

Presupposition and exclusivity in Indian English *only*

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Abstract Indian English (IE) has a post-positional scalar *only*, which presupposes that its prejacent is the most expected among salient focus alternatives (Ghoshal 2024). However, IE *only* frequently licenses non-entailed exclusivity inferences, i.e. that the other alternatives are false. This squib addresses how exclusivity emerges from the conventional meaning of IE *only*, and a two-way asymmetry between its defeasibility vs reinforceability on one hand, and negated vs non-negated constructions on the other. I show that these patterns emerge via known pragmatic pressures if we consider how lexically encoded “expectation” interacts with the informativity of statements in a discourse. Finally, I sketch how the proposed mechanism derives a yet-unanalyzed “minimal sufficiency” use of IE *only* (Grosz 2012).

Keywords: Indian English, discourse particles, focus, only, minimal sufficiency

1 Introduction: issues, aims, questions

In addition to exclusive *only* (1), Indian English has a post-positional scalar *only* (Bhatt 2000; Lange 2007; Parviainen 2020; Ghoshal 2024), which attaches to the right of a focused constituent, and licenses an inference that the constituent is the most expected or least surprising among contextually salient alternatives (2):

- (1) Exclusive *only*
 - a. Only [John]_F came to the party.
= John, and no one else, came to the party.
 - b. John only [danced]_F.
= John did nothing but dance.
- (2) IE *only*¹
 - a. [John]_F only came to the party.
≠ John, and no one else, came to the party.
≠ John did nothing but come to the party.
= John, as opposed to someone else, came to the party, and John was the most expected person to come.
 - b. John [danced]_F only.
≠ John did nothing but dance.
= John danced, opposed to doing something else, and this was the behavior most expected from John (he is well-known for party-dancing proclivities).

¹ All examples involving IE *only* (excluding sections 3.4 and 4) are adapted from Ghoshal (2024), and corroborated by the author’s intuitions as a first-language speaker.

Recent work by Ghoshal (2024) shows that this meaning of ‘most expected’ is not-at-issue, and proposes that IE *only* combines with a proposition p (its *prejacent*), contributes no at-issue meaning, but contributes a presupposition that p is at the top of an expectation scale created from contextually salient focus alternatives of p (Rooth 1992):

- (3) [John]_F only came to the party.
 At-issue meaning: John came to the party.
 Presupposition: Of all the contextually relevant people who might have come (e.g. Ali, Mini, Bill), John was the most likely to come to the party.

In this paper, I examine a set of data that is unexpected given this account, and was flagged by Ghoshal (2024) as a matter for further research. These involve certain non-entailed inferences of exclusivity that emerge from the use of IE *only*. I propose that these fall out naturally from this analysis if we take pragmatic facts into account, by considering how lexically encoded ‘expectation’ interacts with the informativity of statements in a discourse. Finally, I show how the proposed pragmatic mechanism explains another use of IE *only* that was observed in Ghoshal (2024) but not analyzed: a minimal sufficiency reading (Grosz 2012; Coppock & Beaver 2014).

To preview, the core pattern is: IE *only* licenses exclusivity inferences that appear to be conversational implicatures. However, this inference is easy to reinforce but difficult to cancel in non-negated contexts, and yet readily cancelable in negated contexts. How does the exclusivity inference emerge, and what explains the asymmetries in its defeasibility? Discourse is guided by a general pressure to make ‘good’ contributions including (at least) being truthful, informative, and relevant (Grice 1975). The main idea is that lexically encoded expectation interacts predictably with this pressure: the more expected a proposition is as an answer to the current question under discussion (QUD; Roberts 2012), the less informative it is. When a speaker uses IE *only*, the addressee must resolve a tension between their claim and the information that it is the least informative among available options. Interacting with assertion and negation, this yields distinct exclusivity inferences and defeasibility patterns, governed by the baseline requirement for coherent discourse.

After summarizing Ghoshal (2024)’s account of IE *only* in section 1.1, I present the core data involving exclusivity in section 2, outlining three questions that emerge from the patterns (2.3). Section 3.1 introduces the pragmatic mechanisms that I take to be at play, and sections 3.2–3.4 sketch how the core patterns derive from this. Finally, section 4 discusses the minimal sufficiency reading of IE *only*, and section 5 concludes.

1.1 Focus alternatives and the semantics of IE *only*

IE *only* occurs to the right of a constituent with prosodic prominence, which in English signals the presence of focus. It’s semantic import is to evoke a set of alternatives, and unlike the ordinary (o-)value, the focus-semantic (f-)value of an expression containing focus (F) is a set of objects of the same semantic type (Rooth 1985; 1992):

- (4) a. $\llbracket \text{John} \rrbracket^o = \text{john}$
 b. $\llbracket \text{John} \rrbracket^f = \{\text{john}\}$
 c. $\llbracket \text{John}_F \rrbracket^o = \text{john}$
 d. $\llbracket \text{John}_F \rrbracket^f = \{x | x \in D_e\} = \{\text{john}, \text{mini}, \text{ali}, \text{bill}, \dots\}$; D_e is the set of individuals.

Ghoshal (2024) formalizes the ‘most expected’ contribution of IE *only* by proposing that it adjoins to S at LF, creates an ordered “expectation scale” from a contextually salient

subset its prejacent's f-value, and presupposes that the prejacent is at the top of this scale. Glossing over non-essential details, we get:

- (5) Let a sentence α of the form $[\dots\beta_F\dots]$ express the proposition p .
 $\text{only}(p) \rightsquigarrow p \wedge \delta(\forall q [(q \in C \wedge q \neq p) \rightarrow q <_{\text{expected}} p])$,
 where δ is the presupposition operator (Beaver & Krahmer 2001), and $C \subseteq \llbracket p \rrbracket^f$
 gives a contextually-salient subset of the focus alternatives of p .

As (5) shows, IE *only* contributes meaning about the relative expected-ness of the focus alternatives, but says nothing about their truth or falsity. However, in certain constructions, the listener can reasonably infer that the non- p focus alternatives in C are false. I discuss these below.

2 Exclusivity with Indian English *only*

2.1 Exclusivity in non-negated sentences

With a non-negated prejacent p , IE *only* adds a presupposition that p is the most expected among salient focus alternatives. It also licenses an inference that the salient alternatives to p are false:

- (6) Context: The whole class took a test in Math, Physics, and English. John is known to be particularly good at Math and Math is his best subject.
- a. $[\text{John}]_F$ only got an A in Math
 = John was the most likely to get an A in Math (compared to everyone else)
 But also suggests: No one else got an A in Math
 - b. John got an A in $[\text{Math}]_F$ only
 = John's getting an A in Math was most expected (compared to his getting an A in other subjects)
 But also suggests: John didn't get an A in Physics or English

2.2 Exclusivity in negated sentences

IE *only* constructions involving negation can be interpreted in two ways (Ghoshal 2024):

- (i) **High-scope negation:** $\neg(\text{only}(p))$: presupposes that p is the most expected alternative, and asserts that p is false.
 - (ii) **Low-scope negation:** $\text{only}(\neg(p))$: presupposes that $\neg p$ is the most expected alternative, and asserts $\neg p$, i.e. that p is false.
- (ii) is restricted and does not give rise to an exclusivity inference; I discuss it briefly in section 3.4. Here, I focus on (i). IE *only* adds the presupposition that p is the most expected among contextually salient focus alternatives, and just like its non-negated counterpart, licenses an inference that the non- p alternatives are false:

- (7) Context: The whole class took a test in Math, Physics, and English. John is known to be particularly good at Math and Math is his best subject.
- a. $[\text{John}]_F$ only didn't get an A in Math.
 = John was the most likely to get an A in Math (compared to everyone else).
 But also suggests: No one else got an A in Math

- b. John didn't get an A in [Math]_F only.
 = John's getting an A in Math was most expected (compared to his getting an A in other subjects).
 But also suggests: John didn't get an A in Physics or English.

2.3 Nature of exclusivity inference: asymmetries and puzzles

Meaning that is implicated, rather than entailed, can be canceled without anomaly, and reinforced without redundancy (Grice 1975). Tests for implicature in negated sentences suggest that IE *only* merely implicates the exclusivity of its prejacent:

- (8) [The bride]_F only didn't show up to the wedding.
 - a. Reinforcable: Of course no one else came.
 - b. Cancelable: Everyone else was there.

However, tests for implicature in non-negated sentences produce conflicting results:

- (9) [John]_F only got an A in Math
 - a. Reinforcable: No one else got an A.
 - b. Not cancelable: # Five other people also got As.

The continuation in (b) is odd, bordering on unacceptable. This alone does not prove that exclusivity is entailed, since it can be reinforced, and can be canceled in negated sentences. Instead, (b) shows that the implicature is difficult to cancel in non-negated sentences.

The patterns raise the following questions:

- (i) How does the exclusivity implicature emerge given the meaning contribution of IE *only* in (5)?
- (ii) Why is it possible to reinforce, but difficult to cancel, the implicature in non-negated constructions?
- (iii) Why do constructions with negation lack a parallel asymmetry between reinforcement and cancelability?

3 Proposal

3.1 Expectation, informativity, and good contributions in discourse

Ghoshal (2024) proposes that IE *only* marks its prejacent as “the most expected/least surprising option”, but stops short of specifying what this amounts to. The examples show that expectation arises from various sources, including mutually acknowledged knowledge of the world (e.g. that John is good at math), and normative facts (e.g. that a bride is central to the proceedings of a wedding). While its source is contextually determined, I assume that in a given context, ‘expectation’ is understood relative to the issue that the interlocutors are trying to resolve: the overt or implicit question under discussion (QUD; Roberts 2012). Thus, the conventional contribution of IE *only* is to signal how expected the prejacent is as an answer to the current QUD. The central question in this paper is what follows from this. Specifically, if IE *only* identifies its prejacent as the most expected answer to the QUD, why does its use signal that the other alternatives are not true answers to the QUD?

The key idea is that an element's position on such an expectation scale affects the kind of information it introduces into the discourse: an answer that is highly expected contributes relatively little new information, whereas a less expected answer is, other things being equal, more informative. By marking its prejacent as the most expected answer, *IE only* identifies it as the least informative. This creates a potential puzzle: if a speaker has available alternatives that would provide more information, why might they choose to utter the least informative one?

Exclusivity arises from the way this choice is constrained by general principles governing conversation. A well-known formulation of these is Grice's conversational maxims (1975), revolving around the 'Cooperative Principle': interlocutors contribute in ways that advance the shared goals of the discourse. Conversational implicatures arise when the hearer infers what must be true in order to maintain the assumption that the speaker is being cooperative. While the Gricean framework is not the only approach to deriving implicatures (see, e.g., Marty 2026), it suffices for present purposes. I assume these informal working definitions:

- (10) Quality: only utter things that you believe to be true.
- (11) Quantity: if both p and q are true and relevant, q is more informative than p , and q is among the scalar alternatives of p , then utter q rather than p .
- (12) Relevance: be relevant. An assertion is relevant if it provides at least a partial answer to the current QUD.

Depending on what the asserted content is, these predict different ways that exclusivity inferences might emerge from the conventional meaning of *IE only*. In the following subsections, I discuss each sentence-type described in section 2.

3.2 Relevance and exclusivity in non-negated sentences

Consider again the import of *IE only* in a non-negated sentence like (6), repeated below:

- (13) Context: The whole class took a test in Math, Physics, and English. John is known to be particularly good at Math and Math is his best subject.
[John]_F only got an A in Math.

This asserts that John got an A. As established in section 3.1, the presupposition that John is the most expected person to get an A positions this as the least informative addition to the discourse among its salient alternatives. Quantity creates pressure toward the less expected, more informative alternatives. If a more informative alternative were both true and relevant to the QUD ('Who got an A?'), the speaker would have reason to utter it instead. Their choice therefore requires an explanation. Given Quality and Relevance, a more informative alternative can be unavailable either because it is not believed to be true or because it does not contribute to resolving the current QUD. This yields the inference that the less expected alternatives are either false or irrelevant to the current discourse, giving the exclusivity associated with non-negated *IE only* constructions.

Now consider what happens when we attempt to reinforce or cancel the implicature:

- (14) a. [John]_F only got an A in Math
b. Reinforcing exclusivity: No one else got an A.

When the implicature is reinforced by explicitly stating that the lesser expected alternatives are not true, the discourse is coherent in terms of relevance: the speaker merely

confirms what the recipient has already inferred. However, things change when we attempt to cancel the implicature by asserting that a lesser expected, and therefore more informative, alternative is in fact true:

- (15) a. [John]_F only got an A in Math
 b. Canceling exclusivity: ## Five other people also got As.

This sequence is anomalous, because it is incoherent in terms of relevance. While asserting (a) leads to the implicature that (a) is the most informative utterance that respects Quality and Relevance, following it up with (b) contradicts this. (b) introduces the information that a more informative proposition is true, and moreover relevant to the current discourse, since it was uttered in the discourse by a cooperative participant. In light of this, the assertion of (a) appears uncooperative, as it violates Quantity. An alternative is to assume that (a) did *not* violate Quantity, which would suggest that (b) is either irrelevant to the discourse or untrue, in which case uttering (b) violates Relevance or Quality. In other words, there is no way to reconcile the utterance of the sequence (a)–(b) within the same discourse context while assuming the Cooperative Principle to hold throughout. I propose that this is why it is difficult to cancel the exclusivity implicature in non-negated sentences with IE *only*.

3.3 Scalar implicature with high-scope negation

Let us turn to IE *only* constructions involving high-scope negation: $\neg(\text{only}(p))$. Negation targets the asserted content, and the presupposition projects out of negation as expected. The sentence thus presupposes that p is the most expected answer to the QUD, and asserts $\neg p$.

This has a different import than its non-negated counterpart: the most expected alternative is the least likely to be false. Given our conception of informativity, $\neg p$ is therefore the most informative contribution among salient alternatives. Unlike asserting p , asserting $\neg p$ is not perceived as a potential violation of Quantity. Thus, additional considerations of Relevance or Quality need not be implicated to justify the speaker's choice to utter $\neg(\text{only}(p))$.

What, then, generates an exclusivity inference in such sentences? I propose that the presence of negation against the expectation scale invoked by IE *only* triggers a familiar scale-reversal scalar implicature. Scalar implicatures arise from considering alternatives to an utterance from the same scale (Chierchia et al. 2004; Spector 2007; Fox 2007): in many contexts, asserting a stronger alternative on the scale implies the truth of weaker alternatives, whereas asserting a weaker alternative implies the falsity of the stronger alternatives.

The alternatives involved in the examples we have been considering are ordered by strength based on how informative they are. In $\neg(\text{only}(p))$, IE *only* establishes p as the weakest alternative. Negation flips this scale: $\neg p$ is the strongest alternative in terms of informativity. The speaker's assertion of $\neg p$, implies that the informationally weaker alternatives (say $\neg q, \neg r, \neg s, \dots$) hold, too, i.e. that $q, r, s, \dots$ are false. Intuitively: asserting that the most expected alternative is false suggests that the other alternatives, which were less expected to begin with, must be false, too.

- (16) Context: The class took a test in math. John is known to be particularly good at math.
 [John]_F only didn't get an A.

= John didn't get an A, and John was the most likely person to get an A.
Suggests: No one else got an A.

The sentence suggests that if John, being the most likely candidate, did not get an A, it is very unlikely that anyone else did (perhaps the questions were impossibly difficult). This reading of IE *only* parallels the use of *even*: uttered in the same context, the sentence *Even [John]_F didn't get an A* similarly suggests that no one else got an A.

Like other scalar implicatures, this inference can be canceled and reinforced without inducing anomaly:

- (17) a. [John]_F only didn't get an A.
b. Reinforcing exclusivity: So you can imagine how the test went. Of course no one else got an A.
c. Canceling exclusivity: Somehow, *Peter* managed to get an A, and he was the only one.

Crucially, the sequence (17a–17c) is not pragmatically odd, because it does not introduce a less informative utterance followed by a more informative one from the same scale. Since (a) is already highly informative in this context, the informativity of (c) is not crucial here as it pertains to coherence. The most informative sentence given mutual expectations is uttered first, which is then followed by (c), presumably because it has some relevance to the discourse.

This concludes the proposed solution to the puzzle outlined in section 2.3. The next two sections address some additional data, and sketch how this general architecture might be harnessed to explain them.

3.4 Alternatives and (no) exclusivity with low-scope negation

As Ghoshal (2024) notes, IE *only* cannot scope above negation unless negation is included in the focused constituent. In fact, the possible configurations appear even more constrained: IE *only* cannot scope above negation unless negation itself is the target of focus, i.e. focus targets the polarity of the sentence. In these constructions, IE *only* contributes the presupposition that $\neg p$ is the most expected compared to its non-negated counterpart (p), and the sentence asserts $\neg p$.

- (18) Context: Ali hosted a party. It is well known that Ali and John don't get along.
John [didn't go]_F only.
= John didn't go, and his not going was expected (compared to his going).

Although it is logically possible to have sentences where negation is simply part of a larger focused constituent, it is difficult to construe readings where the alternatives predicted by such a construction feature in the expectation scale of IE *only*. Consider the context below. When focus is in the VP, we might imagine two ways of generating alternatives:

- (19) Context: There was a test with problems at different levels of difficulty. Students are expected to be able to solve the easier problems, but not the harder ones.
John [couldn't solve the hardest problem]_F only.
a. **Polarity focus:** {couldn't solve the hardest problem, could solve the hardest problem}

- b. **VP focus:** {couldn't solve the hardest problem, couldn't solve the second-hardest problem, ..., couldn't solve the easiest problem}

However, the only available reading corresponds to 19(a):

- (20) John [couldn't solve the hardest problem]_F only
- a. **Available:** John couldn't solve the hardest problem, and this was expected compared to his being able to solve it.
 - b. **Unavailable:** John couldn't solve the hardest problem, and this was expected compared to his being not being able to solve the second hardest problem, the third-hardest problem, etc.

Why low-scope negation with IE *only* requires polarity focus remains an open question for future research. For present purposes, the key fact is that such structures generate no exclusivity inference—a result that follows naturally from our proposed architecture. The data shows that for a structure *only*($\neg p$), the only contextually salient focus alternatives are p and $\neg p$. The sentence asserts $\neg p$, and presupposes that it is more expected than p . Exclusivity inferences with IE *only* stem from (i) scalar implicature, or (ii) apparent Quantity violations. Clearly, $\{p, \neg p\}$ does not form a scale in the sense discussed in section 3.3, and uttering the more expected (and therefore less informative) $\neg p$ cannot imply that p is *irrelevant* as sketched in section 3.2, as $\neg p$ already entails that p is false. Therefore, the “exclusivity” of the prejacent in these structures is already guaranteed by constraints on the possible focus alternatives and the meaning of negation.

4 Interaction with existing scales: minimal sufficiency reading

In this section, I consider another reading of IE *only*: ‘minimal sufficiency’ (Grosz 2012), which has been discussed primarily for exclusives like *just* and *mere* (Coppock & Lindahl 2014; Coppock & Beaver 2014; Deo & Thomas 2025, a.o.). Such readings rely on a contextually salient scale of significance or power, and express that an entity located low on such a scale is nonetheless sufficient to bring about a given result:

- (21) Just the thought of him makes me shiver.
 (22) Merely talking to her gives me a headache.

Consider (22). On its most natural reading, it invokes alternative forms of contact the speaker might have had with ‘her’, and expresses that even one as trivial as talking causes a headache. Hearing this, I might justifiably infer that living with her would certainly cause a headache, and that seeing her from a distance would not by itself cause a headache. That is, nothing less than talking is sufficient, and nothing more than talking is necessary.

Exclusive *only* does not usually license minimal sufficiency readings (Coppock & Beaver 2014):

- (23) a. Just the thought of food makes my stomach growl.
 $\neq$ The sight or smell of food does not make my stomach growl.
 b. Only the thought of food makes my stomach growl.
 $=$ The sight or smell of food does not make my stomach growl.

Unlike (23a), (23b) can only express the implausible meaning that thinking is the only thing that makes my stomach growl. However, as Ghoshal (2024) notes, IE *only* licenses minimal sufficiency readings:

- (24) a. The [thought of food]_F only makes my stomach growl.
 = Just the thought of food is enough to make my stomach growl.
 ≠ The thought of food is the only thing that makes my stomach growl.
- b. [Seeing him]_F only makes me shiver.
 = Just seeing him is enough to make me shiver.
 ≠ Seeing him is the only thing that makes me shiver.
- c. [Talking to her]_F only gives me a headache.
 = Just talking to her is enough to give me a headache.
 ≠ Talking to her is the only thing that gives me a headache.

Given that IE *only* has a different inferential profile than the expressions examined in existing accounts of minimal sufficiency, how does this inference arise from its conventional meaning? I propose that it follows from the pragmatic mechanism outlined in Section 3.

Consider a context for (24b), with a background of shared assumptions about various forms of contact, ordered by their potential to cause headaches:

- (25) A potency scale for headache-inducing encounters
- a. Living with her
 - b. Spending time with her
 - c. Talking to her
 - d. Thinking about her

Plausible alternatives to the prejacent of IE *only* in (24b) are of the form *X gives me a headache*, where X belongs to the ‘potency’ scale above.

Since IE *only* presupposes its prejacent to be the most expected among contextually salient focus alternatives, in an ordinary context its use is anomalous if this presupposition is not satisfied:

- (26) Context: John is known to be particularly good at Math, and not very good at History.
- a. John got an A in [Math]_F only.
 - b. # John got an A in [History]_F only.

However, against the backdrop of an independently salient and mutually accepted ordering (the potency scale), the speaker can strategically use the conventional contribution of IE *only* to signal a deviation from the norm.

Assume a QUD such as ‘What gives the speaker a headache?’. Higher-potency alternatives are intuitively more expected answers than lower-potency alternatives. Applying IE *only* to a low-potency item (*talking*) triggers a mismatch with naive expectations. I assume that it is not possible to reorder the salient potency scale without an explicit discourse move. To preserve cooperativity, therefore, the addressee infers that the scale has been truncated above *talking*, removing higher-potency alternatives from active consideration in the expectation-ordering. This is compatible with Ghoshal (2024)’s proposal that IE *only* operates over a subset of the focus alternatives. The addressee infers that we are in such an exceptional context that items on the higher end of the potency scale do not even figure in shaping our expectations. This derives sufficiency: nothing more than talking is necessary to cause headaches. However, nothing prevents the higher-potency alternatives from still being true answers to the QUD, as evidenced by the fact that following (24c) with invocations of more potent alternatives is odd, but not contradictory:

- (27) A: [Talking to her]_F only gives me a headache.
 B: # Exactly/no, spending time with her gives me a headache too!

Turning to lower-potency alternatives (e.g. *thinking*): (24c) presupposes that on the currently salient expectation scale, *talking* is the most expected alternative, and asserts *talking*. As outlined in section 3.2, this is an apparent Quantity violation. The addressee infers that the speaker chose this because less expected, more informative alternatives are either false or irrelevant to the QUD. In this case, since the potency scale is clearly relevant, the addressee concludes that even lesser-expected alternatives (e.g. *thinking*) are false. Thus, *talking* is established as the minimal threshold for causing a headache. Informally, the reading is paraphrased as: “talking to her gives me a headache, and the bar is so low that something as trivial as talking to her is the most likely thing to give me a headache”.

Thus, a speaker can harness the lexically encoded “expectation” of IE *only* to adjust the context against which their utterance is understood, to express a minimal sufficiency meaning. The idea that an expression whose conventional meaning involves its pre-jacent’s position among alternatives can be used strategically to structure the context, also underlies a recent analysis of another Indo-Aryan discourse particle, Marathi *-ts*, by Deo (2023).

5 Conclusion and questions

This squib examined non-entailed inferences of exclusivity in sentences involving the post-positional scalar *only* in Indian English (Bhatt 2000; Lange 2007; Parviainen 2020; Ghoshal 2024), asking how they emerge and what leads to asymmetries in their defeasibility. I proposed that considering how lexically encoded “expectation” (as proposed in Ghoshal 2024) interacts with the informativity of statements in a discourse, predicts these very patterns through familiar pragmatic principles governing cooperative conversation (Grice 1975). Finally, I showed how the proposed pragmatic architecture might derive an additional reading of IE *only*: minimal sufficiency (Grosz 2012), although the conventional meaning of the particle differs from expressions that have been shown to license the reading in existing work.

The discussion of pragmatic mechanisms and how they derive implicatures is informal here; I leave a more precise treatment of Quantity and Relevance with respect to the QUD and its interaction with the expectation scale for future work.

Finally, it is worth comparing the inferential profile of IE *only* to Marathi *-ts* (Deo 2023) and its counterparts in related languages, given their shared linguistic area and contact history. Surface-level observations based on Deo (2023) suggest that IE *only* covers a subset of *-ts*’s functions: while *-ts* exhibits both a bottom-of-scale scalar reading (unavailable to IE *only*) and a purely exclusive use, IE *only* is positionally distinguished from its exclusive counterpart, and can co-occur with it. Examining how exclusivity inferences behave across these particles— especially with respect to reinforceability, cancelability, and negation— will clarify whether they admit a unified analysis. Furthermore, it raises an interesting diachronic question of why Indian English recruited the expression *only* to encode this particular cluster of meanings.

Competing interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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