

Kinds, epistemic indefinites, and *some* exclamatives

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Exclamatives comment on some extreme or unexpected property.

- (1) a. What a large watermelon!
b. How beautiful the birds sing!
- (2) The peppers he eats!

Most work on exclamatives in English has focused on these wh-exclamatives and nominal exclamatives.

Introduction

Israel (1999, 2011): exclamative construction making use of the determiner *some*.

- (3) Boy, was she (ever) *some* dancer!
“She was a dancer and she was an exceptional dancer.”
- (4) That was *some* wine she brought to the party!
“She brought wine to the party and it was very good wine.”
- (5) *Some* friend she turned out to be!
“She was a friend and she was a particularly poor friend.”
- (6) It’s going to be *some* party!
“We’re having a party and it’s going to be a great party.”

Israel (1999, 2011):

- First notes their existence
- But, sets them aside to look at other uses of *some*
- Hypothesizes that the exclamative nature is related to *some's* nature as an attenuator.

The goal: Provide an analysis of *some*-exclamatives that depends on independent semantic/pragmatic properties of *some*, as hypothesized by Israel.

Where we're going:

1. Previous theories of exclamatives
2. Argue for a connection between *some* and previous theories of exclamatives.
3. Provide an analysis based on independent properties of *some*, motivated by *some*'s status as an epistemic indefinite.
4. Argue that *some*-exclamatives involve reference to kinds.

Some-exclamatives

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- Typically predicative.
- Lack of an *a(n)* exclamative. Properties of *some* are crucial for building exclamative meaning.

Is this an exclamative?

Zanuttini & Portner (2003) note three semantic/pragmatic features of exclamatives.

- Inability to function in question/answer pairs
- Factivity
- Scalar implicature (noteworthiness)

These features are also exhibited by *some*-exclamatives.

Question/Answer Pairs: *Some*-exclamatives are difficult to use in answering a question, even though they have semantic content that could in principle answer the question.

- (8) A: How good of a lawyer is John?
B: *John is some lawyer!
- (9) A: What does John do for a living?
B: *John is some architect!

Factivity: *Some*-exclamatives are factive in that they presuppose that the NP applies to the subject.

(10) A: Man, John is *some* friend.

B: Hey, wait a minute! I didn't know you were friends with John.

Scalar Implicature: *Some*-exclamatives comment on something noteworthy or surprising.

Is this an exclamative?

Zanuttini & Portner's features are similar ones proposed by Michaelis & Lambrecht (1996).

- (11) Semantico-pragmatic properties of the abstract exclamative construction
 - a. presupposed open proposition
 - b. scalar extent
 - c. assertion of affective stance: expectation contravention
 - d. identifiability of described referent
 - e. deixis

Previous work on exclamatives

Lots of analyses of exclamation. A few styles of approaches to exclamation (not exhaustive):

- Embedding Approach (Abels, 2005)
- Degree Approach
(Rett, 2011; Castroviejo Miró, 2006)
- Question Approach
(Gutiérrez-Rexach, 1996; Zanuttini & Portner, 2003)

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An issue: *Some*-exclamatives do not embed under *amazing*. Difficult to say that amazement predicate provides exclamative flavor.

- (14) *It's amazing John is some friend!

Exclamatives are degree constructions on par with other degree constructions like comparatives (Castroviejo Miró, 2006; Rett, 2011).
Make use of covert gradable property.

- (15) a. What desserts John baked!
 b. The places John visited!

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Make use of covert gradable property.

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b. The places John visited!

- (16) a. What *G* desserts John baked! (G=delicious)
b. The *G* places John visited! (G=exotic)

One issue: *Some* has a scalar notion inherent to it—quantity. But, *some*-exclamatives never get a quantity interpretation.

(17) *That was some wine we drank! It would've filled buckets!

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(17) *That was some wine we drank! It would've filled buckets!

This is in contrast to nominal exclamatives, which can get a quantity interpretation.

(18) The wine we drank! It would've filled buckets!

Question Approach

Examples: Gutiérrez-Rexach (1996); Zanuttini & Portner (2003)

Assume a Hamblin-Karttunen style question semantics is at work in exclamatives (Hamblin, 1973; Karttunen, 1977).

(19) Semantics of a question

$$\llbracket \textit{Who came to the party?} \rrbracket = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Mary came to the party,} \\ \text{Bill came to the party,} \\ \text{Bob came to the party,} \\ \dots \end{array} \right\}$$

Question Approach: Exclamative Operator

Gutiérrez-Rexach 1996 assumes an exclamative operator that asserts an emotive attitude (surprise, disgust, ...) towards a proposition.

- (20) Let a be the speaker, w a world (typically the actual world), p a proposition, and $P \in EMOT$ (the set of emotive properties).
Then, $EXC \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \lambda a \lambda w \lambda p_{\langle s, t \rangle} \exists P_{\langle s, \langle st, et \rangle \rangle} [P(w)(p)(a)]$

Question Approach: Widening

Zanuttini & Portner (2003) take sentence to denote set of propositions, but widening rather than exclamative operator is responsible for exclamative meaning.

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- (21) What peppers he eats!
- $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{he eats poblanos,} \\ \text{he eats serranos,} \\ \text{he eats jalapeños} \end{array} \right\}$
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$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{he eats poblanos,} \\ \text{he eats serranos,} \\ \text{he eats jalapeños} \end{array} \right\} \subset \underbrace{\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{he eats poblanos,} \\ \text{he eats serranos,} \\ \text{he eats jalapeños,} \\ \text{he eats habaneros} \end{array} \right\}}_{\text{widened set}}$$

A problem: These theories play on an obvious similarity between questions and exclamatives. What similarity does *some* have to a question?

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Claim: *Some*-exclamatives are best analyzed with a Question Theory, based on independently motivated assumptions about indefinites and *some*.

Indefinites and *some*-exclamatives

Alternative semantics, the semantics of questions, has been used in the analysis of indeterminate pronouns in Japanese and German (Kratzer & Shimoyama, 2002) and Spanish epistemic indefinites (Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito, 2003).

(And see also AnderBois 2011 for similar thoughts in Inquisitive Semantics.)

(23) Kratzer & Shimoyama (2002)

a. $\llbracket dare \rrbracket^{w,g} = \{x : \text{human}(x)(w)\}$

b. $\llbracket nemutta \rrbracket^{w,g} = \{\lambda x \lambda w'. \text{slept}(x)(w')\}$

c. $\llbracket dare\ nemutta \rrbracket^{w,g} =$
 $\{p : \exists x [\text{human}(x)(w) \wedge p = \lambda w'. \text{slept}(x)(w')]\}$

(24) $\llbracket a\ girl \rrbracket^{w,g} = \{x : x \text{ is a girl and } x \text{ is in } g(D)\}$

(where D is a variable ranging over sets of individuals)

(Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito, 2003)

Epistemic indefinites

What are epistemic indefinites?

- Indefinites that impose restricts on the speaker regarding their knowledge of the referent.
- Canonical English case: unreduced *some*
- Contrast with other indefinites in requiring (rather than merely allowing) uncertainty

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(25) A: Some cabinet minister has been shot!
 B: #Who?

(26) A: A cabinet minister has been shot!
 B: Who?

Analyzing *some*

Model *some* as introducing a set of alternatives, a la Kratzer & Shimoyama (2002). Kratzer & Shimoyama-style analysis:

$$(27) \quad \llbracket \text{some professor} \rrbracket^{w,g} = \{x : \mathbf{professor}(x)(w)\}$$

$$(28) \quad \llbracket \text{some professor is dancing on the table} \rrbracket^{w,g} \\ = \{p : \exists x [\mathbf{professor}(x)(w) \wedge p = \lambda w'. \mathbf{dance}(x)(w')]\}$$

Issue: This doesn't model a difference between the singular indefinite *a* and *some*!

Need an additional constraint for *some*.

Modeling the ignorance component of *some*

How to model the ignorance component of *some*?

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(29) There's a lot of garlic in whatever (it is that) Arlo is cooking.

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Adapt proposal from von Stechow (2000).

von Fintel (2000) reformulates Dayal (1997)'s analysis of *whatever*:

- (30) $\text{whatever}(w)(F)(P)(Q)$ (Analysis D')
- a. presupposes: $\exists w', w'' \in F : \iota x.P(w')(x) \neq \iota x.P(w'')(x)$
 - b. asserts: $\forall w' \in F : Q(w')(\iota x.P(w')(x))$

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Whatever statements:

1. Presuppose that the speaker cannot identify the referent of the free relative.
2. Assert that some property Q holds of the referent.

Modeling *some*:

- Useful insight in semantics of *whatever*: presupposition of more than one individual satisfying a description (across worlds).
- Adapt this intuition so that *some* also constrains alternatives.

How to adapt the analysis of *whatever*:

- *Some* is constrained to always generate at least two alternatives.
- Encoded as a presupposition of *some*.
- Ignorance arises via implicature.
- See also Weir 2012 for a related proposal for *some* based on Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito 2010.

Interlude: Kinds and *some*

Some-exclamatives invoke reference to kinds at some level.

Argument 1: NPs without kinds

Some evidence.

- Carlson (1977) argues that reference to a kind requires an well-established kind.
- Some NPs such as *green bottle*, *person from the next room*, and *non-Methodist* do not have well-established kinds associated with them.

(31) *People in the next room are widespread.

Argument 1: NPs without kinds

It is odd to use these in *some*-exclamatives.

- (32) a. ??This is some green bottle!
 b. #John is some person from the next room!

- (33) ??He is some non-Methodist!

Argument 2: Post-nominal adjectives

More evidence come from adjectives like *visible* and *navigable*. Only have stage-level interpretations post-nominally (Bolinger, 1967; Larson & Marušič, 2004).

- | | | | |
|------|----|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (34) | a. | the stars visible | (stage-level only) |
| | b. | the rivers navigable | (stage-level only) |
| (35) | a. | the visible stars | (stage-level or individual-level) |
| | b. | the navigable rivers | (stage-level or individual-level) |

Argument 2: Post-nominal adjectives

Some-exclamatives resist these adjectives post-nominally, but allow them prenominally.

- (36) a. This is some navigable river! (We barely made it to the river mouth alive!)
b. *This is some river navigable!
- (37) a. These are some visible stars! (I can barely see them, and I know where to look!)
b. *These are some stars visible!

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- b. *These are some stars visible!

Also consistent with *some*-exclamatives invoking reference to a kind.

Weir (2012) also independently argues for *some* involving reference to kinds.

- (38)
- a. I saw some contraption in the copy room this morning.
 - b. I came home to find some plant growing through a hole in my wall.
 - c. Doctor, some growth appeared on my arm. Should I be worried?

Kinds in *some*-exclamatives

Assume that common NPs denote properties of kinds (and their subkinds) (Zamparelli, 1995; Gehrke & McNally, 2013, a.o.)

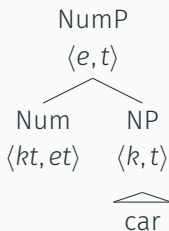
$$(39) \quad \llbracket car \rrbracket = \lambda x_k. \mathbf{car}(x_k)$$

For instance, *car* is a property of the CAR kind, as well as subkinds such as SPORTSCAR, BMW, CLOWN CAR and so on.

Articulated DP structure with a NumP dominating NP.

Num is the locus for shifting kinds to individuals (Gehrke & McNally, 2013; Déprez, 2005).

(40)



Lexical items of category Num (such as the singular indefinite article and *some*) minimally do the following:

- Provide existential closure over kinds
- Relate kind to instantiating individual (R relation; cf. Carlson (1977)).
- Singular indefinite as well as *some* are of the category Num.

$$(41) \quad \llbracket [_{NumP} [_{NP} \text{car}]] \rrbracket = \lambda y \exists x_k [\text{car}(x_k) \wedge R(y, x_k)]$$

What do the alternatives range over?

Analyze alternatives in *some*-exclamatives as ranging over subkinds of the kind denoted by the NP.

$$\begin{aligned} (42) \quad & \llbracket \textit{John is some lawyer} \rrbracket \\ & = \{p' : \exists x_k \text{ s.t. } p' = [R(j, x_k) \wedge \textbf{lawyer}(x_k)]\} \end{aligned}$$

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- Expresses attitude towards extreme proposition.

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- Expresses attitude towards extreme proposition.

$$(43) \quad \llbracket Ex-Op \rrbracket = \lambda P \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{there is a salient ordering} \\ \text{among the propositions in } P \text{ and} \\ \text{ATTITUDE}(\text{speaker})(\text{MAX}(P)) \end{array} \right]$$

Presence of exclamative operator marked with exclamative intonation.

Additional consideration: What kinds of kinds?

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- (44) (*Background: John is a pet insurance lawyer.*)
 #Wow, John is some lawyer!

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Cannot exclaim about subtype of lawyer. Rather, one must exclaim about John's behavior as a lawyer (loses cases often, doesn't know the law).

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Possibility: *Some*-exclamative is an expression of what the speaker considers normal members of the kind to be like (cf. d'Avis 2016).

Wrap-up

What does the picture look like now?

- *Some*-exclamatives have in common with other exclamatives an alternative semantics.
- Alternatives come from independently motivated constraints to model ignorance requirements of *some*.
- Argued that kinds play a role in *some*-exclamatives.
- Analyzed *some*-exclamatives as involving an attitude to the particular subkind that the subject is instantiating.

Many facets to explore:

- Nature of pejorativity and why a pejorative interpretation is obligatory in certain syntactic configurations.
- How to more precisely state the alternatives invoked and how they are ordered
- Exploring lexical semantic differences among classes of NPs.

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Appendix

Appendix: Obligatory pejorativity

In-situ variant allows neutral (a) or pejorative (b) interpretation.

- (45) John is some lawyer!
- a. He always wins his cases and does lots of pro bono work.
 - b. He loses every case and still charges a lot.

Preposed variant only allows pejorative (b) interpretation.

- (46) Some lawyer John is!
- a. #He always wins his cases and does lots of pro bono work.
 - b. He loses every case and still charges a lot.

Appendix: *Some*-exclamatives in argument position

Some-exclamatives can sometimes be used in argument position.

(47) John picked some book to read!

One analysis: raise type of *some* from $\langle e, t \rangle$ to $\langle \langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle$ using typeshift from Partee 1987.

However, some impossible cases are still predicted to be good.

(48) *Some book is sitting on the table!

Appendix: Lexical differences among NPs

Lexical semantics of the NP matters for interpretation.

(49) John is some lawyer! (behavior-based)

(50) This is some cake! (quality-based)

(51) This is some knife! (quality-based or behavior-based)

Appendix: Normalcy in *some*-exclamatives

d'Avis (2016): Considers generic sentences in part to express a conception of normalcy on the part of the speaker.

Proposal: Draw up alternatives based on speaker's conception of what is an (ab)normal property for the kind denoted by the NP to hold.