

# Why Multiple Clefts Are Disallowed

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## 1. Introduction

This paper presents an analysis of clefts. In Korean, *wh*-expressions cannot be clefted along with another constituent,<sup>1</sup> and true multiple clefts do not seem to exist. We discuss and explain two apparent exceptions to this generalization: (i) *way* ‘why’, which does appear in such clefts, and (ii) multiple clefts read with an echo intonation (which will be called “echo clefts” throughout this paper).

We show that the seemingly exceptional behavior of *way* ‘why’ in this instance can be attributed to the same reason as its exceptional behavior observed elsewhere (Huang 1982, *inter alia*): *way* ‘why’ is a clausal modifier, and as such, modifies the clause in whose specifier it is merged. The examples where *way* ‘why’ appears side by side with a clefted phrase are thus examples where only one constituent has been clefted.

The exceptional behavior of echo clefts also falls out from the oft-observed peculiarity of echo questions. The lack of locality effects, which sets apart echo questions from run-of-the-mill questions, is what makes these constructions possible and suggests that a different mechanism is involved in the interpretation of echo questions.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces the data in question along with Hiraiwa and Ishihara’s (2002) proposal for Japanese clefts, the latter of which will provide a syntactic backdrop for our analysis. Section 3 is devoted to the discussion of *way* ‘why’ in clefts and elsewhere, and section 4, to echo clefts. Section 5 discusses implications of our analysis and issues for further research.

## 2. Clefts and their anatomy

As shown in the Korean example below, Korean (and Japanese) clefts are the mirror image of English or Chinese clefts: the topical material (corresponding to a *that*-clause in English) comes first, followed by the clefted constituent and the copula.<sup>2</sup>

- (1) [Sue -ka Bonn -(ey)se palphyohanun kes] -un encey -ya?  
Sue -NOM Bonn -in present COMP -TOP when -COP-Q<sup>3</sup>  
‘When is it that Sue is presenting in Bonn?’

### 2.1. Clefts and questions

Clefted run-of-the-mill<sup>4</sup> *wh*-phrases in Korean appear to elude pairings with other phrases. This is shown below with *encey* ‘when’:

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<sup>1</sup> The same is true of Japanese. We refer the readers to Kawamura (2006) for further detail.

<sup>2</sup> Hiraiwa and Ishihara (2002) credit John Whitman for the observation that the copula is used as a focus marker in many languages including Korean, Chinese, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Abbreviations: NOM(INATIVE); ACC(USATIVE); DAT(IVE); TOP(IC); COP(ULA); Q(UESTION); CL(ASSIFIER).

- (2) \*[Sue -ka Bonn -(ey)se palphyohanun kes] -un encey ku nonmwun i -ya?  
 Sue -NOM Bonn -in present COMP -TOP when that paper COP -Q  
 Intended interpretation: ‘When is it that Sue is presenting THAT PAPER in Bonn?’

*Way* ‘why’ is the only pronounced exception to this rule:

- (3) [Sue -ka Bonn -(ey)se palphyohanun kes] -un way ku nonmwun i -ya?  
 Sue -NOM Bonn -in present COMP -TOP why that paper COP -Q  
 ‘Why is it that Sue is presenting THAT PAPER in Bonn?’

This is the first “exception” we will address in section 3, after briefly introducing our assumptions about these constructions.

## 2.2. The formation of clefts

As illustrated below, the formation of clefts in Korean is subject to locality restrictions:

- (4) [[Sue -ka Bonn -ey kanta -ko] (mal)han kes] -un encey -ya?  
 Sue -NOM Bonn -to go -COMP said COMP -TOP when -COP-Q  
 ‘When is it that Sue said she was going to Bonn?’

*Encey* ‘when’ here cannot indicate the time point for Sue’s trip to Bonn; rather, this is a question about the time it was said (by Sue or someone else) that Sue was going to Bonn. In other words, the clefted constituent cannot be construed as part of the innermost clause. Such locality restrictions suggest that these clefts are the result of a syntactic operation. This is the reason we adopt Hiraiwa and Ishihara’s (2002) analysis of Japanese clefts proper, despite the commonalities otherwise shared by the Korean clefts and what Hiraiwa and Ishihara (2002) call “pseudoclefts” (see section 5.2 for further detail).

Under this proposal, clefts are related to another emphatic construction, which is illustrated below:

- (5) [<sub>CP</sub> Sue -ka kuke -l palphyohanun ke] -ya.  
 Sue -NOM that -ACC present COMP -COP  
 ‘It is that Sue is presenting that.’

Hiraiwa and Ishihara (2002) refer to the Japanese counterpart of (5) as an “*in-situ* focus construction”, given that it is possible to focus individual constituents within this construction using stress rather than movement. The same is true of Korean:

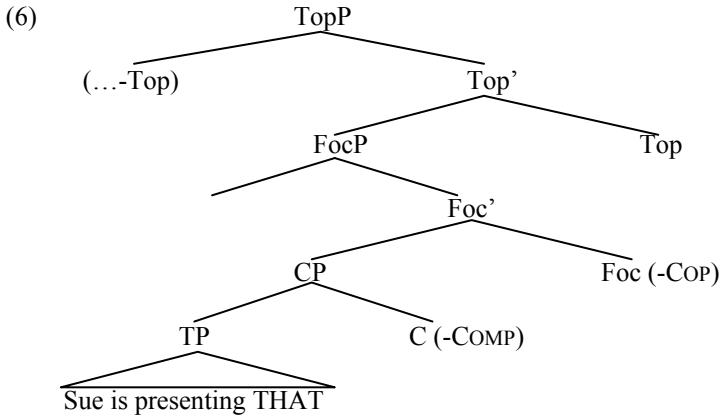
- (5’) [<sub>CP</sub> SUE -ka kuke -l palphyohanun ke] -ya.  
 Sue -NOM that -ACC present COMP -COP  
 ‘It is that SUE is presenting that.’

- (5’’) [<sub>CP</sub> Sue -ka KUKÉ-L palphyohanun ke] -ya.  
 Sue -NOM that -ACC present COMP -COP  
 ‘It is that Sue is presenting THAT.’

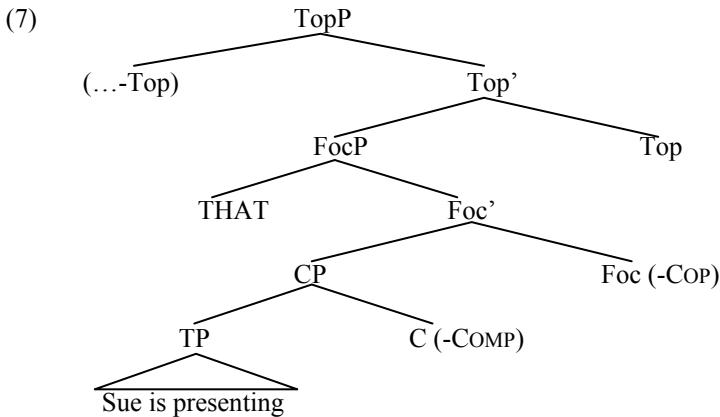
The basic structure of the *in-situ* focus construction in (5)-(5’’) is shown below, with English glosses replacing the Korean words for the readers’ convenience:

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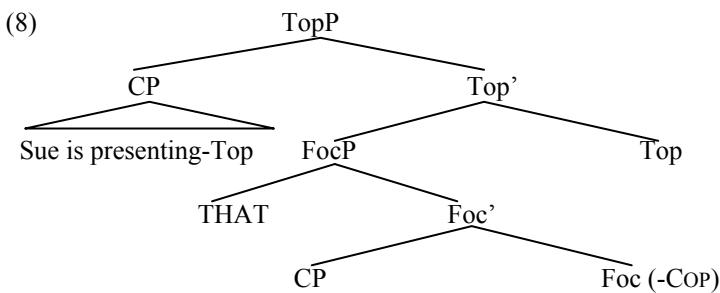
<sup>4</sup> By ‘run-of-the-mill’ *wh*-expressions, we mean *wh*-expressions that occur in non-echo questions. For further detail about intonation and grammaticality judgments about this example, see section 4.



The derivation of a cleft from (6) takes place in two steps. First, the focused phrase (e.g., *kuke-l* ‘that-ACC’ in (5’’) and (6)) undergoes focus movement:



The remnant (e.g., *Sue-ka palphyohanun ket* ‘Sue is presenting-COMP’ in (5’’) and (6)) is then topicalized:



### 2.3. Restrictions on clefting

Examples such as (1), where a *wh*-expression is clefted, can be derived through the same steps illustrated in (6)-(8) above.

- (1) [Sue -ka Bonn -(ey)se palphyohanun kes] -un encey -ya?  
 Sue -NOM Bonn -in present COMP -TOP when -COP-Q  
 ‘When is it that Sue is presenting in Bonn?’

From its clefted (focused) position, the *wh*-expression can associate with the question operator housed in the matrix CP (InterrogativeP), to form a matrix question about the time of Sue's presentation in Bonn. Focusing more than one constituent, however, does not seem to be an option, as shown by (2):

- (2) \*[Sue-ka Bonn -(ey)se palphyohanun kes] -un encey ku nonmwun i -ya?  
 Sue -NOM Bonn -in present COMP -TOP when that paper COP -Q  
 Intended interpretation: 'When is it that Sue is presenting THAT PAPER in Bonn?'

At a rudimentary level, one can attribute the ungrammaticality of (2) to a general restriction on multiple clefts, which seems to be observed by a majority of Korean speakers, as well as speakers of languages such as English (where only adjuncts are allowed in multiple clefts). Even for Japanese speakers and a minority of Korean speakers who find multiple clefts perfectly acceptable, the clefted phrases in apparent multiple clefts seem to behave as one constituent, forming what Takano (2002) calls "surprising constituents". I illustrate these with an example from Japanese, which more commonly allows multiple clefts:

- (9) Mary -ni ageta no -wa [John -ga hon -o (nisatu)] -da.  
 Mary -DAT gave COMP -TOP [John -NOM book-ACC (two.CL) -COP  
 (Lit.) 'It is John (two) books that gave to Mary.' / ('John gave (two) books to Mary.')
- [Adapted from Takano 2002: 244]

In view of the fact that the clefted material behaves as one constituent, and assuming that this surprising constituent is but an instance of a phrase formed by the conjunction of focused material, the impossibility of clefting a *wh*-expression alongside a non-*wh*-expression can be attributed to Ross's (1967) Coordinate Structure Constraint.

### 3. Seeming exception 1: *Why* clefts

We must then conclude that (3) cannot be an instance of a multiple cleft, and it should now be evident that it is not. The grammaticality of (3) (repeated below) has to do with the fact that *way* 'why' is associated with the main clause, rather than the embedded clause:

- (3) [Sue-ka Bonn -(ey)se palphyohanun kes] -un way ku nonmwun i -ya?  
 Sue -NOM Bonn -in present COMP -TOP why that paper COP -Q  
 'Why is it that Sue is presenting THAT PAPER in Bonn?'

The question here concerns the reason for the entire fact of Sue presenting that paper (rather than some other one) in Bonn, and not the reason for Sue's presentation. (3) is thus *not* an exception to the rule. Furthermore, the behavior of *way* 'why' that we see in (3) is fully in line with its so-called exceptional behavior elsewhere.

#### 3.1. *WHY* is different

In her 1985 LSA presentation, Engdahl observes: "*Why* asks for the reason for an entire fact; it's not itself a constituent of the fact. *What reason* on the other hand is ambiguous; it may also correspond to a constituent of a fact."

- (10) For what reason did no US soldier go to Vietnam?  
 a. Because he wanted to have a good time. (*what reason* under the scope of *no US soldier*)  
 b. The president didn't allow US troops to be sent there. (OK answer but false presupposition)

(11) Why did no US soldier go to Vietnam?

a. #Because he wanted to have a good time.

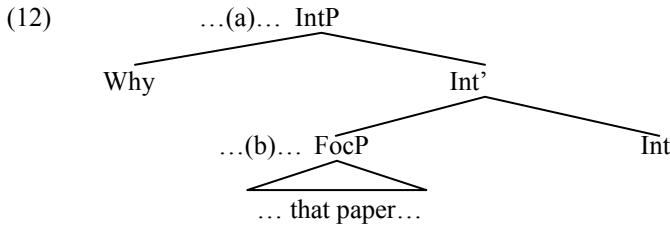
b. The president didn't allow any US troops to be sent there.

[Engdahl 1985: 3]

The contrast illustrated in (10)-(11) is evident: since *why* asks a question about the “fact” that “no US soldier went to Vietnam”, (11a), which contradicts this fact, does not constitute a felicitous answer to this question. On the other hand, (11b) is a possible answer, since it shares with the question in (11) the incorrect assumption that no US soldier was sent to Vietnam.

Engdahl's (1985) idea about *why*'s semantics fully agrees with *why*'s (or its Korean or Chinese counterpart's) syntactic position (as a clausal modifier) as proposed by Lin (1992) and Ko (2005), among others.

Taking these views into account, the structure of (3) can be represented as follows:



Assuming with Rizzi (1999) that the projection TopP may be either in (a) or (b) in the tree above, we derive the two possible word orders for (3):

(3) [Sue -ka Bonn -(ey)se palphyohanun kes] -un way ku nonmwun i -ya?  
 Sue -NOM Bonn -in present COMP -TOP why that paper COP -Q  
 ‘Why is it that Sue is presenting THAT PAPER in Bonn?’

(3’) Way [Sue -ka Bonn -(ey)se palphyohanun kes] -un ku nonmwun i -ya?<sup>5</sup>  
 why Sue -NOM Bonn -in present COMP -TOP that paper COP -Q

### 3.2. WHY's focus sensitivity

*Why*'s peculiar syntactic (discussed in Huang 1982 and many others) and semantic behavior (discussed in Lawler 1971 among others) may thus be equally attributed to its lexical properties as a clausal modifier. Furthermore, Korean is but one language where *why* enjoys a special status. As observed in Kawamura (2006), facts very much akin to the Korean/Japanese facts discussed in the previous section are observed in English as well:

(13) a. \*What us/here/yesterday?<sup>6</sup>  
 b. Why us/here/yesterday?

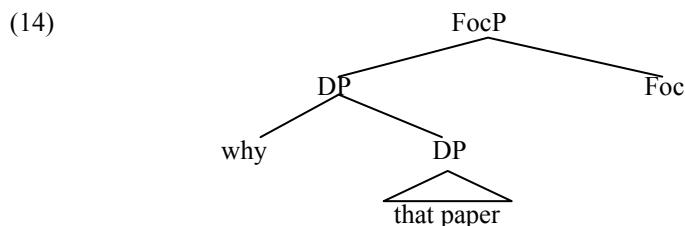
The abbreviated questions in (13b) are all synonymous with their cleft + question counterparts. *Why* belongs with its local clause, i.e., the cleft construction as a whole. In English, each of the grammatical questions in (13b) presupposes some previous utterance, and inquires about the reason the focused constituent is being singled out. They are in essence the abbreviated forms of cleft + question. In both the English and the Korean examples, the *why*-clefts are instances of single clefts, where the

<sup>5</sup> The reason we did not choose (3') as our main example should be evident: unlike its unambiguous counterpart, the linear order of (3') could give rise to a different analysis (bracketing) which is not relevant for our point.

<sup>6</sup> “What now?” is fully grammatical and widely used. However, this seems like a stock phrase, as suggested by the fact that other time expressions are not allowed in the same manner.

non-*wh*-phrase is focused, rather than multiple or combination clefts. This is merely another instantiation of *why*'s special status; *why*'s "locality" (Huang 1982, Ko 2005, etc); and *why*'s limited versatility in Korean/Japanese/Chinese (Nishigauchi 1990, among others), where counterparts of *wh*-phrases, except for *why*'s, play multiple roles as interrogatives, indefinites, free-choice items, etc.

It is more economical to assume, as we have, that these peculiarities of *why* have a common source (its status as a clausal modifier), rather than to follow Kawamura (2006), which assumes that *why* forms part of FocP, and is thus allowed to co-occur with the focused constituent, unlike other *wh*-phrases.



[Kawamura 2006: 3]

*Why*'s sensitivity to focused constituents can be easily explained, whether we adopt with Lawler (1971) the traditional view that *why*-questions are presuppositional, or assume, like Fitzpatrick (2005), a stricter view of presupposition and attribute the "presuppositional" flavor of *why*-questions to an inference: in either case, we either presuppose or infer the non-*why* portion of those questions.

In addition, *way* 'why' does not seem to behave as one syntactic unit with the clefted constituent:

- (3'') [Sue -ka Bonn -(ey)se palphyohanun kes] -un way ku nonmwun -i ani -ya?  
 Sue -NOM Bonn -in present COMP-TOP why that paper -NOM NEG-Q  
 'Why isn't it THAT PAPER that Sue is presenting in Bonn?' [Ad. from Tomioka, p.c.]

The negation *ani* serves to negate 'that paper' as the focused item, and does not negate the entire question. Putting *way* 'why' in FocP fails to capture the connection between (3) and other facts about *why* (mentioned in this section); it furthermore fails to capture the syntactic behavior of *why* in examples such as (3'').

#### 4. Seeming exception 2: Echo clefts

Our discussion of (2) in section 2.1 calls for one caveat. While (2) is clearly ungrammatical when read with the falling intonation typical of *wh*-questions, it *is* grammatical when read with a rising intonation and construed as an echo question:<sup>7</sup>

- (2') [Sue -ka Bonn -(ey)se palphyohanun kes] -un encey ku nonmwun i -ya?  
 Sue -NOM Bonn -in present COMP -TOP when that paper COP -Q  
 'It is that paper that Sue is presenting in Bonn WHEN?'

This does not constitute a problematic exception to the rule, either. It is well known that echo questions are impervious to locality constraints (such as the aforementioned Coordinate Structure Constraint):

- (15) A: John knows who ate beans and squid.  
 B: John knows who ate beans and WHAT? [Artstein 2002: 102]

<sup>7</sup> The same holds true of the Japanese counterpart of (2) (Tomoko Kawamura, p.c.).

For (15B) to be a run-of-the-mill matrix question about what it is that John ate with beans, *what* would have to escape the conjunction phrase *beans and squid*. (15B) *is* a matrix question about that, but it is *not* a run-of-the-mill question. It is an echo question that depends on the utterance (15A).

Such insensitivity to locality restrictions suggests that echo questions rely on an interpretation mechanism distinct from that of typical (*wh*-)questions. Crucially, the association between the question operator and the *wh*-expression inside a conjunction phrase, which proved problematic with typical questions (in (2)), is no longer a problem with echo questions. An analysis of echo questions along the lines of Artstein (2002), which posits no such association, is compatible with these facts. We refer the reader to Artstein (2002) for details of such an analysis.

## 5. Discussion and concluding remarks

We have attributed yet another puzzle about *way* ‘why’ to its distinctive status as a clausal modifier. Our proposal links the Korean facts to other languages, in that many languages seem to strongly disfavor multiple clefts, and it allows for a more unified analysis of *why*’s multifariously unique behavior across languages. We have also shown how the restriction on multiple clefts can be bypassed in the case of echo questions, and have seen that this too is no glaring inconsistency; this fact instead supports analyses that suppose distinct mechanisms for echo questions in contrast to run-of-the-mill questions.

### 5.1. Crossing dependencies?

The analysis presented in this paper is a substantial revision of our initial hypothesis presented in the abstract. In the abstract, we assumed that crossing dependencies—the dependency between the *wh*-expression and the question operator intersecting with the dependency between the head of FocP (the copula) and the clefted/focused constituent (cf. Büring 2006)—were responsible for the contrast between (2) (‘when’ + ‘that paper’) vs. (3) (‘why’ + ‘that paper’) and (2) vs. (2’) (echo reading of ‘when’). We have since reconsidered our previous analysis, given the grammaticality of (1), where only *encey* ‘when’ is clefted. (1) conclusively shows that *encey* ‘when’ can be simultaneously subject to both a focusing effect and association with the question operator without giving rise to ungrammaticality.

Problems due to crossing dependencies are observed in a very similar set of examples:

- (16) a. \**Encey na man?*  
       when I only  
       Intended meaning: \*‘When just me?’  
       b. *Way na man?*  
       why I only  
       ‘Why just me?’

In (16a), *encey* ‘when’ cannot be associated with the event in the elided clause, for the same reason laid out in section 2.3. Yet it cannot be associated with the matrix clause, either; the main predicate (the copula) does not provide an adequate event/state whose time *encey* ‘when’ could single out. Here again, an echo reading of (16a) would make it acceptable, in which case (16a) as a whole would constitute the misunderstood portion of a previous utterance and would thus behave as one unit.

The dependencies in (16b), on the other hand, do not cross, since *way* ‘why’ is associated with the matrix clause and sits well above the projection where the *man* ‘only’ phrase is located (cf. Lee 2004 for a proposal about the position of this projection in Korean).

### 5.2. Korean vs. Japanese clefts

While the facts regarding Japanese and Korean clefts are largely parallel, the two languages nonetheless exhibit different properties. Hiraiwa and Ishihara (2002) classify Japanese clefts where

the clefted constituent bears no case marker as a separate kind of cleft (“pseudo-cleft”). Korean clefts do not exhibit this distinction, as the case markers *-i/-ga* (NOM) and *-(l)ul* (ACC) are generally disallowed before the copula *i-*.

In addition, Korean clefts exhibit a trait found with other languages (Chinese, Hungarian, English, among others), which may very well be attributable to a pragmatic reason: increasing the number of clefted constituents undermines the very *raison d'être* of the construction.

The full extent of the differences between Japanese and Korean clefts remains to be ascertained. We reserve that work for future research.

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