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Exclamative Wh-Phrases as Positive Polarity Items

González Rodríguez, Raquel

Abstract: This paper studies the island effects induced by negation in exclamative sentences. In order to explain this phenomenon, I focus on the interaction between exclamative wh-phrases and negation, showing that negation can appear in exclamative sentences when the wh-phrase is not within the scope of negation; when the negative operator has wide scope, the sentence is ungrammatical. Assuming Szabolcsi and Zwarts's (1997) account of negative islands, I argue that the wh-phrase can have wide scope only when its domain is an unordered set, and not when it ranges over ordered sets. I argue that the inverse scope relation, where the wh-phrase is within the scope of negation, is always rejected, since wh-phrases are positive polarity items. I show that they are sensitive to downward-entailing contexts and propose that this is due to the fact that they widen a domain of quantification without strengthening the statement, in line with Kadmon and Landman's (1993) and Chierchia's (2004) analyses of negative polarity.

Additional title: Els sintagmes-qu exclamatius com a termes de polaritat positiva

Record created 2009-02-24, last modified 2009-09-28

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