

My topic is d-linked

Benjamin Kratz *Graduiertenkolleg 'Satzarten: Variation und Interpretation' Universität Frankfurt*

Since Pesetsky's (1987) seminal paper, the ability of discourse-linked wh-phrases (DWH) to violate syntactic superiority has been at the focus of attention. Nevertheless, there are additional interesting empirical data which show that DWH behave differently from non-d-linked wh-phrases. In this talk, I present an analysis of DWH that draws a connection between three of these empirical phenomena and two claims about the information-structural nature of DWH found frequently in the recent syntactic literature. The phenomena observed are:

- (i) the ability (sometimes necessity) to license resumptive pronouns in a number of languages (e.g. Dobrovie-Sorin 1993 for Rumanian):

- (1) a. *Pe *care* (*baiat*) ai vazut?
PE which boy have (you) seen?
b. Pe *care* (*baiat*) *l*-ai vazut?
PE which boy CL-have (you) seen?
c. Pe *cine* (**l*-)ai vazut?
Who CL-have (you) seen?

- (ii) the possibility to escape (weak) islands (e.g. Boeckx & Grohmann 2004):

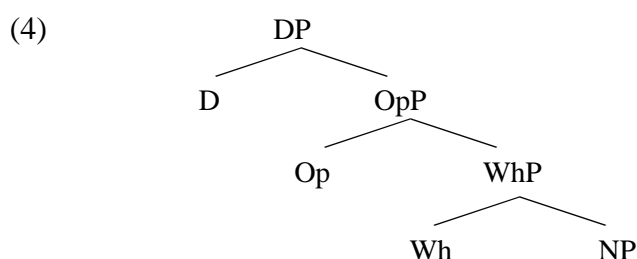
- (2) a. [*Which of these books*]_i do you wonder [whether Gromit read *t_i*]?
b. ??*What_i* do you wonder [whether Gromit read *t_i*]?

- (iii) the lack of operator behaviour as can be shown with the obviation of WCO-effects (e.g. Lubańska 2006 for Polish):

- (3) a. **Kogo_i* [*jego_i* matka] kocha *t_i*?
Who-AKK his mother loves
'Who_i does his_i mother love?'
b. ?[*Które dziecko*]_i [*jego_i* rodzice] kochają *t_i*?
which child-AKK his parents love
'Which child_i do his_i parents love?'

The claims about the information-structural status of DWH concern (iv) their specific character (Enç 1991); and (v) their status as syntactic topics (Polinsky 2001; Grewendorf 2008).

Following a proposal by Boeckx & Grohmann (2004), I assume that inherently d-linked wh-phrases like *which* are headed by an empty D-head (for a justification of this claim in semantic terms, see Rullmann & Beck 1998). I expand their analysis by claiming that the D-head takes an empty (focus-)operator as its complement; this operator in turn takes the wh-element *which* (bearing the wh-feature) as complement. At the bottom of the structure we find the (nominal) restriction of the wh-element which bears a topic-feature (e.g. Rizzi 2000). The proposed structure looks like (4):



On the one hand, the empty D-Head is responsible for the specific character of DWH (cf. (iv)). On the other hand, it can be stranded in the base-position and spelled-out as a resumptive pronoun (cf. (i)). The empty operator can be stranded (in the left-periphery of the clause or the base-position) by the genuine wh-phrase. This is the reason why DWH do not trigger WCO as other wh-phrases do (cf. (iii)). With non-d-linked wh-phrases like *what*, the operator (alternatively: the focus-feature) is part of the wh-phrase itself and therefore cannot be separated from it. The topic-feature on the restriction (cf. (v)) has the effect that the final landing-site of DWH is higher in the left-periphery of the clause than with other wh-phrases. This fact together with the licensing of the resumptive pronoun (following an early proposal by Ross 1967) is responsible for the island-insensitivity attributed to DWH (cf. (ii)). Finally, I will show how the analysis I propose can also account for the contrast between (5) and (6):

- (5) a. Which school ordered which book?
b. Which book did which school order?
- (6) a. What school ordered what book?
b. *What book did what school order?

An explanation in terms of equidistance (Uriagereka 1999) cannot explain why (6b) is bad, since *what N* is expected to behave like *which N*, contrary to fact. In Uriagereka's system, superiority is an effect of the violation of 'attract closest'. He claims that DWH are not subject to this constraint, because the target of 'attract' is too deeply embedded in the complex wh-phrase and therefore both wh-phrases count as 'equidistant'. In a system like the present, the differences between (5) and (6) – and the obviation of syntactic superiority by DWH in general – can be explained by the fact that DWH have the wh- and focus-features on different heads and an additional topic-feature (which in any event seems not to be subject to superiority). This enables them to take part in movement-operations non-d-linked wh-phrases may not.

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