

Move to mI, but only if you can

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WAFL 11 · York · June 4–6 2015

1 Introduction

Goal for today: Deriving the distribution of mI.

- Motivate a syntactic movement hypothesis based on simplex polar questions.
- Extend its predictions to alternative questions.

1.1 Background data

- mI turns a declarative into a polar question.

- (1) a. Can muz-u yedi.
Can banana-ACC ate
Can ate the banana. Declarative
- b. Can muz-u yedi mi?
Can banana-ACC ate PQ
Did Can eat the banana? Polar question with clause final *mI*

- mI occurs in different positions in a clause, as a suffix.

This changes the question's intonation and felicity conditions (Zimmer, 1998; Kamali, 2011).
For instance, (2) is not appropriate in the same contexts as (1-b).

- (2) Can muz-u mu yedi?
Can banana-ACC PQ ate
Did Can eat the banana? Polar question with *mI* after the object

- Syntactic restrictions bear on mI's position. These lead to ungrammaticality, not infelicity.

(3) shows that mI cannot occur between an adjective and the modified noun:

- (3) Can [sarı (*mı) muz-u] *(mu) yedi?
Can yellow PQ banana-ACC PQ ate
Did Can eat the yellow banana? (Or the green one?)

***Acknowledgements:** I would like to thank the audiences at the UMass syntax workshop and at ECO5 graduate student workshop, Rajesh Bhatt, Martina Gračanin-Yuksek, Vincent Homer, Kyle Johnson, Beste Kamali, Angelika Kratzer, Sözen Özkan and Taiki Yoshimura. · **Conventions:** The capital "I" in mI signals vowel harmony; mI is glossed as PQ; By "mI's host", I refer to the phrase to the left of mI.

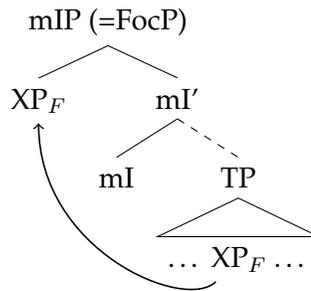
(The ungrammaticality in (3) is not due to a restriction on DP internal mI.)

- **Question:** Can we capture mI's distribution with simple and general syntactic assumptions?

1.2 Proposal

- mI is a head generated within a fine-grained CP layer (Rizzi, 1997), assume Foc.
- mI attracts a focused phrase, XP_F , in its c-command domain to its specifier position.

(4) Illustration of the movement hypothesis



- Based on this proposal, a sample derivation for (5), repeated from (2), is given in (6):

(5) Can muz-u mu yedi?
 Can banana-ACC PQ ate
 Did Can eat the banana?

(6) a. mI [_{TP} Can banana-ACC ate] Merge mI
 b. [_{mIP} banana-ACC [mI [_{TP} Can ate]]] Move direct object
 c. [Can [_{mIP} banana-ACC [mI [_{TP} ate]]]] Topicalize subject

- Movement can be implemented by the syntactic F marking of the moved phrase, determined by using focus assignment and projection rules (Selkirk, 1996).
 mI's host has distinctive intonation. This might be the overt realization of F marking.
- Whether XP can move is determined by language specific restrictions on movement.

1.3 Theoretical import

- Independent evidence for the geometry in (4).
- Generalization relating restrictions on mI's position to restrictions on movement.
- Prediction of the structure of alternative questions.

2 Motivation

2.1 The internal structure of mIP

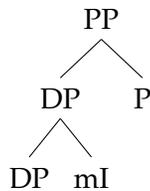
- The proposed structure in (4) and other movement proposals (Kahnemuyipour & Kornfilt, 2011; Kamali, 2011) make the following prediction:

(7) **Prediction:** mI and its host do not form a constituent.

- Constituency tests such as coordination, substitution, and movement are not applicable for independent reasons. So, we must follow an indirect line of reasoning.
- Here, we will see that two standard ways in which mI and its host could form a constituent, adjunction and complementation, make incorrect predictions. We will conclude from this and from additional positive evidence that the non-constituency prediction in (7) holds.¹

2.1.1 Constituency hypothesis I: Adjunction

(8) **Hypothesis:** mI adjoins to DP



- **Property of adjunction:** An adjunct is “transparent”, if XP can be selected by a head H, [XP Adjunct] can also be selected by H.

- Transparency is illustrated in (9).

The adjective “yellow” adjoins to “car”. The DP is selected by the postposition “for” regardless of the presence of the adjunct.

(9) Ali [(sarı) [araba]] için geldi.
Ali yellow car for came
Ali came for the yellow car.

- mI is not transparent: it interferes with selection.

In (10), a postposition cannot select a DP suffixed with mI.

(10) *Ali [araba mı için] geldi.
Ali car PQ for came
Intended: Did Ali come for the car?

¹Questions about the geometric relation between question particles and their hosts are standard, present in Hagstrom (1998); Cable (2010) and in Besler (1999) for Turkish. Cable (2010) mentions, but dismisses, the option of a non-constituency based account. Besler (1999) leaves the question for further research.

- The ungrammaticality of (10) might be due to the fact that nothing can linearly intervene between a P and its complement.
- This restriction does not hold between a V and its complement.

(11), repeated from (2), shows that mI can occur between a V and its complement.

- (11) Can muz-u mu yedi?
 Can banana-ACC PQ ate
 Did Can eat the banana?

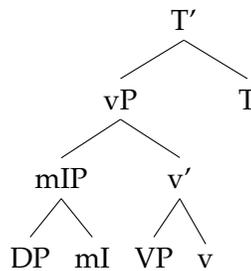
But, the contrast between (10) and (11) cannot be captured without making reference to specific classes of head-complement relations: ones that are subject to the restriction and others that are not.

This type of proposal has a precedent for Tlingit in Cable (2010): The “Question Phrase Intervention Condition.” Despite similarities between Tlingit and Turkish, crucial differences suggest that Cable’s proposal does not straightforwardly extend to Turkish.

- The movement based account will subsume the contrast between (10) and (11) under general principles regulating movement in Turkish.

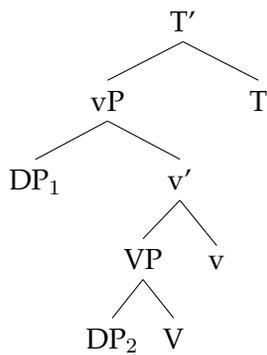
2.1.2 Constituency hypothesis II: Complementation

(12) **Hypothesis:** mI takes DP as its complement.

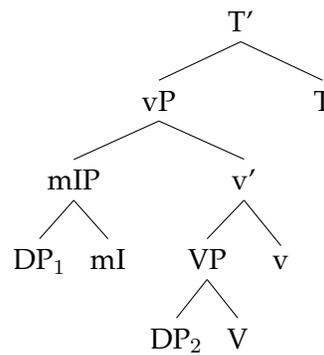


- **Property of complementation:** If Y takes DP as a complement, DP’s c-command domain is closed off by Y.

(13) DP₁ c-commands DP₂



(14) DP₁ does not c-command DP₂



- mI does not close off the c-command domain of its host.

In (15), mI's host "Ali" binds the object DP, violating Principle B and satisfying Principle A.²

(15) Aynada Ali_i mi { on-u_{*i} / kendi-ni_i } görmüş?
 in.the.mirror Ali PQ 3S-ACC / self-ACC saw
 Did Ali see {*him / himself} in the mirror?

- A control for (15) is given in (16).

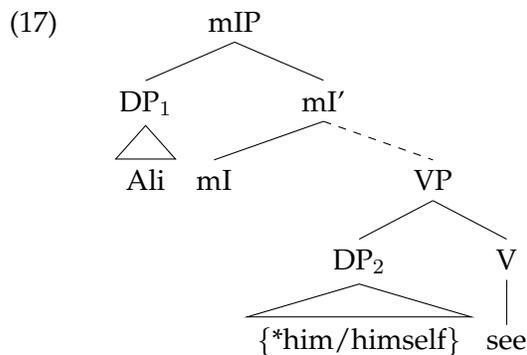
The DP "Ali" is the complement of the postposition "göre" ("according to").

The object is not bound by Ali: Principle B is satisfied and Principle A, violated.

(16) [Ali-ye göre] biri { on-u_i / *kendi-ni_i } görmüş.
 Ali-DAT according.to someone 3S-ACC / self-ACC saw
 According to Ali, someone saw {him_i / *himself_i}.

This suggests that postpositions, unlike mI, close off a DP's c-command domain.

- This pattern suggests that mI's host takes scope from the spine, like in (17).³



2.2 mI's position and movement

The following generalization captures the class of phrases that can host mI.⁴

(18) **Generalization on mI's position:**
 XP can be suffixed with mI iff XP can be moved away from its head.

- A DP that can move can be suffixed with mI.

Example from possessive phrases. [Also applies to (1-b) and (2).]

(19) shows that a possessor can move to the left of the matrix subject.

²**Principle B:** A pronoun is free in its local domain. **Principle A:** An anaphor is bound in its local domain.

³Note that neither determiners nor case markers close off a DP's c-command domain. However, mI seems to be distinct from both types of items.

⁴There might be a common cause to the restrictions on movement and the restrictions on mI placement. If one is found, the generalization could cease to be an argument in support of movement. I must also remain vague as to what kinds of movement are covered by the generalization. I only use leftward scrambling here.

- (19) a. Can [sen-in muz-un-u] yedi.
 Can 2S-GEN banana-POSS.2S-ACC ate
 Can ate your banana.
 b. Sen-in Can [Δ muz-un-u] yedi.
 Can ate your banana.

(20) shows that a possessor can be suffixed with mI, “in situ”.

- (20) Can sen-in mi muz-un-u yedi.
 Can 2S-GEN PQ banana-POSS.2S-ACC ate
 Did Can eat your banana?

- A DP that cannot move cannot be suffixed with mI.

Example from a postposition and its complement. [Also applies to (3).]

(21) shows that a postposition’s complement cannot be scrambled.

- (21) a. Ali [araba için] geldi.
 Ali car for came
 Ali came for the car.
 b. *Araba Ali [Δ için] geldi.
 Intended: Ali came for the car.

(22), repeated from (10), shows that mI cannot follow the complement of a postposition.

- (22) *Ali [araba mı için] geldi.
 Ali car PQ for came
 Intended: Did Ali come for the car?

- **Not attested:** An XP that can move, but that cannot be suffixed with mI.
- **Possibly attested:** An XP that cannot move, but that can be suffixed with mI. Two types of examples must be explained, as they are apparent instances of this configuration.

– Clause final mI,

- (23) Can muz-u yedi mi?
 Can banana-ACC ate PQ
 Did Can eat the banana?

– mI splitting up a verbal suffix sequence.

- (24) Sen muz-u yiy-ecek mi-sin-n?
 2S banana-ACC eat-FUT PQ-COP.2S
 Will you eat the banana?

Either the generalization must be relaxed; or these cases explained away.⁵

⁵There are forms like “gele-mi-bil-ir-im?” (come-PQ-MOD-AOR-COP.1S) where the question particle splits up a verbal

- Interim conclusion:
 - An XP that cannot host mI is an XP that cannot move to mI.⁶
 - The attempt to move an “unmovable item” pied-pipes the phrase containing it.

- (25) a. Ali [arabá × için] mi geldi.
 Ali car for PQ came
 Did Ali come for the car?
- b. Can [sarı × muz-u] mu yedi?
 Can yellow banana-ACC PQ ate
 Did Can eat the yéllow banana? (Or the green one?)

2.3 mI extends quantifier scope

- If mI triggers raising, this should affect scope relations. Preliminary evidence suggests that this prediction holds.
- In Turkish, universal quantifiers are most naturally interpreted as scoping below clause-mate negation (Kelepir, 2001).

- (26) Bugün herkes gel-me-di.
 today everybody come-NEG-PST.3S
- a. Available: It is not the case that everybody came today. $\neg > \forall$
- b. Unavailable: For all x, x did not come today. $*\forall > \neg$

- If mI is suffixed to the universal quantifier, the wide scope reading becomes available.

- (27) (?) Bugün herkes mi gel-me-di?
 today everybody PQ come-NEG-PST.3S
- a. Unavailable: Did not everybody come today? $*\neg > \forall$
- b. Available: Did everybody not come today? $\forall > \neg$

- Whether reconstruction is an option is left for further research.
- The movement hypothesis appears to be on the right track.
- The observation that the universal quantifier outscopes negation in (27) is consistent with the hypothesis that mI is in the CP.

suffix sequence at a juncture where the copula is not present, before the modal “-bil”. This might suggest that the modal suffix is syntactically a light verb, like “ver” and “dur”.

⁶Most quantifiers (her, bazı, iki). These items are not targets for movement. Some quantifiers (çok and az) and numerals followed by classifiers (iki tane) can be suffixed with mI. These items are targets for movement.

3 Alternative questions

3.1 Background

Turkish alternative questions are formed:

- by suffixing each alternative with *mI*,
- and with the disjunction “*yoksa*” which glosses as “if not then” (distinct from boolean disjunction “*veya*”).

(28) Çay mı yoksa kahve mi iste-di-n?
tea PQ DISJ coffee PQ want-PST-2S
Which did you want, tea or coffee?

- A question like (28) is unambiguously an alternative question (compare with prosodic disambiguation in English or French).

3.2 The big disjuncts analysis

- Turkish alternative questions involve “big disjuncts” (Gračanin-Yukseş, 2014).

The alternative question in (28) has the structure in (29-a), with elided material, rather than the one in (29-b).

(29) a. [tea want.2S [or [coffee want.2S]]] “Big” disjuncts
b. [tea [or [coffee]]] want.2S “Small” disjuncts

- Any phrase that can be suffixed with *mI* in a polar question can serve as an alternative in an alternative question.
- Disjuncts can be strings that are not constituents on the surface.

(30) Ali çay mı yoksa Can kahve mi iste-di?
Ali tea PQ or Can coffee PQ want-PST.3S
Which is true, did Ali want tea or Can coffee?

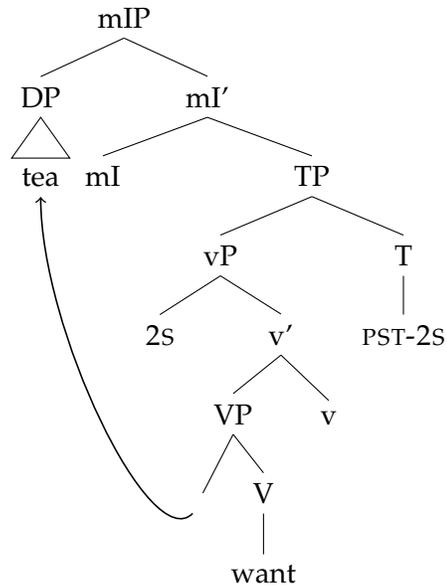
In (30), the string formed by the subject and the object of the first disjunct is not a constituent. This suggests that these arguments are selected by an unpronounced predicate.

- The movement proposal predicts the big disjuncts analysis: Disjuncts are at least as big as *mIP*, or bigger, given that material precedes *mI*’s host.

In what follows, the derivation of (28) is provided.

- The internal structure of one disjunct is illustrated in (31).

(31) a. [*mI* [2S tea want-PST-2S]]
b. [tea [*mI* [2S Δ want-PST-2S]]]



- The full alternative question is formed by two such structures.

(32) [[tea mI want-PST-2S] [or [coffee mI want-PST-2S]]]

- The surface string is derived by TP ellipsis.

The availability of TP ellipsis in gapping constructions is independently argued for by İnce (2009).

(33) [[tea mI ~~want-PST-2S~~] [or [coffee mI want-PST-2S]]]

4 Concluding remarks

- On the basis of novel evidence, mI's host raises to mI, a head in the CP layer.
- This predicts previous results on the size of disjuncts in alternative questions.

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