Two Kinds of Partial Movement: Evidence from Dholuo and German Wh-Questions

Fanselow (2006) and others have observed that there are superficially two types of partial wh-movement: the WHAT-construction (WC), as in German, and Simple Partial Movement (SPM), as in Dholuo. I offer new data from Dholuo showing that these two types of movement display different properties and should be analyzed differently. I accept the Dayal (1994) analysis of the WC, and offer an analysis of SPM. With these two analyses, the WC is not actually a case of optional movement, while SPM is a case of truly optional, truly partial movement.

WC and SPM are word orders observable in wh-questions in which the wh-item originates in an embedded clause. In WC, the wh-item appears in a clause edge lower than the scope position of the question, but higher than its *in situ* position, and a wh-item that means ‘what’ appears in the scope position of the question. This word order is found in languages such as German (Dayal, 1994). In SPM, the wh-item appears in a clause edge lower than the scope position of the question and higher than its *in situ* position, but there is nothing in the scope position of the question (Fanselow, 2006). This word order is found in languages such as Dholuo.

(1) a. Was glaubst du, mit wem Maria gesprochen hat?  
   'Who do you think Maria has spoken to?'  
   WC, German, Dayal (1994)

   b. Onyango duaro ni ng’a ma Pamba ogwe?  
      Onyango wants that who Pamba kick  
      'Who does Onyango want Pamba to kick?'  
      SPM, Dholuo, field notes

Superficially, the only difference between WC and SPM is the scope marker ‘what’. One might hypothesize that they are the same construction, but that SPM contains a silent ‘what’. I offer new data from Dholuo that show that this cannot be the case: SPM and WC are two distinct structures.

First, WC is impossible when the wh-phrase originates in an embedded infinitival. In Dholuo, SPM is available in contexts such as these. This includes clauses that are embedded under *duar* ‘want’ and are not marked with the inflection of a tensed clause.

Second, WC is impossible when the wh-question contains matrix negation (Dayal, 1994). In Dholuo, SPM is available when the matrix clauses is negated.

Third, WC is only available when a certain semantic restriction is met. WC structures contain an embedded question led by the full wh-phrase. WC is only felicitous if the speaker believes that there exists a true answer to this embedded question. So in the example, if the speaker is open to the possibility that Maria did not speak to anyone, then WC is infelicitous, although full wh-fronting is available (Dayal, 2000). SPM has no such restriction.

Finally, all languages that utilize WC have different word order possibilities than languages that utilize SPM. WC languages are languages that usually require wh-movement of one wh-item. SPM languages allow for wh *in situ*, wh-fronting, and SPM all as possible word order options (Fanselow, 2006).

(2) a. Onyango duaro ni Pamba ogwe ng’a?  
      Onyango wants that Pamba kick who  
      'Who does Onyango want Pamba to kick?'  
      wh *in situ*

   b. ng’a ma Onyango duaro ni Pamba ogwe?  
      who Onyango wants that Pamba kick  
      'Who does Onyango want Pamba to kick?'  
      wh-fronting, Dholuo, f.n.

The most popular analysis for WC is that of Dayal (1994). In this analysis, WC is not a rare
example of partial movement in a language with otherwise obligatory wh-movement. Rather, WC questions consist of two questions with wh-fronting, one adjoined to the other. In the example, *was glaubst du* ‘what do you think’ is the main question, which asks for a proposition as an answer. *mit wem Maria gesprochen hat* ‘who Maria has spoken to’ is the adjoined question. The adjoined question picks out a set of propositions that restrict the set of possible answers to the main question. The whole question therefore requests a proposition as an answer, which is the true answer to ‘what do you think’ and is of the form ‘Maria has spoken to x’. In both of these clauses, the wh-phrase appears at the beginning.

My analysis for SPM in Dholuo and other languages derives from Cable’s syntax and semantics of wh-questions. He shows that the semantics of wh-questions involves three syntactic objects (at least in Tlingit): the wh-item, *Q*, and the question operator *ForceQ*. In order for the semantics to work out, *ForceQ* must c-command *Q* and *Q* must c-command the wh-item at LF. Languages differ as to whether *Q* projects a QP and whether *Q* Agrees with the wh-item. He does not discuss languages in which *Q* Agrees but does not project. I claim that SPM languages are such languages.

If *Q* does not project a QP, then it can be merged anywhere, as long as it c-commands the wh-item and is c-commanded by *ForceQ*. This means that it may be the sister of the wh-item, or it may be very far from the wh-item. If *Q* is merged into the same phase as the wh-item, then *Q* and the wh-item can Agree. If *Q* is merged into a higher phase, then the Phase Impenetrability Condition prevents *Q* from Agreeing with the wh-item. If the wh-item can move to a phase edge, close enough to *Q*, then *Q* can Agree with the wh-item in that position. We therefore expect that in these languages, wh-items may surface *in situ* or in phase edges where there are available positions for movement. This produces the word order possibilities of wh *in situ*, wh-fronting, and SPM, and captures the generalization that SPM languages all have a wh *in situ* option.

With this analysis, we expect that SPM languages do not have the wacky semantic distinctions of the WC. There is no covert movement, and therefore we do not expect intervention effects such as those we see with matrix negation in WC. These effects support the Dayal (1994) analysis of WC in that they are also impossible in sequences of two sentences, which the analysis is modeled after.

These new data from Dholuo show that WC and SPM are two distinct structures. I adopted Dayal’s analysis for WC, and I offered an analysis of SPM that accounts for the differences between WC and SPM.

References


