COPULA AND FOCUS MARKERS IN CENTRAL YORÙBÁ DIALECTS

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Article Info	Abstract
	This paper investigated the morpho-syntactic distribution of ''ni'' in Central Yorùbá (hence, CY) dialect. Primary and secondary data were collected on CY dialects (Ifẹ̀, Ìjẹ̀ṣà, Èkìtì and Mọ̀bà) and subjected to syntactic analysis. Noam Chomsky's Minimalist Program (MP) of generative grammar was adopted. Two allomorphs of ni identified are: li and ri. The dialects operate ''ni'', ''li'' and ''ri'' as focus markers. These also have their variants that perform predicate function. These are referred to as copula in this paper. Both copula and focus markers are in complementary distribution. ''Ni'' and ''li'' are in free variation in Èkìtì and Mọ̀bà unlike Ifẹ̀ and Ìjẹ̀ṣa where they are in complementary distribution. Mọ̀bà dialect operates both the focus marker ''ri'' and its copula variant ''ri'' while other CY dialects operate ''ri'' only as a copula. A focus marker is optionally dropped when used with some question nouns (QNs) in the dialects. Three syntactic distributions identified with ''ni'' and its variants are: focused interrogatives, focus constructions and copula constructions. CY dialects exhibit some common features with respect to how both focus markers and copula are operated.

INTRODUCTION

A considerable amount of research works have been carried on the delimitation of Yorùbá dialects; among these are Akínkúgbé (1976), Oyèláràn (1976, 1982), Adétúgbọ̀ (1967,1973,1982), Awóbùlúyì (1998) and, Adéníyì and Òjó (2005). According to Oyèláràn (1976), only Ìjẹ̀ṣà and Èkìtì are under the CY group. Akínkúgbé (1976) and Adétúgbọ̀ (1982) classify Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Ìjẹ̀ṣà and Èkìtì under CY dialects.

Awóbùlúyì (1998) groups Ifẹ̀, Ìjẹ̀ṣà, Èkìtì and Mọ̀bà under CY dialects while Adéníyì and Òjó (2005) delimit CY to Ifẹ̀, Ìjẹ̀ṣà, Èkìtì, Àkúrẹ́ and Mọ̀bà. It is equally important to note that this paper concerns itself much more with linguistic features and not the geographical locations of the native speakers of the dialects. In line with this, it has been discovered that some native speakers of Èkìtì dialect still cut across parts of Oǹdó state, particularly, some parts of Àkúrẹ́ like Ìju, Ìta-

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Ògbólú, Ọbà-Ilé, Ìjàrẹ̀ (Ùjàrẹ̀) and so on (Olúmúyìwá 2006). All CY native speakers in the towns listed above speak either Ìkẹ́rẹ́ or Ìsẹ̀ which are sub-dialects of Èkìtì. Consequent upon this, Awóbùlúyì's classification is adopted in the place of Adeníyì and Òjó (2005) or some others. Ifẹ̀, Ìjẹ̀ṣà, Èkìtì and Mọ̀bà exhibit common features with respect to how they operate their focus markers. They operate more allomorphs unlike their standard Yorùbá counterpart that operates only two (ni/li). Oyèláràn (1988) disregards ni as a verb in Yorùbá because its co-occurence with auxiliaries is highly restricted and it does not allow nominalisation. He therefore, claims that ni is an assertive marker. To him, ni introduces any constituent it preceeds as a new information in a discourse. Yusuf (1990) identifies four different enviroments where ni occurs in Yorùbá: focus, copula, emphatic and constituent interrogative constructions. Adéwọlé (1991) claims that ni is a verb in Yorùbá. According to him, ni sub-categorises for both noun phrase and sentential complements. Jone (2006:145) identifies ni and jẹ́ as the two Yorùbá copula. To her, jẹ́ occurs in a canonical nominal predication while its ni counterpart occurs in an inverse nominal predication. This paper has five sections: Section 1 discusses the introduction. Section discusses the research methodology. In Section 3, relevant extant works are reviewed. Section 4 discusses the syntactic analysis and the distribution of ni and its variants in CY dialects while conclusive remarks are drawn in Section 5 of the paper.

METHODS

This study adopted structured oral interview method to source for data from the informants. The research instrument employed for data collection was Ibàdàn Syntax Paradigm comprising copula, focus and interrogative sentences; these were provided for sixteen (16) native speakers of CY dialects (the informants) aged 60 years and above, to be rendered in their (native) dialects while taking the audio recording of the structured oral interviews. Four (4) native speakers from each of Ifẹ̀, Ijẹ́ṣà, (Adó-)Èkìtì and Ọ̀tùn Mọ́bà. These four dialects are classified under

Central Yorùbá by Awóbùlúyì (1998). It was ensured that the participants did not use standard Yorùbá in their expressions. Data used in this study were presented in CY dialects but written in standard Yorùbá orthography including tones and diacritics. Therefore, data were transcribed using Yorùbá orthography. Few CY sounds that are not found in standard Yorùbà were identified and transcribed using IPA symbols. Morpheme-by-morpheme interlinear glosses were also provided in English. The structures of the copula, focus and interrogatives constructions elicited were analysed using the Phase Theory of Noam Chomsky's Minimalist Program. Apart from the data elicited from the native speakers (informants) of these dialects, secondary data were also sourced from relevant texts and journals. The distribution of each copula and focus item in copula, focus and interrogative constructions in CY dialects was unveiled by the analyses of this work.

Previous works on focus markers in CY dialects

Olúmúyìwá (2006) identifies the following focus markers in CY dialects: *ni*, *li*, *nì*, *kọ́*, *ri/rin*. He disregards *rà* as a focus marker in the dialects based on its co-occurrence with *nì*, he also asserts that 'only *ni* and *li* are used across-board in CY, *ìn* and *kọ́* are operated only among Èkìtì speakers, while only Mọ̀bà dialect uses *ri/rin.* Olúmúyìwá (2009) also claims that all focus markers are signalled by *li* in CY dialects. We observed that some of his assertions above are not very veracious hence, need to be reconsidered.

Let us start on Olúmùyìwá's position that all focus markers in CY dialects take their base form as *li,* as shown below:

> Èkìtì
> (a) Ayọ̀ *li*   ó lọ > Ayọ̀ lí lọ.
>   Ayọ̀ FOC HTS go
>   'AYỌ̀ left.'

> Ifẹ̀/Ìjẹ̀ṣà
> (b) Ayọ̀ *li*   ó lọ. > Ayọ̀ ló lọ.
>   Ayọ̀ FOC HTS go
>   'AYỌ̀ left.'   (Olúmùyìwá, 2009:132)

Now, if focus constructions are signalled by *li* in ajj the CY dialects, how do we account for *ni* as being (more) acceptable than *li* in the examples below?

(2)   (a)   Ṣé títà ni/*li?
            YNQM NOM FOC
                  'Is it for sale?'

      (b)   Èló ni/*li?
            QN FOC
            'How much?'

Focus markers are not signalled by *li* in the above examples. Also, The Ifẹ̀ dialect operates *ni* and *li* similarly with standard Yorùbá, where both are in complementary distribution.

Ajíbóye (2006) identifies *ni, li, ìn, à, nì, ri, rin* and *ìn*. According to him, *rìn* is the nasal counterpart of *rì*. He also claims that *rì, rìn, à, nì* and *ìn* occur with wh-words. To him, *à, nì, ri, rin* and *ìn* occur in wh-in-situ constructions as shown below:

Èkìtì   SY
(ai)   Ìsí   à?
(aii) Ìsín nì/rìn ìn?   Ta ni?
       Who FOC
 Who FOC
 'Who is s/he?'   'Who is s/he?'

Èkìtì   SY
       (bi)   Kí à?

       (bii) Kín nì/rìn/ìn?   Kí ni?
 What FOC   What FOC
 'What is it?'   'What is it?'

Èkìtì   SY
       (ci)   Ùgbà sí à

       (cii). Ùgbà sín nì/rìn/ìn? Èló ni?
 Time which FOC   Time which FOC
 'How much is it?'   'How much is it?'
(Ajóbóyè, 2006:32)

Ajíbóyè's assumption on (3) above is that the QNs are base generated within the lower clause. It is however discovered that some of the QNs and the items referred to as focus marker are not base generated within the restricting clauses. There is a need to first analyse some of the standard Yorùbá examples in (3) above, for the purpose of explanatory adequacy, so as to determine their status. This will invariably expose the dissimilarities between these examples and what Ajíbóyè identifies as their Mọ̀bà equivalents. Two comments are generated by 3a-c above: one, focus markers are merged at the clause left periphery, therefore, the QNs are ex-situ and not in-situ in the examples. Suffice to note that a focus marker is never base generated within the lower clause. Ajibóyè's opinion invariably indicates that a QN occupies the subject position in each of 3a-d above, implying that items *nì, rìn,* and *ìn* are copula but they are not. Take for instance, unlike their copula counterparts, the items fail to subcategorise object complements. Let us consider (4a-b) below in standard Yorùbá, and also (5a-b) in CY dialects.

            Yorùbá
(a)   Ọmọ ta ni ọ́?
Child QN cpl ypu
'Whose child are you?'

            (b)   Kí tún ni èyí?
QN again cpl this
'What is this again?'

Ifẹ̀
(a)   Ọmọ yèsí ni ọ́?
Child QN cpl
'Whose child are you?'

Ìjẹ̀sà
  (b)   Kí tún   ni/li yèé? (Kí tún un yèé)
QN again cpl this
'What is this again?'

The implication borne out of 4a-b and 5a-b above is that 3a-c are sluiced forms of focused interrogatives, they do not manifest in-situ QNs. Only focus constructions are sluiced in Yorùbá and CY dialects, not copula constructions. Therefore, 6a below is a sluiced form of a focus construction like 6b not a copula construction like 6c below:

      Yorùbá

(a)   Ọmọ ta   ni ___?
Child QN FOC
'Whose child is he/she?'

(b)   Ọmọ ta   ni   o jẹ́ ___?
Child QN   FOC you be
'Whose children are you?'

(c)   Ọmọ ta   ni   yín?
Child QN cpl you
'Whose children are you?'

It is also discovered that *nì*, identified as a focus marker by Ajíbóyè (2006) in (3a-c) above and Olumúyìwá (2006) in (7a-b) below is a different item, it never functions as such.

(a)   Kéè **nì**?
           QN FOC
           'What is it?

(b)   Kí rà **nì**?
           QN   FOC
                    'What   is   it?
(Olumúyìwá, 2006:55)

Rà in (7b) above is the same with what Ajíbóyè (2006) identifies as *à* in (3a-c) above. The presupposed focus marker *nì* will be discussed first before discussing *à* and the other two allomorphs (rìn and ìn) used in (3a-c) above. The orthography and analyses in (7a-b) above still need to be reonsidered. For clarity purpose, let us consider the examples below:

Èkìtì/Ọ̀tùn Mọ̀bà
(a)   Ké èe nì (Kí èi-nì)?
QN that
What is that?

(b)   Ké èí (Kí èi)?
QN this
What is this?

The Ifẹ̀ and Ìjẹ̀sà dialectal forms of (8a-b) above are respectively shown in (9a-b) below for more clarity.

Ifẹ̀/Ìjẹ̀sà
(a)   Kí   i   yèé-nì (Kí ni yèe-nì)?
QN FOC that
'What is that?'

(b)   Kí   i/ni   yèé (Kí i/ni yèé)?

QN FOC this
'What is this?'

Unlike 8a-b, the focus is overtly marked in each of 9a-b above. The dialectal equivalent of *èí-nì* 'that' in the Ifẹ̀ and Ìjẹ̀sà dialects is *yèé-nì*. Intuitively, *nì* (the ultimate syllable in *èí-ni* 'that') as a focus marker is in the dialects. Therefore, the focus marker is dropped in each of 7 and 8 above.

Another item that also begged for our attention is *kọ́* identifed as a focus marker in some parts of Èkìtì (Adó and Ìkọ́lé) by Olúmúyìwá (2006). According to him, *kọ́* occurs in a negative construction, and it can be decomposed into *kọ*, a focus marker and ó (HTS as shown in the example below:

(a)   É   è   ṣèmi   kọ́ (kọ + ó).
HTS NEG do.me FOC (FOC + HTS)
'I was not the one.'

(b)   É   è   ṣèmi   kọ́ (kọ
+ ó) lọ
               HTS NEG do-me FOC
(FOC+ HTS) go
               'I was not the one that
left.'   (Olúmúyìwá, 2006: 55)

(c)   É   è   ṣèmi   kọ́
HTS NEG do-me FOC+HTS
'I was not the one ...'

Now, these two questions are generated by the examples above:

i. How do we account for the incorrectness of the elliptical forms (in 12a and b) below?

            SY
(a)   Èmi ni ...
.   I FOC
           'I am ...'

Ifẹ̀/Ìjẹ̀sà
(b)   Ùwọ ni/li ...
.   You FOC
           'You am ...'

SY
(a)   *Èmi ni ó ...
.   I FOC HTS

Ifẹ̀/Ìjẹ̀sà
(b)   *Ùwọ ni/li ó ...

.   You FOC HTS

Standard Yorùbá and its CY dialects counterparts do not operate 12a-b as elliptical forms. A HTS never fuses with focus markers in Yorùbá and any of the CY dialects. Therefore, examples in 10a-b above and their likes still need to be reconsidered.

ii.   The second question is 'how do we account for the absence of *kọ́* in the types of constructions
below?'

                  Ifẹ̀/Èkìtì/Ìjẹ̀ṣà/Mọ̀bà
(a)   Èmi síkọ́ ni/li Adé mi kí.
        I NEG FOC Adé   PROG greet
               'I was not the person Adé was greeting.'

   Èkìtì
      (b)Ùwọ síkọ́ ni/li ó/é gbé e. (Ùwọ síkọ́ lí gbé e.)
        You NEG FOC he carry it
        'You were not the one that carried it.'

All enviroments of occurences the item *kọ́* still need be investigated to be able to determine whether it is truely a focus marker in CY dialects. Therefore, *kọ́* is not adopted as a focus marker in this paper based on the fact that it was not evident in our data, and also, the available literature (Olúmúyìwá 2006) that identifies it is a survey of limited data.

FOCUS MARKERS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION IN CY DIALECTS

Three focus markers are identified in CY dialects, They are *ni, li ri/rin*. These items are operated in focus constructions, constituent interrogatives and copula constructions. Let us first discuss how CY dialects operate their focus markers in focus constructions before discussing the other two types.

Focus Constructions

Just like Yorùbá, CY dialects operate syntactic focus, that is, focus signalled by fronting

the focused constituents to the clause initial positon, while it is followed by any of the focus markers identified above. Let us consider the examples below:

              Ifẹ̀
(a)   Ọlá *ni* mo rí.
        Ọlá FOC I see
        'I saw ỌLÁ.'

             Ìjẹ̀ṣà
(b)   Ùwé *li* Bọ́lá rà.
    Book FOC Bọ́lá buy
'Bọ́lá bought a BOOK.'

             Èkìtì/ Mọ̀bà
(c)   Ọlá   *lí*   rẹran.
(Ọlá li ó ra ẹran.)
    Ọlá FOC-RES buy-meat
    'ỌLÁ bought meat.'

(d)   Lílọ *li* ẹ́ lọ.
    Nom FOC he go
    'He WENT.'

Mọ̀bà

(e)   Aṣọ *ri* Ibọ̀lá rà.
    Ọlá FOC Ibọ́lá buy
        'Bọ́lá bought a CLOTH.'

(f)   Aṣọ *rin* mì í rà.
    Cloth FOC I HTS buy
    'I bought a CLOTH'

Focus markers are italicised in the examples above. *Ni* is more frequently operated among these focus markers by Ìjẹ̀ṣà and ifẹ̀ dialects unlike Èkìtì and Mọ̀bà dialects. Èkìtì native speakers frequently operate *li* more than *ni*. Also, these focus markers are not in complementary distribution, except in the Ifẹ̀ dialect. *Rin* in (14f) is the nasal variant of *ri*. Both are commonly operated in Ìlọfà and some parts of Èkìtì. Ifẹ̀ and Ìjẹ̀ṣà do not operate *ri/rin* (Ajibóyè 2006). The example in 14a above is phrase-marked as 15.

(15)
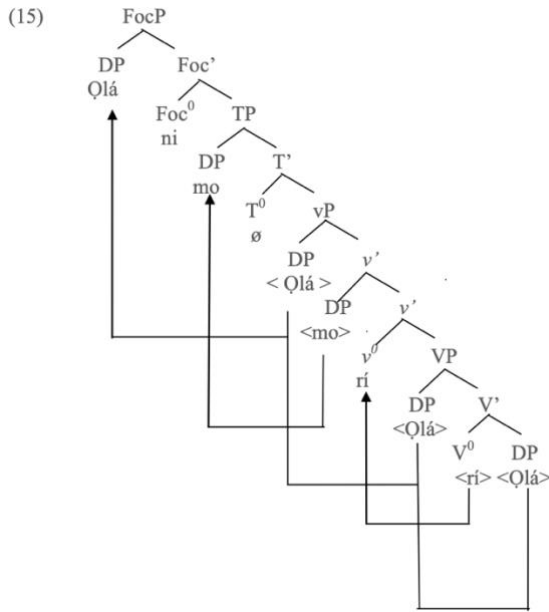
The derivation above is as follows: The verb *rí* 'se' first merges with the DP *Olá* to satisfy the c-selection requirement of the verb *rí* 'see', and to project the V-bar. After this, the DP *Ọlá* is internally merged at the spec VP by *Operation Copy and Delete* so as to check its case feature. The derivation proceeds by merging the null performative light v^0 with the VP to project the *v*-bar. The strong *v*F on the light v^0 attracts the lexical verb *rí* "see" to adjoin to itself. The first person singular subject pronoun *mo* 'I' is externally merged as the inner spec *v*P to satisfy the Predicate-Internal Subject Hypothesis (PISH) which requires the subject of a sentence to be base-generated within the predicate. The DP *Ọlá* is attracted to the outer spec *v*P, an escape hatch which licenses it from Phase Impenetrability Conditon (PIC). Consequently, this allows the DP *Ọlá* to be visible for subsequent syntactic operations. After this, the abstract T^0 is selected from the numeration and merged with the light verb phrase (*v*P) to project the T-bar*,* while the T^0 probes the first person singular subject pronoun *mo* 'I' to its specifier position (the spec TP) to check its [+case, EPP] feature. After this, the Foc^0 *ni* is selected from the numeration and merged with the TP to project the Foc-bar, while the Foc^0 as a probe searches and attracts the DP *Ọlá* to the spec FocP to check its [+focus, EF] feature through specifier and head

agreement. The implication borne out of this is that the focus marker *ni* enters the derivation at the pragmatic domain. It was also discovered that the Ifẹ̀ dialect can delete the the vowel *i* in *ni* and retain the consonants *n* as shown below:

(a)   Oyè ***ni/n*** mo ri
         Oyè FOC I see
'I saw OYÈ.'

Focused Interrogatives

Focus markers also collocate with fronted QNs in CY dialects as depicted in the examples below:

Ifẹ̀
(a)   Kí   ni   ghán   jẹ ?
         QN FOC they   eat
         'What did they eat?'

Ìjẹ̀sà
(b)   Yèsí li   ọ́   tún   mí
pè mi?
   QN FOC RES again PROG   call me
   'Who was calling me again?'

Mọ̀bà
(c)   Ìsí   i mì í   wi   kí
in mú un kò?
   QN Foc I HTS say that   you give it meet
   'Who did I tell you to give?'

Ìjẹ̀sà/ Èkìtì/ Mọ̀bà
(d)   Ùgbà sí   l'Adé   gbọ́?
(Ùgbà sí li Adé gbọ́?)
  Time   QM FOC-Ade hear
         'When did Ade hear?'

The example in 17a is phrase-marked as 18 below for the purpose of descriptive adequacy.

(18) .InterP

```
      .InterP
      /    \
    DP      Inter'
    Kí      /    \
       Inter⁰    FocP
         ø       /    \
              DP      Foc'
              <kí>    /    \
                   Foc⁰    TP
                    ø      /    \
                         DP      T'
                        ghán    /    \
                              T⁰     vP
                               ø     /    \
                                   DP      v'
                                  <kí>    /    \
                                      DP      v'
                                    <ghán>   /    \
                                           v⁰      VP
                                           jẹ     /    \
                                               DP      V'
                                              <kí>    /    \
                                                    V⁰     DP
                                                   <jẹ>   <kí>
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In 18 above, the QN originates from the *v*P domain. The derivation is as follows: The lexical verb *jẹ* 'eat' merges with *kí* 'what' to project the V-bar *jẹ kí jẹ* 'eat what' in line with c-selection requirement of the verb. After this, the QN *kí* 'what' is copied to the spec VP by the *Operation Copy and Delete* so as to check its case feature through specifier and head agreement. The derivation proceeds by merging the null performative verb *v⁰* with the verb phrase (VP) to project the *v*-bar while the strong *v*F on the light *v⁰* attracts the lexical verb *jẹ* 'eat' to adjoin to itself. The third person plural subject pronoun *ghán* is externally merged as the inner specifier of the light verb phrase (*v*P) in line with the PISH. The QN *kí* 'what' is attracted to the outer spec *v*P, an escape hatch from the PIC. This makes it visible to further syntactic operations in the course of the derivation. The derivation proceeds by externally merging the abstract T⁰ with the *v*P to project the T-bar. The T⁰ as a probe attracts the third person plural subject pronoun *ghán* to the spec TP to check its [+case, EPP] feature. The abstract Foc⁰ merges with the TP to project the Foc-bar. The Foc⁰ as a potential probe searches its c-command domain and attracts the QN *kí* (an active goal) to the spec FocP to have its [+Foc] feature checked. The derivation still proceeds by externally merging the abstract Inter-head with the FocP to project the Inter-bar. The Inter⁰ as a potential goal attracts the QN *kí* to the spec InterP to check its [+Q, EF] through specifier and head agreement.

Focus markers can also be dropped in constituent interrogatives as shown below:

Èkìtì/Mọ̀bà

(a)   Kí   in   rà?

       QN you buy
       'What did you buy?'

(b)   Mélòó in mú ghá?
       QN   you pick come
       'How many did you bring?'

(c)   Èló in   a   rà á?
       QN you will buy it
       'How much will you buy it?'

Ifẹ̀

(d)   Ìgbà sí   o   dé?
       Time QM you arrive
       'When did you arrive?'

Èkìtì

(e)   Kà ibi (Kabi) ọ̀   i
       bọ̀?

       QN place   you PROG come
       'Where are you coming from?'

(f)   Kà ibi (Kabi) in   mí
       rè?

       QN place   you PROG go
       'Where are you going?'

The focus marker is optionally dropped in each of the examples 19a-d while the QN *kabi* (kà ibi) "where" does not collocate with a focus marker as depicted in 19e-f.

Copula Constructions and Constituent Interrogatives

The copula *ni* and its allomorphs, *lí* and *rí* function as sentence predicate in both copula constructions and focused constituent interrogatives as respectively depicted in 20 and 21 below:

Ifẹ̀

(a)   Olówó   *ni* ọ́.
       Qwner-money cpl you
       'You are a rich person.'

Ìjẹ̀sà/Èkìtì

(b) Eó   lẹ̀gbọ́n ọmọ   làbúrò.

Money cpl-elder child cpl-younger
'Money precedes a child.'

(c) Eó   *ri* èí (Eó rèé).
Money cpl this.
'This is money.'

(d) Eó   *ri* èi-nì (Eó rèé-nì).

Money cpl that.
'That is money.'

Ifẹ̀

(a) Ọmọ yèsí ni ọ́?
Child QN cpl you
'Whose child are you?'

(b) Kí   ri yèé (Kí rèe)?
QN cpl this
'What is this?'

(c) Kí ri   yèé-nì (Kí rèe-nì)?

QN cpl   that
'What is that?'

Example 20a is phrase-marked as 22 below:
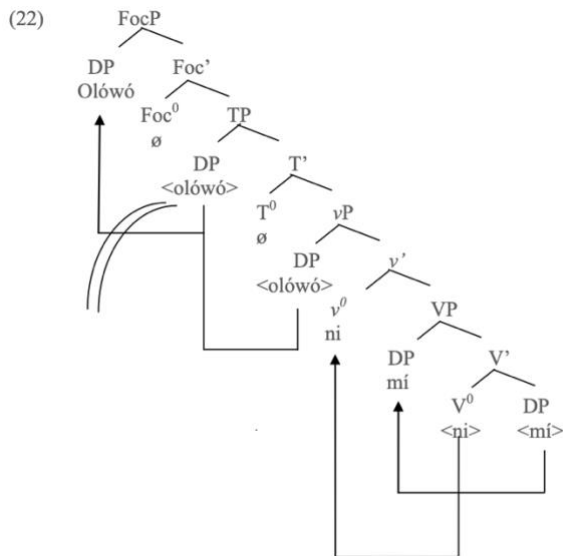
The derivation in 22 above is as follows: The copula *ni* 'be' merges with the first person singular object pronoun *mi* 'me' to project the V-bar in line with c-selection requirement of the copula *ni*. The

same first person singular object pronoun *mi* 'me' is copied to the spec VP by *Operation Copy and Delete* so as to have its case feature checked. The derivation proceeds by the externally merging the null performative light verb v^0 with the verb phrase (VP) to project the *v*-bar, while the strong *v*F feature on the light v^0 attracts the copula *ni* 'be'to adjoin to itself. The DP *olówó* 'rich person' is externally merged as the specifier of the light verb phrase (*v*P) in line with the PISH. The derivation still proceeds by selecting the abstract T^0 from the numeration and merging it with the light verb phrase to project the T-bar while the T^0 probes the subject DP *olówó* 'rich person' to the spec TP to check its [+case, EPP] feature. The abstract Foc^0 is merged to project the FocP. The Foc^0 as a probe attracts the subject DP *olówó* 'rich person' to the spec FocP to have its [+focus, EF] checked through specifier and head agreement. Focus feature is specified [+strong] in Yorùbá, consequently, it necessitates the attraction of the DP *olówó* 'rich person' in the spec TP to the clause left periphery (the spec FocP), thereby causes the DP in the spec TP to be illegible to the PF interface. The predicate function is performed by copula *ni* in 20a and 21a, *li* in 20b and *ri* in 20c-d and 21b-c above. Èkìtì and Mọ̀bà dialects use 23a below in the place of 20a, 23b in the place of 21a, 23c in the place of 21b and 23d in the place of 21c.

(23) (a) Olówó   li e rè.
Qwner-money FOC you be
'You are a rich person.'

(b) Ọmọ ìsí o rè?
Child QN you be
'Whose child are you?'

(c) Kí èí?
QN this?
'What is this?

(d) Kí èí-nì?
QN that
'What is that?

Each of 23a-d above is a focus construction. A functor (focus marker) not a copula features in them. Both the functor *ni* and its copula counterpart are of different categorial status. A

focus maker immediately follows the preposed constituent at clause initial position while a copula is base-generated in the predicate canonical position associated with its grammatical function as respectively shown in 24a and b below:

Èkìtì
(24)   (a)   Eo   li   mi   fẹ́.
Money FOC   I want
'I want MONEY.'

Ifẹ̀
       b.   Ọlógbọ́n   ọmọ   ni
ín.
Owner-wisdom child cpl you
'You are wise children.'

It is also discovered that unlike standard Yorùbá, in CY dialects, a copula does not collocate with *síkọ́* (a constituent negator) the dialectal variant of *kọ́* in standard Yorùbá as shown below:

Ifẹ̀/Ìjẹ̀ṣà
(25)   (a)   Èmi síkọ́ ni Olú rí.
I NEG FOC Olú see
'I was not the person Olu saw.'

Adó-Èkìtì
       (b)   Ùwọ síkọ́   li   ó gbé e.
(Ùwọ síkọ́ lí gbé e.)
You NEG FOC he carry it
'You were not the one that carried it.'

Yorùbá
(c)   Òlẹ   kọ́   ni mi.
Lazy-person NEG   cpl me
'I am not a lazy person.'

Ifẹ̀/Ìjẹ̀ṣà
(d)   *Òlẹ   síkọ́ ni mi.
Lazy,person NEG   cpl me
'I am not a lazy person'

Only focus markers collocate with *síkọ́*, a constituent negator in CY dialects as depicted in the grammaticality of 25a and b above. Therefore, CY (Ifẹ̀/Ìjẹ̀ṣà) use 26 below as the acceptable form of 25d:

(26)   É   èé   ṣe   òlẹ   ni mí.

He NEG do   lazy-person   cpl   me
'I am not a lazy person.'

The scope of negation spread over the entire clause in 26 above unlike 25b

CONCLUSION

CY dialects evidently operate two types of *ni*: one is a functor while the other is a copula. The first type as a functional head immediately follows the focused constituent at the clause initial position. Therefore, it does not assign a case unlike the copula, a verb base-generated at the predicate position. The dialects use focus markers in both focus constuctions and focused interrogatives while a copula is operated in either a copula construction or a content word question with QN base generated at the subject canonical position. CV dialects share some common features which wholistically set them apart from the standard Yorùbá with respect to how they operate their focus and copula markers.

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