



is presupposed (Halvorson 1978, Delin & Oberlander 1995, Percus 1997). The problem is that it appears not to project — for instance, (7) does not presuppose (7a). Büring (ms.) suggests a solution: a cleverly designed exhaustive presupposition, such as his proposed conditional presupposition (7b), can be allowed to project without running afoul of the data. Our solution to the problem follows Büring but, unlike Büring’s approach, ours also avoids the other problems described below.

- (7) It was not Larry who laughed.
- a. Nobody other than Larry laughed. [Not presupposed]
  - b. If Larry laughed, then nobody else did. [Presupposed on Büring’s proposal]

The second problem concerns the *focus sensitivity* of clefts — that is, the fact that intonation rather than syntax determines what part of a cleft’s meaning is exhaustified. On most accounts, the entire pivot is exhaustified; these accounts give incorrect predictions on examples like (8), where the focus and pivot are not coextensive.

- (8) It’s  $\overbrace{\text{John’s ELDEST daughter}}^{\text{pivot}}$  who was at the party, along with 200 other people.  
focus

We show that presupposing  $\text{MAX}_S(p)$  has all the advantages of the conditional presupposition, with the further advantage of capturing focus sensitivity through its dependence on the Current Question. We prove that *when* pivot and focus are coextensive, the two presuppositions are equivalent; but when pivot and focus are not coextensive, they differ in their predictions — and  $\text{MAX}_S(p)$  leads to the correct ones.

The role which we give to focus also lets us solve a third problem, concerning the existential presupposition. Büring has claimed that clefts do not consistently trigger an existential presupposition, based on sentences like Bob’s reply in (9a) — which, as he points out, does not presuppose (9b). But in other examples of clefts, a not-at-issue existential inference of some sort clearly does arise.

- (9) a. Alice: I know John and Mary spoke on the phone. But who called whom?  
 Bob: It was JOHN that called MARY.
- b.  $\rightarrow$  Someone called Mary.
  - c.  $\rightarrow$  Someone called someone.

We argue that clefts do indeed trigger an existential inference, but that it comes about indirectly and is not always derivable from existential quantification over the coda. The focus structure of the cleft constrains the CQ; furthermore, the rules of discourse require a speaker to reject a CQ that he knows to be trivial; thus, any move that does not reject the CQ will implicate that (as far as the speaker knows) a nontrivial answer to the CQ exists. In the case of (9), the existential inference predicted — once we take prosodic focus into account — is not (9a) but (9b). This prediction is consistent with our intuitions.

**References** Büring, D. (ms.) Conditional Exhaustivity Presuppositions in Clefts (And Definites). Manuscript, UCLA. • Coppock, L. and Beaver, D. (2011) Sole Sisters. In *Proceedings of SALT 21*. • Horn, L. (1981) Exhaustiveness and the semantics of clefts. In *Papers from the 11th Annual Meeting of NELS*. • Delin, J. and Oberlander, J. (1995) Syntactic constraints on discourse structure: the case of it-clefts. *Linguistics* 33(3). • Halvorsen, P. (1978) The Syntax and Semantics of Cleft Constructions. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Texas. • Percus, O. (1997) Prying open the cleft. In *Proceedings of NELS, Vol 37*. • Roberts, C. (1996) Information structure in discourse: Towards an integrated formal theory of pragmatics. In *OSU working papers in linguistics 49: Papers in semantics*.