

Talk title: Indefinites, reference, and truth conditions

Abstract:

In this talk, I argue -- on the basis of some involved empirical data -- that referring to something doesn't automatically mean contributing that referent to higher truth conditions. It follows that Russell's strongest argument against a referential analysis of indefinite noun phrases (e.g. 'a student') doesn't go through. Indeed, a simple principle for predicting when a referential occurrence will violate the standard Fregean link between reference and truth also (straightforwardly) predicts that the reference of indefinite noun phrases will always be truth-conditionally inert.

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