Counterfactuals: Families of constructions

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Description
Counterfactual constructions convey the speaker's belief that the actualization of a situation was potential – possible, desirable, imminent, or intended –, but that it did not take place, i.e. it did not belong to the actual world (Verstraete 2005: 231). While counterfactuals have mostly been studied in formal-semantic frameworks (e.g., Baker 1970; Iatridou 2000; Ippolito 2003; Karttunen 1970; Kratzer 1981; Lewis 1973; Reinhart 1976; von Fintel 2001; *inter alia*), few studies have explored counterfactuals from a functional perspective (but see Olguín Martínez & Lester 2021; Van linden & Verstraete 2008; Verstraete & Luk 2021). The goal of this workshop is to help fill this gap. Counterfactuals are typically associated with the kind of conditional construction exemplified in (1). However, they may show up in other guises as well, e.g. hypothetical manner constructions as in (2), various non-prototypical conditionals such as the concessive-conditional example in (3), or 'if not for NP' constructions as in (4).

(1)   *If I had known that, I wouldn't have appointed him*.

(2)   *The child is crying, as if I had hit him*.

        Turkish (Turkic)
(3)   *söyle-se-m   de,   gel-mez-di-n   sen.*
        say-COND-1SG even   come-NEG.AOR-PST.COP-2SG you
        'Even if I had told you, you wouldn't have come.' (Menz 2016: 95)

        Khmer (Austro-Asiatic)
(4)   *baeu kom   baːn kun   bawn preah loːk   cuaj,*
        if   NEG   get   merit grace lord   monk help
        'Without the help of God,

        srac   bat   tev   haeuj.
        ready disappear   go   already
        I would have been lost.' (Haiman 2011: 226)

Apart from complex sentences, counterfactuality can also be expressed by simple clauses. In many languages, these are structurally similar to the main clause of a conditional counterfactual construction as in (5) and (6) (Van linden & Verstraete 2008: 1888).

(5)   *I should have done it!*

Ik (Kuliak)

(6) *ats-í-a*   *ƙa=naa*   *barats-o=nákᵃ.*
     come-1SG-REAL   HYP=PST   morning-INSTR=DEM.SG.PST
     'I would have come this morning!' (Schrock 2014: 516)

Other languages have a construction that could be regarded as a counterfactual conditional construction with an elided main clause as in (7) (Kawachi 2014: 91). These instances are known in the literature as 'counterfactual wishes' and seem to be the result of insubordination (Evans & Wanatabe 2016).

(7)   *If only she had come*!

The counterfactual constructions discussed above form a FAMILY OF CONSTRUCTIONS. In recent years, this notion has established itself in Construction Grammar as a label for sets of constructions with a similar meaning or function, often despite striking differences of form (Diessel 2019: 199-200; Leuschner 2020; Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez et al. 2017; Vander Haegen et al. 2022). Family resemblances should be considered a synchronic reflection of the ongoing diachronic emergence of the constructions in question. Unlike the derivation processes assumed in the classic version of generative grammar, associative connections between constructions reflect the language users' experience with particular patterns (Croft 2001; Diessel 2019). Analyzing families of constructions can allow us to formulate not only hypotheses about how existing schemas may be used to categorize novel linguistic experiences, but also hypotheses about the linear arrangement of linguistic elements, and associative connections between individual lexemes and specific slots of constructional schemas.

Aims of the workshop
The workshop will bring together original research that contributes to our understanding of the range and limits of crosslinguistic variation of counterfactual constructions. Thanks to descriptions of the forms, syntactic strategies, and semantic profiles of such constructions in a given language, family, or macro-area, the workshop will pave the way for a typology of counterfactuals. Potential contributions include, but are not restricted to, the following:

1. TAM values. What are the profiles of the TAM values that are associated with counterfactual marking (e.g., irrealis, frustrative, past tense; cf. Overall 2017: 492; von Prince 2019; von Prince et al. 2022)? How do the semantics of certain language-particular "irrealis" categories and counterfactuality relate to each other? If a language contains more than one type of counterfactual construction, do they occur with the same TAM values?
2. Clause-linking markers. If a language contains multi-word counterfactual connectives, what are the building blocks of the multi-word expression? What motivates their co-occurrence? What determines the linear order of the building blocks of multi-word counterfactual connectives (i.e. sequential relations; Diessel 2019: 15)?
3. Diachrony. What are the diachronic sources of grammatical markers used for encoding counterfactual constructions?

4. Optionality. Clause-linking markers and/or TAM values may be optional in that can be omitted without affecting the meaning of the construction. What are the factors that may lead speakers to omit TAM or clause-linking markers from a counterfactual construction?
5. Language contact. Are counterfactual constructions prone to diffusion? What are the mechanisms involved in the development of counterfactuals through language contact?
6. Filler-slot relations. In many languages, speakers can choose to verbalize counterfactual thoughts/experiences in different ways (e.g., *If only she had gone*! vs. *I wish she had gone*!). The question is: Do these counterfactual constructions appear with the same verbs in a particular slot? The co-occurrence patterning of lexemes and constructions is functionally motivated (Gries & Stefanowitsch 2004: 99), giving rise to a joint distribution of lexemes in constructions that are known in the literature as filler-slot relations (Diessel 2019: 20).
7. Discourse functions. Counterfactuals may develop intriguing discourse functions. For instance, in many languages around the world, hypothetical manner constructions may develop into insubordinate constructions with exclamative force (e.g. *as if he had a lot of money!*; Olguín Martínez 2021).

Please send provisional abstracts of no more than **300 words** (excluding references) in PDF format by **November 10, 2023** to jfolguinmartinez@gmail.com; tom.bossuyt@ugent.be; ellisonluk@gmail.com. If the workshop is approved, authors will be asked to submit revised 500-word abstracts according to the SLE guidelines.

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