Objective

The work demonstrates that Japanese has two varieties of negative polar interrogatives (the P-type and the N-type), which are differentiated information-intuitively and, as a consequence, formally as well.

Negative Polarity Interrogatives in Japanese

Ladd (1981) demonstrates that there are two varieties of English negative polar interrogatives (that is called the nulls question and more negative question). (18)

Outside NPs

A. You must be starving. You want to go out to some place to eat?
B. I've never been to a restaurant where there's a slow cooker.

Inside NPs

A. You must be starving. You want to go out to some place to eat?
B. I've never been to a restaurant where there's a slow cooker.

In outside NP questions, “the speaker believes a proposition P and words confirmation” and “what is being questioned is the speaker’s belief about the proposition P.” In inside NP questions, “the speaker has just inferred a proposition P and what is being questioned is the illocution – P” and words confirmation about the illocution – P. While inside NP questions are compatible with positive polarity items (PPI) but not with negative polarity items (NPI), the opposite is true for outside NP questions.

Being and Gregory (2008) distinguish three kinds of questions (i.e., a context where there is context relevant evidence [where that has just become relevant evidence to the speaker], the context relevant evidence for the core proposition P (P); b. a context where there is context relevant evidence against P; and c. there is no context relevant evidence toward either direction).

(19) a. Polarity question: Speaker asks P to Betsy, where P is the proposition elaborated by the negated negative of the negative interrogative

b. The Speaker is certain of the proposition for the negated-NP (P);

(20)

Negation in Japanese

Two Varieties of Japanese Negative Polarity Interrogatives

Japanese has two basically differentiated varieties of the negative polar interrogatives.

(21) a. Sweet? 

b. 'Is that sweet?'

(22) a. No, it’s not sweet.

b. 'Is that not sweet?'

Tentative definitions of semantic tones

Speaker considers P to be Betsy, where P is the proposition elaborated by the negated non-interrogative in the negation.

Speaker considers P to be Betsy, where P is the proposition elaborated by the negated negative of the negative interrogative.

More generally, the two varieties of Japanese negation polar interrogative contrast in the case of pitch movements within the phrase containing the negation. This contrast is used by speakers in the course of natural interaction, where two speakers are involved.

(23) a. Beatrice: 'Why don’t you say it out loud?'

b. Beatrice: 'Why don’t you say it out loud?'


tonal compression serves as a means of information structural coding (information packaging).

Tonal Compression and Focus/ground Configuration


P-type focus reduction: the final pitch of a sentence is preserved while the important information is emphasized. (24)

N-type focus reduction: the final pitch of a sentence is preserved while the important information is emphasized. (25)

The negative is not part of the focus P-type, and it is part of the focus in N-type.

When a negative predicate consists of a main predicate and an auxiliary (the latter of which contains the negation morpheme), both components usually retain pitch movements.

When there is no negative predicate consists of a main predicate and an auxiliary (the latter of which contains the negation morpheme), both components usually retain pitch movements.

(26) a. I’m never going to get a dog.

b. I’m never going to get a dog.

The auxiliary of a negative predicate, in contrast, tends to be part of the ground and be tonally compressed.

(27) a. I’m never going to get a dog.

b. I’m never going to get a dog.

The negation in the N-type patterns the same as the negation in a declarative in two respects:

(28) a. It’s, or at least to be, part of the focus, and

b. It can be licensed an N-type if it is compatible with P.

The negation in the N-type is a genuine” or “true” negation (in a propositional sense), while that in the P-type is “false”.

Tonal Neutralization

The token content is observed between the P-type and N-type where negation is grammatically expressed on the sentence (i.e., auxiliaries, complements with auxiliary, tenses, etc.). Beneath the simple proposition where the clause follows a noun or a nominal adjective, and complex words with connectives where the basis of the clause is subject.

Constructions with “simple” verbs, whose negative form, as well as positive forms, do not involve an auxiliary, for those constructions, the intention of pitch movement, involving the phrase containing the negation does not guarantee the N-type interpretation (while the tonal compression does guarantee the P-type interpretation).

(29) a. [wait] (at) the restaurant

b. [wait] (at) the restaurant

(30) a. I hear that there is an ice cream shop.

b. I hear that there is an ice cream shop

(31) a. [ask] (for a] hotdog

b. [ask] (for a] hotdog

(32) a. [ask] (for a] hotdog

b. [ask] (for a] hotdog

In cases where a polar interrogative with negated node is further followed by yes-i.e. another instance of node-

(33) a. [taste] (something)

b. [taste] (something)

(34) a. [taste] (something)

b. [taste] (something)

(35) a. [taste] (something)

b. [taste] (something)

More on the Meaning of the NTN-type Interrogative

A closer look at data reveals that the N-type on the “negative -back” interpretation conveys more than what it says.

(36) a. The N-type on the “negative -back” interpretation not only conveys that Speaker is biased toward the negation answer, but also implies that this bias has been formally in the discourse situation, or that Speaker considers the proposition denoted by the radical both likely and desirable.

The NTN-type and inference in the discourse situation (37) a. The bias that is implied of an N-type interrogative “inference” involves “reference” on the speaker. (The negative back should not be present prior to the discourse.)

b. The NTN-type on the “negative -back” interpretation conveys some kind of information on what the negation back was.

(38) a. [organize] (a) a meeting

b. [organize] (a) a meeting

(39) a. [organize] (a) a meeting

b. [organize] (a) a meeting

(40) a. [organize] (a) a meeting

b. [organize] (a) a meeting

(41) a. [organize] (a) a meeting

b. [organize] (a) a meeting

(42) a. [organize] (a) a meeting

b. [organize] (a) a meeting

The NTN-type and desirability

The NTN-type can also be used as the speech speaker suggests the proposition denoted by the radical both likely and desirable, or that the speaker has a negative basis back (cf. Level 2007) in addition to a negative back.

(43) a. [be having] (one day)

b. [be having] (one day)

(44) a. [be having] (one day)

b. [be having] (one day)

(45) a. [be having] (one day)

b. [be having] (one day)

More on the Meaning of the P-Type Interrogative

The P-type interrogative has several other uses besides the “positive aspect” use. First, it can convey that the speaker considers the core proposition possible in the case of some information that may not be available to the hearer. Second, it can be used to express the speaker’s belief. Third, it can be used to make a request or invitation.

The P-type and information gaps

The P-type can be used by the speaker to express the speaker’s expectation of the core proposition holding quite a low gap. (27) (Note that in the same situation at (27) English outside negation NPI is “It’s not back of my shirt.”) Would it be really appropriate for the speaker to not be biased toward the positive answer?

(46) a. [be eating] (one day)

b. [be eating] (one day)

(47) a. [be eating] (one day)

b. [be eating] (one day)

(48) a. [be eating] (one day)

b. [be eating] (one day)

(49) a. [be eating] (one day)

b. [be eating] (one day)

The P-type interrogative conveys either:

(50) a. [that] Speaker considers P in (i)

b. [that] Speaker considers P in (i)

(51) a. [that] Speaker considers P in (i)

b. [that] Speaker considers P in (i)

(52) a. [that] Speaker considers P in (i)

b. [that] Speaker considers P in (i)

The P-type as a means of expressing one’s belief

The P-type can use a means where the speaker expresses his belief, opinion, or judgment, and which convey the speaker’s willingness to avoid self-contradiction.

The P-type as a means of expressing one’s belief

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(53) a. [be eating] (one day)

b. [be eating] (one day)

(54) a. [be eating] (one day)

b. [be eating] (one day)

(55) a. [be eating] (one day)

b. [be eating] (one day)

(56) a. [be eating] (one day)

b. [be eating] (one day)

(57) a. [be eating] (one day)

b. [be eating] (one day)