



Comparative Syntactic Study of Wh–Movement of Yoruba and Igala Languages

Aturamu Olayinka Omolayo

Department of Yoruba

College of Education, P. M. B. 250, Ikere, Ekiti State

Email: olayinkaaturamu@yahoo.com

Abstract: This paper attempts to presents a comparative account of WH- movement in standard Yoruba and Igala Languages, there are no words such as the English WH- word used for interrogative sentences but the name was given because of the syntactic behaviour of such words in sentences. Consequently, this paper identifies and analyse lexical words that function as WH- words Igala and Yoruba languages. The syntactic analysis of the interrogative sentences in the languages will be investigated on the basis of sentences drawn from Igala and Yoruba. We shall also attempt to discuss how the recent Minimalist program enable us to understand the WH – movement in Igala and Yoruba languages.

INTRODUCTION

The Igala and Yoruba languages are among the major African languages, two related but separate languages of the Defoid/foreboid sub-group of the West Benue-Congo Phylum (Bendar – Samuel 1989, Heine and Nierse 2000) spoken in Kogi and the South Western States of Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Lagos, Ekiti and Kwara in Nigeria. According to Ilori (2010:13), Igala is a language spoken by the dominant ethnic a language spoken by the dominant ethnic group in Kogi State which consists of nine local government areas namely: Bassa, Idah, Anikpa, Opporo, Olamaboro, Dekina, Omala, Igalamela or Oddu and Ibaji. Yoruba is one of the three major language. It is an international language spoken as a first language by approximately 199million, 081 thousand, and three hundred and twenty eight West Africans to be found in South-Western Nigeria, and with a large numbers of speakers in Togo, Republic of Benin and Sierra-Leone. In this paper, a comparative account of the Wh–movement in Yoruba and Igala will be examined. There are no words such as the English Wh–word used for interrogative sentences in the two languages but the name was given due to the Syntactic behaviour of such words in the sentences of the two languages. These questions take their name from the fact that the words that introduce them mostly begin with the letters (Wh) in English: Why, which, how etc. Like other languages of the world, Igala and Yoruba feature Wh – movement occurring in Wh–questions, relative clauses, NP, topicalisation and a number of other constructions. Of all these constructions, the concern of this paper is the Wh–questions. In Igala and Yoruba, Wh–questions make use of the following question words. These elements include:

English	Standard Yoruba	Igala language
reason	idi ki / itori i ki	
person	ta	ene
how many	meloo	monu
things	ki	enwu
time	(Ni) igba wo	egba
manner/process	bawo	abu
how much	elo	onu



place
choose

(Ni) ibo
ewo

ugbo

Each of these question words can constitute a questions. As a result, any of them occurring in a sentence signals a question in Igala and Yoruba. In addition, from the translation equivalents of the question words, we see that they can analysed as interrogative substitutes for nouns, numerals and a number of adverb like words or phrases which have locative, manner, purposes and other functions in the sentence.

Research Questions

This study attempts to provide answers to the following questions:

* Where in a tree diagram is a fronted.

Wh-element positioned?

* Is the current theory of linguistics sufficient of analyzing the process of Wh-element in Igala and Yoruba languages?

* Can there be multiple Wh-movement/fronting in Igala and Yoruba languages?

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the Minimalist program, the most current model of the generative grammar propounded by Chomsky (1993, 1995 etc). Minimalist program accounts for all rules that involve select, merge and move. Minimalist program makes use of using few and simple enough theoretical apparatus for the description of basic syntactic derivation and other relatively complex ones e.g. derivations via movements. Only two structural levels of linguistic representation (a two interface levels of Logical Form (LF) and Phonetic Form (PF) are recognized in the Minimalist Program (MP). This rule out the D-structure and S-structure levels of Government and Binding (GB) and Principle and Parameter theory (PPT) and replaces with bare Phrase Structures. Elements moved from the working area converge at each of the two inter face levels i.e. Logical Form (LF) and Phonetic Form (PF) if they are grammatical, but they crash if they are not.

Review of Literature on Wh – Movement

Wh-movement, according to Mathews (1981), is a proposed movement of Wh-forms to the beginning of a clause or sentence. This term Wh-movement is used because most English interrogative words start with Wh-form. Examples are what, where, when, why etc. The Wh-movement tends to be applied to similar word order in all languages even when the interrogative words of a given language do not start with Wh. Languages differ as to where they place the Wh-phrase in simple questions. Ndimele (1992:) observes that many SVO languages such as English have overt Wh-movement but some such as Chinese languages do not. He mentioned that Wh-movement is one of the parameters of the principles and parameters which seek to account for differences between languages relating to whether they move or do not move the Wh-phrase in simple Wh-question.



Awobuluyi (1978:42) pointed out that a Noun takes a qualifier, the Wh wo derived from ewo could be regarded as noun, they take qualifier like in: lwe ta ni iyen. The semantic distinction of:

- (1) lwe ewo? (which book?)
 ↘
 Wh NP
 ↘(wh Noun Phrase)
- (2) Omo wo?
 ↘
 Wh Ap (which child)
 ↘(Wh Adjectival Phrase)
- (3) Ewo ni temi ninu mejeeji?

wo here does not precede a noun like in English but it follows the noun. We observe a distinction between Wh ewo and wo is that Wh ewo can precede a sentence while wo cannot precede proceed a sentence and Wh ewo cannot connote a meaning when its use as a sentence unlike ewo. When wo is sentence initial such sentence will be ungrammatical.

Awobuluyi (1978:123) further explains that "one type of interrogative sentence contains the question word, the other does not". For example, he portrays structures like:

- (4a) Olu lo (Olu goes/went)
 (4b) Se Olu lo? (Did Olu go?)
 (4d) Se o lo? (Did he go)
 (5a) Olu lo (Olu go / went)
 (5b) Nje Olu lo? (Did Olu go?)
 (5d) Ibo ni o lo? (Where did he go?)

We observed that while (5d) contains Wh question items that proceed the sentence and it involves the raising of one's tone high to show that those sentences are questions. While (5a) contains no lexical question word. This is what Awobuluyi (1978:124) observes when he says that: "interrogative sentences without question words are pronounced specially". With (4b) being formed from (4a) and (5b) and (5d) being formed from (5a) movement have been applied on the subject of (4a and 5a) Olu such that the o resumptive pronoun has been substituted for the moved subject, otherwise, the resultant sentence would have been ungrammatical and absurd.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts two sources for the data used in this work which were collected systematically from native speakers of Igala and Yoruba languages through interview and existing relevant works on the language. The study also made use of information obtained from available literary and linguistic literature on various aspects of question in Igala and standard Yoruba and other languages used in this study/research.

Wh – movement in Igala

Wh – movement is a movement of a Noun Phrases (NP's) adverbial phrase's (ADVPr's), Prepositional Phrases (PP) when they are Wh – words or phrases to a non-case position. The wh – word moves into specifier position in CP, it leaves behind a coin dexed trace. Wh



– movement moves interrogatives phrases in Igala. Wh and other categories occurs as well at the beginning of the clause.

In examples 8 – 11 as follows:

E li Mary
E li ene
2sg see who
You saw who?
What 2sg pray do?
What are you doing? (NP)

Ene e li —_c?
Who 2sg see.
Who did you see (NP)

Our position is that there are two types of verb phrase: da and nko in Yoruba and only one in Igala which is ha which do not involve wh items. They function at sentence final position and there is no evidence of operator movement in their derivation in Yoruba. In the two languages they connote how and where respectively.

Example:

Omokunrin naa da? (Where is the boy?)

Omokunrin naa nko? (Where is the boy?)

Whereas the wh – word in Igala language can occur sentence initially or finally.

Igala:

(a) Ugbu omo enekene e de? (nko)
Ugbu omo enekene ha? (da)
Where is the boy?

(b) Ukolo we ha?
How is your work?

Example (8) is an example of an echo question:

You saw who?

While g wh – word is at the predicate position. Another example:

Igala: Ene lo ti eyi kose?
(Who went to the school?)

Wh – word is at the subject position in the above example.

All Wh – movements Question operators leaves traces in their starting positions. These traces must have case. The language permit Wh – movement from in – situ to overt clause position c – commanding the trace without changing the



grammatical functions, but places the Wh – phrase in a position which permit the variable – binding relation to be set up.

The list of Wh – words in Igala have significant feature tone pattern of high tone with the exception of “monu”. It is the high tone that makes it to become question marker.

- | | | | | | |
|-----|------|---|-----------|----|--------|
| (a) | Enwu | + | high tone | => | enwu |
| | tong | | Qst | | “What” |
| (b) | abu | + | high tone | => | abu |
| | how | | Qst | | “What” |

On the other hand, we cannot rule out multiple Wh – movement in Igala language.

Ma ene enwu ma ka
 That who what will say
 That who will say what?

The language allow multiple Wh – fronting while others like English do not as shown in (14). Here multiple Wh – fronting in the Wh – expression above occur in a fixed order.

Wh – Movement in Yoruba

The interrogative content words in Yoruba are lexical items in their own right with associated lexical features and insertable in P – markers by the lexical insertion rule (Chomsky, 1965:84). We assumed that each of them will be assigned such categorical features as [+N], [+Adv].

The following are the interrogative lexical items in question.

- (a) ki - what?
- (b) ta - who?
- (c) igba wo - when?
- (d) elo - how much?
- (e) meloo (mu elo) - how many?
- (f) wo/ ewo - which
- (g) bawo (ba ewo) - how?
- (h) ibo / ibi ewo - where?
- (i) i – ti – orii – ki (itorii ki) -why? (because of what)

- (a) - (f) have the feature [+N], (g) – (i) [+ADV],
- (h) [+PP]. It can dominate an interrogative lexical item (a subject NP (head/modifier), a direct and indirect object NP (head/modifier) or Adverbial. The question marker in (c) is wo while igba is a noun. Also in (i) it is ki that is the question marker while itori is a noun.

Wh – movement in Yoruba operate in successive circle. The derivation of Yoruba content word questions involves movement of the Wh – operators into Spec; their position is not empty. Example:



(a) Olu sanwo
 Talo sanwo?

When ta ni is moved it is replaced by a trace.

(15) (a) Okunrin naa mu ki ni- Ki ni Okunrin naa mu?
 Man the took what
 (The man took what?)

(a) Sentence is syntactically declarative, but has the force of a question. The Wh – element occurs after the verb. These are what we call echo questions and they constitute logical form (LF) of interrogative sentences. At times we do have sentences like these.

Example:

O de ni igba wo?
 S V PP object
Igba wo ni o de?
 PP S V

The moved Wh – element is placed before the focus marker ni.

Focus marker is not inserted at the beginning of Wh question words in Yoruba, it follows immediately after the moved Wh – word. Focus marker may be used to mark answers to such questions. For example the answer to the question in (18a) may be “Dada ni” (It is Dada).

(16) (a) Ta ni o ra iwe (NP)
 who focus 2sg buy book
 Who bought the book?

In Yoruba, which has the basic constituents order SVO Wh – questions can have more than one constituent being questioned in a single clause.

(17) (a) **Basic Structure**

ENG: Olu saw that stray dog last night.
 SV: Olu ri aja digbolugi l’ale ana.

Derived Structure

(i) (Ta ni) ri (ki ni) l’ale ana.
 (ii) Ki ni tani ri l’ale ana.

We note that the Wh items in 19(a) have all their Wh phrases fronted to clause initial position. It is also possible that the multiple Wh expressions can occur freely in any order.

Comparing Wh – Elements in the two languages

It is pertinent to note that Igala does not have single word items that correspond to English why and which. While the phrase enuni chi. “What happens?” is used to mean why, ugbo “where” in combination with a nominal qualifier that refers to the entity being questioned (e.g. enyi and eyi in (18 and 19) is used by proxy to mean which.

18(a) Ugbo enyi ki a wo e de ----- ?
 where tooth that prog pain you be -----
 which is the teeth that is paining you?

18(b) Enyi ki a wo e de ugbo

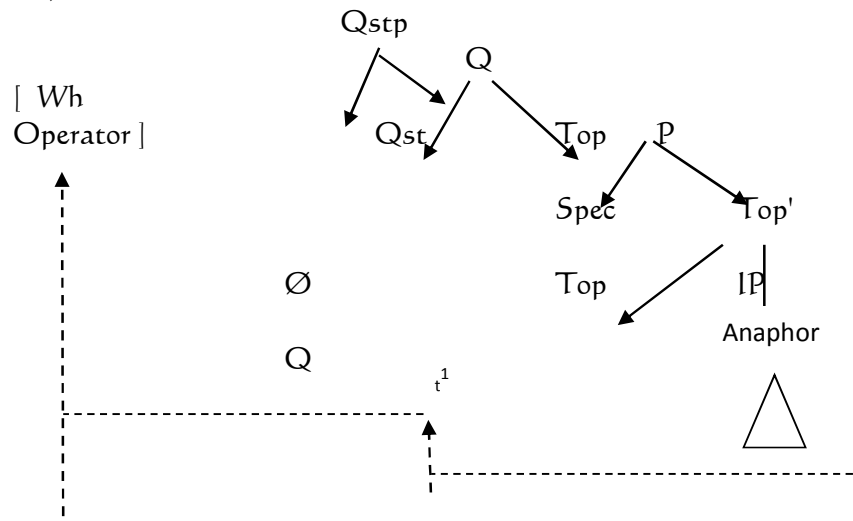


- Tooth that prog pain you be when
 Which teeth is paining you?
 19(a) Ugbo eyi ki e tene de ----- ?
 Where one that 2sg want be -----
 Which one do you want?
 19(b) Eyi ki e tene de ugbo?
 One that 2sg want be where
 Where did you go?

Yoruba language do not have single word items that correspond to English Why what they use as question marker is ki. While nitori or itori is a noun. Structurally, the derivation of Igala content word questions involves movement of the *wh* – operators into *Spec* (i.e. Clause initially) and the head of that question projection is evidently null because there is no phonetically visible functional item that immediately follows the moved *Wh* – operators in *CP*. Therefore we propose a null *Qst* head for both Igala and Yoruba content word question projection as represented in (20). Although the possibility of it selecting topicalisation phrase cannot be totally ruled out since Igala *Top* head is also an empty category.

Yoruba question head obligatorily selects focus projection as direct complement but there is no evidence to show that Igala content word Question head selects Focus Projection.

(20)



Below are some examples where *Wh*-elements occur in standard Yoruba Sentences

- a(i) Ta ni Olu pe – ni Oja Oba?
 Who foc Olu – call loc market King.
 Who did Olu called at the King's market?
 a(ii) Olu pe ta (ni) ni Oja Oba?
 Olu call who foc be market king.
 Olu called who at the king's market?



Distinctions and Similarities between them:

It must be printed out here that for Wh – element to function as a context question, it must co-occur with what (Ndimele, 2003) referred to as generic head nominal in standard Yoruba and Igala languages. Ogbonna (2008) refer to these generic head as nominal elements that receive a Wh – phrase interpretation.

Furthermore, these nominal with the occurrence of ugbo where in Igala language and (Ni) ibo in standard Yoruba formed bi-lexical wh – words in the languages. These can be shown as follows:

Standard Yoruba	English	Igala Dialect
Ni igba wo / Igba wo	Where / Which time	Egba
Ni ibo / Ibo	Where / Which place	Ugbo
Ta	Who / person	Ene

We observe that it was the tonal difference in monu which has initial high tone pattern that aroused the curiosity of scholars to know the origin of monu and meloo “how many” which is one of the Wh – words in Yoruba and Igala. They both have the same tone pattern of high tone. Both monu and meloo “how many” are in free variation with each other. They both connotes the same meaning in the two languages; Onu / elo and meloo / monu. We can question the NP object that follows the verb in the following sentences e.g.

Declarative Sentences

Yoruba: Olu ra eja.
 Igala: Olu la eja.
 Olu bought fish.

We observed that focus marker (FM) ni is not attested in Igala language while focus marker (FM) ni is attested in Yoruba language. In actual fact we do not expect their question marker’s to be the same thing because they are two different languages.

Question: Olu ra eja elo
Yoruba: Eja elo ni Olu ra?
Igala: Eja onu Olu la?
 How much fish did Olu buy?

We observe that when the NP object is moved to the NP subject initial position, the position next to elo / onu in the interrogative sentence ends with a verb which is either followed by a focus projection or not. Monu and meloo have peculiar distinction or similarities between them which I want to point out in this paper. It must be pointed out here that onu in Igala like the elo in Yoruba can be used alone to perform a particular semantic role to mean “How much”. Sometimes, the users of onu can add m as stranded consonant prefixation that will account at the initial position of onu “how much”. This will become monu “how many”. Elo users can add m as consonant prefixation at the initial position of elo “how much” this will become meloo “how many”. This is one of the similarities that exist between onu “how many” and elo “how much”. Another similarity between them is that both of them function as a context question markers and at times they



do co-occur with what Ilori (2010) referred to as generic head nominal elements that receive a wh – phrase interpretation. For instance, these nominal with the occurrence of meloo how many in standard Yoruba and monu in Igala language formed bi – lexical Wh – words in these languages. These can be shown as follows:

Standard Yoruba	Igala	English
Ibi meloo	Ugbo monu	Where / Which place
Idi meloo	Ete monu	Why / What reason
Ona meloo	Una monu	How many / In which way
eeyan meloo	Amone monu	Who / Which person
Igba meloo	Onu monu	When / Which time

I claimed that egba / igba is borrowed from Yoruba since it has some similar noun word, igba which has the same meaning when like that of Igala. While wo is an adjectival question marker in Yoruba. Also, my summation is that both egba / igba come from a common source since Igala and Yoruba belong to the same language family – kwa group of the West Africa language. Examples are shown below:

Igala Language	Standard Yoruba
Logical Form / Derived sentence Ade li a onale.	Logical Form / Derived sentence Ade wa ni ana.
Phonetic Form / Sentence structure Eko yan Ade wa? Adiko egba Ade wa?	Phonetic Form / Sentence structure Igba wo ni Ade wa? Ade wa ni igba wo?

There is an insertion of wo which mean question marker meaning which is between the question head and focus projection ni is in standard Yoruba Wh – operators. While in Igala the Wh – word question marker Adiko that connotes which is in the clause initial position followed immediately by egba and there is no focus projection in the sentence. Therefore, we need to point out that whenever the complementizer ni occurs in question in Standard Yoruba, the following are involved:

- (a) The question is object focus.
- (b) Wh – movement is applied to realise the question word at the sentence initial.

Furthermore, we discover that apart from the syntactic differences between the two types of construction involving object questioning, there seems to be a slight semantic difference between them. It seems that questions with clause initial question words are more emphatic than those with the question words that do not occur in initial position. Another area of differences is that Igala language does not have single word items that correspond to English Why and Which. This is evident in the following examples cited from Ilori (2010) and some other related works.

enwu “thing” + high tone ==> enwu “what”
 ene “person” + high tone ==> ene “who”



abu "how" + high tone ==> abu "what"
ugbo "where" + high tone ==> ugbo "which"

CONCLUSION

The position taken in this paper with regards to the Wh – elements may be summarized as follows: The interrogative are lexical item in their own right with associated lexical features. Each of them is assigned the strict sub categorization features of [+N]. [+Adv] and [+Adj]. The Igala and standard Yoruba Wh – question words are not the same, though they perform the same semantic roles or functions in the interrogative sentences in both languages. Focus Marker (FM) ni not attested in Igala while in Yoruba language it follows immediately after the moved Wh – marker. The Wh – question marker wo in Yoruba and which in English is not attested also in Igala language. The derivation of question marker ibo in Yoruba language which connote where in English is deduced / believed to have been derived through deletion and contraction process.

ibi wo ==> ibi o
w ==> deletion
ibi o ==> ibo

Also, the contraction sentences like this can be accounted for as follows: "Omo wo ni mo ri"

We agreed that there must have been contraction of morpheme e from wo which must have been a prefixation morpheme with wo question marker that then turn it to become a proper noun ewo.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher base on the findings of this study, recommends the followings:

- (1) To develop the child's desire and ability to express himself/herself coherently, fluently and concisely.
- (2) To awaken his/her sense of the value of words and phrases with a view to laying the foundation of discrimination and style.
- (3) To develop the child to acquire syntactic skills that will enable them to assess, store, edit and reproduce words that will be useful for themselves and the development of Nigerian as a nation.
- (4) Teachers should strive to acquire syntactic knowledge and how to apply it to improve teaching and learning process.
- (5) In this paper, we have examined a variety of what are known as multiple constructions. This reveals that there are various properties which are common to both languages, a property lacking in languages without multiple Wh – questions.

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