

# LIN6049

## Advanced semantics: puzzles in meaning

2024-2025

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Week 10

# Today

General feedback on puzzle 5

Demonstrative determiners, part 2

# General feedback on puzzle 5

- (1) Coconut grinding, knife sharpening, mat unrolling

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Hypothesis: the denotation of 'coconut' is  $\{x: x \text{ is a coconut or part of a coconut}\}$

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(1) Coconut grinding, knife sharpening, mat unrolling

Hypothesis: the denotation of 'coconut' is  $\{x: x \text{ is a coconut or part of a coconut}\}$

(3) I bought one coconut at the market

# General feedback on puzzle 5

(3) I bought one coconut at the market

What happens if one uses  $\{x: x \text{ is a coconut or part of a coconut}\}$  in (3)? Is the correct meaning predicted for (3)?

# General feedback on puzzle 5

The wrong meaning can be predicted if:

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The wrong meaning can be predicted if:

- the theory/proposal/hypothesis predicts a sentence to be true in a scenario where, intuitively, it is false



# General feedback on puzzle 5

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- the theory/proposal/hypothesis predicts a sentence to be false in a scenario where, intuitively, it is true

# General feedback on puzzle 5

The wrong meaning can be predicted if:

**-the theory/proposal/hypothesis predicts a sentence to be true in a scenario where, intuitively, it is false**

-the theory/proposal/hypothesis predicts a sentence to be false in a scenario where, intuitively, it is true

# General feedback on puzzle 5

The wrong meaning can be predicted if:

- the theory/proposal/hypothesis predicts a sentence to be true in a scenario where, intuitively, it is false
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if your theory of *or* says that 'A or B' is only true when either A holds or B holds, **but not both**, then this sentence is predicted to be false in a scenario where both of my parents have high blood pressure and I have a good chance of having high blood pressure. But it's true in that scenario

# General feedback on puzzle 5

Then, provide an account that takes care of both *coconut grinding* and (3):

(3) I bought one coconut at the market

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Things to consider: the semantics of *one*, the semantics of *coconut*, perhaps something else?

# General feedback on puzzle 5

Then, provide an account that takes care of both *coconut grinding* and (3):

(3) I bought one coconut at the market

Show how your proposal accounts for *coconut grinding* and for (3). In particular, how it doesn't run, ideally, into the problems you pointed out before!



# Demonstrative determiners, part 2

Last week:

‘[That NP] $_{\rightarrow L}$  VP’

Presupposition:  $|\{x: x \text{ is an NP in } s \text{ and } x \text{ is in } L \text{ in } s \text{ and speaker points at } L \text{ in } s \text{ and } L \text{ is not close to the speaker in } s\}| = 1$

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Today: there's a separate use of *this* that has little to do with demonstration

*This* is ambiguous in English

It is rare crosslinguistically to find demonstratives that have this second use

I'll call this second *this* referential/specific *this*

Referential *this*: characteristics

## Referential *this*: characteristics

- (1) There is this man who lives upstairs from me who is driving me mad because he jumps rope at 2am every night



## Referential *this*: characteristics

- (1) There is this man who lives upstairs from me who is driving me mad because he jumps rope at 2am every night
- (2) He put on this 31 cent stamp on the envelope, and only realized later that it was worth a fortune because it was unperforated

## Referential *this*: characteristics

- (1) There is this man who lives upstairs from me who is driving me mad because he jumps rope at 2am every night
- (2) He put on this 31 cent stamp on the envelope, and only realized later that it was worth a fortune because it was unperforated

Different from:

- (3) Edith read a book. This book was interesting

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- (1) There is this man who lives upstairs from me who is driving me mad because he jumps rope at 2am every night
- (2) He put on this 31 cent stamp on the envelope, and only realized later that it was worth a fortune because it was unperforated

Different from:

- (3) Edith read a book. This book was interesting
- (4) I bought [this book]<sub>→L7</sub> at the bookshop today

## Referential *this*: characteristics

- (2) He put on this 31 cent stamp on the envelope, and only realized later that it was worth a fortune because it was unperforated

## Referential *this*: characteristics

(2) He put on this 31 cent stamp on the envelope, and only realized later that it was worth a fortune because it was unperforated

(5) #He put on this 31 cent stamp on the envelope

## Referential *this*: characteristics

- (2) He put on this 31 cent stamp on the envelope, and only realized later that it was worth a fortune because it was unperforated
- (5) #He put on this 31 cent stamp on the envelope
- (6) #He put on this 31 cent stamp on the envelope, so he must want it to go airmail

## Referential *this*: characteristics

- (7) He put on a 31 cent stamp on the envelope, and only realized later that it was worth a fortune because it was unperforated

## Referential *this*: characteristics

- (7) He put on a 31 cent stamp on the envelope, and only realized later that it was worth a fortune because it was unperforated
- (8) He put on a 31 cent stamp on the envelope



## Referential *this*: characteristics

- (7) He put on a 31 cent stamp on the envelope, and only realized later that it was worth a fortune because it was unperforated
- (8) He put on a 31 cent stamp on the envelope
- (9) He put on a 31 cent stamp on the envelope, so he must want it to go airmail

# Referential *this*: characteristics

## Characteristic 1:

referential *this* has a **noteworthy requirement**: the statement requires something worthy of note to be said about the referent of the noun phrase

## Referential *this*: characteristics

(10) Sarah wants to read a book about butterflies, but she can't find it

## Referential *this*: characteristics

- (10) Sarah wants to read a book about butterflies, but she can't find it
- (11) Sarah wants to read this book about butterflies, but she can't find it

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- (10) Sarah wants to read a book about butterflies, but she can't find it
- (11) Sarah wants to read this book about butterflies, but she can't find it
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- (10) Sarah wants to read a book about butterflies, but she can't find it
- (11) Sarah wants to read this book about butterflies, but she can't find it
- (12) Sarah wants to read a book about butterflies, but she can't find one
- (13) #Sarah wants to read this book about butterflies, but she can't find one

## Referential *this*: characteristics

(14) Lorraine didn't read a book about butterflies because she couldn't find it

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- (14) Lorraine didn't read a book about butterflies because she couldn't find it
- (15) Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies because she couldn't find it



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- (14) Lorraine didn't read a book about butterflies because she couldn't find it
- (15) Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies because she couldn't find it
- (16) Lorraine didn't read a book about butterflies because she couldn't find one

## Referential *this*: characteristics

- (14) Lorraine didn't read a book about butterflies because she couldn't find it
- (15) Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies because she couldn't find it
- (16) Lorraine didn't read a book about butterflies because she couldn't find one
- (17) #Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies because she couldn't find one

# Referential *this*: characteristics

With *want* and negation, two readings in principle:

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Sarah wants to read a book

# Referential *this*: characteristics

With *want* and negation, two readings in principle:

Sarah wants to read a book

(a) Wide scope: a book (want)

‘There is a certain book that Sarah wants to read’

# Referential *this*: characteristics

With *want* and negation, two readings in principle:

Sarah wants to read a book

(a) Wide scope: a book (want)

‘There is a certain book that Sarah wants to read’

(b) Narrow scope: want (a book)

‘Sarah wants to read a book or other, no book in particular’

# Referential *this*: characteristics

With *want* and negation, two readings in principle:

Lorraine didn't read a book

# Referential *this*: characteristics

With *want* and negation, two readings in principle:

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(a) Wide scope: a book (not)

‘There is a certain book that Lorraine didn't read’



# Referential *this*: characteristics

With *want* and negation, two readings in principle:

Lorraine didn't read a book

(a) Wide scope: a book (not)

‘There is a certain book that Lorraine didn't read’

(b) Narrow scope: not (a book)

‘Lorraine didn't read any books’

# Referential *this*: characteristics

- (a) Wide scope of *this book*:
  - ‘There’s a certain book Sarah wants to read’
  - ‘There’s a certain book Lorraine didn’t read’

# Referential *this*: characteristics

(a) Wide scope of *this book*:

‘There’s a certain book Sarah wants to read’

‘There’s a certain book Lorraine didn’t read’

...can’t find it

~~...can’t find one~~

# Referential *this*: characteristics

- (a) Wide scope of *this book*:  
‘There’s a certain book Sarah wants to read’  
‘There’s a certain book Lorraine didn’t read’  
...can’t find it                      ...~~can’t find one~~
- (b) Narrow scope of *this book*:  
‘Sarah wants to read a book or other, no book in particular’  
‘Lorraine didn’t read any books’

# Referential *this*: characteristics

(a) Wide scope of *this book*:

‘There’s a certain book Sarah wants to read’

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(b) Narrow scope of *this book*:

‘Sarah wants to read a book or other, no book in particular’

‘Lorraine didn’t read any books’

~~...can’t find it~~

...can’t find one

# Referential *this*: characteristics

(a) Wide scope of *this book*:

‘There’s a certain book Sarah wants to read’

‘There’s a certain book Lorraine didn’t read’

...can’t find it

...can’t find one

(b) ~~Narrow scope of *this book*:~~

~~‘Sarah wants to read a book or other, no book in particular’~~

~~‘Lorraine didn’t read any books’~~

~~...can’t find it~~

~~...can’t find one~~

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- (11) Sarah wants to read this book about butterflies, but she can't find it
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- (14) Lorraine didn't read a book about butterflies because she couldn't find it
- (15) Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies because she couldn't find it
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# Referential *this*: characteristics

Characteristic 1:

referential *this* has a **noteworthy requirement**: the statement requires something worthy of note to be said about the referent of the noun phrase

Characteristic 2:

Referential *this* takes **wide scope over *want* or negation**

# Referential *this*: characteristics

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referential *this* has a **noteworthy requirement**: the statement requires something worthy of note to be said about the referent of the noun phrase

Characteristic 2:

Referential *this* takes **wide scope over *want* or negation**

Characteristic 3:

Referential *this* is **indefinite**

# Referential *this*: noteworthiness

Characteristic 1:

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# Referential *this*: noteworthiness

Characteristic 1:

referential *this* has a **noteworthy requirement**: the statement requires something worthy of note to be said about the referent of the noun phrase

How can we build this into the semantics of referential *this*?

# Referential *this*: noteworthiness

The noteworthy requirement

## Referential *this*: noteworthiness

The noteworthy requirement: not about speaker knowledge, and not about referring back to the referent sometime later

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(18) #Mary wants to see this new movie; I don't know which movie it is

## Referential *this*: noteworthiness

The noteworthy requirement: not about speaker knowledge, and not about referring back to the referent sometime later

- (18) #Mary wants to see this new movie; I don't know which movie it is
- (19) Mary wants to see this new movie; I don't know which movie it is, but she's been excited about seeing it for weeks



## Referential *this*: noteworthiness

The noteworthy requirement: not about speaker knowledge, and not about referring back to the referent sometime later

(20) #I want to see this new movie

## Referential *this*: noteworthiness

The noteworthy requirement: not about speaker knowledge, and not about referring back to the referent sometime later

(20) #I want to see this new movie

(21) I found this blue apple on my plate!

## Referential *this*: noteworthiness

The noteworthy requirement: not about speaker knowledge, and not about referring back to the referent sometime later

(20) #I want to see this new movie

(21) I found this blue apple on my plate!

(22) #I found this apple on my plate!

# Referential *this*: noteworthiness

The noteworthy requirement: a presupposition?

‘This<sub>R</sub> NP VP’

Presupposition:  $\{x: x \text{ is an NP in } s \text{ and } x \text{ is noteworthy in } s\} \neq \emptyset$

Assertion:  $\{x: x \text{ is an NP in } s\} \cap \{x: x \text{ VPs in } s\} \neq \emptyset$

# Referential *this*: noteworthiness

The noteworthy requirement: a presupposition?

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Presuppositions involve both speakers and listeners. A speaker uses a presuppositional item when they are reasonably certain that the listener shares knowledge of the content of the presupposition

## Referential *this*: noteworthiness

Example:

(23) [Context: a teacher to her class]

The<sub>w</sub> final assignment is due in May

The teacher is reasonably certain that her students know about the final assignment. *The*<sub>w</sub> is presuppositional

## Referential *this*: noteworthiness

(11) Sarah wants to read this book about butterflies, but  
she can't find it

But with (11), the speaker is not really making assumptions about the listener's knowledge. The speaker seems to be only considering what's noteworthy from her own point of view

# Referential *this*: noteworthiness

The noteworthy requirement: part of the assertion then?



# Referential *this*: noteworthiness

The noteworthy requirement: part of the assertion then?

‘This<sub>R</sub> NP VP’

Presupposition: —

# Referential *this*: noteworthiness

The noteworthy requirement: part of the assertion then?

‘This<sub>R</sub> NP VP’

Presupposition: —

Assertion:  $\{x: x \text{ is an NP in } s \text{ and } x \text{ is noteworthy in } s\} \neq \emptyset$   
and  $\{x: x \text{ is an NP in } s\} \cap \{x: x \text{ VPs in } s\} \neq \emptyset$

## Referential *this*: noteworthiness

(18) #Mary wants to see this new movie; I don't know which movie it is

## Referential *this*: noteworthiness

(18) #Mary wants to see this new movie; I don't know which movie it is

When noteworthiness fails, as in (18), we don't get a false sentence. (18) is infelicitous, not false

## Referential *this*: noteworthiness

(18) #Mary wants to see this new movie; I don't know which movie it is

When noteworthiness fails, as in (18), we don't get a false sentence. (18) is infelicitous, not false

If we make noteworthiness part of the assertion, we're claiming (18) is false

Referential *this*: noteworthiness

The noteworthy requirement: a felicity condition

# Referential *this*: noteworthiness

The noteworthy requirement: a felicity condition

‘This<sub>R</sub> NP VP’

Presupposition: —

Assertion:  $\{x: x \text{ is an NP in } s\} \cap \{x: x \text{ VPs in } s\} \neq \emptyset$

Felicity condition:  $\{x: x \text{ is an NP in } s \text{ and } x \text{ is noteworthy in } s\} \neq \emptyset$

# Referential *this*: wide scope

‘This<sub>R</sub> NP VP’

Presupposition: —

Assertion:  $\{x: x \text{ is an NP in } s\} \cap \{x: x \text{ VPs in } s\} \neq \emptyset$

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# Referential *this*: wide scope

‘This<sub>R</sub> NP VP’

Presupposition: —

Assertion:  $\{x: x \text{ is an NP in } s\} \cap \{x: x \text{ VPs in } s\} \neq \emptyset$

Felicity condition:  $\{x: x \text{ is an NP in } s \text{ and } x \text{ is noteworthy in } s\} \neq \emptyset$

Wide scope of *this<sub>R</sub>* (with respect to *want* or negation)  
follows from the noteworthy felicity condition

## Referential *this*: wide scope

(15) Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies  
because she couldn't find it (wide scope only)

(17) #Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies  
because she couldn't find one (narrow scope only)

## Referential *this*: wide scope

**(15) Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies  
because she couldn't find it (wide scope only)**

(17) #Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies  
because she couldn't find one (narrow scope only)

## Referential *this*: wide scope

**(15) Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies  
because she couldn't find it (wide scope only)**

(17) #Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies  
because she couldn't find one (narrow scope only)

If the situation contains a book about butterflies that she couldn't find, we can then say naturally, of that book, that Lorraine didn't read it. So there is a certain book that Lorraine didn't read

## Referential *this*: wide scope

(15) Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies  
because she couldn't find it (wide scope only)

**(17) #Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies  
because she couldn't find one (narrow scope only)**

## Referential *this*: wide scope

(15) Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies  
because she couldn't find it (wide scope only)

**(17) #Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies  
because she couldn't find one (narrow scope only)**

“Lorraine didn't read a certain book about butterflies  
because she couldn't find any books about butterflies”

## Referential *this*: wide scope

(15) Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies  
because she couldn't find it (wide scope only)

**(17) #Lorraine didn't read this book about butterflies  
because she couldn't find one (narrow scope only)**

“Lorraine didn't read a certain book about butterflies  
because she couldn't find any books about butterflies”—  
we haven't added anything noteworthy about a specific  
book, we've only added something general about Lorraine  
and books about butterflies

# Referential *this*: wide scope

‘This<sub>R</sub> NP VP’

Presupposition: —

Assertion:  $\{x: x \text{ is an NP in } s\} \cap \{x: x \text{ VPs in } s\} \neq \emptyset$

Felicity condition:  $\{x: x \text{ is an NP in } s \text{ and } x \text{ is noteworthy in } s\} \neq \emptyset$



# Referential *this*

Puzzle 7: specificity in Atara Imere