

# Exploring the subject, adjunct and Wh-island constraints in the usage of English in some selected Nigerian newspapers

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the subject, adjunct and Wh-island constraints in the usage of English in some selected Nigerian newspapers. The purpose is to know the extent to which these constraints have adapted to the Nigerian English. This study is based on the same code which is English language but of different varieties such as Nigerian English and English by the native speakers. This research is qualitative in nature, it is based on textual analysis, data were purposively sampled from the reportage columns in some selected Nigerian newspapers such as the interview columns. The theoretical framework used in this study is the Chomskyan Principles and Parameters theory with a focus on movement and bounding theories. Findings show that writers of Nigerian newspaper columns use the subject island, adjunct island and wh-island constraints sparingly and this shows a tactful attempt to avoid expressions which permits long distant wh- movement in order not to violate the subjacency conditions and syntactic constraints. Due to the tactful avoidance, this paper recommends that complex syntactic structures should be thought extensively at all stages in the Nigerian classrooms to enable L2 learners of English gain adequate competence and performance of the language.

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## 1. Introduction

Syntactic Island constraints remain a core in syntactic studies to enable L2 learners of English gain adequate competence and performance of the English constructions, just like the ideal native speakers do. This study has been necessitated by the fact that studying complex syntactic constraints can be onerous as stated by Phillips (2013). This on itself makes it tasking and difficult for the L2 learners to gain adequate competence and performance of the island constraints understudy. Moreover, Chomskyan approach to linguistic studies, especially syntax, has been over the years riddled with abstract representations which makes it impossible to assimilate his transitory syntactic models yet, it is a fully adequate grammar which typically explores the concept of the Universal grammar and its markedness.

It is important to note that subjacency/island constraints are typically based on locality movement and when movement takes place within a sentence, what happens is transformation. The subjacency/island constraints are not usually practical constructions on their own but are conditions/ constraints

respectively that push or control movement in a syntactic structure; island constraints work in line with Chomskyan subjacency conditions. In linguistics, these island constraints and subjacency conditions have to do with that element which stays or is bound to a constituent. Ouhalla (1992) further explains that subjacency derives its effects from three conditions: i) cyclicity condition, ii) Wh-island condition, iii) the complex noun phrase (CNPC). Some examples from Ouhalla (1992) are:

- 1a. *Which car [IP] did you think [CP ti [that] [(LP) John would fix ti...]*  
 1b. *? CP [which car] IP[ do you wonder [CP when [IP John will fix ti...]*  
 1c. *CP[which car have [IP] you met [DP) someone [CP who [IP] can fix ti*  
 1d. *? CP which car did [IP] you hear [(DP) the rumour [CP ti that [IP] Bill fixed ti...*

While explaining those sentences, Ouhalla begins with the cyclicity condition as shown in 1a, subjacency forces movement of the wh-phrase from the embedded clause to the higher clause to operate in two steps, i.e. successive cyclically. Each step crosses only one bounding node, namely IP. This negates the fact that movement of the wh-phrase to the root clause directly such as (“which car, is what you think that John would fix ti...”) in a single step would result in crossing two IP nodes the embedded IP and the root IP are therefore excluded. This is the reason the subjacency derives the cyclic effect of wh-movement. In a simple explanation, the cyclic effect entails movement / crossing one step at a time before another and still maintaining a grammatical effect.

In other words, “the cyclicity condition imposes a successive cyclic derivation on (instances of long) wh-movement, with each step targeting the nearest spec CP Position” (Ouhalla 1992). Sentence 1b illustrates the wh-island constraints. It is obvious that this condition reduces to the cyclicity because in a “wh-island construction, an element cannot be moved anyhow. In 1b, the spec, CP of the embedded clause is filled. The ‘wh’ phrase is forced to move directly to the root clause in a single step, thereby crossing two IPs (bounding nodes). The complex noun phrase condition illustrated in 1c and 1d also reduces to subjacency. In 1c, the wh-phrase is forced to move in a single step to the root clause, thereby crossing two IPs (bounding nodes) together. The concept of constraint is really complex to study, this idea was explicated by Phillips (2013), who states that “natural language grammars would probably be simpler if there were no island constraints.”

Phillips claimed that they are “obscure and often complex and present a potentially daunting challenge for language learners.” Island constraints explicate such structures that are isolated from the entire sentence because of some rules; these rules are often embedded as ‘movements’ in grammar, and these movements are restricted based on the nature of boundedness. Falk (2009) studied the island constraints and categorized them as “either pragmatically driven or syntactically driven.” His major focus was on the unparallel prominence condition analysis to justify the grammaticality of complex noun phrase constraints (CNPC), thus, he investigated the Iraqi Arabic language. Falk found that “regardless of the syntactic identity of ‘what,’ the crucial point is that the construction (Iraqi sentences) obey the complex noun phrase constraints (CNPC).”

Iraqi Arabic      *English translations*

*Mona it manna tis tiri se no? -----→      Mona hoped to buy what?*

*What did Mona hope to buy?*

Erteschik-Shir (2007) explored the CNPC in Danish and observed that the judgments on CNPC violations match the pragmatic status of the said language, they found that “the CNPC as it applies to relative clause has undergone grammaticalization in English and not in Danish.” Some examples given in Danish by Erteschik-Shir are:

**Danish****English translations**

*Dethargeg drill etange hargjort* ----- → *That have I made fun of many who have done.*

---- → *That, I have made fun of many have*

*done.*(290)

Carnie (2011) explored subjacency/MLC (minimal link condition) effects in Mandarin Chinese. He found that ‘wh-phrase move just as in English, but they move covertly that one does not hear the movement.’ This means that the movement is implied even though it is not syntactically represented. Carnie compared two hypotheses, one is the covert movement hypothesis which he observed that (Mandarin Chinese wh- phrase move just as in English but they move covertly). The other hypothesis, simply observed that wh-phrases do not move in Mandarin. His argument was that ‘island effects are seen in English precisely because there is movement.’ Carnie also concludes that “too long a movement violating subjacency causes the sentence to be ill- formed.” This long movement of the wh-phrase or word is what second language learners of English avoid but it is important to study this complexity in syntactic constructions to avoid violations in subjacency conditions and maintain an island constraint effect. Carnie’s idea was that when there is no movement, obviously, no violation of the subjacency condition will occur. He further expatiates his findings using these sentences in Mandarin Chinese.

**Mandarin Chinese****English translations**

*Hufei xiang-zhidaowei shnme shengi?* ----→ *Hufei want to know who why get angry.*

----→ *For what reason (why) does Hufei wonder who gets angry ti?*

Bruhn (2009) explored LF (logical form) wh- movement in Mongleng. Mongleng is a language of the Hmong people of Laos in Thailand and Vietnam. He explained that Mongleng is a wh-in- situ language and utilizes no wh-particle to type its wh question. He further explained that with matrix verb ‘paub’ (know), long distance readings are unavailable or marginal. Daniel’s focus was on the non-bridge verb with complement. He explained that English and German, in contrast to Mongleng, utilize overt fronting of wh-constituents to form wh-questions and that ‘CNP, Adjunct island, clausal subject island and wh island which exist in English are also present in German.’ Mowarin and Oduaran (2014) studied constructive inquiry into wh-interrogative in English and Nigerian Pidgin. Their focus was on the wh-words/phrases that function as wh-markers in the two languages with highlights on the derivations of wh- interrogation in direct and embedded clauses and, the constraints surrounding each derivation. They explain that there are two types of movement in English, which are: 1) Head-to-head or head movement; 2) Operator movement or movement.

However, according to them, “Nigerian Pidgin bestrides the two cross linguistic variations of wh-movement since it involves both the overt wh- movement and also occur in- situ like the Chinese/Japanese.” Mowarin and Akpofure stated further that “wh-in-situ questions in Nigerian pidgin NP (noun phrase) are quite different from those of English which occur only in echoic questions.” Cheng and Rooryck (2012) investigated French language and found that ‘French employs optional wh-movement in questions and in- situ-wh-arguments are not allowed inside islands such as, CNP (complex noun phrase) island.’ Akira and Yoshida (2013), also studied the Japanese language and observed that, “Japanese exhibit wh- island effects.” This means that there is obvious wh movement in Japanese.

Bruening and Tran (2006) studied the Vietnamese, examining the complex noun phrase, clausal subject island and adjunct islands. They presented two types of wh-in-situ questions in the said language claiming that “one type is immune to Islands while the second type is sensitive.”

Megerdomain and Ganjavi (2000), studied eastern Armenian and Persian languages with a focus on clausal subject islands and wh- islands; they found that “both languages utilize optional wh-movement and that they are sensitive to islands, but, unexpectedly, wh-in- situ shares this sensitivity.” Uwalaka (1991) investigated the wh-movement in Igbo, a language spoken in the eastern part of Nigeria. She found that the Igbo language presents the LF wh-movement (in-situ) and also presents the syntactic wh-movement. Okeke (2012), in line with Uwalaka, also examined traces in the Igbo language especially those associated with wh- and NP- movements using the theoretical framework of Chomsky’s Revised Extended Standard Theory (REST). Okeke observes that Igbo allows a proposed wh-phrase to co-occur with an overt complementiser (CP) inwh-direct questions. He also states that the Igbo wh- phrases can remain in- situ and can also move to a clausal initial position. Stating further, Okeke observes that a situation of moved wh-phrase to a clausal initial position such as these examples in Igbo sentences below where example (a) is a case of LF (logical form)- movement. However, from the scholarly reviews above, apart from linguists such as Bruhn (2009) who investigated island constraints in German and English, Cheng and Rooryck (2012) who investigated island constraints in French and Macaulay and Oduaran (2014) who worked on wh-interrogative in Nigerian Pidgin, others explored the syntactic island constraints in notable indigenous languages. Investigating the indigenous languages will definitely show a -clear-cut area of divergence and convergence of the island constraints because the constraints are predicated upon English of the native speakers. However, this study is based on the same code which is English but of different varieties i.e. Nigerian English, Nigerian Pidgin among others, no sufficient research has explored subject, adjunct and wh- island constraints in the usage of English in some selected Nigerian newspapers to see the extent to which the Nigerians English has conformed to the complex syntactic constraints of the native speakers’ English.

### 1.1 Movement Theory and Transformations

Akira and Yoshida (2013) explain that “movement is an operation that was introduced by transformational theories of generative grammar to characterize so-called displacement phenomena, as seen in wh-questions.” Newmeyer (2016), posits that there are three basic properties that characterize wh-movement constructions in language: 1) there is a gap; 2) There is unboundedness; 3) There are constraints on the potential unboundedness.

Ouhalla (1992) explains that “movement as it is, is the traditional transformational means of overcoming the discontinuities associated with wh-fronting, topicalization, extra position, scrambling, inversion, DP movement, Heavy NP shift, Quantifier raising, L-Lowering, V-raising L-raising, Do support. Ore Yusuf explain the concept of move  $q$  ( $\alpha$ ) thus: “move anything ( $q$ ) over a variable  $X$  or  $Y$  ... move  $q$  (where  $q$  could be a wh-phrase and NP,  $q$  VP, PP, CP, indeed anything (i.e XP) to the left, right, beginning or end of a phrase).”

Chomsky (1981) explains this further by explaining that move  $\alpha$  has been used to replace other movement theories explicated within the  $P \alpha P$  theory. This theory which is also labeled principles and parameters theory is a more advanced theory of universal grammar. This structure represents the way grammar is organized in the theory as Chomsky posits.

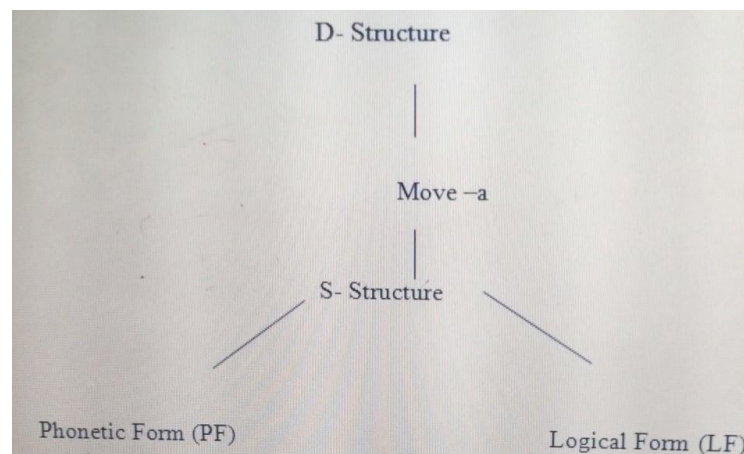


Figure 1. Chomsky’s D-structure

This further illustrates that at the D-structure in this PPT model retains most the features of deep structure in ST and D-structure in REST, the move-a also relates to them as well. Consequently, D-structure and S- structure maintain their identities as they are in REST.

## 1.2 Island Constraints

The island constraint is simply a list of stipulations and they sharply raise the question of whether it is possible to reduce them to fewer, deeper structural principle (Newmeyer, 2016). In other words, island constraints work in line with Chomskyan subadjacency conditions. It is obvious that some syntactic structures are islands. Ross (1967) explicated this by stating that “certain syntactic structures are islands i.e they are effectively isolated from the rest of the sentence. They are in for the purpose of various kinds of rules.”

Ross (1967) further explains that these rules involve movement rules. Typical examples are: wh-question formation (which involves the “movement” of wh-interrogative pronoun to the beginning of a sentence) and Relation Clause Formation (which has to do with the movement of relative pronoun to the beginning of the clause).” Some examples are:

- (i) a. John gave a pen to Mary.  
b. John gave Mary a pen.
- (ii) a. John threw the pen to Mary  
b. John threw Mary the pen.

According to Ross, this kind of rule above is called a cyclic rule. They are often governed by the predicate. Equi-Np Deletion and subject-raising are all types of cyclic rule. It is important to note that cyclic rules have lexical exceptions and islands are not relevant concept because its scope is limited. Examples of rules where syntactic concept of island is relevant are:

- i. a. Freddy wants to start reading Daniel steel’s book  
b. What book does Freddy want to start reading? (wh-Question formation)
- ii. a. Doe thinks you said that I heard that Kloe claimed that the US Army detests the new age monster.  
b. The new age is the monster *-i* who Doe thinks you said that I heard that Kloeclaimed that the US Army detests-*I*

The idea of ‘island’ comes from the fact that in the iib, movement cannot occur over an island boundary, otherwise, the consequence will be ungrammatical.

Ross discussed several types of islands in his seminal dissertation in 1967. They are grouped thus:

### 1.2.1 Wh-Islands

Wh Islands are weaker than adjunct islands, although the extraction is quite awkward most times, they are not necessarily considered to be ungrammatical by all speakers.

Examples:

- 1a. Doe wonders where Erica went to buy a pair of socks.  
b. ?? What does Doe wonder where Erica went to buy -? (this extraction seems marginal)
- 2a. Fred asked why John was waiting for Frank.  
b. \*Who did Fred ask why John was waiting Frank? The attempt to extract out of a wh-island fails.
- 3a. Doe wonders where Fox went to buy the schoolbag  
b. \*?? What does Doe wonder where Fox went to buy (this extraction seems marginal)



In sentence 1b, 2b and 3b, the attempt to extract an expression out of wh-island is unacceptable. 1b and 3b are strongly marginal, while 2b is unacceptable. However, non-finite wh-islands are weak. Santorini (2013) explains a possible derivation for wh-movement (long-distance) in Figure 2. *What did she claim that he was eating?*

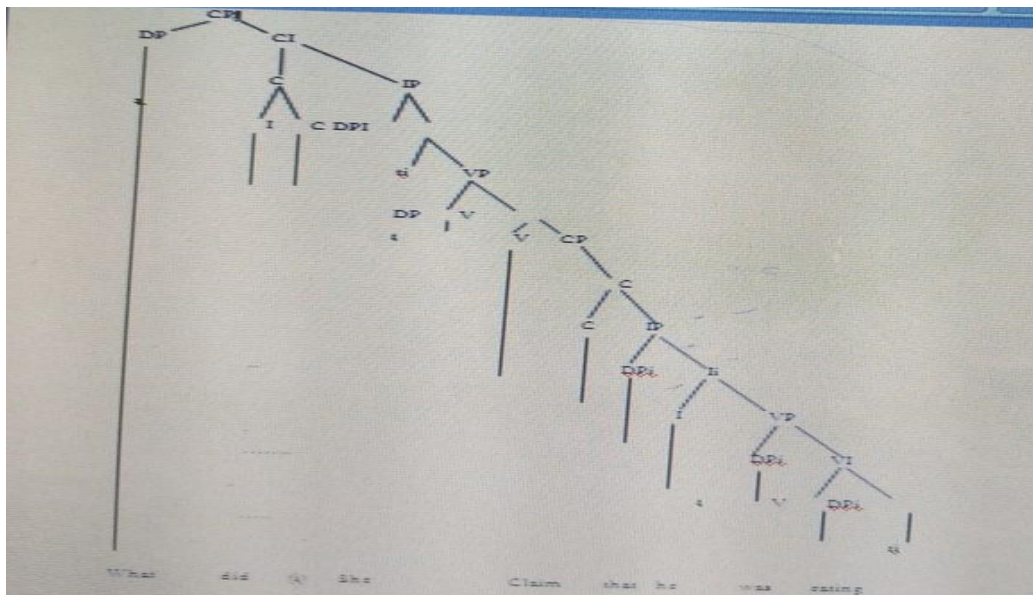


Figure 2. Derivation for wh-movement (long-distance)

From the tree in Fig. 2, every trace on the DP node is an indication of a moved 'wh' which is or has become otherwise fronted. Ouhalla (1992) on explicating the concept of long distant wh-movement and subjacency conditions states that subjacency is basically "a condition on movement (move -a) rather than a condition on representations derived by movement." It is partly due to the fact that it is a condition on movement that subjacency is sometimes thought to belong to a separate module of grammar called bounding theory.

### 1.2.2 Bounding theory

There is no mention of boundedness in grammar without the mention of "barrier," the concept of "barrier" and bounding node are similar. They are all in a bid to restrict unnecessary movement in a clausal constituent. Barriers are used in the definition of government and it is also used to replace the notion of bounding node in the definition of subjacency. Bounding theory in relation to bounding node plays an important role in government and proper government of syntactic constituent. It is also important to note that bounding nodes and barrier all work in line with subjacency. IPs (inflectional phrases) are arguably seen as barriers and assume a bounding category as explained by Heageman (1991).

*a when will John fix the car?*

*b who do you think John will fill the car?*

*(CP when; will (IP John fix the car ti)?)*

An obvious explanation of the sentences mentioned is that from the actual kernel or basic sentence, 'when' is generated, hence, the trace *ti* after the NP 'the car' or VP, 'fix the car.' However, the movement of 'when' crosses only IP (INFL (TNS +AGR)). But here, the IP is not a barrier and thus the wh-movement does not violate subjacency. So it could be said that on the bases of short movement, most crossing of barriers or bounding nodes may not necessary affect or violate subjacency, however, a look at the examples 21 below, as explained by Heageman explicates this better.

(When; do (**IP** you ( **VP** think **CP** *ti* ( **IP** John will fix the car **ti**)))?

In the above construction the ECP (Empty category principle) has been violated, the intermediate trace is not theta-governed and therefore must be antecedent- governed at LF (logical form), in essence, two barriers intervene between the trace and its purported antecedent. However, this use is marginal and conversationally acceptable, though grammatically, the empty space which leaves a trace that lacks an obvious co- indexation or antecedent government must be properly filled, such that this example:

When; do (**IP** you ( **VP** think **CP** *ti* (that) ( **IP** John will fix the car **ti**)).

### 1.2.3 Subject Island

In most subjects, the wh-movement is not (or hardly) possible. According to Ivan and Kluendir, (2014) 'No elements can be extracted from a clause that functions as subject'

- 1a. That Sue went home is likely.
  - b. \*Who is that<sub>i</sub> went home likely? – (the extraction fails above)
- 2a. The story about Frank was false
  - b. ?? Who was the story about <sub>i</sub> false? (This is marginal)
- 3a. That Sue is celibate is unbelievable
  - b. \*Who is that<sub>i</sub> is celibate unbelievable? (extraction fails)

Consequently, Anna and Marcel (2004) claim that “non-finite wh-islands are weak.”

### 1.2.4 Adjunct Island

This type of island is centered on adjunct clause. Wh-movement cannot take place in an adjunct clause. 'Because', 'if', 'when' and relative clauses in most cases introduce adjunct clauses.

Examples:

John went home because she needed to do that?

- a. \*What did John go home because?  
he need to do <sub>i</sub>?

In the above b sentence, an attempt to move wh out of an adjunct clause fails. However, according to Anna and Marcel (2004), adjunct islands are strong islands.

- b. John went out because Doe hurt him
- c. \*What did John go out because.

In the above d sentence, an attempt to move wh out of an adjunct clause fails.

## 1.3 Use of English in Nigeria

The controversy of the evidence of Nigerian English is a futile one, in the sense that 'New Englishes' have emerged as a result of indigenization and nativisation of the English Language on a new soil. Bamgbose (2000) attests to this when he opines that certain expression in our speech or writing is in Nigerian form found in British English. Walsh states that the varieties of English spoken by educated Nigerians, no matter their language, has enough feature in common to mark off a general type, which may be called Nigerian English (Bamgbose, 2000) However, Banjo (2002) states that “it is important to note that the English Language is spoken by about 600 million people in the world, though only half of that number speak it as their mother tongue.”

In essence, the definition of New English would “apply in every detail to English as a Second Language” (Dadzie & Awonusi, 2009). According to Banjo (2002), this Nigerian use of English has become a second language and it is marked by these circumstances: *developed through the education system; developed in an area where a native variety of English was not originally spoken; used for a range of functions among the users; become 'localized' or 'nativized' by adopting some language features of its own.*(63)

The basic argument here is that there exist as Nigerian English. It is important at this juncture to mention that many scholars have attempted to state the sub-categories or varieties of the English spoken in Nigeria. However, it is also important to note that explains that “educational parameter has proved much more productive. This is because the type of English spoken and written by Nigerians manifestly varies according to the level of general education attained.

## 2. Research Method

This research is qualitative, it is based on textual analysis where data were purposively sampled from the reportage columns such as interviews because they represent movements of the wh-words. Excerpts drawn from these selected newspapers were sampled and analyzed using the rules of island constraints and subjacency mapped by bounding and movement theories. The newspaper columns were thoroughly read to identify the constraints under study. The syntactic island constraints were selected, highlighted and analyzed based on violations or non violations of each constraints. Labeled brackets were used to further explain each syntactic constructions. The scope of this study is limited to the subject island, wh- island and Adjunct island out of the seven island constraints identified by Ross (1960), the other constraints are: subject island, wh- island, left branch island, Adjunct island, complex noun phrase island, non-bridge verb island and co-ordinate structure island. The data for this study were taken from the newspaper variety because they present factual events, news, interviews, reportage, from all facets of life. These Nigerian based newspapers and magazines are The Guardian, Vanguard, Punch, The Daily independence, Daily post, Allure vanguard and This day style; spanning from 2011-2016. The framework used in this study is the Chomskyan Principles and Parameters Theory popularly referred to as the Government and Binding Theory. Within this study, the focus is on the movement theory/Bounding theory which is anchored in syntactic islands and subjacency conditions.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

### 3.1. Adjunct Island Constraints

This type of island is centered on adjunct clause. Wh-movement cannot take place in an adjunct clause. 'Because', 'if', 'when' and relative clauses in most cases introduce adjunct clauses. Szabolasi and Dikken (2003) like: John went home because she needed to do that?

- d. \*What did John go home because?

he need to do i?

In the above b sentence, an attempt to move wh out of an adjunct clause fails. However, according to Szabolasi and Dikken,(2003) adjunct islands are strong islands.

- e. John went out because Doe hurt him

- f. \*What did John go out because.

In d sentence, an attempt to move wh out of an adjunct clause fails.

Politics: S-court 'll do justice- Okpara.(Clifford Ndujide in an interview with Mr. James Okpara, a lawyer.)

- 1a. As a lawyer, if you were to preside over the appeal, what would you have done?

(Vanguard. Feb 3, 2016.38)

The constraints on the adjunct construction is centered on the adjunct clause. Wh-movement cannot take place out of an adjunct clause. These include; "because," "if," "when" and relative clauses which introduces adjunct clauses in most cases. From the above data, it is clear that there is a careful attempt to avoid the violation of these said constraints. The Wh-word has been moved directly to ask the intended question without using complex structures. However, the subjacency condition has not been violated.



SP[what]IP[would you have done?]]

1b. Muyiwa Adeyemi in an interview with Alao – Akala

“What are those things you will do differently if given the chance to govern the state again”

(The Guardian Friday, March 6, 2015)

This construction above with the adjunct clause has been stated in a way to tactfully avoid the violation of the adjunct Island constraints, However, the subjacency condition has not been violated also.

### 3.2 Subject Island

In relation to Subject Island Constraints, in most subjects, the wh-movement is not (or hardly) possible. According to Ivan and Kluender, (2014) ‘No elements can be extracted from a clause that functions as subject’

- 1a. That Sue went home is likely.
- b. \*Who is that i went home likely? – (the extraction fails above) (
- 2a. The story about Frank was false
- b. ?? Who was the story about i false? (This is marginal)
- 3a. That Sue is celibate is unbelievable
- b. \*Who is that is celibate unbelievable? (extraction fails)

Consequently, Anna and Marcel (2004) claim that “non-finite wh-islands are weak”

**Law:** distinction between barristers, solicitors getting blurred in UK, says Scholar Crisp. (Joseph Onyekwere interview with the Dean, Faculty of Law, BPP University, London, Prof. Peter Crisp.).

2a. “What are the qualifying examinations which the solicitors do in order to be given the right of audience in court?”

(Guardian. March 3, 2015.52-53)

The constraints on the subject island entail that the wh-movement is hardly possible in a clause that functions as subject. In the above sentence, there is no violation of the subject island. A possible positive statement for this above question is:

- ii. The qualifying examinations which the solicitors do in order to be given the right of audience in court?  
If the subject (clause) was moved such as this example iii below: It can be said to have violated the SI constraint.
- iii. What are done in order to be given the right of audience in court?

However, the sentence iii above is an informal conversational construction, this makes it marginal, though not ungrammatical, but has violated the subject island. This is because the clause that functions as subject which would have made the wh-word more meaningful has been moved. The first wh-word ‘what’ occupy the spec (cp) positions, while the second wh-word ‘which’ occupy the CP position, in other words, there is no subjacency violation in the above construction.

SP[what] IP[are the qualifying examinations] CP[which the solicitors do] IP[in order to be given the right of audience in court?]]]]

**2b.** Interview with Oluwafeyijimi Sodipo (Miss Nigeria, 2011)

“*What is one item of makeup that you can’t do without?*” (Tuesday Style. May 20, 2012.4)

The sentence above has not violated the subject island constraints. The subject (nominal category) of the sentence above has not been moved to feature within the wh-question word; such as this below.

ii. What is it that you can’t do without?”

In ii above, the subject of the construction has been moved and replaced with the wh-word in the spec (CP) position. However, this construction can be used, it is grammatical but marginally used, especially in a conversational context. There is also non-violation of the subjacency condition in the above as well.

SP[what] DP[is one item of makeup] CP[that you can’t do without?]]]]

**2c.** Interview with Chief Iwuanyanwu by Jude Opara

(Saturday Vanguard Feb 6, 2016)

“How Federal Government College Warri Changed my life”

In most subjects, wh-movement is hardly possible. Subject Island constraints stipulates that no element can be extracted from a clause that functions as subject. From the above, the subject island has not been violated because the wh-moved item is appropriately placed in its usual canonical CP position. The SI would have been violated if the moved item is this construction below:

\*Whose - changed my life?

Consequently, the Subjacency condition has not been violated in the initial construction.

**2d.** Joseph Onyekwere interview with the Dean faculty of Law, BPP University London Prof. Peter Crisp.

“What is your view about the separation of solicitors from the barristers in UK?”

(The Guardian March 3, 2015)

Again, the subject Island has not been violated in the above construction neither has the subjacency condition too. No element has been extracted from the above clause “your view about the separation of solicitors...” A violation would have been this construction below;

\*What is yours- about the separation of solicitors from the barristers in UK?

**2d.** In the same interview with Prof. Peter Crisp.

”*What are the qualifying examination which the solicitors do in order to be given the right of audience in court?*” (The Guardian March 3, 2015)

There is no violation of the subject island constraints and the subjacency condition in the above construction. No extraction has been made out of the subject clause. An extraction which will signal an ungrammatical sentence and an obvious violation of the SI could be this construction below;

\*What are qualifying-which solicitors do...?

### 3Wh-island constraints:

Wh Islands are weaker than adjunct islands, although the extraction is quite awkward most times, they are not necessarily considered to be ungrammatical by all speakers (Szabolasi & Dikken 2003).

Examples:

- 1a. Doe wonders where Erica went to buy a pair of socks.
- b. ?? What does Doe wonder where Erica went to buy -? (this extraction seems marginal)
- 2a. Fred asked why John was waiting for Frank.
- b. \*Who did Fred ask why John was waiting Frank? The attempt to extract out of a wh-island fails.
- 3 a. Doe wonders where Fox went to buy the schoolbag
- b. \*?? What does Doe wonder where Fox went to buy (this extraction seems marginal)

In sentence 1b,2b and 3b, the attempt to extract an expression out of wh-island is unacceptable. 1b and 3b are strongly marginal, while 2b is unacceptable. However, non-finite wh-islands are weak.

Politics, Governance and Development: Buhari too weak to rule, says Alao-Akala. In an interview with MuyiwaAdeyemi.

- 3a.** “I will compare what is happening to him now to what happened to him in 1983 when he became the Head of State.”(The Guardian, March 6, 2015)

Although this is not a moved wh-word which forms a question, but it is an example of a wh-movement /construction. Extraction of a wh-word out of a wh-construction looks quite awkward but not necessarily considered to be ungrammatical. There are three wh-words in this construction, each occupying CP positions respectively. However, there is a subjacency violation in the above because the successive cyclicity does not hold between the first wh-word and the second wh-word ‘what’. The second wh-word seem awkward and redundant. The sentence could be this below;

- ii. I will compare what is happening to him to 1983 when he became the Head of State.

In this sentence ii above, the subjacency condition has been observed.

CP[what] IP[is happening to him now] IP[to what happened to him in 1983] CP[when he became the Head of State]]]

- 3b.** Muyiwa Adeyemi in the same interview with Alao – Akala. Alao – Akala response to Buhari’s governance.

*“I will compare what is happening to him now to what happened to him in 1983 when he became the head of state”* (The Guardian Friday , March 16, 2015)

Violation of the wh-Island constraints does not necessarily yield ungrammatical constructions. Looking at this construction above, the moved wh-word may seem awkward but it is an acceptable construction, the wh island constraints has not been violated and the cyclicity effect has also been maintained hence there is no violation of the subjacency condition.

- 3c.** Nonye Odife comments on Financial Vanguards

“*Who is deceiving who?* It is better I keep my dollars with me than to freely give it to CBN, this is what you get when everyone relies on oil we put all our eggs in one basket.” (Vanguard Feb 22, 2016)

Although this construction seems off the appropriate grammatical construction, it is passable within the discourse terrain, however, the moved wh word has not crossed more than one bounding node signifying that the subjacency condition has not been outrightly violated. However, looking at the sentence pragmatically, these subjacency effect is taken on the bases of reanalysis and reanalysis is a case of subjacency that does not permit double extraction. And, there is a constraint on reanalysis as subjacency. This sentence however seem to have failed syntactically but not pragmatically.

**3d.** Ramon Oladimeji in an interview with the senior Advocate of Nigeria in the year 2000, Chief Felix Fagbohunge, comments on the ethics of legal profession and his views. Ramon puts this question forward:

“Recently there has been allegations of money exchanging hands between lawyers and judges, what is the limit of the relationship that a lawyer can have with a judge, especially bearing in mind that they are in the same profession?” (Punch, 2010:33)

Violation of the wh-island does not necessarily spell ungrammaticality, here in the construction above the subjacency condition has not been violated because the move wh –word is in its usual CP positions, however the that –clauses are placed in a way that it licenses grammaticality.

### 3.3 Discussions

Writers of Nigerian newspaper columns avoid long wh movement and sparingly employ the adjunct island and subject island constraints in order not to violate the constraints. However, taking a look at the subject island, wh-islands and adjuncts islands, it is obvious that the subject island restricts extractions out of a clause that functions as subject island constraints, this type of constraints is minimally used or violated in the Nigerian newspaper columns as shown in the analysis. The wh-island which is said to be weaker than the adjunct island, restricts movement out of wh construction although they are not necessarily considered as ungrammatical, they can appear awkward and its usage is minimal, thus, findings show a tactful attempt by the Nigerian newspapers columnists to not make expressions which permit long distant wh- movement in order not to violate the subjacency condition.

The adjunct island which is centered on adjunct clause entails that movement cannot take place in an adjunct clause. Most often, these clauses are introduced by because, if, when and relative clauses. However, the adjunct clauses occur sparingly in the excerpts, this study reveals that there is a careful attempt at not violating the constraints of Adjunct Island in the selected Nigerian newspaper columns.

### 4. Conclusion

It is clear that the level of variation between the syntactic performance and competence of the ideal native speakers of English and that of the near native speakers of English in Nigeria is insignificant. Thus, the research consolidates the fact that the Nigerian English does not deviate out rightly from the complex syntactic structures of the ideal native speakers of English. However, varieties in terms of syntactic representation may abound but there is no form of ungrammaticality presented. This can be plausible based on Lamidi (2002) who opines that “the average Nigerian user of English language avoids the task of errors and ‘sounding Nigeria.’” Lamidi further concludes by stating that instead of deviating from the main, a Nigerian tags it accommodation.

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