

April 28, 2016

Dear Editorial Board,

Please find attached a copy of our manuscript, "Definitely, maybe: Approaching speaker commitment experimentally." This manuscript is our original work, has not been previously published, and is not currently under consideration elsewhere. We would appreciate your considering it for publication as a squib in the Journal of Semantics.

This work offers a novel experimental approach to the cross-linguistic investigation of speaker commitment in modals and evidentials. Here we compare English and German. Over the course of three sets of experiments, we probe both sides of the communicative coin – production and interpretation – to address the questions of a) which devices speakers use to communicate a proposition p under varying evidential circumstances in the two languages (a bare main clause, epistemic modals, discourse particles); b) how strong the resulting listener belief in p is upon observing different utterances about p ; c) how strong the inferred speaker commitment to p is upon observing different utterances about p ; and d) how strong the inferred evidence for p is upon observing different utterances about p . This work contributes to a domain of research on speaker commitment that is only just taking shape at the crossroad of theoretical semantics/pragmatics and psycholinguistics. We believe that it provides a good starting point for approaching theoretical debates on the nature of evidential expressions empirically.

Joshua Knobe (Yale University), Lisa Matthewson (University of British Columbia), and Malte Zimmermann (University of Potsdam) have worked on modals, discourse particles, and/or evidentiality or have used similar methods to ours in other domains. They are all qualified to review this work.

Please let us know if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

Judith Degen,
Andreas Trotzke
Gregory Scontras
Eva Wittenberg
Noah Goodman