

Questions in Buli*

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1. Introduction

This paper contains a brief description of interrogative sentences in Buli. Section 1 is about yes/no questions. Section 2 introduces the interrogative words and presents the basic pattern found in monoclausal *wh*-questions. Section 3 extends the description, covering interrogatives containing embedded clauses. Section 4 addresses indirect questions and section 5 covers the formation of multiple *wh*-questions in the language.

2. Yes/No Questions

Yes/no questions in Buli preserve the word order typical of declarative clauses. What distinguishes one from the other is the presence of a question marker /a:/ always bearing falling tone at the end of a yes/no question. Sometimes the insertion of /a:/ triggers certain phonological process, as indicated below:

- (1) ñ kà bi:k
 I (NE)¹ am a child
 ‘I am a child’
- (2) ñ kà bi:ɡã:
 I am a child-Q²
 ‘Am I a child?’
- (3) fə kà bi:k
 You(NE)are a child
 ‘You are a child’

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¹ NE stands for non-emphatic forms of pronouns.

² In casual speech, /ɡ/ becomes [ɣ] by means of a spirantization rule. ‘Q’ stands for ‘question marker’.

- (4) fò kà bi'gâ:
 You(NE)are a child-Q
 'Are you a child?'
- (5) wà kà bi:k
 He is a child
 'He is a child'
- (6) wà kà bi'gâ:
 He is a child-Q
 'Is he a child?'

If the last word of the declarative clause ends in /a/, /a + â:/ simplifies into [â:] as shown below.

- (7) bà kǎ nàlimà
 they are chiefs
 'They are chiefs'
- (8) bà kǎ nàlimâ:
 They are chiefs-Q
 'Are they chiefs?'

If the declarative sentence ends with a high vowel /u/, the vowel becomes a glide [w]:

- (9) wà kà nùrú
 He is a man
 'He is a man'
- (10) wà kà núr^wâ:
 He is a man-Q
 'Is he a man?'

3. Wh-Questions: Basic Pattern

3.1 Wh-phrases

Here is a list of the main wh-words in the language³:

- (11) Wh-words in Buli
- | | | |
|----|-------------------|---------|
| a. | (ká) wànà | 'who' |
| b. | (ká) bwà | 'what' |
| c. | (ká) bē | 'where' |
| d. | (ká) dīsàpō/dìmpo | 'when' |

³ /ka/ seems to be a focus marker. It appears not only in interrogative sentences, but also in focus constructions. Its presence is optional in both constructions.

- e. (ká) sê 'how'
 f. (ká) bwãññ/ ká bwà Ì swà 'why'

'Which NP' phrases consist of two parts. The first part is a definite NP, and the second part is the pronominal form of the NP, followed by a /na/ suffix. Examples are shown in (12). Again, the presence of /ka/ is optional. In (12a), 'which man' consists of *nudwa* (the man) and *wa* (the pronominal form for 'the man')-*na* (suffix)'.⁴

- (12) a. (ká) núdwà wà-nà 'which man'
 Foc the man who
 ('wà' is the pronominal form for *nudwa* class)
- b. (ká) yérí ðì-nà 'which house'
 Foc the.house which
 ('ðì' is the pronominal form for *yeri* class)

3.2 Wh-question formation

Wh-questions can be formed in two ways. First, wh-phrases can be dislocated to the left-periphery of the clause. In this case the wh-phrase is followed by the complementizer [àñ] or [àtì]⁴. A subject wh-phrase should be followed by [àñ] as in (13a), other arguments can be followed either by [àñ] or [àtì] as in (13b), and adjuncts can only be followed by [àtì].

- (13) a. (ká) wànà àñ/*àtì nàx àtìm?
 Foc who C hit Atim
 'Who hit Atim?'
- b. (ká) wànà àñ/àtì àtìm nàgì?
 Foc who C Atim hit
 'Who did Atim hit?'

Second, wh-phrases can stay in-situ, unless they occupy the subject position, as shown by the contrast below:

- (14) a. *ká wànà nàx àtìm?
 Foc who hit Atim
 'Who hit Atim?'
- b. Àtìm nàgì (ká) wànà?
 Atim hit Foc who
 'Who did Atim hit?'

⁴ [àñ] or [àtì] can be reduced as [ñ] or [tì].

Here are some more examples of wh-questions:

(15) (ká) bwà 'what'

a. (ká) bwà àlì/àtì àtìm nàgì?
 Foc what C Atim hit
 'What did Atim hit?'

b. Àtìm nàgì (ká) bwà ?
 Atim hit Foc what
 'What did Atim hit?'

(16) (ká) bē 'where'⁵

(ká) bē ??àlì/àfì àtìm nàgì Mary?
 Foc where C Atim hit Mary
 'Where did Atim hit Mary?'

(17) ðisàpō / ðimpò 'when'

(ká) ðisàpō / ðimpō ??àlì/àtì àtìm nàgì Mary?
 Foc when C Atim hit Mary
 'When did Atim hit Mary?'

(18) (ká) sē 'how'

A: (ká) sē ??àlì/ àtì àtìm nàgì Mary?
 Foc way C Atim hit Mary
 'How did Atim hit Mary?'

B: Àtìm nàgì Mary nālīmūnī
 Atim hit Mary well
 'Atim hit Mary well.'

(19) (ká) bwàññ / (ká) bwà ñ swà 'why'

a. (ká) bwàññ ??àlì/àtì àtìm nàgì Mary?
 Foc why C Atim hit Mary
 'Why did Atim hit Mary?'

b. (ká) bwà ñ swa ??àlì/àfì àtìm nàgì Mary?
 Foc why C Atim hit Mary
 'Why did Atim hit Mary?'

⁵ In-situ questions with adjunct wh-phrases sounded very odd to our informant.

(20) ‘Which NP?’

- a. **(ká) núdwà wàna** àlī/àtī àtīm nàgì?
 Foc the.man which C Atim hit
 ‘Which man did Atim hit?’
- b. **(ká) yérí dīnà** àlī/àtī àtīm sè?
 Foc the.house which C Atim build
 ‘Which house did Atim build?’

4. Wh-Questions: Long distance Extraction

4.1 Extraction and resumption

A resumptive pronoun is obligatory when the subject of the embedded clause is extracted, as in (21a) vs. (21b). Notice that the presence of the complementizer *ayin* is obligatory (see 21c). This might suggest that resumption is the strategy employed to avoid "that-trace" violations.

(21) Subject extraction

- a. ká wàna **àtī** Atīm wè:nì àyín wà nàʔì Mary⁶
 Foc who C Atim said that he hit Mary
 ‘Who did Atim say that __ hit Mary?’
- b. *ká wàna àtī Atīm wè:nì àyín nàʔì Mary
 Foc who C Atim said that hit Mary
- c. *ká wàna àtī Atīm wè:nì wà nàʔì Mary
 Foc who C Atim said he hit Mary

A long distance dislocated wh-subject can be followed by either [àtī], as in (21a), or [àlī] as shown in (21a) and (22).

- (22) ká wàna **alī** Atīm wè:nì àyín wà nàʔì Mary
 Foc who C Atim said that he hit Mary
 ‘Who did Atim say that __ hit Mary?’

Notice that in the cases involving short distance extraction of subjects, as discussed in the previous section, *ali* was the only option for the complementizer. This contrast suggests that the selection of the complementizer is decided locally, i.e., the choice of *ali* over *ati* is obligatory only if the complementizer and the subject being extracted belong to the same clause. If more embedded subjects are extracted, both *ali* and *ati* can be used.

In contrast to subject extraction, the use of resumptive pronouns in the object position of an embedded clause is not allowed, as shown in (23b). This is consistent with viewing resumption as a last resort strategy, to be used only

⁶ The form of the resumptive pronoun varies according to the noun class to which the wh-phrase belongs.

when its absence leads to ill-formed structures, as we just saw above in the case of subject extraction:

- (23) *ká wàná* atì/alī *Ātīm wè:nì àyín* *Máryí nà:yì (*wà)*
 Foc who C atim said that Mary hit him
 ‘Who did Atim say that Mary hit __?’
- (24) *ká bʷà* *àtì* *Ātīm wè:nì àyín* *Máryí dè (*dì)*
 Foc what C atim said that Mary ate it
 ‘What did Atim say Mary ate __?’
- (25) *ká yérí dìnà* atì/alī *Ātīm wè:nì àyín* *Máryí sè (*dì)*
 Foc house which C Atim said that Mary bulit it
 ‘Which house did Atim say that Mary bulit __?’

4.2 Adjunct extraction

A wh-adjunct fronted to the matrix clause is ambiguous between a matrix reading and a lower reading, as in (26).

- (26) *ká dīsàpō atì/alī* *Ātīm wè:nì àyín* *Máryí nà:yì Bill*
 Foc when C Atim said that Mary hit Bill
 ‘When did Atim say that Mary hit Bill __?’
 ‘When did Atim say _ that Mary hit Bill?’

4.3 Partial wh-movement

Partial wh-movement, that is, movement of a wh-phrase to the edge of an embedded clause in a matrix wh-question is possible. In the case of subject extraction, *ali* should be used in the clause out of which the subject is being extracted, as shown in (27b). In the case of object extraction, both *ali* and *ati* are allowed, as illustrated in (27c).

- (27) a. *ká wàná* lí/ tì *Ātīm pòlì àyín wà* *nà:yì Mary*
 Foc who C Atim thought that he hit Mary
 ‘Who did Atim think that __ hit Mary?’
- b. *Ātīm pòlì àyín ká wàná* lí/*tì *nà:yì Mary*
 Atim thought that Foc who C hit Mary
 ‘Who did Atim think that __ hit Mary?’
- c. *Ātīm pòlì àyín ká wàná* lí/tì *Máryí nà:yì*
 Atim thought that Foc who C Mary hit
 ‘Who did Atim think that Mary hit __?’

A wh-adjunct undergoing partial movement has only the embedded reading, as shown in the contrast between (26) and (28).

- (28) Atim wè:nì àyĩn **ká dīsàpō atì/aī** Mǎrý nàvì Bill
 Atim said that Foc when C Mary hit Bill
 ‘When did Atim say that Mary hit Bill _?’
 *‘When did Atim say _ that Mary hit Bill?’

4.4 Extractions (out) of possessive NPs:

Two options are available for extraction involving possessive NPs. First, the whole NP can appear dislocated, as in (29)-(30):

- (29) **ká ná: b̀nà ẓuk^w t̃ f̃ nàvì**
 Foc cow which head C you hit
 ‘Which cow’s head did you hit?’

- (30) **ká ná: ḡnà ẓuk^w t̃ f̃ nàvì**
 Foc cow which head C you hit
 ‘Which cows’(pl.) head did you hit?’

Notice that although the questions concern the identity of the possessor ('cow') ('which cow x is such that you hit x's head?'), the possessee ('head') also appears dislocated.

Second, extraction of the possessor without accompanying possessee is also possible, but then a resumptive pronoun should be left in the original site:

- (31) a. **ká wàná t̃/l̃i *(wà) ná:b nàg̃i Atim**
 Foc who C he cow hit Atim
 ‘Whose cow hit Atim?’
- b. **ká wàná t̃/l̃i Atim nàg̃i *(wà) ná:b**
 Foc who C Atim hit he cow
 ‘Whose cow did Atim hit?’

This is consistent with our previous remarks characterizing resumption as a last resort strategy. In (31a) and (31b), the resumptive pronoun is allowed because its presence repairs the illicit extraction out of an NP.

4.5 Extraction of wh-phrases out of a relative clause

A wh-phrase cannot be extracted from a relative clause. Neither overt fronting (32b), nor an in-situ question (32c) are allowed. Note also that a resumptive pronoun cannot improve the ungrammaticality of wh-extraction out of a relative clause, as shown in (32).

- (32) a. **f̃ kàrim gbàṅká t̃ wà màṽsì l̃**
 You read the book C he wrote RC⁷.
 ‘You read the book that he wrote’

⁷ RC: relative clause marker. For more on the nature of this marker, see. (Hiraiwa and Suzuki 2002 included in this volume).

- b. *?ká wàná tĩ fɔ̀ kà̀rìm gbáŋká tì wà màxìsì lǎ
 Foc who C you read the book C he wrote RC
 'Who did you read the book that __ wrote?'
- c. *?fɔ̀ kà̀rìm gbáŋká tì kǎ wàná lĩ màxìsì lǎ
 You read the book C Foc who C wrote RC
 'Who did you read the book that __ wrote?'

5. Indirect Questions

Indirect yes/no questions are introduced by the complementizer [àyĩn]:

- (33) bà bègĩ Atim àyĩn wà sè yènnĩ
 They asked Atim if he built the house
 'They asked Atim if he built the house'

Indirect wh-questions are also introduced with [àyĩn], which is followed by the wh-phrase and the complementizers [lĩ] or [tĩ]:

- (34) a. bà bègĩ Atim àyĩn ká wàná lĩ/*tĩ sè yènnĩ
 They asked Atim that Foc who C built the house
 'They asked Atim who built the house'
- b. bà bègĩ Atim àyĩn ká bwà lĩ/tĩ wà sè
 They asked Atim that Foc what C he built
 'They asked Atim what he built'

Wh-phrases cannot be left in-situ in an indirect question. So, (35) can only be interpreted as a matrix question. Notice that overt extractions out of a wh-island seem to be tolerated in Buli, as suggested by the grammaticality of (36a-b):

- (35) bà bègĩ Atim àyĩn wà sè **kà yèrí dīnà**
 They asked Atim that he built Foc house which
 'Which house did they ask Atim if he built _?'
 *'They asked which house Atim built'
- (36) a. **ká yèrí** dīnà tĩ nò bègĩ Atim **àyĩn** wà sè
 Foc house which C you asked Atim that he built
 'Which house did you ask Atim if he built _?'
- b. **ká yèrí** dīnà tĩ nò bègĩ Atim àyĩn **ká wàná** lĩ sè
 Foc house which C you asked Atim that Foc who C built
 'Which house did you ask Atim who built _?'

6. Multiple Wh-Questions

In multiple questions, the focus particle *ka* appears only once, as shown in (37a-b), and it should precede the higher wh-phrase in the overt syntax, as in (37c).

- (37) a. **ká wàná** lĩ nàxì **bʷà**
 Foc who C hit what
 'Who hit what?'
- b. ***ká wàná** lĩ nàxì **ká bʷà**
 Foc who C hit Foc what
- c. *?**wàná** lĩ nàxì **ká bʷà**
 Who C hit Foc what

Superiority violations are possible in Buli, as shown by the grammaticality of (38), where a wh-object has been extracted and a wh-subject has been left in situ:

- (38) **ká bʷà** tĩ **wàná** nàxì
 Foc what C who hit
 'What did who hit?'

In the case of verbs with two objects, both wh-phrases can be left in-situ and the focus particle can precede either the direct or the indirect object:

- (39) a. Ařim tẽ **ká wàná** **bwà**
 Atim gave Foc who what
 'To whom did Atim give what?'
- b. Ařim tẽ **wàná** **ká bwà**
 Atim gave who Foc what
 'What did Atim give to whom?'

The wh-phrases can also be fronted in the double object construction:

- (40) a. **ká wàná** tĩ Ařim tẽ **bwà**
 b. **ká bwà** tĩ Ařim tẽ **wàná**

Our informant considered (40) correct, but he expressed a preference for the use of a serial verb construction in these cases:

- (41) a. **ká wàná** tĩ Ařim pà **bwà** tẽ
 Foc who C Atim took what gave
 'To whom did Atim give what?'

- b. **ká bwà** tì Atim pà tè **wàná**
Foc what C Atim took gave who
'What did Atim give to whom?'

7. Summary

The main features of Buli interrogatives that arose from this survey were: (i) yes/no questions contain a clause final interrogative particle; (ii) wh-phrases can appear dislocated or can be left in-situ (if they are not in subject position) in matrix questions; (iii) wh-phrases cannot be left in-situ in indirect questions; (iv) the language has two complementizers: wh-subjects require the presence of complementizer [àfi], whereas other arguments and adjuncts accept both [àfi] or [àti]; (v) resumption is obligatory when wh-phrases are extracted from subject position in an embedded clause or are extracted out of possessive NPs; (vi) superiority violations are tolerated in multiple wh-questions; (vii) indirect questions do not block wh-extraction, i.e. they are not islands; (viii) A relative clause is an island for wh-extraction whether or not wh-phrases undergo overt movement. (iv) partial movement is possible in embedded questions.

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