Kanien'kéha conditionals:
The Optative in conditional constructions

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1   Introduction

Languages have constructions which express **non-accidental correlations** between situations.

- The two constructions in Kanien'kéha that I want to discuss today are given below: (1a) is a **conditional** and (1b) is a *whenever*-**construction**

(1) a. Tóka' è:rhar **ahontatísheke'**,   **aionkhihró:ri'**   tsi   nihotikhwáksen.
         toka' ehrhar a-hon-atati-s-heke'   a-ionkhi-hrori-'   tsi   ni-hoti-khw-aksen
         if   dog   OPT-MPLA-talk-HAB-CONT   OPT-3PL>1PL-tell-PUNC   that PRT-MPLAfood-be.bad.STAT
         'If dogs could talk, they would tell us that their food sucks.'

     b. Tsi   ní:kon   ki' **enhahwistatshénri'**,   ice cream **enhahninòn:ra'**.
         tsi   ni-kon   ki' en-ha-hwist-a-tshenri-'   ice cream en-ha-hninon-hr-a'
         that PRT-be.amount   just FUT-MSGA-money-JR-find-PUNC   ice cream FUT-MSGA-buy-PURP-PUNC
         'Every time he finds money, he buys ice cream.'

My focus today will be on the form the verbs take in these constructions. The idea, roughly (I'll define what I mean by this below):

- The Optative is used in cases where the speaker **doesn't want to commit to the proposition**

- The Future is used when the speaker *does* **commit to the proposition.** (I'll focus less on this, but ask me about it or see §4.5 of my thesis for some of the discussion!)

Today:

- I'll exemplify some of the generalizations I've been able to draw so far...

- And ask for your help with the remaining puzzles.

Why?

- These are relatively low-frequency constructions but (I think) important for how we use language to talk about non-real situations. **Let me know your thoughts!**

- I haven't found any detailed descriptions of these properties. **Let me know if I've missed any!**

2 Conditionals: modal choice and (counter)factuality

The central empirical generalizations:

1. The use of the Optative leads to a **counterfactuality inference** about the proposition:

   - For *past temporal reference*, the **Optative-Stative** is used
   - For *present temporal reference*, the **Optative-Ongoing** is used
   - For *future temporal reference*, I'm less clear on the correct empirical generalization

Before I illustrate, let me clear up some important terms. Given a sentence of the form (1a), the proposition after *if/tóka'* is the ANTECEDENT, and the other proposition is the CONSEQUENT.[1]

(2) **Conditional terminology (see also (1a) above)**

   a. If dogs could talk, they would tell us that their food sucks.'

   b. ANTEDECENT: Dogs can talk.

   c. CONESEQUENT: They tell us that their food sucks.

I'll use the following definitions:

   - **Indicative conditional**: an expression used to describe that, since the **antecedent is true**, the consequent is *also* true.[2]

   - **Counterfactual conditional**: and expression used to describe that, **while the antecedent is not true**, if it had been, the consequent *would* be true.[3]

The difference is seen in a well-known example from Adams (1970):

(3) Context: someone killed Kennedy

   a. If Oswald **didn't** kill Kennedy, someone else **did.**   (Indicative conditional)

   b. If Oswald **hand't killed** Kennedy, someone else **would have.**   (Counterfactual conditional)

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[1]Technical detail: by "proposition" here, I mean the *prejacent* of the modal rather than the whole modalized proposition.

[2]Slightly more formally, for an antecedent p and consqeuent q: $[\![p]\!]$ is true at evaluation time t_0 in the evaluation world w_0 entails that $[\![q]\!]$ is true at evaluation time t_0 in the evaluation world w_0.

[3]Again, for an antecedent p and consqeuent q: $[\![p]\!]$ is true in some world w (but not necessarily in w_0), then $[\![q]\!]$ is true in that w.

2.1 Past temporal reference = Optative Stative

NB: I don't have a full set of minimal pairs for the full paradigm, so take my generalizations with a grain of salt!

- **Generalization 1a:** Indicative conditionals use the usual matrix-clause form

- **Generalization 1b:** Counterfactual conditionals use the Optative form

(4) **Past referring indicative conditional – Factual or Stative**
Context: Kó:r and Shawatis are roommates. They take turn doing the chores: today, they need to do the dishes and sweep. We are trying to figure out who did what. (I know that Kó:r washed the dishes; *wakaterièn:tare' tsi Kó:r wahaksoharénion'.*)

    a.   Tóka' Kó:r **wahaksoharénion'**,   (sok ne') Shawatis **wa'thatónhewe'**.
        toka Kor wa-ha-ks-ohare-nion-'   sok ne' Shawatis wa'-t-ha-at-onhew-e'
        if   Kor FACT-MsGA-dish-wash-DISTR-PUNC then NE Shawatis FACT-DUPL-MsGA-SR-sweep-PUNC
        'If Kó:r washed the dishes, then Shawatis swept the floor.'

    b.   Tóka' Kó:r **roksoharénion**,   (sok ne') Shawatis **tehotonhé:wen**.
        toka Kor ro-ks-ohare-nion   sok ne' Shawatis te-ho-at-onhew-en
        if   Kor MsGP-dish-wash-DISTR.STAT then NE Shawatis DUPL-MsGP-SR-sweep-STAT
        'If Kó:r has washed the dishes, then Shawatis has swept the floor.'

    c. #Tóka' Kó:r **ahaksoharénion'**,   (sok ne') Shawatis **tahatonhéwe'**.
        toka Kor a-ha-ks-ohare-nion-'   sok ne' Shawatis t-a-ha-at-onhew-e'
        if   Kor OPT-MsGA-dish-wash-DISTR-PUNC then NE Shawatis DUPL-OPT-MsGA-SR-sweep-PUNC
        Intended: 'If Kó:r washed the dishes, then Shawatis swept the floor.'

(5) **Past referring counterfactual conditional – Optative-Stative**
Context: Kó:r never does his chores! He didn't do the dishes and now we have flies in the house.

    a.   Tóka' **ahoksoharénion**   ne Kor, iah ki' thaionkwanahskwaién:take'
        toka a-ho-ks-ohare-nion   ne Kor iah ki th-a-ionkwa-nahskw-aient-ake'
        if   OPT-MsGP-dish-wash-DISTR.STAT NE Kor NEG just CONTR-OPT-1PLP-pet-have.STAT-CONT

          ne tsí'ks
          ne tsi'ks
          NE fly
        'If Kor had washed the dishes, we wouldn't have flies!'

    b. #Tóka' **wahaksoharénion'**   ne Kor, iah ki' teionkwanáhskwaien   ne
        toka wa'-ha-ks-ohare-nion-'   ne Kor iah ki te-ionkwa-nahskw-aien ne
        if   FACT-MsGP-dish-wash-DISTR-PUNC NE Kor NEG just NEG-1PLP-pet-have.STAT ne

          tsí'ks
          tsi'ks
          fly
        Intended: 'If Kor had washed the dishes, we wouldn't have flies!'

· **Generalization 2:** Counterfactual conditionals use the Optative *Stative*, not the Punctual.[4]

· **Open question:** Are the overt Pasts (*-(h)kwe'*, *-hne'*) good in these contexts?

(6)   **Past referring counterfactual conditional – Optative-Stative**
      Context: I see a rotten apple on the counter, and throw it away.

    a.   Aonkenonhwaktanì:'on   tóka' thí:ken sewahió:wane' **aonkwahiá:kon.**
         a-wake-nonhwakt-a-ni-'on   toka' thiken sewahiowane' a-wak-ahi-a-k-on
         OPT-1SGP-be.sick-JR-BEN-STAT if   this   apple   OPT-1SGP-fruit-JR-eat-STAT

         Ioiánere'   tsi   iah   tewakahiá:kon!
         io-ianer-e'   tsi   iah   te-wak-ahi-a-k-on
         NP-be.good-STAT that NEG NEG-1SGP-fruit-JR-eat-STAT
         'I would have been sick if I had eaten this apple. Good thing I didn't eat it!'

    b. # Aonkenonhwaktanì:'on   tóka' thí:ken sewahió:wane' **akà:iake'.**
         a-wake-nonhwakt-a-ni-'on   toka' thiken sewahiowane' a-k-ahi-a-k-e'
         OPT-1SGP-be.sick-JR-BEN-STAT if   this   apple   OPT-1SGA-fruit-JR-eat-PUNC

         Ioiánere'   tsi   iah   tewakahiá:kon!
         io-ianer-e'   tsi   iah   te-wak-ahi-a-k-on
         NP-be.good-STAT that NEG NEG-1SGP-fruit-JR-eat-STAT
         Intended: 'I would have been sick if I had eaten this apple. Good thing I didn't eat it!'

Table 1: Generalizations so far (? denotes lack of example in this handout), I

Temporal Ref.	Antecedent form	Indicative	Counterfactual
episodic past	FACT-PUNC	✓(4a)	✗(5b)
	STAT	✓(4b)	?
	OPT-PUNC	✗(4c)	✗(6b)
	OPT-STAT	?	✓(5a, 6a)

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[4]This is interesting in light of the observation for English that open future-referring conditionals are expressed with the simple past (*If your plants died next week, I would be very upset*), whereas "counterfactually-settled" future-referring conditionals are obligatorily expressed with the past perfect (*If your plants had died next week, I would have been very upset*). This is discussed at length by Arregui (2007) and others.

2.2 Present temporal reference = Optative Ongoing

(7) **Present referring indicative conditional**
Context: Shawátis and Kó:r only ever smoke together. You ask me where Shawátis is, but I haven't seen him. I see Kó:r outside smoking, though, which means that Kó:r is probably smoking as well.

  a. Tóka' Kó:r rotshókwen,   Shawátis ki' ò:ni' (rotshókwen)
         toka' Kor ro-atshokw-en   Shawatis ki' o'ni ro-atshokw-en
         if   Kor MsGP-smoke-STAT Shawatis just also MsGP-smoke-STAT
         'If Kor is smoking, then Shawatis is too.'

  b. #Tóka' Kó:r ahotshókwenke',   Shawátis ki' ò:ni'
         toka' Kor a-ho-atshokw-en-ke'   Shawatis ki' o'ni
         if   Kor OPT-MsGP-smoke-STAT-CONT Shawatis just also
         Intended: 'If Kor is smoking, then Shawatis is too.'

(8) **Present referring counterfactual conditional – Optative-Habitual**
Context: I'm sitting in my office, tired of work, and dreaming of being on the beach.

  a. Sénha **aonkwatshennonníhake'**   tóka' tsi   kaniataratátie' **aontakatawénsheke'**.
         senha aon-wak-atshennoni-hake'   toka tsi   kaniatar-atatie' aon-ta-k-atawen-s-heke'
         more OPT-1sGP-be.happy.STAT-CONT if   that river-along   OPT-CIS-1sGA-swim-HAB-CONT
         'If I were swimming by the beach, I would be happier.'

  b. #Sénha **wakatshennón:ni'**   tóka' tsi   kaniataratátie' **tkatá:wens**.
         senha wak-atshennoni'   toka tsi   kaniatar-atatie' t-k-atawen-s
         more 1sGP-be.happy.STAT if   that river-along   CIS-1sGA-swim-HAB
         Intended: 'If I were swimming by the beach, I would be happier.'

(9) **Present referring counterfactual conditional – Optative-Stative**
Context: I'm sitting in my office, very hungry, and dreaming about dinner.

  a. Sénha **aonkwatshennonníhake'**   tóka' **taonkwatskà:honke'**.
         senha aon-wak-atshennoni-hake'   toka' t-aon-wak-atska'hon-ke'
         more OPT-1sGP-be.happy.STAT-CONT if   DUPL-OPT-1sGP-dine.STAT-CONT
         'If I were eating, I would be happier.'

  b. #Sénha **wakatshennónni**   tóka' **tewakatskà:hon**.
         senha wak-atshennoni   toka' te-wak-atshka'hon
         more 1sGP-be.happy.STAT if   DUPL-1sGP-dine.STAT
         Intended: 'If I were eating, I would be happier.'

Table 2: Generalizations so far (? denotes lack of example in this handout), I

Temporal Ref.	Antecedent form	Indicative	Counterfactual
episodic past	FACT-PUNC	✓(4a)	✗(5b)
	STAT	✓(4b)	?
	OPT-PUNC	✗(4c)	✗(6b)
	OPT-STAT	?	✓(5a, 6a)
episodic present	ONG	✓(7a)	✗(8b, 9b)
	OPT-ONG	✗(7b)	✓(8a, 9a)

2.3 States and habits = Optative Habitual or Optative Stative

(10) **Past habitual indicative conditional**
Tóka' Wátio **raterennó:thahkwe'**,   rorennakà:te
toka' watio r-aterennot-ha-hkwe'   ro-renn-a-ka'te
if   Watio MsGA-sing-HAB-FOR.PST MsGP-song-JR-have.many.STAT
'If Wátio was a singer, he knows a lot of songs.'

(11) **Past habitual subjunctive conditional**
Wátio   rakhonníhahkwe'.
Watio   ra-kh-onni-ha-hkwe'
Watio   MsGA-food-make-HAB-FOR.PST

    Tóka' Wátio **ahaterennóthake'**,   é:so tsi   tahotstikáhwhen.
    toka' Watio a-r-aterannot-ha-ke'   eso   tsi   t-a-ho-atsikahwh-en
    if   Watio OPT-MsGA-sing-HAB-CONT very that DUPL-OPT-MsGP-travel-STAT
'Watio was a cook. If he had been a singer, he would have travelled all over.'

(12) **State-predicate counterfactual conditional**
tóka' aonkkwatshéheke',   kanonhsowá:nen   aonkenonhsó:take'
toka a-wak-kwatshe-heke'   ka-nonhs-owanen   a-wake-nonhs-ot-a-ke'
if   OPT-1SGP-be.rich.STAT-CONT 1SGA-house-be.big.STAT OPT-1SGP-house-stand-STAT-CONT
'If I were rich, I would have a big house.' (vf)

2.4 Future temporal reference = unsure

The puzzle of the future

· Future reference is an open puzzle for counterfactuals: the proper analysis is still under debate

· The discussion is technical and relies on a clear separation on the *meaning* and the *form* of the
  conditional. See (13–14) for the English.

- ([13](#)) is called a 'Future Less Vivid (FLV)' – it is marked with the PAST but refers to a future eventuality.

(13) CONTEXT: You ask me to take care of your plants next week. I accept but I'm hesitant because I am not very good with plants, and I'm worried that they'll die in my care.

    a.   If your plants died next week, I would be very upset.

    b. #If your plants had died next week, I would have been very upset.   (adapted, [Arregui 2007](#))

(14) CONTEXT: [continued from ([13](#))] Later, you cancel your request because they've already died so no one needs to care for them. *That's a relief...*

    a. #If your plants died next week, I would be very upset.

    b.   If your plants had died next week, I would have been very upset.   (adapted, [Arregui 2007](#))

Is the future ever settled in Kanien'kéha?

- At least as it stands for now, Kanien'kéha morphologically mark both genuinely-open future events and (possibly) settled future events the same: with the Future.

- The example in ([16](#)) isn't great, though, since a *plan* might not be sufficient to consider the future settled (in contrast to the plant examples above).

(15) **Open future conditional**
Tóka' **eniokennó:ron** enióhrhen'ne' Kó:r enhawennahnó:ton' ne iá:we átste'
toka en-io-kennor-on eniohrhen'ne' Kor en-ha-wennahnot-on' ne iawe atste'
if FUT-NP-rain-STAT tomorrow Kor FUT-MsGA-read-PUNC NE instead outside

    ahoió'ten'.
    a-ho-io't-en'
    OPT-MsGP-work-PUNC
'If it rains tomorrow, Kor will read inside instead of working outside.'

(16) **Possibly (?) contrary-to-settled-fact future conditional**

    a. Tekatohtahrhóhsere' kí:ken enwatiahia'khserò:kten', enwá:ton' ken
           te-k-atohtahrho-hser-e' kiken en-w-at-iahia'khser-o'kt-en' en-w-aton' ken
           DUPL-1SGA-clean-PURP-INT? this FUT-NP-week-end-STAT FUT-NP-be.possible Q

           enhstié:nawa'se'.
           en-hst-ienawa's-e'
           FUT-2SG>1SG-help-PUNC
           'I'm going to clean the house this weekend, can you help?'

b. Iah, tóka' enióhrhen'ne' **tenhsatohtáhrho'** ne sanónhskon
    iah toka eniohrhen'ne' t-en-hs-atohtahrho-' ne sa-nons-kon
    no if tomorrow DUPL-FUT-2SGA-clean-PUNC 2SGP-house-LOC FUT-NP-be.possible

       enwá:ton' enkonié:nawa'se'.
       en-w-aton' en-kon-ienawa's-e'
       Q FUT-1SG>2SG-help-PUNC

    'No. If you were going to clean the house tomorrow, I could help you.'

c. #Iah, tóka' eniohrhen'ne' **tahsatohtáhrho'** ne sanónhskon
    iah toka eniohrhen'ne' t-a-hs-atohtahrho-' ne sa-nons-kon
    no if tomorrow DUPL-OPT-2SGA-clean-PUNC 2SGP-house-LOC FUT-NP-be.possible

       enwá:ton' enkonié:nawa'se'.
       en-w-aton' en-kon-ienawa's-e'
       Q FUT-1SG>2SG-help-PUNC

    Intended: 'No. If you were going to clean the house tomorrow, I could help you.'

2.5 Summary

Here's a table showing the space of possibilities given the contrasts I've drawn up above.

Table 3: Full set of generalizations in this handout (? denotes lack of example in this handout)

Temporal Ref.	Antecedent form	Indicative	Counterfactual
episodic past	FACT-PUNC	✓(4a)	✗(5b)
	STAT	✓(4b)	?
	OPT-PUNC	✗(4c)	✗(6b)
	OPT-STAT	?	✓(5a, 6a)
episodic present	ONG	✓(7a)	✗(8b, 9b)
	OPT-ONG	✗(7b)	✓(8a, 9a)
episodic future	FUT-PUNC	✓? (15)	✓? (16b)
	OPT-PUNC	?	✗? (16c)
past habit	HAB	✓(10)	?
	OPT-HAB	?	✓(11, 1a)
state	STAT	?	?
	OPT-STAT	?	✓(12)

My goal is to fill in this table and address any confounds, and get a clear empirical picture. If you find any good examples, please let me know!

- One possible confound – mismatching morphology on antecedent and consequent

- Is the generalization that Optative-*Statives* (and crucially *not* Optative-Punctuals) are used for past counterfactuals correct?

- The perennial question: what is the continuative doing?

References

Adams, Ernest W. 1970. Subjunctive and indicative conditionals. *Foundations of Language* 6:89–94.

Arregui, Ana. 2007. When aspect matters: The case of would-conditionals. *Natural Language Semantics* 15:221–264.