

Admitting *-hii* to the Exclusive Club

Vandana Bajaj¹ and Kristen Syrett^{1,2}

¹*Department of Linguistics, Rutgers University*

²*Rutgers Center for Cognitive Science*

We present evidence from two experiments demonstrating that the Hindi focus particle *-hii* is sensitive to variable scalar endpoints, and we relate these findings to previous work on *only* and modality to unify the taxonomy of exclusives with formalized notions of speaker expectations.

Only, and other exclusives in English, can appeal to a set of rank-ordered scalar alternatives. Such particles presuppose that ‘at least’ the prejacent is true, and assert that ‘at most’ the prejacent is true, thereby picking out a weak, minimal element on the scale and asserting that alternative as the upper bound (Coppock & Beaver (2014)). Hindi has several exclusives (*sirf*, *bas*, *keval*) that function equivalently to ONLY, but the clitic *-hii* has extra presuppositional meaning, as in (1).

- (1) JOHN-hii aaya.
John-HII come-PAST.M.SG
- a. ‘Only John came (nobody else did).’
b. ‘Only John came (and he was the one I thought most likely to come).’
c. ‘Only John came (and he was the one that I least wanted to come).’

-hii licenses a complement-exclusion meaning, shown in (1a). It can in certain contexts select for a MIN-ranked alternative on a scale of speaker desirability (cf. Varma (2006)), as in (1c). However it diverges from ONLY in two notable ways. First, absent negation, *-hii* appears to be felicitous with a MAX-ranked proposition on a scale of likelihood (Bajaj (2014)), shown in (1b). Second, *-hii* allows for two different interpretations in the presence of negation. When *-hii* takes scope outside of negation, it gives rise to an ‘only not’ reading ((2a)), but when *-hii* is in the scope of negation, it has a ‘not even’ meaning ((2b)) (Bhatt (1994)). This latter reading highlights a propositional alternative as the one that is necessary for achieving a goal.

- (2) JOHN-hii nahiiN aaya.
John-HII NEG come-PAST.M.SG
- a. ‘Only John didn’t come (everybody else did).’
b. ‘Even John didn’t come (and now we cannot accomplish some goal).’

We capitalized on the scalar variability of *-hii* and its interaction with negation to probe its meaning in two judgment studies. Participants were all native Hindi speakers, and all the survey items were presented to them in Devanagari script. Experiment #1 probed for the existence of a scalar endpoint felicity requirement for *-hii*, presenting participants with items like in (3) and (4).

- (3) Prof. Mehta is giving an exam to his students Aatish, Vijay, and Deepak. Any time before that there was an exam given, Aatish always passed but Deepak always failed. Prof. Mehta doesn’t know anything about whether Vijay would pass or fail, since he is a new student. In the end, one student passed and two failed.
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|----------------|--|-------------------|
| Aatish passed. | Prof. Mehta says, “Aatish-hii passed.” | Can this be said? |
| Vijay passed. | Prof. Mehta says, “Vijay-hii passed.” | Can this be said? |
| Deepak passed. | Prof. Mehta says, “Deepak-hii passed.” | Can this be said? |
- (4) Gautam wants to buy tickets to see his favorite tabla player in concert. He doesn’t know what sort of seat he will get because he’s buying very close to the show date. If he gets

a front seat he will be very happy because he will get to see and hear the performer very clearly. If he gets a back seat he will be very disappointed because everyone’s heads will be in the way. If he gets a seat in the middle, then he will be indifferent.

Gautam gets a front row seat. Gautam says, “I got a front seat hii.” Can this be said?

Gautam gets a middle row seat. Gautam says, “I got a middle seat hii.” Can this be said?

Gautam gets a back row seat. Gautam says, “I got a back seat hii.” Can this be said?

Experiment #2 investigated the availability of two interpretations when a *-hii*-marked NP interacts with sentential negation, presenting participants with items like in (5) and (6).

- (5) Prof. Bhatia is leading Tina, Bindu, and Ami through a new lab experiment.
Bindu and Ami and have safety goggles, Tina doesn’t.
Prof. Bhatia says, “We’re almost ready to start the experiment, Tina-hii doesn’t have safety goggles.”
Can this be said?
- (6) Ronak is going to the airport to travel to London on a business trip. Without a passport, Ronak will not board the flight at all, so his wife feels that he needs to have his passport to leave. New clothing can always be bought in London, so his wife doesn’t feel that clothing is most critical to pack.
Ronak packed his clothing and computer, not his passport.
Ronak’s wife says, “How can Ronak go to London, when he didn’t pack his passport-hii?”
Can this be said?

Our results reveal that *-hii* does indicate exclusivity and associate with either MIN or MAX of a scale of propositional alternatives, but that the endpoint targeted varies systematically with the scale type made salient by the discourse context (desirability, likelihood, or necessity).

For contexts that make salient a scalar ordering of desirability, Coppock & Beaver (2014)’s generalization for English exclusives fits *-hii* neatly, since *-hii* behaves like rank-order *only* in selecting for a MIN. However, scales of likelihood and necessity make *-hii* seem like an outlier because speakers select for a MAX-ranked alternative in these contexts.

We propose to recast the meaning of *-hii* to consistently target a MIN, and appeal to modally-based scales as a formalization of speaker expectations. We build on insight from Lassiter (2014)’s analysis of graded modality, which shows that modals associate with speaker conceptions of probabilities for propositions, and furthermore, such modal expressions can make reference to the endpoints of probability scales. This allows us to uniformly accommodate referencing probability comparisons for epistemic, bouletic, and teleological contexts invoking *-hii*, and we integrate this proposal with Coppock & Beaver (2014)’s taxonomy of English exclusives to demonstrate that, crosslinguistically, scales used with exclusives may be formally captured by appealing to modality.

References

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