

PA6.2 – Multiple *wh*-questions: Ex-situ/in-situ variation in Avatime

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I. The form-meaning mismatch

- Multiple *wh*-questions are an instance of many:1 form-meaning mismatches.
- Wh*-elements can remain in base position (in-situ), or be moved (ex-situ). Avatime multiple *wh*-questions exhibit optional or constrained movement

- (1) Nyawé a-ŋa egè kivoé? (Avatime)
who.FOC 3SG-eat what yesterday
'Who ate what yesterday?
- (2) Egé nyawè a-ŋa kivoé?
what.FOC who 3SG-eat yesterday
'What did who eat yesterday?

Problem: By far, research has focused on Indo-European languages to establish the typology of multiple *wh*-questions. A Kwa language like Avatime for example shows a relationship between context, structure, and tone[1] to determine the interpretation of multiple *wh*-question.

Goal: Establish the structure of multiple *wh*-questions in Avatime, movement conditions and effects.

• Research questions

- What determines the ordering of multiple *wh*-phrases?
- What are the prosodic effects on the *wh*-phrases in multiple *wh*-type structures in Avatime?
- Do we observe effects of d-linking in Avatime? If so, how do they interact with tone?
- How do information structural properties like being focal vs. topical affect ordering preferences? Which role does contrast play?

II. Methodology and hypotheses

Method

- Starting point: A typology of Avatime questions.
- Identify syntactic, semantics and pragmatic factors that determine the varying forms e.g., d-linking, crossover effects, superiority or anti-superiority effects etc.
- Experimental studies; acceptability and truth value judgement test, context-driven elicitation tasks.

Fieldwork in Avatime Gbadzeme with adult speakers ranging from 18 years and above.

Hypothesis

- The interpretation of scope and focus is determined by prosody and discourse context rather than syntactic hierarchy.

III. Expected results and discussion

- The basic word order in Avatime is **SVO**. Object can also be preposed giving the sequence OSV.

Discussion

- How do ordering preferences observable in declaratives relate to those we find in interrogatives?
- How do the differences in the complexity of *wh*-phrases affect the serializing preferences?

Expectations

- Superiority effects, although basically syntactic in nature can be affected by pragmatics since context can affect which *wh*-element can be placed highest at Spec CP and which one can remain in-situ if only one can be moved.
- Types and distribution of tones by means of encoding different question structures:
 - A *wh*-item is marked by a high tone only in case it is in Spec CP.
 - With multiple fronting, the high tone is realized on the highest *wh*-element.
 - In single fronting, the in-situ element retains a low tone.

IV. Consequences and follow-up questions

- Ex situ/in situ variation in *wh*-questions is a multi-factorial phenomenon.
- Information structural properties like topicality/focality, and interpretive effects (e.g., pair-list readings) interact with the basic syntactic superiority effect.
- Given the expected outcomes of PA6.2 from Avatime, the picture is complicated by a further factor: tone
- This raises follow-up questions about the relation of tonal properties of *wh*-questions to syntactic structure on the one hand, and to information structure on the other hand.
- With respect to PA6.3, the effects of tone raise intricate theoretical and empirical question, among which are the following:
 - What exactly is the role of prosody in the amelioration in superiority effects?
 - How do prosodic factors affect the online processing of multiple *wh*-questions in general?
 - How do tonal and prosodic factors interact in the processing of multiple *wh*-questions in tonal languages?
 - Are information structural/pragmatic properties able to override processing preferences that are tied to structural and/or tonal configurations? If so, what are the relevant properties?