

## Im/explicit disjunction and negation in un/grammatical wh-questions in German

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For decades, constraints on long wh-movement have been treated in syntactic terms. Ungrammatical constructions (cf. (1)) have been explained by invoking well-known principles (e.g. *Subjacency* (e.g. Chomsky 1973), *Relativized Minimality* (Rizzi 1990), the *Phase Impenetrability Condition* (e.g. Chomsky 2000)).

(1) (i) \*Wen weiß Peter, ob Maria eingeladen hat?

*who knows Peter whether Mary invited has*

‘Peter knows whether Mary invited who?’ (intended reading)

(ii) \*Wen weiß Peter, wann Maria eingeladen hat?

*who knows Peter when Mary invited has*

‘Peter knows when Mary invited who?’ (intended reading)

This talk suggests an analysis that treats the ungrammaticality of constructions such as (1) not as a matter of core syntax, but as a semantic violation (cf. Müller 2010).

Relying on *Partition Semantics* for a semantic characterisation of wh-questions (cf. Groenendijk/Stokhof (1984, 1997), Higginbotham (1991, 1996) and the concept of *index dependency* of propositions denoted by [+wh]-complement clauses (cf. Groenendijk/Stokhof 1982), this talk argues that questions such as (1) are ‘defective’ on logico-semantic grounds, and will thus be ruled out by the semantic module.

The discourse function associated with wh-questions is to open up a limited number of alternatives which might serve as an answer. Ideally, the answer given reduces these possibilities to a single one (i.e. the complete answer). Answering questions such as (1), however, can lead to the impossibility of reducing any alternatives. In this case, the questions cannot fulfil their discourse function (cf. Comorovski (1996) and Abrusán (2007) for similar lines of thinking). I will show that marked cases of wh-questions (cf. (2)) can be explained by the very same analysis. The only difference consists in the fact that an alternative interpretation applies that makes these structures acceptable.

(2) Wen hat Peter eingeladen oder wen hat Maria nicht in der Bahn gesehen?

*whom has Peter invited or whom has Mary not on the tram seen*

‘Who did Peter invite or who didn’t Mary see on the tram?’

Answer: #Paul und Fritz (= Peter hat Paul und Fritz eingeladen oder Maria hat nicht

*Paul and Fritz (= Peter has Paul and Fritz invited or Mary has not*

*Paul und Fritz in der Bahn gesehen.*

*Paul and Fritz on the tram seen.*

‘Paul and Fritz (= Peter invited Paul und Fritz or Mary didn’t see Paul and Fritz.’

The crucial factors in deriving the defective nature of (1) are disjunction and negation which enter the semantic object corresponding to the questions in (1) ‘wrapped up’ in the meaning of the conjunction and the wh-pronoun, that is implicitly. In case disjunction and negation appear at the surface, that is explicitly, a reinterpretation of the question takes place. I argue that this reinterpretation ‘saves’ the question in (2) from being ruled out by the semantic module for the same reason as the questions in (1).

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