

Complementizers in Kùcè: A minimalist theoretic analysis

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Abstract

As attested in other languages, complementizers play a significant role in the syntax of Kùcè, a Niger-Congo language spoken in Bassa, Plateau State, north-central Nigeria. However, the discussion of complementizers in the language is under-reported in the literature. This paper therefore examines the complementizers of Kùcè with the aim of determining their classification and properties. Data were collected with the use of a researcher-designed wordlist, West African Linguistics Society (WALS) questionnaire and unstructured oral interview. The study identifies four main complementizers which include, *àtá* ‘that’, *hā* ‘whether’, *t+subject pronoun root verb (sprV)* ‘if’, and *ísī* ‘that’. The study found that *àtá* has a strong declarative force feature, while *hā* exhibits a strong interrogative force feature. *t+sprV* possesses a strong imperative force feature as well as an interrogative force feature. Whereas *àtá* and *hā* are typically force heads, the complementizers *t+sprV* and *ísī* are focus markers respectively, in that they trigger movement of focused constituents.

Keywords: Complementizer, Force, Focus, Feature, Finiteness, Kùcè, Movement.

Ìtī nī āyen ānò ba yardā, ínsák ùtā nūnā ama áná áyī āgyigyó áyī Kùcè, kiyén iyī Niger-Congo bā Bássá, Plateau State north-central Nigeria. Kodáshikè ìdaw áyá ínsák áyī Kùcè, ùshí bùmī kinfā átákàrdá awai ùtā tò ínsák áyī Kùcè nī múlók ígí āsifa āgi. Bà tā kādīsì nī kāshì nī ìndòl áyá mudádí. Bánít iyá West African Linguistics Society (WALS) ùcílí kayísì áyī kanú nī ùsùmā ìbibān. Kùmùsā ùtā nūnā ínsák ínás, *àtá* ‘*ípí gyó*’, *hā* ‘*ho*’, *iti*, *ísī* kùmāsú úwui ígí ta *àtá* ùshì nā ányé nī ushī bī unkún, aní *hā* ushì nī kayísì nī ushì nū unkún. *t+sprv* ushì nū unkún nī kayísì nī unkun. *àtá* nī *hā* ushì nī ìtú nū ushì nū unkun. ínsák *t+sprv* na *ísī* bā *shin a ányé áyī unkun. itá zugā ìcizì ayī ìbān.*

Introduction

Complementizers are clause introducers which are assumed to constitute a distinct functional class that project the functional phrase referred to as the Complementizer Phrase (CP) in the generative grammar framework. The assumption is that every clause is headed by the complementizer, intrinsically bearing a specific clause type (or force feature) depending on the force of the clause it introduces and subcategorizes. For instance, a clause is regarded as ‘declarative’ in force if it makes a statement. Furthermore, a clause is regarded as ‘interrogative’ in force when it asks a question, while it is assumed to be ‘imperative’ in force when it gives a command. A clause is also regarded as ‘exclamative’ in force if it expresses an extreme degree of some variable factor which may be left implicit (Nweya, 2019). According to Ilori (2010), within the Government and Binding (GB, hereafter) framework, Complementizer (Comp) is a mandatory pre-subject position associated with all clauses. The position is lexicalized when a clause has a Comp element and left unrealized otherwise. As a result, all clauses in GB framework were regarded to be CPs underlyingly. This implies that all clauses were assumed to be base-generated at D-structure as CPs within GB (Haegeman, 1991, and Radford, 1988). Within the Minimalist framework, the Complementizer Phrase is recognized. However, it is not assumed for all clauses as only the different layers, which are the minimal projections, are permissible. This is because the framework does not recognize any superfluous elements or projections, informed by virtual conceptual necessity.

Following works in Chomsky (1995) and Rizzi (1997), the CP was assumed to split into a number of different functional projections specifically Force Phrase (ForceP), Focus Phrase (FocP), Topic Phrase (TopP) and Finiteness Phrase (FinP). This assumption is reinforced by facts across languages that the CP domain houses various elements which project a functional phrase position at the left periphery of clauses (i.e. a position above the Tense Phrase (TP)), which include clause introducers assumed to be force markers, focus markers, topic markers and finiteness markers. This resulted in the following simplified hierarchy of the split C (Rizzi, 1997):

- (1) Force > (Top) > (Foc) > Fin.

The highest projection Force is a host to clause-typing operators and tensed clauses such as *that* or *whether* in subordinate sentences. Force assigns forces to clauses in a derivation. This may be declarative, interrogative or imperative. Topic is an expression which represents ‘old’ or ‘familiar’ information by moving a constituent to the front of a sentence. Focus is an expression which marks ‘new’ or ‘unfamiliar’ information. The lowest projection Fin(iteness) hosts untensed clauses such as *for*. It is the interface to the propositional TP in its scope. Rizzi argues further that the Topic/Focus field sandwiched

between Force and Fin is optional, as indicated by the brackets. In the event that there is neither any topical, nor focal constituent, the topic/focus field can be inactivated, Force and Finiteness features are syncretised into an unsplit C. The assumption here is that C only splits into multiple phrases in structures containing a topic and/or focus elements. The relevance and adequacy of the split CP as encapsulated in the structure in (1) above is that not all languages attest the expanded CP. This implies that the structure is parameterized across languages. As a result, languages determine how their CP is expanded.

Kùcé is the language of the Bàcé people of Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State, North Central Nigeria. The language is spoken around the city of Jos and villages including Zagun, Asak, Kishi, Igbak, Inchaz, Ingo and Imbop. It is also spoken outside its traditional areas due to migration and other economic activities. The speakers of this language call themselves Bàcé and their territory Kùcé. Recent editions of the ethnologue dispense with the noun prefix and list it simply as Cé.

Kùcé is a tone language and falls within the Plateau group of the Eastern branch of the South-Central Niger-Congo group (Wilson 1996). Languages in the same sub-family or group as Kùcé which share a closer genetic relationship with it are those in the Ninzam group of languages such as Mada, Gwantu, Nindem, Kaningkon and Kanufi (Wilson, 1996). Besides several other minority languages spoken in communities bordering the Kiché area, Hausa and Fulani traders live among the Bàché. Hausa is the lingua franca of Northern Nigeria, and is spoken in schools, in government offices, and in the markets of Jos, the only city nearby.

This study is useful in a number of ways. In spite of studies on different aspects of the language, this paper, to the best of our knowledge is the first attempt at studying the CP domain of Kùcé, in line with the assumptions of the minimalist framework. The study is, therefore, a significant contribution to Kùcé scholarship in particular and Universal Grammar theory in general. Its contribution to the theory is by way of reinforcing some of the theoretical assumptions by providing evidence and insights from the Kùcé language. The paper contributes to the assumption in the minimalist framework that the different layers of the CP occurring at the left periphery of the sentence and their distribution as well as their functions are feature-driven based on the facts of Kùcé.

Methodology

The corpus for the study comprises two sets of data collected in Bássá L.G.A, North Central Nigeria. The first set consists of a researcher-designed wordlist containing phrases and clauses which contain the complementizers in Kùcé. Based on the wordlist, utterances from spontaneous speech of Kùcé speakers were recorded in an interview carried out in some social settings, including the family, market and the workplace. The

second set consists of West African Linguistic Society questionnaire, containing about five hundred expressions ranging from words to sentences of different types. A group of speakers of Kùcé were interviewed lasting about five hours in length. The interview was audio-recorded with the permission of the participants, ten adult males and six adult females competent in Kùcé aged between 55 and 70. Cell phones were used to collect the data.

The method of analysis involved the application of basic Minimalist principles, while the data were subjected to morpheme-by-morpheme glossing and qualitative analysis. The validation of the data for this study was undertaken by an applied linguist, a native speaker who is also the leader of the Kùcé Bible Translation Team in Jos.

The recorded data in both sets were transcribed, and the transcripts were classified. Only utterances identified as instances of complementizer phrases relevant to our analysis were utilized in the study. To provide detailed syntactic structures of the data, utterances illustrating complementizer phrases are presented as examples in this study in a three-line format. The first line gives the utterance in the form it was recorded; the second line provides the interlinear glossing and the third line, the English translation of the utterances. In few cases, phrase markers are used to show the syntactic structure of the expression.

Literature Review

It is a fact across languages that there are projections of different kinds above the Tense Phrase (TP) in clauses. To lend support to this fact, Radford (2004) asserts that there must be one type of projection which hosts preposed focused constituents, and another type of projection which hosts complementizers. A typical example is the sentence (2) below:

(2) I am sure [**that** never again would he attempt to do it]

The example in (2) shows that a sentence containing a preposed constituent such as ‘never again’ can occur after a complementizer such as **that**. This fact led Rizzi (1997) to suggest that the CP should be split into a number of different projections namely Force Phrase, Focus Phrase, Topic Phrase and Finiteness Phrase. This analysis is widely referred to as the Split CP hypothesis in the literature.

Previous studies on Kùcé have shown that there is an increasing amount of literature on different aspects of the Kùcé language. These include; lexicography, phonology and morphology. These studies were carried out from a descriptive stand point. Such studies include Wilson (1996), Blench, Adiwu & Asukutuk (2006) and Ejiemenu (2014). Studies on functional categories were undertaken from a theoretical point of view. For example, Anyanwu (2021) provides a syntactic study of the phrasal categories, adjectives,

prepositions and complementizers using the X-bar theory as conceived within the Government and Binding framework. The study analyzes the relative positions of the functional categories with respect to their complements. He claims that Kùcè is head-first with respect to functional categories as exemplified in (3) below. Anyanwu (2021):

- (3) a. Akaso à shílāk gàgai nā mī
 Akaso 3SG [AdjP so [PP good to 1SG]]
 ‘Akaso is so kind to me.’
- b. Adikis à shí gànggà kī kīhūpī kā mī
 Adikis 3SG is [AdjP very in jealous [PP of 1SG]]
 ‘Adikis is very jealous of me.’
- c. tīsík gūyī yá kàtāt itébùlì
 put it [PP just on top table]
 ‘put it right on the table.’
- d. būmī kūtārā ngí
 inside room the
 ‘inside the room’
- e. m̄n yishí hā Āngyà â disí ābāyiwāk
 1SG ask [CP whether Āngyà 3SG teach students]
 ‘I will ask whether Āngyà will teach the students.’
- f. Ĥn sā ghi hā Ādūbà â shi nyē
 1SG NEG know [CP whether Ādūbà 3SG PROG come]
 ‘I don’t know whether Ādūbà is coming.’

The examples in (3a-f) imply that the heads, adjective, preposition and complementizer in a phrasal structure consistently precede their complements in Kùcè. This lends support to the claim that Kùcè is a head-first language. Interesting and insightful as Anyanwu’s (2021) analyses are, the study is based essentially on the X-bar theory as a theoretical framework. We are not aware of any previous studies on complementizers in Kùcè within the minimalist framework.

Nweya (2019) studies the complementizers that occur in the clausal left periphery in Igbo, also a Niger-Congo language, and classifies them on the basis of their feature strength. The complementizers, all of which bear a low tone are *nà* ‘that’ (with strong declarative feature), *mà* ‘if/whether’ (with strong interrogative feature) and *kà* ‘that’ (with strong imperative and subjunctive feature). This is illustrated in the examples in (4) below:

- (4) (a) O kwù-rù nà ya gà à-bia (Declarative)
 3sg say-Pst Comp 3sg Fut Part-come
 ‘S/he said that s/he will come’
- (b) O na - a- ju gị mà ị ga-a -la ụkà? (Interrogative)
 3sg Prog-Perf- ask 2sg Comp 2sg Fut-Perf- go church
 ‘S/he is asking if you will go to church’
- (c) O sị ka Emeka si - e nrī (Imperative)
 3sg say Comp Emeka cook-Imp food
 ‘S/he said that Emeka should cook’

The elegance of Nweya’s (2019) analysis is the introduction of distinctive feature matrix. Therefore in addition to the identification of the complementizers in Kùcè, we shall also adopt and adapt a distinctive-feature based analysis in line with the assumptions outlined in the Minimalist Program.

To the best of our knowledge, the present study represents the first major attempt to study the complementizer domain in Kùcè in line with the tenets assumed in the Minimalist Program.

Theoretical Framework

The goal of this section is not to deeply scrutinize all the principles that characterize the Minimalist Program. Rather, focus is on the basic tenets that characterize the derivation of phrasal or clausal structure. For a broader understanding of the Minimalist Program, the reader should consult Chomsky (1993, 1995, 2001).

A general assumption in the Minimalist Program is that the class of possible linguistic levels of representation is restricted to two, required by ‘conceptual necessity’. The two fundamental levels interface with the performance systems, known as Articulatory Perceptual system (A-P) and the Conceptual-Intentional system (C-I). The latter is the place where linguistic expressions interface with the cognitive systems (Chomsky, 1995). The linguistic levels that interface with A-P and C-I are Phonological Form (PF) and Logical Form (LF) respectively. Each derivation within the MP has to meet these interface levels, obeying certain natural economy constraints. When these are met, the derivation converges otherwise the derivation is invalid, resulting in a crash.

Within the minimalist framework, the processing of syntactic derivation is likened to the way a computer selects and merges two items. The two fundamental operations *Select* and *Merge* are therefore the basis for building syntactic derivations. *Select* ensures that syntactic objects are appropriately selected, while *merge* combines these syntactic objects in a pair-wise fashion. Complex representations arise from the recursive application of

this combinatorial procedure. When *merge* applies on already formed syntactic objects to derive larger units from the existing ones, we have a clear case of movement (or scrambling), otherwise known as ‘internal merge’, which is subject to constraints such as Minimal Link Condition or Attract Closest Principle. Syntactic objects built by merge are mapped onto the Conceptual-Intentional system and the Articulatory-Perceptual system. The operation which maps syntactic objects onto these two interface levels is called *Transfer* (or *Spell-Out*).

Within the minimalist framework, it is a general assumption that words are described in terms of a set of features. These features are phonetic, grammatical and semantic in nature. In summary, the minimalist program is guided by economy considerations in terms of representation and derivation.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The complementizers in Kùcè include *àtá* ‘that’, *hā* ‘whether’, *t+sprV* (where *sprV* indicates subject pronoun root Vowel), and *ísī* (a focus/topic head). These complementizers merge with their complements to derive complex structures. i.e. they interface with their TP complement and the clausal domain higher than the CP – the matrix clause. They are discussed in the following sections.

The Complementizer *àtá*

The complementizer *àtá*, is a force marker heading a Force Phrase (ForceP) in Kuce. This is because it plays a role in specifying the force of its subcategorized clause. Consider the examples in (5) and (6) below:

- (5) a. Ìngònà á tā àtá Àtìlèk á bló bâ mākárántá
 Ingona 3SG say that Atilek 3SG go to school
 ‘Ingona said that Atilek went to school.’
- b. Kúy hī àtá Kúrú a shī bana ata
 1PL know that God 3SG be with 1PL
 ‘We know that God is with us.’
- c. Àtíkpi á tā àtá Àjon á bló kīkò
 Atikpi 3SG agree that John 3SG go home
 ‘Atikpi permitted Mary to go home.’
- d. àdīsí á nī yhí àtá ā kāngà
 teacher 3SG did know that 3SG sick
 ‘The teacher discovered that he was sick.’

- e. Ìn sāmà yhí àtá Àsúkútúk â nyé
1SG NEG know that Àsúkútúk 3SG come
'I do not know that Àsúkútúk came.'
- (6) a. Ìn sā tí Àjékòb á shī nyé
1SG NEG say Jacob 3SG be come
'I did not say Jacob is coming.'
- b. Ú yhí á shī ìkōnō
2SG know 3SG be sleep
'You know he is sleeping.'
- c. Àgóró á tá Àsò á bló kīkò
Àgóró 3SG agree Àsò 3SG go home
'Agoro permitted Aso to go home.'
- d. àdīsī á nì yhíàk ā ngā
teacher 3SG did know 3SG sick
'The teacher discovered that he was sick.'
- e. Ìn sāmà yhí Àsúkútúk â nyé
1SG NEG know Àsúkútúk 3SG come
'I do not know Asukutuk came.'

The examples in (5a-e) and (6a-e) above are complex clauses that contain matrix and embedded clauses. In (5a-e), the embedded clauses are introduced by the complementizer, *àtá*, which marks the clauses as declarative in force. In (6a-e) the complementizer has a null spell-out though the embedded clauses are declarative in force. Thus, we argue that the structural difference between examples (5a-e) on the one hand and examples (6a-e) on the other hand is the presence of the force marker *àtá* 'that'. The overt spell-out of the force marker in one situation and its null spell-out in another situation leads us to propose a null complement force marker for instances where force markers are not lexicalized. Based on our data in (5a-e) and (6a-e) we observe that there is no focalized or topicalized constituent, hence CP does not split into different layers. This means that Force and Finiteness features are syncretized. Accordingly, only a single C constituent is projected which carries both finiteness and force features. On this view, example (5a) for instance would have the phrase structure shown in (7) below (where DEC is a declarative force feature and FIN is a finiteness feature):

- (7) [CP [càtá_{DEC, FIN}] [TP Àtílèk [T á] bló bâ mákárántá]]

We also observe that in Kùcé, the overt complementizer *àtá* does not subcategorize for embedded interrogative clauses. This explains why the examples in (8b and 9b) below are ungrammatical:

- (8) a. Ú tí Àjón á bló àmà
 2SG say John 3SG go where
 ‘Where did you say John went to?’
- b. *Ú tí àtá Àjón á bló àmà
 2SG say that John 3SG go where
 ‘Where did you say that John went to?’
- (9) a. Bâ tí àdó â nyé-e
 3PL do prayer 3SG come-Q
 ‘Will they pray that he comes?’
- b. *Bâ tí àdó àtá â nyé- e
 3PL do prayer that 3SG come-Q
 ‘Will they pray that he comes?’

In (8a) and (9a), the embedded clauses are interrogative in force. The complementizer *àtá* does not introduce embedded interrogative clauses, otherwise the structure will crash. This explains why the structures in (8b) and (9b) are ungrammatical. Our position is that the complementizer *àtá* does not subcategorize for interrogative embedded clauses in Kùcé. Interestingly however, it is used to introduce imperative clauses as shown in the examples in (10) below:

- (10) a. Àkúbàkà á tí wū àtá â nyé
 Akubaka 3SG tell 3SG that 3SG come
 ‘Akubaka told him that he should come.’
- b. À tét ábā àtá bâ bló bá cūc
 3SG ask 3PL that 3PL go to church
 ‘He ordered that they should to church.’
- c. Àsántū á tí àtá Àmary â bló kīkò
 Àsántū 3SG tell that Mary 3SG go house
 ‘Àsántū said that Mary should go home.’
- d. Àkān á tí wū à- lú ikpú
 Àkān 3SG tell 3SG PROPERF-cook food
 ‘Akan told him to cook.’

- e. À tét ábā à- bló bá cūc
 3SG ask 3PL_{PRO} PERF-go to church
 ‘He ordered them that they should go to church.’
- f. *Àkān á tí wū àtá à- lú ikpú
 Àkān 3SG tell 3SG that PRO-cook food
 ‘Àkān told him to cook food.’
- g. *À tét ábā àtá à bló bá cūc
 3SG ask 3PL that_{PRO} go to church
 ‘He ordered them to go to church.’

Our data in (10a-c) show that *àtá* ‘that’ introduces an imperative clause. Observe that the imperative clause is finite. However, the complementizer is given a null spell-out in embedded infinitival clauses, as shown in (10d-e). Giving it an overt spell out in infinitival clauses will result in a crash. This explains why the examples in (10f-g) are ungrammatical.

The Complementizer *hā*

In Kùcè, the complementizer *hā* ‘whether’, on a mid tone, is a clause introducer. This is shown in the examples in (11) below:

- (11) a. Ín sā yhí hā â shī nyé
 1SG NEG know whether 3SG be come
 ‘I do not know whether he will come.’
- b. Bá yhí hā â shī ikōnō-o
 3PL know whether 3SG be sleep-Q
 ‘Do they know whether he is sleeping?’
- c. Ú yhí hā Àshóm â shī ùvì àmákárántá-a
 2SG know whether Àshóm 3SG be child school-Q
 ‘Do you know whether Àshóm is a student?’
- d. Kú shī nyé hā kú sāmì hík ūgā-a
 1PL be come whether 1PL NEG find time-Q
 ‘Can we come whether we have time or not?’

In the examples (11a-d) above, *hā* ‘whether’ is introduced into the derivation via external merge with its complement TP and types the clause as interrogative. We argue therefore that the complementizer *hā* has a strong interrogative force feature. More so, this complementizer acts as an interface between a propositional content expressed by its c-selected TP, and its super-ordinate structure (i.e. the root clause). Interestingly however,

this complementizer may interface only with its c-selected TP, giving the complement the force of interrogation. This is shown in the examples in (12) below:

- (12) a. Hā kú chīn-i
 whether 1PL give up-Q
 ‘Shall we give up?’
- b. Hā ù shī nyé ùnù hík-i
 whether 2SG be come and find-Q
 ‘Can you come and meet me?’
- c. Hā In jā-a
 whether 1SG buy-Q
 ‘Should I buy?’
- d. Hā kù shī bló-o
 whether 1PL be go-Q
 ‘Should we go?’

The examples in (12a-d) confirm the strong interrogative force feature of the complementizer *hā* in Kùcé.

The Complementizer *t* + *sprV*

This complementizer, with an initial consonant *-t*, takes the concord vowel prefix a-, i- or u-, depending on the final vowel (or root vowel) of the preceding subject pronoun, realized as *tā*, *tī* or *tū* ‘if’ on a mid-tone. In terms of its defined syntactic property, this complementizer c-selects an embedded finite TP whose subject is given a null spell-out at PF. Consider the examples in (13) below:

- (13) a. Īn tī nyé Īn hík ikpú-u
 1SG if come 1SG.FUT find food-Q
 ‘Will I have some food if I come?’
- b. Īn tī ntí ū nyé ū nyé-e
 1SG if say 2SG come 2SG.FUT come-Q
 ‘Will you come if I ask that you come?’
- c. Àshóm á tā tòh Àmary â hīlè
 Àshóm 3SG if see Mary 3SG return
 ‘If Àshóm sees Mary let him return.’
- d. Àládì á tā já iwúl à nyá ā
 Àládì 3SG if buy goat 3SG bring 3SG
 ‘If Ládi buys a goat she should bring it.’

- e. Ú tū bló anu já
 2SG if go 2SG buy
 ‘If you go, buy it.’
- f. Ú tū hīlè anu sòh
 2SG if return 2SG sit
 ‘If you return, sit there.’
- g. * tū Ú hīlè anu sò
 if 2SG return 2SG sit
 ‘If you return, sit there.’
- h. * tā Àládi á já iwúl à nyá ā
 If Ládi 3SG buy goat 3SG bring 3SG
 ‘If Ládibuys a goat she should bring it.’

The examples in (13a-b) show that the complementizer *c*-selects an interrogative clause, while in (c-f), it subcategorizes an imperative clause. In this regard, we argue that the complementizer *t+sprV* ‘if’ has strong imperative/interrogative features.

A careful observation of the data in (13a-f) shows a scrambling operation in the derivation of the embedded clauses. Notice that the clausal subject occupies a focused position via overt movement. Our argument is that the clausal subject within the clausal left periphery is a target of focus. This implies that the clausal pronouns/subjects in (13a-f) originated as subjects of the embedded TPs but have moved via internal merge to the specifier position of the focus head. Our argument therefore is that the complementizer *t+sprV* doubles as a focus marker in Kùcé. What this means is that the complementizer appears in the embedded clause initial position adjacent to the focused subjects/pronouns. The movement of the subject is a last resort to ensure that the structure converges, otherwise the subject will be visible at PF and the derivation will crash. This explains why the structures in (13g-h) are ungrammatical.

The Complementizer *ísĩ*

In terms of its defined syntactic property, this complementizer is intricately related to focus and content questions, specifically *Wh*-questions because movement to the left periphery position is involved and the landing site for the target of the focused constituent is the specifier position of the CP. This is illustrated in the examples in (14-19) below:

- (14) a. Bā wúró kīkò
 3PL sweep house
 ‘They swept the house.’

- b. iwúró kíkò ísī bá tī<iwúró kíkò>
sweep house that 3PL do
'It was sweeping the house that they did.'
- (15) a. Àmary â lú ikpú
Mary 3SG cook food
'Mary cooked the food.'
- b. ilú ikpú ísī Àmary á tī <ilú ikpú>
cook food that Mary 3SG do
'It was cooking the food that Mary did.'
- (16) a. Àsònyhíp â cízi bló bâ Légòs
Àsònyhíp 3SG travel go to Lagos
'Àsònyhíp travelled to Lagos.'
- b. ìcìzi bló bâ Légòs ísī Àsònyhíp á tī <ìcìzi bló bâ Légòs>
travel go to Lagos that Àsònyhíp 3SG do
'It was traveling to Lagos that Àsònyhíp did.'
- (17) a. Ú múlók àtákdā àsé
2SG like book which
'Which book do you like?'
- b. àtákdā àsé ísī ù múlók <àtákdā àsé>
book which that 2SG like
'Which book do you like?'
- (18) a. Ú shī tī mkpísā
2SG be do what
'What are you doing?'
- b. Mkpísā ísī ù shí tí <mkpísā>
what FOC 2SG - PROG do
'What are you doing?'
- (19) a. Á nyé númbùtā
3SG come when
'When did he come?'
- b. númbùtā ísī á nyé <númbùtā>
when that 3SG come
'When did he come?'

The examples in (14a-16a) and (17a-19a) are the underlying structures where the syntactic objects are in their base-generated positions prior to scrambling. The data in (14b-16b) and (17b-19b) are regarded as derived structures, known as cleft constructions and *Wh*-questions respectively. These constructions are instances of focalization. In (14b-16b), the verb phrases move from their base-generated positions to the clause-initial positions and are immediately followed by the complementizer *ísī* ‘that’. Similarly, in (17b-19b), the *Wh*-phrases raise to the clause-initial positions, followed by the complementizer. Notice that the clauses are all finite. Our analysis suggests that the complementizer *ísī* ‘that’ is a focus marker heading a Focus Phrase (FocP). Therefore, we argue that examples (14b-16b) and (17b-19b) are cleft focus and interrogative focus constructions respectively. In line with the ideas of the Minimalist framework expressed in Radford (2004), we assume that the head focus *ísī* ‘that’ which serves as a probe, carries an [EPP] feature and an uninterpretable focus feature which together attract a focused constituent, which serves as a goal (which itself, contains a matching interpretable focus feature) to move into the specifier of FocP where the uninterpretable focus feature is checked off before transfer. The movement of the focused constituents is a last resort to ensure convergence otherwise the uninterpretable feature of the focus head will be visible at PF, resulting in a crash.

From the analysis thus far, the complementizers in Kùcé serve as the interface between thematic domains within TP and discourse structure in the higher projections. This is consistent with the claims expressed in Rizzi (1997, p. 283) that “‘complementizers act as the interface between a propositional content expressed by the TP, and the super-ordinate structure (a higher clause or, possibly, the articulation of discourse, if we consider a root clause)’”. Therefore, from the facts of Kùcé, we claim that the Complementizers act as interfaces and express at least two kinds of information. One piece of information is about the clause type (in that the complementizer plays a role in specifying the force of its clause, whether it is declarative, imperative, interrogative, cleft, etc), and the other one gives information about finiteness which is embedded under C.

Conclusion

This study has examined the classification of complementizers in Kùcé, as well as their properties. Four main complementizers were identified. They are *ata*, *ha*, *t+sprV* and *ísī*. The study classified them on the basis of their force strength. *Átá* has a strong declarative force feature, while *hā* exhibits a strong interrogative force feature. *t+sprV* was argued to exhibit a strong imperative force feature as well as an interrogative force feature. Whereas *átá* and *hā* are typically force heads, the complementizers *t+sprV* and *ísī* are focus markers, in that they trigger scrambling, attracting constituents to move to their specifier position in the higher projection via internal merge. Consistent with the claims expressed in Rizzi (1997) the study found that complementizers in Kùcé act as the

interface between a propositional content expressed by the TP, and the super-ordinate structure which is the higher clause.

Abbreviations/Symbols

| | |
|----------|--------------------------------|
| A-P | Articulatory-Perceptual |
| C-I | Conceptual-Intentional |
| Comp | Complementizer |
| CP | Complementizer Phrase |
| EPP | Extended Projection Principle |
| FIN | Finiteness |
| Foc | Focus |
| FocP | Focus Phrase |
| ForceP | Force Phrase |
| FP | Focus Phrase |
| FUT | Future |
| INF | Infinitival |
| LF | Logical Form |
| MP | Minimalist Program |
| NEG | Negation |
| NP | Noun Phrase |
| Part | Particle |
| PERF | Perfective |
| PF | Phonological Form |
| PROG | Progressive aspect |
| <i>Q</i> | Question particle |
| Spec | Specifier |
| sprV | Subject pronoun root verb |
| T | Tense |
| TP | Tense Phrase |
| UG | Universal Grammar |
| V | Verb |
| VP | Verb Phrase |
| ∅ | Nil |
| 1SG | First person singular pronoun |
| 1PL | First person plural pronoun |
| 2SG | Second person singular pronoun |
| 3SG | Third person singular pronoun |
| 3PL | Third person plural pronoun |

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