### Processing Focus Intervention Structures in Mandarin Chinese

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#### Introduction

Focus intervention

*Q*—[F:*XP* … *WH*]

Zhiyou Yuehan: chi-le shenme? Only John, eat-Asp what?

Intended: What is the thing x such that only John ate x? (Mandarin)

Focus intervention is a locality constraint on Q-WH dependencies (Beck 96, 06; Beck & Kim 97; Yang 12).

**Broad Research question:** How does focus intervention compare to another locality constraint, islands?

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#### Similarities and differences

**Similarities**

Both are grammatical constraints that disrupt dependencies:
- Islands disrupt filler-gap dependencies;
- Focus intervention disrupts Q-WH dependencies.

**Differences**

- **Different intereners:** Presence vs. absense of focus
- **Different dependencies:** Overt vs. covert dependencies

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#### Experiment 1 (n=34) & 2 (SPR, n=33)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complexity</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Experiment 1</th>
<th>Experiment 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal Baseline</td>
<td>XP…WH...</td>
<td>Intervention Baseline</td>
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Factorial design in Experiment 1 & 2

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#### Experiment 3 (n=43) & 4 (SPR,n=40)

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Structure</th>
<th>Experiment 3</th>
<th>Experiment 4</th>
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Factorial design in Experiment 3 & 4

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#### Discussion

**Major findings:**

Focus intervention in Mandarin influences offline judgment, but not online parsing. This contrasts with:
- islands, which influence both,
- grammaticality illusion, which influence neither.

**Possible reasons:**

- **Possibility 1:** Preceding context gives cues to the presence of a WH-expression.
- **Possibility 2:** No retrieval or no cost of retrieval (of Q). Scope parsing may not be subject to the [+F] interference, c.f. Xiang Ming (14, 15).
- **Possibility 3:** D-linked of WH-expressions
  D-linked wh-phrases repair disrupted Q-WH dependencies, (see also Hofmeister & Sag (2010) for similar effects in wh-islands.)
- **Possibility 4:** Pragmatic sources
  Focus intervention is not a locality violation, but pragmatic infelicity, c.f. Tomioka 2007, Eliam 2011.

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#### Future research

- **Direction 1:** Presence vs. absence of context
- **Direction 2:** Bare wh-phrase vs. D-linked expression
- **Direction 3:** Prosodic manipulations of [+F] of focused NP including pitch value, amplitude, duration, etc.
- **Direction 4:** More fine-grained time measure like eye-tracking

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#### Selected references


