

Syntacticizing scalar evaluation

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1. Introduction, main claims and overall significance. In this talk, I review the scopal evidence that has been adduced for a syntactic disentanglement of ‘exclusion of alternatives’ and (use-conditional) ‘scalarity’ in ‘only’ words (Hole 2015, 2017), and I introduce novel evidence into the discussion. This research forms part of a larger endeavor to chart use-conditional meaning in the syntax.

2. The syntax-semantics set-up. (1) is a German example featuring *nur*, and (2) provides paraphrases of its truth-functional and of its scalar component of meaning. (I leave the evaluative BAD meaning surfacing in many *nur* sentences undiscussed in this contribution.)

(1) Paul trinkt nur TEE. ‘Paul only drinks TEA.’

(2) a. ‘Paul drinks nothing but tea.’ (truth-functional)

 b. ‘Paul drinks as little as nothing but tea.’ (use-conditional)

(2a) is uncontroversial. ‘As little as’ in (2b) spells out the kind of scalarity that I assume to be active in many uses of *nur* and that this talk concentrates on. It partly coincides with Jacobs’ (1985) WENIG operator, non-truth-functionally implying that the asserted focus value ranks lower on some contextually defined scale than the contextually determined threshold value. It is likewise akin to Coppock & Beaver’s (2014) evaluative strength parameter. Now, as can be seen from the paraphrases in (2), I have the scalar operator (spelled out as *as little as* in (2b)) scope above the exclusive component rendered as *nothing but*. This flies in the face of standard accounts, which invariably implement the scalar predicate as a presupposition of the exclusive operator (Guerzoni 2003, Klinedinst 2004). The main goal of this talk is to illustrate the explanatory potential of the proposal made here. The proposal is summarized in (3), where SCAL is the ‘as little as’ operator taking scope above tense in the relative vicinity of epistemic modality. EXCL is the exclusive meaning component which adjoins not any lower than at the VoiceP level.

(3) [SCAL...[EXCL [preajcent]]]

References: • Coppock, E. & D. Beaver. 2013. Principles of the exclusive muddle. *Journal of Semantics* 31(3). 371–432. • Guerzoni, E. 2003. Why even ask?: on the pragmatics of questions and the semantics of answers. Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. • Hole, D. 2015. A distributed syntax for evaluative ‘only’ sentences. *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft* 34(1). 43–77. • Hole, D. 2017. A crosslinguistic syntax of scalar and non-scalar focus particle sentences: the view from Vietnamese and Chinese. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 26(4). 389–409. • Jacobs, J. 1983. *Fokus und Skalen*. Tübingen: Niemeyer. • Klinedinst, N. 2004. Only scalar only. *Hand-out Journées Présuppositions et Implications*.