



Vortrag im Rahmen des Linguistischen Kolloquiums

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Questions in Ama

The paper aims at investigating the formal and functional properties of questions in Ama (Nilo-Saharan, Eastern Sudanic). In general three types of questions can be differentiated: constituent questions, polar questions and alternative questions. Whereas constituent questions and alternative questions ask for special information to fill an open proposition, whereby alternative questions already provide the possible candidates for it, yes/no-questions principally request the truth value of a proposition. It will be shown that the different semantic functions of constituent and polar questions are expressed by different means in Ama, whereas alternative questions present a mixture of both. Constituent questions can be roughly characterized by displaying a wh-word and a final question marker *a*. Polar questions are identical to declaratives in syntax and prosody, and do not show any special morphosyntactic marking. Finally, alternative questions show the same syntactic structure as polar questions but are marked by the sentence-final question marker. The main feature of all interrogatives is the total absence of declarative particles that are often, but not always, nonetheless exclusively found in main clauses. Given the fact that these particles are never found in interrogatives and only sometimes in declaratives, there seems to be no difference between polar questions and statements. Furthermore, it will be shown that the distribution of the sentence-final question marker is not as clear as described here but allows lots of exceptions, only partly explainable by scope or structural considerations. After having presented the basic structural and functional characteristics of Ama interrogatives, I will briefly examine polar questions with different scope values. Thus, as previous research has shown, not all yes/no-questions in fact allow a simple “yes” or “no” answer, but rather expect a more elaborated response, as they question only whether a single constituent fulfills the truth condition of that proposition.

**Ort: Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften,
Invalidenstr. 118, Raum 410**

Zeit: 16:15 Uhr

Alle Interessierten sind herzlich eingeladen!