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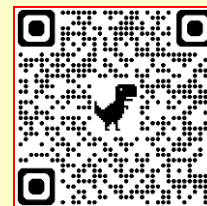
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Focus Constructions and Relative Clauses in Ànàgó

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at focus constructions and relative clauses in Ànàgó, a dialect of Yoruba spoken in Ipokia, Ipokia Local Government of Ogun State, Nigeria, paying particular attention to the structural properties and strategies of focus construction and relative clause formation. It is not in doubt that extensive work has been done on the topics in the standard version of the speech form; little can be said of same in relation to Ànàgó, particularly as it concerns the formal similarities and differences between focus constructions and relative clauses. In lights of the foregoing, this paper presents a comprehensive account of the markers for focus expressions and relative clauses in Ànàgó. The analysis of the data with insights from the minimalist program shows that subject focus and possessive focus involve resumptive pronouns while object focus and object relativisation employ a gap strategy. However, there is no movement effect when nominalised forms of verbs are focused or relativised. The two constructions are distinguishable based on co-occurrence principle, what licenses the movement or displacement and the internal structures of each of them.

KEY WORDS: Focus constructions, Relative clauses, Gap, Resumptive pronouns, Ànàgó, Yorùbá.

1. Introduction

The Yoruba language has received an extensive attention in all levels and areas of linguistic inquiries. However, there are a number of its dialects that have not gotten the desired linguistic attention. Ànàgó, a dialect of the language spoken in Ipokia, Ipokia local government of Ogun State is presumably one of the varieties of Yoruba language that needs closer interrogation. One of the several aspects of the dialect that is not well studied is the focus construction and how it compares and contrasts with the relative clause. Of interest to this paper is the availability of descriptive accounts on the topic in the mainstream Yoruba and a number of its dialects. Studies like Awóbùlúyì (1978, 1987, 1992, 2013), Bámbóṣé (1990), Owólabí (1983, 1987, 1989), Yusuf (1990), Adéwólé (1991), Ilori (2010) and Olánrewájú (2022, 2024) among others belong to the descriptions of focus in standard Yoruba while

those on the dialects of Yoruba or related languages include Arokoyo (2009), Olaogun (2016, 2017), Akintoye and Owoyele (2018) and Kareem (2025) among others. The few studies on the relative clause in Yoruba and its dialects include Lawal (1987), Olánrewájú (2008) and Ilori (2010) among others. None of the above mentioned works relates to the discussion of focus as an independent syntactic projection or draws any comparison between focus and relative clauses in Ànàgó. Therefore, the major aim of this study is to describe in greater details the formal and the not too clear structural similarities between focus constructions and the relative clauses in Ànàgó and show that focus constructions and relative clauses are essentially not syntactically, as well as semantically identical; each of these construction types requires a different formal licensing.

According to Aboh, et al (2007:1), focus is taken as a pragmatic category that interacts with grammar where a part of the clause

provides the most relevant or most salient information in a given discourse situation. As we shall later see in this paper, this description of focus succinctly captures the phenomenon of focus in Ànàgò, where the focus phrase with a strong feature in the head *ní* forces the raising of an NP with a focus feature to the specifier of the focus phrase. This is referred to as an *ex-situ strategy* and it is a strategy commonly found in some specific African language families, such as Kwa, Bantu, and Chadic, Ameka (1992) and Newman (2000). In the words of Vries (2002:14), the defining properties of relative constructions are: a). a relative clause is subordinated; and b). a relative clause is connected to surrounding material by a pivot constituent.

The above properties are expressed further in the definition of canonical relative clause given by Dixon (2010) where a relative clause is said to comprise two clauses; a main clause (MC) and a relative clause (RC), within a single intonation unit, where the RC modifies a noun phrase in the MC and central to this construction is what Dixon calls the common argument (CA), a term referred to as the Pivot by Vries, which occurs in both clauses in varying degrees. The above descriptions of the relative clause appear to have direct relevance to the data used for this study. However, despite the large array of accounts about focus constructions and relative clauses in standard Yoruba, some of its dialects and related languages, Ànàgò as a dialect of Yoruba is under described in relations to specifics about focusing and relativisation. This paper considers this as a gap that restricts our understanding of the two related but different syntactic derivations in Ànàgò. Thus, the attempt in this study is to give a descriptive as well as theoretical account of focusing and relativisation in Ànàgò. By so doing, this study will contribute to knowledge on focusing and relativization in Yoruba and African linguistics in general. The remaining part of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides information about the sources of the data used for the study and the strategies adopted for the analyses. Section 3 describes the internal structure and the derivation of focus constructions in Ànàgò. In section 4, I examine the strategy used in the formation of relative clauses in Ànàgò from both descriptive and theoretical perspectives. Section 5 compares and contrasts the forms and structures of focus constructions and relative clauses while section 6 concludes the work.

2. Data Collection and Analysis

The data used for this study were collected on fieldwork to Ipokia by means of natural speech recordings with native speakers of Ànàgò, while the elicitation technique involved structured or guided interviews designed to allow speakers produce focus and relative clause constructions. Apart from providing a descriptive account of focusing and relativisation in Ànàgò, the study gives an insight on the formal structural composition of focus and relative clause by adopting the Kayne's (1994) approach, and complements the theoretical account of the subject matter with relevant insights from the minimalist program (MP henceforth) proposed in (Chomsky 1993, 1995, 2000; Collins 2013, 2016 etc.). The major operations used in the MP to build syntactic structures is *merge*, a mathematical operation that combines selected lexical items from the set in a numeration subject to the binary principle, and its use in this way is called external merge. However, when merge applies on already formed syntactic objects to derive larger units from the existing ones, we have a clear case of movement otherwise known as *internal merge*, which is subject to Minimal Link Condition or Attract Closest Principle. Another aspect of the MP which is relevant to our analysis in this paper is the copy theory of movement which maintains that a moved constituent leaves behind a copy of

itself when it moves and the copy's phonetic features are deleted and so become null in line with the spell-out of occurrences condition. The core tenet of the MP finds strong support in the Split-CP Hypothesis, which according to Rizzi (1997, 2001) assumes that the complementizer phrase (CP) should be split into a number of projections. The various constituents that independently project a phrase position at the left edge or periphery of clauses include Force Phrase (ForceP) Focus Phrase (FP), Topic Phrase (TopP), Relative Phrase (RelP), etc.

3. Focus Constructions

Extant studies on Yorùbá syntax such as Ìlòrí (2010), Arókoyò (2013), Olàògún (2016), Oláńrewájú (2024) and Kareem (2025) among others have shown that different argument positions that are accessible to focus include Subject DP, Object DP, Preposition DP and Genitive DP while those categorized as non-argument positions but are accessible to focus are predicate/verb and Adjunct or post modifier. From what we are going to show below, Ànàgò is not different in this regard. The peculiar behaviour of each of the argument positions will be considered in turns.

3.1 Focusing from subject position

I should mention from the onset that similar to what is found in standard Yorùbá and its various dialects, a subject DP in Ànàgò is deemed to perform the action associated with the verb in a clause; it is never acted upon, explaining why it does not manifest the trait of languages where distinction is made between active and passive sentences. As revealed by the examples below, each time the DP functioning as the subject of a sentence is focused, the focused DP is moved to the sentence initial position and is immediately followed by the focus marker *ní* or the form that contracts the focus marker with the resumptive pronoun i.e. *ló*. This situation forces a clear change in the canonical order of the subject DP element because the focus marker now intervenes between the subject DP and what is understood as a resumptive pronoun. Let us consider the examples below.

- 1a. Adé wà ní bí
Adé be at here
'Adé is here'
- b. Adé_x ló_x wà ní bí
Adé Foc.RP be at here
'**ADÉ** is here'
- 2a. Wùmí rasọ f'ólú
Wùmí buy.cloth give.Olú
'Wùmí bought cloth for Olú'
- b. Wùmí_x ló_x rasọ f'ólú
Wùmí Foc.RP buy.cloth give.Olú
'**WÙMÍ** bought cloth for Olú'
- 3a. Mo rí ilé Adé
Isg see house Adé
'I saw Adé's house'
- b. Èmi_x ló_x rí ilé Adé
Isg Foc.RP see house Adé

‘I saw Adé’s house’

The subject positions of the examples in (1 and 2) are occupied by referential expressions and when they are moved by means of focus, there is a gap that shows up at the position where the movement has taken place. The gap in this case is represented by a resumptive pronoun to indicate the difference between the neutral/non-focus sentences in (1a, 2a) and those in (1b, 2b) whose subject DPs are focused. The same situation occurs with example (3) where the subject of the neutral sentence is a pronominal. The position vacated by the focused pronominal item is filled by a resumptive pronoun which contracts with the focus marker. This observation provides clause structure evidence to the effect that the subjects (referential expression/pronoun) in (1b, 2b & 3b) are the real targets of focus: the co-referentiality of the focused constituents with the resumptive pronouns is an indication that movement has actually taken place. The item *ló* interpreted as the combination of the focus marker and the resumptive pronoun may be explained off as the form that survives in Ànàgó after processes like deletion and assimilation have taken place. This feature of focus in Ànàgó is similar to the situations in the Ifè and Àwòrì dialects of Yoruba Adewole (2021) and Aina (2023) respectively. There is information structure evidence in (1-3) that the subjects are actually focused. In each of the examples, the focused constituents convey the most salient information in the sentence because we take each of the utterances as a response to a wh-question about the subject DP. For instance in (2), it is taken that an individual called *Wù mí* bought a piece of cloth which provides an essential background for the sentence. Thus, it is the intention of the speaker to give new information to the hearer that it was *Wù mí* that bought a piece of cloth but definitely not somebody else.

3.2 Object DPs Focus

It is easy to predict the position from where the object of a verb originates because Ànàgó consistently allows the DP object to follow the verb (transitive) which it complements. This is clear from the example in (4) where the direct object of the mono-argument verb *ra* ‘buy’ is the target of the focus particle *ní*.

- 4a. *Wù mí ra asọ*
 Wù mí buy cloth
 ‘Wù mí bought a piece of cloth’
- b. *Asọ ní Wù mí ra <asọ>*
 cloth Foc Wù mí buy
 ‘Wù mí bought **A PIECE OF CLOTH**’

As (4) reveals, focus as a movement transformation allows us to identify the object position in Ànàgó; it consistently yields an object verb order in the dialect. Thus, the object of the verb which canonically occurs after the verb at the point of merge (external) is caused to move by means of internal merge to the spec of FocP. Example (4a) is a neutral sentence which shows that the object of the verb *ra* ‘to buy’ occurs to its left the moment it is focused. As opposed to the contracted form in (1b, 2b & 3b), example (4b) marks the object as the focused item, making it occur at the spec of the FocP that is headed by the morpheme *ní* same as with standard Yorùbá. Consequently, the movement of the internal argument of the verb *ra*, a mono-transitive verb, leaves a copy of itself behind with a null phonetic spell-out.

As it has been attested in standard Yorùbá, it is also possible in Ànàgó for each of the object DPs in a kind of serial verbal

constructions to serve as the target of focus. This is exemplified in (5).

- 5a. *Wù mí rasọ f’ólú*
 Wù mí buy.cloth give.Olú
 ‘Wù mí bought cloth for Olú’
- b. *Asọ ní Wù mí ra <asọ> f’ólú*
 cloth Foc Wù mí buy give.Olú
 ‘Wù mí bought **A PIECE OF CLOTH** for Olú’
- c. *Olú ní Wù mí rasọ fún <Olú>*
 Olú Foc Wù mí buy.cloth give
 ‘Wù mí bought a piece of cloth for **OLÚ**’

In line with the assumption by Baker (1989, 1991); Collins (1997); Baker & Stewart (2002); Carstens (2002); among others, I consider the sentence in (5a) as a neutral representative example of serialization because it seems to support the Argument Sharing-Hypothesis. Specifically, the sentence indicates that two lexical verbs *ra* ‘to buy’ and *fún* ‘to give’ (realised in its contracted form in (5a, b)) are present and they share one subject *Wù mí* without any form of coordination. Also, the two verb roots are not members of separate clauses. In (5b), it is the direct object of the first verb in the series that is accessible to focus movement, explaining why the phonetically null position occurs to the immediate right of the verb *ra*. In (5c), the direct object of the second verb is the item focused, leaving a phonetically null copy to the immediate right of the verb. In both (5b, c), the two VPs appear in their contracted forms i.e. the verbs and their complement are morphologically fused but their full forms are realised the moment their complements are focused. Thus in (5b), the verb *ra* is stranded in the event of focusing its direct object while the full form of the verb *fún* ‘to give’, shortened as the unpronounceable *f’* in (5a, b) is realised in (5c) where its direct object is the focused item.

3.3 Preposition DP focus

From the very minimal example drawn from Ànàgó, we can tentatively argue that the dialect does not show evidence of pied piping where the entire PP can be focused or stranded, a situation in which only the complement of the preposition head is focused. As revealed by the examples below, the preposition head completely disappears when its complement DP gets raised to the specifier position of the FocP.

- 6a. *Adé wà níbí*
 Adé be/exist at.here
 ‘Adé is here’
- b. *Ìbí yèyí l’adé wà*
 Here this Foc.Adé be/exist
 ‘Adé is **HERE**’
- 7a. *Mo rí Olú l’òná*
 Isg see Olú at.yesterday
 ‘I saw Olú yesterday’
- b. *Òná lè è r’ólú*
 Yesterday Foc Isg see.Olú
 ‘I saw Olú **YESTERDAY**’

Example (6a) is a neutral sentence where the preposition *ní* and its complement *ibí* ‘here’ are fused and the form that survives at the phonetic interface is *níbí* ‘at here’. When *ibí* is focused as in (6b), it gets raised to the spec of the focus marker, which in this case is contracted with the subject of the sentence. The example in (6b) does not show that the preposition is feasible at the interface but we assume that it gets disappeared for grammaticality purpose because the item *wà* ‘be/exist’ is not a DP complement taking verb; the absence of the preposition *ní* in (6a) renders the expression ungrammatical. Furthermore, it appears that focusing the complement requires the presence of a modifier to actually indicate that the structure is meant to provide new information. This assumption is based on the occurrence of *yèyí* ‘this’ in the focused structure but it is not a part of the neutral sentence in (6a). The (7a) example contains a PP adjunct *l’òná* ‘at yesterday’ where the preposition and its complement are contracted but when the complement *òná* ‘yesterday’ is preposed due to the strong specifier feature of the focus marker, the preposition head disappears or is deemed to be covert as in (7b). Besides, the form of what serves as the focus marker in this case is different from what we have so far described as the form of the focus marker in the dialect. The reason for this variation may be due to cases of deletion and assimilation. This is so if we take cognizance of what the form of the subject DP is in the neutral sentence and the form seen in the focused structure.

3.4 Genitive DP focus

Genitive DPs are those whose feature properties are used to show possession. In this case, the constituent nouns never refer to the same person or thing but are associated with each other in different ways; the nouns express a possessive relationship. As the Ànàgó data suggest, one possibility is the movement of the entire genitive DP i.e. the possessor alongside the possessed through focus. In this circumstance, a silent copy of the focused genitive DP is left at the extraction site. This possibility is illustrated in the example below.

- 8a. Mò rílé Adé
Isg see.house Adé
‘I saw Adé’s house’
- b. Ilé Adé nì rí <ilé Adé>
House Adé Foc see
‘I saw **ADÉ’S HOUSE**’
- c. Adé nì rílé è
Adé Foc see.house RP
‘I saw **ADÉ’S HOUSE**’

Example (8a) is a neutral sentence whose object DP is a noun-noun genitive where the possessed *ilé* ‘house’, contracted with the verb *rí* ‘see’, precedes the possessor *Adé*. The (8b) example shows that the entire genitive DP is focused, getting raised to Spec-FocP and a phonetically null copy is left at the movement site. In this case the full form of the possessed item *ilé* ‘house’ is found in the Spec-FocP alongside its possessor *Adé*. Example (8c) indicates that the possessor alone is the item that is fronted and focus-marked, leaving the possessed item behind at the base generated position. The example sentence in (8c) shows that the structure will not be licit if what remains in the extraction site of the possessor is a silent copy of the focused possessor DP. Thus, the structure in (8c) aligns with the situation in standard Yorùbá, Ilori (2010), Owe, Arokoyo (2013) and Ñjò-Kóo, Olaogun (2016) where a resumptive pronoun that anaphorically refers to the focused possessed DP in spec-FocP is

required. The particle *è* in (8c) functions as the resumptive pronoun that refers to the focused possessor *Adé*, indicating agreement in number and person at the PF spell out. Though *è* and *Adé* do not share any morphological features, they have clear semantic identity, making them to be co-referential. This is the reason angle brackets are not used for the lower occurrence of the moved item (resumptive pronoun) because the two occurrences of the possessor and the resumptive pronoun are spelt out and pronounced. It then means that each of the sentences in (8) is formed from different numerations.

In both (8b) and (8c), the subject DP is underspecified; it does not have phonological form but it has a clear semantic representation given the glosses of the sentences. I assume that the particle *nì*, on the basis of the tone it bears, combines the meanings of the focus marker with the subject DP which in this case is a pronominal. The situation in (8b, c) above is similar to (9b) where the expression is a direct response to the question in (9a).

- 9a. Ilé mèlò ò kọ?
House how many 2sg build
‘How many houses did you build?’
- b. Méjì nì kọ
Two Foc build
‘I built **TWO** (houses)’

Sentence (9a) is a representative example of a content question formed by means of raising the direct object of the transitive verb *kọ* ‘to build’ to the clause initial position where in the overt syntax of the dialect should be followed by the focus marker. However, the example could be analysed to spot a covert focus marker because it is not syntactically marked but it is present in the semantics of the structure. Interestingly, the response to the question as shown by example (9b) contains what can be described as the focus marker while the agent of the action expressed by the verb is suppressed in overt syntax. This is the same as what I describe of the data in (8b, c) above because the particle marked for the focus marker bears the same low tone.

3.5 Verb focus

The core idea behind the notion of verb focus is borne out of the morphological resemblance that exists between the verb of the clause dominated by a focus phrase and the item located in the spec-FocP. In this regard, it is widely assumed that focusing a verb in most languages requires that the verb is nominalised at the focus landing site. However, this view has been contradicted by Aboh (2006:24) who claims that the verbal predicate fronting in Gungbe does not involve nominalisation of the fronted verbal category. This means that languages do not behave the same way in relations to the notion about verb focus. In the case of Ànàgó, it seems as if the item found in the spec of the FocP is a nominalised form of the verb that forms the core or nucleus of the sentence predicate. Let us consider the examples below:

- 10a. Adé pa ejá
Adé kill dog
‘Adé killed a dog’
- b. Ípa l’adé pa ejá
Killing Foc.Adé kill dog
‘Adé **KILLED** a dog’

- 11a. Adé pe Akin
Adé call Akin
'Adé called Akin'
- b. Ípè l'adé pe Akin
Calling Foc.Adé call Akin
'Adé **CALLED** Akin'
- 12a. Adé se isé
Adé do work
'Adé worked'
- b. Íse ni Adé sisé
Working Foc Adé do.work
Adé **WORKED**'
- c. Íjí nì ò jí ọkọ
Stealing Foc 3pl steal motor car
'They **STOLE** a motor car'

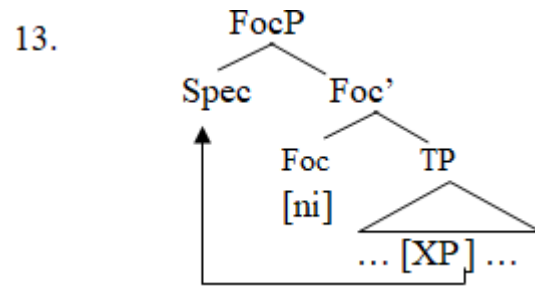
My opinion in this study is that the preposed items in examples (10b, 11b, 12b & c) above located at the spec of the FocP are not verbal elements but they are nominal items deemed to share semantic and morphological resemblance with the verbs in their respective sentences. Thus, I speculate that *ípa*, *ípè*, *íse* and *íjí* in (10b, 11b, 12b & c) respectively are the nominalised forms of the verbs, which form the numeration that derives each of the sentences. This invariably means that each of the items is externally merged at the spec FocP for feature valuation and, the angle brackets can therefore not be used for the verbs which we can assume as the lower occurrences of the nominalized forms since the two forms are spelt out and pronounced at the PF interface.

3.6 A minimalist analysis of focus

Having done a description of focus as a syntactic phenomenon in Ànàgó, its uniform formal account can also be achieved irrespective of the positions where the focus item originates. Ignoring the details of operation merge, where items in a numeration are externally merged to derive a convergent TP, representing a complete clause, I posit that the focus marker *ni* as well as its contracted form enters the derivation of each of the example sentences above through external merge. However, the constituents located at the spec-FocP are deemed to enter the derivation by means of internal merge, following the assumption that all the ϕ -features of the constituents that are accessible to focus must be valued and deleted appropriately so that the movement of such items can be licit. Therefore, the feature of focus as contained in the description of focus in Ànàgó seems to agree with the *focus constituent condition* which specifies that:

all the ϕ -features of a potential focus constituent must be valued within the TP (that is the minimal/simplex sentence that contains it)

Put differently, the appearance of focused items in spec-FocP is an instantiation of operation move, a condition that supports the assertion that Ànàgó employs the Ex-situ focus type. In this case, the derivation of focus constructions can be shown to have the structure below:

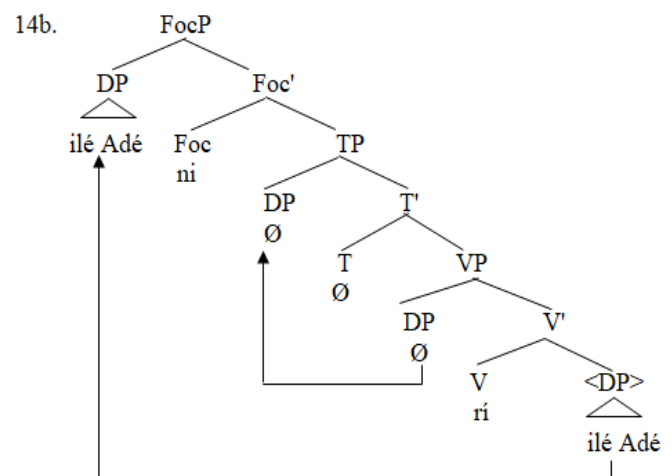


The above P-marker indicates that whenever a constituent becomes the subject of focus, the affected constituent moves to the spec-FocP for it to satisfy the strong specifier feature of the Foc head *ni* or its variant as the case may be. The XP, as the tree diagram shows, is a constituent of TP, which could correspond to the subject, object or any other category capable of being the target of focus.

As the structure above indicates, focus projections in Ànàgó involve only one probe: foc, a functional element that can cause a movement operation. Let us look at the example below:

- 14a. Ilé Adé nì rí <ilé Adé>
House Adé Foc see
'I saw **ADÉ'S HOUSE**'

The derivation of the sentence in (14a) begins by first merging the verb *rí* 'see' with its complement *ilé Adé* 'Adé's house' to satisfy the c-selection requirement of the verb. The subject DP, which by the interpretation of the structure should be the first person singular pronoun, is suppressed in the syntax and is assumed to covertly merge in the Spec-VP in line with the Predicate Internal Subject Hypothesis (PISH); Hornstein et al (2005). Apart from the need to satisfy the EPP requirement of the head verb, the account is favoured by the assumption that the external argument receives its theta role at the point of merge in the spec-VP. The VP is then merged with the null T head to form the T-bar that in turn merges with the null subject to form the TP. The derived TP at this stage merges with the focus marker *nì*, which in this case combines the meaning of the subject DP, to form a Foc' and the Foc' is then merged with a null specifier to project a FocP. This description is schematically captured in (14b).



Though the subject is somehow suppressed in the syntax of the sentence; for the sake of other examples where it is overt and the purpose of Full Interpretation, a principle of representational economy which obligatorily demands that all the features of a pair must be legible at the relevant interfaces, I propose that the suppressed subject raises to the Spec-TP, which is outside of its

theta domain, to check its nominative case where it is licensed. Also, the strong feature of *ni* is responsible for the movement of the object DP *ilé Adé* ‘Adé’s house’ to the spec-FocP but definitely not the moved element itself. This analysis conforms to Adesola’s (2005: 67) argument that the strong feature that requires checking is not in the moved element. The structure in (14b) is adjudged convergent because minimality is respected.

Obviously, the structure in (14b) may not be able to adequately handle the feature of the example sentences in (10b, 11b, 12b & c) because, as earlier proposed, the focus marker *ni* alongside its variant is a probe that attracts only items with [+nominal] feature. Thus, as (12c) indicates, it is the [+nominal] feature on *jí* ‘to steal’ that is attracted to the spec FocP where it is lexicalised as *íjí* ‘stealing’ (a gerundive/nominal form) to meet its strong specifier features. This is achieved by means of copying and lexicalization, a combined process that violates the Inclusiveness Condition (IC), a stipulation that prevents the computational system from introducing new elements in the course of the derivation. So, a better way of explaining off the structure is to assume that *íjí*, the nominalised or gerundive form of the verb meaning to steal is a tangible part of the numeration, enters the derivation via external merge, fully inflected and carries a triple set of features: semantic, syntactic and phonological.

4. Relative Constructions

The general consensus in the literature is that a relative clause is a subordinate clause that occurs or operates within the matrix clause to produce a complex sentence, in this case, a complex TP. Thus, there is a kind of relationship where a constituent semantically shares the matrix and the relative clause i.e. the subordinate clause Vries (2002), Ilori (2010). In this regard, the meaning of the resulting complex sentence reveals two occurrences of a variable. Let us consider the relative clause construction in Ànàgó illustrated in (15):

15. *Mi kólé yé da*
 1sg build.house RM good
 ‘I built a house that is nice’

Based on the definition of the relative clause above, we can, on the basis of its semantics, give the breakdown of the structure in (15) as: *mì kólé* ‘I built a house’; *ilé da* ‘a house is nice’. This explanation shows that there are two occurrences of the word *ilé* in the entire sentence, though the form that survives at the PF interface contracts with the verb in the main clause.

Similar to the situation in standard Yorùbá where there is an invariant relative clause marker *tí*, Ànàgó also appears to make use of an invariant relative clause introducer *yé*. Interestingly, the relative clause markers in both standard Yorùbá and Ànàgó have a CV syllable structure while the nuclei of the syllable bear the same high tone. This is not to suggest that the high tone is the marker of the relative construction. Configurationally, the particle *yé* merges with a convergent TP construction as the embedded clause to derive a *yé*-clause projection. The resulting *yé*-clause serves as a type of clausal modifier immediately following the relativised item, i.e. nominal construct in the complex TP. Following some existing studies in Yorùbá syntax, I aver that relativised items in Ànàgó originate from within the *yé*-clause prior to its raising to the pre-*yé*-clause position. In conformity with this assumption, example (15) above will be analysed as: *Ilé da* serving as the basis of the relative which is realised as *yé ilé da* immediately the relative head *yé* is externally merged to it. Thereafter, the subject of the sentence,

which is the constituent relativised, moves to the pre-*yé*-clause position i.e. the spec-RelP to produce a form such as *ilé yé <ilé> da*, leaving a phonetically null copy at the extraction site which is the subject of the *yé*-clause. This account implies that Ànàgó relative clause marker, similar to what obtains in standard Yorùbá, projects a RelP with a strong head as well as specifier features that need to be checked for the RelP to be convergent. Apart from the subject of the relative clause that occupies the spec-RelP in (15), there are a number of other items that can occupy spec-RelP in Ànàgó. In (16a) it is the direct object of the verb *kó* ‘to build’ that is relativised causing its movement to the spec-RelP and leaving a phonetically null copy at the movement site.

- 16a. *Ilé yé e kó <ilé> da*
 House RM 1sg build good
 ‘The house that I built is nice’
 b. *Mo rí asọ yé ẹ rà <asọ>*
 1sg see cloth RM 2pl buy
 ‘I saw the cloth which you bought’
 c. *Olè jí ọkọ yé Wù mí rà <ọkọ>*
 Thief steal motor car RM Wù mí buy
 f’àrẹ̀mú
 give.Àrẹ̀mú
 ‘A thief stole the motor car which Wù mí bought for Àrẹ̀mú’

In (16b, c), the objects of the RelP are relativised causing each of them to move to the spec of the RelP where they fill the gap, indicating that within the dialect’s clausal architecture, the relative marker *yé* is part of the numeration which enters into the derivation through operation merge, which in this case is external. For instance, the noun phrase *asọ* ‘cloth’ in (16b) modified by the relative clause corresponds to the relativised item whose movement creates a gap inside of the relative clause, indicated by a copy of *asọ* placed in angled brackets. The leftward movement of the head NP *asọ* in (16b) is to fill the empty slot in the object position of the matrix clause same as with *ọkọ* ‘motor car’ in (16c). It seems like the form of the relative marker can change on the basis of the sound around it. Let us consider the example below:

17. *Asọ yó ò rán <asọ> tí ya*
 Cloth RM 2sg sew have tear
 ‘The cloth which you sewed has torn’

As against the usual relative marker *yé* found in examples (15-16), what we have instead in (17) is *yó* where vowel [e] is realised as [o] probably due to the assimilation of the segment in the subject position of the relative clause. We can on the other hand assume that the relative marker is compositionally derived in the syntax, such that the final vowel of the relative marker fills the contentive slot of the subject DP of the relative clause. This difference does not in any way affect the syntax and derivation of the relative clause.

The locative time adjunct can also be relativised as in (18) where the item *ìgbà* ‘time’ which functions as an adjunct to the unaccusative verb *dé* ‘arrive’ is relativised and ends up at the spec of the RelP, leaving a gap at the movement site.

18. Ìgbà yé è dé <ìgbà>

Time RM 1sg arrive

'The time when you arrived'

Nominalized forms of verbs can be relativised in Ànàgò but when do, there is no supporting evidence that such relative clause has a constituent with any kind of anaphoric link to another constituent serving as its antecedent in the main clause. This is observed in the examples below:

19a. Írí yé è r'ákin kò dùn mó mì

Seeing RM 1sg see.Akin not sweet with 1sg

'Seeing that I saw Akin did not make me happy.'

b. Ìwá yé è wá ó se mí ní ànfààní

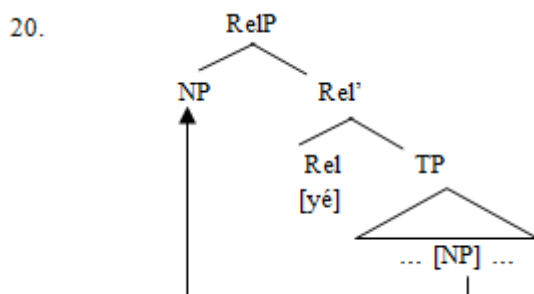
Coming RM 1sg come 3sg do 1sg at benefit

'Coming that I came benefited me'/'The fact that I came benefited me'

The presence of the relative marker *yé* in the above examples necessarily suggests that a nominal item is required in its specifier position for the derivation to converge. However, none of the canonical arguments in either example is the item that is relativised though there is evidence to the effect that the meaning of each of the complex structures involves two occurrences of a variable, which in each case is a verb and its nominalized form. Thus, I take it that the relativised nominal copies of the verbs in (19) do not appear in the spec-RelP via internal merge because there is no gap within the relative clause; they rather enter into the derivation through external merge to satisfy the strong specifier feature of the relative head.

4.1 A minimalist analysis of the relative clause

In the immediately preceding section, I roughly discussed the formations and described the elements of relative clauses in Ànàgò. In this section however, I intend to present a formal account of the relative clause and the very approach I consider appropriate for the analysis of the relative clause in Ànàgò is the raising/promotion analysis proposed by Kayne (1994). According to Kayne's proposal, the derivation of the relative clause involves the promotion of material from the subordinate clause into a matrix position where it fills an erstwhile empty position, which could correspond to the subject or object of the matrix clause. This alternative approach is different from Rizzi's (1997) who considers relativisation as a movement to the left periphery. Drawing insights from minimalism, the proposed empty position corresponds to the head NP that is relativised and occupies the Spec-RelP. As the examples in (15-19) indicate, the relativised item can originate within the *yé* clause as subject, direct object, or the complement of a preposition before being raised to the pre-*yé* clause position. This description is captured in (20).



The above P-marker shows that the interpretive relation between NP and <NP> is a movement case where the moved category NP c-commands the position where it was first merged externally. I consider the analysis in (20) appropriate because the relative marker, which I do not count as a relative pronoun in this dialect, does not form a constituent with the head noun at any stage of the derivation. Also, the Head Movement Constraint contained in the minimalist program is preserved. However, the assumption that the relativised item naturally originates within the *yé* clause and gets raised to the pre-*yé* clause position may not be extended to example sentences in (19), where the relativised NPs are the nominalised forms of the verbs in the respective sentences. Thus, I assume that the nominalised forms of the verbs enter the derivations through external merge to satisfy the strong specifier features of the RelP.

5. Focus Constructions and Relative Clauses

The separate discussions of each of the focus constructions and relative clauses may appear to suggest that the two construction types are identical because they displace elements to the left periphery of their respective clauses. However, they differ because it is possible to find the two grammatical constructions within a single sentence where either can linearly occur before the other. On the other hand, focus can be set apart from relative clause on account of what licenses the movement or displacement and the internal structures of each of them. Let us first consider the co-occurrence of focus and the relative in the same sentence as in the examples below:

21a. Ìgbà yé è dé ìgbà l'adé ló

Time RM 1sg arrive time Foc.Adé left

<ìgbà yé è dé ìgbà>

time RM 1sg arrive time

'THE TIME WHEN YOU ARRIVED Adé left'

b. Asọ yé ẹ rà asọ FocØ mí rí <asọ

Cloth RM 2pl buy cloth 1sg see cloth

yé ẹ rà asọ>

RM 2pl buy cloth

'I saw the cloth WHICH YOU BOUGHT'

c. Íjì nì ọ jí ọkọ yé Àkànní

Stealing Foc 3pl steal motor car RM Àkànní

rà <ọkọ>

buy

'They STOLE the motor car which Àkànní bought'

d. Olè ló jí ọkọ yé Wùmí rà

Thief Foc.RP steal motor car RM Wùmí buy

<ọkọ> f'àrẹmú

give.Àrẹmú

'A THIEF stole the motor car which Wùmí

bought for Àrè mú'

As previously mentioned, a RelP is a modifier to a Noun that is relativised and Ànàgó data reveal that a RelP can be focused as in (21a, b) above. In (21a, b), the relativised NPs *ìgbà* 'time' and *asọ* 'cloth' originate within the *yé* clauses as an adjunct to the verb *dé* 'arrive' in (21a) and as the direct object of the verb *rí* 'see' in (21b) respectively and later raise to the pre- *yé* clause position. When the relative phrase in each of (21a) and (21b) goes through focus; the entire phrase moves to occupy the spec of FocP, leaving a phonetically null copy, called a gap behind at the adjunct position of the main clause in (21a) and the object position of the main clause in (21b). The gap in question is indicated by the use of strikethrough while the angled brackets show the constituent moved or focused. A significant difference between (21a, b) is the presence of an overt focus marker in (21a) and its absence in (21b). This appears to show that FocP can project with a covert head in Ànàgó, though the same cannot at the moment be said about the relative clause.

In (21c), the relative phrase *ọkọ yé Àkànní rà f' àrè mú* 'the car which Àkànní bought for Àrè mú' functions as the direct object of the verb *jí* 'steal' in the main clause. In this example the relative clause is not focused; the relative is rather exhaustively dominated by the focus phrase whose focused item is the nominalised copy of the verb in the main clause. The derivation shows that the relativised NP *ọkọ* 'car' originates within the *yé* clauses as the direct object of the verb *rà* 'buy' and moves to the empty slot in the pre- *yé* clause position which corresponds to the direct object position of the verb *jí* 'steal' in the upper clause. The movement ensures the convergence of the derivation otherwise the structure is bound to crash. The difference between (21c, d) is the item that is focused, which in the case of (21d) is the subject of the main clause whose movement to the spec-FocP induces the appearance of a resumptive pronoun that contracts with the focus marker to produce the form *ló* 'focus marker-resumptive pronoun'. In both (21c) and (21d) the focused phrase dominates the relative phrase which functions as the direct object of the verb in the main clause.

The examples in (21) above have revealed that focus and relative constructions involve movement of some sorts which does not mark them as entirely similar. Again, the fact that the two can be found within a single sentence may be a good reason to treat them as distinct. As opposed to the opinion about focus which ordinarily places emphasis on a unit or a constituent within a simple clause, a relative clause is a subordinate clause which limits or defines the reference of the head noun. This is exactly what each of the relative phrases in (21) does; each of them modifies their host but this is not the case with the focus phrase. The data used for this study show that the head NP of the relative clause is always semantically definite while the NP in the spec-FocP may be generic, indefinite or definite. Consider the following examples:

- 22a. *Asọ ni o rán <asọ>*
cloth Foc 3sg sew
'You sewed **A PIECE OF CLOTH**'
- b. *Ọkọ ni Wù mí rà <ọkọ>*
Motor car Foc Wù mí buy
'Wù mí bought **A MOTOR CAR**'
- 23a. *Asọ yó ò rán <asọ>*
cloth RM 3sg sew
'The cloth which you sewed'

- b. *Ọkọ yé Wù mí rà <ọkọ>*
Motor car RM Wù mí buy
'The motor car which Wù mí bought'

In (22), the focused items *asọ* 'cloth' and *ọkọ* 'car' have generic or indefinite readings by virtue of the position they occupy and the function they serve. However, the occurrence of the same set of items in the spec-RelP (23) gives them a definite reading, marking a significant difference in the configurations of focus in (22) and relative in (23). By this it means there is no likelihood of alternative interpretations of the relative clause. Thus, I take the examples in (23) simply as cases of restrictive relative clause, confirming Saah's (2010:102) position about Kwa languages, which he avers only use the restrictive relative clause type. Thus, Ànàgó does not distinguish between restrictive and non-restrictive clauses.

According to Hornstein et al (2005:65), the relative clause is a sentence that can function as a kind of giant adjective; this is not a feature attributable to focus constructions. It may therefore be convenient to admit that, unlike focus constructions, the relative clause in Ànàgó is a sentence performing the same function as an adjective. Take a look at the expressions in (24).

- 24a. *Asọ yó ò rán <asọ>*
cloth RM 3sg sew
'The cloth which you sewed'
- b. *Ọkọ yé Wù mí rà <ọkọ>*
Motor car RM Wù mí buy
'The motor car which Wù mí bought'
- 25a. *Asọ ni o rán <asọ>*
cloth Foc 3sg sew
'You sewed **A PIECE OF CLOTH**'
- b. *Ọkọ ni Wù mí rà <ọkọ>*
Motor car Foc Wù mí buy
'Wù mí bought **A MOTOR CAR**'

The constructions in (24, 25) illustrate a number of properties with which relative clause is associated but are not known with focus constructions. It is obvious that the relative clause is a modifier that follows the modified noun or noun phrase and it is embedded because as the examples in (24) indicate, they do not make complete sense. This is unlike the focus expressions in (25) which are intuitively complete and not dependent on any other constituents for interpretations. The nouns modified are *asọ* 'cloth' in (24a) and *ọkọ* 'car' in (24b). In each case, the antecedent noun phrase occurs on the left edge of the clause and is immediately followed by the relative morpheme *yó/yé*. In line with Downing (1978:378), cited in Vries (2002: 14), I conjecture that there is co-reference between items within and outside the relative clause (i.e. the relative clause as an embedded clause and the matrix or main clause upon which it depends), and that the relative clause is an assertion about the relative NP. This account about the relative clause agrees with the raising analysis, where the head is assumed to be generated and interpreted in the relative clause; after raising, it is semantically part of the main clause, too (Vries 2002:77). The expression in (26a) confirms the description above because *ẹjá* 'dog' is deemed to have originated from and interpreted in the relative clause, and after raising, it becomes an integral part of the main clause i.e. direct

object of the main clause. This is not the same as with focus construction which is an independent clause.

- 26a. Olè pa ejá yé Wù mí rà <ejá>
 Thief kill dog RM Wù mí buy
 f'àrè mú
 give.Àrè mú
 'A thief killed the dog which Wù mí bought for Àrè mú'
- b. *Olè pa ejá ni Wù mí rà <ejá>
 Thief kill dog Foc Wù mí buy
 f'àrè mú
 give.Àrè mú

The example sentence in (26b) crashes because the NP *ejá* 'dog' in the spec of the FocP does not have the same syntactic distribution as the one found in the spec-RelP in (26a). As earlier discussed, different constituents can get preposed to the spec of FocP and RelP but they check different features. It is clear that NP in spec RelP can function as direct object of the main clause as shown in (26a), this is not possible in the case of focus construction as the non-convergent example in (26b) shows. Thus, the raising analysis proposed for RelP by Kayne (1994) is not the same as movement to the left periphery in the case of focus subsumed in the Split-CP Hypothesis, Rizzi (1997). The relativised NP *ejá* 'dog' in (26a) is semantically shared by both matrix and the relative clauses, suggesting that the θ -role and the syntactic role that the relativised NP plays inside of the relative clause, is in principle independent of its roles outside of the relative. Based on this assumption, *ejá*, as example (26a) indicates, stands in the syntactic position of the experiencer or the patient in the main clause and a theme in the relative clause, and it functions as the object in each of the clauses. This manner of analysis cannot be extended to focus constructions since the spec-FocP is not a theta marked position. This is the reason the structure in (26b) is not convergent; the NP in the spec-FocP is assuming both theta and case positions contrary to the feature speculation of the focus head. While it is obvious that the first and the second occurrences of the focused DP form a chain and only one case is available to a chain as examples (25) suggest, the same may not be extended to relativised NPs in (24).

6. Conclusion

This paper has done a side by side analysis of the structures and formations of focus and relative constructions in Ànàgò, a dialect of the Yorùbá language spoken in Ipokia, Ogun State, Nigeria. The analysis shows that the focus marker could contract with the resumptive pronoun to yield a different phonetic form when the subject is focused while the dialect makes use of an invariant relative marker whose spell out could be influenced by the vowel sound around it. In all instances, the head noun precedes the relative clause. A defining characteristic of the relative clause is the obligatory use of the relative marker that introduces the clause but it is possible for the focus phrase to project with a covert head. Furthermore, it has been shown that resumptive pronouns are obligatorily employed in the contexts of subject and genitive focus constructions. The dialect deploys ex-situ focus constructions and relative clauses and prohibits a right-headed relative clause. This study establishes that both focus constructions and relative clauses involve movement strategies which by the different diagnostics used

for their analyses show that they are different types of construction.

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