

Hurford Disjunctions

(based on work in progress by Cheirchia, Fox and Spector, as well as Fox and Spector)

- (1) a. John talked to [Mary or Sue] or both.
- b. John did some or all of the homework.
- c. John read 3 books or more.

With the aid of *exh* we can keep to a simple definition of Hurford's constraint.

- (2) **Hurford's constraint (HC):** a disjunction *p or q* is unacceptable when one of the disjuncts entails the other.

Are there any new predictions?

If HC is right, (3)a should be rejected in favor of the parse in (3)b

- (3) a. [p or q] or [p and q]
- b. *exh*[p or q] or [p and q]

The problem is that the two parses are logically equivalent, so how can we distinguish between them.

Two methods:

- a. Although here the two parses are equivalent. Can we construct cases where the two parses are not equivalent?
- b. Although the two parses are equivalent they have different alternatives, which could have consequences for implicatures. Can we investigate those?

1. New meanings predicted by HC

- a. *q* entails [*p...*],
- b. this entailment can be obviated by exhaustification: there is a way to strengthen *p* by *Exh, S(p)*, such that *p* doesn't entail *S(p)*
- c. (*p or q*) is not equivalent to *S(p) or q* where *S(p)* is the relevant strengthening of *p*

For such cases, (2) makes new predictions which appear to be corroborated:

- (4) a. John has 3 or 6 children.
- b. Either every boy did some of the homework or Joey did all of the homework and every other boy did just some of it.

2. New Implicatures predicted by HC:

- (5) a. John did some of the homework.
- b. John did some or all of the homework.

- (6) a. You're required to do some of the homework.
b. You're required to do some or all of the homework.
- (7) a. Everybody did some of the homework.
b. Everybody did some or all of the homework.
- (8) a. The doctor said that we must take Tylenol or Advil.
No, we have to take both.
#No, we are not allowed to take both.
b. The doctor said that we must take Tylenol or Advil or both.
No, we have to take both.
No, we are not allowed to take both.
- (9) a. Everybody did some of the homework.
No, everybody did all of the homework.
#No, Nobody did all of the homework.
b. Everybody did some or all of the homework.
No, everybody did all of the homework.
No, Nobody did all of the homework.

Free Choice as diagnostic

- (10) a. We are allowed to take Tylenol or Advil.
b. We are allowed to take Tylenol or Advil or both.

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

24.954 Pragmatics in Linguistic Theory
Spring 2010

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.