Asymmetries on wh-extraction in Medumba
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Medumba wh-questions are formed either: (i) in-situ, or (ii) ex-situ. They are always accompanied by two particles: (i) a question particle (Q particle) \( \theta \) that varies in tone depending on the tone of the preceding word; (ii) an invariant high-tone focus particle \( \theta \) that precedes the wh-phrase. Mono-clausal extraction triggers agreement (by vowel length) on V and on T (2 &3b). Cross-clausal extraction is accompanied by resumption, triggers full agreement with the embedded CP and partial (agreement only on T) with the matrix CP (4).

Mono-clausal subject wh-questions are in-situ and trigger agreement on T (2).

(2) á wú fɔ̃-ɔ n-kù m-fà bò Nùmí á?
   FOC wh P4-H N-IMP N-give bag Numi Q
   ‘Who was giving the bag to Numi?’

Object wh-phrases can stay in situ (3a) or move to the left periphery (with agreement on V and T (3b)).

3a. Nùgà fɔ̃ m-fà á kú Nùmí á?
   b. á kú Nùgà fɔ̃-ɔ n-kù m-fà-à Nùmí á?
   Nuga P4 N-give FOC wh Numi Q  FOC wh Nuga P4-H N-IMP N-give-L Numi Q
   ‘Nuga gave what to Numi?’  ‘What did Nuga give to Numi?’

Cross-clausal extraction requires resumption and triggers partial agreement on the matrix CP (4).

(4) á wú Sèɛmí fɔ̃-ɔ n-tʃùp mbù Nùgà fɔ̃-ɔ n-kù m-fà-à bò jí á?
   FOC wh Sami P4-H N-say COMP Nuga P4-H N-IMP N-give-L bag 3SG.IO Q
   ‘Who was Sami saying that Nuga was giving the book to (him)’?

Adjunct wh-phrases are always in-situ (5a).

(5) a. Nùgà fɔ̃ mfà bò Nùmí á sù á?
   b. *á sù Nùgà fɔ̃ m-fà bò Nùmí á?
   Nuga P4 give bag Numi Q  FOC wh Nuga P4 give bag Numi Q
   [Nuga gave the bag to Numi when]  [when did Nuga give the bag to Numi?]

This paper addresses the following questions: (a) how is the Q/focus-particle integrated into the CP-layer? (b) What forces or prohibits wh-movement? (c) What is the mechanism of wh-agreement? I propose that the different features of the wh-phrase are encoded by distinct C-heads in the CP-layer. The outer C-head encodes the Q-feature and hosts the Q-particle whereas the inner C-head encodes the wh-feature and hosts the wh-phrase in its specifier position. With regard to wh-agreement, I argue that it follows the operation Agree (Chomsky 2000) and proceeds by phases (Chomsky 2001). The agreement asymmetry is triggered by the fact that the embedded clause is adjoined to Spec-v and behaves like an adjunct island. Evidence comes from the fact that cross-clausal (4) as well as extractions from an islands require resumption (6).

(6) á wú Nùmí fɔ̃-ɔ nèen tìn kàà Nùgà fà-à bò *(jì) á
   FOC wh Numi P4-H go market before Nùgà give-L bag 3SG.IO Q
   *Who did Nùmí go to the market before Nùgà gave the bag to him?

References