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Syntactic Processes Dealing With the Derivation of WH-Multiple Questions

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the syntactic processes involved in deriving Persian WH-multiple questions. Therefore, the function of WH-words in these constructs regarding the syntactic processes is examined. It also clarifies which syntactic functions justify their sequential or split orders. The research method is descriptive-analytic on the base of Chomsky's Minimalist approach (1995). Research data was collected from books, Media, newspapers, social networks and Google search engine and native speakers' speech. Data analysis shows that in sequential WH-multiple questions (both types), backward deletion occurs in which the identical constituent in the first clause is deleted under identity. In these constructions, the first WH-word remains in situ and the second one moves to the focus phrase after deleting the identical constituent. Scrambling is just possible with adjunct- adjunct and adjunct-argument order in these constructions. In split WH- multiple questions, the deletion of identical constituent occurs in the second clause as forward deletion in which both WH-words remanin in situ. Scrambling in these constructions is also possible with adjunct-adjunct and adjunct-argument order. Scrambling and superiority of WH-words are not permitted in WH-multiple questions with any order of WH-words.

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1. Introduction

Among the constructions that Chomsky examines in the form of minimalist approach are WH-questions. These constructions are observed in two types, yes /no questions and WH-questions which is the aim of the present study. Sometimes WH-questions consisting of two or more WH-words, named WH-multiple questions. These constructions are in two types: sequential and split. Sequential WH-multiple questions are themselves divided into two types of simple (without coordinator) and coordinated (with coordinator). In split one, WH-words are separated. The present study seeks to answer these questions: What is the function of WH-words in WH-multiple questions with respect to the syntactic processes, and which syntactic operations justify their sequential or split nature?

2. Literature Review

A review of the research literature shows that WH-quesions have been studied only in terms of structure, type and movement of WH-words in Persian just in single WH-word questions and none of them examined the syntactic processes in the derivation of Persian WH- multiple ones. Therefore, conducting such a study in relation to WH-multiple questions based on Chomsky's Minimalist Program (1995) distinguishes itself from other similar studies in this field.

3. Methodology

The research method is descriptive-analytic based on the principles of Chomsky's (1995) Minimalist Program as theoretical framework.

4. Results

The examination of data shows that in coordinated WH-questions (both types), the common constituent in the first clause is deleted under identity and satisfying language economy. In other words, backward deletion occurs. In the coordinate WH-questions (both types), the first WH-word remains in-situ and under identity and thus deleting it, the second WH-word moves to the focus phrase.

In contrast, in split WH-questions, forward deletion occures in which the deletion of identical clause occurs in the second clause, leaving a gap in the position of identical elements, and both WH-words are placed in their original unmarked place. In this type of WH-questions, the movement of WH-word leads to the ungrammaticality of WH-construction and as a result, Persian speakers will not accept it. Therefore, It has been concluded since no movement occurs in this type of constructions, there is no need to apply the attract closest principle.

Also, the analysis of data shows that scrambling of two adjuct-adjunct WH-word in sequential coordinate WH-question is possible. But in multiple WH-question, scrambling and superiority leads to unacceptable and sometimes ungrammatical constructions. Thus, contrary to Bošković's (1999) view that focus languages do not show superiority effects, multiple WH-questions in Persian, which is a focus language, shows it. In split WH-questions, scrambling of two adjunct- adjunct WH-words is possible.

In coordinate WH-questions with adjunct-argument order, scrambling of two WH-words is possible. On the contrary, this kind of scrambling in Persian multiple WH-question leads to ungrammatical construction. In contrast, scrambling of adjunct- argument WH-words in split WH-questions is allowed and the result is a grammatical and acceptable construction. Scrambling of WH-words with the order of augment-adjunct is not possible in any of the coordinate, multiple and split WH-questions and the result will be an ungrammatical WH-question.

In coordinate WH-questions with the order of argument-argument WH-words, if the case markers accompanying WH-words are deleted, the construction will be ungrammatical and in the case of two argument WH-words scrambling, the construction will be grammatical, but not acceptable for Persian speakers. In multiple WH-quesions, scrambling of two WH-words is not possible. In split WH-question with two argument WH-words, scrambling is impossible and ungrammatical. The results also show that argument coordination can only occur with transitive verbs.

293

5. Discussion

It has been discussed and examined what syntactic processes involved in derivatiing of WH-multiple questions? And which syntactic operations justify its sequential or split properties. In thi way, WH-multiple questions in different orders of adjunct-adjunct, adjunct-argument, argument-adjunct, and argument-argument, have separately been studied.

6. Conclusion

We concluded that the existence of multiple WH-questions in Persian as a pro-drop language violates the view of Sitko (2013) who claims that pro-drop languages allow multiple WH-word rising.

In general, the syntactic processes involved in WH-multiple questions of Persian are: finding the identical constitute and deleting it, remaining the first WH-word in-situ and moving the second WH-word to focus phrase.

Notes

1. In this study, we investigate only WH-multiple questions with two WH-words.

2. Acceptability

3. Unacceptability

4. Lubańska

5. *Stefano*

6. Pro- drop languages

7. Covert wh-movement

8. Empty wh-operator

9. Overt wh-movement

10. Merge

11. A-position: A position that takes a semantic role and corresponds to traditional subject and object position.

12. A′-position: A position that does not take a Ө-role. Such as adjuncts position and specifier position of CP

13. Scrambling

14. Conceptual-intentional

294

15. Articulatory-perceptual

16. Occam's Razor

17. Attract Closest Principal: According to this principle, which is assumed to attract a   particular type of structure, attracts the closest possible structure of that type.

18. Superiority condition

19. Deletion under identity