When you can and can’t see double: Revisiting focus doubling in ASL
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**BACKGROUND & PUZZLE:** Doubling in American Sign Language (ASL) and Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) involves an *emphatic focus* (E-focus) interpretation of the reduplicated element (Nunes & Quadros, 2005, hereafter NQ). Focus doubling exhibits the following: (1) doubling involves heads (verbs, modals, negation, -wh-words, etc.) but not phrases (1a,b) (Petronio, 1993, hereafter P93); (2) only one head can be doubled in a sentence (P93); (3) moved and in-situ -wh-words can be doubled (2a,b) (NQ); (4) doubling exhibits syntactic island effects (P93); (5) only the -wh-element can be doubled in a moved -wh-question, but a non- -wh-element can be doubled in a -wh-in-situ question (3a,b) (NQ). NQ propose (for Libras) that doubling involves head-adjunction of the focused element to an E-Foc head, followed by non-terminal node dominating them (cf. Chomsky, 2000; Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou, 2001:217). Morphological fusion nevertheless occurs between the element in Spec,FocP and the Focus head (cf. Matushansky, 2006), and from here we adopt NQ’s proposal regarding the timing of morphological fusion: if fusion occurs prior to TP-movement, both copies are realized (4,5b,6a – highlighted elements are fused); if fusion does not occur immediately after movement to SpecFocP, the lower copy within TP is deleted before TP-movement, yielding (5a), which involves successive-cyclic -wh-movement through Spec,FocP on the way to Spec,ForceP. Following -wh-movement to Spec,ForceP, the lower copy in Spec,FocP morphologically merges with Foc and both -wh-copies are realized at PF. (6b) is ruled out because the focus-doubled no occupies Spec,FocP; assuming Focus does not allow multiple specifiers (Rizzi, 1997), movement directly to Spec,ForceP violates minimality. A slight modification thus captures (7), (8), (9) – wh-doubling is impossible in indirect questions (10) (Petronio & Lillo-Martin, 1997).

**ANALYSIS:** We propose a modification and extension of NQ’s analysis to capture the properties in (1)-(3) as well as the asymmetry regarding doubling in indirect questions in ASL. We depart from NQ’s proposed head-adjunction to E-Foc; we argue instead that the focused element always undergoes movement from the lower TP directly to Spec,E-FocP, precluding (i) the need for later excorporation and (ii) the assumption that head-adjoined elements can c-command out of the non-terminal node dominating them (cf. Chomsky, 2000; Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou, 2001:217). Morphological fusion nevertheless occurs between the element in Spec,FocP and the Focus head (cf. Matushansky, 2006), and from here we adopt NQ’s proposal regarding the timing of morphological fusion: if fusion occurs prior to TP-movement, both copies are realized (4,5b,6a – highlighted elements are fused); if fusion does not occur immediately after movement to SpecFocP, the lower copy within TP is deleted before TP-movement, yielding (5a), which involves successive-cyclic -wh-movement through Spec,FocP on the way to Spec,ForceP. Following -wh-movement to Spec,ForceP, the lower copy in Spec,FocP morphologically merges with Foc and both -wh-copies are realized at PF. (6b) is ruled out because the focus-doubled no occupies Spec,FocP; assuming Focus does not allow multiple specifiers (Rizzi, 1997), movement directly to Spec,ForceP violates minimality. A slight modification thus captures (1)-(3) without resorting to excorporation or c-command out of a head-adjoined category. At the same time, we maintain the explanatory merits of NQ’s analysis: (1) only simplex heads can undergo fusion with E-Foc; (2) there is only one E-Foc head per sentence; (3) whether the doubled -wh-word appears fronted or in situ depends on timing of fusion relative to TP-movement; (4) extraction out of an island to Spec,E-FocP is impossible; (5) only a -wh-element occupying Spec,E-FocP is available for extraction to Spec,ForceP.

Consider now the indirect question asymmetry: (7), but not (10), is possible. NQ do not address long distance -wh-doubling, but their analysis predicts that it can be generated by excorporating the -wh-element through the embedded Spec,ForceP up to the matrix Spec,ForceP. Our analysis instead merely involves successive-cyclic -wh-movement through Spec,FocP and then the embedded Spec,ForceP, up to the matrix Spec,ForceP (7’). Petronio & Lillo-Martin (1997) argue that -wh-doubling in indirect questions is banned in ASL because indirect-question-taking predicates like know subcategorize for [+WH] but not [+F] complements. (8) and (9) show us however, that there isn’t a general incompatibility between predicates like know and [+WH] or [+FOC] complements; rather these simply can’t select a complement that is simultaneously [+WH] and [+FOC]. We propose that ASL has a restriction on foci: there can only be one Focus in a single clause. Subsuming -wh-features and “emphatic” focus (which we take to be one specific instantiation of Focus more generally) under a singular [+FOC] feature, we propose that ASL only allows one instance of focus-feature-driven movement per clause (cf. Rizzi, 1997, who argues that focus and -wh-phrases compete for the same position in the left periphery). This is consistent with the optionality of -wh-movement in matrix questions in ASL; movement to Spec,ForceP is not necessary to ensure a -wh-question interpretation. We assume that overt -wh-movement in matrix questions is not necessarily WH-focus-feature driven, and does not use up the singular instance of Focus movement. Unlike matrix -wh-questions, indirect questions involve (obligatory) true [+WH]-feature-driven movement, necessary to ensure an indirect question interpretation; when know selects an indirect question, selection must be local, and the -wh-element must occupy the embedded Spec,ForceP. Doubling becomes impossible because of the ban on multiple foci. Long-distance -wh-movement with its biclausal structure and projection of two independent foci (7’), is a way around this; the higher -wh-element constitutes matrix Focus while the focused double constitutes embedded Focus.
**CONCLUSION:** Our analysis of focus doubling in ASL improves on previous analyses in both theoretical simplicity and empirical coverage. The analysis captures the core empirical facts about focus doubling and, through a proposed ban on multiple instances of focus-driven movement, accounts for the lack of *wh*-doubling in indirect questions in ASL.

**DATA**

(1) a. ANN CAN’T READ CAN’T
   b. *ANN CAN’T READ CAN’T READ

(Petronio, 1993)

(2) a. WHO JOHN SEE YESTERDAY WHO
   b. JOHN SEE WHO YESTERDAY WHO

(NQ:468)

(3) a. JOHN WILL BUY BOOK WHEN WILL
   b. *WHAT JOHN NO BUY NO

(NQ:472)

(4) ANN CAN’T READ CAN’T

(4') [TopP [TP ANN CAN’T READ] [Top [E-FocP CAN’T] [E-Foc E-Foc [TopP ANN CAN’T READ]]]]

(adapted from NQ:466)

(5) a. WHO JOHN SEE YESTERDAY WHO
   b. JOHN SEE WHO YESTERDAY WHO

(NQ:467-8)

(5a') [ForceP WHO [Force [TopP [TP JOHN SEE WHO] [Top [E-FocP WHO] [E-Foc E-Foc [TopP JOHN SEE WHO]]]]]

(adapted from NQ:471)

(5b') [TopP [TP JOHN SEE WHO] [Top [E-FocP WHO] [E-Foc E-Foc [TopP JOHN SEE WHO]]]]

(adapted from NQ:467)

(6) a. JOHN WILL BUY BOOK WHEN WILL
   b. *WHAT JOHN NO BUY WHAT

(NQ:472)

(6a') [TopP [TP JOHN WILL] [Buy Book WHEN] [Top [E-FocP WILL] [E-Foc E-Foc [TopP JOHN WILL] Buy Book WHEN]]]

(adapted from NQ:472)

(6b') [ForceP [Force [TopP [TP JOHN NO] [Buy WHAT]] [Top [E-FocP NO] [E-Foc E-Foc [TopP JOHN NO] Buy WHAT]]]]

(adapted from NQ:472)

(7) WHO YOU KNOW JOHN SEE YESTERDAY WHO

(7') [ForceP WHO [Force [TP YOU KNOW] [ForceP WHO] [Force [TopP [TP JOHN SEE WHO] [Top [E-FocP WHO] [E-Foc E-Foc [TopP JOHN SEE WHO]]]]]

(8) YOU KNOW WHO JOHN SEE YESTERDAY

(9) YOU KNOW JOHN CAN’T READ CAN’T

(10) *YOU KNOW WHO JOHN SEE YESTERDAY WHO

(10') [ForceP [Force [TP YOU KNOW] [ForceP WHO] [Force [TopP [TP JOHN SEE WHO] [Top [E-FocP WHO] [E-Foc E-Foc [TopP JOHN SEE WHO]]]]]

**REFERENCES**


