

Remind-Me Readings: Evidence for Question Act Decomposition

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Proposal Searle placed questions in his typology of speech acts as a subtype of imperatives (Searle, 1975). Building earlier work by one of us (Sauerland, 2009), we argue that particles such as *again* interact with question speech acts in such a way, that not only support Searle, but propose the specific syntactic implementation. Namely, we argue that every question speech act is embedded under two syntactically distinct operators, IMPERATIVE and MAKE-KNOWN, in that scopal order. Semantically, IMPERATIVE(*P*) contributes imperative force ('*P*(you) is required') while MAKE-KNOWN(*Q*)(*x*) is interpreted as '*x* contributes the answer to *Q* to the common ground.' We

Remind-Me Readings in *wh*-Questions In English, the repetitive focus particle *again* in *wh*-questions can mark what we call a *remind-me* reading: *What is/was your name again?* It marks that the answer to the question was part of the common ground already, but the speaker forgot. In German, the repetitive particles *wieder* and *noch mal* can be used to the same effect (Sauerland, 2009). There is a preference for the latter particle in most cases, and therefore we focus on *noch mal* in the following. Japanese, however, cannot mark remind-me readings with the repetitive focus particles *moichido* or *mata*, and instead uses a special sentence final particle *kke*.

- (1) a. Was ist/war wieder/nochmal ihr Name? (GERMAN)
What is/was again/once more your name
b. Namae-wa nan-da-(ta)-kke? (JAPANESE)
name-Top what-COP-(PAST)-KKE
'What is your name again?'

Despite the different morphological status of *-kke* and *again* and *nochmal*, all three languages show interesting commonalities that justify a uniform treatment. Note for one, that the tense of the verb in all three languages can be either present or past. Furthermore, in all three languages the remind me reading becomes obligatory one the focus particle or *-kke* is added. Note that, in all three languages, a question without the respective marker (*again*, *nochmal*, or *-kke*) can also be used in a remind-me context. However, the occurrence of the marker makes the reading obligatory. This is most directly the case in Japanese, where *-kke* is not ambiguous. In English and German, the obligatory-ness holds modulo the ambiguity: If all other readings of *again/nochmal* are ruled out by context or by other features of the question, only the remind me reading is possible. In (1a), the pragmatics of the predicate *have name X.X.* has this effect: Since the assumption that multiple name changes don't occur is part of our world knowledge, an interpretation of *again* in (1) presupposing name-changes is not available. Note that for this reason the declarative (2) is odd.

- (2) #My name is again Uli

We propose that in all three languages, the morpheme enforcing the remind me reading has the meaning of English *again*. For German *nochmal* this is standardly assumed, but for Japanese *-kke* this is as far as we know a novel claim – we are actually not aware of any work in formal semantics addressing *-kke*. We furthermore propose that the remind me reading derive from the structure shown in (3), where *again* or its counterpart occupies a position high in the structure of the question, scoping above part of the complex structure of the two speech act heads we propose.

(3) IMPERATIVE *again/nochmal/-kke* MAKE-KNOWN (*what is your name*)

The structure in (3) accounts for the remind-me readings essentially in the following way: (3) can be paraphrased as ‘*You are required to again make it known what your name is.*’ or more colloquially ‘*Tell me again what your name is.*’ (See (Sauerland, 2009) for arguments that the second paraphrase is not fully appropriate in all cases.)

The Japanese–German Comparison In this section, we present an additional argument for our proposal as outlined in the previous section. Namely, we argue that the proposal allows us to relate two properties of remind me readings in German and Japanese to each other: On the one hand, there is a word order difference between the two languages. On the other hand, only Japanese allows remind-me readings with yes/no-questions.

The word order difference is illustrated by the examples in 1 above. The German *nochmal* occupies a sentence medial position. The Japanese *-kke*, however, is a sentence final particle. For *-kke* to occur in any other than a sentence final position is essentially unthinkable. The position of German *noch mal* seems more flexible, however, this is mostly due to the fact that other constituents of the German sentence can move around. For example, both (4a) and (4b) allow a remind me reading. In (4a), *noch mal* occupies a sentence final position, while in (4b), *noch mal* precedes the verbal particle. However, the final position of *noch mal* in (4a) is entirely due to the effect of verb-second in German. The finite verb, *heißen* in (4a), moves the clause final position to its surface position. If the verbal form is phrasal, as in (4b), the non-finite part of verb must follow *noch mal*.

- (4) a. Wie heißen Sie noch mal?
how be-named you again
‘What is your name again?’
b. Wie hat er noch mal geheißen?
how has he again be-named
‘What was his name again?’

Furthermore German allows *noch mal* in initial position as in (5), however, the reading that arises is more restrictive than the remind me reading in 1 and (4). Specifically, (5) requires that the same question was asked before. The examples 1 and (4), however, are possible in a scenario where the answer to the question was known before by the speaker, even when the speaker nor anybody else asked to be told this knowledge in the past. Specifically for example (4a), a third person may have announced the name of the addressee in the past. In that scenario, (5) is infelicitous.

- (5) Noch mal, wie heißen Sie?
 again, how be-named you?
 Again, what's your name?

German and Japanese contrast strikingly when it comes to *remind-me* readings with yes/no-questions. In German, neither *wieder* nor *nochmal* can be used to mark a remind-me reading of yes/no-questions. In Japanese, however, *-kke* is unproblematically with yes/no questions. We consider the German example in (6) and its Japanese counterpart in (7) both relative to the following scenario: *We meet up at a party. When you arrived, you listed for me which of other guests you know so that I know who I should introduce you too. But, I forget and sometime later wonder whether you know Bill.* The German example (6) is sharply odd in this scenario, but the Japanese example (7) is fully acceptable. (The judgement on the English 'Do you know Bill again?' seems to vary among speakers.)

- (6) #Kennen Sie noch mal Bill?
 know you again Bill
- (7) Bill-o sitteiru(-no-da)-kke?
 Bill-Acc know(-NO-cop)-KKE
 'Assert to me again if you know Bill.'

Our proposal predicts the second difference between German and Japanese on the basis of the first. Note first that it has been independently observed that LF-movement out of yes/no questions is blocked (Chierchia, 1992; Moltmann and Szabolcsi, 1994) (see also Fox 2000 for a partial explanation). Specifically, Moltmann and Szabolcsi (1994) observe that wide scope of the embedded subject over the matrix subject is available in the constituent question (8a), but not in the yes/no question (8b).

- (8) a. One girl knows what every boy bought for Mary. ($\forall \gg \exists$)
 b. One girl knows whether every boy bought a present for Mary. ($*\forall \gg \exists$)

While we don't know of a convincing explanation of the generalization that LF-movement out of yes/no questions is blocked, for our account of the facts in (6) and (8) the generalization alone is sufficient. Namely we propose that because of the difference in word order, only Japanese *-kke* can be base generated in the position in the speech act domain. German *noch mal* must be generated in a clause internal position and can only acquire the speech act interpretation of the remind me reading by LF-movement. Then given the generalization we just referenced predicts that remind me readings are blocked in yes/no questions in German: *noch mal* would need to undergo LF-movement across a yes/no question to reach a position in the speech act domain. In Japanese, *-kke* starts out in a position in the speech act domain and therefore is not affected by the nature of the question. In this way, our proposal predicts that word order and whether yes/no questions permit a remind me reading should be correlated.

Further Evidence Since LF-movement is not available in Japanese, the proposal also accounts for the absence of remind-me readings with Japanese *moichido* or *mata*. Thirdly the proposal correctly predicts that negative quantifiers block remind-me readings in German (cf. Sauerland 2009):

- (9) Was hat fast keiner nochmal bestellt?
what has almost noone once more ordered
*‘Remind me: What did almost noone order?’

As far as we can tell, *-kke* cannot occur with embedded questions:

- (10) *doko-ni simatta-kke siri-tai desu.
where-loc put away-KKE know-want cop

Assuming that speech-acts cannot be embedded, this restriction also follows from our proposal.

Tense Now return to the discussion of tense. We observed in 1 above that in all three languages the tense of the verb in the question can be either present or past. This fact is reminiscent to the observation in (11) that individual-level predicates don’t give rise to life-time effects in some contexts. Musan (1997) argues that in such cases the tense interpretation is implicitly restricted by context, and therefore doesn’t give rise to an implicature that Gregory’s having blue-eyed ends before the time of utterance.

- (11) I had a chance to have a closer look at him. Gregory had blue eyes. (Musan, 1997, p. 272)

Also note that the optionality between past tense and present tense holds for paraphrases of the remind me readings such as *Can you tell me again what your name is/was?*

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