



The diachrony of conditionals and temporals

Yueh Hsin Kuo
ykuo@nccu.edu.tw



Yueh Hsin Kuo*

On the directionality from temporal to conditional

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- Two questions:
- Is there really unidirectionality from temporal to conditional crosslinguistically?
- How does the answer to the first question suggest to us how temporal and conditional connectives are represented grammatically?

Outline

- Background
 - Definitions, differences and diachronic relations
- Crosslinguistic data
 - Chadic, Japanese, Manchu and Mandarin
- Theoretical implications

Background: Temporals and conditionals defined

- Temporals: protasis ('subordinate') marking expressions like *when*
 - **Not** *then, before, or after*
- Conditionals: protasis marking expressions like *if*
 - **Not** *then*
- Temporals and conditionals include only the connectives, not the clauses they mark

Background: Differences

- (1) *If/when John comes, he eats a biscuit*
- Fillmore's (1986, 1990) proposal (see also Akatsuka 1985):
 - **If** expresses **neutral** epistemic stance
 - the user is non-committal with respect to the content of the clause.
 - **When** expresses **positive** epistemic stance
 - the user commits themselves to the content of the clause.
 - *It's a matter of when not if*
- Similar to (ir)realis. Attested in many languages such as German, Japanese Turkish, etc.

Background: Differences

- This basic functional contrast motivates the morphosyntactic properties of clauses marked by *if* and *when*
 - *if*-clauses: a wider range of morphosyntactic combinations
 - *when*-clauses: a more limited range of morphosyntactic combinations
- Crosslinguistically, conditionals license more markers in their protases than temporals (Podlesskaya 2001)
- In English, *when*-clauses have the least modal-marking and *if*-clauses has the most (Gabrielatos 2019)

Background: Differences

- This contrast can be demonstrated with the following examples
 - (2) *If he decides to file the suit, the hospital's lawyers will be allowed to interview him for discovery.*
 - (3) *When he decides to file the suit...*
 - (4) *If he decided to file the suit...*

Dancygier and Sweetser 2005: 48

Background: Differences

- Generalisation: conditionals are more grammatical than temporals
 - Formally, conditionals license more morphosyntactic markers
 - Functionally, conditionals allow for more rhetorical manipulation and are more subjective
- This generalisation allows us to hypothesise on the basis of unidirectionality:
 - Temporals turn into conditionals, but not the other way around
- Because unidirectionality states that an expression usually becomes more grammatical, and not less grammatical

Background: Diachronic relations

- Unidirectionality from temporal to conditional is seemingly confirmed
 - Traugott (1985)
 - World Lexicon of Grammaticalisation (Heine & Kuteva 2002; Kuteva et al 2019)
- Temporals turn into conditionals in habitual, generic and future contexts (Lichtenberk 1991; Frajzyngier 1996; Traugott & Dasher 2002; Mauri & Sansò 2014)
 - (1) *If/when John comes he eats a biscuit*
 - ‘John habitually comes and eats a biscuit’
 - ‘John will come and eat a biscuit’

Background: Diachronic relations

- In light of the supposed unidirectionality,
 - Why, in habitual, generic and future contexts, a temporal would be reanalysed as a conditional and a conditional, in the same contexts, would not be reanalysed as a temporal?
- Hierarchical models of grammar (e.g. Cartographic Syntax, Functional Discourse Grammar) would appeal to the way the clause is structured (e.g. Hengeveld 2017; Narrog 2012; Roberts 2010)
 - More grammatical categories: higher in the clause
 - Less grammatical categories ‘climb up’ and become more grammatical
 - Synchronic claims regarding the high position of conditionals (Haegeman 2003)

Background: Diachronic relations

- Empirical problems
 - Traugott (1985) reconstructs the directionality on the basis of unidirectionality
 - Kuteva et al (2019) cite Frajzyngier's data as evidence for unidirectionality from temporal to conditional but ignores the other direction
 - Evidence for unidirectionality is thin and claims about it are biased
- In the remainder of the talk,
 - No unidirectionality from temporal to conditional
 - Habitual/generic and future contexts are where both directions of change occur
 - Implications for the syntactic representation of temporals and conditionals.

Crosslinguistic data: Chadic

- Reflexes of Proto-Chadic **mV* are temporals and/or conditionals
- Frajzyngier (1996: 386) argues that **mV* must be a conditional rather than a temporal since **mV* is more frequently a conditional in the descendant languages than a temporal
- This is predicated on the assumption of economy in the comparative method, which is not unproblematic

Crosslinguistic data: Japanese

- *-tara* and *-eba* ‘when; if’
- (5)

<i>nihon</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>it-tara</i>	<i>denwa</i>	<i>shimasu.</i>
Japan	to	go-tara	call	do

‘If/when (I) go to Japan, (I will) call (you).’ (Fujii 2018: 570)
- (6)

<i>asa</i>	<i>denki</i>	<i>ga</i>	<i>tsuk-eba</i>	<i>niwa</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>inu</i>	<i>ga</i>
morning	light	NOM	turn.on-eba	backyard	GEN	dog	NOM

isseini hoe-hajimeta.
at.once bark-started

‘When(ever)/if the lights were turned on in the morning, the dog(s) in the backyard would start to bark all at once.’ (Fujii 2018: 562)
- Epistemic stance could clarify contextually whether it is a temporal or conditional (Akatsuka 1985)

Crosslinguistic data: Japanese

- *-tara* ‘when’ in (7) and *-eba* ‘if’ in (8)

- (7) (...) *senaka wo nagashite-kudasee to it-tara... babaame ga*
 back ACC wash-give.IMP QUOT say-when hag NOM
tawashi wo motte kiyagatte o-senaka wo
 (pot)scrubbing.brush ACC bring came HOR-back ACC
araimashoo ka to nukashiyagaru.
 wash Q QUOT say
 ‘(...) When I said, “Please wash my back,” an old hag came with a (pot)
 scrubbing brush and said, “May I scrub your back?”’
 (Shinzato 2015: 163)

- (8) *sōki ni shujutsu wo shitei-reba tabun yoku*
 early at surgery ACC do.ASP-if perhaps well
natteita darō.
 become.ASP.PST SFP
 ‘If (she) had had an operation at an early stage, she would have perhaps
 recovered.’
 (Fujii 2018: 561).

Crosslinguistic data: Japanese

- *-tara* ‘when’ in (7) and *-eba* ‘if’ in (8)
- The historical source of *-tara* is a conditional and that of *-eba* is a temporal (Shinzato 2015; Frellesvig 2010)
 - I.e. *-tara* conditional > temporal; *-eba* temporal > conditional
- By hypothesis, generic and future contexts are where the changes happened

(5) *nihon e it-tara denwa shimasu.*
Japan to go-**tara** call do
‘If/when (I) go to Japan, (I will) call (you).’ (Fujii 2018: 570)

(6) *asa denki ga tsuk-eba niwa no inu ga*
morning light NOM turn.on-**eba** backyard GEN dog NOM
isseini hoe-hajimeta.
at.once bark-started
‘When(ever)/if the lights were turned on in the morning, the dog(s) in the
backyard would start to bark all at once.’ (Fujii 2018: 562)

Crosslinguistic data: Manchu

- Chen (2013)
 - *-ci* is canonically a conditional, but may be a temporal in past contexts
 - *-hA/rA-de* is canonically a temporal, but may be a conditional in NON-past contexts
- Habitual/generic and future contexts are likely the relevant contexts where the changes happened

Crosslinguistic data: Manchu

- (9) *gene-ci, uthai hūdun jio*
go-COND then quick come.IMP
'If [you] go [there], then come [back] quickly!'

Chen (2013: 72)

- (10) *si damu honggon-i kalar se-re ici*
2SG just small.bell-GEN jingling say(AUX)-IPFV.PTCP direction
baihana-ci, aifini šoforo-fi aliya-habi
go.to.search-COND already seize-PFV.CVB wait-PFV.FIN
kalar se-: onomatopoeia imitating the sound of keys or small bells, 'to jingle'
'When you just go and search [for the hawk] in the direction of the small bell's jingling sound, [you'll see that the hawk] has seized [its prey] and has long been waiting [for you]' (AGA4: 125)

Chen (2013: 101)

- (11) *beri dara-fi emgeri gabta-ci, majige*
bow draw.taut-PFV.CVB once shoot-COND a.little
amari-ha
fall.backwards-PFV.PTCP
'As [I] drew the bow taut and shot [the arrow], [I] fell backwards a little'

Chen (2013: 100)

Crosslinguistic data: Mandarin

- *Shi* 'time' developed into a temporal and then a conditional (Eifring 1995; Jiang 2002; Ōta 1958; Zhang 1990)
- *Dehua*: a conditional, but not a temporal (Eifring 1995; Jiang 2004; Wang 2017; Yap et al. 2017)
- The Academia Sinica Corpus of Balanced Chinese contains temporal uses

- (12) 我想剛剛選擇的話,很多人都選擇第二個
wǒ xiǎng gānggāng xuǎnzé **dehuà** hěnduō rén dōu xuǎnzé dìèr ge.
I think just.now choose **when** many people all choose second CLF
'I think when we were choosing just now, many people chose the second one.'

- Habitual/generic and future contexts are where the changes happened

- (13) & (14) 當你遇到挫折的話,你不妨...
dāng nǐ yùdào cuòzhé **dehuà** nǐ bùfáng.
when you encounter setback **dehuà** you might.as.well
'When/if you experience a setback, you might as well...'
每次我打他的話就會跟爸爸講
měi cì wǒ dǎ tā **dehuà** jiù huì gēn bàba jiǎng.
every time I hit she **dehuà** then will with dad tell
'Every time I hit her, she would tell Dad.'

Theoretical implications

- In sum, a temporal can turn into a conditional and a conditional can turn into a temporal.
- Implications for
 - What grammaticalisation is or is not
 - A cross-linguistic perspective on change and syntax
 1. Danger of taking the unidirectionality hypothesis for granted
 2. Danger of assuming a universal syntactic hierarchy, along which grammatical items develop.
 - Temporals and conditionals are not represented syntactically uniformly across languages.
 - Temporals and conditionals are really not that syntactically distinct from each other, allowing for both directions of change.
 - Cf. similar bidirectional phenomena in the domain of modality (Kuo 2020, 2022, 2024)



Thank you for your time

Yueh Hsin Kuo
ykuo@nccu.edu.tw