

## Some Comments on Andrew Kehler's 'Ellipsis and Anaphora in a QUD Model of Discourse'

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### 1 Introduction

The plan:

- implicit QUDs and focus
- implicit QUDs and contrastive topics
- some more general comments

### 2 Implicit QUDs and Focus

#### 2.1 *Brief Reminder/Momentary Flashback to a Few Minutes Ago*

The paper's solution to Dahl's puzzles relies on the assumption that potentially implicit QUDs share binding properties with explicit questions. Like explicit questions, QUDs are subject to the Kehler & Büring (2009) 'Be Bound or Be Disjoint!' requirement, which is defined in terms of these notions:

- (1) a. c-command
- b. syntactic category (at least the category 'pronoun')
- c. *wh*-word
- d. free in a c-command domain

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Thanks to Ezra Keshet, Alan Munn, Cristina Schmitt, and Phil Pellino for discussion.

This suggests a hypothesis:

- (2) **STRONG QUD INTERNAL STRUCTURE HYPOTHESIS (SQUISH)**  
Even implicit QUDs have syntactic structure and are sensitive to all constraints on such structures.

The paper doesn't explicitly make this very strong claim. But some (potentially weaker) version of this is necessary to make available the notions in (1), which are in turn necessary to the paper's account of ellipsis.

Major potential confound: it is not always easy to be precisely identify a particular implicit QUD.

#### 2.2 *Focus, Islands, and QUD Well-Formedness*

Q-A congruence: focus in an answer corresponds to the *wh*-constituent in a congruent question (Rooth 1996, Roberts 1998, Kadmon 2001, Büring 2003, a.o.):

- (3) A: Who wants coffee? (Rooth 1996)  
     B: EDE wants coffee.  
          \*Ede wants COFFEE.

The most straight-forward way a *wh*-question can go awry is through violation of an island:

- (4) a. complex NP island:  
          \*Who<sub>1</sub> do you believe [the claim that Floyd killed *t*<sub>1</sub>]?  
     b. *wh*-island:  
          \*Who<sub>1</sub> do you wonder [whether Floyd killed *t*<sub>1</sub>]?  
     c. Coordinate Structure Constraint:  
          \*Who<sub>1</sub> did Floyd kill Lincoln and *t*<sub>1</sub>?  
     d. adjunct island:  
          \*Who<sub>1</sub> did a book about *t*<sub>1</sub> disappoint Floyd?

Prediction: Since focus marks the position of a *wh*-word, the placement of focus should be constrained in a way that mirrors the constraints on the corresponding *wh*-word in the QUD.

In fact, though, placement of focus is *not* island-sensitive (Anderson 1972, Rooth 1985, Kratzer 1991, Rooth 1996):

- (5) a. complex NP island:  
I believe [the claim that Floyd killed KENNEDY].  
b. *wh*-island:  
I wonder [whether Floyd killed KENNEDY].  
c. Coordinate Structure Constraint:  
Floyd killed [Lincoln and KENNEDY].  
d. adjunct island:  
A book [about KENNEDY] disappointed Floyd.

So this prediction of SQUISH seems not to be borne out.

SQUISH does, however, suggest an idea that has the potential for synthesis of two different kinds of approaches to focus:

- movement theories (Chomsky 1977, Drubig 1994, Wagner 2005 a.o.)
- in-situ theories (Rooth 1985, 1996, Roberts 1998 a.o.)

A middle ground SQUISH makes available:

- as in in-situ theories, focus constituents are *not* moved, but ...
- ... focus normally requires a potentially implicit QUD in which the focused constituent corresponds to a *wh*-word, and ...
- ... because QUDs have syntactic structure, this *wh*-word may need to move

Best of both worlds?

### 2.3 Focus Movement and Crossover

If focus is not sensitive to island constraints, why believe in focus movement at all?

Focus *does* give rise to weak crossover (the example is from Chomsky 1976 as cited in Meinunger 2003):

- (6) a. His<sub>1</sub> mother loves John<sub>1</sub>.  
b. \*His<sub>1</sub> mother loves JOHN<sub>1</sub>.

The LF of (6b) would, on a movement theory, be (7), which is a weak crossover configuration:

- (7) \*JOHN<sub>1</sub> his<sub>1</sub> mother loves *t*<sub>1</sub>.

- (8) a. \*Who<sub>1</sub> does his<sub>1</sub> mother love *t*<sub>1</sub>?  
b. \*everyone<sub>1</sub> [ his<sub>1</sub> mother loves *t*<sub>1</sub> ] (LF)

This would seem to suggest that focus involves movement after all, despite the island facts.

The understanding of these facts in an in-situ approach (Rooth (1985, 1996):

- in this case, there *is* movement
- ... but it is not focus movement, because that doesn't exist
- it's instead normal scoping operations (such as QR, presumably)

A confession: I don't actually understand how this helps with (6).

If we assume that QR is obligatory even for non-quantificational DPs like *John*, the LF would be (9):

- (9) \*John<sub>1</sub> his<sub>1</sub> mother loves *t*<sub>1</sub>.

If we assume that QR is optional for non-quantificational DPs, the LF would be (10):

- (10) His<sub>1</sub> mother loves John.

Possible explanation: This movement story is presented wrt a more complicated example involving association with focus and *only*.<sup>1</sup> It may help in that case but not in this one.

### 2.4 Other Arguments for Focus Movement

Lots of languages—most notably Hungarian—move their foci overtly (Drubig 1994, Meinunger 2003).

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<sup>1</sup>It involves this contrast (from Rooth 1985, cited in Kratzer 1991):

- (i) We only expect the woman he<sub>1</sub> loves to betray HIM<sub>1</sub>.  
a. possible reading: 'we expect no one but him<sub>1</sub> to satisfy  $\lambda x$ [the woman *x* loves betrayed *x*]'  
b. impossible: 'we expect no one but him<sub>1</sub> to satisfy  $\lambda x$ [the woman he<sub>1</sub> loves betrayed *x*]'

The reading in (10b) would result from moving *him*<sub>1</sub>. This movement is a crossover violation, so the reading is unavailable. In structures in which crossover is not an issue (*We only expect HIM<sub>1</sub> to be betrayed by the woman he<sub>1</sub> loves*), both readings are possible.

Argument from NPIs (Wagner 2005): VP *only* licenses NPIs in the unfocused portions of its scope:<sup>2</sup>

- (11) a. John only gave any kale to HIS friends.  
b. John only gave KALE to any of his friends.

Wagner begins with a denotation for VP *only* that combines with the focused element and the result of abstracting over the position it occupied:

- (12) *only*(his friends)( $\lambda x$  . John gave any kale to  $x$ )  
*only*(kale)( $\lambda x$  . John gave  $x$  to any of his friends)

His *only* is downward (Strawson-)entailing on the second argument, so it is expected that NPIs should be able to occur there. Movement is required to build this second argument.

It's not clear that SQUISH provides any new way of thinking about these arguments:

- if the appearance of focus movement is really a shadow of the movement of a *wh*-word in an implicit QUD, the fact that focused elements can move overtly in many languages isn't relevant (because *wh*-words can too, and this isn't news)
- it's not clear to me that SQUISH would offer any new handle on association with focus

## 2.5 Interim Assessment: SQUISH and Focus

SQUISH might offer a new way to understand why focus placement is sensitive to weak crossover, by deriving this fact from the corresponding fact about *wh*-words.

Islands remain a problem. In focus-movement theories, Drubig (1994) provides a way out. He suggests that in the problematic island data, an entire island focus-moves all at once.

- (13) a. complex NP island:  
[the claim that Floyd killed KENNEDY]<sub>1</sub> I believe  $t_1$

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<sup>2</sup>The observation is from von Stechow (1999), where he attributes it to Danny Fox.

- b. *wh*-island:  
[whether Floyd killed KENNEDY]<sub>1</sub> I wonder  $t_1$   
c. Coordinate Structure Constraint:  
[Lincoln and KENNEDY]<sub>1</sub> Floyd killed  $t_1$   
d. adjunct island:  
[a book about KENNEDY]<sub>1</sub>  $t_1$  disappointed Floyd

Suspicious? But...

- all of these examples are actually grammatical in English (with a huge 'but', which is below)
- precisely this kind of focus fronting of whole islands happens overtly in Hungarian (Drubig 1994)

The potential big 'but': But the fronted expressions in (13) seem like contrastive topics rather than (ordinary focus-)focus:

- (14) A: Do you believe the claim the Floyd killed Kennedy?  
B: The claim that Floyd killed Kennedy], I believe. (The claim that he killed Lincoln, I don't.)
- (15) A: Identify the person such that you believe the claim that Floyd killed that person.  
B: #The claim that Floyd killed Kennedy], I believe.  
?I believe the claim that Floyd killed KENNEDY.
- (16) A: Who killed who?  
B: Lincoln and Kennedy, FLOYD killed.
- (17) A: Floyd killed Lincoln and who else?  
B: #Lincoln and Kennedy, Floyd killed.  
Floyd killed Lincoln and KENNEDY.

Still, Drubig's focus-movement of islands does allow a movement theory to reconcile the crossover and island facts.

Could this help with a SQUISH approach to crossover and focus? Maybe, but it gets a little hairy:

- could assume that implicit QUDs allow fronting of whole islands
- but not obvious this is possible with overt QUDs in English (or rather, it may be possible but only with a big confounding 'but')

- so we'd have to say there is a difference between overt and implicit QUDs in this regard
- not a self-evidently terrible idea, but it is a rejection of SQUISH

Weaker version of SQUISH:

- (18) WEAKER QUD INTERNAL STRUCTURE HYPOTHESIS<sup>3</sup>  
Even implicit QUDs have syntactic structure, but they are not sensitive to all constraints on such structures.

One way in which implicit QUDs would have to be less constrained would be that they would permit movement of entire islands.

Once we make this move, though, it would be simpler to suppose instead that implicit QUDs aren't subject to island constraints.

### 3 Implicit QUDs and Contrastive Topics

#### 3.1 Adverbial Contrastive Topics

A cool idea about *in X's case* phrases:

...the phrase *In X's case* (and others in its class) introduces a QUD created by substituting *X* for a parallel entity within the meaning of an anaphorically-identified, contextually-salient referent. The remainder of the clause answers (and is intoned with respect to) this QUD, and both question and answer are situated in a more complex QUD structure ....

Additional evidence for this (apart from ellipsis facts):

- (19) I think Mrs. Smith will pass most of the students in the class.  
But in John's case,  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{forget it} \\ \text{no way} \\ \text{no chance} \\ \text{PLEEEAAASSSE} \end{array} \right\} !$

<sup>3</sup>Apologies to Ezra, who suggested a way to make this have the fantastic acronym 'RelinquISH' which I now, sadly, can't remember.

- (20) Every boy in Mrs. Smith's class hoped she would pass him.  
a. In John's case, I'm sure she'll do it.  
b. In John's case, I think it's inevitable.  
c. In John's case, I'm optimistic.

All of these cases involve a dependence on an implicit QUD.

This approach seems especially appealing, since:

- If short answers such as *forget it* are as impoverished in their internal structure as one might suppose, what would *in John's case* have to work with on any alternative account?
- My best attempt at an answer, which is terrible: *in John's case* might constrain a situation variable wrt which *forget it* is interpreted. But this would require that *forget it* actually involve a situation variable somehow. Unlikely. It seems unlikely that we'd even want to say that *forget it* or *no way* express propositions.<sup>4</sup>
- Alternatively, the short answers in (20) may have more internal structure of their own that is apparent, meaning that the adverbial might have available to it some of the internal machinery of full sentences.

#### 3.2 Other Cases?

Perhaps this approach could shed light on how other similar modifiers work?

Domain adverbs (Ernst 2002 a.o.):

- (21) a. Socially, Einstein wasn't that smart. Intellectually, he certainly was.  
b. Legally, Floyd is at fault. Morally, he isn't.

As *a(n) NP* phrases:(actual exchange on a local news program):<sup>5</sup>

- (22) anchorperson 1: Did you get many spankings as a kid?  
anchorperson 2: [<sub>CT</sub> *As a kid* ], no... (Immediate embarrassed sputtering.)

<sup>4</sup>Although in an indirect way they convey them.

<sup>5</sup><http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7d6C5s9yU2s>

Even *in view of* phrases, which play an important role as a means of expressing conversational backgrounds that restrict a modal (Kratzer 1981 and elsewhere):

A: Who killed Kennedy?

B: In view of the law, Floyd.

(23) A: Did Floyd murder Kennedy?

B: In view of the law, not a chance.  
In view of what we know, no way.

### 3.3 Implicit QUD Problems Again

There is, however, a difficulty with the implicit QUDs some of these examples require.

(24) Socially, Einstein wasn't that smart. Intellectually, he certainly was.

(25) accommodated implicit super-QUD:

- a. \*In what way is Einstein how smart?
- b. \*How smart is Einstein in what way?

Perhaps the accommodated implicit QUD actually avoids this by some periphrastic means:

- (26) a. How and in what way is Einstein smart?
- b. How smart is Einstein, and in what way?

This would loosen the connection between particular QUD structures and discourse relations.

(27) anchorperson 1: Did you get many spankings as a kid?  
anchorperson 2: [<sub>CT</sub> *As a kid* ], no... (Immediate embarrassed sputtering.)

(28) accommodated implicit super-QUD:

- a. \*Did you get many spankings, and as what?
- b. \*What did you get many spankings as?
- c. Did you get many spankings, and if so, at what age?
- d. Did you get many spankings, and if so, how old were you?

Again, ungrammatical or a meaning that isn't obviously the right one. Would these really have e.g. *Did you get many spankings as a kid?* as a subquestion?:

(29) A: How old were you?

B: ?A kid.

*A kid* is certainly a sensible answer in (29), but also an indirect one.

(30) A: Who killed Kennedy?

B: In view of the law, Floyd.

(31) accommodated implicit super-QUD:

- a. \*In view of what did who kill Kennedy?
- b. \*Who killed Kennedy in view of what?
- c. \*Who killed Kennedy, and in view of what?

(32) A: Did Floyd murder Kennedy?

B: In view of the law, not a chance.

(33) accommodated implicit super-QUD:

- a. \*Did Floyd murder Kennedy in view of what?
- b. ?Did Floyd murder Kennedy, and in view of what?
- c. ?What did Floyd murder Kennedy in view of?

Again, not clear that these mean the right sorts of things.

## 4 Final Remarks

If it is possible to find a suitably weakened QUIISH, the natural questions that arise include:

- could the use of implicit QUDs accomplish some of what LF (as a syntactic representation) does?
- how roundabout can a QUD be? are there ways of identifying more precisely what the syntactic structure of an implicit QUD might be (perhaps by using the tools the paper employs: question-answer congruence, discourse relations, facts about givenness)?

Bigger picture:

- SQUISH—the strong form of the hypothesis that implicit QUDs have syntactic structure—may not be tenable
- there are many ways one might imagine weakening this hypothesis that may still open up some analytical directions that might otherwise not have been available
- the idea is *methodologically* useful, since it leads one to ask questions that wouldn't arise (as easily) on the standard view

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