

## ■ *Ba, To, Tara, and Nara*: Conditional

Conditional expresses the cause and effect relationship between one event and another event that is predicted to become the first event's result. The basic conditional forms are *ba*, *to*, *tara*, and *nara*. They form the following types of conditional sentences.

### ● Hypothetical Condition

The first group of conditional sentences expresses hypothetical conditions in which both the condition and the result are yet to be realized. All four forms may be used in this type.

(1) *Kusuri o nome ba, netsu wa sagaru darō* 'If you take the medicine, the fever will probably go down.'

(2) *Ano saka o noboru to, Fuji san ga miemasu yo* 'If you climb that slope, you'll see Mt. Fuji.'

(3) *Shigoto ga owattara, denwashimasu* 'Once I'm done with my work, I'll call you.'

(4) *Asu shigoto ga aru nara, kyō wa mō kaere* 'If you have work tomorrow, go home for the day.'

*Ba* is suitable for expressing the necessary condition for realizing the situation in the main clause, and it expresses that "if one does X, the situation in the main clause will be realized." Thus, *ba* cannot be used when the speaker tells the listener about an occurrence of an unwanted situation.

(5) \**Osake o nomisugire ba kanzō o warukusuru yo.*

*To* presents the situation where "If X occurs, Y inevitably occurs." *Tara* may also be used in (1) and (2). Generally, *tara* and *nara* are used when the main clause expresses command/request and volition/desire. *Ba* is also possible in this usage if the conditional clause has a stative predicate.

(6) *Kono hon, hoshikere ba, ageyō* 'If you want this book, I'll give it to you.'

(7) *Jikan ga nakere ba, asu kitekudasai* 'If you don't have time [now], please come tomorrow.'

*Ba* becomes *nara* in a nominal predicate sentence.

(8) *Asu ame nara, shiai wa chūshi da* 'If it rains tomorrow, the match will be canceled.'

Only *nara* can reverse the temporal relationship between the condition and result, as in (4). The *nara* conditional sentence does not convey what will happen if the condition is realized. Rather, it expresses the speaker's judgment/evaluation/attitude toward the situation that s/he has confirmed.

(9) *Pasokon o kau nara, ano mise ga yasui* 'If you are to get a PC, that shop has a good price.'

This usage of *nara* may express the topic.

(10) *Wain nara aka ga ii* 'As for wine, I'd like red wine.'

Some hypothetical conditions are used right after the situation, which constitutes the condition, has occurred.

(11) *Koko made kure ba, mō anshin da* 'We're safe now that we've come this far.'

Especially *nara* may express the speaker's judgment toward the other party's utterance that has been just made.

(12) *Tonari no ie ni dorobō ga haittanda yo* 'A burglar broke into our neighbor's house.'

*Otonari ni haitta nara, otaku mo abunai ne* 'Yours may be next if your neighbor's house was broken in.'

(13) *Shimbun wa? Shimbun nara, koko ni aru yo* 'Where's the newspaper? The newspaper is here.'

- Counter-Factual Condition

The second group of conditional sentences expresses counter-factual condition, where neither the condition nor the result occurred. *Ba, tara,* and *nara* are used with this group.

(4) *Kusuri o nome ba, netsu ga sagatta noni* 'Had you taken the medicine, the fever would have gone down.'

(15) *Musuko ga ikiteita nara, kotoshi hatachi desu* 'If my son were alive, he would be 20 this year.'

The function of expressing counter-factual condition is unique to conditional sentences. This type of condition is not readily expressed with *to*. This indicates that, of the 4 forms, the ability to express condition is the weakest with *to*. Also, the condition may be factual with *nara*.

(16) *Ame ga furu nara, kasa o mottekita noni* 'I would have brought an umbrella, had I known it was going to rain.'

- General Condition

The third group is general condition, which expresses the cause and effect relationship that is not limited to any specific point in time. Usually this type is expressed with *ba* or *to*.

(17) *Osake o nome ba, ketsuatsu ga agaru* 'If you drink, your blood pressure will go up.'

(18) *Teekiatsu ga chikazuku to, tenki ga waruku naru* 'When a low atmospheric pressure approaches, weather turns bad.'

When an event repeats more than once, the relationship is that of habit or repetition.

(19) *Jikan ga are ba, eega o {miru/mita mono da}* 'When I have/had time, I go see/used to go see a movie.'

(20) *Chichi wa osake o nomu to, kao ga akakunaru* 'When my father drinks, his face turns red.'

- Factual Condition

The fourth group is factual condition, where for both the condition and the result there is a factual condition that has occurred once before. *To* and *tara* are used for this group to express the situation that triggers the result.

(21) *Doa o akeru to, kōto o nuida* 'When he opened the door, he took off his coat.'

(22) *Doa o akeru {to/tara}, kaze ga haittekita* ‘When I opened the door, the wind came in.’

(23) *Doa o akeru {to/tara}, Chichi ga tatteita* ‘When I opened the door, my father was standing there.

(24) *Hon o yondeiru {to/tara}, denwa ga natta* ‘I was reading a book, when the phone rang.’

Unlike *to* in (21), *tara* is not used for the same subject’s volitional continuous action. *Tara* may be used if the speaker relates orally what s/he directly experienced.

(25) *Futon ni haittara, sugu nechatta yo* ‘As soon as I got into the futon, I fell asleep.’

(26) *Satō sensei ni shitsumon shitara, oshietekuremashita* ‘I asked Prof. Sato, and she answered my question.’

Except for *nara*, all conditional clauses may function as an introductory remark to an utterance or a verb that expresses thought.

(27) *Omoeba, mukashi wa yoku nonda* ‘Come to think of it, I used to drink a lot.’

(28) *Hakkiri iu to, sore wa machigai da* ‘If I may, to be frank, that is a mistake.’

(29) *Kangaetemitara, kare wa mada hatachi da* ‘Come to think of it, he’s only 20 years of age.’

Conditional clauses may also 接続語化、複合格助詞化、form complex expressions that express 当為.

→条件節の周辺形式 More Related Forms of Conditional Clauses (2-J), 勧め Suggestion (2-H), 義務・許容 Obligation and Permission (2-H)

#### ● References

Masuoka, Takashi, ed. (1993) *Nihongo no jōken hyōgen* (Conditionial Expressions in Japanese). Kurosio Publishers.

Hasunuma, Akiko (2001) ‘Jōken hyōgen’ (Conditionial Expressions) in *Serufu mastaa shiriizu 7* (Self Master Series, 7). Kurosio Publishers.

(Maeda Naoko)