FACTS AND IDEALS

ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONDITIONALS AND OPTATIVES *

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If I only could, I’d be running up that hill … with no problems.  
– Kate Bush, “Running Up That Hill”, 1984
(an optative in popular culture)

Plan of Action

• Section 1 – The Proposal and the German particle doch as a Case Study
• Section 2 – Making Right Predictions
• Section 3 – Conclusion
• Section 4 – Open Questions / Extensions: Looking Beyond doch

1. The Proposal

1.1 What Are We Looking At?

• The Phenomenon to be Investigated: German Optatives (i.e. Wünschsätze, Scholz 1991, Rosengren 1993; Gärtner 2010; for English: Rifkin 2000, Asarina & Shklovsky 2008): Conditional antecedents that convey a wish.

(1) a. independent optative antecedent
   Ach, wenn ich dir doch (nur) helfen könntest!
oh, if I you DOCH only help could
   ‘Oh, if only I could help you!’

b. integrated optative antecedent (pace Scholz 1991, see page 2 for reference)
   Ach, wenn ich doch (nur) könntest, würde ich dir helfen!
oh, if I DOCH only could would I you help
   ‘Oh, if only could, I would help you!’

• Why German? – German optatives are less rigid than English ones, e.g. nur ‘only’ is optional.
• I will use the labels optative and wish to refer both to the speech act and to the construction.

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• **Important empirical preliminaries that I will not discuss:** At least in some dialects, optatives antecedents can be integrated into a declarative conditional (against the standard view in Scholz 1991 who claims that this is impossible).

⇒ Naturally occurring examples (see also Appendix A); the fact that the optative antecedent *wenn ich doch nur könnte* ‘if only I could’ is in pre-verb-second position indicates that it is truly integrated into the conditional clause.

(2) a. [Wenn ich doch nur könnte] würde ich die Zeit zurück drehen und altes anders machen!
   ‘If only I could, I would turn back time and do everything differently!’
   <http://meinekleine-fotowelt.over-blog.de/article-ich-vermisse-sie-54405701-comments.html>

   ‘Oh, if only I could, I would immediately start working with you.’
   <http://www.bei-bea-nails.de/nagelforum/threads/23638-Studios-in-K%C3%B6ln-Mitarbeiter/page2>

c. [Wenn ich doch nur könnte], würde ich sofort kommen.
   ‘If only I could, I would come immediately.’

⇒ The following examples indicate that omission of an element in pre-verb-second position is not a possible explanation as we do not find it in analogous non-optative constructions, cf. (3), modeled on (2b).

   ‘I wish I could then would I immediately start working with you.’

   ‘I wish I could. I would immediately start working with you.’

• **Final Remark:** The fact that all of the examples in (2) and Appendix A contain the same antecedent should not be interpreted; it is due to the fact that the use of wildcards in google is restricted, so the string *wenn ich doch nur könnte würde ich* was a successful guess at an occurring sequence that would not require wildcards.
1.2 What Do I Claim? – In a Nutshell

- **The Research Question:**
  
  What do elements such as *doch*, *nur* ‘only’ and *ach* ‘oh’ contribute to optatives?
  
  ⇒ **Note:** I will use *doch* as a case study and not always list other such elements.

- **The Core Proposal:**
  
  i. In German, conditional antecedents can *generally* be used as wish speech acts.
  
  ii. Elements like *doch* are used to *indirectly* emphasize an intended wish speech act.
  
  iii. We can formally capture (ii) in terms of how the semantics of *doch* interacts with the speech act of a *doch*-containing utterance.

⇒ **Illustrating the Proposal:**

  i. I will argue that (4) *can* express an indirect wish speech act.
  
  ii. This wish speech act can be emphasized by means of elements like *doch*, (5)
  
  iii. The effect in (ii) arises, because *doch* imposes conditions on when an utterance that contains *doch* can be used; these are context-independently satisfied in a wish, but need to be satisfied by the context otherwise.

(4)  *Context: Anna stares at a photo of Bill holding his first copy of Syntactic Structures*

Wenn ich *an seiner* Stelle ins Zuchthaus gegangen wäre, wäre er jetzt ein renommierter Linguist.

‘If I would have gone to jail in his place, he would be a famous linguist by now.’

(5)  *Context: Anna stares at a photo of Bill holding his first copy of Syntactic Structures*

Ach, wenn ich *doch nur* an seiner Stelle ins Zuchthaus gegangen wäre, ow *if I DOCH only in his place to prison gone were* wäre er jetzt ein renommierter Linguist.

‘Oh, if only I would have gone to jail in his place, he would be a famous linguist by now.’
1.3 Introducing Wish Speech Acts

- **Claim 1**: Optative antecedents always convey a wish speech act; if they are integrated in a (declarative) conditional, the entire utterance expresses two speech acts:
  
  i. **assertion** – the default (i.e. literal) speech act assigned to declaratives.
  
  ii. **wish** – an indirect (i.e. non-literal) speech act based on an inference.

  (cf. Searle 1969, 1975, and Levinson 1983 for the necessary background)

⇒ **Illustration of Claim 1 for an integrated optative antecedent:**

(6) Ach, wenn ich doch nur an seiner Stelle ins Zuchthaus gegangen oh, if I DOCH only in his place to prison gone wäre, wäre er jetzt ein renommierter Linguist. were were he now an acknowledged linguist

‘Oh, if only I had gone to jail in his place, he would be a famous linguist by now.’

a. **assertion speech act**: If I had gone to jail in his place, he would be a famous linguist by now.

b. **wish speech act**: I wish I had gone to jail in his place.

- **Argument 1 for Claim 1: Independent optative antecedents convey only a wish**

  Independent optative antecedents convey a wish speech act.

  ⇒ Anna’s utterance in (7) cannot be used as an assertion, as it is not a complete conditional clause; therefore, Berti cannot challenge its truth / falsity (7a).

  ⇒ In contrast, it is an “act of wishing”; Berti can challenge the act itself, (7b) (based on Scholz 1991) or question its motivation, (7c), see specifically Rifkin (2000).

(7) Anna: Wenn ich **doch nur** reich wäre!

  if I **DOCH only** rich were

  ‘If only I were rich!’

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1 It can be observed that conditionals that are used in assertory speech acts must always contain a consequent, see (i)-(iii), cf. Iatridou (1991), Haegeman (2003), Bhatt & Pancheva (2006) for discussions of non-optative conditionals. An explanation for this fact is beyond the scope of this talk.

i. **hypothetical / event conditional**: If a number is prime, #(it cannot be divided by 2).

ii. **relevance / biscuit conditional**: If you’re hungry, #(there’s some stew in the fridge).

iii. **factual / premise conditional**: If you’re so tired, #(you should go to sleep).
   nonsense that is.correct DOCH not
   # ‘Nonsense. That isn’t correct.’

   oh come.on you do JA only so you want that at.all not
   ‘Come on! You’re just faking. You don’t want that at all.’

c. Berti: Aber warum denn? Warum willst du das?
   but why DENN why want you that
   ‘But why? Why do you want that?’

• Argument 2 for Claim 1: Integrated optative antecedents convey a wish, too

⇒ A hearer can address the assertion, by questioning the truth/falsity of the
   conditional, shown in (8a); furthermore, a hearer can address the wish, shown in
   (8b); finally, both can be done within a single response, shown in (8c).

(8) Anna: Wenn ich doch nur an seiner Stelle ins Zuchthaus
   if I DOCH only in his place into jail
   gegangen wäre, wäre er jetzt ein renommierter Linguist.
   gone were were he now an acknowledged linguist
   ‘Oh, if only I had gone to jail in his place, he would be a famous linguist
   by now.’

a. Berti responds to the assertion speech act

   Berti: Ja, das stimmt. Er wäre jetzt ein renommierter Linguist.
   yes that is.correct he were now an acknowledged linguist
   ‘Yes, that’s true. He would be a famous linguist by now.’

b. Berti responds to the wish speech act

   Berti: Aber willst du wirklich an seiner Stelle ins Zuchthaus
   but want you really in his place into jail
   gegangen sein?
   gone be
   ‘But do you really want to have gone to jail in his place?’
c. Berti responds to both speech acts

Berti: Ja, das stimmt, aber willst du wirklich an seiner Stelle
yes that is.correct but want you really in his place
ins Zuchthaus gegangen sein?
into jail gone be
‘Yes, that’s true, but do you really want to have gone to jail in his place?’

⇒ As I argue that wish speech acts can be freely assigned to (regular) conditional antecedents, (8) must be contrasted with (10); falls ‘if’ blocks an optative reading, see (9)³.

(9) **Wenn** / *Falls* ich doch nur reich wäre!
if *if Falls I DOCH only rich were
‘If only I were rich!’

⇒ Example (10), which contains falls ‘if’, only allows for an assertion speech act, and cannot express a wish, cf. (10a) vs (10b+c).

(10) Anna: Falls ich (*doch nur) an seiner Stelle ins Zuchthaus
ifFALLS I DOCH only in his place into jail
gegangen wäre, wäre er jetzt ein renommierter Linguist.
gone were were he now an acknowledged linguist
‘If I had gone to jail in his place, he would be a famous linguist by now.’

a. Berti responds to the assertion speech act

Berti: Ja, das stimmt. Er wäre jetzt ein renommierter Linguist.
yes that is.correct he were now an acknowledged linguist
‘Yes, that’s true. He would be a famous linguist by now.’

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² The possibility of addressing both the wish speech act and the truth / falsity of the conditional within a single response corroborates the assumption that the wish speech act is an indirect speech act. As Levinson (1983) shows, indirect speech acts generally allow for responses that address both the literal and the indirect meaning, (i):

i. A: Can you please lift that suitcase down for me?
B: Sure I can; here you are.
(Levinson 1983:269)

³ It is not clear why falls does this, but it seems as though falls imposes presuppositions that can often be made explicit by translating falls as ‘just in case that’. Plausibly, this is incompatible with a wish speech act.
b. **There is no wish speech act for Berti to respond to**

   Berti: #Aber willst du wirklich an seiner Stelle ins Zuchthaus
ein gehen? but want you really in his place into jail
gone be

   #‘But do you really want to have gone to jail in his place?’

c. **There is no wish speech act for Berti to respond to**

   Berti: #Ja, das stimmt, aber willst du wirklich an seiner Stelle
yes that is correct but want you really in his place
ins Zuchthaus gegangen sein?
into jail gone be

   # ‘Yes, that’s true, but do you really want to have gone to jail in his place?’

1.4 **Wishes Come For Free!**

- **Claim 2:** A wish speech act is an indirect (i.e. non-literal) *use* of the proposition in a conditional antecedent, which does not need to be independently marked.

- **Argument 1 for Claim 2: Bare conditional antecedents can be optatives.**

  \[ \Rightarrow \text{(11) gives evidence from a corpus search (using *Project Gutenberg*)} \]

  Note: Absence of a consequent was used as a diagnostic for a non-assertive use of a conditional antecedent when performing corpus searches and is thus purely circumstantial.

(11) a. Rico schaute die Blumen an und dachte:
   ‘Rico looked at the flowers and thought:

   “Wenn Stineli diese sehen könnte!”
   if Stineli these see could
   ‘If Stineli could see these!’

   und stand lange unbeweglich am Zaun.
   ‘and stood at the fence for a long time without moving.’
b. Da fuhren die Musikanten zusammen am Nachmittag über den goldenden See im offenen Kahn unter dem blauen Himmel hin, und Rico dachte:

‘The musicians were crossing the golden lake in the afternoon in their open barge under the blue sky, and Rico was thinking:

“Weih ich so mit dem Stineli hinüberfahren könnte!”

‘If I could cross the lake like this with Stineli!’

Wie müsste es staunen über den See, an den es nicht glauben wollte!’

‘How she would be astonished by the lake that she didn’t want to believe in!’

(Quotes from Johanna Spyri (1878): Heimatslos. Geschichten für Kinder und auch für solche, welche die Kinder lieb haben, 1. Band. Acceptability verified with native speakers)

• Argument 2 for Claim 2: Regular conditionals can convey a wish.

⇒ As expected if we treat the optative wish as an indirect speech act, a regular conditional can convey such a wish, as shown by Berti’s response in (12).

⇒ The crucial contrast here is between the anti-optative falls ‘if’ (see (9)) and the neutral wenn ‘if’. As marked, Anna’s statement ‘I am sad’ and Berti’s response are incompatible with falls ‘if’, indicating that (9) really qualifies as an optative.

(12) Context: Anna stares at a photo of Bill holding his first copy of Syntactic Structures

Anna: Ich bin traurig. Wenn ich an seiner Stelle ins Zuchthaus gegangen wäre, wäre er jetzt ein renommierter Linguist.

'I’m sad. If I had gone to jail in his place, he would be a famous linguist by now.'

Berti: Aber willst du wirklich an seiner Stelle ins Zuchthaus gegangen sein?

'But do you really want to have gone to jail in his place?'
1.5 How to show that you are wishing for something – *doch* as a case study

- **Claim 3:** While indirect wish speech acts can sometimes be inferred from the context (see section 1.4), elements like *doch* can be used to non-compositionally mark a wish.

- **Illustration of *doch* in optatives:**

  (13) a. Wenn es **doch** gestern geregnet hätte!
      if it **DOCH** yesterday rained had
      ‘If only it had rained yesterday!’
  
  b. Hätte es **doch** gestern geregnet!
      had it **DOCH** yesterday rained
      ‘Had it only rained yesterday!’

- **Implementation of Claim 3:** We define the notion of *cue* in (14) to cover elements such as *doch*.

(14) **Definition – Cue for a Wish Speech Act**

An *optativity cue* is an element that cues a wish speech act as follows:

i. Its semantic contribution is independent from *optativity*.

ii. Its meaning is compatible with a conditional antecedent that expresses a wish speech act in an out-of-the-blue context.

iii. Its semantic contribution to a non-optative conditional antecedent requires a very specific context (which for instance cannot be out-of-the-blue).

iv. Therefore, if it does not follow from the context whether a wish speech act is intended or not, the particle will convey that a wish speech act is intended.

- **The cue *doch* in a nutshell (focusing on the relevant meaning component):**

  ⇒ i. *doch* presupposes that in some sense (made clear below) the modified proposition is not new, see (15a) versus (15b) from Grosz (2010).
  
  (‘Ø’ stands for ‘absence of any particle.)
(15) a. **Context:** The hearer is well aware that she’s been to Paris before and the speaker wants to make this fact salient in order to follow up on it.

Du warst ja / doch / #DOCH / #Ø schon in Paris.
you were JA DOCH #DOCH #Ø already in Paris
‘You’ve (JA / DOCH / #DOCH / #Ø) already been to Paris.’

b. **Context:** The hearer is an amnesiac and believes that she has never been to Paris, when the speaker discovers an old flight ticket to Paris with the hearer’s name on it.

Du warst #ja / #doch / DOCH / Ø schon in Paris.
you were #JA #DOCH DOCH Ø already in Paris
‘You’ve (#JA / #DOCH / DOCH / Ø) already been to Paris.’

⇒ ii. In a wish speech act, the speaker’s use of if doch p presupposes that the speaker wishes for p, which is the case in (17) but not in (16). Given that the speaker knows her wishes best, the hearer will typically accommodate.

(16) **Situation where the wish is not presupposed and cannot be easily accommodated**

**Context:** Stefan is at Thomas’s place and Thomas has made no suggestion whatsoever that he doesn’t want Stefan to stay for longer.

Stefan: Stört es dich, wenn ich mir noch ein Bier nehme?
bothers it you if I me still a beer take
‘Does it bother you if I take another beer (from your fridge)?’

oh Stefan leave now please me becomes it too late
‘Oh, Stefan, please leave now. It’s getting too late for me.’

b. Thomas: Ach, Stefan, ich wünschte (eigentlich), du würdest jetzt gehen …
oh Stefan I wish actually you would now leave
‘Oh, Stefan, I (actually) wish you’d leave now. (It’s getting too late.)’

c. #Thomas: Ach, Stefan, wenn du doch jetzt (nur) gehen würdest! …
oh Stefan if you DOCH now only leave would
# ‘Oh, Stefan, if only you’d leave now. (It’s getting too late for me.)’
(17) Situation where the wish is presupposed or can at least be easily accommodated

Context: Thomas is sick. Stefan is looking after him, even though a great party is scheduled for tonight.

a. Thomas: Stefan, geh ruhig auf die Party. Das stört mich nicht.
   Stefan go Ruhig to the party that bothers me not
   ‘Stefan, please do go to the party. That doesn’t bother me.’

b. Stefan: Nein, nein, ich bleibe bei dir.
   no no I stay with you
   ‘No, no, I’ll stay here with you.’

c. Thomas: Ach, Stefan, wenn du doch jetzt (nur) gehen würdest!
   oh Stefan if you DOCH now only leave would
   ‘Oh, Stefan, if only you’d leave now!’
   … Du hättest so viel Spaß!
   you had so much fun
   ‘… you would have so much fun!’

⇒ iii. In non-optative conditional, the speaker’s use of doch marks that the truth of the antecedent proposition is ‘established (i.e. not under discussion)’, as in (19) (versus (18)). Given that the speaker does not control the common ground, this is not trivial.

(18) Situation in which the truth of the antecedent is presupposed

A: Es regnet!       —       B: Und?
   it rains             and
   ‘It is raining!’      ‘So?’

A: Na, wenn es doch regnet, müssen wir die Party absagen.
   well if it DOCH rains must we the party cancel
   ‘Well, since it’s DOCH raining, we have to cancel the party.’

(19) Situation in which the truth of the antecedent is not presupposed

   rains it             I know not
   ‘Is it raining!’     ‘I don’t know.’
A: Wenn es (#doch) regnet, müssen wir die Party absagen.
   if it #DOCH rains must we the party cancel
   ‘If it’s (#DOCH) raining, we have to cancel the party.’

⇒ iv. Conclusion from (i), (ii) and (iii): If the common ground does not entail the
   truth of the antecedent proposition, using doch in a regular conditional is
   odd, whereas using doch in an optative is fine.

1.6 How to analyze doch in a formal semantics

- **Auxiliary assumption 1:** There are at least two contextually given sets of
  propositions that are used to manage the discourse (henceforth: context sets).

  i. The **Common Ground:**
  
  This set contains propositions that are treated as mutual knowledge by the
  discourse participants (Stalnaker (1974, 1978)).

  ii. The **Ideal List (of discourse participant i):**
  
  This set contains propositions that reflect the ideals of a discourse
  participant i and serves to order possible worlds in better worlds and less
  optimal worlds. (An adaptation of Han’s 1998, 2000 Plan Set and Portner’s
  2005, 2007 To-Do List, which are reminiscent of Lewis’ 1979 sphere of
  permissibility.)

- **Auxiliary assumption 2:** Assertions / Statements are speech acts that operate on the
  common ground, whereas Wishes / Orders are speech acts that operate on ideal lists.

- **Auxiliary assumption 3:** There are speech acts that add to the common ground or to
  an ideal list, but there are also speech acts that reactivate propositions from the
  common ground, see (20a) versus (20b). (For recent discussion see Repp 2009,
  Bárány 2009, in the spirit of Krifka’s 2006 common ground management.)

(20) a. **adding p to the common ground**

   A: Im März 1968 war Thatcher noch nicht an der Macht.
   in March 1968 was Thatcher yet not at the power
   ‘In March 1968 Thatcher was not in power yet.’

   B: Jaja, das weiß ich eh!
   yeah that know I PRT
   ‘Duh! I know that! (Why are you telling me?)’
b. reactivating \( p \) from within the common ground

A: Im März 1968 war Thatcher ja noch nicht an der Macht.
   In March 1968 was Thatcher \( \text{ja} \) yet not at the power
   ‘As we all know, in March 1968 Thatcher was not in power yet.’

B: # Jaja, das weiß ich eh!
   yeah that know I
   # ‘Duh! I know that! (Why are you telling me?)’

- **Claim 4**: Optative speech acts are speech acts by which the speaker reactivates a
  proposition \( p \) from within her ideal list

- **Argument for Claim 4**: We have already seen arguments that the wish is a
  presupposed wish in (16) and (17). A further example is given below\(^4\).

(21) a. Kellner: Womit darf ich Ihnen dienen?
   waiter with.what may I you serve
   waiter: ‘What would you like?’

b. Thomas: # Wenn Sie mir doch einen Kaffee bringen könnten!
   if you me DOCH a coffee bring could
   # ‘If only you could bring me a coffee!’

c. Thomas: Ich hätte gerne einen Kaffee.
   I had happily a coffee
   ‘I would like a coffee.’

- **Claim 5**: A uniform analysis of \( \text{doch} \) is possible, which assumes an uncontroversiality component, given in (22a) and a correction component, given in (22b).

- As the correction component is trivial in conditionals, I will ignore (22b).
  ((22b) is trivial, as every conditional antecedent \( p \) will automatically make \( \neg p \) salient.)

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\(^4\) Thanks to Irene Heim or suggesting this example.
(22) **Semantics of *doch* (operational version that over-simplifies\textsuperscript{5,6}, cf. Grosz 2010)**

For any proposition \( p \) used in a speech act \( \phi \),

a. *doch* \( \phi \) indicates that the speaker considers \( p \) to be in the context set targeted by \( \phi \).

(See Repp 2009 for a recent approach to *doch* that assumes a similar function of *doch*.)

b. *doch* \( \phi \) presupposes that there is a contextually salient proposition \( q \), such that:
   
i. \( q \) is a focus alternative of \( p \)
   
ii. given contextually salient background assumptions, \( q \) contradicts \( p \)

(i.e. if \( p \) and \( q \) is not a logical contradiction, *doch* \( p \) presupposes that in the current context \( \neg \{ p \ \text{and} \ q \} \).)

(see Abraham 1991, Bárány 2009, Doherty 1985, Ormelius-Sandblom 1997 for predecessors of the idea that \( p \) corrects a salient \( q \) that entails \( \neg p \))

- **Illustrating the analysis of *doch* for reactivating statements:** In a matrix clause, (23) and in a conditional antecedent, (24).

(23) a. **Context:** The hearer is well aware that she’s been to Paris before and the speaker wants to make this fact salient in order to follow up on it.

\[
\text{Du warst *doch* schon in Paris}.
\]

you were **DOCH** already in Paris

‘You’ve **DOCH** already been to Paris.’

b. **speech act** \( \phi = \text{retrieval of } p \text{ from common ground} \):

\[
\text{We all know, } \{ p \text{ you’ve been to Paris} \}.
\]

c. **uncontroversiality contribution of “*doch*”:**

The speaker conveys \( \{ p \text{ hearer has been to Paris} \} \) to be in the common ground.

(24) A: Es **regnet**! — B: Und?

it rains and

‘It is raining!’ ‘So?’

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\textsuperscript{5} Grosz (2010) shows, based on Kratzer & Matthewson (2009), that *doch* \( \phi \) can be used in cases in which the hearer or the speaker does not know \( p \) or in which the hearer even disputes \( p \). As argued in Grosz (2010), such utterances, if successful, can be assumed to involve accommodation. Clearly, there can be cases when the speaker is mistaken about the common ground, which is an idealized concept.

A: Na, wenn es doch regnet, müssen wir die Party absagen.

   well if it DOCH rains must we the party cancel

   ‘Well, if it’s DOCH raining, we have to cancel the party.’

a. speech act $\psi = \text{assertion of } \text{if } p, q:

   \[ \text{if } p, q \text{ If it is raining, we have to cancel the party}. \]

   \text{speech act } \phi = \text{retrieval of } p \text{ from common ground}:

   We all know, $[p \text{ it is raining}].$

b. \text{uncontroversiality contribution of “doch”:}

   The speaker conveys $[p \text{ it is raining}]$ to be in the common ground.

\* Illustrating the analysis of \textit{doch} for (reactivating) wishes:

(25) a. \text{Wenn ich doch reich wäre!}

   \text{if I DOCH rich were}

   ‘If only I were rich!’

b. \text{speech act } \phi = \text{retrieval of } p \text{ from ideal list}:

   \text{It is my established wish that } [p \text{ I am rich}].

c. \text{uncontroversiality contribution of “doch”:}

   The speaker conveys $[p \text{ I am rich}]$ to be in the speaker’s ideal list.

\Rightarrow \text{A Clarification:} I do not assume that the counterfactuality of optative conditional antecedents like (25) follows from the wish speech act. I assume that the speech act in (26a) and (26b) is the same (namely retrieval from the ideal list)\textsuperscript{7}.

(26) a. \text{counterfactual optative (} p \text{ is presupposed to be false, cf. Stalnaker 1975)\textsuperscript{8}}

   \text{Wenn Hans gestern nur nicht verschlafen hätte.}

   \text{if Hans yesterday only not overslept had}

   ‘If only Hans hadn’t overslept yesterday.’

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\textsuperscript{7} Scholz (1991) decides to draw a distinction between what she calls \textit{Wunschsatz} ‘wish clause’ in (26a) and what she calls \textit{Heischesatz} ‘demand clause’ in (26b). This is motivated by her framework; it is not clear that the differences between (26a) and (26b) warrant a categorical distinction of this type.

\textsuperscript{8} See also von Fintel (1997) for a recent discussion.
b. *non-counterfactual optative (p is not presupposed to be false)*

Wenn Hans morgen nur nicht verschläft.
if Hans tomorrow only not oversleeps
‘If only Hans doesn’t oversleep tomorrow.’

**Why *doch* in conditional antecedents cues optativity:**

i. *doch* in a non-optative conditional antecedent presupposes that the antecedent proposition is in the common ground, cf. (24).

ii. In contrast, *doch* in an optative conditional antecedent presupposes that the antecedent proposition is in the speaker’s ideal list, cf. (25).

iii. In an out-of-the-blue context, *doch* in an optative antecedent can always be accommodated (assuming that the speaker is the best authority on the speaker’s ideal list), whereas *doch* in a non-optative antecedent imposes conditions on shared knowledge.

iv. Therefore, *doch* indicates optativity whenever the presuppositions for using *doch* in a non-optative antecedent are not met in the discourse.

**How *doch* and subjunctive marking conspire:**

⇒ Optatives that contain *doch* are typically in the subjunctive.

⇒ Non-optative antecedents that contain *doch* can only be in the subjunctive if they are implicitly conditionalized, i.e. if the *doch*-marked antecedent itself is not counterfactual. This follows from the fact that the factuality presupposition of *doch* contradicts a counterfactuality presupposition.

(27) Sue: Wenn er, hättest du ihn eingeladen, doch ohnehin nicht
if he had you him invited DOCH anyway not
gekommen wäre, hättest du dir keine Vorwürfe machen brauchen.
come were had you you no reprimands make need
‘If, had you invited him, he wouldn’t have come anyway, you shouldn’t have felt bad about it.’

a. *speech act ψ = assertion of if (if z) p, q:*

   \[ \text{[if } p, q \text{ If (had you invited him) he wouldn’t have come anyway, you shouldn’t have felt bad].} \]
speech act $\phi = \text{retrieval of } p \text{ from common ground}$:

We all know, [if$_z$ p If you had invited him, he wouldn’t have come anyway].

b. uncontroversiality contribution of “doch”:

The speaker conveys [if$_z$ p If you had invited him, he wouldn’t have come anyway] to be in the common ground.

$\Rightarrow$ Such utterances are highly complex and comparatively rare (it is virtually impossible to find them in corpora). Therefore, doch in combination with subjunctive marking is a strong indicator of the comparatively trivial optative reading.

2 Making Right Predictions

2.1 Prediction 1: Cues can co-occur

Different cues are discussed in the literature; there are at least four particles that Scholz (1991) discusses, and certain interjections like ach ‘oh’.

(28)  

 out of the blue

a. Ach, wenn Hans käme!
oh if Hans came!
‘Oh, if only Hans came!’

b. Wenn Hans doch käme!
if Hans DOCH came!
‘If only Hans came!’

c. Wenn Hans nur käme!
if Hans only came!
‘If only Hans came!’

d. Wenn Hans bloß käme!
if Hans BLOß came!
‘If only Hans came!’

e. Wenn Hans wenigstens käme!
if Hans at.least came!
‘If only Hans came!’
It has also been observed that optative readings can be cued by a clause-initial "optative accent" pattern (which might just be an instance of Verum Focus):

(29) **WÄRE ich zuhause geblieben!**  
WERE I at.home stayed  
‘HAD I stayed home!’  
(Rosengren 1993:36)

- My analysis correctly predicts that such cues can co-occur. The effect is that the optativity seems even more strongly emphasized (due to the fact that non-optative readings are rendered more and more marginal).

(30) *out of the blue*  
a. **Ach, WENN** Hans **doch nur** käme!  
oh if Hans **DOCH** only came!  
‘Oh, if only Hans came!’  
(Scholz 1991:125)  
b. **Ach, KÄME** er **doch nur**!  
oh **kame** he **DOCH** only  
‘Oh if only he came!’  
(Scholz 1991:125)  
c. **Wäre Hans **doch nur** bloß gekommen!  
were **H. DOCH only BLOß** come  
‘If only Hans had come!’  
d. **Wäre Hans **doch nur** wenigstens gekommen!  
were **H. DOCH only at.least** come  
‘If only Hans had come!’

### 2.2 Prediction 2: Lack of cues is meaningful

- A prediction from the cue-based approach to wish speech acts is that the lack of cues is meaningful as well. Specifically, given that non-optative conditionals represent the literal meaning, a good strategy in terms of a signaling game⁹ (Lewis 1969) would be to use cues if and only if optativity is intended, explaining (31b).

---

⁹ See Appendix B for a sketch of such a signaling game.
(31) *out of the blue*

a. **Ach**, wenn Hans käme!
   oh if Hans came!
   ‘Oh, if Hans came!’

b. # Wenn Hans käme!
   if Hans came!
   # ‘If Hans came!’

⇒ **The reasoning in detail (see Appendix B for a longer discussion):**

- Assume that there are (positive) optativity cues, but no (negative) non-optativity cues.
- A speaker who wants to encode optativity has a choice between an ambiguous expression (such as (31b)) and a non-ambiguous expression (such as (31a)).
- Assume that speaker and hearer implicitly commit to a specific strategy (cf. Lewis 1969).
- The most successful set of strategies will be as follows:
  i. By default, the speaker uses cues when optativity is intended, and uses ambiguous constructions like (31b) only for non-optative conditionals.
  ii. By default, the hearer will disambiguate constructions like (31b) towards a non-optative conditional reading, and expect optatives to contain cues.
  iii. When the context favors an optative reading, cues become obsolete.

2.3 **Prediction 3: There is no stronger link between optativity and cues**

- A hypothesis explored by Rifkin (2000) and Asarina & Shklovsky (2008) is that optativity may arise from the combination of some focus particle (e.g. scalar *only*) and a specific focus (e.g. on counterfactual morphology in the case of Asarina & Shklovsky 2008)\(^{10}\).

- The following two examples both contain *doch* in the conditional antecedent and both involve narrow focus on the constituent *only once*. Yet, both an optative reading and a non-optative reading are available.

---

\(^{10}\) A similar approach seems to be taken by Biezma (2010a, 2010b), who proposes that optativity is derived from a particular information structure, which can be marked by placing focus particles in the antecedent.
(32) **optative case (optional “ach” is included as it helps bring out the optative reading)**

Context: John and Mary are lost in the snowy mountains. John wants to fire his gun to draw attention from the rangers. John considers only shooting once, but because he’s paranoid about not being found, he shoots three times. The third shot triggers an avalanche. The avalanche causes a lot of damage. A year later, John is still paying for reparation costs. Mary sighs:

(Ach,) wenn er doch [nur EINEN]₁ Schuss abgefeuert hätte, hätte (oh) if he DOCH only ONE shot fired had had er KEINE Lawine ausgelöst!
he no avalanche triggered
‘If he had DOCH fired [only ONE] shot, he wouldn’t have caused an avalanche!’

(33) **non-optative case**

Context: John and Mary are lost in the snowy mountains. John wants to fire his gun to draw attention from the rangers. Mary tries to wrestle the gun out of his hand and tells him it would trigger an avalanche. John intended to only shoot once, but because of Mary he accidentally shoots three times. The third shot triggers an avalanche. Later, the rangers blame Mary and not John. They tell her: *It is your fault and not his, because you wrestled with him, and if you hadn’t wrestled with him, he would have fired only one shot.* Mary responds: *So? How does this make it my fault?* A ranger responds:

Wenn er doch [nur EINEN]₁ Schuss abgefeuert hätte, hätte er if he DOCH only ONE shot fired had had he KEINE Lawine ausgelöst!
no avalanche triggered
‘If he had DOCH fired [only ONE] shot, he wouldn’t have caused an avalanche!’

⇒ **Note:** The intended reading for (33) is one where *doch* takes scope inside the antecedent, and the antecedent is covertly conditionalyzed; this is made explicit in (34):

i. (34) is a more explicit version of (33) in the context given for (33); the internal antecedent *had you not disturbed him* is covert in (33).

ii. (34) shows that *doch* can be in both the consequent and the antecedent, indicating that *doch* scopes locally inside each of them.
(34) Wenn er [hätten Sie ihn nicht behindert] doch [nur EINEN] Schuss abgefeuert hätte, hätte er doch KEINE Lawine ausgelöst!
‘If he had DOCH fired [only ONE] shot, he wouldn’t have caused an avalanche!’

3. Conclusion

• I have argued that the so-called optative can be analyzed as a wish speech act, which is not compositionally derived, but supported by cues in the following way (sect. 1).
  ⇒ They are compatible with a wish speech act in an out-of-the-blue context.
  ⇒ They impose specific restrictions on when and how non-optative conditionals can be used that contain them.

• I have shown that this makes correct predictions on the interaction between optativity and typical features of optativity (such as particles, interjections, etc.) (section 2).

4. Open Questions / Extensions: Looking Beyond doch

• This section outlines a research program that extends beyond the scope of this talk. Correspondingly, the ideas presented in section 4.1 and 4.2 are preliminary and informal.

4.1 How can nur ‘only’ be a cue for optativity?

• Null Hypothesis (see also Asarina & Shklovsky 2008, cf. Rifkin 2000): There is a generalizable reading of garden-variety nur ‘only’ that can somehow cue optativity.
  ⇒ Let us first investigate the observable interactions between nur ‘only’ and optativity.
• Three types of interaction between nur ‘only’ and optativity:
  – We find cases where nur ‘only’ fails to cue optativity.
  – We find cases where nur ‘only’ sometimes (i.e. probabilistically) cues optativity.
  – We find cases where nur ‘only’ obligatorily cues optativity.

• When nur ‘only’ fails to cue: As observed for English by Rifkin (2000), nur ‘only’ cannot cue optativity when it is below negation or combines with a narrow focus:

(35) a. Context: In a game show, the candidate is facing three doors (left, middle and right), and asked to open as many as he would like; afterwards, a die will be cast to decide how many doors he should have opened. If he opens as many doors as the die says, he wins whatever is behind them. If not, he wins nothing. He opens the left door and the middle door. The left door contains a box of junk, the middle door contains a brand new car. The die is cast, and it turns out that he should have only opened one door; he gets nothing.

?? Hätte ich nur die [MITTLERE]ₚ Tür geöffnet!
had I only the middle door opened
‘If I had opened only the middle door!’

b. Context: Rambo is cornered by a batallion, and, as he only has a pistol, he is overpowered and ends up in prison. If he had had grenades or other stronger means of defending himself, he would have been able to overpower the batallion.

?? Hätte ich nicht nur [eine PistOLE gehabt]ₚ!
had I not only a pistol had
‘If I hadn’t only had a pistol!’

• Universal Compatibility of nur ‘only’ with optativity: Nevertheless, if nur ‘only’ is not the only cue for optativity, we observe that the different readings of nur ‘only’ in (35) are compatible with optativity; i.e. nur ‘only’ does not block optativity.

(36) a. Context: In a game show, the candidate is facing three doors (left, middle and right), and asked to open as many as he would like; afterwards, a die will be cast to decide how many doors he should have opened. If he opens as many doors as the die says, he wins whatever is behind them. If not, he wins nothing. He opens the left door and the middle door. The left door contains a box of junk, the middle door contains a brand new car. The die is cast, and it turns out that
he should have only opened one door; he gets nothing.

Ach, hätte ich nur die [MITTLE] Füre geöffnet!
oh had I only the middle door opened
‘Oh, if I had opened only the middle door!’

⇒ I wish that \( p \& p = \text{the only door I opened is the middle door.} \)

(quantificational only)\(^{11}\)

b. Context: Rambo is cornered by a batallion, and, as he only has a pistol, he is overpowered and ends up in prison. If he had had grenades or other stronger means of defending himself, he would have been able to overpower the batallion.

Ach, hätte ich nicht nur [eine PistOLe gehabt] F!
oh had I not only a pistol had
‘Oh, if I hadn’t only had a pistol!’

⇒ I wish that \( p \& p = \text{I didn’t only have a pistol.} \)

≈ I wish that \( p \& p = \text{the best thing I had wasn’t a pistol.} \)

(scalar only)

• When nur ‘only’ optionally cues optativity: In (37), the nur-containing antecedent has a salient optative reading, (37a), but can also be used in a non-optative way, (37b). For now, we will not be concerned with the relevant paraphrase.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(37) a. } & \text{Wenn er sich nur [umgeSEHe] F hätte!} \\
& \text{if he self only looked.around had} \\
& \text{‘If only he had looked around!’}
\end{align*}
\]

b. Context: A student was stopped by campus police while walking in an off-limits corridor. Our shared knowledge is that he would have only had looked around if he hadn’t been stopped. He was punished. Was it right to do so? – I argue:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Wenn er sich nur [umgeSEHe] F hätte, hätte er nicht bestraft} \\
& \text{if he self only looked.around had had he not punished} \\
& \text{werden sollen.} \\
& \text{be shall} \\
& \text{‘Since he would have only looked around, he shouldn’t have been punished.’}
\end{align*}
\]

• **When nur ‘only’ obligatorily cues optativity:** This is the most crucial case with respect to the discussion in this talk. There are, in fact, cases where nur ‘only’ enforces an optative reading, namely clauses with the sequence nur nicht ‘only not’.

(38) a. Wenn er nur nicht zu spät gekommen wäre!
    if he only not too late come were
    ‘If only he hadn’t come too late!’

    b. Hätte er nur nicht reich werden wollen!
    had he only not rich become wanted
    ‘If only he hadn’t wanted to get rich!’

⇒ A non-optative conditional with nur nicht ‘only not’ (illustrated for the antecedent in (38b)) seems to be impossible or at least very marked:

(39) a. Hätte er nicht reich werden wollen, wäre er jetzt ein besserer Künstler als ich.
    had he not rich become wanted were he now a better artist than I
    ‘Had he not wanted to get rich, he would be a better artist than me now.’

    b. ?# Hätte er nur nicht reich werden wollen, wäre er jetzt ein besserer Künstler als ich.
    had he only not rich become wanted were he now a better artist than I
    ?# ‘Had he only not wanted to get rich, he would be a better artist than me now.’

(under a non-optative reading)

⇒ This gives rise to the following three generalizations.

• **Generalization only-1:** nur ‘only’ is compatible with optativity both in a low and in a high scope position (cf. in particular (36)).
• **Generalization only-2:** *nur* ‘only’ can act as a cue for optativity when it is in a high scope position (cf. (37a) and (38)). However, the context still plays a crucial role, as shown in (37a) versus (37b).

• **Generalization only-3:** *nur* ‘only’ is a strong cue for optativity when it is in a high scope position and a non-optative reading is blocked (cf. (38b) versus (39b)).

⇒ For brevity, I will focus on the third (and most crucial) of these generalizations:

– Why does *nur* ‘only’ act as a strong cue for optativity when taking scope over negation? Why does it block a non-optative reading in such configurations?

– In other words: Why is *nur nicht* ‘only not’ ill-formed unless optative?

• In analogy to the meaning of *doch* in (22), assume a semantics like (40) for *nur* ‘only’ in a high scope position, which is relativized to speech acts (this is preliminary and glosses over cases where *nur* ‘only’ takes scope below the speech act level):

(Given the purpose of this sketch to be applicable to optatives, I remain neutral as to what is “asserted” and what is “presupposed”. It is often assumed that *only* *p* presupposes that *p* is true, implemented by (40a), and *only* *p* asserts that no alternative to *p* is true, implemented by (40b), cf. Horn 1969 and recent discussions such as von Fintel & Iatridou 2007)

(40) **Semantics of scalar nur ‘only’, relativized to speech acts (informal sketch)**

For any proposition *p* used in a speech act *φ*,

a. *nur* *φ* conveys that the speaker considers *p* to be in the context set *C* targeted by *φ*.

b. *nur* *φ* conveys that stronger focus alternatives of *p* on a salient non-logical dimension are excluded from this context set *C*.


⇒ This is illustrated in (41) for an optative\(^{12}\) with a *nur nicht* ‘only not’ sequence.

\(^{12}\) I differ from Asarina & Shklovsky (2008) in that I do not assume that the relevant scale is always a **better than** scale. This does not seem to capture all uses of scalar *only*, as (i.) seems perfectly well-formed.

i. In his snowboarding accident, John only stretched the ligaments in his knees. There won’t be any lasting damage.

⇒ True in a scenario where John has a lot of painful bruises, but the worst thing that happened to him is that he stretched the ligaments in his knees. (Excluded: John ripped his ligaments. / John broke his leg. / …)
(41) a. \([_p \text{Wenn er nur nicht zu spät gekommen wäre!}]\)
    if he only not too late come were
    ‘If only he hadn’t come too late!’

b. *wish speech act \(\varphi\):* retrieve \(p\) \((p = \text{he didn’t come too late})\) from the
    speaker’s *Ideal List*

c. *contribution of nur:* \(p\) is in the speaker’s *Ideal List* and stronger focus
    alternatives of \(p\) (such as \(q = \text{he didn’t come too late and he brought his laptop}\) on a salient non-logical dimension
    are excluded from the speaker’s *Ideal List*.

d. *paraphrase:* I only wish that \([_p \text{he hadn’t come too late}]\) and I do not wish
    anything stronger than that, e.g. \([_q \text{he hadn’t come too late and he had brought his laptop}]\).

⇒ An argument for such a scalar analysis of *nur* ‘only’ in optatives comes from the
contrast in (42). The contrast is subtle, and as wishes might be “revisable on the
-go”, right-node raising is used to make the wishes as simultaneous as possible.

(42) Context: In 13-card rummy, whoever doesn’t have a run (a sequence of 3 cards in
the same color) “loses” the current round and “gives” 100 points.

a. Ach, wenn ich doch eine Folge und wenn Hans doch keine hätte!
    oh if I DOCH a run and if Hans DOCH none had
    ‘If only I had a run and Hans didn’t!’

b. ?? Ach, wenn ich nur einen Folge und wenn Hans nur keine hätte!
    oh if I only a run and if Hans only none had
    ‘If only I had a run and Hans didn’t!’

    (note: the scalarity of “only” matters, because it would be better for me if I had a
run and Hans didn’t than if I just had a run)

⇒ Compare an analogous declarative that triggers *retrieval from the Common
Ground* (as marked by the particle *ja*) with *nur nicht* ‘only not’, in (43).
(43) a. Ich bin klüger als Sie.
I am smarter than you
‘I am smarter than you.’

[\[p \text{ Sie wollen sich das ja nur nicht eingestehen.}]\]
you want self that ja only not admit
‘You only don’t want to admit it.’

b. speech act $\phi$: retrieve $p$ ($p = \text{you don’t want to admit it}$) from the Common Ground

c. contribution of nur: $p$ is in the Common Ground and stronger focus
alternatives of $p$ (such as $q = \text{you don’t want to admit it and you are right, as it is false}$) on a salient non-
logical dimension are excluded from the Common Ground.

⇒ Why does nur nicht ‘only not’ block a non-optative conditional reading?

• Preliminary Assumption: nur ‘only’ above nicht ‘not’ must take scope at the speech act level, i.e. the proposition containing it must encode a speech act.

⇒ Support for this Assumption: The sequence nur nicht ‘only not’ is
acceptable in a conditional antecedent that encodes a retrieving speech act, (44a),
diagnosed by the presence of ja, but not in a regular conditional antecedent, (44b):

(44) a. Wenn er es ja nur nicht geWAGt hat, wollte er es trotzdem tun.
if he it JA only not dared has wanted he it still do
‘If he [JA] only didn’t dare to do it, he still wanted to do it.’

= ‘If, as we know, he just didn’t dare to do it, he still wanted to do it.’

i. retrieving speech act $\phi$: retrieve $p$ ($p = \text{he didn’t dare to do it}$) from the Common Ground

ii. contribution of nur: $p$ is in the Common Ground and stronger focus
alternatives of $p$ (such as $q = \text{he didn’t dare to do it and he didn’t even want to do it}$) on a salient non-
logical dimension are excluded from the Common Ground.
b. Wenn er es (#ja) (#nur) nicht geWAGt hat, ist er jetzt zuhause.
   ‘If he (#ja) (#only) didn’t dare to do it, he’s at home now.’

- Why nur ‘only’ serves as a cue in nur nicht ‘only not’ configurations:
  i. Conjecture: nur ‘only’ above negation takes scope at the speech act level, with the semantics in (40).
  ii. In optatives, this yields a reading where all better alternatives to a negative \( p \) (e.g. \( p = \text{he didn’t come too late} \)) are excluded from what the speaker wishes for right now. Given that the speaker is the highest authority in what the speaker wishes for, this is automatically felicitous.
  iii. In non-optative constructions, this yields a reading where all stronger alternatives to a negative \( p \) (e.g. \( p = \text{he didn’t dare to do it} \)) are excluded from the Common Ground. Setting aside the issue of whether this is asserted or presupposed, the following point can be made. As in the case of \( \text{doch} \), we can assume that this requires a more specific context, as e.g. a relevant scale must be made salient, as in (44a).

4.2 The desideratum for evaluative cues

- Point of Departure: Certain optativity cues are inherently evaluative.

(45) a. \( \text{Àch, wenn er nicht verschlafen hätte!} \)
   ‘Oh, if he hadn’t overslept!’

   b. Hätte ich lieber / besser auf meine Mutter gehört!
   ‘Had I rather listened to my mother!’

   c. Wenn er wenigstens nett wäre!
   ‘If at least he was nice!’

- Evidence: \( \text{àch ‘oh’ and wenigstens ‘at least’ cannot be used in a context where the speaker does not intend a personal evaluation, cf. (46)-(48). The adverbs lieber ‘rather’ and besser ‘better’ are trivially evaluative.} \)
(46) a. Àch, warum hast du das getan?
   oh why have you that done
   ‘Oh, why did you do this?’
   *conveys a negative evaluation of the fact that the hearer did it*

   b. (#Àch,) wieviele Kinder hat der Hans?
   (#oh) how many children has the Hans
   ‘(#Oh,) how many children does Hans have?’
   *does not typically convey any evaluation of how many children Hans has*

(47) a. Bei dem Flugzeugabsturz gab es zumindest 90 Überlebende.
   at the air.crash gave it at least 90 survivors
   ‘In the air crash there were at least 90 survivors.’

   b. Bei dem Flugzeugabsturz gab es wenigstens 90 Überlebende.
   at the air.crash gave it at least 90 survivors
   ‘In the air crash there were at least 90 survivors.’

(48) a. Bei dem Flugzeugabsturz gab es zumindest 90 Tote.
   at the air.crash gave it at least 90 deads
   ‘In the air crash there were at least 90 casualties.’

   b. Bei dem Flugzeugabsturz gab es wenigstens 90 Tote.
   at the air.crash gave it at least 90 deads
   ‘In the air crash there were at least 90 casualties.’

- *Desideratum for future research:* Establish a way in which such elements have
  their use conditions trivially licensed by the fact that ideal lists are evaluative in that
  they rank worlds in better and less good ones.

  ⇒ Then, their function as optativity cues follows from the fact that non-optative
  speech acts do not automatically involve evaluation.
Appendices

Appendix A: Evidence for optative antecedents in pre-V2 position in conditionals

(49) a. Wenn ich doch nur könnte würde ich mein leben dafür geben um alle kinder auf der welt vor so etwas zu bewahren und zu retten.

‘If only I could, I would give my life to protect and rescue all of the children in this world from things like that.’


b. Wenn ich doch nur könnte würde ich mehr als einen Hund zuhause haben!

‘If only I could, I would have more than one dog at home!’

<http://www.hallohund.de/tierschutz/50504/hunde-suchen-ein-neues-zuhause>

c. Wenn ich doch nur könnte würde ich die zeit zurück drehen und alles anderes machen!

‘If only I could, I would turn back time and do everything differently!’

<http://meinekleine-fotowelt.over-blog.de/article-ich-vermisse-sie-54405701-comments.html>

d. Wenn ich doch nur könnte, würde ich dir dinge über s1 und mich erzählen, das sähest du ihn auch in einem ganz anderen licht!

‘If only I could, I would tell you things about s1 and myself, you would start seeing him in a completely different light!’


e. Wenn ich doch nur könnte würde ich sie alle nehmen!

‘If only I could, I would take all of them [of these cats]!’


f. Wenn ich doch nur könnte, würde ich sie sofort zu mir nehmen!

‘If only I could, I would take her [this cat] immediately!’


g. Ach wenn ich doch nur könnte würde ich sofort bei dir arbeiten.

‘Oh, if only I could, I would immediately start working with you.’

<http://www.bei-bea-nails.de/nagelforum/threads/23638-Studio-in-K%C3%B6ln-Mitarbeiter/page2>
h. Wenn ich doch nur könnte, würde ich gerne mal ein Bild von unserem Haus malen.

‘If only I could, I would love to paint a picture of our house.’

<i>http://www.creawelten.de/thread.php?postid=192095</i>

i. Wenn ich doch nur könnte würde ich auch nur blumen essen.

‘If only I could, I would also only eat flowers.’

<i>http://www.aktienboard.com/forum/archive/t-94384.html</i>

j. Wenn ich doch nur könnte, würde ich sofort kommen.

‘If only I could, I would come immediately.’


k. Wenn ich doch nur könnte, würde ich dich lieben.

‘If only I could, I would love you.’

<i>http://www.iphpbb.com/foren-archiv/26/1646400/1645720/mels-poesie-is-back-47737100-62015-152.html</i>

Appendix B: Formally Modeling a Cue-Based Approach to Optative Semantics

- We can formalize a cue-based approach to optativity in terms of a signaling game (Lewis 1969):
  - For successful communication, speaker and hearer each have to commit to a communicative strategy.
  - Specifically, in our examples, the speaker must decide whether to use cues or not, and the hearer must decide how to disambiguate an ambiguous utterance.

- Let us focus on a decision between optative and hypothetical conditional.

- Consider two utterances; (50a) versus (50b).

(50) a. Wenn ich könnten, würde ich dir helfen!

if I could would I you help

‘If I could, I would help you!’ (✓ hypothetical conditional / ✓ optative)
b. Wenn ich doch könnte, würde ich dir helfen!
   if I DOCH could would I you help
   ‘If I only could, I would help you!’ (× hypothetical conditional / ✓ optative)

⇒ Compare the following example, which shows that doch eliminates a hypothetical reading (see Coniglio 2009).

(51) Wenn eine Zahl (#doch) eine Primzahl ist, kann sie (doch) nur
   if a number #DOCH a prime number is can it (DOCH) only
durch sich selbst und durch 1 dividier werden.
   by it self and by 1 divided be
   ‘If a number is a prime number, it can only be divided by itself and by 1.’

• Assume (following the idea of Lewis 1969:130-133) that speaker and hearer have to
  commit in any given context to one of the following set of strategies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Set 1</th>
<th>Set 2</th>
<th>Set 3</th>
<th>Set 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaker uses optativity cues?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearer disambiguates utterances without cues?</td>
<td>hyp. cond.</td>
<td>optative</td>
<td>hyp. cond.</td>
<td>optative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payoff in $s_1$ (= speaker intends a hypothetical conditional)</td>
<td>(2,2) success</td>
<td>(0,0) failure</td>
<td>(2,2) success</td>
<td>(0,0) failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payoff in $s_2$ (= speaker intends an optative)</td>
<td>(0,0) failure</td>
<td>(2,2) success</td>
<td>(1,1) effort + success</td>
<td>(1,1) effort + success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⇒ The expected utility of a set of strategies is calculated as follows.

$$\sum_{\text{situation } s_i} (\text{payoff in } s_i) \times (\text{probability of } s_i)$$

• It follows that sets of strategies have the following expected utilities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker doesn’t use cues.</th>
<th>Hearer treats cases without cues as non-optative</th>
<th>Hearer treats cases without cues as optative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaker uses optativity cues</td>
<td>(2-P(OPT), 2-P(OPT))</td>
<td>(P(OPT), P(OPT))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Therefore, if the probability of an optative or non-optative reading is balanced (i.e. \( P(\text{OPT}) = 50\% \)), the highest expected utility (or Pareto-dominant Nash Equilibrium) results from strategies where the speaker uses optative cues, and the hearer interprets utterances without cues as non-optative:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( P(\text{OPT}) = 0.5 )</th>
<th>Hearer treats cases without cues as non-optative</th>
<th>Hearer treats cases without cues as optative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaker doesn’t use cues.</td>
<td>(1, 1)</td>
<td>(1, 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker uses optativity cues</td>
<td>(1.5, 1.5)</td>
<td>(0.5, 0.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast, if the probability of an optative reading is significantly higher (e.g. \( P(\text{OPT}) = 75\% \)), the highest expected utility results when the speaker does not use cues, and the hearer interprets utterances without cues as optative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( P(\text{OPT}) = 0.25 )</th>
<th>Hearer treats cases without cues as non-optative</th>
<th>Hearer treats cases without cues as optative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaker doesn’t use cues.</td>
<td>(0.5, 0.5)</td>
<td>(1.5, 1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker uses optativity cues</td>
<td>(1.25, 1.25)</td>
<td>(0.75, 0.75)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix C: A Note on Independent Antecedents

It should be pointed out that, as Scholz (1991) observes, optatives aren’t the only independent conditional antecedents that we find.

⇒ Crucially, all of these independent conditional antecedents express a non-assertive speech act, indicating that there is no one-to-one relation between optativity and the omission of a consequent:

(52) a. Wenn das mal nur am Ende der Herr Maulschmidt nicht ist. if that MAL only at.the end the Mister Maulschmidt not is
‘Well, if this isn’t Mister Maulschmidt!’ (SURPRISE) EXCLAMATIVE

≈ ‘Surprisingly, there’s Mister Maulschmidt!’
≠ ‘I wish that this is indeed (not) Mister Maulschmidt.’ (#optative paraphrase)
b. Wenn du ihn halt auch so lange hast warten lassen!
   ‘Well, if you had to make him wait for so long!’
   ≈ ‘You should not have made him wait for so long!’
   ≠ ‘I wish that you had to make him wait for so long.’
   (#optative paraphrase)

c. Mein Gott! Der Olaf! Wenn ich den schon sehe!
   ‘My God! Olaf! If I just see him!’
   ≈ ‘To see Olaf makes me unhappy!’
   ≠ ‘I wish that I see Olaf.’
   (#optative paraphrase)

(Scholz 1991:40,45,48, paraphrases and labels are mine)

⇒ In contrast, an antecedent of a conditional cannot be stranded if it is used to retrieve a proposition:

(53) Wenn es doch regnet, #(müssen wir die Party absagen).
   ‘Since it’s DOCH raining, we have to cancel the party.’

⇒ Currently this is an open research question how this might be explained; I aim to address this question in future research.

References


Rifkin, J. 2000. If only if only were if plus if only. In CLS 36-1, ed. A. Okrent and J. P. Boyle, 369–384.


