

Adjectival Associates of Exception Phrases

It is not difficult to say what the truth conditions of an utterance of (1) are.

- (1) Every nurse except Sandy can perform the Heimlich Manoeuvre.

We would judge an utterance of (1) to be true just in case every nurse other than Sandy can perform the manoeuvre and Sandy lacks this ability. More challenging, however, is to provide explicit truth conditions for naturally occurring sentences like the following, in which exception phrases do not modify overtly quantificational expressions, but rather the lexical meaning of various adjectival predicates:

- (2) He was naked except for a conveniently-placed long tartan scarf.
- (3) Holiday cottages are fully furnished except for linens and towels.
- (4) I am craft-challenged except for needlework.
- (5) The FBI is being characteristically close-mouthed except for an unequivocal declaration that the listening device wasn't planted as a political dirty trick.

In this talk, I discuss the compositional interpretation of sentences such as (2)–(5), and their relevance for a general theory of exceptives in English.