4.

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

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).

   b. *Who said grace how?

   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