

# Topics as Speech Acts – An Analysis of Conditionals

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## 1. Introduction

In this paper we show that syntactic similarities and differences between *normal indicative conditionals* (henceforth: ICs) and *biscuit conditionals* (henceforth: BCs) with fronted antecedents correspond to syntactic similarities and differences between two kinds of topic marking constructions: aboutness topic marking via *German Left Dislocation* (henceforth: GLD), on the one hand, and the marking of frame setting topics via *Hanging Topic Left Dislocation* (henceforth: HTLD), on the other. From this we conclude that the fronted antecedents of indicative conditionals are aboutness topics, while the fronted antecedents of biscuit conditionals are frame setting topics.

By extending the approach in Endriss (to appear) on aboutness topicality in general and Endriss and Hinterwimmer (to appear) on GLD in particular and combining it with the approach to indicative conditionals of Schlenker (2004), we derive the semantic and pragmatic contributions of the respective conditionals. We argue that in GLD as well as in HTLD a separate speech act of topic establishment is combined with an act of assertion, the differences between the two constructions being due to the following fact: only in the case of GLD it is ensured that what is asserted is directly predicated of the respective topical referent. In the case of HTLD, in contrast, the two speech acts only need to stand in a relation of relevance to each other. The only thing that is special about the cases where *if*-clauses function as aboutness and frame setting topics, is that the topical referents are possible worlds instead of individuals (cf. Bittner, 2001).

The paper is structured as follows: in section 2.1 we present some basic facts about ICs and BCs, and in section 2.2 about GLD and HTLD. Section 2.3 gives some arguments for analysing ICs as aboutness topics and BCs as frame-setting topics. Section 3.1 summarizes our approach to aboutness topicality and extends it to frame-setting topics. In section 3.2 we introduce Schlenker's (2004) analysis of *if*-clauses as definite descriptions of possible worlds. In section 3.3 we present our analysis of ICs as aboutness topics, and of BCs as frame-setting topics. Section 3.4 takes up some loose ends. This paper focuses on the presentation of the relevant data and the main ideas of our approach. We refer the reader to Ebert, Endriss and Hinterwimmer (to appear) for a more detailed analysis.

## 2. The Facts to be Accounted for

### 2.1 ICs vs. BCs

Consider the sentences in (1) and (2), which exemplify ICs and BCs, respectively:

- (1) If Peter went shopping, then there is pizza in the fridge.
- (2) If you are hungry, ↓ (\*then) there is pizza in the fridge.

Note that in contrast to (1), in the case of (2) the antecedent is separated from the consequent by a short pause, indicated by “↓”. In addition to that, the pronoun *then* is not allowed in the case of (2). Crucially, in (1) the truth of the consequent depends on the truth of the antecedent: while it is neither asserted that there is pizza in the fridge, nor that Peter went shopping, what is asserted is that there is a connection between Peter's shopping and there being pizza in the fridge, i.e. it cannot be the case that Peter went shopping and there is no pizza in the fridge. In (2), in contrast, the consequent is true independently of the truth of the antecedent: even if the addressee weren't hungry, there would still be pizza in the fridge. According to the traditional analysis ICs have the truth conditions of material implication, i.e.  $\neg(A \wedge \neg B)$ , where *A* is the antecedent and *B* the consequent. This, however, has the undesirable consequence that every conditional where either *A* is false or *B* is true is automatically true,

which does not correspond to speakers' intuitions. Therefore, the most popular view nowadays (at least among linguists<sup>1</sup>) is the following one: a conditional with antecedent *A* and consequent *B* is true if in every world where *A* is true and which is furthermore as close to the actual world as possible, *B* is true as well (Warmbrod 1983, Kratzer 1986, Nolan 2003; cf. Lewis 1973).

This account obviously does not work for BCs, since it is not asserted that the consequent is only true in those worlds where the antecedent is true. Therefore, BCs have been analysed as conditional assertions by de Rose and Grandy (1999): while the truth of the consequent does not depend on the truth of the antecedent, the speaker's assertion of the consequent is dependent on the truth of the antecedent, i.e. the speaker only asserts the consequent under the condition that the antecedent is true. This analysis has been criticised by Siegel (2006) because it cannot account for examples like (3) below, where the speaker presumably is not even present at the situations that would make the antecedent true, and therefore cannot be assumed to assert the consequent then.

- (3) If they ask you how old you are, ↓ you're under 14.

Siegel (2006) therefore analyses BCs as involving existential quantification over potential relevant literal speech acts., i.e. in a case like (3) the speaker asserts that in all worlds where the antecedent is true there is a potential relevant literal act of asserting the consequent. The problem with these accounts is that they are both too weak. To see this, consider the examples in (4) and (5):

- (4) If you don't want to watch the movie, ↓ the gardener is the killer.

- (5) If the congregation is ready, ↓ I hereby declare you man and wife.

Note that no matter whether the addressee wants to watch the movie or not, the speaker spoiled it by uttering (4). Likewise, in the case of (5) the declaration of marriage happened independently of the readiness of the congregation. An often observed characteristic feature of BCs that seems right to us, however, is the following: the antecedent gives conditions stating when the consequent is relevant (hence the term *relevance conditional*). In the case of (2), for example, it is understood that the speaker assumes the assertion that pizza is in the fridge to be relevant to the listener only in case s/he is hungry. A unified theory of ICs and BCs should thus account for the (in)dependence of the truth of antecedent and consequent in the two cases as well as for the observed relevance effects. As we will see in section 2.3 and section 3, such an analysis is possible if the assumption of a close connection between conditional antecedents and topicality (see e. g. Haiman 1978 and Bittner 2001) is sharpened in the following way: the antecedents in ICs and BCs are analysed as instantiating two kinds of topics that bear different relations to their respective comments. We will show that the antecedents of ICs are aboutness topics that accordingly bear a direct predication relation to their comments, while the antecedents of BCs are frame-setting topics that stand in an unspecified relevance relation to their comments.

In the next section we will therefore have a closer look at two kinds of topic marking constructions in German: GLD and HTLD. The first has been argued to indicate aboutness topicality at the sentence level, and the second to shift the discourse topic.

## 2.2 Two Kinds of Topic Marking Construction: GLD vs. HTLD

Consider the examples in (6) and (7), which exemplify GLD and HTLD, respectively<sup>2</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Among philosophers of language the possible world analysis is often reserved for counterfactuals, for which it was originally developed by Lewis (1973). Indicative conditionals, in contrast, are treated as being completely different objects. They do not have truth conditions at all and their impact can roughly be described as follows (following Ramsey, 1994; orig. 1929): the speaker tells the hearer that she, upon hypothetically adding the antecedent proposition to the stock of propositions believed by her, accords the consequent proposition a high chance of being true as well, and asks the hearer to do the same thing (see Bennett 2003 for discussion and references).

<sup>2</sup> In the gloss, RP stands for *resumptive pronoun*.

- (6) Den Pfarrer, den kann keiner leiden.  
 The-ACC pastor RP-ACC can nobody like.  
 'The pastor nobody likes.'
- (7) Der Pfarrer, ↓ keiner kann ihn leiden.  
 The-NOM pastor nobody can him like.  
 'The pastor, nobody likes him.'

Note that the English counterparts illustrated by the glosses are often called *topicalization* and *left dislocation*, respectively (Prince 1998). For reasons of space, we will concentrate on the German variants in the following, whose defining characteristics can be summarized as follows, following Frey (2004) (who builds on Altmann 1981):

- (A) In the case of HTLD, the left peripheral phrase is separated from the rest of the sentence by a short pause. In the case of GLD, there is no pause.
- (B) In the case of HTLD, the resumptive element may show up in the form of a personal pronoun (as shown in (7) above), a weak d-pronoun like *der*, a strong pronoun like *dieser*, an epithet or a definite description. In the case of GLD, only a weak d-pronoun is allowed (as shown in (6) above).
- (C) In the case of HTLD, the resumptive element may show up either in the prefield or in the middlefield of the clause (as shown in (7) above)). In the case of GLD, the resumptive element is preferably realized in the prefield, i.e. in Spec., CP of the matrix clause, as shown in (6) above.
- (D) In the case of HTLD, the left peripheral element may either be in the nominative (as shown in (7) above) or in the same case as the resumptive element, if it is a DP. In the case of GLD, it has to be in the same case as the resumptive element.
- (E) In the case of HTLD, a pronoun contained within the left peripheral constituent may not be bound by a quantifier contained within the matrix clause, as shown in (8a) below (from Frey (2004: 3)). In the case of GLD, in contrast, pronoun binding from within the matrix clause is unproblematic, as shown in (8b):
- (8) a. \*Sein<sub>1</sub> Doktorvater/\*Seinen<sub>1</sub> Doktorvater, ↓ [jeder Linguist]<sub>1</sub> verehrt ihn.  
       his-NOM advisor his-ACC advisor every linguist admires him.
- b. Seinen<sub>1</sub> Doktorvater, den verehrt [jeder Linguist]<sub>1</sub>.  
       his-ACC advisor RP-ACC admires every linguist.  
       'Every linguist admires his supervisor.'

Note that the binding facts give us a clear criterion to distinguish instances of GLD from instances of HTLD. We will come back to this point in section 2.3, where we argue that ICs whose antecedent is resumed by *dann* (*then*) instantiate GLD, while BCs with fronted *if*-clauses instantiate HTLD.

Frey (2004) shows that only in the case of GLD the left peripheral constituent unambiguously function as the aboutness topic of the respective sentence, i.e. as the entity the sentence is about, while the function of HTLD is to indicate a shift of the discourse topic. This is shown by the contrast between (9a) and (9b) (from Frey 2004: 20):

- (9) Ich habe etwas in der Zeitung über Hans gelesen.  
 I have something in the newspaper about H. read.
- a. Den Hans, den will der Minister zum Botschafter ernennen.  
    the-ACC H. RP-ACC wants the minister to ambassador (to) appoint.
- b. #Hans, ↓ der Minister will ihn zum Botschafter ernennen.  
    H. the minister wants him to ambassador (to) appoint.

In (9), the first sentence establishes Hans as the current discourse topic. (9a), which exemplifies GLD, is fine, since Hans is accordingly marked as the aboutness topic of the following sentence, which gives us the crucial information about Hans. (9b), in contrast, which exemplifies HTLD, is out. This shows that HTLD can only be used in order to establish a new discourse topic.

Frame-setting topic constructions are well attested in the languages of the world (see Maslova and Bernini 2006 for an overview). Interestingly, in many languages entities can function as frame-setting topics that are not taken up by proforms within the matrix clause to which the constituent marked as the frame-setting topic has been juxtaposed. This is illustrated with two examples from Japanese and Korean below:

- (10) Japanese (from Chen 1996: 402)  
 Nihon wa syoto ga sumi-yo-i  
 Japan TOP capital NOM live-good-PRS  
 ‘As for Japan, its capital is a good place to live.’
- (11) Korean (from Li and Thompson 1976: 468)  
 Pihengi-nin 747-ka khi-ta  
 Airplane-TOP 747-SBJ big-STAT  
 ‘As for airplanes, the 747 is big.’

As indicated by the glosses, in English a conventionalised expression like *as for...*, *as concerns/ regards...* has to be used in such cases, at least in more formal registers. The same is true of German and most other European languages. (12) is an English example similar to the examples in (10) and (11) insofar as (i) the left peripheral constituent is not taken up by a proform within the matrix clause and (ii) the semantic relation holding between the entity denoted by the topical constituent and the proposition denoted by the matrix clause is not linguistically encoded and is thus left completely unspecified:

- (12) As for the pastor, ↓ the marriage sermon was wonderful.

Note, however, that in all the examples in (10) – (12) the proposition denoted by the matrix clause is implied to be relevant w.r.t. (questions regarding) the entity denoted by the topical constituent, i.e. the matrix clause can be construed as answering a question concerning Japan (*where in Japan can you live well?*), airplanes in general (*which airplanes are big?*) or some contextually salient pastor (*how did the pastor perform on the marriage?*).

In the following section we give some arguments for analysing the antecedents of ICs as aboutness topics marked via left dislocation, and the antecedents of BCs as frame-setting topics.

### 2.3 ICs and BCs as Instantiating Two Kinds of Topic Marking Constructions

It has often been observed that there is a strong syntactic similarity between ICs (and subjunctive conditionals) and correlative constructions, which „involve a free relative clause adjoined to the matrix clause and coindexed with a proform inside it“ (Bhatt and Pancheva 2001). *Then* can therefore be regarded as a proform which relates back to the possibilities introduced by the *if*-clause (see e.g. also Iatridou 1994), i.e. its function is the same as that of the resumptive pronouns present in the prefield of the GLD-examples discussed in section 2.1. Recall that in the case of BCs, in contrast, *then* is prohibited, i.e. if the proform *then* is present, the sentence is automatically interpreted as an IC. In addition to the presence/absence of a weak d-pronoun in the clause-initial position of the matrix sentence, there are other telling parallels between GLD and ICs, on the one hand, and HTLD and BCs, on the other.

- (A) As with HTLD, the left peripheral *if*-clause is separated from the rest of the sentence by a short pause in the case of BCs. In the case of ICs with left peripheral *if*-clauses, in contrast, there is no such pause, just as with GLD.

- (B) As with HTLD, binding into the left peripheral *if*-clause is impossible in the case of BCs, as shown by (13a) below. In the case of ICs, in contrast, binding from within the matrix clause is possible, just as with GLD, as shown by (13b) (see also Haegeman, 2003):
- (13) a. Wenn man sie<sub>i</sub> gut pflegt, dann blüht [jede Orchidee]<sub>i</sub> mehrmals im Jahr.  
if one it well groom then blossoms every orchid several times in the year.  
'Every orchid blossoms several times a year, if you groom it well.'
- b. \*Wenn Du etwas über sie<sub>i</sub> wissen willst, [jede Orchidee]<sub>i</sub> blüht  
if you something about it to know want, every orchid blossoms  
mehrmals im Jahr.  
several times in the year
- (C) As HTLD can only be used to shift the discourse topic, the propositional content of the *if*-clause has to be novel in order for a BC to be fully acceptable, as shown by the oddity of the mini discourse in (14a). In the case of ICs, in contrast, there is no problem if the propositional content of the *if*-clause is already discourse given, as shown by (14b). Again, this is parallel to GLD.
- (14) a. A: I'm thirsty. B: #If you're thirsty, ↓ there's beer in the refrigerator.  
b. A: I'm thirsty. B: If you're thirsty, then let's have a break and get something to drink.

We take these parallels as evidence that ICs with left-dislocated antecedents resumed by *then* are instances of GLD where the *if*-clause functions as the aboutness topic, while in the case of BCs the left peripheral *if*-clause functions as the frame-setting topic. In section 3 we will see that the semantic and pragmatic contributions of ICs and BCs are captured by (a) extending the approach to aboutness topics in general by Endriss (to appear) (cf. also Ebert and Endriss, 2004) and to GLD in particular by Endriss and Hinterwimmer (to appear) to frame setting topics and (b) combining it with the approach to indicative conditionals by Schlenker (2004), who treats *if*-clauses as definite descriptions of possible worlds.

### 3. ICs as Aboutness Topics and BCs as Frame-setting Topics

#### 3.1 Our Approach to Topicality in General

Endriss (to appear) argues that *aboutness topics* must be interpreted in a separate speech act of topic establishment  $REF_X$ , resembling an act of *referring* (Searle 1969) or *frame setting* (Jacobs 1984). This act formally establishes a new aboutness topic by introducing a new discourse referent  $X$  for the topic-marked constituent. The remainder of the sentence (i.e. the *comment*) is then interpreted as a predicate that applies to this discourse referent  $X$  inside the originating speech act. Crucially, the  $REF_X$  act is performed before this originating act. In the following we will restrict ourselves to *assertions* for the sake of a simple exposition. In this case, an assertion of a proposition structured into topic and comment is interpreted as indicated in the schema in (15).

- (15)  $REF_X(TOPIC) \& ASSERT(COMMENT(X))$

The  $REF_X$  act establishes the topic by introduction of a new discourse referent  $X$  followed by a subsequent speech act of asserting that the comment holds of  $X$ . The two speech acts are conjoined via speech act conjunction  $\&$ . We have to leave things at this schematic level here and refer the reader to Endriss (to appear) and Endriss, Ebert and Hinterwimmer (to appear) for more detail on the analysis. Concerning the case where aboutness topics are explicitly marked via GLD, Endriss and Hinterwimmer (to appear) assume that the *d*-pronoun in the specifier of the matrix-CP is interpreted like a relative pronoun, i.e. that it triggers lambda-abstraction. In a sentence such as (6), repeated below as (16a), the matrix clause is thus interpreted as (16b), while the entire sentence is interpreted as shown schematically in (16c):

- (16) a. Den Pfarrer, den kann keiner leiden.  
 The-ACC pastor RP-ACC can nobody like.  
 ‘The pastor nobody likes.’  
 b.  $\lambda y. \neg \exists z[\text{like}(z, y)]$   
 c.  $\text{REF}_x(\text{u}[\text{pastor}(x)]) \ \& \ \text{ASSERT}(\neg \exists z[\text{like}(z, X)])$

Note that we do not observe any truth conditional effect comparing (16c) to the (non-topical) standard analysis that would derive an assertion of  $\neg \exists z[\text{like}(z, \text{u}[\text{pastor}(x)])]$ . This is different if the topic-marked constituent is an indefinite. In this case, a widest (possibly island-free) scope reading for the indefinite is derived (see Endriss, to appear, for details). Concerning an HTLD-example like the one in (7), repeated here as (17a), we assume that it is interpreted as shown in (17b):

- (17) a. Der Pfarrer, ↓ keiner kann ihn leiden.  
 The-NOM pastor nobody can him like.  
 ‘The pastor, nobody likes him.’  
 b.  $\text{REF}_x(\text{u}[\text{pastor}(x)]) \ \& \ \text{ASSERT}(\neg \exists z[\text{like}(z, y)])$

In the case of HTLD, the act of topic establishment has exactly the same effect. But since the matrix clause is not interpreted as a lambda-abstract, its denotation cannot be applied to the topical discourse referent. Instead, the matrix clause is interpreted as an independent assertion that is simply conjoined with the act of topic establishment via speech act conjunction. The proform in (17a) is thus treated as a free variable that needs to be resolved. Since the topic is the most salient discourse referent in (19a), the free variable  $y$  has to be resolved to it.

Hence in the case of frame-setting topics, the relation between topic and is not simply one of predication, as becomes even clearer by considering the interpretation of (12) (repeated here as (18a)) shown in (18b):

- (18) a. As for the pastor, ↓ the marriage sermon was wonderful.  
 b.  $\text{REF}_x(\text{u}[\text{pastor}(x)]) \ \& \ \text{ASSERT}(\text{wonderful}(\text{marriage\_sermon}))$

Since (18a) does not contain any proform whatsoever, the only connection of topic and comment is via their consecutive performance as speech acts. Here the issue of relevance comes into play: using standard Gricean assumptions, an assertion is only felicitous if it is relevant to the preceding discourse. In (18a), the pastor is established as the topic. The following assertion thus has to be relevant with respect to the pastor, i.e. it has to be construable as answering (at least indirectly) a question that increases the addressee’s knowledge about the pastor. This is exactly the pragmatic effect we observe in the case of frame setting constructions. Note that in the case of aboutness topics, the relevance condition is trivially fulfilled, because a predication is obviously relevant to its argument. With these assumptions in place, let us now turn to ICs and BCs.

### 3.2 *If-Clauses as Definite Descriptions of Possible Worlds*

We follow Schlenker (2004), who builds on Stalnaker (1968), in analysing the antecedents of conditionals as definite descriptions of possible worlds: they denote the unique possible world which is most similar to the actual world  $w_0$  among all possible worlds where the respective proposition is true. The *if*-clause in (1), repeated below as (19a), thus denotes the object in (19b): the unique world  $w$  which is most similar to the actual world  $w_0$  among all possible worlds where Peter went shopping<sup>3</sup>.

- (19) a. If Peter went shopping, then there is pizza in the fridge.  
 b.  $\iota_{w_0} w[\text{went\_shopping}(w)(\text{peter})]$

<sup>3</sup> The subscript at the iota-operator  $\iota$  indicates the world of evaluation w.r.t. which ‘similarity’ is measured. We ignore the issue of plurality necessary for cases of quantification over possible worlds here (cf. Schlenker, 2004).

The proposition denoted by the consequent is then applied to the denotation of the *if*-clause, which gives us (20):

- (20)  $\text{pizza\_is\_in\_the\_fridge}(\iota_{w_0}w[\text{went\_shopping}(w)(\text{peter})])$   
 ‘The unique world where Peter went shopping which is most similar to the actual world is among all the worlds where pizza is in the fridge.’

### 3.3 ICs as Aboutness Topics, BCs as Frame-setting Topics

Based on our observations concerning the parallels between ICs and GLD we assume that the *if*-clause in (19a) is actually interpreted as the aboutness topic: the act of topic establishment introduces a discourse referent  $X$  for the unique world denoted by the *if*-clause, and it is then asserted that the predicate of worlds denoted by the consequent holds of  $X$ .

Note that we assume the proform *then* in Spec., CP to trigger lambda-abstraction over possible worlds in exactly the same way in which d-pronouns like *der* trigger lambda-abstraction over individuals. It is thus guaranteed that the predicate denoted by the consequent applies to the discourse referent established as the topic by the first speech act, and we get (21) as the interpretation of (19a):

- (21)  $\text{REF}_X(\iota_{w_0}w[\text{went\_shopping}(w)(\text{peter})]) \ \& \ \text{ASSERT}(\text{pizza\_is\_in\_the\_fridge}(X))$

Again, (21) is truth conditionally equivalent to (20), similar to the individual case in (16). Since we deal with a simple case of predication, the relevance requirement again is trivially fulfilled. Let us now turn to BCs, which, crucially, do not allow the proform *then* in the consequent. The consequent is thus not interpreted as a predicate that applies to the topical discourse referent, but as an independent assertion, i.e. the predicate of worlds is applied to the actual world by default. Our example (2), repeated here as (22a), is therefore interpreted as shown in (22b):

- (22) a. If you are hungry,  $\downarrow$  (\*then) there is pizza in the fridge.  
 b.  $\text{REF}_X(\iota_{w_0}w[\text{hungry}(w)(\text{listener})]) \ \& \ \text{ASSERT}(\text{pizza\_is\_in\_the\_fridge}(w_0))$

That there is pizza in the fridge is thus asserted unconditionally, which is exactly what we observed for BCs. Note that our analysis of BCs as involving frame-setting topics automatically accounts for the fact that *then* is not allowed in BCs: the consequent would then necessarily be interpreted as a predicate that applies to the world denoted by the *if*-clause. Consequently, it would no longer be asserted unconditionally, and the respective sentence would be interpreted as an ordinary IC (which is extremely implausible in many cases).

On the other hand, since it holds of  $w_0$  irrespective of whether  $w_0$  actually satisfies the antecedent-predicate, there cannot be any causal connection between the two predicates. Thus, there has to be another reason for why the speaker mentioned the world denoted by the *if*-clause in connection with the matrix-assertion. The most plausible one is that the information provided by this assertion is especially relevant with respect to goals the addressee plausibly has in the antecedent-world. In the case of (22a), for example, a plausible goal of the addressee in the antecedent world would be to get something to eat. The information that there is pizza in the fridge (in this world, too) is of course highly relevant with respect to this goal.

### 3.4 Remaining Issues

This section addresses some issues that were left open in the discussion so far.

Recall the contrast in binding observed for GLD vs. HTLD as well as ICs vs. BCs, illustrated in (8) and (13), respectively. In the case of GLD, Ebert and Endriss (2007) argue that the left dislocated phrase containing a pronoun constitutes an instance of a *functional (aboutness) topic*. Glossing over the details, their analysis derives a representation for (8b) where in a first REF act of topic establishment a function  $f$  mapping an individual into the set of his supervisors is introduced into the discourse, while in the subsequent speech act it is asserted that every linguist admires whatever  $f$  assigns to him/her. We extend this approach in Ebert, Endriss and Hinterwimmer (to appear) to deal with HTLD and the IC vs.

BC contrast in the same way as indicated above for the non-functional case. We derive a interpretation for (13a) that can be paraphrased along the following lines: a function  $f$  that maps an individual into a possible world where that individual is groomed well (i.e. where the antecedent is true) is established as topic in the REF act and it is asserted that for every orchid it is true in the respective world assigned to it by  $f$  that it blossoms several times a year (see Ebert, Endriss and Hinterwimmer, to appear, as well as Endriss, to appear, for the formally spelled out analysis and further background reading on functional topics, respectively).

So far we restricted our attention to *assertive* speech acts of propositions that are structured into topic and comment. However, both kinds of topics discussed in this paper can occur with other speech acts like *questions* and *commands*. In this case, the notion that insures discourse coherence may not be *relevance* but a more general notion of felicity/appropriateness of which relevance is just the special case applicable for assertions. We will investigate the issue of topic interpretation with other speech acts in future work.

Furthermore, we have not yet discussed counterfactual conditionals, since subjunctive *if*-clauses are in general not acceptable in BCs. But since subjunctive *if*-clauses are compatible with *then*, it is clear that they can at least function as aboutness topics. Concerning the questions why they are not acceptable in BCs, we tentatively suggest that this is due to the following reason: it is hard to see why asserting something that is true in the actual world should be relevant with respect to a world of which the speaker explicitly assumes that it is *not* the actual world (as indicated by subjunctive marking).

An obvious question is how ICs without *then* are dealt with in our analysis. Concerning cases where the *if*-clause is fronted, we are faced with two options: first, we may assume that a silent *then* is present in such cases, and that the sentences are interpreted in the same way as ones with overt *then*. Alternatively, we might say that in these cases the *if*-clause is not left-dislocated but still part of the matrix clause, and hence not marked as aboutness topic. Consequently, it would not be interpreted as topic in a separate REF speech act, but as part of the matrix clause along the lines of a standard conditional analysis as in (19-20) that is truth conditionally equivalent to the topic analysis in (21). These two variants of ICs (with/without *then*) would then be treated entirely parallel to the distinction of GLD (signalling topic marking) vs. simple fronting of the corresponding DP (no topic marking).

Concerning sentences with postposed *if*-clauses, we follow Schiffrin (1992) and Dancygier (1998: 445ff.) in assuming that postposing serves a backgrounding function and that postposed *if*-clauses accordingly tend to be non-topical, similar to the just mentioned case. Finally, with respect to postposed *if*-clauses in BCs, there is some evidence that these cases are instances of a type of construction called *Afterthought*, where unclear pronominal reference is resolved by right-adjointing a referential DP to the respective matrix sentence (see Averintseva-Klisch, 2006 for discussion). In the case of BCs, this means that the speaker makes it clear by right-adjointing an *if*-clause to the matrix sentence that the respective assertion is not relevant to the speaker in general, but only under the condition that the actual world is identical to the world denoted by the *if*-clause. In other words, she makes it clear that she silently took the actual world to be one where the predicate characterizing the world denoted by the *if*-clause holds. There is thus also some kind of unclear reference involved in such cases, which is resolved via the (denotation of the) right-adjointed constituent. Again, the precise analyses of these cases will be the subjects of further research.

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