

More free choice and more inclusion: An experimental investigation of free choice in non-monotonic environments

(based on joint work with Nicole Gotzner and Paolo Santorio)

Disjunctions in the scope of possibility modals give rise to a conjunctive inference, generally labeled 'free choice' (Kamp 1973). That is, a sentence like *Iris can take Spanish or Calculus* typically suggests that she can choose between the two. An approach which has become prominent in the literature derives free choice as a kind of scalar implicature (Fox 2007; Klinedinst 2007; Franke 2011 a.o.). In this talk, I focus on the predictions of two main type of accounts within this approach, with the goal of investigating what is the best implicature-generating algorithm for capturing free choice and related data points. The first is based on a standard algorithm for computing implicatures, which proceeds by negating, 'excluding,' alternatives to a sentence and adding the information so obtained to the assertion. Accounts in this vein have been successful at capturing free choice and related phenomena. Recent experimental findings involving negative quantifiers have, however, challenged exclusion approaches (Chemla 2009). On these grounds, Bar-Lev & Fox (2017) have proposed a novel theory of free choice, which can account for those data. The main goal of this talk is to explore the exclusion vs. inclusion debate further, by looking at another case in which the predictions of the two accounts diverge, involving disjunction in the scope of non-monotonic quantifiers. The crucial case is sentences like *Exactly one girl cannot take Spanish or Calculus*, and its potential free choice reading suggesting that one girl cannot take either Spanish or Calculus and all of the others can choose between the two. I report on an inferential task experiment testing this case, building on Chemla 2009; Chemla & Spector 2011 and Gotzner & Romoli 2017. In our results, we find evidence for this free choice reading. As we discuss, this is challenging for the exclusion implicature theories of free choice, but in line with inclusion accounts like Bar-Lev & Fox 2017. This case constitutes, therefore, a further important argument for inclusion accounts.