

Expletive negation and *only*

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Puzzle Contrary to the natural assumption that negative morphemes bring about truth-condition reversal, Hebrew sentential negation does not always make the expected contribution to meaning, just like other instances of EXPLETIVE NEGATION (EXN) crosslinguistically.

Data Hebrew EXN is found in *until*-clauses (1) and free (headless) relative clauses (2). The presence of EXN has an interpretational effect in both cases. In *until*-clauses, EXN triggers an uncancellable implication, according to which the main-clause was interrupted at the onset of the

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| <p>(1) <i>yoni yaSan ad Se ha-Sxenim (lo) hidliku muzika</i>
 Y. slept until that the-neighbors NEG lit music
 ‘Yoni was asleep until the neighbors turned on some music.’</p> <p>(2) <i>mi Se (lo) yaSav b-a-xacer kibel ugiya</i>
 who that NEG sat in-the-yard received cookie
 ‘Whoever was sitting in the yard got a cookie.’</p> <p>(3) <i>ha-rof'im metaplim be-mi Se lo xole</i>
 the-doctors are treating in-who that NEG ill
 Only: #‘The doctors are treating whoever is not ill.’</p> | <p><i>until</i>-clause (e.g., in (1), Yoni woke up when the music started). The interruption implication can be shown to be obligatory with EXN, since only with EXN are <i>until</i>-sentences incompatible with contexts which falsify the implication: the speaker in (1) cannot be ignorant as to whether Yoni kept sleeping after the music started. In fact, she must believe that he did not. Similarly, expressions such as <i>at least</i> cannot modify the <i>until</i>-clause in (1). In EXN-less cases, contrarily, the implication behaves like a scalar implicature in being cancellable and disappearing in downward-entailing environments.</p> |
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EXN-less FRs are in principle ambiguous between a *wh-ever*-interpretation and a plain extensional one. Introducing EXN into a FR forces the FR into a *wh-ever*-interpretation, including modal implications of ignorance or indifference, just like in the English translation (e.g., in (2), the speaker didn’t care or doesn’t remember who was in the yard).

Finally, negation in copula-less (i.e., verbless PRES-tense) sentences is arguably structurally lower than ordinary sentential negation. This negation cannot be interpreted expletively even when inside a suitable environment (3), leading to the generalization that *to be expletive*, NEG *must be high*.

Proposal: covert *only* in (1) I propose that the interruption implication is a scalar implicature which arises due to EXN being obligatorily associated with grammatical strengthening. I follow Chierchia et al. (2012) in taking scalar implicatures to arise due to a covert exhaustivity operator (4), akin to *only* in meaning. I assume that the set of alternatives to the complement of *until* is the entire (contextually restricted) temporal domain. Thus, a sentence of the form $A \text{ until } B_t$,

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| <p>(4) $\llbracket \text{EXHAUST} \rrbracket = \lambda A_{st,t} . \lambda p_{st} . \lambda w_s . p(w) = 1 \wedge \forall q \in A [(p \not\subseteq q) \rightarrow q(w) = 0]$</p> <p>(5) $\text{Alt}(A \text{ until } B_t) = \{A \text{ until } B_{t_-}, A \text{ until } B_t, A \text{ until } B_{t_+}\}$</p> <p>(6) $(\lambda w . A \text{ until } B_{t_+} \text{ in } w) \subseteq (\lambda w . A \text{ until } B_t \text{ in } w) \subseteq (\lambda w . A \text{ until } B_{t_-} \text{ in } w)$</p> <p>(7) $\llbracket \text{EXHAUST}[A \text{ until } B_t] \rrbracket^w = 1$ iff $A \text{ until } B_t \text{ in } w \wedge \neg A \text{ until } B_{t_+} \text{ in } w$</p> | <p>where t is the time at which the complement B is evaluated, has the set of alternatives in (5), where t_- stands for times preceding t and t_+ stands for times following t. Alternatives in this set are ordered by (Strawson) entailment (6). Preliminarily, I take EXN to contribute only exhaustification and no negation (an assumption to be modified and explicated in a moment). Thus, a sentence of the form $A \text{ until } B$ would have the meaning in (7), equivalent to $A \text{ only until } B$.</p> |
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EXN B would have the meaning in (7), equivalent to $A \text{ only until } B$.

Decomposing *only* Why should the negative morpheme participating in EXN carry the meaning of *only*? A decompositional analysis of *only* can shed light on this question. Modal sufficiency constructions, as *only have to* in *To get good cheese, you only have to go to the North*

End are analyzed by von Fintel & Iatridou (2007); they propose a decomposition of *only* into negation and an exceptive, thus allowing the necessity modal *have to* to scope between the two components: *you do not have but go to the NE*. They provide further support from the fact that some languages express the meaning of *only* by exactly such means (e.g., French *ne... que* and Greek *dhen... para*).

Accordingly, I propose that EXN is in fact an ordinary negation, spelling-out the negative component of *only*. What is special about cases of EXN is that the exceptive head is not pronounced.

Supporting observations (i) An overt *only* with sentential focus cannot accompany EXN (8). (ii) EXN cannot license Negative Concord (NC). Putting a NC item under negation forces a non-expletive interpretation (9). This property follows from the proposal, since exceptives are intervenors for NC (10).

(8) *yoni yaSan (*rak) ad Se (*rak) ha-Sxenim (*rak) lo (*rak) hidliku muzika*
 Y. slept only until that only the-neighbors only NEG only lit music

(9) *ma Se lo natanu le-af exad haya haxi ta'im*
 what that NEG we gave to-no one was most tasty
 'What(ever) we did **not** give to anybody was the tastiest.'

(10) a. *miri lo ra'ata af exad* b. **miri lo ra'ata ela af exad*
 M. NEG saw no one M. NEG saw but no one
 'Miri didn't see anybody.'

FRs The datum in (2) still calls for an explanation, since there does not seem to be any exclusive inference from FR-EXN (i.e., (2) is compatible with non-yard-sitters getting a cookie as well). However, there is evidence for the presence of (a non-exclusive) *only* in some FRs:

(11) a. *kaniti ma Se rak bikaStem* b. *kaniti ma Se lo bikaStem*
 1.bought what that only 2PL. asked 1.bought what that NEG 2PL. asked
 'I bought whatever you asked for.' 'I bought whatever you asked for.'

If we had an understanding of the contribution of *only* in FRs the current proposal could explain the presence of EXN in FRs, since EXN is proposed to spell-out the negative component of *only*.

Extending the account to FRs might give rise to a reason for the requirement that EXN be high (3): in von Fintel & Iatridou's analysis, the exceptive is an NPI. For negation to license the exceptive, it must be high enough to scope over the exceptive. It remains to be shown that the lower negation in copula-less sentences (3) is lower than any position the exceptive can take.

Previous proposals The current proposal differs from previous ones in (i) retaining a uniform negative meaning for negative morphemes; (ii) providing a principled reason for the participation of negative morphemes in EXN, and (iii) explaining the obligatory interruption implication (and potentially, the height requirement too).

Previous proposals have either alluded to lexical ambiguity of the negative morpheme (Eilam 2007, Rubinstein & Doron 2015) or to a uniformly negative analysis (Abels 2005, for Russian). The interruption implication and the height requirement both remain a challenge for these approaches. Furthermore, ambiguity approaches leave as an accident the use of negative morphology in EXN.

Selected references Abels, K. 2005. Expletive negation in Russian: A conspiracy theory. *J of Slavic Ling* 13(1). Chierchia, G., D. Fox & B. Spector. 2012. The grammatical view of scalar implicatures and the relationship between semantics and pragmatics. *Handbook of semantics* 3. Eilam, A. 2007. The crosslinguistic realization of -ever: Evidence from modern Hebrew. *CLS* 43. von Fintel, K. & S. Iatridou. 2007. Anatomy of a modal construction. *LI* 38(3). Rubinstein, A. & E. Doron. 2015. Expletive negation in constituent unconditionals. Presented at *Negation and Polarity Workshop*, Hebrew U. Jerusalem.