

Ling 315:
The Semantics of Questions
WiSe 2012-2013

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This advanced seminar studies the semantics of different types of questions, including constituent questions, *yes/no* questions, and alternative questions. Particular attention will be paid to certain syntactic issues (e.g. surface and LF scope), morphological make-up (e.g. distribution of question-marking particles) and phonological aspects (e.g. focal intonation) that have an impact on the compositional derivation of question meanings in different languages. Furthermore, we will investigate several aspects of the resulting question meaning, such as degrees of exhaustivity, weak islands, epistemic bias, the relation between questions and conditionals, and embedding properties of alternative questions.

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Office hours: Thursdays 12-13h

COURSE PREREQUISITES

Background on semantics at least equivalent to Ling115.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Attendance to the lectures
- Class presentation of a paper (Referat)
- Short presentation of your term paper (Hausarbeit) as work in progress at the Mini-Conference
- Term paper (Hausarbeit) due shortly after the end of classes

SCHEDULE (approximate dates)

October 23	<p>Introduction General background in compositional semantics Heim, I. and A. Kratzer. 1998. <i>Semantics in Generative Grammar</i>. Blackwell.</p>
October 30 Nov. 13 Nov. 20	<p>Semantic composition of <i>wh</i>-questions Hamblin, C. L. 1973. Questions in Montague English. <i>Foundations of Language</i> 10: 41-53. Karttunen, L. 1977. Syntax and Semantics of Questions. <i>Linguistics and Philosophy</i> 1: 3-44. Groenendijk, J. and M. Stokhof. 1984. <i>Studies on the Semantics of Questions and the Pragmatics of Answers</i>. Dissertation, University of Amsterdam. Heim, I. (1994a). Interrogative Semantics and Karttunen's Semantics for <i>know</i>. In A. Mittwoch et al. (eds.) <i>Proceedings of the Israeli Association for Theoretical Linguistics</i>. Jerusalem.</p>
Nov. 6	<p>Invited lecture: M. Teresa ESPINAL (U. Autònoma de Barcelona)</p>
Nov. 27 Dec. 4	<p>Weak Islands in <i>wh</i>-questions Rullmann, Hotze. 1995. Negative Islands and Maximality. In V. Samiian and J. Schaeffer, eds., <i>Proceedings of the Western Conference on Linguistics</i>, WECOL, vol. 7, pp. 210-223. California State University, Fresno. Fox, D. and M. Hackl. 2006. The universal density of measurement. <i>Linguistics and Philosophy</i> 29: 537-586. Abrusán, M. 2007. Islands of contradiction: Presuppositional and negative islands. <i>Proceedings of SALT 18</i>. Dočekal, M. and I. Kučerová. 2012. Focus on weak islands. Talk at <i>SinFonIJA V</i>.</p>
Dec. 11 Dec. 18	<p>Crosslinguistic variation in <i>wh</i>-questions Hagstrom, P. 2001. Particle movement in Sinhala and Japanese. Ms. Boston University. [SINHALA, JAPANESE] Shimoyama, Junko. 2006. Indeterminate phrase quantification in Japanese. <i>Natural Language Semantics</i> 14:139-173. [JAPANESE] Dayal, V. 2000. Scope Marking: Cross-linguistic Variation in Indirect Dependency. In U. Lutz, G. Mueller and A. von Stechow, eds., <i>Wh-Scope Marking</i>. John Benjamins, pp. 157-193. [HINDI, GERMAN, ENGLISH] Escandell Vidal, V. 1999. Los enunciados interrogativos. Aspectos semánticos y pragmáticos. In I. Bosque and V. Demonte, eds., <i>Gramática descriptiva de la lengua española</i>. Espasa. Pp. 3929-3991. [SPANISH] Haida, A. 2007. <i>The indefiniteness and focusing of wh-words</i>. PhD thesis. Humboldt University Berlin. Chapter 7. [HUNG., SOTHO, GURUNE, etc.]</p>
Jan. 8 Jan. 15	<p>Yes/no questions EPISTEMIC BIAS: Romero, M. and C.-H. Han. 2004. On Negative Yes/No Questions. <i>Linguistics and Philosophy</i> 27: 609-658. Krifka, M. 2012. Negated polarity questions and denegations of assertions. Ms. Humboldt Univ.</p>

	<p>Yes/no questions, Continued</p> <p>ASSOCIATION WITH FOCUS IN TURKISH: Kamali, B. 2012. On Focus and Topic in Yes/No Questions in Turkish. Handout. Possibly an invited talk!</p>
<p>Jan 22</p> <p>Jan 29</p> <p>Feb 5</p>	<p>Alternative questions</p> <p>SCOPE OF DISJUNCTION: Larson, R. 1985. On the syntax of disjunction scope. <i>Natural Language and Linguistic Theory</i> 3: 217–264. Schwarz, B. 1999. On the syntax of <i>either...or</i>. <i>Natural Language and Linguistic Theory</i> 17: 339–370. Han, C.-H. and M. Romero. 2004. The Syntax of <i>Whether/Q...Or</i> Questions: Ellipsis Combined with Movement, <i>Natural Language and Linguistic Theory</i> 22: 527-564.</p> <p>RELATION TO CONDITIONALS: Rawlins, K. 2008. <i>(Un)conditionals: An investigation in the syntax and semantics of conditional structures</i>. Ph.D. diss, UCSC. Onea, E. and M. Steinbach. 2011. Where questions, conditionals and topics converge. In M. Aloni, ed., <i>Amsterdam Colloquium 2011</i>. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer. Pp. 42-51.</p> <p>EMBEDDING PROPERTIES: Abels, K. 2004. Why surprise-predicates do not embed polar interrogatives. In <i>Linguistische Arbeitsberichte</i>. Leipzig. Pp. 203-222. Guerzoni, E. 2007. Weak Exhaustivity and <i>Whether</i>: A Pragmatic Approach. <i>Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT) XVII</i>. Ithaca, NY: CLC Publications.</p>
<p>February 12</p>	<p>MINI-CONFERENCE</p>