

## **A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF *ATĪ* AND ITS VARIANTS *ATĪRĪRĪ* AND *ATĪRĪ* AS COMPLEMENTISERS AND DISCOURSE MARKERS IN GĪKŪYŪ<sup>1</sup>**

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Complementisers are important categories for linguistic theories in description of syntactic structures. In generative grammar theories, the complementiser phrase is an indispensable functional category. Gĩkũyũ, a Bantu language of Kenya, has a ubiquitous complementiser, *atĩ* /ate/ ‘that’, and its variants *atĩrĩrĩ* /aterere/ and *atĩrĩ* /atere/. This paper demonstrates that besides having a complementiser function, *atĩ* is an evidential and dubitative marker, a hearsay marker and a discourse filler. It also has an echoic usage. Its related discourse particles, *atĩrĩrĩ* and *atĩrĩ* are quotative markers; they have information-structuring and deictic functions. This paper bases its analysis on Role and Reference Grammar. It shows—that investigating *atĩ* beyond its syntactic complementiser function reveals a holistic view of its other functions and those of its related particles. It also brings to light the interaction of linguistic domains involved in its occurrence in Gĩkũyũ grammar.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Complementisers became important categories in sentence structure analysis in the generative grammar tradition since Bresnan (1972). Later theoretical developments saw the complementiser become the head of the Complementiser Phrase (CP). With this, complementisers got into the heart

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of recursion, now considered as part of Universal Grammar (See Hauser, Chomsky, & Fitch, 2002; Fitch, Hauser, & Chomsky, 2005; Coolidge, Overmann & Wynn, 2010).<sup>2</sup>

Originally, the CP had a purely syntactic function, but this changed with the expanded or the multi-layered CP proposed in the “split CP hypothesis” developed within the Cartography enterprise led by among others Rizzi (1997). The expansion of the CP led to a more elaborate left periphery of the clause comprising complementisers, interrogatives, and information-structure notions of topic and focus as functional heads. Consequently, the syntactic of the CP yielded more functional projection heads, such as force, focus, topic, finiteness, etc. In this connection that van Gelderen (2013: 203) noted that the CP as conceptualised in the Cartography enterprise, contained a lot of pragmatic content.

Following theoretical interests in complementisers, this paper describes *atĩ*, a Gĩkũyũ complementiser. The paper will also discuss *atĩrĩrĩ* and *atĩrĩ*, assumed to be variants of *atĩ*. Although much of complementiser analyses were based on the generative grammar-related theories, this paper adopts a structural-functional analysis based on Role and Reference Grammar (RRG), a theoretical framework developed by van Valin & LaPolla (1997) and van Valin (2005), but merely for descriptive purposes.

RRG is a functionalist linguistic theory, and Frajzyngier’s (1995) observed that “Functionalist approaches are very interested in the function of specific complementisers” (p. 476). It is for that reason and others that the present study focuses on *atĩ*, *atĩrĩrĩ* and *atĩrĩ* because of their multifunctional nature in in Gĩkũyũ grammar and of their pervasiveness in Gĩkũyũ speech.

There is consensus in Gĩkũyũ linguistic literature that *atĩ* is a complementiser akin to *that* in English (Barlow 1951; Gecaga 1955; Overton 1972; Mugane 1997; Bennett et al. 1985; Perez 1985). It is equally accepted that *atĩrĩrĩ* and *atĩrĩ* are related to *atĩ*. However, except for noting that *atĩ*

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<sup>2</sup>Although recursion is said to be universal, Everett (2005, 2008) has shown that Piranha, a Brazilian language, lacks embedded clauses, which is evidence of recursion. So, doubts can be raised about the universality of recursion.

is a complementiser, the literature does not get into the description of *atĩ* or of its related variants. And that is what the present article aims to offer: a detailed functional analysis of *atĩ*, *atĩĩĩĩ* and *atĩĩ*.<sup>3</sup>

The paper argues that *atĩ* has more functions than just the syntactic one of introducing a complement clause. As for *atĩĩĩĩ* and *atĩĩ*, it is shown that they have other functions other than introducing direct speech. It will show that they have additional discourse-pragmatic and semantic functions.

Writing about the complementiser function and question formation in Dholuo (a Nilotic language of Kenya), Omondi (1986: 235) noted that the complementiser *ni* ('that') is semantically and syntactically significant in the analysis of embedded and non-embedded sentences. In clauses, *ni* may indicate assertion, emphasis, questions, or various shades of doubt, among other things. Omondi also noted that, a complementiser position may also contain a focused element. Omondi's observations about Dholuo resonate with the projected analysis of complementiser *atĩ* and its related variants, *atĩĩĩĩ* and *atĩĩ*, in Gĩkũyũ in the present study.

Writing about complementisers in Setswana (a Bantu language of Botswana), Letsholo (2013: 56) noted that complementisers were at the heart of linguistic "creativity and productivity". But, despite their importance, they have been hardly afforded a serious, deep analysis. in Bantu languages. Indeed, complementisers in most Bantu grammars are casually mentioned. For example, in Perez's (1985) study of verbal complementation in Gĩkũyũ, Kirundi, and Shona, there is no comment on the multifaceted behaviour of the Gĩkũyũ complementiser *atĩ*. However, other than Letsholo (2013), there notable studies on complementisers in Bantu languages that are worth mentioning, such as Givón & Kimenyi's (1974) study on the semantics and syntax of complementisers in Kinyarwanda; a study of Kikamba and Chichewa complementisers (Myers 1975); Diercks (2013), on

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<sup>3</sup> Gĩkũyũ has the following letter vowels: i, ĩ, e, a, u, ũ, o; they are pronounced as: /i, e, ε, a, u, o, ɔ/. In this paper, the Gĩkũyũ orthography for both the consonants and the vowels will be maintained.

Lubukusu; and Kawasha (2006, 2007), on Chokwe, Luchazi, Lunda, and Luvale.

This article is guided by several definitions of complementisers. Noonan (2007) defines a complementiser as a “word, particle, clitic, or affix” which marks a complement, although it might have other functions in a language (p. 55). Myers (1975:186) called complementisers “introducers” of complement clauses, and Ransom (1986:87-88) noted that complementisers set complements off from the main clause. These definitions exclude subordinators, which are ignored in this paper.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE AND REFERENCE GRAMMAR (RRG) FRAMEWORK

RRG has a semantically motivated model for clausal representation called the “layered structure of the clause” [LSC]. The idea is that a clause has layers: nucleus, core, clause and sentence, as shown in Figure 1.

The LSC has a constituent projection, which contains the clausal constituents, and an operator projection which contains the operators or grammatical categories such as aspect, negation, tense, evidentials, event quantifiers, directional, epistemic and deontic modals, and illocutionary force. These operators belong to the respective layers mentioned above. For instance, tense, epistemic modality, illocutionary force, external negation and evidentials all modify the clausal layer, while aspect, internal negation and some directionals modify the nuclear layer. Event quantifiers, directionals involving a core argument, negation, deontic modality modify the core layer.

RRG has a distinct theory of complex sentences. The theory has three clause linkage types, otherwise called ‘nexus types’. These are: coordination, subordination and cosubordination, an RRG unique clause linkage nexus relation. It is in the discussion of complex sentences, especially

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<sup>4</sup> See the criticism of Noonan’s and Ransom’s definitions by Frajzyngier (1995: 474-5). Gĩkũyũ has two other complementisers, *kana* ‘whether’ and *korwo* ‘if’, which are not discussed in this article, although important elements for a future study.

in cosubordination, that the operators mentioned above become very important as is evident in section 4.1 where the evidential function of *atĩ* is discussed.

Further, RRG distinguishes between daughter and peripheral subordination (Van Valin 2005, 2007)<sup>5</sup>. In daughter subordination, whether core, clausal or sentential, the embedded unit is a direct daughter of that layer. In peripheral subordination, an adjunct unit is in the periphery of a layer. In sum, a complement clause such as the one in (1) is a form of core (daughter) subordination, as it is a direct daughter of the core node, as illustrated in Figure 1.

- (1) *Ma-a-ug-ir-e*                      *atĩ*                      *ma-kũ-inũka*                      *ũmũthĩ*.  
 3pl-RCPST-say-PFV-FV    CLM                      3pl-NRFUT-go.home-FV    today  
 ‘They said that they would go home today.’

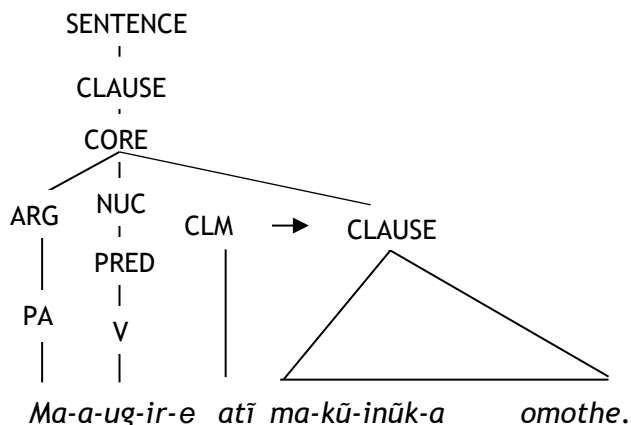


Figure 1: Core (daughter) subordination

The notion of “complementiser” in RRG is replaced with that of “clause-linkage marker” (CLM), a term which depicts complementisers as belonging to a “more general functional class” (van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 470-6).

<sup>5</sup>This is a sketchy overview of RRG and the LSC. For lack of space, the RRG theory of complex sentences is not discussed here. But see van Valin & LaPolla (1997) and van Valin (2005, 2007) for a general discussion of it, and Kihara (2017) for an RRG analysis specifically of Gikũyũ complex sentences.

Indeed, while the notion of “complementiser” in English includes *that* and *whether*, and also *for* and *if*. van Valin & LaPolla also add *from* and *to* to the class of clause-linkage markers (p. 472). According to van Valin & LaPolla, *to* and *from* in English apply at core level, while *that* applies at the clause level.

CLMs have a syntactic and semantic role in complex sentences. Coordinative and subordinative conjunctions, complementisers and other linkage devices are all CLMs; hence the CLM a more inclusive notion.

### 3. *ATĪ* AS A SYNTACTIC COMPLEMENTISER

Before illustrating some syntactic (complementiser) functions of *atī*, a speculative note on the origin of the complementiser and its related particles is in order.

In most languages, including African ones, it has been–reported that complementisers akin to the English *that* either originated from verbs of ‘saying’, or are grammaticalized forms of these verbs (Givón & Kimenyi 1974; Lord 1993; Hopper & Traugott 2003; Nurse 2008; Dixon 2006; Creissels et al. 2008; Güldemann 2008, Letsholo 2013; D’Arcy 2015). With specific reference to Gĩkũyũ, Benson (1964: 18) claims that *atī* “originated from an old verb meaning ‘say’”. Whatever this verb might have been, it is no longer evident in the language.

It is likely that *atī*, *atīrīrī* and *atīrī* have become fully grammaticalized quotatives, going by the typology of quotatives by Nicolle (2016). Indeed, Hengeveld (1998: 336-7) noted that when quotative constructions become grammaticalized, the verbs of saying may become quotative-introducing conjunctions. In (2a repeated from 1) *atī* occurs with an utterance verb *uga* (‘say’), in (2b) it occurs with a propositional attitude verb *ītīkīa* (‘believe’), and in (2c) with a verb of knowledge *ona* (‘see’).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Concerning the abbreviations used in the examples, Arabic numerals refer to persons, e.g.1sg:1st person singular, and to noun classes, e.g.1-*mwana* ‘baby’; CLM: clause linkage marker; RCPST: recent past; NRFUT: near future; RMPST:remote past; IMPST:immediate past; MOD:modal; FV:final vowel; PFV:perfective; PFT:perfect; IM:interpretative marker; DC:discontinuous constituent; PRS:present; AM:assertive

(2) a) *Ma-a-ug-ir-e atĩ ma-kũ-inũka ũmũthĩ.*  
 3pl-RCPST-say-PFV-FV CLM 3pl-NRFUT-go.home-FV today  
 ‘They said that they would go home today.’

b) *Nj-ĩtĩk-ĩt-i-e atĩ no ma-hot-e gũ-teg-a*  
 1sg-believe-PFT-DC-FV CLMMOD 3pl-be.able-FV 15-catch-FV  
*ngware.*

10.guinea fowl

‘I believe (that) they can snare guinea fowls.’

c) *Nĩ nd-a-on-a atĩ nĩ mũ-Ø-rĩk-ir-i-e*  
 AM 1sg-IMPST-see-FV CLM AM 3pl-RCPST-finish-PFV-DC-FV  
*wĩra.*

14-work

‘I have seen that you finished the work.’

The subordinate clauses in (3a-b) are an infinitive clause and a complement clause, respectively. Both clauses lack aspect and tense markings. They differ in that (3a) has an infinitive prefix *kũ-*, but no person/subject marker, while (3b) has a 3<sup>rd</sup> person subject marker.

(3) a) *A-r-end-a atĩ kw-endi-a mũ-tĩ.*  
 3sg-PRS-want-FV CLM 15-sell-FV 3-tree  
 ‘S/he wants to sell a tree.’

b) *A-r-end-a atĩ e-endi-e mũ-tĩ.*  
 3sg-PRS-want-FV CLM 3sg-sell-FV 3-tree  
 ‘S/he wants that s/he sells a tree’.

The examples so far presented show the complementiser functions of *atĩ*, which is introducing dependent clauses. I have shown that it introduces finite clauses (2a-c) infinitive units (3a), and dependent subjunctive clauses (3b).

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marker; FM:focus marker; TM:topic marker; Q:question; IP:independent pronoun; OM:object marker; TNS:tense; COP:copula; AUD- auditory; EVD:evidential; APL:applicative; INT:interrogative; DM:discourse marker; DEM:demonstrative; QUOT:quotative; DUB:dubitative; FOC:focus; RP:reference phrase.

However, the purely syntactic functions of *atĩ* illustrated above do not represent all of its possible uses in Gĩkũyũ. In the sections that follow, additional functions of *atĩ*, beyond that of syntactic complementation, will be discussed, together with those of its related particles, *atĩrĩrĩ* and *atĩrĩ*.

#### 4. OTHER FUNCTIONS OF *ATĨ*

In addition to its complementation function, which is a purely syntactic, *atĩ* also serves as an evidential marker, as a dubitative and hearsay marker, and as a discourse filler.

##### 4.1 *Atĩ* as an evidential marker

Evidentiality is a notion that has been discussed by among others Chafe 1986; van Valin & LaPolla 1997; Aikhenvald 2004, Squartini 2007; and Brugman & Macaulay 2015. It refers to how the speaker came to have the information they are relaying in an utterance some languages have markers that show that what a speaker says, they may have witnessed it visually, auditorily, or they may have been told. In (4) below is an example from Koasati, a Muskogean language spoken in Louisiana and Texas, which has a morphological auditory suffix (*-ha*) that indicates that a speaker heard what she/he has reported (Kimball 1991: 207 cited in de Haan 2013: 1024).

- (4) *Nipó-k aksóhka-ha*  
 meat-SUBJ char- AUD

‘It sounds like the meat is charring.

The suffix *-ha* in (4) is an auditory evidential marker expressing the idea that the event described (charring of meat) was perceived through the sense of hearing. de Haan (2012: 1024) proposed two types of evidentials: direct and indirect evidentials. The former is used when the speaker witnessed the event first-hand, and the latter when the speaker was not present at the event or action. In that case, suffix *-ha* above is a direct evidential marker. The indirect evidentials comprise hearsay evidentials (also called quotatives)



and inferential evidentials. Hearsay evidentials are used when the speaker heard about the action or event from another source (de Haan 2012: 1025).

Aikhenvald (2004: 10) pointed out that not all languages have special grammatical markers for evidentiality as in Koasati. Languages without evidential morphological markers, and English is one of them, mark evidentiality with bi-clausal constructions. Such constructions have introductory clauses with complementation markers (e.g. *I heard that...*). Other languages which do not have either the morphological or bi-clausal constructions to mark evidentials may use “hearsay” particles, whereby the action reported may have been indirectly witnessed or inferred.

Similar to English, Gĩkũyũ lacks grammatical/morphological evidential markers such as those in Koasati; as there is no evidence of such a marker in the verb complex of both languages. However, for Gĩkũyũ, it can be argued that *atĩ* is used evidentially. Indeed, Aikhenvald (2004) wrote that evidentials may originate from complementisers, and this seems to be the case with the Gĩkũyũ *atĩ*, which has remained as both a complementiser and a hearsay marker to indicate evidentiality. This claim also finds support in Bybee (1985) who noted that quotatives may function as evidential markers, a claim that may also apply to both *atĩ* and *atĩĩĩĩ*.

In (5) below, the speaker does not want to appear as the source of the information relayed in the proposition. The use of *atĩ* as an evidential allows him/her to be non-committal on the truthfulness of the relayed information. *Atĩ*, which can be also be placed at the beginning of the sentence, allows the speaker to indicate that what she/he is saying was heard from elsewhere. In that case, this a case of indirect evidence.

- (5) *Ithe*                      *atĩ*            *a-a-me-er-ir-e*  
 1.father                    EVD        3sg-RMPST-3plOM-tell-PFV-FV  
*ma-ti-ka-na-mũ-gaĩ-ir-e*    *kĩ-nd ũ*.  
 3pl-NEG-PST-TNS-3sgOM-share- PFV-FV        7-thing.

‘Their father (is alleged to have) told them not to give him anything (from his estate).

As earlier mentioned, in an RRG analysis, evidentials (EVD) occur in the operator projection, where they modify the clause layer. When the scope of an operator is shared among units in a given layer, cosubordination is instantiated. The fact that two or more linked units in a given layer share or depend on at least one grammatical category (operator) they are said to be in a cosubordinate relationship. Therefore, there is nuclear cosubordination, core cosubordination, and clausal cosubordination. However, there is no sentential cosubordination, since there are no operators for the sentential layer.

The interpretation of *atī* in (5), which is represented in Figure 2, is that it has scope over the two clauses it precedes; unlike complementiser which is only associated to the clause it introduces. In Figure 2, note that because of its position, evidential (EVD) *atī* has scope on both clauses, which is indicated by the common clause layer at the bottom of the LSC, unlike the tense (TNS) operator which is different in both clauses, remote past and future respectively. In that case TNS is not shared between the linked clauses, and the same is seen for aspect (ASP) and negation (NEG) in the core, which appears in the second clause only.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Kihara (2017) for an analysis of cosubordination in Gikūyū complex sentences

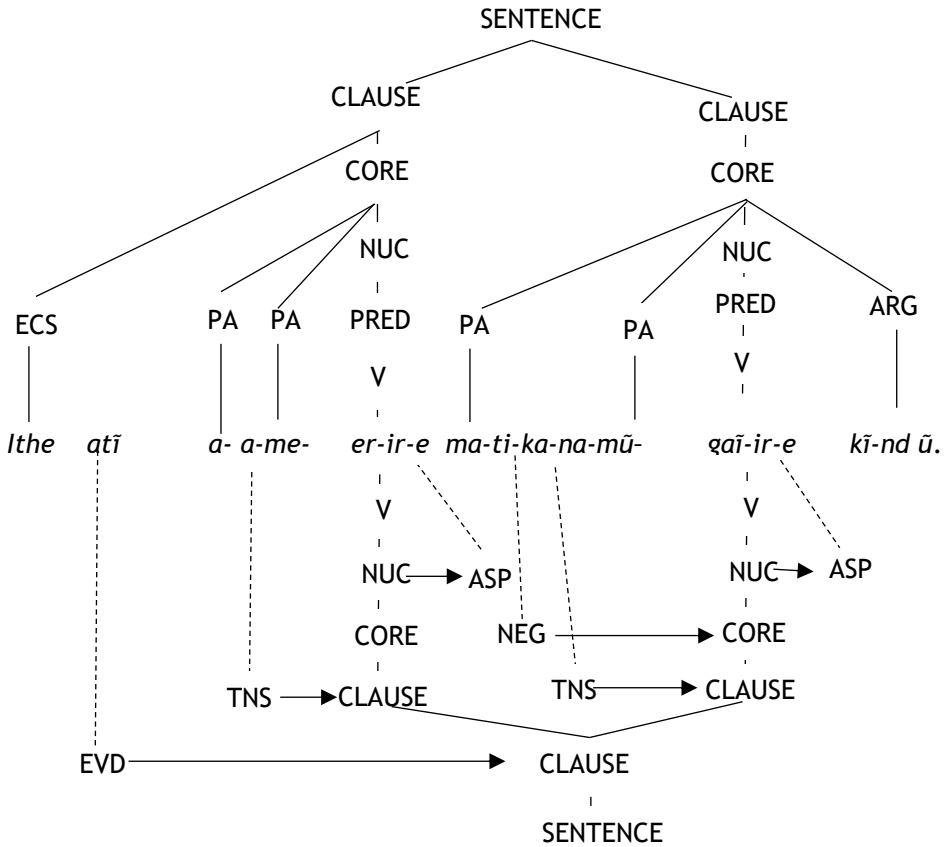


Figure 2: Clausal cosubordination

#### 4.2 *Atĩ* as a dubitative and hearsay marker

*Atĩ* might also be analysed as a dubitative and hearsay marker. According to Bybee (1985: 179ff), a dubitative marker expresses doubt as to whether a described event in a proposition occurred or will occur; or it may even be interpreted as mere hearsay. Itani (1998) wrote that Japanese has a colloquial complementiser that is also functions as a hearsay marker. The same complementiser contains an echoing and reporting meaning (see similar findings by Blass' (1990) on Sissala). The findings noted above are

very similar to what I am suggesting for complementisers *atī*, *atīrīrī* and *atīrī* in Gīkūyū.

In (6), *atī* refers to events that the speaker did not witness first-hand and which he/she is also quite doubtful about. In (6a), the speaker is non-committal about the relayed information, rendering the information as unreliable; he/she expects the listener to even correct his/her belief. It is also possible to place *atī* in (6a) at the beginning of a sentence, with the aim of showing that the speaker is non-committal or doubtful, and therefore ready for correction, if need be. In (6b), a complement clause headed by *atī* is introduced by *atīrīrī/atīrī*. Here *atī* has a dubitative role and not that of complementiser. It is the one that indicates the speaker's commitment to the truthfulness of the utterance.

- (6) a) *Ndī-ra-igu-ir-e*                      *atī*    *nī*    *ma-ra-cok-ir-e*  
 1sg-RCPST-hear-PFV-FV              DUB    AM    2-RCPST-return-PFV-FV  
*kw-ao.*  
 16-theirs  
 'I heard that they returned to their home.'
- b) *Ndī-ra-igu-ir-e*                      *atīrīrī/atīrī*,    *atī*    *nī*  
 1sg-RCPST-hear-PFV-FV              QUOT              CLM    AM  
*ma-ra-cok-ir-e*                      *kw-ao.*  
 3pl-RCPST-return-PFV-FV    16-theirs  
 'I heard that they returned to their home.'

### 4.3 *Atī* as an echoing/interpretive discourse particle<sup>8</sup>

Ordinarily, complementisers introduce a complement clause by setting it apart from a main clause (Ransom 1986; Noonan 2007). My contention, based on Frajzyngier (1995), is that *atī* in (7) below has an echoic interpretative function rather than complementiser function. This is attested by Mugane (1997) who notes that *kana* and *atī* can be used in echo questions (questions

<sup>8</sup> I use the terms "discourse particle" and "discourse marker" interchangeably.

involving repetition of the whole or part of a previously asked question), as in (7).

- (7) *Atĩ kana Kamau nĩ-a-ra-on-a?*  
 That whether Kamau fp-3sg-Pres-see-fv  
 ‘Is Kamau seeing?’ (Can Kamau see?)’ (Mugane 1997: 153)

In (7) it is evident that *atĩ* is much more than a complementiser, as it is odd for two complementisers, *atĩ* “that” and *kana* “whether”, to co-occur in a single sentence without any ungrammaticality. English, such a co-occurrence is ungrammatical in a language such as English. However, Frajzyngier (1995: 474) argued that in languages where complementisers co-occurred in a sentence, (e.g. in Dutch and Polish), the co-occurring complementisers had distinct functions. For example, one of them may indicate mood or modality and the other a speaker’s propositional attitude. I suggest that *atĩ* in (7) reflects a speaker’s propositional attitude, whereby she/he exhibits uncertainty.

The proposition in (8a) below is ‘echoed’ by the inclusion of *atĩ* in (8b). This discourse marker (DM) makes it an exclamative intonational question, either with the Wh-word or with *atĩ* alone. The proposition shows disbelief, on the speaker’s part, who is seeking confirmation whether what s/he heard is exactly what had been said. S/he does this by ‘echoing’ (8a), although the speech is not repeated.

- (8) a) *Baba a-ra-ug-a atĩ tũ -inũk-e ũmũ thĩ.*  
 1.father 3sg-PRS-say-FV CLM 1pl-go.home-FV today  
 ‘Father is saying/suggesting that we go home today.’

b) *Atĩ ?*

DM

‘What?’

c) *Atĩ baba a-ra-ug-a atĩ tũ -inũk-e ũmũthĩ?*

‘Is it true that father is saying/suggesting that we go home today?’

d) *Atĩ!*

As an echoic marker in (8d) *atĩ* indicates disbelief and apprehension. The hearer derives some inference from the context, about the new and

unexpected development contained in (8c), thus motivating the response in (8d). The response by the hearer/speaker in (8d) can be explained in reference to the notion of echoic interpretation proposed by Sperber & Wilson (1995: 289-290). When used echoically, *atī* is prosodically marked by a rising intonation at the end. Compared to the *atī* in (8b), the *atī* in (8d) has a falling intonation. The difference in intonation has to do with the fact that the speaker in (8b) expresses disbelief by way of a question, while the speaker of (8d) indicates shock and disbelief at the previous utterance, with “a-just-imagine” kind of attitude.

#### 4.4 *Atī* as a discourse filler

In their conversations, Gīkūyū speakers use *atī* as a “euphemistic filler”, especially when a speaker avoids direct or blunt mention of something, for example the mention of scatological allusions, as in (9a), or when his/her intention is to exclude hearers for whom the information is not intended, as in (9b). In both cases, *atī* replaces the unspoken/omitted information, which is *nī īrathuria*, “it is farting” for (9a), and whatever the speakers had agreed to do for (9b).

- (9) a) *Eheria ngui ī-no ha-ha nī ī-rek-a atī.*  
 Remove 9.dog 9-DEM 17-hereAM 9-do-FV DM  
 ‘Remove this dog from here, it is ... (doing something) ’
- b) *Ūmūth ī to-tū-ra-gī -ī k-a... atī?*  
 Today INT-2pl-PRS-still-do-FV DM  
 ‘Today are we still not doing ...(it)?’

The context of (10) is about somebody going to church and it is evident that he/she is late; and therefore his/her statement is ironical. It is equivalent to ‘Just imagine that I am going to church, this late!’ Although, *atī* may be placed clause-initial or -final, the function and effect remains the same.

- (10) *Atī nd-a-thie kanitha (atī)*  
 DM 1sg-PRS-go 9.church (DM)  
 ‘I am going to church.’

In the question-answer pair in (11), *atĩ* is used to seek confirmation or clarification about something a hearer may not have heard clearly.

- (11) SPEAKER A: *Atĩ w-a-nj- ĩr-a atĩa Kũi?*  
 DM 2sg-IMPST-1sgOM-tell-FV Q Kũi  
 ‘What have you told me, Kũi?’
- SPEAKER B: *Ĩĩ ma-cio maĩ ma-ku.*  
 DM 6-DEM 6-water 6-ASSOC  
 ‘There is your water.’

The question in (11) may be used echoically, when the speaker is pretending to have not heard correctly what has just been said to him/her, e.g. if he/she thinks that the speaker was rude. Speaker A dares Speaker B to repeat what he/she has said.

In the preceding sections, it has been shown that *atĩ* has more functions than just the complementiser function. It is demonstrated that it can function as an evidential marker, a dubitative/hearsay marker, an echoic/interpretative particle, and a discourse filler. Next, I will describe the functions of *atĩrĩrĩ* and *atĩrĩ*, related variants of *atĩ*.

#### 4.5 Functions of *Atĩrĩ* and *Atĩrĩrĩ*

*Atĩrĩrĩ* is so ubiquitous in the speech of the Gĩkũyũ people that speakers of other languages refer to them as the “*atĩrĩrĩ*” people” or “*mbarĩ ya atĩrĩrĩ*” ‘the family of *atĩrĩrĩ*’ (Armstrong 1967: 292).

Gĩkũyũ linguistic literature describes different functions of *atĩrĩrĩ* and *atĩrĩ*. For instance, Benson (1964: 18) says that *atĩrĩrĩ* is an interjection; Gecaga (1955: 112) notes that *atĩrĩrĩ* is used with a connotative meaning akin to: “I say” or “listen to me”. Elsewhere, it is suggested that *atĩrĩ* is a quotation-introducing particle (Bennett 1986: 70). Leakey (1978: 47) notes that *atĩ*, *atĩrĩrĩ* and *atĩrĩ* are ‘punctuation words’ that are used to break up sentences in a narrative. He added that because Gĩkũyũ lacked a long, written history, *atĩrĩrĩ* and *atĩrĩ* were used to open new paragraphs and sentences, while *rĩrĩ* and *-rĩ* served as a colon/semicolon and a comma

respectively. Whereas the claims above are valid and supported by data, I will add more functions and expound on some of those proposed above with more specific examples.

In the following sections, some functions of *atīrī* and *atīrīrī* are analysed, beginning with its purely syntactic function as a quotative.

#### 4.5.1 *Atīrī and Atīrīrī as quotative complementisers*

An analysis of quotative constructions should not rely on the syntactic parameter only according to Güldemann (2008: 224) and D’Arcy (2015: 48). On the contrary, it should consider their structure, their meaning and their interpretation based on context. It is such an analysis that is the most suitable for a discussion of *atīrī* and *atīrīrī* since it allows an analysis of the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features of such constructions.

Earlier I showed that *atī* can singularly introduce a complement clause (example 1). However, neither *atīrīrī* nor *atīrī* can introduce a complement clause alone as seen in (12b); both must be followed by *atī* as in (12a). Sentence (12b) can only be grammatical, if the introduced unit is a direct speech.

- (12) a) *A-a-ug-a atīrīrī, atī gū-ti-re mū-ndū*  
 3sg-IMPST-say-FV QUOT CLM 15-NEG-be 1-person  
*ū-ka-mū-thami-a hau.*  
 3sg-FUT-3sgOM-move-FV there

‘He said, that there is no one who would move him from there.’

- b) \**A-a-ug-a atīrīrī / atīrī gū-ti-re mū-ndū ū-ka-mū-thami-a hau.*

‘He said there was no person who would move him from there.’

When introducing indirect speech with the intention of quoting someone, *atīrīrī* precedes *atī* as in (12a). In speech, *atīrīrī* is normally followed by an intonational break, just before the complement clause. Whereas *atīrīrī* can be replaced with *atīrī*, neither of them can introduce a complement clause on its own without *atī*. Hence, both *atīrīrī* and *atīrī* are best analysed as quotatives rather than clausal complementisers, although they more or less share the function of introducing clauses with complementiser *atī*.



The examples in (13), from Gecaga (1955: 112) illustrate the complementiser function of *atĩĩ* and *atĩĩĩĩ* of introducing direct speech.

(13) a) *Nd-a-mw-ĩr-ir-e* *atĩĩ* “*Oka na i-timo*  
1sg-RMPST-3sgOM-tell-PFV-FV QUOT come COM 5-spear  
*rĩ-aku na ngo.*”

5-your and 9.shield

‘I said to him, “Bring your spear and shield.”’

b) *Ma-ra-nj-er-ir-e* *atĩĩĩĩ* “*Tw-e na*  
3pl-RCPST-1sgOM-tell-PFV-FV QUOT 1pl-have COM  
*ng‘aragu gũ-kũ ma-tuko ma-ya*”.

9-hunger 15-here 6-days

6-DEM

‘They told me, “We have a famine here now”.’

The examples in (13) shows that *atĩĩ* and *atĩĩĩĩ* introduce sentences akin to *atĩ*, except that *atĩĩ* and *atĩĩĩĩ* introduce direct speech, which *atĩ* cannot. That is one reason why *atĩĩ* above is described as a quotative complementiser, to differentiate it from the clausal complementiser *atĩ*.

With regard to the subordination, questions are normally asked as to whether direct speech units are the same as subordinate complement clauses. Payne (2006:295) notes that, “Direct speech complement clauses are always the most independent complement type in any language”. According to Kroeger (2005: 226), direct speech quotations, although they are embedded, are not grammatically analogous to complement clauses, since they exhibit a higher degree of independence. This is evident in the reported speech units in (13) which are independent clauses with independent illocutionary force; imperative for (13a) and declarative for (13b).

In addition, direct speech quotations may not be subject arguments in sentences, as is common for complement clauses (D’Arcy 2015: 47). Hengeveld (1998:336) views direct discourse units as forms of indirect subordination. Despite the different views, there agreement that direct speech quotations are form of subordinate units.

From an RRG perspective, direct speech quotations are considered as sentential subordination (van Valin 2005: 193). This follows from the fact that direct discourse complements are complete sentences since they have independent illocutionary force. Consequently, on the LSC a direct speech quotation is a direct daughter of the sentential node.

#### 4.5.2 *Atĩrĩrĩ and atĩrĩ as information structuring particles*

The association between prosodic prominence and focus exists in diverse languages. I earlier mentioned Leakey's (1978) suggestion that *atĩrĩrĩ* and *atĩrĩ* have a 'punctuation function' in Gĩkũyũ. I take this claim from here and suggest that the prosodic pause that co-occurs with *atĩrĩrĩ* or *atĩrĩ* has an information structuring function, based on the sentence in (14a) whose answer is in (14b).

- (14) a) *A-a-mũ-ĩr-ir-e* *atĩa ?*  
           3sg-RCPST-2plOM-tell-PFV-FV      Q  
           'What did s/he tell you?'  
       b) *A-a-tũ-ĩr-ir-e* *atĩrĩrĩ, ATĨ TŪ-KŪ-RIRIKANI-E*  
           3sg-RCPST-2pl-tell-PFV-FV CLM   CLM 2pl-2sgOM-remind-FV  
           ***MŪ-CEMANIO NĨ RŪCIO.***  
           4-meeting COP tomorrow  
           'He told us that, that we remind you that the meeting is  
           tomorrow.'

Focus as information structure unit is generally understood as new information that is of communicative interest since it is not recoverable from the discourse. In most languages focus is associated with some prosodic aspects such as lengthening, duration or stress. A unit in focus may be placed in a specific position in a sentence, depending on a language. The new information (focus) in (14b) is the answer is bolded part. It is preceded by or introduced by some duration, before the focused unit is presented. It is this lengthening that follows *atĩrĩrĩ*, that I am proposing has information structural purpose, specifically to introduce a focal element. It is worth noting that I am not suggesting that *atĩrĩrĩ* or *atĩrĩ* are focus markers in

Gĩkũyũ, the language has *nĩ* for that purpose (see Kihara 2017 and Bergvall 1987). On the contrary, I am proposing *atĩĩĩĩ* / *atĩĩ* help structure the flow of information in a sentence, including signalling the new information by way of duration and thereby creating a prosodic boundary between old presupposed information in the main clause and new information (focus) in the unit introduced by *atĩĩĩĩ* / *atĩĩ* in (14b) above.

#### 4.5.3 *Atĩĩĩĩ and atĩĩ as deictics*

I have already illustrated that *atĩĩĩĩ* and *atĩĩ* are quotatives (section 4.4.1). Elsewhere, Clark & Gerrig (1990) and Güldemann (2002, 2008) have illustrated instances of quotatives that have demonstrative or deictic functions. In this section, I discuss the deictic function *atĩĩĩĩ* / *atĩĩ*.

*Atĩĩĩĩ* in (15) has a deictic function. Here, the speaker may simply make a verbal suggestion, or he/she may go ahead to practically demonstrate it after the verbal suggestion is given. It is this ‘pointing’ feature that I am calling the deictic function, although it may be actualised or accompanied by a real (action) demonstration of the action.

(15) *ĩĩkaa-i atĩĩĩĩ enjaa-i mw-ena ũ-yũ.*  
do-IMP-pl DEM dig-IMP-pl 3-side 3-Dem

‘(You) do this, dig on this side.’

Example (16b) below illustrates the deictic function of *atĩĩĩĩ*. The demonstrative *ũũ*, ‘this way’, introduces an utterance in (16a) in much the same way that we have seen *atĩĩĩĩ* / *atĩĩ* do. My proposal here is that *ũũ* has a deictic function in (16a). Although *ũũ* can be replaced by *atĩĩĩĩ* or *atĩĩ* in (16a), both *atĩĩĩĩ* and *ũũ* cannot co-occur, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (16b). It is this complementary distribution that supports the claim that both morphemes have a deictic function.

(16) a) *Nd-a-ug-a ũũ mũ-ti-ga-thi-ĩ kũ-u.*  
1sg-PRS-say-FV DEM 3pl-NEG-TNS-go-FV 16-there

‘I have said this “do not go there”.’

b) \**Nd-a-ug-a ũũ atĩĩĩĩ/atĩĩ mũ-ti-ga-thi-ĩ kũ-u.*

‘I have said this “do not go there”.’

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper set out to describe complementiser *atĩ* and its related forms, *atĩrĩrĩ* and *atĩrĩ*. It has demonstrated that *atĩ* has a syntactic function of a complementiser, a semantic function of an evidential marker, dubitative/hearsay marker, and pragmatic functions of a discourse filler, and an echoic/interpretative particle. This paper has also discussed the functions of *atĩrĩrĩ* and *atĩrĩ*, related variants forms of *atĩ*. It has been that *atĩrĩrĩ* and *atĩrĩ*, have a syntactic complementiser (quotative) function of introducing direct (quotation) speech. In addition, these variants also used for discourse-pragmatics functions to structure information in sentences as well as deictic (demonstrative) particles as speech orienters.

In summary, the functions of these particles cut across the linguistic domains of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics and discourse in Gĩkũyũ. It is the position of this paper that limiting the analysis of particles such as *atĩ* and its variants *atĩrĩrĩ/atĩrĩ* to their syntactic functions, has a potential danger of failing to realize the interaction between the syntactic domain and other linguistic domains. Therefore, functional linguistic theories, such as RRG, in which syntax is not autonomous, can help in the analysis of the linguistic behaviour of particles such as *atĩ* and show how other domains such as semantics and pragmatics and discourse become involved. This paper suggests the need for more studies of such particles in Bantu languages, in order to describe their functions in grammars.

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