

LEXICAL POLARITY ITEMS IN ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN, EMPHATIC AND ATTENUATING ITEMS

Mihaela ZAMFIRESCU

Școala Doctorală, Universitatea din București

Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to argue that a suitable account of polarity items entails the use of a Scalar Model, which makes clear predictions about what is and is not a possible polarity item and about the semantic features they must encode. It predicts that there should be a regular association between a form's scalar value, informative strength and polarity sensitivity. Scales are part of human reasoning and scales of ordered sets of values interact in a meaningful way with negation. Natural language predicates (adjectives, verbs, quantifiers etc.) can be divided into gradable ones (good/ bad) or non-gradable (afloat, astir etc.). Conceptually, gradable predicates represent points along some semantic dimension <hot, warm, lukewarm> or the extreme of such semantic dimension (antonymic pairs like <old, young>).

Keywords: scalar operators, rhetoric effects, positive polarity items, emphatic, attenuating

1. Introduction and Motivation

According to Israel (2000) polarity items are forms whose felicity depends on the sorts of inferences one might draw from their use in context. These inferences are scalar in nature and reflect the scalar semantics of the polarity items themselves.

Polarity items are scalar operators whose profiled content is construed against the background of an ordered set of alternatives and which are thus interpreted within the information structure provided by the scalar model.

A scalar model is a structured set of propositions ordered along one or more parameters in a way that supports inferencing. The model consists of a propositional function with one or more open variables, each ranging over a scale of possible values. The propositional function effectively defines a type of eventuality, and the variables stand for the various ways this eventuality may be realized.

A scalar model can be either simple with one variable and values ordered along a single scale, or complex with many variables and thus with many scales.

According to Israel, inferencing in a scalar model is defined relative to the propositional function on which is built.

The Scalar Model is empirically more adequate because it has a better coverage including phenomena like scalarity, polarity sensitivity and inferences that polarity contexts support. It is theoretically beneficial since it incorporates essential insights of the semantic analysis. It accounts for more phenomena and shows how the two semantic features typical of polarity items – their scalar denotation and expressive rhetorical force – give rise to polarity sensitivity.

Israel's (1996, 1997) Scalar Model of Polarity predicts a reliable correlation between a polarity item's sensitivity and its scalar semantic properties. (I didn't sleep a wink. = the emphatic NPI makes reference to a low scalar value/ She is insanely good-looking and outrageously cruel. = the emphatic PPI denotes high scalar values)

This theory predicts that:

- forms denoting a minimal scalar degree may be emphatic negative polarity items while forms denoting a maximal degree can be emphatic positive polarity items. Israel (1996) views polarity sensitivity as a problem in lexical semantics.
- polarity items are conventionally specified for two semantic features, quantitative value and informative value, and the interaction of these two features in a single lexical form is what creates the effect of polarity sensitivity.

2. General notions

2.1. Defining the Domain.

It was believed that every affirmative sentence has a negative counterpart different from it only in the presence of a Neg constituent. This is not always the case.

There are affirmative sentences which lack a negative counterpart and there are negative sentences which lack an affirmative counterpart. This lack of symmetry is due to the

occurrence of certain elements, which in given collocations or in some of their meanings require an affirmative or negative environment.

The term '**polarity item**' allows for the characterization of certain words or expressions with respect to negation. There are two distinct categories that are sensitive to the polarity of the sentence or phrase in which they occur: negative polarity items (**NPIs**), which require negative sentences and positive polarity items (**PPIs**), which require assertive, non-negative contexts.

2.2. Semantic scales (Horn, 1972)

First, we can distinguish between three types of scales: semantic, pragmatic¹ and argumentative, although the main concern of this section represents Horn's (1972) semantic (logical) scales

Thus, **semantic scales** are those whose members (predicates) are ordered by semantic (or logical) entailment and where the mention of any member of the scale unilaterally entails the lower or weaker members to its right and conversationally implicates the negation of the higher or stronger scale members to its left. This implicature is a Generalized Conversational Implicature induced via the Q-principle, of which the speaker's correlate is 'say as much as you can' and the hearer's correlate 'what is not said is not the case'. Natural language predicates (adjectives, verbs, quantifiers etc.) can be divided into gradable ones (good/ bad) or non-gradable (afloat, astir etc.).

Conceptually, gradable predicates represent points along some semantic dimension <hot, warm, lukewarm> or the extreme of such semantic dimension (antonymic pairs like <old, young>).

Items belonging to scalar categories may be ordered according to their strength along that semantic dimension.

According to the logic of a Horn scale (Horn, 1972, 1989), scalar expressions, <e1, e2, ..., en>, are ranked in terms of their entailments so that for an arbitrary sentence frame S and

¹ **Pragmatic scales** are those whose members are ordered by pragmatic entailment (Fauconnier, 1975). These scales are 'non-logical' and they are invoked (among other things) by:

- (a) connectives – in fact – which rhetorically marks what follows as a better or more specific instance (*bad, in fact terrible*);
- (b) temporals – still – *She is still talking about the party.*
- (c) part-whole – *finger – hand – arm.*
- (d) focus modifiers.

In this case we are not talking about logical entailment but about implicatures derived from speaker – addressee expectations about the world. These types of scales will be presented in detail in section 2.4.

Argumentative scales are those whose members are ordered according to the relative strength that its members – arguments – possess in support of a particular contextual (explicit or implicit) 'conclusion' (Ducrot, 1980; Anscombe and Ducrot, 1994) The discussion on argumentative scales does not represent the aim of the present paper, maybe they will be dealt with in future papers.

expressions $e_j > e_k$, $S(e_j)$ unilaterally entails $S(e_k)$, where e_1, e_2, \dots, e_n are: lexicalized items, of the same word class, from the same register; and “about” the same semantic relations or from the same semantic field

(1) STRONG	WEAK
1.....2.....m.....m+1.....n	
< n.....n-1.....4 3 2 1 >	the cardinal scale
< the firstthe second.....the n-th >	the ordinal scale
< allmany.....some >	the quantificational scale
< necessary.....likely.....possible >	
< mustshould.....may >	a deontic scale
< hotwarm.....lukewarm >	
< adore.....love.....like >	
< excellent.....good.....OK >	
< none.....hardly any.....few >	
< impossible.....unlikely.....uncertain >	
< freezing.....cold.....cool >	
< loathe.....hate.....dislike >	
< {terrible/ awful}..... bad..... mediocre >	

Basically, stronger predicates entail weaker ones.

- (2) a. It is cold. \rightarrow It is cool.
 b. He has three children. \rightarrow He has two children.

If a speaker asserts a sentence containing a later, weaker term in the scale he implicates the falsity of the stronger scalar variants.

- (3) a. He has three children.
 He does not have four children.
 b. Some have come.
 Not all have come.

If a speaker asserts the negative of a sentence containing an earlier, stronger term in the scale, he implies a weaker variant.

(4) Not all have come.

Many have come.

Some have come.

Cardinal quantifiers form a typical scale with the following aspects:

Cardinal numbers assert their lower bound; a cardinal number 'n' always means 'at least n' and entails all the preceding weaker cardinals.

(5) a. I have three children.

b. * I have (only) three children, in fact I don't even have that many.

c. I have two children.

d. I have one child.

Cardinal numbers implicate their upper bound; a cardinal number 'n' implicates 'at most n'. Thus, (a) implicates (b), but the implicature can be cancelled, as in (c) in contrast with (a).

(6) a. John has three children.

b. John doesn't have more than three children.

c. John has three children, in fact he has four.

The negation of a cardinal 'not n' implicates 'n-1', thus (a) implicates (b).

(7) a. John doesn't have three children.

b. John has two children.

Sentences containing numbers assert lower boundedness, at least n, and may implicate upper boundedness, at most n, but the speaker may choose to ignore the implicature and thus the following question may receive two answers.

(8) a. Does John have three children?

b. Yes, in fact he has four. (ignoring the implicature)

c. No, he has four. (taking the implicature into account)

The quantitative upper-boundedness implicature mentioned above can be suspended.

(9) a. John doesn't have three children, he has four. (negation is stressed)

b. John has three children and possibly even more.

and indeed he may have more/ *fewer

if not more/ * fewer.

With **ordinal numbers** the quantitative implicature is reversed, because the orientation of the scale is also reversed. Whenever the ordinal refers to ranking the ordinal asserts upper-boundedness and implicates lower-boundedness.

(10) He finished at least third if not second out of two hundred entries.

No. 3 *fourth

The direction of the scale for both cardinals and ordinals will depend on general knowledge of the world, on what counts as normal 'desirable' for a certain situation.

Quantifiers are typical examples of scalar predicates. As with cardinal numbers and other scalar predicates, the use of a quantifier q_i correspondingly implicates that so far as the speaker knows no stronger quantifier can be substituted. Horn argues that on quantitative scales with defined end points, the negation of this end point (the strongest element) must be inferred by the listener from the stipulation on any weaker element on that scale, while the negation of non-terminal elements may be inferred from the stipulation of relatively weaker elements.

Speakers select words from a scale, the one which is the most informative and truthful, according to the circumstances in which he/ she is uttering the sentence. Thus, in the following example, by choosing the word 'some' the speaker creates an implicature ($+>$ not all).

(11) I'm studying linguistics and I've completed some of the required courses.

The basis of scalar implicature is that, when any form in a scale is asserted, the negative of all forms higher on the scale is implicated.

If the speaker who uttered the sentence under (11) continues to give other details about those courses, we can identify more scalar implicatures.

(12) They're sometimes really interesting.

Here, the speaker communicates, via implicature, the negative forms higher on the scale of frequency (+> not always, +> often).

By correcting themselves, speakers typically cancel out one of the scalar implicatures.

(13) I got some of this jewellery in Hong Kong – um actually, I think I got most of it here.

In the previous example, the speaker initially implicates '+> not most' by saying 'some', but then continues by correcting herself by actually asserting 'most'. That final assertion can still be interpreted with a scalar implicature (+> not all).

For **scalar adjectives**, the second item is included in the first, thus 'beautiful' entails 'at least pretty', 'hot' entails 'at least warm'. As we have said before, it is inappropriate to use the weaker term when the stronger term applies, because the speaker would be underinformative violating the maxim of quantity.

Context will usually determine the application of the upper-bound implicature of scalar predicates, there are several constructions in English whose function is either of making the implicature explicit by asserting it, or to eliminate it by contradiction or suspension. Among these cases:

- Asserting the implicature:

(14) a. She is pretty, but not beautiful.

b. She is just/ only pretty (but not beautiful).

- Contradicting (or cancelling) the implicature:

(15) a. She is not just/ only pretty, but beautiful as well.

b. She's pretty and what's more/ moreover/ in fact she's beautiful.

- Suspending the implicature:

(16) a. She's pretty, if not beautiful.

b. She's pretty, or even beautiful.

If clauses can function as presupposition and implicature suspenders, and their most salient formal feature is their truncated 'if not' form. The underlying semantic tense of the if clause and of the main clause must be semantically (referentially rather than formally)

identical and the ‘if’ should not be counterfactual, for the reduction of the clause to be possible. In the following example, it is impossible to reduce to ‘if not’ clauses.

(17) a. The candidate will be unhappy, if he isn’t victorious.

* if not victorious.

b. Nixon is always disappointed, if he isn’t victorious.

* if not victorious.

Counterfactual if-clauses can be reduced to a different construction ‘if not for NP’, unlike suspender ‘if-not’ clauses, counterfactual ‘if not for NP’ clauses can be preposed.

(18) a. If not for you, I couldn’t hear the robin sing.

b. Were it not for you, I couldn’t hear he robin sing.

If it weren’t for you

Suspension ‘if-not’ clauses are not the same thing with concessive ‘if not’ clauses.

(19) a. Diana is pretty, if not beautiful. (suspension)

b. Diana is pretty, if not intelligent. (concessive) (even if she isn’t intelligent)

There are clear differences between the two constructions, thus:

- ‘if-not’ concessive clauses can be preposed, unlike suspension ‘if-not’ clauses.

(20) If not beautiful, Dolores is nevertheless happy.

Even if not beautiful

- Suspension if-clauses accept NPIs within their scope and exclude PPIs

(21) The milk train doesn’t stop here anymore, if it ever did in the past.

* sometimes

- If the suspension clause contains an overt negative, then the two affective elements ‘if’ and ‘not’ create an environment that may also tolerate the occurrence of PPIs (according to Baker’s theory)

(22) He will eat daisies soon, if indeed he hasn't already eaten some.
if indeed he hasn't eaten any of them yet.

- The positive polarity adverb 'downright' appears only in suspending 'if-not' clauses, but not in concessive clauses

(23) a. Diana is pretty, if not downright beautiful.
b. * Diana is pretty, if not downright intelligent.

- Negative PIs, appearing in a clause with an overt negative, have the reverse effect, forcing the concessive reading.

(24) a. Diana is pretty, if not downright beautiful (suspension)
b. Diana is pretty, if not exactly beautiful (concessive)

Conclusion: In this section we have presented Horn's study on the inferential properties of scalar predicates because the use of scales will be very important in the development of this paper as the hypothesis that polarity sensitive expressions occupy extreme positions on a scale was further pursued by Israel in his 1998 thesis.

3. Israel's proposal (1996)

Israel's Scalar Model of polarity states that polarity items encode a speaker's attitude toward the information he/ she conveys in discourse, and so provide a means of manipulating the emotional and cognitive responses of the hearer.

A very important feature of the scalar model is the idea that **polarity items** themselves conventionally **express certain pragmatic functions** and they are licensed where they can discharge these functions.

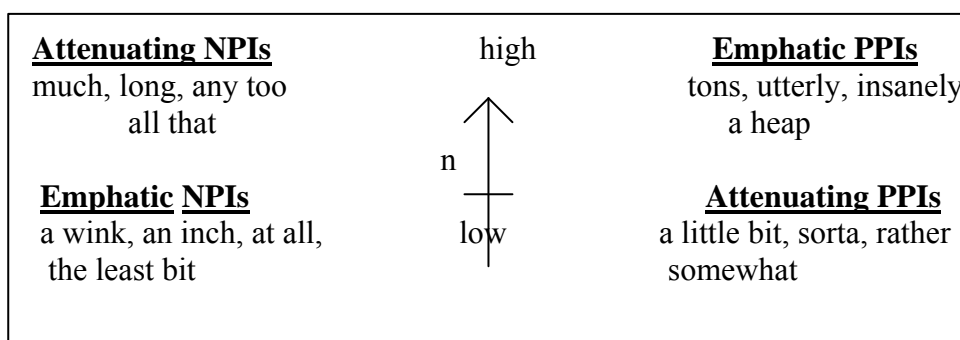
Polarity items are sensitive to the logical structure of the contexts in which they appear because the rhetorical attitudes they encode crucially depend on the kinds of inferences one might draw from their use.

The scalar model receives support from the fact that polarity items come from semantic domains which are inherently scalar and measure terms or degree adverbs qualify as polarity items that bear this feature.

3.1. Hypotheses of the Scalar model of Polarity

In this section we are going to provide the hypotheses that the scalar model of polarity makes, hypotheses which will be discussed with examples later on.

- Polarity items are conventionally specified for two scalar semantic features, quantitative value and informative value
- The interaction of these two features in a single lexical form is what creates the effect of polarity sensitivity
- PSIs are understood as scalar operators which must be interpreted with respect to an appropriately structured scalar model: they are forms whose lexical semantic-pragmatic content make them sensitive to scalar inferences.
- Polarity items tend to be associated with certain kinds of pragmatic affect, frequently serving either to intensify or to attenuate the rhetorical force of an utterance. For example, emphatic NPIs are: ‘lift a finger/ do a thing/ say a word’ and they strengthen the force of an expressed or implied negation and ‘all that/ so very/ any too’ attenuate the force of negation.
- Emphatic NPIs almost always denote or make reference to low scalar values, while attenuating NPIs refer to high scalar values. **Emphatic NPIs:** any, ever, at all, the least bit, in the slightest, give a damn, have a chance in hell, can possibly, can dream of.
- Emphatic PPIs, ‘a heap of/ utterly/ insanely’, denote high scalar values, and attenuating PPIs, ‘sorta/ rather/ somewhat’ denote low or low to mid scalar values. **Emphatic PPIs:** tons of N, scads of N, constantly, utterly, insanely, in a flash, within an inch of N, be bound to V, gotta V.



The quantitative value need not be absolute but is in fact often understood as relative to some scalar norm, represented as ‘n’ in the diagram.

This diagram divides polarity items along three parameters according to whether they are PPIs or NPIs, high-scalar or low-scalar, emphatic or understanding.

(25) She didn’t lift a finger to help him.

An expression like, ‘lift a finger’, expresses a minimal effort and contrasts with all expressions which denote a great effort. Being an emphatic item it contributes to a strong proposition. Thus, this expression can only be used in scale reversing contexts, where inferences run from lesser to greater efforts.

A sentence like the previous one is grammatical because it licenses the inference that ‘she didn’t try very hard’.

(26) * She lifted a finger to help him.

By contrast, the previous sentence cannot generate such an inference and the reason for its failure is that such an expression expresses a weak proposition incompatible with its inherently emphatic nature.

According to Israel (2004), the same logic applies to attenuating polarity items; these forms require a construal in which they are entailed by some default norm within the scalar norm.

(27) * Her theory is all that complicated.

A sentence like (27) simultaneously offers itself as a weak claim and yet makes a strong claim (‘the theory is very complicated’). The sentence is ungrammatical because it allows no construal consistent with both its scalar denotation and its attenuating pragmatics.

3.2. The lexical semantics of polarity sensitivity

Expressions denoting minimal quantities or scalar endpoints often become stereotyped as **emphatic NPIs**. In English we can enumerate: ‘drink a drop/ (spend) a red cent/ budge an

inch, lift a finger/ have a snowball's chance in hell.”(<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com>;
<http://www.city-data/forum/elections/287232-one-wrights-coments-context-2.html>)

- (28) a. Roberta doesn't drink a drop.
b. I tried every argument, but she didn't budge an inch.
c. Did Mary ever lift a finger to help you?
d. I don't have a red cent.
e. I for one will never vote for a candidate who will spend a red cent of my tax dollars to fix some 'climate crisis' that doesn't exist.
f. He is telling the author that their article didn't have a snowball's chance in hell of passing.

Other **emphatic NPIs** include the scalar expressions: 'let alone/ much less', degree adverbs like 'at all/ in the slightest', verbal idioms like 'can fathom'. (<http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/language/archives/005142.html>;
<http://www.natureinstitute.org/txt/ch/details/genetics.htm>)

- (29) a. David Beckham cannot take defenders on at the best of times, let alone when he is no more than semi-fit.
b. With a wealth of interesting examples he shows how genes (DNA) alone cannot determine traits, much less organisms.
c. Can't you give me any help at all?
d. The whole stupid argument didn't interest me in the slightest.
e. No one can fathom a motive: Pastor shot during service.

Understating NPIs, like 'much' are less common but we can also enumerate the adverbial 'long' or 'all that'+Adj.

- (30) a. He didn't last long.
b. Few of them are all that clever.

Now, we can consider the contrast between the low-scalar PPI 'a little bit' and the high-scalar 'scads'. The use of the NPI trigger 'rarely' shows that these expressions qualify as PPIs.

- (31) a. Belinda (*rarely) won scads of money at the Blackjack tables.
b. Belinda (*rarely) won a little bit of money at the Black jack tables.

The sentence under (a) in the previous example constitutes an emphatic assertion to the effect that Belinda won a very large quantity of money, while the example under (b) asserts only that Belinda won a small quantity of money. ‘Scads’ defines a very high quantity and produces an emphatic sentence, while ‘a little bit’ defines a small quantity and produces an understatement.

Low scalar PPIs in English include degree modifiers like ‘pretty/ rather/ somewhat/ sorta’, verbal idioms like ‘give X a shot/ put in a word for’, quantificational NPs like ‘a smidgen/ a tad/ a handful’. (<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com>);

- (32) a. Her work was pretty good.
b. Irene is a rather good musician.
c. I somewhat like this movie.
d. He sorta knows how to fix the car.
e. Jason’s father always thought he would be a great baseball player and encouraged him to give it a shot.
f. He put in a good word for her with the boss.
g. I believe you need a smidgen of goofiness with your design to really make what you learn stick.
h. He looked a tad bigger than me.
i. there is only a handful of people in the street.

High-scalar PPIs include comparative and superlative expressions like ‘far Xer/ way Xer/ by far the Xest’ intensifiers like ‘utterly/ awfully/ entirely/ intensely/ as hell’, quantifying NPs ‘heaps/ tons’, adjectives like ‘awesome/ radical.’. (<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com>);

- (33) a. Scientist have determined that the ‘Goldilocks’ zone, a region in space where conditions are not too hot and not too cold for life to exist, is far bigger than originally thought, and extends into our solar system as well.
b. This crisis is way bigger than dead banks and Wall Street bailouts.
c. This is by far the biggest lion we saw in Okinawa.

- d. This is an utterly beautiful night.
- e. I'm awfully sorry.
- f. I am entirely satisfied with the architect's design.
- g. He sipped his drink, staring intensely at me.
- h. I'm tired as hell.
- i. We have heaps of homework tonight.
- j. I looked and felt tons better.
- k. This is a totally awesome arcade game.
- l. He proposed a radical solution.

3.2.1. Quantitative value

Quantitative value reflects the fact that most PSIs encode a scalar semantics. Israel views a scale as an ordering of elements along some gradable dimension of semantic space. Thus, for a form to encode a specific q-value, it has to designate some relative or absolute position within such an ordering. The high and low q-value of polarity items is understood relative to the contextual norms associated with a given dimension.

For most PSIs q-value is a transparent element of meaning, because quantifiers and degree modifiers designate an abstract scalar extent or degree, often without reference to any particular dimension. For example a PPI like 'hell of' signals that the predicate holds to a very high degree, and the NPI 'at all' signals that the predicate holds to a minimal degree.

- (34) a. He's helluv (hell of) tall.
 b. He's not tall at all.

3.2.2. Informative value

I-value is a pragmatic feature encoding a speaker's attitude to the content he/ she conveys. Thus, emphatic utterances express great involvement and commitment to what is said while understatements denote deference and a desire to mitigate face threatening acts.

Basically, informativity is a property of sentences used in contexts. Emphatic sentences make a stronger claim than might have been expected while understating sentences make a weaker claim that might have been expected.

Israel presents a variety of tests that suggest that emphatic PSIs represent a distinct class from understating PSIs. In this respect, certain intensifying devices allow some intensifiers but exclude hedged constructions within their scope.

The tests we can use to distinguish between emphatic PSIs and understating PSIs are:

- Modification by the intensifying “literally”, which emphatic PSIs allow but understating PSIs reject.
- Occurrence after the introduction “you’ll never believe it!”, which is acceptable for emphatic PSIs but not for the understating PSIs.
- Coordinating conjunctions like ‘or at least’, ‘in fact’ or ‘and what’s more’ show that emphatic PSIs make stronger claims than understating PSIs.

In the following examples, the sentences under (a) are emphatic and allow modification by the intensifying ‘literally’, while the sentences under (b), which are understating reject the modification.

(35) a. Margo literally didn’t sleep a wink before her big test.

b. * Margo literally didn’t sleep much before her big test.

(36) a. Belinda literally won scads of money at the Blackjack tables.

b. * Belinda literally won a little bit of money at the Blackjack tables.

In the following examples, the sentences under (a) are emphatic and can be introduced by a breathless ‘You’ll never believe it!’, but the sentences under (b), which are understanders cannot be introduced by it.

(37) You’ll never believe it!

a. Margo didn’t sleep a wink before her big test.

b. ? Margo didn’t sleep much before her big test.

(38) You’ll never believe it!

a. Belinda won scads of money at the Blackjack tables.

b. ? Belinda won a little bit of money at the Blackjack tables.

(39) a. Margo didn’t sleep a wink or at least she didn’t sleep much.

b. * Margo didn’t sleep much or at least she didn’t sleep a wink.

(40) a. Margo didn’t sleep much, in fact she didn’t sleep a wink.

- b. * Margo didn't sleep a wink, in fact she didn't sleep much.
- (41) a. Belinda won scads of money or at least she won a little bit.
 b. * Belinda won a little bit of money, or at least she won scads.
- (42) a. Belinda won a little bit of money, in fact she won scads.
 b. * Belinda won scads of money, in fact she won a little bit.

Conclusions:

The Scalar Model argues that polarity sensitivity is a sensitivity to scalar reasoning. Scalar reasoning plays a pervasive role in the structure of rhetorical utterances in general and polarity items reflect the conventional exploitation of scalar reasoning and complex scalar models for specific rhetorical purposes in discourse.

The inferences relevant to polarity licensing need not to be and frequently are not logical at all, that is, they do not depend entirely on semantic entailment and they cannot be captured at any single level of representation.

4. Positive polarity items in Romanian

Just like in English, Romanian PPIs can be divided into grammatical and lexical PPIs. Since the aim of this paper is to concentrate on lexical PPIs for grammatical PPIs we will just give two examples 'deja' and 'oarecare'²

Lexical PPIs include: 'cand mi-oi vedea ceafa; la Pastele cailor; cand va face broasca par; cand va face plopul pere si racita micsunele; cand o prinde mata peste; cand va face spanul barba; cand or zbura bivolii;' ; 'in doi timpi si trei miscari; cat ai bate din palme'; 'ca dracu' (emfatic)'; 'olecuta; oleaca; nitel(us); nitica; un strop; o umbra; un dram; putin(tel); tone; o puzderie; o gramada; o sumedenie'.

Following Israel's Model of Scalarity we can clearly see that in Romanian polarity items can be understood as scalar operators which must be interpreted with respect to an appropriately structured scalar model: they are forms whose lexical semantic-pragmatic content make them sensitive to scalar inferences.

² Anamaria Falaus (2007, 2008) and Savescu-Ciuciuvara (2005) offer an extensive study of 'oarecare' indefinites in the tradition of Szabolcsi (2004) and also analyze Romanian N-words.

Attenuating PPIs denote low or low to mid scalar values: olecuta; oleaca; nitel(us); nitica; un strop; o farama; un dram; o picatura; o umbra; un graunte; putin(tel); o catime; un pic; un crampei.’

- (43) a. Are olecuta de rabdare.
b. Ai nevoie de nitica inteligenta ca sa poti invata matematica.
c. Va intarzia nitel dar va veni cu siguranta.
d. Clipeste nitel si va disparea senzatia de usturime.
e. In viata ai nevoie de un dram de noroc.
f. Bea un strop de vin ca sa uiti de necaz.
g. Am o umbra de indoiala asupra veridicitatii povestii.

Emphatic PPIs denote high scalar values: o puzderie; o multime; o gramada; o sumedenie; „cât ai zice pește”; „cât ai scăpăra dintr-un amnar”; „cât te-ai freca la ochi”; „când va face plopul pere și răchita micșunele”; „când o prinde mâța pește”; „când va face spânul barbă”.

- (44) a. S-au scris in ziare o gramada de minciuni.
b. Am subliniat o sumedenie de greseli in ultima lucrare pe care am scris-o.
c. Dintr-o data am vazut o puzderie de stele.
d. Secretara a aparut cu raportul cat ai zice peste.
e. Realizeaza adevarul cat ai bate din palme.
f. Ma va suna cand va face spanul barba.
g. Va recunoaste ca a gresit cand va face plopul pere si rachita micsunele.

The aim of the experiment I carried out was to test the use of the expressions listed above in both positive and negative contexts and to see if the 40 native speakers of Romanian considered the sentences as grammatical or not. The results show:

Emphatic PPIs

Example	Results
Va recunoaste ca a gresit cand va face plopul pere si rachita micsunele.	95% of the speakers considered the sentence grammatical and 5% considered the sentence not grammatical.
Îsi va schimba comportamentul la Pastele Cailor.	97.5% of the speakers considered the sentence as not grammatical, while 2.5% of the speakers marked the sentence as grammatical.
Vine cat ai zice peste.	92.5% of the speakers considered the sentence grammatical and 7.5% considered it as not grammatical.
Nu vine cat ai zice peste.	77.5% of the speakers considered the sentence not grammatical and 22.5% considered it grammatical.

Attenuating PPIs

Example	Results
Are si el nitica dreptate.	85% of the speakers considered the sentence grammatical and 15% considered it not grammatical.
Nu are olecuta rabdare.	65% of the speakers considered the sentence not grammatical and 35% considered it grammatical.

Conclusions: We can notice that Israel's model of polarity can be successfully applied to PPIs in Romanian, since all the examples presented before are scalar operators that can be associated with certain kinds of pragmatic affect, frequently serving either to intensify or to attenuate the rhetorical force of an utterance.

Bibliography:

1. Chitoran, D. & Cornilescu, A. (1985), *Elements of English Sentence Pragmatics*, Editura Universitatii Bucuresti
2. Cornilescu, A. (1995), *Concepts of Modern Grammar: A Generative Grammar Perspective*, Editura Universitatii Bucuresti
3. Fauconnier, G. (1975a) "Pragmatic scales and logical structure", *Linguistic Inquiry*: 6.353
4. ----- (1975b) "Polarity and the scale principle", *Papers from the Eleventh Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society
5. Horn, L. (1989), *A Natural History of Negation*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press
6. Horn, L. & Y. Kato (2000), *Negation and Polarity: Syntactic and Semantic Perspectives*, Oxford University Press Inc., New York
7. Israel, M. (1995), "Negative Polarity and Phantom Reference.", *BLS*: 21, 162-173
8. Israel, M. (1996), "Polarity Sensitivity as Lexical Semantics.", *Linguistics and Philosophy*: 19, 619-666
9. Israel, M. (1997), "The Scalar Model of Polarity Sensitivity." In Forget et al., eds., 209-229

10. Israel, M. (1998), “*Ever*: polysemy and polarity sensitivity.”, In *Linguistic Notes from La Jolla*: 19, 29-45
11. Israel, M. (1998), “Some and the Pragmatics of Indefinite Construal.” *BLS* 25
12. Israel, M. (2001), “Minimizers, Maximizers, and the Rhetoric of Scalar Reasoning.”, *Journal of Semantics*: 18.4, 297-331
13. Israel, M. (2004), “The Pragmatics of Polarity.”, In *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, Horn & Ward (eds), Blackwell, 701-723
14. Ladusaw, W. (1979), *Polarity Sensitivity as Inherent Scope Relations*, Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, Austin
15. Szabolcsi, A. (2004) “Positive Polarity-Negative Polarity”, *Natural Language and Linguistic Theor*, 22: 409-425
16. Van der Wouden, T. (1997), *Negative Contexts: Collocation, Polarity and Multiple Negation*, Routledge, London
17. <http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com>;
18. <http://www.city-data/forum/elections/287232-one-wrights-coments-context-2.html>
19. <http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/language/archives/005142.html>
20. <http://www.natureinstitute.org/txt/ch/details/genetics.htm>
21. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php>
22. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php>
23. <http://www.goenglish.com>; <http://en.wikipedia.org>

24. <http://www.usingenglish.com/refrence/idioms.html>

25. <http://www.yourdictionary.com/idioms>

Mihaela Zamfirescu is a PhD student in the 3rd year at the Doctoral School ‘Languages and Cultural Identities’, University of Bucharest, whose thesis analyzes positive polarity items in English and Romanian.