

Modal Indefinites and Domain Constraints

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Across languages, we find indefinites that trigger modal inferences. This work contributes to a semantic typology of these items by contrasting Spanish "algún" with indefinites like German "irgendein" or Italian "uno qualsiasi". While "irgendein"-type indefinites trigger a Free Choice effect (Kratzer and Shimoyama 2002; Chierchia 2006), "algún" simply signals that at least two individuals in its domain are possibilities. Additionally, "algún", but not "irgendein", can convey that the speaker does not know how many individuals satisfy the existential claim in the world of evaluation. We contend that the two types of indefinites impose different constraints on their domain of quantification: "irgendein" and its kin are domain wideners (as argued by Kratzer and Shimoyama 2002), whereas "algún" is an 'anti-singleton' indefinite (its domain cannot be restricted to a singleton). This, together with the fact that "algún" does not require uniqueness, allows us to derive the contrast between "irgendein" and "algún" by using the pragmatic reasoning put forward in Kratzer and Shimoyama 2002.