Defending a quantifier-particle approach to Yorùbá exclusives*

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1 Introduction

- Quantification in natural language has (at least) two basic apparatuses:
  - **D-quantification** (e.g., determiner *every*)
  - **A-quantification** (e.g., adverb *always*) (Partee 1991; Chierchia 2021)
- Exclusive focus particles like *only* are remarkable since they seem to allow for both modes of quantification: (Horn 1969; Jackendoff 1972; Taglicht 1984; Rooth 1985; Büring and Hartmann 2001; Coppock and Beaver 2014, *i.a.*)

(1) a. John gave **only$_{\text{adfoc}}$** MARY a book (adfocal only, resembles D-quantification)
b. John **only$_{\text{adv}}$** gave MARY a book (adverbial only, resembles A-quantification)

- **The debate on exclusive focus particles**
- View ❶: Co-existing D-quantification and A-quantification (Horn 1969; Rooth 1985, 1992; Coppock and Beaver 2014, cf. Yip and Adedeji 2024; Yip 2026 for Yoruba)
  ➜ Adfocal *only* is a D-quantifier, Adverbial *only* is an A-quantifier (exclusive "operator")
- View ❷: Reducing D-quantification to A-quantification (Bayer 1996; Lee 2005; Quek and Hirsch 2017; Bassi, Hirsch, and Trinh 2022; Hirsch 2022; Sun 2021; Branan and Erlewine 2023, cf. Aremu 2026 for Yoruba)
  ➜ Adfocal *only* is a concord particle that signals an exclusive operator

- **Why is the debate important?**
- Reductionist attempts of **other domains** of quantification (Kratzer and Shimoyama 2002; Kratzer 2005; Szabolcsi 2015, 2017, 2018, 2024, cf. Carlson 1983, 2006)
  E.g., Negative concord, universal concord, ...
- Semantic universal: All D-quantifiers are **conservative** (Barwise and Cooper 1981)
  - Conservativity: D(A)(B) = D(A)(A ∩ B)
    E.g., *every student came* is true iff every student is a student who came
  - **D-quantifier *only* is not**: it does not "live on" its restrictor
    E.g., *only students came* (not always true) ≠ only students are students who came (tautology: always true)

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- **Why is Yoruba special?**
- Yoruba has both adverbial (*kàn*) and adfocal (*nìkan*) particles
  (vs. languages with only adfocal particles, like Akan, Yip and Ahenkorah 2026; or only adverbial particles, like Cantonese, Yip 2024)
- *kàn* and *nìkan* may be doubled: **exclusive doubling** (reported as early as in Yip 2021)

(2) Adverbial-adfocal exclusive doubling in Yoruba (YO)

a. Ayọ̀ **kàn** fún [Adé]$_F$ ní ìwé (Adverbial)
Ayo only give Ade SEC book

b. Ayọ̀ fún [Adé]$_F$ **nìkan** ní ìwé (Adfocal)
Ayo give Ade only SEC book

c. Ayọ̀ **kàn** fún [Adé]$_F$ **nìkan** ní ìwé (Doubling)
Ayo only give Mary only SEC book
(a-c): 'Ayo only gave *Ade* a book.'

- **A debate on the proper treatment of the two particles**
- The **quantifier-particle (Q-)** approach: by Yip and Adedeji (2024) and Yip (2026) ➜ supporting View ❶
  nìkan is an exclusive D-quantifier, whereas *kàn* is a particle associated with scalarity (non-entailment scale)

(3) [***kàn***$_{[\text{Scalarity}]}$ ... [XP$_F$ ***nìkan***$_{[\text{Exclusivity}]}$] ...]]

(4) $[\![nìkan]\!](ALT) = \lambda x_e \lambda P_{\langle e,st\rangle} \lambda w : P(x)(w).\, \forall y \in ALT[P(y)(w) \rightarrow P(x) \subseteq P(y)]$

- The **operator-particle (OP-)** approach: by Aremu (2026) ➜ Supporting View ❷
  kàn is an exclusive A-quantifier (OP), whereas *nìkan* is a particle associated with scalarity (entailment scale)

(5) [***kàn***$_{[\text{Exclusivity}]}$ ... [XP$_F$ ***nìkan***$_{[\text{Scalarity}]}$] ...]]

(6) $[\![kàn]\!](ALT) = \lambda p \lambda w : p(w).\forall q[(q \in ALT \wedge q(w)) \rightarrow p \subseteq q]$

- Another difference set aside in this talk: covert movement (Q-approach) vs. scalar agreement (OP-approach)

- **Our goals today:**
- We re-examine Aremu 2026's counterarguments. While his observations are interesting and insightful, we show that they **do not challenge** the Q-approach, with:
  - closer empirical scrutiny
  - independent properties of Yoruba considered
- We extend our arguments to two other adfocal particles, *lásán* (Yip and Adedeji 2024) and *péré* (Aremu 2026), and show that they are also D-quantifiers with exclusion performed on different scales.

➜ **The Q-approach holds for Yoruba exclusives**, whereas the OP-approach does not.
Implications on quantification and conservativity of quantifiers.

- Data note: Confirmed with 5 additional native speakers (besides the second author), based on Standard Yoruba

2 Defending the Q-approach

(7) Six arguments in response to Aremu 2026

a. Backward association and the lack of reconstruction

b. Multiple focus association

c. Wide scope under ellipsis

d. Problematic assumption of the split scope argument

e. Appendix A: Scopal interaction with other operators

f. Appendix B: *kàn* is scalar

2.1 Backward association and the lack of reconstruction

- Yip and Adedeji (2024): *kàn*, unlike adverbial *only* in English, allows for backward association with focus (BAwF) of a moved object

(8) #[Mary]$_F$, John **only** met _ at the party. (Erlewine 2014:11)
Int.: 'Mary is the only person John met at the party.'

(9) German$_F$ (**nìkan**) ni Akín **kàn** ṣe _. (movement, obj focus)
German only FOC John only do
'It is only *German* that Akin took.'

- BAwF of adverbial 'only' is cross-linguistically banned (e.g., Cantonese, English, Vietnamese, ...; see Erlewine 2014 for a semantic explanation)

➜ *kàn* should not be analyzed as an exclusive OP

- Aremu (2026), citing German (Erlewine 2014; Bayer 2018; Hirsch and Wagner 2019, 2025), claims that BAwF is achieved by reconstruction, so this cannot be evidence against *kàn* as an OP.

(10) Backward association in German
A naturally occurring example from Erlewine (2014, p.189)
Context: I don't deal with this kind of stuff...
das [verwirrt]$_F$ mich **nur** _.
that confuses me only
'That only confuses me.'

← Response: This predicts that BAwF possibilities should **correlate** with quantifier reconstruction possibilities, as Hirsch and Wagner (2019, ex.11-12,36) showed for German.

- **However**: Yorùbá negation **blocks** quantifier reconstruction, but still allows for BAwF.[1]

1. A possible re-interpretation of the contrast is that the narrow scope reading in (11b) is by further QR of the subject 'one student', and there is no possible QR site in (12b) for negation to be above the moved object 'every person' (Mitcho Erlewine p.c.). This possibility, however,

(11) Reconstruction of universal quantifiers in Yorùbá

a. Akẹ́kọ̀ọ́ọ́ kan fẹ́ràn [gbogbo olùkọ́]
student one like every teacher
Narrow (∃>∀): 'A specific student (e.g., Ade) likes all the teachers' (surface)
Wide (∀>∃): 'Ade likes the Yorùbá teacher, Bode likes the English teacher, ...' (inverse)

b. [Gbogbo olùkọ́] ni akẹ́kọ̀ọ́ọ́ kan fẹ́ràn __
every teacher FOC student one like
Narrow (∃>∀): 'A specific student (e.g., Ade) likes all the teachers' (reconstructed)
Wide (∀>∃): 'Ade likes the Yorùbá teacher, Bode likes the English teacher, ...' (surface)

(12) No reconstruction below negation for quantifier scope in Yorùbá

a. Mary kò fẹ́ràn [gbogbo ènìyàn]
Mary NEG like every person
Narrow: 'Mary only likes some people and dislikes the others.' (¬>∀)
Wide: 'Mary is a mean person and likes no one.' (∀>¬)

b. [Gbogbo ènìyàn] ni Mary kò fẹ́ràn __
every person FOC Mary NEG like
NOT Narrow: *'Mary only likes some people and dislikes the others.' (*¬>∀)
ONLY Wide: 'Mary is a mean person and likes no one.' (∀>¬)

- Not only is BAwF with negation possible, the exclusive scope **cannot** be reconstructed under negation (see also Appendix A)
- Unlike German where BAwF correlates with scope reconstruction of exclusives (Hirsch and Wagner 2019)

(13) Backward association with negation in Yorùbá

a. John kò **kàn** ṣe German **nìkan**
John NEG only do German only
Narrow: 'It is not only German that John takes (but also French).' (¬>only)
Wide: 'It is only German that John just didn't take.' (i.e., John didn't take German—he took French and Latin) (only>¬)

requires *ni*-focus movement to lack scope reconstruction, which is needed by the OP approach for explaining BAwF. Moreover, QR is clause-bounded in Yoruba (as in (i)) and yet reconstruction for narrow scope is possible across clause boundaries (as in (ii)), suggesting that the contrast in (11–12) should be attributed to availability on reconstruction but not on QR.

(i) olùkọ́ kan mọ̀ [pe gbogbo akẹ́kọ̀ọ́ọ́ fẹ́ràn Ade]
teacher one know COMP every student like Ade
Narrow (∃>∀): 'A single teacher knows that every student likes Ade' (surface)
NOT Wide (∀>∃): 'For every student x, there is a different teacher who knows that x likes Ade (maybe every student tells their own favorite teacher)' (*inverse)

(ii) olùkọ́ kan ni Ade mọ̀ [pe gbogbo akẹ́kọ̀ọ́ọ́ fẹ́ràn __]
teacher one FOC Ade know COMP every student like
Narrow (∃>∀): 'Ade knows that A likes teacher X, B likes teacher Y, ...' (reconstructed)
Wide (∀>∃): 'Ade knows that a single teacher is liked by every student' (surface)

b. German (**nìkan**) ni John kò **kàn** ṣe _
German only FOC John NEG only do
ONLY: 'It is only German that John just didn't take.' (i.e., John didn't take German—he took French and Latin) (only>¬)

- Negation blocks scope reconstruction in general and even **bleeds NPI licensing**
- NPI: *N-ki-N* and *N kankan* (e.g., see Ajiboye 2024)

(14) a. Adé kò fẹ́ràn omo-ki-omo kankan
Ade not like child-KI-child one.RED
'Ade doesn't like any child.'

b. *Adé fẹ́ràn omo-ki-omo kankan
Ade like child-KI-child one.RED
Lit: 'Ade likes any child.'

- NPI licensing is bled after focus movement across negation[2]

➜ Negation blocks scope reconstruction of the NPI

(15) *omo-ki-omo kankan ni Adé kò fẹ́ràn
child-KI-child one.RED FOC Ade not like
'It is any child that Ade does not like.'

➜ Yip and Adedeji (2024)'s argument still holds: *kàn* is not an OP and lacks the lexical association property of adverbial 'only' (Tancredi 1990), and hence exceptionally allowing BAwF

- Challenges the OP approach
- To our knowledge, the blocking behavior of negation is a **new empirical discovery for Yorùbá**, though it is not uncommon cross-linguistically (e.g., English raising: Boeckx 2001, Mandarin 'again': Xu 2016)

2.2 Wide scope under ellipsis

- Background: English adfocal *only*'s wide scope reading does not survive ellipsis, unlike a QR of a D-quantifier (Bassi, Hirsch, and Trinh 2022, cf. Sag 1976; Fox 2000; Bassi, Hirsch, and Trinh 2022)

(16) a. Jill may bring **only** WINE. (may>only, only>may)

b. ... Bill may, too. (◇>only, *only>◇)
i ....# Therefore, Bill cannot bring beer.
ii. ...Of course Bill can also bring beer if he likes.
(adpated from Bassi, Hirsch, and Trinh 2022:816,818)

2. It is not that foucs movement cannot target NPIs. With a matrix negation, the NPI can be focus-moved in the embedded clause.

(i) *In the school Akin always gets away from punishment, people discussing whether it's the management or the teachers that support Akin. Ade: Maybe someone likes Akin, but no TEACHERs like Akin.*
Adé **kò** rò [pé [olùkọ́-ki-olùkọ́ kankan] ni ó feran Akin]
Ade not think COMP teacher-KI-teacher one.RED FOC 3SG like Akin
'Ade doesn't think that it is any TEACHER who likes Akin.' (i.e., Ade thinks that no teachers like Akin)

(17) a. A boy is standing on **every** building. (...) (every>a)

b. A girl is, too. (every>a)

(Bassi, Hirsch, and Trinh 2022:820)

- One of the strongest arguments for the OP approach
- Drawing on a restriction that A-quantifier *only* cannot associate into ellipsis site (see Han and Romero 2004; Beaver and Clark 2008; Bassi, Hirsch, and Trinh 2022)
- Yip and Adedeji (2024): *nìkan*'s wide scope is **retained** after ellipsis (original data confirmed with 4 speakers; confirmed again with the 5 consultants in this study)

(18) Wide scope survives ellipsis in Yorùbá

a. Olùkọ́ náà gba John láàyè [láti ṣe German$_F$ **nìkan**]. (...)
teacher the permit John give.chance to do German only
i. 'The teacher allows John to take only German.' (John can take French if he likes) (permit>only)
ii. 'The teacher only allows John to take German.' (John cannot take French) (only>permit)

b. ... Olùkọ́ gba Mary náà láàyè Δ. (...)
teacher permit Mary as.well give.chance
i. 'The teacher also allows Mary to take only German.' (Mary can take French if he likes) (permit>only)
ii. 'The teacher also only allows Mary to take German.' (Mary cannot take French) (only>permit)

(19) *Wide scope context + continuation*
The school has different language courses: German, French, Yoruba. Mary and John major in German study and must take German. Other languages are not allowed for them due to limited course credits.
(18a+b) ... Fún ìdí èyí Mary kò lè ṣe Faransé.
for reason this Mary NEG can do French
'(18a+b) ... Therefore, Mary cannot take French.'

➜ *nìkan* is a **D-quantifier**, whose wide scope is retained after ellipsis just like QR

- Aremu (2026) claims the opposite: *nìkan*'s wide scope disappears after ellipsis, supporting the OP-approach.
- Yet, he did not replicate our original example reported above, but another example below
- All 5 of our consultants could **not** get the ambiguity even in the non-elided baseline (a) (marked by %).

(20) a. Tolú ṣèlérí láti wá [ní ọ̀la] nìkan.
Tolu promise to come LOC tmr. only
Tolu promised to come only tomorrow.' (prom. > only, %only > prom.)
i. Narrow: 'Tolu made a promist that he would come only tomorrow' (the content of the promise is about coming only tomorrow)
ii. %Wide: 'Only tomorrow is such that Tolu promised to come then.' (tomorrow is the only day for which Dapo made a promist to come, i.e., he made no other promise about another day)
(reported to be available by Aremu 2026, but unavailable for all our consultants)

b. Dàpò nàà ṣèlérí [VP ...] pẹ̀lú.
Dapo too promise also
i. Narrow: 'Dapo made a promist that he would come only tomorrow.'
ii. *Wide: 'Only tomorrow is such that Dapo promised to come then.' (Aremu 2026:166)

- NB: the narrow scope naturally entails the wide scope, as promising to only come tomorrow means not promising to come on other days.
  ➜ **Confound**: The truth conditions are hard to tease apart
- If we turn to cases where the two scopal readings have easily distinguishable truth conditions, wide scope is available even after ellipsis (e.g., (18) above)

➜ **The Q-approach holds** but the OP-approach does not, unlike what Aremu 2026 claims

- See also another example (**??**) below:

(21) Wide scope survives ellipsis in Yorùbá

a. Ade kọ̀ [láti gbe omi$_F$ **nìkan** wá].
Ade refuse to bring water only come
i. 'Ade refused to only bring water.' ⇝ Ade wants to bring both wine and water. (refuse>only)
ii. 'Ade only refused to bring water.' ⇝ Ade wants to bring wine but not water. (only>refuse)

b. ... Ayo nàà kọ̀ Δ.
Ayo also refuse
i. 'Ayo also refused to only bring water.' ⇝ Ayo wants to bring both wine and water. (refuse>only)
ii. 'Ayo also only refused to bring water.' ⇝ Ayo wants to bring wine but not water. (only>refuse)

c. *Narrow scope continuation* (possible for both (a) and (b))
... ó fe gbe waini nàà wá.
3SG want bring wine too come
'He wants to bring wine too.'

d. *Wide scope continuation* (possible for both (a) and (b))
... kò fe gbe omi wá.
NEG want bring water come
'He doesn't want to bring water.'

2.3 Multiple focus association

- Yip and Adedeji 2024: *kàn* does not establish its own focus association and must depend on *nìkan*
  - Rationale behind: if *kàn* is really an OP, it should be able to associate with a different focus when the one attached by adfocal particles is outside of *kàn*'s scope

(22) **Only$_{\text{Adfoc}}$** John **only$_{\text{Adv}}$** eats rice.
'John is the only person who only eats rice (other people eat both rice and noodles)'
(Horn 1969:106, intepretation added)

- We reproduce the argument with clear contexts below:
  - As evidenced by the lack of multiple-'only' reading in **[Subj-*nìkan*...*kàn*]** cases, where the object is not targeted (i.e., bananas are also eaten by Tolu)[3]
  - For both the subject and the object to be targeted, **a second *nìkan*** after the object must be added

(23) a. [Everyone loves bananas and has eaten some during lunch. Other people don't like yams and don't eat them. Tolu just doesn't want to waste food. So, he just goes ahead and has eaten yam.]
Tolú **nìkan** ni ó **kàn** jẹ ịsu **(#nìkan)** (subject focus only)
Tolu only FOC 3SG only eat yam only
'Only *Tolu* ate yam.'

b. [The quantity of yams is small, so everyone should take little yam and support it with banana so that everyone can get some yam. Stubborn Tolu doesn't like banana and takes a lot of yam, finishing them. The teacher asks: "Someone took too much yam. Who?"]
Tolú **nìkan** ni ó **kàn** jẹ ịsu **#(nìkan)** (multi-'only' with both subj. and obj. foci)
Tolu only FOC 3SG only eat yam only
'Only *Tolu* ate only *yam*.' (other people ate both)

- Aremu (2026): a curious case of the so-called concord reading with two *nìkan*. (cf. Lee 2005 for Korean)
  - Where there is only one exclusive OP associating with both foci (the <Subj, Obj> ordered pair), unexpected if *nìkan* is a D-quantifier (whose multiple occurrence enforces multiple-'only' readings)
- **However**, we could **not** replicate his judgment, as well as with our 5 additional consultants: All of them reported **infelicity** in the context below; the only reading is the multiple-'only' one (i.e., like (23b))

(24) *There are three people in a room [Adam, John and Sam], and there are three dishes in the room as well [rice, bean, yam]. Q: Who ate what?*
%Ádáàmù$_F$ **nìkan** ni ó jẹ ìrẹsì$_F$ **nìkan**
Adam only FOC 3SG eat rice only
'Nobody ate anything except Adam who ate rice.' (i.e., The pair <Adam, rice> is the only alternative that satisfies the eating relation)
(reported to be possible by Aremu 2026:167; unavailable for our consultants, marked by %)

- We however noticed that with a stress on the second *NÌKAN* in a different context: ➜ A different multiple 'only' reading, where the second *NÌKAN* **associates with the whole clause**.
- The truth condition is similar to what Aremu treated as the "concord" reading, as evidenced by the infelicity of the continuation.

3. Aremu (2026) argues that *kàn* below still operates on the object as evidenced by the infelicitous continuation.

(i) a. Tolú **nìkan** ni ó **kàn** jẹ ịsu
Tolu only FOC 3SG only eat yam
Lit.:'Only tolu only ate yam.'

b. #Ó jẹ ọ̀gẹ̀dẹ̀ pẹ̀lú.
3SG eat banana also
'... and he also ate banana.' (Aremu 2026:194)

While our consultants agree with Aremu (2026)'s judgment, we note that *kàn* has an extra scalar flavor like *just* (see Appendix B). We suggest that the infelicity of an additive continuation above is due to a conflict between *kàn*'s scalar reading "the matter is just that" and subsequent addition of the information.

- *nìkan* may associate with a clausal focus, independently (see Yip and Adedeji 2024)

(25) *You're very angry and regret going to a party. Everyone expected more food, but only rice was served there, and even that, only Adam got rice and you got nothing. Q: What happened in the party?*

a. [Ádáàmù$_{F1}$ **nìkan**$_1$ ni ó jẹ ìrẹsì]$_{F2}$ **NÌKAN**$_2$
Adam only FOC 3SG eat rice only
'It's only that only Adam got rice.' (nothing happened in the party, other than "only Adam ate rice)

b. #... John jẹ ìrẹsì àti ẹ̀wà, Sam sì jẹ ìrẹsì àti ẹja díndín.
John eat rice and bean Sam and eat rice and fish fried
'... #John ate rice and bean, and Sam ate rice and fried fish.'

- Importantly, when the second *NÌKAN* is not clause-final, i.e., structurally unambiguous as attaching to the object ➜ The clausal focus reading is gone, only the multiple 'only' reading (subj > obj) is available.

(26) a. Ádáàmù$_{F1}$ **nìkan**$_1$ ni ó jẹ [ìrẹsì]$_{F2}$ **NÌKAN**$_2$ lẹ́ẹ̀kan
Adam only FOC 3SG eat rice only once
ONLY: 'Adam is the only person who ate only rice once.'
NOT: 'It's only that Adam got only rice once.'

b. ... John jẹ ìrẹsì àti ẹ̀wà, Sam sì jẹ ìrẹsì àti ẹja díndín.
John eat rice and bean Sam and eat rice and fish fried
'... John ate rice and bean, and Sam ate rice and fried fish.'

- Aremu (2026)'s so-called concord reading indeed involves multiple 'only' (clausal focus + subject focus), **supporting the Q-approach** instead of the OP-approach

2.4 Problematic assumption of the split scope argument

- The OP-approach: split scope readings as evidence against QR (Quek and Hirsch 2017; cf. Lee 2005 for Korean)

(27) Split scope readings of English adfocal *only*
You are required to learn **only** *one*$_F$ language.

a. Non-split: 'There is only a certain language you are required to learn.' (**only** > **one** > require)

b. Split: 'You are only required to learn a language, whichever one you choose.' (**only** > require > **one**)

- QR pied-pipes NumP, predicting that its scope should also be tied to the exclusive scope, rather than split scope

(28) The D-quantifier approach with QR
[$_{TP}$ you $\lambda 1$ [$_{vP}$ [only one lang.] $\lambda 3$ [$_{vP}$ t_1 be.required [$_{TP}$ PRO$_1$ $\lambda 2$ [$_{vP}$ t_2 learn t_3]]]]

(29) The operator-particle approach
[$_{TP}$ you$_1$ [Op$_{EXCL}$ [$_{vP}$ t_1 be.required [$_{TP}$ PRO$_1$ $\lambda 2$ [$_{vP}$ t_2 learn [$_{FP}$ F=only$_{adfoc}$ one lang.]]]]]]

- Aremu 2026: Yoruba allows split scope readings.
➜ Claimed to support the OP-approach over the Q-approach

(30) Split scope readings of Yorùbá adfocal *-nìkan*
Adam ní láti pa [$_{QP}$ adìẹ [méjì]$_{F}$ **nìkan**].
Adam has to kill fowl two only
Lit: 'Adam is required to slaughter only two fowls.'
Meaning: Adam is only required to slaughter (any) two fowls (he could slaughter more if he wishes)
(**only** > require > **two**) (adapted from Aremu 2026:200, ex.133)

- This is empirically sound as also confirmed by our consultants
- **However**: Crucial assumption of this argument: NumP = existential quantifier.
- Not necessarily so (Ionin and Matushansky 2006; Rothstein 2016; Bylinina and Nouwen 2018, cf. Link 1987, a.m.o.)

(31) a. Every **two** houses come with one parking space. (Bylinina & Nouwen 2019)
b. **Three** men can lift the piano. (Bylinina and Nouwen 2018, ex.18)
c. Rod A is **three** times longer than rod B. (Bylinina & Nouwen 2019)

- Empirical challenge: split scope readings still available **after overt movement**.
➜ Not expected if NumP is existential quantifier, which now should take wide scope

(32) Preservation of split scope readings after movement in Yorùbá
[adìẹ méjì$_{F}$ **nìkan**] ni Adam ní láti pa __.
fowl two only FOC Adam has to kill
Lit: 'Adam is required to slaughter only two fowls.'
Meaning: Adam is only required to slaughter (any) two fowls (he could slaughter more if he wishes)
(**only** > require > **two**)

(33) The operator-particle approach: predicts [only > two > require] instead
[Op$_{EXCL}$ [$_{FocP}$ [$_{FP}$ Prt=*nikan*$_{adfoc}$ two fowl.] $\lambda 3$ [$_{TP}$ Adam$_1$ [$_{vP}$ t_1 has.to [$_{TP}$ PRO$_1$ $\lambda 2$ [$_{vP}$ t_2 kill t_3]]]]]

- Split scope readings **after movement** also available in other languages a where the OP approach is forcefully argued for, based on the expected behavior of adverbial and adfocal particles (e.g., English, Quek and Hirsch 2017, and Vietnamese, Yip 2026)

(34) It is only two courses that John need to take. (any two)

(35) Preservation of split scope readings after movement above negation in Vietnamese
Để tốt nghiệp, [(chỉ) **mỗi** ba khóa học] John (mới) cần học __.
to graduate only only three subject John just need study
Lit.: To graduate, only three courses John need to take.'

a. Non-split: '... namely, Vietnamese, English, and Mathematics; courses other than these three do not count.' (**only** > **three** > need)
b. Split: '... any three courses are fine.' (**only** > need > **three**)

- The "narrow scope" of NumP in (32) cannot be attributed to reconstruction
- Negation blocks scope reconstruction, but split scope readings are still available.

(36) Preservation of split scope readings after movement above negation in Yorùbá

a. [Context: There are 20 required courses of the major in total. However, if students have sufficient background, they can be exempted from taking some courses. The upper limit is 2. The teacher knows that John is very advanced and knows all the stuff already, but due to the regulation ...]
[Iṣẹ́ méjì$_F$ **nìkan**] ni Olùkọ́ náà (kàn) gba John láàyè [láti má ṣe _].
course two only FOC teacher the only permit John give.chance to NEG.INF do
Lit: 'The teacher only allows John not to take two course.'
Meaning: 'The number of courses John can be exempted from taking cannot exceed two.'
(**only** > allow > not > **2**)

b. [Context: John is a graduate student. This semester, he has too many things on his plate: teaching, writing qualifying papers, organizing conferences, etc. So, as for course taking, his teacher (advisor) wants him to take at most one.]
[Iṣẹ́ méjì$_F$ **nìkan**] ni Olùkọ́ náà kò (kàn) gba John láàyè [láti ṣe _].
course two only FOC teacher the NEG only permit John give.chance to do
Lit: 'The teacher only disallows John to take two courses.'
Meaning: 'The number of courses John takes cannot exceed two.' (**only** > not > allow > **2**)

➜ NumP should denote **properties** rather than an existential quantifier in the above cases.

- When NumP denote properties, the "split scope readings" can be derived from the Q-approach compositionally (Appendix C)
- **Takeaway**: The existence of split scope readings is not informative of the debate

3 Varieties of exclusive D-quantifiers

- Yoruba has other exclusive adfocal particles: *Lásán* 'only, just' and *péré* 'only'
- We will show that they are also D-quantifiers, applying the diagnostics we developed for *nìkan*
- Exclusion may be based on different scales, like English quantificational *only* vs. scalar *only*

(37) a. Mary **only** invited ALEX$_F$. (Quantificational) (Klinedinst 2004, ex.1)

b. Bill is **only** a JUNIOR$_F$/#SENIOR. (Scalar) (Klinedinst 2004, ex.14)

- *Lásán*: allows a rank order reading, similar to the scalar use of English *only* (Yip and Adedeji 2024; Aremu 2026)

➜ Exclusion is based on non-entailment scale (rank order)

(38) A rank-order reading with incompatible alternatives

a. #Ìdá ọgọ́rin **nìkan** ni John (**kàn**) gbà nínú ẹ̀kọ́ Faranse.
present eighty only FOC John only get inside course French
#'The only kind of points John got is 80 points for French.'

b. Ìdá ọgọ́rin **lásán** ni John (**kàn**) gbà nínú ẹ̀kọ́ Faranse.
present eighty just FOC John only get inside course French
'John only got 80 points for French.' (while Mary got 90 points!)
(Adapted from Yip and Adedeji 2024:ex.5)

- *Péré*: first systematically studied by Aremu (2026)
- We note that it *requires* numerals ➜ Exclusion is based on numerical scale

(39) a. *John **péré** (ni ó) ka [àwọn ìwé Gẹ̀ẹ́sì]
John only FOC 3SG read PL book English
Int.: 'Only John read English books.'

b. Omo kan **péré** (ni ó) ka [àwọn ìwé Gẹ̀ẹ́sì]
child one only FOC 3SG read PL book English
'Only one child read English books.'

- *Lásán* and *péré* pass the tests of D-quantifiers

(40) a. **Wide scope under ellipsis** (examples below)

b. Lack of scope reconstruction across negation

c. Multiple focus association

(41) *Wide scope context: Usually, everyone takes 6 courses in a semester. Ade and Akin are doing QP this semester. The teacher doesn't want them to be distracted, so just 2 is allowed for them.*

a. olùkọ́ nàà gba Ade láàyè [láti ṣe iṣẹ́ méjì **lásán/péré**]
teacher the permit Ade give.chance to do course two only
'The teacher only allows Ade to take two courses.'

b. olùkọ́ gba Akin nàà láàyè Δ
teacher permit Akin as.well give.chance
'The teacher only allows Akin (to take two courses) too.'

c. Fún ìdí èyí Akin kò lè ṣe iṣẹ́ mẹ́ta.
for reason this Akin not can do course three
'Therefore, Akin cannot take three.'

- *Lásán* and *péré* also encode **exclusivity**
- Whose exclusion is based on different scales (cf. Coppock and Beaver 2014 for English)

(42) $[\![\textit{nìkan}]\!](ALT) = \lambda x_e \lambda P_{\langle e,st\rangle} \lambda w : P(x)(w).\ \forall y \in ALT[P(y)(w) \rightarrow \underline{P(x) \subseteq P(y)}]$ (based on entailment)

(43) $[\![\textit{lásán}]\!](ALT) = \lambda x_e \lambda P_{\langle e,st\rangle} \lambda w : P(x)(w).\ \forall y \in ALT[P(y)(w) \rightarrow \underline{P(x) \geq_s P(y)}]$; s is a non-logical scale

(44) $[\![\textit{péré}]\!](ALT) = \lambda x_e \lambda P_{\langle e,st\rangle} \lambda w : P(x)(w).\ \forall y \in ALT[P(y)(w) \rightarrow \underline{P(x) \geq_n P(y)}]$; n is a numerical scale

➜ A parallelism between A-quantification vs. D-quantification:

(45)

Quantification	**Entailment scale**	**Rank order**	**Numerical scale**
A-quantifier	*exclusively*	*just/merely*	(Cantonese *sin*? - cf. Yip 2026)
D-quantifier	*nìkan*	*lásán*	*péré*

4 Conclusion

- **Summary:**
- Yoruba exclusive adfocal *nìkan* is a D-quantifier; adverbial *kàn* is **not** an exclusive operator
- While Aremu 2026's observations are interesting and insightful, we showed that they do not challenge the Q-approach, especially with independent properties of Yoruba considered (e.g., negation blocks reconstruction)
  ➜ It is important to consider different aspects of the language before drawing a parallel with superficially similar patterns in other languages
- We extend our arguments to two other adfocal particles, *lásán* (Yip and Adedeji 2024) and *péré* (Aremu 2026), and show that they are also D-quantifiers with exclusion performed on different scales.

(46) D-quantification of exclusives in Yoruba

a. *Nìkan*: Entailment-based

b. *Lásán*: Non-logical scale (e.g., rank order)

c. *Péré*: Numerical scale

➜ The Q-approach holds for Yoruba exclusives, whereas the OP-approach does not.

- Implication ①: D-quantification **cannot** be reduced to A-quantification (i.e., View ❶)
- Implication ②: **Not all** D-quantifiers are conservative

5 Appendices

5.1 Appendix A: Scopal interaction with other operators

- Yip and Adedeji 2024: The scope with negation is **not determined** by the relative position of *kàn*.
  - Negation takes **wide scope** over 'only' when *kì-í* 'not (habitual)' precedes the ex-situ focus.
  - Negation takes **narrow scope** under 'only' when *kò* 'not' follows the focus, with *nìkan* optionally pronounced.
  - In both cases, **negation is structurally higher** than *kàn*.

(47) Narrow scope under negation [YO]

a. kì-í ṣe German$_F$ ni John **kàn** ṣe _
NEG do German FOC John only do
'It is not only German that John takes (but also French).' (i.e., John takes German and French) (NEG>only)

b. kì-í ṣe German$_F$ **nìkan** ni John **kàn** ṣe _
NEG do German only FOC John only do
'It is not only German that John takes (but also French).' (i.e., John takes German and French) (NEG>only)

(48) Wide scope over negation [YO]

a. German ni John kò **kàn** ṣe _
German FOC John NEG only do
'It is only German that John just didn't take.' (i.e., John didn't take German—he took French and Latin) (only>NEG)

b. German **nìkan** ni John kò **kàn** ṣe _
German only FOC John NEG only do
'It is only German that John just didn't take.' (i.e., John didn't take German—he took French and Latin) (only>NEG)

➜ If *kàn* were really an operator, both sentences should have had a wide scope negation reading, which is not the case.

➜ In contrast, the Q-approach captures that it is the position of the (c)overt quantifier *nìkan* that determines the scope.

- Aremu 2026: *kò*'s position is fixed in the preverbal field (see Yip and Adedeji 2024 for the ordering of preverbal particles), and hence negation scope is unreliable
- **However**: the position *kò* does determine scope with modals

(49) The scope of negation and modals in Yorùbá
Ade **kò** lè ṣe German.
Ade NEG may do German
ONLY: 'Ade is not allowed to take German.' (¬ > ◇)
NOT: 'Ade is allowed not to take German.' (*◇ > ¬)

- Aremu 2026: A different negation, *kọ́* (cf. Adebayo 2021) can be placed before *kàn* in with a [¬>only] reading. (This negation *kọ́* (high tone) should be not confused with the verb *kọ̀* (low tone) 'refuse'.)

(50) German (**nìkan**) kọ́ ni John **kàn** ṣe.
German only NEG NI John only do
'It is not only German that John took.' (¬>only) (Aremu 2026:199)

- **However**, *kọ́* is a special negation used with the copula *ni*. The regular negation *kò* used for verbs and another copula *je* is banned before the copula *ni*.

➜ The *ni* in Aremu (2026)'s example (**??**), hence, should be analyzed as a copula (cf. Bisang and Sonaiya 2000) instead of a focus marker that signals movement.

(51) a. Kìnìhún {**kọ́**, *__kò__} ni ọba ẹranko.
Lion NEG NEG COP king animal
'The lion is not the king of animals.'

b. Kìnìhún {*__kọ́__, __kò__} je ọba ẹranko.
Lion NEG NEG COP king animal
'The lion is not the king of animals.'

- While it is unclear to us why the only scope is [¬ > only] even though the subject with *nìkan* precedes *kọ́*, this pattern is general in other copula sentences.
- Awaits future work (see also Amaechi this conference on copula clauses in Yoruba)

(52) a. Kìnìhún **nìkan** kọ́ ni ọba ẹranko.
Lion only NEG COP king animal
'Not only the lion is the king of animals (but also the elephant).' (¬ > only)
'Only the lion is not the king of animals (all other animals are)' (*only > ¬)

b. Kìnìhún **nìkan** kò je ọba ẹranko.
Lion only NEG COP king animal
'Not only the lion is the king of animals (but also the elephant).' (¬ > only)
'Only the lion is not the king of animals (all other animals are)' (*only > ¬)

- What is important here is that the use of special *kọ́* does not invalidate the above argument based on regular negation *kò*.

5.2 Appendix B: Scalarity of *kàn*

- *Kàn* carries not-at-issue scalarity (non-entailment scale)
- As evidenced by four tests (only one given examples here, see Yip 2026 for the others)

(53) Testing scalarity in exclusive doubling in Yorùbá

a. Contextual (non-)salience of excluded alternatives

b. Listing scenarios

c. **Equal-to-expectation vs. lower-than-expectation readings**

d. Superlatives: associating with upper bound vs. lower bound on a scale

(54) An equal-to-expectation reading
Ó yẹ kí Bíà gbé nǹkan ẹyọ-kan nìkan wá. (...)
EXPL suppose MOOD Bear carry something single only come
'Bear was expected to bring only one (kind of thing).'

a. ... Bíà (sì) gbé oúnjẹ$_F$ **nìkan** wá.
Bear and carry food only come
'... And Bear did only bring the food.'

b. ... #Bíà **kàn** gbé oúnjẹ$_F$ wá.
Bear only carry food come
'... And Bear only/just brought the food.' ⇝ Bear should have brought more

c. ... #Bíà **kàn** gbé oúnjẹ$_F$ **nìkan** wá.
Bear only carry food only come
'... And Bear only/just brought bring the food.' ⇝ Bear should have brought more

- Unexpected from Aremu 2026's version of the OP approach where *kàn* is a pure exclusive OP, and it is the adfocal particles that determine the nature of the scale
- *nìkan* already determines the entailment scale for exclusion, should be interchangeable with *kàn* and doubling according to this view

➜ The Q-approach: *kàn* is not an exclusive OP, but a scalar particle (see Yip 2024, 2026 for compositional accounts)

5.3 Appendix C: Derivation of the so-called split scope reading under the Q-approach

(55) Split scope readings of Yorùbá adfocal *-nìkan*
Adam ńı láti pa [$_{QP}$ adìẹ méjìF **nìkan**].
Adam has to kill fowl two only
Lit: 'Adam is required to slaughter only two fowls.'
Meaning: Adam is only required to slaughter (any) two fowls (he could slaughter more if he wishes)
(**only** > require > **two**) (adpated from Aremu 2026:200, ex.133)

(56) The semantics of adfocal *nìkan* (attaching to property-denoting NumPs)
$[\![nìkan_{property2}]\!](C_i) = \lambda Q_{\langle e,st\rangle}\lambda\mathcal{P}_{\langle\langle e,st\rangle,st\rangle}\lambda w.\ \forall N \in C_i[\mathcal{P}(N)(w) \rightarrow \mathcal{P}(Q) \subseteq \mathcal{P}(N)]$

(57) a. The semantics of regular transitive verbs
$[\![\text{catch}_{\text{TV}}]\!] = \lambda x\ \lambda y\ \lambda e.[\textit{catch}(e) \wedge \textit{Agent}(e) = y \wedge \textit{Theme}(e) = x]$

b. The semantics of verbs in pseudo-incorporation
$[\![\text{catch}_{\text{INC-V}}]\!] = \lambda P\ \lambda y\ \lambda e.[P\text{-}\textit{catch}(e) \wedge \textit{Agent}(e) = y]$
Where $\exists e[P\text{-}\textit{catch}(e)] = 1$ iff $\exists e'[\textit{catch}(e') \wedge \exists x(P(x) \wedge \textit{Theme}(e') = x)]$

(58) Derivation of the split scope reading in (**??**) in Yorùbá
LF: [$_{TP2}$ [$_{QP}$ [[$_{NumP}$ adìẹ méjì] $\sim C_i$] nìkan(C_i)] [$_{TP1}$ $\lambda Q_{\langle e,st\rangle}$ [Adam ńı láti pa t_Q]]]
'fowl' 'two' 'only' 'Adam' 'has' 'to' 'kill'

a. $[\![\textit{Adam}]\!] = a$

b. $[\![\text{TP1}]\!] = \lambda Q_{\langle e,st\rangle}\lambda w.\Box Q\text{-}\textit{kill}(a)(w)$
Where $\exists e[Q\text{-}\textit{kill}(e)] = 1$ iff $\exists e'[\textit{kill}(e') \wedge \exists x(Q(x) \wedge \textit{Theme}(e') = x)]$

c. $[\![\textit{adìẹ}]\!] = \lambda x.\textit{fowl}(x)$

d. $[\![\textit{méjì}_{\text{F}}]\!] = \lambda x.|x| = 2$
$[\![\textit{méjì}_{\text{F}}]\!]^{alt} = \{\lambda x.|x| = 1, \lambda x.|x| = 2, \lambda x.|x| = 3...\}$

e. $[\![\text{NumP}]\!] = \lambda x.\textit{fowl}(x) \wedge |x| = 2$ (abbreviated as *2-fowls*)
(by Predicate Modification of (c) and (d))
$[\![\text{NumP}]\!]^{alt}$ = {*1-fowl, 2-fowls, 3-fowls, ...*}

f. $[\![\text{QP}]\!] = \lambda\mathcal{P}_{\langle\langle e,st\rangle,st\rangle}\lambda w.\ \forall N \in C_i[\mathcal{P}(N)(w) \rightarrow \mathcal{P}(\textit{2-fowls}) \subseteq \mathcal{P}(N)]$

g. $[\![\text{TP2}]\!] = \lambda w.\ \forall N \in C_i[\Box N\text{-}\textit{kill}(a)(w) \rightarrow \Box\textit{2-fowls-kill}(a) \subseteq \Box N\text{-}\textit{kill}(a)]$
Where $\exists e[\textit{2-fowls-kill}(e)] = 1$ iff $\exists e'[\textit{kill}(e') \wedge \exists x(\textit{2-fowls}(x) \wedge \textit{Theme}(e') = x)]$

⇝ For all properties N with the skeleton of "n-fowls" (i.e., fowls with any cardinality),
if the following propositions hold in the world w: [it is required that there exists an event where Adam slaughters some x and x are fowls with any cardinality (=N)],
then these propositions must be entailed by the prejacent proposition:
[it is required that there exists an event where Adam slaughters some x and x are fowls with the cardinality of 2].
⇝ Adam is only required to slaughter (any) two fowls.

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