

DEFINING FUTURE AND SUBJUNCTIVE IN ENGLISH

In a number of languages Futures and Subjunctives seem to share properties which have supported views that they are very closely related and that they should thus be treated in a similar fashion, e.g. as categories of the same level of grammatical description. Very often they share formal properties; they are both inflectional categories in some languages or they are both periphrases of a similar type. Moreover, it has been variously observed that the connection is not only formal and that the two categories also share a notional core. Most obviously they are both easily treated as *irrealis* markers at least in the sense that they can never be used to assert the truth of a proposition. Interestingly, however, while 'future' has been included in the lists of cross-linguistically attested gram-types in Bybee and Dahl 1989 and Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994, there was not enough relevant evidence for a similar treatment of the 'subjunctive'.

The aim of this paper will be to accommodate the English facts in this general picture. More particularly, the arguments for and against the assumption of a future tense in English will be reevaluated in view of similar arguments concerning the status of the subjunctive in English. It will be shown that no single level of grammatical analysis can be regarded as the level at which these distinctions can be made; while all morphology, syntax and semantics are relevant to the definition of both future and subjunctive in a given language, the overall analysis needs to consider their interaction with clause types and speech acts. Crucially, as will be argued, it is precisely in cases like these that cross-linguistic data can be used as evidence for language specific decisions.

References

- Bybee, J. L. & O. Dahl. 1989. The Creation of Tense and Aspect Systems in the Languages of the World. *Studies in Language* 13: 51-103.
- Bybee, J. L., R. Perkins & W. Pagliuca. 1994. *The Evolution of Grammar: Tense, Aspect and Modality in the Languages of the World*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

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