

Second-order left periphery heads in Yoruba

Since the Split-C hypothesis was formulated by Rizzi (1997) based on data from Italian, a number of other languages have been shown to support this hypothesis. A good example is Gungbe (Aboh 2004). Standard Yoruba has no less than 20 particles which qualify as complementizers in the sense of traditional generative grammar: *pé, kí₁, kí₂ ni, àbí, sé, sebí, òjé, àní, àfi, njọ-npé, bí, tí₁ (bí), tí₂, òkó, àsé, njọ, ha, ná, and kúkú*). The language, therefore, presents itself as a testing ground for current proposals in this cartographic tradition. In this paper, I show that Yoruba not only provides support for this hypothesis but also invites us to appreciate how complex the heads at the left periphery could be. According to Rizzi (2013:446), left periphery heads have an interface function of triggering interpretive routines. For example, this function can be expressed for Top head as ‘my specifier is to be interpreted as the Topic, and my complement as the Comment’. Because this function is simple in that no additional interface interpretation is available, I call heads carrying this function first-order left periphery heads (FOLPHs). Yoruba provides evidence for what I call second-order left periphery heads (SOLPHs) exemplified in (1).

(1) SOLPHs in Yoruba

Force	Syntactic objects (SOLPHs)	Additional interface features (interpretive instructions)
Declarative	...àní ZP	interpret ZP as pre-established information
	... àsé ZP	interpret ZP as a realization of a set {λλ..} from the common ground which was not taken into consideration beforehand
	...njọ-npé ZP	interpret ZP as a recognition of a set {λλ..} in the common ground
Interrogative	...sebí ZP	interpret ZP as a set {λλ..} in the common ground
	...òjé ZP	interpret ZP as a doubt
	...àbí ZP	interpret ZP as pre-established information

In addition to signaling the force of the phrases they head, SOLPHs carry syntax-pragmatic interface instructions that guide how the information in their complements figure in the Common Ground.

References

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