

Negative polar questions and answers in English and Korean

Keunhyung Park

Kyungpook National University

This study explores the complexity of negative polar questions (NPQs) in contrast to positive polar questions (PPQs). While PPQs have clear truth conditions, NPQs present ambiguity, making their interpretations unpredictable. The ambiguity arises from the interaction of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics when negation is involved in NPQs. Traditional classifications distinguish between polarity-based and truth-based languages, where a 'yes' response to NPQs can mean both positive and negative answers depending on the language's structure. The current study challenges this dichotomy, revealing that typological differences stem from distinct negation structures and their potential ambiguities. The research also delves into the impact of these structures on first language (L1) versus second language (L2) interpretations, highlighting the challenges L2 learners face in understanding nuanced polar questions. The study suggests implications for teaching NPQs in second language acquisition and sets the stage for future research in this area.