What does *vajon* contribute?[1]

Hans-Martin GÄRTNER — *NYTK, Budapest & IAWDS*
Beáta GYURIS — *NYTK, Budapest & ELTE, Budapest*

Abstract. The Hungarian particle *vajon* can be added to interrogatives to render the question acts they are used for "reflective" in the sense of geared to raising a question without answer request (Lyons 1977: 755), i.e., with weakened "call-on-addressee" (cf. Beyssade and Marandin 2006; Truckenbrodt 2006). This effect puts *vajon* in close proximity with triggers of "non-intrusive" questions (NIQs), as noted by Farkas (2022: 313; 2023: 114), and "conjectural" questions (CQs) (Eckardt 2020). Studying *vajon* against this theoretical background (i) uncovers difficulties for content-based approaches to particle/clause type (in)compatibilities, (ii) demonstrates the usefulness of distinguishing different types of rhetorical questions, (iii) identifies obstacles to analyzing *vajon* as either an NIQ- or a CQ-trigger, and (iv) adds another example to the inventory of cross-linguistic indirect speech act discrepancies.

Keywords: special questions, particles, sentence types, speech acts

1. Introduction

The Hungarian particle *vajon* can be added to interrogatives to render the question acts they are used for "reflective" in the sense of geared to raising a question without answer request (Lyons 1977: 755), i.e., "issue-rasing in a pure form" (Szabolcsi, Whang and Zu 2014: 138) with weakened "call-on-addressee" (cf. Beyssade and Marandin 2006; Truckenbrodt 2006). Evidence for this is provided by examples such as (1) and (2) (Gärtner and Gyuris 2012: 415), where the latter is taken as an utterance of one's computer's operating system.[2] *Vajon* shows up where a question comes without answer expectation, (1), and is blocked when information seeking is the sole purpose, (2).

(1)   A: Have you been in touch with John lately?
   a.   B: Not at all.
   b.   A: #(**Vajon**) Elvégezte   már   az   egyetemet?
                      VM.finished already the university.ACC
         'Has he already received his degree? #(I wonder.)'

---

[2] VM is used as gloss for "verb modifier," i.e., an instance of a particular class of verbal particles, bare nouns, and other predicative items that, if present, fill the immediately preverbal position in "neutral" clauses (cf. É. Kiss 2002: section 3).

(2)   (#**Vajon**) Folytatja   a   leállítást?   Igen / Nem
                 continue.SUBJ.3SG the closing.ACC   yes   no
         'Would you like to shut down (this application) now? (#I wonder.) Yes / No'

The illustrated effect puts *vajon* in close proximity with triggers of "non-intrusive" questions (NIQs), as noted by Farkas (2022: 313; 2023: 114), and "conjectural" questions (CQs) (Eckardt 2020). In the following *vajon* will be studied against this theoretical background, a strategy which, as is going to be shown, (i) uncovers difficulties for content-based approaches to particle/clause type (in)compatibilities; (ii) demonstrates the usefulness of distinguishing different types of rhetorical questions; (iii) identifies obstacles to analyzing *vajon* as either an NIQ- or a CQ-trigger, and (iv) adds another example to the inventory of cross-linguistic indirect speech act discrepancies. These points will be addressed in Sections 2-5, respectively. Section 6 explores a modification of the NIQ-approach and Section 7 contains a brief conclusion.

2.   *Vajon* and the declarative/interrogative distinction

As indicated in (3) and (4), *vajon* is strictly excluded from declarative clauses (*vajon-DEC), while being optional – modulo pragmatic effects – in interrogatives. In fact, *vajon* may serve as diagnostic of interrogativity.[3]

(3)   (***Vajon**)Ezeknek a furcsa   szimbólumoknak van   jelentésük.   (\\)
                 these.DAT the strange symbol.PL.DAT   be.3SG meaning.their
         'These funny symbols have a meaning. (*I wonder.)'

(4)   (**Vajon**)Ezeknek a furcsa   szimbólumoknak van   jelentésük?   (/\\)
                 these.DAT the strange symbol.PL.DAT   be.3SG meaning.their
         'Do these funny symbols have a meaning? (I wonder.)'

A deeper account of *vajon-DEC may adopt an ingenious proposal by Farkas (2022: 313f.), who derives analogous behavior of the Romanian counterpart particle *oare* from a constraint ruling out necessarily redundant discourse effects (cf. Farkas 2023: 120). This is formulated within a version of the "table model" of discourse (Farkas and Bruce 2010) combined with "inquisitive semantics" (Ciardelli, Groenendijk and Roelofsen 2019; Farkas and Roelofsen 2017).

Consider first the (bare essentials of the) formal treatment of polar interrogatives.

---

[3] A globally falling contour, (\\), identifies declaratives. (\\) may not occur with interrogatives unless they are marked by particle *-e* on the finite verb (or an appropriate alternative host where such a verb is missing). Interrogatives without *-e*, such as the one in (4), require a characteristic global "rise-fall" contour, (/\\), peaking on the penultimate syllable (cf. Ladd 2008: 81ff.). For further discussion, see Gärtner and Gyuris (2012: 400ff.; 2022: 1.1) and works cited there. That *vajon* is incompatible with non-interrogatives has, for example, been shown wrt its ban from exclamatives (Farkas 2023: 115; cf. Gärtner and Gyuris 2007).

(5) INTERROGATIVE

    a. $I(S_{INT}) = \{\, p, \bar{p} \,\}$

    b. $info(I(S_{INT})) = \bigcup \{\, p, \bar{p} \,\} = p \cup \bar{p}$

    c. $ps = \{\, DC_{Ad} \cup \{\, p \,\}, DC_{Ad} \cup \{\, \bar{p} \,\} \,\}$

    d. $ps^{+} = \{\, DC_{Ad} \cup \{\, p \,\}, DC_{Ad} \cup \{\, \bar{p} \,\}, DC_{Ad} \cup \{\, p \cup \bar{p} \,\} \,\}$

As shown in (5a), the "issue" (*I*) denoted by a polar interrogative (S_{INT}) is the familiar set made up of the prejacent proposition and its complement.[4] The "informative content" of an issue is arrived at by applying set union to the propositions it contains. In the case of polar interrogatives this "cover[s] the whole logical space provided by the context" (Farkas 2022: 303), i.e., the context set, CS. The follow-up moves governed by question acts based on canonical interrogatives are captured by the "projected set," ps, (5c). Addressees are offered the choice of committing to one of the issue's options, i.e., of adding either *p* or $\bar{p}$ to their "discourse commitments," DC_{Ad}. And, crucially, if *vajon* is modeled on its "non-intrusive" counterpart *oare*, its discourse effect consists in granting the addressee the "trivial" option of leaving things open. This is achieved by adding $DC_{Ad} \cup \{\, CS \,\}$ to a thus modified ps^{+}, as can be seen in (5d).

The constraint **vajon*-DEC, then, emerges from the formal analysis of declaratives in (6).

(6) DECLARATIVE

    a. $I(S_{DEC}) = \{\, p \,\}$

    b. $info(I(S_{DEC})) = \bigcup \{\, p \,\} = p$

    c. $ps = \{\, DC_{Ad} \cup \{\, p \,\} \,\}$

    d. $ps^{+} = \{\, DC_{Ad} \cup \{\, p \,\}, DC_{Ad} \cup \{\, p \,\} \,\} = \{\, DC_{Ad} \cup \{\, p \,\} \,\}$

(6a), (6b), and (6c) are obvious consequences of declaratives being taken to denote singleton issues, i.e., sets just containing the prejacent proposition. The redundancy in (6d) follows from the technical assumption that *vajon* induces ps^{+} by contributing $DC_{Ad} \cup \{\, info(I) \,\}$ (Farkas 2022: 312; 2023: 120). In the case of interrogatives this results in an additional addressee option whereas in the case of declaratives it doesn't. And thus, "[t]he non-occurrence of [*vajon*] in declaratives is explained by the fact that speakers would never have any reason to use it in such sentences" (Farkas 2022: 314).

Now, given its principled nature, the ramifications of this approach to **vajon*-DEC deserve further exploration.[5] Importantly, first of all, *vajon* must equally be absent from Hungarian-style "rising declaratives" (RDs). Thus, the ban on *vajon* persists if (3) is turned into what Goodhue (2021: 954) calls an "incredulous inquisitive" (II) RD. As for grammar, this would

---

[4] In keeping with Farkas (2022), the downward closure of issues, one of the hallmarks of inquisitive semantics (cf. Farkas and Roelofsen 2017: 251f.), will be abstracted away from.

[5] Investigating the broader scope and viability of such redundancy accounts is beyond current concerns. The possibility, for example, of inserting *vajon* into the interrogative complement of matrix predicates translating as 'I wonder' – as in *Azon tűnődöm/gondolkodom, hogy (vajon)* ... ('I'm wondering about whether ...') – would have to be made consistent with the restriction in question. Matters of this kind have recently been discussed wrt "language logicality" (cf. Pistoia-Reda and Sauerland 2021). Note that the distribution of *vajon* in clause combining is limited to "embedded root environments" (Heycock 2017; McCloskey 2006; Woods 2016) as indicated by Gärtner and Gyuris (2012: 417, fn.46) and confirmed by Farkas (2023: 123).

require a change in prosody such that a rise-fall contour is associated with each accentable word. The English rendering of the resulting "II-RD(3)" is provided in (7).[6]

(7)   These funny symbols have a meaning!?

As for interpretation, it has to be pointed out that, given *vajon*-DEC, II-RD(3) would not be amenable to the "bipolar" treatment of RDs envisaged by Farkas and Roelofsen (2017: 261) and Ciardelli, Groenendijk and Roelofsen (2019: 104, Table 6.1). This is because if $I(S_{DEC}\uparrow) = I(S_{INT}) = \{\, p, \bar{p} \,\}$, then the contribution of *vajon* to II-RD(3) would result in the ps$^+$ in (5d) and thus be non-redundant.

Of course, in order to reconcile the above approach to *vajon*-DEC with a bipolar treatment of RDs, one might appeal to construction-specific pragmatic factors. This, however, is not as straighforward as might initially appear. II-RD(3)/(7) may be uttered among a group of scholars studying the field notes of an absent colleague. Here it is hard to see why the speaker should not grant the addressees the option introduced by *vajon* of leaving the issue unresolved, reflected in the putatively non-redundant component $DC_{Ad} \cup \{\, info(I(S_{DEC}\uparrow)) \,\}$ being a member of ps$^+$. This is independently confirmed by the fact that using the polar interrogative in (4) including *vajon* would be perfectly fine in the same context.[7]

Second, attempts at combining the redundancy account of *vajon*-DEC with a monopolar analysis of interrogatives (Krifka 2015: 336f.; Krifka 2021: 76) would face the opposite challenge. If $I(S_{INT\mu}) = I(S_{DEC}) = \{\, p \,\}$, *vajon* should be excluded from this kind of interrogative, given that the resulting ps$^+$ will equal the one in (6d). Again, however, the facts disconfirm such a prediction. As shown in (8), *vajon* is unexceptionable in biased questions involving propositional ("inside") negation, one of the prime candidates for monopolar treatment.

(8)   **Vajon** nem volt   itt   senki?   (/\)
              not   be.PAST.3SG here nobody
       'Was nobody here? I wonder.'

It is not obvious how to categorically rule out signaling bias while at the same time allowing addressees to refrain from committing to an answer.[8]

---

[6] Further categories from the typology presented by Goodhue (2021) are "confirmative inquisitive" and "assertive" RDs. In Hungarian, the former are realized by declaratives to which the question-tag-like particle *ugye* (cf. Gyuris 2009) is added, the latter by declaratives intonationally modulated by a slight final rise (Gyuris 2019: 266). There are reasons to believe that the (multiple) rise-fall pattern of Hungarian II-RDs is indicative of (presumptive) echoicity, which would account for the need to resort to different forms for both CI-RDs and A-RDs. Note also that matters of "surprise" and "incredulity" are likely to have to be treated as independent parameters (cf. Gunlogson 2003: 68; Rudin 2022: 347). Finally, it has been observed that the use of inquisitive RDs can convey positive or negative bias or (dis)agreement (cf. Rudin 2022: 3.3.1/2).

[7] Analogous difficulties in accounting for the absence of NPIs from RDs under the bipolar approach are addressed by Farkas and Roelofsen (2017: 280) and critically assessed by Rudin (2018: 2.7; 2019). Rudin (2022: section 5) develops a variant of the analysis by Farkas and Roelofsen without relying on bipolarity.

[8] Interestingly, Krifka (2021: 2.12) opts for a bipolar analysis of the German counterpart of reflective questions (see Section 6 below).

3.   *Vajon* and rhetorical questions

Consider next the interaction of *vajon* and rhetorical questions (RHQs), a type of questions that, quite relevantly, has been taken to "seek no answers" (cf. Maynard 1995). In line with the discussion so far, one may say that the "special characteristic [of RHQs] is that the input context resolves the issue they raise in an obvious way" (Farkas 2022: 330). One way of illustrating this in terms of the approach to polar interrogatives in (5) is to assume that $p \cap CS = \varnothing$, and $CS \neq \varnothing$, i.e., $CS \subseteq \bar{p}$. Importantly, the contribution of *vajon* to the ps of S_{INT} in such a situation would be redundant too, as the corresponding ps^+ in (9) shows. (Remember that $info(I(S_{INT})) = CS$.)

(9) $ps^+ = \{ DC_{Ad} \cup \{ \varnothing \}, DC_{Ad} \cup \{ CS \}, DC_{Ad} \cup \{ CS \} \}$

And, as it turns out, *vajon* is indeed infelicitous in such RHQs. (10) could, for example, be used by the speaker to dismiss a childish request by her friend.

(10) (#**Vajon**) Az anyád vagyok?   (/\)
              the mother be.PRS.1SG
      'Am I your mother? (#I wonder.)'

A categorical ban on *vajon* from RHQs, however, would go against much of the more descriptive Hungarian literature, where "rhetorical uses" are standardly counted among the central functions of that particle (for references, see Götz 2019). And indeed, RHQs of the kind in (11) are attested.

(11) (**Vajon**) Megtett a   kormány mindent, hogy elkerülje   a válságot? (/\)
              VM.did   the governm. everything that   VM.avoid.SUBJ.3SG the crisis
      'Has the government done everything to avoid the crisis? (I wonder.)'

The difference between (10) and (11) can be captured by noting that if (11) were uttered by a member of the opposition during a parliamentary session, $p \cap CS \neq \varnothing$ would be a likely contextual state. And thus, the use of *vajon* would create the by now familiar additional option for addressees.[9]

Now, it is possible to subsume these different types of RHQs under a common denominator by slightly rephrasing the above characterization along the lines of Biezma and Rawlins (2017: 308): "[...] rhetorical questions presuppose that the answer is entailed in the context of utterance (and hence available to all participants) [...]." The type exemplified in (10) would come with direct presupposition satisfaction, while the one shown in (11) requires accommodation-like adjustments.[10]

What is not so clear, however, is whether "necessary redundancy" in the account for *vajon-DEC should be extended to "accidental (contextual) redundancy" in an account for *vajon-

---

[9] See Sections 5 and 6 for further remarks on the particular pragmatics of example (11).

[10] Prosodically, Hungarian RHQs are marked by higher onset as well as greater F0 excursion. The former property fits the diagnosis of "divergent initial pitch" for non-standard questions by Sicoli et al. (2015: 205). Relevant cross-linguistic work has recently been carried out by Dehé et al. (2022).

RHQ to cover cases like (10).[11] In fact, this strategy may face empirical challenges. Thus, consider (12).

(12)   Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

This interrogative-based question from the gospel of St. Matthew (7:16) ("Authorized King James Version") constitutes a good candidate for an RHQ that requires no accommodation.[12] Nevertheless, the Hungarian "Károli Bible" from 1590 and several modern translations contain *vajon* here. Adding that particle arguably explicitly supports the didactic function of having addressees "reflectively" contemplate the "message" of the RHQ. An utterance of (10) in the context described earlier would, on the other hand, be a fairly blunt indirect way of saying "no," without any attention to the content of the question intended.[13] This kind of difference will be picked up again at the end of Section 5 on indirect speech acts.

4.   NIQ- vs. CQ-trigger

The discussion so far has followed Farkas (2022; 2023) in treating *vajon* as a trigger of "non-intrusive questions" (NIQs), the formal hallmark of which is captured by ps^+ in (5d): addressees are given the explicit option of leaving an NIQ unresolved. The pragmatic intuition behind this mechanism is that NIQs weaken one of the defaults of canonical question acts, namely, the "addressee compliance assumption," formulated in (13) (Farkas 2022: 297).

(13)   *Addressee compliance:*
       The speaker assumes that the addressee will provide this information in the immediate future of the conversation as a result of the speaker's speech act.

And indeed, this fits well with the uses of *vajon* presented above. However, there are contexts that stand in the way of an NIQ-trigger analysis. Consider (14), taken as an utterance in a phone conversation.

(14)   #**Vajon** hol vagy?
       'Where are you? I wonder.'

In the direct Romanian counterpart of (14), the bona fide NIQ-trigger *oare* felicitously serves as a means through which "the speaker [...] tactfully signals that she is aware the addressee might have reasons not to provide the answer" (Farkas 2022: 322). This, it seems, does not

---

[11] Technically, the latter approach requires something like the "project+discard" mechanism mentioned by Farkas (2022: 330), which reduces $ps^{(+)}$ to viable options. A suitable kind of dynamic system for working this out is presented by AnderBois et al. (2015).

[12] Note that CS derives from "the discourse commitments of all participants *augmented by background assumptions*" (Farkas 2022: 304) [italics ours, HMG/BGY].

[13] On this kind of employing RHQs as "retorts," see Schaffer (2005). The difference between (10) and (11) does not simply follow from *vajon* being confined to "initiating" – as opposed to "reactive" – dialog acts, as indicated by the following exchange. A: *Are there going to be any surprises in the presidential race?* B: (*Vajon*) *Van Magyarországon több mint egy jelölt?* ('Does Hungary have more than one candidate? (I wonder.)').

apply in the case of *vajon*. Instead, an utterance of (14) gives the (odd) impression of the speaker having started a soliloquy, disregarding the interlocutor on the phone.[14]

Another challenge for the NIQ approach to *vajon*-interrogatives are what can be called "equal expertise" effects. (15), uttered in the context of a job search committee, may serve as illustration.

(15) **Vajon** Smith fogja megkapni az állást?
      'Will Smith get the job? I wonder.'

Curiously, (15) would be adequate if uttered between either two outsiders to or two members of the committee, whereas it is infelicitous in a mixed situation. Why weakening the addressee compliance assumption should be ruled out in the latter case, especially if the question is asked by an outsider to a committee member, is quite unclear.

At the same time, equal expertise effects of the type just described would speak in favor of considering *vajon* a trigger of "conjectural questions" (CQs) as analyzed by Eckardt (2020). Core ingredient here is the assumption that CQs invite "defeasibl[e] infer[ences] from *pooled knowledge of speaker and addressee*" (Eckardt 2020: 35). Such invitations do not make (much) sense in contexts of unevenly distributed "priviledged knowledge," which would be a good basis for explaining the constraints on uses of (15).

However, the idea that *vajon* constitutes a CQ-trigger turns out to be dubious as well. Thus, although German interrogative root (*wohl-*)VF-clauses,[15] i.e., the prime instance of CQ-triggers according to Eckardt (2020), behave like Hungarian *vajon*-interrogatives wrt the diagnostics in Section 1 – preferred option in the context of (1) (cf. Truckenbrodt 2006: 274), infelicitous in counterparts of (2) – the principles putatively guiding their overall distribution lead to clear divergences. In particular, as discussed in detail by Farkas (2022: 5.3.2), CQs differ from NIQs in that, at the level of speech act defaults, CQs suspend the "addressee competence assumption," stated in (16) (Farkas 2022: 297).

(16) *Addressee competence:*
      The speaker assumes that the addressee knows the information that settles the issue she raises.

This is directly reflected in the empirical assessment by Eckardt (2020: 35) that German root (*wohl-*)VF-interrogatives "cannot be used as rhetorical questions." By contrast, examples like (11) and (Hungarian versions of) (12) show that *vajon* does occur in RHQs.[16] It must

---

[14] Farkas (2023: 5.1.1) explicitly discusses evidence that *vajon*-interrogatives are not exclusively used in self-addressed questions. For further recent work on the latter, see Eckardt and Disselkamp (2019).

[15] These structures are dealt with in some detail by Oppenrieder (1989), Truckenbrodt (2006), and Zimmermann (2013). They can be considered a variety of "insubordination" (cf. Evans 2007), given that they are root constructions displaying the (finite) "verb final" (VF) order characteristic of subordination. The modal particle *wohl* is obligatory in *wh-* and optional in polar (*ob* "whether") instantiations.

[16] Rendered by German (*wohl-*)VF-interrogatives, none of the examples in (10)-(12) would be felicitous in the contexts in question. An additional constraint on counterparts of (11) and (12) appears to be that in situations of public speaking, VF is blocked by verb-first or verb second structures. Meibauer (1986: 78) presents a potential (journalistic) counterexample to Eckardt's categorical assessment.

therefore be concluded that, close affinities notwithstanding, *vajon* neither reduces to an NIQ- nor to a CQ-trigger.

5. Indirect speech acts

Question acts without answer request, performed to reflect upon an issue, tactfully signal non-intrusiveness, or invite joint conjecture, could easily be taken to function as extra polite directives. This, at least, is what Oppenrieder (1989: 182) argues on the basis of examples like the following, involving a German (*wohl-*)VF-interrogative. (17) might be uttered by a speaker carrying some piece of heavy luggage reaching a door next to which the addressee is standing.

(17) Ob   Du mir   wohl die Tür   öffnest?!
       whether you I.DAT   the door open.PRS.2SG
       'Could you open the door for me?! I was wondering.'

Directive cues like *bitte* 'please' or the mitigator *mal* 'once,' 'just' (König, Stark and Requardt 1990: 88f.) may be added for purposes of disambiguation. And indeed, similar uses are attested for the functionally closely related Danish *mon-*interrogatives (Beijering 2012:126). However, strikingly, directive uses of Hungarian *vajon-*interrogatives are infelicitous (cf. Gärtner and Gyuris 2012: 417f.). This is illustrated in (18), which directly translates (17).

(18) (#**Vajon**) Kinyitod nekem az ajtót?!
       'Will you open the door for me?! (I was wondering.)'

In this case, addition of cues like *kérlek* or *kérem* 'please' would only increase incompatibility with the presence of *vajon*.

Now, cross-linguistic variation regarding the licensing of indirect speech acts is usually considered a matter of (more or less arbitrary) conventionalization (cf. Searle 1979; Wierzbicka 1985). At the same time, understanding the kind of communicative failure involved in attempts at using *vajon-*interrogatives as requests may help reaching a more substantive and differentiated analysis of such phenomena. Thus, consider frameworks that capture the interaction between sentence types, particles, and speech acts in terms of use conditions (e.g. Gutzmann 2015). Here, the switch from reflectivity to indirect request in cases like (17) implies that Gricean mechanisms are able to operate on the output of such conditions. The question then arises as to what could prevent the same kind of process from applying in cases like (18).

One clue for giving an answer stems from work on "the intonational disambiguation of indirect speech acts" by Sag and Liberman (1975: 496): "These conclusions suggest the following hypothesis: some intonation contours can "freeze" an utterance pragmatically, i.e., require a literal interpretation [...]." A tool that could in principle bring about such "freezing" effects would be strictly "nondisplaceable" (Potts 2007: 166) use conditions, which persist and remain valid throughout all semantico-pragmatic interpretation. A candidate for such a "shielded use condition" accompanying uses of *vajon* is formulated in (19).

(19) Uses of *vajon*-interrogatives concern information.

(19) has the potential of explaining what would go wrong with an utterance of (18) in the given situation were it to include *vajon*. The addressee would have to find the speaker's exclusive interest in matters of fact misleading. The same shielded use condition could actually serve as basis for an alternative account of the infelicity of the rhetorical question in (10): The speaker's purpose of saying "no" would be flouted by *vajon* drawing the addressee's attention to the informational content of the interrogative. This clearly distinguishes (10) from (11) and (12), with the strategic and didactic nature of the latter favoring reflection upon the presented issues themselves.

6. Projected sets again

Section 4 concluded that to analyze *vajon* as either an NIQ-trigger or a CQ-trigger faces obstacles. It therefore makes sense to explore the extent to which the two approaches can be modified to yield better coverage. Concentrating on the NIQ-analysis, one radical change here would have *vajon* allow nothing but the "trivial" option into the projected set ps^{+}, as shown in (20).[17]

(20) $ps^{+} = \{\ DC_{Ad} \cup \{\ p \cup \bar{p}\ \}\ \}$

This way, speakers explicitly signal – rather than just defeasibly implicate[18] – that they do not expect addressees to resolve the issue introduced by the *vajon*-interrogative. And clearly, with such a suspension of "addressee competence," (16), one arrives at a variant of the CQ-approach. But then, of course, the pros and cons regarding the latter have to be revisited.

To begin with, lack of a specific mechanism for the pooling of knowledge prevents the new analysis from deriving the "equal expertise" effect in (15). At the same time, it matches the CQ-analysis in predicting infelicity of *vajon* in instances of "tactful" non-intrusiveness like (14), given that addressee competence seems to have to be assumed to adequately characterize such contexts. Also, recall from the discussion in Section 4 that the same holds for rhetorical questions. Thus, (20) would be tool for blocking *vajon* from RHQs like (10), but cannot improve on the CQ-approach regarding RHQs (11) and (12).

The latter impasse warrants a further look at (11). On the basis of (20), *vajon* could here be taken to turn what is a rhetorical question at the level of content into a provocative display of mockful pretense puzzlement. This would correspond well with the strategic goals of antagonistic political discourse. However, such a fundamental revision (mutatis mutandis) is less intuitive in the case of (12), where addressee competence and didactic "reflectivity" are of equal importance.

---

[17] A related suggestion has independently been made by Woods and Haegeman (2023). In contrast with (5d), (20) implements a non-monotonic discourse effect (cf. Farkas 2022: 310; Rudin 2022: 358f.).

[18] Assuming that the projected sets of standard questions, (5c), and NIQs, (5d), compete under appropriate "maxims for projection" (Rudin 2022: 6.2).

An even more radical approach is promoted by Krifka (2021: 2.12), who suggests that German (*wohl-*)VF-interrogatives could simply trigger a record of the speaker's interest in the issue via creation of a multiply rooted commitment space, without any introduction of present or projection of future commitments (see also Faller 2023). Given that this proposal is designed to capture the German case, it is unclear how it could derive the kind of cross-linguistic variation in the realm of indirect speech acts discussed in Section 5 without additional appeal to something like condition (19). Approaches based on (20) possess no advantage here either.

7.   Conclusion

This short paper has studied uses of the Hungarian "reflective" question particle *vajon* by investigating its affinity to closely related triggers of "non-intrusive" questions (NIQs) (Farkas 2022; 2023) and "conjectural" questions (CQs) (Eckardt 2020). This has (i) uncovered difficulties for content-based approaches to particle/clause type (in)compatibilities. In particular, doubts were cast on the possibility of extending the ban on "necessarily redundant discourse effects," potentially responsible for keeping *vajon* out of declaratives, to semantically bipolar analyses of "rising declaratives" and monopolar analyses of interrogatives displaying "inside negation" (Section 2). (ii) The usefulness of distinguishing different types of rhetorical questions has been demonstrated, with presence vs. absence of presupposition accommodation in resolving questions as one core ingredient (Section 3). (iii) Obstacles to analyzing *vajon* as either an NIQ- or a CQ-trigger have been identified. Concretely, its exclusion from contexts of "tactful non-intrusiveness" weigh in against the former, and its occurrence in (some) rhetorical questions against the latter approach (Section 4). (iv) Another cross-linguistic indirect speech act discrepancy has been pointed out, showing that *vajon*-interrogatives are ruled out under while their German counterparts, (*wohl*)-verb final interrogatives, allow directive construal. To account for this difference, it has been proposed that a radically nondisplaceable "shielded use condition" confines uses of *vajon* to the realm of information (exchange) (Section 5). (v) A variant of the NIC-approach, which eliminates the "addressee competence assumption" and thus moves it closer to the CQ-approach, has been explored, with mixed results regarding better coverage (Section 6). A comprehensive treatment of *vajon* that ties together the above loose ends will have to await further research.

References

AnderBois, S., A. Brasoveanu, and R. Henderson (2015). At-issue proposals and appositive impositions in discourse. *Journal of Semantics 32*, 93–138.

Beijering, K. (2012). *Expressions of epistemic modality in Mainland Scandinavian. A study into the lexicalization-grammaticalization-pragmaticalization interface*. Ph. D. thesis, University of Groningen.

Beyssade, C. and J.-M. Marandin (2006). The speech act assignment problem revisited: Disentangling speaker's commitment from speaker's call on addressee. *Empirical Issues in Syntax and Semantics 6*, 37–68.

Biezma, M. and K. Rawlins (2017). Rhetorical questions: Severing asking from questioning. *SALT 27*, 302–322.

Ciardelli, I., J. Groenendijk, and F. Roelofsen (2019). *Inquisitive semantics*. Oxford: OUP.

Dehé, N., B. Braun, M. Einfeldt, D. Wochner, and K. Zahner-Ritter (2022). The prosody of rhetorical questions: A cross-linguistic view. *Linguistische Berichte 269*, 3–42.

É. Kiss, K. (2002). *The syntax of Hungarian*. Cambridge: CUP.

Eckardt, R. (2020). Conjectural questions: The case of German verb-final *wohl* questions. *Semantics and Pragmatics 13*(9), 1–54.

Eckardt, R. and G. Disselkamp. (2019). Self-addressed questions and indexicality – The case of Korean. *Sinn und Bedeutung 23*, 383–397.

Evans, N. (2007). Insubordination and its uses. In I. Nikolaeva (Ed.), *Finiteness*, pp. 366–431. Oxford: OUP.

Faller, M. (2023). Conjectural speech acts in Cuzco Quechua. *Journal of Pragmatics 214*, 144–163.

Farkas, D. (2022). Non-Intrusive Questions as a Special Type of Non-Canonical Questions. *Journal of Semantics 39*, 295–337.

Farkas, D. (2023). Bias and anti-bias. Two case studies from Hungarian. *Journal of Uralic Linguistics 2*, 96–126.

Farkas, D. and K. Bruce (2010). On Reacting to Assertions and Polar Questions. *Journal of Semantics 27*, 81–118.

Farkas, D. and F. Roelofsen (2017). Division of labor in the interpretation of declaratives and interrogatives. *Journal of Semantics 34*, 237–289.

Gärtner, H.-M. and B. Gyuris (2007). Interpreting *vajon*. Talk presented at ICSH 8, NYU New York, 24 May 2007.

Gärtner, H.-M. and B. Gyuris (2012). Pragmatic markers in Hungarian: Some introductory remarks. *Acta Linguistica Hungarica 59*, 387–426.

Gärtner, H.-M. and B. Gyuris (2022). On the Absence of Propositional Negation from Hungarian Polar *e*-Interrogatives. *Studia Linguistica 76*, 661–683.

Goodhue, D. (2021). A unified account of inquisitive and assertive rising declaratives. *Proceedings of the Linguistic Society of America 6*, 951–965.

Götz, A. (2019). *Linguistic contrast and translation universals: A corpus-based investigation of the translational use of the Hungarian pragmatic marker* vajon *('I wonder')*. Ph. D. thesis, ELTE Budapest.

Gunlogson, C. (2003). *True to form. Rising and falling declaratives as questions in English*. New York: Routledge.

Gutzmann, D. (2015). *Use-conditional meaning. Studies in multidimensional semantics*. Oxford: OUP.

Gyuris, B. (2009). Sentence-types, discourse particles and intonation in Hungarian. *Sinn und Bedeutung 13*, 157–170.

Gyuris, B. (2019). Thoughts on the semantics and pragmatics of rising declaratives in English and of their Hungarian counterparts. In B. Gyuris, K. Mády, and G. Recski (Eds.), *K + K = 120. Papers dedicated to László Kálmán and András Kornai on the occasion of their 60th birthdays*, pp. 247–280. Budapest: MTA Nyelvtudományi Intézet.

Heycock, C. (2017). Embedded root phenomena. In M. Everaert and H. van Riemsdijk (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell companion to syntax*, pp. 174–209. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

König, E., D. Stark, and S. Requardt (1990). *Adverbien und partikeln. Ein deutsch-englisches wörterbuch*. Heidelberg: Julius Groos Verlag.

Krifka, M. (2015). Bias in commitment space semantics: Declarative questions, negated questions, and question tags. *SALT 25*, 328–345.

Krifka, M. (2021). Modelling questions in commitment spaces. In M. Cordes (Ed.), *Asking and answering. Rivalling approaches to interrogative methods*, pp. 63–95. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto.

Ladd, D. R. (2008). *Intonational phonology*. Cambridge: CUP.

Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics*. Cambridge: CUP.

Maynard, S. (1995). Interrogatives that seek no answers: Exploring the expressiveness of rhetorical interrogatives in Japanese. *Linguistics 33*, 501–530.

McCloskey, J. (2006). Questions and questioning in a local English. In R. Zanuttini, H. Campos, E. Herburger, and P. Portner (Eds.), *Crosslinguistic research in syntax and semantics*, pp. 87–126. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Meibauer, J. (1986). *Rhetorische fragen*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Oppenrieder, W. (1989). Selbständige verb-letzt-sätze: Ihr platz im satzmodussystem und ihre intonatorische kennzeichnung. In H. Altmann, A. Batliner, and W. Oppenrieder (Eds.), *Zur intonation von modus und fokus im Deutschen*, pp. 163–244. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Pistoia-Reda, S. and U. Sauerland (2021). Analyticity and modulation. Broadening the rescale perspective on language logicality. *International Review of Pragmatics 13*, 1–13.

Potts, C. (2007). The expressive dimension. *Theoretical Linguistics 33*, 165–198.

Rudin, D. (2018). *Rising above commitment*. Ph. D. thesis, UC Santa Cruz.

Rudin, D. (2019). Embedded Rising Declaratives and Embedded Quotation. *SALT 29*, 1–21.

Rudin, D. 2022. Intonational commitments. *Journal of Semantics* 39:339–383.

Sag, I. and M. Liberman. 1975. The intonational disambiguation of indirect speech acts. *CLS 11*, 487–497.

Schaffer, D. (2005). Can rhetorical questions function as retorts? Is the Pope catholic? *Journal of Pragmatics 37*, 433–460.

Searle, J. (1979). Indirect speech acts. In *Expression and meaning*, pp. 30–57. Cambridge: CUP.

Sicoli, M. A., T. Stivers, N. Enfield, and S. Levinson (2015). Marked initial pitch in questions signals marked communicative function. *Language and Speech 58*, 204–223.

Szabolcsi, A., J. D. Whang, and V. Zu (2014). Quantifier words and their multi-functional parts. *Language and Linguistics 15*, 115–155.

Truckenbrodt, H. (2006). On the semantic motivation of syntactic verb movement to C in German. *Theoretical Linguistics 32*, 257–306.

Wierzbicka, A. (1985). Different cultures, different languages, different speech acts. *Journal of Pragmatics 9*, 145–178.

Woods, R. (2016). *Investigating the syntax of speech acts: Embedding illocutionary force*. Ph. D. thesis, University of York.

Woods, R. and L. Haegeman (2023). Removing question force from interrogative clauses: The West Flemish particle *kwestje*. Unpublished manuscript, Newcastle & Ghent University.

Zimmermann, M. (2013). *Ob*-VL-interrogativsatz. In J. Meibauer, M. Steinbach, and H. Altmann (Eds.), *Satztypen des Deutschen*, pp. 84–104. Berlin: de Gruyter.