

The Speaker's Presupposition and Conditional Sentences*

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Semantic notions, as well as syntactic rules, must be taken into account to explain grammatical phenomena. This paper presents evidence that one such notion, the speaker's presupposition about the realization of the protasis, is a key to capturing the correct generalizations of conditional sentences.

0. Introduction

Robin Lakoff (1969) claims that the speaker's attitude—positive or negative—comes into play in the choice between *some* and *any* in certain types of conditional sentences.¹

McGloin (1976–77), discussing Japanese conditionals, also argues that the speaker's attitude determines the distribution of *to*, *tara* and *ba*.

This paper is concerned with English and Japanese conditional sentences. Section 1 will first review R. Lakoff's analysis and make the claim that the present analysis, based on the speaker's presupposition, can more adequately account for the usage of *some* and *any*. Section 2 deals with McGloin's analysis and shows that the analysis proposed in Section 1 also functions in explaining the use of Japanese conditionals.

In the course of the discussion it will become apparent that the fact of whether the speaker presupposes that the condition will exist or not is important.

1. Usage of *some* and *any* in conditional sentences

1. 1. Robin Lakoff (1969)'s analysis

R. Lakoff (1969) discusses that the choice between *some* and *any* is dictated by the speaker's attitude in certain types of conditional sentences.

Her claim is that *some* involves a positive feeling on the speaker's side, while *any*, a negative attitude in such sentences.

She gives the following examples and then explains the differences of the two sentences in each pair.

- (1) a. If you eat some candy, I'll whip you.
- b. If you eat any candy, I'll whip you.
- (2) a. If you eat some spinach, I'll give you ten dollars.
- b. If you eat any spinach, I'll give you ten dollars.

In (1), the first sentence is strange in a normal situation. With *some* indicating a positive feeling in the first clause (S_1), the speaker wants the hearer to eat the candy. But the second clause (S_2), 'I'll whip you', is normally interpreted as a 'warning'. The only possible interpretation might be that it is spoken to a person who wants to be whipped.

The second sentence with *any* is much more normal. *Any* conveys a negative feeling: the speaker does not want the addressee to eat the candy. Thus S_1 and S_2 , which is a 'warning', match up naturally and correctly with each other.

In (2), on the contrary, the first sentence is more normal. By using *some*, the speaker wants the hearer to eat the spinach. He assumes that the addressee will want ten dollars as most people would and promises it as a 'reward'.

As for the second sentence, however, we can't easily imagine a case where the speaker does not want the hearer to eat the spinach and thus gives a 'warning' that he will give ten dollars as a 'punishment'. It comes to the fact that it is spoken to a person who thinks of receiving money not as a 'reward' but as a 'punishment'.

She gives (3a) and (3b) to support her analysis.

- (3) a. I warn you that, if you eat $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{any} \\ * \text{some} \end{array} \right\}$ candy, I'll whip you.
- (3) b. I promise you that, if you eat $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{some} \\ * \text{any} \end{array} \right\}$ candy, I'll give you ten dollars.

Unlike (1) and (2), in (3) only the first member in each pair is grammatical. She claims that (3a) and (3b) convey the same meaning as (1) and (2) respectively. The grammatical sentences correspond to the normal interpretations of (1) and (2). This means that the main verbs of (3), *warn* and *promise*, make the positive and negative nature of *some* and *any* more conspicuous.

She concludes that the types of sentences which have been discussed are 'threats' or 'promises' rather than mere conditionals in meaning. The speaker's attitude comes into play. A negative 'threat' goes with *any* because the

speaker threatens someone else to prevent an undesired action; a positive 'promise', with *some*, because the speaker promises someone else a reward for doing a desired action.

1. 2. Proposed analysis

Here I will show that another point of view can also explain the use of *some* and *any*. The important point is whether the speaker presupposes that the condition expressed in S_1 will exist or not in the end. Whether the speaker predicts the final occurrence of the action or existence of the state expressed in S_1 determines the choice between *some* and *any*.

R. Lakoff's explanation is that (1) is a 'threat' implying a negative feeling, which makes the speaker choose *any*, while (2) is a 'promise' involving a positive attitude, which leads to the use of *some*.

But if we look at these from another angle, we can say that the speaker in (1) is thinking of the possibility that the addressee will not eat the candy as a result of his utterance, or in some cases he is sure of it. In his mind is an idea that such a situation will not exist after all. We can say that the future final existence of the condition is not presupposed in (1), which leads to the choice of *any* rather than *some*.

In (2), on the other hand, the speaker, so long as he promises a 'reward', is predicting that the hearer will or may eat the spinach at some time or other in the near future after all.² He presupposes that the condition will exist in the future, in which case *some* is chosen.

The point to be emphasized here is that the choice between *some* and *any* depends not upon the speaker's negative or positive attitude, such as a 'threat' or a 'promise', but upon the speaker's presupposition about the future final fulfillment of the condition.

R. Lakoff, in the following example, further argues that the *if only* construction is used only when the speaker's attitude is positive — he wishes or hopes that the situation expressed in S_1 will be or had been true, which means that only *some* is always suitable in this construction.³

(4) If $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{someone} \\ \text{*anyone} \end{array} \right\}$ would explain the theory of relativity to me,

I could pass the test easily.

The S_1 of this sentence expresses a hypothetical condition, which means that the speaker knows that the condition will not be fulfilled after all.⁴ And the fact that he expressly wishes such a condition means that in his mind is a situation where his wish is realized. It follows that in his consciousness the speaker presupposes that the condition would exist after all, although he knows it will not. Thus *some* is used.

1. 3. R. Lakoff's vs. proposed analysis: criticism of R. Lakoff's analysis

In this subsection I will show that the proposed analysis explains not only the conditional sentences discussed above but also other types of sentences which R. Lakoff's analysis cannot handle. It will be shown that the proposed analysis can explain the use of *some* and *any* in interrogative sentences also.

The sentences so far can be accounted for by both R. Lakoff's and the proposed analyses. But now consider the following sentences from Bolinger (1977).⁵

- (5) a. I warn you that if you do something like that I'll whip you.
- b. I promise you that if you do anything bad I'll come to your rescue.

Compare (5) with (3). These sentences are grammatical although there is a negative main verb *warn* and a positive *promise*. It follows that the presence of these verbs, which R. Lakoff claims emphasize a positive and negative attitude, has nothing to do with the choice between *some* and *any*. It means that R. Lakoff's analysis cannot explain these sentences.

The proposed analysis states that in (5a) the condition is presupposed, which means that the speaker is thinking that the hearer will surely do the forbidden action after all, while in (5b) the condition is not presupposed, which means that the speaker predicts that the addressee will not do a bad action. This explanation correctly matches up with the natural interpretations of these sentences. It is the speaker's prediction of the final fulfillment of the condition which chooses *some* or *any*.

Now consider further the following conditional sentences in which *some* or *any* appears:

- (6) a. If you need some money, let me know.
- b. If you need any money, let me know.

There is, of course, a difference in meaning. When uttering the first sentence, the speaker is thinking that the hearer may now or will need the money in the near future after all. While in (2) the speaker does not or cannot easily think of such a case.

These normal interpretations correctly match up with the proposed analysis that the condition expressed by S_1 with *some* is presupposed, while that expressed by S_1 with *any* is not. The following two pairs of sentences will illustrate this.

(7) a. I hear your father's company has gone bankrupt. If you need

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{some} \\ *any \end{array} \right\}$ money, let me know.

b. I hear you've won one million yen in the public lottery. If you need

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} any \\ *some \end{array} \right\}$ money, let me know.

R. Lakoff explains these sentences by saying that the sentence with *any*, having a negative force, expresses the speaker's 'threat', while the sentence with *some*, having a positive force, expresses his 'promise' or 'hope'. But the sentences in (7) do not seem to express such a positive or negative attitude on the part of the speaker. The choice of *some* or *any* here is made purely by the speaker's presupposition about the final realization of the condition expressed by S_1 as in the preceding examples.

It follows that the proposed analysis in this paper can explain both types of sentences which include the speaker's attitude and those which do not. On the other hand, R. Lakoff's analysis needs a separate explanation for each type.

This idea also accounts for the difference of the situation in which *some* or *any* is used, for example, in a chemistry class. The teacher, explaining the chemical reaction of hydrochloric acid and water, will utter (8a). On the other hand, (8b) will be used when he warns the students to be careful in the experiment using the hydrochloric acid.

(8) a. If you drop some water into the hydrochloric acid, it will explode.

b. If you drop any water into the hydrochloric acid, it will explode.

The *if* in the first sentence is very close to *when* in meaning, which means that the condition is presupposed. On the contrary, the second sentence does not presuppose the final occurrence of the action described in S_1 .

We will now turn to interrogative sentences and see how the proposed analysis explains the use of *some* and *any*. Consider (9) and (10):

(9) Are there any letters for me today?

(10) Won't you have some more tea?

The speaker in (9) does not know whether a letter for him has arrived or not.⁶ It means that the condition is not presupposed by him, which leads to the choice of *any*.

On the contrary, the speaker in (10) is inviting the hearer to have more tea, which means that he is thinking that the addressee wants and will have more tea. The condition is presupposed. Thus *some* is chosen.

Many linguists, including R. Lakoff, put emphasis on the addressee's answer in explaining the use of *some* and *any* in interrogative sentences: when the speaker assumes a 'yes' answer, *some* is used; when a negative answer is assumed, *any* is used. It follows that such an approach needs another explanation for the choice of the words in conditional sentences.

In this section we have seen that the analysis, which is based on the speaker's presupposition about the final fulfillment of the condition, captures the generalizations of the use of *some* and *any*, while R. Lakoff's is ad hoc. The proposed analysis explains the choice of the words in a wider range of sentences than her analysis.

2. Uses of the Japanese conditionals, *to*, *tara* and *ba*

2.1. McGloin's (1976–77)'s analysis

Interestingly, as in the use of *some* and *any*, McGloin (1976–77), discussing Japanese conditionals, argues that the use of *to*, *tara* and *ba* is partly governed by the speaker's attitude.⁷ Her claim is that *to* and *tara* can be used when the speaker's attitude toward the protasis is negative, while *ba* is used when the speaker wishes or hopes that the situation described in S_1 will be true — i. e., his attitude is positive. She also states that because of this *to* and *tara* are used in indicating a 'warning', while *ba*, to express an 'invitation'.

Now consider the sentences:

- (11) *garasu wa* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{otosu to} \\ \textit{otositara} \\ \textit{otoseba} \end{array} \right\}$ *wareru.*

‘If you drop glass, it will break.’

She claims that all these sentences are grammatical because these are taken to be a general and objective statement. The speaker is talking about the quality of glass—breaking (when dropped) is inherent to glass. The speaker’s attitude is neutral.

But, when the speaker’s attitude is negative, *to* and *tara* can be used, while *ba* cannot.

- (12) *Abunai!* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{Otosu to} \\ \textit{Otositara} \\ * \textit{Otoseba} \end{array} \right\}$ *wareru yo.*

‘Look! If you drop it, it will break.’

This utterance does not express a general and objective statement. It expresses a particular and subjective statement. Imagine that your little child is playing with a fragile glass vase and you see him about to drop it. Then you utter (12) as a ‘warning’ lest he should drop it. The speaker’s attitude is negative. This is also true of (13).

- (13) *Sonnani* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{isogu to} \\ \textit{isoidara} \\ * \textit{isogeba} \end{array} \right\}$ *korobu yo.*

‘If you hurry like that, you’ll fall down.’

On the contrary, she claims, when the speaker’s attitude is positive, *ba*, as well as *to* and *tara*, is used.

- (14) *Kono kusuri o* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{nomu to} \\ \textit{nondara} \\ \textit{nomeba} \end{array} \right\}$ *naoru yo.*

‘If you take this medicine, you will get better.’

All these sentences are grammatical and almost the same in meaning: the

speaker is recommending, at a particular moment, taking this medicine.⁸ But she still claims that *ba* most strongly implies a positive nuance, that of 'invitation': it says that 'if only a certain condition is met, then a desirable consequence will occur.'

2.2 Explanation by the proposed analysis

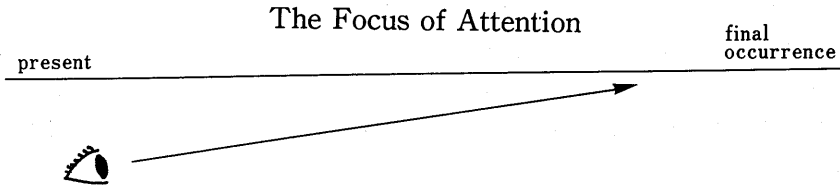
In Section 1 we have seen that the idea of the speaker's presupposition is important in determining the choice of *some* or *any*. Here I will show that the speaker's presupposition also comes into play in the choice of *to*, *tara* or *ba*, but in a different way. It will also be shown that there are sentences which McGloin's analysis cannot handle that the proposed analysis can.

McGloin's explanation of (12) is that this is a 'warning', which means that *ba* implying a positive nuance cannot be used.

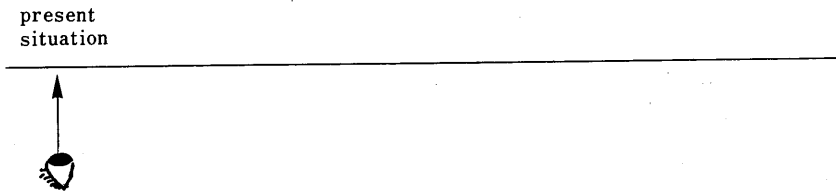
But here consider the nature of *ba*. Historically *ba* was *wa* and one meaning of *wa* was to emphasize one choice over the others. It means that *ba* implies an opposite alternative of the condition expressed by S_1 . When using *ba*, the speaker, in his mind, imagines an opposite case: he is thinking of the situation where the condition is not fulfilled, as well as the situation, where it is fulfilled. This nature of *ba* is a key to understanding why it cannot be used in (12) from the speaker's point of view.

But notice here the crucial difference between the speaker's presuppositions in English and Japanese. In English, as explained, the speaker's presupposition means that of the 'final' fulfillment of the condition: the fact that whether the speaker judges that the situation described in S_1 will 'finally' exist plays an important role. But in Japanese, this is not so. The Japanese presupposition concerns the 'likelihood' of the fulfillment of the condition. It is important whether the speaker predicts that the situation is likely to exist. The analysis of the present situation before his eyes is important. The judgement about whether the action in S_1 will occur in the end plays no role in the choice as in English. We can say that in English attention is focused on the future, while in Japanese it is focused on the present. The following figure will illustrate this.⁹

(15)



English presupposition



Japanese presupposition

Now remember in what situation (12) is used. As long as the speaker gives a 'warning', we can say that he is judging from the present situation before his eyes that the dropping of a vase is sure to occur, aside from the possibility of its final occurrence. He is not thinking about whether it will actually occur in the end: he is just describing, based on the scene before him, that there is a likelihood that the situation will exist. We can say that in this sense the condition is presupposed in (12). Who gives a warning to someone who is not likely to do the action?

But *ba*, as seen, implies an opposite alternative, which means that the speaker, when using *ba*, is thinking of the case where the condition will not be fulfilled, as well as where it is fulfilled. There are both possibilities. In this sense, *ba* does not presuppose the condition. It follows that *ba* cannot be used in (12), which expresses a 'warning'. This also holds true for (13).

On the other hand, *to* and *tara* do not have such a feature. *To* is said to presuppose the realization of the condition: when the speaker uses *to*, he is predicting or judging from the circumstances before him that the addressee is likely to do the action, not thinking about whether the situation will finally exist. In this sense, when using *to*, in the speaker's mind the condition is

presupposed.

Tara is concerned with temporal sequence: the *ta* of *tara* is, historically, the past tense suffix *ta*. It simply says that the action described in S_1 must be completed before that of S_2 . It is not concerned with the fulfillment of the condition. When the speaker uses *tara*, he doesn't consider whether the action in S_1 will occur or not.

Thus *to* and *tara* both can be used for expressing the condition which the speaker feels is sure to be fulfilled because of the fact that they do not imply the opposite case.¹⁰

Now let us see why *ba* can be used in (14). The speaker is recommending taking this medicine. The addressee may take it in the end or may not. But at the moment of the utterance, the speaker does not know whether that situation will exit or not. He is not thinking of the final occurrence of the action. It follows that in this sense the condition is not presupposed. Thus *ba*, which implies both the fulfillment and non-fulfillment of the condition can be used.

Of course, *to* and *tara* can also be used in (14). They do not imply the opposite case. The speaker recommends doing that action without thinking of the case in which the addressee will not do it.

By the way, there are fixed expressions which McGloin's analysis cannot handle.

- (16) *Ii ten o toru ni wa kono hon o* $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{yomu to} \\ \text{yondara} \\ \text{yomeba} \end{array} \right\} \textit{ii.}$

'If you want to get good marks, it is important [good] to read this book.'

Although McGloin's claim is that *ba* expresses a positive, and *to* and *tara* a negative attitude, this is not so, quite the reverse in (16). *Ba* implies a negative nuance: when using *ba*, the speaker implies that the hearer needs only that action and no further action.¹¹ On the contrary, *to* is used positively: the speaker recommends doing that action enthusiastically.¹²

In this section, first we have reviewed McGloin's analysis based on the speaker's attitude, which is similar to that of R. Lakoff. Then we have seen that the idea of the speaker's presupposition proposed in Section 1 also explains the use of the Japanese conditionals, *to*, *tara* and *ba*, although the meaning of the presupposition is different from that in English. When

presupposing whether the condition will exist or not, English puts emphasis on the final fulfillment of the condition, while Japanese, on its likelihood.

The proposed analysis for Japanese conditionals claims that when the condition is presupposed, *to* and *tara*, not *ba*, can be used, while if it is not presupposed, *ba* also can be used. We have also seen that there are fixed expressions which McGloin's analysis cannot explain.

3. Summary

In this paper I have made the following claims. First R. Lakoff's and McGloin's analyses, based on the speaker's attitude, positive or negative, fail to capture the important generalizations concerning conditional sentences, while the proposed analysis can. The proposed analysis claims that the speaker's presupposition about the fulfillment of the condition determines the choice of *some* or *any* in English and the choice of the conditionals, *to*, *tara* or *ba* in Japanese.

Second, what the speaker's presupposition means is different, rather the reverse between English and Japanese. In English it means whether the speaker judges that the condition finally exists, while in Japanese it means whether it is likely to exist. It is interesting to note that, in consequence, the English presupposed condition becomes an unpresupposed condition in Japanese and the English unpresupposed condition becomes a presupposed condition in Japanese. Semantic notions, including the speaker's presupposition discussed in this paper, seem to function in the language use.

Notes

*

I would like to thank Vance E. Johnson for stylistic suggestions.

1.

The *any* under consideration here in this paper is unstressed: it has the meaning, 'a given quantity'. The other *any* has heavy stress; it means 'any at all' and contrasts with *none*.

2.

Of course, there are cases where the speaker, knowing that the addressee will not do the particular action, promises a 'reward', in which case a hypothetical condition [a subjunctive form] is used. See footnote 4.

3.

Quirk, *et al.* (1972: 747) also states that the S_1 of this construction expresses the

speaker's 'hope'— what the speaker wishes had happened or would happen.

4.

The S_1 of the conditional sentence expresses two types of conditions, an open condition and a hypothetical condition. An open condition says nothing about the fulfillment of the condition; a hypothetical condition conveys the prediction of the non-fulfillment of the condition.

5.

R. Lakoff, giving the following sentences, states that these are different types of sentences from those of (1) and (2). She claims that here the speaker's 'belief' about the world is relevant to the choice of *some* or *any*.

(i) a. Unicorns are mythical beasts: if John sees some unicorns out there, I'll eat my hat.

b. Unicorns are mythical beasts: if John sees any unicorns out there, I'll eat my hat.

(ii) a. If John sees some goldfish in that tank, it's not surprising: there are lots of them in there.

b. If John sees any goldfish in that tank, it's not surprising: there are lots of them in there.

(In (i) the second sentence is a normal interpretation, while in (ii) the first sentence is.)

6.

Of course, there might be a case where the speaker presupposes that a letter has come and thus uses *some* instead of *any*.

7.

As for other factors which come into play in the choice of these words, see Alfonso (1966), Kuno (1973), Miyajima (1964) and others.

8.

Of course, (14) can be taken as a general and objective statement.

9.

Thus interestingly, it follows that the meaning of the speaker's presupposition is quite the reverse between English and Japanese. To make the point clear, let us consider the concrete examples, (1) and (2).

We have seen that in (1) the speaker of English, giving a 'warning', judges that the addressee will not eat the candy after all and that in this sense the

condition is not presupposed. But in the same situation, the speaker of Japanese will give a 'warning' from another, or rather opposite perspective that the action will surely occur, based on the addressee's present behavior. In this sense, the condition is presupposed in Japanese.

On the other hand, in (2) the speaker of English invites the addressee to eat the spinach and thinks that he will do so in the end: the condition is presupposed. But the speaker of Japanese, looking at the present situation, is not sure whether the action will occur: the condition is not presupposed.

10.

Because *tara* remains unresolved whether the condition will be fulfilled, it can be used both for the condition which is presupposed similar to *to* and for the condition which is not presupposed similar to *ba*.

11.

Here *tara* conveys almost the same meaning as *ba*.

12.

For details, see Miyajima (1964), Murayama (1985) and others.

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