



A Note on Exceptive Use of But and Except

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A Note on Exceptive Use of *But* and *Except* *

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1. Introduction

Although *except* and *but* are used as exceptives, *but* cannot always replace *except*. This is shown by the contrast in (1):

- (1) a. Every student except John attended the meeting. (Imanishi (1994:384))
 b. Every student but John attended the meeting. (von Stechow (1992:144))
 c. { *But/Except } me, everyone was tired. (Quirk et al. (1985:708))

John in (1a,b) is a member of the set of students, and he is excluded from the set of the attendees of the meeting. We will refer to *John* as "EXCEPTION", and to *Every student* as "CORRELATE" in (1a,b). Only a few attempts have so far been made at exploring exceptive use of *but*, and little is known about its grammatical behaviors. In this study we will reveal some properties of exceptive *but* in comparison with *except*.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 deals with three differences between exceptive *but* and *except*. Section 3 presents two common characteristics between them. Section 4 illustrates the process of interpreting implicit CORRELATES. Section 5 presents concluding remarks.

2. Three Differences between Exceptive *But* and *Except*

2.1. Intonation Break Intervention

Let us start by observing three differences between *except* and exceptive *but*. The first difference between exceptive *but* and *except* lies in whether an intonation break between CORRELATES and EXCEPTIONS is possible or not. According to Higashimori (1992), an intonation break can intervene between CORRELATES and EXCEPTIONS in the case of *except*, while not in the case of *but*, as (2) and (3) show:

- (2) ... he could not make anybody hear him. *Except* a spider who came out of a crack in the ceiling and examined the knots critically, from a safe distance. (Potter, B. *The Great Big Treasury*)
 (3) *He couldn't eat anything. *But* cucumbers. (Higashimori 1992:90; italics mine)

In (2), the CORRELATE is *anybody*, and the EXCEPTION is *a spider who came out*

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of a crack in the ceiling and examined the knots critically, from a safe distance. In (3), the CORRELATE is *anything*, and the EXCEPTION is *cucumbers*. In each of the examples, the CORRELATE and the EXCEPTION are located in different sentences, whereby an intonation break intervenes them.

2.2. Sentence Initial Exception

The second difference between exceptive *but* and *except* concerns the linear order of CORRELATES and EXCEPTIONS. As shown by Quirk et. al (1985), *except* allows EXCEPTIONS to precede CORRELATES, while exceptive *but* does not, as in (1c). Why, then, cannot *but* precede CORRELATE, unlike *except*? The data show that the unacceptability of exceptive *but* in (1c) would be attributable to the existence of the intonation break between the EXCEPTION and the CORRELATE, as shown in (3).

2.3. Acceptability of Two EXCEPTIONS

2.3.1. except

The last difference between exceptive *but* and *except* resides in the acceptability of two EXCEPTIONS in one sentence. Imanishi (1994) points out that more than one element can occur as EXCEPTIONS in the case of *except*. Consider the following examples (the CORRELATES are marked by square brackets, and the EXCEPTIONS by angle brackets):¹

(4) This morning [nobody]₁ talked [to anyone]₂ in this room except <Tom>₁
<to Mary>₂.

(5) Mary forced [nobody]₁ to [do anything]₂ except <Tom>₁ to <clean the house>₂.

(6) [At no time]₁ was [any room]₂ occupied in this hotel except <Room A>₂
<on Sunday>₁. (Imanishi 1994:381-382)

In (4), there are two EXCEPTIONS *Tom* and *to Mary*, and the corresponding CORRELATES are *nobody* and *to anyone* respectively. We must notice that *Tom* is the agent and *Mary* is the patient here, and thus they are of different kinds.² (5) and (6) go on in the same vein: In (5) the EXCEPTIONS are *Tom* and *clean the house* and the CORRELATES are *nobody* and *do anything* respectively. In the case of (6), the EXCEPTIONS are *Room A* and *on Sunday*, and the corresponding CORRELATES are *any room* and *At no time* respectively.

¹ For analytical convenience, I will henceforth adopt different notations from Imanishi's (1994).

² The following example is not a case of two EXCEPTIONS in one sentence.

(i) Every student except John and Mary attended the meeting. (von Stechow (1992:143))
Although *John* and *Mary* are two different persons, they are common in that they did not attend the meeting. Thus they are regarded as one EXCEPTION.

2.3.2. but

Imanishi (1994) confines herself to the study of *except*. No studies have ever tried to investigate whether or not exceptive *but* allows more than one EXCEPTION. If we replace the *except*'s in (4)-(6) with *but*'s, we can get (7)-(9):

- (7) *This morning [nobody]₁ talked to [anyone]₂ in this room but <Tom>₁ <to Mary>₂.
 (8) *Mary forced [nobody]₁ to [do anything]₂ but <Tom>₁ to <clean the house>₂.
 (9) *[At no time]₁ was [any room]₂ occupied in this hotel but <Room A>₂ <on Sunday>₁.

The examples in (7)-(9) show that an exceptive *but* does not allow two EXCEPTIONS in one sentence, unlike *except*. Based on this fact, I propose the following constraint:

- (10) Two kinds of EXCEPTIONS cannot be contained in exceptive *but* phrases.

In this section we have seen three differences between exceptive *but* and *except*: First, *except* allows intonation break intervention between a CORRELATE and an EXCEPTION, while *but* does not. Second, *except* allows EXCEPTION-preposing, while *but* does not. Third, *except* allows two EXCEPTIONS, while *but* does not.

3. Two Characteristics Common to Exceptive *But* and *Except*

In this section we will see two characteristics common to exceptive *but* and *except*. The first common characteristic relates to the universality of CORRELATES. Quirk et al. (1985) and von Stechow (1991, 1992) suggest that exceptive *but* requires the notion of totality, i.e., totality of the set referred to by its CORRELATES, as shown in (11):

- (11) {Every/*Most/*Many/*Some/*Three/No} student(s) but John attended the meeting. (von Stechow (1992:144))

Every and *no* imply the totality of the set of *students*, while the other determiners do not. (11) shows that a CORRELATE of exceptive *but* must imply the notion of totality of the set referred to by itself.

Imanishi (1994) argues that the same is true of *except*, as in (12):

- (12) {Every/*Most/*Many/*Some/*Three/No} student(s) except John attended the meeting. (Imanishi (1994:384))

(11) and (12) show that both exceptive *but* and *except* need the totality of the set referred to by their CORRELATES.

The second common characteristic concerns the deletability of CORRELATES. Imanishi (1994) provides examples that show a variety of the deletability of CORRELATES of *except*. Consider the following examples (ϕ is a symbol for an

implicit element and the CORRELATES are again marked by square brackets, and the EXCEPTIONS by angle brackets).

- (13) John drinks *([anything]) rapidly except <beer>.
 (cf. John drinks ϕ rapidly.)
- (14) a. John teaches $\phi_1 \phi_2$ enthusiastically.
 b. John teaches (Mary)₁ *([everything]₂) enthusiastically except <mathematics>₂.
 c. John teaches *([everyone]₁) (mathematics)₂ enthusiastically except <Mary>₁.
 d. John teaches (mathematics)₁ ([to everyone]₂) enthusiastically except <to the third-graders>₂.
- (15) a. John talked $\phi_1 \phi_2$ seriously.
 b. John talked (to his wife)₁ ([about everything]₂) seriously except <about money>₂.
 c. John talked ([to everyone]₁) (about money)₂ seriously except <to his wife>₁. (Imanishi (1994:385))

In (13)-(14c), the implicit CORRELATES are arguments of the verbs. (14d)-(15c) are examples in which implicit CORRELATES are optional adjuncts to the verbs. The examples (13)-(15) show that when CORRELATES are optional adjuncts to the verbs, they are deletable, but when they are arguments of the verbs, they are not deletable. Consider the following:

- (16) a. The old man cannot speak ([in any way]) except <very slowly>.
 b. The old man cannot treat me *([in any way]) except <like a child>.
 c. *The old man cannot treat me. (a-b: Imanishi (1994:385))

Although implicit elements in both (16a) and (16b) are involved in manner, their acceptability differs from each other. *In any way* in (16a) is an optional adjunct to the verb *speaks*, while that in (16b) is an obligatory adjunct to the verb *treat*, as (16c) shows. Thus, the optional adjuncts can serve as implicit CORRELATES, as in (16a), while obligatory ones cannot, as in (16b).

As for the deletability of optional adjuncts in the CORRELATES of *except*, Imanishi (1994:386) suggests that implicit modifiers always induce universal quantification, and therefore are always deletable. However, we should note that optional CORRELATES are not always deletable, as shown in (17):

- (17) A: To whom does John teach mathematics?
 B: He teaches it *([to everyone]) enthusiastically except <to the third-graders>.

Although *to everyone* in (17) is an optional adjunct to the verb *teach*, the adjunct *to*

everyone includes a part of the focus of the reply, i.e., everyone except the third-graders. Hence, although the adjunct *to everyone* is optional to the verb *teach*, it is pragmatically obligatory here. Therefore, if an optional CORRELATE is pragmatically obligatory, it is not deletable.

Let us turn to exceptive *but*. The deletability of CORRELATES of exceptive *but* has never been examined, as far as I know. Thus I will observe the deletability here. If we replace the *except*'s in (13)-(15) with *but*'s, we can get (18)-(20). The same observation as that of *except* applies to exceptive *but*: Optional adjuncts to the verbs can serve as implicit CORRELATES, while obligatory elements, such as arguments and obligatory adjuncts to the verbs, cannot:

- (18) John drinks *([anything]) rapidly but <beer>. (cf. John drinks ϕ rapidly.)
- (19) a. John teaches $\phi_1 \phi_2$ enthusiastically.
 b. John teaches (Mary)₁ *([everything]₂) enthusiastically but <mathematics>₂.
 c. John teaches *([everyone]₁) (mathematics)₂ enthusiastically but <Mary>₁.
 d. John teaches (mathematics)₁ ([to everyone]₂) enthusiastically but <to the third-graders>₂.
- (20) a. John talked $\phi_1 \phi_2$ seriously.
 b. John talked (to his wife)₁ ([about everything]₂) seriously but <about money>₂.
 c. John talked ([to everyone]₁) (about money)₂ seriously but <to his wife>₁.

However again, we must not forget one proviso. As we have seen in the case of *except*, a pragmatic factor affects the deletability of CORRELATES. If an optional CORRELATE of exceptive *but* includes a part of the focus of a reply, it is not deletable, as (21) shows:

(21) A: To whom does John teach mathematics?

B: He teaches it *(to everyone) enthusiastically but to the third-graders.

Thus we can say that optional CORRELATES are not always deletable.

As for the deletability of arguments, Nogawa (1994) argues that the omissibility of arguments depends on whether they pre-exist or not, as shown in (22):

(22) a. A: Have you been baking cookies?

B: ?I've been baking ϕ , but not cookies.

b. A: Have you been baking potatoes?

B: *I've been baking ϕ , but not potatoes. (Nogawa (1994:98))

In (22a) *cookies* is a baked product, and the referent of the NP does not exist before the

act of baking. On the other hand, *potatoes* in (22b) is an ingredient and it is pre-existent. Nogawa (1994) argues that if the referent of an argument of a verb is pre-existent, it is deletable, as in (22a), while if not, it is not deletable, as (22b) shows.

However, this factor does not affect the acceptability of sentences including exceptive *but* or *except*, as exemplified in (23):

- (23) a. A: Have you been baking cookies?
 B: I've been baking {*but /*except} cookies.
 b. A: Have you been baking potatoes?
 B: I've been baking {*but /*except} potatoes.

Therefore, arguments, whether their referents are pre-existent or not, cannot be deleted in a sentence including exceptive *but* or *except*.

In this section we have seen two characteristics common to the two exceptives: First, both *except* and exceptive *but* requires the totality of the set referred to by their CORRELATES. Second, the deletability of CORRELATES generally depends on their optionality to their verbs.

4. The Interpretation of Implicit CORRELATE

As we have seen in Section 3, CORRELATES are generally deletable when they are optional adjuncts to the verb. In this section, we will deal with an interpretive process of implicit CORRELATES. Let us take an example of implicit CORRELATES:

- (24) John teaches mathematics enthusiastically but to the third-graders.

The EXCEPTION is *to the third-graders* and the CORRELATE is not explicit in this case. The first step of interpretation of implicit CORRELATES is to interpret the category of EXCEPTIONS. Since the EXCEPTION *to the third-graders* is a *to* NP, the implicit CORRELATE is also supposed to be a *to* NP. The next step is the selection of the head. Since *the third-graders* is a personal noun, *-one* is included here.³ As for the determiner, we can choose from the ones which imply universality, such as *every*, *all*, or *any* (see the discussion of the universality of CORRELATES in Section 3). However, since the head we chose is *-one*, we must select not *all* but *any* or *every*. Then, the implicit CORRELATE is *to anyone* or *to everyone*. Consequently, the hearer of (24) interprets the sentence as meaning (25):

- (25) John teaches mathematics to {anyone/everyone} enthusiastically but to the third-graders.

Let us take another example, which involves negation:

³ Although there are other options such as *-body* in *everybody*, a fuller study of such kind of problems lies outside of the scope of this paper.

(26) The old man cannot speak but very slowly.

First, a hearer of this sentence assumes that, since the EXCEPTION is *very slowly*, the CORRELATE is the one expressing a manner. Secondly, s/he determines the head of the CORRELATE and the determiner. *Very slowly* is a kind of manner, so *way* is chosen as the head and thus the preposition *in* is also chosen. Since this sentence involves negation and implicit CORRELATES must imply universality, we select the negative polarity item *any* as the determiner. As a result the hearer gets *in any way* as the implicit CORRELATE. Therefore, (26) implies (27):

(27) The old man cannot speak in any way but very slowly.

Next we turn to an example of sentences in the past form:

(28) John talked to his wife seriously but about money.

In this sentence, the EXCEPTION is *about money*, so the CORRELATE is assumed to be the one in the form of *about* NP. The next step is the choice of the head and the determiner of the NP. Since the head of the NP *money* is non-personal, the hearer interprets the head to include *-thing*. As for the determiner, we should not overlook the fact that we cannot use *any-* here; since everything in the past is already definite, we cannot use the indefinite determiner *any* in this case. Therefore, *all* and *every*, which are not indefinite, are available. Since we have already chosen *-thing* as the head, we can select *every* instead of *all*. So we get *about everything* as the implicit CORRELATE. The hearer interprets (28) as meaning (29):

(29) John talked to his wife about everything seriously but about money.

A summary may be helpful here. The interpreting process of an implicit CORRELATE starts with the identification of the category of an EXCEPTION. The next step is the selection of the head and the determiner, with two provisos. A first proviso concerns the positive/negative polarity: In the case of negative contexts, a negative polarity item *any-* must be selected as the determiner. A second proviso concerns the tense form. When the past tense is involved, we cannot use *any*. In such cases, we can use *all* or *every*. The determiner is selected based on the determiner-noun concord.

From the observation in this section, we see that the category of the implicit CORRELATE is the same as that of the EXCEPTION. As is often pointed out, the conjunction *but* relates two or more structurally parallel units (e.g., He is *poor* but *happy*). Thus the exceptive *but* is similar to the conjunction *but* in that they relate two structurally/semantically parallel units. Then we may say that exceptive *but* has the semantic properties of the conjunction *but* and *except*. A full discussion of this topic will have to be made in my future research.

5. Concluding Remarks

In this study I have revealed one difference and one common property between the two exceptives. The difference I found between them concerns the acceptability of two EXCEPTIONS: *Except* allows them while exceptive *but* does not. The common property I clarified between them relates to the deletability of CORRELATES: If the CORRELATE of the two exceptives is an optional adjunct to the verb, it is deletable, but if it is an argument or an obligatory adjunct of the verb, it is not deletable. Furthermore, I dealt with the interpretive process of implicit CORRELATES of exceptive *but*. There are some interesting issues unsolved, such as why *but* differs from *except* in the three respects discussed above. But I hope that this paper will stimulate further research and bring about a more widespread understanding of exceptive *but*.

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