

snippets

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A split in mandatory embedded implicatures

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Magri (2009) observed that weak scalar items, like *some*, are infelicitous when they are contextually equivalent to their stronger scalemate, like *all*, as illustrated in (1).

- (1) **Context:** *bears form a species.*
- a. # Some bears are mammals.
 - b. ? All bears are mammals.

This follows, Magri contends, if exhaustive interpretations of e.g. *some* are derived via an operator EXH operating on logical strength only.

Using (2), Magri (2011) argues that the infelicity persists under embedding: weak scalar items are infelicitous in downward-entailing (DE) environments, when they are contextually equivalent to their strong counterpart.

- (2) **Context:** *In Italy, children inherit the last name of their father.*
- a. # Every father some of whose children have a funny last name must pay a fine.
 - b. ? Every father all of whose children have a funny last name must pay a fine.

Magri uses this to argue that EXH can be embedded, even in DE environments: EXH at matrix level is vacuous since (2b) is logically weaker than (2a) but, if EXH can apply inside the restrictor of *every*, a contradiction can be derived locally.

I argue that the facts for DE environments are nuanced: while certain DE environments, like the restrictor of quantifiers in (2), do ban weak scalar items under equivalence, others, like negation, in fact require them, *contra* Magri.

To show this, I use the scale $\langle \textit{allowed}, \textit{required} \rangle$. First, unlike $\langle \textit{some}, \textit{all} \rangle$, both its items easily embed under negation. Second, it has no homogeneous competitors. As discussed in Magri (2009), homogeneous competitors, like (3) and (4), make all non-homogeneous items degraded in Magri's contexts (hence '?' for b sentences in (1) and (2)), creating a confound.

- (3) Bears are mammals.
- (4) Every father whose children have a funny last name must pay a fine.

When unembedded, $\langle \textit{allowed}, \textit{required} \rangle$ displays a Magri effect, cf (5).

- (5) **Context:** *in this dystopian regime, there is no free choice; every action is either forbidden or mandatory.*
- a. # I am allowed to vote for the party.
 - b. ✓ I am required to vote for the party.

Under negation, only the weak *allowed* is felicitous. This pattern of judgments is the reverse of (2) and contradicts Magri (2011)'s claims.

(6) Negation

- a. ✓ I am not allowed to vote for the opposition.
- b. # I am not required to vote for the opposition.

In antecedent of conditionals however, the facts are as in (2) and fit Magri's generalization.

(7) Conditionals

- a. #If I'm allowed to vote on Friday, Iris will be upset.
- b. ✓If I'm required to vote on Friday, Iris will be upset.

no offers a useful minimal pair: while “*no P Q*” is classically equivalent to “*no Q P*”, *no*'s restrictor prefers the strong item *required*, while its scope demands *allowed*.

(8) *What a terrible act of rebellion...*

- a. ✓ No one who was required to vote on Friday did so.
- b. ✓ No one who voted on Friday was allowed to.
- c. # No one who voted on Friday was required to.

Generally, for modal items at least, restrictors conform to Magri (2011)'s predictions while the scope of negation and negative quantifiers shows the opposite pattern. These facts are perhaps connected to the non-emptiness presupposition of restrictors: these environments are Strawson DE but not strictly so. I leave it open to future research to extend the generalization to more scales and environments.

References

- Magri, Giorgio. 2009. A theory of individual-level predicates based on blind mandatory scalar implicatures. *Natural language semantics* 17:245–297.
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