

## An Anti-Contiguity Approach to Egyptian Arabic Interrogative Distribution

### Abstract

Egyptian Arabic (henceforth, EA) wh-phrases can appear in three syntactic structures; it can appear in-situ, move to the left periphery, or move to an initial position followed by obligatory relativizer ‘*illi*’ and coindexed with a resumptive pronoun. This paper investigates wh-constructions in EA. It describes the distribution of both in-situ and wh-phrases movement in EA. It also analyzes these constructions using two major theories of prosodic analysis: Contiguity Theory (Richards, 2010, 2016) and Anti-Contiguity Theory (Kandybowicz, 2018). Richards (2010) proposed a way of predicting whether a given language would move its wh-phrases or leave them in-situ. The basic idea was that wh-phrases universally must be connected prosodically with the C that *Agrees* with them and that movement is one way of creating the relevant prosodic connection. The anti-contiguity theory (ACWC; Kandybowicz, 2018), on the other hand, proposes that the distribution of wh-items is also regulated by a prosodic well formedness condition, but that it is an anti-contiguity constraint. Kandybowicz proposes that Universal Grammar indeed constrains wh-items from forming prosodic constituents with overt complementizers at the level of Intonational Phrase. The constraint is that no  $\iota$  may contain both overt C and a non-prominent wh-. An occurrence is *prominent* if it occurs at either the left or the right edge of  $\iota$ .

The prosodic structure of the EA data supports the anti-contiguity analysis. EA nominal wh-phrases do not allow overt C in the root clause, so the ACWC is not violated. In the embedded clause, EA allows optional C. I assume that EA is right edge prominent in the eyes of ACWC. If ACWC is parameterized for right  $\iota$  edge prominence in EA, the wh-structures would be fully ACWC compliant and the availability of embedded wh- in-situ in the language would be

accounted for. The third possibility that EA nominal interrogatives allow fronting of the wh-item when associated with obligatory relativizer ‘*illi*’ and a resumptive pronoun. I assert that this construction also complies with the ACWC proposal by making two arguments; one is a syntactic argument and the other is a prosodic argument. First, ‘*illi*’ is considered a relative pronoun not a complementizer. The second argument is that fronted wh-constructions are focused and focus in EA creates a prosodic boundary. Therefore, moved wh-phrases create an IP boundary to its right which creates the anti-contiguity relation between C and the wh-word.

**Keywords:** wh-in-situ; Egyptian Arabic; syntax-phonology interface; anti-contiguity theory; prosody

#### **References:**

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