CLASSIFYING CONDITIONALS:
THE CASE OF METALINGUISTIC *IF YOU LIKE**

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ABSTRACT It is agreed that metalinguistic 'if you like' puts some aspect of communication into metalinguistic focus, serving the pragmatic function of commenting upon the appropriateness of the words uttered, but there is little consensus as to whether metalinguistic 'if you like' introduces a conditional. By taking observations from the *International Corpus of English*, this paper aims to show that utterances using metalinguistic 'if you like' belong in the class of conditional expressions. This is achieved by proposing pragmatic criteria to guide the categorisation of conditional expressions, where conditionality is not inherently linked to truth-conditional content. Next, this paper argues that 'if you like' can be classed in the broad category of speech-act conditionals, where it is not the truth of the *if*-clause that provides the situations of truth of the main clause, but rather where the *if*-clause refers to the situations where the main clause is felicitously used. Finally, by utilising the semantic contextualist framework of Default Semantics (Jaszczolt 2010), this paper shows that 'if you like' is comparable to other *if*-clauses which overtly invoke a metalinguistic sense in a full phrase. In sum, this paper takes the case of 'if you like' as a case study in re-conceptualising the class of conditionals and truth-conditional content.

1   INTRODUCTION

The phrase 'if you like' has two main functions: first, as a conditional clause, and second, as a parenthetical comment. The examples (1) and (2) illustrate these two variations, respectively.

(1)   We can have a competition if you like later on. (*ICE-GB* S2A-049 052)

(2)   So I went in with a bone of complaint, if you like. (*ICE-GB* S1A-064 142)

In (1), the realisation of the factuality of the main clause is dependent on the realisation of the antecedent of the conditional; it is a conditional of the form 'if p, q'. This is in contrast to (2), where the use of 'if you like' puts an aspect of communication into metalinguistic focus – in this case the phrase'bone of complaint' – serving the pragmatic function of commenting upon the appropriateness of the words uttered. For the purposes of this paper, the term 'metalinguistic' is taken as concerning linguistic characteristics such as form, pronunciation or choice of words, as opposed to propositional content. In this paper, reference to the phrase 'if you like' will be to the parenthetical type unless stated otherwise. Present-day English examples are mainly drawn from the Great British component of the *International Corpus of English* (ICE-GB).

There is little consensus as to whether parenthetical 'if you like' introduces a conditional. Chen (1996) argues that there is no obvious conditional relationship between 'if you like' and the main clause. This would render 'if you like' a 'conventionalised' expression where the pragmatic effect is only recognisable through mutual understanding of that effect (terminology from Bach 1995). 'If you like' does not combine compositionally, and the phrase does not have any semantic, or truth-conditional, import.

On the other hand, Declerck & Reed (2001) categorise 'if you like' with other conditionals which explicitly invoke the same pragmatic function, as in (3).

(3)   It is still peanuts if you'll pardon the expression. (*ICE-GB* S2B-021 017)

While Declerck & Reed (2001) assume that both (2) and (3) express conditionals, one could also argue that, given they perform the same role in discourse, that neither express conditionals.

My purpose in this paper is to argue in favour of the view that parenthetical 'if you like' expresses a conditional. I do by adopting a characterisation of conditionals which allows that a conditional thought may be expressed either as the primary, intended meaning of the speaker, or as a secondary meaning which forms part of the input to the main intended meaning. By situating the analysis in the radical contextualist semantics of Default Semantics (Jaszczolt 2005, 2010), I adopt a truth-conditional unit that does not necessarily adhere to the syntactic form of the uttered sentence form. The upshot of such a move is that the notion of conditionality is no longer intrinsically linked to truth-conditional content. In sum, the conditional affinities between all of (1), (2) and (3) are brought together, while acknowledging the role of parenthetical 'if you like' is as a hedging device in discourse.

To justify the inclusion of parenthetical 'if you like' in the class of conditionals, I use pragmatic criteria to guide the categorisation of conditional expressions proposed in Elder (2012), namely that p is remote from reality, and p is a supposition. Moreover, I argue that 'if you like' can be classed as an 'indirect' conditional (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik 1985: 1095-1097), where it is not the truth of the *if*-clause that provides the situations of truth of the main clause, but rather where the *if*-clause refers to the situations where the main clause is felicitously used. Finally, by utilising the framework of Default Semantics, this paper shows that 'if you like' is comparable to other *if*-clauses which overtly invoke a metalinguistic sense in a full phrase.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 describes how 'if you like' is used in present-day English. Section 3 starts the debate of whether 'if you like' introduces a conditional, by first outlining the criteria for conditionality and examining whether and how 'if you like' satisfy these criteria. To aid answering this question, Section 4 provides evidence from historical uses of 'if you like' to help guide the categorisation of such utterances, while Section 5 compares 'if you like' to other metalinguistic phrases which do not use the word 'if'. Section 6 then couches the analysis in the semantic framework of Default Semantics; Section 7 provides the conclusion.

2   Uses and functions of 'if you like'

In the ICE-GB, there are 44 spoken instances of the phrase 'if you like'. Of these, 36 tokens fall into the category of 'if you like' as a parenthetical comment. This section starts by providing a detailed exploration of the function of 'if you like' in discourse.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) defines the phrase 'if you like' under the entry for 'like' as follows:

> Phr. *if you like*: if you wish to phrase or consider something in a particular manner; often used as a vaguely intensive expression, = 'indeed', 'perhaps'. *colloq.*

I apply this definition to the instances of 'if you like' found in the ICE-GB, identifying several possible interpretations of the definition.

First, at a conceptual level, "if you wish to phrase or consider something in a particular manner" supports the idea that 'if you like' invites the hearer to put some aspect of the current communicative exchange into focus. More specifically, it acts as a parenthetical remark on some aspect of the main clause of the utterance. Usually, this is a remark on a certain word or expression that the speaker has chosen to use; in the case of (2), 'if you like' comments upon

the phrase 'bone of complaint', inviting the hearer to accept the speaker's choice of expression. As such, we can describe this use of 'if you like' as having the function of a metalinguistic comment; rather than commenting upon the propositional content of the expression, it comments upon the appropriateness or accuracy of the linguistic form of the words uttered. This metalinguistic aspect can be further underlined by putting the target expression in quotation marks to indicate that something non-propositional is being hedged.

It can be noted that the phrase 'if you will' has an analogous metalinguistic sense to 'if you like' also in current usage. While there are no instances of 'if you will' present in the ICE-GB, the phrase can nevertheless be identified in ordinary discourse, as exemplified by (4).

(4)   Phew, what an epic episode, or 'epic-sode' if you will, this week's show was. (BBC blogs – The Voice UK, 2013[1])

The phrase 'if you will' has received some attention in the literature. For example, Brinton (2008: 164-166) identifies several metalinguistic uses of 'if you will', suggesting that it is often used with metaphors and figures of speech; cases where the speaker searches for the correct formulation of an expression or word; to qualify foreign or 'fancy' words; or to indicate that the speaker is not entirely comfortable with the expression or that the hearer may not accept its use.

Examining the cases of 'if you like' in the ICE-GB, we see that this characterisation of uses of 'if you will' readily corresponds with uses of 'if you like': (2) comments on the figure of speech 'bone of complaint'; in (5) we see the speaker search for an appropriate phrase; (6) presents terminology specific to the academic field; and (7) appears to distance the speaker from his affiliation with the word 'forced'.

(5)   The caricaturist [...] presents a kind of unrelenting, uh, sort of repetition of a particular way of looking at them, um, a particular image of them if you like. (*ICE-GB* S2A-057 072)

(6)   And that is the prosodic effect, if you like, of the liquids in these words. (*ICE-GB* S2A-030 034)

(7)   More and more people are being, if you like, forced into the private sector. (*ICE-GB* S1B-039 102)

There are clearly affinities between the two phrases 'if you will' and 'if you like'. It remains to be seen whether they should be treated analogously vis-à-vis conditionality.

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1 Accessed from http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thevoiceuk/posts/Episode-3-The-Aftermouth

Let us return to the OED definition of 'if you like'. While 'if you like' appears to have a predominantly pragmatic function, the OED definition can be taken more literally by considering that 'if you like' is elliptical for an expression such as 'if you wish to phrase something in a particular way'. This suggestion could be supported by the fact that it is possible for an *if*-clause to comment on the linguistic form of an utterance in a full phrase, as in (3) repeated below, and similarly (8).

(3)   It is still peanuts if you'll pardon the expression. (*ICE-GB* S2B-021 017)

(8)   Very short skirt on if you don't mind me saying. (*ICE-GB* S1A-040 089)

As with 'if you will' and 'if you like', these *if*-clauses qualify some linguistic aspect of the main clause: in (3) the speaker qualifies a metaphor, while in (8) the speaker hedges the appropriateness of the description. In terms of discourse function, these examples are clearly comparable to utterances using 'if you like'. By grouping these uses of 'if' together, the question of what counts as a conditional is extended to encompass these *if*-clauses which overtly invoke a metalinguistic sense in a full phrase.

So far I have focussed on parenthetical 'if you like' as a metalinguistic hedging device. However, examples from the ICE-GB indicate that 'if you like' can also be used as a *non*-metalinguistic hedge, as in (9) and (10).

(9)   So if you like, that is the definitive statement for the time being. (*ICE-GB* S1B-007 205)

(10)   If you like, that's a measure of how much people are paid. (*ICE-GB* S2A-037 023)

This observation correlates with the OED definition, which states that 'if you like' is "often used as a vaguely intensive expression" in the same way as 'indeed', suggesting that 'if you like' serves as a general hedge or qualifier of a statement. This is in contrast with the idea that 'if you like' comments on a particular word or phrase; 'if you like' no longer acts as a metalinguistic comment, but specifically comments on the propositional content of the utterance. While in (2) we can put 'bone of complaint' in quotation marks to highlight that 'if you like' comments on the adequacy of the phrase, in (9) and (10) there is no particular phrase that 'if you like' attaches to; rather, it hedges the overall assertion.

An analogous trend can be seen with the phrase 'if you will', where in addition to its metalinguistic use, it is also used as a general hedge as something

of the form 'if you are willing to accept what I am claiming' (Brinton 2008: 166). In Section 4, I examine how phrases such as 'if you like' and 'if you will' may have made a shift from metalinguistic hedges to general hedges – both of propositional content and of illocutionary force – and discuss how this affects how we should categorise them.

Let us take stock. In this section, I have identified various ways of characterising the phrase 'if you like'. Two communicative roles have been identified: first, as a metalinguistic comment on a specific word or phrase, and second, as a general hedge on an assertion. In terms of its semantic role, it has been suggested that 'if you like' could either function as a standalone discourse marker, or as elliptical for some longer phrase. In the latter case, we could liken 'if you like' to other *if*-clauses which explicitly state the metalinguistic sense, such as 'if you don't mind me saying'. I now move to the question of whether 'if you like', and by extension other metalinguistic *if*-clauses, express conditionals. The next section introduces some criteria for defining conditionals before discussing whether and how 'if you like' may satisfy these criteria.

3   'If you like' as a conditional clause

As detailed elsewhere (e.g. Elder 2012), an utterance counts as conditional as long as (a) p restricts the situations where q holds, and (b) the antecedent p indicates remoteness from reality. The rationale for these criteria is as follows.

Under Stalnaker's (1975) possible-worlds theory of conditionals, the truth of the consequent of a conditional is evaluated in those worlds where the antecedent is true. This truth-conditional theory guides the first criterion: consideration of the consequent must be restricted to the situation which the antecedent specifies. However, unlike Stalnaker's truth conditions of conditional assertions, this criterion need not be satisfied in terms of truth and falsity, but may be satisfied in terms of the felicity of the main clause utterance. In Austin's (1961) seminal example (11), the consequent is true in all possible worlds, not just the world where the antecedent is true.

(11)   There are biscuits on the sideboard if you want them.

Rather, the antecedent provides the situation of discourse where the consequent is felicitously uttered.

This distinction between truth and felicity aligns with Quirk et al.'s (1985: 1095-7) distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' conditionals. In a 'direct' conditional, the antecedent refers to situations where the consequent is true, while in an 'indirect' conditional the antecedent refers to the situations where the consequent is felicitously uttered. Under these definitions, (11) is an in-

direct conditional. I adopt the labels 'direct' and 'indirect' to distinguish between these two types of conditional.

As it stands, a conditional expresses some relation between two states where the situation described in the consequent considered on the supposition of some condition. The second criterion for delimiting the class of conditionals is that the truth of that condition – the antecedent – should be deemed to be uncertain by the speaker. The rationale for such a criterion is largely Gricean: according to Grice (1967), use of the word 'if' signifies that the speaker does not know the antecedent to be certainly true. In turn, we get the quantity implicature that the speaker is not able to make a stronger statement, for example using 'since' instead of 'if'. In order to extend this rationale to other conditionals which do not use 'if', remoteness is a requirement of the antecedent more generally, thereby removing the burden from the word 'if'. It should be noted that for this second criterion to be applied, the speaker's epistemic stance towards the situation described in the antecedent has to be considered. Whether or not a particular utterance is included in the class of conditionals will partly stem from the speaker's own judgement in the certainty of the antecedent.

With these criteria in mind, let us return our attention to the metalinguistic *if*-sentences (3) and (8), repeated below.

(3)   It is still peanuts if you'll pardon the expression. (*ICE-GB* S2B-021 017)

(8)   Very short skirt on if you don't mind me saying. (*ICE-GB* S1A-040 089)

In these examples, the *if*-clause has the same function as 'if you like' of pulling a specific word or phrase into metalinguistic focus. But moreover, these examples satisfy the criteria for being conditional: first, the *if*-clause supplies a condition on which the consequent is felicitously used, and, second, by invoking the hearer's agreement or opinion indicates that the speaker is not committed to the felicity of that statement. As such, we can analyse these *if*-sentences as indirect conditionals. The following discussion considers whether and how the phrase 'if you like' can be analogously interpreted such that it satisfies the criteria for introducing an indirect conditional, and hence whether utterances using 'if you like' may fall into the class of conditional expressions.

Declerck & Reed (2001: 213, 353-4) co-opt both 'if you like' and 'if you will' as 'metalinguistic P-conditionals' (where P stands for the antecedent) in the same class as those utterances which use a full phrase in the antecedent. Their classification is made on the basis that in all of these cases the *if*-clause comments on the form or the choice of words used in the consequent; they all

share the same discourse function.

In terms of conditionality, it seems to me that there are two options available. On the one hand, taking 'if you like' as elliptical for something like 'if you accept the expression' would license including 'if you like' in the class of conditional expressions, since 'if you like' would satisfy the criteria for introducing a conditional in the same way as other indirect conditionals. On the other hand, one could argue that 'if you like' does not explicitly invoke the same sense when we consider the logical form of the utterance, despite the similarities in discourse function between 'if you like' and these other, metalinguistic indirect conditionals. That is, 'if you like' is not compositional, and is not recognised as having any conditional import.

We can put the first idea in terms of Bach's (1995) notion 'standardisation'. He argues that performative verbs, even when used performatively (e.g. 'I order you to leave'), retain their 'literal' truth-evaluable meaning. Rather than discussing conditionals in terms of their truth conditions, we can instead utilise the idea of standardisation in the evaluation of conditional expressions more generally: even though an expression may be used to perform some other speech act, if it satisfies the criteria for conditionality it may still be classed as such. In the case of 'if you like', although the intended effect may be to highlight the speaker's attitude towards the choice of words used, if the expression is elliptical for some more overt condition, the 'standard' conditional meaning is still recoverable.

On the other hand, if such ellipsis is not transparent to interlocutors, it may be more plausible to conjecture that 'if you like' is a 'conventionalised' phrase insofar that the pragmatic effect of the utterance is only recognisable through mutual understanding of that effect (Bach 1995). That is, no such conditionality is recognised by the speakers, and it is only the metalinguistic effect which can be recovered.

It is this latter way that Fretheim, Boateng & Vaskó. (2003: 59) characterise 'if you like':

> Parenthetical expressions like 'if you like' [...] constrain the
> speaker's ostensively communicated propositional attitude [...].
> Their extra-clausal syntactic position and the lack of stress that
> goes with that position are indicative of a grammaticalisation
> process involving the loss of truth-conditional meaning.

This relevance theoretic position (cf. Sperber & Wilson 1986) is reminiscent of Blakemore's (1987) 'conceptual' versus 'procedural' distinction. Her initial argument was that lexical items (e.g. 'dog', 'table', etc.) encode concepts, which, in turn, contribute to truth-conditional meaning. On the other hand, some

expressions (e.g. 'but', 'so') do not contribute to truth conditions, so do not encode concepts. Rather, these expressions have procedural meaning, which provide procedural constraints on how to interpret the surrounding utterance in context.

To take an example, Blakemore argues that the conjunction 'but' does not contribute to truth conditions, but invites the hearer to interpret the second conjunct as having some contrast with the preceding utterance. As such, procedural meaning can be seen as pragmatic, as it concerns language processing, rather than language comprehension. Moreover, items with procedural meaning are optional, as the semantic components of the utterance are still recoverable without an overt marker.

(12)   The cinema was hot and crowded. I enjoyed the film.

(12′)   The cinema was hot and crowded but I enjoyed the film.

It is still possible to derive the same inference that there is some contrast between the two sentences in (12), but the addition of 'but' in (12′) overtly signals that this is how the two utterances are intended to be interpreted.

We can compare this analysis of 'but' with the case of 'if you like'. The main clause q in, say, (2) *could* be asserted simpliciter. However, the intended interpretation of q is overtly signalled by the use of 'if you like', showing that the speaker distances himself from his commitment to the propositional content of that clause. As such, we could say that this way of interpreting q may arise from a procedural constraint on 'if you like', and 'if you like' does not contribute any conditional meaning.

Next, Fretheim et al. (2003) suggest that the 'extra-clausal position' of 'if you like' indicates that it does not contribute to truth-conditional content. I call this the 'argument from syntax'. Looking at the 'syntactic position' of 'if you like', it is uncontroversial that it is superfluous to the propositional content of the main assertion. Indeed, metalinguistic 'if you like' arguably does not contribute to anything propositional since it only serves to hedge the speaker's association with a linguistic expression. However, used literally, 'if you like' is integral to the propositional content of the sentence: in (1), repeated below, 'if you like' restricts q to those situations where the hearer would like or wishes q to occur.

(1)   We can have a competition if you like later on. (*ICE-GB* S2A-049 052)

While the argument from syntax highlights a difference between literal 'if you like' and parenthetical 'if you like', it does not help to decide whether the latter type is conditional. This is because in an indirect conditional, the

antecedent restricts the situations where the consequent is *felicitously* uttered, so a relation in terms of *truth* is not required for its conditionality. Therefore, since the truth of the consequent of an indirect conditional is not dependent on the truth of the antecedent, the antecedent *can* be deleted without affecting the truth of the assertion. As such, neither the syntactic position nor the contribution to propositional content of the antecedent of an indirect conditional affect its status as a conditional, and by extension, will not be factors when classifying 'if you like' as conditional.

Couching this in terms of the conceptual/procedural distinction, it can be argued that parenthetical 'if you like' *does* indeed have procedural meaning, insofar that it informs the hearer of the speaker's epistemic stance towards the main clause q. However, this does not correspond to a distinction in terms of truth conditions. An indirect conditional is classed as a conditional on the basis that p constrains the situations where q is felicitously uttered, but the main purpose of the utterance 'if p, q' is to assert q; p merely plays a hedging role. The upshot is that conditionality is no longer tied to truth-conditional content. The truth conditions of a conditional may pertain to the extant logical form 'if p, q', but this is not a *requirement* for conditionality; the truth conditions of an indirect conditional may simply correspond to q simpliciter. I expound on this view in Section 6.

To sum up this section, we have seen that while in an indirect conditional the antecedent does not serve the function of restricting the possible worlds where the consequent is *true*, the *if*-clause nevertheless constrains the situations where the consequent is *acceptable* by invoking the hearer's agreement or opinion. The question is whether or not 'if you like' performs this same role. While 'if you like' hedges the speaker's association with a particular expression, it is still unclear whether the phrase invokes the same conditional function of invoking the hearer's acceptance. Following Bach (1995) we could go one of two ways. An ostensibly apparent way to class 'if you like' as a conditional would be to conclude that it is elliptical for a longer phrase. As such, 'if you like' could be deemed a 'standardised' expression. By contrast, if only the metalinguistic sense of 'if you like' is recoverable by interlocutors, the expression would be rendered a 'conventionalised' expression.

The following section takes a diachronic approach to aid in answering this question. Gauging how 'if you like' arose as a discourse marker may help with formulating the criteria for how such utterances should be classified.

4   Historical development of 'if you like'

In this section I describe extant hypotheses for how 'if you like' came to express a metalinguistic comment. It appears that there is evidence for 'if you like'

as both a standardised and a conventionalised phrase, indicating a lack of agreement in the extant literature. I favour the view that since 'if you like' can be used both literally and metalinguistically, and moreover that there are contexts in which it is used ambiguously between the two readings, it is plausible that 'if you like' as a metalinguistic comment directly stemmed from its literal interpretation. This supports the view that metalinguistic 'if you like' plays the role of a conditional clause.

Jespersen (1927: 209) first noticed that while the syntactic form of phrases such as 'if you like' and 'if you please' have remained unchanged over time, they have undergone a "complete change" in their grammatical construction. Indeed, Chen (1996) notes that 'if you like' shares a similar historical development with 'if you please'. In particular, in Early Modern English, 'like' used as an impersonal verb was apparently synonymous with 'please' (Chen 1996: 28). While 'if you please' (or a variant, 'if it please you') underwent formal reduction to our everyday 'please' in making a request or accepting an offer (Chen 1996: 25-27; see also Allen 1995; Traugott & Dasher 2002: 255-258), Chen (1996: 27-28) suggests that 'if you please' also has a metalinguistic function which is resistant against formal reduction. The following examples using 'if you please' from the OED arguably show such a function.

(13)   I heard of the father and son in the other regiment, the Slashers if you please, being carried up drunk to bed. (1848 Thackeray *Let.* in *Scribner's Mag.* (1887) Apr. 391/1)

(14)   To a monotonous degree, then, each aspect of the operation of the Council is in the hands of the mathematics educators—the teachers, if you please. (1973 *Math. Teacher* May 479/1)

(15)   Brando wears a kaftan apparently borrowed from Claire Rayner and rides around in a popemobile, if you please. 1996 *Neon* Dec. 92/4)

Although there are no instances of 'if you please' in the ICE-GB, these modern examples may suggest that 'if you please' has a similar metalinguistic function to 'if you like', even though to today's ears may sound somewhat archaic; Allen (1995: 299) considers it "condescending".

Moving to 'if you like', Chen (1996) notes that 'if it like you' was synonymous with 'if it please you' in Early Modern English, and similarly underwent formal reduction as it lost its conditionality; it can be conjectured that the conditional marker 'if' became obsolete as the conditional meaning was lost. By late Early Modern English, 'if it like you' and its variants was obsolete (Chen 1996: 29). Meanwhile, 'if you like' came into existence in the mid-fifteenth century, and, like 'if you please', did not undergo formal reduction.

Chen (1996: 29) conjectures why:

> One reason may be that it never lost its function as a true pro-
> tasis; the other reason may be that its non-conditional use has
> been restricted to metalinguistic function, which [...] somehow
> saves the conditional clause from formal reduction.

While these two conflicting reasons align with our current hypotheses, it is sus-
pected that Chen favours the latter view. He suggests that the metalinguistic
uses have become 'de-conditionalised': since there is no obvious consequent
which is conditional upon the antecedent 'if you like', these utterances do not
act as conditionals. This would fit with Bach's (1995) notion of convention-
alisation: the expression became fixed as its role as a pragmatic marker was
established. However, we have still not ruled out the first possibility that 'if
you like' does act in the same way as an antecedent of a conditional, as it is
still unclear whether 'if you like' originated as an elided phrase.

In looking at the development of 'if you will' in Old English and Middle
English, Brinton (2008: 170) notes that 'if you will' often occurs in directive
contexts. In such cases, she suggests that 'if you will' can be interpreted as
elliptical for 'if you are willing to do so'. Meanwhile, she notes that 'if you
will' also has the pragmatic sense of 'if you are willing to call it that'. The
earliest examples that she finds are from the mid-sixteenth century, and both
types are acceptable in Present Day English.

Brinton (2008: 177-178) conjectures that a semantic shift from 'if you are
willing to do so' to 'if you are willing to say so' was facilitated by examples
such as (16).

(16)   Call them if you will, Popish fooles, and addleheads. (1641 'Smectym-
        nuus', *An Answer to a Booke entituled An Humble Remonstrance*)

Such examples provide a 'bridging context': while the force of the utterance
is directive, and thus leads to the interpretation 'if you are willing to do so',
the verb 'call' "invites the inference that supplies the metalinguistic sense 'if
you are willing to say so'" (Brinton 2008: 178). She thus suggests that the
implicature was extended beyond verbs that explicitly invoke the act of calling
or saying, which led to the metalinguistic sense of 'if you will' to extend beyond
directive contexts.

Brinton takes this analysis further when considering that 'if you will' can
also be used as a general hedge of the form 'if you are willing to accept what
I am claiming'. She suggests that "if one is calling X Y [...] then it can be
inferred that one is claiming, at least tentatively, that X is Y" (Brinton 2008:

178). In this way the use of 'if you will' is extended from metalinguistic to non-metalinguistic contexts in generally hedging the speaker's assertion.

Accepting Brinton's suggestion, it would appear that parenthetical 'if you will' arose directly from its conditional sense. 'If you will' in its literal form is elliptical for the overt condition 'if you will do so', and its meaning has morphed so as to act as a comment on the linguistic form of the words uttered. In this case, it may be conjectured that this elided overt condition provides the basis for including 'if you will' in the class of metalinguistic conditionals, along with those that overtly comment on the phrase, such as 'if that's the right word'.

I apply this analysis to the case of 'if you like'. While it is not obvious what 'if you like' may be directly elliptical for, it may be conjectured that it arose out of something like 'if you like the phrase'. Indeed, the following present-day examples suggest that in a metalinguistic context 'if you like' could be used as part of an antecedent with literal reference to the meaning of 'like'.

(17)   "But why did he leave the half-million to his son, in his will?" "*Gaga*, my dear Binkie. Just *gaga*. Senile, if you'd like it better." (1929 W. J. Locke *Ancestor Jorico* xviii)

(18)   A steady blasting of the ship's whistle sounded abandon ship that afternoon shortly before six bells, if you like nautical parlance. (1966 H. Brean *Traces of Merrilee* viii. 85)

The relation between literal and metalinguistic uses of 'if you like', and by analogy 'if you will', becomes even more blurred when we observe present-day 'bridging' examples between literal uses of 'if you will' and metalinguistic uses. These examples provide us with evidence that there may not always be a clear-cut distinction between the two types. For example, in (19), 'if you will' could be interpreted either as having a dual role of both the literal sense – 'call me...if you will' – and the metalinguistic sense, commenting on 'old romantic', or as being ambiguous between the two.

(19)   Call me an old romantic if you will. (BBC Blogs – Will and Testament, 2012[2])

In spoken communication, the difference may be discerned by intonation patterns; 'if you will' said with flat intonation may give us the metalinguistic sense, while emphasis on 'will' would likely give us the literal sense. On the other hand, there may not be one specific sense intended by the speaker, leaving the interpretation to be recovered by the hearer. This fuzzy boundary between the two uses of 'if you will' provides some rationale for conjecturing

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2 Accessed from http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/ni/2012/04/a_visit_to_monkey_town.html

some semantic similarities between its literal use and its parenthetical use. An analogous argument can be made for 'if you like'; (20) and (21) exemplify this possible dual use.

(20)   You could call it ingenuity if you like. (*BNC* G4N 406)

(21)   I've got red hair (it's ok, you can say ginger if you like). (BBC News Magazine, 2009[3])

Putting the target content in quotation marks – "ingenuity" or "ginger" – highlights the metalinguistic function; equally, 'if you like' can be used literally as a condition on the speech act of 'calling' or 'saying'.

Taking stock, 'if you like' has been used metalinguistically since the 1500s, and as such, its pragmatic function was established by the time of Present Day English. However, there does not appear to be any consensus for its role as a conditional clause. For example, Chen (1996) conjectures that in its metalinguistic use, the phrase 'if you like', like 'if you please', became 'deconditionalised' in that it does not have a direct consequent which is conditional upon the *if*-clause. Rather, in Bach's (1995) terminology, it has become a conventionalised expression.

On the other hand, on the basis that metalinguistic 'if you will' was modified from the pragmatic sense 'if you are willing to call it that', it is possible that 'if you like' can be interpreted as short for an overt condition, such as 'if you like the phrase'. I favour the view that, since we can find examples from present-day English where 'if you like' is overtly used in this way, 'if you like' is a standardised expression and retains its conditional use. This argument is further supported by the fact that we can find examples which do not exhibit a clear preference for either a literal reading of 'if you like' or a metalinguistic reading.

Taking the viewpoint that 'if you like' developed as an elliptical phrase for something more explicit, it should then be questioned whether natural language users are able to identify its use as a conditional, or whether the conditional meaning has been lost. If the conditional meaning is not transparent to speakers then perhaps 'if you like' should only be treated as a pragmatic marker. The following section compares 'if you like' to other metalinguistic phrases which do not use the conditional marker 'if', judging whether there are any differences between them which might affect the conditional status of the expression 'if you like'.

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3 Accessed from http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/8195177.stm

5   OTHER METALINGUISTIC CLAUSES IN ENGLISH

Quirk et al. (1985: 618-619) discuss the phrases 'if you like' and 'if you will' in a general class of metalinguistic comments, along with phrases such as 'so to speak', 'to quote X', 'as X puts it'. The phrase 'as it were' can also be added to this list of hedging devices. In this section, I question whether 'if you like' serves exactly the same function as these other phrases, and whether invoking the conditional marker 'if' affects the conditional status of the expression. I conclude that by explicitly invoking the acceptance of the hearer, 'if you like' encodes a conditional aspect which is not expressed by these other metalinguistic comments.

Pullum (2003) suggests that 'if you will' is the "old fogey's" version of 'like', which is favoured by younger speakers. He argues that in every context where 'if you will' can be used metalinguistically, a semantically equivalent statement can be used using 'like'. While Liberman (2003) responds that the semantic effects of 'like' are much more diverse and are not restricted to the same use as 'if you will', 'like' does nevertheless have a similar function of putting an expression in metalinguistic focus. Indeed, in some contexts, 'like' serves to indicate that the speaker wishes to distance himself from the expression, signalling that the expression chosen may not be appropriate, or that the speaker is not comfortable with using the expression (cf. Andersen 2001: 241-250). Considering the contexts in which 'if you will' and 'if you like' may be used, it would equally appear that 'like' could be a direct replacement, albeit with some change in register.

I focus on the case of 'as it were' as a point of comparison with 'if you like'. Appealing to the OED definition of 'as it were', we see that it can be used synonymously with an expression which uses 'if'.

> *as it were*: (as a parenthetic phrase used to indicate that a word
> or statement is perhaps not formally exact though practically
> right) as if it were so, **if one might so put it**, in some sort.

This definition suggests that at the level of conceptualisation, 'as it were' could be reanalysed as a conditional, as it implicitly invites a hypothetical agreement of the expression used. However, a difference between 'if you like'/'if you will' and 'as it were' is that the former cases, by using 'you', explicitly call upon the hearer's acceptance of the target phrase. 'As it were' does not invoke any such acceptance. As Brinton (2008: 182) suggests, 'as it were' impersonalises both speaker and hearer, thus contrasting with 'if you will' which involves both speaker and hearer. In this sense 'as it were' has a stronger force of negative politeness (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987).

A similar analysis can be applied to a comparison of 'like' as a metalinguistic comment and 'if you like'. As pointed out by Andersen (2001: 244), using 'like' highlights that the target expression is an "echoic use of a linguistic form without any specific attribution" (cf. Carston 1996). That is, the speaker uses 'like' to signal that the expression used is not wholly attributed to the speaker himself. In contrast, 'if you like' does not necessarily remove the speaker's attribution from the target expression, but rather, it explicitly calls for the hearer's agreement that it is an appropriate expression to use. In this way, 'if you like' can be seen as providing a condition upon which the speaker is willing to use the phrase, and hence using the conditional marker 'if' serves some purpose that is not expressed in other phrases such as 'as it were' or 'like'. In particular, use of 'if' directs the hearer's attention to those situations where the phrase is felicitously used.

Let us put this in more concrete terms. Returning to the criteria for inclusion in the class of conditionals outlined in Section 3, it should be noted that while the lexicon may provide a tool for overtly expressing conditional thoughts – namely with 'if' – there is no one-to-one correspondence between conditional expressions and conditional thoughts. That is, since the criteria for being conditional do not come directly from the language system itself, the definition does not limit the level at which conditionality may arise. The following section outlines the principles of Default Semantics, and expounds on my view that 'if you like' can both express a conditional, without the consequence that the *if*-clause must contribute to the truth conditions of the utterance.

6   Conditionals and Default Semantics

In this section I use the theory of Default Semantics (e.g. Jaszczolt 2005, 2010) combined with my pragmatic definition of conditionality to show how 'if you like' can both express a conditional, without contributing to truth-conditional content.

I start by addressing the question of what the truth-conditional unit is. This amounts to positioning the analysis on the continuum from semantic minimalism, which does not allow any contextual intrusion into the semantic unit, to contextualism, where context plays a significant role in determining the truth-conditional unit. I seek a theory of meaning that concerns itself with the meanings of utterances in discourse as understood by the interlocutors of that discourse. As such, I make the assumption that utterances are the primary bearers of truth. This is in opposition to the view that truth conditions are predicated of sentences, while an analysis of the meanings to which utterances can be put is pushed to the role of pragmatics.

This latter view is the one put forward by semantic minimalism (e.g. Borg 2004, 2012, Cappelen & Lepore 2005), which relies on the assumption that a semantic theory should be independent of pragmatic considerations. For example, Borg (2004) holds that "judgements made at the point of communication will depend on a vast range of information located beyond the reach of the language faculty" (Borg 2004: 8-9), and that "a semantic theory will be interested in what a sentence means, not all the things it may be used to communicate" (Borg 2004: 19).

It should be noted that Borg does not dispute that all utterances are context-sensitive, but that the object of study for semantics is the 'minimal proposition'. However, such a minimal conception of semantics does not fare well for a theory of meaning that aims to capture the intuitions and intentions of interlocutors. A more promising tack for my purposes is to adopt some variety of semantic contextualism, where the logical form of the *uttered* sentence can be enriched to align with interlocutors' intuitions about what is said.

There are many varieties of contextualism. At the more conservative end of the contextualist spectrum is 'indexicalism', where any contextual information that contributes to establishing truth-conditional content has to be attributed to context-sensitive 'slots' in the logical form (e.g. Stanley 2000). This has the aim of ensuring that truth conditions align with speakers' intuitions, while ensuring that enrichments are systematic and non-arbitrary. Progressing towards more radical flavours of contextualism, Relevance Theorists (e.g. Sperber & Wilson 1986, Carston 1988, 2002) take 'explicatures' – an enriched, or 'developed', logical form – as the input to truth-conditional semantics. These explicatures need not be mandated by context-sensitive elements in the logical form, but may also contribute to the truth-evaluable proposition via 'top-down' pragmatic processes. In a similar vein, Recanati (2010) espouses 'truth-conditional pragmatics', admitting both 'saturation' of linguistically mandated elements of the logical form such as reference assignment of indexicals, and the pragmatic operation of 'modulation' which allows top-down processing which is not enforced by the linguistic expression.

It should be noted that while Recanati allows that modulation is an optional, context-dependent process, his contextualist 'truth-conditional pragmatics' stipulates that semantic interpretation and free modulation of the logical form is still mandated by the words uttered. This is in contrast to the radical contextualist approach that I espouse of Default Semantics (e.g. Jaszczolt 2005, 2010) in which the logical form of the utterance can not only be enriched to align with the intended content of the utterance of that sentence, but may also be overridden to align with the primary, intended content of that utterance. As such, truth conditions may be predicated of a unit which

corresponds to the syntactic form of the uttered sentence to varying degrees. The motivation for adopting such a radical stance is as follows.

We know that conditionals are not only expressed using sentences of the form 'if p, q', as exemplified by (22) to (24).

(22)   Take one more step and I'll shoot.

(23)   Your money or your life.

(24)   You like it? It's yours.

Such examples show that while a conditional may be expressed overtly via the sentence used, a conditional may also be expressed implicitly via a conditional implicature.

The criteria for conditionality outlined in Section 3 are intended to account for this fact. This means that conditionality is not intrinsically linked to the sentence form. In order to adopt a truth-conditional theory which accounts for conditionals expressed via such a broad array of structures, the truth-conditional unit *cannot* rely on the form of the sentence. Therefore, any theory that fits this desideratum *must* require that the unit of investigation be relaxed so that it is not necessarily tied to the syntactic form of the uttered sentence. Default Semantics is one such theory that allows such a construal of the truth-conditional unit. It allows that the unit of investigation need not necessarily be tied to the syntactic form of the uttered sentence, allowing that the logical form may be overridden to generate the required unit.

But now, in light of capturing the truth conditions of primary intended meanings of utterances, the truth conditions of conditionals of the form 'if p, q' need not be constrained by this sentence form.[4] This is because even in cases where the utterance is deemed conditional in virtue of its logical form, the primary intended meaning need not be conditional. This is the case for the indirect conditionals discussed here. For example in Austin's 'biscuit conditional' repeated below, the primary meaning is one of an offer or an invitation for the hearer to help himself to biscuits, not of a conditional.

(11)   There are biscuits on the sideboard if you want them.

In fact, non-conditional primary meanings are not limited to indirect conditionals; direct conditionals may equally express a non-conditional meaning as their main, intended meaning, as shown in (25) and (26).

(25)   If you like it's yours.

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4 There are many truth-conditional (and non-truth-conditional) theories of conditionals on the market. See (e.g.) Bennett (2003) and von Fintel (2011) for an overview of the various positions.

PM: You can have it.

(26)   If she takes the pill she will get better.
         PM: She should take the pill.

These examples show that sometimes the most appropriate way to convey the intended message is through an implicature, not through 'what is said' by the sentence. Thus, in the case of both direct and indirect conditionals, it may be the case that the speaker's main meaning is not the conditional one.

Default Semantics takes the truth-conditional unit as the output of a 'merger' of information coming from different sources of information, where the word meaning and sentence structure is just one of various potential sources (see Jaszczolt 2010 for an explanation of these sources of information). So, in cases where the outputted truth-conditional unit does not correspond to the conditional sentence form, the conditional meaning is still present as a *secondary meaning* that contributes to the merger of information.

For example, in all of (11), (25) and (26), a conditional is expressed using the dominant conditional sentence form ('if p, q'), but their primary meanings are not conditional. However, this does not mean that they 'lose' their status as conditional. This is because conditionality is linked to the sentence structure, which in turn constitutes part of the input to the pragmatic process of generating the non-conditional truth-conditional unit. In short, conditionality no longer corresponds to truth conditions.

I now analyse parenthetical 'if you like' with such a semantics. Although the primary pragmatic function of 'if you like' may be as a metalinguistic discourse marker, the use of the word 'if' specifically directs the hearer's attention to the relevant situations where the target expression is felicitously used. Thus, while 'if you like' can be used in many of the same contexts as other metalinguistic phrases which do not use 'if', 'if you like' is set apart from these phrases due to its use of the conditional marker 'if'. The upshot is that we can have the best of both worlds: we can class 'if you like' as a conditional on the basis that the conditional sentence form gives rise to the relevant implicature via the use of the conditional marker 'if', but this does not detract from the fact that the main function of 'if you like' is as a pragmatic discourse marker, to mark that something non-propositional is being hedged.

7   Conclusion

This paper has analysed utterances using parenthetical 'if you like' in light of whether they express conditionals. In particular, my main purpose has been to show that the pragmatic function of 'if you like' and its conditionality need not be mutually exclusive.

First, the pragmatic criteria for conditionality gives rise to a category of conditionals that encompasses conditionality either expressed as the primary, intended meaning of the speaker, or as a secondary meaning which forms part of the input to the main intended meaning. This amounts to a reconceptualisation of what it is to be conditional, as conditionality is no longer tied to truth-conditional content.

Second, in line with the principles of Default Semantics, I take on board a truth-conditional unit that does not necessarily adhere to the syntactic form of the uttered sentence. The result for utterances using 'if you like' is that they are classed as conditional on the basis that they direct the hearer to accept the target expression, but the *if*-clause does not itself contribute to the truth-conditional content of the utterance. Rather, 'if you like' maintains its role in discourse as a metalinguistic comment.

In sum, I hope to have shown that neither the class of conditionals nor the truth-conditional unit of a conditional need be constrained by the 'if p, q' sentence form. A conditional can be expressed explicitly via a sentence using 'if', or it can be expressed implicitly using some other sentence structure. Likewise, the primary meaning of a conditional sentence may or may not be the conditional meaning. By taking the primary meaning as the truth-conditional unit, 'if you like' need not contribute to the truth conditions of the utterance in which it features, but it *does* contribute to conditionality.

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