



## Facts and Ideals: On the Role of *doch* in Conditionals and Optatives\*

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**Abstract.** This paper addresses *optative constructions*, constructions that express a wish or desire without a modal that means ‘wish’ or ‘want’. Focusing on German, I argue that “expressing a wish” is a possible use of a conditional antecedent that is freely available. The question is how certain elements, such as the contrastive particle *doch* (or the focus particle *nur* ‘only’), which are typical for optative constructions, interact with this wish. I argue that they interact with the wish indirectly; they have a meaning that is independent from optativity, but which can be used to bring out an already available wish reading. This is achieved by eliminating alternative readings. Discussing German *doch* as a case study, I show how this interaction can be made precise.

### 1 The Puzzle

Optative constructions (Scholz 1991, Rosengren 1993, Rifkin 2000, Asarina & Shklovsky 2008, Biezma 2010, Gärtner 2010) express a wish or desire without containing a modal that means *wish* or *want*. This is illustrated in (1); (1a) conveys a wish that appears equivalent to the wish described in (1b).

- (1) a. **If only** John had come to the party!  
b. **I wish** John had come to the party.

In many languages, optatives seem to have the shape of conditional antecedents that contain the particle *only* (Rifkin 2000). In some languages, other particles are prototypical markers of optative constructions; in German, (2a), the unstressed contrast particle *doch* (cf. Thurmair 1989) seems to support an optative reading; as shown in (2b), Dutch *toch* can do so as well.

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\* For helpful discussions, I thank Norbert Corver, Kai von Fintel, Hans-Martin Gärtner, Noah Goodman, Martin Hackl, Irene Heim, Sabine Iatridou, Angelika Kratzer, Prityy Patel-Grosz, Paul Portner, Josh Tenenbaum and Coppe van Urk; I would also like to thank the audience at MIT’s ling-lunch.

- (2) a. Wenn Hans **doch** einmal auf Maria gehört hätte!      *German*  
*if Hans doch once to Maria listened had*  
 ‘If only Hans had listened to Maria once!’
- b. Als Jan **toch** eens naar Marie had geluistered!      *Dutch*  
*if Jan toch once to Marie had listened*  
 ‘If only Jan had listened to Marie once!’

A question at the core of research such as Rifkin (2000) is what such particles contribute to an optative clause, specifically whether they compositionally contribute optativity. The present paper analyzes German *doch* in optatives as a case study, based on the semantics of *doch* in declaratives (Abraham 1991, Doherty 1987, Grosz in press, Karagjosova 2001, 2004, Lindner 1991, Ormelius-Sandblom 1997). In declaratives, *doch* roughly marks the modified proposition *p* as an established fact (in the sense of Kratzer & Matthewson 2009), which in the evaluation context is presupposed to contradict a salient alternative *r*, as shown in (3).

- (3) Hans kocht oder putzt immer, aber  $[\neg[p\wedge r]]$  nie beides]. Also wissen  
*Hans cooks or cleans always but never both thus know*  
 wir, dass  $[\neg r]$  Hans nicht gekocht hat], weil  $[p]$  er **doch** geputzt hat].  
*we that Hans not cooked has because he doch cleaned has*  
 ‘Hans always cooks or cleans, but never both. Therefore, we know that Hans didn’t cook, because he [doch] cleaned.’

*presuppositions triggered by “doch”:*

It is an established fact that  $[p = \text{Hans cleaned}]$ , and there is a salient alternative proposition  $[r = \text{Hans cooked}]$ , such that  $\neg[p\wedge r]$ .

This paper addresses two questions. First, can we devise a uniform semantics of *doch* that covers both its optative use and its use in non-optative constructions? Second, how is *doch* linked to optativity? I answer the first question in the affirmative and present a generalized analysis of *doch* that covers its optative and its non-optative uses. The second question is answered as follows: The contribution of *doch* to optative constructions is indirect in the sense that it can block non-optative readings in out-of-the-blue contexts.

## 2 The Proposal

### 2.1 A Uniform Analysis of *doch*

Before discussing optatives with the form of conditional antecedents, this section provides the general background for my analysis of *doch* in optative clauses. Consider first the difference in German between the root clause with

verb-second movement in (4a) and the unembedded *dass*-clause in (4b), Truckenbrodt (2006). By virtue of convention, a verb-second clause typically has the force of an assertion, (4a). In contrast, an unembedded *dass*-clause in German can be exclamative or have the optative force of a command or wish, (4b). I treat such conventional forces as reflecting different *uses* of the expressed proposition (i.e. as different speech acts, cf. Levinson 1983).

- (4) a. Ich **hätte** Rom noch einmal gesehen.  
*I had Rome still once seen*  
 ‘I would have seen Rome once more.’ (assertion)
- b. **Dass** ich Rom noch einmal gesehen **hätte!**  
*that I Rome still once seen had*  
 ‘I wish I had seen Rome once more!’ (wish / #assertion)

I will henceforth call utterances like (4a) *declarative statements* and cases like (4b) *dass-optatives*. Both utterance types allow for the presence of *doch*, (5). Again, the verb-second clause in (5a) is used as a (reinforcing) statement, whereas the *dass*-clause in (5b) expresses a wish. By virtue of *doch*, (5a) conveys that in a given set of circumstances, the speaker takes it to be granted that she would have seen Rome once more. The less transparent contribution of *doch* in (5b) is discussed further down. The core question is how to account for the presence of *doch* in both utterances in a uniform way.

- (5) a. Ich **hätte** Rom **doch** noch einmal gesehen.  
*I had Rome doch still once seen*  
 ‘(As we know,) I would have seen Rome once more.’ (statement)
- b. **Dass** ich Rom **doch** noch einmal gesehen **hätte!**  
*that I Rome doch still once seen had*  
 ‘I wish I had [doch] seen Rome once more!’ (wish)

In order to posit a uniform analysis of *doch*, we need to relativize its meaning to the type of the utterance that it occurs in. To do so, I pursue the following strategy. First, I assume that there are at least two contextually given sets of propositions that are used to manage the discourse (which I will henceforth call *context sets*): The *common ground* is the set that contains propositions that are treated as mutual knowledge by the discourse participants (Stalnaker 1974, 1978). The *ideal list* of a discourse participant *i* is the set that contains propositions that reflect *i*'s ideals (subsuming *i*'s wishes, *i*'s goals, and laws that *i* abides to). The ideal list replaces Han's (1998) Plan Set and Portner's (2005) To-Do List (which are reminiscent of Lewis' 1979 sphere of

permissibility), which it is based on<sup>1</sup>. It serves to order possible worlds into better worlds and less optimal worlds and thus behaves like an ordering source (Kratzer 1981). Having assumed that discourse contexts involve both a common ground and different participants' ideal lists, it is natural to assume that assertions (and statements in general), like (4a) and (5a), are speech acts that operate on the common ground, whereas wishes, like (4b) and (5b), are speech acts that operate on ideal lists. In other words, utterance types come with conventionalized instructions on where to assign the modified proposition.

We also need to assume that apart from speech acts that *add* to the common ground or to an ideal list (like assertions or commands), there must be speech acts that *reactivate* propositions from a context set, to make them salient in the discourse (e.g. as a premise for something else), cf. (6). An assertion can be rejected as inappropriate if the expressed proposition is shared knowledge, (6a); in contrast, a reactivating statement, marked by the particle *ja* cannot be rejected in this way, (6b). (Cf. Repp 2009, in the spirit of Krifka's 2007 common ground management.)

(6) 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 in the power*  
 'In 1968, Thatcher wasn't in power yet.'

B: Jaja, das weiß ich eh! 'Duh, I know that!'

b. *reactivating p from the common ground*

A: Im März 1968 war Thatcher **ja** noch nicht an der Macht.  
*in March 1968 was Thatcher ja yet not in the power*  
 'As we all know, in 1968, Thatcher wasn't in power yet.'

B: # Jaja, das weiß ich eh! 'Duh, I know that!'

By virtue of the (unstressed variants of the) German particles *doch* and *ja*, an utterance can be marked as reactivating old information, rather than adding new information. This is illustrated in (7a) versus (7b). If the modified proposition is shared knowledge of the speaker and hearer, as in (7a), *doch* and *ja* are possible, and a declarative without such particles (the lack of which is symbolized by 'Ø') is pragmatically odd. In contrast, if the modified information is new information, as in (7b), unstressed *doch* and *ja* are odd.

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<sup>1</sup> The label (*i*'s) *ideal list* is chosen (as opposed to *Plan Set* or *To-Do List*) to reflect the fact that it can contain propositions that *i* has no control over, such as *that it rains tomorrow*.

- (7) a. Context: H is well aware that she's been to Paris and S wants to make this shared fact salient in order to follow up on it.  
 Du warst **ja** / **doch** / # $\emptyset$  schon in Paris.  
*you were ja doch # $\emptyset$  already in Paris*  
 'You've (ja / doch / # $\emptyset$ ) already been to Paris.'
- b. Context: H is an amnesiac and believes that she has never been to Paris; S discovers an old flight ticket to Paris with H's name on it.  
 Du warst #**ja** / #**doch** /  $\emptyset$  schon in Paris.  
*you were #ja #doch  $\emptyset$  already in Paris*  
 'You've (#ja / #doch /  $\emptyset$ ) already been to Paris.'

We can now give an analysis of *doch*, relativized to speech acts, cf. (8). The 'familiarity' component discussed above is captured by (8a). Furthermore, (8b) captures the fact that *doch* differs from *ja* in that it presupposes that there is a salient alternative proposition *r*, which contradicts the modified proposition *p* in the utterance context (see Grosz in press for a recent discussion). I use the term *indicates* instead of 'presupposes' or 'implicates', as it is not clear how these terms apply at the speech act level.

- (8) *Semantics of "doch" (simplified and generalized to speech acts)*  
 For any proposition *p* used in a speech act  $\varphi$ ,
- doch p* indicates that the speaker considers *p* to be established as part of the context set targeted by  $\varphi$ .
  - doch p* indicates that there is a contextually salient proposition *r*, such that the common ground entails  $\neg[p \wedge r]$ .

Having established a distinction between ideal list and common ground and a uniform analysis of *doch*, we can now provide an analysis for (5a+b), in (9), omitting the meaning component in (8b) for ease of exposition.

- (9) a. Ich **hätte** Rom **doch** noch einmal gesehen.  
*I had Rome doch still once seen*
- speech act: **retrieve** [(in certain salient circumstances) the speaker would have seen Rome once more] from the **common ground**.
  - doch*  $\Rightarrow$  [(in such circumstances) the speaker would have seen Rome once more] is an established part of the **common ground**.
- b. **Dass** ich Rom **doch** noch einmal gesehen **hätte!**  
*that I Rome doch still once seen had*
- speech act: **retrieve** [the speaker has seen Rome once more] from the speaker's **ideal list**.
  - doch*  $\Rightarrow$  [the speaker has seen Rome once more] is an established part of the speaker's **ideal list**.

Having shown the analysis at work, it is worth pointing out a further parallel between *doch* in optatives and *doch* in non-optative clauses. Grosz (in press) argues that *doch* interacts with focus, positing that the salient proposition *r* that conflicts with the modified proposition *p* (in (8b)) must be a focus alternative, illustrated in (10).

- (10) Context: Georg and Peter see a blue Peugeot parked in front of the pub.  
 Peter: Schau, der Hans ist da! ‘Look, Hans is here!’  
 Georg: Nein, der Hans hat **doch** einen [GRÜNEN]<sub>F</sub> Peugeot.  
*no the Hans has doch a green Peugeot*  
 ‘No, (as we both know) Hans has [doch] a GREEN Peugeot.’
- i. *doch* indicates that Georg considers [<sub>p</sub> Hans has a green Peugeot] to be an established part of the common ground (i.e. not under de-bate).
  - ii. *doch* indicates that there is a salient focus alternative *r* = [Hans has a blue Peugeot], such that  $\neg[p \wedge r]$  (given that Hans only has one car).

While I have omitted this feature from (8b) as it is not at the core of the present discussion, such interaction with focus can also be observed in the case of optatives, illustrated in (11). Here, focus indicates which aspect of reality the speaker would like to change.<sup>2</sup> This can be taken as further evidence for a uniform contribution of *doch*.

- (11) a. Dass **doch** [OTTO]<sub>F</sub> die Nachtschicht mit Anna geteilt hätte!  
*that doch OTTO the night.shift with Anna shared had*  
 ‘If only it had been OTTO who shared the night shift with Anna!’
- b. Dass Otto **doch** [die NACHTschicht]<sub>F</sub> mit Anna geteilt hätte!  
 ‘If only it had been the NIGHT shift that Otto shared with Anna!’
- c. Dass Otto die Nachtschicht **doch** [mit ANNA]<sub>F</sub> geteilt hätte!  
 ‘If only it had been ANNA that Otto shared the night shift with!’

Having posited a uniform analysis of *doch*, section 2.2 considers conditional antecedents with *doch*. The remainder of this paper argues that a uniform approach to *doch* extends to optative and non-optative *if*-clauses and sheds light on why *doch* in an *if*-clause prefers an optative reading.

## 2.2 *Doch* in Conditional Antecedents

This section discusses what *doch* adds to conditional antecedents, covering both non-optative and optative cases. (12a) is a baseline example of a non-counterfactual conditional clause, (12b) is a counterfactual conditional clause.

<sup>2</sup> Replacing *dass* ‘that’ by *wenn* ‘if’ in (11) does not change the judgments, as counterfactual *dass*-optatives and counterfactual *wenn*-optatives are roughly equivalent (cf. Scholz 1991).

- (12) a. Wenn Karl gewinnt, (dann) wird gefeiert!  
*if Karl wins then it.is celebrated*  
 ‘If Karl wins, we celebrate.’
- b. Wenn Karl gewonnen hätte, (dann) hätten wir gefeiert!  
*if Karl won had then had we celebrated*  
 ‘If Karl had won, we would have celebrated.’

Adding *doch* to a conditional antecedent can have two effects. The first effect is illustrated in (13). Here, by means of using unstressed *doch* (typically in indicative conditional antecedents) the speaker conveys that the truth of the antecedent proposition is established (cf. also Iatridou 1991 on factual conditionals and *since*-clauses). For now, I assume that the antecedent is used in a secondary speech act (as an *embedded root clause*, cf. Hooper & Thompson 1973, Haegeman 2003), by means of which the antecedent proposition is reactivated from the common ground.

- (13) a. Wenn Karl **doch** gewinnt, dann wird gefeiert.  
*if Karl doch wins then it.is celebrated*  
 ‘Since Karl is obviously going to win, we will celebrate.’
- b. primary speech act: assert [if Karl wins, we celebrate]
- c. secondary s.a.: reactivate [Karl will win] from the **common ground**

The second effect of *doch* in conditional antecedents is shown in (14), (glossing over possible prosodic differences between (13) and (14)). Here, by virtue of unstressed *doch* (typically in counterfactual conditional antecedents) the speaker conveys a wish for the truth of the antecedent proposition<sup>3</sup>.

- (14) a. Wenn Karl **doch** gewonnen hätte, dann hätten wir gefeiert!  
*if Karl doch won had then had we celebrated*  
 ‘If only Karl had won, then we would have celebrated!’
- b. primary s.a.: assert [if Karl had won, we would have celebrated]
- c. secondary s.a.: reactivate [Karl won] from the speaker’s **ideal list**

The analysis presented in (8) derives the following. Assume that the secondary speech act is *retrieval* in both (13) and (14); in (13) it operates on the common ground, in (14) it operates on the speaker’s ideal list. It follows that in (13) *doch* conveys that the antecedent proposition is an established part of the common ground. By analogy, in (14) *doch* indicates that the antecedent proposition is an established part of the speaker’s ideal list. In both cases,

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<sup>3</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper why optative *if*-clauses can occur without a consequent, as in (2a) above, whereas non-optative *if*-clauses require a consequent.

*doch* supports (or even *triggers*) retrieval of this proposition from some context set. I now provide evidence for such a contribution of *doch*.

(15) and (16) show that *doch* in a non-optative conditional antecedent indicates that the truth of the antecedent has been established (i.e. made part of the common ground). Therefore, *doch* can be placed into the antecedent in (15), where it has already been established that the antecedent is true.

- (15) A: Es regnet! – B: Und?  
 ‘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.’

In contrast, *doch* cannot be used in the conditional antecedent in (16), where it is still under debate whether the antecedent is true.

- (16) A: Regnet es? – B: Ich weiß nicht. Warum?  
 ‘Is it raining?’ ‘I don’t know. Why?’  
 A: (Na,) wenn es (#**doch**) regnet, müssen wir die Party absagen.  
*well if it doch rains must we the party cancel*  
 ‘(Well,) if / #Since it’s (#doch) raining, we have to cancel the party.’

This shows that *doch* can only be used in conditional antecedents if the truth of the antecedent is established. For *doch* in optative antecedents, an analogous point can be made. In example (17b), the *doch*-marked optative antecedent is ill-formed (as opposed to the straight imperative in (17a)). This follows if *doch* requires the hearer, Stefan, to accommodate that the modified proposition is already on the speaker’s ideal list. While hearers will often accommodate for such information (explaining that optatives are usually good in out-of-the-blue contexts, cf. Scholz 1991), Stefan has good reasons (e.g. social norms) to refuse to accommodate in (17b). This example thus feels inappropriate, as it conveys that Stefan should have known all along.

- (17) 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?  
 ‘Does it bother you if I have another beer?’  
 a. Thomas: Ach, Stefan, geh jetzt bitte. Mir wird es zu spät.  
*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, wenn du **doch** jetzt gehen würdest.  
*oh Stefan if you doch now leave would*  
 # ‘Oh Stefan, if only you’d leave now.’

Contrast (17) with (18); in (18), Thomas’s initial suggestion plausibly adds the proposition that Stefan leaves to Thomas’s ideal list. Therefore, it is felicitous in (18) to reactivate this proposition in the subsequent optative.

(18) Context: Thomas is sick. Stefan is looking after him even though there is a great party on for tonight.

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

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

Thomas: Ach, Stefan, wenn du **doch** jetzt gehen würdest.  
*oh Stefan if you doch now leave would*  
 ‘Oh Stefan, if only you’d leave now.’  
 Du hättest so viel Spaß!  
 ‘You would have so much fun!’

### 2.3 Why Does *doch* Seem to Cause Optativity?

At this point, we can return to the question of what *doch* contributes to an optative conditional. Specifically, why does *doch* trigger optativity in (19a), in the sense that (19a) is typically understood as an optative and a non-optative reading is not even considered, even though it is possible, cf. (19b).

- (19) a. Wenn Hans **doch** geblieben wäre ...  
*if Hans doch stayed were*  
 ‘If only Hans had stayed!’
- b. Wenn Hans **doch** geblieben wäre, wäre Fürchterliches passiert.  
*if Hans doch stayed were were horrible things happened*  
 ‘Since (under certain circumstances) Hans would have stayed,  
 horrible things would have happened.’

To account for this pattern, I propose that the contribution of *doch* in conditional antecedents makes an optative reading more accessible whenever the context does not explicitly favor a non-optative reading. To see this approach at work, we need to consider minimally contrasting pairs of utterances. So far, we have only considered indicative cases of *doch* in non-optative conditional antecedents, as in (20a). Crucially, such constructions are possible in the subjunctive, as shown in (20b) (and also in (19b) above).

- (20) a. Wenn Karl **doch** gewinnt, dann wird gefeiert.  
*if Karl doch wins then it.is celebrated*  
 ‘Since Karl is obviously going to win, we will celebrate.’
- b. Wenn Karl **doch** gewonnen hätte, hätten wir gefeiert.  
*if Karl doch won had had we celebrated*  
 ‘Since Karl would have won, we would have celebrated.’

Evidently, (20b) cannot be counterfactual, as *doch* requires the truth of the antecedent to be established whereas counterfactual antecedents are implied to be false. A context for (20b) is given in (21); as indicated, the antecedent in (20b) and (21) must be implicitly conditionalized. The implicit conditional is made overt (in parentheses) in (21).

- (21) Berti: I’m so annoyed that the race was canceled. – Susi: But why?  
 – Berti: Because Karl would have won. – Susi: So? Why do you care?  
 You don’t even like Karl. – Berti: But I like to celebrate and ...  
 ... wenn Karl (, wäre das Rennen nicht abgesagt worden,) **doch**  
*if Karl were the race not canceled been doch*  
 gewonnen hätte, hätten wir gefeiert.  
*won had had we celebrated*  
 ‘Since(, had the race not been canceled,) Karl would have won,  
 we would have celebrated.’

We can now construct an example that allows for both an optative reading and a non-optative reading, given in (22), (23) and (24).

- (22) Wenn Karl **doch** gewonnen hätte ... dann hätten wir gefeiert!  
*if Karl doch won had then had we celebrated*  
 ‘If Karl doch had won ... then we would have celebrated.’

What (22) conveys on its non-optative reading is given in (23).

- (23) *Non-optative reading of (22):*  
 If Karl had won, we would have celebrated.  
 Karl didn’t win (or lose) because the race was canceled.  
 We didn’t celebrate.  
*doch* ⇒ I reactivate from the common ground that [Karl would have won if the race had not been canceled].

Contrast this with the optative reading of (22), given in (24).

- (24) *Optative reading of (22):*  
 If Karl had won, we would have celebrated.  
 Karl didn’t win.

We didn't celebrate.

*doch*  $\Rightarrow$  I reactivate from my ideal list that [Karl did win].

The fact that *doch* in such ambiguous conditional antecedents typically gives rise to an optative reading can now be derived as follows. Under an optative use, (24), *doch* triggers a presupposition/implicature with respect to the speaker's ideal list. Given that the speaker is the highest authority with respect to her own ideal list, this will by default be self-fulfilling, i.e. the hearer will accommodate unless there are good reasons to refuse to accommodate (cf. Stefan in (17b)). In contrast, in non-optative cases, e.g. (23), *doch* triggers a presupposition/implicature with respect to the common ground, i.e. with respect to shared knowledge between speaker and hearer. This will fail in all contexts in which no such shared knowledge persists and cannot be easily accommodated. Furthermore, given that optatives with *doch* are typically in the subjunctive, a further asymmetry arises. Non-optative subjunctive antecedents that contain *doch* must be implicitly conditionalized, as in (21) and (23), whereas optative antecedents do not have such a requirement. It follows that non-optative readings, like (23), are further restricted to contexts in which the implicit conditionalization of the conditional antecedent can be successfully resolved. Therefore, by virtue of placing the particle *doch* in a conditional antecedent, as in (22), non-optative readings are restricted to very specific contexts and blocked in all other contexts. In contrast, *doch* in an optative conditional antecedent imposes restrictions that are typically self-fulfilling (in the sense that a hearer will accommodate a presupposition with respect to what the speaker wishes for). This makes *doch* acceptable in an optative conditional antecedent even when uttered out of the blue, deriving the fact that *doch* biases an optative reading.

#### 2.4 Against a Strictly Compositional Approach

I have argued that *doch* has a uniform semantics that is sensitive to the type of utterance it occurs in. The meaning of *doch* is thus in some sense independent from optativity, which predicts that typical optative features such as the particle *doch* are neither sufficient nor necessary conditions of optativity. We have already seen that particles like *doch* do not automatically give rise to an optative reading when placed into a subjunctive *if*-clause, (25).

- (25) Wenn du **doch** so einfach aufhören könntest zu rauchen,  
*if you doch so easily stop could to smoke*  
 warum machst du's dann nicht?  
*why make you 'it then not*  
 'If, **as we've established**, you could stop smoking that easily, then why  
 don't you do it?' (slightly sarcastic)

Similarly, my analysis predicts that optativity should be possible in the absence of any particle. This prediction also seems to be correct, as the bare conditional antecedent in (26)<sup>4</sup> can be understood as expressing a wish.

- (26) 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.'

## 2.5 Why Optatives without any Cues Fail

In sum, I have argued for a particular view of *doch* in conditional antecedents that can be summarized as in (27), where *doch* is viewed as an optativity cue.

- (27) Summary – Cue for a wish  
 An optativity cue is an element that cues a wish reading for a conditional antecedent as follows:
- i. Its semantic contribution is independent from optativity.
  - ii. Its meaning is compatible with a conditional antecedent that expresses a wish in a non-specific (or even out-of-the-blue) context.
  - iii. Its semantic contribution to a non-optative conditional antecedent requires a very specific context (which cannot be out-of-the-blue).
  - iv. Therefore, if the context does not determine whether a wish speech act is intended or not, the optativity cue conveys that a wish speech act is intended by blocking alternative readings, due to (iii).

An interesting aspect of optative constructions is that optatives without any cue are typically somewhat marked, (28), making the presence of particles seem obligatory (but see Rosengren 1993, cf. also (26) above).

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<sup>4</sup> From Johanna Spyri (1878): *Heimatlos. Geschichten für Kinder und auch für solche, welche die Kinder lieb haben*. Acceptability in modern-day German verified with native speakers.

(28) *in an out-of-the-blue context:*

Wenn ich <sup>??</sup>(**doch**) reich wäre!  
*if I doch rich were*  
 ‘If <sup>??</sup>(**doch**) I were rich!’

While (26) suggests that optatives without particles are not always ill-formed, the question arises why optatives without any particles are dispreferred. I propose that this follows from treating such particles as optativity cues, if we make standard assumptions on rational discourse participants (cf. Lewis’s 1969 *signaling games*). If a speaker has to decide whether to use optativity cues and the hearer has to decide how to interpret conditional antecedents without such cues, the most successful strategies are typically those where speakers always use cues and hearers always interpret antecedents without cues as true conditionals. It follows that hearers will typically understand (28) without *doch* as a (fragmentary) non-optative conditional, unless the context overrides this preference. In cases like (26), an optative intention can be inferred from other information (such as the inferred friendship between Rico and Stineli, the description of the context, the verb that is used, etc.).

### 3 Conclusion

I addressed the meaning and role of particles such as German *doch* in optative constructions. I argued that conditional antecedents can express a wish by virtue of a secondary speech act; particles do not encode this wish, but act as cues that bring out a possible wish reading (i.e. optative reading) by eliminating competing non-optative readings. I showed that this analysis correctly predicts that such particles are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions of optativity. Finally, I showed that this analysis can explain that unmarked conditional antecedents are typically understood as non-optative fragments. This follows, as rational discourse participants will usually pursue strategies where optative cues are used when optativity is intended and conditional antecedents without such cues are understood as non-optative.

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