Where's ‘Why’?

SHLONSKY, Ur, SOARE, Gabriela


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Remarks
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Replies

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Ur Shlonsky
Gabriela Soare

Why and its counterparts in some languages are argued to be externally merged in a low left-peripheral specifier of a dedicated functional category and subsequently moved to a criterial position higher in the left-peripheral space. The analysis considers both short- and long-distance construals of why, asymmetries of why-extraction in finite and nonfinite complement clauses, the position of ‘why’ in a multiple wh-movement language like Romanian, and the differences between why and how come. The analysis sharpens the formal differences between movement to a criterial position and movement out of cyclic domains via escape hatches.

Keywords: why, wh, left periphery, Romanian, how come

1 Introduction

Several authors have argued that the adjunct why (and its equivalent in other languages) is externally merged in the left periphery of the clause (e.g., Hornstein 1995, Ko 2005, Rizzi 1990, 2001, Stepanov and Tsai 2008, Thornton 2008).

For Rizzi (2001), for example, Italian perché is base-generated in Spec,InterrogativeP (henceforth, Spec,Int), which is configured higher than Spec,FocusP (henceforth, Spec,Foc), the position of other wh-operators. In (1), according to this approach, why does not bind any (syntactic) variable, since it is not associated with a trace or a copy.

(1) Why did John leave?

It is not the case, however, that why cannot be associated with a variable at all. Rizzi and others argue that why can indeed move and does so in instances of long-distance construal (henceforth, long construal).

Sentence (2) is ambiguous. Why can be interpreted as questioning the reason for your saying something, or it can be construed with the lower clause, questioning the reason for John’s leaving. Construal with the lower clause is taken to involve run-of-the-mill wh-movement: why raises
from its ‘‘base’’ position in the embedded Spec,Int and moves to the same position that hosts other moved wh-expressions (Spec,Foc, in Rizzi’s view). Why’s trace/copy in the left periphery of the embedded clause determines its (lower) scope.\footnote{Long extraction of why is delicate: why is more constrained by factive islands than other adjuncts (Cattell 1978) and appears to resist irrealis complement clauses (Iatridou and Kroch 1992:19–20n15).}

(2) Why did you say that John left?

1.1 Why and Criterial Freezing

One property of quantificational or discourse-related categories (Wh, Foc, Top(ic), etc.) is that once they have reached their scope position, they are frozen there and cannot continue to move to another scope position.

Rizzi (2006, 2007) views this property, which he calls *Criterial Freezing*, as a condition delimiting chains to a biunique relation between a semantically selected (external Merge) position and a scope position (a *criterial* position, in his terms).

To be sure, chains can be trivial, in the sense that an externally merged element can be interpreted in situ with respect to its scope/discourse properties with no movement. Trivial chains of this sort are exemplified by quantificational adverbs and nonclitic negation in many languages.

Similarly, nothing prohibits why from being externally merged in Spec,Int and satisfying a *Criterion* without having to move. What is conceptually problematic is endowing why with two options: satisfaction of a Criterion in Spec,Int (in (1) and in the short-construal interpretation of (2)), and movement to a higher criterial position (in the long-construal interpretation of (2)). Taking Spec,Int to be only optionally criterial is tantamount to saying that either Criterial Freezing is itself optional or that Int\textsuperscript{0} is only optionally endowed with a criterial feature. Both undermine the chain-delimiting constraint of Criterial Freezing. To preserve the force of this approach, it would be desirable to show that any movement of why from Spec,Int constitutes a violation of Criterial Freezing so that if why is externally merged in Spec,Int, it should not be able to raise to a higher clause.

1.2 Relative Why

In English, why can be employed not only as an interrogative wh-expression but also (as an LI reviewer reminds us) as a relative pronoun.

(3) The reason why I left him . . .

In (3), why creates an open position within the relative clause, which is predicated of reason. The simplest thing to say here is that why is moved to the position of relative operators from some lower position, leaving a trace/copy that is interpreted as a semantic variable. Since this does not seem to be problematic for other wh-expressions that figure both as interrogative and as relative operators (e.g., who, what, where), we see no reason to treat why differently. Given
that *why* is not inherently interrogative and that it can be both a relative operator and an interrogative one, it is at least plausible that *why*’s external Merge position is dissociated from its landing site.

1.3 Dissociating *Why’s* External Merge and Criterial Positions

In this article, we argue for precisely such a dissociation of *why*’s external Merge and criterial position(s). Our claim is that *why* (and its synonyms in some other languages) is externally merged as specifier of a dedicated functional projection—labeled *ReasonP*—configured above negation and adverbials and, most probably, above the canonical subject position. In (1) and in the short-construal interpretation of (2), *why* raises from Spec,Reason to Spec,Int, the criterial position. In the long-construal interpretation of (2), *why* moves from its base position in the embedded Spec,Reason to a criterial position in the matrix left periphery. In (3), *why* is moved to Spec,Relative).

2 The External Merge Position of *Why* and English Infinitivals

In this section, we develop the first empirical argument against external Merge of *why* in Spec,Int and in favor of a lower Merge position. We show that *why* cannot, however, remain in its base position and must move to a criterial position, forming a nontrivial chain.

Many English speakers detect a degradation in the grammaticality of infinitival questions headed by *why*; compare (4g) and (5g) with the other examples in (4) and (5), respectively.²

(4) I asked Bill
   a. whether to serve spiced aubergines for dinner.
   b. who to serve.
   c. what to serve the guests.
   d. when to serve spiced aubergines.
   e. how to serve spiced aubergines.
   f. where to serve spiced aubergines.
   g. ??why to serve spiced aubergines.

(5) a. Whether to serve spiced aubergines is the big question.
   b. Who to invite for dinner
   c. What to serve the guests
   d. When to serve the spiced aubergines
   e. How to serve spiced aubergines
   f. Where to serve spiced aubergines
   g. ??Why to serve spiced aubergines

This degradation is keyed to the finiteness of the complement clause: there is no grammaticality difference in the sentences in (6).

² For speakers like Chris Collins (1990 and pers. comm.) who accept (4g) and (5g), *why* is presumably endowed with formal features that enable its attraction to Spec,Wh. See section 5.
(6) I asked Bill a. whether I should serve spiced aubergines for dinner.
    b. who I should serve.
    c. what I should serve the guests.
    d. when I should serve spiced aubergines.
    e. how I should serve spiced aubergines.
    f. where I should serve spiced aubergines.
    g. why I should serve spiced aubergines.

Infinitival clauses are ‘‘reduced clauses’’ in Hooper and Thompson’s (1973) terminology. Various
elements that may unproblematically occupy the left periphery of finite clauses are barred from
the left periphery of infinitivals. The following contrasts illustrate this with a topicalized PP
adverbial, (7); an argumental topic, (8); and a topicalized VP, (9). (Examples similar to (7a–b)
and (8a–b) are studied in detail in Haegeman 2006, 2010; (9a–b) are adapted from Johnson 2001:
446.)

(7) a. John promised us that [at five o’clock] he would cook dinner for his children.
    b. *John promised us [at five o’clock] to cook dinner for his children.

(8) a. John decided that [his mother] he won’t invite (her) to his wedding.
    b. *John decided [his mother] not to invite (her) to his wedding.

(9) a. ?John agreed that [eating spinach] he should be.
    b. *John agreed [eating spinach] to be.

The unavailability of why and topics in infinitival clauses, as compared with the full availabil-
ity of wh-elements other than why, calls for a formal explanation. As Haegeman (2006) argues,
a hierarchical cartography of the left periphery like that proposed by Rizzi (1997, 2001), as in
(10), combined with the idea that clauses can be truncated, or spliced at different points (Rizzi
1993/4), provides a framework in which the ‘‘reduced’’ nature of infinitival clauses can be
expressed.

(10) ForceP > IntP > TopP > FocP > WhP > Fin(ite)P
(Rizzi 2001)³

The generalization underlying the restrictions on the left periphery of infinitivals can be stated
in the following terms (see Haegeman 2010 for a different formulation of the generalization):⁴

³ Rizzi (2001) takes (10) to be valid for embedded clauses only. In root clauses, wh-elements target the focus
projection. Yet in Italian, wh-infinitivals are possible but fronted focus is barred from the left periphery of infinitives
(see Boci 2007, Haegeman 2006). This suggests that Foc and Wh are distinct heads. It remains to be determined why
the distinction cannot be manifested in root clauses.

⁴ Some languages, like German, prohibit indirect infinitival questions altogether, as discussed in Sabel 2006, for
example. Such languages presumably have a more deeply truncated left periphery.

It is intriguing, in this context, to ask whether the distribution of if and whether cannot also be given a cartographic
explanation. Suppose that if is merged in the head of IntP. Its unavailability in nonfinite clauses follows from the truncation
analysis, since this projection is unavailable in infinitives. Take whether to be merged either in Int⁰ or in Wh⁰. It thus
follows that whether should be available in both nonfinite and finite clauses. Further research is needed to determine
how Italian se and French si pattern in this respect, as per Kayne’s (1991) discussion. See Gärtner 2008.
Infinitival clauses are spliced at WhP

\[
\text{ForceP} \rightarrow \text{IntP} \rightarrow \text{TopP} \rightarrow \text{FocP} \rightarrow \text{WhP} \rightarrow \text{FinP}
\]

When why appears in a matrix clause that embeds an infinitival complement, it can be construed locally, that is, within the matrix clause. For many speakers (though not for Barrie (2007)), why can also be construed long-distance, that is, within the embedded infinitival clause (see also Cattell 1978 and Ko 2005:898–899n31, citing David Pesetsky, pers. comm.). The why-question in (12), for example, can be paraphrased as either (12a) or (12b). The former paraphrase and associated answer instantiate matrix construal; the latter, embedded construal.5

(12) Why did you ask her to resign?

a. What is the reason x, such that for x, you asked her to resign?
   e.g.: Because I didn’t want to just tell her. (short construal)

b. What is the reason x, such that you asked her to resign for that particular reason x?
   e.g.: I asked her to resign because of her health, not because of her intelligence . . .
   (long construal)

The juxtaposition of (4g) and (5g) with the long-construal answer in (12b) suggests that why has an external Merge position in the infinitival clause but that it cannot remain there. The long-construal answer in (12b) is mediated through the trace of why inside the infinitival clause.

Although why is a wh-expression, it is presumably not capable of satisfying the criterial requirements of the Wh head in the left periphery. If it were capable of doing so, why-questions such as (4g) and (5g) would pattern with all the other wh-infinitivals. We take it that interrogative why cannot surface in the infinitival clause because it is specialized to interact with Int0, not with Wh0. Since IntP is part of the left periphery truncated in infinitivals, as diagrammed in (11), the ungrammaticality of (4g) and (5g) results from the absence of an appropriate landing site for why in the infinitival left periphery.6 Why may, however, move to the CP of the (finite) matrix clause, giving rise to the long-construal reading in (12b).7

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5 Note that emphatic stress on the embedded verb resign, as in Why did you ask her to RESIGN?, elicits an answer such as Because she couldn’t really be expected to continue after what happened. As an L1 reviewer helped us understand, this is not an instance of embedded scope for why but a consequence of its construal with focus, compatible with matrix scope. For the original discussion, see Bromberger 1992.

6 Bolinger’s (1978) observation that why in (i) most naturally “asks for the reason for Bill’s telling Mary something or other,” namely, the impossibility of long construal of why across two infinitival clause boundaries, might follow from Subjacency under the assumption that extraction from a clause must transit through Spec,Force (truncated in infinitivals). Bolinger’s observation cannot be accounted for in terms of Subjacency, if long movement is merely required to pass through the highest specifier of the clause (its edge).

7 We come back to the landing site of long-moved why in section 5, contending, with Rizzi (2001), that it is the matrix Spec,Wh (Rizzi’s Spec,Foc; see footnote 3) and not, as would perhaps be expected, the matrix Spec,Int.
Let us refer to the external Merge position of *why* as *Spec,Reason*. The derivation we have in mind for the long-construal reading in (12) is schematized in (13), where the arrow indicates *why*-movement and **“CP”** stands for the matrix left periphery.  

(13) [\[-CP\] \[\[ForceP > IntP > TopP > FocP > WhP > . . . > ReasonP . . .\]]

At this point, we have shown that *why* starts out in a position lower than *Spec,Int*. The evidence we review in the next section, adapted from Rizzi 2001 and related works, serves to fix the base position of *ReasonP* above *NegP*. In section 4, we discuss the syntax of ‘*why*’ in Romanian, adducing evidence to the effect that the external Merge position of ‘*why*’ is higher than the canonical subject, a claim that Ko (2005) argues for on the basis of substantial evidence from Japanese and Korean. Finally, in section 6, we show that in at least English and Italian, there is a candidate for external Merge in *Spec,Int*, namely, *how come* / *come mai*. Some well-known differences between *why* and *how come* can be explained by reference to their different base positions.

### 3 ReasonP Is above NegP

Unlike other adjuncts (but see Stepanov and Tsai 2008 on some interpretations of *how*), *why* is not sensitive to negation in the clause with which it is construed. This is illustrated in the contrast between *how* and *why* in (14).

(14) a. Why didn’t Geraldine fix her bike?
   b. *How didn’t Geraldine fix her bike?*

If one accepts that the ungrammaticality of (14b) follows from a Relativized Minimality violation induced by the intervention of negation (Rizzi 1990), then it follows that the chain formed in (14a) is rooted in a position higher than negation. This is schematized in (15).

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8 While *why* cannot appear in the left periphery of an infinitival interrogative, (4g), it may appear as a sluicing remnant, as in *I told you how to fix the car, but not why*. Merchant’s (2001) proposal that the remnants of sluicing occupy the specifier position of an “EllipsisP”—unique to such constructions and presumably independent of other structural constraints that hold of the left periphery—can accommodate this observation.

9 The familiar scope ambiguity of *because*-adjuncts with respect to negation (Iatridou 1991), illustrated in (i), shows that there is probably a lower position for reason phrases (see also Ko 2005).

(i) Lee didn’t fall in love with Kim because it was raining when they met.
   a. Because it was raining when they met, they didn’t fall in love.  \(\text{because} > \text{not}\)
   b. They didn’t fall in love because it was raining but because of something else.  \(\text{not} > \text{because}\)

Reasons are vague, in that they can provide (at least) purpose, reason, and rationale answers to *why*-questions. To the degree that these types of ‘reasons’ are associated with different positions in the clausal hierarchy (as argued already in Faraci 1974), there are likely to be multiple external Merge positions for *why* (see Ko 2005, Stepanov and Tsai 2008). We limit ourselves, in this article, to discussing the highest potential position.
(15) a. how...NegP...\textit{t}_{how}
   
   \textbf{X}

   b. why...\textit{t}_{why}...NegP

The short versus long construals of why, discussed in relation to (12), have a parallel in finite embeddings. As Rizzi (1990, 2001) shows, why in (16) is ambiguous, and this ambiguity can be traced to the choice of why’s base position.

(16) Why did you say Geraldine fixed her bike?

   a. Why did you say such-and-such a thing? (short construal)
   
   b. Why did Geraldine fix her bike? (long construal)

For Rizzi (2001), the long construal of why in (16) is derived by moving why from Spec,Int in the embedded clause to Spec,Foc in the matrix. That movement is indeed involved is substantiated by the sensitivity of the long construal of why in (16) to negation. As Rizzi (1990, 2001) points out, only the short construal of why is available in (17).

(17) Why didn’t you say Geraldine fixed her bike?

Postponing to section 5 our discussion of why’s precise landing site in long-construal questions, we note here that the mere existence of a long-construal reading of why in (16) and its sensitivity to negation in (17) argue for movement from the embedded clause.

4 The Position of ‘Why’ in Romanian

In this section, we develop another empirical argument against external Merge of interrogative ‘why’ in Spec,Int and in favor of the view that ‘why’ moves to that position in questions with short construal. In so doing, we show that the external Merge position of ‘why’ is higher than the canonical subject position.

Romanian is a textbook example of a rigid multiple wh-fronting language, as Rudin (1988) originally showed. This characteristic of Romanian syntax provides a useful probe for exploring the relative order of wh-expressions in the left periphery and, in particular, the order of ‘why’ with respect to the others.

Laenzlinger and Soare (2005) and Soare (2009) discuss the order of multiple wh-elements in the Romanian left periphery and observe that it basically mirrors the order of arguments and

\[10\] The long-construal reading is available as an echo question.

\[11\] A reviewer correctly points out that if there is more than one base position for why in English (see footnote 9), then our analysis of why in infinitivals does not argue for merging it in Spec,Reason: why could be merged in a lower position than our Spec,Reason and then move to the matrix for long construal. The relevant empirical test for determining why’s base position should come from negated infinitivals such as Why did you ask/tell her not to resign? If the base position of why is below negation, long construal is predicted to be impossible. The judgment here is too delicate to argue one way or the other. In finite clauses, why can be construed with a negated subordinate clause: Why did you say that Geraldine didn’t fix her bike?

It should be stressed that our more general claim—namely, that why’s external Merge and criterial positions are dissociated—is not vitiated by the difficulty of determining the precise base position of why in infinitives.
adverbs in the IP system. Thus, not only do subjects precede objects, but also adjuncts are arrayed in the order ‘when’ > ‘where’ > ‘how’. The authors argue that this order is derived by moving the wh-expressions to Spec,Foc as a single remnant IP out of which all non-wh material has been evacuated (see also Grewendorf’s (2001) Wh-Cluster Hypothesis).\(^{12}\)

Since the main thrust of our argument does not hinge on this particular analysis and since our examples here involve de ce ‘why’ coupled with a single wh-element, we abstract away from the remnant movement approach and continue to assume the traditional one (but see footnote 17). We do assume, however, that the mechanism facilitating multiple wh-fronting does not hinge on multiple satisfaction of the Wh-Criterion (see also footnote 19).

If Romanian de ce is externally merged in Spec,Int, above WhP (or FocP), we expect it either to not cooccur with other wh-elements—assuming that a clause can have only one criterial Wh head, either Wh\(^{Foc}\) or Int\(^{Foc}\), but not both (see footnote 19)—or, if such cooccurrence is permitted, to precede other wh-elements.

The fact of the matter is that de ce ‘why’ may cooccur with another fronted wh-constituent and when this happens, it obligatorily follows it. Consider (18)–(21): de ce follows a subject wh-element, an object wh-element, ‘when’, and ‘where’.\(^{13}\)

(18) a. Cine de ce a plecat?
   who why has left
   ‘Who left and why?’
   b. *De ce cine a plecat?

(19) a. Pe cine de ce ai întrebat despre accident?
   ACC who why (you) have asked about accident
   ‘Who did you ask about the accident and why?’
   b. *De ce pe cine ai întrebat despre accident?

(20) a. ?Când de ce l-ai văzut?
   when why him-(you) have seen
   ‘When did you see him and why?’
   b. *De ce când l-ai văzut?

(21) a. ?Unde de ce ai reparat mașina?
   where why (you) have repaired car.the
   ‘Where did you repair the car and why?’
   b. *De ce unde ai reparat mașina?

\(^{12}\) Some speakers prefer objects to the right of where and when. Laenzlinger and Soare (2005) relate this option to the nonapplication of object scrambling prior to wh-movement.

\(^{13}\) The combination of cum ‘how’ and de ce ‘why’ is unacceptable in either order. ‘Why’ > ‘how’ is impossible because ‘why’ cannot precede any other wh-element in the left periphery. The order ‘how’ > ‘why’ can be taken to violate Relativized Minimality: ‘why’ blocks movement of ‘how’ over it, on the assumption that manner and reason adverbs share some Relativized Minimality–relevant feature (see Rizzi 2004 and, from a different perspective, Stepanov and Tsai 2008). Relativized Minimality is irrelevant for argument extraction in (18) and (19). The fact that Relativized Minimality is not violated in (20) and (21) shows that ‘when’ and ‘where’ lack the feature shared by ‘how’ and ‘why’ and that the position occupied by ‘why’ in the left periphery in these examples is not a (generalized) operator position.
Our proposal is that *de ce* is externally merged in Spec,Reason and the other *wh*-element (‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, etc.) is raised over *de ce* to Spec,Wh. *De ce* thus remains in situ in the (a) examples of (18)–(21). This is diagrammed in (22).

(22) \[\text{WhP} \ldots [\text{ReasonP} \text{ de ce } [\text{TP} \ldots \text{wh} \ldots]]\]

Soare (2009) shows that topicalized material cannot follow *wh*-expressions in Romanian, but can only precede them: (23a–b) illustrate the distribution of a topicalized adverb; (24a–b), that of a clitic-left-dislocated argument. Soare attributes the ungrammaticality of the (a) examples in (23) and (24) to the absence of a TopP projection below Foc,WhP.

(23) a. *Pe cine recent ai văzut?
   ACC who recently (you) have seen
   ‘Who have you recently seen?’
   b. Recent, pe cine ai văzut?

(24) a. *Cui cartea ai oferit-o?
   who.DAT book.the (you) have offered-it
   ‘The book, to whom did you offer?’
   b. Cartea, cui ai oferit-o?

The addition of *de ce* does not change the picture: a topic can appear neither between the first *wh*-element and *de ce*, (25a), nor to the right of *de ce*, (25b); it can only appear to the left of the first *wh*-element, (25c).

(25) a. *Cui cartea, de ce ai oferit-o?
   who.DAT book.the why (you) have offered-it
   ‘The book, to whom did you offer?’
   b. *Cui de ce cartea ai oferit-o?
   who.DAT why book.the (you) have offered-it
   c. Cartea, cui de ce ai oferit-o?

Thus, the position occupied by *wh*-elements other than ‘why’ is the same whether or not ‘why’ is also present. *De ce* is in situ in the preceding examples in a position lower than that of topics.

What makes it possible for *de ce* to remain in situ is that another *wh*-expression (or a cluster of such expressions; see the third paragraph of this section and footnote 16) raises to the criterial Wh position, satisfying the Wh-Criterion in the overt syntax, as required in Romanian. Thus, Int does not attract *de ce* in multiple *wh*-questions because the Wh-Criterion is already satisfied by a *wh*-element (or elements) in Spec,Wh. This presupposes that *de ce* itself is not a legitimate goal.

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14 No Superiority effects are detected when one or more *wh*-expressions move above *de ce*. Indeed, only ‘how’ seems not to be able to move above ‘why’ in Romanian, suggesting that the relevant condition on multiple *wh*-movement is not Superiority but feature-based Relativized Minimality; see footnote 13.

15 A reviewer’s suggestion that ReasonP is immediately below IntP and above TopP is thus not empirically adequate.
for probing by Foc, Wh. As we showed in section 2, this must also be true of why in English infinitivals. In section 5, we discuss the reason for this limitation.16

It appears to be the case that the inflected verb in Romanian finite interrogatives moves higher than it does in, say, Italian. Parenthetical expressions and high adverbs, which can appear between the wh-word and the inflected verb in Italian (see (26) and (27), from Cardinaletti 2007: 60–61), are barred from preverbal position in Romanian (see (28) and (29)).

(26) Chi, secondo te, hanno scelto, alla fine?
   whom according to you (they) have chosen in the end
   ‘According to you, who did they choose, in the end?’

(27) a. Cosa francamente si poteva evitare?
    what frankly si could avoid
    ‘What could one frankly avoid?’
   b. Cosa forse potevamo evitare?
    what perhaps (we) could avoid
    ‘What could we perhaps avoid?’
   c. Chi necessariamente ha torto?
    who necessarily has wrong
    ‘Who is necessarily wrong?’
   d. Chi saggiamente ha invitato, Gianni?
    whom wisely has invited Gianni
    ‘Who did he wisely invite, Gianni?’
   e. Chi di solito invita / invita di solito, Gianni?
    whom usually invites / invites usually Gianni
    ‘Who does he usually invite, Gianni?’

(28) ?*Cine, după părerea ta, l-a văzut pe Ion?
   who in opinion the your him-has seen ACC Ion
   ‘Who in your opinion saw Ion?’

(29) a. *Ce, sincer vorbind, a putut evita?
    what sincerely speaking (he) has could avoid
    ‘What, sincerely speaking, could he avoid?’

16 The grammaticality of (i) shows that de ce in situ is insensitive to the presence of sentential negation (a fact familiar from English; see (14)), and the contrast with the ungrammatical (ii) shows that this is a fact about ‘why’ and not about adjuncts in general.

   (i) Cine de ce nu a plecat?
      who why not has left
      ‘Who did not leave and why?’
   (ii) *Cine cum nu a plecat?
      who how not has left

Stepanov and Tsai (2008) show that Bulgarian ‘why’ is also the furthest to the right in the hierarchy of multiple wh-elements in the left periphery. They argue that ‘why’ occupies a VP-peripheral position in that language. The position of de ce relative to negation and the contrast between (i) and (ii) would be unexpected if Romanian de ce were merged so low.
b. *Ce poate am putut evita?  
   ‘What could we perhaps have avoided?’

c. *Pe cine probabil va invita Ion?  
   ACC who probably will invite Ion  
   ‘Who will he probably invite, Ion?’

d. *Pe cine recent a invitat Ion?  
   ACC who recently has invited Ion  
   ‘Who did he recently invite, Ion?’

e. *Pe cine apoi vei întâlni?  
   ACC who then (you) will meet  
   ‘Who then will you meet?’

If the landing site of the verb in Romanian interrogatives is taken to be Fin⁰ (Soare 2009) or another position in the left periphery (e.g., Mood; see Cornilescu 1997, 1999), the in-situ or external Merge position of de ce must be higher. It cannot, however, be excluded that the position of the finite verb in Romanian, while higher than that of Italian, is nonetheless not as high as Fin but lower, above all adverbs and parentheticals but below Fin (and Mood).

The fact that ‘why’ is found in situ only in a multiple wh-fronting language suggests that ReasonP is configured in the left periphery and not within the traditional IP. Languages like Serbo-Croatian differ from Romanian in allowing wh-elements to be attracted to different heads (e.g., Focus and Wh, according to Bošković (2002)), but the common denominator of multiple wh-fronting languages is the requirement that all wh-expressions appear in the left periphery at Spell-Out. This is met in Romanian either by multiple wh-movement or, when de ce is involved, by a combination of movement and base generation.¹⁷

De ce does not remain in situ in Spec,Reason when it is the only wh-expression in the clause, since the Wh-Criterion cannot be satisfied by an in-situ wh-element; it requires overt wh-movement. The evidence suggests that in such cases, de ce moves from Spec,Reason to Spec,Int in the left periphery.

Consider the possibility of inserting a topic to the right of de ce, as in (30a–b). (30a) should be compared with (24a) and (30b) with (23a).

(30) a. De ce cartea ai oferit-o fetei?  
   why book.the (you) have offered-it girl.the.DAT  
   ‘The book, why did you offer it to the girl?’

¹⁷ Under Laenzlinger and Soare’s (2005) analysis, in which (multiple) wh-movement in Romanian is an instance of remnant IP-movement, de ce is too high to be included in the moved remnant and is stranded, as it were, ending up to the right of the moved remnant IP. Under Grewendorf’s (2001) Wh-Cluster Hypothesis, why, being an adjunct, cannot form the nucleus of a wh-cluster and attract other wh-elements.

The ungrammaticality of the surface order ‘why’ . . . wh in Korean and Japanese multiple questions—known as the anti-Superiority effect (e.g., Watanabe 1992)—could be amenable to the account we propose for Romanian and would lead us to concur with Takahashi (1993) that Japanese and Korean have overt wh-movement, a controversial idea that we cannot adequately defend here.
b. De ce, recent, l-ai văzut pe Ion?
   ‘Why did you recently see Ion?’

(31) shows that *de ce* in a single wh-interrogative may be followed by a focalized constituent. Other wh-constituents are incompatible with a focalized constituent in matrix interrogatives, in any order, as (32) shows.\(^{18}\)

(31) De ce UN CD ai cumpărat pentru el (? în loc de un roman)?)
   ‘Why is it a CD that you bought for him, instead of a novel?’

(32) a. *Cui UN CD i-ai cumpărat (? în loc de un roman)?
       who.DAT A CD him-(you) have bought (instead of a novel)
   ‘To whom is it a CD that you bought, instead of a novel?’

   b. *UN CD cui i-ai cumpărat, în loc de un roman?

Single wh-questions featuring *de ce* pattern very much like Italian *perché* questions, described by Rizzi (2001). Not only are topics and foci possible in questions with ‘why’, as opposed to questions featuring other wh-expressions—the impossibility of SV order following a wh-expression (or a ‘strong’ subject; see Cardinaletti 2007) in Italian, relaxed in the case of *perché*, is also a characteristic trait of Romanian interrogatives. In (33b), the subject Ion cannot follow cui ‘who.DAT’, but (34b) shows that it can appear to the left of the verb under *de ce*.

(33) a. Cui i-a cumpărat Ion un CD?
       who.DAT him-has bought Ion a CD
   ‘For whom did Ion buy a CD?’

   b. *Cui Ion i-a cumpărat un CD?

(34) a. De ce a cumpărat Ion un CD pentru el?
   ‘Why did Ion buy him a CD?’

   b. De ce Ion a cumpărat un CD pentru el?

However, unlike preverbal subjects in Italian (Cardinaletti 2004), preverbal subjects in Romanian are topics (Cornilescu 1997, 2000, Dobrovie-Sorin 1994), so that their appearance under *de ce* is not so much an indication that the inflected verb raises to a lower position under ‘why’ (as Rizzi argues for Italian), but that (e.g.) Ion in (34b) occupies a topic position below IntP.

It seems reasonable to conclude that single wh-interrogatives in Romanian featuring *de ce* are schematically derived as in (35): *de ce* moves from Spec,Reason to Spec,Int, crossing over topics and foci.\(^{19}\)

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\(^{18}\) As in Italian, a focalized constituent can precede a wh-element in embedded interrogatives. This does not affect the thrust of our argument.

\(^{19}\) The left-periphery schema in (35) does not rule out a situation in which both WhP and IntP are activated. The problem of how to rule out such a state of affairs is partially independent of whether Spec,Int is a position for external or internal Merge, since it can potentially arise when Int\(^0\) is filled by, say, ‘whether’/’if’ and Spec,Wh by a phrasal expression. Although Universal Grammar allows some flexibility as to which head, Wh or Int, is endowed with criterial features, economy considerations preclude the activation of both in a single clause.
Rizzi (2001) argues that long-moved why is attracted to the matrix Spec,Foc and not to the matrix Spec,Int. He shows that long-moved perché patterns with other wh-elements in triggering VS order and is incompatible with a fronted focus. Long-moved perché differs, in this respect, from short construal of perché. As far as we have been able to determine, this is also true in Romanian.

In our terms, what needs to be explained is why short-moved why raises from Spec,Reason to Spec,Int and cannot target Spec,Wh, whereas long-moved why has exactly the opposite property, namely, it targets the matrix Wh and not the matrix Int.

Criterial satisfaction is an interface condition, but the syntactic machinery that drives it (the operations Agree and Move) depends on the manipulation of formal (uninterpretable) features (Chomsky 2004). Although both Wh and Int bear the substantive or criterial wh-feature—and hence serve as signposts for the semantic interfaces to interpret the clause as an interrogative—only Int possesses the formal feature to attract why.20 Thus, local why is not attracted by the formal features of the criterial Wh head; it is attracted only by those of the Int head (or the Rel head, in the case of relative why; see (3)). Why can only reach Spec,Wh if it somehow becomes attractable by the Wh probe.

How does this come about in long extraction? Short movement to a criterial position is movement to a dedicated position in the cartography of the left periphery: focal elements move to Spec,Foc, relatives to Spec,Rel, topics to Spec,Top, and so on. Long movement, however, transits through a phase-edge position in the left periphery of CP (and perhaps of vP) (Chomsky 2008). These “escape hatches” are not criterial positions, for if they were, Criterial Freezing would block any further movement.21

Our view is that movement out of a phase proceeds through the highest specifier of a phase, perhaps Spec,Force (giving rise to the “bottleneck effect” characteristic of the Wh-Island Constraint).22 We further assume that elements at the edge of a phase can be further attracted to any criterial head, provided, of course, that there is no conflict in the substantive (criterial) feature that they bear.

Short movement of why can only target Spec,Int. Once why moves to the “escape hatch” on the edge of an embedded CP, it can be attracted to the matrix Wh head, since there is no conflict in the substantive content of Wh and Int. Assuming that WhP is projected (or gets a chance to project) prior to IntP, we obtain the desired result: long-moved why is not attracted to matrix Int because it is first attracted to matrix Wh and becomes criterially frozen in Spec,Wh.

20 Conversely, Int lacks the formal features attracting wh-expressions other than why.
21 For Rizzi (2006), cyclic movement proceeds through attraction by “formal counterparts” to criterial features on the dedicated criterial heads. See also McCloskey 2002.
22 If ForceP is the locus of illocutionary force and, as an LI reviewer reminds us, is primarily a root phenomenon (Bayer 2004), then the “escape hatch” position is simply the highest specifier position in the embedded clause.
Long-moved *de ce* in Romanian is predictably also attracted to the matrix Wh position, patterning with Italian, as described in Rizzi 2001, since the conditions that favor this derivation follow from general principles of the sort discussed in the preceding paragraphs. Thus, unlike short movement of *de ce*, discussed in section 4, long movement (and hence, embedded construal) of *de ce* requires subject inversion, as in (36). Without inversion in the matrix clause, *de ce* in (36) cannot be a question about the reasons for dismissal.

(36) De ce crede secretara cǎ vor avea loc multe concedieri?
    why thinks secretary.the that will take place a.lot firing.pl.
    ‘Why does the secretary think that a lot of firing will take place?’

In (37), which features a focalized indirect object in the matrix clause, only the matrix reading of *de ce* is available.

(37) De ce SECRETAREI i-ai spus cǎ directorul va demisiona?
    why SECRETARY.DAT him-(you) have told that director.the will resign
    ‘Why did you tell THE SECRETARY that the director will resign?’

Long-moved *de ce* behaves like all other wh-elements (with the exception of short-moved *de ce*) in being incompatible with focus (recall the discussion surrounding (31) and (32)). Either we assume, with Rizzi (1997), that wh-elements (including long-moved *de ce*) compete with focalized ones for the same position (Spec,Foc) or, if wh-movement targets Spec,Wh, as we suggested earlier, this limitation is due to an intervention effect on the focus chain.

Finally, consider the contrast in (38), where *de ce* cooccurs with a topic in the left periphery.

(38) a. Angajaţilor, de ce li s-a spus cǎ li se vor acorda bonusuri?
    employees.DAT why them s.refl.-has told that them s.refl. will give bonuses
    ‘Why did they tell the employees that they would give them bonuses?’

b. De ce angajaţilor li s-a spus cǎ li se vor acorda bonusuri?
    why employees.DAT them s.refl.-has told that them s.refl. will give bonuses

In (38a), *de ce* is construed either with the embedded clause or with the matrix, but in (38b), it can only be interpreted with matrix construal. This contrast shows that *de ce* is not in the same position in the two examples. Like other wh-elements, it moves to Spec,Wh from the embedded clause in (38a). This movement cannot take place in (38b) because topics cannot intervene between the wh-word and the verb, as (33) showed. Only matrix construal is possible in (38b): *de ce* moves from Spec,Reason to Spec,Int in the matrix, and never crosses a ‘‘CP’’ boundary.

6 External Merge and Internal Merge in Spec,Int: Why versus How Come

We have argued that if Spec,Int is a criterial position, then the constraint of Criterial Freezing blocks any movement from or through this position. Since why in an example like (39) can be
interpreted either with short construal (over the main clause) or with embedded construal (in which case it is sensitive to intervention effects in the matrix clause), it follows that why is not externally merged in Spec,Int. If it were, it could not move out of the embedded clause and only short, local construal would be available in (39).

(39) Why did you say (that) John left?

With this in mind, consider (40), in which how come can have only matrix scope.

(40) How come you said (that) John left?

a. How come you said such-and-such a thing? (∕short construal)

b. How come John left? (*long construal)

Collins (1990) discusses this difference between why and how come and argues that how come is base-generated as the head of CP while why is moved from inside IP.

While we agree with Collins’s basic analytic intuition, namely, that these two interrogative expressions are not merged in the same position, we take a different view regarding the actual positions these interrogative expressions occupy. How come is a phrase, not a head (see also Ochi 2004), and patterns with wh-phrases like why and unlike interrogative heads like whether or if in licensing sluicing.

(41) They thought John left early, but they didn’t tell me

a. why.

b. how come.

A more reasonable candidate for how come’s base position is Spec,Int. Merged in that position, how come is subject to Criterial Freezing and cannot be long-construed in (40).23 Mutatis mutandis, the availability of long construal in (39) argues that why is base-generated not in Spec,Int but in a position from which it has the option of moving either to a (local) Spec,Int or to a criterial position in the matrix clause.

Like English, Italian manifests a contrast between perché and come mai with respect to long extraction, as shown in (42) (Denis Delfitto, pers. comm.). This suggests that, like English, Italian distinguishes between interrogative phrases that are merged (and frozen) in Spec,Int—come mai—and phrases that are moved to Spec,Int—perché.24

(42) a. Come mai ha detto che si dimetterà?

how come (he/she) has said that so will resign

‘How come he/she said he/she will resign?’ (∕short construal)

b. *whether/if.

23 As expected, negation in the matrix clause fails to render (40) ungrammatical.

(i) How come you didn’t say (that) John left?

24 A reviewer reminds us of Tsai’s (2008) suggestion that Chinese weishenme ‘why’ has the option of merging either as an IP adjunct or as the head of IntP. The separation of the Merge positions of why and how come in English and Italian suggests a more precise formulation of this optionality.
b. Perché ha detto che si dimetterà?  
*Why (he/she) has said that s/he will resign*  
( short construal)
( long construal)

We conclude this section with a brief mention of three other differences between *why* and *how come* that Collins (1990) discusses: subject-auxiliary inversion, the licensing of *wh*-in-situ, and scope interactions with subject quantifiers. The differences boil down to the presence of a *wh*-trace with *why* and its absence with *how come*.

Subject-auxiliary inversion (or movement of *T* into the left periphery) is obligatory in (root) *why*-questions and impossible with *how come*.

(43) a. Why did John leave?  
*Why John left?*  
(44) a. *How come did John leave?*  
b. How come John left?

Collins attributes the ungrammaticality of (44a) to the impossibility of moving *I*0 to a filled *C*0 (recall that, for him, *how come* occupies *C*0). Our suggestion is that (English) subject-auxiliary inversion is triggered by interrogative operators that are linked to a syntactic variable (or trace). *How come* is not associated with a variable since it constitutes a trivial chain; hence, it fails to trigger inversion.

In a similar vein, the contrast between (45a) and (45b), which shows that *how come* cannot license an in-situ *wh*-element, might plausibly be attributed to the absence of a trace in *how come*’s chain, as suggested by the ungrammaticality of (45c) (as per Chomsky 1973).25

(45) a. (Tell me) why John ate what.  
*(Tell me) how come John ate what.*  
c. *I wonder whether John ate what?

Collins further observes that *why*-questions allow a pair-list answer (inverse scope) while *how come*–questions do not.

(46) a. Why did everybody come?  
(wh > ∀, ∀ > wh)  
b. How come everyone came?  
(wh > ∀, ∀ > wh)

Suppose, with Chierchia (1993), that pair-list readings are functional readings and that functional readings require a *wh*-trace. *Why* is associated with a trace but *how come* is not.26

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25 Hornstein (1995:147–150) considers (45a) ungrammatical. However, the contrast between (45a) and (45b) seems real.

26 Fitzpatrick (2005) argues that the core difference between *how come* and *why* is that the former is factive: he notes that *how come* fails to license negative polarity items in its complement, in much the same way as factive predicates with superordinate negation.
7 Conclusion

We have argued that in several languages—English, Romanian, Italian—the internal Merge position of ‘why’ is distinct from its criterial position. ‘Why’ gives the impression of being internally merged in the position in which it is interpreted, because its internal Merge position is situated higher than that of other wh-elements. In our view, however, ‘why’—like other wh-elements—forms a nontrivial chain and leaves a trace (copy). The base position of ‘why’ is in Spec,ReasonP. In languages that require overt wh-movement but tolerate only a single wh-element in the left periphery, why must move to Spec,Int, a criterial Wh position, distinct from Spec,Wh in its formal (as opposed to substantive or criterial) feature composition. If Spec,Int is not projected, as is the case in (truncated) infinitival clauses in English, it raises to the matrix left periphery. Why remains in situ in Spec,Reason if and when some other wh-element moves to Spec,Wh. Such a configuration arises in a multiple-wh language like Romanian.

Finally, we argued that some of the main properties that distinguish why from how come in English and Italian can be understood through a cartographic lens. How come is externally merged in Spec,Int, where it is subject to Criterial Freezing, while why accesses Spec,Int through movement from Spec,Reason.

References


Département de linguistique
Université de Genève
CH-1211 Genève 4
Switzerland
ur.shlonsky@unige.ch
gabriela.soare@unige.ch