

# A puzzle about free choice and negative bias

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## simple and complex NPIs

- wh-phrases in Vietnamese are ambiguous between an interrogative and an NPI reading (Bruening and Tran, 2006)

(1) Nam không đọc **quyển** sách nào  
Nam not read book which/ANY

- if the wh-phrase is preceded by the morpheme **bất kỳ**, only the NPI reading survives

(2) Nam không đọc **bất kỳ** **quyển** sách nào  
Nam not read BK book which/ANY

# NPI licensing

(3) a. Nam đang không cầm (bất kỳ) quyển sách nào  
Nam is not holding BK book ANY  
trên tay  
in his hand

b. \*Nam đang cầm (bất kỳ) quyển sách nào trên tay  
Nam is holding BK book ANY in his hand

cf. Fauconnier 1975; Ladusaw 1979

## yes/no questions

- yes/no questions ask the hearer to choose between a proposition and its negation, and are of two types (Trinh, 2005; Duffield, 2007)
  - polarity questions:  $NP+VP \Rightarrow NP+có+VP+không$

(4)      Nam có    đang ngủ        không?  
            Nam CO is    sleeping KHONG  
            'Is Nam sleeping?'

Answers: **có** "yes" / **không** "no"

- agreement questions:  $NP+VP \Rightarrow NP+VP+à$

(5)      Nam đang ngủ        à?  
            Nam is    sleeping A  
            'Nam is sleeping?'

Answers: **vâng** "that's right" / **không** "no"

# bias in agreement questions

- agreement questions are biased towards the prejacent (cf. Trinh, 2014)

(6) Speaker sees Nam with “The Critique of Pure Reason”

a. Nam đọc Kant à?

Nam read Kant A

b. #Nam có đọc Kant không?

Nam CO read Kant KHONG?

(7) Speaker sees Nam with “The Phenomenology of the Spirit”

a. #Nam đọc cả Kant à?

Nam read also Kant A

b. Nam có đọc cả Kant không?

Nam CO read also Kant KHONG?

# NPIs in polarity questions

- NPIs are licensed in polarity questions

(8) a. Nam có đang đọc quyển sách nào không?  
Nam YES is reading ANY book NO

b. Nam có đang đọc bất kỳ quyển sách nào không?  
Nam YES is reading BK ANY book NO

- BK induces negative bias: the speaker of (8-b) suspects that Nam does not read books

(9) a. Nam rất lười đọc sách. (8-b).  
Nam very lazy read book.

b. #Nam rất chăm đọc sách. (8-b).  
Nam very diligent read book.

# NPIs in agreement questions

- Simple NPIs are licensed (with the expected bias)

(10) Nam đang đọc quyển sách nào à?  
Nam is reading ANY book A  
'Nam is reading a book?'  
~~ the speaker suspects that Nam is reading a book

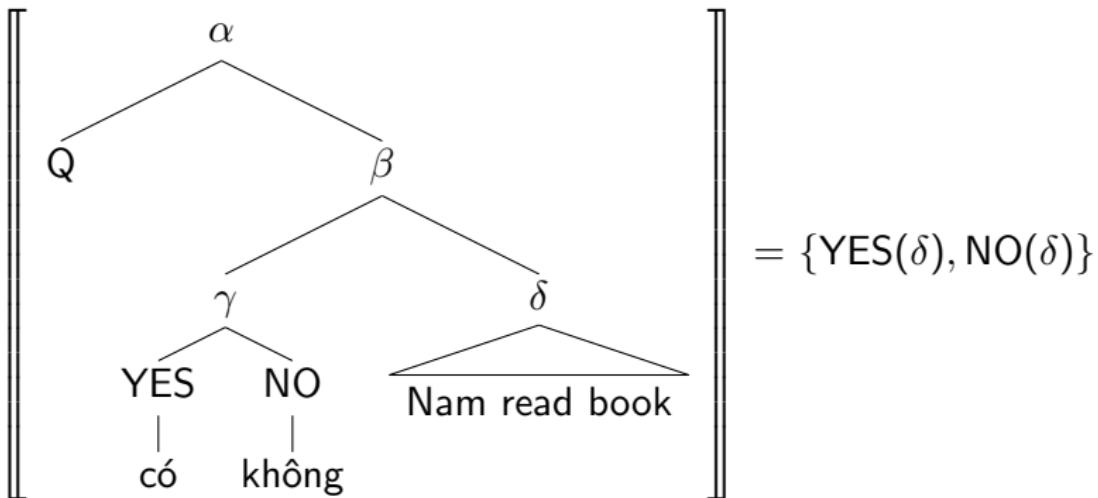
- Complex NPIs are not licensed

(11) \*Nam đang đọc bất kỳ quyển sách nào à?  
Nam is reading BK ANY book A

# interim summary

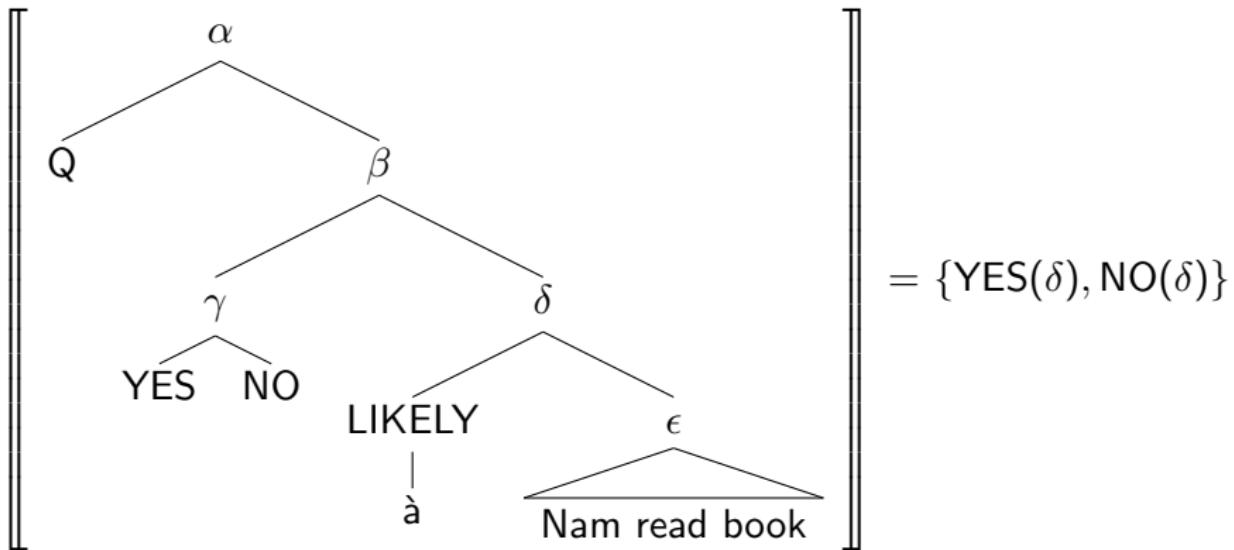
- ANY is licensed
  - under negation
  - in polar questions and in agreement questions
  - does not induce negative bias
- BK-ANY is licensed
  - under negation
  - in polar questions but not in agreement question
  - induces negative bias

# polar questions



cf. Karttunen 1977

## agreement questions



$[\![\delta]\!] = [\![\epsilon]\!]$  if it is likely that  $\epsilon$ , undefined otherwise

# ANY

- ANY is licensed under negation (and questions)

(12) Nam không đọc quyển sách nào

Nam not read ANY book

$\neg \exists x(B(x) \wedge R(n, x))$

(13) Nam có đọc quyển sách nào không?

Nam YES read ANY book NO

$\{\exists x(B(x) \wedge R(n, x)), \neg \exists x(B(x) \wedge R(n, x))\}$

(14) Nam đọc quyển sách nào à?

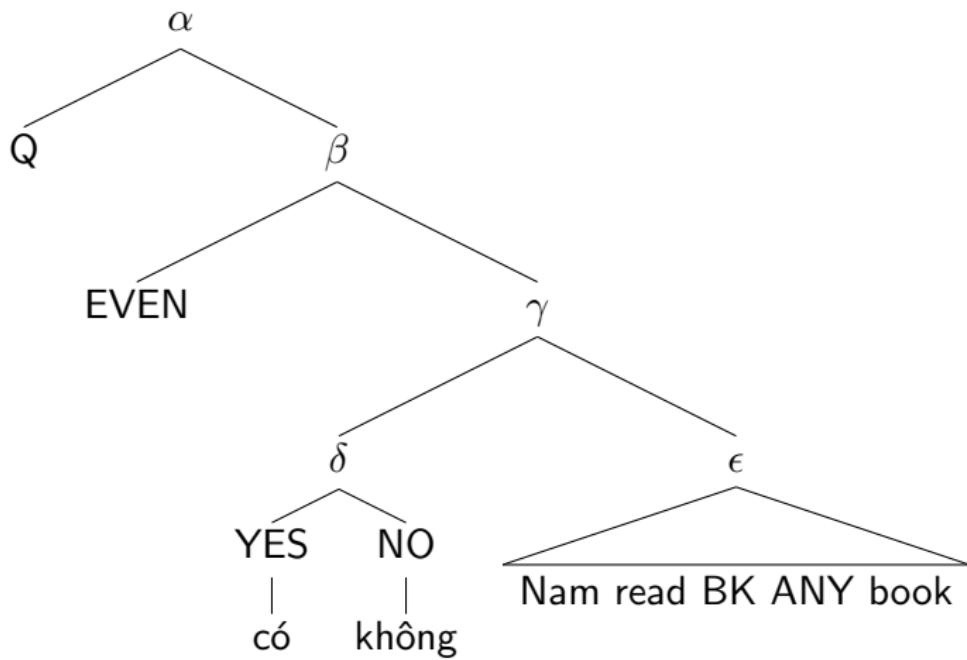
Nam read ANY book A?

$\{\exists x(B(x) \wedge R(n, x)), \neg \exists x(B(x) \wedge R(n, x))\}$

cf. Klima 1964; Guerzoni and Sharvit 2014

- BK makes the minimal clause containing it more likely
  - (15) Nam read [ANY BK book]  $>_{\text{likely}}$  Nam read [ANY red book]
- BK comes with a silent EVEN which has the following interpretation
  - (16)  $\llbracket \text{EVEN } \alpha \rrbracket = \alpha$  if it is unlikely that  $\alpha$ , undefined otherwise

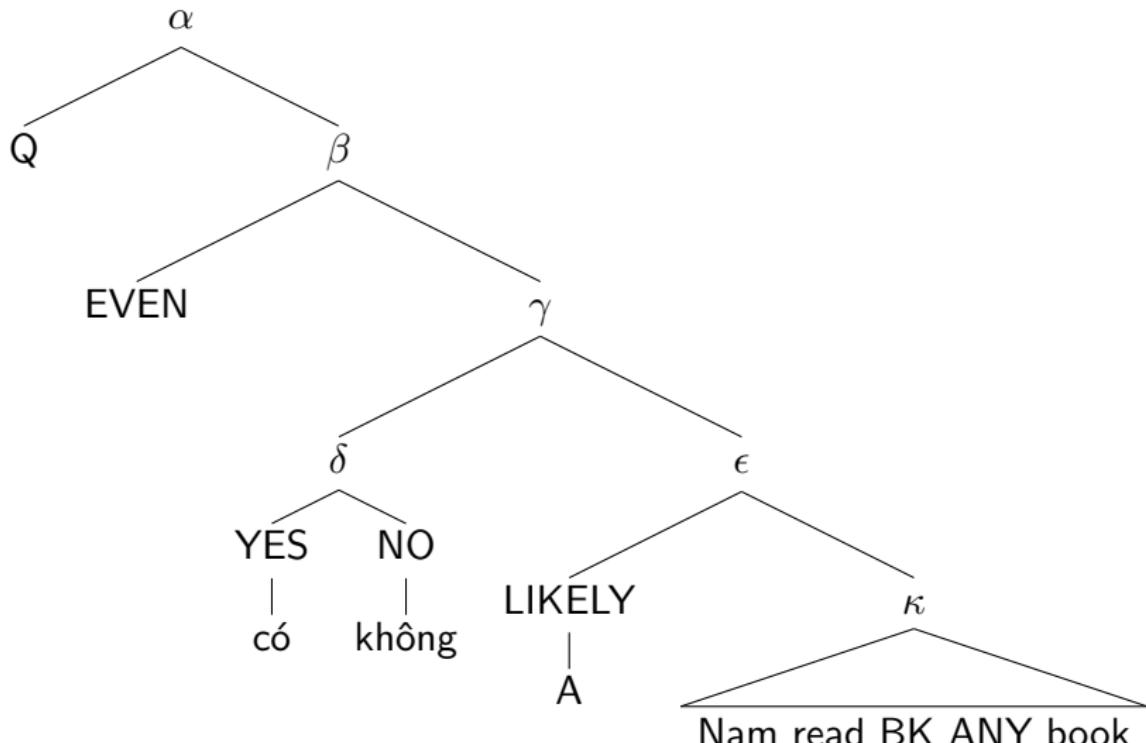
cf. Heim 1984; Krifka 1995; Guerzoni 2004



$= \{\text{EVEN}(\text{YES}(\epsilon)), \text{EVEN}(\text{NO}(\epsilon))\}$

$= \{\text{EVEN}(\epsilon), \text{EVEN}(\neg\epsilon)\}$

→ negative bias



= #

→ BK cannot occur in agreement questions

## a puzzle

- free choice requires BK

(17) a. \*Nam được đọc quyển sách nào  
Nam may read ANY book

b. Nam được đọc bất kỳ quyển sách nào  
Nam may read BK ANY book  
'Nam is allowed to read every book'

- free choice and negative bias are complementary

(18) Nam có được đọc bất kỳ quyển sách nào không?  
Nam YES may read BK ANY book NO

a. Is Nam allowed to read any book  
+ bias towards 'Nam is not allowed to read any book'

b. Is Nam allowed to read every book  
+ no bias

## some thoughts

- biased yes/no questions denote  $\{p, \neg p\}$
- free choice is related to negative bias
- NPIs do not always come with EVEN

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