One indefinite scopes out of islands: an experimental study of long-distance scope in English and German

Tania Ionin1, Cornelia Ebert2 and Britta Stolterfoht3

1University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2University of Stuttgart, 3University of Tübingen

50 years of Linguistics at MIT: A scientific reunion, December 9-11, 2011

Background

- Indefinites, unlike other quantifiers, can scope out of islands, obtaining long-distance wide-scope readings (Fodor & Sag 1982 & much subsequent literature).
- Jennifer read every book that a professor assigned.
- Jennifer read every book that any professor assigned.
- The teacher put away every toy that a/one/ONE child played with.
- In German, topicality is marked by stress on the determiner: indefinites with stressed EIN (‘one’) can occur in topic position and have long-distance WSRs, more readily than indefinites with unstressed ein (‘alone’).
- What about English? Is the relevant factor determiner form (a vs. one), stress on the determiner, or both?
- Experiment 1 (English and German)
- • Goal: to examine whether long-distance WSRs are facilitated by determiner form and/or stress pattern, in English and in German.
- • Test instrument: web-based Truth-Value Judgment Task (TVJT).
- • 36 target items (6 conditions, 6 tokens per condition) + 36 fillers.
- • TVJT results: 44 native English speakers & 30 native German speakers.
- • Narrow-scope reading (NSR, every>a): Jennifer read every book that any professor assigned.
- • Wide-scope reading (WSR, a>every): Jennifer read every book that this professor assigned.
- • English version:
- a vs. one
- vs.
- every>a
- vs.
- Von jedem Professor eine Aufgabe.
- • In English, WSR is facilitated by determiner form:
- a/one
- vs.
- one
- • Endriss (2009): a link between long-distance scope, topicality, and stress pattern:
- • Different theoretical accounts of long-distance WSRs (e.g., Reinhart 1997, Kratzer 1998, Schwarzschild 2002).
- • 50 years of Linguistics at MIT: A scientific reunion, December 9-11, 2011
- • References
- • In German, WSR is facilitated by determiner form: ONE > one > a
- • Consistent with Endriss (2009), if one & EIN are markers of topicality, differences among determiners not expected on choice-function approaches to WSRs.
- • References
- • Acknowledgements
- • Data collection: Miriam Fuether & Jenna Kim (Exp. 1 & 2), Soudna Baek & Tatiana Luchkina (Exp. 3)
- The English part of this project is supported by a University of Illinois Campus Research Board grant.

Experiment 1 (English and German)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>scenario</th>
<th>truth-value on WSR</th>
<th>truth-value on NSR</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>%TRUE</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>%TRUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
<td>FALSE</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>ONE</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>FALSE</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
<td>one</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>EIN</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experiment 2 (English, pilot study)

Goals: to determine whether WSRs are unavailable for a indefinites, or only preferred to determine whether one indefinites allow the WSR when the WSR is infelicitous.

- • Test instrument: web-based Acceptability Judgment Task (AJT).
- • Sentences presented in written form, in isolation, and rated on a scale from 1 (unacceptable) to 7 (acceptable).
- • 80 items: focus on 4 categories, 8 tokens each (4 with a, 4 with one).

Experiment 3 (English)

Goals: to tease apart scope readings from the interpretation of one as exactly one vs. at least one.

- • Test instrument: web-based Truth-Value Judgment Task (TVJT).
- • Each sentence was presented auditorily in the context of a picture.
- • 4 different test versions for each indefinite type (a vs. one).
- • Each test version: 16 target items (4 conditions, 4 tokens per condition) + 36 fillers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>scenario</th>
<th>exactly one</th>
<th>at least one</th>
<th>WSR</th>
<th>NSR</th>
<th>TVJT results: 40 native English speakers tested on each indefinite type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
<td>WSR</td>
<td>NSR</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
<td>WSR</td>
<td>NSR</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>FALSE</td>
<td>FALSE</td>
<td>WSR</td>
<td>NSR</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>FALSE</td>
<td>FALSE</td>
<td>WSR</td>
<td>NSR</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


Acknowledgements:

Pictures drawn by Miriam Fuether.
Data collection: Miriam Fuether & Jenna Kim (Exp. 1 & 2), Soudna Baek & Tatiana Luchkina (Exp. 3)

The English part of this project is supported by a University of Illinois Campus Research Board grant.