

Exclamatives – a discourse perspective

Dag Haug (joint work with Daniel Altshuler)

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- Merin and Nikolaeva (2008): “near-equivalent, differing at most in register”
- Previous research focused on the sentence-internal content
- We focus instead on the sentence-external (discourse) level, which has seen much less attention

Plan

- 1 Previous research
- 2 Discourse data
- 3 Analysis
- 4 Data revisited
- 5 Resolving the deixis

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 - denies that they can be inserted into narratives (Castroviejo Miró 2008)

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Paul worked so hard! For he owed a lot of money to his parents.

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Paul worked so hard! For he owed a lot of money to his parents.
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How hard Paul worked! For he owed a lot of money to his parents.

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We will not discuss the French data here, but it is pretty clear that English *wh*-exclamatives and other exclamations *do* contract discourse relations

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- It seems hard to construct a true narrative progression

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So it is not that the speech act of exclamation is incompatible with narration, but rather something about the function of *wh*-exclamatives specifically.

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We add that changing the topic improves the discourse:
Wow, it is beautiful!

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Nothing semantically wrong with causes, but something with the discourse

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Underlying intuition

wh-exclamatives are deictic expressions pointing to properties of events that are mutually manifest to the discourse participants

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 - $\llbracket p! \rrbracket = \text{🤔}(\llbracket p \rrbracket)$

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wh-exclamatives but not exclamations crucially involve *degrees*

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Even when there is no gradeable property, we infer one

(17) What a student!

Exclamatives

- $\llbracket \textit{How/what } p! \rrbracket = \text{😲}(p(d))$
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- $\llbracket \textit{How/what } p! \rrbracket = \text{😬}(p(d))$
- The *wh*-word somehow contributes a degree argument?
- But where do we get the referent of that degree variable?

SDRT 101

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 - coordinating: *Narration, Result, Parallel, ...*
 - subordinating: *Elaboration, Explanation, Topic, Comment, ...*

Example discourse

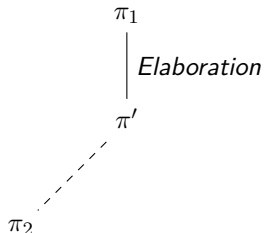
 π_1

π_1 : John had a great evening last night.

Example discourse

π_1 : John had a great evening last night.

π_2 : He had a great meal.

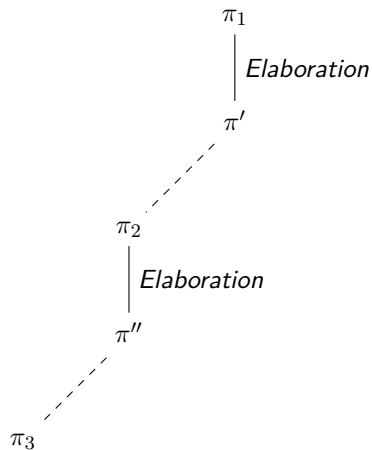


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π_1 : John had a great evening last night.

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π_3 : He ate salmon.



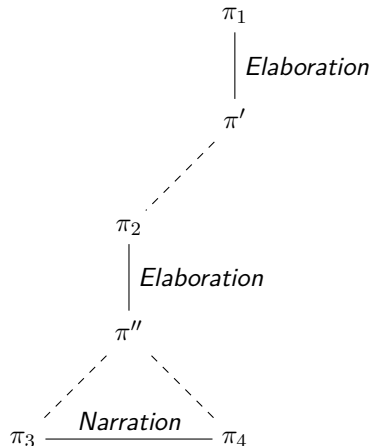
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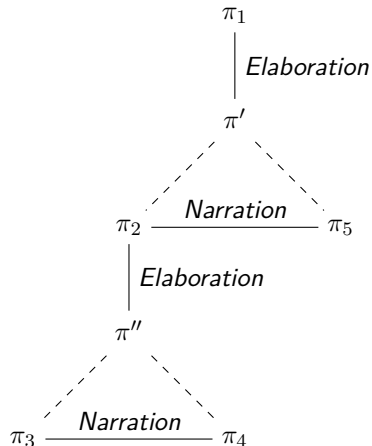
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π_5 : He then won a dancing competition.



Elementary event units (Hunter et al 2018)

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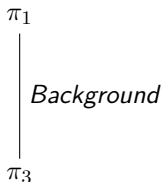
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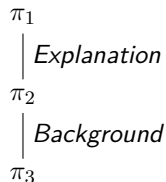
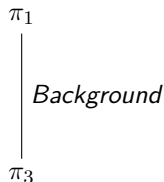
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The EEU directly enters the graph

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$$\begin{array}{c} \pi_1 \\ | \\ \text{Elaboration} \\ | \\ \pi_2 \end{array}$$

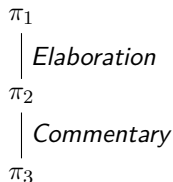
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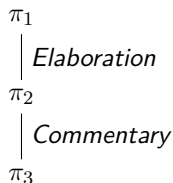
A discourse analysis of *wh*-exclamatives

(A to B while watching a job talk:) How intelligent Joan is!

π_1 [Joan is giving a job talk.]

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- The descriptive content is the discourse head of the exclamative

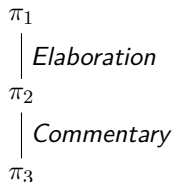
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- The descriptive content is the discourse head of the exclamative
- Where does d come from?

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 - ① the speaker believes the addressee is equally capable to make a similar utterance
 - ② reaction to stimulus, i.e. any kind of information that has narrowed the Common Ground in the previous moment
- “the speaker often needs to call the recipient’s attention to object in the common deictic space using verbal, vocal and bodily resources” (Pfeiffer 2016, p. 40)

Goat updates (Stalnaker 1999)

If a goat walked into the room, it would normally be presupposed, from that point, that there was a goat in the room. And the fact that this was presupposed might be exploited in the conversation, as when someone asks, How did that thing get in here?, assuming that others will know what he is talking about.

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- Our claim: the degree variable gets its referent exactly like the goat
- As a consequence, the descriptive content of the *wh*-exclamative must attach to an event that is mutually manifest to the interlocutors and provides a referent for the degree variable

Plan

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John and Sue watch π_0 : Bill pulls up in a (new) car.

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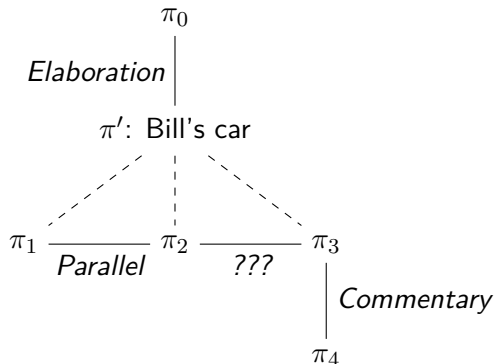
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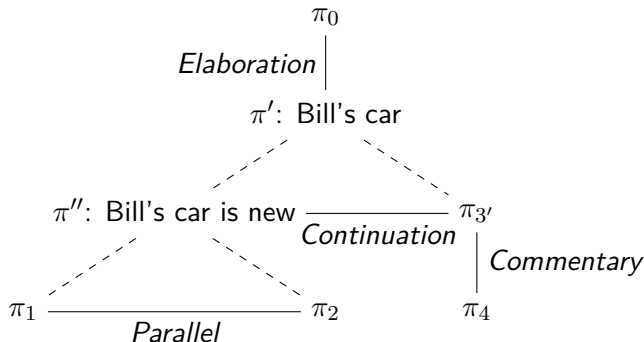


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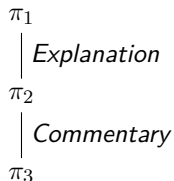
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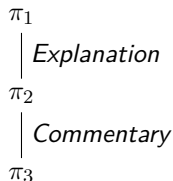
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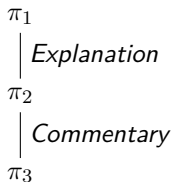
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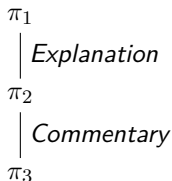
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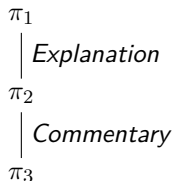
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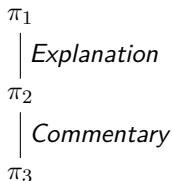
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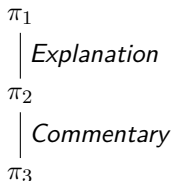
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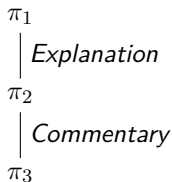
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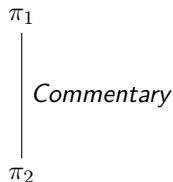
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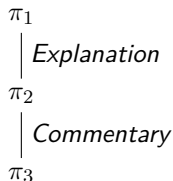
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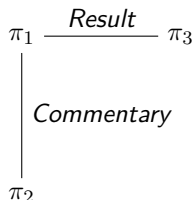
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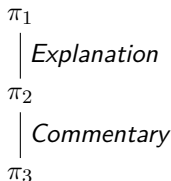
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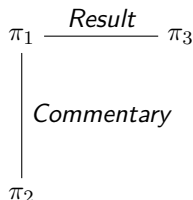
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- Wellformed iff the context provides d , e.g. a job talk EEU

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- (22) House A is in Palo Alto. It's got 3 bedrooms and 2 baths, and was built in 1950. It's on a quarter acre, with a lovely garden, and the owner is asking \$425K. But *that's* all I know about it. (from Webber 1988)

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- Both in line with a deictic analysis

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- Follow from the need to point to an accessible degree referent, typically via an event in the shared environment