

# Wh-constructions: Questions and relative clauses

Tallerman, Chapter 8

# WH-questions: Languages with wh-movement

- English (movement to C position, leaving a gap)
  - Jack put the book on the table.
  - **Where** did Jack put the book \_\_\_\_.
  - **What** did Jack put \_\_\_\_ on the table.
  - **Who** \_\_\_\_ put the book on the table?
- Wh words: *who, what, which, where, when, why, how*
- Wh-movement does not change grammatical relations

– Welsh (movement to beginning of sentence,  
prior to finite verb)

- *Gwelais* i ddraig yn yr ardd  
saw:1SG I dragon in the garden  
‘I saw a dragon in the garden.’
- **Beth** *welaist* ti \_\_\_\_ yn yr ardd?  
What saw:2SG you in the garden  
‘What did you see in the garden?’

- Wh-landing site is a position immediately before the complementizer (C)
  - Frisian
    - **Wat** *oft* ik drinke woe?  
 what whether I drink would  
 ‘What would I drink?’
  - Colloquial Moroccan Arabic
    - **M<sup>c</sup>amn** *lli* hdarti?  
 with.whom that you:spoke  
 ‘Who did you speak to?’

- Wh-movement also occurs in embedded clauses:
  - I know [**who** has studied for the final exam].
  - They wonder [**which cereal** John had for breakfast].
  - Bill persuaded John to ask [**where** Mary put the books]
- Where is the gap for these wh-phrases?
- What category is the wh-phrase?
- How do embedded questions differ from matrix questions in English?

# Languages with in-situ wh-questions

- English echo questions:
  - Kim put the book on **which table**?
  - Sue bought **how many copies** of that wonderful book?
- Echo questions are used to express incredulity or to clarify part of what the addressee said.

- Many languages (e.g. Chinese, Japanese, Korean) use in situ strategy even for ordinary questions

- Japanese

- Hanako-ga kinoo [tomodati-to] [susi-o] tukurimasita  
Hanako-NOM yesterday friend-with sushi-ACC made  
‘Hanako made sushi with her friends yesterday.’
- Hanako-ga kinoo [**dare**-to] [susi-o] tukurimasita  
Hanako-NOM yesterday who-with sushi-ACC made  
‘Who did Hanako make sushi with \_\_\_\_ yesterday?’
- Hanako-ga kinoo [tomodati to] [**nani**-o] tukurimasita.  
Hanako-NOM yesterday friend-with what-ACC made  
‘What did Hanako make \_\_\_\_ with her friends yesterday?’

- Some languages allow both strategies

- French

- Tu vois Pierre ce soir.  
you see:2SG Pierre this evening  
‘You’re seeing Pierre this evening.’
    - **Qui** tu vois \_\_\_ ce soir?  
who you see:2SG this evening  
‘Who are you seeing \_\_\_ this evening?’
    - Tu vois **qui** ce soir?  
you see:2SG who this evening  
‘Who are you seeing \_\_\_ this evening?’



# Multiple wh-questions

## – English

- Fred put the book on the table.
- **What** did Fred put **where**?
- \***What where** did Fred put?

## – Bulgarian

- **Kogo** vižda John.  
Who sees John.  
‘Who does John see?’
- **Koj kogo** vidjal?  
Who whom saw  
‘Who saw whom?’

– Japanese

- Taroo-ga [Yosiko-ni] [hon-o  
Taroo-NOM Yoshiko-DATIVE book-ACC  
ni-satu] ageta  
two-CLASSIFIER gave  
‘Taroo gave two books to Yoshiko.’
- Taroo-ga [dari-ni] [nani-o] ageta no?  
Taroo-NOM who-DATIVE what-ACC gave QU  
‘Who did Taroo give what?’

– Malagasy

- **Iza** no nividy **inona**?  
who PRT bought what  
‘Who bought what?’
- Anasan’ **iza inona** ny savony?  
washes who what the soap  
‘Who washes what with the soap.’
- **Aiza inona** no vidinao?  
where what PRT buy:2  
‘Where do you buy what?’

# Focus & Topic Preposing

- English Topicalization:
  - How do you feel about vegetables?
  - BEANS I LIKE \_\_, but CARROTS I can't STAND\_\_.
- English Focus Preposing:
  - They got a new dog.
  - FIDO they named it \_\_.

– Welsh focus prreposing

- Oedd fy ffrind yn dweud ei hanes wrth yr athro heddiw  
was my friend PROG tell her story to the teacher today  
'My friend was telling her story to the teacher today.'
- [<sub>PP</sub> wrth yr athro] oedd fy ffrind yn dweud ei hanes \_\_ heddiw  
to the teacher was my friend PROG tell her story today  
'It was [to the teacher] that my friend was telling her story today.'
- [<sub>VP</sub> dweud ei hanes wrth yr athro] oedd fy ffrind \_\_ heddiw.  
Tell her story to the teacher was my friend today  
'??It was [telling her story to the teacher] that my friend was today.'

– Hungarian pre-verbal focus position

- Péter olvasta a könyvet.  
Peter read:DEF the book:ACC  
‘Peter read/was reading the book.’
- Péter **a könyvet** olvasta  
Peter the book:ACC read:DEF  
‘It’s a book that Peter read.’

– Scrambling in Japanese

- Kinoo Taroo-ga Ginza-de susi-o tabeta.  
Yesterday Taroo-NOM Ginza-in sushi-ACC eat:PAST  
‘Taro ate sushi in Ginza yesterday.’
- Taroo-ga Ginza-de Kinoo susi-o tabeta.  
Kinoo susi-o Taroo-ga Ginza-de tabeta.  
Susi-o kinoo Taroo-ga Ginza-de tabeta.  
Ginza-de Taroo-ga kinoo susi-o tabeta.  
Kinoo Ginza-de susi-o Taroo-ga tabeta.