

NEGATIVE POLARITY: LICENSING CONDITIONS AND CONNECTIONS TO SCALAR IMPLICATURES

Emmanuel Chemla (IJN/LSCP), Vincent Homer (IJN/UCLA), Daniel Rothschild (All Souls College)

Negative polarity items (NPIs) are a class of lexical items or phrases (including, ‘ever’, ‘any’, ‘lift a finger’) whose grammatical acceptability is sensitive to semantic features of their linguistic environment. It has long been claimed that NPIs are licensed exclusively in downward-entailing environments (Fauconnier, 1975; Ladusaw, 1979), where downward-entailingness (DE) is a generalized semantic notion of negativity. This generalization explains, for instance, the following contrasts in the acceptability of the NPI ‘ever’:

- (1) a. John won’t ever eat that. (2) a. Every student who ever ate that got ill.
 b. *John will ever eat that. b. *Some student who ever ate that got ill.

Many researchers argue that the licensing of NPIs is pragmatic in nature, and closely related to the calculation of scalar implicatures (SIs) a paradigmatic pragmatic phenomenon.

The goal of this project is twofold. First, we will use experimental techniques to collect robust grammaticality judgments about NPIs. To adjudicate between various theories of NPIs, we will test the acceptability of NPIs in DE environments but crucially also in non-monotonic environments and so-called Strawson DE environments for which different theories make different predictions *and* introspective judgments diverge (see Krifka, 1995; von Stechow, 1999; Chierchia, 2004; Homer, 2007). Second, we will collect inferential judgments about scalar implicatures triggered in the same environments (see Chemla, 2009; Chemla and Spector, 2009).

Rothschild will traveled to Paris and worked on writing up paper with Chemla and Homer as well as planning new experiments.

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