

## PhR 2019 Philological Readings

### SYNTACTIC AND PRAGMATIC MARKERS OF SUBJECTIVELY CHARGED ENGLISH COMPLEX CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

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#### *Abstract*

The paper focuses on the urgent problem of functioning of complex conditional sentences in the English discourse. Complex conditional sentences are regarded as a variant of the prolonged syntactical form with the conditional meaning that reveals the relation between a protasis and an apodosis either explicitly or implicitly through various syntactical structures. The purpose of the research is to specify the markers of subjectivity on syntactic and pragmatic levels which influence a superstructure of complex conditional sentences in contact communication represented in fictional texts by characters' speech. The research method applied is a discursive-stylistic analysis which implies taking into consideration discursive and stylistic properties of a text that determine the choice of conditional constructions and their modal-pragmatic superstructure. The results of the research demonstrate that the subjective character of English complex conditional sentences in contact communication is created by the repetition of dependent clauses in complex conditional sentences within an utterance, parts of dependent clauses and conditional elementary sentences (ES) as a part of separated ES with conditional conjunction. On the pragmatic level a speaker's attitude towards an utterance content is shown through restrictive particles such as only, ever, just and intensifying particles such as really, too, so, still, very.

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## 1. Introduction

There is a tradition in descriptive grammar to define complex conditional sentences as the main grammatical means of expressing conditional situation, when a speaker first assumes some idea or some event that can happen and then concludes what will happen or what would happen (would have happened) as the result of his assumption realization or non-realization. Linguists distinguish three main semantic types of complex conditional sentences: indicative, counterfactual (Edgington, 2014) and relevance (Douven, Elqayam, Singmann, & Wijnbergen-Huitink, 2018).

The last one does not specify the circumstances which help a speaker make such a conclusion but determines a kind of relevance between two parts of conditional situation. In other words if your assumption is true the information supplied in the main clause is relevant for you to know.

## 2. Problem Statement

Prototypical complex conditional sentences (indicative, counterfactual and relevance) have been studied from various aspects in different languages. Thus linguists focused on their syntactical structure, conditional conjunctions as the markers that connect two possible events (Weisser, 2015) and means of translation into other languages (Evstafiadi, 2018). Moreover, pragmatic aspect of incomplete conditionals was studied by Elder and Savva (2018). However, the problem of complex conditional sentences functioning in different texts and speech types has not been elaborated and is still of current interest.

Basing on Olga Kostrova's approach to analysis of complex conditional sentences, we regard them as a kind of metalinguistic construct that unites all syntactical structures able to express conditional relation between the events and is termed prolonged syntactical form (PSF) with conditional meaning (as cited in Evstafiadi, Inozemtseva, Sapuh, Andreeva, & Verzhinskaya, 2017). Besides complex conditional sentences PSF with conditional meaning embraces:

- 1) compound conditional sentences;
- 2) two elementary sentences (ES) with one used in a compressed form: as a preposition-noun combination, participle, gerund or infinitive;
- 3) a chain of semantically connected elementary sentences one following the other by a full stop, an exclamatory mark or a question mark;
- 4) contexts which unite a part of a complex or a compound sentence and an independent sentence following it (Evstafiadi et al., 2017).

PSF with conditional meaning is marked with modality, i.e. being a modal-pragmatic unit it contains a modal-pragmatic superstructure created as a result of the interaction of different language means which determine modality of a speech type and text type.

## 3. Research Questions

We are interested in the peculiar structure of English complex conditional sentences functioning in contact or instant communication. Another question that demands our special consideration is a set of

syntactic and pragmatic means that reveal subjective character of English complex conditional sentences in fictional texts.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to determine specific markers on the syntactic and pragmatic levels that make English complex conditional sentences subjectively charged in contact communication.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The most suitable research method that reveals the functioning of complex conditional sentences is discursive-stylistic analysis which implies taking into consideration discursive and stylistic text properties (Andreeva, 2006). On the one hand, a text is regarded as a kind of communication between two interlocutors - an author and a reader, on the other hand, a text is considered as the product of an author's speech and the basis of a reader's discourse.

Communication can take place in various circumstances. If interlocutors are distanced we deal with a distant type of communication. If they are in close vicinity to each other we speak about an instant or contact communication. Thus the discursive-stylistic analysis of a text is interested in interlocutors, their time and space location, their intentions and their attitude to the reality and their messages. It reveals a connection of a text as a kind of communication with specific circumstances termed communicative registers which are considered as speech types (Evstafiadi & Baimuratova, 2015).

Our recent research has proved that speech types and text types differ in modality (Evstafiadi et al., 2017). The author's speech which corresponds to distant communication is objectively charged where a character's speech (in fictional texts as an example) is subjectively coloured. We consider that only omniscient narration in fictional texts can be regarded as distant communication in its pure form, while personified narration (carried out in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>d</sup> person singular) reveals the author's intention to make a reader the witness of the situation. Thus, such types of narration provide correlation of the author's and the reader's time and space systems and can be considered as a variety of contact communication. The last in its pure form corresponds in fictional texts to character's speech that is abundant in all kinds of conditional structures united by the term prolonged syntactical form with conditional meaning.

Moreover, contrastive types of modality are created due to conditional structures used in these speech types and text types (Kostrova, 2018). We have demonstrated which specific conditional structures are prevalent in scientific and fictional texts making them objectively charged (Evstafiadi et al., 2017). In distant communication represented in scientific texts authors tend to use elementary sentences with a preposition-noun combination, participle, gerund or infinitive and complex conditional sentences, while the other types of the prolonged syntactical form with conditional meaning are not observed. In fiction one can notice a variety of conditional structures due to a complex nature of a fictional text itself.

However, some constructions which can be found in both types of communication are differently charged. Their modal-pragmatic superstructure is created due to the set of linguistic means found on various levels of the language. The principle marker of objective and subjective modality is the category of person: in distant communication the author prefers to tell about other people and objects in the 3<sup>d</sup>

person referring to them by their proper names or 3<sup>d</sup> person pronouns whereas in contact communication 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns are used in complex conditional sentences. The impersonal character of English conditional sentences in distant communication is also due to predicate tense forms (Present Simple Indicative and in some cases Past Simple) and passive forms (Evstafiadi et al., 2017).

The data of the present research include 688 utterances containing complex conditional sentences selected from the characters' speech of English fictional texts. Characters' speech in its variation (uttered, inner or represented) is regarded as a contact or instant interpersonal communication or interlocution that occurs in a character's mind.

## 6. Findings

Discursive-stylistic analysis of the data reveals syntactic and pragmatic means which create subjectively charged superstructure of complex conditional sentences. They are different types of repetition and particles.

### 6.1. Repetition in English complex conditional sentences

Repetition as a stylistic device consists in reiteration of phonemes, morphemes, words, synonyms or syntactical constructions. It serves to convey alive emotional speech and provides cohesion and coherence of a text.

Speech of excited characters, who, as a rule, can be overwhelmed with various feelings and emotions such as happiness, fear, anxiety, etc., is characterized by syntactically incomplete structures and repetitions of words, word-combinations and phrases. The data that we have analysed show the typical repeated elements in the structure of complex conditional sentences in fictional texts.

The examples given below demonstrate repetition of dependent clauses in complex conditional sentences (a), a part of dependent clauses (b, c) and conditional elementary sentences (ES) as a part of separated ES with conditional conjunction (d).

(a) “Tears prickled the corners of her eyes. Trisha blinked them back savagely. *If she started to cry*, she wouldn't be able to tell herself she wasn't frightened. *If she started to cry*, anything might happen” (King, 2019, p. 30).

The speaker in (a) considers various consequences of one and the same condition, the second option differs from the first one in the degree of worry and anxiety. If the speaker understands the first option, the second one frightens her because of its uncertainty. In this case repetition creates a basis for emotional gradation.

(b) “*If she'd lived* in mountainous country, like West Virginia or Colorado, Nuggie would've gone to slag-heap heaven years ago—although things might have turned out very differently, *if she had lived* somewhere else. Tony Bartlett would've picked a different victim, for one thing” (Evans, 1996, p. 5).

Example(b) contains the repeated part of the dependent clause “*If she'd lived*”. The speaker in both complex conditional clauses contemplates several options of her hypothetical location: “in mountainous country”, “somewhere else”, whereas the main clauses disclose consequences of such hypothetical conditions. Repetition in this case makes the utterances more expressive.

(c) “She didn't give him time to answer her question but rushed on. “You've deliberately involved yourself in danger. I would never do such a thing. Now that we are married, I not only think about my well-being, I think about yours. *If something happened to you*, I would be devastated. Yet *if something happened to me*, I believe you would only be mildly inconvenienced. My funeral would force you to put your work aside for a few hours. Do excuse me, sir, before I say something more I know I'll regret” (Garwood, 2017, p. 264).

In the above example a part of a conditional clause «if something happened to...» is reiterated, which increases the contrast between the speakers' possible reaction to a hypothetical event, expressed by the opposition between the pronouns «you» – «me» and the epithets which convey emotions of different intensity «devastated» – «only mildly inconvenienced».

(d) “She turned her pack around with some effort and worked the buckles loose. It would have been easier if she'd been sitting up, but there was no way in the world she was coming out from under this tree again tonight, no way in the universe. *Unless it comes back*, the cold voice said. *Unless it comes back and drags you out*” (King, 2019, p. 90).

In example (d) repetition of an elementary sentence «Unless it comes back» enhances expressiveness of the whole utterance and reveals the speaker's tension.

To increase expressiveness of an utterance syntactical parallelism is employed in combination with lexical repetition:

“*If he hadn't had* such beautiful eyes, and *if he hadn't had* such a wonderful smile, and *if his teeth hadn't been* as white as God's surely were, she wouldn't have taken the time to notice and forget every other thought” (Garwood, 2017, p. 229).

“The nasty thing was gone, but her terror lingered. It had been right under her hand, hidden in the dead leaves and right under her hand. Evidently not a biter, thank God. *But what if there were more? What if they were poisonous?*”

“*What if the woods were full of them?* And of course they were, the woods were full of everything you didn't like, everything you were afraid of and instinctively loathed, everything that tried to overwhelm you with nasty, no-brain panic. Why had she ever agreed to come? Not only agreed but agreed cheerfully?” (King, 2019, p. 29).

Moreover, syntactical parallelism creates the effect of a live excited speech of a person who contemplates several conditions to convince himself that his point of view is correct.

“You never used to cry. If loving someone makes a woman miserable, I swear I'm never going to fall in love. I wish I never had to get married either. Perhaps *if you went back and tried once more... If you told him how you feel...*” (Garwood, 2017, p. 152).

“She set her jaw. “I'll survive it. Then I'll escape. If necessary, I'll kill him first.” Her lips tightened. “Even a clay lamp is a weapon, *if you use it correctly*. Come to think of it, *if one of us set the house on fire*, we might be able to slip away in the confusion” (Evans, 1996, p. 139).

## 6.2. Particles in English complex conditional sentences

Particles are functional parts of speech which impart an utterance various shades of meaning and modality. The role of particles in communication is very significant as they convey a speaker's attitude to

an addressee or to a communicative situation at large, his intentions and emotions. Thus they take part in making modal-pragmatic superstructure of complex conditional sentences subjectively charged.

We have determined a set of particles which intensify emotional tone of English complex conditional sentences in contact communication:

1) restrictive particles *only, ever, just* which convey a speaker's desire to make an emphasis on a word they refer to:

“If he would *only* listen to my reasons for being worried, Sir Richards, he wouldn't be so quick to call my concern interference” (Garwood, 2017, p. 218).

“What if he were too injured to be moved? Or already dead?

If he'd tried to rescue her while she was drugged...

“At least she hadn't seen any evidence so far to think he had, and Sibyl had a feeling Bericus, at the very least, would have dragged Charlie in front of her, *just* to see her horrified reaction” (Evans, 1996, p. 222).

The examples above illustrate a speaker's uncertainty in a favourable outcome so he focuses his listener's attention on the only possible way out of a current or imaginary situation.

2) intensifying particles *still, so, very, really, too* which express a speaker's evaluation of an utterance content (evaluation of intensity or quality):

“The tree came down, just about crushed me. Would've killed me if I'd *still* been there when it landed” (Evans, 1996, p. 83).

“And made a pretty profit from his investments, I might add. Albert handles some of your wife's funds, you see, and I believe he would be *very* offended if you didn't accept his gift” (Garwood, 2017, p. 218).

In each case a speaker makes a comparison between the current state of affairs and a hypothetical one and judges whether it will be or would be favourable or not.

It is necessary to admit that subjectivity produced by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns in uttered and inner speech of characters is intensified by the revealed syntactic and pragmatic markers used in combination with peculiar predicate forms (Future Simple Indicative Mood, Conditional Mood) and lexical means such as modal verbs (e.g. can, could, may, might) and modal words (e.g. surely, probably, likely). In represented speech repetition and particles prove to be the major means of conveying subjective character of English complex conditional sentences.

## 7. Conclusion

Complex conditional sentences as a variant of prolonged syntactical form with conditional meaning can be charged with modality. In other words they function differently in various texts and speech types. Contact communication represented by characters' speech in fictional discourse provides opportunities for interlocutors to express their feelings and emotions both explicitly and implicitly. Thus complex conditional sentences become subjectively charged as they implicitly reveal speakers' emotional state, their attitude to their addressees and to a communicative situation at large. The research has shown that besides morphological means (the category of person, predicate tense forms) and lexical ones such as modal verbs and modal words the subjective character of English complex conditional sentences is

created by syntactic and pragmatic means. On the syntactic level we have specified peculiar repeated elements of English complex conditional clauses. We have studied their stylistic potential to convey speakers' feelings and emotions. On the pragmatic level we have determined a set of restrictive and intensifying particles which serve to express a speaker's desire to draw his interlocutor's attention to a particular element of an utterance or his evaluation of an utterance content. Thus, on both levels such markers demonstrate that English complex conditional sentences are subjectively coloured in contact communication.

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