

# Concessive conditionals in and beyond Europe: A typological approach

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My talk is concerned with adverbial subordinate clauses called **concessive conditionals**. Following Haspelmath & König (1998), I distinguish three subtypes, exemplified for German in (1)–(3):

- (1) a. scalar concessive conditional  
 [*Selbst wenn es morgen regnet*], *gehen wir spazieren*.  
 b. alternative concessive conditional  
 [*Ob es morgen regnet oder nicht*], *wir gehen spazieren*.  
 c. universal concessive conditional  
 [*Egal wie (/wie auch immer) das Wetter morgen wird*], *wir gehen spazieren*.

Though concessive conditionals like (1)–(3) are formally heterogeneous in many European languages (e.g. German), they nevertheless share some important semantic features: like conditionals, they express a relationship between a protasis and an apodosis, but whereas prototypical conditionals have a single antecedent in their protasis (i.e. ‘if  $p$ , then  $q$ ’), concessive conditionals have a set of antecedents: ‘if  $\{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots\}$ , then  $q$ ’ (König 1986; Leuschner 2006: 19–23).

In keeping with this basically conditional meaning, some languages mark their concessive conditionals uniformly as conditionals. As demonstrated by Haspelmath & König (1998: 627–628), such languages can be found in the Caucasus, e.g. Godoberi, in which all concessive conditionals consist of a conditional converb plus an additive focus particle that evokes the multiplicity of antecedents.

- (2) a. scalar concessive conditional  
 [*ĉai r-a<sup>2</sup>-alara-la*], *iLe* *išqa-ru* *ma-n-iLibu-da*.  
 [rain PL.NT-come-COND-also] we:ABS home-ELAT PL.H-go-FUT.PART-COP  
 ‘Even if it rains, we will go outside.’  
 b. alternative concessive conditional  
 [*ĉai r-a<sup>2</sup>-alara-la*], *mili b-ax-alara-la*, *iLe* *išqa-ru* *ma-n-iLibu-da*.  
 [rain PL.NT-come-COND-also] sun N-fall-COND-also we:ABS home-ELAT PL.H-go-FUT.PART-COP  
 ‘Whether it rains or the sun shines, we will go outside.’  
 c. universal concessive conditional  
 [*inL'ašū nawab u-k'-alara-la*], *iLe* *išqa-ru* *ma-n-iLibu-da*.  
 [which weather NT-be-COND-also] we:ABS home-ELAT PL.H-go-FUT.PART-COP  
 ‘Whatever the weather will be, we will go outside.’

According to Haspelmath & König (1998: 625), differences in the marking of concessive conditionals are associated with different **subordinating strategies**: finite-subordinating languages like German mark all three subtypes differently as in (1), whereas nonfinite-subordinating languages like Godoberi have uniformly-marked triplets as in (2). This suggests a bi-directional universal ‘finite subordination ↔ differential marking’ (or its contrapositive: ‘nonfinite subordination ↔ uniform marking’).

While Haspelmath & König (1998) consider only European languages, I will present preliminary data from an on-going investigation into concessive conditionals based on a **global sample**. My main goals are to investigate

- (i) which coding strategies are used to express concessive conditionality in the languages of the world;
- (ii) which grammatical factors determine the coding strategy used in any given language.

Initial results from my study suggest that the main subordinating strategy is indeed important, but that finite-subordinating languages with identical marking can be found, e.g. Kanuri (Saharan). If this is confirmed in the course of the investigation, it means that we are dealing with an **implicational universal** ‘nonfinite subordination → uniform marking’ rather than a bi-directional one.

## References

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