

# Wh-Questions in Jibbali

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*The paper investigates the strategies used in Jibbali, a Modern South Arabian language, for the formation of its wh-questions. Jibbali is a language in which wh ex-situ strategy is normally used but in-situ strategies are also used. These strategies are realized in two syntactic constructions, a monoclausal construction, and a biclausal clefted construction of a topic-comment structure, with the wh-phrase making the predicate, and a headless relative clause making its subject. Besides this difference in their clause structure, the two constructions differ in their use of a gap and a resumptive pronoun respectively, a difference that is tied up to the different syntactic processes involved. The paper sketches the syntactic representation for each of these constructions and discusses the related question of wh-scope-licensing which determines their interpretation.*

**Keywords:** *Modern South Arabian; Jibbali; wh-questions; cleft structures; wh-fronting; resumptive pronoun*

## 1. Introduction

Jibbali is one of the six Modern South Arabic languages spoken in south Oman and south Yemen in the Arab Peninsula.<sup>1</sup> This language is exclusively spoken in the region of Dhofar in the Sultanate of Oman. The paper attempts to provide an analysis of wh-questions and the strategies that are used in this language to form such questions.<sup>2</sup>

Cross-linguistically wh-questions fall into two structural types. The first is that of a clause within which the wh-phrase constitutes an argument or an adjunct. Here, the wh-question construction is said to be a monoclausal construction disregarding, for the moment, the fact that these wh-questions could be of complex clausal structure with infinitely embedded complement clauses. The second is that of an equational clause of a topic-comment/subject-predicate structure in which the wh-phrase makes up the predicate, or part of the predicate, and the subject has the structure of a free relative clause. This structural design is seen as a ‘pseudo-cleft/cleft’ construction in the literature (e.g. Potsdam 2006; Potsdam & Polinsky 2009). This is a more complex, biclausal construction consisting of the main clause and the embedded subject clause.

The position that the wh-phrase occupies in the clause has conventionally been parameterized. Natural languages seem to be conveniently divided into those that front their

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<sup>2</sup> Research in the Modern South Arabian languages, which only goes back to first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has remained rather limited. More research has picked up in these languages since the eighties of the twentieth century, especially Soqotri and Mehri. However, Jibbali, is still poorly documented. Only two books can be mentioned that are devoted to the description of Jibbali grammar: Hofstede (1998) and Rubin (2014). My thanks go to the anonymous reviewer who has also pointed out Wagner’s (1953) work on Mehri syntax, which contains a description of questions in Jibbali.

wh-phrases to a clause-initial position and those that leave them in the positions they merged at in the clause. These are the so-called ex-situ and in-situ strategies of wh-questions. The difference between the two has originally been claimed to follow from the strength or weakness of the relevant feature of the question operator located in the CP. If it is strong then the corresponding feature on the wh-phrase will pied-pipe the whole phrase to specifier position of the CP in order for the uninterruptable feature to be checked/valued. If that feature is weak, the wh-phrase will not move (cf. Chomsky 1995). More recently, wh-movement is said to be triggered by an optional Edge feature that the relevant head- i.e. C, is assumed to have, and which will, if present, cause the movement of the wh-phrase from its base position to the spec of this head to satisfy it (cf. Chomsky 2000).

Coupled with the two alternative structural configurations of the wh-questions, these two strategies will make four theoretically possible constructions: monoclausal wh-questions with either fronted ex-situ or in-situ wh-phrases, and biclausal cleft wh-questions in which the predicate wh-phrase is either fronted to a clause-initial position or remains in-situ. Jibbali seems to make use of all the four of the above possible structures to form its wh-questions. The present paper is concerned with the syntax of these structural alternatives.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 is a basic descriptive statement of the word order in this language together with wh-questions and how they are formed. Section 3 discusses the structure of the first of the two constructions used in forming wh-questions. This is the monoclausal construction in which the wh-element moves to a clause-initial position from the position it is subcategorized inside the clause. Section 4 deals with the second mode of forming wh-questions in this language, i.e. the biclausal construction in which the wh-element forms the predicate in a subject-predicate equational sentence. Section 5 discusses the syntactic representation of these constructions and their interpretation in terms of wh-scope licensing. Section 6 is a conclusion.

## 2. Jibbali wh-questions

Jibbali has a predominant SVO word order, though it also exhibits frequent instances of the common Semitic VSO order in many of its clauses (Hofstede 1998; Rubin 2014). The different orders do not generally trigger any difference in subject-verb agreement. All the subject  $\phi$  features are copied onto the verb regardless of their position in relation to one another. One may equally hear either of the two sentences below.

- |     |                       |                     |          |                            |
|-----|-----------------------|---------------------|----------|----------------------------|
| (1) | maħaad<br>Mahad       | ʈotem<br>bought.3SM | e<br>DEF | nuʈub <sup>3</sup><br>Milk |
|     | ‘M. bought the milk.’ |                     |          |                            |
|     |                       |                     |          |                            |
| (2) | ʈotem<br>bought.3SM   | maħaa<br>d<br>Mahad | e<br>DEF | nuʈub<br>Milk              |
|     | ‘M. bought the milk.’ |                     |          |                            |

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<sup>3</sup> For the transliteration of sentences in Jibbali standard IPA symbols will be used. Vowel length and consonant length (germination), are indicated by symbol-doubling.

Beside these conventional verbal sentences there are also verbless ‘equational’ sentences of the subject-predicate type, exemplified in (3) and (4) below:

- (3)      e            yiig            taʃbuun  
           def        man        tired  
           ‘The man is tired.’

- (4)      saalim        dexto  
                               r  
           Salim        doctor  
           ‘S. is a doctor.’

Wh-questions in Jibbali make use of wh-words that may be grouped into two groups: nominal and adverbial as follows:

- (5)      A.        Nominal  
                   muun            ‘who’  
                   ʔiine            ‘what’  
                   ʔiine            ‘which’  
                   min  
  
           B.        Adverbial  
                   hut’uun,        ‘where’  
                   huun  
                   miit            ‘when’  
                   koh            ‘why’  
                   yo(l)            ‘how’  
                   mteʔ            ‘how many’

### 3. Monoclausal wh-questions

The first type of wh-questions in Jibbali is illustrated in the following sentences.

- (6)      muun        maḥaad        ʔini --- ?  
           who        Mahad        saw.3SM  
           ‘Who did M. see?’
- (7)      ʔiine        saalim        ʔotem --- ?  
           what        Salim        bought.3SM  
           ‘What did S . buy?’
- (8)      miit        maḥaad        ʔayad            mesket --- ?  
           when        Mahad        went.3SM        Muscat  
           ‘When did M. go to Muscat?’

The clause-initial *wh*-elements in sentences (6), (7) and (8) are related to the empty clause-internal position – gap – which represents a variable and is assumed to be where the *wh*-element has originated/merged inside the clause. To account for the dependency relation between the *wh*-element and the gap, movement can be invoked whereby the *wh*-element moves from its original base position to the beginning of the sentence- Spec-CP in more technical terms, leaving a gap in that position.<sup>4</sup> Such sentences may thus be structurally represented as (6a), (7a) and (8a), showing the movement of the *wh*-phrase to Spec-CP. We leave aside, for the moment, its exact landing site within the complex phrasal structure of the CP, but will return to it later on in the discussion.

- This movement can be ascertained of via the conventional diagnostics of the sensitivity of movement to syntactic islands, first suggested by Ross (1967). It is borne out by the ungrammaticality of the following sentences each of which exhibits the violation of a certain syntactic island. Sentences (9), (10), (11) and (12) involve violations of the complex NP

(i) [kin muun] †emk e zarʃat [PP (wh)]i ?  
to who sold.1S DEF farm -----  
'To whom did I sell the farm?'

(ii) \*muuni †mek e zarʃat [PP kin ti] ?  
who sold.1S DEF farm to ---  
'Whom did I sell the farm to?'

(iii) [xatum e muun] †otemk [DP ... (wh)...]<sub>i</sub> ?  
 ring of who bought.2SM  
 'Whose ring did you buy?'

(iv) \*muun<sub>i</sub> †otemk [DP xatum e t<sub>i</sub>]  
 who bought.2SM ring of --  
 'Whose ring did you buy?'

(relative clause) island, wh-island, adjunct island, and coordinate-structure island respectively.

- (9) \* muun<sub>i</sub> tyorb [DP e tiiθ [CP ε t<sub>i</sub>nuut t<sub>i</sub>]] ?  
 who know.2SM DEF woman REL saw.3sf ----  
 ‘\*Who do you know the woman who saw?’
- (10) \* muuni fixbork ?aħmad [CP her kuun t<sub>i</sub>ni t<sub>i</sub>] ?  
 who asked.2sm Ahmad if was.3SM saw.3SM ---  
 ‘\*Who did you ask Ahmad if he saw?’
- (11) \* ?iine<sub>i</sub> t<sub>i</sub>nk [CP efene maħaad yi+tem t<sub>i</sub>] ?  
 what saw.2SM before Mahad buy.3SM.SUBJ ---  
 ‘\*What did you see before Mahad bought?’
- (12) \* muun<sub>i</sub> t<sub>i</sub>nk [DP maħaad b [DP t<sub>i</sub>]] t<sub>i</sub>ak’ yesgid ?  
 who saw.2SM Mahad and --- in mosque  
 ‘\*Who did you see Mahad and in the mosque?’

Turning to the boundaries of this wh-movement we find that it is licensed across clause boundary from embedded ‘tenseless’ clauses as in (13), or from tensed embedded complement clauses with matrix verbs that select [-wh] complement clause like *ƣuur* ‘say’, *ƣorob* ‘know’, as in (14).

- (13) muun<sub>i</sub> maħaad t<sub>i</sub>agiib [t<sub>i</sub> yiƣna t<sub>i</sub>\_\_\_\_] ?  
 who Mahad want.3SM see.3SM.SUBJ ----  
 ‘Who does M. want to see?’
- (14) ?iine<sub>i</sub> t<sub>i</sub>uuk [t<sub>i</sub> het t<sub>i</sub>εk imƣiin] ?  
 when said.2SM you ate.2SM ---- yesterday  
 ‘What did you say you ate yesterday?’

The movement of the wh-elements from their original positions as arguments in the embedded clauses to the beginning of the matrix clause is conventionally achieved in a successive-cyclic fashion.

Besides the usual ex-situ strategy of fronting the wh-elements to a clause-initial position, we may occasionally find monoclausal wh-questions in which the wh-phrases occupy positions usually occupied by non-wh lexical elements. Here, the wh-phrases seem to have remained in their original clause-internal positions. All nominal wh-phrases, merged as complements, seem to be able to appear in situ. This is illustrated in (6b) and (7b).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> These are all questions that illicit information. They are to be distinguished from echo-questions that share the same in-situ construction but differ in their function, which is to check the validity of information that has already been given. These are not my concern in this paper.

- (6) b. maḥaad      ʔini              muun ?  
 Mahad        saw.3SM        who  
 ‘Who did M. see?’

- (7) b. saalim        ʔotem              ʔiine ?  
 Salim        bought.3SM        what  
 ‘What did S. buy?’

These sentences show the *wh*-elements in the clause-internal positions where they merged as verb complements in the clause structure. Are there any restrictions on the occurrence of in-situ questions? In particular, we may want to see if some of the *wh*-phrases practice any preference of either of the two strategies. Nominal/complement *wh*-phrases *muun*, ‘who, and *ʔiine* ‘what’ can occur equally well in either position. However, in-situ questions with adverbial *wh*-phrases, merged as adjuncts, like (8b) and (15) below do not seem to occur as freely as their ex-situ counterparts. My informants either did not accept them or said they were rare

- (8) b. maḥaad        ʔayad              mesket        miit ?  
 Mahad        went.3SM        Muscat        when  
 ‘When did M. go to Muscat?’

- (15)    miizuun        ʔayadot            hut’uun ?  
 Mayzuun        went.3SF        where  
 ‘Where did M. go?’

The alternation between the ex-situ and in-situ questions does not appear to be as free for the adverbial/adjunct *wh*-phrases as it is for their nominal/complement counterparts.

Besides, there are two more points in which the ex-situ and in-situ questions seem to differ. The first is that while ex-situ *wh*-questions are sensitive to syntactic islands as seen from the ungrammaticality of sentences (9)–(12) above, in-situ *wh*-questions allow questioning from inside syntactic islands. The sentences are fully grammatical as illustrated in (16), (17), and (18), which involve the Complex-NP island, the *Wh*-island, and the Coordinate structure island respectively.

- (16)    maḥaad    yiyorb        e        tiiθ        [ε        ʃfok’ot        muun] ?  
 Mahad    know.3SM    DEF    woman    REL    married.3SF    who  
 ‘M. knows the woman who married who?’

- (17)    maḥaad    ʃixbiru-hum        [her    ʔini        muun] ?  
 Mahad    know.3SM-them    if        saw.3PM        who  
 ‘M. asked them if they saw who?’

- (18)    ʔink            [maḥaad    bi        muun]        ʃak’        yesgid        ?  
 saw.2SM        Mahad        and        who        in        mosque  
 ‘You saw M. and who in the mosque?’

The second point of difference is that in-situ wh-questions must be D-linked. The notion of D-linking (Pesetsky 1987) concerns the reference of an item (here a wh-element) to previous discourse. Thus in the questions in (19), while the speaker in (19a) may have no previous idea as to whether *Salim has met anybody*, in (19b) the question presupposes his/her acquaintance with some previous discourse in which it was said that *Salim has met someone*. He is asking about which person it was that he has met.

(19) a.    muun        saalim        †ini    ?  
               who        Salim        saw.3SM  
               ‘Who did S. see?’

(19) b.    saalim        †ini                muun    ?  
               Salim        saw.3SM        who  
               ‘Who did S. see?’

D-linking appears to be responsible for another structural option within the monoclausal wh-questions in Jibbali. There is one wh-phrase that makes available the choice of retaining a resumptive pronoun in place of the gap that we usually find in such monoclausal wh-questions.<sup>6</sup> The partitive *ʔiine min* DP ‘what of DP’, i.e. ‘which DP’, can appear in such questions either with a gap in the position it is subcategorized inside the clause, or with a resumptive pronoun filling that gap. This is what (20a) and (20b) illustrate.

(20) a.    ʔiine    min    ʔiig    †ink \_\_\_\_\_    mʃiin    ?  
               what    of    man    saw.2SM ---    yesterday  
               ‘Which man did you see yesterday?’

(20) b.    ʔiine    min    ʔiig    †ink-toʃ        mʃiin    ?  
               what    of    man    saw.2SM-him    yesterday  
               ‘Which man did you see yesterday?’

Such questions presuppose a previous discourse in which the truth of the proposition that the addressee has seen someone is ascertained of, and he/she is only asking for a selection from a set. Thus, contrary to questions with *ʔiine* ‘what’, or *muun* ‘who’, these questions cannot be answered with (21):

(21)    de    loʔ        ,        †e    loʔ  
               one    no                thing    not  
               ‘nobody’                ‘nothing’

The adequate answer will have to mention someone that was seen.

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<sup>6</sup> Resumptive pronouns are bound pronouns that cliticize on verbs and nouns. These are /-k/ and /i/ for 1s, /-un/ and /-in/ for 1p, /-k/ for 2sm, /ʃ/ for 2sf, /-kum/ for 2pm, /-kən/ for 2pf, /ʃ/ for 3sm, /-s/ for 3sf, /-hum/ 3pm, and /-sen/ for 3pf. Epenthetic vowels and consonants may be inserted between the stem and the clitic, e.g. /-to/ in *†inik-toʃ* ‘(I) saw him’

#### 4. Biclausal wh-questions

Arguments in Jibbali can be questioned via a second structural construction that is commonly used and is exemplified in (22) and (23) below.

- (22) *muun*  $\epsilon$  *ʔink-toʃ* *ʕak'* *yesgid* ?  
 who REL saw.2SM-him in mosque  
 ‘Who is the person that you saw in the mosque?’

- (23) *ʔiine*  $\epsilon$  *maḥaa* *ʔtii-ʃ* ?  
                     *d*  
 what REL Mahad bought.3SM-him  
 ‘What is the thing that M. bought?’

The above questions appear to share some similarities with the monoclausal gap-questions of the previous section. They use the same wh-elements – i.e. *muun* ‘who’ and *ʔiine* ‘what’. They also show that these elements occupy a clause-initial position, which can be assumed to be the result of a movement process to this position in both question types. However, at a closer look, these two constructions are found to differ in a number of very significant properties that are discussed below.

First, in contrast to the first question type, these questions make use of a resumptive clitic pronoun that we find in the base position where the wh-phrase may be said to have originated inside the clause. This is the element /-ʃ/ in sentences (22) and (23) above. In mono-clausal wh-questions there is a gap in the corresponding position. In those constructions it was only the nominal wh-element *ʔiine min* ‘which’ that allowed resumptive clitic pronouns as in (20b) above.

The second point of difference between the two constructions concerns their sensitivity to island constraints. The gap-type monoclausal wh-questions exhibit sensitivity to these constraints as was illustrated in the ungrammaticality of sentences (9)–(12) above. These sentences show that the dependency relation between the wh-element and the gap inside the clause is not licensed across syntactic islands. On the other hand, sentences of the biclausal construction show their insensitivity to these constraints. This is evidenced in the well-formedness of sentences (24)–(26).

- (24) *ʔiine*  $\epsilon$  *mahaad* *ʔini* [<sub>DP</sub> *e* *yiig*  $\epsilon$  *ʔtii-ʃ*] ?  
 what REL Mahad saw.3SM [DEF man REL bought.3SM-him]  
 ‘\*What is the thing that Mahad saw the man who bought it?’

- (25) *muun*  $\epsilon$  *saalim* *ʔayad* [<sub>CP</sub> *ʔfene* *ʃeh* *yeʔini-ʃ*] ?  
 who REL Salim went.3SM [before he see.3SM.SUBJ-him]  
 ‘\*Who is the person that S. went before seeing?’

- (26) *muun*  $\epsilon$  *ʔine* [<sub>DP</sub> *saalim* *ʃe-ʃ*] ?  
 who REL saw.1P [Salim with-him]  
 ‘\*Who is the person whom you saw in the mosque?’



In the above sentences the presumed dependency between the wh-element and the resumptive pronoun crosses over the complex-NP island, the adjunct island, and the coordinate structure island respectively. This will initially lead to reject a wh-movement analysis for these sentences.

The third point of difference between the two wh-question types concerns their syntactic structure. In the first type, we have a single clause in which the wh-element is generated and is moved to its left edge, as shown in (6a), (7a) and (8a). On the other hand, the second type of wh-question is a complex construction with a wh-phrase followed by a headless relative clause (HRC) that is initiated by the particle /ε/, which functions as a relativizer (Hofstede 1998: 55).<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.1 *The equative pseudo-cleft structure of biclausal wh-questions*

Rather than being a simplex clause with a displaced wh-phrase like the first question type, this question type takes the form of a pseudo-cleft equative construction of the subject-predicate type, with the (nominalized) headless relative clause forming its subject and the wh-phrase its predicate (Potsdam 2006). It is biclausal in the sense that the matrix clause contains a clausal subject. The clause-initial position of the wh-phrase appears to be the result of its displacement to the left edge from its original predicate-internal position. Provisionally, sentences (22) and (23) may thus be syntactically represented as (22a) and (23a) below, where the predicate, a DP/QP in our case, is assumed to be a TP complement, and the headless relative clause is the TP specifier.

(22) a. [CP muuni [TP [CP ε ʔink-toʃ ʔak' yesgid] [QP ti]]]

(23) a. [CP ʔiinei [TP [CP ε maħaad ʔtii-ʃ] [QP ti]]]

The plausibility of this account is based on a number of things. The first concerns the syntactic status of the headless relative clause. Why should it be posited as the subject of the clause, occupying its Spec-TP position? The alternative analysis whereby the wh-phrase occupies the subject position seems to be equally tenable, and has been suggested for similar constructions in Arabic, another Semitic language (Shlonsky 2002).

The subjecthood of the headless relatives in this construction stems from their nominal character. These clauses, which share all the features of the regular definite relatives except for the absence of the head noun, exhibit clear nominal characteristics and have been argued in the literature to constitute grammatical nominalizations in contrast to lexical

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<sup>7</sup> Hofstede (1998: 55) mentions other relativizer particles of headless relative clauses; /ðe/ and /lhiin/. The difference between them is related to whether the clause has a personal or non-personal reference. /ε/ is used when the clause refers to persons, /ðe/ is used when the clause is negative and /lhiin/ or /ʔiin/, when the clause refers to things. This is a feature that would be part of what the head-noun (head DP) will have in the ordinary relative clauses, and would suggest that the relativizer in this language agrees with the head DP and not the relativized DP within the relative clause. In addition, the main relativizer /ε/, is nearly homophonous with the definite article, for which Hofstede records numerous phonetic variants. This adds credence to the analysis of the relativizer as the head of a DP- i.e. determiner - rather than a sentence complementizer heading a CP, as was suggested by Ouhalla (2004) for one group of Semitic languages. However, we will still use the more neutral term 'relativizer' for these particles.

nominalizations, and their categorial status to be that of a DP.<sup>8</sup> As such, they can stand as arguments on their own and, thus, appear in argument positions in non-wh clauses, as in (27) and (28).

- (27) [ε    ʔotem            siyyaareh    ʔayad        mesket  
[rel    bought.3SM    car]                went.3SM    Muscat  
'The person who bought a car left to Muscat.'
- (28) he    ʔinik    [ ε    ʔotem            siyyaareh]  
I        saw.1S   [REL   bought.3SM    car]  
'I saw the person who bought a car.'

The bracketed headless relative [*ε ʔotem siyyaareh*] 'who bought a car', occupies the position of the subject in (27) and that of the direct object in (28).

On the other hand, it has been argued that the clause-initial position occupied by both the wh-phrase, and its DP counterpart in the response to such questions, as in (22b), indicates that the wh-phrase forms the subject of the clause, and hence, no movement to the left edge of the clause is required.

- (22) b. maḥaa    ε    ʔinik-toʃ            ʕak'        yesgid  
d  
Mahad    REL    saw.2SM-him    in        mosque  
'Mahad is the person that you saw in the mosque'

The clause-initial position of the DP *maḥaad* in (22b), in addition to its referentiality, may thus be taken as indicative of its subjecthood, and hence the predicate status of the headless relative clause. However, it will be shown below that this is not the strong argument that it may appear.

The second argument for the subjecthood of the headless relative and the predicate status of the wh-phrase in these constructions is based on the informational roles of these two constituents in the sentence. The headless relative furnishes the topical familiar information, which is typical of the subject of the sentence. The wh-phrase plays no such role. Instead, there is a noticeable parallelism between the wh-phrase in these wh-questions and the focused DP's in focus constructions, a similarity that motivates assigning them the same structural status. Consider sentences like (29) and (30) below.

- (29) **maḥaad**    ε    fiṭḥ                oob  
Mahad    REL    opened.2SM    door  
'It is Mahad that opened the door.'
- (30) muun    ε    fiṭḥ                oob  
who        REL    opened.3SM    door  
'Who is it that opened the door?'

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, arguments that these clauses are actually nominal expressions in Shibatani & Makhashin (2009) who investigate headless relatives in Soqotri, a sister language. See also Ouhalla (2004) for a DP analysis of relative clauses in other Semitic languages.

In these examples, the initial phrases in both constructions are generally interpreted as focused phrases. The DP *maḥaad* in (29) is the constituent that provides new information, and similarly, the wh-phrase *muun* in (30) requests new information (Potsdam 2006). Thus, in both constructions: the focus construction and the wh-construction, these constituents make the predicate of the clause and are moved under focus to the left periphery – i.e. CP – of this clause from the clause-internal position where they originally merged. Furthermore, it is still possible to find them in their base position as sentences (29a) and (30a)

- (29) a.   ε       fith                   oob   **maḥaad**  
           REL   opened.3SM   door   Mahad  
           ‘the person who opened the door is M.’

- (30) a.   ε       fith                   oob   muun  
           REL   opened.3SM   door   who  
           ‘Who opened the door?’

One further point of parallelism between focus constructions and these wh-question constructions, and which provides more support to treating them similarly, is that, in both constructions, there may appear a pronoun-like optional element to the right of the focused phrase and the wh-phrase. This is illustrated in (31), (32), and (33) below.

- (31)   miizuun   seh           ε       †inik-tos  
        Mayzuun   PRT.3SF   REL   saw.1S-her  
        ‘Mayzoon is who I saw.’

- (32)   muun   feh           ε       †inik-tof ?  
        who   PRT.3SM   REL   saw.1S-him  
        ‘Who is it that I saw?’

- (33)   saalim   lo?       maḥaad   feh           ε       †inik-tof  
        Salim   not   Mahad   PRT.3SM   REL   saw.1S-him  
        ‘Not Salim but Mahad is who I saw.’

This element, which is homophonous with the independent subject ‘nominative’ third person pronoun, confers a stronger emphatic tone on the sentence and places focus on the fronted element. This is probably why we find it more often in contrastive focus contexts as in (33).

Like the monoclausal wh-question constructions, biclausal wh-questions exhibit the in-situ strategy too. The wh-phrase that commonly occurs in a clause-initial position may also surface in its original predicate position as in (29a) above. However, such sentences seem to occur less frequently than their ex-situ counterparts. In contrast to the situation in monoclausal wh-questions, no differences in D-linking or referentiality can be distinguished between the ex-situ and in-situ biclausal wh-questions. Perhaps it is because the biclausal ex-situ wh-question itself carries a presuppositional tone. The speaker presupposes that someone has done something, or something has indeed happened and is asking the question to get information about the person or the thing involved.

## 4.2 The resumptive pronoun

I now turn to one of the points of difference that were assumed to exist between the two wh-question constructions: the presence of a resumptive pronoun in biclausal wh-constructions and its absence in the monoclausal constructions. It was eluded that this resumptive pronoun constitutes a variable that is bound to the fronted wh-element, in an analogous fashion to that which is sometimes found in some monoclausal wh-questions, like example (20b).

However, a closer look at sentences of the biclausal wh-questions reveals that contrary to its role in the monoclausal constructions, the resumptive pronoun in these constructions does not serve such a function and is not related to the clause-initial wh-phrase. Rather, it lies within the boundaries of the headless relative clause, and its presence in this clause follows from syntactic stipulations on how relative clauses are formed in this language. Except when the relativized DP is the subject of the clause, all relative clauses must contain a resumptive pronoun that is related to the head (Hofstede 1998: 51). This includes headless relative clauses, in which the head may be assumed to be a null *pro* element.

When the subject is relativized, subject-verb agreement will substitute for the absent resumptive pronoun. Relativization from any other position leaves a resumptive pronoun that is bound to the head DP. This strategy allows the relativization of an argument from any position in the sentence regardless of its structural depth. The dependency between the resumptive pronoun and the head DP is unbound and is insensitive to syntactic islands as was seen in (24), (25) and (26).

In headless relatives, which we are concerned with here, the resumptive pronoun is bound to the null pronominal *pro*, the head DP of the relative clause in our case, in the same way that it is bound to the head DP in ‘headed’ relative clauses – conventionally through the mediation of the relativizer. As for the nature of the binding relationship that the clause-initial wh-phrase has to the rest of the sentence, it is clearly that of a predication relation that must obtain between the two DP’s that form this type of sentence (cf. Aoun et al. 2010: 152).

## 5. Syntactic Representation

In this section I would like to develop an analysis that captures the structural similarities and differences between the two types of wh-questions with their ex-situ and in-situ strategies, and provides a uniform semantic interpretation for them. This is necessary in order to satisfy the scope licensing demands for the correct interpretation of such sentences.

The tentative syntactic representation that was suggested for the two constructions used in wh-questions in this language shows that in both constructions, one and the same process is at work: a wh-phrase movement to a clause-initial position. A more precise account of this clause-initial position has been proposed in the form of the split-CP hypothesis, initiated by Rizzi (1997). The left periphery of the clause, the CP complex, may accordingly be represented as in (35).

(34) [ForceP.. [Force ..[TopP.. [Top..[FocP..[Foc.. [FinP..[Fin..[IP..]]]]]]]]]

Of concern to us in this cartography are two phrasal categories: The Force Phrase (ForceP), and the Focus Phrase (FocP). ForceP is the highest phrasal projection of the semantically

interpretable functional projections and is assumed to be the locus of the feature that types the discourse function of the sentence. In case of questions, it is said to involve a [+Q] feature that types the clause as a question. The head of this projection (Force<sup>0</sup>), which is marked as [+Q], is generally taken to constitute the interrogative operator that binds a wh-phrase as a variable (see, for example, Ouhalla 1996: 697).

The second functional category of concern in this connection is the Focus Phrase (FocP), another one of the semantically interpretable functional projections. This projection is the locus of the focus operator that binds focused elements, including wh-phrases. The head of this projection, Foc<sup>0</sup>, with its feature [+Foc], represents the focus operator. It contains an [+EPP] feature that is responsible for triggering the movement of the focused elements to its specifier, as has been extensively argued in the literature within the cartographic approach, see for example Rizzi (1997, 2004), Belitti (2004) and Cinque (2002, 2006). This is the position that wh-elements are assumed to occupy in the case of ex-situ questions.

In Jibbali, the focus operator has typically a null spell-out, but may occasionally be spelled out overtly as, *seh* or *feh*, an element that is homophonous with the third person pronoun, as we saw in the case of sentences (31), (32), and (33). Thus, in its overt form, the focus head has additionally  $\phi$  features of gender and number, which are licensed via agreement with the nearest target, i.e. a focused DP, or wh-phrase, that will consequently move to the specifier of this phrase due to the presence of the [+EPP] feature in the head.<sup>9</sup>

Within this picture the ex-situ questions of both, the monoclausal and biclausal constructions in Jibbali, come about as a result of the movement of the wh-phrase from the position at which the wh-phrase has originally merged inside the clause to the specifier position of the Focus Phrase, via an Agree-Move operation. This operation involves matching/valuing the [+Foc] feature on Foc<sup>0</sup> with that on the wh-element, plus the movement of the wh-phrase to satisfy the [+EPP] feature. We may sketch a syntactic representation of these two constructions as (35) and (36).

(35) [ForceP ....Q [FocP wh-phrase<sub>i</sub> ...[Foc F ].. [TP ... [OP t<sub>i</sub>.....]]]

↑

(36) [ForceP .. Q [FocP wh-phrase<sub>i</sub> [Foc F ] ...[ TP [ DP HRC] [QP t<sub>i</sub>]]]

↑

In (35) we have a monoclausal construction with a wh-phrase that has moved from inside the TP to the specifier position of the FocP in the left periphery of the clause. Representation (36) shows a biclausal wh-construction in which the TP specifier position – i.e. subject position – is occupied by a headless relative clause. Assuming that the TP here is a nonverbal equational (subject-predicate) sentence, the predicate- i.e. the TP complement, is a QP of the wh-phrase type. This wh-phrase moves to the specifier of FocP. In both cases the movement of the wh-phrase leaves a gap/non-spelled copy in the original position where it merged.

In the case of the resumptive monoclausal constructions found in questions with *?iine min* ‘which of’, a resumptive pronoun will appear in place of the gap (t<sub>i</sub>) in (36). Wh-movement cannot be motivated here as evidenced in the insensitivity of such questions to syntactic islands. The dependency relation between the resumptive and the wh-phrase must

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<sup>9</sup> We may note here that this element is not specified for person. Actually it doesn't occur if the focused DP is a first or second person pronoun.

be accounted for differently. Since no movement could have taken place, the wh-phrase may be assumed to merge at the position of the specifier of the FocP, and is linked to the resumptive via binding.<sup>10</sup>

The in-situ monoclausal and biclausal questions will receive the same syntactic representations as those in (35) and (36) respectively. What is initially involved here is the matching/valuation of the [+Foc] feature of the head of the FocP and on the wh-phrase via Agree. No movement of a wh-phrase to the left periphery of the clause is evidenced because of the lack, or weakness, of the EPP feature on the Foc head. The wh-phrase remains in its base position inside the TP, as in (35a) and (36a).


(35) a. [ForceP ... Q [FocP [Foc .. F.. ].. [TP .....[QP wh-phrase] .....]]]

(36) a. [ForceP .. Q [FocP [Foc ..F.. ] ...[TP [DP HRC] [QP wh-phrase]]]]]

The above syntactic representation of these sentences will straightforwardly yield the appropriate structural configuration for the proper scope licensing which is necessary for the assignment of the right interpretation to these sentences as questions. The question operator is located in a structurally high position in the clause so as to ensure the right scopal properties.

The question operator is assumed to be realized on the head of the functional head C that has the feature [+Q]. Within the finer categorization of the left periphery that is adopted here, it is realized on the head (Force<sup>0</sup>). The question operator binds the wh-elements which are taken as variables whether they remain in their base position, as is the case of in-situ questions, or if they have been fronted to Spec Foc position in ex-situ wh-questions. These fronted wh-phrases will in turn bind the gaps/copies in their original base positions, or the resumptive pronoun in the case of those mono-clausal wh-questions which exhibit a resumptive pronoun instead of a gap, as is illustrated in (37) and (38).

(37) [ForP Q [FocP wh-phrase<sub>i</sub> ...[Foc (F) ].. [TP ... t<sub>i</sub>.....]]]



(38) [ForP .. Q [FocP wh-phrase<sub>i</sub> [Foc (F) ] ...[ TP [ DP HRC] [QP t<sub>i</sub>]]]]]



Being in the head of ForceP, the question operator assumes a higher position in the clause than other elements, and this will provide the proper scope for all the sentences to get the right interpretation. In this configuration, the wh-scope is licensed in the usual c-command relation that obtains between the operator and the rest of the elements in the sentence.

## 6. Conclusion

I have argued that Jibbali uses two syntactic constructions to form its wh-questions: a monoclausal construction yielding conventional wh-questions, and a biclausal pseudo-cleft construction that consists of two constituents a subject and a predicate. In this construction, the subject is a headless relative clause, a clause type that we may find in non-wh-contexts,

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Aoun & Choueiri (1998) for a similar account of wh-binding and scope licensing in Lebanese Arabic.

and the wh-phrase forms the predicate. The syntactic differences between these two constructions have been discussed in detail including the use of the gap/resumptive and the dependency between them and the fronted wh-element. It has also been shown that ex-situ and in-situ strategies are used with both constructions and that the choice between these strategies is based on the association of each of them with fine semantic differences in referentiality and D-linking.

A syntactic representation of these constructions has been sketched conforming to the fine categorization of the CP space. Within this picture the movement of wh-phrases is assumed to be to Spec-Foc to satisfy an EPP feature. For the proper semantic interpretation of such sentences the question operator has to take scope over other elements in the sentence, which will be the case if this operator is assumed to be uniformly realized on the head of the highest phrasal category in the CP complex, i.e. Force Phrase. This will ensure the proper licensing of the wh-scope. The question operator will unselectively bind the wh-phrases as variables in their position in  $\text{Foc}^0$ , to which they have moved in ex-situ questions, or in their original merger position in in-situ constructions.

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