

On the so-called volitional use of *will*: Semantic or pragmatic or both?

Naoaki Wada
University of Tsukuba
wada.naoaki.gb@u.tsukuba.ac.jp

Keywords: *will*, volition, modality, mental attitudes, the three-tier model of language use

There have been numerous studies on the *will*-future (e.g. Close 1977; Collins 2009; Copley 2009; Dancygier 1998; Haegeman 1983; Kissine 2008; Klinge 2005; Wekker 1976) and they never fail to refer to its volitional use, as shown in *I'll write tomorrow*. With respect to the volitional use, the previous studies can be mainly divided into two types of analyses: (i) it comes from a pragmatic implicature; (ii) it is semantically different from the future-tense or epistemic use, here referred to as the predictive use.

Both analyses have drawbacks, however. Type (i) analyses cannot explain why in the volitional use, the active version of the *will*-sentence is different in cognitive meaning from the passive version, as in (1) *John won't meet Mary vs. Mary won't be met by John*, while in the predictive use, the two versions have the same cognitive meaning, as in (2) *The new treatment will cure the disease vs. The disease will be cured by the new treatment*; and why volitional *will* can appear in certain conditional clauses, as in (3) *If he'll pay, I'll go with him*, but predictive *will* cannot, as in (4) **If John will come, Mary will come*. Type (ii) analyses do not agree on whether volitional *will* is dynamic or denotic and the category "root" is often used to accommodate the disagreement, which cannot explain Nuyts's (2005) observation that deontic and epistemic categories are attitudinal and make a natural class. Moreover, they usually treat volitional and predictive *will* separately, not having offered an explanation based on a unified model of tense and modality/mental attitudes motivated by a general theory of language use.

To solve the above problems, I will adopt my model (Wada 2017), a unified model of tense and modality/mental attitudes motivated by the three-tier model of language use (Hirose 2015). In this model, sentential utterances are semantically decomposed into the domains of addressee-oriented speaker's (AS) attitudes, situation-oriented speaker's (SS) attitudes, and propositional content; subjective modalities—epistemic or deontic—are speaker's attitudes while objective modalities are propositional elements. The situation construal tier, where the speaker as private self (the subject of construing/thinking) construes a situation, consists of SS-attitudes and propositional content; the situation report tier, where the speaker as public self (the subject of communicating) conveys the construed situation to the addressee, consists of situation construal and AS-attitudes. The concept of volition derives from the interaction between the propositional content and the context involved in the process of situation construal, being initially attributed to the private self. In situation report, cases which have been labeled "volitional uses" are divided into three. (a) When the private self is taken as identical with the relevant speaker as public self (typically realized as the first-person subject), the volition is an SS-attitude and the *will* involved expresses volition; this explains the low acceptability of *?I'll cut the grass but unfortunately I won't be able to* (Salkie 2010), where the volition as SS-attitude is contradictory to the negative prediction as the same speaker's attitude. (b) When the private self is identified as a different person from the relevant speaker, the volition is a propositional element and the *will* involved is predictive; the volition conveyed in (1) is a propositional element and its attribution to different subjects makes the two sentences "semantically" different. The fact that volitional *-(y)oo* as a Japanese mood marker is basically used only with a (implicit) first-person subject (Miyazaki et al. 2002) cross-linguistically justifies case (a) as an independent category. (c) In conditional clauses made only of the propositional content, the volition illustrates the semantic retention of an older use of *will*, as in (3); speaker's attitudes cannot be involved here and so the predictive use is not allowed, as in (4).

Selected References

- Haegeman, Liliane (1983) *The Semantics of Will in Present-Day British English: A Unified Account*. Brussel: Paleis der Academiën.
- Hirose, Yukio (2015). An Overview of the Three-Tier Model of Language Use. *English Linguistics* 32(1): 120-138.
- Kissine, Mikhail (2008) Why *Will* is not a Modal. *Natural Language Semantics* 16(2): 129-155.
- Miyazaki, Kazuto, et al. (2002) *Modarithi*. Tokyo: Kurosio.
- Nuyts, Jan (2005) The Modal Confusion: On Terminology and the Concepts behind it. In A. Klinge and H. Höeg (eds.), *Modality*. London & Oakville: Equinox.
- Wada, Naoaki (2017). Gengosiyoo no Sansoo Moderu to Zisee, Modarithi, Sintekitaido. In Y. Hirose, et al. (eds.), *Sansoo Moderu kara Mietekuru Gengo no Kinoo to Sikumi*. Tokyo: Kaitakusha.