Interpreting the nonfinite logophoric pronoun in Ewe

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Overview. Since Clements (1975), it has been accepted that yè in Ewe is a logophoric pronoun. Though yè may be logophoric in the subject of finite clauses, they are not in controlled, nonfinite subject positions. I present novel data from the Anlo dialect of Ewe to show that yè+a (subject control, optionally pronounced ya), ne (object) and yè+wo (plural, split, pronounced yo) are the overt instantiations of PRO, which can be inanimate crosslinguistically. The impossibility of a long-distance reading for nonfinite yè, despite it possessing inherent φ-features (3^{rd}), presents an issue for Pearson (2015), who argues that the presence of φ-features leads to long-distance readings. Contra Pearson (2015), yè+a must be read de se. I propose an alternative to Percus & Sauerland (2003) in which context generators cannot occur in the subject position of infinitivals due to a type mismatch, explaining why nonfinite yè cannot have a de re reading.

Data. The pronoun yè+a is found with predicates which would contain obligatorily-controlled (OC) PRO in languages such as English, as shown with the attitudinal control predicates in (1).

(1) Agbe_{i} djagbagba/nlobe/dzina/vovom/wosumu/dzi/susum try/forget/want/afraid/decide/like/intend COMP LOG-IRR leave

'yAgbe_{i} tried/forgot/wanted/is afraid/decided/likes/intends PRO to leave.'

The suffix -a is the irrealis mood marker; this is unsurprising as control infinitives always have an irrealis mood, following Stowell (1982). The inanimacy test in (2)-(3) that Charnavel & Sportiche (2016) uses to rule out logophoricity show that yè+a is not logophoric. Yè can never appear alone as a regular pronoun. This pronoun also appears in embedded clauses that are not attitudinal, shown in (2), and with inanimate controllers with attitudinal predicates, shown in (3).

(2) Ati-a dze-gome be yè_{i}-a nge.

'The tree began PRO to break.'

(3) Emo_{i} djagbagba be yè_{i}-a dze-gome.

'Machine try COMP LOG-IRR begin

'The computer tried PRO to turn on.'

Pearson (2015), among others, points out that the logophoric pronoun yè in Ewe only appears via binding of the pronoun by an operator in the left periphery of the complement of an attitudinal predicate. Clements (1975) notes that yè is used to refer to the individual whose thought or speech is reported in a given context. This cannot be the case in (2) or (3).

(4) and (5) seem to be overtly identical, but are not. Three facts are represented in these examples. First, yè need not be read de se, as Pearson (2015) points out, but yè+a must always be read de se, when it can. Second, clauses containing yè are finite, as aspectual marking can be added to them, as in (4).Clauses containing yè+a are nonfinite, as seen in (5), as aspectual marking cannot be added. Finally, n-words can usually be assigned across nonfinite clauses in languages such as Italian and Hebrew, but not in finite clauses. (4) and (5) show that this is also the case in Ewe.

(4) Kofi (*mè)-be yè_{de so/de re} dzoe (dzo-m) (*o).

Kofi NEG_{1} COMP LOG leave RED-PROG NEG_{2}

'Kofi said he left (was leaving).'

(5) Kofi (mè)-be yè-a_{de so/de re} dzoe (*dzo-m) (o).

Kofi NEG_{1} COMP LOG-IRR leave RED-PROG NEG_{2}

'(lit. Kofi said PRO to leave *(leaving).)'
Agbe kadedzi be Kofi djagbagba be yè+a dzo
Agbe believe COMP Kofi try COMP LOG-IRR leave

‘Agbe believed that Kofi tried to leave.’

All the aforementioned data shows that yè+a behaves very similarly to OC PRO, which Chierchia (1990) shows must be interpreted de se when possible, cannot usually have a long-distance antecedent, may also appear with non-attitudinal predicates and may be inanimate. Yè+a may therefore be a phonetically overt OC PRO. I show further similarities between yè+a and OC PRO: for example, the controller must c-command yè+a; in ellipsis contexts yè+a must be construed with a sloppy reading rather than strict and yè+a must be interpreted as a bound variable.

As expected, long-distance control yè+a is seen with the subject control predicate promise. In the case of split control, the OC subject has a complex coordination structure, in which each yè is syntactically plural but semantically singular: the plural of yè is yè+wo. Surprisingly, Ewe does not seem to allow partial control at all. Split control is represented below in (7).

(7) Agbei do englugble ne Fafaki be [yèi-wwo meve yèk-wo](i+k) fo ntsu-a.
    Agbe make promise to Fafa COMP LOG-IRR two+person LOG-IRR beat man-DEF
    ‘Agbe promised Fafak PROi to beat the man.’
This set of data in which PRO is phonetically overt indicates that there is much more to split control than we could see in a language such as English where PRO is invisible.

Problems. This data challenges Clements (1975)’s conclusion that yè is an inherently logophoric pronoun, given the possibility of nonfinite yè having inanimate referents. Pearson’s argument that the lack of φ-features on PRO leads to long-distance readings fails given that nonfinite yè has φ-features and its referent is usually local; in addition, we must also limit her account of the optionality of de se readings purely to finite clauses. Finally, in the syntax-semantics interface, this data raises significant problems for Hornstein (1999)’s control-as-raising approach, which cannot derive movement out of split control coordinate structures such as in (7).

Analysis. I limit Percus & Sauerland (2003)’s account of concept generators in which attitude complements are functions from concept generators to finite attitude complements, to prevent a de re reading of the subject of all infinitivals. At least in Ewe, I propose that finite embedded clauses denote propositions rather than properties, while control complements denote properties, and the obligatoriness of the de se reading between them is due to a type mismatch. In doing so, though I reject Pearson’s conclusion that the lack of long-distance antecedents with PRO is due to its lack of φ-features, I concur that the reason nonfinite yè cannot usually have a long-distance antecedent is because it cannot be embedded in a resP; it must be controlled.

Conclusion. The data provided in this paper raise numerous problems for existing accounts in both semantics and syntax, leaving a great deal for future research. One question left open is why finite yè is logophoric. I present data showing that even the logophoricity of finite yè is unclear, potentially leading to the conclusion yè may not be a logophoric pronoun after all.