

A unified semantics for exceptive-additive ‘besides’

Clemens Steiner-Mayr & Ekatarina Vostrikova

This talk is about the semantics of exceptive-additive ‘besides’ in English. Similarly to exceptive constructions (like ‘except’ and ‘but’), ‘besides’ can occur with universal quantifiers and it contributes the negative inference in such contexts (as shown in (1)).

(1) Every girl except/ but/besides Ann came. (Inference: Ann did not come)

Unlike exceptives, ‘besides’ can occur with existentials and in such contexts it contributes a positive inference (as the contrast between (2) and (3) illustrates).

(2) *At least one/ exactly one/ some girl(s) girl except/ but Ann came.

(3) At least one/ exactly one/ some girl(s) besides Ann came. (Inference: Ann came)

In this talk we propose a unified semantic treatment of exceptive-additive constructions that accounts for its interaction with various quantifiers and explains its difference from exceptives. The account we suggest is based on independently motivated mechanisms. Specifically, we propose to extend the existing analyses of exceptives in terms of Exh (Hirsch 2016; Črnic 2021) to exceptive-additives. The difference between the two types of constructions lies in the way the alternatives are constructed. Building on the idea that K operator can be represented in syntax (Meyer 2013, Buccola & Haida 2020), we propose the first account of the ‘at least n NP besides DP’ type of constructions.