

Analysis of the Question Word Structure in Bushehri Dialect Based on Minimalism

Introduction

The construction of interrogative sentences in different languages, including the Bushehri dialect, is a function of the movement or non-movement of the interrogative word and its active or passive position. The present study uses a descriptive-analytical method within the theoretical framework of the minimal program to examine the movement of interrogative words in the Bushehri dialect.

The minimalist approach is considered one of the fundamental developments in the framework of generative grammar, which was first proposed by Chomsky (2015) in an article entitled "Notes on Economy, Derivation, and Linguistic Features" and then expanded and republished in the form of a book entitled *The Minimalist Program*. In this approach, Chomsky emphasizes the elimination of redundant steps in the process of syntactic derivation and the abandonment of redundant and unnecessary linguistic features. The principles of brevity and conciseness, as two fundamental components of this theory, play a decisive role in the construction and evaluation of syntactic analyses; in such a way that the more concise and simpler the theoretical structure is, the more desirable it is considered (Radford, 2004). The minimalist program is fundamentally based on the theory of principles and parameters, and its main goal is to explain the fundamental principles of this theory, especially the principle of economy in syntax. Therefore, minimalism can be considered in practice as an extended form of the theory of principles and parameters (Caulicover, & Jackendoff, 2005).

Literature Review

Persian is a language that is with a question-word structure in the main position and the occurrence of multiple question words in this language is not a mandatory syntactic movement, but rather the result of the initialization process. He considers the movement of the question word to be an optional process. However, due to the existence of multiple questions in this language, unlike other languages, the question-word does not operate in the main position, but rather all question phrases move to the beginning of the clause in the superstructure.

Meshkoh al-Dini (1995) also states in his research entitled "Translocation of the Question Structure in Persian Sentences and Some of Its Theoretical Results" that the movement of the question structure is a principle and its optionality or mandatory is a variable factor and the structural differences between languages can be explained based on the assumption of principles and variable factors. Unlike English, where the movement of the question word is unmarked in interrogative sentences, in Persian the movement of the question word is marked and the question word in the main position (in the focal position) is considered as an unmarked form. Therefore, Persian is one of the languages that have more flexibility in interrogative sentences than other languages. However, it should not be ignored that the movement of the question word is towards the beginning of the sentence. He also believes that if the question word is not moved, the resulting interrogative sentence is echoic and even if the movement of the question word is towards the

beginning of the sentence and accompanied by a mark, the resulting sentence is still echoic. But with the movement of the question word, this question phrase moves from its position to another position, and its first position is emptied.

Vaezi (2013) stated by examining questions in Persian that the question word in the original position is sensitive to syntactic constraints observes all syntactic principles and at the logical level also has a behavior similar to the obvious movement of the question word (syntactic movement). He considered such a movement as the "obvious movement of the interrogative operator". He believes that the derivation of sentences with the moved question word has taken place through the merger and movement of structures with the motive of matching the focal characteristic in the nucleus. He considered the focal group as one of the permitted positions for the landing of the question word.

Methodology

Data were collected by recording and transcribing 170 minutes of conversation from 32 Bushehri speakers in different age groups (35 to 60 years). In total, 115 sentences were analyzed, including 40 simple interrogative sentences, 30 compound sentences, 20 derivative sentences, and 25 sentences with dual interrogative words. These sentences were analyzed in terms of the type of movement (syntactic or non-syntactic), the motive and direction of the movement, either optional or mandatory movement, and the location of the interrogative word. Two linguists who were fluent in the Bushehri dialect categorized and analyzed the data.

The conversation implementation process was carried out by two linguists fluent in the Bushehri dialect, and the interrater agreement in this process was estimated to be about 82%. After extracting interrogative sentences from the data, a total of 115 interrogative sentences were selected as analytical samples. These sentences included 40 simple interrogative sentences, 30 compound interrogative sentences, 20 derivative sentences, and 25 sentences with double interrogatives. The structural diversity of these sentences allowed for a more detailed analysis of syntactic patterns in this dialect. The analysis of the sentences was based on the theoretical framework of the minimalist program and focused on interrogative movement. In this analysis, each sentence was examined in terms of the presence or absence of syntactic interrogative movement, whether the movement was optional or mandatory, the direction of movement and the place of landing, as well as the semantic or discursive motives of the movement, and compared with data from English and Egyptian Arabic. The location and type of position of the question words in the sentence structure (whether active or passive, focal or marginal) were also taken into account in the analysis. All analyses were conducted simultaneously and compared with the opinions of two linguists to ensure the validity of the analyses (Huang, 1982).

Results

The findings show that in the Bushehri dialect, restrictions such as the contiguity condition and structural dominance do not prevent question word movement. Furthermore, question words can

appear in different sentence positions, and this diversity can often be explained by discourse functions such as emphasis, salience, and initialization. The results indicate that question word movement in this dialect is mainly based on functional and semantic motives and differs from the syntactic rules of languages such as English.

In the Bushehri dialect, in many cases, the interrogative remains in its original position and is not moved to the beginning of the sentence. This feature indicates that the movement of the interrogative in this dialect is mainly done in a hidden way. In other words, on the surface of the sentence, the interrogative element is not moved, but its semantic interpretation requires examining the [wh] feature at the logical level.

(1) to ki didi?

'Who did you see?'

In sentence (1), the interrogative word "who" appears after the subject and remains in the main object position. Given that the interrogative word does not move to the position of the complement group in this dialect, it can be concluded that in this structure, the feature [wh] is examined at the logical level and the movement occurs only in the logical case. This feature makes the Bushehri dialect similar to languages such as Mandarin Chinese and sometimes Egyptian Arabic, in which interrogative words can also remain in the main position. In contrast, English requires an explicit movement of the interrogative word to the position of the complement group.

(2) to ketâb-o kojâ nadi?

'Where did you put the book?'

The notable point in all these examples is the lack of compulsion in the movement of interrogative words to the position of the complementizer group and the lack of semantic dependence on their overt transfer. Therefore, these data strengthen the hypothesis of hidden movement in the Bushehri dialect.

Discussion and Conclusion

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the movement of interrogatives in the Bushehri dialect is largely optional, informal, and pragmatic. Syntactic constraints such as the contiguity condition or structural dominance do not have much effect on the movement of interrogatives. In sentences where two interrogatives remain in their basic positions, not only is the overt movement not mandatory, but in some cases, the movement to the foreground (pre-closure) leads to the sentence being unruly, except in exceptional cases. Since the core of the complement group in this dialect does not necessarily have the feature [+Q], based on the principle of extended projection, there is no need to move the interrogative to the position of the complement group to revise this feature.

Consequently, the syntactic structure of interrogative sentences in the Bushehri dialect can be largely justified by functional motives such as emphasis, focalization, or the expression of emotional states (such as surprise, anger, or interest). Overall, the performance of the Bushehri

dialect in the field of question movement is fundamentally different from that of languages such as English, and in this respect, it shows more structural similarities with Standard Persian. This dialect can be placed in the category of languages that examine the [+wh] feature mainly at the level of logical form and do not consider movement at the phonetic level mandatory. The findings of this article can significantly contribute to a more accurate understanding of syntactic mechanisms in Iranian dialects, as well as to comparative studies based on the minimalist program.

Keywords: minimalism, question word movement, Bushehri dialect

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