

Focus Constructions in Ñjò-kóo¹

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Abstract

Focusing is a universal syntactic phenomenon. That is, there is no language in the world that does not have a means of placing prominence on constituents for focus purposes. However, the formal expression of focus differs from one language to another. Some languages express focus morphologically by using distinct morphemes or elements while others employ suprasegmentally means. The paper, therefore examines the focus strategies in Ñjò-Kóo. It gives a detailed description of different constituents that may be focused in the language and the changes that are triggered in the clause as a result of the focusing. Adopting the Minimalist Program of Chomsky (1995) and Cartographic analysis of Rizzi (1997) Split-CP projections within the clausal left periphery, the study investigates how focus clauses are derived in the language and reveals that the syntax of focus in the language involves two probes: focus (foc) and emphasis (emph) each of which can provoke displacement operations. The paper employs information and clause structure evidence to motivate the constituents being focused. It is also observed among other things, that the constituents that could be focused in Ñjò-kóo are subject DP, object DP or object DP of preposition, possessor DP and a whole sentence, and that the language does not distinguish between sentence and verbal focus hence the same strategy is employed for both focus types.

Keywords: Cartographic analysis, Clausal left periphery, Focusing, Minimalist program, Split-CP projection

1. Introduction

Focusing is a universal phenomenon in that every language has a means of placing prominence on the constituent that is foregrounded. Some languages employ syntactic, morphological or prosodic means for focus purposes. The English language is an example of language that employs prosodic means while most African languages including Ñjò-kóo use distinct items for focus purposes. Gundel (1988) and Givon (1991) claim that hardly can there be any language that uses just one system/means, say, morphology, to code focus information. They argue further that word order variation and special syntactic constructions such as cleft sentences are also used to indicate focus.

Most existing works on focus constructions in Nigerian Languages commonly dwell on the constituents being focused or touch on argument on whether focus constructions are sentences or phrases (Awobuluyi, 1978, 1992, and Arokoyo, 2013). As far as I am aware, there is no known work that has employed information structure and clause structure to motivate the constituents being focused in a clause. This being the case, the present paper gives a detailed descriptive and theoretical description of different constituents that may be focused in the language, the changes that are observed in the clause as a result of the focusing, and also employ information and clause structure evidence to motivate the constituent being focused in a clause at any given instance. The article is organized into

¹ Ñjò-Kóo is the name proposed in Olaogun (2016) for a group of relatively mutually intelligible speech forms formally called *Amgbé/Arigidi-Cluster* spoken in the North-western part of Akoko in Ondo State, Nigeria. Ñjò-Kóo is a language spoken in at least five towns; Òkèàgbè, Ìgáṣí, Àjòwá, Arigidi, and Eruṣú made up of nine communities; Ìgáṣí, Arigidi, Eruṣú, Oyín, Urò in Àjòwá, and Áfá, Ùdò, Ògè, Àjè in Òkèàgbè all in Akoko North West local government in Ondo State. Ñjò-Kóo is a compound name formed from Ñ *jò o* and Ñ *Kó o* (or Ñ *ghó o* the variant of Ñ *kó o* used in Urò) which is a form of greeting equivalent to *Pèlẹ o* in Standard Yoruba.

five sections. The first two sections centre on introduction and theoretical framework respectively. Section three focuses on the constituents that can be focused. The fourth section touches on the derivation of focus constructions while section five concludes the paper.

2. The Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Minimalist Program framework as proposed in Chomsky (1995, 1998 and 2002). Minimalist Program is a theory of grammar which employs minimal linguistic apparatus to form syntactic structures. The apparatus are operations select, merge, and agree. Operation select chooses relevant lexical items from the lexicon and puts them in the numeration for the construction of syntactic structures. Numeration contains the selected lexical items needed for constructing syntactic structures and an index that shows the number of times that each lexical item is used in the derivation. The lexical items in the numeration are therefore put together by operation merge based on their individual features. Following the assumption that operation move is a form of merge and that movement of features has been replaced by *agree*, the computational system that builds the syntactic tree now consists of two operations, namely, merge and agree. Merge is the operation that combines two syntactic elements to form larger constituents. It is a binary and recursive operation which puts together selected lexical items from the numeration. Operation merge is divided into two, namely, external and internal. External merge involves merge operation that takes an item from the numeration to build a syntactic structure while internal merge is a syntactic operation that affects syntactic objects that are already introduced into the derivation. *Agree* is a non-lexicalist approach to feature interpretability in the lexicon. The Agree-based method holds the assumption that only [+interpretable] features of lexical elements are already fully specified in the lexicon before they enter the derivation, whereas elements with [-interpretable] features acquire their features in the course of the derivation. According to Hornstein et al. (2005: 317), *agree* is the operation that establishes a relation between two different linguistic elements, probe and goal, in the syntactic structure through which feature values can be exchanged. A probe is a head with [-interpretable] features, and a goal is an element with matching [+interpretable] features.

Some other minimalist assumptions and hypotheses that are relevant to the analysis and derivation of focus constructions in Ñjò-Kóo are discussed below. These assumptions are: *Phase impenetrability condition*, *VP-internal Subject Hypothesis*, *Theta Role Assignment Principle*

Phase Impenetrability Condition: According to Radford (2009:398), this is a constraint on grammatical operations which states that the domain of a phase head is inaccessible to an external probe (i.e. a c-commanding probe which lies outside relevant phase)

VP-Internal Subject Hypothesis: This hypothesis states that the subject of a TP is base-generated at the Spec of VP, the subject then raised to the Spec - TP to satisfy the EPP feature of the T head.

Theta Role Assignment Principle says that arguments receive their theta roles through a merge operation and an argument is theta-marked (i.e. assigned a theta role) via merger with a predicate (Radford 2009:399).

Information structure: It has to do with the way speakers package information and transfer to the hearers. This also called information packaging.

Clause structure: This has got to do with how constituents are combined in a rule-governed manner to form a convergent and acceptable structure

3. The Constituents in Focus

This section discusses the categories of constituents that can be focused in Ñjò-kóo as well as changes that are observed in the rest of the clause consequent upon focusing. The constituents that may be focused in the language are subject DP, object DP, possessor DP, a whole sentence and the verbs².

3.1 Subject DP Focus

The focused constituent here is the DP with the grammatical role of subject. When the subject DP is focused, it is fronted and marked with a focus marker **úwòñ** and a clause final high tone morpheme. The former immediately

²For detailed information on verb focus, readers should see Olaogun (2017).

follows the focused constituent and the latter occurs in clause final position. This is the difference between simple non-focus clauses in (1a-e) and clauses whose subject DPs are focused in (2a-e).

1. (a) Délé ju ògèdè
Délé eat plantain
'Ade ate plantain.'
- (b) Títí da àju
Titi buy yam
'Titi bought yam.'
- (c) Bólú da iwé
Bolu buy book
'Bolu bought a book.'
- (d) Igbèjì ópú pu èyè
the dog kill snake
'The dog killed a snake'
- (e) Şégun li Bólá
Segun beat Bólá
'Şégun beat Bola'
2. (a) Adé úwòn <Adé>³ ju ògèdè é
Ade FOC Ade eat plantain EMPH
'ADE ate plantain.'
- (b) Títí úwòn <Títí> da àju ú
Titi FOC Titi buy yam EMPH
'TITI bought a tuber of yam.'
- (c) Bólú úwòn <Bólú> da iwé
Bolu FOC Bolu buy book+EMPH
'BOLU bought a book.'
- (d) Igbèjì ópú úwòn <Igbèjì ópú > pu èyè é
the dog FOC Igbèjì ópú kill snake EMPH
'The DOG killed a snake'
- (e) Şégun úwòn <Şégun> li Bólá
Şégun FOC Segun beat Bola+EMPH
'SEGUN beat Bola'

As observed in the examples above, when a subject DP is moved for focus, there is a gap at the extraction site⁴. That is, there is nothing that occupies the extraction position of the focused constituent. Also, examples (2c and e) show that when the focused sentence ends with a high toned lexical item, the clause final high tone fuses with the high tone of the lexical item that ends the clause. The reason for this fusion may be to maintain euphony.

³ Given the copy theory of movement, the angle brackets indicate that the element or constituent in the brackets has been moved. It is also important to say that the constituent so moved in each construction occurs in two places. This actually underscores the conception of movement in the current status of the minimalist theory as several occurrences of one constituent. So, when this happens, the highest copy is spelt out and pronounced in the PF component.

⁴ The fact that nothing occupies the position from where the subject DP is moved appears to be a piece of cross-linguistic evidence which supports Awóbúlúyì's claim that in SY when the subject is focused there is no resumptive pronoun at the extraction site contrary to some scholars that believe that the high tone syllable 'Ó' that normally surfaces in the focus construction such as Olú ni ó_i t_i ra isu is a resumptive pronoun. Part of Awobuluyi's argument against "o", the so-called resumptive pronoun is that it does not agree in number and person with the focused subject DP in the language as given below.

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| a | Olú _i ni o _i ra isu | b | Áwà _i ni o _i ra işu |
| | Olufoc RP buy yam | | we foc RP buy yam |
| | 'OLU bought yam' | | 'WE bought yam' |
| c | [Olú àti Adé] _i ni ó _i ra işu | d | Áwò _n _i ni ó _i ra isu |
| | Olu and Ade foc RP buy yam | | they foc RP buy yam |
| | . OLU and ADE bought yam' | | 'THEY bought yam' |

As evident in the above, the form of the so-called resumptive pronoun does not change with the number and person of the focused subject DPs in examples (a-d). That is, the form remains constant in each case.

It is very important to motivate the claim that the subjects are truly focused in the sentences above. There is both information structure and clause structure evidence to prove that the subjects in examples (2a-e) are focused. The focus constituents in these examples are **Adé** in (2a), **Títí** in (2b), **Bólú** in (2c), **Igbéèjì ópú** in (2d), and **Şégun** in (2e). For example, the speaker who makes the utterance in (2a) is questioning the subject DP in (1a) and accordingly responding to the wh-question *Konẹ ẹ ju ọgèdẹ?* ‘Who ate banana?’ The fact that somebody ate banana is known to both of the discourse participants thereby constituting the background or existential presupposition of the sentence, whereas the intention of the speaker is to newly inform the hearer that it was **Adé** that ate banana and not someone else. Thus, the constituent **ADÉ** conveys the most salient information in the sentence. Put differently, the constituent is non-presupposed but novel to the hearer with regard to the question posed by the speaker which the sentence in (2a) is meant to answer. Similarly, the two occurrences of each of the focused constituents is a compelling attestation to the fact that movement has taken place. The clause structure evidence reveals that the focused constituent is derived while its copy is base generated. For instance, **Adé** in (2a), **Títí** in (2b), **Bolu** in (2c), **Igbéèjì ópú** in (2d) and **Şégun** in (2e) are base generated before the verbs **ju** in (1a), **dà** in (1b and c), **pu** in (1d) and **li** in (1e), but each of them later shows up at the beginning of the clauses in (2a-e). Precisely, each of them precedes the focus marker **úwọ̀n** in each focus sentence.

3.2. Object DP Focus

These focus constituents concern the DPs with core grammatical function of objects. Examples (3a-e) illustrate this type of focus.

- 3 (a) Ọ̀gèdẹ́ úwọ̀n Adé ju <ọ̀gèdẹ́> ú
Plantain FOC Adé eat ọ̀gèdẹ́ EMPH
‘Ade ate PLANTAIN.’
- (b) Àju úwọ̀n Títí dà <àju> á
Yam FOC Titi buy yam EMPH
‘Titi bought a tuber of YAM.’
- (c) Ìwé úwọ̀n Bólú dà <ìwé> á
Book FOC Bolu buy iwé EMPH
‘Bolu bought a BOOK.’
- (d) Èyẹ́ úwọ̀n ópú pu <ópú> ú
snake FOC dog kill ópú EMPH
‘The dog killed a SNAKE’
- (e) Bọ́lá úwọ̀n Şégun lí <Bọ́lá> í
Şégun FOC Segun beat Bola+EMPH
‘Segun beat BOLA’

The focused object DP is fronted and marked with a focus marker in addition to the clause final high tone. The syntactic process here is similar to what happens when a subject DP is focused in that the focused element is preposed and there is nothing that occupies the extraction site where the constituent is focused. Apart from the copy of the focalised constituent traditionally referred to as a gap, no anaphoric or resumptive pronoun is licensed in that position.

Again, motivating the fact that it is the object DPs that are focalised in the sentences, (3a-e) is also in order here. As said in respect of subject focalisation, there exists both information structure and clause structure evidence that the objects in examples (3a-e) are focused. The focus constituents in these examples are **ọ̀gèdẹ́** in (3a), **àju** in (3b), **ìwé** in (3c), **èyẹ́** in (3d) and **Bọ́lá** in (3e). For example, the speaker who makes the utterance in (3a) is questioning the object DP in (1a) and also responding to the wh-question *ko Adé yè ju?* ‘What did Adé eat?’. The fact that **Adé** ate something is known to both the speaker and the hearer thereby constituting the background or existential presupposition of the sentence whereas the intention of the speaker is to newly inform the hearer that it was **ọ̀gèdẹ́**,

'plantain' that **Adé** ate and not something else. Thus, the constituent **ÒGÈDÈ** conveys the most salient information in the sentence. Put differently, the constituent is non-presupposed and novel to the hearer with regard to the question posed by the speaker which the sentence in (3a) answers. Similarly, the two occurrences of each of the focused constituents indicate that movement has actually taken place. The clause structure evidence reveals that the focused constituent is derived while its copy is base generated. For instance, **ògèdè** in (3a), **àju** in (3b), **iwé** in (3c), **èyè** in (3d) and **Bólá** in (3e) are base generated after the verbs **ju** in (1a), **dà** in (1b and c), **pu** in (1d) and **li** in (1e) but each of them later shows up in clause initial position in (3a-e). Precisely, each of them precedes the focus marker **úwòn** in each focus sentence. In more technical terms, the lower occurrence that is not spelt out is said to be found in the IP internal position, while the highest occurrence that is pronounced and spelt out is said to have moved to the left peripheral position.

3.3 Possessor DP Focus

In *Ńjò-kóo* genitive constructions, possessor DPs may also be fronted and focus-marked as the sentences in (4b) and (5b) illustrate.

- 4 (a) Dàda di ewó Òjó
Dada steal money Ojo
'Dada stole ojo's money.'
- (b) Òjó úwòn Dàda di ewó o⁵ ó
Ojo FOC Dada steal ewo RP EMPH
'Dada stole OJO's money.'
- 5 (a) Èdi di iwé Ayò
Thief steal book Ayo
'The thief stole AYO's book.'
- (b) Ayò úwòn èdi di iwé e é
Ayo FOC thief steal book RP EMPH
'The thief stole AYO's money.'
- 6 (a) Bólá da àju Ayò rí aaja
Bola buy yam Ayo in market
'Bola bought Ayo's yam in the market.'
- (b) Ayò úwòn Bólá da àju ù⁶ rí aaja
Ayo FOC Bola buy yam Rp in market+EMPH
'Bola bought AYO's yam in the market'

As evident in the (b) examples above, when a possessor DP is focused in this language, there is always a resumptive pronoun with 3sg feature that anaphorically refers back to it. It is also observed that the tone on this resumptive pronouns changes depending on the environment where it occurs. Its inherent low tone always rises to mid when it

⁵ In examples 4b and 5b, the resumptive pronouns *o* and *e* are used for the lower occurrences instead of the exact copies of the moved elements in the clausal left periphery. These pronouns which show agreement in number and person anaphorically refer back to their respective moved constituents. The fact that the two occurrences of each of these moved constituents are spelt out and pronounced necessitates the non-use of the angle brackets for the lower occurrences. We can then speculate that when the lower occurrence of a moved constituent is realised as a pronoun, it is also spelt out and pronounced. As we know that languages detest unnecessary repetition, this may be the reason why any lower occurrence that has the same form with the moved element is not pronounced in the language.

⁶ For example, 'his book' and 'his money' in the language are rendered respectively as 'iwé è' and 'ewó ò' meaning that the original/inherent tone on this third person singular pronoun in the language is a low tone

occurs between two high tones as examples (4b) and (5b) show. But in example (6b), the original low tone is retained on the resumptive pronoun.

3.4 Preposition DP Focus

The DP that performs the grammatical function of object of preposition is the concern of focus in this section. In African languages, when the object DP of a preposition is focused, at least three strategies are involved: (1) the prepositional head may be stranded, (2) it may be pied-piped, and (3) it may disappear completely. For instance, in Yorùbá the prepositional heads could be stranded or pied-piped with their DP **objects**³. However, in Njò-kóo, prepositional heads are never stranded or pied-piped. They simply disappear as the ungrammaticality of (7b) and (7c) on the one hand, and grammaticality of (7d) on the other, show below:

7. a. Bólá da àju Ayò rí aaja
Bola buy yam Ayo in market
'Bola bought ayo's yam in the market.'
- b. *(rí aaja) úwòn Bólá da àju Ayò < rí aaja > ó
Prep. market FOC Bola buy yam Ayo in market EMPH
'Bola bought Ayo's yam in the MARKET.'
- c. *Áájá úwòn Bólá da àju Ayò rí < áájá >
Market FOC Bola buy yam Ayo prep market+EMPH.
'Bola bought ayo' yam in the MARKET.'
- d. Áájá úwòn Bólá da àju Ayò < áájá > ó
Market FOC Bola buy yam Ayo market EMPH
'Bola bought Ayo's yam in the MARKET.'

3.5 Verb Focus

In Njò-kóo, the process of verb focus in the language is that the verb to be focused will be nominalised attaching the morpheme 'à-' to its root word. When a verb is focused, a copy of the nominalised verb which is focused is left in-situ i.e. in its IP- internal base generated position. The language has no mechanism to license a gap as demonstrated by the ungrammaticality of (8e-h).

8. (a) Àju úwòn Adé ju⁷ ògèdè é
Nom-eat FOC Ade eat plantain EMPH
'Ade ATE plantain.'
- (b) Àdà úwòn Adé da iwé
Nom-buy FOC Ade buy book +EMPH
'Ade BOUGHT a book.'
- (c) Àrọ ùwòn mòmó rọ ẹẹ é
Nom-grind FOC mummy grind pepper EMPH
'Mummy GROUND pepper'
- (d) Àli úwòn Sẹgun li Bólá
Nom-beat FOC Sẹgun beat Bola+EMPH
'Sẹgun BEAT Bola'
- (e) *Àju_i úwòn Adé - ògèdè é

⁷ The difference in the form of the lower and the highest occurrences of the focused verb necessitates the spell out and the pronunciation of both of them.

Non-eat FOC Ade plantain EMPH
 ‘Ade ATE plantain.’

- (f) *Àdà úwòn Adé – ìwé
 Nom-buy foc Adé book+emph
 ‘Ade BOUGHT a book.’
- (g) *Àrọ úwòn mọmọ - ẹṭẹ ẹ
 Nom-grind FOC mummy pepper EMPH
 ‘Mummy GROUND pepper’
- (h) *Àlì úwòn Şẹgun - Bọlá
 Nom-beat FOC Şẹgun Bọlá+EMPH
 ‘Şẹgun BEAT Bola’

3.6 Sentence Focus

The language employs the same strategy for the verb focus in sentence focusing. The verb of the sentence is copied, nominalised and fronted as the sentence in (9b) shows.

9. (a) Kọlá ju àran
 Kola eat meat
 ‘Kola ate meat’
- (b) Àju úwòn Kọlá ju àran án
 Nom-eat FOC Kola eat meat EMPH
 ‘Kola ATE meat’

4. Derivation of Focus Constructions

In Njò-kóo, just like in many African languages, there is a condition that every potential focus constituent must fulfill. The constituent to be focused must enter the derivation via internal merge while the focus marker must enter the derivation through external merge. The reason is that all the ϕ -features of the element or constituent to be focused must be valued and deleted appropriately for the movement of that item to take place. This requirement is subsumed under what is called **focus constituent condition** which says:

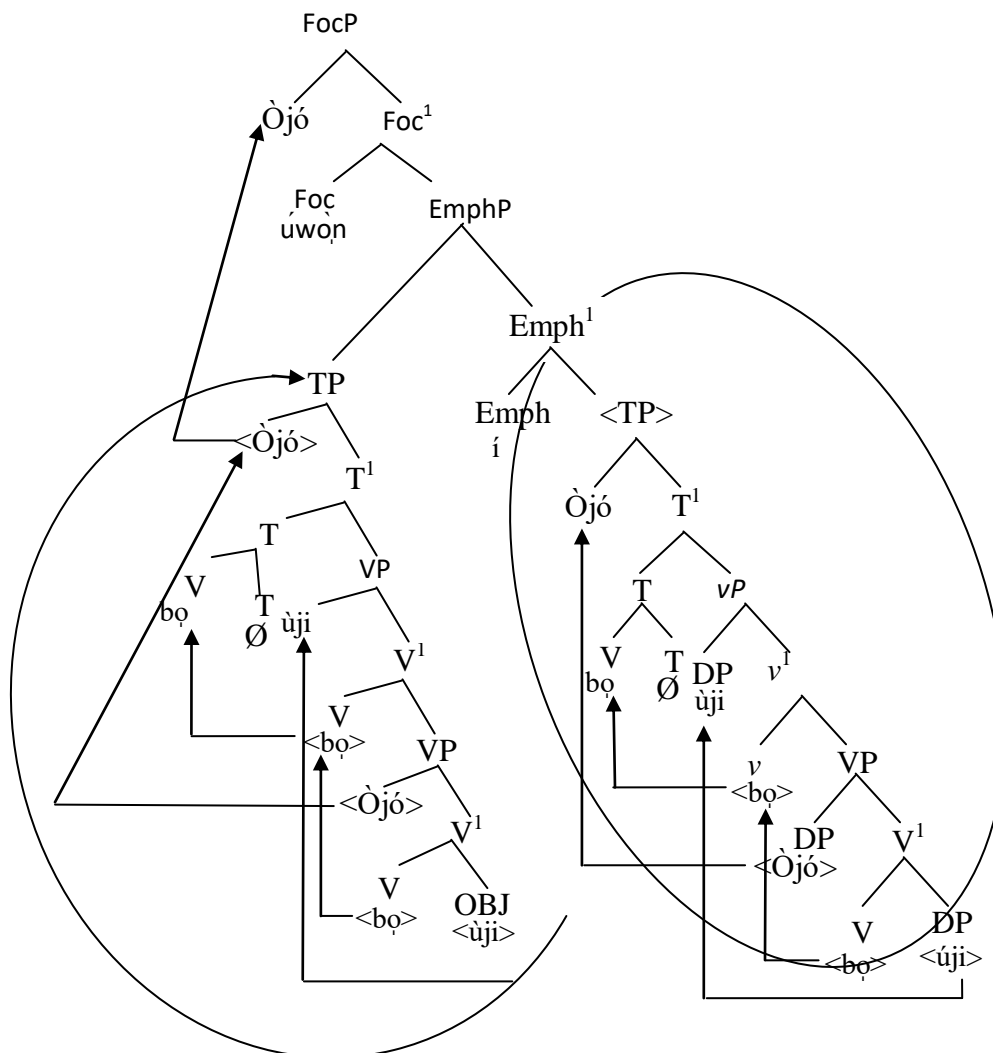
all the ϕ -features of a potential focus constituent must be valued within the TP (that is the minimal/simplex sentence that contains it). Therefore, the sample derivation of focus constructions below is in line with this assumption.

4.1 Derivation of Subject DP Focusing

A focus construction such as (10) is derived as given in (11)

10. Òjó úwòn <Òjó> bọ ùji í
 Ojo FOC drink water EMPH
 ‘ÒJÓ drank water’

11.



The syntax of focus projections involves two probes: foc and emph each of which is capable of triggering a displacement operation. From the minimalist perspective, the structure is derived by first merging the verb **bo** to its complement **uji** in order to satisfy its c-selection requirement while the subject DP **Òjò** is second merged with the same verb in the Spec-VP (in line with VP-internal Subject Hypothesis) so as to satisfy the EPP requirement of the head verb. In line with the TRAP (i.e the Theta Role Assignment Principle that some scholars labelled Predicate-Internal theta –marking Hypothesis), it is assumed that the external argument **Òjò** receives its theta role when it is merged in the spec-VP shell assuming further that arguments check their case features outside their theta domain.

The subject DP **Òjò** is raised to check its case feature in the Spec-TP. If we assume that phi-features of arguments are [+interpretable/valued] and case features are unvalued/uninterpretable while the phi-features of T are [–interpretable/unvalued] but the case features on them are valued, then, following operation Agree, T becomes the active probe by virtue of having [–interpretable] phi-features while the subject DP **Òjò** in its c-command domain automatically becomes the goal because of its unvalued case feature. So, the external argument being the active goal with phi-complete features of T, is thereby attracted to Spec-TP to fulfill the focused condition.

The derivation proceeds by externally merging the emph head (which is morphologically realized as a clause final high tone morpheme) to the TP in order to satisfy its c-selection requirement thereby projecting an emph-bar. The emph head has an EPP/edge feature which is why it projects EmphP by pied-piping the whole TP to its specifier position. There are both empirical and theoretical reasons why the pied-piping to the spec of EmphP is licensed in this structure. Given phase impenetrability condition, if the focused constituent is moved before the pied-piping, the

phase domain of the emph head will undergo transfer and will no longer be accessible for any syntactic operation. So, the pied-piping comes before the movement of the focused constituent. Also, if the pied-piping is not done, the correct word order will not be realized. After this, the foc head **úwòṅ** is also externally merged with EmphP to also satisfy its c-selection requirement thereby becoming the probe at this point which begins to search for its c-command domain for an active goal, that is, the constituent with a matching focus feature. In Agree-based system, for a movement operation to take place, there must be an agreement relation between a probe and its potential goal, i.e. the probe must possess interpretable/unvalued feature while the goal should have a corresponding valued/+interpretable feature. On the basis of this agreement condition, the reasoning is that the subject DP **Òjọ** has [+focus] feature which has been valued before it entered the derivation i.e. it acquires the +interpretable focus feature as it enters the numeration while the foc head has an unvalued/uninterpretable [focus-EPP] feature which was acquired in the course of the derivation. It should be stated that the requirement for a foc constituent like **úwòṅ** to have a specifier is said to be a consequence of foc carrying an [EPP] feature requiring it to project a specifier. The [EPP] condition specifies that an uninterpretable EPP feature on a probe is deleted by movement of the closest active goal of the relevant type to become the specifier of the probe. Therefore, the probe foc attracts the goal to its specifier position in order to value the unvalued focus-EPP feature and subsequently deletes it because unvalued/uninterpretable features are not legible at LF component.

The fact that the focused constituent acquires its focus feature before it is introduced to the derivation whereas the focus-EPP feature of the probe is introduced after entering the derivation is compatible with the assumption that unvalued features are on-line features while valued features are offline features (Christano 2004).

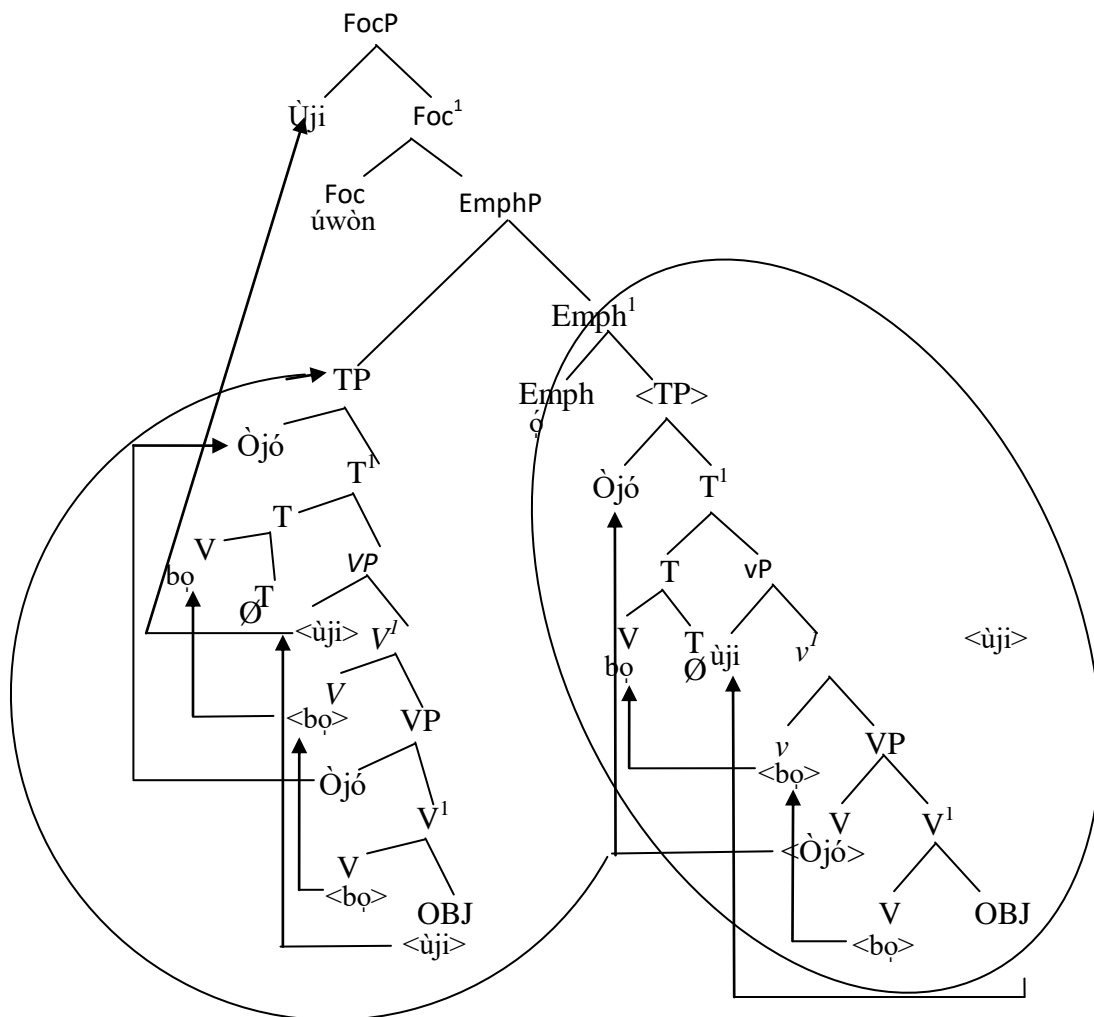
Given that all of the constituents within the TP are in the c-commanding domain of the probe of foc, the question arises as to how the goal of the focus head probe would be determined since all of the nouns and verbal expressions are in the c-commanding domain of the probes and, each of them is active for movement operations because each of them has one undeleted [-interpretable] feature or the other. Put differently, what then determines the constituent to be focalised? Apart from attract closest condition which says that, a head which attracts a given kind of constituent attracts the closest constituent of the relevant kind. The subject DP **Òjọ** is the only constituent that fulfills the focus constituent condition. Besides, there are two other factors that also determine the constituent to be focused, namely, information structure factor as well as clause structure factor. Discourse factor or information structure factor requires that the focused constituent in the tree diagram above can only be a felicitous answer to the wh-question *konẹ ẹ bọ ùji?* So, if any constituent other than the subject DP is focused, the response will be inappropriate. Similarly, the clause –structure, demands that the clause final high tone morpheme which superimposes on the vowel of the immediately preceding lexical item be spelt out as **í**. Therefore, if any constituent other than the subject DP is focalised, the right word order and the desired meaning will not be realised as shown by the ungrammaticality of the focus construction below in (12)

12. * Ùji úwòṅ Òjọ bọ ọ
 water FOC Ojo drink EMPH
 ‘Ojo drank WATER.’

One might quickly want to dismiss the claim that all of the constituents in the c-commanding domain of the foc probe are potential goals on the alleged ground that the EPP feature of the foc head is [+N] and the verb *dà* has [-N] feature. Well, cross-linguistic evidence shows that this observation might not hold water in that there are some languages whereby the spec, FocP can host –N or +N constituent. That is, there are some languages where foc head does not have [+N] EPP feature

2 Derivation of Object DP focus

13.



The derivation of object DP focus also meets the phi-feature valuation condition as well as theta marking requirement. The object DP **ùji** receives its internal theta role within the contentful/main VP when it is merged with V as TRAP demands. It also checks its accusative features in the spec of outer *vP*-shell in line with Chomsky (1999) MSH and VP-Shell analysis. Having fulfilled this condition, it is well able to be focused or moved to spec of FocP for scopal reason.

The structure is derived by first merging the verb **bọ** to its complement **ùji** in order to satisfy its C-selection requirement while the subject DP **Òjó** is second merged with the same verb in the Spec-VP (in line with VP-internal Subject Hypothesis) so as to satisfy the EPP requirement of the head verb. Given TRAP (i.e. the Theta Role Assignment Principle that some scholars labelled Predicate-Internal theta –marking Hypothesis), it is assumed that the external argument **Òjó** receives its theta role when it is merged in the spec-*vP* shell assuming further that arguments check their case features outside their theta domain.

The subject DP **Òjó** is raised to check its case feature in the Spec-TP. Assuming that phi-features of arguments are +interpretable/valued but case features are unvalued/uninterpretable while the phi-features of T are – interpretable/unvalued but the case features on them are valued, then, following operation Agree, T becomes the active probe by virtue of having –interpretable phi-features while the subject DP **Òjó** in its c-command domain

automatically becomes the goal because of its unvalued case feature. So, the external argument being the active goal with phi-complete features of T, is thereby attracted to Spec-TP to fulfill the focused condition.

The derivation proceeds by externally merging the emph head (which is morphologically realised as a clause final high tone) to the TP in order to satisfy its C-selection requirement thereby projecting an emph-bar. The emph head has an EPP or edge feature which is why it projects EmphP by pied-piping the whole TP to its specifier position. There are both empirical and theoretical reasons why the pied-piping to the spec of EmphP is licensed in this structure. Given phase impenetrability condition, if the focused constituent is moved before the pied-piping, the phase domain of the emph head will undergo transfer and will no longer be accessible for any syntactic operation. So, the pied-piping comes before the movement of the focused constituent. Also, if the pied-piping is not done, the correct word order will not be realised. After this, the foc head *úwòn* is also externally merged with EmphP to also satisfy its c-selection requirement thereby becoming the probe at this point which begins to search its c-command domain for an active goal, that is, the constituent with a matching focus feature. for a movement operation to take place, there must be an agreement relation between a probe and its potential goal i.e. the probe must possess [–interpretable/unvalued] feature while the goal should have a corresponding [valued/+interpretable] feature. On the basis of this agreement condition, the reasoning is that the object DP *ùji* has [+focus] feature which has been valued before it entered the derivation i.e., it acquires the [+interpretable] focus feature as it enters the numeration while the foc head has an unvalued/uninterpretable [focus-EPP] feature which was acquired in the course of the derivation. It should be stated that the requirement for a foc constituent like *úwòn* to have a specifier is said to be a consequence of foc carrying an [EEP] feature requiring it to project a specifier. The [EPP] condition specifies that an uninterpretable EPP feature on a probe is deleted by movement of the closest active goal of the relevant type to become the specifier of the probe. Therefore, the probe foc attracts the goal to its specifier position in order to value the unvalued focus-EPP feature and subsequently delete it because unvalued/uninterpretable features are not legible at LF component.

The fact that the focused constituent acquires its focus feature before it is introduced to the derivation whereas the focus-EPP feature of the probe is introduced after entering the derivation is compatible with the assumption that unvalued features are on-line feature while valued features are offline features (Christano 2004).

Given that all of the constituents with the TP are in the c-commanding domain of the probe foc, what then determines the constituent to be focalised? Apart from attract closest condition which states that, a head which attracts a given kind of constituent attracts the closest constituent of the relevant kind. The subject DP *Òjó* is the only constituent that fulfills the focus constituent condition. Besides, there are two factors that also determine the constituent to be focused namely; information structure factor as well as clause structure factor. Discourse factor or information structure factor requires that the focused constituent in the tree diagram in (13) can only be a felicitous answer to the wh-question *Ko Ójó yè bọ?* So, if any constituent other than the subject DP is focused, the response will be inappropriate. Similarly, the clause structure demands that the clause final high tone morpheme be spelt out as *ú* which bears on the vowel of the preceding lexical item. Therefore, if any constituent other than the subject DP is focalised, the right word order and the desired semantic interpretation will not be realised as shown by the ungrammaticality of the example sentence in (14).

14. * *Òjó úwòn bọ ùji í*
 Ojo FOC buy water EMPH
 ‘Ojo drank WATER’

One might quickly want to dismiss the claim that all of the constituents in the c-commanding domain of the probe are potential goals on the alleged ground that the EPP feature of the foc head is [+N] and the verb *dà* is –N feature. Well, cross-linguistic evidence shows that this observation might not hold water in that there are some languages whereby the spec, FocP can host –N or +N constituent. That is, there are some languages where foc head does not have [+N] EPP feature

5. Conclusion

The paper examined the focus strategies in *Ìjò-kóo*. It gives a detailed description of different constituents that may be focused in the language and the changes that are triggered in the clause as a result of the focusing. The article reveals that the syntax of focus in the language involves two probes: focus (foc) and emphasis (emph), each of which can provoke displacement operations. The paper also employs both information and clause structure evidence

to motivate the constituent that is being focused. It is discovered that the language does not distinguish between sentence and verbal focus. That is, one and the same focus strategy is employed for both sentence and verbal focus.

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