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HOW TO REFER: A PRELIMINARY INQUIRY

*Abstract*

In this paper, I challenge a thesis well established in semantics – the idea that the speaker's intentions don't play any role in the determination of the truth conditions of a sentence, and are relevant only to establish its implicit meaning. In the first part of the paper, I show that, according to Kaplan and Perry, the addressee must take into account the speaker's intentions in order to fix the reference of some expressions, i.e. the demonstratives; therefore the intentions are relevant in order to determine the semantic core of demonstrative sentences. The analysis of how demonstratives refer is the starting point for a more general reflection on the notion of communicative intention. In closing, I argue that the speaker's referential intention has a semantic role only if it is reasonable and not arbitrary, that is to say if it can be recognised by the addressee.