Do rhetorical questions belong to the pragmatic wastebin?

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Introduction: Rhetorical questions

(1)   a. Who likes salty licorice?
       b. Does anyone like salty licorice?

- Both (1a) and (1b) can be pronounced as *genuine* or *information-seeking* questions (**ISQ**), or as rhetorical question (**RQ**).
- But what are rhetorical questions?

Rhetorical questions..

- don't require an answer
- are indirect assertions (Riemer, 2020)
- can be used for different pragmatic purposes
  - ‣ to highlight some fact
  - ‣ as a retort
    - (2)   A: How reliable is she?
    -         B: How shallow is the ocean? (Schaffer, 2005, (2))
  - ‣ to embarrass the addressee (Farkas and Roelofsen, 2017)
- ...and the list of these observation goes on.

Introduction: Rhetorical questions

The goal is to give an account of rhetorical questions from which the above properties can be derived.

- What are rhetorical questions?
    - Are they assertions?
    - Are they questions?
- What is the role of the context in interpreting rhetorical questions?
    - Does the addressee have to know the domain?
    - Does the addressee need to share a certain piece of information (common ground)?
- How do rhetorical questions sound?
    - How does their intonation contribute to their interpretation?
    - Do rhetorical questions share any prosodic features across languages?

Outline

Introduction: Rhetorical questions

Negative / empty set rhetorical questions (**RQ−**)

(3) Context: Your friend would like to buy salty licorice for a movie night you're heading to. But you think it's a bad idea since your friends definitely don't like it. You say:
  - (a) "Who likes salty licorice?"
  - (b) "Does anyone like salty licorice?"
  - (c) "Nobody likes salty licorice."

Positive / existential rhetorical questions (**RQ+**)

(4) Context: You and your friend both know that Ben is a big fan of salty licorice. Seeing a bag of salty licorice, your friend wonders who could have bought it. You think the answer is obviously Ben, so you say:
  - (a) "Who likes salty licorice?"
  - (b) ??? "Does anyone like salty licorice?"
  - (c) "Ben likes salty licorice."'

Introduction: Rhetorical questions

(1) a. Who likes salty licorice?
     b. Does anyone like salty licorice?

RQs have various definitions:

- "Negative" assertions (Han, 2002)
    - On this view, (1a) and (1b) convey 'Nobody likes salty licorice'
    - RQ– only
    - The meaning of RQ–s is derived compositionally

- Questions with an already known/obvious answer (Rohde, 2006; Caponigro and Sprouse, 2007; Biezma and Rawlins, 2017)
    - On this view, the interpretation of (1a) and (1b) is determined by the common ground.
        a. Mary likes salty licorice (as we all know)
        b. Everyone likes salty licorice (as we all know)
        c. Nobody likes salty licorice (as we all know)
        d. ...
    - RQ– or RQ+
    - The meaning of RQs is pragmatically determined

Defining rhetorical questions

The **assertion-like** analysis of RQs can answer:

- Why do RQs pattern with assertions?
- (5) (a) *After all*, nobody cares about prosody.
  - (b) *After all*, who cares about prosody?
- How come minimizers are licensed in RQs (RQ−s)?
  Wh-word/Q operator becomes a "negative quantifier"

Issues

- What about RQ+s?
- Why are RQs syntactically the same as information-seeking questions (ISQs)?
  - ‣ Multiple RQs "After all, who danced with who first?"
  - ‣ Embedded RQs "Should I even ask, who would give a damn if I stopped coming to work?"
    (Caponigro and Sprouse, 2007)
- Why can RQs be answered the same way as ISQs and not as assertions?
- (6) (a) A: Who likes salty licorice? (as a RQ−)
    B: Nobody. / #Yes. / #No.
  - (b) A: Nobody likes salty licorice.
    B: #Nobody. / Yes. / No.

Defining rhetorical questions

The **question-like** analysis of RQs can answer:

- RQ+s are not ignored.
- Why are RQs syntactically the same as ISQs?
- Why can RQs be answered the same way as ISQs and not as assertions?

Issues = Strengths of the assertion-like account

- Why do RQs pattern with assertions?
- How come minimizers are licensed in RQ–s?

Proposal

- It is possible to combine the strengths of both approaches in an inquisitive semantic account.
- The meaning of RQs is neither entirely compositional, nor entirely pragmatically determined.

Defining rhetorical questions

An implicit assumption of Caponigro and Sprouse (2007) and Biezma and Rawlins (2017):

- I challenge this assumption, similarly to Jamieson (2018)
- **RQ+**: a non-empty subset of the Hamblin-set
  - ‣ To arrive at the intended interpretation of RQ+s, the hearer needs to rely on the common ground.
  - ‣ "pragmatic rhetorical *wh*-questions" (Jamieson, 2018)
- **RQ−**: the complement of the Hamblin-set
  - ‣ To interpret RQ−s, no contextual information is needed.
  - ‣ Jamieson (2018): "generic rhetorical questions"
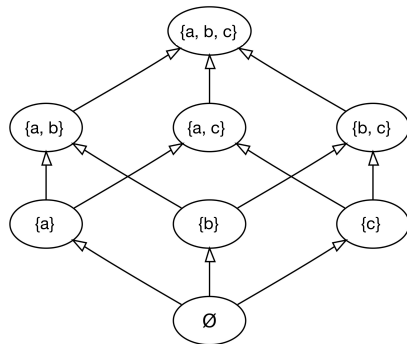
Inquisitive semantics

Inquisitive semantics models both the inquisitive and the informative content of an expression.

- Inquisitive content: a set of *alternatives*, maximal elements of partially ordered sets of information states (nodes {a}, {b} and {c})
  - ‣ Trivial: at most one alternative
  - ‣ Non-trivial: more than one alternatives
- Informative content: a set of possible worlds
  - ‣ Trivial: W
  - ‣ Non-trivial: a proper subset of W
- IS is ideal for biased questions, which have both a non-trivial inquisitive content and a non-trivial informative content
  - ‣ They raise an issue
  - ‣ They also commit the speaker
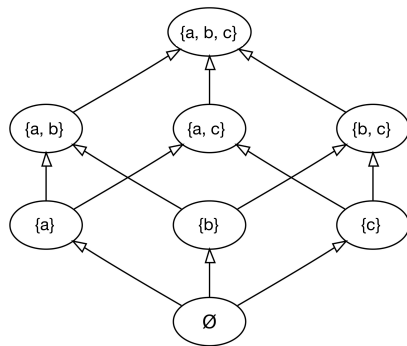
Inquisitive semantics

- Farkas & Roelofsen (2017)'s "division of labor" account extended to accommodate *wh*-interrogatives
- **Basic discourse context**
  - ‣ Participants: a set of individuals
  - ‣ Table: a stack of issues (Farkas and Bruce, 2010)
  - ‣ Commitments: a function that maps every participant onto a set of possibilities to which they are publicly committed.
  - ‣ *commitment set*: a set of possible worlds compatible with a participant's commitments
  - ‣ *cg*: common ground: derived from participants' commitment sets.

Inquisitive semantics

An expression ϕ, whether it is a declarative or interrogative sentence, is subject to the same interpretation process.

(7) **Basic conventions of use**
   If a discourse participant x utters a declarative or interrogative sentence ϕ, the discourse context is affected as follows:
   - (a) The proposition expressed by ϕ, $[\![\phi]\!]$, is added to the TABLE.
   - (b) The informative content of ϕ, info($[\![\phi]\!]$) is added to COMMITMENTS(x)

(8) **Special discourse effects**
   Sentence-final intonation marks (in English) whether and how the basic interpretation of an expression is overridden by different levels of credence in the highlighted alternative.
   - ↑ zero to low credence,
   - ↓↑ moderate to high credence,
   - ↓↓ high credence

Inquisitive semantics

Highlighted alternatives

- A polar interrogative has two alternatives: $\{\alpha, \overline{\alpha}\}$
- One of the two alternatives has a special status: the *highlighted alternative*, which
  - is the proposition conveyed by the sentence radical
  - introduces a propositional discourse referent

(9) A: Does Ben like salty licorice?
   B1: I don't think *so* = 'Ben likes salty licorice'
   B2: Yes. / No. = 'Ben likes salty licorice'

- EVIDENCE: a function that maps commitments to intervals of credence levels. For example:
  - Incredulity towards α: $\langle \alpha, [\text{zero, low}] \rangle$
  - Uncertainty regarding α: $\langle \alpha, [\text{low, moderate}] \rangle$
  - Certainty in α: $\langle \alpha, [\text{high}] \rangle$

Inquisitive semantics

(10) Assertions, $P = \{\alpha\}^{\downarrow}$
  - i. Basic conventional discourse effects
    - a. α is added to the TABLE
    - b. info(α) is added to COMMITMENTS(x)
  - ii. Special effects: n/a

(11) Polar questions, $P = \{\alpha, \overline{\alpha}\}^{\downarrow}$
  - i. Basic conventional discourse effects
    - a. $\{\alpha, \overline{\alpha}\}$ is added to the TABLE
    - b. info(α) $\cup$ info($\overline{\alpha}$) $= W$ is added to COMMITMENTS(x)
  - ii. Special effects: n/a

(12) Rising declaratives $P = \{\alpha, \overline{\alpha}\}^{\downarrow}$
  - i. Basic conventional discourse effects
    - a. $\{\alpha, \overline{\alpha}\}$ is added to the TABLE
    - b. info(α) $\cup$ info($\overline{\alpha}$) $= W$ is added to COMMITMENTS(x)
  - ii. Special effect: $\langle \alpha, [\text{zero, low}] \rangle$ is added to EVIDENCE(x)

Inquisitive semantics

Polar rhetorical questions

(1b) *Does anyone like salty licorice?* (RQ−)

- Basic conventional discourse effects:
    - ‣ $\{\alpha, \overline{\alpha}\}$ is added to the TABLE
    - ‣ W is added to COMMITMENTS(x)
- Special effect: Depends on prosody!
    - ↑ zero to low credence,
    - ↓↑ moderate to high credence,
    - ↓↓ high credence
- What do we know about the prosody of polar rhetorical questions in English?
    - ‣ A tendency to have a falling final tune (Banuazizi and Creswell, 1999; Dehé and Braun, 2019)
- If so: $\langle\alpha,[\text{high}]\rangle$ should be added to EVIDENCE(x)
- But a RQ− expresses just the opposite, that $\langle\alpha,[\text{zero}]\rangle$ is added to EVIDENCE(x)

Inquisitive semantics - Summary

- In Farkas & Roelofsen's (2017) system, interrogatives and declaratives are interpreted by the same principle: their semantic content is put on the TABLE and their informative content updates the speaker's commitments.
- It aims at a systematic account of special effects, tying them to sentence-final tunes, in line with the theory of biological codes (Ohala, 1994; Gussenhoven, 2004)

Problems

- Polar RQ–s tend to have a falling final tune in English, contrary to what Farkas & Roelofsen's system would predict.
- Rising declaratives aren't necessarily incredulous and don't always rise (Geluykens, 1988; Poschmann, 2008)
- It is not straightforward how *wh*-interrogatives fit, given that they don't have highlighted alternatives.
  - ▸ How do we assign credence levels?
  - ▸ How do we interpret sentence-final tunes?

Rhetorical *wh*-questions

- *Wh*-interrogatives like (1a) do not have a highlighted alternative because they do not have a sentence radical.
- They have a *question radical* (Krifka, 2017) which denotes a *highlighted property* (Farkas, 2020).
- The highlighted property applied pointwise to each member of the domain yields a Hamblin-set.
- D = {Ann, Ben, Cecil}
  - A = {'Ann likes salty licorice', 'Ben likes salty licorice', 'Cecil likes salty licorice'}$^\downarrow$
  - $\overline{A}$ = {'Nobody likes salty licorice'}$^\downarrow$

(13) The basic conventional discourse effects of a wh-interrogative in a domain D
   a. $A \cup \overline{A}$ is added to the TABLE
   b. info(A) $\cup$ info($\overline{A}$) = W is added to COMMITMENTS(x)

Rhetorical *wh*-questions: Special discourse effects

Rhetorical questions have the same basic discourse effects as any other question, but they will also have special effects.

- Special effect of RQs: The answer is already given (Rohde, 2006; Caponigro and Sprouse, 2007; Biezma and Rawlins, 2017)
- How to interpret a RQ like (1a) assuming that D = {Ann, Ben, Cecil}:
    a. $A \cup \overline{A}$ is added to the TABLE
    b. W is added to COMMITMENTS(x)
    c. $W \cap cg$ is added to COMMITMENTS(x)
- Result:
    ‣ In a context where it is common ground that Ben likes salty licorice, c. would yield 'Ben likes salty licorice' (RQ+)
    ‣ In a context where it is common ground that nobody likes salty licorice, c. would yield 'Nobody likes salty licorice' (RQ−)
- Is this the only special discourse effect of rhetorical questions?

Rhetorical *wh*-questions: Special discourse effects

(3)   (a) Context: You and your friend both know that Ben is a big fan of salty licorice. Seeing a bag of salty licorice, your friend wonders who could have bought it. You think the answer is obviously Ben, so you say:

     (b) "Who likes salty licorice?" = '**Ben** likes salty licorice' **RQ**+

(14) Interpretation

     a. $A \cup \overline{A}$ is added to the TABLE and W is added to COMMITMENTS(x)

     b. $W \cap$ info(A) = info(A) is added to COMMITMENTS(x)
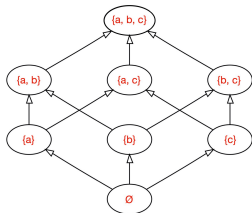
     c. $W \cap$ info(A) $\cap cg$ is added to COMMITMENTS(x)

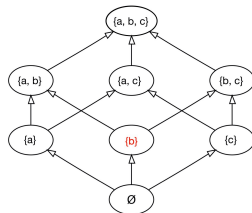Figure: 1. W Figure: 2. $\cap$ info(A)   Figure: 3. $\cap cg$
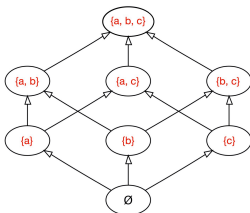
Rhetorical *wh*-questions: Special discourse effects

(2)   (a) Context: Your friend would like to buy salty licorice for a movie night you're heading to. But you think it's a bad idea since your friends definitely don't like it. You say:

    (b) "Who likes salty licorice?" = '**Nobody** likes salty licorice' **RQ−**

(15) Interpretation

    a. $A \cup \overline{A}$ is added to the TABLE and W is added to COMMITMENTS(x)

    b. $W \cap \text{info}(\overline{A})$ is added to COMMITMENTS(x)

    c. $W \cap \text{info}(\overline{A}) \cap cg$ is added to COMMITMENTS(x)
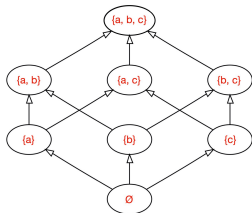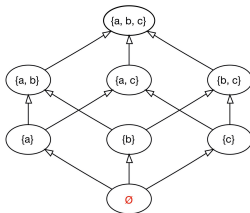

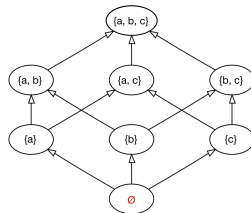Figure: 4. W

Figure: 5. $\cap \text{info}(\overline{A})$

Figure: 6. $\cap cg$

Rhetorical *wh*-questions: Special discourse effects

- Which special effects shall we attribute to rhetorical questions?
    - That the answer is given (for both RQ+ and RQ−)
    - That the answer to a RQ+ is from the domain, and the answer to a RQ− is from outside the domain

Let prosodic markedness tell us.

- **Option 1**: RQs are not marked compared to ISQs.
    - Empirical studies: prosody does distinguish RQs from ISQs (Banuazizi and Creswell, 1999; Braun et al., 2019; Dehé and Braun, 2019; Dehé and Braun, 2020; Zahner et al., 2020)
- **Option 2**: RQ−s and RQ+s are prosodically realized the same way and are associated with the same prosody
    - RQs have one special discourse effect
    - $W \cap cg$ is added to COMMITMENTS(x)
- **Option 3**: RQ−s and RQ+s are prosodically realized differently and are associated with different prosodic contours in perception
    - RQ−s and RQ+s indeed have their own unique special discourse effects.
    - RQ−s: $W \cap \text{info}(\overline{A})$ is added to COMMITMENTS(x)
    - RQ+s: $W \cap \text{info}(A)$ is added to COMMITMENTS(x)

Rhetorical questions: Summary

- RQ+s and RQ−s suggest an answer that is already in the common ground.
- At the same time, they may also indicate *where* in logical space the answer is to be found.
  - ‣ RQ+s: within the domain
  - ‣ RQ−s: outside the domain
- The two have different consequences:
  - ‣ If it is inside the domain, it doesn't resolve the issue, so it is resolved by consulting the cg
  - ‣ If it is outside the domain, it does resolve the issue, and the cg is not needed
- Based on their prosody, we have three options:
  - ‣ ISQs and RQs don't differ at all (false).
  - ‣ RQs differ from ISQs but RQ−s and RQ+s are the same (assumed in the semantic literature): this would support for current question-like analyses.
  - ‣ There is a three-way distinction between ISQs, RQ+s and RQ−s: does not invalidate current analyses but calls for a revision.

Prosody

- RQ−s are prosodically distinguished from ISQs in production in various languages.
- Perception studies on German RQ−s and ISQs also show that the two question types are associated with a different set of prosodic cues

	RQ− vs. **ISQ** (*wh* and polar)	**RQ−** vs. **RQ+** vs. **ISQ** (*wh*)
Production	**Mandarin** (Zahner et al., 2020) **German** (Braun et al., 2019) **English** (Dehé and Braun, 2019) **Icelandic** (Dehé and Braun, 2020)	**Mandarin** (Lo and Kiss, 2020) **Cantonese** (Lo et al., 2019)
Perception	**German** (Neitsch et al., 2018) (Kharaman et al., 2019)	**Cantonese** (Lo et al., 2021)

- There is a three-way prosodic distinction in both languages, even though both mark them differently (Lo et al., 2019; Lo and Kiss, 2020)

Prosody

- In-lab production experiments on Northern Mandarin and Cantonese
- Participants read out each wh-interrogative in three different contexts

瑪莉帶咗你上佢隻遊艇遊船河，瑪莉一路都自己揸
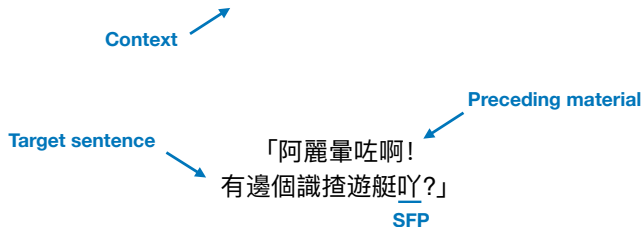緊隻遊艇，但係佢忽然間暈低咗，隻遊艇就冇人揸
喇，你噚噚臨話晒畀遊艇上面嘅人知：

Context

Preceding material

Target sentence

「阿麗暈咗啊！
有邊個識揸遊艇吖?」

SFP

Figure: 7. Example of a trial

Prosody: Cantonese
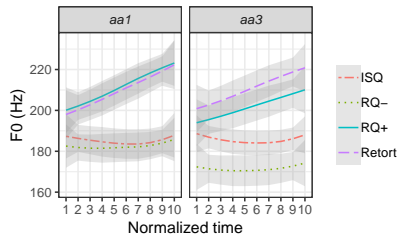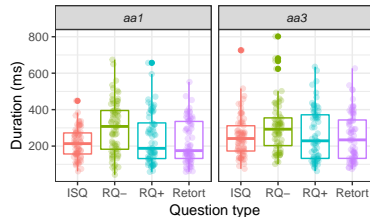
Lo et al. (2019)

- Conditions
    - ‣ Information-Seeking Question (**ISQ**)
    - ‣ Negative Rhetorical Question (**RQ−**)
    - ‣ Positive Rhetorical Question (**RQ+**)
    - ‣ Positive Rhetorical Questions as Retorts (**Retort**)
- Results: the sentence-final particles (SFP) had the following contours:
    - ‣ ISQ: Short duration, low & level F0
    - ‣ RQ+: Short duration, rising F0
    - ‣ RQ−: Long duration, low & level F0
- Conclusion
    - ‣ There is a three-way prosodic distinction in Cantonese between ISQs, RQ+s, and RQ−s.
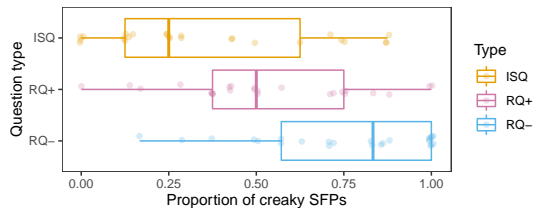
Prosody: Mandarin

(Lo and Kiss, 2020)

- 8 wh-interrogatives (2 per tone)
    - 有谁想喝咖啡啊? (penultimate syllable: T1)
- Conditions
    - Information-Seeking Question (**ISQ**)
    - Negative Rhetorical Question (**RQ−**)
    - Positive Rhetorical Question (**RQ+**)
- Results

Question type	Utterance duration	SFP duration	F0 on wh-word	F0 on SFP
ISQ	shorter	longest	lowest	highest
RQ+	longer	In between ISQ and RQ−		
RQ−	longer	shortest	highest	lowest

Prosody: Mandarin
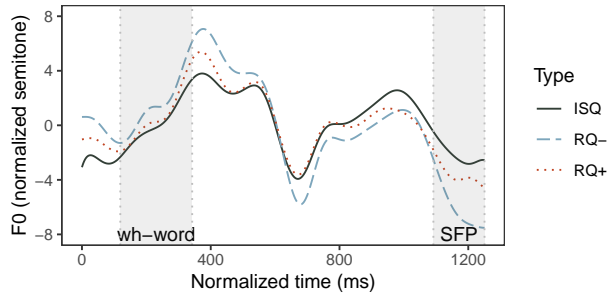
Prosody: Mandarin

(a)

(b)
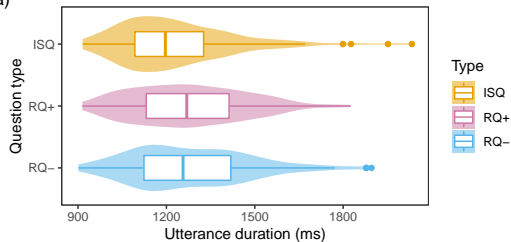
From Lo and Kiss (2020)

Prosody: Mandarin

- Conclusion
  - ‣ There is a three-way prosodic distinction in Mandarin between ISQs, RQ+s and RQ−s
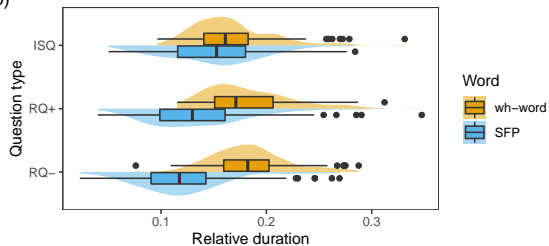 - ‣ The investigated prosodic cues order the three question types along a scale of inquisitiveness

Inquisitive content: $[\![\phi]\!]$	Informative content: $\mathrm{info}([\![\phi]\!])$	Question type	Utterance duration	SFP duration	F0 on wh-word	F0 on SFP
$\|A \cup \overline{A}\| > 2$	W	ISQ	shorter	longest	lowest	highest
$\|A\| > 1$	$W - \mathrm{info}(\overline{A})$	RQ+	longer	In between ISQ and RQ−		
$\|\overline{A}\| = 1$	$W - \mathrm{info}(A)$	RQ−	longer	shortest	highest	lowest

Prosody: Cantonese

- Stimuli
  - 12 ambiguous *wh*-interrogatives:

    jau5 bin1go3 soeng2 jam2 gaa3fe1 aa3?
    exist who   want drink coffee SFP

    'Who wants to drink coffee?'
  - Manipulated the duration and F0 rise of the SFP orthogonally based on Lo et al. (2019):
    - Duration: 250, 310, 370, 430, 490, 550 ms
    - F0 rise: 0, 25, 50, 75 Hz

- Participants: 14 native speakers of Cantonese
- Procedure: three-alternative forced choice task, with each option exemplifying one particular reading:
  - The speaker does not know who wants to drink coffee (ISQ)
  - The speaker thinks nobody wants to drink coffee (RQ−)
  - The speaker already knows who wants to drink coffee (RQ+)
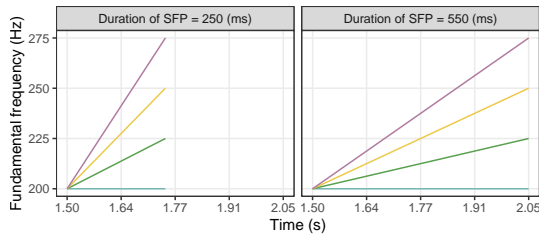
Prosody: Cantonese

- Different combinations of pitch contours and duration on the SFP lead to different proportions of ISQ, RQ−, and RQ+ responses.
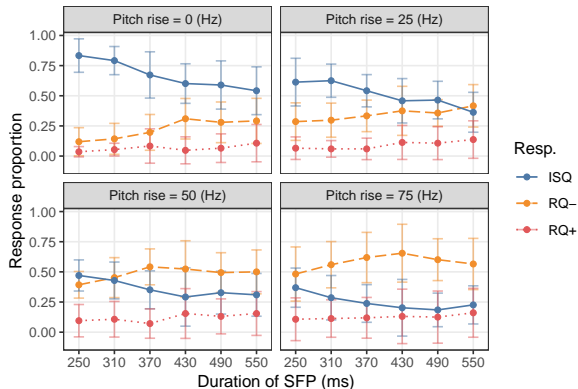
Longer duration leads to
more RQ− and less ISQ responses

Larger F0 rise leads to
more RQ− and less ISQ responses

Prosody: Cantonese

ISQs, RQ−s, and RQ+s can be distinguished in production and perception, therefore, it is not enough to assign RQ−s and RQ+s the same special effect (that the answer is given). However, the picture is not clear.

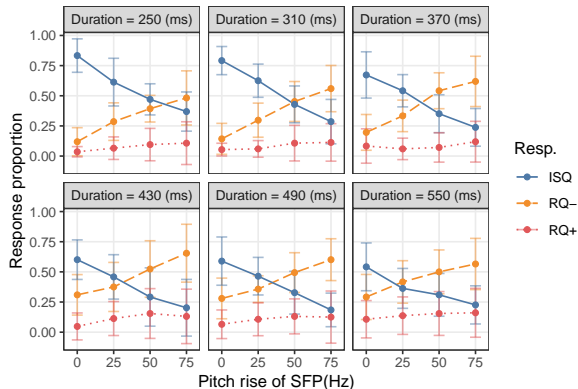|	Production	Perception
ISQ	low F0, short duration	low F0, short duration
RQ+	rising F0, short duration	n/a
RQ−	low F0, long duration	rising F0, long duration

Table: Summary of production and perception results

A possible reason: Perceptual confusion

- Perceptual confusion has been reported in studies involving tone-intonation interaction in both Mandarin and Cantonese (Liu et al., 2021; Xu and Mok, 2012b,a)

Prosody: Summary

- Both Cantonese and Mandarin have prosodic cues that distinguish ISQs, RQ−s and RQ+s in production.
  - ‣ Cantonese: the distinction is observed on the sentence-final particle (as expected)
  - ‣ Mandarin: both the SFP and the wh-phrase participates in marking the three question types.
- The three question types were also distinguished in perception in Cantonese.
  - ‣ ISQs and RQ−s are associated with distinct combination of prosodic cues, but not RQ+s.
  - ‣ Why were RQ−s not associated with the same intonational contour on the SFP in perception as the one they were produced with?

Discussion

- RQ−s and ISQs were associated with a certain contour, but not RQ+s. What do they have in common?
  - ISQs are the most inquisitive and least informative interrogatives
  - RQ−s are the least inquisitive and most informative interrogatives
- Both are relatively independent from the context, and it may be that this context-independence makes them more likely to conventionalize their prosodic properties.
- Arriving at the desired interpretation of a RQ+ is not possible without consulting the common ground.
  - RQ+s commit the speaker to $\text{info}(A)$.

Inquisitive content: $[\![\phi]\!]$	Informative content: $\text{info}([\![\phi]\!])$	Question type	Utterance duration	SFP duration	F0 on wh-word	F0 on SFP
$\|A \cup \overline{A}\| > 2$	W	ISQ	shorter	longest	lowest	highest
$\|A\| > 1$	$W - \text{info}(\overline{A})$	RQ+	longer	In between ISQ and RQ−		
$\|\overline{A}\| = 1$	$W - \text{info}(A)$	RQ−	longer	shortest	highest	lowest

Discussion: Sentence-final tunes

Do rhetorical questions have similar suprasegmental properties across languages?

- The Biological Codes (Ohala, 1994; Gussenhoven, 2004): Sentence-final rises and falls have biological "roots" (sound symbolism)
    - Small (powerless) individuals have higher pitch, large (powerful) individuals have lower pitch.
    - Utterances with final falls are associated with finality, certainty and dominance.
    - Utterances with final rises are associated with non-finality, uncertainty, and submissiveness.
- Farkas and Roelofsen (2017):
    - ↑ zero to low credence,
    - ↓↑ moderate to high credence,
    - ↓↓ high credence
- Mandarin sentence-final particles conform this picture, but not Cantonese ones.
    - ISQ: low F0, short duration
    - RQ−: low F0, long duration
- The majority of languages follow this symbolism, although phonology may change this default.
    - Belfast English: assertions with a rising final tune
    - Caribbean Spanish: questions with a falling final tune
- Problem: The theory of biological codes is hard to falsify (if possible at all)

Discussion: Polar rhetorical questions

The analysis proposed here applies to polar rhetorical questions as well.

- $A = \{\alpha\}$
- Basic conventional discourse effects:
  - ‣ $\{A, \overline{A}\}$ is added to the TABLE
  - ‣ W is added to COMMITMENTS(x)
- Special discourse effects:
  - ‣ Polar RQ–: info($\overline{A}$) is added to COMMITMENTS(x)
  - ‣ Polar RQ+: info(A) is added to COMMITMENTS(x)
- What about the prosody of polar RQ+s...?
  - ‣ Would "Is John a vegetarian?" have three different prosodic contours under the ISQ, RQ– and RQ+ readings?

Discussion: Previous accounts of RQs

- Assertion-like accounts: RQ−s are like assertions.
  - ‣ It follows from the fact that they commit the speaker to a single alternative.
  - ‣ Their intended reading is encoded by prosody.
- Question-like accounts: RQs are questions.
  - ‣ Their basic conventional discourse effects are the same as the ones of genuine questions, which explain their question-like properties.
  - ‣ Their assertion-like flavor comes from special effects.
    - ⋆ RQ−s have special effects that resolve the issue.
    - ⋆ RQ+s have special effects that do not resolve the issue, hence their intended meaning is eventually resolved by consulting the common ground.
- Jamieson (2018): RQ+s and RQ−s have distinct meanings, RQ+s are indeed "pragmatic" and RQ−s are indeed "generic".
  - ‣ However, the generic feel is due to the availability of the empty set alternative across contexts (so a metavariable proposed by Jamieson (2018) is not needed).

Discussion: Limitations

- Only wh-interrogatives
- Only *who*
- Only singleton answers
  - "What's going to happen to these kids when they grow up?" (Rohde, 2006)
- The role of sentence-final particles? (Prieto and Roseano, 2021)
- Only Mandarin and Cantonese
- A certain population (1st/2nd year undergrads at the University of Toronto)
- Lab setting
- No data on EQ (Orrico and D'Imperio, 2020)

Conclusion

I conclude that the two types of rhetorical questions differ in terms of how much their interpretation relies on the common ground.

RQ+s are a pragmatic phenomenon, although since their prosody differs from ISQs, they do encode something after all, that the answer is from the domain.

RQ−s do not require the hearer to be up-to-date wrt the common ground, they work even in a defective context. They do not belong to the wastebin, although contextual information (knowing the domain, world knowledge) may play a role in arriving at the desired interpretation.

Both RQ−s and RQ+s are pragmatic to some extent, and modeling both their inquisitive and informative content can account for it.

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