

It-clefts are IT* Constructions

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**inquiry terminating*

Analyzing clefts and exclusives

A unified semantics

It was JOHN that laughed and only JOHN laughed have the same two entailments:

- The prejacent: laughed(John)
- An exhaustive implication: MAX_s(laughed(John))

This gives a unified semantics for the two expressions:

$$\text{CLEFT}(p) = \text{ONLY}(p) = p \ \& \ \text{MAX}_\sigma(p)$$

Here we define MAX_s following Beaver and Clark 2008:

$$\text{MAX}_\sigma(p) = \lambda w \forall q \in \text{CQ}_\sigma [q <_\sigma p \rightarrow \sim q(w)]$$

Where σ is the current context, CQ_σ is the current question under discussion, and $(<_\sigma)$ is a salient ranking among alternatives.

The issue of at-issueness

The clear differences between clefts and “only” sentences (e.g. those in Horn ????) can be explained by a difference in *at-issueness* between them:

- With “only,” the exhaustive component MAX_σ(p) is at-issue.
- With a cleft, the prejacent p is at-issue.

For clefts, this explains why exhaustivity must be informative, and why it projects.

(Specifically, we believe exhaustivity is a *not-at-issue entailment*. Ask us why!)

Focus-sensitivity

On our account, the exhaustive meaning of a cleft (like that of *only*) is *focus-sensitive*. The meaning of MAX_s depends on the current Question Under Discussion, which is itself constrained by focus (Beaver & Clark 2008).

This helps us explain examples like (11), and also some previously sticky facts about the existential part of a cleft's meaning (see Büring 2008).

The basic similarity...

- (1) **Clefts are exhaustive in meaning**
#It's Sarah who laughed, and John laughed too..
- (2) **Exclusives are similarly exhaustive**
#Only Sarah laughed, and John laughed too.

...and more data on clefts

- (2) **Clefts aren't stronger than their prejacent**
 - a. Mary ate pizza, and in fact, she only ate pizza.
 - b. # Mary ate pizza, and in fact, it was pizza that she ate.
- (3) **Defined correctly, exhaustivity projects (see Büring 2008)**
It wasn't Sarah who laughed...
 - a. ...it was Fred. [“Only Sarah laughed” doesn't project]
 - b. ...it was the students. [“Only 1 person laughed” doesn't project]
 - c. ?? ...it was Sarah *and* Fred. [“If Sarah laughed, then nobody else did” seems to project]

- (4) **The cleft prejacent clearly doesn't project**
#It wasn't calamari that Jane ate, though she did eat calamari.

- (5) **Exhaustivity isn't cancellable**
#It's John that Mary loves. And he's not the only one.

- (6) **Exhaustivity has a local effect (Tonhauser et al. 2011)**
 - a. # John thinks it was an apple Mary ate, and he thinks she ate a pear.
 - b. John thinks it was an apple Mary ate, and Fred thinks she ate a pear.
 - c. John thinks it was an apple Mary ate, but I know she ate a pear.

- (7) **Exhaustivity isn't a strong presupposition**
A: Did Sarah bring the wine? Or Fred? Or maybe Sarah *and* Fred?
B: It was Sarah who brought the wine.

- (8) **New material in the cleft complement**
It was ten years ago this month that young Irwin Vamplew was bopped on the head with a nightstick while smashing windows in Berkeley in order to end the war in Vietnam. [Prince]

- (9) **Focused material in the cleft complement**
 - a. It was JOHN who called MARY. [Büring]
 - b. **Alice:** What has John done around the house lately?
Bob: It was John who [cleaned the BATHROOM last week]F

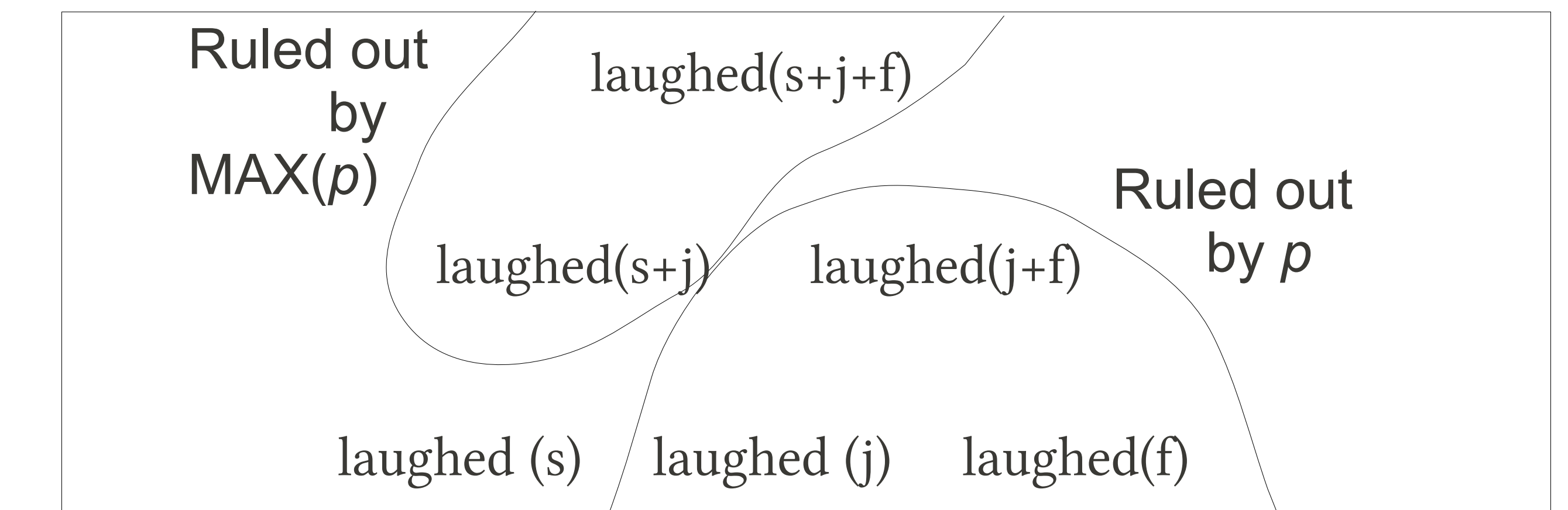
- (10) **Given, unfocused material in the pivot**
It was John's ELDEST daughter who went to the party.

- (11) **Focus, not syntax, determines what's exhaustified**
It was John's ELDEST daughter who went to the party. When she arrived, there were over 200 people there.

Some worked examples Exhaustivity in simple clauses

Following Coppock and Beaver (2011, 2012) we assume that scalar operators can specify a *type* of scale that they prefer to associate with. We claim the cleft construct requires an *entailment scale*.

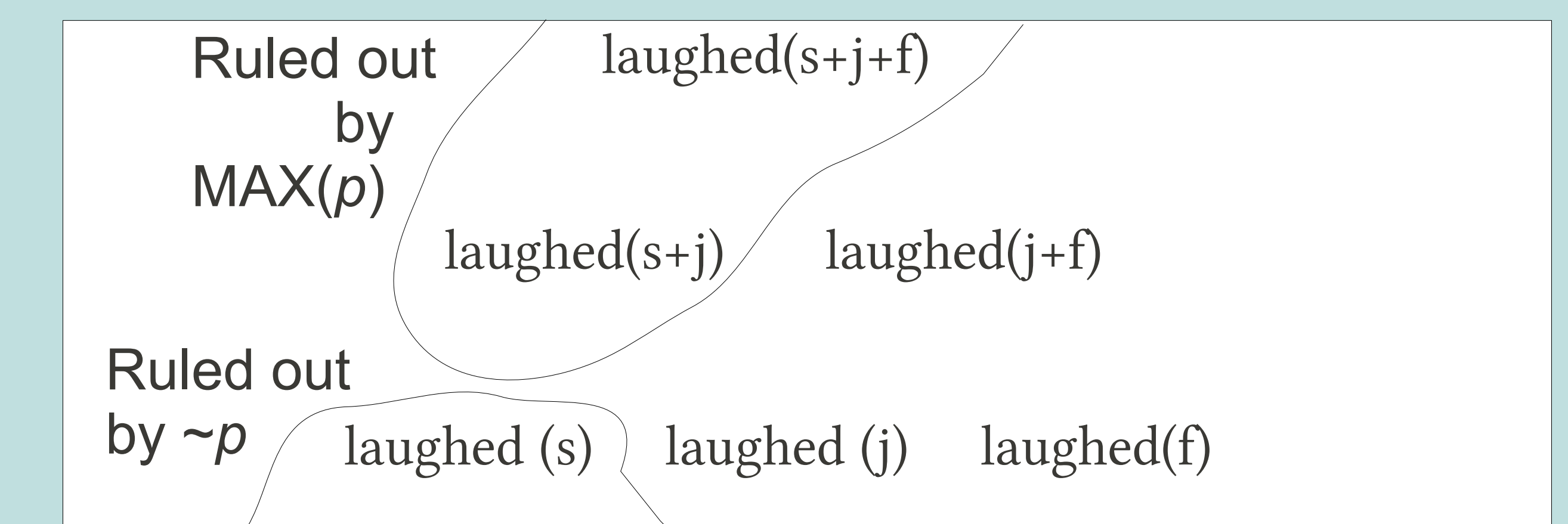
In a positive, unembedded clause, p & MAX_s(p) is an exhaustified version of p.



The only worlds satisfying both conjuncts are the ones where only Sarah, and nobody else, laughed.

What projects?

We assume (following Roberts et al. 2011) that *not-at-issue content projects*. In our case, that means that MAX_s(p) projects, and p does not.



MAX_s(p) alone amounts to the claim that no alternatives *strictly stronger than laughed(s)* are true. In other words,

- (i) Sarah may have laughed, or
- (ii) some other person or group may have laughed, but
- (iii) no larger group *which includes* Sarah laughed.

And this is what the data shows.

The existential component?

Based on (12), Büring argues that there's no existential component to cleft meaning, because (12) does not imply *someone called Mary*.

But (12) *does* imply *someone called someone* And we can generate this. The current QUD in (12) gives these alternatives:

called(j, m) & called(m, j)

called(j, m) called(m, j)

In every one of them, it is the case that *someone called someone*.

Similarly, in the examples above based on (3), it is the case in all alternatives that *someone laughed*.