Echoicity and contrast in Spanish conditionals

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The conditional construction in Spanish, illustrated in (1-b):

(1) A: Estoy cansado.
   be.1SG tired
   ‘I’m tired.’

   B: Si tú estás cansado, yo estoy muerto.
      if you be.2SG tired   I be.1SG dead
      ‘(lit.) If you are tired, I am exhausted.’

→ We will call them Echoic contrastive conditionals (ECCs for short).
Research questions

- Are they regular (hypothetical) conditionals?
  - What are their properties?
  - What is their distribution?
- What is the rhetorical relation between antecedent (p) and consequent (q)?
- What is the information structure of p and q?
- What formal analysis can account for the specific behavior of ECCs?
Goals & Claims

- **Goal**: Characterize ECCs and provide an analysis that is compatible with current theories of conditionals in semantics.

- **Claims**
  - ECCs are *biscuit* conditionals in the sense of e.g. Siegel (2006).
  - The hypothetical relation between p and q is really established between the assertion of p and the assertion of q, two propositions that stand in a relation of *contrast*.
  - Spanish conditionals with Contrastive Topic marking and no causal or epistemic dependence between p and q, yield contrast, scalarity and echoicity.
This talk

1. Introduction

2. Background
   - Previous work
   - Properties

3. Proposal
   - Conditional
   - Discourse structure

4. Conclusions
Narbona (1990) mentions ECcs when discussing conditionals in Spanish.

(1)  
A: Estoy cansado.  
    be.1SG tired  
    ‘I’m tired.’  
B: Si tú estás cansado, yo estoy muerto.  
    if you be.2SG tired I be.1SG dead  
    ‘(lit.) If you are tired, I am exhausted.’

☉ p echoes the previous utterance in the dialogue.  
☉ The biclausal structure is used to emphasize two opposed propositions.
Schwenter (1999): the contrastive function of the construction is evidenced by the obligatoriness of the **overt subject pronouns**.

(1) A: Estoy cansado.
   be.1SG tired
   ‘I’m tired.’

   B: Si #(tú) estás cansado, #(yo) estoy muerto.
   if you be.2SG tired I be.1SG dead
   ‘(lit.) If you are tired, I am exhausted.’

(2) A: Estoy cansado.
    ‘I’m tired.’

    B: Si (#tú) estás cansado, acuéstate un rato.
    if you are tired lie down a while
    ‘If you are tired, lie down for a while.’
Properties 1 and 2

(3) A: Ayer me bebí una botella de vino entera.  
     Yesterday 1SG.CL drank a bottle of wine whole  
     ‘Yesterday I drank a whole bottle of wine.’

     B: Si tú te bebiste una botella, yo me bebí dos.  
     if you 2SG.CL drank a bottle I 1SG.CL drank two  
     ‘(lit.) If you drank a bottle, I drank two.’

1 Echoicity
2 Contrastivity

→ We follow Mayol (2010) in claiming that the overt occurrence of the pronoun in a null subject language flags Contrastive Topic (CT).
Property 3

3. **Scalarity:** the focused predicates in p and q stand in a scalar relationship, such that the one in q is higher / stronger in some contextually relevant scale.

(4) [In a textbook on prehistorical animals]
Si los dinosaurios daban *miedo*, el tiranosaurio rex era directamente *aterrador*.
‘If dinosaurs were scary, the tyranossaurus rex was downright terrifying.’
**Property 3**

3. **Scalarity:** the focused predicates in p and q stand in a scalar relationship, such that the one in q is higher / stronger in some contextually relevant scale.

(5) B: Si tú estás *cansado*, yo estoy *muerto*.
   ‘(lit.) If you are tired, I am exhausted.’
B’: Si tú estás *cansado*, yo estoy totalmente *relajado*.
   ‘If you are tired, I am totally relaxed.’
Property 4

4 Lack of conditional interpretation (≈ q is true in those worlds in which p is also true, cf. Stalnaker 1979): p doesn’t seem to be a condition for the truth of q.

(6) Si llueve, iré al cine.
   if rains will go I to the movies
   ‘If it rains, I’ll go to the movies.’

(1) A: Estoy cansado.
   ‘I’m tired.’
   B: Si tú estás cansado, yo estoy muerto.
   ‘If you are tired, I am exhausted.’
Property 5

Expression of disdain: they may convey that the speaker is challenging the truth or the relevance of her interlocutor’s utterance.
Alert! Apparent cases of ECCS.

These are not the same kind of animal . . .

(7) Si tú no vas, ellos vuelven.
    if you NEG go.2SG they come back.3PL
    ‘If you don’t go [to vote], they will come back.’

→ There is a conditional relation between p and q, no echoicity.
→ The pronoun is optional in p.

(8) If that’s art, then I’m the Queen of England.

→ Called backhanded conditionals (Muñoz 2013).
  ○ Imply $\neg p$ (hyperbole).
  ○ $q$ is agreed not to be true in the actual world (outlandishness).
→ Not necessarily echoic, no scalarity, epistemic dependence.
Interim summary and update on our goals

- p and q in ECCs are CT-marked.
- ECCs have the form of conditional sentences, but the meaning of q is apparently not conditional on the meaning of p.
- p is systematically echoic.

We need an analysis that . . .

1. finds out whether a conditional relation can be preserved in ECCs.
2. explains why whenever there is Contrastive Topic, scalarity, echoicity (and potentially disdain) arise.
Our analysis in a nutshell

Main idea

- A conditional relation is established between two utterances: the assertion of q is relevant given the assertion of p by a previous discourse participant.
- Both p and q address the same multiple wh-question, which is flagged through Contrastive Topic. The two propositions stand in a discourse relation of contrast.
- q is interpreted as winning the argument in the contrast between p and q. This coincides with the stronger scalar term.
Not a hypothetical conditional

- Biscuit conditionals (Siegel 2006, Predelli 2009, Franke 2007a,b).
- Also *relevance* or *speech act* conditionals.
- They do not state when $q$ is true (there is no causal or epistemical *dependence* between $p$ and $q$).
- They state when it is *appropriate to utter* $q$.

(9) a. If you are hungry, (#then) there is pizza in the fridge.
    b. If you need anything else later, (#then) my name is James.

(10) a. If you are hungry, $\exists a \exists p$ [$a$ is an assertion of $p \land p = \text{‘there’s pizza in the fridge’}]
    b. If you are hungry, there is a relevant assertion that there’s pizza in the fridge.
Not a hypothetical conditional

- In ECCs there is a lack of causal or epistemic dependence between p and q (Prop. 4). q seems to be entailed.

- Whenever entonces ‘then’ is included, a causal or epistemic dependence arises, (11) (no ECC reading).

(11)  
  a. Si tú estás cansado, (#entonces) yo estoy muerto.  
      ‘If you are tired, (#then) I am exhausted.’  
  b. Si los dinosaurios daban miedo, (#entonces) el tiranosaurio rex era directamente aterrador.  
      ‘If dinosaurs were scary, (#then) the tyranossaurus rex was downright terrifying.’
Not a hypothetical conditional

A subtype of biscuit?

- If the lack of apparent dependence between p and q is key to determining the kind of conditional, then ECCs are biscuits.

(12) In all worlds where p has been asserted, there is a relevant assertion that q.

- We still need to understand why echoicity (+ taking the assertion of p as the antecedent) and contrast go hand in hand.
QUD

- QUD-model of discourse (Roberts 1996, Ginzburg 1994): An utterance \( U \), uttered in a context \( C_1 \), addresses the most salient qud \( \text{qud-max}_{C_1} \) and introduces a qud which becomes the most salient in the output context \( \text{qud-max}_{C_2} \) (Vallduví 2016).

(13) A: \( \text{qud-max}_{C_1}: \) What are we having for dinner?
    B: Fish.
    \( \text{qud-max}_{C_2}: \) Are we having fish for dinner?

- 'Fish' is a rheme, the actual update potential of an utterance, which is the locus of progression in discourse.

- The theme is omitted.
When is the theme present?

○ “Theme-containing utterances prepare the input context by promoting a given qud to qud-maximality prior to being elaborated on” (Vallduví 2016).

○ When qud-max$_{C1}$ is split into several QUDs. (Büring 2003)

(14) How was the concert?
   a. The sound was awful.
   b. The audience was enthusiastic.
   c. The band was fantastic.
Contrastive Topic

(15) \[\text{qud-max}_{C1:} \] How is A feeling?
A: Estoy cansado.
   ‘I’m tired.’
[qud-max]_{C2:} Is A tired?

(16) B: Si tú estás cansado, yo estoy muerto.
   ‘If you are tired, I am exhausted.’
[qud-max]_{C3:} Who is feeling how, regarding tiredness?
   Who is feeling how tired?

○ CT indicates what QUD q is addressing: a multiple wh-question.

1. Focus-driven question: How are you feeling, regarding tiredness?
2. CT-driven question: Who is feeling how, regarding tiredness?
Where does scalarity come from?

- The discourse relation between the answers to the multiple wh-question can be either sequentiality, (17-b), or contrastivity, (17-c).

(17) A: Who is feeling how, regarding tiredness?
   B1: He_{CT} is tired and I_{CT} am exhausted.
   B2: He_{CT} is tired, but I_{CT} am exhausted.

- But contrastivity explains scalarity.
Contrast

- According to a **formal contrast** approach (Sæbø 2003, Umbach 2005), as reported in Winterstein (2012) for *but*:

  \[(18) \quad \begin{align*}
  \text{a.} & \quad \beta = 1; \, \alpha = \text{he}; \, \gamma = \text{exhausted}; \, \delta = \text{tired} \\
  \text{b.} & \quad \text{CONTRAST conveys } \neg \gamma(\alpha) = \text{he is not exhausted}
  \end{align*}\]

- On the scale <exhausted,tired>, a **quantity implicature** arises that he is tired and nothing more, he’s **only** tired.
Contrast

- The second conjunct presents the **stronger argument** (Anscombe and Ducrot 1977).

  (19) a. The earrings are expensive, but pretty. [We’ll buy them.]
  b. The earrings are pretty, but expensive. [We won’t.]

- As Tomioka (2016) puts it, **Hurford’s Constraint** does not only apply to disjunction. Contrastive Focus obeys HC.

  (20) a. Andy read some of the books, but Anna read all of them.
  b. ??Anna read all of the books, but Andy read some of them.

→ When two scale-mates are contrasted, the better order is the one in which the semantically stronger one follows the weaker one.
Contrast

- If the scalar terms are reversed, a contradiction arises, (21):
  - If $\gamma(\beta) = I$ am tired, then $\neg \gamma(\alpha) = he$ is not tired.
  - **BUT** “exhausted” $\equiv$ “tired”, so you cannot be “not tired” and “exhausted” at the same time.

  (21) $\#He_{CT}$ is exhausted, but $I_{CT}$ am tired.

- The 2 opposed items in focus must be alternatives in a Common Integrator (here, belong to the **same scale**) (Sæbø 2003), (22).

  (22) $\#He_{CT}$ is tired. $I_{CT}$ am happy.
A decision problem

Communication takes places against the background of a decision problem of the hearer (What action should he carry out? What should he believe?) (Franke 2007a,b).

In biscuits, the speaker realizes that in all p worlds, the hearer has a decision problem.

p helps identify in what way q is relevant to decide for one action over the other.

(23) a. There are biscuits in the cupboard.
    b. If you are hungry, there are biscuits in the cupboard.
A decision problem

- In ECCs, we claim, the speaker imposes her own decision problem.
  - She presents 2 possible answers to the CT-driven QUD (‘Who is feeling how, regarding tiredness?’).
  - By uttering the ECC she wants to resolve this QUD so as to settle her decision problem: **Who wins the argument?** (‘Who is more tired?’).

- This competition does not arise when there is no contrast between p and q, even if there is CT marking, (24).

(24)  
A: Estoy cansado.  
‘I am tired.’  
B: (Pues) Yo\textsubscript{CT} estoy muerto.  
\textsc{part} I am dead  
‘I am exhausted.’
Back to biscuit conditionals

(11) In all worlds where $p$ has been asserted, there is a relevant assertion that $q$.

$\rightarrow$ What makes the assertion of $q$ relevant / appropriate?

- The assertion of $q$ is justified by the previous assertion of $p$, because $p$ and $q$ are 2 different ways of answering the same QUD.
- Given the previous assertion of $p$, the assertion of $q$ can be interpreted as the answer that settles the decision problem, i.e. who wins the argument.
Echoicity

We reason how echoicity is derived, as follows:

- The antecedent of the ECC is the utterance of p.
- In placing p in the antecedent of a conditional, the speaker presupposes $\Diamond p$ (Isaacs and Rawlins 2008).
- This implicates $\neg \Box p$, which is incompatible with $\text{BEL}_{spk}(p)$.

∴ The author of the assertion of p must be someone else.
A function of 2 factors:

a) By placing $p$ in the antecedent of a conditional, the speaker may not be accepting $p$ into the cg or the QUD resolved by $p$ (as was meant by another discourse participant).

b) $\gamma$ is a better state of affairs than $\delta$ ($\gamma$ is the stronger argument, $\delta$ falls short).
The speaker examines a previous utterance of p and imposes a decision problem: Who wins the argument?

1) The relevance of the assertion of q is motivated by her wish to settle the decision problem.
   i) Lack of conditional dependence between p and q (Prop. 4)

2) She contrasts p with her own assertion that q.
   i) p and q are CT marked (Prop. 2)
   ii) p is echoic (Prop. 1)
   iii) The focus in q is a stronger scalar term than the focus in p (Prop. 3)

3) She challenges the truth or relevance of p by placing it in the antecedent of a conditional.
   i) Disdain (Prop. 5)
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Thanks!

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