Rituals on the first of the month

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Question 5 asked about practices on the first of the month:

5 At your school, do you say or do something special on the first day of a month? If so, what?

The traditional *A pinch and a punch for the first of the month* (with actions to match) was the basic answer provided by almost all schools. There was a certain amount of variation on the basic pattern, but most of it was insignificant.

The first article was quite frequently omitted, no doubt because there is a competitive element in saying this first, so a quick start is important to the speaker. However, we cannot be sure that all teachers were careful about recording this, so not much weight can be placed on this variation. The variant *a kick and a punch* was recorded from two schools, but is clearly not widespread. There were also a small number of schools which reported *a pinch **or** a punch…*, but again, this was not significant. The article before *punch* was almost always present in the reports, in contrast with the initial article. There were no variants for *punch*. There were a few reports of *on* or *at* as the preposition, and one with no preposition at all, but the overwhelming response was the traditional *for*.

Most of the variation reported was in the conclusion of the phrase. We had reports of *the first day of the month, first day of the month, first day of month, the start of the month*, and also some reports which we suspect are responses to the traditional saying: *for the rest of the month, till the end of the month*. Of these terminations, there were 122 reports of *the first of the month*, 20 of *the first day of the month*, and 13 of *for the rest of the month*. The others were reported only once or twice, and were thus of little significance. The patterning of these was strange. The *first day of the month* was reported only from the Central and Southern regions with the exception of four schools in Auckland. One of these four schools usually reports very mixed linguistic features, suggesting that it has many children from mobile families. However, the other three schools reporting this are normally typical of Auckland. There is only one report of the retort *for the rest of the month* from the South Island, but it is dotted throughout the North Island.

This traditional saying is very frequently followed by *and no returns*, (necessary to prevent retaliation) but there were some variants on this as well. 73 schools reported *(and) no returns*. 9 schools reported *(and) no return*, all but three in the Northern Region, with the others in the Northern / Central border area, and all but two reports in rural areas. There were two reports of *pigs return*, both from the north of the South Island. Other variants such as *no backs* occurred only once and can be ignored.

Many schools also reported the use of *white rabbits* or a variant on this. If you say this before someone says *a pinch and a punch*, they cannot say it. (During school visits, one child commented that "If you're going to say *white rabbit* you have to say it in the morning before you wake up"!) *White rabbits* was reported from 63 schools throughout the country. *White rabbit* was reported from 11 schools with a strange distribution. All but three of them were in the North Island. All but three of them were in the Central Region, but there were three in Auckland and lower Northland. The reports came in small clusters. There were also 6 reports of *rabbits*, three of them from Southland-Otago, but the others in isolated spots in the North Island.

A few schools also reported the traditional April Fool's tricks, but this was too sporadic to be useful. In the data we did receive, there was nothing to suggest any variation in the practices associated with April 1.

There are many other retorts reported. The most frequent one is *A flick and a kick for being so quick*, but there are many other variants on that theme. Often the first item does not rhyme, e.g. *A punch/pinch and a kick…* There are other variants for the end of the phrase: e.g. *… for being a dick/prick/so thick.* Some of those reported seem to be retorts to the retorts, e.g. *A Kick in the toe for being so slow, a punch and a blow for being so slow, A slap and a whack for answering back/to pay you back*, but all of these were reported only once, and as a group were not widespread. In general terms, once you have the general pattern provided by *A flick and a kick for being so quick*, the possibility for innovation is restricted only by the rhyme (and children do not demand perfection in rhymes) and the imagination, so there were many single-report variants (e.g. *A flick/kick in the dick for being so quick)*. The most significant aspect of the distribution of these retorts is probably their presence vs. absence, rather than the particular form reported. (One teacher commented that *A pinch and a slam so kiss my toe-jam* was this year's innovation in that school.)

Of the retorts with *quick* in rhyme position, *A flick and a kick for being so quick* was reported 47 times, *A slap and a kick/flick…* 26 times, *A punch and a kick/flick…* 12 times, *A kick and a flick…* 11 times, *A pinch and a kick…* 10 times, and *A hit and a kick/flick…* 3 times. There were only two reports of *A slap…* outside the North Island.

The only other termination with any frequency was *… for being a dick,* with a total of 26 occurrences. The commonest were *A flick and a kick for being a dick* (13), *A punch and a kick…* (6), and *A kick and a flick…* (3). Almost half of these were from Northland and Auckland. However, the remainder were dotted throughout the rest of the country.

More interesting is the distribution of the schools which did not report a retort at all. There was only one north of Auckland, but that appears to be the only regional difference. However, there was a noticeable difference between urban and rural areas. Urban schools comprise 40% of our sample, and rural schools 60%. However, only 26% of urban schools did not report a retort, whereas 74% of rural schools did not. Northland was an exception to this, with rural schools there regularly reporting retorts. During school visits, many further schools reported retorts than did so in the original questionnaire, but it remained true that those that did not were rural schools.

Statistical Analysis

There was little in the replies to this question which was worth including in the statistical analysis. Only three items were included: *the first day of the month* (as opposed to the widespread *the first of the month*); *no return* (in the singular) and the report of a retort. (For this purpose, all retorts were counted as equivalent.)

The first day of the month

This form did not correlate significantly with any of the factors considered.

No return

No return is nearly significantly low decile (p-value 0.0514). There was significantly more use of *no return* in the Northern Region than the Southern

Region (p-value 0.0001). When the contrast statements comparing the Northern and Central Regions were produced, the difference between these two regions for *no return* was nearly significant (p-value 0.0523). *No return* is also exclusively reported from the North Island. When the interaction between Main Region and Island is considered, the statistics showed that none of the regional contrasts is significant when Island is taken into account. The contrast with Island is, however, absolute. Thus Island is the only important factor for this form.

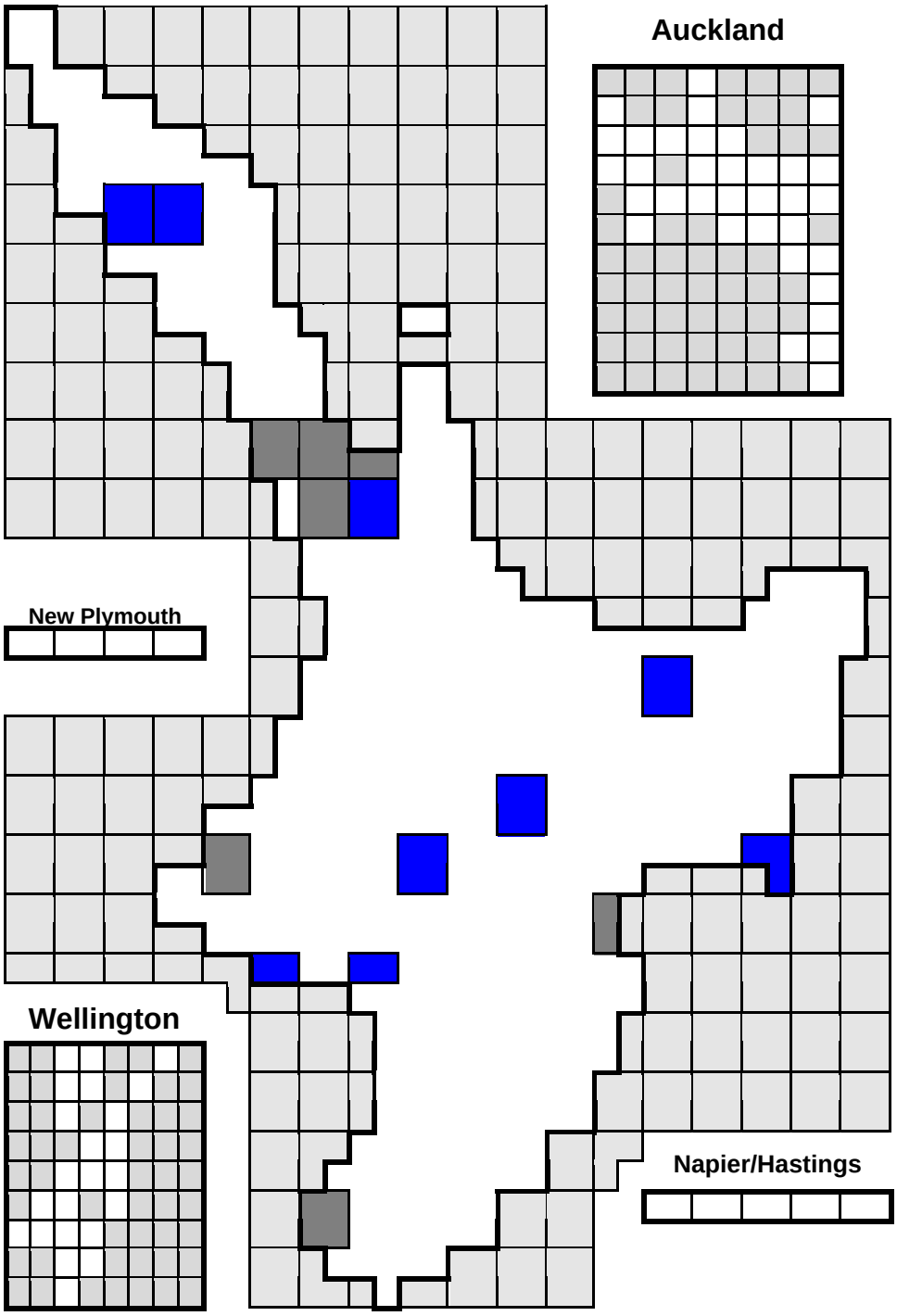
Retort used

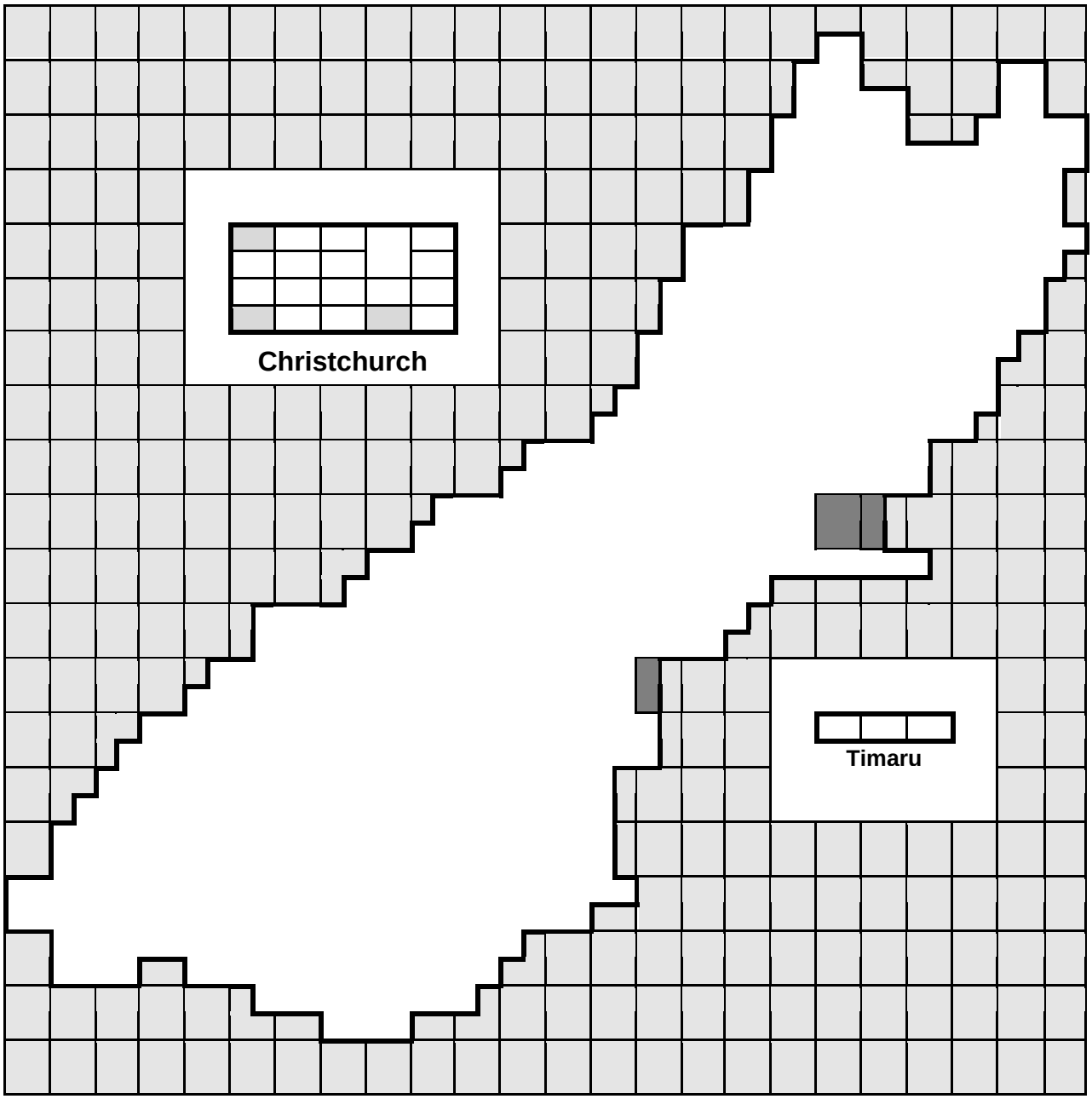
The urban / rural distribution of the retort was confirmed by the statistical program: a retort is considerably more likely to be reported from urban schools than rural schools, with the p-value 0.0032.

Summary

This was in many ways an unproductive question, with little variation in evidence. However, the use of a retort is one of the forms which correlates most strongly with urban schools in our data.
The map of the schools reporting *no return* follows.

Map for Q5: *No return*





Key

Note that the insets are not to scale, nor all on the same scale for practical reasons. Each box represents one school in both urban and rural areas.

No return

See urban map insert

Q5 Statistics: First of the month

1st of Month by Decile

Analysis Of GEE Parameter Estimates–Empirical Standard Error Estimates

parameter		Estimate	Std Err	Lower	Upper	Z	Pr>|Z|
intercept	0.0000	.	.	.	.	.	
item	The_1s	-1.6868	0.5556	-2.7759	-0.5978	-3.036	0.0024
item	no_ret	-1.2440	0.7033	-2.6224	0.1343	-1.769	0.0769
item	some_r	0.3089	0.3918	-0.4589	1.0767	0.7885	0.4304
decile*item	The_1s	-0.0326	0.0899	-0.2087	0.1435	-.3630	0.7166
decile*item	no_ret	-0.3186	0.1635	-0.6391	0.0019	-1.948	0.0514
decile*item	some_r	0.0466	0.0626	-0.0761	0.1692	0.7446	0.4565
scale	1.0106	.	.	.	.	.	

1st of Month by Main Region

Analysis Of Initial Parameter Estimates

parameter		DF	Estimate	Std Err	ChiSquare	Pr>Chi
intercept	0	0.00	0.0000	.	.	
item	The_1s	1	-1.2993	0.6513	3.9792	0.0461
item	no_ret	1	-24.3653	0.7164	1156.8941	0.0001
item	some_r	1	0.0000	0.5345	0.0000	1.0000
item*region1	The_1s,1	1	-1.2847	0.8325	2.3813	0.1228
item*region1	The_1s,2	1	-0.3102	0.7187	0.1862	0.6661
item*region1	The_1s,3	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
item*region1	no_ret,1	1	22.2253	0.8363	706.2332	**0.0001**
item*region1	no_ret,2	0	20.7277	0.0000	.	.
item*region1	no_ret,3	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
item*region1	some_r,1	1	0.9410	0.6104	2.3764	0.1232
item*region1	some_r,2	1	0.4162	0.5825	0.5105	0.4749
item*region1	some_r,3	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
scale	0	1.00	0.0000	.	.	

CONTRAST Statement Results

Contrast	DF	ChiSquare	Pr>Chi	Type
1 -2 for no_ret	1	3.7666	0.0523	LR
1 -2 for some_ret	1	2.0014	0.1571	LR
1 -2 for The_1std	1	2.9593	0.0854	LR

1st of Month by Sub-Regions

Analysis Of Initial Parameter Estimates

parameter		DF	Estimate	Std Err	ChiSquare	Pr>Chi
intercept	0	0.00	0.0000	.	.	
item	The_1s	1	-1.2993	0.6513	3.9792	0.0461
item	no_ret	1	-26.3653	1.0235	663.5337	0.0001
item	some_r	1	-0.0000	0.5345	0.0000	1.0000
item*region2	The_1s, 1	1	-25.0660	216811.094	0.0000	0.9999
item*region2	The_1s, 2	1	-25.0660	216811.094	0.0000	0.9999
item*region2	The_1s, 3	1	-0.0225	0.8608	0.0007	0.9792
item*region2	The_1s, 4	1	-25.0660	104152.681	0.0000	0.9998
item*region2	The_1s, 5	1	0.2007	0.9320	0.0464	0.8295
item*region2	The_1s, 6	1	-0.2048	0.8543	0.0575	0.8105
item*region2	The_1s, 7	1	-0.7802	1.2447	0.3929	0.5308
item*region2	The_1s, 8	1	-25.0660	216811.094	0.0000	0.9999
item*region2	The_1s, 9	1	0.0465	0.8635	0.0029	0.9570
item*region2	The_1s, 10	1	-0.8979	1.2391	0.5252	0.4687
item*region2	The_1s, 11	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
item*region2	no_ret, 1	1	25.6722	1.3408	366.6299	**0.0001**
item*region2	no_ret, 2	1	0.0000	216811.094	0.0000	1.0000
item*region2	no_ret, 3	1	0.0000	121837.317	0.0000	1.0000
item*region2	no_ret, 4	1	24.6606	1.1589	452.8004	**0.0001**
item*region2	no_ret, 5	1	23.9674	1.4624	268.6137	**0.0001**
item*region2	no_ret, 6	0	23.3208	0.0000	.	.
item*region2	no_ret, 7	1	0.0000	177025.517	0.0000	1.0000
item*region2	no_ret, 8	1	0.0000	216811.094	0.0000	1.0000
item*region2	no_ret, 9	1	0.0000	125175.944	0.0000	1.0000
item*region2	no_ret, 10	1	0.0000	167941.152	0.0000	1.0000
item*region2	no_ret, 11	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
item*region2	some_r, 1	1	1.6094	1.2189	1.7435	0.1867
item*region2	some_r, 2	1	1.6094	1.2189	1.7435	0.1867
item*region2	some_r, 3	1	1.3218	0.7761	2.9002	0.0886
item*region2	some_r, 4	1	0.4700	0.6695	0.4929	0.4827
item*region2	some_r, 5	1	-0.3365	0.7928	0.1801	0.6713
item*region2	some_r, 6	1	0.7621	0.7037	1.1729	0.2788
item*region2	some_r, 7	1	0.2231	0.8577	0.0677	0.7947
item*region2	some_r, 8	1	0.0000	0.9759	0.0000	1.0000
item*region2	some_r, 9	1	1.2528	0.7792	2.5849	0.1079
item*region2	some_r, 10	1	0.0000	0.8281	0.0000	1.0000
item*region2	some_r, 11	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
scale	0	1.00	0.0000	.	.	

1st of Month by Island

Analysis Of Initial Parameter Estimates

parameter		DF	Estimate	Std Err	ChiSquare	Pr>Chi
intercept	0	0.00	0.0000	.	.	
item	The_1s	1	-1.6740	0.3632	21.2377	0.0001
item	no_ret	1	-26.3654	0.3507	5650.7859	0.0001
item	some_r	1	0.3909	0.2700	2.0960	0.1477
item*island	The_1s, 1	1	-0.3348	0.4848	0.4770	0.4898
item*island	The_1s, 2	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
item*island	no_ret, 1	0	24.1318	0.0000	.	.
item*island	no_ret, 2	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
item*island	some_r, 1	1	0.3023	0.3482	0.7534	0.3854
item*island	some_r, 2	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
scale	0	1.00	0.0000	.	.	

1st of Month by Catholic

Analysis Of GEE Parameter Estimates – Empirical Standard Error Estimates

parameter		Estimate	Std Err	Lower	Upper	Z	Pr>|Z|
intercept	0.0000	.	.	.	.	.	
item	The_1s	-1.0986	0.5774	-2.2302	0.0330	-1.903	0.0571
item	no_ret	-2.7081	1.0328	-4.7323	-0.6838	-2.622	0.0087
item	some_r	1.0986	0.5774	-0.0330	2.2302	1.9029	0.0571
item*catholic	The_1s, 1	-0.8737	0.6360	-2.1203	0.3729	-1.374	0.1695
item*catholic	The_1s, 2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
item*catholic	no_ret, 1	-0.0247	1.0954	-2.1715	2.1222	-.0225	0.9820
item*catholic	no_ret, 2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
item*catholic	some_r, 1	-0.5179	0.6054	-1.7045	0.6686	-.8555	0.3923
item*catholic	some_r, 2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
scale	1.0000	.	.	.	.	.	

1st of Month by Urban/Rural

Analysis Of GEE Parameter Estimates – Empirical Standard Error Estimates

parameter		Estimate	Std Err	Lower	Upper	Z	Pr>|Z|
intercept	0.0000	.	.	.	.	.	
item	The_1s	-1.7148	0.3621	-2.4245	-1.0051	-4.736	0.0000
item	no_ret	-4.0604	1.0086	-6.0372	-2.0837	-4.026	0.0001
item	some_r	1.2637	0.3141	0.6481	1.8793	4.0231	0.0001
item*urb_rur	The_1s, 1	-0.2048	0.4851	-1.1556	0.7460	-.4221	0.6729
item*urb_rur	The_1s, 2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
item*urb_rur	no_ret, 1	1.7832	1.0747	-0.3233	3.8896	1.6592	0.0971
item*urb_rur	no_ret, 2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
item*urb_rur	some_r, 1	-1.1239	0.3813	-1.8713	-0.3766	-2.948	**0.0032**
item*urb_rur	some_r, 2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
scale	1.0000	.	.	.	.	.	

1st of Month by Main Region and Island

Analysis Of Initial Parameter Estimates

parameter		DF	Estimate	Std Err	ChiSquare	Pr>Chi
intercept	0	0.00	0.0000	.	.	
item	The_1s	1	-1.2993	0.6513	3.9792	0.0461
item	no_ret	1	-26.3653	0.7282	1310.8177	0.0001
item	some_r	1	-0.0000	0.5345	0.0000	1.0000
item*region1	The_1s, 1	1	-1.7176	1.0322	2.7690	0.0961
item*region1	The_1s, 2	1	-0.5199	0.7861	0.4374	0.5084
item*region1	The_1s, 3	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
item*region1	no_ret, 1	1	0.6633	0.8465	0.6140	0.4333
item*region1	no_ret, 2	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
item*region1	no_ret, 3	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
item*region1	some_r, 1	1	1.1765	0.7673	2.3510	0.1252
item*region1	some_r, 2	1	0.5232	0.6207	0.7107	0.3992
item*region1	some_r, 3	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
item*island	The_1s, 1	1	0.4329	0.6101	0.5033	0.4780
item*island	The_1s, 2	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
item*island	no_ret, 1	0	23.5620	0.0000	.	.
item*island	no_ret, 2	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
item*island	some_r, 1	1	-0.2356	0.4650	0.2567	0.6124
item*island	some_r, 2	0	0.0000	0.0000	.	.
scale	0	1.00	0.0000	.	.	

CONTRAST Statement Results

Contrast	DF	ChiSquare	Pr>Chi	Type
1 –2 for no_ret	1	0.6680	0.4137	LR

