

A Feature Based Analysis of Igbo Complementisers

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Abstract

It has been argued that Igbo complementisers are associated with more than one clause type and therefore, cannot be classified based on the type of clause they introduce. This assertion has not been further examined in Igbo as the paucity of studies on Igbo complementisers show. Hence, there is need to characterise Igbo complementisers based on features for the purpose of classification. This study, therefore, re-examines the syntax of Igbo complementisers with a view to determining their distribution and c-selection properties as well as distinguish them based on their features. Data for the study were gathered from primary and secondary sources. The study identified three main complementisers in Igbo. They are *nà* 'that', *mà* 'if/whether' and *kà* 'that'. '*na*' c-selects mostly embedded declarative clauses. '*mà*' introduces mostly interrogative clauses where both the matrix and embedded clauses bear overt question morpheme, while '*kà*' is the only complementiser that introduces subjunctive clauses. Based on their behaviours, the study posits that '*na*' '*mà*' and '*kà*' have strong declarative, interrogative and subjunctive features respectively. Using distinctive feature matrix, the study characterised and distinguished Igbo complementiser. It was also observed that there is no agreement between complementiser and inflection as obtainable in English since Igbo complementisers are not specified for any tense that matches with that of the c-selected IP. The study concludes that Igbo complementisers can be classified using distinctive features.

Keywords: *Complementiser, feature, Igbo*

Introduction

Complementisers are functors used in introducing subordinate clauses across languages. It is a universal category because it exists in most languages of the world. In contemporary syntactic analysis, it is assumed that every sentence is headed by a complementiser which bears a specific force feature depending on the force of the clause it introduces in the language. A sentence is said to be declarative in force if it is used to make a statement, interrogative in force if it is used to ask a question, imperative in force if it is used to issue an order; exclamative in force if it used to express delight or surprise. Consider the following clauses from Radford (2009:10) where the clauses bear different force features:

- (1) a. He asked *where she had gone*.
- b. Did you know *that he has retired*?
- c. Tell her *what a great time we had!* (*Italicization is mine*)

In (1a), the main clause has a declarative force while its complement clause (*where she had gone*) is interrogative in force; in (1b) the main clause is interrogative in force, whereas the complement clause is declarative; and in (1c), the main clause is imperative, whereas the complement clause is exclamative. In other words, each sentence in the complex sentences has its own specific force feature. This is also applicable in the simple clauses in (2) below:

- (2) a. He went home
b. Are you feeling OK?
c. You be quiet!
d. What a great idea that is! (Radford 2009:10)

The single sentences above bear specific force feature. (2a) is declarative in that it is used to make a statement; (2b) is interrogative because it is used to ask a question; (2c) is imperative because it is used to issue a command; (2d) is exclamative in that it is used to express delight. In this connection, complementisers are assumed to bear a specific feature if it consistently introduces a particular type of clause in complex sentences.

Cross linguistically, a complementiser is often hosted in the left edge of the clause where it heads the complementiser phrase (CP). Traditionally, it is associated with one slot in the structural representation labelled 'COMP' for complementiser where it hosts other syntactic objects promoted to the left of the canonical subject position. However, it was later discovered, on conceptual and empirical grounds, that it is possible to allow the features hosted in COMP to head their own phrases. This is based on the fact that reinterpreting COMP in terms of X-bar across languages shows that the head C hosts subordinating complementisers and fronted auxiliaries, while its specifier hosts syntactic objects that have been promoted to the left periphery for discourse related reasons such as topic and focus (see Haegeman 2012). Therefore, it was necessary to assume that a layer exists to the left of the canonical subject position that accommodates these elements. This area has become known in contemporary syntactic analysis as the CP domain or the left periphery.

The CP domain houses the information that depends on both structure and context for interpretation. The nature and number of constituents that manifest in the left periphery have attracted tremendous research interest among linguists following Rizzi's (1997) proposal which suggests that the CP domain could be split into a number of separate hierarchically organised functional projections such as Force Phrase (FP), Topic Phrase (TopP), Focus Phrase (FocP) and Finiteness Phrase (FinP). Apart from Rizzi (1997), a number of studies have advanced empirical evidence in support of this view in various languages; e.g. *Gungbe* (Aboh, 2004, 2007, Aboh and Pfau, 2010), *English* (Haegeman, 2012), *Basa'a* (Bassong, 2014), *Ibibio*, (Doherty, 2016) Romance languages (Erteschik-Shir, 2007) to mention but a few.

The behaviour of complementisers differ across languages. In English for instance, there are three complementisers, and they encode different grammatical properties. They are *that*, *if*, and *for*. *That* introduces a declarative clause, *if* introduces an interrogative clause, and *for* introduces an *irrealis* clause i.e. one relating to a hypothetical event which hasn't yet taken place and may or may not take place at some stage in the future (see Radford 2009:6). Hence, the assumption that *that* is a finite declarative complementiser, *if* is a finite interrogative complementiser, and *for* is an infinitival *irrealis* complementiser.

In Igbo studies, however, there is a dearth of literature on Igbo complementisers. This might be attributed to the behaviour of complementisers in the language. For instance, Uwalaka (1997) observes that Igbo complementisers introduce more than one type of clause. Hence,

it is somewhat difficult to classify them according to the clause type they introduce. In addition, morphemes that function as complementisers in the language often perform other functions. Therefore, one can only identify them based on their distribution in the sentence. This study, therefore, investigates the syntactic features of Igbo complementisers with a view to identifying them, determine their syntactic distribution and c-selection properties, and classify them based on their feature strength. In line with the objectives, the paper seeks to provide answers to the following research questions: (a) what are the particles that function as complementisers in Igbo? (b) what are their syntactic distribution and c-selection properties, and (c) how can Igbo complementisers be classified?

To achieve these objectives and answer the research questions, the paper is divided into four sub-sections. Sub-section one provides the background to the study, sub-section two reviews related literature, sub-section three presents and analyses the data used for the study while sub-section four is the summary and conclusion.

Literature Review

Complementisers are hosted in the Force-Finiteness system within the left periphery. It operates in the high force where mood is marked and the lower finiteness where tense is marked. According to Rizzi (1997), it is the interface between a propositional content (expressed by the IP) and the superordinate structure (a higher clause). If it is directed to force, it determines the mood of the clause such as whether a sentence is a question, a comparative, exclamative etc. This is also termed clausal typing (Cheng, 1991) or force specification (Chomsky, 1995). If it is directed to finiteness, it serves to determine the tense of the IP. One piece of evidence in support of this view is the *agree* relationship between C and I. For instances, in English, *that* c-selects a tensed verb while *for* c-selects an infinitival verb. In this way, it is assumed that C is specified for tense which matches that of the c-selected IP.

Igbo complementisers have attracted very little research attention. This might be attributed to two main reasons: First, they all introduce more than one clause type as Uwalaka (1997) observes; and secondly, the particles that function as complementiser also perform other functions in the language. This behaviour often results to confusion in the identification of complementisers in the language. Consider the example:

- (3) a. Ònye kà ì bù?
 Who ? 1SG be
 Who are you?

In (3) above, Nwachukwu (1995) and Uwalaka (1997) identify *kà* as a complementiser while Osuagwu (2017) and Nweya (2018) identify it as a focus marker. Therefore, it is important to adequately determine the distributional properties of this particle in order to determine its functions as well as the contexts. In addition, the decomposition of the traditional COMP requires a re-analysis of the distribution of C in Igbo.

Uwalaka (1997) identifies four complementisers in Igbo. They are *ka*, *mà*, *nà* and *si*. The complementiser *si* combines with the other three complementisers within the clause. These complementisers introduce different types of embedded clauses. Consider the examples below:

- (4) a. Ogu kwù-rù nà/si/si na oge à-gaa-la
 Ogu talk-past COMP time pre-go-perf
 ‘Ogu said that time has passed’.
- b. Òbi jù-rù si mà/si/si ma chi ò bọ-ọ-la
 Obi ask-PST say COMP day it dawn-PST-PERF
 Obi asked if it was dawn already.
- c. Òbi gwà-rà ụmụ akwụkwọ ka/si/si ka ha rọọ arumarọ
 O. tell-past offspring.PL book COMP they do assignment
 Obi told the students to do their assignment.

(Uwalaka 1997:4)

The c-selection properties of the complementisers in these examples show that *nà* introduces declarative clauses (4a), *mà* introduces interrogative clauses (4b) while *kà* introduces imperative clauses as in (4c). The data also show that *si* (also identified as all-purpose complementiser) may occur on its own as a complementiser or combine with other complementisers associated with the relevant clause type. In this regard, Igbo permits a sequence of two complementisers. Therefore, she argues that the claim that complementiser choice is dependent on the semantics of the matrix verb cannot be sustained for Igbo. Consider also these examples from Uwalaka (1997:7).

- (5) a. Ezè tiri iwu kà/si ka onye ọbụla bịa ọgbakọ
 Eze give-past order that person all come gathering
 ‘Eze gave orders that everyone should come to the gathering.’
- b. Ọ bụ ihe ọjọọ nà ụmụ akwụkwọ nà-abanye n’otu nzuzo
 It be thing bad that students prog-enter in secret cults
 ‘It is terrible that students join secret cults.’
- c. Nà ụmụ akwụkwọ nà-abanye n’otu nzuzo bụ ihe ọjọọ
 That students prog-enter in secret cults is terrible
 It is terrible that students join secret cults
- d. Òbi nà-àrụ ọrụ kà o nweta egò
 Obi prog-pref.work in order he get money
 Obi is working to get money
- e. Ada gà-ènwe ańurị mà ya gafèe n’ùle
 Ada fut-pre-have joy if she go-past in-exams
 ‘Ada will be happy if she passes the exam.’
- f. Àda gà-èje ahịa mà chi bọọ
 Ada fut-pre-go market if day dawn
 ‘Ada will go to the market when day dawns’

- g. Òbi na-ajù mà/sì /sì mà ule ò bù taā
 Obi prog-perf.ask whether exam it be today
 ‘Obi is asking whether the examination is taking place today.’

These examples simply show that Igbo complementisers introduce more than a type of clause. They also show that Uwalaka identifies *sì* as all-purpose complementiser which may occur with other COMPs. In contrast, this study observes that this behaviour of *sì* is peculiar to Owerri group of dialects. In the standard Igbo and many other dialect groups, the element *sì* is a verb often used to introduce a direct speech in expressions like *Jizos gwara ha sì...* ‘Jesus told them saying...’ For this reason, it usually occurs in the environment of the verbs of saying such as *ju* ‘ask’, *gwa/kwu* ‘say’ and it usually follows such verbs in the relevant constructions. Therefore, this study does not identify *sì* as one of the COMPs in Igbo since its function as COMP does not cut across Igbo dialects and the standard Igbo.

With regard to Yoruba, Lawal (1991) examines the Yoruba complementisers with a view to identifying their distributional properties. According to her, there are three items that may be identified as complementisers in Yoruba. They are *pé*, *kí* and *tí* (see also Ilori 2010). The status of *pé* and *kí* as COMP is controversial because of their multifunctional nature. Hence, the need to re-examine their distributional properties. In this regard, she observes that when *pé* is functioning as COMP, it occupies the clause initial position which is the position for complementisers. This position is clearly distinguishable from its verbal position as these two sentences show.

- (6) a. *Olú pé awon ti dé*
 ‘Olu says they have arrived.’
 b. *Olu gbàgbé pé Bola ti jáde*
 Olu forget that Bola PERF go out
 ‘Olu forgot that Bola has gone out.’

(Lawal 1991:75-76)

In (6a), the function of *pé* is verbal because it denotes action and follows the subject. In this case, it functions as the main verb in the matrix clause. In contrast, data (6b) shows that *pé* introduces the embedded clause because it occurs at its periphery and does not express action in that position. Other evidence that were put forward in support of this argument include (i) the ability of *pé* in (6b) to be coordinated with the conjunct, *ati*, and (ii) its inability to be nominalised in the subject position, a feature that is characteristic of Yoruba verbs.

Lawal (1991:78) also argues that *kí* shares the syntactic features and behaviour associated with *pé*. A close examination of the syntactic distribution of *kí* shows that it occurs at the clause periphery where a bare verb cannot occur without being nominalised. In addition, it cannot undergo the process of predicate clefting by reduplication like other verbs and it can only be coordinated with the conjunct *ati* and not *si* which is often used to conjoin VPs. In this regard, *ki* must be overt in the coordinated clauses. Consider these examples from Lawal (1991 81-82)

- (7) a. **ki-ki* *a* *lọ* *dára*
 Ki-NOM we go good
- b. [*lilọ wa*] *dára*
 going our good
 ‘our going is good.’
- c. *ki* *a* *lọ* *dára*
 We go good
 ‘That we should go is good.’
- d. **kiki* *ti* *o* *dára* *ki* *ó* *wa*
 ki-NOM that it good ki we good
- e. *fifé* *ti* *mo* *fé* *ki* *Bọla* *fé* *Bisi*
 marrying FOC I want that Bola marry Bisi
 ‘marrying that I want Bola to marry Bisi,’
- f. *wọn gbàgbé [ki wọn ra búrédi] atí [ki wọn gbe omọ]*
 they forgot COMP they bought bread and COMP they picked child
 ‘they forgot that they bought bread and that they picked the child.’
- g. **wọn gbàgbé [ki wọn ra búrédi wọn] si ki wọn gbé omọ*
 they forgot COMP they bought bread and COMP pick child

In the data above, (7a) is ungrammatical because *ki* occurs in a clause initial position, a position which a bare verb cannot occupy without being nominalised as exemplified in (7b). In contrast, (7c) converges because *ki* is not nominalised. Data (7d) shows that *ki* cannot undergo the process of predicate clefting by reduplication in contrast to (7e) which involves the verb, *fifé*. Lastly, (7f) indicates that *ki* clauses just like *pé* clauses may be coordinated with the conjunct, *atí*, the coordinator for NPs and PPs; whereas, (7g) is ungrammatical because the coordinator for VPs was used. The study concludes that *pé* and *ki* have the properties which characterise complementisers rather than verbs. However, the study did not determine whether Yoruba complementisers are classifiable based on the type of clause they introduce.

In the Hausa language, Newman (2000) identifies *cēwā* as the commonly used complementiser for the introduction of complement clauses. Its usage depends on the specific verb or verbal expression in the matrix clause. He notes that it is a verbal noun of the verb *cē* ‘to say’. Based on the rules of Hausa grammar, the occurrence of the complementiser *cēwā* is blocked if the matrix clause contains the verb *cē* or its nominalised counterpart *cēwā*. These postulations are exemplified below (see Newman, 2000: 97-98 and Frąckiewicz, 2016: 88-89).

- (8) a. *Yā* *bayyànā* *cēwā* *yànzú* *lōkàcī* *yā* *yì*
 3SG/TAM explain COMP now time 3SG/TAM do
 ‘He explained that the time had come’
- b. *Yāràn sun tsayà cēwā sun maidō manà dà kudīnmù*
 children-DET 3PI/TAM insist COMP 3PI/TAM return us with money-our
 ‘The children insisted that they had paid us back our money’

In (8a) above, the matrix clause does not contain the verb *cē* or the verbal noun *cēwā*. Hence, *cēwā* introduces the complement clause. In contrast, the use of *cēwā* in the matrix clause blocks it from being used as the introducer of the complement clause in (8b). Other particles that function as COMP in place of *cēwā* are *wai* and *da* subject to the c-selection property of the verb of the matrix clause. In other words, it is the verb of the matrix sentence that c-selects the COMP that heads the CP in Hausa.

In summary, the studies reviewed above show that though the main function of COMP is to introduce complement or embedded clauses in a language, the manner it performs this function varies crosslinguistically due to its language specific properties. The review also shows that particles that function as COMP may perform other functions.

Complementisers in Igbo

This study identifies three main complementisers in Igbo. They are *nà*, *mà* and *kà*. Similar to most of the items that occur in the left periphery of Igbo clauses they all bear low tone whenever they are performing this function. Aside their complementiser function, these elements perform other functions in the language. The sub-sections that follow discuss these items respectively.

Na Complementiser

The item, *nà*, performs different functions in the language. Aside its complementiser function, it functions as a verb, preposition, conjunction and auxiliary verb as exemplified below.

- (9) a. Ndị Ohi **nà-rà** yà àkpà **nà** Ñsuka.
 Person.PL thief snatch-PST 1SG bag P Nsukka
 ‘Thieves snatched his/her bag at Nsukka’
- b. Òbi **nà** Ada **nà-àrịọ** egō.
 Obi CONJ A. AUX(PROG)-PART-beg money
 ‘Obi and Ada are begging for money’

In (9a), the bolded *nà* functions as a verb and as a preposition respectively. As a verb, it immediately follows the subject of the sentence and expresses the action performed in the sentence. As a preposition, it c-selects a DP complement. In (9b), it functions as a conjunction and an auxiliary verb respectively. As a conjunction, it conjoins two DPs, *Obi* and *Ada* but immediately precedes the verb as an auxiliary. Nevertheless, it also functions as a complementiser as in these examples.

- (10) a. O kwù-rù **nà** ya gà à-bia.
 3SG say-PST COMP 3SG FUT PART- come.
 ‘S/he said that s/he will come’

- b. Èmekà gwà-rà yà nà ha nò n'ulò
 Emeka tell-PST 3SG COMP 3PL be P-house
 'Emeka told him/her that they are at home'
- c. Mmā a-mā-ghī nà m bjà-rà.
 Mma PRE-know-NEG COMP 1SG come-PST
 'Mma did not know that I came.'
- d. Obi mà nà Uchè nà à-nụ mmanyā.
 Obi know COMP Uche PROG PART-drink wine
 'Obi knows that Uche drinks.'
- e. Mmā nù-rù nà ọ la-ā-la.
 M. hear-PST COMP 3SG go-PST-PERF
 'Mma heard that s/he has gone'
- f. Ị nù-rù nà ọ gà à-bịa echi.
 2SG hear-PST COMP 3SG FUT PART-come tomorrow
 You heard that s/he will come tomorrow.

A close look at (10) shows that the syntactic position of *nà* differs from its positions in (9). Data (10a-f) are complex sentences that contain matrix and embedded/ complement clauses unlike (9). All the embedded clauses are declarative in force and they are introduced by the COMP, *nà*. However, *nà* also introduces interrogative embedded clauses as shown below:

- (11) a. Ị mà nà Azukà nà-èzu ohī?
 2SG know COMP Azuka PROG-steal thief
 'Do you know that Azuka is a thief?'
- b. Ị sì nà ọ̀ gini mè-rè?
 3SG say.PST COMP what do-PST
 'What did you say happened?'
- c. Ị sì nà Ị gà-rà èbee?
 2SG say.PST COMP 2SG go-PST where
 'Where did you say you went to?'

In (11), the embedded clauses are interrogative in force. Observe that '*na*' introduces a yes/no question in (11a) and *wh*-questions in (11b&c). However, while the low tone interrogative marker is overt in the matrix clause, it is not overt in the embedded clauses. Lastly *nà* also introduces imperative constructions as in (12) below.

- (12) a. Ọ̀gọ̀ gwà-rà yà na ya sì-e nri.
 Ọ̀gọ̀ tell-PST 3SG COMP 3SG cook-IMP food
 'Ọ̀gọ̀ told him/her that s/he should cook'
- b. Ọ̀gọ̀ gwà-rà yà na ọ̀ ga e-sì nri.
 Ọ̀gọ̀ tell-PST 3SG COMP 3SG FUT PART-cook food
 'Ọ̀gọ̀ told him/her that s/he will cook'
- c. *Obi jụ-rụ na ọ̀ nà à-nụ mmanyā?
 Obi ask-PST COMP 3SG PROG PART-drink wine
 'Obi asked if s/he drinks' (intended meaning)

- d. *O jù-rù nà ò ga-abja?
 3SG ask-PST COMP 3SG FUT-come
 ‘S/he asked if s/he will come’ (Intended meaning)
- e. *Ì sì nà ebee ka I je-re
 2SG say COMP where FOC 2SG go-PST
 ‘Where did you say that you went to?’

In (12a&b), *na* introduces imperative clauses. However, the sentences in (12c&d) crashed because of the presence of the verb, *ju* ‘ask’, which does not collocate with *nà*. This may be attributed to the fact that (12c&d) are interrogative in force as evident with the presence of *ju* ‘ask’ and the low tone Q(uestion)-morpheme borne by the pronoun following COMP. (12e) shows that *nà* hardly introduces focused wh-questions. In all, one can deduce that *nà* introduces more declarative clauses than interrogative and imperative clauses as evident in the ungrammaticality of (12c-d). Therefore, it is assumed that it has strong declarative force or feature.

***Mà* Complementiser**

Similarly, *ma* ‘if/whether’ also performs other functions in the language such as conjunctive and verbal functions. When it is performing conjunctive function, it is often used in pair (see Uba-Mgbemena, 2006: 45). Consider the examples below:

- (13) a. Mà nwokē mà nwaānyì.
 CONJ man CONJ woman
 ‘Both men and women’
- b. O rùtè-rè mà ò hụ-ghī ha.
 3SG arrive-PST CONJ 3SG see-NEG 3PL
 ‘S/he arrived but s/he did not see them’
- c. Ha mà yà ọfụmā.
 3PL know 3SG well
 ‘They know him/her very well’

In these examples, *ma* functions as a coordinating conjunction in (13a&b) and as a verb in (13c). In (13a&b), it joins two constituents of equal grammatical status although it is used correlatively in (13a). However, it is the main verb in (13c) where it immediately follows the subject of the sentences. Yet, it also functions as a complementiser as shown in the sentences below.

- (14) a. Ọ nà à-ju (gì) mà ì ga-a-la ụkà?
 3SG PROG PART-ask 2SG COMP 2SG go-PST-PERF church
 ‘S/he is asking if you have been to church?’
- b. Ọnye mà mà ò gà à-bja ahja taā?
 Who know COMP 3SG FUT PART market today
 ‘Who knows if he would come to market today?’

- c. Òbi jù-rù yà mà ò nà à-nụ mmanyā?
 Obi ask-PST 3SG COMP 3SG PROG PART-drink wine
 ‘Obi asked if s/he drinks?’
- d. Ọ jù-rù yà mà ò gà à-bịa echī.
 3SG ask-PST 3SG COMP 3SG FUT come tomorrow
 ‘S/he asked if s/he would come the next day.’
- e. Ada gà ènwe anụrị mà ya gafè-e n’ùle.
 Ada FUT PART-have joy COMP 3SG pass-FUT P-exam.
 Ada will be happy if she passes the exam.’ (Uwalaka 1997: 7)
- f. Ada gà è-je ahịa mà chi bọ̄
 Ada FUT PART-go market COMP day dawn
 ‘Ada will go to the market if day dawns. (Uwalaka 1997: 7)
- g. *Ọ nùrù mà Uche kpò-rò n’ekwentị.
 3SG hear-PST COMP Uche call-PSTP-handset
 ‘S/he heard that Uche called on phone’ (intended meaning)
- h. *Ọ gwà-rà mà gị bịa akwụkwọ.
 O. say-PST COMP 2SG come book
 ‘S/he told you to come to school.’ (Intended meaning)
- i. *Ha jù-rù (m) ma ebe m jè-rè
 3PL ask-PST 1SG COMP what O. wear-PST
 ‘They asked where I went to.’ (Intended meaning)
- j. *Ị sì mà Ị gà-rà èbee?
 2SG say-PST COMP 2SG go-PST where
 ‘Where did you say you went to?’ (Intended meaning)

The first observation that needs to be made is that the positions of *mà* in (13) differ from its position in (14) which involve complex sentences. In (14), *mà* ‘if/whether’ occurs at the initial of the embedded clauses where it introduces interrogative clauses in (14a-d) and conditional clauses in (14e&f). The ungrammatical constructions in (14g-j) show that *mà* hardly introduces declarative (14g), imperative clauses (14h) and embedded wh-questions (14i-j). Nevertheless, it was observed that it has strong interrogative force based on the fact that it introduces embedded questions with overt LT Q-morpheme as shown in (14a-d) and also collocates with the verb *ju* ‘ask’.

***Kà* Complementiser**

The item *kà* is also multifunctional in Igbo. It functions as a verb and a conjunction as well as a focus marker. As a verb, it is typical of copula verbs often used in comparative constructions. In focus constructions it immediately follows focalised constituents. Consider the examples below.

- (15) a. kà nwokē kà nwaānyì
 CONJ man CONJ woman
 ‘Both men and women’
- b. Òbi kà Uchè ogologo
 Obi be Uche tallness
 ‘Obi is taller than Uche’
- c. Mmā kà Òmimi oji
 Mma be Omimi dark
 ‘Mma is darker than Omimi’
- d. Moto kà Osii zùtà-rà
 car FOC Osy buy-PST
 ‘Osy bought A CAR’
- e. N’anya kà okwute tù-rù ya
 P-eye FOC stone through-PST SG
 ‘The stone hit him/her IN THE EYE’

In the data above, (15a) is a coordinated structure where *kà* is the coordinator, (15b-c) are comparative constructions where *kà* functions as a copula while (15d-e) are focus constructions where *kà* marks focus. The focalised constituents, a DP and PP, were focused in (15d) and (15e) respectively. That notwithstanding, *kà* also functions as a complementiser in the following constructions.

- (16) a. Ọ sị kà Èmekà si-e nrī.
 3SG say-PST COMP Emeka cook-IMP food
 ‘S/he said that Emeka should cook’
- b. Ànyị chọ-rọ kà ị bịa echī.
 1PL want-PST COMP 2SG come tomorrow
 ‘We want you to come tomorrow.’
- c. Ọ nà à-gba mbọ kà ọ guọ akwụkwọ.
 3SG PROG PART-work hard COMP 3SG read book
 ‘He is working hard to be educated’
- d. Ị mà kà ọ gà à-bia echī?
 2SG know COMP 3SG FUT PART-come tomorrow
 ‘Do you know if s/he would come the next day?’
- e. Ị jù-rù yà kà ọ gà à-bia echī?
 2SG ask-PST 3SG COMP 3SG FUT PART-come tomorrow
 ‘S/he asked if him/her if he/she would come the next day’
- f. *Mmā nù-rù kà ọ la-ā-la.
 Mma hear-PST COMP 3SG go-PST-PERF
 ‘Mma heard that s/he has gone’ (Intended meaning)
- g. *Ọ kwù-rù kà ya gà à-bia.
 3SG say-PST COMP 3SG FUT PART- come.
 ‘S/he said that s/he would come’ (Intended meaning)

The data above show that *kà* also functions as a complementiser. In (16a), *kà* introduces an imperative clause. In (16b-c), it introduces subjunctive or *irrealis* clause; while in (16d-e), it introduces interrogative clauses. It hardly introduces declarative clauses as shown in (16g-h). Data (14&16) reveal that *kà* and *mà* can both introduce embedded interrogative clauses with overt LT Q-morpheme. However, *mà* cannot introduce imperative and subjunctive clauses as *kà*. In this regard, one can posit that *kà* has strong imperative/subjunctive feature. The fact that these complementisers introduce more than one clause type makes it difficult strictly classify them based on the complement clauses they select. It, therefore, becomes necessary to adopt an approach that can capture the peculiarity of Igbo.

Consequently, the alternative is to employ a feature based approach where the syntactic properties of the COMPs are represented using distinctive features as shown in the table below:

(17)

Complementisers	<i>nà</i>	<i>Mà</i>	<i>kà</i>
Complement Clauses	+ Declarative - Interrogative + Imperative -Conditional	-Declarative +interrogative -Imperative +Conditional	-Declarative +Interrogative +Imperative +Conditional

The table above represents the distinctive feature matrix of Igbo complementisers. It indicates that *na* c-selects declarative and imperative complement clauses as shown in (10&12). In the context where the complement clauses are interrogative in force, the low tone interrogative marker is covert as in (11). The second COMP *mà* is [+ interrogative] because it c-selects a complement clause that bears an overt interrogative element (see 14) but hardly c-selects a complement clause that is declarative or imperative in force. Hence, it is [-declarative, -imperative]. It is the only COMP that c-selects conditional clauses as shown in (14e). Lastly, *kà* share some feature of *mà* for the fact it c-selects a complement clause that bears overt interrogative low tone (16d&e). In addition, it c-selects more of imperative constructions as shown in (16a-c). Hence, it is [+imperative]. However, it hardly c-selects declarative clauses as evident in the ungrammaticality of 16(f-h).

Summary and Conclusion

This study has further examined the syntax of Igbo complementisers. Three main complementisers were identified in Igbo. They are *nà*, *mà* and *kà*. Like other elements that occur in the left periphery, they all bear low tone. The complementisers were classified based on their feature strength. They are *nà* ‘that’ (with strong declarative feature), *mà* ‘if/whether’ (with strong interrogative feature) and *kà* ‘that’ (with strong imperative and subjunctive feature). Using distinctive features, the study demonstrated that although the complementisers introduce more than one clause type, it is plausible to distinguish using feature matrix based on multiple features.

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