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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 Keniji 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

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‘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*.”¹

(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 datsukanryoseiji 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.)’
(See Yamadera 2010:166)
- (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.)’ (ibid.)
- (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.)’ (ibid.)
- (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.)’ (Yamadera 2010:166)
- (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.)’ (ibid.)
- (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?’ (Yamadera 2010:166)

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.

- (15) a. Nani-ga Shinjuku-ga yakei-ga kireina no.
 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
 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
 b. Ta nali wenrou.
 He where kind
 ‘Why do you say that he is kind? (He is not.)’
- (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”?’
- (23) Nani-ga/Doko-ga [boku-wa kimi-o aishiteiru ndayo] yo.
What-NOM/where-NOM I-TOP you-ACClove 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

- (24) a. Shenme [wo ai ni ya] a.
 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.)’
- (29) a. *Nali yisheng a.
 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/dokoga* 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?’
 Addressee: *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}[_{TP}[_{DP} *Nani-ga/Doko-ga*] [_{PredP} [_{CP/TP} (in)direct quoted phrases] *na*]] *noyo*]
 What-NOM/where-NOM COP C
 b. [_{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

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 most interesting
 ‘What is the most interesting?’
 b. Zhe ben shu zui you qu.
 This book most interesting
 ‘This book is the most interesting.’
- (36) a. Shenme ta wenrou.
 What he kind
 ‘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.
 He GEN where good
 ‘Where of him is good?’
 Addressee: Ta de xing ge hao.
 He GEN personality good
 ‘lit. His personality is good.’
- (38) Ta (*de) nali zhu zai riben?
 He GEN where live in Japan
 ‘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).

- (39) a. *Taro-wa nani-o hashi-tte inai no?² [Japanese: wh-adjunct]
 Taro-TOP what-ACC ran-Prog not Q
 ‘Why isn’t Taro running?’
 b. Taro-wa naze hashi-tte inai no?
 Taro-TOP why ran-Prog not Q
 ‘Why isn’t Taro running?’ (See also Kurafuji 1996, 1997)
- (40) Taro-ga nani-o tabete-i nai no? [Japanese: wh-argument]
 Taro-NOM what-ACC eat-Prog not Q
 ‘What isn’t Taro eating?’
- (41) a. *Ta mei zai pao shenme? [Chinese: wh-adjunct]
 He not Prog run what
 ‘Why isn’t he running?’
 b. Ta weishenme mei zai pao?
 He why not Prog run
 ‘Why isn’t he running?’ (See also Ochi 1999)
- (42) Taro mei zai chi shenme? [Chinese: wh-argument]
 Taro not Prog eat what
 ‘What isn’t Taro eating?’

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 yasahi 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

² *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.

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