

Long-Distance Dependencies and the Syntax–Prosody Interface

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Cross-linguistically, when a question phrase bears a grammatical function in a subordinate clause but the interrogativity it introduces extends over a higher clause, there are a number of ways in which a constituent (‘wh’) question can be formed. In this paper, I look at the relationship between syntax and prosody in languages which employ distinct strategies to form this type of question. Japanese is an ‘in-situ’ language, in which question words appear in a position consistent with their non-interrogative counterparts (1). By contrast, Hungarian is characterised as an ‘ex-situ’ language, in which a question phrase occupies a position consistent with it being syntactically focused (2). Another strategy, referred to in the literature as scope-marking or partial ‘wh’-movement, is also available (3).

- (1) JAPANESE
- a. Mari-ga *doko-de* ojōsan-ni *nani-o* eranda ka.
Mari-NOM where-LOC daughter-DAT what-ACC choose.PAST Q-PART
‘What did Mari choose for her daughter where?’
- b. Rikako-san-wa Morita-san-ni [Mari-ga *doko-de* ojōsan-ni
Rikako-HON-TOP Morita-HON-DAT Mari-NOM where-LOC daughter-DAT
ranpu-o eranda to] barashita ka.
lamp-ACC choose.PAST that reveal.PAST Q-PART
‘Where did Rikako reveal to Mr Morita that Mari chose a lamp for her daughter?’
- (2) HUNGARIAN
- a. János [*ki-t*]_{FOCUS} [*ki-nek*]_{FOCUS} mutat-ott be?
John.NOM who-ACC who-DAT introduce-PAST.3SG VM
‘Who did John introduce to who?’
- b. István [*ki-nek*]_{FOCUS} gondol-ja, [hogy János
Stephen.NOM who-DAT think-PRES.DEFO.3SG that John.NOM
be-mutat-t-a Mari-t]?
VM-introduce-PAST-DEFO.3SG Mary-ACC
‘Who does Stephen think that John introduced Mary to?’
- (3) HUNGARIAN
- István [MI-T]_{FOCUS} gondol, [hogy János [*ki-nek*]_{FOCUS}
Stephen.NOM WHAT-ACC think.PRES.3SG that John.NOM who-DAT
mutat-t-a be Mari-t]?
introduce-PAST-DEFO.3SG VM Mary-ACC
‘Who does Stephen think that John introduced Mary to?’

These distinct constituent question formation strategies involve different aspects of linguistic structure, both syntactic and prosodic. Based on elicited spoken data, I formulate descriptive generalizations about the roles that relative prosodic prominence, syntactic position and their interaction play in the strategies used to form multi-clause constituent questions and argue that the intra- and inter-language variation in constituent question formation strategies identified is best captured in the non-derivational, constraint-based framework of Lexical-Functional Grammar.