
Paradigmatic and syntagmatic factors in the licensing of polarity items

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The licensing of polarity items depends on a number of factors, including the semantic properties and scope of their triggers, locality conditions on licensing and the presence of intervening material. Besides these factors, we also need to look at competing alternatives (a paradigmatic factor) and the internal structure of complex polarity items (syntagmatic).

When several synonymous polarity items compete, they tend to develop distributional differences. Sometimes these differences are absolute, leading to complementary distributions (classic examples being the Slavic *n*-series, licensed by clause-mate negation versus an alternative series (i-series in Serbo-Croatian, libo-series in Russian), licensed elsewhere by nonveridical operators (Progovac 1994, Pereltsvaig 2006)). In other cases they manifest themselves in different triggering preferences or different collocational effects (Hoeksema & Rullmann 2001). In this paper, I compare English *anymore* and *any longer*, as well as their Dutch counterparts *meer*, *langer* and *nog langer* ‘still longer’, all nearly or completely synonymous temporal NPIs, with different distributions. A complication in studying these items is their polysemy: they all have uses other than the ones I will focus on. Compare e.g. *she does not live here any longer* (= *anymore*) and *she did not live here any longer than perhaps two months*.

The internal structure of complex polarity items may also affect their distribution. In the case of Dutch *nog langer* we have a combination of the negative polarity item *langer* with the positive polarity item *nog*, which makes it bipolar item (Van der Wouden 1997). Another case of a bipolar item is Dutch *enigszins mogelijk* ‘possible at all.’ While *mogelijk* is not a negative polarity item, and *enigszins* is a positive polarity item, their combination is a bipolar item which require licensing by an appropriate operator but shuns direct negation (Hoeksema 2024), similar to French *un tant soit peu* (Spector 2012).

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