Question-word Interrogatives in Nigerian Pidgin

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A typological analysis of question-word interrogatives in the literature identifies the preposed movement of question-word forms (the so-called wh-words in English) to the beginning of the clause/sentence and the case where the interrogative word/phrase remains in-situ as two possible range of variations. This paper analyzes question-word interrogation in Nigerian Pidgin (NP) based on Chomsky’s Government-binding model of transformational grammar. The three main objectives of this paper are as follows: First, it discusses the derivation of question-word interrogatives and identifies single, bi-lexical and multi-lexical question-word forms in the language. It discusses the phenomenon of pied piping in multi-lexical question-word forms. Secondly, the paper deliberates on question-word fronting in direct and embedded clauses. The paper also considers the constraints on Wh-movement in NP. It also analyzes Wh-interrogative clefting which involves the use of the focus construction na (it-be) to precede question-word forms. It also evaluates the use of ńkọ as Wh-in-situ marker in the language. Finally, it undertakes an overview of the assertion that Wh-interrogations in Nigerian Pidgin are simplification of its superstrate language and posits that substrate languages have enormous influence on its development.

Key words: Wh-movement, Nigerian pidgin, pied piping, na and substrate influence.

1. Introduction
Due to the fact that it is a linguistic universal, question formation is a core aspect of syntactic analysis; this is why it occupies a central place in the various models of Chomsky’s transformational grammar (See Chomsky 1965, 1981, 1995a). In natural languages, interrogatives are bifurcated into Yes/No and Wh-types. This paper analyzes the derivation of Wh-interrogatives in Nigerian Pidgin (henceforth referred to as NP). Based on Government-binding Model of Chomsky’s transformational grammar adopted for this, the paper analyzes the derivation of Wh-question in the language and identifies the words/phrases that function as the language’s Wh-items. It also deliberates on Wh-movement in direct and embedded clauses and identifies the constraints on the movement in the language. The paper also recognizes some peculiar features of substrate languages in Wh-interrogatives in NP. These include the use of na for Wh-interrogative clefting and the use of ńkọ Which occurs in-situ.

The data for this study are mainly sentences taken from the mesolectal sociotect of Warri/Sapele variety of standard NP and the model adopted for this study suits the data analysis very well. As a contact language, the paper critically reviews the opinion of most pidgin and Creole linguists that Wh-interrogatives in NP are simplifications of that of its superstrate language with a view into identifying the role of substrate influence in its derivation.

2. Nigerian Pidgin
As a former colony of Great Britain, English is the official and the main exogenous language in complexity multilingual and multicultural Nigeria. NP is the country’s indigenoxenous language; like English, is an ethnically neutral language in the country. (See
Oyeleye 2005). NP is a bridge between English and indigenous languages. Since it is a language of horizontal camaraderie, it can be succinctly described as a neo-Nigerian language.

NP is a member of West African Pidgin English (WAPE). The three varieties of WAPE are NP, Ghanaian Pidgin (GP) and Cameroonian Pidgin (CP). The three varieties are mutually intelligible (See Elugbe 1995). WAPE is a member of a larger group called West African Pidgins; it has three varieties which are Sierra-Leonian Krio, Liberian Kru and WAPE. West African Pidgins is also a member of the Atlantic group of English-based pidgins and creoles which was established in the new world during the 17th and 18th centuries as a product of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

The origin of NP predates the contact of Nigerians with freed slaves from Sierra Leone in the second half of the 19th century. Prominent pidgin and Creole linguists (See Hancook 1986, 1987; Singler 1992 and Elugbe and Omamor 1991) mentioned the existence of an English lexifier ‘core’ Creole that emerged along the upper Guinea Coast of West Africa in the 1600s. There were intermarriages between the British settlers and Africans and their offsprings were referred to as mulattos. The mulattos became the first speakers of the proto Creole Guinea Coast Creole English (GCCE). We believe that it was a variety of this ‘core’ GCCE that was also spoken in the coastal areas of Nigeria as attested to by Elugbe and Omamor (1991:20):

On the other hand, by our account based on the historical facts NP arose from the 16th and 17th centuries contact between West Africans and their English speaking trading partners. In fact Antera Duke’s Diary predates the return of slaves to Sierra Leone.

The Diary represents a form of pidgin spoken around Calabar towards the end of the 18th century; What is more, it is a variety of the ‘core’ GCCE. NP is not homogenous in Nigeria. It varies from a Creole in the Niger Delta to a trade language in the other parts of the country. Based on its elaborate use and its creolization, a standard sociolect of NP has been identified. It has two varieties which are the Warri/Sapele or Western variety and Port Harcourt or Eastern variety. Each of the two varieties has three sociolects. They are the basilectal which is closest to indigenous languages, the mesolectal which is the creolized sociolect and the acrolectal which is the decreolizing sociolect. The data for this study is taken from the Western or Warri/Sapele variety.

The elaboration in the domain of use of NP has resulted in the language stepping into formal domains hitherto known as exclusive preserves of the English language. It is now used in schools, media houses, churches and advertising. Due to this development, the language has changed its status from a low prestige one spoken mainly by urban semi-literates and illiterates between the 1960s and 1980s to a high status language within the past two decades. We believe that it is this change in status that has motivated IFRA to initiate efforts at standardizing the language. The resolution of conference on NP it organized in the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, between 7th and 10th of July 2009 resolved to rename the language Naija and evolve a dictionary, a standard orthography and grammar for the language Which is now unarguably the most popular in Nigeria.

3. Cross Linguistic Variation of Wh-Movement
There are two typological variations with respect to the position of the interrogative word/phrase in overt syntax in the literature. They are the English/Spanish type, which are derived through preposed movement of interrogative word/phrase to the (Spec-CP) of
the sentence and the Chinese/Japanese or Wh-in-situ languages. In-situ is a Latin word and it means “in place” (See Radford 2002; 268).

NP falls into the English/Spanish group because it displays overt syntactic Whmovement; however, it is Wh-in-situ in echoic questions in NPs. Nkô occurs Wh-in-situ but its derivation involves overt syntactic movement. The Wh-movement features in NP also permeate Kwa languages, which are NP’s substrate languages, as attested to by Ogbonna (2007-2008:72) in his analysis of Wh-movement in Igbo thus:

Igbo scholars (Goldsmith 1981, Uwalaka, 1991, Ndimele 1991) observed that Igbo has a combination of these two patterns, that is, the syntactic and the LF Wh-movement, in direct questions. In other words, Igbo has the structure in which the question constituent(s) remain(s) in-situ and another in which the question constituent(s) is/are moved to sentence initial position.

Huang (1986) and Watanabe (2003) believe that the two cross linguistic variations of Wh-questions involve a type of movement. They opine that While English/Spanish type languages involve overt syntactic LF Wh-movement, Wh-in-situ languages encompass covert LF Wh-movement. Watanabe (2008:204) states the advantage of the LF movement to Wh-in-situ languages thus:

The advantage of the LF movement approach to Wh-in-situ is that we can state the selectional restrictions as straightforward formal conditions on LF representations applicable to English type languages as well as Chinese type languages.

Watanabe (2003) observes that there is also a form of overt movement in some Wh-in-situ languages. Based on this observation, Wh-in-situ languages are grouped into two. There is the Japanese type Wh-in-situ where some form of overt movement takes place and the Chinese type where there is no movement at all. Asuen and Li (1993b) also buttress Watanabe’s observation above by giving the following empirical considerations. They remark that While Japanese Wh-in-situ is sensitive to Wh-Islands, Chinese is not.

4. Derivation of Wh-Movement in NP
Wh-interrogation in NP is derived through operator movement. Two types of movement are identified in the literature. They are movement to an argument position which is also known as head-to-head movement and movement to a non-argument position which is also called operator movement. Both movements usually leave a trace.

The constituents of Wh-elements in NP are briefly discussed below. In the mesolectal sociolect of Warri/Sapele variety of NP adopted for this study Wh-constituents that always function as operator expressions are mostly bi-lexical; however, some simple lexical Wh-constituents also exist in this sociolect. Below are some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Operator expressions in mesolectal sociolect</th>
<th>English Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i)</td>
<td>wich pêson</td>
<td>Which person – Who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii)</td>
<td>wich taim</td>
<td>Which time – When</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii)</td>
<td>wetin mek</td>
<td>What make – Why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv)</td>
<td>wich ples</td>
<td>Which place – Where</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A recent trend among some speakers of the mesolectal sociolect is to use simple Wh-constituent interchangeably with bi-lexical Wh-phrase, as shown in 2(a-b) below:

2a. \{\textit{Wetin mek yu}\} dē krai?

\{\textit{Wai}\}

\{\textit{What make}\} you PROG cry.

\{\textit{Why}\}

Why are you crying?

b. \{\textit{Which pesin}\} \textit{PAST} karī mai baisikul?

\{\textit{Hu}\}

Who took my bicycle?

Such speakers are, however, few and far between. Speakers of the acrolectal sociolect use mainly the English forms since it is the decreolizing sociolect.

\textit{Hau} (how) is a unique type of Wh-constituent in NP because it functions mainly in non-verbal clauses. Elugbe and Omamor (1991:108) give the following examples which highlight the fact that it functions mainly as an unritualized adjacency pair thus:

3(a) Hau nau – How are things?
(b) Hau bodi – How are you?

They add that “Both expressions such as above are probably best treated as idiomatic expressions.”

Below are two set of examples of clauses with interrogative operators occurring in-situ and their position after derivation.

4a. Yu de krai \textit{wetin mek}.
You prog cry \textit{what mek}.
You are crying \textit{why}.

b. Yọ mama go kom \textit{wich taim}
Your mother PROG kom \textit{which time}?
Your mother will come \textit{when}.

c. \textit{wetin mek yu de krai}?
\textit{What make} you Prog cry?
\textit{Why} are you crying?

d. \textit{Wich taim yọ mama go kom}?
\textit{Which time} your mother PROG come?
\textit{When} will your mother come?

In 4a and b, the interrogative operators appear in-situ while in 4c and d, they are extrapolated from their position as the complement of their respective verbs and preposed
to Spec-CP position of the clause which is always unoccupied. Radford (2002:268) describes how wetinmek (Why) and wich taim (When) in 4a and b are preposed, thus:

The preposed operator expressions are moved into some pre-head positions in CP. Given that specifiers are generally positioned before heads, so they occupy the specifier position with CP (= Spec-CP).

The moved Wh-interrogative operator always leaves a co-indexed trace which is known as and abbreviated as Wh-traces. Below is a diagrammatic representation of Wh-movement in 4c wich taim yọ mama go kọm.

Haegeman (1991:139) observes that what triggers Wh-movement is the feature (+Wh) Which always resides in the C of a Wh-sentence. He adds that … Wh-phrases move into the specifier of CP to check the Wh-feature.”

Based on Wh-movement discussed above, Carnie (2007:321) formalized the operation thus:

**Wh-movement**
Move a Wh-phrase to the specifier of a CP to check a [+WH] feature in C.

The diagrammatic representation of 4c in P.M I above succinctly illustrates Carnie’s formalized Wh-movement rule.

5. **Types of Wh-Interrogatives in NP**
Two types of Wh-interrogatives in NP are the direct and embedded ones. The internal constituents of each of the two sub-divisions identified above will be discussed in detail below.

5.1 **Wh-Interrogatives in Direct Questions**
The sub-components of Wh-interrogatives in direct questions that will be distinguished include the following: first, is the use of single, bilexical and multilexical Wh-phrases in
direct questions; second, is Wh-interrogative clefting and finally, is an analysis of Wh-in-situ or echoic questions. The use of *ńkọ* as Wh-in-situ marker in NP will also be discussed.

### 5.1.1 Single, Double and Multiple Wh-phrases in Direct Questions

In the mesolectal sociolect from which data was collected from this study, there are two single Wh-lexical phrases that are exclusively used singly. They are *wetin* (What) and *hau* (how). It usually functions as an idiomatic expression as stated earlier in this essay (see Elughe and Omamor (1991). Below is an example of *wetin* (What) and *hau* (how) in an NP clause.

5a. *Wetin* yu bai fọ maket tode?
   *What* you PAST+buy for market today.
   *What* did you buy from the market today?

5b. *Hau yọ mama bọdi?*
   *How* mother body?
   *How* is your mother’s health?

In many contexts, single and double Wh-phrases can be used interchangeably as shown below.

6a. \{ *Wetin mek* \} yu dẹ krai?
   \{ *Wai* \} *Why* make you PROG cry.
   *Why* are you crying?

b. \{ *Which pesin* \} PAST+ kari mai baisikul?
   \{ *Hu* \} *Who* took my bicycle?

Semantically, *wetin* collocates with (-human) features While *hu/wich pesin* (which person) collocates with + human objects. Pragmatically, *hau* (how) functions as a form of greeting in the language.

Below is an example.

   Hau nau? How are you? – fine.

Two bilexical Wh-phrases still used exclusively bilexically in this sociolect are:

- Wich ples and wich taim
- Which place What time
- Where When

Below are some examples:
7a. Wich taim dis rein go stop?  
Which time DET rain FUT stop?  
When will this rain stop falling?

b. Wich ples yọ mama go?  
Which place DET mother PAST+go?  
Where did your mother go?

The bi-lexical Wh-phrases semantically function like compounds in each of the examples above. There are also cases of multi-lexical Wh-phrases functioning as operators of direct questions in Wh-interrogatives.

Below are some examples:

8a. Wich kaind mit yọ mama bai?  
What kind meat DET mother PAST+buy?  
What type of meat did your mother buy?

b. Hau meni shu dem yọ sista get?  
How many shoe dem DET sister get.  
How many pairs of shoes does your sister have?

c. Wich pẹsin papa pictọ bi dis?  
Which person father picture BE this?  
Whose father’s picture is this?

5.1.2 Pied Piping of Bi-lexical and Multi-lexical Wh-phrases

The preposing of the entire bi-lexical and multi-lexical Wh-phrases from their position as the complement of the verb of the clause to its (Spec-CP) position has been described as cases of pied-piping in the literature (see Radford 2002, Haegeman 1991 and Carnie 2007). If only the Wh-determiner is preposed and its complement is left in-situ, an ungrammatical structure will emanate as shown in 8a – c above and repeated below as 9b and 11b respectively.

9a. Wich taim dis rein go stop?  
Which time DET rain FUT stop.  
When will this rain stop?

b. *Wich dis rain go stop taim  
Which DET rain FUT stop time.

10a. Wich kind meat yọ mama bai fọ maket.  
What kind meat DET mother PAST buy for market.  
What type of meat did your mother buy from the market?

b. *Wich yọ mama bai for makẹt kind meat  
What your mother PAST buy from market type of meat
11a. *Wich pẹsin papa foto bi dis?*  
Which person father photo BE this?  
Whose father’s picture is this?

b. *Wich bi dis pẹsin; papa foto.*  
Which BE this person father photo?

While (9a – 11a) are correct, (9b – 11b) are wrong because the complement of the Wh-determiner are not pied piped along with the preposed Wh-determiner. So, as wich (Which), wich (What) and wich (Whose) in (9b – 11b) are preposed to (Spec-CP) position of the clause of their respective complements *tain* (time), *kain mit* (type of meat) and *peson papa foto* (father’s picture) “… has to be pied piped along with the moved Wh-operator” (Radford 2002: 276).

The reason why (9b – 11b) are ungrammatical, when the complement of the Wh-operator is not pied piped along with the Wh-determiner, is due to what Radford (2002) calls violation of the chain uniformity principle. This is due to the fact that there is no one-to-one correspondence between the preposed Wh-operator and the trace it leaves behind as far as phrase structure rule is concerned. 10b is used as an illustrative example below:

10b. *Wich yọ mama bai; kind meat?*  
Pre-posed trace (NP)  
DP (foot)

Radford (2002:277) succinctly repeats the chain uniformity principle of chains as formalized by Chomsky (1995b), thus:

**Chain Uniformity Principle**  
A chain must be uniform with regard to phrase structure status.

So, the only way a uniform chain can be formed in (10b) is for the entire phrase to be pied piped to evolve a uniformity of the head and the foot, as in (10a).

Pied piping also bears a close affinity to Haung (1982) **Condition on Extraction Domain** (CED) which states that complements allow extraction out of them. So, in (9a – 11a) above, the entire complement of the verb which constitutes the DP must be moved around to avoid a violation of CED. Pied piping is also closely related to the **bounding theory** propounded by Ross (1969). He states that subjects (DP) are islands, which nothing can be extracted out of. So, the bi- and multi-lexical Wh-determiners in (9a – 11a) above are islands which do not accept extraction. We find that pied piping is used in the derivation of Wh-interrogatives as a last resort When the need to ensure that the Wh-operator and its complement converge towards a common point at Spec-CP to ensure that the derived Wh-interrogative is grammatical.

5.1.3 **Wh-Interrogative Clefting in NP**  
Direct questions are also derived through Wh-Interrogative clefting in NP. There seems to be a relationship between Wh-Interrogative clauses and the syntactic process of clefting. (Focused constructions refer to structures in which a constituent is fronted for emphasis). The focus marker (na) (it is) introduces a Wh-Interrogative in Wh-
interrogative clefting. This syntactic process permeates all English based Atlantic pidgins and creoles (see Holm 1988, Maulhuaster 1986 and Elugbe and Omam 1991).

Finney (2004:63), who draws his examples mainly from krio spoken in Sierra Leone, defines Wh-interrogative clefting thus:

In Wh-interrogative clefting, a focused Wh-interrogative phrase is introduced by na and like in nominal clefting, the use of overt complementizer is prohibited.

Most of the examples of Wh-interrogatives in direct questions above can undergo Wh-interrogative clefting by base generating the focus marker (na) at position preceding the preposed Wh-phrase. Below are some examples:

12a. i. Na \( \text{wetin mek} \) \( \text{yu de kra?} \)
   \( \text{wai} \)

   ii. It-be \( \text{What make} \) you PROG cry?
      \( \text{Why} \)
      Emph. Why are you crying?

b. Na \( \text{wich taim} \) di rain go stop?
   It-be which time DET rain FUT stop?
   Emph. When will the rain stop?

c. Na \( \text{wich kind mit} \) \( \text{yọ mama bai fọ maket}? \)
   It-be which kind meat DET mother buy in market?
   Emph. What type of meat did your mother buy from the market?

d. Na \( \text{wich peson} \) papa foto bi dis?
   It-be which person father photo BE this?
   Emph. Whose father’s picture is this?

A derived structure from Wh-interrogative clefting does not accept overt complementizers; this is attributed to the fact that clefting, as a syntactic process in NP, as well as other English based Atlantic pidgins and creoles, is based generated. An ungrammatical structure will evolve once an overt complementizer is added to a Wh-interrogative cleft clause as shown below.

13a. Na \( \text{wich kind meat} \) \( \text{we yọ mama bai for market}? \)
    It-be which type meat COMP your mother buy from market?
    Emph. What type of meat that did your mother buy from the market?

b. * Na \( \text{wetin mek} \) \( \text{yu de kra?} \)
   \( \text{wai} \)

   It-be \( \text{what make} \) COMP you PROG cry?
   \( \text{why} \)
   Emph. Why that you are crying?
Wh-interrogative clefting is alien to English; however, it is a common phenomenon in kwa languages, which are the substrate languages of NP. Below are examples of Wh-interrogative clefting from Urhobo and Yoruba, which are kwa languages spoken in southern Nigeria. While *ki* is the focus marker in Urhobo, *ni* is the focus marker in Yoruba. Below are examples of Wh-interrogative clefting in Urhobo and Yoruba.

**Urhobo**

14a. Die wọ tá ré?
What you talk + PAST?
What did you say?

*Wh-interrogative clefting:*

b. Ki die wọ tá-ré?
It-be What you talk PAST
Emph: What did you say?

**Yoruba**

15a. Ìgbá wó ló dé?
Time When you come?
When did you come/arrive?

*Wh-interrogative clefting:*

b. Ni ìgbá wó ló dé
It-be Time When you come.
Emph: When did you come/arrive?

The examples above, buttress the fact that Wh-interrogative clefting in NP is influenced by substrate languages.

### 5.4 Wh-in-Situ in Direct Questions

Wh-in-situ questions are also a part of direct Wh-questions in NP. These set of questions are not information seeking because no new information is required, rather, they are echoic since they are meant to reaffirm an opinion the speaker already have about an issue. The speaker wants a confirmation of an information he/she heard or was told. Below are a few examples:

16a. Di rein go stop wich taim?
DET rain FUT stop *which time.*
The rain will stop *when?*

b. Yọ mama go wich ples?
DET mother PAST+go *which place?*
Your mother went/travelled to *where?*
Echoic questions exist in both NP’s superstrate and substrate languages. So, the English gloss of (16a & b) are allowed in English only as echo questions, as shown below in 17a and b.

17a. The rain will stop when?
   b. Your mother travelled to where?

Ogbonna (2007-2008) did extensive study on Wh-in-situ questions in Igbo, a Kwa language spoken in the Eastern part of Nigeria. His findings permeate all Kwa languages. He gives these two examples of Wh-in-situ in Igbo.

18a. iló hùrù ónye?
    You see-r (past) Who.
    Who did you see?

   b. Ì gárá ébe?
    You go-r (past) Where
    Who did you see?

5.1.3.1 ñkọ as a Wh-in-Situ Marker in NP
ñkọ is a wh-in-situ marker in NP; however, ñkọ does not play echoic function in an NP clause where it usually occurs clause final. In any clause Where ñkọ functions clause final, such Wh-interrogative functions as a content or information seeking question like its preposed Wh-phrase counterpart.
   Below are some examples:

19a. Mai mọni ñkọ?
    What about/Where is my money?

   b. Yọ mama ñkọ?
    Your mother What about/how?
    What about/how is your mother?

Etymologically, ñkọ is derived from Yoruba, a major language in Nigeria, which is spoken in Western Nigeria. Yoruba is one of the dominant languages that shaped the evolution of West African pidgins in general and NP in particular due to the influence of the Saro from Sierra Leone on the language when they came to Lagos during the 19th century. Finney (2004:72) underscores the importance of Yoruba in the reshaping of Sierra Leonean Krio, thus:

The language and traditions of settlers of Yoruba origins have had a strong influence on the language, social life and customs of krio speakers in Freetown. A large number of lexical borrowings in krio from West African languages, particularly Yoruba, are well documented. (Bradshow 1966, Fyle and Jones 1980). Yoruba is second only to English as the largest contributor to the krio lexicon (Fyle 1994). These borrowings have generally retained the morphophonemic properties they had in Yoruba.
Nkọ as a Wh-phrase marker is more commonly used in the Warri/Sapele speech community or Western Niger Delta than in the Eastern part of the Niger Delta since it is a cushioned word from Yoruba.

5.2 Wh-Movement in Embedded Questions
Embedding occurs mainly in complex sentences and Matthews (197:111) defines this syntactic process as “… the inclusion of one clause or sentence in another.” Two types of Wh-movement are identified in embedded clauses in NP. They are: first the case of a Wh-phrase which is preposed to the Spec-CP of the Matrix clause of direct questions in embedded clauses and secondly indirect questions in embedded clauses. In the case of Wh-movement of direct questions in embedded clauses, the Wh-phrase is preposed from the complement of the verb of the insert clause to the Spec-CP position of the matrix clause. Below are two examples:

Movement of the Wh-phrase is not a single leap because it passes two clausal boundaries before it gets to its final landing site. The moved Wh-phrase does not terminate at Spec-CP of the embedded clause because the Wh-feature in the C of the embedded clause is [-WH]. Due to this fact, the preposed Wh-phrase cannot be checked if it lands at the insert clause. However, the Spec-CP of the matrix is empty and its C is occupied by a [+WH] feature. So, the Spec-CP of the embedded clause is an escape hatch for it to pass through. Between the clauses the Wh-phrase passes through, it leaves traces which Radford (2002) calls intermediate traces.

In the case of Wh-movement in indirect question in embedded clauses, the landing site of the preposed Wh-phrase is always the Spec-CP of the embedded clause. This is due to the fact that the C of the embedded clause has [+WH] which the preposed Wh-phrase checks; on the other, the C of the matrix clause is [-WH] so a Wh-phrase cannot be pre-posed to the Spec-CP of the matrix clause because it cannot be checked by C [-WH] feature.

Below are two examples:

20. \[CP_1 \ldots C \text{[+WH]} \text{wich pesin} \text{[TP yu tink} \text{[CP \ldots C [-WH]} \text{se [TP tif di moni j ]]} \text{]} \text{]? \]

[CP_1 \ldots C \text{[+WH]} \text{Which person} \text{[TP you PAST think} \text{[CP \ldots C [-WH]} \text{COMP [TP steal the money j ]]} \text{]} \text{]} ?

Who do you think stole the money?

21a. \[CP_2 \ldots C \text{[-WH]} \text{[TP A no sabi} \text{[CP_1 \text{wich pesin} \text{C[+WH]} \text{– [TP Ese giv di moni j ]]} \text{]} \text{]} \text{]} \text{]} \text{]

[CP_2 \ldots C \text{[-WH]} \text{[TP I not know} \text{[CP_1 \text{Which person C[+WH]} \text{[TP Ese give the money j]} \text{]} \text{]} \text{]} \text{]} \text{]

I do not know \backslash wonder whom Ese gave the money.

21b. \[CP_2 \ldots C \text{[-WH]} \text{[TP A no sabi} \text{[CP_1 C[+WH]} \text{[wetin mek} \text{[TP pipul de ron j ]]} \text{]} \text{]

[CP_2 \ldots C \text{[-WH]} \text{[TP / wonder} \text{[CP_1 C[+WH]} \text{What make} \text{[TP people Prog run j]} \text{]} \text{]} \text{]

I wonder why people are running.
(21b) is diagrammatically shown in the tree diagram below.

5.2.1 Constraints on Wh-movement
The inability of the Wh-phrase in (21a) above to prepose to the Spec-CP of the matrix clause shows that there is a constraint on Wh-movement; it was first formulated by Ross (1967). This constraint is now known as complex Island phenomenon. It was later codified into the bounding theory which deals mainly with subjucancy conditions on Wh-movement. Haegamon (1992:365) defines subjucancy conditions thus:

Movement cannot cross more than one bounding node where bounding nodes are IP and NP.

In 21a above, the TP in the embedded clause acts as an island which blocks movement of the Wh-phrase to the matrix clause. If the Wh-phrase (wetinmek) (Why) moves from the Spec-CP portion of the embedded clause, it will result in a violation of subjucancy condition since the embedded TP is already an island.

Carnie (2007:334) states that if a Wh-phrase moves near a [+Wh], it becomes a constraint through Which it cannot pass. This constraint is also known as a locality condition Which Carnie (2007:335) thus analyses:

Movement must always target the nearest potential position. This locality condition is known as the minimal link condition (MLC). Minimal link condition – intuitive version move to the nearest potential landing site.
Another constraint on movement describes clauses with more than one Wh-phrase. Once one of the Wh-phrases is proposed, the clause it is preposed to acts as an island and renders the movement of any other Wh-phrase impossible. If another Wh-phrase is preposed, because the resulting clause will be ungrammatical.

Below is an example:

Island

23. A si [wetin the layon kill] wich taim
    I saw [What the lion killed] When

So the clause “wetin the layon kill” acts as an island constraint which blocks the extraposition of the Wh-phrase “wich taim” from its position as the complement of kill.

6. The Influence of Substrate Languages on Wh Interrogatives in NP

A fundamental feature of pidgins and creoles is that their grammar and vocabulary are sharply reduced. This reduction is in most cases attributed to a simplification of the grammar and lexicon of the superstrate language. It is against the backdrop of the above observation that led some pidgin and creole linguists to assert that certain syntactic processes in NP, Which are linguistic universals, like negation and question formation are simplification of that of English – its superstrate language.

We are, however, of the opinion that Wh-interrogatives in NP is derived from substrate languages based on the facts enumerated below: First, in English there is fronting of an auxiliary after a subject as in derivation of Yes/No question before a Wh-phrase is preposed to Spec-CP position in the derivation of Wh-interrogation. The movement of an auxiliary from T to C in the derivation of Wh-interrogatives is alien to NP and Kwa languages. Secondly, Wh-interrogative clefting in NP is a productive syntactic process in kwa languages as shown in this essay with data from Urhobo and Yoruba. Wh-interrogative clefting does not, however, exist in English Wh-movement. Thirdly, the peculiar features of ńkọ (What about/where) and hau (how) in the derivation of Wh-interrogatives in NP are derivations from substrate languages. Fourthly, bi-lexical Wh-phrases are commonly used in substrate language; it is not unlikely that bi-lexical Wh-phrases in NP are derivations from substrate languages. Based on the facts above, we can affirm that Wh-movement in NP is not a simplification of that of English but a derivation from substrate languages.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt has been made to determine the salient syntactic processes of Wh-interrogatives in NP. It undertook a cross linguistic variation of Wh-movement and analyzed the derivation of Wh-interrogatives in the language. The paper then distinguished between Wh-movement in direct and in embedded questions. The paper then focused on specific features of Wh-movement peculiar to NP. They include Wh-interrogative clefting and the peculiar use of hau (how/what about) and ńkọ (what about/where) as Wh-phrases in the language. Pied piping of bi and multi-lexical Wh-phrases and constraints on Wh-movement in embedded clauses were also analysed with the aid of copious examples. Finally, we affirmed that Wh-movement in NP evolved from substrate languages based on the close affinity of the data analysed for this study with those of substrate languages. It is our hope this study will stimulate further research on the syntactic processes of NP – a language whose status has changed from a low one between the 1960s and 1980s to a high prestige language within the past two decades.
References

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