

Chimerical conditionals*

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Abstract This paper introduces and analyzes *chimerical conditionals*, a class of conditionals that are puzzling *vis-à-vis* the distinction between so-called “biscuit” and hypothetical conditionals. An analysis of this distinction is developed which draws on the pragmatic account of Franke 2009. Building on this analysis, chimericity is then shown to derive from a systematic ambiguity of a definite and often implicit argument in the consequent of chimerical conditionals, between a rigid designator and an individual concept reading. This ambiguity is argued to arise from different ways in which context can resolve familiarity presuppositions. One consequence of the inquiry is that the notion of *(in)dependence* employed in much work on conditionals cannot be viewed as a relation between propositions, but must be made sensitive to the dynamics of information flow.

Keywords: conditionals, definiteness, presupposition, conditional dependence, implicit arguments, biscuit conditionals, familiarity, pragmatics

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1 Introduction

The sentences in (1) exemplify the well known contrast between two kinds of conditionals, hypothetical conditionals (1a),¹ and “biscuit” or “non conditional” conditionals (1b) (Austin 1956, Geis & Lycan 1993, DeRose & Grandy 1999, Siegel 2006, *inter alia*).

- (1) a. There is beer in the fridge if John remembered to go shopping.
b. There is beer in the fridge if you’re thirsty.

Intuitively, hypothetical conditionals express a condition, whereas biscuit conditionals do not. In hypothetical conditionals, the truth of the consequent is felt to depend on that of the antecedent, due to a causal or epistemic connection between the situation described by the latter and the one described by the former. In biscuit conditionals, the truth of the antecedent and that of the consequent are felt to have nothing to do with each other. As DeRose & Grandy (1999) put it, upon hearing (1b), one cannot seriously ask what would be the case if the antecedent were false.

As pointed out already by Austin, biscuit and hypothetical conditionals differ in their inferential behavior. Specifically, biscuit conditionals imply the truth of the consequent, and hypotheticals do not. For example, an utterance of (1b) implies that there is, indeed, beer in the fridge, whereas an utterance of (1a) does not. Furthermore, this implication of (1b) is not cancelable, as evidenced by the oddity of (2).

- (2) #If you’re thirsty, there is beer in the fridge, though there might not be any beer there.

By the same token, biscuit conditionals imply an unconditional, so that (1b) implies (3).

- (3) Whether you are thirsty or not, there is beer in the fridge.

The main challenges posed by the biscuit / hypothetical distinction are to characterize precisely the intuitive notion of (not) expressing a condition, to explicate when and why a given conditional is interpreted one way or the other, and to link such an explication to the difference in inferential

¹ Often referred to in the literature as indicative conditionals. The term *indicative* evokes mood, but the contrast at hand is independent of mood, as has been observed recently by Franke 2009, Swanson 2011, and in unpublished work by Jennifer Rau.

behavior between the two kinds of conditionals, explaining the unconditional implication of biscuit conditionals. At stake in such an explanation is the division of labor between semantics and pragmatics in the interpretation of conditionals.

Austin 1956 and especially DeRose & Grandy 1999 make the important observation that whether a given utterance of a conditional is interpreted hypothetically or as a biscuit depends on pragmatic background assumptions. Given the right assumptions, any biscuit conditional can be read hypothetically, and vice versa. For example, in a science fictional context in which it is known that internal states can causally affect and effect reality, (1b) could be used to inform the hearer of a causal connection between her thirst and the presence of beer in the fridge. Similarly, contexts can be constructed making an epistemic connection between the addressee's thirst and the presence of beer in the fridge plausible. In the other direction, imagine a context in which whenever John remembers to go shopping, he also forgets to drink, and becomes thirsty. In this context, (1a) can be used to inform the addressee that there is beer in the fridge that John can drink.² Fixing background assumptions, however, fixes the interpretation one way or the other.

This paper introduces and analyzes a class of conditionals, termed *chimerical*, that is puzzling given these observations about the biscuit / hypothetical distinction, because, even when background assumptions are fixed, conflicting intuitions about the interpretation and inferential behavior of its members place them in both categories at once. To exemplify the phenomenon, consider the scenario in (4), henceforth referred to as *the heist scenario*.

The heist scenario: You are planning to steal the scroll of the book of Isaiah from the British Museum, and are worried about the distribution of guards. You turn to an expert who knows the operation of the museum well, and ask for her advice. She tells you:

(4) If you enter the museum from the south, there are no guards.

In this context, is (4) a biscuit or a hypothetical conditional? Answering this question requires fixing background assumptions. Suppose that, as is usually the case, it is common knowledge between us that there is no causal or other regular correlation between the distribution of guards in the museum and

² I thank a reviewer for pointing this kind of context out to me.

any particular individual's actions. Under these fixed assumptions, there are nevertheless two contrasting intuitions about (4).³

On the one hand, (4) seems to be a hypothetical conditional. Its hypothetical reading is salient when the context is such that you have not yet decided which entrance you will use to enter the museum, and you are asking the expert what the best option is. In uttering (4), she is telling you that whether or not you will encounter guards when you enter the museum depends on which entrance you choose. Evoking DeRose and Grandy's informal test, one can very reasonably ask the expert: *and what if enter from the north? Are there guards then?*

On the other hand, (4) seems to be a biscuit conditional. Its biscuit reading arises when the context is such that you are deliberating whether to enter the museum, or whether instead to use a somewhat unreliable and risky gadget to retrieve the scroll without entering the museum. Surely, whether or not there are guards at the entrance has nothing to do with which method you choose. In this case, the expert's utterance of (4) is communicating that, at least as far as the possibility of encountering guards is concerned, there is no reason to prefer the risky option. It is then silly to reply to the expert: *and what if I don't enter, are there guards then?* Chimerical conditionals thus oscillate between hypothetical and biscuit interpretations. Any analysis must both describe and explain this oscillation. This paper attributes it to a semantic ambiguity.

Corresponding to these conflicting intuitions, there is also uncertainty with respect to the inferential behavior of (4). If the sentence is a biscuit conditional, it should imply its consequent, and if it is hypothetical it should not imply it. However, whether (4) implies its consequent or not cannot be directly determined, because the consequent, (5), does not express a stable proposition.

(5) There are no guards.

What proposition (5) expresses depends on the context (in a particular way discussed in detail later on). Since there is no unique proposition expressed by (5), it is simply not possible to say, simpliciter, whether any given sentence entails it. An analysis of chimerical conditionals must tie their ambiguity to their inferential behavior. An explication of the hypothetical and biscuit

³ In informally polling native speakers of English, I have found that many initially have a strong preference for one intuition over the other. All speakers I have consulted acknowledge both upon brief reflection.

interpretations of chimericals should predict that they do not imply their consequent on the former and do imply it on the latter. Furthermore, it seems that, regardless of whether (4) is interpreted hypothetically or as a biscuit, it entails that there are no guards at the south entrance to the museum. This fact must also follow from any analysis.

Building on the ideas of [Franke 2007, 2009](#), this paper develops a pragmatic account of the biscuit-hypothetical distinction, which is then used to construct an analysis of chimericity that fulfills the desiderata just outlined. The main intuition of my account of the distinction is that biscuit readings of conditionals arise when defeasible pragmatic assumptions that are taken to be mutual knowledge (in the sense of [Clark & Marshall 1981](#)) between the interlocutors rule out a common ground in which the issue raised by the consequent depends on the one raised by the antecedent. The relevant notion of issue dependence is closely related to the one employed in Franke's analysis of biscuit conditionals, as well as in recent accounts of the so-called "proviso" problem ([van Rooij 2007, Lassiter 2012](#)), and is a dynamic version of [Lewis's \(1988\)](#) notion of question non-orthogonality. However, the notions diverge in that the one employed here cannot be defined in terms of propositions, requiring an essentially dynamic definition, sensitive to presuppositional dependencies. The fact that mutual knowledge rules out dependence of the antecedent and consequent issues brings about a strengthening effect, whereby implication of the consequent in biscuit conditionals is derived.

Chimericity is shown to be rooted in a systematic ambiguity in the consequent of certain conditionals. A conditional is chimerical when its consequent contains a definite argument, often implicit, which, because of its familiarity prepositions, is interpretable in two ways: as a rigid designator or as an individual concept. In a nutshell, the main idea is that, for reasons made precise below, the expert's answer in (4) can be interpreted in two ways, paraphrased in (6).

- (6) a. If you enter the museum from the south, there are no guards where you enter.
- b. If you enter the museum from the south, there are no guards there.

Which interpretation is available when is shown to follow straightforwardly from very general properties of definite descriptions, and definite null anaphors in particular, made familiar by [Partee 1989](#) and analyzed within a Heimian theory of definiteness by [Condoravdi & Gawron 1996](#).

Chimericity arises simply because the fixed, world knowledge based background assumptions described above dictate that the issues raised by the antecedent and consequent in (6b) cannot be dependent, whereas they say nothing about the antecedent and consequent of (6a). The fact that, on either interpretation, (4) entails that there are guards at the south entrance is accounted for in terms of the same strengthening process involved in deriving the consequent of biscuit conditionals. Finally, the analysis of chimericity as such does not depend on the correctness of my account of the biscuit / hypothetical distinction as having to do with the notion of independence. Any analysis of the contrast that explains why (6a) is hypothetical and (6b) is biscuit will do. All the analysis depends on is the correctness of my account of the semantic ambiguity of chimerical consequents.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. §2 discusses in some more detail the differences between hypothetical, biscuit, and chimerical conditionals. §3 introduces the dynamic framework assumed in the rest of the paper. §4 presents the proposed analysis of the biscuit / hypothetical distinction. §5 lays out the proposed analysis of chimericity, and §6 draws some general conclusions and situates the analysis within the broader context of the division of labor between semantics and pragmatics.

2 Hypotheses, biscuits, and chimeras

This section further exemplifies and establishes the descriptive generality of the phenomenon of chimericity, and motivates in informal and intuitive terms the analytical claim at the core of the analysis below, namely that chimericity is rooted in an ambiguity due to the presence of an ambiguous definite element in the consequent.

Consider the sentence in (7), uttered in a context in which we are discussing your future travel plans.

- (7) If you are going to Barcelona, I know a local tailor.

As discussed earlier, whether a conditional is interpreted as hypothetical or biscuit depends on pragmatic background assumptions. Different assumptions lead to different intuitions, and so in examining particular examples, the assumptions must be fixed. Suppose that, as is normally the case, it is mutual knowledge between us that future actions cannot causally determine an individual's present state of knowledge. Given this fixed assumption, there

are still, just like in the heist scenario, two contrasting intuitions about (7), a hypothetical one and a biscuit one.

The hypothetical intuition is that whether I know a tailor local to your destination can depend, epistemically, on what that destination is. This kind of dependence is perfectly compatible with the background assumption above, namely that future actions cannot determine present epistemic states. In a context in which you are weighing several possible destinations, I can utter (7) to communicate exactly such a dependence. This intuition can be brought out even more clearly by the paraphrase in (8).

(8) If you are going to Barcelona, I know a tailor local to your destination.

The hypothetical intuition about (7) crucially depends on interpreting the consequent as raising the issue of whether I know a tailor local to your destination, where what your destination is is not settled in the common ground between us, and moreover, is one of the issues at hand. Interpreting the consequent in this way involves interpreting the definite description, *your destination*, as an individual concept, mapping any world of the common ground to your destination in that world. The details of what such an interpretation involves are elucidated and elaborated below.

The biscuit intuition about (7) is that who you know cannot possibly depend on whether or not I go to Barcelona. This kind of dependence is incompatible with the background pragmatic assumption that future actions cannot determine present epistemic states. The biscuit reading is highlighted by the paraphrase in (9).

(9) If you are going to Barcelona, I know a local tailor there.

The biscuit reading involves an interpretation of the consequent of (7) as saying that I know a tailor in Barcelona, and associated with the issue of whether I know such a tailor or not. According to the aforementioned pragmatic background assumption, a resolution of this issue cannot come from learning whether you go to Barcelona or not. Therefore, (7) on this interpretation is not likely to be used, or understood, to communicate such a dependence, but instead would normally be used, and understood, to communicate to the hearer that the speaker knows a tailor in Barcelona. Explaining the reasoning that leads to such an understanding is one of the key tasks of a theory of the biscuit-hypothetical distinction.

The inferential behavior of (7) is obscure in much the same way as was demonstrated for the heist scenario earlier. It is not possible to judge, simpliciter, whether (7) does or does not imply (10), since this latter sentence expresses different contents in different contexts.

(10) I know a local tailor.

The context dependence of (10) is due to the lexical predicate *local*, which, as shown by Partee 1989, has an implicit definite location argument, made explicit in the paraphrases in (8) and (9). But, also in parallel to the heist scenario, here too each interpretation is associated with specific and determinate implications, which are also brought out by the paraphrases. On the hypothetical interpretation, (7) is taken not to implicate its consequent — it does not imply that I know a local tailor at your destination, only that this is the case if your destination is Barcelona. On the biscuit interpretation, it does imply the consequent — it implies that I know a tailor in Barcelona.

The reader should be able to convince herself that a similar situation holds for the naturally occurring chimerical examples in (11) and (12).

(11) There's a bench if we go a bit further.

(12) If you like skiing, there are many options in Canada.

The examples cited so far all involve an implicit argument in the consequent. In (11), that argument is the location said to contain a bench, and in (12) it is the argument of *options*, the activity for which there are options in Canada. However, the implicitness of the argument is not essential, and chimericity arises also when the consequent contains an overt description. An example is the paraphrase (8) of (7) above, which is itself chimerical. When the definite description *your destination* is read as a rigid designator, picking out in each possibility of the context your destination in that possibility, the interpretation is hypothetical, as described above. However, if the definite description is read as referring back to Barcelona, the biscuit reading arises, in the same way as it does for (9). The reason why the pronoun *there* in (9) does not give rise to the same ambiguity as the definite description in (8) has to do with interpretational differences between pronouns and definite descriptions observed by Condoravdi & Gawron (1996). They observe, using the pattern in (13) (their example (13)), that pronouns, unlike definite descriptions and definite implicit arguments, must refer back to a linguistic antecedent when

one is present. While (13b) can be interpreted as saying that everyone who bet on the Superbowl won their bet, (13c) cannot.⁴

- (13) a. Everyone who bet on the Superbowl won the bet.
b. Everyone who bet on the Superbowl won.
c. Everyone who bet on the Superbowl won it.

Since pronouns must anchor to a linguistic antecedent, the pronoun *there* in (9) must refer back to the linguistically introduced antecedent *Barcelona*, rendering the consequent unambiguous, and forcing the biscuit intuition. In contrast, the implicit argument in (7), and the definite description in (8), can anchor instead to a variety of antecedents made available in the context. How this anchoring gives rise to the non-rigid, individual concept interpretation is explained in §5.

What is essential to chimericity is thus the range of interpretations that implicit and explicit definite arguments share, which includes in particular rigid and individual concept interpretations. As discussed extensively in §5, this range is determined by the familiarity presuppositions, in the sense of Heim 1982, carried by all such arguments. Such presuppositions can be satisfied by context in various ways, and each way of satisfying them determines a different interpretation for the definite argument, implicit or not, they are associated with.

3 Conditionals in a dynamic setting

Before turning to the analysis of the biscuit / hypothetical distinction, this section briefly presents the dynamic framework used throughout the rest of the paper. This is a standard framework, similar to Heim's (1982) file change semantics, and relying on the formulation in Dekker 1993. The framework is introduced somewhat informally and only in the amount of detail required for the exposition of the proposed analyses of biscuit conditionals and chimericity. Furthermore, no systematic and compositional translation procedure associating natural language expressions with dynamic meanings is given here. More extensive presentations of this and similar systems can be found in Heim 1982, Dekker 1993, Beaver 2001, *inter alia*.

In dynamic semantics, sentences are interpreted as functions from contexts to contexts. A context is understood as a body of information, for

⁴ Though see Pedersen 2011 for a dissenting view on this issue.

example the information taken to be common ground between interlocutors, or the information available to an agent. A context encodes information about the discourse referents defined as available for discussion, and factual information about what reality is taken to be like. For example, a context can provide information about two discourse referents, x and y , and say that x is a flower and y is a bee and y is sitting on x .

A model M is a pair $\langle D, W \rangle$, where W is a non-empty set of worlds and D is a non-empty set of individuals. A context c is a set of *possibilities*. A possibility i is a pair $\langle w, f \rangle$, where w is a world and f is an assignment function, a function mapping discourse referents, represented as object language variables taken from a set of variables V , to individuals in D . The domain $dom(f)$ of an assignment function f is the subset of variables in V to which it assigns individuals. The domain of a possibility i is simply the domain of its assignment function, $dom(f_i)$. Within a context, all the possibilities have the same domain, so it is possible to talk of the domain of a context, $dom(c)$, which is simply the domain shared by all the possibilities in c .

The meaning of a sentence is its *context change potential* (CCP), the way in which it can update a context, i.e., add information to it. There are two ways in which a sentence can add information to a context. First, it can introduce new discourse referents into the domain of the context. Second, it can add information about what is the case, including information about the values of defined discourse referents. Increasing the domain of a context with a new variable is called domain extension.

(14) *Domain extension*

For any possibility i , and element $d \in D$, $i[x/d] = \langle w_i, f_i \cup \langle x, d \rangle \rangle$.

The extension of c with x , $c[x]$, is the set of all possibilities $i[x/d]$ such that $i \in c$ and $d \in D$

$$c[x] = \{i[x/d]: i \in c \ \& \ d \in D\}$$

The addition of factual information about what the world might be like, including information about the values of variables already in the domain of the context, is modeled as loss of possibilities. Those possibilities in the input context that do not verify the information conveyed by the sentence are lost. The possibilities that are not lost are said to survive. A possibility i that is part of an input context c survives in an (output) context c' if and only if there is a possibility in c that is the same as i except for, possibly, having a

larger domain. An entire input context survives in an output context if and only if all the possibilities in the input context survive in the output context.

(15) *Survival*

If c and c' are contexts, and i a possibility in c , then

- (i) i survives in c' , $i < c'$, iff $\exists j \in c': w_i = w_j \ \& \ f_i \subseteq f_j$.
- (ii) $c < c'$ iff $\forall i \in c: i < c'$.

The CCP of a sentence ϕ is the function determining, for any context c , the context $c + [\phi]$ that results when c is updated with ϕ . In specifying CCPs, I use English expressions instead of translating them into a logical language. The intended interpretations of expressions are relative to possibilities. For example, the CCP of the sentence in (16a) is specified as (16b).

- (16) a. John arrived.
- b. $c + [\text{John arrived}] = \{i \in c \mid \text{John}^i \in \text{arrived}^i\}$

(16b) says that updating a context c with the sentence (16a) retains those possibilities i in c such that the interpretation of *John* relative to i is a member of the interpretation of *arrived* relative to i . As usual, the interpretation of individual terms such as proper names and variables relative to a possibility is determined by the assignment function of the possibility, whereas the interpretation of predicate symbols is determined by the world of the possibility.

Most important for current purposes is the interpretation of sentences containing expressions that introduce new discourse referents, such as indefinites, and the interpretation of conditionals. The interpretation of indefinites makes use of extension as defined above. An example is given in (17).

- (17) a. A man^x arrived.
- b. $c + [\text{a man}^x \text{ arrived}] = \{i \in c[x] \mid x^i \in \text{man}^i \ \& \ x^i \in \text{arrived}^i\}$ if $x \notin \text{dom}(c)$, else undefined.

(17) says that updating a context with the sentence in (17a) extends the domain of c with the variable x , and retains all and only the possibilities in the extension of c with x in which x is a man who arrived. An important aspect of the system, which plays a crucial role in the analysis of chimericity below, is the partiality of CCPs. The CCP in (17b) is only defined for input contexts that do not already contain x in their domain.

An intuitive picture of the information carried by a conditional is that it expresses that assuming the antecedent licenses inferring the consequent. Reflecting this intuition, the CCP of a conditional is in (18).

$$(18) \quad c + [\text{if } \phi, \psi] = \{i \in c \mid i \not\prec c + [\phi] \vee i < c + [\phi] + [\psi]\}$$

Updating a context with a conditional eliminates those possibilities that survive in the context c' that results from updating c with the antecedent, but do not survive in updating c' with the consequent.⁵

Finally, it is useful to define the notion of *support*. A context c is said to support ϕ , $c \models \phi$, if and only if no possibilities in c are lost in an update with ϕ .

$$(19) \quad \text{Support: } c \models \phi \text{ iff } \exists c': c' = c + [\phi] \text{ and } c < c'$$

This much is sufficient to introduce my analysis of the biscuit/hypothetical distinction and of chimericity.

4 An account of the biscuit / hypothetical distinction

Various theories of the biscuit/hypothetical distinction have been proposed in the literature. The analysis I present here is based on the pragmatic approach proposed in Franke 2007, 2009. I do not attempt here to argue for Franke's approach against prominent existing alternatives, such as DeRose & Grandy 1999, Siegel 2006 or Christian Ebert, Cornelia Ebert & Hinterwimmer 2014.⁶ I adopt Franke's approach because I find it more appealing than

⁵ This CCP for conditionals, taken from Dekker 1993, embodies a material implication analysis of conditionals. While such an analysis is widely held to be too simplistic, it is the simplest possible analysis of conditionals and suffices to illustrate the points of relevance in this paper. Assuming a more sophisticated analysis would neither improve my analysis, nor pose any problems for it.

⁶ Discussion can be found in Franke 2009. Here I wish to point out only that one objection against DeRose & Grandy's conditional assertion analysis, raised by Christian Ebert, Cornelia Ebert & Hinterwimmer (2014) and repeated by Franke, is not valid. On the latter analysis, conditionals assert their consequent on the condition that the antecedent is true. Christian Ebert, Cornelia Ebert & Hinterwimmer (2014) object that in examples like (i), the consequent is asserted regardless of whether the antecedent is true or not.

(i) If you're not going to watch the movie, the hero dies.

They point out that a speaker who utters (i) has spoiled the movie regardless of the truth of the antecedent. However, this does not show that the consequent of (i) is asserted. All

the alternatives, and because it can easily form the basis of an analysis of chimericity that is couched in a uniform semantics for conditionals. The latter analysis, however, does not depend on adopting Franke's approach. Chimericity is a consequence of the semantics of chimerical consequents, and it is possible that other approaches to the biscuit / hypothetical distinction can be used to account for chimericity. Exploring whether they can do so and how, however, involves tackling complicated issues that are tangential to the goal of the paper. For example, extending [DeRose & Grandy's](#) analysis would require discussing how the notion of conditional assertion, and more generally conditional speech acts, should be formalized, and how it might interact with a theory of definite presuppositions, a far from trivial task. Franke's analysis, in contrast, is couched in a familiar and well understood dynamic semantics.

The intuitive idea behind Franke's proposal is that biscuit conditionals are ones whose antecedent and consequent are taken to be causally and epistemically independent of each other. Two propositions are independent of each other when learning the truth (or falsity) of the first, if not already known, does not change the agent's beliefs about the second. The assumption of independence together with some pragmatic reasoning leads to an *unconditional* meaning, e.g., to the entailment of the consequent. Specifically, reasoning on part of the hearer about the interaction between what the speaker says in uttering a conditional and what she is presumed to believe, namely the independence of the antecedent and consequent, leads inevitably to the conclusion that she takes the consequent to be true.

I adopt this intuition, but propose two modifications to Franke's specific proposal. The first is to define independence not as a relation between propositions, but between *issues*, defined as sets of formulae in a dynamic language. This modification is required for the analysis of chimericity, as will become clear below. The second is in how the entailment of the consequent is derived. In Franke's analysis, what determines whether a conditional is hypothetical or biscuit is what the hearer assumes about the status of the antecedent and consequent in the speaker's information state. I argue that assumptions about a speaker's information state are not enough. There are

it shows is that the information in the consequent is conveyed regardless of the truth of the antecedent. There are many ways in which hearers can come upon information that will spoil a movie for them, which are not assertions by an interlocutor. Assertion is a theoretical notion, and [Christian Ebert](#), [Cornelia Ebert](#) & [Hinterwimmer](#) do not take any steps to show that there is assertion of the consequent in (i).

cases in which the hearer assumes that the antecedent and consequent issues are independent in the speaker's epistemic state, but no biscuit reading is generated. What is required for biscuit readings to arise, and hence for the strengthening inference leading to the consequent being implied, is a context in which mutual knowledge, which is part of the common ground between the interlocutors, rules out dependence *in the common ground*.

4.1 Independence

Franke (2007) analyzes the biscuit/hypothetical contrast in terms of what he calls *epistemic (in)dependence*, a notion closely related to Lewis's (1988) *orthogonality of subject matters*. Lewis defines a subject matter as a partition of the set of possible worlds into at least two cells, non-universal equivalence classes of worlds that agree in some respect.⁷ For example, the subject matter of whether it is raining partitions the set of worlds into two cells, one containing all the worlds that agree that it is raining, and another that contains all the worlds that agree that it isn't.⁸ Two subject matters M_1, M_2 , are orthogonal when the partitions they induce crosscut each other, so that every cell of M_1 intersects every cell of M_2 .

The core idea Franke wants to capture is that two propositions p, q are epistemically independent when, in an epistemic state in which they are not already known to be true or false, learning the truth value of one is not enough to determine the truth value of the other. If epistemic states are taken to be sets of worlds, this is clearly the case in any epistemic state in which two subject matters, one partitioning the state into p and non- p worlds, the other into q and non- q worlds, are orthogonal. Franke's definition of epistemic independence is reproduced in (20).

⁷ Lewis deliberates whether to call the one-celled partition a degenerate subject matter or not to call it a subject matter at all, and, for convenience, opts for the latter.

⁸ von Stechow (2001) makes similar use of alternatives to the antecedent to account for the inference known as *conditional perfection*. He argues that uttering a conditional implies that the speaker does not believe that the consequent is true no matter what. In other words, conditionals implicate that the consequent raises an issue, or creates a subject matter, for the speaker. This is of course not the case with biscuit conditionals, which, as we saw, imply the unconditional truth of the consequent. The heart of the analysis proposed here is that the implication that the consequent creates a subject matter for the speaker is cancelled when it is common knowledge that such a subject matter is orthogonal to the subject matter raised by the antecedent.

(20) *Epistemic Independence*: (Franke 2007)

Two propositions p, q are epistemically independent *iff*
 for all $A \in \{p, \neg p\}$ and all $B \in \{q, \neg q\}$,
 $\diamond A \ \& \ \diamond B \rightarrow \diamond(A \ \& \ B)$

This notion of independence is then used to derive the properties that differentiate biscuit from hypothetical conditionals as follows.⁹ Conditionals receive the simple dynamic interpretation in (18) above. Thus, a speaker uttering a conditional *if p,q* is proposing to update the common ground c so that all the p worlds are q worlds, e.g., so that $c + p \models q$. Assuming the speaker is abiding by quality, this indicates that the speaker's own epistemic state σ is such that $\sigma + p \models q$. Now, some pairs of propositions p and q are such that, in Franke's formulation, "normally we would not expect [their] truth or falsity ... to depend on one another" (p. 92). This is for example the case with the propositions *you are thirsty* and *there is beer in the fridge*. So a speaker can normally be taken to assume that these two propositions are epistemically independent, i.e., that (20) holds for these two propositions in the speaker's epistemic state. If this is the case, and yet the speaker is sincerely uttering the conditional *if p,q*, thereby indicating that in her epistemic state, the p worlds are a subset of the q worlds, then the speaker must either believe that p is false, or else that q is true. This is so because if it were epistemically possible for the speaker that p , and also possible that $\neg q$, then by epistemic independence, it would be possible that $p \ \& \ \neg q$, which contradicts what the speaker is literally saying. However, a speaker uttering a non-counterfactual conditional strongly implies that the antecedent is at least possible in their epistemic state, as evidenced by (21).¹⁰ In fact, Leahy (2011) suggests that this is a semantic presupposition of indicative conditionals.

⁹ See Franke 2009 for illuminating discussion of the intellectual roots of this idea, and van Rooij 2007 for an illustration of how independence can be used to account for the strengthening of so-called conditional presuppositions (the so-called "proviso" problem). In fact, van Rooij's strengthening account for conditional presuppositions and Franke's strengthening account, adopted here, of biscuit conditionals, are almost exactly parallel: the reasoning applied by van Rooij to the presupposition of the consequent is here applied to the consequent itself.

¹⁰ An exception is when it is common ground that the consequent is false, as in so-called "monkey's uncle" conditionals (*If that's an analysis then I'm the queen of England*). In this kind of case, the speaker can expect the hearer to recognize their intention to communicate the belief that the antecedent is false based on the blatant implausibility of the consequent. However, such an expectation is unmotivated in a context in which the truth of the consequent is a live possibility.

(21) #David left yesterday. If he is still here, we can go out for drinks.

Therefore, the hearer must conclude that the speaker believes the consequent q to be true. Thus, the utterance implies the consequent, and the implication can only be cancelled if the assumption that the speaker believes p and q to be independent is given up, in which case the conditional becomes hypothetical.

This explanation insightfully derives the most important interpretative property distinguishing biscuit from hypothetical conditionals, the implication of the consequent, as a pragmatic strengthening effect, and I adopt it here, with two modifications. First, as noted already by Franke, the definition in (20) has the unwelcome consequence that, whenever a proposition is known, it is automatically independent of all other propositions, including itself. Beyond the unintuitive nature of this result, it also interferes with Franke's explanation of the pragmatic strengthening responsible for the implication of the consequent. It is easy to imagine contexts in which the hearer assumes that the speaker knows the truth value of the antecedent, consequent, or both, and nevertheless interprets the speaker's utterance as a hypothetical conditional.

For example, consider the scenario of a child playing a game with an adult. The game involves a box with holes of different colors and balls matching the colors of the holes. The child is supposed to put each ball into the hole that matches its color. The parent knows that, if the child correctly matches the colors, the ball reappears in a slot after a few seconds, and if not, it stays trapped inside a tube and must be released. The child however does not know this, since she has not played this game before. The child proceeds to take a ball and put it in one of the holes. Suppose the child is perfectly aware that the adult knows whether her choice was right or not, and she is also aware that the adult knows the outcome of a correct and an incorrect choice. The adult says:

(22) If you made the right choice, the ball will come out here.

In this case, the child clearly assumes that the two propositions, *you chose the right hole* and *the ball will come out here*, are independent on the adult's information state, simply because it is common ground between child and adult that the adult knows the truth value of the antecedent, and perhaps also that of the consequent. It is thus the case that the parent's information state entails either that the antecedent is true, or else that it is false. Therefore,

on the parent's information state, it is either false that $\diamond(\textit{you made the right choice})$, or else it is false that $\diamond(\textit{you made the right choice})$. If either of these is false, then according to (20), the antecedent and consequent are independent. But (22) is clearly not a biscuit conditional. It does not generally entail its consequent, and will not entail it for the child either. Rather, (22) informs the child of the dependency between choosing the right hole and the ball reappearing. In fact, this is a case likely to trigger a conditional perfection inference. In this kind of scenario, then, pragmatic strengthening should kick in, yielding a biscuit interpretation, contrary to fact.

To overcome this problem, Franke (2009) proposes an amended definition where independence is defined not in terms of an agent's epistemic state, but a state derived from it by belief revision. Thus, two propositions are independent if and only if they are independent on the speaker's information state, or would have been independent on that state were the truth of the antecedent not known already. This notion of independence avoids the problem just discussed. However, belief revision is a thorny issue and gives rise to non-trivial questions. For example, the question arises how the child in our scenario could reason about the speaker's revised information state, given that she does not have access to the speaker's current information state. Perhaps what the hearer does is assume that there is at least one such revised state in which the two propositions are not independent.

These issues are circumvented, and a simpler story made available, by the proposal made below, according to which biscuit readings do not arise from independence of the relevant issues on the speaker's epistemic state, but instead from dependence of the issues in the common ground being ruled out by mutual knowledge about causal and epistemic dependencies. What happens in the game scenario just described is simply that, even though the antecedent and consequent are independent for the parent, and even though this is known to the child, there is no common ground information ruling out dependence. When the parent utters the conditional, there is thus no reason for the child not to interpret it as expressing a condition.

4.2 Deriving biscuit and hypothetical readings

My proposal is that a biscuit reading of a conditional arises when a pragmatic background assumption, some piece of information taken to be mutual knowledge between the interlocutors, rules out a common ground in which the antecedent and the consequent are dependent. Crucially, it is not enough

that the issues happen in fact to be independent in the common ground. Dependence must be incompatible with mutual knowledge.

In order to spell out this suggestion, I replace Franke's definition of epistemic independence with a definition of *issue dependence*. Issues are not taken to be sets of propositions, but rather sets of formulae. The reason for this is that some formulae, in particular those crucial for producing chimericity, cannot be identified with propositions, as shown in §5. (23) defines when a set of formulae forms an issue relative to a context c , building on Hulstijn 1997. Issues are simply a dynamic, hence partiality sensitive, version of Lewis's subject matters.

(23) *Issues:*

A set of formulae $\phi?$ is an issue relative to a context c iff:

- (i) *Definedness:* $c + [\phi]$ is defined for all $\phi \in \phi?$
- (ii) *Partition:* For any $\phi, \psi \in \phi?$ such that $\phi \neq \psi$, $c + [\phi]$ and $c + [\psi]$ are non-empty and disjoint, and every possibility in c survives in $c + [\phi]$ for some $\phi \in \phi?$

The antecedent and consequent of a conditional are each associated with an issue. Many factors go into determining which issues a conditional raises, including speaker intentions, mutual conversational goals, etc. The nature of these factors cannot be explored here and is not pertinent to the analysis of chimericity. Very typical issues for a conditional to raise are the ones considered by Franke, containing a proposition and its polar opposite. However, other issues are also possible, for example ones corresponding to *which-questions*, containing a proposition and some salient alternatives.¹¹

¹¹ An interesting consequence of (23) is that there are conditionals, like (i), whose antecedent and consequent cannot be jointly associated with issues.

(i) If John has a sister, John's sister is Catholic.

(i) would normally be uttered in a context which does not satisfy the presupposition of the consequent, namely that John has a sister. Therefore, there is no way to assign the consequent an issue relative to the input context, making it impossible to determine whether the antecedent and consequent issues of (i) are dependent in Franke's sense or not. An obvious way of dealing with this kind of case is to make the definedness condition for issues sensitive to the dynamics of interpretation, and require that the CCPs in the consequent issue be defined locally in the context resulting from updating the input context with the antecedent. The theoretical desirability of such a move depends on whether one thinks (i) should be modeled as a hypothetical conditional. (i) is clearly not a biscuit conditional. However, it is arguably not a normal hypothetical conditional either. While an epistemic

Two issues $p?$, $q?$ are said to be dependent relative to a context c when (i) both induce non-single celled partitions on c and (ii) resolving $p?$ in c leads to at least partial resolution of $q?$ in c , e.g., deletes at least one of the cells in the partition induced by $q?$. Because issues are sets of formulae, the definitions in (24) are stated in terms of context update.

- (24) *Issue dependence*: An issue $q?$ is dependent on $p?$ relative to a context c iff:
- a. For every $\phi \in p? \cup q?$, $c + \phi \neq \emptyset$ and
 - b. For at least one $\phi \in p?$ and one $\psi \in q?$, $c + [\phi] \models \psi$.

Taking the worlds that survive in $c + [\phi]$ for any ϕ in $p?$ or in $q?$ to be a proposition, $p?$ and $q?$ are dependent when they form subject matters relative to c and these subject matters are not orthogonal. Issue dependence is a purely structural property of information states. The presence and absence of this structural property can reflect assumptions about both causal and epistemic relations between subject matters.

Biscuit readings of conditionals arise when the background assumptions shared by the interlocutors rule out a common ground in which antecedent and consequent issues are dependent. For example, consider again (25), with (25a) and (25b) representing the antecedent and consequent issues, respectively, t standing for *the hearer is thirsty*, and b for *there is beer in the fridge*.

- (25) If you're thirsty there's beer in the fridge.
- a. $T? = \{t, \neg t\}$
 - b. $B? = \{b, \neg b\}$

Our knowledge of causal interactions in the world dictates that internal states such as thirst do not have the causal power to bring objects into existence, or to make them change location. Therefore, causal knowledge does not license any conclusions about whether there is beer in the fridge based on whether or not someone is thirsty. Similarly, what we know (or assume to know) about reasoning dictates that from the fact that someone is thirsty,

relation between antecedent and consequent in (i) is undeniable, it seems wrong to say that learning whether or not John has a sister could change one's opinion about whether or not John's sister is Catholic. Similarly, it is absurd to ask whether it would remain true (or false) that John's sister is Catholic if it turned out he didn't have one. I do not attempt to resolve this matter here.

one cannot conclude anything (without auxiliary assumptions) about which objects exist where. This pragmatic knowledge about causality and epistemic reasoning translates into assumption about the structure of the common ground. Specifically, interlocutors would normally assume, unless there is contextually specific information to the contrary, that the issues $T?$ and $B?$ are independent in the common ground. If they were dependent, then resolving $T?$ would be enough to resolve $B?$, contrary to what the interlocutors assume they mutually know.

Franke's strengthening account of the implication of the consequent by biscuit conditionals carries over straightforwardly to this modified version of his account of the distinction. In a context like the one just described, the speaker pragmatically presupposes (in the sense of [Stalnaker 1974](#)) the background assumptions about causality and reasoning. Given the conventional meaning of (25), in uttering it the speaker is suggesting to change the common ground in a way that would make it the case that all possibilities in which t is true are also ones in which b is. The hearer will then seek a way to do this without reaching a common ground that contradicts the mutual knowledge presupposed by the speaker, e.g., one in which $T?$ and $B?$ are dependent. There are two ways for her to do this, both of which involve modifying the common ground in a way that abolishes (e.g., resolves) one of the issues. The first is to conclude that the speaker knows the antecedent to be false, and so to eliminate all possibilities in which it is true from the common ground. The second is to conclude that she knows the consequent to be true, and eliminate all possibilities in which it is false.

This first option is ruled out for the same reason as in Franke's account, namely that indicative conditionals presuppose that the speaker holds the antecedent to at least be possibly true in the common ground. The hearer will thus opt for the second option, deleting from the common ground all possibilities in which there is no beer in the fridge.¹² The resulting common ground of course entails the consequent.

Here as in Franke's account, the strengthening of biscuit conditionals to unconditionals arises from the interaction of the semantics of conditionals with pragmatic assumptions. On the proposed account, what triggers the

¹² Note that it does not matter here whether the speaker also knows whether the hearer is thirsty or not, and even if this is part of the common ground or not. The following is perfectly natural:

- (i) I see you're thirsty. If you're thirsty, there's beer in the fridge.

strengthening is not what the hearer assumes about the speaker's information state, but a conflict between what the speaker said and assumptions in the common ground. It is worth stressing that a pragmatic strengthening account does not predict that the implication of the consequent is cancelable. This implication is not an implicature, and is not generated by reasoning about conversational intentions. Rather, it is a contextual entailment of the output common ground given that certain presuppositions are met.

As pointed out in the introduction, biscuit conditionals also imply an unconditional. This fact also receives a very natural explanation within the current analysis of the biscuit / hypothetical distinction. [Rawlins \(2008\)](#) has argued that unconditionals assert that the antecedent issue is orthogonal to the consequent issue. Assuming this analysis is essentially correct, it follows that utterances of biscuit conditionals imply, because of the common ground in which they are asserted, what unconditionals assert. The truth of an unconditional thus comes out as a necessary contextual inference once a biscuit reading of a conditional is accepted.

A conditional receives a hypothetical reading on this account when there is no mutual knowledge to rule out dependence, in which case there is no reason for the hearer not to update the common ground in the usual way (unless, of course, they believe the speaker's assertion to be false).

Summarizing, the analysis proposed here is that biscuit conditionals are just regular conditionals semantically, set apart from hypothetical conditionals in that their antecedent and consequent raise issues that, because of mutual knowledge between the interlocutors about causality and / or epistemic reasoning, cannot be dependent in the common ground. Issue dependence is analyzed essentially as question non-orthogonality in Lewis' sense. The pragmatically motivated assumption that the antecedent and consequent issues are not dependent brings about a strengthening of the actual context change effect of the conditional, as suggested in [Franke 2009](#). This strengthened dynamic effect leads to a context that entails the truth of the consequent. Having laid out an analysis of the biscuit / hypothetical distinction, it is possible to turn to the main goal of the paper, namely an analysis of chimericity. Before doing so, §4.3 briefly discusses the pragmatic question of the motivation for using biscuit conditionals.

4.3 The conversational rationale of biscuit conditionals

If the semantic effect of a biscuit conditional is, essentially, to assert the consequent, this raises the question why a speaker would ever utter a biscuit conditional rather than simply uttering the consequent. A common intuition in the literature (for example [van der Auwera 1986](#), [Iatridou 1991](#), [Geis & Lycan 1993](#)) is that conversationally, the antecedent plays some role in increasing the assertability of the consequent, e.g., by ensuring that an assertion of the consequent is relevant, polite, or appropriate in some other sense. On [DeRose & Grandy's \(1999\)](#) conditional assertion analysis, all conditional sentences, hypothetical or biscuit, assert their consequent, if they assert anything at all. The assertability of the consequent is conditional on the truth of the antecedent. Unless the antecedent is true, the speaker is not in a position to assert the consequent. Biscuit and hypothetical conditionals differ in which criterion of assertability depends on the truth of the antecedent to be met. Hypothetical readings arise when the speaker is not confident enough about the truth of the consequent to assert it, but is confident enough about its truth given the truth of the antecedent. Biscuit readings arise when the speaker is not confident enough about the *relevance* of the consequent to assert it, but is confident enough about its relevance given the truth of the antecedent.

Conditional assertion, and conditional speech acts more generally, are controversial for various reasons (some of them, in my view, unjustified, see fn. 6), but one need not adopt [DeRose & Grandy's](#) theory in order to accept the basic intuition that the pragmatic rationale of biscuit conditionals has to do with consequent assertability. On the analysis proposed in this paper, conditionals do not in general assert their consequent. Rather, when the issues raised by the antecedent and consequent are taken to be independent, the dynamic effect of the conditional becomes identical to that of the consequent. Nevertheless, by uttering a biscuit conditional, the speaker raises an issue associated with the antecedent, which would not be raised by a simple assertion of the consequent. Raising this issue can have various conversational goals, which can motivate the use of a conditional form. The goal may be to make clear to the hearer what issue the speaker thinks the consequent is relevant for. Against the issue of whether you are thirsty or not, the information that there is beer in the fridge is clearly relevant. The goal might also be to make a simple gesture of politeness. In (26), raising the issues of whether the hearer minds that the speaker is going to light a

cigarette is simply signaling to the hearer that the speaker is ready to take the hearer's concerns into consideration in deliberating her actions.

(26) If you don't mind, I'm going to light a cigarette.

Furthermore, as Franke 2007 points out, the point of raising the antecedent issue, in many cases, can and should be articulated more precisely. He describes the following scenario. Suppose that we are about to go swimming and I am packing my bag. Suppose further that you are thirsty and this is common knowledge between us. If I then say *there is beer in the fridge*, you may not know how exactly this assertion is relevant. It might be that it is relevant because you are thirsty and I am offering you a drink, but it might equally well be that I am instead asking you to help me complete the packing. Uttering the biscuit conditional, *If you're thirsty, there's beer in the fridge*, on the other hand, clarifies that I am asserting that there is beer because this is relevant to the issue of your thirst, and is a way for me to signal to you that you may drink the beer. In this case, asserting the biscuit conditional is not only more conversationally appropriate than a mere assertion of the consequent, it is also more informative. Except for informing you about the presence of beer, it also informs you about how you might go about quenching your thirst. Franke rightly concludes that biscuit conditionals fulfill a function of *optimizing* the discourse in some sense.

5 Chimericity

Turning now to the analysis of chimerical conditionals, consider again the running example of the heist scenario, repeated in (27).

(27) There are no guards if you enter from the south.

As discussed in §2, (27) is chimerical because it gives rise to contrasting biscuit and hypothetical intuitions. On the view elaborated in the previous section, the biscuit / hypothetical distinction corresponds to the presence or absence of a pragmatic presupposition that rules out dependence between the antecedent and consequent issues. The puzzle is that chimericity is present even when the world knowledge based assumptions that do or do not rule out such a dependence are fixed. For example, in the heist scenario, it is taken to be mutual knowledge that the distribution of guards is not causally

or epistemically connected to the addressee's course of action, and yet the example (27) is still chimerical.

If the approach to the biscuit / hypothetical distinction presented above is correct, what could possibly be the source of chimericity? If world knowledge is fixed, then it cannot simultaneously rule out and not rule out dependence between the antecedent and consequent issues. There must therefore be some property of the relevant conditionals that makes it the case that their antecedent and consequent are systematically associated with more than one set of issues. My proposal is that the relevant property is a semantic one, specifically a particular kind of context dependence in the consequent which is familiar from the literature on definite descriptions and definite null arguments.

Specifically, in what follows I show that chimerical consequents contain a presuppositional element interpreted like a definite description. As a consequence, the sentence in (27) is interpreted roughly as if it were the sentence in (28).

(28) If you enter from the south, there are no guards at *the entrance*.

A definite description like *the entrance* can be interpreted as a rigid designator, referring to a particular entrance. It can also be interpreted as an individual concept, denoting, in different worlds, the location one enters through in that world. Such an interpretation is the salient interpretation of the italicized sentence in (29), for example.

(29) Whenever I enter a building in this city, *the entrance is dirty*.

In (27), and in chimerical conditionals more generally, the consequent is ambiguous between an interpretation involving a rigid designator and one involving a concept. Each interpretation gives rise to a different consequent issue. On the rigid interpretation, the consequent issue for (27) is whether or not there are guards at the south entrance. On the concept interpretation, it is whether or not there are guards at the entrance the addressee chooses to enter through, possibly a different one across possibilities in a context. These consequent issues interact differently with the antecedent issue. Intuitively, given the assumptions in the heist scenario, whether or not a particular entrance, say the south entrance, is guarded or not does not depend on the addressee's plans and actions. In contrast, whether or not the entrance you choose is guarded or not surely can depend on what entrance you choose,

since some entrances might be guarded and others not. Thus, the ambiguity of chimerical consequents brings about two sets of issues, one of which contains issues whose dependence contradicts mutual assumptions, the other of which contains issues whose dependence is perfectly compatible with them. The question is which set of issues arises when, and why it arises when it does. The rest of this section elaborates this informal description of the analysis in a way that answers these questions.

5.1 Chimerical consequents and familiarity presuppositions

My analysis pins chimericity on the interpretation of chimerical consequents. The examples in (30) show that the consequent of (27), *There are no guards*, expresses different propositions in different contexts.

- (30) a. Look! There are no guards!
b. I checked my office. There are no guards.
c. Every prisoner who tried to escape thought there were no guards.

(30a) is normally interpreted *deictically*, as saying that there are no guards at the location of utterance. (30b) shows a *discourse anaphoric* interpretation, where the sentence is taken to express the proposition that there are no guards in my office. Finally, in (30c), a so-called *bound variable* reading arises, in which case the sentence does not express a single proposition. Rather, for each prisoner quantified over, it says that that prisoner thought that there were no guards at the prison they tried to escape from. What this shows is that the consequent of (30) does not express a stable proposition — its content is variable with context.

The context dependence exhibited by *There are no guards* is identical to that generally exhibited by sentences containing implicit arguments, in particular ones containing what Fillmore 1986 calls *definite null anaphors*. As observed by Mitchell 1986 and Partee 1989, lexical predicates whose interpretation involves such anaphors, such as *local*, give rise to the three readings exemplified in (30). This is shown for *local* in (31).

- (31) a. We can watch the game at a local bar. (deictic)
b. We were in Berlin and watched the game at a local bar. (discourse anaphoric)
c. Every fan watched the game at a local bar. (bound variable)

Partee proposes that these three readings correspond to different ways in which context can determine an antecedent for the implicit anaphor. Building on this insight, Condoravdi & Gawron (1996) develop an analysis of the context dependence of implicit arguments which links them to definite descriptions, by pinning their range of interpretation on the presence of familiarity presuppositions such as are associated with definite descriptions in Heim's (1982) theory of definiteness as familiarity. For example, in the cases in (31), the implicit argument is presupposed to be a familiar location. In (30), the implicit argument is, roughly, the location that is said to contain no guards.

Condoravdi and Gawron show that adopting a dynamic framework like the one assumed here allows for these three kinds of reading to be captured uniformly, by modeling familiarity presuppositions as restrictions on input contexts. Their analysis is extended to sentences like (30) in Francez 2009, and I adopt it here. A familiarity presupposition is the requirement that the domain of the input context contain a certain discourse referent (represented as a variable), and entail that this referent fulfill some descriptive conditions. For example, the CCP of a sentence containing a definite description is shown in (32).

- (32) a. The dog^y died.
 b. $c + [\text{the dog}^y \text{ died}] = \{i \in c : y^i \in \text{died}^i\}$
 if $y \in \text{dom}(c)$ and $\forall i \in c, y^i \in \text{dog}^i$
 Otherwise undefined.

In order for the CCP of (32a) to be defined, the variable y must be a member of the domain of the input context c , and c must entail that y is a dog.¹³ Implicit arguments are similarly associated with familiarity presuppositions. For example, an utterance of (33), involving the lexical predicate *local* presupposes that a familiar location to which the relevant hotel is local.

- (33) I stayed at a local^x hotel.

Technically, for an utterance of (33) to perform an update, the variable x must already be in the domain of the input context, and the value assigned

¹³ A context c entails a formula ϕ iff ϕ is true in every possibility in c . This notion is the same as the notion of support defined above, except in that it does not allow that ϕ introduces new variables.

to x by the assignment function in every possibility throughout that context must be a location.

The different readings of implicit arguments correspond to the different ways in which context can satisfy their presuppositions. Deictic readings arise when the presupposition is fulfilled because of features of the context of utterance. For example, any context in which something is uttered is a context in which the location of utterance is familiar and in which it is common ground that it is a location. Discourse anaphoric readings arise when the presupposition is satisfied by a referent introduced in a previous utterance. Bound variable readings arise when the presupposition is satisfied in the “auxiliary” contexts constructed in the calculation of a quantificational sentence, the details of which are irrelevant here (see [Condoravdi & Gawron 1996](#)). If the input context does not contain the relevant referent, sometimes the referent can be accommodated. (31c) is an example of such accommodation.

(34) Every fan _{x} watched the game at a local _{z} bar.

In (34), the familiar location z is, for each fan, the location they are in. The input context, presumably, does not contain variables for each of these locations. Instead, they are accommodated via the relation they bear to the fans.

In the cases in (30), the implicit argument is also presupposed to be familiar location.¹⁴ In (30a), the familiar location is determined to be the location of utterance. In (30b), it is the location introduced by the first sentence.¹⁵ In (30c), it is the accommodated prison from which each prisoner is trying to escape. The meaning of the consequent of the chimerical conditional (27) can thus be represented as in (35). The notation $i <_z j$ says that $w_j = w_i$ and $dom(f_j) = dom(f_i) \cup \{z\}$.

(35) $c + [\text{there are no guards}^{z,l}] =$
 $\{i \in c \mid \neg \exists j: i <_z j \text{ and } z^j \in \text{guard}^j \text{ and } \langle z^j, l^j \rangle \in \text{at}^j\}$

¹⁴ I leave open here the question of whether this implicit argument is an argument of the determiner, of the NP, or of the verb *be*. If there are empirical ways to decide this, the decision is inconsequential to the semantic analysis of the relevant sentences. Furthermore, treating the implicit argument as a location is an oversimplification, but this is not relevant here. See [Francez 2009](#) for discussion of the simplification involved.

¹⁵ This is of course not the *only* way to interpret this sentence. The role of the semantic theory presented here is to account for the observed readings, not to provide a mechanism of anaphora resolution.

if $l \in \text{dom}(i)$ and $l^i \in \text{location}^i$ for all $i \in c$
 else undefined.

In words, updating a context c with $\llbracket \text{There are no guards} \rrbracket$ preserves all and only those possibilities in c that cannot be extended with a variable z assigned to some guards located in the familiar location l . If there is no familiar location l , the update is undefined.

5.2 Issues for chimerical consequents

Going back to (27), the familiarity presuppositions associated with the implicit argument of the consequent can now be used to explain the systematic ambiguity of chimerical consequents between a rigid and a non-rigid interpretation, which in turn paves the way to understanding the conditions under which chimerical consequents are associated with different issues.

Consider two versions of the heist scenario. In the first, suppose it is common ground between the interlocutors that there is a southern entrance l , but it is unsettled whether the addressee will enter the museum or not. In this case, the presupposition of the antecedent $\llbracket \text{you enter from the south} \rrbracket$, namely that the south entrance is familiar, is satisfied in the global context (for current purposes, I make the simplifying assumption that the trigger of this presupposition is the noun phrase *the south*, treating it as a shortened name for *the southern entrance*). The CCP for the antecedent can be written as in (36). In (36), m^i is a referent naming the museum, and the notation $@$ is used for the addressee of the context, glossing over the issue of indexicality, for which see the discussion in Condoravdi & Gawron 1996.

(36) $c + [\text{you enter from the south}^l] = \{i \in c \mid \langle l^i, m^i, @^i \rangle \in \text{enter}^i\}$
 if $l \in \text{dom}(i)$ and $l^i \in \text{south-entrance}^i$ for all $i \in c$, else undefined.

The antecedent can then be associated with the issue in (37), the issue whether the addressee enters from the south entrance or not.

(37) { you enter from the south entrance, you don't enter from the south entrance }

The context as described also makes available a particular interpretation for the consequent, which can be called the *rigid* interpretation. On this interpretation, the implicit argument in the consequent anchors to the familiar location l , the south entrance, as in (38).

Chimerical conditionals

- (38) $c + [\text{there are no guards}^{z,l}] = \{i \in c \mid \neg \exists j: i <_z j \text{ and } z^j \in \text{guard}^j \text{ and } \langle z^j, l^j \rangle \in \text{at}^j\}$
 if $l \in \text{dom}(i)$ and $l^i \in \text{location}^i$ for all $i \in c$, else undefined.

This is a rigid interpretation because the discourse referent l refers to the south entrance throughout all the possibilities in the context c . On this interpretation, the consequent issue is whether there are guards at the south entrance or not.

- (39) { there are guards at the south entrance, there are no guards at the south entrance }

Clearly, a dependence between the antecedent issue in (37) and the consequent issue in (39) would, normally, contradict mutual assumptions. Given what we generally know about the causal effects of entering a building, and given what we generally know about the distribution of guards in museums, a speaker generally takes for granted, and assumes the hearer to take for granted, etc., that learning whether or not the addressee will enter from the south or not cannot reveal anything about whether the south entrance is guarded or not. Franke's strengthening process discussed above for biscuit conditionals will then kick in. The CCP of the conditional is the one in (40).

- (40) $c + [\text{if you enter from the south}^l, \text{there are no guards}^{z,l}] =$
 $\{i \in c \mid i \prec c + [\text{you enter from the south}^l] \vee$
 $i \prec c + [\text{you enter from the south}^l] + [\text{there are no guards}^{z,l}]\}$
 if $l \in \text{dom}(i)$ and $l^i \in \text{location}^i$ for all $i \in c$, else undefined.

If the common ground is heterogeneous about whether the addressee enters from the south or not (e.g., contains possibilities in which she does and ones in which she does not), and about whether the south entrance is guarded or not, then the effect of updating with (40) is a common ground in which learning that the addressee did enter from the south would determine that the south entrance is guarded, in contradiction with the assumption that the two issues are not dependent. Therefore, the hearer will seek a way to update the common ground that would not violate the presupposition and still accord with (40). On the assumption that speakers who utter conditionals presuppose the antecedent to be at least possibly true, the only way to update the common ground in accordance with (40) is to delete all possibilities in

which there are guards at the south entrance. The resulting common ground entails the consequent, on its interpretation in (38).

The second version of the heist scenario to be considered is one in which the common ground already determines that the addressee will enter the museum, but does not determine which entrance among several possible ones she will choose. In other words, all possibilities are ones in which the speaker enters the museum, though the entry point might be different across possibilities. The common ground therefore can be taken to include, perhaps through accommodation, a discourse referent for the entry point. This gives rise to a different interpretation for the conditional. The meaning of the antecedent stays the same, as does the antecedent issue, which is the one in (37), but the range of interpretations available to the consequent changes, in that the implicit argument can now anchor to the referent for the entry point. The interpretation of the consequent in that case is the one in (41), where u is the referent for the entry point.

$$(41) \quad c + [\text{there are no guards}^{z,u}] = \\ \{i \in c \mid \neg \exists j : i <_z j \text{ and } z^j \in \text{guard}^j \text{ and } \langle z^j, u^j \rangle \in \text{at}^j\} \\ \text{if } u \in \text{dom}(i) \text{ and for all } i \in c, u^i \in \text{location}^i \text{ and } \langle @, u^i \rangle \in \\ \text{enter-from}^i, \text{ else undefined.}$$

This interpretation involves a non-rigid, individual concept reading of the implicit argument of the consequent. For each possibility i of the common ground, u^i might be a different location, but it is always the one through which the addressee enters the museum in i . Thus, the CCP in (41) amounts to the proposition that there are no guards where the addressee enters the museum, and hence a salient issue to associate with the consequent is whether or not this proposition is true. This issue is the one in (42a), the prose version of which is given in (42b)

$$(42) \quad \text{a. } \{ \text{there are no guards}^{z,u}, \text{ there are guards}^{z,u} \} \\ \text{b. } \{ \text{there are guards where you enter}, \text{ there are no guards where} \\ \text{you enter} \}$$

In contrast with the issue in (39), there is nothing in the background assumptions that would rule out a dependence between these issues. In fact, there is a very salient epistemic dependence between them. Given what we generally know about the epistemic effects of resolving identity questions, determining that the addressee will enter from the south might very well

determine whether the referent of u is guarded or not. This is the source of the hypothetical intuition.

The CCP for the conditional on this non-rigid interpretation is the one in (43).

$$(43) \quad c + [\text{if you enter from the south}^l, \text{there are no guards}^{z,u}] = \\ \{i \in c \mid i \prec c + [\text{you enter from the south}^l] \vee \\ i \prec c + [\text{you enter from the south}^l] + [\text{there are no guards}^{z,u}]\} \\ \text{if for all } i \in c, l, u \in \text{dom}(i) \text{ and } l^i \in \text{south-entrance}^i \text{ and } \langle @, u^i \rangle \in \\ \text{enter-from}^i, \text{ else undefined.}$$

The effect of updating the common ground with (43) is to discard those possibilities in which the addressee's chosen entrance, u , is the south entrance and is guarded. The resulting output common ground is one in which the two issues, (37) and (42b), are dependent. This common ground is partitioned by the antecedent issue into two cells: possibilities i such that u^i is the south entrance, and possibilities j such that u^j is some other entrance. Within the first cell, however, all possibilities are such that there are no guards at u , and so the consequent issue is resolved.

This analysis of the hypothetical interpretation of the conditional captures the fact that the consequent is not entailed. The common ground resulting from updating with (43) is heterogeneous with respect to what the entry point u is, and so does not entail that there are no guards at u . Furthermore, the inference that there are no guards at the south entrance, which, as discussed in the introduction, arises on both interpretations, is also captured. This inference is derived for hypothetical reading in the same way as it was for the biscuit one, namely as a consequence of the pragmatic background assumptions.

If the input common ground is heterogeneous about whether the south entrance is guarded or not, then updating with (43) would lead to a common ground in which all the possibilities in which the south entrance is not guarded are ones in which the addressee does not enter from the south. In other words, the resulting common ground would be one in which there is a dependence between whether the addressee entered from the south entrance or not and whether that entrance is guarded or not. As discussed in the context of the biscuit reading, such a common ground would go against the pragmatically based mutual knowledge of the interlocutors, that there is no causal or epistemic interaction between what the addressee does and how

guards are distributed in the museum. Therefore, the hearer will be lead to assume that the speaker knows the distribution of guards, and to update the common ground so as to eliminate the heterogeneity as to whether the south entrance is guarded. This can be done in a way that respects the speaker's assertion only by deleting all the possibilities in which the south entrance is guarded. Thus, the analysis proposed models exactly the intuitions, observed at the outset, about the inferential behavior of chimerical conditionals on their hypothetical interpretation.

This concludes my proposed analysis of chimericity. To summarize it, the consequent of a chimerical conditional contains a possibly implicit definite element associated with familiarity presuppositions, and consequently can receive two different interpretations, one in which this element is interpreted rigidly and another in which it is not. Which interpretation is available depends on the properties of the input context, specifically on whether the familiarity presupposition is satisfied by anchoring to a rigid referent, whose value is constant across possibilities, or to a non-rigid one whose value changes across possibilities. The two interpretations give rise to two sets of issues, one of which can be dependent given the background assumptions, the other not. This is the source of chimericity.

6 Conclusion

In this paper, a new class of conditionals was described, chimerical conditionals, the hallmark of which is an ambiguity between biscuit and hypothetical readings, even against a fixed set of background assumptions about causal and epistemic dependence. A pragmatic strengthening analysis of biscuit conditionals was proposed along the lines of [Franke 2009](#), in which biscuit conditionals are regular conditionals whose antecedent and consequent are associated with issues the dependence of which contradicts pragmatic assumptions taken to be mutual knowledge between the interlocutors. The chimericity of chimerical conditionals was argued to be rooted in the interpretation of their consequents. Chimerical consequents involve a possibly implicit definite element which is associated with familiarity presuppositions. It was shown that different ways in which context satisfies these presuppositions give rise to different interpretations of the definite argument, as a rigid designator or as an individual concept. Each interpretation gives rise to a distinct consequent issue. In one case, that issue cannot be dependent of

the antecedent issue, given background assumptions, and in the other it can, giving rise to chimericity.

The proposed analysis of biscuit conditionals involves using pragmatically based assumptions to derive a structural admissibility condition on output common grounds. This kind of constraint is naturally modeled within the architecture of a dynamic framework. It is worth pointing out where the components of the proposed analysis of chimerical conditionals fall in terms of the division of labor between semantics and pragmatics. The biscuit / hypothetical distinction is a pragmatic one, resting on the presence or absence of a pragmatic presupposition, usually based on world knowledge. The implication of the consequent in biscuit conditionals is a semantic property, but one that results from pragmatic strengthening of the meaning of the conditional. This strengthening is pragmatic because it is driven by the interaction between pragmatic reasoning and assumptions about conversational principles, namely the assumption that the speaker is obeying the maxim of quality in making an assertion. Chimericity itself is completely semantic, stemming from an ambiguity of the consequent between two readings. Which reading is available is fully determined by properties of the input context, presumably the common ground. Stating the relevant contextual properties requires a conception of presupposition as admissibility conditions along the lines defended in Heim 1990, and chimericity can therefore be taken to provide further evidence that such a conception is required for modeling at least some presuppositions.

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