Iffy Endorsements

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Outline

1. Imperatives as a troublesome clause type
   - (Major) clause types
   - Challenges to formal semantics
   - Modality
   - Speaker endorsement

2. Conditionalized imperatives

3. Imperatives and discourse structure
(Major) clause types

Sentential form types associated with prototypical functions:

(1) *declarative*  
It’s hot inside.  
(assertion)

(2) *interrogative*  
Who can help?  
(question)

(3) *imperative*  
Open the window.  
(command)

(4) *exclamative*  
How nice!  
(exclamation)
(Major) clause types

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All can be used for other functions as well
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1. *declarative*
   - It’s hot inside.
   - assertion

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   - Who can help?
   - question

3. *imperative*
   - Open the window.
   - command

4. *exclamative*
   - How nice!
   - exclamation

All can be used for other functions as well

Form, content and context jointly determine actual utterance function.
(Major) clause types

Imperatives in non-prototypical functions:

(5) Get out. command
(6) Stay away from the machine. warning
(7) Help me with this. request
(8) Get well. wish
(9) Take the bus. advice
(10) Have a seat. invitation
(Major) clause types

**Imperatives in non-prototypical functions:**

(5) Get out. \(\text{command}\)
(6) Stay away from the machine. \(\text{warning}\)
(7) Help me with this. \(\text{request}\)
(8) Get well. \(\text{wish}\)
(9) Take the bus. \(\text{advice}\)
(10) Have a seat. \(\text{invitation}\)

**Challenge:**
capture this versatility in terms of the interplay between a (stable) semantic denotation and (varying) contextual factors.
Challenges to formal semantics

How to characterize the meaning of imperatives

- truth conditions?

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[\text{Open the window}] = 1 \text{ iff } . . .
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Challenges to formal semantics

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- truth conditions?
  \[ \text{[Open the window]} = 1 \text{ iff } \ldots \]

- inference patterns?
  \[
  \begin{align*}
  \text{Open the window} \\
  \vdots \\
  \vdots \\
  \therefore \ldots
  \end{align*}
  \]
Challenges to formal semantics

How to characterize the meaning of imperatives

- **truth conditions?**
  \[ \text{[Open the window]} = 1 \text{ iff } \ldots \]

- **inference patterns?**
  
  Open the window
  
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  \[ \therefore \ldots \]

- **context change potential?**
  
  \[ c[\text{[Open the window]}c' \text{ iff } \ldots \]
Challenges to formal semantics

How to characterize the meaning of imperatives

- **truth conditions?**
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  \llbracket \text{Open the window} \rrbracket = 1 \text{ iff } \ldots
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- **context change potential?**
  
  \[
  c \llbracket \text{Open the window} \rrbracket c' \text{ iff } \ldots
  \]

- **Abstraction principle?**
  
  */?? \ldots [open the window] \ldots]
Modality

Similarity with (other) prioritizing modals

(11) You { should / must / have to } close the window.
   a. descriptive use (assertion):
      ✓ ‘That’s not true.’
   b. performative use (command/request/...):
      X ‘That’s not true.’
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   a. descriptive use (assertion):
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      ✗ ‘That’s not true.’

(12) Close the window.
    ✗ ‘That’s not true.’
   a. never used descriptively
   b. always used performatively

Aside: Some imperative uses are paraphrased more naturally with possibility modals (Schwager, 2005; Grosz, 2009; Oikonomou, 2017; Francis, t.a.).
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Theories differ on the nature of the relationship.
Speaker endorsement

**Imperatives imply speaker’s endorsement:**

(13) According to the guidelines you have to close that door now, ✓ but I absolutely don’t want you to do this.

(14) Close that door now, ✓ but I absolutely don’t want you to do this.
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...even when used for disinterested advice:

(15) A: How do I get into that building?
    B: You have to go in by the front door.
        But on no account would I want you to do this, it’s forbidden.
    B’: Go in by the front door.
        #But on no account would I want you to do this, it’s forbidden.
Speaker endorsement

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    B’: Go in by the front door.
    #But on no account would I want you to do this, it’s forbidden.

... even when used for concessions:

(16) Ok, then go into that building!
    #But on no account would I want you to do this.
Taking stock of what there is to capture

- Link to prototypical use — functional versatility
Taking stock of what there is to capture

- Link to prototypical use — functional versatility
- Non-descriptivity
Taking stock of what there is to capture

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Taking stock of what there is to capture

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Different combinations of:

- compositional meaning
- post-compositional effects
  - on suitable representations of utterance contexts
  - general pragmatic reasoning
Some ideas

- Imperatives denote **action terms**
  
  (Segerberg, 1989; Barker, 2010)
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- **Imperatives express (a certain kind of) preferences**  
  (Bierwisch, 1980; Condoravdi and Lauer, 2012; Oikonomou, 2017; Starr, t.a.)
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- Imperatives are **modal** statements (deontic, necessity); but come with extra conditions on felicitous use (presuppositions)  
  (Schwager, 2006b; Kaufmann, 2012, 2019; Crnič and Trinh, 2009; Grosz, 2009; Oikonomou, 2017; Francis, t.a.)
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- **Combinations of sorts:**
  - quantifiers over worlds
  - future contingencies
  - properties of plan sets
  - modal properties
  (Han, 1999)
  (Eckardt, 2012)
  (Charlow, 2014)
  (Roberts, 2015)
Outline

1. Imperatives as a troublesome clause type

2. Conditionalized imperatives
   - Imperative consequents
   - Speaker preferences and performativity

3. Imperatives and discourse structure
Conditionalized speech acts

'if antecedent, (then) consequent'

(17) If it’s hot outside, ... 
   a. ... it’s hot inside. 
   b. ... who can help? 
   c. ... open the window. 
   d. ... how awful!

All major clause types can be consequents. 
(Few can be antecedents.)
Conditionalized speech acts

′if antecedent, (then) consequent′

(17) If it’s hot outside, . . .
   a. . . . it’s hot inside.
   b. . . . who can help?
   c. . . . open the window.
   d. . . . how awful!

All major clause types can be consequents.
(Few can be antecedents.)

If imperatives are like modals, conditionalized imperatives should behave like conditionals with prioritizing modals in the consequent.
Imperative consequents

(18) If you are cold, close the window.
(19) If you are cold, you {should / . . .} close the window.

Some similarities with prioritizing modals carry over . . .

(Schwager, 2006a; Kaufmann and Schwager, 2011)
Imperative consequents

**Similarities I:**
Modus Ponens(-like) inferences

(20) A: If it’s hot inside, you should open the window.
    B: It’s hot inside.
    A: So you should open the window.

(21) A: If it’s hot inside, open the window.
    B: It’s hot inside.
    A: So open the window.
**Similarities II:**

Modus Ponens(-like) inferences *about means to an end*:

(22) A: If you want to do semantics, you have to study logic.
    B: I want to do semantics.
    A: So you have to study logic.

(23) A: If you want to do semantics, study logic.
    B: I want to do semantics.
    A: So study logic.
Imperative consequents

**Similarities II:**
Modus Ponens(-like) inferences *about means to an end*:

(22)  
A: If you want to do semantics, you have to study logic.  
B: I want to do semantics.  
A: So you have to study logic.

(23)  
A: If you want to do semantics, study logic.  
B: I want to do semantics.  
A: So study logic.

- contingent necessity turns into necessity if antecedent is true  
- works in both (22) and (23)
Imperative consequents

(18) If you are cold, close the window.

(19) If you are cold, you \{should / \ldots\} close the window.

**Some similarities with prioritizing modals carry over...**

(Schwager, 2006a; Kaufmann and Schwager, 2011)

...but not all.

(Condoravdi and Lauer, 2017)
Imperative consequents

Differences I:
Inferences *from necessary means against pursuing a goal*

(24) B: I’m considering doing semantics.
A: If you want to do semantics, you have to study logic.
A: So don’t even think about it.

(25) B: I’m considering doing semantics.
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Differences II:
Inferences *from necessary means in favor of pursuing a goal*

(26) B: I’m considering doing semantics.
A: If you want to do semantics, you have to study logic.
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Conditionals reveal differences not observed in matrix contexts

- Testing ground for competing theories of imperatives
- Evidence to adjudicate between
  - conventional encoding of speaker preferences
  - conventional encoding of discourse management
Speaker preferences and performativity

Two crucial explananda:

1. Relationship between imperatives and the speaker’s preferences
deriving the right amount of endorsement
Speaker preferences and performativity

Two crucial explananda:

1. Relationship between imperatives and the speaker’s preferences
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2. Performativity
   no assertions
Speaker preferences and performativity

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1. Relationship between imperatives and the speaker’s preferences
deriving the right amount of endorsement

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Two approaches (of interest here):

1. Speaker preferences (of a certain kind) are hard-wired into the semantics of imperatives
   (Bierwisch, 1980; Truckenbrodt, 2005; Condoravdi and Lauer, 2012, 2017; Oikonomou, 2016; Starr, t.a.)
   Propositions about discourse commitments to preferences self-verify
   (Condoravdi and Lauer, 2017)

2. Endorsement and performativity from meaning-context interaction
   (Schwager, 2006b; Kaufmann, 2012; this talk)
Speaker preferences and performativity

Public effective preferences

- Preference structure: partially ordered set \( \langle P, \leq \rangle \) of propositions

(Condoravdi and Lauer, 2017)
Speaker preferences and performativity

Public effective preferences

- **Preference structure:** partially ordered set \( \langle P, \leq \rangle \) of propositions

- **Effective preferences:** preference structure that guides actions.
  
  Must be (made) **consistent** and **realistic** relative to agent’s beliefs.
  
  ("if you know you can’t have both, you know how to choose")

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  Must be (made) **consistent** and **realistic** relative to agent’s beliefs.
  (“if you know you can’t have both, you know how to choose”)

- Imperatives encode **public effective preferences** $\Rightarrow$ self-verifying
  - Uttering $p \Rightarrow$ Speaker becomes publicly committed to $p$
  - $[\text{Leave!}]^c = \text{‘Speaker is publicly committed to an effective preference that Addressee leave’}$
Public effective preferences (Condoravdi and Lauer, 2017)

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- Imperatives encode public effective preferences \( \Rightarrow \) self-verifying
  - Uttering \( p \Rightarrow \) Speaker becomes publicly committed to \( p \)
  - \( \llbracket \text{Leave!} \rrbracket^c = \text{‘Speaker is publicly committed to an effective preference that Addressee leave’} \)

Fundamentally different from (descriptively used) modal declaratives.
- C&L argue that this explains the patterns with imperative consequents.
Cooperation by default

Too much endorsement?
Challenge for speaker preference-based theories:

(28) A: How do I get to Logan Airport?
    B: Take the bus. disinterested advice

(29) Have a seat! invitation

- no anti-endorsement: #but on no account would I want you to do it
- no lexical expression of preference: #I want you to do this
Cooperation by default

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Cooperation by default: (Condoravdi and Lauer, 2017)

- An agent is cooperative-by-default if she adds any topical goal of another agent she learns about to her effective preference structure, in such a way that it does not strictly outrank any of her self-motivated preferences.

- want is lexically restricted to self-motivated preferences.
Speaker preferences and performativity

**Differences I:**

Inferences *from necessary means against pursuing a goal*

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**Condoravdi and Lauer:**

- In using the imperative, (25A) commits themself to a conditional effective preference for logic (through cooperation by default).
- This clashes with the unconditional effective preference against semantics (expressed in the next sentence).
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- Imperatives cannot be used for Advice-not-to.
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BUT this does not explain all the data!
Speaker preferences and performativity

Differences II:
Inferences *from necessary means in favor of pursuing a goal*

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    A: If you want to do semantics, you have to study logic.
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The issue:
- (27) is also odd, even though it is ADVICE-TO.
- This can’t be about conflicting preferences.  
  *pace* Condoravdi and Lauer
Speaker preferences and performativity

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The issue:
- (27) is also odd, even though it is *Advice-to*.  
- This can’t be about conflicting preferences.  
- Imperatives can’t be used for *Advice-whether-to*!  
  *pace* Condoravdi and Lauer
C&L observed the contrasts with anankastic conditionals (ACs).

(30) \( \text{if you want}_{\text{PEP}} \ p, \ \text{you have-to}_{\text{TELEO}} \ q \)
If you want to do semantics, you have to study logic.
Non-anankastic reasoning

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ACs are notoriously tricky for compositional semantics

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ACs are notoriously tricky for compositional semantics \(\text{(Sæbø, 2002)}\)

BUT similar patterns hold for non-ACs:

(31) If it gets hot, you \{ have to / should \} open the window.
   a. So make sure it doesn’t get too hot. \[\text{[The window might break.]}\]
   b. So turn up the heat. \[\text{[The window will get stuck if it’s never moved.]}\]

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(32) \quad \text{If it gets hot, open the window.}
\]
\[a. \quad ??\text{So make sure it doesn’t get too hot.} \]
\[b. \quad ??\text{So turn up the heat.} \]

The pattern is not limited to anankastics.
A different culprit:

(33) If you want to do semantics, you have to study logic.
(34) If you want to do semantics, study logic.

\textit{if A, IMPERATIVE}

- imperatives generally address a \textit{decision problem}.
  roughly: “what to do”
- conditional on \textit{A}: “what to do if A”
  cannot count as advice on whether \textit{A}
A different culprit:

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Preferences are not what’s special about imperatives. Presupposed discourse structure is.
Outline

1. Imperatives as a troublesome clause type
2. Conditionalized imperatives
3. Imperatives and discourse structure
   - Modal operator theory of imperatives
   - Conditionals and practicality
Modal operator theory of imperatives

Modal semantics

- Modals can be non-descriptive in certain contexts.
  
  (Schwager, 2006b; Kaufmann, 2012, 2019)
  
  (Kamp, 1973, 1978; Lewis, 1979)

- Imperatives are always non-descriptive.
Modal operator theory of imperatives

**Modal semantics**

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- **at-issue meaning:** Kratzerian necessity modal \( \text{IMP} \)

  \[
  (35) \quad \text{`[IMP[ you leave ]]'} \rightsquigarrow \Box^R (\text{Addressee leaves})
  \]

  Accessibility relation \( R \) determined by modal base and ordering source

  (Kratzer, 1991)
Modal operator theory of imperatives

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- Imperatives are always non-descriptive. (Kamp, 1973, 1978; Lewis, 1979)
  
- at-issue meaning: Kratzerian necessity modal $\text{IMP}$

  $\begin{equation}
  \text{‘[ IMP[ you leave ]]} \leadsto \Box^R (\text{Addressee leaves})
  \end{equation}$

  Accessibility relation $R$ determined by modal base and ordering source (Kratzer, 1991)

  - presuppositions restrict felicitous use to contexts in which a modal would be performative
Modal operator theory of imperatives

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Accessibility relation \( R \) determined by modal base and ordering source

- *presuppositions* restrict felicitous use to contexts in which a modal would be performative

**Hypothesis:** constraints on discourse status of modality and prejacent explain non-descriptive behavior of conditionals.
Modal operator theory of imperatives

Constraints on felicitous use

\[[\text{MP}]^c(R)(p)\] presupposes:

- Speaker$_c$ has perfect knowledge regarding $\Box^R$ and
Modal operator theory of imperatives

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\[ [\text{IMP}]^c(R)(p) \] presupposes:

- Speaker \( c \) has perfect knowledge regarding \( \Box^R \) and
- **either** no individual has control over \( p \)
  \( \Rightarrow \) *wish imperative, ignored in the following*
- or the context is **practical**, i.e.:
Modal operator theory of imperatives

Constraints on felicitous use

\([\mathcal{IMP}]^c(R)(p)\) presupposes:

- **Speaker** \(c\) has perfect knowledge regarding \(\Box^R\) and
- **either** no individual has control over \(p\)
  \((\Rightarrow \text{wish imperative, ignored in the following})\)
  - **or** the context is **practical**, i.e.:
    - Question Under Discussion (QUD\(_c\)) is a **decision problem** for the addressee (‘What will A do?’) and
    - Prejacent \(p\) answers QUD\(_c\) (eliminates at least one cell) and
    - Modal flavor \(R\) counts as **decisive** in \(c\).
Modal operator theory of imperatives

Decision problem as QUD

- context set $CS_c$: mutual joint beliefs of speaker$_c$ and addressee$_c$
Modal operator theory of imperatives

Decision problem as QUD

- context set $CS_c$: mutual joint beliefs of speaker$_c$ and addressee$_c$
- QUD$_c$: partition on $CS_c$ ('What will the addressee do?')
  cells represent the addressee's action alternatives $\alpha_1, \ldots, \alpha_n$
Modal operator theory of imperatives

Decision problem as QUD

- **context set** $CS_c$: mutual joint beliefs of speaker$_c$ and addressee$_c$
- **QUD$_c$**: partition on $CS_c$ (‘What will the addressee do?’)
  - cells represent the addressee’s action alternatives $\alpha_1, \ldots, \alpha_n$

$$
\begin{array}{c}
\alpha_3 \\
\alpha_2 \\
\alpha_1 \\
\end{array}
$$

- $p$ answers QUD$_c$ if it rules out at least one cell.
Modal operator theory of imperatives

Decisive modality
Modal flavor $R$ counts as decisive in context $c$ if there is a decision problem $\Delta_a$ for an agent $a$ (here: the addressee) and $R$ is taken to encode the relevant criteria for solving it. This entails that:

- $a$ will try to find out whether $\forall p \in \Delta_a \ [\text{Curious George}]$
- if $a$ comes to believe $\exists p \in \Delta_a \ [\text{Busy Beaver}]$, then $a$ will aim to bring about $p$
Decisive modality

Modal flavor $R$ counts as decisive in context $c$ if there is a decision problem $\Delta_a$ for an agent $a$ (here: the addressee) and $R$ is taken to encode the relevant criteria for solving it. This entails that:

- $a$ will try to find out whether $\square^R p$ for all $p \in \Delta_a$  
  \text{[Curious George]}

- if $a$ comes to believe $\square^R p$ for some $p \in \Delta_a$, then $a$ will aim to bring about $p$  
  \text{[Busy Beaver]}

- if any participant $b$ (speaker or addressee) to the conversation in $c$ holds it possible that $\square^R q$ for any proposition $q$, then it is not the case that $b$ effectively prefers that $\neg q$.  
  \text{[Endorsement]}
Modal operator theory of imperatives

Link to prototypical use — functional versatility

- Command meets practical requirements without specific assumptions
- Utterance specific function depends on specific flavor of $R$, lexical material, presumed preferences, . . .

(Kaufmann, 2019)

Non-descriptivity

- Contexts that have the presupposed properties give rise to non-descriptive uses of modal statements

Affinity to prioritizing modality

- Shared at-issue content

Speaker endorsement

- From presupposed status of modal flavor $R$ as decisive modality
Modal operator theory of imperatives

Link to prototypical use — functional versatility

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- Contexts that have the presupposed properties give rise to non-descriptive uses of modal statements

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Speaker endorsement

- From presupposed status of modal flavor $R$ as decisive modality

To show Presupposition on QUD explains the behavior of CIs.
Conditionalized imperatives are embedded in the consequent

- *if*-clause restricts a covert epistemic (weak) necessity modal
- similar to (other) prioritizing modals
  
  (Frank, 1996; Kaufmann and Schwager, 2011; Condoravdi and Lauer, 2016)

(36) If it is hot, open the window. \( \leadsto \text{NEC}[\text{if hot}] \ [\text{IMP you open window}] \)

- true iff ‘\text{IMP you open the window}’ is true at all the (most stereotypical) hot-worlds in the modal base
Conditionals and practicality

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- similar to (other) prioritizing modals

(Frank, 1996; Kaufmann and Schwager, 2011; Condoravdi and Lauer, 2016)

(36) If it is hot, open the window. $\sim$ NEC[if hot] [IMP you open window]

$\implies$ true iff ‘IMP you open the window’ is true at all the (most stereotypical) *hot*-worlds in the modal base

Presuppositions can be interpreted globally or locally

(Karttunen and Peters, 1979; Lewis, 1979; Heim, 1983; van der Sandt, 1992)

(37) a. If we get home late, we’ll have to clean the litter box. [global]
b. If we buy a cat, we’ll have to clean the litter box. [local]
Conditionals and practicality

**Conditionalized imperatives are embedded in the consequent**
- *if*-clause restricts a covert epistemic (weak) necessity modal
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  (Frank, 1996; Kaufmann and Schwager, 2011; Condoravdi and Lauer, 2016)

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**Presuppositions can be interpreted globally or locally**

(Karttunen and Peters, 1979; Lewis, 1979; Heim, 1983; van der Sandt, 1992)

(37) a. If we get home late, we’ll have to clean the litter box.
    [global]
b. If we buy a cat, we’ll have to clean the litter box.
    [local]

- Both options exist for decision problem presupposed by imperative
- Both options amount to **Advice-how-to** (not **Advice-whether**).
A global decision problem

(38) A: What’s a good way to spend this chunk of money?
    B: If you want to host the dinner, buy a bigger dining table.
A global decision problem

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    B: If you want to host the dinner, buy a bigger dining table.

- A’s decision problem in the global context: \{\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_3\}
Conditionals and practicality

A global decision problem

(38) A: What’s a good way to spend this chunk of money?
    B: If you want to host the dinner, buy a bigger dining table.

- A’s decision problem in the global context: \{\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_3\}
- B gives a contingent answer based on a question A can resolve
Conditionals and practicality

A global decision problem

(38)   A:  What’s a good way to spend this chunk of money?
       B:  If you want to host the dinner, buy a bigger dining table.

- A’s decision problem in the **global context**: \{α₁, α₂, α₃\}
- B gives a **contingent answer** based on a question A can resolve

B uses a sub-strategy to (partially) resolve the issue
Conditionals and practicality

A local decision problem

(39)  A: What do I have to do if I want to host the dinner?
     B: (If you want to host the dinner,) buy a bigger dining table.
Conditionals and practicality

A local decision problem

(39) A: What do I have to do if I want to host the dinner?
   B: (If you want to host the dinner,) buy a bigger dining table.

- A’s conditional decision problem: \( \{\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_3\} | dinner \)
Conditionals and practicality

A local decision problem

(39)  A: What do I have to do if I want to host the dinner?
       B: (If you want to host the dinner,) buy a bigger dining table.

- A’s conditional decision problem: \( \{\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_3\} \mid \text{dinner} \)
- B’s answer resolves the conditional decision problem
A local decision problem

(39) A: What do I have to do if I want to host the dinner?  
    B: (If you want to host the dinner,) buy a bigger dining table.

- A’s conditional decision problem: $\{\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_2\}|dinner$
- B’s answer resolves the conditional decision problem

A raises a sub-issue; B (fully) resolves it
No Advice-whether-to

(40) A: Should I host the dinner party?
B: If you want to host the dinner, buy a bigger dining table.
B: ??So don’t do it. / ??So yeah, do it.
No Advice-whether-to

(40)  A: Should I host the dinner party?
    B: If you want to host the dinner, buy a bigger dining table.
    B: So don’t do it. / So yeah, do it.

• A’s global decision problem: \{dinner, dinner\}
No Advice-whether-to

(40) A: Should I host the dinner party?
    B: If you want to host the dinner, buy a bigger dining table.
    B: ??So don’t do it. / ??So yeah, do it.

- A’s global decision problem: \{dinner, dinner\}
- B’s answer does not rule out either cell
  either globally or among the antecedent-worlds

\[
\begin{array}{c|c}
\text{dinner} & \text{dinner} \\
\hline
\alpha_1 & \times \\
\alpha_2 & \times \\
\alpha_3 & \times \\
\end{array}
\]
Conditionals and practicality

No Advice-whether-to

(40)  A: Should I host the dinner party?
     B: If you want to host the dinner, buy a bigger dining table.
     B: ??So don’t do it. / ??So yeah, do it.

- A’s global decision problem: \{dinner, dinner\}
- B’s answer does not rule out either cell
  either globally or among the antecedent-worlds

\[\begin{array}{c|c}
\text{dinner} & \text{dinner} \\
\hline
\text{dinner} & \text{dinner} \\
\end{array}\]

- Equally bad for Advice-to and Advice-not-to.
Conditionals and practicality

Modals are ok

(41) A: Should I host the dinner party?
B: If you want to host the dinner, you have to buy a bigger dining table.
B: So don’t do it. / So yeah, do it.
Conditionals and practicality

Modals are ok

(41)   A: Should I host the dinner party?
   B: If you want to host the dinner, you have to buy a bigger dining table.
   B: So don’t do it. / So yeah, do it.

- descriptive use
- not action-directing; can serve as grounds for conclusion
Conditionals and practicality

Imperatives can be ok (after all)

(42)  
A: I want to host the party.  
B: If you want to host the party, buy a bigger dining table.  
    a. #So I don’t think you should host it.  
    b. But I don’t think you should host it.  
    c. But it would cost you a fortune, so I don’t think you should host it.
Conditionals and practicality

Imperatives can be ok (after all)

(42)  A: I want to host the party.
     B: If you want to host the party, buy a bigger dining table.

a. #So I don’t think you should host it.
b. But I don’t think you should host it.
c. But it would cost you a fortune, so I don’t think you should host it.

(42a): B has conflicting assumptions about the conversational goals (rather than conflicting preferences)

so-moves show what the speaker takes to be the QUD.

but marks contrast, can shift the QUD
Conclusions

- Assimilating imperatives to modals allows us to capture imperatives in the consequents of conditionals
  
  N.B. Propositional and/or dynamic theories of imperatives generally do well on conditionals

- Restrictions on conversational strategy do not come from clashes between conditional and unconditional preferential commitments

- Capturing the non-descriptive nature of imperatives (performatively used modals) provides clues for capturing their discourse behavior

- Progress for understudied topic: discourse strategies involving imperatives and performative modality (more to do: syntax-prosody-semantics of information structure, markers of rhetorical relations, discourse strategy trees,...)
Thank you.
References I


References

References III


Conditional preference commitments

Condoravdi and Lauer consider three definitions:

(C&L) Agent \( a \) is **committed to preferring** \( q \) conditionally on \( p \) iff \( a \) is automatically committed to preferring \( q \) if/once . . .

a. . . . \( p \) is true. **Strong**
b. . . . \( a \) believes/knows that \( p \) is true. **Intermediate**
c. . . . \( a \) is committed to believing that \( p \) is true. **Weak**
Conditional preference commitments

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(C&L) Agent \( a \) is committed to preferring \( q \) conditionally on \( p \) iff \( a \) is automatically committed to preferring \( q \) if/once \( p \) is true.

- **Strong**
  - \( ... p \) is true.
- **Intermediate**
  - \( ... a \) believes/knows that \( p \) is true.
- **Weak**
  - \( ... a \) is committed to believing that \( p \) is true.

Only **Weak** delivers a plausible notion of public effective preferences.
Condoravdi and Lauer consider three definitions:

(C&L) Agent $a$ is **committed to preferring $q$ conditionally on $p$** iff $a$ is automatically committed to preferring $q$ if/once . . .

- a. . . $p$ is true. **Strong**
- b. . . $a$ believes/knows that $p$ is true. **Intermediate**
- c. . . $a$ is committed to believing that $p$ is true. **Weak**

Only **Weak** delivers a plausible notion of public effective preferences.

All three are hard to reconcile with linguistic data . . .
Conditional preference commitments

(C&L) Agent $a$ is committed to preferring $q$ conditionally on $p$ iff $a$ is automatically committed to preferring $q$ if/once . . .

a. . . . $p$ is true. \textbf{Strong}

b. . . . $a$ believes/knows that $p$ is true. \textbf{Intermediate}

c. . . . $a$ is committed to believing that $p$ is true. \textbf{Weak}

All three: (44a) is contradictory, (44b) is probably pointless

(44) a. I am worried I might go crazy. If I tell you to kill me, don’t do it.

b. If I die before I get tenure, give my books to the grad students.
Conditional preference commitments

Problems with Strong and Intermediate:

(C&L) Agent $a$ is committed to preferring $q$ conditionally on $p$ iff $a$ is automatically committed to preferring $q$ if/once . . .

a. . . . $p$ is true.  
b. . . . $a$ believes/knows that $p$ is true.  
c. . . . $a$ is committed to believing that $p$ is true.

Intermediate, Weak: (45a) is contradictory; (45b) is void

(45)  
a. If my secretary is a spy, make sure I never know.  
b. I will never find out if my secretary is a spy. But if she is, send her this envelope.
Conditional preference commitments

(C&L) Agent $a$ is committed to preferring $q$ conditionally on $p$ iff $a$ is automatically committed to preferring $q$ if/once . . .

a. . . . $p$ is true.  

b. . . . $a$ believes/knows that $p$ is true.  

c. . . . $a$ is committed to believing that $p$ is true.
Conditional preference commitments

(C&L) Agent $a$ is committed to preferring $q$ conditionally on $p$ iff $a$ is automatically committed to preferring $q$ if/once . . .

\begin{enumerate}
\item $\ldots p$ is true. \textbf{Strong}
\item $\ldots a$ believes/knows that $p$ is true. \textbf{Intermediate}
\item $\ldots a$ is committed to believing that $p$ is true. \textbf{Weak}
\end{enumerate}

- It is hard to come up with a satisfactory notion of conditional preference commitments
- Preferable: conditionalized imperatives as actual commitments to contingent preferences