

Some Remarks on the Diachrony of Wh-Movement (and some other things)

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This talk consists of four parts. First, I will review what is known about Wh-movement parameters in the synchronic domain, following the well-known literature beginning with Bach (1971). Then I propose a diachronic path for wh-movement: multiple fronting develops into a single-fronting system (of the English kind), which in turn naturally develops into an in-situ system. Evidence from Romance, Indo-European and Japanese supports this path. Third, I try to place the synchronic and diachronic variation in wh-movement in a general theory of parameter hierarchies and markedness of the kind put forward in Roberts (2019). Finally, and more speculatively, I will consider the longer-term diachrony of wh-movement.