

Marshallese yes/no questions and remnant movement

Many Austronesian languages form yes/no questions through the use of a question particle, although the placement of the particle within a sentence may differ from language to language. Some positions for the question particle include 1) at the beginning of a sentence, as in Kosraean and Chamorro (see Lee 1975, Chung 1991); 2) following the first constituent of a sentence, as in Malagasy (Paul 2001); or 3) in various positions within the sentence, as in Marshallese. While an analysis has not been proposed for many of these languages, the Malagasy question particle *ve* has been analyzed as a second position clitic that is generated in the left periphery (Paul 2001). The analysis of the Marshallese question particle as a second position clitic will not explain its placement within a sentence, however, because its distribution differs from that of the Malagasy question particle. In Marshallese, the question particle *ke* may occur in a number of positions in the sentence, including after preverbal adverbials or tense/aspect, as in (1); immediately following the main verb, as in (2); immediately following the object, as in (3); and sentence finally, as in (4). In negative questions, the question particle may only occur sentence finally, as shown in (5a-d).

In order to account for the position *ke*, I argue that the Marshallese question particle is generated as the head of the interrogative phrase in the left periphery but that the various possible positions of *ke* result from the movement of sentential elements into the left periphery. There are two analyses that might explain how this movement occurs. The first involves head movement. In this type of analysis, *ke* is generated as the leftmost element, but the elements which, on the surface, precede the question particle—excluding the subject—form a complex head which raises into the left periphery to adjoin with the question particle. This is followed by movement of the subject to the left periphery above the interrogative phrase. However this analysis cannot account for sentences such as (3), in which *ke* follows the object, because the object DP intervenes between elements of the complex head, which in this analysis would have to consist of the agreement marker, modal, verb and question particle. This analysis also inaccurately predicts that the question particle should be able to occur sentence internally in negative questions.

Sentences like (3), in which *ke* follows the object, and (5a-d), in which there is a negative element, can be accounted for under the second analysis, which involves remnant phrasal movement. In this analysis, the phrasal elements following the question particle move to the specifier of the focus phrase below the interrogative phrase, followed by movement of the remnant subject agreement phrase to the specifier of the topic phrase above the interrogative phrase, as in (6). Since the movement of the elements preceding *ke* in (3) involves phrasal movement rather than head movement, sentences in which the question particle follows the object are unproblematic. Further, the movement of sentential elements to the specifier of the focus phrase explains why the question particle must be sentence final in negative questions, because the movement of a phrase to the focus phrase over a negative phrase results in a relativized minimality violation. Finally, the remnant movement analysis explains why the elements preceding the question particle can be coordinated, since by this analysis the elements in this position are a constituent. The fact that the remnant movement analysis but not the head movement analysis can account for the possible positions of the question particle shows that head movement is not a necessary movement operation.

- (1) John e-j ke konono ibben Mary?
 John 3SG-T(PRES) Q talk with Mary
 'Is John talking with Mary?'
- (2) Herman e-lukkuun kōnan ke men in mour?
 Herman 3SG-INTENS love Q thing of life
 'Does Herman really love animals?'
- (3) Re-n kommon pade ke n̄an ir?
 3PL-MOD_{EPIS} make party Q to them
 'Should they throw a party for them?'
- (4) Herman e-lukkuun kōnan men in mour ke?
 Herman 3SG-INTENS love thing of life Q
 'Does Herman really love animals?'
- (5) a. Kwo-j jab etal n̄an Rita ke?
 2SG-T(PRES) NEG go to Rita Q
 'Aren't you going to Rita?'
- b. *Kwo-j ke jab etal n̄an Rita?
 2SG-T(PRES) Q NEG go to Rita
 'Aren't you going to Rita?'
- c. *Kwo-j jab ke etal n̄an Rita?
 2SG-T(PRES) NEG Q go to Rita
 'Aren't you going to Rita?'
- d. *Kwo-j jab etal ke n̄an Rita?
 2SG-T(PRES) NEG go Q to Rita
 'Aren't you going to Rita?'
- (6) **Base structure** [AgrSP Herman_i ear [INTENS_P lukkuun [VP t_i kōnan men in mour]]] →
Step 1: Movement of DP to FocP [FocP [men in mour]_j [AgrSP Herman_i ear [INTENS_P lukkuun [VP t_i kōnan t_j]]]] →
Step 2: Merge ke [IntP ke [FocP [men in mour]_j [AgrSP Herman_i ear [INTENS_P lukkuun [VP t_i kōnan t_j]]]]] →
Step 3: Movement of remnant AgrSP to TopP [TopP [AgrSP Herman_i ear [INTENS_P lukkuun [VP t_i kōnan t_j]]]_k [IntP ke [FocP [men in mour]_j t_k]]]

References

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 Lee, Ke-dong. 1975. *Kusaiean reference grammar*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

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