

When is ‘or not’ required in an embedded polar question?

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Supplemental Data

First, to show that Japanese behaves like weak Type II languages w.r.t. licensing of *dooka* ‘or not’:

(9) *Japanese*

- a. watashi-wa [hiro-ga sake-wo nomu **ka (dooka)**] kangae-teiru
I-TOP Hiro-NOM sake-ACC drink Q or not think-PRS
‘I wonder if Hiro will drink sake (or not).’
- b. [iku **ka *(dooka)** atode] denwa de shira-se-masu
go Q or not later phone with know-CAUS-HON
‘Whether or not I go, I’ll let you know later by phone.’
- c. [hiro-ga sake-wo nomu **ka (dooka)**] wa tenki-ni yoru
Hiro-NOM sake-ACC drink Q or not TOP weather-DAT depend
‘Whether Hiro will drink sake (or not) depends on the weather.’

Turkish builds polar questions by adding the focus clitic *-mI* to their declarative prejacent, which could attach either to the verb or to the object for broad focus interpretations (Kamali 2011a,b). Disjunction is not required in yes-no question complements if *-mI* is present.

(10) *Turkish*

- [Ali yemek **<mi>** yap-tı **<mi>**], merak ed-iyor-um
Ali dinner MI make-PAST MI wonder do-PRES-1SG
‘I wonder if Ali made dinner.’

(Kamali, 2025: 44)

Kamali points out an asymmetry that arises between the two attachment sites while considering nominalized variants of embedded polar questions, which are purported to be equally as common. The nominalization of the object attachment question retains the clitic on the object (11a), while the nominalization of the verb attachment question requires the clitic to be replaced by a periphrastic construction expanding the standard nominalization with a V-not-V form (11b).

(11) *Turkish*

- a. Merve [Ali’nin yemek **mi** yap-tığ-ın]-ı soruyor.
Merve Ali-GEN dinner MI make-NMLZ-3SG-ACC asks
‘Merve asks if Ali made dinner.’

object attachment

- b. Merve [Ali'nin yemek yap-ıP yap-ma-dıĝ-ın]-ı soruyor
 Merve Ali-GEN dinner make-CVB make-NEG-NMLZ-3SG-ACC asks
 'Merve asks if Ali made dinner.' *verb attachment*
 (Kamali, 2025: 45)

She considers the semantic difference between verb-attachment and object-attachment questions to be whether the propositional set is *bipolar* or *monopolar*, à la Krifka (2015). Syntactically, Kamali & Krifka (2020) assume the former to involve a Polarity head, with evidence from NPI-licensing.

Two questions that arise from (10) and (11): why do verb-attachment questions not permit *-mI* in the nominalized form, but object-attachment questions do? Further, why must the verb-attachment resort to disjunction in order to license a nominalized polar question complement?

Kamali (in review) suggests that verb-attachment questions are barred from the default monopolar question meaning due to a failure of focus projection (cf. Selkirk, 1995). Instead of coercion, then, they must find a different semantic pathway for deriving their bipolar question meaning:

- The Polarity head may accomplish this in association with the focus clitic *-mI*;
- In nominalized complements, the Polarity head is not licensed, and another way to produce the intended bipolar question meaning is with alternative disjunction → V-not-V (11b).

In fact, Japanese also makes frequent use of the periphrastic construction for non-root alternative polar questions, see examples below with an unconditional (12a) and subject of 'depend on' (12b).

(12) *Japanese*

- a. [Hiro-ga sake-wo non-demo nom-anaku-temo] watashi-wa nomu
 Hiro-NOM sake-ACC drink-even.if drink-NEG-even.if I-TOP drink
 'Whether Hiro will drink sake or not, I will drink.'
- b. [hi-ro-ga sake-wo nomu **ka** nom-anai-**ka**] wa tenki-ni yoru
 Hiro-NOM sake-ACC drink **Q** drink-NEG-**Q** TOP weather-DAT depend
 'Whether Hiro will drink sake or not depends on the weather.' (equivalent to (9c))

Turkish object-attachment questions are strictly monopolar, and neither do they get coerced into bipolar question meanings, even in embedding contexts like (10) and (11a). In contrast to subject-attachment questions, these do allow focus projection from object to VP to broad focus.

Kamali (2025) suggests further empirical evidence for the default monopolar question meaning:

- English lacks a strictly bipolar question form: it allows for an ambiguous polar interrogative (monopolar or bipolar), or an unambiguous rising declarative (monopolar only).
- The same observation has been made for unrelated languages like Hungarian and Japanese, which have a strict monopolar form but no straightforward bipolar analogs.
- It may be that Turkish verb-attachment questions present an outlier to the universal paradigm of polar questions starting out life as singleton propositional sets (Roberts 1996/2012, Abels 2006, Pruitt & Roelofsen 2011, Roelofsen & Farkas 2015, Uegaki 2018, Dayal 2025).