From exclusion to adversativity
The case of French 'seulement' and Cantonese 'ze1'

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Outline
— In French, the exclusive marker seulement (≈only) can be used as an adversative connective:

(1) J’aimerais venir, seulement j’ai une réunion.
I’d like to come seulement I have a meeting.
I’d like to come, but I have a meeting.

— Similar observations can be made in many other unrelated languages (English, German, Romanian, Japanese, Czech, Cantonese, Mandarin...)
— Those uses are usually recognized/recorded
— Adversative markers are often etymologically related to expressions dealing with quantity
— French mais comes from Latin magis (≈more)
— English but comes from butan which marks a form of exception
— ...
— ... but this general tendency remained unnoticed and no explanation has been proposed for it (as far as I know)

1 Empirical Background

Exclusion
— Exclusive (or restrictive) particles convey a form of restriction [Horn 1972].
— Typically, the usage of an exclusive like only conveys both an exclusive component (2-a) and the truth of its prejacent (2-b)

(2) Lemmy only drank Jack Daniels.
a. →Lemmy drank nothing apart from JD.
b. →Lemmy drank JD.

— The exclusion in [2-a] is relative to a set of alternatives determined by the associate of the particle.
— A given language usually has more than one exclusive particles, with some differences in meaning which are not straightforward to account for (e.g. only vs. just)

Adversative connectives
— Adversative connectives convey a form of opposition between two discourse segments: but, even though, yet...
— Different types of opposition [Lakoff 1971]:
— Formal contrast between elements:

(3) Paul is tall, but John is short.

— Denial of expectation: direct opposition (concession); the right conjunct is the negation of an expectation created by the left conjunct

(4) Lemmy smokes but he’s in good health.

— Denial of expectation: indirect opposition (argumentative use); the left and right conjuncts create opposite expectations:

(5) This car is nice but expensive.

1.1 French seulement

French: seulement
— In French, in some contexts, the adverb seulement can be replaced by mais (but) with no major change in meaning:

(1) J’aimerais venir, seulement/mais j’ai une réunion.
    I'd like to come SEULEMENT/MAIS I have a meeting.
    I'd like to come, but I have a meeting.

— The use has been identified at least since the XVIth century (e.g. Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisé)
— The use is described as oral, and restricted to spoken discourse
— A look in corpora (Frantext) indeed shows early attestations:

(6) le sire Nicolas en fera comme il le vous a promis, et nous avec luy. SEULEMENT il y a une difficulté... Sir Nicolas will do as he promised, and us with him. SEULEMENT there is a difficulty... (Calvin, Jean; Lettres à Monsieur et Madame de Falais 1543-1554)

Adversative usage
— To work as an adversative seulement needs a full clause as its host:

(7) *Cette voiture est belle, seulement chère.
    this car is pretty only expensive

— seulement associates over its whole host clause and is clause initial:

(8) ?J’aimerais venir, j’ai seulement un meeting.
    I’d like to come I have SEULEMENT a meeting
    I’d like to come, I only have a meeting.

— Adversative seulement is usually prosodically detached.
— The use is not compatible with another adversative connective:

(9) ??J’aimerais venir, mais seulement j’ai un meeting.
    I’d like to come but SEULEMENT I have a meeting
    I’d like to come but only I have a meeting.

Other markers
— Like seulement, the adverbial juste (≈just) has exclusive semantics

(10) Lemmy buvait juste du Jack Daniels. Lemmy just drank Jack Daniels.
a. Lemmy drank JD.
b. Lemmy did not drink anything apart from JD.

— Juste also allows the adversative reading reading :

(11) J’aimerais venir, c’est juste que j’ai une réunion.
I’d like to come it’s just that I have a meeting.
I’d like to come, it’s just that I have a meeting.

— The exclusive adjective seul and the exclusive ne... que construction cannot be used as adversatives since they cannot associate with a whole utterance.

Exclusives and opposition types
— Not all types of oppositions can be marked with an exclusive.
— Formal contrast :

(12) #Paul est grand, seulement Jean est petit.
Paul is tall seulement Jean is short
(int.) Paul is tall, but/only Jean is short.

— Direct denial of expectation :

(13) ?Lemmy fume, seulement il est en bonne santé.
Lemmy smokes, seulement he is in good health.
Lemmy smokes, but/only he’s in good health.

— Indirect denial of expectation :

(14) Cette voiture est belle, seulement elle est chère.
This car is pretty seulement it is expensive
This car is pretty, but/only it’s expensive.

Seulement as the « anti-pourtant »
— The distinction between formal contrast and denial of expectations has some typological grounding :
— Russian and Romanian have a marker that appear to be specific to contrast and another one for DoE (Jasinskaja & Zeevat [2009] Bilbiie & Winterstein [2011])
— Within DoE, some markers appear specific to direct opposition :
— pourtant (yet) :

(15) a. Lemmy fume, pourtant il est en bonne santé. Lemmy smokes, yet he’s healthy.
b. #Cette voiture est belle, pourtant elle est chère. This car is nice, yet it’s expensive.

— Thus, the adversative use of seulement can be seen as the complementary of pourtant

1.2 Other languages

English
— Like French, the exclusive only can be used as an adversative :

(16) I’d love to join in. Only I don’t know how to play.  [Halliday & Hasan 1976]

— The use is also described as oral and restricted to spoken English [Halliday & Hasan 1976].
— just works the same as in French

(17) I’d love to join in. It’s just that I don’t know how to play.
The adversative use of only also appears to be limited to an indirect opposition:

(18) a. ?Lemmy smokes, only he’s healthy.
 b. This car is nice, only it’s expensive.

Chinese : Cantonese and Mandarin
— Cantonese and Mandarin both use the adversative connective 不過 (CAN bat1gwo3, MAN bu4guo4).
— Literally, BG means no more than and it retains an exclusive reading when it’s not used as a connective.
— Besides BG, Cantonese also:
— has a sentence final particle (ze1), usually glossed as an exclusive, but which carries an adversative reading.
— allows its most direct equivalent for only to be used as an adversative connective

(19) Ngo5 soeng2 heoi3 ge2. Zing6hai6 m4 dak1haan4 ze1.
     I want go SFP only not free-time ze1
     I want to go, only I’m not free.

— More details on this later.

German
— Rudolph (1996 p.346) mentions that the German restrictive adverbs nur (≈ only) and allein (≈ alone) work like seulement:

(20) Das ist schon richtig, nur dass es dabei eigentlich nichts zu spotten gibt. That’s all right, only that there is nothing to mock.

Other languages
— Similar observations appear to be true for:
— Japanese : tada
— Romanian : numai câ, doar câ
— Czech : je (nom) že (Langova 2011)
— Spanish, Italian, Portuguese (solamente, só que)
— And probably others... Norwegian, Slovak...?

Taking stock
— Exclusive elements (mostly adverbs) can be used as adversative connectives in a variety of unrelated languages.
— This is only applies to elements that can associate with clauses/utterances.
— Usually, these usages cannot co-occur with other adversative markers.
— Their adversative type is restricted to indirect opposition.

2 Semantic change of the exclusive meaning

2.1 Meaning shift
Which meaning shift?
— Which meaning came first: the exclusive or the adversative?
— Intuitively, the exclusive meaning precedes the adversative
— The etymology of some of the exclusive/adversative markers is clearly exclusive in some cases (French, Romanian, Chinese)
— Some of the present adversative connectives started as exclusives (e.g. but Nevalainen 1991)
— I argue that there is a semantic change of the exclusive meaning toward the adversative one.
— This raises the question of which path was taken to go from exclusion to opposition.
— Traugott & Dasher (2002) give nine typical features of the pragmatalization of meaning.
— Five (related ones) seem to apply in the case at hand:
  1. meanings tend to become increasingly subjective, i.e. grounded in the speaker subjectivity.
     — Adversative meaning, especially indirect opposition uses, typically convey meaning related to the speaker’s beliefs:

     (21) He’s French, but not rude.
  2. meanings tend to become increasingly procedural, i.e. indicate constraints on the interpretation of the utterance rather than actual content.
     — Adversative meanings are one core example of purely procedural meanings (Blakemore, 2002) (unlike exclusive readings).
  3. the scope of items tend to enlarge, up to the discourse level.
  4. truth-conditional meanings become non truth-conditional.
  5. meanings bearing on the event described tend to refer to the speech act itself (Sweetser, 1990).

Previous analysis: Traugott (1986)
— Traugott (1986) proposes a general constraint on the derivation of ‘but connectives’ (including the derivation of but itself from butan).
— The core property is that element that eventually can mark opposition:
  — express a « proximal-distal » or « linear » configuration.
  — the elements in the prejacent are « other/distant » from those in the other argument.
  — the adversative meaning is metaphorically derived from that latter property.
— Exclusives fit that picture by conjuring elements that have/don’t have a given property (although Traugott does not mention them).
— However, this account does not give a straightforward account of why exclusives only allow indirect DoE.

Other sources Nevalainen (1991)
— Nevalainen (1991) studies in depth the system of exclusive adverbials in English, from 1500 to 1900.
— but is identified as initially serving exclusive functions, some which have survived today:

(22) a. Everybody but Paul came.
    b. He is but a child.
— However, nothing is said about the shift from the exclusive meaning of but to its present adversative reading.

2.2 Path of semantic change
— To identify the path of semantic change, I’ll consider the argumentative properties of exclusion and adversative conjunction (Anscombe & Ducrot, 1983; Merin, 1999; Winterstein, 2010).
— I’ll argue that the change is metonymic, which predicts that bridge cases (i.e. cases ambiguous between the exclusive and adversative) can be identified.
— I’ll argue that the restriction of the adversative to indirect DoE can be accounted for in this way.

Argumentation in language

(23) a. I’m hungry.
    b. \( \rightsquigarrow \) I want to eat.
— Argumentation is linguistically driven:

The argumentative possibilities in a discourse are tied to the global linguistic structure of the utterances and not just to the content they convey.

— The description of some items is best done in argumentative terms rather than truth conditional ones (although those are not mutually exclusive. [Merin (1999); Winterstein (2010)]

Adversative conjunctions and argumentation

— The meaning of adversative connectives like but is often described in terms of contrast (Lakoff 1971).
— Inferential approaches consider that the semantics of but always involve some kind of pivot inference that is “disputed” by its conjuncts (Anscombe & Ducrot 1977; Winterstein 2012b).

(24) a. Lemmy smokes but is in very good health.
   b. Lemmy is tall, but Lars is short.

— Anscombe & Ducrot (1977) : an utterance “p but q” conveys an argumentative opposition:
   — p argues for a pivot conclusion $H$
   — q argues against $H$, i.e. for $\neg H$
   — q must be a better argument for $\neg H$ than p is for $H$
— The pivot is inferred based on contextual information and other considerations.

Exclusion and argumentation

— Ducrot (1973, pp. 272–273) : French seulement (= only) is an argumentative operator, it marks an inversion of the argumentative orientation of its prejacent.

(25) a. Lemmy has a master’s degree. $\Rightarrow$ Hire him.
   b. Lemmy only has a master’s degree. $\Rightarrow$ Do not hire him.
— This is a consequence of the core meaning of exclusives, rather than an inherent property of these markers (Winterstein 2012a)
— Inversion only occurs when stronger argumentative alternatives are excluded (which is very frequent, but not systematic)

Path of change: inversion to opposition

— Exclusion can mark an argumentative inversion
   — Monadic operation, does not require an antecedent
— Adversative connectives mark argumentative opposition
   — Dyadic constraint, is anaphoric (in the broad sense of Berrendonner 1983)
   — Both have in common the fact of arguing against something:
     — Against what the prejacent argues for in the case of exclusion
     — Against an antecedent for the case of opposition
   — The shift from inversion to opposition is a metonymic one: it goes from one part of an argument (the opposite status of one premise) to the overall structure of the argument (the argumentative scheme of opposition).
   — When two argumentatively opposed segments are used, it’s more natural to mark the opposition:

(26) a. ?He arrived late and barely (late).
   b. He arrived late but barely (late).
— A marker like only inverts argumentation, so a discourse of the form $A$ only $B$ can either be interpreted as:
   — « $A$ » and « only $B$ » are co-oriented, i.e.
     $A \Rightarrow H$
— only $B \sim_{arg} H$ (i.e. $B \sim_{arg} \neg H$)
— « $A$ » and « $B$ » are opposed and only is a connective (this is blocked when an overt adversative is used)
— $A \sim_{arg} H$
— $B \sim_{arg} \neg H$

Bridge cases
— Metonymic change is continuous (unlike metaphoric change)
— This entails that « bridge cases » should exist, i.e. cases such that the use of an exclusive marker is ambiguous between the exclusive reading and the adversative one.
— The following examples appear to fit :

(27) Tu ne quarras pas chose grande, affin que tu soyes honneste. Seulemente demande l’esmende de l’offence de Jehan prophete, qu’a dit que je suis deshonneste, palharde, ribaulde, putain. You shall not ask for a big thing, so that you are honest. Only ask for reparation of the prophet Jean’s offense, who said I am dishonest, bawdy, ribald, and a whore. (Anonymous, La Passion d’Auvergne 1477)

(28) Her face is perfect, only her body is not.

Testing the ambiguity
— In the exclusive reading, it’s expected that (by default) the utterance will be argumentative co-oriented with the preceding discourse segment (and contra-oriented for the adversative reading).
— The ambiguity can be tested by trying opposite argumentative continuations :

(29) a. EXCLUSIVE : Her face is perfect, only her body is not, so we can hire her for the photo shoot.
    b. ADVERSATIVE : Her face is perfect, only her body is not, so we cannot hire her for the photo shoot.

Exclusion and exception
— Usually, exceptive particles allow the same semantic shift as exclusives and can also be used as adversatives ($sauf que\approx except that$) :

(30) J’aimerais venir, sauf que j’ai une réunion. 
    I’d like to come SAUF QUE I have a meeting.
    I’d like to come, but I have a meeting.
— The shift can be explained on the same ground as for exclusives since the semantics of these particles are very similar, one being the dual of the other :

(31) a. Only Lemmy came.
    b. = Nobody came except Lemmy.

2.3 Open Issues

I. Why does the semantic change only leads to an indirect opposition meaning?
II. The proposed path of semantic change could theoretically be applied as soon as an element inverts the argumentative orientation of its host.
— However, this is not the case :
— Not all exclusives can (e.g. Japanese $dake$)
— Other elements that invert orientation, cannot be used as adversatives (e.g. French $à peine$, English barely).
III. It’s not clear whether the adversative use of exclusive particles is compatible with other overt adversative markers. However, items that underwent semantic change are often found in harmonic contexts \cite{Mosegaard-Hansen2008}.

Why only indirect opposition?
— For a sentence $A$ only $B$, marking direct opposition would mean :
  — $A \rightarrow \neg B$
  — And if the proposed path is right, it means that originally the exclusive reading should yield an inversion such that :
  — $only \ B \rightarrow \neg \ B$
  — But exclusive markers still convey the truth of their prejacent (as a presupposition)
  — $only \ B \rightarrow \ B$
  — This entails that an utterance only $B$ cannot be used as an argument against $B$ itself, i.e. the shift does not allow direct opposition.

Why not all items?
— Only items that can syntactically scope over a whole clause can undergo the shift.
— Those who only associate with sub-sentential phrases are less likely to be interpreted as discourse connectives
— This rules out :
  — Japanese *dake*
  — Adverbs like *barely/à peine*

Harmonic contexts
— Adversative exclusives usually don’t co-occur with other adversative marking.
— It’s not clear whether forcing co-occurrence is possible
  — French :
  (32) a. ??J’aimerais venir, mais seulement j’ai un meeting.
  b. ?J’aimerais, mais c’est seulement que j’ai un meeting.
  — English
  (33) a. *I’d like to come, but only I have a meeting.
  b. ?I’d like to come, but it’s just that I have a meeting.
— It might be a purely syntactic reason: two discourse connectives cannot co-exist.
— In Chinese, elements of various PoS convey similar functions. Harmonic contexts are frequent, if not the norm.

3 The case of Cantonese
— In its inventory of adversative and exclusive items, Cantonese has :
  — Several adversative connectives *bat1gwo3, daan6hai6…*
  — Many ways to convey exclusion/restriction :
    — Adverbs : *zi2hai6, zing6hai6, dak1…*
    — Sentence Final Particles : *ze1, za3, ze1 ma3…*
  — Here, I will focus on :
    — the adversative *bat1gwo3*, which was originally an exclusive marker
    — the exclusive SFP *ze1* which has now an adversative reading
Chinese: bat1gwo3/bu4guo4
— Cantonese and Mandarin both use the adversative connective 不過 (CAN bat1gwo3, MAN bu4guo4)
— Sentence initial BG conveys an adversative reading:

(34) ... bat1gwo3 keoi5 dak1 saam1 go3 neo5pang4jau5.
... BATGWO he has three CL girlfriend
... but he has three girlfriends.

— Literally BG means no more than and can still be used as a marker of exclusion when not in clause initial position. However it requires the additional use of exclusive SFP (e.g. ze1ma3).

(35) Keoi5 bat1gwo3 dak1 saam1 go3 neo5pang4jau5. #(ze1ma3).
he BATGWO have three CL girlfriend EXCL. SFP
He only has three girlfriends.

— The shift from the exclusive meaning of BG to an adversative reading can be accounted for by the mechanism proposed above.

— Problem: adversative BG is compatible with both direct and indirect DoE:

(36) a. Keoi5 sik6jin1 bat1gwo3 hou2 gin6hong1.
he smoke BG very healthy
He smokes but he’s in good health.

b. Ni1 ga3 ce1 hou2 gwai3 bat1gwo3 hou2 leng3.
DEM CL car very expensive BG very pretty
This car is very expensive but very nice.

— Hypothesis: BG is at a more advanced stage than only/seulement:
— its exclusive meaning is weakened
— its adversative meaning is widened
— Prediction: only/seulement might widen their adversative readings in the same way?

The SFP ze1
— Usually, the Cantonese Sentence Final Particle ze1 is described as being an equivalent of only (Kwok 1984; Fung 2000; Matthews & Yip 2011).
— It associates with full propositions and takes a complete utterance as its argument:

(37) Bob zi1dou3 Ann git3zo2fan1 ze1.
Bob know Ann marry+PFV ZE.
Bob “only” knows Ann got married. (≈ « that’s not a big deal ») * Only Bob knows Ann got married.

— This distinguishes ze1 from other exclusive particles, notably za3:

(38) Bob zi1dou3 Ann git3zo2fan1 za3.
Bob know Ann marry+PFV ZA3.

Non-exclusive ze1
— Some uses of ze1 are not so easily construed as exclusive and involve “downplaying” or adversative readings.

(39) keoi5 ji4ga1 hou2 sai3go3 ze1.
he now very young ZE
He (still) is very young (so it’s ok if he cannot walk).
Adversative ze1

— ze1 can be used for indirect DoE, possibly with an additional harmonic adversative connective:

(42) ni1 ga3 ce1 hou2 leng3 wo3 (bat1gwo3/daan6hai6) hai6 siu2siu2 gwai3 ze1.
DEM CL car very nice SFP (but) COP a bit expensive ZE
This car is nice but a bit expensive.

— And ze1 is not compatible with direct DoE:

(43) #ni1 dem go3 cl pai4zi2 brand m4hai6 not gei2 quite hou2 very gwai3 exp. ze1.
This is not a very good brand, but it’s very expensive.

Non-symmetric opposition

— Adversative seulement appears to be symmetric (like mais)

(44) a. Cette voiture est belle, seulement elle est chère.
   b. Cette voiture est chère, seulement elle est belle.

— However, ze1 is not always symmetrical:

(45) *ni1 ga3 ce1 siu2siu2 gwai3 bat1gwo3 hou2 leng3 ze1.
DEM CL a bit expensive but very nice ZE
This essay does not make sense, but the grammar is flawless.

— Adversative ze1 might not be the only non-symmetric adversative exclusive:

(46) a. ?I don’t know how to play, only I’d like to join.
   b. ?This car is expensive, only it’s (very) nice.

— This can be related to the ambiguity of sequences « p onlyq » as either:

— « A » and « only B » are co-oriented
— « A » and « B » are opposed and only is a connective
— In the above examples the first analysis is not acceptable for reasons inherent to the semantics of exclusives (Winterstein [2012a]), which accounts for the observations cf. :

(48) a. #It’s only nice.
   b. Only the grammar is good.

— This constraint relaxes over time, i.e. the symmetricity of adversative exclusives may be an indication of the advancement of the semantic change.

Cantonese : taking stock

— Cantonese sports 3 distinct exclusive markers which can be used to mark adversativity
— It is hypothesized that these markers are at different stages of their evolution toward adversative markers
  1. the adverb zingōhai6 is comparable to only
  2. the SFP ze1 is losing its purely exclusive reading
  3. the connective bat1gwo3 cannot work as an exclusive on its own anymore
— **Future work**: check the diachrony of these elements
  — bat1gwo3 and zingōhai6 can be checked in (oral) Mandarin corpora
  — ze1 is more tricky: there are very few Cantonese corpora, and even less historical ones
  — An initial probe comparing contemporary Cantonese corpora (Luke & Wong, 2015) with Mid-20th century Cantonese (Chin, 2015) shows no significant difference in the Exclusive/Adversative distribution.

**Conclusion and perspectives**
— Cross-linguistically, exclusive markers tend to acquire adversative properties.
— Different stages of progress might be observable in contemporary Cantonese.
— Traugott & Dasher (2002) discuss the evolution of adverbials toward discourse markers (e.g. *in fact*, *actually*)
— Those markers passed through an adversative stage, and later went on to become fully fledged discourse markers
⇒ is there also a next stage for exclusive markers?
  — Chinese BG seems relatively stable
  — but maybe it’ll end up acquiring the versatility of French *mais* (which has uses beyond its purely adversative reading)

**Bibliographie**


