

Lecture 24: Wh-Movement – 1.

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Outline

- 1 Wh-Questions
 - Introducing Wh-Movement
 - Indirect Wh-Questions
 - Spec,CP
 - Subject Wh-Questions

Wh-Questions

Questions

There are **two types of questions**:

① **Yes/No-Questions**: allow only *yes/no* answers.

- (1) a. Did you see the dog?
- b. Have you eaten yet?

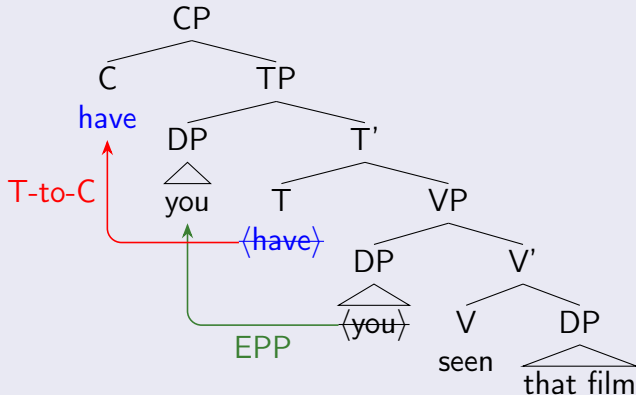
② **Wh-Questions**: Require a phrase as an answer.

- (2) a. Who did you see last week?
- b. Where are you planning to go tomorrow?

Yes/No-Questions: Reminder

- Yes/No-Questions (in English) are derived by T-to-C movement.

(3) Have you ___ seen that film?



Wh-Words

Wh-questions have **wh-words**, which replace constituents:

- *who*: DP – *John, a girl*
- *what*: DP – *an apple, a book*
- *when*: AP, PP – *yesterday, in the morning*
- *where*: AP, PP – *there, in the office*
- *why*: CP – *because he is an idiot*
- *which*: AP – *red*
- *how*: AP, PP – *quickly, with a hammer*
- etc.

Wh-movement

The *wh*-phrase moves to the beginning of the sentence:

- (4)
- What languages* can you speak ___ fluently?
 - Why* are you laughing ___?
 - Who* was Sally dating ___?
 - Where* are you going ___?
 - When* does the play begin ___?

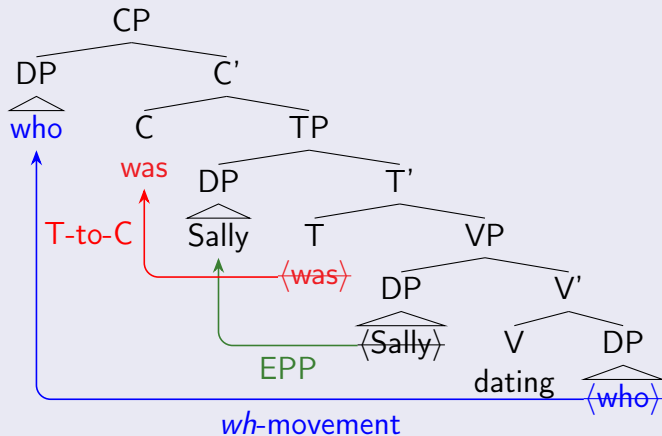
The answer shows where the *wh*-word is coming from:

- (5)
- You can speak *Japanese and Navajo* fluently.
 - You are laughing *for no reason*.
 - Sally was dating *Jake*.
 - You are going *to Moscow*.
 - The play begins *at 7pm*.

Wh-movement

Formally, in *wh*-questions, the *wh*-phrase moves to Spec,CP position (*wh*-movement), and T moves to C, just like in Yes/No-questions.

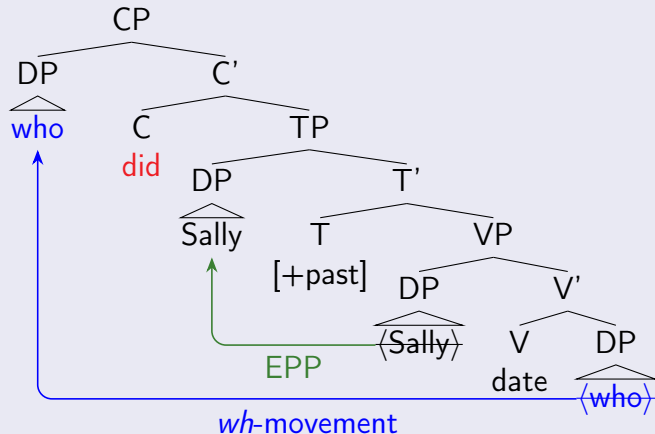
(6) Who was Sally ___ dating ___?



Wh-movement

If the T is empty, *do* is inserted into C.

(7) Who did Sally date ___?

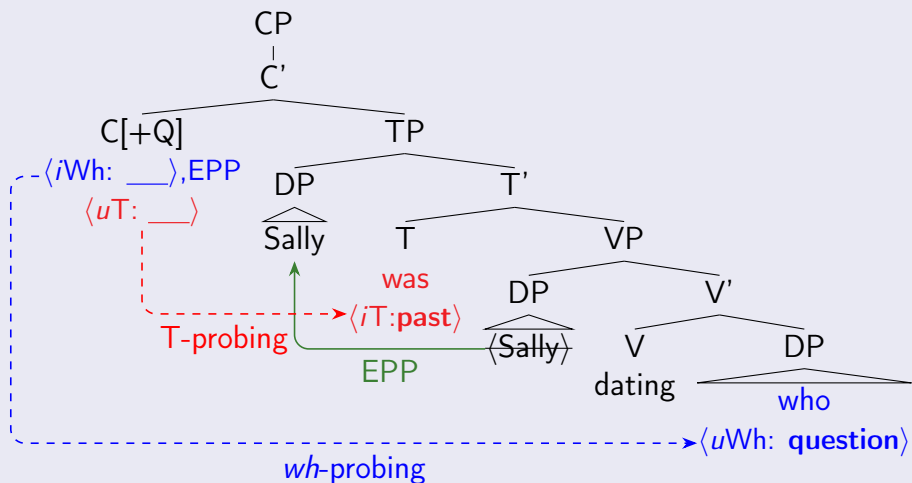


Wh-movement and features *

- Speaking even more formally, we say that CP in questions is headed by a special **C[+Q]**.
- C[+Q] has an **interpretable Wh-feature**, $\langle iWh: _ \rangle$.
- This allows C[+Q] to search for an element with a **matching Wh-feature**, and pull it up to Spec,CP: some type of **Wh-EPP** is in place in English!
- There also must be a **T-feature** on C[+Q], which will pull the element in T to C.

Wh-movement and features *

(8) Who was Sally ___ dating ___?



Echo-questions: *wh*-in-situ

- In some questions, the *wh*-phrase does not move at all, and stays at its base-position.
- Such questions are called *wh*-in-situ (i.e. *in place*) questions. We say that *wh*-phrase remains *in situ*.
- In English, these are used as *echo-questions*, to echo and questions something said previously:

- (9) a. I have just met Barack Obama!
 b. You have just met *who*?

Indirect questions

- **Indirect questions** (or **Embedded questions**) are the sentences where *wh*-movement happens in the embedded clause.
- In English, they can, for example, be embedded under verb **to wonder**, which **must select** a CP with **C[+Q]**, (10), but other verbs are also possible.

(10) a. *John wonders [_{CP} that he left].

(11) a. Bill wonders [_{CP} **why** he left ____].

b. Mary knows [_{CP} **where** Sally lives ____].

c. Sue asked [_{CP} **what** Mary bought ____].

Indirect questions

- In **Indirect questions** there is no T-to-C movement, so we don't get dummy **do**.

- (12)
- *Bill wonders [_{CP} **why did** he leave ____].
 - *Mary knows [_{CP} **where does** Sally live ____].
 - *Sue asked [_{CP} **what did** Mary buy ____].

- Formally, in **indirect questions** there is no T-feature on C[+Q], that's why T is not raised to C.

Evidence for Spec,CP position

There is some evidence that *wh*-phrases target **Spec,CP position**, and that the **complementizer** in *wh*-questions is special.

- **Irish:**

- *Wh*-questions have a **non-null complementizer**, in a special form.
- *Wh*-word occurs right before it.

(13) Cé a^L bhí ___ sa seomra?
 who that_{WH} was in.the room
 “Who was in the room?”

- **Bavarian German:**

- *Wh*-questions allow **non-null complementizer**, and a *wh*-word occurs right before it.

(14) I woass ned wann dass da Xavea kummt ____.
 I know not when that the Xavea comes
 “I don’t know when Xavea is coming.”

Subject *wh*-questions


Subject questions (in English) are pretty special:

- (15) a. John ate fried chicken.
 b. **What did** John eat ___?
- (16) a. John ate fried chicken.
 b. **Who** ate fried chicken?

- There is **no T-to-C movement** in **subject *wh*-questions** — we don't have a dummy *do*.
- **Question: Is there even *wh*-movement in subject questions?**
 Which of the two structures below is correct?

- (17) a. [CP **Who** [TP ___ ate fried chicken]]?
 b. [TP **Who** ate fried chicken]?

Subject *wh*-questions

- (18) a. [CP **Who** [TP ___ ate fried chicken]]? 
 b. [TP **Who** ate fried chicken]?


Scottish Gaelic

- It is not easy to choose the right structure just based on English.
- Consider **Scottish Gaelic**!

- (19) **Cò** a dh'ith na breacagan fheoil?
 who that_{WH} ate the.PL pancakes meat
 "Who ate the beef waffles?"

- The *wh*-word is right before the **complementizer**, so in Scottish Gaelic it is clear that even subjects raise to Spec,CP.

Subject *wh*-questions

- (20) a. [_{CP} *Who* [_{TP} ___ ate fried chicken]]? 
- b. [_{TP} *Who* ate fried chicken]?

Theoretical arguments

- Theoretically, if we assume a *wh*-feature on C, why would it not pull the *wh*-word up?
- However, we do have to say something about T-to-C movement in subject questions. . .

Subject *wh*-questions

- (21) a. [_{CP} **Who** [_{TP} ___ ate fried chicken]]? 🖱️
 b. [_{TP} **Who** ate fried chicken]?

Who the hell?

- In English, expressions like *who the hell* and *who on earth* can never stay *in situ*, unlike other *wh*-phrases:

- (22) a. **Who on earth/Who the hell** is she going out with?
 b. *She is going out with **who on earth/who the hell**?

- So, in Subject questions, they also must move to Spec,CP:

- (23) a. **Who on earth** called the police?
 b. **Who the hell** called the police?

- So it's likely that any *subject wh-word* moves to Spec,CP.

Subject *wh*-questions

Based on this evidence, we will assume that *wh*-subjects move to Spec,CP position

Absence of T-to-C in subject questions

- So, we assume that subject *wh*-words also move to Spec,CP.
- Why is there **no T-to-C** movement?

- (24) a. [_{CP} **Who** [_{TP} ___ bought the book]]?
 b. *[[_{CP} **Who** did [_{TP} ___ buy the book]]?^a

^aThis sentence could be grammatical if we have a special emphasis, but with a neutral intonation, subject questions have no T-to-C.

- When we talked about **Agreement**, we mentioned the proposal by **Pesetsky & Torrego (2007)**, according to which **nominative elements have a T-feature**.
 - That's why nominative case was only allowed in sentences with tense, and not in infinitives.
 - **P&T propose that this T-feature on the subject satisfies the T-requirement of C, instead of T-to-C movement!**