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# Some truths and nontruths about even if<sup>1</sup>

RENAAT DECLERCK and SUSAN REED

## Abstract

The authors describe the various aspects of interpretation of even if conditionals. The following are their main findings: (a) it is (part of) the invariant meaning of even that this focusing adverb evokes a sense of "expected incompatibility"; (b) in "implicative conditionals" (= those interpreted as 'P leads to Q') this sense of expected incompatibility manifests itself as a "sense of unexpectedness"; (c) even if conditionals that have the sense of unexpectedness implicate an expectation understanding ('One might expect P to preclude Q') and entail a nonpreclusive understanding ('P does not preclude Q'); (d) in implicative even if conditionals, even evokes an even if scale, which is a scale of improbability and whose values are if conditionals, ordered from low (= least unlikely) to high (= most unlikely); (e) because the values on the even if scale are conditional sentences, implicative even if conditionals are truly conditionals: they express a conditional relation between P and Q; (f) in quite a few cases this relation does not hold between P and the overt Q-clause but rather between P and an implicit Q. In that case the overt Q-clause is interpreted as an adverbial clause of reason; (g) the range of values on the even if scale may be determined by the range of propositional values on an ancillary scale of P-propositions, which may itself depend on another scale; (h) the ordering of the values on the P-scale, and the concomitant interpretation, may be determined by the positive or negative meaning of the verb in the Q-clause; (i) there are good reasons to include polar even if conditionals in the class of scalar even if conditionals; (j) even blocks the necessity implicature ("conditional perfection") that is very often invited by implicative conditionals; (k) no additional apparatus is needed to analyze the various kinds of even if conditionals with a nonassertoric Q-clause; (l) nonimplicative even if conditionals still have a sense of expected incompatibility but lack the sense of unexpectedness (yielding the expectation understanding and the nonpreclusive understanding) and the scalarity that are

*typical of implicative even if conditionals; (m) we can distinguish two classes of nonimplicative even if conditionals: those in which the P-clause is purely concessive and those in which it expresses some kind of comment on the contents, truth, presuppositions, etc., of the Q-clause.*

### 1. Introduction

As appears from the list of references at the end of this article, many people have written about *even if*. Together they have made virtually any claim that could be made about *even if*,<sup>2</sup> but since the claims are often contradictory, it is time to separate the correct claims from the incorrect ones. This is what we will attempt to do in this article. To put it metaphorically, most of the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle have been offered, but they have been mixed with pieces that do not fit in, and some of the necessary pieces are still missing. It is our purpose to identify the right pieces and to provide the missing ones, so that the jigsaw puzzle can finally be completed.

Most of the authors have treated *even if*, not as a single compound conjunction, but as a combination of the focusing particle *even* and the *if* of a conditional. We subscribe to this analysis. What needs to be established, then, is what the effect is of putting *even* before the *if* clause of a conditional. As regards this, different claims have been made in the literature. One of the aims of the present article is to show that these claims are often incorrect generalizations, and (related to this) that the range of possible interpretations of *even if* is wider than has generally been assumed. We will also suggest explanations for these data and will attempt to show that they all follow from a unitary meaning of *even*.

### 2. Preliminaries

2.1. We will use *situation* as a cover term for anything that can be expressed in a sentence (i.e. actions, events, processes, states — cf. Lyons 1977). The verb “actualize” will be used as a cover term for the predicates that are typically associated with one of these categories. Thus, rather than saying that an activity is performed, an event happens, a process takes place, or a state holds, we will simply say that the situation in question actualizes.

2.2. According to some linguists (see section 4.4.2), *even if* sentences are not conditionals. However, we will argue in section 4.4 that at least

those *even if* sentences that invite or require a scalar analysis must be conditionals, because the values on the relevant scale are conditionals. Because of this, we will use the term “*even if* conditional” more frequently than the semantically emptier label “*even if* sentence.”

2.3. Thinking of the logical representation ‘If P, (then) Q’, we will refer to the conditional clause as the “P-clause” and to the head clause (whether it is itself subordinate or not) as the “Q-clause.” The situations expressed in these clauses will be called the “P-situation” and the “Q-situation.” Because both the protasis (P-clause) and the apodosis (Q-clause) may be positive or negative, we shall refer to the two propositions expressed in the P-clause and the Q-clause as, respectively, “P” and “Q,” rather than “p” and “q.” This allows us to refer to affirmative propositions as [+p] and [+q], and to negative propositions as [−p] and [−q]. The symbols “P” and “Q” then stand for a proposition that is ultimately expressed by a tensed modalized clause, with a positive or negative polarity value.

As is clear from the paraphrase ‘if P, Q’, *if* does not form part of the proposition P. Thus, in *I'll be happy if she comes*, P is not *if she comes* but *she comes*. This is logical, since only the latter has a truth value. *If she comes* resembles a (nonrhetorical) question in that it does not have a truth value; it is therefore not a proposition.

2.4. As argued in Declerck and Reed (forthcoming), there are many different ways of classifying conditionals. One of the distinctions made there is between “implicative” and “nonimplicative” conditionals. By “implicative” we mean the conditionals in which P induces or implies Q, that is, in which there is a kind of causal, resultative, or licensing link between P and Q. Under this heading we can bring together “inferential conditionals” and “actualization conditionals.” It is typical of these that they can generally be paraphrased in terms of ‘If P, then Q’. The following illustrate the two possibilities:

- (1) a. If it rains, the match will be cancelled. (= *actualization conditional: the actualization of the P-situation will result in the actualization of the Q-situation*)
- b. If Watt didn't invent the telephone, (then) someone else must have done. (= *inferential conditional: the truth of P leads to the conclusion Q*)

The following are examples of nonimplicative conditionals:<sup>3</sup>

- (2) a. If John is not smart, at least he is reliable.
- b. He is one of the best students, if not the best, that we have ever had.

- c. If I may say so, I don't think he is at all to be trusted.
- d. I couldn't do a crime even if I wanted. (TRC 102)

As we will see below, one of the factors determining the interpretation of *even if* may be whether the *if* conditional to which *even* is added is implicative or not. This is interesting, because the examples that have been discussed in the literature have nearly always been examples in which *even* is added to an implicative *if* conditional.<sup>4</sup>

2.5. We will argue in section 4.2 below that when *even* is added to an implicative *if* conditional, *even* anticipates, assumes, or evokes an expectation that the truth of the P-proposition will/would/does/etc. cancel the validity of the Q-proposition,<sup>5</sup> and at the same time denies the truth of that expectation. In other words, in this type of *even if* conditionals, '*even if P, Q*' denies the validity of the evoked expectation 'if P, not-Q'. This means that there is both an "expectation understanding" ('you might expect P to preclude Q') and a "nonpreclusive understanding" ('P will/would/does/etc. not preclude Q'). Thus, *Even if I supported it, the proposal would fail* is understood as 'You might expect that my supporting the proposal would preclude the proposal's failing (= expectation understanding) but in fact my supporting the proposal would not preclude its failing (= nonpreclusive understanding)'.

2.6. Since *even* is added to an *if* conditional, and since '*even if P, Q*' evokes an expectation understanding that is expressed by an *if* conditional of the type 'if P, not-Q', it is potentially very confusing to speak of "implicative *even if* conditionals." This could be understood as meaning either that the *even if* conditional as a whole is implicative, or that only the *if* conditional is, or that the *if* conditional expressing the expectation understanding is. It is therefore important to note that in this article we are going to use "implicative *even if* conditional" in this latter sense, that is, as indicating an *even if* conditional whose expectation understanding is expressed by means of an implicative conditional. Thus, *Even if it rains, the match will not be cancelled* will be called an implicative *even if* conditional because the rejected expectation 'If it rains, the match will be cancelled' is implicative.<sup>6</sup>

2.7. In spite of being *if* conditionals, some *even if* conditionals do not show a direct "if" relation between the *even if* clause and its head clause (i.e. the overt Q-clause). In fact, there are two cases in which such a direct relation is lacking. The first possibility is that the relevant Q-clause is not the overt Q-clause but a *that* clause embedded into it, as in *Even if it rains, it's been decided that the match will not be cancelled*. This

sentence can be analyzed as a syntactic variant of *It's been decided that the match will not be cancelled even if it rains*. Second, and more interestingly, there is the possibility that the "if" relation holds between the P-clause and an implicit Q-clause that must be reconstructed from the context. To make the difference clear, we will first consider an example in which there is no implicit Q-clause:

- (3) Even if the weather is awful, the fête will take place.

This is interpreted as 'One might expect that the fête will not take place if the weather is awful, but (in fact) awful weather will not preclude the fête taking place'. The possibility of the "if" relation holding between the *even if* clause and an implicit Q-clause is illustrated by the following:

- (4) [She's got the best motive of any of them, and she'd probably have the nerve as well.] But she couldn't have planned it all, surely, even if somehow she had the opportunity (to commit the murder) that night, [say, after she got back from Stratford]. (DOC 240)

What is going on here is that the speaker is going through a check-list of what would be required to make a good suspect (viz. motive, means, opportunity). He comes to the conclusion that the referent of *she* would not make a good suspect, even if she had had the opportunity (which is hardly likely), because she could not have planned it all. So the message conveyed in the *even if* conditional is, 'The view that she's not a good suspect wouldn't be undermined (precluded) by it transpiring (which is unlikely) that she had the opportunity, because she couldn't have planned it all'. That is, the "even if" relation holds between the implicit Q-clause (which we shall call  $Q_1$ ) *she isn't a good suspect* and the P-clause *she had the opportunity*. The apparent Q-clause, *she couldn't have planned it all, surely* (which we shall call  $Q_2$ ), is not the actual Q-clause but gives an explanation for the assertion of ' $Q_1$  even if P'. We can read (4) as 'But she couldn't have planned it all, surely, so she's (still) not a good suspect, even if somehow she had the opportunity'.

If the interpretation 'Even P does not preclude Q' concerns an implicit Q, the overt Q-clause as a rule expresses the reason why the speaker conveys this message: '(my believing that)  $Q_2$  causes (me to say that)  $Q_1$ , even if P' (where  $Q_2$  is the overt Q-clause and  $Q_1$  the implicit one), which is equivalent to '(my saying that) " $Q_1$ , even if P" results from (my believing that)  $Q_2$ '. It follows that we can paraphrase such a sentence with either '[Even if P,  $Q_1$ ] because  $Q_2$ ' or '[Even if P,  $Q_2$ ], so that  $Q_1$ '. Thus, (4) can be paraphrased as 'Even if she had the opportunity, she cannot have committed the murder, because she could not have planned

it all', or, alternatively, as 'Even if she had the opportunity, she could not have planned it all, so she cannot have committed the murder'.

The following is another example in which P is related to an implicit Q:

- (5) [So next time when you sort through your wardrobe and wonder if Oxfam can sell worn or old fashioned garments, remember] *Wastesavers* will put them to good use even if our shops cannot. (COB-W)

This does not mean 'You might expect that if Oxfam shops can't put the garments to good use, *Wastesavers* won't, but that expectation is wrong'. The scenario evoked is that of someone choosing between 'Oxfam shops can sell these, so I'll give them to Oxfam' and 'Oxfam shops can't sell these, so I'll throw them away'. That is, (5) evokes an expectation that if Oxfam shops cannot put the garments to good use, no one can, but then denies this on the basis that *Wastesavers* can (and will) put the garments to good use. In other words, (5) expresses that the P-situation ('Oxfam shops cannot put them to good use') does not preclude the IMPLICIT Q-situation 'someone can put them to good use' because it does not preclude the overt Q-clause situation '*Wastesavers* will put them to good use'. (It is, of course, possible to interpret the missing Q-clause slightly differently, e.g. as 'there is no point in sending the garments to Oxfam' or 'Oxfam cannot benefit from them', but this obviously does not affect the point we are making here.)

The observation that *even if* conditionals may have to be interpreted in terms of an implicit Q-clause has, to the best of our knowledge, been hinted at only once before. Dancygier (1988: 118) gives the following examples:<sup>7</sup>

- (6) a. (Even) if he attacks me, I've got a gun.  
 b. (Even) if she called yesterday, I was out at the time.

She comments that (a) such examples "are interesting in that the relevance of their apodoses can only be explained through elements of meaning which are not expressed on the surface" (1988: 118), (b) "in such (very specific) cases the scope of *even* is not the sentence as a whole, but the surface protasis with its underlying continuation" (1988: 118), and (c) such sentences "cannot function in the same way if the order of their clauses is reversed — apparently because their apodoses can only be considered relevant in relation to what comes in the scope of *even*" (1988: 119). However, claims (b) and (c) seem to be disproved by examples like our (4) above, in which the *even if* clause follows the overt Q-clause so that, by Dancygier's criterion of word order, neither the overt Q-clause nor the implicit Q-clause is within the scope of *even*.

### 3. The semantics of *even*

3.1. With the possible exception of Kay (1990: 83–84), everyone dealing with the subject of *even if* has claimed that *even* represents its focus as “unexpected” or “unlikely,” hence that it is (or at least forms part of) the basic meaning of *even* in *even if* that it represents the truth or actualization of ‘if P, Q’ as contrary to expectation. This analysis is put forward, for example, by Jespersen (1940: 21.66), Fraser (1969: 67), Horn (1969: 106), Quirk et al. (1985: 1099), Kjellmer (1989: 257). Lycan (1991: 115–116) states that “everyone knows that the main function, probably the only function of *even* is to carry that expectation-contravening connotation.” The latest confirmation is to be found in Dancygier (1998: 162): “what *even* seems to share with *although* is the ‘negative expectation.’”

In this article we will argue a slightly different analysis. Our view is that the basic meaning of *even* is “expected (or expectable) incompatibility,” which can manifest itself in more ways than “negative expectation.” Compare the following:

- (7) a. Even John failed the test.
- b. John’s always patient with me, even when he’s in a hurry.
- c. Even if I get no help from anyone, I will go through with the scheme.
- d. I enjoyed the walk, even if — as I found out afterwards — the rest of the group didn’t.

In (7a), the speaker had clearly expected there to be incompatibility between the propositions ‘Some people may fail the test’ and ‘John may fail the test’: in his opinion, one would have expected John to be the least likely person, or one of the least likely persons, to belong to the set of people that might fail the test. In other words, there is expected incompatibility between the two propositions, in the sense that one would have expected that if ‘Some people may fail the test’ turned out to be true, ‘John may fail the test’ would turn out to be false.

In (7b), there is expected incompatibility between John’s being patient with me and his being in a hurry. In (7c), *even* is added to an *if* conditional. In the next section we will see that, at least in implicative conditionals like (7c),<sup>8</sup> the combination of *if* with *even*’s sense of expected incompatibility leads to a “sense of unexpectedness,” which includes both an “expectation understanding” (viz. one might expect me not to go through with the scheme if I get no help) and a “nonpreclusive understanding” (viz. this expectation is wrong: even if I get no help from anyone, this will not prevent me from going through with the scheme).

However, there is no such sense of unexpectedness in (7d), where *even* is added to a nonimplicative conditional, because there is neither an expectation understanding ('One would have expected me not to enjoy the walk if the others did not enjoy it') nor a nonpreclusive understanding ('The fact that the others did not enjoy the walk did not prevent me from enjoying it'). Sentence (7d) also does not assert that it was unexpected for the others not to enjoy their walk. (It may actually have been the case that the general expectation was that the walk would not be enjoyable, and that, except in my case, that expectation was borne out.) In (7d), *even* just expresses that my appreciation of the walk was different from that of the others, and that I find this rather surprising, in other words, that I had expected there to be incompatibility between a positive appreciation of the walk by myself and a negative appreciation of the walk by the others. *Even* thus conveys a sense of expected incompatibility; it does not express "unexpectedness" or "negative expectation" in the sense that  $[-p]$  ('The rest of the group didn't enjoy the walk') was unexpected. (As noted above, it may have been the case that it was generally EXPECTED that the walk would not be enjoyable, and that, except in my case, that expectation was borne out.)

In sum, the general meaning of *even* is that it expresses expected (or expectable) incompatibility between two propositions. When *even* is added to an implicative conditional, as in (7c), this produces a "sense of unexpectedness," which consists of a combination of an "expectation understanding" ('One might expect me not to go through with the scheme if I get no help') and a "nonpreclusive understanding" ('This expectation is wrong: even if I get no help from anyone, I WILL go through with the scheme'). When *even* is added to a nonimplicative conditional, as in (7d), there is no "sense of unexpectedness," because there is neither an "expectation understanding" ('One would have expected me not to enjoy the walk if the others did not enjoy it') nor a nonpreclusive understanding ('The fact that the others did not enjoy the walk did not prevent me from enjoying it').

3.2. Apart from its expected incompatibility sense, *even* is commonly recognized to have scalarity as part of its semantics. We will not go into this aspect here but defer the discussion to section 4.4.

#### 4. Implicative *even if* conditionals

Our analysis of *even if* is in keeping with some claims that are familiar in the literature but is at variance with some others. First, we disagree

with the claim that *even if* conditionals always convey a sense of unexpectedness. We will argue that it is only in implicative conditionals (i.e. those whose expectation understanding is expressed by means of an implicative conditional — see section 2.6) that the sense of expected incompatibility induced by *even* is equivalent to a sense of unexpectedness. Second, we do not accept Lycan's (1991: 115–116) suggestion that the expression of unexpectedness is “the only function of *even*” in the combination *even if*, even though this view, expressed in terms of a scale of unexpectedness, is widespread in the linguistic literature. With the possible exception of Sweetser (1990), no one has argued that what we call the “nonpreclusive” understanding (= ‘Even P does not preclude Q’) is another aspect of the meaning of *even if*. In fact, for many authors, a major feature of *even if* sentences is that P is IRRELEVANT to Q.<sup>9</sup> This means that previous treatments generally focus on the fact that P does not affect the truth conditions for Q, rather than questioning what the relation between P and Q actually is. The trouble with this approach is that, while it naturally involves the claim that *even if* sentences are not conditionals at all — see for example Fraser (1969: 71), Dancygier (1998: 164) — its proponents still relate the meaning of *even if* to unexpectedness (or, as Dancygier [1998] calls it, “negative expectation”). Since unexpectedness clearly has to do with the relation between P and Q (see Dancygier 1998: 162), it is impossible to understand the claim about unexpectedness without some idea of WHAT the relation between P and Q is: what is the relation that is unexpected?

Third, we will argue that, even if we restrict ourselves to *even*'s sense of unexpectedness in implicative conditionals, we need to define that sense more clearly than has generally been done in the literature. Thus, if we consider *Even if the weather is awful, the fête will take place*, we need to say more than that this sentence implies that it is contrary to expectations that the fête will take place if the weather is awful. In our opinion, the interpretation of the sentence involves two understandings, viz. an “expectation understanding” (‘We might expect awful weather to preclude the fête taking place’) and a “nonpreclusive understanding” (‘Awful weather will not preclude the fête taking place’). More generally, there is an expectation understanding ‘We might expect P to preclude Q’ (or ‘We might expect P to result in not-Q’) and a nonpreclusive understanding ‘P does NOT preclude Q’. This characterization of the meaning of *even if* is similar to Sweetser's (1990) analysis (“even P is sufficient for Q” or “even P is insufficient for not-Q”), except that Sweetser's analysis seems to refer to the nonpreclusive understanding only and does not distinguish between implicative conditionals (which have the two understandings) and nonimplicative ones (which, as we will see, do not). It

follows that Sweetser's account involves scalarity in the interpretation of all *even if* conditionals, whereas we shall argue that it has a role only in the interpretation of implicative ones.

Fourth, we will argue that, in implicative *even if* conditionals, the expectation understanding differs from the nonpreclusive understanding in that it is only a cancellable implicature, while the nonpreclusive understanding forms part of the semantics (invariant meaning) of implicative *even if* conditionals.

#### 4.1. *The sense of unexpectedness*

Consider the following:

- (8) a. Even if John helps us, the job will not be finished today.
- b. Even if John does not help us, the job will be finished today.

Because (8a)–(8b) are implicative *even if* conditionals, the combination of *if* and the sense of expected incompatibility induced by *even* produces a sense of unexpectedness. This means that (8a)–(8b) yield both an expectation understanding and a nonpreclusive understanding. That is, they assert that the expectation that P will/would/does/etc. preclude Q is not correct; in doing so they naturally imply that what is asserted is unexpected (surprising). Thus, (8a) implies that it is surprising (because it goes against the expectation to the contrary) that the job will not be finished today if John helps us, and (8b) implies that it is surprising that the job will be finished today if John does not help us.

A question that naturally arises is whether the sense of unexpectedness conveyed by implicative *even if* conditionals concerns P only or concerns the entire conditional (i.e. the P–Q relation). To see which of these options is the correct one, consider the following:

- (9) Even if it snows, the match will not be cancelled.

If the sense of unexpectedness concerned P only, then (9) would imply only 'It is unlikely to snow', that is, 'Snow is not expected.' However, this understanding is at best an implicature of (9), as it can easily be cancelled: *Even if it snows, which is quite likely, the match will not be cancelled.* Since at least the nonpreclusive understanding in the sense of unexpectedness forms an inherent (noncancellable) part of the meaning of implicative *even if*, we must conclude that the second theoretical possibility is the correct one: the sense of unexpectedness concerns the conditional as a whole, that is, the implicative relation between P and Q. This means that in (9) it can be paraphrased as follows:

- (10) It is surprising that  $[+p]$  will lead to  $[-q]$  because we would expect  $[+p]$  to preclude  $[-q]$ .

#### 4.2. *The nonpreclusive understanding of implicative even if conditionals*

Consider the following again:

- (11) a. Even if John helps us, the job will not be finished today.  
 b. Even if John does not help us, the job will be finished today.

It is clear that (11a)–(11b) have not only an expectation understanding but also a nonpreclusive understanding: they can be paraphrased as (12a)–(12b), respectively:

- (12) a. One might expect that the job would be finished today if John helped, but in fact the job will not be finished today if John helps. (= *One might expect that P would preclude Q — where P is  $[+p]$  and Q is  $[-q]$  — but P will not preclude Q.*)  
 b. One might expect that the job would not be finished today if John did not help, but in fact the job will be finished today if John does not help. (= *One might expect that P would preclude Q — where P is  $[-p]$  and Q is  $[+q]$  — but P will not preclude Q.*)

Needless to say, the nonpreclusive understanding ('P does not preclude Q') is not an implicature but a logical entailment of what is asserted by an implicative *even if* conditional. It is an aspect of meaning that cannot be cancelled. The following is anomalous, because contradictory:

- (13) \*Even if John helps us, the job will not be finished today, but in fact John's helping us will prevent the job not being finished today.

#### 4.3. *The expectation understanding of implicative even if conditionals*

The expectation understanding 'One might expect P to preclude Q' follows as a strong implicature from the combination of the nonpreclusive understanding of the implicative *even if* conditional ('P does not preclude Q') and the sense of unexpectedness ('it is surprising that P does not preclude Q'). Naturally, 'it is unexpected that "if P, Q"' suggests 'it is to be expected that "if P, not-Q"', because to say that something is not expected automatically evokes a contrast with something else that is

expected. That “something else” is usually the opposite of what is not expected.

It is in keeping with this that (14a) is interpreted as (14b) and strongly suggests (14c):

- (14) a. Even if it rains, the garden party will go through.
- b. Contrary to expectations, the garden party will go through if it rains. (*sense of unexpectedness + nonpreclusive understanding*)
- c. One might expect that rain would preclude the garden party going through. (*expectation understanding*)

More generally, (15a) expresses (15b), which strongly suggests (15c):

- (15) a. Even if P, Q.
- b. Contrary to expectations, P does/did/will/etc. not preclude Q. (*sense of unexpectedness + nonpreclusive understanding*)
- c. If P, then P is expected to preclude Q (or P is likely to result in not-Q). (*expectation understanding*)

(14b) naturally suggests (14c) because the idea of “contrary to expectations” in (14b) contrasts with “one might expect” in (14c), and (15b) naturally suggests (15c) because to say that nonpreclusion is contrary to expectations implies that preclusion is in accordance with expectations. However, the expectation understanding (15c) is only an implicature of (15b), because it can be cancelled by the context without semantic anomaly.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the expectation understanding ‘You might expect this horse to react if a bomb goes off’ that is evoked by (16a) is cancelled by the added sentence in (16b), without (16b) as a whole being semantically anomalous (contradictory):

- (16) a. Even if a bomb goes off, this horse won’t react.
- b. Even if a bomb goes off, this horse won’t react — as is to be expected from a police horse.

Moreover, in all implicative *even if* conditionals, the expectation understanding ‘you might expect P to preclude Q’ is cancelled by the Q-clause itself, which says that P does NOT preclude Q.

The fact that the expectation understanding may be cancelled by the context does not alter the fact that it always arises in implicative *even if* conditionals: there is an understanding that the speaker anticipates, assumes, or evokes an expectation (on the part of the addressee, someone else, or “people in general”) that the truth of the P-proposition will/would/do etc. preclude the validity of the Q-proposition — an understanding that is at the same time refuted by the inevitable nonpreclusive

understanding.<sup>11</sup> The claim that *even if* invariably calls up an expectation understanding is confirmed by the fact that *even if* conditionals are unacceptable if they lack this sense. Compare the following:

- (17) a. If Iris Murdoch didn't write *The End of the Affair*, it must have been Graham Greene.
- b. \*Even if Iris Murdoch didn't write *The End of the Affair*, it must have been Graham Greene.
- (18) a. If it rains a lot, we won't need to water the garden.
- b. \*Even if it rains a lot, we won't need to water the garden.
- c. Even if it rains a lot, we'll (still) need to water the garden.
- d. Even if it doesn't rain a lot, we won't need to water the garden.

Unlike (17a), (17b) is unacceptable because *even* introduces the pragmatically unacceptable expectation understanding 'one might expect Graham Greene not to have written *The End of the Affair* if Iris Murdoch didn't write it'. The (un)acceptability of (18b)–(18d) similarly has to do with whether or not the expectation understanding is pragmatically acceptable: in (18b) it is not, but a change of polarity (positive vs. negative) in either the P-clause or the Q-clause entails that the expectation understanding makes perfect sense in (18c) and (18d).

As pointed out in section 2.7, the Q-proposition of an implicative conditional may correspond with the overt Q-clause or may be implicit. The former possibility is illustrated by *Even if it freezes we will not stay inside*, which is interpreted as 'You might expect that if it freezes we will stay inside, but in fact we will NOT stay inside if it freezes' (= 'You might expect P to preclude Q — where Q is 'we not stay inside' — but in fact P will not preclude Q'). In other words, '*even if* P, Q' denies the truth of the evoked expectation 'if P, not-Q'. The following sentence further illustrates this use of *even if*:

- (19) Tell her I'll be there, even if they have to wheel me in. (Dexter 1994: 149) (= *It might be supposed that my having to be wheeled in would preclude my being there, but this supposition would be false: I WILL be there.*)

However, there are also cases in which it is not the validity of the overt Q-clause itself that is cancelled but the validity of a Q-clause implicit in it:

- (20) [Double glazing and draught insulation can cut lost heat by half and save about £60 a year. Insulated cavity walls are also effective, saving up to £70 a year. However, they can be expensive to install, costing up £400.] Even if you already have basic energy-saving

measures in place there are usually between 7 and 10 other steps you could take to make even more savings. (COB-W)

This does not mean ‘Contrary to expectations, your already having basic energy-saving measures in place does not preclude there being between 7 and 10 other steps that you could take to make even more savings’, but something like ‘Contrary to expectations, your already having basic energy-saving measures in place does not preclude *your thinking still further about saving energy, because* there are between 7 and 10 other steps you could take to make even more savings’. Similarly,

- (21) [All ABTA tour operators are obliged to go to arbitration and to accept the final decision. You can get full details of the scheme from ABTA or a local consumer adviser. Note:] Even if your holiday was not arranged through an ABTA member, anyone who provides a service has a legal duty to do so with reasonable care and skill, in a reasonable time, and for a reasonable charge. [A firm must observe these obligations.] (COB-W)

This does not mean ‘You might think that if your holiday has not been arranged by an ABTA member, whoever arranged it does not have a legal duty to arrange it with reasonable care (etc.), but that assumption is wrong: your holiday’s not having been arranged by an ABTA member does not preclude any service provider’s having a legal duty to arrange it with reasonable care (etc.)’. The real interpretation is ‘Contrary to what you might expect, your holiday’s not having been arranged by an ABTA member does not preclude *your having a right to redress if things go wrong, because* anyone who provides a service has a legal duty to do so with reasonable care (etc.).’

The following are further examples of *even if* conditionals with an implicit Q:

- (22) a. Even if we had undertaken a hunt, it would not have been successful. (= *Even if we had undertaken a hunt, that wouldn’t have changed anything, because it wouldn’t have been successful.*)  
 b. [She won’t let me alone.] Even if I go upstairs to work, she brings me six cups of coffee in two hours. (BOF 83) (= *Even if I go upstairs to work, she does not leave me alone, because she brings me six cups of coffee in two hours.*)  
 c. Even if there were a sheriff in this town, he wouldn’t be able to stop the bandits. (= *Even if there were a sheriff in this town, that wouldn’t solve the problem, because he would be unable to stop the bandits.*)

In sum, implicative *even if* conditionals are interpreted in terms of an expectation understanding and a nonpreclusive understanding. The interpretation resulting from these understandings can be paraphrased as ‘Contrary to what might be (or might have been) expected, P does not result in not-Q’, or ‘Contrary to what might be (or might have been) expected, P does not preclude Q’. It needs stressing, however, that the Q in question is not always expressed by the overt Q-clause but may be an implicit Q.

#### 4.4. *Scalarity*

4.4.1. Since (at least) Horn (1969), all authors on *even* have added another element to the “contrary to expectation” part of *even*’s meaning, viz. that of scalarity. *Even* is interpreted as scalar because it places the constituent it focuses as extremely high or low on a particular scale. For example, *Even Mary managed to do it* implies that (of those who did it) Mary was the least likely person (or one of the least likely persons) to be able to do it.<sup>12</sup> Sweetser (1990) puts it as follows:

all ... examples of *even if* ... are more than simply concessive: they express not only opposition between the two clauses but the further idea that the protasis represents a relatively *extreme* possibility from among the possible conditions which can be expected to occur in opposition to the truth or the fulfillment of the apodosis (1990: 136)

Dancygier (1998) also asserts that scalarity is a central feature of the meaning of *even*:

What all accounts share is the claim that *even* introduces a scale of unlikeness, or negative expectation, the highest position on which is occupied by the referent in the scope of *even*. ... Thus what *even* seems to share with *although* is the “negative expectation” — hence its concessive use — but its most salient meaning is that of scalarity. ... the structure in the scope of *even if* ranks high on the scale of “negative expectation” (1998: 161–162).

4.4.2. Since, as noted in section 4.1, the sense of unexpectedness of *even if* concerns the conditional as a whole (i.e. the relation between P and Q), the scale that authors attribute to the use of *even if* must apply to the RELATION between P and Q. (This is often not clear from the literature.) Thus, *Tell her I'll be there, even if they have to wheel me in* can be interpreted as meaning that their having to wheel me in is the least expected (or at least a highly unlikely)<sup>13</sup> circumstance *in which I would be there*, and as implying a contrast with other circumstances *in which I*

would be there, not just with other “less extreme” circumstances.<sup>14</sup> In other words, in implicative *even if* conditionals each value on the relevant scale is an *if* conditional.<sup>15</sup> In the above example, the values (ordered in terms of increasing unlikelihood) might be something like *I'll be there if I am driven there, I'll be there if I have to drive there myself, I'll be there if I have to go there by bike, I'll be there if I have to go there on foot, I'll be there if they have to wheel me in, etc.*, or, possibly, *I'll be there if I'm well, I'll be there if I'm still not fully recovered, I'll be there if I'm still ill, I'll be there if (I'm so ill that) they have to wheel me in, etc.*

It is worth pointing out that the view that (at least in implicative *even if* conditionals) *even if* refers to a scale whose values are *if* conditionals runs counter to the widespread claim that *even if* sentences are not conditionals. The latter claim is made explicitly by Fraser (1969: 66):

concessive conditionals [= *even if* conditionals] ... while they have the general appearance of conditional sentences, ... have no conditional force; the *if* is preceded in each case by an *even* which neutralizes the hypothetical force of the following *if* clause. The result is a concessional clause, a clause which plays no role in determining the truth conditions for the main clause of the sentence.

The claim that *even if* sentences are not conditionals is also made explicitly by Athanasiadou and Dirven (1997: 85), Dancygier (1998: 164), and Lycan (1991: 123). The latter puts it as follows:

Although *Q even if P* has the superficial aspect of a conditional and although it seems grammatically to be simply the result of applying *even* to an ordinary conditional, it does not seem intuitively to be conditional in meaning. A speaker who asserts *Q even if P* is typically felt to have asserted that *Q* — unconditionally.

The above view is equivalent to the view that in *even if* conditionals *P* is “irrelevant” to *Q*. This view was first voiced by Fraser (1969: 68), who writes that in *Mary will leave even if John stays* there is an inference that “Mary will leave no matter what happens.” However, Fraser goes on to comment that there is (simultaneously) an interpretation that “it would be very unlikely for Mary to leave if John stays” (1969: 68). Now, if there is an interpretation that it would be very unlikely for Mary to leave if John stays, then there is an expectation of a connection between the two situations, which means that the *even if* conditional can hardly imply that *P* is seen as IRRELEVANT to *Q*.

The view that *even if* sentences are not conditionals is further disproved by the fact that there are *if* clauses that seem fairly uncontroversially conditional and seem to relate to the *Q*-clause in a way similar to that of *even if* clauses. Thus, in (23b) the *even if* clause relates to the *Q*-clause in the same way as the *if* clause does in (23a):

- (23) a. [Wear this bullet-proof jacket.] That way you will be OK if you are shot at.  
 b. [Wear this bullet-proof jacket.] That way you will be OK even if you are shot at.

In both (23a) and (23b), the *if* clause specifies the salient case in which Q is true (or in which the Q-situation actualizes). The difference between the two examples is that the addition of *even* in (23b) emphasizes that compatibility between the P-situation and the Q-situation is not usually expected, or expectable.

4.4.3. It is clear from our above discussion of *Tell her I'll be there, even if they have to wheel me in* that implicative *even if* conditionals lend themselves to a scalar analysis, and that the values on the *even if* scale are *if* conditionals. It is interesting to note that the position of the relevant *if* conditional (i.e. the one combining with *even*) on the *even if* scale is often determined by the position of its P-clause on an "ancillary" (subsidiary) propositional scale (P-scale), and that this position may itself be determined by the position of a constituent of the P-clause on another ancillary scale. The constituent in question is then strongly accented and is felt to be the real focus of *even*. For example, *even* may focus a numeral in the *even if* clause. In that case the numeral is heavily accented and interpreted as representing a (relatively) extreme value on the numerical scale (which is a "natural" scale). This numerical scale functions as an ancillary scale to the P-scale (whose values are P-propositions) because the position of the numeral on the numerical scale determines the position of the P-clause on the P-scale. The latter scale itself functions as an ancillary scale to the *even if* scale (whose values are *if* conditionals) in the sense that the position of the P-clause on the P-scale determines the position of the *if* conditional on the *even if* scale. However, since (in implicative *even if* conditionals) *even* always puts the relevant conditional high on the scale of unexpectedness, the ordering of the values (conditionals) on the *even if* scale may be the reverse of the ordering of the values (propositions) on the ancillary P-scale. For example,

- (24) a. Even if you have written SIX papers, you will not pass this exam [if you do not know the coursebook by heart]. (*In this context, "six papers" is an unusually high value on the numerical scale of "number of papers compatible with failing this exam."* *This numerical scale functions as an ancillary scale to the P-scale whose values are the P-propositions 'You have written 0/1/2/3/4/5/6/etc. papers'. The high position of 'You have written six papers' on this ancillary P-scale, plus the use of "even,"*
-

- determines the high position of 'You will not pass if you have written six papers' on the "even if" scale on unexpectedness.)*
- b. [Afterwards he kept on saying that it was *me* who'd agreed to do it, *me* who'd started it all not him. Mum! He was a wicked liar, but] even if it was just one per cent me you've got to forgive me. (DOC 89) ("Just" represents one per cent as a low value on the numerical scale. This low position of "one" on this ancillary scale determines the low position of 'It was one per cent me' on the P-scale. However, "even" makes clear that the conditional 'You've got to forgive me if it was one per cent me' is a very high value on the "even if" scale, which is a scale of unlikelihood and whose values are conditionals of the type 'You've got to forgive me if it was 1/2/3/4/5/etc. per cent me'. This is an example, then, of how "even" reverses the direction (orientation) of the ancillary scales underlying the "even if" scale, because on the latter scale the least likely value ranks highest.)<sup>16</sup>
  - c. Even if you have written NO papers at all, you will pass [if you know the coursebook by heart]. ("No" is the lower limit of the numerical ancillary scale, hence 'You have written no papers' is the lowest value on the P-scale. However, the values are ordered in the reverse way on the "even if" scale: 'You will pass if you have written no papers' is the highest (i.e. least likely) value on this scale. The lower values on the scale are 'You will pass if you have written {1/2/3/etc.} papers'.)

Apart from the numerical scale, there are other natural quantificational scales:

- (25) Even if EVERYBODY helped, we wouldn't be able to move that boulder. ("Everybody" represents the highest possible value on the quantificational scale of "number of people." It follows that 'Everybody helps' is the highest value on the P-scale, which is ancillary to the "even if" scale. It follows that 'We will not be able to move that boulder if everybody helps' ranks highest on the "even if" scale, the lower values being 'We will not be able to move that boulder if {most of us / some of us / not many of us / etc.} help'.)

Apart from a quantifier, *even* can also focus another constituent of the *if* clause:

- (26) Even if JOHN is late, the coach will leave on time.

This should be analyzed along similar lines to (24a)–(24c) and (25). However, it also allows us to make an interesting observation: the

meaning of (26) changes drastically if we move *even* into the *if* clause, as (28a) demonstrates. Compare (26) with (27):

- (27) If even JOHN is late, there is no discipline in the team any more.

In (26) the *if* clause expresses an “open” condition (i.e. a condition the speaker thinks may or may not be fulfilled). By contrast, the *if* clause of (27) expresses either a “factual” condition or a “closed” one. (In the former case, the P-situation is represented as BEING a fact in the actual world, in the latter it IS ASSUMED to be a fact.) This difference of meaning entails that the following are unacceptable on the intended readings:

- (28) a. \*If even JOHN is late, the coach will leave on time. (*intended reading: open condition*)  
 b. \*Even if JOHN is late, there is no discipline in the team any more. (*intended reading: closed or factual condition*)

The different interpretations of (26) and (27) are due to the fact that the scale determining the interpretation is not the same in (27) as in (26). In (26), where *even* precedes the *if* clause, the relevant scale is an *even if* scale, whose values are conditionals, and the least likely conditional (i.e. the conditional in which the P-situation is least likely to be compatible with the Q-situation) ranks highest, whereas in (27), where *even* occurs inside the *if* clause, the relevant scale is a scale of people ordered in accordance with a particular criterion.<sup>17</sup> In (26) the range of values (conditionals) on the *even if* scale is determined by the range of P-propositions on the ancillary P-scale. The range of values on the P-scale is determined by the range of persons on an ancillary scale whose values are persons, such as Mike, Jack, Gordon, John. In this case this ancillary scale is evoked by the specifical focus on *John*, which calls up a set of alternative values. (A “specifical” sentence specifies a value, viz. the focus, for an implicit variable. Thus, *JOHN is late* specifies *John* as the value satisfying the presupposed variable ‘the x who is late’, in the same way as *It is John who is late* does — see Declerck (1988). One of the characteristics of a specifical sentence is that a contrast is evoked between the value that is selected and a set of other potential values that are not selected. It is the sum total of these values that constitutes the set of values on the ancillary scale of persons. The position of “*John*” on that scale determines the position of *John is late* on the P-scale, and consequently the position of the conditional ‘The coach will leave on time if *John* is late’ on the *even if* scale.)<sup>18</sup>

The difference between (26) and (27) follows from the fact that only the former involves an *even if* scale. This has to do with the fact that in (27) there is only one focusing speech act (with *even* as focuser and ‘*John*

is late' as highest value on the scale of persons that might be late, which is a scale of unexpectedness or unlikelihood), whereas in (26) there are two: there is focusing by *even* as well as specificational focusing. (The latter results in [26] being equivalent to 'Even if it is JOHN who is late...') *Even if* implies a propositional scale (P-scale) and creates an *even if* scale (which is also an improbability scale). The specificational focusing creates the range of values of the P-scale (viz. 'Mike is late', 'Jack is late', etc.). This in its turn determines the range of values of the *even if* scale (viz. 'The coach will leave on time if MIKE is late', etc.). *Even* then places the conditional 'The coach will leave on time if JOHN is late' high on the *even if* scale, thus representing its Q-situation as more unlikely than that of 'The coach will leave on time if MIKE is late', etc.

If the focus of *even* is neither *if* nor a quantifier, nor a specificationally focused constituent of the *if* clause, the hearer himself has to identify the ancillary scale that determines the *even if* scale:

- (29) We'll find the girl, even if she's at the OTHER end of the WORLD!

This sentence suggests that one of the least likely cases in which the girl will be found is when she is at the other end of the world. In this case the first ancillary scale is the scale of places where the girl might be, ordered according to the degree of difficulty they entail of finding the girl: the more difficult the place renders it to find the girl, the higher this place ranks on this scale. Naturally, 'at the other end of the world' is an extremely high value on this ancillary scale. This scale determines the ancillary P-scale, which is a scale with as values propositions of the type 'The girl is at X'. In accordance with the ordering on the first ancillary scale, the proposition 'The girl is at the other end of the world' is an extremely high value on this ancillary P-scale. Because of *even*, the conditional 'We'll find the girl if she's at the other end of the world' is interpreted as lying near the upper limit of the *even if* scale (improbability scale), whose values are conditionals of the type 'We'll find the girl if she's at X'. (Remember that on the *even if* scale the least likely *if* conditional is the highest value.)

There are also cases in which *even* focuses the *if* clause as a whole. In that case there is no ancillary P-scale, and therefore no special (contrastive) accentuation pattern: the nuclear accent of the *if* clause is weaker and is in its unmarked position, viz. on the last open-class word conveying new information. For example,

- (30) a. Teachers are being urged by trade union activists not to intervene in violent incidents even if a pupil is in danger.  
(COB-W)

- b. Should a parent put their children's needs above their own, even if it means sacrificing their own happiness? (COB-W)
- c. When looking for a partner we often go for someone like one of our parents, even if it's not very comfortable for us. (COB-W)

In each of these examples the *if* conditional represents a value that is particularly high (possibly the highest) on the *even if* scale. In (30a) the values constituting the scale are conditionals whose *if* clauses represent the various cases in which it might be thought that it is to a certain degree necessary for teachers to intervene in violent incidents. In (30b) the values are conditionals whose P-clauses describe situations that differ in the degree to which they require parents to put their children's needs above their own. In (30c) the values are conditionals referring to situations in which it is possible that we would choose a partner who resembles one of our parents. In all three examples, the position of the 'if P, Q' values on the *even if* scale is determined by the degree to which 'P results in (or is compatible with) Q' is seen as unlikely to be true.

4.4.4. Another thing that has not been noted yet in the literature is that the ordering of the values on the P-scale, and the concomitant interpretation, may be determined by the polarity (in meaning) of the verb of the Q-clause. (By "polarity in meaning" we mean that the speaker may view a situation as either positive [pleasant, satisfactory, desirable] or negative [unpleasant, unsatisfactory, undesirable].) Compare the following:

- (31) a. Even if you answer TWO of the three questions correctly, you {fail / don't pass} this exam. ("fail" or "not pass" is a negative idea, hence "two" is interpreted as "as many as two")
- b. Even if you answer TWO of the three questions correctly, you {pass / don't fail} this exam. ("pass" or "not fail" is a positive idea, hence "two" is interpreted as "only two")

As suggested by the paraphrases of *two*, the orientation of the ancillary P-scale is different in (31a) and (31b): *you answer TWO of the three questions correctly* is seen as a high value on the P-scale of (31a), but as a low value on the P-scale underlying (31b). However, because of the different semantic polarity of the Q-clauses of the *if* conditionals in (31a) and (31b), both conditionals are interpreted as ranking high on the *even if* scale: (31a) expresses that it is highly unexpected (unlikely) to fail the exam if you answer two of the three questions correctly, while (31b) expresses that under the same circumstances it is highly unexpected to pass the exam.

4.4.5. The various cases of scalar *even if* conditionals that have been referred to have the following characteristics in common. The *even if* scale is a scale determined by the degree of improbability that P leads to (or is compatible with) Q. The values on the scale are implicative conditional sentences, that is, expressions of ‘P leads to Q’ (which minimally imply ‘P is compatible with Q’).<sup>19</sup> These *if* conditionals are ordered from low to high according to the degree of improbability that P leads to Q, or, if you prefer, the degree of expectation (probability) that P leads to not-Q (i.e. that P precludes Q). Thus, *Even if it snows, the game will not be cancelled* evokes a scale of improbability whose values are conditionals of the form ‘if P, Q’ (where Q is [−q]). Possible values on this scale (ordered from low to high) may be

- a. The game will not be cancelled if there is a lot of wind.
- b. The game will not be cancelled if there is some drizzle.
- c. The game will not be cancelled if it rains.
- d. The game will not be cancelled if it snows.

The ordering of these values on the improbability scale is from (a) (= lowest value) to (d) (= highest value). Thus, (d) represents the case in which the expectation that P will lead to not-Q (i.e. that P will preclude Q) is strongest: according to the speaker, snow is the P-situation that is most likely to evoke the expectation ‘P is sufficient for not-Q’ (where Q is [−q] and not-Q is therefore [+q]). In other words, it is if it snows that the expectation that the game will be cancelled is highest. It follows that the *even if* scale can be referred to not only as an “improbability scale” but also as an “expectation scale.”<sup>20</sup> The values on the scale are conditionals of the type ‘P leads to Q’, each with its concomitant expectation understanding ‘P will lead to not-Q’. Since (in implicative *even if* conditionals) *even* implies that the expectation is denied, that is, that P will not preclude Q in spite of the expectation to the contrary, the *even if* conditionals corresponding to (a)–(d) have not only an expectation understanding but also a nonpreclusive understanding.

4.4.6. It should be clear now that a scalar analysis of (implicative) *even if* conditionals refers to an *even if* scale, which is a scale of improbability (with the least probable value ranking highest). The scalar values are *if* conditionals, that is, expressions of compatibility between P and Q. This scalar analysis crucially involves the following understandings:

- a. the “extreme value understanding”: the *even if* conditional represents a value that ranks very high (sometimes highest) on the *even if* scale.
- b. the “plural set understanding”: by focusing a particular *if* conditional, *even* evokes a set of other *if* conditionals, which represent less extreme (lower) values on the *even if* scale.

c. the “contrastive understanding”: the *if* conditionals representing the extreme value is contrasted with all the other (less extreme) values (*if* conditionals) on the *even if* scale.

d. the “ordering understanding”: the *if* conditionals representing the values on the *even if* scale are ordered in terms of the degree of improbability that they are valid. The highest conditional on the scale is that in which P is least likely to be compatible with Q.

e. the “implicative understanding”: the conditionals on the *even if* scale must be implicative conditionals, that is, conditionals of the type ‘P leads to Q’ (the weakest form of which is ‘P is compatible with Q’).

These five understandings are essential to a scalar interpretation of *even if* conditionals. This means that there is automatically a scalar interpretation if all the understandings are present, and that there is no scalar interpretation if one or more of them are lacking. (The latter possibility has not been recognized in the literature: all *even if* conditionals are traditionally assigned a scalar analysis. However, it will be shown in section 5 that only implicative *even if* conditionals can be analyzed this way.)

4.4.7. Before examining nonimplicative *even if* conditionals, it is necessary to counter a potential objection to the claim that all implicative *even if* conditionals require a scalar analysis. This potential objection has to do with the “extreme value understanding” and the “plural set understanding.” It would seem that there are implicative *even if* conditionals that are nonscalar because they lack these understandings. For example,

- (32) I mean er er these things all point to the fact that they're going to try and hold on to their, hold on to their positions you know even if, even if they're criticized. (COB-S)

At first sight, it seems questionable whether the utterance of this *even if* conditional evokes an extreme value understanding: it is not obvious that “their” being criticized is at (or near) an extreme of any scale of P-cases that are unlikely to be compatible with their trying to hold on to their positions. The reason this would seem an inappropriate reading of (32) is that being criticized does not seem extremely unlikely to go along with trying to hold on to one's position. (Being found guilty of fraud, sexual harassment, or arson, yes, but being criticized?) In fact, (32) just seems to be a simple case of *even if* denying or precluding a possible assumption that P is sufficient for not-Q: ‘you might expect that they would not try to hold on to their positions if they were criticized, but they will try to hold on even if they are’. (Note that “if” should not be read as “iff”). This reading lacks not only the “extreme value understanding” but also

the “plural set understanding”: if there is a scale, the only two values on it are ‘they will try to hold on to their positions if they are criticized’ and ‘they will try to hold on to their positions if they are not criticized’. Since these are the only two values, they both represent something like an extreme end of the scale, viz. the highest and lowest value, respectively.<sup>21</sup> The crucial question is whether we can still speak of a scale if there are only two values, which are each other’s polar opposites.

It should be noted that even (33), which is the prototypical example in the literature on *even if* conditionals and which is always treated as scalar, allows a polar interpretation:

- (33) Even if it rains, the match will not be cancelled.

With a contrastive accent on *rains*, we can readily assume a number of alternative conditions (e.g. ‘if only ten members turn up’, ‘if it is not sunny’, etc.) that might be considered less likely to bring about cancellation of the match than ‘if it rains’. But if there is no contrastive accent, there is at least a possibility of reading (33) as expressing little more than a polar contrast between ‘If it rains’ and ‘If it doesn’t rain’, that is, the possibility of reading (33) as ‘Even if it DOES rain, the match will not be cancelled’.<sup>22</sup> For example, I could say *Even if it rains, the match won’t be cancelled* to somebody unfamiliar with the sport of rugby (and the very wet conditions under which it is sometimes played), and it would be very unlikely that I would have in mind a scale of situations that might (wrongly) be expected to cause cancellation, of which rain is the most likely. I would more likely simply be explaining that the person should understand that, despite the looming black clouds, we will still be going to the rugby match. In other words, (33) can simply be a denial or precluding of an assumption of incompatibility between rain and the match not being cancelled. In this interpretation, the two contrasting conditionals involved (viz. ‘The match will not be cancelled if it rains’ and ‘The match will not be cancelled if it does not rain’) would not seem to be on a real SCALE of improbability but simply relate one to the other. Effectively, they are the equivalents of the alternative answers to a polar question — see also Haiman (1974: 342) and König (1986: 231).

In sum, apart from *even if* conditionals that have a clear plural set understanding, there are also *even if* conditionals that just evoke a single alternative with which the *if* conditional is contrasted. The alternative is a conditional with a P-clause that is the polar opposite of the P-clause of the *even if* conditional. The following is an example that can only be interpreted this way:

- (34) [I hope John will agree. But] even if he doesn’t, we’ll carry out this decision.

In this case the only contrast there is is between ‘if John agrees’ and ‘if John doesn’t agree’, which are each other’s polar opposites. It is typical of such polar *even if* conditionals that they can be paraphrased by ‘Q, both if P and if not-P’, or ‘Q, whether or not P’: ‘We’ll carry out this decision, whether John agrees with it or not’.

It is open to debate whether in these cases we can still speak of a SCALE. It seems reasonable to argue that the plural set understanding that is typical of a scalar interpretation requires a number of values higher than two. However, there are a number of arguments that plead in favor of assigning a (somewhat special) scalar analysis even to polar *even if* conditionals. To begin with, a set of two (one of them being the *if* conditional focused by *even*) may be a small set, but it is a plural set. Second, like prototypical scalar *even if* conditionals, (34) is an implicative conditional with an expectation understanding as well as a nonpreclusive understanding. Third, even though there are only two conditionals that qualify as scalar values, there is an ordering understanding and an extreme value understanding in the sense that the *if* conditional following *even* ranks highest on the scale of improbability: it is naturally less likely that we will carry out a decision if someone involved disagrees than it is likely that we will carry it out if the person in question agrees. Fourth, the requirement of a contrastive understanding — the idea that the *if* conditional representing the extreme value is contrasted with all the other (less extreme) values (*if* conditionals) on the scale — is satisfied, even though there are only two values: being each other’s polar opposites is the strongest possible form of contrast. Fifth (and finally), (34) seems to require a scalar analysis because there is an ancillary P-scale with the propositions ‘John will not agree’ and ‘John will agree’ as values, as well as an *even if* scale with the conditionals ‘We’ll carry out the decision if John doesn’t agree’ and ‘We’ll carry out the decision if John agrees’ as values. For all these reasons it seems warranted to consider polar *even if* conditionals as scalar. However, unlike the *even if* scale in “prototypical” scalar *even if* conditionals, the *even if* scale in question is the extreme type in which the plural set of values is restricted to two.

A few more examples may help to justify the suggestion that a polar analysis is sometimes necessary. Consider the following:

- (35) [You have the News and Style Guide. — Yeah. Yeah. — I have ... brought that yeah.] — Erm it is the just I think the one list that is worth checking even if it doesn’t appear in the new citations. — [Mm. Worth checking against the original because it, it’s one that newsroom certainly will go straight to to see what, what we’ve said.] (COB-S)

The meaning of the *even if* clause here is not ‘it is the one list that is worth checking even in the/a circumstance that is most/very unlikely to warrant checking it’ or ‘it is the one list that is worth checking even in the/a circumstance in which you would least expect it to be worth checking’. What it does mean is ‘whether or not it appears in the new citations, it is the one list that is worth checking’. As is clear from the use of ‘whether or not’ in this paraphrase, this is a polar rather than prototypical scalar interpretation.

- (36) [Unfortunately, there’s no way we can avoid going up to Newcastle without giving offence. We will of course have to be introduced to young Sam but] even if he hadn’t arrived Ian’s Dad and Doreen expect to see us [— it’s difficult enough to get away with only going up there for a day or two]. (COB-W)

There is probably an implicit Q-clause in this sentence so that it should be read as ‘even if he hadn’t arrived, Ian’s Dad and Doreen expect to see us AND SO WE WILL HAVE TO GO’ or alternatively (and equivalently), ‘even if he hadn’t arrived, WE WOULD STILL HAVE TO GO BECAUSE Ian’s Dad and Doreen expect to see us’. However, (36) does not mean that young Sam’s not having arrived would have been the least likely circumstance (for Ian’s Dad and Doreen to have expected to see us, and) for us to have to go. It means that whether he had arrived or not, we would have to go, because Ian’s Dad and Doreen expect to see us. (This interpretation arises via ‘if he hadn’t arrived, we would still, CONTRARY TO THE EXPECTATION THAT I MAY HAVE EVOKED IN SAYING THAT WE HAVE TO BE INTRODUCED TO HIM, have had to go’.)

- (37) [She told me that she will be doing one more course after this and then be looking for a job. I hope she finds one.] Even if she does, though, she will still have to move to a cheaper house. (COB-W)

It is not likely that the meaning here is that ‘her’ finding a job is high on a scale of “negative expectation” (improbability), “the highest position on which is occupied by the referent in the scope of *even*” (Dancygier 1998: 161–162), that is, that her finding a job is the most unlikely cause of her having to move to a cheaper house (or, more generally, the most unlikely circumstance in which she will have to move to a cheaper house).

- (38) [Your choice will be governed by your priorities — your dedication and practice will be much more quickly apparent from the seven balls route! Nevertheless] you will probably find many of his tips on practising extremely useful, even if you do not wish to follow the same directions as he has. (COB-W)

On a prototypical scalar interpretation, this means something like: not wishing to follow the same directions as he has (followed) is the unlikeliest (or a very unlikely) circumstance in which you would find his tips on practicing useful (and you will still find them useful), so you will find them useful IN ALL LESS UNLIKELY CASES. On a polar interpretation, (38) expresses 'you might expect finding his tips useful to be inextricably linked to wishing to follow the direction he has followed, but your expectation would be wrong: you will find the tips useful whether or not you wish to follow the direction he has followed'.

It is worth noting that one way of triggering a polar alternative analysis is to put a strong accent on *if* — see also Barker (1994: 254–258):

- (39) a. Even IF that is true, you cannot draw any conclusions from it yet.
- b. Even IF my client was there, that wouldn't mean he had anything to do with the theft.

In such sentences, the *even if* scale is determined by an ancillary P-scale consisting of only two polar alternatives: P vs. not-P. Because '*if P*' ranks higher on the *even if* scale (where the highest value is the least likely one), there is an emphasis on the suppositional (nonfactual) nature of the proposition expressed in the *if* clause. In other words, *even IF* expresses that of the two alternatives — fulfilment and nonfulfilment of the condition — fulfilment is the less likely.

It should be noted that the existence of polar *even if* conditionals has been noted by some authors (e.g. Haiman 1974; König 1986; Barker 1994), but that these often tend to classify too many *even if* conditionals as belonging to this class. Haiman (1974) seems to treat all *even if* conditionals as polar. Barker (1994: 254) applies the notion to such examples as the following:

- (40) a. The conference was good, even if most of the papers went on too long and few pleased the crowd.
- b. She spoke to him clearly even if somewhat bluntly.

In later sections we will claim that (40a) is a "purely concessive" *even if* conditional and that (40b) is a conditional with a "commenting" *even if* clause. In our opinion, neither of them is amenable to an analysis in terms of 'Q, whether or not P'. As a matter of fact, *even if* conditionals never receive a polar interpretation if they do not have an expectation understanding and a nonpreclusive understanding. This becomes clear when we compare the following sentences:

- (41) a. Even if it does rain, the match will not be cancelled.
- b. Even if she had noticed my presence, she showed no sign of it.

Sentence (41a) denies (i.e. precludes the truth of) the expectation ‘If it rains, the match will be cancelled’. Since this conditional expresses ‘P leads to Q’, (41a) yields a polar interpretation (‘The match will not be cancelled, whether it rains or not’). By contrast, sentence (41b), which is a nonimplicative *even if* conditional — see below, does not deny the truth of the expectation ‘If she had noticed my presence, she would have shown sign of it’. It follows that (41b) does not yield the polar reading ‘Had she noticed? If she had, she showed no sign, and if she hadn’t, she didn’t show any sign either’. (In fact, ‘If she hadn’t, she didn’t show any sign’ is nonsensical.)<sup>23</sup>

A polar reading is also excluded if the *even if* clause is specifical, as in *I will do it {even if JOHN is there / even if it is John who is there}*. The appropriate paraphrase here is not ‘I will do it if John is there, and I will do it if John is not there’ but rather ‘I will do it if (it is) John (who) is there, and I will do it if SOMEONE ELSE (e.g. Bill, Jack, William, Derek, etc.) is there’. (In other words, there is reference here to a scale of improbability whose values are determined by an ancillary P-scale resulting from specifical focusing.)

#### 4.5. Even if precludes the implicature that P is necessary for Q

It is well known in the linguistic literature that, failing any indication to the contrary, ‘if P, Q’ tends to be read as ‘Q if and only if P’ (= ‘Q iff P’). This tendency (implicature) is known as “conditional perfection” (Geis and Zwicky 1971): the pragmatic interpretation of *if* is often such that a one-way conditional (‘if P, Q’) is “perfected” into a biconditional (‘if P, Q’ + ‘if not-P, not-Q’). In other words, ‘if P, Q’ is often interpreted as ‘iff P, Q’ (= ‘Q only if P’). For example, *If the weather is fine, we’ll go to the seaside* is conventionally interpreted as having ‘...but we won’t go if the weather isn’t fine’ as part of its meaning. In other words, the unmarked pragmatic interpretation is ‘If and only if the weather is fine will we go...’, in which the weather being fine is seen as a NECESSARY condition for our going to the seaside. Like all conversational implicatures, this implicature can be cancelled by the context, for example by the addition of *In fact we’ll go to the seaside anyhow, even if it rains* — see Haegeman (1984). (The implicature can also simply fail to arise, as in *Mother will be happy if you tell her that*, which does not suggest that Mother will not be happy if she is not told the news in question.)

Van der Auwera (1997) and Horn (2000) have suggested different explanations for the origin of the conditional perfection implicature. Our

own explanation for the implicature, which we will henceforth refer to as the "necessity implicature," is as follows.<sup>24</sup> Consider (42):

- (42) If it doesn't rain next Sunday, John'll drive to the seaside.

The eventual truth (in the actual world) of the assertion *Next Sunday John'll drive to the seaside* depends on a variety of pragmatic conditions: John is still alive next Sunday, he is not seriously ill, he has a car at his disposal, the seaside is within driving distance, John can drive a car, etc. When uttering (42), all these conditions are pragmatically presupposed to be fulfilled. The condition referred to in the P-clause is just a further pragmatic condition. However, unlike the other conditions, this condition needs mentioning because it is not pragmatically presupposed to be fulfilled. This means that, although strictly speaking the P-condition is not sufficient for Q in that there are other conditions to be satisfied, it is interpreted as the only relevant condition, that is, as the only pragmatic condition that is not self-evident, since all the other conditions are pragmatically presupposed to be fulfilled. In accordance with the Gricean maxims of quantity and relevance, the P-condition is the only one that needs mentioning, because it is the only one that presents necessary (new) and relevant information. It follows that it is interpreted as a sufficient and necessary condition, since all the other conditions are disregarded.

In sum, in the actual world, absence of rain is not the only pragmatic condition for driving to the seaside and is neither a sufficient nor a necessary pragmatic condition for doing so. However, the fact that it is mentioned as a condition, and that it is the ONLY condition mentioned, implicates that this condition can be seen as both sufficient and necessary: if only one condition is mentioned, the hearer has a right to conclude that there is in fact only one (relevant) condition, hence that the condition mentioned is the only necessary and sufficient condition for Q. In the absence of any indication to the contrary, (42) will therefore be interpreted as meaning that absence of rain on Sunday is a necessary and sufficient condition for the proposition 'We drive to the seaside' to become true in the actual world.

Perhaps it is worth noting that we are arguing here that the sufficiency understanding is not part of the semantics of 'if P, Q', as is universally accepted in the literature, but just an implicature. Our claim is corroborated by the fact that the sufficiency understanding is cancellable:

- (43) If it rains, we'll stay inside — provided the headmaster agrees, of course. (*Rain is not the only condition here that must be satisfied; it is therefore not a sufficient condition.*)

Another point worth making is that the necessity and sufficiency implicatures only play a part in the interpretation of implicative *if* conditionals. Neither of the implicatures arises in nonimplicative *if* conditionals, such as the following (already referred to as [2d]):

- (44) I couldn't do a crime if I wanted. (*This sentence does not implicate that my wanting to do a crime is a sufficient or/and necessary condition for my being able to do one.*)

Moreover, even in implicative conditionals, the implicatures may fail to arise because they are blocked by pragmatic knowledge:

- (45) [What shall we give Susan for her birthday?] — She would be happy if she was given a necklace.

Since it is natural that there are many different circumstances in which people may be happy, the necessity implicature ‘Susan would be happy only if she was given a necklace’ (= ‘Susan would not be happy if she was not given a necklace’) does not arise: it is blocked by our pragmatic knowledge of the world.

Returning to our main line of argument, we can point out — with König (1986: 236) and Dancygier (1998: 163) — that the addition of *even* to an implicative *if* conditional blocks the necessity implicature. *Even* has this effect irrespective of whether P and Q are positive or negative. For example,

- (46) a. Jane will help you if she has the time.  
b. ?Jane will help you even if she has the time.
- (47) a. Jane won't help you if she doesn't have the time.  
b. ?Jane won't help you even if she doesn't have the time.
- (48) a. Jane will help you if you don't treat her badly.  
b. ?Jane will help you even if you don't treat her badly.
- (49) a. Jane will not help you if you treat her badly.  
b. ?Jane will not help you even if you treat her badly.

In each of the (a) examples, *if* is by implicature interpreted as “iff.” In each of the (b) sentences, the addition of *even* blocks this reading. (These *even if* sentences are odd because the sense of unexpectedness induced by *even* is hardly compatible with the contents of the conditional to which *even* is added: our knowledge of the world tells us that having the time is not a very unlikely condition for helping someone but in fact virtually a necessary condition for doing so; similarly, we do not normally help a person unless that person does not treat us badly.)

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Dancygier's (1998: 163) explanation for this blocking effect of *even if* is as follows. According to her, the necessity implicature typically arises with causal conditionals: since (in her opinion) *even if* conditionals are never causal (i.e. they mean 'Q despite P' rather than 'Q because of P'), they do not yield the necessity implicature. However, we have argued that implicative *even if* conditionals do have a kind of causative meaning, since they necessarily have the nonpreclusive understanding 'even P does not prevent Q'. The following examples show clearly that it is wrong to assume that *even if* conditionals are never causal:

- (50) a. [I'll leave not only if Bill comes but also if Jim comes.] I'll even leave if Gordon comes. (*adapted from Barker 1994: 251*)  
     b. Even if you drink (just) a drop, you'll get fired.

(50a) yields a causal interpretation ('even Gordon's coming will cause me to leave') but there is no necessity implicature (i.e. no understanding that I will leave ONLY IF Gordon comes.) Similarly, in (50b) drinking a drop clearly causes the Q-situation, but the implicit contrast of "a drop" with other quantities that are more obvious (i.e. expectable, probable) candidates to satisfy the variable X in 'if you drink quantity X you'll get fired' rules out the necessity implicature. Moreover, the claim that the necessity implicature requires a causal reading is disproved by examples like *If any of these children is wearing an Air Force badge, he or she has a parent in the Air Force*. The 'Q because of P' interpretation is certainly ruled out here (at least if the sentence is to be interpreted as true in the actual world), but the necessity implicature is not: the sentence could be read as 'It is only if these children are wearing an Air Force badge that they have a parent in the Air Force' (which may actually suggest 'P because of Q' rather than the other way round).<sup>25</sup>

In our opinion, König's (1986) explanation is the correct one: "concessive conditionals (...) exclude conditional perfection as an admissible inference pattern by entailing or presupposing that the conditional relationship holds for a whole series of antecedents" (1986: 236) In our terminology, this means that the "if and only if" interpretation of *if* in *even if* conditionals is incompatible with the plural set understanding that forms part of the scalar meaning: '*even if*  $P_1$ , Q' implies that there are one (in polar *even if* conditionals) or more (in prototypical *even if* conditionals) values of the type '*if*  $P$ , Q' on the *even if* scale. This means that  $P_1$  is not the only condition for Q, hence that it is not a necessary condition. This explanation is in keeping with the observation that the necessity implicature never arises in nonimplicative conditionals, which do not allow a scalar analysis.

4.6. *Nonassertoric implicative even if conditionals*

So far we have only considered *even if* conditionals in which the Q-clause is a (positive or negative) assertion. However, the Q-clause of an implicative *even if* conditional may also be interrogative or directive. The following illustrate a first possibility:

- (51) a. Will I really be punished even if I do not do anything wrong?  
       b. [Cleaning-up tips: Help prevent spills by placing the mixing bowl on a folded, damp tea towel, ... Put a plastic sheet under the table and sweep food up before it gets trodden around the house. And] even if you hate washing up, don't assume that your child will — [make clearing up afterwards part of the fun.] (COB-W)

(51a) is a wide-scope polar question, which is interpreted as ‘Is it really true that I will be punished even if I do not do anything wrong?’ This is just the interrogative version of an assertoric implicative *even if* conditional: it has both an expectation understanding (‘I expect not to be punished if I do not do anything wrong’) and a nonpreclusive understanding (‘Will my not doing anything wrong not preclude my being punished?’). This kind of interrogative *even if* conditional does not pose any particular problems. The same is true of (51b), which differs from an assertoric implicative *even if* conditional only in that the Q-clause is a directive: (51b) has both an expectation understanding (‘You might expect that you can assume that if you hate washing up, your child will do too’) and a nonpreclusive understanding (‘That expectation is wrong: don't assume that your child will hate washing up if you do’).

The following sentences illustrate a second possibility:

- (52) a. (*speaking about a two-party state*) Even if party A becomes more popular in the city, party B will win the elections.  
       b. Even if party A becomes more popular in the city, will party B win the elections?  
       c. Even if party A becomes more popular in the city, vote for party B!

(52a) is an implicative *even if* conditional with an expectation understanding (‘You might expect party A to win the elections if it becomes more popular in the city’) and a nonpreclusive understanding ‘That expectation is wrong: party B will win the elections’). Sentence (52b), which is a polar question with narrow scope, is the interrogative counterpart of (52a): it has the same expectation understanding and a nonpreclusive (expectation-cancelling) understanding (‘I am questioning this

expectation'). Sentence (52c) is the directive counterpart of (52a): it has the same expectation understanding and a nonpreclusive (expectation-cancelling) understanding ('Act counter to the expectation: vote for party B').

The following illustrates a third possibility:

- (53) a. Even if I take this apple and eat it, who shall suffer?  
 b. [That damned fool boy!] What does he mean by trying to come home now, even if he did promise? (LOB)

These sentences are rhetorical questions, which are interpreted as if they were assertions. They therefore present no problem at all, because, as usual, they are interpreted in terms of an expectation understanding and a kind of nonpreclusive understanding: 'Surely, my eating this apple will not preclude (= alter the fact) that nobody will suffer, although you might expect the contrary', and 'You might expect that I'd like him to come home if (= now that) he promised, but that expectation is wrong: I don't want him trying to come home now'.

The following illustrate a fourth possibility:

- (54) a. [“Order! Order!” — “Don’t interrupt me, damn you! You know he’s my husband and that I’m his wife.] Even if he’s to be unknown as usual — do I get my pension?” (TUS 71)  
 b. [The older you are the less strenuous the exercises should be. But] even if you’re over seventy, do try to get your muscles moving. (LOB)

These *even if* sentences can be analyzed as speech-act conditionals,<sup>26</sup> with both an expectation understanding and a nonpreclusive understanding. Thus, (54a) is interpreted as 'You might expect me not to ask the question *Do I get my pension?* if my husband is to be unknown, but the fact that he is to be unknown actually does not prevent me from asking if I will get it'. The directive (54b) can be analyzed similarly: 'You might expect me not to tell you to try to get your muscles moving if you're over seventy, but in fact your being over seventy does not prevent me telling you to do so'. These sentences show that nonassertoric Q-clauses are unproblematic if 'preclude Q' can be interpreted as 'preclude my saying/asking/ordering that Q'.<sup>27</sup>

A final possibility of an implicative *even if* conditional with an interrogative Q-clause is illustrated by the following:

- (55) [“She could already be dead, couldn’t she?” — “You have to think positively, Nicole.”] — “And even if she is still alive, what will happen to her if Dennison’s thugs get to her first?” (COB-W)

This is the only type of nonassertoric *even if* conditional that appears difficult to account for in terms of an expectation understanding and a nonpreclusive understanding. The sentence as a whole would not seem to be a speech-act *even if* conditional. The Q-clause looks like a true (nonrhetorical) wh question. There are only two polar values on the ancillary P-scale (and thus on the *even if* scale): 'If she is still alive' and 'If she is no longer alive'. However, there is no ensuing polar interpretation of the kind we have observed in (34) (= *I hope John will agree. But] even if he doesn't, we'll carry out this decision*) because there is apparently no expectation understanding and no nonpreclusive understanding. Sentences like (55) would therefore seem to defy our analysis. However, the solution to the problem becomes clear when we compare (55) with its assertoric counterpart:

- (56) And even if she is still alive, something (bad) will happen to her if Dennison's thugs get to her first.

Here too the expectation understanding and the nonpreclusive understanding would seem to be lacking, but in fact they are not, because (56) has an implicit Q-clause:

- (57) And even if she is still alive, *she is hardly better off than if she's dead, because* something (bad) will happen to her if Dennison's thugs get to her first.

In the same way, (55) is short for

- (58) And even if she is still alive, *will she be better off than if she's dead?* Because something (bad) will happen to her if Dennison's thugs get to her first.

The Q-question here presents no problem because it can be analyzed either as a rhetorical question or as the Q-clause of a speech-act conditional like (54a).

### 5. Nonimplicative *even if* conditionals

Nonimplicative *even if* conditionals do not express 'contrary to expectations, P does not preclude Q' and do not allow a scalar analysis.<sup>28</sup> The following are some typical examples:

- (59) a. But they don't really look like musicians, even if, occasionally, they sound like it. (COB-W) (*This is not interpreted as meaning that the conditional 'They don't really look like musicians if,*

*occasionally, they sound like it' is a value which contrasts with other conditionals on an "even if" scale.)*

- b. But he is clever and a talented researcher even if, in parts of this passionately angry book, the talent is ill-used. (COB-W)
- c. However one does appreciate that the job of prime minister is not one with a huge amount of long-term security, even if, once they have been removed from office, very few of them are actually to be seen queuing for Salvation Army soup. (COB-W)
- d. [The appearance of three new books on the subject (...) proves that,] even if philosophers want no part of the action, publishers know a good thing when they see it. (TLS)

These *even if* conditionals can be subdivided into two groups: *even if* conditionals with a “purely concessive” P-clause and *even if* conditionals in which the P-clause expresses some kind of comment on the Q-clause.

### 5.1. Purely concessive even if clauses

According to Quirk et al. (1985), “concessive clauses indicate that the situation in the matrix is contrary to expectation in the light of what is said in the concessive clause. ... Often they also imply contrast between the situations described by the two clauses” (1985: 1098) It is clear that this definition covers all *even if* conditionals, since (as we have seen) a sense of expected incompatibility (and hence of contrast) is an inherent part of the semantics of *even*. In implicative *even if* conditionals, this sense appears as a sense of unexpectedness (combining an expectation understanding and a nonpreclusive understanding). Nonimplicative *even if* conditionals do not yield this sense of unexpectedness: the only aspect of meaning expressed by *even* is now the general sense of expected incompatibility. However, when *if* is used in a context triggering a concessive reading, as in *If she's ill-mannered, at least she's honest*, the combination with *even*, with its sense of expected incompatibility, results in a “purely concessive” nonimplicative *even if* conditional. For example,

- (60) Even if politicians were not interested in this subject, the media would still be paying a lot of attention to it, [because they know the general public is interested in that kind of subject].

This counterfactual *even if* sentence, which is similar to (59d), yields a purely concessive interpretation, which involves a sense of contrast but which is clearly not scalar and does not involve the expectation and nonpreclusive understandings: (60) cannot be paraphrased as ‘You might

expect that if politicians were not interested in the subject, that would preclude the media paying a lot of attention to it, but in fact the media would still be paying a lot of attention to it'. Such an interpretation is blocked by our pragmatic knowledge of the world, as everybody knows that what the media are interested in is in no way determined by what politicians are interested in.<sup>29</sup>

Apart from counterfactual clauses, *even if* can also introduce purely concessive clauses with another kind of possible-world meaning. Consider, for example, the following *even if* conditional:

- (61) Even if we grant Allan Janik's point that Weininger was an intense, sincere young man in search of a truly "moral science," clearly something went badly wrong with his thought-experiment. (TLS)

As argued in Declerck and Reed (forthcoming), this kind of conditional has a "neutral" meaning in that it assumes nothing in connection with fulfilment of the condition in the real world. In this respect it is like Comrie's (1986: 90) example *If the butler had done it, we would have found just the clues that we did in fact find*. It is also a clear example of a purely concessive *even if* conditional. A suitable paraphrase is 'Clearly, something went badly wrong with Weininger's thought-experiment, although we might grant Allan Janik's point that Weininger was an intense, sincere young man in search of a truly "moral science."' (As said before, the absence of a sense of unexpectedness, and hence of an expectation understanding, does not alter the fact that *even* does induce a sense of expected incompatibility: the fact that Weininger was an intense, sincere young man in search of a truly "moral science" seems [but, the author insists, is not] incompatible with the fact that he made a faulty thought-experiment.)

In the following example, the *even if* clause is interpreted as "open" (i.e. the condition is seen as one that may or may not be fulfilled):

- (62) [If by chance he does not kill me I shall be crippled for life.] Even if he fails to kill or cripple me I shall be permanently disfigured. (LOB)

Needless to say, this is not interpreted as 'You might expect that if he fails to kill or cripple me I shall not be permanently disfigured, but in fact I shall be permanently disfigured'. By contrast, the sentence can be read as 'I may not be killed or crippled by him, but I shall be permanently disfigured'. This interpretation is not implicative but purely concessive.

In the following examples of purely concessive *even if* conditionals the P-clause is "tentative," that is, the truth of P, or the actualization of the P-situation, is represented as not impossible, but rather unlikely.

- (63) a. [He's in prison, so] he couldn't come to our party even if he wanted to.  
 b. [Edward Augustus Freeman (...) told Englishmen that The Anglo-Saxon (or, as he preferred, "Old English") Chronicle was "the book you should reverence next after your Bibles and Homer."] He would probably be satisfied that its readership has stood up at least as well as either of theirs; even if he would not have been so pleased that a great deal more of it is in New England than in Old. (TLS)

Although in these sentences there is a sense of expected incompatibility between P and Q (as there always is when *even* is used), neither of them has the expectation understanding 'You might expect P to result in not-Q' (in other words: 'You might expect P to preclude Q'). Thus, the following do not appear to be part of the interpretation of (63a)–(63b):

- (64) a. You might expect that his wanting to come to our party would result in his being able to do so. (*Q is [−q]*)  
 b. You might expect that the fact that he would not have been pleased that most of the readership of the Old English Chronicle is in New England would preclude his being satisfied that its readership had stood up as least as well as that of the Bibles and Homer, but this fact would actually not have precluded his being satisfied that this was the case. (*This sentence is all right in itself, but it is not an appropriate paraphrase of [63b].*)

There are also purely concessive *even if* sentences in which the P-clause receives a "factual" interpretation, that is, in which P is taken to be unconditionally true in the actual world:

- (65) But they don't really look like musicians, even if, occasionally, they sound like it. (COB-W)

There is no expectation understanding 'You might expect that it would follow from the fact that they occasionally sound like musicians that they look like musicians',<sup>30</sup> nor a nonpreclusive understanding 'sounding like musicians actually does not prevent them from not looking like musicians'. There is also no scalar reading that sounding like musicians is the most unlikely circumstance in which "they" would not look like musicians (nor a polar reading 'they do not look like musicians, whether or not they sound like musicians').<sup>31</sup> Sentence (65) simply means 'They may (occasionally) sound like musicians, but they do not really look like musicians', which is a purely concessive reading.

The following are similar purely concessive examples with a factual condition:

- (66) a. [I did it because I think] I had the sheer gumption to get through and enjoy my life, even if it has taken me all this time to finally come to terms with the parts of myself I wasn't too keen on. (COB-W)
- b. [Rochdale FC are not an anachronism, though. They are the same as Liverpool only in miniature.] We have a new stand, executive boxes, an electronic scoreboard (even if it doesn't work). [We even have our own flag.] (COB-W)

Let's close off this section on purely concessive *even if* conditionals with three further remarks. First, purely concessive *even if* conditionals differ from implicative ones in that the relation between P and Q cannot be a relation between P and an implicit Q rather than between P and the overt Q-clause. Consider the following:

- (67) [The new vicarage was a three-bedroomed affair, built in the local stone, but in a style best described as anonymous. "It just suits us," Walter Primp told everyone.] And even if Thyrza Primp regretted their two-peas-in-a-pod grandeur in the old vicarage, she had by then gained an unassailable position in the town, [and her natural parsimony reconciled her to her reduced state]. (adapted from COB-W)

At first sight this *even if* conditional would seem to be purely concessive, as it invites the paraphrase 'Thyrza Primp might have regretted their ... grandeur in the old vicarage, but she had by then gained an unassailable position in the town'. In fact, however, (67) is more likely to be interpreted as an *even if* conditional with an implicit Q-clause:

- (68) Even if Thyrza Primp regretted their two-peas-in-a-pod grandeur in the old vicarage, *she had become reconciled to living in a more humble vicarage because* she had by then gained an unassailable position in the town, [and because her natural parsimony reconciled her to her reduced state].

This interpretation is necessarily implicative, not purely concessive.

Second, it is interesting to see that a purely concessive *even if* clause may have the effect of cancelling (or blocking) an implicature that the Q-clause yields when used in isolation. Consider (69):

- (69) Her betrothed would have learned her reason one day, she says, even if it proved to be on Judgement Day. (TLS) (= *If things had not fallen out as they did, her betrothed would (still) have learned*

*her reason one day, even if the learning (had) proved to be on Judgement Day.)*

Here the *even if* clause gets rid of the reasonable assumption that “one day” means at its broadest “one day within his life.” This implicature-cancelling effect of *even if* is also apparent in the following:

- (70) [But in his meeting with council (...) the Iraqi ambassador refused to commit to the resolutions. He called them extraneous issues, and he said] even if Iraq wanted to comply with them it could take many years to do so. [For instance, Resolution 674 calls for Iraq to pay war reparations to Kuwait. But with its “war-ravaged economy,” he suggested, “Iraq is in no position to do so.”] (COB-W)

Clearly, the ambassador wants to say that the resolutions are unreasonable, but he does not want this to suggest that Iraq has any intention of complying with the resolutions — a suggestion that the Q-clause (*it could take [Iraq] many years to comply with the resolutions*) on its own actually does make.<sup>32</sup>

A third, and final, remark concerns the relation between purely concessive *even if* and *even though*. Consider the following:

- (71) a. [It was the loneliness of the neighbourhood, they supposed, that kept the house next to theirs empty. (...) The house stood two hundred yards from the Bartlebys’ and] A. liked looking out of the window now and then and seeing it, even if it was empty. (quotation from a Patricia Highsmith novel, cited by König 1986: 240)  
 b. “Kubla Khan,” even if originally scribbled down in a frenzy of recollection, was carefully revised for publication. (TLS)

There is little difference of interpretation between these *even if* sentences and the following:

- (72) a. A. liked looking out of the window now and then and seeing it [the house], even though it was empty.  
 b. “Kubla Khan,” even though originally scribbled down in a frenzy of recollection, was carefully revised for publication.

There is a minute difference between (71a) and (72a): while (71a) is from the point of view of A., (72a) is from the point of view of the narrator or, rather, is authorial. (Perhaps [72a] COULD be read as from A’s point of view, but that is not the obvious reading, and it still differs from [71a] in that [71a] CANNOT be authorial). This seems to be to do with the fact that while the *though* clause in (72a) is a statement of a fact, the *if* clause

in (71a) is not: it expresses a closed condition, that is, a condition that is assumed to be fulfilled. And closed conditions, which are typically echoic (cf. Akatsuka 1991),<sup>33</sup> are discourse-oriented — they crucially involve an addressee, even if the addressee is the self, as in (71a), which we understand as A. thinking to himself “The house is empty, but I like looking out of the window and seeing it, even if it is empty.” Similarly, we can paraphrase (71b) with a closed conditional, which strongly suggests that the P-clause is discourse-oriented: ‘*Kubla Khan* might have been scribbled down in a frenzy (...) but it was carefully revised for publication’, or ‘I agree that *KK* was originally scribbled (...), but still, it was (...).’ Sentence (72b), by contrast is purely authorial: there is no indication of echoic qualities.

In sum, while (72a)–(72b) are formally identical to (71a)–(71b), except that *even though* is substituted for *even if*, their interpretations are not quite identical. This means that substituting *even though* for *even if* in purely concessive *even if* conditionals is not often possible without a change (albeit a minute one) of interpretation. The reason is that *even though* can only introduce clauses with a factual meaning. By contrast, *even if* introduces an *if* conditional, and, as noted above, *if* conditionals may be factual, as in (65) and (66a)–(66b), but they more often have a nonfactual (i.e. closed, open, tentative, neutral, or counterfactual) meaning. In the latter cases *even though* is not a valid alternative to *even if*:

- (73) a. [He's in prison, so] he couldn't come to our party even if he wanted to. (\**even though*)
- b. Her betrothed would have learned her reason one day, she says, even if it proved to be on Judgement Day. (TLS)  
(\**even though*)

### 5.2. Commenting even if clauses

According to Barker (1994: 254), *even if* conditionals can receive a ‘whether-or-not-P’ interpretation (in our terms: a polar reading) even when the P-clause is factual, as in the following examples (=Barker’s [8a]–[8c], 1994: 254):

- (74) a. The conference was good, even if most of the papers went on too long and few pleased the crowd.
- b. Women have always kissed women, even if more cynical males describe the process as being reminiscent of prize fighters shaking hands. (TAM 12)
- c. She spoke to him clearly even if somewhat bluntly.

Barker claims not only that these sentences mean ‘Q whether or not P, though I think that P’ but also that this paraphrase is equivalent to ‘Q although P’ (1994: 254). In our opinion, neither of these claims is correct. Thus, (74a) does not receive the polar interpretation ‘Either way, whether most of the papers went on too long or not, the conference was good’, and the latter paraphrase is not equivalent to ‘Although most of the papers went on too long, the conference was good’ (which paraphrase does seem closer to the interpretation of [74a]). Similarly, Barker attributes a polar reading to (74b), but the reading ‘Women have always kissed women, both if more cynical males describe the process as being reminiscent of prize fighters shaking hands and if they do not’ is bizarre, and it is certainly not equivalent to ‘Women have always kissed women although more cynical males describe the process as being reminiscent of prize fighters shaking hands’. Similar remarks apply to (74c).

In our opinion, (74a)–(74c) are not implicative (as they would be if they were polar). Sentence (74a) might be considered as purely concessive, but we are not really certain that *even if* is interpreted as *despite the fact that*. Sentences (74b)–(74c) are definitely neither implicative nor purely concessive. As a matter of fact, they do not belong to any of the types we have distinguished so far. They illustrate a type (not discussed in the literature) in which the *even if* clause has a “commenting” function, that is, represents the speaker’s comment on what is said in the Q-clause.

Let’s consider (74c) first. This sentence expresses little more than

- (75) She spoke to him clearly. She did so somewhat bluntly.

except that the use of *even* in (74c) adds the idea of expected incompatibility. This means that P represents some sort of (at least potential) detraction from the validity of Q (or of uttering Q). This aspect of meaning explains why the coordination of two manner adverbials (e.g. *clearly* and *bluntly*) by means of *even if* is only acceptable if the two ideas expressed can be expected to be incompatible with each other:

- (76) a. She spoke to him clearly {and / \*even if} at just the right volume. (“*even if*” is odd because there is no easily imaginable incompatibility between clarity of speech and speech at just the right volume)
- b. She spoke to him clearly {and / even if} somewhat {loudly / quietly}. (“*even if*” is OK if we interpret “loudly / quietly” as “too loudly / quietly,” which detracts a bit from the positive evaluation in “she spoke clearly”)<sup>34</sup>
- c. She spoke to him slowly, even if somewhat quietly. (This is OK if the slowness is a positive factor and the quietness is a

*negative factor that nevertheless does not cancel out the positive one, for example if she is speaking to someone in a language he finds difficult to understand, in which case slowness would make it easier for him to understand her, but quietness might make it a little harder to understand her.)*

- d. He spoke brutally, even if {\*kindly / \*slowly / ??clearly / honestly}. (“brutally” and “kindly” cannot be seen as compatible; “slowly” and “clearly” simply cannot be made relevant as manners of speech that might be seen (potentially) to detract from the brutality of someone’s speech; but “honestly” is something positive that can be set against the negative “brutally.”)

As for (74b), this sentence is similar to (74c) in that the *even if* clause has a commenting function. It is therefore equivalent to

- (77) Women have always kissed women. More cynical males describe the process as being reminiscent of prize fighters shaking hands.

except that *even* in (74b) adds the idea of expected incompatibility. This means that (74b) differs from (77) in that it expresses a logical connection between the two clauses, viz. that P might be thought by some to detract from (the validity, felicity, etc., of) Q but in the speaker’s view does not.

In the following example (where the *even if* clause again has a commenting function) the connection is of a different kind:

- (78) The King Bolo lyrics have been known to Eliot scholars and enthusiasts for some years now, even if only from hearsay. (TLS)

In this case the following seems a reasonably suitable paraphrase:

- (79) The King Bolo lyrics have been known to Eliot scholars and enthusiasts for some years now, but sometimes they have only been known from hearsay.

The meaning of *but* in the paraphrase (79) is not so much adversative as “downtoning”: the commenting P-clause weakens (an element of) the interpretation of the Q-clause by denying one of the implications or implicatures that could be read from the Q-clause. When used in isolation, the sentence *The King Bolo lyrics have been known to Eliot scholars and enthusiasts for some years now* suggests that Eliot scholars and enthusiasts have had first-hand access to the text of the King Bolo lyrics for some years. The commenting *even if* clause says that for at least some scholars and enthusiasts this has not been the case, and thus has a downtoning effect on the interpretation of the Q-clause. (The *but* clause in [79] actually has a slightly different downtoning effect. While [78] means ‘Q, DESPITE some small downtoning’, [79] means ‘Q, but not quite as fully Q

as you might have thought from just "Q". However, this just shows how difficult it is to find a paraphrase that receives EXACTLY the same interpretation as the sentence it is supposed to paraphrase.)

A similar downtoning analysis might be suitable for (74b): in isolation, the sentence *Women have always kissed women* suggests that women have always shown genuine signs of affection for each other, because that is what kissing is generally assumed to be. The addition of *even if more cynical males describe the process as being reminiscent of prize fighters shaking hands* questions this implicature by suggesting that the kissing is seen by some as only done perfunctorily.

In the following example, the commenting *even if* clause is downtoning in that it adds a somewhat negative qualification to a positive idea.

- (80) She's one of the best students, even if not the BEST, we've ever had.

Interestingly, this sentence is downtoning ('I can certainly say she's one of the best, even though I'm not sure I can say she's the best'), whereas the following (without *even*, with the nuclear accent on *the*, and without the heavy "parenthesis" intonation of the *even if* clause of [80]) is upgrading ('She might not just be one of the best, she might be THE best'):

- (81) She's one of the best students, if not THE best, we've ever had.

A negative commenting *even if* clause may also serve to block the possibility of an excessive interpretation of a negative idea expressed in the head clause. In that case the *even if* clause is upgrading rather than downtoning:

- (82) At this time of year, Detroit is cold, even if it is not downright freezing.

In isolation, *Detroit is cold* does not rule out (even if it does not invite) the interpretation that it is freezing in Detroit. The *even if* clause precludes this reading by saying that the temperature is higher than that.

Conversely, *even if* has a "downgrading" connotation in commenting *even if* clauses that are meant to soften the speaker's immodesty in uttering a self-congratulatory Q-clause:

- (83) ["Because we are a small company, everything is overseen by me or my beloved husband," she writes,] "and it all runs very efficiently, even if I say so myself!" (COB-W)

The *even if* clause here is not downtoning, because it does not weaken the validity of Q, but it is downgrading in that it renders the Q-utterance more tentative.

Another type of commenting *even if* clause consists of those that we will refer to as “evaluating.” We can distinguish three subtypes: “truth-evaluating,” “content-evaluating,” and “presupposition-evaluating.”

Truth-evaluating *even if* clauses express a comment that concerns the degree of truth of the Q-clause, or the authority behind it. This kind of evaluating *even if* clause has a downgrading connotation.

- (84) The murderer has apparently been arrested, even if the news hasn't been confirmed yet by the authorities.

A second subclass of evaluating *even if* clause is “content-evaluating.” It is typical of these that they express the speaker's comment on the semantic content of the Q-clause:

- (85) [You know, that knife's somewhere, isn't it? The knife that someone stuck into McClure. The knife that BROOKS stuck into McClure. That's the infuriating thing for me.] Knowing that the bloody thing's SOMEWHERE, even if it's at the bottom of the canal.  
(DOC 133)

Here the Q-clause says that the knife must be somewhere. The *even if* clause adds to this the comment that “at the bottom of the canal” is the least likely, or the least accessible, place for the knife to be, and in doing so makes it clear that “somewhere” in this instance cannot just include obvious and easily accessible places. This may imply that there is some notion of scale involved in the interpretation of the sentence, but this is not the normal improbability scale that is typical of implicative *even if* conditionals, as is clear from a comparison with (86):

- (86) We'll find the bloody thing, even if it's at the bottom of the canal.

This sentence has the usual expectation understanding ('You might expect that the bloody thing will not be found if it's at the bottom of the canal') and the nonpreclusive understanding ('Its being at the bottom of the canal will not preclude us finding the bloody thing'). There are no similar understandings in (85), which implies neither 'You might expect that the bloody thing isn't anywhere if it's at the bottom of the canal' nor 'Its being at the bottom of the canal will not preclude the bloody thing being somewhere'. In other words, if there is a scale in (85), it is not an *even if* scale whose values are conditionals expressing various kinds of P–Q relation. Rather, the scale is one of (in)accessibility of places included in the reference of *somewhere*, as opposed to being a scale of P-situations that will produce the Q-situation.

The following is another example with a content-evaluating *even if* clause:

- (87) I think about religion (...) as the exercise of law as applied by each man to himself, even if that law be anarchy, negation or despair. (WOS 72)

There might be a case for arguing that what the *even if* clauses in (86)–(87) evaluate are the contents of the words *somewhere* and *law*, respectively. This would mean that the *even if* clauses express a metalinguistic comment. However, we will not commit ourselves to this analysis, because it may well be that in (87) it is not the way(s) in which the word *law* can be used that is at issue, but the types of law that can be imagined. Similarly, in (86) there might not really be a query about the meaning of the word *somewhere* but rather a concern that the strategies for delimiting its reference on this occasion are deployed in the right way.

Apart from truth-evaluating and content-evaluating commenting *even if* clauses, there is a third subtype of evaluating *even if* clause, which we will refer to as “presupposition-evaluating.” It is typical of this subtype that the comment expressed in the *even if* clause does not concern the semantic content of Q as a whole, but only the justifiedness of a pragmatic presupposition of the Q-proposition: the P-clause questions, cancels, or otherwise comments on this pragmatic understanding. For example,

- (88) [“How could I have closed the door? It wasn’t open.” — “I don’t care.] You should have closed it even if it wasn’t open.”

The phrase *close a door* only makes sense if (and therefore pragmatically presupposes that) the door in question is open. In (88), where the speaker is being unreasonable (probably in order to avoid admitting that he is in the wrong), the *even if* clause runs counter to this presupposition.

In this connection we should also refer to the observation made in connection with (69)–(70) above that *even if* clauses may cancel or block a pragmatic implicature. Such *even if* clauses combine a concessive meaning with a commenting one. The following is a further example:

- (89) John did a good job clearing away the glasses after the party, even if those on the windowsill up there escaped his attention.

As argued in Declerck (1987), if *John cleared away the glasses* is used in isolation, *the* is by implicature interpreted as *all the*. In (89), the *even if* clause cancels this implicature of inclusive reference.

A final note on commenting *even if* clauses is that purely concessive *even if* clauses that receive a factual interpretation might be argued to be *even if* clauses commenting on the speech act of uttering Q. This point of view is actually defended in Sweetser’s (1990: 138) “speech-act analysis” of (what we call) purely concessive *even if*, according to which a

purely concessive *even if* sentence means "I say (insist) that X, even if I admit that Y":

- (90) These animals are not mammals, even if they are viviparous.

However, since a speech-act comment on the Q-clause is necessarily concessive, it seems to be an academic question whether we should consider the factual *even if* clause of (90) as purely concessive or as a commenting *even if* clause (expressing a concessive speech-act comment on Q). This does not alter the fact, though, that the distinction between these two types of nonimplicative *even if* conditional is often relevant. The sentence *[He's in prison, so] he couldn't come to our party even if he wanted to* does not mean 'I say that he couldn't come to our party, even if I admit that he wanted to' (= Sweetser's "I say [insist] that X, even if I admit that Y"). In fact, we have already noted that many purely concessive *even if* conditionals resist Sweetser's speech-act analysis — see note 31.

## 6. Conclusion

In this article we have attempted to describe the various aspects of interpretation of *even if* conditionals. The following have been our main findings: (a) because the values on the *even if* scale are conditional sentences, implicative *even if* conditionals are truly conditionals: they express a conditional relation between P and Q; (b) in quite a few cases this relation does not hold between P and the overt Q-clause but rather between P and an implicit Q. In that case the overt Q-clause is interpreted as an adverbial clause of reason; (c) it is (part of) the invariant meaning of *even that* this focusing adverb evokes a sense of expected incompatibility; (d) it is only in implicative conditionals that this sense of expected incompatibility manifests itself as a sense of unexpectedness; (e) *even if* conditionals that have the sense of unexpectedness implicate an expectation understanding ('One might expect P to preclude Q') and entail a nonpreclusive understanding ('P does not preclude Q'); (f) in implicative *even if* conditionals, *even* evokes an *even if* scale that is a scale of improbability and whose values are *if* conditionals, ordered from low (= least unlikely) to high (= most unlikely); (g) the range of values on the *even if* scale may be determined by the range of propositional values on an ancillary P-scale, which may itself depend on another scale; (h) the ordering of the values on the P-scale, and the concomitant interpretation, may be determined by the positive or negative meaning of the verb in the Q-clause; (i) there are good reasons to include polar *even if*

conditionals in the class of scalar *even if* conditionals; (j) *even* blocks the necessity implicature that is very often invited by implicative conditionals; (k) no additional apparatus is needed to explain the various kinds of *even if* conditionals with a nonassertoric Q-clause; (l) nonimplicative *even if* conditionals still have a sense of expected incompatibility but lack the sense of unexpectedness (yielding the expectation understanding and the nonpreclusive understanding) and the scalarity that are typical of implicative *even if* conditionals; (m) we can distinguish two classes of nonimplicative *even if* conditionals: those in which the P-clause is purely concessive and those in which it expresses some kind of comment on the contents, truth, presuppositions, etc., of the Q-clause. (The two functions, however, are not mutually exclusive.)

Some of the above findings, as well as some minor ones not yet mentioned here, are corrections of, or additions to, the literature. To our knowledge, it has never been explicitly argued (a) that the unitary meaning of *even* is "expected incompatibility," (b) that not all *even if* conditionals have a sense of unexpectedness, (c) that the sense of unexpectedness, if present, involves an expectation understanding plus a nonpreclusive understanding, (d) that the expectation understanding differs from the nonpreclusive understanding in that it is only a cancellable implicature, (e) that only implicative *even if* conditionals allow a scalar analysis, (f) that the range of values on the *even if* scale may be determined by the range of propositional values on an ancillary P-scale, which may itself depend on another scale, (g) that the ordering of the values on the P-scale, and the concomitant interpretation, may be determined by the polarity (in meaning) of the verb of the Q-clause — see section 4.4.4, (h) that the sufficiency understanding of 'if P, Q' is not part of the semantics of conditionals but just an implicature, (i) that nonassertoric implicative *even if* conditionals should be analyzed exactly like assertoric ones, (j) that the P-clause of a nonimplicative *even if* conditional may be purely concessive or/and commenting, (k) that many seemingly problematic *even if* conditionals can be naturally explained by positing an implicit Q-clause, but (l) that this is only possible as far as implicative *even if* conditionals are concerned.

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#### **Notes**

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2. Dancygier (1998) is particularly rich in this respect. If we criticize her more than anyone else, this is largely because she has said far more, and more explicit and perceptive things about *even if* than other writers.
3. Many of the examples adduced below are attested examples. See the list of Sources following the References for the abbreviations used, which are followed by the page number where appropriate.
4. The only exceptions are Sweetser (1990), who recognizes the existence of “speech-act” *even if* conditionals, and Dancygier (1988, 1998), who speaks of “conversational” *even if* conditionals. The kind of example Dancygier has in mind is *Mary is already on her way here, even if you don't want to hear about it* (Dancygier 1998: 164).
5. We are using the term “validity” here because not all Q-clauses have a truth value. In *Drink a glass of water before breakfast, even if you're not thirsty*, the *even if* clause describes a situation that might be thought to make the injunction expressed in the Q-clause invalid, but injunctions do not have a truth value.
6. The same is true of the (improbable) sentence *Even if it rains, the match will be cancelled*, because the expectation ‘The match will not be cancelled if it rains’ is read as ‘It is not the case that the match will be cancelled if it rains’, i.e. the negation has wide scope and the conditional in its scope is implicative.
7. Barker (1991: 23–25) discusses a type of “anomalous cases” (1991: 25) of counterfactual *even if* conditionals, which, in our analysis, are explained in terms of an implicit Q:
  - (i) (*said after losing a battle*) Even if the reinforcements had come, they would have been too tired after their journey to help us. (1991: 24) (*Our paraphrase is: Even if the reinforcements had come, we would (still) have lost the battle because they would have been too tired after their journey to help us.*)

However, Barker does not suggest the possibility of accounting for such examples by positing an implicit Q-proposition. In fact, he is only interested in finding an explanation for his conclusion that there are *even if* conditionals such as (i) that “have false consequents,” which runs counter to the claim that “*even-ifs* should never have false consequents” (1991: 24). The explanation he proposes is based on “conversational considerations” (1991: 24) and is quite different from ours.

8. As we will see in section 5, the sense of expected incompatibility of *even* can manifest itself in still different ways when *even* is added to an *if* conditional.
9. Actually, in a way, Sweetser (1990) too (whether intentionally or not) treats P as irrelevant in her definition of the meaning of *even if*: the *even if* clause seems to be just a way of getting to the statement that Q “will almost certainly occur”: “Suppose I say that certain extremely unfavorable circumstances will nonetheless be sufficiently favorable to ensure Y (or sufficiently unfavorable to allow  $\sim$ Y). I have produced a very strong statement that Y will occur whatever happens; since nearly all circumstances are more favorable to Y than X is, Y will almost certainly occur. Such, I claim is the correct interpretation of *even if*-sentences” (1990: 132).
10. It is important to see that “cancelling” an implicature means that the implicature does arise but is then denied or questioned by the subsequent context. If a usual implicature does not arise at all, we say it is “blocked.” Thus, the implicature that *the* should be read as *all the* — see Declerck (1987) — is cancelled in *The glasses were broken, at least*

*most of them*, but blocked (by pragmatic knowledge) in *There are cracks in the paving-stones*.

11. It might seem odd to claim that the nonpreclusive understanding (which is an entailment of the assertion made in the conditional) evokes an expectation understanding that runs counter to it. However, it is by no means unusual for an assertion to evoke an expectation to the contrary. This happens, for example, in *John DID do it*, which implicates (because of the Gricean maxim of relevance) that there exists a claim to the contrary. In fact, any contrastive assertion automatically evokes an expectation or claim to the contrary, because there can only be such a sense of contrast if there is a contrasting proposition.
12. It does not really matter whether we speak of a "probability scale" (with the value "most likely" at the upper end and the value "least likely" at the lower end) or of a "scale of unlikelihood" (on which the values are ordered in the reverse way). In what follows we will adopt the latter convention.
13. According to some people — e.g. Fauconnier (1976), König (1986), Van der Auwera (1986) — *even* marks the extreme of a scale. However, this claim is too strong, as has been pointed out by (among others) Fillmore (1965), Horn (1969), Anscombe and Ducrot (1983), Dancygier (1988), Kay (1990), and Lycan (1991).
14. Similarly for simple *even*, Kay (1990: 90) notes in connection with *The test was so hard that even Charles failed it*, "we do not necessarily, as some have thought, presuppose that Charles was the least likely person to fail the test of those who took it. But we frequently implicate (with suitable epistemic qualification) that of the people who failed the test Charles was the least likely to do so."
15. This runs counter to König's (1986: 232) and Dancygier's (1998: 162) view that the values are conditions: "the scale implied by *even* is understood as a scale of possible conditions, one of which appears in the protasis" (Dancygier 1998: 162).
16. The observation that the ancillary numerical scale ultimately determines the *even if* scale is in keeping with the fact that, in sentences where "*even if ... just*" makes sense, *even* can be put either before the constituent focused by *just* or before *if* with no apparent difference of meaning:
  - (i) I would blame her if it was even just one per cent her fault.
  - (ii) I would blame her even if it was just one per cent her fault.
17. There is a similar difference between the following:
  - (i) I'll be angry even if Jane turns up.
  - (ii) I'll be angry if Jane even turns up.

In (i) *even* refers to a scale whose values are conditionals, with *I'll be angry if Jane turns up* representing a (relatively) extreme value on that scale. In (ii), which is interpreted as 'I'll be angry if Jane does as much as turn up', *even* refers to a scale whose values are not conditionals but are the various things that Jane can do that are sufficient to make me angry.
18. In (26), the values on the ancillary scale of persons are ordered in accordance with their importance, i.e. the degree to which it is necessary that the person be present on the coach or/and its destination; what the P-scale is measuring is the expected likelihood of a person's being late to prevent the coach leaving on time; what the *even if* scale is measuring is the likelihood of the coach leaving on time. In (27), the values on the scale of persons are ordered in accordance with the probability of a person being late; for lack of *even if* there is neither an *even if* scale nor an ancillary P-scale.

19. This definition of “implicative *if* conditional” has been elaborated on in section 2.4 and should be distinguished from the definition of “implicative *even if* conditional” given in section 2.6. (The latter is an *even if* conditional whose expectation understanding is expressed by means of an implicative *if* conditional.)
20. Dancygier (1998: 162), in a discussion of Haiman (1974), speaks of a “scale of negative expectation.” This notion is not unpacked in detail, but it is likely that it is not dissimilar to the scale just described here, except for one important difference: for Dancygier, the scale is (despite her view that *even if* sentences are not conditionals) a scale of “possible conditions,” not a scale of conditionals, although she says that the scale “relates specifically to the p/q relation.”
21. The polar option that is NOT chosen in the *even if* conditional is normally felt to be lower on the improbability scale (i.e. more likely) than the one that is chosen. That is, if I say *If John comes, the party will be good — oh, and of course, it'll be good even if he doesn't come*, John's coming is interpreted as less unlikely to go with the party being good (i.e. more likely to bring about a good party) than his not coming.
22. As noted by Barker (1994: 252), a contrastive accent on the auxiliary *do* induces a polar interpretation.
23. Dancygier (1998: 166) seems to argue that *even if* conditionals like (41b) are scalar. We see no justification for this analysis.
24. For lack of space, we cannot go into Van der Auwera's (1997) and Horn's (2000) explanations here.
25. Surprisingly, Dancygier (1998) seems to agree with this: “There is some confusion among inferential conditionals, as some seem to pass the test [for inviting the conditional perfection inference], while others do not. Thus if the protasis is accepted (even though only tentatively) as the only premise licensing the conclusion, perfection is applicable, as in the case of *If he was wearing a purple jacket, then it was him I saw at the party*” (1998: 163).
26. Speech-act conditionals are conditionals in which the *if* clause gives the reason why the speaker makes the speech act of uttering the Q-clause. The best known example in the literature is *If you're hungry, there's a pie in the fridge*.
27. According to Sweetser (1990), speech-act *even if* statements amount to ‘I say (insist) that X, even if I admit that Y’ (1990: 138). However, it will be pointed out below that this is an overgeneralization — see note 31.
28. Dancygier's (1998) discussion of the meaning of *even if* conditionals assumes that they are always implicative, e.g. “*even if* sentences are always related to the speaker's beliefs about causal links which can be expected to hold” (1998: 163–164). However, Dancygier does mention the existence of “conversational” (and epistemic) *even if* sentences, saying that “Just as in the case of predictives, these sentences refer negatively to relations between *p* and *q* that might be expected to hold” (1998: 164).
29. Apart from the purely concessive interpretation, it is also possible to read (60) in terms of an implicit Q-clause: ‘Even if politicians were not interested in this subject, it would still be a current topic, because the media would still be paying a lot of attention to it’. On this reading the sentence is scalar and implicative.
30. Since Q is [−q] here, ‘cause not-Q’ means ‘cause [+q]’.
31. Note that there is also no NECESSARY implication of ‘even if I admit that’, which disproves Sweetser's (1990: 138) “speech-act analysis” of (what we call) purely concessive *even if*, according to which a purely concessive *even if* sentence means ‘I say (insist) that X, even if I admit that Y’. (We must admit, however, that Sweetser does not explicitly claim that all purely concessive *even if* sentences are speech-act conditionals. It is just that all the “pure concessives” — she does not use this term herself — that she

analyzes [1990: 138], she analyzes as speech-act conditionals.) There are further problems with this analysis. Sweetser's paraphrase does not explicitly tell us how the scalar meaning that she attributes to *even if* takes a part in the interpretation, but there are indications that it should be read as something like 'admitting that P is an extremely unfavorable circumstance for the performance of the speech act in Q, it is nonetheless sufficiently favorable to ensure/allow the performance of the speech act in Q, so let us consider that I am performing the speech act of insisting that Q'. This kind of paraphrase is not appropriate for (65), and neither is it for examples like the following:

- (i) Even if Bruno were alive, he could not publicly respond [because it would be a breach of privacy]. (TLS)
- (ii) ["When I see headlines like 'Oscar, Depardieu, Rapist,' it's bad, bad for my family, my wife Elisabeth, my children. It's bad because] even if it's not true and it's stupid — it stays in people's minds. [It dirties me," Depardieu told the French press.] (COB-W)
- (iii) "Kubla Khan," even if originally scribbled down in a frenzy of recollection, was carefully revised for publication. (TLS)

Clearly, (i) is not interpreted as 'Admitting that Bruno's (hypothetical) being alive would be extremely unfavorable to my asserting that he could not respond publicly, it would nevertheless be sufficiently favorable, so let us consider that I assert that he could not respond publicly'. Similarly, (ii) cannot be analyzed in terms of 'I insist that it stays in people's minds, even if I admit that it's not true and it's stupid'. And it would be downright silly to claim that (iii) means 'admitting that *Kubla Khan* was originally scribbled down in a frenzy of recollection is highly unfavorable to the speech act of insisting/asserting that it was carefully revised for publication'.

32. Perhaps (68) could be seen as implicative rather than purely concessive. This would mean that implicative *even if* conditionals may also have an implicature-cancelling effect.
33. The following conditionals, which are clearly echoic, typically have a closed condition:
  - (i) ["He's coming here himself tomorrow." — "Right.] If he's coming here himself tomorrow, I no longer need to telephone him today."
  - (ii) If, as you say, the water will rise as high as this, we'd better move our furniture to the first floor.
34. The version with *and* may seem a bit odd, but if it is interpreted as purely descriptive, say as an answer to a policeman wanting the exact description of how she spoke, it is OK.

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