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Wh-words in time

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Introduction

- Diachronic dimensions of wh-words (syntax/morphology):

  - <u>Morphology</u>: etymology/historical origin of wh-words (focus: Indoeuropean)

  - <u>Syntax</u>: the rise and fall of wh-movement

  - <u>Morphosyntax</u>: further evolution of wh-constructions (wh-relatives, in particular)

- The majority of these aspects are still underresearched…

The historical origin of wh-words

- Origin of wh-words in Proto-Indoeuropean (PIE) (cf. Gonda 1954 for an overview):

  - PIE roots *k^wi- and *k^we-/*k^wo- (cf. Latin *quis, quo, quid, quem* etc.; Ital. *quando*: pronominal elements that could be used both as indefinites and interrogatives (cf. e.g. Brugmann 1911: 348)

    - *k^wi- → wh-nominals ('who', 'what' etc.)

    - *k^we-/*k^wo- → wh-adjectives/wh-determiners ('which')

  - Which function was primary? Two camps:

    1. *k^wi-/*k^wo- were originally indefinites; interrogative pronouns are a secondary development (Meillet, Hirt and others).

    2. The interrogative use is older; indefinite pronouns developed from former interrogative forms (Miklosich, Frei, Leumann and others).

The historical origin of wh-words: indefinites?

- <u>General idea (Meillet 1922, Hirt 1937 and others)</u>:
  - indefinite + special position (and/or focus/stress) = interrogative
- <u>Arguments in favor of an indefinite origin of wh-words</u>:
  - **Ablaut**: Hirt (1937) takes $*k^w i$- to exhibit a zero grade vowel, which is typical of unstressed/enclitic elements ⇒ indefinite origin, since interrogative pronouns are typically stressed/focused.
  - **The impact of stress/syntactic movement**:
    - wh-words in-situ (deaccented): indefinite reading
    - wh-words + movement/fronting (+accent/stress): interrogative reading

The historical origin of wh-words: indefinites?

- Problems/questions:
  - A zero grade analysis of *$k^w i$-* implies the existence of an older form *$k^w ei$-,* which is proposed by only very few people (including Hirt himself; see also Pokorny 1959)
  - The adjectival stem *$k^w e$-/*$k^w o$-* exhibits a non-reduced full grade/o-grade vowel, which is not expected under Hirt's scenario.
  - The hypothesis implies that there was a time when the interrogative function was not expressed (at least not by the elements in question), which seems quite odd from a typological perspective.

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The historical origin of wh-words: interrogatives?

- General idea(s) (Miklosich 1874, Frei 1940, Leumann, Hofmann & Szantyr 1972: 459):
  - a. interrogative – focus/stress = indefinite
  - b. interrogative + morphological marking = indefinite
- Arguments in favor of an interrogative origin of wh-words:
  - In many languages, indefinites are derived from simple wh-words by adding morphological material (cf. e.g. Haspelmath 1997):
    - reduplication: Lat. *quis* 'who', *quisquis* 'whoever, anybody' Indones. *apa* 'what', *apa-apa* 'anything'
    - neg+wh: Sanskrit *nakis* 'nobody' ($\leftarrow$ neg + *$k^w i$*-); Indones. *apa* 'what', *tiada apa* 'nothing'
    - wh+particle: Lat. *quisque* 'everybody' ($\leftarrow$ *$k^w i$*- + *$k^w e$*-), Engl. *who, whoever*; Jap. *dare* 'who', *dare ka* 'somebody'

  "Haspelmath's generalization"

  Many languages: Question = wh-word; Indefinite = wh-word + morpheme; No language: Indefinite = X; Question = X + morpheme.

The historical origin of wh-words: interrogatives?

- <u>Potential problems</u>:

- The hypothesis implies that there was a time when the indefinite function was not expressed (at least not by the elements in question); again, this seems to be somewhat peculiar from a typological perspective.

- The fact that indefinites can be derived by (a) adding morphological material or (b) loss of stress does not necessarily imply that the interrogative function is more basic:

  - The absence of additional markers does not automatically give rise to an interrogative reading – in many (early) IE languages, bare wh-elements may also be used as indefinites (cf. e.g. Lat. *quis* alongside the extended forms *quisquis*, *quisque*, *aliquis*).

  - Lack of stress/accent on indefinites ≠ loss of stress – "the absence of a feature can also mean that is has never existed" (Gonda 1954: 247)

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The historical origin of wh-words: preliminary conclusions

- Apparent paradox: syntax vs. morphology

  - syntax: wh-word + X (X: movement) = interrogative

  - morphology: wh-word + X (X = additional markers) = indefinite

- Potential solution:

  - Neither the indefinite nor the interrogative function is primary; PIE *k^wi-/*k^wo- were **underspecified** pronominal elements that could express both functions depending on position/syntactic context and/or intonation (cf. already Delbrück 1893: 521; Brugmann 1911: 348, and Gonda 1954; cf. also Roland's talk):

  - "the I.E. *k^u-pronouns [...], expressed the idea of unspecified individuality; [...] The *k^u- pronouns had, or 'obtained', their special functions only in the syntactic surroundings – including position in the sentence, sentence modulation etc." (Gonda 1954: 266)

    - movement/focus = interrogative; in-situ/deaccented: indefinite (alternative: explicit morphological marking)

  - (some) **syntactic** contexts that turn bare wh-words into indefinites (Gonda 1954; Tran & Brüning 2010 on Vietnamese):

    - negation
    - yes/no questions
    - protasis of conditionals

The historical origin of wh-words: research questions

- How can we express the link between indefinites and interrogatives in a formal way?
  - Brüning & Tsai 2009 (following Hamblin 1973 and Kratzer & Shimoyama 2002):
    - bare (interrogative) wh-words introduce a set of alternatives
    - indefinite = wh + ∃;
  - But: Again, this assumes that the interrogative use is more basic...
  - alternative assuming an underspecified basic form:

    +X → indefinite (X = morphology, scope of other operators)

    wh

    +Y → interrogative (Y = focus, ...)
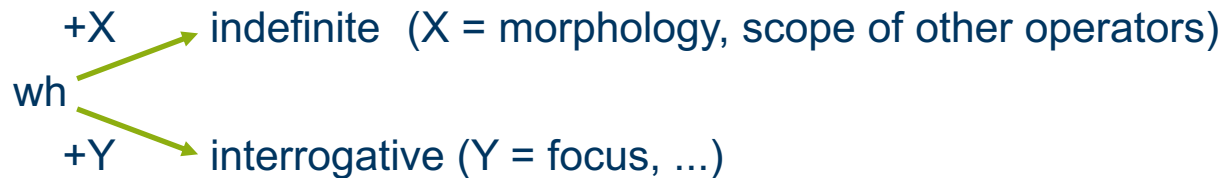
- <u>Rise of new wh-words/wh-phrases</u>:
  - alternative pathways leading to wh-words (e.g. Ital. *(che) cosa*)?
  - differences between wh-arguments (relatively stable) and wh-adjuncts (Cecilia's work on 'where' in Romance)

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The rise and fall of wh-movement

- The previous discussion has already suggested that there is a connection between movement and an interrogative reading of wh-words.

  - (Caveat: Of course, (overt) movement is not a necessary ingredient for interrogatives. In fact, in-situ strategies are cross-linguistically more common (WALS))

- However, not much is known about diachronic aspects of wh-movement...

The loss of wh-movement

- Loss of wh-movement/rise of in-situ strategies:

  - Japanese: Watanabe (2002)

  - Iraqi Arabic: Simpson (2004)

  - Chinese: Aldridge (2009)

  - Basque: Duguine & Irurtzun (2014)

  - Brazilian Portuguese: Kato & Duarte (2002), Kato (2013)

  - French: Foulet (1921), de Boer (1926), Matthieu (2004).

- Potential account: wh-movement is masked by other operations

  - Watanabe (2002): Increasing rate of subject topicalization blurred the evidence for wh-movement to the left of the subject.

  - Simpson (2004): wh-movement is never lost, but merely concealed by other movement operations:

    - multiple topicalization operations (cf. Simpson & Bhattacharya 2003 on Bengali)

    - pied-piping of larger chunks containing the wh-phrase

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The rise of wh-movement

- <u>Rise of wh-movement</u>: Similar to other related phenomena (verb movement, scrambling etc.) the historical emergence of movement operations has rarely been observed.

- <u>Clefts as a likely candidate</u>: In many (wh-in situ) languages, wh-questions may be formed by an alternative strategy that involves clefts and is linked to focus:

  - Bantu (cf. e.g. Sabel & Zeller 2006, Van der Wal & Maniacky 2015, Zentz 2016)

  - Niger-Congo (cf. e.g. Adesola 2006 on Yoruba)

  - Austronesian (Georgopoulos 1991; Paul 2000; Pearson 2001; Massam 2003; Aldridge 2004; Potsdam 2006, 2009; Aldridge 2013)
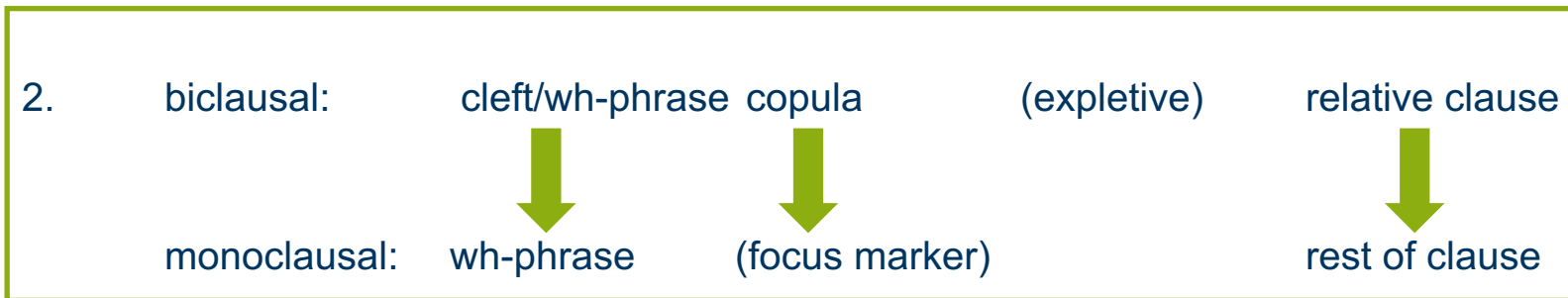
- Example: Indonesian (cf. e.g. Sneddon 1996)

(1) a. Dia menulis apa?   wh-in-situ
        he   wrote   what

     b. Siapa yang menulis buku ini?   w-ex-situ A (*yang* also introduces relative clauses)
        who   REL wrote   book this

     c. Siapa ∅ menulis buku ini?   w-ex-situ B (without *yang*; accepted by some speakers)

The rise of wh-movement

- Reanalysis of an originally biclausal cleft structure (with the wh-element base-generated in the upper clause) as a monoclausal structure (with wh-movement):

(2)   [Who is it [that ate the fish]]? → Who$_{[+foc]}$ ate the fish?

1.	biclausal:	(expletive)	copula	cleft/wh-phrase	relative clause
	monoclausal:		(focus marker)	focused phrase/ wh-phrase	rest of clause

2.	biclausal:	cleft/wh-phrase	copula	(expletive)	relative clause
	monoclausal:	wh-phrase	(focus marker)		rest of clause
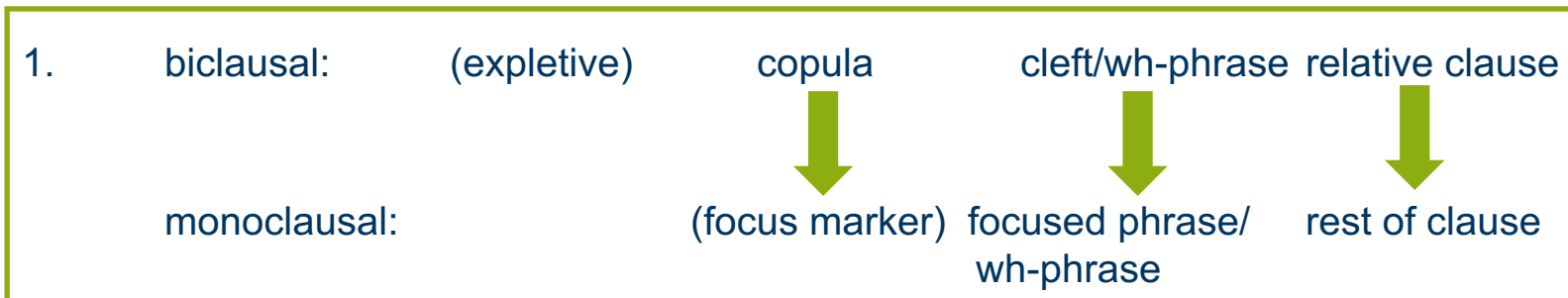
- cf. e.g. Harris & Campbell 1995, Harris 2001, Hartmann & Zimmermann 2006, Jendraschek 2009, Tailleur 2013 (on the development of *Wh-est-ce-que*), Van der Wal & Maniacky 2015, Zentz 2016

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The rise and fall of wh-movement: research questions

- Are clefts the only diachronic pathway to wh-fronting? Or are there other potential sources for wh-ex-situ (cf. e.g. Hirt 1937 on Indo-European)?

- Is wh-movement always a focus strategy, or may it grammaticalize further leading to some abstract 'fossilized' EPP[+wh]-feature that triggers movement?

- Is there a link between the rise of wh-movement and the etymology/historical development of wh-pronouns?

- Did wh-movement evolve as a strategy to distinguish between interrogative and indefinite functions of one and the same pronominal element in Indo-European?

- Which factors/developments can lead to a situation where wh-movement cannot any longer be detected by the learner? Is it really plausible to attribute relevant changes to shifts in usage frequencies (cf. e.g. Kroch 2001 for a critical assessment)?

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The evolution of wh-relatives

- <u>Well-known fact</u>: In many IE languages, wh-words turned into relative pronouns (cf. Delbrück 1893: 389ff., Gonda 1954 on early IE languages; Truswell & Gisborne 2015, Gisborne & Truswell 2017, Gisborne & Truswell 2018).

  - both d- and wh-relativizers are rare cross-linguistically (de Vries 2002), but very common in the IE family (Comrie 1998: European areal feature)

  - wh-relativizers are not inherited from PIE; they evolved repeatedly in various daughter languages (polycentric/parallel evolution, Gisborne & Truswell 2018)

- <u>Early IE development</u>: original relative stem *yo- is replaced by *k^wi- and *k^we-/*k^wo- (Indo-Iranian, Greek, Balto-Slavic families)

- <u>Germanic</u>: relative d-pronouns are replaced by wh-forms (ongoing change for ≈1.000 years, cf. e.g. Fleischmann 1973; Fuß 2016, 2018; Coniglio & Paul 2019 on German; Brandt & Fuß 2014, 2018 on present-day German)

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The evolution of wh-relatives

- <u>General diachronic pathway (cf. Radek's and Olga's talks)</u>:

(3)   wh-interrogatives/-indefinites (in various constructions) →
       generalizing/free choice free relatives → individuating/specific free relatives →
       headed relatives (subject to language-specific restrictions)

- <u>Language-specific developments depending on</u>:

  - the constructions that were reanalyzed as free wh-relatives

  - the specific contexts in which free relatives (FRs) were reanalyzed as headed relatives

  - the set of wh-elements that were affected by these reanalyses (headed relatives).

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The evolution of wh-relatives: free relatives

- <u>Three scenarios</u>:

1. Traditional idea (cf. e.g. Gonda 1954) – reanalysis of indefinites in conditionals:

(4) '[earns wh-SOMEONE money] he should keep it' → '[who-REL earns money] should keep it.'

2. Reanalysis of cases where a wh-indefinite is modified by an adverbial element *sô* and a corresponding relative clause (Paul 1920: 199; Jespersen 1954 on OE):

(5) a. [NP sô hwer [CPrel sô ...]] 'such one as ...'
     b. [NP sô hwer [CPrel ∅ ...]]
     c. [NP swer [CPrel ∅ ...]] ⇒ [free CPrel (s)wer ...] (Middle High German, MHG)

- Gisborne & Truswell 2018: (5) is actually linked to (4) (see also Paul 2007 on the conditional interpretation of FRs in MHG):

(6) [eal swa hwæt swa ic þe gehet]   [eal ic hit gesette] (Gisborne & Truswell 2018: 26)
     all so   what so I thee promised   all I it appoint
     'If I promised you anything, I will do it.'
     'Whatever I promised you, I will do it all.

The evolution of wh-relatives: free relatives

- Three scenarios:

3. Reanalysis of indirect questions as free relatives: Ambiguous cases in connection with verba dicendi/sentiendi, which may license a propositional or nominal complement (cf. e.g. Hogg & Denison 2006 on OE):

(7)   uuanda si   ne-uuizzen [uuaz sî   tuônt] ⇒... [free CPrel uuaz sî tuônt]
       since   they NEG-know   what they do
       (N_Ps_Glossen_18_56-59 (edition 75 - 95))

- German: Relative wh-pronouns were initially confined to free relatives with indefinite/generalizing readings, while d-FRs expressed definite and individuating readings (cf. e.g. Paul 1920: 199ff.).

The evolution of wh-relatives: headed relatives

- Reanalysis of appositive free relatives (cf. Paul 1920: 206f.; Behaghel 1928: 726; Truswell & Gisborne 2015, Gisborne & Truswell 2017 on OE)).

- Extraposed wh-relatives are often structurally ambiguous:
  - appositive free relative that provides additional information linked to a nominal expression
  - headed (restrictive) relative that modifies a nominal expression

- This ambiguity might lead to syntactic reanalysis:

(8)   quaemet inti gisehet [thia stat] [$_{free\ CPrel}$ uuar   trohtin gilegit   uuas]
        come   and see   the place   where Lord   laid-to-grave was

        quaemet inti gisehet [thia stat   [$_{headed\ CPrel}$ uuar trohtin gilegit uuas]]

- This reanalysis first affected contexts that fitted the indefinite/generalizing semantics of wh-words (*alles+was*, in particular, Paul 1920: 206, Behaghel 1928: 726)).

The evolution of wh-relatives: headed relatives

(9)   dhazs sie   ni   eigun <u>eouuihd</u> [**huuazs**   sie   dhar   uuidar setzan].
            that   they not own   anything, what.REL they there   against set
            'that they do not possess anything that they set against it'
            (Isidor IX.12, Eg. 719)

- Another context: d-pronouns as antecedents:

(10) vnder diesen allen ist keiner <u>das</u>, [**was**   er   seyn will]
       among these   all   is nobody that what he be   want
       'among all these people, nobody is what he wants to be'
       (Hans Michael Moscherosch, Gesichte Philanders von Sittewald; Alsatian, 1650)

- <u>Present-day colloquial German</u>: Extension to neuter nouns:

(11)   "Wir waren zu statisch in der 2.   Halbzeit.
            we   were   too static   in the 2nd half
            Das 0:0 ist <u>ein Ergebnis</u>**,** [**was** für uns nicht zufriedenstellend ist]."
            the 0:0 is   a   result   what for us not   satisfactory   is
            'A draw is a result that is not satisfactory for us.'
            (dpa, 22.08.2008; Magerkost in Hannover: 96 und Energie Cottbus trennen sich torlos)

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The evolution of wh-relatives: lexical choices

- Languages may differ with regard to the set of wh-elements that are used in headed relatives (Germanic):

  - English: *who*, but not *what*

  - German: *what* (to some extent), but not *who*

  - Dutch: *who* (in PPs and oblique cases), *what* (subject to similar restrictions as in German)

- Replacement of d-pronouns by wh-elements is possibly shaped by (Fuß 2018):

  - properties of the gender system ⇒ in headed relatives, 'who' is only possible after the loss of grammatical gender (otherwise, the presence of semantic gender on personal wh-forms leads to a feature mismatch between antecedent and relative pronoun)

  - German: The transition from *das* 'that' to *was* 'what' involved a reanalysis in which an originally semantically motivated distribution ([–def] → wh-, elsewhere → d-) was attributed to morphosyntactic properties ([+gender] → d-, elsewhere → wh-)

The evolution of wh-relatives: research questions

- Are there alternative pathways to (headed) wh-relatives?

- How can we account for fine-grained differences between the relevant developments in various (Indo-European) languages (for instance, it seems that in English early wh-relatives favor oblique wh-words, while in German, 'what' seems to play a special role)?

- Is the restricted areal distribution of wh-relatives linked to borrowing (cf. Gisborne & Truswell 2018 for discussion)?

- Can the observation that there seem to be recurring pathways of change in different languages be attributed to a common feature/property of wh-words? (cf. e.g. Gisborne & Truswell 2018)

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