**The status of ‘wh-expletives’ and the partial wh-movement constructions of Hungarian**

Julia Horvath (NLLT, 1997)

April 20, 1999

Paul Hagstrom

---

**Point 1:** (3) really is an example of a partial movement construction.

It is not, for example, literally *What do you think? Who did John see?* (You can ask sequences of questions in Hungarian of course, but this is different…)

- It shows up in the full range of embedded contexts
  - *(Keep it a secret —, The question of — doesn’t interest anyone, …)*
- Pronoun binding can cross (reputed) “clauses.”

Nor is it *What do you think about the question of who John saw?*

- If you embed yes/no questions in this manner, you can’t elide (but overt is fine).
  - That is, *What did John think… did Mary pass the exam? is bad—but ok is:* "What did John think about the question of did Mary pass the exam?"

---

**Some competing accounts of partial wh-movement:**

McDaniel (NLLT, 1989)

(1) Was glaubst du wessen Onkel, Jakob t. besucht?  
what believe you which uncle Jakob visit  
‘What do you think? Whose uncle is Jakob visiting?’  
‘Whose uncle do you think Jakob is visiting?’

Her idea: This is one big chain, pronounced funny,  
So it is just like having moved wessen Onkel to the front, representationally.

Her reasons: These “bottom-heavy” chains still obey Subjacency.  
Locality condition I: All clauses between wh-expletive and contentful wh-word must be wh-expletivized. (though recall Müller disagrees)  
Locality condition II: No non-expletive wh-phrase can occupy an intervening SpecCP (the wh-island constraint).

(Müller’s account is of this “direct dependency” sort as well)

Dayal (NLS 1994, 1996)

(2) jaun kyaa soccta hai ki merii kis-se baat karegii  
John what-think-pr that Mary who-INS talk-do-F  
‘What does John think, who will Mary talk to?’  
‘Who does John think Mary will talk to?’

Her idea: There is no direct link between kyaa and kis.  
There is an indirect (coindexation) link between kyaa and the whole embedded CP.  
The embedded CP contributes the restriction to kyaa in the matrix question.

Her reasons: Hindi kyaa appears in object position—so, not base-generated in operator position.  
Hindi can use kyaa to scope mark a yes/no question (unlike German)—surely kyaa cannot be associated with a wh-word in that case—there is none.

---

**Horvath and how historical hypotheses haven’t handled Hungarian**

(3) Mit godolsz, hogy kit láttott János  
what-ACC think-2sg that who-ACC saw-3g John-nom  
‘Who do you think that John saw?’  
‘What do you think? Who did John see?’

Her idea: *mit* is associated with the embedded CP (like suggested by Dayal)  
The embedded CP is appropriate because it got the “operator” features of *kit*.

Her reasons: ‘Wh-expletive’ gets its case and agreement properties from the local clause.  
Partial wh-movement acts different from full wh-movement (bad for McDaniel)  
…well, we’ll get to them.

---

Dayal observed that you can scope-mark a yes-no question in Hindi.  
But yet: You can scope mark an embedded yes-no question… sometimes.  
Specifically, if the embedded yes-no question has a wh-word in it.

(4) a. Mit kérdezték, hogy kivel találkoztam-e?  
what-ACC asked-3pl that who-with met-1sg-Q.prt  
‘With whom did they ask whether I had met?’

b. * Kérdezték, hogy kivel találkoztam-e.  
asked-3pl that who-with met-1sg-Q.prt  
(‘They wondered whether I had met whom.’)

**Note:** The embedded clause is interpreted as a yes-no question—  
the wh-word originating there has to take scope elsewhere.

**So:**  
Dayal said that the ‘wh-expletive’ can’t be associated with the wh-word, since  
you can scope mark a yes-no question.  
But that doesn’t go through in Hungarian—in Hungarian there seems to really be  
a dependence on the presence of a wh-something-or-other for scope marking.

**And another thing:**  
Dayal’s proposal says ‘interpret each question directly; then, one restricts the other’  
But we can’t interpret the embedded question in (4a) directly—that’s (4b) and it’s bad.

**So:**  
- Hungarian has partial wh-movement (not just sequences of questions)  
- Hungarian partial wh-movement relies on the presence of a contentful wh-word.  
- Dayal’s direct and independent interpretation idea seems to run into trouble here.  
  [Though does Horvath provide a semantic analysis at all? I don’t think she does…]
Point 2.2: There are locality effects for partial wh-movement. (good for McDaniel-type view)

Like McDaniel’s and Dayal’s (but unlike Müller’s) German, Hungarian can’t skip:

(5) a. *Mit hitt Mari, [hogy akartad, [hogy kinek telefonáljunk]]?
what believed Mary that wanted that who phone
ACC 3sg.IND.DO NOM 2sg.DEF.DO DAT SUBJ.1pl
(‘To whom did Mary think that you wanted that we phone?’)

b. Mit hitt Mari, [hogy mit akartál, [hogy kinek telefonáljunk]]?
what believed Mary that what wanted that who phone
ACC 3sg.IND.DO NOM ACC 2sg.IND.DO DAT SUBJ.1pl
(‘To whom did Mary think that you wanted that we phone?’)

So: Scope marking is successive-cyclic.
This at least hints at a “chain” analysis—
the expletive series and movement chains at least have this property in common.

Also: mit…kivel can’t cross CNPC boundary (like was…mit wem in German)

Note: Assuming there’s a chain, it’s can only be an LF chain in Hungarian.
(Evidence: they don’t license parasitic gaps, which surface A’ chains should)

Point 3.1: The chain analysis can’t be right, according to Case and Agreement.

Turns out: Hungarian gives us good evidence that the McDaniel chain-view is wrong.

Consider:

(6) Mit mondta, hogy kinek vett János színházigyvet?
what said that who bought John theater-ticket
ACC 2sg.IND.DO DAT NOM ACC
‘For whom did you say John bought a theater ticket?’

(7) Mire számítsz, hogy melyik fiúval fog Mari beszélni?
what count-2sg that which boy-with will Mary speak-inf
ACC NOM
‘With which boy do you count (on) that Mary will speak?’

So: ‘Wh’-expletive and contentful wh-word are realized with different Cases.
One chain doesn’t get two Cases, though—it just isn’t done.

Moreover:
• The Case of the wh-expletive is what we independently get from the matrix V.
• Not all expletives have the same Case (so, they’re not getting a “SpecCP” Case).

(8) a. Mit mondott Mari?
what-ACC said-3sg.IND.DO Mary-NOM
‘What did Mary say?’

b. Mire számítsz?
what-AL count-2sg
‘What do you expect (count on)?’

So: • The ‘wh-expletive’ seems to be a member of its local clause.
• It gets Case/Agreement as if it started out in an A-position
   (not base-generated in Operator position—i.e., contra McDaniel, Müller…).

Point 3.2: There are differences in subjacency effects between full & partial mmt.

Overall point: Real chains and expletive sequences act different from one another.
Not likely that they’d be exactly the same kind of thing.
Not likely that they’d be indistinguishable at LF.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hungarian</th>
<th>CNPC</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Adjunct</th>
<th>from DP</th>
<th>from FIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overt movement:</td>
<td>blocked</td>
<td>blocked</td>
<td>blocked</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td>ok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial movement:</td>
<td>blocked</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td>blocked</td>
<td>blocked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
Neither is uniformly more permissive than the other.
In some cases (from DP’s and infinitival clauses), it’s easier to move overtly.
In other cases (from subjects and adjuncts), it’s easier to scope mark.
So, things seem pretty different… (This is bad for a McDaniel-type view).

Side note: Might (9) be accounted for by whatever accounts for German anti-locality?
   Same question re: infinitives.

(9) *mit(l) láttál/láttad [kinek, a t, feleségét]?
what saw/saw who the wife
(-ACC) 2sg.IND.DO/2sg.DEF.DO DAT 3sgposs-ACC
(‘What did you see [whose wife]?’)

Point 3.3: We [being a partial movement sequence] don’t need no antecedent government.

Again, arguing again McDaniel, and now even against Rizzi.

So, chains (as Rizzi and then Cinque proposed) are subject to two kinds of locality restriction.
• For “referential” elements, longer movement is possible because the chain can be
  “held together” by its referential indices.
• For “nonreferential” elements, antecedent (local) government must hold the chain together.

Scope-marking a nonreferential (i.e. adjunct) wh-word should be just as restricted as moving one.
Or, perhaps even more restricted, if we think that the scope marker can’t have a referential index.
And Rizzi (1992) says that’s what happens—scope marking chains are always nonreferential,
so always act like (overt) adjunct extraction.

His reason: In German, you can’t scope mark out of a negative island.
  (and you can’t move a nonreferential wh-word out of a negative island either)

But in Hungarian… Factive:
   overt mmt of hogy ‘how’ bad, scope marking (with mit) ok.
Negative:
   overt mmt of hányszor ‘how many times’ bad, scope marking ok.

So: We at least conclude from this that scope marking sequences (in Hungarian—!) do not
require antecedent government to remain coherent.
Horvath’s account:

(10) a. What is the associate of the “contentless” wh-element?
b. How do we do selection?
c. How do the funny locality properties follow?

Answer to (10a): The associate is not the wh-phrase itself, it’s the whole CP.

This is made extra-plausible by the fact that Hungarian has CP-type expletives elsewhere.
(And so does Hindi—yeh ‘this’ noted in Dayal 1996)

And look: This makes it obvious why you can’t scope mark into a DP or an infinitival.
A [+wh]-CP-expletive can’t have a DP associate.
Oh, and these [+wh]-CP-expletives only associate with finite CP’s.
Ok, maybe the infinitive case doesn’t exactly fall out from independent considerations.
But the DP case seems to more or less work.

And where is the ‘wh-expletive’ anyway? We have kind of contradictory evidence.
• It’s not in theta position because the associate (clause) is in theta position.
• It’s not (originally anyway) in operator position because it gets Case & agreement.
(That is, to say, it is originally in an A-position).

So what kind of position has those properties?

Proposal: The ‘wh-expletive’ is base-generated in SpecAgr.

The idea, I guess, is that the clause doesn’t need Case (so there’s no competition for SpecAgr).?

Answer to (10b): We have to move +WH features around a bit to get selection—here’s how.

Consider Basque:
• A CP can be fronted as if it were a wh-phrase,
  provided it has had a wh-phrase move to its internal SpecCP.

The idea (due to Jon Ortiz de Urbina and Gert Webelhuth, in some order):
The CP gets to be [+WH] by virtue of having a [+WH] feature in its Spec.
(And all else follows)

The proposal: A CP can take the +WH feature of an element in its Spec.

Take. Like, it isn’t in SpecCP anymore, it’s on CP itself.
So, it is no longer a problem that a wh-word was in SpecCP of a non-interrogative clause—
(Wh-criterion requires that +WH feature be shared by C and its Spec)
Because the thing in SpecCP lost its +WH feature. And C didn’t get it, CP did. I guess.

How to get “no skipping”: Assume the expletive and associate have to match in ±WH-ness.

A funny story about yes-no questions.

Yes/no questions—formed with a Q particle (-e), assumed to be C°. It can’t be an appropriate associate for a wh-expletive because it can’t become [+WH]… because -e “has no free operator feature it could transmit further.”

??

But if there were anyway a wh-phrase in SpecCP of a yes-no question, it could transfer its [+WH] and all would be fine. The embedded clause is still interrogative due to -e.

??

Answer to (10c): Funny locality effects come from: What can/can’t be an associate.
Where [+WH] can/can’t be moved.

CNPC: The DP can’t be an associate of a CP-expletive.
Like the wh-inside-DP case.

Subjects, Nishigauchi-style answer. You move the whole thing, nothing has to move out of adjuncts: a subject or an adjunct. So I guess the assumption is that they’re each CP’s.

Weak islands: The CP (which is doing the moving) gets a theta-role, is referential.
(I.e. the complement of admit). And referential things are immune to weak islands.
So, we kind of expect that it will depend on the selectedness of the CP, not the kind of contentful wh-phrase that’s involved.

Closing remarks

Some complaints about Dayal:
Hindi: yes-no questions can be scope marked.
Hungarian and German: yes-no questions cannot be scope marked.
Dayal: any interrogative clause should be able to participate (without further stipulation)
So Dayal accounts for Hindi and not Hungarian and German. Surprising?

The wh-phrase in yes/no questions is a problem under Dayal’s account—
you can’t interpret these directly (as she does) since such structures are ungrammatical

Dayal’s account seems to predict that in response to
What did they say? With whom did Mary dance?
you should be able to answer
Nothing
or
They said nothing about with whom Mary danced.
But you can’t. Not even in English. Does that undermine Horvath’s point?

If was etc. are real wh-words moving like real wh-words do, they should license parasitic gaps.
But in Hungarian, at least, they don’t.
Interesting facts about negative islands—a.k.a abandon all hope.

Wrt negative islands, Hungarian appears to be of two minds.

• First, scope marking can get a non-referential wh-phrase out of a negative island—where movement would have failed.

• Second, scope marking can’t get a referential (presumably) wh-phrase out of a neg. island—(presumably where overt movement would be fine).

What’s going on?

Well, it turns out to depend on the choice of the matrix predicate, and not on the type of wh-phrase or the means of transport.

Some verbs:  
beismer ‘admit’
elárul ‘reveal’
tagad ‘deny’
észrevész ‘notice’
megenged ‘permit’

seem to require a D-linked reading.

Others  
gondol ‘think’
mond ‘say’
hall ‘hear’
érez ‘feel’

don’t (i.e., don’t like) a D-linked reading. (which is why What don’t you think? sounds bad)

One thing this means: We have to be really careful when we are doing crosslinguistic comparison—we don’t want to compare language A class I verbs with language B class II verbs, or we’ll think we’ve found a distinction which is really an artifact.

Final cross-linguistic point: Abandon hope, languages are not uniform wrt scope marking. For one thing, the ability to scope-mark a yes/no question is flatly incompatible with the present proposal, so maybe Dayal’s account of Hindi is more correct for Hindi.

And German’s different from both. German disallows scope-marking yes/no questions (like Hungarian, unlike Hindi) but also disallows scope-marking into factive complements (unlike both Hindi and Hungarian). And, given the wh-copying as well, it may well be that McDaniel’s account (a chain) is the right analysis for German. And, even if it isn’t, it could well be for Bahasa Indonesia—CED seems to hold there.

**To sum up:** Everyone’s been locally right, but wrong to try to make it more globally applicable.