

Anatomy of Igbo Wh-Phrases

Jeremiah Anene Nwankwegu

Dept. of Linguistics and literary Studies, Ebonyi State University, P.M.B. 053, Abakaliki,
Nigeria

Tel: 234-703-946-9389 E-mail: jerrynwankwegu@gmail.com

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Abstract

The Igbo wh-phrases display interesting variable behaviours in movement, with respect to whether they move to the left peripheries of direct or embedded interrogative clauses. A question arises why, unlike the English wh-phrases, the Igbo wh-phrases cannot maintain consistent shape and behaviour across the different syntactic constructions and in the face of different movement triggers. This paper dissects the wh-phrases in Igbo with the view to showing that they are not only different in their surface shapes but also in their internal configurations. The wh-phrases divide into basic and non-basic. It is found that the basic wh-phrases have their wh-features merged not only higher in the primary trees but as the head of the maximal wh-projections whereas the non-basic ones have theirs merged lower, usually as complement of DPs. The paper argues that these differences in internal configuration determine the wh-ness of the wh-phrases and are responsible for the observed variability in response to different syntactic stimuli or wh-movement triggers in direct and indirect wh-interrogative constructions. The study explores the minimalist framework.

Keywords: Igbo, wh-phrases, embedded interrogative clauses, wh-movement triggers, wh-features

1. Introduction

That Igbo has a way of retaining its wh-phrase in-situ, as in (2) or moving it to the left periphery of the clause, as in (3) is no longer new information.

- 1) Emeka rì-rì **ji**

Emeka eat-past yam

‘Emeka ate yam’

- 2) Emeka rìrì **gìnī?**

Emeka eat-past what

‘What did Emeka eat?’

- 3) **Gìnī** kà Emeka rìrì?

[what that Emeka eat-past]

‘What did Emeka eat?’

What is interesting, and of concern to this study, is that, unlike in the English language, wh-phrases in Igbo display variable behaviours with respect to their movement in direct question (3) and indirect question (4).

- 4) Ọ jùrù **ihe** Emeka rì-rì?

3sg ask-past what Emeka eat-past

‘He/she asked what Emeka went?’

Notice how *gìnī*, in a direct question, changes to *ihe*, in the embedded clause-initial position. Note that (5) is ungrammatical in the language.

- 5) * Ọ jù-rù **gìnī** Emeka rì-rì?

3sg ask-past what Emeka eat-past

(6) is also degraded, unless the question clause is parsed as a direct quotation, in which case there will be a pause or coma after the matrix predicate *jùrù*.

- 6) ? Ọ jù-rù **gìnī** kà Emeka rì-rì?

3sg ask-past what that Emeka eat-past

All the examples above involve *gìnī*, a wh-argument. All the wh-arguments in Igbo display the same tendency as *gini* above. Wh-adjuncts (wh-temporal, wh-frequency, wh-price/rate, wh-quantity, wh-manner, wh-reason, wh-purpose) behave rather differently. Consider (7-9)

- 7) Emeka gà-àbia **mgbè olē?**

Emeka will-come time which

‘When will Emeka come?’

8) **M̀gbè olēka** Emeka gà-àbia?

Time which that Emeka will come

‘When will Emeka come?’

9) Gwa m **m̀gbè** Emeka gà-àbia

Tell me time Emeka will come

‘Tell me when Emeka will come’

Notice that the element *ole*, which, ordinarily, should be considered the very bearer of the wh-essence of the wh-temporal, obligatorily disappears when the wh-phrase gets embedded. Note that (10) is illicit in Igbo

10) *Gwa m **m̀gbè olē** Emeka gà-àbia

Tell me time which Emeka will come

More interestingly, all the wh-adjuncts do not exhibit the same tendency: wh-temporal and wh-manner behave alike, whereas wh-frequency, wh-quantity and wh-price/rate belong together, albeit, not in all contexts, as we will show shortly. Consider (11-13)

11) Hà rì-rì nri **ùgbòrò òle**?

3pl eat-past food times how many

How many times did they eat?

12) **Ùgbòrò òle** kà ha rì-rì nri?

Times how many that 3pl eat-pst food

How many times did they eat?

13) Ọ jùrù **ùgbòrò ole** ha rì-rì nri

3sg ask-past times how many 3pl eat-past food

‘He/she asked how many times they ate’

Notice the difference between the behaviour of the wh-temporal in (7-10) and the wh-frequency in (11-13). The wh-frequency *ugboro ole* maintains its shape/structure in all the syntactic environments (11-13) in which it has privilege of occurrence (in-situ, fronted and embedded). In this case, unlike *mgbe ole*, (14) is illicit:

14) *Ọ jùrù **ùgbòrò** ha rì-rì nri

3sg ask-past times 3pl eat-past food

Now, consider also (15-17) involving wh-price, *ego olē*. *Ego olē* exhibits exactly the same character as *ùgbòrò òle*

15) Ùnù zù-rù ewu ahù **ego olē**?

2pl buy-past goat Det money how-many

‘How much did you buy that goat?’

16) **Ego ole** kà unu zù-rù ewu ahù?

Money how-many that 2pl buy-past goat Det

‘How much did you buy that goat?’

17) Ọ nà-àjù **ego olē** unu zù-rù ewu ahù

3sg aux-ask money how-many 2pl buy-past goat Det

He/she is asking how much you bought that goat

However, *ego ole* has a peculiar extra character, as in (18-20).

18) Ùnù zù-rù ewu ahù **òlē**?

2pl buy-past goat Det how-many

‘How much did you buy that goat?’

19) **Òle** kà unu zù-rù ewu ahù?

How-many that 2pl buy-past goat Det

‘How much did you buy that goat?’

20) Ọ nà-àjù **ole** unu zù-rù ewu ahù

3sg aux-ask how-many 2pl buy-past goat Det

He/she is asking how much you bought that goat

The above examples, it should be noted, are not by any means exhaustive of all the possibilities of wh-instantiations in Igbo. However, these suffice to illuminate the concern of this paper.

Considering this chameleonic behaviour of the wh-phrases in Igbo, a question arises what accounts for these differences. Logically, we presume that there is something about the lexical or phrasal configuration of the Igbo wh-phrases that makes them behave the way they do. Therefore, we suppose that the wh-phrases in Igbo vary morphologically, resulting in their varying behaviours in overt syntax. In the remaining parts of this work, we will seek to substantiate this assumption.

1.1 Inventory of wh-phrases in Igbo

For descriptive convenience, we have divided wh-phrases in Igbo broadly into two structural types: the basic wh-phrases (in lexical forms) and the non-basic wh-phrases (in phrasal forms) as tables (1) and (2) below show respectively

Table 1. Basic Wh-phrases in Igbo

	Wh-Phrase	Gloss	Category
(i)	Ònyē	Who	Argument
(ii)	gịnī	What	Argument
(iii)	Èbeē	Where	Adjunct

These three basic wh-elements in Table 1 are the only ones capable of conveying complete argument or adjunct meaning, without any overt or assumed sister constituent. All other wh-expressions are overtly phrasal – made up of combinations of two or more lexical or morphological elements. We refer to these as non-basic wh-phrases. See the table below:

Table 2. Non-Basic Wh-phrases in Igbo

	Wh-Phrase	Gloss	Category
(i)	m̀gbè olē/òle m̀gbè	When	Adjunct
(ii)	Màkà gịnī/n'ihī gịnī	Why	Adjunct
(iii)	Ùgbòrò òlē	how many times	Adjunct
(iv)	etu olē/òleē etu	How	Adjunct
(v)	ego olē	how much	adjunct

As can be seen, all the non-basic wh-phrases in Igbo are those that express adjunct meaning.

As we have noted in the foregoing, unlike in English, the wh-phrases in Igbo behave inconsistently with respect to in-situness and movement. On this, we have proposed that the wh-essences of the Igbo wh-phrases are variously merged, though, built on the same underlying architecture. Before moving to substantiate this claim, we first examine what have been reported in the literature on the structures of wh-phrases.

2. Previous Studies on Structures of Wh-Phrases

The idea that wh-words/phrases are built on a sort of underlying morphological architecture has been variously expressed by Chomsky (1957), Klima (1962), Haegeman (1991), Di Sciullo (2003) (cf. Zavitnevich-Beaulac 2005), to mention but a few.

Chomsky (1957), perhaps, is the first to suggest that wh-words have internal morphology. He proposes that wh-words are derived from a concatenation of wh+NP, such that, supposing NP

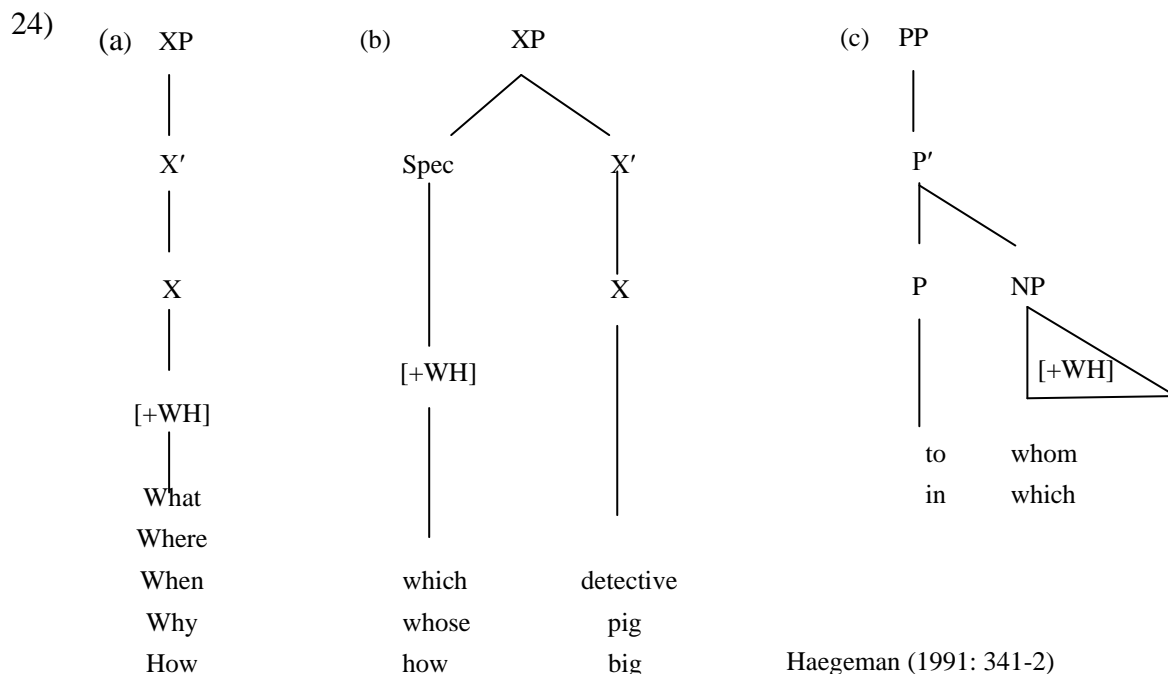
is *he*, *him* or *it*,

- 21) *wh+he* derives *who*
- 22) *wh+him* derives *whom*, *while*
- 23) *wh+it* derives *what* (1957:69)

Generalising, Chomsky (1957:112) proposes that *who* is derived from *wh+animate noun* while *what* is derived from *wh+inanimate noun*. This proposal, though crucial, overgeneralises by suggesting that every *wh+animate noun* results in *who*. There are very many animate nouns that cannot be questioned using *who*. In fact, except for human entities, no other animate noun is question-substituted with the *wh*-proform *who*. It is, therefore, safer to say that *who* derives from *wh+human noun*.

Klima (1962, 1964) makes a similar proposal to Chomsky's above; differing only in suggesting that *wh*-words derive from a sequence of a *wh*-morpheme and an indefinite. Therefore, *who* and *what* derive from *wh+somebody* and *wh+something* respectively. This idea was upheld by Katz and Postal (1964) and has continued to enjoy the patronage of many scholars till date (see Baker 1970; Cheng 1991; Aoun & Li 1993; Ouhalla 1996).

Haegeman (1991:340) argues that the nature of a phrase is determined by the nature of its head. Thus, a phrase with an interrogative element as its head will, therefore, be characterised as an interrogative phrase or a *wh*-phrase for short. Demonstrating this argument in English, Haegeman (1991) analyses English *wh*-phrases as structurally represented below:



Haegeman in the above analysis contends that the presence of [+WH] as the head or specifier in the structures above gave them their *wh*-characters. For instance, she argues that it is the presence of *wh*-element as the complement of the prepositions in (24c) that suffices to allow

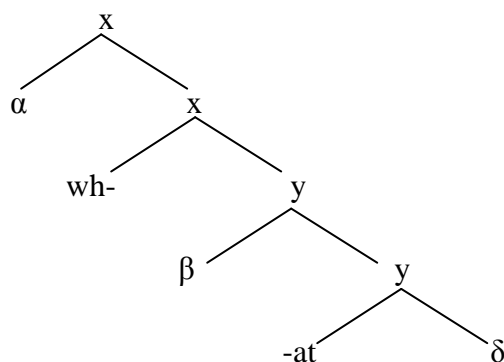
the entire PP to undergo wh-movement.

More extensively, Di Sciullo (2003), cited in Zavitnevich-Beaulac (2005), proposes that wh-elements universally are, by nature, uniform, in terms of morphological copulation. Di Sciullo, therefore, argues that morphological objects represents set of relations and that functional constructs like wh-words (and complementisers) are articulated on the basis of asymmetric relation of Morphological Shell (M-Shell), as in (25)

$$25) [{}_x \text{Op } x [{}_R y [{}_R z]]]$$

According to Di Sciullo (cf. Zavitnevich-Beaulac 2005), the above configuration comprises two layers: the operator or variable layer (Op x) and the Restrictor layer (y (R z)). This, Di Sciullo (2003:5), as cited in Zavitnevich-Beaulac (2005) argues, is “independent of specific categorial feature. In fact, it is a part of morpho-conceptual feature structure of all functional categories.” The hypothesis also has it that, for instance, the English wh-word ‘what’ is made up of two morphemes that are in asymmetric relation: obligatory wh-affix and another obligatory constituent ‘-at’, both of which are heads that project specifier and complement positions as structurally represented in (26) below:

26)



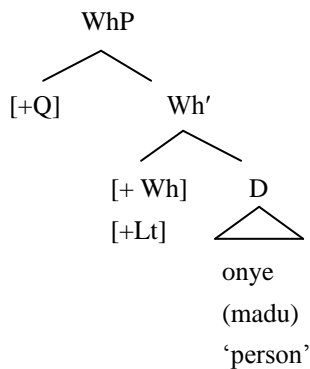
Though, not in every detail, I share the same underlying assumption of the above scholars. We propose, therefore, that wh-phrases in Igbo are structurally built based on some morphological architecture similar to what Chomsky (1957), Klima (1962), Haegeman and Di Sciullo express above.

3. Internal Structure of Igbo wh-phrases

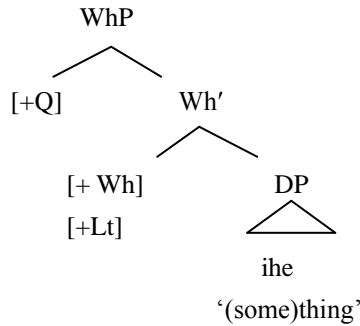
The Igbo wh-phrases are believed to be internally structured as shown in the subsections below.

3.1 Internal structure of Igbo basic wh-phrases:

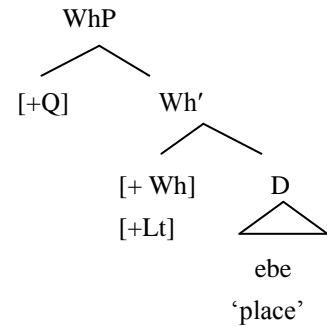
27) (a) *Ònyē* ‘who’



(b) *Gīnī̄* ‘what’



(c) *Èbeē* ‘where’

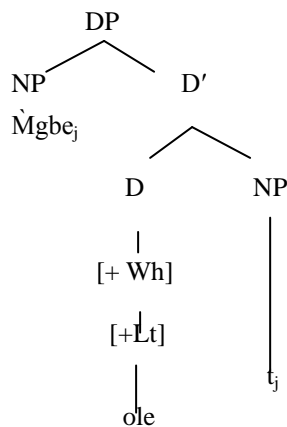


We see the basic wh-phrases (*ònye*, *gīnī* and *èbee*) as maximal projections of some abstract low tone wh-heads, taking relevant DPs as their complements. It is the wh-head and/or Q-feature of of/in a wh-phrase that serves as its launching force to the fronted position.

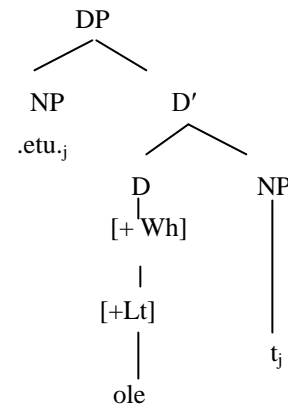
Now, turning to the atomic components of the non-basic wh-phrases, we propose that the non-basic wh-phrases differ from the basic wh-phrase in some significant ways. The basic wh-phrases, as shown above, are wh-headed lexical phrases with Q-features, and PP and/or DP components. They are the true wh-phrases in Igbo. On the other hand, the non-basic wh-phrases, as we will demonstrate shortly, are DPs or PPs with wh-internal components, which accord them the status of wh-constituents

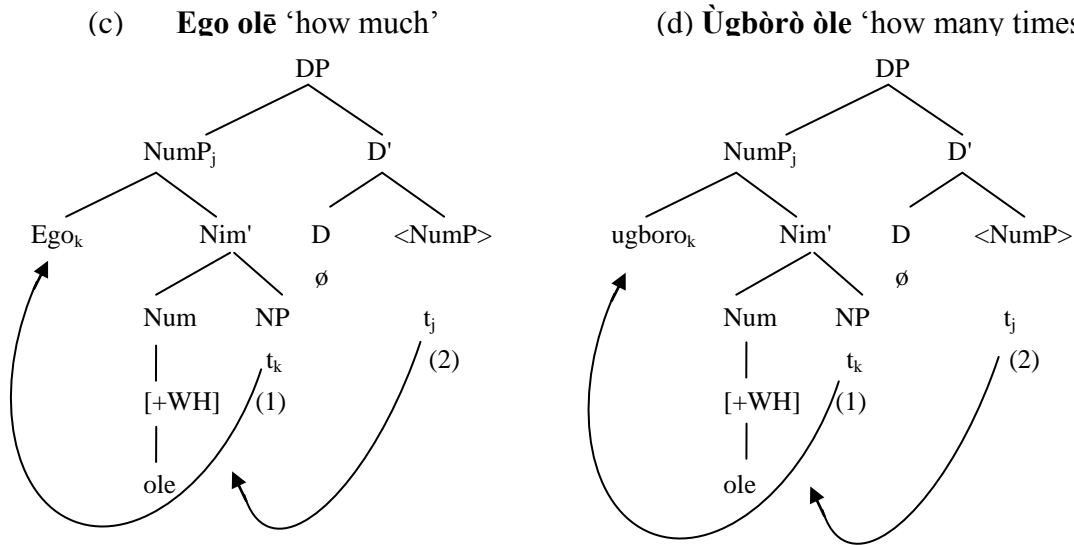
3.2 Internal structures of Igbo non-basic wh-phrases

28) (a) *Ìgbè olē* ‘which time’ (when)



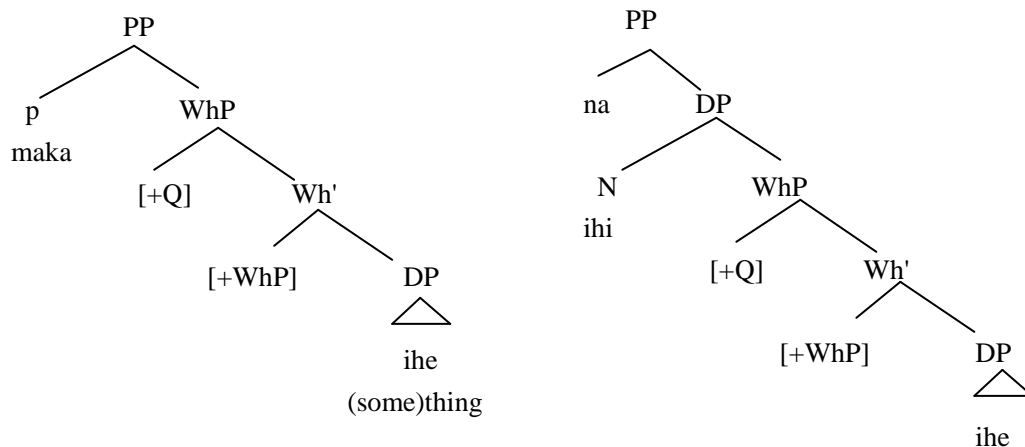
(b) *Etu olē* ‘how’





Before we discuss the above, let us also look at SI *wh-reason*. This is simply a PP taking a full wh-phrase, specifically *gini* as its complement. Examples (29a-b) are illustrative.

29) (a) **Màkà gīnī** ‘because of what’ (why) (b) **N’ihì gīnī** ‘for what reason’ (why)



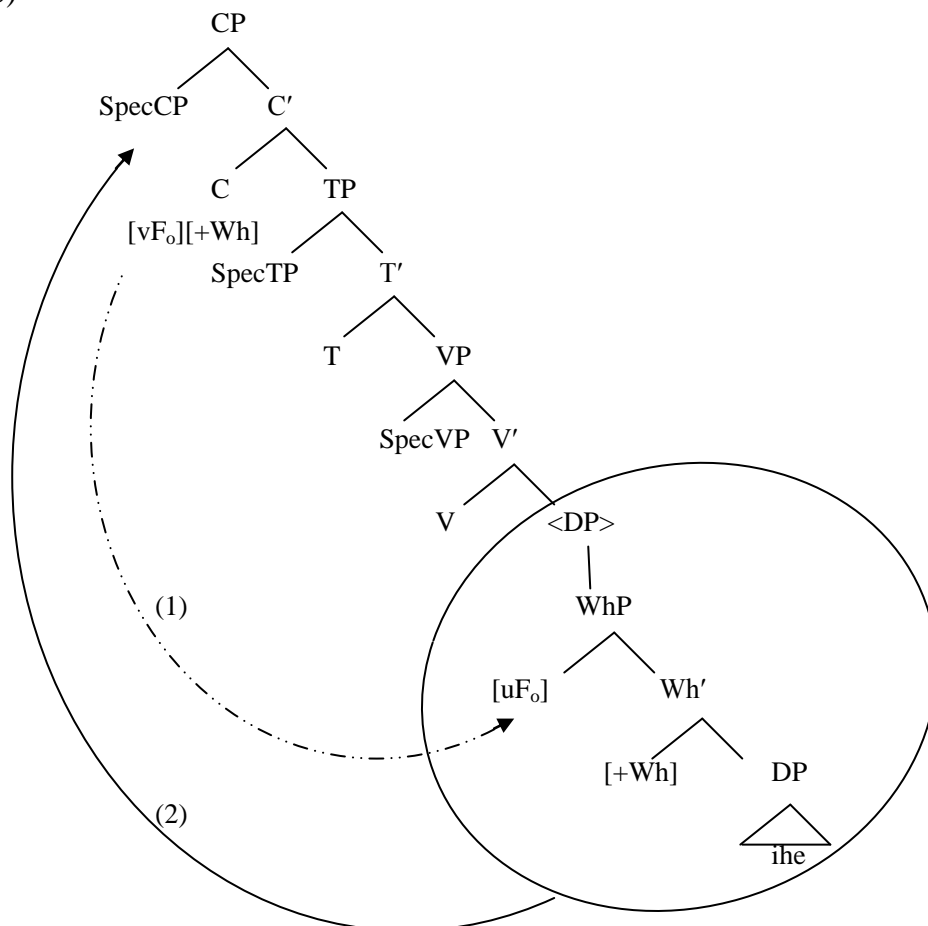
Now, looking at all the examples of the non-basic wh-phrases structure above (28-29), one will notice that (28a-d) are DPs with wh-internal-elements merged at different nodes of the trees. In (a) and (b), the [+WH]-feature is merged in D^0 , whereas in (c) and (d), it is merged in Num^0 of a NumP, which entirely is a complement of D, though raises to SpecNumP. We assume the activeness of the wh-feature in these structures to be largely dependent on how up or down the primary tree they are merged. Put differently, the visibility and activeness of the [+WH]-feature seem dependent on the number of nodes dominating it. This, we assume, is responsible for the differences in behaviour between (a-b) and (c-d).

4. Behaviour of Wh-phrases in Direct Questions

Movement in language is instantiated only when forced (Chomsky 1993, 1995, 2000). Several proposals have been put forward to explain why wh-elements move in some

languages. In Igbo, Nwankwegu (2015) argues that movement in different interrogative constructions are variously motivated, depending on the syntactic structure of the question expression. He argues two major needs for the movement of wh-phrases to SpecCP in Igbo direct wh-interrogatives. First, he states that movement of the wh-element is for feature checking (Chomsky 1995). He argues that wh-movement in Igbo is motivated by the need to check the strong Q(question)-feature on C⁰. In this case, the Q-probe (the interpretable Q-feature on C⁰) targets the Q-goal (the uninterpretable Q-operator feature on the wh-phrase), forcing it to move to the checking domain (SpecCP) of the C⁰. Second, he proposes that movement is for specification of Q as either yes-no or wh-question. According to him, the Q-affix on C⁰ is unvalued/underspecified for wh-/yes-no question. Following from the wh-/yes-no ambiguity of the abstract Q-affix in C⁰, a wh-feature is required to internally or externally merge in SpecCP or adjoin to C to disambiguate and specifically type the interrogative construction as a wh-question. Example (30) below presents a graphic illustration of the wh-Q-checking and movement in direct wh-question.

30)



Here, the entire wh-element in predicate focus in-situ is wh-headed, hence characterised as a wh-phrase. Now, since the attractor [Q-affix in C⁰] targets the specifier [uF_o]

(unvalued/uninterpretable Q-feature) for Q-checking and since the specifier, the head and the complement form a constituent, the head and the complement all pied-pipe to SpecCP; i.e., the entire wh-phrase is able to front as one indivisible whole. This scenario changes in an embedded wh-question.

4.1. Behaviour of Wh-phrases in Embedded Questions and KWIC

One of the wh-characteristics of partial wh-in-situ languages is obligatory fronting of a wh-element in an embedded wh-construction (Bobaljik & Wurmbrand 2014). In such languages, therefore, a wh-in situ is irredeemably ungrammatical in an embedded clause (except in cases of multiple wh-questions, where one wh-phrase fronts while the other(s) remain(s) in-situ). Consider (31):

31) a. *He asked me I was doing what?

b. He asked me what I was doing.

This also applies in Igbo, as the examples below show:

32) a. *Ànyị chò-rò i-ma Ì hụ-rù ònyē

[1pl want-IND INF-know 2sg see-PAST who]

*We want to know you saw who

b. Ànyị chò-rò i-ma onye I hụ-rù

[1pl want-IND INF-know who 2sg see-PAST]

We want to know who you saw

However, in Igbo, what gets moved in embedded wh-construction differs significantly from what gets moved in direct wh-construction, both in terms of feature and structure. When moved to the CP of the embedded wh-clause, the wh-phrases are suppletive; i.e., they take on the relative cognate/suppletive forms. Table 3 below shows the wh-phrases and their suppletives.

Table 3. Wh-phrases and their relative suppletives

Interrogative	Relative
Ònyē (who) -	onye (person) (note initial high tone)
Ginī (what) -	ihe (thing)
Èbeē (where) -	ebe (place)
Ìgbè olē (when) -	m̀gbè (time/period)
Etu olē (how) -	etu (manner)

(Though, there are more possibilities with the non-basic wh-forms; these, suffice for

illustrative purposes). Now consider the examples below:

33) Ànyì chòrò i-ma onye I hù-rù

[We want INF-know who you see-PAST]

We want to know who you saw

34) Ha jù-rù *ihe* m ri-ri

[They ask-PST what I eat-PST]

They asked what I ate

35) Uche jùrù nna ya *mgbè* a lù-rù agha Biafra

[Uche asked father his when indef-pron fight-past war]

Uche asked his father when the Biafrican War was fought

The question here is why the change in shape of the *wh*-elements as shown in the above examples. To answer this, it is necessary to establish, first, what motivate(s) movement of *wh*-elements in embedded interrogative constructions.

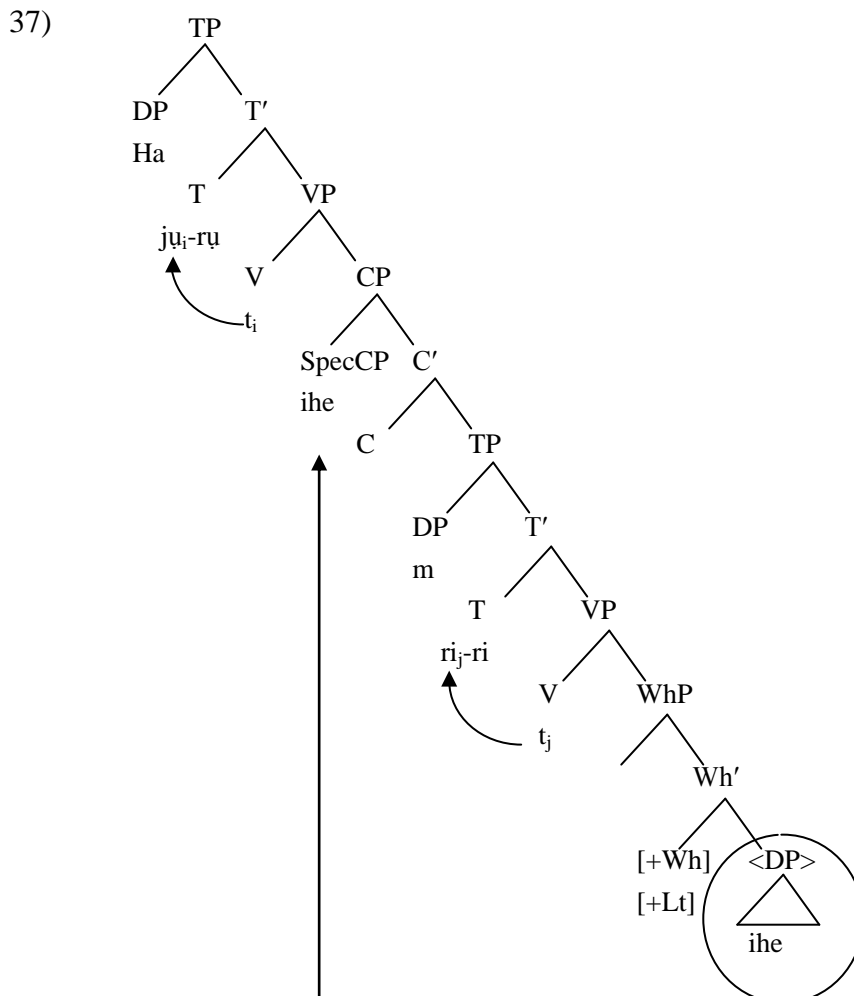
Baker (1970) proposes clause-initial Q for every clause, whether matrix or embedded. He argues that the only difference between the matrix Q and the embedded Q is a matter of subordination. Similarly, Rizzi (1997) postulates a uniform C-system for every clause, whether embedded or direct. If this is to be upheld, it logically follows that the same trigger(s) is/are responsible for the attraction of *wh*-phrases to SpecCP in both direct and indirect questions. However, empirical evidence, such as the unavailability of subject-auxiliary inversion in embedded question, as against its obligatory application in direct question in English, points to the contrary. We argue that in an indirect *wh*-question, the embedded C⁰ does not bear a Q-feature. Thus, as Nwankwegu (2015) argues, the embedded clause only makes reference to a question (it does not pose the question). The indirect question gets its interrogative reading from the [+Q] (interrogative) feature of the matrix predicate, which is usually, *i-ju* (to ask) or *i-ma* (to know); hence it is not ‘directly’ but ‘indirectly’ typed as a question. This position finds support in Katz and Postal (1964) who originally proposed Q-morpheme in language.

As Radford, et al (1999) points out, “syntactic structures are projections of lexical items (i.e. words)” and functional elements, and so “must satisfy the individual properties of the words” or functional elements they contain. Words, like verbs, possess head features, which specify the kind of head positions they can occupy; specifier features, which determines the kind of specifiers they permit or disallow; and complement features, which specify the range of complements they can or cannot take. Following Chomsky’s (1993, 2000) Checking Theory, it is supposed that these grammatical features must be checked by head-complement ‘Agree’ configuration or specifier-head relation before spell-out. The complement features of the Igbo interrogative verbs, such as *ju* (ask) and *ma* (know), require them to take either a DP (in a simple direct clause) or an interrogative CP (but never a TP) (in embedded clause) as their

complements. It is, therefore, assumed in this work that the movement of the relevant wh-element to the CP is to satisfy the complement feature requirement of the matrix predicate. Since the matrix predicate requires CP complement in the case of embedded clause, it is logical to contend that the CP domain proper cannot be inactive (or empty), hence the attraction of the wh-substitute of the indirectly queried entity to activate the CP. Note that since the attracting feature in this case is neither a [+Q] or a [wh-], the system must find a means of filtering out these unwanted features from the target wh-phrase or else, the derivation would crash.

Assuming the above to be correct, it follows that in the case that a basic wh-phrase is in the target position, only the complement DP component is attracted to SpecCP. Therefore, for *gini*-phrase, the complement DP *ihe* is attracted; for *onye*-phrase, *onye* (note the tone difference) is attracted, and for *èbeē*-phrase, *ebe* is attracted (see (33-34) and table (3)). Note that these DPs are usually of high tone. This is so because the [+wh] head of the wh-phrase, which usually bears the characteristic low tone of the Igbo wh-phrases, has been excluded. Consider the derivation tree (37) below, representing (36) above.

36) Ha jù-rù *ihe* m ri-ri



Two questions arise here: (i) What then empowers the targeted DP to move, since it bears no operator feature? (ii) If the argument that only the DP (and not the maximal wh-projection) moves to the embedded CP is maintained, what happens to the remnant of the wh-phrase in-situ, since it does not pied-pipe to the embedded CP position, as can be seen in (37)?

To the first question, we agree with Horvath's (1981, 1986) assumption that wh- phrases uniformly exhibit the feature [FOCUS], based on which, he proposes a universal requirement regarding the Wh-Q-operator (Horvath 1981, 1986 p. 118 (43):

38) *The FOCUS Constraint on Wh-Q Operator:*

A non-echo question interpretation can be derived only if the Wh-Q operator bears the feature [focus] at LF.

We take this to be true for Igbo wh-phrases. Hence, we tweak this assumption to propose that the D^0 of the complement DP of the WhP (such as in (27)) is merged with a focus operator, which launches it to SpecCP. This has a consequence. It follows, and we so assume, that the C^0 also possess a [+FOC] feature. The simple answer to the second question is that the remnant gets obligatorily deleted. Implicit in this assumption is that the embedded C^0 has a strong [+FOC] affix. This is to say that what triggers the movement of the wh-phrase in embedded question is [+FOC]-feature. This proposal complicates our earlier suggestion above that the matrix predicate is responsible for the movement of wh-elements in embedded question construction. How can these two proposals be reconciled? The two proposals can be conflated by proposing local selectional requirement: the matrix predicate selects a CP with a [+FOC] C^0 and, in turn, the C^0 selects a [-WH] DP with [+FOC].

In the case of wh-adjunct fronting, the proposal made above still applies. As can be seen in (28a-d, 29a-b), none of the wh-adjuncts is wh-headed in Igbo. The wh-adjuncts of frequency, price, temporal and manner are all basically DPs with wh-features merged at various functional nodes on the trees. As for the wh-adjuncts of reason/purpose as in (29a-b), they are PPs with a full-fledged WhPs as their complements.

The same proposal on wh-movement in embedded interrogative constructions also holds true for *kedu wh-interrogative construction* (KWIC). In fact, KWIC patterns exactly like embedded wh-constructions described above. This similarity is already noted by Uwalaka (1991: 189). However, there are a number of non-trivial differences, crucial among which is the presence and role of the matrix predicate in indirect wh-construction, but not in KWIC. For KWIC, a strong [+FOC]-feature is merged with the *kedu* wh-element. In this case, the strong Q-affix on C^0 is checked by the external merging of *kedu* in the checking domain of C (SpecCP), hence another active wh-element is no longer required in the CP, to avoid violation of the constraint posed by the 'Doubly Filled Comp Filter'. This explains why (39) is ungrammatical.

39) **Kèdu ginĩ* Eze nyèrè gị tị?

[*kedu* what Eze give-PST you]

One may ask, why (40) is grammatical since *ole* is still overt in the moved wh-phrase *ugboro*

ole.

40) *Kèdu ùgbòrò òlē; Eze bia-rà t_j?*

[*kedu* time how many Eze go-PST]

How many times did Eze come?

To understand why (40) is possible, let us take another look at (28c). The wh-element in the DP in (28c) is merged as a number head of a number phrase (NumP), which serves as a complement of the matrix DP (remerged at SpecCP). So deeply buried in the minimal project, the [+WH] feature is not visible to the extant wh-element in CP. The only functional element visible to the strong feature of C in the DP above is the focus feature merged in D.

Movement of/from a wh-reason/purpose *maka ginī* or *n'ihī ginī* in an embedded wh-question structure comes with it an interesting twist. In a direct question, the entire *maka ginī* or *n'ihī ginī* gets fronted. Consider (41-43) below.

41) *Ò chì-rì ọchì màkà nà ọ hụ-rì egō?*

[Q He laugh-past laughter because that he see-past money]

Did he laugh because he saw money?

42) *Ò chì-rì ọchì màkà ginī?*

[Q He laugh-past laughter because what]

Why did he laugh?

43) *Màkà ginī kà Ò jì-rì chĩa ọchì t_j?*

[Because of what that he hold-past laugh laughter t_j]

Why did he laugh?

It is pertinent to make a brief remark on few other changes in the root clause. First, the root clause assumes a purpose clause structure, following the movement of *màkà ginī* to the CP. The Igbo purpose clause patterns like a serial verb construction, with the verb *jì* 'hold' heading the initial VP and bearing the tense feature. The subsequent verb only takes a tense-agreement suffix, usually an open vowel suffix (OVS), as in (43), where '-a' in *chì-a* is a tense-agreement OVS relating to the rV (-ri) past tense marker in *jì-rì*. *Jì(ri)* selects either a DP (mainly) or, in this case, a PP complement *màkà ginī*. It appears *màkà ginī* moves cyclically, taking a two-step move, to its CP final destination. The first move is a PP (A-movement), which takes the phrase to the complement position of *jìrì* before A'-movement to SpecCP (instigated by *ginī*) (44).

44) *Màkà ginī kà Ò jì-rì ~~màkà ginī~~ chĩa ọchì ~~màkà ginī~~?*



As is the case in the movement of wh-phrases in embedded structure, already discussed, there

are also significant changes in what gets fronted in the case of wh-reason fronting. Consider (45) below.

45) Ànyi chòrò ima *ihe*_j Ọ jì-rì (*màkà ya*_j) chia ọchì *maka-gini*_j

We want to know what he hold-past (because it) laughed laughter

We want to know why he laughed

In (45), the first step moves the maximal PP to the complement position of the first VP, headed by *jìrì*; then the second step extracts only the complement DP (*ihe*) of the WhP (*gini*) to the embedded clause-initial position. This last move leaves behind a resumptive pronoun *ya* in its extraction site. The emergence of a resumptive pronoun in this case is a repair strategy, necessary to remedy the damage of extracting an obligatory nominal complement of the preposition *màkà*. (Note that preposition stranding is not permissible in Igbo). However, *màkà ya* can be optionally surface-deleted.

5. Conclusion

In the foregoing exposé, we have tried to x-ray the wh-phrases in Igbo with the view to showing in a principled way that their behavioural differences in overt syntax owe it to the variation in the positions the [+WH] features are merged on the primary derivational trees.

We have argued and substantially demonstrated that the restrictions imposed on the wh-phrases in terms of movement all depend on the nature and target of the triggering features. For a triggering feature targeting a [+wh] goal, an entire wh-phrase is attracted; for the one targeting non-wh goals, a non-wh-component of the wh-phrases is extracted.

Furthermore, we have argued that the degree of wh-ness of a wh-phrase depends on the visibility of its wh-feature – those whose wh-essences are merged higher on the tree are more visible than those whose wh-essences are merged lower on the tree. This accounts for the differences between the basic and non-basic wh-phrases in Igbo. The basic wh-phrases have their [+wh] essences merged as the heads of the phrases, higher on the tree than the non-basic wh-phrases, whose wh-essences are merged lower as complements of the phrases.

Though, the ideas and proposals championed in this study are considered authentic, possibility of errors are not ruled out. Consequent upon this and the need to address some unanswered questions raised in the work, further research is, no doubt, needed.

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