

The presuppositional status of Agent-Evocator verbs and the influence of world knowledge on *Implicit Causality* biases

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In this presentation we want to argue for a rich semantic structure of Agent-Evocator verbs (AgEvo-Vs), a subclass of the so-called *Implicit Causality* verbs (IC-Vs). Throughout the psycholinguistic literature this verb class has shown a strong bias to re-mention the NP2 in sentence completion tasks (SCTs) with sentence fragments like “Peter punished Paul because he ...”. According to Bott & Solstad (2014) this bias is driven by a presupposition (PSP) in the AgEvo-Vs. It’s a matter of common knowledge that PSPs project out of the scope of operators. Therefore in our first experiment we tested the obvious case where AgEvo-Vs were embedded under the operator negation (e.g. “Stefan punished Marvin because he ...” vs. “It’s not true that Stefan punished Marvin because he ...”; test language: German). We found that negation had an effect, speaking against a presuppositional status of AgEvo-Vs. In our second experiment we embedded AgEvo-Vs under deontic modals (baseline condition/“have to”/“be allowed to”: “Paul punished/ had to punish/ was allowed to punish Jörg because he ...”; test language: German). A mixed model logistic regression revealed that “have to” showed no effect ($p=.91$), while “be allowed to” had a significant effect ($p<.001$) but only for verbs with a negative valence (negative: 36% NP2 references vs. positive: 77%). In these cases the sentence fragments triggered explanations about the kind of permission the subject argument has for performing the action described by the verb (e.g. “Paul was allowed to punish Jörg because he was his teacher.”). As “negative actions” like punishing need more often an “authorization” than “positive actions” like rewarding, these kind of completions occurred more often for negative (40.48%) than for positive verbs (10%). The baseline and the “have to” condition didn’t show any valence effects. So AgEvo-Vs are affected by operators. This leads us to conclude that they are no *bona fide* PSPs. Instead, they seem to belong to a class of projective content sharing properties of both PSPs and CIs (cf. Tonhauser et al.’s (2013) Class D). We will present an attempt at a semantic representation of AgEvo verbs that takes this into consideration.