



Feature Bundling in the Left Periphery of Igbo Interrogatives

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The Puzzle

Wh-phrases in Igbo (Niger-Congo; Nigeria) can front sentence-initially or be licensed *in-situ*.

(Igbo's two tones and downstep are marked with accents over the vowels.)

Canonical declaratives *Wh ex-situ*:

- (1) Àdá zù-rù jí. (2) Gínī kà Àdá zù-rù?
Ada buy-rV yam what C Ada buy-rV
'Ada bought yam.' 'What did Ada buy?'

Wh in-situ: an *ò* must appear between subject and verb.

- (3) * Àdá zù-rù gínī? (4) Àdá ò zù-rù gínī?
Ada buy-rV what Ada ? buy-rV what
Int.: 'What did Ada buy?' 'What did Ada buy?'

Puzzle: What is the analysis of *wh in-situ*?

Proposal

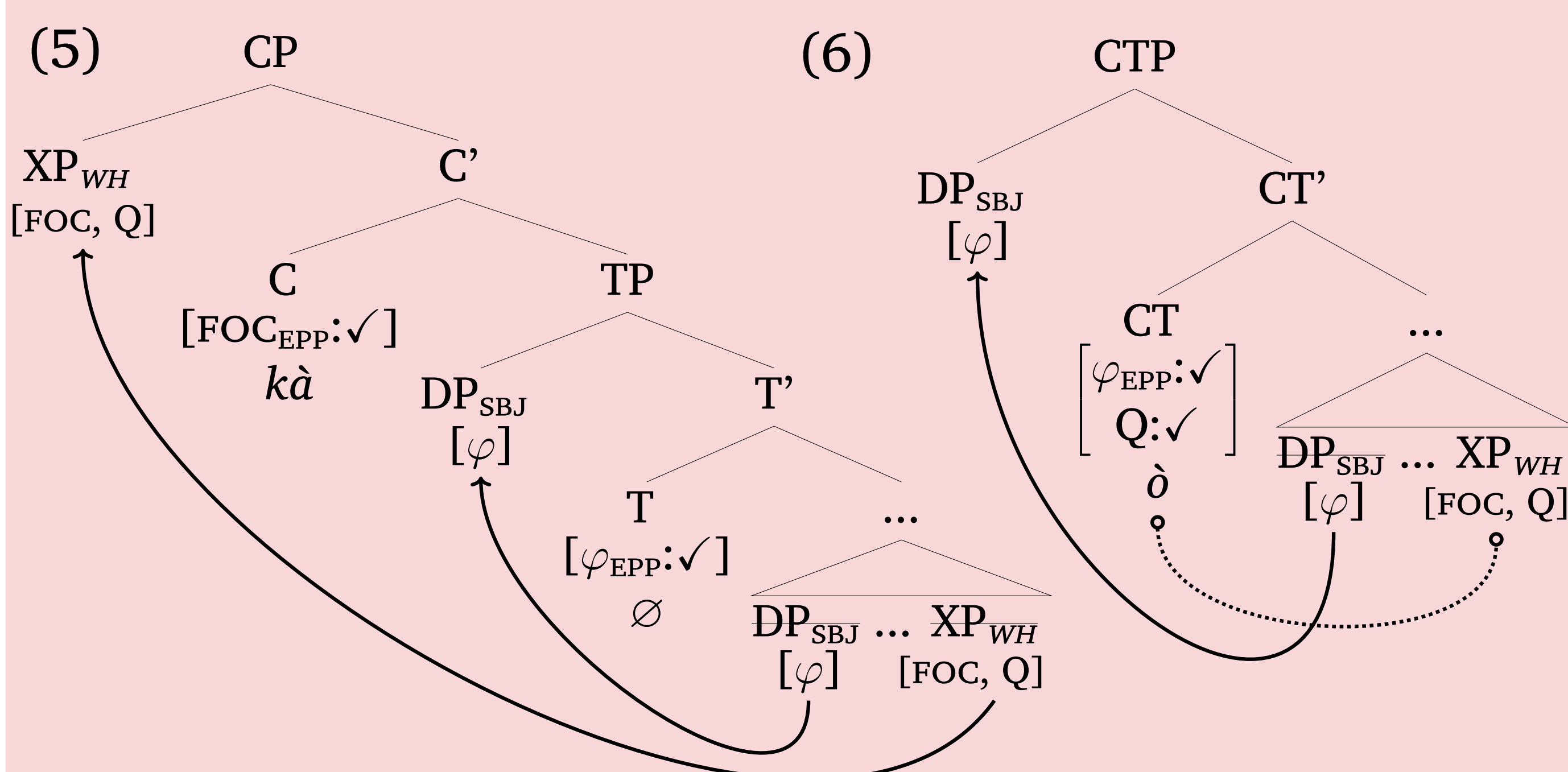
Inventory of left peripheral features: [φ_{EPP}], [FOC_{EPP}], [Q]

Features traditionally distributed over **separate heads** can be **bundled on single heads** (Van Urk, 2015; Martinović, 2015).

Wh ex-situ:

$kà \leftrightarrow C[FOC_{EPP}]$

$\emptyset \leftrightarrow T[\varphi_{EPP}]$



Wh in-situ:

$\emptyset \leftrightarrow CT[\varphi_{EPP}, Q]$

\leftrightarrow (bundled features)

Phonological Realization

CT⁰ appears to be absent when the subject is a clitic:

- (8) {Ì/Ò} zù-rù gínī? (9) {Ì/Ò} zù-rù gínī?
{2/3SG} buy-rV what {2/3SG} steal-rV what
'What did you/(s)he buy?' 'What did you/(s)he steal?'

However, the clitics in *in-situ* questions are **low toned**, while in declaratives (10) and *wh ex-situ* (11) they are **high toned**.

- (10) {Í/Ó} zù-rù jí. (11) Gínī kà {Í/Ó} zù-rù?
{2/3SG} buy-rV yam what C {2/3SG} buy-rV
'You/(s)he bought yam.' 'What did you/(s)he buy?'

\Rightarrow CT⁰ is a low tone (Amaechi, 2020's Int⁰).

In (8), (9): pronouns procliticize on CT⁰ and host the low tone.

In (4): non-pronominals cannot procliticize and an epenthetic /o/ hosts the low tone.

Revised Vocabulary Item of CT⁰: $\text{`} \leftrightarrow CT[\varphi_{EPP}, Q]$

Complementarity between C & T and CT

My proposed lexicon predicts that certain left peripheries should be **impossible to build**: CT⁰ doesn't select for C⁰, nor vice versa.

Borne out in **attempted polar question with focus fronting**:

- (12) Jí kà Àdá rì-rì. (13) Àdá ò rì-rì jí?
yam C Ada eat-rV Ada CT eat-rV yam
'Ada ate YAM.' 'Did Ada eat yam?'
- (14) * Ò jí kà Àdá rì-rì? (15) * Jí kà Àdá ò rì-rì?
CT yam C Ada eat-rV yam C Ada CT eat-rV
Int.: 'Did Ada eat YAM?' Int.: 'Did Ada eat YAM?'

Subject Questions are 'ex-situ'

CT⁰ appears to be absent in local subject questions:

- (16) Ònyé rì-rì jí? (17) * Ònyé ò rì-rì jí?
who ate-rV yam who CT ate-rV yam
'Who ate yam?' Int.: 'Who ate yam?'

Are local subject questions licensed by C⁰ or CT⁰?

Pattern in the perfective:

- (18) * Gínī kà Àdá ériēlā? (19) Àdá ò riéllá gínī?
what C Ada eaten Ada CT eaten what
Int.: 'What has Ada eaten?' 'What has Ada eaten?'

Licensing *wh*-question in perfective is possible **only with CT⁰**, i.e. C⁰ cannot Merge in these clauses. **What about subjects?**

Subject Questions (con't)

Subject questions are **also unacceptable** in the perfective:

- (20) * Ònyé ériēlā jí?
who eaten yam
Int.: 'Who has eaten yam?'

Local subject questions are licensed by a **C[FOC_{EPP}] allomorph and not by CT⁰**, or else (20) should be acceptable given (19).

Additional Vocabulary Item: $\emptyset \leftrightarrow C[FOC_{EPP}] / _ t_{SBJ}$

Why can CT⁰ never license local subjects? CT⁰ can only license *wh*-phrases it **c-commands**. Local subjects move to spec,CT, out of the c-command domain. Perhaps CT⁰ only probes once, but features must be checked successively.

Wh-subjects **predicted** to be licensed by a **higher CT⁰** (even in the perfective):

- (21) Ò sì nà ònyé ériēlā jí?
3SG+CT say C who eaten yam
'Who did (s)he say has eaten yam?'

Lack of *kà* has been taken as evidence against licensing by C⁰ (Amaechi and Georgi, 2019) – perfective patterns unexplained.

Discussion

Split-CP (Rizzi, 1997) accounts capture neither the complementary distribution of *kà* and *ò*, nor *kà*'s incompatibility with perfective clauses without additional stipulations (e.g. Amaechi, 2020).

If bundling were (post)syntactic, nothing predicts that local subjects cannot be licensed by CT⁰. [Q], presumably higher than [φ_{EPP}], would c-command all positions during derivation.

Affirms previous work that features on a single head can target different goals.

Bundling features presyntactically unifies a wide range of question strategies in Igbo, providing a new framework to understand movement and licensing asymmetries.

Selected References

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● Rizzi, L. (2001). On the position "Int(errogative)" in the left periphery of the clause. In: *Current studies in Italian syntax*, 287–296.
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Featural Makeup

CT⁰ *ò* also appears in **polar interrogatives**, C⁰ *kà* does not.

- (7) Àdá ò zù-rù jí?
Ada CT buy-rV yam
'Did Ada buy yam?'

\Rightarrow CT⁰ bears [Q] and C⁰ does not.