Wh-expletives in Hindi-Urdu: the \( vP \) phase

Emily Manetta, UC Santa Cruz  
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1. Introduction

This paper brings together three current strands of work on wh-dependencies:

- The specifier of \( vP \) may be as much a crucial intermediate stopping point in long wh-movement as is the specifier of CP (Chomsky 2005, Richards 2005)
- Wh-expletives are featurally deficient, and when merged into the specifier of a functional head, leave that head free to Agree with an unraised wh-phrase (Simpson 2000, Manetta 2005)
- Significant intra-language variation can be attributed to the featural properties of the phase-defining heads (\( C, v, D \)) (Chomsky 2005)

Goal: Bringing together these strands of research provides an understanding of small but fundamental contrasts brought out in a micro-comparison of the syntax of wh-dependencies in Hindi-Urdu and Kashmiri

There are two ways to form a long-distance wh-dependency in Hindi-Urdu:

Wh-displacement

(1) Sita-ne \( \text{kis-co} \) socaa ki Ravii-ne _____ dekhaa?  
Sita-erg who-acc thought that Ravi-erg saw  
‘Who did Sita think that Ravi saw?’

Wh-expletive construction

(2) Sita-ne \( \text{kyaa} \) socaa ki Ravii-ne \( \text{kis-co} \) dekhaa?  
Sita-erg expl thought that Ravi-erg who-acc saw  
‘Who did Sita think that Ravi saw?’

Long-distance wh-dependencies in Kashmiri appear superficially quite similar, but we will see in the next section that there are deep differences:

Wh-displacement

(3) tse \( \text{kem'} \) chu-y ba:sa:n ki mohn-as dits __ kita:b  
you who aux think that Mohan gave book  
‘Who do you think gave Mohan the book?’

Wh-expletive construction

(4) tse \( \text{k'ra} \) chu-y ba:sa:n ki mohn-as \( \text{kem'} \) dits kita:b  
you expl aux think that Mohan who gave book  
‘Who do you think gave Mohan the book?’

Core proposal:

- The sets of features that drive wh-constructions in the two languages are the same
- The crucial features appear on different phase-defining heads in each language: on \( C \) in Kashmiri and on \( v \) in Hindi-Urdu
2. Wh-dependencies in Kashmiri

2.1 Basic facts

Kashmiri is V2, with any constituent potentially appearing before the verb¹:

(5) a. aslaman dits mohnas kita:b ra:mini kh’t:raÆ ra:th
   aslam-erg gave Mohan-dat book Ram-dat for yesterday
   ‘Aslam gave Mohan a book for Ram yesterday.’

b. mohnas dits aslaman kita:b ramini kh’t:raÆ ra:th

c. kita:b dits aslaman mohnas ramini kh’t:raÆ ra:th

d. ra:mini kh’t:raÆ dits aslaman mohnas kita:b ra:th

e. ra:th dits aslaman mohnas kita:b ra:mini kh’t:raÆ

Wh-phrases immediately precede the second-position verb. A topic may also appear preverbally just when a wh-phrase is present (Bhatt 1999).

(6) a. rajan kÇmis he:v nev kita:b?
   Raj whom showed new book
   ‘To whom did Raj show his new book?’

b. kÇm’ he:v shi:las nev kita:b ra:th
   who showed Sheila new book yesterday
   ‘Who showed a new book to Sheila yesterday?’

Kashmiri finite complement clauses have identical word order to matrix clauses. I repeat here the two types of long-distance wh-dependencies.

(7) Mira: k’a: chi yatsha:n  ki  su gotsh   anun ____.
   Mira  what aux wants   that  he should bring
   What does Mira want that he should bring?

(8) Mira: k’a: chi yatsha:n  ki  k’a: su gotsh   anun.
   Mira  expl  aux wants   that  what he should bring
   What does Mira want that he should bring?

(9) tse kem’ chu-y ba:sa:n ki  mohn-as dits  __  kita:b
   you who aux think that Mohan gave  book
   ‘Who do you think gave Mohan the book?’

(10) tse k’a:  chu-y ba:sa:n ki  mohn-as kem’ dits kita:b
    you expl aux think that Mohan who gave  book
    ‘Who do you think gave Mohan the book?’

- In both Hindi-Urdu and Kashmiri wh-material (wh-expletives and full wh-phrases) appears preverbally
- In Kashmiri the verb is in second position, so the wh-material is in Spec, CP

2.2 Accounting for wh-expletives in Kashmiri (Manetta 2005)

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¹ All Kashmiri data is from Wali and Koul (1997) unless otherwise indicated.
This is an approach that has as its goal a unified account of the \(A\) and \(A\)-bar expletives, and therefore relies on the valuing of features via the operations Move and Agree.

**A-system:**
- A head (Probe) may Agree with a nominal (Goal) in a mutual valuing of features
- Move (Agree + pied-piping + internal Merge) occurs if the EPP is present
- If a DP-expletive happens to be in the numeration, it can merge to satisfy the EPP; the features on the probe are valued via interacting with another DP in its domain
- Operations are limited to the phase (the unit in which derivations proceed)

**A-bar system:**
- Heads and wh-XPs will possess interpretable and uninterpretable features
- If EPP is present, an accessible wh-XP will undergo Move
- If a wh-expletive is in the numeration, it can merge to satisfy the EPP
- The uninterpretable features on the A-bar probe will be valued by interacting with an accessible wh-XP via static Agree over some distance.

For a single-clause Kashmiri constituent question:
(11) \(\text{rajan kemis he:v nev kita:b?}\)
   Raj whom showed new book
   ‘To whom did Raj show his new book?’
- In Kashmiri C will always have the EPP: \([\text{wh-features}] [\text{EPP}]\)

**Full wh-movement from an embedded clause:**
(9) \(\text{tse kem' chu-y ba:sa:n ki mohn-as dits kita:b}\)
   you who aux think that Mohan gave book
   ‘Who do you think gave Mohan the book?’

(12) \(\begin{array}{c}
\text{[CP kem’} \quad \text{[C}_{(Q)} \ldots \quad \text{[v kem’} \quad [v} \\
\text{[wh-f]} \quad \text{[wh-f]} \quad \text{[wh-f]} \\
\text{[EPP]} \quad \text{[EPP]} \quad \text{[EPP]}
\end{array}
\)

**Partial wh-movement (wh-expletive construction):**
(10) \(\text{tse k’a: chu-y ba:sa:n ki mohn-as kem’ dits kita:b}\)
   you expl aux think that Mohan who gave book
   ‘Who do you think gave Mohan the book?’

(13) \(\begin{array}{c}
\text{[CP k’a} \quad \text{[C}_{(Q)} \ldots \quad \text{[v k’a} \quad [v} \\
\text{[wh-f-u]} \quad \text{[wh-f]} \quad \text{[wh-f]} \\
\text{[EPP]} \quad \text{[EPP]} \quad \text{[EPP]}
\end{array}\)

3. Wh-expletive Constructions in Hindi-Urdu
Major differences between Hindi-Urdu and Kashmiri
- Hindi-Urdu is not V2 like Kashmiri, but verb-final
- Wh-material is not found at the clause edge (Spec, CP)

3.1 Basic Facts of Hindi-Urdu
Hindi-Urdu is verb final, and the subject typically precedes the object:
(14) Hamid-ne pani piya
Hamid-erg water drank
‘Hamid drank water.’
(15) bacci-ne mehmaan-ko phul pesh kiye
child-erg guest-acc flowers present aux
‘The child presented flowers to the guest.’ (Schmidt 1999)

Hindi-Urdu is often described as a wh-in-situ language. There is a preference/tendency for the wh-word to appear immediately before the sentence-final verb (Bhatt 2003, Schmidt 1999, Kidwai 2000).
(16) kitaab-ko kis-ne parhi?
book-acc who read
‘Who read the book?’
(17) Hamid-ne kyaar parha?
Hamid-erg what read
‘What did Hamid read?’
(18) aap chai kab pite haiñ?
you tea when drink aux
‘When do you drink tea?’

Hindi-Urdu is a scrambling language; other word orders are possible for (16-18).

I will assume the phrase-structure in (19) for simple clauses.
(19) vP
   /    \                  \   \
  Subject  \    \       \     \
        \    vP
           /   \  \
          \     \   \
             \    \ 
               Object Verb

Finite embedded clauses appear to the right of the verb in linear order.
(20) Vo jaantii hai [ki anu aayii]
She know aux that Anu come
She knows that Anu came.

We will follow Bayer (1996) in saying that finite clauses are complements in Hindi-Urdu, and that they are exceptionally taken on the right. I won’t try here to resolve issues of word order that arise as a result of this structure.
(21) vP
3.2 Wh-dependencies in Hindi-Urdu

- Movement at LF is one conceptual solution to the problem of wh-in-situ (Dayal, 1996, Mahajan 1990)
- An alternative is the operation Agree (Chomsky 2000) through which heads can interact with wh-material over a distance

Hindi-Urdu wh-in-situ

The C head at which the wh-material is interpreted need not possess the EPP property

(8) Hamid-ne kyaa paṛha?
    Hamid-erg what read
    ‘What did Hamid read?’

(22) [\[CP C [\[TP Hamid-ne kyaa paṛha]]
     \[wh-f] \[wh-f]]

Questions about (2):

(2) Sita-ne kyaa socaa ki Ravii-ne kis-ko dekhaa?
    Sita-erg expl thought that Ravi-erg who-acc saw
    ‘Who did Sita think that Ravi saw?’

- How do the features on the matrix C get valued? The wh-phrase in the embedded clause remains in some position lower than the left periphery. It cannot be the wh-expletive kyaa, which has no interpretable features.
- What is the role of the wh-expletive kyaa?
- Why is there no wh-material of any kind in the intermediate Spec, CP?

Conclusion: The analysis of Kashmiri in section 2 cannot be extended to Hindi-Urdu without modification. What is missing? An understanding of the preverbal position of wh-phrases and wh-expletives.

A Case for [Q]-bearing v:

- Rackowski and Richards (2005) are among those who have considered Spec, vP as a potential intermediate stopping point for wh-movement
- They show that matrix verbs in Tagalog must exhibit specific morphology agreeing with a finite complement clause in order for wh-extraction be possible from that clause
- If v (in addition to interrogative C) has features and the EPP which must be valued via wh-movement, wh-material will move through Spec, vP.
In a significant break with previous approaches, Rackowski and Richards claim that it is unnecessary for non-interrogative C to Agree with any wh-material at all.

(23) Who did you say Bush appointed __?
(24) a. \[ C_{[Q]} [ v [ C [ v \text{who} ]] ] \]
   b. the matrix v agrees with the embedded C
   c. \[ C_{[Q]} [ v [ C [\text{who} v \text{who} ]] ] \]
   d. \[ C_{[Q]} [ \text{who} v [ C [\text{who} v \text{who} ]] ] \]

Note: Rackowski and Richards assume that once a probe P has Agreed with a goal G, P can ignore G for the rest of the derivation (see Richards 1998, Hiraiwa 2001).

What about languages with wh-morphology in non-interrogative CPs?

Hybrid proposal:
- For some languages (Kashmiri, Irish), non-interrogative CPs are wh-positions
- For others Spec, vP is the only stopping off point for long wh-movement, and we might see languages in which wh-material can remain in Spec, vP (Hindi-Urdu)
- If this is so, we can understand the contrast between Hindi-Urdu and Kashmiri in these terms

Reexamining Hindi-Urdu wh-expletive construction in (2) in light of this approach:

(2) Sita-ne kyaa socaa ki Ravii-ne kis-ko dekhaa?
   Sita-erg expl thought that Ravi-erg who-acc saw
   ‘Who did Sita think that Ravi saw?’

(25) \[ CP [C_{[Q]} \ldots [v \text{kyaa} [v [C [v \text{kis-ko} [v \text{kis-ko} ] ] ] ] ] ] \]

Of note:
- Line above the derivation represents an Agree relation between v and C – this enables v to probe through the CP phase to the edge of the vP phase
- For more on the origin point of the wh-expletive, see Manetta (2005)

Questions answered:
- The syntactic position of preverbal wh-material in Hindi-Urdu: the specifier of vP.
Features of the full wh-phrase in the lower clause in (2) are available to higher probes because they are located on the edge of the relevant phase: the vP-phase.

- No wh-material is found in non-interrogative CPs in Hindi-Urdu because it is irrelevant for wh-movement (bearing no wh-features).
- The wh-expletive serves to value the EPP on the attracting head for long wh-movement (in Hindi-Urdu, the v head), and the features on that head may then be valued via static Agree with some other Goal. Thus wh-expletives in Hindi-Urdu and Kashmiri are governed by exactly the same mechanisms.
- Hindi-Urdu can now be considered a true case of ‘partial’ wh-movement, in that the full wh-phrase in the lower clause moves from its base position into the specifier of the embedded vP. This resolves a puzzling asymmetry between the ‘wh-expletive’ and ‘partial movement’ languages.

Let us reconsider (1), repeated here.

(1) Sita-ne kis-ko socaa ki Ravii-ne ____ dekhaa?
    Sita-erg who-acc thought that Ravi-erg saw
    ‘Who did Sita think that Ravi saw?’

Debate in the literature about the nature and grammaticality of (1):

- Wh-movement (Simpson 2000, Simpson and Battarchaya 2003)
- A form of scrambling (Dayal 1996) and unrelated to the wh-expletive construction in (2), or to wh-movement visible in other languages
- If all movement is driven by the interaction of features and/or by the EPP property, then both full wh-movement (Kashmiri) and wh-scrambling (Hindi-Urdu) must be driven by the same basic mechanisms (Chomsky 2004)

(26) [CP [C [Q] ... [vP kis-ko [v [CP [C [vP kis-ko [v kis-ko ]]]]]

Of note:

- There is no wh-expletive in the numeration, so the matrix v head must cause kis-ko to move into its specifier in order to form a licit derivation
- Whether the wh-displacement in (26) is termed wh-movement or scrambling, the wh-word is undergoing feature and EPP-driven displacement into a higher clause.

4. The Position of wh-material in Hindi-Urdu
This account implies that wh-material in Hindi-Urdu is not in-situ, as is commonly assumed, but instead in Spec, vP. This is surprising, and not obviously correct. In this section I offer three kinds of empirical support:

- Position of Focus constituents
- VP/vP adjoined adverbs
- Sluicing

**Focused Constituents**

**Hindi-Urdu:**
The grammaticalized focus position in Hindi-Urdu is the preverbal position in linear word order (Butt and King 1996, Kidwai 2000).

(27) mai-ne kamre-me [inhii tiin larkon-ko] bheja
   I-room-to [these-three boys-acc] sent
   I sent THESE three boys to the room.

(28) kitabeN kal maiN laya tha
    books yesterday I brought aux
    I brought the books yesterday (It is I who brought the books yesterday)

This suggests that there is a fixed syntactic position for focused constituents, interrogative and non-interrogative.\(^2\) It is consistent with the view of Spec, vP as that fixed position in Hindi-Urdu.

**Kashmiri:**
Similarly, Spec, CP is the canonical position for both interrogative and non-interrogative focus in Kashmiri (Bhatt 1999, Manetta 2005).

Pre-verbal constituents are generally interpreted as focused. For instance, the focus-particle –ti can only appear suffixed to constituents in this position (Bhatt 1999).

(29) bi ti go:s gari vakhtas peth
    I time-dat on
    I too went home on time.

**Adverbs**

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\(^2\) Hindi-Urdu has very flexible word order, and much work has been done on scrambling in this language, though I won’t discuss it here. Clearly these constituents can scramble following the satisfaction of criteria in this position.
Adverbs that are typically analyzed as adjoining to the vP, such as ‘always’, appear before the verb and the direct object in an unmarked Hindi-Urdu sentence (Schmidt 1999). It is also possible for the adverb to follow the object (32); this demonstrates that the wh-word cannot be in-situ.

(30) Vo mujhe hamesha cai pilata hai
He me always tea drink-cause aux
He always has me drink tea.

(31) Vo aap-ko hamesha kya pilata hai
He you always what drink-cause aux
What does he always have you drink?

(32) Vo aap-ko kya hamesha pilata hai
He you what always drink-cause aux
What does he always have you drink?

This suggests that in Hindi-Urdu, these adverbs can adjoin to vP either before or after the wh-phrase has merged into Spec, vP.³

Kashmiri:
Contrast this with Kashmiri, in which these adverbs follow the second-position verb.

(33) akh’kis sÆ:t’ chi hame:shÆ lada:n
one another with aux always fight
‘(They) always fight with each other.’

(34) tÇmis nishi Çs hameshÆ no:kar
He near have always servants
‘He always has servants.’

(35) su cha: zã:h sÇ:ras gatsh-a:n
She aux ever walk go
‘Does she ever go for a walk?’

(36) kÇmis chi hame:shÆ lada:n.
who aux always fight
Who always fights?

In Kashmiri, the verb is clearly in a position higher than the edge of vP (usually analyzed as C or the equivalent), and the wh-phrase above that (Spec, CP).

³ Similarly, Mahajan (1990) observes that for adverbs ambiguous between a ‘process’ and ‘event’ reading, the ‘event’ reading is available at either position.

(i) sita kam jaldise karthii thi:in
sita work quickly did aux
Sita worked quickly.

(ii) sita jaldise kam karthii thi:in.
Chandra (2005) adds that the direct object kam in this case must receive focal stress. This suggests in our account that kam is in Spec, vP, and when the adverb has the ‘event’ reading, it must be adjoined to Spec, vP either before or after the object. I won’t go into the larger discussion of specificity and agreement from which this data was taken here.
Sluicing
Whether or not you would expect to find sluicing in Hindi-Urdu depends on your account of sluicing. In fact, sluicing is generally possible in Hindi-Urdu (Mahajan 2005, Merchant 2001).

(37) Aisha-ne ek ciiz khariidii leken mujhe nahii pataa (ki) kyaa.
Aisha-erg a thing bought but I not know (that) what
Aisha bought something, but I don’t know what.

(38) Khadija jaldii calii jaaegii leken mujhe nahii pataa (ki) kyoN
Khadija early leave go-fut but I not know (that) why
Khadija will leave early, but I don’t know why.

However, recent work (Mahajan 2005) has given us reason to question whether the sluicing we see in Hindi-Urdu is precisely like the sluicing we see in a language like English. It appears that Hindi-Urdu sluicing does not repair island violations.

Complex NP island:

(39) *mE jaanta huN ki Ravii-ne [Salmaa-ki ek larke-ko dii hui kitaab] phar dii
I know aux that Ravi-erg Salma-dat a boy-dat gave aux book tore gave
leken mujhe nahiiN pataa (ki) kis-ko.
but I not know (that) who.
‘I know Ravi tore up the book Salma gave to a boy, but I don’t know to whom.’

(40) I believe the claim that he bit someone, but they don’t know who. (Ross 1969)

Adjunct island:

(41) *Salmaa [Raam-ke ek larkii-se milne par] bahut naaraaz hogii leken mujhe
salma ram-dat a girl-with meet upon very angry become but I
nahiiN pataa (ki) kis-se.
not know (that) who-with.
‘Salma will be angry upon Ram’s meeting with a girl, but I don’t know with whom.’

(42) Ben will be mad if Abby talks to one of the teachers, but I don’t remember which. (Merchant 2001)

Coordinate Structure island:

(43) *Ali-ne Aisha or ek larke-ko saath saath dekhaa, leken mujhe nahiiN pataa
Ali-erg Aisha and a boy-acc together saw but I not know
(ki) kis-ko.
(that) who.
‘Ali saw Aisha and a boy together, but I don’t know who’.

(44) Bob ate dinner and saw a movie that night, but he didn’t say which.

(4) Judgments here are Mahajan’s; I have confirmed these with native-speaker informants, who report significant contrast between sentences like (37)-(38) and sentences like (39), (41), and (43).
It appears that Hindi-Urdu sluicing patterns with English VP-ellipsis in not amnestying islands. Though the results are preliminary, this suggests that the constituent being sluiced may be smaller than a full clause (TP).

This observation correlates with proposals by Merchant (2002) and Fox and Lasnik (2003) which claim that the size of the gap is crucial in island amnestying.

These results would be consistent with an account in which the wh-phrase preceding the sluice is not in Spec, CP, but instead lower, in Spec, vP.

While much work remains to be done, we would expect a to see the contrast between Hindi-Urdu and Kashmiri borne out in this domain as well.

5. Conclusion

We understand the contrasts between Hindi-Urdu and Kashmiri long-distance wh-dependencies as follows:

- vP may play the same role often attributed to CP in wh-movement: it can be a position for wh-expletives and partially moved wh-phrases.
- We can attribute the position of wh-material in each language to the properties of the phase-defining heads C and v (for instance, the presence or absence of EPP). In effect, what we see is the same clausal typology in Kashmiri and Hindi-Urdu, but lower in Hindi-Urdu and higher in Kashmiri.
- The role of the wh-expletives in Hindi-Urdu is resolved: to satisfy the EPP on a given head so that the head may value its features with some other element in its domain. This is now unified with the role of wh-expletives in Kashmiri and with that of the better-studied expletives of the A-system.
References
Rackowski, Andrea and Richards, Norvin. 2005 ‘Phase edge and extraction: a Tagalog case study’. ms.