

A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF ÀHÀN INTERROGATIVE SENTENCES

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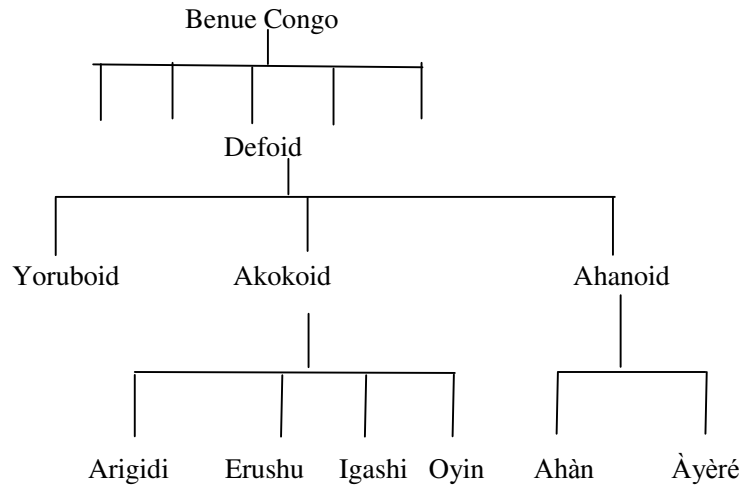
Every language has a way of turning a positive statement to a question forms. However, the way each language does this is based on parameter setting. Besides this, in every language of the world there are polar questions and there are content questions. In polar questions, yes or no answer is adequate as a response; while content questions require sentential structure as an answer. In this paper, I describe the formation of the polar questions and content questions in Àhàn, a language situated within Yorùbá speech form, spoken in a particular quarter in Òmùò-Èkìtì, a town in Ekiti State, Southwest Nigeria. I also show in this paper that Àhàn operates a kind of in-situ derivation in its interrogative formation. However, I posit that the kind of Wh in-situ operated in the language is different from that observed in Chinese and some other Asian languages. Besides, I also show, in the paper, that while a language like Yorùbá and some other Kwa languages use a focus marker in the formation of wh questions, Àhàn does not utilise a focus marker.

Chaque langue a une manière de changer une phrase positive en une phrase interrogative. Cependant, la manière dont chaque langue le fait est basée sur la fixation d'un certain nombre de paramètres. A part cela, dans chaque langue du monde il y a des questions polaires et des questions de fond. Dans les questions polaires, la réponse par un oui ou un non est approprié ;tandis que les questions de fond requièrent une structure syntaxique comme réponse. Dans cet article, nous décrivons la formation des questions polaires et des question de fond en àhàn, un dialecte du Yorùbá parlé dans un quartier spécifique de Òmùò-Èkìtì, un ville de l'Etat d'Ekiti, au sud-ouest du Nigéria. Nous montrons également dans cet article que ce dialecte ahan effectue un genre de dérivation in-situ dans la formation de l'interrogatif. Cependant, nous proposons que le genre de Question in-situ opéré dans la langue est différent de celle observée en chinois et d'autres langues d'Asie. En outre, nous montrons que, quand bien même une langue comme le Yorùbá et quelques langues Kwa emploient la marque du focus dans la formation des questions Q, la langue àhàn n'utilise pas de marqueur de focus.

0. INTRODUCTION: THE ÀHÀN LANGUAGE AND ITS SPEAKERS

Àhàn, an endangered language, is spoken by the Àhàn people of about 2000 inhabitants. The proper language family this language belongs is still controversial. For instance, Williamson (1989:201), Capo (1989:281), and Crozier and Blench (1992:13) put Àhàn under the Akokoid branch of Defoid family group. Bennet and Sterk (1977) also classified Àhàn as one of Akokoidlects. Elugbe (1989) grouped Àhàn under Edoid sub-family. However, Elugbe (2012) gives Àhàn a separate subgroup which he calls *Ahanoid*. Finally, Akanbi (2014), towing the line of Elugbe (2012) but with a little modification, removes Àhàn from Akokoid and puts it on a par with Akokoid, and Yoruboid. He puts the three under Defoid group. The figure below shows the grouping of Àhàn as done by Akanbi (2014).

Fig. 1



Culled from Akanbi (2014:6)

Akanbi (2014) also argues that Àhàn is a distinct language from Yorùbá. Among other pieces of evidence, Akanbi (ibid.) bases one of his arguments on lexicostatistic counts. By using 100 words comprising of kinship terms, numerals, and domestic chores word list, he concludes that the cognate sounds between Àhàn and Yorùbá is less than thirty-five per cent. Whereas, Swadish (1955) proposes that before two languages could be adjudged to be dialects of the same language, there must be eighty-five per cent sound and meaning cognates.

1. CLAUSE TYPES

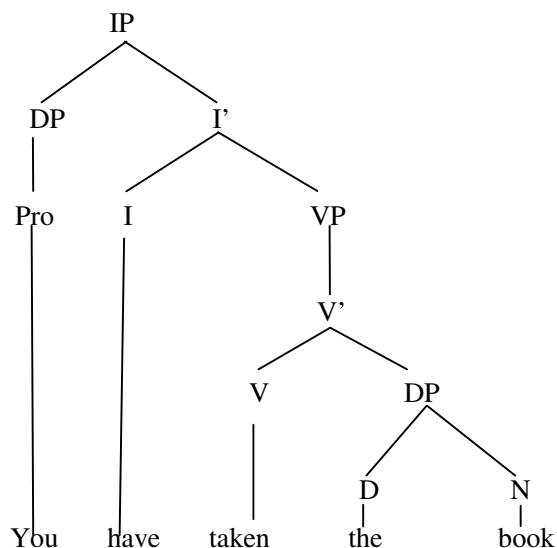
Three types of clauses among others are identified cross linguistically. They are declaratives, imperatives and interrogatives. Each of these clause types is associated with particular speech acts (Akrofi-Ansah 2010:98). According to Akrofi-Ansah (ibid.), whilst declaratives are used for asserting, claiming, stating, accusing, criticizing, promising and guaranteeing, imperatives are employed in issuing commands for certain action to be taken by the addressee (cf. König and Siemund 2007; Siemund 2001). Interrogatives are conventionally associated with the speech act of requesting information.

In addition, based on their syntactic and semantic properties, interrogatives are divided into two broad types, namely, polar interrogatives and constituent interrogatives (König and Siemund, 2007:291). These two categories of interrogatives are also known in the literature as Yes/No questions and content questions respectively. Yes/No questions or polar questions are so called because they require just Yes or No for an answer. This does not mean that the answer could not be more than Yes/No; but it suffices to respond with Yes/No as answers for such questions. But on the other hand, content question or *wh*-question requires a sentential answer. The data in (1) is an illustration of Yes/No interrogatives in English.

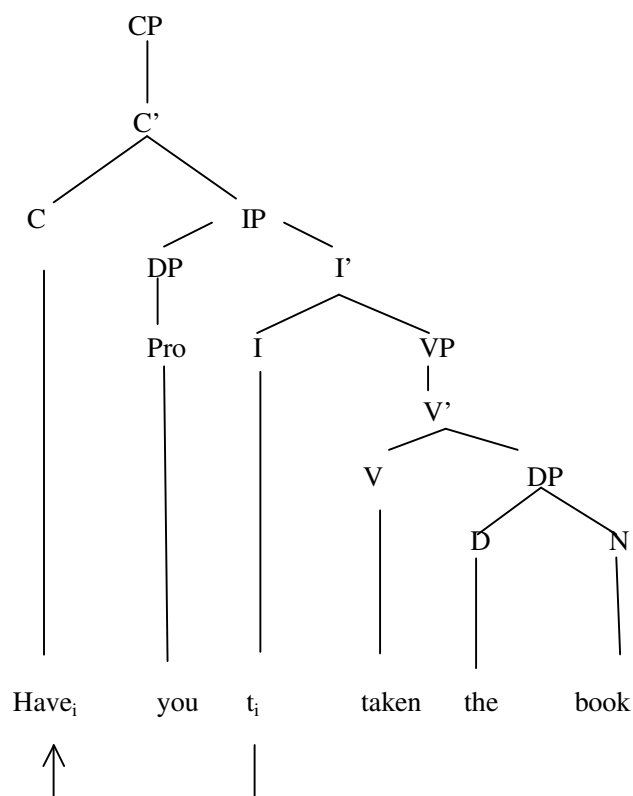
- (1) a. Have you taken the book?
 b. Will John eat the food?
 c. Do the people know that you have gone?
 d. Can I buy a car for you?
 e. Shall I go with them?

Furthermore, all the questions in (1a - e) demand either Yes or No as an answer. In English, Yes/No or polar interrogatives are mostly derived by fronting the auxiliary modal and raising it to the [C, CP]. This type of movement is called I to C movement, i.e. Head-to-Head movement. For a clear understanding of this type of movement, I use the configurations in (2a and 2b) as illustrations. I use (1a) as the exemplified sentence. The configuration in (2a) is the D-Structure of (1a) while (2b) is the S-Structure where the movement is effected.

(2) a.



b.



Constituent or content interrogatives demand answers that provide the kind of information indicated by the interrogative word or phrase that is used to ask the question. For example in (3) below, each question requires different information in the answer. For instance in (3a), location is being enquired, in (3b) personality is the focus, in (3c), time is what is being asked for, in (3d) something of [$\pm$ animate] in nature is what is being queried while in (3e) it is the manner of doing *x* that the person asking the question is seeking to know, while in (3f) the reason for doing *x* is the focus. The questions that are considered above are as follow.

- (3) a. Where is the car?
 b. Who is coming?
 c. When are you going?
 d. What is this?
 e. How were you beaten?
 f. Why were you beaten?

Constituent/content questions are called *wh*-questions because such questions, in most cases in English, are signalled by *wh*-words such as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, etc. It is from these shortcut symbols that linguists have adopted the nomenclature even though there is no such acronym in the types of question formations in all the African languages, Àhàn inclusive.

In this paper, I want to discuss both the polar and content questions in Àhàn. I want to show that the formation of these types of questions in the language is different from what obtains in Yorùbá¹ language within which Àhàn language is situated. I will show that in Àhàn, a particular question marker inflects for plural and that where in some Kwa languages some content questions are derived by the use of a sentence or a phrase, Àhàn uses just a lexical item. I will also show in the paper that focus marker is silent phonetically in the Àhàn language. This paper is discussed under four sections. Section one is the introduction. In section two, I discuss the various types of interrogative sentences and markers in Àhàn. I look at the derivation of questions in Àhàn in section three. Section four is the conclusion.

2. ÀHÀN INTERROGATIVE SENTENCES

In Àhàn, as in many other languages, both Yes/No and content interrogatives are attested. Each of these question types requires a question marker that signifies that the sentence or utterance is interrogative and that it requires an answer. I shall discuss each of these two interrogative types in the sub-sections following.

2.1 YES/NO QUESTIONS IN ÀHÀN

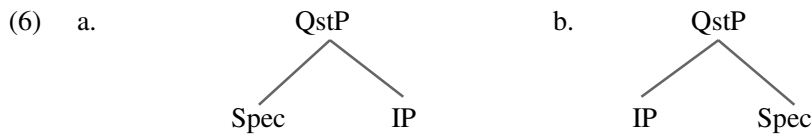
There are two ways by which yes/no or polar interrogatives are formed in Àhàn. One way is by using a question marker which is placed in the initial position or (Spec QstP) of the sentence. This question marker is inserted since there is no evidence of movement from any part of the structure. The other way is by elongating the vowel that ends the verb within the sentence. The examples in (4 and 5) explain these two formations.

¹ My reference to Yorùbá here and in some other few places does not mean that this paper is a comparative analysis. The reference is just a coincidence. Besides, I also made reference to some other languages in the paper apart from Yorùbá.

- (4) a. **Şe** **Òjó á?**
 QstM Ojo come
 Did Òjó come?
- b. **Òjó á a**
 Ojo come QstM
 Did Òjó come?
- (5) a. **Şe** **Òjó thèrù**
 QstM Ojo eat
 Did Òjó eat
- b. **Òjó thèrù u?**
 Ojo eat QstM
 Did Òjó eat?

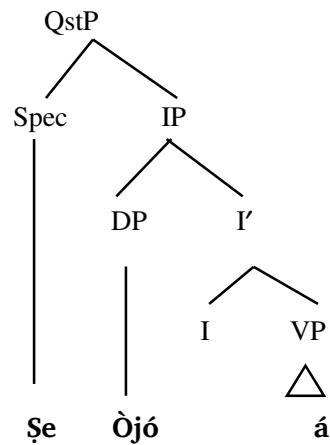
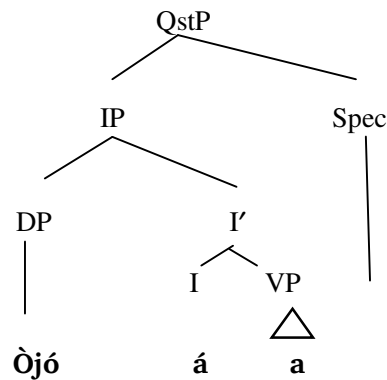
One can observe from (4b) and (5b) above that even though the extra vowel designated as *Question Marker* takes the form of the last vowel of the verb segmentally, the tone is different. Instead of copying the tone of the last vowel of the verb, the extra vowel takes a mid-tone. It means then that the tone on the last vowel of the verb has no influence on the tone that the vowel of the question marker bears. The implication of this is that if this extra vowel bears the tone of the vowel of the verb, then, the sentence will be ungrammatical because a wrong question marker has been selected from the lexicon. The question to ask here is could there be any element in the underlying form to which the last vowel of the verb assimilates? Our immediate answer will be that there cannot be any underlying element in such position. We say this because the verb that is placed in this position does not have any object and therefore, instead of using tone as question marker here, Àhàn uses a vowel (see Awobuluyi 1978, Omoruyi, 1989).

The structure of the Yes/No question in Àhàn is represented in the form of the configuration in (6a and b) below.



In (6a), the configuration represents a situation when the question marker is in the initial position i.e. **Şe**. But (6b) shows the configuration of an elongated vowel designated as the question marker. The marker here i.e. **şe** resembles what we have in Ào (see Taiwo, 2007) however, the tone is different. While this same marker bears a high tone in Ào, it is mid tone in Àhàn.

We can use the schemata in (6a and b) to explain the structure of (4a and b) above on the tree diagrams in (7a and b) below. Since the two examples above follow the same pattern, I will only use (4) for the derivational configuration.

(7) a. **Şe Ojó á a**b. **Òjó á a**

To summarize, it is observed that in Àhàn, these are the only two strategies to derive Yes/No or polar question in the language. One is by using the question marker **şe** while the other is by elongating or lengthening the last vowel of the verb within the clause with a mid-tone.

I shall now turn to content or constituent (also called WH) interrogatives.

2.2 WH INTERROGATIVES IN ÀHÀN

As we look at the derivation of question formation in the world languages, we observe that languages differ with the preferred position of *wh*-words or interrogative words/phrases. Akrofi-Ansah (2010:99) rightly notes that

Constituent words or phrases may be put obligatorily in clause-initial position; they may occupy the same position as the constituent questioned or they may occupy either of these two positions in which case the language accepts both positions.

Languages can then be described in terms of its interrogative constituents as fronting, in-situ or optional fronting respectively as the case may be (cf. Siemund, 2001). Like in many Kwa languages, of which Àhàn is one, where focus marking plays a significant role in constituent interrogation formation, Àhàn is a constituent fronting interrogation language. However, Àhàn does not employ focus marker in the derivation of its constituent questions. Therefore, there is no item that separates the focused question marker from the rest of the interrogative sentence in the question formation in the Àhàn language. This will be made clearer as we go on in this section.

Various words are used as interrogative markers in various contexts in Àhàn. Some of the interrogative words have both syntactic and semantic distinctions. The table below (8) illustrates the inventory of the interrogative markers in the Àhàn language.

(8) Concept	Interrogative Word	Gloss
[+human]	eké/sába	Who
[±animate]	kè/síbí	What
[+location]	şufi	Where
[+time/period]	şúgbì	When
[+enumeration]	sólù	How many/much

As can be observed from the table in (8), the last three interrogative markers start with consonant **s**; for now, we cannot explain the reason for the resemblance in the initial consonants of these three markers. However, we believe there is nothing particularly strange in this coincidence. English language, for example, has virtually all its interrogative markers beginning with *wh*. In fact, it is from this that linguists give name to interrogative markers in various languages of the world. Therefore we do not see anything spectacular in the said consonant beginning many of question markers here. However, the issue of **eké/sába** ‘who’ and **kè/síbí** ‘what’ needs some postulations. We want to posit that diachronically, Àhàn might be a noun class language and that what we see in the two interrogative markers is a vestige of its being a noun class at some particular time in the past.

In all the interrogative words in Àhàn, there is no one that marks gender distinction. The first two interrogative words in (8) above can be used for any human entity as the case may be without recourse to gender. I shall present the sentential use of all the interrogative markers before explaining their derivation. Each of the interrogative words in (8) above will be presented for discussion.

2.2.1 Eké/saba (who) as interrogative marker in Àhàn

As with all interrogative words in Àhàn, **eké** ‘who’ is put in the initial position. It has a semantic property in that it is used only for entities that have the feature [+human]. It has no inflection for gender. But when the questioned element is plural, the form changes as in (10) below.

In Àhàn examples given in (9), the interrogative marker **eké** ‘who’ moves from the object position of the verb within the sentence to the initial position of the interrogative sentence i.e. [Spec, CP] position.

- (9) a. **Eké_i Òjó ò yè t_i**
 Who Òjó. Med.P² see
 Who did Òjó see?
- b. **Eké_i mì yè t_i**
 Who 1sg. see
 Who did I see?
- c. **Eké_i mì fẹyèt_i**
 Who 1sg love
 Who do I love?
- d. **Eké_i Adé è lù t_i**
 Who Adé. Med.P beat
 Who did Adé beat?
- e. **Eké_i t_i gbì iwè jì Adé**
 Who give book for Adé.
 Who gave a book to Adé?

The examples in (9) form part of the many other interrogative sentences in Àhàn where this type of interrogative marker can be used. All the sentences manifest a case of *wh*-movement. *Wh*-movement refers to the movement of '*wh*-phrases' from their base positions to their clause-initial positions (Koopman et.al.2009:373). All the sentences in (9) have their *wh*-phrases represented by **eké**, move from the object positions to the initial position of the clause in [Spec, CP]. However, the case in (9e) is different. The *wh*-phrase is moved from the subject position to the Spec, CP. In other words, while the *wh*-phrases in (9a-d) move from the object position to Spec, CP, that in (9e) moves from the subject position to the Spec-CP hence the interrogative marker is immediately followed by a trace. And since Àhàn does not use focus marker in the derivation of its content questions, there is no element to separate the question marker from the trace. The type of movement in (9e) is what is called *vacuous movement* in the literature.

In (9a-d), the verbs are left stranded which is not the case in (9e) where the verb (a Serial Verb Clause in this case) remains in the medial position of the sentence. The movement in (9e) is from the subject position to Spec CP; hence the interrogative marker is immediately followed by a trace '*t_i*'. Looking at (9a) and (9d), it is observed that there is an extra vowel which takes the form of the last vowel of the preceding noun but with a low tone. I have designated this vowel as medial particle. This Medial Particle (Med.P) which is inserted, only surfaces when the interrogative marker immediately precedes a referential/proper noun. When it is followed by a pronoun, the vowel does not surface, hence, we call it medial particle. The function of this medial particle is twofold. One, it is to differentiate between structures where an R-expression (i.e. a lexical noun like Ojo, Olu, etc) is used from structures where a pronoun is used as the subject of a focused construction. Two, it functions as a capitulatory pronoun, thereby making for proper government (cf. Sonaiya 1988, Lawal 2006).

² This low toned **ò** is designated as medial particle here.

However, as I have earlier pointed out, when the element questioned is plural, the question marker takes a different form. This means that overtly, the interrogative marker that has the feature [+human] inflects for plural in the Àhàn language. The sentences in (10) show the form of this interrogative marker.

- (10) a. **Sába_i mì yè t_i?**
 Who.PL 1sg see
 ‘Who did I see?’
- b. **Sába_i é_i á**
 Who.PL. OP come
 ‘Who came?’

The implication of **sába** as against **eké** as an interrogative marker is that what is being referred to is more than one. For instance in (10a), the question can be reframed in such a way that it can appear like ‘who were the people that I saw’ and that of (10b) can be like ‘who were the people that came’. In (10a), movement is from the object position; while in (10b) movement is from the subject position hence one finds the insertion of **é** which is designated here as Operator.

2.2.2 Kè (what) as interrogative marker

Kè ‘what’ unlike **eké** or **sába** ‘who’, is used to question entities that have the feature [±animate]. It is used to inquire about entities other than those that have the feature [+human]. The following are examples of sentences where **kè** is used.

- (11) a. **Kè_i Olú gbà t_i á**
 What Olu bring/take come
 ‘What did Olú bring?’
- b. **Kè_i Òjó yà tsot_i**
 What Òjó tns. want
 ‘What does Òjó want?’
- c. **Kè_i ọ yè t_i**
 What 3pl see
 ‘What did they see?’
- d. **Kè_it_i wu ode Òjó**
 What fell house Ojo.
 ‘What fell on Òjó’s house?’
- e. **Kè_i t_i ra**
 What lose
 ‘What got lost/what has got lost?’

The interrogative markers in (11a-c) are moved from the object position to the [Spec, CP] leaving the verbs stranded. However, the interrogative markers in (11d-e) are moved from the subject position of the clause to [Spec, CP] position, hence, like (9e) above, the trace immediately follows the interrogative marker. The question here is: why is it that there is no insertion of **é** (which we have earlier designated as Medial Particle) in (11d-e)? The answer is that when there is similarity in the features of the

vowel of the interrogative marker, a rule of elision is invoked. In this instance, vowel contraction, which is a phonological process, comes into operation. This informs the reason why there is no *é* in those sentences even though the movement is from the subject position.

However, as shown in (12) and (13) below, this interrogative marker has two forms. Each form selects the verb that goes with it. From my investigation, I observe that the verbs ‘say’ and ‘see’ have the same form in Àhàn which is **yè**; i.e. **yè** as a verb can be interpreted to mean ‘see’ and/or ‘say’. But when each of these verbs is used in interrogative sentences where the verb **yè** is interpreted differently, the markers are different. The examples below give credence to this observation.

- (12) a. **Síbí ò yè**
 What 3pl. say
 ‘What did they say?’
- b. **Síbí ò mà yè**
 What 3pl. NEG say
 ‘What did they not say?’
- c. **Síbí Adé yè**
 What Ade say
 ‘What did Adé say?’
- (13) a. **Kè ò yè**
 What 3pl. see
 ‘What did they see?’
- b. **Kè ò mà yè**
 What 3pl. NEG see
 ‘What did they not see?’

The interrogative marker in (12) and (13) above disambiguates the ambiguities between the two uses of the verb **yè** ‘say/see’ in the sentences. However, this is not the case when these same verbs appear in a declarative sentence. The meaning is only recoverable in the context. See the examples below.

- (14) a. **Olú yè eriko tika**
 Olu see man the
 ‘Olú saw the man.’
- b. **Mà yè Olú así ajá**
 1sg see Olu PREP. market
 ‘I saw Olú in the market.’
- (15) a. **Òjó yè òyè**
 Ojo say word
 ‘Òjó said/spoke the word or Òjó spoke.’
- b. **Òjó é yè**
 Ojo FUT. speak
 ‘Òjó will speak.’

- c. **Òjó ká yè**
 Ojo ASP. speak
 'Ojó has spoken.'

Situations like (14 and 15) above show that pragmatics can come into play when doing syntactic analysis. This phenomenon clearly manifests in the Àhàn language.

3.2.3 **Şúfi (where) as interrogative marker**

The interrogative marker **şúfi** is used to ask for the location of a particular object. Like other interrogative markers in the language, this marker is also placed at the [Spec, CP] position and is followed by a null phonetic focus marker. Consider the following sentential examples.

- (16) a. **Şúfi ngho yún**
 Where 2sg go
 'Where did you go?'
- b. **Şúfi Olú ti á**
 Where Olú PART. come
 'Where did Olú come from?'
- c. **Şúfi Òjó yerà**
 Where Òjó go
 'Where did Òjó go?'
- d. **Şúfi Olú ñthì**
 Where Olú sleep
 'Where did Olú sleep?'

Certain issues manifest in the examples in (16). Looking at (16b) the **ti** designated as *particle* looks like the bperfective aspect in Yorùbá. This particle does not stand as an aspect marker in Àhàn but as a locative marker. In fact, the perfective marker in Àhàn is **ká** which is different both in form and tone from that of Yorùbá **ti**. (I will not go into the discussion of Tense, Aspect and Modal (TAM) in Àhàn here; it is a subject of another paper in preparation by the author). However, this is not to say that Yorùbá has no locative marker which is represented by **ti** as shown in (17) below. But I want to say that this might be a mere coincidence or that there is an influence of Yorùbá on Àhàn in this instance since Àhàn language situates within the Yorùbá speaking area.

- (17) **Ó ti Èkó wá sí Ìbàdàn** (Yorùbá)
 3sg LOC. Lagos come PREP Ibadan
 'He came from Lagos to Ibadan.'

Situations like these have nothing to do with the status of Àhàn as a distinct language from Yorùbá.

2.2.4 *Şúgbi* (when) as interrogative marker

Şúgbi is a question marker in Àhàn that enquires about the time or period of an event. It is interesting to note that while in some Kwa languages, this question marker is in the form of a phrase, Àhàn uses just a lexical item. Akrofi-Ansah (ibid.) reports that, in Larteh, a phrase is used as a marker of this type of interrogation. She gives the sentence below as part of her examples.

- (18) **Berefè ne te/manke ne a bè-yó sukuu** (Larteh)
 Time how much in (time of day) FOC 3sg FUT-go school
 ‘When will he/she go to school?’

(Akrofi-Ansah 2010:104)

She further reports that in related languages like Akan and Ga, the interrogative device for eliciting information about temporal setting is a phrase and not a word; though she did not give examples and I am not able to lay my hands on the dissertation she referred to, I only rely on her judgement here (cf. Saah, 2000 and Kotey, 2002).

Yorùbá, a Kwa language like Àhàn, also makes use of a phrase as a marker of enquiring for time/period. Consider (19)³.

- (19) a. **(Ní) ìgbà wo > (nígbà wo) ni Òjó dé** (Yorùbá)
 PREP. period QstM FOC Ojo come
 ‘When did Òjó come/arrive?’
- b. **(Ní) ìgbà wo ni wọn yóò lẹ** (Yorùbá)
 Prep. period QM FOC 3pl FUT go
 ‘When will they go/proceed?’

Where the languages (Larteh and Yorùbá) referred to above make use of phrases as question markers, Àhàn makes use of just a word which occupies the [Spec, CP]. We give examples below.

- (20) a. **Şugbi_i ngho yé hù t_i**
 When 2sg MedP. come
 ‘When did you come/arrive?’
- b. **Şugbi_i Ojó thèrù t_i**
 When Ojo eat
 ‘When did Òjó eat?’
- c. **Şugbi_i ọ òthì t_i**
 When 3pl sleep
 ‘When did they sleep?’
- d. **Şugbi_i ngho yúnt_i**
 When 2sg go
 ‘When do you want to go?’

³ An anonymous review argues that **wo** is the question marker in structures like those in (19a and b) and that it is not the whole PP. Since the focus of this paper is Àhàn and not Yorùbá, we will not go into the discussion of the issue here. This is a subject for another paper.

Just like other interrogative markers, verbs in the above sentences are left stranded after the objects have been moved. We should observe that in questions of this type, the item which was turned to WH interrogative marker can only be at the adjunct position.

2.2.5 Sòlú (how much/many) as an interrogative marker

Sòlú as an interrogative marker is used to ask for number, price or quantity of an item. The marker is also moved from the originating position to [Spec, CP] as the landing site. I give examples of this marker in sentences in (21a and b).

- (21) a. **Sòlu** **èri** **uṣu** (Price)
 How much be yam
 ‘How much is yam?’
- b. **Sòlù** **Òjó** **rà** **àwù** (Price)
 How much Ojo buy cloth
 ‘How much did Òjó buy the cloth?’
- c. **Sòlù** **èri** **uṣu** **ṅgho** **rà** (Number/Quantity)
 How many be yam 2sg buy
 ‘How many yams did you buy?’
- d. **Sòlù** **mì** **rà** (Number/Quantity)
 How many 1sg buy
 ‘How many do/did I buy?’
- e. **Sòlù** **ode** **Olú** **kó** (Number)
 How many house Olu built
 ‘How many houses did Olú build?’

As can be seen from the data in (21), in this type of question, Àhàn does not differentiate between price and number/quantity. The same question marker is used for both. The only way to differentiate is through context. I believe that the differentiation is more of pragmatic than syntactic. I say this for the fact that it is only those who know the background of the discussion that can be able to adduce meaning to the marker whether the speaker is talking of price or number. Based on my findings, this phenomenon is peculiar to Àhàn. However, this does not rule out the fact that other languages that have not been discovered may manifest this peculiarity.

Having discussed some of the interrogative markers in Àhàn, the next thing is to answer the question; how are these interrogative sentences derived from the basic sentence. This question will be answered in section three below.

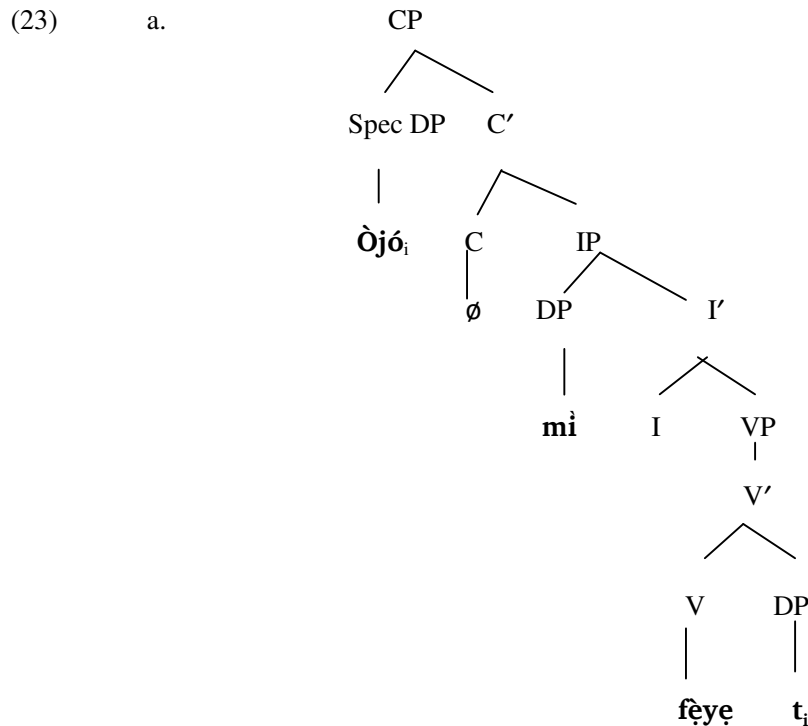
3. DERIVATION OF INTERROGATIVES IN ÀHÀN

In the derivation of constituent interrogation, focus marking plays a significant role. The term focus construction as defined by Drubig and Schaffer (2001:1079) “...denotes a type of sentence that serves to promote a specified constituent, its focus, to a position of particular prominence by setting it off from the rest of the sentence in one way or another.” In Àhàn, I observe that in the derivation of content

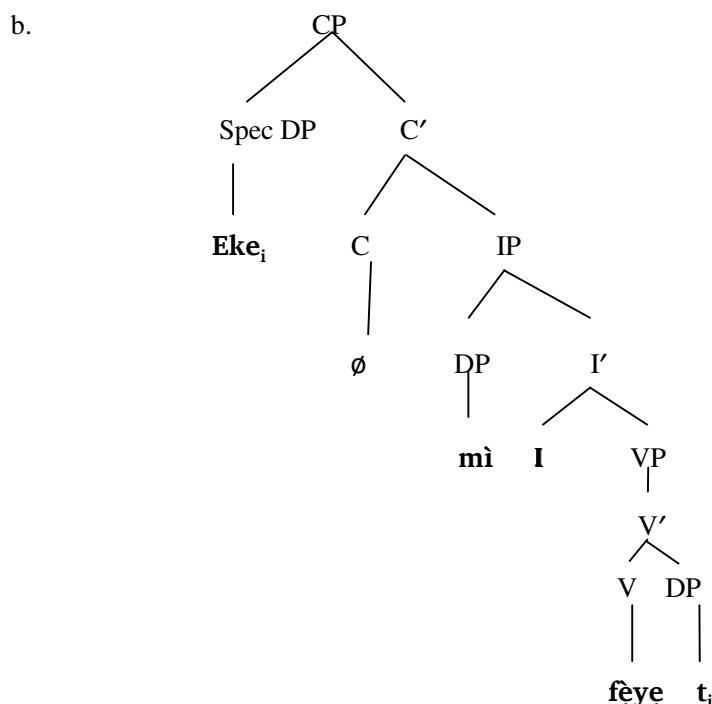
interrogatives, NP, which becomes a WH-phrase, is not reduced to WH phrase at the launching/originating position. What I observe to be the case is that the NP either in the subject or object position, moves to the [Spec, CP] of the landing site, before it becomes a WH constituent. As will be shown through the various examples we are going to present, we can posit that the WH constituent in [Spec, CP] in Àhàn is at the in-situ position because the element (NP) that is moved is turned into a WH phrase at the Spec, CP. We illustrate our explanation through the sentences in (22).

- (22) a. **Mà fẹyẹ Òjó** (basic clause)
 1sg love Ojo
 'I love Òjó.'
- b. **Òjó mì fẹyẹ** (focus construction)
 Ojó 1sg love
 'It is Òjó I love.'
- c. **Eké mì fẹyẹ** (Content question)
 Who 1sg love
 'Who do I love?'

What (22) above shows is that the NP Òjó, which is the object of **fẹyẹ** 'love' in (22a), is focused and then moved to the [Spec, CP] in (22b) before it is changed to a *wh*-phrase in-situ in order to turn the sentence into a content question in (22c). In (23) I present the tree diagram to show the derivation of the content question from the focus sentence. First I present the focus construction configuration before the interrogative structural tree.



(23a) above is represented in its question derivation position in (23b)



The implication of the phenomenon of having the WH phrase in-situ in Àhàn means that echo question in the language is rare if there is any at all. The question is how do they utter the type of sentences presented in (24)? The simple answer is no Àhàn person will utter the sentences in the form presented. What this means is that structures like (24) below are ungrammatical in Àhàn.

- (24) a. *Òjó yẹ èke
 Òjó see who
 ‘Òjó saw who?’
- b. *ngho yún sufi
 2sg go where
 ‘You went where?’
- c. *Òjó yá tsokè
 O. Tns. want what
 ‘Òjó wants what?’
- d. *Mà fẹyẹ eké
 1sg. love who
 ‘I love who?’

In essence, a DP that originates in a lower clause moves to the [Spec, CP] of the matrix clause where it becomes a WH phrase in-situ.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I posit that a WH marker specified as [+human] inflects for plural; the example of which is given in the body of the paper. Not only this, I also posit that the WH phrase in the language is derived in the in-situ. Though, as I have pointed out, it does not mean that there is no movement in the derivation of interrogative sentences, only that the NP either in the subject, object or adjunct positions moves first to [Spec, CP] position as a focused NP before it is turned to a WH phrase in-situ. This is a clear cut difference from derivation of WH phrases in other in-situ languages of the world where no element moves from anywhere in the sentence (see Akrofi-Ansah, 2010). We therefore submit that in Àhàn, echo questions are non-existent and if they exist at all, they are very rare. This paper has also argued that Àhàn language does not make use of focus marker in the derivation of interrogative sentences. I therefore submit that the phenomenon of the absence of focus marker in Àhàn is one of the major factors that differentiate the language from Yorùbá and some other Defoid languages. For instance, in Yorùbá, when an element is moved from the originating site to Spec CP, there is always an insertion of **ní** which is immediately preceded by the moved element. This scenario is not attested in Àhàn. Therefore, the language cannot be said to be a dialect of the Yorùbá language. I have also shown in the paper that the verb **yẹ** which can be interpreted as ‘speak or see’ has different interrogative markers selected when the verb is interpreted as ‘see’ against when it is interpreted as ‘speak’.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASP	Aspect	QstM	Question Marker
C	Complementizer	QstP	Question Phrase
CP	Complementizer Phrase	Spec	Specifier
DP	Determiner Phrase	V	Verb
FOC	Focus	V	Verb Phrase
FUT	Future marker	WH	Content Question Marker/Phrase
I	Inflection	1pl.	First Person Plural Pronoun
IP	Inflectional Phrase	1sg.	First Person Singular Pronoun
LOC	Locative	2pl.	Second Person Plural Pronoun
Med.P	Medial Particle	2sg.	Second Person Singular Pronoun
NEG	Negator	3pl.	Third Person Plural Pronoun
OP	Operator	1pl.	First Person Plural Pronoun
PART	Particle	3sg.	Third Person Singular Pronoun
PREP	Preposition		

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