

## Rhetorical Adjunct Wh *mwue* ‘what’ in Korean

Kurafuji (1996), Ochi (1999; 2004), and Nakao and Obata (2009) suggest that the Accusative Case-marked wh-adjunct *nani-o* ‘what-Acc’ in intransitive sentences of Japanese is interpreted very much like English *why* (*the hell*) (or Japanese *naze* ‘why’) as in (1).

- (1) John-wa **nani-o**/naze hasit-tei-ru no?  
John-Top what-Acc/why run-PROG-NPST Q  
‘Why is he running?’

The distinctive syntactic/semantic aspects of the Accusative WHAT-adjunct *nani-o* have been noted in comparison to its counterpart *naze*. First, sentences with the WHAT-adjunct *nani-o* have a special connotation that the speaker is surprised at, or is in disapproval of the subject’s unexpected behavior (Ochi, 1999). Second, the WHAT-adjunct *nani-o* imposes an animacy restriction on the subject of a clause (Kurafuji, 1997). Third, the interpretation of the WHAT-adjunct *nani-o* in Japanese is not clause-bound (Kurafuji 1997). Fourth, the WHAT-adjunct *nani-o* can occur in multiple wh-questions (Kurafuji, 1997). Fifth, the WHAT-adjunct *nani-o* is only allowed to take wide scope over the subject QP (Tsai, 2008). Sixth, the WHAT-adjunct *nani-o* cannot undergo sluicing (Ochi, 1999).

The Korean counterpart *mwue(s)* with the Acc Case marker comes with eventive predicates, and that with the Acc or Nom Case marker occurs with stative or copula predicates, as follows:

- (2) Ney-ka acik eli-ntey, hakkyo-ey **mwe(-l)** ka-lyeko ha-ni?  
you-NOM still young-CONN school-to what-ACC go-to do-INTERR  
‘Though you are still young, WHAT do you want to go school.?’  
(3) Enni-i-ci **mwe(-l)/mwe(-ka)** hyeng-i-ya?  
elder sister-COP-CONN what-ACC/what-NOM elder brother-COP-Informal  
‘(She is) an elder sister, but WHAT is she an elder brother?’

This paper argues that the construction at issue is a rhetorical question, and derives from this view such properties as documented above for Japanese WHAT-adjunct *nani-o*.

It has been noted (Collins, 1991) that *why* and *how come* behave differently with respect to rhetorical questions: questions with a negative bias, as seen in (4) and (5).

- (4) Why (the hell) did you do that?                      (5) \*How come you did that?

The example in (4) is felicitous in a rhetorical question since the negative bias in the question (‘you did not do that’) does not interfere with any other factors. However, the same negatively biased question is not permitted with *how come*, as shown in (5). Since the Japanese (Ochi and Hsin 1999, 315) and the Korean WHAT-adjuncts are associated with a negative bias, it is a right tack to assimilate them to English *why* rather than to *how come*.

But note that the Korean WHAT-adjunct can be construed not only as ‘why’ but also as ‘how’ or ‘in what respect,’ as follows:

- (6) Ney-ka chimkwu-lul ta kacye ka-myen, nay-ka **mwe(-l)** cal swu iss-keyyss-ni?  
 you-NOM bedding-ACC all take-if I-NOM HOW sleep CAN-WILL-INTERR  
 ‘If you take all the bedding (here), HOW can I sleep (without it)?’
- (7) Nay kho-ka **mwe(-ka)** khu-ni?  
 MY nose-NOM what-NOM big-Q  
 ‘In WHAT RESPECT is my nose big?’

The construction at issue like (1)-(3) and (6)-(7) is translated into a normal wh-question, but it can be properly construed as a rhetorical question (RhQ). In fact, this construction has the hallmarks of RhQs: (i) RhQs don’t expect an answer; (ii) RhQs have the feel of an assertion; (iii) RhQs can optionally be answered (in keeping with Caponigro & Sprouse, 2007; Biezma & Rawlins, 2017; contra Yang & Mizuno, 2019). For example, the answer to the sentence in (2) is not expected because it is already inferrable. On the one hand, RhQs are essentially a regular question, but their answer is known to both the speaker and the addressee -- a question in which the answer is (already) part of the Common Ground (in the Stalnakerian sense; Stalnaker 1970, 2014). On the other hand, RhQs have the feel of an assertion because the asker publicly makes an commitment (in some sense) to a single proposition that is already in the common ground. In fact, in some limited cases, the Korean WHAT-adjunct can occur in non-question, declarative clauses as in (8).

- (8) sihayngchako epsi **mwe(-l)** ka-l swu iss-tako sayngkakhaci-nun anh-supnita.  
 trial-error without what(-ACC) go-CAN-COMP think-CONT.TOP don’t-ENDER  
 ‘I don’t think that I can go what with trial and error.’

As point out above, no answer to RhQs is ordinarily expected, but the answer, e.g., to (2), can be provided by either speaker or addressee, as follows:

- (9) Na/Ne-to hyeng-chelem kongpwuha-ale.  
 I/you-also elder-brother-like study-in order to  
 ‘In oder to study (in school) like my/your brother.’

The view of the construction at issue as a RhQ sheds lights on the properties of this construction listed above. First, the negative bias of this construction follows naturally from the view. Second, the ban on the use of the WHAT-adjunct with stative predicates is due to the Accusative marker on it not being compatible with such type of predicates. Third, the construal of the WHAT-adjunct with the matrix Q is expected since RhQs also allow for the parallel relation. Fourth, the WHAT-adjunct in multiple wh-questions counts as a negative expression as in multiple NPIs. Fifth, the WHAT-adjunct in WH-QP interaction also serves as a negative expression interacting with other QPs. Sixth, following Ochi (1999), the strongly-focused WHAT-adjunct for RhQ construal cannot license sluicing.

**Selected Refs.** • Biezma and Rawlins 2017 ‘Rhetorical questions’. SALT27 • Caponigro and Sprouse 2007 ‘Rhetorical questions as questions’. SuB11 • Collins 1991 ‘Why and how come’. MWPL 15 • Kurafuji 1997. ‘Case checking of accusative wh-adjuncts’. MIT WPL 31 • Nakao and Obata 2009 ‘When ‘what’ means ‘why’: On accusative wh-adjuncts in Japanese’. UPWPL 15. • Ochi 1999 *Constraints on Feature Checking*. UConn diss. • Ochi and Hsin 1999 ‘The syntax of adjunct WH-NPs’. UPWPL 6. • Tsai 2008 ‘Left periphery and how-why alternations’. JEAL 17. • Yang & Mizuno 2019 ‘On the discourse dynamics of exceptional *what*-questions’. GLOW in Asia 2019.