

The referential properties of indefinite proper names

Proper names are semantically definite and are primarily used without articles, or with the definite article, depending on the language, as in (1) and (2). However, there are also secondary uses of proper names with the indefinite article. In one particular type (cf. (3)), the indefinite proper name refers to the same referent as the definite proper names in cases (1) and (2). While this construction is common in Spanish and other languages, it is only marginally acceptable in English, but see (4) from a Google search. We account for this reading by assuming that the indefinite article introduces a variable over “manifestations”, “roles” or “aspects” of the single most salient bearer of the name (here: President Donald Trump). A hidden operator can then bind this variable yielding the correct referential properties.

- (1) a *Donald Trump* does not lie. b *Donald Trump* no miente
(2) a (*The) *Donald Trump* does not lie. b *El Donald Trump* no miente.
(3) a *?A Donald Trump* does not lie. b *Un Donald Trump* no miente.
(4) But I think you would see some defections, and a Donald Trump would really help with the Democrats' task of mobilizing their base
(<https://www.vox.com/2015/11/25/9800174/why-one-political-scientist-thinks-donald-trump-might-actually-win>)

Besides the primary use of proper names without articles, as in (1), or with the definite article, as in (2), we assume (at least) four different classes of secondary uses (note we do not discuss metonymic uses here): (i) In the denominative use, the proper name is used as common noun, as in (5). (ii) In the metaphorical use, as in (6), the proper name refers to a set of objects that have the (contextually) salient properties of the bearer of the name. (iii) In the stage-use, as in (7), the PN “cuts” out a certain stage from the “whole” individual. The stage x_s is closely related to the whole individual via a realization relation (Carlson 1977). (iv) In the manifestation use the actual bearer of the name instantiated by a manifestation. This can be illustrated by example (8), which has (at least) two readings or uses. According to the metaphorical use, we need another person called Roosevelt. According to the manifestation use, we need Roosevelt in different manifestation, i.e. with different properties.

- (5) I would rather talk to *a Carmen* than to *a Gertrudis*. *x is called PN*
(6) He is *a James Joyce* (of the 21st century). *x has salient properties of PN*
(7) *The young Isaac Newton* did not show any sign of genius. *x_s is a stage of PN*
(8) We need *another Roosevelt*
 (a) We need another individual *called* Roosevelt. (= (6))
 (b) We need another *manifestation* of Roosevelt. *x_m is a manifestation of PN*

Manifestations differ from stages in that several manifestations can hold of one individual at the same time. Therefore, we can refer to different manifestations of the same individual at the same time without contradiction, as Chomsky (1972: 67) does when he says, “I am not against MY FATHER, only against THE LABOR MINISTER”. The idea of manifestations, “social roles”, “aspects”, etc. is often employed for cases of more fine-grained referential contexts, as in (9) (Brown & Yule, 1983). We therefore suggest that predicates are lexically ambiguous so that they either take a simple individual or a manifestation of an individual as arguments..

- (9) a As a colleague you're deficient but as a neighbor you're marvelous
 b As his neighbor I see quite a lot of him, as his colleague I hardly ever see him.

We analyze the generic sentences (1) and (3) according to Krifka et al. (1995) with a hidden generic quantifier binding free variables. In (1), repeated as (10), the operator binds just the situational variable *s*. In (3), repeated as (11), the indefinite article introduces a variable – either of the simple individual type, of the stage-type, or of the manifestation-type. We focus on the latter case. This variable over manifestations first stands in some realization relation *R* to the bearer of the name George Bush and the realization relation *R* is contextually restricted in order to give us only the salient or prominent manifestations of Donald Trump (such as *president*, *republican*, *christian* etc.). Non-salient manifestations (such as *milk-drinker*, *long-sleeper* etc.) are not under discussion here. The variable over manifestations can be bound by the generic operator yielding the logical form (11b) and its paraphrase (11c).

- (10) a Donald Trump does not lie.
 b Gen(*s*) [gb say something in *s*] [gb does not lie in *s*]
 (11) a *Un Donald Trump* no miente.
 b Gen(x_m, s) $\exists R [R(x_m, gb) \& C(R, gb)]$ [x_m does not lie in *s*]
 c For every contextually salient manifestation of George Bush and every relevant

While the truth-conditions of the two sentences are the same, the subtle meaning difference is caused by the different logical forms. (10b) makes an assertion about the individual Donald Trump, while (11b) makes an assertion of different manifestations of Donald Trump.

Summarizing our analysis of the referential properties of indefinite proper names, we assume that (i) manifestations are sub-individual objects that stand in a realization relation to an individual; (ii) the indefinite article introduces a variable that can range over such manifestations (in certain circumstances), and (iii) the (hidden) generic operator quantifies over such manifestations.

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