

snippets

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Strengthened disjunction or non-classical conjunction?

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It has been claimed that the coordinators *manu* in Warlpiri (Bowler 2014), *or* in child English (Singh et al. 2016), and *ya* in Japanese (Sauerland et al. 2017) lexically express disjunction, but are obligatorily strengthened to a conjunctive meaning in upward-monotonic contexts by some version of double exhaustification (Fox 2007). Embedded contexts apparently reveal the disjunctive lexical meaning of these expressions: they yield a “neither reading” when embedded under negation (1a), behave like disjunctions in conditionals (1b), and in Warlpiri, are translated by disjunctions when occurring in *wh*-questions (1c).

- (1) a. Kula=rna yunparnu manu wurntija jalangu. Lawa.
NEG=1SG.SUBJ sing.PST MANU dance.PST today nothing
‘I didn’t sing or dance today. I did nothing.’
(Warlpiri; Bowler 2014:139)
- b. Tarou-wa kouhii ya koucha-o nom-eba yoru nemur-e-nai darou
Taro-TOP coffee YA tea-ACC drink-if night sleep-can-NEG infer
‘If Taro drinks things like coffee or tea, he won’t be able to sleep at night.’
(Japanese; Sauerland et al. 2017:113)
- c. Ngana yanu Juka Juka-kurra manu Wakulpa-kurra?
who go.PST Juka Juka-ALL MANU Wakulpa-ALL
‘Who has been to Juka Juka or Wakulpa?’
(Warlpiri; Bowler 2014:141)

However, in all three contexts, the seemingly “disjunctive readings” also exist for an uncontroversially conjunctive coordinator, German *und* ‘and’. (2a) can have a neither reading if *und* is unstressed. Given the assumption that conjunctions of any semantic category are plural expressions (Schmitt 2019), this is arguably an instance of the homogeneity inference triggered by plural expressions (Schwarzschild 1994). Murray (2017) already notes that a plurality-forming meaning for conjunction would, given homogeneity, derive (1a). But the analogy with conjunction also extends to (1b) and (1c): (2b) has a reading involving quantification over situations where Anna drinks coffee or alcohol, and can be true if she never drinks both. Križ 2015:39 discusses this reading for plural definites, relating it to homogeneity. (2c) can ask who Hans will marry, and who Fritz will marry, without necessarily asking who will be married to both of them. In each case, the relevant reading can be paraphrased using a disjunction.

- (2) a. Heute hat Anna nicht getrunken und geraucht.
today has Anna not drunk and smoked
‘Anna didn’t drink and smoke today.’

- b. Wenn Anna Alkohol und Kaffee trinkt, schläft sie oft schlecht.
if Anna alcohol and coffee drinks sleeps she often badly
'If Anna drinks alcohol and coffee, she often can't sleep well.'
- c. Wen werden Hans und Fritz heiraten?
who.ACC will.3PL Hans and Fritz marry
'Who(m) will Hans and Fritz marry?'

Therefore the pattern in (1) does not unambiguously support an analysis in terms of disjunction and strengthening. The data are also compatible with an analysis that treats the coordinators under discussion as non-classical conjunctions, analogous to German *und*. Crucially, we cannot draw the opposite conclusion: (2) does not show that German *und* is underlyingly disjunctive, as *und*-conjunctions combine with non-distributive predicates (3). For (3), strengthening along the lines of Fox 2007 would fail because the subconstituent alternatives are semantically deviant.

- (3) *Anna und Maria sind eine tolle Mannschaft.*
'Anna and Maria are a great team.'

Data with non-distributive predicates would thus be crucial to decide whether the observations in Bowler 2014, Singh et al. 2016, and Sauerland et al. 2017 support a strengthening mechanism deriving a conjunctive meaning for disjunction, or reflect independently attested non-classical properties of natural language conjunction.

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