



seit 1558

Complex Anaphors in Discourse

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1. Definition

Complex anaphors are nominal expressions referring to propositional structured referents while introducing them as unified entities into a discourse.

- (1) *Young drivers usually drive too fast.*
This / this state / this fact / this image

...

2. Ontological Types of Referents

degree of abstractness	ontological category
high	proposition $_{pp}$ fact $_f$ state $_s$
↑	[dependent on world]
	[-dynamic, -telic / dependent on world and time]
low	process $_p$ event $_e$
	[+dynamic, -telic]
	[+dynamic, +telic]

(fig. 1)

3.1 Types of Complexation

Antecedent	Maintenance by lexical anaphors $z_x \approx x$	Maintenance by neutral anaphors $z_{neutral} \approx x$	Ontology-changing complexation $z_x \approx y$
[The Jacob-Sisters' dogs resemble each other as much as their owners.] _s	Insiders assume that [this resemblance] _s is the reason for their success.	Insiders assume that [this] _n is the reason for their success.	Insiders assume that [this fact] _f is the reason for their success.
<It> is indisputable, that [the amount of jobs decreases, while the importance of the service sector is growing at the same time] _p .	[This process] _p hasn't finished yet.	[The whole thing] _n hasn't finished yet.	[This insight] _f / [This misbelief] _{negf} / [This assumption] _{pp} determined economical sciences of the 20 th century.
[The Americans tried to invade the building but were forced back by shots from the top floor.] _e	Two soldiers were injured during [this action] _e , one inside the house and the other one outside the house.	[This] _n happened yesterday while Mr. Rumsfeld visited Bagdad.	[This fact] _f proves that the situation isn't under control yet.

3.2 Constraints on Ontology Changing Complexation

- (2) $*z_y \approx x$ if $x > y$

(“if x is higher on abstractness scale than y“)

Anaphorical complexation can shift referents of any ontological type to a discourse entity of either the same ontological type or an ontological type that is more abstract. Thus, anaphorical complexation can be a process of increasing abstractness (in terms of fig. 1).

- (3) [The earth turns about the sun.]_p
 [This process]_p will presumably last for $7 \cdot 10^9$ years.
 [This state]_s will presumably last for $7 \cdot 10^9$ years.
 [This fact]_f is well known since the Middle Ages.
 Researchers of the Vatican were not allowed to examine
 [this possibility]_{pp} / *[This event]_e...

4. Resolution and Disambiguation

The ‘abstractness constraint’ (2) can serve to explain ontological based resolution of ambiguous complex anaphors.

- (4) [Gerhard Schröder assured that [Railway Manager Mehdorn is a competent man]]_e.
 (a) [This act of lying]_e distressed the Opposition. /
 (b) [This testimonial]_s distressed the Opposition.

(fig. 2: resolution model)

5. Textual function

Once the complex referent is established as a unified discourse entity by a complex anaphor, the discourse entity is accessible by personal pronouns (as *it* in the 3rd sentence), whereas the use of personal pronouns in the Vorfeld as a complex anaphor (as *it* in the 2nd sentence) is restricted (cf. Hegarty 2003):

- (5) [The earth turns about the sun.]_p
 [This process]_p / [This]_n / *[It] will presumably last for $7 \cdot 10^9$ years.
 [It] might, however, terminate a few years earlier.

discourse level	W	X	Y	W X Y	W X Y E1
text semantic level	↑	↑	↑		↑
	Schröder (w)	Mehdorn (x)	Opposition (y)		
	e1 – assure (w, s1)	s1 – competent man (x)	act-of-lying (z _e)	$z_e \approx e1$	z_e
	e2 – distress (y, z _e)			(re)activates	e1
phase	1	2	3		

Legend:

x, y:
nominal referents on text semantic level
 e1, s1:
complex referents on text semantic level indicated as “event”, “state” etc.
 z_e, z_s:
anaphors indicated as “event”, “state” etc.
 W, X:
nominal discourse entity established in discourse level
 E, S:
complex discourse entity indicated as “event”, “state” etc., established in discourse level