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## Reply to David Ripley's Comments on *Comparison of Complex Predicates: 'and', 'or' and 'more'*

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I agree with Ripley that additional theories and theoretical approaches should be considered in light of the findings discussed in my paper. I am particularly grateful for his remark concerning theories taking conjunction to be monotone. In a similar vein, joint work with Frank Veltman (in preparation), resulted in arguments against several dominant approaches to the analysis of vagueness and comparison, including the supervaluationist approach (Kamp 1975) and the Kleinean approach (Klein 1980). The basis for these arguments comes from the inference form highlighted by the reported experiment—Premise: *x* is more *P* and *Q* than *y*; Conclusion: *x* is more *Q* than *y*—which these theories fail to capture. Additional approaches (and inference patterns) should be considered in the future.

At the same time, I wholeheartedly agree with Ripley that more data is required before any solid conclusions can be drawn regarding the generality of my results, in particular in the case of disjunctions. The research reported in the paper is preliminary, and to be continued. Let me mention, in this context, that an ongoing experimental study of complex comparisons in English supports the hypothesis that the interpretation of comparisons with conjunctions of concrete one dimensional adjectives, such as *expensive and time consuming*, is Boolean. At the same time, that new study shows that disjunctions, as well as conjunctions of more abstract and multidimensional adjectives, such as *experienced and successful*, are more complex to understand.

This is not surprising. Disjunctions are notorious for posing a variety of semantic-pragmatic challenges to language researchers, such as free choice interpretations. For example, utterances of *Take an apple or a pear* normally convey that the addressee may take an apple (but not a pear), AND he or she may take a pear (but not an apple). Thus, disjunctions of offers and in particular of commands normally convey a conjunction of offers or commands. Somewhat similar effects show up in the context of disjunctive comparisons, e.g., many speakers interpret *equally experienced OR successful* on a par with *equally experienced AND successful*.

As for multidimensional adjectives, consider, for example, the adjective *successful*. One can be successful in some respects, but not successful in others (cf. Klein 1980). The set of respects that count for a truthful application of this adjective is highly context dependent. The considerations governing the selection of respects, and the operations that integrate them into a single, unified adjectival sense are poorly understood (conjunctions? disjunctions? Boolean? Fuzzy? etc.) Finally, to the best of my knowledge, the interactions between these operators and those denoted by natural language

modifiers of gradability and comparison (*more, very, most*, and so on) have rarely been investigated so far. The main conclusion to draw is, therefore: more experimentation is needed!

The paper and comments illustrate the relevance of descriptive, empirical work to the study of formal semantics in linguistics, philosophy of language and logic. Formal theoretical work might progress through the study of inference forms—their robustness among language users, and their generality across lexical items. My hope is that the complexity of the data will inspire logicians to develop new systems, particularly suited to natural language semantics.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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