Reality and Assurance in Chrau Conditional Sentences

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1. *Semantic components*

2. Correlation with forms

3. Battery of forms

4. Comments

A conditional sentence is defined as a sentence whose parts (whether present or understood) stand in a conditional semantic relationship with each other. A semantically conditional sentence may take a number of forms. Semantic characteristics of sentences are assumed to be near-universal, i.e., a functioning human language must have some way of expressing these notions; the forms will differ with each language. It is hoped that this description of Chrau conditional forms will facilitate comparisons with other languages.[1]

1. Semantic components.

The semantic nucleus, or root, of a conditional sentence is composed of a conditioning event and a resultant event (cf. Thomas 1983:104,144). This conditional relationship tends to be

involuntary or automatic, and not infrequently uses intransitive

or passive forms for the resultant event. The conditioning event

may be viewed as a cause or a triggering state or action. A

conditional sentence differs from a purposeful sentence (which it

often resembles in form) in that a purposeful sentence is voluntary

and has a goal in mind; a conditional sentence is more automatic,

and the action ends at the result, without going on further to a

purpose.

The sentence root may be modified by time or location

settings, compounding, pragmatic modals (illocution, psychological

mood, reality, status), or by any of a variety of free-floating

or overarching semantic elements which I am calling semantic

prosodies,[2] or by presuppositional elements. In this paper I

confine myself to the reality (pragmatic), assurance (illocution

variant), and expectation (presupposition) parameters, with

occasional references to time (setting).

Did or will the condition actually occur? The reality

of the conditioning event may be factual (Chrau exx. 1,5,9...),

contrafactual (10, 11, 12, 13), uncertain (2,3,4...), or general

(6, 16, 17). General borders on uncertain so that they are sometimes

indistinguishable (6). A negative condition (2, 23, 25) is usually

uncertain and is often a threat. A future conditioning event tends

to be given uncertain reality. This parameter may be illustrated from English:

You hit me so I hit you.   (Factual)

If you had hit me I would have hit you.   (Contrafactual)

If you hit me I will hit you.   (Uncertain)

Any time you hit me I hit you back.   (General)

If the conditioning event happens, how sure is it that the resulting event will happen? The assurance of the conditional relationship may vary from very strong certainty (4), to normal assurance (1, 2, 3), to weak unsureness (5, 18). This parameter is a continuum, probably segmented differently by each language. A past event tends to have normal assurance, because the event has already happened that way, but non-normal assurance is possible (19).

If you hit me I'll hit you.   (Normal)

If you hit me I'll certainly hit you.   (Strong)

If you hit me I may hit you.   (Weak)

If you hit me there's no assurance that I'll hit you. (Very weak)

Contrasting with the internal assurance of the conditional relationship and the external reality of the conditioning event, there can also be a general presupposition regarding the conditional relationship. What do people normally expect in such a situation?

Violation of this presupposition or expectation leads to a concessive sentence (22, 23, 24).

> If you hit me I'll hit you.   (Normal)
>
> Even if you hit me I won't hit you.   (Contraexpectancy)
>
> Even if you hit me I'll go ahead and hit you.
>
> (Contraexpectancy (you are bigger than me))

(1) Jun   lăp   dăq,   nŏq   Luc   pănh   nĕh.

    deer   enter   trap   so   Luc   shoot   it

    A deer entered the trap, so Luc shot it. (Factual, normal assurance, expected, past, declarative)

(2) Đăng, ănh pâ̂m may chủt.

    not   I beat you dead

    If you don't I'll beat you to death. (Uncertain reality, normal assurance, expected, future, declarative)

(3) Hê̂ chaq   yang   palơ̂m   nŏq,   thi   an   gatayh so.

    if demon spirit   pollute   that   then   let sneeze dog

    If the spirits have polluted it, then let a dog sneeze.

    (Uncertain reality, normal assurance, expected, future, imperative)

(4) Niu may pâ̂m ănh, nŏq nhă̂ng ănh pâ̂m may.

    if you hit me then truly   I hit you