**I. Background: NPI-licensing and intervention effects**

Licensing Negative Polarity Items (NPIs)
- NPIs have to be licensed by c-commanding downward entailing operators (e.g. negation).
- Non-licensed NPIs elicit lower acceptability ratings, prolonged reading/reaction times (Drenhaus et al. 2005; Parker & Phillips 2016), and N400 effects (Saddy et al. 2004).

(1) *Kein Musiker hat jemals einen Oscar gewonnen.*
*NoMusician had ever won an Oscar.*

**Wh-interventions**
- Focus operators and quantifiers intervene between C and Wh-in-situ elements (Beck 2006).

(2) *Wen hat Max niemand wo getroffen? who has Max no one whom met intended: ‘Where did no one see whom?’*

**Comparative results for intervention effects in Wh-questions: lowered acceptability and increased reading times (RTs) Haida & Repp (2013).**

**II. Material**

**Context**
For some time now, you find warning on cigarette packs. These are intended to make the consumers aware of the risks.

**Experiment 2** (self-paced reading. 45 participants, 24 items + 40 fillers)
- Intervention effect: interaction of Licensor and Intervener
  - at intervention inducing quantifier (zahlreichen)
  - preceding the NPI (parallel to Control of Exp. 1)
  - apparently contra Haida & Repp (2013) (longer RTs after the Wh-in-situ element)

**Experiment 1** (acceptability judgment task, 30 participants, 24 items + 38 fillers)
- Intervention effect: interaction of Licensor and Intervener
  - large decrease for high Licensor + Intervener
  - confirming Richter & Radó (2014) and Haida & Repp (2013)
  - small decrease for low Licensor + Intervener
  - presumably interpreting the preverbal negation as sentence negation (wide scope)

**III. Results and Discussion**

- *Control-condition as bad as the intervention condition*
- Indicating that NPI-licensing is not a necessary prerequisite for the “intervention effect”
- Intervention effect is not dependent on the presence of an NPI.

**IV. Sketching an analysis**

**Wh-intervention (Mayr 2014)**
- Wh-expressions denote a set of alternatives (individuals) and trigger an existential presupposition.

- Existential quantifier receives wide scope in the denotation but surface scope in the presupposition.
- For non-additive operators these two meanings are not identical.

- 3x ∈ {a, b, c} P(x) = P(a) ∨ P(b) ∨ P(c)

- (5) Op(P(a)) ∨ Op(P(b)) ∨ Op(P(c)) ≠ Op(P(a) ∨ P(b) ∨ P(c)) for Op = non-additive pairwise

- (6) Wh [non-additive Op [Intervener [Alternative Set + 3-Presupposition]]]

**NPI-intervention**
- Certain quantifiers may block NPI-licensing (intervention effect) (Linebarger 1987; Guerzoni 2006).
- Intervening quantifiers cause lower acceptability (Richter & Radó 2014).

(3) *John didn’t give a red cent to (‘every’ charity.

~ vx (John gave a red cent to x) for x = a charity*

**Non-intervention configurations**
- Configurations appear to be very similar
- Interveners are not identical
- WH: no, few, only, every, ...
- NPI: every, mehr als x ‘more than x’, viele seiner N ‘many of his N’, ...

**In fact several Wh-interveners are NPI-licensors.**

**V. Conclusions**

- Some apparent NPI-intervention effects are independent of the presence of NPIs.
- NPI-licensors are incompatible with some quantifiers (partitives).
- Those cases may be treated on a par with Wh-intervention cases.
- Follow-up study needed to confirm these results
- Calls for a principled (experimental) investigation of the scopal interaction of semantic operators.
Intervention effects in NPI-environments: A case of scope incompatibility?

Constantin Freitag
Universität zu Köln

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References


