**It-clefts are IT* Constructions**

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* inquiry terminating

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**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: \( \text{MAX}_s(\text{laughed}(\text{JOHN})) \)

This gives a unified semantics for the two expressions:

\[
\text{CLEFT}(p) = \text{ONLY}(p) = p & \text{MAX}_s(p)
\]

Here we define \( \text{MAX}_s \) following Beaver and Clark 2008:

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

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

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**The basic similarity...**

1. Clefts are exhaustive in meaning
   - It's Sarah who laughed, and John laughed too...
   - Only Sarah laughed, and John laughed too.

2. Exclusives are similarly exhaustive
   - Only Sarah laughed, and John laughed too.

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**...and more data on clefts**

3. Defined correctly, exhaustivity projects (see Büring 2008)
   - It wasn't Sarah who laughed...
     - Only Sarah laughed. *"Only Sarah laughed" doesn't project*
     - ...it was the students. *"Only 1 person laughed" doesn't project*
     - ...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)
   - John thinks it was an apple Mary ate, and Fred thinks she ate a pear.
   - John thinks it was an apple Mary ate, but he knows she ate a pear.
   - 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.

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**Focus-sensitivity**

On our account, the exhaustive meaning of a cleft (like that of *only*) is focus-sensitive. The meaning of \( \text{MAX}_s \) 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).

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**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 \( \text{MAX}_s(p) \) 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!)*

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**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 construction requires an entailment scale.

In a positive, unembdedded clause, \( p \) and \( \text{MAX}_s(p) \) is an exhaustified version of \( p \).

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

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**What projects?**

We assume (following Roberts et al. 2011) that *not-at-issue content projects*. In our case, that means that \( \text{MAX}_s(p) \) projects, and \( p \) does not.

(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.

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**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 Alice* And we can generate this. The current QUD in (12) gives these alternatives:

\[
\text{called}(j, m) \lor \text{called}(m, j)
\]

\[
\text{called}(j, m) \land \text{called}(m, j)
\]

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

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