Iffy discourse:
Japanese *moshi* in conditionals and nominal topics

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Introduction

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- This property of *if* is later coined the term '**iffiness**' by von Fintel and Iatridou (2002).

See Appendix 1 for how German conditional connectives fare with Lewis's example.

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2. For *moshi* at least, iffiness amounts to unsettledness in the context;
3. For cross-linguistic studies on iffiness, the tests established here could help disentangle the iffiness associated with each conditional marker.

Why Japanese *moshi*?: Preliminaries

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(4) *(*moshi) John-ga {ki-masu / kuru darou / kuru youda.}*
MOSHI J-NOM come-POL come MOD come EVID
'John will come.' / 'J will probably come.' / 'It looks like J will come.'

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MOSHI J-NOM tomorrow get.up-COND first mail-ACC check do MOD
'When J. wakes up **tomorrow**, he'll probably check his e-mail right away.'

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Whether one wakes up **tomorrow** is normally not questionable, but whether one wakes up **in the middle of the night** may be.

See also Appendix 2 for a similar argument with evidence from unconditionals.

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(9) A: John came.
B: *moshi John-ga HONTOU-ni ki-ta nara, Mary-mo ki-teiru hazu*
MOSHI J-NOM really-DAT came COND M-NOM come-ASP should
da kedo.
COP but
'If John **REALLY** came, Mary should be here, too (but look, she isn't).'

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Description of moshi's iffiness in conditionals:

> *moshi* requires the antecedent proposition not to be entailed by CS.

The iffiness of *moshi* in topics

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(11) [Teacher speaking in front of students in classroom]

shinbun-o yomi-tai hito-wa, koko-ni ar-imasu.

newspaper-ACC read-want people-TOP here-DAT be-POL.NPST

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Since this constraint is independent of *moshi*, our tests for *moshi*'s iffiness in topics should not be confounded by it.

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Description of moshi's iffiness in topics:

> *moshi* requires it to remain open as to which individuals satisfy the property expressed by the topic and which individuals don't.

Analysis

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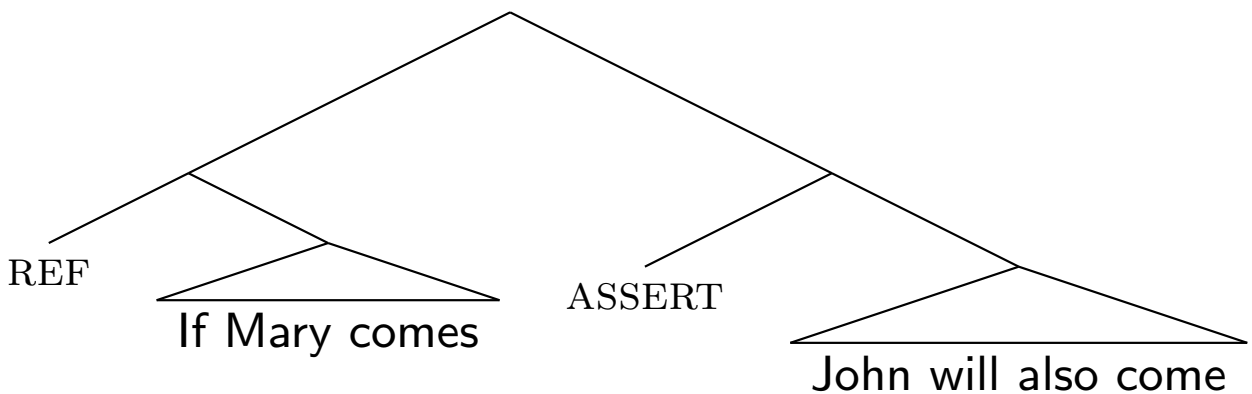

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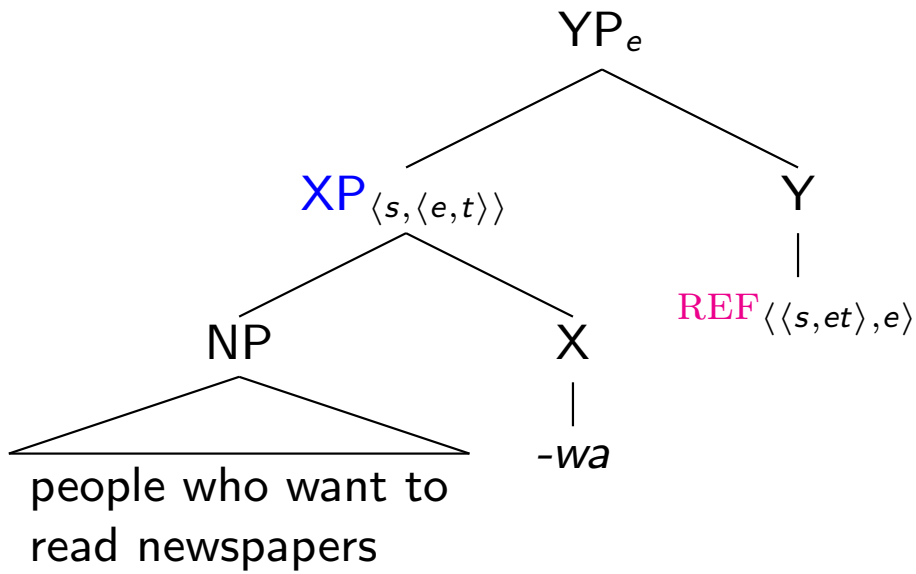

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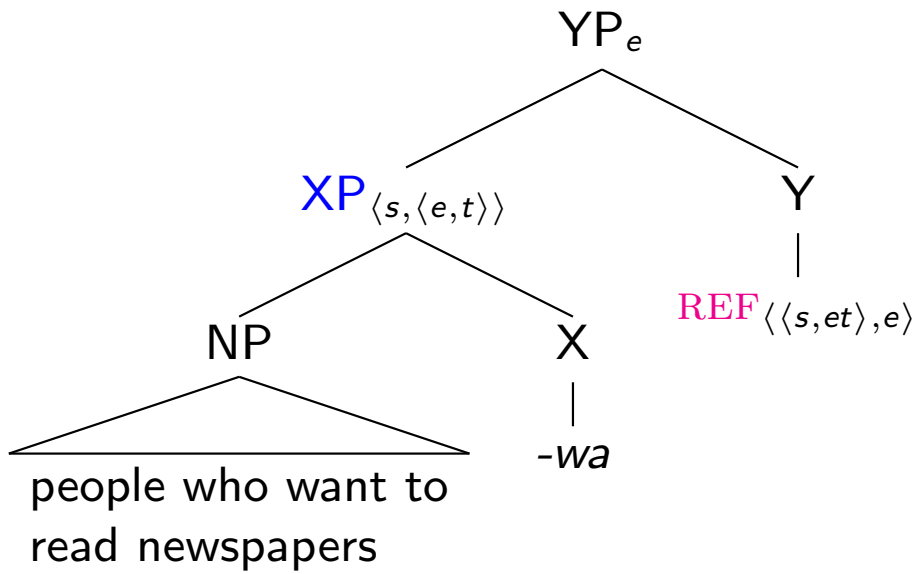

b. $[\![\text{XP}]\!]^c = \lambda w.\lambda x.\textbf{want-to-read-newspapers}(x)(w)$

Baseline illustration: topics as speech act

- *wa*-marked phrases denote intensional properties;
- A speech act operator REF maps intensional properties to definite descriptions of the salient individuals satisfying the properties at w_c

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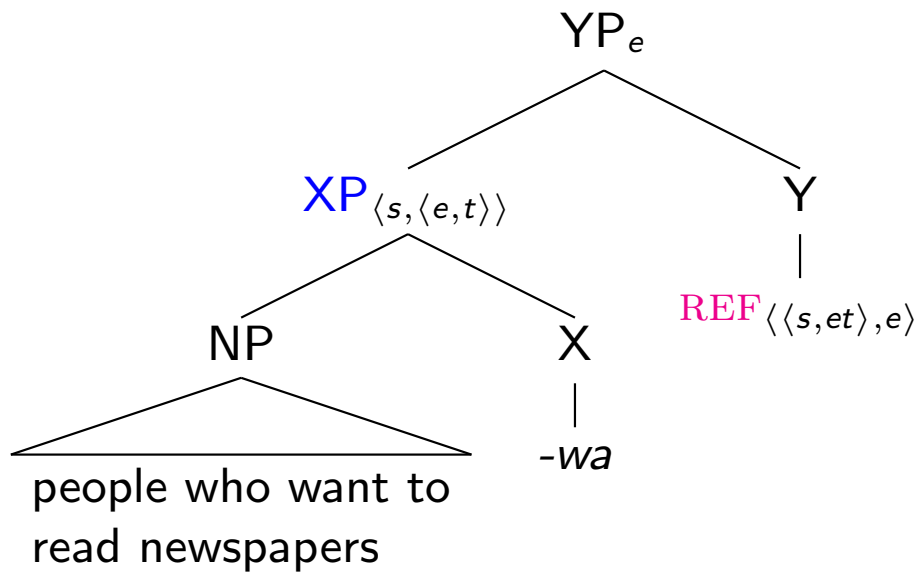

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(σ maps atomic individuals to the maximal element of their closure under sum, Link 1983)

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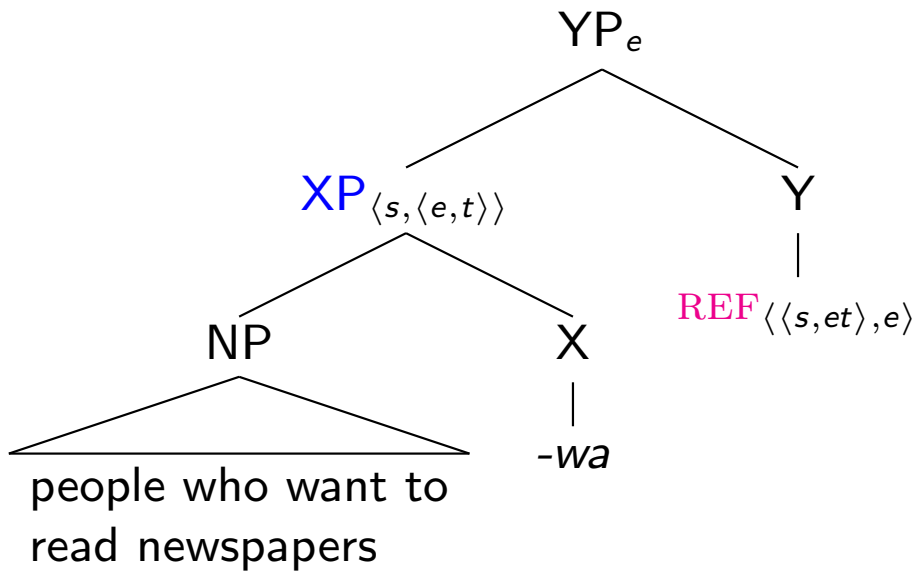

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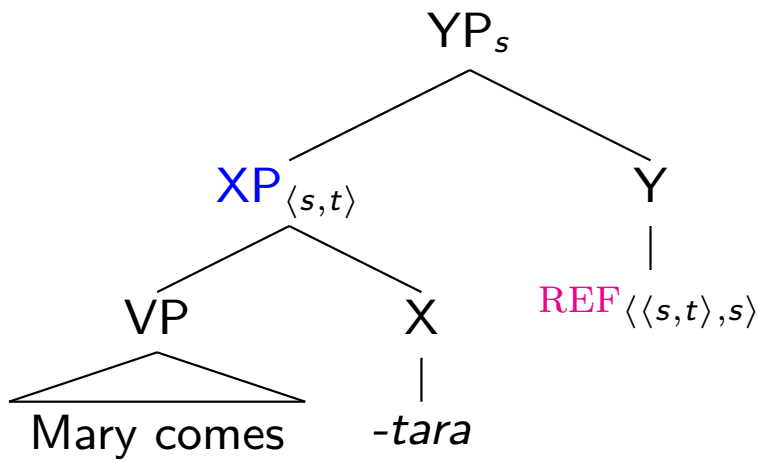

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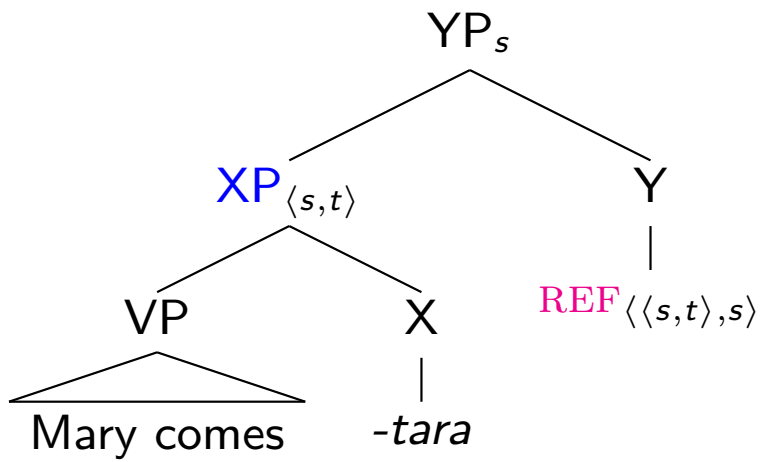

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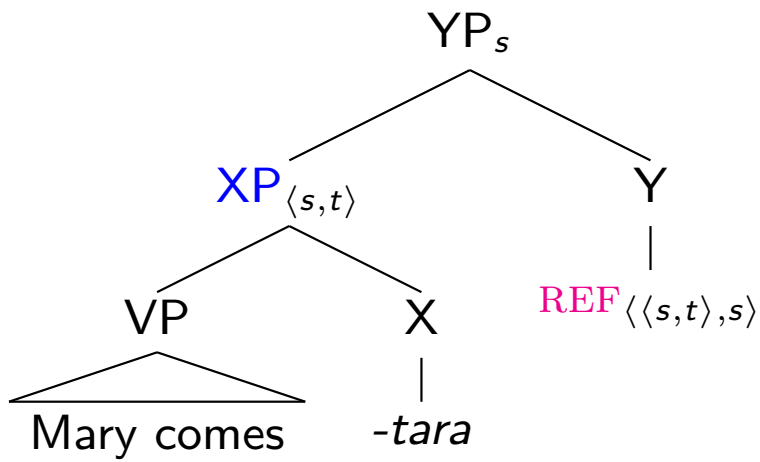

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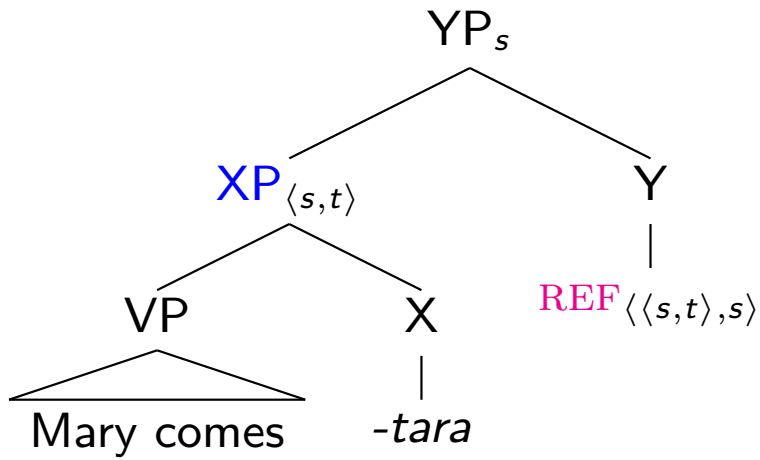

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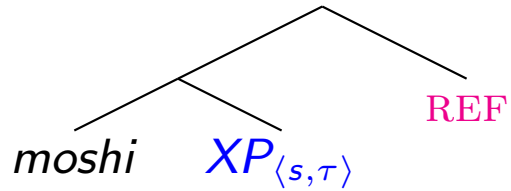

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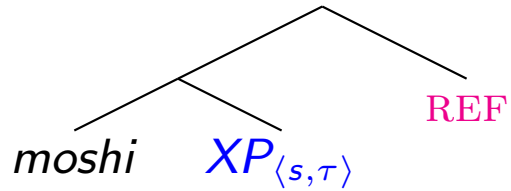

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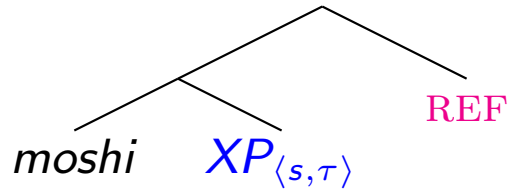

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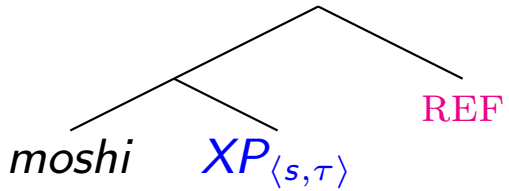

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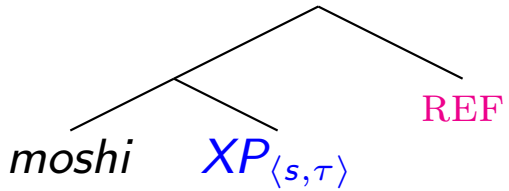

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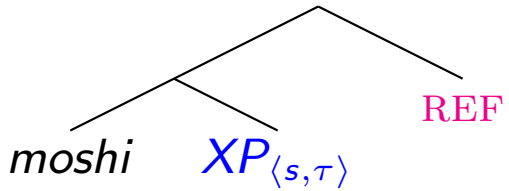

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...and is truth-conditionally vacuous:

When defined, $[\![moshi]\!]^c(X)(f) = f(X)$

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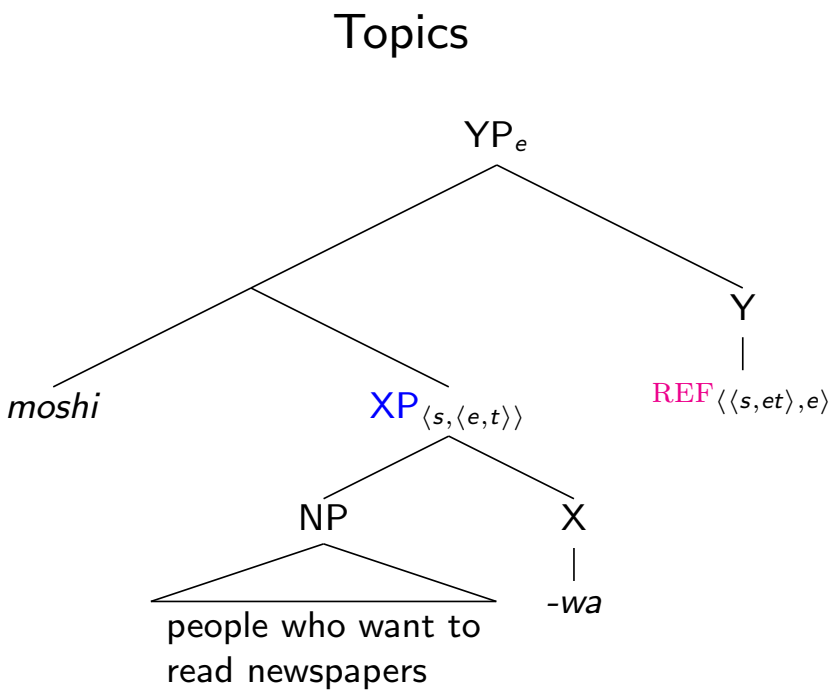

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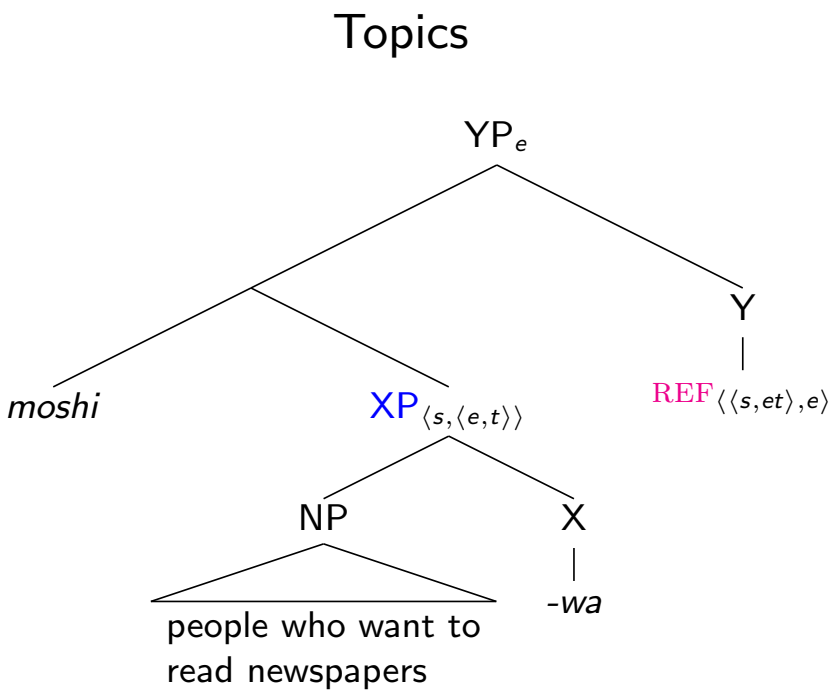

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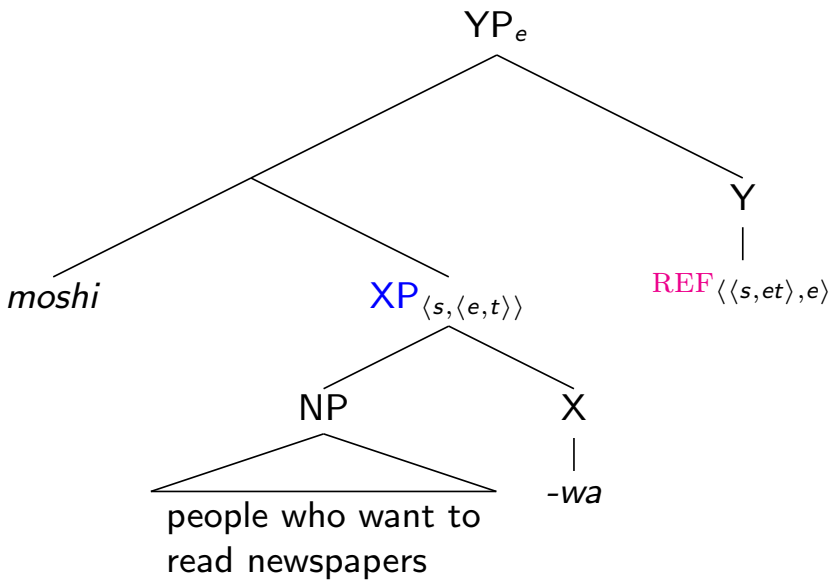

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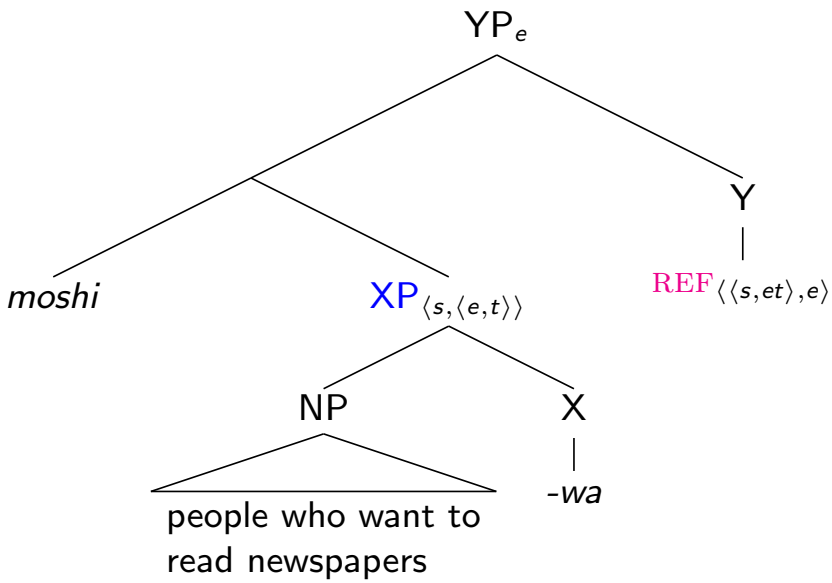

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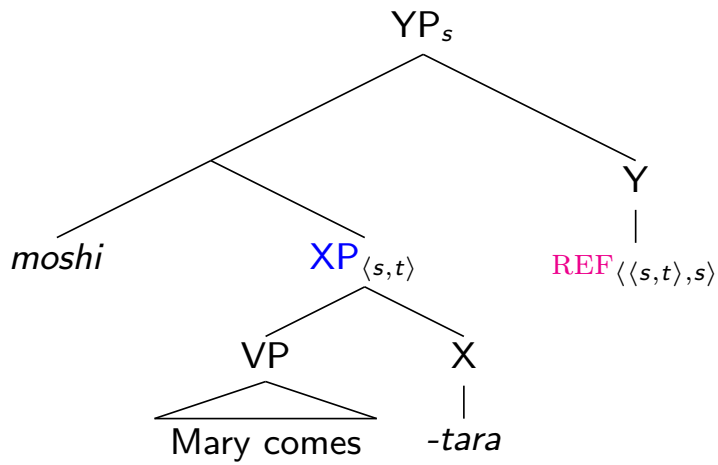

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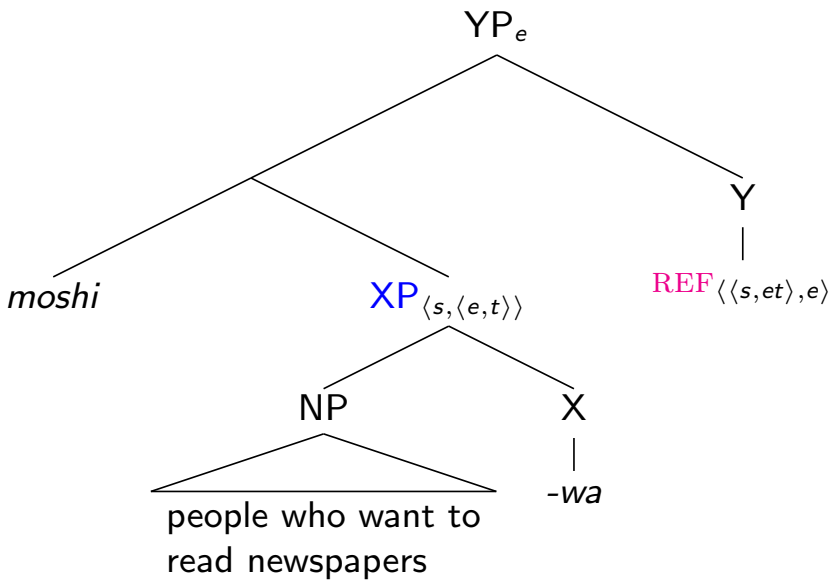

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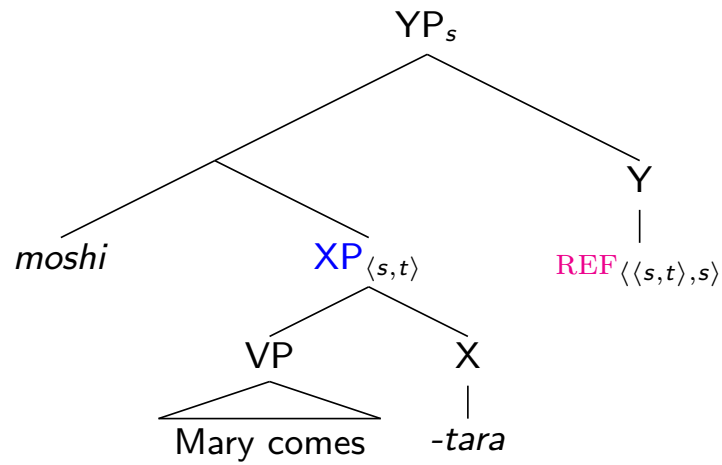

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See Appendix 3 for predictions about special root clauses that perform the REF speech act.

Conclusion

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Is English *if* not 'iffy' at all, or do we need polysemy for iffiness?

Thank you!

And thanks to Teruyuki Mizuno, Magda Kaufmann, Nadine Theiler, Yoshiki Fujiwara, and the audience at the Semantics Colloquium, Goethe University Frankfurt (Jan 2021) and UConn Meaning Group (Feb 2021) for discussions.

Appendices

Appendix 1: German conditional connectives in Lewis's example

German iffy candidates: *falls* (Hinterwimmer 2014), *sollte* (Sode and Sugawara 2018)

(23) {??*Falls* / *Wenn*} *Peter aufwacht, trinkt er meistens erst mal eine Tasse Kaffee.* (Hinterwimmer 2014: (15))

(24) #*Sollte Peter aufwachen, trinkt er meistens erst mal eine Tasse Kaffee.*
'When Peter wakes up, he always drinks a cup of coffee first.'
(Magda Kaufmann p.c.)

But the iffy elements identified solely by Lewis's test may come apart in other environments, e.g. *if* vs. *sollte*:

(25) According to the schedule, the train leaves at 8:00...

a. If the train leaves at 8:00, we have to be at the station at 7:50.

b. ??*Sollte der Zug um 8 Uhr abfahren, dann müssen wir spätestens um 7.50 Uhr am Bahnhof sein.* (Sode and Sugawara 2018: (23))

Appendix 2: Additional evidence from unconditionals

Unconditionals have antecedents that jointly exhaust all possibilities :

(26) Whether or not Alfonso goes to the party, it will be fun. (Rawlins 2013: 112)

Prediction: Iffy markers should be incompatible with such antecedents.

moshi is incompatible with unconditionals:

(27) *(#moshi) M-ga ki-temo ko-naku-temo, J-wa kuru darou.*
MOSHI M-NOM come-COND come-NEG-COND J-TOP come MOD
'Whether or not Mary comes, John will probably come.'

(28) *(#moshi) dare-ga ki-temo, watashi-wa ik-imas-en.*
MOSHI who-NOM come-COND I-TOP go-POL-NEG.NPST
'Whoever comes, I will not go.'

moshi is ok in antecedents that raise multiple options but do **not** jointly exhaust all possibilities:

(29) *(moshi) shippai shi-temo baka-ni sare-temo, kanojo-wa akirame-nai darou.*
MOSHI fail do-COND idiot-DAT do.PASS-COND she-TOP give.up-NEG MOD
'Even if she fails, even if ppl. laugh at her, she'll probably not give up.'

Appendix 3: Further prediction about root clauses that tolerate *moshi*

Our account predicts *moshi* to be ok in declaratives that perform the REF speech act.

This prediction is borne out, e.g. *suppose*-sentences that set up contexts for modal subordination: (Roberts 1989; Kaufmann 2000)

(30) *(moshi) dorobou-ga kita to suru. terebi-ga to-rareru kamoshirenai.*
MOSHI burglar-NOM came C do TV-NOM take-PASS MOD
'Suppose a burglar broke in. The TV might be taken.'

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