

The *only* connectives

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<http://kvf.me/only>

Introduction

Our only

(1) He's a very nice man, **only** he talks too much.

Jespersen 1949

Another example of our *only*

(2) The flowers are lovely; **only**, they have no scent.

OED, cited by Brinton 1997

Our *except*

- (3) He's a very nice man, **except (that)** he talks too much.
- (4) The flowers are lovely; **except (that)** they have no scent.

Question

Formal semantics has decent off-the-shelf analyses of exclusives and exceptives as quantificational operators, but their use as sentential connectives is underexplored.

How do the sentential connective uses relate to the “ordinary” uses?

Exclusive *only*

- (5) Lindsey **only** introduced [JODIE]_F to the audience.

Exclusive *only*

- is a cross-categorial operator
- “negates” alternatives to its prejacent
- the alternatives are calculated based on focus
- the prejacent is not-at-issue (presupposed?)

Horn 1969, Rooth 1985, 1992, Krifka 1993, von Stechow 1997, 1999

Exclusive *only* vs connective *only*

(6) He's a very nice man, **only** he talks too much.

- what is being negated?
- the preadjacent seems at-issue
- no obvious association with focus

Exceptives

(7) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Every} \\ \text{No} \end{array} \right\}$ player **except** Megan sang the anthem.

Exceptives

- attach to universal quantifiers
- state that their associate is an exception to the claim
- if and only if associate is subtracted from domain, claim is true

Quantificational *except* vs connective *except*

- (8) He's a very nice man, **except (that)** he talks too much.
- no obvious universal quantification
 - no domain to subtract from
 - associate is a proposition, not an object in a domain of quantification

Normally, *only* \neq *except*

(9) Carli saw **only** Lea.

(10) #Carli saw **except** Lea.

(11) Carli saw **no one except** Lea.

But in our cases, *only* and *except* appear interchangeable.

Another angle

In our examples, so-called “adversative connectives” would also seem to be very much at home:

(12) He's a very nice man, $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{but} \\ \text{yet} \\ \text{although} \end{array} \right\}$ he talks too much.

Can we learn from their analysis?

Uncharted territory

We know a lot about contrastive **but**,
but very little about connective **only** or **except**.

A few exceptions

- Laurel Brinton. 1997. “The flowers are lovely; only, they have no scent”: The evolution of a pragmatic marker. Anglistentag 1997 Giessen Proceedings.
- Grégoire Winterstein. 2016. From exclusion to adversativity: The case of French *seulement* and Cantonese *ze1*. Handout of a talk at a workshop on “Researching pragmatic particles in communication cognitive, argumentative and social dimensions”, Trondheim.

and ...

SIDS
13.1

Eva Breindl, Anna Volodina, Ulrich Hermann Waßner
HANDBUCH DER DEUTSCHEN KONNEKTOREN 2

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SIDS
13.2

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HDWID

*Eva Breindl, Anna Volodina,
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HANDBUCH DER DEUTSCHEN KONNEKTOREN 2

SEMANTIK DER DEUTSCHEN SATZVERBÜDGE

TEILBAND 1

SCHRIFTEN DES INSTITUTS FÜR DEUTSCHEN
FORSCHUNGSBEREICH FÜR DEUTSCHEN
FORSCHUNGSBEREICH FÜR DEUTSCHEN

Sweeping under the rug

“This **only** is not an exclusive, however, but rather an exceptive (evidence: it can be paraphrased by **except**).”

Coppock & Beaver 2014:403

Looking under the rug

- How do the meanings of connective **only** and **except** relate to their “ordinary” meanings?
- How do they fit into the landscape of contrastive connectives?
- How come the distinction between exclusives and exceptives is apparently neutralized in our cases?

Even *but* shows the pattern

The contrastive connective par excellence **but** has exclusive and exceptive pedigree as well:

(13) Taylor saw **but** one solution. (= only one)

(14) Taylor saw nobody **but** Greta. (= nobody except Greta)

This is well-known but the adversative and exceptive literatures haven't come together.

Our goals today

- Point out a fascinating, underrecognized data set
- Explore initial ideas for an analysis

The plan

- Introduction
- Some more examples
- Some more languages
- Contrastive connectives
- Our *except*
- Our *only*
- Further issues

Some more examples

Modal intervention

- (15) a. I would have come to the meeting.
b. I wanted to come to the meeting.
c. I almost came to the meeting.

... **but/only/except** I had a doctor's appointment.

Rarely recognized as a separable use of adversatives,
but see Brinton 1997, Longacre 2007.

The *only* speech acts

- (16) Fine, I'll go to Oleana with you, **but/only/except** where is it?
- (17) I hope you can relax this weekend, **but/only/except** don't forget to fix the drain!

Not something well-explored in the adversative literature

An example given to us by David Beaver:

(18) It's raining, **only** don't use that as an excuse to skip class!

Only, this seems related

- (19) I was just wondering if there'd been any developments.
Only, I'm leaving in a day.

Death in Paradise, Season 6, Episode 7

And this

- (20) She gave me one of those withering looks that Italian and French people reserve for tourists who come on vacation largely unaware of the fine cultures of those two countries. **Only** I was not totally ignorant.

From: Keith Devlin, *Finding Fibonacci*

Some more languages

Greek

(21) *ine kalos anthropos*
is good person

a. ***ala*** *milai poli*
but talks much

b. ***mono (pu)*** *milai poli*
only factive C talks much

Greek

(8) *ine kalos anthropos*
is good person

c. ***ektos tu*** ***oti milai poli***
except the.GEN.(NEUT) C talks much

d. ***ektos apo to*** ***oti milai poli***
except from the.ACC C talks much

German

(22) *Er ist sehr nett,*
he is very nice

- a. ***nur/bloß***: *er redet zuviel*
only he talks too-much
- b. ***nur/bloß*** daß er zuviel redet
- c. ***nur/bloß*** redet er zuviel
- d. er redet ***nur/bloß*** zuviel

German

(9) *Er ist sehr nett,*
he is very nice

e. ***außer daß*** *er zuviel redet*
except that he too-much talks

French

- (23) a. C'est un homme très gentil, **mais** il parle trop.
- b. C'est un homme très gentil, **seulement** il parle trop.
- c. C'est un homme très gentil, **c'est juste qu'**il parle trop.
- d. C'est un homme très gentil, **sauf qu'**il parle trop.
- e. C'est un homme très gentil, **pourtant** il parle trop.

Contrastive connectives

How contrastives work

A very substantive literature:

Lakoff, Anscombe & Ducrot, Foolen, Winter & Rimon, Sæbø, Umbach, Jasinskaja & Zeevat, Winterstein, Toosarvandani, etc.

The core consensus

An adversative connection signals that the first proposition makes one expect something that the second proposition then denies.

Direct contrast

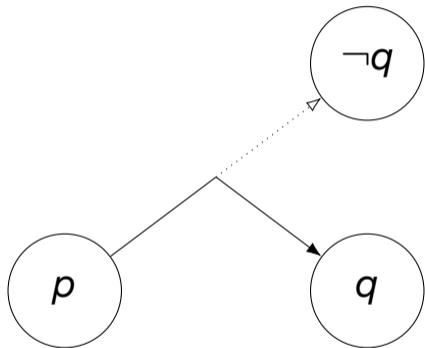
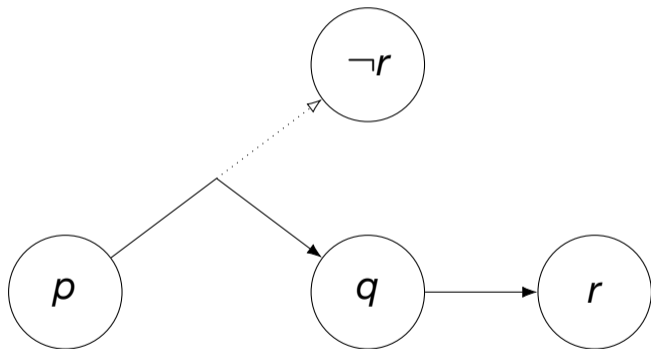


Diagram from Rudolph 1996

Direct contrast

(24) He runs every day **but/yet** he gets out of breath on stairs.

Indirect contrast



Indirect contrast

(25) It's raining **but/#yet** I'm taking an umbrella.

So, I won't get wet.

(26) We were hungry, **but/#yet** the restaurants were closed.

So, we didn't get to eat.

Winter & Rimon 1994

Common core of adversative connectives

There exists a statement r s.t. in the context of utterance:
 p implies $\neg r$ and q implies r .

Winter & Rimon 1994

Direct contrast (*yet* but also *but* etc.)

$$r = q$$

Indirect contrast (*but* and not *yet*)

$$r \neq q$$

(In)direct contrast

Direct

(27) He runs every day **but/yes** he gets out of breath on stairs.

Indirect

(28) It's raining **but/#yes** I'm taking an umbrella.

Our *except*

Clausal analyses of exceptives

Recent work (among others: Potsdam & Polinsky 2019, Vostrikova 2019) has argued that at least some exceptives are actually clausal and involve ellipsis:

(29) I saw every player **except** Olga.

(30) I saw every player **except** ~~I didn't see~~ Olga.

Vostrikova's conditional analysis

ϕ except ψ

= ϕ is false but if ψ had not been the case, ϕ would have been true

Or: The fact that ψ is true is the only thing that stands in the way of ϕ being true in the actual world.

(31) Every player sang **except** Megan ~~didn't~~.

=

(32) Not every player sang but if Megan had sung, every player would have sung.

Problem: This is just not an equivalence!

“Except” true but “if” false: Some players always do the opposite of what Megan does. If she had sung, at least some of the others wouldn’t have.

“Except” false but “if” true: Several other players joined Megan in not singing, but they would have joined if Megan had decided to sing.

If clausal exceptives are conditionals, they are a very special kind and we need to figure out how they work.

Vostrikova makes a proposal that is very much tied to (i) ellipsis/focus structure and (ii) the presence of a quantificational target with a domain expression (*every player*).

Conditional analysis of our *except*?

- (33) Every player sang, **except** Megan stayed silent.

- (34) Every player would have sung, **except** Megan stayed silent.

A difference in what altered scenarios we're considering.

David Lewis (1979) on conditionals

- (35) If Nixon had pressed the button, there would have been a nuclear holocaust.

Lewis: from the point of departure, we prefer to look at worlds that match our world in matters of “law” rather than particular fact.

Two kinds of exceptive conditionals

A Lewis-style conditional:

- (36) Every player would have sung, **except** Megan stayed silent.

A particular fact conditional:

(37) Every player sang, **except** Megan stayed silent.

Consider a world where Megan didn't stay silent but keep all the other particular facts about players and singing the same (ignoring the possibility that whether other players are singing may depend on what Megan does).

Possible implementations

- similarity ordering that only cares about matters of particular fact
- a premise semantics (Kratzer, Veltman) that takes only atomic sentences as premises

Our *only*

Propositional *only*

Rooth 1985 posited a propositional *only* as the base case of his cross-categorial semantics. He thought it was a “phantom operator”.

Previously, the only plausible cases of propositional *only* were:

- (38) a. The judge **only** sent you to prison; your wife didn't leave you too. (McCawley 1970: p.296, ex.(13))
- b. The barbecue went fairly well. It **only** rained. It wasn't windy, there are enough beer, and there weren't any mosquitoes. (attributed to Irene Heim in von Fintel 1997)

Our *only* is a propositional *only*

But what are the propositions it negates, since they are not provided by focus?

Task: for each instance of our *only*, figure out what propositions are excluded.

Some examples

(39) He's a very nice man, **only** he talks too much.

~> The only limitation/exception to his niceness is that he talks too much.

(40) She gave me one of those withering looks that Italian and French people reserve for tourists who come on vacation largely unaware of the fine cultures of those two countries. **Only** I was not totally ignorant.

~> The only problem with her attitude was that I was not totally ignorant.

(41) I was just wondering if there'd been any developments.
Only, I'm leaving in a day.

↪ The only reason I ask is that I'm leaving in a day.

Interim conclusion

Interim conclusion

It may be possible to explain our connectives as having meanings that are “lifted” from their ordinary meanings to the propositional or even speech act level.

Our *except* states that its prejacent is the exception to the first “conjunct”.

Our *only* states that its prejacent is the only limitation/exception/relevant rejoinder to the first “conjunct”.

Relation to classic adversatives

Our connectives play in the same arena but they do have subtly different meanings.

- (42) He runs every day **but/yet/#only/#except (that)** he gets out of breath on stairs.
- (43) It's raining **but/#yet/#only/#except** I'm taking an umbrella.

Why do they all work in Jespersen's example?

- (44) He's a very nice man, **but/yet/only/except** he talks too much.

Contextual underdetermination

very nice man – talks too much

- **but/yet:** too much talking is unexpected from a nice man
- **only/except:** too much talking is a limitation/exception to the niceness

Further issues

Modal intervention

How do such cases fit in?

- (45)
- a. I would have come to the meeting.
 - b. I wanted to come to the meeting.
 - c. I almost came to the meeting.

... **but/only/except** I had a doctor's appointment.

Except: if I hadn't had a doctor's appointment, I would have come.

Only: the only reason the pre-jacent of the modal is not true is that I had a doctor's appointment.

Indirectness

Recall:

(46) We were hungry, **but/#yet** the restaurants were closed.

So, we didn't get to eat.

This works with our connectives, too:

(47) We were hungry, **only/except** the restaurants were closed.

Indirect modal intervention?

(48) We were hungry, **only/except** the restaurants were closed.

The target of our connectives is something like *We wanted to eat*.

Difference between *except* and *except that*

(49) We were hungry, **except/#except that** the restaurants were closed.

It seems that *except that* doesn't tolerate indirect cases.

Asymmetries

Sassoon 2013:

- (50) a. Dan is healthy, **except for** high blood pressure.
- b. #Dan is not healthy, **except for** normal blood pressure

Sassoon's explanation

- *healthy* is a generalization across multiple dimensions/aspects
- one is *not healthy* if there's **some** dimension/aspect where health is bad
- so, exceptives cannot apply to (implicitly or explicitly) negative multi-dimensional propositions

Clausal variants

- (51) a. Dan is healthy, **except** he has high blood pressure.
b. #Dan is not healthy, **except** he has normal blood pressure.

Same with *only*?

Asymmetries with indirect *only*?

- (52) a. The house is in a nice location, **but/only** it's very dilapidated.
- b. The house is very dilapidated, **but/#only** it's in a nice location.

Noted in HDK

A useful heuristic

As pointed out to us by Lingzi Zhuang, we can find the true target of our connectives via a test with *otherwise*:

- (53) He talks too much, otherwise **he's a very nice man.**
- (54) We were hungry, otherwise **we would have eaten.**
- (55) The house is very dilapidated, otherwise **we should buy eat.**

One of the more recalcitrant cases

(56) I was just wondering if there'd been any developments.

Only, I'm leaving in a day.

≈ I'm leaving in a day, otherwise I wouldn't ask.

The hardest cases

- (57) Fine, I'll go to Oleana with you, **only** where is it?
≈ (I'm asking) where is Oleana, otherwise ...
- (58) It's raining, **only** don't use that as an excuse to skip class!
≈ ... otherwise ...

More open problems with our *only*

- lack of presuppositional asymmetry
- lack of focus-sensitivity

Conclusion

Where we are

- our *only* and our *except* express something like quantificational adversity
- formal implementations to come
- there are open questions

The End