Exceptive phrases and the negative condition

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Overview

- The semantics of exceptives
  - Domain subtraction
  - The three constraints and some concerns
  - Predictions made by the negative condition
- Experimental results on *other than*, *but*, and *except*
- Parallels with previous work and a proposal sketch
- Conclusions and open questions

The semantics of exceptives

Exceptive phrases (EPs) are usually treated as restrictors of quantifier domains, minimally requiring domain subtraction:*

(1) $Q[A]$ EXCEPTIVE C $P := Q[A - C]$ P (+ ?)

where Q = quantifier, A is its restriction, C is the exception, and P is the sentence-predicate (scope).

EPs therefore entail an associated negatively restricted relative clause (NRR):

(2)
a. **EP:** Everyone *except the linguists* came to the meeting.
   EP: Everyone *but the linguists* came to the meeting.
   ⊢ **NRR:** Everyone who is not a linguist came to the meeting.
b. **EP:** No one *except the linguists* came to the meeting.
   EP: No one *but the linguists* came to the meeting.
   ⊢ **NRR:** No one who is not a linguist came to the meeting.

*Hoeksema 1990, von Fintel 1993, Moltmann 1995

Exceptive types

Hoeksema (1987) makes a distinction between **connected** and **free** EPs:

(3) **Connected EPs** (*but*, *except*; do not extrapose):
   a. Every student *but the linguists* attended the meeting.
   b. *(?)*But the linguists*, every student attended the meeting.

(4) **Free EPs** (*but for*, *except for*; do extrapose):
   a. Every student *except for the linguists* attended the meeting.
   b. *Except for the linguists*, every student attended the meeting.

This arguably corresponds to quantifier co-occurrence restrictions:

(5) Most of the girls *except for Kim*/**except Kim* went home.

but . . .

(6) a. "Bush's memoir will remind most except those on the Left why they liked him."
   b. "I don't have many vices except TV."

Moltmann's 3 conditions on connected exceptives

(7) **The inclusion condition:** exceptions must belong to the restriction of the quantifier

a. ?Every boy *except Mary* came to the party.
b. Every boy *but not Mary* came to the party.

(8) **The quantifier constraint:** the quantifier modified by an exceptive must be universal

a. (?)Most boys *except John* came to the party.
b. Most boys *except for John* came to the party.

(9) **The negative constraint:** applying the predicate to the exceptions yields the opposite result

a. Everyone *except the students* arrived on time.
   $\rightsquigarrow$ *Everyone not a student arrived on time, and none of the students arrived on time.*
b. Everyone *other than the students* arrived on time.
   $\rightsquigarrow$ *Everyone not a student arrived on time.*

The Negative Condition

For Moltmann and von Fintel (1993), the negative condition crucially distinguishes "true" EPs from negatively restricted relative clauses and *other than* phrases:

(10) a. #John went home, and everyone *except John* went home.
b. John went home, and everyone *other than John* went home.

(11) a. #John did not go home, and no one *except John* went home.
b. John did not go home, and no one *other than John* went home.

Hoeksema (1987) questions this for free EPs:

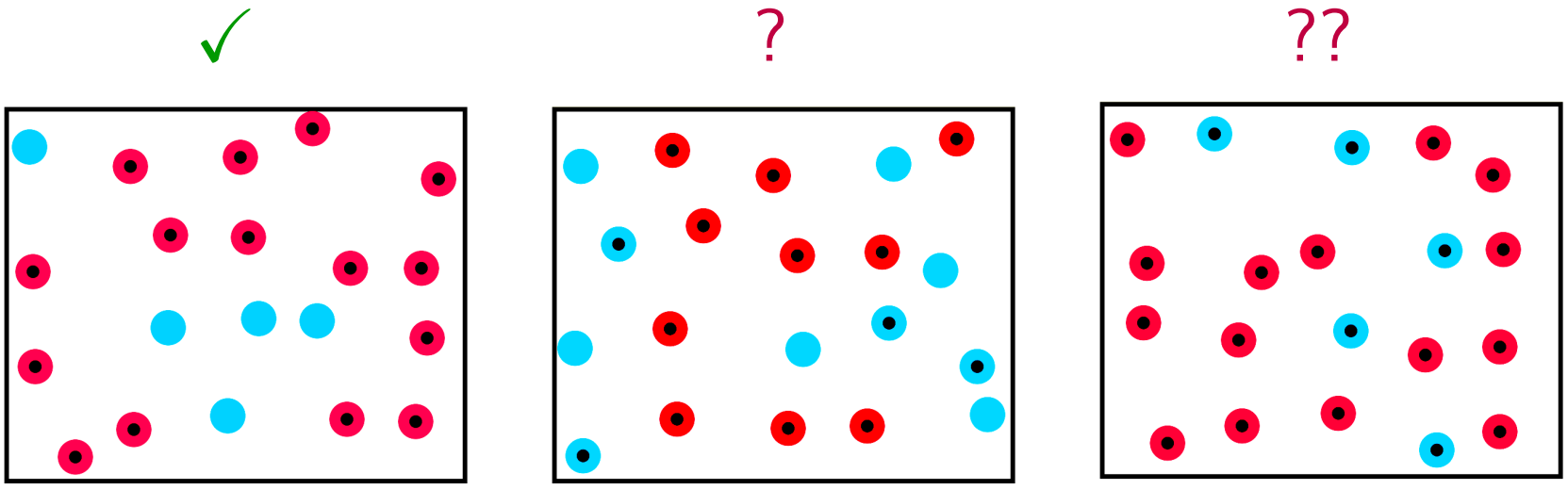
(12) Everyone *except for Dr. Samuels* has an alibi. Let's go talk to Dr. Samuels and see if he has one, too.

and . . .

(13) Everyone *except/but Dr. Samuels* has an alibi. Let's go talk to Dr. Samuels and see if he has one, too.

Predictions made by the negative condition

Every marble EXCEPTIVE the blue ones has a dot



Connected EP: Every marble except the blue ones has a dot.
Every marble but the blue ones has a dot.

→ *negative condition requires that no blue marble has a dot*

True **False** **False**

Other-than: Every marble other than the blue ones has a dot.

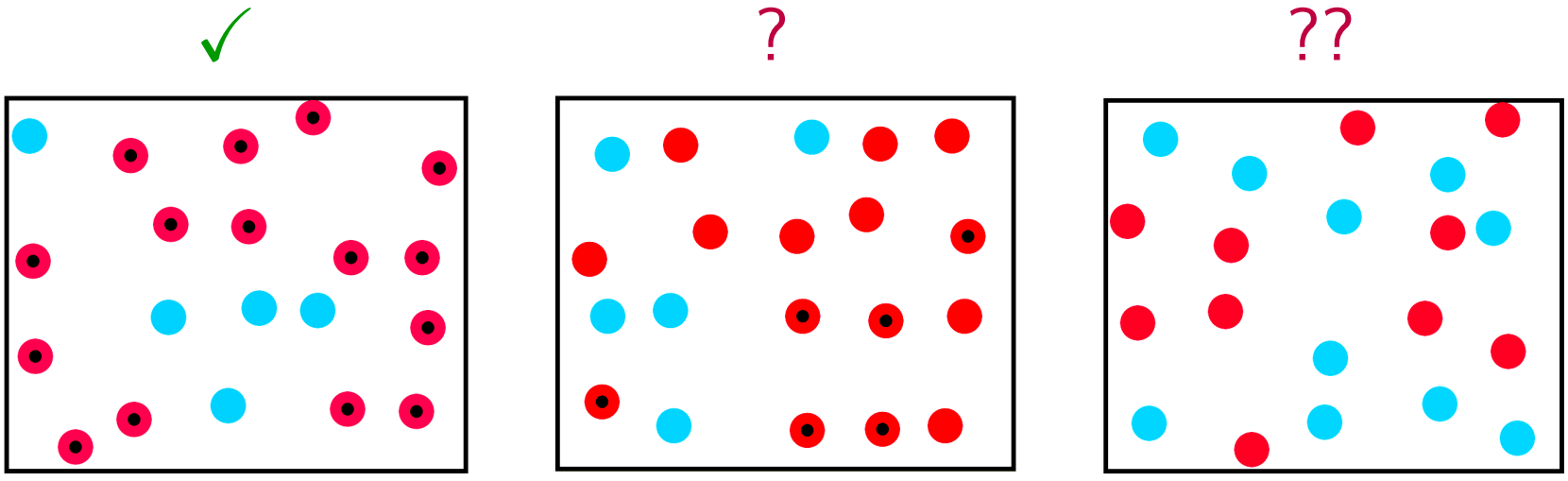
NRR: Every marble that is not blue has a dot.

→ *no negative condition requirements*

True **True** **True**

Predictions made by the negative condition

No marble EXCEPTIVE the red ones has a dot



Connected EP: No marble except the red ones has a dot

No marble but the red ones has a dot

→ *negative condition requires that all red marbles have dots*

True **False** **False**

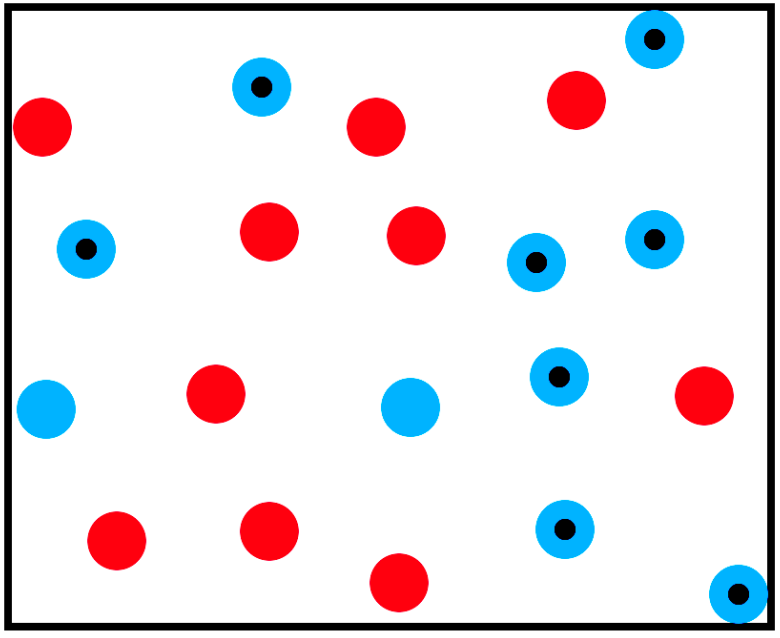
Other-than: No marble other than the red ones has a dot.

NRR: No marble that is not red has a dot.

→ *no negative condition requirements*

True **True** **True**

Experiment design (from Nadathur & Lassiter 2014)



Is the following claim true or false?

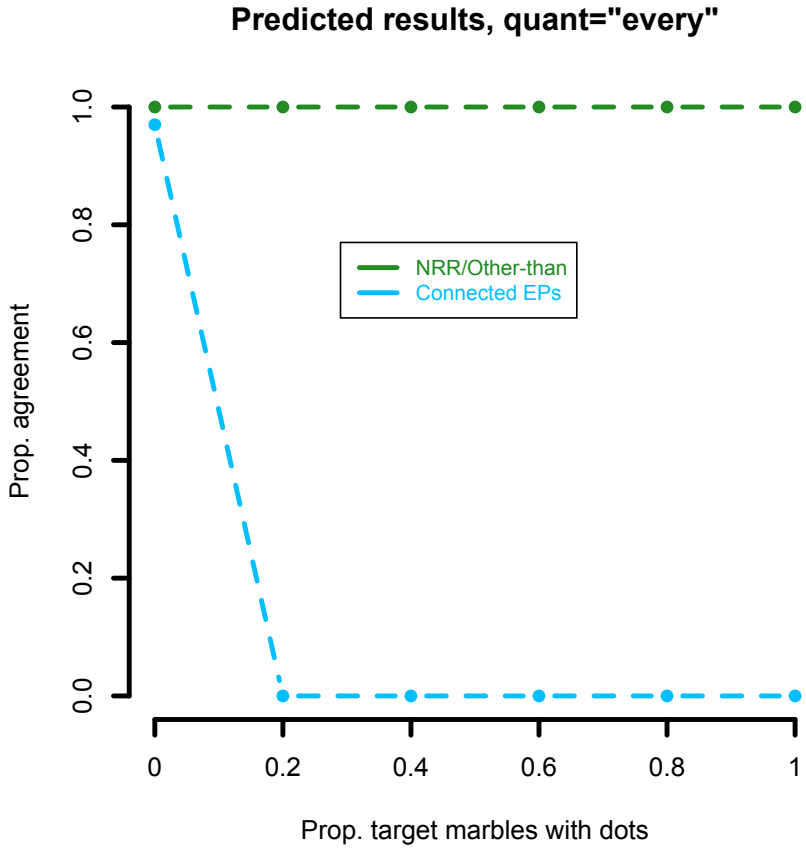
"No marble has a dot except the blue ones."

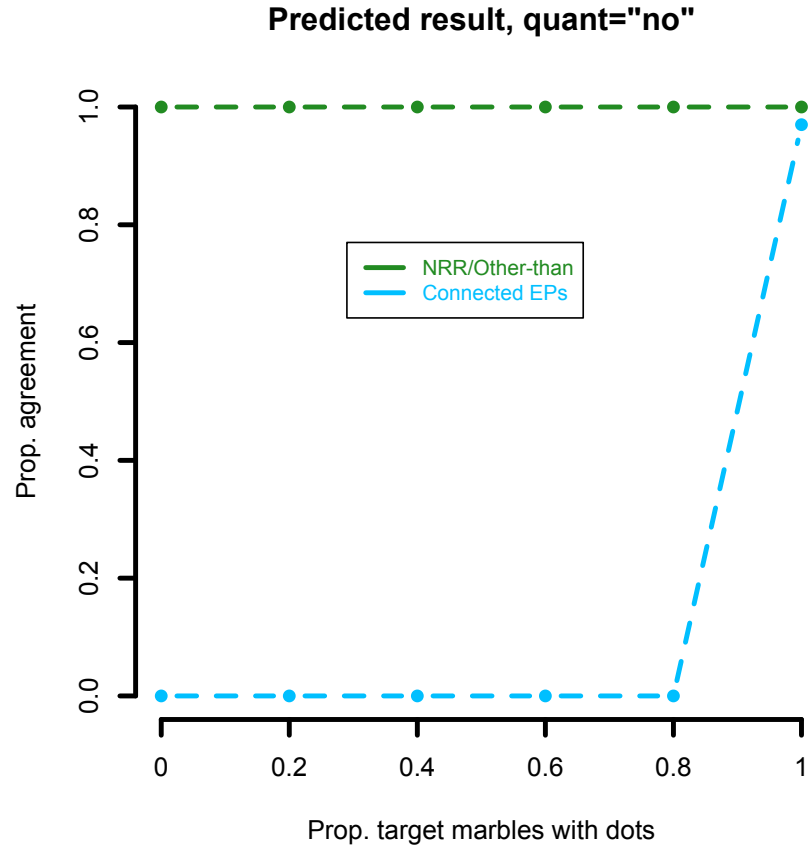
○ True ○ False

Continue

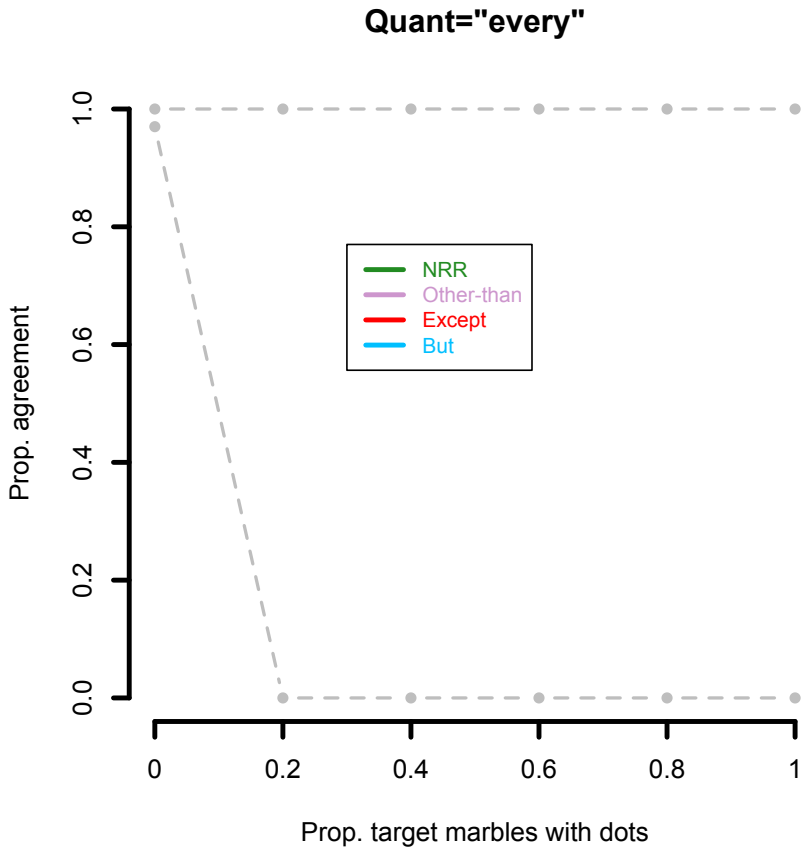
- Forced-choice T/F
- Critical trials: quantified sentences containing *except*, *but* (connected EPs), *other-than*, and NRRs
- **Key manipulation:** prop. of target marbles with dots
- Parameters: target colour, red/blue marble ratios, high/low EP position
- 176 native English speakers (MTurk)
- 48 trials/participant: 12 test, 12 controls, 24 fillers

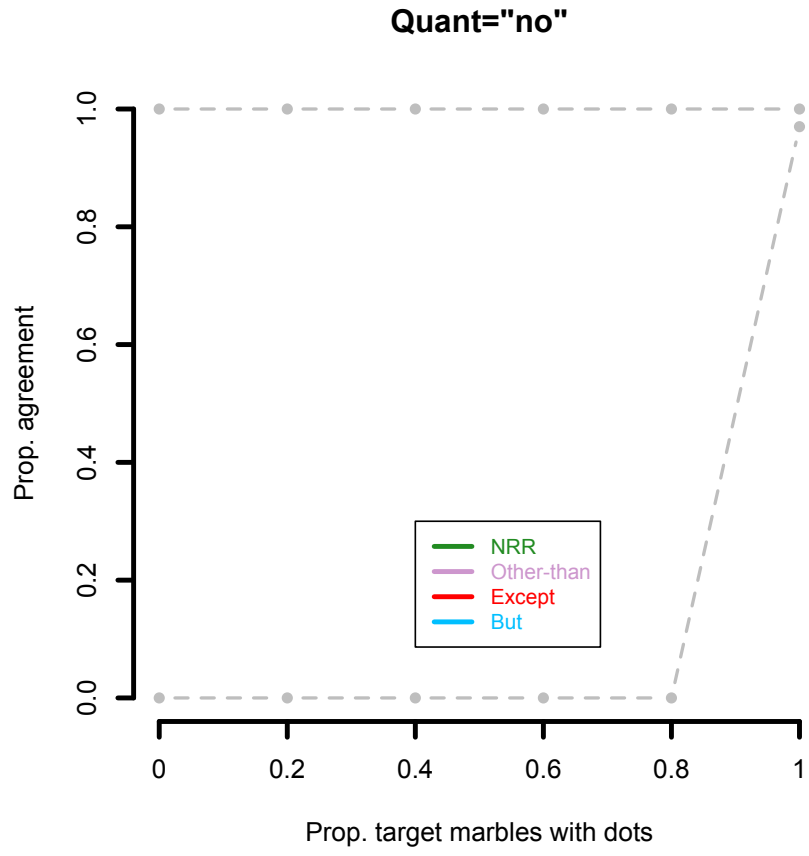
Predicted results (no pragmatics)



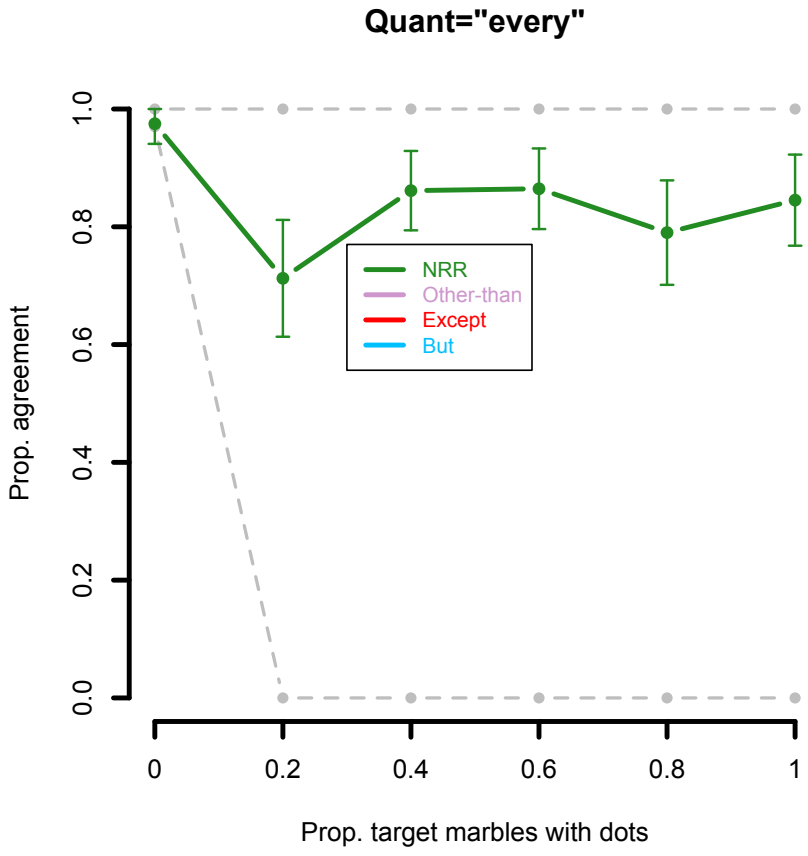


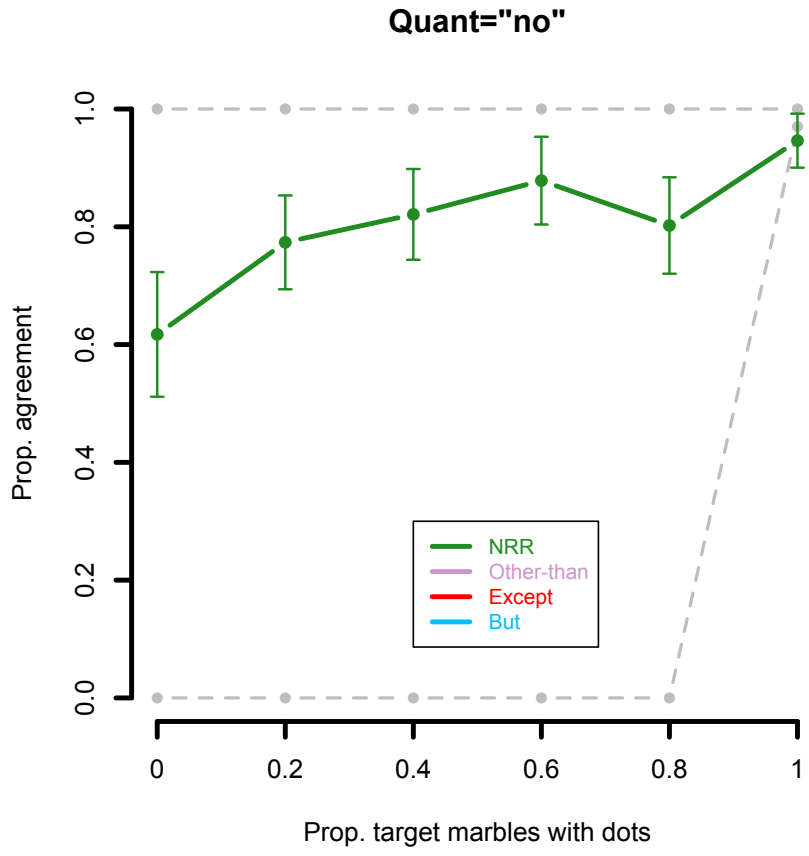
Actual results



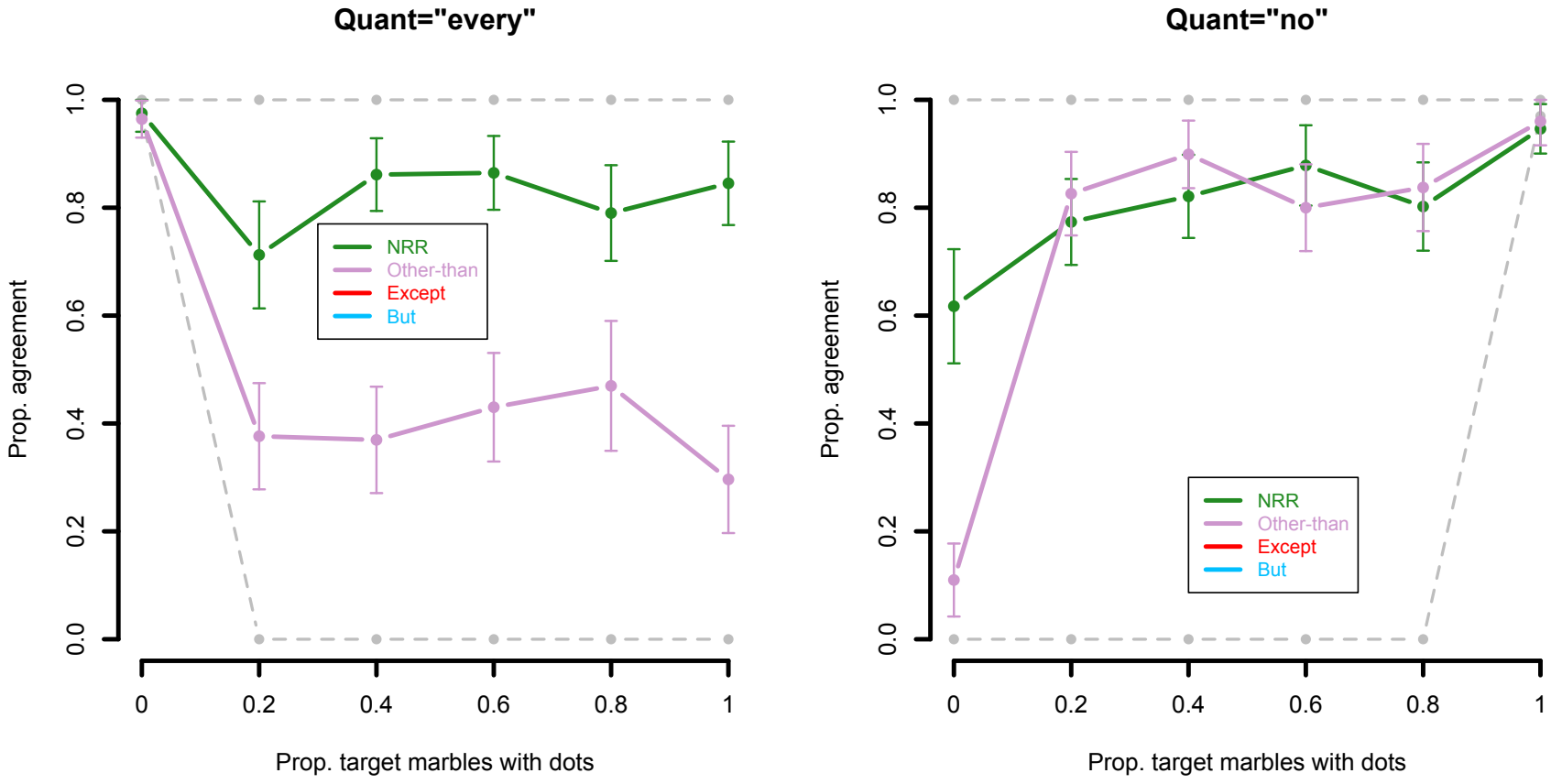


Actual results



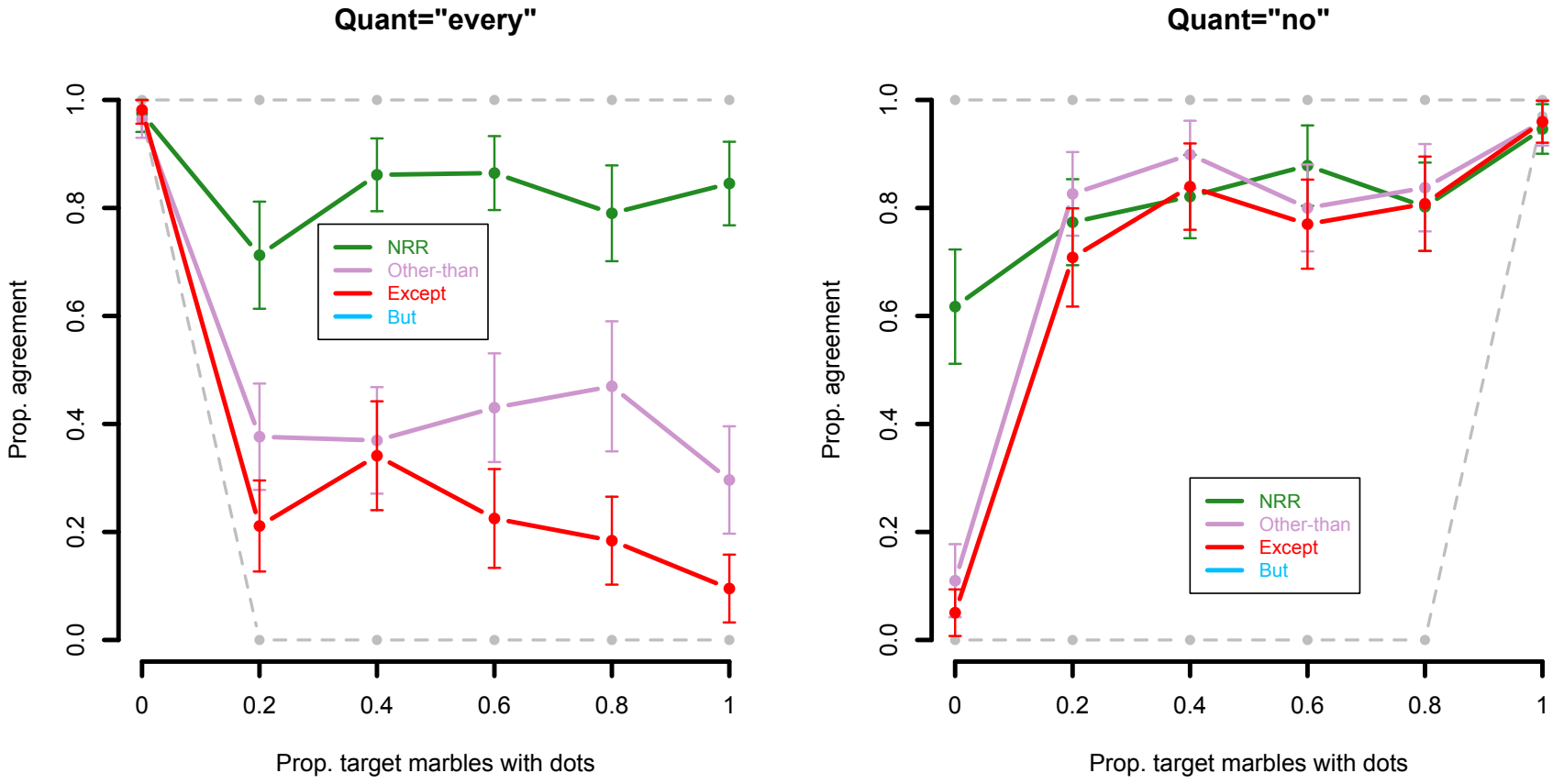


Actual results



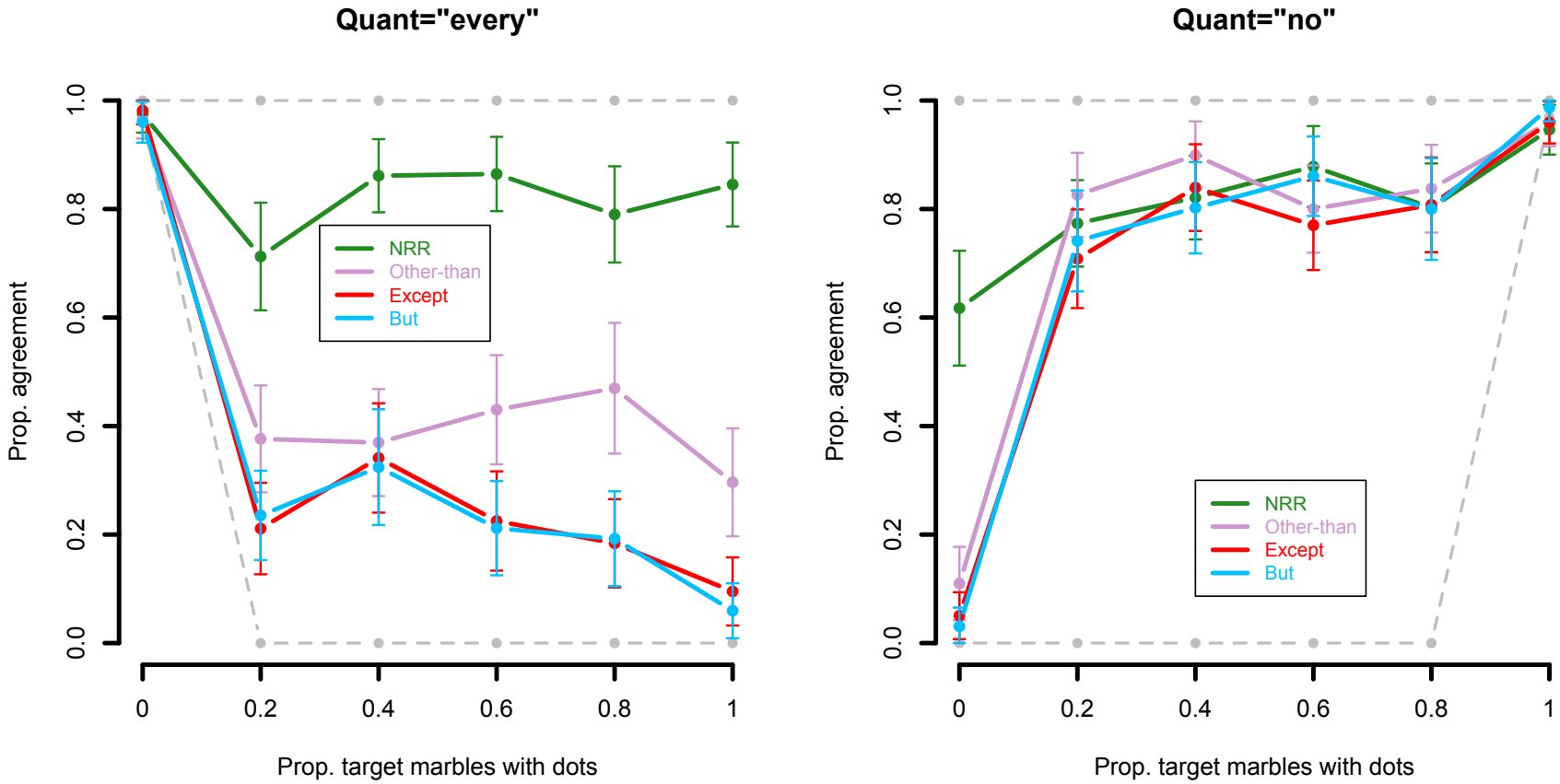
- *other than* does not pattern with NRRs

Actual results

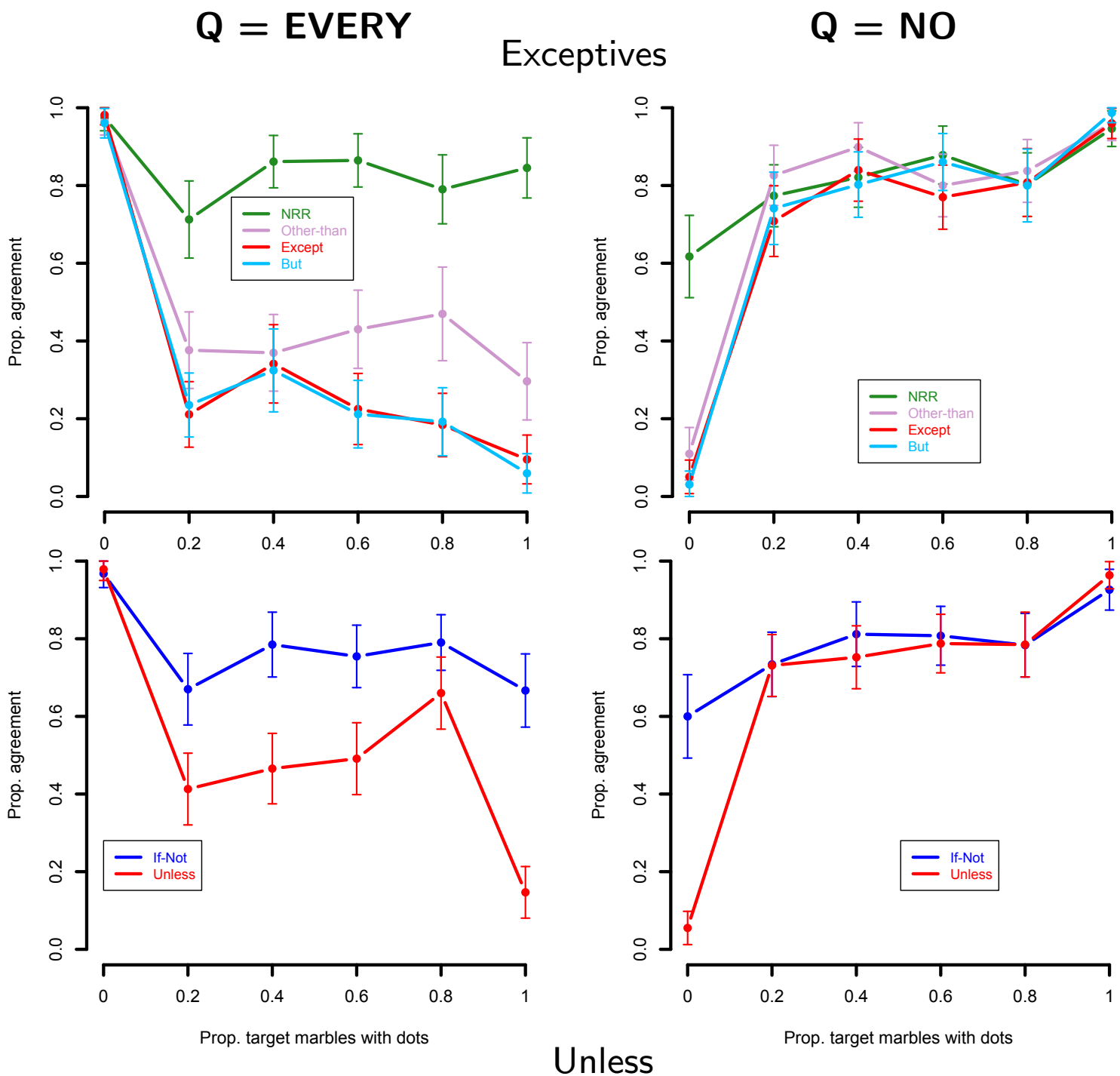


- *other than* does not pattern with NRRs
- a semantic negative condition is not supported for *except*

Actual results

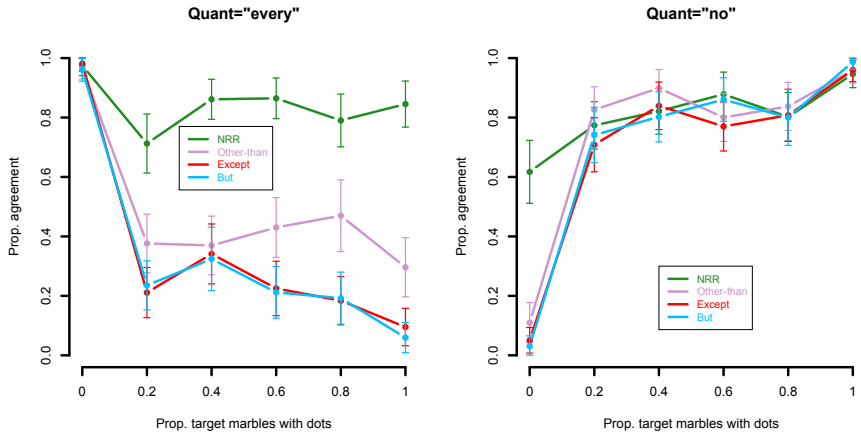


- *other than* does not pattern with NRRs
- a semantic negative condition is not supported for *except*
- *except* and *but* are indistinguishable
- EPs (*other than*, *except*, *but*) are sensitive to "across-the-board" contexts
- the positive and negative cases differ significantly (!)

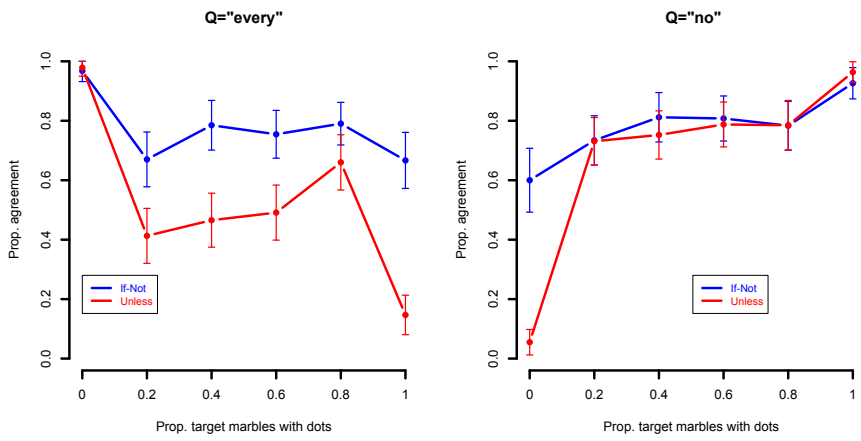

Q = EVERY
Q = NO
Exceptives
Unless
Prop. agreement
Prop. target marbles with dots
NRR
Other-than
Except
But
If-Not
Unless
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0
0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1

Parallels to earlier work

Exceptives



Unless



- "Across-the-Board" cases: $\neg Q[C \wedge A]P$ (cf. Hoeksema)
- *Except*, *but* stronger than *other than*, *unless*
- Variability is not semantic

We conjecture:

- Non-AtB condition is a felicity condition
- Free vs. connected (strong vs. weak) is pragmatic
- There is a deep connection between biconditionality strength and quantifier polarity

A proposal sketch

We propose that exceptives have the following semantics (cf. Nadathur & Lassiter 2014):

(14) **Proposal:** $Q[A]$ EXCEPTIVE C P

DEFINED if and only if $\neg Q[A \wedge C]P$
in which case
TRUE just in case $Q[A - C]P$

The non-AtB presupposition (in effect for EPs, but not NRRs), "draws attention" to the value of P on the excepted set C, and "invites" an inference to the negative condition.

Open question: Why is this invitation absent under the negative universal quantifier? (And how does it vary in strength?)

Generalizations and the negative condition

Garcia-Alvarez (2008) points out:

(15) Few *except locals* know that Cz. has a wine industry

- *Few* and *except C* supposedly do not co-occur (but . . .)
- The negative condition does not apply here:
  "Few" non-locals know, and the locals **also** know

Consider:

(16) a. Everyone *except locals* knows that Cz. has a wine industry.
b. No one *except locals* knows that Cz. has a wine industry.

- (16a) licenses the generalization that "locals don't know"
- (16b) licenses the generalization that "locals do know" (and so does "no one")

We conjecture that strong exceptionality results from a "conspiracy" between the licensed generalization and the non-AtB condition. How?

Conclusions and questions

Summary:

- We have identified several patterns apparently characteristic of exceptives:
  - sensitivity to an AtB precondition
  - "susceptibility" to biconditionality/the negative condition
  - a sharp distinction in "intermediate" cases under positive/negative quantifiers
- We propose a unified *semantics* for strong and weak EPs . . .

Open questions and future work:

- We predict that free exceptives pattern like *unless*, *other than*
- We suspect that exceptives are sensitive to context about the speaker's authority and/or motivation (maybe accounting for strong/weak distinction)
- Does the pos/neg split replicate with other lexical items? In other languages?

References

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