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CONDITIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN PROVERBS

Abstract: This study starts from two fundamental research questions: in what ways conditionality is expressed in proverbs, and how a generic interpretation is actualized in conditional constructions within proverbs. The study has been conducted on a limited corpus of Portuguese and Croatian proverbs excerpted from several collections of proverbs and sayings, with primary interest in their semantic-syntactic structure rather than their lexical or possibly figurative meaning. We focus on the relationships among propositions in proverbs with a binary structure, guided by the criterion that they are connected by some type of conditional relation. Since both genericity and conditionality are not only linguistic, but also logical and conceptual universals, we expect that a comparative analysis, in this context, will reveal a certain degree of correspondence between Portuguese and Croatian proverbial texts. Our analysis of the corpus will focus on the following research questions: a) what types of conditional constructions are the proverbs based on; b) which verb forms are used in the proverbs to express different degrees of hypotheticality, c) what syntactic features characterize non-canonical conditional constructions in the proverbs. We believe that such type of analysis can contribute, as well, to a better understanding of the actualization of generic information at the linguistic level.

Keywords: proverb, conditionality, genericity, Portuguese, Croatian

1. Introduction

From both a paremiological and a phraseological perspective, proverbs are most often studied as a specific type of micro-texts that represent a lexicalized, “fixed” structure, mostly with figurative meaning, whereby this meaning and its interpretation are primarily explained through the prism of idiomaticity, whether of individual lexical components or of the overall phraseological meaning.¹ Such an approach is probably crucial for the interpretation of the proverbial text, but we are also interested in considering the proverb as a linguistic construction, a type (or several types) of syntactic structure, assuming that these grammatical constructions themselves have their own semantic and pragmatic interpretation, that is, their meaning.

We consider genericity to be the key distinctive feature of the proverb and the proverb to be a prototypical form of a generic statement. This paper is therefore conceived as a contribution to the study of the ways and mechanisms, or syntactic-semantic “strategies,” by which generic value is expressed in a proverbial context. We focus specifically on proverbs with a conditional construction, that is, on how conditionality is expressed in them as a concept and as a semantic relation between propositions. Conditional constructions in both Portuguese and Croatian have their own regularities, primarily regarding temporal, aspectual, and modal values.² However, we will also test our initial hypothesis that generic statements, and especially proverbial ones, in a certain way neutralizes the semantic-syntactic properties of some grammatical categories, both word classes and syntactic structures, as well as tense-aspect values.

In the first part of the article, we will examine the concepts of genericity and conditionality relevant to this research followed by a concise description of conditional subordinate clauses in Portuguese and Croatian. We will then attempt to classify the material from the corpus according to two criteria: the type of conditional construction (according to Peres et al. 1999) and the status of factuality. Finally, we will offer an interpretation of the proverbs from the corpus in which we identified some form of

¹ About the complexity surrounding proverb definition(s) see e.g. Villers (2024).

² Cf. Chapter 4.

implicit, non-canonical conditional relation between the propositions.

2. *On genericity*

In some recent works, including this one, we have examined the means that indicate a generic reading in proverbs. It is therefore necessary to provide a definition of the concept of genericity, at least in those aspects relevant to our research. In addition to general definitions of genericity, we also take into account interpretations of generic value in the context of the study of proverbial texts, which highlight specific features of the “genre” itself, as well as characteristics inherent to generic statements in general (Lanović 2022: 271–273).

Most authors who address the concept of genericity emphasize that it is a philosophical, logical, and conceptual universal that is also expressed at the level of language. In this sense, it is possible to find a link with conditionality, which can also be considered not only a linguistic construction but also a cognitive domain.

In the broadest sense, genericity can be defined as the expression of some regularity or generalized property, a “general” or “timeless” truth (Stanojević and Đurić 2016: 35). In language, it is expressed in two ways: as nominal genericity (“kind-referring NP” or “generic NP”) or as sentential genericity (“kind predication”). In the first type, the noun or noun phrase does not refer to an individual or a single entity but to a *kind* – an entity of the “genus” type. In the second type, generic sentences (“characterizing sentences”) do not express specific episodes or concrete facts, but rather a kind of generalized property or regularity that encompasses a set of episodes or individual facts (e.g., Krifka et al. 1995; Dobrovie-Sorin and Beyssade 2012: 191). Generic reference thus relates to an entire *class* of entities understood as a whole (Lyons 1977; Cruse 2006; Hurford et al. 2007). In such syntactic constructions, the generic interpretation arises from the nature of the relationship between the concept denoted by the noun phrase (the subject) and the property attributed to it by the predicate, as well as from the tense-aspect values of the predicate (Lopes 1992: 133).³

³ For our research, we consider particularly relevant the studies dealing with the interdependence, that is, the interaction, of the two aforementioned „carriers“ of genericity (Carlson 1982; Chierchia 1995; Krifka et al. 1995; Oliveira and Silva 2007 etc.).

Since generic sentences do not refer either to specific individuals or to particular spatio-temporally determined events, their truth value cannot be assessed with respect to specific spatio-temporal criteria (Lopes and Santos 1993: 1). Proverbs make statements about generic situations; in the absence of counter-information, generic information is verified by episodic examples of the described *type situations* (Kleiber 1989). Therefore, the most adequate paraphrase of generic statements in general might be *mostly, generally, usually, in principle*, although this is never lexically explicit in proverbs. For genericity as a feature of the proverb (in our view a fundamental one), the features of atemporality, ageographicality, and impersonality are relevant.

The generic differs from the specific, but it also differs from the universal – this distinction is relevant for proverbs at both the linguistic and conceptual levels. As in other types of generic sentences, proverbs express general truths *by default* (and not universal truths). A certain regularity is taken as true, despite awareness of the existence of exceptions, counterexamples, and contradictions (Schubert and Pelletier 1988, Krifka et al. 1995, Corpas Pastor 1996, Lanović 2022). It should also be noted that contradiction is a well-established feature of folk theories and stereotypes, which are often the source of the semantic motivation of proverbs.

In this and similar studies, we start from the hypothesis that genericity is the key feature of the proverb, and the proverb is the prototypical form of a generic statement.

3. *On conditionals*

Conditional reasoning, similarly to genericity, is understood as a cognitive domain studied by several scientific disciplines – logic, psychology, and philosophy, in addition to linguistics. “Conditional (*if-then*) constructions directly reflect the characteristically human ability to reason about alternative situations, to make inferences based on incomplete information, to imagine possible correlations between situations, and to understand how the world would change if certain correlations were different” (Ferguson 1986). The very concept, that is, the cognitive domain of conditionality, has been examined quite thoroughly within

cognitive linguistics. Dancygier and Sweetser (2005, 2014) view conditional sentences (especially “standard predictive” ones) as examples of constructions that create alternative mental spaces, that is, pairs of mental spaces that cannot coexist within the same segment of space and time. The cognitive framework is appropriate here because it does not treat grammar as independent of meaning; rather, every grammatical construction has a semantic and/or pragmatic interpretation, that is, every syntactic construction can in itself carry meaning.⁴ Kostić (2011: 30–31) cites Dancygier (1998), who argues that the meaning of conditional sentences is determined by a series of *form-meaning* correlations specific to this construction. For example, the verb forms in these sentences signal some important aspects of interpretation (such as the type of reasoning or the knowledge of the speaker and interlocutor that serves as the starting point for reasoning), but in ways specific only to conditional sentences, affecting the interpretation of the entire construction rather than of each one of the clauses. We will also address verb forms in conditional constructions, but in light of the hypothesis that in a proverbial context, due to generic interpretation, their values are in a certain way neutralized. In our analysis, we understand conditionality at both the linguistic and conceptual levels, since most proverbs in our corpus imply some kind of implicit (rather than canonical) conditional relation between propositions, that is, the presence of other meanings or subordinate relations: temporal, causal, concessive, and others. What we consider a conditional construction does not necessarily structurally correspond to a subordinate conditional clause.

The structure of a prototypical conditional construction is “if *p*, (then) *q*” (*q*, if *p*). In a conditional subordinate clause (the protasis or antecedent) the condition for the realization of the content of the main clause (the apodosis or consequent) is expressed. The conjunction *if* was traditionally considered in logical-philosophical tradition and in formal semantics as an oper-

⁴ „Construction Grammar (Fillmore et al. 1988, Fillmore and Kay 1991, Goldberg 1995, 2006, Croft 2001) and Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987, 1990, 1991) in particular specifically hold that linguistic structure consist of constructions, which are *form-meaning mappings* at every level of the grammar.“ (Dancygier and Sweetser 2014: 129).

ator of material implication ($\rightarrow$), and this relation was regarded as key for interpreting conditional sentences.⁵ This implied that the truth value of the complex proposition was determined by the truth values of the main and subordinate propositions, that is, the proposition is false only if the antecedent is true and the consequent false. However, it became clear that such an interpretation does not reflect how speakers intuitively perceive and understand conditional constructions, and research developed further. The idea of material implication has been overcome, and today it is generally accepted that the truth value of a conditional construction does not depend on the truth values of the antecedent and consequent.

A significant contribution to the evolution of conditional analysis was made by Ramsey (1929), who introduced an epistemic perspective and suggested that truth value necessarily depends on the speaker's system of knowledge and beliefs, that is, on the context of available information, and that there is a modal relation between antecedent and consequent. Complementary to this approach, in terms of conditional constructions, was the semantics of possible worlds and its relation to modality (e.g. Declerck and Reed 2001). Based on such a perspective, and on the speaker's stance towards the expressed situation, is the classification of conditional sentences according to the status of factuality – into factual, hypothetical, and counterfactual – which is in principle accepted by contemporary descriptive grammars, both Portuguese and Croatian.

Within the corpus of proverbs collected for the purposes of this research, we will attempt to carry out two types of classification: according to the typology of conditional constructions by Peres et al. (1999), which in our view significantly contributed to the interpretation of conditional constructions in general, especially in Portuguese, and according to the status of factuality (e.g. Mateus et al. 2003, Raposo et al. 2013). These classifications will serve both for the analysis of the syntactic-semantic structure of proverbs in our corpus and for illustrating two possible types of typology of conditional constructions in general.

⁵ Material implication: p is a sufficient condition for q , and q is a necessary condition for p .

4. Conditional clauses in Portuguese and Croatian

In this chapter, we will provide a concise description of the structure of conditional subordinate clauses in Portuguese and Croatian.⁶ A more detailed discussion will be provided in the next chapters, focusing on the analysis of proverbs from our corpus.

As noted in the previous chapter, a conditional complex sentence, according to its syntactic structure, consists of two semantically interdependent clauses, the so-called protasis or antecedent and the so-called apodosis or consequent. The protasis, i.e. the subordinate clause, contains the condition, while the apodosis, i.e. the main clause, expresses an action or content that is realized “conditionally,” that is, if the action or content of the protasis, i.e. the subordinate clause, is realized. The clauses are therefore connected by one of the formulas “[if *p*, (then) *q*]” or “[*q*, if *p*],” and the resulting complex sentence expresses that whenever proposition *p* is true, proposition *q* is also true (Lobo 2013: 2020, Peres et al. 1999, Lanović and Sarić 2024).

The status of factuality (or, according to some authors, “degree of hypotheticality”)⁷ is the fundamental criterion for the typology of conditional sentences. Although conditional sentences always involve a hypothetical situation, the probability of realization of the condition, and thus of what is conditioned, is not always the same. Therefore, conditional constructions are traditionally divided into real (factual), hypothetical (possible, potential), and unreal (counterfactual). This distinction is relevant because it is expressed through variation in verb forms (tense and mood), which are constructionally linked to a particular type of conditional interpretation.

In Portuguese, the prototypical conditional subordinate clause is introduced by the conjunction *se* ‘if’, the most frequent conditional conjunction, while the main clause begins with *então* ‘then’, which may be implicit or omitted. Other common conditional conjunctions include *caso* ‘if, in case’, *desde que*, *conquanto/contanto que*, *uma vez que* ‘provided that, as long as,

⁶ The examples of conditional sentences cited for illustration in this chapter are taken from Lanović and Sarić (2024), Silić and Pranjković (2005) and Belaj and Tanacković Faletar (2020).

⁷ E.g. Belaj and Tanacković Faletar (2020: 259–274).

given that, since’, *se porventura* ‘if by chance’, *salvo se, sem que, a não ser que* ‘unless, except if’ (in so-called exceptive-conditional clauses),⁸ all of which require the use of the subjunctive in the subordinate clause, while imposing certain formal restrictions regarding the choice of subjunctive tenses. The conjunction *no caso de* ‘in case of’ is also frequent, but occurs exclusively with the infinitive.

In Portuguese, the alternation between the indicative and subjunctive mood tends to be associated with the epistemic opposition “real”/“unreal” (*realis/irrealis*).⁹ On the other hand, the subjunctive in Portuguese is, in any case, (relatively) syntactically determined; it is the mood of the subordinate clause, determined by the nature and meaning of the verb or other predicate in the main clause, and in adverbial subordinate clauses also by the conjunction (Lanović and Sarić 2024). Although the indicative also appears in conditional sentences, it may be said that among adverbial subordinate clauses, the use of the subjunctive in them is the most systematic. However, when this type of semantic-syntactic construction appears in the context of a specific type of generic statement, such as proverbial discourse, it requires a particular approach.

In Croatian, the most common conditional conjunctions are *ako*, *ukoliko*, and *li* ‘if, provided that, insofar as’, which introduce real (factual) or hypothetical (potential) conditional sentences.¹⁰ The conjunction *kad(a)* ‘if’, which indicates a higher

⁸ Cf. Belaj and Tanacković Faletar (2020: 271–274).

⁹ „In fact, this is not a matter of opposition between the “real” in the sense of the “true” and the “unreal” in the sense of the “false,” but rather of a distinction between actualized and non-actualized predication, or possibly between real and non-real predication. [...] Specifically, real predications (*realis*) are situated either in the past or in the present—something that can be claimed to be happening or to have already happened—whereas non-real predications (*irrealis*) are situated in the future: everything future is in fact hypothetical, and what is relevant, with regard to the use of verbal mood, is the speaker’s perception or assessment of the situation in terms of the degree of certainty that something will indeed happen or will not happen.” (Lanović and Sarić 2024 /in press; translation ours/).

¹⁰ Belaj and Tanacković Faletar (2020: 260–261) also list the particle *neka*, functioning as a conjunction, which is the rarest and most marked option; in that case, the predicate can only be in the present tense of the third person (e.g. *Neka ovi ponovno pobijede ne izborima, jao nama!* ‘If they win the elections again, woe to us!’).

degree of uncertainty, appears in hypothetical or unreal (counterfactual) conditional sentences. The hypothetical conjunction *da* 'if' introduces exclusively unreal conditional sentences. Compound conjunctions *osim ako*, *osim kad(a)*, *osim ukoliko*, *izuzev kad* 'unless, except if, except when' occur only in exceptive-conditional clauses, which express the exclusion of the realization of the content of the main clause provided that the content of the conditional clause is realized.

Real (factual) conditional sentences express a realizable condition whose realization actually leads to the realization of the action contained in the main clause. Most of these sentences are equivalent to temporal subordinate constructions with *quando*, *kad(a)* 'when', especially those with generic interpretation. In Portuguese, the indicative typically appears in real conditionals. In Croatian, in protases introduced by the conjunctions *ako* and *ukoliko* there are no morphosyntactic restrictions regarding the use of verb tenses, whereas the conjunction *li* occurs only with the present tense and future II.

- (1) *Se o Rui estava doente, a mãe telefonava-lhe todos os dias.* 'If Rui was ill, his mother called him every day.'
- (2) *Se a água atinge a temperatura de 100 graus, começa a ferver.* 'If water reaches a temperature of 100 degrees, it starts to boil.'
- (3) *Ako su gosti došli, putovali su i oni s njima.* 'If the guests came, they also travelled with them.'
- (4) *Dođu li gosti, vidjet ćete i sami.* 'If the guests come, you will see for yourself.'

Among real conditionals are also "pseudo-conditionals" – in fact causal structures marked by factivity. Real, factual situations from the protasis do not condition the realization of the content of the apodosis:

- (5) *Se a Maria está em casa, então vamos visitá-la.* 'If Maria is at home, then let's visit her.'
- (6) *Ako su svi parni brojevi djeljivi s dva, onda je djeljiv i broj osam.*

- (7) *'If all even numbers are divisible by two, then the number eight is divisible by two as well.'*

Among “false conditionals”, one may also include so-called “speech-act” conditionals:¹¹

- (8) *Se bem me lembro, o João não gosta de ervilhas. 'If I remember correctly, João doesn't like peas.'*
 (9) *Ako se ne varam, ti si im to obećao. 'If I am not mistaken, you promised it to them.'*

Hypothetical (possible, potential) conditional sentences express in the antecedent an action that is possibly or eventually realizable (with varying degrees of probability), and if it is realized, the propositional content of the consequent will also be realized:

- (10) *Se o Rui estiver doente, a mãe vai telefonar-lhe todos os dias. 'If Rui is ill, his mother will call him every day.'*
 (11) *Se o Rui estivesse doente, a mãe telefonar-lhe-ia todos os dias. 'If Rui were ill, his mother would call him every day.'*

In the latter example, the degree of hypotheticality is higher, that is, the probability of realization of the action is lower, but remains possible – it will depend on context, the combination of verb tenses, complements, and sometimes pragmatic factors. In Portuguese, in hypothetical conditionals, the subordinate clause contains the subjunctive (future or imperfect), while the main clause contains a verb in the indicative (present, future and periphrastic future forms, conditional, or imperative).

In Croatian, there are also more restrictions regarding the use of verb tenses. In the protasis, the conditional mood is obligatory. In the apodosis, with the conjunctions *ako* and *ukoliko*, one may use the conditional, the relative present (most often

¹¹ Although the typical mode for the “false conditionals” is indicative, the subjunctive may also occur; e.g. *Se quiseres lanchar, há leite e bolachas* ‘If you want a snack, there is milk and biscuits’. According to Santos (2003: 189) the only distinction is stylistical.

imperfective) with future meaning, and future I. If the protasis is introduced by the more hypothetical conjunction *kad(a)*, the conditional is obligatory in the apodosis as well.

- (12) *Ako bismo imali vremena, došli bismo.* 'If we had time, we would come.'
- (13) *Ukoliko bih ranije završio s poslom, putovat ću i ja s vama.* 'If I finish work earlier, I will travel with you as well.'
- (14) *Kad bih ranije završio s poslom, putovao bih i ja s vama.* 'If I finished work earlier, I would travel with you as well.'

Unreal (counterfactual) conditional sentences are those in which the condition contained in the subordinate clause is unrealized or unrealizable, and consequently the action or state contained in the main clause is also unrealized or unrealizable. In Portuguese, the verb of the unreal conditional clause is typically in the imperfect or pluperfect subjunctive, and the main clause in the imperfect indicative or conditional:

- (15) *Se o Rui tivesse estado doente, a mãe ter-lhe-ia telefonado todos os dias.* 'If Rui had been ill, his mother would have called him every day.'
- (16) *Se o Sol girasse à volta da Terra, não haveria sistema solar.* 'If the Sun revolved around the Earth, there would be no solar system.'

In Croatian, in unreal conditional protases the relative present is used when referring to an unrealizable condition, whereas with an unrealized condition one of the verb forms expressing past time is used (most commonly the perfect). In the apodosis, the conditional is obligatory.

- (17) *Da postoje vukodlaci, svijet bi izgledao drukčije.* 'If werewolves existed, the world would look different.'
- (18) *Da si radio, imao bi sada od čega živjeti.* 'If you had worked, you would now have something to live on.'

As already noted, our understanding of conditional construction in this paper will not necessarily structurally coincide with the prototypical structure of the conditional complex subordinate sentence, since we understand conditionality not only as a syntactic-semantic relation, but above all as a conceptual one.

5. *Corpus*

The corpus for this paper consists of a total of 300 proverbs with binary structure – 136 Portuguese and 164 Croatian – excerpted from several collections of proverbs and sayings, based on the criterion of some type of conditional relation between propositions. The assumption is that this type of relation between antecedent and consequent is the most frequent in proverbs, although it is not always a prototypical conditional structure.

The existence of some form of conditional relation and binary structure were the relevant features for including a proverb in the corpus, regardless of its literal or figurative meaning. In addition to proverbs with canonical, prototypical conditional structure, the corpus also includes those in which propositions are connected by some type of implicit conditional relation, and other meanings are often present in them, most frequently causal, concessive, and temporal.

Using the material from the corpus, we will carry out a classification by subjecting canonical conditional constructions to two possible typologies – with regard to the type of conditional constructions according to Peres et al. (1999) and with regard to the status of factuality. After that, we will attempt to offer a typology of non-canonical conditional constructions identified in the corpus.

The analysis and presentation of results will primarily be qualitative, since, given the relative limitation of the corpus, it would be inappropriate to present specific quantitative estimates. For the purposes of this paper, several randomly selected examples will be used to illustrate each of the categories.

6. *Classification according to the general typology of conditional constructions in Portuguese (Peres et al. 1999)*

The hypothesis of the general typology of conditional constructions in Portuguese by Peres et al. (1999) will first be presented in tabular form and then explained and illustrated (with examples provided by the authors themselves) for each type of construction.¹²

Table 1. The hypothesis of the general typology of conditional constructions in Portuguese (Peres et al. 1999: 631)

<i>Construções condicionais</i> 'Conditional constructions'				
monocondicionais 'monoconditionals'			bicondicionais 'biconditionals'	
com marcação de condição suficiente (ou de condição suficiente) 'sufficient condition'		com marcação da condição necessária (ou de condição necessária) 'necessary condition'	diretas 'direct'	indiretas 'indirect'
condição suficiente fechada 'closed sufficient condition'	condição suficiente aberta (incondicionais) 'open sufficient condition (unconditionals)'			

Monoconditional constructions ($p \rightarrow q$) indicate a straightforward relation of implication; the antecedent is a sufficient condition for the consequent. The authors classify them into constructions with a sufficient and a necessary condition, whereby the sufficient condition may be "closed" or "open" (the "unconditional" constructions).

A "closed" condition implies that the antecedent contains a single situation presented as a sufficient condition for the veri-

¹² The typology of Peres et al. (1999: 627–653) is mostly adopted by Lobo (2013: 1981–2060). Some other authors who dealt in more detail with conditional structures in Portuguese: Ferreira (1996); Marques (2001, 2010, 2013); Oliveira (1990, 1991, 2008 etc.); Santos (1992, 1993, 2004).

fication of the consequent. In Portuguese, these are typically introduced by the operator *se* ‘if’, or *caso, no caso de, a: O Paulo vem se chover*. ‘Paulo will come if it rains.’

An “open” sufficient condition (inconditionals) implies “conditional-concessive” constructions. The situation contained in the consequent will occur in any case, regardless of the verification of the set of relevant options contained in the antecedent (at least one of these situations could prevent the realization of the consequent):¹³

- (19) *Paulo vem mesmo que chova*. ‘O Paulo will come even if it rains.’
- (20) *O Paulo vem, quer chova quer não*. ‘Paulo will come whether it rains or not.’
- (21) *O Paulo vem, aconteça o que acontecer*. ‘Paulo will come no matter what happens.’
- (22) *O Paulo vem, por muito que lhe custe*. ‘Paulo will come no matter how difficult it is for him.’

In monoconditional constructions with a necessary condition, the subordinate conditional clause in the above formula would be the proposition *q*, while the main clause expresses the sufficient condition *p*. These constructions are introduced in Portuguese by exclusive operators *só se, apenas se, somente se* ‘only if’ and others:

- (23) *Paulo só vem se estiver bom tempo*. ‘Paulo will come only if the weather is good.’
- (24) *Só te curas se deixares de fumar*. ‘You will recover only if you stop smoking.’

In biconditional constructions ($p \leftrightarrow q$), the antecedent is both a sufficient and a necessary condition for the consequent, which includes a relation of mutual implication between the antecedent and the consequent. Operators introducing “direct” bicondition-

¹³ The authors also distinguish subtypes of these „unconditional“ constructions: alternative, universal and selective inconditionals (Peres et al. 1999: 633–635).

als are *se e só se, mas só/apenas se, desde/contanto que* ‘if and only if’, ‘provided that’:

- (25) *Saio, mas só se estiver bom tempo. ‘I’m going out, but only if the weather is good.’*
 (26) *Venho, desde que esteja bom tempo. ‘I’ll come, provided that the weather is good.’*

Operators of “indirect” biconditional subordination are *excepto se, salvo se, a menos que, a não ser que* ‘except if, unless’ and others:

- (27) *Venho, salvo se não estiver bom tempo. ‘I’ll come unless the weather is bad.’*
 (28) *Saio, a não ser que esteja a chover. ‘I’m going out unless it is raining.’*

We attempted to apply this classification on the proverbs from our corpus, taking into account “canonical” conditional constructions.¹⁴ The most represented type in the corpus, in both languages, are monoconditionals with a “closed” sufficient condition:¹⁵

- (29) *Se o cego guia o cego, correm ambos o risco de cair. (If the blind leads the blind, both run the risk of falling.)*
 (30) *Se queres aprender a rezar, entra no mar. (If you want to learn to pray, go into the sea.)*
 (31) *Se as andorinhas partirem em Outubro, seca tudo. (If the swallows leave in October, there will be drought.)*

¹⁴ Peres et al. (1999: 627–653) also include in this category the “conditional-concessive” sentences, as well as some other structures, such as *quer... quer*, which they consider an “alternative” type of conditional-concessive sentence (cf. Lobo 2013: 2018); some authors treat these structures as coordinate.

¹⁵ Peres et al. (1999) include in this class constructions that, according to the other criterion we used, can be classified as factual (*Se um indivíduo é juiz, tem uma licenciatura em Direito* ‘If an individual is a judge, he has a law degree.’), hypothetical (*Se a estrada for arranjada, haverá menos acidentes. ‘If the road is repaired, there will be fewer accidents.’*) and counterfactual (*Tivesse ele dito a verdade, tudo teria ficado resolvido* ‘If he had told the truth, everything would have been resolved’). Cf. Lopes (2009: 149–169).

- (32) *Se a inveja fosse coxa muita gente andava de muletas.*
(If envy were lame, many people would walk on crutches.)
- (33) *Ako dažd ne daždi, zemlja ne plodi.* (If it doesn't rain,
the land will not yield.)
- (34) *Ako gora ne će k tebi, a ti k njoj.* (If the mountain won't
come to you, you go to the mountain.)
- (35) *Ako hoćeš da te zlo posluže, plati naprijeda.* (If you
want to be poorly served, pay in advance.)
- (36) *Da je steći ko što je reći, svi bi bogati bili.* (If gaining
were as easy as speaking, everyone would be rich.)

The remaining proverbs in the corpus are identified as monoconditional constructions with an “open” sufficient condition, that is, unconditional constructions.¹⁶

- (37) *Ainda que o galo não cante, a manhã sempre rompe.*
(Even if the rooster does not crow, morning always breaks.)
- (38) *Por velho que seja o barco, sempre passa o vau.* (No
matter how old the boat is, it will always pass the ford.)
- (39) *Quer faça frio ou calor não largues o cobertor.* (Whether
it's cold or hot, do not let go of the blanket.)
- (40) *Magarac ostaje magarac, makar imao i zlatan pokrovac.*
(A donkey remains a donkey, even if it has a golden cover.)
- (41) *I ko bježi, od smrti nije utekao.* (Even he who flees has
not escaped death.)
- (42) *Ili malahna, ili velika nevjesta, hoće joj se svatovi.*
(Whether the bride is small or big, she will want to marry.)

Examples (37), (40), and (41) represent “selective” unconditional constructions, in which the proposition from the protasis is presented as contrary to the realization of the situation in the apodosis (*even-if* conditionals in English); examples (39) and

¹⁶ Belaj and Tanacković Faletar call them unconditional-concessive clauses (*bezuovjetnodopusne klauze*) (2020: 286).

(42) are “alternative” unconditional constructions, where the protasis expresses a set of options through coordinated propositions, while example (38) is a “universal” unconditional construction, implying universal quantification over situations.

Other types, such as monoconditionals with a necessary condition and biconditionals, were not registered in the sources used.

7. *Classification according to the status of factuality*

We classified the proverbs in the corpus according to the criterion of factuality status,¹⁷ taking into account only prototypical, “canonical” conditional constructions. We identified all three types; the most common, in both Portuguese and Croatian, are directive hypothetical conditionals.¹⁸ It should be noted that, in terms of structural grammatical pattern, they may also be real (factual), but authors generally classify them as hypothetical and they mostly fit that type.

Here are some examples of proverbs from the corpus, classified as real (factual) conditional constructions:

- (43) *Se em terra entra a gaivota é porque o mar a enxota.*
(If the seagull lands on the shore, it is because the sea drives it out.)
- (44) *Se as armas falam, as leis se calam.* (If weapons speak, the laws are silent.)
- (45) *Se mais temos, mais apeteçemos.* (The more we have, the more we desire.)
- (46) *Se Deus o marcou, alguma coisa nele notou.* (If God marked him, he noticed something in him.)
- (47) *Ako što oko ne vidi, srce ne žudi.* (What the eye does not see, the heart does not crave.)
- (48) *Riječi su dobre, ako djela slijede.* (Words are good if deeds follow.)
- (49) *I crv se svija ako ga zgaziš.* (Even the worm writhes if you crush it.)

¹⁷ Cf. Chapter 4.

¹⁸ „Directive“ in the sense of instructions or warnings in the proverbial context – how should or should not one behave to achieve some goal or to avoid some negative circumstances.

- (50) *Ako gaće ne skvasi, ribe ne uhiti. (If you don't wet your pants, you won't catch any fish.)*

The prototypical verb tense of real conditionals, in both Portuguese and Croatian, is the present (with certain aspectual differences), in both the protasis and apodosis. Many authors refer to the so-called “timeless” present, an unmarked verb tense expressing relative present (Mikić and Škara 1992; Lopes 1992; Barić et al. 1995; Katičić 2002; Belaj and Tanacković Faletar 2020 and others). They note that this tense expresses a meaning that, in addition to “timeless”, is also called “gnomic,” “habitual-generic,” or explicitly “proverbial.” According to Mikić and Škara, “proverbs show a tendency to express timelessness, thus attempting to abstract from the specifications of tense” (1992: XI; *translation ours*). We will refer again to the relativity of the category of tense in the proverbial context, but through the “timeless” present atemporality is certainly expressed, as one of the fundamental features of the generic statement.

It is worth highlighting example (46), in which the past tense appears in both the protasis and apodosis, namely the aorist indicative (*pretérito perfeito simples*). Past tenses are atypical for proverbs, but they do occur (we have recorded additional examples in our corpus among non-canonical conditional constructions). Their occurrence in generic statements is thought to result from “inductive generalization,” derived from knowledge of the regular repetition, in the past, of certain episodic situations, which thereby become typical (whenever a situation of type A is verified, a situation of type B is also verified) (Lopes 1992). In this way, the past tense confers a higher degree of factuality, credibility, and persuasiveness to such statements.

Among the hypothetical (potential) constructions in our corpus, as can be seen from the following examples, the majority are directive conditional constructions:

- (51) *Se não há vento, rema. (If there is no wind, row.)*
 (52) *Se podes olhar, vê; se podes ver, aprecia. (If you can look, see; if you can see, appreciate.)*
 (53) *Se queres ter boa fama, não te encontre o sol na cama. (If you want a good reputation, don't let the sun find you in bed.)*

- (54) *Se ouvires roncar o mar, deixa os outros embarcar.* (If you hear the sea snore, let others board.)
- (55) *Se bebes demais, tropeças e caís.* (If you drink too much, you stumble and fall.)
- (56) *Ako hoć' bit' dobro služen, sam se služi.* (If you want to be well served, serve yourself.)
- (57) *Ako je tko lud, ne budi mu drug.* (If someone is foolish, do not be his friend.)
- (58) *Ako misliš kćerku dobit, klanjaj se majki.* (If you want to win a daughter, bow to her mother.)
- (59) *Ako budeš svudar, ne ć' bit' nigdje.* (If you are a wanderer, you will be nowhere.)

Directive or normative proverbs probably constitute the bulk of the proverbial corpus in general, regardless of language. There is certainly a close connection between proverbs and normative statements, as every “advice,” “warning,” or “caution” is in fact based on conditional reasoning, whether this is explicitly stated or not (as seen in the various structural patterns of directive proverbs, which are often elliptical). Their pragmatic purpose is didactic or instructive, and their interpretation is close to the deontic. They serve as “instructions” for certain behavior, which could be paraphrased as statements with the modal verb *dever* ‘have to, must’, with a deontic interpretation, in the apodosis. The modal verbs *dever* and *haver-de*, as well as *querer*, *poder* ‘to want, can’ (in Croatian *htjeti*, *moći*), are often explicit, or the imperative is used. Simply by appearing in the proverbial context, it is understood (*by default*) that the warning comes from the “voice of collective authority.” This type of proverb is also characterized by atemporality, as the conditional statement does not refer to a specific situation, but to a “class” of situations, making the “warning” permanently valid – if the conditions or assumptions for its applicability are met.¹⁹

Verb forms – both tenses and moods – vary in both Portuguese and Croatian. In examples (51-55), in Portuguese we record the present or subjunctive future in the protasis (hypotheticality, “futurity”) and the present indicative, imperative,

¹⁹ Cf. Lopes (1992: 246–249).

or present subjunctive in the apodosis. In Croatian (56-59), the protasis appears in the present or future (I or II), and the apodosis in the imperative, future, or present. In the proverbial context, however, tenses are not absolute, but become relative; syntactic-semantic rules seem to be neutralized, and all structures may receive a generic interpretation.

There are also unreal (counterfactual) conditional constructions in our corpus; the following are some illustrative examples:

- (60) *Se Deus quisesse que o homem voasse, tinha-lhe feito asas. (If God wanted man to fly, he would have made him wings.)*
- (61) *Se não houvesse ocasião, não haveria ladrão. (If there were no opportunity, there would be no thief.)*
- (62) *Se o velho pudesse e o moço soubesse, não havia nada que se não fizesse. (If the old man could and the young man knew, there would be nothing left undone.)*
- (63) *Se Deus ouvisse os cães, choviam ossos. (If God listened to the dogs, it would rain bones.)*
- (64) *Kad bi mladi znali, stari mogli, lijeni htjeli, sve bi dobro bilo. (If the young knew, the old could, and the lazy wanted, everything would be fine.)*
- (65) *Da budala zna da je budala, dvije bi pameti imao. (If a fool knew he was a fool, he would have twice the wisdom.)*
- (66) *Da je tkati kao zjati, svaki bi tkao, a ne bi zjao. (If weaving were like yawning, everyone would weave, and none would yawn.)*
- (67) *Kad bi čoeK znao, đe će vrat slomiti, nigda ne bi onamo išao. (If a man knew where he would break his neck, he would never go there.)*

Among proverbs with unreal conditional constructions in our corpus, those in which the protasis contains an unrealizable condition (examples 60-67), i.e., a proposition corresponding to essentially impossible situations, predominate. In such cases, the relation between propositions, though logically valid, does not align with reality, or the “impossible” condition results in an absurd consequent. In Portuguese, the verb of the subordinate

clause typically appears in the imperfect or pluperfect subjunctive (a mood for *irrealis* predication), while the verb of the main clause appears in the conditional (or in the imperfect indicative, which replaces it). In Croatian, the protasis contains the conditional, (relative) present, or infinitive with the conjunction *da* (“da-clause”), while in the apodosis there is exclusively the conditional.

A specific feature of the proverbial context is that the status of factuality, or the degree of hypotheticality, is, at least in some respects, not actually relevant for interpretation, which is always generic.

8. *Non-canonical conditional constructions*

A large proportion of our corpus consists of structurally diverse constructions that imply some form of *implicit* conditional relation between propositions. Structurally, these include other types of subordinate clauses (relative, temporal, locative) which, however, are conditional in sense and meaning. In classification, we relied primarily on Lopes (1992), but our main criterion was to interpret and illustrate with representative examples all the types of constructions recorded in our corpus.

8.1. *Constructions with an indefinite-relative pronoun in the role of subject*²⁰

Such constructions, with pronouns *quem*, *tko* ‘who(ever)’ (along with some additional forms in Croatian), are the most common among the non-canonical constructions in our corpus. The pronoun denotes an indefinite “individual,” in fact a *kind* (“kind-referring NP”), and may be interpreted as a universal quantifier over entities (human beings). Belaj and Tanacković Faletar point to the high degree of hypotheticality and schematicity of the relativizer *tko*, which precisely because it does not denote strictly directed reference appears in phraseologized and proverbial

²⁰ In the grammatical tradition, they have been classified and named differently; Portuguese authors have traditionally most often grouped them among nominal subordinate clauses, whereas today they are treated as relative clauses without an antecedent, or “free” relative clauses (*relativas sem antecedente*, *relativas livres*). For Belaj and Tanacković Faletar (2020), they are correlative clauses of the substitution type.

constructions of general meaning (2020: 366–367). These can be paraphrased with *se / quando / sempre que; ako / kada / kad god / svaki put kada* ‘if, whenever, every time that’. The high degree of factuality of such constructions derives from empirical generalization. The following are several illustrative examples from our corpus:

- (68) *Quem à boa árvore se chega, boa sombra o cobre.*
(Whoever approaches a good tree is covered by good shade.)
- (69) *Quem anda à chuva, molha-se.* (Whoever walks in the rain gets wet.)
- (70) *Quem quiser viver em paz, tem de ser mudo, cego e surdo.* (Whoever wants to live in peace must be mute, blind, and deaf.)
- (71) *Quem a dois amos servir a alguém há de mentir.* (Who serves two masters must lie to someone.)
- (72) *Quem com cães se deita com pulgas se levanta.* (Who lies down with dogs gets up with fleas.)
- (73) *Quem no mar não entrar não se pode afogar.* (Who does not enter the sea cannot drown.)
- (74) *Tko želi rat bio mu u kući.* (Whoever wants war, let it be in his house.)
- (75) *Tko u boj ne ide, u boju ne umire.* (Who does not go to battle does not die in the battle.)
- (76) *Tko hoće časno, ne može lasno.* (Whoever wants to do something honourably cannot do it easily.)
- (77) *Tko leži sa psom, pun je buha.* (Who lies with the dog gets full of fleas.)
- (78) *Tko ljeti planduje, zimi gladuje.* (Who idles in summer starves in winter.)
- (79) *Tko vjetar sije, buru će žeti.* (Who sows the wind will reap the storm.)

In Croatian, conditional constructions with *tko* ‘who(ever)’ use the present indicative in both the protasis and apodosis (with both perfective and imperfective aspect, as relative and timeless), and in a small number of examples we record future I or the imperative in the apodosis. In Portuguese, present, aorist, and

future subjunctive forms appear in the protasis, depending on structurally different levels of factuality; the same verb tenses are found in the apodosis. In the Portuguese subcorpus, past verb tenses (indicative aorist, *pretérito perfeito do indicativo*) are thus recorded, especially in the protasis, as in examples (80-82). In Croatian, we recorded only one example of such a construction with a past tense (83):

- (80) *Quem não se aventurou, não perdeu nem ganhou.* (Who did not venture, neither lost nor gained.)
- (81) *Nunca milho semeou quem passarinho receou.* (No one ever sowed corn who feared the little bird.)
- (82) *Quem nasceu para burro, nunca chega a cavalo.* (Who was born a donkey will never arrive as a horse.)
- (83) *Kome nije bilo patiti, onaj ne može ni zapaziti.* (Who has not suffered cannot perceive.)

In Croatian, these constructions also include the relativizer *koji* 'that, which', sometimes with an explicit antecedent and sometimes without it (84-87):

- (84) *Koja jabuka docne sazrije, dugo stoji.* (The apple that ripens late lasts long.)
- (85) *Koja kokoš mnogo kakoće, malo jaja nosi.* (The hen that cackles much lays few eggs.)
- (86) *U kojega je miša samo jedna rupa, brzo glavu izgubi.* (The mouse with only one hole quickly loses his head.)
- (87) *Koju ruku ne možeš posjeći, valja je poljubiti.* (The hand you cannot cut off, you should kiss.)

8.2. Constructions *quando p, q* / *kad(a)* 'when(ever)' *p, q*

Although these constructions have the structure of temporal clauses, the conjunction *quando* / *kada* 'when(ever)' is atemporal and in fact has conditional value – it can be paraphrased with *se* / *ako* 'if', or with *sempre que* / *kad god*, *svaki put kad* 'when-ever, every time that'. In generic conditionals, it reflects a set of cases in which the consequent is true and therefore functions as a universal quantifier over situations. Generic interpretation is

further supported by its iterative value, establishing a kind of fixed correlation between type situations:

- (88) *Quando em casa não está o gato, folga o rato.* (When the cat is away, the mouse plays.)
- (89) *Quando a esmola é grande, o santo desconfia.* (When the alms are great, the saint becomes suspicious.)
- (90) *Quando o mar está calmo, qualquer um pode ir ao leme.* (When the sea is calm, anyone can go to the helm.)
- (91) *Quando há vento é que se iça a vela.* (It is when there is wind that the sail is hoisted.)
- (92) *Kad je zdravlja, onda je svega.* (Where there is health, there is everything.)
- (93) *Budala kad šuti, drže da je pametan.* (When a fool is silent, they think he is wise.)
- (94) *Kad lisica prodikuje, pazi na kokoši.* (When the fox preaches, beware of the chickens.)
- (95) *Kad susjedu kuća gori, ti na svoju vodu nosi.* (When the neighbor's house is on fire, carry water to your own.)

In accordance with the iterative value of the temporal conjunction, in examples (90-93) the verb tense is present indicative – “timeless,” that is, relative. In examples of directive proverbs (94, 95), the apodosis contains the imperative.

8.3. Constructions *onde p, q* / *gdje* ‘where(ever) *p, q*

Like *quando* / *kada*, *onde* / *gdje* in generic conditional constructions, most often in proverbs, loses its original grammatical meaning as a relative adverb of place, that is, a spatial localization, becoming a universal quantifier over states or events. It behaves in fact identically to *quando* / *kada*, also establishing a fixed correlation between type situations, with a high degree of factuality. This is evident in examples from the corpus (96-101), all of which have the (relative, proverbial) present tense:

- (96) *Onde há fumo, há fogo.* (Where there is smoke, there is fire.)
- (97) *Onde muitos mandam ninguém obedece.* (Where many give orders, no one obeys.)

- (98) *Onde olhos não vêem, coração não sente.* (Where the eyes do not see, the heart does not feel.)
- (99) *Gdje je mnogo babica, kilava su djeca.* (Where there are many midwives, the children are weak.)
- (100) *Gdje je dim, tu je i vatra.* (Where there is smoke, there is fire.)
- (101) *Gdje je mnogo riječi, malo je koristi.* (Where there are many words, there is little use.)

8.4. Conditional-concessive constructions

In interpreting this type of construction, neither Portuguese nor Croatian authors are unanimous, but most distinguish them from so-called causal-concessive constructions (e.g. Silić and Pranjković 2005: 349–351; Belaj and Tanacković Faletar 2020: 274–286). Portuguese authors (e.g., Lobo 2013: 2015–2020) generally divide them first into factual and non-factual, and then among non-factual distinguish conditional-concessive hypothetical (*condicional-concessiva hipotética*) from conditional-concessive counterfactual sentences (*condicional-concessiva contrafactual*).²¹ The consequent is linked to a set of potential, alternative conditions, and the content of the consequent is always true, whichever of those conditions is fulfilled. Even if the subordinate clause describes a situation functioning as a potential obstacle to the realization of the situation described in the main clause, contrary to expectations this does not prevent realization of the main clause proposition.²² Peres et al. (1999) classify them among constructions “with open sufficient condition” or “unconditional” (see Chapter 6).²³ The following are several examples from the database illustrating this type of conditional:

²¹ Cf. Lanović and Sarić (2024; *in press*).

²² They are often noted for their similarity to independent adversative clauses; in most cases, it is also possible to reframe them as adversative clauses, but they are certainly in a different syntactic relationship, and their informational content is somewhat different.

²³ In accordance with the generic interpretation, Belaj and Tanacković Faletar (2020) point to a metonymic relationship of UNCONDITIONALITY for HABITUALITY/CONCESSIVENESS. “It is, however, not a matter of allowing the realization of the main clause’s content on the basis that it is in opposition to the content of the subordinate concessive clause, i.e., it is not a matter of allowing despite something un-

- (102) *Ainda que o galo não cante, a manhã sempre rompe.* (Even if the rooster does not crow, morning always breaks.)
- (103) *Quer faça frio ou calor não largues o cobertor.* (Whether it's cold or hot, do not let go of the blanket.)
- (104) *Por mais que o amor se encubra mal se dissimula.* (No matter how much love is concealed, it is poorly hidden.)
- (105) *Por muito que se tenha, nunca é de mais.* (No matter how much one has, it is never too much.)
- (106) *Magarac ostaje magarac, makar imao i zlatan pokrovac.* (A donkey remains a donkey, wven with a golden cover.)
- (107) *I u malom čovjeku, nađe se veliko srce.* (Even in a small man, a big heart can be found.)
- (108) *Ili loncem o kamen, ili kamenom o lonac, teško loncu svakojako.* (Whether the pot strikes the stone, or the stone strikes the pot, it is the pot that suffers.)

In Portuguese examples (102–105), as in conditional-concessive constructions in general, the protasis must contain the subjunctive. In concessive clauses, this is the case even when the proposition of the subordinate clause is true; traditionally there was a distinction between “factual” and “non-factual” content in concessive clauses, marked by alternation between the indicative and subjunctive, but the tendency is towards the subjunctive regardless of whether the concession is imaginary or real (Lanović and Sarić 2024).²⁴ In Croatian examples (106–108), verb tenses vary, and elliptical constructions are not uncommon, which becomes irrelevant for generic interpretation.

expected or contrary, but despite everything, or rather anything, which is precisely what makes unconditional clauses a marginal type of concessive meaning.” (Belaj and Tanacković Faletar 2020: 285; *translation ours*).

²⁴ Marques (1995: 159, 164) offers a possible explanation for propositions that are presented as true, yet the conjunctions as operators of concessive subordination still select the subjunctive: he states that awareness of the truth of the subordinate clause’s proposition in concessive structures exists, but that it is “not relevant” for the sentence’s semantics, since it does not mark any contrast and is not necessarily taken as “new information.”

8.5. Imperative clause in the protasis – declarative clause with future indicative in the apodosis

This type of conditional construction is not characterized by a high degree of factuality (like, for example, conditionals with *quem / tko* ‘who(ever)’, *quando / kada* ‘when(ever)’, or *onde / gdje* ‘where(ever)’); its truth value is undetermined. It should be noted that future indicative, which generally appears in such examples in the apodosis, is not a factual tense in Portuguese; it rarely expresses posteriority relative to the time of utterance and, is its semantic characteristics, is closer to mood than to tense (e.g., Mateus et al. 2003: 158). In Croatian, the first part most often contains some form of imperative (or otherwise syntactically expressed imperativity), while the second contains some form of the future (Pranjković 2002: 154–156):

- (109) *Diz-me com quem andas, dir-te-ei quem és//as manhas que tens.* (Tell me who you spend your time with, and I will tell you who you are.)
- (110) *Fala pouco e bem, ter-te-ão por alguém.* (Speak little and well, and they will consider you someone.)
- (111) *Falai no mau que ele sempre aparece.* (Speak of the bad, and he will always appear.)
- (112) *Čini dobro i meći u more, ne će tonut.* (Do good and cast it into the sea; it will not sink.)
- (113) *Pomozi drugomu, i tebi će Bog pomoći.* (Help another, and God will help you.)
- (114) *Pusti pijetla na prag, popeće se i na stolicu.* (Let the rooster on the doorstep, and it will climb the chair.)

8.6. Elliptical expressions – nominal binary phrases

Although we list this type of implicitly conditional construction last in our classification, it is generally very frequent in proverbial texts, as it eliminates the parameter of time, and it represents a privileged proverbial form for expressing general, timeless, and impersonal “truths.” As Pranjković (2002: 174–176) notes, these are implicit coordinated structures with a conditional relation, in which conditionality is expressed primarily through aspectual-temporal relations, that is, parallelism of verb forms. They are

stylistically marked and characteristic of proverbs or *sententiae*, mostly archaic. They may also consist exclusively of nominal (nominative) parts; this is mostly the case in the examples registered in our corpus. These structures are predominantly binary, juxtaposed, asyndetically connected, and semantically there is a relation of implication between the members. They are also ideal for proverbial expression because of their specific rhythmic structure, which serves as a mnemonic element. Their factual value, as in most other structural types, derives from generalization formed by abstraction from the regular co-occurrence of episodic situations. The following are illustrative examples of elliptical proverbs from our corpus:

- (115) *Patrão fora, dia santo na loja.* (*The boss away, the holy day in the shop.*)
- (116) *Estrelas a brilhar, marinheiros ao mar.* (*Stars shining, sailors to the sea.*)
- (117) *Longe de vista, longe do coração.* (*Far from sight, far from the heart.*)
- (118) *Grande mar, grande tormenta.* (*Big sea, big storm.*)
- (119) *Dobar početak, dobar svršetak.* (*Good beginning, good ending.*)
- (120) *Golemo blago, golema i briga.* (*Great treasure, great worry.*)
- (121) *Čist račun, duga ljubav.* (*Clear accounts, lasting friendship.*)
- (122) *Strpljen – spašen.* (*Patient – saved.*)
- (123) *Veselo srce – pola zdravlja.* (*A cheerful heart, half of health.*)

9. Results and discussion

According to the results of the analysis of the corpus of proverbs with conditional constructions used for the purposes of this paper, the most represented, both in the Portuguese and Croatian subcorpus, are proverbs with implicit conditional constructions, that is, those that structurally do not correspond to the prototypical conditional sentence “if *p*, (then) *q*,” but instead express some kind of implicit conditional relation between propositions.

Among these, constructions with an indefinite-relative pronoun in the role of subject (*quem* / *tko* (*koji* ‘who(ever)’) predominate. These are followed, in quantitative terms, by constructions with *quando* / *kada* ‘when(ever)’ and *onde* / *gdje* ‘where(ever)’, as well as elliptical binary nominal structures.

It has been confirmed that in general (across various types) directive conditional constructions prevail, often not introduced by a conjunction. In these, the content of the protasis explicitly states the preconditions for the realization of the content of the advice/warning or the reasons justifying that advice (e.g., goals).

Concise forms of expressing conditional relations (e.g., binary nominal structures, but also a large number of directive constructions) are preferred due to conciseness and rhythmicity, given the importance of mnemonic elements in proverbial texts.²⁵

The analysis revealed a very high level of correspondence between Portuguese and Croatian proverbs with conditional structure. In temporal-aspectual terms, the fundamental difference is the Portuguese subjunctive (*conjuntivo*), which, if not syntactically determined (e.g., by the predicate of the main clause or by conjunction), generally has a hypothetical, “futural,” *irrealis* value. In the Croatian subcorpus, it was not confirmed that equivalents to the Portuguese subjunctive in corresponding constructions would necessarily be verb forms expressing hypotheticality, which supports the hypothesis that in generic, and especially proverbial contexts, the values of certain grammatical categories are neutralized. The preferred tense in both Portuguese and Croatian is the present indicative, thereby confirming its assumed status as a relative tense, in fact atemporal and “timeless”, when it appears in a proverbial statement.

Given the results, we assess that the answer to one of the hypotheses stated at the beginning of the article is affirmative – the proverbial context indeed neutralizes the syntactic-semantic properties of certain grammatical categories and structures, particularly tense, aspectual, and modal values. For illustration,

²⁵ We can, for instance, assume that this is the reason why *então* / *onda* ‘then’ which use to be presented as part of the extended formula of the conditional structure, almost never appears explicitly in the apodosis of proverbs.

let us consider two examples of proverbs from our database in which we observe the “status of factuality,” as this is a criterion relevant specifically for conditional constructions:

- (124) *Ako gora ne će k tebi, a ti k njoj. (If the mountain won't come to you, you go to the mountain.)*
 (125) *Da se riječi kupuju, manje bi ih bilo. (If words could be bought, there would be fewer of them.)*

According to the criterion of conditional structure itself, example (124) represents a hypothetical construction, where the content of the subordinate clause is potentially realizable, that is, realization is probable. Example (125), however, represents an unreal conditional sentence in which the propositions, according to our “knowledge of the world,” are unrealizable. However, knowing that these are proverbs, this structural distinction is completely irrelevant at the conceptual level. The “truth” of the content of a proverb is understood *by default* in the communicative context in which it is used, without any need to question the stated claims; it is entirely irrelevant whether we believe them or not, or whether we identify with the voice of the implicit “collective authority”. When confronted with proverbial text, a generic reading is automatically activated (see Chapter 2), which, in our interpretation, may be attributed to the automatic activation of several types of mechanisms operating at linguistic, pragmatic-discursive, and conceptual levels (Lanović 2022). According to Lanović (2022: 271-273), at the linguistic level, decisive for generic interpretation is the referential value of the entities thematized in the proverb, especially noun phrases, that is, their interaction with tense-aspect values of predications and the relation among propositions representing “type situations.” In this paper, we have dealt exclusively with the expression of genericity at the linguistic level.

However, there are other types of means in discourse signaling that we are dealing with a proverb that may be assigned as “pragmatic-discursive mechanisms”. These are metalinguistic expressions that very often (though not necessarily) introduce a proverb into discourse, simultaneously presenting it as a voice of authority (in Portuguese, e.g., *como diz o povo, como se costuma*

dizer, como se diz, como diz o provérbio, como dizem os velhos ‘as the saying goes, as they say, as it is said, as the proverb says, as the old people say’ etc.). In this type of mechanisms, we also include mnemonic elements, that is, specific rhythmic and syntactic patterns characteristic of proverbs. In some cases, specific vocabulary, very often archaic, will also serve as a trigger for the activation of a generic-proverbial reading.

In addition to these two types of mechanisms, cognitive or conceptual mechanisms will certainly also operate. In this respect, various interpretations may be offered, but as this is not the focus of the present paper, we will, for illustration, suggest the proposal by Lakoff and Turner (1989), who identified the conceptual metaphor *GENERIC IS SPECIFIC* as the basis for understanding and interpreting proverbial texts. “There exists a single generic-level metaphor, *GENERIC IS SPECIFIC*, which maps a single specific-level schema onto an indefinitely large number of parallel specific-level schemas that all have the same generic-level structure as the source-domain schema” (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 162). The mentioned conceptual metaphor combines with the cultural model the authors call “The Great Chain of Being,” the folk unconscious theory of the connection between properties and behavior they call “the Nature of Things,” and the pragmatic principle of communication called the “Maxim of Quantity” (provide as much information as necessary and no more); they consider this combination essential for the interpretation and understanding of proverbs (Lanović 2022: 273-275). We may agree that, for the interpretation and understanding of proverbs, the interaction of different parameters is essential, in addition to linguistic ones, reasoning mechanisms based on the speaker’s encyclopedic knowledge are activated, along with cognitive operations such as abstraction and generalization, as well as reasoning based on analogy.²⁶

10. Concluding remarks

According to our initial research questions, the results of the analysis conducted on a limited corpus confirmed that all types

²⁶ Cf. also *Corpas Pastor* (1996).

of prototypical conditional constructions appear in proverbs, except for monoconditionals with a necessary condition and biconditionals (according to the general typology of Peres et al. 1999). Among non-canonical conditional constructions, with an implicit conditional relation between propositions, the following have been confirmed: constructions with an indefinite-relative pronoun as subject; constructions of the type *when(ever) p, q*; constructions of the type *where(ever) p, q*; conditional-concessive constructions; imperative clause in the protasis – declarative clause with future indicative in the apodosis, and elliptical expressions – nominal binary phrases. As for the types of constructions, the Portuguese and Croatian subcorpora showed a high degree of correspondence. Regarding the verb forms used to express different degrees of hypotheticality, the main difference is the Portuguese subjunctive. However, our hypothesis was confirmed that, given that proverbial discourse expresses generic information, the values of certain grammatical categories are “neutralized”; thus, in proverbial contexts, in both languages, and especially in Croatian, verb forms that do not themselves express hypotheticality are frequent (most commonly, the relative present indicative). We consider that in this study the corpus was too limited for quantitative assessments to be meaningful, but this remains a task for future research based on more comprehensive (extensive) corpora.

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