QUESTION NOUNS AND CLAUSE-TYPING IN YORÙBÁ

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Abstract

Interrogative sentences are deployed to perform speech acts of asking questions or making requests. Interestingly, the syntax of interrogatives in Yorùbá has attracted the attention of many researchers in the language (Ìlọ̀rí, 2010: Ọláńrewájú & Táíwò, 2020: Ọláńrewájú 2022). However, the correct feature specification and syntactic behaviour of question nouns (hence, QNs) are yet to be given adequate attention. Some of the extant works in the language equate QNs in Yorùbá with wh-phrases of English and some other Indo-European languages, This paper, within the confines of the Chomsky's Minimalist Program, discusses the two existing views on how constituent interrogatives involving QNs are clause-typed (the traditional opinion hypothesizing that QNs are the question makers in constituent interrogatives while the other position holds the views that an abstract question morpheme clause-types a sentence as a constituent question). This paper lays some claims to support the traditional position that a clause is typed a constituent question by the transfer of the question force [QF] on a QN to the Inter0 through specifier and head agreement. Primary and secondary data were collected and subjected to syntactic analysis. QNs in the language are *ta* 'who' and *kí* 'what', *èló* 'how much', *mélòó* 'how many' and so on. Polysyllabic QNs are derivational in the language. Yorùbá content word questions, relative clauses, adverbials and so on are not signalled in wh-encripts unlike English. The language operates different functional heads to clause-type them.

Keywords: *Question nouns, Question feature, Clause-Typing Hypothesis, Constituent, Interrogatives, Yorùbá*

I   INTRODUCTION

Interrogatives across word languages can be classified based on the types of responses they trigger into constituent and polar questions (König and Siemund, 2007; Issah, 2013). Unlike wh-phrases in English, QNs in Yorùbá are restricted to interrogatives only (Awóbùlúyì, 1978, 2008, 2013: Bámgbóṣé, 1990; Táiwò and Abimbọ́lá, 2014; Ọláńrewájú, 2020, 2022 and so on). In Yorùbá, QNs, referred to as wh-phrases in some other literature, are onthologically different from their equivalents in English and some other European languages. Evidently, constituent questions are not signalled by wh-encripts in Yorùbá. Yorùbá operates different items (QNs, question verbs (hence, QVs) and interrogative qualifiers) to form its content word questions (Awóbùlúyì, 1978; Bámgbóṣé, 1990, Ọláńrewájú, 2022). This paper classifies QNs and QVs as different lexical categories in Yorùbá, therefore, adopting wh-phrases for them would be descriptively inadequate and inappropriate.

Ouhalla (1996) opines that wh-questions in natural languages differ in respect to their morphological and semantic properties. The veracity of this assertion is evident in the different ontological features of wh-phrases in English and QNs in Yorùbá as shown in the examples below:

	English	Yorùbá
(1)	who	ta
	what	kí
	where	ibo

The English words above occur both as QNs and demonstrative adjectives and so on unlike their Yorùbá counterparts which are operated only as QNs. Let us also consider the English examples below:

(2) a. i. Who did you see?   ii. The man who came here has left.

b. i. What do you need?   ii. I have seen what I needed.

c. i. Where did you keep it?   ii. I saw it where I kept it.

Yoruba does not operate its QNs similarly to what is applicable in the types 2aii, bii and cii above because QNs in the language strictly occur in content word interrogatives. Saito (1992), in line with the the view above, claims that wh-feature exist in all languages. This is consequently responsible for the attraction of interrogative constituents to the clause left periphery, for a feature checking purpose. It is

however discovered that the [+Q] feature on the Inter0 of a Yorùbá interrogative clause is not strong, therefore, it cannot trigger an overt movement of a QN (Ìlọ̀rí, 2010). Movement of an interrogative constituent to the clause left periphery is motivated by the strong [+foc] feature on the Foc0 (Ọláńrewájú and Táíwò, 2020). This prompted Issah (2013) to claim that interrogative constituents constitute a linguistic device used to identify pieces of information considered to be prominently new. Also, Kroeger (2004:139) in Issah (2013:56) opines that a question word bears pragmatic focus because it specifies the crucial piece of new information required. This paper has five sections: Section one discusses the introductory parts of the paper. Section two and three discuss the traditional position on Yorùbá QNs and the opinions of the recent scholarly works, that is, the opposing view respectively. In section four, the discussion is on features of Yorùbá QNs while the concluding remarks are drawn in Section five.

II   PREVIOUS STUDIES ON QNS IN YORÙBÁ

Awóbùlúyì (1978, 2013) identifies five QNs in Yorùbá. They are: *kí* (what), *ta* (who), *èwo* (which), *èló* (how much), and *mélòó* (how many). Bámgbóṣé (1990) identifies six: *kí* (what), *ta* (who), *èwo* (which), *èló* (how much), *ibo* (where), *èkelòó* (what number/position). According to Awóbùlúyì (1978), these QNs are seldomly used with qualifiers or are markedly restricted in the types of qualifiers they co-occur with. Awóbùlúyì (2013) claims that *kí* (what) and *ta* (who) unlike other questions nouns identified above allow vowel insertion as shown below:

(3)   a. Owó   o   kí   ni   o   fẹ́?

Money MTS what FOC you want

'What money do you want?'

b. Owó   o   ta   ni   o   sọnù?

Money MTS who FOC you lose

'What money did you lose?'

It is observed that the distinction identified by Awóbùlúyì (2013) above is factored by syllabic structures and morphological derivation of QNs in Yorùbá, amongst others. *Kí* (what) and *ta* (who) are consonant initial QNs unlike some others. It should be equally noted that other types of nouns that start with consonant phonemes also allow vowel insertion as featured in 5a and not 4b below:

(4)   a. Owó   o   Délé ni   o   fẹ́.

Money MTS Délé FOC you want

'You want DELE'S MONEY.'

b. Owó   Ayọ̀   ni   o   fẹ́.

Money Ayọ̀ FOC you want

'You want AYỌ̀'S MONEY.'

Although, the QN *mélòó* (how many) begins with a consonant phoneme, it does not share this similar syntactic attribute with *kí* (what) and *ta* (who) due to its different structure and form of derivation. *Melòó* is derived from *mú èló* (pick/take how many) (Ọláńrewájú, 2022). This derivation is in line with Awóbùlúyì's (2008) claim on the derivation of Yorùbá numerals like *méjì, mẹ́ta, mẹ́rin* and so on. These numerals do not also allow insertion of a mid-tone syllable (MTS) just like *mélòó*, as shown below:

(5)   a. Ìwé mélòó ni   o   fẹ́?

Book QN FOC you want

'How many book do you need?'

b. *Ìwé   e   mélòó ni o fẹ́?

Book MTS QN FOC you want

(6)   a. Ìwé méjì   ni   o   fẹ́?

Book QN FOC you want

'How many book do you need?'

b. *Ìwé   e   méjì ni   o   fẹ́?

Book MTS QN FOC you want

The examples in 5b and 6b are ill-formed. Suffice to note that the focused constituents in the pragmatic domain in 6 and 7 above lack semantic kinship unlike 4 and 5. This might reasonably factor why mélòó (how much) disallows MTS insertion unlike *kí* (what) and *ta* (who).

Yorùbá QNs according to Awobùlúyì (2013) can function as complements in Yorùbá clauses just like some other classes of nouns. In 8 below, *èló* (how much) functions as the complement of the verb *dì* (become).

(7)   Ó   di   eló ba-yìí?

It become QN like-this

'How much is it now?   (Awóbùlúyì, 2013:52)

III   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1   ON THE OPPOSING VIEW

Ọláògún (2016), and Ọláògún and Aṣiwáju (2016) take a radical departure from the traditional position on QNs in Yorùbá by disregarding them as interrogative markers. Following Nkemnji (1995), and Aboh and Pfau (2011), Ọláògún and Aṣiwáju (2016) claim that items like ta, kí and so on only satisfy focus requirements and not clause-typing. They base their claim on the following evidence:

i. Yorùbá operates an overt/abstract question morpheme to mark content word questions.
ii. Wh-phrases co-occur with an overt/abstract question morpheme
iii. Some other languages attest non-overt wh-phrase.
iv. A wh-phrase does not mark questions alone in English.
v. Yorùbá still operates wh-questions without wh-phrases.

The five points itemised above are subsumed under; (a) clause typing evidence, (b) information structure evidence and (c) clause structure evidence.

On the use of question morpheme stated (in i) above, Ọláògún (2016) claims that, just like some other languages under Kwa, Yorùbá operates an abstract question morpheme, and not QNs to clause-type a construction as content word question. According to him, the overt equivalent of the abstract question morpheme occurs after a subject DP, as evident (in 8a) below:

Yorùbá

(8)   a. Ìwọ   a   mọ̀?

You INTER know

'Did you know?'

Ǹjọ̀kóo

b. Olú   yé   rán?

Olu INTER know-emph

'Did Olu know?'   (Ọláògún, 2016:14)

The question morphemes a and ye come after the subject DPs and function as yes/no question markers in 8a and b. To Ọláògún, overt realisation of a question morpheme after the subject DP (in 8a) above is evidence that Yorùbá also operates its abstract equivalent, either after a subject DP or at the clause final position. It is however discovered that *a* is wrongly identified as yes/question marker (in 9a) above based on the following reasons:

3.1.1 *MORPHEME IDENTIFIED*

The question morpheme identified (in 9a) above still co-occurs with dà/ńkọ́ as shown (in 9) below:

(9)   Ọlọ́gbọ́n   náà   a   dà?

Wise.person the PSM QV

'Where is the wise?'   (1 Cor. 1:20, Bíbélì Mímọ́)

Example (9) above generates two plausible questions: one, considering *a* as a question morpheme in 10a above, how many question markers are operated in the derivation? Two, what clause-type the expression interrogative, that is, what is the question marker in the expression? The plausible answers are *two* and *dà* respectively. *Dà* is a content word question marker in Yorùbá (Awóbùlúyì, 1978, 2013; Bámgbóṣé, 1990; Ìlọ̀rí 2010; Táíwò and Abímbọ́lá, 2014; Ọláògún 2016), as evident (in 10) below:

(10)   Esther   dà?

Esther INTER

'Where is Esther?'   (Ọláògún, 2016:129)

In Yorùbá, QVs never co-occur with other question markers (Táíwò & Abímbọ́lá 2014; Ọláńrewájú, 2022). Let us consider the examples below:

(11)   a. Ìyàwó rẹ   dà?

Wife your QV

'Where is your wife?'

b. *Ǹjẹ́/Ṣé   ìyàwó rẹ   dà?

YNQM   Wife your QV

(12)   a. Àwọn ọ̀rẹ́   ẹ   Kọ́lá   dà?

They friend MTS Kọ́lá QVs

'Where are Kọ́lá's friends?'

b. *Ta   ni   àwọn ọ̀rẹ́ ẹ   Kọ́lá dà?

QN FOC   they friend MTS Kọ́lá QV

Examples (11b and 12b) are ill-formed. The QV *dà* co-occurs with a polar question marker in 11b and a QN in 12b.

Another logical question generated by 9a and 10 repeated (as 14a and b) below, for ease of reference, is that if *a*, a question morpheme, according to Ọláògún (2016) triggers yes/no response in 13a, what type of response does it trigger in (11) repeated as (13b) below, if truly it is a question marker in Yorùbá?

(13)   a. Ìwọ   a   mọ̀?

You PRM know

'Did you know?'

b. Ọlọ́gbọ́n   náà   a   dà?

Wise-person the PRM QV

'Where is the wise?'   (1 Cor. 1:20, Bíbélì Mímọ́)

a functions as a pre-modifier in (13a and b) above. Therefore, Ọláògún (2016) still needs to adequately account for the true feature specification of a which he refers to as a question morpheme in 13a above.

3.1.2 OTHER COMMONLY USED YES/NO QUESTION MARKERS

The item a occurs with some other commonly used yes/no question markers like ǹjẹ́ and ṣé as evident in the examples below:

(14)   a. Ǹjẹ́/Ṣé Ìwọ a   mọ̀

YNQM you PRM know

'Did you really know?

b. Ǹjẹ́/Ṣé Ìwọ tilẹ̀   mọ̀

YNQM you PRM know

'Did you really know?

In a nutshell, *ǹjẹ́/ṣé* is the yes/no marker (in 14a) above, and this indicates that, yes/no question marker is abstract in 10a repeated (as 13a) above. Similar to tilẹ̀, *a* functions as a pre-modifier (Táíwò, 2019; Ọláńrewájú and Táíwò, 2020).

On co-occurrence of wh-phrase with an overt or abstract question morpheme, Ọláògún (2016), and Ọláògún and Aṣiwájú (2016) also claim that evidence from other languages reveals that the equivalents of items like *kí* "what", and *ta* "who" in some other languages co-occur with overt question morpheme as shown (in 15) below:

Lélé

(15)   a. Wey ba   é   gà?

Who FOC go INTER

'Who went away?'

ǸJọ̀-Kóo

b. Kósan Ade yè   dẹ   ìsi?

Where Adé INTER buy yam

'Where did Adé buy yam?'   (Ọláògún and Aṣiwájú, 2016: 2-3)

Now, the two germane questions that demand answers here are: What type of response does the abstract equivalent of yè trigger in Yoruba? Two, for the sake of intuition, how do we account for this question morpheme triggering two different types of responses: polar and constituent word answers? This implies that *a* is a pre-modifier just like *tilẹ̀* and *lè* (16b and c) below:

(16)   a. Báwo ni Oyè **a**   ṣe gbọ́?

QN   FOC Oyè PRM do hear

'How did Oyè get to hear?'

b. Ǹjẹ́/Ṣé Oyè **tilẹ̀**   mọ̀

YNQM Oyè PRM know

'Did you really know?'

c. Ǹjẹ́/Ṣé Oyè **lè**   lọ

YNQM Oyè PRM go

'Can Oyè go? The three pre-modifiers above (a, tilẹ̀ and lè) can even be stacked in an interrogative clause as shown below:

(17)   Ǹjẹ́/Ṣé Oyè a   tilẹ̀   lè   lọ.

YNQM Oyè PRM PRM PRM go

'Could Oyè go?'

To Nkemnji (1995), Aboh and Pfau (2011), Ọláògún (2016), and Ọláògún and Aṣiwájú (2016), the last two germane questions asked above are irrelevant. To them, focusing and clause-typing are teased

apart; the question morpheme clause-types while QNs (identified as wh-phrases in their scholarly works) only satisfy focus requirement as shown in (18) phrase-marked as (19) below:

(18)   Kí   ni   o   jẹ?

ON FOC you eat

'What did you eat?'
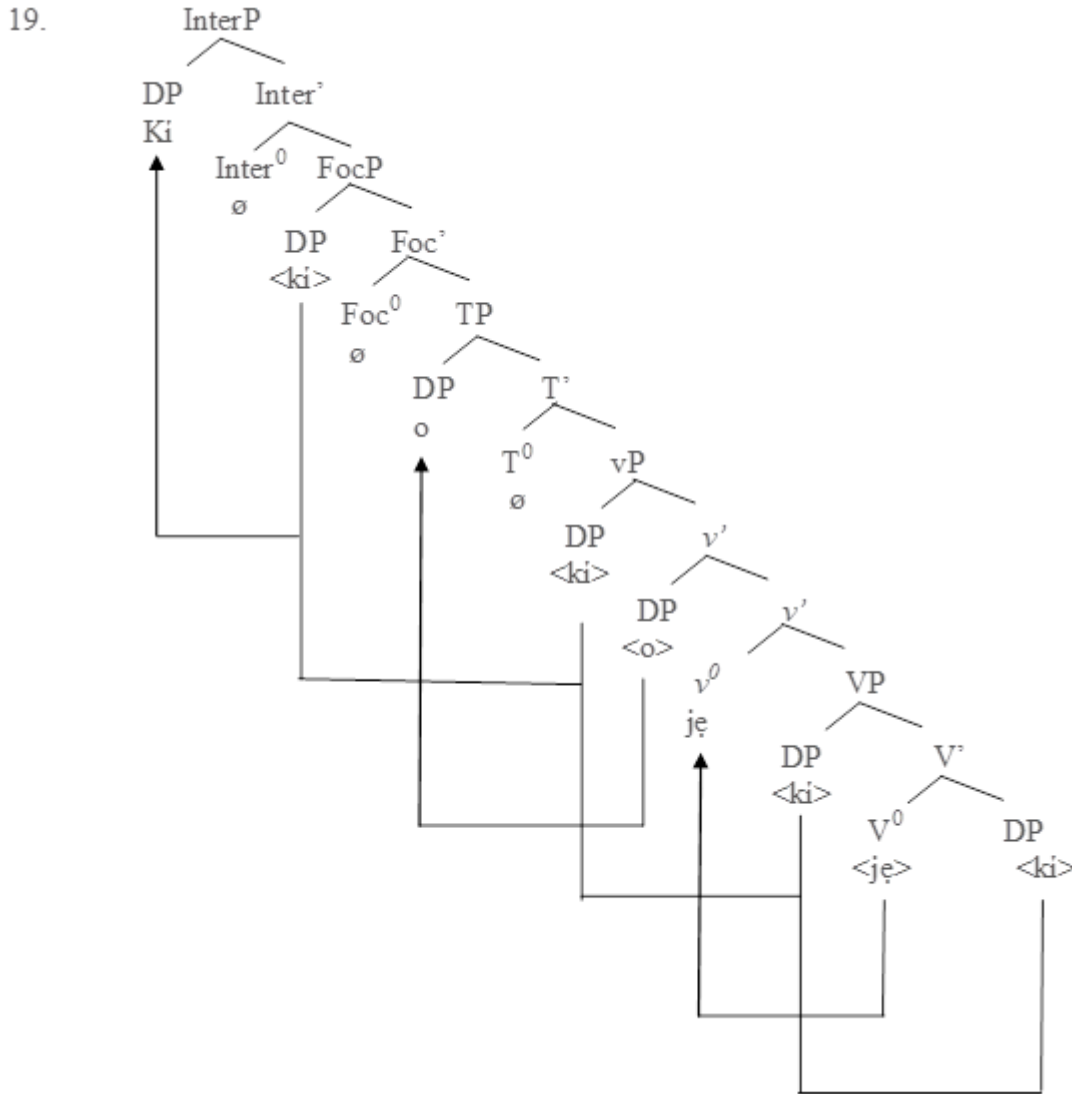
Picture 1. Example 19

In 19 above, the QN originates from the vP domain. The derivation goes thus: The lexical verb *jẹ* 'eat' merges with *kí* 'what' to project the V-bar *jẹ kí* 'eat what' in line with c-selection requirement of the verb. After this, the QN kí 'what' is copied to the spec VP by the *Operation Copy and Delete* to have its case feature checked through specifier and head agreement. The derivation proceeds by merging the null performative verb v0 with the VP to project the v-bar while the strong *v*F on the light v^0 attracts the lexical verb *jẹ* 'jẹ' to adjoin to itself. The second person singular subject pronoun *o* 'you' is externally merged as the inner specifier of the light verb phrase (*v*P) in line with the Predicate-Internal Subject Hypothesis (PISH). The QN kí is attracted to the outer spec *v*P, an escape hatch from Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC). This invariably allows it visible to further operations in the course of the derivation. The derivation proceeds by externally merging the abstract T^0 with the *v*P to project the T-bar. The T^0 as a probe attracts the second person singular subject pronoun *o* 'you' to the spec TP to check its [+case, EPP] feature. The abstract Foc^0 merges with the TP to project the Foc-bar. The Foc^0 as a probe searches its c-command domain and attracts the QN *ki* 'what' (an active goal) to the spec FocP to have its [+Foc] feature checked. The derivation proceeds by externally merging the abstract Inter0 with the FocP to project the Inter-bar. The $Inter^0$ as a potential goal attracts the QN *kí* 'wdat' to the spec

InterP to check its [+Q, EF]. Only QNs can occupy the spec InterP in Yorùbá (Radford, 2009: Ìlọ̀rí, 2010: Ọlánrewájú, 2020, 2022).

Another plausible fact revealing that QNs are inherently interrogative in Yorùbá is shown (in 20) below:

(20)   a. **Aṣọ wo** ni Oyè rà ____.

Cloth QM FOC Oyè buy

'Which cloth did Oyè buy?'

        b. **Aṣọ yẹn** ni Oyè rà ____.

Cloth that FOC Oyè buy

'Oyè bought that cloth.'

In 20a above, the QM *wo* performs interrogative function and it does not satisfy any focus requirement. *Wo* (an interrogative qualifier) and *yẹn* "that" (a qualifier) are not specified [+nominal], therefore, they cannot be hosted at the spec FocP. The DP *aṣọ wo* forms the question phrase (QP) (in 20a) above while the [+Q] feature wo percolates through the entire phrase *aṣọ wo* (Ajíbóyè, 2005). Also, extraction of the entire QP to the clause left periphery is in line with Wh-Attraction Condition (WAC) in (21) below:

(21)   The edge feature on C attracts the smallest possible maximal project containing the closest wh-word to move to spec CP. (Radford, 2009:216)

The implication borne out (20a and b) above is that once wo is the question marker in 20a, kí also marks question (in 22a) below:

(22)   a. Iṣẹ́ kí ni Ọlá n ṣe?

Work QN FOC Ọlá PROG do

'What is Olá's profession?'

    b. Iṣẹ́ Olùkọ́ ni Ọlá ń ṣe.

Work teacher FOC Ọlá PROG do

'Olá TEACHES?'

In 22a and b above, the QN kí 'what' functions as interrogative qualifier while olùkọ́ 'teacher' functions as nominal qualifier.

Ọlaògùn (2016) also observes that wh-phrases do not mark only questions in English, they also occur in declarative sentences, as shown (in 23 and 24) below. Consequently, the item is not marking constituent interrogatives in Yorùbá.

(23)   a. We met the man *whom* you interviewed last week.

    b. The committee decided over *who* will represent the University at the meeting.

    c. The boy *who* bought a car last week is dead.

    (Oláògún, 2016:128)

(24)   a. *Who* broke the plate?

    b. I have seen the boy *who* broke the plate.

    c. I met the boy *where* he broke the plate.

A cursory look at 23a-c above reveals that *who* marks a constituent question in 24a, relativisation in 23a-c, and *where* as an adverbial marker in 24c. This consequently factors English adopting the "wh-term". Yorùbá content word questions, relative clauses, adverbials and so on are not signalled in wh-encrips unlike English. Yorùbá operates different functional heads to project them. Let us consider the examples below for a better explanation:

(25)   a. [InterP Kí [Inter' ∅ [FocP <kí>[Foc' ni [TP Olú [vP <kí> [v' <Olú> [v' rí

[VP <kí> <rí> <kí>]]]]]]]]?

QN   FOC   Olú   see

'What did Olú see?'

b. [RelP Ọmọ   [Rel' ti [TP wọ́n   [vP <ọmọ> [v' <wọ́n> pè

[VP <wọ́n> <pe> <ọmọ>]]]]]].

Child   REL   they   call

'The child who was called'

c. Mo ri owó   ní [RelP ibi [Rel' ti [TP Olú [vP <ibi> [v'<Olú>[v' jókòó

[VP < Olú > <jókòó> [PP sí [DP <ibi>]]]]]]]]].

I see money at   place   REL Olú   sit

to

'I saw Olú where he sat.'

A cursory look at the gloss in each of 25a-c above reveals that English operates a wh-expression in a wh-question in 25a, and also in relative constructions in 25b-c. This is not applicable in Yorùbá, where different lexical items are operated to mark content word questions and relative constructions. Therefore, QNs in Yorùbá are ontologically different from wh-phrases operated in English.

Ọláògún (2016) also claims that Yorùbá operates wh-questions without wh-phrases as shown below:

(26)   a. Esther   dà?

Esther INTER

'Where is Esther?'

b. Ìwé   ńkọ́?

Book INTER

'Where is the book?'   (Ọláògún, 2016:129)

The data (in 26a-b) above suggest two facts: one, Yorùbá operates lexical items with inherent [+Q] feature to form its constituent interrogatives and examples are QNs, QVs and interrogative qualifiers. Two: *dà* and *ńkọ́* (in 26a-b) above are QVs, contrarily to Awóbùlúyì's (2013) position (Read Bámgbóṣé, 1990; Táíwò and Abímbọ́lá, 2014; Ọláńrewájú, 2022). Therefore, examples (26a and b) above are sentences while *dà* and *ńkọ́* are their predicates. It is also equally important to note here that *dà*, *ńkọ́*, *ta*, *kí*, *wo* and so on are used to form content word questions, therefore, they do not have the same categorial status.

Another plausible evidence that reveals how QNs do more than focus marking is shown in the examples from Central Yorùbá dialects as shown below:
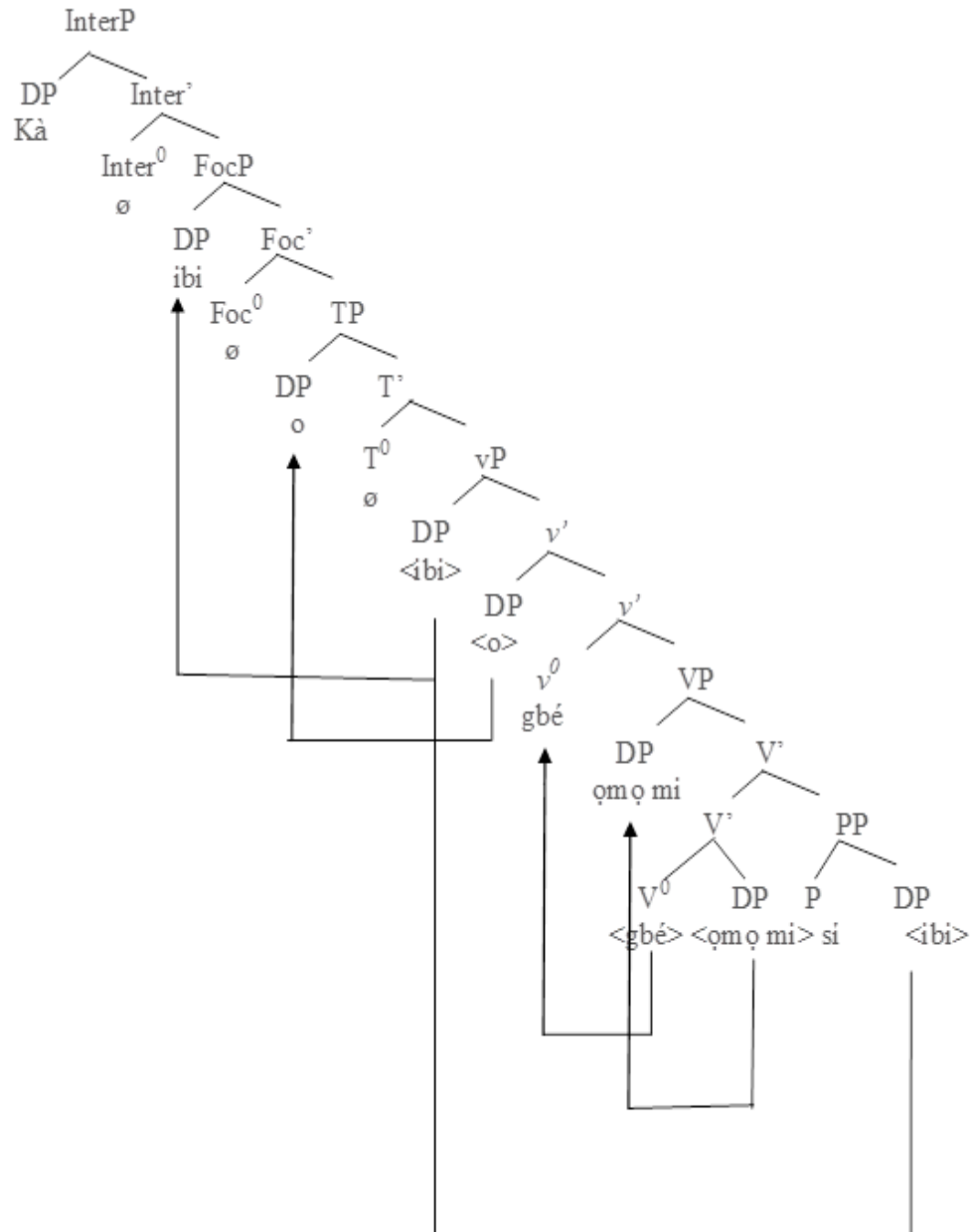
Ifẹ̀

(27)   a. Ka   ibi   o gbé   ọmọ mi sí (Kabi ọ gbọ́mọ mi sí)?

QN place you carry child me at

'Where did you put my child?'

Adó-Èkìtì

b. Ka   ibi   ọ   a   fi eó   mi sí (Kabi ọ̀ a fi eó mi sí)?

QN place you will put money my at

'Where will you put my money?'

28.

Picture 2. Example 28

The tree diagram (in 28) below does a better illustration on 27a. The derivation in 28 is as follows: The verb *gbé* 'carry' merges with the DP *ọmọ mi* 'my child' to project the lower V-bar. The lower V-bar merges with the PP *sí ibi* to project the higher V-bar. The object DP *ọmọ mi* "my child" is copied to the spec VP by *Operation Copy and Delete* so as to have its case feature checked through specifier and head agreement. After this, the null performative light verb v^0 is externally merged with the VP to project the *v*-bar, while the strong *v*F feature on the light v^0 attracts the lexical verb *gbé* 'carry' to adjoin to itself. The subject DP, the second person singular subject pronoun *o* 'you' is selected from the numeration and merged as the inner specifier of the light verb phrase (*v*P) in line with the PISH. The outer spec *v*P then becomes the escape hatch for the DP *ibi* 'place' so as to be licensed from the PIC. The abstract T^0 is externally merged with the light verb phrase (*v*P) to project the T-bar while the the subject DP the second person singular subject pronoun *o* "you" is probed to the specifier position of the TP where its [+EPP] feature is checked. The derivation proceeds by merging the abstract Foc^0 to project the Foc-bar. The Foc^0 as a probe also attracts the DP *ibi* 'place' to the spec FocP to check its [+Focus] feature. The derivation still proceeds by merging the abstract $Inter^0$ with the FocP to project the Inter-bar. The QN *ka* is externally merged at the spec InterP to check the [+Q, EF] on the $Inter^0$ through specifier and head

agreement. This implies that only the DP *ibi* 'place' and not *kà* (QN) undergoes focusing in (29) above. *Kà* is externally merged at the spec InterP in line with Radford's (2009: 124) proposal (29) below:

(29)   A clause is interpreted as a non-echoic question if (and only if) it is a CP with an interrogative specifier i.e a specifier with an interrogative word) (Ọláńrewájú, 2022: 167)

3.2   FEATURES OF YORÙBÁ QNS

3.2.1 DERIVATIONAL

Apart from *kí* (what) and *ta* (who) that are monosyllabic, other QNs have more than a syllable and they are all derivational.

3.2.2 COMPLEMENTS

They function as complements for (transitive) verbs and transitive prepositions according to Awóbùlúyì (2013), as shown below:

(30)   a. Wọ́n jẹ *kí*?

They eat QN

'They ate what?'

b. Olú   di *mélòó* báyìí?

Olú become QN   now

'How many are they now?

c. Olú lọ sí *ibo*?

Olú go to QN

'Olú went where?

Interrogatives in 30a-c are echoic types, the QNs *kí* (what), *mélòó* (how many) and *ibo* (where) are legible to the PF interface at the canonical position associated with their grammatical functions. Under minimalist assumption, they take LF movement to the spec InterP (Radford, 2009). It is discovered that the QN for human referent, *ta* (who) does not occur in situ unlike some other QNs. This factors why the derivations (in 31a and b) below crash at the LF interface.

(31)   a. *Wọ́n na ta?

 They beat QN

b. *Mo rí ta ní ọjà?

I see QN at Market

3.2.3 SUBJECT DP

A QN also functions as subject DP in a copula construction (Yusuf, 1990). Let us consider the examples below:

(32)   Ta   ni   yin?

QN   be   you

'Who are you?'

In 32, the subject QN *ta* 'who' is copied to the spec FocP through the spec TP before it finally lands at the spec InterP. *Ni* as the copula assigns a nominative case to *yin* 'you' which implies that *ni* in 33 is not a focus maker here, it behaves like a verb (Adéwọlé, 1991).

3.2.4 QUALIFIER

QNs also function as qualifiers in Yorùbá, just like wo (which) qualifies a head noun.

(33)   a. Irú   iṣẹ́   *wo*   ni   ẹ̀   ń   ṣe?

Type work QM FOC you are do

'Which type of work are you doing?'

b. Irú   iṣẹ́   *kí*   ni   ẹ̀   ń   ṣe?

Type work QN FOC you are do

'What type of work are you doing?'

c. Ọmọ   *ta*   ni   wọ́n jẹ́?

Child QN FOC they be

'Whose children are they?'

An interrogative qualifier is used with the head noun in 33a while QNs are used as qualifes in 33b-c. The head nouns inherit the QF in each of the constructions through percolation. Also, the question phrases (QPs) in the examples above are undetachable in line with Wh-Attraction Condition (WAC) discussed earlier in this paper (Ajíbóyè, 2006; Radford, 2009; Ìlọ̀rí, 2010).

3.2.5 RHETORICAL QUESTION

Two QNs can be stacked in rhetorical question forms in Yorùbá as shown below:

(34)   a. Ta   ni   ó   ṣe kí?

QN FOC he do QN

'Who did what?'

b. Níbo   ni   ọmọ mélòó lọ?

At-QN FOC child QN   go

'Where did how many children go?'

The implication borne out of 34 above is that Yorùbá conflates QNs only in echoic interrogatives. Also, copying a QN to the clause left periphery is mainly determined by the actual QN a speaker intends to focus. Therefore, Attract the Closest Principle (ACP) captured under Superiority Condition in previous models of generative grammar is not observed in the language when QNs are stacked.

IV   CONCLUSION

The syntax of interrogatives in Yorùbá is evidence that the language has some dissimilar features compared to English and some other Indo-European languages with respect to how it forms its questions. QNs are specified with [QF], therefore, they do more than satisfying focus requirements contrary to what Ọláògún (2016), Ọláògún and Aṣiwájú (2016) claim. Therefore, they are ontologically different to wh-phrases of English. In Yorùbá, constituent interrogatives and polar questions are clause-typed differently. Formation of a non-echoic question using a QN involves the syntactic movement of the QN to the clause left periphery whereby the Inter0 acquire the [QF] through specifier and head agreement in line with Cheng's (1991) Clause-Typing Hypothesis and Radford's (2009) proposals while a polar question is clause-typed by the [QF] on the overt or abstract question marker (the Inter^0).

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