

THE CONCEPT OF CONDITIONALITY IN LINGUISTICS

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Abstract. This article examines the linguistic concept of conditionality, a semantic-grammatical category that expresses hypothetical relations between events, states, or propositions. Conditionality plays a crucial role in human cognition, as it allows speakers to model potential scenarios, evaluate consequences, and express causal-logical relations. The study reviews major theoretical approaches to conditional constructions in typological, cognitive, and functional linguistics. Special attention is given to the formal markers of conditionality, their semantic classifications, and cross-linguistic variations. The article also analyzes the pragmatic functions of conditional structures in discourse. The findings show that conditionality forms a complex system integrating semantics, syntax, pragmatics, and cognitive mechanisms. Understanding this category contributes to broader insights into language structure, reasoning patterns, and communication strategies.

Key words: conditionality; conditional constructions; hypothetical meaning; protasis; apodosis; modality; causation; linguistic typology; cognitive linguistics; conditional clauses.

Introduction. Conditionality is one of the fundamental semantic categories of natural languages. It allows speakers to represent **non-actual, hypothetical, predictive, or counterfactual situations**, linking them through logical-causal relations such as *if X, then Y*. Conditional constructions are widely used in everyday communication, scientific reasoning, legal discourse, and academic writing [7].

Despite their ubiquity, conditional structures have been described from multiple theoretical perspectives—logical, grammatical, semantic, pragmatic, and cognitive—which indicates the complexity of this linguistic phenomenon[1].

The investigation of conditionality is important for several reasons. First, it contributes to understanding how languages encode human reasoning. Second, it reveals similarities and differences across languages in expressing hypothetical relations. Third, it plays a significant role in translation studies, second-language teaching, and discourse analysis [2].

The purpose of this article is to define the concept of conditionality, explore its linguistic manifestations, and provide an overview of the main approaches to studying conditional constructions.

Literary review. The linguistic study of conditionality has a long history, beginning with classical logic and continuing through modern linguistic theories. Early works in formal logic, especially by Frege, Russell, and later Lewis (1973), laid the groundwork for analyzing conditional propositions as logical implications. Their insights influenced linguistic semantics [4].

According to Comrie (1986), conditional structures can be classified according to their semantic types: factual, predictive, hypothetical, and counterfactual. Thompson and Longacre (1985) investigated conditional clauses in a typological framework, showing considerable cross-linguistic diversity in their formal markers [5].

Methods and methodology. The research methodology is based on a combination of **descriptive, comparative, and cognitive-functional** methods.

Discussion and Results. The notion of conditionality is important to people’s thinking and action, the nature of people’s capability to make conditional judgments and think conditional thoughts is very controversial issue in the fields like psychology, philosophy, logic and linguistics. A language reflects the particular culture of its nation, especially, conditional role in reflecting national features and culture of this nation is considerable. Not only traditions of the people and national notions can express the culture of nations, but also conditional sentences. Many researchers define the notion of conditionality from different perspectives.

Another scholar Alexe states that “conditionality is a complex notion as its analysis often requires adopting an interdisciplinary approach. Conditional sentences, whose broadest syntactic frame is illustrated by the [if p, q] structure, have received extensive theoretical attention even since antiquity”. It is clear that conditionality should be analyzed with the help of other subjects. As well as, standard frame of conditional sentences is (if p, q) [6].

According to Wierzbicka the meaning of the English word ‘condition’ is semantically more complex than that of the lexical primitive IF. Even the well-known view that “a conditional clause is a subordinate clause, and so semantically and syntactically dependent on a ‘head clause’”, is not very useful. There are paratactic conditionals such as “Do it and/or I will punish you”. It is understood that to call sentence with if, or by its main part is not effective way, because there some sentence which do not have if.

By considering this problem Declerck and Leuven offer a broad definition to the conditionals as “conditional sentence which corresponds with the way the notion is intuitively utilized by many linguists: a conditional sentence is a two-clause structure in which one of them is expressed by if or a phrase or a word which has a similar meaning to *if*, *only if* (e.g. *provided*) or except *if* (viz. *unless*). The only two-clause structures with if that we do not treat as conditionals are those in which the subordinate clause is introduced by as if, or is a subject or object clause introduced by if”. According to these linguists’ view not all two-clause structures with *if* that should not be treated as conditionals, because there are an object or subject clause, introduced by as if.

Ferguson et al. claim that “not all sentences including conditional connectors have conditional meaning, but the sentences might not include conditional connectors the meaning might still be conditional”. It is clear from Ferguson’s opinion that conditional connectors serve to connect main clause with subordinate clause, but there might be conditional sentences which might be connected logically without them, the conditional relation might be.

Von Stechow holds opinion that “conditionals are sentences that talk about a possible scenario that may or may not be actual and describe what (else) is the case in that scenario; or, considered from ‘the other end’, conditionals state in what kind of possible scenarios a given proposition is true.” So, conditionals give us information about possible events that may or may not be real and illustrate what is the case in that events.

There is a standard definition of conditional constructions comes from logic. According to Johnson-Laird “there is a subordinate clause (the *if*-clause, *protasis*) and a main clause (*apodosis*), represented by one of the conditional connectors based on the connection between consequent and antecedent, and that in turn based on beliefs even which the antecedent specifies fully the state of issues in which the result is to be evaluated, the connection may be an entailment or a mutual entailment”. It is clear from above consideration: the conditional clause consists of two parts such as *protasis* and *apodosis*. *Protasis* is a subordinate clause and it contains the condition, *apodosis* is main clause it reveals result or conclusion.

Moreover, Stalnaker gives a possible definition to conditionals as conditionals as statements that convey "a proposition which is a function of two other propositions, yet not one which is a truth function of those propositions" The conditional function is introduced by "If... then" formula. The protasis is presented by a conjunction which is usually "if". It is prominent to note that certain syntactic elements like mood, time relation and verb tense are responsible to determine the meaning of conditionals.

Many linguists claim that a protasis is, in certain prominent sense, a kind of prototypical subordinate clause and a kind of sentence topic. Moreover, Haiman states that conditional sentences are topics. Conditional clauses share critical properties of topics in various languages. However, not all topics are conditionals, and not all conditionals (at least in the sense of clause with 'if) are topics, yet to the extent the two structures overlap, generalizations about topics are possibly to hold for conditional clauses¹. It is noteworthy that a sentence topic is accepted by various linguists as a grammatical unit characterized by some prosodic, phonological and semantic, syntactic properties.

Likely, conditional clause is the subordinate clause par excellence, the general approach would look for cross linguistic evidence. This means the implications of this clarification, for instance in connection with kinds of conditional clauses that take the form of conditionals. It is clear that researchers define conditionals according to the compositional meaning of conditional sentences which consist of constituent parts, as if-clause (protasis, antecedent, condition) and the consequent (apodosis, result, main clause).

Authors of Russian theoretical and practical grammars English language are less categorical than their foreign counterparts. They pay enough attention to the description of complex sentences with conditional clauses and characteristic of conditional unions (if, in case, unless, on condition that, provided that, so long as, suppose or supposing (that), etc.) and verb forms, used in conditional sentences, depending on whether the condition refers to present, future, or past tense.

In foreign syntax, the term conditional clause is used ("Conditional sentence"), which is defined as a structure consisting of the main clause and the subordinate conditional clause. Conditional part is introduced by the union if or synonymous unions (for example, provided, unless).

Conclusion. The study of conditionality in linguistics demonstrates that this category plays a central role in expressing hypothetical, causal, and predictive relationships across languages. Conditional constructions form a complex interaction of semantic, syntactic, pragmatic, and cognitive components, reflecting how speakers conceptualize alternative events and possible worlds.

The review of theoretical approaches shows that no single linguistic model fully captures the multidimensional nature of conditionality. Logical semantics highlights implication relations; structural linguistics focuses on formal markers; functional and pragmatic approaches emphasize discourse roles; and cognitive linguistics explains how humans mentally construct conditional scenarios.

Together, these perspectives reveal that conditionality is not merely a grammatical phenomenon but a reflection of **human reasoning, decision-making, and communicative strategy**.

The findings of this article confirm that conditionality is realized through a wide range of linguistic tools—conjunctions, verb forms, modal markers, and discourse structures. Cross-

¹ John Haiman, *Conditionals are topics*. *Language* 54: 1978, p. 564

linguistic comparison indicates both universal tendencies (such as the presence of protasis-apodosis relations) and language-specific patterns (such as the diversity of conditional markers and modal nuances).

Understanding conditionality contributes to improved linguistic theory, more effective translation practices, enhanced language teaching of conditional forms, and deeper insights into communication and cognition.

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