

The typology of *wh*-interrogatives in Tigrinya

Ethio-Semitic languages are generally characterized as being *wh-in-situ* languages (Girma 2003). We discuss the nature of content questions in Tigrinya (Semitic; Ethiopia & Eritrea; SOV), where *wh*-questions permit a relatively “free” word order.

Goals. We argue that this apparent freedom is explained by recognizing three distinct strategies of *wh*-interrogatives, each with varying syntactic and semantic properties: (i) *wh*-in-situ, (ii) *wh*-fronting + V-to-C movement, and (iii) *wh*-fronting (without V-to-C).

Evidence. *Wh-in-situ constructions* involve *wh*-phrases surfacing in their argument/adjunct position in an altogether SOV sentence. Like in some other typical *wh-in-situ* languages (e.g. Mandarin Chinese; Huang 1982, 1995), they allow wide scope reading in embedded contexts, both pair-list and single-pair readings, and they display WCO and island effects (with argument-adjunct asymmetries).

The *wh*-movement strategy involves movement of the finite verb along with fronting of the *wh*-phrase. Consistent with other standard *wh*-movement languages (e.g., English), it exhibits core properties of *wh*-movement: it allows long-distance movement, it disallows pair-list readings, and displays reconstruction effects, WCO effects, and strong island effects.

The third strategy only involves a fronted *wh*-phrase in clause-initial position with no adjacency with the verb, which remains in a lower position. Some syntactic and semantic properties give rise to meaningful differences compared to the other strategies. For example, this strategy does not display island effects (1), even though it allows reconstruction (2); it also suppresses pair-list reading (4) compared to the *wh-in-situ* strategy (3).

- (1) nimən salam [yared siləzi-rəxəb-ə] təhag^wis-a?
who(m) Selam Yared since-find.PF-3fsg.S be.happy.PF-3fsg.S
‘Who did Selam get excited because Yared met?’
- (2) [ʔayənay nənayhidhidom siʔlitat] salam-n yared-n yi-fətw-u?
which each-other pictures Selam-& Yared-& 3-like.PF-3pl.S
‘Which pictures of each other do Selam and Yared like?’
- (3) a. Q: kullu-wəddi mis-mən kis’awət dəly-u?
all-boy with-who playing want.PF-3msg.S
‘Who did every boy want to play with?’
b. A1: With Selam.
c. A2: Yared with Selam, John with Saba, and Haben with Sarah.
- (4) a. Q: mis-mən (dəly-u) kullu-wəddi kis’awət dəly-u?
with-who want.PF-3msg.S all-boy playing
‘With whom did every boy want to play?’
b. A1: With Selam.
c. A2: #Yared with Selam, John with Saba, and Haben with Sarah.

We demonstrate that, concerning the third strategy, analyses in terms of (pseudo-)clefting or topicalization, which have been argued to circumvent island violations in certain cases (cf. Huang, Li & Li 2009 on Chinese topics; Hiraiwa & Ishihara 2002 on Japanese pseudo-clefts), are untenable, because this construction does not display the expected semantic effects.

Selected references • Demeke, Girma Awgichew . 2003. *The Clausal Syntax of Ethio-Semitic*. PhD thesis. U. Tromsø. • Hiraiwa, Ken and Shinichiro Ishihara. 2002. Missing Links: Cleft, Sluicing, and “No da” Construction in Japanese. MITWPL 43: 35-54. • Horvath, Julia. 2013. Focus, exhaustivity and the syntax of Wh-interrogatives. Brandtler, Molnár & Platzack (eds.), *Approaches to Hungarian 13*, 97–132. Amsterdam: Benjamins. • Huang, James C.-T., Y.-H. Audrey Li, and Yafei Li. 2009. *The syntax of Chinese*. Cambridge: CUP.