

A Study of Conditional Clauses with *Will*

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This study deals with conditional clauses with *will*. In *if*-clauses the present tense is commonly used, even if the content of an *if*-clause indicates an event in the future. But, as examples like (1)-(6) below show, *will* can appear in conditional clauses.

- (1) If he *won't* arrive before nine, there's no point in ordering for him.
(Comrie 1982, Dancygier 1998: 62, 118)
- (2) If it *'ll* definitely rain, then I'll take my umbrella. (Comrie 1982)
- (3) If he *will* go to China next year, then we should publish his book now.
(Declerck 1984)
- (4) I don't want to call on Mrs Fustle, but I'll see her if it *will* do any good.
(ibid.)
- (5) I will come if it will be of any use to you.
(Jespersen 1931: 400, Palmer 1990²: 178)
- (6) If it *will* amuse you, I'll tell you a joke.
(Comrie 1982, Palmer 1990², Dancygier 1998: 118)

The purpose of this study is to claim that, based on the classification of conditional sentences by Dancygier (1998) and Dancygier and Sweetser (2005), the conditionals which have predictive *will* in the *if*-clauses are non-predictive conditionals, and to describe accurately characteristics observed in *if*-clauses with *will*.

Dancygier (1998) and Dancygier and Sweetser (2005) classify conditional sentences in English into 'predictive conditionals' and 'non-predictive conditionals,' in terms of backshift. According to the definition of Dancygier (1998), the term "backshift" is a notion such that the time marked in the verb phrase is earlier than the time actually referred to. In the framework of Dancygier (1998) and Dancygier and Sweetser (2005), a predictive conditional is one which is characterized by backshift. For instance, in (7), *put* in the *if*-clause refers to the future, but in fact the present tense is used; in (8), the form *went* refers to the present or future, but marks the past tense; in the *if*-clause of (9), the verb refers to the past, but the past perfect is used. Thus, we can see that backshift is the restriction on the tense of verbs used in predictive conditionals.

- (7) If you put the baby down, she'll scream. (Quirk et al. 1985: 1088)

- (8) If he went to the police, we would be in trouble. (Declerck 1991b: 429)
 (9) I'd have been in bad trouble if Jane hadn't helped me. (Swan 1995²: 248)

The verbs in the conditional clauses of these examples are formed on the basis of the restriction on the tense. Therefore, we can state they are not formed based on general rules. Dancygier (1998) also states that predictive conditionals represent 'predictive reasonings,' and that in predictive conditionals, the conditional clause expresses a cause, and the main clause expresses the effect. In fact, Quirk et al. (1985) call the use of the protasis of this type a DIRECT CONDITION, and state this is the central uses of the conditional clauses. On the other hand, non-predictive conditionals have no direct causal relation between the conditional clauses and the main clauses, and the verb forms in non-predictive conditionals, which do not show backshift, refer to the time that the tense forms of the verbs indicate. Hence, the restrictions on the tense observed in predictive conditionals do not apply to non-predictive conditionals. In other words, the verbs in the conditional and main clauses of non-predictive conditionals are formed by general rules, and are interpreted in the same way as ordinary independent clauses are. This suggests that in the *if*-clause of a non-predictive conditional, *will* referring to the future can be used. Actually, Dancygier (1998) states that *will* can appear only in a non-predictive conditional. Thus, it follows that the conditionals which have *will* in the *if*-clauses are non-predictive conditionals.

Also, in this study I claim that the conditional clause with predictive *will* can be classified into the two cases: one is the case where the content of the conditional clause is contextually given, and the other is the case where the content of a conditional clause is not contextually given. By this distinction, we can see whether or not *will* in the conditional clause represents the original speaker's mental attitude. According to previous studies, in (1)-(3), the content of the conditional clause is contextually given. With this case, we should note that *will* expresses the original speaker's mental attitude. Although *will* expresses the speaker's mental attitude in an ordinary independent clause, in (1)-(3) *will* within the *if*-clause represents not the speaker's mental attitude but the original speaker's mental attitude. This applies to modals other than *will*, such as *may*, *must*, *should*, etc. For example, in (10) and (11) below, the content of the conditional clause is contextually given, and the modals in these conditional clauses all express the original speaker's mental attitude.

- (10) A : Tom may have gone back to his hometown.
 B : If Tom *may* have gone back to his hometown, he may see his old

- friends. (Okamoto 2005: 163)
- (11) If, as you say, the treasure { *must / should / may* } be hidden here ...
(Declerck and Reed 2001: 204)

On the other hand, since the content of the conditional clause in (4)-(6) is not contextually given, there is no original speaker in (4)-(6). Therefore, *will* in conditional clauses like (4)-(6) does not express either the speaker's mental attitude or the original speaker's mental attitude. We can go a step further and state this: in all of the examples in (4)-(6), we can not determine whose mental attitude *will* in the conditional clauses represents. We can say that in this case, the mental attitude which *will* represents is not someone's.

Furthermore, with regard to non-predictive conditionals which have *will* in the conditional clauses, I would like to state: in both of the two cases, the temporal sequence between p and q is $q \rightarrow p$. Here, I define p and q as the event represented by the propositional content in the *if*-clause and the one represented by the propositional content in the main clause, respectively. For example, p in (2) indicates the event represented by the propositional content of it-definitely-rain, and q in (2) indicates the one represented by the propositional content of I-take-my umbrella. In predictive conditionals, such as (7)-(9), the events occur in the temporal sequence of $p \rightarrow q$. But, in non-predictive conditionals which have *will* in the *if*-clauses, the events occur in the temporal sequence of $q \rightarrow p$.

In this study we have seen that a conditional sentence which has *will* in the conditional clause is a non-predictive conditional and does not have a direct causal relation in which p represents a cause, and q represents the effect. This means that the main clause in a non-predictive conditional does not express a prediction based on the conditional clause. Therefore, it follows that a conditional clause in which *will* appears does not express a DIRECT CONDITION, which is used in Quirk et al. (1985). Now, the question arises : what does a conditional clause with *will* express? For this question I will answer that a conditional clause with *will* expresses the speaker's motivation for uttering the main clause. Reasons for leading us to this answer are: (i) A modal in the main clause of a conditional which has *will* in the *if*-clause tends to indicate a non-epistemic sense (in fact, in most of the conditional sentences like this, *will* appearing in the main clause is used in 'volition' sense.) (ii) The main clause with the conditional clause deleted is acceptable. For example, *will* in the main clauses of (2) and (4)-(6) does not indicate an epistemic sense, representing 'volition.' Also, in predictive conditionals, some sentences without conditional clauses are not acceptable, as shown in (12) below:

- (12) *It will rain. (Leech 2004³: 57)

In (1)-(6), however, the main clauses with the conditional clauses deleted seem to be acceptable.

The main points in this study will be summed up as in (13)-(14) below:

- (13) A conditional clause with *will*:
- (a) This expresses the speaker's motivation for uttering the main clause.
 - (b) The temporal sequence is $q \rightarrow p$.
 - (c) Mental attitude which *will* represents is not the speaker's.
- (14) The two cases in a conditional clause with *will*:
- (a) The case where the content of the conditional clause is contextually given: *Will* represents the original speaker's mental attitude.
 - (b) The case where the content of the conditional clause is not contextually given: *Will* does not represent the original speaker's mental attitude.

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