

Hindi/Urdu is an SOV language that uses prosody to mark a sentence as a polar question (PolQ):

- (1) a. anu=ne uma=ko kitab d-i L-H% [PolQ]  
 A.F=Erg U.F=Dat book.F.Sg.Nom give-Perf.F.Sg L-H%  
 ‘Did Anu give a/the book to Uma?’  
 b. anu=ne uma=ko kitab d-i L-L% [Declarative]  
 A.F=Erg U.F=Dat book.F.Sg.Nom give-Perf.F.Sg L-L%  
 ‘Anu gave a/the book to Uma.’

Non-*wh*-questions can also contain de-accented *Kya* (a final-falling contour with *kya* usually results in ungrammaticality). De-accented *kya* can appear in different positions:

- (2) (kya) anu=ne (kya) uma=ko (kya) kitab (\*/✓ kya) d-i (kya)?  
 KYA A.F=Erg KYA U.F=Dat KYA book.F.Sg.Nom KYA give-Perf.F.Sg KYA  
 ‘Did Anu give a/the book to Uma?’ (Paraphrases will be refined below)

De-accented *kya* is called *polar-kya*. In preverbal position polar *kya* is not possible unless the context allows for an interpretation in which alternatives to the verb are relevant or the verb is prosodically (contrastively) marked. The preverbal position is where we find the accented counterpart of polar-*kya* (3), interpreted as the plain *wh*-word ‘what’. In this case the final contour is not the same as the one found in PolQs.

- (3) anu=ne uma=ko kya di-ya L-L%  
 A.F=Erg U.F=Dat what give-Perf.M.Sg L-L%  
 ‘What did Anu give to Uma?’

The contribution of *kya* has mostly been argued to be information-structural, e.g. [1] claimed that material to the left of polar *kya* is given and not available for questioning: in (4) it is not at-issue whether Anu is the agent, but B’s response signals an interpretation in which it is asked whether it is Anu who gave the book to Uma, which is incoherent and results in infelicity.

- (4) A. anu=ne kya uma=ko tofa di-ya?  
 Anu.F=Erg KYA Uma.F=Dat present.M.Sg.Nom give-Perf.M.Sg  
 ‘Did Anu give a/the present to Uma?’

B. #nahī, asim=ne di-ya (‘No, Asim did’)

**The proposal in a nutshell:** We argue that *kya* is a focus-sensitive operator. We present new data showing that *kya* associates with focused elements in the question utterance and constrains the set of possible answers. In this sense, the distribution of *kya*-questions (KQs) is more constrained contextually than plain polar questions (PolQs). We provide a semantics for utterances with *kya* that explains intuitions for (4), and explains (without further complications/stipulations in the semantics) why (i) KQs are very well suited to express surprise/disbelief about part of a previous claim (5); (ii) non-serious invitations cannot be conveyed with KQs (the *kya-less* version in (6) would be used when the speaker is not serious about the offer), and (iii) why rhetorical questions (RhQs) with *kya* prefer to place it at the end, (7). This data has not been discussed in the literature. (We further argue that our proposal can lead to a unified account of polar *kya* and *wh-kya* but we do not elaborate this point in the abstract for space reasons).

- (5) A: When John came to visit, he brought a toy for Amra.  
 B: jon=ne amra=ko kya k<sup>h</sup>ilona di-ya ? (magar) wo 17=ki hai  
 John=Erg Amra=Dat kya toy.M.Sg.Nom give-Perf.M.Sg (but) she 17 is  
 ‘John gave a toy to Amra?! She is 17!’  
 (6) A doesn’t feel like offering coffee to their visitor and wishes s/he declines the offer:  
 A: (#kya) ap coffee lē-ge?  
 kya you.Hon coffee.F.Sg take-Fut  
 ‘Will you have coffee?’  
 (7) Context: A is telling B how to behave in a situation. B says (with typical RhQs prosody):  
 B: (?kya) tum (?kya) meri ammā ho (kya)?  
 kya you kya my mother.F.Sg be.Pres kya  
 ‘Are you my mother?’

**Focus association and the space of possible answers in KQs:** (8) shows that KQs are different from PolQs (we offer now paraphrases that better reflect the interpretation).

(8) *I know that John gave something to Amra ...*

a. ✓ ... jon=ne amra=ko kya k<sup>h</sup>ilona di-ya? [KQ]

John=Erg Amra=Dat KYA toy.M.Sg.Nom give-Perf.M.Sg  
‘Was it a toy that John gave to Amra?’

b. #... jon=ne kya amra=ko k<sup>h</sup>ilona di-ya? [KQ]

John=Erg KYA Amra=Dat toy.M.Sg.Nom give-Perf.M.Sg  
‘Was it to Amra that John gave a toy?’

The parallel *kya*-less utterance would be a PolQ (‘Did John give a toy to Amra?’) and acceptable in this context. The KQ data above shows that the placement of *kya* affects the question interpretation (i.e. its possible answers) and conveys by default that the element on the right is at-issue (explaining the infelicity of (8b)). However, the word order in (8b) can be used to express the question in (8a) if ‘toy’ is prominent prosodically. Similarly, if ‘John’ is prosodically prominent in both KQs in (8) they can be uttered (in a different scenario) to ask whether it was John who gave the toy to Amra. In addition, KQs exclude the empty-set answer: (9) is infelicitous because the speaker states that ‘nothing’ is a likely answer, but this answer is incompatible with the KQ (the KQ in (9) conventionally conveys that something was given to John by Amra):

(9) *I don’t think John gave anything to Amra...*

... jon=ne amra=ko (#kya) k<sup>h</sup>ilona di-ya?

John=Erg Amra=Dat kya toy.M.Sg.Nom give-Perf.M.Sg  
‘Did John give a toy to Amra?’

**Analysis:** The discussion above leads to the conclusion that *kya* associates with focus, and with default prosodic marking the element immediately to the right of *kya* is taken to be focused. When an element is made prominent prosodically, *kya* associates with it. In (10) we provide the semantics of KQs (exemplified in (11)) based on [2]’s proposal for PolQs, which bridges (Hamblin) semantics and discourse using the Q(uestion)U(nder)D(iscussion) discourse model.

(10) Where  $m_F$  is the focused element,  $\llbracket [Q] \llbracket \_kya \ m_F \_ \rrbracket \rrbracket^c = \llbracket \_m \_ \rrbracket^c$

defined only if (a)  $\llbracket \_m \_ \rrbracket^c \subseteq \text{QUD}(M_{kya})$ ; (b)  $|\llbracket \_m \_ \rrbracket^c \cup \text{QUD}(M_{kya})| > 1$ ;

(c)  $\text{QUD}(M_{kya}) \subseteq \llbracket \_m_F \_ \rrbracket^f$

(11)  $\llbracket (8a) \rrbracket^c = \llbracket \text{John gave a toy to Amra} \rrbracket^c = \{\text{John gave a toy to Amra}\}$

defined only if (a)  $\{\text{John gave a toy to Amra}\} \subseteq \text{QUD}(M_{kya})$ ;

(b)  $|\{\text{John gave a toy to Amra}\} \cup \text{QUD}(M_{kya})| > 1$ ;

(c)  $\text{QUD}(M_{kya}) \subseteq \{\text{John gave a toy to Amra; John gave a book to Amra...}\}$

A PolQ in [2]’s analysis excludes (c). PolQs state that the content proposition is a possible answer, (a), and inquire whether the content proposition holds (its semantics is merely the singleton set), and (b) require that other alternatives are available in discourse (i.e. the QUD in [3]’s sense contains more alternatives). According to (10), KQs further conventionally impose that the possible answers be a subset of the focus alternatives of the utterance. (11) signals that the question is necessarily about what was given to Amra (explaining also (4)) and excludes the empty-set answer: i.e. (11) (c) imposes that the set of possible answers entails that John gave something to Amra. By lacking (c) PolQs leave participants more room to maneuver and to accommodate answers to the QUD like ‘nothing’. **Enriched meanings:** This proposal explains (i) that (6) cannot be used when the speaker wants to leave open that ‘nothing’ is a possibility (as in non-serious invitations); (ii) sentence final *kya* (without prominence marked in other constituents) cannot associate with elements to the right and associates by default with the entire proposition on its left (the entire proposition is at issue). This is crucial to obtain a rhetorical interpretation in which the entire proposition is pretended to be at issue.

**Selected references:** [1]Bhatt & Dayal. 2014. Polar questions and disjunction: clues from hindi-urdu polar *kyaa* [2]Biezma & Rawlins. 2012. Responding to alternative and polar questions. [3] Roberts. 1996. Information structure in discourse.