

February 21, 2006

CLASS 8: R-EXPRESSIONS

OVERVIEW

- *names* (regardless of complexity) refer to things: people, animals, cities, stars...
- but other linguistic expressions *refer* as well — they are... R(eferring)-expressions
- the first major cut we'll make is to look at noun phrases (NPs): *definite vs. indefinite*

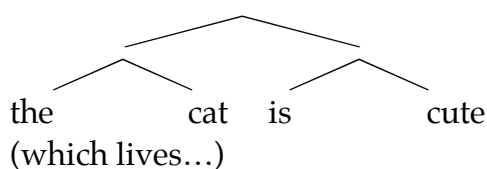
DEFINITE NPs

- (1) a. Miss Emma is cute.
 b. The cat that lives at Kleantes' place is cute.

Hypothesis: *Miss Emma* and *the cat that lives at Kleantes' place* refer to the same thing.

(This is not a necessary or logical conclusion; cf. *extensionality vs. intensionality* later.)

(2)



- *is cute* = property (unsaturated proposition)
- *cat* = property (but it's a different property)
- *the cat* = argument to (*is*) *cute* (saturation)
- ⇒ *the* = argument to *cat* (turn it into referent)

So, *the* turns *cat* into a referring term: of all cats, "it" (*the*) pick out a particular one.

- subtlety: *sense vs. reference* (again from Frege); *presuppositionality* (in the pragmatics part)
- (3) Consider a linguistic expression E and things in the world X, Y.
- a. The **sense** of E tells us that, given the facts as they actually are, it refers to X; but given the facts in the alternative scenario, it would refer to Y.
- b. The **reference** of E (given the facts as they actually are): X.

INDEFINITE NPs

- we've entertained the idea that *a(n)* doesn't have any meaning at all (cf. Russian)

- (4) a. A cat came into the house. **The** cat wanted some food.
 b. I had an appointment with **a** (certain) student again — you know the one.