

Quantifier Scope: Experimental Investigations in German and Turkish

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Abstract

Sentences containing two quantifier phrases can give rise to scope ambiguities. For instance, the sentence below in English has two possible interpretations.

- (1) A student read every book.

Firstly, it can receive a wide scope interpretation of the existential quantified noun (Wide- \exists), *a student*, meaning that there is a single student who read every book. Secondly, the quantifier phrase (QP) can receive narrow scope reading (Narrow- \exists , also referred to as inverse scope reading), an interpretation wherein for every book, there is some student who read it.

In contrast to English, languages that allow for flexible ordering of constituents are assumed to be rigid with respect to scope, lacking latter Narrow- \exists reading in canonical order (see Bobaljik & Wurmbrand, 2012, for a more refined view). Yet, recent empirical findings for flexible word order languages have been conflicting, and some scrambling languages such as German, Greek, Russian and Bangla are reported to have both interpretations available (Guha, Moitra, & Marty, 2021; Ionin & Luchkina, 2018; Oikonomou, Golcher, & Alexiadou, 2020; Philipp & Zimmermann, 2020).

In this talk, I present data from sentence-picture judgement experiments that aim at testing the availability of narrow readings of existential QPs and the effect of linear order in computing scope in two languages: German and Turkish. The findings suggest the availability of Narrow- \exists readings in both languages, while word order appears to affect the interpretation differently for the languages tested.

References

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