

Negative Polarity Items

Corpus Linguistics, Semantics, and Psycholinguistics

Day 5: Homework 3 and More Data

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Homework Assignment 3

- Aim: Provide a quantitative profile of an NPI in your language.
- Method:
 - 1 take one of the NPIs from your previous assignments.
 - 2 collect the first 40 occurrences of this NPI in a corpus (or on the web)
 - 3 classify them, using the CoDII context categories
 - 4 indicate the occurrence ratios for the individual contexts
- Mail your results by tomorrow 2pm to
`manfred.sailer@phil.uni-goettingen.de`

Results and Problems

- Problems with the CoDII categories:
 - ▶ descriptions unclear
 - ▶ categories missing (wh-question)
 - ▶ CoDII design: for qualitative profiles in classical contexts.
- Other problems:
 - ▶ Non-NPI usage a distinct lexical item? *beim besten Willen* (*at the best will*)
 - ▶ two licensors?

instead

- Is clause-initial adverbial *instead* an NPI?
 - ▶ Pat didn't prepare for the exam.
Instead he went to parties every night.
 - ▶ Pat has to prepare for the exam.
Instead he goes to parties every night.
- Does preposition *instead (of)* license NPIs?
 - ▶ Pat stayed at home instead of going to any of his classes.

Is clause-initial *instead* an NPI?

- Licenser would be in the preceding clause.
- Quantitative profile: German, IDS-corpus, random 100 occurrences (from 10,621; all written corpora)

CM:	28	CN:	14
DEINT	1	NegV(?)	22
Konj:	13	OTHER	22
- antecedent proposition does not obtain:

Ein Finale . . . entfiel somit. **Stattdessen** stand der Tabellenerste als Turniersieger fest.
- antecedent proposition obtains but is not desirable:

Und er würde, sagt er, die US-Truppen aus Einsätzen in internationalen Konfliktregionen zurückbeordern, “die Amerika nichts angehen”.
Stattdessen möchte er die Soldaten an der Grenze zu Mexiko stationieren
- Status not clear, but rather: refers to proposition that does not hold in the *instead*-world.

Does *instead of* license NPIs?

- Entailment status: antimorph (strongly negative)
 - ▶ Peter swims instead of drinking and smoking.
Peter swims instead of drinking or instead of smoking.
 - ▶ Peter swims instead of drinking or smoking.
Peter swims instead of drinking and instead of smoking.
 - ▶ Like: *without*
- NPI:
 - ▶ *ever*
 - ▶ *a read cent*
 - ▶ *bother*
- *Instead of* has strong negative entailments but licenses only weak NPIs.
- Contrasts with *without*.
- Pragmatic reasons? (instead-alternative should be a reasonable option?)

Just because ... does(n't) mean ... (Bender and Kathol, 2001)

- Data suggesting NPI status:
 - ▶ Just because they live in Berkeley doesn't mean they're left-wing radicals.
 - ▶ I doubt that just because they live in Berkeley means they're left-wing radicals.
 - ▶ * Just because they live in Berkeley means they're left-wing radicals.
- But:
 - ▶ (So, let me get this straight,) just because we live in Berkeley means we're left-wing radicals.
 - ▶ (So, let me get this straight,) *he needs any more money.
 - ▶ Kim seems to believe that just because we live in Berkeley means we're left wing radicals.
- No NPI!

Morphologically fixed NPIs

- French: *je peux* (I can); in inversion questions: *puis-je ... ?*
- only in singular: *a word*
- no third singular form: *need*
- only in passive(?):
 - ▶ I can't be bothered to look for it just now.
 - ▶ * I will be bothered to look for it just now.
 - ▶ * My mother keeps bothering me to look for it just now.

Parasitic licensing

- Parasitic gaps in syntax:
 - ▶ Which books did you read _?
 - ▶ Which books did Pat go to university without taking _ with him?
 - ▶ Which books did Pat buy _ without reading _?
- Parasitic NPI licensing:
 - ▶ I don't claim that Sandy lifted a finger to help me.
 - ▶ I don't claim that Sandy ever lifted a finger to help me.
- Not frequent in corpora!
- Theoretical status unclear:
 - ▶ real parasitic licensing?
 - ▶ weak NPI helps to construct a context in which the strong NPI is licensed?

Double negation (Baker, 1970)

- Data:
 - ▶ Nobody lifted a finger to help Pat.
 - ▶ Chris wouldn't lift a finger to help Pat.
 - ▶ * Nobody wouldn't lift a finger to help Pat.
- Qualitative corpus research: look for NPIs in sentences with double negation. (Hardly present in corpora!)
- Intonation? “Metalinguistic” negation?
- Theoretical implications unclear.

Intermediate Summary

- Rejecting NPI-status based on quantitative profile.
- Unexpected (“illogical”) licensing behavior.
- More constellations of data that require empirical research.

NPI candidata extraction: Limitations overcome?

- polysemy and ambiguity
 - ▶ the verb *matter* is an NPI, the noun is not.
 - ▶ *bother* (= *annoy*) is an NPI, *bother* (= *take the trouble*) is not
 - ▶ German *brauche* (*need*) is an NPI if it selects an infinitival complement, but not as a transitive verb.
- reading-dependent licensing
 - ▶ You say anything, and I'll kill you.
 - ▶ * You said anything, and I killed you.
- inherently negative predicates (circularity!)
 - ▶ The proposal lacks any plausibility.
 - ▶ It was impossible to ever return.

Hoeksema's Questions

Lexicographical questions

- 1 For any language, what are its NPIs?
- 2 Are there cross-linguistic regularities in the NPI-vocabulary?
- 3 What meanings are expressed by NPIs?

Hoeksema's Questions

Distributional questions

- 1 What is the distribution of a given polarity item?
- 2 What, if any, distributional features do polarity items have in common?
- 3 Does the distribution of polarity items vary on a language-to-language basis, or from item to item?

Hoeksema's Questions

The explanatory questions

- 1 Why are there polarity items?
- 2 Why is a particular item polarity sensitive?

Hoeksema (2000, pp. 116–117)

Baker, C. L. (1970). Double Negatives. *Linguistic Inquiry* 1, 169–186.

Bender, Emily and Kathol, Andreas (2001). Constructional Effects of *Just Because ... Doesn't Mean ...*. In *Proceedings of the 27th Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*. BLS, Berkeley, USA.
faculty.washington.edu/ebender/papers/bender_kathol01