

Exceptive constructions: Syntax and Cross-linguistic distribution

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Abstract

Natural language allows us to express universal statements (e.g., *All dogs bark*), and languages also have means of expressing exceptions to such generalizations, via exceptive constructions (e.g., *All dogs bark except chihuahuas*). Linguistic means of expressing exclusion have received modest attention from philosophers of language and semanticists, whose focus has been primarily on English. Beyond that small body of work, little is known about exceptive constructions across the world's languages: how they are built, what their distribution is within and across languages, and how they compare to other constructions expressing comparison or contrast. In this talk, I present and analyze the landscape of exceptive constructions in several natural languages focusing on the structural contrast between free/connected exceptives and phrasal/clausal exceptives. I will then link this exploration to more general issues of ellipsis and case-marking in exceptive phrases.