Prosody and the Comparative Syntax of Wh-questions in
Tokyo and Kumamoto Yatsushiro Japanese

keywords: comparison of Japanese dialects, syntax-prosody interface, Wh-question

A number of works (ref.[1]) have shown that (not only syntax, but also) prosody plays a pivotal role in accounting for the nature of Wh-questions in Tokyo Japanese (TJ) which must exhibit (A) Focus-Prosody (FP); FP-less/incorrect-FP Wh-questions are ungrammatical.

(A) FP of Wh-question (FPWh):

(i) Wh-phrases must be accompanied by F⁰-boosting, (ii) followed by F⁰-compression between Wh-phrases and the QWh-particle (which license the Wh-phrase).

(1) Wh-question and FPWh in TJ:

[CP Mari-ga nani-o nomiya-de (t) non-da-no]? (A-i) F⁰-boosting on nani-
M.-NOM Wh-ACC drink-TNS-QWh
‘[What QWh did Mari drink t; at the bar]?’

Richards (2010) argues that the reason the otherwise grammatical Wh-questions with an embedded "C-headed/Q-less Wh-CP" (CP that contains Wh-phrase but not Q-particle) in TJ (2)a becomes ungrammatical when an embedded-CP is right-dislocated is due to prosodic reasons; the necessary FPWh cannot be formed (2)b. By contrast, the right-dislocated "Q-headed Wh-CP" (CP that contains both Wh-phrase and Q-particle) is grammatical since it maintains the required FPWh even after right-dislocation (3). Yamashita (2010) argues that the reason Wh-phrases cannot be right-dislocated in TJ (ref.[2]) is also due to prosodic reasons; the necessary FPWh cannot be formed (4).

(2) TJ: in-situ and right-dislocation (RD) of "C-headed/Q-less Wh-CP":

a. in-situ "C-headed/Q-less Wh-CP" (A-ii) Correct F⁰-compression until no

Ken-ga [CP Mari-ga nani-o nomiya-de non-da-to] (Yumi-ni) tsutae-ta-no?
K.-NOM M.-NOM Wh-ACC drink-TNS-C Y.-DAT tell-TNS-QWh
‘[What, QWh did Ken tell (Yumi) [that Mari drank t; at the bar]?]’

b. RD of "C-headed/Q-less Wh-CP": *(A-ii) NO F⁰-compression until no

*Ken-ga [CP Mari-ga nani-o nomiya-de non-da-to]?
K.-NOM Y.-DAT drink-TNS-QWh M.-NOM Wh-ACC
‘[[What, QWh did Ken tell (Yumi) [that Mari drank t; at the bar]]RD]?’

(3) TJ: in-situ and RD of "Q-headed Wh-CP":

a. in-situ "Q-headed Wh-CP"

Ken-ga [CP Mari-ga nani-o nomiya-de non-da-ka] (Yumi-ni) tsutae-ta-\{no/yo\}.
K.-NOM M.-NOM Wh-ACC drink-TNS-QWh Y.-DAT tell-TNS-QWh/SFP
‘[[QWh Did Ken tell/Ken told] (Yumi) [what, QWh Mari drank t; at the bar]]?/’

b. RD of "Q-headed Wh-CP"

Ken-ga [CP Mari-ga nani-o nomiya-de non-da-ka]?
K.-NOM Y.-DAT drink-TNS-QWh/SFP M.-NOM Wh-ACC
‘[[QWh Did Ken tell/Ken told] (Yumi) [what, QWh Mari drank t; at the bar]]?/’

(4) TJ: RD of Wh-phrase out of Wh-question:

*[CP Mari-ga t; nomiya-de non-da-no]?, nani-o? (A-i) F⁰-boosting on nani-
M.-NOM bar-at drink-TNS-QWh Wh-ACC *(A-ii) NO F⁰-compression until no
‘[[QWh [Mari drank t; at the bar]]?, what;RD]?’ *(B) unnecessary F⁰-boosting on V(-T)
The aim of this paper is to present further arguments for the general line of research that takes syntax-prosody interface of Wh-questions into consideration seriously, especially along the lines pursued by Richards (2010) and Yamashita (2010), by providing new evidence involving right-dislocation and Wh-questions in Kumamoto Yatsushiro Japanese (KYJ), which shows striking and interesting differences from that of TJ.

Prosody and the syntax of Wh-questions in KYJ shows completely differently patterns from that of TJ. <1>I report the hitherto unnoticed novel finding that Wh-questions in KYJ lacks FP<sub>Wh</sub>; no F<sub>0</sub>-boosting on Wh-phrases. <2>Both right-dislocation of "C-headed/Q-less Wh-CP" and Wh-phrase are grammatical in KYJ (5)&(6).

(5)KYJ: in-situ and RD of "C-headed/Q-less Wh-CP":

- a. in-situ "C-headed/Q-less Wh-CP"
  
  Ken-no [CP kuroka inu-n nan-ba soko-de non-da-te] (Yumi-ni) tsutae-ta-<i>kkai</i>?
  
  K.-NOM black dog-NOM Wh-ACC there-at drink-TNS-C Y.-DAT tell-TNS-Q<sub>Wh</sub>
  
  ‘[What, Q<sub>Wh</sub> did Ken tell (Yumi) [that black dog drank t<sub>i</sub> there]]?’

- b. RD of "C-headed/Q-less Wh-CP"
  
  Ken-no t<sub>CP</sub> (Yumi-ni) tsutae-ta-<i>kkai</i>?, [CP kuroka inu-n nan-ba soko-de non-da-te]?
  
  K.-NOM Y.-DAT tell-TNS-Q<sub>Wh</sub> black dog-NOM Wh-ACC there-at drink-TNS-C
  
  ‘[[What, Q<sub>Wh</sub> did Ken tell (Yumi) t<sub>CP</sub>?], [that black dog drank t<sub>i</sub> there]]’

(6)KYJ: RD of Wh-phrase out of Wh-question:

- [CP Kuroka inu-n t<sub>i</sub> soko-de non-da-<i>kkai</i>?], nan-ba,? black dog-NOM there-at drink-TNS-Q<sub>Wh</sub> Wh-ACC
  
  ‘[[Q<sub>Wh</sub> Black dog drank t<sub>i</sub> there?], what<sub>i(RD)</sub>?’

I argue that the differences between the two dialects in the (un)availability of right-dislocation of "C-headed/Q-less Wh-CPs" and Wh-phrases naturally follows from the Richards-Yamashita analysis; unlike Wh-questions in TJ (with FP<sub>Wh</sub>), Wh-questions in KYJ, being without FP<sub>Wh</sub>, does not lead to incorrect-FP<sub>Wh</sub> even if right-dislocation takes place.

To conclude, I have argued that the analysis utilizing the presence and absence of prosodic conditions on Wh-questions in TJ and KYJ accounts for the differences between the two dialects on the (un)availability of right-dislocation of "C-headed/Q-less Wh-CPs" and Wh-phrases. Existing "syntax/semantic"-only analyses cannot give proper accounts, since there are no dialectal differences syntactically/semantically. The important implication of this paper is that there are cases where we must make use of prosodic factors in analyzing syntactic problems, calling for the need and importance of syntax-prosody interface approach (as noted e.g., in Kitagawa 2005:p.303).

(749 words, including data but excluding references)

References: