Concealed pseudoclefts in Marshallese *wh*- questions
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Many languages, including Austronesian languages such as Malagasy, Palaauan, and Malay, exhibit what appears to be optional *wh*- movement. These constructions are of particular theoretical interest because optional movement is often argued to be theoretically impossible (see Chomsky 1995 and Cheng 1997). In this paper, I provide evidence supporting the prohibition against optional *wh*- movement by examining Marshallese (Austronesian, Oceanic, Micronesian) optional *wh*- movement and showing that the *wh*-movement construction is actually a concealed pseudocleft, which consists of an unmoved *wh*- predicate and a headless relative clause subject (1) (Potsdam 2005).

(1) [IP [predicate *wh] BE [DP/headless RC]]

Marshallese has both an initial (2) and an in situ (3) *wh*- construction. The initial *wh*- word must be followed by a determiner or demonstrative, while the in situ *wh*- cannot.

(2) Ta *(eo/ko) kidu ko r=ar kokkure? what the.SG/the.PL.NONHUMAN dog the.PL.NONHUMAN 3PL.AGR=PST destroy
‘What (singular/plural) did the dogs destroy?’

(3) Kidu ko r=ar kokkure ta (*eo/*ko)?
dog the.PL.NONHUMAN 3PL.AGR=PST destroy what the.SG/the.PL.NONHUMAN
‘What did the dogs destroy?’

These two constructions appear to mean roughly the same thing except that the use of a singular determiner in (2) indicates that the speaker expects the response to be singular, whereas the plural determiner indicates that he/she expects the response to be plural. With an in situ *wh*- there is no such expectation.

Gagnon and Wellwood (2008) were the first to suggest that Marshallese initial *wh*- questions do not involve fronting of a *wh*- operator. However, their findings are essentially flawed because while their conclusions are correct, their data does not show what they claim it does. After discussing their evidence, I present new evidence against *wh*- movement in Marshallese. First, Marshallese allows resumptive pronouns, which Adger and Ramchand (2005) argue are not possible with *wh*- movement. Second, Marshallese allows extraction out of relative clauses (4), which should not be possible given the complex noun phrase constraint.

(4) Wōni eo [kidu eo e=ar kiji ___] e=ar rorrór boñ?
who the.SG dog the.SG 3SG.AGR=PST bite.TR 3SG.AGR=PST bark last.night
‘The dog that bit who barked last night?’ (lit. ‘Who did the dog that bit __ barked last night?’)

Third Marshallese displays nonidentity effects involving agreement suffixes on prepositions. Suffixes in *wh*- movement sentences pattern like sentences containing a null *pro* and allow the third person plural suffix –er when the determiner is plural (see [5] & [6]). However, sentences with an overt DP or an in situ *wh*- allow only the third person singular suffix, even if the DP is plural (7) & (8).

(5) John e=ar turoñ ipp-er *pro*.
John 3SG.AGR=PST dive with-3PL
‘John went diving with them.’
Finally, the relative clause complementizer *me* may follow the determiner (9), which should not be possible if movement is occurring.

(9) Wōn eo *(me)* John e=ar deñet-e ilo jikin iuikkure eo?  
    who the.SG that John 3SG.AGR=PST hit-3SG on playground the.SG  
    ‘Who (singular) did John hit on the playground?’

In addition to arguing against *wh-* movement, I contend that Marshallese initial *wh-* questions are pseudocLEFTs rather than cLEFTs, as was argued by Gagnon and Wellwood. Following criteria outlined by Potsdam and Polinsky (accepted), I show that Marshallese initial *wh-* questions have the following three syntactic properties of pseudocLEFTs: 1) Marshallese has headless relative clauses in argument positions in declaratives; 2) Marshallese allows dummy heads in *wh-* questions (10); and 3) pied-piping is not possible in Marshallese.

(10) Wōn armij eo e=ar bōuri bōqol eo?  
    who person the.SG 3SG.AGR=PST catch ball the.SG  
    ‘Who caught the ball?’ (lit. ‘Who is the person who caught the ball?’)

In addition to providing the first typological description of Marshallese *wh-* questions and establishing the concealed pseudocLEFT as a property of Austronesian languages, these conclusions regarding Marshallese *wh-* questions show that, in some cases, optional *wh-* movement languages should be reanalyzed as in situ languages.

References
Potsdam, E., Polinsky, M. (accepted). Questions and word order in Polynesian. Lingua.