

ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF CLAUSAL *wè* IN FONGBE

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This paper discusses the distribution of *wè* in the context of a clause in Fongbe. Its presence is correlated with the property [+definite] of the subject or of the delimiting object. Furthermore there are two surface positions for *wè* with respect to negation. On the basis of this distribution, I propose that there are two syntactic positions for *wè* within the Fon clause. Spec-Head agreement within the two projections of *wè* accounts for the correlation between the presence of *wè* and a [+definite] argument. Finally, it is proposed that *wè* is a determiner of events.

Cet article discute la distribution de *wè* tel qu'il apparaît à l'intérieur de la phrase en fongbe. La présence de *wè* dans ce contexte est en corrélation avec le trait [+défini] du sujet ou de l'objet délimitant. De plus, *wè* occupe deux positions de surface par rapport à la marque de négation. Sur la base de cette distribution, je propose qu'il y ait deux positions syntaxiques pour *wè* à l'intérieur de la phrase fon. L'accord spécifieur/tête à l'intérieur des deux projections de *wè* rend compte de la corrélation entre la présence de *wè* et un argument [+défini]. Finalement, il est proposé que *wè* est un déterminant d'événement.

O. INTRODUCTION

O.1. ISSUE

The morpheme *wè* in Fongbe, which I will gloss as 'it-is', occurs in various contexts. In (1a), it occurs with a nominal predicate in a truncated cleft¹ in (1b) it occurs with a clefted noun phrase, in (1c) with a clefted predicate and in (1d), it occurs with a clefted causal clause.

- (1)a. *àtín wè*
tree it-is
'It is a tree (not e.g. a bush)' (Hounkpatin, 1984-5:186)
- b. *masè vî lé wè wá*
Massè child PL it-is arrive
'It is the people of Massè who have arrived' (Hounkpatin, 1984-5:218)
- c. *lón wè súnù ́ lón*
jump it-is man Det jump
'It is jump that the man did (not e.g. run away)'
- d. *ḍó t́ cé kù wútù wè, ùn yì Glèxwé*
cause father my dead cause it-is, I go Ouidah
'It is because my father died that I went to Ouidah
(not e.g. because my brother had a baby)' (Anon., 1983:IX-7)

As noted in Anononymous (1983:11-3), *wè* may also occur in the context of a clause as in (2).

- (2)a. *mí kó wòn wè*
you already forget it-is
'It is that you have forgotten already' (Anon., 1983:11-3)

¹ The suggestion that (1a.) is a truncated cleft comes from the facts illustrated below:

àtín wè (é nyì) 'It is a tree that it is.'
tree it-is it is

- b. é ɖù nǔ ǎ wè à
 he eat THING NEG it-is INT
 'Is it that he has not eaten?'

(Hounkpatin, 1984-5:147)

The major difference between the interpretation of the data in (1) and (2) is that, while in the former the constituent headed by *wè* is assigned a contrastive interpretation (as is indicated in the translation), in the latter, no contrastive interpretation is entailed by the presence of *wè* in the clause. The contrastive interpretation of the sentences in (1) follows from the fact that the constituent headed by *wè* is a clefted phrase, and hence, it is being assigned a focus interpretation. In (2) however, the constituent headed by *wè* is not clefted. *wè* is part of the clause. It can occur either in matrix or in embedded clauses containing a lexical complementizer as shown in (3).

- (3)a. súnù ɔ gbà mótò ɔ wè MATRIX
 man Det destroy car Det it-is
 'It is that the man destroyed the car.'

- b. Kòkú lìn ɖò Asibá gbà mótò ɔ wè EMBEDDED
 Koku think that Asiba destroy car Det it-is
 'Koku thinks that it is that Asiba destroyed the car.'

The presence of *wè* in this latter context simply entails that new information -- that is information not already known by the participants in the interaction -- is being referred to.²

In this paper,³ I discuss the distribution of *wè* as it occurs in the context of the sentences in (2) and (3).⁴ Since *wè* does not exhibit the semantic content associated with lexical items defined in terms of the major features [α N, β V], I take *wè* to be the head of a functional category projection which I will refer to as XP. I will assume that the projections of functional categories conform to the revised format of the X' theory (e.g. Chomsky, 1986, 1989). All projections, minor as well as major, have the format in (4) (in which the linear order is irrelevant).

- (4) $X^{\max} = X''$
 $X'' = Y'' X'$
 |
 SPEC
 $X' = X Z''$
 |
 COMPL
 $X = [+/-N, +/-V], C, AGR, T, NEG, DET, \text{etc.}$

² Note that *wè* also occurs in progressive clauses e.g.

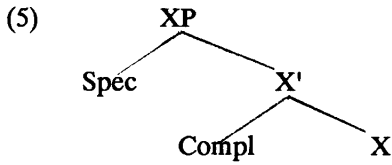
Kòkú ɖò yìyì wè 'Koku is leaving.'
 Koku at leaving

I do not discuss this construction in this paper.

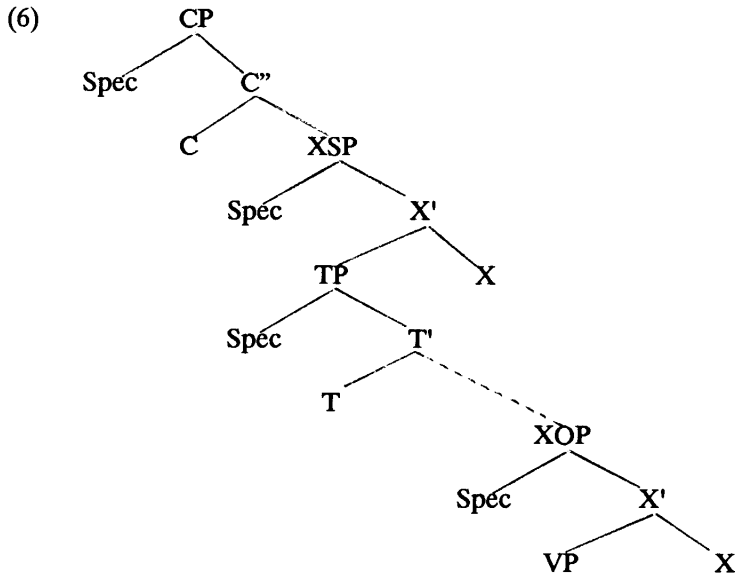
³ I want to thank my Fon informants from Benin: Maxime da Cruz (from Cotonou/Porto Novo) and Aimé Avolonto (from Abomey), for providing me with the data base discussed in this paper. I would like to thank the members of my research group (at UQAM) for their comments on an earlier version of this paper. Thanks to Monique Poulin for help in formatting the manuscript. The present work is realized within the context of the Haitian project at UQAM. The project is financed by grants from CRSH, FCAR and FIR (UQAM).

⁴ The analysis proposed for the distribution of *wè* in this paper accounts for the data elicited from speakers of Abomey and Cotonou/Porto Novo. The two informants from Ouidah with whom I worked on this topic present a very different set of data. This suggests that the distribution of *wè* is not uniform across the Fon dialects.

Further, I will assume that the relationship between the specifier and the head of a functional projection as in (5) is defined in terms of agreement (cf. Pollock, 1989; Chomsky, 1989, and the references therein).



I will argue that in the context of a clause, *wè* heads two different syntactic projections: one where it is correlated with properties of the subject (a projection which I will refer to as XSP), and one where it is correlated with properties of the object (which I will refer to as XOP) (sections 1 and 2). Under this proposal, the structure of the Fon clause is as in (6).



I will show that Spec-Head agreement in definiteness accounts for the distributional properties of *wè* and for the interpretive facts associated with it (section 3).

1. THE DISTRIBUTION OF *wè* WITH RESPECT TO PROPERTIES OF THE SUBJECT AND OBJECT.

In this section, I show that the presence of *wè* within a clause is correlated with the property [+definite] of either the subject or the delimiting object. Before presenting this data, I introduce the basic facts about the determination of NPs in Fon.

In Fon, bare nouns are interpreted as generic or as mass nouns as in (7) and (8) respectively.

(7) *Kòkú gbà mótò*
 J/K destroy car
 'J/K destroyed cars.'

(8) *Kòkú d̀̀ b̀̀léd̀̀*
 J/K eat bread
 'J/K ate bread.'

Nouns occurring with *dé* 'a' are interpreted as indefinite count nouns.

- (9) *Kòkú dù bléqì dé*
 J/K eat bread a
 'J/K ate a piece of bread.'

Count nouns⁵ may occur with the definite determiner.⁶ The determiner has the following allomorphs: *lɛ́, ɛ́n, ɛ́*.

- (10) *Kòkú qù bléqì ɛ́*
 J/K eat bread Det
 'J/K ate the bread (in question).'

Following the analysis in Brousseau and Lumsden (1990), I will assume that in the context of a noun phrase the determiner heads a projection DP. As can be seen in (10), DP is head final.⁷ Finally, in a [-definite] context as in (7), (8) and (9), the head of DP remains phonologically empty. Hence, I will assume that the lexical determiner is in complementary distribution with a phonologically null determiner.

1.1. *wè* AND THE [+ DEFINITE] PROPERTY OF THE SUBJECT

The contrast in grammaticality between the sentences in (11) and the sentences in (12) shows that the presence of *wè* within a clause is correlated with the property [+definite] of the subject DP. The sentences in (11) contain a [-definite] subject. In this context, *wè* is not permitted, as is shown by the ungrammaticality of these sentences.

- (11)a. * *àvó dé wé wè* INDIVIDUAL LEVEL PREDICATE
 dress a white it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that a dress is white']
- b. * *súnù dé lón wè* INTRANSITIVE VERB
 man a jump it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that a man jumped.']
- c. * *vì dé sè àxwá wè* TRANSITIVE NON AFFECTEDNESS VERB
 child a hear noise it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that a child heard noise.']
- d. * *súnù dé gbà mótò dé wè* AFFECTEDNESS VERB
 man a destroy car a it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that a man destroyed a car.']
- e. * *súnù dé fùn àhwàn wè* INHERENT OBJECT VERB
 man a make war it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that a man made war.']

⁵ Proper names (person or place) do not occur with the determiner. Nonetheless proper names have the same properties as [+definite] noun phrases.

⁶ In Lefebvre (1986, and to appear), I show that the determiner *ɛ́* is deictic in addition to being definite. On the basis of this fact I suggested that [+deictic] might be the feature characterizing the Fon determiner. It is not clear to me as yet whether, in addition to being [+definite], *wè* is also [+deictic]. Pending further research on this topic, in this paper I will assume that the feature which is common to both *ɛ́* and *wè* is the feature [+definite].

⁷ Note that in the context of a plural marker, the determiner is not obligatorily overtly manifested at Surface Structure as shown below (Lefebvre, 1986):

vì léé 'The children (that we know of).'
 child PL

In contrast, in the context of a [+definite] subject, *wè* is permitted, as is shown by the grammaticality of the sentences in (12).

- (12)a. ávró ó wé wè INDIVIDUAL LEVEL PREDICATE
 dress Det white it-is
 'It is that the dress is white.'
- b. súnù ó lón wè INTRANSITIVE VERB
 man Det jump it-is
 'It is that the man jumped.'
- c. vì ó sè àxwá wè TRANSITIVE NON AFFECTEDNESS VERB
 child Det hear noise it-is
 'It is that the child heard noise.'
- d. súnù ó gbà mótò dé wè AFFECTEDNESS VERB
 man DET destroy car a it-is
 'It is that the man destroyed a car.'
- e. súnù ó fùn àhwàn wè INHERENT OBJECT VERB
 man Det make war it-is
 'It is that the man made war.'

Thus, the contrast in grammaticality between the sentences in (11) and those in (12) shows that the presence of *wè* within a clause is correlated with the property [+definite] of the subject. Note that the sentences above either have no object (cf. (a, b)) or an object which is not [+definite] (cf. (c, d, e)).

When *wè* is correlated with the subject of the clause, what is being presupposed as new information is the content of the whole clause as illustrated in (13).

- (13) súnù ó gbà mótò dé wè
 man Det destroy car a it-is
 'It is that the man destroyed a car.' [new information: the man destroyed a car]

1.2. *wè* IN THE CONTEXT OF OBJECTS

The contrast in grammaticality between the sentences in (14) and (15) shows that the presence of *wè* within a clause may also be correlated with the property [+definite] of an object DP. In (14) the objects are [-definite] and the sentences containing *wè* are ungrammatical.

- (14)a. * súnù dé gbà mótò dé wè AFFECTEDNESS VERBS
 man a destroy car a it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that a man destroyed a car.']
- b. * súnù dé dù àsón dé wè
 man a eat crab a it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that a man ate a crab.']
- c. * súnù dé bló távò dé wè
 man a make table a it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that a man made a table.']

In contrast, the objects in (15) are [+definite] and *wè* is permitted in this context. Note that in these sentences the subject is [-definite] and hence cannot be associated with it.

- (15)a. súnù dé gbà mótò ó wè AFFECTEDNESS VERBS
 man a destroy car the it-is
 'It is that a man destroyed the car.'
- b. súnù dé dù àsón ó wè
 man a eat crab the it-is
 'It is that a man ate the crab.'
- c. súnù dé bló távò ó wè
 man a make table the it-is
 'It is that a man made the table.'

On the basis of the contrast in grammaticality between (14) and (15), one might conclude that the presence of a [+definite] object is sufficient to allow for *wè* to appear in correlation with an object. This is not so, however. Consider the sentences in (16) in which the object is [+definite] and yet the presence of *wè* still yields ungrammatical sentences.

- (16)a. * vì dé sè àxwá ó wè TRANSITIVE NON AFFECTEDNESS VERBS
 child a hear noise Det it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that a child heard the noise.']
- b. * súnù dé kpé vì ó wè
 man a meet child Det it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that a man met a child.']
- c. * súnù dé sè flanségbè ó wè
 man a know French Det it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that a man knows this variety of French.']

How can the difference in grammaticality between the sentences in (15) and (16) be accounted for? Crucially, the objects of the verbs in (15) ('destroy', 'eat', 'make') are affected objects. They delimit the event denoted by the verb (cf. Tenny, 1987). In contrast, the objects of the verbs in (16) ('hear', 'meet', 'know') are not affected objects and hence do not delimit the event. The minimal difference between the data in (15) and that in (16) appears to be that in the latter, there is an argument which delimits the event, whereas in the former, there is not.⁸ Hence, the presence of *wè* is correlated with an affected object.

The contrast in grammaticality between the sentences in (14), where the affected object is [-definite], and those in (15), where the affected object is [+definite], shows that *wè* is correlated with the property [+definite] of the affected object.

⁸ Note that with inherent object predicates of the type shown below, *wè* is not permitted even in the context of a [+definite] object.

- a. * súnù dé fun ahwan ó wè INHERENT OBJECT VERBS
 man a make war Det it-is
- b. * súnù dé ò àmlìn ó wè
 man a sleep sleep Det it-is
- c. * súnù dé zùn zònlìn ó wè
 man a take walk Det it-is
- d. ? súnù dé wà àz ó wè
 man a do work Det it-is

These facts will be discussed in the light of a better understanding of this class of predicates (Brousseau, in preparation).

When *wè* is correlated with the object, what is interpreted as new information does not correspond to the content of the whole clause (as is the case when *wè* is correlated with the subject (cf. (13)). Rather, it is restricted to the predicate and the internal argument. This is illustrated in (17).

- (17) *súnù dé gbà mótò ó wè*
 man a destroy car the it-is
 'It is that a man destroyed a car.' [new information: the car has been destroyed]

1.3. SUMMARY

The facts reported on in this section show that the presence of *wè* within a clause is correlated with the property [+definite] of the subject or of the delimiting object. The correlation between *wè* and one of the two arguments of the predicate further correlates with two slightly different interpretations. When *wè* is in correlation with the subject, the content of the whole clause is being interpreted as new information. When *wè* is in correlation with the delimiting object, what is being interpreted as new information includes only the predicate and the internal argument. As is shown in (12), *wè* is compatible with [+definite] subjects of all types of predicates. In contrast, as shown from the contrast in grammaticality between (14) and (15), *wè* is compatible only with [+definite] delimiting arguments of affectedness predicates.

This distribution suggests that there are two positions for *wè* within the clause: one which is high in the syntactic tree and allows for *wè* to be in a configurational relationship with the subject; another one which is lower in the tree and allows for *wè* to be in a configurational relationship with the delimiting object (cf. the configuration in (6)). The distribution of *wè* in the context of negation supports this proposal.

2. THE DISTRIBUTION OF *wè* IN THE CONTEXT OF NEGATION

The Fon data involving the distribution of *wè* in the context of negation provide evidence that there are two syntactic positions for *wè*. In this context, the two positions for *wè* are directly visible in the distribution of functional lexical items at Surface Structures. I begin with a brief introduction to the functional category NEG in Fon.

2.1 THE FUNCTIONAL CATEGORY NEG IN FON

In Fon matrix clauses, the negation marker is *ǎ* as shown in (18).⁹

- (18) *Kòkú wá ǎ*
 Koko arrive NEG
 'Koku has not arrived.'

Following Pollock's (1989) analysis of negation for French, I will assume that the negation particle constitutes the head of a projection NEGP. Hence, I will assume that, like French 'ne', *a* in Fon heads NEGP. Pending further research on negation in the language, I will assume that NEGP dominates TP. With respect to the topic discussed in this paper, nothing hinges on this assumption.

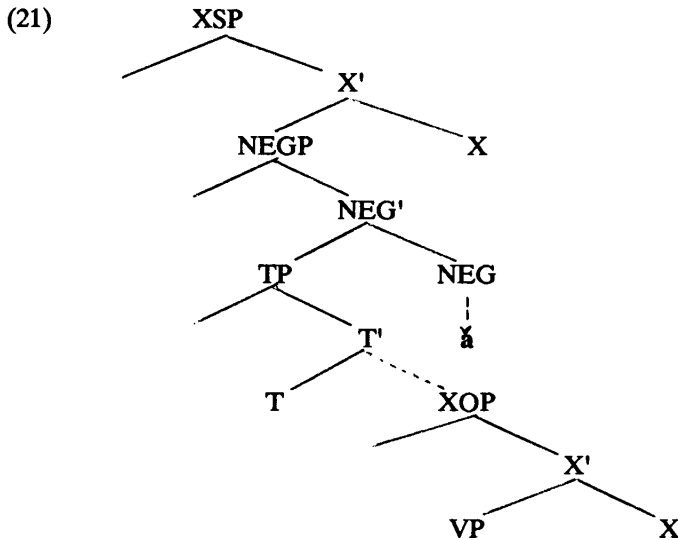
⁹ The expression of negation in Fon is much more complex than that (Hounkpatin, 1984-5; Anonymous, 1983). For this paper, the data in (18) is sufficient. For an elaborate discussion of negation in Fon within the framework of functional categories, see da Cruz (in preparation).

There are two surface positions for *wè* in Fon with respect to the negation particle heading NEGP. *Wè* may follow the negation particle, as in (19), or it may precede it as in (20).

(19) *súnù ɔ fìn mótò ɔ ǎ wè*
 man Det steal car Det NEG it-is
 'It is that the man did not steal the car.'

(20) *súnù ɔ fìn mótò ɔ wè ǎ*
 man Det steal car Det it-is NEG
 'It is not that the car has been stolen by the man.'

On the basis of this distribution, I will assume that if there are two positions for *wè*, one will be higher than NEGP in the syntactic tree (XSP) and one lower than NEGP (XOP) in the syntactic tree. The structure of the clause would then be as in (21).



The structure proposed in (21) is supported by the following facts.

2.2. THE DISTRIBUTION OF *wè* IN THE CONTEXT OF NEGATION

When *wè* follows the negation particle, it can only occur in the context of a [+definite] subject as is shown by the contrast in grammaticality between (22) and (23).

(22) * *súnù dé fìn mótò dé ǎ wè*
 man a steal car a NEG it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that a man did not steal a car.']

(23) *súnù ɔ fìn mótò dé ǎ wè*
 man Det steal car a NEG it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that the man did not steal a car.']

Wè may occur in this position in the context of subjects of various types of predicates: individual level predicates, as in (24a), intransitive verbs as in (24b), transitive non affectedness as in (24c), transitive affectedness verbs as in (24d) and inherent object verbs as in (24e).

- (24)a. àvó ó wé ǎ wè INDIVIDUAL LEVEL PREDICATE
 dress Det white NEG it-is
 'It is that the dress is not white.'
- b. súnù ó lón ǎ wè INTRANSITIVE VERB
 man Det jump NEG it-is
 'It is that the man did not jump.'
- c. vì ó sè àxwá ǎ wè TRANSITIVE NON AFFECTEDNESS VERB
 child Det hear noise NEG it-is
 'It is that the child did not hear the noise.'
- d. súnù ó gbà mótò dé ǎ wè AFFECTEDNESS VERB
 man Det destroy car a NEG it-is
 'It is that the man did not destroy a car.'
- e. súnù ó fùn àhwàn á wè INHERENT OBJECT VERB
 man Det make war NEG it-is
 'It is that the man did not make war.'

When *wè* precedes negation, it can only occur in the context of a [+definite] affected object as can be seen by the contrast in grammaticality between (25) and (26).

- (25) * súnù dé fin mótò dé wè ǎ AFFECTEDNESS VERB
 man a steal car a it-is NEG
 [Lit: 'It is not that a man has stolen a car.']
- (26) súnù dé fin mótò ó wè ǎ AFFECTEDNESS VERB
 man a steal car the it-is NEG
 'It is not that a man has stolen the car.'

In this position, *wè* cannot occur in the context of a non affected object (hence non-affectedness predicates), even if the object is [+definite], as is shown by the ungrammaticality of the sentences in (27).

- (27)a. * vì dé sè àxwá ó wè ǎ TRANSITIVE NON
 AFFECTEDNESS VERBS
 child a hear noise Det it-is NEG
 [Lit: 'It is not that a child has heard the noise.']
- b. * súnù dé kpé vì ó wè ǎ
 man a meet child Det it-is NEG
 [Lit: 'It is not that a man met the child.']
- c. * súnù dé sè flànségbè ó wè ǎ
 man a know French Det it-is NEG
 [Lit: 'It is not that a man knows that variety of French.']

2.3. SUMMARY

The Fon data discussed in this section show that when *wè* follows the head of NEGP, it is correlated with the property [+definite] of the subject (cf. section 1.1). Similarly, when *wè* precedes the head of NEGP, it is correlated with the property [+definite] of the delimiting argument (cf. section 1.2). The surface distribution of *wè* with respect to the negation particle thus strongly supports the proposal that there are two independently motivated positions for *wè* (cf. (21)): one in which *wè* can be

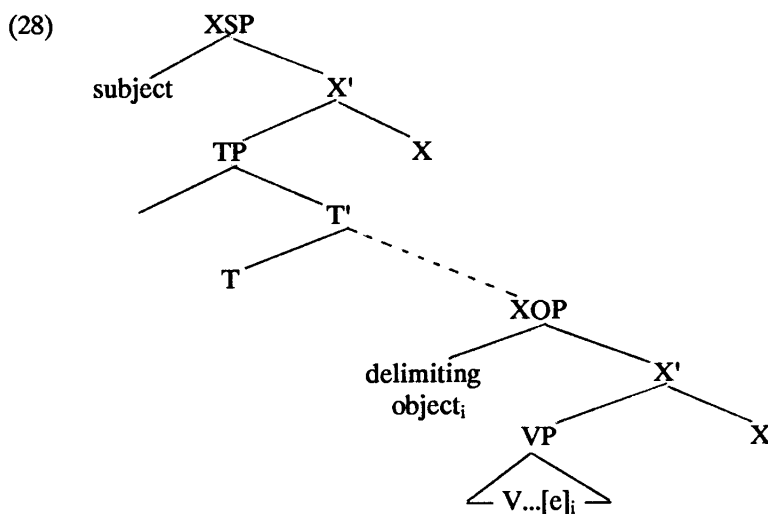
associated with the subject (XSP), and one in which *wè* can be associated with the object (XOP).

3. THE SPEC-HEAD RELATIONSHIP WITHIN PROJECTIONS HEADED BY *wè*

Having shown that there are two syntactic positions for *wè*, I now turn to an analysis which will account for its distribution as outlined in sections 1 and 2. I propose that the facts concerning the distribution of *wè* can be accounted for by the various facets of agreement taking place between a specifier and its head.

3.1. SPEC-HEAD AGREEMENT IN DEFINITENESS

The correlation between the [+definite] feature of the subject/object and the presence of *wè* within the clause can be accounted for by agreement in the feature [\leq definite]¹⁰ through Spec-Head agreement. In this particular case, each projection of *wè* (XSP, XOP) constitutes a domain of agreement. By S-Structure, the subject of the clause fills the Specifier position of XSP¹¹ and the object fills the specifier position of XOP. This is illustrated in (28).



Thus, at S-Structure, both projections of *wè* contain a DP in their specifier position,¹² and hence exhibit an appropriate configuration for Spec-Head agreement.

¹⁰ Number is not involved in agreement. As the following examples show, *wè* never occurs with a plural morpheme, even in the context of a [+plural] specifier. (Cf. footnote 6 for plural specifications.)

- a. * *dàwé (s) léé fin mótò (wè) léé*
 man Det PL steal car it-is PL
 [Lit: 'It is that the men stole the cars.']
- b. * *dàwé dè fin mótò (s) léé (wè) léé*
 a man a steal car Det PL it-is PL
 [Lit: 'It is that a man stole the cars.']

¹¹ For discussion of the D-Structure position of the subject in a structure of type (28), see Lefebvre (to appear).

¹² I assume that empty heads have to be licensed (Travis, 1988; Baker, 1988) and that Spec-Head agreement is a way of achieving this licensing (Cowper, to appear). Hence, an empty head X has to be licensed by a DP in Spec of its projection. Since agreement involves delimiting arguments and the head of the X projections, the position X will be licensed only when the clause contains a delimiting argument. Consequently, when a clause contains no delimiting arguments, AGRO will not be licensed and the X projection will not appear in the structure.

The variable α in [α definite] can be assigned two values: [+definite] and [-definite]. Within DPs, [+definite] is realized as \acute{s} (or one of its allomorphs), and [-definite] is phonologically null. Similarly, within XSP, [+definite] is realized as *wè* and [-definite] is phonologically null. Hence, the determiner does not surface in every DET position nor does *wè* in every XP head position. The possible surface combinations of values for the feature [α definite] for pairs of DP (subject or object) and X (XS or XO) are represented in (29).

(29)	AGRSP		AGROP	
	specifier	head	specifier	head
a.	+definite	+definite	+definite	+definite
b.	-definite	-definite	-definite	-definite
c.*	-definite	+definite	*-definite	+definite
d.	+definite	-definite	+definite	-definite

These four possibilities are exhibited in (30) and (31) for XSP and XOP respectively.

- (30)a. súnù acute s gbà mótò acute wè
 man Det destroy car a it-is
 'It is that the man destroyed a car.'
- b. súnù acute gba motò acute empty
 man a destroy car a Det
 'A man destroyed a car.'
- c. * súnù acute gbà mótò acute wè
 man a destroy car a it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that a man destroyed a car.']
- d. súnù acute s gbà mótò acute empty
 man Det destroy car a Det
 'The man destroyed a car.'

- (31)a. súnù acute gbà mótò acute s wè
 man a destroy car Det it-is
 'It is that a man destroyed the car.'
- b. súnù acute gbà mótò acute empty
 man a destroy car a Det
 'A man destroyed a car.'
- c. * súnù acute gbà mótò acute wè
 man a destroy car a it-is
 [Lit: 'It is that a man destroyed a car.']
- d. súnù acute gbà mótò acute s empty
 man a destroy car Det Det
 'A man destroyed the car.'

In (a) and (b) of (29)-(31), the feature specification of the DP in Spec of XP and the feature specification of the head are the same. The data in (c) and (d) show that, when the feature specification of the DP in Spec of XP and the feature specification of the head are not the same, the only grammatical configuration is the one where the DP

in Spec of the projection is positively specified for definiteness. While (d) is grammatical, (c) is not.¹³

The observed agreement facts follow directly in Spec must agree with the head of the projection (and not vice versa) and if features are allowed to be underspecified (e.g. Archangeli, 1984; Pulleyblank, 1983; Lumsden, 1987). [+definite] must be the marked value since it has a marked interpretation. Thus, if X is [+definite], then the specifier must be [+definite], yielding the surface configuration in (29a). If X is not [+definite] it is unspecified for definiteness at D-Structure. So, the specifier can be either [+/-definite]. This yields the surface configurations (29d, b). On this analysis, the impossible configuration in (29a) will never be generated.

3.2. SPEC-HEAD AGREEMENT AND INTERPRETIVE FACTS

Recall from section 1 that when *wè* is correlated with the property [+definite] of the subject, hence occurring as the head of XSP, the whole clause is being presupposed as new information. I will refer to this interpretation as the wide scope interpretation. However, when *wè* is correlated with the property [+definite] of the object, hence occurring as the head of XOP, only the predicate and its internal argument are presupposed as new information. I will refer to this interpretation as the narrow scope interpretation. These two possibilities are depicted in (23) (= (13)) and (33) (= (17)) respectively.

(32) súnù ó gbà mótò dé wè
 man Det destroy car a it-is
 'It is that the man destroyed a car.' [new information: the man destroyed a car]

(33) súnù dé gbà mótò ó wè
 man a destroy car the it-is
 'It is that a man destroyed a car.' [new information: the car has been destroyed]

With other types of projections (e.g. NEGP, CP, etc.), scope is determined by the element in Spec of the projection (e.g. negative adverbial, Wh, etc.). In line with this general approach to scope, I propose that, through agreement, the arguments in Spec of the projections headed by *wè* acquire scope properties and that consequently they determine the scope of the presupposed new information. Hence, when *wè* heads XSP, the subject has scope over the whole clause. This yields the interpretation in (32). When, however, *wè* heads XOP, the object has scope only over the predicate and the internal arguments. This yields the interpretation in (33).

This analysis accounts for the fact that there cannot be two occurrences of *wè* within the same clause, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (34) in which the two X positions are both lexically filled by *wè*.

¹³ It is notable that the surface configurations found as a result of agreement in definiteness (cf. (29)) parallel those found in languages exhibiting agreement in ϕ features. The matching configurations in (a) and (b) represent the classic cases. The possibility for heads to be less specified for a given feature than the DP it is agreeing with, as in configuration (d), is a widespread phenomenon in languages of the world. Similar facts involving gender agreement are reported for Hebrew (Ritter, to appear); similar facts involving number agreement in Quechua are reported in Lefebvre and Dubuisson (1977) and Lefebvre (1981). To the best of my knowledge the non-matching configuration, where the head is more specified than the DP it is agreeing with, as in configuration (c), has not been observed. Agreement in definiteness thus appears to produce the same surface patterns as agreement in ϕ features.

(34) * súnù s gbà mótò s wè wè
 man Det destroy car Det it-is it-is

Since the subject has scope over the whole clause when *wè* occurs as head of XSP, the presence of *wè* as head of XOP within the same clause is redundant.

3.3. AGREEMENT AND EVENT STRUCTURE

We have seen that *wè* is either the head of XSP or the head of XOP. Through agreement in definiteness, either with the subject or with the object, *wè* identifies the subject or the delimiting object of the clause. These two arguments mark the beginning point and the end point of an event respectively.

Van Voorst (1988) has proposed that while the subject of the clause marks the object of origin of an event, the object of the clause (here the delimiting argument) marks the object of termination of an event. On this view, *wè* may be interpreted as bearing at the beginning point of an event when it heads XSP, or as bearing at the end point of an event, when it heads XOP. *Wè* may thus be viewed as a determiner of events which, through agreement, identifies the beginning point or the endpoint of an event.

In light of this new perspective on *wè*, we can account for the following additional facts concerning the distribution of *wè*. First, we can account for the fact that non-delimiting arguments never move to Spec of XOP. Non-delimiting arguments are not involved in event boundaries and hence they cannot be in a Spec-Head relationship with a determiner of events.

Second, we can account for the fact that *wè* does not occur in [-T] clauses.

(35) * súnù dé jló ná gbà mótò s wè
 man a want to destroy car Det it-is

Only referential expressions can be the object of a determiner. Finite clauses are temporal R-expressions (cf. Chomsky, 1981). This property allows them to be the object of a determiner. Conversely non-finite clauses are not referential and hence, they cannot be the object of a determiner (cf. (35)).

3.4. SUMMARY

In this section I have shown that the distribution of *wè* can be accounted for by agreement taking place in the configuration Spec-Head of the projection headed by *wè*.

- * Agreement in the feature [+definite] accounts for the fact that *wè* can only occur in the context of a [+definite] subject or in the context of a [+definite] delimiting object.
- * Agreement determines the argument which will assign scope for the interpretation of what is being presupposed as new information.
- * Finally, agreement, together with the proposal that *wè* is a determiner of events, accounts for the fact that *wè* is never correlated with a non delimiting argument and that *wè* never occurs with [-T] clauses.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I studied the distribution of clausal *wè*. I argued that *wè* heads two functional projections: one which allows it to be associated with the subject of the clause, and one which allows it to be associated with an object. I showed that agreement taking place in the configuration Spec-Head within a projection can account for the distribution of *wè* as it occurs within a clause.

The categorial characterization of *wè* remains to be defined. This requires an analysis of other functional categories in the language, an enterprise which is beyond the scope of the present paper.

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Received, August, 1991.