

## One Day „Only”: Position statement of Petra Hendriks

The particle *only* appears to be a rather elusive element, since it combines many functions at the same time (e.g., as a focus particle, as a quantifier, as a scope marker). Recently, a number of similarities have been discovered between *only* and disjunctive *either* (cf. Hendriks 2001). These similarities between *only* and *either*, as well as their differences, might help us disentangle the different functions of the particle *only*.

Similarities between disjunctive *either* and *only*:

- a. *Either* and *only* attach to XP only.
- b. *Either* and *only* can attach to almost any major constituent.
- c. *Either* and *only* associate with focus.
- d. *Either* and *only* must c-command the focused phrase.
- e. *Either* and *only* can give rise to scope ambiguities in certain cases but not in other cases.
- f. *Either* and *only* dislike to sit inside PPs and complex NPs.
- g. *Either* might give rise to exhaustive interpretations, just like *only*, although this might also be an epiphenomenon resulting from the closure intonation of the disjunction.

Differences between disjunctive *either* and *only*:

- a. *Either* can attach to IP, whereas *only* cannot.
- b. *Either* must cooccur with *or* (the relation between these two elements is subject to locality conditions), whereas the distribution of *only* is not dependent on any other element.
- c. *Either* might not have a generalized quantifier interpretation, whereas such an interpretation has been proposed for *only*.

A comparison of *only* with *either* suggests the following:

Because the exhaustivity effects, certain distributional properties (see, for example, f.) and the intonational prominence of focus (second occurrence effects) seem to be tendencies rather than hard effects, an explanation of the properties of *only* might be framed in terms of soft constraints (cf. Optimality Theoretic Semantics). Constraint interaction might also yield an explanation for the scope effects with *only* and *either*, which seem to be strongly influenced by context and intonation.

Hendriks, P. (2001), „Either” as a focus particle. Unpublished manuscript, University of Groningen, downloadable as pdf-file at [www.let.rug.nl/~hendriks](http://www.let.rug.nl/~hendriks).