Temporal and modal expressions in Japanese conditionals

Setsuko Arita

Ritsumeikan University

sarita@fc.ritsumei.ac.jp

Modern Japanese has at least four basic conditional forms: *-eba*, *-to*, *-(ta)ra*, and *-nara*. They can be classified into two groups: 'complete tensed clauses', where both past and non-past forms can occur as in the *–nara* clause*,* and 'incomplete tensed clauses', where either past or non-past forms can appear, or none of them can occur, as in the case of *-eba, -to and -(ta)ra*. (Arita 2009) Such complexity is a result of the historical changes in the tense-aspect-modality system of Japanese grammar.

This paper explores the treatment of the semantic notion of 'settledness' (Kaufmann 2005) as an interface between tense and modality, by examining how temporal and modal expressions are distributed in conditional clauses in Japanese. What is meant by 'settled' is that the truth-value of a proposition is already determined at the time of utterance.

The core (direct) conditionals are divided into three types, predictive, epistemic and counterfactual ones in terms of the settledness of the antecedent: the unsettled antecedent characterizes the predictive conditional. The epistemic type is defined as a conditional whose antecedents are objectively settled but not subjectively settled; that is, its truth-values are unknown to the speaker. The counterfactual type are also characterized as settled antecedents, but they are different from the epistemic conditionals in that their antecedents are subjectively settled, or to be more precise, the speaker knows that the antecedent is false. This paper shows that the distributional differences between complete tensed and incomplete-tensed conditional clauses in Japanese are best explained by referring to the settledness of the antecedent.

A settled antecedent whose truth-value is objectively determined but is unknown to the speaker characterizes an epistemic conditional, as explained above. *-Nara*, a complete tensed clause marker, is the most appropriate form for the epistemic antecedent.

(1) *Mosi   Taroo-ga   Rondon-ni ir-u-nara*,

　　Supposing   Taro-NOM   London-in be-N.PAST-COND

　　matigai.naku   Hiruton-ni   syukuhaku.si-teir-u.

surely   Hilton-in   stay-ing-N.PAST

'If Taro is in London, he is undoubtedly staying at the Hilton.'

(2) *Mosi*   *Pozunan-ga*   *kinoo*   *ka.t-ta-nara*

Supposing   Poznan-NOM   yesterday   win-PAST-COND

yuusyoo.sur-u   *tyansu-ga*   *ar-u.*

championship   chance-NOM   be-N.PAST

'If Lech Poznan won the match yesterday, they still have a chance of winning the championship.'

Example (1) is uttered in the situation that the speaker does not know whether or not Taro is in London at the time of the utterance. The *(r)u*-form of the stative predicates followed by *-nara* is the most appropriate form for this situation. Example (2) designates a situation in which the speaker does not know whether or not Lech Poznan won the game on the day prior to the time of the utterance. The *ta*-form of the predicate followed by *-nara* is the best for such discourse. On the other hand, *eba/tara* clauses are limited to use in such settled past antecedents. They can be used in epistemic conditionals only if they accompany the imperfective aspect morpheme *-tei*. Without *-tei*, neither *-eba* nor *-tara* can denote settled protasis. Needless to say, *-nara* designates settled protases without *-tei*.

(3) *Mosi*   *Pozunan-ga kinoo*   *{*kat-eba/*kat-tara/kat-teir-eba/kat-tei-tara}*

Supposing Poznan-NOM yesterday win-PAST-COND

yuusyoo.sur-u   *tyansu-ga*   *ar-u.*

championship chance-NOM   be-N.PAST

'If Lech Poznan won the match yesterday, they still have a chance of winning the championship.'

Here, the imperfective aspect morpheme *-tei* in an incomplete tensed clause appears to designate settledness of the antecedent, similarly to the past form *-ta* in *-nara* clauses. Moreover, the imperfective form also tends to appear in incomplete tensed clauses which designate a (settled) counterfactual antecedent. Note that both *–tara* and *nara*, incomplete tensed conditional markers, can be used in predictive conditionals without the *–tei* form. Therefore, settledness in the antecedent should be manifested grammatically in a system of Japanese conditionals.

From a historical viewpoint, *-nara* in ancient Japanese designated both settled and unsettled conditional clauses, but from the medieval period, it tended to indicate settled antecedents and had become established as a settled conditional marker by around the

post-medieval period. (Yajima 2013) In some dialects, *-nara*, or a certain form corresponding to *–nara* in each dialect, covers not only settled but also unsettled antecedents. (Hidaka 2013, Arita and Eguchi 2012.)

Interestingly, a quasi noun *-no*, which grammatically functions as a noun but does not possess any conceptual meaning, is often inserted before *–nara*. The *–nonara* form is used exclusively for epistemic antecedents. The form was generalized in the Edo period coupled with epistemic *–nara* conditionals. The insertability of the quasi noun shows the dialectal variations. (Hidaka 2013)

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