

Wh-Fronting (in Hungarian) is *Not* Focus-Fronting¹

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1. Introduction

Across many languages, wh-questions bear extensive structural similarities to (what could be pre-theoretically dubbed) ‘focus-constructions’. For this reason, linguists have often sought to identify some shared semantic or pragmatic property of these constructions, which might ultimately explain their structural affinities.² A common claim in this literature is that the parallels between wh-questions and focus-constructions are due to the fact that, in some languages, wh-questions obligatorily *contain* focus-constructions, a requirement that is, in turn, due to wh-operators being universally ‘focused’ (in some sense). The wide-spread acceptance of this claim has even lead some linguists to propose that obligatory wh-fronting in some languages is – contrary to first appearances – not due to a rule of ‘wh-movement’ as found in English, but simply reflects an independent requirement that ‘focused’ phrases be fronted (cf. *inter alia*, Horvath 1986, Cheng 1997, Bošković 2002).

Although this idea has by now been absorbed into the field’s collective wisdom, it is actually rather difficult to state precisely *what* semantic/pragmatic properties wh-questions and focus-structures share, a fact that explicitly surfaces in early discussions of the proposal (Horvath 1986). To illustrate the point, let us consider those accounts which claim that obligatory wh-fronting in some languages is merely a species of a more general ‘focus-fronting’ rule. Typically, the logic of such an account runs as follows.

(1) Wh-Fronting in Language X is Actually Just Focus-Fronting

- (a) Language X requires that (non-wh) phrases bearing ‘focus’ (in some sense) must be fronted to position Y.
- (b) Wh-operators in the wh-questions of language X must be fronted to position Y.
- (c) Wh-operators in wh-questions universally bear ‘focus’ (in some sense).
- (d) Therefore, given (1a) above, the obligatory ‘focus’ of the wh-operators (1c) is sufficient to explain their obligatory fronting in wh-questions (1b).

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Finally, it should also be acknowledged here that many of the key empirical observations in this paper were already noted in a different context by É. Kiss (1998) and Horvath (2000, 2005). However, neither author discusses the consequences that these facts hold for the general theory of wh-fronting.

² The following is a limited sample of work in this vein: Horvath 1986; Arregi (2003); Enrico (2003); Szendrői (2003, 2005).

Given the schematization in (1), it is apparent that accounts of this form can only succeed if the term ‘focus’ in (1c) is used with the same sense as it is in (1a). That is, accounts of this type assume that the feature ‘focus’ that triggers the operation of ‘focus-fronting’ is the *same* as the feature ‘focus’ that wh-operators obligatorily bear.

For this reason, a potential danger in proposing an account of this type is that the term ‘focus’ in linguistics is highly ambiguous. As is often pointed out, the word ‘focus’ is used by different linguists to denote very different kinds of phenomena, and it is rather doubtful that the term as a whole picks out a natural class of phenomena. Thus, in proposing an account of the kind in (1), one runs the very real risk of equivocating on the term ‘focus’. In other words, one can only truly put forth an account of the type in (1) if one can demonstrate that (independent of terminological convention) the feature triggering the operation of ‘focus-movement’ is a feature that wh-operators universally possess.

This issue is addressed explicitly by Horvath (1986), who argues that the rule of ‘focus-fronting’ in Hungarian targets a particular feature, independently found to hold of wh-operators. Although later work has uncovered certain difficulties for her particular account, it certainly meets the minimal burden of explicitly ruling out an equivocation on the term ‘focus’. Unfortunately, this is not true of more recent proposals embracing the logic in (1) (cf. Cheng 1997, Bošković 2002, Enrico 2003). Indeed, it would be fair to say that recent proposals having the form in (1) simply assume, take as granted, that there is *some* use of the term ‘focus’ whereby both (1a) and (1c) are true.

The purpose of this paper is to challenge that widespread assumption. It will be shown that this assumption is simply not true for one rather prominent case: Hungarian. Since at least the work of Horvath (1981, 1986), the analytic structure in (1) has been the accepted explanation for the extensive parallels between Hungarian’s focus-constructions and its wh-questions.³ Indeed, it might be argued that the relative prominence of Hungarian as a language exemplifying (1) has been instrumental to the wide-spread application of (1) to other languages where wh-questions and focus-constructions are syntactically parallel (cf. É. Kiss 1995). Nevertheless, I will argue that, contrary to appearances, the rule of ‘focus-fronting’ in Hungarian does *not* target a feature obligatorily born by wh-words. Consequently, the obligatory wh-fronting seen in Hungarian wh-questions is not triggered by the same feature as triggers the operation of focus-fronting. Whatever ultimately accounts for the structural parallels between Hungarian wh-questions and focus-constructions, it cannot be that its wh-questions are simply a subspecie of its focus-construction.

I will argue, then, that the analysis in (1) does not hold for one of the central, best-studied cases for which it was developed. It is hoped that this result will prompt further, more detailed study of the semantics of ‘focus-constructions’ across languages. Recent research suggests that, despite superficial similarities in structure and use, so-called ‘focus-constructions’ ultimately encode rather different semantic properties across languages (Davis *et al.* 2004). This semantic heterogeneity amongst the structures pre-theoretically dubbed ‘focus-constructions’ further diminishes the plausibility that they form a natural semantic class with wh-questions, and so diminishes the plausibility that shared semantic features account for the wide-spread syntactic affinities between these constructions.

My argument will begin in the following section, with some background concerning Hungarian wh-questions and focus-constructions.

³ However, Horvath (1986) herself cites such earlier works as Kiefer (1967), Horvath (1976), Szabolcsi (1980) and É. Kiss (1981).

2. Wh-Fronting and Focus-Fronting in Hungarian

A central and oft-discussed topic in the syntax of Hungarian is the fact that the language's wh-questions bear a striking similarity to its 'focus construction'.⁴ The following illustrates.

(2) Wh-Questions and Focus-Constructions in Hungarian

a. *Wh-Question*

János **KIT** mutatott be Marinak?
John who.acc introduced PRT Mary.to
Who did John introduce to Mary?

b. *Focus-Construction*

PÉTERT mutatta be Marinak.
Peter.acc introduced PRT Mary.to
It was PETER that he introduced to Mary.
(*PETER was the one that he introduced to Mary.*)

The wh-question in (2a) and the focus-construction in (2b) exhibit the following structural parallels. First, in the wh-question, the wh-word must appear immediately before the main verb of the clause, as must the 'focused' phrase in the focus construction of (2b). Secondly, both the fronted wh-word in (2a) and the fronted 'focus' in (2b) bear the main stress/pitch-accent of the sentence. Finally, in both the wh-question (2a) and the focus-construction (2b), the verbal particle *be* must be *post-verbal*, rather than *pre-verbal*. As discussed throughout the literature on Hungarian, these three properties group together Hungarian wh-questions and Hungarian focus-constructions into a natural class, to the exclusion of certain other 'movement-constructions' (such as Hungarian relative clauses).

Given the similarities between these constructions, an analysis akin to that in (1) would be quite attractive. That is, the parallels between the structures in (2) would be elegantly captured if the fronting operation responsible for the pre-verbal position of the wh-word in (2a) were just the *same* as the one responsible for the pre-verbal position of the 'focus' in (2b). As already noted, however, in order for such an account to go through, it must be assumed that this fronting operation targets some feature that inheres both in the wh-word of (2a) and in the 'focus' of (2b). What feature, then, could this be?

Perhaps the earliest and best-known answer is that the feature is 'discourse-newness' (Horvath 1981, 1986; Szendrői 2003). According to such accounts, the discourse-new/non-presupposed information in a Hungarian sentence must occupy an immediately pre-verbal position. Given that both the wh-word in (2a) and the fronted 'focus' in (2b) represent the non-presupposed information of their respective sentences, the shared structural features of these sentences would follow straightforwardly.

Unfortunately, subsequent research has uncovered a rather critical difficulty for this highly attractive account (É. Kiss 1998; Horvath 2000, 2005). Contrary to its assumption, discourse-new/non-presupposed information doesn't *have* to be pre-verbal in a Hungarian sentence. Consider the following question/answer pair.

⁴ For detailed overview and discussion of the issues summarized here, I refer the reader to the following: Horvath (1981, 1986), É. Kiss (1987, 2002), Szendrői (2003, 2005).

(3) Partial Answers in Hungarian (Horvath 2005)

- a. Question: **HOL** tudhatnám meg a vonatok menetrendjét?
where I.can.know PRT the train schedule.ACC
Where can I find out about the train schedule?
- b. Answer: Megtudhatod (például) [**AZ INTERNETEN**]...
PRT-you.can.know for.example the internet.on
You can find out about it, for example, on the internet...
(in addition to possibly other places as well)

As originally observed by É. Kiss (1998), in a ‘partial answer’ to a wh-question, the discourse-new/non-presupposed information must *follow* the verb. Such cases establish that ‘discourse-newness’ is not alone sufficient for a phrase to undergo the fronting seen in (2).⁵ It necessarily follows, then, the feature triggering the fronting operation in (2) cannot be the ‘discourse-newness’ of the wh-phrase/focus-phrase.

Another possibility worth considering is that the movement operation in (2) targets phrases that bear ‘focus’ in the sense used by Rooth (1985) and related work. To clarify what this means, let us first examine more closely the semantics of the focus-construction in (2b). Given the well-formedness of sentences like (3b), it is evident that the fronting of ‘Peter’ in (2b) doesn’t encode that phrase’s ‘newness’. What, then, does it encode? As first observed by É. Kiss (1998), the pre-verbal position of ‘Peter’ in (2b) encodes a kind of ‘exhaustive identification’. This ‘exhaustivity’ is reflected in the English translation of (2b). Both the English translation and the Hungarian original entail not only that Peter was introduced to Mary, but that Peter was the *only* person to be introduced to Mary. That is, if question (2a) were answered with (2b), then the speaker would be understood as giving an ‘exhaustive answer’ to the question. If the speaker wished to provide only a partial answer to the question, to state only that Peter is *one* of the people introduced, then (as in (3b)) a post-verbal placement of ‘Peter’ would be required. This is shown below.

⁵ Szendrői (2003) disputes this conclusion, proposing instead that the discourse-new DP in (3b) *is* (contrary to first appearances) fronted to the position of the ‘focus’ in (2b). Szendrői claims that this focus-fronting is simply obscured by a subsequent ‘left-dislocation’ of the main verb to a higher topic position, to the left of the (otherwise pre-verbal) focus. This proposed left-dislocation of the verb is argued to account for the characteristic intonation of the partial question in (3b).

Although an intriguing proposal, this analysis faces the following difficulties. First, Szendrői (2003) doesn’t clarify what is meant by the claim that the verb in (3b) is ‘left-dislocated’. That is, an explicit structure for such cases is not provided, and so the claim is not independently testable (on syntactic grounds). This difficulty is amplified by the fact that Hungarian possesses a separate construction that has been independently analyzed as left-dislocation (or ‘topicalization’) of the verb (Lipták & Vicente (in press)), one that has a distinct morpho-syntactic appearance from the partial answer in (3b).

As we will later see, however, a more difficult challenge for Szendrői (2003) is the impossibility of sentences like (22) below. As we will later elaborate, it is unclear why Szendrői’s (2003) ‘dislocation analysis’ of structures like (3b) wouldn’t incorrectly predict the possibility of structures like (22).

(4) **Partial Answer to Question (2a)**

(Valószínűleg) bemutatta **PÉTER** Marinak.
probably PRT-introduced Peter.acc Mary.to
Well, probably, he introduced Peter to Mary.

It appears, then, that the focus-movement in (2b) is triggered by an exhaustive interpretation of the ‘focus-fronted’ phrase. Interestingly, although space precludes a fully adequate exposition, there is a potential semantic parallel between this exhaustive interpretation of the pre-verbal DP in (2b) and the interpretation of the wh-word in (2a). The parallel can be described roughly as follows. In the semantic work of Rooth (1985) and related approaches, both the wh-question in (2a) and the ‘exhaustively interpreted’ focus(cleft)-construction in (2b) would require for their semantic derivation that one compute over the ‘alternatives’ to the immediately pre-verbal phrase (cf. Rooth 1985, 1992; Beck 2006). Thus, the possibility arises that the fronting operation seen in (2) targets phrases with the following property: their overall semantic contribution to the meaning of the sentence includes a set of ‘alternatives’.

Although perhaps more complex than our first hypothesis, this alternate proposal suffers from a similar difficulty: the property in question just isn’t *sufficient* for the fronting seen in (2). Consider, for example, sentences like the following.

(5) **No Focus-Fronting of Phrases with ‘Even’ (Horvath 2000, 2005)**

Mari elkésett még [**AZ ESKÜVŐJERŐL**] is.
Mary PRT-she.was.late yet the her.wedding.from also
Mary was even late to HER WEDDING.

Sentences like (5) upset the proposed semantic parallel between Hungarian wh-questions and focus-constructions.⁶ Horvath (2000, 2005) notes that, like its English correlate *even*, the Hungarian phrase *még ... is* ‘even’ has a semantics that involves computation over ‘alternatives’ to its DP argument. Thus, the post-verbal phrase *az esküvőjéről* ‘her wedding’ in (5) is – like the pre-verbal wh-word in (2a) and the pre-verbal ‘focus’ in (2b) – a phrase whose semantic contribution includes a set of ‘alternatives’. Therefore, the post-verbal placement of *az esküvőjéről* ‘her wedding’ in (5) demonstrates that, as with ‘discourse-newness’, this more complex semantic property cannot be what triggers the obligatory fronting seen in (2).

Thus, we have so far been unable to pin down a property that uniquely characterizes the immediately pre-verbal phrases in (2a) and (2b). As one final possibility, let us return to the observation that the ‘focus-fronting’ in (2b) encodes an ‘exhaustive’ interpretation of the fronted phrase. Given the minimal contrasts with (3b), (4) and (5), it is reasonable to conclude that the fronting in (2b) specifically targets the features (or elements) that contribute this exhaustive interpretation. That is, following É. Kiss (1998) and Horvath (2000, 2005), I will assume that focus-fronting in Hungarian focus-constructions like (2b) occurs when the fronted phrase is interpreted as exhaustively specifying/identifying the individual(s) of which the remainder of the

⁶ Furthermore, it should be noted that these sentences provide further evidence against the initial proposal that the fronting seen in (2) targets discourse-new/non-presupposed information. They also provide, in their original context, additional evidence against the claim of Szendrői (2003), that the main stress/pitch-accent of a Hungarian sentence must be immediately pre-verbal.

sentence is true. As noted by É. Kiss (1998) and Horvath (2000, 2005), this hypothesis is supported by the behavior of the Hungarian modifier *csak* ‘only’. Unlike *még ... is* ‘even’, phrases modified by *csak* ‘only’ must undergo focus-fronting in Hungarian, as illustrated below.

(6) **Focus-Fronting Obligatory with ‘Only’ (Horvath 2000, 2005)**

Mari csak [**AZ FOGADÁSRÓL**] késett el.
 Mary only the reception.from she.was.late PRT
Mary was only late for the reception.

Given the meaning of *csak* ‘only’, its behavior in sentences like (6) would result from the following generalization, which we adopt as our theory of Hungarian focus-fronting.

(7) **The Trigger of Hungarian ‘Focus-Fronting’**

The ‘focus-fronting’ seen in (2b) targets a feature EX-FOC that contributes the information that the phrase bearing EX-FOC exhaustively identifies the entities of which the remainder of the sentence is true.⁷

With this theory of Hungarian ‘focus-fronting’ as background, let us now consider one final possibility regarding the relationship between Hungarian wh-questions and focus-constructions. Could it be that the fronting of the wh-word in (2a) is also triggered by the ‘EX-FOC’ feature triggering the focus-fronting in (2b). That is, could both the wh-fronting in (2a) and the focus-fronting in (2b) be fronting of an ‘exhaustive/identificational focus’ (É. Kiss 1998)?

In the following sections, I will argue ‘no’. We will see that the ‘exhaustivity’ associated with Hungarian focus-fronting simply does not obtain for Hungarian wh-fronting. Consequently, we must conclude that wh-fronting in Hungarian is not triggered by the EX-FOC feature. Finally, since we adopt the assumption in (7), we must furthermore conclude that the feature triggering Hungarian wh-fronting is simply *not* the feature that triggers its focus-fronting. Thus, the fronting of wh-words in Hungarian cannot be reduced to a more general rule of ‘focus-fronting’ as in (1). Despite their considerable similarities, the structures in (2a) and (2b) must be viewed as exemplifying different grammatical constructions.

In order to build towards these conclusions, I begin in the next section with some background assumptions regarding the semantics of questions and answers.

3. Questions, Answers, Partial Answers and Exhaustive Answers

For reasons of space, I will employ a rather simplified and informal theory regarding the meaning of (wh-)questions and their answers. Throughout my discussion, I will use the term ‘answer’ in the following, somewhat technical fashion.

⁷ Following Horvath (2000, 2005), we can view the pre-verbal position of the *csak*-phrase in (6) as due to this fronting rule directly targeting *csak*, which might be viewed as something of an overt manifestation of ‘EX-FOC’.

(8) **Answer to a Wh-Question**

Given a wh-question $Q = [\dots \text{wh-word} \dots]$, an *answer* to Q is a proposition identical to Q , but where the wh-word is replaced by some referential constant.

Given the definition in (8), the sentences in (9), (10), (11) stand as a licit ‘Question-Answer Pair’, while the sentences in (12) do not.

(9) **Question-Answer Pair**

- a. **What did Dave eat?**
- b. **Dave ate sandwiches.**

(10) **Question-Answer Pair**

- a. **What did Dave eat?**
- b. **Dave ate ice-cream.**

(11) **Question-Answer Pair**

- a. **What did Dave eat?**
- b. **Dave ate sandwiches and ice-cream.**

(12) **Not a Question-Answer Pair**

- a. **What did Dave eat?**
- b. **Dave likes sandwiches.**

Of course, there is a pre-theoretic sense in which (12b) is an answer to (12a). For our purposes here, however, responses like (12b) will not be qualify as ‘answers’ in our special sense.⁸

Given the general concept of ‘answerhood’ in (8), we can now introduce two special subtypes of answer. The term ‘exhaustive answer’ is defined as follows.

(13) **Exhaustive Answer**

An ‘exhaustive answer’ to a wh-question Q is a true answer to Q which entails all the other true answers to Q .

For example, suppose that its true that Dave ate sandwiches and ice-cream. Thus, the true answers to question (9a) are (9b), (10b) and (11b). However, since answer (11b) *entails* answers (10b) and (9b), it can be said that (11b) is an ‘exhaustive answer’ to (9a). For the answers in (9b) and (10b), we introduce the term ‘partial answer’, defined as follows.

⁸ An alternative label for responses like (12b) might be ‘reply’ rather than ‘answer’ *per se*.

(14) **Partial Answer**

A ‘partial answer’ to a wh-question Q is a true answer to Q which *does not entail* all the other true answers to Q.

With just this minimal amount of terminological background, we can now develop a crucial experiment to test whether Hungarian wh-fronting is triggered by the same feature as triggers Hungarian focus-fronting.

4. The Crucial Experiment: Wh-Questions Requiring Partial Answers

4.1 The Experimental Design

Our crucial experiment rests on the following, key observation.

(15) **Empirical Generalization**

If the wh-word of a wh-question occupies a position receiving ‘exhaustive focus’, then the wh-question is infelicitous if an exhaustive answer to the question is impossible for pragmatic reasons.

To illustrate this generalization, let us consider two constructions in English where a DP receives the ‘exhaustive focus’ of the Hungarian focus-construction in (2b): so-called ‘it-clefts’ like (16a) and ‘specificational copular sentences’ like (16b).

(16) **Structures Exemplifying ‘Exhaustive Focus’ in English**

- a. *It-Cleft*
It was the sandwich that Dave ate.
- b. *Specificational Copular Sentence*
The sandwich was the thing that Dave ate.

As reflected in the gloss for (2b), and as explicitly discussed in Section 2, the underlined DPs in (16a,b) receive the same ‘exhaustive interpretation’ as the focus-fronted DP in Hungarian structures like (2b).

Now, let us also consider a question which, for pragmatic reasons, cannot be given an exhaustive answer. Both the wh-questions under (17) seem to have this property.

(17) **Questions Not Permitting Exhaustive Answers**

- a. Where can I buy a newspaper in this city?
- b. Which numbers are odd?

Given that a single person cannot be expected to exhaustively enumerate *all* the places where a person can buy a newspaper in a given city, it is fair to say that, for pragmatic reasons, question

(17a) cannot be given an exhaustive answer. Similarly, given that a single person cannot list *all* the odd numbers, question (17b) cannot be given an exhaustive answer.⁹ Indeed, the questions in (17) are most naturally understood as so-called ‘mention some questions’, questions that ‘seek’ only partial answers.

Finally, let us examine what occurs when we attempt to construct questions akin to those in (17) using the structures in (16). The following illustrates.

(18) Exhaustively Focused Wh-Word in Questions Not Permitting Exhaustive Answers

- a. ?? Where is it that I can buy a newspaper in this city?
- b. ?? Where are the places that I can buy a newspaper in this city?

- c. ?? Which numbers are the ones that are odd?

Each of the questions in (18) is perceived to be ‘odd’. More specifically, they are perceived to be ‘infelicitous’, to make an unreasonable demand upon the addressee. For example, sentences (18a,b) are perceived to require the addressee to exhaustively list *all the places in the city where the speaker can buy a newspaper*, while sentence (18c) is perceived to require the addressee to exhaustively list all the odd numbers.¹⁰ For this reason, we find that the generalization in (15) is accurate: when the wh-word occupies a position receiving exhaustive focus, the question is infelicitous if (for pragmatic reasons) an exhaustive answer cannot be given.

Given our background assumptions in Section 3, it is rather clear why the generalization in (15) should hold. Recall that, as defined in (8), an answer to a wh-question is a proposition formed by replacing the wh-word of the question with some constant. It follows, then, that in any answer to the wh-questions in (18), the constant replacing the wh-word will occupy a position associated with exhaustive focus. For example, the propositions in (19) represent possible answers to the wh-question in (18a).

(19) Licit Answers to Question (18a)

- a. It’s **at a newspaper stand** that you can buy a newspaper in this city.
- b. It’s **at a magazine store** that you can buy a newspaper in this city.
- c. It’s **on 49th street** that you can buy a newspaper in this city.

As we see in (19), because the constant C replacing the wh-word in the answer also receives exhaustive focus, the resulting answer states that C is the *only* entity making the remainder of the answer true. Therefore, if any answer to any question in (18) is ever true, *then no other answer can be*. Thus, the only true answers to the questions in (18) are *exhaustive answers*. Consequently, if an exhaustive answer cannot be given for pragmatic reasons, it follows that the question can *never be given a true answer*. Presumably, a pragmatic condition on a speaker asking a question is that they assume the addressee can provide a true answer to that question.

⁹ On the other hand, it is true that question (17b) can be interpreted as asking for a *definition* of the mathematical term ‘odd’. For our limited purposes here, I leave this alternate interpretation of (17b) aside.

¹⁰ Note that, for independent reasons relating to plurality, the question in (17b) cannot be converted into an ‘it-cleft’ question.

(i) * Which number is it that is odd?

Given that questions like those in (18) can never be given true answers, we predict that they should appear infelicitous. More specifically, we correctly predict that they should appear to place an unreasonable demand upon the addressee to provide an exhaustive answer.

As one final note before we turn to Hungarian, let us look back to the questions in (17). Unlike the questions in (18), those in (17) are entirely felicitous, and are not perceived to unreasonably require exhaustive answers. We must conclude from this fact that the *wh*-words in (17) do not occupy positions associated with exhaustive focus. This is, of course, well in-line with standard assumptions regarding the syntax and semantics of *wh*-questions in English. It is commonly assumed that the fronted position of the *wh*-word in English is due to a fronting-operation triggered by some morpho-syntactic feature of the *wh*-word. It is also commonly assumed that the *wh*-word of an English *wh*-question does not obligatorily receive the ‘exhaustive focus’ of the underlined DPs in (16), either inherently or due to its syntactic position.

We should ask, then, whether questions akin to those in (17) are possible in Hungarian, and what such questions look like.

4.2 The Experiment

Given our understanding of the contrast observed above for the English *wh*-questions in (17) and (18), we are inexorably lead to the following chain of reasoning regarding Hungarian. Suppose that a Hungarian *wh*-question like (2a) were a sub-specie of the focus-construction in (2b). It would follow that the *wh*-word in (2a) occupies a position ‘receiving exhaustive focus’ in the sense intended by (15). Therefore, given the generalization in (15), we would predict that if *ever any* *wh*-question in Hungarian cannot (for pragmatic reasons) be given an exhaustive answer, then that *wh*-question is infelicitous.

In other words, suppose that (2a) were simply a sub-specie of the focus-construction in (2b). Then, given the exhaustive semantics of (2b), it would follow that the *wh*-question in (2a) should have the semantic properties of English cleft-questions like those in (18). Therefore, Hungarian *wh*-questions should, like the cleft-questions in (18), all have the property that their only true answers are exhaustive ones. Consequently, we should find that in cases where (for pragmatic reasons) exhaustive answers cannot be provided, Hungarian *wh*-questions will be perceived as infelicitous.

As we see below, however, this prediction is false. Consider the following sentences.¹¹

(20) Some ‘Mention-Some’ Wh-Questions in Hungarian

- a. **Hol** vehetek újságot itt a környéken?
 where I.can.buy newspaper.acc here the vicinity.on
Where can I buy a newspaper around here?
- b. **Melyik számok** páratlanok?
 which numbers odd.pl
Which numbers are odd?

¹¹ Additionally, consider the *wh*-question in (3a). For reasons similar to those surrounding (17a) and (20a), question (3a) also cannot be given an exhaustive answer.

Both of these questions (and question (3a)) strike Hungarian speakers as being perfectly natural. They do not seem to make the ‘unreasonable demands’ upon the addressee that the English questions in (18) do. Indeed, they are perceived by speakers to be fairly direct translations of the natural English ‘mention-some’ wh-questions in (17).

Following our experimental logic, we must conclude that pre-verbal wh-words in the wh-questions of Hungarian do not (necessarily) bear the EX-FOC feature that is obligatorily born by the pre-verbal ‘foci’ in the focus-constructions of Hungarian. That is, the obligatory wh-fronting seen in Hungarian wh-questions is not triggered by the ‘focus’ (in any sense of that term) of the wh-word itself. Indeed, a more likely alternative is that – just as in English – obligatory wh-fronting in Hungarian is triggered by some morpho-syntactic feature of the wh-word.

As one final point to consider, let us return to the question-answer pair in (2). The fact that both the wh-word in (2a) and its parallel ‘replacement’ in (2b) obligatorily front to the same position is what initially sparked the notion that the fronting in (2a) is not ‘true’ wh-fronting as found in English (cf. Horvath 1986). After all, as is evident from the sentences in (9) – (11), the parallelism between (2a) and (2b) doesn’t hold of question-answer pairs in classic wh-fronting languages like English. In this context, however, it should be noted that this question-answer parallelism *also* fails to hold for the ‘mention-some’ questions of Hungarian. As shown both under (3) above and (21) below, a ‘mention-some’ question like (20a) does not permit its answer to exhibit focus-fronting.

(21) Another ‘Mention-Some’ Question-Answer Pair

- a. **Hol** vehetek újságot itt a környéken?
 where I.can.buy newspaper.acc here the vicinity.on
Where can I buy a newspaper around here?
- b. Vehetsz **a kávézóban** például.
 you.can.buy the cafeteria.in for.example
You can buy one in the cafeteria, for example.

Nevertheless, the wh-word of the ‘mention-some’ question must still undergo fronting to the pre-verbal position. Compare (21a) to the ill-formed (22) below.

(22) Obligatory Wh-Fronting, Even in ‘Mention-Some’ Question ¹²

- * Vehetek **hol** újságot itt a környéken?
 I.can.buy where newspaper.acc here the vicinity.on

¹² Note that the impossibility of (22) is a challenge for Szendrői’s (2003) analysis of question-answer pairs like (3) and (21). According to Szendrői (2003), the initial V in (3b) and (21b) has simply been left-dislocated, and so occupies a position higher than the (focus-fronted) answer. If this were true, however, then we would expect that wh-questions like (22) should also be possible, seeing as how the V also represents discourse-old, given information in (3a) and (21a). The impossibility of (22), then, casts serious doubt upon the notion that (3b) and (21b) simply reflect dislocation of the verb. Rather, the contrast between (21a) and (22) is most natural under an analysis where the rules/constraints enforcing wh-fronting in Hungarian wh-questions are distinct from those relating to the fronting of DPs in focus-constructions like (2b).

Therefore, once one controls for the exhaustivity of the answer, one finds that Hungarian generally exhibits the *non*-parallelism seen for English question-answer pairs. Thus, if we take seriously the properties of Hungarian ‘mention-some’ questions, we must conclude that the fronting seen in Hungarian wh-questions is exactly of the same type as found in English.

5. Conclusion

I have argued that an analysis of the kind in (1) cannot go through for wh-fronting in Hungarian. The principle consequence of this conclusion is that, whatever accounts for the obligatory pre-verbal position of Hungarian wh-operators, it has nothing to do with the operator being ‘focused’, in any sense of the term.

As stated in this paper’s introduction, this conclusion brings with it a broader empirical mandate. Given that the analytic structure in (1) fails to hold for the language most often taken to exemplify it, we should very carefully re-examine other languages for which this analysis has been proposed. After all, the weaknesses of (1) for Hungarian have only become clear now that much more detailed research has been carried out on the language’s focus-constructions (É. Kiss 1998; Horvath 2000, 2005; Szendrői 2003). In contrast, many of the other languages for which (1) has been proposed are comparatively understudied. Indeed, one area where the analysis in (1) is often encountered is in the descriptive grammars of understudied languages, ones for which the author often employs only a vague and informal use of the term ‘focus’ to begin with (Enrico 2003, 2004). It is hoped that, by challenging one of the best-known arguments for (1), more cross-linguistic study of focus-constructions may thereby be promoted. Furthermore, one should note that our ‘crucial experiment’ in Section 4 provides a novel diagnostic for testing whether obligatory wh-fronting in a given language is indeed simply ‘focus-movement’.¹³

One other, final consequence of our rejection of (1) is that it ‘re-problematizes’ the structural similarities between wh-questions and focus-constructions in Hungarian and so many other languages. Although it cannot be denied that in many languages wh-operators and ‘focused’ phrases target the same structural position, this fact simply cannot be due (in general) to the fact that wh-words are ‘focused’ in some sense. Thus, the extensive tendency for wh-questions and focus-constructions to be structurally similar remains an important puzzle, one whose difficulty has perhaps not been fully appreciated. Generally speaking, it is no more a solution to this puzzle to simply label wh-words as ‘[+FOCUS]’ than it would be to stipulate that ‘focused’ phrases are ‘[+WH]’. Such accounts risk lumping together properties that are underlyingly very different, despite accidental similarities in nomenclature.

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¹³ In other words, the experiment from Section 4 provides a means for independently testing the oft-encountered claim that a given language’s wh-questions are based off of ‘focus-constructions’ or ‘cleft constructions’.

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