Salience and (not-)at-issue status of subordinate clauses

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Dynamic Structuring in Language and Communication
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Not-at-issue content

Simons et al. (2011):

$P$ is at issue iff it contributes to the current QUD

properties of not-at-issue content

projection, non-rejectability, ...

assent/dissent test

A: Juan lives in Maria’s house.
B: No, that’s not true. / Yes, that’s true.

⇝ Juan does (not) live in Maria’s house.
⇝ Maria does (not) have a house.

e.g. Tonhauser (2012)
Appositive relative clauses (ARC)

Anderbois et al. (2011), Syrett & Koev (2015):

**sentence-medial ARC**

A: Chloe, who decided to dress in a classical ballet style, has been chosen to audition for the ‘All Stars’ Dance Company.

B: No, she didn’t.

**sentence-final ARC**

A: ‘All Stars’ chose to audition Chloe, who decided to dress in a classical ballet style.

B: No, she didn’t.
At-issueness as salience

Question 1
Isn’t this just recency?

Where does recency belong?
Recency is a salience factor in discourse processing: Material from the last processed sentence/clause is most salient and is most accessible for certain kinds of anaphoric reference.

Question 2
If this is just recency, what kind of consequences does this have for our understanding of (not)-at-issue status?
### Recency vs. subordination in discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right Frontier Constraint</th>
<th>Polanyi (1988)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only the last processed discourse node and the nodes that it is subordinated to are open for attachment of new discourse material.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

**subordinating coherence relations:**

*Elaboration, Explanation, Background:* lead to hierarchical structures and discourse embedding, and do not “push the discourse forward”

**coordinating coherence relations:**

*Contrast, Parallel, Narration:* the discourse units are on a par and the discourse progresses in a normal left-to-right fashion
Recency vs. subordination in discourse

discourse subordination

a. The Millers bought a house in the country.
b. The prices for country houses started to rise again.
c. They rose by 1.7% since the start of the year. [the prices]

discourse subordination + pop return

a. The Millers bought a house in the country.
b. The prices for country houses started to rise again.
c. They rented it out. [the Millers]
Recency vs. subordination in discourse

What happened at \( \{ t_1, t_2, \ldots \} \)?

What happened at \( t_1 \)?

The Ms bought a country house.

Why?

The prices started to rise.

Narration

What happened at \( t_2 \)?

They rented it out.

Explanation
What happened at $t_1$?

The Millers bought a house in the country.

What happened?

The prices started to rise again.

What happened at $t_2$?

They rented it out.

QUD stack update

ARCs in discourse structure

appositive relative clauses...

- constitute independent discourse units  Koev 2013
- participate in discourse relations  Schlenker 2013
- address their own QUDs  Mann & Thompson 1988
- (normally, but not always) are connected to the main clause by a subordinating coherence relation  Loock 2007

Jasinskaja (2015, in revision) *Not at issue any more.*
http://dslc.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/20854.html

### ARCs in discourse structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARC as <em>Elaboration</em></th>
<th>sentence-final</th>
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<tr>
<td>‘All Stars’ has chosen to audition Chloe, who you met in the gym yesterday.</td>
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<tr>
<th>ARC as <em>Elaboration</em></th>
<th>sentence-medial</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chloe, who you met in the gym yesterday, has been chosen to audition for ‘All Stars’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
'All Stars' has chosen to audition Chloe. / Chloe [...] has been chosen to audition for 'All Stars'.

Who is Chloe?

who you met in the gym yesterday
At-issueness as a dynamic notion

Simons et al. (2011):

$P$ is at issue iff it contributes to the current question under discussion (the QUD on top of the stack)

Sentence-medial ARC:

Who is Chloe?

What happened?

Chloe

What happened?

who you met in the gym yesterday

What happened?

has been chosen to audition for ‘All Stars’.

not at issue any more
At-issueness as a dynamic notion

Simons et al. (2011):

\[ P \text{ is at issue iff it contributes to the current question under discussion (the QUD on top of the stack)} \]

Sentence-final ARC:

Who is Chloe?

What happened?

‘All Stars’ has chosen to audition Chloe

What happened?

who you met in the gym yesterday

↑

not at issue any more
Some consequences

1. at-issue status of one and the same piece of content can change in time

2. the coherence relation between the main clause and the ARC (subordinating vs. coordinating) affects the at-issue status/relative salience of the ARC vs. the main clause


3. direct rejections are just like other strongly anaphoric devices

4. ARCs are just like other subordinate clauses
### Salience and anaphoricity

The assent/dissent test only works with forms of so-called direct acceptance/rejection (Farkas & Bruce 2010):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Direct acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>Direct rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maybe</td>
<td>Direct response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she did</td>
<td>Direct acceptance (affirmative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she didn’t</td>
<td>Direct rejection (negative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that’s (not) true</td>
<td>Direct response (affirmative)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- The assent/dissent test is a linguistic test used to determine the salience and anaphoricity of different forms of direct acceptance or rejection. It is based on the observation that certain responses are more likely to be accepted or rejected depending on their context.
- The forms listed above are examples of what the test looks for, with yes and no being clear examples of direct acceptance and rejection, respectively.
- The inclusion of maybe suggests a more nuanced response, possibly indicating uncertainty or a middle ground.
- She did and she didn’t are affirmative and negative forms, respectively, and may be used to reinforce or deny the information presented.
- That’s (not) true could be considered a more generalized form, indicating agreement or disagreement with a statement in a more colloquial manner.
Salience and anaphoricity

pronouns pick out the most salient antecedent, definite DPs need not

a. The Millers bought a house in the country.
b. The prices for country houses started to rise again.
c. They rented it out. [the Millers]
d. Then they/the prices rose even more.

light, less explicit forms \sim require salient antecedents
heavy, more explicit forms \sim less dependent on salience

Gundel, Hedberg & Zacharski 1993
Salience and anaphoricity

direct rejections require a salient antecedent, “indirect” rejections do not

A. Chloe, who decided to dress in a classical ballet style, has been chosen to audition for the ‘All Stars’ Dance Company.
B. a. ??No, she didn’t.
   b. (HWAM) Chloe didn’t dress in a classical ballet style!

direct rejections are composed of light, less explicit anaphoric forms:
- response particle no  Krifka 2013
- VP ellipsis in she didn’t  Frazier & Clifton 2005
- demonstrative pronoun that in that’s not true
Salience and anaphoricity

direct rejections require a salient antecedent, “indirect” rejections do not

A:  
   a. The Millers bought a house in the country.  
   b. The prices for country houses started to rise again.  
   c. They rented it out.  

B: No, they didn’t.

\[ \rightsquigarrow \text{The Millers didn’t rent out the house.} \]

\[ \# \rightsquigarrow \text{The prices didn’t start to rise.} \]

B’: Hey, wait a minute! The prices for country houses didn’t rise as far as I know.
Salience and anaphoricity

ARCs cannot be (easily) directly rejected, not because they are somehow immune to rejection, e.g.

- because they contribute to a separate level of meaning, e.g. conventional implicature Potts 2005
- because they update the common ground automatically, bypassing ratification by the hearer AnderBois et al. 2015

but because ARCs are not salient enough to serve as antecedents for anaphoric devices that “direct rejections” consist of.
### Main clause preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frazier &amp; Clifton 2005</th>
<th>VP ellipsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary laughed after she made a joke about the supervisor. Then Tina did too.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⇝ Tina laughed 70%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⇝ Tina made a joke</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cooreman &amp; Sanford 1996</th>
<th>pronoun resolution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The conductor sneezed three times after the tenor opened his music score. He...</td>
<td>the conductor ~ 92.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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DSLC  
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Main clause preference

Rejection of main vs. adverbial clause

A: Mary laughed after she made a joke about the supervisor.
B: No, she didn’t.

⇝ Mary didn’t laugh ✓
⇝ Mary didn’t make a joke ??

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**Clause order**

### Clause order effect with adverbial clauses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors/Reference</th>
<th>Clause Type</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frazier &amp; Clifton 2005</td>
<td>*after-*clauses</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooreman &amp; Sanford 1996</td>
<td>various temporal clauses</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*because-*clauses</td>
<td>yes!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sentence-initial temporal clause

A: After Mary laughed, she made a joke about the supervisor.
B: No, she didn’t.  

\[\leadsto\] Mary didn’t make a joke.
Clause order

The same pattern as with ARCs:

**sentence-initial because-clause**

A: Because Chloe danced perfectly, she won the competition.
B: No, she didn’t. \(\rightsarrow\) Chloe didn’t win.

**sentence-final because-clause**

A: Chloe won the competition, because she danced perfectly.
B: No, she didn’t. \(\rightsarrow\) C didn’t win / didn’t dance perfectly.

The same pattern with although-clauses.
Adverbial clauses as independent speech acts

ARCs admit speech act adverbials

‘All Stars’ chose to audition Chloe, who *frankly* danced like an amateur.

although/because-clauses admit speech act adverbials

- ‘All Stars’ chose to audition Chloe, although *frankly* she danced like an amateur.
- ‘All Stars’ did not choose to audition Chloe, because *frankly* she danced like an amateur.

temporal clauses don’t

Chloe cried after (*frankly*) she danced like an amateur.
### Adverbial clauses as independent speech acts

**other indications towards speech act status**

- distinct speech act types in the main and the subordinate clause  
  Koev 2013, Sweetser 1990
- prosodic separation

**root clause phenomena in causal and concessive clauses, not in temporal clauses**

- left dislocation  
  Hooper & Thompson 1973  
  Sawada and Larson 2004, Antomo 2013
- V2 in German  
  Günthner 1996, Antomo 2013
(why) are ARCs less salient?

• whether ARCs are salient or not depends on their place in discourse structure and the dynamics of discourse update, in the same way as it does for other subordinate clauses that function as independent speech acts and for independent sentences

• to the extent that ARCs are inherently less salient than main clauses, they share this property with other subordinate clauses (adverbial clauses)

ARCs are less salient, and therefore difficult to reject, not because they contribute a special kind of content, but because they are subordinate clauses
Conclusion

- Syrett & Koev’s (2015) idea that the variable at-issue status of ARCs depending on the position in the sentence is a matter of recency and salience is not a harmless move.
- Combined with off-the-shelf theories of recency and salience, it explains various aspects of the behavior of ARCs and other kinds of clauses with respect to rejection.
- Applying what we know about salience in discourse to phenomena traditionally carrying the label of not-at-issue content gives rise to non-trivial hypotheses for empirical investigation.
Thank you!

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