1 Introduction

This study develops Li and Law’s (2013) approach to focus intervention effects (FIEs), arguing that it makes desirable predictions regarding FIEs in alternative questions, sentences with indefinites, and contrastive topic constructions. Differing from previous analyses of FIEs, which unselectively ban \(wh\)-phrases in the scope of a focus operator (Beck 2006, Cable 2010, Mayr 2013), Li and Law (2013) take into consideration the grammaticality contrast between FIEs (1a) and focus association with \(wh\)-phrases (FWHA) (1b) in \(wh\)-in-situ languages (Mandarin examples are used for illustration).

1a. ?? Ta zhi rang [Lee]\( \varepsilon \) jian shei?
   he only allow Lee meet who
   ‘Who is the person \(x\) such that he allows only Lee to meet \(x\)?’

1b. Ta zhi rang shei jian Lee?
   he only allow who meet Lee
   ‘Who is the person \(x\) such that he allows only \(x\) to meet Lee?’

Based on the contrast between FIEs and FWHA, they proposed that FIEs arise iff a focus operator scopes over a constituent that provides a set of sets as the quantificational domain for the focus operator.

2 Deriving FIEs

The LF structure of (1a) is (2) (the English gloss is used throughout for simplicity). Following the flexible functional application (FFA) (Hagstrom 1998), \(who\) is composed in a pointwise manner. As a result, the ordinary value of \(VP1\) is a set of properties (3a). The secondary value of \(VP1\) is (3b), in which the assignment function \(h\) is activated to interpret \([Lee]\_f\) as a distinguished variable (Kratzer 1991). Therefore, the focus value of \(VP1\) is (3c), which is a set of sets of properties.

(2) \([cp[\{p\}he [vp2 only [vp1 allow [lee]_f meet who]]]]\)

(3) a. \([vp1]^f = \{\lambda y. y allows Lee to meet x | x \in \{John, Peter, …\}\} \]

b. \([vp1]^h = \{\lambda y. y allows h(1) to meet x | x \in \{John, Peter, …\}\} \]

c. \([vp1]^g = \{\lambda y. y allows h(1) to meet x | x \in \{John, Peter, …\} | h \in H\} \]

According to Kratzer (1991), the focus value of a given constituent provides the quantificational domain for a focus operator. In (2), only takes \([vp1]^f\) as its quantificational domain. At the level of the ordinary value, the composition of only with \(VP1\) is facilitated by the FFA, which results in a new set (4).

(4) \([vp2]^g = [only vp1]^g\]
   = \{\lambda y. \forall P[\{vp1]\}[P(y) \Rightarrow P(y) = y allows x to meet Lee] | x \in \{John, Peter, …\}\}

   = \{\lambda y. \forall P[\{vp1]\}[P(y) \Rightarrow P(y) = y allows John to meet Lee], …\}

Note that the quantificational domain of only is inappropriate. In (4), only should quantify over properties, but its quantificational domain is a set of sets of properties. The composition is illicit, giving rise to FIEs.

3 Deriving FWHA

The LF structure of (1b) is (5). Since no focused phrase is contained in the scope of only, the secondary value of \(VP1\) is equivalent to its ordinary value, i.e., a set of properties (6).

(5) \([cp[\{p\}he [vp2 only [vp1 allow who meet Lee]]]\)

(6) \([vp1]^e = [vp1]^g = \{\lambda y. y allows x to meet Lee | x \in \{John, Peter, …\}\} \]

Although \(h\) is not used to compute \(VP1\), \([vp1]^g\) still denotes a set of alternatives by virtue of containing who. Only can directly take \([vp1]^g\) as its quantificational domain. At the level of the ordinary value, only is applied to each member of the set in (6), resulting in a new set (7).

(7) \([vp2]^g = [only vp1]^g\]
   = \{\lambda y. \forall P[\{vp1]\][P(y) \Rightarrow P(y) = y allows x to meet Lee] | x \in \{John, Peter, …\}\}
analyzing FIEs.

provide wh

5 (12)

Suppose that a focus operator scopes over the CT construction, it sets of propositions as its focus value, as in (13). In (12), a disjunctive phrase denotes a set of sets. In (13), a disjunctive phrase in Mandarin.

(9a) shows that the focused phrase. (9b) shows that the de re reading of the indefinite is possible when only is not present.

We propose that only [John]f wanted to watch a movie. #It’s Titanic.

Only [John]f wanted to watch a movie. It’s Titanic.

We have observed that an indefinite in an intensional context fails to have a de re reading when it is in the scope of a focus-sensitive operator being associated with a focused phrase. As a consequence, the indefinite in (9a) fails to license the cross-sentential anaphora. (9b) shows that the de re reading of the indefinite is possible when only is not present.

(10) |a movie| = \{ x is a movie & x \in D_{\text{e}} \}

(11) | [\text{John}]_{\text{F}} \text{ wanted to watch a movie} | P_2 \exists P_3 [\text{John}]_{\text{F}} \text{ wanted to watch a movie} |

In order to get a de re reading, the expansion of the set denoted by the indefinite must be closed by an existential closure in IP3. Therefore, the ordinary value of IP2 denotes a set of propositions via set expansion (12a). Correspondingly, the secondary and focus values of IP2 are (12b) and (12c) respectively. Following the composition shown in section 2, FIEs arise when only takes |IP2| as its quantificational domain.

(12a) | [\text{John}]_{\text{F}} \text{ wanted to watch a movie} |\text{ and x is a movie} \in D_{\text{e}} \}

(12b) | [h(1)] \text{ wanted to watch x} |\text{ x is a movie} \in D_{\text{e}} \}

(12c) | [h(1)] \text{ wanted to watch x} |\text{ x is a movie} \in D_{\text{e}} \} | h \in H |

6 Contrastive topic (CT) The current analysis also predicts that FIEs could appear in a CT constructions in Mandarin. Constant (2010, 2011) argues that the focus value of a CT construction denotes a set of sets. In (13a), for example, the second clause denotes a set of sets as its focus value, as in (13b).

Mama meitian hen wan cai hui ji, [s [Baba]_{\text{CT}} ne, gancui jiu [bu hui jia]f.

mother everyday very late just return home father NE simply just not return home ‘Every day, mom comes home very late, and Dad does not even come home at all.’

S\] = \{ \{\text{Mom comes home late, Mom does not come home, …}\}

\{\text{Dad comes home late, Dad does not come home, …}\} \}

Suppose that a focus operator scopes over the CT construction, it should take the set of sets in (13b) as its domain and trigger FIEs. (14) shows that this is indeed an illicit composition.

*Zhiyou [s [Baba] ne, gancui jiu [bu hui jia]f only father NE simply just not return home ‘Only Dad NE, does not even come back at all.’

5 Conclusion This paper has shed new light on the empirical domain of FIEs. Given that wh-questions, alternative questions and sentences with indefinites have all been argued to involve Hamblin sets, the fact that they are all sensitive to FIEs is unsurprising. This in turn provides strong motivation for adopting Hamblin’s semantics as a general framework for analyzing FIEs.