Referential Opacity in Propositional Attitudes

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I. Introduction

The ultimate goal of this paper is to show how referential opacity is licensed within the system of the mental spaces approach explicated in Fauconnier (1985, 1994) and Saeed (1998). First, we assume with Song (2000) that subject positions in the complement of Korean propositional attitude verbs are transparent when past tense in the embedded clause occurs. The empirical evidence for this analysis is based on the observation that the embedded subject position with past tense in Korean induces only a de re reading, despite the well-known generalization that propositional attitude sentences are referentially opaque. Second, we argue, in support of the mental spaces approach, that the properties of referential opacity and the existence of the phenomenon fall under this system. Third, we propose in this paper that in Korean opaque contexts pronouns give rise to interpretations that are looser than reflexives and pro induces interpretations that are looser than pronouns. The organization of this paper is as follows. Section II provides background discussion for the remainder of this paper in relation to referential opacity. In section III, our discussion centers on illuminating referential opacity which occurs in the complement of Korean propositional attitude verbs. It is perhaps worth
emphasizing that Korean propositional attitude sentences give rise to a 
*de re/de dicto* ambiguity when present tense in the embedded clause 
appears, but they induce only a *de re* reading when embedded verbs 
are marked by past tense. Thus, this fact offers a plausible reason 
why the embedded subject position with past tense in Korean is 
transparent. In section IV, we attempt to show how referential opacity 
in Korean propositional attitude sentences is accounted for within the 
mental spaces approach. Two interpretations such as a *de re* reading 
and a *de dicto* reading in the mental spaces approach are captured by 
space-connecting strategies between the reality space (R) and the 
belief space (B). Section V provides further confirmation for the claim 
that referential opacity in propositional attitudes falls under the mental 
spaces approach. Also, we propose in this section that in Korean 
propositional attitude sentences pronouns yield interpretations that are 
looser than reflexives and pro allows interpretations that are looser 
than pronouns. Thus, our claim has the effect of the following 
hierarchy: pro > pronouns > reflexives.

II. The Phenomenon of Referential Opacity

Let us consider the following sentence:

(1) Jones believes that the leader of the Black Gulch Gang 
is a sociopath.

According to Saeed (1998), (1) is ambiguous in two ways. First, (1) is 
interpreted as "Jones knows the identity of the gangleader in reality 
and in his belief the gangleader is a sociopath. Second, (1) is also 
interpreted as "Jones doesn’t know the identity of the gangleader in 
reality but has a belief about this person. That is, Jones in (1) doesn’t 
know the identity of the gangleader in reality but in his belief the 
gangleader is a sociopath. Likewise, (2) is two ways ambiguous, 
depending on the interpretation of *a detective*:

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