

## False Alternative: Why A-not-A questions in Mandarin Chinese are polar questions

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A-not-A questions in Chinese (Qù bù qù? Go-not-go?) look like alternative questions: the speaker appears to offer a choice between two options. This talk challenges that intuition and argues that A-not-A constructions are in fact polar questions. We first lay out the theoretical grounds for this claim, showing that the visible 'disjunction' is not a real coordination but the morphological side effect of a single negative-interrogative operator moving to the left edge of the clause. We then present several syntactic tests that diagnose polar question status: island effects, intervention effects from focus particles, incompatibility with quantified subjects, resistance to reordering, the range of possible answers, and prosodic evidence. Together, these diagnostics build a convergent case that surface form can be deeply misleading about the underlying question type.