**The distribution of issue-addressing follow-ups and the rise and fall of issues in discourse**

**Intro** — Inquisitive semantics (Groenendijk 2007 et seq) treats or as an inherently inquisitive, issue-raising connective (building on previous work that treats disjunctions as sets of alternatives, e.g., Alonso-Ovalle 2006), and and as an inherently non-inquisitive one. This asymmetry predicts that disjunctions license issue-addressing follow-up questions (1a), but conjunctions do not (ib).

1. a. Jack said he would (either) wash the windows or mow the lawn. $\checkmark$ I forgot which it is.
   b. Jack said he would (both) wash the windows and mow the lawn. $\#$ I forgot which it is.

The examples below pose an apparent problem for the assumption that the felicity of these follow-ups is a reliable indicator of an issue having been raised. In (2), it looks like a disjunction fails to raise an issue (2); and in (3), it looks like a conjunction manages to do so.

(2) A: I’m going to a conference. You have to teach my class or meet with the lab technician.
   B: You know what, I’m pretty free. I can do both. $\#$ I’ll let you know when I decide which.

(3) A: I’m going to a conference tomorrow. You have to teach my class and meet with the lab technician.
   B: You know what, I’m pretty busy. I can only do one. $\checkmark$ I’ll let you know when I decide which.

Crucially, in such examples, A’s conjunction/disjunction is separated from B’s issue-addressing follow-up by an objection to A’s assertion. This suggests that the problem does not lie with the semantics of conjunction and disjunction, but with the way this semantics interacts with conversation dynamics.

**Discourse dynamics** — Assume a model of conversation along the lines of Farkas and Bruce (2010), Ginzburg (2012), and related work. A conversation $K$ consists of a sequential series of stages $(k_1 < k_2 < \ldots < k_n)$; a transition from $k_i$ to $k_{i+1}$ happens whenever a participant asserts, accepts, objects to, or retracts a proposition or set of propositions $p$. Each participant $X$ is associated to an individualized list $DC_X$ of publicized discourse commitments (assertions that $X$ has made and not retracted). In a dialogue between $A$ and $B$, if $A$ asserts $p$, then $p$ is added to $DC_A$; if $B$ accepts $p$, then $p$ is added to $DC_B$; but if $B$ objects to $p$, then an alternative $q$ incompatible with $p$ is added to $DC_B$, and participants have to find a way to resolve this conflict. This might require retracting either $p$ or $q$, or keeping both $p$ and $q$ and “agreeing to disagree”. Given this much, I propose that (4) adequately describes the distribution of issue-addressing follow-ups.

(4) Given an issue introduced by a disjunction $[p \lor q]$ at stage $k_j$ of the conversation, participant $X$ can felicitously address this issue at a later stage $k_i$ iff $[p \lor q]$ is in $DC_X$ at $k_i$.

Note that (4) consists of two separate requirements: (i) $[p \lor q]$ must be in the correct $DC$; and (ii) at the correct conversational stage. The rest of this abstract provides arguments in favor of this position.

**Baseline** — Under this approach, (1a)/(1b) can effectively be modelled as monologues. When $A$ asserts $[p \lor q]$ at $k_j$, this issue is added to $DC_A$, allowing $A$ to utter an issue-addressing follow-up (abbreviated IAFU in the figures at right) at $k_2$. In contrast, the same follow-up is infelicitous at $k_2$ in (1b) because $DC_A$ doesn’t contain an issue at $k_1$.

The issue must be in the correct $DC$… — Consider now the analysis of (2)/(3). In (2), even though A’s assertion at $k_i$ raises an issue, B’s utterance *I’m pretty free, I can do both at $k_2$ raises both the objection $-[p \lor q]$ to A’s assertion, and the assertion of the alternative non-issue $[p \land q]$. The infelicity of B’s follow-up at $k_3$ reflects the absence of $[p \lor q]$ in $DC_B$. In contrast, in (3), A’s assertion at $k_i$ doesn’t raise an issue, but B’s utterance *I’m busy, I can only do one* amounts to the objection $-[p \land q]$ to A’s assertion, and the assertion of the alternative issue $[p \lor q]$ at $k_2$. The presence of $[p \lor q]$ in $DC_B$ at $k_j$ makes B’s follow-up felicitous.
Note, importantly, that the follow-up in (2) is infelicitous even though the \([p \lor q]\)
issue is present in DC_A at \(k_3\). This supports the requirement in (4) that \([p \lor q]\) be
part of the DC of the speaker that utters the follow-up. Consider (5), a minimal
extension of (2), as additional evidence. Even though B objects to A's assertion
and counter-asserts \([p \land q]\) at \(k_3\), A counter-objects to B and reasserts \([p \lor q]\) at
\(k_3\). When B utters “OK at \(k_4\), B is doing two things: first retracting both \(\neg[p \lor q]\)
and \([p \land q]\) from DC_B; second, accepting A's reassertion and adding \([p \lor q]\) to
DC_B. As a consequence, B can now utter a felicitous follow-up at \(k_5\).

\[\begin{array}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{DC_A} & \text{DC_B} \\
\hline
k_1 & p \lor q & \neg[p \lor q] \\
k_2 & p \lor q & \neg[p \lor q] \\
k_3 & p \lor q & \neg[p \lor q] \\
k_4 & p \lor q & \neg[p \lor q] \\
k_5 & p \lor q & \neg[p \lor q] \\
\hline
\end{array}\]

(5)

A: You have to teach my class or meet with the lab technician.

B: You know what, I’m pretty free. I can do both.

A: Thanks, but you can’t do that. It goes against university regulations.

B: Well, you’re busy, I want you to do both.

A: I appreciate you’re busy, but I really need you to do both.

B: You have to teach my class and meet with the lab technician.

A: You know what, I’m pretty free. I can do both.

B: Fine. Fine. # I’ll let you know when I decide which one I want to do.

As in (5'), this outcome can be reversed if B insists on objecting to A's re-assertion at \(k_4\). (6) illustrates, the persistence of \([p \lor q]\) at \(k_4\) licenses a felicitous follow up.

\[\begin{array}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{DC_A} & \text{DC_B} \\
\hline
k_1 & p \land q & \neg[p \land q] \\
k_2 & p \land q & \neg[p \land q] \\
k_3 & p \land q & \neg[p \land q] \\
k_4 & p \land q & \neg[p \land q] \\
k_5 & p \land q & \neg[p \land q] \\
\hline
\end{array}\]

(6)

\[\begin{array}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{DC_A} & \text{DC_B} \\
\hline
k_4' & p \lor q & \neg[p \lor q] \\
k_5' & p \lor q & \neg[p \lor q] \\
\hline
\end{array}\]

(5')

\(\text{and at the correct stage}\) — Having \([p \lor q]\) in the correct DC is not enough; it
must also be there at the stage the follow-up is uttered. Consider (6), a minimal
extension of (3). At \(k_3\), B objects to A's assertion and counter-asserts \([p \lor q]\). At
\(k_3\), A counter-objects to B and re-asserts \([p \land q]\). As above, when B utters “Fine,
Fine at \(k_4\), two things happen: first, B retracts both \(\neg[p \land q]\) and \([p \lor q]\); and
second, B accepts A's re-assertion of \([p \land q]\), adding it to DC_B. Note that, in
the course of the whole conversation, \([p \lor q]\) is only ever present in DC_B; but
because it is not in DC_B at \(k_5\), a follow-up addressing this issue is infelicitous.

(6)

A: You have to teach my class and meet with the lab technician.

B: You know what, I’m busy. I can only do one.

A: I appreciate you’re busy, but I really need you to do both.

B: Fine, fine. # I’ll let you know when I decide which one I want to do.

As in (5'), this outcome can be reversed if B insists on objecting to A's re-assertion at \(k_4\). As (6') illustrates, the persistence of \([p \lor q]\) at \(k_4\) licenses a felicitous follow up.

\[\begin{array}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{DC_A} & \text{DC_B} \\
\hline
k_1 & p \land q & \neg[p \land q] \\
k_2 & p \land q & \neg[p \land q] \\
k_3 & p \land q & \neg[p \land q] \\
k_4 & p \land q & \neg[p \land q] \\
k_5 & p \land q & \neg[p \land q] \\
\hline
\end{array}\]

(6')

\[\begin{array}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{DC_A} & \text{DC_B} \\
\hline
k_4' & p \lor q & \neg[p \lor q] \\
k_5' & p \lor q & \neg[p \lor q] \\
\hline
\end{array}\]

\(\text{Extensions}\) — In general, these patterns highlight the need to integrate our theories of semantics with a formal
type of conversation dynamics. Here I have focused on the behavior of conjunctions and disjunctions in
assertions, but this model can in principle be extended to study the rise and fall of issues associated to other
types of expressions —e.g., indefinites, (polar) questions, and their interactions (see the remarks in Farkas
and Bruce 2010). It can also be applied to the study of how speakers reactions to each other raise issues even
in the absence of inherently issue-raising expressions (cf. (7C) vs. (7C'), and the discussion in Ginzburg 2012).

(7)

A: I think we should ask the Dean for more lab space.

B: I think we should ask him for money for a new hire.

C: We are a weak department and money is tight! √ We need to decide which we are going to ask for.

C': We are a strong department and money abounds! # We need to decide which we are going to ask for.

\textbf{References} — Alonso-Ovalle 06 Disjunction in alternative semantics, PhD UMass ● Farkas and Bruce 10 On reacting to assertions
and polar questions. JAS 27 ● Ginzburg 12 The interactive stance. OUP ● Groenendijk 07 Inquisitive semantics: two possibilities for
disjunction. TBI 2007