Negative Polarity Items
Corpus Linguistics, Semantics, and Psycholinguistics

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Predictions of Syntactic Theories

NPI licensing is a syntactic mechanism.

- focuses on licensing relation question
- licensee question trivialized
- big questions:
  - ▶ locality effects?
  - ▶ intervention effects?
  - ▶ parasitic phenomena?
- psycholinguistics: P600 in case of violation
- corpora:
  - ▶ cause of the variation in the distribution profiles?
  - ▶ finding theoretical interesting constructions

Predictions of Semantic Theories

NPI licensing is a semantic mechanism.

- focuses on licenser question
- licensing environment has certain semantically determined properties
- big question: unified theory of semantic properties?
- problems:
  - nothing (?) to say about licensees
  - locality effects
- psycholinguistics: N400
- corpora:
  - counterexamples
  - surprising distributional profiles
  - reading-dependent effects (episodic vs. law-like)

Predictions of Pragmatic Theories (1)

NPI licensing is a pragmatic mechanism.

- focuses on licensee question: existence of NPIs is pragmatically motivated
- classes of NPIs:
    - minimizers
    - any-class: domain widening and strengthening
- important notion: pragmatic scales; silent 'even' theories of NPIs
- problems:
    - other types of NPIs: maximizers, verbs (brauchen), . . .
    - locality effects?
    - technical problems with pragmatic operators (hidden even, domain widener)

Predictions of Pragmatic Theories (2)

- strength of approach: context effects (reading dependent licensing)
- 'ungrammaticality' is a pragmatic violation
- psycholinguistics: N400?
- corpora:
    - NPIs with contexts: scales?
    - frequencies?

Predictions of Collocational Theories (1)

NPI licensing may have a syntactic, semantic and pragmatic component.

- focuses on licensees and their distribution in usage
- related to:
  - ▶ idioms ('trip the light fantastic', 'pull the strings', 'pull s.o.'s leg')
  - ▶ collocations ('take a shower')
- certain variation in distribution is expected idiosyncratic behavior expected
- usage influences grammaticalization
- problems:
  - ▶ why are minimizers / any-type NPIs typical classes?
  - ▶ explanatory value?
  - ▶ scope locality effects?

Predictions of Collocational Theories (2)

- psycholinguistics:
  - ▸ NPI licensing violations should pattern with incomplete use of idioms
  - ▸ probably no syntactic violation (P600)
  - ▸ N400 for unexpectedness
- corpus linguistics:
  - ▸ motivates method (Lichte)
  - ▸ frequency data are interesting
  - ▸ qualitative profiles
  - ▸ lexicographic relevance

Manfred, Janina, Frank:

Thank You!