Object Movement in Negative Constructions in Standard Yorùbá

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*The object of the negative verb **sí** 'to be' in standard Yorùbá can optionally move to the Spec-IP position in the same clause. This feature is however, peculiar to this verb. This movement could only take place where **sí** occurs with the negative morpheme **kò** or **kì. Sí** cannot occur in an affirmative sentence; **wà,** its affirmative counterpart, would occur in that environment. **Wà** can only occur in a negative sentence with **kò** if it is preceded by the pre-verb **lè.** The syntactic process where the object of **sí** moves to the empty subject position is called object movement in negative constructions.*

1. Introduction

This paper discusses object movement in negative constructions in standard Yorùbá within the Principles and Parameters (PPT) framework of generative syntax. NP movement is a substitution rule whereby one constituent is substituted for another (empty) one (Radford 1988), therefore, a category must be moved to a landing site which has the same property of the moved category. Movement is upward only; the moved category is moved to a higher position. Another characteristic of NP movement is that it always moves an NP from a position where an NP receives a θ-role to a position to which no θ-role is assigned (Cowper 1991), Lasnik & Uriagerika 1988).

Based on these characteristics, we shall discuss object (NP) movement in negative constructions in standard Yorùbá. The object of a particular verb, *sí* 'to be', moves to a hitherto empty subject position in the same sentence. The movement is however, not obligatory as the object *sí* can remain in situ and the utterance is still well formed. *Sí* 'to be', occurs only in negative constructions and is therefore tagged a negative verb in the language most importantly when it has *wà* as its positive counterpart. The syntactic process where the object of *sí* moves to the empty subject position is called object movement in negative constructions.

2. Negative sentences in Yorùbá

In Yorùbá, negative constructions are marked by the following negative morphemes: *'kò', 'kì'* and *'máà'* Bámgbósé (1967: 20), Taiwo (2006). *'Kò'* can be realized as *'kò'* or *'ò'* in different environments. It is *'ò'* when it refers to the first person singular or plural as in (1a), while it is *'kò'* in other environments. These negative morphemes occur in the sentences below.

(1) a. *Èmi ò ní lọ sí oko.*
I neg fut.neg. go to farm

'I will not go to the farm'.

b.   *Kò   sí   owó   ní   ọwọ́   Adé.*
     neg   be   money   in   hand   Adé
     'Money is not in Ade's hand'/ 'Ade does not have money'.

c.   *Kì   yóò   sí   ójó   ní   osù   kẹ́wàá.*
     neg   fut.   be   rain   in   month   ten
     'There will be no rain in the tenth month'/'It will not rain in the tenth month'.

d.   *Òjó   kò   lọ   sí   Èkó.*
     Ojo   neg   go   to   Lagos
     'Ojo did not go to Lagos'.

e.   *Ayò   kì   yóò   rí   wa   nínú   ilé.*
     Ayò   neg   fut.   see   us   inside house
     'Ayò will not see us in the house'.

f.   *Bàbá   kò   wá   sí   ìpàdé   òní.*
     Father   neg   come   to   meeting   today
     'The father did not attend today's meeting'.

g.   *Máà   jẹ   iyán   yẹn.*
     Neg.   eat   pounded-yam   that
     'Don't that pounded-yam'.

From (1a-g), it is observed that '*màá*' can only occur in an imperative sentence where the speaker is issuing out a directive, as in (1g), while 'kì', 'kò' and 'ò' can be used in any other sentence-type, like the declarative, interrogative and exclamatory, but not the imperative.

A careful examination of the negative sentences above reveals that (1b), (1c) and (1g) have no subject while others have. The subjects in (1d) - (1f) could be dropped and yet the sentences will be grammatical as in (2a)–(2c) below.

(2) a.   Kò   lọ   sí   Èkó.
          Neg   go   to   Lagos
          'S/he/It did not go to Lagos'.

     b.   *kì   yóò   rí   wa   nínú   ilé*
          neg   fut.   see   us   inside house
          'S/he/It will not see us in the house'.

     c.   *kò   wá   sí   ìpàdé   òní.*
          neg   come   to   meeting   today

'S/he did not attend today's meeting'.

d. *kò ní rí wa nínú ilé*
neg fut.neg see us inside house
'S/he/It will not see us in the house'.

The sentences in (2a – c) are those in (1c –e) without subjects, while (2d) is a variant of (2c).

3. Object movement in Negative Constructions

We observe that the verb in (1b) and (1c) has objects. The verb is *sí* 'be' and the objects are *owó* 'money' in (1a) and *òjò* 'rain' in (1c). We shall discuss the objects of this verb in this paper. We propose the sentences in (3) as the D–structures of those in (1b&c).

(3) a. *[e]   kò   sí   owó   ní ọwọ́   Adé.*
         neg   be   money   in hand   Ade
         'Money is not in Ade's hand'/ 'Ade does not have money'.

     b. *[e]   Kì yóò   sí   ójó   ní osù   kẹ̀wàá.*
          neg fut. be rain   in month ten
         'There will be no rain in the tenth month'/'It will not rain in the
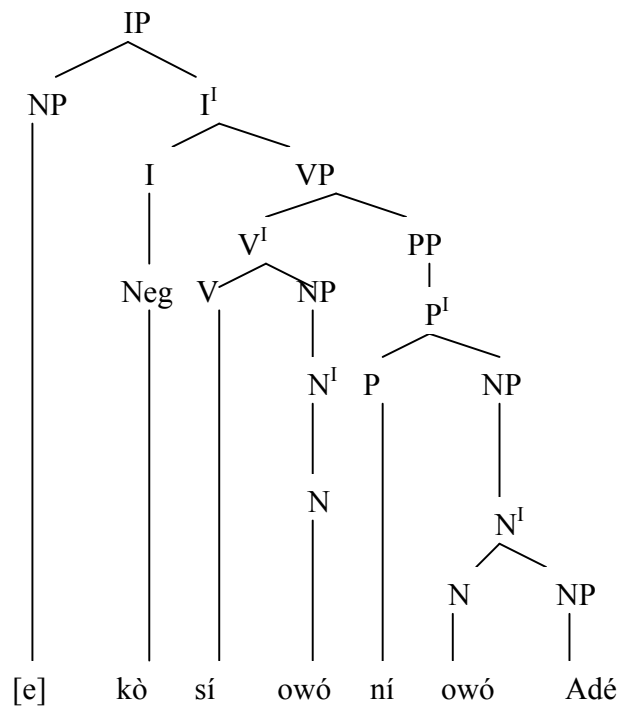   tenth month'.

The objects of the verb *sí* 'to be' can be moved to the empty positions in (3) thereby leaving behind their traces in accordance with one of the characteristics of NP movement. Consider the examples in (4) below.

(4) a. Owó_i   kò   sí   t_i   ní   ọwọ́   Adé.
         Money neg   be   in   hand   Ade
         'Ade does not have money'.

     b. Òjò_i   kì   yóò   sí   t_i   ní   osù   kẹ̀wàá.
         rain   neg. fut.   be   in   month ten
         'There will be no rain in the tenth month'/ 'It will not rain in the
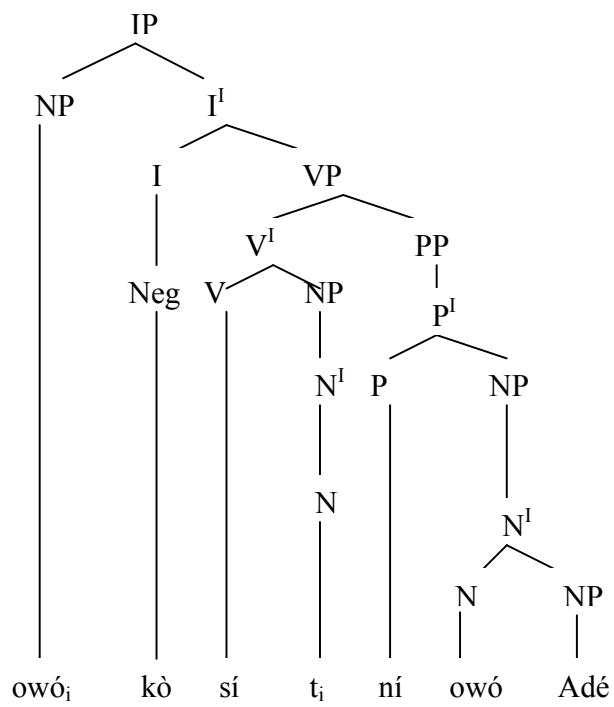   tenth month'.

The objects in (3) are moved from NP positions to the same positions in (4). This movement is upward to a higher position in the clause as is exemplified in the tree-diagram in (5b). These objects were moved form a theta position where they were theta-marked by the verb *sí* to a non-theta position where they cannot receive any θ- role. The examples in (3a) and (4a) are represented in the tree diagrams in (5a) and (5b) respectively.

(5) a

[Tree diagram: IP → NP, I'; I' → I, VP; I → Neg; VP → V', PP; V' → V, NP; NP → N'; N' → N; PP → P'; P' → P, NP; NP → N'; N' → N, NP]

Terminals: [e] kò sí owó ní owó Adé

b.

[Tree diagram: IP → NP, I'; I' → I, VP; I → Neg; VP → V', PP; V' → V, NP; NP → N'; N' → N; PP → P'; P' → P, NP; NP → N'; N' → N, NP]

Terminals: owó$_i$ kò sí t$_i$ ní owó Adé

It is not possible to have an expletive in the empty subject positions of (3) hence; the sentences in (6) below are ill-formed.

(6)   a.   *Ó   kò   sí   owó ní ọwọ́   Adé
                    It   neg.   be   money in hand   Ade

        b.   *Ó   kò   ní   sí ójó ní osù   kẹ́wàá
                   It   neg. fut.neg be rain in month   ten

4. Motivation for movement

In the Yorùbá language, the subject of the negative sentence is not morphologically marked if the said subject is the third person singular short pronoun (Awobuluyi 2001a&b, 2008), Ajọngọlọ 2005). The sentences in (7) have short pronouns as subjects except (7e) which does not have a subject.

(7)   a.   Mi ò   fẹ́   gbọ́   ọ̀rọ̀ yín.
                    I   neg want hear   word you (pl)
                    'I don't want to hear your word'.

        b.   A ò   ní   sọ fún   wọn.
                    we neg fut.neg say give   them
                    'We will not inform them'.

        c.   O   ò   rí Adé.
                    you (sg) neg. see Adé
                    'You (sg) did not see Adé'.

        d.   Ẹ   ò   kọ   lẹ́tà   náà.
                    you (pl) neg. write   letter   the
                          'You (pl) did not write the letter'.

        e.   Kò   rí   mi.
                    neg. see   me
                    'He/She/It did not see me'.

        f.   Wọn kò   rí   mi.
                    they neg. see   me
                    'They did not see me'.

In (7e), the subject is not realized because it is the third person singular short pronoun. The D-structure of the sentence in (7e) is given in (8) below, it resembles those in (3).

(8) [e] kò rí mi.
          neg. see me
          'He/She/It did not see me'.

Despite the resemblance, the object of the verb *rí* 'to see' cannot be moved to the empty subject position in (8) unlike what we have in (4). However, the movement in (4) is optional because both the sentences in (3) and (4) above are acceptable in the language.

      Though the movement as explained above is optional, there is a slight difference between the negative sentences where the objects are in-situ (as in (3)) and the ones where these objects are moved to the subject positions (as in (4)). When a mild emphasis or communicative prominence is placed on the object of *sí*, then the object is moved to the subject position of the sentence to that effect. This is the situation in the sentences in (4) and similar ones. However, when no such emphasis or communicative prominence is intended, then the object of *sí* remains in-situ while the subject position is empty as in the sentences in (3) and similar ones.

5. The Verb sí 'to be'

The verb *sí* 'to be' is referred to as a negative verb. This is because it occurs only in negative and not affirmative constructions. Consider the sentences below.

(9) a. *Owó kò sí ní ọwọ́ Adé*
         Money neg. be in hand Ade
         'Ade has no money'.

     b. **Owó sí ní ọwọ́ Adé*
         Money be in hand Ade

     c. *Owó wà ní ọwọ́ Adé*
         Money be in hand Ade
         'Ade has money'.

(10) a. *Òjò kì yóò sí ní osù kẹ̀wàá.*
         rain neg. fut. be in month ten
         'There will be no rain in the tenth month'/'It will not rain in the tenth month'.

     b ** Ójó yóò sí ní osù kẹ́wàá.*
         rain fut. be in month ten
     c. *Ójó yóò wà ní osù kẹ́wàá.*
         rain fut. be in month ten
         'There will be rain the tenth month'/ 'It will rain in the tenth month'.

The sentences in (9c) and (10c) are the affirmative counterparts of the negative sentences in (9a) and (10a). Note however, that those in (9b) and (10b) are not grammatical; their ungrammaticality is due to the fact that the negative verb *sí* 'to be' tries to function in affirmative constructions. The affirmative counterpart of the verb *sí* is *wà*, this is why (9c) and (10c) are grammatical. In the same vein, the affirmative verb *wà* 'be' may not function in a negative construction. If it does, such will be unacceptable. This accounts for the ungrammaticality of the sentences in (11) that contains *wà* 'be' and the negative morphemes.

(11) a. *Owó   kò wà   ní   ọwọ́ Adé*
          Money neg. be   in   hand   Ade

      b. *Òjò   kì yóò wà   ní   osù   kẹ́wàá.*
          rain neg. fut.   be   in   month ten

However, the verb *wà* occurs in the negative sentences below.

(12) a. *Owó   kò lè   wà   ní   ọwọ́ mi ní ìparí ọsù.*
          Money neg. preverb be in   hand   me at month end
          'Money cannot be in my hand at the end of the month' /
          'I cannot have money at the end of the month'.

      b. *Adé kò   lè   wà   ní ilé   ní aago méjọ.*
          Ade   neg. preverb be   in house at clock eight
          Ade cannot be at home by eight o'clock'.

Two observations could be made from the two sentences in (12). First, the verb *wà* does not occur immediately after the negative morpheme *kò*, there is the preverb, *lè* which is between it and the negative morpheme, if the preverb does not occur between the two, the sentences will be illformed as we the examples in (11a&b). The other observation is the fact that the subjects of the sentences in (12) were not moved from the object position of *wà,* rather they are base-generated as subjects. Hence, sentences like the ones below are not acceptable in standard Yorùbá.

(13) a. *kò   lè   wà Owó   ní   ọwọ́ mi ní ìparí ọsù.*
          neg.   preverb be money in   hand   me at month end

      b. * kò   lè   wà Adé ní ilé   ní aago méjọ*
          neg. preverb   be   Ade in house at clock eight

The above analysis points to the fact that **wà** behaves differently from *sí* in standard Yorùbá. Following the above assertion, we establish that the verb 'be' has two forms in Yorùbá. They are *sí* and *wà*, which function in negative and affirmative constructions respectively. But other verbs

like *lọ* 'to go', *wá* 'to come', *jẹ 'to eat', mọ̀* 'to know' etc, can occur in both negative and affirmative constructions. This occurrence is what we have in the sentences in (14) – (17) below.

(14)   a.   *Adé   kò   lọ   sí   oko*
            Ade   neg   go   to   farm
            'Ade did not go to the farm'.

       b.   *Adé   lọ   sí   oko*
            Ade   go   to   farm
            'Ade went to the farm'.

(15)   a.   *Ójó   kò   wá   sí   ilé*
            Ojo   neg   come   to   house
            'Ojo did not come to the house'.

       b.   *Ójó   wá   sí   ilé*
            Ojo   come   to   house
            'Ojo came to the house'.

(16)   a.   *Táyọ̀   kò   jẹ   ịsu*
            Táyọ̀   neg.   eat   yam
            'Tayo did not eat yam'.

       b.   *Táyọ̀   jẹ   ịsu*
            Táyọ̀   eat   yam
            'Tayo eat yam'.

(17)   a.   *Olú   kò   mọ   Dúgbẹ̀   ní   Ìbàdàn*
            Olú   neg.   know   Dúgbẹ̀   at   Ìbàdàn
            'Olu does/did not know Dugbe in Ìbàdàn'.

       b.   *Olú   mọ   Dúgbẹ̀   ní   Ìbàdàn*
            Olú   know   Dúgbẹ̀   at   Ìbàdàn
            'Olu knows/knew Dugbe in Ìbàdàn'.

All the discussion above can be summed up in Table 1 below.

	Verb	**Neg. forms**	**Affirmative forms**
a.	be	kò sí	Ó wà
b.	go	Kò lọ	Ó lọ
c.	come	kò wá	Ó wá
d.	eat	kò jẹ	Ó jẹ
e.	know	kò mọ̀	Ó mọ̀

Table 1 *Negative and Affirmative forms of Verbs*

It follows from Table 1 that while the affirmative forms of other verbs (b-e) take the expletive '*ó*' and maintain their negative forms, that of 'kò sí' in (a) takes the expletive and changes the verb 'sí to wà'.

6. Conclusions

The object movement discussed above optionally moves an NP from the object of the verb to the subject of the sentence. The motivation for this movement is the intended slight emphasis or communicative prominence placed on the object of the negative verb *sí* 'to be' in a negative construction in Yorùbá. When no such emphasis or communicative prominence is intended, movement does not take place. This movement can only occur in a negative sentence that has the verb *sí*. The verb itself will occur in negative sentences, it has an affirmative counterpart in *wà*.

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