In the complement of 'deny'

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1 A Case of Reading Alternation with Marked Preference

It is commonly agreed that the negative predicate *deny* licenses negative polarity items in its sentential complement, see (1), and such a possibility is mostly assumed not to exist for the NP complement, see (2).

(1) She denied she had taken anything.

(2) *She denied anything.

However, the conviction of such an impossibility results from an oversimplification of the linguistic data. As observed by Tovena (1993), *deny* licenses polarity sensitive (PS) *any* in direct object position when the NP contains a mass or an event noun, cf. (3), more rarely when it contains a countable noun. In (4), the primary reading of *any* is as a free-choice item (FC).

(3) She denied any knowledge of the plot.

(4) She denied any accusations.

Furthermore, the polarity sensitive reading obtains with count nouns if it is not possible to establish a discoursive link (Tovena, 1998), i.e. the intersection between the noun and the domain of discourse must be empty at the time of the utterance, see (5).

(5) a. Ms Higuchi moved out of the presidential palace, but then moved back in. Her husband in turn left the official residence to move into the army intelligence headquarters. So far Ms Higuchi has denied any plans for divorce. (The Guardian, 14/9/1994)

b. Defence officials from a number of NATO member countries have denied any link between illnesses among Balkan veterans and uranium weapons. (www.cnn.com, 4/1/2001)

c. The US denied any wrongdoing in Afghanistan.

This paper focusses on the alternation in reading preference for *any*-phrases in NP complement of transitive *deny* exemplified in (3) to (5). The analysis

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proposed builds on two points: the predicate involved in these sentences does not imply the existence of its object, and the structure of the domain of denotation of the noun in object position supports more or less easily such an implication.

2 A Brief Reminder of a Few Significant Facts on the Licensing Power of deny

Many semantic treatments of polarity sensitivity rest on some form of the claim that NPIs are licensed in the scope of monotone decreasing operators. In the eighties and nineties, they have been seen to have difficulties in explaining the contrast between examples (1) and (2), which might suggest that deny is unable to license in clausemate position, as already noted by Linebarger (1980).

A contrast of that type has been used by syntactic approaches, put forward by Progovac (1988) and Laka Mugarza (1990), as evidence for the claim that a licenser like deny, which licenses NPIs in its restrictive clause, only does so across a clausal boundary. These authors claimed that occurrences of any in NP complements had to be interpreted as FCLs, which for them corresponded to a wide scope universal quantifier.

Progovac argues that adversative predicates are ‘indirect’ licensers. She claims that ‘the element responsible for NPI licensing with these verbs is the polarity operator in Spec of Comp of their complements, and not the verb itself.’ (Progovac, 1988:145) The choice of the position Spec of Comp for the surface null polarity operator is based presumably on analogies with wh-phenomena. Laka Mugarza (1990:180–181) also argues that adversative predicates do not license directly. They select complementizers that have the feature [+neg]. The licensing of the NPI inside the clausal complement takes place indirectly, via the feature on the head of the complementizer. The putative licensing failure is established on the basis of some criteria for telling apart licensed NPIs from ‘free’ items similar to Carlson’s (1981).

The analysis adopted by Laka consists of differentiating clausal complements subcategorised by adversative predicates from those embedded under ‘non-negative verbs’, as proposed also by Progovac. The two syntactic proposals differ in a few points. One point is the specification of what in the CP projection is responsible for the licensing and its positioning. Another point is the level of representation at which licensing takes place. Progovac’s treatment is a mix of SS and LF licensing, whereas in Laka’s licensing takes place exclusively at SS.
A similar position with respect to the putative reduced licensing power of 
*deny*, but motivated on semantic ground, has been defended by Kas (1993). 
Like in the syntactic approaches mentioned above, the strategy followed by 
Kas consists of characterizing the whole NP direct object of negative 
predicates as a non-licensing position. The upward monotonicity of negative verbs 
with respect to their direct object NP is argued for on the basis of the patterns 
of inference in (6). *Deny* is classified as an ‘extensional’ verb. However, the 
ambiguity of the weak determiner *a* has an impact on inferences where subset 
relations are expressed by adjectival modification (To vena, 1998:173). A 
minister can utter (7a) with the intention of denying the possibility of a con­siderable increase *qua* increase. This is the case considered by Kas where (7a) 
implies (7b). But if the minister intends to deny only the large size of the 
increase, the inference from (7a) to (7b) does not go through.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(6)} & \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \text{George denied a horrible crime} \to \text{George denied a crime} \\
\text{b. } & \text{George denied a crime } \not\to \text{George denied a horrible crime}
\end{align*}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(7)} & \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \text{The minister denied a considerable tax increase} \\
\text{b. } & \text{The minister denied a tax increase}
\end{align*}
\end{align*}
\]

As mentioned above, the non-licensing claim was first disproved by 
To vena (1993) who showed that NPIs may occur in direct object position on 
the basis of data such as (3), more generally both readings are possible, but the 
PS reading is more likely to emerge with mass and event nouns, whereas the 
FC reading is favourite with countable nouns.

To the other extreme of the spectrum of claims on the licensing power of 
negative predicates, Hoeksema and Klein (1995) have argued that the distribu­tion of *any’s* Dutch cognate *eindig*, that has an existential and a PS reading but 
no FC reading, should be taken to provide evidence for a PS interpretation of 
all the occurrences of *any* in NP complements.

Finally, To vena (1998) has shown that count nouns are not necessarily 
incompatible with a PS reading of *any*. She draws attention to the relevance 
of D-linking (Pesetsky, 1987) in creating the conditions for a PS reading of 
*any* with count nouns, on the basis of data like in (5). This observation is part 
of her claim that *any* is not possible when the truth of the sentence where it 
occurs depends on the identity of the individuals that constitute the reference 
domain, what is called the Non Individuation constraint.
3 Scales, Existence and Interpretation Variation

A peculiarity of the pair of sentences (3) and (4) is that they contain the same verb, an *any*-phrase in the same syntactic position, they do not differ with respect to the presence/absence of other operators, and still they exhibit different reading preferences.⁴

In the literature, we find a discussion of another case of double reading of *any* in the NP complement of the same verb in Fauconnier (1975). This paper is a classic contribution on the issue of scalar implicatures, in particular it deals with the possibility for certain expressions to play the role of scalar endpoint with maximal strength in scales on which inferences run in either direction, and with the possibility of building such bidirectional scales with certain predicates. Fauconnier draws an analogy between the logical properties of *any*, mainly its ‘universal’ vs ‘existential’ readings, and properties of superlatives in their quantificational readings. For instance, in (8) the superlative functions as a universal and in (9) as a negated existential.

(8) The faintest noise bothers my uncle.
(9) My neighbour is so nice that he is not bothered by the loudest noise.

Fauconnier accounts for quantifying superlatives in terms of pragmatic scales. He argues that a sentence containing *the faintest*, for instance, will have a quantified reading in a context that presupposes a scale for which the superlative is a low point, cf. (8). The assumption is that if one is disturbed by a certain noise level, he is also disturbed by a louder noise. Negation produces the well-known scalar reverse effect, cf. (9) where the counterpart of existential *any* is realised by the ‘opposite’ superlative *the loudest*.

If one keeps fixed the ranking of ‘quantities’, the direction of the inferences on the scale depends on the properties of the verb, see the contrast between the positive sentences in (8) and (10) due to the fact that *stand* allows inferences from a large quantity to smaller ones.

(10) He can stand any/*the faintest noise.

Fauconnier makes a number of remarks that are of particular interest for our concern. He draws attention to the fact that examples like (11) and (12), which exhibit the same verb, are equally negated, but contain two superlatives that are one the opposite of the other, both have universal force and can be paraphrased by (13).

⁴The role of the PP as subtrigger might be relevant for a FC reading but not for the PS reading under discussion.
(11) He didn't hear the faintest noise.

(12) He didn't hear the loudest noise.

(13) He didn't hear any noise.

He points out that the cooccurrence of adjectives that indicate a minimum quantity (that becomes a zero quantity in negative sentences) with predicates that do not imply the existence of their object, verbs of perception such as hear and verbs like notice, contra verbs that imply the existence of their objects such as pay attention, make it possible to have the same propositional frame to support inferencing from either end of a scale.

In cases of double inferencing such as (11) and (12), it is (11) that seems to violate the predictions of the scale associated with not hear, because one expects loudest as a minimum. The reading implicating absence of noise would not hold for (11) had the verb been like in (14). In (14) the predicate pay attention implies that there were some noises, and they were ignored. The superlative in (15) does not have a quantificational reading but is about a specific noise.

(14) He didn’t pay attention to any noise.

(15) He didn’t pay attention to the faintest noise.

Thus, the presupposition of existence attached to the argument position of the verb in (14) somewhat inhibits the possibility of a quantificational reading for the superlative. This effect obtains also in the scope of negation. On the contrary, (13) can be used either to report that he didn’t hear the noises there or that there were no noises to be heard there, i.e. as (12) or (11).

Fauconnier claims that in the case of (11) ‘the “minimum quantity” adjectives can only be used in negated contexts with the same effect of any and contrary to the scale principle if the associated predicate does not imply existence of an object’ (Fauconnier, 1975:367). In these cases the negation is used to suggest nonexistence of the object. In the case of the universal reading of sentences such as (12), the existence of the object is implied. ‘[T]he correct scale is not directly associated with the logical form of the relevant sentences, rather it corresponds to an inferred existential statement’ (Fauconnier, 1975:368). Thus, (11) commits the speaker or the subject of the sentence to the corresponding existential statement in (16).

(16) There wasn’t the faintest noise.
Interestingly, Fauconnier notes that cases that do not imply the existence of the object but rather suggest its nonexistence, focus on quantity rather than strictly on the relation expressed by the predicate. The scalar entailment becomes the most important piece of information conveyed by sentence (11).

4 Mental Verbs

The predicates that do not imply the existence of their object discussed by Fauconnier are mainly mental verbs. Croft (1993) proposes a causal structure model of verb meaning which is intended to explain the relationship between lexical semantics and case assignment to the different arguments. Volition and causation play a prominent role in this model. In particular, in order to account for the variation in subject assignment across languages, Croft proposes two distinct ways of organizing the causal chain that makes up the event described by verbs of perception such as hear (more generally mental verbs). He claims that ‘a mental state is actually a two-ways causal relation’ depending on whether the perception of the stimulus by the experiencer is presented as internally motivated, i.e. her ability to focus on the stimulus is foregrounded, or externally motivated, i.e. the potential of the stimulus to get the experiencer’s attention/consciousness is foregrounded.

This distinction has been exploited to account for the fact that both superlatives in (11) and (12) can get the quantificational interpretation in the same sentence frame He didn’t hear X (Israel, 2001). The two resulting propositions reflect different facets of the complex causal relation which is hearing.

In (12), which contains the loudest, inferences are based on the experiencer’s ability to perceive a noise. Fainter sounds are harder to perceive than louder ones, thus if one is not able to perceive even the loudest sound, which is the easiest to perceive, presumably he won’t be able to perceive anything. Negating the most likely position on the pragmatic scale warrants the inference that all positions are negated for a hearer of a given auditory acuity. Loud noises are the strongest position on the scale. Inferences run from the strongest position to all the other positions on the scale.

As for (11), which contains the faintest, the role of the stimulus’s potential is expressed in terms of an existential scale ranking stimuli on the basis of their likely existence (Hoeksema and Rullmann, 2000). When louder sounds occur in a place, weaker sounds can also be found there, most likely. Alternatively, taking up Fauconnier’s observation, when a large ‘quantity of sound’ is found, a ‘smaller quantity’ is also found. So, from the nonexistence of small quantities it is fairly safe to conclude that there are no sounds at all, independently of
the auditory acuity of the hearer. This time, inferences run from the minimum quantity position to all the other positions on the scale.

5 A Two Direction Scale for deny

5.1 Two uses of the verb

The verb deny in (3)–(5) is used in two different ways. In (3) and (5) the verb is close to express existential negation. Negation is construed DEScriptively (Horn, 1989), as the sentence in (3) is interpreted as asserting that there is no knowledge of the plot that is possessed by the entity in subject position.

In (4), the verb ascribes falsity to its object. Here the denial has the form 'the accusations are not grounded'. The sentence conveys a rejection that seems close to what has been termed PRESuPTION DENIAL (Geurts, 1998) as the sentence is interpreted as asserting that the accusations that have been vented are false.

The discussion of the uses of deny should be completed by including the cases where it has a 'not give' interpretation, usually associated with a double object construction. In (17) we have an instance that, being in the passive form, results in a reading that could be translated as 'not to be given', from which can be inferred 'not to have'.

(17) Arthur tried to gauge the speed at which they were travelling, but the blackness outside was absolute and he was denied any reference points. (Douglas Adams, 1979, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, p. 158)

The passive form in (17) is the type of occurrence commonly found in my collection of www texts. The active occurrence shown in (18) is unique and exhibits an any-phrase associated to the thematic role of patient with a beneficiary realised as a PP. It contains a case of FC any. No instances of the verb with the ditransitive pattern overtly realized were found.

(18) Since 1980 the Supreme Court has denied any First Amendment protection to child pornography [...] (www.itc.virginia.edu/virginia.edu/spring01/eyberlaw/home.html)

It has been observed (Shehadi, 1969), that there is a close link between 'what exists' and 'what is true'. The verb deny, in its functioning detailed in this study, seems to suggest that we can say that there may be a possibly equally close link between 'what does not exist' and 'what is false'. In all
cases, the assertion of non existence has to be relativized to the point of view of the entity in subject position. This remark is consistent with data both on passive and active forms.

5.2 Two directions for the two uses

Capitalizing on Fauconnier’s observation about the relevance of the existential implication on the direct object position, and by analogy to the case of mental verbs, we suggest that these two uses of deny also reflect a complex event structure that can be characterised via two distinct causal chains that give rise to inferences in opposite directions on a scale.

The corresponding of Croft’s ‘two-ways causal relation’ to be considered for deny depends on whether the existence/plausibility that the entity occupying the syntactic position of object has to the eyes of the entity in the syntactic position of subject, is presented as being internally motivated, i.e. the (un)willingness of the subject to acknowledge the object as true/relevant is foregrounded, or externally motivated, i.e. the (lack of) potential of the object/stimulus to impinge on the subject/experiencer’s consciousness is foregrounded.

Note that only in the former case the subject qualifies fully and exclusively as ‘agent’. Only in the former case the existence of a nonempty domain of denotation for the noun in the NP in object position is independently implied.

Let us see how this proposal applies to the data in (3)–(5). In (4), where deny reads as reject, inferences are based on the subject’s volition to acknowledge the object. The existence of the object is implied and could constitute the previous content that is denied by the whole sentence. The scale supports the inference that, if the subject is persuaded of the falsity of the ‘stoutest’ claim/accusation, or is not able to see its truth/relevance, she will consider false and reject also much weaker claims. The strongest position gets a quantificational reading with universal logical force. This is the typical reading of any called free-choice.

As for (3) and (5), where deny reads as ascribe no existence, the role of the object’s potential is expressed in terms of an existential scale ranking objects on the basis of their likely existence. If there are manifestations of large quantities of a given (type of) entity, smaller quantities are also found. So, from the nonexistence of the smallest quantity it is fairly safe to conclude that there is no quantity at all, independently of the willingness of the subject to acknowledge its existence. The strongest position on the scale gets existential quantificational reading. This is the typical reading of any called polarity sensitive.
6 The Readings of any-Phrases

6.1 The readings and the structure of the quantificational domain

The possibility of having PS and FC readings for any shows that this item does not lexicalise a particular scalar endpoint like superlatives do, contrast (11) and (12) with (13). However, something must be added to account for the particular reading distribution exemplified in (3)–(5).

The difference in the way the scale is interpreted and entailments run, has an effect that can be cashed on a quantifier in the following way. We take that the standard assumption of non-emptiness attached to the restrictor of a quantifier is not uniquely defined by its being strong or weak, cf. (Milsark, 1977) and much subsequent work. We suggest that it also depends on the characterisation of the argument position the quantifier occupies, which follows from the specification provided by the predicate.

In the case of (4) the argument position can be occupied by a quantifier with a non empty restriction set.

In the case of (3) and (5), what is negated is the existence of any instantiation of the the N-predicate in the argument position. The latter can be occupied by a quantifier with an empty restriction set.

A discretised domain of quantification is required to build a scale of the type used in (4), because distinct individuals are considered for the object position. Count nouns give access to individuals naturally.

No such requirement applies for the scale used in (3) and (5), which can rank quantities. In this case, the impossibility of D-linking is exploited as a 'smoke screen' that hides the identity of the entities in the count case, and induces a cardinality reading. Mass nouns naturally block lexical access to the units in the domain of denotation. Their denotation does not contain directly accessible individuals. Quantities do not support referential links.

6.2 FC and PS

How can we connect these considerations with the common opinion that any is a modal determiner? Note that the domain of the restriction of example (4), which contains any with a FC reading, includes actual and possible accusations. Indeed, it is expected to include actual instances, because the sentence is episodic, in the sense that it makes reference to (a) particular event(s). However, the sentence is not just about some particular actual instances. The unacceptability of (19) shows that is not possible for the domain of the restrictor to
include only actual accusations.²

(19)  *She denied any accusations from John.

Sentence (19) does not allow the reading ‘any possible accusations’, as shown by the following contrast.

(20)  a.  *John issued several serious accusations on Mary, but she flatly denied any of them

b.  ..., but she flatly denied each/all of them

There is a set of actual entities in the denotation of the restrictor in the case of FC reading of any with deny, e.g. specific accusations in (4) because the sentence is episodic. This observation, consistent with our pretheoretical linguistic intuitions, is compatible with the observation that discourse independence is relevant for PS readings to arise, cf. (5). However, these actual entities do not constitute the whole domain, because of the IRREFERENTIALITY of any (Jayez and Tovena, forthcoming) (Jayez and Tovena, to appear), recall the unacceptability of (19). In other words, in the case of (4) the real world satisfies certain propositions involving particular individuals, for instance the proposition that she rejected accusation $a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_n$, where $a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_n$ are the accusations vented in the discourse context, but these propositions do not determine the fact that she was in the disposition of rejecting all accusations. There is an extra piece of information which cannot be reduced to an enumeration.

According to the constraint of Non-Individuation, any is not possible when the truth of the sentence where it occurs depends on the identity of the individuals which constitute the reference domain (Tovena, 1998). Any is licensed by negative predicates when the sentence does not describe particular events but rather a general attitude. For instance, the fact that (21a) is not just about a particular set of entities is consistent with the impossibility of overt discourse anaphora, see (21b).

(21)  a.  John refused any compromises

b.  John refused any compromises, Yet, *they, were rather reasonable.

²For some speakers, the sentence is not completely excluded but they report a habitual reading where John is known to be a compulsive liar, which is consistent with our position.
In order to express Non-Individuation in a formal way, we need the notion of referentiality of a sentence defined in (Jayez and Tovena, forthcoming) via the two ordered constraints corresponding to VARIATION and DOMAIN SHIFT given in (22).

(22) **Referentiality of a sentence**

Let $S$ be a sentence with a logical form $\text{ATT}([\text{FCI}] [P] [Q])$.

1. The logical form must not be descriptive, and
2. $S$ should obey constraint (i) or, if this is impossible, constraint (ii):
   (i) For every maximal set of worlds $W' \subseteq W$ that satisfy $S$ and where the denotation of the restriction $P$ is the same and is non-empty, there is no individual $c$ that satisfies $Q$ (or $\sim Q$) every time it satisfies $P$ in $W'$.
   (ii) The denotation of $P$ is not rigid.

In case $S$ does not satisfy 1. and 2., it is referential. (Jayez and Tovena, forthcoming)

Variation is akin to the idea that the *any N* phrase can refer to different N-entities in different worlds when the sentence hosting it is true. Domain shift shares with variation the fact that it involves several worlds, but it differs in that there is no choice of individual on a world-by-world basis. When the domain of the FC phrase is not rigid, *any* is acceptable with a FC reading, as in (23), because the different continuations of the current situation may shift between different sets of misdemeanors.

(23) **Punish any misdemeanor**

The definition of NI provided in (24) captures the property in virtue of which referential knowledge cannot specify completely the logical information conveyed by the sentence containing a FCI. NI obtains in two cases: (i) either there is no referential knowledge proper (no individuation determined at speech time) or (ii) there is some extra logical information that is not reducible to referential knowledge. Case (i) corresponds to the possible existence in the future of mutually incompatible worlds. Case (ii) corresponds to the fact that a sentence hints at some conceptual dependency, which evades any purely referential characterization.

(24) **Formal definition of NI**

Let $S$ be a sentence whose modal form is $\text{ATT} \phi$ and whose tripartite structure is $\text{ATT}([\text{FCI}] [P] [Q])$, and let $W$ be the set of possible ATT-accessible worlds. The FCI is licensed only if the information
concerning what makes P true or false cannot be reduced to referential information. (Jayez and Tovena, forthcoming)

In order to take into consideration the PS behaviour of any and French le moindre, Jayez and Tovena (2003) extend NI into Non Situatedness.

(25) **Non Situatedness**

*Any* and *le moindre* are appropriate only in sentences whose truth does not depend on a particular set of situated—i.e. spatio-temporally located—eventualities, inside the main spatio-temporal trace. (Jayez and Tovena, 2003)

Downward entailing contexts do not presuppose particular situated events. E.g., in *Last month Daniel didn't read any book* there is no situated event of non-reading a particular book inside the main spatio-temporal trace. For instance, the fact that Daniel did not read book $b$ spans the whole month trace, but cannot be situated at some location inside this trace. ‘Negative events’ are impossible if they are situated, cf. (19).

Negative predicates in general deny the existence of any event associated with their NP complement. The way events are associated with NPs varies according to the semantic class of the NP and the information attached to the head noun. For instance, *John refused three apples* is most naturally interpreted as ‘there are three apples such that John refused that there be an event of taking / eating / etc., them’. The predicates ‘take’, ‘eat’, etc. can be added to the semantic representation because they are associated with the noun *apple*.

When the head noun denotes an event, we do not need to interpolate a particular predicate. For instance *John refused three compromises* means ‘there are three compromises such that John refused that there be an event which realizes them’. This interpretation is only possible for certain kinds of nouns. Entities of type object (vs event) or event-denoting nouns which do not easily refer to potential events with a sentence in the past are not appropriate with all or some negative predicates.

The fact that negative predicates may enter non-referential interpretations is in agreement with the proposals by Zimmermann (1993), Krifka (1995) and Moltmann (1997) that these verbs are ‘intensional’, i.e. do not take individuals but properties or quantifiers as objects.

The difference between the cases in (3)–(5) is the following. We have non-existence in the case of (3) and (5), and domain shift in the case of (4). The sentence in (4) means that ‘she communicated that any possible accusation was misguided’. This implies that the person in question ‘denies’ also the actual accusations, but not just them. There is a fixed and rigid set of (real)
accusations and in addition a set of future accusations that varies according to
the different continuations.

7 Tying up Loose Ends

Sentences containing *deny* are relevant in the discussion of weak islands. The
approach defended in this study is compatible with the algebraic perspective
on scope interaction proposed for the weak island effects by Szabolcsi and
Zwarts (1993). Recall that treatments such as Progovac’s are crucial for a
movement based syntactic account of the contrast in (26), because they bring
about an intervener in (26b) but not in (26a). Next, the contrast between (26b)
and (26c) has been dealt with by stipulating that only D-linked wh-phrases can
extract, see (Rizzi, 1990) and followers.

(26)  
   a. How did he deny it?  
   b. *How did he deny that he solved the problem ___?*  
   c. Which man did you deny that I invited ___?

Szabolcsi and Zwarts have argued that when a wh-phrase scopes over
some scopal element SE, the operations associated with that SE are performed
in its denotation domain. Characteristic of bad extractees is their lack of indi­
viduality. The term non-individual is used for instance to refer to mass terms
and amounts. Non-individuals are characterised by the fact that they exhibit a
partial ordering which has to be taken into consideration when computing the
answer to a question.

In the cases under consideration in this study, no movement has been pos­
tulated. The effect of the presence of a SE is to be exploited for any-phrases
in a different way. Considering the issue in terms of scope relations, Tovena
(1998, ch.5) has noted that the possibility of outscoping downward monotone
SEs results in the availability of a FC reading for any-phrases, although they
are not required to outscope and the impossibility does not result in ungram­
maticality as for wh-phrases. From our current point of view, we observe first,
that S-complements denote in the domain of propositions, which is not rigid,
therefore it allows for domain shift. Therefore, we predict that they pair with mass
and event nouns and can be classified as licensing environments. Second, as
noted in (Tovena, 1998), Szabolcsi’s observation that propositions are ordered
(by entailment) makes it possible to extend to S-complements the treatment of
mass NP-complements and to account for the absence of meaning alternation
of any inside S-complements, see (27).
(27)  a. The librarian denied that any book had been stolen.
    b. The officer denied that any information had been leaked from his office.

The unacceptability of (2) is another crucial piece of data for a theory that postulates a licensing difference for NP and S complements. To account for this case we propose that the absence of an overt domain for the restrictor may be the relevant fact. This absence makes it impossible to identify the conceptual dependency used to produce the extra bit of information that exceeds what we can get in referential terms. Hence the sentence has only an episodic reading, which is incompatible with the constraint of Non Individuation.

8 Conclusion

We have shown that the content of transitive deny with an NP complement reflects a complex event structure that can be characterised via two distinct causal chains that give rise to inferences in opposite directions on a scale.

Verb readings have been linked to any-phrase readings by saying that in the 'say it is false' reading of deny, inferences are based on the subject's volition to acknowledge the object and the implication of existence on the argument position is compatible with a FC reading of any-phrases. In the 'assess non-existence' reading, there is a quantity scale where entities are ranked according to their likely existence, and any-phrases receive a PS reading.

Finally, the alternation under discussion is compatible with a view of any as an irreferential determiner.

References


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