Unifying if-conditionals and unconditionals

**If-conditional**

(1) If Alfonso comes to the party, it will be fun.

**Alternative unconditional**

(2) Whether Alfonso comes to the party or not, it will be fun.

**Alternative unconditional**

(3) Whether Alfonso or Joanna comes to the party, it will be fun.

**Constituent unconditional**

(4) Whoever comes to the party, it will be fun.

**SIMILARITIES**

- Similar meaning – interaction with domain of operator.
- Similar distribution – internal and external properties.
- See right-hand column.

**DIFFERENCES**

- Intergroup structure (see left-hand column).
- Unconditionals involve an Indifference entailment: (5) It doesn't matter whether Alfonso comes to the party.

**(6)**

- # If Alfonso comes to the party or not, it will be fun.
- # If Alfonso or Joanna comes to the party, it will be fun.
- (c) does not convey that it doesn't matter whether Alfonso or Joanna comes (though it is compatible with the choice not mattering).

**Discourse effect**: Avoid taking a stance on an issue while still moving the discourse forward.

- A: Alfonso is good at his job.
- B: Whether or not he's good, we have to fire him.

**ANALYSIS**

**Similarities and differences follow compositionally from structure...**

- if we treat unconditionals as adjuncts as intergroup conditional adjuncts (following Zaefferer 1990, 1991; Lin 1996; Izvorski 2000; Gawron 2002).
- Uniform type, (x), for if-conditional and unconditionals. (No syncategorematic or constructional distinction needed as in previous analyses; see handout).
- Hamblin's Pointwise Function Application to uniform composition of conditional adjuncts.
- Compatible with various implementations of the LKH theory; here I use the binding/correlative version (von Finst 1994; Bhatt and Paracheva 2006).
- Hamblin's Universal Operator

**Constituent unconditionals as intergroup structures**

- Hamblin universal operator
- Characteristic properties of embedded alternative interrogatives: negative stripping (or not), and unexpected lefward appearance of or not.
- Alfonso wonders whether the party was cancelled or was not cancelled.
- Alfonso wondered whether or not the party was cancelled.
- Alternative unconditionals show the same pattern:
- Whether the party is cancelled or is not cancelled, we should go out tonight.
- Whether the party is cancelled or not, we should go out tonight.
- Whether or not the party is cancelled, we should go out tonight.

**Unconditionals as conditionals**

- The semantic function of an if-clause is to restrict the domain of an operator (Lin 1996; Gawron 2002, Haddad and Pullum 2003).
- Unconditionals have a close paraphrase as an exhaustive list of conditionals (Lin 1996).
- a. Whether or not Joanna comes to the party it will be fun.
- b. If Joanna comes to the party it will be fun, and if she doesn't it won't be fun.
- c. Whether or not Joanna comes to the party, you should come.
- d. Whether or not Alfonso comes to the party, if Alfonso comes to the party, you should come.
- Unconditionals and if-conditional can interfere, and can also stack (un)restrictions.
- # Whether or not Joanna comes to the party, if Joanna comes to the party, you should come.
- # Whether or not Alfonso comes to the party, if Alfonso comes to the party, you should come.
- # Whether you’re hungry or not, there’s a sandwich in the fridge.
- # Whether you’re hungry or not, there’s some chicken in the fridge.

**Contrafactival had...would**

- (7) Suppose Alfonso didn’t end up going to Bard, and Harvard or Princeton were his other choices.
- Whether he had gone to Harvard or to Princeton, he would have become a banker.
- (8) Dependence of tense (I argue Haregan 2003 inter alia; present tense in antecedent gets future reading due to still in consequence).
- (9) While Alfonso is tired or not, he will have a good time at the party.


- If you’re hungry, there’s a sandwich in the fridge.
- Whatever you’re hungry for, there’s probably some in the kitchen.