Alessandro Capone*

Presuppositions as pragmemes: The case of exemplification acts

Abstract: This paper is an example of how contextual information interacts with the interpretation of noun phrases (NPs) in discourse. When we encounter an NP escorted by the definite article or a proper name, the expectation is triggered that the speaker is referring to some referent x that the hearer can normally identify. Strawson and Russell have agreed that a referent must be associated with a definite description so that the assertion containing it can be said to be true. In the case where a description does not refer to anything, the assertion is considered by Russell to be false, while Strawson says that the issue of truth or falsity does not arise. In this paper, we examine a case in which contextual information interacts with the interpretation of NPs in discourse and the hearer is not expected to identify a referent when hearing a proper name. In this case, the issue of truth or falsity does not arise, because the hearer does not identify the referent. In fact, s/he does not intend for the discourse to about a referent at all. These situations are primarily represented by sentences uttered during the course of a grammar lecture, in which the lecturer is explaining a rule of language and does not focus on external reality. The hearers are aware of this focus and do not process the NP (in general a proper name) to identify a specific referent. This discourse is of three types, which will be discussed at the end of this paper.

Keywords: reference, pragmeme, presupposition, fictional discourse, exemplification acts

1 Introduction

Reference as a relation becomes especially interesting in the context of the widely accepted idea that reference constitutes a master key to the understanding of the link between language (or even representations generally) and reality (Wettstein 2019: 101). In this paper, I discuss referential failure in the context of

*Corresponding author: Alessandro Capone, Department of Cognitive Science, University of Messina, Messina, Italy, E-mail: alessandro.caponis@gmail.com

the speech act of "exemplification."[1] Referential failure is what happens when a speaker uses an NP (a definite description or a Proper Name) but in the context there is nothing which or no one who uniquely satisfies the description or the Proper Name. The hearer, in this case, cannot identify the referent of the NP and cannot obtain any information about the world. This is what happens, I claim, in exemplification acts. Exemplification acts, are acts in which a speaker, normally a lecturer, talks about language rather than about historical facts (although he may also use historical facts). In many cases, the lecturer uses fictional statements, which are created on purpose to exemplify a certain grammatical rule, to show the students how language works. I propose that contextual information is required for understanding how exemplification and the corresponding pragmeme work, by following van Dijk's (2009) position that the context of use should play a crucial role in studies of language. In the context of this pragmeme, the speaker often does not have an individual in mind when proffering a proper name. Thus, there is a clear distinction between the pragmeme of exemplification and the act of asserting (or the pragmeme of asserting), the latter normally either being true or false. A pragmeme of exemplification is neither true nor false (with the exception of quasi-assertions, which will be discussed separately), in that the issue of its truth does not arise. This is due to the fact that the reason for the utterance in question, or the sequence of utterances, does not reach the threshold of intentionality required by an assertion. The point of an assertion is/should be to aim for the truth, to pass some information about the world to the hearer and to justify epistemic authority on the basis of the evidence possessed by the speaker (Goldberg 2015). Assertions are normally based on referential acts, for which the following considerations apply:

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In the case of exemplification, there are potentially three cases: referential expressions like proper names that refer to nothing; some proper names that refer to individuals whilst others refer to nothing; and proper names that all refer to individuals (and in case they saturate the predicates that are true for them, they can constitute true assertions). In the former two cases, the exemplification act does not reach the threshold of intentionality that is required by

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1 Strawson (1950) does not consider exemplification to be a case of language use. But I believe he is mistaken, although he would obviously be right to contrast exemplifications with assertions.

assertions. Thus, it cannot be said to be true or false, since an example, in itself, can only be correct/incorrect in respect to a certain language and its rules of grammar or communicative competence. In the third case, if the exemplification act coincides with the intentions that characteristically accompany an assertion, then the act can be said to be true or false. However, even if the act is true of the world, this does not mean that the speaker, in uttering it, is aiming at the truth, because he might only be saying something that indirectly relates to a certain language and the rules that characterize linguistic competence in that language. The speaker's aim is not necessarily to direct the hearer's attention to the world, but only to exemplification as a means by which a certain grammatical rule or rule of language use can be justified.

2 Pragmemes

In this section, I am not going to repeat considerations which have already been expressed in Capone (2005, 2018a and Forthcoming) based on considerations by Mey (2001, 2010) on the pragmeme. To sum up their findings, a pragmeme is not a speech act or a language game, but can be a more extended unit of language, consisting of more utterances which are subordinated to the same goal (see Kecskes 2010; Haugh and Jaszczolt 2012), whose interpretation is illuminated by the situational and cultural contexts. This position is illustrated and corroborated by the considerations of this paper, which help to expand the position on reference and the pragmeme broached by Mey (2010).

3 Reference and presupposition

The platitude that it is speakers that presuppose (and refer) and not sentences (which goes back to Strawson 1950) is enough for us to be confident that there is something worth discussing about presuppositions as pragmemes.[2] However,

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2 Strawson says: "Obviously in the case of this sentence, and equally obviously in the case of many others, we cannot talk of *the sentence* being true or false, but only of its being used to make a true or false assertion, or (if this is preferred) to express a true or a false proposition" (Strawson 1950: 326). For García-Carpintero too, both sense and reference are contextually derived: "It is not part of the view that sense and reference are ascribed to types; on the contrary, they are to be ascribed to contextualized expressions, that is, tokens (García-Carpintero 2018: 1109).

some scholars still believe that reference is a relationship between a linguistic expression and an object, and that a linguistic expression refers to a certain object by virtue of a person's reference to that object (see Michaelson and Reimer 2019). This view may serve to express the idea that referential expressions like proper names, definite descriptions, demonstratives and pronominals have a potential for reference, but somehow obscures the fact that reference is, without doubt, determined by the speaker's intentions (the most notable case which demonstrates this is Bezuidenhout's (1997) example, where "I" or "Me" are used instead of "The President of USA," that is, a pronominal which, in context, serves as a definite description having an attributive interpretation). In fact, pragmemes are endowed with intentionality insofar as the speaker intends to do something with his/her words and, in particular, create effects on the world (in the realm of action).

Before proceeding with this section, I need to clarify a point on which much in the paper depends. I would like to reply to an assertion by a referee, who says that while I distinguish between reference and presupposition, I normally proceed by using the term "reference." Reference, according to me, is a pragmatic act and is ambiguous between the object referred to and the speaker's act of referring to that object. Assuming that I mainly talk about the pragmatic act, when I use the term "reference" or "referring," I am talking about a linguistic use of an expressive resource of the language and the pragmatic resources involved in that usage. Mainly, this is work done by the speaker who, however, takes into account the hearer's attention and mutual knowledge. When I talk about the referential presuppositions, I am talking about those things that are presupposed and that belong to the common ground. They are normally representations of things and not the things in themselves. Such representations may include names or definite descriptions: modes of presentation, in other words. Referential acts normally create referential presuppositions, because they name certain modes of presentation under which the objects referred to are conceptualized and discussed. In normal cases, referential acts suffice to establish referential presuppositions. Thus, although we may separate the two concepts for convenience, they are normally to be seen in tandem. This is not to say, that they will always go hand in hand. To give an example of the fact that sometimes they do not go hand in hand, consider my case of exemplification acts, such as "John is crazy but Mary does not consider him crazy." Here there is a linguistic presupposition that works in anaphora (John – him), but there is no referential act, because both the lecturer and the students do not bother to identify the referent.

It is not always the case that the act of presupposing coincides with the act of referring. Some presuppositions, such as those triggered by definite

descriptions and proper names, can be seen as acts of reference, while others cannot. If I say "John regrets going to Paris," I am presupposing the event of going to Paris, but also a fact that is true, or at least accepted, in the common ground (it does not make sense to say that a referring expression is true on its own).[3] However, I am not referring to an object, unless we consider an event to be an object of some kind which has a spatio-temporal location in our world, on a par with other things. Reference normally requires transparency and the possibility of substitution without changes in the truth-conditional meaning. Some presuppositions, like those embedded in a propositional attitude (like regret), are not transparent and do not permit substitutions in the sentences embedded in them, because they are exceptions to Leibniz's law (Jaszczolt 1999). There are some differences which we should be wary of when identifying presupposition with reference, although in a number of cases they appear to coincide. For instance, referring is a more direct act than presupposing (Strawson 1950 uses the term "implies" for presupposition).

Let us see how things work for a simple utterance like "John went to Paris." If only reference was involved, the speaker, when uttering "John," is referring to the individual called John. This is the act of referring, which requires the speaker to have an object or an individual in mind, and should use a linguistic expression (in this case John) appropriately to inform the hearer as to which individual is being referred to. At the very minimum, the act of reference presupposes that there should be an object, and that the speaker should refer to it by using a linguistic expression in a particular context (so far, this view is in line with considerations by García-Carpintero 2018, who makes use of a number of meta-descriptions of how the phenomenon of demonstrative reference points to a presupposition that is only partially descriptive because it incorporates a Fregean descriptive component). In the case of proper names, the act of presupposing is relatively complicated because there is a presupposed link between the use of a name and an individual, and also between the use of a name and a discourse referent. A discourse referent is a discourse entity that is linked with an object belonging to the real world. Thus "John" refers to John (the thing or individual), while the use of "John" presupposes a discourse referent that has

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3 According to Stalnaker (1978, 2002) presuppositions are constraints on how an assertion should be added to the common ground. Before an assertion is accepted in the common ground, we should ensure that its presuppositions are compatible with it, or we should make them compatible through the process of accommodation, by which a certain discourse is repaired so that presuppositions are accepted in a symmetric way by both the speaker and the addressee.

the mode of presentation "John," which the discourse participants are aware of, and which serves as a link between the participants and the thing being referred to in the real world.[4]

It is true that, in an act of reference, substitution is licit (particularly in the subject position). However, in an act of presupposing, the community needs to know the individual's mode of presentation and this information normally goes into the common ground (an anaphoric view of presupposition [see van der Sandt 2012]). Substitution of the presuppositional act requires the participants to know the equivalence between the two modes of presentation; that is, the different ways to present reference (of the same referent). At the very least, the common ground should include the information that this mode of presentation is a means of talking about the same referent, and that the substitution has been triggered due to communicative exigencies; they need to be able to go backwards from the new mode of presentation used for the referent. Thus, a (potential) presuppositional act can be replaced by another presuppositional act displaying more or less the same requirements. This is only possible because either the equivalence of two or more modes of presentation with respect to the referent is itself presupposed in the *common ground* (Stalnaker 1978, Stalnaker 2002), or it is in the common ground that the hearer will recognize the referent of the expression which was used to replace another potential expression. In the participants' discourse, unless such presuppositions have managed to determine equivalence regarding reference, substitutions of identicals would not be sufficiently informative to provide the basis for a new assertion that is equivalent, from a truth-conditional point of view, and that does the same work, from an informational point of view. Of course, as stated by Devitt (1996), the reason for the substitution could be to progress from an assertion that fails to be informative to an assertion that uses an NP that can be illuminating and can enable the hearer to easily identify the referent. In other words, participants can progress from a discourse in which an NP does not evoke a referent because there is no shared presupposition to support the relationship between the hearer and the referent, to a more efficient discourse in which the hearer and speaker can both identify the referent, thanks to the work performed by a particular presupposition (that is, it is common knowledge that a particular NP is associated with a particular referent).

This may be sufficient to separate the notion of reference from the notion of presupposition, although they have other things in common – primarily, the characteristic that when the presuppositional or referential act fails, the hearer is incapable of judging the sentence as true or false (Strawson 1950; Levinson

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4 García-Carpintero (2018) writes of "metalinguistic senses, known by competent speakers on the basis of their competence, which figure in ancillary presuppositions".

1983). This finding conforms with the literature, with the notable exception of Russell (1905) who claims that when a presuppositional or referential act fails (insofar as a referent cannot be found for a particular expression X), the sentence/statement is false. Although various forms of contextualism have been used to explain how a sentence is asserted as true in a certain context, while in a different context is asserted as false, contextualism has not been explored to explain the possibility that a sentence (uttered) in a certain context can be false, and when uttered in a different context, can be neither true nor false (DeRose 2009).

If acts of reference (presuppositions and referential acts) were genuine pragmemes, we would expect the utterances with which they are associated to trigger different intuitions in different contexts. A statement is false if we look at the world and are unable to find some fact that matches the proposition we are evaluating. However, if the situation arises regarding a referential act or presupposition that is not aimed at a particular object (as happens in the case of linguistic examples in the act of exemplification), then we do not see why the statement should be considered as false. The issue of whether it is true or false does not arise. In other words, the statement appears to inherit the referential status of the referential expressions or presuppositions that are used in it (it can be neither true nor false depending on that status). Later, we will deepen these considerations further when meta-linguistic utterances and referential/presuppositional failure are discussed.

Statements like "The President of the Republic is wise" could be false, in the following sense. Suppose we know that GB is not a republic, and the discourse takes place in GB and is related to it. Then we look at the world and try to discover some fact such as The President of the Republic is wise, but there is no such fact. We might very well consider the sentence/statement to be false. However, it should be noted that we are not only interested in whether the sentence/statement in itself is true or false, but in whether referential or presuppositional failure makes the sentence/statement true or false. In other words, we should be able to say that if the referential or presuppositional act fails, then the sentence/statement is false. (To someone who is skeptical about this, one can simply point out that one is not interested in whether the predicates applies or not to the subject. The statement could be independently false because there is nobody around who is wise).

At this point Russellians might argue that if the reference fails, then there is no President of the Republic and the predicate cannot be true of the subject. Instead, Strawson's view is that we need a logical subject and referent to be able to say that something about that referent is either true or false. Clearly, Russell's position differs from that of Strawson's in that, for the latter, the falsehood of a

statement is based on the fact that the predicate is not true of the subject, which is presupposed (or implied) through an existential presupposition. Thus, for Strawson, falsehood presupposes a referent in the world. These points of view are clearly different, and Russell's view is more eliminative in form. In his view, for a sentence to be false, in addition to the non-applicability of the predicate to the subject, there must be no referent for the subject. If there is no referent, then no fact can be specified in the sentence. Strawson could argue that it is a contingency that, at the time of the utterance, there is no king of France, a fact which, for Russell, makes the proposition false.

Only part of Strawson's analysis is accepted because the method used to ascertain truth or falsehood is eliminative in form. When the status of the subject component is not sufficient to establish whether the statement is true (because the subject points to a referent that does not exist), one would have to look at the predicate and determine whether it applies to the subject and the referent pre-supposed by it. If no case exists in which the predicate is true of the subject (or if it saturates it vacuously), the sentence/statement cannot be true, and therefore is false.. Normally, we are familiar with cases in which the predicate cannot be true of the subject because the latter does not have a particular property (e. g. laziness) (to be more precise, even if the predicate saturates the subject in the linguistic expression, the extension of the predicate does not satisfy the referent of the subject) and if this is so, then the corresponding statement is false. But with referential failure (as attested by the speech act of exemplification which I will discuss later), the case is reversed because we cannot find a referent to combine with the predicate, not because such a referent does not exist, but because we do not look for it (hence, an utterance of a linguistic expression which denotes an object cannot belong to the extension of the predicate). This means that the intersection between the extensions of the predicate and the extensions of the referential expression is empty. This is NOT because it is necessarily empty, as I will demonstrate with a number of examples, but because the level of intention-ality does not reach the level of the assertion, and hence there is no logical operation, like intersection, that corresponds to the linguistic/semantic relation of saturation. We can assume, on the basis of what we will discover, that there is one purely grammatical operation called saturation, and another operation that is both grammatical and semantic. The purely linguistic relation of saturation works in the case of linguistic examples; the grammatical/semantic operation of satu-ration works at the level of the assertion and other speech acts that are sufficiently similar to achieve the speaker's intentions.

At this point, it might be useful to discuss Strawson's claim that if some-thing is not an assertion, it cannot be true or false, as only assertions can be true or false. This could be viewed as being a premise for the notion that when a

referential expression fails to refer (in that there is no corresponding referent), the statement cannot be true or false, because by lacking the referential link to an object, the utterance cannot be considered to be an assertion (given that assertions are normally about things in the world). Since it is not an assertion, it cannot be true or false. Strawson states that assertions are things that are true or false, and implies that only assertions are. In fact, if other speech acts had the potential to be true or false, for the sake of comprehensiveness he would have had to mention these as well. Is this not too categorical? I previously claimed that, in the case of non-referring NPs, Russell could rescue his theory by stating that the sentence/proposition does not correspond to a fact that is true after all, and hence is false. But Strawson's point is to deny that a sentence can be true or false; in his view only an assertion can be true or false. Of course, the advantage of this view is that an assertion requires the application of a predicate to a referent; if there is no such referent, then the act of predication is impossible. Since an assertion is primarily an act of predicating a property of a particular thing, if there is no referent, then there can be no assertion. Since only assertions can be true or false, the question of truth or falsity does not arise for the speech act in question. If Strawson is correct, then Russell's picture collapses.

However, we have at least two counterarguments to Strawson's view, namely, predictions and examples. Admittedly, in some rare cases, a number of examples have a quasi-assertoric status (as my subsequent discussion makes clear). Predictions are not assertions, but they turn out to be true or false. They differ from assertions because of their evidential basis. When I say "John will come back to you", I am not looking at the way things are in the world (or to a single piece of evidence), but I am usually connecting together many pieces of evidence by making use of conditionals, and, above all, by using dispositional information about John (how John would behave or react in particular circumstances). A prediction usually connects more than one piece of argumentation, it has an argumentative structure, has a compressed use (and the hearer has to unpick the implicit argument or arguments). While an assertion can occur in isolation, provided that there is no under-determination at the level of NPs, VPs, etc., a prediction requires a greater quantity of contextual information. The use of a sentence in isolation can be considered to be an assertion by default. Instead, a prediction presupposes some prior supporting context in which one of the speakers asks the person uttering the prediction to provide information by engaging in an act of argumentation (Why would s/he do this?). As in the case of an assertion, a prediction about the world will either be true or false. More importantly, the difference between an assertion and a prediction is that the latter concerns the future (although it can be considered to be true or false at the time in question), whereas an assertion is only concerned with the present and

the past. Predictions can take into account possible worlds and, above all, can relate to non-existent referents in those possible worlds, e. g. Martians will invade the earth. This characteristic sets them apart from assertions, which, according to Strawson, relate to real referents (otherwise, they relate to things which we are unable to say are true or false).

Another case which appears to be an assertion, but is actually not, although the content of this speech act can be assessed as being true or false, appears in an important paper by García-Carpintero (2018). In this paper, he discusses the context of the appellative practices which end up coordinating the speakers of a community in the use of a certain proper name for a referent. These practices involve a transmission chain (knowledge is passed on from one person in the community to another) in deference to the original act of naming something X. García-Carpintero is inclined to accept that utterances such as "X is ... " or "Let us call X 'Y''" are directives in that they guide and coordinate subsequent linguistic action. However, is it unclear whether "X is ... ." has a content that is truth-evaluable, even if it is considered not to be an assertion but a directive in disguise. Certainly, in a community that does not accept the directive, the utterance should be considered to be false. Perhaps an objection is raised that it will take time for "X is ... ." to become effective, because a community of speakers should accept this norm of use, as stated by García-Carpintero. However, there will be a time during which the proposition "X is ... " will be evaluated as true or false, and the speech act that has this content will still be considered to be a directive involving deference to a previous, original act. These considerations support the case for re-considering Strawson's position, which implies that assertions, and not other speech acts, can be true or false. From this it follows that truth-evaluability does not need to depend on whether a speech act is an assertion, but directly on success when referring to an object.

It is possible that Strawson, when stating that truth or falsehood depends on the content being asserted, merely wishes to contrast a sentence with an assertion of the sentence. Thus, a statement such as "It is assertions that are capable of being true or false" should be qualified by saying that it is the speech act which has a certain content X, which ought to be regarded as being true or false. But, without doubt, this cannot be accepted, because when we say that an assertion is false, we do not normally mean that it is false that the speaker has made an assertion, but only that the content being asserted is false. The same applies to predictions, quasi assertions, and the acts of naming things. It is the content that we regard as being true or false, not the speech act that is utilized to express that content. This makes it possible for the content to be either true or false, depending on the circumstances (if it depended on the event of the speech act, it would always have to be true). But then, why does Strawson

believe that it is the speech act of asserting that is true or false? Probably, he considers that a sentence, on its own, cannot express truth-conditional content, but would have to do so in the context of a speech act like, for example, an assertion (a position that is also reminiscent of McDowell 1998). This is the case because only in the context of such speech acts do NPs have reference and are presuppositional (as García-Carpintero insists). But, at this point, it would be easier to link the notion of truth to the notion of a referential and presuppositional act by the speaker, instead of involving assertions in the process. Presuppositions are normally a requirement for an assertion to be proffered, even if, in some cases, these requirements are not satisfied, as in conditional assertions (if someone had wings, s/he could fly). Although assertions are typically about the world, they do not necessarily presuppose the referents which the speaker and hearer have in mind.

The problem for Russell's sentences is that they do not constitute assertions or quasi-assertions (and are not predictions): they lie in a sort of limbo. However, they definitely involve things that can be asserted or said. The notion of *said* which we normally use is not very different from the notion of an assertion, in that it requires beliefs, intentions, commitments and evidence. However, at least some champions of truth-conditional semantics (Cappelen and Lepore 2005) have distinguished between the word *say*, as used in assertion, and the word *say*, as used outside a communicative frame. Suppose I were to repeat what was said by an English speaker, and I do not know the meaning of one of the words used. Then, I could report the sentence I had heard by saying something like "John said that NP ... .VP," which would be correctly understood by my addressee. Suppose I did not hear the content of NP. Yet, I said something that looks like a sentence. What is being said does not need to be an assertion, but we can say things like "What Alessandro said is true." Although "what Alessandro said" does not reach the level of intentionality of an assertion (and does not satisfy the other constraints involved in that assertion [see Goldberg 2015]), we can say that what Alessandro has said is true (or false). It can be false either because an NP points to a referent that does not exist or, even if such a referent exists, the predicate is not true of the referent. What is said can range from repetition of a message that has just been heard, to a message which the speaker does not understand a word of, to an assertion. Thus, scholars like Russell, when expressing their theories, do not need to use the notion of assertion, but can instead use "The sentence 'Mary went to the cinema' is false" as a sentential fragment that should be completed along the lines of "What is said by the use of the sentence 'Mary went to the cinema' is false." Linguistic examples in speech acts of exemplification are strange beasts. They should exemplify cases of mentioning an expression (following the

precedent established by Lyons 1977). But it can be clearly demonstrated, as I will do later, that even linguistic examples are subject to constraints on the use of language. However, if the notion of what is said, a precedent established by Cappelen and Lepore (2005), is accepted, Lyons' terminology needs to be revised. After all, what was said by using the sentence "Mary went to the cinema" is an artificial transformation of a case of mentioning, into a case of language use. But this need not worry us too much, because the transformation was obtained by expanding the sentential fragment (usually fragments that are expanded are either NPs or VPs, according to Stainton 2006, but in this case a whole sentence can be expanded).

But then should we abandon the Strawsonian analysis according to which, if a presuppositional expression fails, then the statement containing that expression cannot be evaluated for truth, as the issue of truth and falsehood does not arise? I have anticipated that there is a case, which I will discuss later, that confirms that Strawson has something important to say regarding this. However, for the moment, let us confine ourselves to presuppositions that express preparatory conditions, such as can be found in recipes.

(1) If you want to prepare good (cake) sponges, you need at least 6 eggs. After putting in the eggs, the sponges should be cooked properly in the oven for 30 minutes.

"After putting in the eggs" is a presuppositional expression (which needs pragmatic expansion and, in particular, completion: i. e. 6 eggs) that vocalizes a preparatory condition. Suppose that the presupposition is not satisfied because only 1 egg is put into the sponge mixture. You would certainly not expect the sponges to be good. But I have a problem with saying that if the presupposition fails, then the sentence is false. Perhaps the statement obtained from the sentence in use is neither true nor false. We do not know enough about how to cook sponges. Perhaps there is a magic powder which, if added, will enable the sponges to be properly cooked. A response to this statement could be that it was never mentioned in the recipe that magic powder was added to the sponge mixture. Cooks might share the presupposition that a particular powder should, or could, be added if few eggs are available, and thus the addition of the presupposition repairs the defective context, and the statement can be considered to be true. But if we do not know that magic powder will be added, then we are happy to say that the issue of truth or falsity does not arise.

This appears to me to be a forceful example which could counter any pending objections.

4 Reference, presupposition, and exemplification in the lecture room

Regarding transformations which are due to contextual clues, consider what happens when a teacher of English (or grammar) writes some sentences on a blackboard and then numbers them. This is a situation (a meta-linguistic one) in which the purpose of the lecture and the rule for numbering the examples are considered when determining how proper names that happen to be grammatical subjects (or objects) are interpreted. Mey (2010) claimed that the pragmeme of referring presupposes collaboration and requires uptake and, thus, speakers have to collaboratively select a referent. A proper name generally refers to a referent (see McDowell 1998). The interpretation of the sentence "John has washed the cat in the washing machine" depends on a rule that assigns a property to the sentence:

(2)   "John has washed the cat in the washing machine" is true iff John has washed the cat in the washing machine.

But there is a procedure for understanding this sentence and the speech act it gives rise to when proffered in a real situation. Such a procedure is based on assigning reference to "John," by linking it to a referent. Basically, the truth of the speech act depends on whether the speaker has intended to refer to John by using the proper name "John." What happens in those cases where there is no referent to link the proper name to? These are clearly cases from fables or fiction (e. g. the unicorn; see Voltolini 2019). Although the referent does not exist in reality (in our objective world), there is a second order reference act (see McDowell 1998), because the speaker appears to refer to a referent that does not exist in our world, much in the same way as s/he would refer to a referent that, instead, exists, given that s/he is referring to "things that could be taken to be Meinongian non-existent entities, concrete non-actual possibilia" (García-Carpintero 2015: 22). In other words, those things could exist in the world (and works of art) that human beings create. Cases/utterances like "Superman hit the cat" should be understood (following general considerations by McDowell 1998) as "The referent of Superman in the fictional world of the story hit the cat" (see also the discussion in Kecskes 2010 and in the introduction to; Haugh and Jaszczolt 2012; Capone 2016, Capone 2018b).

But now what happens when we return to the original example of the teacher producing sentences on a blackboard? After all, while fictional names can trigger a search for the referent in a fictional Meinongian world, proper

names in linguistic examples do not trigger any such search in the case of the pragmeme of *exemplification* (or examples in general which illustrate a point of grammar), given that the students are only too aware that the purpose of the examples is to explain some grammatical rule. They concentrate on the task and are not bothered with looking at the semantics and pragmatics of the proper name in question. The semantics and pragmatics of the proper name seemingly are (or become) inert, because the students do not look for a referent, when usually proper names are instructions to look for a referent, and they do not have access (or seek access) to a context that allows them to restrict their search. This case clearly differs in two ways from the fictional cases discussed by McDowell (1998), which amounted to second order acts of reference; firstly, they clearly do not involve possibilia; and secondly, even fictional stories involve the social praxis of assertion (we are asserting things about those possible worlds and the referents populating them).

Here, in the case of the teacher, there is no speech act of referring. The context clearly has the power to make the semantics and pragmatics completely inert, and we are fairly confident that this is due to a rule of use. It is not the case that, each time such cases are encountered, students have to determine how to deal with them. They simply know that such examples are referentially inert (or partially referentially inert). It is the situation that determines the pragmeme. Not only is the issue of reference determined by the context, but the issue of truth and falsity of the assertion is too. If students in a lecture were to be asked whether such sentences containing non-referential NPs are true or false, they would probably reply that the issue of truth and falsity does not arise, as it would not have occurred to them to verify the information displayed in examples of this sort. Since these sentences are to be used as examples, they normally would not be used as assertions (which are normally either true or false). Of course, there may be exceptions, as in the case of multi-functional assertions that are also used as examples. However, this is dependent on the context of the utterance, as one cannot say, by default, that an assertion is to be considered as an example, or that an example is to be considered as an assertion). Of course, a teacher might use a sentence which, if it was used as an assertion, would be true, because the facts in the world correspond to the information produced in the particular speech act. But, knowing that a sentence can be used as an assertion (and thus, as a type of speech act), it does not follow that it was used in this manner. It would be pointless for a student to say, "Yes, that is true," because such an utterance uses the demonstrative to connect the remark to the content of the assertion, but in this case there is no assertion. The assertion was never produced (although the referent of *that* could be the assertion).

We assume that for an assertion to be seen as such, certain contextual conditions must be satisfied. Not only should the speaker possess appropriate intentions, beliefs, evidence, etc., but also the frame should allow the assertion. A question is normally the right frame for an assertion. Oral testing by a teacher is the right frame for an assertion. By default, a declarative sentence is considered to be an assertion, provided that it makes sense to anchor proper names and definite descriptions to referents that exist in the context, which depends on the detection of the speaker's intentions. While truth is the aim of an assertion, and the content of an assertion turns out to be true if the fact (referred to) in the world corresponds to (matches) what is said or predicated in the assertion, an example which is fabricated and provided during a grammar lecture, in which the topic is governed by rules and instances of rules (illustrated by examples) is not generally aimed at the truth. It could happen that the content of the sentence (the representational state predicated in the sentence) is true (if the proper name used as the subject refers to a famous person, such as Einstein, and if such an object saturates a predicate that happens to be true of that object). Certainly, no student would say that the main point of an example was to say something about the world (about the referent corresponding to the subject of the sentence) or something that could be judged to be either true or false.[5] Here, truth is just a matter of looking at the match between the proposition being expressed and the facts of the world, independently of whether the speaker is primarily aiming at the truth when vocalizing a sentence. But no one could say that, in a real assertion, truth can be predicated when the content of a declarative sentence matches some fact in the world, regardless of the speaker's intention to discuss such a match. As stated by McDowell (1998), for the truth-conditional aspect of meaning to work, it should be seen in the frame of an assertion. In a real assertion, the speaker's intention is not for his/her utterance to be true solely by chance, but to be true because s/he takes responsibility for its truth and knows that the facts are as described by the representational dimension of the assertion. Even if the assertion was established to be false at a later point in time, the assertoric speaker would have to commit himself/herself to the truth of the expressed proposition, to having sufficient evidence for the assertion and to wanting his/her students to accept it. Furthermore, the assertion would have to be epistemically authorizing, as defined by Goldberg (2015), in that another person hearing and believing the assertion would be justified in producing another similar assertion with the same content. The teacher who merely uses an example does not want to commit himself/herself to its truth, to having sufficient evidence or to wanting his/her students to accept

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5 Of course, truth should be aimed at, if the examples truly attest to some rules or general grammatical principles, but this is a different story.

the representational state predicated in the utterance (she may be indifferent to whether they accept it or not). In fact, she does not believe that the use of this example should be epistemically authorizing.

However, we can have sentences/assertions such as in (3) below:

(3) Professor Pennisi is the head of this department.

There is nothing to prevent a sentence/assertion of this type from being used as a linguistic example (in a context that makes it clear that both an assertion was uttered and an example was produced in this utterance). Suppose that a lecturer is speaking on the topic of modifiers and wants to exemplify the rule of modification. According to this rule, a modifier attaches to an N, forming an N', and then a determiner ("the") attaches to N' forming N'', which has the same combination possibilities of an NP and, thus, can be combined with a verb ("is") to form a predicate that can be saturated by it, in this case a proper name. Professor Pennisi's students know who Professor Pennisi is, and, thus, this NP activates the reference and presupposition that there is a Professor Pennisi in their minds. At the very least, the presupposition can be distinguished from the referent insofar as some linguistic form or mode of presentation of the reference appears therein, and appears to be presupposed by both the speaker and the hearers (in this respect, proper names differ from the demonstratives or pronouns in which the presuppositions come into existence, by the very act of using the demonstrative or pronominal expression, in a form of tacit accommodation, in which a referent is associated with a demonstrative or pronominal mode of presentation. Accommodation (Stalnaker 2002; van der Sandt 2012) is usually employed to repair an asymmetric situation in which a speaker presupposes a proposition without being sure whether it belongs to the common ground). The referent does not require a mode of presentation, although it can be demonstrated by using a demonstrative mode of presentation. However, we cannot say that a demonstrative mode of presentation is associated with the referent, because it is merely a way to help language users talk about that referent. In the absence of talk, the demonstrative mode of presentation does not need to do any work. The speaker has in mind a referent, which s/he might recognize through perceptual stimuli, and of which s/he has clear memories.

However, in the case of (3) above, the NPs or Ns that appear in the sentence/statement are referentially active, they do not trigger referential failure or inertness and the statement can be considered to be true (or false), regardless of whether it is being used as a linguistic example to demonstrate a rule, such as N' modification. This example works simultaneously as an assertion. The fact that (3) is an exception to what we have previously stated is important when

classifying the phenomena in question as being entirely pragmatic, given the high degree of context dependence and variability in interpretation. Thus, regardless of the point of the example, if it is possible to connect an NP or an N' to a referent, then that NP or N' must be interpreted as not being referentially inert. Obviously, we can also have the situation where some of the NPs are referentially inert, while the remainder are not. In such cases, the result of truth-evaluation is the same as if all the NPs are referentially inert, because a referentially inert NP is sufficient to make the statement impossible to evaluate with regards to the truth. Consider the case in (4) below:

(4) Professor Pennisi talked with a Martian.

"Professor Pennisi" can have a reference, while the NP "a Martian" need not, because it is simply referring, in a second order way, to some fictional story about the existence of Martians. According to Strawson (1950), indefinite descriptions are usually referential expressions, even if their use is determined by contextual conditions that differ from those of definite descriptions. This includes the conditions that the identity of the referent should remain unknown and that an anaphoric relationship does not exist between the indefinite description and a previous referential expression. The overall result of the composition is that the statement is false, if it is considered to be about the real world, and true, if it is considered to be about a possible world (a fictional world) which shares some of the referents (e. g. Professor Pennisi) with the real world, but also contains referents that do not exist in the real world. The situation would become even more complicated if we considered possible worlds where there are Martians but there is no X, such that X's name is Pennisi and X is a professor. But now consider (5) below:

(5) Professor Pennisi talked to Filippo.

Even if "Professor Pennisi" can be connected with a referent, given that he is salient in the minds of students and lecturers in the Department of Cognitive Science, the name "Filippo" does not trigger any salient referent. Thus, students can simply consider it to be a referentially inert mode of presentation. The lecturer, in other words, does not need to have someone in mind when s/he utters the proper name "Filippo" (at this point, it could be argued that this constituent does not work as a proper name. However, it has all the features of a proper name, even if it is being used in a particular context in an atypical manner). Thus, given that the name is referentially inert, we do not feel that it is correct to say that the sentence containing it, if it is considered to be a speech act of *exemplification*, is true or false. The purpose of the sentence was to

exemplify some rule of grammar (e. g. the functions of PPs (prepositional phrases)) and, thus, the lecturer did not intend to talk about the world and its referents but, at most, about language and its rules. Of course, it could be argued that languages and rules are both in the real world and, thus, the statement must ultimately be about the world that contains both languages and rules. However, it is only indirectly about the real world because the speaker, by using a statement like (5), is not directly describing some rule, but is only exemplifying it (unlike the appellative practices discussed by García-Carpintero 2018). As an example, the sentence is not a verifiable assertion and, furthermore, it is not to be regarded as something that can be either true or false. Strawson's viewpoint about referential expressions and referential failures which result from a statement being neither true nor false (as the issue of its truth does not arise) is vindicated, not so much by reference to discussions about definite descriptions, but by reference to proper names as used in the examples given by a grammar teacher. The aim of (5) is to show that even a single use of a referentially inert NP is sufficient to turn a sentence into something that can be neither true nor false. My views diverge from those of Strawson insofar as he claims that, if something is not an assertion, then we cannot say that it is true or false, and according to Strawson, something is not an assertion if the referent associated with an NP does not exist.

To distinguish my cases from those of Strawson, my view is that, even if we accepted that something is not an assertion and it makes no sense to say that it is true or false, we should still distinguish between those cases where NPs do not have a referent (in that the speaker uses them even if s/he knows that these referents do not exist) and those which are not used for assertion purposes, but to provide examples, where NPs are used or interpreted by language users without seeking their referents. These are cases in which, uncontroversially, the issue of truth does not arise.

Now let us return to (5). But what if Professor Pennisi talked to someone whose name is Filippo, at least on one occasion, even if the speaker and the audience do not know or remember that? Should the example/assertion in this case not be true?

What is less clear is when we should consider a linguistic example to be an assertion. Can a sentence have the status of both an example and an assertion? I would not be opposed to considering the usefulness of this concurrence of functions. After all, one can make an assertion and also use it as an example. But then, if Professor Pennisi managed to talk to a person called Filippo, the assertion would have to be true, even if this is unknown to the speaker and hearer. What bothers me about this is not so much the fact that a statement can have a truth-value which is independent of the speaker's

knowledge (and verification possibilities). After all, as many scholars have highlighted, truth is independent of knowledge (Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet 1990), and is also independent of the verification possibilities on the part of the speaker/hearer (McDowell 1998). However, one fact that should not be neglected is that, in general, it is not sentences that are true or false, but statements or assertions (alternatively, other types of speech acts such as predictions).

To be considered as being asserted, a proposition must be volunteered by a speaker who is aiming at the truth, who wants to communicate a true proposition, who is justified in proffering that proposition by appropriate evidence and who is committed to defending it (Goldberg 2015). However, in this case, the proper name Filippo was chosen at random, in exactly the same way as it is chosen in an example. Thus, the claim that the sentence has not been asserted is justified, even if, at the very least, some constituents manage to refer to entities in the real world. By uttering "Professor Pennisi," the speaker has someone in mind. However, when uttering "Filippo," the speaker does not have a person in mind and, therefore, does not intend the hearers to recognize a referent, by virtue of the mode of presentation used. The mode of presentation was used vacuously. What started off as a sentence about the world, ended up being a sentence whose sole aim was to exemplify a particular grammatical rule. There was no assertoric force behind the use of the sentence, and this indicates that the issue of truth or falsehood did not arise in this case, as this issue generally does not arise in language units that are not assertions (or other specific speech acts). Even if we were to use a sentence which could be regarded as being a picture of the world, in that it refers to referents that exist in the world and connects them through the right relations, and if there is a fact in the world that seems to mirror what is being described in the sentence, unless the sentence is proffered through the appropriate assertoric intentions (that is, the intention to speak about the world, to transmit knowledge which the speaker has about the world, the intention to base the assertion on justifying evidence (some epistemic condition), the intention of persuading the hearer that the facts are as described in the assertion) it does not count as an assertion and is merely something that is true by chance. (Some modification of this story would be required for predictions, quasi-assertions and naming practices). Suppose I take a sentence at random and I proffer it (but not in the way that I would proffer an utterance) as a mere vocal exercise (much in the same way as a ball is chosen by a machine during a bingo session). It could be the case that the sentence mirrors some fact in the world (after all, in composing a sentence, I have to use constituents and predicates that belong to the language; thus, it is likely that the constituents

and the predicative relations happen to be things or relations that exist in the world). However, even if the sentence mirrors some fact in the world, it would be wrong to conclude that the sentence is true of the world because it is not an assertion, was composed at random and did not take into account what the speaker saw in the world. The relationship between an assertion and some fact in the world must be intentional, because the speaker should be describing what the world is like when making an assertion.

Exemplification is generally regarded as being a pragmeme which differs from an assertion. It relates to the world, but only indirectly. It serves to illustrate a grammatical point and, without doubt, a grammatical rule is something that belongs to the world (as a language also exists in the world). However, we cannot directly say that according to the content of the pragmeme, there is some fact in the world that makes it true or that the speaker considers it to be true of the world. The speaker considers a rule that is exemplified by the sentence to be true of the world. However, the speaker's goal might be to produce a sentence which presupposes a rule; a grammatical sentence presupposes a correct rule, while an ungrammatical sentence presupposes an erroneous rule. In this case, the issue of presupposition is not a matter of linguistic semantics. We do not find a lexical trigger that points to some rules, as we usually do in the case of linguistic presuppositions (Levinson 1983; Macagno and Capone 2016; Capone 2017a, Capone 2017b. Sometimes presuppositions are determined by reasoning, by the use of rational reflection. But not in this case. The students are able to deduce that there must have been a reason that led the teacher to produce those sentences and to present them during the lecture. But such a thought should form an integral part of the pragmeme in which the teacher and the students are engaging. Students know by experience and precedence that the relationship between sentences produced by a teacher on a blackboard is related to the goal of illustrating and discussing some grammatical rule. The goal might very well be explicit, and thus rational reflection would be dispensable. But rational reflection is one of the tools that we have at our disposal for reconstructing the relationship between the primary intentions of a lecturer and his/her secondary intentions. In producing sentences, the teacher does not have an independent goal, but one which is subordinate to the overall goal of discussing and explaining (or justifying) a grammatical rule. This is the main reason why examples are not speech acts, which can be true or false, because they are subordinate to the purpose of proposing a rule which could be regarded as being true or false.

Now, we are clearly being confronted with a pragmeme, because the speech act being considered has a holistic character and is not based on a single

utterance, but on a series of utterances and the relations between them (the most important of which is the relation of subordination). This is what Haugh and Jaszczolt (2012) term a second-order intention, following ideas by Kecskes (2010). This is an example of a macro speech act, of a macrostructure (van Dijk 1980) which requires sequential relations and *a priori* knowledge of how the sequence is structured. We know that the rule can be presented either before or after the examples. But the examples have to be seen as presupposing a rule, which can be presented either before or after them, and naturally flows as a conclusion from some reasoning based on them. The sequence therefore is: examples; reasoning followed by a generalization; a rule. Are students able to recognize such a sequence relatively easily? It is possible that they would have to undergo some training, but it is also plausible that this is a natural sequence and students might already be intuitively aware of it. They might know what to expect, given what they know (the kind of training they have received) and what they understand about the plausibility of a certain sequence and the rational ways in which it can be organized.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, I have introduced the pragmeme in the context of societal pragmatics and I have then tried to reduce a number of presuppositions to pragmemes, as they appear to require contextual information to be used appropriately. One of the most interesting findings of the paper is that the dispute between Russell and Strawson can be resolved by taking into account different contexts, with some contexts being more favourable to Strawson, while others are more favourable to Russell. When presuppositions fail, in some cases a statement can be considered to be false; in other cases, the issue of its truth does not arise. I concentrated on instances of the latter that are favourable to Strawson's position. In particular, I expatiated on the differences between asserting and exemplifying a point of grammar. In the latter situation, presuppositions appear to be inert and, thus, the question of a statement's truth or falsity does not arise. I distinguished this situation from fictional cases, which, depending on the context, can be considered false or true (they are true in respect to the fictional world that is being considered). Although I restricted my study to a small number of cases of presuppositional failure, I am confident that this paper is a platform from which further investigation of these phenomena can proceed.

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Bionote

Alessandro Capone

Alessandro Capone is Full Professor of Linguistics in the Department of Cognitive Science at the University of Messina. He is editor-in-chief of the Springer series *Perspectives in Pragmatics, Philosophy, and Psychology* and a member of the editorial board of three top international pragmatics journals. Dr Capone has published several papers in many important pragmatics and linguistics journals. He has edited numerous volumes in linguistics and pragmatics.