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Embedded definite descriptions: Russellian analysis and semantic puzzles. (English. English summary)

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The common Russellian analysis of sentences containing embedded descriptions (for instance, “The man wearing the beret is French”) produces ambiguous readings and misses the most natural one of asserting the uniqueness of the object satisfying the description.

In this paper, an alternative is suggested, but the project of providing a uniform procedure to eliminate all embedded definite descriptions while preserving logical form faces interesting difficulties. Some examples suggest that sentences containing embedded descriptions can, as Russell would have wanted, be plausibly represented by logical formulas that contain no singular terms corresponding to the descriptions. But other examples suggest that a more general procedure for obtaining logical translations of these sentences is impeded by several puzzles.

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