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From long weak definites to short ones

abstract

 The category « weak definites» was first introduced in the literature by Poesio (1994) for complete definite descriptions of the form : « the x of y ».
Crucial examples: *the corner of a busy intersection*
The term was used many years later by Carlson & Sussman (2003) for short definite NPs of the form *« the x»* in restricted lexical environments.
Crucial examples : *to take the escalator.*
In both cases definite NPs are said « weak » mostly because they seem to lack (some ? all the ?) attributes of well behaved definites.
The main issue I shall discuss is: are these two kinds of definite NPs related ; is it possible to analyze them as variants of the same phenomenon ?
Arguments will be given for analyzing both as relational definites along the lines of Corblin (in press), and to integrate as an intermediary stage short relational definites (*In this room the door is large*). Although the main claim is that these varieties of definites are related, a particular attention will be devoted to investigate the main differences between them regarding contextual dependency, uniqueness, scope, and meaning enrichment (Roberts 2003, Aguilar & Schulpen 2001). I will discuss in particular some problems raised by Bourmayan (2013) regarding the analysis of weak definites as bound relational definites.

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