WH- MOVEMENT IN PALESTINIAN ARABIC

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Abstract

This paper presents a typology of wh-questions in Palestinian Arabic which can be best described as a mid way between Iraqi Arabic and Egyptian Arabic. The wh-operators in Palestinian Arabic function in two different ways depending on the kind of wh-operator, whether it is a wh-argument or a wh-adjunct. This paper argues that the wh-adjuncts undergo syntactic movement to the matrix comp and thus working as Iraqi Arabic, while wh-arguments do not undergo movement and thus working as Egyptian Arabic. To support the arguments in this paper, the researcher drew upon the works of Wahba (1984 & 1991) and Cheng (2000).

1. Introduction:

Languages behave differently in the strategies they apply to form wh-constructions. In English, for example, only one wh-phrase is raised and the fronting strategy is more frequent than in- situ strategy, which is possible when we have a multiple wh-word constructions where only one wh-element must front leaving the other in-situ, as in (1-3).

(1) What did you grant to Mary?
(2) "Did you grant to Mary what?
(3) Who did Mary grant what?

In Japanese and Chinese, wh-phrases favor the in-situ position; as in

(4) John-wa dare-ni nani-o ageta ka ?
    Iohn-top who-dat what-ace gave Q
    'Who did John give what ?' (*Lassadi* 2003, p.67)

In Bulgarian and Serbo-Croatian all wh-phrases in one sentence are raised; as in (5) below

(5) Koj kogo vizda?

    Who whom sees

'Who sees whom?' (*Lassadi* 2003, p.67)

       In the case of Palestinian Arabic, the rare obligatory wh-movement and the optional wh-movement in both simple and embedded questions are triggered by focus features, as in (6-7).

(6) aysh gult la Mona

    What say 2.S.M.Past to Mona

    'What did you say to Mona?'

(7) zurt Mona laysh

    visit.2.S.M.Past Mona why

    'Why did you visit Mona?'

This leads us to propose that many languages exhibit optional movement in wh-constructions. This proposal has been adopted by many linguists including Pesetsky (1993), Aoun and Li (1993), Boskovic (1997, 2000), and Denham (2000). These linguists place languages such as French, EA, Iraqi Arabic, Babine language, Bahasa Indonesia and Palauan that exhibit optional wh-movement under a special type.

    Palestinian Arabic, which has not been fully discussed in the literature, has a basic SVO order and get the VSO by moving the verb to the front position. It has wh- operators that can be divided into two major types: wh- arguments like miin 'who', aysh 'what', *ayya 'which'* and wh-adjuncts operators such as *laysh* 'why' and *wajn* 'where'. On the surface, both kinds of wh-operator arguments and adjuncts appear to have the option of appearing in the comp node in the matrix clause or in its base generated position "in-situ". Just like English, the wh-operator can appear in the specifier of CP to check the (+wh) feature, leaving the question base position marked with a trace. It must be mentioned at this point that all the examples were taken from conversations of the researcher's senior EFL students who come from all geographic areas of Gaza strip. In presenting the examples, the researcher will stick to the transliteration of PA words, but in case of the sounds that are not found in English, symbols from IPA will be used. Consider the following examples:

(8) a. Meen behib Hassan?
    Who love Hassan
    Who does Hassan love?
  b. ayya ktab qara Hassan?
    Which book read Hassan
    Which book did Hassan read?
  c. laysh Zaalan Hassan?
    Why Hassan sad
    Why is Hassan sad?

    Like Mandarin Chinese (Huang 1982; Cheng 1991), wh-operators in Palestinian Arabic, henceforth PA, can also remain in their base position "in-situ"

(9) a. behib Hassan meen?
    Love Hassan who?
    Who does Hassan love?
  b. qara Hassan ayya Ktab?
    Read Hassan which book
    Which book did Hassan read?
  c. Zaalan Hassan laysh?
    Sad   Hassan why?
    Why is Hassan sad?

    From the above examples one would have the impression that PA has both the options of leaving the wh-operators in situ like Chinese, or moved to the specifier of CP like English.

    In her work on Iraqi Arabic, Wahba (1984) argues that Iraqi Arabic is an optional fronting language where it can allow both in-situ and syntactic movement at S- structure. Wahba did draw on the difference in the behavior of the wh- argument and wh- adjunct when they have to move to the matrix comp. She attributed the discrepancies between the two kinds of wh-operators to the hypothesis that wh-adjuncts function under more strict rules than the wh-arguments. Wh- argument can violate the Tense Locality Restriction (TLR), while wh- adjuncts fully obey this restriction in Iraqi Arabic. Consider the following examples from Wahba (1991):

(10). *a. [leesh i tsawwarit Mona[ei [Ali masha ei]]]
        why thought   Mona   Ali   left

'Why did you think Ali left?'
b. [shenoi[tsawwarit Mona [ei[Ali ishtara ei]]]]
        what   thought   Mona   Ali   bought
        'What did Mona think Ali bought?' (p. 263)

Example (10 a) is ungrammatical because the wh-operator is an adjunct. Thus it can not cross more than one tensed clause to the way to the matrix Comp and (10 b) is grammatical because the wh-operator is an argument. In this respect, Wahba (1991) did not provide any clear explanation as to why such difference occurs.

On the other hand, Cheng (2000) in her work on wh-optional fronting languages argues that there is no syntactic wh-movement in wh-optional fronting languages. She also argues that the apparent fronting of wh- words in optional fronting languages does not involve wh-movement to specifier of CP, based on data from Egyptian Arabic. She based her argument on the assumption that the fronting of wh- words is an instance of clefting in the case of arguments and topicalization in the case of adjuncts.

In this paper the researcher suggests that PA has some characteristics of both Iraqi Arabic with regard to wh- adjuncts and that it has some characteristics of Egyptian Arabic with regard to wh-arguments. He supposes that wh- arguments are base generated in the spec of CP and that they do not undergo any real movement and that, on the other hand, wh- adjuncts undergo syntactic wh- movement from their base position to the matrix comp.

To support this argument some of the work will draw on some of the aspects discussed by Wahba (1984 & 1991) and Cheng (2000).

2. Wh- arguments in PA show strong resemblance to relative clauses and clefts

(11)   a. il walad illi   ab- oh darab-oh.   'relative clause'
           the boy that father his hit   him.
           'The boy that his father hit.'

    b. hatha il walad illi   ab-oh darab-oh. ' clefting'
        this the boy that father his hit him.
        'This is the boy whom his father hit.'
    c. miin illi ab- oh darab-oh?   'wh- argument'

Who that father his   hit him
'Who did his father hit?'

In the above examples we notice that the wh-argument *miin* 'who' in (11 c) resembles the relative clause in sentence(11 b) and the cleft structure in(11 c) in that they all use the complementizer *illi* 'that'.

According to Wahba (1984) there is a difference between relativization and wh-fronting with respect to island violations. She states that relativization violates island constraints while wh-fronting does not. She argues that relativization does not involve movement while wh-fronting does. She also points out that relativization involves the existence of a resumptive pronoun while wh-fronting does not.

The wh- arguments in PA follow the same pattern as relative clauses. They both violate island constraints, and do not undergo movement. The issue concerning the island violations will be discussed later in this paper, but first consider the occurrence of the resumptive pronoun in both relative clauses and wh- arguments. The wh-argument is similar to relativization in that it also requires a pronoun to fill a gap. For example:

(12)   a. miin illi am-oh axadat-oh?
           Who that mother- his pick up him 3sg
           'Who did his mother pick up?'
       b. * miin illi Mona darabat?
           Who that Mona hit
           'Who did Mona hit?'
       c.   aysh illi shoft-oh?
           What that see- you 3sg
           'What did you see?'
        d. *aysh illi shoft?
           What that see?
           'What did you see?'
        e. Ayya kitab illi qarait –oh?
          Which book that read- you 3sg
          'Which book did you read?'
         f. *Ayya kitab illi qarait?
          Which book that read- you

'Which book did you read?'

It is important to notice that the complementizer *illi* 'that' occurs only with wh- arguments but not with wh- adjuncts:

(13) * Laysh illi darab Hassan il walad?
why   that hit   Hassan the boy
'why did Hassan hit the boy?'

In PA, there is a widely used complementizer *illi* 'that' with wh-arguments. It functions to specify an element and also it is used to solve the ambiguity created by the subject- verb gender agreement. To clarify this point, I will first draw on this matter of ambiguity.
Consider the following examples:

(14) a. Miin darab- t   Hassan?
        Who hit (FGM) Hassan
        'Who is the woman/girl that hit Hassan?'
   b. Miin daraba- t   Dana?
        Who   hit   (FGM) Dana
      'Who hit Dana?/ who did Dana hit?'

In example (14 a), where the verb and the object have different gender markers, the "t" marks the Feminine and contrasts with the biological gender that is implied by the masculine name "Hassan", the question bears only one meaning: it is a direct question about the feminine X that hit Hassan. While in (14 b) where the verb and the subject bears the same gender marker, the question bears two optional contrasting meanings. These phenomena would suggest, following Chomsky (1991) (extending the system of Pollock 1989), that in PA there are two kinds of agreement: subject agreement and object agreement and that the NP in the predicate clause selects one of the two agreements in each interpretation.

PA uses another and more salient way of discriminating the two meanings through the use of the complmentizer *illi* 'that'.

(15) a. Miin illi darabat Dana?
        Who that hit Dana?
        Who hit Dana?
Or by juxtaposing the NPs in order to get the other meaning

(16)   Miin Dana darabat?
         Who hit Dana?
         Who did Dana hit?
         The use of *illi* with wh- arguments can provide evidence that wh-arguments do not undergo movement. Consider the following examples:

(17) a. Darabat Dana Miin?
         Hit Dana Who
         Who did Dana hit?
     b. Miin darabat Dana?
         Who hit Dana
         Who hit Dana?/ who did Dana hit?'
         If we assume that the wh- word *miin* appears in the matrix comp in (17 b) as a result of a syntactic movement, then how could we account for the other different meaning that it bears when it shows up in the clause initial position? I assume that the wh- argument is base generated in the specifier of CP and that no movement has taken place.

3. Move Alpha and successive cyclicity of wh-adjuncts

         According to Wahba (1991), wh- phrases in-situ have the option of appearing in any intermediate comp that intervenes between their base position and the controlling comp. Thus, the same phenomenon occurs in PA, but it is conditioned to the kind of wh- operator. This phenomenon, in PA, holds for adjunct wh- questions while it doesn't hold for wh- arguments. Consider the following examples with wh-adjuncts: *wayn* 'where' in (18) and *layyish* 'why' in (19):

(18) a. [comp1 Hassan bedoh [comp2 yo?mor Ali [comp3 iroh wayn]]]?
         Hassan wants   to make Ali   to go where
         'Where does Hassan want to make Ali go?'
     b.[comp1 Hassan bedoh[comp2 yo?mor Ali [wayn i iroh ti?]]]
         Hassan wants   to make Ali where to go.
     'Where does Hassan want to make Ali go?'
     c.[comp1 Hassan bedoh[wayn i yo?mor Ali [comp3 iroh ti?]]]
         Hassan wants where   to make Ali   to go

'Where does Hassan want to make Ali go?'
   d.[wayn i Hassan bedoh[comp2 yo?mor Ali [comp3 iroh ti?]]]
   where Hassan wants   to make Ali   to go
   'Where does Hassan want to make Ali go?'

(19) a.[comp1 Hassan bedoh [comp2 yo?mor Ali [comp3 iroh laysh]]]?
   Hassan wants   to make Ali   go   why
   'Why does Hassan want to make Ali go?'
   b. [comp1 Hassan bedoh[comp2 yo?mor Ali [laysh i iroh ti?]]]
   Hassan wants   to make Ali   why   to go.
   'Why does Hassan want to make Ali go?'

   c. [comp1 Hassan bedoh[layyish i yo?mor Ali [comp3 iroh ti?]]]
   Hassan wants   why   to make Ali   go
   'Why does Hassan want to make Ali go?'
   d. [laysh Hassan bedoh[comp2 yo?mor Ali [comp3 iroh ti?]]]
   why Hassan wants   to make Ali   go?

   In the above examples the wh- adjunct *wayn* 'where' and *laysh* 'why' appear in (18 a & 19a) at the base position in the most embedded clause; in (18 b &19 b), they appear in the next specifier up; in (18 c &19 c), they appear in the next higher position and finally in (18 d &19 d) until they reach the highest comp in the main clause. It should be noted that in all the examples (a-d) *wayn* and *laysh* have wide scope over the whole sentence. These examples provide evidence that wh- adjuncts can appear in lower specifier positions and can still have matrix scope.

   However, if we compare the wh-adjuncts in the last examples with some parallel examples with wh- arguments, we will see a great difference. For example:

(20) a. [comp1 Hassan bedoh[comp2 iqn? Evan[comp3 ishof miin?]]]
    Hassan wants to convince Evan to meet who
    Who does Hassan wants Evan to meet?
   b. *[comp1 Hassan bedoh[comp2 iqn? Evan[miin$_i$ ishof t$_i$?]]]
    Hassan wants to convince Evan who to meet
    'Hassan wants to convince Evan to meet who?'
   c. *[comp1 Hassan bedoh[miin$_i$ iqnˁ Evan[ishof   t$_i$?]]]

Hassan wants who to convince Evan to meet
'Hassan wants Evan to meet who?'
d. [miin$_i$ Hassan bedoh[comp2 iqn? Evan [comp3 ishof t$_i$?]]]
who Hassan want to convince Evan to meet
'Who does Hassan want to convince Evan to meet?'

In the above examples with wh- argument, it can be noticed that when the wh-question word *miin* is moved in the same manner as that for the wh-adjuncts, the result produces ungrammatical sentences in (20 b-c), while the only grammatical sentences are those in (20 a-d). This data suggests two possible explanations to the problem. The first explanation is to assume that there are two kinds of movement: successive cyclicity with regard to wh- adjuncts and long distance movement with regard to wh- arguments. The second and more likely explanation is that wh-adjuncts undergo syntactic movement while wh-arguments can only stay in-situ or can be base generated.

4. The Tense Locality Restriction:

Wahba (1991) describes the definition of the tense locality restriction (TLR) as "a wh-phrase in–situ may not cross more than one tensed clause in its path to Comp" (p. 261), and examines the influence of this constraint on the movement of both wh- arguments and wh-adjuncts. According to her, there is a major difference between the two kinds of questions. The locality requirement holds only for adjunct wh-operators such as *laysh* or *leesh* 'why', but not for argument wh- operators such as *miin* 'who' and *aysh* 'what'. PA resembles Iraqi Arabic in this respect, for example:

(21) a.?*[laysh i arada Hassan[ti Evan isafar ti?]]
why want Hassan Evan travel-inf
'why did Hassan want Evan to travel?'
b. [aysh arada Hassan[Evan yishtara ?]]
what want Hassan Evan bought
'what did Hassan want Evan to buy?'

Just like Iraqi Arabic, the (21 a) example is ruled out since the wh-operator is an adjunct, while the example in (21 b) is grammatical since the wh- operator is an argument. It is also worth mentioning here that Wahba (1991) did not provide any clear explanation for the phenomenon in Iraqi Arabic. Therefore, the suggestion at this point is

that this is another instance to support the assumption that PA has syntactic movement with wh- adjuncts and base generated wh-argument. Since the wh-adjuncts can not move out of a non finite clause as in (21 a), the wh- argument can move out of a non finite clause as in (21 b).

5. Island Constraints

Wh- arguments can be distinguished from wh-adjuncts in terms of one more important factor in that wh-adjuncts observe the various island constraints. In the literature, island sensitivity has been taken as evidence for movement (Chomsky 1977).

Thus, according to this argument, wh- argument are not sensitive for the islands constraints since they do not undergo syntactic movement. Consider first the following examples with wh-adjunct. Consider the Complex-NP island (Ross 1967) and Wh-island constraints:

(22) Complex NP island
  a. Mohammad darab illwalad illi howwa ʕayyish wayyn?
   Mohammad hit the boy that he live where?
   'Mohammed hit the boy that he lives where?'
  b. *[CP1 Wayyn[TP 1 Mohammad darab[NP ill walad
   [CP2 ill [TP2 hwwa ʕayyish   ti ?]]]]
   where Mohammad   hit   the boy   that   he   lives ti
   'where did Mohammad hit the boy that live?'

(23) Wh- island
  a. *Laysh Hassan tsawwar Ali ishtara ayyish?
   Why Hassan   thought Ali bought what
   Why did Hassan think Ali bought what?
  b. *wayyn Mohammed beʕrif laysh Hassan raah?
   Where Mohammad knows why Hassan went.
   'Where does Mohammed know why Hassan left?'
  c. *laysh Mona Fakarat Ali shaf Miin?
   Why Mona thought Ali saw who.
   Why did Mona think Ali saw who?

It can be concluded from the above examples with wh-adjuncts that the ungrammaticality results from the violation of the constraints

on movement (wh-islands and complex NPs). These examples provide clear evidence that wh-adjuncts in PA undergo movement. Consider the following examples with wh-argument phrases:

(24) Lack of Complex -NP island with wh-argument

a. Miin/ayya   austaz biˤrf oh ilt talib illi shaf o fi il madrasa?
        Who/which teacher know 2.p the student that saw 3sf- him in the school.
        'who/which teacher do you know the student that saw in the school?
b.   Ayya film bti?rfoh el bent ill shafato fi i-cinema?
        Which film know 2p. the girl that saw it in the cinema
        'Which film do you know the girl that saw in the cinema?'

(25) Lack of Wh-island with wh-argument:

a. Miin illi Hassan biˤrif wayyn raaħ ?
        Who that Hassan knows where went he
        'Who does Hassan know where he went?'
b. Miin illi Manal biˤrif laysh sayhat?
        Who that Manal know why cry she.
        'Who does Manal know why she cry?'
c. Ayya kitab illi Mana shafat wayn Hassan hatto?
        Which book that Manal saw where Hassan put.
        'Which book did Manal see where Hassan put?'
d. Aysh illi Mohammed ˤirif wayyn txabaa?
        What that Mohammed know where hide he.
        'What did Mohammed know where he hide?'

        From the examples above with wh-arguments, it can be concluded that the wh-arguments violate the movement constraints and still result in grammaticality. This evidence in PA would suggest that wh-arguments do not undergo movement and thus they are base generated in the matrix comp.

6. The Relative clause constraint:

        Wahba (1984) argues that wh-question can not be fronted out of a relative clause. However, this statement does not hold in the syntax of PA, therefore the following examples are considered grammatical:

(26) a. ayya kitab illi Hassan beʕrif miin illi ishtarah?
      Which book that Hassan know who that bought.
      Which book does Hassan know who bought?

   b. ayya oɣnia Hassan be?rif miin illi ɣanaha?
      Which song Hassan knows who that sang it.
      Which song does Hassan know who sings it?

7. Wh-Movement and the Weak Crossover

      According to the weak crossover phenomenon, a variable can not be preceded by a coindexed pronoun (Chomsky 1976). Likewise, Lasnik and Stowell (1991) hypothesize it as "…in a configuration where a pronoun P and a trace T are both bound by a quantifier Q, T must c-command P." (56). Consider the following example:

(27) * Miin i darab-oh aboh i   ti
     Who i did his i father hit ti?
    *Who his father hit him?

   Example (27) is ungrammatical because the moved wh- operator crosses over the coindexed pronoun "his" on its way to the comp. The weak crossover phenomena does not hold for the syntax of PA. Consider the following examples:

(28) a. Miin i illi aboh i darab-oh   ti?
     Who i that father- his hit him ti
     Who is the one that his father hit him?

    b. Miin i illi am ha i shafat –ha ti?
     Who that mother-her saw her
     'Who is she that her mother saw her?'

      In both of the above examples the traces of the wh-word *miin* (in case the supposition is that there is movement of the wh-argument) and the pronouns *oh* 'his' in (28 a) and *ha* 'her' in (28 b) are both bound by the wh-argument. In addition, the traces of the wh-words in both examples do not c-command the pronouns *oh* 'his' and *ha* 'her'.

      Based on the assumption of Lasnik and Stowell (1991), this cannot be grammatical.   This evidence in PA can also contribute to the researcher's hypothesis that the wh-argument does not undergo movement and that it is base generated in the matrix Comp.

Conclusion (Typology of Wh-Questions in PA)

Wh-questions in PA can be best described as a mid way between Iraqi Arabic, which has wh-movement according to Wahba (1991), and Egyptian Arabic, which does not have wh-movement according to Cheng (2000). According to the analysis in this paper, the main determinant of the existence or the lack of wh-movement in PA is the kind of wh-word itself. In the case of wh-adjuncts, it is argued that there is movement just like Iraqi Arabic since the wh-adjuncts can move cyclically successive to the matrix comp, and observe the tense Locality restriction and all kinds of islands (wh-islands and complex NPs). Wh-arguments are base generated, in other words, they do not undergo any movement since they act like relative clauses and that they do not observe the tense locality constraint or the wh-islands. Moreover the wh- argument in PA violates the crossover phenomenon in that it can cross a coindexed node.

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