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## Olùkùmi polar question derivation: A complex linguistic inquiry

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**Abstract:** This study investigates polar questions in Olùkùmi, an island dialect of Yorùbá. Clauses have unique peculiarities that distinguish one clause type from another in every language. This informs why a question construction can be differentiated from any other construction type. Question construction is of various types one of which is the polar question that is the focus of this paper. A polar question is the question type that expects affirmation or rejection. Studies on Olùkùmi have paid little attention to question types. Hence, this study aims to fill this gap in language documentation by illustrating the derivation, projection, and possible responses to polar questions in Olùkùmi. This study adopts a qualitative method, and the frame technique is used for data collection to get relevant structural samples from competent native speakers in the Ugbódù community, Delta state, Nigeria. Chomsky's Minimalist Program is adopted as the theoretical framework. Findings show that Olùkùmi uses a high-low tone morph under the special intonation pattern which takes the last vocalic anchor of an affirmative construction as a polar particle. The particle surfaces sentence finally question the status of a declarative construction to a polar construction. Also, It was discovered that polar question derivation in Olùkùmi has a limited overt particle/marker and its response could either be *hèhèhè/báà ni* "Yes/It is so" or *hèhè/ é è ghò báà* "No/ It is not so". This study has shown that the form and derivation pattern of the Olùkùmi polar question is different from standard Yorùbá.

**Keywords:** Minimalist program, Olùkùmi, Polar particle, Polar question, Tone-morph

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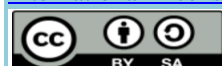
### 1. Introduction

Sentence is usually conceived as the largest unit of grammar (Matthews, 2007). Sentences can be classified based on their structural or semantic categories as well as functions. Under the functional criteria, a sentence could make a declarative proposition, give an order as in the case of an imperative sentence, or request a response as in the case of an interrogative sentence. A simple sentence can perform various functions such as declaration, imperativization, or interrogation as one makes plain statements, gives orders, or asks questions (Yusuf, 2007). Sentences are similar underlyingly, despite the seeming surface structural differences. The declarative according to Yusuf (2007) is primary whereas others are derived and the process by which one sentence generates another type is simply tagged transformation.

Transformation is a process that relates the deep structure of a sentence to the surface structure through transformational rules. As a process, it works on the basic sentence generated by the phrase structure rules. Syntactic structures are analysed into syntactic categories being established based on the syntactic relationship they have with other elements in construction (Crystal, 2008). Constructions are derived using an enriched feature-laden lexicon and a computational system involving three operational devices- select, merge, and move. A clause or sentence can be used to perform the function of inquiring about what the speaker has nothing or little knowledge about. Such construction is

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referred to as interrogative/question construction. Question construction also known as interrogative construction is one of the functional classifications of sentence. It is used to inquire about information.

Interrogative construction could come in different forms based on the answers they require such as a yes/no question, wh-question, alternative question, echo question, or indirect question (Quirk et al, 1985; Lamidi, 2008). However, Yes/No questions and wh-questions are the types projected at the CP layer. A transformational relationship exists between a statement and the corresponding question type whether it is a Yes/No or Wh-question (Nwachukwu, 1989; 1995a&b; Yusuf 1992; 1998). As earlier mentioned, the yes/no question also known as the polar question is the focus of this study. The study would add to the existing literature on Olùkùmi (such as; Eleshin-Ajikobi, 2023; Oluwadoro & Abiola, 2016; Arokoyo, 2012; Obisesan, 2012) by filling the vacuum in this aspect of syntactic analysis. The study's main aim is to develop a descriptive analysis of polar question derivation in Olùkùmi. The research objectives and goals are to: (i) Examine the process of polar question derivation in Olùkùmi. (ii) Investigate the response to a polar question in Olùkùmi. (iii) Analyse Olùkùmi polar question derivation within the minimalist program framework to ascertain the applicability or otherwise of the theory.

Olùkùmi though described as an autonomous language by some scholars such as Lewis, Gary and Charles (2015), Arokoyo and Madobu (2017), is however taken to be an island dialect of Yorùbá following Ajikobi (2018), and Eleshin-Ajikobi's (2021) classifications. It is spoken in Odiani clan; an area of Aniocha North Local Government Area of Delta State which constitutes a distinct and unique tribe in western Igboland and has been described aptly as a 'Yoruba Enclave'. The principal speakers of Olùkùmi reside in Ugbódù and Ukwu-Nzu. Anioma, Idumogo, Ogodor, Ubulubu, and Ugboba are other communities where it is used by settlers who migrated from Ugbódù or Ukwu-Nzu. Olùkùmi speech form is the only legacy that distinguishes its speakers' communities from the western Igbo sub-culture communities in which it is 'sandwiched'. The data for this analysis is from Ugbódù community which is the case study. Ugbódù is at the extreme north of Aniochaland close to the Esan South-East Local Government Area of Edo State. It is situated as a community in such a way that it has Ohordua to the north; Onicha-Ukwu to the south, Idumuje to the west, and Ukwu-Nzu to the east.

## 2. Literature review

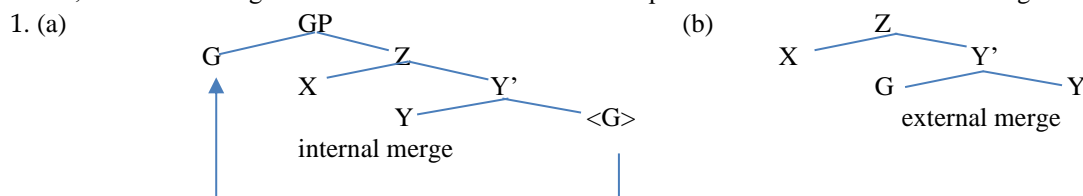
This section reviews the available relevant literature to the current study based on the Mini Literature Review (MLR) approach, an aspect of the Framework Synthesis. The MLR according to Chukwuere (2023) has to do with a succinct, concentrated, and brief examination of earlier publications as they relate to a given subject to detect the vacuum to be filled by the current study. This helps to know the extent of work that has been done so far in Olùkùmi and the area of study, thereby enabling the identification of the gap to fill. The review is presented under three subsections that relate to the focus of the study. The subsections are: (i) theoretical framework (ii) works on polar question, and (iii) works on Olùkùmi.

### 2.1 Theoretical framework

The Minimalist framework is an improved version of the earlier theories of generative grammar. It is a product of Chomsky's (1993, 1995) and subsequent publications. Its motive is to cut down the syntactic derivation process to a minimum level and also develop a theory of language acquisition that maximizes the learnability of natural language grammar. (Chomsky, 1995; Radford, 1997; Marantz, 1995; Crystal, 2008; Collins, 2011; 2016, etc.). According to Cook and Newson (2007), the 'Minimalist Program intends to reduce the number of operations and assumptions, making it, in the end, simpler than past theories'. The principle of economy makes statements about human language as simple as possible (Haegeman, 1996). The Interface levels of the framework are phonetic form (PF), and logical form (LF). The PF is an abstract representation of sound while the LF is an abstract representation of meaning.

Language within MP is an interface of the articulatory and perceptual (A-P) system (PF -Sign) and their conceptual and intentional (C-I) system (LF - meaning) (Luraghi and Parodi, 2008). The grammar is modelled as a Computational System containing a numeration of lexical items, to which operations *Merge* and *Move* apply to build up a structural description. All inflected words are formed in the lexicon and merged in a binary order to derive a convergence construction in a bottom-up approach. Specifically, the merge is a recursive process that combines two lexical items, or the process that combines one lexical item with a grammatical construction (Crystal, 2008). It is a process that involves combining elements and labelling the resultant combinations (Hornstein, Nunes, and Grohmann, 2005). Merge creates a larger syntactic unit from smaller ones. It merges two independent elements X and Y to form Z; which has X and Y as its immediate constituents.

Merge is sub-categorised into two namely; external and internal merge. The external merge functions as explained above, while the internal merge (referred to as move) functions in a slightly different way. Apart from combining X and Y, an internal merge draws G from within Y'. An example of an internal and external merge is schematized below:



The angled bracket around G shows that the element has been moved from its in-situ position to where the arrow points. In this case, it is the last occurrence that spells out. Operations are triggered by morphological necessity, with



- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 6. (a) Àlàbí pòn omi.<br>Alabi fetch water<br>'Alabi fetched water.' | (b) <b>Şé</b> Àlàbí pòn omi?<br><b>QM</b> Alabi fetch water<br>'Did Alabi fetch water?'   |
| 7. (a) Àlàbí pòn omi.<br>Alabi fetch water<br>'Alabi fetched water.' | (b) <b>Ñjé</b> Àlàbí pòn omi.?<br><b>QM</b> Alabi fetch water<br>'Did Alabi fetch water?' |

In standard Yorùbá and some of its dialects, a polar particle (an independent morpheme) is adjoined to the left periphery of a basic construction to derive a polar construction as presented in (6) and (7) above. Also, a polar particle such as *bí* occurs in the sentence-final position as explicated in (8) and there is a possibility of multiple polar particles in a single construction as in (9).

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 8. (a) Àlàbí pòn omi.<br>Alabi fetch water<br>'Alabi fetched water.' | (b) Àlàbí pòn omi <b>bí</b> ?<br>Alabi fetch water <b>QM</b><br>'Did Alabi fetch water?'                   |
| 9. (a) Àlàbí pòn omi.<br>Alabi fetch water<br>'Alabi fetched water.' | (b) <b>Şé/Ñjé</b> Àlàbí pòn omi <b>bí</b> ?<br><b>QM</b> Ade eat yam <b>QM</b><br>'Did Alabi fetch water?' |

The same set of data is presented as the basic constructions in (6-9) to point to the fact that a polar question of the same interpretation could be asked using different particles appearing at the sentence-initial position (as in 6b and 7b) or sentence-final position (as in 8b) and sometimes with multiple particles in varying positions (as in 9b).

### 2.3 Extant work on Olùkùmi

On the extant work on Olùkùmi, it is observed that formal linguistic research on the syntactic aspect is very scanty. For instance, the available literature on Olùkùmi is majorly on either morphology (Eleshin-Ajikobi, 2023; Kareem, 2021), phonology (Adeniyi & Ajikobi, 2018; Arokoyo 2012; Ugbelase 1992), lexicostatistics comparison of the speech form and related codes (Oluwadoro & Abiola, 2016; Obisesan, 2012), or Dictionary compilation (Arokoyo & Madobu, 2017). This study intends to add the polar question derivation which is a syntactic analysis to the existing literature on Olùkùmi.

## 3. Research methodology

This study adopts qualitative research methods that rely heavily on primary data sources (interview, observation, discussion) and partly on secondary data sources (library). Qualitative research is the research type that uses participant, observation, or case study methods in data collection which results in a narrative or descriptive record of a particular study (Parkinson & Drislane, 2011). As stated by Lewis (2018), qualitative studies are inductive, and as such data are collected, observed, and analysed in a bottom-up approach, and conclusions are drawn based on the native speakers' intuition. Five competent native speakers of Olùkùmi, one from each of the five communities that constitute Ugbòdù kingdom in Aniocha North LGA of Delta state were consulted which comprised four males and one female. Bilingual and introspective approaches to data collection were used to get relevant speech samples recorded and later transcribed for data elucidation through the frame technique. This involves requesting the language consultants to provide the equivalents of random declarative and polar derivations in Olùkùmi. Apart from the raw data from the consultants, libraries were consulted where references were made to books, journals, articles, and unpublished theses. Online sources such as websites and other relevant sources on the topic as well as Olùkùmi were also consulted. These works are duly cited on our reference page.

## 4. Findings and discussions

### 4.1. Olùkùmi polar question derivation

In Olùkùmi, a polar question is derived from a declarative sentence through the use of special intonation patterns (high-low morph). The affirmative particle *ni* in the final position of an affirmative/basic construction in Olùkùmi is modified to a *ní* morpheme in a polar construction. Thus, a mid-tone on the final syllable in a declarative construction is changed to a high-low tone to derive a polar construction. Consider the following illustrations.

- | <b>Basic Sentence</b>   | <b>Derived Polar Question</b>   |
|---|---|
| 10. (a) Adé mọ omi ní.<br>Ade drink water AFF<br>'Ade drank water.'                                   | (b) Adé mọ omi <i>ní</i> ?<br>Ade drink water AFF-QM<br>'Did Ade drink water?'                                    |
| 11. (a) Seríre yú oẓà ní òní ní.<br>Serire go market at today AFF<br>Serire went to the market today. | (b) Seríre yú oẓà ní òní <i>ní</i> ?<br>Serire go market at today AFF-QM.<br>'Did Serire go to the market today?' |
| 12. (a) Ba rẹ rhà únọ ulé ní.<br>father 2sg be inside house AFF<br>'Your father is at home.'          | (b) Ba rẹ rhà únọ ulé <i>ní</i> ?<br>father 2sg be inside house AFF-QM<br>'Is your father at home?'               |

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 13. (a) Ezin rò ní àná ni.<br>rain fall be yesterday AFF<br>'It rained yesterday.'  | (b) Ezin rò ní àná níi?<br>rain fall be yesterday AFF-QM<br>'Did it rain yesterday?'    |
| 14. (a) Wé re omi ni.<br>2sg go water AFF<br>'You are going to the stream.'         | (b) Wé re omi níi?<br>2sg go water AFF-QM<br>'Are you going to the stream?'             |
| 15. (a) Adé í mọ omi ni.<br>Ade PROG drink water AFF<br>'Ade is drinking water.'    | (b) Adé í mọ omi níi?<br>Ade PROG drink water AFF-QM<br>'Is Ade drinking water?'        |
| 16. (a) Seríre á zẹ usu ni.<br>Seríre FUT eat yam AFF<br>Serire will eat yam.       | (b) Seríre á zẹ usu níi?<br>Seríre FUT eat yam AFF-QM<br>'Will Serire eat yam?'         |
| 17. (a) Àwán á wá ewé ni.<br>3pl FUT come school AFF<br>'They will come to school.' | (b) Àwán á wá ewé níi?<br>3pl FUT come school AFF-QM<br>'Will they come to school?'     |
| 18. (a) Wo zẹ ùrùnzẹ han.<br>2sg eat food PERF<br>'You have eaten.'                 | (b) Wo zẹ ùrùnzẹ hán-àn?<br>2sg eat food PERF-QM<br>'Have you eaten?'                   |
| 19. (a) Olú ó re ọzà han.<br>Olú HTS go market PERF<br>Olu has gone to the market.  | (b) Olú ó re ọzà hán-àn?<br>Olú HTS go market PERF-QM.<br>'Has Olu gone to the market?' |

It should be noted that in a declarative construction with a perfective aspect in Olùkùmi, the perfective marker is effected for the question as illustrated in examples (18) and (19). The *han* in the basic construction changes to *hán-àn* in the derived polar question construction just as the *ni* in examples (10) to (17) change to *níi*. Hence, the mid-tone on the last vocalic anchor of the basic sentence changes to a high-low tone on the derived polar question. This significant use of tone in Olùkùmi corroborates Dangana and Anyogo's (2024) assertion on the use of tone in most African languages.

#### 4.2. Answers to Olùkùmi polar questions

This question type has a binary answer, meaning that it can only be answered in either of the two possibilities which are Yes or No. Holmberg (2014) points out that there are some variations regarding the answers to polar questions which can be understood if we assume that the expressions have syntactic structures even when they consist of just a word. It is a popular notion in the literature that answers to polar questions; *Yes* (to affirm) and *No* (to negate) are more than they appear as individual lexical items, and have many other lexical items coded in them, thereby springing a specific structure in languages (Usenbo, 2017; Holmberg, 2014; 2001, De Villiers et al., 2008). An accurate answer to a particular question may be any type of syntactic constituent being; a noun phrase, verb phrase, prepositional phrase, or even a main clause.

As shown in various literature on interrogative answers a polar question determines the kind of answers that can be expected because there is a direct relationship between a question and the actual answer it requires (De Villiers et al., 2008). This study agrees with the above notion as it would be shown that polar answers denote more than they appear in Olùkùmi.

##### 4.2.1 Affirmative Response

There are two (2) forms of affirmative response to a polar question cross-linguistically as observed by Yaisomanag (2012), viz; (a) an affirmative particle like *Yes* in English, *Oui* in French and (b) a repeated (finite) verb of the question as in Finish language. The first type is employed in standard Yorùbá and by extension in Olùkùmi because it has designated morphemes that confirm the truth condition of a proposition raised by a speaker in a polar question. Standard Yorùbá uses *bẹ̀ẹ̀ ni* or *hẹ̀n* as the case may be, while *báà ni* and *hẹ̀hẹ̀hẹ̀* serve the same purpose in Olùkùmi to perform the function of answering a 'Yes' to a proposition. Examine the polar questions and their affirmative responses in Olùkùmi below.

- | <b>Polar Question</b>   | <b>Affirmative Response</b>  |
|---|--|
| 20. (a) Adé mọ omi níi?<br>Ade drink water QM<br>'Did Ade drink water?'           | (b) Hẹ̀hẹ̀hẹ̀, (Adé mọ omi ni).<br>Yes, (Ade drink water AFF)<br>'Yes, (Ade drank water)'              |
| 21. (a) Olú á yú ọzà níi?<br>Olu FUT go market QM<br>'Will Olu go to the market?' | (b) Hẹ̀hẹ̀hẹ̀, (Olú á yú ọzà ni)<br>Yes, (Olu FUT go market AFF)<br>'Yes, (Olu will go to the market)' |

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 22. (a) Ọma họn nńi?<br>child cry QM<br>'Did the child cry?'   | (b) Hẹhẹhẹ, (ọma họn ni)<br>Yes, (child cry AFF)<br>'Yes, (the child cried)'   |
| 23. (a) Seríre í zẹ usu nńi?<br>Seríre PROG eat yam QM<br>'Is Serire eating yam?'                        | (b) Hẹhẹhẹ, (Seríre í zẹ usu ni)<br>Yes, (Seríre PROG eat yam AFF)<br>'Yes, (Serire is eating yam).'                       |
| 24. (a) Báà ni ẹ ti gbá alẹ nńi?<br>this be 3pl PERF sweep floor QM<br>'Is this how to sweep the floor?' | (b) Hẹhẹhẹ, (Báà ni ẹ ti gbá alẹ ni)<br>Yes, (this be 3pl PERF sweep floor AFF)<br>'Yes, (this is how to sweep the floor)' |

#### 4.2.2 Negative response

The idea in a realistic sense is that when a response to a polar question does not affirm the statement, it negates it. Thus, as a polar question can be affirmed, it can also be refuted cross-linguistically. The negative response in Olùkùmi is expressed through the use of negating items; *hẹhẹ* or *é è ghò báà*. An example of a negative response to a polar question is presented below.

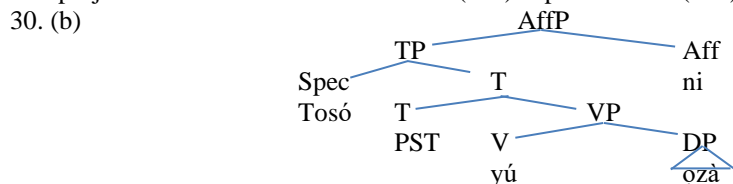
- | <b>Polar Question</b>  | <b>Negative Response</b>   |
|--|--|
| 25. (a) Adé mọ omi nńi?<br>Ade drink water QM<br>'Did Ade drink water?'                                  | (b) Hẹhẹ, (Adé è mọ omi).<br>No, (Ade-3sg NEG drink water)<br>'No, (Ade did not drink water)'  |
| 26. (a) Olú á yú ọzà nńi?<br>Olu FUT go market QM<br>'Will Olu go to the market?'                        | (b) Hẹhẹ, (Olú é a yú ọzà)<br>No, (Olu 3sg-Neg FUT-NEG go market)<br>'No, (Olu will not go to the market)'                                 |
| 27. (a) Ọma họn nńi?<br>child cry QM<br>'Did the child cry?'   | (b) Hẹhẹ, (Ọma é è họn)<br>No, (child 3sg-Neg NEG cry)<br>'No, (the child did not cry)'  |
| 28. (a) Seríre í zẹ usu nńi?<br>Seríre PROG eat yam QM<br>'Is Serire eating yam?'                        | (b) Hẹhẹ, (Seríre é i zẹ usu)<br>No, (Seríre 3sg-Neg PROG-NEG eat yam)<br>'No, (Serire is not eating yam).'                                |
| 29. (a) Báà ni ẹ ti gbá alẹ nńi?<br>this be 3pl PERF sweep floor QM<br>'Is this how to sweep the floor?' | (b) Hẹhẹ, (é è ghò báà ni ẹ ti gbá alẹ)<br>No, (3sg-Neg NEG be this be 3pl PERF sweep floor)<br>'No, (this is not how to sweep the floor)' |

#### 4.3. Olùkùmi polar question projection

Syntactic projection is how syntactic constructions are analysed on syntactic trees for clarity and more understanding. Olùkùmi polar question is derived from an affirmative construction with the introduction of a tone-morph [high-low] on the last vocalic anchor of the affirmative construction. Following the pedestal proposed by Ajiboye (2013), that all the Yorùbá interrogative particles occur at the sentence-initial position at the Logical Form (LF) level, this study proposes that the polar marker in Olùkùmi is initially generated at the question node of the QstP (Question Phrase) which is a sub-set of a CP (Complementizer Phrase). Movement is done for the appropriate constituent to derive a convergent polar question which resulted in the polar particle surfacing at the sentence-final position at the Phonological Form (PF) level, following spell-out. Let us examine how the polar question is projected from the declarative sentence in 30 below.

30. (a) Tosó yú ọzà ni.  
Tosó go-PST school Aff  
'Tosó went to the market.'

The projection of the basic sentence as in (30a) is presented in (30b).



Example (31) is the polar question form of the declarative sentence in (30a) above since polar questions are derived from basic utterances.

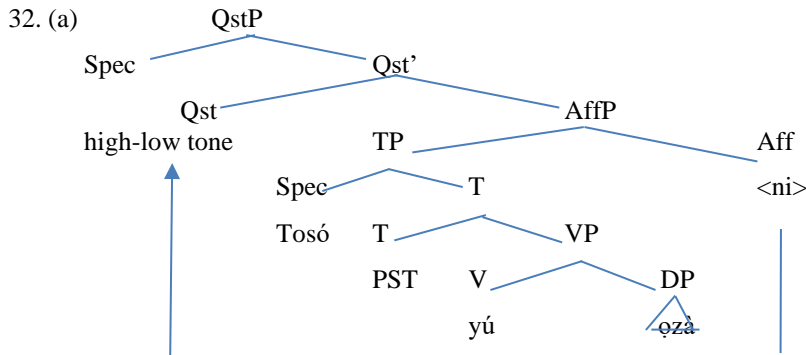
31. Tosó yú ọzà nńi?  
Tosó go market QM  
'Did Tosó go to the market?'



The polar question under the MP framework in Olùkùmi involves merging the polar particle to a convergent AffP to project a QstP, and moving the initial TP to the specifier position of the QstP. The Qst is the head of the QstP as every projection has its own head and the heads are sole determinant of what can be moved into their domain (Abimbola, 2024). The polar question particle consequently, occupies the sentence's final position after the triggered movement. The derivation steps would be generated on the syntactic tree as follows.

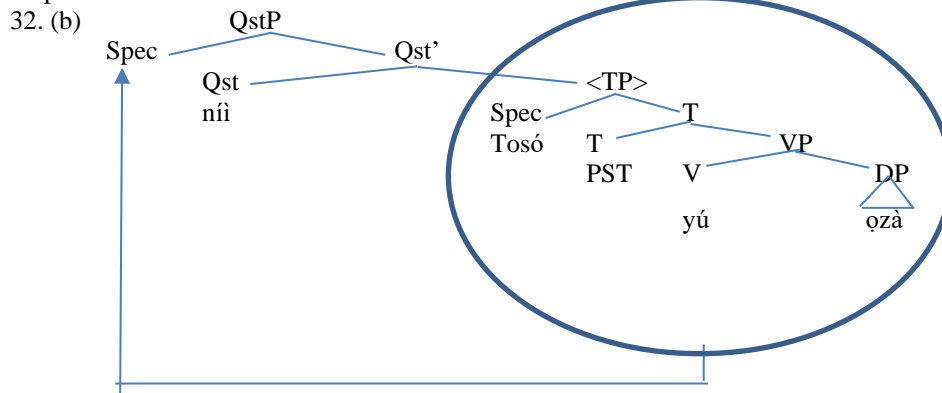
Step 1:

The affirmative phrase in Olùkùmi is merged with a question particle through an external merge. This projects the Question Phrase for question construction derivation. The question node is occupied by the question particle (*tone-morph*) through the adjunction rule. Since the basic construction used in polar derivation in Olùkùmi is overtly marked for affirmation, it is proposed that the functional head of the AffP ‘*ni*’ moves to merge with the question particle which is the functional head of the QstP, to change the question particle from *high-low tone* to *nîi* through a head-to-head movement. This is imperative as tones are auto-segmental elements that need a tone-bearing unit to function. This is illustrated in (32a)



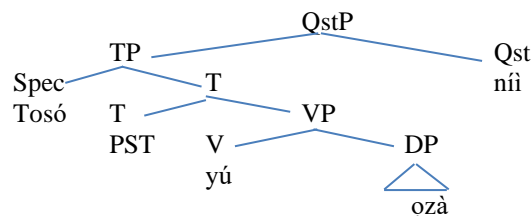
After the functional head-to-head movement of the Aff particle to merge with the Qst particle, the remaining part of the AffP i.e., the whole TP moves across the Qst particle to occupy the Spec-QstP as seen in step 2 (32b) below.

Step 2:



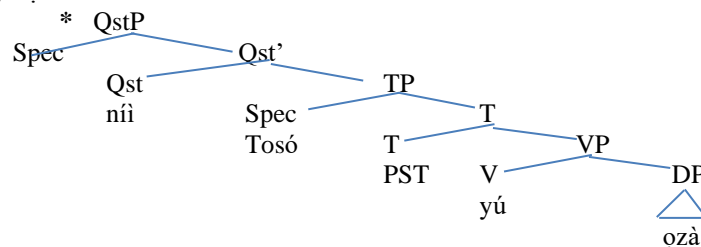
The movement of the TP is licensed by the strong [+EPP] feature possessed by the Olùkùmi polar question particle that attracts the pied-piping of the whole TP to its left periphery for convergence of the polar derivation thereby making the Qst particle surfaces at the clause-final position of the QstP as seen in (32c), otherwise, the derivation crashes as evident in (32d) below.

32. (c)



Crashed polar question derivation:

32. (d) \*nîi Tosó yú òzà?



As presented in (32c) above, the polar particle triggers the syntactic movement of a visible goal in its c-command domain based on feature specification of inter-head movement in such construction that resulted in convergence derivation while lack of movement of the TP resulted in crash derivation as in (32d). The motivation for the movement which moves the TP across the Qst head to the specifier position of the QstP was done as a last resort after procrastination. The movement occurred on greed tenet for a selfish interest of the construction to have a [+Qst] feature. The placement of the moved constituent followed the linear axiom, as the spec-QstP is the nearest landing site where the moved element could be placed in the hierarchically closest position in an upward direction of the right kind from its source position. Other operations and surface output conditions interact with the computation process to ensure that the derivation converges at PF and LF. For instance, the principle of full interpretation ensures that no superfluous or uninterpretable element is in the final derivation as seen in (32c). It is observed that the moved TP has a spell-out reading on the last occurrence at the left-most periphery in Olùkùmi.

Olùkùmi polar question derivation is in line with the view of some scholars (such as; Ajiboye, 2013; Olaogun, 2010) that polar question derivation in Yorùbá and by extension, its dialects, is interesting as it involves some morphophonemic rules. As opposed to some scholars' (such as Yusuf, 1997) conception of the derivation of this question type as stated in Olaogun (2010) that "In Yorùbá (Yes/No question formation), it is enough to adjoin a question particle to the declarative sentence. No movement is involved. Neither is any morphophonemic rule employed".

## **5. The contribution of the study**

This study adds to the existing literature in Olùkùmi by describing the derivation process in the formation of polar question which is an aspect of question types in human language. It buttresses the fact that tone performs a vital role in the Yorùbá language with evidence from an island dialect (Olùkùmi) that uses toneme as a polar particle as opposed to standard Yorùbá which uses a lexical morpheme to mark the same construction. The study also contributes to the projection of a syntactic construct in Olùkùmi which is one of the less documented dialects of the Yorùbá language.

## **6. Key findings of the study**

As illustrated in the study, some findings were discovered in exploring the intricacies of polar question derivation in Olùkùmi amongst which are:

- i. A polar question is derived from an affirmative proposition.
- ii. Olùkùmi has a limited polar particle i.e., high-low tone morph as a special intonation pattern used in the derivation of polar questions.
- iii. The polar particle in Olùkùmi appears at the sentence-final position in the polar question construction as opposed to standard Yorùbá where it appears mostly at the sentence-initial position.
- iv. Among the possible responses required for the Olùkùmi polar question could either be *héhèhé* "yes", *bàà ni* "it is so" or *héhè* "no", *é è ghò bàà* "it is not so".
- v. Olùkùmi polar particle is base-generated at the head of the question phrase (QstP), i.e. the Qst node and has a strong feature that triggers clausal movement to the specifier position of the QstP for convergence derivation.

## **7. The implications of the study**

This study shows that the form and distribution of syntactic features are language/dialect-specific for convergence derivation. A language and its dialects may vary in the forms and the distributions of syntactic features or elements; this fact does not refute their relatedness. It, however, establishes the complex nature of natural/human language. Furthermore, the response to a polar question encodes more information than it appears as individual lexical items, as they have many other lexical items coded in them that are not uttered.

## **8. Recommendations and suggestions**

The study is recommended for African language experts, and linguists in general. It calls on linguists to intensify efforts in the description and documentation of less-spoken languages or dialects for the preservation and documentation of our local speech forms. This in a way can also proffer solutions to unravel some language-specific peculiarities found in the standard form.

## **9. Conclusion**

This study has presented the derivation and projection of polar questions in Olùkùmi. It showed that Olùkùmi has a limited polar particle i.e., tone morph (high-low) that surfaces at the sentence-final position of such construction. It further claimed that this particle is base generated at the question node of the QstP and has a strong feature that attracts clausal movements around it to its left periphery, and involves some morphophonemic rules for convergence derivation. In addition, the study showed that the response to a polar question could be *Héhèhé* "Yes", *Bàà ni* "It is so" or *Héhè* "No", *É è ghò bàà* "It is not so", and that the response however, encodes more information than they appear as individual lexical items, as they have many other lexical items coded in them. It was also observed that the polar particle in Olùkùmi appears at the sentence-final position in polar question construction as opposed to standard Yorùbá where it occurs mostly at the sentence-initial.



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