

# “Just” don’t ask: Exclusives and potential questions<sup>1</sup>

Alex WARSTADT — *New York University*

**Abstract.** The English exclusive *just* is not synonymous with other exclusives such as *only* in sentences like *Sometimes, bad things just/only happen*. I give a new analysis of *just* which explains this and other puzzling readings of *just* observed in earlier work (e.g. Wiegand, 2016; Beltrama, 2018). I argue that *just* excludes alternatives derived from a potential question, or possible future QUD, in the sense of Onea (2016). This new perspective makes it possible to give the first unified account of these non-canonical exclusive readings of *just*, and provides evidence that the semantics of lexical items can be sensitive to possible futures of the discourse.

**Keywords:** exclusives, potential question, QUD, discourse particle, alternatives, assertability.

## 1. Introduction

There is growing evidence that the semantics of certain lexical items makes reference to the structure of discourse. In particular, it has been proposed that the QUD stack (Roberts, 1996; Ginzburg, 1996) or Table (Farkas and Bruce, 2010) plays a crucial role in the lexical semantics of focus sensitive items like *only* (Beaver and Clark, 2008; Coppock and Beaver, 2013) discourse particles like German *überhaupt* (Rojas-Esponda, 2014), and polarity response particles like *yes* (Farkas and Roelofsen, 2011). While stack-based models track conversational goals that have been adopted prior in the discourse, less attention paid to the role of possible *future* conversational goals in grammar. Onea (2016) makes progress in this direction by proposing a theory of **potential questions**, intuitively possible future QUDs, and their role in grammar.

In this work, I propose that the English particle *just* makes direct reference to the future of the discourse as part of its conventional meaning in examples like (1). Specifically, if someone utters *The lights in this place turn off and on*— i.e. (1a) without *just*—a likely followup question is *Why?*. What *just* does is express that this followup question is unanswerable. It does so *before* the addressee can ask it, thus preventing the addressee from asking a useless question.

- (1)
- |    |   |                                   |
|----|---|-----------------------------------|
| a. | The lights in this place just/#only turn off and on.                    | UNEXPLANATORY                     |
|    | <i>(Paraphrase: The lights turn off and on for no apparent reason.)</i> |                                   |
| b. | The pumpkin bisque is just/#only delicious!                             | UNCONTRASTIVE                     |
|    | <i>(Paraphrase: The pumpkin bisque is extremely delicious.)</i>         |                                   |
| c. | Sue is not just/#only a teacher; she’s a math teacher.                  | UNELABORATORY                     |
|    | <i>(Paraphrase: Sue is not a general teacher.)</i>                      |                                   |
| d. | Betsy just/only eats soup.  | CANONICAL EXCLUSIVE/UNCONJUNCTIVE |
|    | <i>(Paraphrase: Betsy eats soup and nothing else.)</i>                  |                                   |

More generally, I argue that *just* is an exclusive operator over a potential question raised by preajacent, which prevents it being adopted as a QUD. Unlike **strong exclusives** which negate alternatives, I propose that *just* is a **weak exclusive** which declares alternatives unassertable, thereby freeing the speaker from taking a position on the potential question. This explains

---

<sup>1</sup>Thanks to Chris Barker, Craige Roberts, and Anna Szabolcsi for insightful comments on my QP on this topic. Thanks also to Omar Agha, Lucas Champollion, Masha Esipova, Magdalena Kaufmann, Floris Roelofsen, Amy Rose Deal, Philippe Schlenker, and audiences at SuB 24 and NYU Semantics Group.



appear in rotting fruit entirely without cause. This sentence is false, and spontaneous generation is (rightly) disproved, if an explanation for the prejacents is found. By contrast, Wiegand (2016) notes that the speaker in (2b) does not make a similarly strong claim that the lights turn off and on for no reason whatsoever. Instead, they convey they are ignorant of the cause for lights' turning off and on. While they may suspect a ghost is responsible, they are ultimately unsure.

- (2) a. *Context: Aristotle is explaining his view of spontaneous generation.*  
Flies just appear in rotting fruit. STRONG EXCLUSION
- b. *Context: The speaker is explaining why they think their house may be haunted.*  
The lights just turn off and on. WEAK EXCLUSION

Examples (2a) and (2b) illustrate what I refer to as **strong exclusion** and **weak exclusion**, respectively. One contrast between examples of this type is that strong exclusives cannot be followed up with claims to the effect that some of the relevant alternatives may be true (3a), while, as Wiegand (2016) notes, weak exclusives allow such followups (3b):

- (3) a. Aristotle: Flies just appear in rotting fruit. # They may be hatching from eggs.  
b. The lights just turn off and on. A ghost may be flipping the switch.

In addition to conveying speaker ignorance, weak *just* can also convey reluctance to answer certain questions (4a) or irrelevance of a question (4b):

- (4) a. A: Why did Skip break up with you?  
B: They just did. (*paraphrase: I'd rather not say why.*)
- b. A: I was on my way to the hospital to deliver a baby when the train stopped.  
B: Why did it stop?  
A: It just did. Anyway, I missed the delivery. (*paraphrase: It doesn't matter why.*)

## 2.2. Four Flavors of Exclusive *just*

Prior literature on *just* has identified various sub-types of *just* which can arguably be analyzed as either a weak or strong exclusive. I identify four primary flavors based upon the kind of discourse continuation that is made infelicitous by *just*. While these categories are a convenient descriptive tool, they play no formal role in the analysis, and do not necessarily exhaust the range of interpretations of *just* that can be observed or that follow from the account. Furthermore, as I discuss in Section 4.2, the interpretation of *just* is highly flexible and context sensitive, and so a given example may be consistent with numerous flavors and paraphrases.

**Unexplanatory *just*** In the unexplanatory flavor first identified by Wiegand (2016), *just* conveys that there is no explanation for the prejacents. This meaning is not expressible with *only*:

- (5) a. The lights in this place just/#only turn off and on.  
(*Paraphrase: There is no (known) reason why.*)
- b. Last week, a piano just/#only fell from the sky onto Fifth Avenue.  
(*Paraphrase: There is no (known) reason why.*)

As shown in (6), attempts to follow up unexplanatory *just* with an explanation result in oddness (while without *just*, such a followup is perfectly natural). If strong *just* is intended, these examples result in a contradiction, even if the explanation is modalized, as already shown



- 
- b. A: What are you up to?  
B: I'm just reading. (*paraphrase: What I'm reading is not of interest.*)
  - c. Usually I have to say "hocus-pocus" to open the gate, but today it just opened.  
(*paraphrase: I didn't have to say "hocus-pocus".*)
  - d. Betsy just walked over and shook the president's hand.  
(*paraphrase: Betsy walked over without much ado.*)

In each example discourse continuations that elaborate on the prejacent are infelicitous (12). Both the strong and weak readings are available, though in the predicative case, the strong reading is implausible. For instance, if Fido is a dog, Fido must be a specific type of dog. Thus, the weak reading is most natural, in which his breed is unknown or irrelevant. By contrast, *strong* reading is most natural in (11c), in which the speaker did not have to say "hocus-pocus".

- (12)
- a. #Fido is just a dog. In fact, he's a dalmatian.
  - b. #Betsy just shook the president's hand. She had to pass a secret service check first.
  - c. #I'm just mad. In particular, I'm mad at you.

The non-predicative cases (11) can be distinguished based on whether the excluded elaboration expresses an implicit argument. Examples (11a-11b) involve an implicit argument: if one is mad, one is usually mad *at* something; and one cannot read without reading *something*. Examples (11c-11d) do not involve an implicit argument, but rather a manner or sub-process of an event. For instance, (11b) can be understood to say that Betsy did not seek permission from the president or the secret service before walking over and shaking the president's hand.

**Unconjunctive (Canonical Exclusive) *just*** Of all the flavors of *just*, the **unconjunctive**, or canonical exclusive use, has been the best studied. It shares many properties with *only* (13): it denies alternatives to the prejacent, it (tends to) presuppose its prejacent<sup>4</sup> (Horn, 1969), and it is focus-sensitive (Rooth, 1985).<sup>5</sup>

- (13)
- a. Betsy just/only eats [CHICKEN NUGGETS]<sup>F</sup>.  
⊢Betsy doesn't eat hot dogs. *alternative denial*
  - b. Betsy doesn't just/only eat [CHICKEN NUGGETS]<sup>F</sup>. She eats hot dogs!  
⊢Betsy eats chicken nuggets. *prejacent presupposition*
  - c. Betsy just/only [EATS]<sup>F</sup> chicken nuggets.  
⊢Betsy doesn't make chicken nuggets. *focus sensitivity*

For our purposes, the main point of contrast between unconjunctive *just* and *only* is the availability of weak exclusion. While strong *just* is certainly more commonly observed in connection with this flavor (a fact I have no explanation for), a weak reading is available in (14). In (14B), the response with *just* seems to indicate that the speaker isn't doing anything of relevance besides sitting. By contrast, *only* really resists this weak interpretation: the response comes out as false because the speaker is also biting their finger nails.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup>The nature or even existence of this presupposition has been widely debated (Horn, 1996; Roberts, 2011: i.a.). I set aside this issue for reasons of space.

<sup>5</sup>I also set aside some contrasts between *just* and *only* noted by Coppock and Beaver (2013). For instance under negation *just* appears to presuppose its prejacent, while *only* does (e.g. *Betsy is not just/#only an admiral, she's a general.*). Furthermore, *only*, but not *just*, adjoins to DPs (e.g. *Only/#Just Betsy saw the fox.*).

<sup>6</sup>Craige Roberts (p.c.) suggests an alternative explanation for the oddness of B': *only* requires a salient alternative



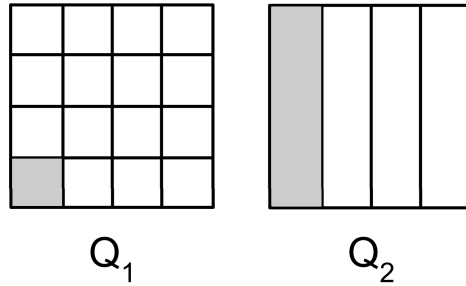


Figure 1: Illustration of question relevance. If the current QUD is  $Q_1$ , then  $Q_2$  is a relevant followup question. For each question, the entire region is the context set, and each smaller region is an alternative in the partition. The gray area represents the universal negative answer.

where of the  $cs$  is the **context set**,  $QUD$  is the **QUD stack**, and  $S$  and  $A$  are the speaker and addressee respectively. The context set is the largest (nonempty) set of possible worlds consistent with the common beliefs of all the discourse participants, and the QUD stack is a set of questions (explicit or implicit) accepted by the interlocutors and ordered by precedence. The **current QUD**  $CQ$  is the element on top of the stack (i.e. the most recent). In the spirit of Groenendijk and Stokhof (1984), I assume that interrogatives denote a set of alternative nonempty propositions that form a **partition** over the context set and represent the exhaustive answers to the question.<sup>7</sup> Note that Onea (2016) implements his theory of potential questions in inquisitive semantics (Ciardelli et al., 2018). To my knowledge, it is possible with some modifications to adapt my analysis to inquisitive semantics.

### 3.2. Motivation & Definition

Onea’s (2016) motivation for potential questions comes from general observations about discourse. In the QUD model (Roberts, 1996; Ginzburg, 1996), new information is generally seen as addressing the current QUD. However, this view does not capture occasions where new information actually *raises* a new question. In the dialogue in (16), B1 addresses question A1, but also raises question A2. By contrast, B1’, though relevant to A1, does not raise A2. The notion of a potential question gives a formal explanation for this contrast. The intuition is that A2 is likely to have a positive true answer given B1 but not B1’.

- (16)    A1: How is John doing?  
           B1: He recently had car accident. / B1’: Sue just broke up with him.  
           A2: Is he injured? (# in response to B1’)

Potential questionhood imposes constraints on future QUDs that are supplementary to constraints already present in QUD theory. In Roberts’s (1996) proposal, a new QUD is felicitously askable only if it is relevant to the current QUD, as defined in (17) and illustrated in Figure 1. For concreteness, if  $Q_1$  is *Who ate what?*, then a relevant followup question  $Q_2$  could be *What did Betsy eat?*. Assuming the context set is consistent with several options for what Betsy ate,

<sup>7</sup>There has been considerable debate over whether the partition view of questions is adequate for questions that are not strongly exhaustive (e.g., Beck and Rullmann, 1999; van Rooy and Schulz, 2004). For simplicity, I restrict my discussion to strongly exhaustive questions.





region represents the probability that the question has a positive true answer, and one can see a marked difference between questions A2 and A2' in the size of this region. This presupposes an ordinary context. If participant A lives with several mischievous children who hide her things, then the white region in A2' would be much larger, and as predicted the question would be felicitous.

- (19) A1: What happened to the cookies I was saving for the holiday party?  
 B: They're not in the cabinet anymore.  
 A2: Who ate them? / A2': # Who hid them?

### 3.2.1. Potential Questionhood vs. Existential Presupposition

An alternative hypothesis to explain the badness of the response in (19) is that an existential presupposition of the question is not satisfied in the context. I reject this hypothesis for two main reasons. First, presupposition failure cannot explain the oddness of the followup polar question in (16) in response to B1', since a polar question clearly cannot presuppose its positive answer. Second, appealing to presupposition failure to explain the badness of (19A2') should equally predict badness in the case of (19A2), since the speaker's beliefs do not incontrovertibly entail the existential proposition.

I side with Groenendijk and Stokhof (1984), Onea (2016), and many others in the view that *wh*-questions do not have an existential presupposition by virtue of their semantics.<sup>8</sup> In support of this view, Groenendijk and Stokhof (1984) argue that a universal negative answer is a felicitous response to a *wh*-question (20B), and Onea (2016) provides further evidence that such responses do not behave like rejections of a presupposition (20B').

- (20) A: Who is coming with me?  
 B: Nobody. / B': # Hey wait a minute, nobody's going with you!

Instead, Onea's (2016) theory gives a pragmatic explanation for this existential inference. In order for *Q* to be a potential question, the existential proposition must be likely to be true. Hence, if an agent asked *Q*, they must assign high probability to the existential proposition. This view builds on prior work in inquisitive semantics that argues that positive answers of a question have a special "highlighted" status (Roelofsen and Van Gool, 2010; Roelofsen and Farkas, 2015). I import the notion of highlighted alternatives into Groenendijk and Stokhof (1984) partition semantics for questions, using  $\mathcal{H}(Q)$  to denote *Q*'s highlighted alternatives.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.3. Raising Potential Questions

Even a potential question may be a bad candidates for a new QUD. For example, (16B1) licenses all the questions in (21), and each one is relevant to the original QUD *How is John*

<sup>8</sup>See Hamblin (1973), Dayal (1996), AnderBois (2014), and others for an opposing view.

<sup>9</sup>A formal definition of the partition semantics for questions and highlighting is as follows: If *Q* is an interrogative with LF  $wh_1, \dots, wh_n(\beta)$ , where  $wh_i$  is the  $i^{th}$  *wh*-word in *Q*,  $D(wh_i)$  is the domain of  $wh_i$  (e.g.  $D(who)$  is the set of humans), and  $\beta$  is the intension of an  $n$ -ary relation ( $n \geq 0$ ), in context set  $c$ , then:

- (i) a.  $\mathcal{R}_Q = \lambda w \lambda w' [\forall x_1 \in D(wh_1), \dots, \forall x_n \in D(wh_n) [\beta^w(x_1, \dots, x_n) \leftrightarrow \beta^{w'}(x_1, \dots, x_n)]]$   
 b.  $\llbracket Q \rrbracket^c = \{ \{ w \in c \mid \mathcal{R}_Q(w, w') \} \mid w' \in c \}$   
 c. *Q*'s highlighted alternatives  $\mathcal{H}(Q) := \{ a \in \llbracket Q \rrbracket^c \mid \exists x, \dots, \exists x_n \in D(wh_n) \forall w \in a [\beta^w(x_1, \dots, x_n)] \}$



The notion of assertability (23a) is defined in (24) as a conjunction of conditions that a proposition must satisfy to be felicitous and rational to assert. Conditions (a) and (b) can be derived from Grice's (1975) maxims of quality and relation, respectively. The third condition is not entirely Gricean, because it comes into play in uncooperative discourses, such as a police interrogation, where a participant may selfishly refuse to make an assertion. Thus, *just* conveys that each alternative fails at least one of these conditions in the actual world.<sup>11</sup> As noted in Section 2.1, weak *just* can be used to express that the speaker does not know whether the alternatives are true, considers them irrelevant, or is unwilling to assert them. With sufficient context, the listener can strengthen the claim that an alternative is unassertable to the claim that one particular condition in (24) fails to be met.

(24) **Definition: Assertability**

Proposition  $p$  is assertable for agent  $A$  in  $w$  iff: (a)  $S$  believes in  $w$  that  $p$  is true, (b)  $S$  considers  $p$  relevant to the other conversational participants in  $w$ , and (c)  $S$  is willing to be publicly committed to believing  $p$  in  $w$ . This is written  $\text{ASSERTABLE}(a, S_C, w)$ .

Recall that *just* also has a strong reading, as in (2a). I suggest that this reading is pragmatically derived from the weak exclusive lexical entry in (23) when the addressee assumes the speaker is opinionated about the potential question. This is completely parallel to the opinionatedness assumption that has been argued to strengthen weak (or primary) implicatures (Sauerland, 2004). For example, in (2a) the strong reading arises because we assume that Aristotle, as a philosopher seeking to give an explanation, has an opinion about the cause of fruit flies appearing. Since he considers no cause to be assertable (and the relevance and willingness conditions on assertability are met), he must believe there is no cause whatsoever.

Note that I have posited a presupposition for *just* in (23). Non-canonical *just* triggers a soft presupposition that the prejacent is true (25a), but this is often absent (25b). Since it is still debated whether soft presuppositions are semantically encoded (e.g. Abusch, 2010), I leave open the possibility that the prejacent inference arises by other means.

- (25) a. John didn't just leave class. He notified the professor first.  $\rightsquigarrow$  John left class.  
 b. Does the landlord just show up, or does he stay away?  $\not\rightsquigarrow$  The landlord shows up.

#### 4.1. Unifying Non-Canonical Exclusion

We can now show how the various flavors of *just* introduced in (1), repeated in (26), are derived from the lexical entry for *just* in (23). As discussed in Section 2, each flavor prevents discourse continuations that stand in certain rhetorical relations to the prejacent. This follows under the analysis from the fact that different rhetorical relations can be seen as different types of QUDs (see Onea, 2016: §8.3). Examples of each kind of excluded question are given in (27).

- (26) a. The lights in this place just turn off and on. UNEXPLANATORY  
 b. The pumpkin bisque is just delicious! UNCONTRASTIVE  
 c. Sue is not just a teacher; she's a math teacher. UNELABORATORY  
 d. Betsy just eats soup. UNCONJUNCTIVE

<sup>11</sup>One might want  $p$ 's assertability to be a property of an information state instead. This is possible in a framework like inquisitive semantics or the commitment space model of Cohen and Krifka (2014) where the type of the discourse context is lifted to be a *set* of information states (or similar). I leave such an analysis for future work.



---

question, which the second clause supplies. In other cases of unelaboratory *just*, such as (11a), the presence of an implicit argument raises a specificational question about the referent of the argument. This supports the view that that implicit arguments make such potential questions highly salient by default (Onea, 2016: p. 136).

Finally, the unconjunctive—or canonical exclusive—flavor of *just* can be derived in cases where the prejacent raises a **conjunction question**, as in (27d). I assume that such questions have an additive presupposition, in this case that Betsy eats soup. The fact that Betsy eats soup licenses this potential question because prior to learning this fact, each of the positive answers to (27d) has probability 0 due to the failure to satisfy the additive presupposition. If we assume that the QUD concerns what Betsy eats, then this is the most salient potential question. Recall that according to Coppock and Beaver (2013), *only* excludes alternatives from the current QUD. Arguably, the reason that this flavor of *just* is equivalent to the one arising from *only* is that the potential conjunction question is actually equivalent to the QUD after updating the context set with the prejacent.

#### 4.2. Context Sensitivity and Salience

The account of *just* in (23) predicts a high degree of context sensitivity due to the claim that *just* excludes the potential question with the greatest contextual salience. Rather than being a limitation, I argue that this is a necessary feature of an adequate account of *just*. As explained at the top of Section 2.2, the four categories of *just*'s meanings I propose are used heuristically, and there are instances where *just* excludes a contextually salient potential question that is not easily categorized.

For example, consider example (11c), repeated in (29). In this sentence *just* excludes a single alternative, namely the positive answer to the question *Did the speaker have to say “hocus-pocus” when opening the gate?*. This alternative set is highly specific to the context and highly salient, hence this reading is only predicted if *just* retrieves its alternative set from the context.

- (29) Usually I have to say “hocus-pocus” to open the gate. But today it just opened.  
 PQ-ALT<sub>c</sub>(*The gate opened*) =  $\mathcal{H}(\llbracket \text{Did } S \text{ say “hocus-pocus” to open the gate?} \rrbracket)$   
 = {*S said “hocus pocus” to open the gate.*}

Similarly, the interpretation of *just* can be altered based on other factors that determine the salience ordering over potential questions, such as consistency and relevance to the participants' goals. These factors can be sufficient to override the default interpretation of *just*. For example, the string *I just love him* is most naturally interpreted with uncontrastive *just* (i.e. with an intensification reading). However, in (30), it carries an unexplanatory reading, because the uncontrastive reading would be inconsistent with the prior context. Similarly, the string *the lights just turn off and on* (1a) most naturally had an unexplanatory reading in a neutral context. However in (31), we instead get the reading that no additional action is necessary to operate the lights. This is because the potential question of how the light is operated is relevant to the QUD, while the potential explanation question is not.

- (30) I know Justin Bieber is a bit of a jerk and a mediocre singer. I just love him.  
*Paraphrase: I can't explain why I love him.*



For example, in the case of unelaboratory *just* (33), a covert nominal modifier is focused in the prejacent (covert content is crossed out). The modifier itself is trivial, i.e. it returns true for every individual, so it does not alter the ordinary meaning of prejacent. However, the replacements of the modifier are not trivial, giving the set of elaborations on the prejacent. Similarly, Wiegand (2016) posits a covert cause modifier to account for unexplanatory *just*.

- (33) a.  $p = \text{Sue is a } \{\text{MOD}\}_{\neq} \text{ teacher.}$   
 b.  $\llbracket p \rrbracket^f = \{ \text{Sue is a } Q \text{ teacher} \mid Q \in D_{\langle e,t \rangle} \} = \{ \text{Sue is a math teacher, ...} \}$   
 c.  $\llbracket \text{MOD} \rrbracket^o = \lambda x_e. \top$

Although this account generates the same alternative sets as the potential question account, it does not make the same predictions. In fact, it wrongly predicts that *only* should give rise to the same set of non-canonical readings as *just*. The reason is that both *only* and *just* exclude focus alternatives in this view. If alternatives generated by focus on covert modifiers can be excluded by *just*, there is nothing that should stop *only* from excluding these alternative as well.<sup>14</sup> Another critique, albeit a purely theoretical one, is that it is not independently motivated to suppose that covert modifiers of this kind exist in the syntax.<sup>15</sup> In principle, such modifiers should be generally available even in sentences without *just*, but with no observable effect. All else being equal, we should prefer an account that does not posit trivial covert content.

The potential question analysis avoids both pitfalls. The unavailability of non-canonical readings with *only* is easy to explain: *only* gets its alternatives from the QUD. And the “extra” material in the alternatives does not arise arbitrarily, but from pragmatic reasoning about future developments in the discourse and the independently motivated notion of a potential question.

### 5.3. Metalinguistic Alternatives

Beltrama (2018) gives an account that is focused on deriving the intensification effect of uncontrastive *just* in connection with extreme adjectives, as in example (26b). Beltrama’s account resembles the present one in several respects. First, it argues that *just* (and *simply*) express that certain alternatives to the prejacent are unassertable. Second, it derives intensification by restricting the excluded alternatives to versions of the prejacent with the addition of some contrasting piece of information. However, Beltrama does not suggest that *just*’s alternatives come from a potential questions, but rather argues that they are generated by a syntactic algorithm following Katzir (2007) which may insert, delete, contract, or replace constituents in the syntactic structure of the prejacent. Applying this algorithm to the prejacent  $p$  gives the **metalinguistic alternatives** of the prejacent, denoted  $Alt_{ML}(p)$ . These alternatives can be ordered by syntactic complexity as in (34a), and Beltrama uses this ordering to define assertability, also following Katzir, in (34b).

- (34) a. **Structural Complexity** Let  $\phi$ ,  $\psi$  be parse trees. If we can transform  $\phi$  into  $\psi$

<sup>14</sup>In subsequent work, Wiegand (2018) addresses this problem by proposing two mechanisms for introducing alternatives: one is focus in the sense of Rooth (1992), and one is a formally similar mechanism that is triggered by covert modifiers. Accordingly, *only* selects for the first kind of alternatives, while *just* selects for the second. While this proposal avoids the problem of the original account, the solution is ad hoc.

<sup>15</sup>Barker (2013) suggests that sprouting as in *Sue is a teacher, but I don’t know what kind* can be analyzed by proposing a covert modifier in the antecedent clause. However, other analyses do not propose covert modifiers (Chung et al., 1995), and even rely on notions closely related to potential questions (AnderBois, 2014).





---

to potential questions can deepen our understanding of the semantics-pragmatics interface and how language provides tools that help interlocutors shape discourse structure to suit their needs.

## References

- Abusch, D. (2010). Presupposition triggering from alternatives. *Journal of Semantics* 27(1), 37–80.
- Aijmer, K. (2002). *English discourse particles: Evidence from a corpus*, Volume 10. John Benjamins Publishing.
- AnderBois, S. (2014). The semantics of sluicing: Beyond truth conditions. *Language* 90(4), 887–926.
- Asher, N. and A. Lascarides (2003). *Logics of conversation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Barker, C. (2013). Scopability and sluicing. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 36(3), 187–223.
- Beaver, D. I. and B. Z. Clark (2008). *Sense and sensitivity: How focus determines meaning*, Volume 12. John Wiley & Sons.
- Beck, S. and H. Rullmann (1999). A flexible approach to exhaustivity in questions. *Natural Language Semantics* 7(3), 249–298.
- Beltrama, A. (2016). Exploring metalinguistic intensification: The case of extreme degree modifiers. In *Proceedings of NELS*, Volume 46, pp. 79–92.
- Beltrama, A. (2018). Metalinguistic just and simply: exploring emphatic exclusives. In *Proceedings of SALT 28*.
- Chung, S., W. A. Ladusaw, and J. McCloskey (1995). Sluicing and logical form. *Natural Language Semantics* 3(3), 239–282.
- Ciardelli, I., J. Groenendijk, and F. Roelofsen (2018). *Inquisitive semantics*. Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, A. and M. Krifka (2014). Superlative quantifiers and meta-speech acts. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 37(1), 41–90.
- Coppock, E. and D. I. Beaver (2013). Principles of the exclusive muddle. *Journal of Semantics* 31(3), 371–432.
- Davies, M. (2009). The 385+ million word Corpus of Contemporary American English (1990–2008+): Design, architecture, and linguistic insights. *International journal of corpus linguistics* 14(2), 159–190.
- Dayal, V. (1996). *Locality in WH quantification: Questions and relative clauses in Hindi*, Volume 62. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Farkas, D. and F. Roelofsen (2011). Polar initiatives and polarity particle responses in an inquisitive discourse model. In *Amsterdam Colloquium, December*.
- Farkas, D. F. and K. B. Bruce (2010). On reacting to assertions and polar questions. *Journal of semantics* 27(1), 81–118.
- Ginzburg, J. (1996). Dynamics and the semantics of dialogue. *Seligman, Jerry, & Westerstahl, Dag (eds.), Logic, language and computation 1*.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole and J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Speech Acts*, pp. 41–58. Academic Press, NY.
- Groenendijk, J. and M. Stokhof (1984). *Studies on the semantics of questions and the pragmatics of answers*. Ph. D. thesis, Institute for Logic, Language & Computation (ILLC).
- Hamblin, C. L. (1973). Questions in Montague English. In *Montague grammar*, pp. 247–259.

- Elsevier.
- Horn, L. (1969). A presuppositional analysis of only and even.
- Horn, L. R. (1996). Exclusive company: Only and the dynamics of vertical inference. *Journal of semantics* 13(1), 1–40.
- Katzir, R. (2007). Structurally-defined alternatives. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 30(6), 669–690.
- Klinedinst, N. (2004). Only scalar only. *Hand-out Journées Présuppositions et Implicatures*.
- Laparle, S. and R. Truswell (2018). The scalar semantics of just. Poster presented at WCCFL 36.
- Laserson, P. (1999). Pragmatic halos. *Language*, 522–551.
- Lee, D. (1987). The semantics of just. *Journal of Pragmatics* 11(3), 377–398.
- Lee, D. A. (1991). Categories in the description of just. *Lingua* 83(1), 43–66.
- McCready, E. (2012). Salience and questions under discussion.
- Molina, C. and M. Romano (2012). Just revisited: Panchronic and contrastive insights. *International Journal of English Studies* 12(1), 17–36.
- Morzycki, M. (2011). Metalinguistic comparison in an alternative semantics for imprecision. *Natural Language Semantics* 19(1), 39–86.
- Onea, E. (2016). *Potential questions at the semantics-pragmatics interface*. Brill.
- Orenstein, D. (2015). A family of exclusives in Hebrew. *of: ESSLLI*, 96–106.
- Roberts, C. (2011). Only: A case study in projective meaning. *Baltic International Yearbook of Cognition, Logic and Communication* 6(1), 14.
- Roberts, C. (2012/1996). Information structure: Towards an integrated formal theory of pragmatics. *Semantics and Pragmatics* 5, 6–1.
- Roelofsen, F. and D. F. Farkas (2015). Polarity particle responses as a window onto the interpretation of questions and assertions. *Language* 91(2), 359–414.
- Roelofsen, F. and S. Van Gool (2010). Disjunctive questions, intonation, and highlighting. In *Logic, language and meaning*, pp. 384–394. Springer.
- Rojas-Esponda, T. (2014). A discourse model for überhaupt. *Semantics and Pragmatics* 7, 1–45.
- Rooth, M. (1985). *Association with focus*. Ph. D. thesis, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Rooth, M. (1992). A theory of focus interpretation. *Natural language semantics* 1(1), 75–116.
- Sauerland, U. (2004). Scalar implicatures in complex sentences. *Linguistics and philosophy* 27(3), 367–391.
- Schiffrin, D. (1988). *Discourse markers*. Number 5. Cambridge University Press.
- Stalnaker, R. C. (1978). Assertion. *Formal Semantics: The Essential Readings*, 147–161.
- Thomas, W. (2020). The interaction of just with modified scalar predicates. In *Proceedings of SuB 24*.
- van Rooy, R. (2003). Questioning to resolve decision problems. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 26(6), 727–763.
- van Rooy, R. and K. Schulz (2004). Exhaustive interpretation of complex sentences. *Journal of logic, language and information* 13(4), 491–519.
- Wiegand, M. (2016). Just and its meanings: Exclusivity and scales in alternative semantics and speech act theory. *Qualifying paper, Cornell University*.
- Wiegand, M. (2018). Exclusive morphosemantics: Just and covert quantification. In *Proceedings of the west coast conference on formal linguistics (WCCFL)*, Volume 35.