

# Notes on the "Only I" Phenomenon: Evidence for Inducing Sets in Different Categories

Tom Roeper  
June 2000  
UMass<sup>1</sup>

This note, inspired by Kratzer (1998), looks at how extensive the phenomenon of set-induction by only is. We also aim to find a connection to Point Of View phenomena where co-variation across various categories is discussed (Hollebrandse and Roeper (1998) and Hollebrandse (1999) (see also Tenny 1998)).

The core observation from Hollebrandse and Roeper (1998) is that there is a shift from:

1) John said "I can come there"

to a reported semi-quotation as:

2) John said he could come here.

The claim there is that pronoun, tense, and locative must co-vary. That is, it is impossible to vary certain ones without the others:

3)\*John said I could come here (I = John)

Hollebrandse and Roeper propose that there is a Point of View Operator located in the CP which can simultaneously index an identical POV feature on each of these expressions.

This POV Operator creates an escape hatch, allowing (at least marginally) extraction:

4) a. Where did John say could he go t

b. \*Where did John say " can I go t"

So a genuine form of subordination is involved in semi-quotation.

This observation was, in turn, an outgrowth of an experimental result where children, unlike adults, exhibited wh-extraction from quotation just in case there was an identical subject to the speaker in the quotation:

5) How did Deanna say "Can I ride a bike"

The responses were clearly How-say if "I" refers to the speaker and how-ride if "I" refers to Deanna. This suggests in a broad way that

there may be a way of linking chains (wh-chain, co-indexation chain). (See Boyd (1992) for a parallel argument in terms of control, and Richards (1997) concept of Minimal Compliance for phenomena which appear to be related.)

It seemed useful to see if there are parallels in the phenomenon of what we can call set-induction identified by Heim (reference) and discussed by Kratzer for sentences like:

6) Only I got questions that I could answer,

which induces a contrast set (you didn't get a question you could answer).

We look at a variety of grammatical categories to determine whether they allow the induction of a set contrast. In general, with the right verbs, we find that all categories will allow this inference (as well as the usual one) for the vast majority, but not all, speakers:

7) Proper Names:

a. Only Mt Hood still looks like Mt Hood even in winter

b. In these dim photos, only Mary still looks like Mary.

The primary reading here is that therefore:

c. Bill does not look like Bill

d. Only Mary can act like Mary in the culture of Greenwich village.

e. Only Mary can act like Mary in a foreign culture, (the rest of us can't really be ourselves)

f. Only Fred still talks like Fred in front of royalty. (everyone else puts on a phony accent)

Here we find that the additional context (introductory PP) is what makes the difference.

g. Only Christmas is always like Christmas in every culture.

h. Only my birthday makes me feel like my birthday in my old hometown. (not Christmas)

8) Indefinites

- a. Only a very odd person still looks like a very odd person after using modern make-up techniques.
- b. Only a very loud person sounds like a loud person in the old radio tapes.  
(other accents don't come through)
- c. Only a very very tall person looks like a very very tall person from a great distance.  
(small people don't look like small people, they just look normal)

9) Definites

- a. In these old pictures, only the living room still looks like the living room.

Other kinds of indexicals, which carry a POV, also seem to allow this behavior:

- 10)a. Only now can one appreciate now  
[then one could not appreciate then or  
then one could not appreciate now
- b. Only here can one praise here  
=> there one cannot praise there

It seems to be a truly free phenomenon, applicable to VP gerunds as well:

- 11) Only ballet dancing looks like ballet dancing in a still photo.  
Only being nice is appreciated as being nice,  
(acting any other way is misinterpreted).

If these examples are sustainable, then it is clear that the element which can "associate with focus" is not limited to a set of lexical types (like pronouns) or syntactic types, or specificity types.

We can now ask whether the phenomenon can be found in related constructions like ellipsis and gapping.

- 12) Only Mary looks like Mary in this picture, no one else does

In fact 14/18 undergraduates, asked to finish this sentence:

Only Mary looks like Mary, no one else

gave...."looks like themselves". The extension is less clear if a relative clause is involved for my intuition:

- 13) a. ??In this picture, Mary is the only one who looks like Mary,  
no one else does.
- b. ??In these old photos, only Ana is wearing a dress  
that makes Ana look good, everyone else...

It seems that one cannot make the substitution into a relative clause.

Here the reading "looks like Mary" seems much stronger.

It is possible that other features of the context are sufficient to induce an "only" effect without "only":

- 14) ?In this picture, Mary looks like Mary, but no one else does.

The role of the verb in allowing this construal is also evident and it makes it seem like a larger semantic representation is necessary:

- 15) In a court, only the judge acts like the judge, no one else does  
=> acts like the judge

A set of equative verbs works very well. Others are far less clear:

- 16) a. John voted for John, but Bill didn't
- b. \*John loves John, but Bill doesn't

We leave this question without further exploration.

Thus far we find that proper names, definites, and indefinites can all participate in set induction. In addition, POV locatives can participate in the relation.

What are the conditions under which it cannot apply?

We noted above that:

- 17) subordination blocks the binding

We also find that intervening deictic phenomena will not break the relation (a), but an indexical will (b):

- 18) a. ?Only I got a question from you I couldn't answer  
b. \*?Only I got a question from Bill I couldn't answer  
(for variable I)

Parallel to our arguments about wh- extraction, we find that failure to carry out sequence of tense will block the relation as well:

- 19) ??Only I got a question I can answer  
(for variable I)  
??Only he got a question he can answer

The question seems odd because the allowed reading is particularly implausible pragmatically as an assertion (though a context could be imagined):

- 20) you didn't get a question that he can answer.

Once again, one cannot limit the phenomenon to just "only" constructions. Here ellipsis by itself seems to allow it:

- 21) In this picture, Mary looks like Mary, but no one else does.

On the other hand, Gapping seems to be possible here:

- 22) a. Only BB looks like BB, \*not Grover Grover  
not Grover  
not Grover like Grover

but the evidence suggests something simple prevents \*not Grover Grover. It is surprising because the verb is usually construed as looks like and not just looks, but there is a clear grammaticality difference allowing not Grover like Grover. This points in the direction of a phonetic requirement.

How can we capture this relationship in syntactic terms. Let us assume that some extension of the semantic terms will work, the syntax has to co-index an element which is semantically identical, but it is not limited to NP's. Is any other kind of identity required?

Consider cases like:

23) ?Only John constantly promotes the bastard, not Bill

Can this have the meaning that Bill is also a bastard but does not promote himself? If so, it is extremely obscure. Therefore we suggest that "phonetic identity" as well as semantic identity is required.

Before the literature on coreference, there was a substantial literature on how to establish coreference. In 1972, Lasnik made the claim that one should ask how to establish non-coreference, because no one could specify conditions on coreference. The claim was that coreference was always free. But quantificational coreference required c-command. So let us see if this connection will work without c-command:

- 24) a. Only John laughed and then sang, not Bill =>  
Bill did not laugh and sing  
b. Only John laughed and then John sang, not Bill.  
??Bill sang/\*not Bill laughed and then Bill sang

The full sentence then John sang breaks the c-command relation of "only" and blocks the effect.

- 25) John laughed and then only John sang, not Bill  
backwards connection for only: \*Bill not laugh

However "only" operates semantically with reference to earlier NP's, it does not induce this effect. It seems that c-command is a requirement on coreference, which is what we expect for a quantificational relation.

But one might build a system that instead of "assigning" coindices involves an identification procedure which in part returns to the old question of how to assign coreference, and in part may look to modern conceptions of how Formal Features are linked.

Here we find that the additional context is what makes the difference.

- 26) Only Christmas is always like Christmas  
in every culture.

So where is it ruled out:

- 27) Only John would dare to paint a portrait of John  
possible: ?self-portrait for others

28) In this group of spys, only John doubts John,  
no one else doubts himself.

The subsequent clause presupposes the bound reading we have discussed, but still does not seem to deliver a grammatical result, although it is pragmatically fine (daring to do a self-portrait).

If it were not a reflexive reading that is implied, the other non-reflexive contexts would be possible, which is clearly not the case:

29) \*In this group of spys, only John doubts Bill,  
no one else doubts himself,

How about other parts of speech? I think the effect can be found with adjectives too:

- 30)a. only if actually upset does one look upset  
(if actually sad one doesn't look\_\_\_\_\_)
- b. only while angry does one look angry,  
(while amused one does not look amused)

How can we determine if the bound readings are a direct reflection of UG or whether they reflect some particular language feature, either a parametric decision or a lexical choice. Kratzer observes that properties of the particular language indexicals could make a difference, if the pronoun systems differ in the extent to which they carry a full set of Phi features. Alternatively any kind of pronoun which refers back triggers the possibility of the entire set of bound relations.

We might get a first grip by seeking acquisition evidence in behalf of the view that the relation is general.

Now imagine this situation:

An obscure picture is present:

- 31) Look: here are pictures of BB and Grover  
Only BB really looks like BB? Do you think so?  
=> possible answers  
"yes Grover doesn't look like Grover"  
"No Grover does look like Grover"  
"No Grover does not look like BB".

What kind of correlation would we look for here? If there were a correlation with the behavior of sequence of tense (see Hollebrandse (2000)), then it might suggest that a deeper Supervariable was involved.

In sum we have found that:

32)

- a. choice of verb makes a difference (equatives preferred)
- b. subordination blocks the effect
- c. intervening Proper Names has an effect
- d. sequence of tense makes a difference
- e. simple parallelism can achieve the same result
- f. ellipsis/gapping allow the same interpretation

What sort of theory does this lead to? It suggests that we cannot simply look at indexical pronouns for the answer. We must have a larger theory of set-induction. It also suggests that one cannot simply assimilate these phenomena to "point of view" features, as in Hollebrandse and Roeper (1998). While Sequence of Tense may induce this relation, other conditions apply as well. We have articulated a kind of parallelism here and one can approach it in several dimensions: pragmatic, syntactic, and semantic. We have not addressed the appropriate semantic formulations in terms of required presuppositions, etc.

We have thus far implied that a specific kind of substitution of an empty element for any constituent linked to "only" is possible:

33) Only X looks like X:

implies: Not Y looks like Y

where the syntactic categories over which this formula can range include all syntactic categories. It remains an open question of whether these phenomena can be assimilated into a broader theory of parallelism. And, more interestingly, it remains to determine what level of grammar should capture this notion of parallelism. It looks as though a notion of semantic parallelism is involved which is sensitive to syntax and phonology---just what one would hope to find in a more abstract theory where abstract principles link what are sometimes considered independent levels of grammar.

1. Thanks for discussion, obviously, to Angelika Kratzer and to Laura Wagner, Robin Schafer, Bart Hollebrandse, Danny Fox and for data to Laura Holland and Tim Roeper who answered in chorus to "in this picture, Ann looks like Ann, but no one else ... "looks like them"). (My choice of formulation and effort to connect disparate phenomena are not necessarily endorsed by any of the above.)