

The Meaning of Free Choice Indefinites: Insight from Czech and Negation

Since Zeno Vendler's famous article *Each and every, any and all* (*Linguistics in Philosophy*, 1967) formal linguists have been struggling with the precise representation of the meaning of the items called, in honor of Vendler, *free choice items*. Vendler pointed out that English *any* and its derivatives display some characteristics of existential indefinites on the one hand and some characteristics of universal quantifiers on the other, but they are not fully replaceable by them in different clausal contexts. He labeled their meaning as "unrestricted freedom of choice" (hence *free choice items* → FC items). Although the class of FC items is defined semantically, it is usually not a problem to associate this meaning with a particular morphology (*any* in English, *cualquier* in Spanish, *irgendein* in German, *-koli(v)* in Czech etc.). The first stage of the investigation is characterized by attempts to come with an unifying account for the meaning of English *any*. It has been observed that *any* come with two distinct meaning flavors: existential-like flavor in the context of sentential negation, see example and simplified representation of the meaning in (1); and universal-like flavor, in (2).

- (1) John didn't see any students.
 $\neg\exists x[\text{student}(x) \ \& \ \text{saw}(\text{John}, x)]$
- (2) Any student may come.
 $\forall x[\text{student}(x)\rightarrow\text{may_come}(x)]$

This duality led some researchers to a conclusion that the form *any* should be treated as a case of homonymy. Further research showed that this double nature of FC items is cross-linguistically rather a rule than an exception and the generalization has been broadened (I'm simplifying a little bit): FC items (not just English *any*) are interpreted existentially in so called downward entailing contexts (not just negation) — sometimes called as a negative polarity use; and they are interpreted universally in the scope of a modal/intensional operator, sometimes called as a free choice use. Assuming just one core semantics for the FC items cross-linguistically (existential indefinite — since the seminal work of Kadmon & Landman, 1993), the challenge is to explain some specific difference in their distribution in English (*any*) and Czech (*wh-koli(v)*). In this talk I will focus on the contrast in the distribution of FC items in the scope of the sentential negation (English vs. Czech, with potential extension). While it is reported for English that the scope of sentential negation is the most frequent licensing environment for *any* (sentences of the type (1) above; see e.g. Tieu 2013 for that claim), the presence of Czech FC indefinites (*wh-koliv* items) in the same environment is rather rare. Building on the framework of Aloni (2007) and the account for similar phenomena of Pereltsvaig (2006), I will argue that Czech FC indefinites (and not English *any*) are banned out of the scope of sentential negation because of the blocking by negative indefinites, which in this particular context express the same meaning as FC indefinites (on the level of a proposition). This blocking doesn't take place in English because English is a non-negative concord (or double negation) language and it lack the negative series of indefinites (or so called negative concord items). My analysis is supported by the data from a corpus research and a simple experiment with native speakers of Czech (truth judgment task). I will use Czech data to bring an argument for the claim that Aloni's general semantics for FC items can account for both English and Czech and the observed contrast in distribution in the scope of sentential negation can be explain by independent factor (negative concord in Czech).

References: ♣ Aloni, Maria. 2007. Free Choice, Modals and Imperatives. *Natural Language Semantics*, vol. 15, pp. 65–94. ♣ Kadmon, Nirit and Fred Landman. 1993. Any. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 16:353–422. ♣ Pereltsvaig, Asya. 2006. Negative polarity items in Russian and the 'bagel Problem'. In Brown, S. & A. Przepiorkowski (eds.), *Negation in Slavic*. Bloomington: Slavica Publishers. 153 – 178. ♣ Tieu, Lyn. 2013. Logic and Grammar in Child Language: How Children Acquire the Semantics of Polarity Sensitivity. Doctoral dissertation, University of Connecticut. ♣ Vendler, Zeno. 1967. *Linguistics in Philosophy*. Ithaka, NY: Cornell University Press.