

# The internal structure of FEW/MANY: Cross-linguistic explorations

Karen De Clercq (FWO/UGent)

The aim of this talk is to contribute to our understanding of scalar quantifiers (SQs) (Horn 1989:247) or Q-adjectives (Solt 2015), more in particular FEW and MANY, by identifying which building blocks they consist of from a cross-linguistic perspective.

In English SQs like *few* look opaque at first sight. However, *few* and other scalar negative quantifiers like *seldom* and *rarely* have something in common with sentential negation: they can trigger positive question tags as well as inversion, and they can license NPIs:

- (1) a. Jack rarely/seldom goes out, does he/doesn't he? (McCawley 1998:507)
- b. Very few people would they admit to their club. (Collins & Postal 2014:138)
- c. The IRS rarely audits anyone. (Ladusaw 1979:76)

These effects are absent from their positive SQs counterpart MANY. I want to explore the hypothesis, present already in Klima (1964:269-272), that it is the presence of a covert Neg-feature in FEW, and its level of embedding, which explains the data in (1).

Another piece of evidence comes from Dutch *weinig* and French *peu*, both of which mean (noncount) FEW, and which can only be combined with positive gradable adjectives, not negative ones. *Weinig/peu* share this property with the negative affixal marker *on-/iN* 'un-':

- (2) a. on-gelukkig    \*on-droef    weinig gelukkig/\*droef  
     un-happy      un-sad      little happy/sad
- b. in-actif      \*im-passif    peu actif/\*passif  
     in-active      im-passive   little active/passive

De Clercq & Vanden Wyngaerd (2016) argue that both of these restrictions are due to the presence of a covert negative feature in negative adjectives, the negative prefix *un-*, and the SQ *weinig/peu* (which is the noncount counterpart of English *few*). Two negative features cannot be structurally adjacent, whence the pattern in (2).

A third source of evidence is typological in nature. I shall discuss data from different languages (Malagasy, Japanese, Malayalam, Hixkaryana, French), and present some cases where the morphology provides evidence for an underlying Neg-feature in negative SQs like FEW, as well as its absence in MANY.

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