

Reviews

Ludmila Veselovská. *Wh-questions: A case study in Czech*. Olomouc, Czech Republic: Palacký University, 2021. 283 pp. ISBN 978-80-244-5965-3 (print), ISBN 978-80-244-5966-0 (online PDF).

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The volume, written by Ludmila Veselovská, takes a look at the syntax of *wh*-questions, with a particular focus on Czech. The author adopts a generative approach and aims at reconsidering the previous approaches to *wh*-fronting in the literature in light of the Czech data, as contrasted especially with English. Apart from discussing data obtained via grammaticality judgments, the book presents the results of an extensive corpus study. The volume contains altogether seven chapters. Chapters 1–2 discuss the earlier literature on *wh*-movement in general, while chapters 3–4 are dedicated to earlier analyses focusing on multiple *wh*-movement; Chapter 5 summarizes some novel approaches related to Czech multiple *wh*-fronting. Chapter 6 presents the results from the corpus study, while Chapter 7 is an appendix containing the actual data.

Chapter 1 introduces the basics regarding the notion of movement. The discussion is largely theory-neutral and explains the reasons for assuming movement in standard generative grammar in such a way that it should also make the motivations clear for readers coming from different frameworks. In the following example (p. 15, (1.4b)), for instance, the *wh*-element corresponds to an argument of the lexical verb, as simply leaving out the same argument is not permitted in other contexts; it seems straightforward that *what* should be present in the derivation at some point as a verbal argument.

- (1) [_{NP} **What**] did Tom put [_{NP} <t>] on the table?

Apart from subcategorization, Veselovská summarizes standard arguments from case and the binding of anaphors as well as the English-specific “wanna” contraction. As mentioned in the introduction (p. 12), the arguments are based on standard works such as Haegeman and Guéron (1999) and Adger (2003) for English; the literature review here would have benefited from more

specific references in the individual sections, if previous knowledge is not assumed on the reader's part anyway. The argumentation is clearly presented, though the line of reasoning citing case (pp. 15–17) works better for Czech, where morphological case is indicative of function, while in English this is not so (see (1)); for this, a more detailed discussion of English would have been necessary. The rest of the chapter is concerned with briefly presenting other structures showing *wh*-movement, much in the spirit of Chomsky (1977); the data here are given for English only—at least a brief note regarding to what extent the relatedness of the constructions is tenable for Czech would have been welcome.

Chapter 2 offers a contrastive overview of the basic English and Czech data regarding the constraints on *wh*-movement, such as pied-piping, long-distance movement, islands, and the Left Branch Condition. The chief merit of the chapter lies in a meticulous comparison of the two languages; such neat and detailed comparisons are an enrichment to the existing literature. Some of the differences appear relatively obvious; for instance, since Czech does not allow preposition stranding, it is straightforward that extraction out of PPs (pp. 34–36) will be impossible. In other cases, the empirical data are less clear and the conclusions are less robust. For instance, while long-distance movement is grammatical with various English verbs (traditionally called “bridge verbs”), this option is marked as ungrammatical in Czech prescriptive grammars (p. 29, (2.12c)):

- (2) [_{CP} **Co** si Máša myslí, [_{CP} *(že) Tom koupil <t>]].
 what.ACC REFL Mary thinks that Tom bought

‘What does Mary think (people say) Tom bought?’

Confusingly, while Veselovská also marks (2) as ungrammatical, she adds (p. 29) that such sentences with the complementizer *že* are actually acceptable in colloquial language and interpreted as reported speech. Given that the monograph is a formal, generative study, it is somewhat unfortunate that prescriptive judgments are mixed with notions of grammaticality, as the intended audience of the book is undoubtedly more interested in the latter. Likewise, novel experimental data on adjunct island violations are mentioned only in a footnote (p. 37) but not incorporated into the investigation. As the monograph should cover a gap in the existing literature in terms of the fine-tuned empirical description mentioned above, going beyond the limits of what is accepted by traditional grammars would have been desirable.

Chapter 3 presents some basic considerations regarding multiple *wh*-movement. The phenomenon is illustrated for Czech on the following page (p. 70, (3.2)).

- (3) a. **Kdo** **co** koupil?
 who.NOM what.ACC bought
 ‘Who bought what?’
- b. **Co** **kdo** koupil?
 what.ACC who.NOM bought
 ‘Who bought what?’

As can be seen, more than one *wh*-element can be fronted in Czech; further, the order of these is not fixed, as the subject either precedes or follows the (direct) object. This contrasts with English, which shows superiority effects and is generally assumed to ban multiple fronting. The Czech data thus present at least two major challenges: (i) how cross-linguistic differences can be accounted for and (ii) how multiple *wh*-elements can be accommodated at the front of the clause. Chapter 3 reviews the available literature in this respect, and it also clearly shows that while the issue is evidently at the heart of generative investigations, specifically the Czech data did not receive ample attention previously. Most analyses tried to relate cross-linguistic differences to certain parameters, such as the possibility of multiple filled specifiers (Rudin 1988). At the same time, it also emerges clearly that most of the challenges for the analysis stem from the assumption that a given projection (such as the CP) can only have a single specifier position so that multiple *wh*-elements are either stacked into a single specifier or they require separate projections, or at least the non-first *wh*-element should be attached as an adjunct. While several aspects of the cited analyses, as Veselovská also points out, count nowadays as outdated (such as the use of the S and COMP labels), the insights are still highly relevant for the current theory as well, and it is therefore particularly welcome that the book presents such a succinct and clear overview.

Following this line of thought, Chapter 4 is dedicated to the analysis of Czech multiple *wh*-questions. While examples like (3) may suggest that the fronting operation targets essentially the same position (or at least the same projection), other examples clearly show that there is an asymmetry between the first *wh*-element and all the other ones. Consider the following sentence (p. 58, (4.3a)).

- (4) **Co** **by** **komu** **kdy** udělala Monika?
 what.ACC AUX.3 whom.DAT when done.S.F Monika.NOM
 ‘What would Monika do to whom when?’

In (4), the auxiliary intervenes between the first *wh*-element *co*, and the second and third *wh*-elements *komu* and *kdy*. Importantly, *komu* and *kdy* are not in situ, as they precede the subject (*Monika*); if they remained in a postverbal

position, they would instead be interpreted as indefinites. In other words, examples like (4) clearly show that all *wh*-phrases undergo fronting, though not all of them target the same position. The auxiliary is a second-position clitic that is associated with the C position: this indicates that the first *wh*-element indeed targets [Spec,CP], while the other *wh*-phrases target lower positions, which Veselovská, following the original proposal of Rudin (1988) for Czech and Polish, identifies as adjunction to IP. This kind of asymmetry appears to be systematic; as Veselovská convincingly shows, the same can be observed with the unmarked complementizer *že* ‘that’ and the second-person auxiliary affix *-s/jsi*. While the trigger for the movement of the non-first *wh*-phrases is not clearly fleshed out, the empirical data altogether strongly support a multiple constituent analysis of Czech multiple *wh*-fronting and the summary in this chapter provides the basis for further investigations.

Chapter 5 continues discussing the previous literature; while a major focus is still on multiple *wh*-movement, many of the cited analyses only marginally touch upon this issue. The works discussed here are rather divergent, and the chapter creates the impression of a series of review articles that fail to provide a coherent picture when put together. There are two main aspects introduced in this chapter that distinguish newer approaches from more traditional ones: the availability of a more complex left periphery and the consideration of information-structure notions. Citko (1998) and Bošković (1997), as well as subsequent works by the same authors, are summarized adequately in this respect, and the immediate connection to multiple *wh*-movement is also clear. By contrast, the summaries in §5.3 are only loosely connected, and in some cases, not adequately represented. For instance, Veselovská claims that Bacskai-Atkari (2018) offers a “cross-linguistic perspective in multiple *Wh*-questions” (p. 135), while the cited article in fact deals with doubly filled COMP effects of the sort given in (5) below (p. 136, (5.41)).

- (5) Kdo-že přijel pozdě?
 who-that arrived late
 ‘WHO arrived late?’

For cases like (5), which have an echo reading, Veselovská wrongly cites that the decisive feature is the leftmost one, when it is in fact claimed to be the rightmost one, as is also evident from the table cited in (5.40). Likewise, Veselovská seems to suggest that feature stacking (as also in Sturgeon 2008) and the lack of information-structure features in the narrow syntax (as also in Kaspar 2017) are shortcomings, while this is in fact a standard assumption in non-cartographic approaches (see Fanselow and Lenertová 2011).

Chapter 6 presents novel corpus data based on the Czech National Corpus, examining the question of whether superiority effects can be detected in multiple *wh*-fronting. Superiority effects in Czech were investigated exper-

imentally by Meyer (2004), who showed that superiority effects can be detected in Czech, while these effects are not categorical (as claimed for English) but rather scalar (across Slavic). He further observed a reverse animacy effect, which means that when an animate subject is combined with an inanimate object, no superiority effects arise. An example like (6) below (p. 157, (6.13c)), which demonstrates a counter-hierarchical order in terms of animacy, is just as acceptable as the opposite (hierarchical) order.

- (6) **Co** **kdo** řikal o mý ruce?
 what.ACC who.NOM said about my hand
 ‘Who said what about my hand?’

These findings are also corroborated by the results presented by Veselovská. Further, her study clearly shows that certain combinations are more frequent than others; interestingly, while the effects regarding superiority seem to occur not only with two fronted *wh*-elements with no intervenor but also with two (fronted) coordinated *wh*-elements, the preferences for the combinations of pronominal and adverbial *wh*-elements point to a clear split between these two constructions. While the title of the chapter and several points in the text refer to a statistical analysis of the corpus results, no such analysis has actually been carried out, as only the raw frequencies and the percentages are presented. For a fine-tuned analysis, especially in terms of being comparable to the experimental findings, the use of proper statistical tests would have been more than desirable.

Despite some of the concerns mentioned above, I believe that *Wh-Questions: A Case Study in Czech* is an excellent volume that provides novel insights into the syntax of Czech *wh*-questions, and it also offers a fresh look at the earlier analyses that have not been discussed extensively in any comparable work. The text is well written and the ideas of the author are conveyed in a clear way. At the same time, there are unfortunately quite a few issues that indicate the lack of professional proofreading, the burden of which lies primarily with the publisher. For instance, section heading 2.1 is entirely missing. There are several typos and quite a few copy-and-paste errors in the example glosses (as on p. 156, where *co* is translated twice as ‘who’ in (6.12c) and (6.12d) and *koho* is translated as ‘what’ in (6.12c)).

Even though such minor errors may occasionally disturb the reader, they do not undermine the general high quality of the book, which I found to be a lucid and thought-provoking read.

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