

Comparison via *eher*

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German adverb *eher*

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| (1) <i>Aldi öffnet eher als Penny.</i>
'Aldi [supermarket] opens sooner than Penny' | temporal |
| (2) <i>Peru wird eher gewinnen als Brasilien.</i>
'Peru is more likely to win than Brazil' | epistemic |
| (3) <i>Ich nehme eher Wein als Bier.</i>
'I would rather have wine than beer' | preference |
| (4) <i>Das Hemd ist eher blau als grün.</i>
Roughly: 'the shirt is more blue than green' | metalinguistic |

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Kratzer (1981), (2012): Ordering semantics of modals

Der Gauzner-Michl kann eher der Mörder sein als der Kastenjagl.
'Gauzner-Michl is more likely to be the murderer than Kastenjagl.'

- Kratzer argues that *eher* indicates that the notion of possibility is gradable
- but not that, e.g., *möglich* 'possible' is gradable -- **möglicher*

Kratzer + van Fintel (2014), raising three questions

Question 1. Is "eher" genuinely ambiguous between a metalinguistic and a modal comparison reading?

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Herburger & Rubinstein (2014)

Semantic analysis of the epistemic *eher*

- | | |
|---|--|
| (2) <i>Peru wird eher gewinnen als Brasilien.</i>
'Peru is more likely to win than Brazil' | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>eher</i> is not a comparative marker• <i>eher</i> combines a gradable predicate <i>eh-</i> and the comparative <i>-er</i>. <i>eh-</i> measures an individual's readiness to believe a proposition

"the speaker is more inclined to believe that Peru wins than that Brazil wins." |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual orientation – speaker or attitude holder• degrees of belief• metalinguistic <i>eher</i> is a distinct construction |

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Main idea of the present account

1. epistemic, preference, metalinguistic readings are based on the temporal meaning
2. *eher* is a comparative form (no positive??)
3. all uses of *eher* share the notion of a "personal center"
4. *eher* compares closeness to the personal center

- Plan
1. Temporal *eher*
 2. Diachronic development
 3. Epistemic *eher*
 4. Preference *eher*
 5. Metalinguistic *eher*

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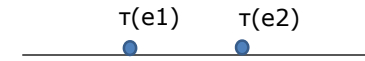
Temporal *eher*: equivalent to *früher* ?

- (5) *Anna kam früher / eher als Berta in Köln an.*
'Anna arrived earlier / sooner in Cologne than Berta.'

==> out of context, *früher* and *eher* appear equivalent

von Stechow (2009) on *spät / früh* 'late'/'early'

- relation between reference time and event run time
- *früh* negative antonym of *spät*
- degree interpretation of *spät / früh*, quantificational comparative
"e2 *später als* e1" iff "e1 *früher als* e2" iff $\tau(e1) < \tau(e2)$



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Temporal *eher* : equivalent to *früher* ?

- (6) a. *Aldi öffnet früher als Penny.*
b. *Aldi öffnet eher als Penny.*
'Aldi [supermarket] opens earlier / sooner than Penny'

==> $\tau(\text{Aldi-opens}) < \tau(\text{Penny-opens})$

Situation 1: personal communication

"where to get some food at this time of the day?"

früher / eher felicitous

Situation 2: impersonal communication,

Aldi corporate website, advertising early opening hours

früher felicitous

eher infelicitous (overly familiar, too chummy, kumpelhaft ...)

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Temporal *eher*: equivalent to *früher* ?

- (7) a. *Der Zug aus Wien wird früher ankommen als der Zug aus Köln.*
b. *Der Zug aus Wien wird eher ankommen als der Zug aus Köln.*
'The train from Vienna will arrive earlier/sooner than that from Cologne.'

==> $\tau(\text{arrival-Vienna}) < \tau(\text{arrival-Cologne})$

Situation 1: personal communication

on the platform, "Are there any news about train arrivals?"

früher / eher felicitous

Situation 2: impersonal communication

Loudspeaker announcement by the Bundesbahn

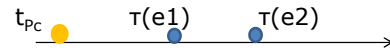
früher felicitous

eher infelicitous (overly familiar, preferred reading epistemic)

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Temporal *eher*

- *früher* and *eher* are temporal relations of precedence
- *eher* is perspectival in requiring a *personal (deictic) center Pc*
Pc provides a point in time preceding the relata



[[*Aldi öffnet eher als Penny*]]^P

= $\exists e_1, e_2. \text{Aldi-opens}(e_1) \ \& \ \text{Penny-opens}(e_2) \ \& \ t_{pc} < \tau(e_1) < \tau(e_2)$

(see also Kamp & Rohrer 1983: "personal perspective")

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Personal center

"Personal center" is provided by a protagonist
speaker or some other prominent agent, -- e.g. narrator
(as in FID, see Eckard 2014, Hinterwimmer 2017)

Personal center

<i>eher</i> _{temp}	point in time
<i>eher</i> _{epist}	epistemic ordering source
<i>eher</i> _{pref}	preference ordering source
<i>eher</i> _{meta}	interpretational ordering source

" α *eher als* β " across domains (i) α precedes β
(ii) α is closer to the Pc than β

(α, β events / propositions)

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Diacronic development of *eher*

- Origin is Old High German *ēr* 'earlier, once', which itself derived from Gothic *airiz*, a temporal adverbial **comparative** whose positive form (subsequently lost) had the meaning 'at daybreak'.
- Initial use as a temporal adverb and then conjunction.
- Apparently modal uses first appear in the late 13th century and become well established by the 16th century.
- Original form was *ê* / *ehe* (with regional variation); explicit comparative suffix *-er* appears in the 17th century.

Based on Hehl (2014)

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Epistemic *eher*

- Kratzer (2012): modal base, ordering source
ordering source induces a pre-order on the worlds selected by the modal base – "better world"

- Relativized to a protagonist P

modal base $f_p: W \rightarrow$ sets of propositions

ordering source $g_p: W \rightarrow$ sets of propositions

$\forall v, w \in \cap f_p(w_0): v \leq_{g_p(w_0)} w$ iff $\{z \in g_p(w_0): v \in z\} \supseteq \{z \in g_p(w_0): w \in z\}$

(2) [[*Peru wird eher gewinnen als Brasilien.*]]^P

iff $\forall w \in \text{Brazil-wins} \ \exists v \in \text{Peru-wins}. v \leq_{g_p(w_0)} w$ & $\neg w \leq_{g_p(w_0)} v$

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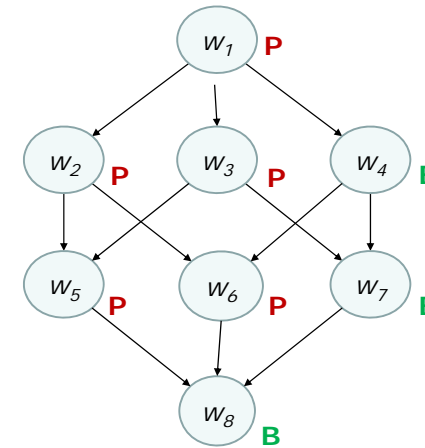
Epistemic *eher*

(2) *Peru wird eher gewinnen als Brasilien.*
 'Peru is more likely to win than Brazil'

- 1) final of the world cup, Brazil plays Peru
 alternatives are complementary: Peru-win & Brazil-lose
 Peru-lose & Brazil-win
- 2) group stage, Brazil & Peru are playing against different teams
 alternatives are independent: Peru-win & Brazil-lose
 Peru-lose & Brazil-win
 Peru-win & Brazil-win
 Peru-lose & Brazil-lose

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Peru wird eher gewinnen als Brasilien [complementary]

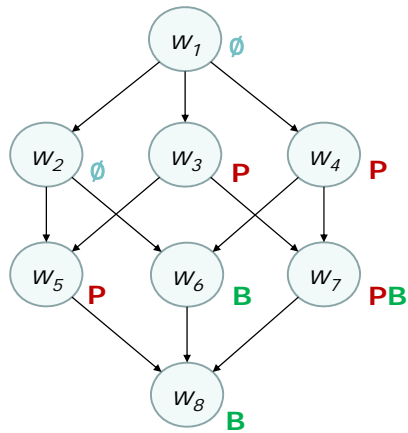


$\cap f_p(w_0) = \{w_1, w_2, \dots, w_8\}$
 $g_p(w_0) =$
 E_1 : Peru's players are healthy
 E_2 : The refs are fair
 E_3 : The weather is good

w_1 : E_1, E_2, E_3 satisfied
 w_2 : E_1, E_2 satisfied
 w_3 : E_1, E_3 satisfied
 w_4 : E_2, E_3 satisfied
 w_5 : E_1 satisfied
 w_6 : E_2 satisfied
 w_7 : E_3 satisfied
 w_8 : none satisfied

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Peru wird eher gewinnen als Brasilien [independent]



$\cap f_p(w_0) = \{w_1, w_2, \dots, w_8\}$
 $g_p(w_0) =$
 E_1 : Peru's players stay healthy
 E_2 : The referees are fair
 E_3 : The weather is good

w_1 : E_1, E_2, E_3 satisfied
 w_2 : E_1, E_2 satisfied
 w_3 : E_1, E_3 satisfied
 w_4 : E_2, E_3 satisfied
 w_5 : E_1 satisfied
 w_6 : E_2 satisfied
 w_7 : E_3 satisfied
 w_8 : none satisfied

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Epistemic *eher*: disjoint alternatives

(8) *Anna wird eher kommen als Berta.*
 'Anna is more likely to come than Berta'

Situation: Anna may come on her own,
 but Berta will only come if Anna comes

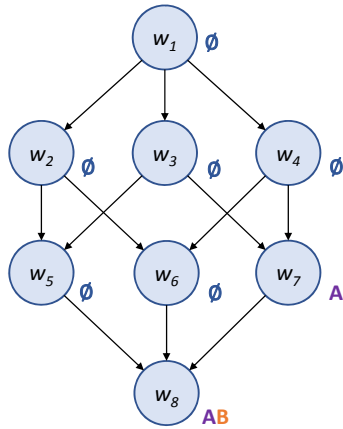
(8) is infelicitous in this situation

--> *eher* requires disjoint alternatives

--> Improve the analysis such that it is required that
 for every B-but-not-A world there is a better A-but-not-B world

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Anna wird eher kommen als Berta [dependent]



$$\cap f_p(w_0) = \{w_1, w_2, \dots, w_8\}$$

$$g_p(w_0) = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} E_1: \text{There is a better party} \\ E_2: \text{There will be salsa music} \\ E_3: \text{Berta is feeling shy} \end{array} \right\}$$

- w₁: E₁, E₂, E₃ satisfied
- w₂: E₁, E₂ satisfied
- w₃: E₁, E₃ satisfied
- w₄: E₂, E₃ satisfied
- w₅: E₁ satisfied
- w₆: E₂ satisfied
- w₇: E₃ satisfied
- w₈: none satisfied

Preference eher

- (3) *Ich nehme eher Wein als Bier.*
'I would rather have wine than beer'

*eher*_{pref} preference ordering source *g*_{p-pref}

[[*Ich nehme eher Wein als Bier*]]^p

$$\text{iff } \forall w \in \text{take-beer } \exists v \in \text{take-wine. } v \leq_{g_{p-pref}(w_0)} w \ \& \ \neg w \leq_{g_{p-pref}(w_0)} v$$

Disjoint alternatives

- (9) *Ich möchte eher einen Martini trinken als neben Fritz sitzen.*

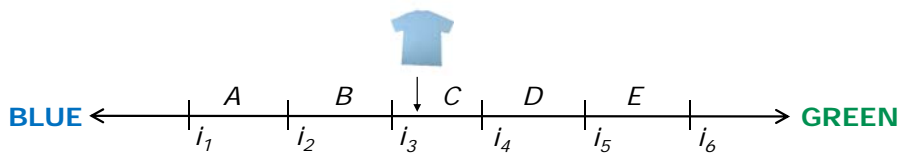
'I would rather have a Martini than sit next to Fritz.'

(9) is infelicitous if sitting next to Fritz is impossible without having Martini.

Metalinguistic eher

- (4) *Das Hemd ist eher blau als grün.* **metalinguistic**
Roughly: 'the shirt is more blue than green'

*eher*_{meta} interpretational ordering source
what the Protagonists takes to be normal interpretations



(for metalinguistic comparison see also Giannakido & Yoon 2011 and Morzycki 2011)

Metalinguistic eher

Following Krifka (2012) (following on Barker 2002):

Two propositional components: worlds, interpretations

proposition $[[\varphi]] \subseteq W \times I$

$$[[\varphi]]^{i,w} = \{ \langle w, i \rangle \mid \varphi \text{ is true in world } w \text{ under interpretation } i \}$$

We focus on either world or interpretation $[[\varphi]]^{i_0} \subseteq W$, $[[\varphi]]^{w_0} \subseteq I$

- epistemic ordering source:
"better world" (given *i*₀)
- meta-linguistic ordering source:
"better interpretation" (given *w*₀)

Metalinguistic *eher*

$f_p: W \times I \rightarrow$ sets of propositions modal base
 $g_p: W \times I \rightarrow$ sets of propositions ordering source

"better interpretation" (given w_0)

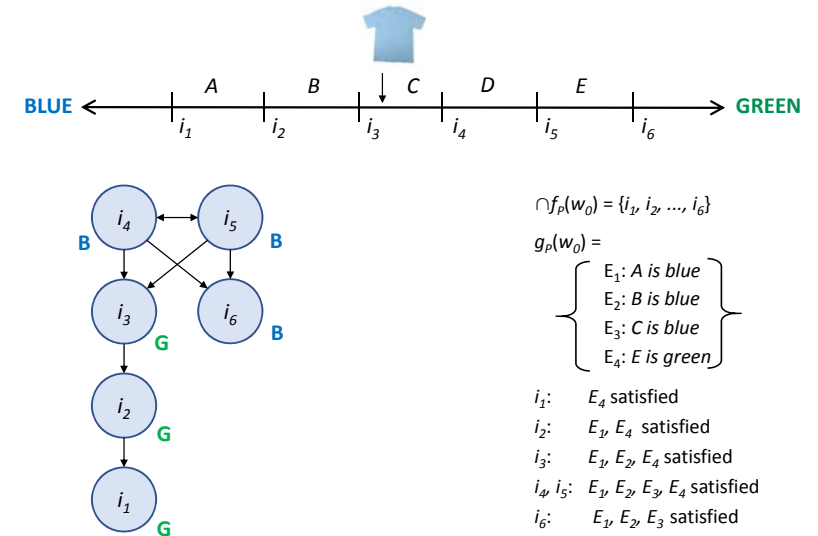
$\forall j, k \in \text{ints}(\cap f_p(\langle w_0, i_0 \rangle))$: $j \leq_{g_p(\langle w_0, i_0 \rangle)} k$
 iff $\{z \in g_p(\langle w_0, i_0 \rangle): j \in \text{ints}(z)\} \supseteq \{z \in g_p(\langle w_0, i_0 \rangle): k \in \text{ints}(z)\}$

$[[\text{Das Hemd ist eher blau als grün}]]^{p, w_0}$

iff $\forall k \in \text{ints}(\psi) \exists j \in \text{ints}(\varphi) j \leq_{g_p(\langle w_0, i_0 \rangle)} k$ & $\neg k \leq_{g_p(\langle w_0, i_0 \rangle)} j$

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Das Hemd ist eher *blau* als *grün*



Metalinguistic *eher*: Two problems

(10) * *Das Hemd ist eher blau als orange.*

Roughly: 'The shirt is more blue than orange.'

- requires interpretations of the shirt such that it is blue and interpretations such that it is orange, which are not available in German

(11) * *Das Hemd ist eher blau als dunkel.*

Roughly: 'The shirt is more blue than dark.'

- blue* and *dark* are orthogonal,
- would require interpretations such that the shirt is blue and not dark and interpretations such that it is dark and not blue contingency which is not licensed by the language

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Conclusion

- Unified analysis of *eher* for temporal, epistemic, preference, metalinguistic readings, making use of
 - (i) scalar structure of time, and
 - (ii) the personal center provided by a protagonist*eher* compares closeness of two items to the personal center
- eher* is analysed as a comparative form in expressing a strict order but not as a comparative of a gradable predicate (a positive form was not even available in Old High German)
- The analysis is naturally embedded in Kratzer's ordering semantics;
- Constraints on the metalinguistic reading of *eher* reveal some insights on how flexible language can (not) be.

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