



SPAGAD 4: Sequencing and Referencing Speech acts

Ways of representing entities, entity-free coreference and the mental states of discourse participants: MSDRT and the 'Entity Representations and Articulated Contexts' framework

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Zoom: [link](#)

Often the propositional attitudes we entertain are referentially connected, in being conceptually about the same thing, although there is no entity in the world that they are each about. A formalism for the representation of propositional attitudes needs a way to capture these (quasi-)referential connections. On the other hand it is also common for two or more attitudes to be about the same real entity, but where the agent has a representation for the entity that each of those attitudes is about; an adequate account of this second phenomenon requires a notion of entity representations, mental representations of entities that interact with the mental representations of the contents of our propositional attitudes. MSDRT (Mental State Discourse Representation Theory) offers ways of dealing with both issues. This makes it a useful framework for the description of complex mental states – consisting of several referentially and logically connected propositional attitudes, as well as entity representations that provide some of these connections – and, by the same token, also for the semantics of complex attitude reports. Moreover, because of the ways it offers for describing complex mental states, MSDRT can also be used in communication-theoretic analyses of speech acts, in which their production by a speaker S and their interpretation by a recipient H are analyzed as distinct processes, guided by the respective mental states of S and H. This way of separating utterance production and utterance interpretation is important for the treatment of reference by definite and specifically used indefinite noun phrases.

All three properties of MSDRT – (i) how it deals with coreference without referents, (ii) how it articulates the role of entity representations as constituents of propositional attitudes and links to the outside world, and (iii) what it enables us to say about speech acts and their interpretation – are useful in dealing with certain relational aspects of speech acts in Dialogue.

After presenting the main features of MSDRT and of the Entity Representations and Articulated Contexts framework that can be embedded within it, the talk will present some applications of these frameworks to Speech Act Theory and Dialogue.