On the Syntax of Wh-items in Hungarian

On the Syntax of Wh-items in Hungarian investigates the syntactic behavior of wh-items in Hungarian. It is a study of their distribution, their licensing requirements and the syntactic relationship they entertain with other elements of the clause.

The main tenet of this study is that wh-items in Hungarian are variables. They are stored in the lexicon without inherent quantificational meaning. Therefore, their distribution is restricted to contexts where they can be bound by suitable quantificational elements. The result is that wh-items show up with various interpretations in Hungarian. Two of these interpretations are taken under closer scrutiny from a syntactic point of view. In questions, wh-items are interpreted as question words and they pattern together with exclusive focus constituents in their overt syntax. However, they also differ from focus in that they entertain a covert relationship with an interrogative complementizer. In another, hitherto undiscussed construction type multiple occurrences of wh-items are found in disjoined clauses and are bound by an unselective universal quantifier from outside.

This study is of interest to those interested in wh-items, the left periphery of clauses and A-bar syntax in general.