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A Note on *Sazi*: The Anti-Indefiniteness *Wh*-Phrase in the Sichuan Dialect of Mandarin Chinese

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on one of the *wh*-phrases in Sichuan Dialect of Mandarin Chinese, namely *sazi* 'what' which corresponds to *shenme* in Standard Mandarin. In contrast to all its congeners, which are often argued to be inherent indefinites, bare *sazi* can only be interpreted as *wh*-construal. To generalize this eccentric property, I will propose two distinct approaches under the theoretically well-constructed Symmetrized Syntax. In each approach, I will explore the possibilities of forming Q-Equilibrium which is argued to be able to define a Transfer Output in association with the notions like Successive Feature Inheritance and Free Internal Merge. Additionally, *sazi* can have indefinite readings under specific conditions, namely, the appearance of some nominal affixes and existential *you*. Nonetheless, those conditions do not exclude the possibility of interrogative interpretation and I will provide an analysis to address this some arbitrary phenomenon. If the analysis of the present work is on the right track, one of the significant implications for the study on Sichuan dialect is that despite this dialect's syntactic nature is often overlooked due to the fact it is just a dialect of Mandarin Chinese, there are some distinct linguistic traits to it that may call for attention. Eventually, it would be desirable if this study prompts the syntactic examination on Sichuan dialect.

Keywords: Sichuan Dialect; Symmetrized Syntax; *Wh*-Phrases; Indefinites; *Wh*-Construal

1. Introduction

1.1. *Wh*-Phrases in Sichuan Dialect

Sichuan dialect (SD hereafter) is predominantly spoken in provinces of Southwest China, e.g., Sichuan and Chongqing. Despite that it may not be completely mutual-intelligible with Standard Mandarin Chinese (SMC hereafter), it is still classified to be a subspecies of Mandarin Chinese [1] this section, I will first sketch an overview of wh-phrases in SD, as the overall argument of this paper rests on the syntactic idiosyncrasies of one of them.

It would be illusory to claim that SD is vastly different than SMC in terms of the system of wh-phrases based on the lexical specifications of each wh-phrase. As shown in (1), it is the case that wh-phrases in SD and SMC are represented by distinct lexical items, whereas they share a great number of commonalities with respect to the syntactic behaviors, as illustrated in (2) [1].

(1) a. *Wh-phrases in SD*
       lago 'who'; *sazi* 'what', *lang'go/zago* 'how', *haojiou* 'when', *la* 'which', *lar* 'where', *wei-sazi* 'why'

   b. *Wh-phrases in SMC*
       shei 'who'; *shenme* 'what'; *zenme/zenyang* 'how'; *heshi* 'when'; *na* 'which'; *nar* 'where'; *weishenme* 'why'

(2) *In-situ property*

   a. Manggo   ci-lo   *sazi*?
      MG   eat-ASP what
      'What did Manggo eat?'

   b. Zhangsan   chi-le   shenme?
      ZS   eat-ASP   what
      'What did Zhangsan eat?'

      Absence of Wh-island Effect

   c. Hogo$_i$,   ngi   jiode   [ta   xihuan   ci   la-zon   t$_i$]?
      hot-pot   2nd think   3rd like   eat   which-kind
      'As for hotpot, which kind of it do you think he likes the most?'

   d. Huoguo$_i$,   ni   juede   [ta   xihuan   chi   na-zhong   t$_i$]?
      hot-pot   2nd think   3rd like   eat   which-kind
      'As for hotpot, which kind of it do you think he likes the most?'

   Wh-phrases as Indefinites

   e. Lago   zai   kao   men.
      who   at   knock   door
      'Someone is knocking the door.'

   f. Shei   zai   qiao   men.
      who   at   knock   door
      'Someone is knocking the door.'

   Unselectively bound by Operators

   g. Lago   xian   lai,   lago   xian   ci.
      who   first   come   who   first   eat
      'For every x, x a person, if x comes first, x gets to eat first.'

   h. Shei   xian   lai   shei   xian   chi.
      who   first   come   who   first   eat

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[1] The romanization of SD data in this work in not carried out in line with precise phonological terminology, thus International Phonetic Alphabets is not used. The reason is simple: phonology is not the focus, and the distinctly articulated romanization approach can outline a rough picture of the phonological difference between SD and SMC for readers who have the knowledge of Chinese Phonetic Alphabets (aka. *pinyin*).

'For every x, x a person, if x comes first, x gets to eat first.'

The wh-phrases that SD and SMC share are the ones denoting the notions of *which* and *where*, since they are externalized by the same Chinese character only with slightly different pronunciations. Nonetheless, as exemplified in (2a), (2c), (2e), (2g), *wh*-phrases in SD behave just on par with their SMC counterparts in the sense of syntactic properties. Specifically, (2a-b) show that *wh*-phrases in both SD and SMC do not undergo overt movement to the edge of clause. (2c-d) demonstrate that no island-effect is induced in the *wh*-phrases in either SD or SMC. It is illustrated in (2e-f) that *wh*-phrases in SD and SMC can have indefinite interpretation if the intonational pitch does not raise. Finally, (2g-h) suggest that *wh*-phrases in SD and SMC are subject to the unselective binding. In this particular case, it is clear that SD lago and SMC shei are uniformly in an operator-variable relation with a Universal Quantifier[2]. Crucially, I follow Cheng[3] and Aoun & Li[4] that *wh*-phrases in Chinese are inherent indefinites rather than quantificational operators. As to the interrogative *wh*-construal, I assume with Tsai[2] that it comes from the unselective binding of a null Op$_{\{Q\}}$ situated in CP (Complementizer Phrase) domain. Thus, the essential difference between (2e-f) and (2g-h) is that the *wh*-phrases in the latter get bound by null Op.

However, this [Op$_{\{Q\}}$-indefinite wh] construal faces difficulty when associated with a specific *wh*-phrase: *sazi*, which is equivalent to SMC *shenme*. Crucially, *sazi* cannot have indefinite interpretation on its own. This interpretational idiosyncrasy is not only in a sharp contrast to *wh*-phrases in SMC, but also to other SD *wh*-phrases. Consider the examples in (3-4):

(3) a. Sazi   lan-lo (./?)
         what   break-ASP
         Reading a: *'Something is broken.'
         Reading b: 'What is broken?'

     b. Manggo   ci-lo   sazi (./?)
         MG eat-ASP what
         Reading a: *'Manggo ate something.'
         Reading b: 'What did Manggo eat?'

     c. Manggo   ba-sazi   ci-lo (./?)
         MG BA-what   eat-ASP
         Reading a: *'Manggo ate something.'
         Reading b: 'What did Manggo eat?'

(4) a. Lago   zai   kao   men (./?)
         who at   knock   door
         Reading a: 'Someone is knocking the door.'
         Reading b: 'Who is knocking the door?'

     b. Manggo   pangdao lago   lo (./?)
         MG   bump   who   ASP
         Reading a: 'Manggo bumped into someone.'
         Reading b: 'Who did Manggo bump into?'

It is obviously incorrect to conclude that SD is a deviant dialect which disables the *wh*-phrase from having indefinite interpretations because *wh*-phrase like *lago*, a *wh*-argument proper, in (4) arguably has indefinite reading in alignment with *wh*-phrases in SMC. By contrast, *sazi* in (3a-b) is prohibited from being interpreted as indefinites disregarding what position it takes, subject or object.

In order to obtain the indefinite reading, sazi must be fused with something else like, for example, the nominal expressions *donxi* 'thing', *xie* 'some'/*dier* 'bit' or the existential verb *you* 'have', as illustrated in (5-7)[2]. It must also be pointed out that *wh*-phrases in (5-7) can all have interrogative reading with rising intonation:

(5) *sazi suffixed with donxi*
     Sazi-donxi   zai   xiang.
     what-thing   at   ring
     'Something is ringing.'

(6) *sazi prefixed with dier/xie*
     Manggo   ci-lo   dier/xie-sazi.
     MG   eat-ASP bit/some-what
     'Manggo ate something.'

(7) *sazi-clause headed with you*
     You   sazi   zai   xiang.
     have   what   at   ring

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[2] The status of the existential-evoking *you* is treated differently in the literature (see Huang[5], Tsai[6]). Since nothing in this paper is conditioned by the grammatical nature of *you*, I will leave this matter open.

'Something is ringing.'[3].

As I will show in Section 3, (7) is different from (5-6) in that you would rule out *wh*-construal on one hand, nominal affixations make indefinite reading possible in addition to *wh*-construal on the other. Nevertheless, *sazi* is a very special *wh*-phrase that it is distinct from other *wh*-phrases in SD or SMC in being inherently interrogative.

1.2. Methods of Linguistic Data Collection and Verification

Before embarking the detailed discussion, it should be noticed that the native-language integrity of the younger generation (born after 1980s) of SD speakers is suffering from the predominance of SMC with respect to both phonology and syntax (see Xia [7]). The linguistic capability of SD among younger generation is significantly deteriorating comparing to the older generation (born before 1980s). For such reason, given that I am a native SD speaker born after 1990s, I have asked for assistance of four older speakers and three younger speakers of SD. The older informants who have lent support to the assessment of linguistic data in the present work are all above 50-year-old (two born in Dazhou, one born in Chengdu and one born in Chongqing).

It is also important to keep in mind that despite SD is just a regional dialect of Mandarin Chinese, there are some internal variations one cannot simply overlook. Zhai [8] presents a thorough classification of SD according to which there are four subdialects of SD. The present work focuses on the Chengdu-Chongqing subdialect because it covers the most population compared to other subdialects (I am also a native speaker of Chengdu-Chongqing subdialect). Therefore, within the four informants, two

were born in Dazhou, one was born in Chengdu and one in Chongqing, all natives speakers of Chengdu-Chongqing subdialect.

To verify the theory that I propose in the present work, all the SD sentences are made by me. Meanwhile, all the sentences were given to the older informants (as the younger speakers' SD capacity is largely affected by the in-put of SMC during their first language acquirement) for assessment. Only those sentences that all informants found robust and natural are considered grammatical. Sentences that at least one informant found awkward are marked with question mark. Sentences that more than two informants frowned upon are marked with asterisk.

1.3. The Symmetrized Syntax

In this paper, I will explore the possibility of generalizing the peculiarity shown by *sazi* under the Symmetrized Syntax (SS) formulated by Narita and Fukui [9]. In this subsection, I will briefly present the core concept of their theoretical construction.

In a nutshell, SS is a system eliminating the asymmetricities induced by several linguistic stipulations under the notion of '[…] symmetry is indeed an overarching constructive principle of the nature world' (see Narita and Fukui [9]: xii) together with the Strong Minimalist Thesis (see Chomsky [10]), which dictates that Faculty of Language is an *optimal* design, whereby its computational workings should be quite simple. I believe two of the propositions proposed in SS is of particular interests of the present investigation: (i) Symmetric Transfer Condition (STC, see Narita and Fukui [9]: 41); (ii) Feature Symmetrization Condition (FSC, see Narita and Fukui [9]: 50):

(8) *Symmetric Transfer Condition*
Only a symmetric syntactic object (SO) can define a Transfer output (TO).

(9) *Feature Symmetrization Condition*
A formal feature must be integrated into a Feature-Equilibrium to erase asymmetricity.

The Feature-Equilibrium (F-Equi) refers to a configuration {α, β} in which α and β bear the same formal

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[3] SD speakers have different opinions on the expression *dier/xie-satsi*. According to a number of local informants, younger speakers do not seem to have preference over any one of them, whereas older speakers prefer *dier-satsi* more than *xie-satsi* in (6). I speculate that this generation gap may result from the percolation of SMC upon youngers speakers. They have much better SMC proficiency than older speakers and absorb not only SMC phonetic features but also SMC lexical characteristic into their SD utterance.

feature that can be found by Minimal Search (MS) simultaneously[4]. To instantiate this configurational design, let us reanalyse the English clause *Mary had a little lamb* in (10). The mandatory A-movement of the subject in languages like English can now be derived from FSC defined in (9). If the subject stays in the domain of *v**P after the external merge, the φ feature carried by T will naturally undermines the symmetricity of the SO formed by the external merge of T, as the formal feature φ differentiating its bearer (i.e., T) from the sister (i.e., *v**P) of it. Therefore, to render the TP in (10) a proper TO which can be interpreted in interfaces, DP must internally merge to T'. In that, MS can successfully detect the φ features of D and T, aptly forming a φ-Equi.

(10) Mary had a little lamb.
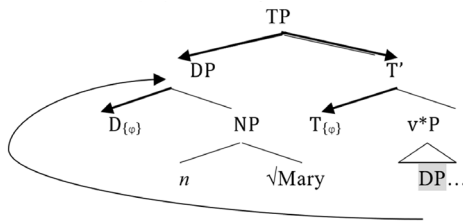
The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: In Section 2, I outline two approaches to generalize the uniqueness of *sazi* in SD under the SS introduced in 1.3 under the assumption that the feature inheritance has multiple variations. In Section 3, I address the issues regarding the nominal affixations that can yield indefinite interpretation while *wh*-construal is still attainable by phonological operation. Section 4 concludes this paper.

2. Optional Successive Feature Inheritance

As shown in (3a-b), *sazi* in SD cannot be interpreted as indefinite independently no matter it is the subject or the object. In conjunction with the examples presented in 1.3, it is plausible to conclude that *sazi* in SD is inherently equipped with the formal feature{Q}, since it not only rejects the universal interpretation assigned by the Null operator, but also it cannot have indefinite reading per se. The water then gets very muddy, as *sazi* in SD stays in-situ

on one hand, but are not subject to unselective binding on the other, making it more similar to English *wh*-phrases. Note that *wh*-phrases bearing {Q} cause no problem in English as they eventually internally merge to the edge of C, whereby the Labeling Algorithm can determine that the label of the newly formed SO is <Q, Q> in the sense of Problems of Projection (Extensions) (POPE, see Chomsky [11, 12]).

Following the FSC regularized in (9), a formal feature like {Q} must be integrated into a F-Equi or the SO containing it cannot be properly transferred. In this Section, I would like to propose that such a F-Equi can be constructed via C-T-*v** feature inheritance.

As to the notion of feature inheritance, it plays a vital part in the current minimalist trend. Chomsky [11] claims that phase head like C and *v** inherently bear φ feature. Importantly, in order to ensure that Transfer and feature valuation to take place at the same time (see also Richards [13], Chomsky [14]), phase-heads must transmit the φ feature onto the heads of their phase-head complements (i.e., T and V). The reasoning is explicable: (i) if Transfer takes place before valuation, uninterpretable formal features would cause the derivational crash; (ii) if Transfer takes place after valuation, Conceptual-Intentional Interface (C-I interface) can no longer distinguish the inherently valued features from derivationally valued ones which have no semantic interpretation according to Chomsky [14]: 19. In effect, the φ feature that T bears in (10b) is originally carried by C, and it gets valued/Transferred simultaneously in the Transfer domain of C.

However, {Q} feature does not have to be inherited by T in languages like English as it is by definition interpretable in the phase head C. Hayashi [15]: 283 presents a novel idea that feature inheritance might be optional hence the {Q} feature of C can opt to be transmitted to T. According to him, this inheritance relation may be responsible for 'I wonder who'-kind interrogative. Observe the following example:

(11) a.   I wonder who you love.

b.   [C [who$_{\{vQ\}}$ [T$_{\{Q\}}$ . . .]]]

Illustrated in (11b), if the {Q} of C is inherited by T, it then becomes possible for one *wh*-phrase to be raised to the edge of T, yielding the clause in the form of (11a)[5]. Therefore, the remaining issue is: is it possible for any formal feature to be handed over to v* from T? To the best of my knowledge, there seems to be no condition particularly bans such T-to-v* feature inheritance. The Phase-Impenetrability Condition (PIC, see Chomsky 2001), according to which whatever is Transferred cannot be accessed by further syntactic operation, does not hinder such feature inheritance; since T and v* are in the same Transfer domain. It is also theoretically possible to rearrange the timing of each operation (labelling or inheritance, see Nomura [16]), indicating v* can inherit the formal feature prior to the rest of the operations. Mizuguchi [17] also argues that there is a 'selectional relation' between T and v*. In fact, an intact C-T-v* configuration is argued to be required for the clausal interpretation at C-I interface. Thus, it fairs well to assume there can be certain kind of relations in between. On the basis of the reasoning presented above, I contend that T-to-v* inheritance is possible.

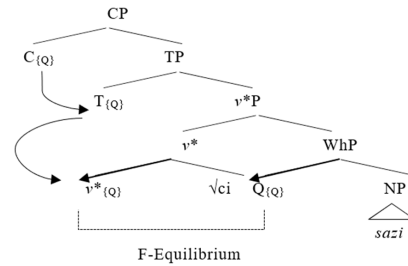## 2.1. Case I: {Q} Is Handed over to *v**

With what has been outlined above in mind, (3b) can be depicted by the following diagram, where {Q} feature inheritance does not stop at T, instead it applies again and {Q} is passed down to v* eventually. In (12), the {Q} feature of C is successively passed to T and v*, and the {k, R} configuration Narita and Fukui [9]: 43) formulate for a single lexical entry is adopted. By doing so, v* and Q can be detected by the MS (bold arrow) and they both bear the {Q} feature, where a F-Equi is successfully constructed. In conclusion, v*P in (12) can then define a TO and be interpreted in interfaces. This configuration differs from Chomskyan POPE system in that the lexical root R externally merges with its categorizer v* instead of assuming an {R-v*} amalgam formed via internal pair-merge, which is not a legitimate operation in terms of the SMT (see also Omune [19]).

(12)

F-Equilibrium

Notice the structure in (12) is able to provide a direct account for the case in which *sazi* is the object. However, subject *sazi* cannot fit in a symmetric configuration in the system depicted in (12). It is feasible to claim subject *sazi*, equipped with inherent {Q}, can be embedded into a Q-Equi via External merge as in (13), where Minimal search locates Q and v* at the same depth, Q-Equi can be constructed without any problem:

(13)

F-Equilibrium
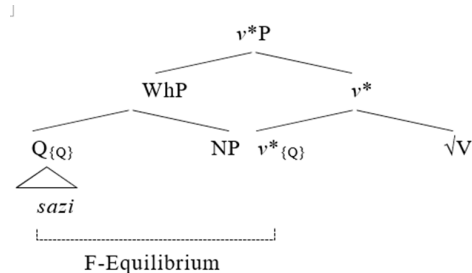
2.2. Case II: {Q} Stays at T

Shown in (3a), *sazi* in SD also occurs as the subject just like English *what*. If we still maintain the Feature inheritance approach, a severe problem emerges: if the mandatory subject A-movement to [Spec, TP] also holds in SD, there would be no way to form the Q-Equilibrium as the MS would always detect *sazi* before v*.

To circumvent the failure of the Symmetrization, I propose the {Q} feature can stay in T[6], which can be seen as a revival of the original model of feature inheritance proposed in Chomsky [20]. Observe the following diagram in (14). In (14), *sazi* is based-generated inside v*P and joins to T' via internal merge. Note that the internal merge
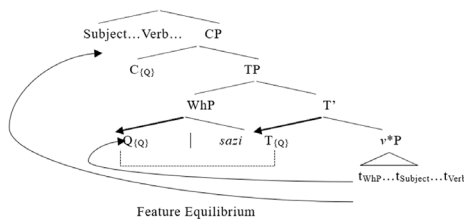
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of *sazi* not only conforms to the requirement of STC by integrating two {Q}s into a F-Equi, but also appeals to the previous theories regulating the formal-feature-triggered movements (cf. The Probe-Goal Union of Miyagawa [21]: 35). Given the C-T-$v*$ feature inheritance is assumed to be optional in this paper, the $v*$P phase stays immune from asymmetricities induced by formal features, as long as {Q} stays at T. Feature inheritance in this form is in full consistency with Hayashi's [15] optional C-T {Q} inheritance[7].

(14)

Feature Equilibrium
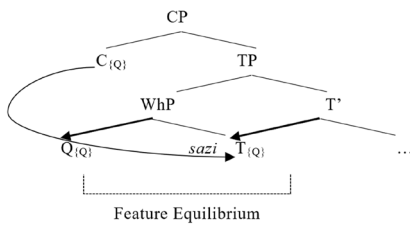
There is another logically possible mode based on the free application of (internal) merge that can give rise to legit wh-construal in the presence of subject *sazi*: shifting object *sazi* to [Spec, T]. As illustrated in (15), the object wh-phrase is raised to [Spec, T], which is typically the position for subject, while the subject rises all the way to [Spec, C]:

(15)

Feature Equilibrium

This analysis is reminiscent of Narita and Fukui's [9]:

262 *Hypothesis J-I* presented for the derivation of in situ wh-phrase. To be more specific, wh-*sazi* internally merges to the edge of T, establishing the Q-Equi and in order to obtain the correct superficial order, the rest part of the lower $v*$P merges to higher positions.

2.3. Does Optional Successive Feature Inheritance Violate PIC?

It is worth noting that the approach which assumes {Q} can be inherited by $v*$ in a successive fashion may be seen as the violation of PIC. In the structure of (12), the *wh*-phrase is in the transfer domain of $v*$ and expected to be transferred at a different timing. However, such PIC violation is just apparent. In the framework of SS, transfer applies whenever an F-Equi is formed. The first transfer output is x (to put this more precisely, the amalgam of semantic root and categorizer), and the entire derivation would be terminated if $v*$ at this point gets isolated by PIC. In other words, the complement of $v*$ is not the very first transfer output. What is transferred can be seen as a copy of the F-Equi generated by Minimal Search, as a result $v*$ is still accessible in the workspace.

The same consequence is also attainable under the standard assumption. The third-factor principal PIC forbids any syntactic operations on what is already transferred, while the establishment of an F-Equi does not induce any change on the syntactic objects. Both $v*$ and the *wh*-phrase only provide information that is required by CI interface, which is accessible by MS application.

Additionally, SD, just like any other Sinitic dialects, does not employ overt φ-agreement[8]. Hence, regarding the phase hood of TP, it is reasonable to take the T in SD to be

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[7] One may argue the structure in (13) leads to a potential challenge to the wh-in-situ status of SD. As to this issue, my analysis is that since the internal merge illustrated in (13) is not in violation of any third-factor principles (no-tampering, cyclicity, minimal yield, etc.). nothing precludes the internal merger of *sazi* and T'.

[8] The blocking effect is taken to be a piece of evidence to support the proposal that Chinese is an Agreement Language by Miyagawa [21]: 49–50. That only when the {Person} of the matrix/subordinate subjects matches can a long-distance anaphoric binding be possible. In practice, the anaphor first covertly moves to the embedded T to value its {Person}. Further LF-movement to the matrix T is possible only when the {Person} the anaphor carries matches with it.

However, this analysis may not be valid in the eyes of the current minimalist trend, as the anaphor clearly moves out of a criteria position (i.e., the Spec of the lower T, see Rizzi [24] where it has its {Person} valued. Furthermore, there are counterexamples to the blocking effect in the context of SD:

(i) Jialaolian[i]   jiode   Fengtsetse[j]   xihuan   goren[i/*j]   malaohanr.
    JLL   think   FTT   like   self   parents
    'Jialaolian thinks that Fengtsetse likes the parents of *him/himself.'

Illustrated in (i), the anaphor in SD *gozen* cannot be long-distantly bound, even though the matrix/subordinate subjects are both 3rd person, suggesting the block effect may be absent/inconstant in SD.

formal feature free by default, suggesting T is not an inherent phase head because phase head is typically considered a head equipped with uninterpretable formal feature. A significant ramification is that TP and *v**P are in the same transfer output in languages like SD. In fact, the strict *v**P-TP-CP successive Transfer would rather disable the formation of Q-Equi in the case of *sazi*, as *sazi*, bearing {Q} inherently, would get transferred in the *v**P layer and can no longer be integrated into a Q-Equi[9]. Consequently, the T-*v** feature inheritance discussed in this section will not violate the PIC.

Before initiating the solution to the problems outlined above, an interim summary is called for. In Section 2, I have presented two models to integrate {Q} features of *sazi* interrogatives into F-Equi. It is shown explicitly that wh-in-situ language like SD can be neatly accounted for by the Symmetrized Syntax framework.

3. Solutions to the Conundrums of *sazi*

In Section 2, I have presented a clear picture entailing the derivation of interrogative sazi. Given unselective binding is not helpful, the general framework of Symmetrized Syntax has been proven to be able to offer a solution to the apparent intricacy demonstrated by sazi. Nevertheless, there are some issues we cannot overlook as they pose additional conundrums that the analysis proposed in Section 2 comes up short of direct solution. In Section 3, I propose that the syntactic idiosyncrasies induced by wh-construal-canceling nominal morphemes that may render sazi a nondefinite can be coped with a scrutiny on the formal nature of {Q} feature. Additionally, I show that the existential-canceling matrix verb seems to pose a sever challenge to the No-tampering condition, a third-factor principle. Tough a dedicated study is required; I tentatively formulate an analysis that can partially address this third-factor-offending phenomenon.

3.1. *Wh*-Construal-Canceling Nominal Morphemes

Recall that it is shown in (5-7) that sazi suffixed with nominal morphemes and sazi preceded by existential you can actually be interpreted as indefinites, repeated as (15-17):

(15) *sazi affixed with donxi*

Sazi-donxi zai xiang(./?)

what-thing at ring

Reading a: 'Something is ringing.'

Reading b: 'What is ring?'

(16) *sazi prefixed with dier/xie*

Manggo ci-lo dier/xie-sazi(./?)

MG eat-ASP bit/some-what

'Manggo ate something.'

(17) *sazi-clause headed with you*

You sazi zai xiang(./?)

have what at ring

'Something is ringing.'

The analysis presented in 2.1 then leaves the following question unanswered: why the {Q} feature, which fails to be integrated into Q-Equi, does not cause any problem in the cases like (15-17)? Since even if we assume the {Q} of *sazi* stays in the workspace for the ongoing derivation, there is no further computations available in such cases. According to the baseline of Symmetrized Syntax, a formal feature like {Q} would necessarily prevent the formation of a Transfer output unless it gets integrated into an equilibrium.

This problem becomes even more complicated as one of the native formants points out that (15-17) may have wh-construal if *sazi* is phonologically emphasized, where the intonation does not have to rise at the end:

(18) *sazi prefixed with dier/xie*

Manggo ci-lo dier/xie-**SAZI**?

MG eat-ASP bit/some-what

'What did Manggo eat?'

(19) *sazi headed with you*

You **SAZI** zai xiang?

have what at ring

Intended reading a: 'Is it true that something is ringing?' (with rising intonation)

Intended reading b: 'What is ringing?' (without rising intonation)

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[9] Narita and Fukui [9]: 63 clarify that the STC does not require a F-Equi to be transferred *immediately*, which predicts that a v*P can stick around until the T-v* inheritance is carried out. Either way, the feature inheritance proceeds unproblematically.

As I have shown in Section 1, that *sazi* is uniquely interpreted as wh-construal when used barely, but the appearance of existential-*you* and nominal morphemes like *dier* and *xie* apparently rule out interrogative reading. Despite *sazi* without being stressed cannot have interrogative reading, phonological emphasis raises such restriction, as suggested in (18-19).

To recap, we have to deal with two issues that fall outside the general picture shown in Section 2: (i) how the {Q}-feature circumvents asymmetricity? (ii) how to analyze the two possible readings, wh-construal and non-wh-construal, of *sazi*?

There is a hypothesis that may answer the two questions at once: though further scrutiny is needed, I appeal to the null hypothesis that {Q}, when distributed asymmetrically within a Transfer domain, may somehow be tolerated because it is not as 'formal' as φ-feature. Notice that in the system of Symmetrized Syntax, the true culprit that troubles the symmetricity of an SO is asymmetrically distributed formal feature. φ-feature, coupling with {Q}-feature, is normally assumed to be formal features, hence they must be integrated into F-Equi to license proper transfer. However, the two formal features vary considerably with respect to their significance in CI interface. {Q} feature induces distinct interrogative interpretation of a Transfer output, whereas φ-feature does not affect the overall interpretation. Notice that the φ-Equi formed in (10) does not add any major semantic content to the derivation. On the other hand, {Q}-Equi changes the interpretation of a Transfer output sheerly, yielding an interrogative instead of an indicative. If the assumption that φ-feature is more 'formal', thus it would be only natural to expect that dangling φ-feature causes severe disintegration. As shown below, in (20), the formal feature φ on the subject never gets integrated into an φ-Equi because they fail to be detected by Minimal Search simultaneously. If the TP is transferred, a vastly unacceptable

outcome is expected. In contrast, let us now see what happens if {Q}-features stay separate:

(20) *will Mary have a little lamb (as indicative)[10].
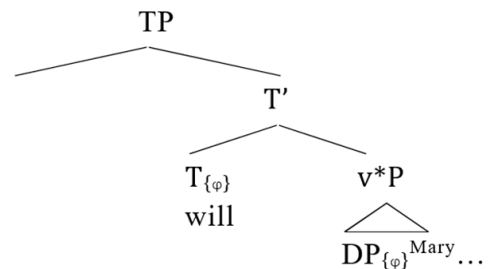
The English wh-phrase *what* stays in situ in (21). Despite it sounds pretty colloquial and is often found in a response to a shock-inducing utterance, *say what* is widely attested in natural conversation, a significant opposition to what (20) demonstrates.

(21) You said what?
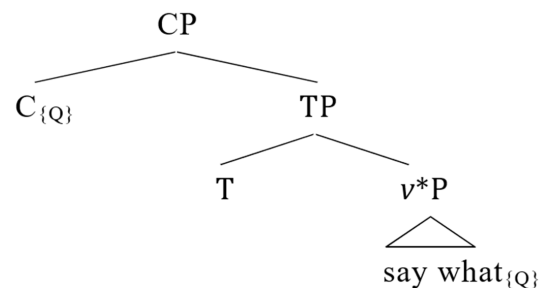
Reading a: What did you say?
Reading b: What you said is shocking!

Surprisingly, with *sazi* being phonologically stressed, the wh-construal in (18-19) is different from normal wh-questions in expressing slight shock and anger[11]. Thus, it makes sense to conclude that dangling {Q}-feature, being not so 'formal' by nature, is not an anti-symmetry factor. The fact that (15-17) can be interpreted in two ways is then similar to what the two readings in (21) show. A condition based on the data from both English and SD can be put together:

(22) *Condition on the formation of {Q}-Equilibrium*
When {Q}-feature does not get integrated into an F-Equi throughout the derivation, both indicative/rhetorical and

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[10] An anonymous reviewer wonders how can the Spec, TP remains vacant while the entire TP is established. I believe that what he/she implies is that the structure depicted in (20) should not be labelled as TP because nothing ever externally or internally merges to Spec, TP. It should be noted that all the "category labelling" in the present work is only for expository purpose, as the notion "projection" has no place in SS. The real derivation in (20) does not involve the completion of TP. Therefore, the subject DP is still allowed to merge to Spec, TP, without giving rise to counter-cyclic movement.

[11] For example, (18) sounds natural if Manggo is suffering from food poison and the doctor is trying to figure out what did he eat.

interrogative readings are tenable, the formation of {Q}-Equi is a specific device that cancels off such ambiguity[12,13].

At this point, there is only one problem left: why is bare *sazi* always interpreted as wh-construal (i.e., always be integrated into {Q}-equilibrium)? A quick answer is that bare *sazi* can be effortless integrated into a {Q}-Equilibrium compared to affixed *sazi*. Note that I have proposed that a dangling {Q} feature does not cancel a transfer output because {Q} feature is not as 'formal' as φ-feature. If (22) is on the right track, the head of *sazi* phrase can always be found on the same depth with a head with Q-feature (*v**, T or even C), yielding the ambiguity-cancelling equilibrium. By contrast, *sazi* with affixation arguably presents {XP, YP} structure, where it cannot be located simultaneously with the head with Q-feature. To be integrated into a Q-Equi, the string-vacuous right-dislocation would be necessary, which the relevant Q-features are of depth 3 (as shown in (18-19), *sazi* needs to be phonologically stressed, suggesting such movement may be in the form of focalization). As a result, affixed *sazi* is interpreted as non-definite when it keeps the Q-feature dangling. On the other hand,

affixed *sazi* is interpreted as interrogative when it undergoes additional right-dislocation to be embedded at the same depth as the Q-feature of a functional head (C, T or *v**).

3.2. Existential-Canceling Matrix Verb

As I have shown in 1.1, besides the nominal morphemes, the existential *you* can assign non-interrogative reading to *sazi*. The fact that *sazi* cooccurring with *you* may also have interrogative reading is neatly explained with the proposal made in 3.1. However, there is another empirical intricacy that not only poses a challenge to the main analysis of this paper, but also violates some third factor principles. The sentences illustrated in (23-24) involve *wonder*-type matrix verb *xiang-xiaode*. Note that existential reading is completely out in both (23) and (24), in which *sazi* cooccurs with existential *you* and nominal morphemes respectively.

(23) Ngo   xiang-xiaode   [Manggo   ci-lo   dier/xie-sazi]?
     1st   wonder   MG   eat-ASP   bit/some-what
     'I wonder what did Manggo eat?'

(24) Ngo xiang-xiaode   [you   sazi   zai   xiang]?
     1st   wonder   have   what   at   ring
     'I wonder what is ringing?'

My analysis in 3.1 does not suffice to provide an immediate solution, because (23-24) seems to run afoul of No-tampering condition (NTC) and Phase-Impenetrability condition (PIC), which both are proper third factor principles. Specifically, if a derivation with a dangling {Q} feature opts to be interpreted as indicative (as suggested in 3.1), and before the introduction of *xiang xiaode* the derivation would reach phase level, where Transfer applies. As

a result, the intended existential reading of sazi would be overridden by wh-construal. Making a formerly indicative reading interrogative violates NTC and PIC at the same time. It changes the interpretation of a lexical item in the course of derivation, while involving interphasal operation. One may claim that the violation of PIC can be resolved if we adopt an alternative version of Transfer timing as in (25), which postpones the Transfer to the moment when the next

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[12] A crosslinguistic study that examines the validity of this condition is beyond the scope of this paper. I will leave this open to future studies.

[13] An anonymous reviewer points out that the condition depicted in (22) should be made explicit in terms of the interpretability and valuedness of {Q} feature. Although the reviewer is correct that interpretability and valuedness should be treated differently as they involve distinct effect in semantic component as suggested in Pesetsky and Torrego[22], it should be noted that the interpretability and valuedness of a formal feature play trivial part in the Symmetrized Syntax framework. On the basis of the assumption that feature-checking and valuation in narrow syntax may be at odds with the third-factor principle No-tampering condition, Narita and Fukui[9] propose that such operations should be activated post-syntactically. The most essential constraint imposed on formal features under the Symmetrized Syntax is that they are prohibited from being distributed asymmetrically in narrow syntax, thus the interpretability and valuedness of {Q} is not explicitly demonstrated in (22).

phase is completed (see Saito [23]:[14]. Still, the violation of NTC remains unresolved despite when the Transfer applies.

(25) An alternative version of Transfer domain

Transfer applies after the completion of the next phase.

I currently do not have a definite account for this matter, and a detailed discussion about this issue goes beyond the scope of this *sazi*-centered paper because what (23-24) show is also true of other wh-phrases:

(26) Ngo   xiang-xiaode   [you   lago   mei   lai]?
     1st   wonder   have   who   have.not come
     'I wonder what haven't come?'

In (26), lago can only be understood as wh-construal whereas it is interpreted as 'anyone' in the absence of *xiang xiaode* when *you* appears at its left position.

Tentatively, I would like to propose an analysis that may lead to a tenable explanation: under the revised definition of Transfer timing shown above, if the construction of an F-Equi is possible within a Transfer output, then it should be executed. With *xiang xiaode*, which is equipped with {Q} inherently just like English wonder, being entered into the system, the computational system would know there are two {Q}-features distributed separately. Note that according to the definition of phase in Saito [23], *xiang xiaode* and *sazi* will be transferred together when the matrix v*P phase is completed, thus PIC does not cause any conceptual blemish here. To form the Q-Equi, optional feature inheritance takes place (see 2.1) and the {Q} of *xiang xiaode* is handed down to T. {Q}-Equi can be formed with *sazi* merging to [Spec, TP]. This analysis to some extent assures that *sazi* only gets interpreted once, therefore CI would not know its interpretation has been changed. Despite this, the violation of NTC might still be a problem in terms of non-linguistic/computation-general principles, but syntax (which is Markovian thus can never know about the fact that the existential reading of *sazi* is changed at the point when the transfer of *xiang xiaode* and *sazi* applies) would have no access to such information. This analysis is nowhere near perfection; it should be considered a provisional account for the existential-reading canceling effect of *wonder*-type verbs in Chinese languages (possibly in other wh-in-situ languages) and its theoretical robustness and empirical coverage are to be explored in future studies.

4. Endnote

4.1. Limitations

An anonymous reviewer correctly points out that this paper suffers from some theoretical and empirical limitations. First, the linguistic data presented above is constrained to a relatively small number of speakers. In fact, only one of the four subdialects of SD is targeted by the syntactic examination, which further narrows down the empirical coverage of the present work. A follow-up study that expands to other subdialects of SD would be desirable. Second, the sample size of the present work is rather small. Despite the authenticity of the assessment towards each sentence is intuitively on the track, the future study of sazi in SD should involve at least 20 native informants. Finally, as I admitted in 3.2, the intricacy caused by wonder-type verb is far from being properly accounted for. In addition to the tentative analysis given in 3.2, one may claim that there are two independent lexical entries of sazi-dongxi; only sazi-dongxi with inherent wh-construal would be chosen if wonder-type verb is involved. However, it is quite uneconomical to have a lexical entry available only when another specific lexical word is present (i.e., wonder-type word).

4.2. Conclusions

In this paper, I have examined the idiosyncratic wh-phrase *sazi* in Sichuan Dialect of Mandarin Chinese that

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[14] The problem ceases to exist if we adopt a weak version of No-tampering condition, which does not prohibit features within a lexical item to be changed, thus the change of interpretation is not strictly impossible. On the other hand, the strong/strict No-tampering condition articulated in Narita and Fukui [9] bans the change of both terms and features of an SO.

can only have wh-construal when used barely, whereas other wh-phrases in SD (and in SMC as well) are inherently indefinites. As discussed in Section 2, I attempt to account for this syntactic property of sazi under the Symmetrized Syntax formulated in Narita and Fukui [9]. In short, I put forward two possibilities for sazi (its inherently-borne {Q} feature, to be more accurately) to be integrated into a Feature Equilibrium, which allows the definition of a Transfer output: (i) the Q-Equi can be built by assuming the C-T-v* successive feature inheritance; (ii) it can also be built by internal merge with the canonical C-T feature inheritance in the sense of POPE system of Chomsky [11][12]. In addition, Section 3 addresses some intricate issue regarding the interpretation of nominal-affixed and you-led sazi expressions. The proposal is that {Q} feature is not as formal as its φ counterpart, thus its being asymmetrically distributed is somehow tolerated in cases like colloquial utterance. In fact, whether a {Q} is integrated in an F-Qui determines the final output of a Transfer Output. The syntactic conundrum brought by the wonder-type verb is also addressed in Section 3. Although a more formal and inclusive analysis is required, a preliminary proposal is made to try to account for its linguistic behavior, however partial and stipulative it is.

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Glossary

ASP   Aspect

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