

Magri effects and the Blindness Hypothesis

PLIN0056 Semantics Research Seminar 2024–25

Lecture 5

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1 The Blindness Hypothesis

- (1) a. #Some Italians come from a warm country.
b. Italians come from a warm country. (Magri 2009: p. 259)

Magri's 2009 analysis:

- Common knowledge: All Italians come from the same country.
- With this common knowledge, the two sentences in (1) are contextually equivalent.
- Scalar implicature computation is **blind** to the common knowledge and when (1a) is used, the **logically stronger** alternative (1b) is obligatorily negated.

The notion of entailment relevant for the definition of the exhaustivity operator EXH is that of logical entailment rather than that of entailment given common knowledge $\mathcal{W}_{ck}$. (Magri 2009: p. 257)

- The resulting inference is contextually contradictory.
- (We'll come back to the alternative with *all* later)

Other examples

- (2) [Context: Mary is conducting a survey on the first and last names of Italian children. She knows that all Italian children inherit the last name of their father; hence; all children of a given couple share the same last name. This week, she has interviewed the children of five couples, A through E, in order to record their first and last names.]
a. #Some children of couple C have a long last name.
b. The children of couple C have a long last name. (Magri 2009: p. 258)
- (3) [Context: In a department where every professor assigns the same grade to all of the students in the same class:]

- a. #This year, Professor Smith gave an A to some students of his semantics class.
 - b. This year, Professor Smith gave an A to the students of his semantics class. (*Ibid.*)
- (4) [Context: Speaking of the atoms of a molecule which cannot be separated.]
- a. #Some atoms went right.
 - b. The atoms went right. (*Ibid.*)
- (5) [Context: Speaking of two Siamese twins who cannot be separated from each other.]
- a. #A twin left an hour ago.
 - b. The twins left an hour ago. (*Ibid.*)

There are cases where the crucial alternative is non-homogeneous.

- (6) [Context: For each topic in semantics, Jacopo either has loads of papers or absolutely no paper about it]
- a. #Jacopo has a few papers about Free Choice.
 - b. #Jacopo has a couple of papers about Free Choice.
- (7) Jacopo has an odd number of children.
- a. #He has two.
 - b. He has three.

But the following doesn't sound so bad?

- (8) [Context: Everyone who has Australian citizenship and is 18 years old or above is required vote at federal elections. Everyone else is not permitted to vote at federal elections.]
- a. ?By law Bruce is allowed to vote at the next federal election.
 - b. ?By law Bruce is permitted to vote at the next federal election.

Mandatory ignorance implicatures, but what is the relevant contextually equivalent alternative? (Nathan, p.c.)

- (9) I know exactly how many kids Jacopo has.
- a. #He has at least three.
 - b. #He has three or more.

2 Universal quantifiers

The following sentences do not sound great.

- (10)
- a. ??All Italians come from a warm country.
 - b. ??Every Italian comes from a warm country.

Magri 2009 analyzes these as follows:

- (10) competes with the generic sentence in (11), which is contextually equivalent.

(11) Italians come from a warm country.

- Magri 2009 assumes that (11) has a *homogeneity presupposition*:

(12) $(\forall x[\text{italian}(x) \rightarrow \text{from.warm}(x)]) \vee (\forall x[\text{italian}(x) \rightarrow \neg \text{from.warm}(x)])$

Generic sentences do indeed show homogeneity:

- (13)
- Italians are funny.
 - I don't think Italians are funny.
 - Are Italians funny?

- Magri 2009 assumes that scalar inferences are generated in the presuppositional dimension in the same way as in the assertive dimension. So (10) will have the negation of (12) as a scalar inference, which contradict the common ground.

(14) $(\neg \forall x[\text{italian}(x) \rightarrow \text{from.warm}(x)]) \wedge (\neg \forall x[\text{italian}(x) \rightarrow \neg \text{from.warm}(x)])$

- A parallel analysis for (16), with the definite alternative in (15b).

- (15) [Context: Mary is conducting a survey on the first and last names of Italian children. She knows that all Italian children inherit the last name of their father; hence; all children of a given couple share the same last name. This week, she has interviewed the children of five couples, A through E, in order to record their first and last names.]
- #Some children of couple C have a long last name.
 - The children of couple C have a long last name.

(Magri 2009: p. 258)

- (16) [Same context]
- ??All the children of couple C have a long last name.
 - ??Every child of couple C has a long last name.

- As mentioned in the previous handout, it's debated whether homogeneity is a presupposition or not (Gajewski 2005, Križ 2015, 2019, Bar-Lev 2021, Križ & Spector 2021, Guerrini & Wehbe 2024). If it's not a presupposition, Magri 2009 will be able to derive a contradictory scalar inference, on the assumption that the generic sentence is logically stronger than the universal due to the homogeneity meaning.
 - A potential issue of this is that one could argue that the quantificational force of the generic sentence, including the bit about homogeneity, is logically weaker than universal (cf. 'non-maximality').
 - Even in that case, if homogeneity is part of the asserted meaning, one could say that the universal and generic sentences are logically independent, and assume that logically independent alternatives can be used to generate scalar implicatures. But this would make a bad prediction: Generic sentences should have the negation of a universal as a scalar implicature.
 - So, for Magri 2009, it's crucial that either (a) the homogeneity inference is a presupposition, or else (b) the generic statement is logically stronger than the universal. The latter option can be fleshed out in a trivalent framework:

$$(17) \quad \llbracket \text{All Italians are funny} \rrbracket = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \forall x[\text{italian}(x) \rightarrow \text{funny}(x)] \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

$$(18) \quad \llbracket \text{Italians are funny} \rrbracket = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \forall x[\text{italian}(x) \rightarrow \text{funny}(x)] \\ 0 & \text{if } \forall x[\text{italian}(x) \rightarrow \neg \text{funny}(x)] \\ \# & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

(19) ϕ is stronger than ψ iff whenever $\llbracket \phi \rrbracket \neq 0$, $\llbracket \psi \rrbracket \neq 0$, but not vice versa.

- The story so far can be extended to negative existential quantifiers essentially as is, except that the contextually equivalent homogeneous alternative has to contain negation.

(20) a. ??No Italian comes from a cold country.
b. Italians do not come from a cold country.

(21) [Same context as (15)]
a. ??None of the children of couple C has a short last name.
b. The children of couple C do not have a short last name.

2.1 Potential problems

- The scalar inference that Magri 2009 derives is arguably too strong. In particular, the negation of homogeneity would be simply inconsistent with a universal statement. E.g., (22) is predicted to be infelicitous due to the contextually equivalent homogeneity alternative (given the existence presupposition) in (23), which should trigger a mandatory implicature entailing the negation of homogeneity.

(22) a. All of my students like semantics.
b. Every student of mine likes semantics.

(23) My students like semantics.

A possible solution is to analyze the scalar inference as an *anti-presupposition*, i.e., (22) will be # if the homogeneity presupposition of (23) is satisfied (*CG(HOMOGENEITY)*)

- This inference is much weaker, because the homogeneity presupposition of (23) is not satisfied when the common ground is ignorant about it.
- This is what is derived by Maximize Presupposition (Heim 1991, Percus 2006).
- Note that at this point, it's important that the homogeneity inference is a presupposition. If it were a regular scalar inference, even a primary implicature (*B_s(HOMOGENEITY)*) will result in a contextual contradiction (given Quality).

- However, the prediction seems to be still too strong. In the following example, the universally quantified sentences in (25) are acceptable, even though the context entails homogeneity (as pointed out by Spector 2014).

(24) [Context: In a department where every professor assigns the same grade to all of the students in the same class.]

- a. #This year, Professor Smith gave an A to some students of his semantics class.
- b. This year, Professor Smith gave an A to the students of his semantics class.

(Magri 2009: p. 258)

(25) [Same context]

- a. This year, Professor Smith gave an A to all the students of his semantics class.
- b. This year, Professor Smith gave an A to every student of his semantics class.

Spector 2014 mentions the possibility that in this example, the context does not establish the intended common ground firmly enough, i.e., some possibilities where homogeneity is not true are still in the common ground (see Schlenker 2012 for a related idea).

- If that is so, then we potentially fail to rule out (24a), because without the intended common ground, the alternative will not be always contextually relevant whenever (24a) is.
- Similarly:

- (26) a. Each student took either none or all of the three semantics modules.
#The smartest of them took some of them.
- b. Each student took either none or all of the three semantics modules.
#The smartest of them took all of them.

We can turn these into cases of common knowledge in local contexts:

- (27) a. If each student took either none or all of the three semantics modules, #the smartest student surely took some of them.
- b. If each student took either none or all of the three semantics modules, the smartest student surely took all of them.

Note that the homogeneous alternative with *them* sounds degraded in these examples.

- (28) a. Each student took either none or all of the three semantics modules.
??The smartest student took them.
- b. If each student took either none or all of the three semantics modules, ??the smartest student surely took them.

2.2 Summary

- The scalar inference triggered by the homogeneity inference must be an anti-presupposition: $\neg CG(\text{HOMOGENEOUS})$.
- For Magri 2009 it is crucial that the homogeneous alternative is logically stronger. The scalar inference it generates is mandatory, whenever it is contextually equivalent.

- Contrary to this prediction, the universal is acceptable in some cases where the homogeneity alternative is contextually equivalent.

(29) [Context: Mary is conducting a survey on the first and last names of Italian children. She knows that all Italian children inherit the last name of their father; hence; all children of a given couple share the same last name. This week, she has interviewed the children of five couples, A through E, in order to record their first and last names.]

- a. #Some children of couple C have a long last name.
- b. The children of couple C have a long last name.
- c. ??All children of couple C have a long last name.
- d. ??No children of couple C have a long last name.

(30) [Context: In a department where every professor assigns the same grade to all of the students in the same class.]

- a. #This year, Professor Smith gave an A to some students of his semantics class.
- b. This year, Professor Smith gave an A to the students of his semantics class.
- c. This year, Professor Smith gave an A to all the students of his semantics class.
- d. This year, Professor Smith gave an A to none of the student of his semantics class.

(31)

- a. #If each student took either none or all of the three semantics modules, the smartest student surely took some of them.
- b. ??If each student took either none or all of the three semantics modules, the smartest student surely took them.
- c. If each student took either none or all of the three semantics modules, the smartest student surely took all of them.
- d. If each student took either none or all of the three semantics modules, the dumbest student surely took none of them.

- The generalization seems to be:
 - *All* is acceptable when it contrasts with another quantifier, e.g., *none*.
 - Sometimes *all* needs to be contrasted; in that case a definite plural is unacceptable.
- A possible solution of this problem is by resorting to a notion of contextual equivalence that encompasses non-truth-conditional aspects of meaning such as information structure. But it would have to make sure that *some* will be still consistently ruled out.

So Magri's account of the competition between universal quantifiers and homogeneous alternatives seems to be problematic.

But the Blindness Thesis might still be a good explanation for his observations about logically stronger but contextually equivalent alternatives.

3 Embedding

3.1 Magri effects in DE environments

It's often considered that scalar strengthening does not (or need not) happen in DE environments.

But [Magri 2011](#) observes *Magri effects* in DE environments.

- (32) [Context: In Italy, children always inherit the last name of their father]
a. #Every father some of whose children have a funny last name must pay a fine.
b. Every father whose children have a funny last name must pay a fine. ([Magri 2011](#): p. 22)
- (33) [Context: In this department, every professor assigns the same grade to all of his students.]
a. #This year, every professor of this department who assigned an A to some of his students got a prize from the dean.
b. This year, every professor of this department who assigned an A to all of his students got a prize from the dean. ([Magri 2011](#): p. 22f)
- (34) [Context: In this department, every professor teaches both a graduate and an undergraduate class in the same field of linguistics.]
a. #This year, no professor who taught graduate or undergraduate semantics got a pay raise.
b. This year, no professor who taught graduate and undergraduate semantics got a pay raise.

In light of these observations, [Magri 2011](#) proposes that mandatory implicatures are generated at every scope site.

- (35) The exhaustivity operator $\text{EXH}_{\mathcal{R}}$ is mandatory *at every scope site*. ([Magri 2011](#): p. 35)

Consequently, scalar inferences are not generated only when the alternatives are deemed contextually irrelevant (and 'pruned'), and polarity does not matter.

3.2 Non-presuppositional DE environments

Note that in all of [Magri](#)'s examples, the relevant DE environment has an existence presupposition, which is UE. So these environments are not purely De.

Let's try non-presuppositional DE environments.

- (36) [Context: In the second year, each student takes either both syntax and semantics, or neither of them and takes phonetics and phonology instead.]
a. My supervisee didn't take syntax or semantics in his second year.
b. My supervisee didn't take syntax and semantics in his second year.

- [Magri](#) predicts (36a) to obligatorily involve local exhaustification, because below the negation, the conjunctive alternative is contextually equivalent and logically

stronger. The resulting meaning is contextually trivial, so the example should be judged as #.

- For (36b), assuming that the conjunction takes narrow scope, Magri generates a mandatory indirect implicature, if (36a) without local exhaustification is an alternative. But he could argue that the alternative has to involve local exhaustification. Also, the conjunction might take wide scope, so the acceptability of (36b) is maybe not a big issue. We will come back to a version of this issue later.

Same issue with (37).

- (37) [Same context]
- a. None of my supervisees took syntax or semantics in their second year.
 - b. None of my supervisees took syntax and semantics in their second year.

But weak scalar items do give rise to infelicity in other DE cases.

- (38) [Context: Each professor gives an A to either none or all of their students. 'Easy' professors give an A to all of their students in some years but not all.]
- a. #This year, no professor gave an A to most of their students.
 - b. #This year, Professor Smith didn't give an A to most of her students.

But note that Magri 2011 predicts these to mean:

- (39)
- a. This year, no professor gave an A to most but not all of their students.
 - b. This year, Professor Smith didn't give an A to most but not all of her students.

These meanings are contextually trivial, rather than contextually contradictory. This does not seem to be the right analysis.

Rather, it would be more promising to analyse (38) in terms of indirect implicatures. But due to Blindness, Magri 2011 cannot derive an indirect implicature in these examples.

3.3 Indirect implicatures

Magri 2011 claims that non-local implicatures, including indirect implicatures, also give rise to Magri effects.

- (40) [Context: Every year, the dean has to decide: if the college has made enough profit that year, he gives a pay raise to every professor who has assigned an A to at least some of his students; if there is not enough money, then no one gets a pay raise.]
- a. This year, every professor who assigned an A to some of his students got a pay raise.
 - b. #This year, every professor who assigned an A to all of his students got a pay raise. (Magri 2011: p. 21)
- (41) [Context: Every year, the dean has to decide: if the college has made enough profit that year, he gives a pay raise to every professor who has taught a graduate or an undergraduate class; if there is not enough money, then no one gets a pay raise.]

- a. #This year, no professor of this department who taught a graduate or an undergraduate class got a pay raise.
- b. This year, no professor of this department who taught a graduate and an undergraduate class got a pay raise. (Magri 2011: p. 25)

But this does not seem to generalize.

- (42) a. No professor gave an A to all of their students.
 $\leadsto$ *At least one professor gave an A to some of their students.*
- b. No professor gave an A to any of their students.
- (43) [Context: Each professor gives an A to either none or all of their students. 'Easy' professors give an A to all of their students in some years but not every year.]
 - a. Last year, three professors gave an A to all of their students. This year, no professor gave an A to all of their students. (So no student got an A this year)
 - b. Last year, every professor gave an A to all of their students, but this year, Professor Smith didn't give an A to all of her students.

Compare:

- (44) [Same context]
 - #This year, Professor Smith gave an A to some of her students.

According to the Blindness Hypothesis, the scalar implicature based on the logically stronger but contextually equivalent alternative should be mandatory. Note that the (b)-alternatives should have no implicatures themselves.

- (45) a. This year, no professor gave an A to any of their students.
- b. This year, every professor gave an A to none of their students.
- (46) a. This year, Professor Smith didn't give an A to any of her students.
- b. This year, Professor Smith gave an A to none of her students.

3.4 Summary

Not clear if Magri effects are observed in DE environments.

- Magri's (2011) original examples involve existence presuppositions. E.g., (47) presupposes that there are professors of this department who assigned an A to 'some' of his students.

- (47) This year, every professor of this department who assigned an A to some of his students got a prize from the dean.

The Magri effect might be computed in this presupposition, which is in a sense unembedded.

Similarly for DE contexts that trigger independent scalar inferences.

- (48) This year, very few professors of this department assigned an A to some of their students.

This sentence has an (indirect) implicature that some professors of this department assigned an A to some (but not all) of their students.

- In at least some presupposition-less DE environments, Magri effects do not seem to arise.

(49) My supervisee didn't take syntax or semantics.

- Some of these cases are infelicitous but it doesn't seem to be because of embedded implicatures. Rather, global indirect implicatures seem to be relevant.

(50) This year, Professor Smith didn't give an A to most of her students.

4 How blind?

4.1 Universally quantified alternatives

(51) [Context: In every class, either everyone gets an A or no one gets an A.]

- a. #Some students got an A in semantics.
- b. All students got an A in semantics.

Schlenker 2012 points out that (51b) does not logically entail (51a): (52b) is true and (52a) is false, when there are no students in semantics (see also Pistoia-Reda 2017, Buyko, Moscati & Pistoia-Reda 2024).

- (52)
- a. $\exists x[\text{student}(x) \wedge \text{gotA}(x)]$
 - b. $\forall x[\text{student}(x) \rightarrow \text{gotA}(x)]$

Indeed the existential import of universal quantifiers in natural language does not seem to be always present (more on this next week).

- (53)
- a. Each year every applicant who already had a published paper got in.
 - b. Each year, all applicants who already had a published paper got in.
(Schlenker 2012: p. 422)

(54) Each year, the applicants who already had a published paper got in.

- (55)
- a. Did you help everyone who asked you for help?
 - b. Did you help the people who asked you for help?

Schlenker 2012 argues that this is a potential problem for the Blindness Hypothesis:

- If scalar implicature computation is really blind to contextual knowledge, it shouldn't know if the domain of the universally quantified alternative is empty or not. Then it is not logically stronger than the existential sentence.
- If only logically stronger alternatives give rise to scalar inferences, the universally quantified sentence should not generate a scalar inference.
- If logically independent alternatives also can give rise to scalar inferences, then we make a bad prediction: A universally quantified sentence should have the negation of the existential alternative as a scalar inference. For example, (56) should be able to implicate that no applicant already had a published paper.

- (56) a. Every applicant who already had a published paper got in.
b. All applicants who already had a published paper got in.

Note, however, that [Schlenker](#) is silent about how to represent the existential import of a universal quantifier, when it is observed. One could represent it as part of the entailment of a universally quantified sentence (so there are two ‘readings’ of a universal quantifier). This alternative would then be stronger than the existentially quantified sentence.

Also, [Magri 2009](#) still has the homogeneous/generic alternative. However, is it actually logically stronger than the existential sentence? Depends on the existential import.

- (57) a. Each year, every international applicant was rejected.
b. Each year, international applicants were rejected.

- (58) Are North Korean immigrants treated as political refugees in this country?

If there is no consistent existential import, the homogeneous alternative won’t be logically stronger. And if we allow ourselves to generate implicatures based on logically independent alternatives, we’d run into [Schlenker](#)’s problem above.

4.2 Contextually ordered scales

[Schlenker 2012](#) discusses Magri effects with contextually ordered scales.

- (59) In my company, everyone who has any degree at all has a Ph.D.
#Bill works in my company and he has a high school degree.
([Schlenker 2012](#): p. 425)

The scale is constructed by common knowledge.

As [Magri 2017](#) points out, the Blindness Hypothesis predicts (59) to be #, because it will generate the implicature that Bill only has a high school degree, which contradicts the common knowledge.

Rather, a problem arises with (60), which is felicitous.

- (60) In my company, everyone who has any degree at all has a Ph.D.
Bill works in my company and he has a Ph.D.

Why doesn’t this have an implicature that Bill does not have a high school degree, which should contradict the common knowledge?

- (61) [Context: I go to work by train. The train route is $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow D \rightarrow E$. The train always leaves from Station A, and goes through one station at a time.]
a. Yesterday the train only arrived at station C.
b. #Yesterday the train only stopped at station C. ([Magri 2017](#): (39))
- (62) [Context: Prof. Smith teaches introductory Calculus, intermediate Calculus, and advanced Calculus. He is strict about requirements and never allows any student to take one of his Calculus classes without having taken the preceding one(s). While in college, did Mary take any classes with him?]
a. Mary only got to intermediate Calculus.

- b. #Mary only took intermediate Calculus.

(Magri 2017: (41))

5 Conjunction

Magri 2016 points out that conjunctive sentences of the following kind are problematic for the Blindness Hypothesis: The *all*-alternative is not contextual equivalent.

- (63)
- a. #Some Italians come from a warm country and are blond.
 - b. #Some children of that couple have a French last name and an Italian first name.
 - c. Professor Smith always assigns the same grade to all of his students.
#This year, some of his students got an A and a prize.
- (Magri 2016: p. 3)

Magri 2016 observes that these sentences improve by adding certain preceding context.

- (64)
- a. Italians come from a warm country. Some of them come from a warm country and are blond.
 - b. The children of that couple have a French last name. Some of them have a French last name and an Italian first name.
 - c. Every year, Professor Smith assigns the same grade to all of his students. This year, his students got an A. Some of them got an A and a prize.
- (Magri 2016: p. 9)

But this runs directly counter to the Blindness Thesis. Context does matter.

In summary, conjunctive sentences are problematic for the Blindness in two ways:

- It predicts (63) to be acceptable.
- It predicts context to not change that, but (64) are acceptable.

6 Towards an alternative explanation

The Magri effect: A sentence with a scalar item is # if it has a logically stronger but contextually equivalent alternative.

- (65)
- a. Prof Smith gave an A to some of her students.
 - b. Prof Smith gave an A to all of her students.

Puzzle: If the two sentences are contextually equivalent, why can't we use both in the same way?

Two possible directions

1. Deny that they are contextually equivalent. For example, using a finer-grained notion of meaning (situation semantics, truth-maker semantics, inquisitive semantics, etc.), we could say that the two sentences differ in meaning (as Nathan suggested last time).

2. Find contextual nonequivalence somewhere.

I'll pursue the second option.

6.1 Idea: Scalar implicature computation is not blind, but incremental

Experimental evidence that scalar inferences are computed online (Breheny, Kat-sos & Williams 2006, Huang & Snedeker 2009, Panizza et al. 2009, Grodner et al. 2010, Huang & Snedeker 2011, Bergen & Grodner 2012, Tomlinson, Bailey & Bott 2013, Huang & Snedeker 2018, Sun & Breheny 2020).

There's some controversy over how soon scalar implicature computation starts, but let's assume that it's basically immediate.

Key observation: The sentences with *some* and *all* are not *incrementally contextually equivalent*.

- (66) a. Prof Smith gave an A to some ...
 b. Prof Smith gave an A to all ...

At this point in processing, implicature computation starts, but contextual equivalence hasn't been established. The continuation could be consistent with the implicature, e.g.:

- (67) Prof Smith gave an A to some students I've taught.

Assuming that scalar inferences are optional, the *some*-sentence has a coherent interpretation, which is without an implicature and overall contextually equivalent to the *all*-sentence.

However it is incrementally suboptimal.

One way to understand this in terms of Manner: Eliminate as many unintended scalar inferences in incremental processing as possible.

6.2 Embedding

We could explain the 'embedding cases' similarly.

- (68) a. Every professor who gave an A to some ...
 b. Every professor who gave an A to all ...

At this point in processing, we entertain two possible existence presuppositions for (68a), although the DP is not done yet:

- a. w/o SI: There are professors that gave an A to at least some ...
b. w/ SI: There are professor that gave an A to some but not all ...

Again, there are possible continuations that are consistent with the SI, so the two sentences are not incrementally contextually equivalent.

- (69) Every professor who gave an A to some students I've taught got a raise.

Under this account, SI computation is 'contextually sighted' so contextually ordered scales are not problematic.

6.3 Indirect implicatures

Recall that indirect implicatures do not consistently trigger Magri effects:

(70) My supervisee did not take syntax or semantics.

An incremental explanation:

- You process *no* first.

(71) My supervisee did not take syntax ...

- Then you hit *or*. (Assuming that it takes narrow scope) you know that SI is not (or very unlikely to be) intended.

(72) My supervisee did not take syntax or...

(Scope ambiguity remains, but scope and structural ambiguities seem to not trigger Magri effects)

- A prediction: In a DE context created by a negative operator that appears after the scalar item, we expect Magri effects. English doesn't seem to provide such a case. Negation appears at the very end in Japanese. But Japanese disjunction is a PPI.

(73) boku-no gakusee-wa toogoron-ka imiron-o tor-anakat-ta.
1SG-GEN student-TOP syntax-or semantics-ACC take-NEG-PAST
'My student didn't take syntax or semantics.'

We can try other DE environments, e.g. *before*-clauses:

(74) [Context: You can only take syntax and semantics in the same semester]
My supervisee took logic before she took syntax or semantics.

(75) #boku-no gakusee-wa [*pro* toogoron-ka imiron-o tor-u]
1SG-GEN student-TOP [*pro* syntax-or semantics-ACC take-PRES]
mae-ni ronrigaku-o tot-ta.
before-at logic-ACC take-PAST
'My student took logic before taking syntax or semantics.'

The way to say (74) in this context is by using a different 'negative' connective.

(76) boku-no gakusee-wa [*pro* toogoron-mo imiron-mo tor-u]
1SG-GEN student-TOP [*pro* syntax-MO semantics-MO take-PRES]
mae-ni ronrigaku-o tot-ta.
before-at logic-ACC take-PAST
'My student took logic before taking syntax or semantics.'

Crucially, in this case, there is no incremental ambiguity.

6.4 Conjunction

- (77) a. #Some Italians come from a warm country and are blond.
b. #Some children of that couple have a French last name and an Italian first name.
c. Professor Smith always assigns the same grade to all of his students.
#This year, some of his students got an A and a prize.
(Magri 2016: p. 3)

Tentative analysis:

- These sound not so great, because you'd better indicate that there's a second conjunct.
- At the end of the first conjunct, one entertains the possibility that this is the end of the sentence, which would be #.

(78) Some children of that couple have a French last name ...

- If we do indicate that there's a second sentence, the judgments get better. For instance, if the first conjunct is entirely de-accented, as in (79).

- (79) a. Italians come from a warm country. Some of them come from a warm country and are blond.
b. The children of that couple have a French last name. Some of them have a French last name and an Italian first name.
c. Every year, Professor Smith assigns the same grade to all of his students. This year, his students got an A. Some of them got an A and a prize.
(Magri 2016: p. 9)

Or inserting *both* works as well.

- (80) a. Some children of that couple have both a French last name and an Italian first name.
b. Professor Smith always assigns the same grade to all of his students. This year, some of his students got both an A and a prize.

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