

The Role of Topic-Hood in Multiple-Wh Question Semantics
Paul M. Willis

Abstract

This paper presents evidence from English that Krifka's (2001) speech act theory of pair list readings for single-Wh questions also accounts for properties of multiple-Wh questions. Observed internal asymmetries in multiple-Wh interpretation can be explained by distinguishing between the contributions of Wh-phrases that are discourse Topics and those that are non-Topics. The discussion then turns to how Topic force (and scope) is realized for Wh-phrases; it is argued that Wh-Topics are bound in situ, allowing them to appear unmoved on the surface. This approach has the advantage of deriving Pesetsky's (1987) D-linking criterion for Wh-in-situ as a lemma. It is also able to account for certain multiple-Wh questions' lack of a pair list reading as the result of deadlocked Topic-hood competition.

Length: 9 pages

Contact: Paul Willis
Dept. of Linguistics
University of California, Santa Cruz
1156 High St.
Santa Cruz, CA 95064-1077