

Pronouns in the psych domain

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A large number of languages display so called *psych properties*, i.e. they behave exceptionally with respect to central linguistic phenomena (Landau 2010). This also holds for nominal anaphoric dependencies, which are usually strictly governed by the principles of Binding Theory. The central observation is given in (1). The comparison of (1a) and (1b) shows that, in contrast to agentive verbs such as ‘visit’ or ‘call’, experiencer object (EO) verbs such as ‘frighten’ or ‘worry’ license Backward Binding (BB).

- (1) a. *His_i doctor visited every patient_i.
b. His_i health worries every patient_i. (Reinhart 2002)

Psych properties give rise to analyses that treat EO verbs as special. The behavioral contrasts to non-psych verbs suggest that the source of the special properties is somehow related to the psychological domain EO verbs refer to. In this talk, we will examine this view, revisit examples and proposals for BB and present experimental data from German backward-bound possessives.

At first, we will discuss confounding factors that appear to be problematic for the empirical evaluation of BB. There are reasons that suggest that the source of BB-licensing is independent from the special grammar of psych verbs (Bouchard 1995, Arad 1998). For example, *picture-NP anaphors*, which are frequently used to test BB, are not only licensed in structures with EO verbs (2), but also in non-EO structures (3).

- (2) Stories about herself_i generally please Mary_i. (Pesetsky 1987)
(3) ?These stories about himself_i don’t describe John_i very well. (Bouchard 1995)

On the other hand, binding of pronominal possessives as in (1) may be cancelled by implicit event quantification, which results in co-dependence of the nominal elements from a generic operator rather than showing proper binding (Fox & Sauerland 1996), see (4) in comparison to (1b).

- (4) GEN_i [His_i health worries every patient_i]

Considering these facts, we discuss experimental data on BB that support its status as a psych property. We present the results of two parallel acceptability studies for accusative and dative experiencer verbs in German which examine the influence of the factors Verb Class (agentive/experiential) and Sentence Aspect (particular/generic) on the acceptability of BB structures. The experimental results reveal a significant effect for Verb Class in both experiments. BB reaches a significantly higher acceptability score with EO structures than with agentive structures (confirmed both for dative and accusative objects). The effect of Sentence Aspect depends on the case of EOs, i.e. it was only found in the accusative experiment.

Finally, with these results in mind, we will discuss current theories with respect to the implementation of BB. Some approaches analyze EOs as deep subjects, which ensures pre-derivational c-command, whereas others assume a late movement of the

EO at LF in order to derive the necessary structural binding relation. We will argue that the obligatory association between the experiencer object individual and the *point of view* of an EO statement points to the second option. Under this view, pronouns in the psych domain are properly bound by viewpoint-holders.

References: **Arad, M.** 1998. Psych-notes. **Bouchard, D.** 1995. The Semantics of Syntax. A Minimalist Approach to Grammar. **Fox, D. & U. Sauerland.** 1996. Illusive scope of universal quantifiers. **Landau, I.** 2010. The Locative Syntax of Experiencers. **Pesetsky, D.** 1987. Binding problems with experiencer verbs. **Reinhart, T.** 2002. The Theta System: An Overview.