ISSUES IN THE DERIVATION OF YORUBA VERB FOCUS CONSTRUCTION

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Abstract

Yoruba verb focus is a syntactic construction where a verb is focused and fronted to sentence initial position, in spec–FocP and the fronted verbal constituent is assigned focus interpretation. The process of verb focus is said to involve copying and reduplicating the verb and fronting to the left of focus marker clause initially. But, the derivation is problematic with regards to; (i) the two forms spelt out as a result of focusing the verb are morphologically unalike in forms, and (ii) the difference in the syntactic classes of the antecedent constituent (at spec–FocP) and the clause-internal verbal form. No extant work has properly taken the peculiarities of the process into consideration hence, the inadequacies of such analyses. This paper, therefore, investigates the syntactic derivational issues in Yoruba verb focus with the view of bringing to the fore a viable account of Yoruba focus verb derivation within the purview of Minimalist Program. The paper argues from a syntactic-based derivation point of view and noted that fronted verbs in verb focus articulation are not reduplicated in the process of verb focus. Rather, verbs are copied and the copy is adjoined to spec-FocP base-generated "Cí-" which has a [+nominal] feature while a PF rule determines the Spell Out. The feature licenses the focused verb at the left periphery (even in relativization). Thus, this analysis unifies Yoruba focus derivation as only whatever is focused is fronted and the same is recoverable.

Keywords: Cí- , Minimalist program, reduplicated verbs, verb focus, Yoruba.

1.0 Introduction

Following Rizzi's (1997) reanalysis of the Complementizer Phrase (CP) domain into what is known today as split-CP projections, that is ForceP> InterP>TopP>FocP>TopP>FinP>TP cartographic layers, the focus phrase has become one of the most interesting discussions in syntax. In Yoruba grammar focus construction is one of the most discussed syntactic constructions. It is a type of derivation in which discourse new information is brought to a position of prominence as discourse new information, that is, spec –FocP position (Abimbola, 2019). In works of Awobuluyi (1978a, 1978b 1992), Owolabi (1987), Yusuf (1999), among others, the discussion on focus projection revolves on whether focus phrases should be regarded as noun phrases or as sentences. Apart from that, the status of 'ni' as the focus marker or a copular based on share resemblance of some focus constructions and certain simple sentence types shielded the discussion on the derivation of focus constructions in Yoruba at the background. However, Ajongolo (2005), Aboh and Dyakorova (2009), Ilori (2010), Olaogun (2016), and Abimbola (2019) have had one or two things to contribute on some issues in the derivation of focus projection. One cannot however say that extant works on the derivation of focus construction have nailed the last issue. Issues in the derivation of focus involves several aspects of the clause like subject, object of the verb, preposition phrase focus/complement of preposition head focus, adjectival and adverbial focus, verb focus, sentence focus and not minding the vast interactions of the construction with other syntactic constructions. Consider the following examples;

1. Olú ra   iṣu ìyá   Adé ní   ọjà
    Olu buy-NF[i] yam Mother Ade prep market
    "Olu bought Ade's Mother's yam at the market"

2a. Olú ni ó   ra   iṣu ìyá   Adé ní   ọjà
    Olu foc HTS buy-NF yam mother Ade prep market
    "Olu bought Ade's Mother's yam at the market"

2b. Iṣu ìyá   Adé ni Olú rà   ní   ọjà
    Yam mother Ade foc Olu buy-NF prep market
    "Olu bought Ade's Mother's at the market"

2c. Ní ọjà   ni Olú ti   ra   iṣu ìyá Adé
    Prep market foc Olu perf. buy-NF yam mother Ade
    "Olu bought Ade's Mother's yam at the market"

2d. Ọjà   ni Olú ti   ra   iṣu ìyá   Adé
    Market foc Olu perf. buy-NF yam mother Ade
    "Olu bought Ade's Mother's yam at the market"

2e. Ìyá   Adé ni Olú ra   iṣu rẹ̀   ní   ọjà
    Mother Ade foc Olu buy-NF yam 3sg.poss prep market
    "Olu bought Ade's Mother's yam at the market"

2f. Olú ra   iṣu ìyá Adé ní   ọjà   ni
    Olu buy-NF yam mother Ade prep market foc
    "Olu bought Ade's Mother's yam at the market"

Data (1) is a simple declarative clause that has subject, object and a preposition phrase in Yoruba language. In Yoruba, nominal, verb and preposition phrase or object of the preposition can be focused. As exemplified in (2a-f) above, the data show focused examples in Yoruba targeting specific constituent of the clause: the subject *Olú* was focused in (2a)[ii]; the object of the verb *iṣu ìyá adé* was focused in (2b), the preposition phrase was focused in (2c). Yorùbá does not permit preposition stranding. Hence, the preposition can be dropped optionally in the language as shown in (2d), and that allows the complement of the preposition to be specifically targeted for focus. In (2e), the qualifier/possessive DP was focused, while the whole sentence was focused in (2f). Within the nominal phrases, adjectives can be focused as well. This is illustrated in (3a-c) below.

3a. Mo wọ   ọkọ̀   dúdú
    1sg board vehicle black
    "I boarded a black vehicle"

3b. Dúdú ni ọkọ̀   tí   mo wọ̀
    black foc vehicle RelM 1sg board
    "Black is the vehicle I boarded"

3c. *Dúdú ni mo wọ ọkọ̀
    black foc 1sg board vehicle

In (3b), the adjective was focused but the object DP has first been relativized before the adjective can be properly focused. This is evident in (3c) which is an ill-formed sentence in the language. Apart from these, the verb can be focused as well.

4.   Rírà   ni   Olú ra   iṣu   ìyá   Adé ní   ojà
        Buying foc Olu buy-NF yam   mother Ade prep market
        "Olu bought Ade's Mother's yam at the market"

5a.   *Rírà ni Olú iṣu ìyá Adé ní ojà
5b.   *Rà ni Olú iṣu ìyá Adé ní ojà
5c.   *Rà ni Olú ra iṣu ìyá Adé ní ojà

In focusing the verb, Yorùbá language has been reported to allow a nominalised verb in the spec-focus phrase (FocP) domain (Ajongolo 2005; Ilori, 2010; Olaogun, 2016, among many others). This is evident in (5b) and (5c) where the verb *rà "buy"* was focused without being nominalised. Also, (5b) does not have a copy of the verb in the clause just like (5a) which has *rírà "buying"* to the left of the focus marker, hence the ungrammaticality of the three examples. The derivations of other constituent focus types in (2a) to (2f) and (3b) seem to have a straight forward account than (4); hence they have been discussed extensively in Yorùbá grammar literatures. It, thus, seems that to focus a verb in Yoruba clauses, the verb must obey certain grammatical rules. The rules essentially require that the verb must be copied. The copy must be nominalised and there must be an overt verbal form in the clause. The derivation of (4) has been attempted by some scholars but seems difficult to capture with viable descriptive and theoretical explanations without any shortcoming.

Explaining the derivation of Yoruba verb focus has been a major challenge in Yorùbá grammar, hence its characterization as an off shoot of nominal focus. In Yorùbá focus construction however, the features of the focused constituents and its copy in the clause are referentially identical. Hence, one could identify the focused constituents' copy and its antecedent in spec-FocP where nominals, prepositions, adverbial phrases and sentences focused are housed. By implication, items focused and moved to spec-FocP are the antecedents whiles the copy left in the clause are the copies in extraction sites. In Yorùbá language, no focused constituent may remain in its extraction position after being focused except verbs. Preposition either move along their object complement or are deleted because preposition stranding is barred. Even as such, the preposition cannot undergo focus by itself without yielding ungrammatical output. Focused constituents must be moved clause initially. Notice that all the focused constituents are moved out of their canonical positions to occupy the spec-FocP in (2a-f) except (4). Also, notice that the exact form of the verb which undergoes focus, remains in its position before focus interpretation contrary to what is observed with all other focused constituents which retain their forms in spec-FocP. To focus Yorùbá verb, the verb is copied or doubled and the copy is fronted and then attached to the clause at the clause initial position. Then, the fronted copy is attached to the clause and partially reduplicated. Thereafter, the focus marker will follow the fronted reduplicated so-called nominalised or deverbal form. The focused verb in the clause is different in form, features and category to the lexicalised form in spec- FocP position. This striking difference is noticeable in a number of ways;

    i.   The antecedent, that is, the form at spec –FocP position and the one in the clause has anti-directional rightward relationship in terms of binding and c-command.

    ii.   The morphological forms/shapes of the antecedent and the copy are not the same.

    iii.   The two constituents belong to different syntactic classes.

    iv.   On theoretical ground, one may ask, at which point will the nominalization take place?

By implication, there are two Spell Out forms. One at spec –FocP is the antecedent while the one in the clause is the phonologically overt copy of the moved constituent. The two forms are morphologically unalike as noted above. This paper, therefore, aims at investigating the issue of verb focus in Yoruba with the view of providing a theoretically viable explanation to the perennial problem. This means that the scope of this work is to discuss salient issues in the derivation of Yorùbá verb focus. Two views are fundamental to the one proposed here. These are Ilori (2010) and Olaogun (2016) which will be discussed before presenting our proposal. Data for the study were collected from various speakers in Ibadan and Ilorin with Awobuluyi (2010) syntactic checklist and other structured focus sentences while some other structures were gathered from existing works on Yorùbá focusing.

For discursive convenience, this paper is sectionalized as follows; section one is concerned with the introduction of the main thrust of the work, data collection methodology and the theoretical framework. Section two reviews two primary views on focus verbs: Ilori (2010) and Olaogun (2016). Section three presents the current view, while section four summarizes and concludes the study.

This work adopts the Minimalist Program for the analysis. Minimalist Program (hence, MP) as proposed in Chomsky (1991, 1995) and Rizzi (1997) Cartographic analysis among others. MP views grammar as a cognitive system and assumes that linguistic theory should contain as few non-derived assumptions as possible. Fundamentally, lexical items are entered into the lexicon with all the required features wired into them (i.e. phonological, syntactic and semantic features). These features will enable them to project maximally in the numeration through operation Merge (internal and external) to derive syntactic object.

Merge (x, y) → XP; where X is a lexical item and a head, while Y is the complement of x

Operation Merge is a binary branching operation and it is Endocentric. When merge combines two elements X and Y, the resulting phrase takes its label from either X or Y (Collins, 2011). In other words, no sentence or syntactic construction is derived from the other; rather each construction is built or constructed up step by step. Economy is fundamental MP and it deals with the principle of Full Interpretation (FI) of features. Features which are matched are said to converge and are Spell Out, but those that do no converge Crashes before LF.

2.0 Literature review

There were phonologically and syntactically motivated arguments on the derivation of deverbal nouns. For the purpose of discussion, this section is systematically divided into two: phonological explanations of the deverbal nouns and sketch of the syntactic views of Ilori and Olaogun schools[iii].

2.1. Phonologically motivated explanations

There are lots of existing arguments on the Yorùbá partial reduplicated verbs (also known as deverbal nouns, gerunds among others). Hence, they are referred to as R-verb in this work. R-verbs behave like every other nominalization in the language. And they may be used in nominal positions as shown below.

6a.   Rírà   ni mo ra   ajá náà
        R-buy foc 1sg buy dog the
        "the fact that I bought the dog"

6b.   Iṣu sísun   ti   mo rà   náà rèé
        yam roasted Rel. 1sg buy the be-here
        "the roasted yam that I bought is this"

6c.   Mo ta   iṣu sísun   kan

6d.   Iṣu sísun   dáa

1sg. sell yam roasted one   yam roasted be-good
"I sold a certain roasted yam"   "the roasted yam is good".

To some scholars, R-verbs are deverbal nouns, formed from verbs by prefixing a copy of the first consonant of the verb and a high-tone high front vowel to the base (Akinlabi, 1985, 2000; Pulleyblank, 1988; clement and Sonaiya, 1989; Ola, 1995; Alderete et al. 1999). In Alderete's et al. (1999) claim, the high vowel in R-verbs is the same with other epenthetic vowels in the language. Akinlabi (2000) notes that loan words and deverbal nouns are not to be taken as the same. The epenthetic vowel in loan words is conditioned by assimilation around labial consonants while the vowel in deverbal nouns does not. Hence, epenthetic vowel may be "i" or "u". But for deverbal nouns, the vowel is always "í". Besides, the usage of epenthetic vowel ranges from breaking consonant clusters to supplying nucleus to final consonants in loan words. He notes that a grammatical rule in the language forbids the use of v-initial high-tone morpheme at the beginning of Yorùbá words. In his view, the rule affects only onsetless words. Hence, high tone vowel may occur word-initially if there is a consonant before the nucleus of the syllable. Reduplicated consonant in deverbal nouns protects the word initial high tone vowel from being barred by the grammar of the language as defiant. Words derived through prefixation, that is from verbal bases, are notably VCV words and they can only be mid or low tone initial words (Owolabi (1989), Akinlabi (2000), Ola (1995), Bamgbose (1990) among others). That is, the prefixes used for nominal derivations can never be high tone morpheme in the language.

Akinlabi (2000) notes that nouns are regularly and productively formed from verbal stems by vowel prefixation. He argues, following Ola (1995), that "consonant copying is triggered by the need to avoid a violation of the …constraint". In essence, the actual prefix is {í-} and it is underlying rather than epenthetic which is not. The problem of that analysis is that the consonant segment of the prefix is motivated only to avoid onsetless initial prefix. The argument failed however to specify which consonants would be required and why. Apart from that, it seems the entire Yorùbá consonants can be used without any rule determining why it has to be the initial consonant of the verb.

Awobuluyi (2001, 2016) notes that R-verbs are instances of consonant prefixation and all consonants in the language can be used as prefixes, usually attached to verbs/verb phrases or adverbs. As a prefix, it denotes an 'action' or 'event'. The consonant prefix copies the form of the consonant of the root morpheme. The derivation requires the same rule which forbids consonant clusters in the language. The same vowel 'i' in loan vocabularies is required to break clusters generated as a result of consonant prefixation. Accordingly, only the mid-tone 'i' is used in such nominalization, but tone change rule may apply to yield high tone "í" output. In his view, to derive R-verbs from base verbs the process begins with following derivation rules/stages: (A) verbs → (B) consonant prefixation → (C) mid tone 'i' insertion → (D) tone change rule → (E) total/partial assimilation rule. These are illustrated with Awobuluyi (2001) examples below:

	A		B		C		D		E
a)	Bú	→	b+bú	→	bibú	→	bíbú	→	N/A
	Dùn		d+dùn		didùn		dídùn		N/A
	Hó		h+hó		hihó		híhó		N/A
b)	Pa	→	p+pa	→	pipa	→	N/A	→	pupa
	Dú		d+dú		didú		N/A		dúdú

Fun	f+fun	fifun	N/A	funfun
Wo	w+wo	wiwo	wíwo	wúwo
Tù	t+tù	titù	títù	títù

His explanation subsumes loan words which use epenthetic vowels to break consonant clusters because the mid tone vowel 'i' is the only vowel used in such nominalization. Hence, loan words' epenthetic vowel is the same as the one in reduplicated verb. This does not seem to be the likely case. The two items are phonologically identical in form but functionally they are different. If that be the case, one would fail to capture the knowledge the speakers on the plater of creating a generalization. There are hundreds of words which are identical in forms and pronunciation but are different in terms of meanings. Such are classified as different words in the lexicon. Hence, the two items may be phonologically identical but functionally different. Hence, they are different items.

Apart from the above-mentioned problem, other major shortcomings of this analysis hinges on the fact that there is no other place where consonant prefixation is used in the language. One way of converting verbs into noun is through vowel prefixation. If this is actually consonant prefixation, it would seem to be the only prefixation process where insertion is required in the language to resolve morphologically derived defiant words. It does not explain why the prefixed consonant must be the form of the base consonant of the root word and not any other consonant. In essence, that requirement leads to traditional claim of partial reduplication process. As highlighted in section 1, there is no proper connection between the deverbal nouns and its copy in focus verb constructions, whereas, language is known for its connectedness in referentiality. Lastly, those items in (B) cannot be so used in focusing, hence they cannot be used as an antecedent to a verb derived from the base as shown below:

7a. Olú ra bàtà
     Olu buy shoe
     Olu bought (a) shoe"

7b. Rírà ni Olú ra bàtà
     buying foc Olu buy shoe
     "the fact is, Olu bought (a) shoe"

8a. Olú sín
     Olu sneeze
     "Olu sneezed"

8b. Sísín   ni Olú sín
     sneezing foc Olu sneezed
     "the fact is that Olu sneezed"

As opposed to (9a and 9b) below.

9a. *Ọmọ náà pa
     child the be-fair
     (cf. Ọmọ náà pupa "the child is fair)

9b. *pupa ni ọmọ náà pa
     fair foc child the be-fair

In essence, the (B) lists added to the class by Awobuluyi are not truly part of the class. Those items are seemingly alike in derivation but they are not because they do not behave in similar way in syntactic constructions. Hence, there is no need for Awobuluyi's tone change and assimilation rules. It is more economical and less-effortful for the language to use the actual tone required instead of introducing another rule which will end up being faceless in the derivation. Those deverbal nouns are clearly defined in behaviour and derivation: that is, deverbal items are always having initial consonant copied from the base and a high tone vowel 'í'. A true verb in the language can be deverbalised and the deverbalised form can be used as an antecedent for the base verb in focus construction.

In furtherance of his claim, Awobuluyi (2013.p12) argues that any verb that cannot be so used with consonant prefixation is not a verb in the language. Yorùbá language does not seem to behave as claimed. Other verbs so deverbalised in the language as nominal items take vowel prefixation as shown below

10a. so → è- +so → èso "fruit"   10b. rà→ r- í- +rà → rírà
      kú → i- +kú → ikú "death"   rà→ *í- +rà →*írà
      rín→ è- +rín → èrín "laughter"   jẹ → *í- +jẹ →* íjẹ

As evident above, high tone vowels are not allowed to participate in such morphological derivations out-rightly, but the presence of the consonant determined by the need for an onset requirement by a high tone vowel in the language. As noted above, there is no explanation on why the consonant has to be the copy of the base verbal form.

Both Akinlabi and Awobuluyi analyses are phonologically based. They do not take the relationship between focused verb and its copy into consideration. Hence, there is need to sheild the high tone vowel from the language internal rule. This paper follows Akinlabi's (2000) in taking {í-} as the prefix and the consonant is required to circumvent the seemingly phonologically/morphologically defiant outcome of such derivations. However, the paper departs from his on the bases of how these enter the derivation. In addition, the epenthetic vowel is not the same as the vowel in deverbal nouns due to the failure of those in Awobuluyi's (2001) B-group to function as antecedent in verb focus. The paper assumes that the consonant is a PF interface Spell Out, hence it is not spelt out in narrow syntax. The consonant is based generated in spec –FocP.

2.2   Syntactically motivated explanations

As noted before, few Yorùbá works discussed the derivation of Yorùbá verb focus. The discussion here is classified into two: the traditional account and the N/Nom(-inative) feature analysis.

2.2.1   The traditional account

The traditional generative account assumes that the nominalised copy of the verbal spec-FocP is the antecedent of the one serving as the predicate in the clause i.e. the structure in (11) below without any explanation. Notable among these scholars is Yusuf (1999), among others.

11.   [FocP [Cí-v [TP …[…V…]…]]

12a.   Olú   ń   kí   Fọlá   12c.   Olú ni <Olú> ó   ń   kí   Fọlá
       Olú cont. greet Fọlá   Olú foc. <Olú> HTS cont. greet Fọlá
       "Olu is greeting Fọlá"   "the fact is, Olú is greeting Fọlá"

12b.   Fọlá ni Olú ń   kí   <Fọlá>   12d.   kíkí   ni Olú ń   kí   Fọlá
       Fọlá foc. Olú cont. greet <Fọlá>   greeting foc. Olú cont. greet Fọlá
       "the fact is Fọlá is greeting Olú"   "the fact is that Olú is greeting Fọlá"

Given that fronted copy often c-command their copies as in the case of nominal focus in (12b-12c) above, it should be the case for (12d.). That is, *kíkí* should C-command *kí*. However, there is no c-commanding relationship of sort between these two items, that is *kíkí* "greeting" and *kí* "greet". Because; (i) the Cí-V copy does not have case nor theta feature, and (ii) there is a problem of where does Cí-V copy originated

from. This is clearly from clause internal because the features of Cí-V are nominal while the clause bound copy is a verb.

In order to justify this analysis, Awoyale (1995) had proposed that there is emphatic case feature assigned to focused constituent by focus marker **ni**. Whereas, no case act as former licenser of focused items[iv]. If case is assigned to items at spec-FocP, what happens to previously assigned case features? Was it erased? If yes, at which point will erasure take place- in narrow syntax or overt syntax domain? What motivates this erasure? Apart from all these which proponents of this view have no definite answers for; there is theta requirement which can only be assigned by verb or preposition element. The item is not theta marked as required for nominal element on theoretical ground. Case cannot be assigned because no case assigner is nearby and no case feature licenses it movement to spec-FocP as movement to spec-FocP does not require theta or case[v]. Why? PP, AdjP, TP and other projections do not require theta or case before such movement can be licensed or licit[vi]. No theta, with which nominal items are identified, is assigned because there is no theta assigner (under merge, since no predicative item is around to assign theta). One should ask; what is the theta role assigned to the item? What assigns it? Under which merge operation will it be done? From the forgoing, it shows that the traditional analysis met its waterloo because there is no way to circumvent these issues. These and many more questions have been a problem often ignored by the advocate of this view. The only analysis given to the assumption is that the Cí-V must be a nominal item, but no explanation on where the item is nominalised, or how the nominalization is required for only the verb and not for other classes.

2.2.2   Nominative and +N features

In explaining the derivation of previous analyses on the derivation of verb focus, Ilori (2010) and Olaogun (2016) whose analyses are based on Minimalist Program have a unified view in certain respect. According to this school, the spec-FocP position only licenses nominal element and any item which bears "nominative" in Ilori's (2010) view and [+N/Nom] feature in Olaogun's (2016) view. Invariably, verb has to be nominalised before being assigned focus interpretation in focus phrase. In line with this hypothesis, the claim predicts that any constituent that must undergo focus must be marked with N-feature or nominative feature, hence the result of nominalization. Ilori (2010) speculates that items attracted to Spec-FocP must have nominal feature. Olaogun (2016) terms his own [+N] feature. Ilori noted that "TPs in spec- FocP behaves more like DPs and so, they are DP projections with null D head. Similarly, they are nominalized sentences with **Pé/kí** introducers which in those cases are null". Consider the following constructions in the language which suffice for their claim.

13a.   Ayọ̀ kọ́   ilé   ńlá
        Ayọ̀ build house big
        "Ayo built a big house"

13b.   Pé   Ayọ̀ kọ́   ilé   ńlá
        nominaliser Ayọ̀ build house big
        "That Ayọ̀ built a bighouse"

13c.   Kí   Ayọ̀ kọ́   ilé   ńlá
        nominaliser Ayọ̀ build house big
        "For Ayọ̀ to build a big house"

That a verb must be nominalised before being assigned focus feature seems very right except for the over-generative power of the assumption and descriptively defective or analytically inadequate problem. For instance, the view assumes that N-feature or Nom-feature is assigned by spec-FocP to every item that

must be focused or that are focused and fronted to spec-FocP position. By implication, this view predicts that any constituent that must be focused is nominalised. Thus, data in (2c, 2d &3b) given above are expected to be nominalised given this assumption but they are not. Accordingly, the spec-FocP position licenses only nominal element or any item which carries [+N] feature. This cannot be true because of the fact that one could focus the whole PP and even sentences in the language without nominalization. Abimbola (2018) also noted that emphatic pronouns are focused but there are not nominalised. The discourse domain is only activated for focus by an emphatic feature which distinguishes focusable constituent and unemphatic one which by implication is not focusable items. It is not true that only the TPs that behave like DPs are attracted to spec-FocP. Other projections like the PP and sentences can be focused without nominalization. Shall we now say that the language use two contrasting rules contrary to consistency feature of language? Consider the following;

14a. $[_{ForceP} [_{spec} \emptyset [_{Force}^1 [_{Force}^0 \emptyset] [_{TP}$ Ayò kó ilé ńlá]]]]
14b. $[_{FocP} [_{spec}$ Ayò kó ilé ńlá $[_{Foc}^1 [_{Foc}^0$ ni] $[_{TP}$ ~~Ayò kó ilé ńlá~~]]]]

If the position must be a nominal position, then it means that the items **ni** is a verb which however, is not the case[vii]. If spec-FocP is a nominal position, then the items moving into the position should be nominalised at all times. The structure above shows that the constituent in spec-FocP originated from the complement position of Foc^0, but was not nominalised. Quite contrary to what the rule predicts, other constituents may be licensed for focus. In fact some languages license AdjP, and other type of projections[viii].

15a. $[_{ForceP} [_{spec} \emptyset [_{Force}^1 [_{Force}^0 \emptyset] [_{TP}$ Ayò kó ilé ńlá $[_{PP} [_{P}^1 [_{P}$ sí] [DP Òyó]]]]]]]]
15b. $[_{FocP} [_{spec}$ Òyó $[_{Foc}^1 [_{Foc}^0$ ni] $[_{TP}$ Ayò kó ilé ńlá $[_{PP} [_{P}^1 [_{P}$ sí] ~~[DP Òyó]~~]]]]]]]
15c. $[_{FocP} [_{spec}$ Ayò kó $[_{Foc}^1 [_{Foc}^0$ ni] $[_{TP}$ ~~Ayò~~ ó kó ilé ńlá $[_{PP} [_{P}^1 [_{P}$ sí] [DP Òyó]]]]]]]]]
15d. $[_{FocP} [_{spec} [_{NegP}$ Olú kó] $[_{foc}^1 [_{foc}^0$ ni] $[_{TP}$ Ayò ń kí ~~[DP Olú]~~]]]

16a. $[_{TP}$ Olú ti ra bàtà náà $[_{PP}$ ní ojà]]]]
16b. $[_{FocP} [_{spec} [_{PP}$ Ní ojà]] $[_{foc}^1 [_{foc}^0$ ni] $[_{TP}$ Olú ti ra bàtà náà ~~[PP ní ojà]~~]]]
16c. $[_{FocP} [_{spec} [_{TP}$ Olú ni ó ra bàtà] $[_{Foc}^1 [_{foc}^0$ ni] ~~[TP Olú ni ó ra bàtà]~~]]]
16d. $[_{FocP} [_{spec} [_{NegP}$ Olú kó]] $[_{Foc}^1 [_{Foc}^0$ ni] $[_{TP} [_{DP}$ ~~Olú~~] ó ra bàtà ní ojà ní kíákíá]]]

In data (15b), the object complement of the preposition was focused. It was fronted clause initially, and focus interpretation was assigned to it in spec-FocP. But in (16b) however, the preposition phrase was focused. Notice that what is true of the PP **ní ojà**, is also true of its properties in spec-FocP. Nothing was changed. It was not nominalised at any stage. In (15c), the object DP was focused and negated with the use of **kó**, a negator for constituent focused item. This is also the case in (16d) where the focused item was negated. Notice that the accusative case feature has already been discharged by the verb and valued on the DP before being focused. Also, its theta feature has been valued. Hence, there is no other feature left on the DP **Ayò** apart from the focus feature triggering movement to spec. In (16c), the whole clause is focused as the focus feature is placed on the whole clause. As a requirement for focusing any item, the item is expected to trigger movement to left periphery. Hence the clause got fronted to spec-FocP. The TP, being the domain that is fronted in (16c), leaves nothing behind, hence the stranding of the focus marker clause finally on the surface order. If spec-FocP must be a nominal position, then it means the item **ni** is a verb. However, this is quite the contrary. It does not have predicative power to license nominative and accusative argument positions[ix]. However, this is not the case.[x]

The rule should be violated by (15b-d) and (16b-d) above, but those constructions are adjudged grammatical and convergent outputs in the language. Hence, to assume outrightly that the spec-FocP licenses only items or constituents bearing [+N] feature is not true and overgeneralized. The actual problem lies in the descriptive power of the sentence generation given to verb focus construction.

The rule predicts other things which are not found in the language. On the basis of descriptive defectiveness, this analysis does not show the basic understanding of native speakers' intuition, that is, this view is counter intuitive. It has a string of theoretical balance which seems to give it popular appeal but does not explain the exact thing the native speaker knows in his language. For instance, the native speaker knows that there is similarity in the forms in (17a) below and that the two cannot be used in the same position as shown in (17b) below. But he will adjudge (18a) & (18b) grammatical and acceptable in his language.

17a.	verb	derived nouns
	rà	rírà
	jẹ	jíjẹ
	pọ́n	pípọ́n
	mu	mímú

17b.   *Mo rírà iṣu
        *Adé jíjẹ iyán

18a   Akin fún mi ní omi mímu
        Akin give 1sg. prep water drinkable
        "Akin gave me a drinkable water"

18b.   Bàbá náà ra ọsàn pípọ́n
        man the buy orange ripe
        "the man bought a ripe orange"

Also, the rule failed to account for the nature of the copy (or trace) which c-commands its antecedent in verb focus whereas, the reverse should be the case as we have said. Any descriptive or theoretical account of Yoruba verb focus should put this into consideration. The difference in the syntactic classes should be given an adequate analysis. It should be able to account for the way the antecedent of the verbal copy which does not have any copy in the clause enters the derivation such that the antecedent is a noun and the copy is a verb. None of these have been explained in the analysis.

The limitation of Chomsky's (2005) analysis in relation to the case found in Yoruba is that it gives credence only to theory internal evidence without any recourse to language internal evidence. If two items are selected in the same way as Chomsky claimed, what determines the "nominality" of the copy in spec-FocP? Cross linguistically, spec-FocP is not a licenser of N-feature. In many related languages, spec-FocP does not license nominative element only, hence, it cannot be said that the position only permit nominal items/nominalised items.

3.0   Propose analysis

This section presents the current line of thinking in relation to Yorùbá verb focus. In the language an item is said to be focused this way- the verb is copied/doubled and the copy/double is fronted to clause initial position. That position is spec-FocP. Then, it is nominalised and then followed by the focus marker ***ni*** as in;

19a.   Ọlá ra aṣọ tuntun
        Ọlá buy clothe new
        "Ọlá bought a new clothe"

19b.   Rírà ni Ọlá ra aṣọ tuntun
        buying foc.Ọlá buy clothe new
        "the fact is Ọlá bought a new clothe"

But the narrative is oversimplified. The properties of moved verbs are the same as the predicative form within the clause in respect to properties already discharged and those left on the item before copying and fronting. Notice that the verb has already become bare-form based on i) theta has already been discharged to the object of the focused verb as stipulated by merge. ii) Case has already been discharged by the verb. Accusative case has already been valued on the object DP. However, no case feature can be absorbed or assumed anymore.

Since all nominal items are required to enter the derivation through the VP in relation to argument structure, given UTAH (Chomsky, 2005; Horrnstein Nunes and Groham, 2005), no nominal item may enter the derivation without its features properly checked in the vP domain. This claim negates the initial N-feature or nominative of Ilori's and Olaogun's argument. In case of movement, there is an escape hatch which is the outer spec position of the vP, it is a temporary landing position for moved items so as to prevent an active item in the derivation from being transferred to the interfaces. This ensures that Inactivity Condition does not freeze an active item in place. Thus, the focused verb is not transferred to the interface because it is the head of the phase and does not have to obey UTAH requirement placed on argument. Hence, only its domain is transferred leaving the specs and the head to continue the computation circle. As a verb, it does not need theta and case features to be assigned to it. Rather the theta and uninterpretable case features are already discharged before the verb gets to the v-phase where it is adjoined to the null v-head. Hence, the focused verb form was copied and fronted to spec-FocP after the VP domain has been transferred to the interfaces. This is shown in the structure below (20) where (19b) is used for the derivational illustration.

20)
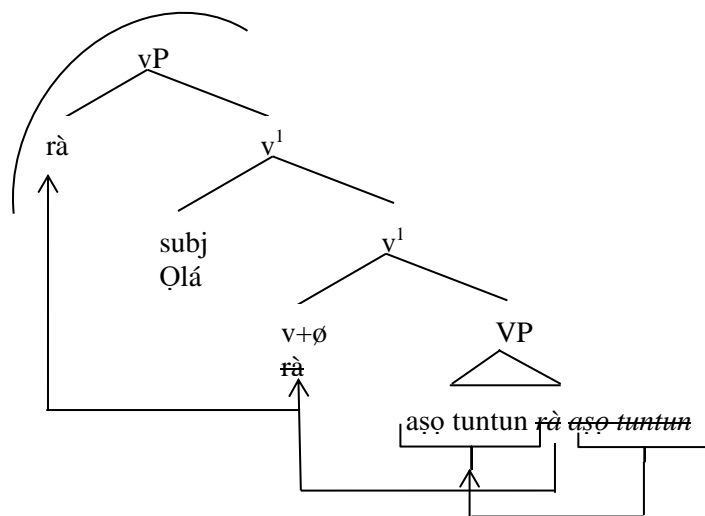
The structure above in (20) illustrates the domain of vP. The verb "rà" had valued the uninterpretable phi-features of the object DP "aṣọ tuntun" in spec-head configuration before the verb moves to the head of the light verb v^0 for lexicalization. Since the outer spec-vP is the position required for the moving to specifier position in the higher clause level, the copied verb must move to this point in the derivation. Hence, the form which is copied is the actual one in the predicate phrase which does not need to be nominalised or required for activation of case and theta. By implication, this form which has ultimately valued all its features cannot license any case feature like emphatic case or whatsoever as speculated in Awoyale (1995), Arokoyo (2013) among others. At this point, there is no contradiction between the features of the verb to be focused and the one predicating the clause heading vP as v^0. Also, the case of the different

forms between the two verbs is ruled out now. As evident, the point at which the copied verb enters the derivation is at the vP phase. And the predicate is properly c-commanded by the antecedent verb from which is to be focused.

In deriving nominal items like those in (21a) below, which are typically derived nouns from the base monosyllabic verb forms through prefixation, the analysis is given as the structure in (21b) below

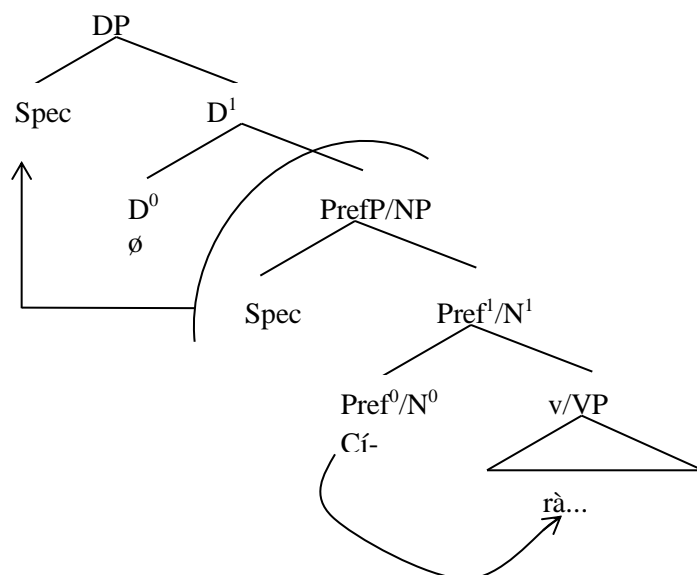21a)   jẹ   →   ì-jẹ   →   ìjẹ
        lọ   à-lọ   àlọ
        so   è-so   èso

21a)
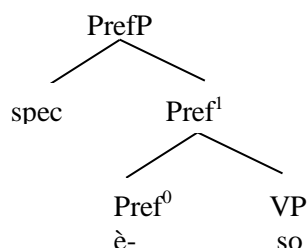
As it is generally assumed in the grammar of the language that deverbal item are nouns,

21b)

For the spec-FocP where the copied verb is moving to, the structure is given as (21c) above. (21c) above is motivated through nominal word order. The Cí- has nominal feature (which by implication is translated as nominalization in morphological domain) and it is based-generated in the spec-FocP as a prefix phrase only for verb focus. The arrow moving rightward under Cí- is used to indicate the directionality or the mapping of the nominal feature. It is mapped on the phrase at the complement position of the item. Cí- is spelt out only at the PF-interface as the form of the consonant specified in the verb. The Cí-, as the head of the PrefP, has [+nominal] feature but a weak specifier feature. This means that there is no fronting of its domain to spec-PrefP. The D-head must be stranded phrase finally in Yoruba as the nominal word

order requires that the nominal phrase is ordered to allow the determiner head occur as the last element in the phrase. The DP order is illustrated as shown below.

22a)   ọmọ náà   (surface word order ← náà ọmọ)
         child Def. "the child"

22b)   [$_{DP}$ [$_{Spec}$ ọmọ [$_D{}^1$ [$_D{}^o$ náà] [$_{<NP}$ ọmọ>]]]

Following Abimbola (2018) who emphasized that a fronted constituent for focus or interrogation triggers the activation of EmpP projection where the emphatic feature is valued because only emphatic features can license movement into the ForceP domain. Using (19b) repeated here for convenience of reference as (23a), the focus verb projection is as the one given in (23b) below.

23a)   Rí-rà   ni Ọlá ra   aṣọ   tuntun
         r-buy   foc. Ọlá buy clothe new
         "The fact is Ọlá bought a new clothe"

23b)

In summary, the derivation of focus verb does not generate any of the initial issues associated with the initial analyses. In section one, a number of issues were identified in verb focus derivation. These were resolved from one stage to another and one can conclude that:

    a.) The antecedent verb form at spec –FocP, which is actually at the complement position of Pref[0] actually c-commands the one predicating the clause. It has intermediate copies which do not require spell out. Only the optimum form is given spell out. There is no more anti-directional rightward c-command relationship in terms of binding and c-command. Only the pronounceable form of the R-verbs is formed at the PF interface.

    b.) The morphological form of the antecedent verbal form in spec-FocP and the copy in the clause are the same form. Both have the same properties in relation to theta, case and other discourse features like emphasis and focus. Thus, resolving the age long problem of divergent forms of the verbs in verb focus construction.

    c.) One other issue addressed by this analysis is that the two verbal items belong to the same syntactic class. There is no class difference in form between in the one in spec-FocP position and the one in the clause.

    d.) Finally, the theoretical issue raised by inclusiveness condition that forbids inclusion of extraneous item into the computation is faced out. Nominalization takes place under merge as it is the feature of the prefix, Cí- in PrefP. Nominalization takes place under merge but the mapping of the Cí-form is at the PF interface. The PF interface is the output position or Spell Out positon in the computation of how lexical items should be pronounced. The nominal feature of Cí- percolated maximally hence its nominal interpretation within the Spell Out..

Conclusion

The paper assumes that the consonant-vowel sequence Cí- is a PF interface Spell Out. The derivation of Yoruba verb focus construction put forward in this work is based on the weaknesses of initial phonologically and syntactically motivated constructions which are assailed with number of problems. It has been demonstrated in this work that when a verb is to be focused, a copy is made and the copy is moved to the outer specifier position of vP. This happens after the domain of v^0 is transferred to the interfaces. The copy at spec-vP serves as the trace or copy which is not linearized for Spell Out. The derivation then proceeds by moving the copied verb to the complement domain of Pref[0] in PrefP based-generated at spec-FocP where the verb is mapped with the nominal feature of the prefix. This means that the verb is adjoined to spec-FocP base-generated "Cí-" which has a [+nominal] feature while a PF rule determines the spell out. The feature licenses the focused verb at the left periphery. Thus, this analysis unifies Yoruba focus derivation as only whatever is focused is fronted and the same is recoverable.

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List of abbreviation

spec =specifier; *FocP* =Focus Phrase; *Foc* = focus marker; *Cí-* = consonant vowel "i" with high tone; *ForceP* = Force Phrase; *InterP* = Interrogative Phrase; *TopP* = Topic Phrase; *FinP* = Finiteness Phrase; *TP* = Tense Phrase; *CP* = Complementizer Phrase; *NF* = Non-future tense; *Prep/p/PP* = preposition/Preposition Phrase; *HTS* = high tone syllable; *perf.* = perfective marker; *1/2/3sg* = first/second/third singular pronoun; *Poss* = possessive marker; *DP* = Determiner Phrase; *Rel/RelM* = relative marker/relative Phrase; *MP* = minimalist program; *x/y/XP* = "x" and "y" are variables; *FI* = full interpretation; *LF* = Logical form; *PF* = Phonological form; *R-v/verb* = reduplicated verb; *VCV* = vowel consonant vowel; *N/A* = not available; → = becomes/results to; *TP* = Tense Phrase; *Cont.* = continuative; *v/V* = light verb/verb; *AdjP* = Adjective/Adjective Phrase; *[Nom]* = nominative feature; *[+N]* = /nominative or nominal feature; *UTAH* = Universal Theta Assignment Hypothesis; *v⁰/vP* = light verb/light verb phrase; *c-command* = constituent command; *pref or pref⁰/pref1/PrefP* = prefix/prefix intermediate projection/ Prefix Phrase; *EmpP* = Emphatic Phrase

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[i] The meaning of all the abrreviations used in this work are listed under the *list of abbreviartions*.

[ii] Notice that something else apparently becomes visible in the clause due to the movement of the subject outside its prior domain. The item has been referred to as the high tone syllable (HTS) some works. It has also been traditionally identified as the 3sg pronoun nominative form. Ajongolo (2005) considered the HTS are traces of fronted subject DP. Traces of the pre-posed NP can either be overt or covert. Ilori (2010) assumes HTS, which was treated as 3sg pronoun in the traditional analysis and in Ajongolo (2005) as traces of moved subject DP constituent, is a tense marker. Ilori follows Oduntan (2000) who argues that the so-called HTS/3sg is a kind of a toneme which marks present/past tense in Yoruba. Since the HTS is outside the scope of the current discussion, interested reader should see Awobuluyi (2016), Appendix II and the references cited in there on arguments for and against HTS while other works like Awobuluyi (1978), Bamgbose (1990) may be consulted for the traditional interpretation of the item as a pronoun.

[iii] One of the most controversial discussions on focus construction in Yoruba was based on whether the construction should be taken as noun phrases or sentences. Awobuluyi's (1976, 1978, 1987 & 1992) view on focusing seems is that focus constructions are noun phrases. This view was contended with by scholars. His arguments are summarized as follows. Focus constructions are noun phrases because:

   i. focus constructions function as complement of the verb *ṣe* "to be". He argues that *ṣe* does not take sentential complements but takes focus phrases as complement. Thus, focus constructions are noun phrases.
   ii. Also, there is obligatory nominalization of focused predicate. i.e. whenever predicate is to be focused, it is partially reduplicated and attached just like every other noun sentence initially. This argument is the main thrust of the present paper has there is no not viable explanation on how a verb becomes a now and both are expected to form antecedent-copy relationship.
   iii. Apart from those, Awobuluyi said that the "ni-phrase" in focus constructions acts semantically like qualifiers by narrowing down the range of possible head nouns one has in mind.
   iv. The last argument advanced in support of this school of thought is that short pronouns do not undergo focusing. They are unspecified, therefore cannot collocate with qualifiers. And this shows further that the "ni-phrase" is actually nothing but qualifier. Awobuluyi (1992) treated nouns as the head of focus constructions; hence the construction is an NP.

This argument is similar in part to Ilori (2010) who argues that short/unemphatic pronoun may be focused but focusing Yoruba short/unemphatic pronouns requires the use of the long/emphatic pronouns. Hence, unemphatic pronouns are considered as traces because they are not licit to movement. That is the short is replaced at some point in the derivation with the long form. The proposal seems theoretically trivial because there is no such mechanism where a lexical item can be replaced in the derivation with another form. Abimbola (2018&2019) discusses that unemphatic pronouns cannot be focused because they lack emphatic feature hence, they are not selected for focus. Interested reader may see those publication and the references cited therein. Awobuluyi (1978&2016), short pronouns are one kind of nouns (i.e. polymorphic nouns). Why should polymorphic nouns be treated as a separate class in respect of focusing if pronouns are actually nouns? See Awobuluyi (2016) Appendix II p.223- 240,

where he said the long/emphatic pronouns are derived from the unemphatic pronouns through a morphological process, prefixation.

To Owolabi (1987) argues that focus constructions are sentences with the following:

i. The fact that focus constructions can be modified by sentential adverbs like *ǹjẹ́* "is it the fact that", *àṣé* "I didn't realize that" and sentence adverbials like *síbẹ̀síbẹ̀* "nevertheless", *ní tòótọ́* "truly" show that focus constructions are sentences.

ii. focus constructions can be conjoined with sentences using sentence conjunctions *ṣùgbọ́n* "and", *àmọ́* "but" and *sì*[iii]. They also conjoin focus constructions.

iii. Similarly, *àti* and *pẹ̀lú* "and" connects NPs/nominal items only. If focus constructions are noun phrases these nominal conjunction should connect with other noun phrases.

His last argument shows similarities between simple sentence structure of Nominal-verb-Nominal and focus constructions.

As far as Awobuluyi is concerned, the "ni-phrase" as in those italicised sections of the clauses in (1) below, acts in similar way as those in (2) below to bring the range of the reference to a specific entity.

1a) *ìwé ni mo rà*   "the book is what i bought"   2a) *ìwé tí mo rà*   "what i bought is book"

1b) *Olú ni ó ra ìwé*   "Olu is the one that bought books"   b) *Olú tí ó ra ìwé*   "Olu is the one that bought books"

1c) *èmi ni mo ra ìwé*   "I am the one that bought books"   c) *èmi tí mo ra ìwé*   "I am the one that bought books"

To Awobuluyi, the italicised phrases in (1) are called "topical qualifier" as opposed to (2) which are called "relative qualifier". See Awobuluyi (1978:40-42, 96) for more. Owolabi (1987) submitted that *ni mo rà* in *ìwé ni mo rà* does not behave like *tí mo rà* in *ìwé tí mo rà* becuase: i) it cannot be negated by kọ́; ii) there is co-occurence restriction between interrogative nouns and qualifiers; iii) Inseparability of qualifiers and qualified items by intensifiers; iv) Occurrence of qualifiers in noun phrases only; v) syntactic functions and semantic interpretation of noun phrases containing qualifiers; vi) non-occurrence of overt markers of qualifiers in independent expressions; vii) non-occurrence of topical qualifier in focus constructions having sentential foci (see Owolabi, 1987).

[iv] See Abimbola (forthcoming) for detail discussion of this issue. The paper is titled "Against [+emphatic] case features assignment in spec-FocP".

[v] Awoyale (1995) assumes following the ideas in English where for, and other similar items can exceptionally case-mark an item which fails to get case assignment as a result of lack of proper case assigner capable of assigning case to overt subject of infinitive clause and other similar constructions as noted by Abimbola (forthcoming).

[vi] If Aboh and Dyakonova's (2009) argument about Yoruba verb focus being a VP focus type holds some water, then

[vii] See Awobuluyi (1992), Yusuf (1999) for further discussions on the argument for and against "ni" as a copula verb.

[viii] See Arokoyo's (2013) examples of adjectival focus among others.

[ix] There is a view which argues that the focus marker is a verb, a copular verb, the idea has long be put to rest due to the fact that the argument holds no water. However, Adesola (2005) claimed that the item 'ni' is a verb and he analysed focus constructions as bi-clausal constructions. In essence, the focus marker was wrongly taken as a verb.

[x] See Awobuluyi (1978), Yusuf (1999), etc. for further studies on the argument which takes *ni* as a copular verb in Yoruba. As reported in a recent paper, Abimbola (2019) noted that such claim would take Yoruba syntax back to the era of assuming *ni* as a copular verb.