

Subject and Non-subject wh-questions asymmetries in Àkúré

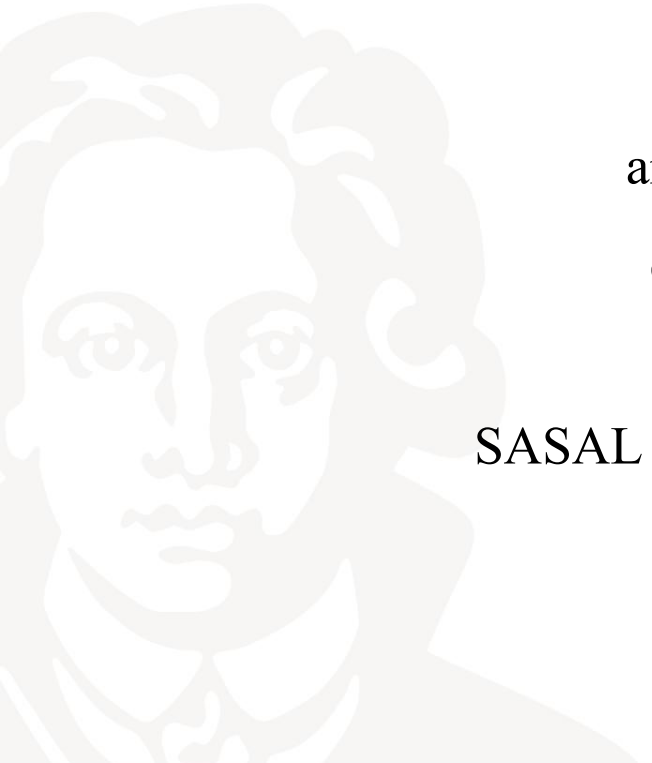
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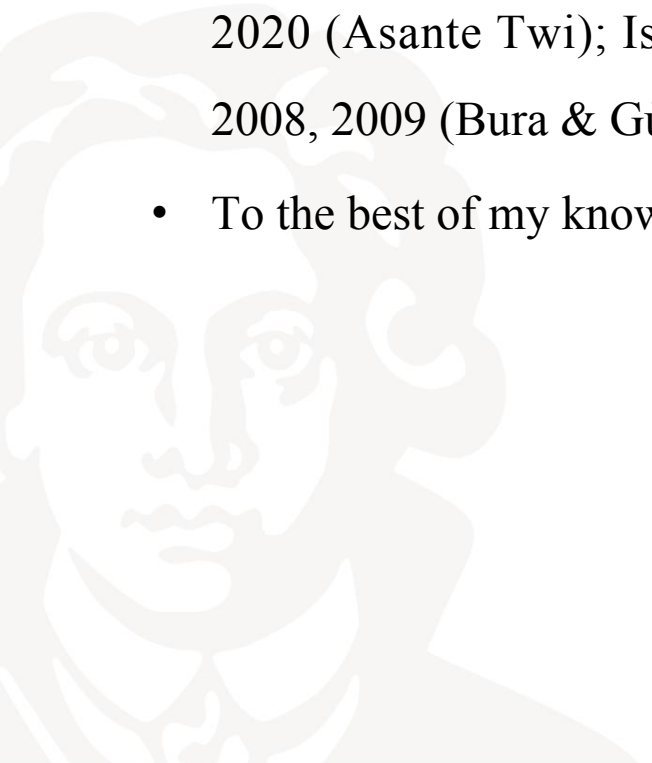
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Introduction

- Studies showing asymmetries between subject and non-subject A'-dependencies abound.
- African languages have shown interesting asymmetries in this regard.
- For recent studies, see Amaechi & Georgi 2019 (Igbo); Korsah & Murphy 2019, 2020 (Asante Twi); Issah & Smith 2020 (Dagbani); Hartmann & Zimmermann 2008, 2009 (Bura & Gùrùntùm); Hein t.a (Linbum); among others.
- To the best of my knowledge, there is no such study in Akure.



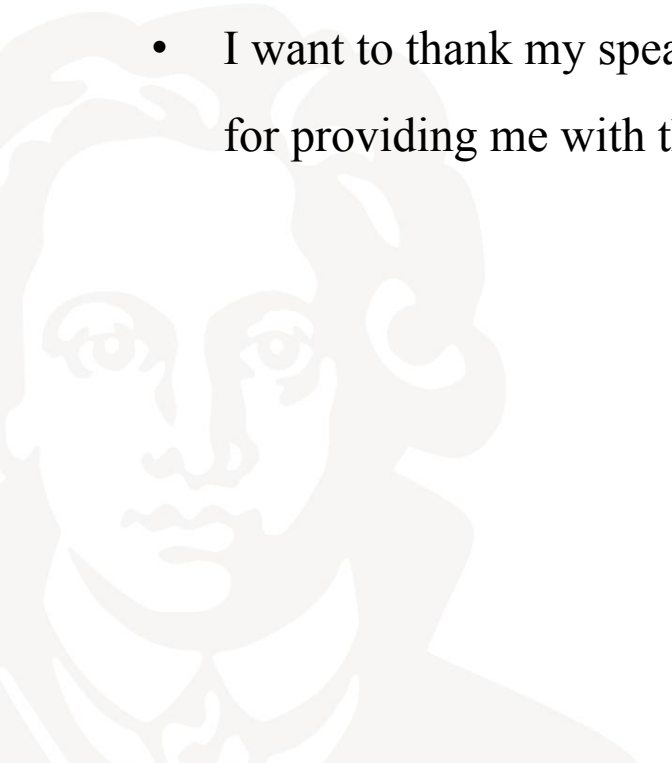
Introduction

- Therefore, the aim of this talk is to:
 - a. outline the asymmetries present in (non-)subject *wh*-questions in Akure;
 - b. propose a general analysis for *wh*-questions formation, and (more specifically) the observed asymmetries in the language.



Background to Akure

- Akure is a Benue-Congo, Yoruboid language.
- Spoken predominantly in Ondo state, South-Western Nigeria.
- The total number of speakers is unknown.
- It is a tonal language with three distinct level tones.
- I want to thank my speakers Mr Yisa Emmanuel Olu and Mr Olanrewaju Olubode for providing me with the Akure data.



Roadmap

- Basic syntax to Akure
- Non-subject *wh*-questions
- Subject *wh*-questions
- Summary and Conclusion



Basic syntax of Akure

- The basic finite sentence structure is S(ubject) V(erb) O(bject). DO >> IO
- (1) is an answer to a question like ‘What happened?’
- It is an *all new* sentence.

(1) Ayo pa eku un
A. kill rat the
‘Ayo killed the rat’

- There is no morphological tense marking in the language.

(2) $[_{CP} C [_{TP} DP_{ext.} [_{T'} T [_{VP} <DP_{ext.}> [_{v'} v [_{VP} <V> [DP_{int.}]]]]]]]]$

Non-subject *wh*-questions

- Object *wh*-questions in Akure are obligatorily ex-situ. Compare (3a) and (3b)
- NB: *wh*-phrases are in **bold** while resumptive pronouns are in *italics*

- (3) a. **Ìsi** Ayò rí ___ ní ojà?
 who A. see at market
 ‘Who did Ayò see at the market?’
- b. *Ayò rí **ìsi** ní ojà?
 A. see **who** at market
 ‘Who did Ayò see at the market?’

Non-subject *wh*-questions

- The same result is found in embedded object *wh*-questions.

(4) a. **Ìsi** Ayò fò fọ Bólá rí <**ìsi**> ní ojà?
who A. say COMP B. see at market
 ‘Who did Ayò say that Bólá saw at the market?’

b. *Ayò fò fọ Bólá rí **ìsi** ní ojà?
 A. say COMP B. see **who** at market
 ‘Ayò said that Bólá saw who at the market?’

- Embedded object *wh*-questions can be dislocated to the left periphery of the embedded clause.

c. Ayò béèrè **ìsi** Bólá rí <**ìsi**> ní ojà?
 A. ask **who** B. see at market
 ‘Ayò asked (about) who Bólá saw at the market?’

Non-subject *wh*-questions and (focus) answer

- The answer to a *wh*-question in Akure has a morphological focus marker *li*.

(5) a. **Kí** Ayò jẹ <**kí**>?

what A. eat

‘What did Ayo eat?’

b. Usu **li** Ayò jẹ <usu>.

yam **FOC** A. eat

‘Ayo ate YAM.’

- Similar to the *wh*-question, the focused answer cannot be in-situ.
- (5c) cannot be an answer to (5a), but to a question like *What happened?*

c. #Ayo je usu.

A. eat yam

‘Ayo ate YAM.’

Non-subject *wh*-questions - evidence for movement

- Non-subject *wh*-questions are apparently ex-situ because we see the displacement.
- But the question is whether they are *moved to* or *base-generated in* their surface position.
- Two island tests: Adjunct island (ex. 6) & Complex Noun Phrase Constraint (CNPC) (ex. 7) (Ross 1967)

- *Adjunct island:*

(6) ***Kí** Ayò jẹ̀ ìrẹ̀sì [torí Bólá se <kí>].

what A. eat rice because B. cook

Lit. ‘What did Ayò eat the food [because Bólá cooked <what>].’

- *CNPC:*

(7) ***Ki** Ayò rí [ọ̀kùnrin ùn kí ó jẹ̀ <kí>].

what A. see man DET REL RP eat

Lit. ‘What did Ayò see [the man who ate <what>].’ DO question from OB-RC

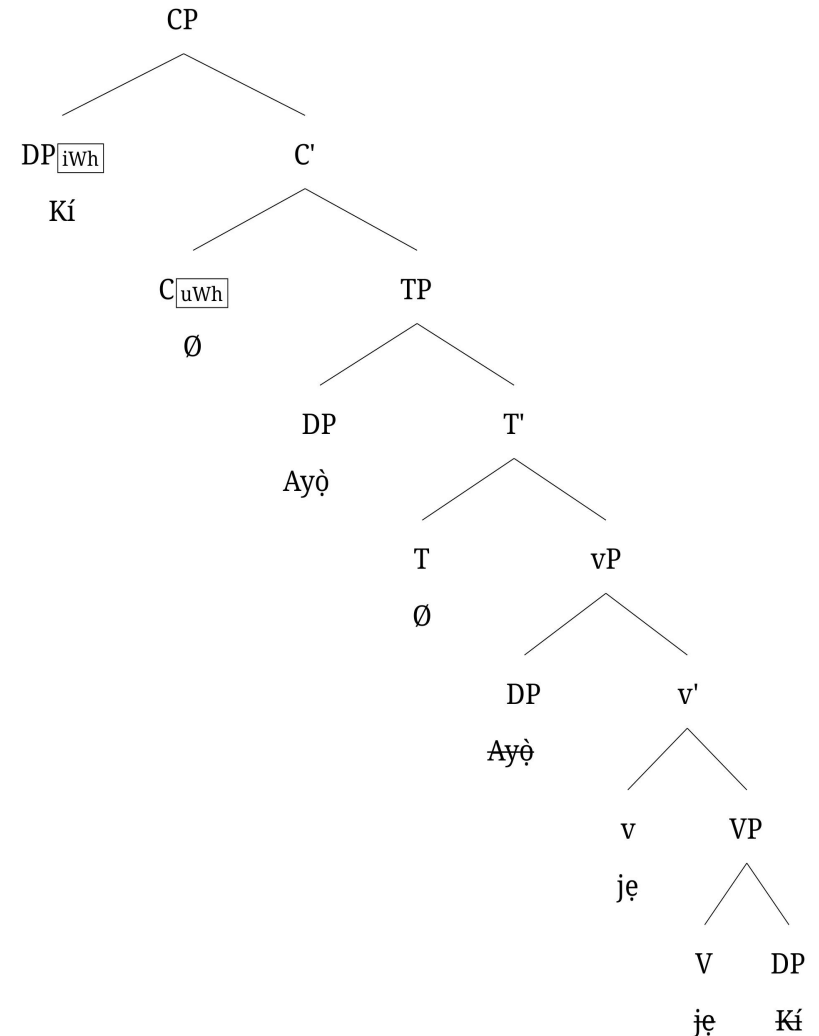
Non-subject *wh*-questions: analysis

(8) **Kí** Ayò jẹ?

what A. eat

‘What did Ayo eat?’

(9)



Non-subject *wh*-questions: analysis

- For long distance object *wh*-question, the movement passes through the edge of the embedded CP (Spec,CP).
- The object *wh*-questions can also occupy embedded Spec,CP in an embedded object *wh*-questions.

(10) [_{CP} **Ìsi** Ayò fò [_{CP} <**ìsi**> fọ Bólá rí <**ìsi**> ní ojà]]?
who A. say COMP B. see at market
 ‘Who did Ayò say that Bólá saw at the market?’

Interim summary

- Non-subject *wh*-question formation is purely syntactic (no morphology).
- They are obligatorily ex-situ.
- The *wh*-phrase in embedded object *wh*-questions can either move to the left periphery of the matrix clause or the left periphery of the embedded clause.
- Object *wh*-questions are realized ex-situ via *movement* to the left periphery of the clause.
- Next, we turn to subject *wh*-questions in Akure.

Subject *wh*-questions

- More activities are going on in subject *wh*-questions than in object *wh*-questions.
- At first glance, it is unclear whether local subject *wh*-questions are *in-situ* or *ex-situ*.

Local SU wh-question

(11) a. **Ìse** jẹ jíjẹ ùń?

who eat food DET

‘Who ate the food?’

b. Ayò *(**lí**) jẹ jíjẹ ùń

A. FOC eat food DET

‘AYÒ ate the food?’

Non-local SU wh-question

(12) **Ìse** Dániẹ̀lì fò fọ *(**ó**) lífẹ Tolú?

who D. say COMP RP love T.

‘Who did Daniel say loves Tolú?’

Subject *wh*-questions

- Both subject and non-subject *wh*-questions lack morphological focus marking entirely.
- I assume that while local subject *wh*-questions are in-situ, non-local subject *wh*-questions are ex-situ.
- Before providing a syntactic structural analysis, let's look at *resumption* in Akure.



Subject *wh*-questions: resumption

- While non-local subject *wh*-questions make use of *resumption* (14), local subject *wh*-questions don't (13).

- *Local SU wh-question:*

(13) **Ìse** (*ó) jẹ jíjẹ ùń?
who RP eat food DET
 ‘Who ate the food?’

- *Non-local SU wh-question:*

(14) **Ìse** Dániẹ̀lì fò fọ *(ó) lífẹ Tolú?
who D. say COMP RP love T.
 ‘Who did Daniel say loves Tolú?’

Subject *wh*-questions: resumption

- The use of resumption in subject *wh*-questions seems to be tied to whether the dependency is long or short.
- No resumption in embedded local subject *wh*-questions too (15).

(15) Dánièlì n beere fọ Ìse (*ó) lífẹ Tolú?
 D. PROG ask COMP **who** RP love T.
 ‘Daniel asked who loves Tolú?’

- Akure therefore obeys the *Highest Subject Constraint* (HSC).
 “the highest subject of a clause cannot be occupied by a resumptive pronoun, ...
 however, resumptive pronouns appear freely in the subject position of embedded
 clauses, finite and non-finite.” (McClowsky 1990, pp.77-8)
- cf. McClowsky (1990) for similar analysis for Irish.

Subject *wh*-questions: resumption

Questions:

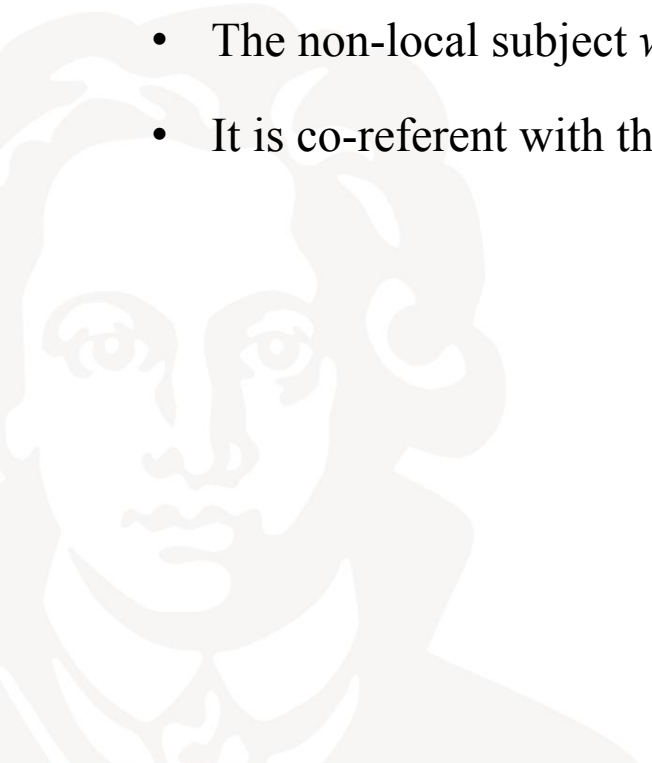
- a. Why is there no resumption in the local subject *wh*-questions (and embedded local subject *wh*-questions)?
- b. Why is there resumption in non-local subject *wh*-questions?



Subject *wh*-questions: resumption

Notes:

- Before answering the questions, we need to answer the question of how ex-situ non-local subject *wh*-questions are realized.
- I assume a *base-generation* approach.
- The non-local subject *wh*-phrase is base-generated in the matrix Spec,CP.
- It is co-referent with the resumptive pronoun in the embedded Spec,TP.



Subject *wh*-questions: evidence for *non-movement*

- *Subject island:*

(16) a. [Kókóró o Bólá] wà lóri àga.
key MTS B. exist on chair
‘[The key of Bólá] is on the chair.’

b. Ìse [kókóró o è] wà lóri àga?
who key MTS RP exist on chair
Lit. ‘Whose [key of *him*] is on the chair?’

c. [kókóró o ìse] wà lóri àga?
key MTS **who** exist on chair
Lit. ‘[The key of who] is on the chair?’

- *Coordinate Structure Constraint:*

(17) a. [Tolu ati Ayo] ri óbinrin un.
T. and A. see woman DET
‘Ayo and Tolu saw the woman.’

b. Ìse [Tolu ati è] ri óbinrin un?
who T. and RP see woman DET
Lit. ‘Who does [him and Tolu see the woman?’

c. [Tolu ati ìse] ri óbinrin un?
T. and **who** see woman DET
Lit. ‘Tolu and who saw the woman?’

Subject *wh*-questions: an analysis

- Answer to the presence of resumption in non-local subject *wh*-questions.

(18) **Ìse** Dánièlì fò fọ *(ó) lífẹ Tolú?
who D. say COMP RP love T.
 ‘Who did Daniel say loves Tolú?’

- Chomsky’s (1982) ECP requires that a **trace** should be properly governed.

(19) Proper government:

government by a lexical head (Chomsky 1982)

- (20) a. *Who_i did Adé say that t_i saw Daniel?
 b. Who_i did Adé say t_i saw Daniel?

Subject *wh*-questions: an analysis

Potential problems for ECP:

- Why should functional heads such as T and Agr license movement of subject to their specifier position and C would not?
- Why would a null complementizer count as a proper governor in English? (Rizzi & Shlonsky 2007, p.1)
- Rizzi 2006 and Rizzi & Shlonsky 2007 approach the shortcomings of the ECP via:

(21) *Subject criterion*

Clauses have a subject requirement; subjects move to the criterial subject position.

(22) *Criterial freezing*

An element satisfying a criterion is frozen in place.

(Rizzi 2006; Rizzi & Shlonsky 2007, p.3)

Subject *wh*-questions: an analysis

- In other words, there is no further movement from a criterial position.
- Movement of the subject from a frozen position violates the subject criterion (cf. ex. (20a) above)

Non-local SU wh-question:

(23) **Ìse_i** Dánièlì fò fọ ***(ó_i)** lífẹ Tolú?

who D. say COMP RP love T.

‘Who did Daniel say loves Tolú?’

Subject *wh*-questions: an analysis

- Both local subject *wh*-questions and embedded local *wh*-questions are in-situ. Thus, no need for resumption.

Local SU wh-question:

(24) **Ìse** (*ó) jẹ jíjẹ ùń?
who RP eat food DET
 ‘Who ate the food?’

Embedded local subject wh-question:

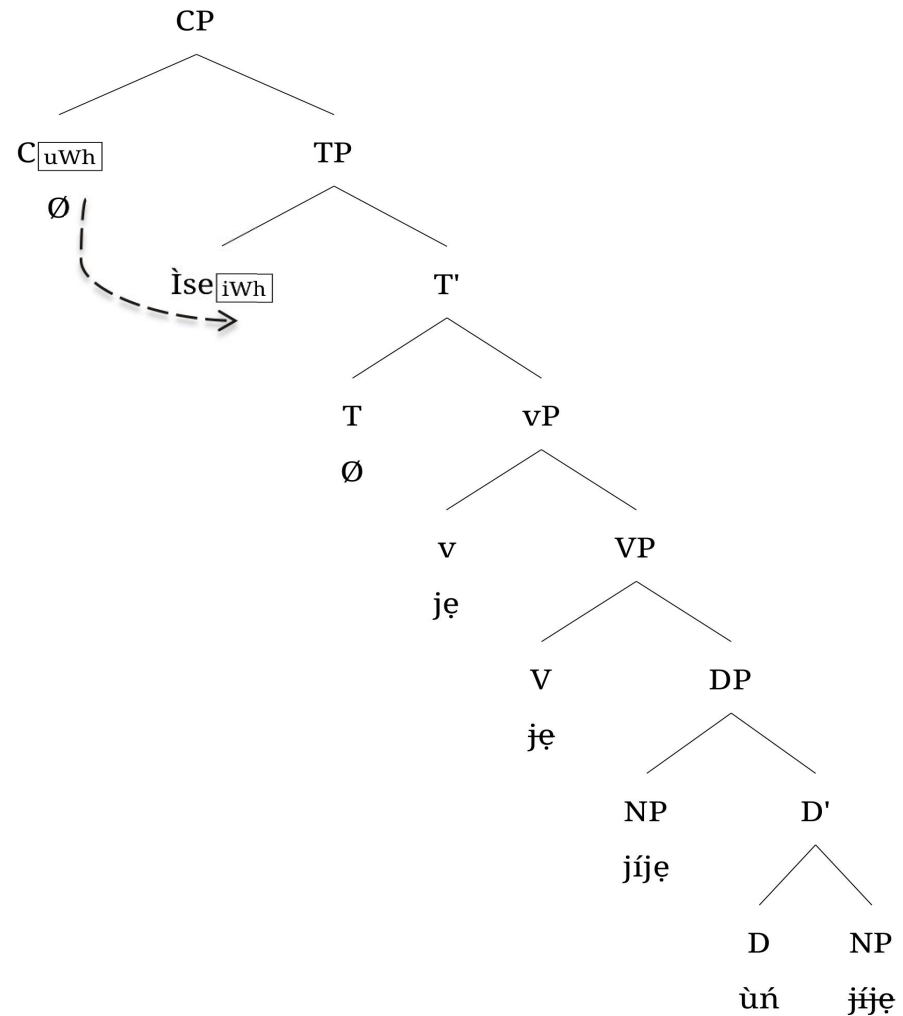
(25) Dániẹ̀lì n beere fọ **Ìse** (*ó) lífẹ Tolú?
 D. PROG ask COMP **who** RP love T.
 ‘Daniel asked who loves Tolú?’

Subject *wh*-questions: an analysis

- (26) *Ìse* (**ó*) *jẹ́ jíjẹ́ ùń?* (27)
 who RP eat food DET
 ‘Who ate the food?’

Bidirectional Agree (Adger 2003:168
 Baker 2008:45; Toosarvandani & van Urk
 2014:15):

*A head H with an unvalued feature F
 Agrees with a goal G with a valued feature
 F only if H c-commands G or G c-
 commands H.*

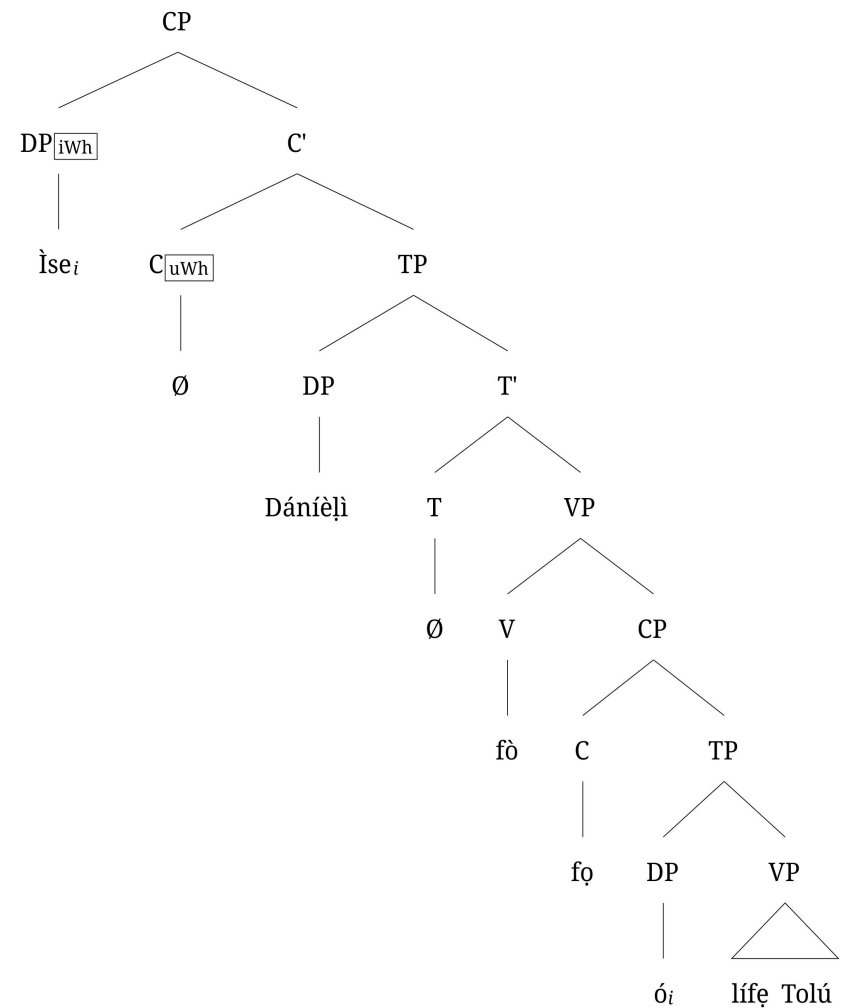


Subject *wh*-questions: an analysis

(28) **Ìse_i** Dánièlì fò fọ ***(ó_i)** lífẹ Tolú? (29)

who D. say COMP RP love T.

‘Who did Daniel say loves Tolú?’



Object *wh*-questions

- The lack of resumption in object *wh*-questions is due to lack of *Object Criterion*.
 - The lexical verb is a proper governor for the trace of the moved object *wh*-phrase.
- Thus, no need for resumption as a repair strategy.



Conclusion

	Resumption	In-situ	Ex-situ	Agree
Local SU <i>wh</i> -questions	-	+	-	downward
Non-Local SU <i>wh</i> -questions	+	-	+ _{base-generation}	upward
Embedded Local SU <i>wh</i> -questions	-	+	-	downward
Non-SU <i>wh</i> -questions	-	-	+ _{movement}	upward

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