

snippets

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Contents

1.	Andreea C. Nicolae, Patrick D. Elliott, and Yasutada Sudo	
	<i>Introduction</i>	1
2.	Dorothy Ahn	
	<i>ASL IX to locus as a modifier</i>	2
3.	Artemis Alexiadou	
	<i>Decomposing scalar approximatives in Greek</i>	4
4.	Anna Alsop, Lucas Champollion, and Ioana Grosu	
	<i>A problem for Fox's (2007) account of free choice disjunction</i>	7
5.	Anton Benz and Nicole Gotzner	
	<i>Quantifier irgendein and local implicature</i>	10
6.	Jonathan David Bobaljik and Susi Wurmbrand	
	<i>Fake indexicals, binding, and the PCC</i>	13
7.	Brian Buccola and Emmanuel Chemla	
	<i>Alternatives of disjunctions: when a disjunct contains the antecedent of a pronoun</i>	16
8.	Luka Crnič and Brian Buccola	
	<i>Scoping NPIs out of DPs</i>	19
9.	Chris Cummins	
	<i>Some contexts requiring precise number meanings</i>	22
10.	Patrick D. Elliott and Paul Marty	
	<i>Exactly one theory of multiplicity inferences</i>	24

11.	Anamaria Fălăuș and Andreea C. Nicolae	
	<i>Two coordinating particles are better than one: free choice items in Romanian</i>	27
12.	Danny Fox	
	<i>Individual concepts and narrow scope illusions</i>	30
13.	Danny Fox	
	<i>Degree concepts and narrow scope illusions</i>	33
14.	Nicole Gotzner	
	<i>Disjunction, conjunction, and exhaustivity</i>	35
15.	Martin Hackl	
	<i>On Haddock's puzzle and the role of presupposition in reference resolution</i>	37
16.	Andreas Haida	
	<i>Symmetry, density, and formal alternatives</i>	40
17.	Nina Haslinger and Viola Schmitt	
	<i>Strengthened disjunction or non-classical conjunction?</i>	43
18.	Fabian Heck and Anke Himmelreich	
	<i>Two observations about reconstruction</i>	46
19.	Aron Hirsch	
	<i>Modal adverbs and constraints on type-flexibility</i>	49
20.	Natalia Ivlieva and Alexander Podobryaev	
	<i>On variable agreement and scope reconstruction in Russian</i>	52
21.	Hadil Karawani	
	<i>The past is rewritten</i>	54
22.	Manfred Krifka and Fereshteh Modarresi	
	<i>Persian ezafe and proportional quantifiers</i>	56
23.	Paul Marty	
	<i>Maximize Presupposition! and presupposition satisfaction</i>	59
24.	Lisa Matthewson, Sihwei Chen, Marianne Huijismans, Marcin Morzycki, Daniel Reisinger, and Hotze Rullmann	
	<i>Restricting the English past tense</i>	61
25.	Clemens Mayr	
	<i>On a seemingly nonexistent cumulative reading</i>	65
26.	Marie-Christine Meyer	
	<i>Scalar Implicatures in complex contexts</i>	67
27.	Moreno Mitrović	
	<i>Null disjunction in disguise</i>	70
28.	Andreea C. Nicolae and Yasutada Sudo	
	<i>The exhaustive relevance of complex conjunctions</i>	72
29.	Rick Nouwen	
	<i>Scalar vagueness regulation and locative reference</i>	75

30.	Robert Pasternak	
	<i>Unifying partitive and adjective-modifying percent</i>	77
31.	Hazel Pearson and Frank Sode	
	<i>'Not in my wildest dreams': a part time minimizer?</i>	80
32.	Orin Percus	
	<i>Uli and our generation: some reminiscences</i>	82
33.	Jacopo Romoli	
	<i>Why them?</i>	84
34.	Fabienne Salfner	
	<i>The rise and fall of non-conservatives</i>	87
35.	Petra B. Schumacher	
	<i>Vagueness and context-sensitivity of absolute gradable adjectives</i>	90
36.	Stephanie Solt	
	<i>More or less an approximator</i>	93
37.	Giorgos Spathas	
	<i>Plural anaphoric reference and non-conservativity</i>	95
38.	Benjamin Spector	
	<i>An argument for the trivalent approach to presupposition projection</i>	97
39.	Bob van Tiel	
	<i>'The case against fuzzy logic revisited' revisited</i>	100
40.	Lyn Tieu	
	<i>A developmental asymmetry between the singular and plural</i>	103
41.	Tue Trinh	
	<i>A tense question</i>	106
42.	Hubert Truckenbrodt	
	<i>On remind-me presuppositions and embedded question acts</i>	108
43.	Michael Wagner	
	<i>Disjuncts must be mutually excludable</i>	111
44.	E. Cameron Wilson	
	<i>Constraints on non-conservative readings in English</i>	114
45.	Susi Wurmbrand	
	<i>Indexical shift meets ECM</i>	117

Exactly one theory of multiplicity inferences

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Spector (2007) observes that an utterance of (1) gives rise to the inferences in (1a) and (1b), in which the plural nominal *difficult problems* is interpreted exclusively and inclusively respectively.

- (1) Exactly one of my students has solved difficult problems.
 - a. One of my students has solved *more than one* difficult problem
 - b. None of my other students have solved *one or more* difficult problems

To explain this, Spector proposes that the literal meaning of (1) is *inclusive*, but is pragmatically strengthened relative to (2).

- (2) EXH (Exactly one of my students has solved a difficult problem)

The meaning of (2), in turn, is derived by conjoining the (inclusive) meaning of the preadjacent of EXH with the negation of its alternative. Spector assumes that *a NP* has *several NPs* as its alternative. As a result, (2) is equivalent to (3).

- (3) One of my students solved one difficult problem, and no other student solved any difficult problem.

As the reader can verify, conjoining the literal meaning of (1) with the negation of (2) (i.e., the negation of (3)) entails both (1a) and (1b).

Spector's account relies on unprincipled assumptions concerning formal alternatives: the unexhaustified singular form in (2) must be an alternative to (1), and as noted, the singular form must have an alternative with *several*. Crucially, however, the plural cannot have an alternative with *several*, otherwise the multiplicity inference would not be derived. In other words, alternativehood, for Spector, must be non-transitive.

We propose a different account that does away with these assumptions. In line with Spector (2007), we adopt the view that the exclusive interpretation of the plural is an implicature. For concreteness, we follow Mayr's (2015) account, framed in terms of predicate-level exhaustification: singular NPs, which range over atoms, are scalar alternatives to plural NPs, which range over atoms and groups. Applying EXH to a plural NP yields a multiplicity implicature by winnowing out the atoms (4).

- (4) A student has solved EXH [difficult problems]
⇒ a student has solved *more than one* difficult problem

Second, we draw on Sauerland's (2013:159) analysis of *exactly* as a focus sensitive expression: much like *only*, *exactly* takes a proposition p that contains a focused element (i.e., a numeral) and returns that (i) p is true, and (ii) for every $q \in ALT(p)$ that is not entailed by p , $\neg q$ is true. This is illustrated in (5).

- (5) Exactly/Only [ONE_F student came to the meeting]
- a. one student came to the meeting
 - b. \neg [n students came to the meeting], for any numeral $n > one$

Third, we rely on previous findings (e.g., Gajewski and Sharvit 2012; Alxatib 2014; Bar-Lev 2018) showing that, in the scope of expressions like *only*, implicatures are generated in the upward-entailing (UE) component (e.g., in the prejacent), yet disappear in the downward-entailing (DE) component (e.g., in the negated alternatives). We illustrate this for *exactly/only* below, using the *not-all* implicature associated with *some*.

- (6) Exactly/Only [ONE_F student ate some of the cookies]
- a. UE component: implicature
one student ate some *but not all* of the cookies
 - b. DE component: no implicature
 \neg [n students ate some of the cookies], for any numeral $n > one$

We propose that the case in (1) is another instance of the above phenomenon: a multiplicity implicature is generated in the UE-prejacent of *exactly*, delivering (1a), but not in its DE-alternatives, hence (1b). The intuition here is that EXH can be rendered vacuous in these DE-alternatives as its working would otherwise weaken their meaning (7). This should ultimately follow from the Economy condition constraining the distribution of EXH (a.o., Fox and Spector, 2018).

- (7) Exactly [ONE_F student solved EXH [difficult problems]]
- a. one student solved EXH [difficult problems]
 \Rightarrow one student solved *more than one* difficult problems
 - b. \neg [n student solved EXH [difficult problems]], for any numeral $n > one$
 \Rightarrow none of the other students have solved *one or more* difficult problems

To close, our account relies on decomposing an apparently non-monotonic operator into a UE and a DE component. Hence, we predict that if a non-monotonic operator cannot be analyzed in this way, the implicatures should be distinct.

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