

The siblings in the shadow of *if*: The semantics and pragmatics of conditional connectives

Mingya Liu (invited speaker)

University of Osnabrück

liu.mingya@uni-osnabrueck.de

The restrictor analysis of conditionals (Kratzer 1986) and conditional connectives (CCs) has inspired many insightful follow-up studies through which it becomes clear that the interpretation of conditional sentences is subject to a process of semantic and pragmatic modulation, that is, the semantic and pragmatic properties of a conditional can be affected by narrow linguistic broad pragmatic context. As of today, there is a huge literature on the interaction between conditionals and, for example, polarity items, quantification, tense and mood (von Fintel 2011). Although CCs can influence the interpretation of conditionals in various ways, the role of CCs in the modulation process remains understudied. In this talk, I will present several studies on the semantics and pragmatics of CCs (in comparison to causal and concessive connectives) in different languages.

One of the studies (Liu *to appear 1*) focuses on the nonveridical property of indicative conditionals (Giannakidou 1998), i.e. they do not entail the truth of the antecedent. I report on three experiments in German, English and Mandarin. They show that in German and Mandarin, certain CCs (i.e. German *falls* 'if' and Mandarin *wanyi* 'if' (lit. 'one ten thousandth') triggered significantly lower ratings of speaker commitment (Giannakidou and Mari 2015), or speaker credence, towards the antecedent, but no contrast was found for English *if* vs. *in case*. Similarly, there is cross-linguistic variation concerning the effect of negative polarity items (NPIs) as well: German NPIs *jemals/überhaupt* and English *ever/at all* convey a weakened speaker commitment towards the antecedent but no such effect was found for the Mandarin NPI *renhe* 'any' – which was tested due to the lack of counterparts for *ever/at all* in the language. This shows that the nonveridicality property of indicative conditionals is elastic. I will discuss the semantic or pragmatic nature of such secondary meaning contributions of CCs (see also Liu *to appear 2*) by combining the experimental results with further distributional observations, diagnostic tests and introspective evaluations of the data.

References: • Kratzer, A. 1986. Conditionals. *Chicago Linguistics Society* 22(2). 1–15. • von Fintel, K. 2011. Conditionals. In C. Maienborn, K. von Heusinger & P. Portner (eds.), *Semantics: An international handbook of natural language and meaning*, 1515–1538. Berlin: de Gruyter. • Giannakidou, A. 1998. *Polarity sensitivity as (non)veridical dependency*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins. • Giannakidou, A. & A. Mari. 2015. Future and universal epistemic modals: Reasoning with nonveridicality and partial knowledge. In J. Blaszack et al. (eds.), *Tense, mood, and modality: New answers to old questions*. Chicago: CUP. • Liu, Mingya. (to appear 1): Graded biconditionality and reasoning. *Chicago Linguistics Society* 54. • Liu, Mingya. (to appear 2): The elastic nonveridicality property of indicative conditionals. *Linguistic Vanguard*.