

A MORPHO-SYNTACTIC ACCOUNT OF **ni** IN MỌ̀BÀ YORÙBÁ*

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This paper examines focus constructions in Mọ̀bà, a dialect of Yorùbá and compares it with the Standard Yorùbá establishing similarities and differences between the two speech forms. As a comparative study, it clarifies the relation between phonology and syntax and more importantly it throws light on the function, occurrence and the status of **ni**, a particle which has generated much debate among Yorùbá scholars. The syntactic account shows that structure of focus constructions is the same in both varieties. The paper also demonstrates that the range of contexts in which **ni** occurs in Mọ̀bà is different from Standard Yorùbá. Also, Mọ̀bà **ni** has context-sensitive allomorphs which are in complementary distribution with it. This differs from Standard Yorùbá, where **ni** is invariant.

Cette étude examine les tournures de focalisation en mòbà, dialecte du yorùbá et le compare au yorùbá standard, notant les ressemblances et les différences entre ces deux parlars. En tant qu'étude comparative elle éclaire la relation entre phonologie et syntaxe, et qui plus est, elle donne des lumières sur la fonction, l'emploi et le status de **ni**, particule qui provoque bien des débats entre chercheurs yorùbá. Le compte-rendu syntaxique indique que la structure des tournures de focalisation est pareille dans les deux parlars. Nous démontrons aussi que la gamme de contextes où figure **ni** en mòbà est différente de celle du yorùbá standard. De plus, le **ni** du mòbà a des allomorphes sensibles au contexte et qui lui sont en distribution complémentaire. Par contre en yorùbá standard **ni** est invariable.

0. INTRODUCTION

Mọ̀bà, a dialect of Yorùbá, shows a lot of similarities with Standard Yorùbá. The two speech forms behave alike with respect to most phonological rules (Bámisilẹ̀ 1986, Ajíbóyè 1991). Two examples suffice to illustrate this. One, in both Standard Yorùbá and Mọ̀bà, L tone monosyllabic verbs surface with M before an object NP (Bámgbóşè 1967: 23, Awóbùlúyì 1978: 52, Bámisilẹ̀ 1986: 87). Two, just as it is difficult to predict which of two contiguous vowels across a morpheme/word boundary gets deleted in Standard Yorùbá, so it is in Mọ̀bà. Thus, Awóbùlúyì's (1988: 70) claim that most phonological rules are morphologically conditioned in Standard Yorùbá is also true of Mọ̀bà.¹

All the works cited above focus on phonology. To the best knowledge of this researcher, no work on Mọ̀bà syntax has yet been undertaken. The present study looks at the syntax of the particle **ni** in Mọ̀bà. As a comparative study, it will clarify the relation

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Mọ̀bà according to Ajíbóyè (1991) comprises sixteen communities in two states of Nigeria: Igógo, Ọ̀tùn, Erímòpé, Ùnkùn, Èpẹ̀, Àayè-ọ̀jà, Osùn-ún, Ukòsú, Ọ̀sàn (in Èkìtì State) and Ùlálẹ̀, Èkàn, Ayédùn, Ùlọ̀fà, Odòwá, and Ọ̀bó (in Kwara state). A recent source (Léré Adéyemí, p.c.) adds two communities: Ùró and Ísáoyè (all in Èkìtì state). In terms of this study, these communities divide into two: Ùlọ̀fà-Odòwá-Ọ̀bó make use of the **rin** and **in** alternants of **ni** with *in situ* WH-questions; all others use **ni** (see §3).

- b. **Kí** Ø **Ikúnlé** **rà?** *Mòṣbà*
 what buy
 What did Kúnlé buy?
- (3) a. **Kúnlé ra kí ni?** *Standard Yorùbá*
 buy what FOC
 Kúnlé bought *what?* (echo question)
- b. **Ikúnlé ra kín nì?** *Mòṣbà*
 buy what FOC
 Ikúnlé bought *what?* (echo question)

Relativization also shows different surface patterns in the two varieties. Standard Yorùbá has **tí** as its relative COMP, (4a). The case in Mòṣbà is quite different. The high tone on the relative COMP is suppressed, yielding a mid tone **ti**. In addition, this **ti** occurs with **ni**, (4b).

- (4) a. **ìwé tí Kúnlé rà...** *Standard Yorùbá*
 book COMP Kúnlé buy
 the book that Kúnlé bought ...
- b. **ìwé ti ni Ikúnlé rà** *Mòṣbà*
 book COMP FOC buy
 the book that Kúnlé bought ...

The remainder of the paper is divided as follows. §2 deals with the focus construction in more detail. §3 looks at WH-questions, while §4 is devoted to relative clauses. We conclude in §5.

1. FOCUS CONSTRUCTIONS

Standard Yorùbá **ni** has been analysed as a focus marker (Awóbùlúyì 1978, 1987; Owólabí 1987). Each of the following syntactic units can be focused (Bámgbóṣé 1967:36ff.): subject, object, noun qualifer (genitive), verb and adverb. (5) - (6) illustrate the occurrence of **ni** in focus constructions the two varieties. There is no disparity in terms of what element can be focused: in both varieties, subject (**Adé**), object (**aṣọ Ìfẹ́**), possessor (**Ìfẹ́**), nominalised verb (**fí-fọ**), and temporal adverb (**ní ànà**) are focusable.³

- (5) a. **Adé fọ asṣọ Ìfẹ́ ní ànà** *Standard Yorùbá*
 wash cloth P yesterday
 Adé washed Ìfẹ́'s clothes yesterday

³ In the Yorùbá literature, this is referred to as predicate cleft. Note too, that when a PP is focused, the preposition can be dropped in both varieties (cf. (5f) and (6f)).

- b. [Adé]_i ni ó_i fọ asọq Ifẹ ní àná
 FOC 3s wash cloth P yesterday
 It is Adé who washed Ifẹ clothes yesterday
- c. [asọ Ifẹ□]_i ni Adé fọ t_i ní àná
 cloth FOC wash P yesterday
 It is Ifẹ□'s clothes that Adé washed yesterday
- d. [Ifẹ]_i ni Adé fọ asọq rẹ□_i ní àná
 FOC wash cloth 3s.Gen P yesterday
 It is Ifẹ whose clothes Adé washed yesterday
- e. [Fí-fọ□]_i ni Adé fọ_i asọq Ifẹ□ ní àná
 NOM-wash FOC wash cloth P yesterday
 It is washing that Adé did to Ifẹ's clothes yesterday
- f. [Ní àná]_i ni Adé fọ asọq Ifẹ□ t_i
 P yesterday FOC wash cloth
 It was yesterday that Kúnlé washed Ifẹ's clothes
- (6) a. Ikúnlé fọ asọ Úfẹ□ ní àná *Mọ□bà*
 wash cloth Úfẹ P yesterday
 Ikúnlé washed Ifẹ□'s clothes yesterday
- b. [Ikúnlé]_i ni ẹ_i fọ asọ Úfẹ ní àná
 FOC 3s wash cloth P yesterday
 It is Ikúnlé who washed Ifẹ□'s clothes yesterday
- c. [Asọ]_i Úfẹ□ ni Ikúnlé fọ t_i ní àná
 cloth FOC wash P yesterday
 It is Ifẹ□'s clothes that Ikúnlé washed yesterday
- d. Úfẹ ni Ikúnlé fọ asọ rìn ní àná
 Úfẹ FOC wash cloth 3s.Gen P yesterday
 It is Ifẹ□ whose clothes Ikúnlé washed yesterday
- e. [Fí-fọ□]_i ni Ikúnlé fọ asọ Úfẹ□ ní àná
 NOM-wash FOC wash cloth P yesterday
 It is washing that Ikúnlé did to to Ifẹ's clothes yesterday

- f. [Ní ànà]_i ni Ikúnlé fọ asọ Ûfẹ t_i
 P yesterday FOC wash cloth
 It was yesterday that Ikúnlé washed Ìfẹ's clothes

Note that in both Standard Yorùbá and Mòṣbà when a subject NP is moved, its position cannot be null. The trace is spelled as a resumptive pronoun: **ó** in Standard Yorùbá, **e** in Mòṣbà, cf. (5b) versus (6b). When an object undergoes FOCUS-movement, there is a gap, cf. (5c) and (6c), in which case a low tone verb retains its lexical tone. When a possessor is focused, its position is filled by a resumptive pronoun which is realised as **re** and **rìn** in Standard Yorùbá and Mòṣbà respectively, cf. (5d) versus (6d).

Next is to look at embedded sentences to test the possibility of long distance focus movement. (Note that the Standard Yorùbá COMP **pé** corresponds to Mòṣbà **wí**: thus Standard Yorùbá **mọ** **pé** 'know that' is realised **mọ** **wí** in Mòṣbà.) We see that focus movement out of an embedded clause is possible, whether from subject, object, or possessor position. This is shown in (7) for Standard Yorùbá and in (8) for Mòṣbà.

- (7) a. **Dàda á mọ pé [Adé fọ asọ Ìfẹ]⁴** *Standard Yorùbá*
 AGR know COMP wash cloth
 Dàda knows that Adé washed Ìfẹ's clothes
- b. [**Adé**]_i ni **Dàda á mọ pé [ó_i fọ asọ Ìfẹ]**
 FOC AGR know COMP 3s wash cloth
 It is Adé that Dàda knows washed Ìfẹ's clothes
- c. [**Aşọ Ìfẹ**]_i ni **Dàda á mọ pé [Adé fọ t_i]**
 cloth FOC AGR know COMP wash
 It is Ìfẹ's clothes that Dàda knows Adé washed
- d. [**Ìfẹ**]_i ni **Dàda á mọ pé [Adé fọ asọ re_i]**
 FOC AGR know COMP wash cloth 3s.gen
 It is Ìfẹ whose clothes Dàda knows Adé washed
- (8) a. **Idàda á mọ wí [Adé fọ asọ Ûfẹ]**
Mòṣbà

⁴Many claims have been made on the status of the high tone syllable (HTS) found between a subject and a verb. Oyelaran (1970) and Awobuluyi (1978: 49f.) claim that this element is obligatory while Awobuluyi (1988) analyzes it as a preverbal modifier. Dechaine (1993: 457) on the other hand, analyzes it as an element that appears whenever the tense is empty. Ajiboye (2005) claims that the HTS is an inflectional element that instantiates Specifier-Head agreement in IP. The cited work goes further to show the parallel between this element and its mid tone counterpart found in a nominal domain (Ajiboye 2005: 104-105). However, the different views on the status of this element are not crucial to the focus of this paper.

- (14) a. **Kí ni Adé rà?** *Standard Yorùbá*
 what FOC buy
 What did Adé buy?
- b. **Kí Ø Ikúnlé rà?** *Mọ̀bà*
 what FOC buy
 What did Ikúnlé buy?
- (15) a. **Adé ra kí ni?** *Standard Yorùbá*
 buy what FOC
 Adé bought *what?* (echo question)
- b. **Ikúnlé ra kín nì?** *Mọ̀bà*
 buy what FOC
 Kúnlé bought *what?* (echo question)

These differences structure the discussion. Content questions where the WH-word is moved are considered first, then content questions where the WH-word is *in situ*.

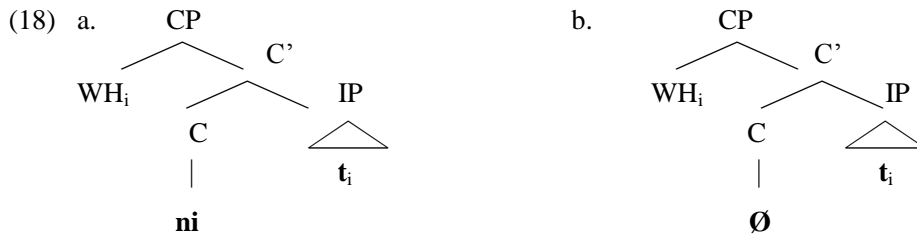
2.1 CONTENT QUESTIONS WITH MOVED WH-

With focus constructions, the focus marker is **ni** in all contexts and its presence is obligatory. In this respect, the two varieties are alike. But whereas Standard Yorùbá also uses the focus particle in the formation of content questions, Mọ̀bà does not.

- (16) a. **[Ta]_i ni ó_i ra ìwé?** *Standard Yorùbá*
 who FOC 3s buy book
 Who bought books?
- b. **[Kí]_i ni Adé rà t_i?**
 what FOC buy
 What did Adé buy?
- c. **[Níbo]_i ni Adé ti ra ìwé t_i?**
 where FOC from buy book
 Where did Adé buy books?
- d. **[Ìgbà wo]_i ni Adé ra ìwé t_i?**
 time which FOC buy book
 When did Adé buy books?

- (17) a. [Ìsì]_i Ø e_i ra ìwé ? Mọ̀bà
 WH FOC 3s buy book
 Who bought books?
- b. [Kí]_i Ø Ikúnlé rà t_i ?
 what FOC buy
 What did Ikúnlé buy?
- c. [Kàbi]_i Ø Ikúnlé tí ra ìwé t_i ?
 where FOC from buy book
 Where did Kúnlé buy books?
- d. [Ùgbà sí]_i Ø Ikúnléra ìwé t_i ?
 time what FOC buy book
 When did Ikúnlé buy books

The preceding examples show that Standard Yorùbá consistently uses an overt focus particle *ni* in content questions. This holds of movement both from an argument position (i.e. subject or object) and from an adjunct. The same pattern obtains in Mọ̀bà, except that *ni* is absent. This means that the two varieties have the same **structure** for WH-questions, but differ in the pronunciation of the COMP position, cf. (18).



Other than this difference in the pronunciation of COMP, WH-questions formed by movement shows the same A-bar movement properties as focus constructions. Long-distance WH-movement is possible.

- (19) [Kí]_i ni o mọ̀ pé [Ìfẹ̀ ní pé [Bọ̀lá rà t_i]]?
Standard Yorùbá
 what FOC 2s know COMP say COMP buy
 What do you know Ìfẹ̀ said Bọ̀lá bought?
- (20) [Kí]_i Ø ọ̀ọ̀ mọ̀ wi [Ùfẹ̀ wí Ø [Ibọ̀lá rà t_i]]?
Mọ̀bà
 what FOC 2s.AGR know COMP say COMP buy
 What do you know Ìfẹ̀ said Bọ̀lá bought?

Recall that focus constructions can appear in embedded contexts, cf. (11) - (12) above. This is not possible with WH-questions formed by movement:

- (21) a. ***Kúnlé mọ̀ pé [ta_i ni ó_i ra ìwé]** *Standard Yorùbá*
 know COMP who FOC 3s buy book
 [Kúnlé knows who bought books]
- b. ***Kúnlé mọ̀ pé [kí_i ni Bólá rà t_i]**
 know COMP what FOC buy
 [Ikúnlé knows what Ibólá bought]
- (22) a. ***Ikúnlé mọ̀ wí [ìs_i Ø e_i rà ìwé]** *Mòbà*
 know COMP who FOC 3s buy book
 [Ikúnlé knows who bought books]
- b. ***Ikúnlé mọ̀ wí [kí_i Ø Ibólá rà t_i]**
 know COMP what FOC buy
 [Ikúnlé knows what Ibólá bought]

As we shall see in the next section, embedded questions are possible in Mòbà if the WH-word is *in situ*.

2.2 CONTENT QUESTIONS WITH WH- *IN SITU*

We begin the discussion of *in situ* WH-words with with equative constructions, where the WH-word is in final position and simply occurs with the focus particle:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (23) <i>Standard Yorùbá</i> | (24) <i>Mọ̀bà</i> |
| a. Ta ni?
who FOC
Who is s/he? | a. (i) Ìsì à?
(ii) Ìsín nì/rìn/ìn?
who FOC
Who is s/he? |
| b. Kí ni?
who FOC
What is it? | b. (i) Kí à?
(ii) Kín nì/rìn/ìn?
what FOC
What is it? |
| c. Níbo ni?
where FOC
Where is it? | c. (i) Kàbisí à?
(ii) Kàbisín nì/rìn/ìn?
where FOC
Where is it? |

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>d. Èlọ́ ni?
how.much FOC
How much is it?</p> <p>e. Ìgbà wo ni?
time which FOC
When is it?</p> <p>f. Bá wo ni?
manner which FOC
How is it?</p> | <p>d. (i) Èlọ́sì à?
(ii) Èlọ́sín nì/rìn/ìn?
how.much FOC
How much is it?</p> <p>e. (i) Ìgbà sí à?
(ii) Ìgbà sín nì/rìn/ìn?
time what FOC
When is it?</p> <p>f. (i) Ùse sí à?
(ii) Ùse sín nì/rìn/ìn?
way what FOC
How is it?</p> |
|---|--|

While **ni** is invariant in Standard Yorùbá, one observes that Mọ̀bà WH-words and focus element have allomorphs that divide into two series. One is oral and the other nasal:

- | | | | | |
|------|-------------|---------|--------------|----------|
| (25) | oral series | | nasal series | |
| a. | [ɪsɪ] | ìsì | [ɪsín] | who |
| b. | [kí] | kó | [kín] | what |
| c. | [kàbi sí] | kàbi sí | [kàbi sín] | where |
| d. | [èlọ́ sí] | èlọ́ sí | [èlọ́ sín] | how much |
| e. | [ùgbà sí] | ùgbà sí | [ùgbà sín] | when |
| f. | [ùse sí] | ùse sí | [ùse sín] | how |
| (26) | [à] | à | [nĩ] | nì focus |
| | | | [rĩ] | rìn |
| | | | [ɪ̃] | ìn |

These variants can be accounted for phonologically. We note that the focus particle is nasalised whenever the WH-word it occurs with is from the nasal series, and that it is oral whenever the WH-word is from the oral series. To account for the allomorphs of the focus particle, it becomes imperative to first set up an Underlying Representation (UR) for the WH-words. The forms in (27a) are UR while the forms in (27b) are derived.

(27)	a. (oral series)	b. (nasal series)	
	/ ɪsí /	[ɪsí]	who
	/ kí /	[kí]	what
	/ kàbi sí /	[kàbi sí]	where
	/ èló sí /	[èló sí]	how much
	/ ùgbà sí /	[ùgbà sí]	when
	/ ùse sí /	[ùse sí]	how

When the oral \acute{A} form of the focus particle is used, the WH-word is realised as in A. To derive the nasal forms in B, we posit a rule of regressive (nasal) assimilation. This is stated as Rule 1.

R1	[+ syll]			
	[+ high]	>	[+ nas]	/ [WH _ # [+ nas]
	[- back]			

Rule 1 states that the final vowel of a *wh*-word is nasalised when it is followed by a nasal. This rule derive for example nasalised [kĩ] from /ki/ 'what'

(28)	/	kí	#	{	nĩ	}	/	>	[kĩ	{	nĩ	}]
				{	rĩ	}					{	rĩ	}	
				{	ĩ	}					{	ĩ	}	

The $nĩ \sim rĩ \sim ìĩ$ alternants also pair into two: $rĩ \sim ìĩ$ versus $nĩ$. In Òbó-Odòwá-Ùlòfà, the $rĩ \sim ìĩ$ alternants are used interchangeably. All other areas make use of $nĩ$. We therefore conclude that $òĩ$ cannot be accounted for via the deletion of the initial consonant of $nĩ$. Rather, what needs to be accounted for is the $rĩ \sim ìĩ$ alternation, which involves deletion of the initial consonant of $rĩ$. This process is given as Rule 2, and its application is restricted to Òbó-Odòwá-Ùlòfà.

R2		C	>	Ø	/ #	[FOC _]	Òbó-Odòwá-Ùlòfà
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The rule states that the initial consonant of the focus particle is deleted and generates (29). This rule is optional as speakers freely make use of either $rĩ$ or $ìĩ$.

(29)	/ r ì /	>	[ì]	Òbó-Odòwá-Ùlòfà
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Thus, while Òbó-Odòwá-Ùlòfà makes use of three allomorphs ($rĩ$, $ìĩ$, $à$) other areas make use of just two ($nĩ$ and $à$).

Other than their segmental differences, the allomorphs of the focus particle are all L-tone variants of the focus particle. These L-tone variants must occur with WH-words, (30). Moreover, they occur only with WH-words, (31).

(30)	a.	(i)	Ìsí	à ?	Mò□bà
		(ii)	Ìsín	nĩ / rĩ / ìĩ ?	

- who FOC
Who is s/he?
- b. *Ìsín ni ?
who FOC
- (31) a. (i) *Adẹ̀mu à Mọ̀bà
(ii) *Adẹ̀mu ni / rìn / ìn
tapper FOC
- b. Adẹ̀mu ni
tapper FOC
It's the palmwine tapper

Why is it that the focus particle which occurs in plain focus constructions is M-tone, but is L-tone when it occurs with WH-words? It seems that the L/M alternation on the focus particle is syntactically motivated. Exactly how this alternation is determined is yet to be ascertained.

In addition to appearing in equative structures with WH-words, the L-tone variant of the focus particle occurs whenever a WH-word is *in situ*, i.e. in its normal argument position. As in Standard Yorùbá, Mọ̀bà *in situ* WH-words have the force of echo questions. But the two varieties differ in how *in situ* questions are marked. Standard Yorùbá uses the M tone focus marker **ni** with both WH-movement and WH-*in situ*, (32). In contrast to this, Mọ̀bà fails to use the focus marker with WH-movement (33a), and with WH-*in situ*, only uses the L-tone variant, as shown in (33b).

- (32) a. **Kí ni Adé rà?** Standard Yorùbá
what FOC buy
What did Adé buy?
- b. **Adé ra kí ni?**
buy what FOC
What did Adé buy?
- (33) a. **Kí Ø Adé rà?** Mọ̀bà
what FOC buy
What did Adé buy?
- b. (i) **Adé ra kí à?**
buy what FOC
What did Adé buy?

- (ii) **kín nì/rìn/in**
 what FOC
 What is it?

Recall that with WH-movement, the focus particle is absent in Mòḡbà, (33a). By contrast, if the WH-word is *in situ*, the focus particle is obligatory, (33b). Note the appearance of a resumptive subject pronoun when extraction takes place.⁷

To summarise, whenever there is extraction of the WH-word, there is null realisation of the focus particle. Conversely if the WH-word is in argument position the focus particle appears in its usual forms.

3. FOCUS PARTICLE AND RELATIVISATION

Our concern in this section is to show yet another difference between Standard Yorùbá and Mòḡbà with respect to the presence of the particle **nì**. While relativisation is marked by **tí** in Standard Yorùbá (Awóbùlúyì 1978), Mòḡbà relativisation involves the presence of the focus particle. What follows are parallel sets of examples from Standard Yorùbá and Mòḡbà.

- (34) a. **ìwé tí Kúnlé rà...** *Standard Yorùbá*
 book COMP buy
 the book that Kúnlé bought...
- b. ***ìwé tí nì Ikúnlé rà...**
 book COMP FOC buy
- (35) a. ***ìwé tí Ikúnlé rà...** *Mòḡbà*
 book COMP buy

⁷ (i) **Ìsì à (*e) rí Ikúnlé?**
 who FOC 3s see Ikúnlé
who saw Kúnlé?

(ii) **Ìsín nì/rìn/in (*e) be Ikúnlé?**
 who FOC 3s beg Ikúnlé
who begged Kúnlé?

The resumptive pronoun **ó** (SY) is realised as **e** or **ẹ** in Mòḡbà. The **e-ẹ** alternation has been accounted for via vowel harmony (see Bámisilẹḡ 1986: 164*f.* and Ajíbóyè 1991: 132*f.*). There are two things to also note with respect to these examples. One, if a WH-word moves from subject position as in (i), a resumptive pronoun is obligatory **unless** the WH-word does not move (ii). Two, the morphological shape of the WH-word differs, again depending on whether there is WH-movement. If the WH-word moves, it is invariant (it has only one form), cf. (i), otherwise the WH-word displays allophonic variation as does the focus particle, cf. (ii).

- b. **ìwé tí ní Ikúnlé rà...**
 book COMP FOC buy
 the book that Kúnlé bought...

In addition to the presence of the focus particle **ni** in Mọ̀bà relativisation we also observe that the relative clause marker, which is H-tone **tí** in Standard Yorùbá, surfaces as M-tone **ti** in Mọ̀bà. The cooccurrence of **ti** and FOC **ni** and the H-tone drop on **ti** demand explanation.

For Standard Yorùbá, Awóbùlúyì (1978) describes **tí** and **ni** as introducers and notes they never co-occur:

It [**ni**] occurs in exactly the same position as the introducer **tí**, for example. Not only that, **tí** regularly occurs optionally in place of **ni** in sentences that would otherwise have contained more than one occurrence of the latter. (Awóbùlúyì 1978: 97)

Awóbùlúyì's description suggests that it is possible to interchange **ni** and **tí**. At first glance, this seems to be true. The example he cites is given as (36), where a **ni**-clause precedes a **tí**-clause. (37) forms a minimal pair with (36), the only difference being the relative position of **ni** and **tí**.

- (36) **Ìwọ̀ ní mo ń bá sọ̀rọ̀ [tí o ń kùn]** *Standard Yorùbá*

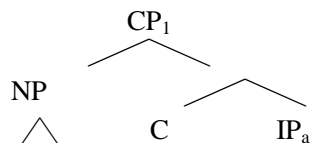
2s FOC 1s ASP with talk COMP 2s ASP grumble
 How dare you grumble when I talk to you.

- (37) **Ìwọ̀ [tí mo ń bá sọ̀rọ̀] ní o ń kùn** *Standard Yorùbá*

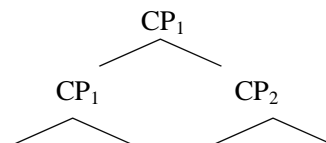
2s COMP 1s ASP with talk FOC 2s ASP grumble
 How dare you grumble when I talk to you.

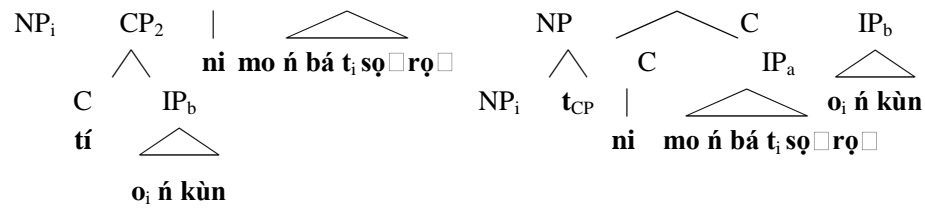
A closer look at the structures involved shows this **ni** and **tí** have not switched positions. Consider first the structure of (37). The NP **ìwọ̀** 'you (sg)' is in focus position, as indicated by the presence of **ni**. The same NP also is the heads of the relative clauses introduced by **tí**. A relative clause normally follows the NP it modifies. This means that the input of (37) involves structure of (37'a), with the relative **tí**-clause preceding the focus **ni**-clause. The surface order is derived by extraposing the relative clause to the right, as in (37'b).

- (37') a.

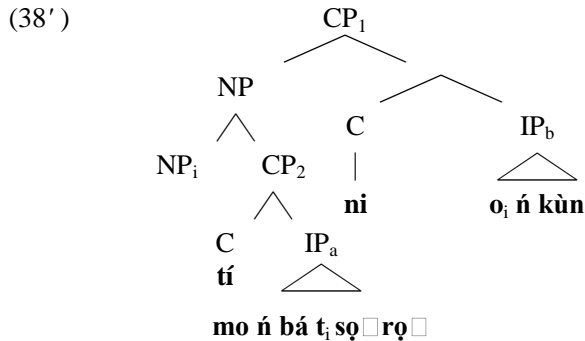


- b.





As for (38), it has the same structure as (37), except that the relative remains in its base position. This is shown in (38').



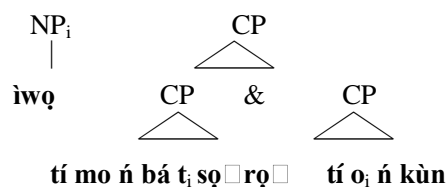
Comparing (37') to (38'), we see that what has been switched is not the relative order of **tí** and **ni** (as individual lexical items), but rather the relative order of the IPs introduced by **tí** and **ni**. In (37) IP_b is contained in the relative clause introduced by **tí** (and subsequently extraposes); in (38) IP_b is contained in the focus clause introduced by **ni**.

In order to definitively show that **tí** and **ni** are not interchangeable, there are two other possibilities to consider. COMPOnstructions with two **tí**-clauses, and constructions with two **ni**-clauses. Let us begin by considering a double **tí**-clause:

- (39) **ìwɔ** [**tí mo n ba sɔ rɔ**] [**tí o n kùn**]
 2s COMP 1s ASP with talk COMP 2s ASP grumble
 = the fact that you grumbled when I talked to you...
 ≠ How dare you grumble when I talk to you?

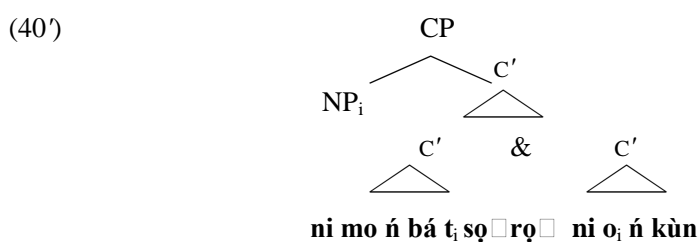
If **tí** always introduces a relative clause, a double **tí**-clause should be a succession of relative clauses. As such, it is predicted to be an incomplete sentence. On the other hand, if **tí** can be used interchangeably with the focus particle **ni**, as Awóbùlúyì suggests, then a double **tí**-clause should have the same interpretation as (37) above. What we see is that successive **tí**-clauses do not constitute a complete sentence. Thus, the structure of (39) involves the association of two relative clause with a single NP, i.e. coordination of two relative CPs:





A similar argument can be made for double **ni**-clauses, which are interpreted as coordinate clauses, (40). As such, they are plausibly associated with a structure like (40').

- (40) **Ìwọ** [**ni mo n bá sọ̀ rọ̀**] [**ni o n kùn**]
 2s FOC 1s ASP with talk FOC 2s ASP grumble
 = It's you that I talked to and is grumbling
 ≠ How dare you grumble when I talk to you



We conclude that despite appearances, in Standard Yorùbá **tí** and **ni** are associated with distinct structures, and so are not interchangeable. This has implications for our understanding of Mọ̀bà, where **tí** and **ni** co-occur:

- (41) **ìwé tí ni mǐ rà...** Mọ̀bà
 book COMP FOC 1s buy
 the book that I bought...

What demands clarification is whether Mọ̀bà **tí** and **ni** occupy distinct positions or constitute a single (complex) unit. To go about offering an answer to this, we consider three alternative hypotheses:

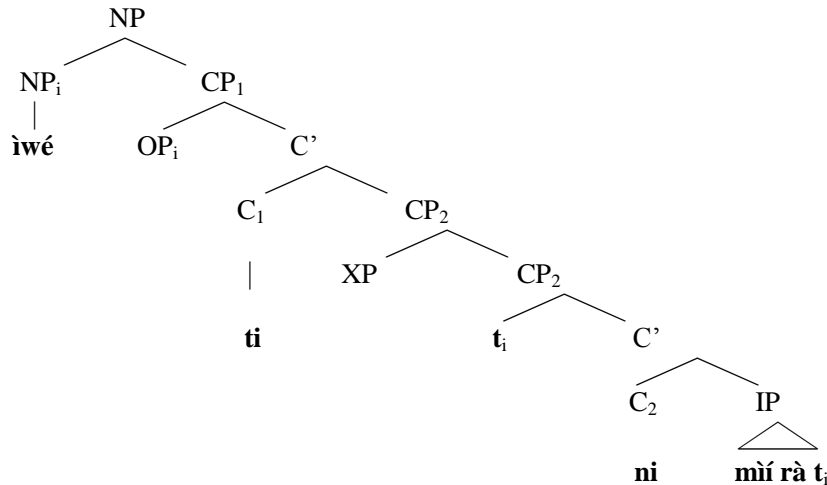
- (i) *recursive CP analysis*:
tí and **ni** are independent COMPs and as such yield a recursive CP structure.
- (ii) *compound COMP analysis*:
tí and **ni** constitute a single compound COMP.
- (iii) *Specifier-Head analysis*:
tí and **ni** are contained in the same CP, with **tí** in [Spec, CP] and **ni** in COMP.

I now illustrate how these three analyses apply to the example in (41).

The first hypothesis treats **tí** and **ni** as separate COMPs, each of which introduces its own CP. This means that if **tí** and **ni** co-occur, there is a succession of two CPs, i.e. a

allows recursive CP structure, as in (42). In this analysis, the null operator of the relative clause first undergoes focus-movement to the Spec of the CP introduced by the focus particle **ni**, and then moves to the higher Spec of the CP introduced by the relative COMP **ti**, from where it is co-indexed with the NP which the relative modifies.

(42) *Recursive CP analysis*

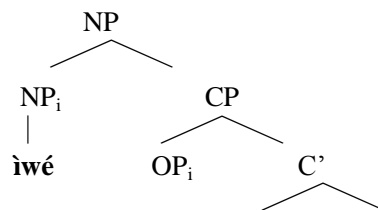


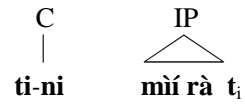
If this hypothesis is correct, we expect it to be possible to insert material between CP1 and CP2. For example, a temporal modifier such as **ní Àná** ‘yesterday’ should be able to occur between **ti** and **ni**. But this is not so:

- (43) a. **iwé ti ni mù rà [ní Àná] ...**
 book COMP FOC 1s buy P yesterday
 the book that I bought yesterday...
- b. ***iwé ti [ní Àná] ni mù rà ...**
 book COMP P yesterday FOC 1s buy

Let us now turn to the second hypothesis, according to which the **ti-ni** sequence is a compound COMP, introducing a single COMP position:

(44) *Compound COMP analysis*



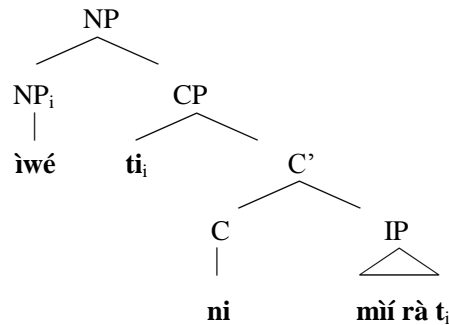


The compound COMPanalysis may then explain why it is impossible for either **ti** or **ni** to introduce a relative clause by themselves. Rather, both **ti** and **ni** are present, or both are absent:

- (45) a. **ìwé ti ni mù\acute{r}à...**
 b. **ìwé Ø Ø mù\acute{r}à...**
 c. ***ìwé ti Ø mù\acute{r}à...**
 d. ***ìwé Ø ni mù\acute{r}à...**
 book COMP FOC 1s buy
 the book that I bought...

The third hypothesis, the Specifier-head analysis, places **ti** in [Spec, CP] position as a relative operator, and **ni** in its usual COMP position:⁸

⁸ Manfredi (p.c.) has independently suggested that **tí** of SY relative clauses is in the operator position of CP.

(45) *Specifier-head analysis*

Considering the case of Mòbà, the third hypothesis may hold i.e. that **tí** in the dialect is a relative operator in [Spec, CP].

An argument that chooses between the two analyses is based on the distribution of **ni**. The compound analysis claims that there are two versions of **ni**: simple and compound, while the Spec-head analysis claims that there is just one **ni**, which is always a COMP. The latter is preferred on grounds of simplicity.

Finally, it is desirable to see how other variants of the focus marker **ni**, i.e. **nì**, **rìn** and **ìn** behave in relativization. Consider first the sentence in (47) from Standard Yorùbá.

- (47) **Ìwé tí mo rà ní** *Standard Yorùbá*
 book REL 1s buy for
 It is the book that I bought

What I observe is that the **ni** variant is possible following the relative marker as well as in final position (48a). None of the low tone variants can follow the relative marker as shown by the ungrammaticality of (48b). Finally, when I look at the occurrence of the focus marker in final position in relativized construction, the same thing is applicable, namely none of the low tone variants is allowed, (48c).

- (48) a. **Ìwé tí ní mǐ ín rà ní** *Mò□bà*
 b. ***Ìwé tí nì/rìn/ìn mǐ ín rà ní**
 c. ***Ìwé tí ní mǐ ín rà nì/rìn/ìn**
 book REL FOC 1s AGR buy for
 It is the book that I bought

What brings about this dichotomy is the type of construction: these L-tone variants occur with WH-words only, (cf. 30).

4. CONCLUSION

We discover that, despite appearances, the focus construction in Mòbà and in Standard Yorùbá is identical in terms of syntax. This is shown by the contrast, which holds uniformly in the two varieties, between focus movement of a subject or possessor, triggering a resumptive pronoun, and focus movement of an object which leaves a gap.

Similarly, the structure of WH-constructions is the same in the two dialects, although there are phonetic differences: WH-movement requires an overt focus particle in Standard Yorùbá, but not in Mòbà. This difference is less for WH- *in situ*, where Mòbà has overt forms whose range of variation is phonologically predictable and syntactically motivated. (Standard Yorùbá has invariant **ni** with WH- *in situ*.)

Relative clauses have the same structure in the two varieties, but where Standard Yorùbá has **tí**, Mòbà has **tí ni**. The Spec-head analysis of **tí ni** maximizes the congruence with Standard Yorùbá.

Overall, the structural context for **ni** is invariant in Mòbà and Standard Yorùbá; where Mòbà differs is in morpheme shape, morphophonology and phosyntax.

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