

Argument preposing in Ibibio

Emmanuel Okon,¹ Victoria Etim² & Unyime Udoeyo³

¹Department of Linguistics & Nigerian Languages
University of Uyo

²Department of Linguistics & Nigerian Languages
University of Calabar & ³Department of Nigerian Languages
College of Education, Afaha Nsit

emmanuelaokon@uniuyo.edu.ng

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Abstract

This study examines argument preposing in Ibibio, a Lower-Cross language spoken in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, from its base-generated position to a case feature position and then to the left periphery of the sentence. It used the Minimalist Program (MP) as its theoretical model to explain the syntactic and semantic causes of argument preposing in overt syntax. According to the MP, sentence derivation is the process of combining meaning and sound while adhering to specific economic rules. Fifty-two sentences were elicited from fourteen native speakers in addition to the researchers' intuitive knowledge. Findings reveal that interrogative, topicalised, left-dislocated and cleft structures show evidence of argument preposing. The work establishes that Ibibio displays both the in-situ and non-in-situ patterns concerning the position of wh-operators. The preposing of the object wh-operators is obligatorily followed by a base-generated “*ke*” focus marker. Topic arguments are probed by the *ke* particle. Left dislocation is characterised by an overt trace in the form of a resumptive pronoun. Clefting process also utilises the *ké* particle as a relativiser to introduce the clause that modifies the cleft argument in the language. Argument preposing in Ibibio is basically a strategy for focusing.

Keywords: argument, interrogative, left periphery, obligatory, preposing.

Abstract in Ibibio

Utom ami akese abaña daña eben anamñkpọ ke ntippe itie amọ eka edem mbaak akenie anyañ abọ idiọño nte anamñkpọ ke usem Ibibio – ake Lowa Krọs, eesemme ke Akwa Ibom Sted. Naiyiria. Nduuño ami akeben awọt mme mbed usem ye se adiinam uben-anamñkpọ ñkaa edem ada anọ. Edeet utom ami ekeene akikere se isịne ke fremwọk Minimalis Prokram. Fremwọk ami abo ke enam usem ekeene ewuana ami mme uyo ikọ eniehe ye se mme udịm ikọ eda enọ ke ibio-ibio mbed. Udịm usem aba mme duob mme iba ke ekebọọ eto mme asem-usem dian ye ifiọk mbon

nduuñọ ke ekama enam nduuñọ ami. Nduuñọ ami ayaara abo ke ubip mbimme, usio ikọ nnyan ke nsio-nsio usañ edo mme usañ ebenne anamñkpọ eka nwuọ-nda itie ke ubok ufien ke usem. Utom ami amaana abo ke usem ami anie usañ iba ekemeke adiibip mbimme: Anye abippe mbimme ke ñkped-ñkped (in-situ) ye ada aboadinam akaañake akeda ke ubok ufien adiwoť idiñọ mbimme. Utom ami ñko ate ke idioño uben anamñkpọ ñkaa edem asesaña ye ntippe ikọ 'ke'. Ke ami anam uwak utom dian ye adiino ikọ nwuọ-nda ke usem. Anamñkpọ aseenie ndukpoñ ke ntak adiika edem. Adiiben anamñkpọ ñkaa edem ado usañ adiino ikọ nwuọ-nda ke usem Ibibio.

Introduction

Language is an important tool in which the stock of lexical items are grammatically organised for communication. Okon (2023) maintains that placing communicative prominence on certain arguments or asking question for an answer is a form of communication in any language. With the human mind as a language processor, it is assumed that lexical/phrasal elements are re-arranged to produce different sentences for the speaker's intention to be heard. This paper is basically concerned with preposing the arguments that are involved in discourse. Arguments are Determiner Phrases (DP) or nominal positions. They are preposed or displaced backward for some feature reason. According to Etim & Okon (2023), the possession of the grammatical ability to move or process lexical items in the mind is a sign of normal grammatical acquisition. Argument preposing is one of such abilities and processes. Argument preposing is concerned with the movement of an argument (DP) from a base-generated position to case feature position for activation and subsequently to another position for some other feature.

With an emphasis on the principles of minimalism—VP-Shell and Predicate Internal Subject Hypotheses (PISH), this study examines argument preposing from its base-generated position within the VP-Shell and then to a position known as A' position or non-argument position. Arguments are preposed in Ibibio for both syntactic and semantic reasons in the following cases: wh-movement, topicalization, left-dislocation, and clefting.

The Ibibio language has not received much attention in argument preposing. But Okon (2012) had discussed NP movement in Uda, one of the Ibibiod lects spoken in Mbo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Again, Udosen & Okon (2019) worked on NP movement to argument position saying that argument position is a case and theta role motivated position. Okon (2023) had also provided some research on interrogative word movement in Ibibio. However, none of these works have taken into account argument preposing from its base-generated position and then rising to the non-argument position from a minimalist perspective. The paper thus provides an in-depth discussion of argument preposing from its base-generated (VP-Shell) position within the minimal clause to the clausal left periphery using Chomsky's (1995) MP model. The analysis employs the Tense Phrase (TP) and Complementizer Phrase (CP) clausal domains. The study seeks to explain how simple rules constrained by general universal principles interact to explain a syntactic phenomenon in Ibibio.

Literature review

Argument preposing is simply a movement process in which an argument is displaced from the VP Shell or base-generated position to the sentential left periphery for some syntactic feature such as case and subsequently to the Spec-C^I for some semantic or focus feature. In other words, it involves moving an argument to the left side of the sentence. A movement action known as "posposing" occurs when a constituent is moved farther to the left within a phrase or sentence. Lasnik & Uriagereka (1988) refer to this movement type as 'leftward unbounded movement', because there is no restriction on the number of possible movements by the operator. Subjacency, which pertains to Move- α applications that are limited to crossing a single "bounding node," is a concept that is associated with preposing. The Subjacency Condition (SC) primarily states that each Move- α application should not be made across a "too large" distance, but rather should be made in a sequence of smaller hops so that the rule application's domains are close to one another. Because it is one step away, it is subservient. Additionally, Ndimele (2004) asserts that the SC is threatened by "long-distance" movement, or movement across more than one boundary node. Subjacency is the principle that limits the operation of the transformational rule of the Move- α . Preposing which also means movement is understood to mean copy and delete.

Overview of Argument and Argument Position

According to Radford (1988), an argument is a participant minimally involved in an action defined by the predicate. It is a nominal position for which a theta role can be assigned. A sentence such as:

1. 'Okon kicked the ball'.

contains two arguments i.e. Okon and the ball. Both arguments represent the two participants in the process of kicking. Okon refers to the agent, the initiator of the action of kicking, while the ball is the theme (i.e. the entity that has undergone the effect of some action). The theme usually occurs at the predicate part of the sentence. The predicate refers to as the verb and other categories that occur after it. In Chomskyan grammar, predicate refers to the verb that has meaning relation to nouns or nominal that co-occurs with it. The argument structure of a predicate explains a set of arguments associated with the subject and the thematic role that each subject plays in respect to the predicate.

Thus, the argument is a relational term for a constituent that acts or receives an action from the verb. The concept of movement within the minimalist syntax was first viewed from a syntactic reason and subsequently a semantic reason too. This means that every base-generated argument within the VP-Shell must be preposed to the argument position where its case feature can be activated. Ndimele (2004), Thráinsson (2007) & Okon (2012) identify two positions with respect to argument preposing. They are argument position and non-argument positions.

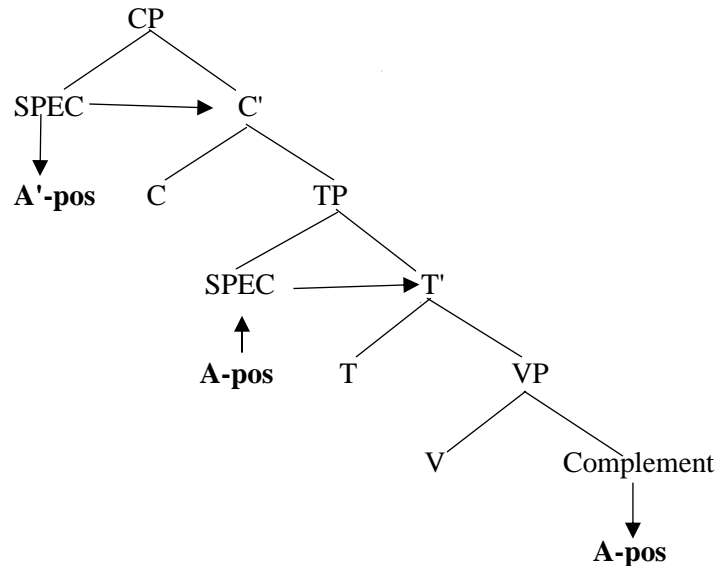
Argument Position (A-position)

Argument position is defined by Ndimele (2004), Thráinsson (2007), Okon (2012), Udosen & Okon (2019) as a position that allows theta role and case to be assigned. An overt nominal in the surface structure must occupy this usually unoccupied position. An argument is moved or preposed to take this place during the movement process. Ndimele (2004) points out that, ‘the category that undergoes A-movement and its null trace constitutes an A-chain’. This type of movement is case-motivated or feature-driven. A-movement, while normally obligatory, can sometimes be suspended. Argument movement (which involves Case-motivated movement of NPs) can be found in passives, ergative, middle sentences, and raising structures.

Non-Argument Position (A-bar Position)

According to Radford (2009), the non-argument position is a domain that can be occupied by adjuncts or arguments. The Government and Binding (GB) framework describes this position as actually not accessible for case and θ -role assignment. The non-argument position, often known as the A' (A-bar) position, is not transparent to government. Argument moves out of its minimal clause, i.e. out of its case motivated position within TP into the Spec-C' position (a position to the immediate left of C). The Spec-C' position is a position of prominence and focus. Arguments can only occupy this position if they are preposed from its case activated position to the left. The operation by which arguments move from an argument position into SPEC-C' (non-argument) position is that of movement. According to Ndimele (2004 p.102), this movement involves ‘the displacement of a constituent from a position to which case and θ -role are assignable into another position to which neither case nor θ -role is assigned’ (i.e. non-argument) position. The following tree diagram labelled (1) illustrates the clausal spines classified as Spec-TP and Spec-CP, respectively:

Diagram 1: Argument Position Schema



Thráinsson (2007: 173).

Thráinsson (2007), Okon (2012), Udosen & Okon (2019) & Okon (2023) observe that, case activation is within the A-position - the minimal clause. Here, a targeted constituent moves out of the VP-Shell into SPEC-T' position (i.e. a position where case and theta roles can be assigned). Thráinsson (2007) also observes that, within the A-bar position, a targeted constituent is moved outside its minimal clause, i.e. arguments are preposed into Spec-C' position, a focus position.

The Minimalist Program (MP)

The most recent version of Chomsky's (1995) transformational generative syntax is called the program (MP). In the view of minimalism, language is composed of two parts: the computing system and the lexicon. A phrase or clause's syntactic structure is produced by combining words that are taken one at a time from the mental lexicon. These objects are arranged by the computational system to generate a pair. In line with Radford (2009), a phrase or clause's derivation is the collection of syntactic operations, such as merger, movement, agreement, and case marking that are employed to create the necessary structure.

If a derivation converges at both the Phonetic Form and Logical Form levels, it is considered grammatical; if not, it crashes. The Spell-Out is the technical term for the point where PF and LF meet (Radford 2009). At this step, information relevant to the pairing of sound and meaning are supplied into the derivation. Stated differently, it is the stage of a derivation where distinct grammar

components handle phonetic and semantic data. It is believed that the computation system contains only those elements required to construct representations linking sign or sound to meaning. It is preferable to think of minimalism as an attempt to rationalize the GB model.

However, the economic tenets of procrastinate, greed, and the shortest move guide MP. According to Chomsky (1991), derivations must be as economical as possible in order to satisfy the notion of economy. This indicates that it is best to avoid applying rules that are not necessary. This is accomplished via minimalism by abandoning the complex Phrase Structure Grammar (PSG) rule system as well as a few of the many theories of the Government and Binding Theory. Sentence building is only the integration of meaning and sound. Adopting this paradigm makes sense because it assumes that arguments move for a variety of reasons, so that distinct layers of a construction will each be represented by a separate projection. Derivations are judged to be well-formed if they meet three major economy principles of MP stated above.

A. Shortest Move

This economy principle entails that a constituent moves to the closest accessible landing site in the computation process. Cook & Newson (2007) note that the range of possible positions is determined by the properties of the moving element. Movement of a constituent is hierarchical and cyclic. A DP undergoing A-movement cannot skip an A-position to move to another A-position. The same applies for a constituent undergoing A-bar movement. The shortest move is equivalent to the Subjacency Condition in earlier versions of the Principles and Parameters theory, and relativized minimality. This also corresponds to the Minimalist Link Condition (MLC) and emphasises that movement chain be kept in the minimum. The MP is not a complete departure from the GB.

B. Greed

A constituent moves in order to examine its own characteristics, not those of another constituent. Therefore, other than the moving element, this principle does not permit the satisfaction of other elements. Since case features can be verified at the argument's base position, an argument that is already in a case-marked position cannot be moved in order to verify its case features. According to Radford (1997), Marantz (1995) & Obiamalu (2015), such a movement will be selfish. It is also important to keep in mind that feature-checking drives the morphological features of movement operations.

C. Procrastinate

Anyanwu (2007) notes that procrastinate favours derivations that delay movement till after Spell-out as an economic concept. It is better to make movements that have no impact on PF than those that do. The last possibility for ensuring convergence is to break the procrastination rule. Hornstein et al. (2005:) assert that the [-interpretable] features must be removed before they reach LF in order to maintain Full Interpretation (FI) and prevent the derivation from crashing. This assertion is based on the MP's rationale.

Note that there should be no [-interpretable] feature. However, once they are present for whatever reason, the language faculty must use any means necessary to get rid of them because if they were not, the LF would not be able to interpret the objects that the computational system created. The only way to remove [-interpretable] features is through movement operations. The removal of [-interpretable] formal features is essentially the licensing checking operation. In view of the fact that every operation must be licensed, it follows that movement must comply with the Last Resort condition stated in Hornstein et al (2005: 293) thus:

Last Resort

A movement operation is licensed only if it allows the elimination of [-interpretable] formal features.

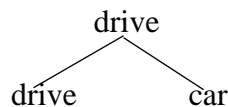
Collins (2002) maintains that it is not in all cases that movement is motivated by the need to satisfy the morphological properties of the moving element and that movement is not often blocked by greed. A strong assumption by Cook and Newson (2007) for the Procrastinate economy condition is that all movement operations must occur before Spell-out. For Chomsky (2015), Last Resort demands that every computational operation must serve a grammatical purpose.

Operations of the MP

In the computing system, the MP utilizes words from the lexicon in order to operate. The MP comprises four operations. Operation Select, Operation Merge, Operation Move, and Operation Check. The processes do not operate concurrently and operate on the notion of division of labour.

- a. **Operation Select:** Anyanwu (2007) states that operation Select targets the needed items from the lexicon (heads and their complements) and ensures they are appropriately selected. This is actually the starting point of derivation. A derivation is a sequence of symbolic elements *S* mapped from a numeration *N*, such that the last number of *S* is a pair.
- b. **Operation Merge:** This is an operation that builds structures where a derivation is built from bottom-up. Merging entails two compatible entities coming together to form a grammatical unit. Udosen & Okon (2022) maintain that two or more nouns can be merged for a nominal compound to be derived. It is defined by two syntactic objects that are joined together in a pair-wise fashion following a binary pattern.

Diagram 2: Simple merge



Obiamalu (2015: 13)

A crucial assumption in the literature is that the MP is derivational rather than representational. Structures are built in piecemeal from bottom (innermost VP-Shell following Larson's (1988) split-VP analysis) to top (most peripheral Force Phrase) following Rizzi's (1997) split-CP hypothesis).

Constructions with Non-Argument Position in Ibibio

The Ibibio language attests the following syntactic operations in which arguments are preposed from the VP-Shell to Spec-TP and subsequently to the clausal left periphery of the sentence: interrogative word movement, topicalisation, left-dislocation and focusing. The processes are discussed below:

Interrogative Operators in Ibibio

The Ibibio interrogative words attest two patterns; The *wh*-words and the *wh*- non-in-situ.

Ibibio *wh*-words in subject in-situ position

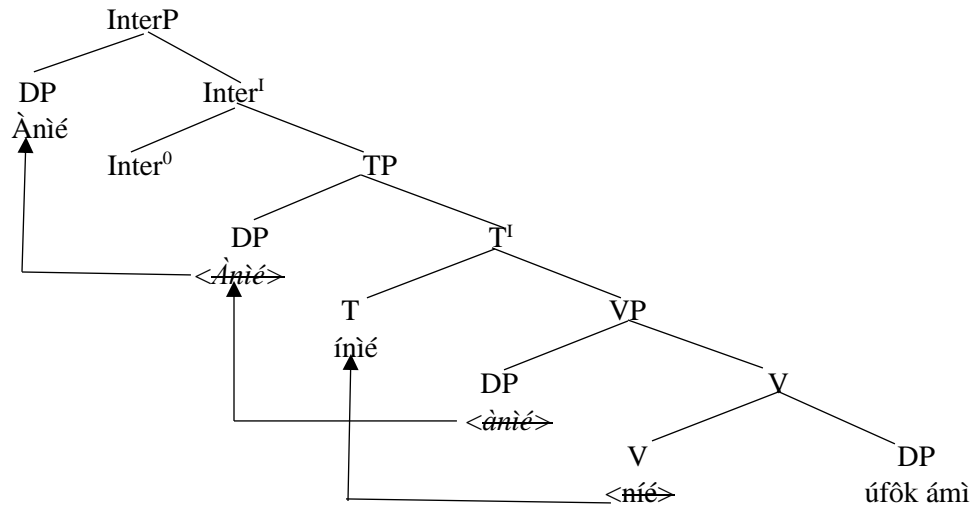
The Ibibio interrogative argument or operator can be base-generated in the same position as the substantive nominal it is used to query. This shows that the Ibibio language is a *wh*-in-situ language with respect to the universal parameter about *wh*-movement. Here, the interrogative words can occur in the subject position in the basic word order (SVO) as shown with *ànié* 'who' in (2), *ákèé* 'which' in (3) in the examples below:

2. Ànié í níé úfòk ámì?
 Who 3SG has house this
 'Who owns this house?'

3. Ákèé úfòk í dòm?
 Which house 3SG be
 'Which house is this?'

The interrogative operators, *ànié* 'who in example (2)' *ákèé* 'which' in example (3) are generated in-situ in the subject position.

Diagram 3: Interrogative operator in subject-in-situ



In this configuration, the lexical (=V) *níé* ‘has’ is merged with its complement argument *úfòk àmì* ‘this house to form the V *níé úfòk àmì*, ‘has this house’ The V is then merged with the DP, *ànié* ‘who’ to form the VP structure. The VP structure is further merged with T-bar and subsequently with TP. Observe that the interrogative subject argument *ànié* ‘who’ which is based generated within the VP moves to a position within the minimal clause. The EPP feature on T requires as its subject a constituent which it agrees with in person and number; hence the displacement of the interrogative argument *ànié* ‘who’ to a position where it can be properly queried. The argument subject is further queried in the InterP and activation of its nominative case feature. Olaogun (2016) & Nweya (2018) maintain that the licensing of interrogatives takes place in overt syntax by movement of the TP to the Spec of InterP, given the Earliness Principle which states that linguistic operations must apply as early in a derivation as possible. Thus, following Nkemnji (1995), Aboh & Pfau (2011), the movement of *wh*-phrase takes place at LF for focusing so as to delimit the question.

Ibibio *wh*-operator in object in-situ position

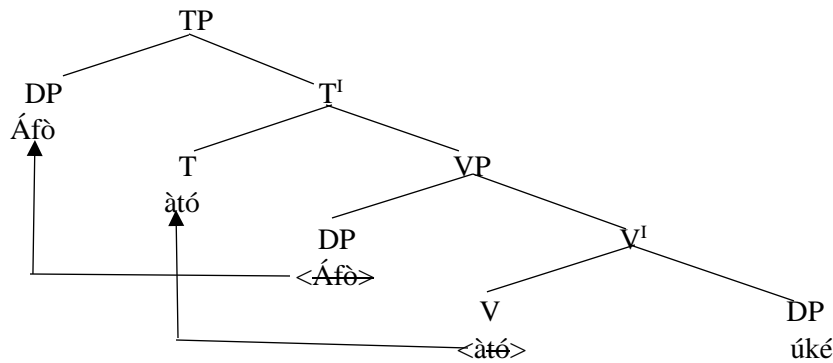
It is also possible for interrogative argument in Ibibio to be generated in-situ at the object position as demonstrated in the following examples:

4. Áfò à tó úké?
 you 2SG come where
 You come from where?

5. Áfò à kèré dìé?
 you 2SG call what
 You are called what?

It is observed that the interrogative arguments *úké* ‘where’ in example (4) and *dìé* ‘what’ in example (5) occur as objects of the verb *tó* ‘come from’ in (4), *kèré* ‘call’ in (5) respectively. The verbs in each case assign accusative Case to their accompanying interrogative arguments. For instance, *tó* ‘come from’ in (4) assigns accusative Case to the interrogative argument *úké* ‘where’ under Merge. Consider the sentence in example (4) in diagram (4) thus:

Diagram 4: Interrogative operator in object-in-situ



From the diagram above, it is observed that the object interrogative argument is base-generated at the object in-situ position. The argument phrase, *úké* ‘where’ is assigned accusative case by the verb *tó* ‘come from’ through the Merge Condition. The subject, *áfò* ‘you’ is raised from its base-generated, Spec-VP position to Spec-TP for its case feature to be activated. If these interrogative arguments in examples (4) and (5) must occur at sentence-initial position, they must be preceded by the focus marker *ké* which is the case for *wh*-words in non-in-situ position. Thus, from the data presented above in examples (4) and (5), it is observed that the Ibibio language exhibits the main characteristics of a *wh*-in-situ language. The next section covers discussions on *wh*-words in non-in-situ position.

Ibibio *wh*-operators in non-in-situ position

In the Ibibio language, it is possible for an interrogative argument to be moved to the left periphery of the sentence. Once a *wh*-expression is moved, it is obligatorily followed by a focus marker *ké*. It is pertinent to remark that the focus marker *ké* is absent when the interrogative arguments occur rightward as in examples (4) – (5) above. Below are data to illustrate this contrast.

6a. Àfò à- kéré dié?
 You 2SG call how
 You are called what?

6b. Dié ké àfò à kéré?
 How [FOC] you 2SG call
 What are you called?

7a. Ènò à ké kâ úké?
 Eno 3SG PST go where
 Eno went where?

7b. Úké ké Ènò à ké kâ?
 Where [FOC] Eno 3SG PST go
 Where did Eno go?

8a. Nnyìn ì tó àñkéé úfòk?
 We 1PLU come from which family
 We come from which family?

8b. Àñkéé úfòk ké nnyìn ì tó?
 Which family [FOC] we 1PL come from
 Which family do we come from?

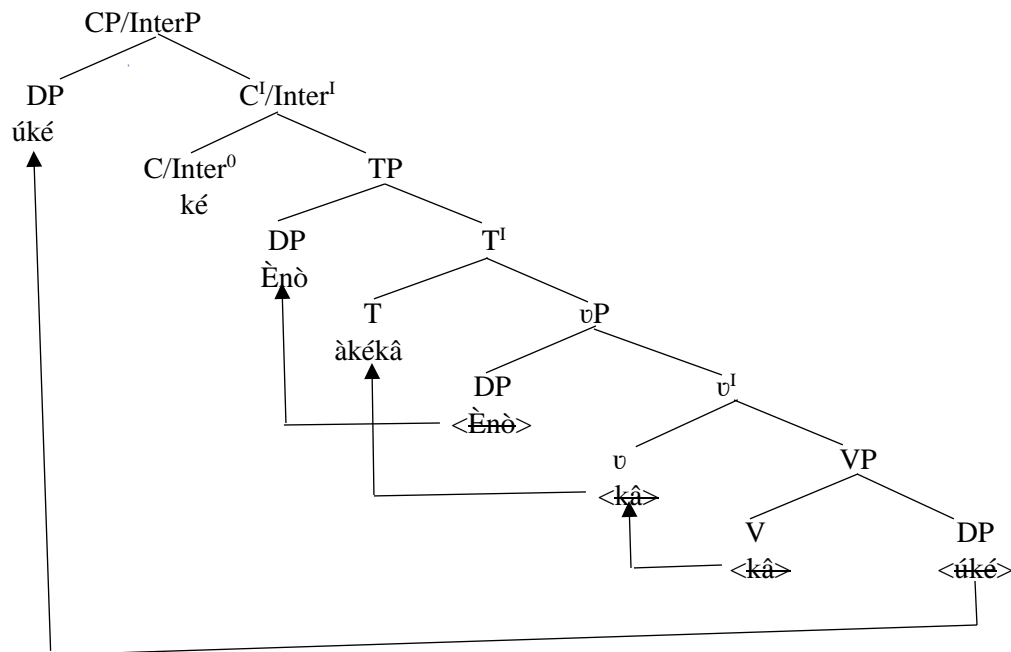
9a. Òkón á níé àfòñ ifàñ?
 Òkón 3SG has cloth how many
 Òkón has how many clothes?

9b. Àfòñ ifàñ ké Òkón á níé?
 Cloth how many [FOC] Okon 3SG has
 How many clothes does Òkón have?

9c. *Àfòñ ifàñ Òkón á níé?
 Cloth how many Okon 3SG has.

It is to be noted that the (6a – 9a) examples do not suggest maintaining any derivational history for the (6b) – (9b) examples. Rather, they are presented for comparative reason. Observe that the subjects in (6b) – (9b) originate internally within the VP containing the relevant verb and from there are moved into Spec-T where case feature is checked. Diagram (5) illustrates the fact that the interrogative argument phrase or operator moves out of its minimal clause to the left periphery (Spec-CP) of the sentence in order to check the interrogative specifier feature within the domain.

Diagram 5: Non-in-situ interrogative operator preposing



From the above diagram, operations Select and Merge apply to the derivation as follows: the interrogative argument *úké* ‘where’ merges with the verb *àkékâ* to form the VP. Since θ -role is assigned under Merge, the verb *kâ* ‘go’ assigns the θ -role THEME, to the interrogative argument *úké* ‘where’. The VP is subsequently merged with a null light performative verb to form v^I . It is the strong feature of the light v that attracts the lexical verb to adjoin to it. *Ënò* is selected and merged with v to form vP . The domain of vP is sent to PF and LF for appropriate interpretation. Further computation proceeds with the merging of T with vP to form T^I . The V moves further to value its T-features. It is important to note that the locus of nominative case and subject-verb agreement for a sentence of this nature is on T. This is so because T carries a complete set of person, number and agreement features in the language and it (T) also probes for the closest goal in its c-command domain to value its unvalued features. *Ënò* satisfies this requirement because its ϕ -features are yet to be valued. It values them on T via Agree. The EPP feature on T attracts the external argument to move and occupy its Spec position forming the TP.

Subsequently, TP is merged with the overt focus marker, *ké* which is base-generated at the complementizer node. *Ké* probes for a goal, *úké* ‘where’, hence; the displacement of *úké* ‘where’ to the C-commanding domain of *ké*, the focus marker. Observe that the interrogative phrase *úké* is preposed to occupy the Spec-C¹ position, which is referred to as the left periphery. The study also postulates that the focus marker *ké* corresponds to the *do* support in English. The focus marker in Ibibio occupies the complementiser position just as it is in English. Also note that it is the edge feature of C that attracts an interrogative expression to move to the specifier position on the edge

of CP. C marks interrogative force in diagram (5). The *wh*-feature is checked in the Spec-CP against the feature [+wh] in C. It is also important to state that *úké* ‘where’ which is copied to the Spec must satisfy AGR condition imposed by UG. *Úké* ‘where’ is assigned accusative Case under Merge by the verb *ká* ‘go’. Observe too that the sentence in example (9c) crashes out of derivation because the occurrence of *díé* ‘why’ is to be obligatorily followed by a base-generated focus marker *ké*. Okon (2023) notes that arguments which are merged with the verb as complement as well as a Prepositional Phrase complement can undergo this leftward movement to the Spec-CP position.

Topicalisation in Ibibio

The language expresses this phenomenon of placing communicative prominence by preposing the argument of the verb as well as merging it with a base-generated *ké* topic marker in overt syntax. Consider the following examples:

10a. Èmèm à má Òkón.
 Emem 3SG like Okon
 Emem likes Okon.’

10b. Òkón ke Èmèm à má.
 Okon [FOC] Emem 3SG like
 Okon, Emem likes.’

11a. Àmì m̀- má- díá èdésì.
 I 1SG PST eat rice
 I ate rice.

11b. Èdésì ke àmì ń ké díá.
 Rice [FOC] I 1SG PST eat
 Rice, I ate.

12a. Ètìm á díá àkòtì.
 Etim 3SG eat beans
 Etim eats beans.

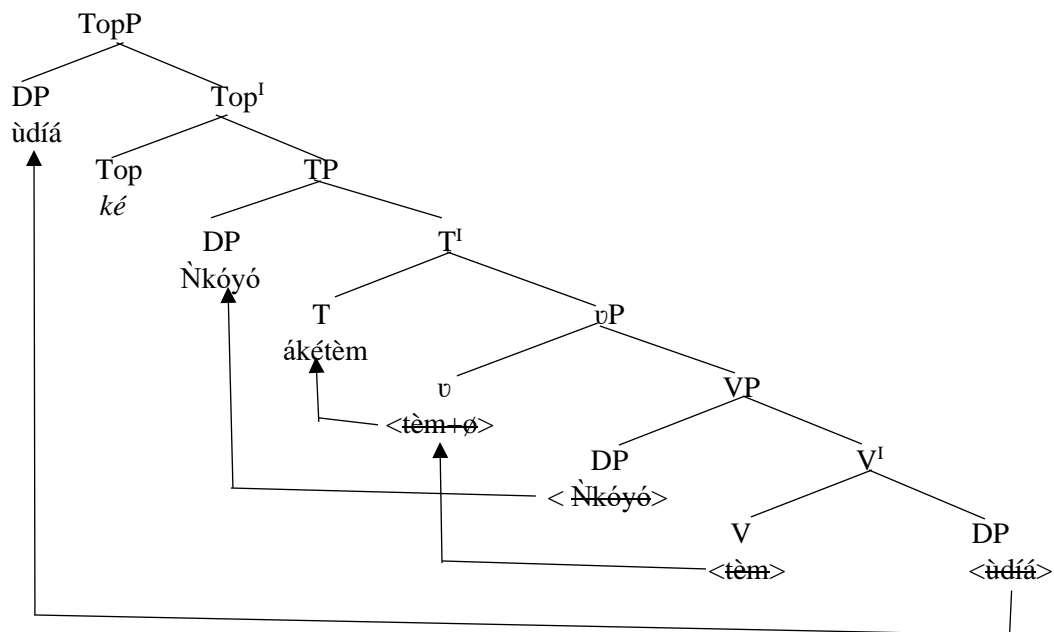
12b. Àkòtì ke Ètìm á díá.
 Beans [FOC] Etim 3SG eat
 Beans, Etim eats.

13a. Ñkóyó á má- á tèm ùdíá.
 Nkoyo 3SG PST 3SG cook yam
 Nkoyo cooked yam.

13b. Ùdíá ké Ñkóyò á ké tèm.
 yam [FOC] Nkoyo 3SG PST cook
 Yam, Ñkóyò cooked.

In the movement type, represented by the above sentences, there is a change in position of the direct object of the verb to a position outside the minimal clause. Thus, the internal argument *Òkón* in example (10a), *èdési*, 'rice' in example (11a), *àkòtì* 'beans' in example (12a) and *ùdíá* 'yam' in example (13a) are topicalised in (10b) – (13b) examples. It should also be observed that movement of these arguments results in emphasis being placed on them with the merging of the topic marker *ké*. Topicalisation involves a leftward extraction to the inter-clausal domain – Spec-CP as seen in the (10b) – (13b) examples. Based on the assumption of Split-CP projections discussed by Rizzi (2003), topic expressions which occur at the beginning of clauses are said to be contained within a TopP headed by an abstract topic constituent. The tree diagram below is a representation of sentence (13b)

Diagram 6: Topicalised preposed argument



This derivation begins by merging the verb, *tèm* 'cook' with its complement argument, *ùdíá* 'yam' to satisfy the c-selection requirement of the head while the subject argument, *Ìkóyó* is merged in Spec-VP to satisfy the PISH assumption that subjects originate internally within the VP. The EPP feature on the T attracts the argument *Ìkóyó* to be raised to Spec-T where its case feature can be checked. In other words, it is supposed that *Ìkóyó* is directly merged with Spec-T in order to satisfy the EPP requirement for T to project a nominal specifier to form the TP. The derivation further merges TP and subsequently with the CP identified as Topic Phrase (TopP). This is necessary so that the preposed argument generated within the VP can be given a topic function. Observe that the movement of *Ìkóyó* generated within the minimal clause is in a successive cyclic manner in

conformity with the Relativised Minimality Condition which requires an A-moved constituent to become the specifier of the closest T constituent above it. In contrast, the movement of *ùdíá* ‘yam’ generated as the complement of *tèm* ‘cook’ within VP is unbounded. The *ké* marker is base-generated as the head of TopP. As soon as the structure is formed, the topic marker, *ké* acts as probe and searches for an argument which it c-commands to occupy the Spec-CP. The only nominal goal c-commanded by the focus marker *ké* within the structure is the complement of the verb, that is, *ùdíá* ‘yam’. Hence, *ùdíá* is given more communicative prominence beyond other constituents in the derivation. The object complement of the verb *ùdíá* ‘yam’ is assigned accusative Case by the verb through Merge operation.

Left-dislocation in Ibibio

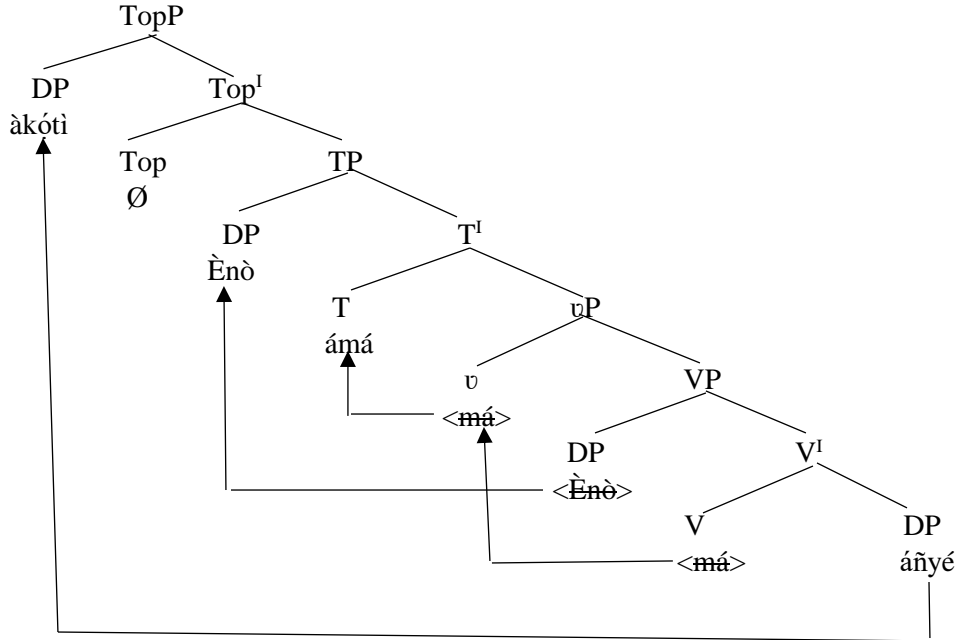
This is a process in Ibibio in which a constituent is moved from its intra-clausal domain to the inter-clausal left periphery within the same syntactic structure. In this type of A- bar movement, a constituent is moved outside the minimal clause. Just like in topicalisation, emphasis or prominence is placed on a particular constituent than other constituents within the construction. Many languages attest different ways of deriving a left-dislocation operation. In the Ibibio language, left-dislocation leaves behind at the site of the dislocated element, an overt pronominal copy of the left-dislocated constituent. The following examples illustrate this:

- 14a. Àmì m- má Òkón.
I 1SG love Okon.
I love Okon.
- 14b. Òkón, àmì m- má àñyé.
Okon I 1SG love him
Okon, I love him’.
- 15a. Ènò a- má àkòtì.
Eno 3SG like beans
Eno likes beans.
- 15b. Àkòtì, Ènò á má áñyé.
Beans Eno 3SG like it
Beans, Eno likes It.
- 16a. Ètìm á- má Àfìdñ mme Ìkwó.
Etim 3SG love Àfìdñ and Ìkwó
Etim loves Àfìdñ and Ìkwó.
- 16b. Àfìdñ mme Ìkwó, Ètìm á- má àmmó.
Àfìdñ and Ìkwó, Etim 3SG love them
Àfìdñ and Ìkwó, Etim loves them.
- 17a. Ùdèmé á- sák Énò.
Udeme 3SG laugh Eno
Udeme laughs at Eno.

17b *Ènò, Ùdèmé á sák _
 Eno, Udeme 3SG laugh
 Eno_i Udeme laughs.

Consider the diagram below for a structural illustration

Diagram 7: Argument Preposing in left-dislocation



In accordance with the PISH, that is the assumption that the subject of a sentence originates internally within the VP node, Ènò is raised from its base-generated position into Spec-TP to check its nominative case. The movement of the subject argument Ènò is to satisfy the EPP Condition which specifies that an uninterpretable feature on a probe is deleted by movement of the closest active goal of the relevant type to become the specifier of the probe. As shown in diagram 7 above, the constituent 'àkòtì' 'beans' which was assigned accusative Case under the Merge condition by the VP has moved from its base-generated position to an inter-clausal domain in the left periphery of the sentence. Note that áñyè 'it' is the overt pronominal element of (àkòtì) 'beans'. Áñyè must also be described as an overt trace or resumptive pronoun which is coreferential with the preposed argument, àkòtì'.

This paper argues that the overt trace element áñyè 'it' is not a violation of the Inclusiveness Condition (IC), a grammatical principle proposed by (Chomsky, 1999). The principle bars the introduction of new elements (features) in the course of derivation. It is argued here that the (14b) – (16b) derivations converged due to the presence of the resumptive pronoun. But in (17b), the sentence crashes as a result of its absence. Therefore, the resumptive pronoun is necessary for left-

dislocated derivations to converge in the Ibibio language. From the above sentences, it is clear that *àñyé* ‘it’ in examples (14b – 15b) and *àmmó* ‘them’ in example (16b) are mere resumptive pronouns referring to *Òkón*, *àkòtì*, and *Àfìdòñ mme Ìkwó* respectively. Thus, *àñyé* ‘him/it’ and *àmmó* ‘them’ are not new elements but copies that are coreferential with *Òkón*, *àkòtì*, *Àfìdòñ mme Ìkwó*, the displaced and preposed arguments. This confirms what Trask (1993) says about left-dislocation that it involves a resumptive pronoun which occurs in the non-dislocated part of the sentence and which is coreferential with a dislocated argument. Comparatively, left-dislocated arguments are separated with the punctuation mark, ‘comma’ from the rest of the sentence in addition to the pronominal copies left behind as a result of movement.

Semantically, left-dislocation serves to mark topic-comment in an explicit manner. It is observed that the left-dislocated arguments stand outside the minimal clause. The other part of the sentence which accommodates the resumptive pronoun can be described as a relatively autonomous or independent clause. For instance: *àkòtì* can be detached from the string in (15b) above and the derivation would still converge as shown below:

18. Ènò á má áñyé.
 Eno 3SG love him
 Eno loves him.

The above sentence becomes clearer if the speaker and the hearer share the same discourse.

Focusing in Ibibio

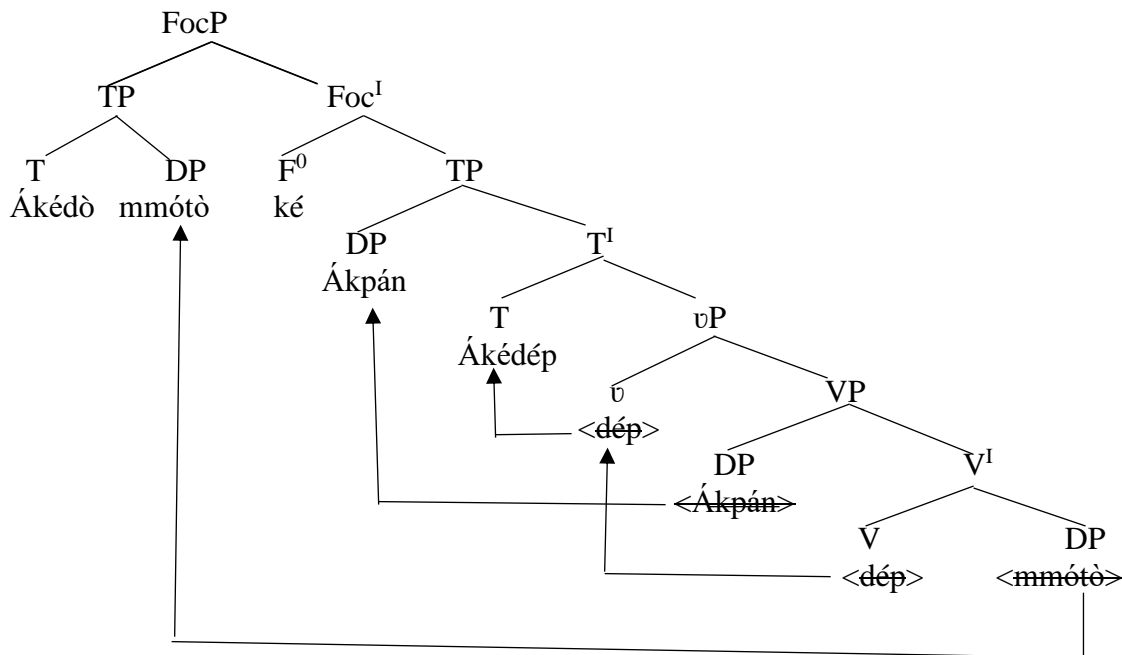
Focusing is also related to giving prominence to a constituent over and above surrounding constituents in a construction. Focusing is achieved through clefting. Clefts typically put a particular constituent into focus. In Ibibio, clefting is characterised by the presence of a particle *ké* as the following examples demonstrate:

- 19a. Ákpán á- ké- dép mmótò.
 Akpan 3SG PST buy car
 Akpan bought a car.
- 19b. Á- ké- dò mmótò ké Ákpán á- ké- dép.
 3SG PST be car [REL] Akpan 3SG PST buy
 It was a car that Akpan bought.
- 20a. Ètìm á- ké- díá àkòtì.
 Etim 3SG PST eat beans
 Etim ate beans.
- 20b. Á- ké- dò àkòtì ké Ètìm á- ké- díá.
 3SG PST be beans [REL] Etim 3SG PST eat
 It was beans that Etim ate.
- 21a. Éyò á- ké- wót ébód ké úfòk.
 Eyo 3SG PST kill goat PREP. house
 Eyo killed a goat at home.

- 21b. *Á- ké- dò ké úfòk ké Éyò á- ké- wót ébót.*
 3SG PST be PREP. home [REL] Eyo 3SG PST kill goat
 It was at home that Eyo killed a goat.
- 22a. *Ímá á- ké- dí úfòk àmì.*
 Ima 3SG PST come house this
 Ima came to this house.
- 22b. *Á- ké- dò úfòk àmì ké Ímá á- ké- dí.*
 3SG PST be house this [REL] Ima 3SG PST come
 It was this house that Ima came.

An illustration with a tree diagram using sentence (19b) is given below:

Diagram 8: Argument Preposing in clefting



As illustrated in the diagram, movement of the argument *Ákpán* occurs in a successive cyclic fashion within the intra-clausal domain in order not to violate the Relativised Minimality Condition, (RMC). *Ákpán* moves to satisfy the EPP requirement that an active goal must move to become the specifier of the probe. *Ákpán* moves to activate its nominative Case feature. The subject argument also enters an Agree relationship with T in the lower clause with its ϕ -features before moving to Spec TP to satisfy the EPP feature of T. It is also important to note that *Ákédò* ‘it was’ is a clause with an expletive *it* in English. In Ibibio, this peripheral clause is introduced by the third person singular marker *Á*, a past tense marker *ké* and the auxiliary *dò* ‘be’ to be *ákédò* ‘it was’. It is the unit that introduces the cleft argument.

The other type of movement is the inter-clausal where the targeted argument expression moves out of its minimal clause to the left periphery of the sentence structure (Spec-CP), a domain where some pragmatic information can be obtained. This paper establishes that the particle *ké* in this instance functions as the relativiser in which the preposed argument (the direct object of the verb, *mmótò* ‘car’) can be focused properly or brought into sharp contrast with other surrounding constituents of the sentence. Given the copy theory of movement, the angle brackets indicate that the element or constituent in the brackets has been moved. It is also important to note that the constituent so moved in each construction occurs in two places or more. This underscores the conception of movement in current Minimalist Theory as several occurrences of one constituent. Napoli (1996) in Ejiófor (2010) maintains that trace is a term which minimalism has redefined to mean copy. In this theory, there is no real movement per se. Instead, one node is copied into another node. Hence, there are no traces in this theory. When this happens, the highest copy is spelt out and pronounced in the PF component.

Conclusion

Argument preposing is an expression used to refer to a movement operation that moves an argument further to the left inside a sentence or phrase. The Minimalist Program was chosen as the analytical framework. MP places a strong emphasis on feature checking as the justification for moving an argument within a derivation. Phrases, clauses, and sentences can be generated through the various MP operations with the lexical elements taken from the lexicon. The computational system of human language requires two interfaces - the Phonetic Form (PF) and Logical Form (LF). These interfaces are crucial if a language is to be understood as the pairing of sound and meaning. This paper reiterates the fact that language is innate in our genes and follows that grammar and grammatical rules are part of natural endowment. The MP presents the syntax of a language as a computational system that links phonology and semantics. Arguments move to different positions for different reasons. The work argued that every subject of a derivation is base-generated within the VP-Shell and subsequently raised or preposed to occupy the Spec-TP for its Nominative Case feature activation. This idea is contained in PISH, one of the tenets of MP concerned with the syntax of the subjects. The following processes have been identified as syntactic phenomena that determine argument preposing: wh-movement, topicalisation, left-dislocation and clefting. In Ibíbio, it is revealed that the interrogative word can be base-generated. In this case, the interrogative arguments can occur both as the subject of the sentence and object of the verb. The Wh-argument that moves to occupy the Spec-TP is equally preposed to the Inter-Phrase (InterP.) for the interrogative argument to be properly queried. It is also revealed that interrogative arguments which occur as the objects of the verb can be preposed. Once they are moved, they are obligatorily followed by a base-generated *ké* focus marker. In Ibíbio, the internal arguments can be topicalised by movement. When this is done, the internal argument moves to occupy the SPEC-CP for a semantic feature to be checked. It is equally revealed that a topicalised argument is immediately followed by a *ke* focus marker which also makes the constituent of prominence more explicit among

others within the same syntactic structure. Apart from placing emphasis on a constituent over other constituents in a construction, left dislocation entails the presence of an overt trace in the form of a resumptive pronoun which refers to the left-dislocated argument. It is remarked that the resumptive element is not a violation of the Inclusiveness but derivations converge due to its presence. In relation to clefting, it is revealed that the *ké* focus marker is used as a relativiser to introduce the next clause which modifies the cleft argument. In this process, constituents move to occupy the SPEC-CP. The direct object, indirect object of the verb as well as the prepositional complement can be focused with the focus marker, *ké* in the language. The subject argument lacks the presence of the focus marker or the relativiser. This is because, the subject position is already a position of prominence. This *ke* particle plays multi-syntactic functions in the language. For interrogative constructions, the *ke* particle functions as an auxiliary in addition to probing for question while that of topic construction is concerned with prominence. The *ke* particle is a relativiser in clefting. Argument preposing relates to two different positions (i.e. argument position- Spec-TP and non-argument position Spec-CP).

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