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Affirmation and weak islands

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Several authors have proposed like analyses of negation and emphatic affirmation in English (Chomsky 1957, Laka 1990). These proposals are motivated in part by the fact that both environments trigger *do*-support.

- (1) Martin doesn't love pasta.
- (2) Martin DOES (too/so) love pasta.

Whatever the nature of *do*-support in sentences such as (1) and (2), it bears noting that emphatic affirmatives of this type behave differently from negation as weak island (WI) inducers. In particular, emphatic affirmative *do* fails to induce WIs of the kind in (3) and (4).

- (3) a. Why don't you think that Ingrid fixed the car.
*downstairs interpretation of *why*.
b. Why DO you think that Ingrid fixed the car.
√downstairs interpretation of *why*.
- (4) a. Someone doesn't love everyone.
* $\forall > \exists$
b. Someone DOES love everyone.
√ $\forall > \exists$
c. Someone does TOO/SO love everyone.
√ $\forall > \exists$

From the perspective of Relativized Minimality (RM) (Rizzi 1990), these facts are somewhat surprising, since there is no obvious reason why a negative operator in $\Sigma P/PolP$ - but not an affirmative operator - should block raising.

At the same time, Williams (1974) observes that emphasis ameliorates WI effects as in (5) and (6). (I am not aware of any explanation for this fact in the literature.)

- (5) * I asked how John didn't behave.
- (6) I asked how John did NOT behave.

In view of this, it might be objected that affirmation itself *does* induce WI's

- just like negation - and that it is rather the emphatic nature of (3b) and (4b,c) that rescues these examples. Crucially, however, emphasis does little to rescue the negative examples with *why* and *everyone*, in (3a) and (4a).

(3a') Why DON'T you think that Ingrid fixed the car.
*/?downstairs interpretation of *why*.

(4a.') Someone DOESN'T love everyone.
*/?∀>∃

Hence, from the perspective of Relativized Minimality, and assuming a single position for affirmation and negation, a difference between negative *do* and emphatic affirmative *do* as WI inducers, remains to be explained.

References

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