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Wh-NP Rhetorical Questions in Japanese and Chinese

Asuka Saruwatari

1. Introduction

This paper explores negative rhetorical questions (RQs) using *nani-ga* ‘what-NOM’ and *doko-ga* ‘where-NOM’ in Japanese as in (1), and also RQs with the Chinese *shenme* ‘what’ and *nali* ‘where.’ I propose that these RQs with *nani-ga* and *doko-ga* as well as Chinese *shenme* are copula sentences and have an embedded structure as in (2), in which any types of predicates can occur.

(1) Nani-ga/Doko-ga  Kenji-ni  eigo-ga  hanaseru
What-NOM/where-NOM Kenji-DAT English-NOM speak
tte iuno!
Quot say.C

‘Why do you say that Kenji can speak English? (He cannot speak English.)’

[Japanese; Yamadera 2010:166]

(2) [CP[TP[CP[TP[DP Nani-ga/Doko-ga] [PredP[CP/TP (in)direct quoted phrases ]] te] (anata iu) no]
What-NOM/where-NOM quote (you) say C

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 discusses previous research and basic data. Section 3 provides more data from Chinese and presents comparisons of the negative *wh*-construction between Japanese and Chinese. Some structures of *Nani-ga/Doko-ga* in Japanese and their counterparts in Chinese are proposed in Section 4. Section 5 concludes this paper.

2. Basic Data and Previous Research

Examples of *nani-ga* ‘what-NOM’, and *doko-ga* ‘where-NOM’ in Japanese are shown in (3) and examples of the Chinese *shenme* ‘what’ and *nali* ‘where’ are provided in (4). These *wh*-questions are used in a context where the speaker disagrees with what has just been heard.

(3) Hanako: Kare-ga  taoreteru yo.
He-NOM fall.down C

I wish to thank my Chinese informants for their judgments; especially I thank Yu Zhang, Zhijun Wang and Jing Nie. I am also grateful to Hiroshi Mito, Masao Ochi, Yoko Yumoto, and Yoichi Miyamoto for their invaluable comments.
‘He has fallen down.’
Taro: Nani-ga/doko-ga kare-ga taoreteiru tte.
What-NOM/where-NOM he-NOM fall.down C
‘Why do you say that he has fallen down? (He has not fallen down.)’

(4) Zhang san: Ta yao dao.
He will fall.down
‘He will fall down.’
Limei: Shenme ta yao dao.
What he will fall.down.
‘Why do you say that he will fall down? (He will not fall down.)’

Cheung (2009) discusses mainly where/how/when in RQs “negative wh(NWH)-word” as in (5), which expresses the speaker’s negative assertion in a particular situation so that “NWH-word+p” is paraphrased as “No way p” or “It is not true that P.”

(5) a. Koei bindou jau hai tousyugun sik je aa?! [Cantonese]
   he where have be.at library eat thing Q
   ‘No way did he eat anything in the library.’

   b. Kare-no doko-ga 1 meetoru 80 senti na no?! [Japanese]
   he-Gen where-Nom 1 meter 80 centimeter Decl Q
   ‘No way is he 6 feet tall.’ (lit. ‘Where of him is 1.80m?!’) (Cheung 2009:310)

While Cheung (2009) provides a Japanese example of kare-no doko-ga ‘where of him,’ Yamadera (2010) illustrates some examples with nani-ga ‘what-NOM’ and she mentions that it can alternate with doko-ga ‘where-NOM.’

(6) Nani-ga/Doko-ga Kenji-ni eigo-ga hanaseru
   What-NOM/where-NOM Kenji-DAT English-NOM speak
   tte iunoyo!
   Quot say.C
   ‘Why do you say that Keniji can speak English? (He cannot speak English.)’
   (Yamadera 2010:166)

1 Cheung (2009) also suggests that the negative wh-constructions should be analyzed as interrogative questions. See Cheung (2009) for details.
The wh-NPs appear with noun phrases as in (7) and (8), transitives as in (9), intransitives as in (10), unaccusatives as in (11), passive sentences as in (12), and adjectives as in (13) and (14). Yamadera (2010) proposes that these wh-NPs can occur with any types of predicates.

(7) Nani-ga/doko-ga dataskanryoseiji na no? What-NOM/where-NOM non-bureaucratic.government is Q ‘Why do you say that it is a non-bureaucratic government? (It is not.)’

(8) Nani-ga/doko-ga kinenchu da! What-NOM/where-NOM off.cigarette is ‘Why do you say that she/he is off cigarettes? (She/he is not.)’

(9) Nani-ga/doko-ga anata-ga heya-o soujishitat te. What-NOM/where-NOM you-NOM room-ACC cleaned Quote ‘Why do you say that you cleaned the room? (You didn’t clean it.)’

(10) Nani-ga/doko-ga anata-ga hashitta te. What-NOM/where-NOM you-NOM ran Quote ‘Why do you say that you ran? (You didn’t run.)’

(11) Nani-ga/doko-ga tsunami-ga kurut te. What-NOM/where-NOM tsunami-NOM come Quote ‘Why do you say that tsunami will come? (It won’t.)’

(12) Nani-ga/doko-ga watashi-ga yugusarete te What-NOM/where-NOM I-NOM be.treated.favorably Quote iu no. say Q ‘Why do you say that I am treated favorably? (I’m not.)’

(13) Nani-ga/doko-ga kare-ga yasashi noyo. NOM/where-NOM he-Nom kind C ‘Why do you say that he is kind? (He is not.)’

(14) Nani-ga/doko-ga Shinjuku-ga yake-ga kirei what-NOM/where-NOM Shinjuku-Nom night.view-Nom beautiful na no. is Q ‘Why do you say that the night view of Shinjuku is beautiful?’

Furthermore, for major subject construction, nani-ga occurs at a position higher than the major subject Shinjuku-ga ‘Shinjuku-NOM’ as in (15). Thus, Yamadera (2010) concludes that nani-ga is in
the CP area and analyzes it as an adjunct.

    What-NOM Shinjuku-NOM night.view-NOM beautiful C
    ‘Why do you say that it is Shinjuku that a night view is beautiful?’

b. ??Shinjuku-ga nani-ga yakei-ga kireina no.
    Shinjuku-NOM what-NOM night.view-NOM beautiful C
    ‘Why do you say that it is Shinjuku that a night view is beautiful?’

c. *Shinjuku-ga yakei-ga nani-ga kireina no.
    Shinjuku-NOM night.view-NOM what-NOM beautiful C
    ‘Why do you say that it is Shinjuku that a night view is beautiful?’ (Yamadera 2010:171)

Although Yamadera (2010) argues that nani-ga is an adjunct and it can occur with any types of predicates, in this paper, I discuss nani-ga/doko-ga in Japanese and the Chinese shenme ‘what’ and propose that these wh-questions are copula sentences and have an embedded structure, in which even direct quotes can occur.

3. More Data on the Negative Wh-Constructions in Chinese and Japanese

As Yamadera (2010) illustrates, nani-ga/doko-ga can occur with any types of predicates, which is also the case in Chinese. Chinese shenme and nali can appear with a nominal predicate as in (16), adjectives in (17), intransitives in (18), transitives in (19), unaccusatives in (20), and passives as in (21).

(16) a. Shenme ta shi yisheng. (Noun Phrase)
    What he is doctor
    ‘Why do you say that he is a doctor? (He is not.)’

b. Ta nali shi yisheng a.
    He where is doctor C
    ‘Why do you say that he is a doctor? (He is not.)’

(17) a. Shenme ta wenrou. (adjective)
    What he kind
    ‘Why do you say that he is kind? (He is not.)’

b. Ta nali wenrou.
    He where kind

(18) a. Shenme ta zai pao. (intransitive)
    what he Prog run

b. Ta nali zai pao
He where Prog run
‘Why do you say that he is running? (He is not.)’
(19) a. Ta hui shuo shenme yingyu. (transitive)
   He can speak what English
b. Ta nali hui shuo yingyu.
   He where can speak English
   ‘Why do you say that he can speak English? (He cannot.)’
(20) a. Ta yao dao shenme a. (unaccusative)
   He will fall.down what C
b. Ta nali yao dao (a/le).
   He where will fall.down C
   ‘Why do you say that he will fall down? (He will not fall down.)’
(21) a. Ta bei haozi da shenme le. (passive)
   He Pass Hanako hit what past.
b. Ta nali bei haozi da le.
   He where Pass Hanako hit past.
   ‘Why do you say that he was hit by Hanako? (He was not.)’

So far, Japanese *nani-ga/doko-ga* and Chinese *shenme/nali* share the same properties; however, there are two noteworthy points here. First, while in Japanese these negative *wh*-NPs co-occur with direct quotes as in (22-3), Chinese *nali* is not allowed to co-occur with direct quotes unlike Chinese *shenme*. See the Chinese examples in (24-5).

Japanese
(22) Nani-ga/?Doko-ga [watashi-ga omiyage-o takusan kattekuru
   What-NOM/where-NOM I-TOP souvenir a.lot buy
   ne] yo.
   C C
   ‘Why do you say “I will buy a lot of souvenirs”? ’
   What-NOM/where-NOM I-TOP you-ACC love C C
   ‘Why do you say “I love you, you know”? ’

*Nali*, which has to follow a subject, cannot occur with direct quotes as indicated in (25) as opposed to the indirect case as in (26).
Chinese

        What I love you C C  
        ‘Why do you say “I love you,”?’
    b. [Wo ai ni ya] shenme. a  
        I love you C what C

(25)  a. *Wo nali ai ni ya  
        I where love you C  
        ‘Why do you say “I love you”?’
    b. *Nali wo ai ni ya  
        where I love you C

(26)  Ni nali ai wo ya  
        you where love me C  
        ‘Why do you say that you love me?’

Second, in Japanese, predicates with noun phrases can appear with these wh-NPs as in (27); whereas, in Chinese, shenme is allowed as in (28), but not nali as illustrated in (29). Nali follows a subject as in (30).

(27)  Nani-ga/doko-ga datsukanryoseiji na no?  
        What-NOM/where-NOM non-bureaucratic.government COP Q  
        ‘Why do you say that it is a non-bureaucratic government? (It is not.)’

[Japanese; See Yamadera 2010:166]

(28)  a. Yisheng shenme  a. [Chinese]  
        Doctor what C
    b. Shenme yisheng  a.  
        ‘Why do you say that he is a doctor? (He is not.)’

        Where doctor C
    b. *yisheng nali  a.  
        ‘Why do you say that he is a doctor? (He is not.)’

(30)  Ta nali shi yisheng  a.  
        He where is doctor C  
        ‘Why do you say that he is a doctor? (He is not.)’

Nani-ga/doko-ga ‘what/where’ in Japanese and shenme ‘what’ in Chinese behave in a similar
fashion; whereas, *nali* ‘where’ in Chinese shows different characteristics. The next section discusses the structures of these *wh*-questions.

4. **Structures of the Negative Wh-Constructions in Japanese and Chinese**

   Based on the data in the previous section, we will consider the structures for *wh*-questions with *nani-ga/doko-ga* in Japanese and Chinese *shenme* and *nali*. *Nani-ga* can be used as ordinary questions (OQs) as seen in (31) and the structures are shown in (32); these sentences are copula constructions and *na* or *da* is a Pred head. Regardless of whether it denotes OQ or RQ, the underlying structure is the same according to Cheung (2009) and Caponigro and Sprouse (2007). Sentences in question for using *nani-ga* and *doko-ga* in (33) are illustrated in (34). The (in)direct quoted phrases occupy the complement position of PredP.

   (31) Speaker: *nani-ga* ichibanninki nano?
     What-NOM the.most.popular C
     ‘What is the most popular?’
   
   Addresssee: Kono hon-ga ichibanninki da.
   This.book-NOM the.most.popular COP
   ‘This book is the most popular.’

   (32) a. [CP [TP [DP Nani-ga] [PredP [DP ichibanninki] na]] no]
       What-NOM the.most.popular COP C
       ‘What is the most popular?’

   b. [CP [TP [DP Kono hon-ga] [PredP [DP ichibanninki] da]]]
       This.book-NOM the.most.popular COP
       ‘This book is the most popular.’

   (33) a. Nani-ga/Doko-ga Taro-ga yasashi noyo
       What-NOM/where-NOM Taro-NOM kind C
       ‘Why do you say that Taro is kind? (He is not.)’

   b. Nani-ga/Doko-ga Taro-ga yasashit te iu noyo
       What-NOM/where-NOM Taro-NOM kind Quote say.C
       ‘Why do you say that Taro is kind? (He is not.)’

   (34) a. [CP[T[TP[DP Nani-ga/Doko-ga] [PredP[CP[T[TP (in)direct quoted phrases ] na]] no]]
       What-NOM/where-NOM COP C

   b. [CP[T[CP[T[TP[DP Nani-ga/Doko-ga][PredP[CP[T[TP (in)direct quoted phrases]] te] (anata) iu] no]
       What-NOM/where-NOM quote (you) say.C

   Chinese *shenme* can appear with direct quotes and nominal predicates, in which case, the
structure for the wh-question using shenme is considered to be the same as (34) in Japanese. Examples of shenme in OQs are illustrated in (35). The example of the negative wh-construction and its structure are shown in (36).

(35)  a. Shenme zui youqu.
    ‘What is the most interesting?’
    b. Zhe ben shu zui you qu.
    ‘This book is the most interesting.’

(36)  a. Shenme ta wenrou.
    ‘Why do you say that he is kind? (He is not.)’
    b. [CP[TP[DP shenme]] [PredP [CP/TP (in)direct quoted phrases]]]

For the Chinese nali, from observations so far, it would seem that it cannot appear with direct quotes as in (25). But, if an OQ is with nali, an analysis might yield that a genitive de is omitted since the answer has a genitive marker as illustrated in (37). However, nali appears where de is prohibited such as in (38). This nali in question is different from -de nali. Therefore, the conclusion is that Chinese nali occupies a position following a subject and its position is restricted in contrast to the Japanese nani-ga/doko-ga or Chinese shenme.

(37) Speaker: Ta (de) nali hao.
    ‘Where of him is good?’
    Addressee: Ta de xing ge hao.
    ‘lit. His personality is good.’

(38) Ta (*de) nali zhu zai riben?
    ‘Why do you say that he lives in Japan? (He does not.)’

Before concluding this paper, consider the inner island effect. Since the wh-adjunct nani-o ‘what-ACC’ meaning ‘why’ exhibits the inner island effect as in (39a) unlike the wh-argument or why as shown in (40) and (39b), respectively; the Chinese shows the same restriction as represented in (41) and (42).
In contrast, as for the negative wh-constructions with *nani-ga/doko-ga* as in (43) and Chinese *shenme* as in (44), they can have a negation, but they are not examples of the inner island in a main clause. They have embedded structures so that negation can appear.

(43)  
(a) Doko-ga kare-ga yasashi kunai noyo. [Japanese]  
Where-NOM he-NOM kind Neg C  
‘Why do you say that he is not kind? (He is kind.)’  
(b) Nani-ga kare-ga yasashi kunai noyo.  
what-NOM he-NOM kind Neg C  
‘Why do you say that he is not kind? (He is kind.)’

(44)  
(a) Shenme [ta shi yisheng]. [Chinese]  
What he is doctor  
‘Why do you say that he is a doctor? (He is not a doctor.)’  
(b) [Ta bu shi yisheng] shenme.  
He not is doctor what

Wh-adjuncts occupying lower position than NegP exhibit the inner island effect.

(i) a. Why didn’t Geraldine fix her bike?  
   b. *How didn’t Geraldine fix her bike?  
   (Shlonsky and Soare 2011:656)
‘Why do you say that he is not a doctor? (He is a doctor.)

c. Shenme [ta bu shi yisheng].

what he not is doctor

‘Why do you say that he is not a doctor? (He is a doctor.)’

With respect to Chinese nali, it occupies a higher position than a negation and does not show the inner island effect as in (45).

(45) Ta nali bu wenrou.

He where Neg kind

‘Why do you say that he is not kind? (He is kind.)’

5. Conclusion

For the negative wh-constructions using nani-ga/doko-ga in Japanese or shenme in Chinese, I argued that these wh-questions are analyzed as copula sentences and quoted parts can have any types of predicates. Regarding nali, it must appear in the position following subjects and cannot occur with direct quotes. We have focused on the cases in which shenme occurs in the sentence-initial position. Shenme can occur in the sentence-final position or the position following a verb, which is in need of further explanation.

References


