Research Paper

Interrogative Construction in Dája

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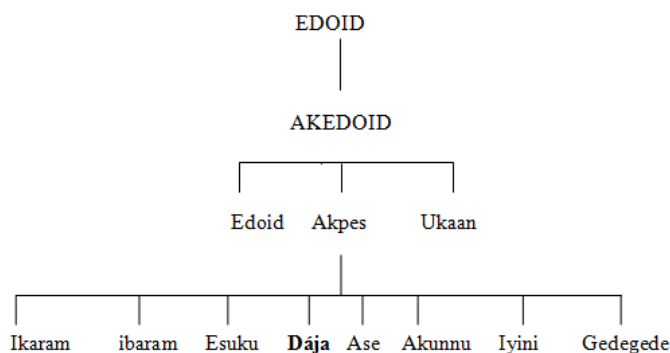*Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria*

Abstract

This paper examines interrogative constructions in Dája, one of the endangered speech forms in Ajowa Akoko, Ondo State. It is shown in this study that there are two types of interrogative constructions in Dája namely, Polar question and content questions. Findings in this study show that Dája has two polar question markers Ṣé & Ni, and they occur at sentence initial position. It is demonstrated that polar question is derived through InterP that select TP as its complement. It is shown that content interrogative constructions are derived through the movement of the content question words to sentence initial position. The theoretical framework adopted for this work is the Minimalist Program of Chomsky (1995, 2000, 2001) and the Split CP hypothesis and cartographic analysis of Rizi (1997, 2004). The data for this research were collected from native speakers in Daja and their responses were recorded and transcribed. It is hoped that this study, sheds light on the syntax of interrogative construction in Daja and document it for posterity as nothing has been done on it.

I. Introduction

Dája is one of the dialects of Akpes. It is one of the endangered speech forms spoken in Ajowa community of Akoko North West local Government area of Ondo State. According to the oral tradition narrated by my informants, (Mr. Oliṣọ and Mrs. Janet Olúfemi.) the progenitors of Dája people migrated from Ile-Ife. However, there are divergent views about the evolution and their migration of the people an. Thus, online source: (http://religiondocbox.com/Pagan_and_Wiccan/68597410-Journal-of-social-issues-and-humanities.html) reveals that, the people of Dája has the same migration history with the people in Oyagi Elelibo and Atiba in Ikaram. According to oral sources, Ohidája, who is believed to be one of the progenitors of Dája people is of the opinion that his people might have passed through places such as Edo on their way from Ilé-Ifè. A group of people known as Ekperi also settled in present Dája. Based on the available information on the historical background of the community there is no evidence as to the source of their speech form because the language in Ilé-Ifè, which they claimed as their origin, is totally different from the Akpes dialects. Dája dialect must have been influenced by their stay in the Akoko area of Ondo state. Agoyi (2008) posits that Akpes is spoken in nine Akoko communities namely; Akunnu, (Ilu Dotun), Ikarami, Ibarami, Ase, Iyinmi, Gedègedè, Dája, and Èsùkù of Ondo State which are mutually intelligible; all the other communities are located in Akoko North West area of Ondo State. According to Elugbe (2011) Dája belongs to Akpes; a subgroup of Akedoid (Akoko+Edoid) branch of Edoid language family.

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                              EDOID
                                |
                                |
                             AKEDOID
                    ┌───────────┼───────────┐
                    │           │           │
                  Edoid       Akpes       Ukaan
        ┌──────┬──────┬──────┬──────┬──────┬──────┐
        │      │      │      │      │      │      │
     Ikaram ibaram Esuku  Dája  Ase Akunnu Iyini Gedegede
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(Elugbe 2011)

Apart from the works on the classification, the few available works on the Dája are in the area of phonology, Agoyi (2008) and Ologun(2013). To the best of the researcher's knowledge no work exists on the interrogative construction in Dája . This present study is an attempt to fill the gap by documenting an aspect of the syntax of the dialect.

This paper is divided into six sections; section one is the introductory part, two discuss existing works on polar and content questions, section three contains the theoretical frame work and section four and five presents polar and content questions in Dája respectively while section six is the concluding remarks.

II.   PREVIOUS WORKS

Question formation is a syntactic phenomenon that has been widely discussed by scholars that include Adèmiluyi (2005), Ajiboye (2006)), Bamgbose (1967, 1990), Lamidi (2000) and Yusuf (1992, 1995, 1997 , 2007), For instance Yusuf (1992; 1998) asserts that it is quite obvious that in question formation, there exists a transformational relationship between a declarative and the corresponding statement be it Yes/No or Wh-question. He further asserts that the simple sentence could perform various functions like declaration; imperativization or interrogation as one makes statement, gives orders or asks questions. In the same vein Heageman (2006:21) claims that sentences with an interrogating structure convey that there is a certain amount of information which the speaker does not have and which he is trying to make the interlocutor supply.

Yes/ No questions, otherwise known as "Polar questions" are questions that take Yes/No for an answer. A lot of scholarly works have been done on Yes/No questions in Benue-Congo languages and their dialects (see Bamgbose (1967, 1990), Yusuf (1995, 1997), Adèmiluyi (2005) and Ajiboye (2006)). In English for instance, there is no specific word for asking polar interrogative questions. What is obtains in the language is the use of functional elements called auxiliary such as: will, can, do. The content word on the other hand is called WH-question in English. Apart from English language, most Benue Congo languages have specific morphemes for polar question words, Bamgbose (1990). The question words may occur at any syntactic position namely; initial position, medial position or final position. Bamgbose (1990) asserts that, the standard Yoruba has the following question words: *Ǹjẹ́, Bí, Ṣé, Ṣèbí/ṣebí, dan, àbí/ tàbí, kẹ and ha.* The interrogative markers Ǹjé and Ṣé occur at the initial position, *àbí/ tàbí* can occur at both initial and medial position, while *dan, kẹ and bí* are addèd at the final position.   Some of the polar questions in Yoruba are illustrated in 1(1b & 2b).

1.   a. Adé ti lọ sí ìta   b. Ṣé Adé ti lọ sí ilé?
        Adé Perf go Prep out   Qw Adé Perf go Perf house
        Ade gone outsidè   Has Adé gone outside?

2.   a. Adé ti lọ   b. Ǹjẹ́ Adé ti lọ?
        Adé Perf go   Qw Adé Perf go
        Adé has gone   Has Adé gone?

He claims further that Yoruba has the following content question words: *kí* 'what', *ta* 'who', *èló* 'howmuch' **ibo** 'where; **èkelòó** 'which one'**mélòó** 'how many' **wo** 'which' **dá** 'where' **ńkọ́** 'where. He explain that the questions words occur at sentence initial position except for **dá** 'where' **ńkọ́** how' that occur at the final position. See the examples below:

2. Kí ni wọ́n jẹ**?**
    Qw foc 3pl eat
    What did they eat?

3. Ta ni o rí**?**
    Qw foc 2sg see
    Who did you see?

4. Olú dá**?**
    Olú Qw
    Where is Olú?

5. Olú ńkọ́**?**
    Olú Qw
    How is Olú?
    (cf. Bamgbose 1990)

III.   Theoretical Framework

The minimalist program (**MP)** is the latest version of the transformational generative grammar. The program is developed on the economy of principles and derivations. The Minimalist program is structured around three systems namely: the lexicon, computational system, LF and PF. The mechanisms of operation of the minimalist are select, merge and agree. MP assumes that the lexicon expresses items that have semantic, syntactic and phonetic features. Derivation in MP starts from the lexicon where items are selected directly and combine together through computational system called Merge. Merge combines items in a par wise manner. Merge is divided into two external merge and internal merge. External merge selects and combines items directly from the lexicon while internal merge applies to merge operation that affects syntactic elements that is introduced into already derived object. Agree is an operation that establishes the relationship between two elements if they share certain grammatical features (Kremers 2003:6). The operation consists of two elements **probe** and **goal**. The **probe,** in order to be able to enter into an agree relation must be active. It can be active if it has unvalued feature so that it can value its feature by probing for an active **goal** that has the same matching features but valued (AL-Horas 2013). Probe is the functional element which serves as the highest head with [-interpretable] feature while goal is lexcal element with [+ interpretable] feature. Moreover, Rizzi's (1997) Split CP hypothesis and cartographic analysis portends that there should be more than one type of CP projection above TP. Therefore, CP should split into a number of different projections specifically ForceP (Force projection), FocP (Focus projection) TopP (Topical projection) among others. This view is supported the fact that CP accommodates constituent which project into phrase position at the left periphery of clause TP which include introducers which are regarded as Force marker or core-complementizers, Adeoye (2018).

IV.   Yes/No Questions in Dája

Yes/ No questions, otherwise known as "Polar questions" are questions that take Yes/No for an answer. That is, the interrogative markers are added to a declarative sentence at the initial position. Dája has two designated morpheme for asking yes/no question, which are *Ni* and *Ṣé.* See the examples below:

	Declarative				Interrogative			
6 a.	Olú	gọ	jije		7a. **Ṣé**	olú	gọ	jije?
	Olú	de	food		Qw Olú	de	food	
	Olú has eaten				Has Olú eaten?			
b.	Olú	dè	jije		b. **Ni**	Olú dè	jije?	
	NP	buy	food		Qw Olú	buy	food	
	Olú bought food				Did Olú buy food?			
c.	Olú	bali	Tundè		c. **Ni**	Olú	bali	Tundè?
	Olú	pay	Tundè		Qw	Olú	pay	Tundè
	Olú paid Tundè				Did Olú pay Tundè?			
d.	Olú	yí	Ola		d. **Ni** Olú	yí	Ola?	
	Olú	see	Ola		Qw	Olú	see	Ola
	Olú saw Olá				Did Olú see Olá?			
e.	Olú	go	yiye	Tundè	e. **Ṣé**	Olú	go	yiye Tundè?
	Olú	perf	seen	Tundè	Qw	Olú	perf	seen Tundè
	Olú has seen Tundè				Has Olú seen Tundè?			
f.	Olú	dé	iso		f. **Ni**	Olú dé	iso?	
	Olú	come	home		Qw	Olú	come	home
	Olú came home				Did Olú come home?			

The examples in (6) are declarative sentences while the examples in (7) are interrogative sentences. It is observed that the polar question markers in Dája are *Ni* and *Ṣé*, and they occur at the sentence initial position in (7). Note that, in fast speech the vowel /i/ of the polar interrogative marker *Ni* is deleted. The response to the above questions is dependent on their truth conditions. *Bẹ́ẹ̀ni* 'Yes' is the response when the question is in the affirmative while *ótí 'No'* is the response when the question is in the negative in Dája.

V.   Content Question In Dajá

Content questions, unlike Yes/No question, require sentential answer or new information from the interlocutor. A content question requires more than the response of affirmation or disaffirmation (Payne, 1997). Dajá has seven (7) content question markers which are*: ké/Oyo* (where), *kélaní* (who), *hin* (how much)/*eni*(how many), *ǹgo* (what), *bo* (which), *hinge/síkó*
(how), *ngiba*(why). The question markers are discussed with sentence examples below:

5.1   Kélaní Content Question Word

This content question word is used to make enquiry about human. It is only used in referring to entities that possess human feature. This is illustrated below:

8a.   Olú   yí   Òjó   b.   Olú   yí   ***kélaní***
      Olú   see   Òjó   Olú   see   Qw
      Olú   saw   Òjó   Olú saw who?

  c.   ***Kélaní***   ø   Olú   yí   <kelani>
      Qw   foc   Olú   see
      Who did Olú see?

9a.   Bósè   yí   Òbàn   b.   Bósè   yí   ***kélaní***
      Bósè   see   child   Bósè   see   Qw
      Bose saw a child   Bósè saw who?

    c. ***Kelani***   ø.   Bósè   yi   <kelani>
      Qw   foc   Bósè   see
      Who did Bósè see?

In 8 and 9 above, the question word **kelani** occurs at sentence initial and final position.

5.2   Ké/Òyo Content Question Word

This content question word is used to make enquires about the location or the position of someone or something respectively, while ***Òyo*** is used to ask for someone or location of a thing, ***ke*** is used to ask for someone or something's where about. Examples can be seen below:

10 a.   Olú   ta   oti   b.   Olú   ta   **Òyo**?
      Olú   go   farm   NP   go   Qw
      Olú went to the farm   Olú go where?

  c.   **Òyo**   ø.   Olú   ta   <Òyo> ?
      Qw   foc   Np   go
      Where did Olú go?

11a.   Olú   ti   iso
      NP   go   house
      Olú went
b.   Olú   ti   **ke** ?   c.   **Ke** ø Olú   ti <ke>?
      Olú   go   Qw   Qw foc   Olú   go
      Olú go where?   Where did Olú go?

We observed in 10 and 11 that the question word **ke** occurs at the initial and final position.

5.3   Ngo Content Question Word

This content question word is used to make enquiry about ones problem or about the present situation or what has happened in the past, it is used to question entities that have (±animate) features. Examples are illustrated below:

12 a. Olú   de   jije   b.   Olú   de   **ngo?**
      Olú   buy   food   Olú   buy   Qw
      Olú bought food   Olú   bought   what ?

 c.   **Ngo**   Olú   dè   <Ngo> ?
      Qw   Olú   eat
      What did Olú eat?

13a. Òbàn   jẹ   iyan   b.   Òbàn   jẹ   **ngo** ?
      Child   eat   pounded yam   Child   eat   Qw
      Child ate pounded yam   Child ate what?

 c.   **Ngo** ọ̀bàn   jẹ   <ngo> ?
      QW   child   eat
      What did the child eat?

.5.4 Bo Content Question Word

This content question is used to make enquiry about a preferable thing. It is also used to select between two options. Examples are illustrated below:

14a. Olú   dè iso   iketidè   b.   Olú   dè   iso   **bo**?
      Olú   buy   house   tall   NP   buy house Qw
      Olú bought a tall house   Olú bought which house?

c.   Iso   **bo**   gi   Olú   dè?
     NP   Qw   FOC   Bola   buy
     Which house did Bola buy?

15a   Olú   de oli   èyítilo   b.   Olú   dè   oli   **bo** ?
      NP   buy cloth black   NP   buy   black Qw
      Olú bought black cloth   Olú bought which cloth

 c.   Oli   **bo**   gi   Olú   dè?
      NP   Qw   FOC   Olú   buy
      Which cloth did Olú buy?

As shown in 14 and 15 above, the question word ***bo*** occurs at sentence medial and final position. ***Bo*** is a qualifier.

5.5   Ngiba Content Question Word

This question word is used to talk about the reason behind a particular event or circumstance, it may used to ask question about that which causes something or action. Examples are shown below:

16a. Ojo   mísì   b. Ojo   misi   **ngiba**?
      NP   sleep   NP   sleep   why
      Ojo slept   Ojo slept why?

 c.   **Ngiba** mo   Ojo gba   hui ?
      Qw   ?   Np pre-verb   run
      Why did Ojo run?

17a. Ojo   fọ   agò̩   b.   Ojo   da   agọ   **ngiba**?
      NP   wash   cloth   NP   buy   cloth   why
      Ojo washed clothes   Ojo bought cloth why

.
c. **Ngiba**   mo   Ojo   gba   da   ago ?
   Qw   ?   Ojo   pre-verb   buy   cloth
   Why did Ojo buy clothes ?

In 16 and 17 above, the question word *ngiba* occurs at sentence initial and final position.

5.6   *Hin/Eni* **Content Question Word**
These content question words are used to make enquiry about prices and quantity of a thing. But the only difference between *hin* and *eni* is that, while *eni* is used to make enquiry about the quantity of something, *hin* is used to specify the price of a commodity. Examples are illustrated below:

18a. Sola   bali   sílè   diha   b.   **Hin** ø Sola bali ?
      Sola   pay   how much   Qw foc. Sola pay
      Sola   paid   two   pence   How much did Sola pay?

19a.   Sola ka ilemu   b.   **Eni**   ø   Sola ka ilemu
      NP take orange   QW foc   Sola take orange
      Sola took orange   How many oranges did Sola take?

 As seen above, the question word **hin/eni** occurs at sentence initial position only.

5.7 *Hinge* **Content Question**

20a.   **Hinge** Olú   misì?   b.   **Hinge** e Olú mi
       QW   NP   sleep   Qw   is NP doing
       How did Olu sleep?   How is Olú doing?

In 20 above, the question word *hinge* occurs at sentence initial position only.

        As earlier explained in the data presented in 5.1 to 5.7 above, it is observed that the content question words occur at the sentence final and the initial positions except for *bo* which occur at the sentence fianl and medial position. One will also notice that the content question words are not accompanied by a focus marker at the initial position and final position. Except for examples 14 and 15 where *gi* 'foc' occurs after the content question word *bo* 'which' which is said to be a qualifier, it is observed that it is only "*bo*" that has overt focus marker in the dialect because it qualifies noun. All other content question words have covert focus marker because they are adverbs/adjectives. Moreover, in 16 and 17, one will notice that **mo** '?' also occurs after the content question word **ngiba** 'why'. The word *mo* cannot be said to be a focus nor a relative marker in the example hence the reason for question mark (?). *Ngiba* is an adverb of reason, thus, this study claims that the *mo* is a complementizer that introduced the adverb of reason. This observation is not strange in languages   , it is reported in Yorùbá that the question word **kí** 'what' is preceded by *nítorí* 'because of' to evoke adverb of reason, there is also an evidence of this in Ú   wù where Adeoye (2018) reports that *ne* occurs after *ńpèṣi* as a complementizer that introduces the adverb of reason (ńpèṣi). Similarly, Goldsmith (1980) noticed in Igbo where the content question word is accompanied by *kà* (that) in the language. The content questions that occur at the final positions are referred to as echo question they are used to show surprise and amazement or request that part of the sentence be repeated, Adeoye (2018). It is observed that example 18 and 19 above have no echo counterparts unlike the other examples, the explanation for this is that the questions words will generate ill-formed sentences when they occur at the final position. It is worthy to note that the content questions that occur at sentence initial position are products of movement.

Non-operator Based Content Questions
5.7 Síkó Content Question Word
These content question words are used to make enquiry about ones condition or welfare, it can also be used as a form of greeting. Examples are illustrated below;
 21a.   Iso   **síkó**?   b.   Tusha **síkó**?
       NP   Qw   work   Qw
       How is home?   How is work?

c. *__Síkó__   tusha?
   Qw   work
   How is work?

In 21, the manifestation of *síkó* is observed in the interrogative sentences. The non-operator based content questions are restricted to initial position. The ill-formedness of (21c) is borne out the fact that the question words occur at wrong positions in the sentences. Note that, the semantics of the t question words shows that *síkó* in 21 (a& b) is a form of greeting.

Derivation of Polar Question in Dája

In deriving the polar interrogative sentence in Dá ja, I proposed Inter head that selects Fin/IP to project maximally below ForceP. The fact of the polar interrogative sentences presented in (7) show that the polar interrogative marker is spelled-out at clause initial position; thus, the marker/head remain in-situ. The tree diagram in (22) below illustrate polar question in Dája.
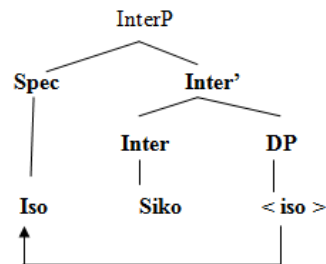
InterP
Spec   Inter^I
          Inter   TP
          Ṣé
          Ni   Olú gọ jij e?
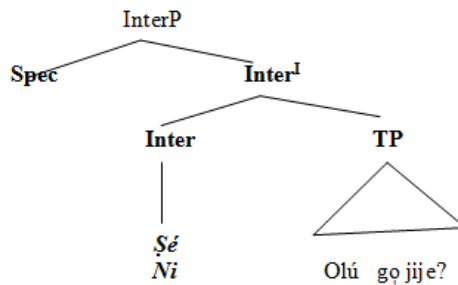
Derivation of Content Question in Dajá

In deriving the content interrogative construction in Dája   , I propose an *InterP* that select *FocP* as its complement. I claim that the whole of *FocP* functioning as complement of *Inter⁰* that gets attracted and raised to *Spec-InterP*, not just the question/wh-operator, as claimed in, Aboh & Pfau (2011:104). The illustration is shown in (23) below:

InterP
FocP   Inter'
Wh -operator   Foc'   Inter⁰   <FocP>
                Foc   FinP   Ø
Ngo   Ø
        Oban je <ngo >
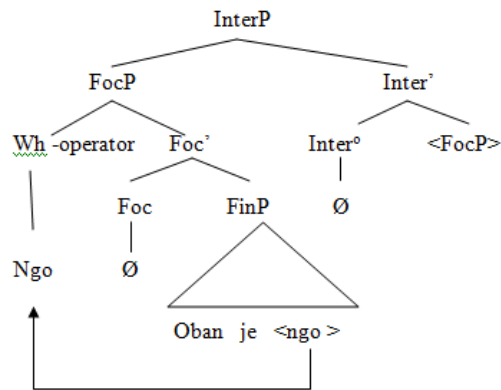
Derivation of Non-Operator Based Content Question

The structures of the question in (21) do not indicate that they have no interaction with *Infl*. This simply suggests that they are truncated TP. The interrogative marker takes DP as its complement. This explanation is shown in (25) below:

InterP
Spec   Inter'
          Inter   DP
Iso   Siko   < iso >

VI.   Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined the derivation of interrogative constructions in Dája . We have established that Yes/No questions are derived InterP that selects TP as its complement.   It is argued that content question words occur at the initial, medial and final position of a sentence. It is demonstrated that, cases of question words at sentence final position are echo questions and asserts that the content question words that occur at sentence initial position are products of movement.

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