Counterexpectation, concession, and free choice in Tibetan and beyond

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Introducing Tibetan *yin.na'ang*

Tibetan *yin.na'ang* ཡིན་ནའང་ appears to have three distinct uses:

(1) **Counterexpectational discourse particle 'however':**
བཀྲ་ཤིས་དགེ་རྒན་རེད། **ཡིན་ནའང་**སྤྱང་པོ་མི་འདུག

bKra.shis dge-rgan red. **Yin.na'ang** spyang.po mi-'dug.
Tashi teacher COP YIN.NA'ANG clever NEG-AUX
'Tashi is a teacher. **However**, [he] isn't smart.'

Introducing Tibetan *yin.na'ang*

Tibetan *yin.na'ang* ཡིན་ན་འང་ appears to have three distinct uses:

(2) **Concessive scalar focus particle:**

Context: Don't worry, the test is easy.

དེབ་གཅིག་**ཡིན་ན་འང་**སྐྱོག་ན་ཡིག་ཚད་མཐར་འཁྱོལ་གི་རེད།

[Dep [gcig]$_F$ **yin.na'ang** klog-na] yig.tshad mthar.'khyol-gi-red.

book one YIN.NA'ANG read-COND exam succeed-IMPF-AUX

≈ '[If [you] read **even/at least** [one]$_F$ book], [you] will pass the exam.'

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(3) ***Wh* universal free choice item (∀-FCI):**
ནོར་བུ་[ཁ་ལག་གི་]**ཡིན་ནའང་**ཟ་གི་རེད།
Nor.bu [(kha.lag) **ga.re yin.na'ang**] za-gi-red.
Norbu food what YIN.NA'ANG eat-IMPF-AUX
'Norbu eats **anything** / **any** food.'

Yin.na'ang = yin + na + yang

Yin.na'ang is also variably *yin.na.yang* ཡིན་ན་ཡང་ or *yin.n'i* ཡིན་ནའི་ and is morphologically clearly:

(4)

ཡིན་	ན་	ཡང་		ཡིན་ན་ཡང་		ཡིན་ནའང་		ཡིན་ནའི
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COPULA	**COND**	**EVEN**						/yine/

Roughly, then, *yin.na'ang = even-if-it's*.

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    - I develop **a new approach to universal free choice,** which does not stipulate its quantificational force.

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- Similar constructions — with the same/similar ingredients and the same/similar range of uses — is attested in **Dravidian languages** (Balusu 2020) and **Japanese**.

(5) COP-COND-EVEN particle focus particle *wh*-quant.

Tibetan	*yin-na-yang*	'but'	CSP	∀-FCI
Kannada	*aad-ar-uu*	'but'	CSP	∀-FCI, ∃-FCI, NPI
Japanese	*de--mo*	'but'	CSP, 'for ex.'	∀-FCI

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Roadmap

§2 Counterexpectational particle

§3 Morphosyntactic aside

§3 Concessive scalar particle

§4 *Wh* universal free choice item

§5 Cross-linguistic extensions

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§2 Counterexpectational discourse particle

Yin.na'ang as a discourse particle

- "*Yin.na'ang q*" refers to a prior proposition *p* and
  (a) requires an expectation that "if *p*, unlikely *q*" and
  (b) commits the speaker to *q*.

(6) **Counterexpectation is required:**

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he food a.lot eat-IMPF-AUX

Yin.na'ang rgyags.pa chags-gi-ma-red.

YIN.NA'ANG fat become-IMPF-NEG-AUX

'He eats a lot of food. # However, he doesn't gain weight.'

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Analysis

Yin.na'ang takes an unpronounced propositional anaphor:

(7) [[$pro_{=p}$]$_F$ yin-na] =yang q

COP-COND EVEN

Literal LF: EVEN (if it's [p]$_F$, q)

Analysis

(8) **Deriving counterexpectation:**

a. Let P be a set of relevant alternatives to p — propositions p' where the conditional "if p', q" is relevant to consider.

b. EVEN requires that the conditional "if p, q" be less likely than "if p', q" for all $p' \in P$.

c. This scalar condition requires low credence in "if p, q," incompatible with an expectation that "if p, likely q." This utterance therefore signals and reinforces an expectation that "if p, likely not q."

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a. The proposition *p* was asserted prior by the same speaker or by another speaker and not denied, committing the speaker to *p*.

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a. Assume that *P* in (8) exhausts all relevant possibilities. This is what Bennett (1982) calls an "introduced" *even if* conditional.

b. In such cases, the assertion "EVEN if $[p]_F$, *q*" implicates the truth of the consequent *q*. See von Fintel 1994: §5.3.3.

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Summary

- What we've done is to use EVEN to build a *concessive* ('although/even though') relation from a *causal* one, as is cross-linguistically common (König 1991: 82–83), and use that to signal *counterexpectation*.

See also Ippolito 2004 for related discussion of English concessive *still* and Balusu 2020 for a similar analysis of Kannada *aad-ar-uu*.

§3 On the syntax of X=*yin.na'ang*

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Taking the morphology of *yin.na'ang* at face value — COPULA + COND + EVEN (4) — *yin.na'ang* is a copular conditional clause with EVEN.

Let's look at another FCI example in more detail...

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(11) Context: Pema is very friendly.

པད་མ་ཕྲུགུ་**སུ་ཡིན་ནའང་**ལ་སྐད་ཆ་བཤད་གི་རེད།

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Two questions for the form X=*yin.na'ang* (FCI and concessive scalar):

1. the arguments of the copular predicate; and
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The arguments of the copular predicate

At first glance, it may be tempting to describe the *wh*-FCI as a *wh*-phrase + *yin.na'ang*.

(12) **But *wh=yin.na'ang* doesn't take 'which' phrases:**

a. ཁ་ལག་**ག་གི་**ཡིན་ནང་

*[kha.lag **ga.gi**] yin.na'ang
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'any (of the) food'

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The arguments of the copular predicate

- Instead, I propose that the nominal (if present) is the first argument to the copula, as a bare definite, and the simplex *wh* is the second. With no nominal, the first argument is *pro*.

(13) ***Wh=yin.na'ang* takes a nominal and a simplex *wh*-word:**

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X=*yin.na'ang* is a clausal structure in an argument position which describes that argument; in other words, a *head-internal relative* or *amalgam* (Lakoff 1974; see also Kluck 2011):

(14) John is going to I think it's Chicago on Saturday.

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...but many approaches to head-internal relatives and amalgams will not apply here, as the embedded clause is a *conditional* clause.

Proposal

- I adopt the Shimoyama 1999 anaphora approach for (Japanese) head-internal relatives: the clause is interpreted as adjoined to the main clause at LF, with its surface position interpreted as a pronoun.

(15) a. (11): Pema talks to [even if {*pro*/the child}$_7$ is who] $\Longrightarrow$

b. LF: [even if {*pro*/the child}$_7$'s who], she talks to *them*$_7$ $\Longrightarrow$

EVEN [if {*pro*/the child}$_7$'s who, she talks to *them*$_7$]

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§4 Concessive scalar focus particle

Concessive scalar particles

Concessive scalar particles are licensed in non-veridical environments and...

- Alonso-Ovalle (2016: 185): “trigger a characteristic interpretation: they convey a strengthening effect in downward entailing environments, a ‘settle for less’ interpretation in modal contexts...” and
- Crnič (2011: 5): associate with “the lowest element on the pragmatic scale.”

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Concessive scalar particles

(16) **Spanish *aunque sea* (Lahiri 2010)**

a. ¡Déme **aunque sea** un vaso de agua, médico de mierda!
give.me AUNQUE SEA one glass of water doctor of shit
'Give me **at least** [a glass of water]$_F$, you crappy doctor!'

b. Si lees **aunque sea** UN libro, vas a aprobar.
if you read AUNQUE SEA one book, you'll pass
≈ 'If you read **even just/at least** [one]$_F$ book, you'll pass.'

Languages vary in whether negation licenses CSPs (Alonso-Ovalle 2016).

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b. Si lees **aunque sea** UN/*CINCO libro, vas a aprobar.
if you read AUNQUE SEA one/*five book, you'll pass
≈ 'If you read **even just/at least** [one]$_F$ book, you'll pass.'

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Languages vary in whether negation licenses CSPs (Alonso-Ovalle 2016).

CSP *yin.na'ang* in a conditional

(17) **CSP *yin.na'ang* licensed by a conditional:**

དེབ་གཅིག་**ཡིན་ནའང་**གློག་ན་ཡིག་ཚད་མཐར་འཁྱོལ་གི་རེད། =(2)

[Dep [gcig]$_F$ **yin.na'ang** klog-na] yig.tshad mthar.'khyol-gi-red.

book one YIN.NA'ANG read-COND exam succeed-IMPF-AUX

≈ '[If [you] read **even just** one book], [you] will pass the exam.'

CSP *yin.na'ang* in a conditional

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#དེབ་གསུམ་**ཡིན་ནའང་**སྐྱོག་ན་ཡིག་ཚད་མཐར་འཁྱོལ་གི་རེད། =(2)

[Dep [gsum]$_F$ **yin.na'ang** klog-na] yig.tshad mthar.'khyol-gi-red.

book three YIN.NA'ANG read-COND exam succeed-IMPF-AUX

≈ '[If [you] read **even just** three...], [you] will pass the exam.'

CSP *yin.na'ang* under negation

(18) **CSP *yin.na'ang* licensed by negation:**

བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཨང་གསུམ་པ་**ཡིན་ནའི་**ལེན་**མི་**འདུག

bKra.shis ang [gsum]$_F$-pa **yin.n'i** len-**mi**-'dug.

Tashi number three-ORD YIN.NA'ANG receive-NEG-AUX

'He didn't **even** get [third]$_F$ place.'

CSP *yin.na'ang* under negation

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*བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཨང་གསུམ་པ་**ཡིན་ནའི་**ལེན་འདུག

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'He **even** got [third]$_F$ place.'

CSP *yin.na'ang* in an imperative

(19) **CSP *yin.na'ang* licensed in an imperative:**

ཁ་ལག་ཏིས་**ཡིན་ནའི་**ཟ་དང་།

Kha.lag [tis]$_F$ **yin.n'i** za-(dang)!

food a little YIN.NA'ANG eat-IMP

≈ 'Eat **at least** a little food!'

Analysis, in the spirit of Lahiri 2010

(20) **Licensing in a conditional (17):**

a. LF: EVEN [$_{\alpha}$ if it$_4$'s [one/three]$_F$ book,
[if you read it$_4$, you will pass the exam]]

b. $[\![\alpha]\!]^{alt} = \left\{ \begin{array}{r} ^{\wedge}\text{if it}_4\text{'s } n \text{ books, [if you read them}_4\text{,} \\ \text{you will pass the exam]} \end{array} : n \geq 1 \right\}$

c. With a weak element, 'one':

$[\![\alpha]\!]^{o}$ = $^{\wedge}$if it$_4$'s one book, [if you read it$_4$, you will pass...]

The prejacent $[\![\alpha]\!]^{o}$ is the least likely within $[\![\alpha]\!]^{alt}$, satisfying EVEN.

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d. With a stronger element, 'three':

$[\![\alpha]\!]^{o}$ = $^{\wedge}$if it$_4$'s three books, [if you read it$_4$, you will pass...]

$[\![\alpha]\!]^{o}$ is *not* the least likely alternative and so EVEN is infelicitous.

Analysis, in the spirit of Lahiri 2010

(21) **Licensing by negation with 'even' reading (18):**

a. LF: EVEN [$_{\alpha}$ if it$_6$'s [third]$_F$ place, Tashi didn't get it$_6$]

b. $[\![\alpha]\!]^{o}$ = $^{\wedge}$if it$_6$'s third place, Tashi didn't get it$_6$

$$[\![\alpha]\!]^{alt} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} ^{\wedge}\text{if it}_6\text{'s } n\text{-th place,} \\ \quad \text{Tashi didn't get}_6 \end{array} : n \in \{1, 2, 3\} \right\}$$

Assuming getting first place is less likely — or more noteworthy (Herburger 2000) — than second, etc., *not* getting third place will be the least likely, satisfying EVEN.

This follows the logic of Lahiri 1998.

Analysis, in the spirit of Lahiri 2010

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(22) **Licensing *yin.na'ang* in an imperative (19):**

a. LF for (19): EVEN [$_{\alpha}$ IMP(if it's [a little]$_{F}$ food$_{3}$, you eat it$_{3}$)]

b. If imperatives don't have truth conditions (*pace* Kaufmann 2012), we can't order them by likelihood or entailment. But we can order imperatives by *noteworthiness* (Herburger 2000).

c. In a context where a stronger request — e.g. IMP(if it's *a lot* of food$_{3}$, you eat it$_{3}$) — is also appropriate, the speaker's choice to make the weaker request with 'little' is noteworthy, satisfying EVEN.

d. This derives the "at least" or "settle for less" (Alonso-Ovalle 2016) flavor of the CSP here.

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Summary

- Following Lahiri 2010 on *aunque sea*, the combination of a copula, conditional, and ‘even’ can derive these interpretations of concessive scalar *yin.na’ang*.

§5 *Wh* universal free choice item

Universal free choice items

Universal free choice items (∀-FCIs) are licensed in a range of modal/conditional and non-episodic (non-veridical; Giannakidou 2001) environments and lead to *universal free choice inferences*:

(23) $f(\text{FCI}_x) \Longrightarrow$ for any choice of x, $f(x)$ is true

(See e.g. Giannakidou 2001, Kratzer and Shimoyama 2002)

Wh in Tibetan

As *wh=yin.na'ang* FCIs involve a *wh*-word, I introduce some background:

(24) **Tibetan is *wh*-in-situ:**

ཐུགས་སྤྱོད་ལ་སུ་སྐྱེབས་སོང་པས།

[$_{TP}$ Thugs.spro-la *su* slebs-song] (-pas?)

party-DAT who arrive-AUX -Q

'Who came to the party?' / *'Someone came to the party.'

(25) ***Wh*-EVEN NPI:** (see Erlewine and Kotek 2016)

ཐུགས་སྤྱོད་ལ་སུ་**ཡང་**སྐྱེབས་**མ་**སོང།

Thugs.spro-la *su*-**yang** slebs-*(**ma**)-song.

party-DAT who-EVEN arrive-NEG-AUX

'No one came to the party.'

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As *wh=yin.na'ang* FCIs involve a *wh*-word, I introduce some background:

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Wh-quantification in Alternative Semantics

I employ the framework for *wh*-quantification in Alternative Semantics in my work in progress; see e.g. Erlewine 2019.

- *Wh*-words have an alternative set ranging over its domain but no ordinary value (Ramchand 1997, Beck 2006, Kotek 2014):

(26) a. $[\![su/who]\!]^{o}$ undefined

b. $[\![su/who]\!]^{alt} = \{x : x \text{ animate}\}$

(27) a. $[\![\text{TP}]\!]^{o}$ undefined

b. $[\![\text{TP}]\!]^{alt} = \{^{\wedge}\text{Tashi came...}, \ ^{\wedge}\text{Sonam came...}, \ \ldots\}$

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(28) **Interpretability:** (based on intuitions in Rooth 1992, Beck 2006)

To interpret α, $[\![\alpha]\!]^{o}$ must be defined and $\in [\![\alpha]\!]^{alt}$.

- To interpret $[\![\text{TP}]\!]$ in (27) above as a question, an operator ALTSHIFT applies to convert it into a valid question denotation. See Kotek 2019.

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Wh-quantification in Alternative Semantics

- Focus particles such as EVEN can't compose with (27) because they require a defined ordinary value (the prejacent).

- To fix this problem, I propose the following covert ∃:

(29) a. $[\![\exists\ \alpha]\!]^{o} = \bigvee [\![\alpha]\!]^{alt}$ b. $[\![\exists\ \alpha]\!]^{alt} = [\![\alpha]\!]^{alt}$

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(30) **Reset:**

Op is "resetting" if it specifies $[\![\alpha]\!]^{alt} := \{[\![\alpha]\!]^{o}\}$

This allows for a compositional derivation of *wh*-EVEN NPIs in Tibetan (25), following the Lahiri 1998 logic for enforcing polarity-sensitivity through a scalar particle. See Erlewine 2020.

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Deriving ∀-FC

(31) **Computing the *wh* ∀-FCI in (11):**

a. (11): Pema talks to [even if {*pro*/the child} is *who*] ⟹

b. LF: EVEN [$_{\alpha}$ if [∃ [it$_7$'s *who*]], [she talks to *them*$_7$]]

Deriving ∀-FC

(32) a. $[\![\alpha]\!]^{o}$ = ^if it$_7$'s *someone*, she talks(HABITUAL) to them$_7$

b. $[\![\alpha]\!]^{alt}$ = {^if it$_7$'s *x*, she talks(HABITUAL) to them$_7$: *x* human}

The conditional restricts the domain of a modal/temporal quantifier (Lewis 1975, Kratzer 1979, 1986, von Fintel 1994). Following Arregui et al. 2014, I model the habitual imperfective as a universal quantifier over "characteristic" situations (Cipria and Roberts 2000: 325).

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(33) ∀ characteristic situations *s* she talks to $g(7)$ in *s*

Deriving ∀-FC

(32) a. $[\![\alpha]\!]^{o}$ = ^if it$_7$'s *someone*, she talks(HABITUAL) to them$_7$

b. $[\![\alpha]\!]^{alt}$ = {^if it$_7$'s *x*, she talks(HABITUAL) to them$_7$: *x* human}

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(33) ∀ characteristic situations *s* and assignments *g*,
where *g*(7) exists and is human in *s*, she talks to *g*(7) in *s*

Deriving ∀-FC

(34) a. $[\![\alpha]\!]^o = {}^\wedge\forall s, g[g(7)$ defined, human in $s \rightarrow$ she talks to $g(7)$ in $s]$

b. $[\![\alpha]\!]^{alt} = \left\{ {}^\wedge\forall s, g[g(7) = x \rightarrow \text{she talks to } g(7) \text{ in } s] : x \text{ human} \right\}$

$[\![\alpha]\!]^o$ asymmetrically entails every alternative in $[\![\alpha]\!]^{alt}$.

EVEN then applies to α. The presupposition of EVEN will be satisfied: the prejacent is the least likely alternative.

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Deriving ∀-FC

- **The universal force of ∀-FCIs comes from the universal modal/temporal quantification** — here, habitual — **which is restricted by the conditional!**

(35) **But what if the conditional restricts a possibility modal?**

a. $[_{\alpha}$ POSSIBLE [she talks to $g(7)$]]
∃ accessible w she talks to $g(7)$ in w

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But here, the prejacent $[\![\alpha]\!]^{o}$ is *weaker* than each of the alternatives in $[\![\alpha]\!]^{alt}$. The prejacent cannot be less likely than its alternatives, so EVEN is infelicitous!

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Ensuring ∀-FC

- The semantics of EVEN ensures that *wh=yin.na'ang* (≈ *even if it's someone*) conditionals can only restrict universal modal/temporal operators!

Wh=yin.na'ang with possibility modal

(36) ***Wh-yin.na'ang* FCI with deontic possibility modal:**
ངའི་ཁྱི་[ཁལག་**གཤེ་ཡིན་ནའང་**]ཟ་ཆོག་གི་རེད།

Nga-'i khyi [(kha.lag) **ga.re yin.na'ang**] za-**chog**-gi-red.

1sg-GEN dog food what YIN.NA'ANG eat-ALLOWED-IMPF-AUX

'My dog is allowed to eat **anything** / **any** food.'

(37) **∀-FCI with possibility modal in (36):**

a. (3): My dog IMPF [ALLOWED eat [even if the food is what]]

b. If the food$_i$ exists, my dog ALLOWED eat it$_i$ × EVEN

c. If the food$_i$ exists, IMPF [my dog ALLOWED eat it$_i$] ◯ EVEN

⇒ ∀-FC > ALLOWED

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Wh=yin.na'ang in episodic description

(38) ***Wh=yin.na'ang* is ungrammatical in episodic descriptions:**

*བཀྲ་ཤིས་ད་ལྟ་[ཁ་ལག་**གཱ་རེ་ཡིན་ནའང་**]བཟས་ཚར་སོང།

bKra.shis da.lta [(kha.lag) **ga.re yin.na'ang**] bzas-tshar-song.

Tashi now food what YIN.NA'ANG eat-finish-AUX

Intended: ≈ 'Tashi finished eating **any** food right now.'

Episodic descriptions claim the existence of a particular event: here, that there was a completion of eating, in the past, in the halo of 'now.'

- There is no modal/temporal operator which supplies universal force and therefore the prejacent will not be less likely than its alternatives, so EVEN cannot be satisfied here.

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§6 Conclusion

Summary

Tibetan *yin.na'ang* has three functions:

1. *Yin.na'ang* counterexpectational discourse particle
2. X *yin.na'ang* concessive scalar focus particle
3. *wh yin.na'ang* universal free choice item

- **All three uses can be derived compositionally from (4):**

(4) ཡིན་ ན་ ཡང་
yin + na + yang
COPULA CONDITIONAL EVEN

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ཡིན་	ན་	ཡང་
yin	+ na	+ yang
COPULA	CONDITIONAL	EVEN

Theoretical implication

- **A new approach to universal free choice**, parasitic on an existing universal/necessity operator via the conditional, enforced by the logical properties of motivated by its overt morphology (4).

  See also its further formalization in Erlewine 2020.

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Extensions

- If this is really derived from the independent conventional semantics for the copula, conditional, and *even*, we might expect similar expressions in other languages.

Rahul Balusu has recently shown (2019, 2020) this to be true in a range of Dravidian languages!

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Extensions: Telugu

For example, Telugu *ai-naa* = COP-EVEN.IF has three functions:

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! But there are subtle differences! For example, Telugu *wh ai-naa* also allows ∃-FCI ('somebody or other') readings. See Balusu 2019, 2020.

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Extensions: Japanese

Japanese *demo* has three functions:

1. *Demo* counterexpectational discourse particle
2. X *demo* concessive scalar focus particle
3. *wh demo* universal free choice item

See the handout's Appendix for some data and one particularly striking parallel between Tibetan *yin.na'ang* and Japanese *demo*.

! But there is a subtle difference! *Demo* has a 'for example' use (Watanabe 2013). See Appendix in handout.

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1. *Demo* counterexpectational discourse particle
2. X *demo* concessive scalar focus particle / ‘for example’
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! But there is a subtle difference! *Demo* has a ‘for example’ use (Watanabe 2013). See Appendix in handout.

On decomposition

A closing thought on constructional transparency...

A complication is that Japanese *demo* is not a synchronically productive combination of copula, conditional, and *even*.

- Hiraiwa and Nakanishi (to appear) propose that the Japanese surface form *demo* is a conventionalized contraction of *dear-te-mo*, which is transparently COP-COND-EVEN. But the proposed contraction is not a productive process.

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Martin Haspelmath @haspelmath · May 19

Replying to @themitcho

A compositional analysis may be possible (for some languages), but is it necessary? Since it's not possible for all languages, isn't a uniform noncompositional story the null hypothesis?

1 2



mitcho @themitcho · May 19

wow, my intuition would be the opposite: as these ingredients (wh, conditionals, 'even') have other uses in language, shouldn't a compositional story be the null hypothesis?

I recognize that there are languages with fixed expressions, grammaticalized from such structures, too.

1 4



Martin Haspelmath @haspelmath · May 19

Why? How do you systematically distinguish between the two situations? I think that when a pattern is productive, it must exist for the speakers. When it's unproductive, it may exist, but typically, we simply don't know. So it's better to take its non-existence as a default.

1 1



mitcho @themitcho · May 19

“when a pattern is productive, it must exist for the speakers” — interesting. for what it’s worth, for this Tibetan construction at hand, speakers describe its parts as decomposed, and the free choice is productive with non-copular verbs and other wh-words too

4

On decomposition

- The success of the decomposition for Tibetan *yin.na'ang* — from its ingredients, COPULA + CONDITIONAL + EVEN — is valuable for understanding this class of expressions, **both synchronically productive and not:**
  - We might find other cases where the morphology and semantics are quite transparent (Dravidian?)
  - and for others, it offers an explanation for *why* a language bundles such meanings together, even if its morphology is now calcified (Japanese).

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  - and for others, it offers an explanation for *why* a language bundles such meanings together, even if its morphology is now calcified (Japanese).

Thank you!

ཐུགས་རྗེ་ཆེ།

Q&A: Wednesday July 22, 10:30 am CEST

I thank Kunga Choedon, Pema Yonden, and Tenzin Kunsang for patiently sharing their language with me. For earlier comments and discussion, I thank Maayan Abenina-Adar, Rahul Balusu, Kenyon Branan, Sihwei Chen, Chris Davis, Hadas Kotek, Elin McCready, and audiences at NELS 50, LSA 2020, and the National University of Singapore.

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