

Question Formation and Focus Construction in Owo: A Yoruba Dialect

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Abstract: Question formation and focusing are two transformational processes attested in Standard Yorùbá both of which have been extensively discussed in previous studies. However, very little is known about these concepts in Owo (Òwò) a south-East Yoruba (Yorùbá) dialect. This study examines the concept of questions and focusing in Òwò dialect with a comparison of the processes in Standard Yorùbá. The study revealed some differences as well as similarities in the two processes in Òwò and standard Yorùbá. Just like in Standard Yorùbá, question markers in Òwò normally occur in sentence initial and final positions. However, the question marker *dè* constantly appears sentence medially before and before verbs in certain constructions. Furthermore, while the focus marker in Yorùbá normally occurs immediately after the focused item with a stable form, the focus marker in Òwò usually occurs at the sentence final position as a reduplicated form of the last syllable of the final item. Also, a pronoun which indicates number and agreement usually occurs immediately after the focused item in Òwò. Finally, just like in Yorùbá, there is a syntactic relationship between question and focusing in Òwò dialect.

Keywords: questions, focusing, Òwò, Yorùbá, transformation

0. Introduction

An uncountable number of scholarly researches have been carried out on Yorùbá language some of which revealed some controversial issues about the structure of the language. As a way of addressing these controversies, Awóhùlúyì (1992) made a clarion call to Yorùbá scholars to start studying the various and structurally diverse dialects of the language in order to find out new things the dialects may reveal about the standard form. This call by Awóhùlúyì has triggered a number of studies which examined different linguistic phenomena in many of the dialects. Some of these studies have helped to resolve

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some knotty issues in the standard form. Examples are Awóbùlúyì (2001; 2006), Adéşuyan (2006), Olúmúyìwá (2009) and Oshodi (2013) which examined the form and function of the controversial high tone syllable (HTS) in Ọ̀wọ̀, Yàgbà, Èkìtì, Òndó and Ọ̀wọ̀ dialects respectively. Evidence from these dialects confirms that the HTS which was labelled a pronoun by some scholars actually functions as a tense and aspectual marker which indicates past/present action in Yorùbá

This present study is also a response to this call. It examines two transformational processes (question formation and focus construction) in Ọ̀wọ̀ a South-East Yorùbá dialect following Awobuluyi's (1998) classification^①. The study aims to examine and compare the structure of these two transformational processes in Ọ̀wọ̀ dialect with their structure in standard Yorùbá. The aim is to identify the similarities and differences which would ultimately provide evidence in terms of the linguistic and structural relationship which exist between Ọ̀wọ̀ dialect and standard Yorùbá. The result is expected to provide additional information about the structure of question formation and focus construction as transformational processes in Ọ̀wọ̀ and Yorùbá.

1. The Theory of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG)

Since this study focuses on transformational processes, it is imperative to discuss the grammatical theory which evaluates the processes of transformations in language. This will provide an insightful background to the transformational processes to be examined in this study.

Transformational generative grammar (TGG), Chomsky (1957) is a theory of language which describes a language with the help of transformational rules. It is basically a theory involving logical reasoning to understand the processing of grammatical knowledge in the human brain. It attempts to analyze language by examining the relationship among the various constituents of a sentence and among the possible sentence structures of a language. The rules employed to express this relationships are called transformations. TGG goes ahead of structural grammar which focuses more on sentence structures used in communication by analyzing the words with reference to its underlying thoughts.

^① Awobuluyi (1988) classified Yorùbá dialects into five different groups: South-East Yorùbá (SEY: Ègbá Ẹ̀bù, Ìlájẹ̀, Ẹ̀kẹ̀, Òndó, Ọ̀wọ̀, Ọ̀bà-Ẹ̀kẹ̀ (Ào)(Táíwò, 2005)), Central Yorùbá (CY: Ifẹ̀, Ìjẹ̀ṣà, Èkìtì, Mòbà), North-West Yorùbá (NWY: Èkó, Àwó, Ègbá (now Yewa), Ọ̀yó, Ọ̀ṣun, Ònkò, Ìbòlò, Ẹ̀bómìnà), South-West Yorùbá (SWY: Sàbẹ̀ẹ̀-Kéú (Ànàgò) Ifẹ̀ (Togo)) and North-East Yorùbá (NEY: Ẹ̀yàgbà, Ìjùn, Ọ̀wọ̀, Owé). These dialects were classified based on phonological, morphological and syntactic similarities which they share and are peculiar to them.

Transformational grammar assigns a “deep structure” and a “surface structure” to show the relationship between such sentences. The deep structure consists of a series of phrase-structure rewrite rules, i.e., a series of possible universal rules that generates the underlying phrase-structure of a sentence, and a series of rules called transformations that act upon the phrase-structure to form more complex sentences. These transformations eventually produce a surface structure that, after words and pronunciations are added, is similar to an actual sentence of a language. The assumption is that all languages share the same deep structure, but they differ from each other at the surface structure level because of the application of different rules for transformations, pronunciation, and word insertion. For example, a basic sentence can be transformed to an interrogative sentence while an affirmative sentence can be transformed into a negative sentence. This will be done through processes of transformations by applying some rules which may involve the movement of some lexical items and the addition of some vital ones. These rules will transform the basic sentence in order to generate new ones (sentences). This informed the name of this theory, Transformational Generative Grammar. It transforms a basic sentence in order to generate new grammar (i.e. new grammatical sentences). *Encyclopedia of Linguistics* (2005) summed up TGG as follows: “its (TGG) principal objective is the formulation of a finite set of basic and transformational rules that explain how the native speaker of a language can generate and comprehend all its possible grammatical sentences, it focuses mostly on syntax and not on phonology or morphology as structuralism does”.

TGG makes use of tree diagrams to represent and distinguish sentences by their syntactic characteristics. Thus we have noun phrases (NP), verb phrases (VP), prepositional phrases (PP) etc. For example, while the rule guiding the basic sentence in Yorùbá says it should contain a Noun Phrase (NP) and a Verb Phrase (VP) that of Òwò dialect normally contains a Noun Phrase (NP), an INF (Inflection) and a Verb Phrase (VP). Though a lot of modifications have been made to this theory which has given birth to other theories e.g. Government and Binding (GB) and The Minimalist Program (MP), the relevance of transformations in the generation and comprehension of sentences in any native language has remained useful in these modified theories.

2. Question Formation Processes in Òwò

Questions are transformational processes which involve seeking or requesting for information about the subject or the action performed by or related to the subject in a basic sentence. In English for example, there are different types of questions like Polar question,

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Interrogative question, Yes/No question etc. Most questions in English are usually introduced by words like “what, where, when, why” etc. known as Wh-words, they usually appear at the initial position of such sentence. However, the processes of question formation in Yorubá and its dialects differ considerably from those of English. In Ọ̀wọ̀ for example, the question marker can occur in word initial, word medial and word final positions. Also, the question marker may have a regular form while in some instances it may not. In such irregular instances it is the last syllable of the noun being questioned that determines the form of the question marker.

There are eight different patterns of question formation in Ọ̀wọ̀. Some of these patterns make use of distinct and regular question markers while others do not have any regular form but their form is determined by the last syllable of the noun being questioned. Each of these markers performs different syntactic function. For example, the item (*d*)ẹ̀ is used to question the subject NP in affirmative sentences. Consider the examples in 1a-1c and 2a-2c below:

- (1) a. Ó sun → [NP[∅]] Ó s̀̀n
 HTS^① sleep
 ‘He/she slept’
- b. Ó **d**ẹ̀ s̀̀n? → [NP[∅]] Ó **d**ẹ̀ s̀̀n?
 HTS QM sleep
 ‘Did he/she sleep?’
- c. É ẹ̀ s̀̀n? → [NP[∅]] É ẹ̀ s̀̀n?
 HTS QM sleep
 ‘Did he/she sleep?’
- (2) a. i-Títi ó s̀̀n
 Títi HTS sleep
 ‘Títi slept’
- b. i-Títi ó **d**ẹ̀ s̀̀n?

^① The issue of what constitutes the actual form and function of the high tone syllable (HTS) is a very controversial issue among Yorubá scholars who have assigned different form and function for it. According to Aw ǫ̀lù ỳì (1978, 1992, and 2001), the HTS is a preverbal element (a tense and aspectual marker) which indicates past/present actions in Yorubá and its dialects. He further claims that in constructions like (1a and b), the ó which is always the first overt element is the HTS just like it is in (2a and b) and not the 3psg pronoun. Aw ǫ̀lù ỳì (2001) claimed that the 3psg pronoun is always covert in such constructions (i.e. 1a and b) hence, the null ∅ sign in the NP position of the form indicated with the arrow. This claim appears to be true if examples (2a, b and c) are considered. The ó in (1a and b) appears to perform the same function as the one in (2a and b) where it does not function as a pronoun.

- Títí HTS QM sleep
 ‘Did Títí sleep?’
 c. i-Títí é ẹ̀ sùn?
 Títí HTS QM sleep
 ‘Did Títí sleep?’

In examples 1b, 1c, 2b and 2c, the subject NPs in 1a and 2a were questioned respectively. In ex.1, the subject NP which is covert in this position is the 3psg pronoun. In 1b and 2b, the distinct question marker is *dẹ̀*, however, in 1c and 2c the question marker changes to *ẹ̀*. There is a phonological (i.e. transformational) explanation for this. The underlying form of the question marker is *dẹ̀*. However, in most instances as shown in 1c and 2c, the consonant of the question marker is deleted, after which it assimilates the HTS (*ó*) but the HTS still retains its original high tone. This phonological process is shown below in ex.3:

- | (3) Base form | Deletion | Assimilation/surface form |
|---|---|---|
| a. Ó dẹ̀ sùn?
HTS QM sleep
‘Did he/she sleep?’ | → Ó ẹ̀ sùn?
HTS QM sleep | → É ẹ̀ sùn?
HTS QM sleep |
| b. i-Títí ó dẹ̀ sùn?
Títí HTS QM sleep
‘Did Títí sleep?’ | → i-Títí ó ẹ̀ sùn?
Títí HTS QM sleep | → i-Títí é ẹ̀ sùn?
Títí HTS QM sleep |

The occurrence of *ó* HTS in 2b and 3b also supports the fact that the *ó* in 1a and 1b cannot be the 3psg pronoun but a tense and aspectual marker. Its function in 1a and 1b is exactly the same in 2a and 2b. Also, the question marker *dẹ̀* occurs in sentence medial position. This is contrary to what operates in Yorùbá where question markers occur only in word initial and final positions.

However, whenever the question marker *dẹ̀* is used together with the verb *ghún* ‘be’, the question always depict an action in the present. Consider the examples below:

- (4) a. Òjọ́ **dẹ̀** ghún uli? → Òjọ́ **dẹ̀** ghúnli?
 Òjọ́ QM be house
 ‘Is Òjọ́ at home?’
 b. Igin **dẹ̀** ghún oko? → Igin **dẹ̀** ghónko?
 tree QM be farm
 ‘Are there trees in the farm?’

The item *Ṣé* just like *dẹ̀* is used to seek information. However, it is used in two ways. One, it is used to seek request concerning intention. This is usually introduced with the

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item *dí* (a tense and aspectual marker) which signifies future intention. Two, it is also used when the person asking the question wants to ascertain the veracity of the issue at stake from the person being questioned tactically or rudely in form of a statement. Consider the examples below:

- (5) a. *Şé dí mi jẹ ẹ?*
 QM TNS-ASP I eat it
 ‘Should I eat it?’
- b. *Şé dí Títí sùn?*
 QM TNS-ASP Títí sleep
 ‘Should Títí sleep?’
- c. *Şé dí òghọ́n jẹ ẹ → Şé dọghọ́n jẹ ẹ*
 QM TNS-ASP they eat it
 ‘Should they eat it?’
- d. *Şé é è sí?*
 QM TNS-ASP NEG be
 ‘Is anything the matter/Is everything okay?’
- e. *Şé ẹghẹ́n ẹ́n sínwín? → Şéẹghẹ́n ẹ́n sínwín?*
 QM you(pl) NEG mad
 ‘I hope you(pl) are not mad?’
- f. *Şé é é şi èmi Òjó ó ran sí? → Şé é şèmi Òjó ó ran sí?*
 QM HTS NEG be me Òjó HTS send to
 ‘I hope I’m not the one Òjó sent you to?’
- g. *Şé é é şi omi mi Títí ó mọ şá? → Şé é şomi mi Títí ó mọ şá?*
 QM HTS NEG be water my Títí HTS drink emph.
 ‘I hope it wasn’t my water that Titi drank’
- h. *Şé ó mà ughun yù ún şe şá? → Şóó màghun yù ún şe şá?*
 QM HTS know thing that 3psg do emph.
 ‘Does he/she really know what he/she is doing?’

In 5a-5c, the questions were asked in a manner requesting if some intentions could be granted. However, in 5d-5h, the questions were presented in form of statements. While examples (c, f and g) were questions asked tactically with no sign of rudeness, examples (e and h) were questions asked with elements of rudeness.

The items *s í* and *k í* are question markers used to inquire about the status or state of nouns in *Ọ̀wọ̀*. *S í* is used for human beings while *k í* is used for animal and other non-living

things:

- (6) a. **S í** iyí? → síiyí?
QM this
‘Who is this?’
- b. **S í** ùwọ́ → sùùwọ́?
QM you(sg)
‘Who are you?’
- c. **S í** òghon rí? → sòòghon rí?
QM they see
‘Who did they see?’
- d. **K í** iyí? → kíiyí?
QM this
‘What is this?’
- e. **S í** Títí ó rí?
QM Títí HTS see
‘Who did Títí see?’
- f. **K í** òghon rí? → Kòòghon rí?
QM they see
‘What did they see?’/ ‘What’s the problem with them?’

In *Ọ̀wọ̀*, *Kẹ́ẹ́* is a question marker used to seek information about people, place or thing.

Consider the examples below:

- (7) a. **Kẹ́ẹ́** rí i?
QM see 3psg
‘Where is he/she/it?’
- b. **Kẹ́ẹ́** ibẹ́? → Kẹ́ẹ́bẹ́?
QM there
‘Where is the place?’

Another process involves questioning to find out the whereabouts of a person or thing. There is no distinct question marker for this. It is the form of the last vowel or syllable of the noun phrase being questioned that marks it off as a question. Below are examples:

- (8) a. i-Kẹ́mi ɲ
Kẹ́mi QM
‘Where is Kẹ́mi?’
- b. i-Kúkùndùkú nẹn ɛn?

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sweet-potato the QM

‘Where is the sweet potato?’

c. Aṣọ wa à?

dress the QM

‘Where is our dress?’

d. Ọma ghọn ọ̀n?

child they QM

‘Where is their child?’

e. Ọ̀jọ̀ ọ̀?

Ọ̀jọ̀ QM

‘Where is Ọ̀jọ̀?’

f. Adé è?

Adé QM

‘Where is Adé?’

The item *dẹ* is used when trying to establish the authenticity or the status of the noun being questioned. It usually expresses an action that took place in the past. Consider examples 9a-9d:

(9) a. Ọ̀jọ̀ **dẹ**?

Ọ̀jọ̀ QM

‘Was it Ọ̀jọ̀?’

b. i-Títí **dẹ**?

Títí QM

‘Was it Títí?’

c. Ajá ẹ̀ẹ̀rẹ̀n **dẹ**?

dog that QM

‘Was it that dog?’

d. Aṣọ funfun **dẹ**?

dress white QM

‘Was it a white dress?’

The lexical item *dẹ̀yí* is used to question a noun which is physically present at the time of questioning. Consider the examples 10a-10d below:

(10) a. i-Títí **dẹ̀yí**?

Títí QM

‘Is this Títí?’

- b. Aja **dèyí?**
dog QM
'Is this a dog?'
- c. Aşo funfun **dèyí?**
dress white QM
'Is this a white dress?'
- d. Oún **dèyí**
3psg QM
'Is this he/she?'

3. Focus Construction in Ọ̀wọ̀

According to Rooth (1996), focus is a grammatical means of marking the organization of information in discourse. It divides sentences into a focus and an open proposition corresponding to background information. Focus selects a value for the variable in the open proposition from a set of contextually relevant alternative propositions. Stockwell (1977) described focus construction as a way of introducing special marking into the surface structure of the elements that is being focused. He therefore equates focus with prominence. Prominence in focusing is phonologically determined by intonation. In Yorùbá for example, when an item is focused it is usually moved to the initial part of the sentence and the focus marker *ni* is inserted immediately after it. Only nouns and verbs can be focused in both Yorùbá and Ọ̀wọ̀. Examples of focus constructions in standard Yorùbá are given below in 9a-9d:

- (11) a. Àiná jẹ ẹran
Àiná eat meat
'Àiná ate meat'
- b. Àina **ni** ó jẹ ẹran
Àiná FOC HTS eat meat
'It was Àina who ate meat'
- c. Ẹran **ni** Àiná jẹ
meat FOC Àina eat
'It was meat that Àiná ate'
- d. *Jíjẹ*^① **ni** Àiná jẹ ẹran

^① In both Yorùbá and Ọ̀wọ̀, the verb is usually nominalized through partial reduplication before it is focused.

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eating FOC Àiná eat meat
 'It was eating that Àiná ate the meat'

In examples 11a-11d, the subject *Àiná*, the verb *jẹ* and object *ẹran* were focused respectively. However, unlike standard Yorùbá where the focus marker *ni* is inserted immediately after the focused item, the focus marker in Òwò usually occurs at the end of the sentence and it always takes the form of the last vowel or syllable of the final word in the sentence. Also, a pronoun which indicates number and agreement usually occurs immediately after the focused item. This pronoun indicates the emphasis on the focused item. It is the combination of this pronoun with the focus marker that succinctly indicates focusing in Òwò. Consider the examples in ex.12-15 where 12a, 13a, 14a and 15a are the basic sentences while 12b-12d, 13b-13d, 14b-14d and 15b-15d are focus constructions involving the subject NP, the verb and NP object respectively. In all the examples (i.e. 12-15), the focused items are italicized while the pronoun which shows agreement and the focus marker are in bold form.

(12) a. *À ñ á* ó jẹ ẹran → *Àiná* ó jẹran

À ñ á HTS eat meat
 'À ñ á ate meat'

b. *Àiná* òun ó jẹran **án**

À ñ á she HTS eat-meat FOC
 'It was *À ñ á* who ate meat'

c. *J jẹ* òun *À ñ á* ó jẹran **án**

eating it *À ñ á* HTS eat-meat FOC
 'It was eating that *À ñ á* ate the meat'

d. *Ẹran* òun *À ñ á* ó jẹ **é**

meat it *Àiná* HTS eat FOC
 'It was meat that *À ñ á* ate'

(13) a. Òjó ó pa eku → Ojo ó peku

Òjó HTS kill mouse
 'Ojo killed a mouse'

b. Òjó òun ó peku **ú**

Òjó he HTS kill-mouse FOC
 'It was Òjó who killed a mouse'

c. *Pípa* òun Òjó ó peku **ú**

killing it Òjó HTS cook-fish FOC

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‘It was killing that Òjó killed a mouse’

d. *Èku* **òun** Òjó ó pa **á**
mouse it Òjó HTS buy FOC

‘It was a mouse that Òjó killed’

(14) a. *Àiná* ati Òjó ó jẹ ẹran → *Àiná* àti Òjó ó ẹran

Àiná and Òjó HTS eat meat

‘Àiná and Òjó ate meat’

b. *Àiná* ati Òjó **òghon** ó jẹran **án**
Àiná and Òjó they HTS eat-meat FOC

‘It was Àiná and Òjó who ate meat’

c. *Jíjẹ* **òun** *Àiná* ati Òjó ó jẹran **án**
eating it *Àiná* and Òjó HTS eat-meat FOC

‘It was eating that Àiná and Òjó ate meat’

d. *Ẹran* **òun** *Àiná* ati Òjó ó jẹ **é**
meat it *Àiná* and Òjó HTS eat FOC

‘It was meat that Àiná and Òjó ate’

(15) a. *Èmi* ati **òun** ó pa eku → *Èmi* àtòun ó peku

I and he/she HTS kill mouse

‘He/she and I killed a mouse’

b. *Èmi* ati *òun* **àwa** ó peku **ú** → *Èmi* àtòun **àwa** ó peku **ú**
I and he/she we HTS kill-mouse FOC

‘It was he/she and who killed a mouse’

c. *Pipa* **òun** *èmi* ati *òun* ó peku **ú** → *Pipa* **òun** *èmi* àtòun ó peku **ú**
killin it I and he/she HTS kill-mouse FOC

‘It was killing that he/she and I killed a mouse’

d. *Èku* **òun** *èmi* ati *òun* ó pa **á** → *Èku* **òun** *èmi* àtòun ó pa **á**
mouse it I and he/she HTS kill FOC

‘It was a mouse that he/she and I killed’

The occurrence of pronoun as an indicator of emphasis as well as marker of number and agreement in focus construction has not been previously reported in any Yorùbá dialect. Thus, its occurrence in Ọ̀wọ̀ is a new discovery in Yorùbá dialectology. Based on this, it becomes imperative to give a detailed background of pronouns in Ọ̀wọ̀ which will provide an insight into their pattern as well as their role in focus construction in the dialect. One important thing is that the type of pronouns which feature in focus constructions in Ọ̀wọ̀ are those referred to as long pronouns (Awóhùlúyì 1978). Interestingly, they are the only

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type of pronouns that can be focused in the dialect. Below are the forms of pronoun both short and long in Ọ̀wọ̀:

Table 1: Short Pronouns in Ọ̀wọ̀

	Subject position		Object position	
<i>first person singular</i>	<i>mo/mi</i>	'I'	<i>mi</i>	'me'
<i>second person singular</i>	<i>wo</i>	'you (sg)'	<i>ẹ</i>	'you (sg)'
<i>third person singular</i>	<i>(ó)</i>	'he/she/it'	<i>(v)</i>	'him/her/it'
<i>First person plural</i>	<i>àwa</i>	'we'	<i>wa</i>	'us'
<i>second person plural</i>	<i>ẹ̀ghẹ̀n</i>	'you (pl)'	<i>ghẹ̀n</i>	'you (pl)'
<i>third person plural</i>	<i>ọ̀ghọ̀n</i>	'they'	<i>ghọ̀n</i>	'them'

Table 2: Long Pronouns in Ọ̀wọ̀

<i>first person singular</i>	<i>ẹ̀mi</i>	'I'
<i>second person singular</i>	<i>ùwo</i>	'you (sg)'
<i>third person singular</i>	<i>òun</i>	'he/she/it'
<i>first person plural</i>	<i>awa</i>	'we'
<i>second person plural</i>	<i>ẹ̀ghẹ̀n</i>	'you (pl)'
<i>third person plural</i>	<i>ọ̀ghọ̀n</i>	'they'

The occurrence of pronouns in focus construction in Ọ̀wọ̀ is illustrated with examples below. The subject and object pronouns are underlined while the long pronouns which are the only type of pronouns that can occur in focus construction are italicized.

- (16) a. i. Mò ó yúbẹ̀ ii. Mì ghún oko iii. Títí ó rí mì
 I HTS go-there I be farm Títí HTS see me
 'I went there' 'I'm on the farm' 'Títí saw me'
- b. i. *Èmi* ó yúbẹ̀ ẹ̀ ii. *Emi* e ghún oko ó iii. *Èmi* i-Títí ó rí í
 I HTS go-there FOC I be farm FOC I Títí HTS see FOC
 'It was I who went there' 'It is I who is on the farm' 'It was I that Títí saw'
- (17) a. i. Wò ó yúbẹ̀ ii. Títí ó rí ẹ̀ → Títí ó rẹ̀
 you(sg) HTS go-there Títí HTS see you(sg)
 'You(sg) went there' 'Títí saw you(sg)'
- b. i. Ùwọ ó yúbẹ̀ ẹ̀ ii. Ùwọ i-Títí ó rí í
 you(sg) HTS go-there FOC you(sg) Títí HTS see FOC
 'It was you who went there' 'It was you that Títí saw'
- (18) a. i. Ó rí i ii. Títí ó rí ì
 3psg see it Títí HTS see it
 'He/she saw it' 'Títí did it'

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- | | |
|--|--|
| b. i. <i>Òun</i> ó rí í
3psg HTS see FOC
'It was he/she that it' | ii. <i>Òun</i> i-Títí ó rí í
3psg Títí HTS see FOC
'It was he/she that Títí saw' |
| (19) a. i. <i>Àwa</i> ó yúbè
We HTS go-there
'We went (there)' | ii. Títí ó rí <i>wa</i>
Títí HTS see us
'Títí saw us' |
| b. i. <i>Àwa</i> ó yúbè é
we HTS go-there FOC
'It was we who went there' | ii. <i>Àwa</i> i-Títí ó rí í
we Títí HTS see FOC
'It was us that Títí saw' |
| (20) a. i. <i>Èghen</i> ó yúbè
you(pl) HTS go-there
'You(pl) went (there)' | ii. <i>Òjó</i> ó rí <i>ghen</i>
<i>Òjó</i> HTS see us
' <i>Òjó</i> saw you(pl)' |
| b. i. <i>Èghen</i> ó yúbè é
you(pl) HTS go-there FOC
'It was you(pl) who went there' | ii. <i>Èghen</i> <i>Òjó</i> ó rí í
you(pl) <i>Òjó</i> HTS see FOC
'It was you(pl) that <i>Òjó</i> saw' |
| (21) a. i. <i>Òghon</i> ó yúbè
they HTS go-there
'They went (there)' | ii. <i>Òjó</i> ó rí <i>ghon</i>
<i>Òjó</i> HTS see them
' <i>Òjó</i> saw them' |
| b. i. <i>Òghon</i> ó yúbè é
they HTS go-there FOC
'It was they who went there' | ii. <i>Òghon</i> <i>Òjó</i> ó rí í
they <i>Òjó</i> HTS see FOC
'It was they that <i>Òjó</i> saw' |

From the examples given in ex.16-21, we noticed that only the long pronouns occurred in focused positions. In all instances, such pronoun explicates the emphasis on the focused element which is the goal of focus construction. When a pronoun either subject or object is focused, it is the long pronoun that appears in the focus position. For example, when the NP subjects (*mo/mi*) and the NP object (*mi*) in 16a (i-iii) were focused in 16b (i-iii), they changed to *èmi*, the first person singular long pronoun. Also, we noticed that the first, second and third person plural pronouns in *Òwò* share the same form with their long pronoun counterparts, the major difference is that only the long pronouns can be focused as earlier stated.

Another important fact has to do with the function of the pronoun which occurs immediately after the focused element. The pronoun performs two related functions in focus construction. It indicates number and agreement. A look at its occurrence revealed that *òun* (the third person singular long pronoun) always occurs after focused singular noun

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and nominalized verb which is always singular in nature while *òghon* and *àwa* which are plural forms of long pronouns appear after focused plural nouns. The choice however depends on the two nouns involved.

4. The Relationship between Question and Focusing in Ọ̀wọ̀

Another important fact concerning the two transformational processes i.e. question formation and focusing in Ọ̀wọ̀ dialect is that a syntactic relationship exists between them. For example, in the process of questioning the NP subject or object or an action relating to either of them in a basic sentence, the answer always occur as focused construction where the question marker *sí* (human) or *kí* (non-human) occurs in focus position. Consider the examples below:

- (22) a. Ọ̀jọ́ ó jẹ ẹ̀kọ
 Ọ̀jọ́ HTS eat pap
 ‘Ọ̀jọ́ ate pap’
- b. Sí ó jẹ ẹ̀kọ ọ́? → Sọ̀ò jẹ̀kọ ọ́?
 QM HTS sleep pap FOC
 ‘Who ate pap?’
- c. Ọ̀jọ́ ọ̀un ó jẹ̀kọ ọ́
 Ọ̀jọ́ he HTS eat-pap FOC
 ‘It was Ọ̀jọ́ who ate pap’
- d. Kí Ọ̀jọ́ ó jẹ ẹ́? → Kóòjọ́ ọ̀ jẹ ẹ́?
 QM Ọ̀jọ́ HTS eat FOC
 ‘What did Ọ̀jọ́ eat?’
- e. Ẹ̀kọ ọ̀un Ọ̀jọ́ ó jẹ ẹ́
 pap it Ọ̀jọ́ HTS eat FOC
 ‘It was pap that Ọ̀jọ́ ate’
- f. Kí Ọ̀jọ́ ó ti ẹ̀kọ ọ́? → Kóòjọ́ ó ti ẹ̀kọ ọ́?
 QM Ọ̀jọ́ HTS PERF do pap FOC
 ‘What did Ọ̀jọ́ do with the pap?’
- g. Jijẹ ọ̀un Ọ̀jọ́ ó jẹ ẹ̀kọ ọ́ → Jijẹ ọ̀un Ọ̀jọ́ o jẹ̀kọ ọ́
 eating it Ọ̀jọ́ HTS eat pap FOC
 ‘It was eating that Ọ̀jọ́ ate the pap’

In examples 22a-22g, the basic sentence is 22a. In 22b, the NP subject *Ọ̀jọ́* was questioned while in 22d the NP object *ẹ̀kọ* was questioned. And in 22f, the action performed by the

subject NP *Òjó* on the object NP *èkọ* which was expressed by the verb *jẹ* was questioned. In 22d and 22f, both questions appeared as focus constructions where the question markers *kí* was focused since the NPs questioned are both non-human i.e. *èkọ* ‘pap’ and *jẹ* ‘eat’. In 22b the question also appeared as focus construction where the question marker *sí* (human question marker) was focused because the NP questioned *Òjó* is a human noun.

It should be noted that it was the sentences (questions) in 22b, 22d and 22f that led to the generation (through transformation) of the sentences (focus constructions) in 22b, 22e and 22g. In other words, the sentences in 22c, 22e and 22g would never have been generated without the existence of those in 22b, 22d and 22f. The above explanation shows that the two types of sentences i.e. questions and focus construction have a syntactic relationship made possible through transformation.

5. Conclusion

In this study, two transformational processes; question formation and focus construction were examined in *Ọ̀wọ̀* dialect. It was discovered that questions in *Ọ̀wọ̀* dialect have different formative patterns. While some use distinct question markers others do not. Focus construction in the dialect involved movement where the focused element is obligatorily moved to the initial part of the sentence. Also, the claim by Stockwell (1977) that focus equals prominence and prominence in focusing is phonologically determined by intonation was found to be true in *Ọ̀wọ̀* dialect. The focus marker in *Ọ̀wọ̀* is phonologically determined by the last syllable of the last item in the focus construction which usually takes a high tone irrespective of the tone on such a syllable. Furthermore, focusing in *Ọ̀wọ̀* dialect exhibits two features which had not been previously reported in any Yorùbá dialect. The first one is the use of pronoun to mark agreement and number. The second one already identified in Oshodi (forthcoming), is the occurrence of the epenthetic vowel [i] in front of all consonant initial nouns which occur in focus construction. It was also discovered that a syntactic relationship which buttresses and equally supports the vital role of transformations in sentence generation was shown to exist between question formation and focus construction in the dialect.

Another important fact revealed in this study concerns the TGG which is the theory adopted for this study. The theory vividly captures and explains the concept of sentence generation in *Ọ̀wọ̀* dialect. From the various examples cited in this work, the concepts of deep and surface structures clearly manifested as important features not only in transformational processes but also in basic sentence formation in *Ọ̀wọ̀* dialect. For

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example, the deep structure of a lot of constructions in Ọwọ dialect would be ungrammatical without the concept of transformation which affects them at the surface level. Examples of such sentences were indicated with an arrow in this study. The initial form is the one exhibited at the deep structure level while the form indicated with the arrow is the one attested at the surface level. Another discovery is that unlike in Yorùbá where structures attested at the deep structure level are most times correct and acceptable, the reverse is the case in Ọwọ dialect where such constructions are not permitted and are neither grammatical nor acceptable. The implication of this is that there is the need to carry out more extensive studies on the grammatical structure of established Yorùbá dialects. This is imperative because there are still speech forms spoken within the Yorùbá region whose status either as dialects of Yorùbá or distinct languages are yet to be established^①. For example, Taiwo (2005) concluded that *Ào* (a speech form spoken in Ìdóàní, Ọsẹ local government area of Ondo state) which was not previously included in any Yorùbá sub-dialect group is a dialect of Yorùbá and included it in the South-East Yorùbá group. In spite of its structural similarities to Yorùbá and the numerous overwhelming features it shares with established Yorùbá dialects, *Ào* still exhibits some phonetic and syntactic features which have not been reported in any Yorùbá dialect. This did not come as a surprise. Awóbulúyì (1992) already confirmed that established Yorùbá dialects are structurally diverse. It is our belief that a critical study of many of the established Yorùbá dialects will reveal more surprising and interesting structural diversity.

In conclusion, just like in previous studies which examined grammatical issues in Yorùbá dialects, the suggestion by Awóbulúyì (1992) that a number of interesting facts would be discovered about standard Yorùbá from studies on its structurally diverse dialects

^① Oshodi (2011a, 2011b) suggested that *Arigidi*, a speech form under the controversial sub-group which has been tagged different sub-language family names should be considered a dialect of Yorùbá. The group which include Erúṣú, Oyín, Èṣí, Àfá, Ògè, Ìṣà, Àjè, Urò and Ọjò was tagged *Yoruboid* Greenberg (1963), *Northern Àkókó Cluster* Hoffman (1974), *Yoruboid* Bennet and Sterk (1977), *Amgbé* Capo (1989), *Akokoïd* Ohiri-Anichie (2006), *Arigidi Cluster* Ethnologue (2009), *North-Central Yorùbá* (NCY) dialects Oshodi (2011b; 2011c) and *North-West Akokoïd* Olúwádọ̀rọ̀ (2014) are all spoken in Àkókó North-west local government area of Ondo state south-west Nigeria where Yorùbá is the lingua franca. According to Oshodi, that *Arigidi* exhibits some features not reported in any Yorùbá dialect is not enough reason to conclude that it is not a Yorùbá dialect since it shares more structural and grammatical similarities than differences with Yoruba and its established dialects. Following the observation of Awóbulúyì (1992) that Yorùbá dialects are structurally diverse and coupled with the claim of Táíwò (2005) on *Ào* as a Yorùbá dialect in spite of having features not previously reported in any Yorùbá dialect, there is the need to re-assess the claim of Oshodi (2011b and c) regarding the status of *Arigidi* as a Yorùbá dialect.

was proved to be valuable in this study. This follows some interesting facts revealed in this study which have a lot of implications on dialectology and in particular the diverse nature of Yorùbá dialectology.

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