Exhaustivity as a Scalar Implicature

Presupposition: Chomsky (1977), Percus (1997), Büring & Kriz (2012); Assertion: Atlas & Levinson (1981); Licensing Condition: Exhaustivity is traditionally analyzed as structural

Exhaustivity fails to arise in conditionals
Exhaustivity fails to arise with negation
Exhaustivity fails to arise in questions

It

Exhaustivity Implicature:

Beaver and Onea (2009):
Drenhaus, Zimmermann, and Vasishth (2011):

3) Q: Was it a pizza that Mary ate?

Participants heard:

4) It wasn’t a pizza that Mary ate.

No, he didn’t

A surprising result from Experiment 1: Relevance had no effect in Exp. 1: but see Kenesei 1984, 2006 & Chafe 1976) while situ contrastive focus (which does not structurally encode exhaustivity) also shows no effect for relevance, thus the exhaustivity of it-cliffs does not have to be structural either.

Materials (Exp. 1, 2, 3, & 4): Same as Exp. 1. (24 participants)

Participants did not find nonexhaustive it-cliffs unnatural!

Experiment 2; Nonexhaustive in-situ Focus patterns similarly to Nonexhaustive It-cliffs

Relevance: little evidence that a more informative, relevant statement makes the it-cliff/foci unnatural.

Explicit mention of the other items that are true of the relative clause: In it-cliffs is less natural when alternatives are implied. It may be that semantics with implicit alternatives are regarded as less contrastive than sentences with explicit alternatives. No support, from this data, for deriving the strength of the exhaustivity intuition from the markedness of the structure.

5. Conclusion:

Exhaustivity: Violating exhaustivity does not make it-cliffs or in-situ contrastive focus unnatural.

Just like implicature, relevance does not have any effect. Implicit alternatives are less natural than explicit alternatives.

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Exp. 3: In-situ Focus Patterns

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