Discourse particles in languages of (North) Western India

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Discourse particles

- Empirical domain: propositions and felicity conditions on the use of various discourse particles (on verbs)
- Languages being documented: Marwari, Bagri, Multani
Marwari

- Spoken in Western Rajasthan
- Gusain 2004: 1.3 crore (13 million) speakers
- Census 2011: 78 lakh (7.8 million) speakers
- Mukherjee 2011: Name Avoidance, 'Rajasthani'
- Language consultant: Prabal Chauhan; Age 20; From Nagaur; Other languages: Hindi, English
Bagri

- Spoken in North Eastern Rajasthan, bordering Haryana
- Census 2011: 2.34 lakh (234 thousand) speakers
- Language Consultant: Punam Silu, Age 20; From Churu;
  Other languages: Hindi, English
Multani

- Spoken in Delhi, Haryana, Western UP
- Census 2011: 21 thousand speakers
- Facebook groups: 70 thousand - 1 lakh members
- Other names: Seraiki
- Language Consultant: Jaya Bhatia, Age 63; From Western UP; Other languages: Hindi, Punjabi, English
Outline

- Theoretical background: Aboutness Topic, Focus, Contrastive Topic, Verum
- Baseline: Topic Marking on N, V in Marwari, Bagri, Multani
- Core: Use of Topic marker on V, along with POS marker, Emphatic Particle
- Complex meanings → Verum operator analysis
Theoretical Background
Aboutness Topic

- A constituent which is proposed as a ‘matter of standing and current interest or concern’ (Strawson 1964)
- ‘what the sentence is about’ (Reinhart 1981)

(1) Tell me about Mira (Reinhart 1981)

Mira\(_{Top}\) is an artist.

(2) Hindi-Urdu

miiraa to kala:ka:r hE

Mira\(_{TOP}\) artist is

‘Mira\(_{Top}\) is an artist.’
Focus

(3) Kabir$_F$ left.  
X left → Who left?

The focus interpretation of a sentence is associated with two semantic objects (Rooth 1985, 1992):

a. the ordinary semantic value of the proposition expressed by the sentence

b. the focus semantic value of the proposition i.e. the set of alternative propositions that the sentence makes salient

Interaction with Covert/overt focus sensitive operators and particles

(4) Hindi-Urdu

(sirf) kabir$_F$ (hi:) gaya:
only Kabir EMPH.PRT went

Only Kabir$_F$ went.
(5) mi:ra to chali: gai:, par Kabir hE Mira TOP walked went but Kabir is Mira$_{CT}$ has gone but Kabir is here. → Is Mira here? Is Kabir here? Is Rita here?

Constant(2014): CT phrases are focused phrases (in the sense of Rooth 1985) that mark the presence of complex questions in the discourse, while also denoting what the (current) question being discussed is about.
Verum (Focus)

- A special kind of accent used to emphasize the truth of the propositional content of a sentence (instead of focusing the accent-bearing expression) (see, e.g., Höhle 1992)

(6) A: I cannot imagine that Peter kicked the dog.
    B: Peter DID kick the dog

Debate about analysis (Gutzmann, et al. 2020)

- Focus (Accent): Ordinary alternative focus on the truth of a proposition
- Verum Operator: Predicate that relates the current proposition to the Question Under Discussion
Data time!
(7)  mEM  ja:-uM
     I   go-FUT
  ‘I will go.’

(8)  Topic marker on Subject

  mEM  to  ja:-uM
  I   top  go-FUT

  ‘I will go.’
  Aboutness:  Y
  Contrastive:  Y
(9) Topic marker on Verb (Gusain 2004; Glosses adapted)

bo ja:we to hE
He goes TOP is

‘He does go.’

(10) Context: Neutral Simple Polar Q

bo ja:we ki?
he goes Q?

‘Does he go?’

(11) Continuation:

...but doesn’t do much there

▶ Does he go? Does he work? Does he relax?
▶ Complex QUD
(12) Context: Neutral Simple Polar Q

thEM ja:-o?
you go-FUT

Will you go?

(13) mEM ja:-uM t:o *(hu:M)
I go-FUT TOP

‘I will go.’

(14) Continuation:

... par koi ka:m ni kar-uM batte
but any work NEG do-fut there

‘...but I will not do any work there.’

▶ Will you go? Will you work? Will you relax?
▶ Complex QUD
Bagri

(15) ma ja:-syuM
I go-FUT
‘I will go.’

(16) ma to ja:-syuM
I TOP go-FUT
‘I will go.’
Aboutness: Y; Contrastive: Y

(17) ma ja:-syuM to
I go-FUT
‘I will go.’

... lekin mEM bhaTTa kaam kon karuM
  but I there work NEG do-FUT

‘...but I won’t do any work there.’
Neutral Simple Polar Q: Y; Complex QUD: Y
Multani

(18) mEM ve-sa:M
I go-FUT
‘I will go.’

(19) mEM te ve-sa:M
I TOP go-FUT
‘I will go.’

(20) mEM ve-sa:M te *(udde)
I go-FUT TOP there
‘I will go there.’

(21) ... par mEM udde koj kare-sa:n kEna:
    but I there something do-FUT NEG
‘...but I won’t do any work there.’

Neutral Simple Polar Q: Y; Complex QUD: Y
More particles: More meanings?

(22) Marwari

mEM ja:-uMlaa to sari
I go-FUT TOP POS

‘I will go.’

(23) Bagri

ma ja:-syuM to sari
I go-FUT TOP POS

‘I will go.’

▶ It’s not the going that’s in doubt. But rather the other related activities are in question.
Multani:

(24) Neutral Negative Polar Question

kya: tussa:M udde kEna: ve-so?
Q you there NEG go-FUT
‘Will you not go there?’

(25) Biased Negative Polar Question

tussa:M ve-so kEna: udde?
you go-FUT NEG there
‘Won’t you go there?’
Speaker expects subject will go

(26) mEM ve-sa:M te *(jaru:r)
I go-FUT TOP definitely
‘I will go.’

(27) ... par mEM udde koj kare-sa:n kEna:
but I there something do-FUT NEG
‘...but I won’t do any work there.’
Negation, Bias and Verum

(28) Does John not drink? Neutral Negative Polar Q
(29) Doesn’t John drink? Biased Negative Polar Q

▶ Positive epistemic implicature: Speaker expects that John drinks.

▶ Preposed negation in English → VERUM operator
  (Romero and Han 2004)

(30) Hindi-Urdu postposed negation (Bhatia and Iyer, 2014)

  vaha:M kuch hE to nahiM?
  There something is TOP NEG

  ‘Isn’t there something there?’

(31) kuch hE to *(sahi)
    something is  TOP POS

  ‘Yes, something is there.’
More particles: More meanings?

Multani

(32) Polar Alternative Question
me-kuM saaf saaf das-so ki tussa:M ve-so ki
I-DAT clean clean tell-IMPR that you go-FUT that
NOT
‘Tell me clearly, will you go or not?’

(33) ve-sa:M te mEm jaru:r hi:
go-FUT TOP I definitely EMPH.PRT
‘I will definitely go.’

(34) # ... par be kamm kEna: karesa:M
   but other work NEG do-FUT
‘...but I will not do other things.’

(35) ... nall be kamm vi kare-sa:M
together other work also do-FUT
‘...& I will do other things as well.’ (Beyond expectations)
Marwari

(36) ja:-uMla: to mEM sari hi:
go-FUT TOP I POS EMPH.PRT
‘I will go.’

(37) ja:-uMla: to mEM hu:M *(hi:)
go-FUT TOP I am PRT
‘I will go.’

Bagri

(38) ja:-syuM to ma sari hi:
go-FUT TOP I POS EMPH.PRT
‘I will go.’

(39) jaa to ma syuM *(hi:)
go TOP I will EMPH.PRT
‘I will go.’

▶ Not only will I go for sure, but I will do other activities also.
Summary

Two patterns

a. V TOP POS
   Acceptance of proposition + denial of other related propositions

b. V TOP POS/COP EMPH.PRT
   Acceptance of proposition + acceptance of other related propositions
Summary and Next steps

- Different Context questions + possible continuations
- The patterns discussed are not just about an ordinary alternative focus on the truth of the proposition but rather more complex meanings are at play (→ Complex QUD + differing expectations)
- Viable analysis: VERUM operator (Romero and Han 2004; Gutzmann et. al 2020); needs to be worked out
- Further question: how best to account for the difference between V TOP POS vs. V TOP POS/COP EMPH.PRT?
Prabal Chauhan  Punam Silu  Jaya Bhatia

THANK YOU