

## The Indefiniteness and Focusing of Question Words

Question words show striking similarities among the languages of the world: They are typically morphologically related to indefinites (see Haspelmath 1997) and they are typically focused (see É. Kiss 1995 among many others). These two properties have been semantically accounted for in various ways, but so far they have not been integrated into a single coherent theory. I will show that an integration can be achieved by combining two independently motivated accounts, which up to now have not been considered together. The analysis arrived at will be shown to yield a number of answerhood conditions that are left unexplained by the pertinent semantic theories of questions (see Dayal 2002 for an overview and a descriptive account), and furthermore to derive intervention effects in *wh*-questions (in a comparable, but significantly different way than Beck (2006)).

I propose to account for the indefinite-interrogative affinity by a variant of the approach of Kratzer & Shimoyama (2002), i.e., by an implementation of the partition theory of questions (see Groenendijk & Stokhof 1982) that is based on the assumption that question words introduce alternatives into the semantic computation, which are evaluated by the interrogative complementizer  $C^{[+Q]}$ . More specifically, I assume that question words denote dynamic existential quantifiers. In a sense, these represent alternative valuations of the existentially quantified variables. Hence if ‘ $\exists$ ’ and ‘ $\leftrightarrow$ ’ are dynamic operators,  $\exists x_1 \dots \exists x_n. \Phi \leftrightarrow \exists x_1 \dots \exists x_n. \Psi$  is equivalent to  $\lambda x_1 \dots \lambda x_n. \Phi = \lambda x_1 \dots \lambda x_n. \Psi$  (see Haida 2005). In a dynamic type logic, we can therefore assume the following denotations (where I assume for simplicity that *wh*-pronouns denote unrestricted quantifiers).

$$(1) \text{ a. } \llbracket who \rrbracket^i = \lambda P. \exists u. P(i)(u) \quad \text{b. } \llbracket C^{[+Q]} \rrbracket^i = \lambda p \lambda j (p(i) \leftrightarrow p(j)) \quad (=: \mathbf{Q}^i)$$

The assumption that question words denote dynamic existential quantifiers is independently motivated by the fact that question words can serve as antecedents for anaphoric pronouns (cf. Van Rooy 1998):

$$(2) \quad \text{Who}_i \text{ won the women's marathon? What time did she}_i \text{ run?}$$

As for the focusing of question words, I assume that the F-feature borne by a question word denotes (essentially) the operator proposed in Szabolcsi (1994) for preverbal focus phrases in Hungarian, i.e., an exhaustification operator that presupposes the existence (and uniqueness) of a maximal sum of entities satisfying the predicate argument of the derived exhaustive quantifier. This is expressed by the  $\sigma$ -operator in (3).

$$(3) \quad \llbracket F \rrbracket^i = \lambda Q \lambda P. Q(i)(\lambda i \lambda \nu' (\nu' = \sigma \nu. P(i)(\nu)))$$

This assumption is justified by the fact that the *wh*-phrase of a simple *wh*-question must appear in the preverbal focus position in Hungarian:

$$(4) \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{János} \quad \text{kit} \quad \text{kisért} \quad \text{haza} \quad / \quad * \text{haza} \text{ kísért?} \\ \text{John.NOM} \text{ who.ACC} \text{ escorted} \text{ home} \\ \text{'Who did János escort home?'} \end{array}$$

If we combine these two proposals, we arrive at the conclusion that the focused *wh*-pronoun *kit*<sup>[+F]</sup> in (4) has the following denotation.

$$(5) \quad \llbracket kit^{[+F]} \rrbracket^i = \llbracket F \rrbracket^i(\lambda i. \llbracket kit \rrbracket^i) = \lambda P. \exists u (u = \sigma \nu. P(i)(\nu))$$

On these assumptions, the question in (4) has the denotation shown in (6).

$$(6) \quad \begin{aligned} \llbracket (4) \rrbracket^i &= \llbracket C^{[+Q]} \rrbracket^i(\lambda i (\llbracket János \rrbracket^i(\lambda i \lambda \nu (\llbracket kit^{[+F]} \rrbracket^i(\lambda i \lambda \nu'. \text{escort}'(i)(\nu, \nu')))))) \\ &= \mathbf{Q}^i(\lambda i. \exists u (u = \sigma \nu'. \text{escort}'(i)(j, \nu'))) \end{aligned}$$

It can be easily shown that the question extension derived in (6) is defined only if at each

