

Purpose of the meeting

During this meeting, we will discuss the precise hypotheses for our experiments and formulate the theoretical impact these experiments might have on the various accounts of “only”. We will base ourselves on the work of Beaver & Clark (2008), whose “tequila test” is the subject of our investigation. Further, we decide on the method and material to be used in the experiments. This is a particularly thorny issue, as we have many methodological objections against the original test. In our own experiment, we want to control for (i) the presence of numbers complicating the task, (ii) comparing “only” to a wide variety of other presupposition triggers (“stop”, “manage”, “too”, ...), (iii) the contrast between the items, and (iv) the possible influence of linguistic (rather than pictorial) target items. We develop the experimental items for at least the first experiment, so we can conduct this experiment upon homecoming. In this experiment, we want to prove our main point that the behavior of “only” in Beaver & Clark’s experiment isn’t in any way special, by replicating the experiment using different presupposition triggers.

Work carried out and results

We decided to run in total three experiments. The first experiment is a slightly altered version of Beaver & Clark's tequila test. We use names instead of numbers, include a much larger number of presupposition triggers as controls, make sure the material is the same for all items, and randomize both items and answers. We expect to obtain results significantly different from Beaver & Clark's. Namely, "only" doesn't differ significantly from all other presupposition triggers. If so, our second experiment investigates the possible confound of language. The tequila test is carried out using pictorial answers. In the third experiment, we focus on the role of contrast. In some conditions, the contrast category is omitted. Moreover, participants are asked for graded rather than binary truth judgements. We expect answers still more in line with a presuppositional approach to "only".

During the visit, we created the material for these three experiments and formulated concrete hypotheses to test the various theories about "only". We moreover discussed some theoretical flaws of the account proposed in Beaver & Clark. Before April, both of us will run the first experiment, one in French and one in Dutch. After that, professor Jayez will visit the Radboud University Nijmegen to discuss the results and if necessary adapt the other two experiments. If the results are sufficiently interesting (i.e. different from those found by Beaver & Clark), we consider publishing the results in a suitable journal.