

Concessive conditionals from a typological perspective

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This study is concerned with a type of adverbial subordinate clauses known as **concessive conditionals**. Three subtypes are usually distinguished; an English example for each is given in (1):

- (1) English
 - a. scalar concessive conditional (**SCC**)
[*Even if it rains*], *we will go outside*.
 - b. alternative concessive conditional (**ACC**)
[*Whether it rains or not*], *we will go outside*.
 - c. universal concessive conditional (**UCC**)
[*No matter what / Whatever the weather is like*], *we will go outside*.

As the name suggests, concessive conditionals share certain functional properties with both concessives and conditionals. Like prototypical conditionals, they express a relationship between a protasis and an apodosis, but whereas the former have a single antecedent in their protasis ('if p , then q '), all concessive conditionals have a set of antecedents: '**if** $\{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots\}$, **then** q ' (Haspelmath & König 1998: 565). Different subtypes use different strategies to convey this relationship: SCCs overtly give a contextually extreme value from the set and imply that the same also holds for less extreme values, ACCs typically consist of a contextually extreme value in disjunction with its negation, and UCCs express the set through free-choice quantification over a variable conveyed by a WH-element (ibid.: 565f.). In any case, the truth-values of the individual antecedents are irrelevant for the truth-value of q , which is always true and therefore entailed (König 1986: 231). Because the antecedent set is contextually exhaustive (Rawlins 2013: 120f.), it includes an unfavorable condition p_n for which one would expect that 'normally (if p_n , then not q)'. Like proper concessives, all concessive conditionals thus entail their q against a background of incompatibility (Leuschner 2006: 26).

Despite the abovementioned functional commonalities, SCCs, ACCs, and UCCs are formally unidentical in most European languages. In other languages, however, they share not only functional, but also formal features. Lezgian, for example, marks all concessive conditionals identically, viz. by adding the scalar-additive focus particle *-ni* to a regular conditional verb form:

- (2) Lezgian
 - a. SCC (Haspelmath 1993: 397)
[*Wuna šeker q^hiweh-aj-t'a-ni*], *i čaj.di-q^h dad gala-č*.
[you:ERG sugar throw-AOP-COND-even] this tea-POESS taste be.behind-NEG
'Even if you add sugar, this tea is not tasty.'
 - b. ACC (ibid.: 398)
[*Am šeher.di-z fe-ji-t'a-ni* (wa ja) te-fe-j-t'a-ni],
[she:ABS town-DAT go-AOP-COND-even and or NEG-go-AOP-COND-even]
[*ada q̄e k'walax kütäh-na*] *k'an-da*.
[she(ERG) today work finish-AOC] must-FUT
'Whether she goes to town or not, she has to finish the job today.'
 - c. UCC (ibid.: 399)
[*Hiniz wun fe-ji-t'a-ni*], *zun wa-q^h galaz fi-da*.
[where you:ABS go-AOP-COND-even] I:ABS you-POESS with go-FUT
'Wherever you go, I will go with you.'

Cross-linguistic patterns in concessive conditionals were investigated by Haspelmath & König (1998). They argue that the parameter of **finite vs. nonfinite subordination** determines how languages mark concessive conditionality, with finite-subordinating languages tending to mark all subtypes differently like English in (1) and nonfinite-subordinating languages often having "triples" like Lezgian in (2) (ibid.: 625).

However, the validity of this conclusion is limited in several ways. First and foremost, their systematic inquiries consider **only European languages**. Secondly, the notion of finite vs. nonfinite subordination is somewhat problematic. It is never precisely defined in Haspelmath & König’s paper; readers are instead referred to Kortmann (1998) and Nedjalkov (1998). Furthermore, the authors acknowledge that a binary distinction between “finite” and “nonfinite” languages is an idealization (Haspelmath & König 1998: 585). Turkish, for example, allows both “tensed” (i.e. finite) and “bare” (i.e. nonfinite) verb forms in concessive conditionals, although the latter are more common (Menz 2016: 100):

(3) Turkish (ibid.)

- a. [*Bir sonraki tren-le git-se-k de*], *yetiř-ir-iz*.
[one later train-PP go-COND-1SG also] arrive-AOR-1PL
- b. [*Bir sonraki tren-le gid-er-se-k de*], *yetiř-ir-iz*.
[one later train-PP go-AOR-COND-1SG also] arrive-AOR-1PL
‘Even if we take the next train, we will be on time.’

Finally, subordination strategies seem to correlate with word order – with predominantly nonfinite subordination correlating with verb-final word order and finite subordination with verb-medial or verb-first word order (Haspelmath & König 1998: 625) – and possibly areal distribution, at least in Eurasia. These may thus be relevant factors, too.

My goal is to **test Haspelmath & König’s (1998) hypothesis on a global scale**, using a geographically and genealogically balanced sample of up to 100 languages, roughly based on the ready-made samples of the WALS (Dryer & Haspelmath, eds., 2013). A first exploratory pilot study based on a small-scale sample of about 20 languages will be conducted in the following 6–7 months. In later stages, I intend to use multifactorial statistical methods in order to identify the truly relevant parameter(s) for the marking strategies in concessive conditionals.

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