Conditional Conjunctions in Brazilian Portuguese

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Outline

1. Introduction
2. Keshet’s (2013) Analysis
3. Brazilian Portuguese
4. Our Proposal for BP
5. Conclusion
6. Appendix
7. References
Introduction: the basic facts

• *The initial observation:* in English, conjoined sentences can have a conditional reading. Those conjoined sentences are also known as “Conditional Conjunctions” (CCs).

(1)  
   a. You eat too many carrots, and your skin will turn orange.
   b. If you eat too many carrots, your skin will turn orange.  
      (Keshet (2013))

(2)  
   a. A fellow gets a few gray hairs, and they think he’s ready for the ashheap.
   b. If a fellow gets a few gray hairs, they think he’s ready for the ashheap.  
      (Bolinger (1967))
• This conditional reading seems to be restricted only to a subset of modal contexts: epistemic modality, for instance, seems to be incompatible with CC readings.

(3)  
a. If he ate the omelet, Urquhart must have been immune arsenic. (Kratzer (2011))  
b. # He ate the omelet, and Urquhart was immune to arsenic.

(4)  
a. If you have the other half of the locket, you could be my long-lost sister. (Schwager (2005))  
b. # You have the other half of the locket, and you could be my long-lost sister.

(5)  
a. If John left work at six, he’s probably home by now. (Keshet (2013))  
b. # John left work at six, and he’s probably home by now.
Finally, the (grammatical) tense marking of the two conjuncts in CCs have to match; otherwise, the CC reading is lost.

Here are some examples with the PRESENT:

(6) PRESENT + PRESENT

a. You eat to many carrots and your skin turns orange.
b. # You ate too many carrots, and your skin turns orange.

(7) PRESENT PERFECT + PRESENT

a. You’ve broken another vase, and I’m leaving.
b. # You broke another vase, and I’m leaving.
• And some examples with the PAST tense:

(8) PAST + PAST

a. Back in those days, schools were strict: you came in one minute late, and you got detention for a week.

b. # Back in those days, schools were strict: you come in one minute late, and you got detention for a week.

(9) PAST PLUPERFECT + PAST

a. Locker inspections used to be really tough: you'd hidden any contraband, and you immediately got suspended.

b. # Locker inspections used to be really tough: you hide any contraband, and you immediately got suspended.
In sum:

- Conjoined sentences can have conditional-like interpretations;
- CCs are not compatible with epistemic modality;
- Tense marking has to match in both conjuncts for the CC reading to arise.
Keshet (2013): ‘Focus on Conditional Conjunctions’

- In Keshet’s analysis, CCs get their conditional meaning from two possible covert (modal) operators: either a Generic operator or a Future operator.

(10) a. You give the slightest attention to drunk people, and they start talking about their moms.

\[
\text{b. } \text{GEN}(s : \text{give-attention(drunk-people}_1(you))) \\
\quad [\text{give-attention}(x_1(you)) \land \text{talk-about}(x_1(x_1 \text{'s mom}) \text{ in } s]
\]

(11) a. You talk like this with my parents, and they will cancel the marriage.

\[
\text{b. } \text{FUT}(s : \text{talk-like-this-with(my-parents}_1(you))) \\
\quad [\text{talk-like-this-with}(x_1(you)) \land \text{cancel(marriage)}(x_1) \text{ in } s]
\]
• **Gen/Fut** interact with focus in a way similar to the way *always* does. Focus in the scope of *Always* determines which content gets incorporated into the restriction (Rooth (1985)).

(12) a. In St. Petersburg, an OFFICER always escorts a ballerina.
    b. In St. Petersburg, an officer always escorts a BALLERINA.

(13) a. Always [Restriciton someone escorts a ballerina] [Nuclear Scope an officer escorts a ballerina]
    b. Always [Restriciton an officer escorts someone] [Nuclear Scope an officer escorts a ballerina]
In Keshet’s story, Focus on the second conjunct marks the nuclear scope; non-focused (given) material is interpreted as part of the restriction.

(14)

```
Gen
  ┌───────┐
  │       │
  │       │
  │       │
  │ TP    │
  │       │
  │       │
  │       │
  │       │
  │ you eat too many carrots │ and │ [+Focus] │
  │       │
  │       │
  │       │
  │       │
  │       │
  │       │
  │       │
  │       │
  └───────┘
  │ your skin turns orange │
  └───┘
```
• Keshet also assumes that CCs are dominated by a single TP. *The main evidence:* grammatical tense marking in English (the two conjuncts have to match in their tense marking).

(15)  

a. You eat too many carrots and your skin turns orange.  
b. # You ate too many carrots, and your skin turns orange.
Brazilian Portuguese (BP) conjunctions can convey CC readings with Present + Present and Past Imperfect + Past Imperfect.

**Present + Present**

(16) Nowadays, Brazilian schools are strict: . . .

Tu chega um minuto atrasado, e tu é suspenso.

‘IF you arrive one minute late, you are suspended’
Past Imperfect + Past Imperfect

(17) Back in the days, Brazilian schools were strict: ... 

tu chegava um minuto atrasado, e tu levava 30 chibatadas.  
‘If you arrived one minute late, you received 30 lashes’
• Interestingly enough, Past Perfect + Past Perfect in BP combinations do not license CC readings.

**Past Perfect + Past Perfect**

(18) Back in the days, Brazilian schools were strict: ...  

# tu chegou um minuto atrasado, e tu  
you arrive.PST.PERF one minute late and you
levou 30 chibatadas.  
bring.PST.PERF 30 lashes

(no CC reading)
• CC readings are also not available with Past Perfect + Past Imperfect (19).

(19) Back in the days, schools were strict: . . .

?? tu {chegou/ chegava} um minuto
you arrive.PST.PERF arrive.PST.IMPF one minute
atrasado, e tu {levava/ levou} 30
late and you bring.PST.IMPF bring.PST.PERF 30
chibatadas.
lashes

(no CC reading)
• Unlike English, CC constructions in BP can have mixed tenses.
• This is potentially problematic for the assumption that CC sentences share a single TP node.

**Past Perfect + Present**

(20) Nowadays, schools are strict: 

\[ \text{tu chegou} \quad \text{um minuto atrasado, e tu} \]
\[ \text{you arrive.PST.PERF} \quad \text{one minute late} \quad \text{and you} \]
\[ \text{é suspenso.} \]
\[ \text{be.PRES suspended} \]

‘if you arrived one minute late, you get suspended’
• But! ... If the order is Present + Past Perfect, the CC reading is lost.

**Present + Past Perfect**

(21) Nowadays, schools are strict: ...

?? tu chega um minuto atrasado, e tu foi suspenso.

be.PST.PERF suspended

(no CC reading)
BP has an alternative CC construction, in which the first conjunct is headed by the copula *ser* ‘to be’.

When this CC variant is used in a context like the previous one (20), the copula can only be inflected in the present tense (22).

(22) Nowadays, schools are strict: . . .

{é/ #foi} tu chegar um minuto atrasado, e
is.PRES was.PERF you to-arrive one minute late and
tu é suspenso.
you are suspended

‘if you arrive one minute late, you get suspended’
• If the context of utterance determines a topic time in the past, the copula in the first conjunct can be inflected either in the **Past Perfect** or the **Past Imperfect**.

(23) Back in the days, Brazilian schools were strict: . . .

\[ \text{\{era/ % foi\} tu chegar um minuto atrasado, e tu levava 30 chibatadas.} \]

‘If you arrived one minute late, you received 30 lashes’
However, in the same context, the second conjunct cannot be in the Past Perfect.

(24) Back in the days, Brazilian schools were strict: . . .

# {era/ foi} tu chegar um minuto
be.PST.IMPF be.PST.PERF you to-arrive one minute
atrasado, e tu levou 30 chibatadas.
late and you bring.PST.PERF 30 lashes

(no CC reading)
• The general pattern for CCs in BP can be summarized as follows:

**CCs in Regular Sentences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense Combinations</th>
<th>CC reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRES + PRES</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAST IMPF + PAST IMPF</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAST PERF + PAST PERF</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAST PERF/IMPF + PAST IMPF/PERF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAST PERF + PRES</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES + PAST PERF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The general pattern for CCs in BP can be summarized as follows:

**CCs in Sentences Headed by Copula**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense Combinations</th>
<th>CC reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRES + PRES</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAST IMPF + PAST IMPF</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAST PERF/IMPF + PAST PERF</td>
<td>%✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAST PERF + PAST IMPF</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAST IMPF + PAST IMPF</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAST PERF + PRES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES + PAST PERF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our story for BP – so far

- We maintain Keshet’s basic architecture for CCs, but modify two of his assumptions:
  - Each conjunct in CCs has a separate TP;
  - There is a top Tense head above the two lower TPs, encoding the notion of “Topic Situation” (Kratzer (2014)).
Here’s the resulting tree for a typical CC:

(25)

```
TP
   /\  
  T_{ts} /  
   \  
   Pres_{ts}
   |   GEN
   \   
TP_1
   /\  
you eat too many carrots
   and
   
TP_2
   /\  
your skin turns orange
```
• The Topic Situation $\text{PRES}_{ts}$ node expresses the intuition that a CC like (25) is “anchored in the Present”.

• In order to capture this, we extend the meaning of $\text{GEN}$ to include a topic situation (26).

\[(26) \quad \left[ \text{GEN} [\phi \text{ and } \psi] \right] = \lambda s. \text{Generally for } s' \subseteq s \left[ \lceil \phi \rceil = 1 \text{ in } s' \right] \left[ \lceil \psi \rceil = 1 \text{ in } s' \right] \]
• The interpretation of “mixed tenses” in BP:

(27) a. Nowadays, schools are strict: ... 
   tu chegou um minuto atrasado, e tu 
   you arrive.PST.PERF one minute late and you 
   é suspenso. 
   be.PRES suspended
   ‘if you arrived one minute late, you get suspended’

b. Generally for $s' \subseteq s_{ts}$ [**arrive-late(you)** at $t < t_{s'}$ in $s'$]
   [**suspended(you)** in $s'$]
• And why doesn’t English allow \textsc{Past Perfect} + \textsc{Present Perfect} in CCs?

• Whatever the reason is, it is not specific to CCs: even run-of-the-mill generic conditionals are infelicitous with this tense combination.

(28) Schools are really strict these days:

a. \# You came one minute late, and you are suspended.

b. \# If you came a minute late, you are suspended.
• The \( \text{PRES}_{ts} \) head could explain the data in (29): we can interpret the inflection in the copula as syntactic agreement with the higher \( \text{PRES}_{ts} \) head.

(29) Nowadays, schools are strict: ...

\{é/ #foi\} tu chegar um minuto atrasado, e is.PRES was.PERF you to-arrive one minute late and tu é suspenso. you are suspended

‘if you arrive one minute late, you get suspended’
• In regards to (19)/(30), we propose that this is the reflex of a ban, in BP, on \textsc{generic} operators having the \textsc{perfect} in its Nuclear Scope – that is, we have $\ast \textsc{gen} > (\textsc{nsp}\textsc{perf})$.

• \textit{Possible evidence}: the conditional counterpart of (19) is also infelicitous (31).

\begin{align*}
(30) & \quad \# \text{ tu } \{\text{chegou/} & \text{ chegava}\} \quad \text{um minuto} \\
& \quad \text{you came.PST.PERF came.PST.IMPF} \quad \text{one minute} \\
& \quad \text{atrasado, e } \text{ tu foi } \text{ suspenso.} \\
& \quad \text{late and you were.PST.PERF suspended}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
(31) & \quad \# \text{ se tu } \{\text{chegou/} & \text{ chegava}\} \quad \text{um minuto} \\
& \quad \text{if you came.PST.PERF came.PST.IMPF} \quad \text{one minute} \\
& \quad \text{atrasado, tu foi } \text{ suspenso.} \\
& \quad \text{late you were.PST.PERF suspended}
\end{align*}
• Our proposal for the $^*\text{GEN} > (\text{NS PERF})$ constraint on BP: 
  Past Perfect can only have an episodic/telic reading.

• It is possible to convey habitual readings with Past Perfect, as long as the situations quantified over are iterated and telic (Ferreira (2005, 2014), Cipria and Roberts (2000)):

\begin{equation}
\text{(32) } \text{Quando eu era estudante, eu entreguei jornal por um ano.}
\end{equation}

\begin{center}
\text{when I was student I deliver.PST.PERF newspaper for a year.}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\text{‘When I was a student, I delivered newspapers for a year’}
\end{center}
• However, sentences with Gen operators overtly expressed by adverbs as geralmente ‘generally’ are infelicitous with stative predicates in the Past Perfect, but fine with the same predicates in the Past Imperfect:

(33) Generally, I liked watching horror movies.
(34) Geralmente, eu {?? gostei/ gostava} de assistir filmes de terror.

‘Generally, I liked watching horror movies’

• Why? Episodic/telic readings (with no iteration) are incompatible with a truly generic reading!
Conclusion – and remaining problems

Some good stuff:

• Possibly interesting explanation for Past Perfect + Present Perfect in BP: Topic Situation/Time is the culprit;

• Possibly interesting explanation for BP copula-CCs;

• Indirect evidence for the syntactic encoding of Topic Situation;

• Further evidence for a two-TPs analysis of CCs;

Topics for future research:

• Why English does not allow Past Perfect + Present Perfect?

• If copula-CCs in BP are a case of agreement with a higher T head, how does the syntax operate in this case?
Appendix: copula-CCs are sufficiency modal constructions

- **Sufficiency Modal Constructions (SMCs)** (von Fintel and Iatridou (2007)): Goal-oriented modal constructions that set-up “least effort” sufficient requirements for achieving a certain goal.

(35)

a. If you want good cheese, you only have to go to the North End.

b. (To get good cheese), it is not necessary that you do something other than going to the North End.

c. Split only:
   
   \[ \text{NEG} \left[ \text{have-to} \left[ P \neq \text{ALT} \left( \text{you go to the North End} \right) \right] \right] \]
• One piece of evidence for an SMC analysis of copula-CCs: substitution of of the copula by \textit{basta} ‘it is enough’.

\begin{quote}(36) \{É/ basta\} tu chegar um minuto atrasado be.PRES be-enough.PRES you to-arrive one minute late e tu é suspenso. and you be.PRES suspended ‘you arrive one minute late and you get suspended’ \end{quote}

• Something weird about this: could we say that ‘getting suspended’ is a goal in some sense? Maybe, with some refinements.
Another piece of evidence for an SMC analysis of copula-CCs: optional use of só ‘only’ after the copula.

(37) É só tu chegar um minuto atrasado e tu be.PRES only you to-arrive one minute late and you é suspenso. be.PRES suspended ‘you arrive one minute late and you get suspended’
Interestingly enough, the first conjunct of the copula-CC can only appear in isolation with só ‘only’:

(38) Q: What do you have to do to get suspended around here?
A: É *(só) tu chegar atrasado.
   be.PRES only you to-arrive late

‘you only have to arrive late’

So it looks like there might be a covert only in copula-CCs, which cannot be recovered in the absence of the second conjunct.
• Here’s an extra piece of the puzzle: the regular conjunction *e* ‘and’ can be substituted by (what appears to be) the complementizer *que* ‘that’.

(39) ́E tu chegar atrasado {e/ que} tu é be.PRES you to.arrive late and that you be.PRES suspenso.
suspended
‘you arrive one minute late and you get suspended’

• Now the copula-CC starts to look a lot like an *it*-cleft – but without a gap in the *that*-clause.

• Clearly, there’s still some work to be done to figure out what is happening here.
References


