

Question Answer Pairs (QAPs) in Hong Kong Sign Language (HKSL)

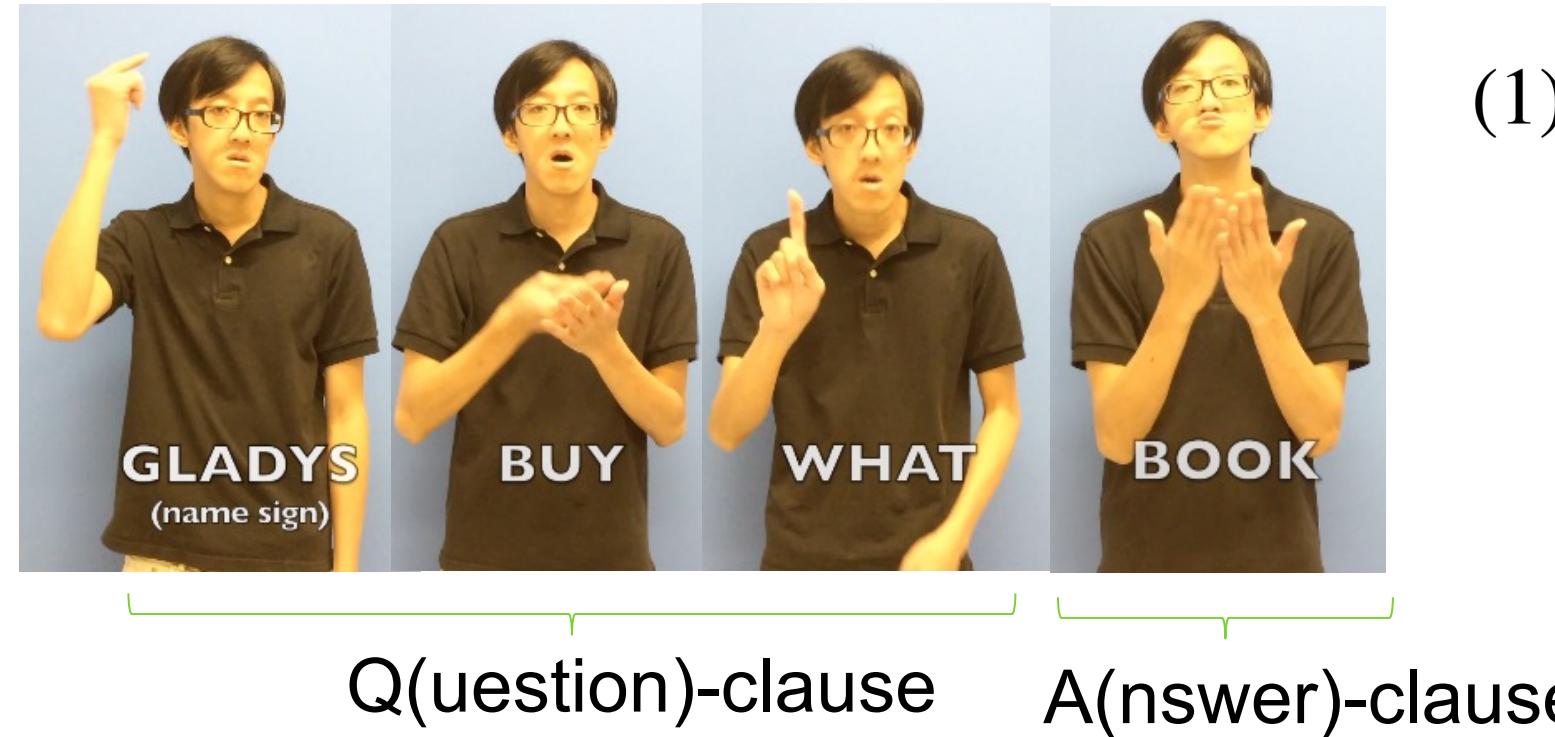


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Introduction

Question Answer Pairs (QAPs) are widely attested across sign languages. It's also been referred to as 'wh-cleft' or 'rhetorical questions' (Baker and Cokely 1980; Baker-Shenk 1985; Wilbur 1996).



- (1) $\overline{\text{GLADYS LIKE WHAT}}, \text{BOOK}$
‘What Gladys bought was a book.’

The focus is expressed in the clause-final A-clause

- QAP provides a good place to investigate semantics/syntax interface in sign languages.
- In this study, I discuss:
 - The syntactic properties of QAPs in HKSL
 - The semantic properties of A-clause in HKSL
- Data:
 - 1) naturalistic monologue by 2 Deaf L1 signers (30 min);
 - 2) fieldwork judgment data from 4 Deaf L1 signers

Syntactically, QAPs in HKSL display mixed clausal properties

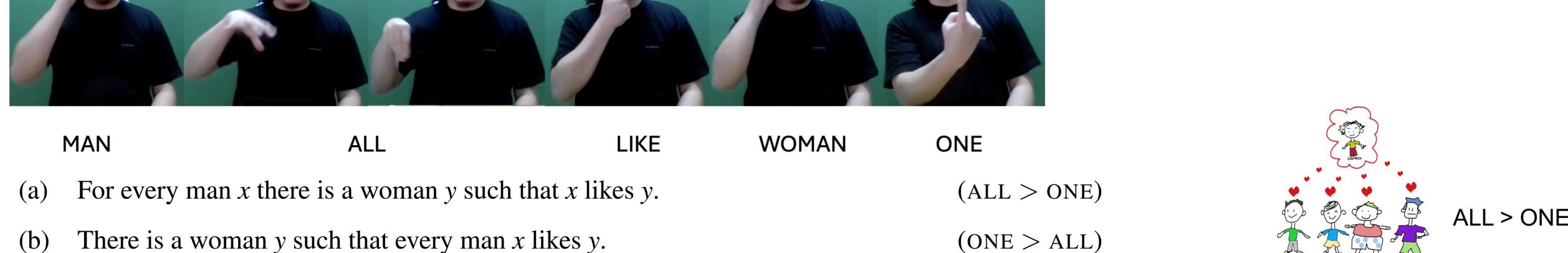
• Some QAPs behave like one single syntactic unit.

- Quantifier Scope ambiguities are attested in QAPs;

- (2) MAN ALL LIKE WOMAN ONE.
‘Every man likes one woman.’



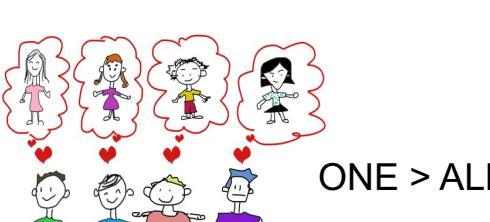
(ambiguous)



- (3) $\overline{\text{MAN ALL WHAT}}, \text{LIKE WOMAN ONE}$.
‘Every man likes a woman.’



(ambiguous)



- Q-clause and the A-clause cannot be intervened by a hinge;

- (4) (a) [3/4] ? POSS-3 FATHER LIKE MALE FEMALE WHICH, BOY, BAD.
‘What her father prefers is male, which is bad.’



br

- (b) [0/4] * POSS-3 FATHER LIKE MALE FEMALE WHICH, BAD, MALE.



br

- Subject WHO must be final in the Q-clause, indirectly indicating the syntactic dependency between Q-clause and A-clause.

• Some QAPs behave like discourse-level question and answer combinations (for some signers).

- Binding of SELF;

- (5) (a) [4/4] ✓ MOM SAY SELF BUSY.
‘Mom said that she (herself) is busy.’

- (6) ‘Mom_i said that she_i is busy.’

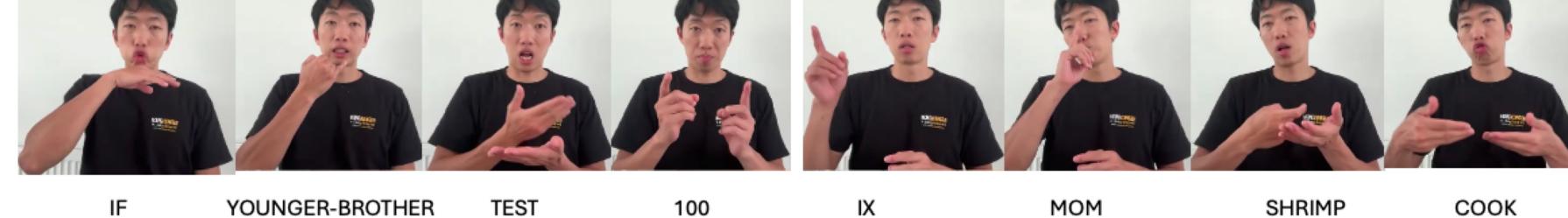
- (b) [0.25/4] * SELF BUSY.
Intended: ‘I am busy.’

- (a) [3.75/4] ✓ $\overline{\text{MOM}_i \text{ SAY WHAT}}, \text{IX-3}_i \text{ BUSY}$.
br

- (b) [2/4] % (?) $\overline{\text{MOM}_i \text{ SAY WHAT}}, \text{SELF}_i \text{ BUSY}$.
(%: inconsistent judgements)

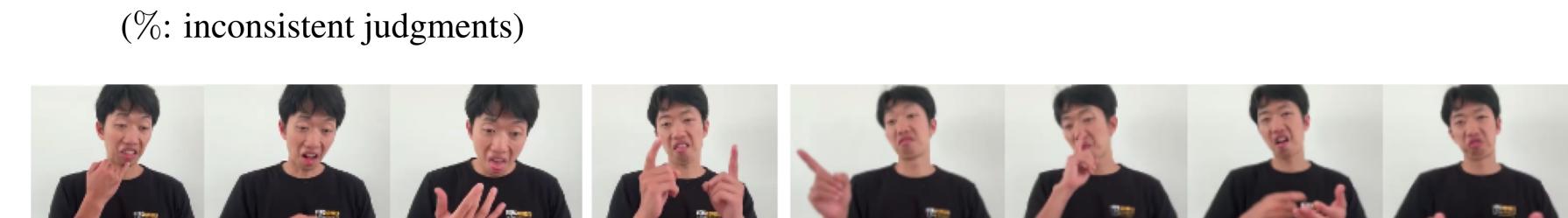
- QAPs in conditionals;

- (7) (IF) YOUNGER-BROTHER TEST ONE-HUNDRED, IX MOM COOK SHRIMP.
‘If brother gets 100 in the exam, mom will cook shrimps.’



br

- (8) [3.25/4] % (?) [QAP YOUNGER-BROTHER TEST SCORE HOW-MANY, ONE-HUNDRED], IX MOM SHRIMP COOK.
(%: inconsistent judgments)



Signers | A B C D
Scores given | 4 1 4 4

- Indirect report with an embedded QAP.

- (9) KENNY THINK GLADYS GO WHERE, IX-1 KNOW.



Both within-signer and across-signer differences are attested w.r.t. judging QAPs as one single syntactic unit

- (a) % ‘Kenny is thinking about that I know where Gladys went.’
(%: One signer accepts this reading.)
- (b) ‘I know where is Kenny thinking about Gladys went.’

Signers | A B C D
Accept (9a) as embedded | # ✓ # #

	signer A	signer B	signer C	signer D
inverse scope in QAP	n.a.	✓ (1 clause)	✓ (1 clause)	n.a.
SELF conditional	✓ (1 clause)	* (2 clauses)	✓ (1 clause)	* (2 clauses)
embedded QAP	* (2 clauses)	✓ (1 clause)	* (2 clauses)	* (2 clauses)

(✓: grammatical; *: ungrammatical; n.a.: not applicable)

Table 1: Summary of judgments from different consultants

Semantics properties of QAPs in HKSL

• QAPs in HKSL can be predicational.

- One major argument against equating QAPs to wh-clefts is that predicational QAP is not possible (e.g., LSF) (Hauser 2018). In HKSL, predicational QAP is allowed (11).

- (11) IN-FACT YESTERDAY HAPPEN WHAT INDIVIDUAL IX WRONG.
In fact, about the incident that happened yesterday, it was that individual’s fault.’



IN-FACT YESTERDAY HAPPEN WHAT INDIVIDUAL IX WRONG

• The A-clause is not always exhaustive.

- (12) A and B are close friends. A saw B’s husband C shopping at the mall yesterday. What C bought was a book, a cake, and a ring. B knows what C bought. Today, A and B were chit-chatting. B said:

- (a) YESTERDAY IX-1 HUSBAND BUY WHAT, BOOK, CAKE, RING.
‘Yesterday my husband bought a book, a cake, and a ring.’
br (mention-all)
- (b) YESTERDAY IX-1 HUSBAND BUY WHAT, RING.
‘Yesterday my husband bought a ring.’
br (mention-parts)
- (c) YESTERDAY IX-1 HUSBAND BUY WHAT, BOOK, CAKE.
‘Yesterday my husband bought a book, and a cake.’
br (mention-one)

- (13) (a) Context 1 (neutral): B talked about C’s shopping.
(b) Context 2 (highlight the surprise): B thought the husband was going to buy a book and a cake, and the ring turned out to be a surprise. B wants to share with A about the surprise.
(c) Context 3 (not-mentioning the ring): B mentioned C’s shopping but doesn’t want to mention the ring to make a big deal of it.

	mention-all	mention-parts	mention-one
Context 1 (neutral)	✓		
Context 2 (highlight the ring)	#	#	✓
Context 3 (ignore the ring)		✓	

Table 2: Acceptability judgments of (12) under different contexts (13)



Whether the A-clause is exhaustive, mention-parts, or mention-some depends on the intension of the speaker in the discourse context.

Discussion

• The structure of QAP aligns with the “pragmatic presupposition ~ predicate (focus) sequence”;

- The pragmatic subject (Lambrecht 1994) always locates in the Q-clause and the pragmatic predicate (i.e., the focus) always locates in the A-clause in QAPs

- (14) EVA LIKE EAT WHAT, FISH .

‘What Eva likes to eat is fish_F.’

Presupposition: ‘Eva likes to eat something x’

Assertion: ‘x = fish’

Focus: ‘FISH’

Focus domain: A-clause (NP)

- (15) LIKE EAT FISH WHO, EVA .

‘The person who likes to eat fish is p.’

Presupposition: ‘Someone x likes to eat fish’

Assertion: ‘x = Eva’

Focus: ‘EVA’

Focus domain: A-clause (NP)

• Focus occupying the clause-final position is related to the prosodic saliency of the sentence (Gan, in prep; Wilbur 1996, 1997, 2012).

REFERENCES

- Scan the QR code for full list of bibliography.



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