Abstract

This talk is concerned with the construction of semantic representations of utterances involving superlatives and ordinal number phrases, using the framework of Discourse Representation Theory (DRT) (Kamp/Reyle 1993). I will describe the constructions of semantic representations, in the form of Discourse Representation Structures, for sentences involving superlatives and ordinals. An important part of this task is the specification of the relevant lexical entries for the superlative operator "-est", and the ordinal expressions "first", "second", "third", etc, as well as the contribution these entries make to the overall superlative and ordinal phrases ("the highest mountain", "the first/second/third time", "the 26th highest mountain"). A crucial aspect of both superlatives and ordinals is the presuppositions they trigger. Representations of these presuppositions will be built as part of the compositional process of DRS construction. As in van der Sandt (1992), presuppositions are resolved in context only after the preliminary representation in which they are explicitly represented has been constructed. However, I will modify van der Sandt's resolution procedure by extending his notion of "contexts". Essentially, the contexts we will work with is to include also information that has not been expressed in the antecedent discourse. Such contexts can be seen as a way of articulating the concept of common ground (Stalnaker 1974).