

# CONDITIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS AS RHETORICAL STRUCTURES

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## **Notice on my son's door**

*If you are a junkie, a pervert, a crook, a creep, a swindler, a slave trader, a Colombian drug lord, a smuggler, a pimp, a burglar, a drifter, a tramp, a drunkard, a pensioner, Hitler, a Nazi, a lazy bum, a communist, and especially a member of this family...KEEP OUT!!!*

## **Abstract**

In this paper I will look into conditional constructions as rhetorical constructions used in discourse. Conditionality is almost tantamount to unassertability (Comrie 1986, Dancygier 1998), and hence one would naturally think that in discourse conditional constructions would not have a great role to play in cases in which epistemic distance is not required. While accepting this generally held view in broad terms, I will nevertheless try to demonstrate that despite the common property of unassertability characterizing conditional constructions, in fact, we often use conditional constructions, not in order to register epistemic distance, but rather to enhance the assertability of the apodosis of the construction, and fuse in the *if*-clause a pluralization of voices. I will argue for a class of conditional constructions whose protasis propositions are not treated as precarious assumptions or context propositions generally presenting insecure knowledge, but rather as **extracted** or **dislocated** constituents of the clause of the apodosis, developed into full conditional clauses and regarded as focalized topics. I will argue that this class of conditionals, which I will call **pseudocleft conditionals**, needs to be viewed as a separate construction whose analysis will also involve the description of the rhetorical discourse function that determines its construction.<sup>•</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

The commonest way of treating an assumption or proposition as lacking assertability is to mark it as conditional or hypothetical by using the conditional marker of the language used. The unassertability of a proposition is commonly linked to the speaker's state of knowledge, beliefs, etc. Conditional sentences are the foundation of logic, the cornerstone of syllogistic reasoning, and as such conditionals are the mortar of causation, explanation, confirmation, disposition, general laws and universal quantification. This awareness then sanctions the epithet 'primordial' for the conditional connective (Kitis 1999). Conditionals in most logical analyses, just like all the other logical connectives, are considered to be truth functional. The conditional is true in all cases except when the antecedent is true and the consequent false. Why are conditionals then so significant in all these domains? The answer has to lie in its potential for projecting the human mind into realms yet untrodden, in other words into the realm of irrealis, possible worlds, alternative worlds, fictional worlds. If this is so, then conditional markers must have a non-factual value, i.e. they must signal conditionality, hypotheticality, speculation, etc. Indeed, in Greek the same marker is used for indirect questions, conditional sentences and wishes. This is not surprising (cf. Akatsuka 1986, Traugott 1985, Wakker 1994) as conditions and indirect questions point to disjunctive situations signalling uncertainty, on one hand, while wishes are placed in the sphere of irrealis, on the other.

While, however, conditional constructions are the most suitable ploy in reasoning and, hence, in argument construction, they are not expected to be of any use in cases where the proposition is assertable on its own merit. In other words, since conditional constructions are linked to the speaker's indeterminate knowledge or belief, conditional markers are not expected to introduce secure knowledge. In this paper, I will examine a type of conditional structure whose antecedent proposition represents known information to both the speaker and the audience, while the consequent also presents secure and determinate knowledge of the speaker. I will claim that this type of conditional structure constitutes a special construction with its own unique properties. The conditional structures, which, I think, present special interest and which I would like to discuss here, are of the following type:

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inviting me to participate. I must also thank Patra Kontoulis for discussion of worrying points and useful suggestions, but primarily for lending me her literary point of view on linguistic matters. Thanks also go to A. Kakouriotis and I. Tsimpli for help with certain issues. Some examples in this study will be from Modern Greek (MG).

- (1) If fashion has joined Hollywood and sports among the great public spectacles of our time, Versace was one big reason why.
- (2) And if Miami Beach is now a laboratory of instant gratification ...in some measure that was Versace's doing too.

These two conditional structures come from the following text, an article in *Time* magazine reporting on Versace's murder and life and his suspect murderer. It is important for the ensuing discussion to embed the two examples in their discourse.

When Gianni Versace walked down the street in Miami Beach, he had every reason to think he had created the world. **If** fashion has joined Hollywood and sports among the great public spectacles of our time, Versace was one big reason why. And **if** Miami Beach is now a laboratory of instant gratification, full of clubs and in-line skaters and muscle guys with deltoids like the gas tanks on a Harley - in some measure that was Versace's doing too. Six years ago, when the city was threadbare, he fell in love with it, and soon began converting a hotel and a crumbling apartment building into his comically scrumptious mansion, one of his four homes around the world. And where Versace went, the models and movie stars soon followed. (*Time* July 28, 1997, my emphasis)

This study will proceed as follows: In the rest of this section I will present the background that has led me to the investigation of conditional structures such as (1) and (2). In sections 2 and 3, I will discuss these structures within the framework of current analyses of conditionals with a view to finding out whether they can fit into such accounts. In this attempt I will mostly rely on Dancygier's (1998) model, as it is the latest and most comprehensive account of conditional connectives. In considering our examples within Dancygier's framework, we will also pay due attention to Sweetser's (1990) proposed analysis, since the two frameworks do not differ markedly. In section 4, I will review the issue of the non-assertability of the protases of conditional constructions, while in 5 I will consider these structures within an account of conditionals as topics. In section 6, I will present the main ingredients of conditional meaning with a view to determining whether the structures under investigation here meet these criteria. We will conclude that these structures constitute a special conditional construction. In section 7, we will pull together all the formal properties of the investigated construction, while section 8 will focus on its semantic characteristics. In section 9, I will discuss the pragmatic and discourse function of this conditional construction and in section 10 I will present the completed picture of the construction with all its formal, semantic

and pragmatic properties that combine to yield a special conditional construction used for certain rhetorical purposes.

### 1. Background

There has been some interest in conditional structures like the one in (3) in the recent non-philosophical literature on conditionals.

- (3) If geography is destiny, then Reggio di Calabria was a fitting birthplace for the Italian designer who built a \$1 billion fashion empire on the notion that there should be no barriers between the aesthetics of refinement and ostentation. (Time, 150, 4, July 28, 1997)

In a recent study (Kitis, 2002) I discussed the rhetorical function of some conditional structures that can have a concessive or even antithetical (contrastive) force, used by the speaker or author either as a grounding mechanism for the subsequent discourse or in order to enhance the impact of the apodosis proposition. Moreover, the proposition of the apodosis in these conditional structures is contrasted to that of the protasis. Examples of this type of conditional structure are the following:

- (4)i. If Berners-Lee invented the Internet, I invented spell check.  
 ii. If Berners-Lee invented the Internet, I, however, invented spell check.  
 (5) *An ja poles xores tis EU to thema ine texnoikonomiko, ja mas ine thema epiviosis mprosta ston turkiko imperialismo.*(MG)  
 ‘If this issue is technoeconomic for a number of other EU countries, for us it is an issue of survival vis-à-vis Turkish imperialism’

I claimed that the concessive type of *if*-conditional structures, not only licenses the Modern Greek (MG) concessive particle *omos*(*however*) in its apodosis, but also that it is precisely this concessive particle that can convert the preceding protasis into a concessive conditional one. In other words, if world-knowledge won't sanction (4i) as a concessive conditional structure, the insertion of *however* will, as can be shown in (4ii); (4ii) has a concessive conditional interpretation. I claimed that the concessive particle of MG *omos*(*however*) has a similar function to MG *tote*(*then*): both particles act as mechanisms for converting the complex sentence into, or ratifying it as, a concessive or hypothetical one; *tote*(*then*) can ratify the conditional structure as a hypothetical one and *omos*(*however*) will ratify it as a concessive one. While the latter is a factualization mechanism in the realm of realis, the former can be such a mechanism only in the realm of irrealis. Although *then* is

mentioned as a factualization device in Dancygier (1998), and thoroughly investigated in Dancygier and Sweetser (1997), I think it is not discussed in these terms, neither is it juxtaposed to other particles such as *still*, *nevertheless* or *however*, which can function as factualization devices firmly placing the conditional in the realis realm, thus licensing a concessive interpretation of the whole conditional construction.

However, the interest in structures like (4) and (5) does not lie in their concessive function, which is admittedly weakened, but rather in the factual character of their protases, which enables them to function as a grounding mechanism for the subsequent discourse (the apodoses) to which the protases are juxtaposed. In Kitis (2002) I claimed that the conditional *an(if)* of Modern Greek can be used in rhetorical constructions with an adversative meaning. This finding is in accord with similar functions of other connectives, such as coordinate conjunction *and*, and temporal subordinate connective *when* (Kitis 2000, forthcoming [a], 2001). But the claim about the antithetical rhetorical function of *an*, the prototypical conditional connective of Modern Greek, is not recent. Tzartanos (1946[1989]: 70) writes that:

‘Many conditional statements are little more than simple **rhetorical modes of expression**; that is, we often use a conditional statement, not because we want to make a supposition that will lead to a conclusion, but because we want to express a thought more vividly.’ (my translation),

while Smyth (1920) talks of “vivid conditionals” in Classical Greek. Tzartanos also goes on to claim that conditional structures can be used to carry a “strong contrast”. He writes:

‘...the protasis of a conditional statement may express more vividly a strong contrast to the content of the apodosis. In this case it is possible for the apodosis to be preceded by a contrastive connective *ma, ala, omos*(=but)’. (70, my translation)

While all this is very interesting and requires further research, in this study I want to concentrate on a particular conditional structure (exemplified in (1) and (2)) that has not been discussed or treated to date to my knowledge, and deserves further analysis. In my previous study (Kitis 2002), I showed that the adversative conditional constructions partly derived their adversative meaning from the concessivity of their protases. The propositions of the protases of such adversatively used conditional constructions are considered to represent assumed or known information. This property of givenness also characterizes the conditional structure that is the focus of this paper, but whereas the

antecedents of the concessive conditionals discussed in Kitis (to appear [b]) present context-propositions to which the speaker does not need to be fully committed, the protasis of the conditional structure discussed here has a fully determinate character and does not require any marking of epistemic distance, such as the marker *if*. Both the speaker and his/her audience are fully committed to the protasis proposition. Moreover, this structure is not used antinomically in order to juxtapose and contrast two states of affairs or events, as was the case in Kitis (to appear [b]); adversativity provides a motivation for the speaker's rhetorical use of the conditional structure. Rather, this is a structure that is exploited in discourse in order to both focalize its topic in a protasis proposition but also enhance the meaning of the apodosis so that its impact becomes greater. In this function this conditional construction is very similar to cleft-constructions and for this reason I will call such conditional structures **pseudo-cleft-conditional constructions**. But first, I will explore the constitution and behaviour of these structures in order to identify the properties that define them uniquely and license the particular construction.

Broadly speaking, there are two trends in the current literature in dealing with conditional statements: The first option is to treat conditional connectives as truth functional, which means that conditional statements will be accounted for in terms of material implication. All paradoxes attached to this solution are explained by appeal to pragmatic principles. This is the line taken by Grice (1978) and his followers, and pursued by relevance theorists. Another strategy would be to reject the material implication analysis altogether and provide an argument to account for the full force and function of conditional statements (Sweetser 1990, Dancygier 1998, amongst many others). In what follows, I will investigate the conditional structure exemplified in (1) and (2) within current paradigms.

## 2. The material implication analysis

The standard analysis of conditionals is in terms of a two-place connective interpreted as material implication. In other words, the truth-table of conditionals determines the truth of the conditional on account of the truth of its consequent. It suffices that the consequent be true, even if the antecedent is false for the conditional to be true. But this analysis cannot be applied to either (1) or (2). (1) and (2) cannot be merely truth functional in the logico-philosophical sense. For it can't be the case that there is an event defined as the cause of another event when the latter is false. It can't be that Versace caused Miami Beach to become a lab of instant gratification when Miami Beach is not

one. It can't be true that we assign causality to an individual for an event that has not occurred after all for there cannot be a cause without an effect. On the contrary, the causality relation in these examples is inverse: instead of the causal relation being from the antecedent to the postcedent, the causality is reversed; the event presented in the postcedent is seen as the cause of the state-of-affairs represented in the antecedent. If an account in terms of material implication is ruled out, so is also one of enrichment in terms of implicatures, or relevance. Let me clarify the scenery further: this is not a case of indicative conditionals, which have been argued to be devices for restricting the domain of 'quantifiers'. Formalization of the two clauses in terms of restrictive quantification "does not contain logically equivalent constituents ... In fact, they don't have *if...then*-clauses as constituents at all" (Kratzer 1991: 654). But this is not the case discussed here, for even if in some cases these conditionals admit indicative form, as in the examples below,

If I play football, I do it in order to please you.  
If I am a linguist, I owe it to you,

their grammatical form conceptually denotes an event that is either in process or habitually occurring, or a state holding of the present but also of the past. In either case, the *if*-clause denotes a fact of our world. As Fillmore writes: it is necessary to keep in mind the difference between *time* and *tense*.

### 3. Broader analyses of conditionals

Within a broader semanto-pragmatic framework, there have been traditionally singled out three types of conditional construction, all three of them characterized by some form of unassertability of their protases: Content-world conditionals, epistemic conditionals and speech act conditionals (Sweetser 1990). Broadly speaking, content world conditionals are termed predictive conditionals in Dancygier (1998). In what follows we will try to see if any of those analyses proposed in Dancygier (1998) and Sweetser (1990) is applicable to our examples with a view to determining the type of conditional to which they belong.

At first glance we can say that all three examples of *if* cannot be claimed to be instances of content-world conditionals, nor of epistemic or speech act or pragmatic or conversational conditionals. But let's look at the defining properties of each of these types more closely.

### 3.1. *Can they be ‘content’-level predictive conditionals?*

‘Content’-level predictive conditionals have participant clauses which refer to events conditionally related with each other. Conditionals (1) and (2) cannot be predictive conditionals as the protases of predictive conditionals present assumptions not derivable from the speaker’s knowledge (including contextual knowledge as well) (Dancygier 1998). Protases of predictive conditionals present a clause *p* as a background to a prediction made in *q*. The protases and the apodoses of predictive conditionals are connected in such a way that the contents of the apodoses are predictable from those of the protases. Predictive conditionals, therefore, involve causality and indeed at least in (1) and (2) there is a pronounced chain of causality. But the causality of (1) and (2) is not conditional but rather factual. Moreover, whereas in predictive conditionals the protases are not knowable and non-predictable (Dancygier 1998), this is not the case in our examples. The protases of both (1) and (2) express states of affairs or events referring to the past, even if valid in the present too. On the other hand, the apodoses in all of them are not in any sense predictions. Indeed, the propositions of the apodoses in (1) and (2) depict an event that is considered to be **the cause** of the event represented in the protasic propositions. The apodoses express an event that occurred in the past too.

### 3.2. *Can they be interpretive, quotative or metatextual conditionals?*

If (1) and (2) are non-predictive then they must be contextually bound or grounded in some way. However, they cannot be said to be quotative in any sense; they do not quote a previous statement or implication or presupposition. Their protases are not tentative either despite the *if* marker. Their protases cannot be said to be “not directly representative of the speaker’s beliefs or knowledge” (Dancygier 1998: 130).

They can’t be interpretive conditionals either (Smith and Smith 1988) or indicative counterfactual conditionals (Akatsuka 1986). The protases of interpretive conditionals do not represent the speaker’s thought or knowledge, but rather interpret the thoughts expressed in the context probably by another speaker. Just as in the case of context-propositions, the speaker is not, or need not be, committed to the proposition.

Examples (1) and (2) are not cases where protases and apodoses form, or meet in, a conditional construction in order to reconcile the incredible with the known (Dancygier 1998: 131). The contents of the potases are not grounded in the narration (textually), but rather in the general knowledge of both the speaker and the reader, while the contents of the apodoses are the new information in the text. So the protases of (1) and (2) are – contra Dancygier’s



(1998) account of non-predictive conditionals – presented as “accepted by the speaker as true” and as generally shared known information and yet in a conditional construction.

The protases of (1) and (2) do not in any way represent the hearer’s perspective either. They do not represent assumptions held (even if tentatively) by the hearer, nor assumptions held tentatively by the speaker either. The contents of the *if*-protases are not (despite the conditional marker) treated as tentative assumptions held by the hearer or speaker or both. Despite the marker, the protases represent quite secure knowledge.

Just like the conditionals in (6) and (7),

(6) If I took up photography it was because I was interested in it,

(7) If I became a linguist, I owe it to Martin Atkinson.

*if* does not function as a marker of change of perspective either (Dancygier 1998: 132), i.e. distancing the speaker from the hearer’s perspective. *If* does not mark an epistemic distance.

The main types of non-predictive conditionals are ‘inferential’, ‘metatextual’ and ‘speech act’ ones. (1) and (2) cannot in any sense be called ‘metatextual’ or ‘speech act’ conditionals. They cannot be metatextual because they are not symmetrically structured protases and apodoses invoking a metatextual interpretation as in (8):<sup>2</sup>

(8) If the Cite is the heart of Paris, the Latin Quarter is its soul.

### 3. 3. *Can they be inferential conditionals?*

Can (1) and (2) be ‘inferential’ conditionals? Inferential conditionals are of the type of (9) to (11):

(9) If he’s still alive then he’s grown up now (must be).

(10) If I fathered a child, then that is surprising (must come as a surprise)

(11) If it was in the letter, then I must have written it... (adapted from Dancygier 1998)

In inferential conditionals (Dancygier’s, 1998 term for epistemic

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<sup>2</sup> It is not clear to what extent symmetry needs to be a condition for metatextual conditionals. Dancygier (1998: 108) excludes this condition in cases of intensification, while Sweetser (1996) defines an independent class of conditionals, called ‘meta-metaphorical’, designed to include examples such as (8). This class is defined mostly by symmetrical mappings. But example (3) can be called a metatextual conditional, although it is not symmetrical and the metaphorical mapping is applicable only to its protasis. It is not a case of intensification either (cf. Dancygier 1998: 108). Such structures require further analysis.

conditionals) the apodoses must present conclusions drawn from the tentative acceptance of the assumptions in the protases. But in (1) and (2) there is no inferential reasoning linking the two clauses. There is no way of reasoning from the protasis ‘if Miami Beach is now a lab of instant gratification’ to the apodosis ‘in some measure that was Versace’s doing too’.

These examples cannot be epistemic conditionals then despite their contextual boundness, which appears to be linked with epistemic conditionals. They do not promote an interpretation whereby one acknowledges a case of inferring a cause (or an enabling circumstance) from knowledge of their effects, as shown by the unacceptability of (1i) and (2i):

- (1i) If fashion has joined Hollywood and sports among the great public spectacles of our time, (then I can/this enables me to conclude that) Versace was one big reason why.  
 (2i) And if Miami Beach is now a laboratory of instant gratification ... (then I can/this enables me to conclude that) in some measure that was Versace’s doing too.

That (1) and (2) cannot be inferential or epistemic conditionals becomes evident by their inability to accept *then*:

- (1ii) If fashion has joined Hollywood and sports among the great public spectacles of our time, ?then Versace was one big reason why.  
 (2ii) And if Miami Beach is now a laboratory of instant gratification ...?then in some measure that was Versace’s doing too.

While *then* may not sound totally unacceptable in (1) and (2),<sup>3</sup> probably due to the nature of the propositional content, it is clear that similar examples such as (6) and (7) do not license *then*:

- (6i) If I took up photography, \*then it was because I was interested in it,  
 (7i) If I became a linguist, \*then I owe it to Martin Atkinson.

Moreover, predictive conditionals do not present any constraints on licensing *then* (Dancygier 1998). We can then conclude that these examples are not instances of prototypical conditionals formulated in the *if p, then q* schema. Dancygier (1998) claims that the non-predictive, non-inferential speech act conditionals, as well as “background” ones, do not license the insertion of *then*. Also Dancygier and Sweetser (1997) claim that the textbook predictive conditional construction carrying an *iff* implicature is associated with *then*.

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<sup>3</sup> Native speakers find them unacceptable after some deliberation rather than instantly.

### 3. 4. *Can they be speech act conditionals?*

The question-heading of this section can only be considered to be rhetorical, as it is more than obvious that these conditionals do not entail their consequents irrespective of their antecedents, as in the Austinian pragmatic or speech act ones: *If you're thirsty, there's beer in the fridge*. This conclusion is also a consequence of the inability to analyze (1) and (2) in terms of material implication, where the truth of the proposition of the consequent warrants the truth of the conditional, too, irrespective of the truth or falsity of the antecedent.

### 4. The question of assertability of protasic propositions

In all the cases of “contextual givenness” and degrees of distance of non-predictive conditionals discussed in Dancygier (1998), although the non-predictive protases differ with respect to the source of the assumptions they contain, as well as the degree of epistemic distance, they all, nevertheless, share one property: the speaker does not take the responsibility for asserting *p*.

Dancygier (1998) considers the concept of givenness as too strong for *if*-protases of the non-predictive type. The contents of the protases cannot be “presupposed to be true. On the contrary”, she writes, “the function of protases is to present assumptions as for some reason unassertable. The contextual grounding of protases, even in the cases where the protasis does indeed quote a preceding utterance, does not ensure that the speaker necessarily accepts the quoted assumption as true; it may even be the case that she believes it to be false” (Dancygier 1998: 134). She also considers the concept of shared knowledge to be “too strong” and proposes the term “shared accessibility”. But it is evident that the author of (1) and (2) (just like the speakers of (6) and (7) and their audience) fully accepts the contents of his/her protases despite the conditional or hypothetical marker and that the *if*-construction functions as a rhetorical ploy in the hands or lips of the author or speaker. But what exactly is its function? Can we assume that the conditional clause functions as a topic?

### 5. Conditionals as topics

Can the protases of (1) and (2) be the topics of the subsequent discourse? Ford and Thompson (1986), elaborating on Haiman's (1978) claim that conditionals are topics, suggest the following formulae of conditional topics and their relation to the apodoses for initial conditionals in written discourse:

- A. X. Assuming X, then Y.      Assuming
- B. X. (But) if not X, then Y.      Contrasting
- C. Generalization. (For example) if X, then Y.      Particular cases
- D. X. If Options Y, then Z.      Exploring of options

It is rather evident in our examples that none of these types is the right formulation of the function of the conditional in (1) and (2). The protases are neither stated nor suggested in any way, as in A (cf. (6) and (7)), and they do not form contrastive topics as in B; neither do they illustrate a generalization as in C, nor do they present an alternative option as in D. Generally the conditional usage has been linked to the speaker's uncertainty or uncontrollability of *p* (Akatsuka 1986, Sweetser 1990). The *if*-clauses in our examples do not serve as "tickets" into the next paragraph playing a cohesive role either. Neither are they paragraph-initial.

However, the protases seem to be sentential topics as they represent old shared information and as the consequents state something new in relation to the protases, such as an explanation of the situation or event represented in the protasis. But the *if*-clauses are topics of a special brand: they are focalized topics, because they represent old information brought onto stage for a special rhetorical reason, as we will see.

## **6. The main ingredients of conditional meaning: Unidirectionality/biconditionality**

It is expected that whatever analysis is adopted for conditionals it will have to revolve around unidirectional logical implication. This means that in our analysis we need to posit an implication relation directed from the protasis *p* to the apodosis *q*. As can be seen in (1) and (2), there is no causal relation such that *p* may have caused *q* or that *q* may depend on *p*. If there is one, it is precisely in the opposite direction, i.e. from *q* to *p*: Versace caused to a certain extent (*q*) the state-of-affairs represented in *p*. This can be schematized as follows: If *q* then *p* (in which *q* would entail *p*), or *q* caused *p*

Moreover, a favoured analysis of conditionals would predict that conditional structures also give rise to implicatures (Grice 1978) so that in the absence of *p* there will be no *q*. Such implicatures lead to an interpretation of *if* as *iff*; this property is called biconditionality, what Geis and Zwicky (1971) called invited inferences or conditional perfection. Do (1) and (2) then promote Conditional Perfection (CP)? Since *p* does not offer a sufficient condition for the truth of *q*, can we assume that *p*, nevertheless, offers a relevance condition (Johnson-Laird, 1986) for either the truth of, or granting

that, or performing  $q$  as in Austinian conditionals? It is evident that this assumption is not warranted either. So there is no causal relation between  $p$  and  $q$ , such that  $p$  causes  $q$ . However, there is a causal relation, but it is an inverse one: it is directed from  $q$  to  $p$ .

If  $p$ ,  $q$  has been claimed to be iconic of real-time sequences of events. The temporal reference of the protasis precedes that of the apodosis (Comrie, 1986). But in our examples, this iconicity parameter is not valid. If anything, the protasis presents an event that follows or is the effect of what is presented in the apodosis. The temporal reference of the apodosis in our examples precedes that of the protasis. Neither are these constructions iconic of a sequence of steps in the reasoning process that the hearer has to follow in order to understand.

## 7. Formal characteristics of the conditional construction

### 7. 1. Clause order

The conditionals examined here seem to have a set order. The apodosis cannot precede the protasis as in (1a) and (2a), even if in real time the proposition of the apodosis presents an event that precedes that of the protasis:

- (1a) \*Versace was one big reason why if fashion has joined Hollywood and sports among the great public spectacles of our time.
- (2a) \*And in some measure that was Versace's doing too if Miami Beach is now a laboratory of instant gratification.

So the protases and apodoses of these conditional constructions are not reversible.

### 7. 2. Unacceptability of 'then'

We have also seen that this construction will not license *then*. This constraint ties up with the nature of the protasic proposition: despite the *if* marker, it is considered factual, and *then* becomes not just redundant but also inappropriate. As Dancygier (1998: 179) writes, “[r]ecall that *if* has been claimed here to signal unassertability of the protasis  $p$ ; what *then* seems to be doing is signalling that the assumption  $p$  has to be factual before  $q$  can be asserted.” But since the proposition of the protasis is already factual in a realis mode there is no reason for the deployment of a factualizing mechanism like *then*.

### 7. 3. Constituent dislocation

Haiman (1978) noted that conditionals can be left-dislocated constituents.

His examples were: (a) *If you could bring a ball, THAT would be good*, (b) *If you tidied up your things, IT would be make me very happy* (576). He writes that “left-dislocation apes the discourse situation in which topics are generally established: initial mention in a full form is followed by subsequent mention in reduced form” (577). While in the construction investigated here there is left-dislocation of a constituent in the form of a conditional *if*-clause, there are certain semantic properties that need to be identified additionally for the completion of the specific construction. Before we explore the semantic properties of the construction, we need to note that the dislocated constituent leaves a trace that takes a pro-form in the main clause of the apodosis. However, there are semantic restrictions as to what is dislocated in this construction, to which we now turn.

## 8. Semantic properties of the construction

The main semantic property of this construction is determined by the semantic type of constituent that is dislocated. It has to represent either the cause or the result of an event or state or action presented in the apodosis proposition (also cf. Tzartanos, 1946) and as such it has to be placed in the realis past or the realis present. In other words, the conditionality of this conditional construction has given its place to an inverse cause-and-effect relationship between the apodosis and the protasis, but the directionality of this causal relationship can also be reversed when it is directed from the apodosis proposition to the protasis one, as is clearly demonstrated in all our examples:

(6a) *Ke telos, an akolouthisa ti photographia, ine jati me endiefere.* (MG)

‘And finally, if I took up photography, it was because I was interested in it.’

(B. Rassias, a well known Greek photographer in broadcast *Nostos*, 20-11-99, TV ET3)

That this conditional construction does not license *then* falls out of what has been said about the nature of its protasis proposition. *If* has been claimed to signal unassertability of the protasis *p*, and *then* has been said to signal the factuality of *p* in view of the assertion of *q*. In other words, *then* factualizes *p* (Dancygier 1998). In the construction we have identified *then* cannot be claimed to play this role as the proposition of the protasis is already assumed to be factual and needs no further factualization mechanism, such as the insertion of *then*. *Then* is not needed to establish, so to speak, a particular mental space that will constitute the domain for the assertion of *q*.

Thus the conditional construction investigated here is firmly placed in the realis domain totally devoid of any conditionality or hypotheticality. If Stalnaker (1975: 168-9) claims that a conditional clause is in effect an instruction to “add the antecedent to your stock of knowledge and beliefs and then consider whether or not the consequent is true”, the conditional construction explored here features an if-clause whose proposition is well entrenched, and assumed as such, in our world knowledge. Despite the if-introducer, the clause introduced does not display either a negative or a neutral epistemic stance (Fillmore). On the contrary, in the cases discussed here, the if-clause displays a positive epistemic stance, a type not licensed by if-constructions according to Fillmore and all relevant literature. In actual fact (6a) came at the end of a TV interview with a well-known photographer. Why then does the author or speaker need to dislocate a constituent from a causal construction, such as I took up photography because I was interested in it, into a conditional one? The answer to this will lead us to pragmatic and rhetorical requirements, which we will explore in the following sections.

## **9. Pragmatic and discourse function of the construction**

That conditional statements are not restricted only to reasoning and hypothesizing is an old claim. Tzartanos (1946) and Inoue (1983), amongst others, claim that conditional statements can be also used for rhetorical purposes. Inoue claims that conditional expressions, while they may be inappropriate or ‘ungrammatical’ for expressing non-hypothetical determinate knowledge, are nevertheless used in such cases to convey the speaker’s indeterminacy or uncertainty. Akatsuka (1986) makes similar claims.

However, while it has been made clear in the literature that such conditional clauses expressing indeterminate knowledge are used for rhetorical purposes, in all these cases it is stressed that the hypothetical construction also conveys the speaker’s uncertainty with reference to what is conveyed (cf. Akatsuka’s (1986) indicative counterfactuals, Kay’s (1991) context-proposition). Epistemic distance then sanctions the use of the conditional marker *if*.

Structures such as (1), (2), (6) or (7), on the other hand, do not in any sense convey any uncertainty of any kind. The obvious question that arises then is why a speaker or author should use such a hypothetical formula as the exponent of secure knowledge if reasons such as the speaker’s or author’s skepticism or indirect knowledge or epistemic distance, in general, are not at play, and if the proposition is not used concessively or antithetically either (Kitsis to appear [b]).

I want to propose that in such cases it is disorientating to call the conditional marker *if* a hypothetical operator signalling uncertainty and hypothesizing. Instead, I submit that *if* can act as a polyphonic operator in this construction. A proposition embedded within an *if*-operator can be rendered polyphonic, i.e. it can be rather opaque relative to the author, narrator, character or reader. I propose that the marker *if* in this construction also invites the active involvement of the interlocutor (or reader) in negotiating meaning and in reinterpreting discourse. Thus, discourse embedded within the scope of an *if* operator in this construction acquires depth of analysis and interpretation by fusing different voices.

Ducrot (Žagar1996: 84) writes: “In certain analyses of mine...there are four, five, six, even seven enunciators: the number of enunciators is absolutely unlimited.”<sup>4</sup> I think that *if* in the construction investigated here, rather than acting as a hypothetical marker, embeds voices within its scope. So, rather than issuing his/her own authoritative propositional voice in a categorical statement, the author or speaker mediates an embedding of other voices too, thus inviting the reader or interlocutor to pose the question him/herself, assert it, resolve it, and then proceed further. So *if* can be used as a dialogical ploy of unleashing of voices. Recall that the same morphological form is used in many languages such as Greek for expressing wishes and indirect questions. Thus, *if* is an operator that works, not only at the level of the fabula or narrated, but also at the level of the *sjuzet* or narrating, enforcing a generalization or pluralization of voices. *If*-clauses, then, can act as a mode of encryption of contexts, since they can encrypt the voice of a figural mind and hence its context, too. Indeed, in the excerpt from *Time*, the *if*-clauses fuse the voices of not only the narrator and the author, but also of the character, especially as they are preceded by a sentence representing the character, Versace, in a meditating mode: “When Gianni Versace walked down the street in Miami Beach, he had every reason to think he had created the world.” The protases of the *if*-clauses also invite the active involvement of their readers in negotiating their meaning, since they invite them to theorize and postulate, hence, resolve, rather than present them with categorical statements. *If...then* structures invite a Modus Ponens inference, which is dialogic in nature, as it involves raising a hypothesis, positing an assumption and completing it in the conclusion (‘If p then q, p, therefore q). However, in our case the assumption set up is, in fact, a secure premise (‘I am a linguist’, ‘I did take up photography’, etc.). On the ground of the attested truth of this secure premise, the hearer/reader is invited

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<sup>4</sup> “Enunciator” is roughly equivalent to point of view.



to discharge or eliminate the antecedent as a hypothesis or assumption and, instead, look on it as a premise that will enable him/her to focus on the postcedent, which bears the informational load. *Conditional* constructions, thus, encrypt both the contexts of the author, narrator, character, but also those of the readers'. In (6) and (7) likewise, the conditional clause promotes its protasis to a focalized topic, thus encrypting the voices of, not only its producer and speaker, but also its audience (TV audience as well as interviewer in (6)) or its interlocutor. *If*-clauses of this construction, then, also achieve an encryption of the *other's* context.

Moreover, this conditional construction identified and discussed here exploits a modal displacement, thus developing a polyfunctionalist scheme, in which the embedded proposition unfolds an event in actual time but also in mind time. The determination of the truth or falsity of a given proposition about a state of affairs is of secondary significance compared to alternative states of affairs. *If* introduces speculation, but its introduced proposition (formally hypothesized as it is) appears to be in antinomy or conflict with the factual context. It, therefore, introduces a multipliability of contexts for the clause between a *de jure* selection of context and a *de facto* functionality of contexts. In other words, the irrealis potential of the marker *if* encrypts a *de jure* operation of contexts. We can conclude then that it is the need for this discourse function of the construction that enforces its realization and significance.

On the other hand, the proposition of the apodosis of this conditional construction acquires an enhanced impact as it is all devoted to the explanatory part of a causal chain. What is promoted to the span of a whole proposition is a cause, while its effect has already been focally topicalized in the *if*-clause of the protasis.

## 10. The pseudo-cleft conditional construction

In this section we will look more closely at the properties both defining this type of conditional identified here and differentiating it from other types already discussed in the literature. I want to claim that conditional structures such as (1) and (2) identified here constitute a particular conditional construction. A grammatical construction is a rather idiosyncratic pairing of a certain syntactic structure definable in a formal way with a certain semantic content and possibly pragmatic enrichment or interpretation as well, such as implicatures. In this particular case, the pragmatic content is definable in terms of the distinct discourse function this conditional construction fulfills.

*The syntactics of the construction, as shown above, are:*

1. The schema *if p q* is the syntactic form of the construction.
2. The protasis can only precede the apodosis.
3. The protasis is an *if*-clause that embeds and configures an extracted constituent of the apodosis.
4. There is a pro-form in the *q*-clause, which takes up the trace of the extracted constituent.
5. The *if*-clause then can be regarded as a dislocated constituent.
6. *Then* is not licensed in this construction.

*The semantics of the construction, as shown above, are:*

7. There is no implication, conditional causality or unidirectional conditionality or biconditionality.
8. There is no conditional perfection of any kind.
9. There is no hypotheticality.
10. There is no iconicity in the *if p, q* construction of the real time sequence (in most cases).
11. There is a causality asserted in inverse order, i.e. the effect or cause<sup>5</sup> is presented in the *if*-clause. And if *p* represents a cause it is as in (12) below. It is in the domain of *realis*.
12. The *if*-proposition is not only regarded as factual but is also firmly placed in the *realis* domain. So is the apodosis.

*The pragmatics of the construction, as shown above, are:*

13. The construction highlights a cause or effect in order to peg on it the effect or cause correspondingly.
14. (13) leads the author or speaker to use the conditional construction in a like manner to cleft constructions. By thus dislocating the known constituent, not only is the latter topicalized but also focalized, promoted as it is into a single clause; it is evident that the rest of the structure carrying the unknown information acquires added force and impact, as this also stands out in a single clause.
15. *Polyphony of 'if'*. Due to the inherent hypotheticality or unassertability of the *if*-marker, the *if*-clause is ideally suited to be an exponent of a variability of voices fused in a single proposition. It is worth recalling that this marker is often morphologically the same for both expressing wishes and introducing complements for cognition-verbs.

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<sup>5</sup> *If Versace was murdered, his empire did not collapse because of that.* Though the causality is not inverse in such cases, it is nevertheless factual and non-conditional.

## 11. Conclusion

In this study, I examined a specific conditional construction that has not to date to the best of my knowledge attracted any attention or received any treatment. I identified its specific properties that compose its constructional character. These properties involve all levels of analysis: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. Moreover, it has been stressed that it is the discourse function of such conditional structures that primarily gives rise to the generation of the construction.

Further, the properties of this conditional construction seem to defy Comrie's (1986: 89) claim that "a conditional never involves factuality – or more accurately, that a conditional never expresses the factuality of either of its constituent propositions." Comrie adds that the propositions may be known independently to be true but within the conditional construction this factuality is not expressed. But in view of examples such as (6) or (7), his claim is not only considerably weakened but it also seems to be unwarranted, for the factual character of the propositions cannot be attributed to implicatures or other pragmatic enrichment. If this were so, then such implicatures could be suspended or cancelled. But while (1) and (2) might be more amenable to such treatment, (6) and (7) totally resist it as can be seen below:

(6ii) *Ke telos, an \*pithanon akolouthisa ti photographia, ine jati me endiefere.*  
(MG)

'And finally, if I \*possibly took up photography, it was because I was interested in it.'

(7ii) If I \*possibly became a linguist, I owe it to Martin Atkinson.<sup>6</sup>

Both (6ii) and (7ii) do not license adverbs that would weaken the assertability of the protasis proposition and would indicate the speaker's epistemic distance. Moreover, the alleged or presumed hypotheticality or conditionality of the *if*-clauses cannot be cancelled by appending a clause to that effect: *And finally, if I took up photography, it was because I was interested in it. \*But I didn't take up photography.*

While Comrie (1986) identifies some bicausal conditionals, he posits the causal link between *p* and *q* as a defining property. He maintains that the link between the two propositions is causal, i.e. "the content of the protasis must be interpretable as a cause of the content of the apodosis" (80). He adds this property as another requirement in the characterization of conditionals in

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<sup>6</sup> (7ii) can only be interpreted qualitatively.

natural language. However, our examples clearly demonstrate an inverse causal link and consequently this requirement cannot be a *sine qua non* defining property of conditional structures, even if we exempt Austinian conditionals. The question, therefore, that arises is whether our examples qualify at all to be included within the class of conditional structures. As they all contain *if*-clauses, however, it is rather unwarranted to maintain that they do not belong to the class of conditional structures. I think they do. But then, rather than assume that all requirements identified and proposed by Comrie (1986) and other researchers are defeasible on account of the evidence presented here, it is wiser to conclude that such conditional structures as the ones discussed in this paper constitute a special brand, and deserve to be identified as a special type of conditional construction whose properties will involve all the levels of analysis discussed here. In other words, this is a construction actually entrenched in a speaker's mind (Croft, 28)

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