

What Does This *Even* Mean? Modality, Ordering and Focus

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Traditionally, accounts of *even* propose that the focused phrase gives rise to an existential presupposition and a scalar presupposition through predominantly pragmatic means. However, if we are to interpret focus and likelihood as a contextually-determined, ranked set of alternatives, then one might expect the phenomena to be reconcilable with a theory of graded modality complete with an ordering source. I will therefore argue for a semantic analysis that better captures the modal nature of *even*. First, I introduce the view that *even* decomposes into two elements – a modal operator with wide scope, and an existentially quantified element of narrow scope. Secondly, I suggest that the modal operator imposes a context-sensitive ordering source that ranks alternatives relative to individuals in addition to worlds and times, thus engendering the subjectivity and “goodness of fit” intuition previously attributed to a scalar presupposition.