

Optional Wh-Movement and Clefts

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1. Introduction

In this paper, I will discuss a word order for wh-questions known as Simple Partial Movement. This construction is available in several languages, including Dholuo, Kikuyu, and Malay. In all of these languages, wh *in situ* and wh-fronting word orders are also possible. The purpose of this paper will be to show that Simple Partial Movement is not clefting in at least Dholuo and Kikuyu. I will present a better analysis couched in the syntax and semantics of wh-questions found in Cable (2010).

In many languages, there are several ways to ask a wh-question: the wh-item may appear *in situ*, fronted to the scope position of the question, or in a left peripheral position of an embedded clause. These word orders are exemplified for Dholuo and Kikuyu in (1) and (2). The wh-item is set in **bold**.

- (1) a. Onyango owacho ni Pamba ogweo **ng'a**?
Onyango said that Pamba kick **who**
b. **ng'a** ma Onyango owacho ni Pamba ogweo?
who Onyango said that Pamba kick
c. Pamba owacho ni **ng'a** ma Onyango ogweo?
Pamba said that **who** Onyango kicked
'Who did Pamba say Onyango kicked?' Dholuo, field notes
- (2) a. Maina augire atĩ Mwangi onire **ũũ**?
M. said that M. saw who
b. N-**ũũ** Maina augire atĩ Mwangi onire?
FOC-who M. said that M. saw
c. Maina augire atĩ n-**ũũ** Mwangi onire?
M. said that FOC-who M. saw
'Who did Maina say that Mwangi saw?' Kikuyu, field notes

The question with the wh-item in the intermediate position (1-c) and (2-c) is a construction called Simple Partial Movement (SPM) (Fanselow, 2006). SPM is defined by the location of the wh-item in a position that c-commands its theta position, but is c-commanded by the scope position of the question, and by the fact that there is no overt scope marker in the scope position of the question. Prior analyses have analyzed SPM as clefting. Although this may be a good analysis for Malay, it does not work for Dholuo and Kikuyu.

2. Simple Partial Movement

In this section, I will present basic facts about SPM in Dholuo and Kikuyu. The Dholuo data I will present are from elicitations. Kikuyu data are both from elicitations and published literature.

In all languages that have SPM, wh *in situ* and wh-fronting word orders are also possible. In at least Dholuo and Kikuyu, all of these constructions are available for both wh-arguments and wh-adjuncts. (1) and (2) were examples with wh-arguments. (3) and (4) exemplify wh-adjuncts in the various positions.

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- (3) a. Pamba paro ni nyasi chakre **saadi**?
P. thinks that party starts **when**
b. Pamba paro ni **saadi** ma nyasi chakre?
P. thinks that **when** party starts
c. **Saadi** ma Pamba paro ni nyasi chakre?
when P. thinks that party starts
'When does Pamba think the party starts?' Dholuo, f.n.
- (4) a. Mwangi onire Maina **rĩĩ**?
M. saw M. where
b. Mwangi **nĩ-rĩĩ** onire Maina?
M. FOC-where saw M.
c. **Nĩ-rĩĩ** Mwangi onire Maina?
FOC-where M. saw M.
'Where did Mwangi see Maina?' Kikuyu, f.n.

In the SPM sentences we have seen thus far, there has been one embedded clause, and the wh-item appeared in the left periphery of that clause. With more layers of embedding, the wh-item can appear in any of the intervening left peripheries, so there are more positions available for the wh-item.

- (5) a. Onyango paro ni Ochieng' owacho ni Achieng' ohero **ng'a**?
Onyango thinks that Ochieng' said that Achieng' loves **who**
b. Onyango paro ni Ochieng' owacho ni **ng'a** ma Achieng' ohero?
Onyango thinks that Ochieng' said that **who** Achieng' loves
c. Onyango paro ni **ng'a** ma Ochieng' owacho ni Achieng' ohero?
Onyango thinks that **who** Ochieng' said that Achieng' loves
d. **ng'a** ma Onyango paro ni Ochieng' owacho ni Achieng' ohero?
who Onyango thinks that Ochieng' said that Achieng' loves
'Who does Onyango think Ochieng' said Achieng' loves?' Dholuo, f.n.

In both Dholuo and Kikuyu, a moved wh-item is accompanied by a morpheme that is absent in the wh *in situ* construction. In Dholuo it is *ma* and in Kikuyu it is *nĩ* or *n-*. In Kikuyu, wh-movement seems to be a special case of a Focus movement process using *nĩ* (Schwarz, 2003; Muriungi, 2005; Fanselow, 2006). The Focused element can be moved to the front, or partially moved, and is preceded by *nĩ*. Following the literature, I gloss *nĩ* as FOC. In Dholuo, SPM and fronting is limited to wh-items. There is no productive Focus-fronting process that uses *ma*. The syllable *ma* appears in relative clauses and a number of other constructions that might be analyzed as reduced relatives.

The fact that this marker appears in relative clauses makes SPM in Dholuo look superficially like clefting. This is the case in other languages with SPM, including Malay (Cole & Hermon, 2000). Due to the resemblance to clefts, wh-movement word orders in many SPM languages have been analyzed as clefting in the past (Bergvall, 1987; Cole & Hermon, 2000; Fanselow, 2006).

3. What are clefts, anyway?

In order to investigate the hypothesis that SPM is clefting, I will clarify what clefting is. There are at least three different types of clefts: it-clefts, pseudoclefts (i.e. wh-clefts), and reverse pseudoclefts. All clefts have three essential parts: a Focused element, a copula, and something that looks like a relative clause. It-clefts also have an expletive 'it' (Jespersen, 1927; Lambrecht, 2001).

- (6) It was Bill who/that I saw.
IT COP FOC relative clause

it-cleft, English

- (7) Who I saw was Bill.
relative clause COP FOC
pseudocleft, English
- (8) Bill was who I saw
FOC COP relative clause
reverse pseudocleft, English

If the Focused element is a wh-item, the cleft is a wh-question.

- (9) **Who** was it that I saw?
FOC COP IT relative clause
it-cleft question, English
- (10) ?***Who** was who I saw?
FOC COP relative clause
(reverse) pseudocleft question, English

In a language that has silent copulas and expletives, we expect it-cleft questions and reverse pseudocleft questions to simply look like a wh-item followed by a relative clause.

- (11) $\emptyset \emptyset$ **Who** that I saw?
IT COP FOC relative clause
it-cleft question
- (12) **Who** \emptyset that I saw?
FOC COP relative clause
reverse pseudocleft question

This is exactly how a wh-fronting question looks in Dholuo. The first element is the wh-item, the Focused element. After that is the rest of the clause, introduced by *ma*, which looks just like a relative clause. So if we assume that Dholuo has silent copulas and expletives, the wh-fronting word order for wh-questions looks exactly like an in-cleft question or reverse pseudocleft question.

- (13) **ng'a** ma Onyango owacho ni Pamba ogweo?
FOC relative clause
'Who was it that Pamba said Onyango kicked?'
Dholuo, cleft analysis

This word order resemblance is the main appeal of the clefting analysis of SPM and wh-fronting in these languages. I will now provide evidence that SPM and wh-fronting in Dholuo and Kikuyu are not clefting.

4. SPM is not (always) clefting

In this section, I will provide arguments that wh-fronting and SPM in Dholuo and Kikuyu are not clefting.

4.1. Availability of overt copula

Recall that for the word order resemblance between clefting and wh-movement to be perfect, we need the language to have silent copulas. The Dholuo copula is not silent, or at least not always silent. The cleft analysis might still be salvaged if we said that the Dholuo copula is sometimes silent. If wh-movement is just clefting with a null version of the copula, we would expect that an overt copula would be available in wh-movement constructions.

However, in the wh-movement word order in (14-a), there is no place to put a copula. Usually, in a cleft in Dholuo, the overt copula would appear before the Focused element. In (14), in which the wh-item appears after the tense pronoun, an overt copula produces ungrammaticality whether it is before or after the tense pronoun.

- (14) a. nyo **ng'a** ma omiel?
 HEST **who** danced
 ‘Who danced yesterday?’
 b. *nyo en **ng'a** ma omiel?
 HEST COP **who** danced
 ‘Who danced yesterday?’
 c. *en nyo **ng'a** ma omiel?
 COP HEST **who** danced
 ‘Who danced yesterday?’

Dholuo, f.n.

The unavailability of the overt copula suggests that the silent copula is also unavailable. Thus, the construction is not a cleft.

4.2. Cleft semantics

Clefts have special semantics associated with them, often described as existence and uniqueness/exhaustivity conditions. The context must be such that there is exactly one salient element of whom the predicate expressed by the relative clause holds. Informally, (15-a) presupposes that exactly one salient individual writes poetry (Chomsky, 1972), while (15-b) does not.

- (15) a. No, it is BILL who writes poetry. Chomsky (1972)
 b. Bill writes poetry.

A question that is a cleft is only felicitous if the speaker believes there is a unique answer to the question. The cleft question in (16) is bad in a “mention some” context, where the speaker does not have any preconceptions about how many different foods go well with goat meat.

- (16) Context: The speaker has goat meat and is trying to decide how to prepare it. He has no knowledge about what sorts of foods go well with goat meat and asks his friend for advice.
 He asks:

#What is it that goes well with goat?

English

Dholuo wh-movement word orders do not have these semantics. They are available with “mention some” contexts, like (17).

- (17) Context: The speaker has goat meat and is trying to decide how to prepare it. He has no knowledge about what sorts of foods go well with goat meat and asks his friend for advice.
 He asks:

ang'o ma dhiga ma ber gi ring diel?
 what goes good with meat goat
 ‘What goes well with goat?’

Dholuo, f.n.

It seems that if the question has an overt copula, it is a cleft. If the copula is pronounced in a Dholuo wh-fronting question, the characteristic cleft semantics appears.

- (18) a. ng'a ma nyo ok omiel?
 who PST NEG danced
 ‘Who didn't dance yesterday?’
 b. en ng'a ma nyo ok omiel?
 COP who PST NEG danced
 ‘Who was it that didn't dance yesterday?’

Dholuo, f.n.

(18-a) is good in a neutral context, such as one in which the speaker is talking to his friend, who did attend the dance recital, and wondering if there were any changes to the program. Our consultant

reported that (18-b) is bad in the neutral context. A good context for (18-b) is one in which the speaker heard that one dancer had injured himself, but could not remember who it was. These data make sense if we suppose that the Dholuo questions with an overt copula are clefts, and the questions without an overt are not clefts.

Another “mention some” context is one in which the speaker wants suggestions for what to feed children. A cleft is bad in this context, as in (19).

- (19) a. What do children like to eat?
b. #What is it that children like to eat? English

In this context, wh-movement and wh *in situ* constructions in Dholuo are both felicitous, as in (20).

- (20) a. nyitendo ohero chamo ang'o?
children like eat what
'What do children like to eat?'
b. ang'o ma nyitendo ohero chamo?
what children like eat
'What do children like to eat?' Dholuo, f.n.

Again, wh-movement word orders do not seem to have cleft semantics. This suggests that those word orders are not created through clefting.

4.3. Multiple wh-questions in Dholuo and Kikuyu

Schwarz (2003) provides several arguments that Kikuyu wh-movement is not clefting. One of his arguments comes from multiple wh-questions, which I will now report. I will also show that this argument works for Dholuo.

Clefted multiple wh-questions are either universally bad or extremely rare (Schwarz, 2003).

- (21) a. *Who is it that sold what? English
b. *Wer ist es, der was verkauft hat?
who is it that what sold has
'Who is it that sold what?' German, Schwarz (2003)

For Dholuo speakers who accept multiple wh-questions, it is possible to move one wh-item and leave the other *in situ*, as in (22).

- (22) **ang'o** ma Ochieng' omiyo **ng'a**?
what Ochieng' gave who
'Who did Ochieng' give what?' Dholuo, f.n.

The same is true for Kikuyu multiple wh-questions.

- (23) Noo w-ɛnd-iri-ɛ kee?
FOC.who PP-sell-ASP-FV what
'Who sold what?' Kikuyu, Schwarz (2003)

If wh-movement in Dholuo and Kikuyu was clefting, we would expect that wh-movement would be impossible in multiple wh-questions. However, wh-movement is possible in both of these questions. This suggests that wh-movement in these languages is not clefting.

4.4. Kikuyu: wh-movement is monoclausal

Kikuyu has processes of topicalization and left dislocation which are clausebound (Schwarz, 2003; Bergvall, 1987). (24) is an example of topicalization. In (24), the topicalized element ‘in front of the house’ can move to the edge of the clause, but not beyond.

- (24) a. Abdul ne-uyire [ate nyina ne-ɔ:n-ire iβuku **mbere ya nyomba**]
 A. FOC-said that ?.mother FOC-saw book **in.front of house**
- b. Abdul ne-uy-ire [ate **mbere ya nyomba** nyina ne-ɔ:nire iβuku t]
 A. FOC-said that **in.front of house** ?.mother FOC-saw book t
- c. **#mbere ya nyomba** Abdul ne-uy-ire [ate nyina ne-ɔ:n-ire iβuku t]
in.front of house A. FOC-said that ?.mother FOC-saw book t
 ‘Abdul said that (his) mother saw a/the book in front of the house.’ Kikuyu, Schwarz (2003)

Schwarz uses topicalization and left dislocation as diagnostics for the edge of a clause. An element can be topicalized or left-dislocated beyond a wh-item, as in (25). This indicates that wh-movement happens within a clause. Since clefting involves movement from within a relative clause to outside it, this means that wh-movement in Kikuyu cannot be clefting.

- (25) Abdul ne-kee ađomayera mwana?
 A. FOC-what read child
 ‘What does Abdul read to the child?’ Kikuyu, Schwarz (2003)

5. Analysis of Dholuo and Kikuyu

This analysis is based on the syntax and semantics of questions in Cable (2010). In that system, wh-question semantics are divided between three morphemes: the wh-item, Q, and the question operator.

- The **wh-item** merges in its thematic position. Semantically, it generates Focus alternatives, in the sense of Rooth (1985) and has no regular semantic value.
- **Q** merges anywhere in the tree where it c-commands the wh-item and then moves to the scope position of the question. Q is a variable over choice functions which take as their domain the Focus-semantic value of Q’s sister.
- The **question operator** is in the scope position of the question. It is an existential operator operating on Q.

Cable (2010) addresses two main types of languages: wh-fronting languages and wh *in situ* languages. In both languages, Q must move to the question operator. In wh-fronting languages, Q must Agree with the wh-item and projects a QP, which becomes the target of movement. When the QP moves, the wh-item moves with it. Since Q must agree with the wh-item, Q cannot merge in too far from the wh-item.

In other languages, Q does not Agree with the wh-item or project a QP. Q adjoins anywhere where it c-commands the wh-item. Q is the target of movement and then moves to the scope position of the question. The following table summarizes the two languages.

| | Q Agrees with wh-item | Q does not Agree |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Q projects QP | wh-fronting languages | ?? |
| Q adjoins to XP | ?? | wh <i>in situ</i> languages |

I propose that Dholuo and Kikuyu are languages in which Q must Agree with the wh-item, but does not project a QP.

| | Q Agrees with wh-item | Q does not Agree |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Q projects QP | wh-fronting languages | ?? |
| Q adjoins to XP | Dholuo, Kikuyu | wh <i>in situ</i> languages |

First, the *wh*-item is base-generated in its *in situ* position. *Q* is base-generated anywhere where it *c*-commands the *wh*-item and does not project a *QP*. Since *Q* must Agree with the *wh*-item, the *wh*-item may have to move to a phase edge to satisfy locality conditions. After Agree is satisfied, *Q* moves to the scope position of the question.

If *Q* is base-generated in the same phase as the *wh*-item, the *wh*-item will not need to move. If *Q* is base-generated in a higher phase, the *wh*-item will have to move to a phase edge right below *Q* in order to Agree. So the *wh*-item may appear in its *in situ* position, or in any phase edge between the *in situ* position and the scope position of the question, depending on where *Q* is base-generated.

One main prediction of this analysis of SPM is that any language that has SPM will also have *wh*-fronting and *wh in situ* word orders available. This is borne out (Fanselow, 2006).

6. Malay *wh*-movement as clefting

The fact that *wh*-movement in Dholuo and Kikuyu is not always clefting does not prohibit clefting from creating similar word orders in other languages or at other times. For example, Dholuo *wh ex situ* word orders with overt copulas have cleft semantics, and thus are probably clefts. Another probably example of clefting is *wh*-movement word orders in Malay.

- (26) en ng'a ma nyo ok omiel?
 COP who PST NEG danced
 'Who was it that didn't dance yesterday?' Dholuo, f.n.

6.1. Headless relatives in Malay

Malay may be a language in which SPM and *wh*-fronting word orders are achieved through clefting, as previous analyses have said (Cole & Hermon, 2000; Saddy, 1991). Cole & Hermon (2000) analyze *wh ex situ* constructions as a *wh*-item and a headless relative clause introduced by *yang*. In Malay, adjunct headless relatives with *yang* do not exist, as in (27), and accordingly, adjunct *wh*-movement with *yang* is also impossible, as in (28).

- (27) a. *Yang Fatimah belajar adalah bagaimana?
 that F. study be how
 'The way that Fatimah studies is how?'
 b. *Yang dia lakukan itu adalah bagaimana?
 that he did this be how
 'The way that he did this is how?'
 c. *Yang Fatimah pergi adalah kenapa?
 that F. leave be why
 'The reason that Fatimah left is why?' BI Malay, Cole & Hermon (2000)
- (28) Kenapa (*yang) Ali dipecat?
 why that A. fired
 'Why was Ali fired?' BI Malay, Cole & Hermon (2000)

This suggests that *wh ex situ* constructions in Malay contain a headless relative clause.

6.2. Malay is not like Dholuo

In Malay, *wh in situ* is allowed within islands, but *wh ex situ* word orders are disallowed (Cole & Hermon, 2000).

- (29) a. Kamu men-cemburui Bill [karena saya berbicara dengan siapa]?
 you be jealous of B. because I spoke with who
 'Who did you get jealous of Bill because I spoke with ...?'
 b. *Kamu men-cemburui Bill [karena dengan siapa yang saya berbicara]?
 you be jealous of B. because with who that I spoke
 'Who did you get jealous of Bill because I spoke with ...?' BI Malay, Saddy (1991)

This suggests that there is movement when we see it, and not when we don't, which is counter to my analysis of Dholuo and Kikuyu. It is also an example of a major difference between wh *in situ* constructions and wh-movement constructions. We do not see this same distinction in Dholuo. There is very little evidence of differences in island sensitivity between different word orders.

These data suggest that wh-movement word orders in Malay behave differently from wh *in situ* word orders. This is more consistent with the clefting analysis of wh-movement than with an analysis similar to mine for Dholuo and Kikuyu.

7. Conclusion

Simple Partial Movement is a word order in which the wh-item is *ex situ* but not in the scope position of the question. In SPM languages, wh *in situ* and wh-fronting word orders are also available. In many of these languages, including Dholuo and Kikuyu, these word orders look superficially like clefts, and so it is tempting to analyze SPM as clefting.

I presented evidence that for Dholuo and Kikuyu, a clefting analysis does not work. Wh-movement word orders did not have the same properties or syntactic characteristics as clefts. However, clefting is still possible as a way to create wh-movement. We see this mechanism in Dholuo questions with an overt copula, and very possibly in Malay wh-movement constructions.

Abbreviations

COP = copula, FOC = focus marker, HEST = hesternal past ('yesterday'), NEG = negation, PST = past

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