

## The M̀báìsè-Ìgbò WH-words and complementation: A GB syntax approach

Obioma Bibian Enwere (PhD)

*Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies*

*University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt*

[enwerecares@gmail.com](mailto:enwerecares@gmail.com); +234 (0) 08033957900

### Abstract

This paper tries to highlight the peculiar features of WH-Questions (WHQs) and to establish whether WH-words are nominal elements which do subcategorize complements to limit their references. The WH-words in M̀báìsè-Ìgbò are grouped into two kinds - those marked by WH-words or the Predicate in-situ WHQs and those marked by initial K̀èdù/ Ǹdíí/ Ǹdáá/ Ólèè or the Subject in situ WHQs, where the WH-word is based-generated in SPEC-I position. The question words with initial Ǹdíí/ Ǹdáá/ Ólèè (K̀èdù), are base-generated head-initially and take cognates - ìhè, ébè, ónyè, ótù, ógè, m̀gbè, as their complements, which specify, ‘what’, how, when, where, and manner. The cognates serve as complements. The Predicate in-situ WHQs are the ones in which the WH-words occur in the complement or predicate position by some movement transformations. These WH-words are themselves the complements of the verbs. Adopting the Government and Binding (GB) approach and a qualitative method, with primary and secondary data, it is observed in M̀báìsè-Ìgbò that WH-words are either the complements of verbs or nominal elements that subcategorize complements depending on their environment of occurrence.

**Keywords:** *M̀báìsè-Ìgbò, complement, Predicate in-situ, head-initial, head-final*

### Introduction

Nouns in M̀báìsè-Ìgbò have been argued to subcategorize complements and WH-words as nominal elements are not left out. This paper based on the GB framework takes a look at the order and processes of complementation of the WH-words/elements in M̀báìsè-Ìgbò, and makes inferences as to what makes this study relevant to the syntax of the dialect in particular, and Igbò in general. WH-questions (WHQs) are so called because (in English) they typically involve the use of interrogative morphemes (+WH) - what, which, why, when, who, where and how, in which the speaker seeks some information about the identity of a particular entity/thing or an issue.

WH-questions or questions involving question words (WHQs) in M̀báìsè-Ìgbò are subdivided into two types - those marked by WH-words, termed basic in situ, and those marked by initial Ǹdíí/ Ólèè or (K̀èdù). The question words with initial Ǹdíí/ Ólèè (K̀èdù) are base-generated in the head-initial positions and the take cognates - ìhè (thing), ébè (place), ónyè (person), ótù (how), ógè/m̀gbè (when/time), as modifiers that specify what is been queried. The basic in-situ WHQs is subdivided into Subject in situ and Predicate in-situ WHQs. Subject in situ WHQs have their WH-words generated at the head-initial position, while the Predicate in-situ WHQs are the ones in which the WH-words occur in the complement or predicate position presumably by some movement transformations. Complementation is important in expressing the word-order of any language; hence, this

work is interested in analyzing the complement activities of the WHQs in M̀báísé-Ígbò dialect.

## **Theoretical reviews**

### **Government and binding**

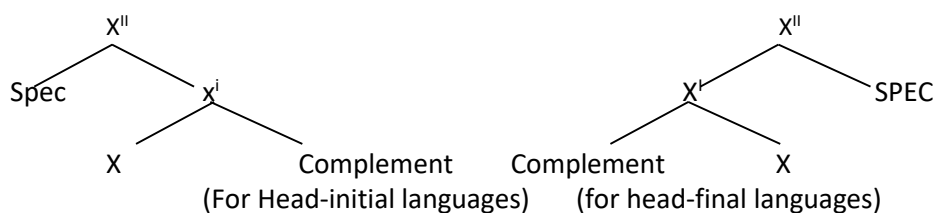
Government and Binding (GB) framework is a theory of syntax and phrase structure grammar, developed principally by Noam Chomsky in the 1980s. The main application of government relations concerns the assignment of case and the proper government of Empty Category Principle (ECP), while binding accounts for the grammaticality or otherwise of structures. Governors are the head of each of the categories (V, N, A, P) and tensed I (T). The head is designated as X, while the maximal projection of the head X, is XP. X as a head of a phrase may be preceded or followed by specifiers and complements, which are functional labels for parts of the structures of the phrase.

### **X-bar**

The X-bar syntax is one of the most important components of the GB theory. The X-bar theory determines which lexical items must occur in the D-structure. The X-bar in generative linguistics as an alternative to traditional accounts of phrase structure and lexical categories, using a system of x-bars, each of which identifies a level of phrasal expansion to account for the intermediate categories, which were not accounted for in previous phrase-structure models.

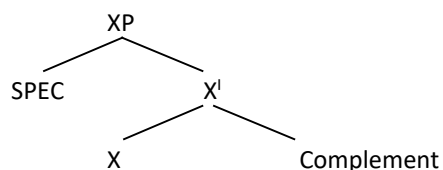
### **Phrase structure and complementation**

The structure of phrases is governed by the principles of X<sup>I</sup> theory. In X<sup>I</sup> theory, every phrase (XP) is a projection of a head (X<sup>0</sup>). The head may be combined with a complement phrase and a specifier, as shown by the universal structural configurations of phrases:

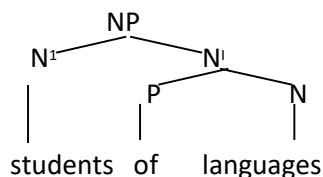


### **Complement in government and binding**

A complement is any constituent which shares the same node with a lexical head as in the case of English, a head-initial language, where:  $XP \rightarrow XCOMP$ .



In  $XP \rightarrow XCOMP$ , X stands for a lexical category e.g., P, N V, while Comp, stands for complement (which could be a PP or an NP). When X equals N, then XP is an NP, as in ‘students of languages’ as in Fig.1(d) below:



In GB, the term complement does not identify a categorial element, but a position which is filled by different items of various categorial statuses (Mbah 2013:128). In SVO languages, In GB, the term ‘complement’ does not identify a categorial element, but a position which is filled by different items of various categorial statuses (Mbah 2013:128). In SVO languages, the complements of  $X^0$  follow it. This is the case in English where the branching direction of  $V^1$  containing the complements of V is to the right, just as the complements or  $P^1$   $N^1$  and  $A^1$ , are to the right, i.e.,  $XP \rightarrow XCOMP$  cf. Fig.1 (a). Other languages such as Korean and Japanese, exhibit an alternative order, (SOV) or  $XP \rightarrow YPX$ , where the head appears to the right of its complement (cf. Fig.1 (b)).

### **Empirical reviews Complementation**

The term “complement” has been used with diverse definitions and explanations, making it difficult to give it a single definite meaning or explanation. However, broadly speaking, a complement can be seen as a word, phrase or clause, which is required for completing the meaning of a particular statement. A simple definition of complement has it as: - “to complement”, “to augment”; “rounding off”, “adjunct”, and “to fill up”, “to complete”, “something that fills up, complete or make perfect”. In line with this definition, complement has also been defined as “to complete”, and complementation is said to do with “completing the meaning of a verb. (Quirk and Greenbaum 1973.) Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, Svartvik (1972), Quirk and Greenbaum (1973:13-14,167), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 348-353) and Huddleston (1988), consider the concept complement in a more general sense; looking at the term “complement” as subsuming all the obligatory items of the predicate. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973:167) notes that in a sentence structure, the object, complement and adjuncts are “obligatory elements of clause structure in the sense that they are required for the complementation of the verb”. Complementation is necessary in the study of the word-order of any language

### **Position of the Head vis-a-vis its Complement**

In many languages, including English and Igbo, lexical heads i.e. - Nouns, Verbs, Prepositions, Adjectives, and determiners precede their complements, hence, English or Igbo, is described as a head-first language (Radford 1997:17). However, there are languages like Korean and Japanese where heads follow their complements (Akmajian 2007:519, Cook 1977:38). Some Ijoid languages of the Delta region of Nigeria, like Izon, is a head-final and complement/object-initial (i.e. the object precedes the verb) (Ndimele 1992). English and other such languages like it are for this reason described as SVO languages, while Izon with similar languages are called SOV language. Head-initial languages take their complements to the right, while head-final languages take their complement to the left. The head which is the most important element of a structure determines the order of arrangement of words in a phrasal relationship.

### **WH-words: nature and classifications**

One major typological classification of questions is the WH-questions (WHQs), involving in English, the use of interrogative morphemes- what, who, when, why, etc., seeking and giving information about some entities. WH-questions (WHQs) elicit information and give answers according to the nature of the questions asked; their responses being nominal or descriptive nominal (as in state questions). The nature of WHQs in *Mbáísé-Ìgbò* could be semantic, syntactic and pragmatic-based. They could also be classified on the basis of their types of responses. The common denominator is that all the questions have [+WH-element] either in the predicate or subject position.

WHQs could be about the location of an entity, or temporal- seeking information about time, or seeking information about the frequency of an event, or state questions - querying the disposition/indisposition or state of affairs of an entity/person, using some formulaic expressions like *Àgháā/Ànáā/Òlìà/Ìndàà*, *Ìndíí* ‘how’, etc. State questions query descriptive nominal and adjectives, using mainly stative verbs (cf. Oluikpe 1979:137), (examples ours):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1a <i>Ò mètè [Àgháā/Ànáā/Òlìà]?</i><br/>3sgcl.do [FACT] how ‘How does s/he?’</p> | <p>C. <i>Ìndíí kà Ì mètè [t<sub>i</sub>]?</i><br/>+WH COMP 2sgcl.do [FACT] ‘How do you do?’</p> |
| <p>b. <i>Ò d<sub>i</sub> Àgháā/Ànáā/Òlìà?</i><br/>it be.how ‘How is it?’</p>        | <p>(d) <i>Ìndíí kà ò d<sub>i</sub> [t<sub>i</sub>]?</i><br/>+WH COMP it be how ‘How is it?’</p> |

[*Àgháā/Ànáā/Òlìà* and *Ìndàà*] (How?), are used emphatically at the subject position. *Ìndàà* is used (emphatically) only at the subject position. The response to state questions is usually ‘*ò d<sub>i</sub> ìmā*’ (it is fine). We observe that when *Ìndíí* is used in formulaic expressions, it obligatorily undergoes a movement from complement position into SPEC or TOP position with the introduction of the complementiser [*kà*] as in 1(c) and 1(d) above .

Locative questions give information about the location of an entity, using WH-morphemes *ébé/òléé*, (where), *òlé ébé/ébé òlé/ ébé òléé* (which place), respectively. *Òléé/ébéé* queries the nominal of place [*ébé*] as in:

Question	→	Response
2a.. Í ná- èjé [ébéè]? 2sg PROG-go where ‘Where are you going?’		Áná m èjé [úyò ákwúkwó] 1sg PROG-go school ‘I am going to the school.
b. Í ná-ágá òlé ébè/ébé òléè/òléé/ébéè? 2sg PROG-go where place ‘Where are you going?’		Áná m àgá [áhà]. 1sg PROG-go market ‘I am going to the market.’
c. Ò jèrè òléè/ébéè? 3sgcl.go [FACT]+wh ‘Where did s/he go?’		Ó jèrè óbá àkwúkwó S/he go [FACT] ban book ‘S/he has gone to the library.’

Temporal questions express information about times of events, with some queried temporal nominal as *ógè* (time), *ùbóchí/èhì* (day), *mgbédé* (evening), *táà* (today), *éché* (tomorrow), etc., using the WH-morphemes *mgbé òlé/ òlé mgbè/ ógè òlé* (what time/when), *òlé èhì* (which day), as in:

Question	→	Response
3. (a) Í gá-éruté [mgbè òlé]? 2sgcl. [FUT] reach time when When will you come/ arrive?		Í gá-éruté [éché n’élékééré ìsé nkè mgbédé] 1sg [FUT] reach/arrive tomorrow, 5 pm ‘I will reach/arrive tomorrow by 5 pm’
(b) Ò gá-ábà [òlé èhì]? 3sgcl.FUT.come +WH + nominal ‘Which day will he come?’		Ó gá-ábà [n’ùbóchí óríè]. 3sgcl come FUT on óríè market day ‘S/he will come on óríè market day’.
(c) Ó bìàrà [mgbè òlé/ ógè òlé] 3sgcl.come [FACT] when ‘When did s/he come?’		Ó bìàrà [únyààhù/n’élékééré ìsé] 3sgcl.come yesterday, at 5pm ‘S/he came yesterday at 5pm.’

Quantity question queries a set of numbers using the morpheme [òlé], ‘how much/many’.

Question	→	Response
4(a) Ò dàrà égò [òlé]? It cost money how (much) ‘How much does it cost?’		Ó dàrà nàrì Nàìrà ábùò 3sgcl.cost naira two hundred ‘it costs two hundred naira.’
(a) Ímádù [òlé] bìàrà Person [+WH] come[FACT] → How many people came?		Ímádù àtò bìàrà person three come ‘Three people came’.

Frequency questions have to do with the number of times an action or event took place, using the frequency marker morphemes *úgbóró òlé/úgbó òlé* (how many times) to query some numerals. [Ólé], ‘How many’. ‘How many’ indicates the queried numeral, which could be cardinal or ordinal as in the following examples: -

Question	→	Response
5. (a) Ó bìàrà úgbóró òlé/ ùgbò òlé? 3sgcl. come [FACT] time how many S/he came how many times?		Ó bìàrà [úgbóró/ ùgbò ábùò] 3sgcl come [FACT] times two ‘S/he came two times.’
(b) Ò jèrè áhà [úgbóró òlé/ ùgbò òlé]? 3sgcl. go[FACT]market +WH time how How many times did s/he go to the market?		Ó jèrè [úgbóró/ùgbò àtò]. 3sgcl. Go [FACT] market three times S/he went to the market three times.



Statement	Statement-echo question
10. (a) É jèrè m áhjà. PE go [FACT] me market → I went to the market	Í jèrè [ébéē]? 2sgcl.go [FACT] +WH 'You went where?' / 'where did you go?'
(b) Á tàrà há ánù. PE chew[FACT] meat → 'They ate some meat.'	Há tàrà [gírī]? 3pl chew FACT] +WH 'They chewed what?/what did they chew?'
(c) N'gózí jèrè áhjà. Ngozi go [FACT] market → 'Ngozi went to the market.'	N'gózí jèrè [ébéē]? Ngozi go [FACT] +WH 'Where did Ngozi go?/Ngozi went where?'

Deliberative question also features WH-morphemes, where the addresser leaves the option of response in the hands of the addressee. The addresser seeks the information about what is to be done from the addressee. For the subject in situ questions, the formulaic expression [N'díí] is used, as in the examples:

11. (a) [N'díí íhē]i I sí m mèrèrè gí t <sub>i</sub> ? +WH thing 2sgcl say me do you [FACT] 'What did you say I should do for you? '	(b) [N'díí ébé]i I sí há jèé t <sub>i</sub> ? +WH place 2sgcl say them go[FACT] 'Where do you want them to go?'
--	---

It is also possible to have post-verbal or predicate in situ deliberative WH-questions as in:

12.(a) Í sí ányí mée [gírī] ? 2sgcl say we do [+WH] What did you say we should do?	(b) Í sí m kpòò [ònyé]? 2sgcl say me call +WH Who did you say I should call?
--	--

By the typological classification of nominal, WH-elements/words are grouped as referential expressions: - nouns that have audible expression. A number of authors have done some work on Igbo WHQs. Green and Igwe (1963), Carrel (1970), Welmers (1973), Nwachukwu (1975, 1988), Goldsmith (1981), Emenanjo (1979), Ólúkpé (1979), Anunobi (1989a, 1989b), and Ndimele (1989, 1991).

Carrel (1970) describes WHQs in Igbo as questions involving interrogative particles like òlé 'how many', òléé 'which or what, while Oluikpe (1979) refers them as òlghī-questions in Ngwa dialect. Nwachukwu (1975a:365-7) calls them Kèdú-questions, to differentiate WHQs from polar or Yes/No Questions (YNQs) questions, and later sets up only one type of WHQs in Igbo - the basic in situ WHQs, which he however, subdivided into two types - subject in situ and predicate in situ WHQs. Subject in situ WHQs are those in which the WH-words are base-generated in the subject/SPEC-I' position, while predicate in situ WHQs are those in which the WH-words are base-generated in the predicate position. Following Goldsmith's (1981) studies on the WH-words in Igbo reviewed in Enwere (1991:17), the WH-words in Mbáísé-Ígbò have also been sub-divided into two types (i) those marked by WH-words as in column (13a) and those marked by initial N'díí/Òléé (N'díí-questions in this work), (Kèdú) in Standard Igbo, in column (13b).



13. (a)		(b)	
Gírí	‘what’	Ñdii/Òléé nhě	‘what’
Èbéé/Òléé	‘where’	Ñdii/Òléé ébē	‘where/which place’
Ónyē	‘who’	Ñdii/Òléé ónyē	‘who’
Òlé	‘how many’	Ñdii/Òléé ótú	‘how/manner’
Àgháā/Ànáā/ Òlìà	‘how’	Ñdii/Òléé ógè	‘when/what time’
Ñdáà	‘how’, etc .	Ñdii/Òléé mgbè	‘what time’
		Òtú olē	‘manner (how)/which way’
		Mgbè òlé	‘what time’
		Ñdii/Òléé	‘how/what time, place, person’,
		mgbè òlé,	‘when’
		̀̀kè òlé	‘which one’
		Òtú olé,	‘which way/how’
		òlé ébé/ébé òlé	‘which place’

### Syntactic classification of WHQs

WHQs in M̀́báísé-Ígbò are classified into: - Subject in situ (head-initial WHQs), predicate in-situ WHQs/head-final WHQs and Ñdii/Òléé- questions. A. Subject in situ WH-words include [Èbéé], [Ñdáà], [Àgháā/Ànáā/ Òlìà]. They appear emphatically as subject as in 14(a-e). While [Èbéé], [Ñdáà], [Àgháā/Ànáā/ Òlìà] are used emphatically in the subject position, [Ñdáà] occurs only emphatically in the subject position.

- |         |                     |        |     |          |            |
|---------|---------------------|--------|-----|----------|------------|
| 14. (a) | [Èbéé/Òléé]?        | ‘how?’ | (b) | [Ònyé] ? | ‘who’      |
| (c)     | [Gírí] ?            | ‘what’ | (d) | [Òlé] ?  | ‘how many’ |
| (e)     | [Àgháā/Ànáā/ Òlìà]? | ‘how’  | (f) | [Ñdáà]?  | ‘how’      |

[Gírí], [Ònyé], and [Òlé], appear as subjects of their verbs in 15(a-c)

- |         |   |     |   |
|---------|---|-----|---|
| 15. (a) | [Ònyé] b̀̀rà. (ngáà)?                             | (c) | [Gírí] m̀̀rè (yá)?                        |
|         | +WH +verb + [ADV COMP]                            |     | +WH +verb + [COMP/PE]                     |
|         | Who come [FACT] here? ‘Who came here?’            |     | +WH do [FACT] him ‘What happened to him?’ |
| (b)     | [Òlé] b̀̀rà (táà)?                                |     |   |
|         | +WH verb COMP/ADV?                                |     |   |
|         | How many come [FACT] today ‘How many came today?’ |     |   |

B. Predicate in-situ WHQs are the ones in which the WH-words occur in the complement or predicate position. Some WH-phrases are generated in situ in the predicate position as in the as in examples 16(a-d) and are well-formed sentences. They are not marked by any echoic intonation that characterizes English questions with predicate in situ WH-phrases:

- |         |   |     |   |
|---------|---|-----|---|
| 16. (a) | Ò m̀̀rè [gírí] ?                                  | (b) | Ò jèrè [Èbéé/Òléé]?                       |
|         | 3sgcl. do-FACT what ‘What did s/he do?’           |     | 3sgcl. go-FACT where ‘Where did s/he go?’ |
| (c)     | Ò nyèrè yā [Ònyé] ?                               | (d) | Ò mere [Àgháā/Ànáā/ Òlìà] ?               |
|         | 3sgcl. give it-FACT+WH ‘Who did s/he give it to?’ |     | 3sgcl. do-FACT +WH ‘How is s/he/ it?’     |

[Àgháā/Ànáā/ Òlìà]? is employed with state verbs as in: (a) Ò m̀̀rè [Àgháā/Ànáā/ Òlìà]? , Nwachukwu (1988) cited in Aǹ̀nobi (1989a) notes that there is some structural similarity between polar questions (YNQs) and predicate in situ WHQs in Igbo in that the Q-morpheme



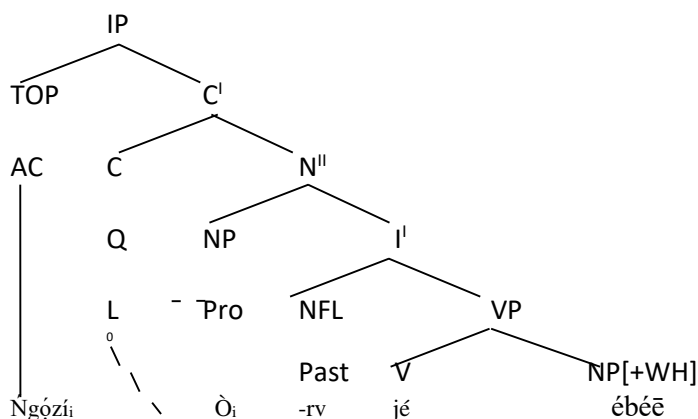
assigns a low tone to the pronominal element in SPEC-I'. Nwachukwu (1988) has proposed an empty category which triggers movement of a definite NP into COMP; leaving behind an overt trace in the subject position. Similarly, Añunobi (1989a, 1989b) following Teke (1980, 1987), proposes an obligatory movement of the subject of WHQs into TOP, where TOP is conceived as an operator node: as in examples like 17(a-d).

17. (a) Ngózi<sub>i</sub> Ò<sub>i</sub> jèrè [ébéē/Óléē]? (c) Ógú<sub>i</sub> Ò<sub>i</sub> hùrù[ònyé]?  
 Ngozi 3sgcl go [FACT][+WH] 'Where did Ngozi go?' Ogu 3-sgcl.see-FACT+WH 'Who did Ogu see?'  
 (b) Ókéké<sub>i</sub> Ò<sub>i</sub> mèrè [gírí<sub>i</sub>]? (d) Àdá<sub>i</sub> Ò<sub>i</sub> bjàrà [mgbè òlè/ ógè òlé]?  
 Okeke 3sgcl. do-FACT+WH Ada 3-sgcl. come-FACT time+WH  
 'What did Okeke do?' 'what time/when did Ada come?'

But Ndimele (1991) observes that raising from SPEC-I' into SPEC-C' is obligatory in Igboid questions with sentence initial noun phrases as in 17(a-d). This, he says is because the abstract Q-morpheme has a low tone which must be assigned to an NP position in SPEC-I'. Ndimele further argues that this raising which characterises Igboid questions with sentence-initial NPs may vacuously apply to WH-phrase in SPEC-I' position since it has been argued that all Igboid wh-phrases diachronically incorporate Q. This observation may be true for Mbáísé-Ígbò predicate in situ WHQs since all Igbo WH-words synchronically begin with low tone with the exception of [gírí<sub>i</sub>]. This may account for the presence of the initial noun phrases in 17(a-d).

Applying this argument to Mbáísé-Ígbò, we observe that predicate WHQs are well-formed in Mbáísé-Ígbò. They are not marked by any echoic intonation that characterises English questions with predicate in situ WH-phrases. Predicate in situ WH-phrases can be fronted by an optional operation - focus marking, achieved through the use of the focus marker [Ó wū] (see examples 20 (a-c)). Representation of predicate in situ WHQs is as follows:

Fig.2 (a) cf.17(a)



### Head-initial WHQs (N̄dīī/Òlḗḗ-questions)

N̄dīī/(Òlḗḗ- questions are base-generated at head-initial position. They are employed as state questions, seeking information about descriptive nominal and adjectives as in the examples:

18. (a)  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{N̄dīī/Òlḗḗ} \\ \text{+WH} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} [\text{ónyḗ}] \text{ gwára } \text{gí?} \\ \text{person tell-past you? 'Who told you?'} \end{array} \right.$
- (b)  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{N̄dīī/Òlḗḗ} \\ \text{+WH} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} [\text{mgbè/ógè}] \text{ Ò } \text{bìrà?} \\ \text{time/when 1sg-come-past 'What time did he come?'} \end{array} \right.$
- (c)  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{N̄dīī/Òlḗḗ} \\ \text{+WH} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} [\text{ótū}] \text{ ésí } \text{èmé } \text{íhḗ } \text{à?} \\ \text{way/manner to do-part thing this 'How is this done?'} \end{array} \right.$
- (d)  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{N̄dīī/Òlḗḗ} \\ \text{+WH} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} [\text{nhḗ}] \text{ Ó } \text{mèrè?} \\ \text{thing 3sgcl. do 'What did s/he do?'} \end{array} \right.$
- (e)  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{N̄dīī/Òlḗḗ} \\ \text{+WH} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} [\text{ébé}] \text{ Ó } \text{dì?} \\ \text{[place] it be 'Where is it?'} \end{array} \right.$
- (f)  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{N̄dīī/Òlḗḗ} \\ \text{+WH} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{ótū } \text{íhḗ } \text{mere } \text{dì?} \\ \text{how thing do [FACT] 'How are things? /'How are things going on/doing?'} \end{array} \right.$
- (g)  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Òlḗḗ} \\ \text{+WH} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} [\text{mgbè}] \text{ Í } \text{bìrà?} \\ \text{[time] 1sgclcome[FACT] 'When did you come?'} \end{array} \right.$

'N̄dīī/Òlḗḗ' like Kèdú in Standard Igbo (Goldsmith 1981)) is also described as a formulaic expression, and when used in that manner, we observe that it obligatorily undergoes a movement from complement position into SPEC-C<sup>1</sup> or TOP position by the process of Topicalization as in 19(a-b).

- (a)  $[\text{N̄dīī}] \text{ kà } \text{Í } \text{mèrè } [t_i]?$                       (b)  $[\text{N̄dīī}] \text{ kà } \text{íhḗ } \text{mere } \text{dì } [t_i]?$   
 +WH How COMP 2sgcl.do [t<sub>i</sub>]                      +WH [COMP] thing 3sgcl.do[FACT] be [t<sub>i</sub>]  
 'How is it with you?'                                      'How are thing going on?'

### WHQs and complementation

#### Subject in situ WHQs and complementation

The subject in situ WHQs [Èbéḗ/Òlḗḗ] [Àgháā/Ànáā/ Òlḗ] [Gírī], [Ònyé], and [Òlé] occur as subjects in the in initial position. In the same vein, [Gírī], [Ònyé], and [Òlé] occur in the sentence-initial position as subjects of the intransitive verbs [bìrà] 'came' and [mere] 'do', respectively. Hence, they may or may require complements for specifying them. They however accept adverbial and locative nominal and pronominal elements - (ngáà) 'here', tãà (today) and yá (him) respectively, as complements of their verbs; as in 15(a-c). With this feature, WHQs in Mbáísé-Ígbò is against the claim in linguistic literature that all sentence-initial WH-phrases must have been moved from somewhere within the same IP. This idea is upheld by linguists like Chomsky and Radford (1988:466), claiming that there cannot be any sentence-initial WH-phrase without movement.

### Predicate in situ WHQs and Complementation

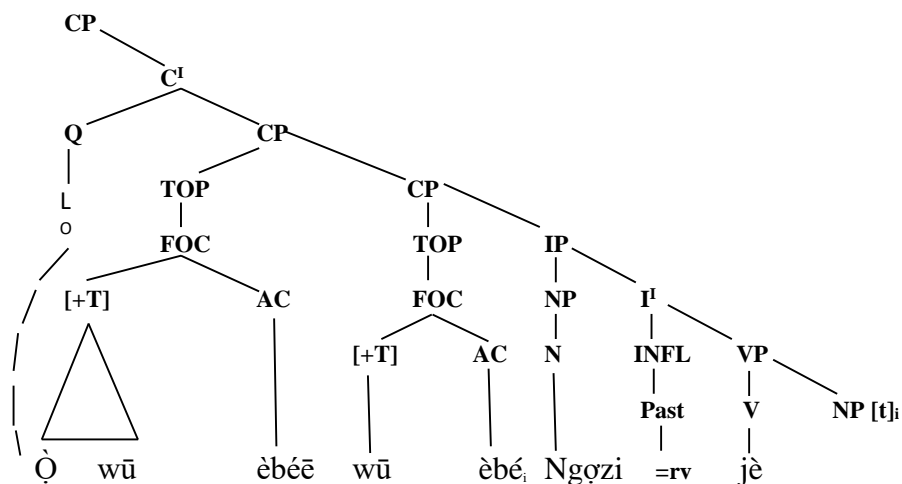
We observe that sentences with WH-words *ébéē/Óléē* (Where), *Gírī* (What), and *Ònyé* (Who), in the predicate slot are well-formed in *Mbáísé-Igbo*. They are not marked by any echoic intonation that characterises English questions with *wh*-words in predicate position. The sentences are well-formed with *Ébéē/Óléē* (Where), *Gírī* (What), and *Ònyé* (Who) in the complement position. It has been argued that [+WH]-words attract [-WH]-phrases as their complements. This WHQs may be fronted through an optional focus marking operations using the focus marker [*Ò wū*] as in:

- 20. (a) [*Ò wū*] [*ébéē/Óléē*]<sub>i</sub> wū *ébé*<sub>i</sub> (place) *Ngɔzi jèrè t<sub>i</sub>?*  
It be +WH<sub>i</sub> be place<sub>i</sub> *Ngɔzi* go [FACT] *t<sub>i</sub>* ‘Where did *Ngɔzi* go?’
- (b) [*Ò wū*] [*ònyé*]<sub>i</sub> wū [*ònyé*]<sub>i</sub> *Ógú hùrù t<sub>i</sub> ?*  
It be +WH<sub>i</sub> be person<sub>i</sub> *Ogu* see [FACT] *t<sub>i</sub>* ‘Who did *Ogu* see?’
- (c) [*Ò wū*] [*gírī*]<sub>i</sub> wū *nhē*<sub>i</sub> *Nnénná mèrè t<sub>i</sub>?*  
It be +WH<sub>ii</sub> be thing<sub>i</sub> *Nnenna* do [FACT] *t<sub>i</sub>* ‘What did *Nnenna* do?’

Complementation can be achieved in Predicate in situ WHQs through focus-marking. Introducing the focus marker [*Ò wū*] attracts [-WH] element, a nominal counterpart of the +[WH] word. Data shows that Predicate in situ WHQs do subcategorize complements through focus marking. The +WH-elements attract [-WH-phrases] taken from 20(a-c) as follows:

- 21. (a) [*ébéē/óléē*]<sub>i</sub> > *ébé*<sub>i</sub> (place)
- (b) [*ònyé*]<sub>i</sub> > [*ònyé*]<sub>i</sub>
- (c) [*gírī*]<sub>i</sub> > *nhē*<sub>i</sub>

Fig.2 (b), cf. 20(a) represents the focalisation of a predicate in situ WH-word



### Head-initial WHQs (Ñdíí/Óléē- questions) and complementation

The question words with initial Ñdíí/Óléē, are base-generated head-initially and take [-WH] cognates - ñhē (thing), ébē (place), ónyē (person), ótū (way/manner), ógè/̀m̀gbè (time), which specify, ‘what’, how, when, where, and manner. The cognates serve as complements - hence, ñhē, ébē, ònyē, ótū, ógè, ̀m̀gbè, etc ‘things’, ‘person’, ‘place’, ‘time’ are referents. The complements which specify the area of references of the WH-words, give answers to the questions raised by them as in examples 22 (a-e):

- 22a     { Ñdíí/ Óléē } [ónyē] gwára gí?  
          { +WH }     person fell-past you? ‘Who told you?’
- b         { Ñdíí Óléē } [̀m̀gbè] Ò biàrà.?  
          { + WH }     time/when 1sg-come-past ‘What time did he come?’
- c         { Ñdíí/ Óléē } [ótū/étū] ésí èmé íhé à?  
          { +WH }     way to way do-part thing this ‘How is this done?’
- (d)       { Ñdíí/Óléē } [ñhē] Ó m̀r̀è?  
          { +WH }     things 3sgcl. do ‘What did s/he do?’
- (e)       { Ñdíí/ Óléē } [ébē] Ò d̀í?  
          { +WH [place] } it be ‘Where is it?’

[Ótú òlē] ‘manner (how)/which way’ and [̀M̀gbè òlé] ‘what time’ are adverbials of time.’ [̀nkè òlé] ‘which one’, is a relative clause, while [òlé ébē/ébé òlē] ‘which place’ is an adverbial of place, respectively; that are expressed by +WH-elements’. They occur in the predicate position as direct objects of the verb as in (23a-c), and can be moved to the subject position by topicalization in examples 23(d-f).

23. (a) Ò m̀r̀è [ótú òlē]? → (d) [ótú òlē]<sub>i</sub> [ká] ò d̀í t<sub>i</sub>?  
3sgcl.do [FACT] manner +WH     manner +WH COMP 3sgcl. Be  
How does s/he/it?                   ‘How is it/ how does it look like.’
- (b) Ò biàrà [̀m̀gbè òlé] ? → (e) [̀m̀gbè òlé]<sub>i</sub> [ká] ò biàrà. t<sub>i</sub> ?  
3sgcl.come [FACT] time +WH     time +WH COMP 3sgcl come [FACT]  
‘When did s/he come?’             ‘What time /when did s/he come?’
- (c) Í gá-érúté [̀m̀gbè òlé]? → (f) [̀m̀gbè òlé] [ká] Í gá-érúté t<sub>i</sub>?  
2sgcl. [FUT] reach [time +wh]     time +WH [COMP] 1sgcl[FUT] reach  
‘What time/ when will you arrive?’ ‘What time/ when will you arrive?’

The +WH-element can attract Noun element for its complement as in:

24. (a) { Ñdíí Óléē } [nwátá] Í nà-èkwú màká yā.  
          { +WH }     child rel 1-sg AUX-talk PROG about him  
                          ‘Which child are you talking about?’

The +WH-element can attract determiner phrase for its complement as in:

- (b)  $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{N}̄\text{d}̄\text{i}̄\text{i}̄ \text{ Ól}̄\text{é}̄ \\ \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{+WH} \end{array} \right. \end{array} \right\} \left. \begin{array}{l} [\text{nw}̄\text{ó}\text{k}̄\text{o} \text{ ñ}\text{k}̄\text{è}] \text{ b}̄\text{i}̄\text{á}\text{r}̄\text{á?} \\ \text{ñ}\text{an} [\text{REL}] \text{ come} [\text{FACT}] \\ \text{'Which was it that came?'} \end{array} \right\}$
- (c)  $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{N}̄\text{d}̄\text{i}̄\text{i}̄ \text{ Ól}̄\text{é}̄ \\ \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{+WH} \end{array} \right. \end{array} \right\} \left. \begin{array}{l} [\text{ú}\text{y}̄\text{o} \text{ ñ}\text{k}̄\text{è}] \text{ Ò}\text{k}̄\text{é}\text{k}̄\text{é} \text{ k}̄\text{ù}\text{d}̄\text{à}\text{r}̄\text{à?} \\ \text{house} [\text{REL}] \text{ Okeke knock down} \\ \text{'Which house did Okeke knocked down?'} \end{array} \right\}$

Without the complements/referents, [Ónyē] (person), [m̀gbè], ‘time/when’, [ótū/étū] ‘how’ [[ñhē]] (thing), [ébē] (place), [nwátá nke] (which child), [nwókō ñkè], ‘which man’ [úyò ñkè] ‘which house’, respectively, hence, sentences like 25(a)-(c) are ambiguous:

25. (a) \*N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ ... Í nà-èkwé màká yā.  
\*‘Which ... 1-sg PROG-talk PROG about him’
- (b) \*N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ ... méré gí?  
\*‘What ... happen (FACT) you’
- (c) \*N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ ... b̄īárá?  
\*‘Which... came?’

### The status of N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄

The peculiar behaviour of N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄-Questions deserves little more closer attention. We observed that every N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ WH-phrase chooses a [-WH] counterpart except N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄-itself as in: N̄d̄īī/ Ól̄é̄ + [ónyē], N̄d̄īī/Ól̄é̄ + [ñhē], but not \*N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ + N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ . \*N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ + [ébē/òl̄é̄]. [N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄] is found only sentence-initially. A number of interpretations have been given to N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄- in this work and the workability of each interpretation is tested, N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ may be interpreted as:

- a movement trigger
- a modifier of a head
- a head itself

Taking N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ as a movement trigger would mean that N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ is an operator in SPEC-C<sup>e</sup> position, which triggers the movement of a particular constituent from any part of the sentence according to the choice of the speaker. In this way, N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ will serve the function of the general focus marker [Ò w̄ū], in the sense that it specifies a position to its right as the landing site for a preposed constituent, as in: \*Ò m̀rè [N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ ñhē], which is ill-formed, until a movement is applied as in: [N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ ñhē]<sub>i</sub> Ò mere t<sub>i</sub>? From this example, it shows that N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ can only trigger the movement of [-WH]-words. This accounts for the oddity of the (b) parts of the sentences below, which have double [+WH] words. Since we cannot have sequence of [+WH] words where one serves as the head and the other a modifier, though, the reason for this has been investigated yet, the (b) sentences are ill-formed as in:

- (a) Ò m̀rè [gírí]? → (b) \*N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ [gírí] Ò m̀rè?  
 (a) Ò g̀rà [ébē] → (b) \*N̄d̄īī/Òl̄é̄ [ébē] Ò g̀rà?  
 (a) N̄d̄īī/ Ól̄é̄ +[ébē] → (b) \*N̄d̄īī/ Ól̄é̄ +[ N̄d̄īī/ Ól̄é̄]

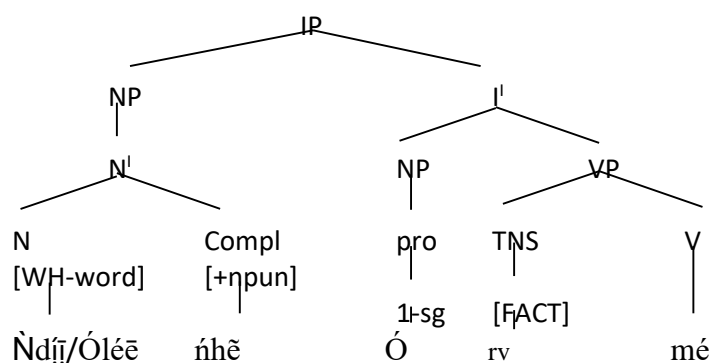
But a point in favour of [N̄díĩ/Òléē] is that it cannot occur with the general focus-marker Ò wū (it be), as in the examples below: Ò wū [N̄díĩ/Òléē ñhě]i Ò mètè?

An interpretation which sees [N̄díĩ/Òléē] as a modifier of a head is also problematic because it violates the modifier/head relationship in Mbáísé-Ígbò, because the head almost always takes modifier to its right, but one thing about this position is that N̄díĩ/Òléē with its head is base-generated at some point in the sentence. The sequence N̄díĩ/Òléē + noun then undergoes an obligatory movement into SPEC-C<sup>1</sup> position as in: \*Ó mere yà [N̄díĩ/Òléēi ñhě]i? → [N̄díĩ/Òléēi ñhě]i Ó mere yà?

The third interpretation which sees [N̄díĩ/Òléē] as the head with the following nominal as its modifier, seems to be more favoured in this analysis. Our position is that N̄díĩ/Òléē is base-generated at some point in the sentence and later the sequence of [N̄díĩ/Òléē]+noun then undergoes an obligatory movement into the sentence-initial position (see examples 19(a-b)). Interpreting [N̄díĩ/Òléē] as head and the following nominal as its modifier is in agreement with the general distributional pattern of the head and its modifiers in Mbáísé-Ígbò. This may account for why [N̄díĩ/Òléē] occurs only head-initially and why it does not attract a WH-word. The relationship between head-initial WH-words with their complements is represented diagrammatically:

N̄díĩ/Òléē ñhě Ó mètè? (cf.22 (d))

Fig.3



‘What did s/he do?’

### Findings and Contribution to Knowledge

WH-words are nominal elements which are either complements themselves or subcategorize complements to make their meaning specific their reference. Two types of WHQs exist in Mbáísé-Ígbò – the base-generated WHQs (subject in situ and predicate in situ) and the N̄díĩ/Òléē WHQs. The WH-elements - [gírĩ], [ònyé], and [Òlé], occur only in the subject/SPEC-I' position in Mbáísé-Ígbò. They incorporate low tone, involving no movement transformations into Top/SPEC-C'. Their verbs are mainly intransitive verbs, accepting adverbials of time locative adjectives as complements. Head-final WH-words are objects of

the verbal predicate. Ñdĩĩ/Ólèē- WH-morpheme is base-generated in the head-initial position in M̀báĩsè-Ígbò Questions with initial sentence interrogative words may not have been moved from elsewhere like in English. There is a degree of correlation between WH-fronting and focus marking/ Topicalization in M̀báĩsè-Ígbò. Ñdĩĩ/Ólèē-questions like their Standard Igbo counterpart (Kèdú) are base-generated with their cognates or the queried nominal attached to them. These queried nominal are designated as their complements since without them, the question becomes incomplete and meaningless. Head-initial WH-words subcategorize for complements in the form of the cognates that they query or ask about. Ñdĩĩ/Ólèē is the head while the following nominal element is a modifier.

Grammatically, the work has contributed to the study of the word order of the language. It has expressed the relationship between the WH-morphemes and the other components of the WHQs. Theoretically, complementation in WHQs is seen to be achievable in predicate in situ WHQs through optional movements of focus-marking and Topicalization, while complementation in Ñdĩĩ/Ólèē WHQs is base-generated in the subject position. GB syntax brings out the actual nature of the word-order of M̀báĩsè-Ígbò WHQs. Pedagogically, it provides materials for intra-linguistic and comparative studies in the complementation features of M̀báĩsè-Ígbò and other languages. This will serve as a material for intra-linguistic and inter-linguistic comparative grammatical analysis.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The paper has been a descriptive analysis of the syntax of WH-questions and their processes of complementation. Three types of WH-questions were analyzed. While the head-initial WH-words subcategorize for complements in the form of the cognates, head-final WH-words are objects of the verbal predicate. The syntax of WH-words is subject the GB syntax. Summarily, we have accounted for WHQS in M̀báĩsè-Ígbò and we were able to note that whereas there is an obligatory WH-fronting in English, it is optional in M̀báĩsè-Ígbò and if need be, it could be achieved through focus marking/topicalization. More work should be done on the nature of the movement transformations involved in the predicate-in-situ WH-questions comparative to the obligatory move to head-initial WH-element in English. Also the nature of Ñdĩĩ/ Ólèē should further investigated into.

### **References**

- Akmajian, A. and Frank H. 1979. *Introduction to the principles of transformational syntax*. Cambridge. MIT Press.
- Andrew, C. 2006. *Syntax: A generative introduction. second edition*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Añunobi, E.N 1989a Towards the description of questions in universal grammar: the examples of Igbo and Hausa unpublished M.A Thesis University of Jos.
- Añunobi, E.N 1989b 'Interrogatives in Igbo' a paper presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> conference of the linguistic association of Nigeria held at University of Jos.



- Brown, K. and Miller J. 1980. *Syntax: a linguistic introduction to sentence structure*. London: Routledge.
- Carrel, P.L.G 1970 *A transformational grammar of Igbo* Ibadan. C.U.P
- Chomsky, N. 1970. 'Remarks on nominalization' in: Jacobs, R.A., and P.S. Chomsky, N. 1981. *Lectures on government and binding* Dordrecht: Foris.
- Chomsky, N. 1981. 'Lectures on government and binding'. Dordrecht: Foris Publications
- Chomsky, N. 1982. *Some concepts and consequences of the theory government and binding*. Cambridge. MA: MIT Press
- Chomsky, N. 1986a. 'Knowledge of language: its nature, origin and use' in: *government and binding* Mass: MIT Press
- Cook, V. I. 1997. *Inside language*. London. Routledge
- Emenanjo, E. N. 1978. *Elements of modern Igbo grammar*. Ibadan Oxford University Press.
- Enwere, O.B 1991 *An account of WH-questions in Igbo syntax*. Unpublished undergraduate project University of Port Harcourt
- Enwere, O.B 2010 *A syntax of the Igbo noun phrase: the Mbáísé* Unpublished MA Thesis University of Port Harcourt
- Goldsmith, J. 1980a. *The structure of WH-questions in Igbo* in Henry Hiz (ed) D..Reidel Publishing company Holland.
- Green, M.N. and G.E. Igwe, 1963. *A descriptive grammar of Igbo*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag
- Gorgi, A. and Longobardi, G. 1991. *The syntax of noun phrase: configuration, parameters and empty categories*. Cambridge Studies in Linguistic 57. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Haegemon, L 1994 *Introduction to government and binding theory* (Second Edition) Blackwell.
- Huddleston, R. 1976. *An introduction to English transformational syntax*. New York: London Group Ltd.
- Huddleston, R. 1988 *English grammar: an outline*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lyons, J. 1968. *Introduction to theoretical linguistics*. Cambridge University Press
- Marantz, A. 1984 'On the nature of grammatical relations Cambridge'. Mass. MIT Press
- Mbah, B.M 2003. 'The syntax of complements In Igbo' in: Ndimele, O-M (ed.) (2003) *in: The linguistic paradise. Aba: NINLAN*
- Mbah, B.M. 2006. *GB syntax: theory and application in Igbo*. (no place)

- Mbah, B.M. 2012. *GB syntax: a minimalist theory and application to Igbo*. Enugu. CIDJAP Press
- Ndimele, O-M. 1992 *Parameters of universal grammar: a government and binding approach*. Owerri. African Educational Services.
- Ndimele, O-M. 1991. *Questions in GB syntax: insights from Echie* . (unpublished) PhD dissertation. University of Port Harcourt..
- Nwachukwu, P.A. 1975. 'Noun-phrase sentential complements in Igbo' (unpublished) PhD dissertation. *University of London*
- Ogbonna, A.N. 1999 *Head-complement relations in Ngwa-Igbo* (unpublished an M.A Thesis University of Port Harcourt
- Olukpe, B.O 1979. *Igbo transformational syntax*. Onitsha: Africana Publishers.
- Quirk, R, Greenbaum, S., Leech, G. and Svartvik, J. 1972. *A grammar of contemporary English*. London: Longman
- Quirk, R. and Greenbaum, S. 1973. *A university grammar of English*: London Longman
- Quirk, R. and Greenbaum, S 1973. *A university grammar of English*. London: Longman Group.
- Quirk, R., Greenbaum, 1990. *A grammar of contemporary English*. London: Longman
- Radford, A. 1981. *Transformational syntax*. Cambridge of English. London: Longman
- Radford, A. 1997. *Syntax: a minimalist introduction*. Cambridge University
- Ransom E. 1986 'Complementation: its meaning and forms' in: *Proceedings of the annual meeting of the Beckley linguistics*
- Riemsdijk, H. and Williams, E. 1986. *Introduction to the theory of grammar*. Cambridge Cambridge University Press.
- Ume, I.A et al. (eds) 1989 *Ụmị nkọwà ụtọasụ Ịgbo*. Onitsha.: Kawuriz and Manilas Publishers Ltd.
- Welmers, E 1963. *African languages structure*. London University of California Press