

Ph. D. Thesis

THE SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS OF *WH*-QUESTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this thesis is to show that there is a syntactic position specified for an exhaustive interpretation. A constituent that can be interpreted exhaustively bears a [foc(us)]-feature, and enters into an agreement relation with a functional category Foc(us). This means that an identificational focus and a nominal *wh*-phrase bear the same feature, establish the same kind of agreement, and in some languages undergo the same kind of movement.

The suggested analysis adopts Chomsky's (1998, 1999) minimalist framework. Chapter 2 reviews several major minimalist concepts, and proposes a new constraint on locality.

In Chapter 3, I demonstrate that the suggested analysis accounts for various facts about focus sentences and *wh*-questions in 'focus' languages such as Hungarian, Basque, and Serbo-Croatian. Focus languages are peculiar in that an EPP-feature is obligatorily associated with a [foc]-feature of a goal, which induces an obligatory 'focus'-movement to SPEC-Foc. Therefore a focus and a nominal *wh*-phrase, but not an adverbial *wh*-phrase, undergo the same movement.

Chapter 4 considers focus- and *wh*-phenomena in Japanese. Japanese is slightly different from 'focus' languages in that an EPP-feature is optionally associated with a [foc]-feature of a goal, which induces an optional 'focus'-movement to SPEC-Foc. Under this assumption, it follows that a nominal *wh*-phrase optionally moves out of v*P

to have an exhaustive interpretation. I also show that the suggested analysis accounts for a strong island effect of a focalized *wh*-clause and anti-superiority effects.

Chapter 5 considers focus- and *wh*-phenomena in English. In English, an EPP-feature is never associated with a [foc]-feature of a goal, which means that neither a focus nor a nominal *wh*-phrase undergoes ‘focus’-movement. However, they establish the same agreement relation with Foc. It explains why a focus and a nominal *wh*-phrase cannot cooccur. The suggested analysis also accounts for the facts about multiple *wh*-questions and weak island phenomena.

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