

1990

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### Recommended Citation

Tateishi, Koichi (1990) "Syntax of the Conditional Topic Construction in Japanese," *North East Linguistics Society*. Vol. 20 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/nels/vol20/iss2/14>

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## Syntax of the Conditional Topic Construction in Japanese\*

Koichi Tateishi

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### 0. Introduction

There is one question which is frequently asked in Japanese syntax: Is there a strong island-like domain from which extraction is prohibited? As an answer to this question, Saito (1985) argues that there is such a domain for Scrambling, a relatively free word-order transposition in Japanese. Nishigauchi (1986) argues that such a domain exists for LF WH-extraction. Fukui (1988), discussing extraction of *naze* 'why' in Japanese, takes a different view in that he claims that the island effect is weaker in Japanese than in other languages like

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\* This paper is a drastically revised version of papers I presented at International Symposium on Japanese Language Education (Jun. 2, 1989; Nanzan University, Nagoya, Japan) and at the 20th annual meeting of Northeastern Linguistic Society (Nov. 3, 1989; University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh). I am very grateful to Jun Abe, Yasuaki Abe, Molly Diesing, Naoki Fukui, Ryūji Harada, Nobuko Hasegawa, F. Roger Higgins, Yasuo Ishii, Yoshihisa Kitagawa, Angelika Kratzer, Ken'ichi Mihara, Yoichi Miyamoto, Tohru Noguchi, Yutaka Ohno, David Pesetsky, Bernadette Plunkett, Elisabeth Selkirk, Peggy Speas, Yoko Sugioka, Mari Takahashi, Shinobu Mizuguchi Tateishi, Ayumi Ueyama, Miyuki Yamashina, Tomoyuki Yoshida, John Whitman and Ellen Woolford, who gave me comments and suggestions to earlier versions of the paper. In case that I missed someone, I will thank all people who got in touch with me about this paper. Especially, I am most grateful to Yoshihisa Kitagawa and Angelika Kratzer, whose comments and suggestions contributed most in writing this revision. Remaining errors are, of course, all mine.

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English, due to the difference in the phrasal structure. One purpose of this paper is to answer "Yes," to this question, again, reconfirming the previous answers to the question.

In particular, a type of topic *wa*-phrase as exemplified in (1) is the main concern of the paper.

- (1) [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>DR</sub> [<sub>IP</sub> shinbun<sub>7</sub>o yomi-tai] hito-wa]] [<sub>IP</sub> <sub>x<sub>i</sub></sub> koko-ni aru]]  
 newspaper-OBJ read-want man-TOPIC here-LOC exist  
 "If somebody wants to read a newspaper, here is one."

There are some interesting semantic and functional properties of this construction. First, the *wa* (topic)-phrase is **not** the topic of the sentence as Kuroda (1986) pointed out. Sentence (1) is itself a statement about a **newspaper**, but not about people who want to read a newspaper, the referents of the phrase marked with a topic marker.

Second, the construction also has a half-vocative, half-conditional character as pointed out by Mikami (1960). The sentence addresses people, asks them whether they want to read a newspaper, and then provides information about the newspaper. In this sense, the construction is similar to certain uses of conditionals, illustrated in (2):

- (2) a. If you want to read a newspaper, you can get one from the newsstand.  
 b. If you are hungry, there's meat in the refrigerator.

These look like matrix phenomena. However, at least for some speakers, the construction of (1) can appear in an embedded context without any difficulty, showing that the phenomenon is a core phenomenon for these speakers.

- (3) Tarō-wa [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>DR</sub> [<sub>IP</sub> shinbun<sub>7</sub>o yomi-tai] hito-wa]] [<sub>IP</sub> <sub>x<sub>i</sub></sub> koko-ni aru] -to] shinji-ta.  
 Taro-TOPIC Hanako -TOPIC beautiful -COPULA -(Particle) -that believe-PAST  
 "Taro believed that there is a newspaper if somebody wants to read one."

Note that the complement of *shinjiru* 'believe' in (3) is **not** a case of direct discourse. Consider (4):

- (4) Tarō-wa [<sub>CP</sub> Hanako-wa bijin-da -yo -to]  
 Taro -TOPIC Hanako -TOPIC beautiful -COPULA -(Particle) -that
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| } | it -ta<br>say -PAST<br>*shinji -ta<br>believe -PAST |
|---|---|

The sentence-final particle *yo*, an assertion marker which appears in conversation, is available only in direct discourse. Yet (4) shows that it is not acceptable in the complement of *shinjiru*

'believe'. Given this, we can say that *shinjiru* 'believe' does not take a direct discourse. The fact that (3) seems to be acceptable, then, shows that the conditional topic is embeddable.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Syntactic Properties of the Construction

Let me introduce some syntactic properties of the conditional topic construction which are crucial in determining the syntactic position of the conditional topic phrase.

#### 1.1. No Nominative Alternative

There is no nominative alternative to the conditional topic, as Kuroda (1986) points out. In the ordinary topic construction in Japanese whose topic corresponds to the external argument of a sentence without a topic, the external argument can also be realized with the nominative marker *ga* on the surface as in (5), though there is a slight difference in the functional reading.

- (5) Tarō-wa/ga hansamu-da.  
Taro-TOPIC/NOM good-looking-COPULA  
"Taro is good-looking."

On the other hand, such alternation is not possible with a conditional topic. (6) shows this fact.

- (6)\*[<sub>CR</sub>[<sub>DR</sub>[<sub>IP</sub> shinbun<sub>i</sub>o yomi-tai] hito -ga][<sub>IP</sub><sup>x</sup><sub>i</sub> koko-ni aru]  
-NOM  
"If somebody wants to read a newspaper, here is one."

This shows that the conditional topic is either an adjunct or is outside of the domain for nominative-marking, namely IP.

#### 1.2. Strict Peripherality

Second, nothing in the same clause can be to the left of the conditional topic. Consider (7). *Koko-ni* 'here' is scrambled to the left of the conditional topic, and the result is ungrammatical.

- (7) \* koko-ni<sub>j</sub> [<sub>CR</sub>[<sub>DR</sub>[<sub>IP</sub> shinbun<sub>i</sub>o yomi-tai] hito-wa][<sub>IP</sub><sup>x</sup><sub>i</sub> t<sub>j</sub> aru]  
"If somebody wants to read a newspaper, here is one."

Again, this is not the case with a normal topic, as we see in (8):

- (8) Tarō<sub>i</sub>o Hanako-wa t<sub>i</sub> seme-ta.  
Taro-OBJ Hanako-TOPIC blame-PAST  
"Hanako blamed Taro."

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<sup>1</sup> Let me emphasize again that there are variations among speakers concerning the judgement for (3), and I still am not sure if the pattern I describe in this paper is attested in the grammar of speakers who reject (3), which also is an interesting topic by itself.

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Here, you can scramble the object *Tarō-o* to the left of the topic *Hanako-wa*. The conditional topic must be in the absolute leftmost position of the sentence.

## 1.3. Unquestionability

Third, a sentence with a conditional topic cannot be questioned, either *wh* or *yes-no*. (9) and (10) respectively show *wh*-questioned and *yes-no* questioned conditional topic sentences. (9)a is a *wh*-question counterpart of (1), our original sentence, which asks where we can find a newspaper, and (10)a is a *yes-no* question counterpart of (1).

## (9) Wh-Question

a.\*[<sub>CR</sub><sub>DR</sub><sub>IP</sub>Shinbun<sub>7</sub>-o yomi-tai] hito-wa][<sub>IP</sub>x<sub>i</sub> doko-ni aru]]?  
where

"If somebody wants to read a newspaper, where can he/she find one?"

b.\*[<sub>CR</sub><sub>DR</sub><sub>IP</sub>Onaka-ga sui-ta] hito-wa][<sub>IP</sub>reizōko-ni  
stomach-NOM empty-PAST people-TOPIC refrigerator-LOC

nani-ga aru]]?

what-NOM exist

"If somebody is hungry, what is in the refrigerator?"

## (10) Yes-No Question

a.\*[<sub>CR</sub><sub>DR</sub><sub>IP</sub>Shinbun<sub>7</sub>-o yomi-tai] hito-wa][<sub>IP</sub>x<sub>i</sub> koko-ni ari -masu-ka?]]  
-POLITE-Q

"If somebody wants to read a newspaper, is there any here?"

b.\*[<sub>CR</sub><sub>DR</sub><sub>IP</sub>Onaka-ga sui-ta] hito-wa][<sub>IP</sub>reizōko-ni tabemono-wa ari-masu-ka?]]  
food-TOPIC

"If somebody is hungry, is there any food in the refrigerator?"

All these sentences are ungrammatical.

One might wonder whether the unacceptability of (9)a is due to the Superiority Effect or ECP, because there is a variable-like element  $x_i$  which *c*-commands a *wh*-phrase *doko* 'where' but is coindexed with it. However, in (9)b, the *wh*-question is ungrammatical even though there is no 'variable' in the main clause. This shows that the ungrammaticality is not due to the Superiority Effect. The *yes-no* questions in (10) show the same pattern as (9)b in that the Superiority account is impossible.

Again, the normal topic does not block questions. The sentences in (11) are perfect Japanese sentences.

## (11) Normal Topic

a. Tarō-wa nani-o tabe-ta-no?  
Taro-TOPIC what-OBJ eat-PAST-Q

"What did Taro eat?"

b. Tarō-wa ringo-o tabe-ta-no?  
apple

"Did Taro eat an apple?"

Interestingly, true conditional counterparts of (9) and (10), (12) and (13) respectively, do not block questions.

## (12) Wh-Question

- a. [<sub>CR</sub>[<sub>XP</sub> **Moshi**[<sub>IP</sub>shinbun<sub>Γ</sub>o yomi-takere]-ba][<sub>IP</sub>x<sub>i</sub> doko-ni aru]]?  
 if -PAST-COND  
 "If somebody wants to read a newspaper, where can he/she find one?"
- b. [<sub>CR</sub>[<sub>XP</sub> **Moshi**[<sub>IP</sub>onaka-ga sui-ta] -ra][<sub>IP</sub>reizōko-ni nani-ga aru]]?  
 -COND  
 "If somebody is hungry, what is in the refrigerator?"

## (13) Yes-No Question

- a. [<sub>CR</sub>[<sub>XP</sub> **Moshi**[<sub>IP</sub>shinbun<sub>Γ</sub>o yomi-takere]-ba][<sub>IP</sub>x<sub>i</sub> koko-ni ari-masu-ka?]]  
 "If somebody wants to read a newspaper, is there any here?"
- b. [<sub>CR</sub>[<sub>XP</sub> **Moshi**[<sub>IP</sub>onaka-ga sui-ta]-ra][<sub>IP</sub>reizōko-ni tabemono-wa ari-masu-ka?]]  
 "If somebody is hungry, is there any food in the refrigerator?"

The only difference here is that we express a conditional sense with the conditional topic in (9) and (10) but with *moshi* 'if' and the conditional suffix *-ba* or *-ra* in (12) and (13). Let us assume that (12) and (13) are real cases of conditionals in Japanese and that they involve an adjunct conditional clause. Then, these facts show that the conditional topic blocks LF Wh-Movement, unlike normal topic, assuming that *ka* 'whether' in yes-no question also undergoes Wh-Movement at LF. They also show that the conditional topic is minimally different from adjuncts, like true conditionals.

Finally, let me note the fact that the normal topic can also have the conditional sense as originally pointed out by Kuroda (1965).<sup>2</sup> Consider (14):

- (14) [<sub>IP</sub>[<sub>DR</sub>[<sub>IP</sub>x<sub>i</sub> Basu-ni noru] hito<sub>Γ</sub>-wa] kippu-o katte-kudasai]  
 bus-LOC get on people-TOPIC ticket-OBJ buy-please  
 "If you will get on the bus, please buy a ticket."

It is certainly possible to have a conditional/vocative flavor with this type of sentence as I indicate in the English translation, but it fails the three syntactic tests shown in this paper.

## (15) Wa/Ga-Alternation

- [<sub>IP</sub>[<sub>DR</sub>[<sub>IP</sub>x<sub>i</sub> Basu-ni noru] hito<sub>Γ</sub>-ga] kippu-o katte-kudasai]  
 bus-LOC get on people-NOM ticket-OBJ buy-please  
 "If you will get on the bus, please buy a ticket."

## (16) Scrambling

- [<sub>IP</sub> kippu<sub>Γ</sub>o [<sub>DR</sub>[<sub>IP</sub>x<sub>i</sub> Basu-ni noru] hito<sub>Γ</sub>-wa] t<sub>j</sub> katte-kudasai]  
 ticket-OBJ bus-LOC get on people-TOPIC buy-please  
 "If you will get on the bus, please buy a ticket."

## (17) Questionability

- a. [<sub>IP</sub>[<sub>DR</sub>[<sub>IP</sub>x<sub>i</sub> Basu-ni noru] hito<sub>Γ</sub>-wa] nani-o kau-no-desu-ka?  
 bus-LOC get on people-TOPIC what-OBJ buy-(Nominalizer)-  
 COPULA-Q  
 "If we will get on the bus, what should we buy?"

<sup>2</sup> Recently, Tonoike (1989) develops a theory of Japanese topic based on this fact.

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b. [<sub>IP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> [<sub>IP</sub> Basu-ni noru] hito<sub>i</sub>-wa] kippu-o kau-no]?  
 bus-LOC get on people-TOPIC ticket-OBJ buy-Q  
 "If we will get on the bus, should we buy a ticket?"

Why are there such differences? It seems that the only difference between the two constructions, the real conditional topic and this construction, is that the topic is  $\theta$ -marked in (14)-(17), while in the real conditional topic construction the 'topic' is not only non- $\theta$ -marked, but also it does not even hold an 'aboutness' relation which sometimes licenses the topic in Japanese. As I mentioned earlier, a sentence with the conditional topic is not a sentence about the conditional topic itself, but about something inside or inherently related to the conditional topic. If so, one way to make the distinction would be to say that in the normal topic construction the topic is generated under SPEC(IP) or whatever position is generally recognized as the position for the subject. Then, everything follows, because SPEC(IP) is inside the nominative case-marking domain and is not the leftmost position in a clause, if we allow adjunction to IP. In examining the nature of the conditional topic construction, we have to be careful enough to eliminate the case which can be analyzed as the normal topic.

In summary, there are three major syntactic properties which distinguish the conditional topic construction. First, there is no nominative alternative to the construction.<sup>3</sup> Second, the conditional topic must be at the absolute leftmost position of the clause. Third, we cannot question anything in this construction. These properties are not shared by the normal topic in Japanese and the true conditional clause in Japanese, which are the closest relatives of this peculiar construction in Japanese.

## 2. Analysis

Given these facts, I will analyze the syntax of the conditional topic as follows: The conditional *wa*-phrase is in a position which can potentially create a syntactic island, i.e. SPEC(CP). I have in mind the structure in Figure 1.

As a consequence, we can account for the facts about the three syntactic tests quite naturally. First, the nominative alternative is not available because SPEC(CP) is outside of the domain of nominative marking in Japanese, IP.<sup>4</sup> Second, note that SPEC(CP) is the absolute leftmost position in a clause, if we assume that there is no adjunction to CP, basically following Chomsky (1986). From this, we can explain the facts about the two other syntactic tests. The Scrambling to the left of the conditional topic is impossible because nothing can adjoin to SPEC(CP), as you can see in Figure 2. Wh-Movement of any sort is impossible as well, because with the conditional topic phrase in SPEC(CP), a wh-phrase cannot move to SPEC(CP), nor can it be absorbed into a non-wh-phrase in SPEC(CP), the conditional topic. This is also represented in Figure 2. The conditional topic creates an island. Moreover, even if there is no Wh-Movement involved in yes-no questions, the ungrammaticality of the conditional topic in yes-no questions can be accounted for. Having a [+WH] COMP requires

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<sup>3</sup> Kuroda (1986) actually pointed out another property of the construction, i.e., we cannot relativize the conditional topic in a relative clause construction. This also is a peculiarity in this construction which is not shared by the normal topic or subject.

<sup>4</sup> See Takezawa (1987) for example for arguments for nominative being marked inside IP.

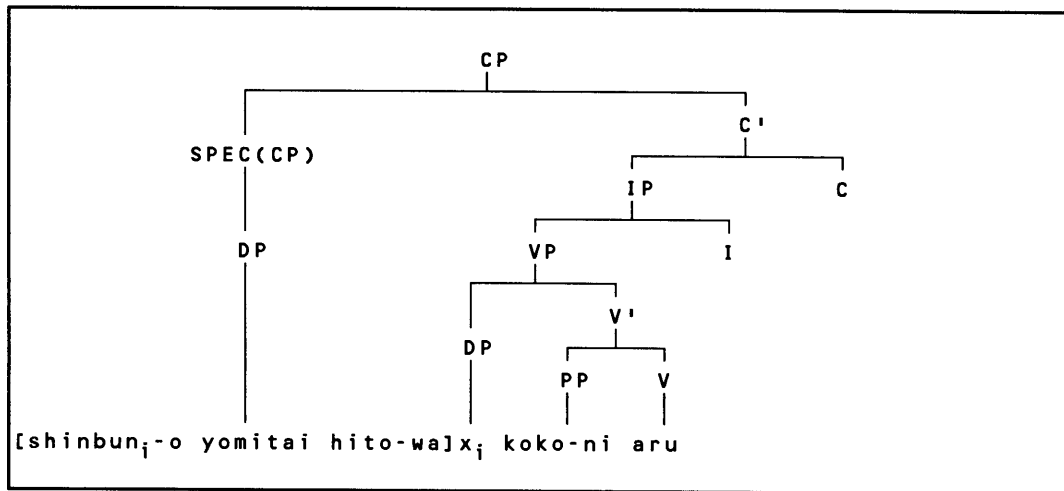


Figure 1: The Structure of the Conditional Topic Construction

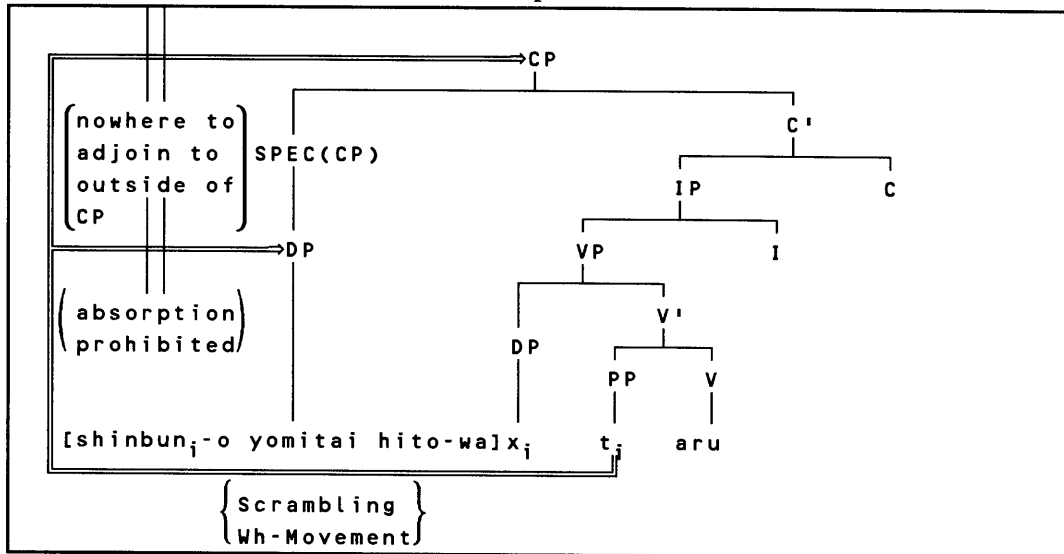


Figure 2: Scrambling and the Conditional Topic Construction

that everything in the projection of C except for the complement IP is [+WH]. Therefore, the conditional topic, which is [-WH], cannot appear in SPEC(CP) in questions in the first place. (David Pesetsky (personal communication)) Finally, by generating the conditional topic in SPEC(CP), we can minimally distinguish it from real adjuncts like true conditionals, which allow Wh in the main clause. Adjuncts do not block Wh-Movement into SPEC (CP).

Let me present one fact (Tohru Noguchi (personal communication)) that validates the analysis presented in this paper. The conditional topic can be postposed to the **end** of the sentence, just like the normal topic. (18) shows the fact:

- (18) a.  $[_{IP}x_i \text{ koko-ni ari-masu-yo}]$ ,  $[_{DP}[_{IP}\text{shinbun}_i\text{-o yomi-tai}] \text{ hito-wa}]$ .  
 "Here is a newspaper, for all who want to read one."  
 b.  $[_{IP} \text{ bijin-desu-yo}]$ ,  $[_{DP} \text{ Hanako-san-wa}]$ .  
 beautiful-COPULA-(Particle) Hanako-Mr./Ms.-TOPIC  
 "She is beautiful, I mean, Hanako."



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As I have shown earlier, the conditional topic cannot come in the middle of the sentence, i.e. the prohibition against Scrambling in the conditional topic construction. Interestingly, questioning is possible if the conditional topic is postposed.

- (19) a. [IP  $x_i$  **doko-ni** ari-masu -**ka**], [DR<sub>I</sub>shinbun<sub>I</sub>-o yomi-tai] hito-wa]?  
 where-LOC -Q  
 "Where is a newspaper, if somebody wants to read one?"  
 b. [IP  $x_i$  koko-ni ari-masu -**ka**], [DR<sub>I</sub>shinbun<sub>I</sub>-o yomi-tai] hito-wa]?  
 -Q  
 "Is there a newspaper here, if somebody wants to read one?"

Whether this postposing of the topic is a real case of extraposition or a case of a parenthetical expression, this fact at least shows that the prohibition against the Wh-Movement in the conditional topic construction is not semantic or pragmatic. Postposed or not, the conditional topic functions in either a vocative or a conditional sense. For example, we can imagine ourselves using the sentence in a context where, in a gathering of large number of people in the same room, we address people who want to read newspapers, and say, "OK, those who need

a newspaper, let me make sure again.  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Here is the thing you want.} \\ \text{Where were newspapers?} \end{array} \right\}$  " Whether we

question or not, the conditional topic in such a case involves a vocative-conditional sense of the same sort. However, the questioning is only possible with the postposed version. This means that what we see here is truly syntactic, because a pair of sentences with the same semantic and pragmatic content differ in grammaticality depending on the order of elements inside the sentences which consist of the same elements.

Now that we have an account of the syntactic facts as described in this section, let me move to another topic in the next section, the nature of the empty category which the conditional topic construction may introduce in the main clause.

### 3. The Nature of an Empty Element in the Main Clause<sup>5</sup>

Let me discuss another issue pertaining to the conditional topic construction. Consider our original sentence (1) again, which is repeated here as (20).

- (20) [C<sub>I</sub>[DR<sub>I</sub>shinbun<sub>I</sub>-o yomi-tai] hito-wa][IP  $x_i$  koko-ni aru]  
 newspaper-OBJ read-want man-TOPIC here-LOC exist  
 "If somebody wants to read a newspaper, here is one."

As I mentioned earlier in this paper, there is an empty element  $x_i$  in the main clause which is coindexed with *shinbun<sub>I</sub>* inside the conditional topic. It seems that  $x_i$  must be empty, as shown in (21):

<sup>5</sup> The content of this section was drastically revised from the original presentations. Thanks go to Ryûji Harada, Yoshihisa Kitagawa, Angelika Kratzer, and Shinobu Mizuguchi Tateishi, who gave me invaluable suggestions to the original paper. Although I will not indicate "(personal communication)" in the main text each time, this section is actually the result of suggestions from them most of which I accept as being correct.

- (21)  $[_{CP}[_{DP}[_{IP} \text{Shinbun}_i\text{-o yomi -tai}]] \text{hito -wa}] [_{IP} \left. \begin{array}{c} x_i \\ *shinbun_i\text{-wa} \\ \text{newspaper -TOPIC} \\ *sore\text{-wa} \\ \text{that -TOPIC} \end{array} \right\} \text{koko -ni aru}]$

After considering facts in (21), it appears that the construction requires an empty variable. This section investigates on whether this empty element is really a variable.

At first look,  $x_i$  appears to be a real variable. First, the emptiness requirement is also attested in the parasitic gap construction in Japanese, as Nishigauchi (1986) points out about the Wh-construction.

- (22)  $[_{CP}[_{IP} \text{Mitsuko -wa dono hon}_i\text{-o} [_{PR}[_{NP}[_{IP} \left. \begin{array}{c} x_i \\ *sore\text{-o} \\ \text{that -OBJ} \end{array} \right\} \text{yomu}]] \text{mae}]] \text{-ni} \text{sute -ta}]] \text{-no}]?$   
 Mitsuko -TOPIC which book -OBJ read before -LOC discard -PAST -Q  
 "Which book did Mitsuko throw away before reading?"

Second, there appears to be asymmetry among arguments on the distribution of 'variables'. If the variable is in the subject position of an unaccusative predicate as we have already seen in (1) or in the object position, the result seems to be grammatical.

- (23)  $[_{CP}[_{DP}[_{IP} \text{Hanako-san}_i\text{-ni ai-tai}]] \text{hito-wa}] [_{IP} x_i \text{ato-de}]]$   
 Hanako-Mr./Ms.-DAT meet-want people-TOPIC I-NOM  
 tsutae-te-oki-masu.]]  
 tell-and-place-POLITE  
 "If somebody wants to meet Hanako, I will tell her about that."

On the other hand, if the variable is an agent or the subject of an individual-level predicate in the sense of Carlson (1977), Diesing (1988) and Kratzer (1988), then the conditional topic is not acceptable.

- (24)  $*[_{CP}[_{DP}[_{IP} \text{Hanako-san}_i\text{-ni ai-tai}]] \text{hito-wa}] [_{IP} x_i \text{ato-de}]]$   
 Hanako-Mr./Ms.-DAT meet-want people-TOPIC later-LOC  
 renraku-suru-soo-desu.]]  
 communication-do-I hear-COPULA  
 "If somebody wants to meet Hanako, she will tell you when to meet later."

- (25)\*\*\* $[_{CP}[_{DP}[_{IP} \text{Hanako-san}_i\text{-ni ai-tai}]] \text{hito-wa}] [_{IP} x_i \text{kimuzukashii-desu-yo}]]$   
 difficult-ASSERT-(Particle)  
 "If somebody wants to meet Hanako, (let me tell you) she is difficult."

If we accept these facts at their surface value, and if we follow theories of asymmetries among subjects which distinguish between VP-internal and VP-external subjects as proposed by Diesing (1988, 1989), Miyagawa (1988), Takahashi (1989), Tateishi (1989), Terada (1987) among others, then we might say that  $x_i$  is indeed a variable, and the asymmetries in the distribution of a variable are due to the principle of asymmetry among positions like ECP.

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However, assuming a variable in the conditional topic construction has several problems. First, a variable is not a necessary element in the construction. I already cited an example without a 'variable', which is repeated here:

- (26) [CP[DP[IP Onaka-ga sui-ta] hito-wa][IP reizōko-ni  
 stomach-NOM empty-PAST people-TOPIC refrigerator-LOC  
 niku-ga aru]]  
 meat-NOM exist  
 "If somebody is hungry, there's meat in the refrigerator."

Moreover,  $x_i$  could be something overt which denotes a subclass of the element in the conditional topic.

- (27) [CP[DP[IP shinbun<sub>i</sub>o yomi-tai] hito-wa] [IP koko-ni Yomiuri<sub>j</sub>ga  
 newspaper-OBJ read-want man-TOPIC here-LOC Yomiuri-NOM  
 aru]]  
 exist  
 "If somebody wants to read a newspaper, here is *Yomiuri* (= one of Japanese nationwide papers)."

Semantically, the coindexed element in the main clause (a **newspaper** in this case) cannot be a definite expression referring to some specific newspaper, but the sentence is telling just that here is a newspaper if somebody wants to read one. Using *shinbun<sub>i</sub>* or *sore<sub>i</sub>* in place  $x_i$  changes a newspaper into the newspaper. We speak of a specific newspaper, e.g. the *New York Times* on Jan. 1, 1989, meaning, "If you want to read a newspaper (on such and such day, etc.), it is here." So, it seems that the real restriction is that the coindexed elements cannot be coreferential.

If this is true, then the characterization of a 'variable' in the conditional topic construction does not look like a variable. First, the conditional topic is not an operator which obligatorily introduces a variable. Rather, what it does is restrict the following discourse.<sup>6</sup> Second, the semantic nature of this 'variable' is not that of a real variable. As I indicated in the English translation of the sentences, the best translation for the 'variable' in the conditional topic construction is *one* rather than typical realizations of English bound variables like *it*. It seems that the conclusion we can draw from all of this is that  $x_i$  in the conditional topic construction is not a real variable, but it is a pronominal element which corresponds to English *one* whose realization in Japanese happens to be empty.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See Diesing (1988), Heim (1982), Kratzer (1988) among others for the syntactic and semantic nature of the restrictor. See also Mizuguchi (1989) for the nature of the restrictor in Japanese, including the conditional topic construction.

<sup>7</sup> Still, there is a problem. The conditional topic construction is acceptable even if the element in the conditional topic coindexed with another element in the main clause is a proper noun.

- (i) [CP[DP[IP Ken<sub>i</sub>-ni ai-tai] hito-wa]  $x_i$  koko-ni iru.]  
 Ken-DAT meet-want people here-LOC exist  
 "If somebody wants to meet Ken, he is here."

(continued...)

## SYNTAX OF THE CONDITIONAL TOPIC CONSTRUCTION IN JAPANESE

This analysis is further supported by the fact that, aside from the case of a parasitic gap which in any case requires emptiness, the real case of an indirectly bound variable in Japanese, the so-called 'Japanese donkey construction' as discussed by Nishigauchi (1986), allows an overt variable *sore* 'that' which roughly corresponds to English *it*, with some semantic conditions on the use of *sore* which are yet to be identified.

- (28)  $[_{IP}[_{OR}[_{IP} y_j \text{ dono hon}_i\text{-o katte}]\text{-mo}] \text{ Nozomi}_j\text{-wa}$   $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} x_i \\ \text{sore}_i\text{-o} \\ \text{that -OBJ} \end{array} \right\}$  yomu.  
 which book -OBJ buy -even Nozomi -TOPIC read

"Whichever book she buys, Nozomi reads it."

It seems that the 'variable' in the conditional topic construction is different from a real variable in its syntactic behavior as well.

Now, we are left with our final problem. Why is there asymmetry in the distribution of this 'variable'? I will repeat relevant examples in the following:

## (29) Unaccusative

- $[_{CH}[_{DR}[_{IP} \text{shinbun}_i\text{-o yomi-tai}] \text{ hito-wa}]]_{IP} x_i \text{ koko-ni aru}]$   
 newspaper-OBJ read-want man-TOPIC here-LOC exist

"If somebody wants to read a newspaper, here is one."

## (30) Object

- $[_{CH}[_{DR}[_{IP} \text{Hanako-san}_i\text{-ni ai-tai}] \text{ hito-wa}]]_{IP} \text{watashi-ga } x_i$   
 Hanako-Mr./Ms.-DAT meet-want people-TOPIC I-NOM  
 tsutae-te-oki-masu.]]  
 tell-and-place-POLITE

"If somebody wants to meet Hanako, I will tell her about that."

## (31) Agent

- \* $[_{CH}[_{DR}[_{IP} \text{Hanako-san}_i\text{-ni ai-tai}] \text{ hito-wa}]]_{IP} x_i \text{ ato-de}$   
 Hanako-Mr./Ms.-DAT meet-want people-TOPIC later-LOC  
 renraku-suru-soo-desu.]  
 communication-do-I hear-COPULA

"If somebody wants to meet Hanako, she will tell you when to meet later."

## (32) Individual-Level

- \*\*\* $[_{CH}[_{DR}[_{IP} \text{Hanako-san}_i\text{-ni ai-tai}] \text{ hito-wa}]]_{IP} x_i \text{ kimuzukashii-desu-yo}]$   
 difficult-ASSERT-(Particle)

"If somebody wants to meet Hanako, (let me tell you) she is difficult."

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<sup>7</sup> (...continued)

Here, we cannot use the one analogy. The two elements are coreferential, which is only allowed in the case of a proper noun. Probably, it is due to the fact that there is no non-specific *Ken* in the first place, but I have to leave this issue for the future research.

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If  $x_i$  is not a variable, we should not expect any asymmetry at all.

The fact, however, seems to be that this asymmetry is only a pseudo-phenomenon. (31) and (32) are ungrammatical even if we do **not** use the conditional topic.

- (33)\*<sub>[CP Moshi]<sub>[IP Hanako-san<sub>i</sub>ni ai-takere]-ba]<sub>[IP x<sub>i</sub> ato-de</sub>  
 if Hanako-Mr./Ms.-DAT meet-want-COND later-LOC  
 renraku-suru-soo-desu.]  
 communication-do-I hear-COPULA  
 "If somebody wants to meet Hanako, she will tell you when to meet later."</sub></sub>

- (34) Individual-Level  
 \*\*\*<sub>[CP Moshi]<sub>[IP Hanako-san<sub>i</sub>ni ai-takere] -ba]<sub>[IP x<sub>i</sub> kimuzukashii-desu-yo]]</sub>  
 if -COND difficult-ASSERT-(Particle)  
 "If somebody wants to meet Hanako, (let me tell you) she is difficult."</sub></sub>

It seems that the two clauses are not relevant enough to construct a well-formed conditional clause in Japanese in the first place. For example, a fully overt version of (33) is still very odd.

- (35)\*<sub>[CP Moshi]<sub>[IP Hanako-san<sub>i</sub>ni ai-takere]-ba]<sub>[IP kanojo<sub>i</sub>ga</sub>  
 if Hanako-Mr./Ms.-DAT meet-want-COND she-NOM  
 ato-de renraku-suru-soo-desu.]  
 later-LOC communication-do-I hear-COPULA  
 "If somebody wants to meet Hanako, she will tell you when to meet later."</sub></sub>

Moreover, in the case of (34), the *one* reading which seems to be required in the conditional topic construction is impossible for an independent reason. With an individual-level predicate like *kimuzukashii* in the present tense, it is almost impossible to have a reading "There is  $x$  which is hard to read." whatever the subject is. What seems to be happening is a conflict between *one*, which requires an existential closure, and an individual-level predicate. It turns out that an apparent asymmetry is not a real case of asymmetry.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that one type of *wa*-phrase in Japanese, namely the conditional topic, is generated under SPEC(CP) based on several syntactic reasons. In particular, I argued for the island-creating character of the construction, by contrasting it with the normal topic and the true conditional construction. I also argued that a seemingly variable-like element in the conditional topic construction is not a variable at all, but is something corresponding to English *one*. There are several issues related to this topic which I have left open in this paper. They include:

- A more accurate semantic characterization of the conditional topic construction
- The relation between the theory presented here and the theory of topics in Japanese in general
- A comparative study of various kinds of subjects in Japanese

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, the fact that there is no asymmetry in the conditional topic construction is independent of the issue of whether there is asymmetry among subjects in Japanese in general.

However, these issues must be left for the future investigation.

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