
The future in conditionals clauses of Portuguese: an interrelation of tense and modality

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze how *future* is expressed in potential/hypothetical conditional clauses in Portuguese, through the arrangement of different *tenses* used in the main and subordinate clauses, and by other mechanisms that trigger the future idea as well as by the expression of modality in these conditionals, which have been distinguished in more eventual (intense future), and more possible (less intense) since Latin. From a functionalist perspective, based mainly on Comrie (1985) - but also Fleischman (1984); Klein (2009) - *tense* was viewed as a functional category that is not encoded only by the verb, but is also related to the complex interaction between tense, syntax and discourse in certain subordinate clauses; and *modality* was considered a complex category which involves semantic and pragmatic factors (PALMER, 1986). The methodology used to analyse the written and oral data of Portuguese was both quantitative and qualitative. The main hypothesis concerns the correlation of certain verb forms used in protasis (*future subjunctive*; *present subjunctive*; *present indicative*), with the presence of following factors: (i) some mark of future, as *future tense* in apodosis; (ii) *weak possibility* and *desire*; (iii) the speaker's degree of certainty front the proposition. The majority of results showed that once *future* had been already marked in the context, predominated in protasis the *present indicative* (when there was more certainty) or *present subjunctive* (when we identified weak possibility or desire), while the use of future subjunctive prevailed when there wasn't mark of future. In other words, the *future* was marked in construcion mostly by future subjunctive (in protasis), or by the future indicative in apodosis or by some modal meaning (as desire) that trigger the future idea correlated to the use of present subjunctive, but rarely by two or more of these means together, especially in oral data, contradicting some grammatical descriptions.

Keywords: future, tense, modality, conditionals clauses.

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