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All the Superhero's Names

In this paper I concern myself with The Superman Puzzle (the phenomenon of the substitution failure of co-referential proper names in simple sentences). I argue that the descriptive content associated with proper names, besides determining the proper name's reference, function as truth-conditionally relevant adjuncts which can be used to express a manner, reason, goal, time or purpose of action. In that way a sentence with a proper name "NN is doing something" could be understood as "NN is doing something as NN" (which means "as-so-and-so"). I argue that the substitution of names can fail on modified readings because the different descriptive content of proper names modifies the main predicate differently. Here I present a formal representation of modified predicates which allows one to model intuitively the different truth-conditions of sentences from The Puzzle.

Keywords:

The Superman Puzzle, proper names, substitution failure, qualifying prepositional phrases, modified predicates, descriptivism, adjuncts, pseudonyms, simple sentences

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