Maximizability, intensifiers, and part-structure modifiers
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In this paper I propose that because certain intensifiers can be modified by maximizers, these types of intensifiers should be analyzed as part-structure modifiers. In my account, the modifiability of the relevant part-structure modifiers comes from the scale structure in the mapping from agents to events.

The Dutch intensifier zelf (‘himself’) can be modified by the maximizer helemaal (‘completely’), but only when used adverbially and when it has an exclusive interpretation (see de Clerck and van der Kooij 2005; Tribushinina and Janssen 2011):

(1) Jan wilde de kamer helemaal zelf schilderen.
    ‘John wanted to paint the room all by himself’ (i.e., without any help at all)

This type of modification of intensifiers is also available in other languages, such as in German (komplett selbst) and in English (all (by) himself, cf. Howell 2010), but this paper will focus on Dutch.

Modifiability of intensifiers is in conflict with the mainstream semantic analysis according to which intensifiers denote the identity function, and their meaning contribution comes exclusively from their association with focus (e.g. Gast 2006). The identity function does not provide a scale structure to which the maximizer may apply, and although the focus alternatives are indeed scalar (in the so-called center-periphery model, see Siemund 2000), the maximizer cannot apply to those (*the queen completely herself or its Dutch equivalent cannot be used to maximize the centrality of the queen).

I suggest instead to treat adverbial-exclusive intensifiers as in (1) as part-structure modifiers (in the sense of Moltmann 1998, 2004), on a par with modifiers such as together and alone. Independent evidence that the type of intensifier in (1) is different from other intensifiers comes from prosody: this type of zelf need not be focused, which is problematic for the standard focus-sensitive account. Instead, the prosodic properties of adverbial-exclusive zelf as in (1) are similar to those of regular adverbs.

Moltmann (2004) treats part-structure modifiers as VP-modifiers that require that the subject of the VP is mapped to an ‘integrated’ event under an additive measure function from entities to events. So X and Y sang together means that X and Y’s singing constitutes an integrated event (rather than two separate singing events). X sang alone means that X’s singing constitutes an integrated event, and no entity containing X as a part does. In this sense, alone is a ‘minimal’ modifier: it refers to a minimal subevent in the event lattice. I suggest that this is the source of scalarity: alone can be modified by a maximizer (all alone), but not together. This gives a theoretical counterpart to earlier proposals that identify a form of scalarity in the mapping of incremental themes to events (Bochnak 2013, in accounting for the eventive reading of half); in my account it comes from the mapping of agents to events.

Finally, I propose that the intensifier in (1) has the semantics of alone – and can thus be modified – except that the nature of the measure function is lexicalized differently (cf. Moltmann 2004). On the basis of Dutch and English data, I identify the meaning differences between alone and the intensifier (e.g. Dutch zelf does not have a spatiotemporal-proximal reading that alone and together and their Dutch counterparts do have).
References


