Modal Questions in Korean and Japanese

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In this talk we will discuss constraints on question with modals in Korean and Japanese. In Korean there are two expressions for expressing future: -겠(-keyss) and -을것이(-ul kes-i: -future adnominal form+ thing+copula). They can be used more or less in the same way, as in (1)a,b, when they express intention. The differences begin to emerge when they are attached to non-volitional predicates.

(1) a. Nayil tangsin-un o-keyss-upni-kka?
    tomorrow you-TOP come-keyss-HON-Q
    'Are you coming tomorrow?'

b. Nayil tangsin-un o-l kes-i-pni-kka?
    tomorrow you-TOP come-l kes-i-HON-Q
    'Are you coming tomorrow?'

(2) a. (Situation : the speaker greets a farmer looking up at the sky)
    Nayil pi-ka o-keys-ssupni-kka?
    tomorrow rain-NOM come-keyss-HON-Q
    'Will it rain tomorrow?'

b. (same as in a)
    *Nayil pi-ka o-l kes-i-pni-kka?
    tomorrow rain-NOM come-l kes-i HON-Q
    'Will it rain tomorrow?'

(2)b cannot naturally be interpreted as an epistemic question asking if the addressee thinks it rains, in contrast to (2)a, which can. In a very special context, (2)b can be coerced to be interpreted as asking someone who can control rain, e.g. a deity or a scientist who is conducting an artificial rain experiment.

The distribution of ul kes-i can be accounted for if we assume that it expresses epistemic necessity. As can be seen in (3)-(4), sentences expressing epistemic necessity cannot be questioned in English or in Japanese.

(3) a. It must rain in the afternoon.
    b. ??Must it rain in the afternoon?

(4) a. Gogo-ni ame-ga huru hazu-da.
     afternoon-in rain-NOM fall must
     'It must rain in the afternoon.'

b. ??Gogo-ni ame-ga huru kai?
     afternoon-in rain-NOM fall must-Q
     'Must it rain in the afternoon?'

Sentences expressing epistemic necessity can be made into a question by changing it into a meta-question, i.e. a question asking about the modal force itself: whether it is necessary or not. In Japanese, such a meta-question can be formed by adding no, the complementizer. We will show that the only way that ul kes-i can be interpreted as a meta-question is to interpret it as expressing the predetermined future, thereby accounting for the special coerced interpretation of ul kes-i.