

A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF YORÙBÁ ABBREVIATED TERMS ON X PLATFORM

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Abstract

This study examines the syntactic structure of Yorùbá abbreviated terms (YATs) on X. It investigates the transformational process involved in their syntactic derivation. Although abbreviation is primarily regarded as a morphological process, it is not indigenous to Yorùbá but a concept borrowed from the English language, where its use is more widespread. The study adopts the X-bar Theory and Movement Rule within the Principle and Parameters Framework to analyse the syntactic structure of Yorùbá abbreviations. These theoretical models explain how deep structure is mapped onto surface structure through syntactic transformations. The analysis focuses on three transformational processes: deletion, insertion, and movement of constituents. Data were gathered from users' posts and comments on X between January 2023 and August 2024. A total of 500 posts from political, sports, religious, and gender-related discourse were sampled. From these, 50 Yorùbá abbreviated terms were selected for detailed analysis using the X-bar Theory and Movement Rule of the Principle and Parameters framework. The findings show that Yorùbá abbreviated terms on X can be classified into four syntactic types: declarative, negative, focused, and interrogative abbreviations. The study concludes that analysing Yorùbá digital communication from both micro- and macro-linguistic perspectives enhances our understanding of the role of internet language in the ongoing development of the Yorùbá language.

Key Words: Yorùbá language, Transformation rules, internet language, acronyms, language dynamism and social media

Àṣamọ̀

Iṣe iwádíí. Yíi se àgbéyèwò ihun síntáàsi àwọn igékúrú ọ̀rọ̀ Yorùbá (AIOY) lóri pepe ibànisòrò ayélujára X. Iwádíí yíi se àyèwò àwọn oté iyídá tí ó ní se pelú ilàná isèdá wón. Bí ó tilẹ̀ jẹ̀ pé igékúrú jẹ̀ ọ̀kan lára ilàná isèdá ọ̀rọ̀, kíi se ọ̀kan lára ilàná ibilẹ̀ isèdá ọ̀rọ̀ lédè Yorùbá, inú èdè Ge'èsi tí a tí sàbà máa n ló ó ní a tí yá a. Tíòrì onípele (Èsì-baa) àti òfin igbèfò abẹ̀ tíòrì awoté-wògàba ní a fí se atupalẹ̀ àwọn igékúrú yíi. Àwọn tíòrì yíi ṣàlàyé bí òfin iyídá se so ihun ipilẹ̀ mó ihun òkè. Ilàná igbèse iyídá méta ní itupalẹ̀ iṣe yíi funka mó, àwọn ní: igékúrú, ifibò, àti igbèfò àwọn fónràn ihun láti ipò kan sí òmiràn. A gba èròjà-àmúkalẹ̀-fáyèwò lóri pepe ibànisòrò ayélujára X láti osù kínní oḍún 2023 tí tí dé osù kejo oḍún 2024 nípasẹ̀ àwọn àkosilẹ̀ àti àriwísí olùlò. Èdègbèta tútí lóri ọ̀rọ̀ isèlú, eré idárayá, èsin, àti ọ̀rọ̀ ajemọ̀ takotabo ní a wò, tí a sí fí tíòrì onípele àti òfin iyídá abẹ̀ tíòrì awoté-wògàba se àgbéyèwò áádótá àwọn igékúrú ọ̀rọ̀ Yorùbá (AIOY). Iṣe iwádíí yíi fídí rẹ̀ múlẹ̀ pé ọ̀nà méré ní a lè pin àwọn igékúrú ọ̀rọ̀ orí pepe ibànisòrò ayélujára X sí ní ilàná síntáàsi, àwọn ní ọ̀rọ̀ igékúrú tí a ṣedá láti ara gbólóhùn àlàyé, iyísódi, àkiyèsí alátenuṃò àti ibèèrè. Ní ikádíí, a se àkiyèsí pé fífi ojú imò èdá-èdè ajemáwújo àti ajemóhùn se àgbéyèwò ilàná ibànisòrò lóri ayélujára le se iranwó fún síse àfihàn ipa èdè ayélujára lóri idàgbàsókè èdè Yorùbá.

Àwọn kókó ọ̀rọ̀: Èdè Yorùbá, òfin iyídá, èdè orí ayélujára, igékúrú, iyipadà èdè àti pepe ibànisòrò orí ayélujára.

1. Introduction

Language is the source of life. It is the vehicle through which the thought, knowledge, art and culture of a particular people are transmitted from one generation to another. Language is dynamic, with changes expected all the time. Arokoyo (2025:7) buttresses this claim when she states that:

Language is the heartbeat of human communication. Language is the principal means by which human beings communicate with one another. It is our most powerful tool, the bridge that connects our thought to the world around us. It is how we expressed love and hatred, build friendships and rivalries, create art and literature and share our deepest fears and greatest aspirations.

We agree with Ajileye's (2015: 109) assertions when he explains the concept of Anglicism in Yorùbá personal and business names. He asserts that "the domestication of the English language in Nigeria has not only produced the 'Nigerianess' of English but also that Anglicism in names has produced the 'Englishness' in Yorùbá names". Ajileye (2015: 109) continues that,

the youth are the drivers of language expansion, adaptation, modification and acclimatization, which are often done either consciously or unconsciously. This study observes that word formation, such as slangs, Anglicisms and abbreviations, which is the focus of this paper, is produced by both literate and non-literate Yorùbá native and non-native speakers, and the focus of this study will be to examine their usage on the X platform formerly known as Twitter. The study of Yorùbá abbreviations, most especially on X, is important because it reflects the people's economic use of words as well as the bundle of syntactic properties embedded in their formation, which, to the best of these researchers' knowledge, has not been fully examined. In this work, we examine Yorùbá Abbreviated Terms (YAT) usage on X-platform by adopting Chomsky's X-bar theory and Principles and Parameters Theory. Although abbreviations are primarily studied within morphology, sentence-derived abbreviations, particularly those derived through transformational processes, also require syntactic analysis. The X-bar phrase structure model provides an appropriate framework for accounting for headedness of each phrase as well as the movement of noun phrases (NPs) from one position to another in the derivation of these abbreviated sentences. Liu et al. (2023: 1) corroborate this claim when they opine that: "Although some online language expressions are peculiar and even difficult to understand, their spontaneous creativity and word formation methods still leave us with research opportunities."

Time certainly has changed; the formative media of the eighties and early nineties bear little resemblance to those of today. Then it was radio, newspapers, magazines, television, mostly indigenous films and music, but now it is the internet, social media, apps and game platforms. Obviously, language use on these platforms has evolved. Some of the digital platforms that are used include Meta, TikTok, Instagram, Google, YouTube, WhatsApp, Email and X, with the latter serving as the main source for our data.

X is a free social networking site formerly known as Twitter, where users broadcast short posts referred to as tweets. According to @EiE Nigeria in Yusuf, Adetomiwa and Adedeji (2020: 154), Nigerian tweets are about 360 million and rank second behind Egypt with 500 million tweets monthly in Africa. However, global digital report (2019) estimates Nigerian Twitter users at about 1.6 million, while Intelpoint (2025) reports the global X usage thus:

The data on Twitter (X) usage globally as of January 2025 reveals that North America and Eastern Asia dominate the platform with 115 million and 102 million users respectively, accounting for nearly 40% of global users combined. Meanwhile, Africa's total share remains relatively small, at 4.8%, with Nigeria contributing a notable 7.57 million users. Nigeria's 7.57 million users surpass the entire Twitter population of Eastern Africa and Oceania. It's also larger than the totals of many smaller regions, including Southern Africa, Central Asia and the Caribbean.

These researchers' adoption of the X platform is premised on the number of Nigerian users on the platform and the perceived prominence of Yorùbá abbreviated terms on the X social media platform. We observed that while syntactic constructions such as Negation, Focus construction, Question formation, among others, have been extensively studied in standard Yorùbá and most of its dialects, very little is known about the syntactic formation of Yorùbá abbreviated terms, most especially Yorùbá abbreviated terms used on the X-platform. This is the research vacuum we aim to fill with this paper. Our primary focus is to carry out a detailed syntactic analysis of Yorùbá abbreviated terms on X. This will be achieved through the following objectives: (i) to examine the status of abbreviation and acronym in Yorùbá derivation on X; (ii) to identify the syntactic structure of Yorùbá abbreviated terms on X; (iii) to identify different sentence types attested in the derivation of Yorùbá abbreviated terms on X; and (iv) to examine the transformational processes attested in the derivation of Yorùbá abbreviated terms on X platform.

2. Literature Review

Language use in modern times can be classified into internet and non-internet usage. Shewale (2024:1) states that "since the year 2018, every day approximately 900,000 people have gone online for the first time. In 2023, there are more than 5.3 billion active users around the globe, which accounts for 65.4% of the global population".

We identified that the process of abbreviation as a mechanism of language expansion in Yorùbá language is an aspect of borrowing from English language, as it has been observed by researchers that not only words can be borrowed from one language to another, structure and pattern of one language can be infused into another (Banjo, 2000; Winford, 2003) and others give credence to this assertion. Haugen (1950) cited in Ajileye (2015: 115) gave credence to this assertion when he explained borrowing as “mixture, stealing, adoption and diffusion”, that is, linguistic borrowing is the attempted reproduction in one language of patterns previously found in another. In this research work, the researchers opined that patterns and systems of abbreviation of English language are adopted in the derivation for Yorùbá Abbreviated Terms, henceforth, YATs.

Acronyms, according to Arokoyo (2017: 150), are words formed from the initial of several words. There are two types of acronyms, which are words acronyms and spelling acronyms, which are also referred to as initialism or abbreviation. Arokoyo (2017) asserts further that spelling acronym is pronounced as the initial letters of the words. We observed that while the usage of abbreviations and other word formation processes in the language of the internet has been examined by different scholars. Few studies have focused on the use of Yorùbá abbreviations on the X platform. Scholars such as Arokoyo (2017: 151) explain that “the importance of the language of the internet cannot be overemphasized as it has drastically increased our words through different word formation processes. Most of the users of the social media platforms like E-mails, WhatsApp, Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, Twitter, Imo, Snapchat, and 2go use acronyms and abbreviations to pass their messages via chatting and short messages.”

Arokoyo (2017:151) further gave the following examples of internet language in English to buttress her claim:

- 1) i. **BAE** - Before Anybody Else
- ii. **LOL** - Laughing Out Loud
- iii. **CTN** - Cannot Talk Now
- iv. **BRB** - Be Right Back
- v. **ICYMI** - In Case You Missed It.

(2017:151)

Arokoyo (2017:151) emphasizes the importance of internet language as a significant area of contemporary linguistic inquiry. Building on this position and the views of other scholars discussed above, this study contends that a syntactic analysis of the derivation of Yorùbá Abbreviated Texts (YATs) on the X platform will contribute to filling the existing gap in research on Yorùbá internet language. We observed that Yorùbá Abbreviated Terms are indigenous word formation mechanism that is used by Yorùbá people to shorten or condense noun phrase into few letters. Examples of such word formation mechanism include names of popular politicians such as Moshood Kasimaawo Olawale (**MKO**), Lateef Kayode Jakande (**LKJ**), Abubakar Bukola Saraki (**ABS**), to mention just few. The current study observed that Yorùbá Abbreviated Terms are indigenous word formation mechanism used by Yorùbá people to shorten or economize noun phrase into few letters. A substantial body of literature has explored the impact of the internet on communication and language use, with notable contributions from AbuSa’aleek (2015), Aiyeola (2020), Ogunbona and Rafiu (2023), and Olaogun (2025). AbuSa’aleek (2015: 136) states that “E-discourse is a new variety of language that leads to significant variations in written structure of language”. Some of the terms that have been used by researchers for this mode of communication include electronic discourse, electronic language, computer-mediated communication, cyber language, internet language, language of the internet, digital communication etc. AbuSa’aleek (2015) explains the word formation processes used by university students in Saudi Arabia. He states that students adopt word formation mechanisms such as Shortening, Clipping, Contraction, Unconventional Spellings, Word-letter replacement, Word-digit replacement, Word combination, Initialism and Emoticons. He observed that the use of unconventional spellings has highest percentage of usage while emoticons have the lowest.

Averianova (2012: 15) explained the use of the internet as a catalyst of language expansion through word coinage in different languages. The scholar asserts that

“The unique linguistic and iconography features of electronic writing comprise but are not limited to innovative abbreviation (acronyms, clippings, logograms, or letter-numeral hybrid and letter morpheme substitute, vowel deletion etc.), emoticons, truncated simplified syntax, non-normative capitalization, and other characters.”

We recognized that there are limited studies on Yorùbá language in relation to internet language or digital communication, despite its recognition by scholars as a major instrument of globalization. Yusuf, Adetomiwa, and Adedeji (2020:150) support this claim, noting that only a handful of studies - such as Awofolu and Malita (2002), Odoje (2014), and Fagbolu et al. (2014) have examined the use of Yoruba in the digital space. For instance, Awofolu and Malita (2002) analyzed language use in machine translation in their work "*The Making of Yoruba-English Machine Translation*". Similarly, Odoje (2014) conducted a comprehensive analysis of Yoruba-English machine translation.

It was also discovered that while AbuSa'alek (2015) identifies unconventional spellings as dominant in Arabic e-discourse, Yoruba abbreviated terms on X show a heavier reliance on initialism through the use of initial letters to send coded messages, which can only be understood by those who have knowledge of the word formation style.

Furthermore, Yusuf et al. (2020) did a resource content analysis of Yoruba language, literature and culture usage on six social media platforms which are Meta (formerly Facebook), X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube and Google in their work titled "*Yoruba language, Development and Digital Communication: Ability, Capacity and Capability*" and advocated for further studies on Yoruba terminological usage on digital space. Yusuf et al. (2020: 162) assert that "Although quite a lot has been done on health (Yusuf and Fadairo 2013), (Yusuf et al. (ed.), 2017) vocabulary of primary science and mathematics in nine Nigerian languages (NERDC 1990) and governance-related terms (NERDC, 1991), a lot is still left untouched on new trends of terminologies, especially in the aspect of digital communications. The availability of such terms will also help build the interest of the audience". Despite significant work on internet language in English and Arabic, studies on Yoruba are scarce. Existing work on Yoruba in digital contexts (Awofolu 2002; Odoje 2014; Yusuf et al. 2020) has focused largely on translation and content analysis, but little attention has been given to syntactic modelling of Yoruba abbreviations.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted for this work is the Principles and Parameters Theory, which is also known as the Government and Binding theory. The architect of the theory is Chomsky (1981) in his work titled "Lectures on Government and Binding Theory". Other scholars, such as Radford (1988), Lasnik & Uriagereka (1988), Freidin (1992), Trask (1993), Haegeman (1994), Kayne (1994) and Black (1999) have equally provided some exegesis on GB theory. Trask (1993: 13) explains what Government and Binding theory entails when he says

“Government and binding theory can be defined as a modular deductive theory of grammar which posits multiple levels of representations (i.e. multiple strata level) related by the transformation rule move alpha. The application of move alpha is constrained by the interaction of various principles which act as condition of possible interactions”.

Sanusi (2017) explains that GB theory greatly eliminates the proliferation of transformation rules like passive, affix hopping, verb number agreement, question formation. Chomsky (1986: 7) sees universal grammar as a system of principles, common to the species and available to each individual prior to experience. Haegeman (1991: 13) buttresses Chomsky's point when she says that "Universal grammar is a system of all the principles that are common to all languages". An example of the universality of natural language is the occurrence of focusing at the left periphery of a focused sentence. Sanusi and Abrefa (2021: 45) opine that the focus constituent is usually extracted from its canonical position and placed at the left periphery, followed by the focus marker. Theoretically, the focused constituent becomes the specifier of

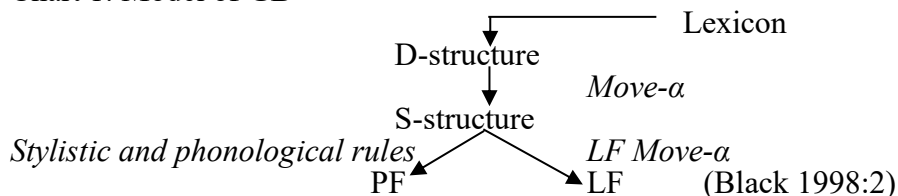
the functional head (F), and the TP becomes its complement. Evidence from SVO languages such as Akan and Yoruba give credence to this.

Chomsky (1981:29) explained the four levels of representation thus: “representation at each syntactic level, i.e. LF and D-Structure and S-Structure are projected from the lexicon, in that they observe the sub-categorization properties of lexical items”. Black (1998:2) expatiates more on Chomsky’s (1981) analysis of the levels of representation under the Government and Binding theory. He explains that:

These properties include what arguments the item subcategorizes for; etc. lexical items are combined together at D-structure (underlying structure). D-structure is mapped into S-structure, which is the syntactic representation that most closely reflects the surface order of the sentence. S-structure is not directly interpreted, but is factored into Phonological Form (PF) and Logical Form (LF). PF is the interface with the phonology where shapes, sounds, and groupings of items are directly represented. LF is the interface with the Semantics. Predication relationship and the scope of quantifiers and operators of various kinds are explicitly represented in the phrase structure at LF.

According to Black (1998: 2), GB assumes a derivational model consisting of four levels of representation as shown in the diagram below:

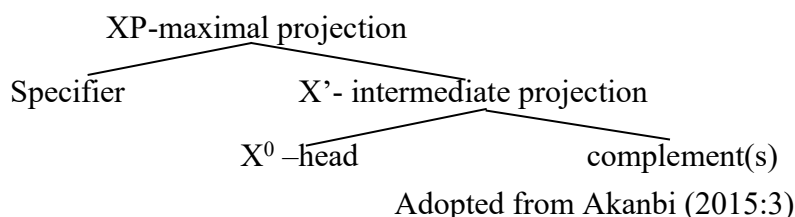
Chart 1: Model of GB



These levels are related to one another by rules (noted in italics in diagram above). Move- α map between D-structure and S-structure, and a similar rule maps S-structure into LF. Move- α is stated as a simple rule, basically allowing anything to move anywhere, since the system of constraints is responsible for correctly restricting this movement. This aspect of the movement rule will be adopted in this work.

Also, the X-bar model of syntax will be adopted for the analysis of our data. Baiyere (2004: 31) explained that “X-bar theory is part of the grammar that regulates and brings out what is common in the structure of phrases”. In the trees generated by the rules, the top node (corresponding to the left side of the rule) is known as the mother, with the two daughters introduced by the right side of the phrase structure rule as shown in this chart:

Chart 2: Basic X-bar Structure



Olorunmade (2021: 58) explained that:

X-bar brings out what is common in the structure and phrases of words and projects the characteristics of lexical entries into the syntax, which links the D-Structure into the S-Structure and logical form component to the lexicon by specifying the possible context in which a particular item can occur.

Akanbi (2015: 3) explains further that one important innovation brought into grammatical analysis through X’ syntax is the binary branching. Binary branching replaces, and it’s an

improvement over the earlier ternary branching. In this paper, our effort will be to examine and analyse YATs gathered from the social media X platform within the purview of syntax using Chomsky's Principles and Parameters Theory. The twin model of X-bar theory and movement rule (Move α) will serve as the theory through which our gathered data will be examined and analyzed syntactically using X-bar syntactic projections.

Chomsky's X-bar model and movement transformation rules are relevant to this study because, while abbreviation falls within the realm of morphology, the abbreviated terms are sentence-derived, most especially through the movement transformation rules. The abbreviated terms were derived from declarative, negative, focused, interrogative and relativized sentences. The X-bar model is relevant for this analysis as it recognized FP, Neg P., InterP. as the head of these derived sentences. It was observed that while the output of these derivations, i.e. abbreviation is morphology, their input are syntactic, which can be analyzed through the X-bar phrase structure rule and the movement rule under Government and Binding theory. Abbreviations such as this can be likened to Yorùbá names' derivation, whose inputs are mostly sentence-derived i.e. syntactic, but have been reduced to single nominal words at the output level.

4. Methods

This section presents the methodological framework adopted for the study. It discusses the research approach that guided the work and describes the data on which analysis is based. Specifically, this section explains the research approach and provides details of the data, including its source, selection, and relevance to the study.

4.1 Research Approach

This research work adopts a qualitative approach to data gathering and elicitation. Data were gathered solely on the X social media platform formerly known as Twitter. This was carried out between January 2023 and August 2024. Data were extracted from tweets and comments of users on the X platform, through a simple random sampling of over five hundred tweets from political, sport, religion and gender discourses. From this pool of data, fifty YATs were examined and analyzed through the X-bar model and the movement rule of the Government and Binding theory.

4.2. Data

Data gathered from these sources were decoded through X users' comments, which were used to gather audience response on the meaning of selected Yorùbá abbreviated terms gathered on the X platform. The main purpose of this is to determine if communication, which is the sole aim of language, whether spoken or written, exists between users of Yorùbá abbreviated terms and their audience. There is anonymity of all the users whose tweets were used as data for this research. We observed that most of the data gathered were profane in nature. This might have occurred as a result of the sources, through which these data were gathered, which are political, sport, religion and gender discourse. Contributors and X users that partake in political, sport, religion and gender discourse often make use of profane words through abbreviation mechanism as strategy of avoidance to evade X rules of engagement and filtering mechanisms. Liu et al. (2023: 4) gave credence to this assertion when they explain that "some words commonly used in real life situations may be restricted on the internet, but where there are policies there are countermeasures. Sometimes by simply changing a word, internet users can outsmart the filtering system". The research adopts the open coding strategy to classify YATs into different categories of sentences, which include Declarative, Focused, Negative and Interrogative sentences using X-bar and the movement model syntactic rules.

5. Yoruba Abbreviated Terms (YATs) and Their Significance

These are abbreviation of Yorùbá terms which can be abbreviation of a word, a phrase or a complete sentence. Online Yorùbá abbreviated terms usage is something we believe started recently, most especially on X. This is because X (formerly Twitter) was established in 2006 but launched in 2012 and gained prominence in Nigeria in 2013, according to Odinaka (2023). A few examples of such abbreviations include:

- 2) i. **KPK** – Kò pò kẹ? ‘Is it not plenty/ is it not awesome?’
 ii. **OPP** – Ó pò pa ‘It is absolutely plenty/awesome’
 iii. **OPG** – Ó pò gan ‘It is abundantly plenty/awesome’
 iv. **OPS** – Ó pò sẹ̀ ‘It is plenty/awesome’
 v. **OBO** – Omọ bàbá olówó ‘The child of a wealthy man’

YATs can be classified into three syntactic groups. These are the word initial abbreviation, syllabic initial abbreviation and SI-Unified abbreviation. Examples of these three forms of YATs are:

- 3) i. **AOP** – Ààyè ò pò ‘There is no much time’ (Initialism)
 ii. **OLF** – Olófo ‘Idiot or stupid person’ (Syllabic abbreviation)
 iii. **EYWRN** – È ya wèrè ni? ‘Are you mad?’ (SI-Unified abbreviation)

In example (3i), demonstrates initialism where the first letter of each word stands as representative of the whole word.. Example (3ii) shows syllabic abbreviation, which happens when the initial letter of each syllable in a word is selected to stand for the syllable. In the SI-Unified abbreviation, there is evidence of initialism and syllabic abbreviation. It is the combination of initialism and syllabic abbreviation as shown in example (3iii).

It is noted that for easy understanding of YATs usage on the X platform, some X users overdo this by inserting a whole syllable in the abbreviations or omitting some, as shown in (iv) below. This is what we call ‘the exception category’

- iv. **KORGFY** – Kò ní ragbá fún un yin ‘it shall never be well with you’

The whole syllable ‘kò’ was used as YATs instead of the initial letter ‘K’, and the second syllable in the sentence ‘ni’ was totally omitted, while other words in the sentence are represented with their initial letters. This shows that there is no standardized method of YATs derivation on X, so any other examples in this category will be regarded as exceptions, because they are very few in number. This shows that there is evidence of variation as well as users’ creativity on YAT’s derivation on the X platform.

We observed that the basic significance of YATs is the economic effect, i.e. to keep it short and simple, which makes communication easy. The use of YATs reveals Yorùbá X user’s creativity. It also helps to create a register for Yoruba X-platform users and to create a coded or secret form of communication; this is referred to as “ẹ̀nà” ‘register’ in Yorùbá language. The explanation in this section elucidates further about the variation and user creativity in categorization of YATs as seen in example (3 i-iv). Example (3iv) shows that there might be exceptions at times where a whole syllable is used as YATs or where a whole syllable is omitted completely.

6. Data Presentation and Analysis

The main focus of this aspect of the research paper will be to examine the syntactic components of YATs. Some of the sentences that will be examined and analyzed using the X-bar syntax and move alpha rule of Chomsky’s Principles and Parameters theory are declarative sentence, negative sentence, focused sentence and interrogative sentence.

6.1 Declarative Sentence Derived Abbreviation on X

Declarative sentence is the basic form, from which all derived sentences, such as interrogative sentence, focused sentence, negative sentence, etc., are derived. It is the primary sentence at the deep structure level which is mapped to the surface structure (derived sentence). Examples of declarative sentences derived YATs on X platform include the following:

- 4) i. **WTMG** – Wà á ti maa gbó ọ
 2SG. would FUT hear 3SG.O
 ‘You would have heard about it’
 ii. **OMSK**– O maa şánkú
 2SG FUT die
 ‘You will die violently’

- iii. **OMKTRTR** – **O máa kú tìrantìran**
 2SG FUT die with lineage
 ‘You will die with your entire lineage’
- iv. **ETYWR** – **È ti ya wèrè**
 2PL PRF become mad
 ‘You are mad’
- v. **MNFE** – **Mo ní ifé rẹ**
 1SG have love 2SG.
 ‘I love you’
- vi. **OYTB** – **Orí yín ti burú**
 Head 2PL. PRF. bad
 ‘You are already an unfortunate person’
- vii. **KSMD** – **Ká sàà máa dúpẹ**
 Let Intensifier FUT thankful
 ‘Let’s just be thankful’
- viii. **WSRR** – **Wà ẹ rere**
 2SG.S do good
 ‘You will do well’
- ix. **ORBR** – **Orí rẹ burú**
 Head 2SG.POSS bad
 ‘You are unfortunate’

These examples stated are in their underlying form, which is the base form for all derived sentences in Yoruba language. Relying on the X-bar model, using example (4ix), “orí” is the head of the noun phrase and the second person singular pronoun “rẹ” is the complement of the head while the verb “burú” ‘unfortunate’ is the head of the verb phrase and has no complement.

6.2 Negation

Negation is a universal phenomenon, which occurs in all languages of the world but differ in the way they are attested. Adenuga (2017: 132) explains that “negation is one of the most important elements in human mind which makes it an unavoidable part of natural language, the tools of human thoughts”. Negation is attested in Yorùbá language morphologically through the insertion of negation markers. Fabunmi (2013) asserts that negation markers occur in pre-verbal position in Yorùbá language. The negation markers for sentence, i.e. sentential negation in the language, are *kò*, *kọ*, *kí*, and *má* respectively.

We observed from the data gathered on YATs, only two Yorùbá sentential negation markers, which are “*kò*” and its medial variants “*ò*”, which are used to negate declarative sentence in Yorùbá and “*má*” which is used to negate imperative sentences, are used in the derivation of YATs. We opine that this is because these two negation markers are used more in profane dialogue between a speaker and his or her audience, which is the same with X users, where conversation and dialogue usually occur between two or more people that communicate without physical contact. These researchers observed that negation in YATs can be classified broadly into two types, which are Overt Negative Abbreviation and Covert Negative Abbreviation.

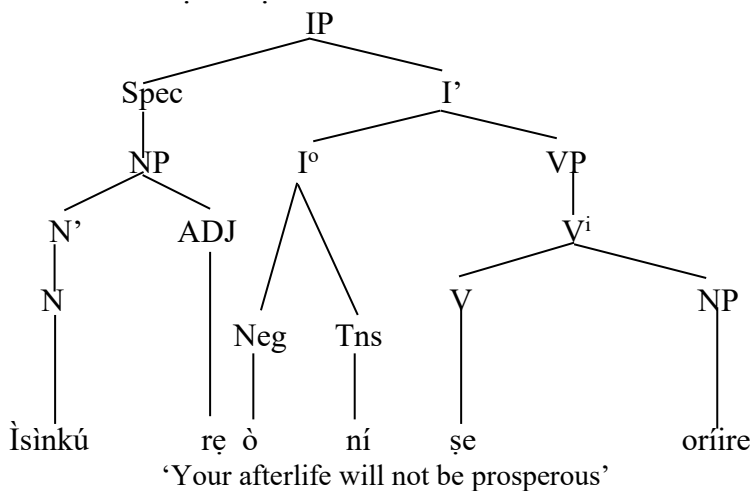
6.2.1 Overt Negative Sentence Derived Abbreviation

Overt negation is a syntactic process where the negation marker is orthographically visible in a derived negative sentence. Examples of YATs where the negation marker is overt and can be seen plainly in the orthography are the following:

- 5) i. **OKEONBL** – **Òkan ẹ ò ní balẹ**
 Heart 2SG.POSS NEG will settledown
 ‘You will not have rest of mind’

- ii. **OKEONSR – Ọkan ẹ** **ò ní ẹ** **ò ní ẹ** **ni ẹ** **ni ẹ**
Heart 2SG.POSS NEG will do success
‘Your mind will not be successful’
- iii. **ISKURONSRR–Ìsínkú ẹ** **ò ní ẹ** **ò ní ẹ** **ni ẹ** **ni ẹ**
Afterlife 2SG.POSS NEG will do success
‘Your afterlife will not be prosperous’
- iv. **KNDFE – Kò ní** **dáa fún ẹ**
NEG will better Prep. 2SG.
‘it shall not be well with you’
- v. **KNRF – Kò ní** **ra-gbá fún-un**
NEG will buy-calabash Prep. 3SG.
‘it shall not be well with him/her’
- vi. **KNRGFE – Kò ní** **ragbá fún ẹ**
NEG will buy-calabash Prep. 2SG.O
‘It shall not be well with you’
- vii. **KNDFO – Kò ní** **dára fún ọ**
NEG will well Prep. 2SG
‘It shall not be well with you’
- viii. **KNRFGGY – Kò ní** **ragbá fún gbogbo yin**
NEG will buy-calabash Prep. all 2PL
‘it shall not be well with all of you’
- ix. **KKAY – Kò kan** **ayé**
NEG concern world
‘It doesn’t concern us’
- x. **MFJPM – Má fejó** **pa mí**
NEG use-talk kill 1SG
‘Do not disturb me with unnecessary talk’

Chart 3: *Ìsínkú ẹ ọ ní ẹ ni ẹ*



It was observed that the sentential negation markers that are attested in the derivation of YATs on X platform are *kò* and its alternant *ò*, and *má* respectively. This tree diagram shows that negative sentence derivation in YATs has distinct syntactic features that distinguish it from the general syntax of negation in Yorùbá language.

6.2.2 Covert Negative Derived Abbreviation

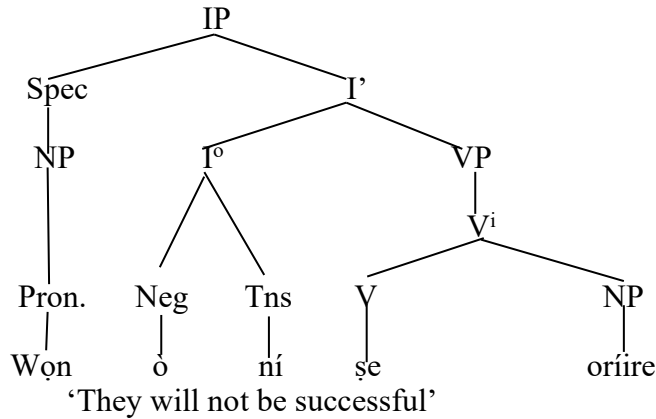
Covert negation is a syntactic process where the negation marker is not orthographically visible in a derived negative sentence. These researchers observed from the data gathered that in the derivation of this type of YATs, only the declarative negator **kò/ò** “will not” is attested. The negative marker of all these sentences, which is the sentential negator “**kò/ò**”, is made covert in the process of abbreviating these terms for economic and brevity purpose. Collins (2001: 45) explains the syntactic function of economy in syntax. He asserts that “economy considerations suggest that the representations formed in the course of a derivation should be as simple as possible, consisting of a minimal number of syntactic objects, each of which is interpretable (at either LF or PF)”. Examples of covert negative sentence derived abbreviation on X include:

- | | | | | | | |
|-------|-----------------|---|----------|-----------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 6) i. | ENKR – | È | ò | ní | kúure | |
| | | 2PL.S | NEG | will | die well | |
| | | ‘You will not die well’ | | | | |
| ii. | ONSR – | O | ò | ní | şe orüre | |
| | | 2SG.S | NEG | will | do success | |
| | | ‘You won’t be successful’ | | | | |
| iii. | ENSR – | È | ò | ní | şe orüre | |
| | | 2PL.S | NEG | will | do success | |
| | | ‘You won’t be successful’ | | | | |
| iv. | ONBGBP – | O | ò | ní | bégbé | pé |
| | | 2SG.S | NEG | will | with peer | fit |
| | | ‘You won’t fit in among your peers’ | | | | |
| v. | ONBGM – | O | ò | ní | bágbà | mu |
| | | 2SG.S | NEG | will | with time | suit |
| | | ‘You won’t be suitable for the time’ | | | | |
| vi. | ONRBTS – | O | ò | ní | rí | báti şe é |
| | | 2SG.S | NEG | will | see | how to do 3SG.O |
| | | ‘You won’t see a path to success’ | | | | |
| vii. | ONRNGG – | O | ò | ní | rónà | gbegbà |
| | | 2SG.S | NEG | will | see-way to-pass | |
| | | ‘You won’t find a way to be successful’ | | | | |
| viii. | ONDL – | O | ò | ní | délé | |
| | | 2SG.S | NEG | will | reach house | |
| | | ‘You won’t reach house’ | | | | |
| ix. | ONKR – | O | ò | ní | kúure | |
| | | 2SG.S | NEG | will | die well | |
| | | ‘You won’t die well’ | | | | |
| x. | WNSR – | Wọn | ò | ní | şe orüre | |
| | | 3PL.S | NEG | will | do success | |
| | | ‘They will not be successful’ | | | | |
| xi. | WNKR – | Wọn | ò | ní | kúure | |
| | | 3PL.S | NEG | will | die well | |
| | | ‘They won’t die well’ | | | | |
| xii. | ONJR – | O | ò | ní | jèrè | |
| | | 2SG.S | NEG | will | make profit | |
| | | ‘You won’t be profitable’ | | | | |
| xiii. | ONGR – | O | ò | ni | ga | rará |

2SG.S NEG will tall at all
 ‘You won’t be great at all’

The example in (6x) will be syntactically analysed using the tree diagram phrase marking to show the transformation rule of insertion of the negative marker *ò* ‘not’. Tree diagram phrase marking is used to show the hierarchical structure, which highlights how negative sentence is derived within the X-bar framework.

Chart 4: *Wọn ò ní ẹ̀se oríire*



These researchers observed that covert representation is not new to Yorùbá grammar. This is because evidence shows that the subject NP is usually covert in the derivation of Yorùbá imperative sentence. For example:

- 7) i. (X) *jáde* ‘(X) go out’
 ii. (X) *díde* ‘(X) stand up’

The X variable in the example (7) represents the subject NP, which can be any name. In addition to this, the polar question marker “*şé*” is sometimes covert in the derivation of alternative questions in Yorùbá language. For example:

- 8) i. **Ade wá tábí kò wá?**
 Ade come conj. Neg. come
 ‘Did Ade come or not?’
- ii. **È ti dé tábí ẹ̀ ò tí ì dé?**
 2PL. GC arrive Conj. 2PL Neg. GC Neg. arrive
 ‘Have you arrive or not?’

Adeoye (2017) and Rabiú (2021) give credence to this assertion when they opine that alternative question in Yorùbá language has a polar question marker which can be overt or covert without distorting the meaning of the sentence. Furthermore, it was also observed that there is the presence of covert negation in selected Yorùbá personal names, which often alter their semantic logical representation at the output level. Examples of such names include:

Syntactic Input Negation

9. a. i. **Awo ò ẹ̀se ìkà**
 cult Neg. do wickedness
 ‘cult did not do wickedness’
- ii. **Ifá ò ẹ̀se ọ̀lẹ**
 Oracle Neg. does laziness
 ‘Oracle is not lazy’
- iii. **Akin ìn tán**
 Bravery Neg. finish
 ‘Valor has not finished’

Semantic Output Declarative Sentence (YPN)

9. b. i. **Awòṣìkà**
cult do wickedness
'cult do wickedness'
- ii. **Fáṣòḽe**
Oracle does laziness
'Oracle is lazy'
- iii. **Akíntán**
bravery finish
'valor has finished'

All these examples show the presence of covert syntactic representation, which includes covert negation in the Yorùbá language, and our research work on YATs buttresses this claim and assertion.

6.3 Focus Construction

Focusing is a universal phenomenon that normally occurs in all languages of the world, although the way and manner they are realized in languages differ. While Yoruba realized it syntactically through the insertion of the focus marker *ni* in front of the SPEC of the CP, it is realized in some languages prosodically through tone, while it is realized in others morphologically. (Yusuf 1999, Arokoyo 2012). Baiyere (2004: 54) also explains the function of focusing in a sentence, when she says that "It is a fact that focus has to do with the speaker passing information that he feels is new to the hearer or trying to make a particular constituent important or emphatic." We observed that there are two types of focusing in Yoruba language, which are constituent focusing and sentence focusing. These two are attested in the derivation of YATs.

6.3.1 Focused Sentence Derived Abbreviation

Sentence focusing is a process in which the whole sentence is moved to the spec of the CP, and the focus marker, which is *ni* in standard Yoruba, is inserted. The transformation process that is used in the derivation of sentence focus in YATs is the insertion of the focus marker in sentence-final position. Akintoye and Owoyele (2018: 118) explain that "sentence focusing is realized when a complete sentence is given prominence by attaching a focus marker to it at the final position". Akintoye and Owoyele (2018: 118) provide the following examples to buttress their claim on sentence focusing in Yorùbá language:

10. i. **Adé na ajá Òjò**
Ade beat dog Ojo
Ade beat Ojo's dog
10. ii. **Adé na ajá Òjò ni**
Ade beat dog Ojo FOC
the fact is the Ade beat Ojo's dog
Akintoye and Owoyele (2018: 118)

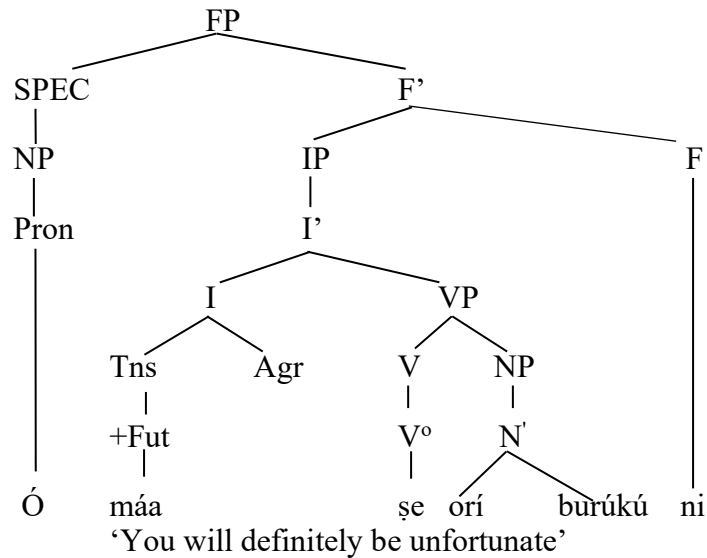
Examples of focused sentence derived YATs use on the X platform include:

11. i. **OSFNI – [FocP [IP O ó ṣòfò] ni]**
2SG.S HTS do tragedy FOC
'You will surely encounter tragedy'
- ii. **OMSRBRKN – [FocP [IP O máa ṣe orí burúkú] ni]**
2SG.S FUT do head bad FOC
'You will definitely be unfortunate'
- iii. **TMTN – [FocP [IP Tì ẹ máa ta] ni]**
2SG.POSS FUT explode FOC

- ‘Your life will definitely scatter’
- iv. **AEMBN** – [_{FocP}[_{IP} Ayé ẹ máa bajé] ni]
 Life 2SG.POSS FUT spoil FOC
 ‘Your life will definitely spoil’
- v. **TMBJN**– [_{FocP}[_{IP} Tì ẹ máa bajé] ni]
 2SG.POSS FUT spoil FOC
 ‘Your life will definitely spoil’
- vi. **OMKKN**– [_{FocP}[_{IP} O máa ké kú] ni]
 2SG.S FUT shout die FOC
 ‘You will definitely shout till you die’
- vii. **ORLN** – [_{FocP}[_{IP} O ó rìn lọ] ni]
 2SG.S HTS walk go FOC
 ‘You will definitely walk till you are lost’

This tree diagram gave more explicit explanation about focused sentence derived YATs.

Chart 5: O máa ẹ se orí burúkú ni



In the derivation of this sentence, the whole sentence at the deep structure level function as an adjunct, which means that the sentence remains at its original position while the focus marker is inserted in the sentence final position. This shows that while constituent focusing involves the movement of the constituent from the SPEC of IP to the SPEC of the CP, sentence focusing does not involve any movement but the insertion of the focus marker in sentence-final position. Kareem (2025) and Akintoye and Owoyele (2018) give credence to this. Kareem (2025: 61) asserts that “Yoruba Olukumi and Yoruba Ilorin attest to sentence focusing. The process is achieved by inserting the focus marker **ni** at the sentence final position. This implies that sentence focusing does not involve movement in these dialects”.

In this tree diagram, the constituents of the sentence, that is, the Noun phrase, the future tense marker and the verb phrase are in their original position and the focus marker **ni** is inserted overtly in sentence final position to show evidence of focusing.

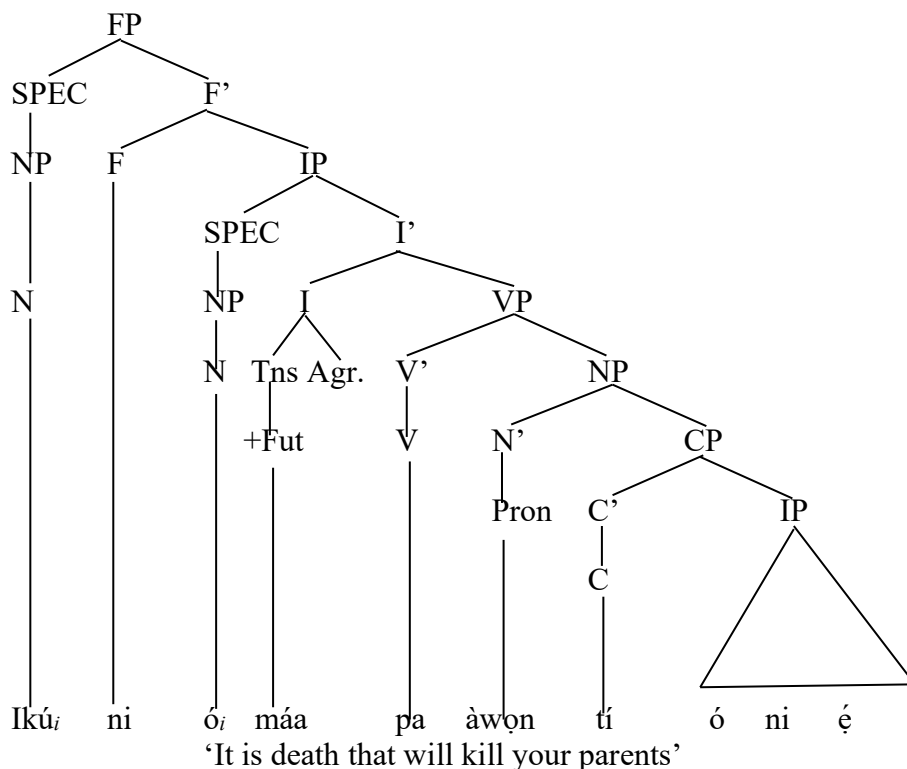
6.3.2 Subject NP Focused Derived abbreviation

The subject NP is the noun phrase that comes at the initial position at the deep structure level. When focused, the subject NP is moved from its original position and the insertion of the focus marker with the presence of a resumptive pronoun is the proof that movement has indeed taken place.

Example of subject NP focusing in the derivation of YATs on X platform is”

12. **IKLMPWTNE** – [_{FocP}[_{IP} **Ikú**_i] **ló**_i **máa** **pàwọ̀n** **tó** **ni** **ẹ**]
 Death FOC FUT kill those that own 2SG.O
 ‘It is death that will kill your parents’

Chart 6: Ikú ló máa pawọ̀n tó ni ẹ



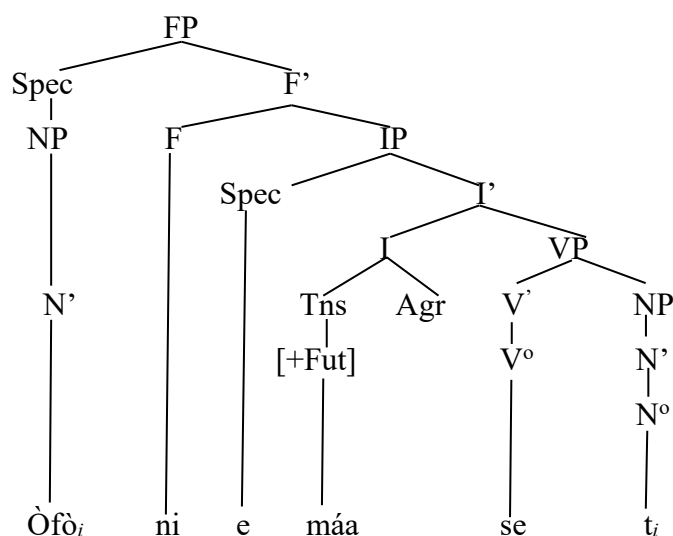
In this sentence, the subject NP which is “**Ikú**” ‘death’ was moved from the Spec of the IP to the spec of the FP and the focus marker **ni** is inserted to show evidence of focusing. The focus subject of the sentence is the moved NP “**ikú**” ‘death’, while the logical subject is the resumptive pronoun “**ó**”, which replaced the moved NP at the extraction site. The resumptive pronoun “**ó**” which through the phonological processes of vowel elision and denasalisation which changed “**ni ó**” to “**ló**” ‘that’ shows the proof of co-indexation and trace between the moved subject NP at the extraction site and the landing site. What this shows is that after movement and insertion of the focus marker, the focused NP is now the focus subject, i.e. the subject of the focus marker, while the resumptive pronoun is the logical subject i.e. the subject of the clause which is the original subject before transformation.

6.3.4 Object NP Focused Derived Abbreviation

Object NPs are complement NPs and are assigned theta roles by the verb or preposition within the scope of Government and Binding theory. We observed that the object NP, which is the complement of the verb in a sentence, is also focused to derive YATs used on the X platform. Examples of object of the verb focusing in the derivation of YATs on X platform are:

13. **OFLMS**–[_{CP}[_{IP} **Òfò**_i] **lẹ** **máa** **şe** **tí**]
 Tragedy FOC FUT do
 ‘it is tragedy that will befall you’

Chart 7: Òfò lẹ máa ẹ



'It is tragedy that will befall you'

In this example, using the tree diagram for phrase marking, the object of the verb “òfò” ‘tragedy’ was moved to the Spec of the FP, and the focus marker *ni* is inserted in front of moved Object NP for focusing. We observed that the focus marker *ni* and the anaphoric pronoun “ẹ” merged together through the phonological processes of vowel elision and denasalisation to form “lẹ” at the surface structure level. The moved object NP at the extraction site is co-indexed to the moved NP at the Spec of the FP through the trace theory. Through this work, it was discovered that Object NP focusing is one of the syntactic strategies through which YATs used on the X platform are derived.

6.4 Interrogative Sentence Derived Abbreviation

A question is a statement or utterance seeking information. Awóbùlúyì (1978: 123) defines interrogative sentences as ‘sentences employed as questions’. Haegeman (2006: 21) thinks that sentences with an interrogating structure convey that there is a certain amount of information which the speaker does not have, and which he is trying to make the interlocutor to supply. According to Olumuyiwa (2015: 109), questions are statements or sentences which seek information and for which a correct reply is expected.

We observed that interrogative sentences attested in the derivation of YATs can be categorized under rhetorical polar question that have an element of focusing inserted in it to denote assertion and emphasis. This is because they are curse words that are used to denigrate an imaginary or virtual opponent or enemy. Our observation is in agreement with Olumuyiwa (2012: 106), who also asserts that Yoruba interrogative proverbs are rhetorical questions. He opines that “the study shows that interrogative proverbs in Yoruba are not used to seek information, rather they are used rhetorically to express an assertion, doubt, affirmation, creation of comic effect”. These researchers opine that the question sentences in example (13) are polar questions because of the overt presence of the polar question marker “şé” in sentence-initial position. Oloruntuyi (2020) gave credence to this assertion when he asserts that:

In forming polar question (question requiring yes/no answer) the question words (QM): Şé, Ñjé, bí are either inserted at the beginning or the end (as the case may be) of the sentence. ‘Şé’ and ‘Ñjé’ are added to the beginning whereas ‘bí’ is added to the end. They can all mean ‘did’, ‘have’ and the verb ‘to be’.

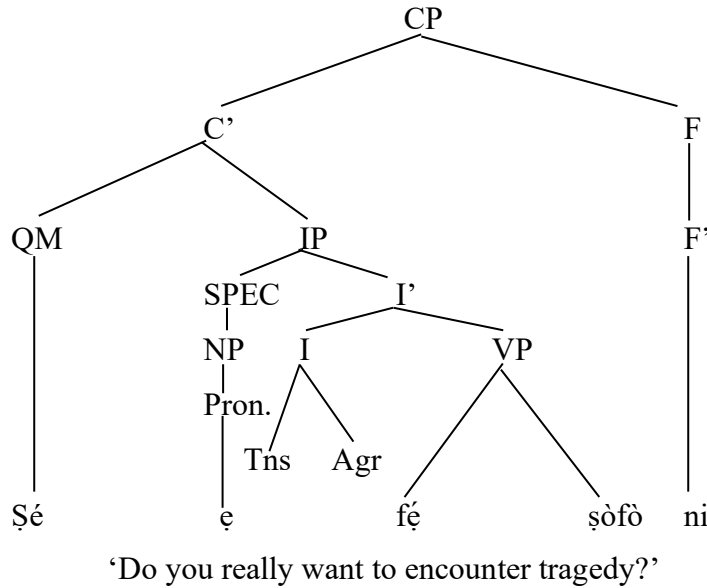
Examples of polar question-derived YATs on X platform include:

14. i. SFSN – [CP[FocP Şé] ẹ fẹ şòfò ni?]
 QM 2PL.S want to do wasteful FOC
 ‘Do you really want to encounter tragedy?’

- ii. SENSWN – [CP_[FocP Şé] ẹ́ ń sínwín ni?]
 QM 2PL.S PROG insane FOC
 ‘Are you insane?’

The tree diagram can be used to explain the derivation of polar question-derived YATs. The tree diagram for example (14i) is as follow:

Chart 8: Şe ẹ́ fẹ́ sòfò ni?



In this tree diagram, the polar question marker “şé” ‘do’ is inserted sentence initial, and the sentence final focus marker ‘ni’ is inserted sentence final to show focusing. The sentence final *ni* focusing in polar question sentence derivation is different from declarative focus construction. This is because while declarative focusing only depicts syntactic focusing, polar question focusing has element of pragmatic emphasis embedded in it. These researchers observed that the examples in (14i-ii) are rhetorical insults rather than genuine inquiries or questions. We also note that the presence of a sentence-final focus in the two examples lay more emphasis and assertion on the profane word used for an imaginary or virtual opponent on the X platform. The deep structure of these sentences are mapped to the surface structure which are derived polar question through the transformation processes of insertion of the polar question marker “şé” sentence-initial and the insertion of the focus marker *ni* in sentence-final position. As earlier mentioned under declarative sentence, sentence final focusing is not derived through movement of the IP to the Spec of CP but through insertion of the focus marker *ni* in sentence final position.

In example (14i), the second person singular pronoun “ẹ́” assimilates regressively with the mid-high front vowel /é/ of the polar question marker and changed it to a copy of itself i.e. /ẹ́/.

7. Findings and Conclusion

Through this study, it was discovered that four types of sentences were used in the derivation of YATs. The sentences are Declarative, Negative, Focused and Interrogative sentences. We also detect that some Yorùbá abbreviations on X violate the rule of Yorùbá orthography, being a language that operates phonemic system of orthography. For example, the mid-high back round vowel /o/ was used in place of mid-low back rounded vowel /ɔ/ and the voiced velar plosive /g/ was also used in place of voiced labia-velar plosive /gb/ in some of the data gathered. These researchers noted that this can be linked to X users’ transfer of English language to Yoruba as well as inadequate knowledge of the Yoruba orthography. A simplified virtual teaching of Yorùbá orthography and their usage on X by qualified Yorùbá language instructors will help solve this issue.

Furthermore, it was established that while *má* and *kò* negative markers are attested in YATs’ derivation, the most prominent is *kò*. Also, it was discovered that though sentence

focusing and constituent focusing are used in the derivation of YATs, the most prominent is sentence focusing. The question marker used in the derivation of an interrogative sentence derived YATs on X is the polar question marker “*ṣé*” ‘did’ with the sentence final focusing for emphasis and assertion embedded in it. It was also noted that the use of Yorùbá abbreviations on X is a double-edged sword, because, while its usage may project the language to the whole world, its usage as evidence from data gathered can also leads to non-standardized use of Yorùbá letters, miscommunication, ambiguity as well as indulgence in the use of profane and vulgar words on the X platform.

Conclusively, it was opined that the use of YATs on X raised the question of standardization as well as communication, as some of the abbreviations could have more than one meaning which can lead to miscommunication and difficulty in decoding the meaning of some of these abbreviations. Also, orthographic violations are identified as one of the negative effects of YATs on X. This may be due to lack of knowledge of the Yoruba standardized orthography and lack of Yorùbá diacritics on X.

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