

The Influence of Russian Conjunctions on Conditional Clauses in Spoken Kazakh

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WLL 499: Languages, Linguistics, and Literature Capstone II

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April 30, 2026

Abstract

The presented capstone project examines the influence of Russian conjunctions on the structure of the spoken Kazakh conditional clauses. History and language policies led to the bilingual environment in Kazakhstan, where Kazakh and Russian languages coexist and are often used together, which leads to contact-induced change. Building on existing research on other types of clauses, such as relative and complement clauses, my study focuses on conditional clauses. Specifically, I look into how Russian conjunctions, such as *esli* ‘if’ and *esli by* ‘if (only)’, are used in spoken Kazakh conditional sentences. The analysis is based on a corpus of 106 conditional sentences that were gathered from more than 25 hours of Kazakh-speaking podcasts, interviews, and comedy shows publicly available on Youtube. The main finding is that Russian conjunctions are often used along with the standard Kazakh conditional morphology, which results in the double marking of conditionality. In the majority of examples, Russian conjunction *esli* appears with the Kazakh conditional suffix *-sa*, which already encodes conditional meaning. There are rare cases, where Russian conjunctions trigger fully finite verb forms that reflect Russian conditional structure. The corpus also contains several unusual constructions, including clauses with converbs and examples where conditional and temporal meanings overlap.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background:

In Kazakhstan, Kazakh language holds the status of the state language with Russian being used alongside in the government organizations and local government bodies according to the law about languages¹. These two languages coexist and for many speakers it is natural to use both of them together in their daily life. This practice leads to the influence of these languages on each other, which can be clearly seen in lexical copying. However, we can also observe subtle changes in syntax, more specifically in subordinate clause structure.

Subordinate clauses are useful for the research in contact linguistics since their structure differs from one language to the other, including Kazakh and Russian. In Russian, subordinate clauses are constructed with the help of complementizers (*chto* ‘that’), relative pronouns (*kotoryi* ‘which’), or adverbial subordinators (*potomu chto* ‘because’, *esli* ‘if’, *chtoby* ‘so that’). These words usually introduce finite subordinate clauses. On the contrary, in Kazakh, most of the subordinate clauses are morphologically formed with the help of the special suffixes attached to non-finite verbs, participles, and converbs. Kazakh still has subordinators, such as *eger* ‘if’ that are not obligatory for the constructions. The absence of such markers does not affect the grammatical type of the clause due to morphological modifications. Such markers mainly hold a pragmatic role and can add emphasis to highlight conditionality.

When bilingual speakers start to combine languages these structures undergo changes, with, for example, Russian conjunctions appearing in otherwise Kazakh sentences. Akanov (2022) studied the changes in relative clause constructions in Kazakh oral speech, comparing them to the written constructions. One of the main reasons was the borrowing of the Russian relative pronoun *kotoryi* which functionally corresponds to the English relative pronoun ‘which’.

¹ [On languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan - "Adilet" LIS](#)

Such constructions change the usual prenominal position of Kazakh relative clauses to the postnominal. Akanov's findings show how contact with Russian can influence the syntax of Kazakh clauses. Building on this observation, the paper examines similar structural influences in conditional clauses.

1.2 Main Analytic Focus:

Conditional clauses are a type of subordinate adverbial clauses that indicate the condition required for the situation in the main clause to occur. In both languages, conditional clauses are formed in different ways. In Kazakh, the predicates of conditional clauses carry the suffixes *-sa* to mark conditionality. These predicates carry subject-agreement suffixes but do not have any tense marking, therefore, they will be treated as non-finite verbs. The tense is indicated in verbs of the main clause.

- (1) *Sen bar-sa-η, ol quwan-a-dī.*
 2SG go-COND-2SG 3SG be.happy-PRS-3SG
 'If you go, she will be happy.'

In example (1), the sentence is complete and grammatically correct. Kazakh language, however, has a conjunction *eger* 'if', originated from Persian *agar*, that can appear in the beginning of the conditional clause but is optional and has 'emphatic function' meaning it is used for emphasizing conditionality (Muhamedowa, 2016: 56).

- (2) ***Eger*** *sen bar-sa-η, ol quwan-a-dī.*
 if 2SG go-COND-2SG 3SG be.happy-PRS-3SG
 'If you go, she will be happy.'

Comparing the two sentences, we can see that the meaning or the grammaticality of the sentences does not change. In Russian, on the other hand, the presence of the conjunction *esli* ‘if’ is needed for the formation and introduction of the conditional clause. The verbs in Russian conditional clauses are finite.

- (3) ***Esli*** *tī* *poydeš’*, *ona* *ob-rad-wet-sya*.
 if 2SG go.PFV-2SG 3SG.F PREF-happy-FUT-3SG.REFL
 ‘If you go, she will be happy’.

The example (3) highlights main differences between Kazakh and Russian conjunctions, as the subordinate clause starts with an obligatory conjunction *esli* ‘if’ that indicates the conditionality and both main-clause and conditional verbs are marked for tense and person.

Another difference is seen in unreal conditions that express hypothetical, predictive, or counterfactual events. For unreal conditions, Russian uses the conjunction *esli by* ‘if (only)’ that requires a finite conditional verb in past tense. In Kazakh, the process of constructing unreal conditional clauses is the same as in the real conditionals. However, in unreal conditional sentences, the main clause uses the verb with aorist or with *-(U)wǟI* marker, along with the copula verb *e-di* <cop-pst.3> (Muhamedowa, 2016: 58; Jumabay, 2025: 225). Therefore, we can observe the influence of the Russian conjunction on the form of verbs both in conditional and main clauses. For example, a hypothetical sentence, where Russian conjunction is used only emphatically in an unreal conditional clause would result in the standard Kazakh conditional syntactical structure:

- (4) ***Esli by*** *sen* *bar-γan* *bol-sa-η*, *ol* *quwan-ar*
 if SUBJ 2SG go-PST.PTCP be-COND-2SG 3SG be.happy-AOR
e-di.
 COP-PST.3

‘If you had gone, she would have been happy.’

In example (4), despite the Russian conjunction *esli by* ‘if (only)’, the verb in conditional clause still uses Kazakh conditional suffix *-sA*, and the main clause verb is with aorist marker and copula verb *e-di* <cop-pst.3>.

In the real condition, the emphatic use of Russian conjunction *esli* ‘if’ would similarly keep the overall Kazakh structure:

- (5) ***Esli*** *sen* *bar-sa-ŋ*, *ol* *quwan-a-dī*.
 if 2SG go-COND-2SG 3SG be.happy-PRS-3SG

‘If you go, she will be happy.’

Example (5) combines Russian conjunction with Kazakh conditional suffix *-sA*. However, the obligatory use of conjunction *esli* ‘if’ as in Russian, would result in the finite verb without suffix *-sA*:

- (6) ***Esli*** *sen* *bar-a-siŋ*, *ol* *quwan-a-dī*.
 if 2SG go-PRS-2SG 3SG be.happy-PRS-3SG

‘If you go, she will be happy.’

Example (6) contains a Russian conjunction with a Kazakh finite verb that indicates present tense, following the Russian syntactical structure.

We can see how structures may overlap and mix in natural speech, which can result in several new forms. The range of these new constructions will be categorized by conditional clause verb form (finite or non-finite in terms of tense marking), subordinative conjunction type (none, *eger*, *esli*, *esli by*, others), as well as conditional type (real or unreal). By combination of verb form and conjunction type we can understand what function the latter has - emphatic similar to Kazakh or obligatory like in Russian, and we can simultaneously observe the influence of

Russian conjunctions on Kazakh conditional structure. Conditional types might shed light on hidden patterns of where and why certain combinations are used.

So, at first we can find Kazakh structures, such as only conditional suffix *-sa* or combinations of conjunction *eger* ‘if’ and the suffixes. Next, we can see the copying of the Russian conjunction *esli* ‘if’ or *esli by* ‘if (only)’ with the Kazakh conditional suffixes. Next, we observe a bigger influence of the Russian syntax structure, such as the use of *esli* and *esli by* with Kazakh verbs in finite form, as well as the insertion of fully Russian clauses.

1.3 Literature review

Due to Kazakhstan's longstanding history of the bilingual environment, rooted from political ties with the Russian Empire, throughout the Soviet period, code-switching or code-mixing between Kazakh and Russian is a common occurrence. Despite governmental ‘Kazakhization’ policies, the majority of ethnic Kazakhs are reported to be Kazakh-Russian bilinguals in terms of oral speech (Smagulova, 2008: 462). Code-switching can appear in any possible form and ‘has no constraints’ (Jankowski, 2012: 33). Therefore, Kazakh speakers may exhibit influence of Russian not only on the surface lexical level, but also deeper in morphological or syntactic structures.

One of such structures is the construction of the subordinate clauses, that are especially sensitive to contact-induced changes, since languages encode dependency relations in a variety of ways. Akanov (2022) provides evidence and analysis of the influence of Russian relative pronouns, such as *kotoryi* ‘which’ that force postnominal position of the relative clause in Kazakh speech. Examples show the adaptation of the standard Russian syntactic structure of the relative clause, since relative clauses in Kazakh precede the modified noun. Muhamedowa (2009: 345) provides a complex study on the use of Russian conjunctions *chto* ‘that’ and *potomu chto* ‘because’ in complement and causal clauses. She argues how, similar to relative clauses,

causal clauses with Russian conjunction *potomu chto* ‘because’ trigger the finite form of the verb, which leads to the right-branching structure. Since there hasn’t been any extensive research, I will be looking into the use and influence of Russian conjunctions *esli* and *esli by* on the formation of Kazakh conditional clauses in oral speech.

Muhamedowa (2016: 56) provides a grammatical overview of the formation of conditional clauses in Kazakh. According to it, conditional clauses are formed through the conditional suffix *-sa* that is attached to the verb of the conditional clause. She states that Kazakh conjunctions, such as *eger* ‘if’, or Russian conjunction *esli* ‘if’ are redundant, since verbs are still morphologically marked. Unreal conditionality is expressed through the same suffixes with addition of aorist marking on the verb of the main clause along with the copula verb *e-di* <cop-pst.3>. Russian conditional clauses purely rely on conjunctions *esli* for real conditions and *esli by* for unreal conditions. However, a study done by Steriopolo (2016: 239) shows how Russian *esli* ‘if’ is actually homophonous and can represent two different syntactic objects that are different in meanings and syntactic structure. The author distinguishes *esli by* two functions: conditional adjunct and complementizer (similar to *chto* ‘what’). She shows how in conditional clauses ‘there is no thematic relationship embedded in ‘esli’-clause..., which means that omission of an embedded clause is possible without the valence of the predicate being violated’. Wang, R., & Starodumova (2018) also provide the systematization of the usage of particle *by* in conditional clauses. They classified the types of sentences, where particle *by* occurs: complex conditional sentences with subordinate conjunctions - *esli*, *esli by*, complex conditional sentences without subordinate conjunctions but with adverbial conjunctions that can signal conditionality - *a to* ‘or else’, *inache* ‘otherwise’, *ne to* ‘otherwise’, and complex conditional sentences with implicit or semantic conditionality without subordinate or adverbial conjunctions. For the latter,

they provide an example, where there are no subordinate conjunctions *esli*, *esli by* and no adverbial conjunctions, however, the conditionality is in the meaning of the propositions.

For better understanding of the semantics of the various forms of Kazakh-Russian conditional constructions, the analysis draws on typological studies done on adverbial subordination. Thompson et al. (2007: 258) describes the semantics of conditional clauses and divides them into real and unreal conditions. Real conditions describe present, habitual, and past events. For the unreal conditions authors differentiate imaginative events that are divided into hypothetical (possible), counterfactual (impossible), and predictive events (future events). Iatridou (2000: 234) focuses on how counterfactuality is expressed across languages, specifically in conditionals through tense and aspect. The author highlights the frequent appearance of past tense in counterfactual conditions and defines it as a ‘fake past’ - counterfactual conditionals that have past tense morphology but do not have a past temporal meaning. Past tense in such cases marks the ‘distance’ from the actual state of affairs, rather than the literal time-related indication.

1.4 Preview / explicit question or hypothesis:

The purpose of the project is to observe the effects of Russian conjunctions on the structure and verb form of the conditional clauses in Kazakh, as well as to look for any non-standard forms resulting from the contact of Russian and Kazakh. The project then answers the following questions:

1. How do Russian conditional conjunctions *esli* and *esli by* influence the verb form and tense marking of verbs (finite or non-finite) in conditional clauses in Kazakh?
2. Are *esli* and *esli by* used emphatically in Kazakh conditional clauses, or are they used obligatorily similar to the Russian construction?

3. In unreal conditions, does *esli* by appear alongside Kazakh conditional marker *-sA* suffix and main predicate with the aorist marker *-(A)r* or *-(U)wǟI* and past-tense copula *e-di* <cop-pst.3> or does the syntax shift towards Russian structure with fully finite verbs?

2. Methodology

2.1 Subjects, corpus, and materials:

Data was drawn from several video sources that include podcasts, interviews, comedy shows in conversational or improvisational format. Such sources contain natural and spontaneous speech, while covering a broad range of topics. The conversations are not scripted or memorized and provide examples of casual language use and natural instances of code-copying. The main sources for the capstone data are the Kazakh speaking videos on Youtube, specifically DOPE SOZ, Narikbi Live podcasts, and Ne Angime and Арзан Психологтар ('Cheap Therapists') comedy shows. These podcasts and shows are produced in Kazakhstan and are publicly available on Youtube. Currently, the DOPE SOZ channel has over 150,000 subscribers with over 550 uploaded videos with each ranging from around 1 hour and up to 2 hours. The channel presents itself as 'A Kazakh podcast about the past and present, about what is important and relevant, not without irony' (DOPE SOZ, 2025). Similar to Narikbi LIVE with more than 300 episodes, the wide range of guests are featured in each episode, including - singers, film industry professionals, people in politics, influencers, healthcare workers, educators, and scientists. The subjects are the podcast speakers. However, their metadata is not provided, therefore cannot be used to analyze the patterns across age, geographical background, level of language knowledge, etc. The focus will be rather on structure and functions of the conditional clauses. The dataset contains 125 conditional clause examples that were extracted from more than 25 hours of video footage.

2.2 Procedure:

For the collection of data, I searched for the informal podcasts and shows conducted in Kazakh language or with Kazakh language speakers on Youtube. While the interviewer guides the conversation in podcasts, it is not scripted but flows in the direction of the current discussion. After selecting episodes at random, I listened to each episode, or if it had subtitle transcription - searched through, and selected and transcribed relevant excerpts of the discussion. Although the examples contained conditional clauses, the context of the examples was also recorded for future analysis. Transcription is done line-by-line including the original sentence, morphological glossing based on Leipzig rules, and translation. Each example is kept in the spreadsheet that contains information on the source, and classification (marker type, verb form, and conditional type), as well as the brief context of where it appeared.

2.3 Coding of conditional sentences:

The collected examples are categorized in order to document their morphological and semantic features. Each conditional clause was coded based on the following aspects: subordinator and its function type, conditional verb form, and conditional semantic type. For semantical coding I categorized conditional clauses into two main types: real and unreal. Data is systematized in order to observe which type of conditionals tend to use which type of marker, and their level of Russian structural influence. The combination of marker type with the verb form shows us whether Russian conjunctions are used as an emphatic (Kazakh structure) or required marker (Russian structure). Verb forms can also clearly indicate whether there was a shift from Kazakh tenseless conditional morphology.

Morpho-syntactic coding

In morpho-syntactic coding each example was categorized by the following variables.

1. Subordinate type identifies which conjunctions were used in conditional clauses. Values are:

Eger - free-standing Kazakh optional conditional conjunction, adapted from Persian, meaning ‘if’ and used for emphasis in the beginning of the clause.

Esli - Russian conjunction ‘if’ that indicates the lexical copying.

Esli by - Russian conjunction ‘if (only)’ used in unreal conditions.

Zero - conditional clauses without any conjunctions.

2. Conditional clause verb form classifies verbs into finite and non-finite forms, and additional cases.

‘-sA’ - Kazakh conditional suffixes that correspond to non-finite form.

Finite (Kazakh) - includes Kazakh verbs marked in tense or aspect that show us the deviation from the standard Kazakh non-finite form towards Russian structure of finite verbs.

Finite (Russian) - fully Russian verbs.

Zero - indicates that there are no verbs; sentences might be unfinished or verbs are omitted but implied.

Others - converbs, participle forms.

3. Main clause verb forms are noted for the unreal conditional clauses. In unreal conditionals, Kazakh follows a specific pattern in the main clause with a predicate with aorist marker *-(A)r* and *-(U)wŠI* and the past tense marker copula *e-di* <cop-pst.3>’.

Functional-semantic coding

Based on Muhamedowa (2016: 57), clauses are also coded for whether they express real conditions that are possible and that usually refer to the current or past actions, or unreal conditions such as hypothetical or improbable situations. Following Thompson et al. (2007: 258), there are several distinctions inside each category. Real conditions essentially describe

conditions based on present or past events, and habitual actions. For instance, example (1) that we saw earlier shows a realistic, possible event. The habitual example would be:

- (7) *Ol oqu-dan šarša-y basta-sa, ol sportzal-in-a bar-a-di.*
 3SG study-ABL tire-CONV begin-COND 3SG sport.hall-POSS.3-DAT go-PRS-3SG
 ‘If she is getting tired of studying, she goes to the gym.’

Example (7) shows repeated or consistent state of actions, or a certain generic rule.

Unreal conditions are divided into hypothetical, counterfactual, and predictive.

Hypothetical conditions describe possible events that could happen. Counterfactual conditions describe events that contradict reality. For example:

- (8) *Men sen-i kör-gen bol-sa-m, sälem ayt-ar e-di-m.*
 1SG 2SG-ACC see-PST.PTCP be-COND-1SG hello say-AOR COP-PST-1SG
 ‘If I had seen you, I would have said hello.’

Example (8) shows how the speaker did not actually meet the addressee, therefore, showing conditionality that did not occur in real life and contradicts the real state of affairs.

And predictive conditions describe predicted future actions or unrealized future outcomes.

- (9) *Eger ol film kör-se, syužet-ti ayt-ıp qoy-ar e-di.*
 if 3SG movie watch-COND plot-ACC tell-CVB AUX-AOR COP-PST.3
 ‘If she watches a movie, she will spoil the plot.’

Example (9) predicts a certain course of actions that is likely to happen, if the condition will be met.

Each example was categorized into one of these values, and the additional column for the context was created in order to help define the semantic interpretation with the surrounding topic

that was discussed. Combining semantic and morphosyntactic coding helps to reveal how and whether certain semantic conditionals tend to align with structural copying.

The function of subordinators is coded either as emphatic or obligatory. This distinction helps us to observe whether the markers have undergone functional changes in the examples.

Emphatic markers are optional and only serve stylistic or pragmatic purposes; they do not alter the grammaticality of the clause and reinforce conditionality. Most of the time they are used in formal speech or to underscore conditionality during long sentences.

Obligatory markers are required for the clause to be grammatical and they reflect Russian structural dependence on the conjunction.

All coded information in the spreadsheet is kept in the spreadsheet with columns for Source, Timing, Example, Semantic coding, Subordinator, Function, Conditional Clause Verb Form, Main Clause Verb Form, and Context. This way, it is possible to cross-reference between semantic and morphological features and to identify mixed constructions that combine properties of both Kazakh and Russian.

3. Results & Discussion

For the project corpus I collected and examined 125 tokens of spoken conditional clauses. Of these, 106 contain Russian conjunctions (102 with *esli* and 4 with *esli by*), while the remaining 19 are Kazakh conditionals that serve as structural reference points.

Results are first presented through the close examination of the Russian conjunctions *esli* and *esli by* - their frequency, function distribution, and their combinations with various verb forms of conditional and main clauses. I then present unusual cases of conditional clauses with participles, converbs, and ambiguous sentences that can be read both as conditional or temporal.

Finally, I provide an overview of the semantic distribution of conditional clauses across all of the dataset.

3.2 Russian conditional conjunction *esli* with Kazakh conditional suffix *-sa*

From these tokens, there are 106 conditional clauses with Russian subordinator *esli* and *esli by*, 85 (80.2%) of which are labeled as “emphatic”, meaning that *esli* and *esli by* are often used as optional conditional markers in natural speech that behave similarly to the Kazakh *eger* and/or substitute it, while the rest 21 (19.8%) tokens contain obligatory subordinator. The leadership of non-finite verb morphology according to Figure 1 aligns with the prominence of the ‘emphatic’ function with Russian conjunctions in the dataset, since *-sa* suffixes already indicate conditionality and the role of the conjunction becomes optional.

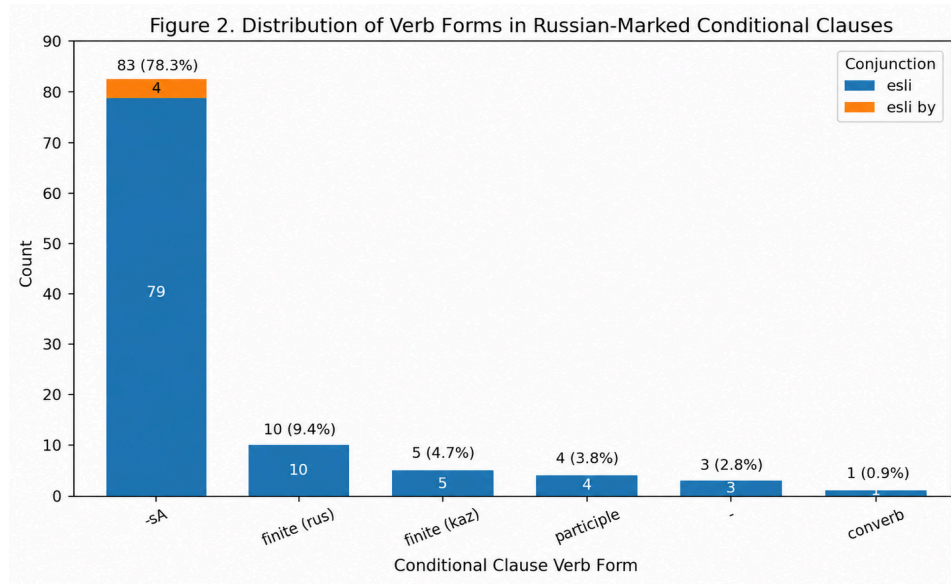


Figure 1. Conditional clause verb form distribution with Russian conditional conjunctions

According to Figure 1, within the set of all of the Russian markers conditional clauses mostly preserve Kazakh non-finite verb conditional *-sa* with 83 tokens (78.3%):

(10) *Esli depressiya-ya predraspolozhennost bol-sa, pogoda kak prosto trigger*

if depression-DAT predisposition be-COND weather like simply trigger
bol-u-i mümkin.

be-VN-POSS.3 possible

‘If there is a predisposition to depression, the weather can be just a trigger.’

- (11) *Esli serial tüsir-e-tin bol-sa-ŋ, kün-i-ne žyırma žeti sahna*

if series shoot-PTCP.IPF be-COND-2SG day-POSS.3-DAT twenty seven scene
tüsir-e-siŋ.

shoot-PRS-2SG

‘If you’re shooting a series, you film twenty-seven scenes per day.’

- (12) *Esli män bol-ma-sa, to tut dramaturgiya emes.*

if meaning be-NEG-COND then here dramaturgy NEG.COP

‘If there is no meaning, then this is not dramaturgy.’

In examples (10), (11), and (12) that are habitual real clauses, the conditionality is expressed through the suffix *-sa* that is attached to verbs, as we see with the verb *bol-sa*. To the standard Kazakh conditional structure speakers added the Russian conjunction *esli*. We can see the similar pattern in a predictive unreal conditional sentences:

- (13) *No ja sejčas esli on-i širt-qa šyır-sa-m, skandal bol-ıp*

but I now if 3SG-ACC outside-DAT take.out-COND-1SG scandal be-CVB
ket-e-di.

go-PRS-3SG

‘But if I take it outside now, there will be a scandal.’

- (14) *Esli oyan turmıs-qa šy-ıp žat-sa-m bolašaq-ta,*

if 3SG.M.DAT marriage-DAT go.out-CVB AUX-COND-1SG future-LOC

ata-ene-men tur-a-mın.

parents.in.law-COM live-PRS-1SG

‘If I end up marrying him in the future, I’ll live with my parents-in-law.’

In example (15) we can also observe the combination of conjunction *esli* and the suffix *-sA* in a sentence with a fully Russian main clause.

- (15) *Otnošenij dal'she ne bud-et, esli men-iŋ bas-ım-da onday oy*
 relationship.GEN further NEG be-FUT.3SG if 1SG-GEN head-POSS.1SG-LOC such thought
närse bol-sa.
 thing be-COND

‘There will be no further relationship if there is such a thought in my head.’

Myers-Scotton (1993: 132) finds and discusses a phenomenon of double morphology providing examples from the Shona-English language pair, where noun stems take both plural suffix *-ma* from Shona and similar suffix *-s* from English. Possible reasons include simultaneous processing of morphologies of the Embedded and Matrix (main) languages without global cross-checking. As the Matrix language controls grammatical structure, it provides necessary morphemes, filling the slots and ignoring English morphemes. My corpus shows a matching pattern of examples with Russian *esli* along with Kazakh conditional morphosyntax. Since most tokens show how conditionality is systematically expressed through Kazakh verbal morphology (the conditional suffix *-sA*), which is the Matrix language, the presence of the Russian (Embedded language) conjunction *esli* does not lead to morphosyntactic change of Kazakh conditional clauses. However, the stability of Kazakh conditional morphology throughout the corpus can also be expected due to the fact that functional morphology is generally more resistant to copying than lexical items.

From the examples above and Figure 1, we can see that the results show a pattern in contact-induced variation in conditional clauses, where Russian conjunction *esli* is used with the Kazakh morphosyntactic construction resulting in, as Muhamedowa (2016: 56) names it, double marking of conditionality.

The conditional suffix *-sA* appears consistently in both real and unreal clauses, and we can see how it continues to function as the main marker of conditionality regardless of the context. This means that there is no functional pressure for the Russian conditional syntax, which requires a finite verb form, to be copied into Kazakh conditional clauses, as the Kazakh structure of conditionality is both semantically sufficient and morphologically well-established. This also shows the asymmetry of the contact-induced change, since during language contact, lexical items are more easily copied than grammatical morphology (Matras, 2007: 61). Conjunction *esli* is easily copied as the lexical item that immediately indicates conditionality, while morphology is resistant as it is more ingrained into the grammar of the language.

3.3 Russian conditional conjunction *esli* with finite conditional verb forms

Next are finite conditional clause verb forms that contain 15 (14.1%) tokens of which 10 are Russian finite verbs (9.4%) and 5 are Kazakh finite verbs (4.7%). We can observe how Russian conditional syntax that includes lexicon based marking (conjunctions) with the tense-based marking of conditional verbs is rare in the dataset. However, some of the examples do abandon Kazakh conditional suffix *-sA*:

- (16) *Esli ol ömir sür-u-in-e mešat' et-pe-y tur, on-ïñ*
 if 3SG life live-VN-POSS.3-DAT interfere do-NEG-CVB stand.AUX 3SG-GEN
minez-qulq-ï, povedenie-si običnïy.
 temperament-POSS.3 behavior-POSS.3 normal

‘If it does not interfere with his ability to live his life, then his temperament, behavior is normal.’

Johanson (2002b: 264) discusses combinational copying of properties from one language to another, which leads to change in selective properties of the matrix language. Here, in example (16) conditionality is only expressed through the conjunction *esli*, while the auxiliary verb *tur* is not morphologically marked - in this case, it is a finite verb. Since the verb lacks conditional suffixes, *esli* holds an obligatory role. Without the conjunction the conditionality of the dependent clause would be absent, which causes a typological shift from the non-finite verb structure toward finite one that reflects Russian syntactic organization. The overall syntactical structure of the sentence adapts the Russian conditional structure, while Kazakh word order or inflectional morphology stays the same.

- (17) *Esli odnomu žol aš-a-siη, to vtoromu žol žab-a-siη konkretno.*
 if one.DAT path open-PRS-2SG then second.DAT path close-PRS-2SG definitely
 ‘If you open a path to one person, then you definitely close the path to another.’

Similarly, in example (17) the conditional structure uses Russian conjunction *esli* along with finite conditional verb form *aš-a-siη* <open-PRS-2SG>.

- (18) *Sen, esli šin zombi bol-ip ket-ti-η, birew kamera-men tüsir-ip*
 you if real zombie become-CVB go-PST-2SG someone camera-INST film-CVB
al-a-di sen-i.
 take-PRS-3SG you-ACC
 ‘If you actually turned into a zombie, someone would film you with a camera.’

- (19) *Esli sa-γan una-ma-di, sub"ektivno oy-ï-n ayt-w-γa är*
 if you.DAT please-NEG-PST.3SG subjective opinion-POSS.3-ACC say-VN-DAT every

adam-niŋ quqıy-ı bar

person-GEN right-POSS.3 exist

‘If you didn’t like it, everyone has the right to express their subjective opinion.’

Examples (18) and (19) contain finite conditional verbs, meaning that *esli* is the only marker of conditionality, mirroring Russian conditional syntax.

- (20) *On esli čit-a-et, ol contr birdene laqtır-a-dy da.*
 3SG if read-IPFV.3SG 3SG counter something throw-PRS-3SG PTCL

‘If he reads [rap], he throws some kind of counter-move.’

Example (20) illustrates global unit copying, where a whole unit with both form and function is copied as described by Johanson (2002a: 291), where the conditional clause is fully in Russian, while the main clause remains Kazakh.

Similarly full Russian conditional clause is shown below:

- (21) *Esli adam-ya mešaet žit’, on-ı diagnoz de-p al-sa-q ta*
 if person-DAT interferes live.INF 3SG-ACC diagnosis say-CVB AUX-COND-1PL PTCL
bol-a-dı.
 be-PRS-3SG

‘If it interferes with a person’s life, we can call it a diagnosis.’

Example (22) contains obligatory Russian conjunction *esli*, as well as Russian conditional finite verb *mešaet*, with fully Kazakh main clause. Although, main clause contains *al-sa-q* with suffix *-sa*, it is not a conditional marker of the subordinate clause but part of the larger main clause expression *de-p al-sa-q ta bol-a-dı*, which indicates a possible interpretation.

3.4 Unreal conditional clauses

Only four tokens in the corpus contain Russian conjunction *esli* by:

- (22) *A esli by daže šest' million-ov, bes million adam öl-se, müldem*
 CONJ if SUBJ even six million-GEN.PL five million person die-COND completely
öl-ip qal-dī ma?
 die.CVB AUX-PST Q

‘And even if six million, five million people had died, did all of them die?’

In example (22) the speaker questions the death statistics of Kazakhs after famine in the 1930s. He implies that the Kazakh population itself supposedly did not exceed 5-6 million, so stating that such a number passed away during famine would have meant that the entire ethnicity of Kazakhs would have been gone. The sentence contains the Kazakh conditional suffix *-sA* that is used for both real and unreal conditions. However, the main clause verb is in a finite past form following the Russian unreal conditional structure. We can assume that the *unreal* conditionality is achieved through the Russian conjunction *esli by*. It is obligatory for the unreal semantics, but not for the overall conditionality, as it is still marked by the conditional suffix in *öl-se*. Verb in the main clause lacks, however, the analytical construction of aorist *-(A)r* or *-(U)wŠI* marker with the past tense marker copula *e-di* <cop-pst.3> that would otherwise be used in unreal conditional sentence in standard Kazakh syntax.

Another example of counterfactual unreal conditional clause with *esli by* is present:

- (23) *Esli by biz-ge ustaz žaŋayī-n barlīy-ī-n ayt-īp žūr-me-se, men*
 if SUBJ we-DAT teacher that.stuff-ACC all-POSS.3SG-ACC say-CVB AUX-NEG-COND I
prosto bir qala-nī kör-ip qayt-uwšī e-d-im,
 simply one city-ACC see-CVB return-HAB COP-PST-1SG
istoriya-sī-n bil-mey.
 history-POSS.3-ACC know-NEG.CVB

‘If the teacher had not been telling me all that stuff, I would have simply seen a city and

come back without knowing its history.’

Example (23) follows standard conditional structure in Kazakh, with suffix *-sA* on the verb in the subordinate clause, and non-finite verb with analytical form *-(U)wǟI* and the copula *e-d-im* <cop-pst-1sg> in the main clause. Here, *esli by* is an optional emphatic marker of conditionality, and it is not obligatory.

- (24) *Esli by men yoga-ǵa öziñ üšin bar-sa-m, süytip bar-ıp žalyastır-ar*
 if SUBJ I yoga-DAT self for go-COND-1SG like.that go-CVB continue-AOR
e-di-m.

COP-PST-1SG

‘If I went to yoga for myself, just like that I would have continued to do so’

Similarly, the example above presents canonical unreal conditional Kazakh structure with an optional *esli by* subordinator.

- (25) *Kak by ti otnes-la-s’, esli by sen-iñ küyew-iñ sonday*
 how SUBJ 2SG react-PST-REFL if SUBJ 2SG.GEN husband-POSS.2SG such
izmena ža-sa?

cheating do-COND

‘How would you react if your husband cheated like that?’

In example (25) we can see Kazakh conditional suffix *-sA*, however the subordinator *esli by* indicates the unreal aspect of conditionality, since the main clause is fully in Russian. As a possibility, the speaker might have used Russian subordinator as the continuation of the Russian main clause and switched to Kazakh.

Aorist and *-(U)wǟI* markers in the main clause verb form appear across 6 tokens in the corpus, that, expectedly, all present unreal conditionality, following Kazakh unreal conditional

sentence structure. Of these, 4 use Russian *esli* without the particle *by* that indicates unreal condition in Russian, from which two are ambiguous with temporal clause and will be discussed later, and two use *esli by* (see examples 24 and 25).

- (26) *Esli ol do konca aš-a-tin bol-sa, možet, biz parallel'nyi*
 If he to.end open-PTCP.IPF be-COND maybe we parallel
vselenniy-lar-di kör-uwšī e-di-k tam, i tak dalee.
 universe-PL-ACC see-HAB COP-PST-1PL there and so on

‘If he were to open it completely, maybe we would see parallel universes there, and so on.’

We can observe how unreal conditionality is maintained mainly through the Kazakh structure of conditional suffixes in *bol-sa* and *-(U)wšī* marker along with copula *e-di* <cop-pst.3> in the main clause. Therefore, the Russian conjunction *esli* is completely optional and carries an “emphatic” role of reinforcing conditionality.

Another hypothetical unreal conditional question is present:

- (25) *Esli sol nede primerno predstavim, kim bol-ar e-di-ŋ?*
 if that thing.LOC approximately imagine-1PL who be-AOR COP-PST-2SG
 ‘If we imagine that roughly, who would you be?’

Here, *esli* is obligatory as the conditional predicate is a finite Russian verb. However, the main clause is fully Kazakh and follows Kazakh unreal conditional structure with aorist marker and copula *e-di-ŋ* <cop-pst-2sg>. Overall, we see a canonical Russian conditional clause with a standard Kazakh main clause of unreal conditional sentence.

3.5 Temporal ambiguity

Cristofaro (2003: 160) discusses conditional relations as the ones, where if the dependent state of affairs (SoA, can be understood as an event) happens, then the main event also must

happen. She specifies that the speaker, however, has no assured knowledge that the conditional event will happen, therefore it is presented as ‘non-factual’. Since the dependent event is non-factual, so is the main event. Cristofaro notes how temporal relations similarly show the dependency of one event on another, except the dependent event is presented as *certain* to happen. Due to the semantic resemblance of conditional and temporal relations, many languages tend to not differentiate morphologically between the two. According to Muhamedowa (2016: 48), temporal relations in Kazakh are mainly expressed through the suffix *-GAn* along with either locative *-DA*, dative *-GA*, ablative *-GAn* case suffixes or postpositions. My corpus contains few cases of sentences with Russian conjunction *esli* that seem to actually describe temporal relations, rather than conditional, and some of them appear ambiguous between two.

- (26) *Esli kogda uže üy-iñ-de otir-ip, birdenke žaz-γan kez-de,*
 if when already home-POSS.2SG-LOC sit-CVB something write-PTCP time-LOC
ešqandaj qıındıq äkel-mey-di.
 no difficulty bring-NEG-PRS.3SG
 ‘If, when you’re already sitting at home, you write something, it doesn’t cause any
 difficulty.’

Example (26) is an unusual case, as it consists of both Russian conditional *esli* (‘if’) and Russian temporal *kogda* (‘when’), as well as Kazakh temporal morphology *žaz-γan kez-de* (literally ‘at the time of writing’). The dependent SoA of writing at home is conditional for the main SoA of absence of difficulty. However, due to the temporal conjunction *kogda* (‘when’), two relations are marked as certain to happen (Cristofaro, 2003: 161), and then double marked with Kazakh temporal morphology consisting of Kazakh suffix *-GAn* and locative suffix *-DA* (Muhamedowa, 2016: 48). Here, the use of noun *kez* (‘time’) points to the simultaneity of the

two events (Muhamedowa, 2016: 51). However, the combination of *esli* and *kogda* is unnatural and might be the result of spontaneous error. The speaker most probably intended to use *esli* to indicate temporal relation, and then shifted toward a more canonical temporal marker *kogda*. Below, I present further examples of *esli* use in clauses with temporal or ambiguous interpretation.

- (27) *Esli bala art-i-men tur-γan kez-de, oṇay-ıraq bol-ar e-di*
 if child back-POSS.3SG-INST stand-PTCP time-LOC easy-COMP be-AOR COP-PST.3
bılayınan.
 this.way

‘If (when) the child is standing with their back (turned), it would be easier this way.’

Here, we can see a similar combination of participle form *tur-γan* and *kez-de* (when standing), however the speaker uses Russian *esli* along with aorist marker and *e-di* in the main clause, which indicates unreal conditionality. The sentence is ambiguous between temporal and conditional meaning.

- (28) *Esli dūrīs azamat-qa šiq-qan-da, osilai bol-mas e-di γoi.*
 if right man-DAT marry-PTCP-LOC like.this be-NEG.AOR COP-PST.3 PTCL
 ‘If she had married the right man, it would not have been like this.’

In example (28) the conditionality is expressed through conjunction *esli*, therefore it is obligatory. The verb form in the main clause indicates a counterfactual conditional meaning, while the complex converb *-qan-da* in the conditional clause is associated with temporal reference, which makes sentences ambiguous.

- (29) *Esli buytip žat-qan kez-de, qara-y-siṇ da, «dura, ti navod-iš' na*
 if like.this AUX-PTCP time-LOC look-PRS-2SG PTCL fool you point.PRS.2SG on

sebya», oybay de-y-siŋ da

self INTJ say-PRS-2SG PTCL

‘If (when) in such a situation, you’re looking, “fool, you’re pointing it at yourself” and you go “oops”.’

Example (29) contains the familiar combination *žat-qan kez-de* with *buytip*, which can be understood as ‘in such a situation’. However, the verbs in the main clause this time are finite, combined with temporal morphology suggest temporal interpretation, although Russian *esli* does make the sentence ambiguous.

(30) *Esli ne sovpadat' et-ken žayday-da, možno adekvatniy tür-de*

if NEG coincide.INF do-PTCP situation-LOC can adequately manner-LOC

özger-u-ge.

change-VN-DAT

‘If (when) things don’t match, it’s possible to change in an appropriate way.’

In example (27) the speaker uses conditional *esli*, which makes the dependent SoA possible but not certain. However, since temporal relation is indicated through Kazakh suffixes *-GAn* in *et-ken* and *-DA* in *žayday-da*, the sentence is ambiguous and can be interpreted as either conditional or temporal. Cristofaro (2003: 161), however, states that while in conditional relations the dependent SoA can happen either simultaneously or before the main event, in temporal relations dependent SoA is usually only simultaneous. Unlike *kez* (‘time’), which signals temporal overlap or simultaneity, the use of *žaydaj* (‘situation’) can signal anteriority to the main SoA, since it can be interpreted as an established state/a set of circumstances: only in the situation that things don’t match, once this state already holds, is it possible to change appropriately. This brings the overall sentence closer to the reality condition relation.

Jumabay (2025: 178) describes how suffix *-sa* in Kazakh can be ambiguous between indicating temporal and conditional relations, and in case of temporal relation, it mostly indicates simultaneity between events in dependent and main clauses.

- (31) *Esli žumīs-ta bol-sa-m, men aktivnīy bol-a-mīn, a kogda bireu*
 if work-LOC be-COND-1SG 1SG active be-PRS-1SG and when someone
una-sa, men onda maksimal'no qaš-a-mīn.
 like-COND 1SG then maximally run.away-PRS-1SG
 ‘If (when) I’m at work, I’m active, but when I like someone, I then avoid/run away as much as possible.’

In the first half of the example (31) the speaker seems to provide the common conditional combination we saw earlier - emphatic Russian conjunction *esli* with Kazakh conditional suffix *-sa* in *bol-sa-m*, and relation can be interpreted as simultaneous. After that, however, the speaker explicitly uses Russian conjunction *kogda* (‘when’), indicating temporal relation between clauses, although word *onda* (‘then’) in the main clause seems to point out the sequence of the events and the anteriority of the dependent clause, and combined with conditional suffix *-sa* in *una-sa*, overall shift the interpretation of the whole sentence towards the conditional one.

One example with converb is present:

- (32) *Esli men sau adam bo-p kir-ip, sol žaq-ta psix bo-p šīy-a-m.*
 if 1SG healthy person be.CVB enter-CVB that side-LOC psycho be.CVB exit-PRS-1SG
 ‘If I go in as a healthy person, I come out of there as a psycho.’

This is an unusual case, where Russian conjunction *esli* is used to indicate conditionality and is obligatory since the verb *kir-ip* is non-finite in converb form, which deviates from both Russian (finite form) and Kazakh (conditional suffix *-sa*) usual conditional morphology.

Although, the converb *kir-ip* can also indicate a preceding temporal relation to the main clause, and the speaker might have used *esli* instead of *kogda*, as *-(I)p* converbs tend to co-occur with the latter subordinator.

3.6 Semantic distribution

Following figure 2, the most prominent conditional clause type semantically is present real clauses with 55 tokens (44.0%):

- (33) *Esli men bu-ni bīlay qoy-sa-m, bugün men-de žaman kūn.*
 if I this-ACC like.that put-COND-1SG today I-LOC bad day
 ‘If I put it like this, today I have a bad day.’

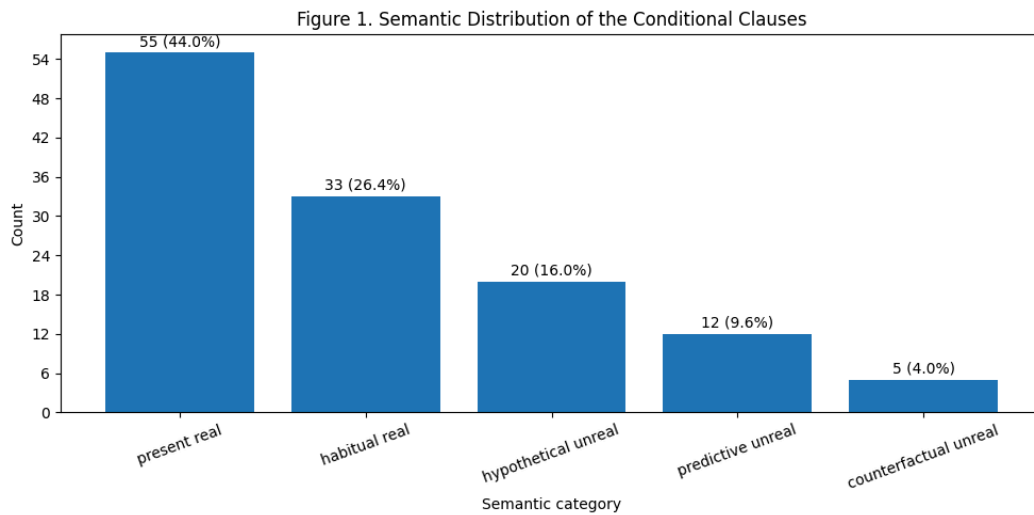


Figure 1. Semantic distribution of the conditional clauses

They are followed by habitual real conditional clauses that usually appear in the form of a general rule with 33 tokens (26.4%):

- (11) *Esli serial tüsir-e-tin bol-sa-ŋ, kūn-i-ne žīyrma žeti sahna*
 if series shoot-PTCP.IPF be-COND-2SG day-POSS.3-DAT twenty seven scene
tüsir-e-siŋ.

shoot-PRS-2SG

‘If you’re shooting a series, you film twenty-seven scenes per day.’

Unreal conditions are less common with hypothetical unreal conditionals leading and containing 20 (16.0%) tokens:

(26) *Esli ol do konca aš-a-tin bol-sa, možet, biz parallel’nyi*

If he to.end open-PTCP.IPF be-COND maybe we parallel

vselennij-lar-di kör-uwšī e-di-k tam, i tak dalee.

universe-PL-ACC see-HAB COP-PST-1PL there and so on

‘If he were to open it completely, maybe we would see parallel universes there, and so on.’

The next are predictive unreal with 12 (9.6%) tokens:

(14) *Esli oyan turmis-qa šiy-ip žat-sa-m bolašaq-ta,*

if 3SG.M.DAT marriage-DAT go.out-CVB AUX-COND-1SG future-LOC

ata-ene-men tur-a-mın.

parents.in.law-COM live-PRS-1SG

‘If I end up marrying him in the future, I’ll live with my parents-in-law.’

And finally counterfactual unreal conditionals contain 5 tokens (4%):

(34) *Men eger de 91-de bol-ma-sa-m, heiter-ler-diñ qatar-in-da bol-uwšī*

1SG if PART 91-LOC be-NEG-COND-1SG hater-PL-GEN row-POSS.2SG-LOC be-HAB

e-di-m.

COP-PST-1SG

‘If I weren’t in 91, I might have been one of the haters.’

Together, real conditions comprise 70.4% of the corpus and unreal conditions account for the rest 29.6%.

4. Conclusion

Through this project I examined how Russian conditional conjunctions *esli* and *esli by* are used and integrated into spoken Kazakh conditional sentences. Among 106 spoken Kazakh conditional sentences with *esli* or *esli by*, the majority contained a combination of Russian conjunctions with Kazakh conditional suffix *-sA*. Speakers tend to mostly use Russian conjunctions as optional, emphatic markers of conditionality, while still using Kazakh verbal morphology as the main marker, which results in double marking of conditionality. Russian *esli by* is rare and is also mostly used alongside Kazakh conditional suffix *-sA*. A couple of unreal conditional sentences use *esli* instead of *esli by*, with the rest of the sentence following standard morphology of Kazakh unreal constructions. Overall, Russian conjunctions are easily inserted in the beginning of clauses, with Kazakh conditional morphology remaining present. However, there are variations, where we can see a bigger influence of Russian on spoken Kazakh. Several conditional sentences show the use of Russian conjunctions, which trigger the typological shift from non-finite form toward finite form in Kazakh conditional verbs, fully mimicking Russian conditional structure. And finally, several examples present the insertion of fully Russian clauses. Additionally, several examples with Russian conditional conjunction *esli* were found that have ambiguous interpretations between conditional and temporal relations.

For the future research and enhancement of the result I would suggest a bigger and more systematized corpus. The current dataset is relatively small with sources limited to publicly available videos that lack metadata on the speakers. Corpus was not designed to represent the overall frequency of the usage of Russian or Kazakh conjunctions, as the data collection was mostly targeted at examples with Russian *esli* and *esli by*. For the bigger number of examples I would suggest conducting additional recordings of naturally occurring Kazakh speech across

different groups of people (age, location, occupation), recording their metadata, which would allow for more detailed both quantitative and qualitative analysis. A bigger focus can also be given to unreal conditional sentences, as they have more complex morphological structure and can reveal more details on contact-induced variation.

This project contributes to the general linguistics field and complements existing research on Kazakh-Russian language contact that has studied subordinate clause types such as relative, complement, causative, while adding to the understanding of conditional clauses.

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