Yes / No Question in Ào*
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This paper describes question markers in Ào within the Minimalist framework. They are Nsé, Sé, pà...rin and pàrin. Nzé and Sé occur in pre-subject positions, pàrin occurs at the sentence – final position while pà...rin, has its first part occurring after the subject while the other part, occurs at the sentence–final position. The structure of pà...rin poses problem for the Extended Endocentricity Principle. Pà...rin may be portrayed as a double head-word of a projection, thus violating the EEP However, we analyse pà...rin as a single- head. The work also discusses the co- occurrence of yes/no question markers.

Keywords: yes/no question, Ào language, minimalist framework

1. Introduction

A Yes/No question is a question to which yes or no would be an appropriate answer. This is in contrast to other question–type known as WH–question or content question in which the answer requires more than a yes or no but a sentence. As the case is in Standard Yorùbá, Yes/No Questions have question markers in Ào. They are Nzé and Sé, which occur in sentence initial position, and can be used interchangeably, pà...rin and pàrin.

This paper gives a descriptive account of Yes/No Questions in Ào within the Minimalist Framework of generative syntax as developed in Chomsky (1995) among others. It is shown that the structure of pà...rin, one of the yes/no question markers, does not conform with the Extended Endocentricity Principle (EEP) which states that every phrase is a projection of a single head word category, and every word category projects into a corresponding phrase category. We shall show, in this work, that pà...rin actually occupies the sentence- final position as the head of the CP in the head-last structure, and that some properties or features of pà motivate it to move to be adjoined to the TASP head of the TASPP.

2. Yes/No Question Markers

The Yes/No question markers are as follows:

(1)

a.  Nzé
b.  Sé
c.  Pà...rin
d.  Pàrin

Nzé and Sé occur in sentence-initial position and can be used interchangeably as in (2) below:
(2) a. Nzé/Sé Táyé ó zé udôn?
lit. ques. mkr Taye agr eat meat
i.e. ‘Did Taye eat meat?’

b. Nzé/Sé azá à gbó in?
lit. ques. mkr dog fut. bark you(pl)
i.e. ‘Will the dog bark at you?’

In negative sentences, Sé is more frequently used, in fact the use of Nzé sounds odd if not totally unacceptable. The sentences in (3) show that Sé can be used to ask questions in a negative sentences while Nzé, though use like sé to ask questions in negative sentences, its use is not as common and frequent as the use of Sé.

(3) a. Sé Táyé é zé udôn?
lit. ques. mkr Taye past neg. eat meat
i.e. ‘Did Taye not eat the meat?’

b. ?Nzé Táyé é zé udôn?
lit. ques. mkr Taye past neg. eat meat
i.e. ‘Did Taye not eat the meat?’

c. Sé azá nií gbó in?
lit. ques. mkr dog fut. neg bark you(pl)
i.e. ‘Will the dog not bark at you?’

d. ?Nzé azá nií gbó in?
lit. ques. mkr dog fut. neg bark you(pl)
i.e. ‘Will the dog not bark at you?’

Another Yes/No Question marker in Ìò is pà…rín, (1c), a pair of particles, which has its first part occurring after the subject DP and the second part occurring at the sentence final position. It has the low and mid tones in its first and second parts respectively, when it occurs in affirmative sentences, as well as in negative sentences that have the present and future tense markers. Consider the following sentences.

(4) a. Táyé ó pà zé udôn rín?
lit. Taye agr que.mkr eat meat que mk
i.e. ‘Did Taye eat the meat?’

b. Táyé pà à yà rín?
lit. Taye que mkr fut come que mk
i.e. ‘Will Taye not come?’
c. Táyé pà níí yà rín?
lit Taye que mkr fut neg come que mkr
i.e. ‘Will Taye not come?’

In a past negative sentence, the first part of the particle also doubles as the past tense negative marker.

(5) a. Táyé è yá.
lit Taye past. neg come
i.e. ‘Taye did not come?’

b. Táyé pà yá rín?
lit Taye que mkr come que mkr.
i.e. ‘Did Taye not come?’

(5a) is a simple past negative sentence. The low tone is the past tense negative marker. It is borne by a vowel similar to the last vowel of the subject DP. But where the simple past negative sentence is an interrogative sentence with pà…rín as the question marker, the low tone past tense negative marker is not realised, rather pà performs the role of the past tense negative marker as in (5b) above.

In a Non-future continuous sentence, the first part of the pair doubles as the continuous aspect marker, this time, with a mid tone.

(6) a. Táyọ ó zérun.
lit Tayọ cont. eat
i.e. ‘Tayọ is eating’

b. Táyọ pa zérun rín?
lit Tayọ que.mkr eat que.mkr.
i.e. ‘Is Tayọ eating’

(7) a. Mí² ya³.
lit I come
i.e. ‘I am coming.’

b. Mí pa ya rín?
lit I que. come Que.
i.e. ‘Am I coming?’

In (6a), the continuous aspect marker is the high tone borne by a vowel identical to the last vowel of the subject DP. However, (6b) has no such marker, but pa, with a mid performs this role. In the sentences in (7), the continuous aspect marker is not realised, the subject pronoun mi, ‘I’ doubles as the continuous aspect marker in (7a), but in (7b), it is pa, the first part of the
question marker that doubles as the continuous aspect marker. None of the elements of *pà...rin* can occur alone in an utterance without the other, occurrence of one without the other will make such utterance to be ungrammatical as in the following:

(8)  

a.  *Mì pà ya?*  
   lit. I que. mkr. come

b.  *Mì ya rín?*  
   lit. I come que. mkr.

c.  *Táyò pà zérun?*  
   lit. Tayo que. mkr. eat

d.  *Táyò zérun rín?*  
   lit. Tayo eat que. mkr.

e.  *Táyé pà zé udòn?*  
   lit. Taye que. mkr. eat meat

f.  *Táyé zé udòn rín?*  
   lit. Taye eat meat que. mkr.

All the sentences in (8) are ungrammatical. In (8a), (8c) and (8e), the first part of the pair *pà* is the only element in these sentences, *rín*, the second part of the pair, does not occur. In (8b), (8d) and (8f) the second part of the pair, *rín*, is the only element that is found in the sentences.

The last of the Yes/No Question markers in Ào is *pàrin* (1d). *Pàrin* is not to be confused with *pà...rin* which we discussed above. The sentences in (9) are examples of sentences with *pàrin* as the Yes/No Question marker.

(9)  

a.  Wò jú pàrin?  
   lit. you(sg) go que mkr  
   i.e. ‘Did you go?’

b.  Ayọ í ulí pàrin?  
   lit. Ayọ be house que. mkr  
   i.e. ‘Is Ayọ at home?’

c.  Oñinrin tié rhiíi nií zé uyán pàrin?  
   lit. man the cont.neg fut.neg eat pounded yam que mkr  
   i.e. ‘Will the man no longer eat pounded yam?’
We shall discuss the structure of the CP with "pà...rìn" as head in details in below. Semantically, "pàrin" and "pà...rìn" do not have the same meaning. Compare the sentences in (10) below.

(10) a. Wò yá pàrin?
lit: you(sg) come que. mkr
i.e. ‘Is it that you come?’

b. Wo pà yá rìn?
lit: you(sg) que. mkr come que. mkr
i.e. ‘Did you come?’

In (10a) where "pàrin" is the question marker, the speaker is asking a question to confirm whether what is said is correct, hence, "pàrin" serves not only as a question marker but also to reassert the action that has been done earlier. However, (10b) is used to ask a question and no other intention or meaning is intended or involved. The speaker of (10b) is asking the addressee whether he actually comes or not. Therefore the use of "pà...rìn" in an utterance is to ask a question, converting a declarative sentence to an interrogative one.

3. The Structure of Interrogative Sentences

We shall now discuss the structures of the interrogative sentences where the question markers in (1) occur. The question markers, "Nžé" and "Sé", in (1a) and (1b) respectively, occur in the sentences in (2) and (3). We shall use (2a) repeated below as (11) as our guide.

(11) Nžé/sé Táyé ó zé udôn?
lit. ques. mkr Taye agr eat meat
i.e. ‘Did Taye eat meat?’

The sentence in (11) has the structural representation in (12).
As we observe from (12), N̄zé and S̄é are question marker complementizers which occur at the pre-subject position of clauses. Technically, they occupy the comp position as the head of the CP. After the derivation of the basic clause, Tāyé ọ̀ ẓe udọn ‘Taye ate meat’ in (12), the whole derivation targets a CP, and it is merged with the Comp to give us N̄zé / S̄é Tāyé ọ̀ ṣe udọn ‘Did Taye eat the meat?’
The structure of the interrogative sentence with pà...rín as the question marker is quite different from what we have in (12). This is because pà...rín is a pair of particles unlike Nzé and Sé.

Two possible analyses can be given for the structure of the sentence with pà...rín as question marker. We discuss the two alternatives below.

3.1 Pà and rín as two independent markers

Each of the pair of particles, pà and rín, can be treated as two independent question markers, co-occurring in a sentence since it is possible to have other question markers co-occurring in the sentence. For example, sé and pàrin can co-occur in a well-formed sentence. However, while sé and pàrin are two distinct question markers that can occur alone in a well-formed sentence, as we have in the sentences in (3) and (9) above, pà and rín cannot, hence, the sentences in (8) above are illformed because only one of the pair of pà...rín appears alone in them. Since these sentences are illformed, each of the pair of particles pà and rín can not be treated as independent question marker.

3.2. Pà and rín as separate heads

Another analysis of pà...rín is the double head analysis, where each of the particles is accorded the status of a head. In (13) below, one head, pà, is a sister of AgrsP and daughter of C and the other, rín, is the sister of C and daughter of a higher C.

(13)

```
CP
  /
 /  
/    
DP    C'
  /
  /
C'  C
    /
  /  
C    C
    /
  /  
/    
Pà AgrsP rín
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Extended Endocentricity Principle

Every phrase is a symmetrical projection of a single head word category, and every word category projects symmetrically into a corresponding phrase category.

The analysis is (13) also failed to capture the semantic uniformity of pà…rín as it suggests that rín is generated higher than where pà is generated.

4. The broken-question marker analysis

Since the two possible analyses discuss above failed to account for the pair of particles, pà…rín, as a question marker, we shall consider the broken determiner analysis of Amfani 1996 to analyse the question marker, pà…rín, in Ào.

Amfani (1996:121-135) proposes a broken determiner analysis for Hausa NP constructions that comprise a head noun and two syntactically independent determiners since these determiners denote some unified semantic sense which is captured by a single determiner in other languages. Consider the Hausa example below.

(15) yaárò̀ ǹ nán
boy the other
‘The other boy’

Amfani argues that the two determiners ǹ nán ‘the other’, constitute a unified semantic sense, and that neither of the two determiners alone can aptly capture the sense denoted by their semantic alliance, therefore, they should appear as a single unit at D-structure in a broken fashion (i.e. DET…DET) and a component of the single unit attaches to the head N at PF. (15) will have (16) and (17), (Amfani’s (122) and (123) respectively), as D-structure and PF representations respectively.
Following Amfani (1996), we shall argue that the pair of particles, \( \text{pà}...\text{rín} \), occupies the sentence final position, as in (18) below, and that some morphological properties of the first part of the particles, \( \text{pà} \), motivate it to move at LF.
The question marker, \textit{pà…rín}, occurs in (4a) above, repeated as (19) below. It has the structural representation in (20).

(19)  \textit{Táyé ó pà ë ndon rín?}
\textit{lit Táyé agr que.mk réat que mk}r
\textit{i.e. ‘Did Taye eat the meat?’}
The lexical items in the sentence (19) have the following grammatical features:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Head-features:</th>
<th>Specifier features:</th>
<th>Complement-features:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pà…rín</td>
<td>Question marker, Tense/Aspect</td>
<td>AgrsP</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Táyé</td>
<td>Nominative case third person singular DP</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Tense/Aspect feature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ó</td>
<td>Agreement marker</td>
<td>Nominal feature</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ṣẹ</td>
<td>Transitive verb, Tense/Aspect</td>
<td>Nominative case DP</td>
<td>Accusative case DP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Affirmative Tense/Aspect feature, interrogative-features</td>
<td>Affirmative DP (Pronoun and Noun)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>udòn</td>
<td>Accusative case</td>
<td>Third person singular DP noun</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The head of the CP in (20) is pà…rín, which occurs at the sentence final position. The first part of the particle, pà, has Tense/Aspect head feature which must be checked, hence pà moves from the sentence-final position as part of the Comp and is adjoined to the TASP to check this head-feature. Here, its specifier feature, which stipulates that it must have a DP specifier, is satisfied, and the feature is erased. Rín, the second part of the particles, has, apart from its interrogative head-features, the AgrsP as its specifier features, which stipulates that the whole of AgrsP is its specifier. The DP subject, Táyé, moves from its position as the Spec of VP, targets the Spec of TASPP to check off its Tense and Aspect complement–features, thereafter, its moves to the Spec of the AgrsP to check off its nominative case head-features. At each of these positions, the appropriate features are found for the DP subject to check, and therefore, erase all these interpretable head-features.
The agreement marker, ó, has its specifier-features, affirmative DP, which specifies that it must have a DP as its specifier. This feature is checked and erased when the DP subject moves to the Specifier of AgrsP.

The Tense/Aspect features demands that, though it is zero (Ø) realised, it must have an affirmative DP as its specifier, and since it also has interrogative head–feature, the first part of the Comp, pà, is adjoined to it for the checking and elimination of the interrogative head–feature since the feature is uninterpretable at LF.

The verb, zè ‘eat’, is a transitive verb. It has the DP, udòn ‘meat’, as its object. It is adjoined to the Agro for the checking off its case features before it finally moves to be adjoined to TasP to check off its tense/aspect feature. Its nominative case feature is also checked by the trace of the DP at the Spec of TasP. Udòn ‘meat’, the DP object, has the accusative case at its head-feature, since this is not interpretable at LF, the DP object is moved to the Spec-AgroP position where the accusative case head-feature is checked appropriately and eliminated.

After all the uninterpretable features have been checked at the appropriate domain and erased, these are the only head-features remaining for each of the lexical items.

Pà.rín - Question – feature, Tense/Aspect feature
Táyé - Third person singular DP subject
Ó - Agreement marker
zè - Transitive verb
ø - Affirmative Tense/Aspect feature
udòn - Third person singular DP

Our analysis above has some implications for the Minimalist Framework adopted in this work. In the MP, and in generative syntax generally, a transformational rule will move a whole constituent from one position to the other. However, our broken-question marker analysis shows that pà...rín, as the head of the CP, is a pair of particles, and that movement does not affect the whole particles but only the first part of the particles since it is pà that has features that need to be checked in some other places. While it moves and leaves behind a trace, tₙ, the second part of the particles, rín, is left behind at the head position of the CP where it checks and erases its only uninterpretable feature which is its specifier-features.

The last of the question markers is pàrin, (1d), which occurs in the sentence in (21).

(21) Òkinrin tié ai zè uyán pàrin?
lit. man the hab. eat pounded yam que mkr
i.e. ‘Does the man usually eat pounded yam?’

The structure of the CP, with pàrin as head, is given in (22) below.
Following (22), the structural representation of (21) is given in (23).

In the derivation of the sentence in (23), the AgrsP that targets and merges with Comp (\(pàrin\)), thereafter, the Spec of AgrsP moves to the Spec of CP.

The CP structure with \(pà\ldots rín\), (20) or \(pàrin\) (23), as head is known as head-last. However, while the first part of \(pà\ldots rín\) moves to be adjoined to the TASP, \(pàrin\) does not move but maintains it position at the sentence final position.

5. Co-occurrence of Yes/No question markers

Some of the Yes/No Question markers that have are so far identified, \(Nzé\), \(sé\), \(pà\ldots rín\), and \(pàrin\), can co-occur in an utterance. \(pà\ldots rín\) can not co-occur with \(pàrin\) because \(pàrin\) occurs at the sentence-final position, a position where the second part of the pair of \(pà\ldots rín\) (i.e. \(rín\)) occurs, this rules out the co-occurrence of the two markers.

\(pà\ldots rín\) can not co-occur with either \(Nzé\) or \(Sé\) because the first part of \(pà\ldots rín\), which is \(pà\), occupies the same structural position with \(Nzé\) and \(Sé\) as the head of the CP. Since they occur in the same position, they are mutually exclusive.

\(Pàrin\) and \(Sé\) can co-occur in a sentence. Where this is the case, as we have in the sentences in (24) below, we have two heads in the CP, one at the sentence initial position, while the other is at the sentence-final position.
(24) a. Sé tirhà ó gbó pàrin?
   lit. que.mkr teacher agr hear que. mkr
   i.e. ‘Did the teacher hear?’

b. Sé in nií yá pàrin?
   lit. que you (pl) fut.neg come que mkr
   i.e. ‘Will you(pl) not come?’

The structure of (24b) is given in (25).

Nzé, however, is not found in any sentence co-occurring with pàrin. Despite the fact that the two occur in two different structural positions, they do not co-occur in a sentence. This may be due to the fact that Nzé is not commonly employed in a Yes/No Question as we observed above. The restriction of the occurrence and use of Nzé can account for its non-occurrence with pàrin in a sentence.

6. Conclusion

Yes/No questions in Ào dialect of Yorùbá have overt markers. These are Nzé, Sé, pà...rín and pàrin. Nzé and Sé are variants that can be used interchangeably, they occur in presentential position as clause introducers. Sé is more frequently used in negative sentences while the use of Nzé seems to be odd if not unacceptable. Pà...rín is a pair of particles which has its first part adjoined to the TASP and the second part occurring at sentence final position. In a negative sentence, the first part of pà...rín bears a mid tone rather than low tone. Pàrin is an indivisible word which occurs at the sentence final position and since it is the head of the CP where it occurs, the structure of the CP with pàrin as head gives us a structure known as head-last. Pàrin can co-occur with Sé but cannot co-occur with Nzé and pà...rín.
Notes

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1 Ào is a name given to a speech form spoken in some towns and villages in the north-eastern part of Ondo State of Nigeria. These are Ìfira, Ìpèsì, Imerì, Ìdógún, Àfò, Ikún and a part of Ìdóàní. See Oye Taiwo (2003c) where Ào is grouped along with the South- Eastern Yoruba (SEY) following Awobulu yi (1998).

2 The Subject pronoun has various forms in various constructions in Ào as we can observe from (7a) and (7b). The features of the pronoun, and those of the lexical item the pronoun is merged with by Operation Merge, determine the form of the subject pronoun in a particular construction. See Taiwo (2005) for details.

3 The intransitive verb, ya ‘come’, bears a mid tone in a continuous sentence as in (7), but bears a high tone in a non- continuous sentence as in (5) above. We shall not pursue this further here since it has nothing to do with our subject matter.

4 The first part of the particle can retain its low tone in a non- continuous utterance as in (i) below.

   (i) Mi pà ya rin?
       I que. mkr come que mkr
       i.e. ‘Should I come?’

The sentence in (i) does not have the continuous aspect unlike (7b), hence the subject pronoun bears a low tone. (i) above has a zero aspect as well as the non- overt non – future tense.

References


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