

Quantifier focus in Serbian

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Abstract: This paper presents a study on the interpretation of anaphoric reference to preceding quantified expressions in Serbian. Quantifiers not only differ in the proportions they denote but also, depending on their polarity, in their properties of assigning referential focus. In an off-line judgement task, we investigated the focus properties of four Serbian quantifiers. The results show that positive and negative quantifiers behave differently and focus different discourse referents. This is in line with what we know from other languages. However, Serbian differs from English in that negative quantifiers are more open to different set focuses. Our conclusion from the study is that negative and positive quantified expressions in Serbian show, in principle, the same categorical differences that we find in other languages. The effect of polarity on referential focus seems to be an effect not particular to English. However, there are subtle differences between negative quantifiers in Serbian and English.

Key words: referential focus, judgement task, semantics, syntax.