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A Metonymic Account of Biscuit Conditionals: A development on Choi and Joh (2016)

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ABSTRACT

The Journal of Studies in Language 36.2, 211-225. Biscuit conditionals are peculiar in that the truth value of the consequent is always true, unlike indicative conditionals where the consequent's truth value is contingent on the truth value of the antecedent. In Choi and Joh (2016), it is claimed that the peculiarity of the biscuit conditionals can be mitigated when the antecedent is interpreted as a question and the consequent as an answer through speech act metonymy. The metonymic analysis is based on the Question scenario that Panther and Thornburg (1999) suggest. However, some biscuit conditionals with an imperative and a question in their consequent clauses seem resistant to the analysis. In the paper, it is claimed that they are similarly explained if the Request or the Emotion scenario is applied on top of the Question scenario. **(Chosun University · Mokpo National University)**

Keywords: biscuit conditionals, indicative conditionals, speech act metonymy, scenario approach, question scenario

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본인이 투고한 논문은 다른 학술지에 게재된 적이 없으며 타인의 논문을 표절하지 않았음을 서약합니다. 추후 중복게재 혹은 표절된 것으로 밝혀질 시에는 논문게재 취소와 일정 기간 논문 제출의 제한 조치를 받게 됨을 인지하고 있습니다.

1. Introduction

DeRose and Grandy (1999) differentiate biscuit conditionals from indicative conditionals by the characteristic that their consequent clause is true all the time, as shown in (1), whereas in indicative conditionals, the truth value of the consequent is dependent on the truth value of the antecedent, as shown in (2). This means that the truth value of the consequent of biscuit conditionals is not contingent on the truth value of the antecedent.

(1) a. There are biscuits on the sideboard if you are hungry.
b. If you are interested, there's a good documentary on PBS tonight.
c. Oswald shot Kennedy, if that's what you're asking me.

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(2) a. There are biscuits on the sideboard if Bill hasn't moved them.
b. If the TV guide is accurate, there's a good documentary on PBS tonight.
c. Oswald shot Kennedy, if there hasn't been enormous conspiracy.

In Choi and Joh (2016), it is claimed that the peculiarity of the biscuit conditionals can be mitigated when the antecedent is interpreted as a question and the consequent as an answer through speech act metonymy. In the example in (1a), the antecedent has the metonymic interpretation as the question *Where can I find food*? and the consequent clause is construed as the answer *The biscuits are on the cupboard*. Then the biscuit conditional behaves like an indicative conditional in that the truth of the consequent becomes dependent on the truth of antecedent as in *If the question is, Where can I find food?, the answer is, The biscuit is on the sideboard* and *If the question is not, Where can I find food?, the answer is not, The biscuit is on the sideboard.*

However, some biscuit conditionals involving an imperative or a question in their consequent clauses seem to be resistant to the Question Scenario analysis. This paper claims that the analysis does apply to these biscuit conditionals, if Panther and Thornburg's (1999) Request and Exclamation Scenarios are applied on top of the Question Scenario which has been utilized for the analysis of regular biscuit condtionals.

2. Literature Review on Biscuit Conditionals

To explain the peculiar characteristic of biscuit conditionals, many theories have been offered. In the following, we will discuss major approaches and discuss their limitations.

2.1 Traditional Speech Act

The most predominant theories on biscuit conditionals have tried to explain them based on traditional speech act. Under this traditional view, there are largely two related but different approaches. Siegel call them a performative approach and an assertion account. In the following, we will briefly discuss them.

On the one hand, Ross (1970), Lakoff (1972), Sadock (1974), Comrie (1986), Van der Auwera (1986), Iatridou (1991), etc. have attempted to analyze biscuit conditionals basically as underlyingly lexical performantive sentences. Thus, the performative approach translates the utterance in (3a) as in (3b).

(3) a. If you are hungry, there are biscuits on the sideboard.
b. If you are hungry, I say to you there are biscuits on the sideboard.

However, studies such as Bach and Harnish (1979), Boër and Lycan (1980), Portner (2004) refute this performative approach with the following evidence. First, it is awkward to paraphrase (4a) into (4b). Second, some biscuit conditionals cannot pass the *hereby* test for performatives as shown in (5).

(4) a. If you need anything else later, my name is James.
b. If you need anything else later, I say to you that my name is James.
(5) a. *If you need anything else later, my name is hereby James.
b. *If you need anything else later, I hereby say to you that my name is James.

On the other hand, Grice (1967), Dummet (1973), Bach and Harnish (1979), Horn (1989), Bach (1999), Siegel (2006) etc. advance a so-called assertion approach by claiming that the consequent of biscuit conditionals is to be viewed as an assertion. However, Ebert et al. (2008) find many counter-examples. For instance, the biscuit conditional in (6) is a command, not an assertion. This can be evidenced by the fact that (6) can be followed by the sentences in (7). Furthermore, Ebert et al. (2008) claim that biscuit conditionals can also be a question and a request as illustrated in (8).

(6) If they ask you how old you are, you're four.
(7) a. No, I won't say that!
b. No, I'm grown up, you can't boss me around!
(8) a. If John is smart, why can't he find a job?
b. If you see John, please say hello from me.

2.2 Topicality

Ebert et al. (2008) provide a novel theory on biscuit conditionals. Based on parallelism between two types of topicality and two types of left dislocation, they claim that left-peripheral if-clauses of indicative conditionals involve aboutness topicality which is parallel to German Left Dislocation (GLD) while left-peripheral if-clauses of biscuit conditionals concern frame setting topicality which resembles Hanging Topic Left Dislocation (HTLD). Therefore, under this theory, the biscuit conditional in (9a) is to be paraphrased as in (9b).

(9) a. If you are hungry, there is pizza in the fridge.
b. As for the possibility that you are hungry, there is pizza in the fridge.

However, there is not a trivial limitation of this approach as Ebert et al. (2008) themselves admit. The limitation comes from the fact that both indicative conditionals and biscuit conditionals do not necessarily appear in the left periphery but also can occur in the right periphery as shown below. Thus, the theory based on the parallelism between two types of conditionals and two types of left dislocation is on the shaky ground since indicative conditionals and biscuit conditionals in (10) do not make essential differences from those in (11).

(10) a. If you want some, there are biscuits on the sideboard
b. If Bill hasn't moved them, there are biscuits on the sideboard.
(11) a. There are biscuits on the sideboard if you want some.
b. There are biscuits on the sideboard if Bill hasn't moved them.

2.3 Disguised Conversation

Joh (2011) offers another novel perspective on biscuit conditionals. She claims that biscuit conditionals are disguised conversations so that the sentence in (12) can be paraphrased as in (13). That is, biscuit conditionals are formed when a speaker has a particular question in mind but also has some predictions about the answer. Under this circumstance, the speaker does not go through the tedious processes of asking the question and waiting for the answer. Instead, the speaker abbreviates them under if-clause and the consequent clause.

(12) If you are hungry, there are biscuits on the sideboard.
(13) A: Are you hungry?
B (Anticipated Answer): Yes, I am hungry.
A: There are biscuits on the sideboard. (Joh, 2011: 260)

According to Joh (2011), since the underlying meaning of the biscuit conditional in (12) is the conversation in (13) comprising of questions and answers, it can be naturally explained that implicature arises out of the consequent clause. In fact, what is actually meant by the consequent clause "there are biscuits on the sideboard" is that "you can eat the biscuits on the sideboard.

However, a limitation is also detected with some biscuit conditionals. Some conversation-like paraphrases do not go smoothly. For instance, the conversation in (15) is to be the paraphrase for the biscuit conditional in (14). Yet, the assumption that the listener will need something later is not naturally connected with the following statement *My name is Kate*. Another example in (17) also reveals a similar problem. We need more elaborations between the question and the answer in (17) which can be claimed to be the paraphrase of the biscuit conditional in (16).

(14) If you need anything else later, my name is Kate.
(15) A: Will you need anything else later?
B: (Anticipated Answer): Yes, I will need something later.
A: My name is Kate. (Choi and Joh, 2016: 91)
(16) If they ask you how old you are, you're four.
(17) A: Will they ask you how old you are?
B: (Anticipated Answer) Yes, they will.
A: You're four. (Choi and Joh, 2016: 91)

2.4 Speech Act Metonymy

Choi and Joh (2016) basically adopt Joh's (2011) approach that biscuit conditionals are disguised conversations but try to develop her idea to overcome the problems discussed above. In short, through metonymic links, Choi and Joh (2016) fill out the missing connection that Joh (2011) could not explain properly. There are in fact various types of metonymy. Among them, they use speech act metonymy to explain the missing connections in Joh (2011). Thus, in the following, we will briefly review what speech act metonymy is and how Choi and Joh (2016) try to account for biscuit conditionals employing it.

In various contexts, a statement can stand for a question as shown in (18) and a question can stand for a request as shown in (19). When one speech act is utilized for another, a speech act metonymy arises.

(18) a. I am wondering if I can take you to the cinema on Friday night.
b. Can I take you to the cinema on Friday night?
(19) a. Can you pass me the salt?
b. Please pass me the salt.

Panther and Thornburg (1998; 1999; 2005; 2007) and Thornburg and Panther (1997) illustrate the scenario for directive speech acts as in (20).

(20) Scenario for Directive Speech Acts
(i) the BEFORE: H can do A.
S wants H to do A.
(ii) the CORE: S puts H under a (more or strong) obligation to do A.
the RESULT: H is under an obligation to do A (H must/should/ought to do A).
(iii) the AFTER: H will do A. (Panther and Thornburg, 1999: 336)

When one of BEFORE, RESULT, AFTER conditions is used for the CORE or the entire scenario, we can have indirect speech act, as Panther and Thornburg (1999) claim as below.

(21) "John, you will take out the garbage," in which "the AFTER condition metonymically stands for the CORE of the requestive speech act scenario or the scenario as a 'whole.'" (Panther and Thornburg, 1999: 337)

Then, a scenario for questions can be illustrated as in (22), where a BEFORE condition is employed to refer to the CORE part of the scenario or the entire scenario.

(22) Scenario for Questions
(i) the BEFORE: S has a desire to know something.
S wants to get some information from H.
H can give the information to S.
(ii) the CORE: S asks H of something.
the RESULT: H can choose to give an answer to S.
(iii) the AFTER: H will give an answer to S. (Panther and Thornburg, 1999: 337)

Based on speech act metonymy introduced above, Choi and Joh (2016) analyze biscuit conditionals. In essence, the antecedent clause of biscuit conditionals indicates BEFORE conditions, "desire," while the consequent clause indicates "desire for information that will lead to satisfaction." Via metonymic linkage, the BEFORE conditions are translated into the CORE condition of the question scenario, that is, "inquiry." The consequent clause can be explained by the

AFTER condition which is "an answer for the inquiry."

Thus, under the speech act metonymy view, the conditional clause and the consequent clause of the biscuit conditional in (23) can be illustrated as in (24) and (25), respectively.

(23) There are biscuits in the cupboard if you are hungry.

(24) Conditional Clause

a. If you are hungry

b. Then you want to eat food (desire)

c. Then you want to know where to find food (necessity to get information)

d. Then your question to me is "Where can I find food?" (question)

(25) Consequent clause

a. There are biscuits in the cupboard

b. My answer to you is that there are biscuits in the cupboard (answer) (Choi and Joh, 2016: 94-95)

More specifically, the metonymic link for (23) can be summarized as in Figure 1 below. The situation that the listener is hungry indicates the eating desire, via CAUSE FOR EFFECT metonymy. The cause, *one's hunger*, then refers to the effect, *one's desire to eat*. In the scenario for the question, one's desire and the necessity to come to know the way to satisfy that desire are necessary BEFORE conditions for the interrogative, *Where can I find food*? Then, the consequent clause indicates the AFTER condition which can serve as the answer. This way, the biscuit conditional is metonymically a disguised conversation comprising a series of question and answer in a systematic manner.

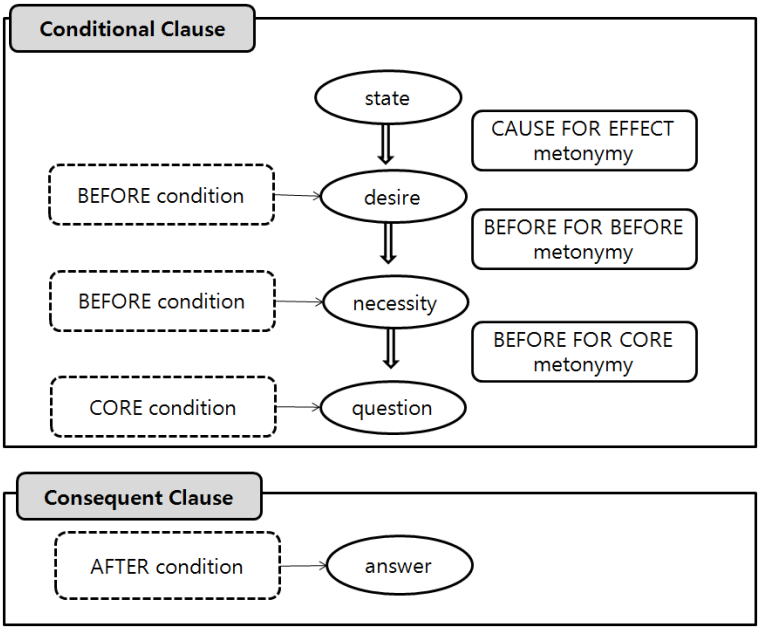

Fig. 1. Metonymic Link of Conditional and Consequent (Choi and Joh, 2016: 95)

What is said in Figure 1 is that the conditional part is interpreted as a question which is eventually indicated by the conditional clause through metonymic links

3. Problems

As explained in Choi and Joh (2016), most biscuit conditionals can be understood as question and answer pairs through speech act metonymy, as shown in (26) through (34). The antecedent in (26) is understood as a question since the *if*-clause includes a need and desire, as in (27b), which leads to the question in (27d).

(26) If you need anything else later, my name is Kate.
(27) a. If you need something later
b. Then you may need somebody to help you (need & desire)
c. Then you may want to ask me for help and to do so you may want to know my name (what is needed to satisfy the desire)
d. Then your question must be "What is your name?" (question)
e. Then my answer to your question is that my name is Kate (answer) (Choi and Joh, 2016: 98)

The same applies to (28). A hearer's interest naturally comes down to his desire and necessity to know more about what he is interested in, as in (29b) and (29c), and the desire and necessity lead to the question *How can I get more information regarding what I am interested in?*, as in (29d).

(28) If you are interested, there's a good documentary on PBS tonight.
(29) a. If you are interested in something, (state)
b. Then you may want to know more about what you are interested in. (desire)
c. Then you may want to know how to get the information related to your interest.
(necessity to know the way to satisfy the desire)
d. Then your question may be "Where can I find a documentary program that will give me more information on my interest?" (question)
e. Then my answer to you is, there's a good documentary on PBS tonight. (answer) (Choi and Joh, 2016: 96)

Similarly in (30), the hearer's desire and need to know what answer should he provide when he is asked about his age lead to the question *What should be an appropriate answer to the question?*, as in (31d).

(30) If they ask you how old you are, you are four.
(31) a. If they ask you how old you are
b. Then you'll have to answer (obligation & desire)
c. Then you may want to know what your answer should be.(necessity to know how to satisfy the desire)
d. Then your question must be, "How old should I be?" (question)
e. Then my answer to you is that you are four. (answer) (Choi and Joh, 2016: 98-99)

The next biscuit conditional is different from the previous examples in that it directly enters the stages of question, omitting some previous stages of desire and/or necessity. The conditional clause in (32), in itself, includes a question even though the content of the question is not explicitly expressed. The truth value of *Oswald shot Kennedy* is not

dependent on the truth value of *if that's what your are asking me,* but on the truth value of *My answer to you is that Oswald shot Kennedy* does.

(32) Oswald shot Kennedy, if that's what you're asking me.
(33) a. If that's what you are asking me
b. Then your question is "Who shot Kennedy?" (question)
c. Then my answer to you is that Oswald shot Kennedy. (answer) (Choi and Joh, 2016: 98)

As we have observed, some biscuit conditionals require several steps to reach the stage of question and others do not need the precondition stages, but directly enter the question stage. Despite the fact that all the biscuit conditionals do not behave exactly the same, they fall into the same category, one that is metonymically interpreted as a question-and-answer pair.

However, as is indicated in the footnote of Choi and Joh (2016), the metonymic approach does not seem to provide an appropriate explanation to the following examples, since they involve an imperative or a question in their consequent clauses which do not seem to receive the 'answer' interpretation.

(34) If you see John, please say hello from me.
(35) If John is smart, why can't he find a job? (Choi and Joh, 2016: 98)

This paper will argue that the seemingly recalcitrant examples are also interpreted as the same question-and-answer pair, adopting Panther and Thornburg's (1999) analysis for independent *if*-clauses. In the next two sections, it will be demonstrated how their scenario approach explains the peculiar biscuit conditionals.

4. Request and Question Scenarios for Biscuit Conditionals

4.1 The Request Scenario

Through a cognitive-based scenario approach, Panther and Thornburg (1999) demonstrate how the dependent hypothetical *if*-clauses perform independent speech acts and in what way their pragmatic forces are motivated. The examples in (36) are dependent *if*-clauses but they perform independent speech acts. The first example *if you will come to order* has the *request* function, the second one *why, if it isn't Susan!* has the function that is *expression of surprise*, and the third one *if you would like a cookie*, has the *offer* function.

(36) a. If you will come to order [request]
b. Why, if it isn't Susan! [expression of surprise]
c. If you would like a cookie. [offer] (Panther and Thornburg, 1999: 129)

What Panther and Thornburg (1999) claim is that the conjunction marker *if,* as a space builder, creates a hypothetical state of affairs which is referred to as p and that, since *if*-clause does not stand alone in regular cases, the presence of the

conjunction *if* creates additional conceptual material which is metonymically activated. The additional conceptual material involves some consequence q, the evaluation of p, the assessment of the truth of p, and the speaker's emotional attitude toward p. The idea is suggested as in (37).

(37) The Conceptual Space of the *if-clause*
WHAT IS EXPLICITLY EXPRESSED:
− a hypothetical/possible situation or state of affairs, p
WHAT IS IMPLICATED/METONYMICALLY ACTIVATED:
− some consequence, q, that, in a given context, may follow from p;
− an assessment of the truth of p, and by extension, q, e.g., true > possible/nonactual > doubtful > false;
− an evaluation of p, and by extension, q, e.g., good/desirable > neutral > bad/undesirable;
− an emotional attitude towards p, and by extension, q, e.g., surprise, awe, wonderment, gratitude, indignation, bitterness, indifference. (Panther and Thornburg, 1999: 129)

According to Panther and Thornburg, in the sentence *if you will come to order,* what is explicitly mentioned as a hypothetical state of affairs is *you will come to order,* as in (36a). But as explained in (37), its consequence is metonymically activated as in (38b) in some context, namely in a noisy classroom.

(38) a. Proposition p: You will come to order
b. Inferable q: ...then I will begin the lecture (Panther and Thornburg, 1999: 131)

The modal verb *will* explicitly indicates a hearer's willingness. The hearer's ability to perform the action and the speaker's desire for the action to be done by the hearer are implicitly activated. The three components forming BEFORE and AFTER parts of the request scenario all together activate the CORE and the RESULT parts of the scenario.

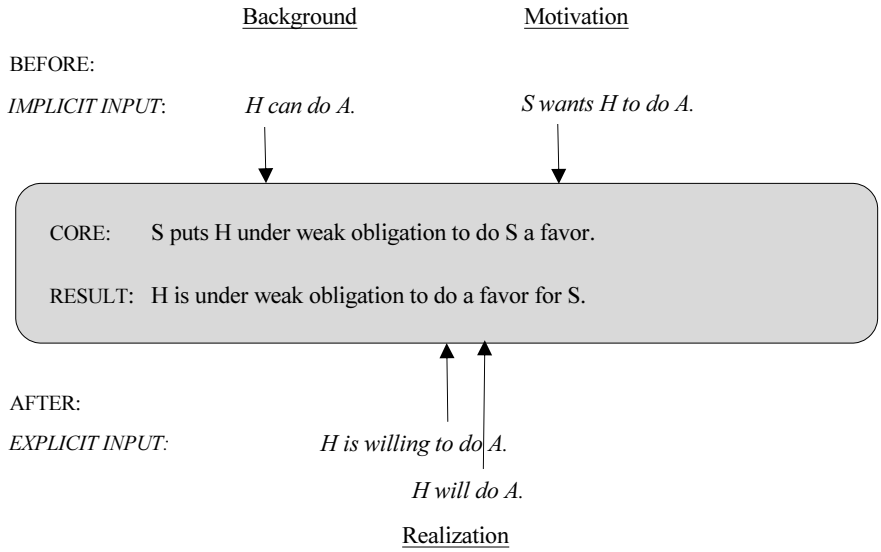

Fig. 2. The *Request* scenario (Panther and Thornburg, 1999: 134)

4.2 Combination of the Request and the Question Scenarios for Biscuit Conditionals

The explanation can be applied to the example *If you see John, say hello from me*. The conditional state *you see John* metonymically indicates a hearer's ability to do what the speaker wants the hearer to do. Then the hearer's ability and the speaker's desire become implicit inputs for the request scenario.

(39) If you see John, please say hello from me
a. If you see John (state)
b. Then you can do something for me when you see John (ability)

The conditional state is explicitly expressed as *you meet John*. It metonymically implicates BEFORE conditions for the request scenario, the hearer's ability *you can do me a favor* and the speaker's desire *I want you to do me a favor.* The BEFORE conditions, in turn, refer to CORE & RESULT.

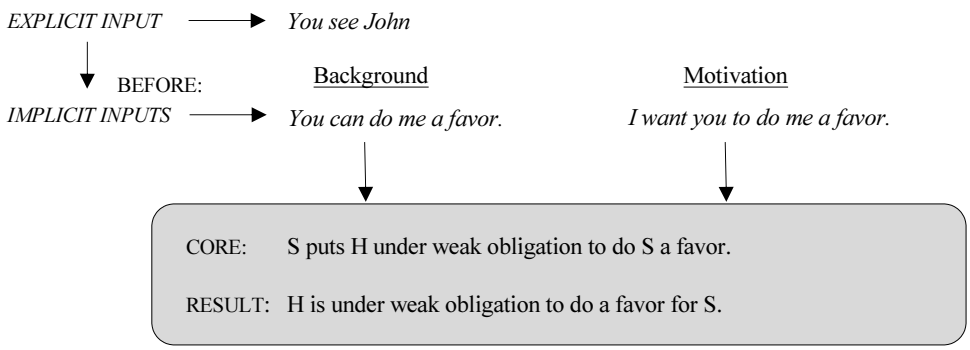

Fig. 3. How the conditional clause fits into the request scenario

At this point, the speaker assumes that the hearer wants to know what he can do for the speaker and, in order to provide the answer, he imposes a question on the hearer. Therefore, the part of the request scenario feeds into the question scenario, as shown in Figure 4.

We can summarize the combination of the request scenario and the question scenario as shown in (40).

(40) If you see John, please say hello from me.
a. If you see John (state)
b. Then you can do something for me when you see John (ability)
c. Then you will want to do something for me (willingness)
==> Request Scenario
d. Then you may need to know what you can do for me when you see John (desire)
e. Then your question to me is that 'Is there anything I can do for you?' (question)
f. My answer to your question is Please say hello from me. (answer)
==> Question Scenario

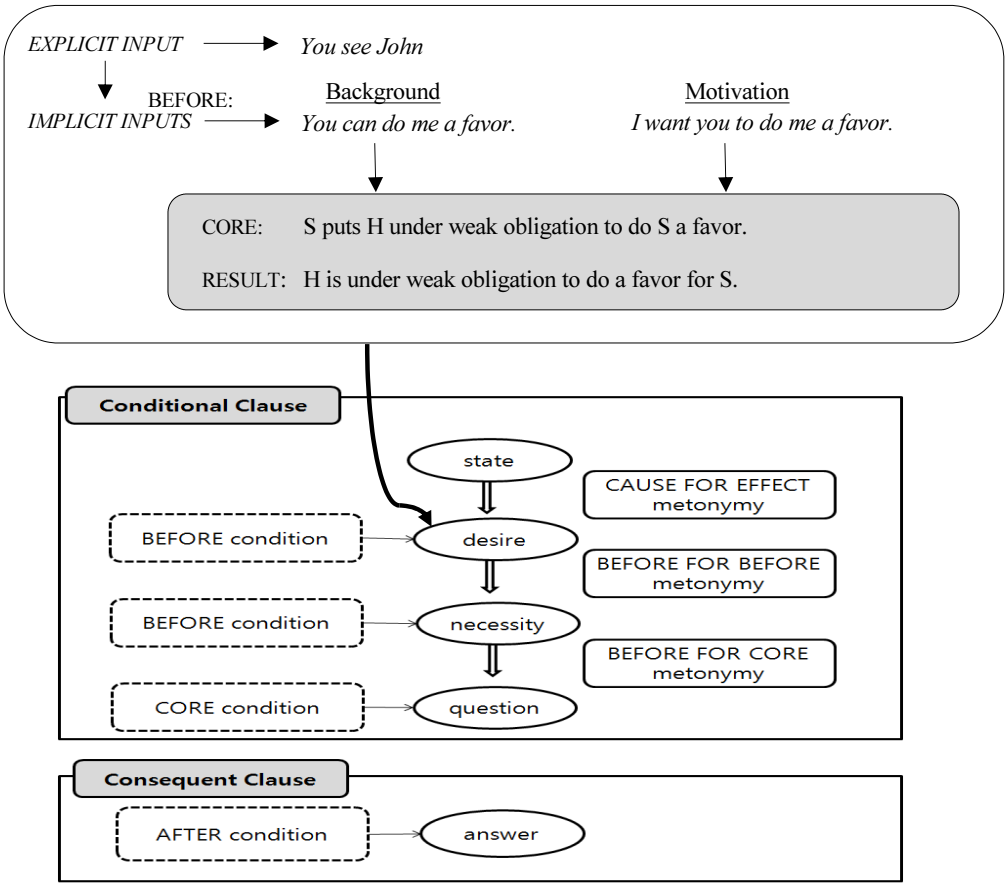

Fig. 4. How the Request scenario feeds into the Question scenario

5. Exclamation and Question Scenarios for Biscuit Conditionals

5.1 The Exclamation Scenario

In explaining (41), Panther and Thornburg (1999) suggest that the contradiction between the expected state in the hypothetical state and the non-expected state in the reality space evokes the emotion, *surprise*. The *if*-clause explicitly express p (it is not Susan). However, in the real situation, it is Susan, unexpectedly. Therefore, the *if*-clause metonymically activates the emotional evaluation of p, which is *surprise*.

(41) Why, if it isn't Susan! [expression of surprise]

The idea is illustrated in Figure 5. The surprise arises when there is a apparent contradiction between expectation and reality.

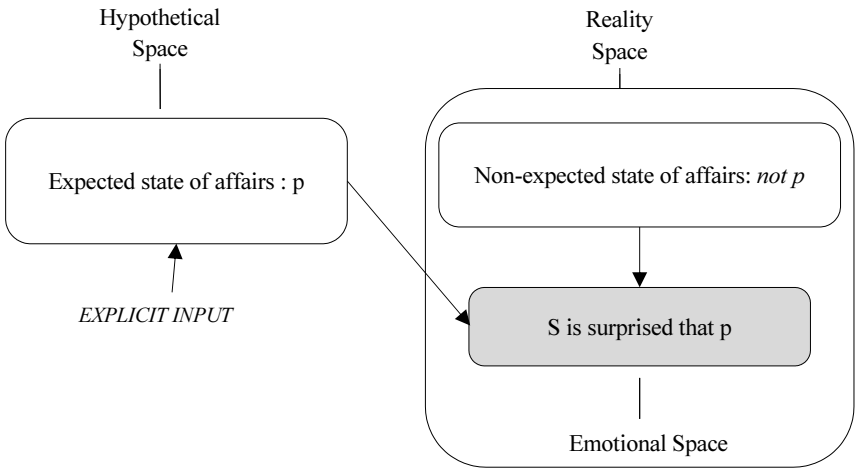

Fig. 5. The *Exclamation* Scenario (Panther and Thornburg, 1999: 141)

5.2 Combination of the Exclamation and the Question Scenarios for Biscuit Conditionals

We adopt the idea in explaining the biscuit conditional in (42). The conditional state is p *John is smart* and the expected consequence of one's smartness is finding a job without difficulties. However, in reality, John does not have a job. The clash between the expectation of the condition *John is smart* and the reality that John does not have a job surprises the speaker, as shown in (42).

(42) a. If John is smart (conditional state)
b. Then John must have a job. However, in reality John does not have a job. (contradiction)
c. Due to the contradiction, the speaker(I) is surprised. (emotion)
==> The *Emotion* Scenario

The idea is illustrated in Figure 6. Due to the contradiction between the expected consequence of the conditional state and the reality, the speaker has the emotion of surprise.

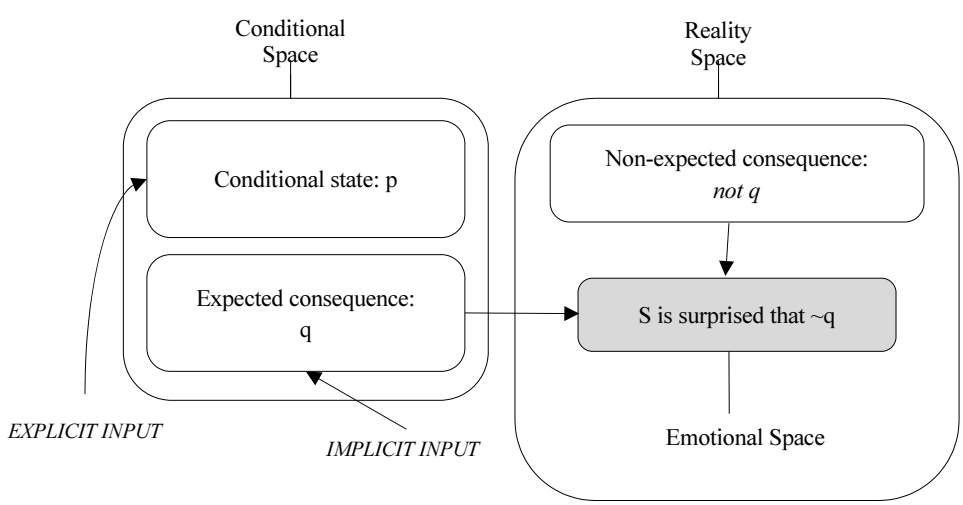

Fig. 6. The *Emotion* Scenario for the Biscuit Conditional *if John is smart, why can't he find a job?*

With his surprise, he has the desire to overcome his surprise. Therefore, the *surprise* scenario in its entirety, as a precondition, feeds into the question scenario, as shown in Figure 7.

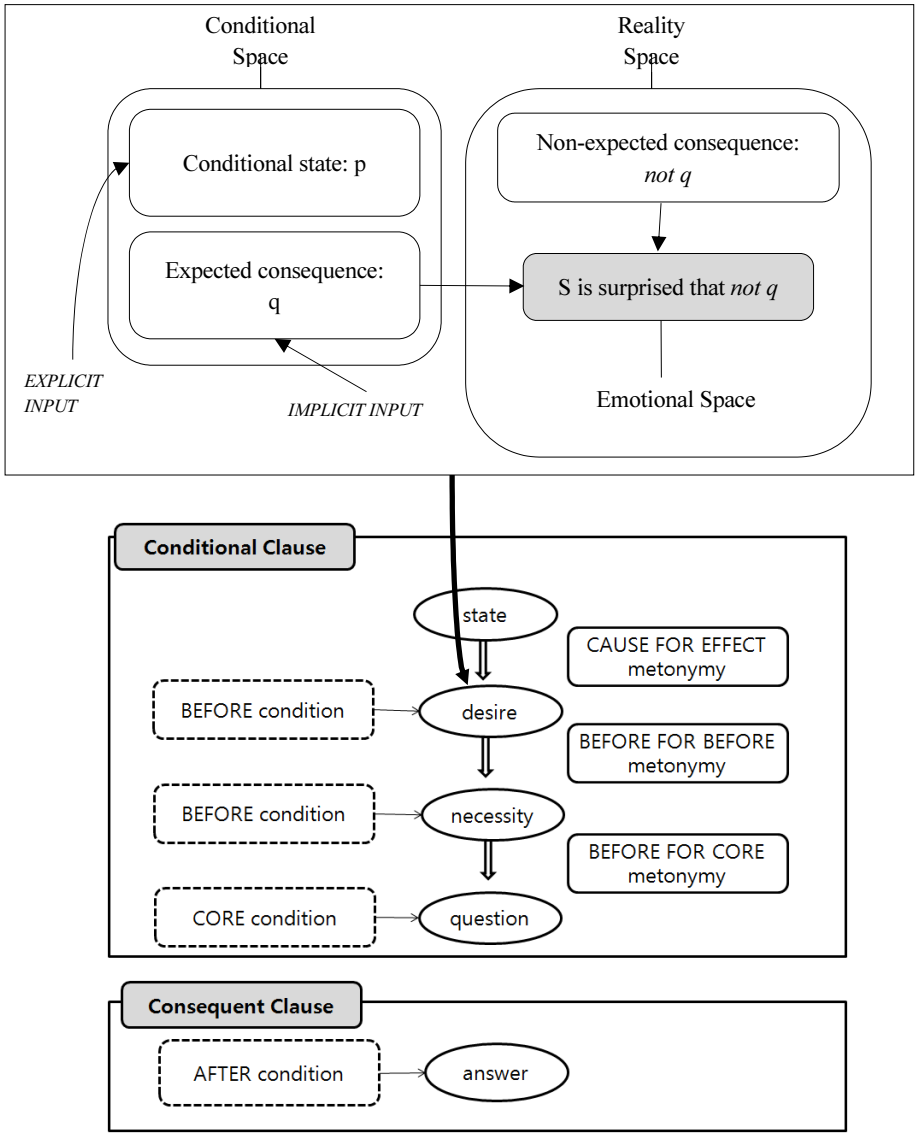

Fig. 7. How the entire *Emotion* scenario feeds into the *Question* scenario

When the *emotion* scenario feeds into the *question* scenario, the speaker has the desire to overcome his surprise by asking a question. The desire leads to the necessity to ask a question and the question must be *what should I ask at this point to overcome my surprise?*

(43) a. Then there is a desire to overcome my surprise (desire)
b. Then I have the question 'What should I ask to overcome my surprise?'

(44) a. The answer to my own question is 'Why didn't he find a job?'
==> The *Question* Scenario

The whole procedure is summarized as follows.

(45) If John is smart, why can't he find a job?

(46) a. If John is smart (condition)

b. Then John can find a job (consequence)

c. However, he can't find a job (unexpected surprise)

==> The *Emotion* Scenario

d. Then there is a desire to overcome my surprise (desire)

e. Then I have the question 'What should I ask to overcome my surprise?'

f. The answer to my own question is 'Why didn't he find a job?'

==> The *Question* Scenario

6. Conclusion

In the paper, it has been demonstrated that seemingly heterogeneous examples of biscuit conditionals are all explained as the same question-and-answer pairs. In the biscuit conditional *If you are hungry, the biscuits are on the cupboard*, the antecedent is interpreted as *Where can I find food?* through metonymy. The state *you are hungry* refers to the hearer's desire of eating food and the desire refers to his need to know where to find food. The need in turn refers to the question *Where can I find food?.* The consequent clause serves an answer to the question: *The biscuit is on the cupboard*. Most of biscuit conditions are well explained based on the metonymic analysis utilizing the Question scenario. However, some recalcitrant examples, such as *If you see John, please say hello to him* and *If John is smart, why can't he find a job?,* seem to resist to the analysis. In the paper we claim that the problematic cases can also be treated as a question-and-answer pair if we adopt Panther and Thornburg's (1999) Request and Exclamation scenarios before we use the Question scenario. If our analysis is on the right track, seemingly heterogeneous biscuit conditionals fall under the same category, one that is metonymically interpreted as a question-and-answer pair.

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