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Referential–semantic analysis
Aspects of a theory of linguistic reference

In this series

REFERENTIAL–SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

Aspects of a theory of linguistic reference

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Preface

The present work is intended as a contribution towards the clarification of one of the problems with which man has preoccupied himself at all times: the relationship between words and things. It is not a philosophical work although the problem is often considered to be primarily philosophical in nature. But the problem has many aspects. Some of these are philosophical, some are pragmatical, some are sociological – and some are linguistic. It is the latter aspects that will be treated here, although some notice will be taken of what philosophers have had to say on the question.

My interest in the problem was first awakened when I participated in a research seminar on the problems of 'linguistic representation', instigated and led by Professor Gunnar Bech, in 1968. Owing to his sad illness, which to the detriment of us all has since forced him to retire prematurely, no very clear conclusions emerged from the seminar, so when a few years later the British Council and the Danish Research Council for the Humanities made it financially possible for me to devote three years to full-time research, I began to explore the area on my own. I am grateful to these two bodies for their support. I am likewise grateful to the Department of English at the University of Copenhagen for supporting my application for such a long leave of absence from my departmental duties.

I spent the three years 1973–6 at the Department of Linguistics, University of Edinburgh, submitting towards the end of that time a thesis for the degree of PhD under the title *A study in the referential functions of English noun phrases*. I consider these three years the happiest and most fruitful period of my professional life, and I would like to thank all the teachers and fellow-students who contributed to it. There are two persons I would like to thank personally for this period: Dr John M. Anderson, with whom I had – and have since had – many a good discussion, and whose theories have played an important part in

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my own work; but most of all Professor John Lyons, who took an active interest in my work which far exceeded the call of duty, and who has continued to do so.

Although the present work, like so many others in linguistics these days, has grown out of a PhD thesis, it is not identical to the thesis, mainly owing to the points of constructive criticism raised against the thesis by two anonymous readers for the Cambridge University Press. I am grateful to them both for forcing me to rethink some of the fundamental principles of the work.

Throughout the last two years I have been sorely trying the patience of my colleagues, friends and students at the Department here with questions and discussions. My thanks are due to them for keeping their patience, and especially to Dr Graham Caie, Peter Harder, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, Christian Kock, Dr Ingeborg Nixon, and Svend Erik Rosenberg (the last of the Department of Linguistics).

I am also very grateful to Annette Götzsche and Tora Schou for typing the manuscript in record time, while at the same time tending their normal secretarial duties for the Department.

Yet over and above all others, I want to thank my wife and two daughters, to whom the work is dedicated. It is my wife's patient understanding and support more than anything that has carried me through the various crises I have undergone during the long history of the work. And it is my daughters who have provided, though unwittingly, much of the stuff that has gone into it.

Mørkøv, January 1979.   T.T.