Revisiting the Licensing Problem and the Issue on Understatement:

The Case of Ammari ‘All that’ in Japanese

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1 Introduction

• Some broad questions:
  – Why not NPIs are all alike (w.r.t. their distributions and meanings) cross-linguistically and within languages? What is the underlying uniformity of NPIs and how do the variations occur?
  – How can the widening+strengthening account be incorporated to degree/scalar semantics?

• Topic of the talk:
  Japanese ammari, a degree modifier seemingly similar to, but not quite the same as all that and sonnani (another similar Japanese degree word that patterns together with all that)

• Agenda:
  – The data: Distribution of ammari in comparison with sonnani and all that
  – Some background: The widening and strengthening condition and degree modifiers (Kadmon & Landman 1993, Krifka 1995)
  – Summary and outlook: Summary and remaining issues

2 The data

2.1 Some Typical NPI Licensing Environments

• A general question which I cannot answer: What is the licensing condition for NPIs?
  – NPIs are acceptable in (Strawson) downward entailing contexts
  (Ladusaw 1996, von Fintel 1999)
  – Polarity items are sensitive to (non-)veridicality. (Giannakidou 1998, 2002)

  Setting that aside for the moment, I use the list of grammatical patterns in (1) just so we can test the distribution of ammari.

(1) a. *I have any potatoes.
b. I don’t have any potatoes.
c. If you have any potatoes, let me know.
d. It is surprising that anyone could go out in this weather.
e. I’ll leave before anyone visits me.
f. Do you have any potatoes?
g. *I turned on the air conditioner, because anyone came.

2.2 Distribution of all that

• Here’s a landscape of all that, a degree word which I thought would be equivalent to ammari.

(2) a. *It is all that hot today.
b. It isn’t all that hot today.
c. If it’s all that hot, turn on the air conditioner.
d. ’I was surprised that it really was all that hot.
e. ’I’ll go out before it really gets all that hot.
f. Is it all that hot today?
g. *I turned on the air conditioner, because the room really was all that hot.

• The status of ‘?’ sentences?: The speaker’s disbelief about the existence of such degree interfering the interpretation?

2.3 Distribution of ammari and sonnani

• Hanaoka-McGloin (1986) introduces ammari and sonnani as NPIs that may appear in sentences other than negation, noting that they contribute to the speaker’s negative expectation or the speaker’s surprise of disbelief.

\[ \text{Context } X...Y \text{ is downward entailing (DE) iff we can tell the truth of } X\alpha Y \text{ from the truth of } X\beta Y \text{ and the fact that } \alpha \text{ entails } (\Rightarrow) \beta. \]

\[ \text{An operator } O \text{ is veridical iff } OP \text{ entails the truth of } P, \text{ otherwise it is nonveridical. English any, however, cannot be captured in terms of non-veridicality, and it is proposed that the condition for any is the ‘anti-licensing’ condition: Any must not be in the scope of veridical expression. (Giannakidou 2002)} \]

\[ \text{Ammari/ammari derived from amari. They basically share the same meaning, although the former could carry some more emphatic flavor and may be used more often in colloquial casual speech. Amari, by the way, also has the meaning ‘extra’ when it is used as a noun. Sonnani has a deictic word sonna ‘so’ or ‘that’ as part of itself.} \]
Kyoo-wa \{ammarī/sonnani\} atsuki-nai. Today-TOP ammarī/sonnani hot not
‘It isn’t very hot today.’

Heya-ga \{ammarī/?sonnani\} atsukat-tara eakon-o
tuke-te-kudasai turn.on-please
‘If the room is very hot, please turn on the air conditioner.’

Note: Difference in the meaning? With sonnani, just like all that, there is a flavor of the speaker’s disbelief: ‘If the room is all that hot (as you say, which I don’t believe), then turn on the damn air conditioner’. With ammarī, there is no such disbelief of the speaker, and it is completely compatible in a situation where you want to make a nice offer.

2.4 Summary

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• If the distribution of any shows the most typical NPI licensing environments that can be captured in terms of DE-ness or some other notion, the distribution of all that and sonnani may not be all that surprising (setting aside the status of ‘?’).
• Ammarī shows somewhat unexpected behavior w.r.t. questions and the because clause.

3 The Domain Widening & Strengthening Approach

In case of the determiner any:

(11) a. I don’t have any potatoes.
    b. *I have any potatoes.

Kadmon & Landman (1993)

(12) The meaning of any NP:
    a. Basic meaning: same as the indefinite (a) NP
    b. Widening: Any widens the interpretation of the common noun phrase along a contextual dimension (kinds, amount,...).
    c. Strengthening: The domain widened statement must entail \(\Rightarrow\) the narrower one.

(13) a. (11)a: Conditions satisfied
    Wide: I don’t have potatoes, cooking or non-cooking
    \(\Rightarrow\) Narrow: I don’t have cooking potatoes
    b. *(11)b: Strengthening not met
    Wide: I have potatoes of some kind, cooking or non-cooking
    \(\neq\) Narrow: I have cooking potatoes

Application to the degree modifier at all:

(14) a. John isn’t tired at all.
    b. *John is tired at all.

In spirit of Krifka (1995):

(15) The meaning of AP at all:
    a. Basic meaning: same as AP
    b. Widening: At all relaxes the interpretation of AP by making the precision/evidence standard less strict. AP is “interpreted in the most liberal way or requiring the least evidence”
    c. Strengthening: The statement with a relaxed precision/evidence standard must entail the ones with stricter standards

For the ones with ‘?’, the judgement ranged from ? to ✓. It seemed that the overall acceptability gets better by putting stress/emphasis on all that or adding really.
4 An Analysis

4.1 Degree/Scaler semantics

Gradable predicates denote a relation between individuals and degrees. (Cresswell 1977)

(18) \([\text{atsui}] = \lambda x. \text{hot}(d)(x)\)

\('x\) is hot to degree \(d\)

The positive form, e.g. \(\text{Today is hot}\), without any overt degree modifier, has a null morpheme \(\text{POS}\). (von Stechow 1984, Kennedy & McNally 2005)

It provides the standard degree \(d\), i.e. what counts as \(\text{hot}\) in the context of utterance.

4.2 An attempt: the basic case

\(\text{Ammari}\) is essentially the same as \(\text{VERY}\). But because of the lexically encoded additional requirement, it behaves as NPI.

(23) \(\text{(To be revised)}\)

a. Basic meaning: \([\text{ammari}] = \lambda f_d. \lambda x. [\text{VERY}](f)(x)\)

\(\lambda f \lambda x. \exists d [\text{STANDARD}(d)(f)(x) \land f(d)(x)]\)

b. Widening: \(\text{Ammari}\) relaxes the interpretation of \(\text{very hot}\) by making the standard less strict, to mean something like \(\text{POS hot}\). (Widen the comparison class)

c. Strengthening: The statement with a relaxed standard must entail the ones with stricter standards.

\(\text{How does this work?}\)

(4) \(\text{Kyoo-wa ammari atsuku-nai.} \)

\(\text{Today-TOP ammari hot-not}\)

\('\text{It isn't very hot today.}'\)
The widening+strengthening condition itself satisfied.

Why does the speaker choose to make a weaker claim? Why say something less informative even though there is an option for saying something more informative (i.e. by not saying ammari)?

This seems to be a general problem for other NPIs that have this kind of ‘weakening’ effect (Israel 2006, van Rooy 2003). van Rooy (2003) suggests to take the notion of ‘strength’ in terms of ‘relevance’ or ‘utility’, i.e. how relevant/useful it is for the speaker to say.

The meaning of ammari hot (revised)

a. Basic meaning: very hot
b. Widening: Ammari relaxes the interpretation of ‘very hot’ by making the standard less strict, to mean something like ‘pos hot’.
c. Quality Strengthening: The statement with a lax standard requires more evidence (in other words, it is something you can say less certainly, less confidently etc. than) the ones with stricter standards. (So say the one you can be more sure of.)

What about other cases (e.g. conditionals, surprise, before, questions...)?

Heya-ga ammari atsukat-tara eakon-o tsukete-kudasai Room-NOM ammari hot-if A/C-ACC turn.on-please
‘If the room is very hot, please turn on the air conditioner.’

Heya-ga ammari atsuku-te odoroita. Room-NOM ammari hot-and be.surprised
‘I was surprised that the room was very hot.’

Soto-ga ammari atsuku-naru-mae-ni dekake-yoo. Outside-NOM ammari hot-become-before-at go.out-VOLITIONAL
‘Let’s go out before it gets very hot outside.’

What about the one without negation?

Kyoo-wa ammari atsuki-nai.
Today-TOP ammari hot-not
‘It isn’t very hot today.’

Heya-ga ammari atsuku-te odoroita.
Room-NOM ammari hot-and be.surprised
‘I was surprised that the room was very hot.’

Soto-ga ammari atsuku-naru-mae-ni dekake-yoo. Outside-NOM ammari hot-become-before-at go.out-VOLITIONAL
‘Let’s go out before it gets very hot outside.’

• The speaker wants to be more responsible for what s/he claims..?
The problematic cases:

(9) Heya-ga ammari atsui-kara eakon-o tsuketa.
Room-NOM ammari hot-because A/C-ACC turned.on
‘I turned on the air conditioner, because the room was very hot.’

(31) a. Basic meaning: Because the room was very hot, I turned on the air conditioner.

b. Widening: Because the room was pos hot, I turned on the air conditioner.
c. Quality Strengthening: Assume that the hotter it is, the more likely people to turn on the air conditioner. You can be more sure of the reasoning that your turning on the air conditioner is caused by extreme hotness (100- degrees), than by regular non-significant hotness (80- degrees).

(8) *Soto-wa ammari atsui-no?
Outside-TOP ammari hot-Q
Intended: ‘Is it very hot outside?’

- The question ‘is it very hot?’ is a more specific, riskier question, that requires some evidence already to assume that is could be very hot, than the question ‘is it hot?’, which is more general. Asking a general question rather than a specific one is preferred (Krifka 1995, van Rooy 2003).

5 Summary and Remarks

- Summary
  - Polarity sensitive degree modifiers that contribute to the under-statement, such as ammari, sonnani, and all that, are not all alike in terms of their distribution and their meaning.
  - One way to extend the widening and strengthening analysis of NPIs to degree modifiers is to make use of comparison class that can adjust the standard degree.
  - The strengthening condition may be calculated in terms of something other than entailment (‘speaker’s commitment’ van Rooy (2003)).

- Remaining issues:
  - What do sonnani and all that mean then? why ammari and sonnani/all that show different distributions w.r.t. questions and the adverbal because-clauses? How do we incorporate the notion of speaker’s disbelief or expectation to the lexical semantics of degree modifying NPIs? (An additional constraint in the widening requirement, e.g. ‘widen the domain so that it includes the degree that speaker does not believe it to be’?)
  - Is the basic meaning of ammari really the denotation suggested for very in K & M? Wouldn’t that predict that it can only be compatible with gradable predicates with an open scale as they predict for very?

References


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