



Constituent questions in Karata

Jérémy Pasquereau & Rashidat Khalidova

University of Massachusetts - Amherst (USA) & Daghestanian Pedagogical University - Makhachkala (Russia)



INTRODUCTION

Karata (*k'irri mač'i*, Russian *karatinskij jazyk*): Nakh-Daghestanian family, ca. 10,000 speakers, 8 villages, North-West Daghestan, Russia.

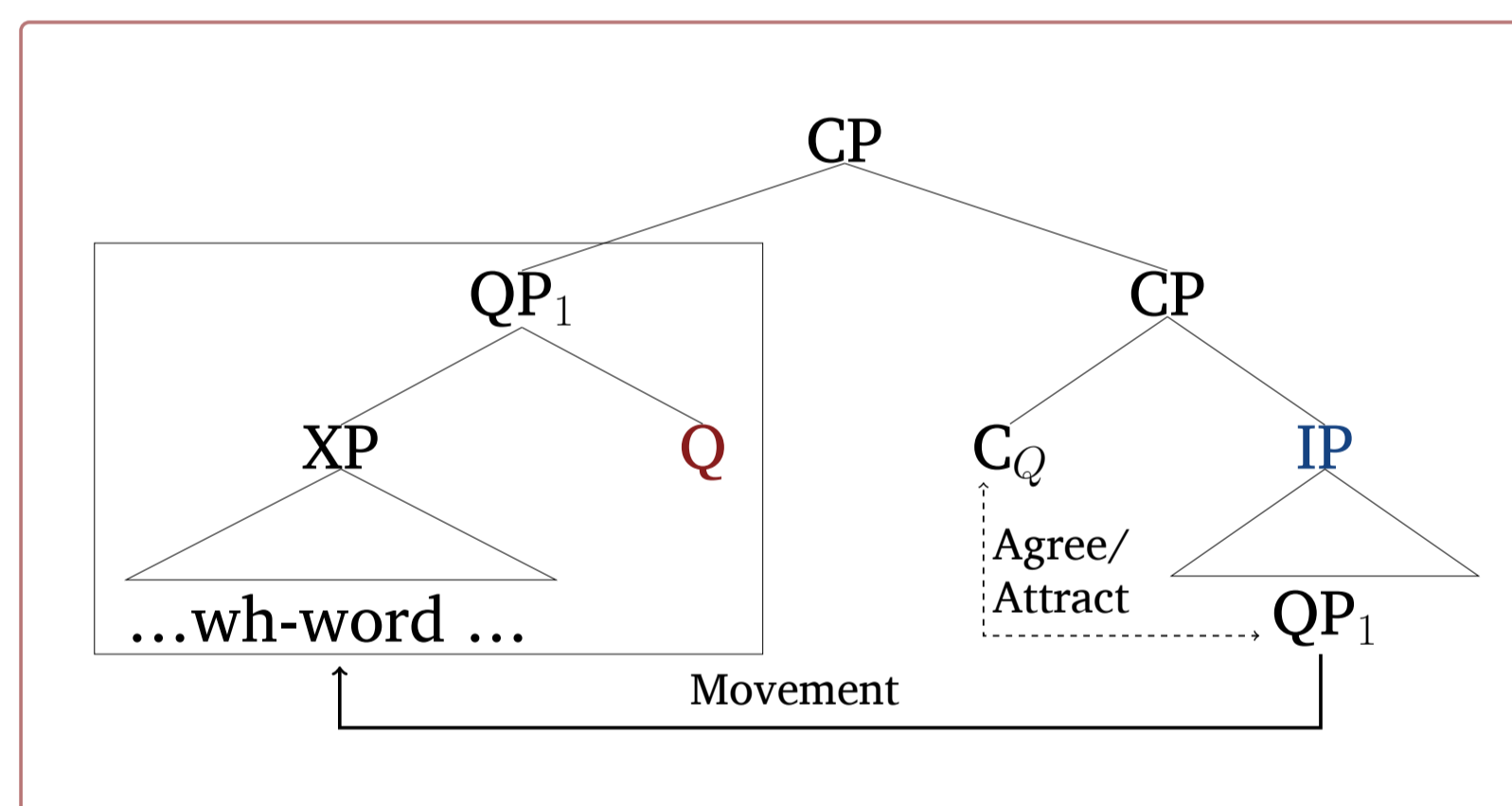
- Karata uses a **Q**(uestion) particle to form its **wh**-questions

(1) **hed-ol** gahała ida-b ?
 thing-Q do.INF COP-N
What are you doing to do ?

- A number of constraints apply to the distribution of **Q**
- I argue that Karata exemplifies the until now unattested type 4 language in Cable's typology of **wh**-questions (2007)

HYPOTHESIS

- In Cable's theory of **wh**-questions, every single language has a **Q** particle (overt or covert)
- In his typology, type 4 languages exhibit the following properties
 - 1 **Q** is overt: box 1
 - 2 **Q** projects and takes the XP containing the **wh**-word as a complement: boxes 2, 3
 - 3 **QP** moves overtly (as a result of agree/attract with C_Q): boxes 4, 5
 - 4 No agreement between **Q** and **wh**-word: box 5
 - 5 Multiple **wh**-questions use one **Q**: box 6



- I also show that the Karata facts are consistent with Cable's **QP** intervention condition: box 3

BACKGROUND ON KARATA WH-QUESTIONS

- Ingredients of a Karata **wh**-question:
 - a Question (**Q**) particle: /ol/ (or /la/)
 - a **wh**-word
 - the main verb must be **non-finite**
- Correlation between position of **Q** and non-finite marking
- This indicates the scope of the question (like Sinhala, Hagstrom 1998)

(2) a. [hede ho-š'u-l b-eĕ-e-Ēe]-l idja-j ho-j?
 [thing DEM-M-ERG N-give-PF-QUOT]-Q COP-PTCP.F DEM-F
What does she think he gave?

b. [hed-ol ho-š'u-l b-eĕ-o-b-Ēe] idja ho-j.
 [thing-Q DEM-M-ERG N-give-PTCP.PF-N-QUOT] COP DEM-F
She is thinking about what he gave.

- Word order in Karata is extremely flexible

1. The question particle is obligatory

- **Q** must be overtly realized

(3) a. men-a hing-ol űurmi ge-da idja-b ?
 2SG-ERG where-Q life do-IPF COP-PTCP.N
Where do you live?

b. *men-a hinge űurmi ge-da idja-b ?
 2SG-ERG where life do-IPF COP-PTCP.N

4. Wh-words in the periphery of the question

- If **QP** moves overtly, we expect **wh**-words to appear at the periphery of the clause

WH-WORD MUST PRECEDE PREDICATE

- In questions, **Q** must precede the main predicate

(4) Questions

a. *men-a q'amaš hed-ol aĒi ? *S V O
 2SG-ERG eat-FUT thing-Q tomorrow
Intended: What will you eat tomorrow?

b. men-a hed-ol q'amaš aĒi ? S O V
 2SG-ERG thing-Q eat-FUT tomorrow

- It could be that the post-V position is reserved for nouns that have properties which **wh**-words lack like definiteness but this is not the case

(5) Assertions

a. men-a q'amaš hede-bik'u aĒi. S V O
 2SG-ERG eat-FUT thing-INDEF tomorrow
I'll eat anything tomorrow.

b. men-a hede-bik'u q'amaš aĒi. S O V
 2SG-ERG thing-INDEF eat-FUT tomorrow

PHRASE TO THE LEFT OF WH-WORD IS TOPIC

- It is possible for other XPs to precede the **wh**-word
- Placement of an XP before the **wh**-word creates a structure with special discourse properties: there is reason to think that the phrase preceding the **wh**-phrase is interpreted as a topic
- A core property of 'topics' is that they can only be denoted by referential expressions (Li et al. 1976)
 - Speakers do not allow fully non-referential material to precede the **wh**-operator of a **wh**-question

(6) a. hem-ol hindi-r-űagi w-o-ű-ā-č'-o-w?
 who-Q where-ALL-any M-go-PF-NEG-PTCP.PF-M
Who will go nowhere? (lit. who will not go anywhere?)

b. *hindi-r-űagi hem-ol w-o-ű-ā-č'-o-w?
 where-ALL-any who-Q M-go-PF-NEG-PTCP.PF-M

- A final suggestive piece of evidence is the translations offered by speakers for questions like (7).

(7) duwa hem-ol L'ab-o-b?
 2SG-DAT who-Q love-PF-PTCP-N
You, who do you love?

- These data argue that any material preceding the **wh**-operator of a Karata **wh**-question must be construed as a discourse topic

2. Q must c-command the wh-word

- **Q** can appear to the right of any word in the constituent that contains the **wh**-word ...

(8) a. mena hing-ol űurmi ge-da idja-b ?
 2SG where-Q life do-IPF COP-PTCP.M
Where do you live?

b. mena hinge űurmi ge-da-l idja-b ?
 2SG where life do-IPF-Q COP-PTCP.M

- ...as long as it c-commands the **wh**-word.

(9) *men-a hinge űurmi-l ge-da idja-b ?
 2SG-ERG where life-Q do-IPF COP-PTCP.N

5. C_Q and QP agree, Q and wh-word do not

- Hypothesis: No agreement possible across island boundary

- C_Q and **QP** agree → **QP** cannot be inside an island: ✓

(10) *[hed-ol b-ar'-ido-j jaše] űumar-ja L'aboj?
 thing-Q N-wear-IPF-PTCP-F girl Omar-DAT love-PF-PTCP-F
Int. Omar loves the girl who is wearing what?

- **Q** and **wh**-word do not agree → islands (inside **QP**) can be moved/pied-piped (unlike in languages with **wh/Q** agreement, e.g. English): ✓

(11) [hede b-ar'-ido-j jaše]-l űumar-ja L'ab-o-j?
 thing N-wear-IPF-PTCP-F girl-Q Omar-DAT love-PF-PTCP-F
Omar loves the girl who is wearing what?
 (lit. *[The girl who is wearing what] does Omar love?)

6. Multiple wh-questions

- If Karata is an instance of a type 4 language, multiple **wh**-questions should be formed with just one **Q** and not exhibit superiority effects

(12) One **Q**, no superiority effects

a. űola hed-ol bahała idja-b?
 who.ERG what-Q buy COP-PTCP-N
Who will buy what?

b. hede űola-l bahała idja-b?
 what who.ERG-Q buy COP-PTCP-N

- Karata is also an instance of a type 3 language: there can be as many **Q**s as there are **wh**-words

- but in that case, superiority effects obtain

(13) a. űola-l hed-ol bahała idja-b?
 who.ERG-Q what-Q buy COP-PTCP-N
Who will buy what?

b. *hed-ol űola-l bahała idja-b?
 what-Q who.ERG-Q buy COP-PTCP-N

References

Cable. 2007. The grammar of **Q**. ♦ Hagstrom. 1998. Decomposing questions.
 ♦ Li & Thompson. 1976. Subject and Topic: A New Typology of Language. ♦
 Littell, Matthewson, & Peterson. 2009. On the semantics of conjectural questions.
 ♦ Peterson. 2009. Pragmatic Blocking in Gitksan Evidential Expressions.

3. QP intervention condition

- Cable defines a condition to capture a pattern evinced by a number of languages

(14) The **QP** intervention condition:
 A **QP** cannot intervene between a functional head and an XP selected by it.

MATRIX/EMBEDDED ASYMMETRY

- **QP** intervenes between C_Q and [IP] (or \bar{I} and [VP])

(15) **Q** cannot be at the right edge of a matrix clause

a. [hed-ol hošul dija beĕ-o-b] I/C_Q?
 thing-Q DEM.M-ERG 1SG-DAT N.give-PF-PTCP-N
What did he give me?

b. *[hede hošul dija beĕ-o-b]-ol I/C_Q?
 thing DEM-M-ERG 1SG-DAT N.give-PF-PTCP-N-Q

- **QP** does not intervene between \bar{V} and its Compl, [CP]

(16) [hede hošul beĕ-Ē'e]-l idja-j hoj?
 thing DEM.M-ERG N.give-PF-QUOT-Q COP-PTCP.F DEM.F
What does she think he gave?

PPS

- The fact that **Q** intervenes between, e.g. a \bar{P} and its [NP] complement, is captured by that condition if **Q** projects and takes [_{NP}... **wh**-word ...] as a complement

(17) a. [űo-č'o] ka?a-l q'wapa idja-b ?
 who-TPL₁[LOC] on-Q hat COP-PTCP.N
Who is the hat on?

b. *[űo-č'o]-l ka?a q'wapa idja-b ?
 who-TPL₁[LOC]-Q on hat COP-PTCP.N

Open questions and speculations

- If **wh**-words really do front, why no long-distance movement?
 - While scrambling within a constituent is possible, scrambling out of it is not
- What is the mechanism that links the form of the verb to the presence of the **Q**-ol?
 - Maybe the verb moves to C_Q (as in French) and its form is the exponent of C/QP agreement
- The **Q**-ol is subject to different constraints in polar **Q**s?

CONCLUSION

- The hypothesis that Karata exemplifies the (until now unattested) type 4 (and 3) of languages in Cable's typology (2007) correctly predicts the behavior of Karata **wh**-questions

- Future work
 - answer open questions
 - extend the work to the other **Q**s in Karata
 - -la is used (like -ol) in **wh**- as well as in polar questions
 - -di is used in alternative questions
 - test the hypothesis that -la is used to make conjectural questions (Littell 2009, Peterson 2009)

This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation, under Award No. BCS-1322770.

Contact Information

- Web: <https://jeremy-pasquereau.jimdo.com/>
- Email: jepasquer@gmail.com, rashi-dr@mail.ru