Research Centre for Japanese Language and Linguistics

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Null Arguments in Pre-modern Japanese

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Features of the OJ Corpus

XML mark-up following the internationally recognized standards of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI)

Phonemic transcription

Orthography

Part of speech

Morphology

Lexeme and morpheme ID; Lexicon

Syntactic constituency: clauses and NPs

Texts used in the
Old Japanese (8ᵗʰ Century) corpus

Kojiki kayō	古事記歌謡	712
Nihon shoki kayō	本書紀歌謡	720
Fudoki kayō	風土記歌謡	730s
Bussokuseki-ka	仏足石歌	after 753
Man'yōshū	万葉集	after 759
Shoku nihongi kayō	続日本紀歌謡	797

Three inflection types

7 of the inflection types in OJ are subordinators. We noticed that 3 of these, though similar in some respects, head clauses that contain null arguments to differing degrees.
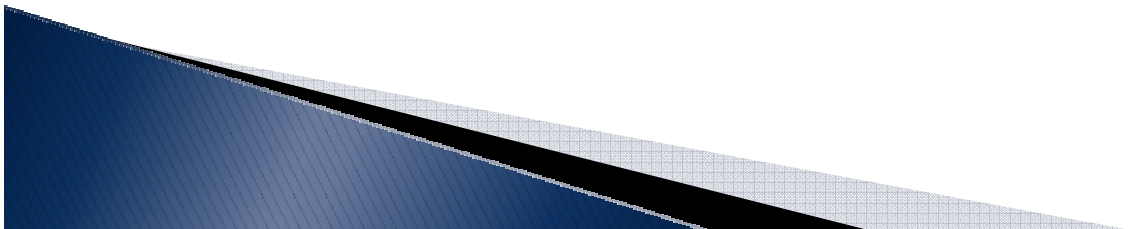
Provisional: *yukeba* "When/because (I) go"

Conditional: *yukaba* "If (I) go"

Concessive: *yukedo* "Even when (I) go"
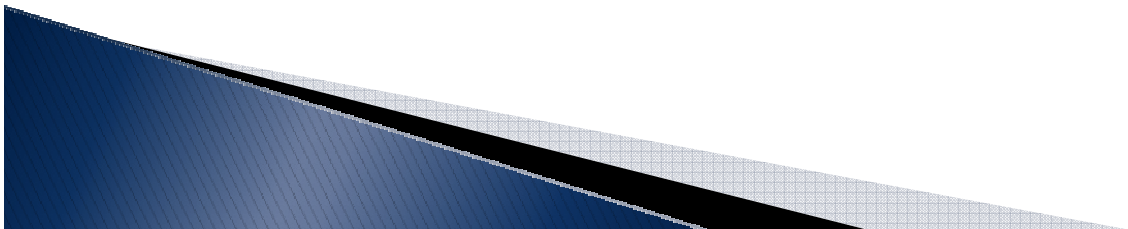
Population of 3 clause types

(OJ, overall)

	No.	Ratio of total (2108)
Provisional:	909	.43
Conditional:	651	.31
Concessive:	548	.26

Starting point

Clauses with empty frames (OJ corpus, overall):

	No.	Ratio within each clause type
Provisional:	417	.458
Conditional:	361	.554
Concessive:	463	.845

Example:MYS 20.4299

年月波 ╱ 安良多安良多爾 ╱ 安比美礼騰 ╱
安我毛布伎美波 ╱ 安伎太良奴可母

tositukwi pa ╱ arata-arata-ni ╱ ZERO api-
　　miredo
a ga mopu kimi pa ╱ aki-dara-nu kamo

"Though we see each other renewedly with the
　　months and years, how I never tire of you
　　upon whom my thoughts dwell. "

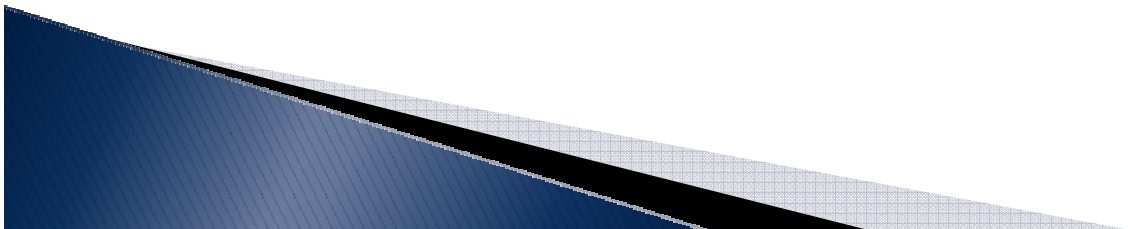# Phonographically written COJ

見者
miba ？ *mireba* ？
miba

	No.	Ratio of total (651)
Provisional:	281	.43
Conditional:	229	.35
Concessive:	141	.22

Unexpected results

Clauses with empty frames (COJ, phono):

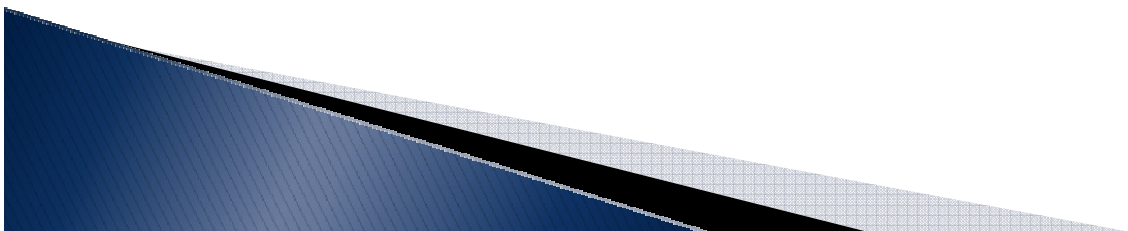|	No.	Ratio within each clause type
Provisional:	144	.512
Conditional:	109	.476
Concessive:	117	.830

Sampling the phon. data

100 tokens from each clause type, at random

This sample, compared to the aggregate of numbers for all three clause types, represents:

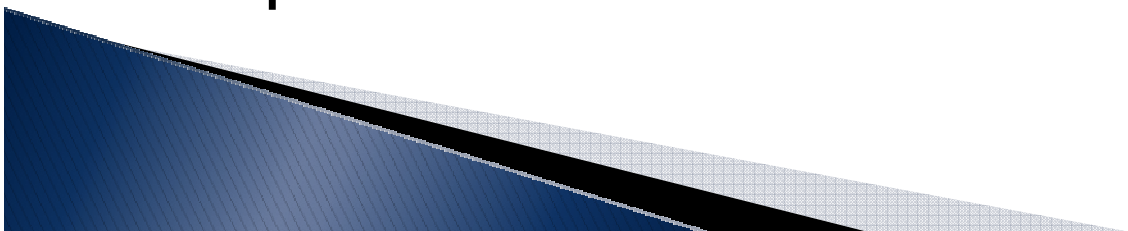14.2% of OJ, overall
46% of the phonographically written data

Assumptions

Empty argument slots were counted as null, whether they were the result of ellipsis, movement, or pro-drop.

Topicalized NPs are assumed to be adjoined to the clause and (normally) associated with a null position inside the clause.

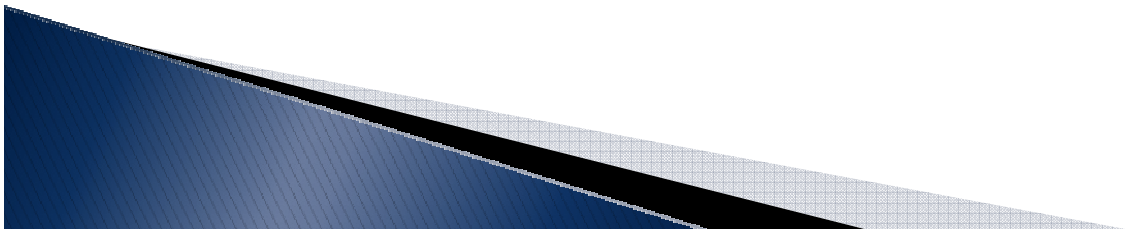NPs with topic markers are assumed to be topics.

Argument slots

NP arguments corresponding to four core grammatical roles:

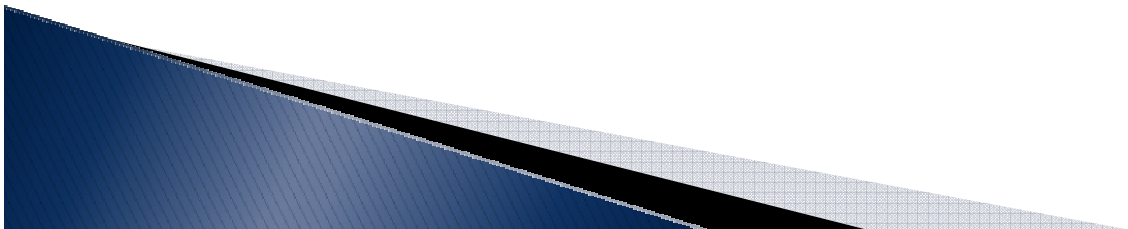Subject
Object
Indirect object
Experiencer/Possessor

The c0 predicate

Inflection: Prov/Cond/Conc
Predicate: *xxxxxxxxx*
No. of core NP argument slots: 1/2/3
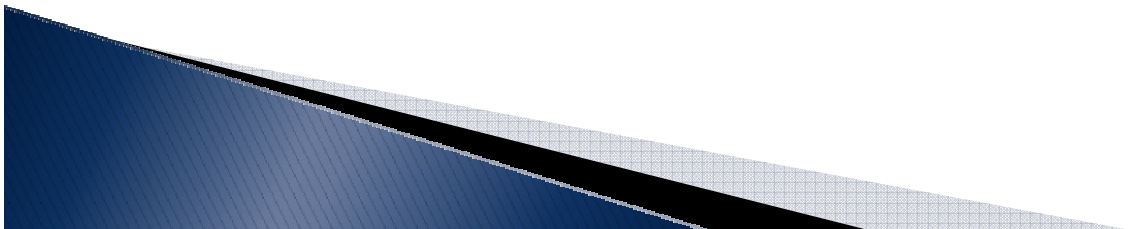
The 4 argument slots

3 categories for each of the 4 slots.

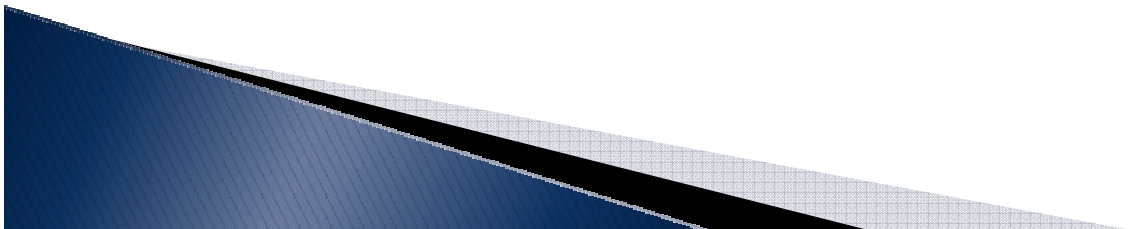For example the subject slot:

Subject: overt(= c0:arg)
Antecedent location: n/a
C1 grammatical role: none

Positions for endophoric antecedents

c0:low topic ; c0:topic ;
c1:arg ; c1:relative head; c1:low topic; c1:topic;
c1:right-dislocated; c1Right:topic;
coordRight:topic; coordLeft:arg;
coordLeft:topic;
c2:arg; c2:relative head;
vocative
Prev-S; Pev-S-event

Types of exophoric antecedents

1st person singular, plural
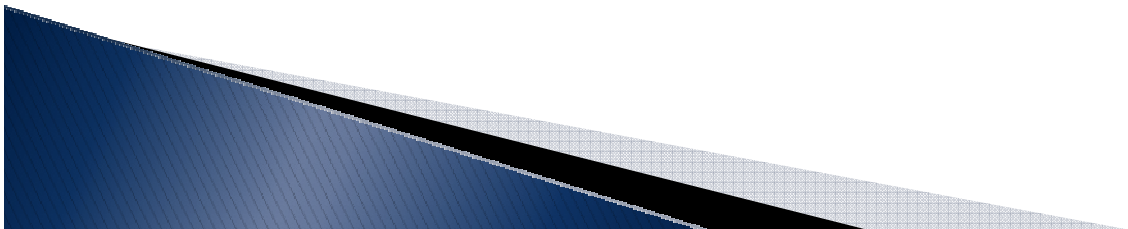
2nd person singular

3rd person singular

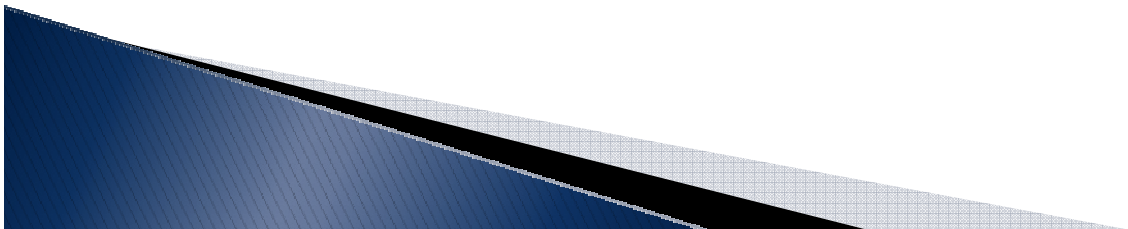Indeterminate as to person

Time

Weather

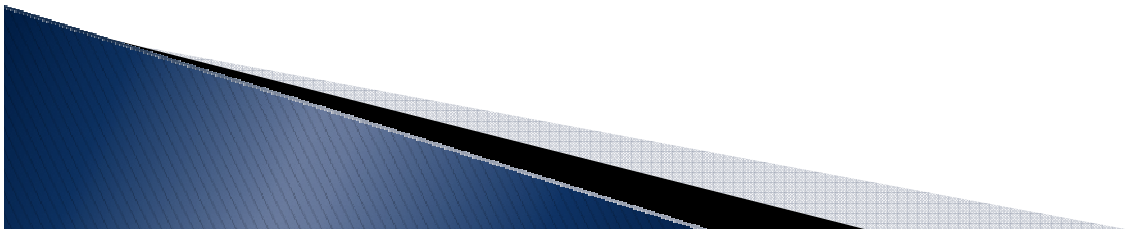# Null arguments with exophoric reference:

	subj	obj	ind	exp/poss	exo	null	ratio
Prov:	52	3	4	1	60	74	.810
Cond:	53	7	6	3	69	95	.766
Conc:	45	10	2	2	59	125	.472

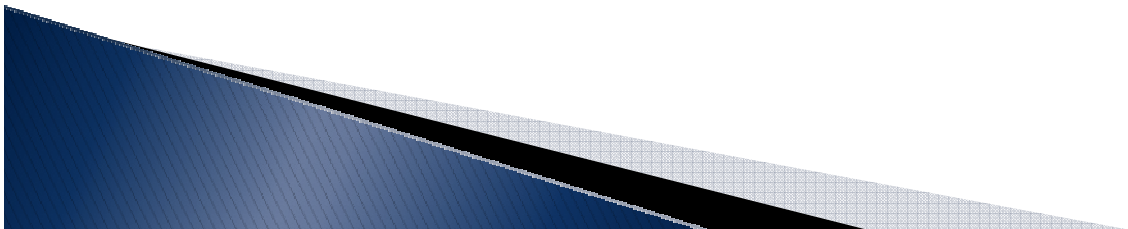# Analysis by Arg-slot

Subjects:

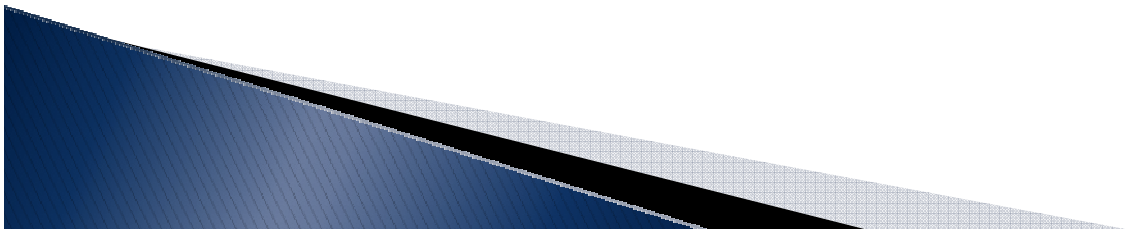|	Overt	Null
Provisional:	40	60
Conditional:	30	70
Concessive:	10	90

Analysis by arg-slot

Objects:

	Overt	Null
Provisional:	23	8
Conditional:	16	15
Concessive:	2	26

Analysis by arg-slot

Indirect object:
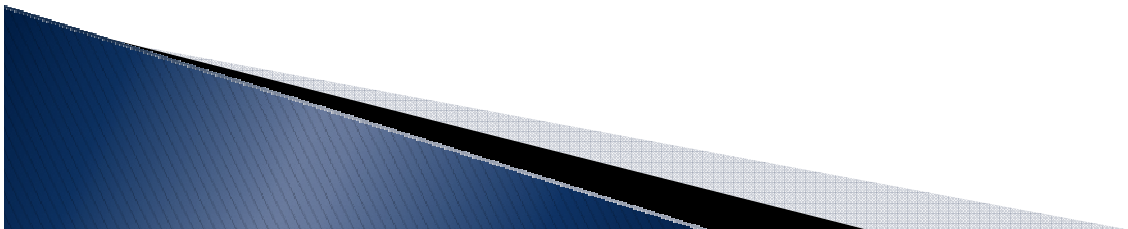
	Overt	Null
Provisional:	1	5
Conditional:	1	7
Concessive:	0	5

Analysis by arg-slot
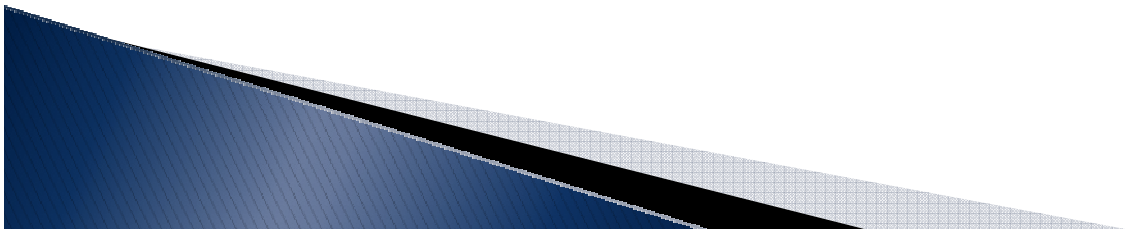
Exp'cer/Pos'sor

	Overt	Null
Provisional:	0	1
Conditional:	0	3
Concessive:	0	4

Empty frames

(out of 100 tokens)

	1-place	2-place	3-place	total
Provisional:	32	10	0	42
Conditional:	41	26	1	68
Concessive:	58	28	0	86

Saturated frames

(out of 100 tokens) :
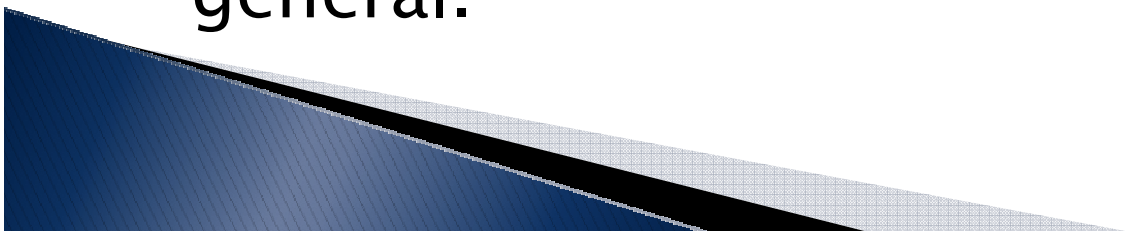
	1-place	2-place	3-place	total
Provisional:	33	4	0	37
Conditional:	22	2	0	24
Concessive:	5	0	0	5
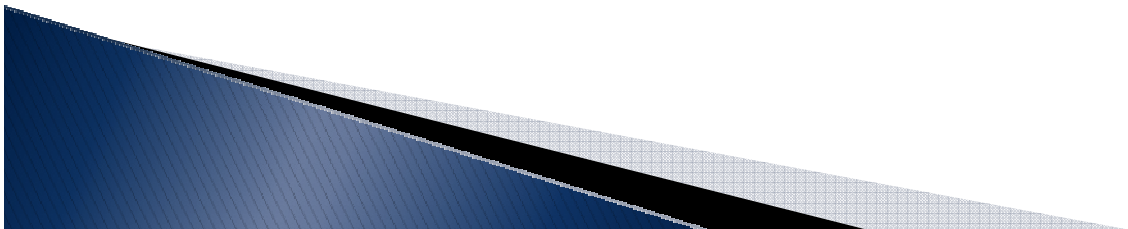
Counting empty and filled argument slots

	Null	No. of slots	Ratio
Provisional:	74	137	.540
Conditional:	95	142	.669
Concessive:	125	137	.912

A more fine-grained analysis suggests the pattern we initially saw for empty frames is a reflection of a tendency in null arguments in general.
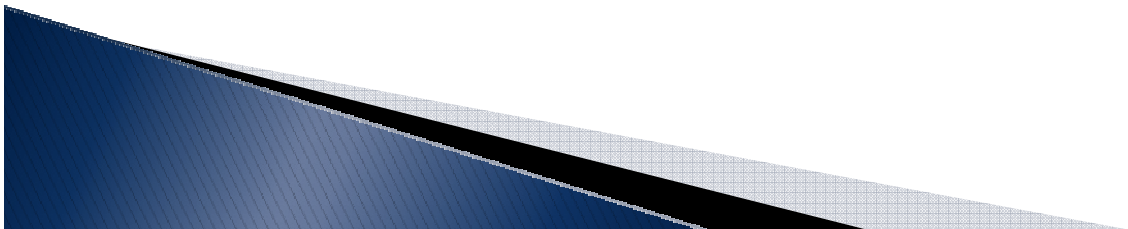
Overt args in the Provisional

安伎也麻能 ／ 毛美知乎可射之 ／ 和我乎礼婆 ／
宇良之保美知久 ／ 伊麻太安可奈久爾

*akiyama no | momidi wo kazasi | wa ga woreba
urasipo mitiku | imada aka–naku ni*

"When I sit wearing the colored leaves of the
autumn mountain, the shore tide flows full,
as I haven't yet had my fill." (MYS.15.3707)

Notable patterns

38 null arguments with a c0:low topic or c0:topic as an antecedent

35 of them appear in concessive clauses

There is one case of c0:subject to c1:subject forced backwards control in KK.51

There is one case of a c0:low topic subject co-referring to a c1:arg object in MYS.5.854

Otherwise, null arguments corresponding with a c0:low topic or c0:topic never have a grammatical role in c1.
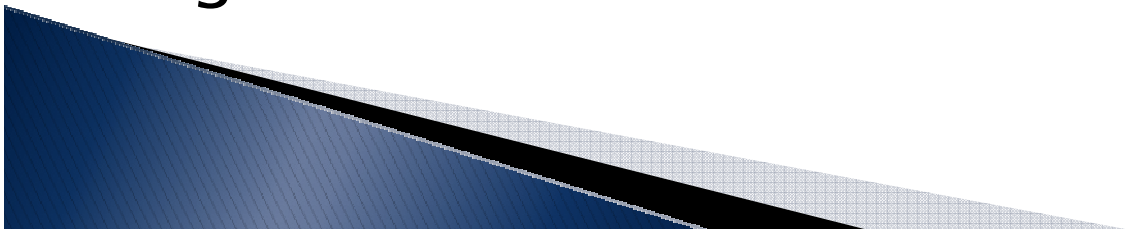
C0:topic antecedent

模騰渠等爾 / 娑那播左該騰模 / 那爾騰柯母 /
于都俱之伊母我 / 磨陁左枳串渠農

moto gotoni / *pana pa sakedomo* / *nani to mo*
/ *utukusi imo ga* / *mata saki–de–ko–nu*

"Though flowers bloom on every stalk, how is it
that my beautiful girl still hasn't come out
blossoming?" (NSK.114)

Switch reference

Morphological elements at points of clause
juncture indicating that a null argument with
a subject grammatical role in a subordinate
clause co-refers with an argument in the
superordinate clause with the same role
("same subject", or "SS" function) or not
("different subject", or "DS" function).
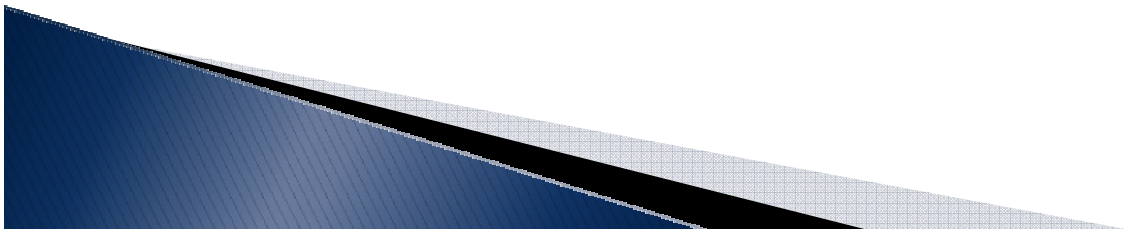
Claim for EMJ

Inflected forms ending in *-ba* (Provisional and
Conditional) have as DS function. (Akiba
1977; Fujii 1985)
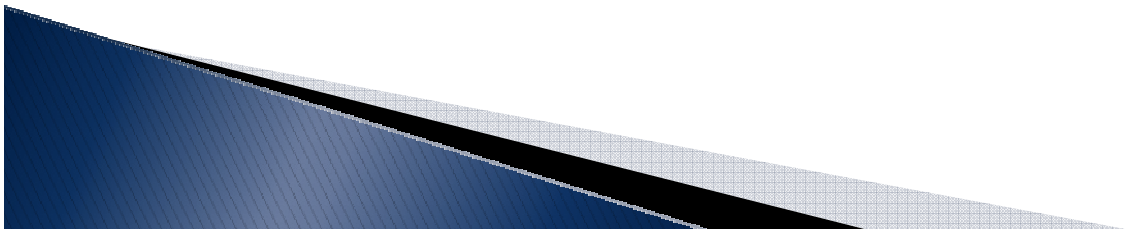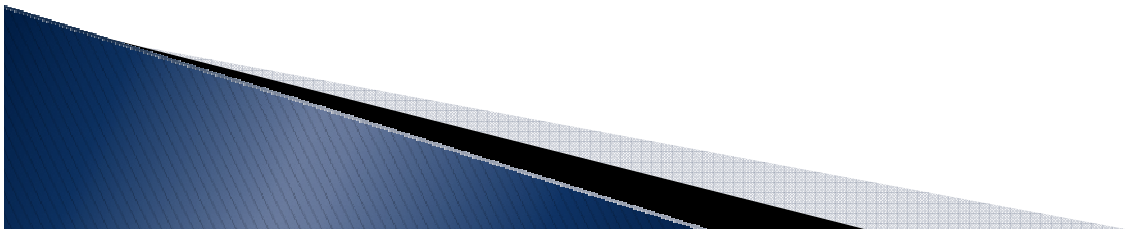
DS function in EMJ

Switch reference of conjunctive particles in
  Sakaki:

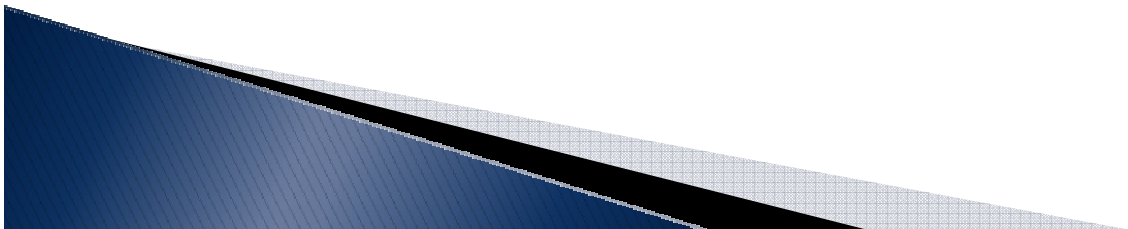   Switch of subject

–ba 68.7%

–do 73.1%

    (McAuley 2002: pg. 32, table.5)

DS function in COJ

	switch	null	ratio
Provisional:	38	50	.760
Conditional:	50	70	.714
Concessive:	66	90	.733

Role discontinuity in COJ

All 4 grammatical roles

	overt	diff	none	total	clauses	ratio
Prov:	40	18	30	88	99	.89
Cond:	30	18	27	75	96	.78
Conc:	10	16	47	73	97	.75

Shift in switch reference:

Provisional has strong DS in OJ.

Concessive comes to have stronger DS than the Provisional and Conditional in EMJ

The Provisional and Conditional become SS by LMJ (Ohori 1994)
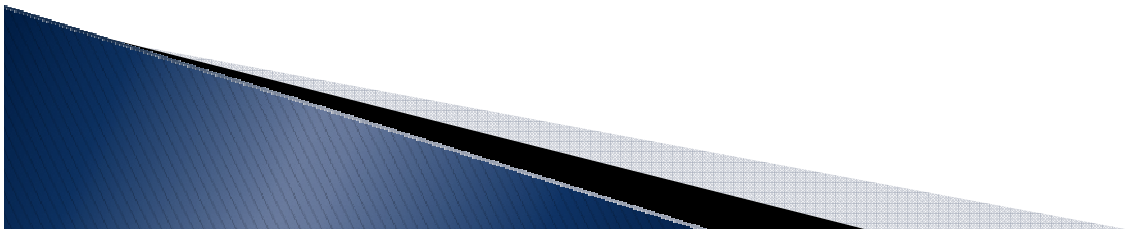
Shift in semantics

Provisional takes on the irealis conditional meaning by NJ

Conditional form almost dies out in colloquial speech by NJ

Some of the realis conditional functions of the Provisional are taken over by new patterns with conjunctional *to* and inflection *-tara*

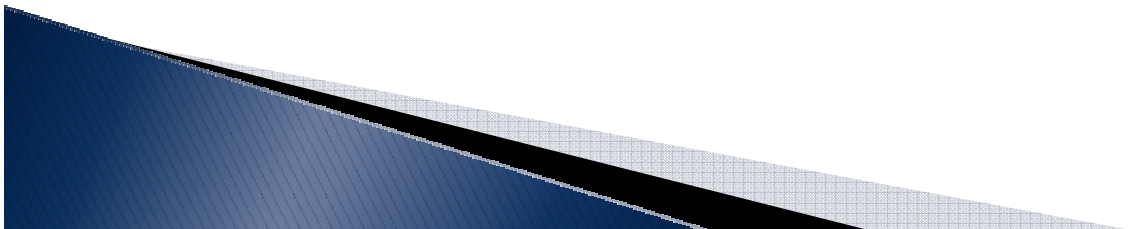# Is NJ *to* like OJ Provisional?

Yamaguchi-Fujii (1993, pg.16) says yes. There are semantic restrictions on *to* that might explain a high rate of overt arguments.

to embedded in non-past tense c_1: a habitual, or logical condition-consequent relation

to embedded in past tense c_1: "After/while S_1 happened, what do you think happened? I observed/discovered that S_2 happened".
(Kuno 1973: pp. 184-199)

Uncontrollability a factor?

In NJ *to* the action denoted by the c1 predicate cannot be controllable by the c0 subject.

*太郎が運転すると、あの帽子をかぶる。
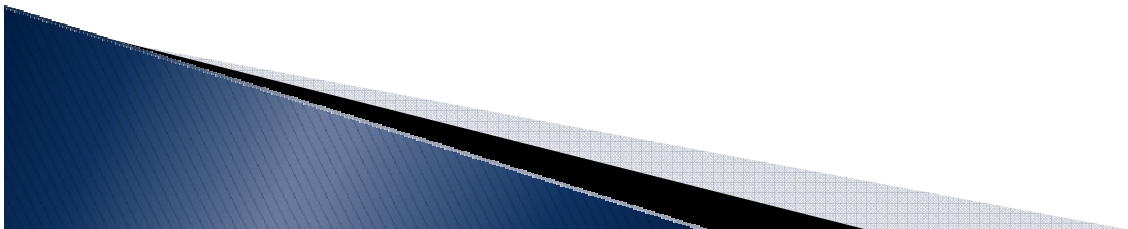"When Taro drives he wears that hat."

Furthermore, with NJ *to* condition, the consequent cannot represent a command, a request, or a determination by the speaker. (Kuno 1973)

Probably not

The predicate heads of clauses embedding Concessives show a high number of adjectives, unaccuasitives.

It is possible to find Provisional conditions to optative consequents in OJ.
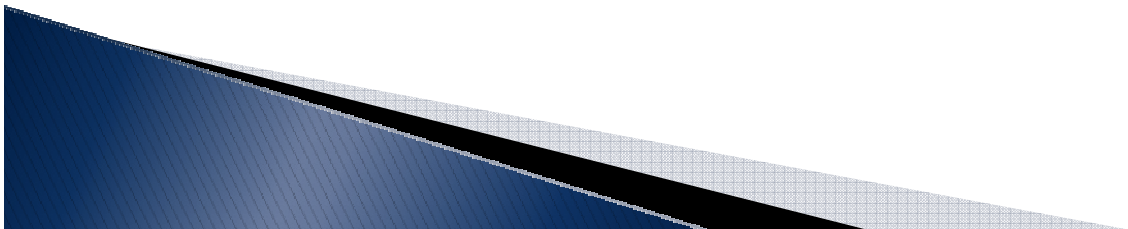
Example

阿我農斯能 / 美多麻多麻比弓 / 波流佐良婆 /
奈良能美夜故爾 / 咩佐宜多麻波祢

a ga nusi no / mi-tama tamapite / paru sareba/
nara no miyakwo ni / myesage-tamapane

"My Lord, by your leave, when Spring comes, I
want you to summon me to Nara, the capitol"
(MYS.5.882)

Pronouns in c0:arg

Definite NP pronouns in COJ (phonographic)

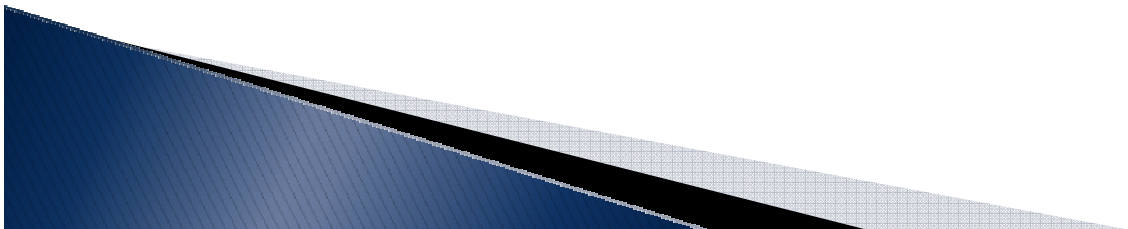|	pronouns	Est. slots	ratio
Provisional:	32	383	.083
Conditional:	11	319	.034
Concessive:	7	193	.036

Pronouns in c0:arg

Definite NP pronouns in EMJ

Ise monogatari   circa 900
Tosa niki   935

	pronouns	Est. slots	ratio
Provisional:	26	428	.06
Conditional:	3	109	.027
Concessive:	5	100	.05

References

Akiba, Katsue. 1977. "Switch reference in old Japanese," Proceedings of the annual meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society, Volume 3, Berkeley Linguistics Society, pp.610-619

Kuno, Susumu. 1973. The Structure of the Japanese Language. MIT Press.

McAuley, T.E.. 2002. "Switch-reference and semantic discontinuity in Late Old Japanese," Journal of Japanese Linguistics, 2002, Nanzan University.

Neeleman and Szendro:i, (University college London and Utrecht Institute of Linguistics) "Pro drop and pronouns", Proceedings of the 24th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics, John Alderete et l. (eds) 299-307, Somerville, MA. Cascadilla Proceedings Project

Ohori, T. 1994. "Diachrony of Clause Linkage: TE and BA in Old through Middle Japanese," Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science Series 4, 1994, Issue 109, pp. 135, John Benjamins BV, Netherlands.

Yamaguchi-Fujii, Seiko. 1993. "On the clause-linking to construction in Japanese." Japanese/Korean Linguistics 2. pp.3-19