

UR SHLONSKY

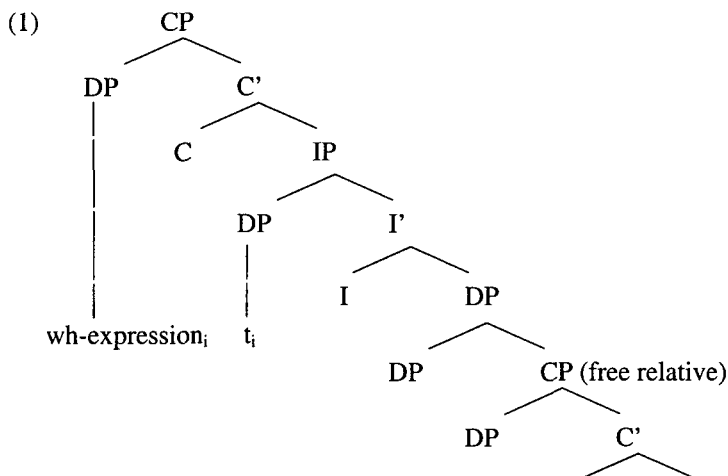
CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS IN PALESTINIAN ARABIC*

1. TWO STRATEGIES FOR WH-QUESTION FORMATION

Like several other dialects of Arabic, Palestinian employs two strategies for the formation of *wh*-interrogatives. I argue that the first is familiar from well-studied languages such as English and involves cyclic movement of a *wh*-operator to *Comp*. As such, it presents no novel features and I put it aside after a brief discussion.

The bulk of the paper is devoted to a study of the second strategy. This strategy is more intriguing in that it appears to lack some of the hallmarks of syntactic *wh*-movement. I argue, however, that it is not an *LF*-movement strategy and indeed does involve movement of a *wh*-element in overt syntax, albeit not from the *D*-structure position of its corresponding variable.

In essence, I argue that this strategy of constituent interrogation should be analyzed at *D*-structure as a copular construction of which the subject is the *wh*-phrase and the predicate, a free relative clause. I attempt to substantiate the claim that the free relative is a nominal predicate, a definite description and hence the clause in which it appears as a predicate is a statement of identity. Between *D*-structure and *S*-structure, the *wh*-operator - the subject of predication - is moved to *Comp*, as diagrammed in (1).



2. CLASS I INTERROGATIVES

In the first strategy of constituent question formation, illustrated in (2a-d), the *wh*-word appears in clause-initial position and a gap marks the position of the variable bound by the *wh*-expression.

- (2) a. *miin_i l-ʔasad ʔakal e_i mbaariḥ?*
 who the-lion ate yesterday
 ‘Who did the lion eat yesterday?’
- b. *[ʔanii bint]_i l-ʔasad ʔakal e_i mbaariḥ?*
 which girl the-lion ate yesterday
 ‘Which girl did the lion eat yesterday?’
- c. *ʃuu_i ʔinti katabti e_i mbaariḥ?*
 what you(F) wrote yesterday
 ‘What did you write yesterday?’
- d. *[la-miin]_i ʔinti baʕaθti maktuub e_i mbaariḥ?*
 to-whom you(F) sent letter yesterday
 ‘To whom did you send a letter yesterday?’

Indirect questions can also be formed by means of this strategy, as in (3).

- (3) *ma- ʕirift -ʃ [la-miin]_i ʔinti baʕaθti maktuub e_i mbaariḥ?*
 NEG (I) knew NEG to-whom you(F) sent letter yesterday
 ‘I didn’t know to whom you sent a letter yesterday?’

Moreover, this strategy is unbounded, in that a *wh*-expression can bind a variable located an unlimited number of clauses down, as demonstrated by (4).

- (4) [la-miin]_i Mona qaalat ?innu Mary fakkarat ?innu Faatme ba^cθat
 to-whom Mona said that Mary thought that Faatme sent
 maktuub e_i mbaarih?
 letter yesterday
 'To whom did Mona say that Mary thought that Faatme sent a letter
 yesterday?'

Finally, Class I interrogatives obey Subjacency, as indicated by the ungrammaticality of (5), which illustrates a violation of the Complex NP Constraint.

- (5) *[?anii bint]_i šufti l-?asad ?illi ?akal e_i?
 which girl (you) saw the-lion that ate
 'Which girl did you see the lion that ate?'

The most straightforward way of accounting for these facts is to assume that syntactic *wh*-movement is at work in Palestinian, fronting a *wh*-element to Comp in a successive cyclic fashion.

3. CLASS II INTERROGATIVES - DESCRIPTION

The second strategy employed in the formation of constituent questions in Palestinian differs in a number of respects from the one described above. First, the fronted *wh*-element is followed by the complementizer (?)*illi*. Thus, compare the examples in (2a-c) with those in (6a-c).

- (6) a. miin_i ?illi l-?asad ?akal -ha_i mbaarih?
 who that the-lion ate -her yesterday
 'Who did the lion eat yesterday?'
- b. [?anii bint]_i ?illi l-?asad ?akal -ha_i mbaarih?
 which girl that the-lion ate -her yesterday
 'Which girl did the lion eat yesterday?'
- c. šuu_i ?illi ?inti katabti -i mbaarih?
 what that you(F) wrote -it yesterday
 'What did you write yesterday?'

A second difference between (2a-c) and (6a-c) can be immediately discerned. In the former sentences, the *wh*-word is associated with an empty category, in the

latter, with a resumptive pronoun. Indeed, an empty category is unacceptable in (6a-c), as shown by comparing (6a) with (7).¹

- (7) *miin_i ?illi l-?asad ?akal e_i mbaariḥ?
 who that the-lion ate yesterday
 'Who did the lion eat yesterday?'

Third, questioning into an island is fully acceptable in this brand of questions. Contrast the ungrammatical (5) with the fully acceptable (8) below.

- (8) [?anii binət]_i ?illi šufti l-?asad ?illi ?akal -ha_i?
 which girl that (you) saw the-lion that ate -her
 'Which girl did you see the lion that ate?'

Fourth, Class II interrogatives are restricted to nominal wh-expressions, as noted originally for Egyptian Arabic by Wahba (1984). Adverbial phrases and PPs can only be questioned by means of a Class I interrogative, that is, by the movement strategy described in §2. Consider the fact that the Class II equivalent to (2d) above, where the wh-expression is a (pied-piped) PP, is ungrammatical, as shown in (9).

- (9) *la-miin ?illi ʿinti baʿaṯti maktuub?
 to-whom that you sent letter
 'To whom did you send a letter?'

This difference between the two strategies of question formation is further exemplified by the contrasts between the (a) and (b) sentences in (10)-(12), in which the wh-expressions are adjuncts or adverbials.

- (10) a. winta katabti l-maktuub?
 when (you) wrote the-letter
 'When did you write the letter?'
 b. *winta ?illi katabti l-maktuub?
 when that (you) wrote the-letter
 'When did you write the letter?'
- (11) a. kiif faḥasti ṣ-ṣayyara?
 how (you) examined the-car
 'How did you examine the car?'
 b. *kiif ?illi faḥasti ṣ-ṣayyara?
 how that (you) examined the-car
 'How did you examine the car?'

- (12) a. ween katabti l-maktuub?
 where (you) wrote the-letter
 'Where did you write the letter?'
 b. *ween ?illi katabti l-maktuub?
 where that (you) wrote the-letter
 'Where did you write the letter?'

Note, finally, that Class II interrogatives may appear as embedded questions and can express an unbounded dependency. These properties are illustrated by (13) and (14) and are shared by the two strategies of question formation in Palestinian.

- (13) ma- ʿirift -š [ʔaay maktuub]_i ?illi Mona baʿθat -o_i la-Mary.
 NEG (I) knew NEG which letter that Mona sent -it to-Mary
 'I didn't know which letter Mona sent it to Mary.'
 (14) [ʔaay maktuub]_i ?illi Mona qaalat ?innu Mary fakkarat ?innu Faatme
 which letter that Mona said that Mary thought that Faatme
 baʿθat -o la-Mhemmad?
 sent -it to-Mhemmad
 'Which letter did Mona say that Mary thought that Faatme sent it to Mhemmad?'

The syntactic properties of the two strategies of question formation in Palestinian Arabic are recapitulated in (15) below.

(15)	Class I interrogatives	Class II interrogatives
Unbounded dependency	yes	yes
Used to form matrix questions	yes	yes
Used to form indirect questions	yes	yes
Type of variable	trace	resumptive pronoun
Constrained by Subjacency	yes	no
Compatible with all types of wh-expressions	yes	no, only with nominal ones

3.1. *The interpretation of Class II interrogatives*

Although the two interrogation strategies have the same truth values, they differ in presupposition. This is brought out clearly in the contrast in (16a, b) below: (16b) presupposes that someone actually solved the problem; (16a) implies no such presupposition.



<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4020-0536-7>

Themes in Arabic and Hebrew Syntax

Ouhalla, J.; Shlonsky, U. (Eds.)

2002, IX, 327 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-1-4020-0536-7