

Paradoxical desires
On counterfactual displacement of German *wünschen*
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In German, counterfactual (CF) marking on the desire verb *wünschen* ‘wish’ and its clausal complement signal that the attitude holder has a desire that is not supported by her beliefs.

- (1) Ich wünschte, du wärest hier.
 I wish-CF you be-CF here
 ‘I wish you were here.’

In (1), counterfactual displacement only partially applies, cf. von Fintel & Iatridou (2008) for crosslinguistic discussion: What is implicitly negated is not the desire for a proposition ϕ , but the doxastic basis of that desire. On the present proposal, CF-marking suspends an uncertainty presupposition (PSP) triggered by *wünschen*. (1) is implicitly conditionalized: The overt sentence functions as the nuclear scope to a covert necessity modal. The nuclear scope’s uncertainty PSP gets isolated into that modal’s restrictor, to be counterfactually displaced.

An uncertainty PSP for *wünschen*. *wünschen* requires an attitude holder’s uncertainty w.r.t. the truth of what she desires: There is no felicitous wishing for something whose falsity (2a) or truth (2b) is out of question.

- (2) a. Ich weiß, dass du morgen nicht kommst, ??doch ich wünsche es mir.
 I know that you tomorrow not come yet I wish it myself
 ‘I know that you won’t come tomorrow, yet I wish for it.’
 b. Ich weiß, dass du morgen kommst, ??und ich wünsche es mir.
 I know that you tomorrow come and I wish it myself
 ‘I know that you will come tomorrow, and I wish for it.’

So *wünschen* is captured by Heim (1992)’s analysis of *want*: An asserted ceteris paribus preference for a proposition ϕ over its negation is based on presupposed uncertainty w.r.t. ϕ .

- (3) a. $\llbracket \text{wünschen} \rrbracket = \lambda p_{s,t} . \lambda x_e . \lambda w_s : \exists w' \in \text{DOX}_x(w) : p(w') = 1, \& \exists w'' \in \text{DOX}_x(w) : p(w'') = 0.$
 $\forall w''' \in \text{DOX}_x(w) : \text{SIM}_{w'''}(p) <_{DES(x,w)} \text{SIM}_{w'''}(\neg p)$
 b. $\llbracket \text{wünschen} \rrbracket^{w@(\phi)}(a)$ is defined iff ϕ is true in some world w' among the attitude holder a ’s belief-worlds in the actual world $w@$, and false in some other world w'' among a ’s belief-worlds in $w@$.
 If defined, $\llbracket \text{wünschen} \rrbracket^{w@(\phi)}(a) = 1$ iff for each world w''' among a ’s belief-worlds in $w@$, a prefers those worlds maximally similar to w''' in which ϕ is true to those maximally similar to w''' in which ϕ is false.

Implicit conditionalization. I suggest the interpretation of (1) to be guided by the same mechanism that is active in cases like the following cited by von Fintel (1994).

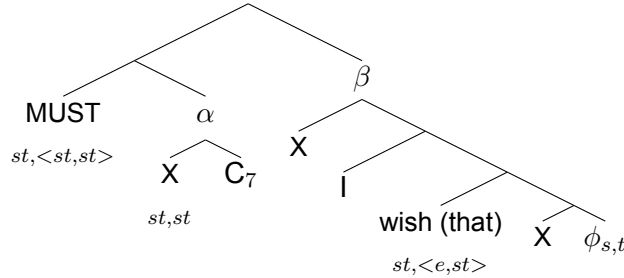
- (4) Robin Hood never misses.
 (von Fintel 1994: 25)

von Fintel treats such sentences as implicitly conditionalized: The overt clause functions as the nuclear scope to the adverbially realized quantifier *never*. The nuclear scope PSP triggered by *misses*, i.e., that Robin Hood shoots, gets accommodated into the quantifier’s restrictor. In the following LF for sentences like (1), CF-marking is represented as an operator X , which reasserts the proposition it attaches to, but presupposes the attitude holder’s disbelief in it. This operator constitutes the presuppositional reversal of Meyer’s (2013) doxastic operator K .

(5) $\llbracket X_\alpha \phi \rrbracket$ is defined iff in all of the speaker a's belief worlds, ϕ is false.

If defined, $\llbracket X_\alpha \phi \rrbracket$ is true if ϕ is true, and false otherwise.

(1) receives a tripartite structure introduced by a covert divalent necessity modal MUST. The overt sentence functions as the nuclear scope, β . The restrictor α branches into the X-operator and a contextual variable C_7 , which the assignment function g interprets as β 's PSP triggered by *wünschen*, i.e., uncertainty w.r.t. ϕ . The PSP gets suspended by being immediately targeted by X under α .



Based on this schema, (1) can be interpreted as follows. The definedness conditions in (6c) reflect the counterfactual PSPs triggered by each new occurrence of X. The italicized part states the PSP of α .

- (6) a. $\llbracket \phi \rrbracket^g = \lambda w_0$. the hearer H is with the speaker S in w_0
 b. $g(7) =$ the presupposition of β triggered by *wünsch-*, i.e., S's uncertainty w.r.t. H's presence:
 $\lambda w_1. \exists w' \in \text{DOX}_S(w_1)$: H is with S in w' , & $\exists w'' \in \text{DOX}_S(w_1)$: H is not with S in w''
 c. $\llbracket (1) \rrbracket^{g,w@}$ is defined iff in all of S's belief worlds in $w@$, *S is not uncertain about H's presence*; S has no doxastically founded ceteris paribus preference for H's presence over H's absence; and H is not with S.
 If defined, $\llbracket (1) \rrbracket^{g,w@} = 1$ iff in all possible worlds w^* in which S is uncertain about H's being with her, S has a doxastically founded ceteris paribus preference for H's presence over H's absence.

When α is made explicit, it becomes obvious that it actually gets a presuppositionally stronger interpretation than the one given in italics in (6c): Presupposed negation of uncertainty w.r.t. ϕ is too vague to make the conditional coherent, (7a). α needs to be strengthened to the certainty that $\neg\phi$, (7b). The assertion in (6c) must be revised accordingly.

- (7) a. Wenn ich nicht wüsste, ob du kommst: ?Ich wünschte, du kämest.
 if I not know-CF whether you come I wish-CF you come-CF
 'If I didn't know if you come: I'd wish you came.'
 b. Wenn ich nicht wüsste, dass du nicht kommst: Ich wünschte, du kämest.
 if I not know-CF that you not come I wish-CF you come-CF
 'If I didn't know that you don't come: I'd wish you came.'

Conclusion. On the present proposal, CF-marking on German *wünschen* suspends an uncertainty PSP via that PSP's accommodation into a CF-marked restrictor to a covert necessity modal. The result is subject to presuppositional strengthening. This analysis suggests CF-marking not do decide between presuppositional or asserted content, but to vaguely target their conjunction instead.

References. von Stechow, Kai (1994). *Restrictions on quantifier domains*. PhD thesis. UMass Amherst. • von Stechow, Kai, & Sabine Iatridou (2008). How to say ought in foreign: The composition of weak necessity modals. In: *Time and modality*. Springer, 115–141. • Heim, Irene (1992). Presupposition projection and the semantics of attitude verbs. *Journal of semantics* 9(3): 183–221. • Meyer, Marie-Christine (2013). *Ignorance and grammar*. PhD thesis. MIT.