

# Linguistics Seminar Series on

## “Natural Language Quantification – Compositionality in Quantifier Phrases and Quantifier Words”

### Lecture 1: Three Classes of Quantifier Phrases

**Professor Anna Szabolcsi**  
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**Date:** October 16, 2012 (Tuesday)

**Time:** 4:30pm – 6:15pm

**Venue:** LSK LT2 (Lee Shau Kee Building), Chinese University of Hong Kong

#### Abstract

According to the classical view (Montague 1974, May 1985) and its refinement in Generalized Quantifier Theory, all quantifier phrases are built in the same uniform manner, from a possibly quite complex determiner expression and a restrictor expression, and their scope is computed in the same uniform manner.

The classical view predicts that the scope behavior of quantifier phrases is uniform, and that differences in the syntactic composition of determiner expressions does not matter as long as they have the same truth-conditional content. It turns out that these predictions are not borne out.

I take up some of the empirical issues that have redrawn the map in recent decades, as laid out in Szabolcsi (2010). Drawing on Beghelli & Stowell (1997), Reinhart (1997), Szabolcsi (1997), Lin (1998), and Stanley & Szabo (2000) I show that unbounded existential scope and clause-bounded distributive scope need to be distinguished for both unmodified indefinites of the ‘some book, two books’ type and for universals of the ‘every book’ type. I introduce the formalization of existential scope behavior using possibly skolemized choice functions that are either existentially closed or contextually given. Distributive scope behavior can be formalized using a silent ‘each’ operator on the predicate or a functional head Dist. Drawing on Hackl (2000, 2009), Geurts & Nouwen (2007), Lidz et al. (2011), I review linguistic and processing evidence that differences in the syntactic composition of modified numerals (‘more/fewer than n’, ‘at most/at least n’, ‘most of the n’) are significant, even when they do not distinguish truth conditions. I motivate a split-scope degree-quantificational analysis of comparative quantifiers.

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

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