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Conditionals, Distancing, and Alternative Spaces

BARBARA DANCYGIER & EVE SWEETSER
University of California, Berkeley

1. Introduction.

There have been at least two quite distinct strands of research on the meaning and use of conditional forms, a logical strand and a pragmatic one. Philosophers and formal semanticists have seen *if-then* constructions as reflecting logical semantic structures such as material implication, or more recently as describing possible worlds; pragmatic analysts, on the other hand, have been interested in the ways that conditional forms reflect non-logical structures such as hedging on the social conditions of speech act appropriateness. Meanwhile, of course, descriptive and prescriptive grammarians have continued to tell students how to use correct verb forms in conditional constructions: one should say, *If it rains, they'll cancel the game in English, rather than If it will rain, they'll cancel the game*. In this paper, we bring together these divided aspects of the understanding of English conditionals, within a framework which we hope will be useful also to the analysis of similar constructions in other languages.

Specifically, we will argue that the framework of mental spaces (Fauconnier 1985/1994, in press) allows us to capture generalizations about both the logical and pragmatic aspects of conditional meaning. At the same time, a constructional analysis of conditional forms (cf. Fillmore 1990)¹ allows us to describe formal parameters such as choice of verb forms, and to map those formal choices directly onto semantic and functional aspects of conditional constructions.

¹ See Fillmore 1988 and Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor 1988 for exposition of the Construction Grammar framework.

We begin, then, with the idea that an *if*-clause sets up a *mental space* in Fauconnier's sense: a partial or local model of some aspect of mental content, in this case very possibly a model of some situation in the world, or (as we shall see) of some speech-act interaction or some reasoning process.² Mental spaces are different from possible worlds in a number of respects, most importantly in that they are not objective in nature, nor necessarily describable in terms of Boolean truth conditions; and also in being local rather than global. The claim that I set up a mental space in *If John had come to the meeting, I'd be happier* crucially does not mean that I'd be happier in a world just like the current one (complete with famines, wars, and AIDS); but neither does it mean that I have envisioned some definite better world in these global respects. I am simply concerning myself only with a limited bit of the world's structure, in setting up this alternative imagined state of affairs: I set up a space in which John came to the meeting, and other local structure (such as the time, place and other participants) probably remains the same. My reasoning does not take global issues into account.

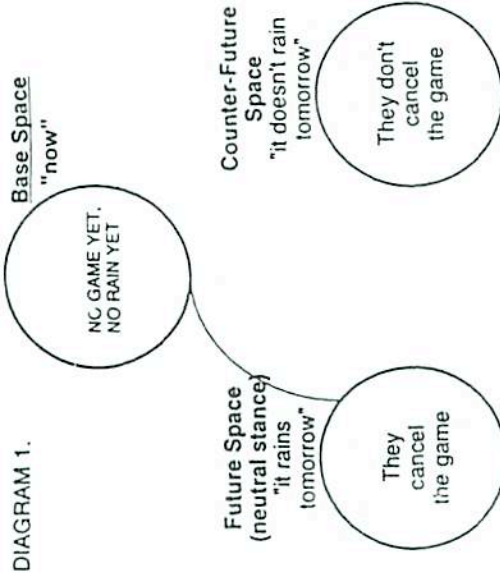
2. Prediction and Reasoning.

One of the most important reasons for setting up mental spaces is to imagine alternatives: in a mental space where we imagine rain happening tomorrow, what do we imagine resulting from the rain? (Will the planned tennis game be cancelled? Or will it be played in the rain?) These imagined futures, and their imagined unfolding continuations, constitute the basis for an important human activity: *prediction* (cf. Dancygier 1993). If we never engaged in prediction, in the construction of (and commitment to) some future scenarios as more likely than others, we could never make decisions or take action at all.

Some predictions may be based on certainties: in saying, *When morning comes, it'll be light again*, we do not consider mental spaces wherein there won't be a morning. Fillmore (1990) remarks that *when* involves a *positive epistemic stance* towards the content on the part of the speaker. But perhaps the most interesting predictions are those that are based on alternatives: for example, an imagined rainfall tomorrow might allow us to predict cancellation of the tennis game, while some other state of affairs would have allowed us to predict some other result. In a sense, a prediction not based on alternatives is less valuable than an alternative-based one, even if it is true: it does not help us set up plans of action, or to choose ways of responding to events and situations, in the way that we are helped by comparing alternatives.

² cf. Sweetser (in press a) for a discussion of mental space structures and conditionality.

A predictive conditional, then, sets up a correlation of parameters which structures alternative mental spaces. *If it rains tomorrow, they'll cancel the game* sets up two alternate mental spaces (both interpreted as potential futures of the speaker's Base space): one wherein it rains and they cancel the game, and another wherein it doesn't rain and they don't cancel the game (see Diagram 1, below).



"If it rains tomorrow, they'll cancel the game."

The essence of predictiveness is the correlation (here, between rain and game-cancellation) which allows conditional prediction of one event based on knowledge about the other. Normally, speakers and hearers assume a causal structure behind such a correlation: two events correlated with each other this strongly are correlated because of a causal relationship. This means that prediction normally invites a hearer to imagine what models of the world would lead the speaker to believe in the correlation mentioned in a conditional utterance. For example, in this case, the hearer might share with the speaker a belief that rain normally causes tennis matches to be canceled, and draw on this causal model to explain the correlation as part of a more general, causally motivated correlation with which he is already familiar. In this sense, prediction brings along a causal model into the speaker's and hearer's mental space structure.³

³ Not all causal models involve direct causation of the event in the main clause by the event

This explains why predictive conditionals are normally interpreted as having "iff" or biconditional structures. Notice that the mental spaces in question are partially structured entities. Thus, if I tell you that *If it rains tomorrow, they'll cancel the game*, I really do mean "and if it doesn't, they won't" - in the limited world-structuring provided by these spaces. I am not concerned with the fact that they might also cancel the game if one of the two singles tennis players became ill - although I know that that is also true. And I don't even mean that conditions won't change, forcing players to play in the rain because of new regulations from the Tennis Association. If this happened (*after my utterance*), my uttered conditional prediction would still have been "true" (a valid prediction) at the time of utterance. Of course, it is true that a speaker or hearer can dream up many different causal scenarios which bring about the same result. Even if it does not rain, other things may cause the game to be cancelled: there may be an earthquake which destroys the town where the game is to take place, the authorities in charge of the game may change the schedule or the rules, or a comet could collide with the Earth. But in saying *If it rains tomorrow, they'll cancel the game*, a speaker is not considering those possible chains of events, rather she is considering the possibility of rain in contrast with the possibility of non-rain. The "iff" reasoning structure which normally seems to prevail in such cases (that is, the speaker seems to mean that the game will only be cancelled if it rains) is not a logical property of the formal semantics of the conditional sentence: if it were, one could not continue by saying something like *Of course, if it snows, they'll also cancel it*. However, the properties of mental space construction ensure that the IFF interpretation will be the normal one, since speakers and hearers will construct a minimally altered mental space, adjusting it locally as directed by the content of the *if* clause.⁴

Naturally, one of the two spaces is set up more saliently and directly than the other. In our example, this is the rain space, rather than the non-rain space. But neither *If it rains, they'll cancel the game* nor *If it doesn't rain, they won't cancel the game* is a reasonable mental-space-structuring

described in the *if*-clause; other relationships, such as enablement (*If I get funding, I'll go to the conference*), are also included in our understanding of causal models of the world and causal relationships between events.

⁴ It is interesting to note that in fact, even when speakers consider multiple possible conditional causal scenarios, they do not do so cumulatively, but alternatively. Thus, a speaker who says, *If it rains, they'll cancel the game* and adds, *If there's an earthquake they'll cancel it too*, and *If there's a hurricane they'll cancel it too* is nonetheless not taken to be envisioning a world wherein rain, earthquake and hurricane all happen together, but three alternative possible scenarios, each of which has one of the same results. (Cf. Grice 1978, Karttunen and Peters 1979 for further discussion of some of the kinds of implicature structures which have been proposed to account for interpretations of conditionals).

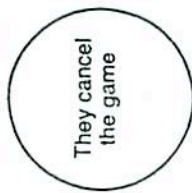
utterance without the presence of both possible future spaces. We will be arguing that certain grammatical forms are characteristic of conditionals used in this way, to make predictions of this kind.

In particular, the apparently "past-tense" verb forms which are sometimes called *counterfactual* in English conditionals are limited to conditional sentences with two characteristics: (1) they are predictive, in the sense defined above, and (2) they are also treated by the speaker as unlikely predictions: they express a rejected future scenario, rather than the chosen alternative. Fillmore (1990) refers to this as taking a *negative epistemic stance* towards the content of the conditional. The speaker of *If it rained tomorrow, they'd cancel the game* thus takes a negative stance towards the mental space wherein rain occurs, while the non-past form in *If it rains* takes a *neutral* stance (see Diagram 2).⁵

DIAGRAM 2.

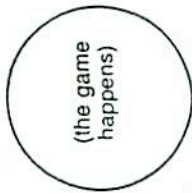
Future Space:
negative stance

"it rains tomorrow"



Counter-Future Space:
(positive stance implied)

"it doesn't rain tomorrow"



"If it rained tomorrow,
they'd cancel the game."

(Note: The favored scenario is the one *not* referred to, with a game and no rain.)

We will use the term *distanced* verb forms to refer to these "past" (or

⁵ We are unwilling to use the term *counterfactual* because it seems clear that such conditionals are by no means restricted to genuinely counterfactual uses; cf. Comrie's (1986) discussion of examples such as *If you got me a cup of coffee, I'd be very grateful*. We should note that the distanced verb forms used in conditional protases also occur in certain other environments marking negative epistemic stance (Fillmore 1990): *I hope I have enough money to go to the conference, but I wish I had enough money to go to the conference*.

It should also be noted that the "past tense" of negative stance and the past tense of temporal reference are not mutually exclusive. An example like the following apparently involves setting up a predictive relationship between the two clauses of the conditional construction, and taking a negative epistemic stance towards the whole. Since the whole is situated in the past, and therefore the speaker might be assumed to know the actual outcome of the

"subjunctive") forms which mark the speaker's understanding that the conditional space is one towards which he or she has a negative epistemic stance, in contrast to some alternate conditional scenario towards which speaker stance is more positive. (Fleischman [1989] argues persuasively that there is a crosslinguistic connection between past tense form and various kinds of distancing, including epistemic distancing and "counterfactual-ity.") In order for a distanced form to be possible, there must not only be alternate scenarios, but the structure of the conditional must be the structure of the predictive relations that set up those scenarios.⁶

Thus far, we have only mentioned conditionals in which the two clauses describe (and indeed refer to) events or states of affairs in the world, and there is a causal relationship between those events or states. However, this is clearly not the case with all conditional sentences. Let us compare some examples:

- (1) If Martin misses another staff meeting, he'll be fired.
- (2) If Martin missed another staff meeting, he would be fired.
- (3) If you're so smart, when was George Washington born?
- (4) If he typed her thesis, (then) he loves her.
- (5) My ex-husband, if that's the right word for him, was seen in Vegas last week. (The divorce isn't final till next week.)

(1) and (2) are examples of the kind already discussed: Martin missing the staff meeting will cause his firing, in the world described. (1) leaves the speaker's attitude towards that mental space neutral, while (2) adopts a negative epistemic stance towards the mental space defined by Martin's missing the meeting, and hence towards the prediction that he will be fired. Sweetser (1990) labels these content level conditionals, because the dependency between the two clauses is at the level of the contents: the events described are in a causal and conditional relationship with each other. (3), however, is structured quite differently. *If you're so smart* bears no causal relationship to anything about George Washington's birth; rather the

scenario, the use of negative-stance verb forms is taken to mean counterfactuality.

- (a) If Martin had missed another meeting, he would have been fired.

The pluperfect here is the result of superimposing negative epistemic stance on simple past reference, creating the need for a double layering of tense marking.

⁶ It is worth noting, although we will not here discuss it further, that the "backshifting" of tense involved in the use of "present fr.: future" in *if*-clauses is also specific to predictive structure: it occurs in *when*-clauses as well as in predictive conditional protases:

- (a) If she arrives (#will arrive), we'll eat dinner together.
- (b) When she arrives (#will arrive), we'll eat dinner together.

It appears to be characteristic, among other places, of backgrounds to prediction. For discussion of this backshifting, see Dancygier 1993.

speaker's assumption that the interlocutors have agreed on the addressee's smartness is in turn the justification for the speech act of asking the question about George Washington's birth. Such examples have been labelled *speech act conditionals* (Van der Auwera 1986, Sweetser 1990). In particular, it is important to note that (3) is not *predicting* either George Washington's birth or the act of asking questions about it; instead, it is conditionally performing the act of questioning.

Parallel problems arise with examples such as (4) and (5). Perhaps the likeliest interpretation of (4) can be glossed as "If I know (or believe) that he typed her thesis, then I can conclude that he loves her." This interpretation does not involve the typing (content of the *if*-clause) being construed as a cause of the loving (content of the *then*-clause). If anything, we prefer the opposite construal of the relationship between the contents of the clauses: perhaps he typed it because he loves her. But the causal relationship between the speaker's belief states is one wherein the knowledge about the typing causes or enables the conclusion about the loving. Sweetser (1990) labels such examples *epistemic conditionals*. Finally, in (5), there is no causal relationship between the choice of a "right word" (to refer to the husband who will be finally divorced from me next week, but isn't yet) and the event of his being seen in Las Vegas; the causal relationship, if any, is between the belief about rightness and the use of the single word *husband*. Dancygier (1986, 1992) and Sweetser (1990) refer to such cases as *metalinguistic conditionals*.⁷

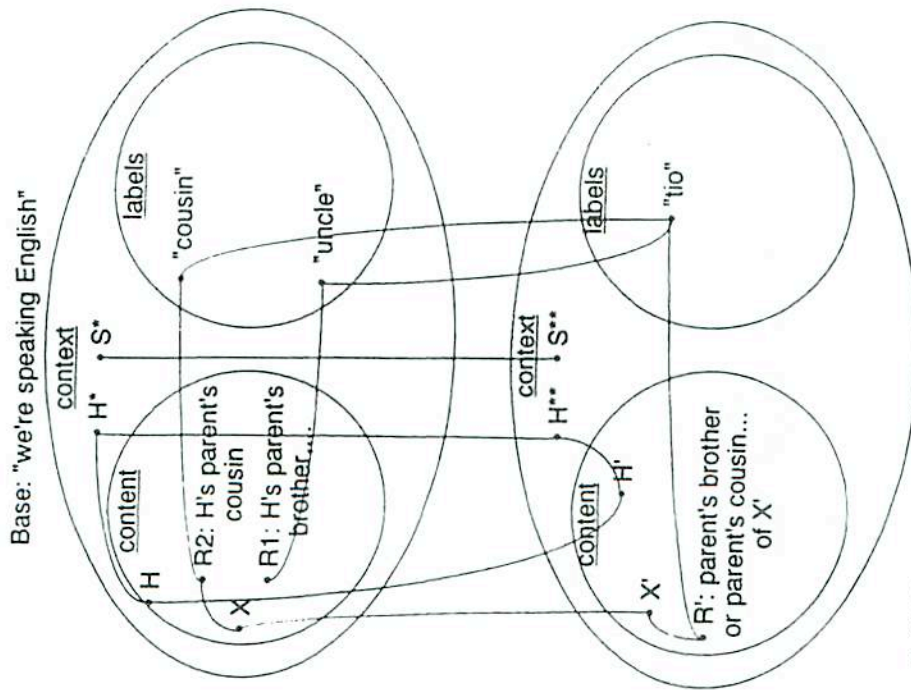
With content conditionals, the story is fairly simple. The speaker sets up a hypothetical world or space wherein the protasis holds, and claims that the apodosis should also hold. Thus, *If it rains, they'll cancel the game*, predicts that the cancelling of the game will happen in the hypothetical future mental space where the rain happens. The *claim* of such a sentence is not that it will rain or that they will cancel the game, but that there is a predictive relationship between the two events. Such "neutral" epistemic stance examples don't allow me to decide whether or not the speaker has explicit other options in mind. Here, it seems likely from the content that the speaker thinks that the game will not be cancelled in a non-rainy world.

A distanced form such as *If it rained, they would cancel the game* brings the unexpressed alternate option into more prominence by clearly showing that the speaker doesn't think the described future world matches the real future. The more likely future world, then, must be the alternate conditional scenario, equally structured by the predictiveness defined above.

⁷ Jespersen (1940) was, we believe, the first to remark on such usages of conditional forms.

DIAGRAM 3. Metalinguistic: full alternative spaces

"If we were speaking Spanish, he'd be your uncle."



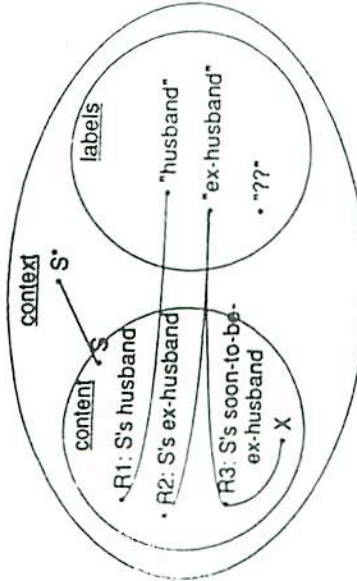
Content-level conditionals are not the only ones which engage in prediction based on alternative spaces. A metalinguistic space is a complex space consisting of a pairing of a content space and a language or code space. Certain metalinguistic conditionals (though not all) really set up two separate complete metalinguistic spaces - that is, two separate pairs of content and linguistic spaces, with independent mappings between them. Each context space includes a Speaker (S) and a Hearer (H), as well as the content and label spaces with which S and H are concerned. As well as *individuals* (such as S, H, and the unnamed X in Diagram 3), mental spaces include *roles*, such as *President*, or *S's father's brother*. In examples like *If we were speaking Spanish, he would be your uncle* (see Diagram 3), there is an English-speaking content-space where events of usage proceed in one way (the "base" space, the speaker's interpreted reality) and a corresponding space of English labels; let us say that the relative in question is actually the addressee's father's cousin, and the speaker knows that the role of parent's cousins standardly takes the label *cousin*, not *uncle*, in her English dialect. Contrasting with this pairing of spaces, there is a Spanish-speaking content-space where events of usage occur in another way, and are mapped onto a corresponding space of Spanish language labels: the speaker here imagines that the role of father's cousin receives the Spanish label *tio*, also used for a parent's brother. Both of these spaces are structured by predictive type relationships: on the basis of the correlation between language and labels, I can use the language being spoken as a basis for predicting the choice of labels.⁸

In other cases, however, metalinguistic conditionals do not set up two full alternate metalinguistic spaces. In *My ex-husband, if that's the right word for him, was seen in Vegas last week* (Diagram 4), there are not two separate content spaces (a space wherein that is the right word and he was seen in Vegas, and another wherein it's the wrong word and he was not seen in Vegas). No matter what the choice of words may be, the speaker intends to convey unconditionally that the man referred to was seen in Vegas. Only the judgement of vocabulary appropriateness allows for possible alternate scenarios - and even that is more of a comment on the speaker's part, rather than a serious attempt to evoke hypothetical states of affairs at any level (alternate choices of label for this role might include "husband" as opposed to "ex-husband"). The most we could say in constructing alternatives here would be that the speaker expresses an

⁸ We are not here dealing with another interpretation of this example, the one where the speaker could mean that he thinks that in a Spanish-speaking world, *social relationships* between the hearer and his father's cousin or uncle or friend would be different, causing different labels to be chosen. This reading seems to involve a much closer, more unified cultural space, where relationships *and* labels are co-present in a single space.

essentially unconditional content and allows for an alternate way of expressing that content. There is surely no way in which the apodosis material is dependent on, predictable from, or caused by the protasis material, since the former operates at the content level and the latter at the metalinguistic level. Since there are neither two full alternate spaces, nor are the expressed claims predictive ones, it is natural that there is no "distanced" equivalent of this example.

DIAGRAM 4. Metalinguistic: NOT full alternative spaces



(X was seen in Vegas last week, and X and S are in the process of getting divorced.)

"My ex-husband, if that's the right word for him, was seen in Vegas last week."

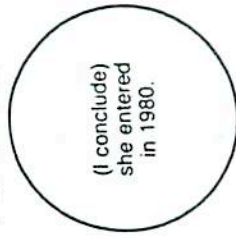
Epistemic conditionals often resist distanced forms, but it is possible to get acceptable epistemic interpretations of some examples with distanced verb forms, e.g. *If she had taken only a one-hour oral, she'd be in the entering class of 1980* (Diagram 5). The example in Diagram 5 seems acceptable in a context where we assume that we just looked at her file, discovered that she had taken the 3-hour oral exam required of all students entering in 1981 or later, and deduced that she entered in 1981 (we had been debating whether she entered in '80 or '81). In such an example, the speaker is precisely setting up a scenario where the interlocutors discover that the student took a one-hour oral, and conclude that she entered in 1980; further, the speaker takes a negative stance towards this scenario, and a positive stance towards an alternate reasoning scenario. Both of these scenarios are predictive: that is, from the speaker's hypothesized discovery, or believed premise, she predicts the conclusion that she is likely to reach.

DIAGRAM 5. EPISTEMICS

(I know) she took a three-hour MA oral. (implied positive stance)



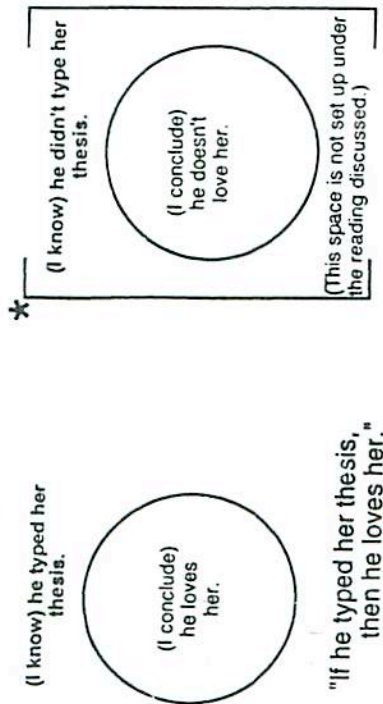
(I know) she didn't take a three-hour MA oral. (negative stance)



"If she had taken only a one-hour oral, she'd be in the entering class of 1980."

Interestingly, not all epistemic conditionals readily allow distanced interpretation, and most of the interpretations of such examples seem very hard to contextualize. Why should this be so? The answer lies again in the degree of genuine hypothetical space-building involved, and in the question of whether the conditional is really "about" the predictive relationship or about the expressed content of the clauses. A speaker who says, *If he typed her thesis, then he loves her* (Diagram 6), is most likely to be using this utterance to centrally express the conclusion that he loves her, and indeed may be doing so in a performative way: "I hereby conclude this, as I speak." The protasis content is evoked mostly as an explanation to the hearer for the speaker's behavior, or as a link to the context (perhaps it was the hearer who claimed that he typed her thesis). Rather than building a new mental space, it may evoke an already established one (a common assumption about the thesis-typing); and in any case, such a usage does not involve setting up alternatives or imagining worlds where the evoked background is not true.

DIAGRAM 6. EPISTEMICS



In such an epistemic conditional, the central content is certainly not the conditional relationship itself: although the speaker might be willing to explicitly say "yes, thesis-typing is evidence for someone being in love," that is not the issue. Unlike *If it rains, they'll cancel the game*, where neither clause is asserted, but only the relationship, here the speaker is essentially asserting the apodosis and contextualizing that assertion by evoking the protasis and laying out the conditional relationship. Not surprisingly, such conditionals don't have distanced forms. They neither focus on predictive relations, nor genuinely bring up two alternative predictive scenarios in the relevant (epistemic) domain. They may in fact be more common than the distanceable (predictive) epistemic conditionals, perhaps because epistemic conditionals are really mostly used to contextualize newly asserted conclusions, rather than to compare reasoning scenarios at a truly meta-epistemic level. They still involve mental space structure: the *if*-clause still sets out a mental space (perhaps evoked rather than built), and hence the use of the conditional construction is appropriate. In many respects, then, we are adopting Haiman's (1978) point of view that conditionals are topics: one reason for using a space-builder is precisely to contextualize by indicating which already-available information is the background to what is being said.⁹ The distanced verb forms, which belong to the domain of prediction rather than just to space-structure in general, are

⁹ Traugott's (1985) observation that there is a crosslinguistic historical connection between conditional markers and topic markers is further evidence for the importance of the topic function in conditional meaning.

inappropriate for such use, and therefore not interpretable in such a context.

Speech-act conditionals almost never comfortably allow distanced verb forms, and this is also natural once we consider their normally non-predictive functions. In *If you need help, my name is Jeanie*, the speaker asserts the "apodosis" (or rather, engages in the speech act it represents) and contextualizes it with the protasis, which is an evoked and shared context (in this respect speech-act conditionals are similar to the epistemics just discussed above). There is no predictive relationship: not only does the speaker say that her name is Jeanie no matter what the hearer needs in the way of help, but her name is Jeanie no matter what. Performative status almost prohibits such a relationship, since (however hedged), a word once said really is said, and a speech act performed is performed. There are no alternate scenarios in the speech-act world here (although there may be some playing on scenario structure - politeness may once have consisted in pretense that you would "take back" an unacceptable protasis speech-act). The speaker just accesses a context in which it is possible that the hearer may need help (or, in the original Austin [1961] example *If you're hungry, there are biscuits on the sideboard*, a context in which he may be hungry), and sets it up as the background to an utterance. With no alternative scenarios or predictive relations between clause contents, there is no basis for marking distance.¹⁰

3. Conclusions.

The model we have presented treats *if* as a "space-builder" which sets up or evokes a mental space, with respect to which the main clause is understood. The spaces constructed with *if* are marked as not involving positive epistemic stance, but do not tell a listener whether the speaker's stance to the space is negative or merely neutral. In English, choice of verb forms marks negative versus neutral epistemic stance, for predictive conditionals.

Prediction is here treated (following Dancygier 1993) as a central function of conditionals: speakers often use conditional forms to express the relationship between alternative scenarios of events, and the correlated events which are predicted to result from the posited scenario. The importance of this function may to some extent explain the feeling of many speakers that the content predictive conditionals are somehow "basic" or

¹⁰ Gilles Fauconnier points out to us that a parent leaving a babysitter in charge of children might say *If you needed any help, the emergency number would be 911*, as well as *If you need any help, the emergency number is 911*. In such a case, the speaker seems indeed to be distancing the whole performance of the informative speech act, and it is possible that it is a genuine predictive speech act conditional.

"good" examples of conditionals. However, *if*-clauses may engage in space building either as a basis for prediction (setting up alternative spaces and comparing scenarios), or simply for purposes of contextualization. In the latter case, normally the speaker's epistemic stance is not specifically marked, and in any case it is impossible to use the verb forms which indicate marked (negative) epistemic stance. The commoality between the more "logical" kinds of conditionals and the more "pragmatic" ones, then, lies precisely in their neutral space-building function, while the differences surface in divergent patterns of verb morphology connected with more specific functions.

Clausal connectives such as *if* are by no means alone in having a semantics involving mental space structure. Fauconnier (1985/1994, in press) has argued that such pervasive, grammatical markers as definite and indefinite articles are equally engaged in mental-space construction. Fauconnier and Sweetser (in press) presents a set of studies of grammatical marking of mental space structure; Sweetser (in press [b]) suggests that the choice of a lexical or periphrastic predicate may also be one of the space-structuring grammatical markers. From these and other current work (such as Van Hoek 1992), set-up and structuring of mental spaces appears to be a central component of our production and interpretation of linguistic forms; it is therefore no surprise that grammatical markers and constructions often explicitly indicate aspects of mental space structure. The *If P, (then) Q* construction itself has been treated as a space-builder since Fauconnier 1985/1994, and the choice of verb forms to indicate epistemic stance fills a function similar to that proposed by Fauconnier for the French subjunctive. The point to be made here is that an analysis which treats these constructions as having mental-space semantics can make generalizations which would otherwise be missed about the use of the constructions, and about restrictions on their use.

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Viewpoint and the Definite Article

RICHARD EPSTEIN

University of California, San Diego

1. Introduction¹

All utterances present conceptual content as construed from some point of view. Ordinarily, the point of view is that of the speaker, but viewpoints may be shifted, and even intermingled, between the speaker, the addressee, and third persons. Linguists have investigated the way viewpoint is expressed in language by such formal means as pronouns and reflexives (e.g., Kuroda 1973, Cantrall 1974, Kuno 1987, Zribi-Hertz 1989, van Hoek 1992, Kemmer, in press), and tense/aspect (e.g., Kamp and Rohrer 1983, Fleischman 1990, Cutrer 1994); see also Langacker (1993). The aim of this paper is to contribute to this literature by exploring the distinct viewpoints that may be conveyed through the use of the definite article in English. I shall argue that the most well-known uses of the definite article reflect the common viewpoint of both speaker and addressee, insofar as they share knowledge of the referent designated by a nominal with *the* (§2). Less well-known, though, are uses of *the* designating referents which speaker and addressee do not share knowledge of (numerous examples can be found in Epstein 1994a). For instance, *the* sometimes reflects the sole viewpoint of the speaker, when it serves as a marker of prominence (§3). In other situations, *the* reflects the viewpoint of neither the speaker nor the addressee, but rather, of a third person referent (§4). To date, little work has been done on the interaction between viewpoint and the definite article; more broadly, the data presented below are intended to show that felicitous use of *the* depends on a wider range of factors—both referential and expressive—than is usually acknowledged.

2. Referential Function of the Definite Article

Nearly all theories of definiteness treat the definite article as an essentially referential element. Although the terminology employed in this area varies considerably—*the* has been described as a marker of "uniqueness" (Russell 1905, Kadmon 1990, Hawkins 1991, Birner and Ward

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