

On a difference between Italian and English factives

Gennaro Chierchia

In E, certain factives license NPIs, while in Italian, they do not:

- (1) a. I was surprised/sorry that Mary said anything
- b. * Mi dispiace/sono sorpreso che Maria abbia sollevato alcun problema

Moreover, in E but not in I intervening factives ‘disrupt’ the relationship between an NPI and its licenser (cf. Homer 2009 on French vs. E)

- (2) a. It isn’t strange that Mary broke any vase
- b. *Non e’ strano che Maria abbia mai parlato
 (it) is not strange that Maria has ever spoken
- c. Non e’ chiaro che Maria abbia mai parlato
 (it) is not clear that Maria has ever spoken

This contrast raises the following questions, among others:

- (3) i. How is it at all possible for presuppositions to ‘intervene’ in NPI licensing?
- ii. How can such intervention be parametric in nature?

The fact that the parameter affects whole classes of items across languages suggests that the switch is morphosyntactic in nature (as opposed to purely lexical). I am going to suggest that (i) factive presuppositions are introduced by an operator and that (ii) such an operator must be attached lower in I with respect to E. This raises various cartographic considerations and some general issues pertaining to NPI licensing and the syntax-semantics interface.