Rhetorical questions (RQs) have the syntactic form of a question but the semantic value of a declarative (Sadock 1971, Han 2002). In general, the meaning of RQs can be obtained by replacing the wh-word1 with the appropriate negative quantifier (1a) or, in the case of polar questions, by adding negation (1b).

1 Observations

Rhetorical questions (RQs) have the syntactic form of a question but the semantic value of a declarative (Sadock 1971, Han 2002). In general, the meaning of RQs can be obtained by replacing the wh-word with the appropriate negative quantifier (1a) or, in the case of polar questions, by adding negation (1b).

\[(1)\]

\[a.\text{ After all, what does John know?} \]

\[‘‘John knows nothing.’’\]

\[b.\text{ After all, does John ever help?} \]

\[‘‘John doesn’t ever help.’’\]

Despite the semantic difference, RQs appear to be identical to interrogative questions (IQs) with respect to syntactic behavior (at least...
in English): the _wh_-word moves to sentence-initial position, induces subject-auxiliary inversion, and displays island effects.

(2) a. After all, what did he _tsubo_ buy _tsubo_?
   b. *After all, what did he _tsubo_ meet _[ac]_ the man who bought _tsubo_?

This squib addresses three additional syntactic observations about RQs across several languages, and their consequences for theories of _wh_-movement.

**Observation 1**

Some languages allow multiple _wh_-words in a single rhetorical question, while others only allow a single _wh_-word.

Much as with multiple _wh_-words in IQs, only certain languages allow multiple _wh_-words in RQs (illustrated here with the contrast between Chinese, Japanese, and Russian, on the one hand, and English, on the other).

(3) a. **Chinese**
   Shei hui dai shenme lai bisai ne?
   ‘Who will bring what to the competition?’
   ‘Nobody would bring anything to the competition.’

b. **Japanese**
   Dare-ga nani-o paatii-ni mottekita-to iu-no?
   who-NOM what-ACC party-to bring-say say-
   ‘After all, who will bring what to the party?’
   ‘Nobody will bring anything to the party.’

c. **Russian**
   V prinipe, kto prineset cˇto na tvoyo veˇcˇerinke?
   after all who will bring what to your party
   ‘After all, who will bring what to your party?’
   ‘Nobody will bring anything to your party.’

d. **English**
   *After all, who would bring what to the party?*

To date, I have observed RQs with multiple _wh_-words (MRQs) in Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Russian, and to some extent Bulgarian. MRQs are not possible in Egyptian Arabic, English, French, Hebrew, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish, although Egyptian Arabic and Italian lack both multiple IQs and MRQs.

Crucially, there is no obvious correlation between multiple _wh_-words in IQs and multiple _wh_-words in RQs, although it does seem that the existence of multiple _wh_-words in IQs in a language is necessary, but not sufficient, for the existence of multiple _wh_-words in RQs (i.e., Egyptian Arabic and Italian lack both multiple IQs and MRQs). Furthermore, there doesn’t seem to be any correlation between types of _wh_-movement and the possibility of MRQs: Chinese and Japanese are in-situ languages, Russian is a multiple _wh_-fronting lan-
guage, and Hindi has a mixed system with both overt wh-movement and wh-in-situ.

**Observation 2**
Wh-arguments in languages without overt wh-movement show island effects in rhetorical questions.

Huang (1982) and others have demonstrated that languages without overt wh-movement do indeed display island effects, although these effects occur only with wh-adjuncts, not with wh-arguments. In RQs in these languages, all wh-words show island effects, regardless of whether they are arguments or adjuncts (illustrated here with Japanese; (4a) shows an island violation with an argument, (4b) shows an island violation with an adjunct, and (4c) demonstrates that the effects in (4a) and (4b) are not simply long-distance effects).

   because get.angry-comp saying-ACC
   'What would John get angry because his wife bought that thing?'
   "There is nothing such that John would get angry because his wife bought that thing."

   dress-ACC bought because get.angry-comp saying-ACC
   'Why would John get angry because his wife bought a new dress?'
   "There is no reason such that John would get angry because his wife bought a new dress for that reason."

c. *[μ John-wa [CP ano Hanako-ga anna misede John-TOP that Hanako-NOM that store nani-o katta-to] in-no]?
   what-ACC bought-comp saying-ACC
   'What does John say that a person like Hanako bought at that kind of store?'
   "There is no thing such that John says that a person like Hanako would have bought that thing at that kind of store."

**Observation 3**
Island violations with arguments in rhetorical questions in languages without overt wh-movement show Principle of Minimal Compliance effects.

Richards (1998) observes that under specific circumstances, island violations are judged better when a second wh-word is added to the construction. For example, following Richards’s assumption that Subjacency holds of both overt and covert movement, the contrast between (5a) and (5b) seems to indicate that adding a wh-word outside
the island rectifies the island violation incurred by the in-situ (and covertly moved) wh-word.

(5) a. “What do you wonder whether John bought?

b. Who wonders whether John bought what?

For Richards, this is a specific instance of a more general principle called the Principle of Minimal Compliance (PMC), in which constraint violations lose their effect if the very same constraint is respected elsewhere in the sentence. Of interest here is that island violations in MRQs demonstrate PMC effects in languages that allow MRQs, such as Japanese.  

(6) a. *[John-wa \[Adj he-gen wife-nom what-acc bought kara] okoru-to iu-no]?

because get.angry-comp saying-o

’What would John get angry because his wife bought?’

‘There is nothing such that John would get angry because his wife bought it.’

b. *[Dare-ga \[Adj John-no okusan-ga nani-o bought kara] okoru-to iu-no]?

because get.angry-comp saying-o

’Who would get angry because John’s wife bought what?’

‘There is no person and no thing such that that person would get angry because John’s wife bought that thing.’

2 The Typology of Wh-Movement

The three observations in section 1 can be restated as three properties of wh-words:

There are undoubtedly several dialects of Japanese, and two bear special mention. First, as Masaya Yoshida (pers. comm.) points out, for some speakers of Japanese the PMC effect in (6b) may be disguised by a scope ambiguity in adjunct islands that decreases acceptability. For these speakers, the effect may be resurrected by scrambling the entire adjunct island to the left periphery.

(i) *[Adj John-no okusan-ga nani-o katta kara] [dare-ga \[Adj John-gen wife-nom what-acc bought kara] okoru-to iu-no]?

get.angry-comp saying-o

’Because John’s wife bought what, who would get angry?’

‘Because John’s wife bought nothing, no one would get angry.’

In the second dialect of interest, adjunct islands may be so weak as to cancel the island effect in (6a). For these dialects, the same paradigm may be created using a stronger relative clause island. The choice of adjunct islands throughout this squib is purely expository, as the syntactic structure of adjunct islands in Japanese is often easier to visualize for English speakers than the structure of relative clause islands.
The core of the theory of wh-movement is the fact that these three properties cluster in only three permutations. It has been standardly assumed that these three clusters are the result of the combination of two very robust distinctions, as shown in table 1: the argument/adjunct distinction among wh-words and the overt/covert movement distinction across languages (see especially Huang 1982, Lasnik and Saito 1984, Chomsky 1986, Richards 1998).

Most major theories of wh-movement have been built around these distinctions in one way or another. In the Barriers system (Chomsky 1986), the effect of the Empty Category Principle (ECP) is to constrain adjuncts but not arguments, and Subjacency constrains overt movement but not covert movement. In Nishigauchi’s (1990) pied-piping account, only covert movement of arguments can induce massive pied-piping, while overt movement of arguments and all movement of adjuncts cannot. And in the unselective binding account proposed by Tsai (1994), or the choice function approach proposed by Reinhart (1997), arguments can be unselectively bound/interpreted via choice function, but adjuncts cannot.

Under the quite plausible assumption that RQs involve wh-movement, these theories would predict the same interaction between the argument/adjunct distinction and the overt/covert movement distinction, yielding the same distribution of the three classes. However, the observations laid out in section 1 are inconsistent with this prediction. Observation 1 indicates that the argument/adjunct distinction does not predict the correct clusters in English, as arguments in

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**Table 1**
The three possible clusters of wh-properties in interrogative questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Covertly moved arguments</th>
<th>Overtly moved arguments</th>
<th>Adjuncts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Island effects</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMC effects</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooccurrence effects</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- whether they display island effects (ISLANDS)
- whether they display PMC effects (PMC)
- whether they cooccur with elements of the same type (COOCUR)³

³ Type here provisionally refers to the argument/adjunct distinction. So the question is whether wh-arguments may cooccur with other wh-arguments, or whether wh-adjuncts may cooccur with other wh-adjuncts. Later in this squib, when the argument/adjunct distinction is proven inadequate, type will refer to the three types delineated in table 3.
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unobserved</th>
<th>Covertly moved arguments</th>
<th>Overly moved arguments, all adjuncts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Island effects</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMC effects</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooccurrence effects</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQs display the "adjunct" property of not cooccurring with other arguments. Observation 2 indicates that the overt/covert distinction does not predict the correct class distinction in languages such as Japanese, as the in-situ argument nani-o ‘what’ in (4) induces an island violation typical of "overtly moved arguments" and "adjuncts." Taken together with observation 3, that there is a PMC effect in example (6), this seems to suggest that arguments in languages such as Japanese are "overtly moved," despite the lack of overt movement. Given these observations, the labels in table 1 must be changed as in table 2 to account for the properties of RQs.

In sum, under standard theories of locality, we would be forced to the following conclusions: (a) arguments in English RQs are syntactic adjuncts, despite being semantic arguments; and (b) arguments in Japanese RQs are overtly moved wh-words, despite appearing in situ. These conclusions suggest a rethinking of the properties underlying the three clusters in table 1, crucially away from the dimensions of argument/adjunct and overt/covert, and for expository purposes, toward a more generic labeling of these clusters as in table 3.4

4 Soh (2005), following Pesetsky (2000), offers a novel two-way distinction in Chinese: wh-words that resolve antecedent-contained deletion (ACD) also do not show island effects, and wh-words that show intervention effects also show island effects. In effect, this reduces to the argument/adjunct distinction, but it provides a new way of viewing islands: in Chinese, islands exist for feature movement, but not for phrasal movement; in English, islands exist for phrasal movement, and possibly not for feature movement. While this observation falls outside the scope of this squib, it should be noted that RQs raise problems for this view as well: in Chinese, the very same constructions that Soh claims are instances of ACD can be interpreted as rhetorical (thus, ACD movement shows island effects), and rhetorical arguments show intervention effects, just like interrogative adjuncts.

(i) Meiyouren gan gen shi dajia? nobody dare with who fight
IQ: ‘Who would nobody dare fight with?’
RQ: ‘There is nobody that nobody would dare fight with.’

These facts seem to be at direct odds with Soh’s distinction, and they lead one to question Pesetsky’s use of ACD as a test for phrasal movement.
Squibs and Discussion

Table 3
The three possible clusters of wh-properties with generic labels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Type I</th>
<th>Type II</th>
<th>Type III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wh-words</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island effects</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMC effects</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooccurrence</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Move First

As noted by an anonymous LI reviewer, tables 1 and 2 seem to indicate that wh-movement in RQs is more restricted than wh-movement in IQs. The properties of wh-movement in RQs, however, are not monolithic: for example, wh-arguments in Japanese are type I in IQs and type II in RQs, but wh-arguments in English are type II in IQs and type III in RQs. So while rhetorical wh-movement is more restricted than interrogative wh-movement, rhetorical wh-arguments are still of two types (II and III), much like interrogative wh-arguments (I and II). This suggests that a comprehensive analysis of wh-movement that accounts for both IQs and RQs must consist of more than the addition of a single “rhetorical” feature.

While this squib is not the place for a full analysis of the wh-movement properties in question, this section suggests what one might look like. First, the analysis must capture the [ ± islands] distinction between types I and II (as accomplished by the analyses of Huang, Nishigauchi, Reinhart, and others) and the [ ± cooccur] distinction between types II and III, without invoking an absolute overt/covert or argument/adjunct distinction. Second, the analysis must capture the covariation between [ ± PMC] and [ ± cooccur]. While there are undoubtedly a number of possible analyses, I would like to briefly suggest one that resurrects an idea from the early days of Government-Binding (GB) Theory.

Under the classic GB approach to wh-movement, [ – cooccur] was the result of an ECP violation (see Lasnik and Saito 1984 for details). More importantly, the ECP violation occurred when the adjunct was not the first wh-word to move to the specifier of CP. This move first analysis predicted that adjuncts could not be in situ in English (7a) because another wh-word had moved first to CP, that adjuncts could be in situ in Chinese (7b) because there is a derivation in which the adjunct could move first, and that adjuncts in Chinese could not cooccur with other adjuncts (7c) because both could not move first.

(7) a. *What did John buy why?*
   b. Zhangsan weishenme maile shenme?
      Zhangsan why bought what
      ‘Why did Zhangsan buy what?’

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Tying \([±\text{cooccur}]\) to the ECP also captured the correlation between \([±\text{cooccur}]\) and \([±\text{PMC}]\), because as Richards (1998) argues, the PMC does not apply to licensing constraints such as the ECP (see Richards 1998 for details).

Despite the loss of the ECP to minimalism, and the loss of the argument/adjunct distinction to the RQ observations in section 1, Lasnik and Saito’s (1984) move first intuition still predicts a correlation between \([±\text{cooccur}]\) and \([±\text{PMC}]\): if a wh-word must move first, then there is no way it can cooccur with another element that must move first; if a wh-word must move first, then there is also no way for the movement of another element to satisfy its requirements via the PMC. Furthermore, if a wh-word must move first, then it must move; therefore, it is plausible to expect it to induce island effects. In this way, Lasnik and Saito’s intuition can be applied directly to type III: type III items must move first. Logically, then, type II items must move (whence island effects and the possibility of cooccurrence and PMC amelioration), and type I items either do not move (perhaps with choice function application or unselective binding) or move with some extra mechanism such as LF pied-piping.

While move first is by no means the only way to capture the observations in section 1, and even though many questions remain unanswered (such as the ultimate source of the move first requirement), the description of wh-movement based on the move first intuition has some points in its favor: it captures the bifurcated nature of RQs (types II and III) in a way that resurrects an idea from the early days of GB while still fitting nicely with modern approaches to wh-movement.

References

Whether We Tense-Agree Overtly or Not

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1 A Tense Node for Chinese

It is often claimed that Sinitic languages have no syntactic Tense node (T). The two most frequent arguments for this claim are, first, that these languages have no morphological/semilexical or grammatical(ized) means of marking events as past events,1 and, second, that locating events in time in these languages is done by means of temporal adverbs or is determined by the context.2 Sentences like the following

The material in this squib was presented at the panel "Tense in Chinese" at the 4th Conference of the European Association for Chinese Linguistics, held in Budapest, January 2006. I would like to thank the participants, especially Wolfgang Klein, Jo-wang Lin, and Wei-Tien Dylan Tsai. Lisa Cheng, Norbert Corver, Hamida Demirdache, and the LI reviewers also made very insightful and helpful comments; thanks! The research reported here was conducted in the context of my "Vernieuwingsimpuls" project on syntactic variation in southern China, co-funded by the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research NWO, Universiteit Leiden (main sponsors), and the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS). The panel "Tense in Chinese" was also financially supported by the project.

1. I use a simple and informal definition of past: an event is past if it is placed before the utterance time.

2. Here are some quotations (a small selection): "...there is no inflectional morphology to express tense..." (Klein, Li, and Hendriks 2000:723); "Mandarin has no markers for tense" (Li and Thompson 1981:13); "The temporal status of an event in Chinese is mainly indicated by time words or expressions" (Tee 1986:90); "Tense is not a feature of Chinese grammar. An act or event is located in time by time words or context, not by the form of the verb" (Ramsey 1989:76); "The position of TT [topic time] on the time line...must be marked by adverbials or left to the context" (Klein, Li, and Hendriks 2000:753); "[Mandarin] Chinese has no grammaticalized means to restrict TT [topic time] to some particular time span in relation to TU [time of utterance]" (Klein 1994:124); Chinese belongs to the type of languages that show "no formal distinction of the tenses in their verbs" (Mei 2002:46); "Chinese is a sentenced language" for several reasons, one being that "the verbal system of Chinese [has] no obligatory morphological marking of a past/non-past distinction" (Hu, Pan, and Xu 2001:1120); "Modern Chinese...does not have the grammatical category of tense" (Gnotin 1991:252); "Chinese...is an aspect and not a tense language...The plotting of action along some sort of time axis...is not a feature of Chinese" (Norman 1988:163); "[Chinese] utilizes various factors such as the information provided by default aspect, the tense-aspect particles, and pragmatic reasoning to determine the temporal interpretation of sentences" (Lin, to appear).