Exclusification in conditional antecedents

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Evidence from conditional antecedents suggests that semantic content is remarkably fine-grained.

If switch B was up, or switches A and B were up, the light would be on.

M-turk experiment
joint work with Alexandre Cremers

Exclusification in conditional antecedents

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Hurford’s constraint

1. If switch B was up, or switches A and B were up, the light would be on.
2. If John were from Paris or France, he would speak French.

(2) violates Hurford’s constraint
- Typically explained in terms of redundancy (Simons, 2001; Katzir and Singh, 2013; Meyer, 2013, 2014; Ciardelli et al., 2017)

Why does (1) not violate Hurford’s constraint?

Exclusification

(3) \text{exh}(P, alt) = P \land \forall Q \in \text{alt} : \neg(P \rightarrow Q) \rightarrow Q

(4) alt(B \lor (A \land B)) = (A, B)

(5) exh(B) \lor exh(A \land B) = (B \land \neg A) \lor (A \land B)

(1) If switch B was up, or switches A and B were up, the light would be on.

(6) If switch B was up but not A, the light would be on.

References

• Possible worlds (Stalnaker, 1968; Lewis, 1973): \{B \lor (A \land B)\} = \{B\}
• Inquisitive semantics (Ciardelli et al., 2018): \{B \lor (A \land B)\} = \{B\}
• Alternative semantics (Alonso-Ovalle, 2009): \{B \lor (A \land B)\} = \{|B|, |A| \cap |B|\} \neq \{|B|\} = \{B\}
• Truthmaker semantics (Fine, 2012)

Counterfactual exhaustification

(7) 

\text{Modal} \\
\text{light on} \\
\text{if (B up, or A and B up)}

(8) a. \text{exh}_0(\text{switch B is up}) (Q: What happened to the switches?)

b. \text{Switch B is up, and nothing happened to switch A}

c. \forall w \in f(\text{switch B is up, } w) : \text{switch B is up in } w, \text{ and } w \text{ agrees with } w \text{ on the position of switch A}

If switch B was up, or switches A and B were up, the light would be on.