

Linguistic Introduction to Conditionals

Michela Ippolito
University of Toronto

Lecture 1 Introduction to conditional structures: overview

In this lecture we introduce conditional sentences, their basic facts about form and meaning, within the broader study of modality in natural language. We introduce different kinds of conditional sentences: O-marked conditionals (traditionally called 'indicative conditionals') with their different flavors, and X-marked conditionals (traditionally called 'counterfactuals', or 'subjunctive' conditionals). In this introductory lecture we discuss the fundamental issues and classic literature on the semantics and pragmatics of conditional sentences.

Selected literature:

- Stalnaker (1975) "Indicative conditionals" in *Philosophia*, 5(3), 269-286
Lewis (1973) *Counterfactuals*. Blackwell.
Kratzer (1981) "Partition and revision: the semantics of counterfactuals" in *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 10(2), 201-216.
Kratzer (1991) "Modality" in *Semantics: An international handbook of contemporary research* 7, 639-650.
Von Stechow (1998) "The presupposition of subjunctive conditionals" in *The interpretive tract* 25, 29-44.

Lecture 2 Morphology and Semantics

In this lecture, we focus on the semantics and morphology of X-marked conditionals, cross-linguistically. We critically review the debate between *past-as-past* theories of conditionals and *past-as-modal* theories of conditionals.

Selected literature:

- Iatridou (2000) "The grammatical ingredients of counterfactuality" in *Linguistic Inquiry*, 31(2), 231-270.
Ippolito (2002) *The time of possibilities: truth and felicity of subjunctive conditionals*, Ph.D. thesis MIT.
Ippolito (2013) *Subjunctive conditionals: a linguistic analysis* Vol 65. MIT Press.
Arregui (2007) "When aspect matters: the case of *would*-conditionals" in *Natural Language Semantics*, 15(3), 221-264.
Khoo (2015) "On indicative and subjunctive conditionals" in *Philosophers Imprint*, 15(23), 1-40.
Schulz (2014) "Fake tense in conditional sentences: a modal approach" in *Natural Language Semantics* 22(2), 117-144.
Mackay (2019) "Modal interpretation of tense in subjunctive conditionals" in *Semantics and Pragmatics* 12, 2.
Halpern and Karawani (2012) "Counterfactuals from A(rabic) to Z(ulu)" in *Proceedings of WCCFL* 29.
Mirrazi and Ippolito (2023) "Modal past is past: evidence from non-SOT languages" in *Proceedings of WCCFL* 41.

Lecture 3 Similarity

In this lecture, we delve deeper into the notion of similarity and its importance in arriving at empirically adequate truth-conditions for conditional sentences.

Selected literature:

- Arregui (2009) "On similarity in counterfactuals" in *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 32(3), 245-278.
Ippolito, M. (2006) "Semantic composition and presupposition projection in subjunctive conditionals." *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 29(6), 631-672.
Kratzer (1989), 'An Investigation of the Lumps of Thought', *Linguistics and Philosophy* 12, 607-653.

Tichy (1976), "A counterexample to the Stalnaker-Lewis analysis of counterfactuals", *Philosophical Studies* 29, 271–273.
Veltman (2005), "Making Counterfactual Assumptions", *Journal of Semantics* 22, 159–180.

Lecture 4 Conditionals and Discourse

In this lecture, we investigate the pragmatics of conditionals. The object of inquiry is the contrast between Sobel Sequences and Reverse Sobel Sequences. This will draw a connection between sequences of conditionals and sequences of other types of sentences.

Selected literature:

von Stechow (2001) "Counterfactuals in a Dynamic Context," in *Ken Hale: A Life in Language*, ed. by M. Kenstowicz, pp. 123–152. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Ippolito (2019) "Varieties of Sobel sequences" in *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 43, 633–671

Klecha (2014) "Two Kinds of Sobel Sequences: Precision in Conditionals," in *Proceedings of WCCFL 32*, Cascadia Press.

Lewis, K. (2017) "Counterfactual Discourse in Context," *Noûs*.

Moss (2012) "On the Pragmatics of Counterfactuals," *Noûs*, 46, 516–586.

Lecture 5 Different types of conditionals structures

In this lecture, we look at non-standard conditional structures. In particular, we investigate *Imperative and Declarative conjunctions* (IaDs) such as *Eat well and you'll live to be one hundred*, which is paraphrasable as expressing the proposition that if you eat well, then you will live to be one hundred; and *what if?* Questions as in *What if aliens are already here?*

Von Stechow and Iatridou (2017) "A modest proposal for the meaning of imperatives" in Arregui, Rivero and Salanova (eds.) *Modality across syntactic categories*, Oxford University Press

Bledin and Rawlins (2019) "What ifs" in *Semantics and Pragmatics*, Vol 12.