The Status of Si in Yoruba

Olabode Abimbola
University of Ibadan

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Olabode TAbimbola, Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, 200284.
E-mail: orlar657@gmail.com

This paper examines the syntax of sentential conjunction in the Yoruba language with the view of ascertaining the actual syntactic function of si on which opinions have been polarized in the syntax of Yoruba grammar. This paper argues that the Yoruba language has a sentential/clausal conjunction element but its structural position is not between the two clauses. The researcher conducted a series of structured interviews and also consulted existing works targeting the si in compound clauses so as to generate the data for the research. The research adopts the Minimalist Program (MP) as its theoretical tool for the analyses presented in the article. MP views syntactic derivations as resulting from computational systems whose operations are based on operation Select and operation Merge. Syntactic structures are built in a pair-wise fashion from bottom to top by putting two items together at a time. The research shows that there are three different si in Yoruba occurring in seemingly similar environment but they are performing different syntactic functions. One si denotes "emphasis" as a preverbal element; the second one denotes "consecutiveness of action" while the third one performs the function of sentential/clausal conjunction, an overt realization of the in the second clause. The overtly marked sentential/clausal conjunction also has a variant, which is an abstract realization between the two conjoined clauses.

Keywords: si, emphasis, consecutiveness, conjunction, sentential conjunction, minimalist program

In the Minimalist Program literature (hence, MP) there are several publications on the nature of sentence types and derivations (Pollock, 1989; Chomsky, 1991, 1993, 1995; Rizzi, 1997; Ajiboye 2005; Ajongolo, 2005; Abimbola, 2014; Olaogun 2016). Compound structures have been identified in MP as projections of the conjunction head (hence, Conj0) whose maximal projection is conjunction phrase (hence, ConjP). ConjP as a functional projection combines two or more Tense Phrases1 (TPs, i.e. TP1 and TP2 TPn) in presyntactic computations together to form compound sentence constructions. Compound sentences are known to consist of two different clauses joined by a conjunction, in addition to having the two clauses as separable. Within Yoruba linguistics, opinions are still polarized concerning one of the sentence conjunctions in Yoruba.

In the traditional grammar of the language si is regarded functionally as the sentence conjunction. Scholars who hold this view are Bamgbose (1990), Yusuf (1980, 1999) among others. We shall regard this hypothesis as the first school of thought. But some scholars do not agree on the presence of sentential conjunction in Yoruba and out rightly disagree with the first school of thought on si as the actual sentential/clausal marker of conjunction. Awobulu (1978; 2001; 2008; 2013) and Ilori (2010) hold the view that Yoruba does not have sentential conjunction, constituting the second school of thought. But there is no known work that has considered the status of si in Yoruba grammar. This is the gap this research intends to fill using the Minimalist Program.

Based on the behavior of conjunctions, conjoined constituents are said to be on either sides of the conjunction element. It is observed, however, that

---

1 Yoruba clause structure has been identified as having a tense head represented by T0, and TP re ten as a maximal category, Ilori (2010); Oduntan (2000); among others. Other abbreviations used in this work include: * - ungrammatical structure/sentence; MP – Minimalist Program; Conj0/Conj – conjunction head; ConjP – Conjunction phrase; ConjII – extended projection of ConjP; TP1 and TP2 – clause one and two in conjoined sentences; T1 – intermediate category/projection of tense phrase; Fig. – figure; DP – Determiner Phrase; D/Det – Determiner; MaxP – Maximal Projection of a given phrasal category; CA – consecutive Action; emph – emphasis; S – sentence; pet – past tense; pres – present tense; prep – preposition; Ex-DP – external argument DP; foc – Focus head of Focus construction; VP – light verb/external VP shell; v1 – intermediate category/projection of VP; α, β – variables; Adv – Adverb.
si behaves differently and hence we investigate the behavior of the item if truly it is actually a conjunction as it has been classified traditionally and speculated in the language or whether it is a preverbal adverb as first mentioned by Awobuluyi (1978). Figure 1 is an example of compound sentence in Yoruba while Fig. 2 indicates the two clauses:

```
[TP Olá ra ẹran, ó sì jẹ ẹ]
[TP Olá buy:pst meat, he si eat:pst it]
"Ola bought meat and ate it"
```

**Figure 1.** A compound sentence in Yoruba.

```
[TP1 Olá ra ẹran], sì [TP2 Olá jẹ ẹ]
[TP1 Olá buy:pst meat], conj [TP2 Olá eat:pst it]
"Ola bought meat, Ola ate it"
```

**Figure 2.** Conjoined clauses: TP1 and TP2.

```
[TP]Jésù sì sókún\] (The Holy Bible: Matthew 11:35)
[TP]Jesus si cry:pst
"Jesus wept"
```

**Figure 3.** A mono-clausal construction with Si.

Figure 2 represents the two clauses in Figure 1 where the bracketed TP1 is clause1 and clause2 is TP2 and si is regarded as the linker between the two clauses, an item which is noticeable to occur consistently after the subject DP. Figure 3 is an example of mono-clausal construction where is occurs independently without the second clause.²

**Materials and Methods**

**Aims of the Research**

It should be noted that the status of si in the grammar of Yoruba language is still unknown. This paper aims to fill this vacuum. It will also examine the derivation of sentences involving clausal conjunction. Apart from the aforementioned goals, it will also investigate the possibility of the item being two in Yoruba. To archive the aforementioned aims, the following research questions are developed to guide the analysis presented here:

- What are the inadequacies in the analyses of conjoined sentences?
- Does the Yoruba language have an overt realization of sentence conjunction marker?
- If the language has a sentence conjunction marker, what is its form?

² Clauses of this sort are discussed in section 5.2. of this work in detail. However, curious reader could read Awobuluyi (1978, 2001) among others.

---

**The Minimalist Program**

The Minimalist Program (hence, MP) propounded by Chomsky (1995, 2000) among others, is adopted for the analysis of this work. MP is a theory that builds on economic principles in the derivation of syntactic structures. It is a more natural and general approach to language (Ouhalla, 1999). MP views the human cognitive system as a computational system similar to that of a computer and uses a limited set of mechanisms and constraints to provide adequate explanation to language structures. MP’s assumptions significantly deviated from its offshoot – Principles and Parameters’ theory and other models of Generative Grammar - by eliminating theory internal levels of representation such as D-structure and S-structure. The Computational System of Human Language (C\textsubscript{H\textsubscript{L}}) in MP is regulated by a principle called the Inclusiveness condition, which assumes that a derivation of a syntactic structure can be built only from the items specified in the numeration (Radford). The numeration serves as the spring-board for the computation where items are first selected into from the lexicon. The lexicon consists of lexical items (LI) used in the computational processes.

MP adopts minimal operations for computational processes: Operation Select, and Operation Merge, Agree, Transfer and Spell-Out.

- **Operation Select** is used to choose from the list of Lexical Items (LIs) available in the lexicon into the numeration for further computation.
- **Operation Merge** is a binary operation that combines two LIs to derive a Syntactic Object (SO). The by-product of merge operations is endocentric, so that when Merge groups two LIs, one of them projects maximally; for instance, if merge combines two elements X and Y, the resulting phrase takes its label from either X or Y (Collins, 2011) e.g. merge (X, Y) = \{X, Y\} = XP. Merge can be divided in two: internal and external merge. Internal merge is concerned with SOs that enter the derivation but have to undergo another merge operation. External merge only targets merger of SOs that enter the derivation from the lexicon.
- **Agree** is the mechanism responsible for the matching of features for onward valuation of unvalued features, i.e., a situation where a head looks for matching features in its c-commanding domain.
- **Transfer** is an operation in narrow syntax that ships derivation to the interfaces, i.e., LF and PF.
- **Spell Out** is the point of interpretation at either the PF or LF.
- This theory determines the structural
representations drawn in this work. Also, the data analyzed were subjected to theoretical analysis.

**Results**

The materials for the study include: a) a primary data source where structured interviews were conducted in English and the responses were given in Yoruba by randomly selected Yoruba speakers; b) secondary sources were also consulted, including existing works on Yoruba grammar.

**A Review of Existing Works on Sì**

Scores of Yorùbá grammarians and linguists have examined the sì and opinions remain polarised on the conjunction sì in the language. Scholars like Yusuf (1980), Bamgbose (1980), Awobuluyi (1978) and Ilori (2010) among others have discussed conjunctions in Yorùbá. Conjunction has been variously defined, it is said to link two or more items together. In Yorùbá, there are basically two types of conjunctions regarding the items they can conjoin. Ogunbowale (1970, p. 95), cited in Yusuf (1980, p. 2), defines conjunction as, “a word which links part of speech or sentences together”. This means that conjunctions that are used to connect two words, phrases, or sentences together do occur in between the words, phrases, or sentences that are being connected. As implied, from this analogy, conjunctions acts like the concrete between two bricks holding them together. Consider the following examples;

As evident from the data presented above in Figure 4 and Figure 5, one could deduce that the conjunction àti/pèlú are DP conjunctions and cannot be used to connect DP and a clause/sentence together as seen in Fig. 6, any attempt to make àti/pèlú function in similar structures as Figure 6 would yield ungrammatical sentence structure in Yoruba language.

**Yusuf’s (1980) View on Sì**

Yusuf (1980) is one of the earliest scholarly works found on sì and his view has some theoretical implications and shortcomings as first observed by Ilori (2010). First, the lowering of sì to the position after the subject DP is rightward. This is not theoretically possible in Minimalist assumptions. This is because MP does not allow rightward movement. Secondly, clauses are generated from the list of lexical items selected from the lexicon, made available in the lexical sub-array, i.e., where computation begins, resulting in clausal architectures built from the Merge operation of two basic elements {α and β} with projection towards the leftward movement or Left periphery. This being so, there is no point where an item that enters late in the derivation can ‘move down’ to what has already been computed in the derivation. Judging by the ways conjunction elements in the language behave (even those Awobuluyi (1978) referred to as disjunctions) usually stand in between the elements being conjoined together and none of them moves rightward. Yusuf’s representation is provided below in Figure 7 and Figure 8.

As evident in Figure 7 and Figure 8, the structures
projected are not allowed in Minimalism. Apart from this, neither of Figure 7 and Figure 8 are possible structures in Minimalism. Figure 7 is not endocentric, i.e., it is not the projection of the conjunction head and so it is not allowed in MP. Figure 8 does not have a head of its own; besides the use "Si" is alien to MP.

**Awobuluyi’s View (1978 & 2008) on Si**

Traditionally, åmọ, sùgbón and si were identified as the clausal conjunctions in the language. But Awobuluyi (1978, p. 104) taking insight from the behaviour of these items noted that two separate classes are combined together in one class called conjunction in the Yorùbá traditional grammar. On the one hand, there is the disjunction which he defines as showing two or more elements are alternatives, and a person can only choose one; on the other hand, there are the conjunctions which 'show that two or more things go together or are united. In sum, both conjunctions and disjunctions 'relate elements of the same functional class'. In his work si is not classified as a sentence conjunction rather he classifies the item as pre-verbal adverb which indicates "consecutive action" (Awobuluyi, 1978, p. 69). He assumes that there is no sentence conjunction that behaves as phrasal conjunction or disjunctions in the language. In his discussion on the HTS in his (2008) book, he only advanced arguments in favor of HTS use of si.

---

**Ilori’s (2010) View on Si**

According to Ilorio, the structural position occupied by si within two sentences or clauses conjoined together seemingly questions the traditional or popular view. Ilori observed that si regularly occur after the subject of clause2 of such compound clauses. As evident in Figure 11 below:

![Figure 11](image)

**Figure 11.** An illustration of the position of si after the subject of the second clause.

His view is, however, unlike most of his predecessors. He claimed that si is a kind of adverb, "that adjoins to the pre-VP adjunct position in the second IP of the compound clause. It is from that position that the subject raises across si/dé to spec-IP to derive the surface syntax in which the subject of the clause2 linearly proceeds si/dé". His view corroborated Awobuluyi’s (1978) view that si is a pre-verbal adverb which indicates "consecutive action". In view of this claim he proposed the following architecture in Figure 12 below:

![Figure 12](image)

**Figure 12.** Ilori (2010) derivational schema.

Inactive elements are not accessible for further operations. His claim assumes that si occurs as syntactic adjunct, i.e. adverb, which originates in pre-VP or pre-ASP within the second clause. Ilori (2010, p. 176) concluded that Yorùbá does not have clausal co-ordinating conjunction similar to disjuncts like åmọ and sùgbón "but" which structurally occupy the central position between the clause1 and clause2 in the language. We disagree with Ilori (2010) on this c.aim that although it may not be possible

---

© Awobuluyi (2008) still maintains his initial stance concerning si when he says that HTS, ó occurs after some pre-verbs in the language. For more of discussions on the HTS and the form of 3rd person pronoun (subjective case), traditionally called ó see Awobuluyi (1992, 2001, 2006, 2008), Oduntan (2000) and Ajongolo (2005). In this paper, we assume that ó is 3rd:sg subject DP.

---

4 He observed that the so-called conjunction has a variant; dẹ, which is similar to the dẹ found in Eko dialect of Yoruba as used in this example here, Adé įẹń, ó dẹ yó bámú “Ade ate and he was filled to the brims”. Another example is Mi dẹ ọ si lìẹ yẹn, “And I was at the place”. The form dẹ can substitute si in all its occurrences in the dialect; in fact si is never used in Eko dialect.

5 cf. Ilori (2010, p. 192) the diagram presentend as Fig.12 here is data (226) in his work.
to have overt realisation of the conjunction marker between clause1 and clause2, a non-overt counterpart is realised in the structure by virtue of its feature.

One may quickly want to jump to a conclusion based on Ilori (2010) that truly Yorùbá does not have a clausal conjunction as he opined. But there are some notable shortcomings in his view as follows: (i) from the theoretical view, the Minimalist Program does not allow for traces\(^6\), movement is specified by the need of a Lexical Items (LIs) to satisfy some features otherwise it is frozen as Activity Condition specifies as Figure 13 below; (ii) adjunction as used in Ilori’s work is theoretically anomalous. Before adjunction of constituents can take place the item must have: (a) at one time being adjoined in the lower level of the tree before it could be raised to spec-VP (as he assumes), which is suggestive of the fact that there is a fusion or merger of two different theoretical models in his work; (b) adjunction extends a MaxP into another MaxP, but this is never the case in his representation. As evident in the work, he assumes \(sì/dè\) is adjoined to spec-VP as if it is DP or a MaxP, whereas it is not. That point shows that the item was merged at spec-VP. \(sì/dè\) did not originate from anywhere in the derivation but merged at spec-VP which shows that \(sì/dè\) cannot enter the derivation there because it does not have MaxP projection. (iii) The assumption that there is no conjunction in such clauses is unacceptable. There is actually a connective abstract/ non-overt element which connects TP1 to TP2 as shown below in Figure 14.

We draw cross-linguistic evidence and present theoretical evidence from the Minimalist point of view on conjunctions and \(sì\).

As one could have observed so far, assuming the previous version of generative theory is problematic towards ascertaining the function of \(sì\) but the problem becomes more vivid as mere over generalization of meaning carried over from the traditional view to the generative theory. Yet the earlier generative version cannot handle the derivation of such constructions accurately which is why it is comfortable to assume (even with GB) lowering of the clausal conjunction. The question one is likely going to ask is this, ‘what actually connect the two clauses?’ Is it the case that there is no connective morpheme/ Lexical Item (LI) as assumed and shown by Ilori (2010) and implicit Awobuluyl’s (1978) claim? In the next section we present the various readings of \(sì\) in Yorùbá.

**Status of \(sì\) in Yoruba Grammar**

In this section we examine the various meaning of \(sì\) in Yoruba and also to ascertain among other things: (i) if \(sì\) does not conjoin any constituents in Yoruba, (ii) if there are other meanings associated with the item and finally (iii) is the item homophonous?

- Yoruba scholars have overlooked one important function of \(sì\), which is emphasis in some sentence structures. In such constructions, we could delete or optionally leave out \(sì\) and the construction would still converge. Only the emphasis placed on the sentence would be left out. Consider the following:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[\text{TP} O \text{ mò mi}] } \\
\text{[\text{TP} \text{ You know me}]} \\
\text{“You know me”}
\end{align*}
\]

*Figure 15. A simple sentence in Yoruba.*

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[\text{TP} O \text{ sì mò mi}] } \\
\text{[\text{TP} \text{ you emph know me}]} \\
\text{“and you know me/ as a matter of fact, you know me or what i can do”}
\end{align*}
\]

*Figure 16. \(sì\) as an emphatic marker.*

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[\text{TP} O \text{ sì mò mi o}]} \\
\text{[\text{TP} \text{ You emph know me emph}]} \\
\text{“you know what I can do/ without any doubt you know who I am”}
\end{align*}
\]

*Figure 17. \(sì\) - an emphatic and sentence final emphasis.*

---

6 Emphasis is abbreviated as “emph” and it is used all through this paper.
Although Awobuluyi did give any explanation regarding such claim in his work. It is however the focus of this paper to show how such constructions has consecutive actions and also shows the conjunction linking the two clauses together.

\[\text{TP} \text{ Ò lọ sì ibè} \]
\[\text{TP} \text{He/she went prep there}\]
\[“\text{He went there}”\]

**Figure 18.** A simple sentence without sì.

\[\text{TP} \text{Ô sì lọ sì ibè} \]
\[\text{TP} \text{he/she emph went prep there}\]
\[“\text{the fact is, he went there}”\]

**Figure 19.** A simple sentence with emphatic sì.

In Figure 15 above, the sentence does not overtly mark any emphatic reading as did Figures 16 and 17. Figure 15 is just a simple declarative without any other information exerted in it. The addressee is actually aware of what the speaker is talking about before he stressed the point in the information. There is nothing else marking emphasis in Figure 16 except sì and nothing seems to be connected to that sentence as clause 2. In essence, Figure 15 is not adjoined to any sentence. Figure 18 is a simple declarative sentence, which does not exert any emphatic force compared to Figure 19 where it is as a matter of fact that the said action was carried out by the ò, the Ex-DP (subject). The addressee is unaware of the fact that the person being talked about actually did what was done.

- As observed earlier, Awobuluyi (1978, pp. 73-74) notes that sì function is not according to the traditional view rejecting that sì is a conjunction in Yorùbá, he claims that sì marks consecutive action as against the conjunction in linking two clauses together. Consecutive actions denote that events in a given sentence occur in succession or one after the other. One action occurs in precedence to the next in sequence and order of the time of occurrence without interruption. For examples:

\[\text{TP Tópe ra asọ tuntun, ò sì wò ọ} \]
\[\text{TP Tópe buy-pst clothe new, he CA wear it} \]
\[“\text{Tope bought a new clothe and wears it}”\]

**Figure 20.** A compound sentence showing consecutiveness in action expressed.

\[\text{TP Ò gé eran, ò sì sè é} \]
\[\text{TP He cut-pst meat, he CA cook it} \]
\[“\text{He cut the meat and cooked it}”\]

**Figure 21.** A compound sentence with consecutive action.

- As observed earlier, Awobuluyi (1978, pp. 73-74) notes that sì function is not according to the traditional view rejecting that sì is a conjunction in Yorùbá, he claims that sì marks consecutive action as against the conjunction in linking two clauses together. Consecutive actions denote that events in a given sentence occur in succession or one after the other. One action occurs in precedence to the next in sequence and order of the time of occurrence without interruption. For examples:

\[\text{TP Ò mu ọtì, ò sì yó kánrin} \]
\[\text{TP He drink-pst wine, he CA brim excess} \]
\[“\text{He drank wine and he was drunk a lot}”\]

**Figure 22.** Consecutive action in compound sentence.

In Figure 20, the action of the buying of clothes, which is in clause 1, precedes that of wearing it signified by sì in clause 2. Similarly the action in clause 1 of Figure 21 occurred before that of clause 2 invariably, the events thereof occurred in succession. There is no way where the cooking of the meat could occur before the buying of the same meat. Also, the events in described in Figure 22 were in sequence. The event of clause one, i.e. drinking of wine, occurred before the man got drunk. He could not be drunk before drinking of the same wine, which got him drunk. Nothing else informs this sequential ordering of events denoted in Figure 22 than sì. From the foregoing, one could conclude that which conjoins the two clauses is overtly not marked in Figures 20, 21 and 22 above. The question arising from this is, if sì is not conjoining the two clauses what is the conjunction? We shall come back to this question in the next section.

- Although the pool of evidence raised from the last two points could actually make one jump to a conclusion that sì is not a conjunction in Yorùbá. There are some expressions where one would be missing words to look further for the conjunction other than sì. For example:

\[\text{TP Ò sanra, ò sì tòbi} \]
\[\text{TP He be-fat, he conj be-big} \]
\[“\text{He is fat and he is big}”\]

**Figure 23.** A compound sentence with sì as conjunction.

\[\text{TP Ó jáde ọ́ sì sunkún} \]
\[\text{TP He go-out he conj cry-pst} \]
\[“\text{He went out and he cried}”\]

**Figure 24.** Another compound sentence with sì as conjunction.

\[11\text{You can have the same sentence rendered without consecutiveness in the action expressed like: Ò mu ọtì, ò yó kánrin where the clauses are only just conjoined together with an abstract conjunction, orthographically represented with that ‘comma’.}\]

\[12\text{Sì in sentences of this sort could be replaced with nítorí “because” or consequence of what has happened then, another event also occurred. For instance, Figure 20 Tópe ra asọ tuntun, ò sì wò ọ could be Tópe wò asọ tuntun, nítorí ò rà à (asọ tuntun) “Tope wore a new clothe because he bought a new clothe”. It is a case of one event bringing about the occurrence of another in succession. Consider this other example; Èmi yóò dìde, èmi yóò sì tòbá mi lọ, èmi yóò sì wì fun ìpò bàbá... “I will arise and go to my father, and tell him father ...” (Diogót Sibell mimú ẹlẹẹ nósí, Luke, 15:18, p. 1684). The order of event came sequentially. The first thing is getting up, followed by going to the father and telling him that ..., getting up cannot be preceded by going to the father or telling the father all that has happened. Nothing else is responsible for the ordering of the event other than sì.}\]
The sequences of events in Figures 23, 24 and 25 above are not in sequential or consecutive order; rather the events were completed and not related to, overtly, the next event. It is not a consequence of being “fat” that leads to being big. It is quite relative to the individual who is fat. One that is fat does not necessarily have to be big. In Figure 24, one could go out without crying and one could stay indoors without crying. Invariably, neither of the two clauses could trigger emphasis nor consecutive actions. Similarly, one could be fair without being beautiful and one could be beautiful without being fair. Neither of clause1 nor clause2 is taking precedence, which informs why there is no consecutive reading in the events. There is no emphasis placed on the clauses, therefore sì is not in any way connected to emphasis and consecutive actions rather it is conjoining the clauses together.

The two clauses linked together in Figures 23, 24 and 25 above are linked by overt conjunction marker sì. But how is it that sì is a conjunction in some expressions, emphatic marker in some others and consecutive action marker?

It is logically plausible to assume that there are three different sì in the language, which have the same occurrence position from the Minimalist point of view. MP assumes that LIs are fully specified in the Lexicon with all the required syntactic, phonological and semantic properties needed for LIs in the derivation. If a lexical item is identical with another LI but different functionally, then they are two different lexical items specified in the lexicon. Variants are treated as individual lexical items in the Lexicon. From a logical point of view, there is a sì which marks emphasis, another one marks consecutive action, while the third denotes clausal conjunction. The three lexical items are specified in the lexicon with their features.

Discussion

The Form of the Conjunction. The Abstract Clausal Conjunction in Clauses with Sì as Emphasis or Consecutiveness Marker

As noted earlier, in some constructions sì often marks consecutiveness and/or emphasis which invariably implied that there is a conjunction present in them, overt or not. In such constructions, a non-overt clausal conjunction conjoins clause1 and clause 2 together and as a functional head it has the ability to project maximally. In such compounds, the non-overt conjunction is the head of the ConjP contrary to Yusuf’s (1980) assumption. Using Figure 11 above as Figure 26 and Figure 27:

- [TP1 Adé jẹun ] a [TP2 sì yó bámú]
- [TP1 Ade eat-pst-something] Conj
- [TP2 He CA fill-pst to-the-brim]

“Ade ate the food and He was filled to the brim”

Figure 27 above shows that the head of the projection is the Conj⁰ represented by “α”. The Conj⁰ selects into its complement position TP₂, and selects TP₁ into its spec position. Both TP₁ and TP₂ are convergent TPs which have been computed before been selected here and merged to Conj⁰ in the narrow syntax. As said earlier, Conj¹ is headed by a strong non-overt in the ConjP. This is why it is able to select the two clauses into its complement and spec positions. This is further illustrated on the schema in Figure 28.
The Clausal Architecture of Clauses with Sì as Conjunction Marker

Normally, sì often occur after the Ex-DP in clause 2\textsuperscript{14} and this actually informs the perspective from which scholars have been looking at it since the 1980s. It should be noted that sì does not occur in between the conjoined clauses but rather in another position, which makes it difficult for some early generative theories and their adherents to capture its behaviors. A conjunction is a functional head linking two or more items/constituents of equal properties together. We shall use Figure 23 for our illustration (repeated here for convenience as Figure 29). The projection is given as Figure 30 below.

Figure 28 above shows the representation of the ConjP clause structure, where Conj\textsuperscript{j} selects TP\textsubscript{2}, Conj\textsuperscript{j} and TP\textsubscript{2} were the first to enter the derivation under merge and both of them project Conj\textsuperscript{i}. TP\textsubscript{1} was selected into spec position, such that Conj\textsuperscript{j} and TP\textsubscript{1} were merged together to project Conj\textsuperscript{i}. Sì enters the derivation at spec- vP for either “emphasis” or “consecutive actions”. But the Ex-DP has to value its unvalued features, it is a goal. The Probe head is T\textsuperscript{0} which has to value its φ-features. It probes down its domain and found a matching goal ô at spec- vP. It attracts the goal to its spec and values its φ-features which explains the ordering of sì after the Ex-DP in clause2.

Only the highest copy of the Ex-DP was linearized.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{The Status of Sì in Yoruba}

Figure 29. A sentence for demonstration of sì as a conjunction.

In Figure 30 above, TP\textsubscript{2} enters the derivation before TP\textsubscript{1}, which enters the derivation as the spec – ConjP. Ignoring all the details at the vP layer, the derivation proceeds with the merging of the Ex-DP argument ô “3\textsuperscript{rd}sg” at spec-vP to project to vP which merged with T\textsuperscript{0} pres, to project T\textsubscript{1}. T\textsuperscript{0} is a probe head and it has unvalued features. It probes down its domain and finds a goal ô with matching features, it attracts the goal to its spec, where the φ-features were valued and deleted. Consequently, the Nominative case feature of ô was also valued and deleted. The Conj\textsuperscript{j} overtly marked by sì, is merged with the derivation thus projecting Conj\textsuperscript{j}. Sì at Conj\textsuperscript{j} has some edge feature which must be satisfied thus projecting in multi-spec order. i.e. multiple spec which holds that [X\textsubscript{0-\textsubscript{1}}] could project a multiple number of specs which reduced by immediate projection below it. To be precise, multi-specs from the top of the tree to bottom reduces by one. Thus, ô at spec- TP\textsubscript{1} bares unvalued features, i.e. emphasis. By virtue of being raised to spec of Conj\textsuperscript{j} it become prominent in TP\textsubscript{2}. The same person who has performed the event in TP\textsubscript{2}, is also performing event depicted in TP\textsubscript{2}. The entity is singled out as the topic of the discussion while the rest of the clause is the comment about the same entity.\textsuperscript{16} ô which now has two copies is occupying the spec- Conj\textsuperscript{j}. Only the highest copy is linearized at PF. Conj\textsuperscript{j} is merged with an already converged TP, and thus projects ConjP.

The results demonstrate that in the Yorùbá Lexicon there are three main sì: one which denotes “emphasis”, the second one marks “consecutive action” and the third is used as “clausal conjunction”.

\textsuperscript{13} As observed clearly, the T\textsubscript{0} precedes sì, and so are aspectual markers in Yorùbá. For example. Òlà à sì lọ, “Ola will still go” where à precedes sì. “a” combines both the tense of the expression and the future marker. Invariably, the Ex-DP raises above sì to value its features.

\textsuperscript{14} This assumption is over-simplified, majority of the items listed in Awobuluyi (1978, pp. 68-69) may appear between the Ex-DP and sì in clause2. Items like future marker: yóò and á, uncompleted action marker; ì, sentence negative markers; kò/ò, and bá/báà sì in clause2. Items like future marker: yóò and á, uncompleted action marker; ì, sentence negative markers; kò/ò, and bá/báà which denotes “may/might” and some others may come between the external DP of clause2 and sì. For example:

1. Òlà yóò sì lọ ola will si go “still Ola will go”
2. Òlà bá sì lọ ola should-have sì go “and Ola should have gone”
3. Òlà à sì lọ (... bí iwo bá lọ Ola will si go (if you neg conditional go) “and Ola will go..(if you will not go)
4. Á sì lọ neg sì go “and ola did not go”
5. (he) kò sì lọ he neg sì go “and he did not go”

All of these items are grouped under the pre-verbal adverb in his work. He further maintains in Awobuluyi (2001) that they co-occur together because they are pre-verbs in the language. It should be noted, however, that the split-Infl hypothesis has shown that this view is not so. In the decomposed Infl, some of the listed items (i.e. on Awobuluyi, 1978, pp. 68-69) are actually functional heads of various projections like the TP, AspP, NegP, etc. Similarly, the decomposed Infl would not allow the treatment of Ilori’s (2010) analysis because his work overgeneralized the function of sì in Yorùbá. Consequently, his analysis only assumes that sì is a pre-verbal adverb which is adjoined to VP (and not even the light vP). For further reading, see Ilori (2010). It is noteworthy here for us to emphasize here that pre-verbs can be serialized one after the other. One could have one, two, three or even four of them in a sequence. One could do this for sì denoting emphasis and sì marking consecutiveness without resulting into non-existence derivation.

\textsuperscript{15} It should be noted that clause, i.e. TP, would also have projected in similar order if there were to be another extended projection above it. Also, by swapping the event order in Figure 29 and similar clauses like it, ô tòbi, ô sì sanra, for instance, the external DP would also have been given prominence by being raised to spec – Conj\textsuperscript{j} which will also be projecting in multiple spec layer.
Conclusion

From the Yorùbá traditional grammarians, there is a clausal conjunction which does not behave according to every other conjunctions in the language whereas, scholars like Awobuluyi (1978, 2001), Ilori (2010) have assumed that the traditional view is wrong. Their assumptions polarized the view on Yorùbá clausal conjunction; hence, the status of sì is unknown. In this article, however, we have established that there may be three instances of sì in Yorùbá differentiated by their individual functions present in the Yorùbá lexicon. We also submit that contrary to Ilori’s (2010) claim that sì enters the derivation through as an adverb in the light vP layer and concludes that when the sì that denotes conjunction is selected from the lexicon, it enters the derivation as a head. Additionally, it has a strong edge feature, which triggers the Ex-DP of TP₂ to move to its spec position thereby projecting multi-spec for Conj 0. When sì, which denotes “emphasis” or “consecutive action” is selected, the item will enter the derivation through the edge of the light vP as an adverbial item.

References


