

Attribution or How to Code a Participant in a Universe of Discourse

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0. Introduction

This paper discusses some aspects of the linguistic coding of entities in the real or conceptual world. Its main goal is twofold : (i) to argue that a noun (with or without modifiers), which is used to code an entity, serves to put forward a part of its property (attribute); (ii) to demonstrate that the choice of a noun is affected by the speaker's cognition of the world and his communicative intent.

In our daily lives, we are constantly making decisions about how to code things or people in speech as well as in writing. Most things have many names. A thing, for example, can equally be called *a table*, *a conference table*, *a brown wooden table*, *a piece of furniture*, and so on. Why do we prefer *apple* to *fruit*, and *soft drink* to *coke* in referring to things on a table one day? The names for things, as Brown (1958) pointed out, change with context ; a dime is a *dime* for adults and vending machines, but for two-year olds it's *money*, and George Williams is *Georgie* to his wife, and *Daddy* to his kids, but *the mailman* to the kids across town.

In this paper, we will be dealing with some factors which influence the speaker's decision on a certain noun rather than the others. It is expected that in choosing a code, we make assessment of all contextual factors and decide on the one, which, we think, is best suited for our communicative purpose. When somebody says, "I talked with *a logician*", he has a certain person in mind. He can think of a lot of ways to describe him/her. He has opted for the word *logician* as a reference term probably because he wanted to draw his interlocutor's attention to his quality as a logician and not to his other properties, being in his forties, having gray hair, etc. We will argue below that choosing a noun means attributing a certain property to an entity and that naming often discloses the speaker's attitude toward the referent.

It should be made clear from the outset, however, that our focus is primarily on 'nouns', not on 'noun phrases'. We will not concern ourselves much with the problem of reference, which is a semantic property of a noun phrase, not of a noun. A common noun by itself does not refer ; what it does is merely to code a property of some entity. Referential status of a noun phrase obtains through the determiner and number marking morphology. Thus, *book* does not have a reference by itself, but *a book*, *the*

book, the books, some books may all function as referring expressions.

We will first examine choices within a semantic field and different levels of generalization (vs specialization). Secondly, we will survey the inevitable problems of sense and reference. Thirdly, we will deal with definiteness in relation to various coding strategies. Lastly, we will briefly touch upon the phenomenon of affect-loadedness or emotive meaning.

1. Semantic Field and Levels of Generalization

The choice between different words is often the choice out of many alternatives that belong to the same semantic field. Thus, in referring to a certain ship, we choose one from *vehicle, vessel, boat, merchant ship, the Queen Elizabeth*, etc. and to call a dessert we may decide on any from *fruit, citrus fruit, orange, mandarin orange*, etc. Very often it is the choice between the more general and the more specific naming of an entity. The deciding factor in these cases is often how general or how specific the speaker wants to make his utterance.

It is not always the case, however, that all the speech participants share the same set of vocabulary. There are cases where coding strategy is affected by the size of mental lexicon. People with a small vocabulary inevitably have few choices. The choice between *dime* and *money*, noted above is one such case. Very often we witness a young child ingeniously extend his small set of vocabulary to cover a wide field. R. Lakoff, in her pioneering work (Lakoff, 1975), discussed the difference between men's and women's vocabulary (hence difference in their interests and life-styles). Women are generally sensitive to subtle differences in colors and boast a rich vocabulary to code the difference: they are able to differentiate, for example, purple, mauve, lavender, violet, etc., whereas men do not care and are content with a few general terms. This is attributed to a difference in mental lexicon.

Every profession has its own special vocabularies or jargons which mean nothing to outsiders. Names of chemicals, for example, are important to chemists and pharmacists but not to philosophers or musicians. What is *acetaldehyde* for students of chemistry may be *liquid* or a simply *stuff* for ordinary people. Similarly, people of different cultural backgrounds show different categorization of one and the same entity. For instance, *rice* for an English speaker, is *ine* (rice plant), *momii* (grain), *kome* (uncooked rice), *seimai* (polished rice), *gohan* (cooked rice-polite), *meshi* (cooked rice-vulgar), or *raisu* (rice served on a plate), etc. for a Japanese person.

Some words are used to code genera (kinds, species). Names of biological species, such as *rose, lily, monkey, squirrel* are prototypical examples. Some like *plant, animal, fruit* are more general. When a speaker chooses a noun between *fruit* and *orange* in referring to a ball-shaped juicy food in front of him, he has a choice between more general and more specific alternatives. In terms of semantic features, we know that the concept of 'fruitness' is inherent in both words. Looked at from this perspective,

the speaker who says *fruit* in referring to an orange may be emphasizing the fruitness, i. e. that it is a (kind of) fruit, ignoring the other (more specifying) features of the referent. Thus, the choice of a more general term may in fact be the speaker's decision to designate the class to which the referent belongs. It is equally possible that the speaker may not be familiar with the object in question and had to rely on whatever substitute available to him. Those general terms are always handy and safe. As in the case of small children, to whom *penny, nickel, dime, quarter*, etc. are all *money*, this is often done by adult speakers. They may at times generalize even more and employ words like *thing, object, animal, people* or *stuff*, the group of words which Hasan (1968) called *general nouns*. In that case he is denoting nothing but the quality of 'physical objecthood' of the referent. It may sometimes turn out to be the case that the object in question is simply uncodable to the speaker.

What is of particular interest in this connection is the use of a more general term in violation of a Conversational Maxim. Consider the following exchange, which originated in Clark and Clark (1977: 122).

(1) Steven : Wilfred is meeting *a woman* for dinner tonight.

Susan : Does his wife know about it ?

Steven : Of COURSE she does. The woman he is meeting is his wife.

Susan will normally be justified, following the Cooperative Principle, in assuming that the woman mentioned by Steven is not Wilfred's wife. This is because *a woman* tends to implicate that Susan does not have enough knowledge to infer which woman is meant. Since anyone who knows Wilfred can be expected to know that he has a wife, Steven has broken the Maxim of Quantity in using a relatively uninformative expression (*a woman*) in preference to a much more informative one (*his wife*)². Yet it satisfies the Maxim of Quality; the utterance is true from the logical point of view, although it is very misleading in a pragmatic way. Thus, problems arise when people deliberately choose to be less informative.

We may sum up the points we have made thus far as follows.

- (2) The reason for using a more general term rather than a more specific one may be ;
- i) lack of vocabulary
 - ii) emphasis on a certain semantic feature(s) of the entity
 - iii) deliberate suppression of information

The reasons ii) and iii) are distinguishable but perhaps related.

Before we move on to the next step of investigation, let us consider another aspect of semantic features. Take the noun *bachelor* by way of illustration. This word has a number of distinguishable meanings. For our purposes, let us put aside those associated with a university degree and the sea lion and concentrate on the one applied to a human male. We are all aware that, in terms of semantic features, *bachelor* should be marked [+Human], [+Male], [+Adult], [-Married]. When we say, "He is a

bachelor", however, we do not intend to say that he is a man or an adult, but that he is unmarried. Only the feature [-Married] is relevant to our communicative intent. This shows that not all semantic features of a noun necessarily have the same degree of importance for our communicative purposes.

2. Sense and Reference

Up to this point, we have dealt with referentiality rather informally. When giving examples, we sometimes used nouns, sometimes names, sometimes nouns modified by various articles and adjectives. In this section we will argue that referentiality is not a property of a noun but of a noun phrase, while sense is an inherent property of both. Confusion follows from the way in which the semantics are melded with the pragmatics of the context and with the speech participants' knowledge of the world. Let us look at the following sentence.

(3) *The Morning Star is the Evening Star.*

This is a classic example of Frege (1892)'s, which is frequently used in discussions of sense and reference. As Frege pointed out, the two expressions *the Morning Star* and *the Evening Star* have the same reference (*Dedeutung*), since they each refers to the same planet, though they cannot be said to have the same sense (*Sinn*). From another point of view, *the Morning Star* and *the Evening Star* are different names given to the one and the same planet, which has yet another name *Venus*. There has thus been a long logical tradition of treating reference, which is also called denotation or extension, as a mapping relation between linguistic terms (such as noun phrases) and entities which exist in the real world. But, as Lyons (1977), among others, recognizes, what the grammar seems to be sensitive to is, rather, whether entities we refer to by some noun phrases have been verbally established in the universe of discourse. Consider the following sentence.

(4) John wants to marry *a girl with green eyes* and take *her* back to Ireland with him, although he's never met any.

Here, *a girl with green eyes* is construed as nonspecific: there is no presupposition or implication of existence at all. The pronoun *she* is a referring expression, referring to "that unique though hypothetical entity which would be crucially involved in actualizing the possible world characterized in the first part of the sentence" (cf. Partee, 1972: 426). Thus, once an entity has been established in the universe of discourse, it is treated as referring, regardless of what its status may be in the real world.

Let us consider another aspect of the expression *a girl with green eyes*. Logically speaking, in cases like (4), Lyons (1977) argues, neither the speaker nor John need be convinced of the present or future existence of girls with green eyes. It is our knowledge of the world that tells us that there are indeed people with green eyes in this world. Logically, sentence (4) means that a girl of John's dream is a member of the set of girls with green eyes. Hence, the indefinite NP *a girl with green eyes* refers to a

generic set and each member is a possible candidate for a girl of John's dream. It is a set of girls defined by the single quality of having green eyes ; i. e. the members of the set all have the attribute 'green-eyed'.

An indefinite noun phrase can also be used specifically, as in the following (5).

- (5) John wants to marry *a girl with green eyes* he met in New York and take *her* back to Ireland with him.

In both (4) and (5), the noun phrase *a girl with green eyes* is used by the speaker to designate a girl of John's choice. In (4), as we have seen, it does not have any referent in the real world or in the linguistic context. Still it describes the girl in the world of John's dreams. What the speaker of (4) communicates is that having green eyes is an important, probably the crucial, quality for John's bride-to-be, or simply that John, who likes green-eyed girls, is looking for a suitable one to marry. The choice of a simple noun phrase thus tells us a lot of things at a time. What about the same noun phrase in (5)? For John and the speaker, it refers to a specific individual in their universe, though it does not help the hearer in identifying its referent. Only the facts that she has green eyes and that John met her in New York are conveyed. The speaker could have chosen any one of dozens of different nominals in referring to the same girl, for example, *brunette*, *typist*, *pro-choice activist*, etc., provided he is acquainted with her. The choice of the expression *girl with green eyes* out of many others is the result of the speaker's cognition of that quality as the most outstanding and meaningful one. The nature and function of this 'attributive' use of nominals will be investigated further below.

We have seen above that a simple indefinite noun phrase may carry a lot of semantic and pragmatic functions. The same can be said of simplest noun phrase; i. e. those without modifiers. The noun phrase *a girl*, for example, is used to focus on the quality of 'girlness' of the referent (existing or hypothetical), rather than her other attributes, such as being a high school student, a volunteer, a football fan, etc. Thus our choice of a noun directs the hearer's attention to a certain attribute of the referent. We see here that essentially the same motivation as (2 ii) is at work, which might be expanded as follows.

- (6) Choice of a noun may be the outcome of either or both ;
i) the speaker's cognition of the entity.
ii) the speaker's focusing on the property coded by that noun.

In either case, as we have just seen, the referential status of a noun phrase is irrelevant to the choice of its head noun.

3. Definiteness

The following (7) is the definition of definiteness by Givón (1993, I : 232), which I have adapted a little to suite the discussion here.

- (7) If the speaker judges that the referent is mentally accessible or identifiable to

the hearer, the referent is coded as definite. If not, it is coded as indefinite. Definite noun phrases, by definition, almost always refer to some entity in the universe of discourse. As Donnellan (1966) has pointed out, however, there are cases where a definite noun phrase may also be employed non-referentially as the subject of a sentence. (8) is one of his examples, where the definite expression *Smith's murderer* is ambiguous, much like the indefinite *a girl with green eyes* we saw in the previous section is.

(8) *Smith's murderer* is insane.

There is of course one interpretation of this sentence under which *Smith's murderer* is understood to refer to some specific individual³. But there is another interpretation which can be brought out more clearly by paraphrasing (8) as

(9) Whoever killed Smith is insane.

In particular circumstances even *whoever killed Smith* might be construed as a referring expression. Normally, however, we might expect (9) to be uttered in situations where the speaker is not simply asserting of some individual (who might have been referred to in all sorts of other ways which make no mention of the crime) that he is insane, but the fact of having committed the murder is being put forward as grounds for the assertion that is made. If (8) is also construed in this way, then the expression *Smith's murderer* is being used attributively. According to Donnellan, in the attributive use, the attribute of being the so-and-so is all important, while it is not in the referential use. For the hearer, however, there is no way of knowing whether a certain expression is used referentially or attributively. Donnellan's argument is summarized as (10) :

(10) In general, whether or not a definite description is used referentially or attributively is a function of the speaker's intentions in a particular case.

I should point out that Donnellan's contention, though quite insightful, is deficient in the following two respects. First, Donnellan introduced the distinction solely in connection with definite noun phrase, but, as we saw in the previous section, indefinite noun phrases also show a similar contrast. Secondly, I assert that the distinction between referential use and attributive use should not be seen as categorial. Referentially used noun phrases may at the same time be attributive. As Lyons (1977) pointed out, the fact that the speaker is free to select his own referring expressions in the utterance should be born in mind in any discussion of the relationship between the linguistic forms and their meanings on particular occasions of their utterance. We propose here the following principle.

(11) In general, a noun is used attributively as a function of the speaker's cognition and mental attitude at the time of speech.

From now on, we will not be concerned with the difference in definiteness or referentiality of noun phrases any more. Instead, we will concentrate on the phenomenon of attributively used common nouns, which reveals the speaker's cognitive attitude

and mentality. We will survey various areas of language where a referential noun phrase is used attributively. For ease of presentation, we will divide the examples into two groups, according to their definiteness. We shall discuss definite expressions first.

3. 1. Coding Definite Entities

Let us begin with the following well-known example, where a 'title' is used to code a person.

(12) Mr. Smith is looking for *the Dean*.

As is commonly the case when titles are used as definite descriptions, this sentence is ambiguous between two interpretations whether or not 'the Dean' is construed referentially or attributively (in Donnellan's sense); and, under either of these interpretations, Mr. Smith may or may not know who is the Dean. We will not go through all the referential possibilities of the expression *the Dean*. What we would like to stress is that, whether or not it is used referentially, a title such as *the Dean* is used to highlight the social position of some entity in the real or conceptual world. Thus, if Dr. Charles Brown is the Dean and (12) is uttered by a professor from the same department who is on friendly terms with him, then the choice of the title is made out of all sorts of other ways which make no mention of his public status, such as *Dr. Brown*, *Chuck*, *my colleague*, *your husband*, etc. The decision is based on a number of semantic and pragmatic factors, including the relationships among the discourse participants, the speaker's encyclopedic knowledge, and the overall speech situation.

The use of titles is widespread in our daily interactions. Let us look at the following sequences of noun phrases cited from popular narratives.

(13) *The little prince* did not notice that *the king*. . . *His father*. . .

(14) *Mr. Fortescue* summoned *his secretary* to his office. . . *Miss Turner* saw that *her employer*. . .

We find three types of referring expressions here. *Mr. Fortescue* is a proper noun. *The little prince* and *the king* are terms used to code referents with their titles, *his father* and *her employer* code relationships between discourse entities. (13) and (14) illustrate how very naturally we utilize different types of definite expressions in referring to one and the same entity. Why is this possible? This is where referential pragmatics comes in⁴. The attributive use of a noun phrase sends out a metamessage based on a number of semantic and pragmatic factors; in (14), for example, Miss Turner = Mr. Fortescue's secretary, and conversely Mr. Fortescue = Miss Turner's employer.

As is well known, the use of relational terms, such as *father*, *mother*, *uncle*, *grandma*, etc. among family members is a common practice in every community. In Japanese society, the use of titles instead of names is conventionalized in referring to one's seniors in all walks of life, at home, at office, and at school. Often this leads to systematic avoidance of personal names, which effects a kind of indirect reference and is regarded as a way of showing respects. Titles like *dean* and *king* and relational

terms like *father* and *boss* come very close to acquiring, in the appropriate context, the status of uniquely referring titles. If a company employee uses referentially the terms such as *president* or *chief* in a context in which no president or section chief has been previously referred to, he normally expects to be understood as referring to the president of his company or the chief of his section. The titles are used here to highlight the social position of the speaker in the company and his/her relation to the referent, while his/her other properties, such as the name, sex, relationship to the hearer, are all ignored. This is another area where the principle (6 ii) is at work.

The following are examples of appositional use of noun phrases.

- (15) *Castro, the man with few cards*, always winds up the dealer.
 (16) Less than three years after spurning a chance at Presidential immortality, *Mario M. Cuomo, the man so often cast as New York's Hamlet on the Hudson*, now risks the humiliation and abandonment of Lear.
 (17) In neighboring New Jersey, meanwhile, *the state's freshman Governor, Christine Todd Whitman*, once scorned as a lightweight candidate, suddenly finds herself mentioned as a possible 1996 Vice Presidential hopeful after pushing a groundbreaking income tax cut through a sympathetic Legislature.

(15)–(17) all originate in newspaper articles. (17) is a simple apposition of a title and a proper noun, where the principle (6 ii) is again at work. What we have in (15) and (16) is the apposition of a personal name with what looks like the author's dogmatic characterization of the referent. They are not much help in identifying the persons in question but they serve to attribute certain qualities to the referents. *The man with few cards* and *the man so often cast as New York's Hamlet on the Hudson* are certainly too long to be called nicknames, but they function essentially the same way; they invite the reader to focus on one specific property of the referent. In this respect what are commonly referred to as pet names and epithets all seem to work the same way. Compare the following sequences.

- (18) a. Chuck. . . Charlie Brown. . . you sly devil. . . ol' Chuck. . . you sly dog. . .
 b. Miss Somers. . . the silly idiot
 c. Neele, you old vulture. . . my boy. . .
 (19) Dear, Darling, Sweetheart, Honey, Sweetheart, etc.

The sequences in (18) are a mixture of personal names, nicknames and epithets. (19) is a collection of terms of endearment. In both these cases, the principle (6ii) seems to be at work. The use of apposition and nickname has another aspect, i. e. that of expressing the speaker's mental or emotional attitude toward the referent, which is summarized as follows.

- (20) The use of attributive code names originates in the speaker's attitude toward the referent.

The following sort of alternation of referential expressions has been conventionally called *lexical substitution*.

- (21) Accordingly. . . I took leave, and turned to *the ascent* of the peak. *The climb* was perfectly easy.
- (22) Once upon a time, when your Granny's granny was your age, *a little yellow bird* lived in a cage. . . *the canary*. . .
- (23) *My girlfriend's father* is in a hospital. *That man* has been smoking for over thirty years.
- (24) *A doctor* came to examine my child, who had been coughing and not eating well. *The pediatrician* said that he had a flu.
- (25) So now *run* home, peeping at your sweet image in the pitcher as you *go*.

Lexical substitution occurs with verbs, as in (25), but it is most commonly found with nominals, as in (21)–(24). Hasan (1968) and Yoshida (1975) discussed the phenomenon and pointed out the following tendencies of 'substituting terms', i. e. referring terms used non-initially.

- (26) Substituting terms tend to be;
- i) more general
 - ii) accompanied by attitudinal adjectives
 - iii) names of species (genera, kinds)

These tendencies do not necessarily coincide. What concerns us most here is the tendency identified in (26ii), which amounts to show that lexical substitution is another area where attributive coding of an entity is evident. Tendency (26i) concerns 'superordinate-hyponym relations', which we have briefly discussed in section 1 above. The sequence *bird-canary*, *great-aunt-girl*, *girl-princess*, and *run-go* in (22)–(25) all demonstrate this tendency. The non-initial use of titles, pet names, epithets and terms of endearment may be regarded as a type of lexical substitution.

Let us consider next coding of objects in procedural discourses. Look at the following substitution sequences in recipes.

- (27) a. When *the vegetables* have been cooking for 30 minutes, stir in *the garlic* and *basil* and then *the eggs*. Mix thoroughly and remove the pan from the heat. Put *the mixture* into the prepared baking dish. . .
- b. In a small bowl stir together *the honey*, *soy sauce*, *sherry*, *five-spice powder* and *Sichuan pepper*. Add *the honey mixture* to the spareribs.
- c. Cut *the white fish and salmon* into long, thin strips. Place *the strips* in a bowl.
- d. . . . and roll up *the pastry*. . . Arrange *the rolls* on the baking sheet. . .
- e. Toast *bread*, butter lightly, place on a baking sheet, and cover *each slice* with a layer of mushrooms. . .
- f. Pour *the eggs over the potatoes* and, when they begin to set, smooth the surface with the back of a spoon and cover the pan. Cook over low heat for 8 minutes. Lightly oil a plate large enough to hold *the omelet*.

The mixture in (27a) and *the honey mixture* in (27b) each codes the product of the

previous operation. *Mixture*, whose semantics points back to the foregone mixing operation, appears to be an ideal all-purpose code for a product standing at an intermediate stage of cooking. Its very meaning functions to put forward the result itself. (27c-e) are examples of reference by way of the shape of the entity. The author chooses to focus on the shape of the product, which plays the role of confirming the previous operation. (27f) is an example where the name of the dish is used to code the final product. The author here stresses the purpose of operation, reminding the reader that he is in the final stage of operation. All these coding devices in recipes are effective in the sense that they code the designed attributes of the products.

3.2. Coding Indefinite Entities

An indefinite NP tends to indicate that the addressee does not have enough knowledge to infer which particular entity is meant. Its typical use is found in the initial introduction of a discourse-participant into the universe of discourse. Look at the following examples.

- (28) a. Once upon a time, there was *a king* and *a queen*, who had no children.
 b. There was *an old man*, who lived in the forest.

In these sentences, each of the italicized noun phrases is associated with some entity in the real or conceptual world. The author or narrator who begins his story with any sentences of this kind is committed, in terms of referential intent, to the existence in the universe of discourse of some royal couple or an old man. As Givón (1993: 215) points out, the conditional implication seems to hold that :

- (29) If there was somebody,
 then that particular individual must have existed

The author, in fact, may have had other choices in portraying his protagonists, for instance, *a sweet couple* in (28a), and *a woodcutter* in (28b). This is another area where the author's decision on a particular noun is effected by his communicative intent. By his code selection, he, in turn, tries to draw hearers' attention to the particular qualification of the referent, which sets the course of the story that follows.

Sentences in (30) below each contains a nonreferring noun phrase.

- (30) a. Have you ever seen *a penguin* ?
 b. You had better try to find *a good wife*.
 c. What a fine canary. . . Oh dear, *a cat* may catch him. Oh dear, the other birds may attack him. . .

The speaker uttering any of these sentences is not committed to identifying a particular individual in the universe of discourse. The speaker of (30), for example, has no penguin in mind; he is asking if the hearer has seen a creature of that 'type', not any 'token' of it. (30a) and (30c) are examples with names of species. *A good wife* in (30b), however, does not designate any species: it is a term denoting a 'qualification', *wife* being a label attached to a social-relational category of woman and *good* a term

expressing a subjective judgement. Here, too, what is talked about is a 'type', not a 'token'. (30b) is a prototypical case of attributively used indefinite nonreferential noun phrase.

Consider next the following sentences.

- (31) a. I was praised by *a professor*.
 b. I heard it from *a doctor*.
 c. *A native speaker* pronounced that word that way.
 d. To my surprise, I found the child reading *a book on philosophy*.

Unlike *a girl with green eyes* in (4) and (5) above, the noun phrases in (31) are always interpreted as referring. The speaker is committed to the existence in the universe of discourse of some person or entity (i. e. professor, doctor, a native speaker or a book on philosophy) that he has previously contacted or seen. This follows from the conditional implication that holds :

- (32) If the speaker was in contact with (or saw) one,
 then that particular one must have existed.

Mhori (1983 : 40f) recognizes two types of circumstances where these expressions are used, which are reproduced in (33).

- (33) A title or qualification is used to refer to a specific entity
 i) as a simple substitute for a proper name, or
 ii) to put forward that particular qualification of the referent.

(33i) is called the 'semi-referential' use and (33ii) is called the 'attributive' use. Indefinite noun phrases used in initial introduction of a discourse referent as those in (28), therefore, may be regarded, in terms of the speaker psychology, as a case of the semi-referential use. Still, as we have seen above, there is no denying of the fact that even in those cases, the speaker is making a decision regarding which particular qualification to opt for.

(33 ii) is more of a case of deliberate obscuring of the identity of the referent. If a sentence of (31) type is uttered under the circumstance of (33 ii), then the speaker's communicative intent is to impress the hearer—often to send the metamessage that he (=the speaker) is one up on him (=the hearer). The famous 'doctor story', cited in R. Lakoff (1975), is an illumination of a misconception that a noun may provoke. It goes like this: A father and a son got involved in a traffic accident. They were taken to a hospital. The doctor in the intensive care unit saw the boy and exclaimed, "My God! He is my son!" To most people this story is incomprehensible, simply because it never occurs to them that the doctor is the mother of the boy. The concept that a doctor is a man is definitely not a part of its semantics but a creation of a human society. It is often the case with an attributively used noun that not only its semantics but socially attributed images of this kind send out powerful metamessages.

The following passages, cited from Mhori (1983 : 43), each contains an attributively used indefinite noun phrase, which provides a unique discourse-pragmatic effect.

- (34) a . Scoundrel ! He is not altogether guiltless in this illness of mine ; and that I had a great mind to tell him. But alas! how could I offend *a man who was charitable enough to sit at my bedside*. . . ? —E. Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*
 b . I shall be sorry to lose you ; but since you cannot stay longer in *a house where you have been insulted*, I shall wish you goodbye, and I promise you to make the General smart for his behaviour. —R. L. Stevenson, *The Rajah's Diamond*

(34a) and (34b) each contains a (heavily modified) indefinite noun phrase, which formally denotes a generic set. In (34a) it is the set of *a man who was charitable enough to sit at my bedside* and in (34b) it is the set of *a house where you have been insulted*. But such an utterance is understood to have a covert discourse referent, which is indicated, indirectly, by means of a modifying phrase providing the reason for the utterance. This is a dexterous deployment of an indefinite noun phrase to indirectly refer to a definite discourse referent. What is particularly notable to us is the fact that our principle (6) applies to cases like these; the speaker here uses an expression of general reference rather than more specific ones, for the purpose of emphasizing a certain character or aspect of the referent.

The following are sentences containing metaphorically used nouns.

- (35) a . That man is *a wolf*.
 b . He is in *a stew*.

(35a) is an example of describing a human subject by the name of a beast; a characteristic, which is normally attributed to a wolf, is used to characterize *that man*. Here, the speaker, instead of using a more straightforward descriptive adjective, chooses to spotlight the wolf-likeness of the referent. In (35b), the name of a dish is utilized in describing the social-psychological condition of the subject. It is detected that, of the many semantic features of *stew*, only some are highlighted, while others (i. e. those pertaining to food) are ignored. The speaker uttering (35b) intends to ascribe those aspects to the subject's state of being. The metaphorical uses of such nouns exemplify a partial utilization of their semantic features. Evidently, the principle (6) is extendable to cover this area of language use, too.

4. Affect-loaded Terms

Ogden and Richards (1923) pointed out that two words might have the same referential meaning, but differ in emotive meaning: e. g. *horse* and *steed*. As Bolinger (1980: 72) pointed out, this is yet another area which we need to consider in dealing with coding devices. What Ogden and Richards called *emotive meaning* are sometimes called *affect-loadedness*. The following argument is found in Bolinger (1980).

- (36) . . . We must look to the quirk of human nature that sees everything colored rosy or gray. Mixed in with most of the words in English . . . and very likely every other language . . . is some taint of liking or disliking. The psychologist Charles

Osgood and his associates call this EVALUATION. Many concepts come in both shades, producing cluster of synonyms and antonyms, almost cell-like in the assemblies they seem to form in our brains. The popular expression is that words are LOADED. . . (Bolinger, 1980 : 72)

Technically, affect-loaded words are called *euphemistic* or *dysphemistic*. The choice of new names for occupations once regarded as lowly as in the following list is normally accepted at face value—to the benefit of those labeled by them.

(37) OLD	NEW
farmer	agriculturist
garbage collector	sanitation engineer
janitor	custodian
undertaker	mortician, funeral director
money handler	financier
tradesman	businessman

All these new names are thought to picture what they designate in a much more favorable way than the old worn-out ones.

Terms of endearment and epithets we have looked at in the previous section fall under the category of *affect-loaded* words, since they serve to attribute the speaker's emotive attitude toward the referents.

5. Postscript

In the linguistic literature, the question of the attributive aspect of noun use is not often discussed. Linguists are usually concerned with questions of referentiality and definiteness. The question of discourse functions of noun phrases, though it sometimes arises, is usually discarded as pragmatic. Kuno (1970) is one of the earliest works on different functions of non-referring noun phrases. He points out that :

- (38) Noun phrases can be, among others, either property noun phrases, noun phrases of non-specific reference, noun phrases of specific reference, or generic. They will henceforth be referred to as [+ qualitative], [− specific], [+ specific] and [+ generic], respectively. (Kuno, 1970 : 361)

His classification is not based on semantics or pragmatics but on syntax ; these noun phrases are distinguished at a stage in the syntactic derivation of sentences. Our argument in this paper indicates that such differences originate in semantics and pragmatics and that (38) should not be seen as a categorical classification of noun phrase types.

We have pointed out that referentiality and definiteness are properties of noun phrases but that attributiveness originates in nouns. The attributive function of a noun phrase arises from an interplay of the information conveyed by the head noun (with or without modifier) and a number of pragmatic factors. The choice of a noun largely depends on and is determined by the speaker's cognition of the world around his mental

attitude toward the discourse entities. We have looked at many cases where suppression of some features puts forward a certain specific (real or imagined) attribute of the referent. There are many other areas we have not explored, such as the use of generic noun phrases and conventionalized idiomatic expressions, where the speaker's psychology and attitude may play little or no role. The points I have made here may be sketchy and lack a satisfactory theoretical ground but the analysis I have presented shall mark a step toward a semantico-pragmatic theory of code choice.

Notes

- 1) For the notion of semantic field, cf. Lyons (1977 : 250f).
- 2) Cf. Leech (1983 : 91).
- 3) *Smith's murderer* is a definite noun phrase, though it does not contain the definite article.
- 4) Cf. Leech (1983. 11).

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