

**A CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF YORÙBÁ ECHO AND POLAR QUESTIONS**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this project was carried out by Adédèjì, Mujeeb Olábòdé in the Department of Linguistics, African and Asian Studies, University of Lagos, Akókà, Lagos, during 2018/2019 Academic session.

.....  
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DATE

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to Almighty God. Maker of heaven and earth.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indeed grateful to God for His providence throughout this project. It has been a period of hard silence and serious personal interaction, in which the grace of the Almighty God is sufficient to see me through. I pray that such grace never ceases.

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## ABSTRACT

This study presents a syntactic and pragmatic analysis of echo and polar questions in the Yorùbá language, with reference to their use in context. The aim of this study is to show the relationship between the two question types and to establish what constitutes each question formation. The choice of echo and polar questions is motivated by the fact that both constructions are rarely discussed, and even when they are, only polar questions and content questions are primarily addressed. This creates a gap in the analysis of echo questions in Yoruba. This study largely fills that gap. Regarding echo questions, it is argued that the syntax of such constructions depends largely on the antecedent that is echoed. This may be a declarative or imperative sentence, or a polar. Either a pseudo-echo or a syntactic echo question may arise from any of these sentences. We claim that *wh*-particles are pre-focused in echo questions and appear to the left of the constructions known as content questions through movement. In echo questions, the *wh*-particle replaces the echoer's main concern. Regarding polar questions, contrary to what is obtainable in existing literature, we claim that Yorùbá polar particles appear clause-initial at LF. Their realization as clause-initial or clause-final at PF results from movement. We propose *InterP* (Interrogative Phrase), where *Inter'* takes an IP as a complement. We also claim that Yoruba polar particles are just four in number *sé*, *ńjé*, *ṣebí/ṣèbí* and *bí*. The item *abi* is consistently analyzed as a conjunction in this study.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This study examines the structure of two types of interrogative constructions in Yorùbá from a contextual perspective. The interrogative constructions under discourse are Echo and Polar Questions. It must be stated clearly from the onset that existing literature on both types of interrogatives is a bit scanty. That is, for the case of Echo Questions, to the best of my knowledge, not even a single voluminous discourse on the structure of such constructions in Yoruba is available as at the time of material sourcing. The case of Polar Questions is fairer; in this study, we are holding to the fact that interrogative constructions in Yoruboid languages have been widely discussed, with Polar Questions among the most discussed.

We shall be discussing the constructions of both Echo and Polar Questions in Yorùbá language, providing both syntactic and pragmatic analysis, which is in turns required for a complete syntactic analyses of such constructions. Analysis will be based on the framework of the Minimalist Program for the syntax, and the Relevance Theory for pragmatic analysis.

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

One of the most important use of language by every user of such language is making enquiries about what is either completely new to them or something they have a prior knowledge of and want to know more. This process is called questioning, a universal phenomenon and an integral part of universal grammar.

The discourse context, the participants are the major elements that determines the kind of questions that emerges from a discourse. Hence, the contextual analysis of echo and polar questions. In some cases, some answers are considered grammatical and meaningful, they are however nullified by

the nature of participants in the discourse. In the case of echo questions, one must consider if they are questions per say, and if they are, do they really require answers at a go?

This study will analyze interrogative constructions such as:

## DATA SET ‘A’

### INTERROGATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

1. **Şé/ńjé** Bólá je ḫrësì?  
Inter B. eat rice  
'Did Bola eat rice?'
2. Bólá jeun **bí**?  
B. eat Inter  
'did Bólá eat?'
3. **Şé/ńjé** Bólá jeun **bí**?  
Inter B. eat Inter  
'Did Bólá eat?'
4. **Àbí** Bólá ra aṣo ni?  
Inter B. buy clothe ?*Inter*  
Inter B. buy/bought clothe ?*Foc.*  
'Did Bólá buy/bought clothe(s)?'
5. Bólá ra bàtà **àbí**?  
B. buy shoe Inter  
'Bólá bought shoes, didn't S/he?'
6. **Şebí** Bólá ra bàtà?  
Inter B. buy shoe  
Bólá bought shoes, didn't S/he?
7. Bólá ha ra bàtà **bí**?  
B. Inter buy shoe Inter  
Did Bola Bought a shoe(s)?

Data sets a provided above are considered to be polar questions in Yorùbá, with their particles occurring at different syntactic positions. However, the status of some of these particles are not clear yet. A good example is that of ‘**àbí**’ (as in example d above) that is considered as a conjunction (disjunction Awóbùlúyì 1978) by some scholars (Bámgbósé 1967), (Adéoyè 2017),

and also as a polar question particle by some other scholars (Ajiboyè 2013), (Fádáiró 2014), (Ilòrí 2017). Another is the case of ‘ni’ (also in example d). Both particles will be discussed extensively in this study. One of the major questions this study will attempt to resolve is ‘does the above particles really have the same semantic connotations when they occur?’

## DATA SET B

In a discourse, the following questions (C a, b, c,d) may sentence 8 below:

8. Wónní Délé pààyàn  
3PL say kill-person  
'He was accused of murder'

- a. **wónní ó pààyàn?**  
He was accused of murder?
- b. **Ó pààyàn?**  
He killed someone?
- c. **Ó şe KÍ NI?**  
He did what?
- d. **Pààyàn?**  
Murder?

In the data set B, the questions 8 (a,b,c,d) are considered echoic in nature. One must state clearly that such interrogative constructions have been grossly under-researched in many languages. Hence, they have not been subjected to recent theoretical analysis, even in English language (Sobin 2010). The situation is still the same, as it is to the best of our knowledge. This study will give account of the use of such questions according to their occurrence in discourse contexts. The high rise intonation which is an integral property of such questions will also be extensively discussed. The third example, i.e 8 (c), also shows that echo questions may involve the use of *wh*-Question particles. We shall discuss the different syntactic positions of these items in echo questions. What problems does such interrogative constructions pose to the analysis of interrogatives (Sobin 1990), (Sobin 2010) and how have such problems been tackled in recent analysis in other languages?

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

As stated earlier in the introductory part, one may say that there are quite a number of works on some types of interrogative constructions in Yorùbá language (Awóbùlúyì 1978), (Oláogun 2010), (Ajíbóyè 2013), (Fádáiró 2014), (Ilòrí 2017), (Adéoyè 2017). Such as content and polar questions. However, most of them have solely been syntactic based (especially in the case of content questions). As for Polar Questions, the only available literature that has employed both syntactic and semantic report is Ajíbóyè (2013). Others, though in their numbers, have only made mention of polar question particles in the Yorùbá language in passing. With the best output being syntactic analysis. Echo questions are rarely discussed.

I shall employ different theoretical approaches towards providing detailed analysis of both echo and polar questions in Yoruba. Providing analysis on the relationships that exists among both interrogative constructions which to the best of my knowledge is yet to be tackled in the language. Also, some polar question particles are subject to different views and opinions from scholars of the language. One important thing to note is that most of the analysis have been syntactic. Here, I shall examine the particles as they occur in context and draw to conclusion on how each of them is employed in the language, and why they are employed at a given time in discourse.

## **1.3 Aim and Objectives of Research**

The main aim is to provide a contextual analysis of both echo and polar questions, expatiate on the semantic distinctiveness of both interrogative constructions when they are used.

Our objectives are listed below:

- To expand the scope of interrogative constructions in Yorùbá language (owing to the fact that both constructions under discuss are rarely analyzed).

- To provide a comparative discourse based analysis of the formations of these constructions.
- To show that both interrogative constructions are employed interchangeably, the one employed is determined by the discuss context.
- To propose syntactic analysis of Yoruba echo questions which we are yet to come across any prior to this attempt of ours.
- To give a context based approach to the analysis of each polar question particle.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research shall be carried out in a bid to respond to some salient points in our topic of study.

The Questions are:

- What is echo question? (and in what context are they majorly employed in Yorùbá?)
- What role does discourse context play in interpreting the selected interrogative constructions?
- What prompts echo questions?
- How does context of use affect meaning of polar question particles?
- What prompt the kind of interrogatives employed in a discourse context?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study will (through contextual based analysis) further expand the scope of works available on Yorùbá interrogative constructions. At the same time, it will contribute its own quota to fill the space of discussions on echo questions which have been a subject of no interest in time past. Also, it will expatiate on point like:

The significant semantic distinctions in each polar question particle. That is, the major difference in meaning, especially between polar question particles that share the same syntactic position(s).

To determine what is really questioned in echo questions. That is, in cases where prior utterances leads to a question, what part of the declarative is questioned in context and what prompts such a questioning.

To expatiate our views on the status of *t(àbí)* as an interrogative particle or a conjunction. Examples will be drawn from different contexts.

## **1.6 Scope and Delimitation of Study**

Interrogative constructions have been discussed extensively in the Yorùbá language. However, the form of interrogatives discussed mostly are referred to as content questions. The case of polar questions have also been mentioned and discussed from mostly a syntactic point of view. We are now left with echo questions which seems not to be considered as worthy of lengthy discussion.

This study will analyze both echo and polar question from a pragmatic and semantic point of view. It is believed that to arrive at a meaningful syntactic analysis, the discourse context of interrogative constructions must be taken into consideration. The study however will not dabble into content questions as they have been extensively discussed and out of the scope of this study.

## **1.7 Research Methods**

The researcher, being a native speaker of the language will be a source of the data that will be herein analyzed. In addition, a field research with other native speakers of the language will be carried out.

At different stages of the study, constant discussions with different scholars on our topic of research in form of interrogation and presentations will be carried out, with a view to further verify

some of our claims, ask for their views and opinions on some of them. This will in turns enrich some of our propositions.

Different context will also be drawn from other sources such as home videos. This is considered necessary because the study will analyze based on language in context. However, home videos will only serve as secondary source of data collation.

Most importantly, library materials on existing literatures, either on Yoruba or the structure of interrogatives in other languages will be consulted for our analysis to meet up with the latest set off discourse on interrogatives in general.

### **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

The study will split into two types when the theoretical framework is considered. The first part, being the syntax will rely solely on the minimalist program. The program is considered capable of providing clear cut evidences on the syntactic constructions of the interrogatives under discuss.

Owing to the fact that it has been employed by earlier scholars (Ajiboye 2013, Fádáiró 2014 and Ilorí 2017). However, it was only employed by the above mentioned in the analysis of polar questions and not echo questions. We shall also try the competence of the program on echo questions.

As for the semantic and pragmatic (contextual/discuss based analysis), the theory employed is the Relevance Theory. This theory has also been employed by scholars on different analysis that involves semantic and pragmatics of some other languages i.e English. I shall try to justify the assumptions of the theory on Yoruba interrogatives.

In what follows, I present the theoretical frameworks.

### **1.8.1 The Minimalist Program**

The minimalist program is a theory of linguistic analysis which has been in vogue since it was proposed by Chomsky (1993, 1995). The minimalist program as the name implies is a theoretical framework which aims at reducing as much as possible the number of rules that is needed in grammatical analysis. It strives to create a model of language that eliminates unnecessary steps in the representation of the derivation of a sentence Al-Horais (2013:2). The program is a further development of the Principles and Parameter theory of Universal Grammar (Eléshin 2017).

With the notion that grammar is not as complex as presented in earlier forms of generative grammars, the motivation for MP is that UG (Universal Grammar) is minimally complex, this is said evident in the ability of young ones to acquire language (if no medical defect) in a short period of time. This in turns provided us with a grammar that employs very small and simple processes for syntactic derivations. Hence, achieving its aim of presenting grammatical derivations in a simple (as possible) way. The basic guiding principle of MP is minimize the theoretical and descriptive apparatus of grammar by avoiding unnecessary complex formulations in favour of very simple syntactic operations (Ilòrì 2010:21-22).

The structure of the minimalist grammar is based on the trio of the lexicon, the computational system, and the LF and PF components. The lexicon produces lexical items from which selections are made and merged to form clauses, one can then imagine such as a functional mental dictionary where lexical items are stored. The LF interfaces with semantic-conceptual systems of cognition and PF is connected to articulatory-perceptual modules Marantz (1996: 351). A harmonic relationship must be in place between the word items used in a derivation. This will ensure the derivation to converge. If not it produces an ungrammatical derivation, hence, it crashes.

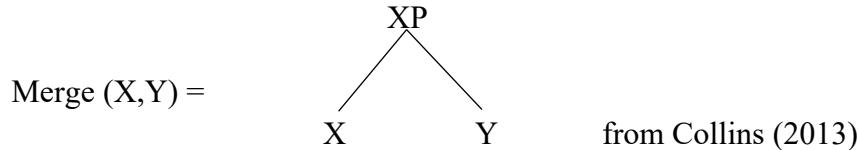
The computation system is the component where selecting and merging takes place. That is, it make use of the relevant lexical items and the syntactic information of the lexicon in it's processing.

The processes in MP are based solely on two operations. They are the ‘Operation Move’ (Chomsky 1995:262; Marantz 1995: 354) and ‘Operation Merge’ (Chomsky 1995: 246). However, Eléshin (2017) points out Operation Merge as the major operation in the MP, but not without a mention of other operations (such as move, select and checking) identified by other scholars (cf. Igbeneghu 2003 and Ilòrì 2010). In this study, useful operations shall be referred to whenever any of such operation(s) is required. We move to discuss briefly the basic operations of the MP:

**Operation Move:** This may be analyzed differently from the general *move a* noticed in earlier models of generative grammar. The *move a* in the MP can move any item anywhere, so long it is motivated by feature checking.

**Operation Merge:** Merge is a binary operation that functions in the process of combining two items (say X and Y) into an unordered set with a label (either X or Y). As in:

$$\text{Merge } (X, Y) = \{X, Y\}$$

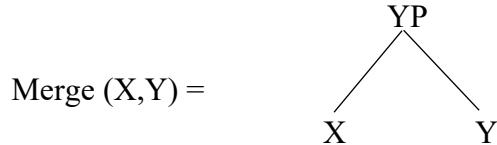


Creating larger syntactic units from smaller ones is the main function of the merge operation. The operation merges two independent elements (as in X and Y above) to form Z, which takes X and Y as its immediate constituent.

Merge is endocentric, that when two elements merge, the resulting constituent must take its label from either of the two. That is:

Merge (X,Y) must produce either an XP or a YP

In essence, the above projection can also be rendered as:



Eléshin (2017:13) however makes a clear remark on the two available kinds of merge in the MP framework. They are the external merge and internal merge. The external merge functions as described above. As for the external, it's a little different in that apart from combining X and Y, it draws from within X (Eléshin 2017). Convergence is achieved if selectional steps are correct. If not, derivation will crash leading to an unattested structure.

- **Economy Principle:**

The economy principles of the MP are discussed in brief:

**Procrastination:** this may be considered as a general constraint on the computation that anything should be delayed as long as possible. That is, until there is a need to do anything, such must be delayed. Marantz (1995: 357) as cited by Eleshin (2017: 16) defines it as “a principle that holds off on movement until after spell-out, so that the result of such movement does not affect PF”.

**Shortest Move:** This principle simply requires that a constituent should only move the shortest distance possible in any single movement operation (Radford 1998). This ensures economy in derivation. It prohibits long distance movement, that is, a constituent must move to the first position of the right kind up from its source position. For example, shortest move should prohibit heads from skipping over any head position Marantz (1995: 355)

**Greed:** this states that unless the required condition to move an element is satisfied, such constituent remains in-situ. That is, movement only affects an element to satisfy the interest of the element in question.

### 1.8.2 Bare Phrase Structure

The major development of the Minimalist inquiry is a theory of phrase structure (sentence building before movement), which is referred to as the Bare Phrase Structure. The Bare Phrase Structure can be considered as a modification of the X-Bar structure. Hence, both are interrelated, with their major difference coming to bear in their basic assumptions in terms of their construction of constituent structures, Chomsky (1995: 172).

The Bare Phrase Structure is different from the X-Bar projection in some ways. In the X-bar theory, each phrase XP has one compulsory element ‘the head of the phrase  $X^0$ ’ all phrases are then uniformly organized in which the head, specifier, complements and adjuncts are structurally defined as follows:



A direct implication of this is that X-bar structures are restricted to the above structure. The case is different considering the Bare Phrase Structure of the MP where derivations are from bottom to top without afore representational structure.

Eléshin (2017) recognizes and list three of such differences. We also list them below for elucidation purpose:

- a. BPS is built from bottom to the top while X-Bar presents a structure for a given construction to be built in a one fell swoop;
- b. BPS does not have a preconceived phrasal structure but that exists with the X-Bar Theory.  
The specifier, head and complement labels are always in the construction; and
- c. The constituent interaction in the BPS only permits binary branching but the X-Bar structure analysis permits both binary and unary branching.

The concept of minimal, intermediate and maximal projections is one still carried over from the X-bar theory to the Bare Phrase Structure of the MP. The inclusiveness condition (Radford 2004: 94) which states that no new features are introduced by the computational system must be satisfied. Chomsky (1995: 242) states thus:

Given the inclusiveness condition, minimal and maximal projections are not identified in any special marking. So they must be determined from the structure in which they appear.

Most importantly, there exist a hypothetical relationship between X-Bar and Bare Phrase Structure, because the latter is a fundamental modification of the former (Chomsky 1995:172). As clearly proven by different analysts, the Bare Phrase Structure stay clear of all unnecessary intermediate levels in a linguistic derivation.

These theory is considered appropriate because it is the latest in syntactic analysis, one may want to subject the analyses of the structure of any construction to its framework in order to meet the current trend of theoretical linguistic analysis.

### 1.8.3 Relevance Theory

This theory was developed by cognitive scientists Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson (1986b, 1987 and 1995). The theory has since gained ground in cognitive linguistics and pragmatics. It is a framework for the study of cognition, proposed primarily in order to provide a psychologically realistic account of communication.

The basic assumption of the theory is the cognitive processing of communication in human is relevance-oriented (Wang Yuan, GUO Minghe 2013: 2). That is, in a discourse, people pay more attention to that which is considered relevant to them, and react promptly.

In pragmatics (and other aspects of linguistics in which the relevance theory has been used) relevance theory is the principle that communication process involves not only encoding, transfer and decoding of messages but also numerous other elements including inference and context.

The theory can be seen as a broader approach to the Gricean theory of pragmatics. The theory is an attempt to work out in detail an aspect of Paul Grice's maxims of conversation. According to Deidre Wilson (2016:1), relevance theory takes as its starting point three of Grice's assumptions about verbal communication. The assumptions are:

- That a sentence meaning is a vehicle for conveying a speaker's meaning.
- Secondly, a speakers meaning cannot be simply perceived or decoded, but has to be inferred from her behavior, together with **contextual information**. Emphasis mine
- And, that in inferring a speaker's meaning, the hearer is guided by the expectation that communicative behavior should meet certain standards.

This is not to say that the assumptions of relevance theory are exactly the same with those of Grice's framework. In as much as Grice's framework serves as the track from which relevance theory took off, the differences in assumptions are clear.

Our choice for this theory is vividly stated in the second assumption above. That is, the aspect of the theory that puts the behavior, together with contextual information in trying to decode meaning of an utterance.

In what is common to pragmatists, and as emphasized by Spaber and Wilson, the process of understanding an utterance is not just a matter of linguistic decoding. It involves identifying:

- What the speaker intended to say,
- What the speaker intended to imply,
- The speakers intended attitude to what was said and implied,
- The (intended) context.

Wilson (1994)

Thus, one may conclude that the interpretation of an utterance involves the combination of explicit content, contextual assumptions and implications.

The role of context in communication was not widely discussed in earlier Gricean pragmatic discuss. This is a central concern in the relevance theory. Raising questions such as: How is the appropriate context selected? How is it that from the huge range of assumptions selected, hearers restrict themselves to the intended ones? The second question is answered with the first one. Ones the context is determined appropriately, the intended assumptions cannot be mistaken.

Relevance theory considers the comprehension of an utterance as an inferential process. It assumes the speakers utterance together with its contextual information as the input, and the considered

output is the interpretation of the speakers meaning. That is, in trying to decode what is meant, what is considered isn't just what is said, but also the context in which such is said.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed the motivation of this study, and also as much as possible give a brief background to the aims and objectives of the study. The theoretical assumptions on which the analysis will be based have also been mentioned, and a skeletal structure of the theories have been given. The basic assumptions of each theory were also discussed, not leaving out the research methodology, significance of study and research questions. These are important discussions which serves as preliminaries to what will serve as the main body of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

After an introductory chapter which clearly states the motivation behind this study, and also its aim and objectives, the next line of action is to review relevant existing works along the line of research. In the following order, we shall review works on interrogatives in general as perceived by different scholars, and conclude on which one(s) we concur with. Then we narrow our review down to question formations in Yorùbá language.

Moving on, we will discuss three types of interrogative constructions in Yorùbá (Content, Polar and Echo Questions) and also examine the views of different scholars. Our major objective here is to point out the areas of counter arguments between different scholars on some of the constructions yet examined. That is, we will argue back and forth, showing to what degree we agree with the views of a particular scholar, and to what extent we disagree with the views of another. This will create a clear framework on which our arguments will rest on in subsequent chapters.

#### **2.1 Interrogatives**

This section simply seeks to clear the doubt on whether there is a difference between what is referred to as a question or an interrogative sentence. We notice that both have been used interchangeably in the literature. A brief explanation from available dictionaries will help clear our doubts.

The Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language explains interrogatives thus:

Denoting inquiry, Of or pertaining to a word, phrase or sentence which asks a question, a word, phrase or sentence used to ask a question as *who*, *whose book*, *who is there?*

The same dictionary defines questions thus:

1. an interrogative sentence calling for an answer ... in interrogation: the act of asking or inquiring... to put a question or questions to; interrogate...

A picture of distinctiveness between a question and an interrogative is presented in a clearer form in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English thus:

1. *technical* an interrogative sentence, PRONOUN etc asks a question or has the form of a question  
the interrogative, the form of a sentence or verb that is used for asking questions.

The above definition states clearly that any form of sentence that is used to ask a question, or in general, any form of sentence that is capable of seeking another person's opinion is considered to be an interrogative sentence. It is our aim to clarify that, we will refer to both echo and polar questions as interrogative as we believe that both constructions are capable of seeking information in a discourse.

Hence we conclude that a distinction can be made by considering interrogative as a syntactic term (we make this pronouncement based on the fact that syntax deals with structures) and questions as a semantic term.

## 2.2 Question Formations in Yorùbá

Yorùbá like other languages of the world have its own strategy of making a request or seeking an explanation from someone. One may conclude that question formation in Yorùbá (except for the case of echo questions) involves the use of certain dedicated morphemes (Yusuff 2006; Ajiboyé 2013; Ilorí 2017; Adéoyé 2018).

In the case of content questions, Yusuff (2006:69) identifies the following particles *ńkó*, *èló*, *mélòó*, *báwo*, *ibo*, *ìgbà wo* etc.

As for polar questions, the following particles *sé*, *ńjé*, *sèbí*, *àbí*, *ha*, *bí*, have been extensively discussed to be polar question markers in (Bámgbósé 1990; Ajiboyé 2013; Fádáiró 2014; Ilorí 2017; Adéoyé 2018). We have chosen to stay with the above cited scholars because their works are more recent, and most importantly, their analysis were exposed to more recent theories. In what follows, we will take a look at the submissions of the above named scholars, this will in turns steady the build up to our analysis in subsequent chapters.

### 2.2.1 Content Questions

The kind of questions here usually requires more than just a simple yes/ no answer. That is, an explanation is required in order to fulfil or satisfy the curiosity of the questioner. Here, the speaker expects more detailed information about a particular situation, something, events, or place Adéoyé (2018:230). We consider these kinds of interrogative constructions in Yorùbá as the mostly widely researched. One must then wonder and ask that if our concentration is based on echo and polar questions, then why a review of content questions? This is necessary because some markers considered to be in the content question category also surfaces in some echo question, hence, we will briefly review Yorùbá content questions to serve as a stepping stone when such particles are discussed under echo questions. I present some earlier works on content questions in Yorùbá.

## **Awóbùlúyì (1978)**

The work states clearly that interrogative sentences are sentences employed as questions. It further grouped them into two basic types. They are (a) interrogative sentences containing question words and (b) interrogative sentences without question words. The question words are however grouped according to their lexical category they belong. They are:

Nouns: ta, kí, èwo, and mélòó.

Qualifiers: ta, kí, èwo, and mélòó.

Verbs: dà and nkó.

The items sé, njé and bí are analyzed as modifiers, and said to occur in questions only.

One must take note that items such as *ṣebí* and *àbí* are not discussed as question words in the work under review. It then further discusses the element that triggers interrogation in sentences without question words. Awóbùlúyì (1978: 124) says:

Interrogative sentences without question word are pronounced specially. The voice is lighter and higher than for their declarative versions. Furthermore, such interrogative sentences are often pronounced with raised eyebrow. The raised eyebrow helps identify such sentences as definitely interrogative...

This example *Ó ti lọ* was used to back the statement. Also, the claim is that if the declarative is pronounced as described above, then it will be interpreted as a question. Then the meaning will change from *he has gone* to *has he gone?*.

One must wonder if the speaker and the hearer are not having a face to face discussion, is that this kind of sentence can never function as an interrogative. Then, further clarifications may be asked on the issue of eyebrows being raised before such constructions can be interpreted as a question. We leave it at this for now, only to revisit with our own explanations during data analysis.

### **Yusuff (2006)**

The work discusses interrogative constructions in general. Following the scholars submission that such constructions are used to inquire about something alien to the speaker. The scholar states thus:

A máá ní fí gbólóhùn békérè ohun tábí işèlè tí a kò mò. A lè lo àwọn ɔrò ibéèrè, a sì lè má lò wón. Lára àwọn ɔrò ibéèrè tí a lè lo ni: sé, ñjé, bí, nkó, dà, ta, kí, èló, mélòó, báwo, ibo, iga wo.

(Sentences are used to ask questions about something or an event that we do not know about. Question particles may be used in the process, or they may be ignored. Some of the questioning words that may be used includes: sé, ñjé, bí, nkó, dà, ta, kí, èló, mélòó, báwo, ibo, iga wo.)

The scholar discusses interrogative sentences in Yorùbá in general, without a distinction on which is what. Hence, the particles are both those of content and polar questions together.

### **Bámgbósé (1990)**

In this work, both content and polar questions are examined simultaneously. Here, we will examine the claims on content questions and later (under review of works on polar questions) also review that of polar questions.

This work is also in line with claim that in order to construct an interrogative sentence in Yoruba, certain particles must be used. It also grouped the particles mentioned by their category with explanations on each of them. Particles involved in question formation in Yoruba according to Bámgbósé (1990:183) are **kí, ta, èwo, ibo, èkelòó** they can also all function as a noun.

It further explains that the item *kí* is used to inquire about inanimate objects, while *ta* is used to inquire about human. The explanation on *ta* is also in line with Ìlòrí (2010)'s classification of interrogative pronouns, where *ta* is analyzed as having the [+HUMAN] feature. While *ibo* i.e *where* is consistently used to inquire about a place(s).

### Ìlòrí (2017)

In an examination of interrogative constructions across Yoruboid languages, Ìlòrí (2017) recognizes two kinds of content questions, the operator based type which requires the presence of a question operators similar to *wh*-words in English, and the non-operator type which does not involve such words. Yorùbá belongs to the first category where question operators are employed. Ìlòrí (2017) opines thus:

Igálà and Yorùbá are wh-movement languages which front content-question operators to a position within the left periphery as focus of interrogation...

The work is syntactic in nature, *wh*-operators such as *kí*, *ta*, *èwo*, *ibo* were mentioned in the examples. As for the projection of content questions in Yorùbá, Ìlòrí claims that there are about three or four possible ways of deriving convergent content question.

The first option, as it projects in Ìlòrí (2010:258) is to assume that already raised question operator in spec-FocP is attracted by Inter<sup>o</sup> to Spec-InterP to check of the strong feature of Inter<sup>o</sup>.

In the above described projection, the operator which had earlier moved into spec-FocP has to move again from there to Spec-InterP. As Ìlòrí (2017:14) claims, the above projection does not work for Itshekiri examples. It however works for Yorùbá, which is our main focus.

The second option as proposed is that following Aboh and Pfau (2011:104) the whole FocP functioning as complement of Inter<sup>o</sup> that gets attracted and raised to spec-InterP.

## 2.2.2 Echo Questions

Echo questions are repetitive in nature. They tend to repeat at least a word, a phrase or the complete sentence hitherto uttered by the first speaker. Noh (1998:107) opines thus:

Echo questions are in some sense repetitions. They are generally claimed to repeat what has been said, whatever its sentence-type.

Echo questions are not just employed to seek a repetition of what the speaker had said when the hearer didn't hear properly, they are also mostly employed to express *doubt, surprise, shock* (as in the case of news) and how *real* a declarative statement is.

As stated earlier on in the introductory chapter, this kind of constructions has suffered a great neglect when compared to others (such as polar and content question). Hence, this makes it extremely difficult to find any voluminous work(s) describing the structure of Yorùbá echo questions. Traces of such construction that we perceive as echo questions have however been a subject of discussion in some published works on Yorùbá interrogative constructions, we must conclude that they are however scanty plus the fact that they are placed under other interrogative constructions such as echo and polar questions. However, this will not stop us from providing a review of available works on echo questions in other languages (especially from English). This is to enable us have a review of the existing literature that this study will follow. We will take a look at what has been done in other languages, majorly in terms of classification of echo questions, and conclude on which category Yorùbá echo questions fall within.

### **Bámgbósé 1990**

A rise in voice when speaking which we consider one of the major differences between echo and other interrogative constructions was discussed in this work. It is however considered to be feature peculiar to polar questions. This is as a result of the fact that answers to these kinds of questions are similar to those of polar questions.

Here, it is discussed that a declarative can be repeated in such a way that it semantically enquires about something or question the truth in the declarative.

### **Ìlòrí 2017**

Examples analyzed in this work on echoic questions in Yorùbá were placed under content questions. However, it is useful to state that the work also concur with our views that some forms of echo can result into interrogations without either *wh-operators* or *polar particles* in use. We reserve citation of such examples for comparative analysis.

I present what stands in as a classification of echo questions:

### **Radford (1988)**

The work takes a look at the typological divisions of questions across languages. The first typological division was made between content and polar questions. It describes polar questions as yes/no set of questions because they can accommodate answers as simple as that. In this view, it explains further that yes/no are not obligatory answers to such questions, that they can be answered with more details.

As for content questions, it explains that they involve the use of *wh*-words. Here, the speaker is said to be requesting information about an entity in the sentence. For example, a *who*-question is asking about the identity of a particular person.

The second typological division given is that of echo and non-echo questions. Echo questions are so called because they echo the speech of another person.

One claim that we consider very important to this study is the clarification between polar echo questions and *wh*-echo questions. Hence we derive that Radford (1988: 463) subdivides echo questions into two types. This subdivision was made considering the category of questions they are close to (content or polar).

We conclude with the point that states that echo questions seem to have more in common with the sentence type they are used to echo than with the corresponding no-echo questions.

### **Sobin (1990)**

In section two of the (1990) published paper, Sobin presents a classification of echo questions in English language. As we shall prove later on this study, Yorùbá echo questions fits perfectly into the categories mentioned.

Sobin (1990) gives (and discussed in details) two kinds of echo questions, they are the Syntactic and the Pseudo echo questions. We discuss both in brief:

#### **Syntactic Echo Questions:**

In this kind of echo question, a *wh*-question word is introduced and a part of the declarative deletes.

Sobin (1990: 142) opines thus:

In such EQs, any newly introduced *wh*-phrases  
appears in-situ.

By in-situ, we want to believe that what Sobin intends in a simpler term is that the newly introduced *wh*-phrase is unmoved.

Question 1b (which appears as 2b in the text) is described as syntactic echo question to the declarative sentence of 1a. Slobin states clearly that such constructions are in certain critical respect a copy of the main utterance (i.e a copy of 1a).

### **Pseudo Echo question:**

This kinds of echo questions are differentiated from other interrogative constructions by the surprise intonation with which they are produced. That is, without the high rise intonation, they will be construed as a normal declarative which always precedes an echo question. The following examples were given:

One must however know that both syntactic and pseudo echo questions are strongly linked to the discourse in which they occur Slobin (1990:145).

Each example in this work is marked by an upward arrow. It is necessary to mention that the arrow indicates an important feature of echo questions. They indicate that an echo question must have an underlining final upward intonation. Slobin (1990) refers to such as surprise intonation.

Another work worthy of mention on echo questions is Bolinger (1957). The work devides repetitive questions into four different categories. They are:

The following examples are cited first from Noh (1998) to aid explanations on Bolinger (1957)'s categories:

- **RECLAMATORY QUESTION:** in this kind of repetitive question, the speaker calls for a repletion of the preceding utterance or part of it, as in (i B).
- **DITTO:** here, the speaker repeats his own question, as in (i A2).
- **ECHO QUESTIONS:** here, the speaker repeats the other person question. As in (2B)

- **REFLEX QUESTIONS:** in which the speaker repeats as a question, a part or all of the preceding non-question. As in (iii B).

From Noh (1998)

We claim herein that both echo questions and reflex questions can be categorized as echo questions. Hence, we will strictly follow Slobin's (1990) categorizations. That is, in what follows (chapters three and four), we will base our analysis on the two categories in Slobin (1990, 2010). We also claim that both categories are attested in the Yorùbá language, with their interpretations contextually determined.

### 2.2.3 Polar (Yes/No) Questions

Simply put in Yorùbá, the name '*ibéèrè békè-ni, békè-kó*' already describes the name of these kinds of interrogative constructions. They basically require a simply require an affirmative or negative response. Where the hearer is expected to simply deny or affirm a question posed to him/her. That is, they simply require a *yes/no* answer (Radford 1988:462; Lamidi 2013 :121). Before Ajiboyé (2013), polar questions in Yorùbá was not a topic of lengthy documentation. One must however conclude that a publication may not have covered the whole available discussion on such publication (Ajiboyé 2013). We review some earlier works on Yorùbá polar questions below:

#### Bámgbósé (2010)

Polar question particles discussed in this work includes *sé*, *ńjé*, *sèbí/ṣebí* and *t(àbí)*. This work considers *t(àbí)* as a conjunction. It further explains that the situation arises when sentences (where one is positive and the other negative) are joined by the conjunction *t(àbí)*. This can also be the case when the first IP deletes, leaving the conjunction at the sentence initial position. The following are examples from the work:

It notes further that in a situation where a question is to be asked without the use of any question word, there must be a raise in voice when making such sentence. It concludes that such questions

are polar (yes/no) questions, because their answers are no different from those of questions involving polar question particle such as *ṇjé*. It states thus:

Tí a bá fẹ́ lo gbólóhùn tí kò ní wúnrèn ibéèrè gégé bí  
gbólóhùn ibéèrè, a gbódò se ìgbóhùn sókè fún gbólóhùn náà.

If we want to use a sentence without a question item as an interrogative, there must be a rise in our voice in the sentence.

It further states:

Ìbéèrè **bẹ́** **ni-bẹ́** **kó** ni àwọn ibéèrè wònyí. Ìdáhùn won kò  
yàtò sí ti ibéèrè tí a fi wúnrèn ibéèrè **ṇjé** se.

These questions are yes/no questions. Their answers are not different from those of questions formed with the particle **ṇjé**.

Emphasis mine

We must state here that we hold our reservations on this submissions. That questions formed without a question particle are polar questions because their answers are the same. In context, this views may change as it is considered important to consider what prompts such question(s). We expatiate on this point with our analysis in subsequent chapters. We must also state that we are yet to notice much changes in the line of this analysis, as it is noticed that such questions are also analyzed as polar questions in Ìlòrí (2017).

## Ajiboye (2013)

This study examines the morphology, syntax and semantics of Yorùbá polar questions from a dialectal perspective. Five dialects Awóri, Owé, Mòbà, Ìgbómìnà and Ìkálè stood as the source of data for analysis. The work divides yes/no questions in Yoruba into two categories. They are the verbal clause and the non-verbal clause types. We, in what follows immediately, examine the major issues discussed and claims made in Ajiboye (2013).

By verbal clause, it further explains that such polar questions involves a full sentence, non-verbal clause are yes/no questions involving nominal expressions which can be a single noun, a noun and its modifiers or a propositional phrase. The work analyzed seven items as interrogative particles used to form polar questions, and divides them into four according to their distribution. The first set (*sé*, *njé*, *àbí*, *ṣebí*) occurring at sentence initial positions, and (*bí*, *ni*, *àbí*) at sentence final with (*ha*) occurring at sentence medial position. It also states that only the interrogative particle *se* can form non-verbal clause questions.

- **Morphology of Polar Questions**

Ajiboye (2013) recognizes seven items which were referred to as clause initiators, yes-no interrogative particles or question tags. They are *Sé*, *Njé*, *Àbí*, *Tàbí*, *ha*, *bí*, *ni*. They are grouped into three according to their position of occurrence in a construction, the first set ‘*njé*, *sé*, *àbí*’ are sentence initials, while ‘*ha*’ appears sentence medial and ‘*bí*, *ni* and *àbí*’ sentence final position. The question of the status of *t(abi)* as either a polar question particle or a conjunction (and sometime analyzed as both) is yet unresolved.

- **Syntax of Polar Questions**

Ajiboyè (2013) although in a cross-examination of yes/no question across selected dialects of Yorùbá language proposes a syntactic analysis of yes/no questions using data from standard Yorùbá. It accounts for the syntactic structure in two different ways, the first was Base generated and the second, movement analysis.

- **Base Generated Analysis**

For the base generation, it is assumed that all questions are projections of I(nflection), which are complements of C(omplementizers). A basic structure proposed for Yes/no questions with Q-particles in sentence initial position, a CP is proposed for each of the structure. Where the Q-particle occupies the C head position.

The basic structure proposed for Yes/no Question in sentence medial position is quite different, the CP is contained inside an IP. Where the CP containing the interrogative particle is a complement of I. the basic structure proposed for Q-particles occurring sentence final is a bit problematic, owing to the fact that the C head will appear final. Hence, a movement analysis is considered following the minimalist program.

- **Movement Analysis**

Here, it is assumed that the structural derivation of Yes/no questions involves some movement. It then assumes that all Yes/no interrogative particles in Yorùbá appears sentence initial at the LF. Two kinds of movement were then analyzed in the buildup (covert and overt). A covert movement can only take place at the LF, whereas overt movement is manifested at the PF. Yes/no questions with sentence initial interrogative particles involves a covert A-bar movement.

When convergence involves the occurrence of interrogative particle after the subject noun at the point of spell out, another CP will be introduced above the base structure. As for cases where interrogative particles are found in sentence final position, the whole IP moves to Spec CP. In accounting for structures where two interrogative particles appear in the same interrogative sentence, the idea of having one all interrogative particles in one C position does not account properly.

### **Semantics of Yes/no question**

Looking at the interrogative particles from a semantic point of view, the work divides yes/no particles in Yorùbá into five types. They are:

- **Confirmatory:** active particles under this category are *sé*, *ni*, *àbí*, *ṣebí*. They are said to be used to inquire from the hearer if there is contrary opinion other than which is put before him in the question.
- **Expression of doubt:** particles capable of expressing doubt are *ha* and *ńjé*. When this particles are used, the expected answer is that of uncertainty.
- **Between affirmative and negative:** particles capable of expressing this are *ha...bi*, *ńjé* and *sé*.
- **Emphatic:** here, when the particle *ha* co-occurs with another interrogative particle, it results in emphasis. For example:

Èyí kò dára tó bí?      ‘isn’t this good enough’ non-emphatic

Eyi ko ha dara to bi? ‘Isn’t this good enough’ emphatic

- **Rhetorical:** the particle *ṣebí/ṣèbí* is the particle discussed as being capable constructing polar question that ordinarily does not demand an answer. For example:

Sèbí ìwọ ni mo rí ní Ojúelégbá? ‘it is you I saw at Ojuelegba,  
isn’t it?’

### Ìlòrí (2017)

One must recognize that the study is not based on Yorùbá interrogative constructions alone, but interrogative constructions across Yoruboid languages. We will focus on discussions on Yorùbá data alone.

On polar questions across Yoruboid languages, the scholar identifies three kinds of derivations. Namely, clause final types, discrete question word type, and supra-segmental marked type. Yorùbá belongs to both the discrete question word class, and the supra-segmental marked type.

Polar questions are generated from declaratives by attaching discrete question words or particles to them. The particles that serve this purposes in Yorùbá according to Ìlòrí (2017:3) are *Njé/Sé/Abí* and *Bí*. While *njé* and *sé* occurs at the clause initial position, *bí* is used in clause final position.

The above examples shows clearly that contrary to what is obtainable in (Bámgbósé 2010; Ajibóyé 2013), Ìlòrí (2017) does not recognize the item ‘*sebi/ṣèbí*’ as a polar question particle. One must also state that earlier on in Ìlòrí (2010: 245-255) recognized just three polar particles (*sé*, *njé* and *bí*). We however will not dwell on Ilori (2010) for long as the 2017 publication is considered a viable update.

As for the supra-segmental marked type, they are marked by a high pitch intonation which scopes over the whole declarative sentence to derive a polar question. The high pitch intonation is represented by an arrow facing a rightward position on the rise.

One must say briefly that our views in this study does not seem to conform with the above example (2b) as a polar question. We analyze such interrogative with a rising intonation as echo questions in what follows (chapters three and four).

The projection of polar questions presented in Ìlòrí (2017) are in line, and will be very useful in the course of this study. The projection according to data examined in the work states that interrogative markers in Yoruboid languages (polar questions) get merged to convergent declarative sentences either clause-initially or clause-inally. It then concludes that the merging process in these kinds of derivation is of the clause initial type only. This claim was made considering the question markers as syntactic head, and the declarative clauses that follows as complements.

Following the split CP hypothesis (Rizzi 1997), the work projects Yorùbá polar interrogative force as *inter<sup>o</sup>*, and it selects IP (=FinP) to project maximally.

It is believed that the upward arrow represents tone change in the sentences. On the cases double interrogative headed questions in Yoruba, such constructions are projected below:

The above structure simply put projects two interrogative projections, where the first (InterP1) merges with the second (InterP2). The first is said to be obligatory, with the second optional. finP/IP, the complement of inter is then raised to the specifier position of InterP1.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have reviewed some literatures related to the topic under discourse. We have been able to lay side by side the views of different scholars and their theoretical assumptions on interrogatives in the Yorùbá language. With the above points well stated, it is obvious that to the best of our knowledge, works on Yorùbá echo questions are scanty, and in cases where they are mentioned, in-depth analysis were not given. As discussed above, works like Ajiboyé (2013), Ìlòrí (2017) and Adéoyé (2018) will serve a great deal in our further analysis. However, this work will differ in one major way from the above reviewed works in the sense we will rely more on data

form language in context, paint scenarios and analyze each interrogative from such scenarios. We will also follow the classifications of echo questions by Slobin (1990, 2010) and Radford (1988).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS TO YORÙBÁ ECHO AND POLAR QUESTIONS**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter details the syntax of Yorùbá polar and echo questions. It begins with a brief description echo and polar questions Yoruba, then to the description of the properties of echo and polar questions in Yorùbá. The concept of Pseudo and Syntactic echo questions (Sobin 1990, 2010) is also employed in a bid to categorize Yorùbá echo questions. As stated earlier in chapter two, the examples given shows the occurrence of *wh*-phrases in echo questions. Such *wh*-phrases are discussed with explanations based on their occurrence and their syntax. On echo questions, we look at the sentence type analysis, where we examine the role(s) played by the initial sentence types that may lead to different types of echo questions.

Next is discussions on Yorùbá polar questions. Although, the literature available on this type of interrogative construction is more than that of echo questions, it has not defied arguments from different perspectives. The status of (t)àbí (as either a polar question particle or conjunction is revisited). The semantic notations of some polar question particles occupied some of our discussions. We examined the relationships that could exist between echo and polar questions. the, syntactic differences are also well established.

#### **3.1 Properties of Echo/Polar Questions (The Syntactic Approach)**

Echo questions, as observed in (Sobin 1990; NOH 1998; Reis 2010; Ilòrí 2017; Adéoyè 2018) can be said to have the following properties:

##### **1. Question Intonation:**

Common to echo questions in general is a high rising intonation which pans through the echoed utterance. This in the real sense is what marks an echo question and in most cases differentiates them from the previous sentence, be it declarative, imperative or a previous question. This is

described by Ìlòrí (2017:5) as supra-segmental interrogative marking. Sabin (1990:143) also describes such intonation as ‘surprise’ intonation, while Reis (2010: 2) called it ‘echo effects’.

In this view, there are two ways of indicating such intonation on an utterance in the literature. The first is an upward arrow (at the end of the utterance) which is employed in Sabin (1990:143), and an upward (slant) arrow (on top of the whole declarative) in Ìlòrí (2017: 5). The difference between the two arrows marks the major difference between English and Yorùbá echo questions. In English, the intonation occurs (in most cases) towards the end of the question. The case in Yorùbá is different. The intonation which converts a declarative to an echo question in Yorùbá scopes through the whole declarative. We present the following examples:

9. a. **English:**

**Declarative:** Bill married Greta Garbo.

**Echo question:** Bill married who↑? (Sabin 1990:142)

b. **Yorùbá:**

**Declarative:** Wón ti dé → ‘they have arrived’

**Echo question:** Wón ti dé  
3SG PERF Arrive  
‘Have they arrived?’ (Ìlòrí 2017:5)

It was, however, analyzed as polar questions. We hold that such analysis only defines such echoic use as an echo question. This will be discussed later on in this chapter. We will adopt Ìlòrí (2017) means of representing the rising intonation, owing to the fact that the work is based on Yoruboid languages, with Yorùbá which is our language of concentration also a Yoruboid language.

## 2. +/- Wh Character

Another striking property of echo questions that is well established in the literature is the unusual *wh* question words in echo questions. The *wh* question words appears in-situ. If they are found

anywhere else apart from their natural position, we claim that such involves movements. An analyses we will provide later on in this chapter.

### **3. Sentence type pre-determined**

Syntactically, echo questions have been analyzed to have a lot more in common with the echoed utterance. That is, most of the features of the previous sentence that led to the echo is present in the resulting echo question. Radford (1988: 464) confirms thus:

Morphologically and syntactically, echo questions seems  
to have more in common with the sentence-types they are  
used to echo than with the corresponding nonecho  
questions.

In essence, what is echoed is in some sense a copy of the previous sentence.

### **4. Questioning Specific Units:**

Echo questions can question different aspects of the preceding sentence. That is, the echo may focus on a word, or units larger than a word. However, this can be said to be specific to syntactic echo questions. This feature can also be said of polar questions. Sudo (2007:2) opines:

Both polar and constituent echo questions can ask about  
units smaller than a word, and units larger than a word  
including non-constituents...

In essence, we do not mean to say that an echo question cannot question the complete thought of the first speaker, we only mean to say that it is capable of questioning the minutest aspect of the preceding utterance.

### **3.1.1 Properties Of Polar Questions**

Polar questions, also popularly referred to as Yes/No questions in the literature simply seeks to questions the truth or falsity of the proposition they express (Fádáiró 2014:38). At minimal, they request a simple Yes/No answer. One must then wonder how such interrogatives are constructed. The construction of such interrogatives however varies on language specific basis. Siegl (2012: 400) presents six major strategies of deriving such interrogatives:

1. Special intonation patterns
2. Interrogative particles
3. The addition of special tags
4. Disjunctive-negative structures
5. A change in the relative order of constituents
6. Particular verbal inflection

As emphasized in Fádáiró (2014: 39), Yorùbá employs the first (special intonation patterns) and second (interrogative particles) strategies. Ajiboyé (2013:5) however sticks with the first strategy, and explains that ‘dedicated morphemes either called clause initiators (Bámgbósé 1966), question tags or interrogative particles’ are found in different locations within the sentence. However, Fádáiró (2014: 39) shares the same view with Ìlòrí (2017:2-5) on the claims that Yorùbá polar questions are marked with special intonation. This study analyzes such interrogatives as echo and not polar questions. Médùbí&Yusuff (2003:154) also discusses such interrogatives:

Interrogation can be categorized into two broad groups:  
Yes/No questions and wh- questions just like we have it  
in majority of world languages (Radford 1981:146). **We  
are of course aware of the third type which is  
categorized by raising of voice at the end of sentences.  
This is also common in natural languages.** Emphasis mine

Content and yes/no questions are well recognized by Médùbí and Yusuff (2003). The statement that follows that obviously states that there is a third type of interrogative which is characterized by the raising of voice. Hence, this study analyses any form of interrogative without a polar particle (and those with a *wh*- question word in-situ, multiple *wh*-question interrogatives and all interrogative constructions that relies on an antecedent for their answers) as echo and not polar questions.

What differentiates polar questions in two different languages is the strategies in which each language employs in constructing such interrogatives. As for their semantics, they seem to consistently seek the truth or false about the declarative they question.

### **3.2 Echo Questions in Yorùbá**

Echo questions are ‘echoic’ in that they tend to repeat or question a previously expressed idea, authority or question. Echo questions are therefore basically reactions to a prior utterance, either in a situation where the echoer does not hear the speaker clearly or does not seem to agree with what/assumptions of the speaker (Radford 1988; Chernova 2017). For example, the following questions may arise in reaction to the speaker’s utterance:

**10. Speaker A.** Mo rí iyálóde ilú Òyó

1SG see Iyalode town Oyo

I saw the Ìyálóde (Women leader) of Òyó town

**Speaker B:** O rí ta ni?

2SG see who?

You saw **who**?

**B2:** Ta ni o rí?

Who FOC 2SG see

**Who** did you see?

**B3:** O rí iyálóde Òyó?

2SG see iyalode Òyó

‘You saw the Ìyálóde of Òyó town?’

**B4:** O rí Ìyálóde ibo?

2SG see Iyalode where

‘You saw the Ìyálóde of where?’

**B5:** O rí ta ni ní ibo?

2SG see who FOC at where

‘You saw **who** (at) **where**?’

**B6:** Ó rí Ìyá-KÍ NI?

2SG see mother what

‘You saw Ìyá WHAT?’

The interlocutor in this instance is quite aware that the title of Ìyálóde is never bestowed on anyone in Òyó town. Hence the echo questions (B1-B6) are reactions to the first speaker’s utterance or claim to have seen the Ìyálóde of Òyó town. Knowing fully well that such does not exist, the echo questions, each with their surprise intonations followed. We give a brief explanation on each of the echo questions:

The echo **B1** seeks more information about the claim of the speaker to have seen the Ìyálóde of Òyó town. One may translate this in English as ‘*come again! You saw WHO?*’ This structure of echo question is considered and further analyzed under the syntactic type of echo questions following Sabin (1990; 2010). As in:

O rí ta ni?

2SG see who?

You saw **who**?

The constituent questioned here is that of the object position ‘ta ni’ ‘who’.

The echo **B2** will appear to anyone who is familiar with the Yorùbá interrogatives as a content question with the *wh* particle appearing to the left. However, we analyze such as a pseudo echo question. As in:

**Ta ni o rí?**

Who foc. 2SG see

**Who** did you see?

The constituent also questioned here is same as that of echo B1 above. Only that it take the construction of the kind of interrogatives with an everyday questioning syntax.

The echo **B3** seeks to question the whole declarative. That is, in the context where the hearer is trying to re-open a conversation that seems to be closed. One may literally translate this into English as ‘are you sure about what you are saying’. As in:

O rí ìyálóde Ọyó?

2SG see women-leader Ọyó

You saw the Ìyálóde of Ọyó town?

The constituent questioned in B3 is the title of ‘Ìyálóde’ ‘women leader’. In the above context, this happens to be the major source of concern to the interrogator.

The echo **B4** only seek to question the the location where the speaker claimed to have seen the person. As the question particle/word ‘ibo’ only questions place and nothing else in the Yoruba language. As in:

O rí Ìyálóde ibo?

2SG see women-leader where

You saw the Ìyálóde of where?

Here, the echoer does not seem to have issues with the title, only that he seems not to agree with the location where the title holder is said to reside. The constituent questioned here is the location.

The echo **B5** questions both the title and the place. Hence the use of **ta** ‘who’ and **ibo** ‘where’.

O rí ta ni ní ibo?

2SG see who where

You saw **who** (at) **where**?

The echo **B6** is a bit different in the sense that it only questions a part of the title and not the entire title of ìyálóde in this context, one may reason the interlocutor as being aware that in Ọyó town, there is a title with the root morpheme ‘*iyá*’ but what follows is not *-lóde* but *lójà*. Hence, the *-lóde* alone is what is being questioned in the entire statement.

Ó rí ìyá-KÍ NI?

2SG see mother what

You saw ìyá WHAT?

The constituent questioned here is a bit complex, we assume that the echoer is already aware that there are title in Ọyó beginning with ‘ìyá’ but the end part is what is questioned. If the speaker had probably said ‘ìyálójà’ or ‘ìyálájé’ the case of echo may not have arisen.

The discourse context of an utterance that leads to the echo question is critical if one intends to describe the syntax of such construction Sabin (1990: 142). We move to analyses of echo questions based on their classifications.

### 3.2.1 Pseudo Echo Questions

From this discussion, and in what follows, following the template of Sabin (1990:145), we will mark utterances that precedes an echo question as **U (Utterance)** and all possible echo questions to such an utterance **E (Echo)**. Pseudo echo questions according to Sabin (1990:145) are syntactically normal questions. What distinct them from preceding **U** is the surprise intonation which questions the previous statement.

One must also add that they are results of echoed declaratives sentences alone. That is, a syntactically normal question that is not the first statement in a discourse, and can also be replied with a simple declarative is a pseudo echo question Sabin (1989; 2010). An example is given above as **B2**. Where the echo is a question with a normal syntactic structure. We repeat below for easy reference:

11. Speaker A. Mo rí ìyálóde ilú Ọyó

1sg see I town O

‘I saw the ìyálóde (Women leader) of Ọyó town.’

EQ: Ta ni o rí?

Who 2sg see

‘**Who** did you see?’

Any other form of echo that may arise from the above statement is considered a syntactic echo question.

### 3.2.2 Syntactic Echo Questions

Syntactic echo questions are quite not similar with pseudo echo questions. In syntactic echo questions, the interrogative duty of the rising intonation (Sobin 1990, 2010) is well profound. Their syntax involves unmoved *wh*- phrases or multiple *wh*- phrases. That is, what differentiates this forms of echo questions from *wh*- question proper is that a *wh*- movement must occur. It is also to be noted here that the Yorùbá echo questions are different from their English counterparts going by Chomsky (1997:101) superiority condition. We suspend this till we get to the phase where we analyze the projection of each echo questions.

### 3.3 Wh-Particles in Yorùbá Echo Questions

The claim here is that *wh*- phrases are syntactically in-situ in syntactic echo questions. In syntactic echo question, a *wh*- phrase is used to replace DP (determiner phrase). We examine the following examples:

12. U: Bólá ti rí [ilé náà]

Bólá PRF see house DEF

‘Bólá has seen the house.’

E: Bólá ti rí [kí ni]?

Bólá Perf. See what

‘Bólá has seen what?’

In the above example, the DP [ilé náà] is replaced with the *wh*-phrase [kí ni]. We claim that such structures appears to be the deep structure, from where the surface (content questions) are derived through movement(s). We exemplify below:

13. **D-Structure.** Bóla rí [kí ni]?

Bola See what

‘Bola saw what?’

**S-Structure.** [Kí ni<sub>i</sub>] Bólá rí [ t<sub>i</sub> ]?

What Bólá see

‘What did Bola see?’

As analyzed earlier on pseudo echo question. The example analyzed above as a content question may also be the echoed form of a declarative. We lay emphasis on the fact that the syntax of echo questions depends on their context. What serves as a content question may serve as an echo question, if it is employed to question a previous declarative. For example:

14. **U:** Lèmójomù je Bábá-Ìjèbú

Lemoomu eat Bábá-Ìjèbú

‘The Imam won Bábá-Ìjèbú (lotto).’

**E:** Kí ni Lèmójomù Je?

What FOC Lemoomu eat

What did the Imam won?

In the above context, the echoer (who is assumed to be a Muslim) is in a state of shock hearing that Lèmójomù (the Yorùbá representation of Arabic Imam) who is supposed to be a Religious leader and should not be found in the act of gambling won a lotto. One important feature that separates such question with a normal content question is that their answer is almost always drawn from the previous declarative. For example, the answer to the above echo question will be ‘Bábá-

Ìjèbú'. In the case where such question is analyzed as a content question, the answer can then be anything else since there was no antecedent before the question.

### **3.4 Sentence Type Analysis of Yorùbá Echo Questions**

In another sense of it, the echo questions that may follow a particular utterance may depend solely on the sentence type of such an utterance. That is, an utterance may be echoed with the rising intonation which makes it an echo question in such a way that is prompted by the sentence type of the previous utterance. What we are saying in essence is that the previous sentence types (be it imperative, declarative or a previous question) determine what is questioned (and what is echoed in some sense).

The syntax of echo questions seems to mostly follow that of the sentence type they directly echo.

We exemplify below:

- Sentence Type and Pseudo Echo Questions**

Pseudo echo questions are responses questioning a declarative sentence. That is, a normal question with a rising intonation is proper when questioning a declarative. Sabin (1989:145) opines:

Upon encountering a ‘questionable’ statement the speaker may create a syntactically ‘normal’ question (but with surprise intonation) to which the questionable statement would be syntactically normal declarative response.

#### **Declarative Sentence:**

15. U: Mo rí ọba Oyéékàn lánàá  
1sg see king Oyéékàn in-yesterday  
'I saw king Oyéékàn Yesterday.'

**E1:** Ta ni o rí lánáá? Pseudo EQ

Who did 2sg see yesterday?

‘Who did you see yesterday?.’

\***E2:** O rí ta ni?

In as much as **E2** above can also serve as a grammatical echo to **U** above, it is starred because it is considered a syntactic echo question (an analysis to which we focus on in what follows).

We can then conclude that pseudo EQ’s are echoes of declarative sentences only. That is. They project the syntax of normal questions Sabin (1990).

### Yes/No Question:

16. **U:** Sé Òjògbón Babalolá féràn àṣà ibílè Yorùbá?

PQ Professor Babalola love culture traditional Yorùbá?

‘Is Professor Babalolá in love with the Yorùbá culture?’

**E:** \*Ta ni ó féràn àṣà ibílè Yorùbá?

Who FOC 2SG love culture tradition Yorùbá

‘Who loves the Yorùbá culture?’

Like their English counterpart, a pseudo echo question cannot echo a preceding polar question.

This also will be the case for imperatives.

As for the syntactic projections of pseudo echo questions. One must first think about such constructions as having the same projection as a normal question. Then the question of what really constitutes such as an echo question arises. The major difference between such constructions and normal content questions is the rising intonation. The rising intonation only proves that the question is referring to an antecedent and in itself not the first statement in the discourse. Aside this, echo questions can only be answered with the properties of the preceding speech which they echo. We exemplify with the following example:

17. **SPEAKER A :U** Ọdékémi pa ẹfòn ní ìgbé ọdẹ<sup>1</sup>  
     Ọdékémi kill a buffalo in forest hunt  
     Odeyemi killed a buffalo in the hunting forest  
**E :** kí ni Ọdékémi pa ní igbó ọdẹ?  
     What did O. kill in forest hunter  
     What did Ọdékémi kill in the hunting forest?

The above echo question may appear like a normal content question, but it only questions the previous declarative and not asking for anything new. However, in contexts where such interrogative construction is the first sentence in a discourse. It is then a content question. That is if the **E** to example 17 above is alone without the antecedent, it will not carry the upward slant arrow, and is not an echo question. For example:

- Kí ni Ọdékémi pa ní igbó ọdẹ?  
     What did O. kill in forest Hunter  
     What did Odeyemi kill in the hunting forest?

- **Sentence Type and Syntactic Echo Questions**

A syntactic echo question is derivable from any kind of sentence. We will discuss syntactic echo questions echoed from declarative sentences, Imperative sentences, and Yes/No questions as they are wide enough to clearly analyze syntactic echo questions. The following are data evidences:

**Declarative Sentence:**

- As earlier stated about declarative sentences, they seem to be the only category that can be echoed by both pseudo and syntactic echo questions. We repeat example 17 (18 below with additional information) above for elucidation purposes:

18. U: Mo rí ọba Oyèékàn ni ànà  
1SG see king Oyèékàn at yesterday

‘I saw king Oyèékàn Yesterday.’

E1: Ta ni o rí lánáá? Pseudo EQ

Who FOC 2SG see yesterday?

‘Who did you see yesterday?’

E2: O rí ta ni? Syntactic EQ

You see who FOC

‘You saw who?’

E3: O rí ọba Oyèékàn ni ànà  
You see king Ooyekan at yesterday  
‘You saw king Oyeekan yesterday?’

The differences between example 15 and 18 above is that, **E2** which was starred in example 15 is no longer starred, this is because it is a syntactic echo question and it fits into our analysis. Secondly, another echo question has just been added in **E3** which is also a syntactic echo question. In **E3** however, a change from the first person singular pronoun ‘mo’ (i) to the second person singular ‘o’ (you) occurred.

### Imperative Sentences:

In an imperative sentence, the internal structure of the echo question is quite different from that of the echoed utterance. The subject pronoun will change from the second person to the first person pronoun. For example:

19. U: ìwọ, dìde dúró

You, stand up

E: kí èmi se kí ni? Syntactic EQ

COMP I do what FOC

‘That is should WHAT?’

Noh (1998: 108) refers to this kind of pronoun change as pronoun shifting. The difference between the pronoun change in declaratives and imperative is that, in declaratives, the first person singular changes to the second person singular pronoun. In imperative, the second person pronoun changes to the first person pronoun.

### **Yes/no question:**

The only acceptable echo forms to yes/no question are syntactic echo questions (Sobin 1990:147). The same holds in Yorùbá as a Pseudo echo question cannot be used to echo a yes/no question. For example the yes/no questions may prompt the following echoes:

20. U:Njé Ḍmòwé Abíólá n̄ pa kílààsì jẹ?

Does doctor Abiola PROG kill class eat

‘Does Doctor Abíólá skip classes?’

- E1: Njé Ḍmòwé Abíólá n̄ pa kí jẹ? *Syntactic EQ*

Does doctor A. prog. kill what eat

‘Does doctor Abíólá do what?’

- E2: Njé ta ni n̄ pa kí jẹ? *Syntactic EQ*

Does who prog. kill what eat

‘Does who do what?’

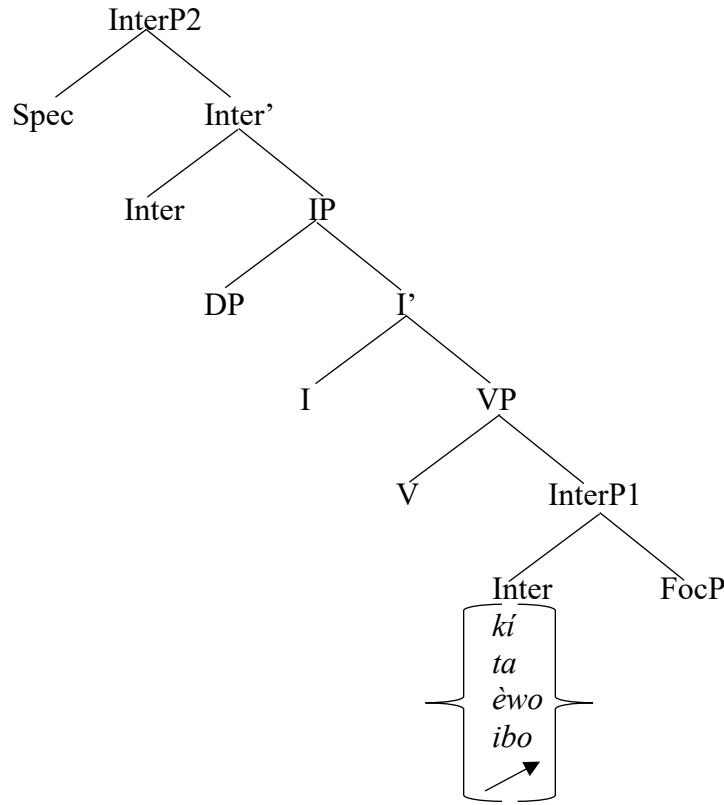
### **• Projections in Yorùbá echo questions**

We propose that the *wh*- phrases in constructions earlier analyzed as syntactic echo questions appears in-situ and are pre-focused. Hence, pseudo echo questions are derived, and can be accounted for through movement(s).

On the cases of construction earlier analyzed as syntactic echo questions, which we claim that *wh*-operators appears in-situ, we propose (following Ìlòrí (2017); and Adéoyè (2018)) that *wh*-operators are pre-focused inside the matrix clause. We propose a multiple Inter(rogative) Phrase layer to account for all echo question constructions in the language. InterP2 takes an IP as

complement. InterP1, containing both the *wh*- operator and FocP ‘*ni*’ is moved as a single constituent to Spec-InterP2 to derive pseudo echo questions. We project thus:

**Figure 1.**



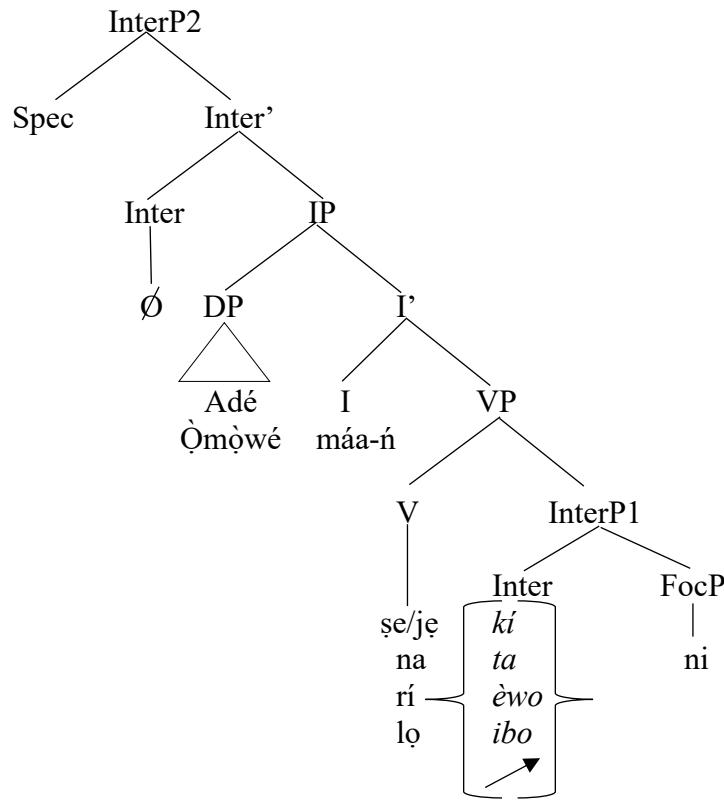
The above (figure 1) structure accounts for both simple and complex echo questions. By simple echo questions, we refer to echo questions with normal syntax of question. That is, pseudo echo questions. Also by complex echo questions, we refer to syntactic echo questions which we earlier explained that *wh*- operators appear in-situ.

All *wh*- operators are assumed in-situ in the above structure. Hence, we account for echo questions such as:

Òmòwé Abíólá máa n̄ şe kí ni?

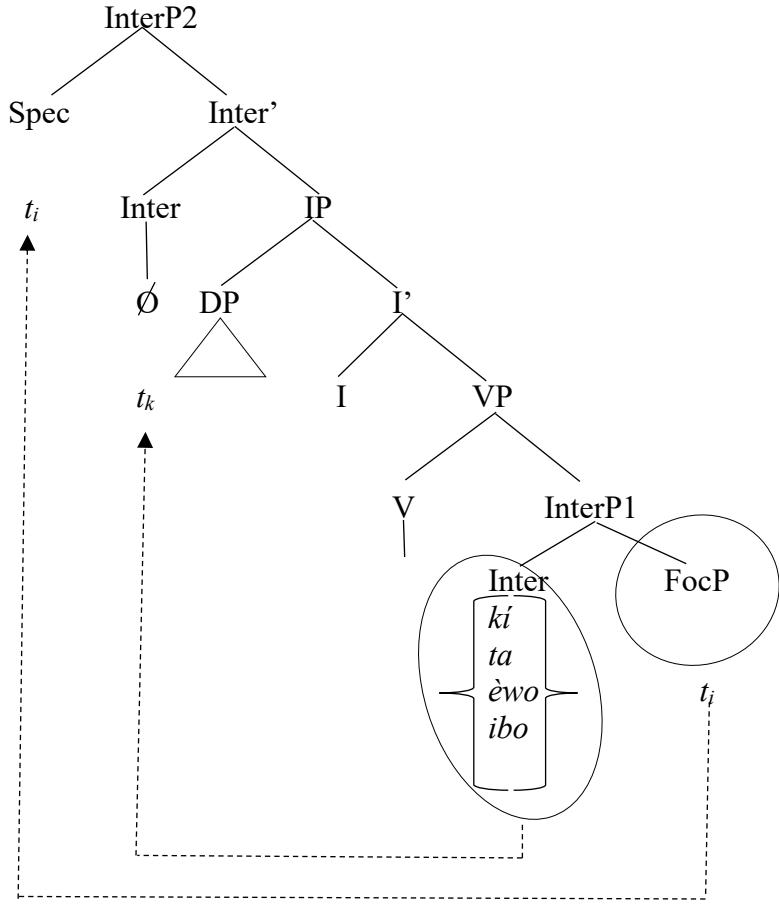
For the above examples, we construct the following projections:

**Figure 2.**



To account for more complex echo interrogative structures. We propose that movement are involved before a converging structure is derived. For example, to derive the examples (below), the InterP1 moves to InterP2, and the complement FocP (with the inherent *wh*- operator) moves as a constituent to Spec InterP2. As presented below:

21.  $\xrightarrow{\hspace{2cm}}$  Kí ta ni ṣe kí ni?
- $\xrightarrow{\hspace{2cm}}$  Sé ta ni máa ní ṣe kí ni?
- $\xrightarrow{\hspace{2cm}}$  Kí èmi ṣe kí ni?



The above structure projects the syntax of Yorùbá echo questions, both pseudo echo questions and syntactic echo questions. It is assumed that in syntactic echo questions, *wh*- operators appears in-situ and are pre-focused. Their clause initial PF structure is as a result of movement of the *wh*- operator and the focus marker.

### 3.5 Polar Questions in Yorùbá

Polar questions in Yorùbá have been extensively discussed. They are the kind of interrogatives that a simple yes/no answer is sufficient for (Radford 1988:462); (Ilòrì 2010:254); (Ajiboyè 2013:3). The construction of Yorùbá polar question is quite different from what is obtainable in their English counterparts. As earlier mentioned, Yorùbá uses polar interrogative particles analyzed by Awóbùlúyì (1978:123) as modifiers, which are adjoined to the beginning, middle or

end Ajiboye (2013) of a declarative sentence. We however pitch tent with available literature which analyzes such particles as strictly polar interrogative particles Medubi & Yusuff (2003) and not modifiers Awobuluyi (1978).

On the contrary, the subject-auxillary inversion (or head movement as seen in Ajiboye (2013:4) for x-bar analysis) system is what works in the English language. For example:

22.            You are good                                  Are you good?

                 Ade will eat    Will Ade eat?

As analyzed earlier, these are not the only ways in which polar questions are derived across natural languages. Siegl (2012: 400) identifies six possible ways, and it seem to be case that Yoruba employs only one of the earlier mentioned six (3.1.1).

- **Verbal Clause and Non-Verbal Clause Analysis Ajiboye (2013)**

The interrogative particle *sé* is the only particle that shows up in the non-verbal clause class, that is, it occurs with NP or PP which are nominal expression and they converge.

The verbal clause category at the other end simply put is a polar particle attached to a full sentence. Hence we can have *sé* in the following examples:

23.            Sé Adé?    Is it Adé?

                 Sé ni Ìbàdàn?    Is it at Ìbàdàn?

But not:

\*Njé Adé?

\*Njé ni Ìbàdàn    Ajiboye (2013:7)

In essence, each polar particle does not attach freely, each have a domain where they can function.

### 3.5.1 Yorùbá Polar Question Particles

Following available literature so far examined, one may conclude that arguments on the syntactic and semantic structures of items that have been analyzed as polar question particles in Yorùbá is far from conclusion. In what we have as our literature review on polar question analysis in Yorùbá, it is obvious that no two scholars accounts for the same number of particles, with the seven particles analyzed in Ajiboyé (2013:11). We present, in tabular form polar particle distributions as analyzed by different scholars:

	Sé	Njé	(t)àbí	Ha	bí	ṣebí	Ni
Awobuluyi (1978)	+	+			+		
Médùbí&Yusuff (2003)	+	+	+		+		
Ilòrí (2010)	+	+			+		
Ajiboyé (2013)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Ilòrí (2017)	+	+	+		+		
Adéoyé (2018)	+	+		+	+	+	

With the above table, it is clear that what constitutes a question seeking a simple yes/no answer in the Yorùbá interrogative structure varies from the perspectives of different scholars examined. Here in, one must have noticed that some particles are well profound across scholars. They are *sé*,

*ṇjé* and *bí*. One must then wonder on what basis do we have the slight differences in the above data.

We observe the following examples for analyses:

24. **Şé** Bólá *jẹun*?

‘did Bola eat?’

25. **Ǹjé** Bólá *jẹun*?

Did Bola eat?

26. \*Bólá **ha** *jẹun*?

Did bola eat

27. Bólá *jẹun* **bí**?

‘Did Bólá eat’

28. Bólá **ha** *jẹun* **bí**?

‘Did Bola eat?’

29. \*Bólá *jẹun* **àbí**?

30. \***Àbí** Bólá *jẹun*?

31. **Şebí** Bólá *jẹun*?

32. \*Bóla *jẹun* **ni**?

Did Bola eat?

Each particle believed (as earlier claimed) to be polar interrogative marker are written boldly. We move to a brief analysis.

To begin with, following Ajiboye (2013:1), Adéoyé (2018: 227) one may conclude that polar particles in Yorùbá language occupies three different syntactic positions at spell out. They are the sentence initial (*şebí*, *ṇjé*, *şé* and *àbí*), sentence medial (*ha*) and (*bí*, *ni* *àbí*) at the sentence final position. Ajiboye (2013: 6) opines thus:

...there are seven interrogative particles for yes no question formation in the standard variety, and they divide into four in terms of their distribution, with four (*ṣé*, *ṇjé*, *àbí*, *ṣebí*) occurring sentence initial, and three (*bí*, *ni àbí*) occurring at sentence final positions respectively. While only one, namely, *ha*, occurs in sentence medial position immediately after the tense marker non future HTS or future *yóò/á/máa...*

The question that we raise here is why we have *àbí* as the only particle that can occur sentence initial and sentence final. Also, can we have other particles apart from *ha* occur sentence medial? As it is obvious in the above given data, examples with the items *ha* and *àbí* are starred. This is resulting from the unclear analysis of their status.

Firstly, on the ***ha*** (Adéoyè 2018:227) for discussions on *ha* as polar question particle) particle as a polar interrogative marker, the major question is, if it can signal interrogation without the occurrence of *bí* at sentence final position. As we have established earlier on that the only form of interrogative construction that cannot begin a discourse is an echo question. We then wonder if the example seen in Ajiboyè (2013:5), Adeoye (2018:227) which analyses *ha* as a polar interrogative particle can stand as the first sentence in a discourse, and signal any form of interrogative semantically. We cite the example below:

33. Yáràduà **ha** dé?

'Did Yáràduà arrive?'

It further exemplifies thus:

34. Yáràduà **ha** dé **bí**?

'Did Yáràduà arrive?'

With the above examples, it is obvious that without the particle *bí* at sentence final position, *ha* cannot ordinarily serve as an interrogative particle.

Also, on the examples analyzing *àbí* as an interrogative particle, one must wonder why one, and only one of such particles can occur both sentence medial and sentence final. However, Ìlòrí (2017:3) analyses the particle as having the same syntactic distribution as Ajiboyè (2013). Ìlòrí (2017:3):

The question particles used for this type of derivation in Yorùbá are **Njé/sé/àbí** and **bí**. While **Nje** and **se** are exclusively used clause-initial and **bi** with its dialectal variants (**ndan** (Òyó) and **na** (Ègbá)) are used only clause-final position, **àbí** is optionally employed in both positions...

We disagree with the above view, we maintain that the item is a conjunction in every construction it appears. However, we suspend this for later analysis.

By this, and contrary to what is seen in Ajiboyè (2013), Adeoye (2018), we claim that no polar interrogative particle occur at sentence medial both at LF and PF. They are sentence initial and final items at PF. Ìlòrí (2017:3) refers to these positions as clause-initial and clause-final positions respectively. This study then claims that the standard variety of Yorùbá language only attests four polar interrogative particles *njé*, *sé*, *sebí*, and *bí*. The first three are clause-initial following (Ìlòrí 2017:3), and *bí* consistently a clause-final polar interrogative particle. This is contrary to Ajiboyè (2013)'s seven particles (*sé*, *njé*, *ni*, *àbí*, *sebí*, *ha*, *bí*), Medubi&Yusuff (2003)'s *sé*, *njé*, *àbí* and *bí*, Adeoye (2018)'s *sebí*, *sé*, *njé*, *ha* and *bí*. Ìlòrí (2017:3) also attests a four particles analyses (*njé*,

*sé*, *àbí* and *bí*). The difference however is that we discard the particle *àbí* as a polar particle and replaces with *ṣebí*. Not to say that they both bear the same meaning.

Another starred example is the one with the particle **ni**. Contrary to earlier analysis (Ajiboyè (2013 & Yusuf 1990) where this item is said to signal interrogation. We follow Ilòrì (2017) and analyses the item as an occurrence of the Yorùbá invariant focus marker **ni**. We uphold this, and exclude it from our analysis of polar question particles.

- **The Proposed Particles**

- **Ṣé:** this particle appears clause-initial in a polar interrogative construction. It can co-occur with other particles such as *bí* at the clause-final position. For example:

Ṣé Òjó wá bí?

Q Ojo come Q

“Did Òjó come?”

Médùbí & Yusuff (2003:155)

- **Njé:** also consistently used clause-initially, it can also co-occur with the particle *bí* at the clause final position. for example:

Njé Adé lọ bí?

Q Ade go Q

“Did Adé go?”

Médùbí & Yusuff (2003:155)

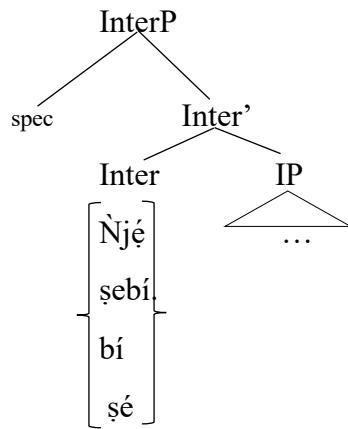
- **Ṣebí/Ṣèbí:** also consistently employed at clause-initial position. This item does no operate with any other polar particle in the build-up of interrogative constructions. That is, the examples below are attested:

\*Ṣebí Adé ti jẹun bí

- **Bí:** this item maintains the clause-final position in our analysis exclusively. That is, it appears clause-final, and can co-occur with other polar interrogative particles (as

exemplified above) in what has been analyzed as a case of tautology or a mere verbosity (Médùbí & Yusuff 2003:155).

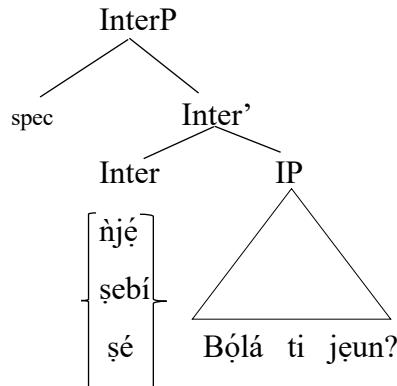
On the syntactic projections of Yorùbá polar questions, I propose, following Ajiboyè (2013) that all polar particles are clause-initial at LF. Their realizations as either clause initial or clause-final at PF is as a result of movement. I propose an Interrogative Phrase structure following Ilòrí (2017) and Adéoyè (2018).



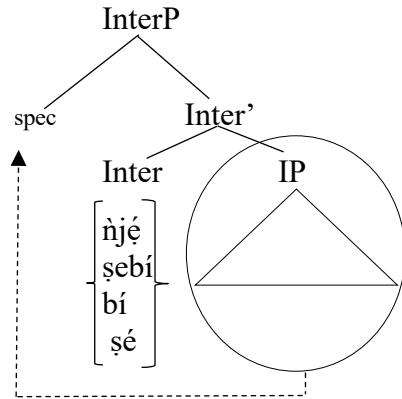
The above structure accounts for the earlier claim that all polar question particles are clause-initial at Lf. Hence, Inter' takes an IP as complement. This accounts for examples such as:

35. Njé Bólá ti jẹun?  
 Sé Bólá ti jẹun?  
 ‘ṣebí Bólá ti jẹun?’

As projected below:

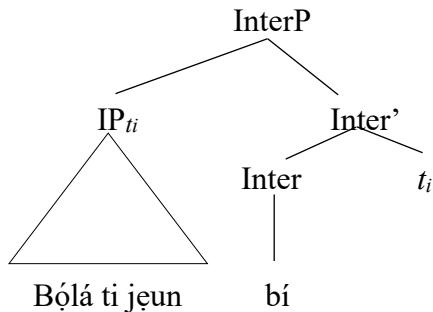


As projected above, the particle  $b'$  is not accounted for. Here, it is proposed that the IP complement moves to Spec-InterP. As in:



The clause-final polar particle *bí* is then accounted for. As in:

36. a. Bólá jéun bí?  
b. Bólá ti jéun bí



### 3.5.2 On the Status of T(àbí)

The status of the items (*t*)àbí in constructions such as:

37.    ?O    f   ow   t b   q mo  
       2Sg want money or child  
       'You desire money or children'

b.    ? j   j un t b   k   j un  
       O.    eat or not eat  
       'did Ojo ate or not'

Yusuff (2006:44)

And:

38. a. ?Njé/ṣé/àbí Ayò-ó fó aṣo?  
Inter Ayo-HTS wash cloth  
'Did Ayò wash clothes?'
- b. ?Ayò-ó fó aṣo àbí/\*njé/\*ṣé?  
Ayo-HTS wash cloth Inter  
'Did Ayò wash clothes?'

Ìlòrí (2017:3)

Yet another set of constructions:

39. ?E lè dúró dè wá tábí kí e máa ló sílé  
'You can wait for us or be on your way home'
- B. ?Sé e ti ṣe tán tábí e sì fée síṣé sí i?  
'Are you through for the day or you still want to work more?'

Bámgbósé (1990:190)

As earlier noticed, we concur with Adéoyè (2017:9) on a trio hypothesis proposal on the status of the item under analysis. They are:

1. t(àbí) is a polar question word and a conjunction.
2. t(àbí) is polar question word.
3. t(àbí) is a conjunction (disjunctive)

The third hypothesis fits into our own analysis. That is, the item t(àbí) is a conjunction in all constructions it appears. The above constructions analyzed earlier where 'àbí' seem to signal interrogation are cases of ellipsis. At LF, such the interrogative particles in such construction is deleted.

We however do not agree completely with the analysis in Ìlòrí (2017:4) on the morphology of the *à-bí* being a combination of the low tone prefix *à-* and *bí*. The low tone prefix has consistently combined with verbs to produce a nominal.

### **3.6 Echo and Polar Question Relationships in Yorùbá**

As noted earlier on in this chapter, Ilòrí (2017) discusses interrogative constructions with a relatively high pitch as polar questions. A look into echo and polar questions relationships in such construction will further negate such interrogatives as polar, and further strengthen our point that such constructions rather falls under echo questions.

One must also note here, that Awóbùlúyì (1978: 124) states that there are interrogative sentences without question particles in Yorùbá. He opines:

Interrogative sentences without question words are pronounced specially. The voice is lighter and higher for such sentences than for their declarative versions.

Furthermore, such interrogative sentences are often pronounced with raised eyebrow. This raising of eyebrow helps identify such sentences as definitely interrogative.

However, this is the extent of Awóbùlúyì's analysis on such interrogative constructions. We agree that eyebrow raising is one of many ways to know that a declarative is now presented in form of a question, but not the only way. However, it wasn't stated what class of interrogative such belongs.

To begin with, depending on the discourse context, any form of interrogative construction may involve raising and lowering of tone. This doesn't trigger any forms of categorical changes in Yorùbá interrogatives. Extensive syntactic analysis of interrogatives in Yorùbá have proven that both polar and *wh*-questions are particle marked. Adéoyè (2018:227) also confirms thus:

However, Yorùbá derives its polar question through

the use of designated word such as sé, şebí, njé, ha, bí.

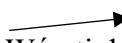
What particularly differentiates echo question is the rise in pitch, which forms an interrogative without necessarily involving any particle(s).

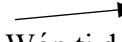
Secondly, another relationship between echo and polar questions in Yorùbá is that polar questions may be the very first utterance in a conversation, but echo cannot. That is, they are both employed in different discourse contexts. We employ Ìlòrí's example and paint a context that proves that such interrogatives are actually echo questions. For example:

A child comes into the house to announce the arrival of some unexpected guests, the first utterance in this context will be a declarative and not interrogative. However, if the guests are the ones expected, the declarative may be followed by an echo question which only seeks to either confirm what the speaker just said or to make the speaker repeat the utterance (in cases where the listener isn't attentive at first).

For example:

40. **Echo question:** \*Wón ti dé?

B. **Declarative:**  Wón ti de 'they have arrived'

**Echo question:**  Wón ti dé? 'have they arrived?'

Example A. above is starred, proving that an echo question cannot occur as the first utterance in a discourse. It will only appear as a declarative. Banfield (1982:124) also agrees thus:

Echo questions are distinguished from other  
questions by their restricted context. An echo question  
occurs in a dialogue as a reaction to a prior utterance and

is interpretable only in respect to it, while other questions may be the first or the only utterance in a discourse.

Echo and polar questions have the same answer structure: ‘bẹ́è ni’ and ‘bẹ́è kó’ can answer for both. Also, both may require further explanations.

### 3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, we have discussed different aspects of both echo and polar questions. As for their projections, we proposed a multiple Inter(rogative) Phrase (InterP) layers for echo questions. Claiming that all *wh*- operators are in-situ and pre-focused. This accounts for syntactic echo questions alone. As for pseudo echo questions, it is the case that the pre-focused *wh*- operator and the FocP moves to derive such constructions.

As for polar questions, we claim here in that contrary to what has been analyzed, we identified four polar question particles. Again, claiming that the item *ha* cannot trigger interrogation without the item *bí* at clause-final position. Also, the item *àbí* is analyzed as a conjunction in all construction. Hence, we conclude that no polar interrogation particle occurs clause-medial, they are either clause-initial or clause-final. The projection proposed here in is an InterP, with Inter' having an IP as complement. All polar particles appear clause-initial at LF, the case of *bí* appearing clause-final is accounted for with IP movement to spec InterP.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **A PRAGMATIC AND SEMANTIC APPROACH**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter details the use of echo and polar questions in context. Here, we will explain the properties of echo and polar question from a pragmatic and semantic point of views, giving submissions on what may lead to echo questions in a discourse, and how appropriate they are in each context. The contexts to be examined are the physical context, social context, linguistic context and epistemic context of both echo and polar questions in Yorùbá.

In conclusion, we will discuss contextual interpretations and the semantic notations of echo question, and most importantly, putting polar question particles in context, we will also discuss their semantic interpretations and see what differences we may have examining each particle in context.

#### **4.1 Properties of Echo/Polar Questions (The Pragmatic/Semantic Approach)**

Echo questions have been described to have the following properties:

- Repetitive: echo questions tend to repeat what has been said, or at least, question a minute part of what has been said with the properties of the previous statement well profound in the echoed form Noh (1998:109).
- They are discourse determined. That is, the previous sentence in a discourse is what determines the use of an echo question. It may query the whole statement, or an actual word in the statement. They question expressions, Sudo (2007:1).

## **4.2 Questions in Context**

In the available body of works so far reached for the purpose of analysis in this study, it is believed that we can split questions in general into two broad categories. They are content and polar questions, with the latter being an important point in this study. However, they both form the third type of division of questions which is the echoed form. Following Radford (1988:463) we concur with the division of *yes-no* echo questions and *wh* echo questions. When a *wh* echo question is used in context, what prompts such is the previous statement. Also, a *yes-no* echo question can only follow another *yes-no* question. There is no context where an echo question can be the first utterance. They are context determined. That is, what is questioned in any form of echo question is actually that part of the previous utterance that is either unclear or doubtful to the hearer.

### **4.2.1 Echo Questions in Context**

As earlier said, echo questions are never the first statement in a discourse. Unlike content and polar questions which any can stand as the first utterance and meaning won't be lost. In Yoruba, a language where honorifics are taken seriously, one will not wonder too far why some form of questions are inappropriate in some context. We believe that what births each echo question is the kind of people involved in the discourse, what has been said so far in the discourse, and the cultural knowledge of the speaker/hearer. We move to explain these contexts individually.

#### **4.2.1.1 Physical Context**

This encompasses what is physically present around the speaker/hearer at the time of communication. On this point, we claim that the mode of questioning is actually dependent on what is being discussed. What is basically affected here is the choice of the *wh*- particle that is to be employed during an echo question. In a context, in a context where a terrible news had filtered in

about someone very close. An echo question may arise and in this case, it is not that what the speaker just said is wrong or that the hearer wasn't sure of what they heard. Hence, in such context, echo questions are rarely answered. For example:

41. Kábíèsí ti wàjà

The king is dead

42.  Kábíèsí še kí ni?

K. do what FOC

Kabiesi is what?

42b. Kí ni ta► ní še?

What FOC who FOC do

'What did whom do?'

In this context, the echo question is mostly interpreted as an exclamation, it does not at most times also expect any change in information from the speaker. If it is answered, what was previously said is only confirmed.

#### 4.2.1.2 Social Context

The social relationship of the people involved in the conversation. It is observed that what is said, or what is questioned and the manner in which the questions are asked depends solely on the relationship between the speaker and interrogator during discourse. We believe that in as much as an echo question as in (41) below is syntactically and semantically well-constructed, it is culturally bared coming from a younger one to an elder. One may one to argue that if the honorific is used as in (42) below, it still doesn't change the fact that such constructions are not proper from for example, a child to either parent.

43. O ṣe kí ni?  
 3sg do what FOC?  
 'You did what?'

44. E ṣe kí ni?  
 2pl do what?  
 'You did what?'

To the best of our knowledge, except in a context of argument, these forms of questions are barred from a child to an adult who is considered disrespected when their knowledge is questioned,

#### 4.2.1.3 Linguistic Context

This analyzes what has been said before in the conversation. The ‘history’ of things said so far. In this context, it is believed that the properties of the echo question will be determined by what has been said so far in the discourse. In this context, echo questions are understood by the person being questioned through the selection of wh- items by the interrogator. We exemplify below:

45. U: Bólájí pa kìnìhún  
 E1 Bólájí pa **kí ni?**  
 Bolaji kill what  
 'Bolaji killed what?'
- 45b. **Ta ní** ṣe **kí ni?**  
 Who do what  
 'Who did what?'
- 45c. **Ta ní** pa kìnìhún?  
 Who kill lion  
 Who killed a lion?

The *wh*- particle **kí ni** (what) is motivated by the intention of the interrogator to question what was killed and not who killed what. Likewise, the B part questions but the hunter and the hunted. The C part only questions who killed what. Hence, the use of **ta ni** (who) in the construction.

The linguistic context, as intended determines what is questioned, this is achieved through the choice of *wh*- item that is used by the interrogator. By this, we claim that the message sent to the first speaker whose utterance is echoed on what part of the first question is not clear is dependent on the choice of the *wh*- word used by the interrogator. Hence, they (*wh*-) are the most important element when they are used in echo questions.

#### 4.2.1.4 Epistemic Context

The inherent knowledge and beliefs of the speaker/hearer also plays a vital role in the pragmatic analysis of echo questions. Hence, an utterance may be echoed if what was said is contrary to what is believed by the interrogator. In this case, the echo question will be used to express the attitude of the interrogator to the meaning of an utterance Noh (1998: 117).

Echo questions are expressive, showing that what is known by the hearer is quite different from what is previously expressed by the speaker. We earlier exemplified this by the example below:

46.    U: Mo rí Ìyálóde Òyó.

1sg see Iyalode Òyó

‘I saw the Ìyálóde (women leader) of Òyó.’

47.    E:  O rí ta ni?

2sg see who FOC

‘You saw who?’

If the speaker had mentioned the Ìyálójà of Òyó and not the Ìyálóde, probably there would be no reason for the echo. On the contrary, the hearer knowing fully well that the title of Iyalode does not hold among the ancient Òyó people, was not so sure of what was said. Hence, the reason for the echo. When an echo question is raised in this context, it is believed at most times that the hearer want the speaker to repeat what has just been to be sure they heard them right.

#### 4.2.2 Polar Questions in Context

The context of discourse may affect the semantic messages of the polar questions in use. As it is known that meaning cannot be separated from the context of the discourse. With respect to this, we agree completely with the semantic analysis provided in Ajiboyé (2013:11-14), they include the confirmatory, Expression of doubt, between affirmative and negative, emphatic and rhetorical.

This also strengthens our claims that polar questions are triggered by only four items in the language. We discuss each category in brief:

- **Confirmatory:** In a context where the interrogator only seeks to know if the hearer of a different opinion from the question before him/her. The items *sé* and *sèbí* are employed in this context.
- **Expression of doubt:** In a context where the interrogator is not so sure of the question he is about to pose, hence in doubt. Either of the items *njé* and *bí* is used.
- **Between Affirmative and Negative:** in a context where the required answer can be any of yes/no. Either of the items *njé*, *sé* or *bí* can serve this purpose. It may even be a combination of any of *sé* and *njé* with *bí* appearing sentence final.
- **Emphatic:** in a context where the interrogator intends to lay emphasis on certain part of the question, the item *bí* is the question word, while *ha* provides us with the semantics of emphasis.
- **Rhetorical:** polar questions may not require answers in some segments. Hence, the interrogator is only trying to confirm an obvious situation. In this context, the item *sèbí* is called to duty.

What we have proven here, is that the four items discussed as polar items in this study are enough to cover the interpretations of polar questions in each context. They also fit perfectly into the discussion and semantic categories provided in Ajiboye (2013).

#### **4.2.2.1 Physical Context**

The physical context does not play any major role in pragmatic use of polar questions. We consider the structure of polar questions completely harmless unless in a situation of argument or a fight where some of such questions may be considered uncultured. The only part of the construction that may possibly change depending on the relationship of the people in the conversation is the honorific pronouns that is used. Apart from this, polar questions remain intact regardless of what is present around the speakers.

#### **4.2.2.2 Social Context**

Unlike echo questions which is restricted to some extent depending on the social relationship of the people discussing. The social context does not restrict any kind of polar question. That is, polar questions are not restricted from anyone to anyone. One may want to argue that in the case of answers, it is restricted. We also agree completely with this view, but our study and conclusion is based on polar questions and not their answers.

#### **4.2.2.3 Linguistic Context**

Ajiboye (2013) already, in a detailed semantic analysis of Yoruba polar questions, the linguistic context we have in mind here encompasses where and how polar question particles are used to achieve the desired results. In some cases, it may appear contrary to what we have earlier noted that all questions can be the very first statement in a discourse except for echo questions. This may also be constrained by the linguistic context. For example:

48. Èyí kò dára tó bí?

‘Isn’t this good enough’

(from Ajiboyè (2013:13))

In any context where the above polar question (one that is said to be non-emphatic in Ajiboyè (2013:13) a claim we totally align with) occurs, one can only reason that it is not the very first statement, as there must have been an item of discussion before such a question is raised. Yet another example:

#### CONTEXT:

A mother comes into the kitchen and noticed that a portion of the food she had earlier prepared is gone. She turns to the child to ask, the following questions may take place:

49 O ti jẹun bí?

Have you eaten?

50 Ṣebí o ti jẹun?

You must have eaten, haven’t you?

The two questions above are bore out of prior knowledge of the two characters in the discourse. We will agree that if there was no food in the house, or if there was no prior discussion on the food, the question will sound completely strange to the child. Hence, we uphold Ajiboyè (2013:13) claim that some of the above raised questions are emphatic. What will be added is that such questions are raised based on what has been discussed earlier on in the conversation, and that is the linguistic context.

#### **4.2.2.4 Epistemic Context**

Under the epistemic context, we will discuss the inherent knowledge of native speakers of the grammar of Yorùbá language and how this may affect the choice of polar items in use. One may question the reason why we can't have the following:

51. \*Njé lóòótò

Instead, the following will be more acceptable:

52. Sé lóòótó?

Syntactically and semantically, one may argue that example (51) is well constructed, pragmatically, one may not come across such constructions often. This is due to the inherent knowledge of the speakers of the language on what is and what is not to be combined.

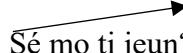
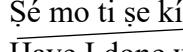
### **4.3 Contextual Interpretations of Echo Questions**

Here, we will base our discussions on what is being said by the speaker, how it is received by the hearer, and most importantly, how it is echoed and what messages were sent back to the speaker. By this, we mean it that it is the case that not all echo questions require a reply. Since they only echo the part that is not really clear to the hearer. This is an important feature shared by both echo and polar questions. As rightly noted by Ajiboyè (2013:13) polar questions may stand rhetorical. That is some contexts, they may also not require answers. Same may be said about echo questions.

For example:

When a polar question is echoed, in such context, it may require no answer(s)

53. Sé o ti jẹun?  
Have you eaten?

- 53a.   
 Sé mo ti jeun?  
 Have I eaten?
- 53b.   
 Sé mo ti se kí njí?  
 Have I done what?

The above echo questions (53a and b) are interpreted as rhetorical as they may trigger no answer from the first speaker.

However, this is not to say that echo questions are rhetorical in all contexts. In some other contexts, they require answers, but the information they seek is embedded in the first statement that was echoed.

#### **4.4 Contextual Interpretations of Polar Questions**

As exemplified above, polar questions are normal questions and the context of use hardly play any role in the question. One may however argue that in some contexts, polar questions may require more than just the usual Yes/no answer they mostly require. In such context, it is observed that the interrogator may simply have a belief which is contrary to that of person being interrogated. Hence, to answer such a question, the person may need to add a few words to back their claims. We exemplify with the examples below:

#### **CONTEXT**

In a court of law the following interrogation may take place:

54. Speaker/Interrogator: Sé o jèbi èsùn tí a fí kàn ó àbí o kò jèbi?

Are you guilty of the crime leveled against you or not?

In a normal context, one would have expected the reply to be a simple *rará* (no), but this may not serve the purpose of answering the above question. Hence, the person may answer (as exemplified below):

55. Rárá, mi ò jèbi pèlú àlàyé

No, I am not guilty with explanation

Apart from the above drawn context where the information required by polar question is way more than just the usual yes/no answer. It is the case that polar questions are not contextually determined unlike echo questions.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

What we have done in this chapter is to discuss echo and polar question from a pragmatic point of view. We conclude that the different context that may birth an echo question are all determinants in both what is said and how the hearer interprets it. The linguistic context determines what exactly is being question in the statement. Hence, the *wh-* particle that is selected is linguistically determined. The social relationships among people in the discussion also plays a large role in the use of echo questions. Also, we discussed the linguistic and epistemic context in echo question.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter concludes the study. Here in, we provide a summary of work done so far from chapter one to four and a brief on the analysis provided, also it details the contributions to knowledge and also make suggestions on areas for further studies.

#### **5.1 Summary**

The work accounts for interpretations of polar and echo questions in Yorùbá language putting the context of their use into consideration. Using the standard form of the language, we found out that both polar and echo question are present in the language.

The first chapter of this work introduces the whole research work beginning with background to the study, the statement of problem, aim and objectives were also clearly stated in the beginning. We then moved on to the research methodology (that is the method of data collection) used in the study and also the background to the theoretical framework was discussed. We used the Minimalist program for syntactic structure analysis and the relevance theory was used to capture the contextual (pragmatic) aspect in chapter four.

We moved on in the second chapter to do a review of relevant literature on interrogatives in general, and then narrowed our discussion to echo and polar questions in Yorùbá language. Also, another kind of interrogative (content question) was discussed, as they play a vital role in providing concrete analysis of echo questions. Here, the body of work available on polar questions in the language was to a great extent very help in analyzing the available data, and further proving our claims. But the case for echo question is quite different as it is hardly considered for analysis in previous works.

In the third chapter, we moved on to provide a syntactic analysis of both echo and polar questions. Here, the minimalist program was called to action as some movement claims were made in the structure of both echo and polar questions. Also, contrary to what is observed by earlier scholars, we claimed that the language only have four polar question particles. They are *ṣé*, *ṇjé*, *ṣebí*, and *bí*.

As for echo question, we claimed that *wh*- particle are found in-situ in such constructions, and that they only appear to echo a part of the previous statement. Be it a normal sentence or a previous declarative. Hence, they cannot appear as the very first statement in a conversation. We also represented the high raising intonation which confirms a statement as an echo question with an upward raising arrow (following the work of Ilòrí (2017)). This arrow scopes through the whole statement showing that there is a raise in voice level as the speech progresses. Hence, without the arrow, one may consider an echo question to be a declarative or even a polar question.

In the fourth chapter, we moved to providing contextual interpretations of both polar and echo questions. Here, it is claimed that the use of echo questions is contextually determined. This, owing to the fact that Yorùbá language exhibits honorifics not just through the use of plural pronoun but also in terms of presentation. Also, following the relevance theory, we conclude that what is really questioned in all contexts of echo questioning is that which is the most relevant in the discourse. And, in the situation where the opinion of the speaker differs and creates a concern to the hearer. This may be triggered if what is said differs from what was earlier said, or differs from the previous knowledge of the hearer (be it linguistic or cultural).

We further proved that echo questions may not be proper in some contexts, this may be as a result of the social relationship between the characters involved in the discourse. For example, one may not be able to

## 5.2 Contributions to Knowledge

As discussed in the third and fourth chapters of this study. We claim that contrary to what is obtainable on polar questions in Yorùbá language before this study, the Language only exhibits four particles to achieve polar questions. Owing to this, we also claim (following the work of Ìlòrí (2017)) that there are no polar particles at the medial position as they either appear at the sentence initial or sentence final at surface structure.

The polar particles discussed in this study are *ńjé*, *sebí*, *sé* and *bí*. The first three particles appear at the sentence initial position at both deep and surface structure. With the last *bí* appearing sentence final at surface structure. The particle *àbí* and *ha* which were earlier analyzed as appearing sentence medial was resolved by the conclusion that *àbí* is consistently a conjunction. The particle *ha* unlike other particles cannot singularly trigger a polar question (at least in the standard form of the language) except another polar particle (*sé*, *ńjé* and *bí*) is employed. Hence, the reason for its exclusion.

Also, we also uphold that all polar question particles are appear sentence initial at the deep structure, and are found at the sentence final position at the surface structure when movements must have occurred. This was projected using the Minimalist Program.

Pragmatically, we claim that polar questions are appropriate (with the above discussed particles) in any context. They violate no cultural constraints and can be used in any situation by anyone to anyone at any point in time when the need arises.

On the case of echo questions, it is to a great deal that the syntax of such interrogative to the best of our knowledge is rarely discussed. Hence, we were able to discuss the syntactic structure of such constructions, not leaving out the pragmatics, where the relevance theory is put to use.

We claim here in that all *wh*- particles appear *in situ* in echo questions, and their sentence initial appearance in cases of content questions are results of movements. Also, like it is commonly proven in languages across the world, echo questions in Yorùbá language also questions that part of a previous statement which is of concern to the hearer. Also, they are never the very first statement in a discourse unlike other forms of questioning like content and polar questions.

Pragmatically, we concluded that echo questions are limited in use. Their use is dependent on the social or linguistic content. It is therefore clear that in most cases a child may be culturally bared from echoing the statement of an elder even when they do not seem completely true to the child.

### **5.3 Suggestions for Further Studies**

The area captured by this study is the syntax of polar questions (a phenomenon we only further researched into), and also the syntax of echo questions. Also, the contextual interpretations of both interrogatives are analyzed. With the above, it shows that there is room for a lot more to be done on the topic of interrogatives in Yorùbá language, especially in the area of echo questions which is rarely visited.

To begin with, a future research may look into the semantics of polar or echo questions in Yoruba. Here, it will further prove what is and what is not obtainable in the language as long as interrogation is concerned. This kind of semantic investigation will further explain the role of *wh*-particles in echo questions. Also, we may further investigate what is really questioned in echo question.

On the four polar question particles discussed in this study, one may see the need to revisit what has been done on polar questions in dialects of the language and see clearly if the rejected particles can in anyway singularly signal a polar question without the use of other particles.

Another issue that a semantic investigation will solve is the question on how many particles really triggers a polar question in the language. By this it will further strengthen the argument on echo questions.

Also, echo questions may be exposed to other semantic and pragmatic theories. Even in the area of syntax, other relevant theories such as the x-bar theory may be employed to check if other levels of derivations can be projected on both echo and polar question.

As earlier said, we proved that what marks echo questions is not really the particles involved, but the high raising intonation that is observed in the voice. Hence, one may one to say that raising and lowering of voice plays an important role in both the expression of the speaker and the reaction of the hearer in echo question. In essence, a future research may also concentrate on the phonological aspects involved in echo questions. Looking deeply at pitch and intonations.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

In this work, efforts have been made an effort to explain the structure of both echo and polar questions in the Yorùbá language. With the context of the questions put into consideration, we explained both the syntax and pragmatics of echo and questions in Yorùbá.

As for polar questions, we concluded on four out of a pool of particles earlier analyzed. This may in the nearest future and in subsequent researchers give room for arguments form another angle on what and what really signals polar questions in Yorùbá.

We also concluded that echo questions are quite different from other question forms, just the way it is in other languages. Other questions may begin a conversation, echo questions are triggered by previous statements in a discourse.

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