

Measure Phrase Equatives Have ? Readings: Comments on J. Rett's "Scales and Equatives"

Cleo Condoravdi

SCALE

Stanford University

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Rett on Measure Phrase Equatives

- ▶ Two readings: ‘at most’ and ‘exactly’
- ▶ Reading derived by the semantics: ‘at most’
 - ▶ weak semantics for MPs + a semantics of *as* that involves complementation deliver an ‘at most’ interpretation

A closer look at the implications of MP Equatives

► Distributive predications

(1) The boys are 5ft tall.

Each boys is 5ft tall

(2) The boys are as much as 5ft tall.

Some of the boys are 5ft tall

and these are (among?) the tallest boys

(3) The pillars are/get as high as 3 meters.

Some of the pillars are 3 meters

and these are (among?) the highest pillars

(4) The pillars are/get as high as 3 meters, if not more.

Some of the pillars are 3 meters

these are among the highest pillars

and (for all I know) there may well be higher pillars than those



A closer look at the implications of MP Equatives

- ▶ Distribution over an implicit domain
- (5) The river is/gets as wide as 5km.
*Some part of the river is 5km wide
and that part is (among?) the widest part(s)*

A closer look at the implications of MP Equatives

- ▶ Indeterminacy

- (6) GM plans on laying off as many as 5,000 employees. (Rett 2010)
Contingency plans call for different numbers of people to be laid off
Some among the contingency plans call for 5,000 employees to be laid off
and these are (among?) those that call for the highest number of people to be laid off
Laying off 5000 people is a lot

A closer look at the implications of MP Equatives

- ▶ Indeterminacy

- (7) GM plans on laying off as many as 5,000 employees, and maybe more.

Contingency plans call for different numbers of people to be laid off

Some among the contingency plans call for 5,000 employees to be laid off

(For all I know) there may well be contingency plans that call for more than 5,000 employees to be laid off

Laying off 5000 people is already a lot

A closer look at the implications of MP Equatives

- ▶ indeterminacy in plans + speaker uncertainty
- ▶ more generally:
 - ▶ variation in e.g. the height of boys, pillars, number of people to be laid off
 - ▶ speaker uncertainty as to e.g. the height of the tallest among the boys, the highest among the pillars, the highest among the candidate numbers of people to be laid off

as many as $n \neq$ at most n

- (8) The law has been used to jail as many as 550 people.
Jailing 550 people on the basis of such a law is a lot
- (9) The law has been used to jail at most 550 people.
- (10) The law has been used to jail as many as 550 people, if not more.

A more fine-grained view of implications

- ▶ Implication regarding named value
- ▶ named value = maximum value
- ▶ Variation
- ▶ Comparison with standard

	Rett	The picture above
named value	yes*	yes**
named value = maximum value	yes	optional

* Asymmetry: only one-sided deviation within precision range

** Two-sided deviation within precision range

An alternative line to consider

- ▶ Lower and higher alternatives
- ▶ *as* applies pointwise to MP alternatives
- ▶ Asserted alternative holds
- ▶ Lower alternatives are entailed by asserted alternative
- ▶ Higher alternatives entail asserted alternative, hence under the right contextual conditions can be negated via scalar reasoning
- ▶ DP equatives fit this picture well assuming a contextually provided ordering

DP equatives

- ▶ temporal ordering

(11) He may have arrived as late/early as 3pm/yesterday.

- ▶ ordering along a trajectory

(12) He reached as far as Berkeley. (Rett 2010)

Possibility modals

- ▶ Uncertainty implication can arise even with epistemic possibility modals
- (13) They may have jailed as many as 550 people, (and maybe even more).
- it's compatible with what is known/the evidence that they jailed 550 people*
- Given what is known/the evidence, 550 is the highest number of people they may have jailed OR*
- For all I know, they have jailed more than 550 people*

Possibility modals

- ▶ epistemic
- ▶ dynamic
- ▶ deontic

(14) The drones can hover as low as 100m above ground(, if not lower).

*The drones have the ability to safely hover 100m above ground
100m above ground is the lowest safe altitude for the drones to*

hover at OR

*for all I know, the drones can safely hover below 100m above
ground*

‘Only’ and ‘even’ readings

(15) After the operation, I could walk as far as 1km, but no further.

(16) After the operation, I could only walk as far as 1km.

(17) After the operation, I couldn’t walk as far as 1km.

(18) After the operation, I couldn’t even walk as far as 1km.