Abstract

This MA thesis focuses on Czech polar questions, especially on the description of their syntactic-semantic interface. Besides that, I discuss an additional layer of pragmatic meaning (i.e., BIAS), which expresses the speaker's expectations about the possible answers based on their beliefs or on their immediate context. The question's bias is signaled by a number of formal means: word order (interrogative vs. declarative), polarity (positive vs. negative question) and particles (e.g. *copak*). The interpretation of negation in polar questions is by no means trivial, as it gives rise to two types of reading: inner and outer. I propose explicit syntactic and semantic analyses of negative polar questions in Czech using the generative and formal semantic approach. To capture the difference between inner and outer negation, I use Repp's (2013) theory and the VERUM/FALSUM operators. I also propose a syntactic analysis of verbal movement to the initial position in Czech interrogative sentences. The thesis, therefore, aims to characterize how the formal means interact with the question's meaning (including bias). I ran a naturalness judgment task to empirically test the hypotheses based on previous accounts of polar questions and my own analyses. The experimental set-up consisted of multiple parts investigating negative polar questions as well as the behavior of certain particles (*copak*, *náhodou*, *snad*, *přece*). The results showed that the immediate context interacts with the question's interpretation as well as its word order. To some extent, it also determined the usage of some of the particles.

Keywords: questions, polar questions, semantics, syntax, pragmatics, bias, negation, particles