Quantificational phrases (QPs) can have a collective or distributive reading. Language-specific preferences exist (Philip, 2005). Our results indicate that children already show these: Dutch-speaking children (6;3–10;1) prefer the distributive reading but English-speaking children (6;0–9;9) the collective one. We argue that the so-called “Quantificational Asymmetry” and lack thereof can be derived from this.

We compared the comprehension of Dutch reflexives (zichzelf ‘SE-self’) and pronouns (hem ‘him’) by Dutch-speaking children (n=62). We used a Picture Verification Task (van der Lely, 1997) where children judged whether the sentence matched the picture. Items were of the type [NP says [NP V NP]], where the embedded subject could be a referential NP (the rabbit) or a QP (every rabbit), and the embedded object a pronoun or a reflexive. When we compared our results to Marinis & Chondrogianni’s study (2011) into English-speaking children, – who used the same task – we discovered differences in these mismatch conditions (where test sentences did not match the picture):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test sentence</th>
<th>Picture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) [the horse says [the rabbit V pronoun ]]</td>
<td>(rabbit scratching himself)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) [the horse says [every rabbit V pronoun ]]</td>
<td>(rabbits scratching themselves)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) [the horse says [every rabbit V reflexive ]]</td>
<td>(rabbits scratching horse)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The differences:
(A) Although both Dutch- and English-speaking children erroneously accept a local antecedent for a pronoun in (1) (presumably because they mistakenly have them co-refer in the discourse, cf. Chien & Wexler (1990)), only English-speaking children reject this when the embedded subject is a QP, as in (2); i.e. only they show the “Quantificational Asymmetry”.

(B) For (3), English-speaking children score 50% but Dutch-speaking children 90% correct.

We hypothesise that both contrasts have the same source: the stronger preference for the distributive reading in Dutch-speaking children (cf. Drozd & van Loosbroek, 2006). Under a distributive reading, each agent is paired to each object and the interpretation of (2) becomes similar to that of (1). Hence, coreference is retained and, consequently, no Quantificational Asymmetry arises. English-speaking children prefer a collective reading for the quantifier every (Novogrodsky, Roeper & Yamakoshi, 2012). Under the collective reading coreference is impossible, because the singular pronoun cannot take the embedded QP-subject as antecedent and the sentence is correctly rejected. This causes a Quantificational Asymmetry in English.

The different results on (3) also stem from the different interpretation preferences. For the Dutch-speaking children the reflexive can be easily bound to the local QP-antecedent, because the distributive reading individualises every agent in the set. However, for the

1 M. van Koert (M.J.H.vanKoert@uva.nl), O. Koeneman (o.koeneman@ru.nl), F. Weerman (F.P.Weerman@uva.nl), A. Hulk (A.C.J.Hulk@uva.nl).
English-speaking children the collective interpretation for *every* in (3) clashes with a singular reflexive: after all, one cannot collectively perform a reflexive action on a single entity. As a consequence, English-speaking children interpret *himself*, an ambiguous anaphor, as a pronoun *him* plus a focus marker *self*, so that it can legitimately take the main clause subject as its antecedent. Children therefore erroneously accept the sentence-picture pair in (3).

We hypothesise that for this reason the Quantificational Asymmetry is a language-specific phenomenon, depending on interpretation preferences for the quantifier.

Word count: 496

**References**


