

Sources of Conditionality

Laura Margarita Merino Hernández

lmerino@indiana.edu

Indiana University

My research focuses on conditionality defined as the semantic notion that allows speakers to consider possible worlds and make inferences about their potential connections based on incomplete information, where an antecedent proposition (protasis) is a sufficient condition for the realization of a consequent (apodosis). The majority of research on conditionality has concentrated on the study of *if*-clauses of the type ‘if *p* (protasis), *q* (apodosis)’ (e.g., Montoliu & Van der Auwera 2004; Haiman & Kuteva 2002). The fact that linguistic and logic-philosophical approaches have mainly focused on this structure is no coincidence as many non-related languages possess an equivalent construction (see Wakker [1996] for Greek’s *eíper*, Cuvalay [1996] for Arabic’s *in*, Yang [2007] for Chinese’s *ruguo*). Nonetheless, speakers use a wide variety of structures to express conditionality including, but not limited to, subordination, juxtaposition, coordination, and nonfinite protases. Although there is an increasing interest for the study of a more diverse pool of conditional constructions (see for example Haiman 1986; Liu to appear; Marcovecchio, Pacagnini, & Kaller 2015; Montolío 1999; Traugott 1985, 1997), current research still lacks systematic analyses that go beyond *if*-clauses.

Drawing from Spanish, my punctual research interests are the following: (a) to establish an empirically-based inventory of conditional markers; (b) to determine what structures can and cannot be used as conditional apodoses; (c) to test the degree to which conditional markers can be used in different cognitive functions (content, epistemic, or speech act; cf. Sweetser 1990); and (d) to investigate the semantic overlap that exists between conditionality and other domains of meaning (e.g., genericity, temporality, modality, causality, adversativity, concessivity). Theoretically, accounting for the linguistic behavior of the body of conditional markers can allow us to better understand the relationships that exist among them, their relationship with other domains of meaning (conventionally and inferred meaning), and the processes that underlie language change. We can also foresee what constructions are eligible to become conditional markers, predict potential or impossible/unlikely conditionals markers in understudied languages, or markers that could have existed in extinct languages.