Concessive Conditionals, Concessive Inference and Common Ground: Japanese Temo and English Concessive If

The immediate aim of this paper is to generate debate about the role of conventional implicature, discourse flow, and inferential process in naturally occurring conversational/written data of Japanese and English concessive conditional clauses. The ultimate goal is to explore how concessive conditionality differs in acknowledging and accommodating common ground and narrowly/broadly inducing inference in concessive conditionals in Japanese and English.

Concessive if and even if in English invoke canonical conventional implicatures, where there are (i) incompatibility between the two states of affairs—antecedent $p$ and consequence $q$, (ii) scalarity: $p$ focused by even is the least likely to occur in order for $q$ to occur—$p$ is at the extreme end of the scale, and (iii) unexpectenedness: $p$ is usually expected to occur under any conditions, but the expectation raised by earlier discourse or background knowledge in which it occurs is unusually denied by the utterance containing even or focused items in concessive if; whereas Japanese concessive conditional temo (lit. even if) does not only imply these three, but also make manifest the very fast incorporation of a concessive sense into the discourse of utterance, where socio-cultural scene manipulates conventionality in language, which is why temo is acceptable but even if is not in the same context of utterance where you see your friend waiting for a bus at a wrong bus stop and you call her attention to it, saying "(#Even) If you wait here, the bus won't pick you up. But if you wait at that bus stop over there, it will."

Incorporation of concessivity into a discourse flow is manifested by a greater tendency to use temo in Japanese than even if in English in the second (or third) use of condition in sequential conditions like "if $p_1$, then $q$. if $p_2$, then $q$. (if $p_3$, then $q$)”, in which case the same consequence is supposed to be obtained on whatever grounds. We observe concessivity in Japanese and conditionality in English in the second sequence of conditions. Japanese concessive temo comes from "It is not the case that if $\neg p$, then $\neg q$" which is implied by the conditional perfection reading of "if $p$, then $q$," where the implication is denied finally (=denial of conditional perfection); whereas there are no such implication generating in English unless otherwise explicitly stated. That means we always make an attempt to add one more effort to language processing and comprehension, which is usually cancelled out by some other way in a different language.

Also, interaction by way of concessive temo in Japanese is characterized by action chains and sequences with synchronized joint efforts of the participants in conversation,
in order to not go further into an excessive, unusual state of affairs by one participant who takes the lead in his/her speech. Avoiding the excessiveness and showing the extreme end at least once, one person prohibits the other from exceeding the limit of the main topic, which is expected to be followed by discouraging him/her from taking up another one, i.e., concessive strategy of one topic structure in the whole context of utterance.