

Optional wh-movement in French and Egyptian Arabic

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Abstract: In this paper, I argue that both French and Egyptian Arabic interrogatives have no wh-movement and favor to leave their wh-phrases in-situ. Whenever these two languages exhibit overt wh-movement, I suggest that it is triggered by some specific features: in the case of French where overt wh-movement is obligatory in embedded questions, wh-movement is triggered by the interrogative features of the matrix verb. In simple questions, it is triggered by focus features. In the case of Egyptian Arabic, the rare obligatory wh-movement and the optional wh-movement in both simple and embedded questions are triggered by focus features.

Keywords: wh-movement, optional movement, minimalism, focus, Egyptian Arabic, French

Introduction

Languages differ concerning the strategies they apply to form wh-constructions. In English 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 give to John?
- (2) *Did you give to John what?
- (3) Who did John give what?

In Japanese and Chinese, wh-phrases favor the in-situ position; as in (4):

- (4) John-wa dare-ni nani-o ageta ka ?
John-top who-dat what-acc gave Q
'Who did John give what ?'

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

- (5) Koj kogo vižda?
Who whom sees
'Who sees whom?'

In this paper, I will examine the behavior of wh-interrogatives in French and Egyptian Arabic (henceforth EA), which seem to exhibit similar patterns for the treatment of wh-constructions consisting in optionally moving the wh-element. French data is taken from the literature and EA data is taken from a collected-corpus based on Egyptian speakers.

- (6) Elle a donné la montre à qui ?
She gave the watch to whom
'to whom did she give the watch ?'
- (7) À qui a-t-elle donné la montre ?
'To whom did she give the watch ?'
- (8) Seme9t eeh ?
Hear.2.S.M.Past What ?
'What did you hear ?'
- (9) Leeh amelt kida
Why do.2S.M.Past that
'Why did you do that ?'

Examples (6) and (7) illustrate how French can alternate between moving the wh-phrase or leaving it in-situ. Examples (8) and (9) show how EA uses similar strategies concerning wh-phrases. Following a close look at how these two languages treat wh-constructions in simple and complex questions, I focus on the reasons that allow wh-words in French and EA to stay in-situ as in French 6 and EA 8, or optionally undergo movement as in French 7 and EA 9, based on proposals by Denham (2000) and _eljko Bo_kovi_ (1998, 2000). I will conclude that both French and EA favor the in-situ strategy and when a wh-phrase undergoes movement, it is related to the existence of a focus feature that triggers this movement. This proposal, as I will explain below, will enable us to analyze wh-interrogatives in languages such as French and EA without violating minimalist principles.

In Section 1 of the paper, I discuss how optional movement in wh-interrogatives fits the principles of the Minimalist Program. In Section 2, I summarize and discuss recent proposals mainly on French on optional wh-movement by Bo_kovi_ (1998, 2000) and Denham

(2000). In Section 3, I illustrate and compare the distribution of wh-constructions in simple questions and embedded questions in French and EA. In Section 4, I adopt ideas of Denham to account for the optionality of wh-movement in French and extend them to Egyptian Arabic. On the one hand, I propose to treat these two languages as exclusively in-situ languages that do not select C from the lexicon in order to trigger movement of the wh-phrase in simple questions. On the other hand, whenever there is fronting of the wh-phrase, I interpret it in two ways: In the case of French, I follow Denham in proposing that fronting of wh-phrases in simple questions is triggered by a focus feature that must be checked before the derivation reaches the interfaces, while fronting of wh-phrases in embedded questions is triggered by the selection of C in overt syntax by some interrogative verbs. In EA fronting of wh-phrases is uncommon, which distinguishes this variety from other varieties of Arabic, and I propose that displacement is triggered by focus features in both simple and embedded questions. In Section 5, I provide a brief conclusion.

1. Optional Movement and the Minimalist Program

When analyzing the behavior of wh-interrogatives in languages such as French and Egyptian Arabic, which has not been discussed in the literature, we find two strategies: one suggests that the wh-element moves to the front position and one favors to leave the wh-element in-situ as illustrated above in (6-9) repeated here in (10-13)

- (10) Elle a donné la montre à qui ?
 She gave the watch to who
 'To whom did she give the watch ?'
- (11) À qui a-t-elle donné la montre ?
 'To whom did she give the watch ?'
- (12) Seme?t eeh ?
 Hear.2.S.M.Past What ?
 'What did you hear ?'
- (13) Leeh amelt kida
 Why do.2S.M.Past that
 'Why did you do that ?'

This leads us to propose that such languages exhibit optional movement in *wh*-constructions. This proposal has been adopted by many linguists including Pesetsky (1987), Cheng (1991), Aoun and Li (1993), Bo_kovi_ (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.

In this paper, I explore the idea of Denham (1997, 2000) on optional movement and discuss whether French and Egyptian Arabic alternate between two options for moving *wh*-words, which seems problematic from a minimalist perspective, or adopt one of these two options, mainly the *in-situ* option. Thus, this study tries to account for optional *wh*-movement in French and in EA, which differs from other varieties of Arabic, following minimalist principles that govern *wh*-movement. Indeed, former analyses of *wh*-movement (Cheng 1991, Aoun and Li 1993, Bo_kovic 1997, 2000, and many others) followed minimalist principles when proposing various interpretations of *wh*-movement. When we look closely at these interpretations we find that they tend to follow minimalist principles but disregard or underestimate some others. By going through these analyses we find that assumptions that explain *wh*-movement such as feature checking and strength (in Bo_kovic 1997, 2000), LF insertion of lexical items (in Aoun and LI 1993) lack explanatory power because of their misinterpretation of minimalist principles concerning *wh*-movement, a matter which leads to unsatisfactory proposals for *wh*-movement.

According to the Minimalist Program as developed in Chomsky (1995), optionality of movement occurs only at the derivation level where only the most economical option is chosen to carry on in the computation so that the output conditions are reached (Denham 2000). This means that it is not possible to consider that, within a language, *wh*-movement has available both options of fronting the *wh*-phrase or leave it *in-situ*. The hypothesis that both options are available, especially in similar syntactic environments, will contradict the minimalist principle on the economy of derivation that only the most economical option could reach the interfaces and be considered as grammatical.

One way of accounting for optional wh-movement is in terms of the strength of a given feature. When +wh is strong, it is uninterpretable at the interface levels, PF and LF, and therefore must be erased before the derivation reaches these interfaces. A failure to delete this strong feature will lead to an ungrammatical derivation at the interfaces that crashes. As far as feature checking and feature strength are concerned, the status of the +wh feature has been discussed in the literature as a major criterion according to which linguists classify wh-movement in different languages and even within one language. As Denham (2000) remarks, strength of wh-features has never been well motivated as a major criterion to decide on the status of wh-movement in a given language. It is problematic, for instance, that in the same language the +wh feature can sometimes be strong and sometimes be weak and that this is offered as an argument to explain optional movement. Denham (2000: 207) argues that '(...) assuming the unsatisfying solution that the same wh-feature can either be both strong and weak within any given language (is not a convincing interpretation of optional wh-movement)'. She also adds that 'If we agree with Chomsky (1993) that feature strength is at the root of cross-linguistic variation, allowing variation within a language loses any explanatory value' (2000: 207).

Another way to account for optional movement of wh-phrases is LF insertion, which is a notion that has been used to account for optional movement of wh-interrogatives by many linguists such as Aoun and Li (1993) and many others. LF insertion suggests that for languages that exhibit overt wh-movement, whenever wh-movement does not seem to occur, that is, whenever wh-phrases are kept in-situ, wh-movement still occurs but covertly at the LF interface; C is inserted at LF, triggering movement of the wh-element to check out the strong +wh on C. LF insertion has also been used to justify cross-linguistic variation with respect to wh-movement. It has been argued that all languages undergo wh-movement, some overtly to C and others covertly, after LF insertion of C.

In this paper, I will explore an approach to optional wh-movement that relies on neither feature strength nor LF insertion. Instead, I suggest that in both French and EA, wh-movement does not

occur overtly and wh-phrases remain in-situ. However, when wh-phrases front overtly in French simple questions, movement is triggered by focus forces and in complex questions, it is triggered by interrogative features of the matrix verbs. In EA, wh-phrases will be interpreted as focus movement.

2. Recent minimalist proposals on optional wh-movement

Recently, many linguists have shown a strong interest in the status of wh-constructions cross-linguistically. Accordingly, Bo_kovi_ (1998, 2000, 2002) and Denham (2000), among others, have focused on analyzing languages such as English, French, Chinese/Japanese and Bulgarian/Serbo-Croatian because, as stated in the introduction, such languages display different types of wh-movements. These linguists have tried to account for the variation in wh-movement between these languages on the basis of the status of +wh, the insertion of C in overt syntax or LF and by proposing that overt movement of the wh-phrase is triggered by a wh-feature or a focus feature.

In this section, I illustrate in detail Bo_kovi_'s (2000, 2002) and Denham's (2000) recent proposal on wh-constructions. This description is followed by a tentative evaluation of their empirical statements and their relatedness and conformity to minimalist assumptions.

2.1. Željko Bošković (2000)

Bošković (2000) has studied French simple and embedded questions in order to determine when the in-situ strategy is allowed and in order to account for the limited distribution of such an option. The French data analyzed in this proposal is the following:

- (14) Qui as-tu vu?
Who did you see ?
- (15) Tu as vu qui ?
You saw who ?
- (16) *Pierre a demandé tu as vu qui
Pierre asked you saw who ?
- (17) Pierre a demandé qui tu as vu

Pierre asked who did you see

The issue is how to account for the ungrammaticality of the in-situ option in embedded questions in French as in (16) and at the same time explain its grammaticality in simple questions such as in (15).

As far as simple questions are concerned, Bošković proposes to insert C in LF so that it becomes possible to account for wh-phrases in-situ as illustrated in (18-19) below:

- (18) S-Structure: $_{IP}$ tu as vu qui
 (19) LF: $_{CP}$ qui C $_{IP}$ tu as vu Bošković (2002 : 56)

In order to interpret wh-in-situ, Bošković relies on the following minimalist assumptions. He considers that in simple questions where wh-phrases remain in-situ, C is phonologically null as in (15) above. He also considers the +wh feature in French as being strong since overt wh-movement exists in this language.

Based on these two assumptions that seem to fit minimalist ideas, Bošković supports his proposal of LF insertion of C by stating that even though merge generally takes place in overt syntax, it is possible to allow lexical insertion at PF and LF under certain conditions: semantically null lexical elements can be inserted at PF and phonologically null elements can be inserted at LF. Since Bošković has already posited that C could be phonologically null in French, it is possible to insert it at LF without violating interpretability conditions. As for the strong +wh feature in French, he suggests that it is possible to insert elements with strong features at LF as long as they are checked immediately upon insertion, but he does not support this claim with clear data and all he advances is that LF insertion of elements is possible in the minimalist system.

As for embedded questions in French, according to Bošković, it is not grammatical to leave the wh-phrase in-situ as illustrated in (16-17) above, repeated here in (20-21)

- (20) *Pierre a demandé tu as vu qui
 'Pierre asked who did you see'

- (21) Pierre a demandé qui tu as vu
'Pierre asked who did you see'

The ungrammaticality of (20) seems to contradict Bošković's interpretation of *wh*-in-situ in simple questions where he proposed to insert C as late as LF. In fact, he explains that, in the case of embedded questions, merge cannot occur as late as LF because it does not expand the tree of an embedded sentence. Therefore, merge of C must occur in overt syntax and this will trigger overt movement of the *wh*-word as in (21) above. This proposal explains the ungrammaticality of (20) and suggests that overt *wh*-movement is the only option available to interpret *wh*-movement in embedded questions. However, it weakens Bošković's proposal for simple questions to insert C at LF, since it does not apply to all types of questions in French.

Although obligatory insertion of C prior to LF in the case of indirect questions is attributed to what is claimed to be an independent requirement concerning how tree expansion works, a recent proposal by Chomsky still weakens Bošković's justification on why C is inserted prior to LF in the case of embedded questions. In his attempt to fit head movement in the bare structure proposal, Chomsky (2000) proposes to have what he calls 'local merge' (head-adjunction), which does not expand the tree. Indeed, recently, Chomsky proposes to reformulate Spec-Head relations as Head-Head relations, and suggests that *there are men in the garden*, may be just a head that is merged, not necessarily Spec-like. Therefore, if we consider Chomsky's new proposal, it seems that movement and merge need not necessarily expand the tree, so Bošković's justification loses some of its force.

In my view, Bošković's proposal contains several undesirable characteristics. First, that the complementizer C is phonologically null is not justified using data from French. In fact, Bošković provides support for this assumption using various examples from Serbo-Croatian (SC) and then compares his findings from SC data to French data. He claims that 'the fact that the complementizer is phonologically null is confirmed by data concerning *wh*-constructions in SC' (2000: 56). In describing SC *wh*-data, he claims that 'SC is a multiple *wh*-fronting language (that) cannot place more than one fronted *wh*-phrase in Spec,

CP. He also claims that 'SC exhibits Superiority effects exactly in those contexts where wh-movement must take place in French' (2000:57). This is illustrated with the following data:

- (23) Ko šta kupuje ?
Who what buys
'Who buys what ?'
- (24) Šta ko kupuje ?
- (25) Zavisi od toga ko šta kupuje
Depends on it who what buys
'It depends on who buys what'
- (26) *Zavisi od toga šta ko kupuje

Bošković considers that 'SC is a French type language with respect to when wh-movement must take place' (2000:57). In (23-24) the Superiority Condition need not be satisfied in SC matrix questions, where neither French nor SC require overt wh-movement. In (25-26), the Superiority Condition must be satisfied in SC embedded questions, where French requires wh-movement. Bošković also claims that, in SC, all wh-phrases must move overtly to Spec, CP and since only one wh-phrase can be fronted to Spec, CP, the other wh-phrases move at PF, which confirms that the complementizer is phonologically null since the wh-phrase can move at PF (2000:58).

Second, I repeat that the idea that C is phonologically null and is inserted at LF lacks explanatory power, since it is also proposed that C is obligatorily inserted in overt syntax in embedded questions. Indeed, the proposal to account for the grammaticality of wh-in-situ in simple questions is not valid to explain the ungrammaticality of wh-in-situ in embedded questions. Inserting C at LF explains how French allows wh-phrases to remain in-situ in simple questions, however such late insertion does not apply to embedded questions because LF insertion of C does not expand the tree of embedded sentences. Bošković's analysis has not achieved unification since on the one hand, LF insertion of C is not particularly revealing, and on the other hand two different solutions are needed : one for simple and the other for embedded

questions. In addition, I agree with Boeckx's 1999 comments when saying that '(Bošković's 1998 proposal on French) seems to fail to capture the interpretative differences between (wh-phrases in-situ and fronted wh-phrases) (...) both sentences are assigned roughly the same LF' (69). In sum, Bošković's proposal has a number of undesirable features that depart from ideal minimalist principles,

Following Denham's (2000) proposal on wh-movement in Babine-Witsuwit'en and other languages (See section 2.2. for discussion and details), the idea I will defend is that wh-in-situ in languages such as French and EA do not have wh-movement. I will first adopt Denham's proposal on French and subsequently apply it to EA in Section 4 with some modifications needed to account for all of EA's wh-in-situ constructions.

2.2. Kristin Denham (2000)

Denham (2000) focuses on simple and embedded questions in order to account for the in-situ strategy in Babine-Witsuwit'en, an aboriginal language spoken in British Columbia (henceforth BW) and then extends her proposal to show that it applies cross-linguistically to languages such as English, French and Chinese.

Denham (2000) argues that BW has optional wh-movement. Fronting the wh-phrase or leaving it in-situ does not lead to meaning change in this language. This means that BW seems to contradict the minimalist principle that states that only the most economical derivation must reach the interface level, since fronting the wh-phrase or leaving it in-situ does not make a difference. Denham solves this contradiction by proposing that optionality in wh-questions arises at the point of selection of C from the lexicon ; if C is selected, movement occurs and the wh-phrase is fronted. Denham illustrates this proposal through examples that show 3 possible positions for an argument wh-phrase: in-situ as in (27-28), fronted in the embedded clause as in (29), or fronted in the matrix clause as in (30) in BW:

- (27) Lillian **ndu** yunkët
 Lillian what 3.S. bought 3.S.
 'What did Lillian bought?'

- (28) **Ndu** Lillian yukèt ?
 what 3.S. Lillian bought 3.S.
 'What did Lillian bought?'
- (29) George **ndītnī** book Lillian yik'iyelhdic yilhni ?
 George which book Lillian 3s. read (opt). 3s 3s told. 3s
 'Which book did George tell Lillian to read ?'
- (30) **Ndītnī** book George Lillian yik'iyelhdic yilhni ?
 which book George Lillian 3s. read (opt). 3s 3s told. 3s
 'Which book did George tell Lillian to read ?'

She states that optional selection of lexical items follows minimalist principles. She explains that the lexicon contains lexical items as well as functional items such as C. She also suggests that optionality is found in the lexicon or more precisely in the numeration. This means that any item, whether lexical or functional, may or may not be selected. For Denham, the functional item C can either be selected or not for any particular derivation (Denham, 2000: 207). The selection of C will prompt wh-movement, the non-selection of C will leave the wh-phrase in-situ. As far as overt syntax is concerned, C is available (i.e. selected from the lexicon) only when the interrogative features of the matrix verb in an embedded question trigger such insertion of C otherwise C is not present elsewhere in overt syntax and is not present at all in covert syntax (LF).

By proposing this hypothesis to account for the optionality of wh-movement in BW, Denham manages not to contradict the minimalist principles on economy of derivation. Namely, it is not possible for two identical sentences to have identical interpretations and be both grammatical since only one derivation must succeed in reaching the interfaces because it is the most economical one. Proposing to optionally select C from the lexicon leads to the creation of two different arrays for a sentence: one containing C and the other not. When comparing both derivations they are both grammatical because they are both the most economical derivations for that particular array (Denham, 2000: 208).

Therefore, Denham proposes to solve the problem of optional wh-movement by allowing optional selection of C from the lexicon. 'If C

and its *wh*-feature appears in the numeration, it will prompt raising of a *wh*-feature and its accompanying *wh*-phrase to check off the *wh*-feature in *C*. If *C* does not appear in the numeration, then no *wh*-movement takes place' (Denham, 2000: 287)

I see several advantages in the above analysis. In evaluating Denham's proposal, we notice that it succeeds in accounting for *wh*-in-situ in BW and also provides an interesting account to explain the in-situ option available in French in that it offers to consider focus as a main reason why French simple questions have the option of fronting or leaving in-situ the *wh*-phrase and to explain that overt *wh*-fronting in embedded questions is triggered by interrogative features of the matrix verb that leads to insertion of *C* in overt syntax and therefore to the overt movement of the *wh*-phrase to *C* for checking reasons. I will also provide some evidence (Section 4) that Denham's proposal could be expanded to *wh*-in-situ EA data.

Denham's proposal does not rely on feature checking when analyzing optional *wh*-movement. Indeed, this study rejects using feature strength as a tool to classify a language as having overt *wh*-movement or leaving its *wh*-phrases in-situ. This is because feature checking has no explanatory value if, within a language, it is possible to have a strong +*wh* that triggers overt *wh*-movement as well as a weak +*wh* that triggers LF *wh*-movement. Feature strength has always been a very disputable element within the various versions of Chomsky's work on *wh*-movement and other issues since a clear-cut definition of it is still under investigation. Recently, the strong/weak dichotomy for features has in fact been abandoned due to its problematic character.

Also, Denham's proposal avoids problems within interpretability conditions at PF and LF interface since she does not propose to use the features of the LF interface in order to account for covert movement of *wh*-phrases in the case of *wh*-in-situ. Avoiding the LF interface saves Denham's proposal from problems such as late insertion of elements with interpretable features like +*wh*. According to recent minimalist principles, elements with interpretable features must be inserted in overt syntax so that they can be interpreted at the interfaces. Delaying insertion of elements could solve the problem of *wh*-phrases in-situ by

suggesting that C has been inserted in LF but it could also raise serious problems dealing with insertion of interpretable elements as late as the interfaces PF and LF.

As far as French is concerned, Denham considers this language as not exhibiting wh-movement except in embedded questions. Optional wh-movement is apparent in simple questions in spoken French. She considers that the optional fronting of the wh-phrase in simple questions is due to the existence of a focus feature. In embedded questions, however, French exhibits overt wh-movement and the option of leaving the wh-element in-situ is ungrammatical in case the matrix verb is an interrogative verb. This restriction enables Denham to conclude that wh-movement is apparent and is the only option available in French embedded questions if the matrix verb such as verbs *demander* and *questionner* has some interrogative features. According to Denham, it is the interrogative feature on the matrix verb that triggers the selection of C from the lexicon, which will also trigger overt movement of the wh-phrase in embedded questions. To sum up, Denham's analysis of French data, the author claims that 'French does not have overt wh-movement except when the properties of the verb require it' (2000:239). As far as French simple questions are concerned, optional fronting of a wh-phrase is motivated by a focus feature.

Denham's analysis of French exhibits various advantages. First, it succeeds in providing an explanation for a wide range of French wh-data (simple questions and embedded questions). Second, it avoids dealing with problematic issues such as wh-feature strength and wh-feature interpretability at the interfaces, which weakens the analysis and make it more complex without providing convincing explanation of wh-movement. Indeed, she does not claim that the wh-feature, when it is strong triggers movement and when it is not strong does not. However, she claims that movement of the wh-phrase is a matter of focus in the case of simple questions and a matter of interrogative feature of the verb that triggers the selection of C from the lexicon in the case of embedded questions. Finally, Denham's proposal on French offers to analyze movement in wh-constructions as focus movement. She supports such an analysis with cleft constructions. Indeed, since

Denham considers that French exhibits no wh-movement, she must provide us with a solid argument in order to explain why we can still observe overt movement of wh-phrases in French data. For this reason, Denham proposes that what triggers overt wh-movement in French is not features of wh-movement that we find in languages such as English, but focus which imposes overt movement on wh-phrases. Denham considers movement of wh-phrases in sentences such as (32) below as wh-clefting that must move to C to satisfy a focus feature:

- (31) Tu as acheté quoi?
You bought what
'What did you buy?'
- (32) C'est quoi que tu as acheté ?
It is what that you bought
'What is it that you bought ?'
- (33) Qu'est ce que tu as acheté ?
What did you bought?

Sentence (31) represents the option of leaving the wh-phrase in-situ. Sentence (32) represents wh-clefting and sentence (33) represents wh-movement to satisfy not a +wh feature but to satisfy a focus feature. According to Denham, sentences like (32) constitute evidence for a focus interpretation of French wh-sentences. Considering French wh-movement as triggered by a focus feature suggests that French exhibits no wh-movement to check a +wh feature.

Vergnaud and Zubizarreta (2000) also consider that the in-situ strategy in French questions could be linked to focus. They suggest that optional movement of French questions correlates with two types of focus: 'questions with fronted wh-phrases are cases of informational focus such as in *À qui est ce que Pierre a parlé ?* and questions with an in-situ wh-phrase are cases of contrastive focus such as in *Pierre a parlé à qui ?*' (see Vergnaud and Zubizarreta 2000 for further analysis). Their proposal suggests that optional movement of French questions offers two distinct semantic interpretations of a wh-question, a hypothesis that is consistent with minimalist assumptions on optional derivations.

Cedric Boeckx (1999) also criticizes Bo_kovic's approach to French, and also notes that 'the problematic optionality' that French simple questions exhibit should not be accounted for by just positing a case of wh-movement with a strong wh feature when there is overt fronting and a weak wh feature when there is no overt fronting. Instead, developing a proposal with points of contact with my ideas in this paper, he considers that French questions exhibit focus in both fronted and in-situ patterns. He also suggests that there are interpretative differences between the two patterns: fronted French questions correspond to a general information seeking strategy and in-situ French questions correspond to a detail-information seeking strategy. As far as interpretative differences are concerned, Boeckx notices that it is not possible to get the answer 'rien' (nothing) from the wh-in-situ as in (34), neither is it possible to get such answer from a cleft question as in (35). The answer 'rien' is grammatical with fronted wh-phrase as in (36): (see Boeckx's 1999 analysis of French questions for further details).

- (34) Jean a acheté quoi ?
Un livre/ *rien
- (35) C'est quoi que Jean a acheté ?
Un livre/*rien
- (36) Qu'a acheté Jean ?
Un livre/rien

These examples show that wh-in-situ requires a familiarity of a particular type with the topic (i.e. participants share background information before the utterance) however, there is no need for familiarity in the case of fronted wh-phrases as in (36).

We can now briefly compare Bo_kovic's and Denham's proposals. Inserting C at LF in order to account for wh-in-situ in simple questions and inserting C in overt syntax to account for fronted wh-phrases in embedded questions as proposed by Bo_kovic does not seem to be an interesting analysis of French optional wh-movement. This is because, other than being unrevealing, this proposal does not fit

minimalist principles since it must appeal to insertion of elements with strong features at LF.

Denham's proposal, on the other hand, seems to offer a comprehensive interpretation of the status of wh-movement in languages such as French and it can also be used for EA where there seems to be no wh-movement. In my view, Denham's proposal to treat wh-movement as linked to the selection of C from the lexicon fits minimalist requirements on wh-movement better than the analysis proposed by Bošković, and can be the basis of additional exploration into the semantics of questions of as in the work of Boeckx and Zubizarreta and Vergnaud mentioned above.

3. Wh-movement in French and EA: simple questions and embedded questions

As stated, this study focuses on analyzing wh-movement in questions in both French and EA. In my view, many reasons make the comparison of these two languages theoretically interesting in view of recent debates on wh-movement. First, we saw above that it has proven controversial whether French is a language that has overt wh-movement or a language that tends to keep its wh-phrases in-situ. This is due to the optionality of moving or leaving in-situ a wh-phrase in simple questions. However, this optionality of movement is not available in complex questions as it is illustrated in the section 3.2. Concerning EA, wh-movement in this language seems to also be very interesting since the in-situ option is almost always the sole available grammatical option. In contrast with other variants, EA is the only Arabic dialect that does not front its wh-phrases, as most of Arabic dialects do front their wh-phrases as illustrated by the two sentences in (37-38) from Standard Arabic. In contrast with EA, the in-situ option is usually ungrammatical in other varieties:

- (37) Madha taf'alou ?
 What do3.S.M Pres prog.
 'What are you doing ?'
- (38) *Taf'alou madha
 do3.S.M Pres prog. What
 'What are you doing ?'

Given this situation, comparing French and EA can be a potential source of interesting insights on how to deal with in-situ languages under minimalist principles (Section 4).

3.1. Wh-movement in simple questions

In simple questions, wh-constructions in French behave in the following way:

- (39) Elle a donné la montre à qui ?
'She gave the watch to who?'
- (40) Marie a acheté quoi ?
'Mary bought what?'

Sentence (39-40) suggests that the wh-elements *à qui* and *quoi* stay in-situ. It is also possible for the same wh-element in the same syntactic environment to front as in (41-42) below:

- (41) À qui a-t-elle donné la montre ?
'To whom did she give the watch?'
- (42) Qu'est-ce-que Marie a acheté ?
'What did Mary buy?'

An interesting element to consider from sentence (42) above is that fronting the wh-element *quoi* has resulted in replacing it with the form 'qu'est-ce-que' or 'qu(e)', as it is unclear whether 'qu'est-ce que' should be as a complex word or as the questions word 'qu(e)' followed by 'est-ce que', whose analysis would also be a matter of debate. The question that arises is whether 'quoi' and 'qu'est ce que' are two different forms of wh-phrases that behave differently in terms of fronting or staying in-situ. The issue of the wh-phrase *quoi* has been discussed in the literature by many linguists (Hirschbühler 1979, Hirschbühler and Bouchard 1987, Goldsmith 1978, to name some). Hirschbühler and Bouchard (1987) explain that *quoi* and *que* are in complementary: whenever *que* occupies the front position (Comp), *quoi* cannot occupy this same position but is grammatical if it remains in-situ:

- (43) Que fais-tu ?
'What do you do ?'
- (44) *Quoi fais-tu ?
'What do you do ?'
- (45) Tu fais quoi ?
'What do you do? '

The authors explain that *que/quoi* alternations is a fact in French similar to other alterations such as *me/moi*. In trying to answer the question 'why can't *quoi* appear in the Comp position of tense clause ?', the authors explained that the alternation *que/quoi* suggests that *que* is an allomorph of *quoi* and that it is also the weak form of *quoi*. The authors analyze *que* as a clitic and provide various arguments to support the cliticization properties of *que* (see Hirschbühler and Bouchard 1987: 43 for details on cliticisation of 'que'). As far as *quoi* is concerned, they analyze the impossibility of a bare *quoi* in Comp as linked to the proposal that *que/quoi* are in complementary distribution, *quoi* being the strong form and *que* being the allomorph of *quoi* and the weak form. If the strong form, i.e. *quoi* is not justified locally, i.e. in the Comp position, the weak form, i.e. *que* must be used.

In discussing the ungrammaticality of fronting *quoi*, Denham (2000) suggests that wh-fronting is an instance of wh-clefting and that this fronting takes place in order to satisfy a strong focus feature (see Denham's (2000:335-337) discussion on wh-clefting). Having said that, it is expected that the location of the basic wh-form, in this case, the in-situ position, suggests that French wh-phrases remain in-situ in simple questions and that whenever fronting is allowed, it must be triggered by some other features, mainly focus (this will be further developed in section 4).

In EA, it seems that wh-constructions favor wh-phrases to remain in-situ in simple questions as illustrated in (46-48) below:

- (46) Seme?t eeh ?
Hear.2.S.M.Past What ?
'What did you hear ?'

- (47) Guit ezzaay ?
Come.2.S.M.Past How ?
'How did you come ?'

- (48) Rayah fiin ?
Go 2.S.M.Pres. Where ?
'Where are you going ?'

It is possible to encounter sentence like (49) below

- (49) Eeh dah ?
What this
'What is this'

where the wh-phrase (eeh) 'what' is fronted for a focus interpretation. The same sentence could also be used in an exclamation structure where the focus is also on the wh-phrase [Eeh dah ! meaning, what's that !].

It is rare if not impossible to come across examples where the wh-word is fronted in EA as illustrated in (50-52) below

- (50) *Eeh seme?t
What Hear.2.S.M.Past ?
'What did you hear ?'

- (51) *Ezzaay guit ?
How come.2.S.M.Past ?
'How did you come ?'

- (52) *Fiin rayah?
Where go 2.S.M.Pres.
'Where are you going ?'

Judging from data presented above, EA favors to keep wh-phrases in-situ in simple questions. Fronting wh-phrases is also possible but not due to checking of +wh feature. Fronting of wh-phrases in EA is due to the existence of a focus feature that triggers movement of the wh-element. In Section 4, I will argue that EA favors to keep wh-phrases in-situ and not front them to get focus because, as a language having a

basic SVO order, EA tends to move the verb or the verb phrase to get focus.

3.2. Wh-movement in embedded questions

In French embedded questions, the *wh*-phrase moves up to the head of the embedded sentence as in (53-56)

- (53) Pierre a demandé qui tu as vu
'Pierre asked who did you see'
- (54) Paul voulait savoir pourquoi la porte était fermée
'Paul wanted to know why the door was closed'
- (55) Marie se questionnait comment sa mère a pu savoir
'Mary asked how her mother could have known'
- (56) Il demande quand le film va commencer
'He inquires when the movie will start'

It is not usually possible to leave the *wh*-phrase in-situ in embedded questions as illustrated in (57-60):

- (57) *Pierre a demandé tu as vu qui
(58) *Paul voulait savoir la porte était fermée pourquoi
(59) *Marie se demandait sa mère a pu savoir comment
(60) *Il demande le film va commencer quand

In EA embedded questions, however, the in-situ option seems to be more grammatical than the wh-fronting option, although alternating with the two options is possible in some cases. In examples (61-62) below, we can optionally focus the noun phrase '*innatiga*' (result) or the wh-phrase '*eeh*' (what).

- (61) Ayiz ye?raf innatiga eeh
 Want.3.S.M.Pre. know3.S.M.Pres. result what
 'He wants to know what is the result'
- (62) *Ayiz ye?raf eeh
 innatiga
 Want.3.S.M.Pre. know3.S.M.Pres. what result
 'He wants to know what is the result'

In (61-62) alternating between focusing the verb phrase in the embedded sentence and the wh-phrase is not possible. It is the verb phrase that must remain focused in the embedded sentence since EA prefers to focus verbs and verb phrases rather than wh-phrases. This analysis supports analyses on word order in various dialects of Arabic where it has been suggested by many linguists such as (Fassi-Fehri 1993, Plunkett 1993, Koopman and Sportiche 1991, Aoun et al 1994, Benmamoun 2000) that Arabic dialects have a basic SVO order and get the VSO by moving the verb to the I position. These authors suggest various reasons why the V moves to I: for tense, topicalization or focus (see Mahfoudhi 2002 for a detailed summary on how these authors analyze the fronting of V). I consider that in EA, when it comes to front two elements in the sentence, a verb phrase or a wh-phrase, it is the verb phrase that is focused leaving the wh-phrase in-situ.

- (63) Ayiz aa?raf rayah fiin
 want.1.M.Pres. know go.2.S.M where
 'I want to know where are you going'

- (64) *Ayiz aa?raf fiin rayah
 want.1.M.Pres. know where go.2.S.M
 'I want to know where are you going'

However, the option of focusing either the wh-phrase or another element of the sentence (subject or object) is not always available as in (63-64) below, where in (64) it is not possible to focus the wh-phrase mainly because the wh-phrase and the noun phrase refer to the same entity, in this case '*enta*' (you). Therefore, fronting the noun phrase for focus would be grammatical and leaving it in-situ is not.

- (65) *Ayiz aa?raf min enta
 want.1.M.Pres. know who you
 'I want to know who you are'

- (66) Ayiz aa?raf enta min
 want.1.M.Pres. know you who
 'I want to know who are you?'

To sum up, both French and EA keep wh-phrases in-situ in various syntactic environments. In French, the in-situ strategy is frequently employed in simple questions. EA seems to favor the in-situ strategy in both simple and embedded questions.

It is the aim of this study to consider wh-movement in French and EA in view of the above situation. The facts of French and EA just reviewed raise the following issues, which are dealt with in the following section: French and EA do not exhibit wh-movement. Instead, they favor to keep their wh-phrases in-situ and when movement is observed it is argued that it is triggered by focus. This proposal will mainly solve the problem of optionality of movement within a language and avoid dealing with the problematic wh feature strength.

4. Analyzing wh-movement in French and Egyptian Arabic

Following the description about French and Egyptian Arabic wh-questions in the previous section, I argue that neither French nor EA adopt the wh-movement strategy and favor to leave their wh-elements in-situ except in some specific syntactic contexts. Even when wh-movement seems to apply in these two languages, it is more of a focus movement that is occurring. Indeed, when looking at both French and EA wh-movement, there are examples where there is a focus interpretation in the case where phrases are displaced. This is explained by data below:

- (67) Tu as acheté quoi ?
- (68) *Quoi as-tu acheté ?
- (69) Qu'est ce que tu as acheté ?

In (67), the wh-phrase *quoi* is base-generated in the object position and moving it would be ungrammatical as we can see in (68). Following Hirschbühler and Bouchard (1987) analysis of *quoi* and *que*, where they argued that *que* is a clitic and that *quoi* is an allomorph of *que*, I suggest that (68) above is ungrammatical because of *quoi*. Indeed, since *que/quoi* are two allomorphs in complementary distribution. The strong form tends to be located in positions requiring clitic features.

Since *que* is considered as the strong form, *quoi* is excluded from the clitic position.

In EA, as demonstrated in Sections 2 and 3, wh-phrases in simple questions always remain in-situ and there are no grammatical examples of wh-movement in simple questions. I suggest that the reason for the non-focus use of wh-phrases in simple questions comes from the fact that EA has a basic SVO order that favors the VSO order by moving the V to get focus (for a discussion of word order in Arabic dialects, see Mahfoudhi 2002). Since wh-phrases are related to either subject or object in interrogative sentences, then focus still remains on the verb as we can see from sentences below:

- (70) Seme?t eeh ?
 Hear.2.S.M.Past What ?
 'What did you hear ?'
- (71) Guit ezzaay ?
 Come.2.S.M.Past How ?
 'How did you come ?'
- (72) Rayah fiin ?
 Go 2.S.M.Pres. Where ?
 'Where are you going ?'

As far as embedded questions are concerned, French exhibits overt wh-movement. I follow Denham's suggestions that wh-phrases have to move in embedded questions whenever the matrix verb has interrogative features like *demander*, *savoir* C is selected by these verbs and wh-movement occurs (see section 2 for Denham's analysis of wh-movement in embedded questions). In EA, I suggest that wh-phrases usually remain in-situ in embedded questions. EA prefers to focus the verb or verb phrase rather than the wh-phrase. Therefore, I conclude that both French and EA lack wh-movement that is triggered by a strong +wh feature. Both languages favor to leave their wh-phrases in-situ but whenever a wh-phrase moves, a focus feature is considered as triggering such movement.

As far as focus movement is concerned, it provides a natural account of wh-movement interpretation. Interpreting wh-movement

in interrogative sentences as focus movement has already been considered in the literature by many linguists such as Rochemont (1986), Rochemont and Cullicover (1990) Boeckx (1999), Vergnaud and Zubizaretta (2000) and many others. According to Rochemont (1986: 177-78), 'Focus is a syntactically represented notion with systematic though varying phonological and semantic interpretation'. In French, a SVO language, *wh*-movement occurs for focus reasons whenever we want to highlight the information in the *wh*-element. In EA, a VSO language, the verb is usually preferably focused leaving *wh*-phrases focus as secondary.

Further research must be conducted to analyze the syntactic as well as the semantic interpretative differences that French and EA questions exhibit when *wh*-phrases move or stay in-situ mainly for focus reasons. This research should exploit Boeckx's 1999 analysis of French and expand it to EA, a language that exhibits similar features concerning question formation, especially in making available the in-situ strategy as in French. Boeckx departs from a *wh*-feature strength that explains *wh*-fronting in French because this type of explanation does not explain why *wh*-phrases in this same language remain in-situ. He instead considers that since French makes available two strategies to form questions there must be two interpretations of question formations. In fact, he considers that there is interpretative differences between the two strategies: fronting French questions correspond to a general information seeking strategy and in-situ French questions correspond to a detail-information seeking strategy. He also adds that *wh*-in-situ questions require a familiarity of a particular type with the topic (i.e. participants share background information before the utterance) however, there is no need for familiarity in the case of fronted *wh*-phrases as described in Section 3 above. It is interesting to explore in-depth Boeckx's proposal by applying it to EA and see if it works to capture the interpretative differences that exists between fronted *wh*-questions and in-situ *wh*-questions in EA.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that both French and EA have *wh*-movement only under specific conditions triggered by features of these

specific conditions and not features of wh-movement. In the case of French, I followed Denham's (2000) proposal. Namely, French does not insert C in overt syntax in simple questions but does that in embedded questions because specific matrix verbs require this early selection of C, which triggers overt movement of the wh-phrase. I also added that in French overt wh-movement in simple questions is triggered by a focus feature, joining some recent proposals by Boeckx and Zubizarreta and Vergnaud, French wh-phrases in simple questions do not require to move to check out the +wh feature on C, instead, they move to check the focus feature on Focus position. This interpretation of wh-movement in French simple questions has been supported by the behavior of the wh-phrase *quoi* which can only be in-situ and cannot undergo movement. A second argument that supports the in-situ strategy in French questions is linked to Vergnaud and Zubizarreta's 2000 analysis of focus in French questions briefly described in Section 3. A third argument that supports the in-situ analysis is Boeckx's (1999) analysis of French questions presented in section 3 above. I have also illustrated that French data showing the high frequent use of wh-phrases in-situ does suggest that French is a language that favors to leave its wh-phrases in-situ or move them to satisfy a focus feature. In the case of Egyptian Arabic, I proposed that it is also a language that does not exhibit wh-movement and that any instance of overt wh-movement is triggered by a focus feature that must be checked by fronting the wh-element to the Focus position. Future research, based on Boeckx's (1999) proposal will enable us to capture the interpretative differences between fronted wh-phrases and wh-in situ and will enable us to better analyze the importance of focus as the main explanation to wh-movement in languages such as French and EA. Further research is also needed to explore the different types of foci as presented by Vergnaud and Zubizarreta 2000 (briefly discussed in Section 3 above) to see which type of focus is compatible with which question form, the fronted or the in-situ.

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