Perfecting imperative conditionals

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Objectives

Shed light on the interaction between:

- **imperative conditionals [ICs]**, or *conditional imperatives* (Parsons 2015; S. Kaufmann & Schwager 2009; ...)

(1) If you see something, say$_{\text{IMP}}$ something! Schwager 2006

- **conditional perfection [CP]** (Geis & Zwicky 1971; van der Auwera 1997; Horn 2000; ...)

(2) If you mow the lawn, I'll give you \$5 Geis & Zwicky 1971
⇝ if **& only if** [$_{\text{p}}$ you mow the lawn], [$_{\text{q}}$ I'll give you \$5]
⇝ if p, q **& if ¬p, ¬q**

Imperative meaning

- **Strong (□)** vs. **weak (◇)** readings for imperatives

(3) Open the window
a. ≈You **must**$_{\Box}$ open the window
b. ≈You **may**$_{\Diamond}$ open the window

Different approaches to the □/◇-alternation

- modal (M. Kaufmann 2012, Grosz 2011, ...)
- minimal, nonmodal (Portner 2004, 2007; von Fintel & Iatridou 2017)
- ◇-semantics + EXH to derive □ (Oikonomou 2022, Francis 2020, ...)

We adopt a **modal ambiguity** approach (Grosz 2011)

The QUD-approach to CP

Idea in **von Fintel 2001**: CP depends on the **question under discussion = QUD** (Roberts 2012)

(4) a. **QUD1, CP-favoring:**
Under which conditions [$_{\text{q}}$ will you give me \$5]?
b. QUD2, CP-neutral:
What if [$_{\text{p}}$ I mow the lawn]?
– If [$_{\text{p}}$ you mow the lawn], [$_{\text{q}}$ I'll give you \$5]*

QUD{1,2} shares the {consequent, antecedent} with the answer.

*Position of the if-clause matters as well, see below

'Priming' imperative force

A QUD1 with a **necessity** modal
⇒ a □-reading for the consequent [$_{\text{q}}$ (you) stay]
⇒ CP as a (conditional) **permission (◇)** not to stay

(5) **QUD1: Under which conditions do I have to stay?**
– Stay if it rains
⇝ you do not have to stay if it does not rain [if ¬rain,¬□stay]
≡ you may leave if it does not rain [if ¬rain,◇¬stay]

A QUD1 with a **possibility** modal
⇒ a ◇-reading for the consequent [$_{\text{q}}$ (you) stay]
⇒ CP as a (conditional) **prohibition (¬◇)** to stay

(6) **QUD1: Under which conditions may I stay?**
– Stay if it rains
⇝ you may not stay if it does not rain [if ¬rain,¬◇stay]

GENERALIZATION

(5′) [**QUD1 Under which conditions must**$_{\Box}$ **x Q?**]
if p, Q-IMP$_{\Box}$ **& if ¬p, ◇¬Q**
≈'if p, x must$_{\Box}$ Q **& if not-p, x is allowed**$_{\Diamond}$ **not to Q**'

(6′) [**QUD1 Under which conditions may**$_{\Diamond}$ **x Q?**]
if p, Q-IMP$_{\Diamond}$ **& if ¬p, ¬◇Q**
≈'if p, x may$_{\Diamond}$ Q **& if not-p, x is not allowed**$_{\Diamond}$ **to Q**'

Reconstructing the QUD

What readings arise in the absence of an explicit QUD?

- default □-reading for the imperative consequent
- CP with **if-clause to the right** (Bolinger 1952)

(7) a. If it rains$_{(??\text{F})}$, stay$_{(\text{F})}$! ?⇝$_{\text{CP}}$ you may leave if it doesn't
b. Stay$_{(?\text{F})}$ if it rains$_{(\text{F})}$! ⇝$_{\text{CP}}$ you may leave if it doesn't

Predicted under the QUD-approach: QUD affects position of the if-clause (von Fintel 1994)

Pro nesting

Two possible LFs for ICs (S. Kaufmann & Schwager 2009):

(8) a. [□ (if) it rains] □$_{\text{IMP}}$ (you) stay nested, double modal
b. [□$_{\text{IMP}}$ (if) it rains] (you) stay single modal

- **Herburger 2015**: CP combines □-force with **¬◇-force**

(9) *if p,q* ⇝$_{\text{CP}}$ □(p)(q) **& ¬◇(¬p)(q)**
≈'if p, q **& if not-p, not-q**'

≈Herburger 2015

- for **(8-b)**, CP is then wrongly predicted to figure as **prohibition**:

(10) □$_{\text{IMP}}$($_{\text{p}}$ rain)(stay) **& #¬◇$_{\text{IMP}}$(¬rain)(stay)**
≈'if it rains, you must stay **& #if it doesn't, you mustn't**'

This arguably leaves us with the nested approach in (8-a).

Open question(s)

Silent exhaustification as a possible means to derive

- CP
- □-force of the imperative

Are the readings reducible to the number of exhaustifications?

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