

LING 366/766: Questions and Focus

Fall 2016, Mondays & Wednesdays, 2:30–3:45pm

Instructor

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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, *wh*-indefinites, 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.

Materials

Handouts, readings, and homework assignments will be available on the course website on [Canvas](#).

Requirements

Requirements for registered students will include: (% of final grade)

1. Weekly readings and active class discussion (20%)
2. Infrequent homework assignments (20%)
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. (30% × 2 = 60%)

Problem sets and language reports

There will be no more than 4 **problem sets**. Problem sets are there to refresh your memory of necessary background for the class and to practice new machinery introduced in the class.

The goal of the **language reports** is to develop some familiarity with a language that you are not a speaker of, based on original fieldwork with a native speaker. You should ideally identify a speaker who you could meet with on several different occasions throughout the semester. Talk to me if you are unsure about your selection.

The language reports will be guided by a list of topics that we will discuss in class, designed to help you structure your elicitations. Each report should be 8–10 pages long (graduate students can write up to 12 pages), including original data (with three-line glosses) and prose, explaining what you were attempting to test and what the data shows.

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 The use of others' ideas or expressions without citation is plagiarism. You must declare all sources in submitted work. Citations don't need to be in any particular format, but they have to be there. Click [here](#) for more information.

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.

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 additional topics, taking the seminar participants’ preferences into account.

The schedule is subject to change. Consult the website.

Day	Topic	Readings (<i>Required</i>)
31/8	Introduction	
A: Movement		
2/9	Review: Compositional semantics (Monday schedule)	<i>Heim and Kratzer (1998): §2.1–2.3, 2.5</i>
7/9	No class: Hadas at SuB	
12/9	Review continued, quantifiers in subject position	<i>H&K §4.1–4.3; 5.1–5.2.3; 6.1–6.5; Partee (1996) pp 1–16</i>
14/9	Quantifier Raising; predicate abstraction	<i>H&K pp 178–198 (most of ch. 7)</i>
19/9	<i>Only</i> -DP as a quantifier	<i>Rooth (1985) pp 27–32, 88–94; Bayer (1996) §2.3</i>
21/9	<i>Only</i> cont’d; discussion of lang reports	<i>Matthewson (2004); skim: Skopeteas et al. (2006); Renans et al. (2011)</i>
26/9	<i>Wh</i> -mvt and the semantics of questions	<i>George (2011) p. 1-17, Karttunen (1977); Groenendijk and Stokhof (1984); Hagstrom (1998); Kotek (2014)</i>
28/9	<u>Case study</u> : Hungarian	<i>É Kiss (2002) ch. 2; Szabolcsi (1981); Brody (1990); É Kiss (1998); Szendrői (2003)</i>
3/10	Characteristics of \bar{A} -movement	<i>Chomsky (1977)</i>
5/10	More characteristics of \bar{A} -movement	<i>Ross (1967); Engdahl (1983)</i>
10/10	<u>Case study</u> : Defaka (and Dinka)	<i>Bennett et al. (2012); Bennett (2009); van Urk and Richards (to appear)</i>
B: Alternative computation		
12/10	Rooth/Hamblin alternative computation	<i>Rooth (1985), pp. 41–59, 67–80 Hamblin (1973)</i>
17/10	<u>Case study</u> : Mandarin Chinese	<i>Huang (1982) pp. 492–502, 524–530</i>
19/10	No class: October recess	

24/10	Unifying focus	<i>Rooth (1992); Rooth (1996), Kadmon (2001)</i>
26/10	<u>Case study</u> : Japanese <i>wh</i> -quantification	<i>Shimoyama (2006)</i>
31/10	Backwards association	<i>Erlewine (2014a); Erlewine (2014b) pp. 78–114.</i>
C: Advanced topics		
2/11	The syntax of pied-piping	<i>Cable (2008), Heck (2009); Cable (2010)</i>
7/11	Computing pied-piping	
9/11	AWF using covert focus movement with pied-piping	<i>Erlewine and Kotek (2016), Krifka (2006); Drubig (1994); Wagner (2006); Horvath (2007)</i>
14/11	Intervention effects	<i>Kim (2002), Pesetsky (2000), ch5; Beck (2006); Tomioka (2007); Mayr (2014)</i>
16/11	<u>Case study</u> : Asante Twi (Kwa)	<i>Kobele and Torrence (2006)</i>
21/11	No class: November recess	
23/11	No class: November recess	
28/11	Intervention and pied-piping	<i>Kotek and Erlewine (2016); Erlewine and Kotek (2014)</i>
30/11	Alternative questions	<i>Han and Romero (2004)</i>
5/12	Alternative questions	<i>Beck and Kim (2006)</i>
7/12	<u>Case study</u> : Yoruba	<i>Howell (2014)</i>
??/12	Make up class TBD (topic TBD based on participants' preferences)	

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