

Review of *Mojmír Dočekal – Czech negation from the formal perspective*

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It is with great pleasure that I have fulfilled my duties of reviewing Dr Dočekal's habilitation thesis, *Czech negation from the formal perspective*. The book contains an introduction, 5 chapters and a summary. In sort, the thesis proposes that despite superficial intricacies and complex scopal interactions with quantifiers, temporal, aspectual, degree and manner operators, negation should remain to be treated as a simple propositional operator that just reverses truth conditions. In order to do this, Dočekal develops a theoretical approach that explains these scopal interactions by means of the integrating the semantics of DP quantifiers, tense and aspect with the semantics of negation.

Chapter 1 sets the stage by adopting the major and basic assumptions of Landman's (2000, 2004) theory of plurality. The chapter is summarizing in nature, but does so in a very profound way. I can imagine using parts of this chapter in a classroom situation.

Chapter 2 focus on the semantics of n-words (negative DPs that require to be accompanied by a negatively marked verb) in Czech. Dočekal argues (in line with earlier work by Ladusaw, Zeijlstra and Penka) that n-words are semantically non-negative indefinites of type <d,t> that morphologically agree with the negation on the verb. The predictions of the claim that n-words are non-negative indefinites (compatible to English weak *some*-phrases) are investigated in the domains of predicative positions, collectivity, intensional predicates and yield positive and promising results. I find Dočekal conclusions convincing.

Chapter 3 compares the semantics of negation with the semantics of aspect. In particular, it focuses on the semantics of *Dokud* ('until'), which has two different readings (as cross-linguistically most instances of 'until'). Rather than alluding to lexical ambiguity (homophony), Dočekal states that one of the two readings is entailed by the other, and that consequently there is no need to adopt two *dokud*'s. The meaning of *doduk* for Dočekal is the same as English *until*, modulo the negation (which for him is absent in *doduk*, but present in *until*). The absence of a negation in *doduk* is in line with earlier conclusions of the non-negative semantics of n-words in general. A question that remains unaddressed (being outside the scope of this thesis), though, is what the cross-linguistic implications of this are: is 'until' systematically non-negative across negative concord languages?

Chapter 4 tackles a long-standing question in the semantics of negation and quantifiers, namely why universal quantifiers sometimes take wide-scope and sometimes narrow-scope with respect to negation. Dočekal argues on economical grounds that at least in Czech (though he claims his principle to be universal) universal quantifiers take low scope and that reverse scopal orders are in fact illusionary and must be deduced to some kind(s) of definite effect(s). I am not sure whether the mechanism that underlies the low-scope interpretation of universal quantifiers isn't too strong, but for Czech the data seem to come out properly. Again, I would be curious to see the cross-linguistic consequences of proposal spelled out in detail.

Chapter 5, finally, discusses the interplay between negation and degree and manner questions, and wonders in particular why in such questions, negation creates weak island effects. For

Dočekal, these weak island effects result from intervention effects in combination with principles of answerability.

As described above, the thesis sets out a unified approach to the semantics of negation in a variety of domains. The thesis follows up on the state-of-the-art, makes a number of very interesting and convincing analyses and combines insights in different domains of semantic theory that haven't been presented before. The writing is clear and the composition of the argument is transparent and sound. At some points, the thesis could use some additional editorial checking, though.

All in all, this thesis really stands out and it is beyond any doubt that it meets the standard requirements placed on habilitation theses in linguistics / formal semantics.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several fluid, connected strokes that are difficult to decipher as specific letters.