# RE-EVALUATING THE "QUESTION" MARKER *KA* IN JAPANESE[*]

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In the discussion of the root/non-root distinction of clauses, Miyagawa (2012) claims that the politeness marker *-mas-* in Japaense is the realization of agreement between the matrix predicate and the addressee (allocutive agreement). He provides interrogative sentences involving the question marker *ka* in order to show there is a super-sentential structure called Speech Act Phrase, whose head licenses the question marker. He only considers regular questions; however, rhetorical questions pattern differently from regular questions, which cannot be accounted for by Miyagawa's analysis. In order to accommodate all types of questions, I will propose that there are in fact two types of *ka*, one with a licensing condition and the other without.

1. Introduction

Miyagawa (2012) proposes that the politeness marking in Japanese is a type of allocutive agreement and that the presence of the politeness marker *-mas-* (or the formal copula *des-*), bearing an allocutive feature, induces the projection of Speech Act Phrase (Speas and Tenny 2003; see Rizzi 1997, Ambar 1999, 2002 and Cinque 1999 for similar work). His proposed structure is shown in (1).
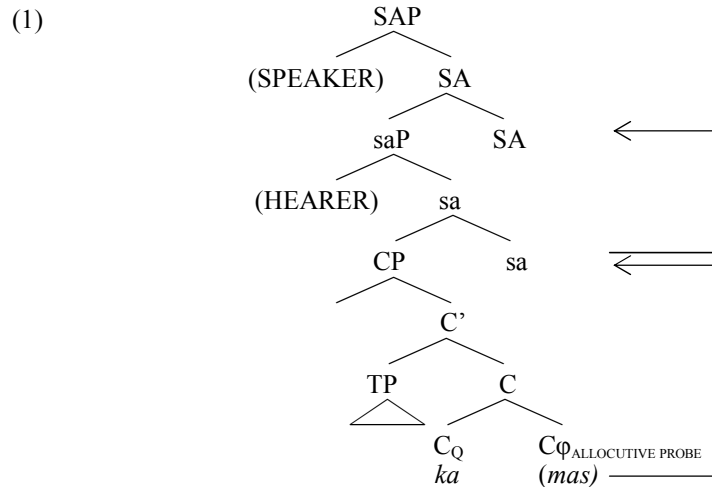
(1)

The allocutive probe is at C, and it moves up to the highest Speech Act head, where it takes HEARER and the entire utterance in its scope. In this paper, I will take this proposal for granted.

Miyagawa (2012) also claims that *ka* must be selected by a head (the Speech Act head or a bridge verb). In order to show that the politeness marker must be present for *ka*-marked questions to be grammatical, he provides the following examples.

(2)   a. Dare-ga   ki-mas-u   ka
          who-Nom come-Pol-Prs   Q
          'Who will come?'

        b. *Dare-ga ku-ru   ka
          who-Nom come-Prs   Q
          'Who will come?' (intended)

                                (Miyagawa 2012: (15-6))

In (2a), the politeness marker -*mas*- is present, and the sentence is grammatical. On the other hand, the question without the politeness marker (2b) is ungrammatical. Therefore, these data alone suggest that the presence of the politeness marker somehow renders an interrogative sentence with the question marker *ka* grammatical. This is consistent with Miyagawa's (2012) analysis.

However, the following example is a case where a *ka*-marked interrogative free of the politeness marker is grammatical.

(3)   (Konna   tokoro-ni)   dare-ga   kuru ka
        like.this   place-to   who-Nom   come Q
        'Who would come (to a place like this)?' (= 'Nobody would come.')

Although the sentence in (3) has exactly the same structure as the one in (2b), it is grammatical. The only difference between them is that one is information-seeking and the other is rhetorical. This cannot be explained by the licensing condition for *ka* proposed by Miyagawa (2012). In this paper, I will try to account for why there is such asymmetry. Before going into my proposal, I will introduce different types of *ka*-marked "questions" in Japanese.

2.   Different Types of *Ka*-marked Sentences

2.1   Ordinary Questions (OQ)

Ordinary questions, alternatively called regular questions or information-seeking questions, are asked in hope of receiving an answer from the addressee. In Japanese, questions are formed either by adding *ka* at the end of a declarative with rising intonation or simply with rising intonation as shown in (4).

(4) a. Bikutoria daigaku-wa   doko-ni   ari-mas-u   (ka) ↗

         Victoria   university-Top   where-P   exist-Pol-Prs Q
         'Where is the University of Victoria?'

     b. Gengogaku-wa   tanosii   des-u   (ka) ↗

         linguistics-Top   fun   Cpl.F-Prs   Q
         'Is linguistics fun?'

There are other discourse markers that can be used for questions such as *no* and *kai*. In this paper, I will focus only on sentences marked with *ka*.

2.2   Rhetorical Questions (RQ)

Rhetorical questions have the syntactic structure of a question but semantically function as a statement. The answer to a rhetorical question is either self-evident or expected to be known to the addressee.

(5) a. Dare-ga   konna gakkai-ni   sankasi-mas-u   ka.
        who-Nom such   conference-P attend-Pol-Prs   Q
        'Who would attend a conference like this?'
        (='No one would attend a conference like this.')

     b. Gengogakusha-ga   buturigakugakkai-ni   sankasi-mas-u ka.
        linguist-Nom   physics.conference-P attend-Pol-Prs Q
        'Would a linguist attend a physics conference?'
        (='A linguist would not attend a physics conference.')

In Japanese, there are multiple forms of rhetorical questions, but I will focus on *ka*-marked questions that can constitute statements in the absence of *ka* with little to no modification (cf. Sprouse 2007 for discussion of another type of rhetorical question; see Bhatt 1998 for discussion of English rhetorical questions).

2.3   Conjectural Questions (CQ)

Conjectural questions (Littell, Mathewson, and Peterson 2010) are questions to which the speaker neither knows the answer nor expects the addressee to know the answer.

(6) a. Dare-ga   tugi-no   daitooryoo-ni   na-ru   ka   naa.
        who-Nom next-Gen   president-P   become-Prs Q   NAA
        'I wonder who is going to be the next president.'

     b. Kono   kasetu-wa   tadasii   n   da   ka.
        This   hypothesis-Top   right   Nm   Cpl Q
        'I wonder if this hypothesis is right.'

This class of interrogative sentences are usually accompanied by other elements such as *naa*, which moderates the illocutionary force of the preceding sentence, and a nominalizer *n(o)*.

2.4   Wh-exclamatives (WE)

Wh-exclamatives express strong feelings, emphasis or emotion. Japanese has a special form of wh-word for exclamatives.

(7)   Nanto/nante subarasii   ronbun   na   n   da-roo   ka.
       how   excellent   thesis   NA   MN   Cpl-Mod   Q
       'What an excellent paper!'

The exclamatives normally contain a nominalizer and a "speculative" modal (*r*)*oo* (Takahara 2009).

2.5   Self-addressed Confirmatives (SC)

There are *ka*-marked sentences which are directed to the speaker himself/herself and are used to digest newly-reported information. I will call these sentences "self-addressed confirmatives." *Ka* in this case is similar to the confirmational *eh* (Wiltschko p.c.) in Canadian English.

(8)   a. Kotosi-wa   kanada-ga   orimpikku-de   yuushoosi-ta   ka.
          this.year-Top   Canada-Nom   Olympics-P   win-Pst   Q
          'Oh, Canada became an Olympics champion this year.'

       b. Aruzenchinzin-no sikyoo-ga   roomahoo.oo-ni   nat-ta   ka
          Argentine-Gen   bishop-Nom   Pope-P   become-Pst   Q
          'Oh, the Argentine bishop became the Pope.'

Since these sentences are "self-addressed," they could well be uttered while watching TV or reading a newspaper alone.

2.6   Resistives (Res)

Ka-marked sentences which I will call "resistives" are used to express the speaker's resistance, refusal or rejection.

(9)   a. Anna   hito-to   kekkonsu-ru mono des-u   ka.
          like.that person-with   marry-Prs   thing Cpl.F-Prs   Q
          'I will not marry that kind of person.'
       b. Koko-made   kite   akirame-ru   (mono)   ka.
          here-to   come-Inf   give.up-Prs   thing   Q
          'I won't give up having come this far.'

2.7 Polar Imperatives (PI)

Ka-marked negative sentences can be used as a positive command. I will call these sentences "polar imperatives."

(10) a. Hayaku   yara-nai   ka.
         right.away do-Neg   Q
         'Do it right away.'

      b. Yame-nai ka.
         stop-Neg   Q
         'Stop it.'

As is clear in (10), the combination of the negation and the question marker sometimes generate a positive command instead of a negative question.

2.8 Embedded Questions (EQ)

As pointed out by Miyagawa (2012) and others, the politeness marker *-mas-* usually does not appear in an embedded clause as shown in (11).

(11) a. George-wa Mary-ni sono   hon-o   motte-i-ru   ka   kii-ta.
         G-Top   Mary-to that   book-Acc   have-Prg-Prs Q   ask-Pst
         'George asked Mary if she has the book.'

      b. *John-wa   dare-ga   sono hon-o   motte-i-mas-u   ka
         J-Top   who-Nom   that book-Acc   have-Prg-Pol-Prs   Q

         sitte-i-ru.
         know-Prg-Prs
         'John knows who has the book.'

When the politeness marker is in an embedded clause as in (11b), the sentence is ungrammatical. This is due to the selectional restriction of the matrix verb. The politeness marker triggers the Speech Act phrase, but the matrix verb cannot take a clause that is not a CP, making the derivation to crash (Miyagawa 2012).

2.9 Syntactically Relevant Distinction

I have introduced eight types of *ka*-marked sentences. Littell, Mathewson, and Peterson (2010) discuss the first three types, namely ordinary questions, rhetorical questions, and conjectural questions, and make a semantic/pragmatic distinction based on speaker/addressee knowledge of the answer. In fact, each of the eight classes of *ka*-marked sentences can be uniquely identified if we also consider whether the sentence is uttered with the presence of the addressee in mind. However, what is relevant for the syntax of interrogative sentences in

Japanese is whether the sentence requires an answer. A response is expected only for ordinary questions, and the others can stand alone. This is reflected in the fact that ordinary questions are uttered with rising intonation, and the other types of *ka*-marked questions with falling intonation. I will use the binary feature [±assertive] to make this distinction, ordinary questions being non-assertive ([-assertive]) and the other types of *ka*-marked sentences assertive ([+assertive]). The word "(non-)assertive" is used here for the purpose of distinguishing sentences that ask for information from those that do not, and it should not be confused with "assertion." The chart in (12) summarizes the points made in this section.

(12) *Ka*-marked sentences and the syntactically relevant distinction

	S knows the answer	S belives A knows the answer	Discourse participant(s)	Response required?	
OQ	No (Yes)	Yes	S,A	Yes	[-assertive]
RQ	Yes	Yes	S,A	No	
CQ	No	No	S,(A)	No	
WE	n/a (Yes?)	n/a	S,(A)	No	
SC	n/a (Yes?)	n/a	S	No	[+assertive]
Res	n/a (Yes?)	n/a	S,A	No	
PI	n/a	n/a	S,A	No	
EQ[1]	??	??	S,A	No	

(adopted from Littell, Mathewson and Peterson 2010 and Peterson 2013 with additions and modifications)

3. Two types of *Ka*

3.1 Assertive *Ka* vs. Non-assertive *Ka*

In order to account for the assertive/non-assertive distinction of *ka*-marked questions, I propose that there are two types of *ka*, one with a licensing restriction and the other without. Ordinary questions are ended with [-assertive] *ka*, which must be licensed by HEARER in the Speech Act phrase. The feature [-assertive] is realized with rising intonation. On the other hand, [+assertive] *ka* is found in the other types of questions, and it does not have any licensing requirement. This is represented in (13).

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[1] Whether the speaker or the addressee knows the answer is dependent on the information contained in the matrix clause.

(13)

$$Ka$$

[-assertive]   [+assertive]

OQ	RQ/CQ/WE/SC/Res/ PI/EQ
• must be licensed by HEARER in the Speech Act phrase.	• no licensing requirement
• realized with rising intonation	• often realized with falling intonation

Furthurmore, as will be clear in the next section, an element representing the addressee (i.e. 2nd person pronouns and proper nouns with the addressee as their referent) causes allocutive agreement just as the politeness marker –*mas*- or the formal copula *des*-, allowing [-assertive] *ka* to occur in the sentence. The informal copula *da* has a [+assertive] feature, and having *da* and the non-assertive *ka* in the same sentence would cause a semantic clash. In the next section, I will explain how this dichotomic system works using examples.

3.2   Relevant data

3.2.1   Polite ordinary questions

When the politeness marker -*mas*- is present, *ka*-marked ordinary questions are grammatical as shown in (14).

(14)   a. Dare-ga   shutubasi-mas-u   ka [-assertive].
              who-Nom run.for.election-Pol-Prs   Q
              'Who will run for the election?'

   b. Anata-wa shutubasi-mas-u   ka [-assertive].
       you.F-Top run.for.election-Pol-Prs   Q
       'Will you run for the election?'

   c. Kenji-wa   shutubasi-mas-u   ka [-assertive].
       K-Top   run.for.election-Pol-Prs   Q
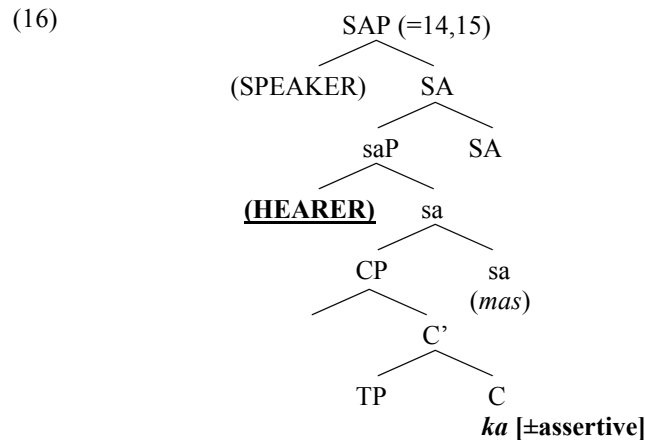   'Will Kenji run for the election?'

Since the politeness marker -*mas*- is the realization of allocutive agreement, the Speech Act phrase is present in the structure for the sentences in (14). Therefore, the non-assertive *ka* is properly licensed by HEARER in the Speech Act projection.

3.2.2 Polite *ka*-marked assertive sentences

The assertive *ka* does not have any licensing requirement; therefore, whether or not the politeness marker is there to trigger the Speech Act phrase, the sentences are expected to be grammatical. *Ka*-marked sentences with the politeness marker *-mas-* are well-formed as expected.

(15)   a. Dare-ga   shutubasi-mas-u   ka [+assertive].
          who-Nom run.for.election-Pol-Prs   Q
          'Who would run for the election?'
          (='Nobody would run for the election.')   <RQ>

        b. Anata-ga   shutubasi-mas-u   ka [+assertive].
           you.F-Nom   run.for.election-Pol-Prs   Q
           'You (of all people) are running for the election.'   <SC>

        c. Kenji-ga   shutubasi-mas-u   ka [+assertive].
           K-Nom   run.for.election-Pol-Prs   Q
           'Kenji (of all people) is running for the election.'   <SC>
           'There is no way Kenji is running for the election.'   <Res>

The structure for (14) and (15) is shown in (16). As mentioned above, the grammaticality of (14) results from the non-assertive *ka* being properly licensed by HEARER, and the grammaticality of (15) is due to the lack of licensing requirement of the assertive *ka*.

(16)

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                    SAP (=14,15)
                   /          \
        (SPEAKER)             SA
                            /     \
                         saP       SA
                        /    \
                 (HEARER)     sa
                            /    \
                          CP      sa
                         /  \    (mas)
                             C'
                            /   \
                         TP      C
                              ka [±assertive]
```

3.2.3 Non-polite ordinary questions

In absence of the politeness marker, *ka*-marked ordinary questions are ungrammatical unless there is an element representing the addressee in the sentence as illustrated in (17).

(17)   a. *Dare-ga shutubasu-ru   ka [-assertive].
       who-Nom run.for.election-Prs   Q
       'Who is running for the election?' (intended)

     b. Omae-wa   shutubasu-ru   ka [-assertive].
       you.C-Nom   run.for.election-Prs   Q
       'Are you running for the election?'

     c. *Kenji-wa shutubasu-ru   ka [-assertive].
       K-Top   run.for.election-Prs   Q
       'Is Kenji running for the election?' (intended)

The ungrammaticality of (17a) and (17c) comes from the fact that these sentences lack allocutive agreement, which means that there is no Speech Act phrase to license the non-assertive *ka* (18a). The sentence in (17b), on the other hand, is grammatical because there is a second person pronoun, which triggers allocutive agreement as with the politeness marker, and so the non-assertive *ka* can be properly licensed (18b).

(18)   a.   *CP (=17a, c)   b.   SAP (=17b)

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(18)  a.    *CP (=17a, c)              b.            SAP (=17b)
                 |                                  /        \
                 C'                         (SPEAKER)         SA
               /    \                                       /     \
             TP      C                                    saP      SA
                ka [-assertive]                          /   \
                                                  (HEARER)     sa
                                                             /    \
                                                           CP      sa
                                                           |
                                                           C'
                                                         /    \
                                                       TP      C
                                                      /  \    ka [-assertive]
                                                    DP    …
                                                    you
```

3.2.4 Non-polite *ka*-marked assertive sentences

Unlike their non-assertive counterparts, plain *ka*-marked assertive sentences are well-formed as predicted by the fact that the assertive *ka* is free of a licensing condition. This is illustrated in (19).

(19) a. Dare-ga   shutubasu-ru   ka [+assertive].
           who-Nom run.for.election-Prs Q
           'Who would run for the election?'
           (='Nobody would run for the election.')   <RQ>

       b. Omae-ga   shutubasu-ru   ka [+assertive].
           you.C-Nom   run.for.election-Prs Q
           'Oh, you (of all people) are running for the election.'   <SC>

       c. Kenji-ga   shutubasu-ru   ka [+assertive].
           K-Nom   run.for.election-Prs Q
           'Oh, Kenji (of all people) is running for the election.'   <SC>
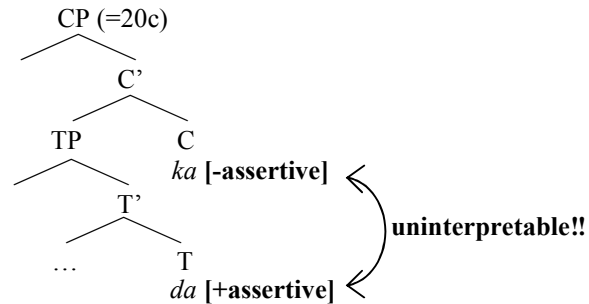   'There is no way Kenji will run for the election.'   <Res>

3.2.5 *Ka*-marked copular sentences

The formal copula *des* is compatible with either non-assertive (20a) or assertive (20b) *ka*-marked sentences. However, the informal copula *da* is incompatible with the non-assertive *ka* (20c) even when there is a second person element in the sentence. (20d) shows that *da* is allowed in an assertive *ka*-marked sentence.

(20) a. Anata-wa   isha   des-u   ka [-assertive].
           you.F-Top   doctor   Cpl.F-Prs   Q
           'Are you a doctor?'   <OQ>
       b. Nani-ga   okasii   n   des-u   ka [+assertive].
           what-Nom   funny   NM   Cpl.F-Prs   Q
           'What is so funny?' (='Nothing is funny')   <RQ>

       c. #Omae-wa   isha   da [+assertive]   ka [-assertive].
            you.C-Top doctor   Cpl.Prs   Q
            'Are you a doctor?' (intended)

       d. Kono   kasetu-wa   tadasii n   da [+assertive]   ka [+assertive].
           This   hypothesis-Top right   NM Cpl.Prs   Q
           'I wonder if this hypothesis is right.'   <CQ>

The unacceptability of (20c) follows from the fact that the informal copula *da* bears a [+assertive] feature, whose presence in a non-assertive *ka*-marked sentence causes a semantic clash. The structure for (20c) is shown in (21).

(21)

```
              CP (=20c)
             /      
            C'
          /    
        TP        C
       /      ka [-assertive]  <
        T'                      )
      /                         ) uninterpretable!!
    …       T                   )
        da [+assertive]  <
```

It may not seem intuitive to have two homophonous elements whose distributions are so similar; however, if we look at other languages, the idea of having two types of *ka* does not seem to be unrealistic.

3.3 Other languages

3.3.1 Korean

Korean has special markers for "self-addressed questions" (Jang 1999) which are similar to conjectural questions. One of the markers is shown in (22c)[2].

(22) a. Mary-ka   o-ass   ta.
          M-Nom   come-Pst   Dec
        'Mary has come.'

      b. Mary-ka   o-ass   **ni**?
          M-Nom   come-Pst   **Q**
        'Has Mary come?'

      c. Mary-ka   o-ass   **na**?
          M-Nom   come-Pst   **Q**
        'I wonder whether Mary has come.'   <CQ>

<div align="right">(Jang 1999: (1))</div>

If there are different lexical items for different functions in Korean, it is no surprise that Japanese has two functionally distinct yet homophonous elements.

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[2] The other "self-addressed question" markers introduced by Jang (1999) are *ka* and *la*.

3.3.2 Souletin dialect of Basque

In Souletin dialect of Basque, there is allocutive agreement (23a-c); however, when there is second person agreement, allocutive agreement does not occur (23d).

(23)   a. <u>To a male friend</u>
        Pettek   lan   egin dik.
        Peter.Erg work.Abs   do.Prf Aux-3.S.Abs-2.S.C.Msc.Alloc-3.S.Erg
        'Peter worked.'

     b. <u>To a female friend</u>
        Pettek   lan   egin din.
        Peter.Erg work.Abs   do.Prf Aux-3.S.Abs-2.S.C.Fm.Alloc-3.S.Erg

     c. <u>To someone higher in status</u> (formal)
        Pettek   lan   egin dizü.
        Peter.Erg work.Abs   do.Prf Aux-3.S.Abs-2.S.F.Alloc-3.S.Erg
                              (Oyharçabal 1993: (6); cited by Miyagawa 2012 :(5))

     d. (Nik   hi)   ikusi   haut.
        (1.S.Erg   2.S.C.Abs) see.Prf   Aux-**2.S.C.Abs**-1.S.Erg
        'I saw you.'   (Miyagawa 2012: (6a))

If the reason why second person agreement and allocutive agreement do not co-occur in Basque is because second person agreement is allocutive agreement, it can be said that a second person pronoun triggers the Speech Act phrase. If this is the case, it would not be a leap of logic to say that second person element causes the Speech Act phrase in Japanese as well.

4.   Alternative Analysis

It was suggested that the asymmetry could be accounted for by having "intonational morphemes" (Davis 2011) instead of introducing two types of *ka*.[3] The idea is that the intonational component of a sentence is a separate morpheme and that the morpheme has a semantic content. If this analysis is incorporated into *ka*-marked sentences, the three-way contrast can be made clear as in (24).

(24)   a. Questions without *ka* ·················· ↑ (rising intonation)
      b. *Ka*-marked ordinary questions ········ *ka* + ↑
      c. *Ka*-marked rhetorical questions ······· *ka* + ↓ (falling intonation)

Although this analysis neatly illustrates the trichotomy, it does not provide us with any explanation as to the grammaticality difference among the three classes.

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[3] I thank Martina Wiltschko for this suggestion.

Since the grammaticality varies in all three cases, the difference cannot be associated with a particular morpheme. Furthermore, Davis (2011) introduces a supersegmental element "RHET" in order to account for the difference between ordinary questions and rhetorical questions. However, this is not a plausible account of rhetorical questions. For one thing, introducing an element that has no phonetic realization unnecessarily complicates the structure. For another, the rhetorical meaning can only be obtained from a *ka*-marked sentence unless a special construction *(...to iu no* 'Do you say that…') is used; therefore, the rhetorical meaning should lie in the question marker rather than in a ghost element. The analysis of intonational morphemes may work perfectly with other sentence-final particles in Japanese. It appears to be inapplicable to *ka*-marked sentences.

5. Remaining Issues

5.1 Questions with non-verbal predicates

Ordinary questions without verbal predicates are grammatical even when there is no politeness marker or second person element.

(25) a. Sono   ringo(-wa)   oisii   ka [-assertive].
        that   apple-Top   tasty   Q
        'Is the apple tasty?'

    b. Mary-ga ano kompyuutaa-o kowasi-ta   no   ka[-assertive].
       M-Nom   that computer-Acc break-Pst   Nm   Q
       'Is it true that Mary broke that computer?'

    c. ?*Mary-ga ano   kompyuutaa-o   kowasi-ta   ka [-assertive].
         M-Nom that   computer-Acc   break-Pst   Q
         'Did Mary break that computer?'

Since there is neither an overt/covert second person element nor the politeness marker in the sentences, it is difficult to structurally account for the grammaticality of the sentences in (25a-b). However, both of these sentences are asking for the addressee's judgement/knowledge rather than a fact as in (25c). Therefore, Sentience/Evidentiality Phrase discussed by Tenny (2006) may help to resolve this issue as this projection seem to require Speech Act Projection as well.

5.2 Wh-questions

Information-seeking wh-questions without the politeness marker are ill-formed for some speakers even when there is a second person element in the sentence.

(26) a. Anata-wa   nani-o   tabe-mas-u   ka [-assertive].
          you.F-Top   what-Acc   eat-Pol-Prs Q
          'What are you going to eat?'

      b. ??Omae-wa   nani(-o)   tabe-ru   ka [-assertive].
          you.C-Top   what-Acc   eat-Prs   Q
          'What are you going to eat?'

Since the sentence with the politeness marker (26a) is well-formed, the unacceptability of (26b) cannot be attributed to the wh-word. The speakers who do not accept (26b) do accept the non-polite *ka*-marked sentence in (17b), so this cannot be due to the lack of second person agreement. I will leave this issue to be solved in the future as this does not directly affect my analysis of the question marker.

6.   Conclusion

In English, questions such as "*What did John do for me?*" could either be an information-seeking question asking for what John has done for the speaker or a rhetorical question meaning John did nothing for the speaker. Since a question in English cannot be disambiguated structurally, the research on rhetorical questions has been confined to semantics and pragmatics. However, in Japanese, as we have seen, a *ka*-marked ordinary question without the politeness marker *-mas-* is ill-formed while its assertive counterpart is grammatical. I have shown that this structural asymmetry can be accounted for by introducing two types of *ka* and that there is a syntactic account available for the distinction between ordinary questions and rhetorical questions in Japanese.

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