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Referents in the Grammar

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INTRODUCTION

Hearing an utterance like (1), (and understanding Swedish), one may wonder two things:

(1) Lena såg Bosse första gången   i Köpenhamn
    Lena saw Bosse first   time-THE in Copenhagen

a) Who saw whom? An unmarked intonation would indicate unmarked word order, i.e. that the first NP is the subject and that the second one is the object. If the first NP is stressed however, that could mean that a marked word order is used and that the first NP is the object.

b) Who are Lena and Bosse? This is a completely different question, which does not seem to have anything to do with the first one. The first one concerns grammar, the second one everyday life knowledge.

Is it generally so, that the identification of the grammatical function for a NP is a grammatical question, while the identification of a referent of a NP is not?

Of course, the exact identification of an expression with a specific referent is much more a question of context than one of grammar, *but*

1) the means for referential identification can be of grammatically different kinds, and

2) the grammatical means for referential identification can interact with other parts of the grammar.

If the sentence above is changed just a little, such an interaction can be illustrated.

(2) Hon såg Bosse första gången   i Köpenhamn
    she saw Bosse first time-THE in Copenhagen

(3) Henne såg Bosse första gången   i Köpenhamn
    her   saw Bosse first time-THE in Copenhagen

When a referent is identified in this quite different way, using personal pronouns instead of names, the possible grammatical ambiguity disappears, since the personal pronoun is marked for case. This type of interaction (Sigurd 1987a: 139) gives one kind of support for the idea that a referent representation may well be integrated into the grammatical description, as is done in Referent Grammar (Sigurd 1987a, b). In what follows I will consider some cases of such interactions.

IDENTIFICATION OF REFERENTS

Referents can be identified by expressions in many different ways, i.e. quite different kinds of distinctions can be used. Names distinguish in one way, characterizing nouns, adjectives and predicates generally in another way. Personal pronouns and definiteness take a context of utterance for granted and distinguish in still further ways within the context. A reflexive pronoun typically identifies a referent via some other phrase in the same sentence, it points to a referent identified by syntactic criteria. The fact that there are many grammatically different ways of identifying referents should not necessarily have anything to do with how grammatical functions are identified for the correponding expressions, but as a matter of fact in many cases it does.

When the referent is identified by syntactic criteria, as for reflexive pronouns and other anaphora, this means that the anaphor has the same referent as a syntactically defined, explicit or implicit "antecedent". Each predicate brings a set of predicate roles. Syntactic rules can identify the argument of one predicate role with the argument of another role, as in (4).

(4) Att dricka sej berusad är inte att rekommendera
        to drink SELF drunk is not to recommend

The one who (maybe) gets drunk referred to by the reflexive pronoun, is identified with the implicit agent of *dricka*, which in its turn is identified with the implicit discourse referent which gets a recommendation, while another implicit discourse referent is the one who recommends. A discourse referent (Karttunen 1976) does not necessarily need to be a real referent; it could be an assumed referent, defined as the argument of a certain predicate role.

Criteria referring to the discourse situation and criteria independent of the situation are used together when previously known referents are identified. Situation independent distinctions of number and gender are combined with discourse based distinctions when personal pronouns are used. In a definite NP containing a noun, an adjective or a verb, the predicate generally characterizes

and distinguishes in terms of situation independent criteria, while the definiteness points to some context that is close for the interlocutors. Names are connected independently of situation to their referents. Even if they are not unique, they can serve to distinguish their referents when the discourse situation narrows the choice.

The distinction between what is close and what is further away in one sense or another, between now and then, between here and there, between the one and the other one etc. is a relative distinction and it is extremely flexible. In the same way the close context indicated by definiteness may not be very close; nevertheless, closeness outside any given context does not give any precise identification. For instance, when somebody cries:

(5) The car!

the listener probably has not noticed this car, but tries to do so as fast as possible to avoid the danger.

Except for uniquely identifying proper names, it seems that identification of referents takes place within contexts. Anaphora have their referents identified within textual contexts. A reflexive pronoun in Swedish is coreferent with the head argument of the construction it occurs in, i.e. the subject of the sentence, the logical subject in an existential sentence, or the head argument of an infinite predicate. Long-distance reflexives in Icelandic are coreferent with discourse topics (Thráinsson 1976, Maling 1984). In Japanese, the reflexive refers to the topic or the subject of the sentence (Kitagawa 1981).

GRAMMATICAL FUNCTIONS AND EMPATHY HIERARCHIES

The system of distinguishing nominative and accusative for most personal pronouns but not for nouns, as in Swedish and English, could be called a system of split accusativity. Systems of *split ergativity* have been more widely discussed in linguistics. The fact that a large part of ergative languages are not fully ergative (Dixon 1979:63) is probably one reason for this.

A split can be conditioned by tense and aspect as in Georgian, or by the semantic nature of NPs. In the latter case it is possible to find a scale or hierarchy for NPs with cut-off points where accusativity finishes and where ergativity begins. In such a hierarchy, first and second person rank higher than third person, pronouns rank higher than nouns and nouns referring to humans higher than nouns referring to animals and these higher than nouns referring to something inanimate. The hierarchies may differ in detail in different languages,

e.g. the first and second person may be ranked differently if there is a split between them (Silverstein 1976:122, Dixon 1979:85, Comrie 1981:178-93).

It is also possible to use more than one hierarchy in the description, one for animacy and one for discourse givenness (Ransom 1977:419-25) or still more hierarchies (Kuno 1976:431-8, Kuno and Kaburaki 1977:651-4). The hierarchy as a whole is called the Empathy Hierarchy by Ransom 1977:425 and DeLancey 1981:626. Dixon 1979:85 calls it the 'potentiality of agency scale', which is misleading in one way, since not only agentive verbs are involved, but also for instance perceptual verbs. "Actor" would be a better term to choose than "agent", as used by Foley and Van Valin 1984:28-36 or Whistler 1985: 239, 243.

However the hierarchy is thought of, it is also connected to the parameter discussed in this article, the grammatical means by which referents are identified, to be more precise, the discourse givenness part of it, not the animacy part. On the other hand it is the first part which is generally most important for split ergativity (DeLancey 1981:644).

Inverse person marking is another grammatical phenomenon in which empathy hierarchies and grammatical functions are interrelated. If the actor is the higher one on the hierarchy, the verb is unmarked in this respect, but if the actor is lower, the verb is marked as inverse. In Nootka (Whistler 1985:244), first and second persons are distinguished from third person, while the Algonquian languages have a more fine-graded system, which includes degrees of proximity (Hockett 1966:59-60). Navaho has a system of inversion with a hierarchy of animacy (Hale 1973, Frischberg 1972).

ANAPHORIC OR PRONOMINAL REFERENCE
In some languages, a plentitude of pronominal distinctions can be made in terms of person, number and gender or some other nominal classification. In other languages, rather few such distinctions can be made. These possibilities for pronominal disambiguation of referents affect other parts of the grammatical system, particularly the extent to which anaphoric devices are used for reference rather than pronominal ones (Heath 1975). Heath takes Choctaw (Mississippi) and Nunggubuyu (Australia) as extreme examples, Choctaw having one third person pronominal category and Nunggubuyu ten.

The distinction between anaphoric and pronominal identification can be used for disambiguating purposes, as is well known. The same cases are not distinguished in different languages however, and that does not only depend on the pronominal part of the system. The ways anaphoric reference is expressed can actually be rather different too.

A separate word can be used for the reflexive interpretation like Swedish *sig/sej* and Japanese *zibun*, with corresponding possessives, or without corresponding possessives like German *sich* and Italian *si*. Another way is to mark ordinary personal pronouns for reflexivity, like in English with *-self*. In Finnish a contrast exists for possessive constructions, which can be double-marked. If there is only a possessive suffix (in agreement with the subject) on the NP, a reflexive interpretation is necessary, but if there is (also) a personal pronoun in the genitive, a non-reflexive interpretation is indicated (Karlsson 1979:108-9). The examples mentioned so far are given to show that one does not need to go far away to find diversity.

If one goes further away, to Australia or America, one can find *switch-reference*, that is anaphoric relations between clauses in the same sentence. The clauses are joined in such a way that they are marked as to whether they have the same or a different subject (Jacobsen 1967, Dixon 1980:465-6, Slater 1977, Foley and Van Valin 1984: 339-54). A language that combines switch reference with split ergativity is Eastern Pomo (California) (McLendon 1978).

Summarizing, I would like to say that the division of labour between anaphoric and pronominal identification can be made in many and at first unexpected ways.

SUMMARIZING COMMENTS
The fact that information about grammatical function and information for referential identification are given together in ways that can be interrelated as in the examples given above, is of course no conclusive argument for treating these kinds of information together also in a grammatical representation like that of Referent Grammar. Would grammatical rules look different if they also could take referential information, in addition to information of coreference indicated by indexes, into account?

For intrasentential phenomena like reflexivation and switch-reference they would not need to, but for a grammar that widens its task from sentences to *texts* they would (cf. Sigurd 1987a). However, even intrasententially grammatical rules might look different if referential circumstances and grammatical functions were not independent. Again, in general they are not independent. The categories of subject and object in Swedish and English are not independent of referential circumstances as is shown by the indefiniteness restriction for existential sentences. The relevance of the Empathy Hierarchy for many phenomena, not only split ergativity (Kuno 1976, Kuno and Kaburaki 1977) provides more evidence for this interrelatedness. To the extent that interrelations between referential circumstances and grammatical functions exist, it should be

possible to write more general grammatical rules if they were integrated into one description.

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