

Diverse mechanisms explain Scalar Diversity

Scalar Diversity (SD) Effect: When research on scalar inference has looked at scalar expressions beyond the usual quantifiers like 'some' and connectives like 'or', a consistent finding has been that participants seem more liable to derive a scalar inference in some cases than others (Doran et al. 2009; van Tiel et al., 2016). The main focus of research on SD has been to consider ways in which relations between the scalar term and its alternative, or sentences containing them, might impact on participants responses. Viewing SD through the prism of exhaustification wrt alternatives explains only a limited amount of variance. In this paper, I will explain how other well-studied pragmatic mechanisms could be involved in explaining SD. In particular, I will look at ways in which apparent scalar inference is derived without exhaustification wrt alternatives. I will present a series of studies which support a multi-mechanism approach to SD and which poses problems for the exhaustification-only approach to scalar inference. In addition, I will present a Bayesian model which can incorporate these several mechanisms and show that it out-performs a model which only allows for exhaustification.