

Exceptional Wide Scope and Underspecification

In this talk I will look at the phenomenon of exceptional wide scope for indefinites. Most approaches to this phenomenon rest on an assumption of structural ambiguity. In particular, one type of representation is assumed to deliver standard narrow scope existential meanings for indefinites, whereas another one yields wide scope existential readings (or, more precisely, in many cases meanings that effectively amount to such wide scope readings). I will discuss data suggesting that the two types of meanings really should not be representationally individuated, i.e., the underlying representations should be seen as parallel to each other for all intents and purposes. I will show that the singleton indefinites view of Schwarzschild (2002) does not run into the problem discussed. It, however, raises another issue: for certain examples it seems dubitable that the descriptive content of the indefinite should be part of the overall semantic content in exceptional wide scope readings. To overcome this problem, I will approach the data using a more general under specification-based account. By investigating the limits of such an account when applied to intricate exceptional scope data, I will extend ideas from a unified account of non-de dicto phenomena (Mayr & Schmitt 2024) to the phenomenon under consideration, thereby making the latter approach even more comprehensive in its empirical coverage.