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Question Formation in Pahari

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is to justify the approach that is adopted here for the analysis of wh-questions in Pahari, a member of the wh-in-situ family. Following Aoun and Li (1993) and Cheng (1997), we argue that Pahari exhibits no obligatory movement because, unlike English, it is equipped with two additional factors: question particles and K-words functioning as both interrogatives and indefinites.

Introduction to Pahari

Pahari is an Indo-Aryan language mainly spoken in the mountainous areas of Kashmir and some northern areas of Pakistan (Masica 1991). Being the native speakers of the Rawalakoti dialect of Pahari, we are focusing on the same dialect which is distinct from other dialects of the same language. It exhibits SOV word order which it shares with its sister languages like Urdu, Punjabi and Hindko. It also shows the same verb agreement phenomenon those other languages of the region exhibit. It means that the verb agrees with either the subject or the object in number person and gender. This is illustrated in the examples below:

- (1) a. budda ka kapna da
 old man-M.NOM grass-M cut-PRES-M be-PRES

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‘The old man cuts grass.’

- b. buddi ka kapni di
 old woman-F-NOM grass-M cut-PRES-M be-PRES
 ‘The old woman cuts grass.’
- c. buddey ka kapne de
 old men-M.NOM grass-M cut-PRES-M be-PRES
 ‘The old men cut grass.’

(1) shows that the verb *kap* ‘cut’ agrees in gender and number with the subject as it does not bear any case marker. In (1a), the verb as well as the light verb agree with the subject that exhibits singular-masculine features and ends up with the *-a* marker that stands for the masculine in Pahari spoken in the region of Rawalakot.

Similarly, in (1b), the verb carries the feminine marker *-i* that agrees with the subject of the sentence (which is also feminine) for the reason that the subject does not have any case marker. The sentence also shows that the object of the sentence is masculine but does not come in agreement with the verb. It justifies the fact that in South Asian languages the verb agrees with the highest nominative argument. (1c) also justifies the phenomenon as the verb agrees with the subject that is plural in number.

Like other languages of the region, if any argument does not bear any case marker, it is assigned the nominative case, it means that more than one argument in a structure may have nominative case and the verb agrees with it.

Like Urdu (Butt 1994), Punjabi (Akhtar 2000) and Gojri (Bukhari 2009), Pahari is also a split ergative language. However, it does not restrict to Past/ Perfective aspect. Ergativity in Pahari dialect spoken in Rawalakot can also be marked on some phonological grounds.

For example, if the subject ends with a consonant, it shows ergativity otherwise it won’t. Similarly, in this dialect, ergative marker displays variation depending upon the number of the argument. This is a very different phenomenon that we don’t see in other sister languages of the region. This discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, therefore it will be discussed in future work. A general illustration of ergativity is shown in the examples below:

- (2) a. naeem-e nai gaddi endi
 naeem-M-ERG new car-F-NOM buy-PERF-F
 ‘Naeem bought a new car.’
- b. komal-a seib khai shorya
 komal-F-ERG apple-M.NOM eat leave-PERF-M

Komal has eaten an apple.’

In (2), the subject carries the ergative case marker *-e* and for this reason the verb does not agree with the subject. In (2a) the subject is masculine while the verb agrees with the object *gaddi* ‘car’ which is feminine as indicated by the marker *-i*. Similarly, in (2b), the light verb *shorya* ‘leave’ does not agree with the subject *komal* which is feminine while the verb agrees with *seib* ‘apple’ that is masculine and therefore agrees with the verb. The agreement with the subject in (2) is blocked because the subject is in the ergative case. Instead, the verb in (2) agrees with the objects which bear nominative case and is the only option for agreement in Pahari. Urdu, Punjabi and Gojri also exhibit the same features.

If both the subject and the object bear case markers, the verb will agree neither with the subject nor the object and will bear the default case maker *-a*. The following example exhibits the phenomenon:

- (3) a. sadaf-a kuki-kya dokha ditta
 sadaf.F.ERG kuki-F.ACC dectet give-PERF.DEFAULT
 ‘Sadaf has cheated Kuki.’
- b. jangt-ein kuryein-kya dokha ditta
 boy-M.P.ERG girl-F.P.ACC deceit give-PERF.DEFAULT
 ‘Boys have cheated the girls.’

In (3) above, the verb does not agree with either the subject or the object because they are both case marked. Therefore, the verb carries the default case marker *-a* in (3a) and (3b) respectively. In the next section, first we will introduce the kinds of questions found in Pahari, and then we will highlight some common and distinctive features which it shares with other languages of the world.

Introduction to Question Formation in Pahari

There are two types of interrogatives sentences in Pahari as is found in other languages of the region: (i) yes-no questions and (ii) group K questions. Yes-no question are generally asked by dropping the operator *kya* ‘what’ sentence initially in a declarative sentence which is a common phenomenon in other languages of the region. Instead, this type of question is asked by stressing the verb or the light verb what so ever comes last in the structure. See the following example:

4. a. ej emtar da
 today sunday is
 ‘Is it Sunday today?’

- b. us ka kapyā
 he grass cut-PST
 ‘Did he cut grass?’

In other languages of the region, when a sentence contains the question marker *kya*, the verb is either in low pitch or neutral, but when the question marker *kya* ‘what’ is absent the verb has obligatorily carry the high pitch. This phenomenon can also be seen in other well known languages of the world like English, Turkish, etc.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, the question can also be formed in Pahari by adding the tag *na* at the end of a declarative sentence. There are generally two functions of questions formed with *na*, firstly to prompt the hearer for a reply and secondly to make the request more insistent (Schmidt 1999). The following illustrates:

5. a. ej emtar da na
 today sunday is tag
 ‘Is it Sunday today, isn’t it?’
- b. us ka kapyā na
 he grass cut-PST tag
 ‘Did he cut grass, didn’t he?’

Corresponding to English wh- words, Pahari has what is generally referred to as K-words because they begin with a K- phoneme. These K-words are question operators, just like English who, whose, whom, how, why words. These include *keā* (what), *keb* (when), *kana* (where), *kiyan* (why), *kun* (who), *kuyan* (how), ‘etc. Their main function is to replace an argument of the verb and simultaneously form the question.

Phenomenon of Question Formation in Other Languages

All languages display certain grammatical patterns which make their users construct constituent (wh) questions. Cross-linguistically, these languages employ different strategies in terms of question formation. English, for instance, is a language that exhibits wh-movement. On the other hand, Pahari is a wh-in-situ language.

However, overlapping seems to be always there, as not all wh-movement languages behave in the same way and neither do all wh-in-situ languages. For instance, although English, Polish and Standard Arabic are all wh-moving, they are not identical as far as the overall questioning system is concerned. English and Polish allow multiple wh-questions. Standard Arabic, on the other hand, simply does not. Though English and Polish have initially been grouped together, they differ in certain ways. In Polish all wh-words are fronted (Poole 2002), while only one wh-word is fronted in English and the others have to remain in situ.

Some languages, such as Malay exhibit yet another way i.e., partial movement (Cole and Hermon 1998). More interestingly, all three types compatibly coexist in Malay. All it suggests that we have a variety of wh-movement which apparently seem to have something in common. However, a close study shows that the same languages tend to diverge in this respect. It seems the same in wh-in-situ languages. For instance, Hindi, Japanese, Chinese, and Pahari are ultimately not identical in terms of the mechanism of constituent questions. Consequently, the study of wh-in-situ languages displays a variety for their inherent characteristics.

English and wh-movement:

In English wh-words are said to be moved from their original position (extraction site) to the beginning of the sentence (landing site). Consider (1) below:

6. a. Who are you inviting today?
 b. You are inviting who today? (echo question)

(6a) clearly shows that *who*, functioning as an object in (6b), has been preposed and has occupied the specifier position in the CP (Spec-CP) leaving behind a trace in the position out of which it moves. Radford (1997) argues in favour of trace assumption in two ways: wanna-contraction and have-cliticization (which is not in the scope of this paper).

Here arises a question why wh-operators move to Spec-CP in forming constituent questions. Lasnik's (1995) principle of Enlightened Self-Interest answers this question straight-forwardly. It states that it is the need for feature checking carried by constituents that motivates movement. It means that the head COMP of CP is supposed to carry an interrogative specifier-feature (wh); the wh-operator, too, carries an interrogative head-feature (wh). As a result the wh-operator is moved to Spec-CP to check and erase the interrogative specifier-feature displayed by COMP.

This phenomenon of feature checking leads to a fact that only one wh-operator is moved in those structures which have more than one wh-operator such as (7) below:

7. a. Who_i did you think t_i would say it?
 b. What_i did you think John would say t_i?
 c. Who_i did you think t_i would say what?
 d. *What_i did you think who would say t_i?
 e. * Who_i what_i did you think t_i would say t_i?
 f. * What_i who_i did you think t_i would say it t_i?

(7a-c) are well formed sentences because they don't violate any principle which may result in any ungrammaticality of the structure. However, (7d) is ungrammatical despite

the fact that only one single wh-operator *what* moves. This is because of the Minimal link Condition (MLC) which, for economy considerations, favours the shortest possible movement (movement of *Who*).

The ill-formedness of (7e) is attributed to the fact that the (wh) specifier-feature of COMP is erased once it has been checked by the moved wh-operator, *who*; and therefore there is no need for *what*-movement. (7f), on the other hand, seems to violate both principles, as it exhibits double wh-fronting and long movement.

However, the following constructions shown in (8) represent a different structure than those given in (7):

8. a. [Which topic]_i did you choose t_i?
 b. *Which_i did you choose t_i topic?

In (8a) the whole DP, *which topic*, is moved to the front. It seems that the moved wh-operator, which has pied-piped its complement, *topic*, moved along with it. On the other hand, the ungrammaticality of (8b) is the result of the violation of the Chain Uniformity Principle (Radford 1997) that states that “A chain must be uniform with regard to phrase structure status.” In (8b) the chain *which-trace* is nonuniform, as the head of the chain, *which*, is a maximal projection, while its foot, *trace*, is not.

K-words in Pahari

There are eight wh-words (henceforth K-words) in Pahari. Their function can vary as shown in (9) below:

9. a. tus keh kerny deya?
 you-ACC what do PROG
 What are you doing?
- b. shahida mikya tang kiyān kerni di?
 Shahida-NOM me-ACC tease why do PROG
 Why is Shahida teasing me?
- c. tus kana aany diya?
 you-NOM where come PROG
 Where are you coming from?
- d. oo kedun eisi?
 he-NOM when come-FUT
 When will he come?

- e. tus kus-kea e dia?
 You-NOM who-ACC live PROG
 Whom iare you inviting?
- f. ithei kon reina da?
 here who live PROG
 Who is living here?

It can be seen in the above examples that K-words (wh-words) in Pahari questions canonically precede the verb. A K-word stays where it is base-generated that means it remain in situ. This can be demonstrated in (10) which is a potential answer to (9f):

10. ithei komal reini di.
 here komal live PROG
 Komal is living here.

In multiple wh-questions, too, wh-words stay in situ. This can be shown in the following question-answer pair given as (11):

11. a. koni kus-kia keh ditta?
 who-NOM who-ACC what give-PST
 Who gave what to whom?
- b. kudsia komal-kia xat ditta.
 kudsia-NOM komal-ACC letter give-PST
 Kudsia gave a letter to Komal.

More interestingly, sometimes K-words in Pahari can be interpreted in two ways that means they can create ambiguity:

12. jewaab kus pata da ?/.
 Answer-ACC who-NOM know PST
- a. Who knows the answer?
 b. No one would know the answer.

Unlike (9e), kus in (12) could be interpreted as either an interrogative or the negative quantifier. It will be argued that a wh-word in Pahari is a variable and interpreted in accordance with the operator(s) that binds it. We will employ this notion of operator binding to account for the wh-in-situ nature of Pahari. First, we consider some proposals developed in the analysis of wh-in-situ languages.

K-words in-situ in Pahari

This section highlights the fact that K-words in Pahari need not raise to Spec-CP position because of their characteristic: they have no inherent interrogative force. Rather, they are variables that, when bound by different operators, receive different readings. To illustrate this phenomenon, we will discuss two cases where the K-words might receive a non-interrogative interpretation.

Generic affirmative constructions

Consider the examples below:

13. kudsia kus-ser yakiin kerni di?/
 kudsia-NOM who-DAT believe do HAB
 i) who does Kudsia believe?
 ii) Kudsia believes no one.

As can be noticed, (13) displays ambiguity between two readings of K-word: an interrogative and negative quantifier. This should clearly indicate that wh-words in Pahari have no inherent interrogative force and that their interpretation is dependant on the presence of other elements in the structure.

Generic negative constructions

Cheng (1997) argues that negation in Chinese constituent questions yields ambiguity. The same, we suggest, is valid in Pahari. Consider (14) below:

14. Ahmed kus-ser yakiin na kerny da?/.
 Ahmed-NOM who-DAT believe neg do PRES
 (i) Who does not Ahmed believe?
 (ii) Ahmed believes everyone.

As can be seen, when a wh-question in Pahari is negated, the structure receives either an interrogative or non-interrogative reading.

Conclusion

This paper has come up with a result that a K-word in Pahari has no inherent interrogative force by itself. However, interrogative sentences can also be generated with tonal effects upon the verb segments. This can especially be seen in yes-no questions. Although the paper does not present a comprehensive discussion of the characteristics of constituent of questions in Pahari, it highlights the approach of studying K-words in Pahari. This is in consistence with the previous generalization made by Cole & Hermon

(1998) about wh-in-situ languages. However, this short paper leaves a room for the researchers who are interested in this aspect of language for detailed analysis.

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