

Some remarks on domain widening

1. Introduction. Many influential accounts of NPI *any* build on the proposal in [3] that *any* widens the domain of quantification with respect to the options previously available in the context. In a recent implementation [1], *any* triggers alternatives with reduced salient domains of quantification. This paper focuses on the claim of domain widening and reaches the following conclusions: (i) simple indefinites in negative contexts are themselves interpreted with respect to the widest domain, (ii) domain widening cannot be thought of as the lifting of restrictions corresponding to silent predicates, because in general context does not make available alternative domains of quantification corresponding to salient silent predicates, (iii) domain widening cannot be thought of as the shifting to a larger topic situation. If we start from a notion of domain of quantification as the set of entities that it makes sense to talk about, then it is predicted that a context will not make available a multitude of options. And consequently, theories of *any* must explain the effects of *any* without making extensive use of alternative domains of quantification.

2. Implementing domain widening. We will focus on [1] as a compositional implementation of [3]’s *widening and strengthening* proposal. [1] provides (1) as the interpretation of NPI *any*: (1a) *any* is an existential quantifier with a contextually provided domain of quantification (*D*), and (1b) it evokes a series of alternatives in which quantification takes place over salient smaller domains. **The epistemic dimension:** According to (1), domain widening effects can be modal (see (2)), and [1] claims that quantification over worlds in (1) should plausibly be restricted to epistemically accessible worlds). [1]’s proposal seeks to accommodate the modal character of free choice *any*. However, for NPI cases, modal widening along an epistemic dimension appears problematic: (3) is true iff Sara saw no students, even if she saw Peter, who might be a student as far as she or the speaker know. Ignorance regarding Peter’s status could prevent us from uttering (3), but it would still be true.

3. Quantificational domains as silent predicates. As [1] points out, domain widening is relational, and [1] implements the widening intuition with the proposal that *any* activate a set of alternatives with various ‘smaller’ salient domains of quantification. [8] has characterized domains of quantification as ‘pronouns’ ranging over properties (similar to the representations in [1]) (we are ignoring the need for more complex types, and our discussion says nothing about whether domain restrictions appear with the determiner or with the noun predicate, as suggested by [7]). As (4) and (5) show, silent predicates (in general) cannot function as domains for simple indefinites in the scope of negation. Example (4): You are at a barbecue, there is a plate of nicely done veggie burgers on the table and you would love one, however a friend approaches with a plate of burnt ones that he made himself. He asks (4a), and you answer (4b). It is clear that his offer is about the veggie burgers on the plate (4c). However, your answer isn’t just about the burgers on the plate. Your answer is actually a lie (not a statement with a restricted domain of quantification). You could later truthfully tell somebody else (4d), and they would be surprised (3e) . Example (5): even though in the context provided, it is clear that your friend is interested in dry socks, the quantificational domain of the indefinite in your reply is not restricted to that set. The view that context makes available silent predicates as values for domain pronouns predicts it should be easy for the indefinite in the scope of negation to go back to the restriction of the previous indefinite. As (6) shows, this is not true even with overt restrictions.

4. Quantificational domains as topic situations. Well-known examples of domain restriction often involve ‘locational predicates’ (see (7)). ([5]) has proposed an analysis according to which domains of quantifications are provided by topic situations associated with a DP (see also [2, 5, 6]). In this framework, domain widening could be understood as the option of enlarging the topic situation (wider domain = bigger topic situation). However, *any* does not always widen the domain in this sense: as (8) shows, adverbials can identify the topic situation for both regular and NPI indefinites; as (9) shows, the topic situation associated with both regular and NPI indefinites can be bound. In both (8) and (9) the NPI fails to shift the topic situation to a larger one (the topic situation associated with a simple indefinite would be the same), yet ‘*any*-effects’ are observed, arguing that they do not arise through a shift to a larger topic situation.

- (1) a. $[[\text{any}_D]] = \lambda P \lambda Q \lambda w [\exists w' \exists x \in D_{w'} [P_{w'}(x) \ \& \ Q_w(x)]]$
 b. $\text{ALT}([[\text{any}_D]]) = \{ \lambda P \lambda Q \lambda w [\exists w' \exists x \in D'_{w'} [P_{w'}(x) \ \& \ Q_w(x)]] : D' \subseteq D \ \& \ D' \text{ is large} \}$
 (Chierchia 2006: 558)
- (2) *I believe that domain widening takes place along two dimensions. First, we pick the largest possible quantificational domain among the reasonable candidates. This means that all entities that for all we know might exist are factored in. Second, our uncertainty about quantificational domains may also have qualitative aspects.* (Chierchia (2006): 555)
- (3) Sara didn't see any student.
- (4) a. Do you want veggie burgers $\cap C$? / Do you want a veggie burger $\cap C$?
 b. No thanks, I don't want veggie burgers $\cap C$ / No, I don't want a veggie burger $\cap C$.
 c. $C = \{x: x \text{ is on this plate}\} / \{x: x \text{ has just been cooked by me}\} / \{x: I \text{ am offering you } x\}$
 d. I want veggie burgers. / I want a veggie burger.
 e. *A friend:* But you just said you didn't!
- (5) A friend comes in from the rain, soaked, and asks:
 a. Can you lend me socks?
 You have just put every sock you own into the washing machine, and answer:
 b. Sorry, I don't have socks.
 Your friend looks at you strangely.
- (6) A: Can you lend me dry socks?
 B: Sorry, I don't have socks. (not understood as: *I don't have dry socks*).
- (7) (...) *just like when I look in my fridge and say there is no beer. I do not say that there is no beer outside the fridge, but I ignore it in my speech.* (Lewis 1986: 136-137)
- (8) a. I don't have potatoes in my fridge.
 b. I don't have any potatoes in my fridge.
- (9) In most of John's classes, he doesn't fail any/a student without a good reason.
 (inspired by von Fintel)

References:

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