CALL FOR PAPERS

International conference LED (*Langues Et Discours*) 2021

Reference: (co-)construction and use

Université Grenoble Alpes, France, 25-26 March 2021

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During these challenging times of Coronavirus, we understand any apprehension about making plans to attend a conference which might require air travel and a hotel stay. The LED 2021 Conference will take place on 25-26 March 2021 in some shape or form, be it in-person or virtually. We are looking forward to receiving your abstracts, wherever you may be.

Reference is considered here in the nominal domain – pronouns included – and is understood as the designation of the mental representation of an entity, regardless of whether the latter exists in the extralinguistic world.

A great amount of research on reference has been devoted to the constraints on the interpretation of referential expressions in anaphoric contexts (e.g. Government and Binding Theory for the syntactic constraints on sentence-internal anaphora; issues of referential opacity for coreferential NPs in subject and object positions; or discourse anaphora); later on, more general studies on reference have considered pragmatics (e.g. Grice's Maxims in Gundel *et al.* 1993) and the influence of the cognitive status of the referent (e.g. Accessibility theory, Ariel 1990; Givenness Hierarchy, Gundel *et al.* 1993; Centering frameworks, Grosz *et al.* 1995, Walker *et al*. 1998, Strube & Hahn 1999). But these studies, as well as more recent research (e.g. Abbott 2010, Gundel & Abbott 2019), have also brought to light the limitations of such theoretical models. They are important in that they establish definite trends, but all they can make out are trends, as the referent's cognitive status obviously interacts with other factors – besides, many of these studies are based on constructed examples.

It is this complexity that the present conference will seek to explore, by bringing together specialists of various fields and languages. It will place the speaker/user at the core of the referential process: as stressed by Strawson (1950) among others, it is not a definite description that refers by itself, but a speaker who uses a definite description to refer to something in a given speech situation.

Contributions to the following issues, based on any of the world languages, are particularly welcome:

- In addition to the cognitive status of the referent, what factors are at play in the construction and management of reference? In particular, what is the influence of constituent order (e.g. role of a rather 'flexible' syntax, as in German, or of a more rigid syntax, as in French), of syntactic functions (e.g. pre-eminence of the syntactic subject), nominal determiners, information structure, or the predicate? The study of ambiguous references may contribute

useful insights into the issue. Another aspect is the influence of conventions (whether the conventions of a culture [Wu *et al*. 2013], of a genre or of a micro-community of practice) in the choice of a type of referential expression. For example, Thurmair (2003), Landragin & Schnedecker (2014) or the research programme Democrat (ANR 2016-2020) have evidenced the role of genre-related conventions for highly codified genres such as cooking recipes, instruction manuals or children's books. But do conventions exist in all genres, and do they always carry the same weight in comparison with other parameters?

- In the studies mentioned above, the focus is mostly on the singular. Yet studies on the plural have shown further complexity (Gardelle 2019). For example, the same NP *the children* may be given a distributive, a collective or a cumulative interpretation depending on the associated predicate (e.g. Abbott 2010 for English, Gunkel 2017 for German); the plural is also likely to create referential blurring (for example *the aqueduct was invented by the Romans* does not mean that all the Romans were involved, Link 1983). This fact has been well documented for personal pronouns, especially "gregarious" *ils* in French (*A l'hôpital, ils ont dit…*, 'At the hospital they said…', Kleiber 1992, Johnsen 2019), pronouns in indirect anaphora (*Ich angele jetzt schon seit Stunden, aber sie wollen einfach nicht anbeißen*, Schwarz 2000) or French *nous* 'we', which can be either inclusive or exclusive. Blurred reference, of course, also brings to mind impersonal pronouns such as French *on* (see Fløttum 2004 on the six values of *on* in academic papers, or, for example, Truan 2018). This blurring effect is often exploited pragmatically in discourse, for emotional distancing (*they*), rhetorical effects in political contexts (*we*) or even "arbitrary reference" (Gunkel 2017) for some quantifiers (*mancher Gast / so manch N – manch ein…*). A closer look at the reference / quantification interface will provide a better understanding of plural reference and more generally, of the process of referential construction. Similarly, considering the problems posed by referential blurring for automatic detection and annotation of coreference in various languages may provide insights on how to deal with referential ambiguity (in the wake of Stede 2016) and complex plurals.
- In addition, the studies mentioned above examine how the types of referential expressions compete. But how is a form selected within a given type? Collins & Postal (2012), for instance, have compiled the uses of 'pronominal imposters', as in *How are we doing today?* used by a nurse to enquire about a patient's health. Another example is the variety of NPs used by the British press to refer to Kate Middleton, with proper names ranging from her full name to *Kate*, *Waitie Katie* and other variants (Hoffstetter 2016; for comparable cases in German, see Balnat 2015, 2018). What are the possible effects of variation from the expected "norm"? Is it possible to detect recurrences, or even conventional expectations, in such variations and their effects? The study of antonomasia, metonomy and metaphor will be another interesting way to examine the complex issues of denomination and representation of the referent.
- Further research into the oral and non-verbal dimensions of reference is also crucially needed: in particular, what part do they play in the (co-)construction of reference? Regarding the phonological dimension, Ariel (1990)'s Accessibility Marking Scale distinguishes between stressed and unstressed pronouns; but stress is still understudied in research on reference based on spoken corpora. Apart from creating a contrast with another referent, what is the role of stress? Another aspect is that of kinetics – gestures, head movements, targeted gazes and pointing. How do these components contribute to the (co-)construction of reference, during language acquisition (Morgenstern 2006, Morgenstern & Parisse 2017, Hannken-Illjes & Bose 2018) but also beyond?
- The study of reference (and its acquisition where appropriate) in speakers with non-typical development (e.g. deaf children, fitted with hearing aids or not) or people who have

Alzheimer's disease or schizophrenia, will also provide useful insights into the parameters at play. In particular, it has been shown that cognitive overload may impact the form of anaphoric pronouns (Bourdin 2015, Vincent-Durroux *et al.* 2018); are there effects on reference in general as well?

- The issue of the construction of reference also raises that of its co-construction, in both spoken and written interaction. For example, the study of anaphora has made out cases of competition for domination (Salazar-Orvig & Grossen 2011), or conversely cases in which speakers helped each other in order to establish reference when a useful word was missing from a non native speaker's lexicon (David, Poussard & Vincent-Durroux 2019). In another domain, how is co-construction effected in the social media, especially Facebook® or Twitter® (Aktas, Scheffler & Stede 2018), or in mediated communication (e.g. WhatsApp®, text messages)? How is reference achieved in multimodal texts, when emoticons and smileys, or even pictures or photos, have a referential role (see Pappert 2017, or the sms4science project (sud4science.org) led by Rachel Panckhurst)?

- Finally, the exploitation of reference for argumentative purposes is still underresearched today. To what extent may a "marked" referential expression (or referential chain) be regarded as part of the argumentative strategy? A closer look at the various links of a given reference chain might prove useful in this respect: in the wake of recent research on the distinction between "conceptual (non-)restrictiveness" and "referential (non-)restrictiveness" for attributive adjectives (*ein schwarzer Rabe*, *die verdammte Tür* – Fabricius-Hansen 2009a/b), or on cases of immediate repetition of proper names in journalistic writing (Vinckel-Roisin 2018), an area for further research is the argumentative role of full NPs (e.g. *Spezifikationsanaphern*, Consten & Schwarz-Friesel 2007, or various studies on general nouns). Similarly, the argumentative, rhetorical angle will be relevant to consider categorisation within a referential chain. For example, nominalisation implies that the categorisation is taken for granted, so that referring to a company as *the furniture giant* makes rejection of that status difficult. How is this linguistic fact deliberately put to use in argumentative or rhetorical contexts; and how can rejection of the proposed status be achieved?

Keynote speakers:

Catherine Emmott (University of Glasgow, United Kingdom): "Antecedentless plural pronouns: use and interpretation"

Lutz Gunkel (Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache, Mannheim, Germany): "Indefinite Reference: Problems and Prospects"

Manfred Krifka (Leibniz-Zentrum Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft, Berlin, Germany): "Anaphoric reference to incorporated objects and weak definites: Does it exist? How does it work?"

Key dates:

Deadline for submission: 27 November 2020
Notification of acceptance: 11 December 2020
Proposals of around 700 words (plus up to 5 references), together with a short bio, should be sent to **led2021@sciencesconf.org** The proposals should be sent both in .doc(x) and .pdf formats.
The talks may be given in English or in French.

Following the conference, submitted papers will be considered for a publication with an international impact, subject to double blind peer review.

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-Academics: 60 euros
-Ph.D. Students: 30 euros
The fees include coffee breaks and lunches.

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