

Event Quantification and Plurality

by

Marcelo Ferreira

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Abstract

This dissertation presents three studies based on the hypothesis that the domain of entities on which natural language interpretation relies includes a partially ordered sub-domain of events. In this sub-domain, we can identify singular and plural elements, the latter being characterizable as mereological sums having singular events as their minimal parts. I discuss how event variables ranging over pluralities are introduced in the logical representation of natural languages sentences and how event operators manipulate these variables. Logical representations are read off syntactic structures, and among the elements I will claim are hidden in the syntactic representation of certain sentences are plural definite descriptions of events and event quantifiers selectively binding plural variables. My goal will be to motivate the postulation of these elements by showing how reference to pluralities of events shed light on several properties of a variety of constructions, and how interpretive differences originated in singular/plural oppositions overtly manifested in the nominal domain are replicated in the aspectual/verbal domain, even in the absence of any overt morphological manifestation. The empirical domain of investigation includes adverbial quantification, donkey anaphora and imperfective aspect, with both habitual and progressive readings being analyzed in detail.

Thesis Supervisor: Irene Heim

Title: Professor of Linguistics