

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-76497-1 - Critical Pragmatics: An Inquiry into Reference and Communication

Kepa Korta and John Perry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Critical Pragmatics

*Critical Pragmatics* develops three ideas: language is a way of doing things with words; meanings of phrases and contents of utterances derive ultimately from human intentions; and language combines with other factors to allow humans to achieve communicative goals. In this book, Kepa Korta and John Perry explain why critical pragmatics provides a coherent picture of how parts of language study fit together within the broader picture of human thought and action. They focus on issues about singular reference, that is, talk about particular things, places, or people, which have played a central role in the philosophy of language for more than a century. They argue that attention to the 'reflexive' or 'utterance-bound' contents of utterances shed new light on these old problems. Their important study proposes a new approach to pragmatics and should be of wide interest to philosophers of language and linguists.

KEPA KORTA is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of the Basque Country. He is the co-author (with John Perry) of articles in *Mind and Language*, *Synthèse*, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, and *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

JOHN PERRY is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Riverside and Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Stanford University. He is the author of *The Problem of the Essential Indexical* (1993; 2000), *Reference and Reflexivity* (2001), *Knowledge, Possibility and Consciousness* (2001), and *Identity, Personal Identity and the Self* (2002), and co-author (with Jon Barwise) of *Situations and Attitudes* (1983).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-76497-1 - Critical Pragmatics: An Inquiry into Reference and Communication

Kepa Korta and John Perry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

# Critical Pragmatics

*An Inquiry into Reference and  
Communication*

---

Kepa Korta and John Perry



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-76497-1 - Critical Pragmatics: An Inquiry into Reference and Communication

Kepa Korta and John Perry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,  
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521748674](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521748674)

© Kepa Korta and John Perry 2011

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written  
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2011

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Korta, Kepa.

Critical pragmatics: an inquiry into reference and  
communication / Kepa Korta and John Perry.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-76497-1 (hardback)

1. Language and languages—Philosophy. 2. Semantics. 3. Communication.

4. Reference (Linguistics) I. Perry, John, 1943- II. Title.

P107.K723 2011

401'.45—dc22

2011009934

ISBN 978-0-521-76497-1 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-74867-4 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or  
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in  
this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is,  
or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-76497-1 - Critical Pragmatics: An Inquiry into Reference and Communication

Kepa Korta and John Perry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

For our beloved siblings

Mikel Korta

Susan Perry

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page xi</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xiii</i>
1 Introduction	1
1.1 A conversation at Hondarribia airport	1
1.2 Three ideas	3
1.3 The anatomy of an utterance	8
1.4 Singular reference	12
1.5 The plan	14
2 A short history of reference	15
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 One hundred-plus years of reference	15
2.3 The problem of cognitive significance	21
2.4 From Kaplan to utterances	22
3 Acts, roles, and singular reference	25
3.1 Introduction	25
3.2 Acts and actions	25
3.3 Roles	28
3.4 Signs and information	30
3.5 Gricean reference	31
4 Elements of reference	37
4.1 Introduction	37
4.2 Cognition and information: an analogy	37
4.3 A modest theory of ideas	38
4.4 Paradigm referential plans	40
4.5 Examples	43
5 Demonstratives	46
5.1 Introduction	46
5.2 The professor and the portrait	47
5.3 Forensics	48
5.4 Walking through Donostia	51
5.5 Truth-conditions	53
5.6 Demonstratives and the problems of cognitive significance	55
	vii

viii	Contents	
6	Context sensitivity and indexicals	59
6.1	Role-contexts	59
6.2	Indexicals	60
6.3	Using 'I'	63
6.4	Indexicals, dates, and time	69
6.5	Technology and indexicals	71
7	Names	74
7.1	Introduction	74
7.2	Names and nambiguity	74
7.3	Networks and reference	76
7.4	Names and roles	82
7.5	Names as role-coordination devices: examples	83
7.6	Names and cognitive significance	85
7.7	The no-reference problem	88
8	Definite descriptions	90
8.1	Introduction	90
8.2	Incomplete descriptions	92
8.3	Designational truth-conditions and referring*	94
8.4	Inaccurate descriptions	96
8.5	Conclusion	100
9	Implicit reference and unarticulated constituents	102
9.1	Introduction	102
9.2	Unarticulated constituents and the supplemental nature of language	102
9.3	Three kinds of unarticulated constituents	104
9.4	Whence unarticulated constituents?	109
9.5	Are unarticulated constituents a myth?	111
10	Locutionary content and speech acts	114
10.1	Introduction	114
10.2	Locutionary content versus what is said	114
10.3	Locutionary acts and locutionary content	116
10.4	Locuted but not said: some examples	118
10.5	Locutionary versus propositional content	120
10.6	Conclusion	124
11	Reference and implicature	125
11.1	Introduction	125
11.2	Grice and what is said	126
11.3	Eros' thirst	128
11.4	Identity, implicature, and cognitive significance	130
11.5	The man who has run out of petrol	132
11.6	The maxim of manner of reference	134
11.7	Conclusion	138
12	Semantics, pragmatics, and Critical Pragmatics	139
12.1	Introduction	139
12.2	Situating semantics	140

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-76497-1 - Critical Pragmatics: An Inquiry into Reference and Communication  
Kepa Korta and John Perry  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

Contents	ix
12.3 Semantic content, raw and refined	142
12.4 Minimalism, contextualism, and Critical Pragmatics	143
12.5 Grice's circle	147
13 Harnessing information	150
13.1 Introduction	150
13.2 Content	150
13.3 Propositions and the structure of action	158
13.4 Coding and classification	160
13.5 Back to Hondarribia	163
14 Examples	166
<i>Bibliography</i>	170
<i>Index</i>	175

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-76497-1 - Critical Pragmatics: An Inquiry into Reference and Communication

Kepa Korta and John Perry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Preface

---

How do a professor of philosophy from Stanford and Riverside universities in California and a senior lecturer from the University of the Basque Country at Donostia (San Sebastian) end up writing a book on the pragmatics of reference together?

The connection between Stanford and Donostia started through an encounter of two members of, at the moment, a tiny set of people: the set of Basque (including Basque-American) logicians. In the 1980s, Jesus Mari Larrazabal and John Etchemendy met at a logic colloquium in England and a friendship was born; a friendship that caused an interesting exchange: various logicians and philosophers – mostly young researchers during their PhD studies, including Korta – had the opportunity to visit the philosophy department and the Center for the Study of Language and Information (CSLI) at Stanford during the 1990s. Several logicians, computer scientists, psychologists, and philosophers – including Perry – took part in workshops and conferences in Donostia in more or less the same period. The research atmosphere of Stanford and, especially, the interdisciplinary approach of CSLI inspired the most determined people in Donostia to create the Institute for Logic, Cognition, Language and Information (ILCLI). In 2002, proposed by the Institute, the University of the Basque Country conferred on Perry the honorary degree of Doctor Honoris Causa.

In 2001, CSLI had not much space available, so Perry was kind enough that summer to share his office with Korta, who at the time was working on the semantics/pragmatics divide and the pragmatically determined elements of what is said – along with some boring stuff for a promotion that never happened. John handed a copy, still warm, of the first edition of *Reference and Reflexivity* to Kepa. It was not only less boring but also very relevant to many phenomena at the border of semantics and pragmatics, or that's what Kepa thought. We didn't talk seriously about it until later that year, when we met again at the semantics, pragmatics, and rhetoric workshop (SPR-01) in Donostia.

There, listening to some of the best specialists in semantic and pragmatics, we convinced ourselves that something was missing in the received framework of pragmatics. The picture of language as action wasn't fully accepted and exploited for the analysis of the role that conventions, the minds of the



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-76497-1 - Critical Pragmatics: An Inquiry into Reference and Communication

Kepa Korta and John Perry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii Preface

speaker-hearers, and the conversational situation play in linguistic communication. We thought some of the ideas from *Reference and Reflexivity* would allow us to make something between a major repair and a minor revolution in the foundations of pragmatics.

We met several times to think, read, and write about pragmatics both in California and the Basque Country, but it was thanks to the Diamond XX Philosophy Institute (that is, Perry's doublewide trailer in the Sierra foothills) that we were able to spend August of 2004 together and write our first paper: 'Three Demonstrations and a Funeral.' In that article early versions of many of the ideas developed in this book and in our other articles can be found. Although Austin's and Grice's pragmatics caused the fall of the code model of communication, stressing the basic idea that language is action and that our intentions and beliefs are critical for the right account, we remained convinced that pragmatic theories were not adequately grounded in a theory of action. Just to give an example, while in action theory it is common to distinguish a plurality of contents for an act – that is, *things that are done* – depending on several factors that can be taken as given, in pragmatics utterances were still considered by most authors to have a single truth-conditional content – *thing that is said*. We saw this 'mono-propositionalism' as a remnant of the code model, that would be naturally overcome in our approach to utterances as intentional acts with an interlocking structure of planned results.

With the publication of Recanati's *Literal Meaning* [Recanati, 2004] and Cappelen and Lepore's *Insensitive Semantics* [Cappelen and Lepore, 2005] the debate between minimalists and contextualists arrived at its height, and like many others we felt obliged to define our view in this framework.<sup>1</sup> In our approach, a level of content with no pragmatic 'intrusion' came naturally as the minimal utterance-bound content of the utterance. This wouldn't correspond to what is said, but it's truth-conditionally complete and apt as the 'input' for pragmatic reasoning, giving a natural way to get out of a vicious circle that threatens Gricean pragmatics theories and which Levinson (2000) dubbed 'Grice's circle.'

We thought that our ideas on pragmatics could also allow us to shed new light on a classic topic that has occupied philosophers of language for a hundred-plus years: the nature of singular reference. By studying the pragmatics of reference, old issues could be seen in new ways. Hence the ideas for this book were worked out.

<sup>1</sup> See [Korta and Perry, 2007b,c] in which we see ourselves as both minimalists in semantics, certainly more radical than Cappelen and Lepore (2005) and even Borg (2004), and as moderate contextualists in pragmatics. Other positions include 'indexicalism' [Stanley, 2000] and 'situationalism' [Corazza and Dokic, 2007]; the latter seems closer to our view.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-76497-1 - Critical Pragmatics: An Inquiry into Reference and Communication

Kepa Korta and John Perry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Acknowledgments

---

After writing this book, and using ‘I’ in many of our examples, we have some difficulty in telling our own individual thoughts about the issues apart. Something similar happens with our acknowledgments. We share most of our friends and colleagues, and workplaces such as the Diamond XX Philosophy Institute, so we share our feelings of gratitude to the members of the Pragmatics Project at CSLI and the Language and Communication Seminar at ILCLI, including Xabier Arrazola, Eros Corazza, Joana Garmendia, Jesus Mari Larrazabal, María Ponte, and Larraitx Zubeldia. We are also thankful to the students of our graduate seminar on the philosophy of language at Stanford in 2009. Perry’s discussions with Robin Jeshion and their students in a pragmatics seminar at the University of California at Riverside were very helpful, and special thanks are due to Megan Stotts from that seminar, who gave us detailed comments on an earlier draft of this book. Our friends Jérôme Dokic and Stefano Predelli also gave us very helpful comments.

Hilary Gaskin, Joanna Garbutt, and Gillian Dadd from Cambridge University Press deserve special thanks for their infinite patience.

We can still tell our institutions and governments apart, so Kepa acknowledges the support of ILCLI, the Basque Government (IT323-10), and the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (HUM2006-11663/FISO; FFI2009-08574). John wishes to thank the departments of philosophy at Stanford and UC Riverside, and CSLI at Stanford, for their support.