

Why Multiple Clefts Are Disallowed

This paper presents an analysis of clefts in Korean, where *wh*-expressions cannot be cleft along with another constituent. We claim that the ungrammaticality of such constructions is due to crossing dependencies (having to do with focus association vs. interrogative interpretation), as discussed in Büring 2006, and that examples which *seem* like multiple clefts are in fact regular (single) clefts or echo questions. Our proposal is a further step in elucidating the relation between interrogatives and focus constructions.

As shown in (1), multiple clefts with *wh*-expressions are typically disallowed, unlike multiple clefts such as (2), which do not involve a *wh*-expression. This pattern is repeated in English abbreviated questions such as *Why bother?* (vs. the ungrammatical **When bother?*). All examples of true multiple clefts involve pairs of focused elements, and *wh*-phrases appear to elude such pairings with other phrases (whether *wh*- or not). The illicitness of such pairings has the same cause as that of (3b), which can be schematized as (4a); similarly, in (1), the dependency between the focused and focus-sensitive elements, and the dependency between the interrogative complement and the *wh*-expression, intersect, as shown in (4b).

More homogenous multiple clefts such as (2) *are* allowed, since both cleft expressions associate with one and the same focusing element, quite possibly forming one constituent, although the frequent employment of cleft constructions as a diagnostic for constituency and the heterogeneity of results from the various constituency tests make it difficult to confirm that conjecture. The crucial point, however, is that no crossing dependency is involved in (2), in contrast with (1).

We predict multiple clefts to be fully grammatical when the *wh*-expression originates high enough that its dependency on the interrogative operator is not disturbed by another dependency, or when the *wh*-expression does not rely on an interrogative operator for its interpretation, as in the case of echo questions. Both predictions are borne out, as shown in (5) and (7) respectively. In the case of (5), we assume, along with Ko 2005, that *way* ‘why’ is merged in [Spec,CP], and thus need not cross over the focus projection that ‘that paper’ associates with, as schematized in (6). This hypothesis is fully confirmed by the interpretation of these sentences: as Kawamura (2006) points out for the Japanese counterpart of (5), such questions ask for the reason ‘that paper’ is singled out, rather than inquire after why Chomsky will present it. Returning to (7), this example is grammatical only with a rising intonation and as an echo question, since the echo *wh*-expression does not have to associate with an interrogative operator. In this we follow Artstein 2002, which attributes the distinction between regular and echo *wh*-questions to the distinct mechanism involved in the interpretation of these latter—focus interpretation *in situ*.

In languages such as Sinhala (cf. Kishimoto 1992), both interrogatives and focus constructions are expressed through the same means. Also, it is difficult to overlook the uncanny similarity between representative analyses for each (Hamblin 1973 on interrogatives and Rooth 1985 on focus, among others). In light of these facts, the relation between focused constituents and *wh*-phrases looms as an intriguing point. Although we do not as yet offer a complete answer to this question, we believe that our work contributes to a better understanding of interrogatives vs. focus.

- (1) *[Chomsky -ka Seoul -(ey)se palphyohanun ket] -un encey ku nonmwun
 Chomsky -NOM Seoul -at present COMP TOP when that paper
 i -ya?
 COP -Q
 Intended interpretation: ‘When is it that paper that Chomsky is presenting in Seoul?’
- (2) [Chomsky -ka palphyohanun ket] -un Seoul -(ey)se ku nonmwun (i)ta
 Chomsky -NOM present COMP TOP Seoul -at that paper COP
 ‘It is that paper in Seoul that Chomsky will present.’
- (3) a. What did John only eat in PARIS?
 b. #John only ate CRÊpes in PARIS. [R. Schwarzschild, Buring 2006]
- (4) a. [John only_{F1} ate crêpes_{F2} in Paris_{F1}] ~₂ CC [Buring 2006¹: 15]
 b. [_{CP} C_Q ... [_{FocP} ... [_{IP} ... when_Q ... that.paper_{Foc} ...]]]
- (5) [Chomsky -ka Seoul -(ey)se palphyohanun ket] -un way ku nonmwun i
 Chomsky -NOM Seoul -at present COMP TOP why that paper COP
 -ya?
 -Q
 ‘Why is it that paper that Chomsky is presenting in Seoul?’
- (6) [_{CP} why_Q C_Q ... [_{FocP} ... [_{IP} ... that.paper_{Foc} ...]]]
- (7) [Chomsky -ka Seoul -(ey)se palphyohanun ket] -un encey ku nonmwun
 Chomsky -NOM Seoul -at present COMP TOP when that paper
 i -ya? (Acceptable only with rising intonation; otherwise identical to (1))
 COP -Q
 ‘It is that paper that Chomsky is presenting in Seoul WHEN?’

References

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¹CC = Buring’s (2006: 8) constant “*ContextConnect*, which says that there must be a salient antecedent in the context whose meaning is an element of the set of propositions introduced by ~”.