Overview

In this work, I claim that the leading analysis for “insituness” in North Italian dialects (NIDs), Remnant-TP movement à la Poletto & Pollock 2015 (and previous works), is incompatible with the interrogative syntax of Tревиано (TV), a Romance Venetian dialect; I argue that, in TV, what looks like “insituness” is actually an instance of IP-internal wh-movement, and that this partial movement is compatible with any type of wh-phrase (whp) (D-linked and non-D-linked, in Pesetsky’s terms), both in matrix and embedded contexts; Finally, I posit the existence of an IP-internal landing site for partial wh-movement, little WhP, and of a low left-peripheral WhP (as in Rizzi 2004, Rizzi&Bucci 2016) targeted by wh-movement in indirect clauses.

1. Remnant-TP movement

“Insituness” in NIDs (Munaro et al. 2001, Poletto & Pollock 2015): result of overt wh-movement to a low left-peripheral WhP, followed by Subject-Clitic inversion (SCI) and further movement of the remnant-TP to the CP domain (right above bare wh-nominals and adverbials). A sentence like (1), is derived as in (2):

(1) A-tu magnà che? (Bellunese)
  have you eaten what “what did you eat?”

(2) Input: [IP tu ha magnà che]
  a. Wh-movement: [CP che, X0[IP tu ha magnà t]]
  b. Remnant IP movement and further displacement: [CP [IP ha-tu magnà t]; C [CP che, C0 [t]]]

A derivation like (2) predicts that:

(i) the “in situ” wh-element should be the rightmost element;
(ii) D-linked wh-elements should never appear “in situ”;
(iii) embedded “insituness” should be ruled out by economy. However, none of the predictions in (i-iii) is met in TV.

2. IP-internal wh-movement

In TV, “in situ” whps surface higher than their base-position (3):

(3) a. a-tu magnà cuando el dolse cuando?
  have you eaten when the cake when “when did you eat the cake?”
  b. a-tu visto dove a maria dove?
  have you seen when the mary when “when did you see Mary?”

The whp CAN stay in its base position, but this gives rise to an echoic reading - the interrogative syntax is lost (no SCI) (4):

(4) a. te a magnà el dolse CUANDO?!
  (ECHO) you have eaten the cake when “you ate the cake WHEN!!”
  b. o a-tu magnà cuando, el dolse?
  have you eaten when # the cake “the cake, when did you eat?”

Notice that the questions in (3) are not instances of right dislocation, which always calls for clitic resumption in TV (5):

(5) a. o a-tu magnà cuando, el dolse?
  it have you eaten when # the cake “the cake, when did you eat?”

3. Embedded insituness (indirect Qs)

In TV, the “if”-complementizer SE introduces indirect wh-questions when the whp is “in situ” (6a) (here, “se” does not give rise to a yes/no interpretation, it is a genuine wh-question!). If the whp is moved “ex situ”, KE (“that”) is used instead (6b):

(6) a. me domando se te a magnà ossa (TV)
  myself askPS se you have eaten what “I wonder what you ate”

  b. me domando ossa ke te a magnà
  myself askPS what ke you have eaten

4. Embedded insituness (long-distance Qs)

Embedded “insituness” is also possible in long-distance questions (7a); they alternate freely with their “ex situ” counterparts in (7b):

(7) a. pensi-tu ke i voje magnar cossa?
  think-you that they wantSUBJUNCTIVE eat what “what do you think they want to eat?”

  b. cossa pensi-tu ke i voje magnar
  what think-you that they wantSUBJUNCTIVE eat

5. Arguing for whp and WhP

IP-internal whp

In both matrix and embedded questions, the “in situ” whp targets a position that is lower than the S position (Subj0) and the V (in T0) (8):

(8) pensi-tu ke [subp el [TP magnara [wph ossa [vp t t t ossa]]]]?
  think-you that he eatFUTURE what t t what
  “what do you think he will eat?”

I suggest this position lies in the vP (likely in the focal position called FocP in Belletti 2004) - I call it “little whP” (9):

(9) . . . [vp [vph wh-phrase] [wph [0 [Topic [Top0 [vp [V0 wh-phrase]]]]]]

Since whP does not block further wh-movement (to the CP-field), I take it to be a non Criterial projection.

Low left-peripheral WhP

Because the “se”-complementizer that licenses “insituness” in indirect questions appears lower than Focus, and lower than all LP topic positions, I suggest to treat it as independent from the “se” of yes-no questions. I claim it is hosted by a very low left-peripheral WhP (à la Rizzi 2004) (10):

(10) . . . [whph se [Top0 . . . [vp whp wh-phrase] [whph [0 [Topic [Top0 [vp [V0 wh-phrase]]]]]]

If moved “ex situ”, the whph regularly targets SpecFocP in matrix and long-distance questions, but makes use of WhP in indirect questions. Since WhP disallows further wh-movement, I take it to be a Criterial projection.

6. Conclusions

In this work I claim that in TV there is no real “insituness”, but partial IP-internal wh-movement. Since here the possibility of licensing “insituness” seems to depend on the presence of whPh and WhP, I suggest that, cross-linguistically, the choice of “in situ” over “ex situ” might be subject to the (un)availability of specialized functional structure of the sort. This prediction is to be tested (at least) in the Romance varieties that display “insituness”. Finally, I suggest we treat the SE and KE complementizers of indirect questions as two different realizations of Whph; se surfaces as ke when endowed with a [ + WH ] feature carried by the movement of the whp to SpecWhP (similarly to the French que/qui alternation).

References