

Focus marking in Ìkálè and the Final-over-Final Constraint

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Introduction: Cross-linguistic studies have shown that the Final-over-Final Constraint (henceforth FOFC), first proposed by Holmberg (2000), seems to be language universal. FOFC disallows, among other hierarchical head sequences, the domination of a head-initial phrase by a head-final phrase [XP[_{VP} Y ZP] X]. Subsequent studies have proposed that FOFC only applies to certain domains (FOFC domain) (see Biberauer et al. 2008, 2014; Biberauer & Sheehan 2012; Biberauer et al. 2009; Erlewine 2017 a.o.). The present study takes a cue from these previous studies and presents novel empirical data from the focus marking in Ìkálè (an SVO Niger-Congo language spoken in Nigeria). I propose that in Ìkálè, although the ex-situ focus is a head-final phrase that dominates a head-initial phrase, it does not constitute FOFC because the FocP is part of a different FOFC domain. What makes up a FOFC domain here is an extended projection.

Data and Observation: Ex-situ focus in Ìkálè is marked by the focus marker *rín*, which always occurs at the clause-final position even though the focused constituent is fronted to the left periphery of the clause. This happens regardless of the category that is in focus. Whether it is the subject (1) or the object (2) that is focus fronted, *rín* occurs clause-finally. Assuming a focus projection (FocP) in the left periphery of the clause, in which the focused constituents move to its specifier position (SpecFocP), the head of the FocP would be to the right position (head-final). This head-final phrase would dominate a head-initial TP: [_{FocP} XP [_{TP/FinP} T *máa* vP] Foc *rín*].

- (1a) Nòó máa je ejíje nè? (1b) Ayò *(ó) máa je ejíje nè *(rín).
who FUT eat food DEF Ayò 3SG will eat food DEF FOC
'Who will eat the food?' 'AYO will eat the food.'
- (2a) Nèè Ayò maa ri-i? (2b) Tolú Ayò máa ri *(rín).
who Ayò FUT see-Q Tolú Ayò will see FOC
'Who will Ayò see?' 'Ayò will see TOLÚ.'

Proposed Analysis: To account for such an exception to FOFC, there have been different proposals on what characterizes as a FOFC domain (where FOFC operates). There are at least two such proposals, (a) Extended projection: FOFC only holds between the heads within an extended projection (Biberauer et al. 2009; Biberauer & Sheehan 2012), and (b) Phase: a phase head constitutes the boundary of the FOFC domain. Thus, FOFC only applies to the complement of a phase (Erlewine 2017). I argue that the former (but not the latter) characterization accounts for the Ìkálè case. The FocP does not constitute the same extended projection with the TP. While the latter is in the proposition domain, the former is in the informational structural domain. They belong to different FOFC domains. Thus, FOFC does not hold between the two heads. On the other hand, I show that the FocP does not constitute a phase because the properties that are peculiar to phases are not present (contra Erlewine 2017).

An alternative analysis would be to say that the focus head is an 'acategorical' head (a la Biberauer et al. 2009) which is defective, and so FOFC does not hold. I show that this cannot be the case because just like other lexical heads that select (as complements) distinct categories, the Foc head also selects a TP as its complement. For example, the exclusive particle *nikàn* (only) in the language can be seen as an 'acategorical' particle or Minor Functional Head (MFH) (cf. Rothstein 1991 and Bayer 1999) because it does not select a specific category nor project categorial features. I further provide an argument for the different FOFC domains based on prosodic domains where phonological interactions occur within certain domains, and not across them.

Selected references: •Biberauer, T., A. Holmberg, & I. Roberts. 2014. A syntactic universal and its consequences. *Linguistic Inquiry* 45. •Holmberg, A. 2000. Deriving OV order in Finnish.