**Agreeing with ‘only’ in Cantonese**

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**Introduction.** Cross-linguistically, exclusive particles ‘only’ may be doubled with a single focus association, constituting an apparent form-meaning mismatch: only one exclusive operator is interpreted despite the appearance of two particles (e.g. Dutch, Korean, Mandarin, Vietnamese; cf. Lee 2005, Barbiers 2014, Hole 2017, Sun 2021). The prevailing approach is to posit a syntactic dependency between the two particles: one particle is a semantically vacuous concord marker that either agrees with (Quek & Hirsch 2017) or (co) overtly moves to (Lee 2004, Erlewine & Kotek 2018, Sun 2021) the other. However, the claim has been largely motivated by semantic arguments (e.g. compositionality & split scope readings) and syntactic arguments are not adequately recruited (except islands in E&K 2018). Moreover, while previous studies focus on adverbal and adfocus particles, other kinds of particles are rarely discussed, such as exclusive sentence-final particles (SFPs) found in Cantonese (A. Law 2004, Lee 2019), Mandarin (Erlewine 2010) and Vietnamese (Hole 2013).

**Claims.** This study aims at filling in both the theoretical gap and the empirical gap of exclusive particle doubling. Focusing on an understudied doubling case with exclusive SFP zaa3 in Cantonese, I argue for an Agree analysis by offering novel evidence from syntactic minimality and locality effects. Furthermore, I show that SFPs display a different profile from adfocus particles: although zaa3 is not an exclusive operator, it is not semantically vacuous either. I suggest that zaa3 has a not-at-issue focus-sensitive contribution which is fed by the exclusive operator it agrees with, showing a close relation between syntax and semantics.

**‘Only’ doubling in Cantonese.** Adverbial zinghai ‘only’ and SFP zaa3, in their singular occurrence in (1)a-b, express non-scalar, at-issue exclusiveness (can be directly dissented by (3)). Crucially, they may be doubled in (2) with the same truth conditions, giving rise to a form-meaning mismatch.

(1) Aaming {a. zinghai} maai-zo lunghaaF bei Aafan {b. zaa3}
Ming only buy-perf lobsters to Fan  
‘Ming only bought Fan lobsters.’ (but not pork or beef) = ¬Φp∧¬Φp  
(3) No. (Ming also bought Fan beef and pork.)

(2) Aaming zinghai maai-zo lunghaaF bei Aafan zaa3
Ming only buy-perf lobsters to Fan  
SFP only ‘M only bought F lobsters.’ = ¬Φp∧¬Φp  
(1)a-b and (2)

#1: Minimality. In doubling cases, zaa3 and zinghai cannot be intervened by quantificational elements like negation as shown by (4)a vs. (4)b. The intended scope in (4)b can only be obtained without zaa3.

(4) a. Aaming zinghai mou maai ngauF (ziaa3) Ming only not buy beef  
Ming not only buy beef  
‘Ming did not only buy beef.’ (only > ¬)  
‘Ming did not only buy lobsters.’ (ziaa3: *¬ → only)  

b. Aaming mou zinghai maai ngauF (ziaa3)  
Ming only not buy beef  
SFP only ‘M only bought F lobsters.’ = ¬Φp∧¬Φp  
(1)

Other quantificational elements such as modals and quantificational adverbs also serve as intereners:

(5) Keoi hoii zinghai sik souF (ziaa3)  
3SG may only eat veggie  
3SG always eat meat  
‘S/he can eat solely veggie.’ (ziaa3: *¬Des → only)  
‘S/he always only eats meat.’ (ziaa3: *∀always → only)

#2: Locality. Zaa3 must occur in the same local domain with zinghai. Doubling fails when they are separated by finite CPs in (7), control clauses in (8), and islands (examples not shown due to space reasons).

(7) Ngo {a. zinghai} juk dizou {cP keoi [b. zinghai] sik souF} mounoi zaa3  
I only know 3SG only eat veggie short time SFP only  
a. ‘I only learnt [that s/he eats veggie] recently. (I already knew if s/he eats other food)’ (only>know)  
b. ‘I learnt [that he only eats veggie] recently.’ (know>only)

(8) Go lousi {a. zinghai} [vP bik Aamingi [IT PRO, [b. zinghai] duk Dakman] zaa3  
CL teacher only force Ming only take German  
a. ‘The teacher only forces Ming to take German.’ (but does not care about French.) (only > force)  
b. ‘The teacher forces Ming to only take German.’ (no French.) (force > only)

Towards an Agree analysis. Following Quek & Hirsch (2017), I propose that zaa3 does not denote an exclusive operator. Rather, it carries an unintepretable [uEXCL] feature and must agree with an exclusive
operator carrying the interpretable counterpart [i\text{EXCL}], realized as \text{zinghai} or remain unpronounced as \text{EXCL} (cf. \text{ONLY} in Q&H 2017; \text{EXH} in Chierchia 2006, \text{i.a.}). \text{First, [\text{EXCL}] has a morphological correlate: the onset z-, related to “restrictiveness” in SFPs (zaa3, ze1), is shared by exclusive morphemes in Cantonese (zing6, zaai1 & zi2). Second, Assuming that [\text{EXCL}] is mapped onto exclusive operators in \text{LF}, an \text{Agree} analysis explains the \text{FORM-MEANING MISMATCH} in (1)-(2): only \text{zinghai}, but not \text{zaa3}, is interpreted as ‘only’ in (2) since [u\text{EXCL}] on \text{zaa3} is already deleted before Transfer to the \text{LF}; on the other hand, the exclusiveness in (1b) comes from a null \text{EXCL} whose presence is required by the \text{Agree} relation with \text{zaa3}. \text{Third, the \text{Agree} relation also receives direct support from \text{minimality} and \text{locality}.} (i) \text{Adopting Rizzi’s (2004) feature-based \text{Relativized Minimality}, quantificational elements carry superfeature [Qu] and may not intervene each other. The \text{minimality effects in (4)-(6)} suggest the presence of an \text{Agree} dependency between \text{zinghai} & \text{zaa3} being blocked by \text{[Qu]} elements, as schematized in (10). (ii) \text{The \text{Agree} relation also obeys locality like \text{Phase Impenetrability Condition} (Chomsky 2000). Zinghai embedded in phase complements (of \nu\text{P/CP in (7)/(8)}) is inaccessible to \text{zaa3} and fails to \text{Agree} (=\text{(11)}).} \text{(10) *[\text{CP zaa3}[u\text{EXCL}] \cdots [\text{Neg/Modal}\text{Deo}/\text{Q-adv etc\{QING/MOD\}_\text{U=1\text{EXCL}}} \cdots \text{zinghai}[\text{Q\text{EXCL}}] \cdots \text{RM violation}} \hspace{1cm} \text{(PIC violation}} \hspace{1cm} \text{Finallly}, an alternative multiple-‘only’ analysis that treats \text{zaa3 as exclusive operators (as alluded to in A. Law 2004, Lee 2019), apart from the \text{compositionality} challenge of doubling in (1)-(2), also falls short of explaining the lack of \text{“split-only” readings in (4)-(6), which is otherwise possible with two adverbial ‘only’: \text{(12)} \text{Ming only may only buy lobsters} ’(\text{Ming only may only buy lobsters}). \text{(only > }^8\text{\text{Deo} > only)}\text{The focus-sensitive contribution of zaa3. While the syntactic \text{Agree} approach requires \text{zaa3 not to be an exclusive operator (via deletion of [u\text{EXCL]}), it does not stipulate \text{zaa3 to be semantically vacuous. I suggest}} that \text{SFP zaa3 has focus-sensitive semantic contribution: it relates the focus alternative set (quantified by ‘only’) to the discourse. \text{Zaa3 requires the excluded alternatives to be \text{contextually salient} s.t. participants are aware of them, shown by the contrast in felicity in (13) where the alternative, ‘beef’, is salient only in (b).} \text{(13) a. You are a cashier in a meat/seafood market. Beef is newly arrived and is really good. You just served a customer, and your colleague asks whether (s)he bought beef.} \text{c. Go haak zinghai maai-zo lunghaaF \text{[\text{b.#/OK}/\text{zaa3}}] \text{‘The customer only bought lobsters.’ \text{[SFP.only}})} \hspace{1cm} \text{Given that the difference between \text{zinghai} and \text{zaa3 rests on felicity but not truth conditions, I suggest formalizing \text{zaa3’s meaning as a \text{not-at-issue} (NAI) requirement on focus alternative sets in (14); where p is the prejacent of exclusive operators like \text{zinghai}, and q is an (excluded) proposition in the alternative set ALT with respect to p in the context c, such that q is more salient than p. Importantly, \text{zaa3 operates on the alternative set quantified by \text{zinghai}/\text{EXCL}, i.e. its meaning is fed by the exclusive operator that it agrees with.}} \text{(14) }\exists q[q \in \text{ALT}_{\text{cp}} \land p \neq q \land p <_{\text{salient}} q] \hspace{1cm} \text{(simplified version of \text{zaa3’s NAI requirement}})\text{Implications.} (i) \text{Novel syntactic arguments (minimality & locality) are provided for the \text{Agree} relation in exclusive particle doubling. (ii) The proposal extends to Vietnamese \text{SFP thỏi ‘only’} and Mandarin \text{SFP eryi ‘only’} which show similar minimality (=\text{(15)}) and \text{locality effects (=\text{(16)}) in doubling. (iii) An apparent \text{FORM-MEANING MISMATCH} is resolved and further reveals intimate interaction between syntax & semantics w.r.t how the meaning of focus particles is fed by the exclusive operator it agrees with.} \text{(15) Nam [\text{a. chi}] \text{không [b. chi] ăn thit bo thỏi.} \text{Nam only not only eat beef \text{SFP.only teacher only force 3SG only take German SFP.only ‘Nam \text{[only]} does not \text{[only]} eat beef.’ [V] \text{‘The teacher [only] forces him to \text{[only]} take German.’ [M]}} \hspace{1cm} \text{(16) Laoshi [\text{a. zhi}] [\text{b. zhi} du Dewen] eryi. \text{Laoshi [\text{a. zhi}] [\text{b. zhi} du Dewen] eryi.}}