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NOUN PHRASE FOCUS IN ÀNÀGÓ DIALECT OF OGUN STATE

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Abstract

Ànàgó people are type of Yorùbá that can be found in Yewa (Ègbádò) region of Ogun State. They inhabit the border line of Nigeria and Benin Republic. The dialect is not well-known like other dialects of Yorùbá like Òyó, Ònkò, Ìjèḅú, Ègbá, Ondó and the likes. The earlier scholars usually categorized the dialect of the area as Ègbádò in the past, but Ègbádò is not their dialect, hence, the focus of this paper. Three dialects that are spoken in the region are Ànàgó, Kétu and Òḥòṛí. These three dialects are spoken in Nigeria as well as in the Benin Republic i.e at the border line of the two countries, especially the Yorùbá towns in Benin Republic, which happens to be part of old Òyó Empire and near the former name of Benin Republic which is 'Dahomey'. This paper focuses on the Ànàgó of Nigeria which can be found in Yewa North Local Government Area of Ògùn State. It explores the syntax of the language to work on, which is the focus construction of the dialect. This work is on how the noun phrase were focused irrespective of where they are. The theory adopted in the work is the X-bar theory of the Government and Binding propounded by Chomsky. The theory is being adopted and used because it involves extraction of constituents and landing it somewhere. It also involves deletion and addition of constituents in a sentence. The findings revealed that all the Noun phrases could be focused, it can be the one at the subject position or object position, but adding that any noun to be focused must be extracted from their syntactic position and being shifted to the specifier, which attracts the addition of a marker immediately after landing the noun at the specifier. The marker **'li'** is being used as a driver in Ànàgó dialect which is regarded as the focus marker.

Keywords: Ànàgó, Yorùbá, Focus Constructions, Dialects.

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Introduction

Works abound in standard Yorùbá and its dialects like Òyó, Ondó, Owé Ìgbómìnà, Ègbá, Ìkálè, Ìlàje, Àwórì and others, but there is little or no work heard about Ànàgó of Nigeria. Ànàgó are type of Yorùbá spoken Ànàgó dialect and can be found in Yewa, Ògùn State, Nigeria. All that is popular and well known was Ànàgó of Cuba. This Anago of Cuba is the extension of Ànàgó of Nigeria who were sold as slaves during Trans Atlantic trade. The Ànàgó that was established as a language in Cuba are the Yorùbá people of Old Òyó Empire before the fall of the empire by the Fulani war which paved way for Gezo of Dahomey to wage war against them and sold many of the Yoruba people into slavery. To corroborate this, Concordia (2012:32) says:

> (It is has been stated that the entire population of Ketu, a town located near the present day border of Benin and Nigeria were captured and sent to Cuba and Brazil. The fact that entire towns from West Africa were being captured and sold into slavery is important because there was a high possibility that these Yoruba speakers ended up in Cuba).

The excerpt revealed how Ànàgó which originated from Nigeria and Benin Republic borders ends became their language in Cuba. In Yewa Region, three dialects that are spoken there are Ànàgó, Kétu and Òḥòṛí. Only four scholar of dialects mentioned the three dialects while many did not know anything about that. Those that mention them were Awóbùlúyì (2001) who listed Ànàgó among his classification of dialects, Igwe and Olabìyí (1973) observe that there were two types of Yorùbá, those in Nigeria and others outside Nigeria; Adéníyì (2005) and Fábùnmi (2012) also recognized the Yorubas outside Nigeria. Adéníyì mentions Ànàgó, Òḥòṛí, Kétu and those in South America. Fábùnmi (2012:55) on his own observed that:

> N7bi t7 [w-jz 4d4 Yor6bq gbil2 d3, 9 t5n p2ka n7 zw[n or7l2 4d4 b7 Togo zti Benin, a r7 If2, Manigri zti *dzsq g1g1 b7 ara zw[n 2ka]4d4 Yor6bq. A k0 jay0 pa b7 a bq s[p3 2ka]4d4 Yor6bq wz n7 Brazil, Cuba zti Benin nqz.
>
> … to examine the extension of the Yorùbá people, they can be found in the countries like Togo and Benin, we can see Ifè, Manigri and Ìdáisà as among the dialects of Yorùbá. We will

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> not be outrageous if we say that there is a dialect of Yoruba in Brazil, Cuba and Benin too.

The above excerpt explains that there are so many other dialects of Yorùbá outside Nigeria apart from the one under this study as mentioned above. This work will now bring to the fore the Ànàgó dialect in Yewa, Ogun State to the scholars of dialects and the society at large. First, the scholarly works on dialects and on focus constructions.

Focus Constructions

Focus can be described as an important piece of new information that is presented in an utterance or a sentence, Diana (2015:2). It is also the way of structuring information in a discourse, almost all languages employ focus strategies, a category of information structure, to present new information in communication.

Different definitions of focus are put across depending on the language being studied and worked on. Boadi (1974) sees focus as a way of presenting new information and also showing prominence in a discourse, he even adds paralinguistic features to his own definition. Ofoe (2007) sees focus as 'a signaling code of device available in a language used to assign an emphatic contrastives status to relevant araguments or in any discourse to replace an earlier assumption of the hearer, single out an element to fill in the knowledge of the hearer. This definition of Ofoe (2007:10) is corroborated with that of Aboh et al (2007:1) when they assert that focus refers to that part of the clause that provides the most relevant or most salient information in a given situation.

Arokoyo (2018:1) defines 'focus constructions as a way of reddening a constituents of a sentence emphatics. From all the definitions, what features most is 'salience' and 'prominence' i.e it is central to the definitions. It seems that the issue of focus is universal to all languages.

There are many works on the dialects of Yoruba and on Focus Constructions done by the researchers,' some of the scholars were Awóbùlúyì (1992, 2001). Yusuf (1989, 1995), Adéníyì (2005), Akíntóyè (2006), Fábùnmi (2012) and Akíntóyè and Owóyelé (2018). The view of these scholars was that two types of focus constructions exist in Yoruba language and its dialects; which were constituents focus and sentence focus.

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Constituent focus is generated by moving a lexical item or a phrase from its structural position which is the extraction position to the landing site which is the initial position after which such a constituent or phrase will be accompanied immediately by a focus marker **'ni'** in the standard dialect i.e (standard Yoruba) as shown below:

(1) Olú ta asọ Kóḷá
Olú sell cloth Kóḷá
'Olú sold Kóḷá's cloth'.

The above example is a matrix or Kernel sentence from which the following focus constructions were derived.

(2)(a) Ọlá ni ó ta asọ Kóḷá
Ọlá FOC RSV sell cloth Kóḷá
It was Olu that sell Kóḷá's cloth

(b) Kóḷá ni Olú ta asọ rè̩
Kóḷá FOC Ọlá sell cloth RSV
It was Kóḷá's cloth that Olú sold

(c) Asọ Kóḷá ni Ọlá tà
Cloth Kóḷá FOC Ọlá sold
It was Kóḷá's cloth that Ọlá sold

Títà ni Ọlá ta asọ Kóḷá
Selling FOC Ọlá sell cloth Kóḷá
It was selling that Ọlá sold Kóḷá' s cloth

Examples (2a-d) are the focus sentences/constructions derived from the basic sentences in (1) above. 2 (a) is the movement of NP in subject position that was extracted from its position to the specifier and the marker **'ni'** was put in front of it. The extraction (shifted) position was not left empty, the resumptive pronoun **'o'** was put there in order to make the sentence grammatical.

2 (b) is where the NP in the object position is extracted (shifted) and put in the specifier which is the landing site and **'ni'** the focus marker is inserted. In the construction, as the genitival NP is moved, the resumptive pronoun **'rè̩'** is used to

fill the position of the extracted NP. **O** and **'rè̩'** are used to fill the position because these positions are not meant to be empty in Yorùbá language, so as not to produce ungrammatical sentences. The two positions are not avoidable to be left empty in the language.

In 2 (d) above, the verb is extracted to the specifier after the verb has been nominalised via reduplication of the consonants of the verb **'ta'** and the copy of the verb is retained in the position. In Yoruba language, any constituent that must be focused suppose to be noun and that calls for nominalisaton of the verb after extraction from its position in the structure as a verb and converting it to noun to make it conform with the rules of the language. That process gives the verb the license to fit in the position.

Sentence focus on the other way round is a situation where the whole structure is given prominence by inserting the focus marker at the end of the sentence which is its final position. The following examples reflect it:

(3) Bádé jé̩ oúnjẹ Tóḷá
Bádé eat food Tóḷá
Bádé ate Tóḷá's food

The sentence in (3) is a basic kernel that can be focused as reflected in the below sentences in (4)

(4) Bádé jẹ oúnjẹ Tóḷá ni
Bádé eat food Tóḷá FOC
It was Bade that ate Tóḷá's food.

In (4), the whole sentence is focused, because the focus marker **'ni'** is inserted at the end of the whole sentence; which means the whole sentence is given prominence (focused).

Theoretical Framework

Government and Binding Theory is the syntactic framework adopted for this paper. It is a theory to be used for universal grammar which is the transformation that exists across all languages. It is a theory propounded by Chomsky since (1981) which is an extension of his syntactic structures of (1957). The theory has different modules that are interwoven that cannot be detached. The theory involves the movement, insertion and deletion of constituents from a syntactic structure. This

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assertion is corroborated by Cook (1988:86) when he observed that "the theory of Government and Binding has an interlocking arrangement of principles and sub theories which interact in many different ways.

Lamidi (2008:28-29) on his own asserts that transformation is a device used to change the structure of one linguistic form to another. Focus constructions is a process of changing of a linguistic instruction for certain steps to be carried on some constituents of any given sentence. The following examples like declarative sentence, interrogative sentence, relative sentence, focus sentence, etc are sentences that are realized through transformation from a kernel sentence. Omolewu (2014:317) observes that transformation performs four major functions in a linguistic structure and that it can delete formatives, involve substitutions, insert new elements and move elements from one position to another. All the transformation processes listed above can be applied to any sentence in any given language. And that is the reason given above that the modules in the theory are interwoven and can used together for a positive result. This theory is applicable and used because the focus construction is a sentence that is derived from transformational process (i.e derived sentence).

Noun Phrase Focus in Anago Dialect

Noun phrase is the category that codes the participants in the events or state described by the verb (Yusuf 1997:8; Arokoyo, 2018:23) All NP can be focused and any NP focused will come to the specifier.

This section of the paper will analyse the different ways in which the noun phrases were focused. It will do the analysis of the noun phrase in any position it emerged in a sentence of the dialect. Structurally, in any given language, the NP can be in subject position and object position and it can function as direct object, indirect object, oblique, genitival noun and as object of comparism. It is in the order of the listed positions of the noun phrases that this work will follow for the analysis.

Subject Noun Phrase ((NP) Focus)

In most, if not all languages, NP is the most and frequent constituent focused. As we can put it in a simple way, it is the most easily focused element in a syntactic construction. It is a situation of giving prominence to NP at the subject position of a sentence which is the beginning of a sentence. When the NP needs to be focused in a sentence, movement must take place; this is where the module of move-alpha

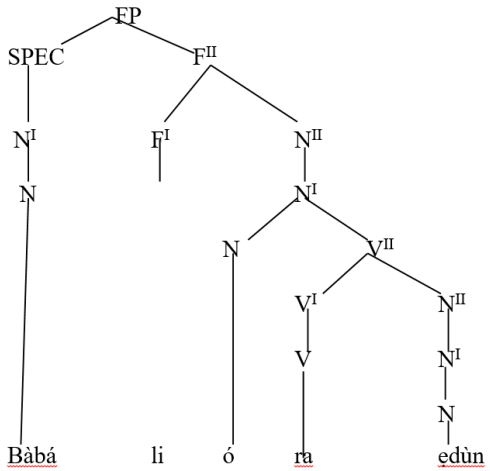
comes in. The NP at the subject position will be extracted from its syntactic position in a construction and made it to feature at the landing site i.e at the specifier which is the beginning of the sentence. As the NP placed at the specifier, it will be followed immediately by the focus marker. The extracted position will be filled with resumptive pronoun to replace the moved constituent so as to let the sentence be grammatical. If the position is left empty, the sentence will be ungrammatical because it does not conform with the rules of the language. In Yorùbá language and all its dialects, the NP can be a word that can be noun, (name), pronoun, and prononminal. Arókoyo (2013:24-25) observes that in languages in the following order, subject, verb, object (SVO), it may not be clear enough if the subject NP is focused because it is in the initial position of the sentence. It is the insertion of focus marker and resumptive pronoun in some languages like Yoruba that certified that movement has taken place formerly.

The subject NP movement in the Ànàgó dialect is like standard Yorùbá in the act of moving the NP of the matrix sentence to the specifier of focus predicate (FP) and followed by the marker **'li'** with the insertion of resumptive pronoun (RSV) at the syntactic position of the moved NP. The data below in (4) & (5) show examples of subject NP focus in `Anàgó dialect:

(4) (a) Bàbá ra ẹdùn
Father buy cutlass

(b) Bàbá li o ra ẹdùn
Father FM RSV buy cutlass
'It was father that bought cutlass'

(5)



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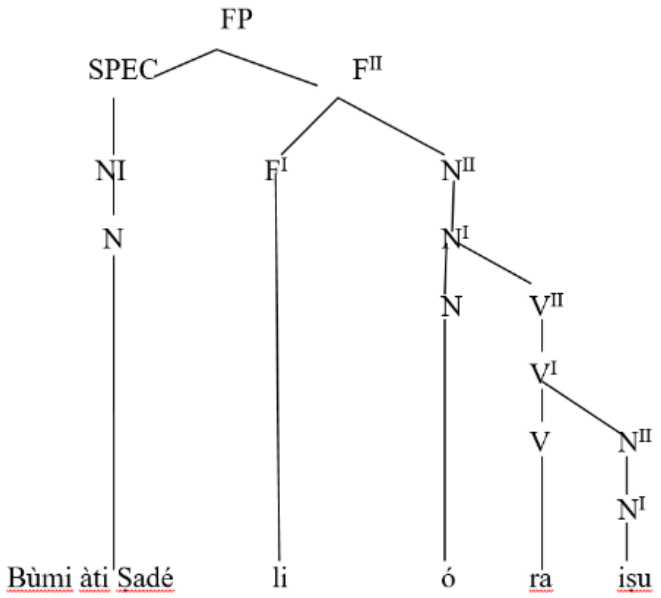
(6) (a) Bùmi àti Sadé ta Isụ
Bùmi and Sadé sell yam
(b) Bùmi àti Sadé li ó ta isụ
Bùmi and Sadé FM RSV sell yam
'It is Bùmi and Sadé that sold yam.

(7)



The two examples in (4a & 6a) are Kernel sentences in which sentences in (4b & 6b) were focused sentences derived from (4a & 6a) while the tree diagrams of the focus sentences were in (5 & 7) respectively.

The NPs that were moved to the specifier of the two sentences were Bàbá (father) in (4) while Bùmi and Sadé in (4) were moved to the sentence position, the focus marker followed it immediately and the insertion of **'o'** the resumptive pronoun replaced the moved constituents in the syntactic position. According to Arókoyò (2013), it is the insertion of the two elements that makes the movement of the NP at the subject position reflected, meaningful and ascertained that the movement is really done/taken place. If the resumptive pronoun is not inserted in the position of the moved element, the result will be ungrammatic sentence.

Object Noun Phrase (NP) Focus

Object Noun Phrase in Yoruba and its dialects are in two different forms. Since the objects NP can be found after the action word (verb) and after the preposition

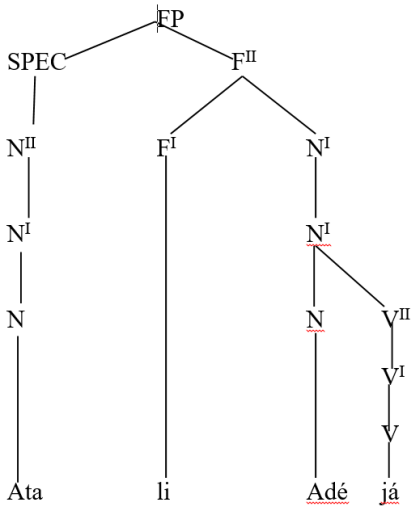
marker in a sentence, invariably they could be object after verb and object after preposition. The two ways are direct object and indirect object. Whether the objects is at the instance of after the verb or after the preposition, it is still the object NP as stated by Arokoyo (2013:28) . The two object noun will be treated independently.

Direct Object Focus (Object of Verb)

The object of verb is the direct object that the verb assign role to. The object noun phrases are complement of the verb. Since the direct object follows the main verb that the subject NP acted upon, it could also be focused. Since the movement is the bedrock of the transformation on any matrix sentence to realize a derived sentence as this focus sentence. The direct object will be extracted from its syntactic position in the structure and landed at the specifier which is its landing site before the driver (marker) is followed immediately to form a focus predicate as the theory stated it. The data below exemplified the movement of the direct object to the specifier in object focus, the verb occurs at the sentence final position since the NP has been extracted to the sentence initial position i.e. specifier.

(8) (a) Adé já ata
Adé grinds pepper

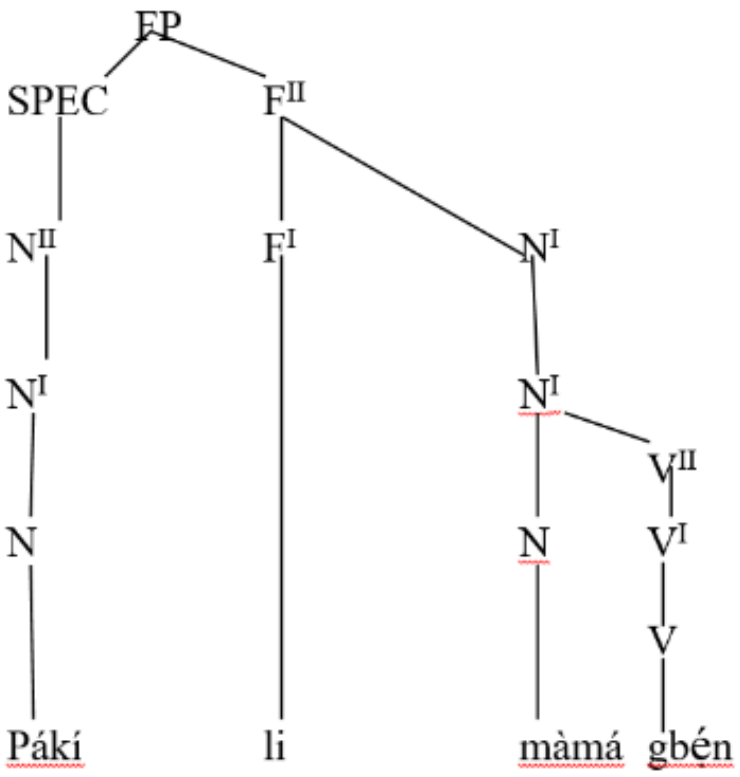
(a) Ata li Adé já
Pepper FM Adé grinds
'It was pepper that Adé grounded'



(10) (a) Màmá gbéṇ Pákí
Mother peels cassava

(b) Pákí li mama gbéṇ
Cassava FM mother peels
"It was cassava that mother peeled!'

(11)



The sentences in (8a & 10a) are matrix sentences that transformational process acted upon to get sentences in (8b and 10b).

'Ata' is the NP object in (8) while **'Pákí'** is the object NP in (10). It was those two constituents that were extracted from their syntactic position in the sentence and shifted to the specifier which is the initial position of the sentence because it wants to be given prominence. After being placed at the specifier, the marker is put immediately after it which is the driver of the emphasis.

In this type of transformation, a resumptive pronoun is not needed to fill the extraction site like that of subject NP. The trace is left empty which means the verb

is to end the structure and the sentence will be grammatical according to the rule of the language.

Indirect Object (IO) Focus (Object of Preposition)

The indirect object are the NPs that can be found at the instance of following the preposition marker. It is the preposition that assigns roles to this NP, though they (DO & IO) are under the same subject Noun phrases. That the object NPs and IO NPs are complements of subject NPs and are assigned theta roles by the verb or preposition which heads the phrase, Omolewu (2014:321). These indirect object NPs could also be extracted from its position in the sentence to the specifier position which is landing site for prominence to take place as a constituent to be emphasisesd.

Preposition Focus

In this type of focus, the preposition is either moved with the preposition marker or got it deleted as ex templified in (12) or it may end the sentence, i.e to be at the sentence-final position as seen in (14). This is ascertained by Arokoyo (2018:34) when she declares that "if the PP is an adjunt, once the complement, i.e the object of preposition is focused, the marker may leave together or get deleted.

Omolewu (2014:324) corroborates this when he says: "The NP objects of the preposition is a subcategorized complement of the preposition and is assigned theta role through its governor, which is the preposition."

Omolewu (2014) explains that Noun phrase in object position of a sentence after the marker of preposition is also a part of predicate that were attributed to the Noun phrase of the subject position. But that the preposition is its governor who gives work directly to the object but not the verb in the sentence. The following data reflect it.

(12) (a) Adé gbá ìgbétí Bóḷá lí oko
Adé slaps check Bóḷá at the farm

(b) (Lí) Oko lí Adé gbá ìgbétí Bóḷá
Farm FM Adé slaps check Bóḷá
'It was at the farm that Adé slapped Bóḷá's cheek'

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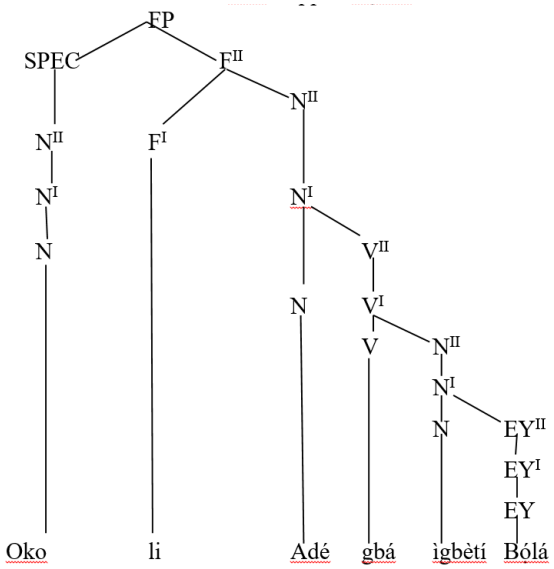
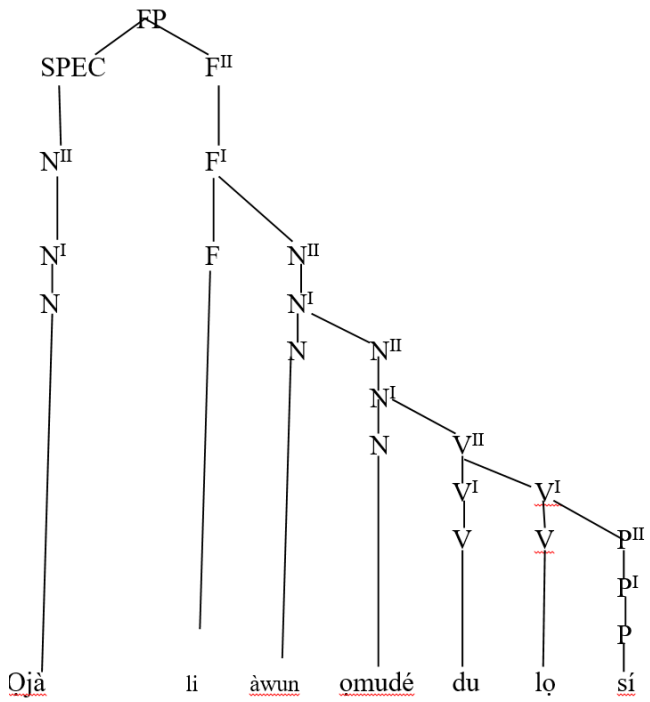
(13)



(14) (a) Àwun Ọmudé du lọ sí ọjà
The children run go to market

(b) Ọjà li àwun Ọmudé du lọ sí
Market FM the children run go PRP
'It was at the market that the children ran to

(15)



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The sentences in (12a & 14a) are the matrix/kernel sentences that resulted to the derived sentences in (12b & 14b) above. The transformational processes of movement and insertion acted upon it as the theory stated. The indirect object that were extracted from their position are **'oko'** and **'ọjà'** which **'lí'** as a preposition assigns roles to and **'ọjà'** which **'sí'** as a preposition assigns role to conform with the assertion that verb in the sentences are not the role assignee of the object of the prepositions.

In (12 & 13) above, when the NP is moved, the preposition is left behind i.e preposition stranding. Preposition stranding is a situation whereby object of a preposition is fronted alone without moving the preposition along.

Oblique Noun Phrase Focus

Oblique is regarded as something that is not straight forward. This means that this noun phrase is not directed to any other noun in the sentence. As we have the assignment of theta role to the assignee, this oblique noun phrase is not related to any. This type of NP is nearly similar to object of prepositional phrase because it appears after marker(s) of preposition. Example of this in Anago are:

(16) (a) Mo bu ìẹ̀sì sí àwo
I put rice in the plate

(b) Awo li mo bu ìẹ̀sì sí
Plate FM PRO put rice in
'It was in the plate that I put rice in.

(17) (a) Kóḷá gbi yẹngẹ sí orí ebè
Kóḷá plant maize on the ridge

(b) Sí orí ebè li Kóḷá gbi yẹngẹ sí
On the ridge FM Kóḷá plant maize
On the ridge was where Kóḷá planted the maize

(18) Awo li mo bu ìẹ̀sì sí

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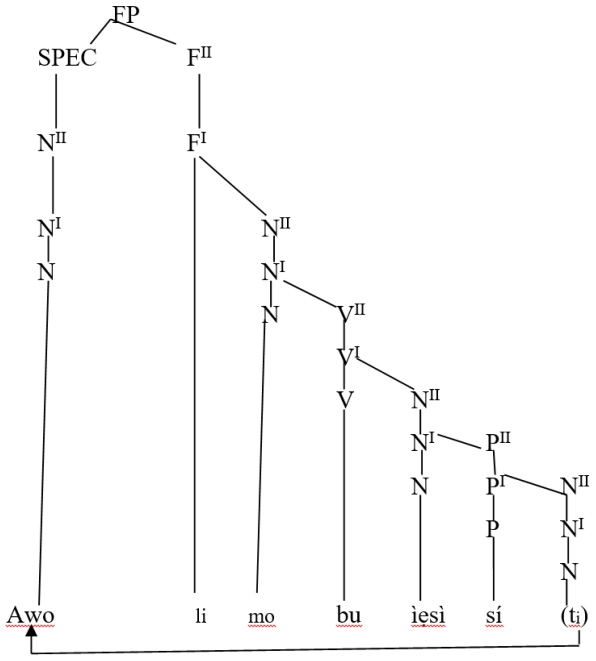
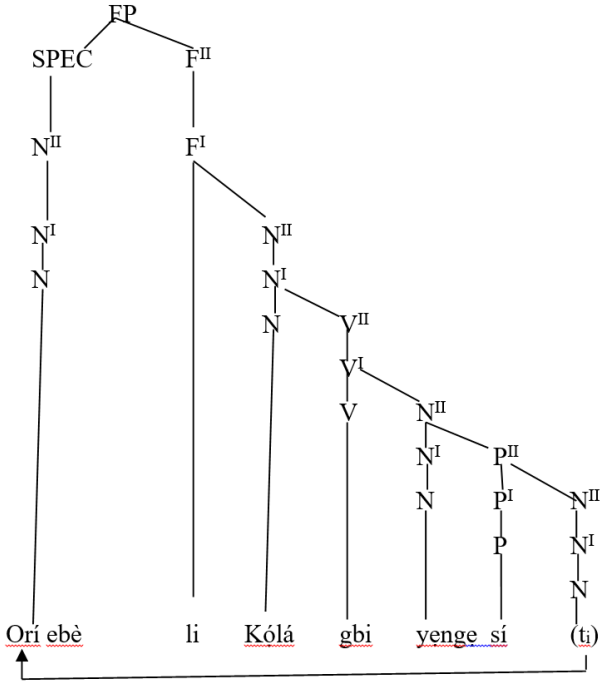


(19) Orí ebè li Kọ́lá gbi yẹngẹ sí



Genitival/Possessor Noun Phrase Focus

Genitival is derived from the word, genitive which is relating to, or being a grammatical case that typically marks a person or thing that possesses someone

or something else or the source from which someone or something comes. The above explanation reflects that it can be used for humans, animals, living things and non-living things.

Arokoyo (2018:36) puts it that "the genitival noun phrase expresses a possessive relationship while Omolewu (2014:327) puts it that genitive phrase is headed by a noun head in accompany of obligatory modifiers. Both of the scholars further their explanation that the genitive nouns can function as subject of a sentence, object of verb and/or object of preposition.

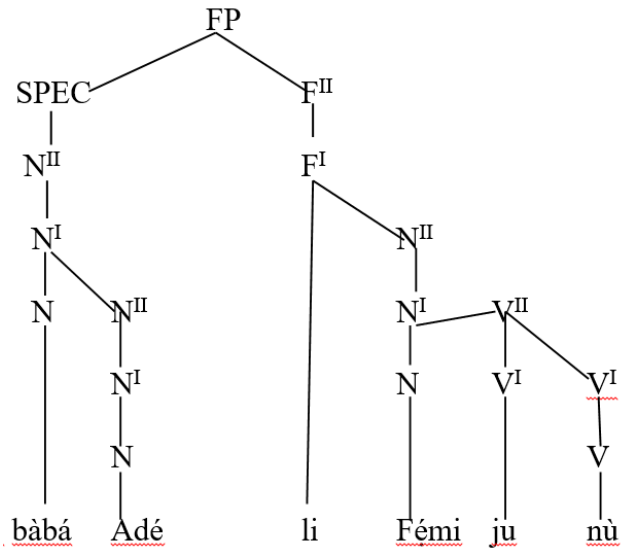
As it is that the two or three noun string together in this genitive noun cannot be detatched, the movement to specifier of the sentence will affect them together, which means that the head cannot be focused alone. This is corroborated by Awóbùlúyì (1967:203) in Arokoyo (2018:36) that the head of a genitive construction cannot be emphasized independently. It behaves and treated like other NPs in a sentence.

Consider the following data:

(20) (a) Féṃi ju atsọ ọ̀ṛé. mi nù
Féṃi throws cloth friend Isg away

(b) Atso bàbá Adé li Féṃi jú nù
Cloth father Adé FM Féṃi throw away
'It was Adé's father cloth that Féṃi lost'.

(21)



(22) (a) Bàbá olówó kọ. ilé títóbi méṭà

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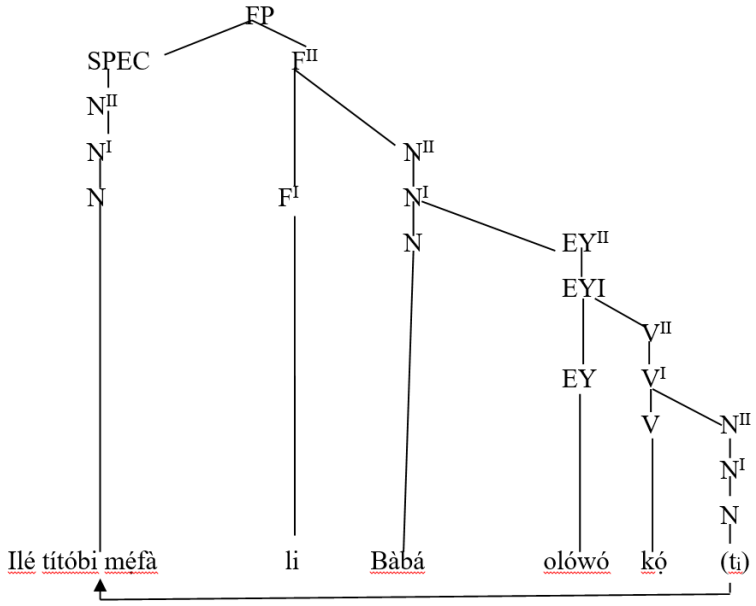
Bàbá olówó build house big six

(b) Ilé títóbi méḍà li Bàbá olówó kọ́
House big six FM father wealth build
'It was a wealth father that build six big houses.'

(23)



In the above data, the possessive nouns that are in the sentence in (20a) is '**atso òṛé̩**' and **'ilé títóbi méḍà'** in sentence (22a). Both the possessive phrases are noun after the verb and that they are more than one word. As reiterated before, all the nouns were extracted from their position and taken to landing site which is the specifier. The head nouns **'atso'** and **'ile'** alone cannot be focused, an attempt to do this, the result will be ungrammatical sentence.

Pronoun/Pronominal Focus

Pronouns are any of a small set of words in a language that are used as substitutes for nouns or noun phrases and whose referents are named for understanding in this context. Pronominal is of, relating to or constituting a pronoun. These sets of words used instead of noun in language is a universal phenomenon, it can only differ from one language to the other in terms of structure.

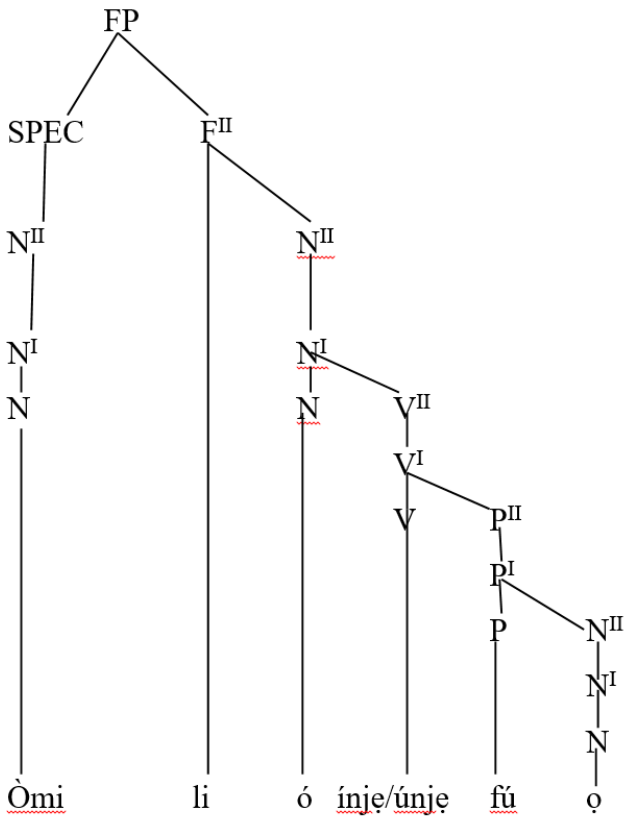
Yorùbá as a language has it cum all the dialects of the language but the items are not the same. It is being used instead of noun phrase. As other noun phrases are

being focused, these pronouns are also focused. Pronoun are six in number and bear only one syllable and function alone as a pronoun while pronominals are also six in number but has two syllables each. This one behaves like pronouns and nouns, hence the name given to it, pronominal. All the characteristics of noun is applicable to it also. Pronouns perform the same grammatical function as nouns in sentences. Consider these data in Ànàgó:

(24) (a) Mo ra ínjẹ/únjẹ fú ọ
Isg-nom buy food for you 2sg-
'I bought food for you'.

(b) Òmi li ó ra injẹ/únjẹ fú ọ
1-sg-nom FM RSP buy food for you
'It was I who bought food for you'.

(25)



(26) (a) Ón kọ ìwé fú wa
3pl nom write book for us

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It was they, that dictate dictation for us.

(b)	Awọn	li	ó	kọ	ìwé	fú	wa.
	3pl-emp	Fm	RSV	write	book	for	us

It was they that wrote book for us

The above examples show the various ways in which the pronouns are being focused in a sentence. The one syllable pronouns cannot be focused while the two-syllable are the most easily focused elements. In a situation where the one syllable pronoun needs to be focused, its counterpart in the two-syllable pronouns will be used to replace it. This attitude makes Arokoyo (2018:) to call the pronouns 'unemphatic' and the pronominals as 'emphatic'. In (24a), **'Omi'** is used to replace '**Mo**' when it is pertinent to focus the subject pronoun, and in (26a) '**Àwọn**' is used to replace '**ọn'** in the sentence when the subject noun is to be focused. In sentence (24b)

Conclusion

This paper examines Focus of Noun phrase of Ànàgó dialect in Ogun State. This is different from Ànàgó language of Cuba that is well known. This work makes it a reality that Ànàgó is a dialect spoken in Nigeria and Benin Republic at the border line of the two countries. It traces the extension of Anago type of Yoruba to Cuba through Atlantic slave trade. That it was the Yoruba that were sold into slavery maintain the language and culture and through which Anago language grew with the mixture of Spanish.

It was revealed that all the nouns phrases in a sentence can be focused. For example, subject noun/phrase objects noun phrase i.e direct object and indirect object, genitival noun phrase, pronouns focus etc. it makes use of Government and Binding theory for the work. This is because the theory has different modules, that involves movement, insertion, deletion, substitutions etc. that are relevant to transformational processes.

The paper reveals that all the noun phrases must be extracted from their syntactic position in the sentence and moved to specifier which is the landing site and followed immediate by the marker '**li'**. There are some noun phrases that cannot be detacted at the instance of the movement, it must be moved together. Is is revealed that not all the pronoun can be focused the unemphatic cannot be focused, but when the need be emphatic will be used to replace it since they

function in the same way and manner. All these findings certified it that Ànàgó is a dialect of Yorùbá like other dialects that are well known in scholarly work.

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