14. Conditional (Excerpt from Eggleston, 2013)

The Tlingit conditional translates into English as 'if' or 'when (in the future) s/he does it'. The following is an example conditional form taken from an audio recording of George Davis and Anita Lafferty, two elders conversing in Tlingit. *Ch'a wáa sá haa naneiní* 'if anything happens to us' (Davis & Lafferty, 2009:27:58). Here, the verb *naneiní* 'if it happens' is in the conditional form. Another example taken from Edwards (2009b) is *g̱anúkni du x'éix̱ at gax̱tootée.* 'When he sits down, we'll serve him.' The conditional form in this sentence is *g̱anúkni* 'when he sits down'.

The conditional form in Tlingit is characterized by having the verb's conjugation prefix (Ø-, *na-, ga-, or g̱a-*), the *–I* form of the classifier, the *n-stem*, and the suffix *–i*.

14.1 The *n-stem*

As stated above, verbs in the conditional form have what is called the "*n-stem*" (Leer 1991). The *n-stem* is the addition of *–n* to the end of the verb. Depending on whether the stem is open or closed, the *n-stem* differs with respect to vowel length.

14.1.1 Closed Stems

Let's consider (variable) closed stems first. Verbs that end in a consonant have short, high vowels in the *n-stem*. Part (a) of the following examples are given in the imperfective, and Part (b) in the conditional, for comparison. In (311a), the imperfective stem is long and high *(-k'éet')* and in (311b) the conditional *(n-stem)* is short and high *(-k'ít'n)*. The next two sets of examples follow the same pattern, where the imperfective stem is long *(-ch'áak'w* and *-.éen* respectively), and the conditional stem is short *(-ch'ák'wn* and *-.ínn* respectively). This is a very predictable pattern in Tlingit. Closed stems will have short, high vowels in the *n-stem*, regardless of conjugation prefix.

(311a) *k̲uk'éet'*   's/he is picking berries'
(311b) *k̲uk'ít'ni*   'if/when s/he picks berries'

(312a) *akach'áak'w*   's/he is carving it'

(312b) *akach'ák'wni*   'if/when s/he carves it'

(313a) *a.éen*   's/he is picking them'

(313b) *a.ínni*   'if/when s/he picks them'

Note as shown in the final example above *(a.ínni)* that a verb ending in *–n* ends up with a double *–nn* in the conditional. The *–n* is geminated (lengthened), pronounced at the end of the first syllable and the beginning of the second syllable.

The exception to the rule "closed verb stems will have short, high vowels in the *n-stem*", of course, are invariable stems (those which remain the same no matter the verb mode). Here are a few examples. Again, the imperfective form is given first for comparison with the conditional form.

(314a) *yanéekw*   's/he is sick, hurt'

(314b) *ganéekwni*   'if/when she is sick, hurt'

(315a) *ashigóok*   's/he knows how to do it'

(315b) *agashgóokni*   'if/when s/he learns how to do it'

In the above two examples, you can see that the vowel length in the verb stem does not change from one form to the next *(-néekw/-néekwn* and *–góok/góokn*). These are verbs with invariable stems, and in this case, both are always long and high. As a second language learner, it is very helpful to learn which verbs have invariable stems. These tend to be *ga* conjugation, stative verbs (Leer, 1991:254). Two verb themes with invariable stems have been documented in the present research that have irregular stem forms in the conditional mode. These are illustrated in Section 15.5.

14.1.2 Open Stems

Now let's consider open stems. As was illustrated in Chapter 8 for the progressive imperfective, verbs with open roots have long, high vowels in the *n-stem*. Part (a) of the example sets below are given in the imperfective and Part (b) in the conditional. Note that in these three example sets, in the imperfective form, the verbs have long, low vowel *(-tee)*; short, high vowel *(-shí)*, and; long, high vowel *(-géi)* respectively. In the conditional form however, all have long, high vowels in the *n- stem (-téen, -shéen, -géin)*.

(316a) *yéi yatee*   'that's the way he/she/it is'
(316b) *yéi natéeni*   'if/when he/she/it is that way'

(317a) *at shí*   's/he is singing'
(317b) *at shéeni*   'if/when s/he sings'

(318a) *kayagéi*   'it's big'
(318b) *kanagéini*   'if/when it's big'

As was discussed in Chapter 8 for the progressive imperfective, stems ending in *–aa* or *–oo* undergo apophony, becoming *–éin* in the *–n stem*. In the first set of examples below (319a-b), *-x̱a* becomes *–x̱éin* and in the second (320a-b), *-t'áa* becomes *–t'éin*.

(319a) *at x̱á*   's/he is eating'
(319b) *at x̱éini*   'if/when s/he eats'
(320a) *kuyat'áa*   'the weather is hot'
(320b) *kut'éini*   'if/when the weather is hot'

The next two sets of examples illustrate verbs with stems ending in *–oo.* The first, (321a-b) is as we saw above, the stem *-.óo* becomes *-éin* in the conditional. In (322a-b) however, there is rounding on the stem consonant, by way of *–w* , where *–góo* becomes *–gwéin*. This is a regular pattern in Tlingit where a consonant which has a rounded counterpart (*k/kw, x'/x'w, g̱/g̱w*, etc.) followed by a round vowel (*-oo, -u*) becomes rounded in the *n-stem*.

Think of the *w* as a remnant of the stem which was once round *(–oo)* but becomes unround *–éin* in the *n-stem*. For a reminder of which consonants have rounded counterparts, see Table 1 in Chapter 1.

(321a) *áa ḵuya.óo*   's/he lives there'
(321b) *áa ḵuna.éini*   'if/when s/he lives there'

(322a) *k'asigóo*   'it's fun'
(322b) *k'aksagwéini*   'if/when it's fun'

Below are two more examples of rounding of the stem consonant. In (323a-b), the verb stem is *–x'oo*, becoming *–x'wéin* in the conditional form. The consonant *x'* is followed by a rounded vowel *(-oo)* (requiring a protrusion, or rounding of the lips) and so the consonant preserves the rounding of the vowel (by way of *w*) when the stem vowel becomes *ei* in the *n-stem*. Likewise, in (324a-b) *-koo* becomes *–kwéin* in the conditional. This only takes place for consonants which have rounded counterparts in the language.

(323a) *át akawsix'óo*   's/he nailed it on it'
(323b) *át aksax'wéini*   'if/when s/he nails it on it'

(324a) *awsikóo*   's/he knows it'
(324b) *askwéini*   'if/when s/he knows it'

Table 50 below summarizes verb stem variation in the conditional mode, giving an example for each root type. Note that what counts in the conditional mode is simply whether the root is open or closed.

Table 50. Stem Variation in the Conditional

Basic Stem Shape ↓	Ø	na, ga, ga
CVV	CV́Vni axéini 'if/when he eats it' O-S-Ø-xaa~ (Ø act) 'for S to eat O'	CV́Vni akanahéini 'if/when she plants it' O-ka-S- Ø-haa~ (na act) 'for S to plant O'
CVV^h	CV́Vni askwéini 'if/when she knows it' O-S-s-koo^h~ (Ø event; CV́V Imp/Hort/Pot) 'for S to know O'	CV́Vni natéini 'if/when he sleeps' S-Ø-taa^h~ (na act) 'for (singular) S to sleep'
CVVC	CV́Cni asxúkni 'if/when he dries it' O-S-s-xook~ (Ø act) 'for S to dry O'	CV́Cni anaxáshni 'if/when she cuts it' O-S-Ø-xaash~ (na act) 'for S to cut O with knife'
CV́VC	CV́Cni aswátni 'if/when she raises him' O-S-s-wáat~ (Ø act) 'for S to raise O'	CV́Cni agalshátni 'if/when he holds it' O-S-l-sháat~ (ga act) 'for S to hold, retain O'
CV́VC'	CV́C'ni as.át'ni 'if/when he chills it' O-S-s-.áat'~ (Ø act) 'for S to make O cold'	CV́C'ni ana.ús'ni 'if/when she washes it' O-S-Ø-.óos'~ (na act) 'for S to wash O'

Having summarized the *n-stem*, which is one of the characteristics of the conditional form in Tlingit, we'll now move on to the other properties: the conjugation prefix, the *-I* form of the classifier, and the suffix *–i*, by looking at some examples, beginning with *Ø* conjugation verbs.

14.2 *Ø* Conjugation Verbs

Part (a) of each example set below is given in the imperative form, Part (b) in the imperfective, Part (c) in the perfective, and Part (d) in the conditional, for comparison. We know that the imperative form requires the verb's conjugation prefix, and it serves to illustrate that these are all *Ø* conjugation verbs. The imperfective form illustrates that these are verbs with variable stems. The perfective shows us the *+I* classifier form, contrasting with the *–I* form found in the conditional. Note the conditional form in each set: *asníx'ni*,

akachákni, and *dakéini.* Since these are all Ø conjugation verbs, we see no conjugation prefix. The classifier in each is *–I (s-, Ø-, and da-* respectively*).* They all have the *n-stem,* which for (325d) and (326d), which are closed roots, means short, high vowel followed by *–n*, and for (327d), which is an open root, means a long high vowel followed by *–n,* (and because the stem is *–aa,* it becomes *–éin,* as discussed above). Finally, each has the suffix *–i,* which is required by the conditional form. Note that this suffix will take the opposite tone of that of the verb stem. Because all variable stems will have a high tone in the conditional, the suffix will be low. However, for stems which are invariable **and** low tone, this suffix will take a high tone. We will see an example of this in Section 14.4 below.

(325a) *Isníx'!*		'Smell it!'
(325b) *asinéex'*		's/he smells it'
(325c) *awsiníx'*		's/he smelled it'
(325d) *asníx'ni*		'if/when s/he smells it'

(326a) *Kachák!*		'Pack it!'
(326b) *akacháak*		's/he is packing it'
(326c) *akaawachák*		's/he packed it'
(326d) *akachákni*		'if/when s/he packs it'

(327a) *Idaḵá!*		'Sew!'
(327b) *daḵéis'*		's/he is sewing'
(327c) *wudiḵáa*		's/he sewed'
(327d) *daḵéini*		'if/when s/he sews'

14.3 *Na* Conjugation Verbs

The examples in this section are all *na* conjugation verbs, as can be seen by looking at the imperative forms and the conditional forms, both of which require the verb's conjugation prefix. The perfective form is also given to show stem variation where it occurs. Examples (328a-c) show a verb with an invariable stem. The stem is long and high *(-wóos')* no matter the verb tense. Notice the long and high stem in the conditional form, where we would

expect a short high vowel in variable stems. In the perfective, the classifier is *ya- (+I)* and in the conditional it's *Ø-* (the *–I* counterpart). The *n-stem* and suffix *–i* are the main clues that the last form is a conditional.

(328a) *X'anawóos'!*   'Ask him/her!'
(328b) *ax'eiwawóos'*   's/he asked him/her'
(328c) *ax'anawóos'ni*   'if/when s/he asks him/her'

The following Example set (329) illustrates a verb with an open stem *(-.áa)* and as expected, the stem is *–éin* in the conditional *(akanas.éini)*. Note also the presence of the *na-* conjugation prefix, the *–I* classifier *(s-)* and the suffix *–i*.

(329a) *Kanas.á!*   'Grow it!'
(329b) *akawsi.aa*   's/he grew it'
(329c) *akanas.éini*   'if/when s/he grows it'

Example set (330) shows another open stem verb *(-shee).* Here, the *n-stem* is *–shéen*. Remember that the quality of the vowel only changes in the *n-stem* for those ending in   *–oo* or *–aa*. Again, the conditional form has the *na-* conjugation prefix, the *–I* classifier *(Ø-)*, and the suffix *–i*.

(330a) *Aagáa kunashí!*   'Look for it!'
(330b) *aagáa koowashee*   's/he looked for it'
(330c) *aagáa kunashéeni*   'if/when s/he looks for it'

14.4 *Ga* Conjugation Verbs

Example sets (331) and (332) are both *ga* conjugation verbs. The first, (331) 'borrow it' offers no surprises. It is a verb with a closed stem *(-hées')* and a variable stem, having the short, high vowel in the conditional form as expected. In (332), the verb 'be noisy' is our first example of a verb with an invariable stem with a low tone. Note in the conditional

form *gala.oosní*, the suffix *–í* has a high tone. Remember that the suffix takes the opposite tone of the verb stem.

(331a) *Gahées'!*   'Borrow it!'
(331b) *aawahées'*   's/he borrowed it'
(331c) *agahís'ni*   'if/when s/he borrows it'

(332a) *Ikla.oos!*   'Be noisy!'
(332b) *wuli.oos*   's/he was noisy'
(332c) *gala.oosní*   'if/when s/he is noisy'

14.5 *Ga* Conjugation Verbs

The final two sets of examples are *ga* conjugation verbs. In (333) 'hold it', we see in the conditional form *agalshátni* the *ga-* conjugation prefix, the *–I* classifier *(l-)*, the *n-stem (-shátn)*, and the suffix *–i.* In (334), the verb 'ask for it' has an invariable stem which is long and high *(-gáax)*, and so the conditional form too has a long and high vowel in the *n-stem (-gáaxn)*. Again, we find in the conditional form the *–I* classifier *(s-)*, the conjugation prefix *(ga-)*, and the suffix *–i,* which is low because the stem has a high tone.

(333a) *galsháat!*   'Hold it!'
(333b) *awlisháat*   's/he held it'
(333c) *agalshátni*   'if/when s/he holds it'

(334a) *geesgáax!*   'Ask for it!'
(334b) *awdzigáax*   's/he asked for it'
(334c) *agasgáaxni*   'if/when s/he asks for it'

To summarize, the conditional is one of the more straightforward forms to learn in Tlingit because the verb stem is based solely on whether the root is open or closed. If you know which conjugation category a verb belongs to and whether the verb stem is variable or not, you can easily create the conditional form by using the verb's conjugation prefix, the *–I*

form of the classifier, the *n-stem*, and the suffix *–i.* To get this information about each verb, it helps to think of the forms of that verb that you already know and see if you can glean from them the necessary information such as the conjugation prefix and the classifier. This information is also given in the theme at the top of each verb entry on the CD.