

Experiment

A forced-choice questionnaire study was conducted to test the comprehension of spoken complex sentences such as below, in which the Wh-element only allows a matrix-scope interpretation because of the declarative COMP *-to* in the subordinate clause.

(1)

健一は [由美がどの男を選んだと] 今でも信じているの？

Keniti-wa [Yumi-ga dono-otoko-o eranda-to] imademo sinziteiru-no?
Top Nom which.man-Acc chose-COMP_{that} still believe-Q

'Which man₁ is such that Kinichi still believes [**that** Yumi selected **him**₁]?'

If the domain of Focus Prosody (FPD) indeed influences the language users' parsing of Wh-questions, we may be able to lead them to assign Wh-scope that is not permitted by grammar by letting them process a sentence accompanied by a specific prosodic pattern. This, in turn, may cause their rejection of a sentence as ungrammatical (Kitagawa and Fodor (To appear in 2006)). In case of (1), for instance, the sentence accompanied by Local FPD would be rejected in response to the subordinate complementizer that is not compatible with the subordinate Wh-scope. Since the grammaticality judgments here hinge on the distinction of two very short mono-moraic complementizers *-to* (declarative marker) and *-ka* (Wh-scope marker), which may be easily disregarded either in auditory or visual perception, we considered it important that we confirm which of the matrix and subordinate Wh-scope the subjects have assigned in each case of their grammaticality judgment

Materials (12 pairs): Experimental sentences, all in question forms, together with 60 filler questions, were auditorily presented to the subjects. While the written version of each sentence was also presented on a screen at the same time, the subjects were encouraged to focus on the spoken stimuli. They were instructed to select a possible answer from the given choices. The experimental sentences were presented either with the global FPD or with the local FPD (local/ global FPD counterbalanced).

Global FPD

(1) (repeated)

健一は [由美がどの男を選んだと] 今でも信じているの↑?

Keniti-wa [Yumi-ga **DO**no-otoko-o eranda-to] imademo sinziteiru-no↑
 Top Nom which.man-Acc chose-COMP still believe-Q

↓H*↓

Local FPD

(2) (repeated)

健一は [由美がどの男を選んだと] 今でも信じているの↑?

Keniti-wa [Yumi-ga **DO**no-otoko-o eranda-to] /mademo sinziteiru-no↑
 Top Nom which.man-Acc chose-COMP still believe-Q

H*

Forced Choice

- The question sentence is not grammatical
- The question can be answered by “Yes” (compatible with the embedded Wh-scope assignment)
- The question can be answered by “Taroo” (compatible with the matrix Wh-scope assignment)

Prediction:

- Greater rejection rate, and/or greater embedded interpretation for items with **local** FPD

Furthermore, the following can also be predicted.

- If implicit prosody is in operation, and local FPD is a default prosodic pattern for Wh-questions in Tokyo Japanese as argued for by Kitagawa and Fodor (2003), the silent versions pattern themselves after the local FPD versions.

Subjects: Thirty-two native speakers of the Tokyo dialect participated in the experiment for payment.

In addition to this experiment involving auditory perception, nine subjects were tested only with the written version of the same set of stimuli, to test the second prediction. (More subjects are currently being recruited for this experiment. Its results will be compared with the main results with auditory-presented stimuli.)

Results

% rejected the question

Global FPD	Local FPD	(Silent: 9 additional Ss group)
5	16	19

Global vs. Local FPD conditions: $p < .001$ (by subject), $p = .062$ (by item)

% interpreted the question with an embedded scope

Global FPD	Local FPD	(Silent: 9 additional Ss group)
0	5	20

Global vs. Local FPD conditions: $p < .05$ (by subject), $p < .05$ (by item)

Although the differences are only marginally significant, the overall results are consistent with the predictions, i.e.

- There was greater rejection rate (16% as opposed to 5%), and/or greater embedded interpretation (5% as opposed to 0%) for items with local FPD prosody compared to items with global FPD prosody.

References:

- Kitagawa, Yoshihisa and Janet Dean Fodor. 2003. Default Prosody Explains Neglected Syntactic Analyses of Japanese. In *Japanese/Korean Linguistics 12*, 267-279. CSLI Publication.
- Kitagawa, Yoshihisa and Janet Dean Fodor. To appear in 2006. Prosodic Influences on Syntactic Judgments. In *Gradience in Grammar: Generative Perspectives*, ed. Fanselow, Gisbert, et al., Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.