Evidence for polarity head: On the interaction of A’-movement and negation in Igbo
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Claim: I present new data from Igbo showing that there is empirical evidence for polarity between C and T heads within the clause structure. I argue that the presence of negative polarity triggers lowering of the C head when there is movement to the specifier of C. The interaction of A’-movement and negation in Igbo also supports the proposal that local dislocation and lowering under distributed morphology account (Noyer & Embick 2001, 2007, Embick 2015) are two distinct post-syntactic operations, with the former occurring before the latter. This is observed with the behaviour of tones and sentential negation under A’-movement in Igbo.

Data: One interesting reflex of movement attested in Igbo is found in clauses containing negation. Consider the following sentence in (1) below. In (1-a), we have a negative statement, and (1-b), shows relativization of the subject. A difference in the two sentences is that there is a particle which surfaces in (1-b). This particle is not present in non-negative counterpart (cf. (2)). In (2-b), there is a tone change on the finite verb that is not discussed here.

    b. Ádá ná é-ri-gí jí. Ada PRT PFX-eat-NEG yam ‘(the) Ada that didn’t eat yam’
(2) a. Ádá rí-rí jí. Ada eat-SFX yam ‘Ada ate yam.’
    b. Ádá (*ná) rí-rí jí. Ada PRT PRT eat-SFX yam ‘(the) Ada that ate yam’

That the ná particle in (1-b) is a reflex of movement is shown by the fact that it is present in all A’-dependencies involving movement, as such topicalization does not show this effect, as well as subject wh-/focus movement which has been argued to involve no movement (Ndimele 1991). I provide a number of empirical evidence showing that the particle in the relative clause in (1-b) is not a (negative) auxiliary as proposed by Nwachukwu (1976), but rather a complementizer, which no longer occur at the left edge of the clause as a result of lowering operation. Unlike auxiliaries in the languages, the particle does not take negation and inflectional affixes, and the verb complex that occur after the particle in (1) is not the nominalized form of the verb, which often follow the auxiliaries in the language. The particle has the same segmental form with the complementizer in declarative sentences, although in these contexts it occurs with a low tone (3-a). A further argument that supports the idea that the particle is a complementizer comes from embedded clauses. First is that in non-subject extraction from negative embedded clauses, the particle is absent (4-b). Secondly, subject extraction from embedded clauses normally exhibit the that-trace effect (cf. (3-b)) (Uwalaka 1991). But with a negative embedded clause (4-a), the particle is obligatory (3-c). I take this to mean that the complementizer originally in C position no longer sits in this position in the clause structure but has been lowered thus that-trace effect no longer holds.

(3) a. Ádá chè-rè ná Obí rí-rí jí. Ada think-SFX that Obi eat-SFX yam ‘Ada thought that Obi ate yam.’
    b. Obí Ádá chè-rè (*ná) rí-rí jí. Obi Ada think-SFX that eat-SFX yam ‘(the) Obi that Ada thought ate yam’


b. Jí Ádá chè-rè nà Ôbí (*ná) é-ri-ghi
   yam Ada think-sfx that Obi PRT PFX-eat-NEG
   ‘the yam that Ada thought that Obi didn’t eat’
   embedded object extraction

c. Ôbí Ádá chè-rè ___ *(ná) é-ri-ghi ji.
   Obi Ada think-sfx that PRT PFX-eat-NEG yam
   ‘(the) Obi Ada thought that didn’t eat yam’
   embedded subject extraction

The tone shift in (subject) relative clauses as pointed out by Goldsmith (1976) also provides further support for the particle as a complementizer. Goldsmith notes that in subject relative clauses the head noun bear a final floating (H)igh tone, but when the particle is present, this floating H tone does not dock on the subject DP but on the particle. Similar final H tone on subjects that have been crossed has also been reported for Igbo (see Manfredi (2018), and references cited therein). This is observed in cases where the subject DP ends with a (L)ow tone. The subject ˚Uchè in (5) and (6) inherently bears a final L tone.

(5) Gínj kà ˚Uché ri-ri ___?
   what FOC Uche eat-sfx
   ‘What did Uche eat?’

(6) Jí kà Ádá ná é-ri-ghi ___.
   yam FOC Ada PRT PFX-eat-NEG
   ‘Ada didn’t eat yam.’

In the non-negative sentence in (5), the subject DP bears a final H tone as it is crossed over by the object, but in negative (6), the subject bears its inherent final L tone and the particle has a H tone. Data (6) also shows that the particle is not a relative marker as proposed by Goldsmith (1976) as it occurs not just in relative clauses but in all kinds of A’-movement dependencies. Evidence for movement comes from island-sensitivity, reconstruction effects and licensing of parasitic gaps.

Assumptions and analysis: I assume, following earlier works by Laka 1990, Zanuttini 1991, 1994 and Martins 2000 that both negation and affirmation are different instantiation of a broader syntactic category. I adopt Zanuttini’s (1994) term polarity for this category. Polarity projects its own phrase and c-commands TP. Polarity Phrase (PolP) is where the polarity value of the clause is established, while the lower NegP position is were the negative element is generated but which does not carry syntactic feature corresponding to syntactic negation. In order to check the negative feature [NEG] on Pol, the Pol head seeks for a value bearing the relevant [NEG] feature in its c-commanding domain. This feature is present on the negative lexical element in NegP below TP. Following Déchaine 1993, I assume that both affirmation and negation are present and distinguished in the grammar of Igbo. I argue that ná is a complementizer, which is displaced and surfaces in a different position that is not C. I develop an analysis of the lowering of C head to pol, the head of its complement as a result of the negative feature value on Pol head. Taking into account that the particle bears the floating H tone of C head under A’-movement. I argue that lowering is a post-syntactic operation that occurs after local dislocation of the floating H tone. A tone which normally should have dock on the subject DP. The lowering analysis is further supported by idea that the particle survives the that-trace effect under subject extraction.

Conclusion and outlook: The data presented here support the assumption that negation must be expressed at the topmost level of the sentence (Zanuttini 1999, Giannakidou 2006). If the above analysis is correct, then what do the data in (6) where focus marker occurs before the complementizer that is lowered mean for a split-CP analysis (Rizzi 1997), where focus is the least in the order of C elements in the hierarchy?