

The Exceptive Conditionals in Farsi

A large body of literature explores the meaning of English *unless*-conditionals, [*unless p, q*], with various proposed paraphrases, including ‘*If not p, q*’ (Brée, 1985), ‘*Only if not p, q*’ (Quirk et al., 1972, cf. Vostrikova 2019), ‘*If and only if not p, q*’ (Comrie, 1986), ‘*Only if p, not q*’ (Fillenbaum, 1986), and ‘*under all circumstances except p, q*’ (Geis, 1973; von Fintel, 1992), and ‘*q, not q if p*’ (Dancygier, 1985). These paraphrases require negating either *p* or *q* clauses in both [*unless p, q*] and [*q, unless p*] orders, suggesting that the negation is native to *unless*. This study investigates the understudied exceptive *mage*-conditional in Farsi. The preliminary assumption posits that *mage* consists of *ma-*, a historical allophone of the negative affix *na-*, and *age* ‘if’, leading to its literal interpretation as ‘not-if’ and translation as ‘unless’ (cf. the etymology of *unless* in von Fintel, 1992). In this talk, we will explore examples from Farsi that do not align with the paraphrase. The data unfolds in three steps: (I) A comparison between the paraphrases of *mage* and *unless* reveals that *mage* does not convey inherent negation. (II) We will then compare *age* ‘if’-conditionals and *mage* ‘unless’-conditionals in relation to the question under discussion (QUD). We will see that while *if*-conditionals can address both *p*-QUD and *q*-QUD, *mage*-conditionals exclusively resolve *q*-QUD, highlighting an exceptional situation for the possibility of *q*. (III) I will present new data from *mage* in non-conditional forms, where it functions as a modal. I argue that *mage* conveys both an exceptive meaning and a possibility modal sense, best paraphrased as ‘*except if p, perhaps q*’ (Kratzer, 1986; von Fintel 1992).