

Disjunctive Questions: The Open List Case

In English, among other languages, the interpretation of a disjunctive question relies on its prosodic structure. Three possibilities can be distinguished.

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| (1) Are you making PASTa ↑ or FISH ↓?
<i>'Which of these things are you making: pasta or fish?'</i> | [Alternative] |
| (2) Are you making pasta or FISH ↑?
<i>'Is it true that you are making pasta or fish?'</i> | [Polar] |
| (3) Are you making PASTa ↑ or FISH ↑?
<i>'Is it true that you are making pasta, fish, or something similar?'</i> | [Open List] |

This poster is concerned with Open List Questions, characterized by a lengthened rise on each disjunct. We observe that OLQs pattern with PolQs with respect to (i) their felicity in various syntactic environments and (ii) their composition crosslinguistically. We show, however, that OLQs cannot be simply analysed as plain PolQs, based on novel data concerning their exhaustivity properties. The crucial point is that OLQs are **only** felicitous if there are *silent alternatives* available, as shown in (2).

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| (4) context: A party where the host only serves beer and wine. | |
| a. Do you want wine or BEER ↑? | [PolQ] |
| b. #Do you want WINE ↑ or BEER ↑? | [OLQ] |

Altogether, we argue that there is a distinction between non-exhaustivity of PolQs (there *might* be other alternatives available in the context) and the mandatory presence of silent alternatives. We aim to explain this difference in terms of the specific intonation of OLQs, and the size of the material that is focus-marked.