Unifying epistemic and concessive *at least*

Peter Alrenga
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
palrenga@umass.edu

Kay (1992) identifies epistemic (1) and concessive/evaluative (2) uses for the scalar operator *at least*: whereas (1) conveys that the speaker does not know exactly how well Kate performed, (2) instead conveys that Kate's performance could have been better.

(1)   At the very least$_{epi}$, Kate won a [bronze]$_F$ medal.

(2)   At least$_{con}$ K. won a [bronze]$_F$ medal.

While epistemic *at least* has attracted considerable recent attention, concessive *at least* has gone comparatively under-studied. This paper aims to develop a unified approach to the two uses that still leaves enough room for attested differences in their distributions and interpretations. Its central claim is that the two uses share the same truth-conditional meaning, but differ in (i) the pragmatic competitors that they evoke, and (ii) what they presuppose about their associated scales. It is shown how such an approach allows for a uniform account of certain shared aspects of interpretation.

References: • Kay, P. (1992): At least. In: Lehrer, A. and E. Kittay (eds), *Frames, Fields and Contrasts*.