

Only only marks exclusion

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1 The interpretation of *only*

- (1) Lemmy only drinks Jack Daniels.
- a. $\neg\neg$ Lemmy drinks nothing apart from JD.
 - b. $\neg\neg$ Lemmy drinks JD.
- The content (1-a) is analyzed as the main content of (1)
 - The content (1-b) is analyzed in different ways:
 - As a main content (Atlas, 1993) (and Pierre d’Espagne)
 - As a presupposition (Horn, 1972; Rooth, 1992; Klinedinst, 2005; Singh, 2008; Beaver and Clark, 2008; Beyssade, 2010)
 - As a scalar implicature (van Rooij and Schulz, 2004)
 - Both as a standard and a weak presupposition (Zeevat, 2011)
 - I assume that (1-b) is a non-main content.
- (2) Does Lemmy only drink Jack Daniels?
- a. $\neg\neg$ Lemmy drinks JD.

Only vs. exhaustification

- What is the difference between (3-a) and (3-b)?
- (3) Who came to the rehearsal?
- a. Lemmy.
 - b. Only Lemmy.
 - c. $\neg\neg$ Nobody came apart from Lemmy.
- If the meaning of *only* is limited to an exclusion, what is the difference with a pragmatic exhaustification mechanism?

Scalarity of *only*

- **Usual answer:** the associate of *only* must be interpreted as being **low** on some scale (= the mirative aspect of *only*)
- (4) a. #Lemmy only has a royal flush.
b. #It only costs two euros, and two euros that's a lot. (Beyssade, 2010)
- \Rightarrow difference between (3-a) and (3-b): in (3-b), more people were expected for rehearsal.
- The exclusion is only relative to elements located higher up on the scale (or elements that are *distinct*);
- (5) Lemmy only has a master's degree.
a. $\not\rightarrow$ Lemmy has no bachelor's degree.
- Many observations in this direction: (van Rooij and Schulz, 2004; Klinedinst, 2005; Raynal, 2008; Singh, 2008; Beaver and Clark, 2008; Beyssade, 2010; Zeevat, 2011) about *only* and various operators marking restriction in French (*seul, ne ... que...*)

The argumentative dimension of *only*

- Ducrot (1973, pp. 272–273): French *seulement* (= *only*) is an argumentative operator, it marks an inversion of the orientation of its prejacent.
- (6) a. Lemmy has a master's degree. $\overset{arg}{\rightsquigarrow}$ Hire him.
b. Lemmy only has a master's degree. $\overset{arg}{\rightsquigarrow}$ Do not hire him.
- The intuition appears correct if we look at the combination of *only* with *but* (that marks two opposed arguments) and *too* (which marks similar arguments):
- (7) a. Lemmy solved some problems, but only some of them.
b. #Lemmy solved some problems, Ritchie solved only some of them too.

Today

1. Analogy between scalarity and argumentative inversion.
2. Problematic examples.
3. Proposition: *only* only marks exclusion, it is not necessary to postulate a scale or argumentative effects.
4. Comparison with (Zeevat, 2011)

2 Inversion and being low

2.1 Argumentative inversion argumentative and being low

There is no need to postulate a distinct argumentative component.

- To be interpreted *only* needs to exclude some alternatives (at least one).
- The exclusion negates a stronger proposition, for which we can assume that it is argumentatively stronger than p , the prejacent: $\exists z(z > p \wedge \neg z)$
- Negation is an argumentative operator that inverts the orientation of its argument.
- Negating elements argumentatively stronger than the prejacent means inverting the orientation of the prejacent: if p argues for r , then $\neg p'$ argues against r , for $p' > p$.
- \Rightarrow it is not necessary to postulate an argumentative dimension of *only*. Its argumentative effects are a consequence of its semantics, as soon as its prejacent belongs to an argumentative scale.

2.2 Puzzling examples

- The previous explanation entails that if the excluded alternatives are not co-oriented with the prejacent, there should not be an argumentative inversion. (8) is a case in point:

- (8) Ronnie likes good whisky.
- a. He drinks single malt scotches.
 - b. He only drinks single malt scotches.

- In the context of (8), (8-b) argues like (8-a), and even appears to be a better argument:

- (9) He drinks single malt scotches, and he even drinks only that.

- Intuitively, if there is a scale here, *only* marks the upper-end rather than the lower one: i.e. it seems to go against what the mirative component would convey.

Discussion

- *Only* excludes lower quality whiskies, not superior ones.
- If *only* marks a low value on a scale, what is this scale in (8)?
- $\langle \textit{Bad whisky}, \textit{Moderate whisky}, \textit{Good whisky} \rangle$: no problem.
- Then *only* marks that it is expected that Ronnie owns lower quality whiskies/that Ronnie is low on a scale of liking bad whiskies.
- Then, why not do the same with (10-a)?

- (10) #Lemmy only has a royal flush.
- a. Scale: $\langle \textit{Nothing}, \textit{one pair}, \dots, \textit{royal flush} \rangle$

- Intuitive difference between (10-a) and (8-b):
 1. In (10-a), *only* does not give a better argument.
 2. In (8-b), *only* improves the argumentation by exclusively marking the top of the scale.

3 Proposition

- *Only* marks an exclusion, but does not encode anything about the scalarity of the elements it excludes.
- To interpret *only*, it is sufficient to determine which elements are excluded.
- Determining what is excluded is a matter of context:
 - Elements that are entailed by the associate, either logically or through world-knowledge are not excluded: *having only a master's degree* does not exclude having a bachelor's degree.
 - Only elements comparable with the associate are excluded: *having read only "War and Peace"* does not (usually) exclude having read the TV guide.
 - Elements excluded can be of different types: entities, propositions, arguments. . .
- Depending on the nature of the excluded elements, there can be some systematic argumentative effects (but these effects are not conventionally determined by *only*).

Argumentative strengthening

- How to explain the argumentative strengthening of (11)?

(11) Ronnie only drinks single malt scotches.
- *Only* excludes that Ronnie drinks other types of whisky, e.g. blends.
- Argumentatively, *drinking only single malt* is stronger than *drinking blends and single malt* or than *drinking only blends*.
- By itself, *only* does not have any argumentative content, but it places Ronnie on an argumentative scale.

Remaining issues

If *only* only encodes an exclusion, one has to explain at least two things:

1. What is blocking (12)?

(12) #Lemmy only has a royal flush.
2. What is the difference between the answers in (13)?

(13) Who came to the rehearsal?
 - a. Lemmy.
 - b. Only Lemmy.

Determining the alternatives

- (14) a. Lemmy only has two pairs.
b. #Lemmy only has a royal flush.

- What is excluded by *only* in the above examples?
- \Rightarrow Probably poker hands. But having one hand already excludes having any other hand.
 - Example (14-a) suggests that what is excluded, is not just poker hands, but poker hands with a purpose: to win. I.e. the best Lemmy can do in (14-a) is to show two pairs.
 - Only hands that are better than the prejacent are excluded, i.e. in this particular case, an alternative p' is distinct from the prejacent p iff. it is better than p .
 - Thus, in (14-b) there is nothing to exclude: *only* cannot be interpreted.
 - By itself, *only* still marks a simple exclusion in (14), but the *distinctiveness* relation is, in this context, of a scalar nature (which is not always the case).

Differences between exhaustification and restriction

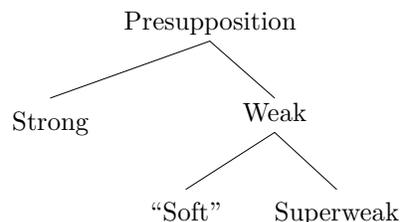
- The use of *only* and a pragmatic exhaustification mechanism differ in the type of the conveyed contents:
 - With *only* the prejacent is presupposed, and the restriction is a main content.
 - With exhaustification, the “prejacent” is a main content, and the restriction is a scalar implicature.
- The attachment possibilities differ between *only* and exhaustification:

- (15) Who came to the rehearsal?
- a. Lemmy. So we managed to work on “Ace of Spades”.
b. #Only Lemmy. So we managed to work on “Ace of Spades”.
c. #Lemmy. So we were not enough to work.
d. Only Lemmy. So we were not enough to work.

- The potential argumentative effects of *only* are another difference with an exhaustive interpretation.
 - Depending on the excluded alternatives, *only* inverts or strengthens the argumentative effects of the prejacent.
 - Exhaustification has no such effects.

4 Comparison with (Zeevat, 2011)

4.1 (Zeevat, 2011): presupposition types



	Accommodation	Binding	Trivialisation
<i>Strong</i>	✓	Common ground	×
<i>Soft</i>	×	Left context	×
<i>Superweak</i>	×	Left context	✓

- Trivialisation: ignore the presupposition if it is coherent with the Common Ground \Leftrightarrow add an individual that believes in the psp.
- Left context binding: characterized by the possibility to bind the presupposition to usually inaccessible contents:

A: My parents think I am in bed.
 B: My parents think I am in bed too.

The meaning of *only*

'On the view of this paper, *only* expresses disappointment at the small size of a quantity expressed by its host'

(16) Only $P(x)$:
 $x, Px, \text{superweak}(x, y, Px, Py, \text{distinct}(x, y)) : \neg Py$

- $\text{superweak}(y, Py, \text{distinct}(x, y))$ =before the assertion, it must be compatible with the common-ground that there is an alternative to x that might be conceivably have the property P , i.e. *only* must have something to exclude.
- The prejacent is both a strong and superweak presupposition, which explains its peculiar projection properties:

(17) [John did not sneeze]
 a. #But, not only John sneezed.
 b. So John does not regret sneezing.

- The mirativity of *only* can be trivialised:

(18) If only John comes, then we will have enough to eat.

Test on (19)

(19) Ronnie only drinks single malt scotches.

- The mirative approach predicts a superweak presupposition of the form:
Ronnie drinks other whiskies than single malt scotches..
- This can be trivialised, which sounds reasonable in (19).

Comparison

Common points : no inherent scalarity for *only*, but some semantic types can only be distinguished on scalar ground.

Divergences • I do not predict specific expectations regarding Ronnie in (19), thus I do not have to explain why it becomes trivialised.

- *Only* has a mirative effect when it runs on an argumentative scale.

5 Conclusions

- *Only* is not an argumentative operator.
- *Only* is not scalar.
- A “mirative” component is not intrinsic to the semantics of *only*.
- Nevertheless, one can find elements that seem to share the semantics of *only* and do impose such a content:

(20) Ronnie is a real *connaisseur*. # He merely drinks single malt scotches.

Thank you

References

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