January 3, 2015

Search Committee

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Dear members of the Search Committee,

I am writing to apply for ██ at ██, advertised on the Linguist List. I received my PhD from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in September 2014, and am currently a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at McGill University. My work focuses on the syntax-semantics interface, and utilizes various experimental and quantitative tools alongside traditional methods.

My dissertation motivates a new syntax and semantics for *wh*-questions, bringing together ingredients familiar from the existing literature, combined in a novel way. This proposal is able to model a range of data not captured at the same time in previous theories, including intricate patterns of pied-piping, superiority effects, the presuppositions of questions, the readings of multiple questions, and focus intervention effects. The proposal leads to a new description of intervention effects, linking them to movement and scope-taking. I additionally develop diagnostics for the presence and extent of covert movement in a question, and argue for a view of covert *wh*-movement as covert scrambling. Arguments come from judgment data, online sentence processing, and considerations of language acquisition. One chapter of the dissertation has been accepted for publication and another is currently under review. In the coming year I plan to turn the dissertation into a book-length manuscript for a major scholarly press.

This work forms part of a larger interest scope-taking and movement in natural language. Alongside research on questions, I have studied the semantics of *most (of the)* and *the most* and argued based on experimental evidence that they are related to the same underlying structure, composed of the degree predicate *many* and the superlative morpheme *-est*. I have additionally studied the acquisition of ellipsis involving Antecedent Contained Deletion, and argued that young children are able to perform both short and long-distance covert movement in order to correctly interpret these structures. In current work, in collaboration with linguists at MIT and Tohoku University in Japan, I am studying the syntax of causative verbs using EEG and MEG. We argue that the results are consistent with a Distributed Morphology approach, but not with Lexicalist approaches, to causatives.

My research has appeared in the journals *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory, Linguistic Inquiry, Natural Language Semantics*, and *Syntax and Semantics* as well as in national and international conferences, and has been supported by both the National Science Foundation and the Mellon Foundation. In the next few years, I plan to expand my research to inves-

tigate alternative modes of scope-taking in natural language, concentrating in particular on Association with Focus, and I plan to study questions and relative clauses in *wh*-in-situ languages. I hope incorporate data from less studied languages into my research, and have recently begun studying Chuj (Mayan) and Tibetan.

As a teacher, my objective is to develops skills to allow students to formulate their own questions and make their own discoveries. My classes often combine short experiments and elicitation exercises, to emphasize the breadth of tools available to the working linguist. Currently I am teaching syntax-semantics seminars at McGill University, which incorporate psycholinguistic as well as original fieldwork components. I have furthermore served as a primary instructor in introductory linguistics courses for middle school and high school students, and as a teaching assistant in introductory linguistics courses for undergraduate students, and in semantics courses for undergraduate and graduate students. In the next few years, I hope to teach introductory and advanced courses in semantics, syntax, and experimental linguistics, and I plan to develop methods courses introducing empirical techniques to theoretical linguists.

I believe that mentoring students is a key aspect of the work of a professor, and one that I find particularly enjoyable. I feel strongly that supporting students in early years is crucial to their development as people and scholars. I am particularly passionate about encouraging minority and first generation students to make the most of their education, and I see great value in involving students in my own research as well as helping them to develop their own individual projects. I would be most enthused about the possibility of moving to ██████, permanently joining ██████████, and working with the linguistics students in the program, as well as collaborating with colleagues there.

Enclosed please find my CV, teaching statement, and research statement. My publications are available on my academic website, at: http://hkotek.com/publications.html. My dissertation committee members—███████████████████████████ ████████████████████████████████████ will submit letters of reference in support of my application.

Please let me know if there are any other materials or information that will assist you in processing my application.

I will attend the LSA 2015 and would be happy to make myself available for an interview.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Hadas Kotek