Typology of Constituent Interrogatives in Central Yorùbá Dialects: A Minimalist Description

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Abstract

This paper is an in-depth analysis of constituent interrogatives in Central Yorùbá (CY) dialects, detailing the forms and strategies employed for them with a view to examining the features that CY dialects as a group exhibit in common. Primary and secondary data were collected and subjected to syntactic analysis. This paper adopts the split CP hypothesis of Noam Chomsky’s minimalist program (MP) of generative grammar. CY dialects use question nouns (QNs),
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question verb (QV) and interrogative qualifiers to form their non-echoed questions. In CY dialects, the QN kà in kabi (ka ibi) ‘where’ does not move through the spec FocP, it is externally merged at the spec-InterP. Implying that not all QNs occupy the spec FocP in constituent interrogatives in the dialects. Focus markers ni, li and ri are also optionally dropped in the dialects.

Keywords: central Yorùbá dialects, constituent interrogatives, dialectal variation, question marker, minimalist program

1. Introduction

Yorùbá dialects, unlike standard Yorùbá, began to attract the interest of language scholars in the last two decades. Therefore, adequate attention is still needed to be paid to research studies of these dialects. This prompted Awóbùlúyì (1998) to call the attention of Yorùbá scholars to take advantage of exploring Yorùbá dialects. Olúmúyìwá (2006) also remarks that any endeavour in line with Awóbùlúyì’s appeal above will invariably have immediate and long-term benefits for Yorùbá studies, especially on things that these dialects can teach us about the structure of standard Yorùbá. A considerable amount of research works have been carried out on the delimitation of Yorùbá dialects; Among these are Akinkugbe (1976), Oyèláràn (1976), Adetugbo (1982), Awóbùlúyì (1998) and Adéníyi & Òjó (2005). These aforementioned works use linguistic features like vowel phonemes, consonant phonemes, pronominal system and so on to delimit Yorùbá dialects. According to Awóbùlúyì (1998), CY

1 The following abbreviations are used in this paper: CP (complementiser phrase), CY (Central Yorùbá), DP (determiner phrase), EF (edge feature), FOC (focus marker), FocP (focus phrase), InterP (interrogative phrase), LF (logical form), NEG (negative marker), PF (phonetic form), PIC (phase impenetrability condition),
dialects comprise Ijẹ̀, Ìjẹ̀ṣà, Èkìtì and Mọ̀bà.

Interrogatives are concerned with requesting for pieces of information. König & Siemund (2007) and Issah (2013: 4) opine that, based on syntactic and semantic properties, interrogatives across world languages can be classified into constituent and polar questions. Issah (2013) claims that interrogatives constitute ‘a linguistic device for the identification of a piece of information considered to be prominently new’. According to Kroeger (2004) in Issah (2013: 56), a question word bears pragmatic focus because it specifies the crucial piece of new information required. Aboh (2007) claims that focused interrogative words and their non-focused counterparts have different formal licensing and information structures of answers. To him, focus constituents and wh-phrases are closely related for the fact that they interact in question and answer pairs, and they are mutually exclusive in many languages. According to Ouhalla (1996), wh-questions in natural languages differ with respect to their morphological and semantic properties. In line with this, QNs in standard Yorùbá and CY dialects exhibit some ontological differences with English and some other languages. Unlike English wh-phrases, QNs are never used except in question formation (Ọláńrewájú & Taiwo 2020, 2021; Ọláńrewájú 2022). There are four sections in this paper: Section 1 is the general introduction. Section 2 passes remarks on some extant works on interrogatives in Yorùbá. Section 3 discusses strategies for forming constituent interrogatives in CY dialects while Section 4 provides conclusive remarks.

PISH (predicate internal subject hypothesis), PP (prepositional phrase), PRM (pre-modifier), PROG (progressive marker), PSM (post-modifier), QF (question feature), QM (question marker), QN (question noun), QP (question phrase), QV (question verb), res (resumptive pronoun), TP (tense phrase), vF (verb feature), vP (light verb phrase), WAC (Wh-attraction condition).
2. Previous Works on Interrogatives in Yorùbá

Awóbúlúyì (1978) classifies question forms in Yorùbá into two: content word questions and non-content word questions, and he identifies five ways of forming both: interrogative nouns, interrogative verbs, interrogative qualifiers, interrogative modifiers and intonational accent with great loudness or pitch rising (Oláńrewájú 2017). Each of these methods is depicted in the examples below:

(1) a. Interrogative nouns (ta, kí, èwo and so on):
   Ta ni èyí?
   QN be this
   ‘Who is this?’

b. Interrogative verbs (dà, ìkó)
   Owó dà?
   Money QV
   ‘Where is the money?’

c. Interrogative qualifiers
   Aṣọ wo ni Olú rà?
   Cloth QM FOC Olú buy
   ‘Which cloth did Olú buy?’

d. Interrogative modifier (bí)
   Wón lọ bí?
   They go QM
   ‘Did they go?’
e. Use of intonational accent

Ẹ̀ rí Adéwálé?
You see Adéwálé
‘Did you see Adéwálé?’

According to Bamgbose (1990: 183–186), the following items are operated to form questions in Yorùbá: interrogative nouns, interrogative verbs, question particles, interrogative conjunctions, interrogative modifiers, interrogative qualifiers and preverbal QMs.

Awóbùlúyi (2013) disregards dà and ģkọ́ as QVs in Yorùbá and refers to them as (interrogative) qualifiers. His arguments are based on the distributional restriction placed on these items. According to him, dà and ģkọ́ are classified alongside kọ́, ni, kẹ́ and wè as shown in (2) below:

(2)  

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Ìwọ́ ni</td>
<td>(You are)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Ìwọ́ kọ́</td>
<td>(You are not ...)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Ìwọ́ dà</td>
<td>(Where are you?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Ìwọ́ ģkọ́</td>
<td>(What of you)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Ìwọ́ kẹ́</td>
<td>(You!)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Ìwọ́ wè</td>
<td>(You!)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Awóbùlúyi 2013: 72)

A cursory look at (3) below evidently reveals that the boldly written items are not qualifiers, they have different grammatical functions in (2) above.

(3) Òjò tún ń ró kẹ/wè/*ni.
Òjò still PROG fall PSM
‘The rain is still falling!’
The question begging for explanatory adequacy on (3) above is ‘what are the italicised items qualifying?’ Therefore, for more plausible grammar, all environments where all these items occur must be surveyed and discussed before we can determine either their grammatical functions or their categorial status. It should be equally noted that only examples (2c) and (2d) above are predicate clauses (Taiwo & Abimbola 2014, Oláńrewájú 2022). Ajíbóyè (2006: 32) identifies the following as examples of in-situ content word questions in Yorùbá.

(4) a. Ta ni?
   Who FOC
   ‘Who is s/he?’

b. Kí ni?
   What FOC
   ‘What is it?’

c. Níbo ni?
   Where FOC
   ‘Where is it?’

d. Êló ni?
   How much FOC
   ‘How much is it?’

A cursory look at the examples above reveals that they are truncated forms unlike (5) below.
(5) a. Ta ni o ki?
   QN FOC you greet
   ‘Who did you greet?’

b. Kí ni o rà?
   QN FOC you buy
   ‘What did you buy?’

c. Níbo ni o ti wá?
   At-QN FOC you have come
   ‘Where are you from?’

d. Èló ni o rà?
   QN FOC you buy
   ‘How much did you by it?’

The preposition *ni* is not pied-piped with the QN, but gets deleted in (5d) above. It is assumed that the reason behind this irregularity is that *èló* “how much” is used to elicit information about price. This is not peculiar to *èlo* as a QN alone, it is also applicable to other nouns in this category. Let us consider the examples below:

(6) a. [TP Olùkò rà iwé [PP ní [DP ṣílè mẹ́ta]]]
   Teacher buy book at pence three
   ‘The teacher bought the book three pence.’

b. [FocP Ṣílè méta ni [TP Olùkó ra
   Pence three FOC teacher buy
   iwé [PP ø [DP <sílè méta>]]]]
   book
   ‘The teacher bought the book THREE PENCE.’
c. *[FocP Ni ṣilè méta ni [TP Olùkọ́ ra
   At pence three FOC teacher buy
   ìwé [PP <ní ṣilè méta>]].
   book

d. [TP Olùkọ́ ra ìwé [PP ní àná]]
   Teacher buy book at yesterday
   ‘The teacher bought a book YESTERDAY.’

e. [FocP Ní àná ni [TP olùkọ́ ra ìwé [PP <ní àná>]].
   At yesterday FOC teacher buy book
   ‘The teacher bought a book YESTERDAY.’

f. [FocP Àná ni [TP olùkọ́ ra ìwé [PP ṃ<àná>]].
   Yesterday FOC teacher buy book
   ‘The teacher bought a book YESTERDAY.’

As evident in (6e) and (6f) above, the preposition ńi is optionally
deleted or pied-piped with the DP àná “yesterday” to the clause left
periphery unlike (6b) and (6c) above. The derivation in (6c) crashes
because the preposition ńi is pied-piped with the moved DP. The
conclusion borne out of this is that what Ajibóyè (2006) refers to as
in-situ content word questions in (4b) repeated as (7a) below, for ease
of reference, is an elliptical form. The QN kí is not base-generated at
the object position in (7a) unlike (7b) below, adapted from Àkanbi
(2016: 418).

(7)  a. Kí ni?
   QN FOC
   ‘What is it?’
b. Adé jẹ kí?
   Adé eat what
   ‘Adé ate what?’

Within minimalist assumption, the QN *kí* in (7b) takes LF movement from the spec VP to the spec InterP as shown in (8) below:

(8) \[ [\text{InterP} \ QF \ [\text{Inter} \ Φ \ [\text{TP} \ Adé \ [T \ Φ \ [\text{TP} \ <\text{Adé}> \ [T \ jẹ \ [VP \ kí \ [V \Τ \ jẹ \ [DP \ <\text{kí}> \ ]]]]]]]].

   Adé        eat     QN
   ‘Adé eat what?’

The derivation in (8) goes thus: The verb *jẹ* ‘eat’ first merges with the QN *kí* ‘what’ to project the V-bar, and hence, satisfies the c-selection requirement of the verb. The same QN *kí* is copied to the spec VP to have its [+case] feature checked through the specifier and head agreement. The null performative light verb *v⁰* merges with the VP to project the v-bar. The strong vF on the light *v⁰* attracts the lexical verb *jẹ* to adjoin to itself while the subject DP, *Adé* is externally merged at the inner spec vP in line with the PISH which requires a subject of a sentence to be base-generated within the predicate. The derivation proceeds by externally merging the abstract T⁰ with the outer vP to project the T-bar. The T⁰ as a probe searches its c-command domain for the DP *Adé*, a matching goal and attracts it to the spec TP where it checks its [+case, EPP] feature. The derivation still proceeds by merging the null head Inter⁰ with the TP to project the Inter-bar. The QN *kí* takes an LF movement to the spec InterP to check the [+Q, EF] on the Inter⁰ through specifier and head agreement. The derivation in (8) above is an echoed question. Therefore, it does trigger any response from an interlocutor. FocP is not activated because the QN *kí* ‘what’ is not focused. Foc⁰ is specified [+strong] in
Yorùbá, unlike Inter\textsuperscript{0}. Consequent on this, the Inter\textsuperscript{0} cannot trigger the syntactic movement of the QN to the clause left periphery.

### 3. Formation of Constituent Interrogatives in CY Dialects

Content word questions in CY dialects are formed using QNs, QVs and interrogative modifiers.

#### 3.1. QNs in CY Dialects

QNs in CY are shown in Table 1 (Ọláńrewájú 2022: 131):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>QN</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human/Person</td>
<td>yèṣí/isí</td>
<td>who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-human/manner</td>
<td>kí</td>
<td>what/how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enumerative</td>
<td>melòó</td>
<td>how many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>èló</td>
<td>how much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>kà, (ka ibi)/ibi sì</td>
<td>where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>igba/ùgbà sì</td>
<td>when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>èčekelòó (èrin kelòó)</td>
<td>what round</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 1, \textit{ibi sì} ‘where’ and \textit{igbà sì} ‘when’ are QPs. The QM (interrogative qualifier), \textit{sì}, in each of the phrases has its interrogative feature percolated through the entire phrase (Ajibóyè 2005, Ọláńrewájú & Táíwò 2020). Now, let us consider how these QNs are
operated in CY dialects.

### 3.1.1. Ỳèsí/Ìsí (Who)

(9) a. Ifè : Yèsí ni ó mí pè mi?
    Ìjèṣà: Yèsí li ó mí pè mi?
    Adó-Èkìtì: Ìsí ó í pè mi?
    Òtùn Móbà: Ìsí òò í pè mi?

    QN FOC res PROG call me
    ‘Who called me?’

b. Ifè : Yèsí ó ṣe iṣu?
    Ìjèṣà: Yèsí ó ṣe uṣu?
    Adó-Èkìtì: Ìsí ó ṣe uṣu?
    Òtùn Móbà: Ìsí òò ṣe iṣu?

    QN res eat yam
    ‘Who ate yam?’

CY dialects also optionally drop FOC as shown in (9) above. QNs are extracted from the subject positions to the clause left periphery to check the [+Focus] and the [+Q, EF] on the Foc-head and the Inter0.

### 3.1.2. Kí (What/How)

As shown on Table 1, CY dialects use ki to question after two things: non-human referents and manner (how). Let us consider how ki is used to elicit information about non-human referents before we return to discussing how it is operated to question manner.
(10) a. Ìfẹ: Kí ni ò rà?
Ìjèṣà: Kí li ò rà?
Adó-Èkìtì: Kí ò rà
Ọ̀ tùn Mọ̀bà: Kí òò rà?
QN FOC you buy
‘What did you buy?’

b. Ìfẹ: Kí ni ighán mú há?
Ìjèṣà: Kí i án mú há?
Adó-Èkìtì: Kí án mú há?
Ọ̀ tùn Mọ̀bà: Kí án-àn mú há?
QN FOC they take come
‘What did they bring?’

Èkìtì and Mọ̀bà drop the FOC as shown in (10) above. The QN, object DP is extracted to the clause left periphery from the vP domain in each of the examples. Now, let us consider the usage of *kí* (how) in the questioning manner in CY dialects.

(11) a. Ìfẹ
Kí ë ṣe ṣe é?
QN you PRM do it
‘How did you do it?’

b. Ìjèṣà
Kí ian Ìjèṣà ṣe é jó?
QN they Ìjèṣà PRM PROG dance
‘How do Ìjèṣà people dance?’
c. Adó-Èkitì
   Kí in ṣe gbó?
   QN you PRM hear
   ‘How did you hear?’

d. Òtùn Mòbà
   Kí óó ṣe mò?
   QN you PRM know
   ‘How did you know?’

In (11) above, the QN *ki* enters the derivation at the clause left periphery. The tree diagram in (12) and (13) elucidate more on how *ki* is used for non-human referents (what) and manner (how) respectively.
In (12) above, the QN originates from the vP domain. The derivation goes thus: The lexical verb ṭà ‘buy’ merges with kí ‘what’ to project the v-bar ra kí ‘buy what’ in line with c-selection.
requirement of the verb \(V^0\). The second person singular subject pronoun \(\vartheta\) ‘you’ is copied to the spec VP to have its [+case] feature checked. The derivation proceeds by merging the null performative light verb with the VP to project the \(v\)-bar. The strong \(vF\) on the light \(v^0\) attracts the lexical verb \(rà\) ‘buy’ to adjoin to itself. The second person singular subject pronoun \(\vartheta\) ‘you’ is externally merged at the inner spec \(vP\) in line with the PISH. The QN \(kị\) is then copied to the outer spec \(vP\), an escape hatch from PIC. This invariably allows it to be visible to further operations in the course of the derivation. The derivation proceeds by externally merging the abstract \(T^0\) with the \(vP\) to project the \(T\)-bar. The \(T^0\) as a probe attracts \(\vartheta\) to the spec TP to check its [+case, EPP] feature. The derivation proceeds by merging the FOC \(ni\) with TP to project the Foc-bar. The Foc\(^0\) as a potential probe searches its c-command domain and attracts the QN, \(kị\) to the spec FocP to have its [+Foc] feature checked. The derivation still proceeds by externally merging the abstract Inter\(^0\) with the FocP to project the Inter-bar. The Inter\(^0\) as a potential probe attracts the QN \(kị\) to the spec InterP to check its [+Q, EF] through specifier and head agreement. In (13) below, the QN, \(kị\) ‘how’ does not originate from within the \(vP\) domain unlike (12) above.
The derivation (in (13)) above goes as follows: The lexical verb ṣe ‘do’ merges with the third person singular object pronoun é ‘it’ to project the V-bar ṣe é ‘do it’ in line with c-selection requirement of the verb (V⁰). The same the third person singular object pronoun é “it” is copied to the spec VP to have its [+case] feature checked. The
 derivation proceeds by merging the null performative light verb $v^0$ with the VP to project the $v$-bar. The strong $vF$ on the light $v^0$ attracts the lexical verb sé ‘buy’ to adjoin to itself while a premodifier sé is externally merged at the inner spec $vP$. The second person plural subject pronoun ë ‘you’ is externally merged at the outer spec $vP$ in line with the PISH which stipulates that subject should originate internally within the predicate. The derivation proceeds by merging the abstract $T^0$ with the $vP$ to project $T$-bar. The $T^0$ as a probe attracts the second person plural subject pronoun ë ‘you’ to the spec TP to check its [+case, EPP] feature. The derivation proceeds by externally merging the abstract Foc$^0$ to project the Foc-bar. The QN, kí is externally merged at the spec FocP. Therefore, feature valuation is satisfied through specifier and head agreement. The derivation still proceeds by externally merging the abstract Inter$^0$ to project the Inter-bar. The Inter$^0$ (as a probe attracts the QN, kí to the spec InterP to check its [+Q, EF]. As illustrated (in (13)) above, when CY dialects operate kí (how) to question manner, they introduce sé, a premodifier, and also, the QN kí does not originate from within the $vP$ domain. It is rather externally merged at the pragmatic domain.

3.1.3. Mélòó (How Many), Èló (How Much), Èëkèlòó (What Round) and Igbà/Ùgbà Sí (When)

As shown in Table 1, mélòó is used for numerative (cardinal numbers). It is derived from mú èló (Ọláńrewájú 2016). Èló is used to ask questions about price. In CY dialects, these two QNs are used similarly to standard Yorùbá. Èëkèlòó and ìgbà/ùgbà sì are used for frequency and time respectively (Àkanbi 2011, Awóbùlúyì 2013, Ọláńrewájú 2016). Let us consider the examples below:
(14) a. Ìfẹ̀
Mélóó ni ẹ̀ ẹ̀fẹ̀?
QN FOC you need
‘How many do you need?’

b. Adó-Èkìti
Èló in ẹ̀ ẹ̀kè̀rì à?
QN you will buy it
‘How much will you buy it?’

c. Ìjēsà
Èkèlòó ni yèé jẹ̀?
QN FOC this be
‘What round is this?’

d. Òtùn Mòbà
Ègbà sí ẹ̀rìn in-in dé?
Time QM you arrive
‘When did you arrive?’

Èkèlòó is used in the place of ìgba kelòó “what round” operated by standard Yorùbá. It can be decomposed to érin kelòó while élèèkèlòó can be decomposed to oní érin kelòó. The entire QPs in (14c) and (14d) are preposed to the clause left periphery in line with WAC in (15) below:

(15) The edge feature on C attracts the smallest possible maximal projection containing the closest wh-word to move spec C.

(Radford 2009: 216)
3.1.4. Kà (Where)

CY dialects use this QN to request for the location of referents. It is operated in two ways: One, it can be externally merged at the pragmatic domain of a derivation. When used in this form, kà is used alongside ibi ‘place’, a DP base generated within the vP domain. Let us consider (16a)–(16d) and (17) (the phrase-marker of (16a)) below. CY also alternate ibi sí with kabi as shown in (16e) below.

(16) a. Ìjèṣà
   Kà ibi (kabi) o fí eó mi sí?
   QN place you put money me to
   ‘Where did you put my money?’

   b. Ifẹ
   Kà ibi (kabi) o fí oó mi sí?
   QN place you put money me to
   ‘Where did you put my money?’

   c. Àdó-Èkiti
   Kà ibi (kabi) o mu eó mi sí?
   QN place you take money me to
   ‘Where did you put my money?’

   d. Òtún Mòbà
   Kà ibi (kabi) óó mu eó mi sí?
   QN place you take money me to
   ‘Where did you put my money?’
(17)

The derivation in (17) above goes thus: The verb *fi* ‘put’ merges
with the DP *eó mi* ‘my money’ in order to satisfy its c-selection requirement of the verb (*V₀*), and consequently projects the lower V-bar. The lower V-bar merges with the PP *sí ibi* to project the higher the V-bar. The object DP *eó mi* is copied to the spec VP to have its [+case] feature checked. The derivation proceeds by merging the null performative light verb *v₀* with the VP to form the v-bar. The strong *vF* on the light *v₀* attracts the lexical verb *fi* ‘put’ to adjoin to itself. The second person singular subject pronoun *o* ‘you’ is externally merged with the inner spec vP in line with the PISH, which conditions a subject DP to be base-generated within the predicate. The outer spec vP then becomes the escape hatch for the DP *ibi* ‘place’ so as to be licensed from the PIC, and also to be actively available for subsequent operations. The derivation proceeds by merging the T₀ with the vP to project the T-bar. The T₀ as a probe searches its c-command domain and attracts *o* ‘you’ to the spec TP where its [+case, EPP] feature is checked. The derivation proceeds by merging the abstract Foc₀ to project the Foc-bar. The Foc₀ as a probe attracts the DP *ibi* ‘place’ to spec FocP to check its [+Focus] feature. The derivation still proceeds by merging the abstract Inter₀ with the FocP to project the Inter-bar. Now, the QN *ka* is externally merged at the spec InterP to check the [+Q, EF] on the Inter₀ through specifier and head agreement. Our analysis above has the following two implications: One, *kà*, the QN does not move through the spec FocP in (17) above. Two, CY dialects do not operate *kabi* as a QN, therefore, the QN in (17) is *kà* which is externally merged at the spec-InterP in line with the interrogative condition in (18) proposed by Radford (2009).
A clause is interpreted as a non-echoic question (if and only if) it is a CP with an interrogative specifier (i.e., a specifier containing an interrogative word).

(Radford 2009: 194)

Apart from the first usage of *kà* discussed above, the item can also be base-generated within the vP domain as shown in the examples below:

(19) a. Ìjẹ̀ṣà
   Kà rí in?
   QN see you
   ‘Where are you?’

b. Ifẹ̀
   Kà rí èwù mi?
   QN see shirt me
   ‘Where is my shirt?’

c. Òtùn Mòbà
   Kà rí ilé rin?
   QN see house his
   ‘Where is his house?’

d. Adó-Èkiti
   Kà rí ulé rè?
   QN see house his
   ‘Where is his house?’
The phrase-marker below (20) illustrates better.

(20)

In (20) above *kà* is merged at the spec vP to satisfy the PISH. The same QN moves to the spec TP for onward valuation of the [+EPP,
case] feature on the $T^0$. The implication borne out of this is that $kà$ functions as a subject QN in CY dialects.

3.2. Interrogative Qualifiers in CY Dialects

CY dialects employ two methods to operate this: One, they use $sì$ and $kelòó$ (interrogative qualifiers) with a head noun, and two, they use any of the QNs discussed above to qualify a preceding noun. Let us consider the examples below on the first method:

(21) a. Adó-Èkìti
   Eó $sì$ ọ hún mi?
   Money QM you give me
   ‘Which money did you give me?’

b. Òtùn Mòbà
   Ìwé $sì$ ṣòọ́ í $kà$?
   Book QM you PROG read
   ‘Which book are you reading?’

c. Ìfẹ
   Ìgbà $kelòó$ rèè?
   Time QM be-this
   ‘What number of times is this?’

d. Ìjèṣà
   Ìpò $kelòó$ li yèè?
   Position QM be this
   ‘What position is this?’

The [+Q] feature on $sì/kelòó$ percolates through the head nouns in
the examples above. The entire DPs i.e., the head nouns and their complements form the QPs. Now, let us consider the following examples on the second method.

(22) a. Ìjẹ̀ṣà
 Ọmọ yèṣí ọ rè?
Child QN you be
‘Whose child are you?’

b. Ọ̀ tùn Mòbà
Ilé kabi ṣi gbé?
House QN you PROG live
‘Which house do you stay?’

c. Ifẹ̀
Ọmọ yèṣí ni ó?
Child QN be you
‘Whose child are you?’

d. Adó- Èkiti
Ulé kabi ṣi gbé?
House QN you PROG live
‘Which house do you stay?’

The QNs all qualify their head nouns in the above examples. Their [+Q] feature percolates through the entire phrases (QPs). They function as qualifiers similarly to the italicised nouns (nominal qualifiers) in (23) below:
(23) a. Ìjẹsà/Èkìtì
Ààbá Oyè re ulú Uléléṣà
Father Oyè go town Ilésì
‘Oyè’s father went to Ilésì.’

b. Ifẹ
Ọmọ olùkó ṣe ipò kin-in-ní.
Child teacher do position first’
‘The teacher’s child came first.’

3.3. QV in CY Dialects

A QV is a specified [+Q] feature and is used to elicit information from an interlocutor (Munro 2012, Taiwo & Abimbola 2014, Ọláńrewágú 2022). CY dialects operate síkó either to form a content word question interrogatives (seeking the location of referents) or a rhetorical question, as respectively shown in (24) below:

(24) a. Ifẹ: Ìwé rẹ síkó?
Ìjẹsà: Üwé rẹ síkó?
Èkìtì: Üwé rẹ síkó?
Ọtún Mòbà: Ìwé rin síkó?
Book your QV
‘Where is your book?’

b. Ifẹ: Ìwọ síkó, ó ó lè gbé e?
Ìjẹsà: Üwọ síkó, ó ó yè gbé e?
Èkìtì: Üwọ síkó, ó ó yè gbé e?
Ọtún Mòbà: Üwọ síkó, óó ó yè gbé e?
You QV you NEG can carry it
‘What of you, can’t you carry it?’
The QV *síkọ* forms the predicate in (24a). The derivation in (24b) is a compound sentence, implying that *síkọ* is never operated to form a rhetorical question in a simple clause. The tree diagram in (25) illustrates the derivation (in (24a)) above.
The derivation in (25) goes as follows: The DP *ìwé rẹ ‘your book’ is externally merged with the QV *síkọ to project the VP in line with the PISH. The null performative light verb *v₀ externally merges with the VP to project the *v-bar. The strong *vF on the performative light verb attracts the QV to adjoin to itself. The DP *ìwé rẹ is attracted to the spec vP to be visible to subsequent syntactic operations. The derivation proceeds by merging the abstract *T₀ with the *vP to project the *T-bar. The *T₀ as a probe attracts the DP *ìwé rẹ to the spec TP to check its [+case, EPP] feature. *Ìwé rẹ is, therefore, a valued nominative case. The derivation proceeds by externally merging the abstract Foc₀ with the TP to project the Foc-bar. The Foc₀ as a potential probe attracts the DP *ìwe rẹ to the spec FocP to check its [+Focus] feature. The derivation still proceeds by merging the abstract Inter₀ with the FocP to project the Inter-bar. The Inter₀ as a potential probe attracts the DP *ìwé rẹ to the spec InterP to check its [+EF] through specifier and head agreement. The [+Q] feature on the abstract Inter₀ is too weak to trigger the overt movement of the DP *ìwé rẹ. The focus projection is activated consequent upon the question-answer pair of this form of interrogative (Aboh 2007, Taiwo & Abimbola 2014). To accommodate the derivation above, Oláńrewájú (2022: 166) proposes (27) below for Yorùbá and related languages in the place of Radford’s (2009) proposal repeated as (26) below for ease of reference:

(26) A clause is interpreted as a non-echoic question if (and only if) it is a CP with an interrogative specifier i.e a specifier with an interrogative word).

(Radford 2009: 124)
(27) A clause is interpreted as a non-echoic question if (and only if) it is an InterP with either an interrogative specifier or a QV.

(Oláńrewájú 2022: 166)

4. Conclusion

CY dialects operate lexical items specified [+Q] feature among subclasses of their nouns, verbs and qualifiers to form constituent interrogatives. Just like their standard Yorùbá counterpart, a clause is typed non-echoed question iff a QN/QP occupies the spec-InterP or when the QV sikọ forms its predicate. A head noun and its complement forming a QP are undetachable, therefore, the entire QP must be attracted to the clause left peripheral position in line with Wh-Attraction Condition. A rhetorical question is formed when a QN is legible to PF interface at the canonical position associated with its grammatical function. FOCs ni and li occur in free variation in CY dialects except Ifẹ where they are mutually exclusive. FOCs are also optionally dropped in the dialects. As obtainable in standard Yorùbá, QNs occur exclusively in constituent interrogatives in CY dialects. Although CY dialects exhibit many similar features, they still feature some sub-dialectal variations with respect to how they form their constituent interrogatives.

References


Cambridge: CUP.