Focus association and Cross-clausal dependencies in Yorùbá

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Background: While many studies have argued that quantifier scopes are sensitive to island effects (Fox $\overline{2000}$, Sabbagh 2007, Bachrach & Katzir 2008, a.o.), other studies have argued otherwise, and have claimed that the observed missing scope in island contexts are often due to "interpretive biases of the chosen examples rather than to a grammatical constraint" (Copestake et al. 2005, Chaves 2007, a.o.). Therefore, in an example such as (1) (from Chaves & Putnam 2020, p.111), although the universal quantifier phrase every language is within an island, it can take a wide scope over the existential quantifier someone (i.e., \forall > \exists : for every language (in a given set) there is someone who is willing to learn it). This would constitute a violation of the CNPC, assuming covert movement. Studies on both sides have primarily been on the classical quantifiers. However, other quantificational elements, such as focus sensitive particles, have not been given much attention. Although, they are not like classical quantifiers, they, however, quantify over the set of alternatives evoked by the focus.

(1) John was able to find *someone* [who is willing to learn *every language* that we intend to study].

<u>Claims</u>: In this study, I present novel data from Yorùbá (Niger-Congo), showing exclusive scope island effects with focus association. Specifically, I argue that (a) the scope of the exclusive focus sensitive particle *nìkan* ('only') in Yorùbá is island-sensitive, and (b) the island sensitivity is best captured by a constraint on agreement with an external exclusive operator, which bears the exclusive semantics, rather than by the lack of a covert movement, in the form of quantifier raising. The implications of the study is that it offers (i) further support for the observation that agreement into islands is usually blocked, and (ii) a support for a propositional analysis for exclusive association instead of a quantifier-raising analysis. **NB**: The author is a native speaker of Yorùbá. So, the data are from introspective judgments.

Focus association and scope: Yorùbá allows exclusive association with both in-situ focus (2-a) and exsitu focus (2-b). The exclusive particle nikan is adfocal in that it immediately follows its focus associate, and forms a constituent with it; a fact supported by the ex-situ focus association in (2-b).

(2) a. Adé je [iṣu]_F nìkan. Adé eat yam only 'Adé ate only YAM.'

b. $[Isu]_F$ **nìkan** ni Adé je ___. yam only Foc Adé eat 'It was only YAM that Adé ate.'

Typically, it has been argued that adfocal *only* can produce scope ambiguity with specific elements (e.g. modals, negation, certain predicates) in the clause (Taglicht 1984, Lee 2005, Quek & Hirsch 2017, a.o.). In Yorùbá, adfocal-*nìkan* plus its focus associate can scope either below the negative marker or above it, see (3-a). These ambiguous readings are supported by the continuations in (3-b) & (3-c) respectively.

- (3) a. Adé $\hat{\mathbf{o}}$ je [iṣu]_F nìkan. [neg > only, only > neg] Adé NEG eat yam only 'Adé did not eat only YAM.'
 - (i) Narrow scope: Adé did not eat only yam (he ate something in addition).
 - (ii) Wide scope: Yam was the only thing he did not eat (he ate something else).

b. ... Ó je èwà pèlú.

3sG eat beans also
'He also ate beans.'

c. ... Ó jẹ ệwà. 3sG eat beans 'He ate beans.'

Interestingly, if adfocal-*nìkan* associates with an embedded focus, it can take not only a narrow scope, but also a wide scope above the embedding predicate, as in (4-a). Again see the continuations in (4-b) & (4-c). This suggests that adfocal-*nìkan* can scope across clause boundaries. It is important to note that the scope ambiguity of *nìkan* (esp. the wide scope) is not due to structural ambiguity because it can be followed by a frequency adverb that is interpreted low in the embedded clause. So, *nìkan* indeed scopes from inside an embedded clause. At this point, we may say that the scope of adfocal-*only* involves an unbounded dependency. However, we know that unbounded dependencies are indeed bounded.

(4) Flexible scope in embedded clause

- a. Tolú mỳ wípé [Adé jẹ [iṣu] $_F$ **nìkan** (léèmèta)]. [know > only, only > know] Tolú know COMP Adé eat yam only thrice 'Tolú knows that Adé ate only YAM.'
 - (i) Narrow scope: It is the case that Tolú knows that Adé ate yam, and nothing else.
 - (ii) Wide scope: Tolú only knows that Adé ate yam- he doesn't know about any other food.

- b. ... Adé ò je èwà. Adé NEG eat beans 'Adé did not eat beans.'
- c. ... Tolú ò wípé Adé je eja pèlú. Tolú NEG know COMP Adé eat fish also 'Tolú does not know that Adé also ate fish.'

Unlike classical quantifiers which have been argued to be insensitive to islands, adfocal exclusive association in Yorùbá is sensitive to island. Example (5) involves a complex noun phrase, with adfocal*nìkan* associating with the object of the relative clause. The exclusive scope can only be narrow, below the epistemic predicate mo, as in (5)-i. The exclusive wide scope reading is absent, see (5)-ii.

- (5) Tolú mo obinrin [tí o je [isu] $_F$ nikan] [know > only, *only > know]. Tolú know woman REL 3sG eat yam only 'Tolú knows the woman who ate only YAM.'
 - (i) Tolú knows the woman who ate nothing but yam.
 - (ii) *Tolú only knows the woman who ate yam, and does not know any other thing.

Since relative clause is considered as one of the strong islands (Szabolcsi & Lohndal 2017, a.o.), and we have seen that exclusive scope does not violate it, the prediction is that weak islands should be violable. This prediction is borne out. Consider the NP-island example in (6). Although, the exclusive particle and its focus associate are within the NP-island, the exclusive scope is ambiguous in relation to negation.

- (6) Tolú ò ka [ìwé nípa [ìjàpá]_E nìkan]. [neg > only, only > neg] Tolú NEG read book about tortoise only
 - Lit. 'Tolú did not read a book about only tortoise.'
 - (i) Narrow scope: Tolú did not only read a book about tortoise, he also read about some other animals.
 - (ii) Wide scope: Tolú read a book about some other animal, but not a book about tortoise.

Discussion: Based on the discussion above, a possible proposal may be to assume that the $DP_F + nikan$ undergo quantifier-raising (QR) in the contexts where inverse scope is allowed (i.e., embedded clauses, weak islands). In island sensitive contexts, OR is blocked. However, I argue for a different approach to the analysis. I propose that instead of QR, the mechanism involved here is agreement. Given the semantic property of only, which requires that it composes with a proposition (with vP as the minimum propositional constituent) (Horn 1969, Rooth 1992, a.o.), the adfocal syntactic position of nikan does not meet this requirement. Following some recent studies, I assume that there is a covert exclusive operator (Op_{only}), which occupies a preverbal position and is responsible for the exclusive interpretation (cf. Lee 2005, Quek & Hirsch 2017, Aremu t.a., a.o.). Op_{only} establishes agreement with the node containing the adfocal particle and the focus associate, (7). Although earlier studies in this line of analysis assume that the adfocal particles are merely concord markers (cf. Lee 2005, Hirsch 2022, a.o.), I, however, assume that they rank the alternatives evoked by the focus (cf. Coppock and Beaver 2014).

(7) $[\text{TP DP }[\mathbf{Op}_{only} [\text{vP v }[\mathbf{VP} [\mathbf{DP+nikan}]]]]]$

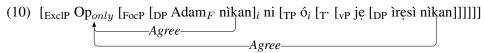
One argument which supports the Op_{only}-particle analysis comes from multiple association with focus contexts, such as (8). Apart from the multiple-only reading (where only Adam ate only rice, and others ate rice and other things), the sentence can also have a concord reading, where the eating relation is satisfied only by the pair <Adam, rice>, see (9-b). The QR-analysis cannot account for such a concord reading, as it predicts that each adfocal particle is interpreted independently. The concord structure is given in (10), which assumes a multiple Agree strategy (à la NEG-concord analyses, see Zeijlstra 2004, 2022, a.o.)

(8) Adam nìkan ni *(ó) je ìresì nìkan.

Adam only_{adf} Foc 3sg eat rice only_{adf}

Reading: 'It is the case that among those who could have eaten something, it is only Adam who ate something x, such that x is rice.' [Technically: the pair <Adam, rice> is the only alternative that satisfies the eating relation.]

- (9) a. ALT: {Adam ate rice, Adam ate beans, John ate rice, John ate beans, ... }
 - b. Only concord: Op_{only} . <Adam, rice> eat.



Therefore, in unbounded dependency constructions, the exclusive narrow and wide scope is derived as a result of the position that Op_{only} occupies in the clause, and establishes agreement with the DP+adfocalnìkan, see (11). However, the agreement relation is blocked in the presence of a strong island.

(11) $[TP ... [(\mathbf{Op}_{only}) [vP \text{ knows } [CP \text{ that } [TP ... [(\mathbf{Op}_{only}) [vP \text{ } [VP \text{ } DP+only]]]]]]]]$