Anti-Givenness, Prosodic Structure and “Intervention Effects”

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Abstract

Based on data from French, Japanese and Korean, this article lays out an approach to *wh*-questions’ intervention effects that questions the very existence of this phenomenon. It is assumed that the property that makes all the “interveners” into one natural class is their anti-given nature. Taking into account *wh*-questions’ syntax, phonology and information structure, it is shown that although the three investigated languages vary with respect to what forces *wh*-fronting in the presence of an anti-given item, prosodic structure always plays a central part.

1 Introduction

In this paper, I propose that there are no intervention effects *per se* and that language-specific factors such as (i) the motivation for leaving a *wh*-phrase in situ, (ii) the requirement for a *wh*-phrase to carry sentence stress and (iii) the orientation and plasticity (Vallduví 1991) of prosodic heads (i.e. phrasal stress and sentence stress) are at the heart of the suboptimal status of the *wh*-questions in which an item in (1) precedes a *wh*-phrase.

Several studies have discussed so-called “intervention effects” – the phenomenon by which in a genuine *wh*-question an item from the list in (1) cannot precede a *wh*-phrase in situ without rendering the question deviant (see among others, Beck and Kim 1997; Kim 2002, 2006; Beck 2006; Tomioka 2007; Eilam 2008, and references therein).¹

(1) “Interveners”:

- Negative polarity items (*anyone, anything* etc)
- Quantificational NPs (*all NP, every NP, some NP* etc)
- Adverbial quantifiers (*always, often, sometimes* etc)
- Free foci
- Foci with a focusing particle (*also, even, only* etc)
- Nominative-marked subjects in Japanese (including disjunctive NPs)
- Negation
- Modal adverbs (*certainly, possibly, probably* etc)

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As soon as the wh-phrase is fronted, and thus not anymore preceded by the intervener, the acceptability status of the wh-question considerably improves. This is illustrated for NPIs, free foci and foci in the scope of a focusing particle with the Korean examples in (2) to (4), taken from Kim (2006, 521).²

(2)  a. #Amwuto nwukwu-lul chotayha-ci anh-ass-ni?
    anyone who-ACC invite-COMP not-do-PAST-Q
   ‘Who did no one invite?’
   b. Nwukwu-lul amwuto chotayha-ci anh-ass-ni?
    who-ACC anyone invite-COMP not-do-PAST-Q
   ‘Who did no one invite?’

(3)  a. [#[Mira-ka]Mira-nom nwukwu-lul chotayha-ess-ni?]
   Mira-NOM who-ACC invite-PAST-Q
   ‘Who did MIRA invite?’
    who-ACC Mira-nom invite-PAST-Q
   ‘Who did only Mira invite?’

(4)  a. #Mira-man nwukwu-lul chotayha-ess-ni?
    Mira-only who-ACC invite-PAST-Q
   ‘Who did only Mira invite?’
   b. Nwukwu-lul Mira-man chotayha-ess-ni?
    who-ACC Mira-only invite-PAST-Q
   ‘Who did only Mira invite?’

Several aspects of this phenomenon make it particularly difficult to apprehend. First, the list in (1) is made of heterogeneous items and the question of the property that makes them all into a natural class has still not received a fully satisfactory answer.

Second, languages vary as to which of the items from the list in (1) act as interveners. By way of illustration, adverbial quantifiers intervene in French but do not in Korean (Kim 2006). This is shown respectively in (5-a) and (5-b) with often.

(5)  a. #Mira, elle invite souvent qui, à ses fêtes?
    Mira she invites often who to her parties
   ‘Who does Mira often invite to her parties?’
   b. Mira-nun cacwu nwukwu-lul phathi-ey teylikoka-ss-ni?
    Mira-TOP often who-ACC party-to take-PAST-Q
   ‘Who did Mira often take to the party?’

Besides not all quantified expressions act as interveners: Japanese subete-no/zembu-no-NP ‘all (the) NP’ and hotondo-NP ‘most NP’ as well as their respective Korean counterpart motun-NP and taypwupwun-uy-NP can precede a wh-phrase in situ (Kim 2002; Tomioka 2007). As noted by Tomioka, the quantified expressions that do not act as interveners are those that, in Japanese and Korean, can be topicalized. Their French counterpart tous les NP and la plupart des NP, which are harder to topicalize, create a deviant structure.³ Kim (2002) and Beck (2006) identify focus phrases as the most robust interveners across languages.

²Wh-phrases appear italics and so-called “interveners” in bold face. The reader is referred to Beck (2006) for an overview of the languages exhibiting intervention effects.

³In French, quantified expressions can be topicalized when they are used as plural definites and are thus referential. I leave this issue open for future research, but it might be the case that Japanese and Korean topicalized quantified expressions are not really quantificational but are associated to the same type of referential reading.
Third, the severity of the intervention effect varies with the intervener. For instance, Tomioka (2007, 1572) notes that in Japanese “NPIs are by far the strongest interveners”. Kim (2002) observes that although universal quantifiers create an intervention effect in Korean, this effect is much weaker than the one created by focus phrases and NPIs.

Finally, recent studies suggest that intervention effects are not a universal phenomenon. Eilam (2008) argues that Amharic is a language that does not generally show intervention effects. Only NPIs create a slightly degraded structure when they precede a wh-phrase in situ (6-a) but, oddly, scrambling the wh-phrase over the NPI as in (6-b) does not result in an optimal wh-question. As noted by Eilam, Amharic speakers have a preference for the clefted-wh question in (6-c).

(6) a. #Mann mm am al-anäbbäb-ä-mm?
   anyone what NEG-read.PER-3MS-NEG
   ‘What did no one read?’

b. #M n am mannalm am al-anäbbäb-ä-mm?
   what anyone NEG-read.PER-3MS-NEG
   ‘What did no one read?’

c. Mänd am näw mannalm y-al-anäbbäb-ä-w?
   what COP.3MS anyone REL-NEG-read.PER-3MS-DEF
   ‘What is it that no read?’

I here claim that what is common to the items listed in (1) is that, just like wh-phrases, they tend to resist givenness. This information-structural property has important prosodic consequences in that it makes these items eligible to realize sentence stress as soon as they are located within the (main/most embedded) intonational phrase that is, the lowest segment of the most extended projection of the verb (CP/TP/vP). Although this idea is in need of further investigation, I take it that their anti-givenness nature that is, the fact that they resist being stored in the immediate common ground (Krifka 2007), is related to their lack of referentiality. For a subset of these items, namely NPIs, foci and quantifiers, their affinity with a set of alternatives might also be at play in their anti-givenness nature. This is probably less obvious in the case of quantificational interveners such as modal adverbs, nominal quantifiers and adverbial quantifiers, but one should keep in mind that these items belong to a closed (ordered) set (“Horn scales”, Horn 1972). By choosing one of these items in order to formulate her wh-question, the speaker discards all the other items within the same set or, in other words, she excludes other alternatives.

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4Tomioka (2007) notes that intervention effects tend to disappear in embedded contexts. I leave the issue of embedded wh-questions open for future research.

5An important part of the literature treats wh-phrases as focused. This is however problematic for theories that associate focus and sentence stress in that in a number of languages, wh-phrases do not attract sentence stress (on this topic, see among others Ladd 1996). What however seems to universally apply is that wh-phrases cannot be treated as given and thus destressed.

6I assume that indefinites, which are sometimes referential, are anti-given by virtue of introducing new discourse referents (Heim 1982).

7The reader is referred to Krifka (1995) for an approach of NPIs in terms of focus and to Karoda (2005) (among others) for the exhaustive reading associated to Japanese nominative subjects.

8Following Krifka’s (2007, 18) general definition of focus, according to which “focus indicates the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions”, these items even qualify as a subtype of focus. As focus marking tends to override givenness marking (Féry and Šamková-Łodovici 2006), this would also explain why these items tend to resist destressing.
In order to account for the different degrees of degradedness, two subsets of Anti-Given Items (AGIs) need to be distinguished. Adopting the distinction between focus and newness defended in Chafe (1976) and more recently in Féry and Samek-Lodovici (2006) and Selkirk (2007), I propose that the first subset (AGI$_1$) contains the AGIs that are always associated with a focus reading and are required to carry sentence stress: free foci and foci associated to a focusing particle. The second subset (AGI$_2$) contains the AGIs that, in absence of association with a focus reading, are nonetheless treated as “new” and require to be minimally stressed, that is, to at least carry phrasal stress: quantificational NPs, adverbial quantifiers, Japanese nominative marked-subjects, negation and modal adverbs. Just like wh-phrases, NPIs seem to belong to one or the other group depending on the language: they belong to the first group in Japanese (Ishihara 2010) and probably in Korean, whereas they seem to belong to the second group in French.\footnote{As languages vary as to how they form NPIs and most particularly whether focusing particles enter in their formation (Haspelmath 1997; Kim 2002), it should not be surprising that NPIs can belong to one or the other group depending on the language. The same remark applies to wh-phrases, whose nature and proximity with other quantifiers varies from one language to the other.}

Languages like Amharic, which do not exhibit intervention effects, are thus expected as the property of always being eligible to realize sentence stress is not in itself problematic and is not generally expected to prevent AGIs from surfacing in wh-in situ questions. The remainder of this paper lays out how it is central in creating suboptimal wh-questions in French, Korean and Japanese.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces French wh-questions and their prosodic, syntactic and pragmatic properties relevant to the present study and lays out a new proposal to capture “intervention effects” in this language\footnote{Although I contend that there are no intervention effects and consequently no interveners, I will use these labels throughout for convenience.}. In Section 3, I discuss Japanese and Korean data and outline my explanation of Japanese and Korean “intervention effects”. Section 4 closes the paper.

2 “Intervention effects” from a French perspective

2.1 French wh-questions’ syntax and prosody

French is an SVO wh-movement language in which wh-in situ questions are licit as genuine requests for information (among others, Aoun, Hornstein and Sportiche 1981).\footnote{In this paper, I only discuss Francilian French, the dialect spoken in informal contexts in Paris and its Metropolitan area. The French fronted wh-questions discussed in this paper are not cleft-sentences. See Rooryck (1994) for arguments in favor of an analysis of est-ce que as a complex complementizer, that is, an interrogative particle.}

(7) a. Qu’est-ce que vous pensez du CONTRAT?
   what-is-it that you think of the contract

(8) a. Comment vous étiez HABILLÉE?
   how you were dressed
b. Vous étiez habillé(e) comment?
   you were dressed how
   ‘How were you dressed?’

From a prosodic perspective, wh-questions exhibit a rightmost sentence stress (Ladd 1996; Zubizarreta 1998). As shown in (7) to (8), only wh-phrases in situ carry sentence stress, which is represented by small capitals. Although wh-phrases are always semantically associated to a focus reading, as they introduce alternatives (Hamblin 1973; Rooth 1992), in French they are not among the items that need carrying sentence stress, as shown by the fact that clause initial wh-phrases do not attract sentence stress. The only prosodic restriction that applies to them is that they cannot be part of a destressed phonological phrase.

Among the languages discussed in this paper, French is the one that presents the largest set of “interveners”. As briefly illustrated with the examples from (9-a) to (14-a), all the items from (1) make a wh-question in situ deviant: the following wh-questions in situ are only acceptable as echo questions whereas each of their fronted-wh counterpart is acceptable as a genuine request for information (see also Chang 1997; Zubizarreta 2003).

(9) a. #Personne n’a acheté quoi?
   no.one NE.has bought what
   ‘What did no one bought?’

(10) a. #Tout le monde a acheté quoi?
    all the people have bought what
   ‘What did everyone buy?’

(11) a. #Ils achètent souvent quoi?
    they buy often what
   ‘What do they often buy?’

(12) a. #Seule Mira a acheté quoi?
    only Mira has bought what
   ‘What did only Mira buy?’

(13) a. #Ils (n’)ont pas acheté quoi?
    they NE.have not bought what
   ‘What didn’t they buy?’

(14) a. #Ils ont probablement acheté quoi?
    they have probably bought what
b. Qu’est-ce qu’ils ont probablement acheté?
what is it that they have probably bought
‘What did they probably buy?’

What will subsequently be shown is that the linguistic factors that determine the choice between the two types of wh-structures illustrated in (7) and (8) straightforwardly account for the suboptimal status of the in situ wh-questions in (9-a) to (14-a).

2.2 French not-so-optional wh-movement

French wh-questions have been a popular topic in the linguistic literature and a number of studies have tried to account for the availability of both fronted and in situ wh-questions in one and the same grammar. It has been argued that French in situ and fronted wh-questions vary from a semantic perspective, that is, with respect to their answerhood conditions (among others, Chang 1997; Boeckx 1999; Cheng and Rooryck 2000; Zubizarreta 2003). According to Adli (2004), Mathieu (2004) and Hamlaoui (2009, 2010) this observation does not carry over to all varieties of French, as in Francilian French any appropriate answer to one of the two types of wh-questions also constitutes an appropriate answer to the other type.

What however emerges from corpus studies of the latter variety of French is that in situ and fronted wh-questions vary from a pragmatic perspective (see Coveney 1995; Hamlaoui to appear, and references therein): wh-phrases in situ are associated with a discourse-given non-wh part. In other words, French wh-in situ questions are semantically equivalent to their fronted-wh counterpart, but they generally emerge when the denotation of the expressions constituting the non-wh portion is given. A given denotation is understood here as a denotation that is already present in the immediate common ground (Krifka 2007). Following Tancredi (1992) and Krifka (2007), there are three ways for a denotation to belong to the immediate common ground: by being present in the previous discourse context, by being situationally given or by being pragmatically inferred through conversational implicatures. French thus seems to be among the languages like Hindi-Urdu (Kidwai 1999, 232) and English (Engdahl 2006, 101) in which wh-questions are subject to the same contextual appropriateness requirements as declarative sentences. In the former language, Kidwai notes that moving the wh-phrase to the preverbal focus position is not compulsory when a question is discourse initial, that is, when the non-wh part is new. In the latter language, Engdahl notes that English resorts to prosodic deaccenting in order to express the discourse-given status of the non-wh portion.

In order to account for the fact that wh-phrases appear in situ when the non-wh part of the question is discourse-given, Hamlaoui (2009, 2010) proposes that this is due to the strong requirement on sentence stress to be kept rightward. Whenever the items constituting the non-wh part are given, they must be destressed (Schwarzschild 1999; Féry and Samek-Lodovici 2006). In this information-structural configuration, the wh-phrase becomes the only item eligible to realize sentence stress. The idea is that in this particular case, syntax and prosody make conflicting demands (Samek-Lodovici 2005): on the one hand syntax requests that the wh-phrase be fronted and on the other hand prosody requires that sentence stress be kept rightward. French is so strongly right-headed that the requirement for the head of the intonational phrase to be aligned with the right edge of this prosodic constituent prevents the wh-phrase

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12The data from Chang, on which most of the generalizations made by Boeckx, Cheng and Rooryck and Zubizarreta are drawn, come from French speakers from Alberta, Ontario, Québec, Marseille and Atlantic-Pyrenees.
from being fronted. From an Optimal Theoretic perspective (Prince and Smolensky 2004), this means that the two following wh-questions are in competition and French grammar favours the structure in (15-b) over the structure in (15-a).

(15) a. COMMENT vous étiez habillée?
   how you were dressed

b. Vous étiez habillée COMMENT?
   you were dressed how
   ‘How were you dressed?’

What happens in French wh-questions is thus not different from what happens in Hungarian declarative sentences, in which prosody forces narrow foci to be aligned with the left edge of the intonational phrase (Szendr˝oi 2003) and in Italian declarative sentences, in which the requirement for sentence stress to be kept rightmost within the intonational phrase is responsible for the (non-canonical) postverbal position of focused subjects (Samek-Lodovici 2005).

The suboptimal status of the wh-in situ questions in which an AGI occurs thus becomes clear: as the wh-phrase is no longer the only item eligible to realize sentence stress nothing prevents the syntactic requirement for the wh-phrase to be fronted and the prosodic requirement for stress to be kept rightward from being simultaneously satisfied.

As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, I have proposed that the different degrees of degradedness created by the AGIs can be accounted for by distinguishing those that require carrying sentence stress (AGI1) from those that only need to carry phrasal stress (AGI2). Let us discuss each subset of AGIs in turn.

Whenever an item from the second subset appears in a French wh-in situ question, the structure is ruled out on syntactic grounds. As the AGI2 already carries phrasal stress, it is eligible to realize sentence stress and leaving the wh-phrase in situ is consequently unnecessary. The deviant structure is illustrated in (16).

(16) #[ { ... AGI2 ... }P {...WH}P ]

Whenever an item from the first subset appears in a French wh-in situ question, the structure is ruled out on both syntactic and prosodic/information structural grounds, hence the increased degree of unacceptability. Recall that focused items must be associated with sentence stress (Jackendoff 1972; Truckenbrodt 1995). Assuming that French is similar to English in banning multiply headed intonational phrases (Féry and Samek-Lodovici 2006), associating sentence stress with the in situ wh-phrase as in (17-a) optimally satisfies the strong require-

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13Engdahl (2006, 100) notes that a question such as the one in (i)B sounds more natural as a regular information question if “the context makes the negative form appropriate”. This is consistent with the present account of “intervention effects”: whenever there is a way to interpret the intervener as discourse-given, the “intervention effect” disappears.

(i) A: Mon fils ne mange pas de poisson.
   my son NE eats not of fish
   ‘My son doesn’t eat fish.’

B: Et ta fille, elle ne mange pas quoi?
   and you daughter she NE eats not what
   ‘What about your daughter? What doesn’t she eat?’

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ment on the intonational phrase’s head to be kept rightward, but amounts to a violation of the requirement for a focus phrase to carry sentence stress (in addition to unnecessarily keeping the wh-phrase in situ). Assigning sentence stress to the AGI₁, as in (17-b), probably creates an even more deviant structure as, on top of not aligning the intonational phrase’s head with its right edge, sentence stress on the AGI₁ has the effect of placing the wh-phrase in the postfocal/destressed part of the clause.

(17)  a. #[( ... AGI₁ ... )p [...WH]p]₁
    b. #[( ... AGI₁ ... )p [...WH]₁]

The next section turns to Japanese and Korean, in which these configurations are suboptimal for reasons related to but distinct from the ones invoked for French due to different prosodic and syntactic “parameter settings”.

3 Japanese/Korean “intervention effects”

3.1 Japanese and Korean wh-questions’ syntax and prosody

Japanese and Korean are wh-in situ SOV languages in which wh-phrases are sometimes scrambled to a sentence initial position (Saito 1989). Whenever a universal or an existential quantifier, a focus phrase or an NPI is located in the subject position, wh-scrambling is compulsory for the question to be acceptable as a well formed information question. This is illustrated with the examples (18) to (23) for Japanese (Tomioka 2007, 1571). The same judgments apply for the Korean counterpart of these examples (see examples (2) to (4) as well as for instance Beck and Kim 1997; Kim 2002, 2006).

(18)  a. #Daremo-ga nani-o yon-da-no?
      everyone-NOM what-ACC read-PAST-Q
    b. Nani-o daremo-ga yon-da-no?
      what-ACC everyone-NOM read-PAST-Q
      ‘What did everyone read?’

(19)  a. #Dareka-ga nani-o yon-da-no?
      someone-NOM what-ACC read-PAST-Q
    b. Nani-o dareka-ga yon-da-no?
      what-ACC someone-NOM read-PAST-Q
      ‘What did someone read?’

(20)  a. #Ken-dake-ga nani-o yon-da-no?
      Ken-only-NOM what-ACC read-PAST-Q
    b. nani-o Ken-dake-ga yon-da-no?
      what-ACC Ken-only-NOM read-PAST-Q
      ‘What did only Ken read?’

(21)  a. #Ken-mo nani-o yon-da-no?
      Ken-also what-ACC read-PAST-Q
b. *nani-o Ken-mo yon-da-no?*
   what-ACC Ken-also read-PAST-Q
   ‘What did Ken also read?’

(22) a. *#Daremo nani-o yom-ana-katta-no?*
   anyone what-ACC read-NEG-PAST-Q
b. *Nani-o daremo yom-ana-katta-no*
   what anyone read-NEG-PAST-Q
   ‘What did no one read?’

(23) a. *#John-sika nani-o yom-ana-katta-no?*
   John-except what-ACC read-NEG-PAST-Q
b. *Nani-o John-sika yom-ana-katta-no?*
   what-ACC John-except read-NEG-PAST-Q
   ‘What did no one but John read?’

The two languages have however been noted to vary with respect to non-quantified nominative subjects. In Japanese, any nominative subject acts as an “intervener”. This is illustrated in (24) and (25) (Tomioka 2007, 1574).

(24) a. *#John-ga nani-o yon-da-no?*
   John-NOM what-ACC read-PAST-Q
b. *Nani-o John-ga yon-da-no?*
   what-ACC John-NOM read-PAST-Q
   ‘What did John read?’

(25) a. *#John-ka Bill-ga nani-o yon-da-no?*
   John-or Bill-NOM whatACC read-PAST-Q
b. *Nani-o John-ka Bill-ga yon-da-no?*
   what-ACC John-or Bill-NOM read-PAST-Q
   ‘What did John or Bill read?’

As shown in (26), in Korean, nominative subjects do not create a deviant structure when preceding a wh-phrase (Kim 2002, 4).

(26) a. *Suna-ka muôs-ûl sa-ss-ni?*
   Suna-NOM what-ACC buy-PAST-Q
b. *Muôs-ûl Suna-ka sa-ss-ni?*
   what-ACC Suna-NOM buy-PAST-Q
   ‘What did Suna buy?’

Japanese and Korean differ from French wh-questions in an important respect: in the former languages, the wh-phrase always carries sentence stress, be it when it is located in its argument/adjunct position or when it is scrambled (see among others Ishihara 2002; Kim 2006). In Korean wh-questions, prosody fulfills a semantic purpose: it determines whether the question is a *yes/no* question with an indefinite or a *wh*-question (Kim 2006). This is shown in the example (27) from Choe (1995).

(27) Nwu(kwu)-ka pakkey w-ass-ni?
   who/someone-nom outside come-past-Q
a. ‘Is there someone at the door?’
b. ‘Who is at the door?’

In (27), the wh-phrase *nwu(kwu) is only interpreted as interrogative when associated with sentence stress. Japanese wh-phrases do not exhibit the same ambiguity as Korean ones, but interrogatives and indefinites are nonetheless morphologically clause (among others, Cheng 1991, 117) and I here assume that prosody is one of the factors that helps discriminating the interrogative from the indefinite reading.  

3.2 Wh-scrambling has a prosodic motivation

Assuming that Japanese and Korean clauses project left-headed intonational phrases (Jun 1996; Kawahara and Shinya 2008), I propose that what the expressions that create suboptimal wh-questions in Korean and in Japanese have in common is that they prevent sentence stress from being simultaneously associated to the wh-phrase and optimally aligned with the intonational phrase’s left edge. This is illustrated in (28) for AGIs2: the head of the phonological phrase carried by the AGI2 stands between the head and the left edge of the intonational phrase.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{(28)} \\
\{ p \ldots \text{AGI}_2 \ldots \} \{ p \ldots \text{WH} \ldots \}
\end{array}
\]

As the AGI2 is eligible to realize sentence stress, there is an alternative prosodic structure to (28), shown in (29), in which sentence stress is assigned to the AGI2 and thus optimally aligned with the left edge of the intonational phrase. The fact that the wh-phrase does not carry sentence stress however makes this structure suboptimal.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{(29)} \\
\{ p \ldots \text{AGI}_2 \ldots \} \{ p \ldots \text{WH} \ldots \}
\end{array}
\]

Focused AGIs create a more degraded structure because in addition to separating the head of the intonational phrase from its left edge, they compete with the wh-phrase for sentence stress realization. Again, as the AGI1 is closer to the intonational phrase’s left edge than the wh-phrase, assigning it the head of this prosodic constituent creates an optimal prosodic structure. However, it has the effect of depriving the wh-phrase from sentence stress, as illustrated in (30).

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{(30)} \\
\{ p \ldots \text{AGI}_1 \ldots \} \{ p \ldots \text{WH} \ldots \}
\end{array}
\]

Alternatively, assigning sentence stress to the wh-phrase, as in (31), has the effect of depriving the AGI1 from sentence stress in addition to creating a suboptimal prosodic structure.

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14Japanese wh-phrases that are to be interpreted as indefinites are suffixed with the particle {-ka}. When the wh-phrase is to be interpreted as an interrogative pronoun, the sentence is suffixed with the particle {-ka}.

15Tomioka (2007) proposes that NPIs create a more severe “intervention effect” because they require to be phrased together with their licensing negation and this is not achieved when they precede a wh-phrase. This proposal is consistent with the present account and would indeed account for the difference between NPIs and other AGI in Japanese and Korean.
In the case of the Korean deviant wh-questions, the present account predicts that if they are associated to the prosodic structures in (29) and (30) – in which the requirement for leftmost sentence stress takes precedence over the requirement for the wh-phrase to carry sentence stress – only the indefinite reading of the wh-phrase should obtain. This is exactly what happens: Korean wh-questions in which an AGI precedes the wh-phrase are only acceptable as yes/no questions containing an indefinite (see among others Song and Schwartz 2009). In sum, wh-scrambling is meant to create an optimal prosodic structure: one in which the head of the intonational phrase is simultaneously leftmost and carried by the wh-phrase. This optimal structure is shown in (32). In this example, the requirement for a focus phrase to bear sentence stress is overriden by the requirements that sentence stress be leftmost and realized by the wh-phrase.16

(32) \([I \{ p \ldots \overset{*}{\text{AGI}} \ldots \} \{ p \ldots \overset{(r)}{\text{WH}} \ldots \} ]\]

The fact that adverbial quantifiers and topicalized quantified expressions do not create suboptimal structures – as in examples (33) and (5-b), repeated in (34) for convenience – naturally follows from the present account.

(33) Taypwupwun-uy haksayng-tul-i nwukwu-lul hoycang-ulo chwuchenha-ess-ni?
most-GEN student-PL-NOM who-ACC president-as recommend-PAST-Q
‘Who did most students recommend as president?’

(34) Mira-nun caewu nwukwu-lul phathi-ey teplyikoka-ss-ni?
Mira-TOP often who-ACC party-to take-PAST-Q
‘Who did Mira often take to the party?’

From a syntactic perspective, these items are adjoined to the clausal level – that is, the most extended projection of the verb (vP/TP/CP). As it is the lowest segment of this projection that is mapped onto the (main/most embedded) intonational phrase’s left edge (Truckenbrodt 1999, 235), these items sit outside this prosodic constituent and thus do not separate its head from its left edge, as shown in (35).

(35) \([I \{ p \ldots \overset{*}{\text{AGI}} \ldots \} [I \{ p \ldots \overset{(r)}{\text{WH}} \ldots \} ]]\]

Korean nominative subjects do not act as interveners because, as noted by Tomioka, they have the ability to be interpreted as topics. This is illustrated with the sentence in (36) taken from Lee and Cho (2003):

(36) Chelswu-ka tongsaying-i cha-lul sa-ss-ta
Chelswu-NOM brother-NOM car-ACC buy-PAST-DEC
‘As for Chelswu, his brother bought a car.’

\[16\] More investigations are needed in order to determine the prosody of a focus phrase in the configuration represented in (32).
They can thus be associated to the prosodic structure in (35): they do not create a suboptimal prosodic structure because they are not phrased within the same intonational phrase as the wh-phrase.17

3.3 Anti-Given Items or Anti-Topic Items?

Based on Japanese and Korean data, Tomioka argues that information structure and prosody constitute a key to a better understanding of the above-discussed deviant structures. The present approach is closely related to the one offered by this author, who also questions the very existence of “intervention effects”.

To account for the fact that a wh-question is deviant when the intervener precedes the wh-phrase but well-formed when the intervener follows it, Tomioka explicitly takes a stand sometimes implicitly taken in studies on wh-questions, namely, that the wh-phrase always acts as the focus and, most importantly, that the non-wh portion is always given. In other words, he assumes that a question like ‘What did John read?’ “can be uttered only in the situation where the proposition ‘John read x’ is salient” (Tomioka 2007, 1575). This view of wh-questions’ information structure is however hardly consistent with what was observed in languages like French, English and Hindi-Urdu and briefly discussed in Section 2.2.

Observing that the expressions responsible for intervention effects have in common that they are unable to bear a topic marker, he proposes that the deviant status of the questions in which they precede a wh-phrase is the result of their failure to be marked as given. According to him, there are two ways in Japanese for an item within the wh-question to be marked as given: either by carrying topic marking or by being included in the intonationally reduced part of the question that follows the wh-phrase, as in Japanese the post-wh part of the question is always intonationally reduced (see Deguchi and Kitagawa 2002; Ishihara 2003, and references therein). As an anti-topic item cannot be morphologically marked as given, the only way for the wh-question to be well formed is for that item to be marked as given through prosodic means. On this account, Japanese wh-scrambling (and probably Korean wh-scrambling as well) cancels intervention effects by placing the “anti-topic item” within the intonationally reduced part of the wh-question and by thus ensuring that it is correctly interpreted as given.

There are at least two issues with this reasoning. First, topichood and givenness do not necessarily overlap, as there are new topics. Second, the idea that the items following the wh-phrase and sitting within the prosodically reduced part of Japanese and Korean wh-questions are given is based on the reciprocal to the principle that states that discourse-given items should be destressed (see among others Féry and Samek-Lodovici 2006). It has not so far however been shown that destressing is always correlated with givenness.

As explained in Section 2.1, French fronted wh-questions do not present the type of post-wh-phrase prosodic reduction witnessed in Japanese and Korean wh-questions. Considering that French wh-in situ questions only emerge when the non-wh part of the question is given,

17 Another possibility is that, just like English subjects, Korean nominative subjects can be interpreted as given and consequently be deaccented while sitting in their canonical position. This would amount to the following prosodic structure, in which the headless phonological phrase corresponding to the subject does not prevent the head of the intonational phrase from being leftmost in this prosodic constituent:

(i) \[ I \{ p \ldots \text{SUBJ}\ldots\} \{ p \ldots \text{WH}\ldots\} \]
Tomioka’s analysis makes the wrong prediction that French should exhibit no “intervention effects”.

4 Conclusion

In this paper I have concentrated on three languages that show consistent “intervention effects”: French, Japanese and Korean. First, I have proposed that there are no intervention effects per se. The property that unites all the so-called “interveners” is their inherent anti-given status. I have shown that the prosodic correlates of this information-structural property are central in the deviant status of the wh-questions is which an Anti-Given Item (AGI) precedes a wh-phrase in the three investigated languages. In order to account for the difference in strength among the AGIs, two classes of AGIs were distinguished: on the one hand the AGIs that are always associated to a focus reading and thus attract sentence stress and on the other hand those that, if not focused, are treated as new and must at least carry phrasal stress.

The proposed account captures cross-linguistic variations as to which items act as “interveners”: the Japanese and Korean nominal and adverbial quantifiers that do not create deviant structures are the ones that are not phrased within the same intonational phrase as the wh-phrase. It also accounts for why Korean wh-phrases preceded by an AGI are only interpretable as indefinite pronouns. The offered surface-based account to the suboptimal status of wh-questions in which a wh-phrase in preceded by an AGI has the same advantages as Tomioka’s (2007) over previous LF-based accounts of “intervention effects” (see Tomioka 2007, for a comparison) and the same consequences for theoretical syntax and LF movement. Hopefully, it also shows that investigating how information structure is expressed in wh-questions is crucial in order to better account for so-called “intervention effects” and more generally to deeper our understanding of the realization of given and focused items.

References


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