

That Kind-of Demonstrative: A Semantic Analysis of English Demonstratives

This paper presents a new analysis of English demonstratives that explains the similarities and differences between demonstratives and other types of definite expressions. It also accounts for the demonstrative's various uses (anaphoric, deictic and descriptive). The aim is to answer two questions: *What do demonstratives refer to? How does that differ from other definite expressions?*

Previous literature (Ahn, 2019; Nowak, 2021; Wolter, 2003) observes that, similarly to expressions introduced by 'the' (i.e. definite descriptions), demonstrative phrases typically refer to unique entities. However, many (Nowak, 2021; Reimer, 1991; Wolter, 2003) have noted that demonstratives also carry an anti-uniqueness requirement, where demonstrative phrases of the 'that N' type require that there be more than one entity of which N is true in the context of utterance.

- (1) I saw the cat yesterday. (=there is one unique cat)
- (2) I saw that cat (with no tail) yesterday. (=there are multiple cats, one of which has no tail)

Following Elbourne (2006), recent theories account for the uniqueness requirement in 'that' and 'the' by proposing that the demonstrative has the definite article as one of its components so that 'that N' is equivalent to 'the x that is N and G' where G may be a deictic gesture, a relative clause, or an index. By contrast, these theories disagree on how to account for the anti-uniqueness requirement. For Nowak (2021), demonstratives presuppose that the intersection of $N(x)$ and $G(x)$ is a proper subset of $N(x)$. Thus, there must exist objects that are N but not G. For Wolter (2003), demonstratives presuppose that the intersection is a singleton set. Anti-uniqueness arises out of a blocking effect; definite descriptions are preferred over demonstratives when referring to semantically unique referents as there are no redundant arguments in their denotation. However, both Nowak's and Wolter's accounts struggle to explain cases like (3) where alternatives do not exist:

- (3) I love cats. All cats. If there was only one cat left in the world, I would find that cat/?the cat) and adopt it. (Nowak, 2021)

In this paper, I show that demonstratives do not refer to individuals, but to kinds. Specifically, the analysis extends Carlson's (1977) analysis of 'that kind of N' to propose that 'that N' contains a covert 'kind of' which is applied to the NP. Thus, phrases like 'that cat' and 'that kind of cat' both have the denotation 'the kind of cat (that is G)'. Support for this analysis comes from the observation that kind-denoting uses of demonstratives are not required to denote well-established kinds, just like 'that kind of N' and unlike kind-denoting uses of plain definite descriptions (Carlson, 1977). This analysis then accounts for two potential interpretations of "that cat (that is G)"—one that refers to the cat kind and one that refers to a specific cat. In instances where demonstratives are used to refer to individuals, Derived Kind Predicate (Chierchia, 1998) is used to shift the demonstrative phrase from referring to kinds to referring to individuals instead. Anti-uniqueness also arises naturally out of reference to kinds because the referent can always be situated within a set where alternatives can be found. Furthermore, unlike Nowak's analysis which requires the existence of alternatives, the other members in a set that act as alternatives are allowed to be hypothetical under this analysis. This approach establishes a stronger connection between demonstrative constructions to kinds than has been previously theorized and changes how we view the relationship of demonstratives to other definite determiners.

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