

On (Possible) *ABA Pattern in Question-Conditional-Disjunction Constructions

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In many unrelated languages of the world, the overt lexical element that introduces the antecedent of a conditional and the embedded polar question complement are homophonous. This overlap in morphology can also be seen with elements introducing disjunction and polar questions as well.

Cremers (2024) first notices the overlap and gives a statistical analysis based on 6 languages, which postulate that the statistical likelihood of a language colexifying conditional - question morphemes and question - disjunction morphemes is higher than the likelihood of a language colexifying conditional - disjunction morphemes. No theoretical analysis is given with the generalization and due to small pool of languages in the work, it's hard to make a robust generalization.

To confirm the cross-linguistic plausibility of the generalization, 40 different language families were analyzed on their lexical elements introducing disjunction, (embedded) polar questions and antecedents of conditionals.

Several generalizations can be made: 1) In line with theoretical work on polar question embedding and conditionals, the biggest morphological overlap is seen in elements introducing questions and conditionals. 2) There is no language where the form of disjunction and conditional overlap to the exclusion of polar question, confirming Cremers (2023)'s proposal.

In this talk, several previous theories on question-conditional link will be reanalyzed along with a novel perspective on their connection.