

STRUCTURED QUESTIONS IN TURKISH

PALOMA JERETIČ NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
paloma@nyu.edu



STRUCTURED QUESTIONS

- Previously undescribed phenomenon found in Turkish
- Internally structured, by raising hierarchically related QUDs

TURKISH DATA

• An ordinary "flat" alternative question is formed by coordinating alternatives, and optionally adding the particle *yoksa* in final position, i.e. right before the last alternative.

(1) Şarap mı istiyorsun, bira mı, (**yoksa**) rakı mı?
wine MI want.2sg beer MI YOKSA rakı MI
Do you want wine, beer or rakı?
Possible answers: *wine, beer, rakı*.

• Structured questions are formed whenever *yoksa* appears before final position.

(2) Şarap mı istiyorsun, **yoksa** bira mı, rakı mı, ...?
wine MI want.2sg YOKSA beer MI rakı MI
Do you want wine, if not would you like beer, or rakı...?
Possible answers: *wine, beer, rakı, any other alcohol*.

(3) Şarap mı istiyorsun, **yoksa** ne istiyor-sun?
wine MI want.2sg YOKSA what want-2sg
Do you want wine, if not what else?

• In examples (2) and (3), pre-*yoksa* alternatives are more prominent than post-*yoksa* ones.

• In general, *yoksa* appears to have the effect of grouping alternatives together, as shown in the examples below.

(4) Su mu istiyorsun, portakal suyu mu, **yoksa** elma mı, armut mu?
water MI want.2sg orange juice MI YOKSA apple MI pear MI
Do you want water or orange juice, if not an apple or a pear?

• Oddness arises when there is no contextually relevant grouping of post-*yoksa* alternatives.

(5) #Su mu istiyorsun, portakal mı, **yoksa** elma mı, armut mu?
water MI want.2sg orange MI YOKSA apple MI pear MI
Do you want water or an orange, if not an apple or a pear?

• Grouping is asymmetrical, i.e. post-*yoksa* alternatives must be grouped, while alternatives pre-*yoksa* don't have to.

(6) Simit mi istiyorsun, yumurta mı, **yoksa** elma mı, armut mu?
simit MI want.2sg egg MI YOKSA apple MI pear MI
Do you want a simit, or an egg, or an apple or a pear?

(7) #Elma mı istiyorsun, armut mu, **yoksa** simit mi, yumurta mı?
apple MI want.2sg pear MI YOKSA simit MI egg MI
int. Do you want an apple or a pear, or a simit or an egg?

• Finally, *yoksa* can appear several times, in which case the question may be interpreted as flat or structured (prosodically disambiguated):

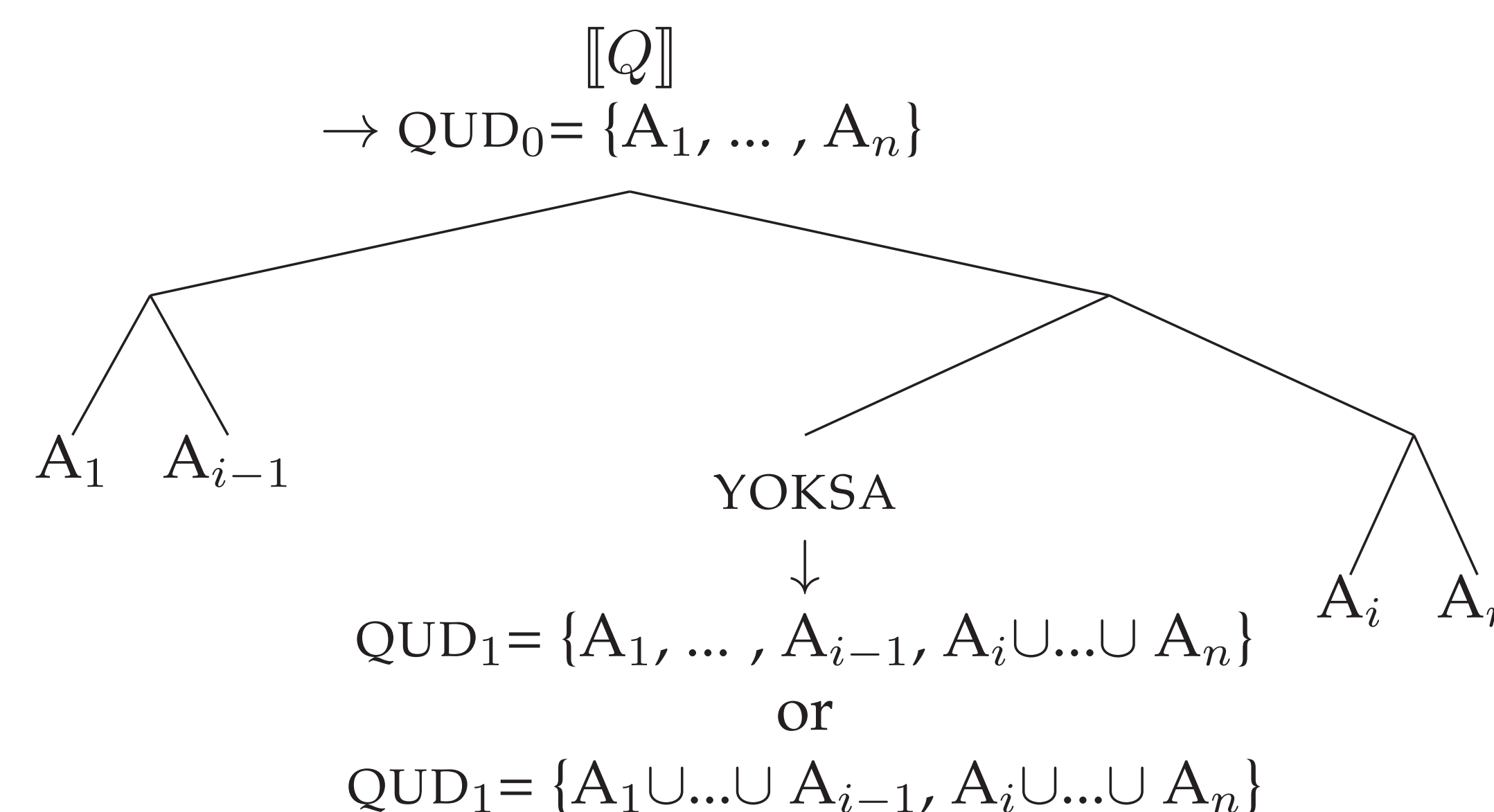
(8) Şarap mı istiyorsun, **yoksa** bira mı, **yoksa** rakı mı?
wine MI want.2sg YOKSA beer MI rakı MI
Do you want wine, if not would you like beer, or rakı...?

THE PROPOSAL

Structured questions are discourse strategies that raise two QUDs in a single utterance: a main QUD and a sub-QUD.

- Questions Under Discussion (QUDs) and sub-QUDs **structure the discourse** (Roberts 1996, 2012, Büring 2003, a.o.)
- A sub-QUD is a QUD that once settled, at least partially answers the main QUD.

(9) QUDs raised by a structured question Q



The particle *yoksa* marks the last uttered possible answer to a QUD.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE ANALYSIS

- Inquisitive Semantics (Ciardelli, Groenendijk & Roelofsen 2015, a.o.)
- A question q must be **relevant** (Büring 2003), i.e. directly address a QUD₀: $\text{alt}([q]) \subseteq \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_0])$.
- The **question particle** MI signifies inquisitive disjunction:
(10) $[[X \text{ MI } Y \text{ MI}]] = X \vee Y$
- Turkish alternatives are full clauses (Gračanin-Yüksek 2016)

- **Yoksa**: marks the last uttered possible answer to a QUD

– "possible answer to a QUD":

(11) $[[p \text{ yoksa } q]]$ presupposes that there is a QUD₁ such that $q! \in \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_1])$, and $p \vee q \subseteq [\text{QUD}_1]$

– "last uttered":

the phonological item *yoksa* breaks up prosodic constituency, affecting syntactic constituency (cf Selkirk 2011) like so:

	$[[ab]c]$	$[a]bc]$
abYc	✓	*
aYbc	*	✓
aYbYc	✓	✓

DERIVING THE FACTS

Flat questions

(12) $[[A \text{ MI } B \text{ MI}]] \text{ yoksa } C \text{ MI}]] = A \vee B \vee C$

– Relevance: $\text{alt}(A \vee B \vee C) \subseteq \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_0])$
– $[[\text{yoksa}]]$: $C \in \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_1])$ and $A \vee B \vee C \subseteq [\text{QUD}_1]$

We have $[\text{QUD}_0] = [\text{QUD}_1]$

→ The unique QUD raised includes A, B, C as its alternatives.

(13) $[[A \text{ MI } \text{yoksa}_1 B \text{ MI}]] \text{ yoksa}_2 C \text{ MI}]] = A \vee B \vee C$

– Relevance: $\text{alt}(A \vee B \vee C) \subseteq \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_0])$
– $[[\text{yoksa}_1]]$: $B \in \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_1])$, and $A \vee B \subseteq [\text{QUD}_1]$
– $[[\text{yoksa}_2]]$: $C \in \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_1'])$, and $A \vee B \vee C \subseteq [\text{QUD}_1']$

Simplest case: $[\text{QUD}_0] = [\text{QUD}_1] = [\text{QUD}_1']$

→ The unique QUD raised includes A, B, C as its alternatives.

Structured questions

(14) $[[A \text{ MI } \text{yoksa } [B \text{ MI } C \text{ MI}]]]] = A \vee B \vee C$

– Relevance: $\text{alt}(A \vee B \vee C) \subseteq \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_0])$
– $[[\text{yoksa}]]$: $(B \vee C)! \in \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_1])$ and $A \vee B \vee C \subseteq [\text{QUD}_1]$
 $[\text{QUD}_0] \subset [\text{QUD}_1]$

→ QUD₀ $\{A, B, C\}$ and its sub-qud QUD₁ $\{A, (B \vee C)!\}$ are both raised by (14).

(15) $[[A \text{ MI } \text{yoksa}_1 [B \text{ MI } \text{yoksa}_2 C \text{ MI}]]]] = A \vee B \vee C$

– Relevance: $\text{alt}(A \vee B \vee C) \subseteq \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_0])$
– $[[\text{yoksa}_1]]$: $(B \vee C)! \in \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_1])$, and $A \vee B \vee C \subseteq [\text{QUD}_1]$
– $[[\text{yoksa}_2]]$: $C \in \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_1'])$, and $B \vee C \subseteq [\text{QUD}_1']$

$[\text{QUD}_1] = [\text{QUD}_1']$

$[\text{QUD}_0] \subset [\text{QUD}_1]$

→ QUD₀ $\{A, B, C\}$ and its sub-qud QUD₁ $\{A, (B \vee C)!\}$ are both raised by (15)

(16) $[[[A \text{ MI } B \text{ MI}]] \text{ yoksa } [C \text{ MI } D \text{ MI}]]]] = A \vee B \vee C \vee D$

– Relevance: $\text{alt}(A \vee B \vee C \vee D) \subseteq \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_0])$
– $[[\text{yoksa}]]$: $(C \vee D)! \in \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_1])$ and $A \vee B \vee C \vee D \subseteq [\text{QUD}_1]$
 $[\text{QUD}_0] \subset [\text{QUD}_1]$

Note that there are the following two possibilities for QUD₁:

(a) $\text{alt}(A \vee B \vee (C \vee D)!) \subseteq \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_1])$ (6)

(b) $\text{alt}((A \vee B)! \vee (C \vee D)!) \subseteq \text{alt}([\text{QUD}_1])$ (4)

→ QUD₀ $\{A, B, C, D\}$ and its sub-qud QUD₁ $\{A, B, (C \vee D)!\} / \{(A \vee B)!, (C \vee D)!\}$ are both raised by (16)

REFERENCES: Bü2003: On D-Trees, Beans, and B-Accents. CGR2015: Inquisitive Semantics. GR2009: Inquisitive sem and pragmatics. GY2016: Alternative questions in Turkish. Ro2012: Information Structure in Discourse. Se2011: The syntax-phonology interface.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: For judgments, thanks to İsa Kerem Bayırlı, Ömer Demirok, Deniz Özyıldız, audience at Tu+3, and anonymous reviewers; for comments at various stages, all those above, and Chris Barker, Lucas Champollion, Masha Esipova.