# Free Choice effects and exclusive disjunction [*]

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## 1 Introduction

The *free choice effect* is the effect whereby a permission sentence like

(1) You may take an apple or a pear.

carries a felt entailment to permission to take each of an apple and a pear (**?**). Schematically:

(FC) $\text{May}(p \text{ or } q) \Rightarrow \text{May}(p)$ & $\text{May}(q)$

This entailment is *prima facie* surprising. I mark the felt entailment with an arrow ($\Rightarrow$) to stay as neutral as possible on what sorts of factors—semantic, pragmatic, or a combination of both—explain the relevant empirical phenomenon.

While a free choice sentence like (1) carries a felt entailment to the addressee's being able to choose between (permissibly) taking an apple and (permissibly) taking a pear, it emphatically does *not* communicate that the hearer may take *both* an apple and a pear, and perhaps even entails that the conjunction is *forbidden*. The general form of this latter intuition is sometimes called 'exclusivity':

(Exclusivity) $\text{May}(p \text{ or } q) \Rightarrow \neg\, \text{May}(p \,\&\, q)$

I will call the weaker form of the same intuition, a mere *non*-entailment, 'joint neutrality':

(Joint Neutrality) $\text{May}(p \text{ or } q) \not\Rightarrow \text{May}(p \,\&\, q)$

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Joint Neutrality is very strongly associated with free choice sentences: see, for example, **?**, pg. 1 and **?**, who calls it 'a consensus in the literature' (pg. 272, footnote 2). Indeed, theorists like **?** have proposed theories on which the mechanism which rules out May$(p \,\&\, q)$ plays an essential role—via Neo-Gricean mechanisms—in explaining (FC) itself.

My purpose here is to use experimental data to gain a greater understanding of the free choice effect where there are more than two disjuncts under the relevant modal operator. Call this the '$n$-disjunct' (or '$n$-ary') case. There are open questions about how (Exclusivity), (Joint Neutrality), and (FC) generalise in such cases, which have not been subject to previous empirical study.