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**Emmanuel Chemla** – École Normale Supérieure, Paris

*French both: a gap in the theory of antipresupposition*

chemla@clipper.ens.fr

Percus (2006) and Sauerland (2006) discuss the “anti-duality” of English universal quantifiers: *all* and *every* cannot be used with a restrictor which is presupposed to hold of exactly two individuals.

(1) a. * Philippe broke all his arms.
   b. Philippe broke all his fingers.

Both of them argue that this contrast comes from an antipresupposition triggered by universal quantifiers: (1a) is infelicitous because the alternative (2) is favored, according to a “Maximize Presupposition” principle à la Heim (1991).

(2) Philippe broke both his arms.

The anti-duality of universal quantifiers and the analysis above straightforwardly extend to other languages that have a word for *both*: Dutch (*beide*), German (*beide*), Italian (*entrambi*), Portuguese (*ambos*), Russian (*oba*) and Spanish (*ambos*). Interestingly, French is an exception: French universal quantifiers do respect the anti-duality property – cf. French translations of (1) in (3) – but no lexical item is a suitable candidate to replace *both*.

(3) a. * Philippe s’est cassé tous les bras.
   b. Philippe s’est cassé tous les doigts.

To capture these data at a minimal cost, we must renounce the standard notion of scale (a set of lexical alternatives) and embrace one of the following theoretical options:

1) Scales may involve complex phrases as well as lexical items. Then, *les deux* – i.e. “the two” – would be a respectable alternative to French universal quantifiers. Unfortunately, it would remain mysterious why phrases like *les dix* – i.e. “the ten” – do not participate to the same set of alternatives – as witness the felicitousness of example (3b).

2) Scales do not involve concrete linguistic material but rather *key concepts* – i.e. concepts which human beings manipulate “naturally” or which they find relevant across the board, depending on your favorite theory of cognition. One
should expect such concepts to be lexicalized in natural languages but, crucially, not necessarily in every language.

This discussion echoes a similar debate in the recent literature on implicatures (cf. Sauerland, 2004 and Spector, to appear) and calls for deeper cross-linguistic investigations.

References