

Criteria subjects, intervention effects and the shape of A'-structures

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In many Romance languages, the lexical subject cannot appear between a *wh*-element in the left-periphery and the inflected verb. The examples in (1) show this phenomenon for Italian questions:

- (1) a. *Cosa Ezra ha comprato?
What Ezra has bought?
b. *Chi Ezra ha conosciuto?
Who Ezra has met?
c. *Come Ezra ha suonato?
How Ezra has played?
d. *Dove Ezra ha suonato?
Where Ezra has played?

Rizzi (1990a) claims that these cases should be treated as *Wh*-Criterion violations, since the pre-verbal subject in (1) keeps the inflected verb from establishing a Spec-Head relation with the interrogative phrase. Italian, which does not display Aux-to-Comp movement in interrogative structures (cf. 2a), employs different strategies to circumvent this restriction (e.g. *null*-subjects (2b), right- (2c) and left-dislocation of the subject (2d)):

- (2) a. *Cosa ha Ezra comprato?
What has Ezra bought?
b. Cosa ha comprato?
What has bought?
c. Cosa ha comprato, Ezra?
What has bought Ezra?
d. Ezra, cosa ha comprato
Ezra, what has bought?

This analysis faces some empirical problems, though. On the one hand, pre-verbal subjects are not always excluded in Italian interrogative structures. In particular, pre-verbal subjects seem to be admitted with some fronted adjuncts in *wh*-questions:

- (3) a. In quale città Ezra ha conosciuto il sindaco?
In which city Ezra has met the mayor?
b. In che anno Ezra ha conosciuto il sindaco?
In which year Ezra has met the mayor?
c. In che modo Ezra ha conosciuto il sindaco?
In which way Ezra has met the mayor?

On the other hand, the restriction on pre-verbal subjects holds in a number of A'-

structures, which do not require the verb to move up to the left-periphery. I will illustrate the cases of Free Relatives, Topic Resumptive Preposing, Focus Fronting and Exclamative clauses.

In this paper, I will argue that many puzzling restrictions on the position of subjects can be explained in terms of locality constraints. I will propose an approach founded on two basic ingredients: a feature-based theory of locality (Starke 2001, Rizzi 2004, Abels 2012) and a quantificational theory of Criterial Subjects (Bianchi & Chesi, *to appear*). I will argue that it is possible to derive a wide empirical range of data, from these two basic ingredients.

References:

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