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PRAGMATIC CONDITIONALS

Summary

Pragmatic conditionals belong to a class of conditionals that are not so familiar to the common everyday learners of English language. They belong to a class of conditionals that tend to be quite difficult to interpret. There are hypothetical, course-of-event and prototypical pragmatic conditionals. Furthermore, hypothetical conditionals may be subdivided into real and unreal, while course-of-event conditionals can be subdivided into descriptive, inference and instructive conditionals. Pragmatic can be divided into logical and conversational. Logical pragmatic conditionals are further divided into identifying and inferencing, while conversational are further divided into discourse and metacommunicative conditionals. The paper further explains and exemplifies each of these types of conditionals.

Key words: *pragmatic, pragmatic conditionals, discourse conditionals, hypothetical conditionals*

PRAGMATIČKI KONDICIONAL

Sažetak

Pragmatički kondicionali predstavljaju vrstu kondicionalnih rečenica koje obično nisu poznate za učenike i studente enleskog jezika. Ovi kondicionali spadaju u vrstu kondicionala u engleskom jeziku koji mogu biti veoma teški za interpretaciju. U ove kondicionale spadaju hipotetički, tzv. kondicionali toka događaja i prototipski pragmatički kondicionali. Također, svaka od ovih kategorija se može i dalje podijeliti te hipotetički kondicionali se dijele na realne i nerealne dok se kondicionali toka događaja mogu podijeliti na opisne, inferencijske i instruktivne kondicionale. Pragmatički kondicionali se dalje mogu podijeliti na logičke i konverzacijske. Logički se dijele na identifikacijske i inferentne dok se konverzacijski

dijele na diskursne i metakomunikacijske kondicionale. U radu se daju primjeri i objašnjenja o svakom od ovih pojedinačnih tipova kondicionalih engleskih rečenica.

Ključne riječi: *pragmatika, pragmatički kondicionali, diskursni kondicionali, hipotetički kondicionali*

Introduction

Conditionals present a trouble for most of pupils and students. Their complexity, especially for foreign language learners creates a lot of problems for proper foreign language acquisition. Thus, this grammatical category deserves to be written about in this article.

However, in this article, we are not going to address the issue of common everyday conditionals that are divided into three to five different categories, the aim of this paper is to provide an overview of somewhat unknown category of conditionals in grammars widely available for foreign language learners. The conditionals under the scrutiny are English language conditionals, i.e. pragmatic conditionals in particular, and examples taken for the purposes of exemplifying the rules come from different contexts and authors.

Division of pragmatic conditionals

Pragmatic conditionals belong to a very controversial type of conditionals which are not so popular due to their characteristics. They are also complex due to several different types with their own characteristics. Namely, there are three major types of pragmatic conditionals: hypothetical, course-of –event conditionals and pragmatic conditionals.

Hypothetical conditionals are the most representative members of this category and usually when we think about conditionals a hypothetical conditional will cross our mind.

Course-of-events conditionals are also rather vague and little disregarded conditionals, but according to Angeliki Athanasiadou and Rene Dirven in their work *Pragmatic conditionals* (2000) which provides important resource for understanding these conditionals, they are necessary for proper understanding of the pragmatic ones.

Pragmatic conditionals and course-of-events conditionals

share the same subcategory of inference conditionals and we have to be aware of both in order to understand them properly.

However, even the term pragmatic is a bit doubtful because people very often perceive it as mostly related to speech acts. The meaning that Athanasiadou and Dirven used in their work comes from Charles Morris who proposes much wider use of the term pragmatic. Therefore, Morris 'specifies the relations between signs and their users….and there is a special emphasis on the presence of the use of the signs.' (Dirven, 2004).

One of the elements that differentiates conditionals is the causal dependency between antecedent and consequent and according to Dirven and Athanasiadou (2000):

> *The causal dependency between antecedent and consequent is absolute in hypothetical conditionals; causal dependency decreases considerably, but remains implicitly given in course-of-events conditionals; and dependency is reduced to purely logical, i.e. non-causal, relationship in pragmatic conditionals of the inferencing type as found in (2), and to a merely conversational point of relevance in pragmatic conditionals of the discourse type found in (3). But the dependency relation is never totally absent.*
>
> (Dirven, 2000)

However, if we look at some other examples that Athanasidou and Dirven use in their work, we may see that they make a difference between types of hypothetical conditionals as well. Therefore, we may say that there are (A&D, 2000:1):

- potentially real hypothetical conditional:
  If it rains, we'll stay at home
- unreal hypothetical conditional (counterfactual):
  If I was bald now, I would shoot myself

When it comes to course-of-event conditionals, they may be further divided as follows:

- descriptive conditionals containing a description of two events:

If there is a drought, the eggs remain dormant.

- inference conditionals containing descriptive protasis and an apodosis based on inference:

If a child has a fever with a skin infection…the infection is spreading seriously and should be considered a real emergency.

- instructive conditional in which the apodosis is an instruction which depends on the occurrence of what is said in the protasis:

If there is more than one contributor, either sort out separate responsibilities or pool the family income.

Pragmatic conditionals as superordinate category can be divided into two groups: logical and conversational conditionals. Furthermore, these two groups are divided into two categories. Logical conditionals are divided into identifying and inferencing conditionals and conversational conditionals are divided into discourse and metacommunicative conditional.

Logical conditionals, due to their nature of being reasoning processes, are such that antecedent usually preposes the consequent.

Conversational conditionals on the other hand depend on the choice of the speaker condition so that the antecedent tends to be postposed. However, despite these divisions they belong to the superordinate category of pragmatic conditionals which are mostly speaker or hearer oriented.

Previously mentioned dependency can be clearly shown in the following Table 1 taken from Athanasiadou and Dirven (2000):

Table 1 – Scale of dependency between antecedent and consequent in conditionals

High dependency		
Hypothetical conditionals	↑	*If it rains. we 'll stay at home*
Course-of-events conditionals		
Descriptive CEC		*If there is a drought, the eggs remain dormant*
Inferencing CEC		*If the soldier was coming, it was nearly time*
Instructive CEC		*You should call a doctor if there* is *a fever*
Pragmatic conditionals		
Identifying PC		*If there's one species to be put out to pasture it's Presidents*
Inferencing PC		*If she's divorced, then she's been married*
Discourse PC		*If anyone wants me, I'm downstairs*
Metacommunicative PC		*I've come to offer my congratulations, if that's the right word.*
Low dependency		

As we can see in the Table 1, the highest degree of causal dependency between antecedent and consequent occurs with hypothetical conditionals and the level of dependency decreases towards metacommunicative pragmatic conditionals. Course-of-event conditionals are also above all types of pragmatic conditionals and therefore possess greater dependency between antecedent and consequent.

Identifying conditionals are such conditionals in which antecedent possesses an identifying function while consequent is identifier or identified one. We can clearly see that in the example used in the previous table *'If there's one species to be put out to pasture, it's Presidents'* antecedent in this sentence clearly has the identifying function and the speaker clearly states that there is one species that should be put out to pastures and in the consequent we have the identified one that is 'the Presidents'.

Inferencing conditionals are mostly used to make inferences but also to emphasize the inferencing force of the utterance which is definitely a sign that they belong to the category of pragmatic conditionals because there are also inferencing course-of-events

conditionals. The example of inferencing pragmatic conditionals is as it is mentioned in Table 1:

- *If she's divorced, then she's been married.*

We can see clearly that there is some level of dependency between antecedent and consequent and that based on the fact that she is divorced; the speaker could reasonably conclude that the she has definitely been married. Then is very frequent and very often can be used to differentiate inferencing pragmatic and inferencing course-of-events conditionals. However, there are many other epistemic expressions that may also be used with inferencing conditionals that include (Dirven, 2000):

'from epistemic modal auxiliaries like may, must, should, have to, and paraphrasing constructions for modality such as it is possible, surely, it seems likely etc. to explicit lexical expressions denoting the truth-finding process, such as (we) conclude, it follows that, is it any wonder, it stands to reason, you must admit, or negative conclusions like it does not follow, it is not necessary, it is strange, I see no reason, etc. Even a certain rhetorical flavour may be present occasionally, especially through the use of rhetorical questions introduced by why shouldn't, why not, how much less, etc.'

Discourse conditionals are related to speech acts more than any other type of conditionals and they connect the consequent to some pragmatic factor in the conversation that is usually related to the hearer in the conversation.

- *If anyone wants me, I'm downstairs.*

The most common feature of discourse conditionals includes their use of present tense in both antecedent and consequent, the sentences are usually affirmative, the order of clauses is usually antecedent-consequent and in conversation there is usually a pause between consequent and antecedent frequently referred to as 'caesura'. Further characteristics of prototypical types of discourse conditionals include (Dirven, 2000):

1. *no possibility of using then*
2. *no hypothetical forms*
3. *no change of tenses*
4. *intonational 'caesura'*
5. *no explicit use of performatives*
6. *very great ambiguity of possible speech-act forces*
7. *preferred order: antecedent before consequent*

Metacommunicative conditionals are similar to discourse conditionals. However, they are, unlike discourse conditionals, more directed to the speaker. Their purpose is in a way to point at some of the aspect of communication which needs special emphasis or to soften the effect of the consequent. Metacommunicative conditionals usually refer only to the single word or expression as in the example *I've come to offer my congratulations, if that's the right word* in which consequent is referred to only one word; in this case to the word congratulations because the speaker is not certain that in the given context (s)he has used the proper word.

Further analysis done by Inchaurralde (2005) is also directed to logical inference of pragmatic conditionals. Namely, he bases his analysis on graded-truth evaluation of conditionals (epistemic evaluation in terms of probability of occurrence) and claims that apart from course-of-event and hypothetical conditionals that Athanasidou and Dirven (1997) mention to be the only analyzable in this respect, some pragmatic conditionals can be analyzed in epistemic terms as well. As an illustrative example he presents the table that Athanasidou and Dirven used and afterwards provides us with his formulation of the table for identifying and inferencing pragmatic conditionals as well.

Table 2 - Conditionals and (non-) commitment to reality (Athanasidou & Dirven, 1997:73)

Type of conditional		**Commitment to the Realisation of the situation**	**Attitude towards likelihood**	
Course-of-event conditional		REAL	Factual	1) If he goes on Fridays, I go too
	Unmarked		Close to factual	2) If he goes, as is usually the case, I will go too.
			Distancing from factual	3) If I go bald, I will shoot myself.
				4) If I do go bald, I will shoot myself.
		POTENTIALLY REAL	Not likely	5) If I went bald, I would shoot myself.

Hypothetical conditional		Less likely	6) If ever I went bald, I would shoot myself.
	Marked	A bit more likely	7) If I did go bald, I would shoot myself.
		Even less likely	8) If I should go bald, I would shoot myself.
		Highly unlikely	9) If I were to go bald, I would shoot myself.
			10) If I was bald now, I would shoot myself.
			11) If I had gone bald, I would have shot myself

As we can see in this table, just as mentioned, Athanasidou and Dirven used only course-of-event and hypothetical conditionals, while in the following table Inchaurralde will show the table for assigning probability to indentifying and inferential pragmatic conditionals as well. (Inchaurralde, 2005:13)

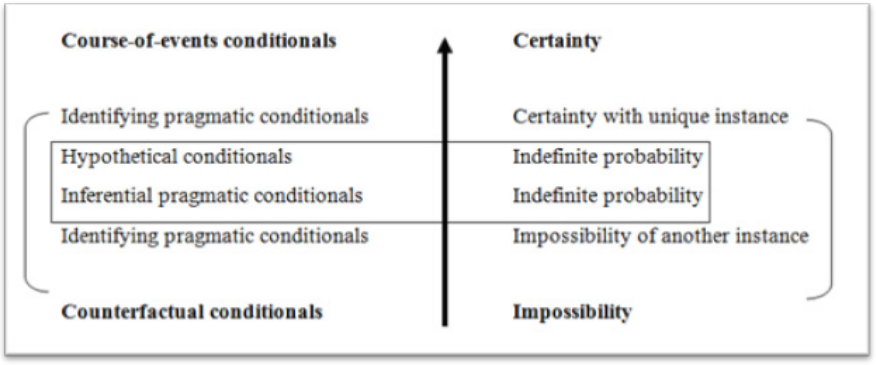


Figure 1 - Assigning probability to identifying and inferential pragmatic conditionals

Conclusion

Finally, as we have seen in this article, conditionals as such, rightfully bear the title of being problematic for language learners. The explained type of pragmatic conditionals with all its divisions into hypothetical, course-of-events and inferencing and later on further divisions into inferencing, instructive, discourse etc. Further confirm this claim. In order to understand all these divisions and subdivisions,

one has to be fully aware of all the intricacies and influences between language, linguistics, logic and philosophy.

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