Jacopo Garzonio (U. Padua)
Cecilia Poletto (U. Frankfurt and U. Padua)

Wh in situ in special elliptical questions

Many questions and few answers

Structure of the talk

- The phenomenon **SEQs** (Special Elliptical Questions)
  - Infinitives and wh-items;
  - General properties;
  - Properties of SEQs.
- Analysis
  - 1. Real wh in situ question?
  - 2. Remnant movement?
  - 3. Third way *á la* Merchant.

Questions and infinitives

▶ Extraction out of an infinitive: standard questions

Cosa sei andato a vedere?
what are.2s gone to see.inf 'What have you gone to see?'

▶ Extraction in special questions (Munaro and Obenauer 1999; 2002)

Cosa l´hai raccontato a fare?

what it=have.2s told to do.inf 'Why have told that?'

(lit. What have you told it to do ~~what~~?)

Questions and infinitives

➡ In situ wh: echo question/surprise-disapproval question:

Sei andato a vedere **cosa**?!

are.2s gone to see what 'You went to see what?!'

➡ No standard question interpretation if the wh-item is in situ.

➡ This clashes with the idea that special questions are checked higher than standard questions (Obernauer 2006).

Fragment questions

Sono andato a Parigi. 'I went to Paris.'

Quando? '**When**?'

(fragment question, standard question)

Sono andato a Parigi.

Andato **dove**?! 'Where did you go?!'

gone where

(fragment question, either echo or special question)

Infinitives and islandhood

- Infinitives can be transparent and allow for extraction of any type of wh-item:

Dove hai deciso di mangiare?

where have.2s decided to eat.inf

Quale libro hai cominciato a leggere?

which book have.2s started to read.inf

Con chi sei andato a parlare?

with who are.2s gone to talk

Cosa hai finito per comprare?

what have.2s finished to buy

The prepositional C *per* induces islandhood

➡ However, final clauses with *per* are islands those with *a* are not:

*__Con chi__ sei andato in ufficio per parlare?

with who are.2s gone in office for talk.inf

?__Con chi__ sei andato in ufficio a parlare?

__Cosa__ sei andato in ufficio a sistemare?

*__Cosa__ sei andato in ufficio per sistemare?

Sono andato al cinema 'I went to the movies.'

A vedere **cosa**?!

to see.inf what 'To watch what?!'

Sono andato in ufficio 'I went to the office.'

A parlare **con chi**?!/Per parlare **con chi**?!

to speak.inf with who/for speak.inf with who 'To speak with whom?!'

Special elliptical questions

- Among infinitival questions, there is an interesting subtype we intend to analyze here: special elliptical questions (SEQs).

- They have some syntactic and interpretive properties that single them out from other infinitival questions.

Elliptical versus non-elliptical questions

➡ Infinitival non elliptical variants:

Sei andato in ufficio a parlare **con chi**?(!)

Con chi sei andato in ufficio a parlare?

    a. Sei andato in ufficio per parlare **con chi**?(!)

    b. *****Con chi** sei andato in ufficio per parlare?

➡ SEQs:

A parlare con chi?!

Per parlare con chi?!

More cases, more complementizers

Ho deciso di partire   'I dediced to leave.'

Di partire per dove?(!)

of leave.inf for where 'To go where?!'

Credo di aver visto Gianni 'It think I saw Gianni.'

Di averlo visto dove?(!)

of have.inf=him seen where 'Where?!'

Complement clauses resume part of the context. They can be standard questions.

The wh-item is obligatorily in-situ

A parlare **con chi**?!

*A **con chi** parlare?!

Per andare **dove**?!

*Per **dove** andare?!

➡ Wh-movement inside the infinitival chunk is ungrammatical.

Movement with "what"

A fare **cosa**?!

%A **cosa** fare?!   (possible in some regional variants of It.)

A fare **icché**?! (Tuscan; Florence)

A **che** fare?!

→ *che/cosa* are weak forms and allow for movement.

➡ This is most probably not a wh-position.

➡ It has actually become a fixed form.

Non ho mai avuto **a che fare** con lui.

The left periphery is blocked

➡ No internal topic positions available:

Sono andato in ufficio con il mio libro.

*Il tuo libro, per darlo **a chi**?!

your book for give.inf=it to who 'To give it to whom?!'

*Il tuo libro, a darlo **a chi**?!

➡ No Focus, as expected:

Guarda! Si é comprato un frullatore 'Look! He bought a mixer.'

*Non un frullatore, UN FORNO A MICROONDE per fare **cosa**?!

not a mixer a oven at microwaves for do.inf what

ModifierP

Sono andato a Padova in auto 'I went to Padua by car.'

*#Rapidamente, per fare **cosa**?!

fastly for do.inf what

- Is this just a pragmatic constraint?

Context depending

- SEQs cannot be used as out of the blue questions.
- They require a specific context to interpret the SEQ

Hans enters the room and I see that he is soaking wet, I ask:

Cosa hai fatto? and not:

%A fare **cosa**?

Interpretative properties

- When the question is elliptical and represents a final clause, it is always a special question.

- It can be Can´t find the value/surprise-disapproval, marginally rhetorical:

Sono andato a Parigi

Per fare **cosa**?!

Movement in non elliptical variants

- The same holds in non-elliptical cases if the final clause is fronted to the left periphery of the main clause:

Per vedere **chi**, sei andato in ufficio?!

→ only special question

- In what follows we present three possible analyses for SEQ:

  - Real wh-in-situ structures (and ellipsis of the main clause);

  - Remnant movement structures;

  - Ellipsis á la Merchant with *pictures-of-whom* type of pied-piping.

Real wh-in-situ?

[CP ~~Sei andato~~ [CP a fare cosa]]

- Suppose that FocusP in infinitival clauses is missing: the wh-item cannot move there.

- The sentence is still grammatical.

- This means that movement is always driven only by the probe.

- When there is no probe, the goal can perfectly survive without moving.

- →So, if the probe head is missing, the goal does not move and we have a real case of wh-in-situ.

- Notice that the deleted portion is not a proper subtree.

- However, this does not explain why these can only be special question wh-items, which generally move further than wh-items in standard questions.

- Furthermore, it seems that the left periphery of the infinitival clause is blocked (no topics, no foci, no modifiers).

- We discard this possibility.

Remnant movement?

- Alternatively, there is wh-movement followed by remnant movement of the whole IP/FinP to a higher position.

[GroundP A fare [FP cosa [CP ~~Sei andato~~ [CP ~~a fare cosa~~]]]]

Obviously, we exclude that these movements happen in the embedded CP.

[CP ~~Sei andato~~ [GroundP a fare [FP cosa [IP ~~a fare cosa~~]]]]

- The problem here is that these are all special questions, and the wh-item should be higher than in standard questions and never crossed by the verb.

Problem

- Why are only elliptical structures special questions while non elliptical structure are not necessarily so?

Sei andato in cantina a prendere **cosa**? (standard question)

A prendere **cosa**?! → can´t find the value, SDQ

Per prendere **cosa**?! → can´t find the value, SDQ

A third possibility

- Suppose that the whole chunk V+wh moves to a Special question position of the main clause followed by deletion of the main clause:
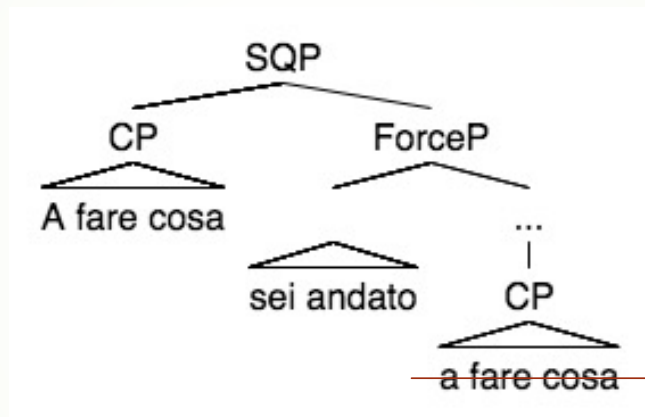
Sei andato a Venezia per parlare con chi?

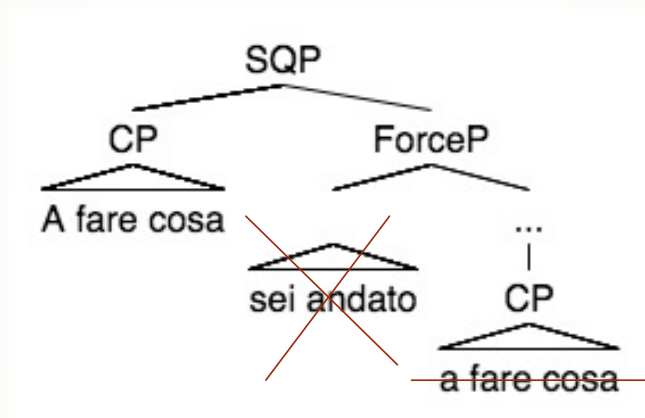Per parlare con chi, sei andato a Venezia?!

Per parlare con chi, ~~sei andato a Venezia~~?!

- This explains why SEQs behave like moved infinitival questions: they both occupy a Special question position.

- The wh-item is indeed moving to a higher position in the left periphery of the main clause, but it drags along the whole IP.

- This means that in addition to simple wh-movement, Italian also has *pictures of whom* type of pied piping (Cinque 2023).

Moving to the top

- In some Italo-Romance dialects that have sentential particles, the particle is sentence final:

A far **cossa**, ti?! (Venetian)

Cossa falo, ti?!

*Ti, **cossa** falo?!

*Ti, a far **cossa**?!

- This further movement to the specifier of the particle is driven by the requirements of the particle.

Not moving to the top

- In Florentine the sentential particle is in front of the infinitival clause:

O a fare **icché**, tu sei andato a Venezia?!

O a fare **icché**?!

O pe' parlare **con chie**?!

[SQP *o* [FocP [CP *pe' parlare con chie*] [TP ~~tusei andato a Venezia~~ ~~[CP pe' parlare con chie~~]]]]

- A similar phenomenon is observable in Sicilian

Ca pi ffari **chi**?!   (Sicilian, Palermo)

prt for do.inf what

Ca pi gghiri **runni**?!

prt for go.inf where

Notice that in Palermitan with the prepositional C a the wh-item must be silent in these cases:

C'a ffari (***chi**)?!

Interaction with SPs

Movement of the whole final clause to the Special Question position of the main clause.

Those SQs that independently require the wh or the whole clause in their specifier, like Venetian *ti*, end up in a sentence final position as usual.

Those SQs that do not require movement to their specifier like Florentine *o* or Sicilian *ca*, end up sentence initially, again as usual.

Concluding remarks

- Elliptical questions are instances of movement known as *picture of whom* pied piping to the Special Question position and subsequent deletion of the lexical material of the main clause, which remains below.

- So, SEQs are not a counterexample to Obenauer´s generalization that special questions move higher than standard questions.

SEQs have no real wh in situ, and no remnant movement.

Thank you for your attention!