

Exclusives and Exceptives in the Sufficiency Modal Construction

As originally pointed out by von Stechow & Iatridou (2007), in the "sufficiency modal construction" (SMC) goal-oriented necessity modals give rise to a non-necessity implication. Cross-linguistically there are two strategies for the expression of the SMC. One strategy, employed by English and exemplified in (1), is to use an exclusive, such as "only" or "just". The other strategy, employed by Greek and exemplified in (2), is to use a hostless exceptive under negation. Both (1) and (2) convey that going to Chicago is not the only way of seeing a Picasso (non-necessity implication) but it is the easiest way (scalar implication).

(1) To see a Picasso, you only have to go to Chicago.

(2) Gia na dhis pinakes tou Picasso, dhen chriazete para na pas sto Chicago.
'To see paintings of Picasso, you only have to go to Chicago.'

In order to account for the non-necessity implication of the SMC, von Stechow & Iatridou assimilate the exclusive strategy to the exceptive strategy, proposing that exclusives lexicalize a negation and an exceptive (NEG + EXCEPT), which can appear in a split scope configuration. In the SMC, negation scopes above the modal and the exceptive below it. Their analysis, however, does not account for the scalar implication of the SMC, predicts presuppositions for the SMC that are unattested, and predicts presuppositions for "only" in other cases that are too weak. Analyses of the SMC that do not decompose the exclusive into NEG + EXCEPT, such as Franke 2006, Krasikova 2010, Alonso-Ovalle & Hirsch 2022, Condoravdi & Francez 2022, are limited to the exclusive strategy, leaving open the question whether and how they could be extended to cover the exceptive strategy.

In this talk I present an analysis of both strategies for the SMC, taking as a starting point the analysis of the SMC by Condoravdi & Francez 2022. Exclusives and exceptives in the SMC are focus sensitive operators that can be independently established to be scalar, i.e. to operate on ordered alternatives. They scope over the modal, and although they do not have identical presuppositional and assertive content, they lead to the same combined content in the SMC. The apparent weakening of the necessity is due to an additional minimization component of the ordering source of the modal leading to a narrower domain of universal quantification.

The content of the ordering source modulates the interpretation of goal-oriented modals in such a way that the ordered alternatives operated on by the exclusive or the exceptive are contextually mutually incompatible, a hallmark of the scalar interpretation of exclusives and exceptives. The analysis derives the scalar implication of the SMC and explains away the non-necessity implication as the result of context equivocation.