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

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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)

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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 undestanding of (not)-at-issue status?

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Recency vs. subordination in discourse

Right Frontier Constraint   Polanyi (1988)

Only the last processed discourse node and the nodes that it is subordinated to are open for attachment of new discourse material.

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

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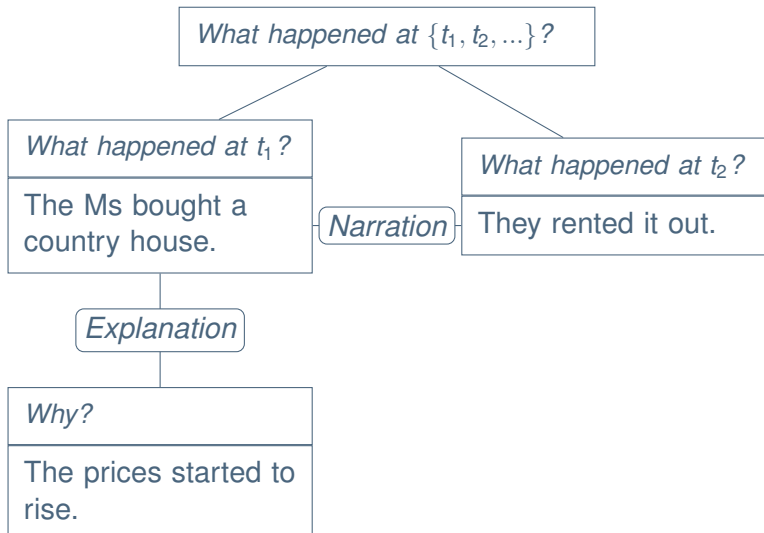
Recency vs. subordination in discourse

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 $\{t_1, t_2, ...\}$?

What happened at t_1?

The Ms bought a country house.

Narration

What happened at t_2?

They rented it out.

Explanation

Why?

The prices started to rise.

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QUD stack update

	Why?	
What happened at t_1?	What happened at t_1?	What happened at t_2?
What happened?	What happened?	What happened?
The Millers bought a house in the country.	The prices started to rise again.	They rented it out.

Grosz & Sidner (1986), Ginzburg (1996), Roberts (1996)

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ARCs in discourse structure

appositive relative clauses...

- constitute independent discourse units   Koev 2013
- participate in discourse relations   Schlenker 2013
                                                  Mann & Thompson 1988

- address their own QUDs
- (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`

see also Hunter & Asher (2016) *Shapes of conversation and at-issue content*. SALT 2016.

ARCs in discourse structure
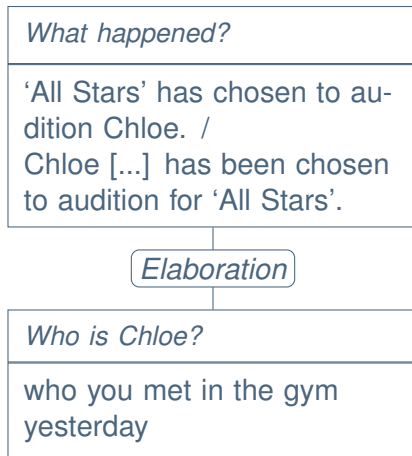
ARC as *Elaboration*	sentence-final

'All Stars' has chosen to audition Chloe,
who you met in the gym yesterday.

ARC as *Elaboration*	sentence-medial

Chloe, who you met in the gym yesterday,
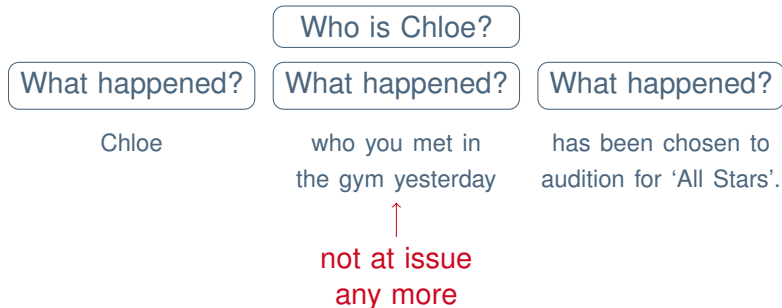has been chosen to audition for 'All Stars'.

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ARCs in discourse structure

> *What happened?*
>
> 'All Stars' has chosen to audition Chloe. /
> Chloe [...] has been chosen to audition for 'All Stars'.

Elaboration

> *Who is Chloe?*
>
> who you met in the gym yesterday

At-issueness as a dynamic notion

Sentence-medial ARC:

Who is Chloe?

What happened?	What happened?	What happened?
Chloe	who you met in the gym yesterday	has been chosen to audition for 'All Stars'.

↑
not at issue
any more

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-final ARC:

Who is Chloe?

What happened?	What happened?
'All Stars' has chosen to audition Chloe	who you met in the gym yesterday

↑
not at issue
any more

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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

   > Ema Zivkovic (2016) *The at-issue status of appositive relative clauses: evidence for a discourse-based approach*. MA Thesis. Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona. (Supervisor: Laia Mayol)

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

- yes
- no
- maybe

also

- she did
- she didn't
- that's (not) true

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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 ∼ require salient antecedents
heavy, more explicit forms ∼ 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.   [the Millers]

B: No, they didn't.

                   ⤳ The Millers didn't rent out the house.
               # ⤳ 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 or
- 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

Frazier & Clifton 2005 — VP ellipsis

Mary laughed
after she made a joke about the supervisor.
Then Tina did too.

⤳ Tina laughed   70%
⤳ Tina made a joke

Cooreman & Sanford 1996 — pronoun resolution

The conductor sneezed three times
after the tenor opened his music score.
He...   the conductor $\sim$ 92.9%

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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

Frazier & Clifton 2005: *after*-clauses	no
Cooreman & Sanford 1996: various temporal clauses	no
because-clauses	yes!

sentence-initial temporal clause

A: After Mary laughed, she made a joke about the supervisor.

B: No, she didn't.   ⤳ Mary didn't make a joke.

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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.   ⤳ Chloe didn't win.

sentence-final *because*-clause

A: Chloe won the competition, because she danced perfectly.

B: No, she didn't.   ⤳ C didn't win / didn't dance perfectly.

The same pattern with *although*-clauses.

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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

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(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

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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 behaviour 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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