

#### 4.

### **Kerstin Hoge - University of Oxford** ***On subject-adverbial effects***

[kerstin.hoge@linguistics-philology.oxford.ac.uk](mailto:kerstin.hoge@linguistics-philology.oxford.ac.uk)

---

In recent work, it has been argued that it is a semantic, rather than a syntactic constraint, which is responsible for the ungrammaticality of subject-adverbial questions, e.g. (1).

- (1) a. \*Who/which girl took the exam why?  
b. \*Why did who/which girl take the exam?

Thus, Reinhart (1998:45) and Haider (1997:221-222) explain the unacceptability of (1a) on the grounds that manner and reason wh-adverbials cannot be interpreted in situ, since they do not supply a set of individuals which can serve as the domain of a (choice) function. Hornstein (1995:147) takes the fact that reasons denote higher-order entities to account for the ungrammaticality of (1b), i.e. he assumes that only elements that range over individuals can act as quantificational generators for pair-list readings.

This squib identifies three empirical phenomena which cast some doubt on the claim that the constraint responsible for subject-adverbial effects is located in the semantics.

First, it is not true that wh-phrases in situ may range only over individuals (Higginbotham, p.c.), as seen in (2).

- (2) a. Who is aiming for what?  
b. Aristotle is aiming for happiness, Epicurus is aiming for pleasure,  
and Zeno is aiming for wisdom.

If wh-phrases ranging over higher-order entities are not interpretable in situ, (2a) should not support a pair-list reading, contrary to fact. The well-formedness of (2a), then, implies that the unacceptability of wh-adverbials in situ does not derive from their failure to supply a set of individuals to which a choice function can apply.

Second, subject-adverbial effects are not universal. In German, multiple interrogatives which contain both a subject wh-phrase and a reason/manner wh-adverbial are entirely grammatical, as shown in (3).

- (3) a. Rosa fragt, wer warum/wie gekündigt hat.  
Rose asks, who why/how given-notice has  
lit. 'Rose asks who gave notice why/how.'

- b. ...warum/wie wer gekündigt hat.  
 why/how who given-notice has

On the assumption that semantic principles do not vary cross-linguistically (cf. Higginbotham 1985:550), the acceptability of subject-adverbial questions in German strongly suggests that English subject-adverbial effects are not to be deduced from semantic properties but follow from a syntactic condition.

Third, for some speakers, subject-adverbial effects are considerably weaker in sentences containing intransitive verbs like those in (4).

- (4) a. ?Who spoke how? (Reinhart 1998:45, (29a))  
 b. ?I don't remember who left why. (Culicover 1997:304, (81a))

Moreover, subject-adverbial questions, in which the verb has an object, are felt to improve in status if the object is itself a wh-phrase, cf. (5)-(6).

- (5) a. ?Who said what how? (Reinhart 1981:542, (36b))  
 b. \*Who said grace how?

- (6) a. ?I wonder why who bought what.  
 b. \*I wonder why who bought a car.

On the view that the explanation of subject-adverbial effects rests with the uninterpretability of wh-adverbials in multiple questions, we would expect (i) the subject-adverbial questions in (1) and (4) to be equally unacceptable and (ii) no additional wh-effect to arise. As seen above, these predictions are not borne out, further calling into question the validity of a semantic approach to subject-adverbial effects.

#### References

- Culicover, P. (1997) *Principles and Parameters*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.  
 Haider, H. (1997) "Economy in Syntax is Projective Economy," in C. Wilder, H.-M. Gärtner and M. Bierwisch eds, *The Role of Economy Principles in Linguistic Theory*, Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 205-226.  
 Higginbotham, J. (1985) "On Semantics," *Linguistic Inquiry* 16, 547-593.  
 Hornstein, N. (1995) *Logical Form*, Blackwell, Oxford.  
 Reinhart, T. (1981) "A Second Comp Position," in A. Belletti et al. eds, *Theory of Markedness in Generative Grammar*, Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Pisa, 517-557.  
 Reinhart, T. (1998) "Wh-in-situ in the Framework of the Minimalist Program," *Natural Language Semantics* 6, 29-56.