

Syncretism and functional migration of Germanic *wh*-expressions

1. This paper will capitalize on meso- and microcomparative evidence regarding the morphosyntax of Germanic *wh*-expressions which suggests a particular underlying conceptual ordering of query functions. The observation is that syncretism and/or inclusion of *wh*-formatives only obtain between exponents that are adjacent in the sequence in (1).

(1) PLACE – DEGREE – MANNER – PROPERTY – KIND – TOKEN – PERSON

In Danish and Norwegian, PLACE and DEGREE have the same exponent (*hvor/kor*), distinct from MANNER and the other query functions. Across West Germanic plus Swedish and Faroese there is generally speaking syncretism across DEGREE and MANNER and (except English) PROPERTY (*how/hoel/wiel/hur/hvussu*), but this exponent is distinct from the exponent for PLACE in the varieties (*where/waar/wol/var/hvar*) and also from the exponents nominal categories KIND, TOKEN and PERSON. In standard Norwegian and Danish syncretism obtains between MANNER and PROPERTY (*hvordan/korleis*), and in some dialects also extending onto KIND and even TOKEN (e.g. North Norwegian *korsn*). From the other end Faroese has a *wh*-exponent that spans PERSON, TOKEN and KIND (*hvør*), and Övdalian has an exponent which in addition to this also may lexicalize PROPERTY (*ukin*). Additional cases of syncretism across two or more query functions in (1) exist, cf. table 1 below, but crucially there are no obvious cases of an exponent that may lexicalize two or more non-adjacent query functions.

2. The main objective of this paper is to make sense of the sequence in (1) in structural terms and to give an account of the syncretism patterns observed. The proposal will be cast within an essentially cartographic approach to syntactic structure, and it will in addition be based on the following assumptions and principles: (i) we assume the so-called Superset Principle (Caha 2009: 55); “A phonological exponent is inserted into a node if its lexical entry has a (sub-) constituent that is identical to the node (ignoring traces)”, (ii) we assume that the sequence in (1) relates to two distinct functional sequences (fseqs), more specifically a predicational/adverbial one and a nominal one as sketched in (2) below; (iii) we assume a principle of ‘Best Fit’ or ‘Preferred Identifier’ (Vangnes 2001: 268f) of the following kind; *Use the exponent with the most relevant and otherwise least irrelevant features for identification of functional structure.*

(2) a. P/A queries: [PLACE [DEGREE [MANNER [PROPERTY
 b. D/N queries: [PERSON [TOKEN [KIND

The link between the two functional sequences is the PROPERTY~KIND connection which can be likened with the predicative~attributive adjective distinction.

3. To see how this analytical machinery will work, we can run through some examples. The Superset Principle predicts that English *where* can be an exponent of all the P/A-queries, but Best Fit specifies that for the subconstituents DEGREE and MANNER the more fit exponent *how* must be chosen. Likewise, although *how* has PROPERTY as a subconstituent, the existence of *what ... like* in the English lexicon entails that this expression needs to be used in PROPERTY queries. Hence, we get the pattern in (3) where the exponents are indicated to the right after the arrows.

(3) English:
 a. [PLACE WH [DEGREE [MANNER [PROPERTY → *where*
 b. [DEGREE WH [MANNER [PROPERTY → *how*
 c. [MANNER WH [PROPERTY → *how*
 d. [PROPERTY WH → *what...like*

German, Dutch, and Faroese are minimally different from English in that there is no special exponent for PROPERTY. For these languages we therefore get the pattern in (4).

(4) German/Dutch/Faroese:

a.	[PLACE WH	[DEGREE	[MANNER	[PROPERTY	→ <i>wo / waar / hvar</i>
b.		[DEGREE WH	[MANNER	[PROPERTY	→ <i>wie / hoe / hvussu</i>
c.			[MANNER WH	[PROPERTY	→ <i>wie / hoe / hvussu</i>
d.				[PROPERTY WH	→ <i>wie / hoe / hvussu</i>

4. Many of the lexicalization patterns under consideration will be run of the mill cases, but certain complications do arise. On the one hand, we see several cases, in particular in the nominal domain, where there seems to be a choice between different forms, one of which is “syncretic” and another which is distinct for the query type in question; consider for instance English adnominal *what* versus *what kind of* and *which*. Some such cases will be explained by reference to register variation whereas others will be explained in terms of transparency and grammaticalization: just as *in what way* is a transparent way of forming an alternative expression to MANNER *how* (but not DEGREE *how*), one may argue that *what kind of* is a transparent way of forming a KIND expression and therefore an alternative to using adnominal *what*. However, in some other linguistic variety the etymological counterpart of *what kind of* may not be compositionally transparent (to the language user), and in such a variety the expression may (i) be the only viable exponent of KIND, and (ii) in diachronic terms migrate to adjacent query functions, as indeed has happened in varieties of Norwegian.

5. The upshot of this paper is that the empirical observations and the theoretical account of them allow us to better understand how the lexicalization range of *wh*-expressions may expand from one query function to another, i.e. how they can undergo *functional migration*. Furthermore, this framework can be considered a generative alternative to the notion of ‘semantic maps’ entertained in typological and cognitive approaches to studies of functional inventories (see e.g. Cysouw et al. 2010). Needless to say, as the approach is confronted with further empirical evidence, adjustments will likely need to be made.

Table 1: (Some) *wh*-expressions across various varieties of Germanic

	PLACE	DEGREE	MANNER	PROPERTY	KIND	TOKEN	PERSON
English	<i>where</i>	<i>how</i>		<i>what... like</i>	<i>what</i> <i>wh-kind-of</i> / <i>which</i>		<i>who</i>
Germ.	<i>wo</i>	<i>wie</i>			<i>was für</i>		<i>wer</i>
Dutch	<i>waar</i>	<i>hoe</i>			<i>wat voor</i>		<i>wie</i>
Swe.	<i>var</i>	<i>hur</i>			<i>vad för (en)</i> <i>hurdan</i>		<i>vem</i>
Far.	<i>hvar</i>	<i>hvussu</i>			<i>hvat fyri</i> <i>hvør</i>		
Nynorsk No.	<i>kor</i>		<i>korleis</i>		<i>kva slags</i>		<i>kven</i>
Dan./ Bokmål No.	<i>hvor</i>		<i>hvordan</i>		<i>hva (for)</i> <i>slags</i>	<i>hvilken</i>	<i>hvem</i>
East. Norw.	<i>å...hen</i>	<i>å</i>	<i>åssen</i>			<i>vem</i>	
North. Norw.	<i>kor</i>		<i>korsn</i>				<i>kem</i>
Övdalian	<i>war</i>	<i>ur</i>			<i>ukin</i> <i>wen för</i>		

References

Cysouw, Michael, Martin Haspelmath, and Andrej Malchukov (eds.). 2010. Semantic Maps: Methods and Applications. Special issue of *Linguistic Discovery*, 8:1.
 Caha, Pavel. 2009. The nanosyntax of Case. PhD dissertation, University of Tromsø.
 Vangsnes, Øystein A. 2001. On noun phrase architecture, referentiality, and article systems. *Studia Linguistica* 55, 249–299.