Demonstratives and Direct Reference

I. Uses of demonstrative NPs

Canonical uses of dedicated demonstratives: [usually accompanied by deictic gesture]
(1) [holding up an Adena Indian artifact from 200BC:] This is beautiful craftsmanship.
(2) [pointing at some stuffed peppers in a restaurant display case:] Those look particularly delicious.
(3) [salesman on a car lot, nodding in the direction of a nearby cluster of trucks:] These vehicles have four-wheel drive.
(4) [policeman, pointing in the direction of a man running through a crowd:] Stop that man!

When a demonstrated entity is human, or sufficiently human-like that use of an accompanying grammatically neuter pronominal form would seem odd, pronominal this and that are replaced by s/he, pronominal these and those by they.

Textual Deixis: [optional deictic gesture in some cases] (Roberts 2003)
(5) This sentence is short.

Discourse Deixis: [deictic gesture not possible] (Roberts 2003)
(23) Melanctha has a dog and a cat. The latter is her favorite, but the former is more loyal.

(6) I saw one quilt which was quite abstract, with lots of asymmetric diagonals. Another one was more traditional, worked in an old Amish pattern. This quilt was less busy than the other, but just as bold.

cf.:
(6') I saw one quilt which was quite abstract, with lots of asymmetric diagonals. Another one was more traditional, worked in an old Amish pattern. #The quilt was less busy than the other, but just as bold.

So far as I know, most (?)all languages make some use of the distinction between proximal and non-proximal in demonstrative reference, and in some, the distinction is refined even further. For example, in Japanese this is a three-way distinction, as we see in kono, 'this', sono 'that', and ano 'that over there'. And consider the different distinction in Spanish (Gutiérrez-Rexach) between este, ese and aquel.

E-type:
(7) The Russians had allowed few pieces from their collection to go on show in the West, but these were the highpoint of the exhibition. (Maclaran 1982)

Bound Variable:
(8) Every dog in my neighborhood, even the meanest, has an owner who thinks that that dog is a sweetie.
(9) On every team there is one player who is not as strong as the rest. That weakest member is the one to play hardest against. (Maclaran 1982) (cf. telescoping, Roberts 1989)

Narrow Scope:
(10) Every father dreads that moment when his oldest child leaves home. [King:10]
(11) Michelin is hoping to find ten more tyre inspectors. These new employees would be required to work the night shift for the first three weeks. (after Maclaran 1982)
[modal subordination interpretation: ‘if more tyre inspectors were hired, they would be required to work the night shift…’]

(12) When a professional athlete sprains an ankle, that injury usually gets special treatment.
[donkey anaphora]

Inverse Linking:
(13) That senator with the most seniority on each committee is to be consulted. [King:10]

Discourse deictic demonstratives seem to be used for one of two reasons, the 2nd a sub-case of the 1st:
1. They tend to carry an implication of contrast, implicating that other members of a relevant contrast set all satisfying the demonstrative’s descriptive content, do not have the properties predicated of the demonstrative (this seems to be the case in (6), (7) and (9), for example).
2. As noted by Isard (1975) and Maclaran (1982) in slightly different terms, they tend to be used when the discourse referent which satisfies their familiarity is only weakly familiar, based on contextual entailments, especially if it contrasts in this respect with other, strongly familiar discourse referents which are alternative candidates to satisfy that familiarity presupposition. This distinction in degree of familiarity can be used to assist in anaphora resolution, as seems to be the case in (50), while the lack of contrast or novelty in (51) makes the demonstratives seem infelicitous:

(50) First square nineteen, then cube it/that. (Isard 1975)

$it$: ‘nineteen’
$that$: ‘nineteen squared’

(51) A car drew up at the door. Two dark-suited men got out of it/the car/?this/?that, then it/?this/?that disappeared down the drive again. (after Maclaran 1982)

I speculate that the contrast involved is based on the proximity distinctions which are central to demonstratives in their canonical use, while the association with relative novelty comes from the canonical use as well, where the discourse referent which satisfies the demonstrative's familiarity presupposition is only just made weakly familiar via the accompanying deictic gesture at the time of utterance. By a Gricean quantity implicature, use of a demonstrative instead of a pronoun or definite description implicates that one of these two conditions – contrast or weaker familiarity – obtains.

Deferred Reference (Nunberg 1993)

Superficially canonical uses of demonstratives don’t always refer to the indicatum:

(101) [Context: One teacher is telling another which students have submitted the parental permission slip for a class trip. The teacher points to a child]: They haven’t signed the form yet.

But this isn’t always possible:

(102) [Context: the teacher asks a child for the parental permission form for the class trip, and the child replies]: #We haven’t signed the form yet.

See the wide range of examples of deferred reference in the Nunberg handout from last time. But two special cases are those with kind interpretations and those with quasi-descriptive uses in modal contexts
(see handout), where the intended denotatum is a kind or some institution associated with the index, not a group which properly includes the index.

Deferred reference with dedicated demonstratives brings out the fact that the demonstration (and proximal component of the demonstrative itself) are associated with the index, not the interpretation:

(43) [pointing at two sample plates in my china shop:] These [pointing at one in front of me] are over at the warehouse, but those [pointing at one across the room] I have in stock here.

"If a gesture can only be used to identify the index, then an identifying gesture will always be out of place with we, since the index (i.e., the speaker) never needs further identification." So the following variant on a Nunberg example:

(x) [Bush, Quayle and Baker in room. Aid gives copies of report to Bush and Quayle. Bush replies:] No, give them to us [pointing to Baker], not to us [pointing to Quayle].

But deferred reference seems to be properly a feature of demonstratives, since we cannot get deferred reference with it, which has no demonstrative uses:

(65) [to person flipping TV channels, as the face of a football star appears on the screen:] Don't change the channel. That (?it) is my favorite team.

[driving past a recent accident:]
(66) Gosh, it must have happened just a second ago.
(67) ?It has happened a number of times on this stretch of highway.

II. **Contrasts between definite descriptions and canonical demonstratives**

Except for the second, these observations are due to Roberts (2003, p.c.).

- Differential felicity in out of the blue contexts:

(88) [spoken to a new acquaintance, in a casual chat:] I’m just back from West Virginia, where I climbed the tallest mountain the state.
(89) [same context] #I’m just back from West Virginia, where I climbed that tallest mountain the state.

- An accompanying demonstration cannot bear on the interpretation of a definite description in the way it does for a demonstrative (Sally McConnell-Ginet, p.c.):

(15) You [nodding to Mary] sit in that chair\textsubscript{k} [pointing to chair \textsubscript{a}], and you [nodding to Jonathon] sit in that chair\textsubscript{r} [pointing to chair \textsubscript{b}].
(16) You [nodding to Mary] sit in the chair\textsubscript{k} [pointing to chair \textsubscript{a}], and you [nodding to Jonathon] sit in the chair\textsubscript{r} [pointing to chair \textsubscript{b}].


- Uniqueness with respect to the descriptive content of the NP:
(17) That student is a genius. (pointing to one among many)
(18) The student is a genius.

cf. the contrast required to motivate the demonstrative, above

• Potential scope behavior in canonical uses:

(14) Context (CG): Charles is from Charleston, West Virginia. Paul is from St. Paul, Minnesota. \( \delta \) is a pointing by the speaker in the direction of Paul, who is seated on a chair in front of the speaker:

Look over here [\( \delta \), the gesture held throughout the next sentence].

If Charles and Paul had changed chairs, then
a) the man being pointed at would be from Charleston.
b) he [\( \delta \)] would be from Charleston.
c) this man being pointed at [\( \delta \)] would be from Charleston.

Many speakers judge (14a) to be felicitous and true. We can take the definite description to mean something like 'the man I would be pointing at in that (counterfactual) situation', who would be Charles. But this reading isn't possible for (b) or (c), which mean that Paul would be from Charleston. Discussing an example very similar to (14b), Kaplan (1977) notes that intuitively this is patently false in the context suggested – whether or not Charles and Paul change chairs should have nothing to do with Paul's being from Charleston.

III. Theories of demonstratives

A. Kaplan

Kaplan's theory of English demonstrative NPs:

(a) Demonstratives are incomplete expressions which must be completed by a demonstration. ..Thus each demonstrative, \( d \), will be accompanied by a demonstration, \( \delta \), thus: \( d[\delta] \) (1977, §XV)

(b) Demonstratives are directly referential. "I intend to use 'directly referential' for an expression whose referent, once determined, is taken as fixed for all possible circumstances, i.e., is taken as \emph{being} the propositional component." For such expressions, "The rules do not provide a complex which together with a circumstance of evaluation yields an object. They just provide an object." "the semantical rules...provide[e] a way of determining the actual referent and no way of determining any other propositional component." (1977, §VI)

Kaplan's two stage interpretation:

• Character: a function from contexts (of utterance) to contents
• Content: a function from worlds/circumstances of evaluation to denotations; e.g., individual concepts, propositions, etc.

Proper names have the same content in any given context, hence have "rigid characters". On the other hand, demonstratives and other indexical expressions don't generally have the same content in different contexts; but in a given context, the content is always rigid.

Problems with embedding Kaplan's account within a more general account of demonstratives:

• The following, from King (2001:3-5) argues against direct reference for non-canonical uses of demonstratives, my “discourse demonstratives”:
(19) [Context: Suppose that Greg has just gotten back a math test on which he scored very poorly. Further, suppose that Greg knows on completely general grounds that exactly one student received a score of one hundred on the exam. Reflecting on the difficult of the exam, Greg says:]
The student who scored one hundred on the exam is a genius.
[Then a classmate (who also knows there is such a student, but not who) reports:]
Greg believes that that student who scored one hundred on the exam is a genius.  [King 2001:3-5]

But see Billy’s CTools Forum comment on this argument.

- Kaplan's theory is only applicable to demonstrative NPs in their canonical usage, accompanied by a demonstration of some sort. This ambiguity leaves a number of connections to the non-canonical uses unexplained. E.g., why is deferred reference possible with both canonical and non-canonical uses of demonstratives, but not with definite descriptions or pronouns? Though Kaplan might want to posit ambiguity, this not only fails to predict that we might expect deferred reference with both senses, but, as Nunberg points out, we still have a problem with deferred reference in the cases where the use of the demonstrative is canonical. There the intended referent isn’t the demonstratum, or (in the kind cases) even an entity which includes the demonstratum. So Kaplan would have touncouple the index (associated with the demonstration) from what is directly referred to, undercutting the intuitive plausibility of his account.

- An empirical problem for Kaplan's theory is pointed out in unpublished work by Irene Heim (1985) and cited in Roberts (2003). Consider her example (20):

(20) [Context: The speaker sees two images of chairs in the room where she sits, one to her left, the other image to her right. The image to the right is either a reflection in a mirror or else behind a piece of clear glass. δ1 is a pointing by the speaker to the image to her left, δ2 is a pointing to the image to her right:]
That [δ1] is that [δ2].

Now consider two different possible contexts of utterance for (20), c and c’. c is the mirror world, so that δ1 and δ2 are in fact gestures which pick out the same chair. On Kaplan's theory, (20) expresses the necessarily true proposition in c. c’ is the glass world, where the speaker is pointing at different chairs, so that, again on Kaplan's theory, (20) expresses the necessarily false proposition. But our intuitions tell us that in neither case does utterance of (1) seem trivial. Kaplan (1977, 1978) explains this apparent non-triviality for related examples as follows: The audience for (20) trusts that the speaker is saying something true. However, they don't know which context they're in, c or c’. From the character of (20), they know that it expresses either a necessarily true or a necessarily false proposition. Hence, they conclude that they're in a context like c, not c’, hence acquiring new information, even though the proposition expressed was not contingent.

However, Heim points out that although this might seem a plausible explanation for the informativeness of (20), this type of explanation doesn't seem to be extendable to examples like her (21) and (22):

(21) That [δ₁] might well be that [δ₂].
(22) If that [δ₁] were that [δ₂], there would be only one chair in the house.

Kaplan argues that the content of a sentence in any given context is a function of the contents of its parts in that same context ("There are no monsters."). Therefore, since (20) is a part of both (21) and (22), the
propositions they express should be calculable on the basis of the proposition expressed by (20). But this is not the case. E.g., consider (21). Suppose its LF is ◊(20), and that it is uttered in context c. Since (20) is the necessarily true proposition, (21) should be the same. And the same agreement would hold for c', where both (20) and (21) would express the necessarily false proposition. But intuitively, (20) and (21) have different meanings. Similarly, given the counterfactual mood of the antecedent of (22), we might felicitously utter it in a situation known by the interlocutors to be like c'. Then the antecedent would be necessarily false, on Kaplan's theory. If we take the meaning of a counterfactual to be basically that of Lewis (1973), then the sphere of worlds in which the antecedent would be true (which are closest in other respects to the actual world c') would be the empty set, and (22) would be trivially true, since the consequent would be trivially true in all those worlds in that sphere. But (22) seems to be contingent, instead, its truth dependent on other facts about the household in question.

Another empirical problem for Kaplan's approach arises in connection with discourse deixis. Consider (23), which displays direct reference effects (and subsequent discussion from Roberts 2003):

(23) Melanchtha has a dog and a cat. The latter is her favorite, but the former is more loyal.

Discourse deixis is closely related to the textual deixis illustrated by (5) above, where this sentence was used to refer to the sentence in which the demonstrative itself occurred. In discourse deixis, the relative proximity in question is that of a constituent or constituents in the immediately preceding discourse – in the case of former or latter, a pair of maximally salient NPs. But reference is not to those NPs themselves, but to the entities which the NPs denote. In (23), we have an ordered pair, <a dog, a cat>, ordered by order of utterance. The referent of the latter is the referent of the second member of the ordered pair, while the referent of the former is that of the first element of that pair. Relevant here is the fact that we can observe direct reference effects with discourse deixis, as in (24):

(24) Melanchtha has a dog and a cat, both of whom are getting very old.
    The cat is her favorite, but the dog is more loyal.
    If I hadn't uttered the last sentence, the latter would spit up hairballs and the former would bark.

The last utterance here is quite odd, and surely false: the latter and the former can only be taken to refer to the dog and the cat, respectively, on account of their being the referents of the most salient pair of NPs, those in the second sentence, <the cat, the dog>. But the counterfactual antecedent asks us to imagine that we hadn't uttered that second sentence; and in addition, the properties predicated of the discourse deictic NPs are clearly more appropriate to the entities which the deictic NPs would have referred to if the second sentence hadn't been uttered. Just as in (14), where Paul's provenience surely wouldn't vary as a function of his changing places with someone in the situation of utterance, in (24) the dog couldn't reasonably be expected to start spitting up hairballs because the speaker hadn't uttered the second sentence! What this example shows is that discourse deixis is potentially just as direct as canonical demonstrative use. However we account for direct reference effects in the latter had better extend to the former, as well.

But the reference in discourse deixis is not direct. Even if we grant that discourse deixis is based on the textual deixis displayed in (5) and that textual deixis involves a demonstration, in discourse deixis the demonstratum is distinct from the deictic NPs' referent. One might still try to maintain the direct reference account by taking the deictic element in NPs like the former to be only part of the logical form of the noun former, which one might represent roughly as in (25):

(25) [[former]: λx.speaker's_referent_for(x, dthat[the non-proximal member of the maximally salient pair of uttered NPs in prior discourse])}
Kripke (1977) introduces the notion of a speaker’s referent to explain the type of example noted by Donnellan (1966), who noted apparent exceptions to Russell’s (1905) arguments that definite descriptions do not denote, i.e. that unlike proper names, they have no referents but are basically quantificational. The speaker’s referent in a given use of a definite description is an entity (in the world) which the speaker has in mind using the definite; we might say that this is an entity which the speaker takes to truthfully instantiate the existential quantification associated with the definite. Thus, the speaker’s referent is an actual entity pragmatically related to the use of the definite description, but the latter itself still does not refer. Kaplan's dthat (Kaplan 1978) directly refers to the unique entity which satisfies the description in brackets following it. Taking the property denoted by (25) to be the argument of the definite article, the resulting definite description will pick out the speaker's intended referent (in the context of utterance) in uttering the first NP of the pair. Thus, the definite description the former is interpreted as if directly referential, although it itself is not. What's directly referred to is the NP the cat itself, although the former is understood to be anaphoric to that NP in the usual sense. Note that on the assumption that Russell was basically correct that definite descriptions do not refer, it cannot be that the structured proposition expressed by the consequent of the conditional in (24) is singular by virtue of containing the semantic referent of the cat. We might try to indirectly retrieve an actual cat, the speaker's intended referent which justifies the claim that Melanctha has a cat. But the relationship of that animal to the NP the cat would be pragmatic, not be that of direct reference. Suppose we said that the proposition expressed by (24) includes, instead of the intended cat, the actual NP used to refer to that cat. The problem then is that it isn't the English NP itself which has as speaker's referent the cat. Rather, it is the use of the NP in the particular discourse in question which has that intended speaker's referent. Can we construct a singular proposition which contains a use of an NP? I imagine one could try to entify a use in such a way as to define such a singular proposition, though it strikes me as stretching the original conception of singularity to do so. But even if we could, examples like the following demonstrate that this would not be adequate:

(26) Everyone in my neighborhood who owns both a dog and a cat tells me that the latter intimidates the former, not the other way around.

(26) presents a problem for the use of the logical form in (25) for former, because there is no way to pick out a speaker's referent for a cat, which is under the scope of the universal quantifier. I.e., such a generalization does not pertain to any particular cat which the speaker might have in mind. So, (24) and (26) argue that we need to extend the account of the direct reference effect in (14) to cover non-canonical uses of demonstratives, and that we cannot use the notion of a speaker's referent to do so. We seem to need something more abstract for such cases, something like Karttunen’s (1976) notion of a discourse referent (more below).

Question for the reader: Which, if any, of these problems argues against an ambiguity theory of demonstratives (AA), in which the direct reference theorist attempts to retain their view for the canonical uses, posing a different semantics for the non-canonical cases? (cf. Chloe’s CTools post)

B. Nunberg (1993): Indicatives (Indexicals + Demonstratives)

Indexicals (I, we, you, now, here) differ from demonstratives (this, that, these, those, demonstrative he, she, they) in that the former have an additional component of meaning.

Nunberg’s semantics for indicatives:
A. Components of the meaning of any indicative:
   1. the deictic component: a function from occurrences or utterances of the expression to elements of the context of utterance. E.g. in any given context c, index(I) = index(we) = speaker(c). This may change even in the course of the same utterance; see (1) below. In dedicated demonstratives, the index is suggested by a combination of the proximality of the demonstratives (this vs. that, etc.) and the accompanying demonstration itself, if any.
2. *the classificatory component*: associated with features like plurality, animacy, grammatical gender or overt descriptive content (*that car, we linguists*), “quasi-aspectual” features (e.g. which distinguish *here* from *hereabouts, now from nowadays or today*).

B. Extra component in the meaning of a dedicated indexical:

3. *the relational component*: constrains the correspondence between the index and the interpretation. E.g. \( \text{index}(I) = \text{interpretation}(I) \), but \( \text{index}(we) \in \text{interpretation}(we) \).

So, though the index associated with a given use of an indexical may, as required by the relational component, determine the interpretation (in a context) for some, notably \( I \), this is not so for all. E.g.:

\[
\text{(11)} \quad \text{Whenever a pianist comes to visit, we play duets.} \quad \text{[Partee 1989]}
\]

\[
\text{(11')} \quad \text{Whenever one of your pianist friends come over, you play duets.} \quad \text{[CR variant]}
\]

But the relational component of the meaning of *we* does have consequences for deferred reference: Since it requires that the demonstratum be part of the interpretation (or denotation) intended on any given occasion of use, (102) (above) is infelicitous on the intended interpretation: The child isn’t one of those authorized to sign the form. Hence, the relational component restricts the occurrence of deferred reference in such cases. In contrast, demonstrative uses of third person pronouns have no explicit relational component, so that the demonstratum (the child in (111) needn’t be a member of the group denoted (the parents in this case).

But note that deferred reference is possible with *we*, e.g. with the kind interpretation cited above.

Nunberg emphasizes that "[T]he truth-conditions associated with any utterance containing the pronoun are always underspecified by the semantic rules of the language": “there are no pure indexicals”. I.e., the interpretation of an indexical (even a dedicated one like *we*) on a given occasion is a function of:

- the speaker's intentions
- the conversational purposes
- the linguistic context

And these may change even within an utterance:

\[
\text{(113)} \quad \text{We, do not know much about this part of the brain, which plays such an important part in our lives, but we will see in the next chapter... [Nunberg, “drawn from a biology text”]}
\]

a) scientific community  
b) humanity  
c) author and readers, the "tour guide" convention of academic writing

But the index is the same in all three, always the speaker.

Problems: This isn’t a very precise theory, and makes no predications about how demonstratives work under quantification, modality, etc.

C. King: Complex demonstratives (demonstrative descriptions) as quantificational NPs

King focuses on four kinds of uses of demonstratives that are problematic for the direct reference theorist:

1. NDNS uses of demonstratives: cases where there is *No Demonstration and No Speaker’s Referent*. cf. (6), (7) above.
2. QI (quantifying in) uses: cf. (8) and (10) above.
3. NS (narrow scope) uses, including the inverse linking cases. Cf. (12), (13); and (under certain assumptions that King might not concur with) (9) (telescoping) and (11) (modal
subordination), which would be E-type cases were they pronominal, but under the scope of a higher operator.

4. Bach-Peters sentences (pp.12ff), his (11), (11a), (11b): These lead to a circularity in the attempt to determine the referents of the demonstratives, each dependent on the other.

Assuming that a unified account is desirable, he must account for why demonstrations are canonically associated with demonstratives, even if not a central part of their conventional semantics: “I hold that it is the intentions speakers have in using ‘that’ phrases, and not the demonstrations that are manifestations of those intentions, that are relevant to the semantics of ‘that’ phrases.” Three kinds of relevant intentions:

- perceptual: the thing one intends to talk about is the object of the perceptual intention.
- a past perceptual intention
- a descriptive intention: “there is a property or conjunction of properties C such that the speaker intends to say something about whatever possesses C.”

The meaning of that involves contextual resolution of its relation to such properties, yielding the usual two-place quantificational relation. I.e., it displays restricted quantification, as is generally the case for quantificational determiners (cross-linguistically).

Besides exploring quantificational examples of demonstrative descriptions, he argues (p.39f) that not all uses of demonstratives are rigid (unlike (14)). I’ve modified his (24) with the addition of necessarily:

(24’) Every university professor necessarily cherishes that first publication of hers.

Two kinds of intentions that a speaker may hold in uttering a complex demonstrative:

1. a perceptual intention to refer to some perceived object b, typically leads to rigid designation.
2. a descriptive intention, to refer to whatever satisfies some property or properties; typically not rigid.

The lexical meaning of ‘that’ is a four-place relation: (pp.43-4)

\[
\_1 \text{ and } \_2 \text{ are uniquely } \_3 \text{ in an object } x \text{ and } x \text{ is } \_4.
\]

where the parameters are:

- 1: a property of individuals: “the predicative material combined with that” [i.e., the CN, if any]
- 2: a property of individuals which restricts the quantification; determined by speakers’ intentions:
  - perceptual intention whose object is b: being identical to b
  - descriptive intention to talk about “whatever satisfies some property or conjunction of properties O*: O* may be “redundant”, i.e. adding no new content
- 3: a property determined by speakers’ intentions:
  - perceptual intention: property of jointly instantiating properties 1 and 2 in w,t (the w,t of the context of utterance) [gives the effect of rigidity across other worlds, as for (14)]
  - descriptive intention: property of jointly instantiating properties 1 and 2. [no intention to track a particular thing across worlds/times]
- 4: a property of individuals, denoted by the predicate applied to this NP
Compare with the usual semantics/pragmatics of quantificational NPs:

Every A Bs. ‘every contextually-relevant A1 has property B4’

So the innovation here, what distinguishes demonstratives per King, is the 3rd parameter of context sensitivity, which determines whether the demonstrative will be rigid (if canonical, used with a demonstrative) or not (if descriptive, as in discourse deixis).

Commentary on King:

His emphasis on intentions as determining the properties which determine the uniquely intended “referent” seems quite correct. Cf. the following examples and discussion from a ms. of mine on Retrievability:

[Often,] discourse goals and other means of increasing salience interact to define the attentional field, the Relevant discourse referents, making it possible for a hearer to Retrieve the intended referent for an anaphoric element. We see this in the following examples (6) and (7), an intentional minimal pair:

(6) Tim and Margaret are sitting at a conference table in her psycholinguistics lab, working on a grant proposal. Tim is making notes on his Compaq-brand laptop.
Margaret: How do you like your Compaq?
Tim: It’s not bad, but it’s getting kind of old. I wish I had a Mac. Macs are far better for graphics, and it turns out that I’m doing a lot more graphics than I’d expected.
Margaret: [gesturing with her thumb over her shoulder, in the direction of her desk in the middle of the room] I just got that last year.
In the direction Margaret is pointing there’s a lot of stuff: a desk with a big pile of papers and a flat screen Dell computer monitor on it, past the desk an eye-tracker, past that a wall calendar.

Even though Margaret’s gesture is vague, in that:
(a) even from her perspective it doesn’t uniquely pick out the monitor, and
(b) Tim has a slightly different perspective than hers anyway, because he is sitting two feet to the south, so that he couldn’t say exactly which thing is at the end of the trajectory from Margaret’s shoulder through her index finger to the desk-area,
still, Tim has no difficulty picking out the monitor as the entity demonstrated—and hence the computer of which it is part as the intended referent—because the question Margaret asked at the outset made the computer the only entity in the direction indicated that was relevant to their discussion.

But in the same concrete situation of utterance, with a different QUD, a different interpretation is retrieved:

(7) Same situation of utterance
Margaret: How do you like your Compaq?
Tim: It’s not bad, but it’s getting kind of old. Anyway, let’s get back to business. What do you think of this budget?
Margaret: [gesturing with her thumb toward the middle of the room] Could we add some money to replace that?
Note that in (7) the demonstrative *that* is closer in actual word-count to both the question Margaret originally asked about Tim’s computer, and to Tim’s last mention of a computer. Yet here, because the question under discussion has switched, one naturally takes the demonstrative to refer not to the computer, but to the eye-tracker. It is the latter that is relevant for the proposed budget, and hence relevant to the question Tim has raised.

Such examples argue that intention recognition is both central to grasping what the speaker wishes to draw the addressee’s attention to, the demonstratum, and also that it is presupposed by her in so demonstrating. But note that though on King’s account much of the conventional content of *that* (or any other demonstrative determiner) on his account could be said to be presuppositional: i.e. demonstratives are highly “context sensitive”—they do not have familiarity presuppositions. Apart from the contextual parameters which restrict the domain of the operator and determine its demonstrative content (if any) and rigidity, the content of a demonstrative is proffered (parameter 4 being proffered by the explicit predicate).

**Problems:** King’s view:

a) predicts that demonstratives can be used descriptively out of the blue (in the “redundant” case involving intention 2), just like informative definite descriptions, thus failing to predict the differential acceptability of (88) and (89).

b) fails to capture the tight relationship between demonstrations and demonstratives, again failing to distinguish in this respect between demonstratives and definite descriptions, e.g., in McConnell-Ginet’s (15)/(16).

c) fails to grasp that we can get direct referentiality in the appropriate cases (including those canonically accompanied by a gestural demonstration) by satisfying a familiarity presupposition associated with the demonstrative either globally (the “rigid” interpretation) or non-globally (the non-rigid interpretation).

d) effectively makes demonstratives like Russellian definites in having semantic uniqueness as part of their proffered content, via the uniqueness requirement. In the quantificational cases, this will yield exactly the same kinds of problems that we saw in donkey sentences for the E-type approach, which led to minimal situations (with all the headaches they bring along).

e) predicts that you cannot have non-rigid interpretations of examples involving a demonstration. But I think this is not the case. Nunberg gives examples where canonical uses have a deferred interpretation, and in at least one of these, the resulting interpretation needn’t be rigid. I.e., he claims that his (18) (with a “quasi-definite” interpretation) is ambiguous in the same way as (20):

(18) [spoken by Supreme Court Justice O’Connor:] We might have been liberals.

(20) The Justices of the Supreme Court might have been liberals.

ambiguous:

- the actual Court members might have been liberals
- the Court might have been made up of liberals instead, if Democrats had won the last few presidential elections. . .
Bibliography:


