McGill LING 721 "Advanced Seminar 1"

Questions, focus, and friends

Fall 2014, Mondays & Wednesdays, 1:30–3:00pm

Instructors

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Description

In this seminar we will explore the syntax and semantics of questions and focus constructions. From a theoretical point of view, we will discuss in detail two technologies used for scope taking—(covert) movement and focus alternative computation—which are commonly employed in the analysis of both questions and focus constructions. From a more typological perspective, we will explore the shared overt morphosyntactic strategies some languages use in the expression of both kinds of constructions.

Phenomena to be discussed include in-situ and ex-situ *wh*-questions and Association with Focus constructions, pied-piping, movement asymmetries and islands, intervention effects, and alternative questions. Time permitting, we may discuss other phenomena for which both (covert) movement and alternative computation have been (or could be) employed, such as universal and existential quantification and NPIs.

Goals

- Develop knowledge of the cross-linguistic possibilities in the expression of *wh*-questions and focus constructions;
- Learn about movement and alternative computation and their characteristics, and become comfortable reading literature which invokes these ideas;
- Gain practical experience investigating linguistic phenomena with a native speaker, and applying the theoretical ideas discussed in class to new data.

Requirements

Requirements for registered students will include:

1. Weekly readings and active class discussion
2. Infrequent homework assignments
3. Two language reports, which report on the investigation of *wh*-questions and focus constructions in a particular language, based on elicitation with a native speaker.

The class will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Unregistered visitors are welcome in the class, but will be expected to follow the readings and be prepared for class discussion. If you have any concerns regarding these requirements, talk to us.

Materials

Handouts and homework assignments will be available on the course website (url TBA). Readings will be uploaded to a shared dropbox folder, at: `bit.ly/focus-wh-readings`. Contact us for the password in order to access the readings folder.

Rules

Student cooperation

You may discuss homework assignments with other students. However, you must always submit your own write-up, and you should list the students who you worked with on your assignment. Elicitations for language reports should be done individually. Elicitation involves a lot of prep work and post-game synthesis, though, and you're of course welcome to work with others in these stages, acknowledging this in the report.

Academic integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see `http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr` for more information). You must declare all sources in submitted work. Citations don't need to be in any particular format. But they have to be there.

Your language reports must be primarily based on original data elicited by you, although you're welcome to draw on relevant data in the literature, with appropriate citation. You must give an accurate characterization of your data. While your report should not include all data that was

collected, omitting data inconvenient for your analysis is a form of misrepresentation. Present them instead—puzzles are good.

Right to submit written work in English or French

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Schedule

This plan is ambitious and subject to change. The semester will be split roughly into three units. We begin by discussing in turn the two major technologies used for scope taking—(covert) movement and focus alternative computation—touching on their relevance for questions and for focus constructions. We then turn our attention to to more advanced topics such as pied-piping, multiple questions, intervention effects, and alternative questions. Time permitting, we may discuss more 'friends,' taking the seminar participants' preferences into account.

The schedule is subject to change. Consult the website.

Day	Topic	Readings (*Required*)
3/9	Introduction	
A: Movement		
8/9	Review: Compositional semantics	*Heim and Kratzer (1998): §2.1–2.3, 2.5*
10/9	Review continued, quantifiers in subject position	*H&K §4.1–4.3; 5.1–5.2.3; 6.1–6.5*; Partee (1996) pp 1–16
15/9	Quantifier Raising; predicate abstraction	*H&K pp 178–198 (most of ch. 7)*
17/9	*Only*-DP as a quantifier	*Rooth (1985) pp 27–32, 88–94*; Bayer (1996) §2.3
22/9	*Only* cont'd; discussion of lang reports	*Matthewson (2004)*; skim: Skopeteas et al. (2006); Renans et al. (2011)
24/9	*Wh*-mvmt and the semantics of questions	*George (2011) p. 1-17*, Karttunen (1977); Groenendijk and Stokhof (1984); Hagstrom (1998); Kotek (2014)
29/9	Case study: Hungarian	*É Kiss (2002) ch. 2*; Szabolcsi (1981); Brody (1990); É Kiss (1998); Szendrői (2003)
1/10	Characteristics of $\overline{\text{A}}$-movement	*Chomsky (1977)*
6/10	Characteristics of $\overline{\text{A}}$-movement	Ross (1967); Engdahl (1983)

8/10	Case study: Defaka (and Dinka)	*Bennett et al. (2012)*; Bennett (2009); van Urk and Richards (to appear)
13/10	**Thanksgiving: No class**	

B: Alternative computation

15/10	Rooth/Hamblin alternative computation	*Rooth (1985), pp. 41–59, 67–80* Hamblin (1973)
20/10	Case study: Mandarin Chinese	*Huang (1982) pp. 492–502, 524–530*
22/10	Unifying focus	*Rooth (1992)*; Rooth (1996), Kadmon (2001)
27/10	Case study: Japanese *wh*-quantification	*Shimoyama (2006)*
29/10	Backwards association	*Erlewine (2014a)*; Erlewine (2014b) pp. 78–114.
3/11	More backwards association	*Erlewine (2014b) pp. 122–142*
5/11	The syntax of pied-piping	*Cable (2008)*, Heck (2009); Cable (2010)
10/11	Computing pied-piping	
12/11	AWF using covert focus movement with pied-piping	*Krifka (2006)*; Drubig (1994); Wagner (2006); Horvath (2007)

C: Advanced topics

17/11	Intervention effects	*Kim (2002), Pesetsky (2000), ch5*; Beck (2006); Tomioka (2007); Mayr (to appear)
19/11	Case study: Asante Twi (Kwa)	*Kobele and Torrence (2006)*
24/11	Intervention and pied-piping	*Kotek and Erlewine (to appear)*; Erlewine and Kotek (2014)
26/11	Alternative questions	*Han and Romero (2004)*
1/12	Alternative questions	*Beck and Kim (2006)*
3/12	TBD	
4/12	TBD (**Monday schedule**)	

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