

## Conditional constructions in Yopno and Tok Pisin

As in other Papuan languages, there are several ways to form conditional sentences in Yopno. The most common involves the use of the conditional-marker *kaŋ*, an example of which is found in the second transcript in the paper “Can the subaltern listen? Self-determination and the provisioning of expertise in Papua New Guinea”:

bo Nian dakwon moat+monjiyo-da yoma dawari dakwon iek+gorongap suwo-k  
or Nian gen children-subj area other gen clothes wash-nom

egip-ni-do nanda-ŋ **kaŋ**  
be-2/3p.fut-dat think-2/3p.pres **cond**

Or, if you want the children of Nian to wash the clothes of people from other villages,

tai on anpak-ŋon tai kw-a egip-no  
good this way-loc good go-2/3p.DS be-1p.NFut  
alright, you can keep doing things this way.

Like the Papuan language Hua discussed in Haiman (1978), Yopno morpholexically distinguishes “counterfactual” conditionals from “hypothetical” and “given” conditionals. To get a sense of what this means, look at the somewhat different pattern of encoding these three types of conditionals in English:

Counterfactual: If she had come, I would have seen her.  
Hypothetical: If she comes, I will see her.  
Given: Given that/When she came, I saw her.

*If*-marked conditionals are used to indicate that the protasis is either hypothetical or contrary to fact, whereas “given” conditionals, morpholexically distinguished by the use of *given that* or *when* in lieu of *if*, do not. *If*-marked conditionals taken together signal the “irreality” of a state of affairs. In contrast, Yopno *kaŋ*-marked conditionals are used for either hypothetical or real states of affairs. Counterfactual conditionals are morpholexically distinct, using the marker *tam*. *Kaŋ*-marked conditionals, then, indicate a non-counterfactual state of affair, a state of affairs that is either real or realizable. It should be noted that the Tok Pisin conditional marker *sapos* patterns much like English *if*, contrasting with the “given conditional” *taim* (“when”).

	Yopno	English	Tok Pisin
Counterfactual	<i>tam</i>	if	<i>sapos</i>
Hypothetical	<i>kaŋ</i>	if	<i>sapos</i>
Given	<i>kaŋ</i>	when, given that, etc.	<i>taim</i>

The conditional marker *kaŋ* appears to have grammaticalized from the verb ‘to see’ in its serialized form (i.e. a nonfinite verb form that is not inflected for tense, aspect, mood or person, sharing those features with the following verb). Though not specifically identified as a pathway of grammaticalization by Heine and Kuteva (2002), the grammaticalization of a verb of seeing into a

conditional marker fits their account of instances in which “process verbs, on account of some salient semantic property, give rise to grammatical markers used for clause combining” (265). In this case, it is not hard to see how a verb form meaning, roughly, “seeing that [thus and such is the case]” could grammaticalize into a conditional marker. Indeed, “seeing that” can be used in English as a conditional marker in much the same way as “given that.” Though semantically the verb form appears quite similar to a conditional marker, it is clear from other evidence that the form used in conditional clauses is not simply the serialized verb form itself but a grammaticalized version thereof.

Finally, like conditionals in English and other languages (Comrie 1986), both Tok Pisin and Yopno conditionals often signal a relationship of consequentiality between a state of affairs in the apodosis (*then*-clause) and in the protasis (*if*-clause). In such cases, conditional sentences in Yopno are often synonymous with sentences containing reason or result clauses, which are also used to signal consequentiality in Yopno.

### References

- Comrie, Bernard. 1986. “Conditionals: A Typology.” In *On Conditionals*, edited by Elizabeth Closs Traugott Alice ter Meulen, Judy Snitzer Reilly, and Charles A. Ferguson, 77-99. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Haiman, John. 1978. “Conditionals are Topics.” *Language* 54 (3): 564-598.
- Heine, Bernd and Tania Kuteva. 2002. *World Lexicon of Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.