

## OPEN ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS IN MANCHU-TUNGUSIC LANGUAGES

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Depending on the logical structure, two types of alternative questions are usually described: (i) **A-or-B** and (ii) **A-or-not-A**. Remarkably, in Tungusic languages Udihe [1] and Oroqen [2], there is one more, typologically rare, type (iii) **A-or-DO-WHAT?**, where the second disjunct is expressed by an interrogative pro-verb. We will call them *open alternative questions*. The pro-verb copies the inflectional markers of the finite predicate, used as the first disjunct, like in (1), both verbs are in focused (stressed) position, and may optionally attach identical word-final clitics *-nu...-nu* or *-(A)s...-(A)s*, so the questions of this kind sound like a rhyme. The talk will discuss how this type of alternative questions might have emerged and how it functions.

If we analyze alternative questions as two coordinated interrogatives with a topicalized shared constituent, our example (1) implies a polar question (1a), and a special question (1b). Either of the two can be used independently, yet they would require different kinds of answers. The polar question has to be replied by repeating the focused constituent of the question (for a positive answer) (2a), or with the morphologically identical form of the negative auxiliary verb (for a negative answer) (2b), while to answer the special question, the addressee is expected to supply a portion of adequate information. When the two interrogatives are put together in a disjunction **A-or-DO-WHAT?** (1), the resulting question does not actually supply the addressee with a list of possible answers, from which she is supposed to choose the correct one; rather a polar question needs to be replied, and the proverbial disjunct seems logically (but not pragmatically!) redundant. This justifies distinguishing the discussed type of interrogatives as a separate class, and suggests that in this case we deal with a mismatch between the inter-clausal structure of the syntactically coordinated construction and its pragmatic usage. We find that the bleached pro-verb *je-* in the second part of the disjunction has been grammaticalized and resembles a tag-question.

Apparently, the further development of this phenomenon can be observed in Oroqen [2]. In Udihe the transition of interrogative verb to clitic is still in progress, and resembles the grammaticalization path of interrogative constructions in Mandarin Chinese (3), where the **A-not-A** question has become a regular way of forming yes/no questions [3]. The Chinese **A-not-A** questions have been re-analyzed as reduplication of the questioned constituent with an infixation of the negation element (4). It can be connected with the fact that Chinese, like Tungusic languages, lacks equivalents to ‘yes’ and ‘no’, which might block this process.

The talk will provide a brief overview of the interrogative constructions in a variety of Manchu-Tungusic languages [5], [6], [7], and we will also discuss whether they emerged due to possible syntactic calquing of their Chinese counterparts, as a result of independent parallel development, or, rather, as a combination of these, and how it can be accounted for from the functional point of view.

### Examples

- (1) *Si eme-zeŋe-i ja-zaŋa-i?* (Udihe)  
you come-FUT-2SG PROV-FUT-2SG ‘Will you come (or what will you do)?’

- (1) a. *Si eme-zeŋe-i?* (Udihe)  
 you come-FUT-2SG  
 ‘Will you come?’  
 b. *Si ja-zaŋa-i?* (Udihe)  
 PROV-FUT-2SG  
 ‘What are you going to do?’
- (2) a. *Eme-zeŋe-i.* (Udihe)  
 come-FUT-1SG  
 ‘(Yes), (I) will come.’  
 b. *E-zeŋe-i.* (Udihe)  
 PROV-FUT-1SG  
 ‘(No), (I) will not.’
- (3) *Nǐ máng bu máng ?* (Chinese)  
 You busy not busy?  
 ‘Are you busy?’

Abbreviations: FUT = future, PROV =PRO-VERB , SG = singular.

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