Wh-Movement In Persian, Russian, And English: A Cross-Linguistic Comparison

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Abstract

Syntax has been one of the important areas of research in second and foreign language acquisition. Today, examining the syntactic structure of different languages using the Minimalist approach is an ongoing process in the field of linguistics. Within the Minimalist framework, wh-movement as one of the most important principles of the theory of Principles and Parameters can be defined as the operation, according to which the wh-phrase moves to the specifier of CP to check a wh-feature in C (Carnie, 2003). Cheng (1991) made a distinction between languages in terms of wh-questions. She divides languages into the ones that show wh-movement (e.g. English) and the ones that keep the wh-word in-situ (e.g. Chinese). The first group is called *wh-movement languages* and the latter is called *wh-in-situ (i.e., in place)*. The present study attempted to throw the distinction into question and analyze the syntax of wh-movement in Persian, Russian, and English within the Minimalist framework to offer a new framework for them. In doing so, the researchers provided notable examples from the three languages to draw a comparison and to offer a vivid picture of wh-movement in the three languages within the Minimalist Approach. Overall, the results indicated that Russian is a controversial issue as no general consensus can be felt among researchers concerning whether or not its wh-phrases undergo [wh]-driven movement. It was found that wh-movement in Persian language could challenge Cheng's (1991) proposal and manifests optional wh-movement which seemed to be impossible within Cheng's framework. The findings also revealed that Russian and Persian similarly function in terms of wh-movement.

Keywords: Wh-Movement, Wh-in-situ, Echo Questions, Minimalist Approach

Introduction

Wh-movement parameter is one of the areas of linguistic study on which language topologists can concentrate. According to Radford (1997, p. 18) wh-parameter can be defined as "the parameter which determines whether wh-expressions can be fronted or not". In other words, it is a parameter of variation among different languages– a parameter which determines whether wh-expressions are placed fronted or not (Galbat and Maleki, 2014). Denham (1997) remarks that wh-movement is a parameterized fact about language, according to which whether a language has overt wh-movement or not is invariable in a language. In addition, Radford (1997) believes that in order to interrogate a statement, the wh-element moves and occupies the specifier position within CP (Spec-CP). In today's minimalist syntax (Chomsky 2000, 2001, 2004), movement is viewed an operation that does not introduce a trace; rather, it leaves behind a complete copy of the moved element, with the result that structures formed by movement exhibit multiple copies of the moved element. The present paper draws its theoretical platform from Minimalism and employs the syntactic model known as the Minimalist Program laid out by Chomsky (1993, 1994, 1995, 2000, 2001a). We examine a very different kind of movement operation conventionally termed wh-movement, by which a wh-expression like *who* or *what languages* moves into the specifier position within CP (Radford, 2009).

1.2 Wh-Movement in Minimalism

Initially in Minimalist Program (1995), the most recent outgrowth of the Principles and Parameters approach, Chomsky puts forward that wh-movement is developed by a strong operator feature of the functional C-head: "the natural assumption is that C may have an operator feature and that this feature is a morphological property of such operators as wh-. For an appropriate C, the operators raise for feature checking to the checking domain of C: [Spec, CP]" (1995, p. 199; cited in Abdolmanafi, 2012) thereby satisfying their scopal properties. If the operator feature on C is strong, movement is overt (e.g. English), and, consequently, if the operator feature is weak, wh-movement is postponed until Logical Form (LF) (e.g. Chinese). However, the trigger of movement, overt or covert, is constantly placed on a target (Abdolmanafi, 2012). In Minimalist Program (2000), Chomsky modifies the proposal, dispensing with LF movement: all movement operations must occur prior to the point of Spell-Out (Rahman, 2009). Wh-movement in this framework enjoys the following system: "the

wh-phrase has an uninterpretable feature [wh-] and an interpretable feature [Q], which matches the uninterpretable probe [Q] of a complementizer" (2000, p. 44). The uninterpretable probe [Q] on C seeks the goal, a wh-phrase, and once the probe locates the goal, the uninterpretable features (on both probe, F [Q], and goal, F[wh]) are checked and deleted. This feature checking is done by means of Agree, no movement is involved. Note that, according to Chomsky, the uninterpretable [wh-] feature of a wh-phrase is "analogous to structural Case for nouns" (2000, p. 21), consequently it does not have an independent status, but is a reflex of certain features of Q. The C-head in this version possesses only an uninterpretable Q feature. The uninterpretable probe [Q] on C cannot be an operator, as it is checked and deleted. The interpretable [+Q] feature, which is presumably a question operator, is assigned to a wh-phrase. Chomsky proposes that Q is realized on a wh-phrase. Being interpretable, Q specifies the semantics of a sentence (and of a wh-element) marking it as interrogative; furthermore, the operator's properties are linked with the feature. It is reasonable to presume that Q should be the trigger of wh-movement (Rahman, 2009). However, in Chomsky's program Q is, in fact, a "free-rider" which lands in an appropriate operator position, [Spec, CP] not for its own need, but owing to some properties of the C-head that need to be satisfied (Zavitnevich-Beaulac, 2002, cited in Rahman, 2009). Following are four sentences containing wh-movement (Radford, 2009).

1) a)   **What languages** *can* you speak?
(b)   **Which one** *would* you like?
(c)   **Who** *was* she dating?
(d)   **Where** *are* you going?
(Adopted from Radford, 2009)

Each of the sentences in (1) contains an italicized inverted auxiliary occupying the head C position of CP, preceded by a bold-printed interrogative **wh-expression** –i.e. an expression containing an interrogative word beginning with **wh**- like *what/which/who/where/when/why* (Radford, 2009). ("How" in questions like *How are you?* is also a wh-word because of a similar syntactic behavior to other wh-words). Each of the wh-expressions in (1) functions as the complement of the verb at the end of the sentence – as we notice from the fact that each of the examples in (1) has a paraphrase in which the wh-expression occupies complement position after the italicized verb (Radford, 2009):

(2) (a)   You can *speak* **what languages**?
(b)   You would *like* **which one**?
(c)   She was *dating* **who**?
(d)   You are *going* **where**?
(Adopted from From Radford, 2009)

Structures like (2) are termed **wh-in-situ questions**, since the bold-printed wh-expression does not get preposed, but rather remains **in situ** in the canonical position linked with its grammatical function (e.g. what languages in (2a) is the direct object complement of *speak*, and complements are normally placed after their verbs, so *what languages* is positioned after the verb *speak*). In English, wh-in-situ questions are used primarily as **echo questions**, to echo and question something previously said by someone else – as we can illustrate in terms of the following dialogue (Radford, 2009):
(3) SPEAKER a: I just met Lord Lancelot Humpalot.
    SPEAKER   b: You just met *who*?
(Adopted from Radford, 2009)

Echo questions such as that produced by speaker B in (3) suggest that the wh-expressions in (1) originate as complements of the relevant verbs, and subsequently get moved to the front of the overall clause (Radford, 2009). But what position do they get moved into? The answer is obviously that they are moved into some position preceding the inverted auxiliary. Since inverted auxiliaries occupy the head C position of CP, preposed wh-expressions are moved into a position preceding the head C of CP (Radford, 2009). Given that specifiers are positioned before heads, it can be suggested that preposed wh-expressions move into the specifier position within CP (= spec-CP) (Radford, 2009).

1.3 Types of Wh-movement

Today, it is generally agreed that three general language types in terms of wh-movement in multiple wh-interrogatives can be found. First, the Chinese type, with all wh-phrases *in situ* (i.e. *in place*): second, the English type, where only one wh-constituent moves overtly and the rest covertly; and the Russian type, multiple wh-fronting (henceforward MWF) language, which requires all wh-phrases be placed fronted overtly. Ouhalla (1996) asserts that there is a special parameter that distinguishes languages with obligatory wh-movement (e.g. English) from wh-in-situ languages (e.g. Japanese) and the ones having optional wh-movement (e.g. the colloquial French). To put it simply, English language possesses an overt wh-movement in questions containing wh-phrase, while in Japanese language no wh-movement can occur and wh-phrases are in-situ. In colloquial French, yet, both forms can be found. Karimi and Taleghani (2007), however, hold that as opposed to English, Persian language neither shows obligatory single wh-movement, nor obligatory multiple wh-movement observed in Bulgarian. The difference in wh-question strategies is often assigned to the fact that cross-linguistically wh-elements are not identical in nature. In fact, most research done to date (Cheng 1991, Ouhalla 1996, Aoun and Li 1993, among others) show that wh-expressions in natural

languages differ as far as their morphological and syntactic properties are concerned. The claim made is that in languages like Chinese, Japanese and Hungarian wh-words are polarity items void of any quantificational force of their own. The argument is based on the fact that, in these languages, wh-elements that function as interrogatives can also act as universal and existential quantifiers (Zavitnevich-Beaulac, 2002).

1.4 Wh-expressions without wh-movement

Wh-movement typically occurs to form questions in English language. However, Radford (1997) stated that at least three kinds of questions in which wh-movement does not occur can be found "1) *echo questions* 2) *quiz questions* and 3) *multiple questions*, when there is already one wh-word at the front" (Radford, 1997, p. 267):

Your friend bought **what**!? - Echo question (to confirm what you thought you heard)

Shakespeare was born in **which** country? - Quiz question

Who bought **what**? - Multiple wh-expressions

(Adopted from Radford, 1997, p. 267)

While wh-movement is the rule in English, other languages may leave wh-expressions in situ more often. In French for instance, wh-movement is often optional in certain matrix clauses (Radford, 1997, p. 267).

1. Overview of Persian Syntax

Is Persian language a wh-movement language or a wh-in-situ language?

Persian language is an SOV (Subject-Object-Verb) language and considered to be a pro-drop language, thus the subject is optional. Moreover, written Persian shows a solid SOV order, except sentential arguments of the verb systematically appear in post-verbal position (Karimi, 2005). However, in the colloquial Persian language a great degree of rearrangements is possible. Generally speaking, Persian wh-words or phrases are as follows:
Čera (why), ku or koja (where), če (what), ki (who), kei(when), kodam or kodamyek (which one), čænd (how many), čegune or četor (how), čeghædr (how much). Persian wh- words can be combined with Noun Phrases(NP) to form wh- phrases for example: Čevæght (what time), baraye če (why), be če mænzur (what for), be če ellæt/dælil and be če sæbæb (why for)…. (Adopted from Kashefi, 2014, p. 26)
Moreover, Persian language shows a large number of word order variants, both in declaratives and in interrogative (Adli, 2010). This can be shown by a set of wh-questions as follows:
(1a) Ali ketab -eʃ -o kei   xæride?   (S O Adj$_{wh}$ V)
    Ali book – his- OM when bought

When did Ali buy his book?

(1b) Ali kei   ketab- eʃ   -o   xæride?   (S Adj ₍wh₎   O V)
      Ali when   book –his-   OM bought

(1c) ketab- eʃ   -o kei xæride Ali?   (O Adj ₍wh₎   V S)
       Book - his -OM when bought Ali

Examples (1a) and (1b) indicate two forms with the temporal wh-adjunct at preverbal (though non-initial) position. They vary in the linear order of direct object and wh-adjunct. Example (1c) displays another possibility of "rearrangement" (Adli, 2010); the wh-adjunct is still preverbal but the subject is placed in postverbal position. OM stands for an object marker modifying the whole phrase rather than the head noun (Adli, 2010). Dabir-Moghaddam (1991) states that in some languages such as Chinese, Japanese and Persian, as opposed to English, the wh-phrase is not moved in the syntactic C component, i.e. between D-structure and S-structure; rather it remains in situ. Bateni (1995) views Persian language as a wh-in-situ language which does not allow wh-movement. For example, note the following example in which the wh-phrase has remained in situ:

Šomâ ketâb râ be ki   dâd-i?

You   book OM to who give.

Whom did you give the book to?

Similarly, Lotfi (2003) holds that Persian language is viewed to be a wh-in-situ language with a basic SOV sentential word order. This means the morpho-syntactic requirements of a wh-phrase--whatever they are- are satisfied without a need for the phrase itself to move overtly from the position in which it is base-generated (Pahlevannezhad and Shahali, 2013). Nonetheless, Pahlevannezhad and Shahali (2013) believe that it is perfectly possible to front one or more wh-phrases for the sake of focusing or other discourse related reasons. Thus, Lotfi (2003) maintains that Persian language may display both syntactic wh-movement and wh-in-situ simultaneously. This means an Optional Movement in Persian can be rightly expected**.**

1. Overview of English Syntax

Common wh-interrogative words in English are *why, what, where, when, who, whom, whose, which, how, whence, whither, whether*. They are function words and are used to ask direct questions (*what are you doing?*), indirect questions (*I wonder what you are doing*), or make relative clauses (*the man who is standing there is my father*). Their syntactic behavior might not be the same all the time as collocations from different corpora might show different results. For example, the corpus of Contemporary American English displays the use of "**whither**" mostly with noun phrases, e.g. whither art history? Whither Aero? Whither the board of directors? Nevertheless, we aim to delve into how typical questions in English using wh-words are

structured and what processes are involved in the movement of the wh-word to its canonical position. Before analyzing the canonical structure of wh-questions, an analysis of echo questions is in order. That is, questions before any change in the structure of declarative sentences. In echo questions, the wh-word is in situ, i.e. in place: You are watching *what?* He is going *where?* He is getting married *when?* Echo questions explain the fact that wh-words originate from such positions in declarative sentences and force their way to the far left side of sentences. But that is not the only change they cause. Auxiliary inversion which typically happens in forming questions also occurs in the process:

She is studying English-> Is she studying English?-> Is she studying what? ->What is she studying?

Drawing a tree could help us analyze this sentence more clearly.
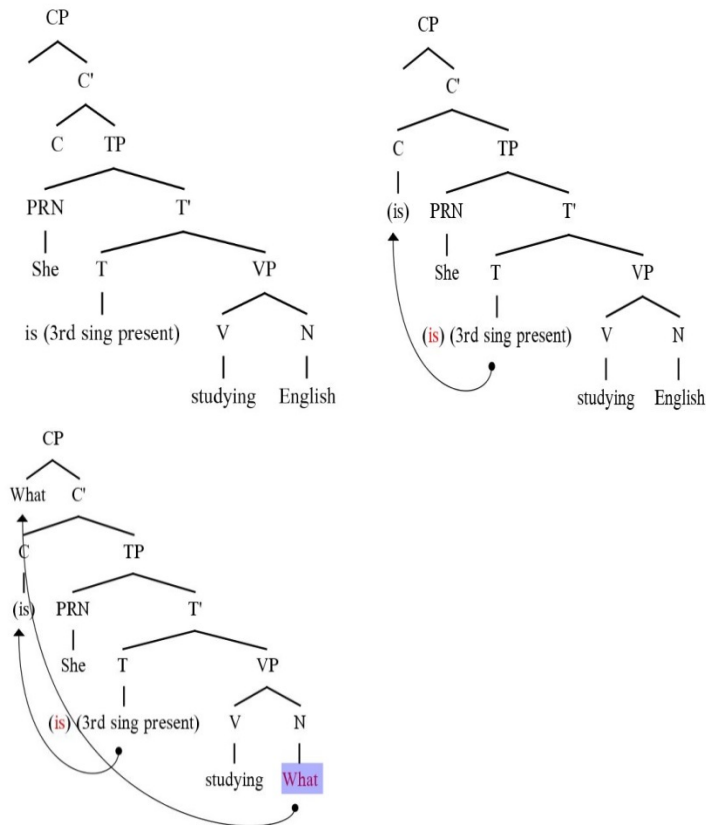
Category T is the head of TP (tense phrase) and as a result of Head movement it moves from the Head T position to the head C position in CP since it is null and empty. The tense feature can move to the C position because firstly it is a main clause and secondly it is interrogative. As a result, the tense feature in C attracts T. The second movement is the Wh-movement

i.e. movement of *What* from the head position of the NP to the Specifier position of CP. This movement is allowed as a result of C having an Edge Feature (Radford, 2009) enabling C to attract the Wh-word to the Spec-C position. The edge feature is subsequently deleted. Another important process that occurs in such an operation involves "wh-copying and wh-deletion" (Radford, 2009, p.189) whereby the category including the wh-word moves to the Spec-C category while leaving behind a copy at the extraction site which is deleted. Another important issue in wh-movement surfaces when the wh-word is the head of a phrase and is a minimal projection. In the following example the wh-word alone cannot move on its own leaving its complements behind.

She is studying English books-> She is studying which books?-> which books is she studying?

As can be seen the whole QP is moved to the Spec-C position as a maximal projection following the Chain Uniformity Condition (Radford, 2009, p.199) in that since *which* heads a QP, all other copies of *which* should also head a QP, hence QP rather than Q moves.
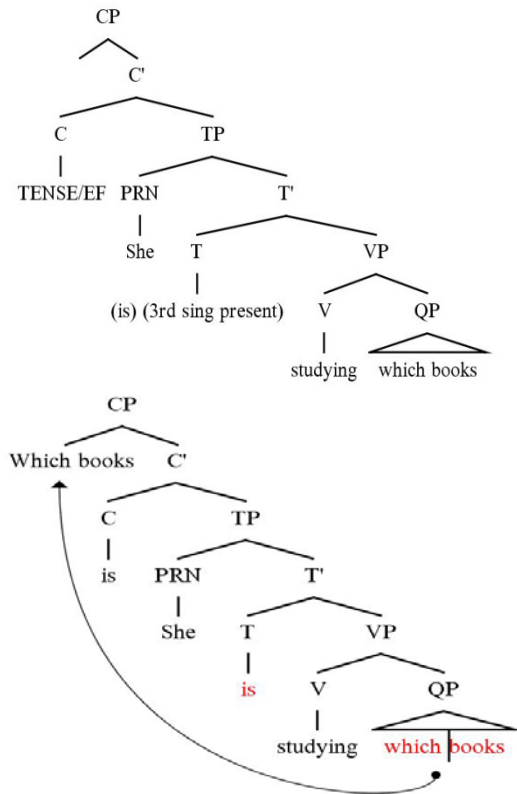
In our examples, the T category was filled by *"is"* as an auxiliary verb. A question arises when there is no auxiliary verb to fill the T category.

That is, what happens when the Affix is 'stranded' and not attached to anything? If C in interrogative main clauses carries both an Edge and a Tense feature that attract wh-words and Tense from head T, this requirement must be satisfied for the sentence to be grammatical and the solution is Do-support (appropriately inflected forms of do (Radford, 2009, p.176).
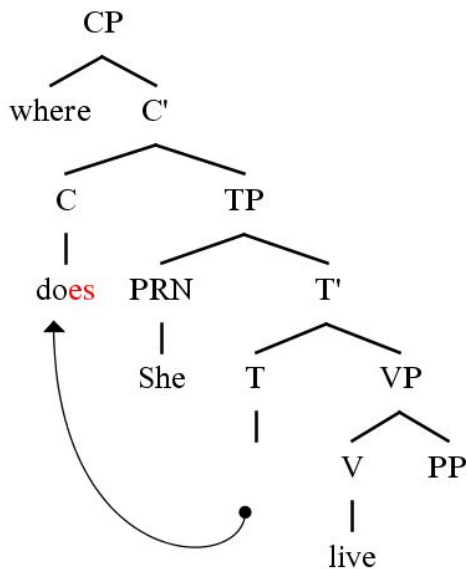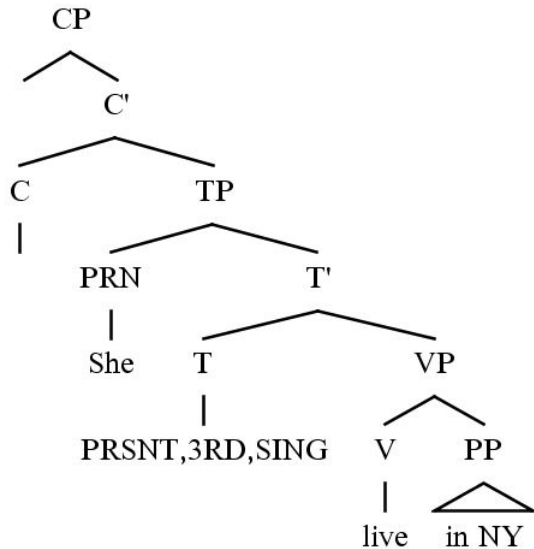
As for relative clauses and indirect questions such as the following examples, based on the aforementioned argument, it is argued that since such clauses are not main clauses, the category C does not carry a tense feature, hence no auxiliary inversion or DO support. However, the edge feature of C attracts the wh-word to be placed in the specifier position of CP.

1) This is where he lives.

2) Do you know where he lives?

We should bear in mind that such analyses are only for typical and normal English questions; nevertheless, in conversational English one can observe different structures e.g. *why the long face?* Not that these structures contradict the rules laid by universal grammar, they are only different realizations of such rules on the surface.

1. Overview of Russian Syntax

The properties and features of wh-movement in Russian language is a controversial issue as no general consensus can be felt among researchers concerning whether or not its wh-phrases undergo [wh]-driven movement. In addition, fronting of a wh-word is obligatory both in single and multiple wh-questions, which can be seen as evidence that Russian language is a normal wh-movement language (Zavitnevich, 2005, cited in Chernova, 2012). On the other hand, since Russian apparently does not display strong Superiority effects in multiple questions, it has been suggested that the driving force of wh-fronting is of a different nature and in fact is a type of focus movement (Chernova, 2012).

Overall, some studies described Russian as a language resorting to a standard, [wh]-driven movement (Zavitnevich 2002, 2005; Bailyn, 2011; Scott, 2012) while some others maintained that Russian language in its core is a wh-in-situ language where wh-fronting is [focus]-driven (Stepanov, 1998; Strahov, 2001; Bošković, 2002a; Chernova, 2014; among others). Chernova (2014, p. 54) reports that "Russian lacks true syntactic [wh]-driven movement and all wh-words in a multiple question undergo pure focus-fronting to a position below CP". The wh-in-situ hypothesis has been heavily criticized in the literature when it applied to Russian language (Dyakonova 2009; Bailyn 2011; Scott 2012, among others). Chernova (2014) argues that one of the principal inconveniences for claiming that Russian wh-elements undergo obligatory focus-movement is that there is no fixed position for focused constituents in this language (Bailyn, 1995a, 2011; Neeleman & Titov, 2009). Chernova maintains that in Russian the focused non-wh-elements can be occurred both preverbally and postverbally(Chernova, 2014), as illustrated in

    a. On pozvonil MAŠE.
       he phoned Masha.DAT
      'He phoned Masha'

    b. On MAŠE   pozvonil.
      he Masha.DAT phoned

    c. MAŠE on pozvonil.
      Masha.DAT he phoned

(Adopted from Chernova, 2014, p. 74)

1.Cross-linguistic comparison: Persian, Russian and English

In this section we examine cross-linguistically possible positions of wh-words/phrases constructions in Persian, Russian and English. We evaluate whether we are dealing with the same phenomenon in the three languages or whether we need different analyses to account for cross-linguistic variation. In Persian some wh- words have prepositions implied in them. Notice the following examples:

?Ou be bazaar raft. (He to bazaar went.) Ou koja raft? (he where went?)

The PP "be Bazaar" (to the bazaar) has been replaced with "Koja" (Where) which is also the case in English. Since Bazaar is a place, it is expected that "Where" replace only the place "bazaar" and not the whole PP; however, the preposition is sometimes spelled out in Persian (mostly Literary style), and one can see sentences such as "?ou be koja raft?" (he TO where went?). The object marker in Persian is usually "raa" in written or formal style and "ro, -o" in informal or spoken style.

Ali-o didam. (Ali- OM saw-1stSg) I saw Ali

Didam Ali-o (Saw-1stSg Ali-OM) I saw Ali

Ali didam. (Ali saw-3rd pastSg-1stOM) Ali saw me.

The verb in the last example can be ambiguous on its own. It can mean both I saw and someone saw me. However, the preceding NP without the Object Marker can remove the ambiguity.

The Object Marker is attached to the Wh- word it modifies:

Ki-o didi? Who- OM saw(2ndSg)?   Ki-o didi to? (Who- OM saw you?)

Ki didet? Who saw-(Obj-2ndSg)?   Ki did to-ro? (Who saw you- OM?)

The wh- word *Who* is assigned an accusative case when it moves from the object position of the clause. In English though the position of a phrase reveals its case and quantifiers do not carry a spelled-out case, except for *Whom*. In Esperanto which is a constructed language also wh- words are assigned overt cases. –n is attached to wh- words in Esperanto as a sign of Object marker e.g., KioN vi mangxis? (what did you eat?) Kio mangxis viN? (what ate you?).

"Who" in subject position in English has been argued to carry a Tense feature, hence no need for T to C movement, auxiliary inversion, or DO-support (Radford, p. 221). "Who" in Esperanto, as has been mentioned, exhibits similar behavior:

Kiun vi vidis? (Who- OM you saw?)

Kiu vidis vin? (Who saw you-OM?)

However, in Persian the Object Marker "raa" is usually not used when a preposition modifies the NP:

Be? ou goftam. To he said(1stpastSg)

The interesting point is that in formal Persian, especially literary style, one can paraphrase the above example as:

?ou ra goftam. He OM said(1stPastSg)

It can be concluded that the Object Marker "raa" is in complementary distribution with Prepositions modifying the same NP. It can also be argued that the Object Marker "raa" can form its own Object Marker Phrase. The only issue would be that prepositions in Persian usually precede NPs, whereas OMs follow them. Consequently, to form wh-question where the Wh-word originates from the argument of a transitive verb, it is the OMP that moves to the Spec-C position of the main clause:

Inja ro doost daram. This place- OM like(1^{st}PrSg)…..> I like this place.

Koja ro doost dari? where OM like (2^{nd}PrSg)…………..> Which place do you like?

To make the wh-movement in the three languages in hand more concrete, consider the following examples;

Ali-o didam. (Ali- OM saw-1^{st}Sg) I saw Ali

Я видел Антона. (Ya videl Antona) (Sub. Saw- masculine Anton-accusative case) I saw Anton. (Similar to English)

Я Антона видел. (Ya Antonavidel) (Sub. Anton-accusative case Saw- masculine) I Anton saw. (Similar to English)

Didam Ali-o (Saw-1^{st}Sg Ali-OM) I saw Ali

Видел Антона. (Videl Antona)(Reply)(Saw- masculine Anton-accusative case) saw Anton

Ali didam. (Ali saw-3rd pastSg-1^{st}OM) Ali saw me.

Ki-o didi? Who- OM saw (2ndSg)?   Ki-o didi to? (Who- OM saw you?)

Кого   ты видел? (Kogo ti videl?)(Who - accusative case you saw - masculine)

Ki didet? Who saw-(Obj-2ndSg)?   Ki did to-ro? (Who saw you- OM?)

Кто тебя видел? (Kto tebya videl)(Who- nominative case you- accusative case saw – masculine)

Кто видел тебя? (kto videl tebya) (Who- nominative case saw – masculine you- accusative case)

Тебя кто видел? (Tebya kto videl)(Accusative case who- nominative case you- saw – masculine)

Koja ro doost dari? Where OM like (2^{nd}PrSg)…………..> which place do you like?

Какое место ты любишь? (Kakoye mesto ti lubish?) (Which place you - nominative case like? Which place do you like?)

Ты любишь какое место? (Ti lubish kakoye mesto?) (You - nominative case like which place? Which place do you like?)

1. Discussion

Wh- movement is a type of syntactic structure which is found universally. However, different languages employ different strategies to form wh-questions. The present paper cross-linguistically reviewed the issue of the nature of wh-expressions. The researchers explored the properties and features of wh-movement in three languages including Persian, Russian, and English within the Minimalist framework. We found that the interrogative sentences having question word or phrases in English and Persian bear some similarity as well as difference. The results indicated that Persian wh-phrases enjoy both covert and overt movements. It was also found that Persian language does not display obligatory single wh-movement compared to English, nor obligatory multiple wh-movement observed in Bulgarian (Karimi, 2005). In addition, Persian language wh-arguments may undergo optional movement either individually or multiply. However, Megerdoomian and Ganjavi (2001; cited in Pahlevannezhad& Shahali, 2013) argue against optional movement in Persian. They claim that it is not possible to apply an optional movement strategy to Persian wh-question formation and offer various types of evidence from distributional properties of the two constructions showing that wh-in situ and overt wh-extraction are two distinct processes. A radical stance on wh-movement was proposed by Kahnemuyipour (2001) which is in line with the present study. Kahnemuyipour believes that Persian is neither a wh-movement language nor a wh-in-situ one; rather, Persian should be classified as a focused wh-movement language. It was also revealed that unlike English language in which wh-word places in the front, in Persian language there is no need to place wh- word at front. For example,

Where did you see Ali?

‑علی دیروز **با کی** رفت؟

‑علی دیروز با محمد **به کجا** رفت؟

On the other hand, in Persian both wh-movement and no-wh-movement principles are simultaneously operating. This might be against with what Radford (1997) claimed. He believed that there are only two possibilities for wh-parameters: a language does or does not allow wh-expressions to be systematically fronted. Overall, obligatory nature of wh-movement rule in English language as opposed to its optional nature in Persian and syntactic movement of question word in English as opposed to its non-syntactic nature in Persian were also seen the differences among Persian and English. Thus, while Persian is a wh-in-situ language, it enjoys wh-movement too. Interestingly enough, the movement is obligatory and sometimes optional. This is against Cheng's framework (1991). Concerning Russian wh-movement, it was found that Russian has the same morphological realization for interrogatives and relatives. Similar to other

Slavic languages, Russian uses the same wh-stem to build existential and universal quantifiers(Chernova, 2014). The analysis showed that a wh-word in Russian is required to move away from the postverbal field and the most natural way to ask a wh-question is to place a wh-word sentence-initially. Dyakonova (2009) argues that Russian must be grouped together with French, since both languages allow two strategies of formation of wh-questions: wh-ex-situ and wh-in-situ. Spelling out the similarities and differences between the three languages is of paramount importance in the Iranian university context as English is the only dominant foreign language taught in Iran, while Persian is the formal and official language and Russian is widely dominant in political domains nowadays.

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