

# Associative anaphora and part–whole relationship: The condition of alienation and the principle of ontological congruence

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to give an answer to the problem raised by the analysis of the relation which holds between the two referents involved in an associative anaphor. By starting with restricted facts over the phenomenon, we try to show that two factors are working in the mechanism of the relation: a condition of *alienation* and the *principle of ontological congruence*. These two factors explain in a novel and stimulating fashion why the utterances: ?*Pierre a exposé son dernier tableau. La beauté* (= la beauté du tableau) *est fascinante*. [Pierre exhibited his latest painting. The beauty (= the beauty of the painting) was fascinating.], ?*Max entre. Les yeux* (= les yeux de Max) *sont hors de leur orbite*. [Max comes in. The eyes (= Max's eyes) are out of their sockets] and ?*Paul ouvre la commode. Le bois* (= le bois de la commode) *était polychrome*. [Paul opened the chest-of-drawers. The wood (= the wood of the chest) was polychrome] are considered deviant, whereas the sequences: *Paul lava la voiture, mais oublia le capot* (= le capot de la voiture). [Paul washed the car but forgot the bonnet (= the bonnet of the car)] and *Max entre, les yeux brillants*. [Max comes in, the eyes shining] are considered well-formed. © 1999 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

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## 1. Introduction

Associative anaphora is a type of indirect textual reference whereby a new referent is introduced as an anaphoric not of but via the referent of an antecedent expression (Kleiber, 1992a) as in the following example:

- (1) *Il s'abrita sous un vieux tilleul. Le tronc était tout craquelé* (Fradin, 1984).  
[He looked for shelter under an old sycamore. **The trunk** was full of cracks.]

But indirect reference is not specific to associative anaphora. Other indirect or inferential anaphora are indeed possible, as can be seen in the following examples:

- (2) a. Paul went to the theater. **They** were playing Shakespeare.  
b. I bought a Golf because **they** are solid.

Here, too, the referent of the anaphoric expression ('they') is interpreted via another referent that was mentioned earlier ("at the theatre", 'a Golf'). The difference however is that the anaphoric relation in (1), can be characterized as providing information about the status of the relation linking the two references involved. The possibility of introducing a new reference contained in an anaphoric expression via another reference mentioned in the earlier text implies that there is some sort of relationship between these two references. In other words, there exists some *bridging coreference* (Kempson, 1986). Moreover, this relationship should have a form of validity that is not only contextual, but also, to some extent, 'generic'. Discourse – in the sense of the need to interpret two subsequent sentences coherently – cannot impose such a connection just by itself, as was demonstrated elsewhere (Kleiber, 1993a,b). A sequence of the type (3):

(3) Paul drove into the village. **The Romanesque church** was located on a hill.

is hardly acceptable because of the absence of a stereotypical link between 'village' and 'Romanesque church'. On the other hand, on the basis of examples such as (1), it appears that this relationship is akin to the *whole-part* relationship where the antecedent corresponds to the whole and the anaphoric expression to the part.

But the whole-part relation (Fradin, 1984; Charolles, 1990) has to be interpreted in a rather broad manner to account for such sequences as:

- (4) We drove into the village. **The church** was standing on a hill.
- (5) Paul selected this novel because **the author** was familiar to him.
- (6) We went into the restaurant. **The waiter** refused to serve us the menu.
- (7) Paul cut himself some bread and put **the knife** on the table.

These examples bring into contact referents which are not as solidly linked to one another as the close whole-part relationships existing between for instance 'steering wheel' and 'car', 'roof' and 'house', 'handle' and 'cup', etc. The risk involved when extending the whole-part relation in such a 'meronymic' way is that there is a temptation to predict that any element or aspect that can be identified in or associated to a referent is eligible to become an associative anaphor after the antecedent has been mentioned. Not only would such a prediction make it impossible to establish a difference from indirect anaphora of the type exemplified by 'they' in examples (2a) and (2b), it would also (Azoulay, 1978; Fradin, 1984; Kleiber, 1992, 1993b) be overly strong as is shown by a French example such as (8):

- (8) \**Pierre a exposé son dernier tableau. La beauté est fascinante* (Azoulay, 1978).  
[\*Pierre has exhibited his latest painting. **The beauty** is fascinating.]

On the other hand and in contrast to the above, not all strict whole-part relationships are susceptible to providing an associative anaphor. As Azoulay (1978), Julien

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