

THE ANTI-CONTIGUITY OF *WH*- AND C: NEW EVIDENCE FROM NUPE
 Jason Kandybowicz, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

1. Introduction

Richards (2010, 2016) proposes a universal PF well-formedness condition that requires *wh*- items to phrase prosodically with their scope-marking complementizers. For Richards, the two items must be prosodically contiguous (i.e. contained within a single Phonological Phrase). Kandybowicz (2017) develops an anti-contiguity proposal in which *wh*- items are prohibited from phrasing with overt C at the level of Intonation Phrase (tP).

- (1) ANTI-CONTIGUITY OF *WH*- AND C (Kandybowicz 2017)
 No tP may contain both overt C and *wh*.

Kandybowicz's anti-contiguity approach to the prosodic licensing of *wh*- is based on the distributional patterns of *wh*- in-situ in four Tano languages of Ghana (Krachi, Bono, Wasa, and Asante Twi). In all four languages, *wh*- in-situ is possible, but only in two of them is *wh*- in-situ permitted inside embedded clauses headed by obligatory overt C. Krachi and Bono both allow *wh*- in-situ in embedded complement clauses, while Wasa and Asante Twi do not. Kandybowicz motivates his anti-contiguity theory by showing that the ability of a *wh*- item to appear in-situ in these languages correlates with the prosodic status of its immediately containing clause. Embedded complement TPs are realized as independent tP constituents in Krachi and Bono, but not in Wasa or Asante Twi. Thus, tP boundaries separate C from embedded *wh*- items in Krachi and Bono, preventing the pair from forming a prosodic constituent at the level of tP. Conversely, no such boundaries intervene between embedded C and TP-containing *wh*- items in Wasa and Asante Twi, yielding prosodic mappings in which the items phrase together under a single tP. Consequently, embedded *wh*- in-situ is prosodically licit in Krachi and Bono (*wh*- and C are non-contiguous in these contexts), but not in Wasa and Asante Twi (*wh*- and C are tP-contiguous in these contexts). The table below summarizes.

- (2)

	KRACHI	BONO	WASA	ASANTE TWI
EMBEDDED TP = tP	✓	✓	✗	✗
EMBEDDED <i>wh</i> - IN-SITU	✓	✓	✗	✗

This talk presents new evidence in support of Kandybowicz's anti-contiguity proposal on the basis of two surprising *wh*- asymmetries in Nupe, a Benue-Congo language of Nigeria. I show that both asymmetries can be explained straightforwardly in terms of (1).

2. Asymmetry 1

Embedded constituents can be focused in Nupe by moving to the left periphery of the embedded clause.

- (3) a. Musa kpe *(gànán) **dùkùn** Nàna si ____ tsúwó o.
 Musa know.PST COMP pot Nana buy.PST yesterday FOC
 'Musa knew that Nana bought A POT yesterday.'
 b. Musa gbíngàn *(kó) **tsúwó** Nàna si dùkùn ____ o.
 Musa ask.PST COMP yesterday Nana buy.PST pot FOC
 'Musa asked whether Nana bought a pot YESTERDAY.'

Embedded *wh*- items, however, may not appear in left peripheral focus positions below obligatory C. That is, despite the availability of an embedded focus position (3), Nupe does not allow embedded questions.

- (4) a. *Musa kpe *(gànán) **ké** Nàna si ____ tsúwó o. (Compare with (3a))
 Musa know.PST COMP what Nana buy.PST yesterday FOC
 Intended: 'Musa knew what Nana bought yesterday.'
 b. *Musa gbíngàn *(kó) **kánci** Nàna si dùkùn ____ o. (Compare with (3b))
 Musa ask.PST COMP when Nana buy.PST pot FOC
 Intended: 'Musa asked when Nana bought a pot.'

To express the intended meanings in (4), Nupe must resort to non-interrogative relative clause syntax (e.g. 'Musa knew the thing that Nana bought yesterday.'). Unable to form embedded questions, the language does not tolerate partial *wh*- movement either.

3. Asymmetry 2

Nupe is not a *wh*- in-situ language (5a), but like English it allows *wh*- in-situ in multiple questions (5b).

- (5) a. *Musa si **ké?**
 Musa buy.PST what

b. Zéé si **ké** o?
 who buy what FOC
 'Who bought what?'

Wh- in-situ in multiple questions, however, is limited to root contexts, as demonstrated in (6).

- (6) *Musa kpe *(gànán) zéé si ké o.
Musa know.PST COMP who buy what FOC

The ungrammaticality of (6) is not surprising given the unavailability of embedded questions in the language (4). Therefore, to demonstrate the restriction on embedded *wh*- in-situ in multiple questions, we must move the initial *wh*- item out of the embedded domain, leaving the lower *wh*- item in its base position.

- (7) a. *Zéé Musa kpe *(gànán) — u-si kè o?
 who Musa know.PST COMP 3RD.SG-buy.PST what FOC

b. *Zéé Musa gbíngàn *(kó) — u-si kè o?
 who Musa ask.PST COMP 3RD.SG-buy.PST what FOC

A first reaction to the ungrammaticality of (7) might be to attribute the ill-formedness to a *Comp-trace* effect. But, as Kandybowicz 2009 shows, long subject extraction across embedded complementizers in the language is possible when a resumptive pronoun cliticizes to the verb (as in (7)). The sentences in (7) become fully acceptable if the in-situ *wh*- items are replaced with non-interrogative expressions (8), revealing the asymmetry between matrix (5b) and embedded (7) *wh*- in-situ in the language.

- (8) a. Zéé Musa kpe *(gànán) — u-si dùkùn o?
 who Musa know.PST COMP 3RD.SG-buy.PST pot FOC
 ‘Who did Musa know bought a pot?’

b. Zéé Musa gbíngàn *(kó) — u-si dùkùn o?
 who Musa ask.PST COMP 3RD.SG-buy.PST pot FOC
 ‘Who did Musa ask bought a pot?’

4. Analysis of the Two Asymmetries

I show that the two asymmetries outlined above can be derived from Kandybowicz's (2017) anti-contiguity of *wh*- and C proposal (1). Prosodic analysis reveals that overt embedded C in the language does not induce iP phrasing of its clausal complement. The phonetic correlates of i-phrasing in Nupe include the presence of low boundary tones (L%) at the right edges of iP, significant pauses/prosodic breaks, and the induction of F0 register reset. (Space limitations restrict me from presenting the relevant acoustic data here.) At the juncture of embedded C and its clausal complement, we find none of these phonetic indicators. In terms of the prosody of embedded clauses, then, Nupe is similar to Wasa and Asante Twi (2).

As a consequence of the fact that overt embedded C does not induce tP phrasing of its complement, C and its clausal complement are prosodically contiguous within tP in Nupe. Given (1), it follows that all *wh*- items in the language are restricted from appearing in embedded contexts, whether moved (4) (i.e. Asymmetry 1) or in-situ (7) (i.e. Asymmetry 2). The root/embedded *wh*- in-situ asymmetry (Asymmetry 2) is also a consequence of the fact that matrix C is obligatorily null in Nupe. Because (1) polices the prosodic relationship between *wh*- and overt C, it cannot be violated by *wh*- in-situ in the matrix domain. For these reasons, *wh*- in-situ is allowed in matrix, but not embedded clauses in multiple questions. The interrogative/non-interrogative embedded focus asymmetry (Asymmetry 1) is the consequence of an additional factor as well. In some languages, focused constituents are obligatorily mapped as tP constituents. If the moved *wh*- expressions in (4) were realized as independent tPs, (1) would not be violated because an *t* boundary would separate *wh*- from C. But Nupe is not a language that realizes focused constituents as independent tPs – focused XPs lack right edge L%, they are not flanked by prosodic breaks, nor do they induce F0 reset.

References

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