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A Comparative Analysis of Focus Construction in Yorùbá and Èbìrà Languages

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ABSTRACT

Many research works have been carried out on focus construction in Yoruba and its dialects. These works include the comparison between the focus construction in Yoruba language and the dialects of Yoruba, a comparison between the focus construction in one dialect of Yoruba and the others. But no attention is paid to the comparison between the focus construction in Yorùbá and Èbìrà languages. Findings reveal that despite the fact that Yorùbá and Èbìrà languages belong to two different language families, there are some similarities between their focus constructions. However, the similarities between the two languages are noticed in the dialect of Yorùbá such as Oǹdó dialect. This forms the basis of the discussion in this paper. The data collection relies on the informants who are the native speakers of Òkené (a sub-dialect of Èbìrà language) and Oǹdó dialect (a sub-dialect of Yorùbá language). The informants are between ages 65-70 and have spent their lifetime in their dialect communities. Descriptive approach is adopted for the data analysis.

Keywords: Èbìrà dialect, Oǹdó dialect, Comparison, Constructions, Yorùbá, Language family

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Bolinger (1965), "Focus construction is a Prosodic stress that marks the point of the sentence where there is a greatest concentration of information which the hearer would be least likely to infer without being told." Aarts (2001) also defines focus construction as "a special construction which enables a language user to highlight a particular string in a sentences". A good study of the above definitions reveals that giving a special attention or prominence to a particular item in a sentence is very paramount in focus construction.

Research works on focus construction in Yoruba language and its dialects have attracted the interest of the Yoruba scholars such as Awobuluyi (1978a,b, 1985, 1992), Owolabi (1981), Bamgbose (1990), Yusuf (1989, 1995), Awoyale (1985), Ajiboye (2006), Akintoye (2006), Akintoye and Owoyele (2018). These scholars accept that two types of focus construction exist in Yoruba language; constituent and sentence focusing. Constituent focusing is generated by moving a lexical item or a phrase to the initial position after which such a lexical item or a phrase will be accompanied by a focus marker *ni* as exemplified below.

1. Olú jẹ iyán Òjó
   Olu eat pounded yam Ojo
   Olu ate Ojo's pounded yam.

   Focus Construction

   a. Olú ni   ó   jẹ iyán   Òjó
      Olú FOC RES eat pounded yam Ojo
      It was Olu that ate Ojo's pounded yam

   b. Òjó ni   Olú jẹ iyán   rẹ̀
      Ojo FOC Olu eat pounded yam RES
      It was Ojo's pounded yam that Olu ate

   c. Iyán   Òjó ni   Olú jẹ
      Pounded yam Ojo FOC Olu eat
      It was Ojo's pounded yam that Olu ate.

   d. Jíjẹ   ni   Olú jẹ iyán   Òjó
      Eating FOC Olu eat pounded Òjó
      The fact was that Olu ate Ojo's pounded yam

Examples 1(a and b) above show that when NPs in subject and genitival positions are moved, the extraction positions are fill with resumptive pronouns. If a subject NP is moved, the extraction position will be filled with a subject resumptive pronoun *ó* as shown in 1(a). But if a genitival NP is moved, the position will be filled with genitival resumptive pronoun *rẹ̀* as shown in 1 (b). The reason for filling the position where Subject and genitival NPs are moved is because Yoruba language does not permit these position to be vacant so as to avoid ungrammaticality. There are lots of issues on the subject resumptive pronoun *ó* among

Yoruba scholars such as There are enough arguments on the status of the high tone syllable *ó* among the Yoruba scholars; Sonaiya (1988), Awobuluyi (1992, 2006), Oladeji (2003), Adesuyan (2006), Akanbi (2004), Olumuyiwa (2005), Oluseye (2005, 2009), Akintoye (2015). The current paper will not delve into this issue. We will treat the high tone syllable *ó* as a resumptive pronoun following Radford (1988) who explains that a sentence without a subject is incorrect. He bases his position on Extended Projection Principle (EPP) which does not allow the generation of a sentence without a subject.

Sentence focusing is realized when a complete sentence is given prominence by attaching a focus marker to it at the final position as demonstrated below.

2. Adé na ajá Òjó
    Ade beat dog Ojo
    Ade beat Ojo's dog

Focus Constructions

i. Adé na ajá Òjó ni
    Adé beat dog Ojo FOC
    The fact is that Ade beat Ojo's dog

b. Olú jí iyán   jẹ
    Olu steal pounded yam eat
    Olu stole pounded yam and ate it

i. Olú jí iyán   jẹ ni
    Olu stole pounded yam eat FOC
    The fact is that Olu stole pounded yam and ate it

Apart from researching on the focus construction in Yoruba language, research works on focus construction have gone far on its comparative analysis in Yoruba language and its dialects, comparison between the focus construction in one dialect of Yoruba and the others. However, findings show that attention has not been paid to the comparison between the focus construction in Yorùbá and Èbìrà languages to discover that there are some similarities between their focus constructions despite the fact that Yorùbá and Èbìrà languages belong to two different language families. For instance, both languages employ the focus marker *ni* for both constituent and sentence focusing. Although, focus marker in Yoruba language occupies the median position in constituent focusing while it always occupies sentence final position in both constituent and sentence focusing in Èbìrà language, the operation of focus construction in Èbìrà language is identical to what operates in Ondó dialect. Hence, Ondó dialect will be selected to represent Yoruba language and Òkené dialect will represent Èbìrà language for our data presentation. It is believed that the two selected dialects will be the good representatives of these languages because they subsume in them. This paper compares the focus construction in Yorùbá and Èbìrà languages and explains their similarities.

Data collection for this paper relies the informants who are the native speakers of Òkené (a sub-dialect of Èbìrà language) and Ondó (a sub-dialect of Yorùbá language). The informants are between ages 65-70 and have spent their lifetime in the selected dialect

communities. The informants were selected because it is assumed that their speech forms have not been corrupted by English language. Descriptive approach is adopted for data analysis.

This paper is divided into four parts. Section one is the introduction. Section two contains the focus construction in Yorùbá language. Section three discusses focus construction in Èbìrà language. Section four consists of the similarities between focus construction in Yorùbá and Èbìrà languages.

2. FOCUS CONSTRUCTION IN YORÙBÁ LANGUAGE

Yorùbá language is grouped under Yoruboid language in Benue-Congo language family. Yorùbá native speakers are located in the Southwest of Nigeria. Yoruba speakers occupy Lagos, Èkìtì, Òṣun, Òyó, Oǹdó and Ògùn States. They can also be found in Kogí and Kwara States (Awobuluyi 1998). Yorùbá language is categorized into different dialectical groups by Yoruba scholars such as Adetugbo (1967), Akinkugbe (1976), Oyelaran (1977), Fresco (1970) and Awobuluyi (1998). Yorùbá language is mutually intelligible in spite of the variants in the dialectical speech forms.

As earlier noted, Yorùbá and Èbìrà languages belong to two different language families but their focus constructions are similar. For instance, both languages employ the focus marker *ni* for both constituent and sentence focusing. Although, focus marker in Yoruba language occupies the median position in constituent focusing and sentence finally in the sentence focusing while it always occupies sentence final position in both constituent and sentence focusing in Èbìrà language, the operation of focus construction in Èbìrà language is identical to what operates in Oǹdó dialect. Hence, Oǹdó dialect which relevant to this paper will be selected to represent Yoruba language for our data presentation and analysis.

According to Adetugbo (1967), Akinkugbe (1976), Oyelaran (1977), Fresco (1970), Oǹdó dialect is grouped under Southeast Yoruba This dialect is spoken in three sub-dialects such as Oǹdó, Ìdànrè and Ilẹ̀-olújìí. Oǹdó sub-dialects are mutually intelligible like the sub-dialects of Ekiti. For this reason, Oǹdó sub-dialect is selected for this paper. It is believed that this dialect will be a good representative of the other two sub-dialects.

Focus construction in Oǹdó is generated by movement transformation as observed in the standard dialect. The focus marker takes two forms; *í* and *ín* in Oǹdó dialect, and both occur at the sentence final position as demonstrated below.

Oǹdó Dialect

3. Olú ó gbé ọma iye
    Olu HTS carry child mother
    Olu carried mother's child

Focus Constructions

a. Olú ó gbé ọma iye   í
    Olu RSP carry child mother FOC
    It was Olu that carried mother's child

a. Iyè   Olú ó gbé ọma ẹ̀   í
   Mother Olu HTS carry child RSP FOC
   It was mother whose child Olu carried

b. Ọma iyè   Olú ó   gbé   í
   Child mother Olu HTS carry FOC
   It was mother's child that Olu carried

c. Gbigbé Olú   ó   gbé ọma iyè   í
   Carrying Olu HTS carry child mother FOC
   The fact was that Olu carried mother's child

4. Àìná   ó   dẹ́n ẹan
   Aina HTS fry meat
   Aina fried meat

Focus Constructions

a. Àìna ó   dẹ́n ẹan ín
   Àìná HTS fry meat FOC
   It was Aina that fried meat

b. Ẹan Àìnà   ó   dẹ́n ín
   Meat Aina HTS fry FOC
   It was meat that Aina fried

c. Dẹ́ndẹ́n Àìná ó   dẹ́n ẹan ín
   Frying Aina HTS fry meat FOC
   The fact was that Aina fried meat

Examples (3 and 4) above show that the focus marker *í* and *ín* are allomorphs; they occur in complementary environments. For instance, the focus marker *í* co-occurs with oral vowels as indicated in examples (3) above while *ín* co-occurs with nasal vowels as demonstrated in examples (4). Research shows that the focus marker *ín* is the underlying form. A close study of Yoruba language and some of the dialects of Yoruba like Ìkálẹ̀ and Ìlàjẹ reveals that focus markers have nasal feature; *ni* in Yoruba language and *ín* in Ìkálẹ̀ and Ìlàjẹ dialects (Sada 1988). There is evidence in Yoruba language that *ni* changes to *li* when it co-occurs with oral vowels (Owolabi 1989). One can also say that *ín* changes to *í* by assimilating the oral feature of the vowels adjacent to it as reflected in examples (3).

As noted in Yoruba language and its dialects, constituent and sentence focusing are also possible in Oǹdó dialect. Constituent focus is derived by moving the lexical item which may be subject, object and genitival NP, nominal verbs and adverbials to the initial position as shown in examples (3, 4). As earlier noted in standard Yoruba dialect, when the NPs in subject and genitival positions are moved to the initial position in Oǹdó dialect, their extraction positions are filled with resumptive pronouns; high tone syllable *ó* and *ẹ̀* respectively as shown in examples (3a, b and 4a).

A close look at examples (3 and 4) shows that the high tone syllable *ó* is present in all of them. There is a difference between *ó* in examples (3a, 4a) and other examples. While *ó* in examples (3b, c, d, 4b, c) functions as a preverb (PRV) because it appears in between the subjects and the verbs Awobuluyi (1993, 2003), *ó* in examples (3a, 4a) functions as a subject resumptive pronoun. The reason is because when a subject NP is moved the extraction cite will be filled with a subject resumptive pronoun (Sonaiya 1988), Oluseye (2005, 2009) and Oladeji (2003). Akintoye (2015) as earlier noted is of the opinion that *ó* in examples (3a, 4a) is generated by merger; a fusion of the preverb *ó* and the resumptive *ó*. According to him, Yoruba language does not permit generating a sentence with a subject. When a subject NP is moved, the extraction position is filled with the subject resumptive pronoun as earlier noted. It is assumed that both *ó* as a preverb (PRV) and as a subject resumptive pronoun are in their right positions. But both of them are merged because they have the same form as demonstrated below.

5. Olú ó gbé ọma iye
   Olu PRV carry child mother
   Olu carried mother's child

Focus Construction

a. Olú ó ó   gbé ọma iye í → Olú ó gbé ọma iye   í
   Olu RSP PREV carry child mother FOC → Olu RSP carry child mother FOC
   It was Olu that carried my mother's child

6. Àìná ó   dẹ́n ẹan
   Aina PRV fry meat
   Aina fried meat

b. Àìna ó ó dẹ́n ẹan ín   →   Àìna ó dẹ́n ẹan ín
   Àìná RSP PRV fry meat FOC   →   Àìná RSP fry meat FOC
   It was Aina that fried meat

3. SENTENCE FOCUSING IN OǸDÓ DIALECT

Sentence focusing involves giving prominence to a whole sentence by attaching the focus marker at the sentence final position as exemplified below.

6a. Ojú é   tì   ọ
    Eye Prog push 2sg
    You are shy

Focus Construction

i. Ojú é   tì   ọ ín
   Eye Prog push 2sg FOC

The fact is that you are shy

   b. Olú tètè   wá
      Olu ADVP come
      Olu came quickly

Focus Construction

   ii. Olú tètè   wá   ín
      Olu ADVP come FOC
      The fact is that Olu came quickly.

A sentence focus marker in Oǹdó dialect takes *ín* form. Apart from that, there is no movement transformation noticed in generating sentence focusing. This means that sentence focusing in Oǹdó dialect is also generated by adjunction.

4. FOCUS CONSTRUCTION IN ÈBÌRÀ LANGUAGE

Èbìrà language is spoken by the tribe that occupies the Northeast part of Kogi-State, Middle belt of Nigeria. Èbìrà speakers consist of three Local Government Areas in Kogi-State; Òkene Local Government Area with the headquarters in Òkene, Adavi Local Government Area having its headquarters in Ògàmùnana, and Òkehí Local Government Area with the headquarters in Ọ̀bàǹgede (Abutu 2003, Ayibiowu 2010). Although, there are many sub-dialects with slight differences under Èbìrà language, Èbìrà language is mutually intelligible in spite of the observed differences. Òkené dialect is selected for the data presentation and analysis in this paper because sub- dialects of Èbìrà are many and it is not possible to capture all of them in a work of this nature.

As noticed in Yorùbá language, there are two types of focus construction in Èbìrà language; constituent and sentence focusing. Focus construction in Èbìrà language is generated by adjunction and movement transformation. For instance, constituent focusing is generated by moving a lexical item or phrase to the initial position and having the focus marker *nì* attached in the sentence final position as demonstrated below.

   Òkené Dialect

   7. Olú ó   sì   ozì ọ̀yinmì
      Olu HTS carry child mother
      Olu carried mother's child

   Focus Constructions

   a. Olú ó   sì   ọzì ọ̀yinmì nì
      Olu RSP carry child mother FOC
      It was Olu that carried the mother's child

b. Òyinmì Olú   ó   sì   ozì   ni   nì
    Mother Olu HTS carry child RSP FOC
    It was mother whose child Olu carried

c   Ọzì   ọyinmì Olú ó   sì   nì
    Child mother Olu HTS carry FOC
    It was mother's child that Olu carried

d   Ọ̀yisì   Olú ó   sì   ọzì ọyinmì   nì
    Carrying Olu HTS carry child mother FOC
    The fact was that Olu carried mother's child

Like Yoruba Language, all focused items in Èbìrà language possess nominal features as revealed in the examples above. A non- nominal item like a verb is nominalized by affixing additional morpheme to the verb as shown in example 7(d). If subject and genitival NPs are moved from to the initial position, the extraction positions are filled with the resumptive pronouns. For instance, when the subject NP *Olú* and genitival NP *Òyinmì* are moved in examples 1(a, b), their extraction positions are filled with the subject resumptive pronoun *ó* and the genitival resumptive pronoun *ni* respectively.

A close study of examples (7) shows that the high tone syllable *ó* is present in all of them. There is a difference between *ó* in examples (7, b, c, d) and other example (7a). While *ó* in examples (7, b, c, d) is a preverb (PRV) because it appears in between the subjects and the verbs Awobuluyi (1993, 2003), *ó* in examples (7a) functions as a subject resumptive pronoun. The reason is because when a subject NP is moved, the extraction cite will be filled with a subject resumptive pronoun (Sonaiya 1988), Oluseye (2005, 2009) and Oladeji (2003).

Akintoye (2015) as earlier noted is of the opinion that *ó* in examples (7a) is generated by merger; a fusion of the preverb *ó* and the resumptive *ó*. According to him, Yoruba language does not permit generating a sentence with a subject. When a subject NP is moved, the extraction position is filled with the subject resumptive pronoun as earlier noted. Since the subject resumptive pronoun *ó* in Oǹdó dialect and Èbìrà language operates the same thing, it is assumed that the explanation given to the high tone syllable *ó* in Oǹdó dialect will also be suitable for that in Èbìrà language. It is assumed that both *ó* as a preverb (PRV) and as a subject resumptive pronoun are in their right positions. But both of them are merged because they have the same form as demonstrated below.

Òkené Dialect

8. Olú ó   sì   ọzì ọ̀yinmì
    Olu PRV carry child mother 1sg
    Olu carried mother's child

Focus Construction

a. Olú ó   ó   sì   ọzì ọ̀yinmì nì   → Olú ó   sì   ọzì ọ̀yinmì   nì
    Olu RSP PREV carry child mother FOC   → Olu RSP carry child mother FOC
    It was Olu that carried my mother's child

5. SENTENCE FOCUSING IN ÈBÌRÀ LANGUAGE

Sentence focusing involves giving prominence to a whole sentence by attaching the focus marker at the sentence final position as exemplified below.

Òkené Dialect

8. Olú ó   rè   iyá
   Olú PREV eat pounded yam
   Olu ate pounded yam

Focus Construction

a. Olú ó   rè   iyá   nìì
   Olú PREV eat pounded yam FOC
   The fact was that Olu ate pounded yam

9. Tádé ó sì àga Òjó
   Tade PREV carry chair Ojo
   Tade carried Ojo's chair.

a. Tádé ó   sì   àga Òjó nìì
   Tade PREV carry chair Ojo FOC
   The fact was that Tade carried Ojo's chair

10. Ayò ó   ri   ọzì Adé
    Ayò PREV see child Ade
    Ayo saw Ade's child

a. Ayò ó   ri   ọzì Adé nìì
   Ayò PREV see child Ade FOC
   The fact was that Ayo saw Ade's child

A sentence focus marker in Èbìrà language takes *nìì* form with double vowels. We can suggest that the sentence focus marker *nìì* is generated by vowel lengthening. While *nì* is the focus marker, the second vowel *ì* functions as an emphatic marker. This type of emphatic marker is also attested in Yoruba language but functioned as topicalization (TOP) (Bamgbose 1990). It is employed when an addressee is responding to a question from his/her speaker as demonstrated below.

11. **Question**   **Response**

a. Ta   ni Olú rí?   Òjó nìì
   CQW FOC Olu see   Ojo TOP
   Who did Olu see?   It was Ojo

b. Èwo ní   Adé yàn?   Ìyẹn niì
   CQW FOC Adé choose   DET TOP
   Which one did Ade choose?   That one

c. Èló   ni   Ayọ̀ san?   Ṣílè   méjì niì
   CQW FOC Ayọ pay   Shilling two TOP
   How much did Ayo paid?   It was two shillings

6. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN FOCUS CONSTRUCTION IN YORÙBÁ AND ÈBÌRÀ LANGUAGES

There are many similarities observed between the focus constructions in Oǹdó dialect and Èbìrà language. For instance, focus markers occupy the sentence final position in the constituent and sentence focusing in Oǹdó dialect and Èbìrà language as shown in examples (3a-d, 4a ,b, 6ai. bi, 7a-d, 8a, 9a repeated below as:

Oǹdó Dialect

12. Olú ó   gbé ọma iye
    Olu HTS carry child mother
    Olu carried mother's child

Focus Constructions

a. Olú ó   gbé ọma iye   í
   Olu RSP carry child mother FOC
   It was Olu that carried mother's child

b. Iyè   Olú ó gbé ọma ẹ̀   í
   Mother Olu HTS carry child RSP FOC
   It was mother whose child Olu carried

c. Ọma iyè   Olú ó   gbé í
   Child mother Olu HTS carry FOC
   It was mother's child that Olu carried

d. Gbigbé Olú ó   gbé ọma iyè   í
   Carrying Olu HTS carry child mother FOC
   The fact was that Olu carried mother's child

13. Àìná   ó   dẹ́n ẹan
    Aina HTS fry meat
    Aina fried meat

Focus Constructions

a. Àìna ó   dẹ́n ẹan ín
    Àìná HTS fry meat FOC
    It was Aina that fried meat

b. Ẹan Àìnà   ó   dẹ́n ín
    Meat Aina HTS fry FOC
    It was meat that Aina fried

14a. Ojú é   tì   ọ
     Eye Prog push 2sg
     You are shy

Focus Construction

i. Ojú é   tì   ọ   ín
    Eye Prog push 2sg FOC
    The fact is that you are shy

b. Olú tètè   wá
    Olu ADVP come
    Olu came quickly

Focus Construction

i. Olú tètè   wá   ín
    Olu ADVP come FOC
    The fact is that Olu came quickly.

Òkené Dialect

15. Olú ó   sì   ozì ọ̀yinmì
    Olu HTS carry child mother
    Olu carried mother's child

Focus Constructions

a. Olú ó   sì   ọzì ọ̀yinmì nì
    Olu RSP carry child mother FOC
    It was Olu that carried the mother's child

b. Òyinmì Olú ó   sì   ozì ni nì
    Mother Olu HTS carry child RSP FOC
    It was mother whose child Olu carried

c Ọzì ọyinmì   Olú ó   sì   nì
Child mother Olu HTS carry FOC
It was mother's child that Olu carried

d Ọ̀yisì Olú   ó   sì   ọzì ọyinmì   nì
Carrying Olu HTS carry child mother FOC
The fact was that Olu carried mother's child

16. Olú ó   rè   iyá
Olú PREV eat pounded yam
Olu ate pounded yam

Focus Construction

a. Olú ó   rè   iyá   nìì
Olú PREV eat pounded yam FOC
The fact was that Olu ate pounded yam

17. Tádé ó sì àga Òjó
Tade PREV carry chair Ojo
Tade carried Ojo's chair.

a. Tádé ó   sì   àga   Òjó nìì
Tade PREV carry chair Ojo FOC
The fact was that Tade carried Ojo's chair

As noted in the examples above, focus markers in Oǹdó dialect and Èbìrà language take two forms. For instance, focus markers in Oǹdó dialect are *í* and *ín*; the focus marker *í* co-occurs with oral vowels as shown in examples 12(a-d). The focus marker *ín* has a wider spread because it co-occurs with nasal vowels in a constituent focusing and lso employed in the sentence focusing as exemplified in 13-14. Focus markers *nì* and *nìì* are attested in Èbìrà language; *nì* occurs in sentence final position of the constituent focusing examples 15 (a-d) while the focus marker *nìì* occurs in the sentence focusing examples 16-17.

Another thing is that high tone syllable *ó* occupies is present in Oǹdó and Èbìrà language; it occurs in between the subject and the object as indicated in examples (12a-d, 13a, b, 15a-d, 16a, 17a). As earlier explained, the function of the high tone syllable *ó* in examples 12 and 13, 15, 16 and 17 is different from how it functions in the other examples. For instance, the high tone syllable *ó* in examples 12 and 13, 15, 16 and 17 functions as preverb while it functions as a resumptive pronoun in 13(a) and 15 (a)

As noted in this paper, verb is nominalized in Oǹdó dialect by partial reduplication while verbs are nominalized in Èbìrà language by prefixation as demonstrated below.

Oǹdó Dialect

18. Olú ó   gbé ọma iye
Olu HTS carry child mother
Olu carried the mother's child

a. Gbigbé Olú   ó   gbé   ọma iyè   í
    Carrying Olu HTS carry child mother FOC
    The fact was that Olu carried the mother's child

b. Déndẹ́n Àìná ó   dẹ́n ẹan   ín
    Frying Aina HTS fry meat FOC
    The fact was that Aina fried meat

Òkené Dialect

19a. Olú ó   rè   iyá
      Olu HTS eat pounded yam
      Olu ate pounded yam

i   Ọrire Olú ó   rè iya   nì
      Eating Olu HTS eat pounded yam FOC
      The fact was that Olu ate pounded yam.

b.   Tadé ó si àga Òjó
      Tade HTS carry chair Ojo
      Tade carried Ojo's chair

i.   Ọyisi   Tádé ó   si   àga Òjó nì
      Carrying Tade HTS carry chair Ojo FOC
      The fact was that Tade carried Ojo's chair

c.   Ayọ̀ ó   ri   ozì Adé
      Ayo HTS see child Ade
      Ayo saw Ade's child

i.   Ọyiri Ayọ̀ ó   ri   ozì Adé nì
      Seeing Ayọ̀ HTS see child Adé FOC
      The fact was that Ayo saw Ade's child

According to examples 19 (a-c) above, the prefix *ọri* is affixed to the verb *re* 'eat' to derive *ọrire* 'eating' in 19a (i), *ọyi* is affixed to the verb *si* 'carry' to derive *ọyisi* 'carrying' in 19b (i) and *ọyi* is affixed to *ri* 'see' to generate *ọyiri* 'seeing' in 19c (i).

7. CONCLUSIONS

This paper examines a comparative analysis of focus construction in Yorùbá and Èbìrà languages. Although Yorùbá and Èbìrà languages belong to two different language families, research shows that their focus constructions have many things in common. For instance, their constituent focusing is generated by movement transformation and the focus markers in both languages take *ni* form. It is also explained in this paper that although, focus marker in Èbìrà

language occurs in sentence final position in both constituent and sentence focusing, this operation is similar to what operates in Oǹdó dialect (a dialect of Yoruba). It is also glaring that their sentence focusing is generated by adjunction; no movement transformation is discovered, but the focus markers are added in the sentence final position in two languages. In addition, high tone syllable *ó* in between the subject and verb is attested in Oǹdó dialect and Òkené dialect and it functions the same thing. This paper also explains that while nominal verb is generated by partial reduplication in Yorùbá language, it is generated by prefixition in Èbìrà language. With a critical study of the focus constructions in Oǹdó dialect and Òkenè dialect, one can suggest that Yorùbá and Èbìrà languages share the similarities through the influence that Yoruba language had over Èbìrà due to religious and social interaction between the two languages (Adevi 1989). The reason is that the two languages belong to two different language families as earlier noted; Yorùbá belongs to Yoruboid under Benue-Congo while Èbìrà belongs to Nupoid under Niger-Congo (Blench 2013).

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