This paper discusses the Yoruba items *Pe* and *Kí*. These items have sometimes been analyzed as verbs and sometimes as complementizers. Thus their status has not been clearly established. In this paper, we look at the various structures in which these items occur and at their behaviour and proceed to reanalyze them. In this re-examination attention is paid to the distributional criteria of both verbs and complementizers. The paper concludes that *Pe* and *Kí* are complementizers not verbs.

1. Introduction

Complementizers may be defined simply as particles which serve to mark out clause boundaries. They are usually found at the beginning of subordinate or embedded clauses. Complementizers thus serve to introduce clauses. An example of a complementizer is *that* in English as found in the sentence below:

(1) I know *that* he will arrive early.

The properties of complementizers play a crucial role in clause analysis and in the formulation of general properties of grammar, particularly within the GB framework. It is hoped that a study of comp-like elements in Yoruba will provide further insights into the role and properties of complementizers in grammar. Before going into the discussion of Yoruba complementizer-like elements we will briefly discuss some relevant features of the complementizer system.
1.1. Syntactic position of complementizers. Our discussion here will be within the framework of Government and Binding Theory [Chomsky 1977, 1981]. The syntactic position occupied by complementizers is that of COMP. The COMP node is introduced by the phrase structure rule for sentences:

\[
S' \rightarrow \text{COMP} \quad S \hspace{2cm} \text{COMP} \rightarrow \pm WH
\]

One of the main assumptions in GB is that all sentences begin with a COMP node. The COMP node is specified for the feature ±WH, where -WH is the abstract element that dominates non-interrogative clauses while +WH dominates interrogative clauses. Verbs select for the feature ±WH. The main function of COMP is to designate a node in sentence initial position where constituents moved by fronting transformations can be attached. An example is the WH-movement transformation which moves constituents into sentence initial position. A second important function of COMP is to provide a syntactic position for sentence introducing elements such as question particles and complementizers. That Yoruba sentences begin with a COMP node is not controversial as Yoruba has sentence initial question particles such as ūjë and sé. Also, WH-movement takes place in the language. These facts are illustrated in the examples below:

(2) a. ūjë Bólá wá?
   QPRT Bola came
   ‘Did Bola come?’

b. Sé Bólá wá?
   QPRT Bola came
   ‘Did Bola come?’

c. Ta ni ó rí?
   WH FOC you saw
   ‘What did you see?’

1.2. Complementizer-like elements in Yoruba. In Yoruba there are three items which may be identified as complementizers. They are pé, ki and ti.\(^1\) In this paper

\(^1\)The sentence introducer \(kí\) is sometimes realized as \(pé \ kí\), that is everytime we have \(kí\) alone it may be taken as an instance of deletion of \(pé\) from \(pé \ kí\), but \(pé\) alone does not represent deletion of \(kí\) from \(pé \ kí\). \(Pé\) alone is a separate complementizer as can be seen in the following examples.

(i) Ayo mò pé Bólá ti lọ
   Ayo knows that Bola has gone

(ii) *Ayo mò (pé) kí Bólá ti lọ
   Ayo knows that Bola has gone
we are concerned with the elements *pé* and *kí* as these are the elements on which controversy exists. Not all Yoruba linguists agree that *pé* and *kí* are complementizers. Some Yoruba linguists regard these items as verbs [Oyelaran 1983, Bamgbose 1966]. Below we will attempt to establish the true status of these elements. First we look at *pé*:

2. The Sentence Introducer *pé*

Arguments for *pé* as a verb have been motivated mainly by the fact that *pé* occurs in minimal sentences where it means ‘say’. The examples below illustrate this usage:

(3) a. *Olu pé awọn ti dé*
    Olu says they have arrived

    b. *Olu pé won wá*
    Olu said they came

Sentences such as those in (3), where *pé* co-occurs with other verbs, have been analysed as serial verbal constructions [Oyelaran 1983]. Serial verbal constructions (SVC) are sentences which contain sequences of two or more verbs without any syntactic marker of subordination such as complementizers. Thus Oyelaran, on the basis of sentences such as (3), analyzes the sentences (4) below as instances of SVC [Oyelaran 1983]:

(4) a. *Olu gbàgbé pé Bólá ti jàde*
    Olu forget (?) Bola PERF go out
    ‘Olu forgot that Bola has gone out’

    b. *Olu ràntí pé Bólá ńsun*
    Olu remember (?) Bola sleeping
    ‘Olu remembered that Bola was sleeping’

From the examples we can see that *pé* and *kí* occur in the same context but *pé*, *pé kí*, and *kí* may not substitute for each other without a change in meaning. (See Lawal [1989] for some discussion on their distribution and meanings). The shorter form *kí* is used more frequently than the longer *pé kí*, so whenever we talk of *kí* we are also referring to *pé kí*.
c. Ó dàbì ení pé mo ti pàdè rè
   it seem person (?) I have met him
   ‘it seems that I have met him’

d. Ó jọ́ bí ení pé òjò fèè rò
   it look like person (?) rain want fall
   ‘it looks like (that) it wants to rain’

The claim is that pé in (4) above is similar or identical in meaning with the sequence of pé and another verb in (3) where it is a verb meaning ‘say’. We will show below that this claim is untenable and that the sentences in (4) are not instances of SVC but sentential complement clauses with pé having the status of a complementiser. We will give arguments based on the distributional and syntactic properties of pé to support our claim.

2.1. Syntactic position of pé. One of the main problems which anyone who wants to analyze pé as a verb will have to account for is why pé occurs in sentence initial position, i.e. the COMP position. This is illustrated with the examples below:

(5) pé a jọ́ lọ́ dára
   ( ) we together went good
   ‘that we went together was good’

(6) pé obinrin ló borí jọ́ mí lójú
   ( ) woman FOC-she won resemble me eye
   ‘that a woman won surprised me’

In the above examples pé cannot be said to be the subject of the sentence as claimed by Oyelaran [1983]. In the first place for pé to be the subject of the sentence it must be a phrasal category not a lexical category since only phrasal categories can occupy an argument position, e.g. subject position. But pé is a lexical category not a phrasal category since it is only a bare verb stem.

The implication of having a bare verb as a subject of the sentence is theoretically not acceptable as it will mean permitting a structure like (7).
Such a structure cannot be defended or justified. Moreover, before a verb can occupy the subject position of a sentence in Yoruba, it must be nominalized. In Yoruba, nominalized verbs take special forms. They are either reduplicated as illustrated in (8),

(8) a. jó  
    dance  → jíjó  ‘dancing’

b. ló  
    go  → líló  ‘going’

c. pe  
    call  → pipe  ‘calling’

or they are preceded by a nominalizing morpheme, as in (9):

(9) a. jó  
    dance  → i-jó  ‘dancing’

b. ló  
    go  → à-ló  ‘going’

c. mò  
    know  → i-mò  ‘knowledge’

d. gbàgbé  
    forget  → i-gbàgbé  ‘forgetting’

The sentence introducer pé cannot be classified as a nominalized verb because it does not exhibit the required nominalized form. Pé also does not satisfy another minimum criteria for verbs which is that it cannot undergo reduplication for nominalization. All Yoruba verbs have this ability. Even defective verbs like bá, fí, and, tète may be reduplicated. This is illustrated in (10a-c):

(10) a. tí-tètè tí ó tète ló dára  
    hurry that he hurry go good  
    ‘his hurrying to go is good’

b. bíbá  
    tí ó bá  Bólá ló dára  
    accompanying that he accompany Bola go good  
    ‘his accompanying Bola’s going is good’
c. *fifì tí Bọlá fì ọbẹ gé isu dára
   using that Bola use knif cut yam good
   ‘Bola’s cutting the yam with a knife is good’

Contrast the above with the pé sentences in (10d-f):

d. *pípé tí ó dára pé a lọ
   ( ) that it good ( ) we went

e. *pípé tí ó gbàgbé pé Bísì nibo
   ( ) that he forgot ( ) Bisi is coming

f. *pípé tí pé a lọ
   ( ) that ( ) we went

Another point against classifying pé as a verb is the fact that pé clauses may be conjoined with àti. In Yoruba the coordinator for verbs or VP is sí not àti. The coordinator àti may only conjoin nouns. It cannot conjoin verbs or VP’s:

(11) a. *mo [VP lọ sí qja] àti mo [VP ra isu]
   I went to market and I bought yams

b. mo [VP lọ sí qja] mo sí [VP ra isu]
   I went to market I and bought yams
   ‘I went to the market and I bought yams’

c. [NP pé Bọlá wa] àti [NP pé mo wa] dára
   ( ) Bola came and ( ) I came good
   ‘that Bola came and that I too came is a good thing’

d. *[NP pé Bọlá wa] sí [NP pé mo wa] dára
   ( ) Bola came and ( ) I came good

Koopman [1984] argues for the verbal status of a similar element in Vata by claiming that the element na in Vata is an empty verb selected by the higher verb which cannot directly select a sentential complement. Such a hypothesis cannot work for pé for the simple reason that pé does not introduce only verbal complements. It also introduces noun complement clauses:
(12) a. \([\text{NP } \text{iròhin } \text{pé } \text{iyawó oga bímo}] \text{ VP } \ldots\]
    news ( ) wife boss bring forth baby
    ‘the news that the boss’ wife has had a baby …’

b. \([\text{NP } \text{èro } \text{pé } \text{èun ó lọ sí ëwọn}] \text{ VP } \ldots\]
    idea ( ) he will go to prison
    ‘the idea that he will go to prison …’

c. \([\text{S } \text{mo gbó } [\text{NP } \text{iròhin } \text{pé } \text{Babangida ní bọ}] ]\]
    I heard news ( ) Babangida is coming
    ‘I heard the news that Babangida is coming’

Thus, pé cannot be analyzed as an empty verb which is selected by the main verb as is the case with Vata na.

2.2. Pé in the S’ system. Having shown that pé is not a verb we are now in a position to account for the S-initial position of pé in sentences such as (5) and (6) repeated here as (13):

(13) a. \(\text{pé a jọ lọ dára }\)
    ( ) we together went good
    ‘that we went together was good’

b. \(\text{pé obinrin lọ borí jọ mí lójú }\)
    ( ) woman FOC-she won resemble me eye
    ‘that a woman won surprised me’

Let us consider the phrase structure rules for the sentence which we gave earlier:

\[
\text{S'} \rightarrow \text{COMP S} \\
\text{COMP} \rightarrow \pm \text{WH}
\]

The assumption from the above rules is that all sentences begin with a COMP node. As shown earlier, Yoruba sentences also begin with a COMP node. The syntactic position occupied by pé which is sentence initial is the position of COMP, i.e. the position occupied by items such as complementisers and other sentence introducing particles. The COMP node is specified for the binary feature ±WH. The sentence introducer pé introduces non-interrogative clauses. It can therefore be safely assumed that pé has the feature -WH. Its syntactic position and
its syntactic distribution in contrast to that of the verb * pé* in (3) makes it uncontroversially a complementiser. It occurs in the position where complementisers occur.

Further evidence in support of the complementiser status of *pé* comes from its behaviour in coordinated clauses:

(14) a. [ *pé* Bólá *wa*] àti [ *pé* ó *jeun*] VP ...  
that Bola came and that she ate

b. [ *pé* Bólá *jáde*] àti [ *pé* Bísí *dé*] VP ...  
that Bola went out and that Bisi arrived

In such coordinated clauses as can be seen from the examples above *pé* must be repeated. This shows that *pé* is a constituent of the S’ system.

The above facts and the foregoing discussion show that *pé* is an instance of an initial COMP node, not a verb or VP. *Pé* may be translated as that in English. See Lawal [1989] for a discussion of the meaning properties of this element.

3. The Sentence Introducer *Ki*

The second COMP-like element we shall examine is the sentence introducer *kí*. As with *pé* not all Yoruba linguists agree on the complementiser status of *kí*. For instance Awobuluyi [1978] classifies *kí* as a nominalizing morpheme while Bamgbose [1966] classifies it as a preverb.

3.1. The two “*kV*” morphemes of Yoruba. Before we proceed, however, it is important to point out that the sequence involving the *kí* classified by Awobuluyi as a nominalizer should be distinguished from the homophonous sequence involving the *kí* which introduces clauses. Awobuluyi, however, lumps the two together as can be seen in the example given in Awobuluyi [1978].

(15) a.  *eni*  *kí* *eni* → *enikéni*  ‘anybody’
    person () person

b.  *kí* *kó* *ilé*  ‘building houses’
    () build house

c.  *éyan*  *kí* *énìyan* → *èyankéniyan*  ‘a good for nothing’
    person () person

d.  *kí* *a* *só* *dóótó* *dára*  ‘it is good to say the truth’
    () we say truth good
It is obvious that Awobuluyi's analysis of *ki* as a nominalizer is wrong as the nominalizing morpheme is *ku* rather than *ki*.\(^2\) That this morpheme shows up as *ku* in the examples below supports this claim:

\[
\begin{align*}
(16) & \quad \text{a. } \text{igbà } \text{*ku } \text{igbà } \rightarrow \text{igbàkùbà } \text{‘anytime’} \\
& \quad \text{b. } \text{iṣq } \text{*ku } \text{iṣq } \rightarrow \text{iṣqùṣq } \text{‘bad sayings’} \\
\end{align*}
\]

The ‘u’ is sometimes deleted before vowels other than ‘i’, and optionally deleted before ‘i’. Secondly, in (15b) the sequence *ki* is not the nominalizing morpheme *ku* but the reduplicated ‘k’ of the verb *ko*, followed by the vowel ‘i’ as in examples like (17):

\[
\begin{align*}
(17) & \quad \text{a. } \text{lò } \rightarrow \text{lílò } \text{‘going’} \\
& \quad \text{b. } \text{wá } \rightarrow \text{wìwá } \text{‘coming’} \\
& \quad \text{c. } \text{*ki } \rightarrow \text{kìkì } \text{‘greetings’} \\
\end{align*}
\]

And in (15d) and (15e) *ki* is a sentence or clause introducer not a nominalizing morpheme. We shall justify this below.

3.2. Syntactic distribution of *ki*. The sentence introducer *ki* is analysed in Bamgbose [1966] as a verb, more precisely a preverb, but *ki* shares most of the syntactic features and behaviour associated with the element *pé*, which suggests that *ki* cannot be a verb. First, like *pé*, and unlike verbs, *ki* occurs in S-initial position, a position which a bare verb cannot occupy without being nominalized. *Kì* does not have a nominalized form in this position:

\[
\begin{align*}
(18) & \quad \text{a. } *\text{kìkì } \rightarrow \text{a } \text{lò } \text{dára } \text{ki-NOM we go good} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\(^2\)This was first pointed out to me by a reviewer.
Contrast the *ki* sentence above with the sentence below where a verb occupies the S-initial position:

b. *ki a lọ dára* ‘that we should go is good’
   (*we go* good)

c. [lìlọ wa] dára ‘our going is good’
   going our good

d. *[lọ wa] dára
   go our good

Example (18d) is ungrammatical because the verb has not been nominalized. Secondly, *ki* unlike verbs cannot undergo the process of predicate clefting by reduplication:

(19) a. *kíkí tí ó dára kí ó wa
   ki-NOM that it good (*) we go

   b. *kíkí tí ó dára kí a lọ
   ki-NOM that it good (*) we good

Contrast the unacceptable *ki* sentences with the sentences below where the verb has been clefted:

c. gbígbàgbé tí Bólá gbàgbé kí ó ti ìlèkùn
   forgetting FOC Bola forgot () she shut door
   ‘forgetting to shut the door that Bola forgot’

d. fífé tí mo fé kí Bólá fé Bísí
   marrying FOC I want () Bola marry Bisi
   ‘marrying that I want Bola to marry Bisi’

Thirdly, *ki* clauses just like *pé* clauses may not be coordinated with *sì*, the coordinator for VPs. Rather the coordinator that may be used is *àti*, the coordinator for NPs and PPs.

(20) a. wón gbàgbé [kí wón ra búrédì] *àti* [kí wón gbé ọmọ]
   they forgot () they bought bread and () they pick child
   ‘they forgot to buy bread and to pick the child’
b. *wón gbàgbé [kí wón ra bùrédî wón] sì [kí gbé ọmọ]
they forgot () they buy bread they and () pick child

Fourthly, when *kí clauses are coordinated, *kí like *pé must be repeated, showing that it forms part of the expansion system of S’ system (see the examples (20a) above).

*Kí is sometimes found in main clauses, and this has been used as evidence against its complementiser status [Bamgbose 1966]. However, this fact is uncontroversial since in such sentences *kí occupies the S-initial position, which is the COMP position:

(21) a. *kí Olúwa pèlù wa
( ) God be with us
b. *kí è tètè dé
( ) you quick come
‘*that come back quickly’

Its occurrence in such structures does not count as evidence against its complementiser status. Moreover, other COMP-like elements are also realized in main clauses in Yoruba. The examples below illustrate this:

(22) a. *sé Bólá ti dé?
QPrt Bola PERF arrived
‘has Bola arrived?’

b. *njé Bólá le?
QPrt Bola went
‘did Bola go?’

The COMP position in a main clause may have zero-realization or it may be overt. What the data here shows is that Yoruba is one of the few languages where the COMP is realized overtly in main clauses and is unlike English, which has zero-realization of COMP in main clauses. The occurrence of *kí in main clauses does not therefore count as evidence against its status as a complementiser.

4. Conclusion

We have shown in this paper that the items *pé and *kí in Yoruba are complementizers, not verbs. We found that *pé and *kí have the properties which characterize complementizers rather than verbs. Most importantly, our analysis clarifies certain issues in Yoruba grammar: First, sentences in which *pé cooccurs
with other verbs are not serial verbal constructions but complement clauses and secondly, the syntactic position occupied by pé and kí is shown not to be that of subject but rather that of COMP, a position which is consistent with the facts and with the true status of these items.

REFERENCES


