

Forbidding *Forbidden* A Feasible Crosslinguistic Universal?

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Searching for semantic universals in the modal domain
Workshop on the universals in modal and attitudinal semantics
University of Leiden – December 14, 2018

Suggestions today

- ▶ stating the suggested FF universal
- ▶ parallels: forbidding *no* and antonyms
- ▶ possible sources of evidence for FF

Stating the FF-Universal

FF (Forbid 'Forbidden') Any primitive concept m of type $\langle st, st \rangle$ in any language is isotone (i.e. if $p \subseteq p'$, then $m(p) \subseteq m(p')$)

Some immediate issues:

- ▶ Don't conditionals restrict modals?
- ▶ Can't *not* be of type $\langle st, st \rangle$?
- ▶ Are *deny*, *reject* primitive concepts of type $\langle est, est \rangle$?

Two Parallel Proposed Universals

Determiners:

NN (No 'no') Any primitive concept d of type $\langle et, ett \rangle$ in any language is isotone in its scope (i.e. if $s \supseteq s'$, then $d(r)(s) \rightarrow d(r)(s')$; cf. Sauerland 2000, Penka 2011).

Adjectives:

AA (Anti-antonym) For any degree dimension D , any primitive concept a of type $\langle d, t \rangle$ must be isotone (i.e. if $d > d'$, then $a(d) \rightarrow a(d')$; cf. Heim 2006, Kayne 2006, Büring 2007, Moracchini 2018).

Sources of Evidence

- ▶ cross-linguistic absence of non-isotone lexical items:
NN: absence and/or decomposition of 'no'
AA: asymmetries between positives and antonyms
FF: ?
- ▶ L1 acquisition generalizations:
NN: argument for learning difficulty
AA & FF: ?
- ▶ others: e.g. artificial grammar learning

NN: Absence of 'no' 1

Languages with no lexical item for 'no': Japanese (Yabushita 1996), Salish (Matthewson 1998)

Japanese:

Sono hon-o yonda gakusei-wa hitori-mo inai.
that book read students one-even exist-not

'Students who read that book don't exist.' (*literally*)

'No students read that book.'

Salish:

- a. xwa kwet syaqcu-s (Sechelt)
neg THING wife-his

'His wife didn't exist.' (*literally*)

'He had no wife.'

- b. 7axw ti ka lhalas 7ala 7ats (Bella Coola)
NEG DET HYP boat here

'A boat doesn't exist here.' (*literally*)

'There's no boat here.'

NN: Absence of 'no' 2

Negative concord languages:

- a. Non o visto nessuno (Italian)
Non have seen nobody
'I saw nobody.'

- b. *o visto nessuno
have seen nobody

NN: Decomposition of 'no'

Possible analyses of 'no' / German 'kein':

- ▶ generalized quantifier: $\llbracket \text{no} \rrbracket = \lambda R \lambda S. R \cap S = \emptyset$
- ▶ decomposed: 'no' = silent 'not' + 'some'

weil keine Beispiele bekannt sein müssen (German)
because no examples know be must

(not \gg must \gg some)

AA: Asymmetries

Absence of antonyms (e.g. Kayne 2006):

English: deep / shallow.

French: profond / peu profond

Explanation of Bierwisch asymmetries:

How tall is he? She is as tall as him

How short is he? She is as short as him.

FF: Candidate morphemes for negative modals

Negative modals (Veselinova 2013) from 105 languages:

modal/att.	# languages	example
<i>not know</i>	27	Siona, French
<i>not able</i>	18	Ojibwe, Korean
<i>not want</i>	17	Kwaza, Slovene
<i>not need</i>	4	Tetun

Prohibitives: two (optional) parts in Teiwa (Klamer 2010)

Ha-dan na-pak-an gaxai.
2s-part 1s-call-REAL do.not
'Don't call me' (Lit. 'Your obligation is not to call me')

NN: L1 acquisition

Katsos *et al.* (2016): Understanding of positive and negative quantifiers by 5 year olds from 31 languages, two relevant generalizations:

- ▶ generalization 1: isotone quantifiers easier (*all, some*) than antitone ones (*no, not all*)
explanation: primitive concepts \gg composed concepts
- ▶ generalization 2: negative concord in a language makes understanding of negative quantifiers significantly easier
explanation: transparent composition \gg opaque composition

(cf. Deschamps *et al.* 2015)

Outlook

- ▶ general constraint on antitonic meanings: FF, NN, AA
- ▶ explanation: scalar structure?

Feasible implicature based generalizations:

- ▶ no weak necessity without strong necessity
- ▶ no modals with actuality entailments unless there non-actuality modals