

A Note on TARA/NARA/REBA- Japanese Conditional Expressions

*Mamoru IKUTA**

One of the most confusing problems for learners of the Japanese language at the primary level is to distinguish the usage of TARA, NARA and REBA- conditional expressions. The problem also applies to teachers in explaining it to learners and indeed understanding it for themselves.

In this paper, I would like to explain the correct basic usage of these expressions and reorganize the pedagogical grammars concerning TARA/NARA/REBA so that both teachers and learners can make use of it for better comprehension.

The sentence patterns discussed in this paper are compound sentences conjoined by TARA/NARA/REBA. The main clauses are limited to non-past tense only for the sake of discussion.

1. A model for explanation of TARA/ NARA/REBA

In order to make an efficient comparison, I assumed the following scheme among these three expressions.

- (a) V+[TA/NA]+RA+(BA)
- (b) V+(Ø)+(R)EBA (verb stem+ (R)EBA)¹
V-TARA(BA)
- (c) V-NARA(BA)
V (Ø) (R)EBA

Formula (a) shows the basic form of TARA/NARA. The part [TA/NA] stands for Tense/Aspect while [RA] indicates conditional Mood.² This BA is different from the one in REBA. The former emphasizes supposition and/or makes the sentences classical. This marker is optional.

The most basic difference between TARA and NARA, therefore, lies in the Tense/Aspectal part in the conditional clause.

(R)EBA in formula (b) is attached to conjugated verbs without any Tense/Aspectal part.

In summing up, the formula (c) is given. TARA/NARA share the common morpheme RA and differentiate themselves by [TA/NA] in Tense/Aspect. And REBA is different from both because it has no Tense/Aspectal marker.

* Chief Language Officer, The Japan Foundation Bangkok Language Center.

This model discussed above is valid only when the clause takes action verbs. It will be shown later that, when the clause ends with state predicates, the model will be transformed into a simpler one, that is, REBA-Clause will be equivalent to TARA-Clause because of no restriction on the main clause.

In the following discussion. I would like to compare TARA/NARA/REBA-Clause making use of this model.

2. TARA/NARA

2.1 Basic usage of TARA (S1-TARA S2.)

TARA-Clause presupposes the perfection of action. In other words. S1 must temporally precede S2. This is explained from the Tense/Aspectal part (TA), which indicates [past/perfection].

- (1) Nihon-e kaet-tara, Kyōto-o tazuneru-tsumori desu.
JapanLOC returnTARA KyōtoACC visit intension POL
When I go back to Japan, I will visit Kyōto.
- (2) Ame-ga hut-tara, sentakumono-o torikonde kudasai.
rainNOM rain TARA laundry ACC take in IMP POL
When it rains, take the laundry in, please.

These sentences clearly show the temporal order between S1 and S2.

- * (3) Tai-e it-tara, tsurete itte kudasai.
ThaiLOC goTARA take me go IMP POL
When you get to Thailand, take me there, please.
- * (4) Tai-e it-tara, tai koukū-de ikimasho.
ThaiLOC goTARA Thai Int. Airway. INS go

When we get to Thailand, we shall go by TG.

After you go to Thailand, you cannot take me there nor can you chose the airlines. The ungrammaticality of these sentences is explained on the basis of the temporal order which is characteristic of the TARA-Clause.

2.2 Basic usage of NARA (S1-NARA S2.)

NARA shows no temporal order like TARA. Na apparently originates from the copula 'DA' or explanatory 'NODA' (Kuno), therefore the characteristics of NARA can be considered within this range. To put it another way. NARA derives from 'DA'+RA, whose Tense/Aspect is non-past /non-perfect and whose Modality is the same as that of TARA.

Sentences *(3) and *(4) will be rendered grammatical by substituting TARA with NARA.

- (5) Tai-e iku-nara, tsurete itte kudasai.
ThaiLOC goNARA take me go IMP POL
When you go to Thailand, take me there, please.
- (6) Tai-e iku-nara, tai koukū-de ikimasho.
ThaiLOC goNARA Thai Int. AirwaysINS go
When we go to Thailand, we will go by TG.

2.3 Comparison of TARA and NARA

Further observation concerning TARA and NARA will be given below.

- (7) Kono hon-o yon-dara, kono hon-mo yomu-to ii desu-yo.
this bookACC readTARA this book too had better read SOF
After reading this book, you should read this also.

- (8) Kono hon-o yomu-nara, kono hon-mo
yomu-to ii desu-yo.
this bookACC readNARA this book
too had better read SOF
If you (are going to)read this book,
you should read this also.

(These sentences are taken from Alfonso.)

In sentence (7), the speaker suggests that after the listener reads through a certain book he should read another book also, while in (8), the speaker recommends two books for the listener to read. The sequence of reading is decided in (7), while he merely recommends two books in (8).

- (9) Tai-e it-tara, taigo-o naratte Kudasai.
ThaiLOC goTARA Thai lang.ACC
learn IMP POL
If you go to Thailand, please learn the
language(there).

- (10) Tai-è iku-nara, taigo-o naratte kudasai.
Thai LOC go NARA Thai lang. ACC
learn IMP POL
If you go to Thailand, please learn the
language (now).

In sentence (9), learning the Thai language in Thailand is suggested, while in sentence (10), learning Thai before going to Thailand is suggested.

- (11) O-sake-o non-dara, unten shi-nai-de
kudasai.
POLalchohoIACC drinkTARA drive
not IMP POL
After you drink,do not drive a car.
(12) Unten shitara, o-sake-o noma-nai-de
kudasai
drive TARA POLalcoholACC drink
not IMP POL
After you drive, do not drink.

Sentence (11) prohibits driving after drinking. (12) is not appropriate from the semantic aspect, that is, refraining from alcohol after driving is unlikely. In both cases, temporal

order of S1 and S2 is apparent.

- (13) O-sake-o nomu-nara, unten shi-nai-de
kudasai.
POLalcoholACC drinkNARA drive
not IMP POL
If you drink, do not drive.

- (14) Unten suru-nara, o-sake-o noma-nai-
de kudasai
drive NARA POLalcoholACC drink
not IMP POL
If you drive, do not drink.

However, when you compare (13) and (14), even if you substitute S1 with S2, no drastic change will be caused. It is more important for a NARA-Clause which lines of the discourse it focuses. The speaker picks up someone's line or topic from the discourse and makes a certain comment on it. A NARA-clause is a focused statement and/or topic in the discourse.

- (15) Taro-ga shinda-nara, Hanako-ni isan-
ga hairu daro.
Taro NOM diePST-NARA Hanako
DAT propertyNOM will come in
(As you suggested) If Taro dies,
Hanako will inherit his property.
(16) Taro-ga shin-dara, Hanako-ni isan-ga
hairu daro.

Taro NOM die -TARA hanako DAT
propertyNOM will come in
If Taro dies, Hanako will inherit his
property.

Although both of the sentences have a temporal relationship between two clauses, they differ in whether Taro's death is presented or not. In (15), Taro's death is cited and embedded in the clause (NARA-Clause). Therefore you cannot question the supposition that "Taro-ga shinda" (Taro dies), even if Taro has not actually dead.

On the other hand, in (16). Taro's death is very inconceivable. The presupposition of

Taro's death is made by the speaker, not by someone else nor from the discourse. You can question if Taro dies.

To put it another way, Taro's death is the speaker's presupposition in (15), while his death is parenthesized and has nothing to do with the speaker's presupposition in (16).

Despite sharing the past marker TA, the two sentences have distinctive differences.

3. TARA/NARA/REBA

3.1 Basic usage of REBA (S1-REBA S2.)

The basic meaning of REBA-Clause is "under a certain condition things become so and so."

- (17) Ame-ga hureba, kouzui-ni naru.
 rain NOM rainBA flood become
 If it rains, it will flood.
- (18) Kono botan-o oseba, doa-ga hiraki-masu.
 this buttonACC pushBA doorNOM
 open POL
 If you push this button, the door will open.

S2 is logical consequence of S1. S1 automatically leads to S2. Consequently, S2 cannot include such modal expression as will, order, asking, prohibition, advice, eliciting and hope. (Yosikawa, Teramura)

- * (19) Ame-ga hureba, uti-ni iyō
 rain NOM rainBA homeLOC be
 If it rains, I will stay at home.
- * (20) Ame-ga hureba, uti-ni i-tewa ikemasen.
 rain NOM rainBA homeLOC be do not
 If it rains, do not stay at home.
- * (21) Ame-ga hureba, uti-ni i-tai.
 rain NOM rainBA homeLOC be want
 If it rains, I want to stay at home.

But the characteristic of the REBA-Clause as stated above is valid only when it includes an Action Predicate such as an action verb. In the case of a State Predicate such as a state verb, adjective or negative form being followed by REBA, the restrictions on S2 disappear. Any sentence with modality can follow REBA-Clause.

S2 does not have to be the logical consequence of S1 any longer.

The fact that the REBA-Clause shows different features when it takes an Action Predicate or a State Predicate could be explained from the difference between the characteristics of AP and SP per se.

It is related to the fact that AP, or an action verb has a Tense/Aspectual notion, while SP does not have this kind of notion.

When there is a Tense/Aspectual notion, something is expected to happen as the result of a certain action. The logical consequence, so to speak, is tended to be caused. Therefore the most typical usage of the REBA-Clause, "If you do, that will become so and so.", will appear.

However SP does not have a Tense/Aspectual notion as AP do. It is not expected that something should happen as the result of S1 as much as AP. That is the reason the sentence "ko-areba, ko suru" (If it is like this, I will do like this) is possible.

Let us make [SURU] as the representative of AP, [ARU] as SP, [SHIYO] as sentence with modality and [NARU] as without modality. The following scheme will be given.

- a. [SURU] + REBA — [NARU]
 *b. [SURU] + REBA — [SHIYO]
 c. [ARU] + REBA — [NARU].
 d. [ARU] + REBA — [SHIYO]

(Fig. 1)

- a. Ame-ga hureba, kouzui-ni naru.
 rain NOM rainBA flood become
 If it rains, it will be flooded
- *b. Ame-ga hureba, uti-ni i-tai.
 rain NOM rainBA homeLOC be want
 If it rains, I want to stay at home.
- c. Hima-ga ar-eba, ikudeshō.
 timeNOM beREBA go shall
 If I have time, I shall go.
- d. Hima-ga ar-eba, iki-tai desu.
 timeNOM beREBA go want to POL
 If I have time, I want to go.

4. TARA/NARA compared with REBA

Here is the model shown in Section 1.

V-TARA(BA)

(c) V-NARA(BA)

V (Ø) (R)EBA V:Action Verb

I would like to make a conclusion based on this model and the discussion so far

[1] In contemporary Japanese, a TARA/NARA-Clause shares RA as a morpheme, through which it provisionally presents the things which have not yet been realized and states that under such conditions something happens or makes something happen.

[2] The difference between TARA and NARA is caused by the difference between TA and NA, which indicate Tense/Aspect.

[3] A BA-Clause does not include a Tense/Aspectual notion. The relation between S1 (conditional clause) and S2 (consequence clause) is logical and objective.

[4] An RA-Clause includes a Tense/Aspectual notion. S1 is the clause presupposed by the speaker subjectively and internally, and S2 follows the speaker's attitude to the presupposition.

Now I would like to exemplify the above using the following sentences.

(22) Nihon-e kaet-tara, Kyōto-o tazuneru-tsumori desu.

JapanLOC returnTARA KyōtoACC visit intension POL

When I go back to Japan, I will visit Kyoto.

(23) Nihon-e kaeru-nara, Kyōto-o tazuneru-tsumori desu.

JapanLOC returnNARA KyōtoACC visit intension POL

In case I go back to Japan, I will visit Kyoto.

* (24) Nihon-e kaere-ba, Kyōto-o tazuneru-tsumori desu.

JapanLOC returnBA KyōtoACC visit intension POL

I go back to Japan and will visit Kyoto.

(25) Nihon-e kaere-ba, Kyōto-o tazuneru koto-ga dekimasu.

JapanLOC returnBA KyōtoACC visit be able to

When I go back to Japan, I can visit Kyoto.

The difference between sentence (22) and (23) is due to the Tense /Aspectual markers, TA and NA. Temporal sequence matters much in (22), while (23) picks up someone's line or topic from the discourse. NA, derived from DA (copula) presents the topic rather than governs the temporal sequence between S1 and S2.

Sentence (22) and (23) share the morpheme RA, through which the speaker presupposes that he is in Japan.

Sentence (24) is ungrammatical because an Action Predicate cannot be followed by a sentence with modality.

When sentence (25) is contrasted to (22) and (23), the logical relations between the two clause is stronger. The speaker states externally the fact; the logical consequence that he can visit Kyoto, which is deducted from his returning to Japan.

5. Conclusion

In modern Japanese, TARA and NARA have the common morpheme RA, which distinguishes them from REBA in their conditional moods, and TARA and NARA are distinguished by the Tense/Aspectual marker, TA/NA.

Notes:

1. REBA is attached to the stem of Vowel Verb (also known as Second Group Verb). R is deleted when it suffixes a Consonant Verb (First Group Verb). Japanese usually identify this particle as BA, because the former part (R)E is considered to be absorbed in conjugated verbs. REBA should be presented as (R)EBA in its strict sense, but for the sake of simplification of discussion. REBA will be used.
2. RA has never been identified as a distinct morpheme before. Although RA is not productive as other morphemes, it is not insignificant for this discussion to regard RA as a morpheme. I am going to clarify the common feature of TARA and NARA and the difference between TARA/NARA and REBA through this concept.
3. * indicates that the sentence is ungrammatical.? shows ambiguity of the sentence.

List of Abbreviations

ACC (accusative)	NOM (nominative)
DAT (dativé)	POL (polite)
IMP (imperative)	PST (past)
INS (instrumental)	SOF (softening word)

References

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