

INTERACTION OF FOCUS AND ELLIPSIS IN THE INTERPRETATION OF ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS

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요약

This paper presents the observation that negative alternative questions across languages can be formed only when negation has not been inverted (Han (1999)), and proposes to derive this fact from the effects of Focus on negation and the LF-syntax of *yn*-questions.

Although the questions in (1) have the same components (they both contain the proposition expressed by *John drank coffee or tea* plus negation), they do not have the same interpretation. (1b) has either a *yn*-question reading or an alternative question (alt-) reading. Under the *yn*-reading, the possible answers are *Yes, John drank coffee or tea* and *No, John did not drink coffee or tea*. Under the alt-reading, the speaker presupposes that between coffee and tea, John didn't drink one of them, and the possible answers are *John did not drink coffee* and *John did not drink tea* (see Karttunen (1977), Larson (1985), Higginbotham (1993) on the semantics of alt-questions). (1a), on the other hand, has only the *yn*-reading.

- (1) a. Didn't John drink coffee or tea?
b. Did John not drink coffee or tea?

We argue that inverted negation in *yn*-questions contributes focus MARKING (not necessarily focus STRESS) on the polarity (the so-called Verum Focus in Höhle (1992)), and that the interpretational effect and implicature of inverted negation in questions result as a by-product of the interaction of focus with the LF-syntax of *yn*-questions.

Let us first derive the lack of alt-reading in inverted negation example in (1a). First, as noted in Romero (1998), each of the two disjuncts in the disjunctive phrase has to be focused in order to form an alt-question: *Did John drink COFfee*

or TEA at the meeting? We propose that this stress pattern is due to the fact that alt-questions involve ellipsis, extending Schwarz' (1999) analysis of *either ... or* to *whether/Q... or*: e.g. bare argument ellipsis in (2) and gapping in (3).

(2) Did John drink COFfee or ~~did he drink~~ TEA?

(3) Did JOHN drink COFfee or MARY ~~drink~~ TEA?

Schwarz however did not extend ellipsis analysis on *either ... or* to *whether/Q... or*, because the two constructions show asymmetries in the types of ellipsis allowed. We will argue that the asymmetries can be explained if we incorporate the insight from Larson that *whether/Q* undergoes movement, given that it is *wh*-version of *either*.

Importantly, parallel effects to the ones associated with inverted negation can be reproduced in affirmative questions with focus on *did* and on negative questions with focus on canonical negation:

(4) DID John drink coffee or tea?

a. *Yn*-reading answers:

Yes, John drank coffee or tea.

No, he did drink coffee or tea.

b. # Alt-reading answers:

John drank coffee.

John drank tea.

(5) Did John NOT drink coffee or tea?

a. *Yn*-reading answers:

Yes, John did not drink coffee or tea.

No, he did drink coffee or tea.

b. ??Alt-reading answers:

John did not drink coffee.

John did not drink tea.

We propose a unified focus-based account of all these cases. The key ingredients of the analysis are as follows. First, we argue that the position of *didn't* in C^0 has the discourse function of Focus marking the polarity (cf. Cleft-constructions, where the pivot phrase is inherently Focus marked). Second, crosslinguistic data show that polarity Focus located in C^0 can only be interpreted as exhaustive Focus. This Focus needs to be licensed internally to each disjunct, yielding the LF in (6), which crucially involves ellipsis. Following Heim (1997), (6) is ruled out because we are deleting a Focus-marked constituent (*not_F*) without deleting the Focus squiggle operator associated with it ($\sim C'$).

- (6) *Didn't_F you buy flowers for JOANNA or for PAQUITA?
 *[Q]_[IP1][you did not_F buy flowers for Joanna(_{F1})] ~C1 or
 [_{IP2} [~~you did not_F buy flowers~~ for Paquita(_{F2})] ~C'] ~C2]

Third and finally, Focus on non-inverted polarity can be marginally understood as contrastive with respect to the previous discourse; only in these cases in the alt-reading of (5) marginally available.

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