

# Assertoric inertia, veridicality conflict, and perspective in NPI licensing

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# Assertoric inertia

Semantically entailed material that is outside the scope of the asserted, and hence potentially controversial, aspect of utterance meaning counts as **assertorically inert** and hence as effectively transparent to NPI-licensing and related diagnostics of scalar orientation.

(Horn, 2002, *Assertoric inertia and NPI-licensing* CLS 32: 62)

- (1) \*Ariadne **almost** talked to **anybody**.  
Entails: (1') Ariadne did not talk to somebody  
But (1') becomes assertorically inert and cannot  
license NPIs.
- (2) **Only** Ariadne talked to **anybody**.  
Entails or presupposes (2') Ariadne talked to  
somebody  
But (2') becomes assertorically inert and cannot  
block NPIs.

## Likewise, emotive verbs

- (1) Ariadne **regrets** that she talked to **anybody**.  
Entails or presupposes: (1') Ariadne talked to somebody  
But (1') becomes assertorically inert and cannot block NPIs.

# Negative inference

NPIs are licensed by negative inferences (Baker 1970, Linebarger 1980, Giannakidou 1998) that become **assertorically 'active'**.

- (1) Nobody other than Ariadne talked to anybody.
- (2) Ariadne did not want to talk to anybody.

(see also Horn 2002, Beaver and Clark 2008).

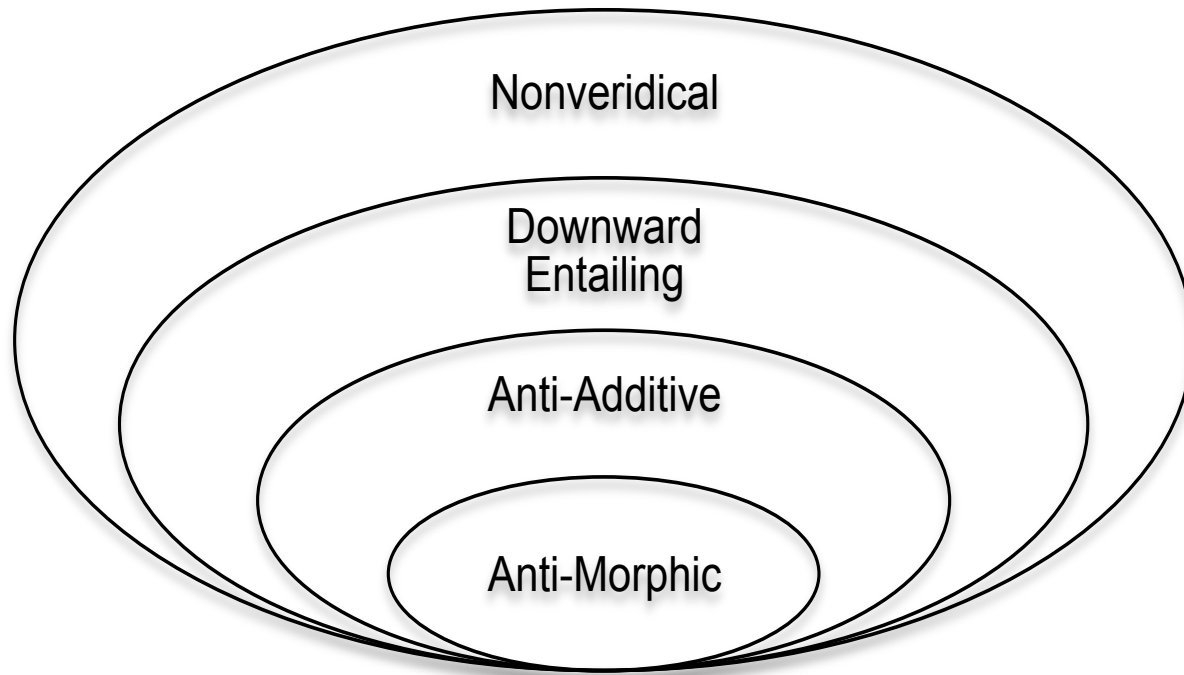
# Licensing vs. rescuing

**Two modes** of licensing (Giannakidou 2006, *Language* paper)

- In licensing there is a formal licenser at LF for the NPI.
- In rescuing, there is a potential licenser: negation.  
But there is also **veridicality conflict**.
- Rescuing produces **weaker** licensers.

Giannakidou 1998 called this direct vs. indirect licensing

NPIs are licensed in **Nonveridical Contexts**



Giannakidou 1997, 1998 et seq., Zwarts 1995, 1996, Hoeksema 1999, 2012, Bernardi 2002, etc.

## Implicit and explicit negation

- **Explicit**: negative (anti-additive, anti-morphic, DE) in the assertion, i.e. by entailment
- **Implicit**: negation in the non-assertion (emotives)
- Implicit negation indeed has ERB profile akin to the ungrammatical (during the 500-700ms time window, the emotive condition showed a **P600** amplitude that is **as large as the unlicensed** condition)

Xiang, Grove, and Giannakidou 2015, *Journal of Neurolinguistics*



What do all these observations have in common?

- We have NPI-licensors with **conflicting veridicality components** (*only, barely, regret*): a veridical component, and a negative (antiveridical) one.
- The licensing with the conflicting licensors is more complex.
- They are **weaker licensors**, we have variation (intra- and crosslinguistic)

English: *any* is good with only, emotives, but other NPIs aren't

- (1) a \* Only Bill came **either**.  
b \* Only Bill is **all that** intelligent.  
c \* Only Bill arrived **until Friday**.
- (2) a \*Bill regrets that Larry came **either**.  
b \* Bill regrets that Larry is **all that** intelligent.  
c \* Bill regrets that Larry left **until Friday**.

Greek NPIs generally do not appear with only or emotives.

(9) ?? **Μετάνιωσα** που είπα **τίποτα**.  
I regret that I said anything.

(10) ?? **Μόνο** η Μαρία είπε **τίποτα**.  
Only Maria said anything.

## Duffley and Larrivéé 2015:

- Any is **not very frequent** with emotives.
- It appears to be more frequent with 'negative' emotives than it is with positive ones.

# Greek emotives

- ❖ We can't find NPIs with emotives in Greek corpora, and
- ❖ When speakers are asked for judgments, they are quite **degraded**, below acceptability threshold.
- ❖ Chatzikonstantinou, Giannakidou, and Manouilidou 2015: **Gradient Strength of Greek NPIs**

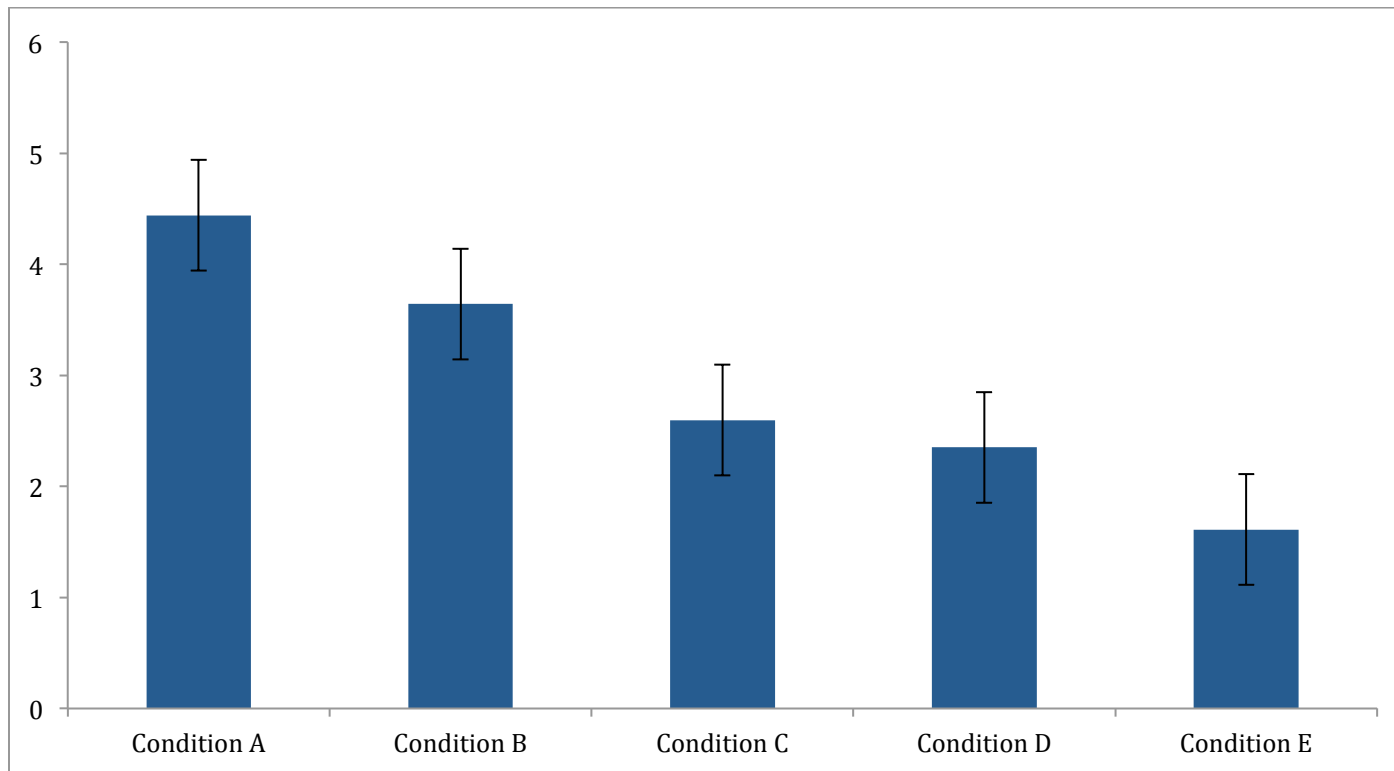
## Conditions

- A. Κανένας νέος σκηνοθέτης **δεν** χρησιμοποίησε ποτέ ειδικά εφέ.  
NEG **No** young director ever used special effects.
- B. **Ελάχιστοι** νέοι σκηνοθέτες χρησιμοποίησαν ποτέ ειδικά εφέ.  
DE **Very few** young directors ever used special effects.
- C. **Μόνο** νέοι σκηνοθέτες χρησιμοποίησαν ποτέ ειδικά εφέ.  
**Only** young directors ever used special effects.
- D. **Έμεινα έκπληκτος** που νέοι σκηνοθέτες χρησιμοποίησαν ποτέ ειδικά εφέ.  
**I was surprised** that young directors ever used special effects.
- E. \* Νέοι σκηνοθέτες χρησιμοποίησαν ποτέ ειδικά εφέ.  
\* Young directors ever used special effects.

# Acceptability judgment task, 90 students, University of Patras

<b>Licenser</b>	<b>Dependency</b>	<b>Acceptability Rate</b>
<b>Negation</b>	direct licensing	<b>4.7</b>
Very few	indirect licensing	3.5
<b>Monon (only)</b>	indirect licensing	<b>2.5</b>
<b>emotive</b>	indirect licensing	<b>2.3</b>
no-licenser	-	0.3

## Chatzikonstantinou, Manouilidou and Giannakidou, 2015



Emotives and *only* pattern **below acceptability** (3.5); in between acceptable (grammatical NPIs) and ungrammatical NPIs.



## Interpreting these data

- There is a substantial **empirical** for two modes of licensing, as predicted by Giannakidou 1998, 2006 (*pace* Linebarger, Baker).
- Within the licensers, there is a difference between STRONG (negative), and MINIMAL negations (DE, ελαχιστοι).
- There is some rescuing with emotives and *μόνο* in Greek; but less so than in English.

# What constrains rescuing and inertia?

- What determines whether a negative inference can rescue?
- Or, equivalently, what determines whether a component will become assertorically inert?

## Baker's 1972 *contrariness*

Emotives express a relation of contrariness between a fact and some mental or emotional state.

- (4) "We say that we are surprised when a certain fact does not conform to our expectations; relieved when it does not conform to our fears; disappointed when it is not in line with our hopes. Likewise, we say that a certain fact is odd or strange if it seems counter to our view of what is logical."

## Which level of representation?

Giannakidou 2006, 2015, *The Subjunctive as Evaluation*,  
University of Chicago Press volume

- (19) Negative presupposition of factives  
*i* is surprised that (p) is defined if and only if: *i* believed  
or expected that  $\neg p$ , at a time  $t' \prec t_u$  (where  $t_u$  is the the  
utterance time).

But:

(1) Ariadne is happy that Nicholas participated in the marathon, and she always knew he would do it!

(ex. From Giannakidou & Mari, *Mixed (non)veridicality and mood choice with emotive verbs*, CLS 2015)

➤ It can't be a presupposition.

# A conversational implicature?

- Linebarger seemed to believe that.
- A **negative conversational implicature** then **can rescue** *any*, but not Greek NPIs or stronger English NPIs.

# Almost

(1) Ariadne almost solved the problem.

(2) Ariadne didn't solve the problem.

(3) \* Ariadne almost solved anything.

- Horn: (2) is assertorically inert **although it is an entailment** (in the same spirit, Amaral & del Praete 2010).
- How is this consistent with the fact that a negative implicature licenses NPIs with emotives?

In other words:

How come a negative implicature is enough to rescue *any* with *regret*, but a negative entailment is not enough to rescue *any* with *almost*?



## The two differ in **perspective**

- Almost has **positive** perspective
- Regret has **negative** perspective
- Barely has negative perspective too, and rescues *any*

(1) SYRIZA barely/hardly solved any problems.

*Barely (S)* = SYRIZA solved a small number of problems, there is a much greater number of problems that SYRIZA didn't solve.

***Perspective:*** NOT solving a much greater number of problems **is considered by the speaker to be bad thing.**

(1) Ariadne almost won the race.

*Almost (S)*= Ariadne did not win, but she was close to winning. (Ariadne finished second place).

***Perspective:*** Coming close to winning **is considered by the speaker to be a good thing.**

## Perspective: an expressive phenomenon

**Expressive 'concord'**: positive attitude towards the positive conjunct (*almost*), negative towards the negative conjunct (*barely*)

Like honorification? (Potts and Kawahara 2004)

(1) Expressive index (Potts 2007: (37):

An expressive index is a triple  $\langle a \mid b \rangle$ , where  $a, b \in D_e$ ;  $I \in [-1, 1]$ .

- Giannakidou and Yoon, *The subjective mode of comparison*; NLLT (2011: 49)

(2) Expressive attitude towards a proposition

An expression can have an expressive index  $\langle \alpha \mid q \rangle$ , where  $\alpha$  is the speaker,  $q$  the proposition it embeds; and  $I \in [-1, 1]$ .

## *almost, barely*: expressive modifiers

*Almost P*: **positive index**; P a scalar eventuality description

- a. *almost*:  $\langle t, \epsilon \rangle$
- b. At issue meaning:  $x \text{ not } P \ \& \ x \text{ close to doing } P$ .
- c.  $\epsilon$  level: *almost* has an expressive index  $\langle \alpha \mid p \rangle$ , where  $\alpha =$  speaker,  $p$  is 'close to doing P'; and  $\mid$  ranges between  $[0, 1]$ .

*Barely P*: **negative index**; P a scalar eventuality description

- a. *Barely*:  $\langle t, \epsilon \rangle$
- b. At issue meaning:  $\text{Some } x \ P \ \& \ \text{Many } x \ \text{not } P$ .
- c.  $\epsilon$  level: *barely* contains an expressive index  $\langle \alpha \mid p \rangle$ , where  $\alpha =$  speaker,  $p$  is 'Many  $x$  not P';  $\mid$  ranges between  $[-1, 0]$ .

So:

- If perspective is in the **expressive dimension, then this dimension plays a role** in determining whether a negative proposition will be able to rescue NPIs or not.
- Expressive is the highest level of semantic representation (**speaker oriented**).
- Hence, the **most global level** of meaning determines whether an expression can act as a licenser.

But: **negative perspective alone cannot** license NPIs!

- (1) \*That bastard Kresge said anything!  
(Giannakidou and Yoon 2011: (73))

“ This sentence is pretty bad because the negativity that comes from the expressive interval of *bastard* **is not part of the descriptive content**, where truth conditions are calculated. The sentence remains veridical (i.e. positive), hence the NPI anything cannot be licensed.”



Giannakidou and Yoon 2011:

Negative expressive **can license only if it becomes conventional**, part of the at issue meaning:

- (1) He knows **squat** about any scientific theory.
- (2) He probably knows **squat** about any pop culture that doesn't revolve around ...
- (3) I've got him hooked on college and pro basketball and he knows **jack** about any of it.

(examples from GY, *gratia* Larry Horn, also discussed by Postal)

**Thank you, Larry, for being such  
an inspiring mentor!**

