According to Cheng and Huang (1996) (henceforth C&H), Mandarin Chinese exhibits two types of conditionals with indefinite wh-phrases that have the semantics of donkey sentences: ‘bare conditionals’ and *ruguo*- and *dou*-conditionals. Bare conditionals require multiple occurrences of wh-phrases and disallow the use of any covert or overt elements in the consequent; by contrast, *ruguo* - and *dou*-conditionals show a different pattern with the presence of wh-phrases in the antecedent and anaphoric elements in the consequent. The analysis offered by C&H is that in bare conditionals, wh-phrases are variables, licensed and bound by an implicit necessary operator, and thus obtain their quantificational interpretations from this operator. By contrast, in *ruguo* - conditionals, they are negative polarity items, and once licensed, they are treated as existential quantifiers and are interpreted via the standard Quantifier Raising. The anaphoric elements in the consequent, then, are analyzed as E-type pronouns. Chierchia (2000) argues that C&H’s analysis cannot be right because, given the novelty condition, which requires indefinites to introduce new entities, the presence of the wh-phrases in the consequent should not be expected. Chierchia revises by proposing the Disclosure Hypothesis, according to which indefinite NPs are existential quantifiers and their quantificational variability is due to the wiping out of their existential force and assigning them new quantificational force by and from the operators at hand. In this paper, I hold that even though Vietnamese conditionals with wh-phrases do not belong to any types of conditionals in Chinese as characterized by C&H, they can be accounted for by C&H’s situation-based analysis of *ruguo*-conditionals. In terms of Chinese conditionals, Vietnamese conditionals look like bare conditionals in that they have no leading elements as in (1b), but unlike their Chinese counterparts, Vietnamese ‘bare’ conditionals disallow the use of wh-phrases in the consequent as shown in (1c). They are also like *ruguo*-conditionals in that they use anaphoric elements in the consequent, as in (1a) and (2). On C&H’s situation-based analysis of *ruguo*-conditionals, the semantics of (1a) will be as in (3). This representation leads to the question of whether or not wh-phrases in Vietnamese are existential quantifiers, and if not, what they are. Vietnamese wh-phrases, on my hypothesis, are not existential quantifiers, but are predicates with open variables, and their quantificational variability results from their morphological combination. For example, in Vietnamese, when a wh-phrase is attached with particle *đó*, it obtains a specific indefinite interpretation of type <e>, typical of referential expressions, as illustrated in (4), but when it is followed by particle *cũng* it obtains a universal interpretation as in (5a). If wh-phrases were existential quantifiers by themselves, it would remain unclear how they obtain these readings in combination with these particles. This paper consists of 4 sections. Section 1 introduces basic facts about Vietnamese conditionals with wh-phrases. Section 2 offers a situation-based analysis of conditionals in Vietnamese and extends this analysis to other structures involving the use of wh-phrases with quantificational readings as in (5). Section 3 discusses the morphological structure of Vietnamese and accounts for the difference between Vietnamese, Chinese and English with respect to conditionals with wh-phrases. Section 4 concludes the paper with typological claims.
(1) a. Ai nấu, này ăn.
   who cook that. person eat
   i. ‘whoever cooks eats.’
   ii. ‘If you cook, then you eat.’
  b. *Nếu ai nấu, này ăn.
   if who cook that. person eat
  c. *Ai nấu, ai ăn.
   who cook who eat

(2) Ai đến trước, [e] ăn trước.
who come first eat first
i. ‘Whoever comes first eats first.’
ii. ‘If you come first then you eat first.’

(3) ∀s [ s is a situation & ∃ x x is person and x cooks in s] [∃s’ s ≤ s’ & the person who cooks in s eats in s’]

(4) a. Nếu Tân không muốn mời ai, thì Tân sẽ nói cho tôi biết.
   If you not want invite who then Tan FUT tell give I know
   i. ‘If Tan does not want to invite anyone, then he will let me know.’
   ii. ‘If there is a person such that Tan does not want to invite that person, he will let me know.’
  b. Nếu Tân không muốn mời ai-đó, thì Tân sẽ nói cho tôi biết.
   If Tan not want invite who-DO then Tan FUT tell give I know
   ‘There is a person such that if Tan does not want to invite that person, he will let me know.’

(5) a. Ai cùng vui- vê.
   who CUNG happy
   ‘Everyone is happy.’
  b. Ai- này lo -lạng.
   who NAY worry
   ‘Everyone is worried.’

References: