

Chapter 5

The expression of information structure in Kirundi

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This chapter reports on different linguistic means used in Kirundi to construct informational units in a sentence. We demonstrate that information structure has a fundamental influence on the morphosyntax of Kirundi. Information structure determines the word order to a large degree, with the requirements for topics in the preverbal domain and a final focus position leading to a range of subject inversion constructions. It can also influence the verbal inflection, particularly in verb forms distinguishing the conjoint/disjoint alternation. Other linguistic phenomena linked to information structure such as predicate doubling, the agreeing particle *-ó* as a topic marker and copular constructions (clefts, pseudoclefts and reverse pseudoclefts) pinpointing the focus interpretation are also described in this chapter.

1 Introduction

Kirundi is a Bantu language spoken in Burundi in the Great Lakes region of central and eastern Africa. In Guthrie's (1948) referential classification, updated by Maho (2009), Kirundi is JD62, and it has ISO code [run]. Its speakers are estimated to be over 11 million in Burundi, where it has the status of national and official language according to Article 5 of the National Constitution dated 7 June 2018. The country's second official language is French. Kirundi is mutually intelligible with a number of neighbouring languages, most importantly Kinyarwanda (JD61), but also some languages spoken in the regions of Tanzania bordering Burundi, such as Kiha (JD66) spoken in Buha (south of Kirundi), Kihangaza (JD65) and Kishubi (JD64) in Bushubi (north-east). Kirundi is also close to Kivinza (JD67), spoken in Uvinza in Tanzania, south of Buha.



The current chapter mainly draws on Nshemezimana (2016), referring to other work on Kirundi where appropriate, and also drawing on the BantUgent monolingual corpus of Kirundi. Further data come from the first author as a native speaker, whose data for the BaSIS project have been stored in an Online Language Database via Dative, which is to be archived in The Language Archive. Examples created based on corpus examples are indicated as “derived”.

While word order (Morimoto 1999, 2006, Bukuru 2003), the conjoint/disjoint alternation (Ndayiragije 1999, Sabimana 1986, Nshemezimana & Bostoen 2017), and clefts (Lafkioui et al. 2016) have been described and analysed before, the phenomena of predicate doubling and the marker *-ó* are newly described here. We follow the Kirundi orthography (Ntahokaja 1994). The tone marking in this chapter follows the Kirundi tradition started by Meeussen (1959) and does not (necessarily) represent surface tones.

The aim of the chapter is to provide an overview of the different linguistic means that Kirundi uses to structure information in a sentence. Specifically, the conjoint/disjoint alternation is recapitulated in Section 2; we discuss word order, including the relatively large array of subject inversion constructions, in Section 3; predicate doubling is described in Section 4; Section 5 describes the function of the marker *-ó* as a contrastive topic marker; and Section 6 discusses four types of copular constructions, including clefts and pseudoclefts. For further explanation on general terms in information structure we refer to van der Wal et al. (2025 [this volume]).

2 Conjoint and disjoint verb forms

Like many other eastern and southern Bantu languages, Kirundi has certain conjugations with two forms, the conjoint and the disjoint. These terms were coined for Kirundi by Meeussen (1959: 215–216) to express the relation between the verb and the following element as together (French *conjoint*) or separated (French *disjoint*). The alternation has been linked to differences in information structure, with conjoint (cj) expressing focus on a constituent following the verb, and disjoint (dj) associated with predicate-centred focus (see van der Wal & Hyman 2017 for an overview). Nshemezimana (2016) and Nshemezimana & Bostoen (2017) provide a detailed corpus-based analysis of the alternation and its connection with information structure, which we summarise here, and add to.

Key to the conjoint/disjoint alternation is the fact that the conjoint verb form cannot appear clause-finally (i.e. some element has to follow), and there is a direct or indirect relation with information structure (van der Wal 2017: 15). In Kirundi,

the alternation is directly dependent on information structure, as Ndayiragije (1999), Bukuru (2003), and Nshemezimana & Bostoen (2017) show, and as we also discuss below.

The alternation can be found in three conjugations in Kirundi: the present, near past, and remote past. We illustrate each below. In all tenses, the CJ form is never constituent-final, and in the present and near past tense, it loses a lexical H tone if it has one. The DJ form retains a possible lexical H, and is marked by a prefix *-ra-* in the present and remote past, and by *-a-* in the near past.

(1) Present (Nshemezimana 2016: 79, 80, and derived)

- a. CJ Nkomeza-magúfa ifasha *(umutíma waawe).
n-komer-i-a ma-gúfa i-Ø-fásh-a u-mu-tíma
9-be.strong-CAUS-FV 6-bone 9SM-PRS.CJ-help-FV AUG-3-heart
u-awe
3-POSS.2SG
‘Carbohydrates help your heart.’ (corpus UGhent)
- b. DJ Nkomeza-magúfa irafasha.
n-komer-i-a ma-gúfa i-ra-fásh-a
9-be.strong-CAUS-FV 6-bone 9SM-PRS.DJ-help-FV
‘Carbohydrates help.’ (derived)

(2) Near past (Nshemezimana 2016: 79, 80, and derived)

- a. CJ Ma, nabonye *(Bikíra Mariyá) ...
ma n-a-Ø-bón-ye Bikíra Mariyá
mother 1SG.SM-N.PST-CJ-see-PFV virgin Mary
‘Mother, I’ve seen the Virgin Mary!’ (derived)
- b. DJ Ma, naabóonye Bikíra Mariyá ...
ma n-a-a-bón-ye Bikíra Mariyá
mother 1SG.SM-N.PST-DJ-see-PFV virgin Mary
‘Mother, I’ve seen the Virgin Mary!’ (corpus of BantUgent)
- c. CJ *Namuboonye.
n-a-Ø-mu-bón-ye
1SG.SM-N.PST-CJ-1OM-see-PFV
‘I’ve seen her.’ (derived)
- d. DJ Naamubóonye.
n-a-a-bón-ye
1SG.SM-N.PST-DJ-1OM-see-PFV
‘I’ve seen her.’ (derived)

(3) Remote past (Nshemezimana 2016: 79, 80, and derived)

- a. CJ ... yatéeye *(akáamo abanyeepolitiíke) ...
a-á-Ø-teer-ye a-ka-áamo a-ba-nyeepolitiíke
1SM-RMT.PST-CJ-throw-PFV AUG-12-call AUG-2-politician
‘...he has appealed to the politicians....’ (corpus UGhent)
- b. DJ ... yaráteeye akáamo abéenegíhugu bó mu Kirundo.
a-á-ra-téer-ye a-ka-áamo a-ba-éenegíhugu ba-ó
1SM-RMT.PST-DJ-throw-PFV AUG-12-call AUG-2-inhabitant 2-CONN
mu Kirundo
18 Kirundo
‘...he has appealed to the inhabitants of Kirundo.’ (corpus UGhent)
- c. DJ Yarágateeye.
a-á-ra-ka-téer-ye
1SM-RMT.PST-DJ-12OM-throw-PFV
‘He has thrown it.’ / ‘He has appealed.’ (derived)

The fact that the DJ form can be followed by a non-dislocated object or adjunct already shows that the alternation is not determined by constituency, as Nshemezimana & Bostoen (2017) and Nshemezimana (2016) also argue.

Nshemezimana & Bostoen (2017: 397) add that the potential and subsecutive conjugation also show the tonal effects with H-toned verbs, and show that the alternation is not present in negative and relative conjugations (in line with the tendencies in other languages, see van der Wal 2017). They summarise the marking as in Table 1.

Table 1: Conjoint and disjoint verb forms (Nshemezimana & Bostoen 2017: 397)

conjugation	TAM-marker	disjoint	conjoint
present	-Ø-	-ra- /+lexical H	-Ø- /-lexical H
near past	-a-	-a- /+lexical H	-Ø- /-lexical H
remote past	-á-	-ra- /+lexical H	-Ø- /-lexical H
potential	-oo-	-Ø- /+lexical H	-Ø- /-lexical H
subsecutive	-ka-	-Ø- /+lexical H	-Ø- /-lexical H

Nshemezimana & Bostoen propose that the DJ marker *a-/ra-* should be analysed as a marker of “event focus” (predicate-centred focus), and moreover that

the cj form is the default, without any focus function (cf. Ndayiragije's 1999 analysis of *a-/ra-* as an antifocus marker). However, further details from introspective tests by Ernest Nshemezimana reveal that this cannot be the whole story. If the cj form is unmarked in form and function, the incompatibility with idioms and postverbal NPs modified by 'even' is unexpected. These instead require a dj form – with the cj form, the idiomatic reading is lost (4) or the sentence becomes ungrammatical (5). In these sentences, the focus is clearly not on the event.

(4) Parts of idioms cannot follow the cj form

- a. DJ Turafáshe imbwá amabóko.
 tu-ra-fát-iyé i-n-bwá a-ma-bóko
 1PL.SM-DJ-hold-PFV AUG-9-dog AUG-6-arm
 'We really landed ourselves in a nasty situation.'
 lit. 'We have held the dog by the arms.'
- b. CJ Dufashe imbwá amabóko.
 tu-Ø-fát-iyé i-n-bwá a-ma-bóko
 1PL.SM-CJ-hold-PFV AUG-9-dog AUG-6-arm
 'We have held the dog by the arms.'
 *'We really landed ourselves in a nasty situation.'

(5) Objects modified by 'even' cannot follow the cj form

Yohana ararya/*arya ndetse na ifi.
 Yohana a-ra-ri-a/a-ri-a ndetse na i-fi
 1.John 1SM-PRS.DJ-eat-fv/1SM-eat-FV even and AUG-9.fish
 'John eats even fish.'

Furthermore, a cognate object is only accepted when modified to become specific (6), and the same goes for the word *umuntu* 'person' after a cj form: it either needs to be specified in order to be grammatical, or else it is interpreted as generic, as opposed to the corresponding dj form which freely accepts an indefinite reading. This too would be unexpected if the cj form were an information-structurally neutral form.

(6) Cognate objects cannot as such follow the cj form

- a. DJ Naaróose indóoto.
 N-a-a-róot-ye i-n-róoto
 1SG.SM-N.PST-DJ-dream-PFV AUG-9-dream
 'I dreamt a dream.'

- b. CJ Naroose indóoto *(zitari nziiza).
 N-a-Ø-róot-ye i-n-róoto zi-ta-ri
 1SG.SM-N.PST-CJ-dream-PFV AUG-10-dream 10SM-NEG-be.REL
 n-ziiza
 10-good
 ‘I dreamt dreams *(that were not pleasant).’
- (7) Indefinite non-specific cannot as such follow the CJ form
- a. CJ Twaboonye umuntu *(yambaye nk’ umusazi).
 tu-a-Ø-bón-ye u-mu-ntu a-ambar-ye^H
 1PL.SM-N.PST-CJ-see-PFV AUG-1-person 1SM-get.dressed-PFV.REL
 nka u-mu-sazi
 like AUG-1-fool ‘We saw someone *(dressed like a fool).’
 ‘We saw a human being.’
- b. DJ Twaabóonye umuntu.
 u-a-a-bón-ye u-mu-ntu
 1PL.SM-N.PST-DJ-see-PFV AUG-1-person
 ‘We saw someone.’

This suggests that there is more at hand than the CJ form as a neutral form, specifically that some alternatives must be available (and possibly excluded) for the focused referent after a CJ form. The exclusion of alternatives would explain the incompatibility of NPs with ‘even’, as these do not allow exclusion: with ‘even’, the predicate is true for all alternatives, even the least likely one. A constituent modified by ‘even’ cannot follow the CJ form if this requires exclusion of alternatives for the following constituent. The generic and the modified interpretation of the indefinite *umuntu* ‘person’ also follows, as these are the two interpretations that allow for exclusion of alternatives: unlike the indefinite non-specific interpretation ‘someone’ (which does not exclude anyone), a person dressed like a fool excludes everyone not dressed as a fool, and ‘human being’ excludes the alternatives of cats, chickens, etc. For the same reason, exclusive focus on the element following the CJ verb form also predicts incompatibility with the universal quantifier ‘all’. As shown in (8b), this is not directly ungrammatical in Kirundi, but the context shows that a contrast is interpreted with another set, thus allowing exclusion: all the sweet potatoes but not (all) the beans.

(8) Compatibility with universal quantifier

- a. (Context: Two children are supposed to share the potatoes. The first child comes in and eats all the food; when the second child comes in, s/he complains. The parent asks ‘What happened?’)

DJ Yaariye vya ibijumbu vyóóse.

a-a-a-ri-ye bi-a i-bi-jumbu bi-óóse

1SM-N.PST-DJ-eat-PFV 8-DEM₅ AUG-8-sweet.potato 8-all

‘S/he has eaten all the sweet potatoes.’

- b. (Two children are supposed to share the food. The first child comes in and eats more than s/he should; when the second child comes in, s/he complains. The parent asks ‘What is left?’)

CJ Yariye ibijumbu vyóóse, asigaza ibiharage (gusa).

a-a-Ø-ri-ye i-bi-jumbu bi-óóse a-sigaz-a

1SM-N.PST-CJ-eat-PFV AUG-8-sweet.potato 8-all 1SM-leave-FV

i-bi-harage gusa

AUG-8-beans only

‘S/he has eaten all the sweet potatoes, s/he left the beans (only).’

While these diagnostics thus suggest an interpretation of exclusive focus after the cj form, the following test shows that this cannot be *exhaustive* focus. The theoretical difference is that for exclusivity at least *some* alternatives must be excluded, while for exhaustivity *all* alternatives are excluded. Correcting an incomplete assertion with a cj form cannot start with ‘no’, as shown in (9). This shows that the negation cannot apply to the hypothesised exhaustivity in the question: the negation can only apply to the truth of the statement, and since it is true that you drank milk (even though that is not the complete truth), this cannot be denied. From this answer, we deduce that there is no such exhaustivity present in the question, that is, the focus expressed by the cj form cannot be exhaustive, i.e. the question in (9) with the conjoint form is not interpreted as ‘Did you drink only milk?’. This differs from when the question contains an explicit exhaustive marker ‘only’ as in (10), in which case ‘no’ in the answer denies the exhaustivity: it is not exhaustively milk that I drank.

(9) Q.CJ: Mbega wanyooye amata?

mbega u-a-Ø-nyo-ye a-ma-ta

Q 2SG.SM-N.PST-CJ-drink-PFV AUG-6-milk

‘Did you drink milk?’

A: Ego/#Oya, n'ifanta nayinyóoye.
 ego/oya ni i-fanta N-a-nyó-ye^H
 yes/no COP AUG-9.fanta 1SG.SM-N.PST-drink-PFV.REL
 'Yes/#No, I also drank Fanta.'

(10) Q.CJ: Mbega wanyooye amata gusa?
 mbega u-a-Ø-nyó-ye a-ma-ta gusa
 Q 2SG.SM-N.PST-CJ-drink-PFV AUG-6-milk only
 'Did you drink only milk?'

A: Oya/#Ego, n'ifanta nayinyóoye.
 oya/ego na i-fanta N-a-a-yi-nyó-ye
 no/yes also AUG-9.fanta 1SG.SM-N.PST-DJ-9OM-drink-PFV
 'No/#Yes, I also drank Fanta.'

An exclusive (even if not exhaustive) interpretation also predicts that the cj form will be incompatible with a context in which there are multiple correct answers. In such a "mention some" context, either form is acceptable in Kirundi, but crucially, adding 'for example' throws off the cj form, as in (11a).

- (11) (What do tourists in Burundi typically do?)
- a. CJ Bagenda kuri Tanganyika (#nk' akakorero).
 ba-Ø-gend-a kuri Tanganyika nka a-ka-korero
 2SM-PRS.CJ-walk-FV 17 Tanganyika like AUG-12-example
 'They visit Tanganyika (#for example).'
 - b. DJ Baragenda kuri Tanganyika (nk' akakorero).
 ba-ra-gend-a kuri Tanganyika nka a-ka-korero
 2SM-PRS.DJ-walk-FV 17 Tanganyika like AUG-12-example
 'They visit Tanganyika, for example.'

These data suggest an analysis in which the cj form triggers alternatives for the postverbal (clause-final, see Section 3.2.1) constituent. This analysis also explains the well-known restriction that postverbal question words, which are inherently focused, require the cj form (12), as do contrasted NPs, and NPs modified by 'only' (13).

(12) A(*ra)kora iki?
 a-ra-kór-a ikí
 1SM-PRS.DJ-do-FV what
 'What does s/he do?'

- (13) Aríko ya(*ra)vyáara abakoóbwa gusa.
 ariko a-á-(ra-)vyáar-a a-ba-koóbwa gusa
 but 1SM-RMT.PST-(DJ-)give.birth-FV AUG-2-girl only
 ‘But she gave birth to girls only.’
 (Nshemezimana & Bostoen 2017: 403)

We thus propose a characterisation of the CJ form not as a default but as a form triggering alternatives for a postverbal constituent. This in turn suggests a characterisation of the DJ form as triggering an alternative set NOT for a postverbal constituent. This negative characterisation is in line with its underspecified interpretation: the DJ form is used for different types of predicate-centred focus (Güldemann 2010), specifically TAM focus, verum, and state-of-affairs focus (see extensive argumentation in Nshemezimana & Bostoen 2017). It is also used inthetic inversion constructions such as (14), where the main motivation is the detopicalisation of the logical subject (see further Section 3.2.2). If any alternatives are generated, then they concern the whole assertion – Lambrecht’s (1994) “sentence focus”. Crucially, the CJ form in subject inversion, if possible, expresses focus on the postverbal logical subject, as in (14b).

- (14) a. (Context: Reporting what you saw at the neighbour’s to someone who was not there.)
 DJ Harapfuuye impené.
 ha-ra-pfú-ye i-n-hené
 16SM-DJ-die-PFV AUG-9-goat
 ‘A/the goat has died.’
 b. (Context: Reporting what happened to someone who, hearing that an animal in his neighbour’s herd has just died, wants to know which animal it is.)
 CJ Hapfuuye impené.
 ha-Ø-pfú-ye i-n-hené
 16SM-CJ-die-PFV AUG-9-goat
 ‘A/the goat has died.’

Nshemezimana & Bostoen (2017) mention that there is one context in which the choice of verb form is “up to the speaker” and no systematic difference in interpretation can be found. This is in environments for VP focus (Lambrecht’s predicate focus). Nevertheless, in specific examples we can detect a difference between VP focus with a CJ or with a DJ form. In (15), the CJ form suggests that

washing dishes is what s/he did, possibly to the exclusion of doing other things, whereas the DJ form has a more casual interpretation, suggesting other activities were also performed.

(15) (*Yakora iki?* ‘What did s/he do?’)

- a. CJ Yooza ivyombo.
a-á-Ø-óoz-a i-bi-ombo
1SM-RMT.PST-CJ-wash-FV AUG-8-dishes
‘S/he washed dishes.’ (habitually)
- b. DJ Yarooza ivyombo.
a-á-ra-óoz-a i-bi-ombo
1SM-RMT.PST-DJ-wash-FV AUG-8-dishes
‘S/he washed dishes.’ (sometimes, and sometimes s/he went to work on the land)

These new data thus help us to understand that the CJ form is not the unmarked “elsewhere” form that Nshemezimana & Bostoen (2017) propose it to be, but triggers alternatives on the element following the CJ verb form. This generalisation holds in those environments where the DJ form is grammatically also possible, were it not for the context. This excludes relative and negative conjugations, for example, as these do not show an alternation but only allow one form (formally equal to the CJ form). In line with Nshemezimana & Bostoen (2017), we conclude that the CJ/DJ alternation in Kirundi is directly affected by information structure, unlike in neighbouring Kinyarwanda, which Ngoboka & Zeller (2017) analyse as constituent-based.

3 Word order

Word order in Kirundi is largely determined by information structure. The pre-verbal domain is restricted to non-focal elements and highly preferred for topical elements, whereas the postverbal domain is characterised as non-topical, with the clause-final position reserved for focus. Example (16) illustrates that it is the clause-final constituent that is in focus.

- (16) a. Nya muvyéeyi yaheereye amata abáana mu nzu.
nya mu-vyéeyi a-a-Ø-há-ir-ye a-ma-tá
1.DEM₇ 1-mother 1SM-N.PST-CJ-give-APPL-PFV AUG-6-milk
a-bá-ana mu n-zu
AUG-2-child 18 9-house
‘The mother (that we were talking about) gave milk to the children in [the *house*]_{FOC} (not outside).’

- b. Nya muvyéeyi yaheereye abáana mu nzu amatá.
 nya mu-vyéeyi a-a-Ø-há-ir-ye a-ba-áana mu
 1.DEM₇ 1-mother 1SM-N.PST-CJ-give-APPL-PFV AUG-2-child 18
 n-zu a-ma-tá
 9-house AUG-6-milk
 ‘The mother (that we were talking about) gave [the *milk*]_{FOC} (not the bread) to the children in the house.’
- c. Nya muvyéeyi yaheereye amatá mu nzu abáana.
 nya mu-vyéeyi a-a-Ø-há-ir-ye a-ma-tá mu
 1.DEM₇ 1-mother 1SM-N.PST-CJ-give-APPL-PFV AUG-6-milk 18
 n-zu a-ba-áana
 9-house AUG-2-child
 ‘The mother (that we were talking about) gave the milk to [the *children*]_{FOC} (not the husband) in the house.’

We discuss the interpretational restrictions and preferences for the preverbal and postverbal domain subsequently, paying special attention to sentence-final focus (Section 3.2.1) and subject inversion constructions (Section 3.2.2).

3.1 Preverbal domain

As in other Bantu languages (see Zerbian 2006, Yoneda 2011, van der Wal 2009 among others), in Kirundi there is a ban on focus in a preverbal position, as shown for content question words in (17a) and (18a) and elements modified by ‘only’ in (19a) and (20a).¹ Instead, the focused element occurs postverbally, or in a cleft construction. The postverbal focus is illustrated in (18b) and (20b) for objects, and in the subject inversion construction in (17c) and (18) (see further in Section 3.2 on subject inversion). Example (17b) illustrates a clefted subject (see Section 6 on clefts). We do not illustrate all the possible grammatical versions but refer to the relevant sections – for now, the take-away point is that focus may not occur preverbally.

- (17) a. * Ndé yiinjíye/ariinjiye?
 ndé a-Ø-íinjir-ye / a-Ø-ra-íinjir-ye
 1.who 1SM-PRS-come.in-PFV / 1SM-PRS-DJ-come.in-PFV
 int. ‘Who comes in?’

¹Content questions and their answers are inherently focused, and the particle ‘only’ is an exhaustive focus-sensitive particle, which therefore modifies a focused element. As described in van der Wal et al. (2025 [this volume]), these are used as diagnostics for focus.

- b. Ni ndé asohotse? [cleft]
 ni ndé a-Ø-sohok-ye^H
 COP 1.who 1SM-PRS-go.out-PFV.REL
 ‘Who (is the one who) goes out?’
- c. Haje ndé? [subject inversion]
 ha-Ø-əz-ye ndé
 EXP-PRS.CJ-come-PFV who
 ‘Who comes?’
- (18) a. * Iki u-a-bón-ye? / u-a-a-bón-ye
 what 2SG.SM-N.PST-see-PFV / 2SG.SM-N.PST-DJ-see-PFV
 int. ‘What did you see?’
- b. Wabonye iki?
 u-a-Ø-bón-ye iki?
 2SG.SM-N.PST-CJ-see-PFV what?
 ‘What did you see?’
- (19) a. * Abagabo babiri gusa barasohotse.
 abagabo babiri gusa ba-ra-sohok-ye
 2.man 2.two only 2SM-PRS.DJ-go.out-PFV
 Int: ‘Only two men went out.’
- b. Hasohotse abagabo babiri gusa. [subject inversion]
 ha-Ø-sohok-ye abagabo babiri gusa
 EXP-PRS.CJ-go.out-PFV 2.man 2.two only
 ‘Only two men go out.’
- (20) a. * Imbwá gusa naabónye.
 imbwa gusa N-a-a-bón-ye
 9.dog only 1SG.SM-N.PST-DJ-see-PFV
 int. ‘I saw only a dog.’
- b. Naabónye imbwá gusa.
 N-a-Ø-bón-ye imbwa gusa
 1SG.SM-N.PST-CJ-see-PFV 9.dog only
 int. ‘I saw only a dog.’

The preference for topics to occur preverbally can be seen in left-dislocated arguments, such as *abaana* ‘the children’ in (21a) and frame-setting elements like *harya* ‘there’ in (21b), both given in the context. (See van der Wal et al. 2025 [this

volume] for further background on the different types of topics.) The expression of shift topics remains to be examined.

(21) (Where were you taking the kids to this morning?)

- a. Abáana, twaari túbajanye kw'ishuúre.
a-ba-áana tu-a-ri tu-ba-gi-an-ye kw'
AUG-2-child 1PL.SM-N.PST-be 1PL.SM-2OM-go-ASS-PFV 17
i-shuúre
AUG-5.school
'The kids, we were taking them to school.'
- b. Harya twaari túbajanye kw'ishuúre.
ha-rya tu-a-ri tu-ba-gi-an-ye kw' i-shuúre
16-DEM₃ 1PL.SM-N.PST-be 1PL.SM-2OM-go-ASS-PFV 17 AUG-5.school
'There (where you saw me) we were taking them to school.'

It is also possible for multiple topic expressions to occur preverbally, either specifying ever smaller subsets, for example of location in (22a), or narrowing down the referent by intersection of time and place, as in (22b).

(22) (Context: The journalist gives information in a radio broadcast.)

- a. I Ngozi, muri zone Mwumba, ku musozi Karungura, hariho umuvyeyi yibáarutse ubushuuri.
i Ngozi muri zone Mwumba ku mu-sozi Karungura ha-Ø-ri=hó
19 Ngozi 18 5.area Mwumba 17 3-hill Karungura EXP-PRS-be=16
u-mu-vyeyi a-a-íibáaruk-ye^H u-bu-shuuri
AUG-1-mother 1SM-N.PST-give.birth-PFV.REL AUG-14-triplet
'In Ngozi, in the Mwumba area, on Karungura hill, there is a mother who gave birth to triplets.'
- b. Ku mugórooba w'eéjo, i Ngozi, hariho umuvyeyi yibáarutse ubushuuri.
ku mu-górooba u-a ejó i Ngozi ha-Ø-ri=hó
17 3-evening 3-CONN yesterday 19 Ngozi EXP-PRS-be=16
u-mu-vyeyi a-a-íibáaruk-ye^H u-bu-shuuri
AUG-1-mother 1SM-N.PST-give.birth-PFV.REL AUG-14-triplet
'Yesterday evening, in Ngozi, there is a mother who gave birth to triplets.'

Multiple active participants may also be expressed as preverbal full NPs or pronouns, illustrated in (23). Note that when both topical referents are expressed pronominally, the first referent can be analysed as an aboutness topic (indicating to the addressee which referent the following information is about), and the second is interpreted as a contrastive topic (i.e. an identifiable typically given referent that is contrasted with another given referent), as shown in (23b–23c).

- (23) (Context: Reaction to the question asking whether the dogs normally like (eating) sweet potatoes.)

a. Imbwá, ibijumbu, zirabíkunda.

i-n-bwa i-bi-jumbu zi-ra-bi-kúund-a
AUG-10-dog AUG-8-sweet.potato 10SM-PRS.DJ-8OM-like-FV
'Dogs, the sweet potatoes, they like them.'

b. Zó, vyó, zirabikunda.

zi-ó bi-ó zi-ra-bi-kúund-a
10-PRO 8-PRO 10SM-PRS.DJ-8OM-like-FV
'Them (dogs), as for as them (sweet potatoes), they like them.' (but not the beans)

c. Vyó, zó, zirabikunda.

bi-ó zi-ó zi-ra-bi-kúund-a
8-PRO 10-PRO 10SM-PRS.DJ-8OM-like-FV
'Them (sweet potatoes), as for as them (dogs), they like them.' (but the cat doesn't)

However, it is also possible for non-topical subjects to occur preverbally, as illustrated in (24) and (25). These examples show that indefinite non-specific subjects, which cannot function as topics, can occupy a preverbal position.

- (24) (Why are the people shouting?)

Umuntu arapfúye.
u-mu-ntu a-ra-pfú-ye
AUG-1-person 1SM-PRS.DJ-die-PFV
'Someone has (just) died.'

- (25) (Context: Reaction to seeing the milk spilled on the floor.)

Umuntu yaasheeshe amatá.
u-mu-ntu a-a-sees-ye a-ma-tá
AUG-1-person 1SM-N.PST.DJ-pour-PFV AUG-6-milk
'Someone poured the milk.'

In summary, the preverbal domain may not be occupied by focused constituents, and is preferred for topics, which may be contrastive. Nevertheless, the preverbal domain cannot be characterised as only topical, since indefinite non-specific subjects may also appear preverbally.

3.2 Postverbal domain

The verb phrase typically functions as the comment to the preverbal topic. The whole VP can form the focus, as in the storyline in (26) or with the cognate object in (27), or the focus can be only one constituent within the comment, which appears in clause-final position (on which more in Section 3.2.1).

- (26) Baratérama, [barasoma akúuki]_{FOC}...
 ba-ra-teram-a ba-ra-som-a a-ka-úuki...
 2SM-DJ-rest-FV 2SM-DJ-drink-FV AUG-12-honey.drink
 ‘They rested and drank the honey drink, ...’
- (27) (Context: Having arrived in class, a teacher finds that the students have not yet done the homework s/he left them the day before and asks them the following:)
- Q: None ejó mwaákoze ikí?
 none ejó mu-á-Ø-kór-ye ikí
 then yesterday 2PL.SM-RMT.PST-CJ-do-PFV what
 ‘What did you do yesterday then?’
- A: Twaáraririmvye indirimbo.
 tu-á-ra-ririmvye i-n-ririmbo
 1PL.SM-RMT.PST-DJ-sing-PFV AUG-10-song
 ‘We sang songs.’

As in other languages, the right periphery of the sentence can also host a right-dislocated element, interpreted as an afterthought, like *iyo mbwa* ‘that dog’ in (28).

- (28) Duhejeje kuyigaburira, iyo mbwá.
 tu-Ø-hez-ye ku-yi-gaburira i-i-o n-bwá.
 1PL.SM-PRS.CJ-finish-PFV 15-9OM-feed AUG-9-DEM₂ 9-dog
 ‘We just fed it, that dog.’

Material that is neither topical nor focal can also appear in the postverbal domain. This is typically the case for subject inversion constructions, discussed and further illustrated in Section 3.2.2. The postverbal domain thus hosts non-topical information, and this may be focal, but only in clause-final position, as shown in the next section.

3.2.1 Sentence-final focus

Focused elements appear in sentence-final position or in a cleft construction. The clefts are presented in Section 6, and here we discuss the clause-final focus position. This position, as identified by Sabimana (1986) and Ndayiragije (1999), is shown for Theme and Recipient arguments of ditransitive verbs in the following examples: content questions in (29a) and (30a), answers to those questions in (31) and (32), and arguments modified by the exhaustive focus-sensitive particle ‘only’ in (33) and (34a). In each example we see that the focused element (the question word, answer, or constituent modified by ‘only’) must appear as the second of the two objects, in the clause-final focus position.

- (29) a. CJ Uhaaye umwáana iki?
u-Ø-há-ye u-mw-áana ikí?
2SG.SM-PRS-give-PFV AUG-1-child what
‘What have you given to the child?’
b. CJ *U-Ø-há-ye ikí u-mw-áana?
2SG.SM-PRS-give-PFV what AUG-1-child
- (30) a. CJ Uhaaye ikijumbu ndé?
u-Ø-há-ye i-ki-jumbu ndé?
2SG.SM-PRS-give-PFV AUG-7-sweet.potato who
‘Who do you give a sweet potato?’
b. CJ *U-Ø-há-ye ndé i-ki-jumbu?
2SG.SM-PRS-give-PFV who AUG-7-sweet.potato
- (31) (What do you give to the child ?)
a. CJ Mpaaye umwáana ikijumbu.
N-Ø-há-ye u-mw-áana i-ki-jumbu.
1SG.SM-PRS.CJ-give-PFV AUG-1-child AUG-7-sweet.potato
‘I give the child a sweet potato.’

- b. CJ Ndamuhaaye ikijumbu.
 N.ra-Ø-mu-ha-ye i-ki-jumbu.
 1SG.SM-PRS.CJ-1OM-give-PFV AUG-7-sweet.potato
 'I give him/her a sweet potato.'
- c. CJ # N.ra-Ø-mu-ha-ye i-ki-jumbu u-mw-áana
 1SG.SM-PRS.CJ-1OM-give-PFV AUG-7-sweet.potato AUG-1-child

(32) (Who do you give sweet potato?)

- a. CJ N-Ø-há-ye i-ki-jumbu u-mw-áana.
 1SG.SM-PRS.CJ-give-PFV AUG-7-sweet.potato AUG-1-child
 'I give the sweet potato to a child.'
- b. CJ N-Ø-ki-há-ye u-mw-áana.
 1SG.SM-PRS.CJ-7OM-give-PFV AUG-1-child
 'I give it to a/the child.'

(33) a. Tu-a-{mu}-ha-ye {Kabura} i-bi-jumbu gusa
 1PL.SM-N.PST.CJ-{1OM}-give-PFV 1.Kabura AUG-8-sweet.potato only
 'We gave Kabura/him only sweet potatoes.'

- b. * Tu-a-(mu)-ha-ye i-bi-jumbu gusa Kabura.
 1PL.SM-N.PST.CJ-(1OM-)give-PFV AUG-8-sweet.potato only 1.Kabura

(34) a. Tu-a-{bi}-ha-ye i-bi-jumbu Kabura gusa.
 1PL.SM-N.PST.CJ-{8OM-}give-PFV AUG-8-sweet.potato 1.Kabura only
 'We gave sweet potatoes/them to Kabura only.'

- b. * Tu-a-(bi)-ha-ye Kabura gusa i-bi-jumbu.
 1PL.SM-N.PST.CJ-(8OM-)give-PFV 1.Kabura only AUG-8-sweet.potato

Kirundi thus shows evidence for a dedicated clause-final focus position.

3.2.2 Subject inversion constructions

In keeping with the tendency for preverbal elements to be topical and focal elements to be postverbal, the logical subject *must* stay in a postverbal position when it is focal and *prefers* a postverbal position when it is non-topical (alternatives being the various clefts described in Section 6). Such word orders are known as subject inversion constructions (Zerbian 2006). Kirundi is exceptional in showing all seven types of subject inversion constructions listed by Marten & van der Wal (2014), including Patient Inversion, Semantic and Formal Locative Inversion, Instrument Inversion, Complement Inversion, Default Agreement Inversion and

Agreeing Inversion. These are discussed extensively by Nshemezimana (2016), Ndayiragije (1999), Morimoto (2000, 2006, 2009) and Sabimana (1986), and are presented in turn below.

In Patient Inversion, the patient occupies a preverbal position, determining subject agreement on the verb, and the logical subject is clause-final. In (37), for example, the theme *amaazi* ‘water’ is preverbal, determining subject marking in class 6, and the logical subject ‘Yohana’ appears postverbally. The postverbal logical subject is interpreted as focused in Patient Inversion, as shown by the compatibility with *gusa* ‘only’ in (35), and the simple focus in answer to a content question in (37). Patient Inversion takes the conjoint verb form, and cannot be used inthetic contexts. For pragmatic restrictions on animacy in Patient Inversion, see discussion in Morimoto (2006) and Nshemezimana (2016).

- (35) (When will you be healed?)

Sinzí. Ivyo biizi Imáana gusa.

si-n-zí i-bi-o bi-zi i-máana gusa
NEG-1SG.SM-know AUG-8-DEM₂ 8SM-know AUG-9.God only

‘I don’t know, only God knows.’

- (36) (Did Christian take pictures yesterday?)

Amafoto yafashe Ernest, nayó Christian sinzí.

a-ma-foto a-a-Ø-fát-ye Ernest nayó Christian
AUG-6-photo 6SM-N.PST-CJ-take-PFV 1.Ernest but 1.Christian
si-n-zi

NEG-1SG.SM-know

‘*Ernest* took pictures, but *Christian* I don’t know.’

- (37) (Who brought water?)

- a. Amáazi aazanye Yohana.

amáazi a-a-Ø-zan-ye Yohana
6.water 6SM-N.PST-CJ-bring-PFV 1.John

‘*John* brought water.’

- b. # Yohana aazanye amaazi.

Yohana a-a-Ø-zan-ye amaazi
1.John 1SM-N.PST-CJ-bring-PFV 6.water

In Formal Locative Inversion, a topical locative expression appears preverbally, subject marking is always class 16 *ha-*, and the logical subject appears in final position forming the focus, as illustrated in (38). The subject marker *ha-* is formally

the same as the expletive (see Default Agreement Inversion), but a difference is spotted in the fact that it can still refer to a location, as in (39). Locative Inversion, too, is not found in thetic contexts but only with subject focus.

- (38) (Context: At a party, we want to know how many visitors have already been welcomed. Some people have been received in the garden and others in the house. The speaker gives the report for those who have been received in the house.)
 Mu nzu haakiiririwe abantu batanu.
 mu n-zu ha-a-Ø-akiir-ir-w-ye a-ba-ntu ba-tanu
 18 9-house 16SM-N.PST-CJ-receive-APPL-PASS-PFV AUG-2-person 2-five
 ‘In the house there have been received five people.’
- (39) (Context: Seeing tracks in the sand and pointing, ‘What has passed here?’)
 Hacijyeho imodoka.
 ha-cí-ye=hó i-modoka
 16SM-pass-PFV=16 AUG-9.car
 ‘Here passed a car.’

Apart from the locative class 16 subject marking, the verb in Locative Inversion can also have an enclitic in *-o*, coreferent with one of the four locative classes: =*hó* (cl.16), =*mwó* (cl.18), =*kó* (cl.17) and =*yó* (cl.19) (Meeussen 1959: 64). See also Devos et al. (2017) on Kirundi locative enclitics. The class 18 =*mwó* is illustrated in (40).

- (40) (Nshemezimana 2016: 137)
 Muri aya mavuriro, harabonekamwo umwahwa.
 murí a-a-a ma-vuuriro ha-ra-bónek-a=mwó
 18 AUG-6-DEM₁ 6-health.center 16SM-PRS.DJ-be.seen-FV=18
 u-mu-aáhwa
 AUG-3-traditional.medicine
 ‘In these health centres, there can be found traditional medicine.’

The enclitic is used when the locative noun phrase is dislocated, suggesting that the enclitic is a (resumptive) pronoun. This renders the locative phrase free in its position, being able to appear in initial (41a), central (41b), or final position (41c).

(41) (Nshemezimana 2016: 134)

- a. Muri aka gakino, harimwó ibihíimba bitatu.
 Muri a-ka-a ka-kino ha-Ø-ri=mwó i-bi-híimba bi-tatu
 18 AUG-12-DEM₁ 12-skit 16SM-PRS-be=18 AUG-8-part 8-three
 ‘In this sketch, there are three parts.’
- b. Harimwó, muri aka gakino, ibihíimba bitatu.
 ha-Ø-ri=mwó muri a-ka-a ka-kino i-bi-híimba bi-tatu
 16SM-PRS-be=18 18 AUG-12-DEM₁ 12-skit AUG-8-part 8-three
 ‘There are, in this sketch, three parts.’
- c. Harimwó ibihíimba bitatu, muri aka gakino.
 ha-Ø-ri=mwó i-bi-híimba bi-tatu muri a-ka-a ka-kino
 16SM-PRS-be=18 AUG-8-part 8-three 18 AUG-12-DEM₁ 12-skit
 ‘There are three parts, in this sketch.’

While *ha-* is underspecified for locative semantics, the enclitic agrees in class with the dislocated locative noun phrase and specifies the exact location: among (with =*mwó*) (42), on (with =*kó*) (43), inside (with =*yó*) (44),² or with existential reference (= *hó*) (45).³ The information-structural interpretation is still the same.

- (42) Muri abo bantu harimwo uwugwaye korona.
 muri a-ba-o ba-ntu ha-Ø-ri=mwó u-wu-gwáar-ye korona
 18 AUG-2-DEM₂ 2-person 16SM-PRS-be=18 AUG-1-be.sick-PFV 1.corona
 ‘Among these people, there is one who suffers from the corona virus.’
- (43) Ku méezá haryamyeko akayáabu.
 ku méezá ha-ryáam-ye=kó a-ka-yáabu
 17 table 16SM-sleep-PFV =17 AUG-12-cat
 ‘On the table a cat is sleeping.’

²Note that class 16 =*ho* and 19 =*yo* (but not 17 and 18) can be used to refer to locative noun phrases of class 18.

³It is interesting to note that the corpus study by Nshemezimana & Mberamihigo (2021) reveals that the majority of locative enclitics is the class 18 =*mwó*, with 95.74% in the written part of the corpus, and 66.15% in the oral part. This can perhaps be linked to its larger variation in use, alternating with =*yo* in certain contexts, as in (i).

- (i) Aha harimwo/yo iki?
 a. a-ha-a ha-Ø-ri-mwó iki?
 AUG-16-DEM₁ 16SM-PRS-be=18 what
 b. a-ha-a ha-Ø-ri-yó iki?
 AUG-16-DEM₁ 16SM-PRS-be=19 what
 ‘What’s in it here?’

- (44) Mu nzu hinjiyeyo inzoka.
 mu n-zu ha-a-Ø-injir-ye=yó i-n-zoka
 18 9-house 16SM-N.PST-CJ-enter-PFV=19 AUG-9-snake
 ‘In(to) the house has entered a snake.’
- (45) Aha hantu hariho abantu badutwaye amakaramu.
 a-ha-a ha-ntu ha-ri=hó a-ba-ntu ba-tu-twáar-ye
 AUG-16-DEM₁ 16-place 16SM-be=16 AUG-2-person 2SM-1PL.OM-take-PFV
 a-ma-karamu
 AUG-6-pen
 ‘In this place are people who took our pens.’

The enclitic can also be used for disambiguation: without the locative enclitic, (46) is ambiguous between a goal reading of the locative phrase (‘going to Bujumbura’) and a source reading (‘leaving from Bujumbura’). With the enclitic, as in (47), the locative can only be interpreted as the goal.

- (46) (Among the given people, who went to/from Bujumbura?)
 I Bujumbura hagiye Minani.
 i Bujumbura ha-a-Ø-gi-ye Minani
 19 Bujumbura 16SM/EXP-N.PST-CJ-go-PFV 1.Minani
 ‘Minani went to Bujumbura/Minani went from Bujumbura (to Europe).’
- (47) I Bujumbura hagiye Minani.
 i Bujumbura ha-a-Ø-gi-ye=yó Minani
 19 Bujumbura 16SM-N.PST-CJ-go-PFV=19 1.Minani
 ‘Minani went to Bujumbura.’

Kirundi also features Semantic Locative Inversion (SLI). SLI received its name from the fact that the locative interpretation of the preverbal constituent is only present semantically in denoting a spatial or temporal localisation (Buell 2007). This differs from the formally locative phrase that is crucially marked by the locative prefix (see above). In SLI, the verb takes its subject marker in the noun class of the preverbal (semantically but not formally) locative phrase in the subject function, as seen in (48) for the class 8 location ‘these eyebrows’; in Formal Locative Inversion the subject marker is in locative class 16.

- (48) Ivyo bigóhe birikó ubwoóya bwiínshi.
 i-bi-o bi-góhe bi-ri=kó u-bu-oóya bu-iínshi.
 AUG-8-DEM₂ 8-eyebrow SM8-be=17 AUG-14-hair 14-much
 ‘In these eyebrows there are a lot of hairs.’ (*Anon.1990*, Education, 1990s – BantUGhent corpus)

In Instrument Inversion, intransitive as well as transitive predicates may occur, but the instrument must crucially be an argument of the verb. This is done by deriving the verb as a causative, marked by the suffix *-ish/-esh*, as illustrated in (49) and (50c), the alternative being the instrument in the function of an adjunct, as in (50a) and (50d) with the preposition *na* ‘with’. In (49), the instrument *ivyo bikoreesho* ‘these implements’ precedes the verb and determines subject marking in class 8, and the logical subject ‘Christians and non-Christians’ follows the verb. As Zeller (2013) also notes for Zulu, the predicate must prototypically take an instrument for inversion to be possible (e.g. write with a pen, but not climb with a ladder), for example in (50) drinking with a straw. The straw (*umukeenke*) is an adjunct in (50a), it is a postverbal argument in (50b) where the verb is not *-nyw-* but the causative *-nyweesh-*, and it appears preverbally in the subject inversion construction in (50c), determining subject marking on the verb in class 3. In all instances of Instrument Inversion, the postverbal logical subject is in focus, and again the construction cannot be used in athetic context.

(49) (Nshemezimana 2016: 120–122)

- a. O_[INST]VS: Ivyo bikóreesho bikoreesha uwa Krístu n’úwutari wé.
i-bi-o bi-kóreesho bi-Ø-kór-ish-a
AUG-8-DEM₂ 8-implement 8SM-PRS.CJ-do-CAUS-FV
u-u-a Krístu n’ u-u-ta-ri wé
AUG-1-CONN Christ and AUG-1-NEG-be 1.PRO
‘These implements are used by Christians as well as non-Christians.’ (CU101004Ukwege, Paix, 2010s)
- b. SVO_[INST]: U-u-a Krístu n’ u-u-ta-ri wé
AUG-1-CONN Christ and AUG-1-NEG-be 1.PRO
ba-Ø-kór-ish-a i-bi-o bi-kóreesho.
2SM-PRS.CJ-do-CAUS-FV AUG-8-DEM₂ 8-implement
‘Both Christians and non-Christians use these implements.’

- (50) a. SVO_[INST]: Nyaa mugabo akuunda kunywá inzogá n’úmukeenke.
nyaa mu-gabo a-Ø-kúund-a ku-nyóá
1-DEM₇ 1-man 1SM-PRS.CJ-like-FV 15-drink
i-N-zogá n’ u-mu-keenke
AUG-9-drink with AUG-3-straw
‘The man in question often drinks the drink with the straw.’

- b. SVO_[INST]: Nyaa mugabo akuunda kunywéesha inzogá umukenke.
 nyaa mu-gabo a-Ø-kúund-a ku-nyó-ish-a
 1.DEM₇ 1-man 1SM-PRS.CJ-like-FV 15-drink-CAUS-FV
 i-N-zogá u-mu-keenke
 AUG-9-drink AUG-3-straw
 ‘The man in question often drinks the drink with the straw.’
- c. O_[INST]VS: Umukeenke ukuunda kunywéesha (inzogá) nyáa mugabo.
 u-mu-keenke u-Ø-kúund-a ku-nyó-[ish]-a
 AUG-3-straw 3SM-PRS.CJ-like-FV 15-drink-CAUS-FV
 (i-N-zogá) nyaa mu-gabo
 AUG₉-9-drink 1.DEM₇ 1-man
 ‘The man in question (not John) often drinks the drink with the straw.’
- d. *O_[INST]VS: *Na u-mu-keenke u-Ø-kúund-a ku-nyóá
 with AUG-3-straw 3SM-PRS.CJ-like-FV 15-drink
 (i-N-zogá) nyaa mu-gabo
 AUG-9-drink 1.DEM₇ 1-man

Complement Inversion involves a CP triggering subject marking in (default) class 8 on the verb, and the postverbal subject is in focus. Unlike in Kinyarwanda (Kimenyi 1980: 193), the CP does not appear in preverbal position in Kirundi, but is typically right-dislocated (presumably because it is phonologically heavy), as shown in (51a).

(51) (Nshemezimana 2016: 124)

- a. VSO_[PROP]: Vyaávuzé abakurambere bíwaácu, kó yooba ari amatá avyaayé amasoro.
 bi-á-Ø-vúg-ye a-ba-kurambere ba-íwaácu
 8SM-RMT.PST-CJ-say-PFV AUG-2-older.people 2-POSS.1PL
 kó a-oo-bá-a a-ri a-ma-tá
 COMP 6SM-POT-be-FV EXP-be AUG-6-milk
 a-vyáar-ye^H a-ma-soro
 6SM-generate-PFV.REL AUG-6-butter
 ‘Our elders (not someone else) said it, that it would be the milk that generates the butter.’ (Kabizi141114revu, Magazines, 2010s)

- b. SVO_[PROP]: Abakurambere bíwaácu báavuze kó yoobá ari amatá
 avyaayé amasoro.
 a-ba-kurambere ba-íwaácu ba-á-Ø-vúg-ye
 AUG-2-elder 2-POSS.1PL 2SM-RMT.PST-CJ-say-PFV
 kó a-oo-bá-a a-ri a-ma-tá
 COMP 6SM-POT-be-FV EXP-be AUG-6-milk
 a-vyáar-ye^H a-ma-soro
 6SM-generate-PFV.REL AUG-6-butter
 ‘Our elders said that it would be the milk that generates
 the butter.’ (Adapted from (51a))

In Default Agreement Inversion (DAI), the subject marker is the expletive *ha-*, which here does not refer to a particular place (compare to Locative Inversion above). When the verb takes a conjoint form (see Section 2), the clause-final logical subject is interpreted as focus, seen in the question word in (52), and the subject modified by ‘only’ in (53), as well as the incompatibility with ‘even’ (54); the latter test suggests an exclusive focus interpretation.

- (52) (Context: The teacher wants to know how many students the headmaster needs to go unload school materials in the car. He asks her:)
 Haaze abanyéeshuúre bangáahé?
 ha-əz-e a-ba-nyéeshuúre ba-ngáahé?
 EXP-come-SBJV AUG-2-student 2-how.many
 ‘How many students should come?’
- (53) (Have all people died in the accident?)
 Ha-a-Ø-pfú-ye Kabura gusa.
 EXP-N.PST-CJ-die-PFV kabura only
 ‘Only Kabura died.’
- (54) (Are the women the ones who trap moles?)
 Ahanini, hatega (*ndetse na) abagabo.
 ahanini ha-teg-a ndetse na a-ba-gabo
 usually EXP-trap-FV even and AUG-2-man
 ‘Usually men trap (them).’

When the verb takes its disjoint form, the entire sentence is within the scope of the assertion – unlike the conjoint form, it does not imply any presupposition. These are known as “thetic sentences”, and these can be seen as sentences

without a topic expression, i.e. in which the subject is detopicalised (Lambrecht & Polinsky 1997, Lambrecht 2000, Sasse 1987). As expected, it is ungrammatical to modify the postverbal constituent with *gusa* ‘only’, as in (55b). This DAI construction can be compared to the presentational construction with *hari/hariho* (see Section 6.2), which differs in both form and function.

(55) (What happened?)

- a. Harakómeretse umuntu.
Ha-ra-kómerek-ye u-mu-ntu
EXP-DJ-be.hurt-PFV AUG-1-person
‘Someone has just been hurt.’
- b. Harakómeretse abaana (*gusa).
Ha-ra-kómerek-ye a-ba-ána gusa
EXP-DJ-be.hurt-PFV AUG-2-child only
‘(*Only) the children have been hurt.’

(56) (Nshemezimana 2016: 152)

Haraaza kaánda abatóozakoóri ngo babatizwe.
ha-Ø-ra-əz-a kaánda a-ba-tóozakoóri ngo
EXP-PRS-DJ-come-FV also AUG-2-tax.collector for
ba-batiz-u-e
2SM-be.baptized-PASS-SBJV
‘There also came tax collectors to be baptized.’
(*UbwuzureBushasha*, Religion, 1960s)

The same use of the expletive *ha-* is seen in weather expressions (also *thetic*), and as mentioned, contrasts with the locative interpretation in *Locative Inversion*.

(57) Harakanye.

ha-ra-kany-ye
EXP-DJ-become.cold-PFV
‘It’s cold.’

Transitive predicates may also participate in DAI, whereby both the agent and the patient argument appear postverbally. The only possible interpretation is subject focus (in line with Carstens & Mletshe (2015)’s observation for Xhosa), and the subject must, as expected, occur in clause-final position, resulting in VOS order (58). Here, only the conjoint form is accepted, and a *thetic* interpretation is impossible.

(58) (Who has poured the milk?)

- a. Hasheeshe amatá Yohana. (VOS)

Ha-a-sees-ye a-ma-tá Yohana

EXP-N.PST-pour-PFV AUG-6-milk John

‘John (not Peter) had poured the milk.’

- b. # Hasheeshe Yohana amatá.

ha-a-Ø-sees-ye Yohana a-ma-tá. (#VSO)

EXP-N.PST-CJ-pour-PFV John AUG-6-milk

‘John (not Peter) had poured the milk.’

In Agreeing Inversion, the subject marker agrees with the postverbal logical subject. Here, the logical subject has to be indefinite and only the disjoint verb form may be used. In this construction, the postverbal logical subject is part of the new information (though not focal), and the construction as such is used in athetic environment, as in (59) and (60). The DAI and presentational alternatives (see further in Section 6.2) are also felicitous here as indicated in (59b) and (59c), respectively; DAI is seen as very natural, and AI is associated with colloquial use.

(59) (Why are the people shouting?)

- a. A-Ø-ra-pfú-ye u-mu-ntu.

1SM-PRS-DJ-die-PFV AUG-1-person

- b. Ha-Ø-ra-pfú-ye u-mu-ntu.

EXP-PRS-DJ-die-PFV AUG-1-person

- c. Ha-Ø-ri u-mu-ntu a-pfú-ye^H.

EXP-PRS-be aug-1-person 1SM-die-PFV.REL

‘Someone has just died/is dying.’

(60) (Context: You have visited the neighbours and when you come back your husband asks ‘Anything new?’)

Yaapfuuye impené kwa Kabura.

i-a-a-pfú-ye i-n-hene kwa Kabura

9SM-N.PST-DJ-die-PFV AUG-9-goat 17 Kabura

‘A goat has died at Kabura’s house.’

VS word order is not only encountered in subject inversion, but also when the subject is right-dislocated. However, we can see a clear difference between AI on the one hand, and a right-dislocated subject on the other hand. In AI, the subject is part of the new information; it is in a low syntactic position, scoping under negation, as in (61); and there is no prosodic break between V and S.

- (61) (Are the schools open?) [Agreeing Inversion]
 Ntarúugurura (amashuúre) yóóse.
 nti-a-raa-ugurur-a a-ma-shuure a-óóse
 NEG-6SM-INCP-open-FV AUG-6-school 6-all
 ‘Not all schools are open yet.’ (but some are)

When the subject is right-dislocated, however, the subject is given information (added as an afterthought); the quantified subject scopes over negation, as in (62); and there is typically a prosodic break, indicated by the comma in (63).

- (62) (Are all schools open?) [right-dislocation]
 Ntaruugurura, amashuure yoose.
 nti-a-raa-uguru-a a-ma-shuure a-ose
 NEG-6SM-INCP-open-FV AUG-6-school 6-all
 ‘They are not open yet, all schools.’ (none are open)

- (63) (Nshemezimana 2016: 57)
 Yaráhejeje arageenda, nya mwáana.
 a-á-ra-hér-i-ye a-ra-geend-a nyaa mu-áana
 1SM-RMT.PST-DJ-finish-CAUS-PFV 1SM-DJ-go-FV 1.DEM₇ 1-child
 ‘Eventually he left, the aforementioned child.’
 (Mushingantahe, Paix, 2000s)

In summary, the logical subject appears postverbally in subject inversion constructions, where it is interpreted as focused when the verb is in its conjoint form, and as non-topical in thetics with a disjoint form. When compared to other Bantu languages, Kirundi is exceptional in allowing a wide range of inversion constructions, as also discussed in Kerr et al. (2023).

4 Predicate doubling

It is possible in Kirundi to use the infinitive together with an inflected form of the same predicate, a construction known as “predicate doubling” (see overview in Güldemann & Fiedler 2022). Of the three types of predicate doubling, Kirundi allows topic doubling, and shows a special nominalised in-situ doubling. We discuss these in turn.

In Topic doubling, the infinitive occurs in the left periphery as a topic. For intransitive verbs, there are four possible interpretations. The interpretation can be

a) verum as in (64), b) implied contrast with another action/verb as in (65), c) depreciative (cf. Meeussen 1967), d) intensive/excessive; both c and d are illustrated in (66).

- (64) Kwiruka ndiiruka.
ku-iruka N-ra-iruk-a
15-run 1SG.SM-PRS.DJ-run-FV
verum: 'I do run!' (you might think I don't)
- (65) Inka, kuzigaburira naazigaburiye.
i-n-ka ku-zi-gabur-ir-a N-a-a-zi-gabur-ir-ye
AUG-10-cow 15-10OM-feed-APPL-FV 1SG.SM-N.PST-DJ-10OM-feed-APPL-PFV
contrastive: 'I did feed the cows.' (implying that the other task of cleaning the house is not done)
- (66) Kwandika uraanditse.
ku-andika u-ra-andik-ye
15-write 2SG.SM-DJ-write-PFV
Intensive: 'You have really written a lot!' (you expected one page and s/he has written five)
Depreciative: 'At least you have written (something).' (the answers on a student's exam are not good enough)

For topic doubling with a transitive verb, the object can either follow the infinitive, or the inflected verb. If the object follows the infinitive, as in (67), the focus is on the VP and the interpretation is verum or depreciative; if the object follows the inflected verb, as in (68), the focus is on the object, as indicated in the context of an object question.

- (67) Kurya imboga (kó), ndazirya, ariko...
ku-ria i-n-boga ku-ó ni-ra-zi-rí-a ariko...
15-eat AUG-10-vegetable 15-CM 1SG.SM-PRS.DJ-10OM-eat-FV but
'Even though I eat vegetables, ...'
'I do eat vegetables, but... (it doesn't help)'
- (68) (Context: In a restaurant, when asked what you want to order.)
(U)kuryá, ndya inyama, kunywá nywa ifanta.
u-ku-ryá N-rí-a i-nyama ku-nywá N-nyó-a
AUG-15-eat 1SG.SM-eat-FV AUG-10.meat 15-drink 1SG.SM-drink-FV
i-fanta
AUG-9.fanta
'For eating, I eat meat, for drinking, I drink fanta.'

Since topicalised constituents can be marked by the contrastive topic marker *-ó* (see Section 5), the initial infinitival phrase can be marked as such, too, by *kó*. The particle seems to foreground the depreciative meaning, as in (69), or adds an exclamative flavour (see (96) below).

- (69) A: I need to lose weight.
 B: Maybe if you do sport?
 A: Kugira ikarashishi *kó* ndayigira.
 ku-gira i-karashishi ku-ó N-ra-i-gir-a
 15-do AUG-9.sport 15-CM 1SG.SM-PRS.DJ-9OM-do-FV
 ‘Even if I do sports... (I don’t lose weight).’

A second type of predicate doubling, cleft doubling, is not acceptable in Kirundi with the same predicate appearing twice. If the infinitive is clefted, the predicate cannot be doubled (as is possible in other languages, such as Fwe (Gunink 2018) and Kiitharaka (Kanampiu & van der Wal 2025 [this volume])), but instead the light verb *-kora* ‘do, make’ must be used, as in (70b).

- (70) a. *Ni kuririmba ndirimba.
 ni ku-ririmba N-ririmba-a^H
 COP 15-sing 1SG.SM-sing-FV.REL
 ‘It’s singing that I sing.’
 b. Ni kuririmba nkora.
 ni ku-ririmba N-kór-a^H
 COP 15-sing 1SG.SM-do-FV.REL
 ‘It’s singing that I do.’

Equally ungrammatical is the third type of predicate doubling: in-situ doubling with a bare infinitive is not accepted (which is possible in other languages, e.g. Kiitharaka and Kinyakyusa – see Kanampiu & van der Wal (2025 [this volume]) and Lusekelo et al. (2025 [this volume])):

- (71) *Niirutse kwiiruka.
 ni-Ø-íruk-ye ku-íiruka
 1SG.SM-PRS.CJ-run-PFV 15-run
 int. ‘I really ran.’

However, two other nomino-verbal forms can be used in situ with the same inflected predicate: either a derivation in class 14 *bu-* with a final vowel *-e* (equal to the subjunctive), as in (72) and (73), or with *nya* preceding the infinitive, as in (74).

- (72) Heba ivyaha buhebé.
Ø-héb-a i-bi-áaha bu-héb-e
2SG.SM-leave-IMP AUG-8-sin 14-leave-SBJV
'Stop sinning for real.'
- (73) Ushaaka ngende bugende?
u-shaak-a N-gend-e bu-gend-e
2SG.SM-want-FV 1SG.SM-go-SBJV 14-go-SBJV
'You really want me to go?'
- (74) Uzoozé tubaané nya kubáana.
u-zoo-əz-e tu-báan-e nya ku-báana
2SG.SM-FUT-come-SBJV 1PL.SM-live.together-SBJV very 15-live.together
'Come, we should live together properly.'
'We should be living-together living-together.'

Both constructions with *bu-* and *nya* bring about a reading of 'really', 'properly', referring to a prototype (as in the English reduplication 'I want a DRINK-drink', see Ghomeshi et al. 2004), but also touching on verum and unexpectedness. The precise interpretations and use of this and the other predicate doubling constructions remain for future investigations.

5 Particle -ó for contrastive given information

Kirundi has a particle *-ó* that originates as a pronoun (the “-o of reference” in Ashton 1945) but also functions as a marker of contrastive given information. This is also found in Kĩitharaka and Rukiga with similar functions (see Asiiimwe & van der Wal 2021, Asiiimwe & van der Wal (2025 [this volume]) and Kanampiu & van der Wal (2025 [this volume])). In its function as a pronoun, we encounter *-ó* as an independent pronoun – in (77) the pronominal object, after the preposition *na* ‘with’ in (75), and after the comparative *nka* ‘like’ in (76) – and also as an enclitic when referring to locations (78).

- (75) Natambanye **nabó**.
N-a-táamb-an-ye na=ba-ó
1SG.SM-N.PST-dance-ASS-PFV with=2-PRO
'I danced with them.'

- (76) Atamba nkaátwe.
a-Ø-taamb-a nka=twe
1SM-PRS.CJ-dance-FV like=1PL.PRO
‘He dances like us.’
- (77) (Context: You are talking about someone and say that they are always late. I haven’t heard well and ask ‘Are you talking about me?!’ You say:) Mvuze wé.
N-Ø-vúg-ye wé
1SG.SM-PRS-CJ-say-PFV 1.PRO
‘I’m talking about him/her.’
- (78) (Nshemezimana 2016: 134)
Kuri kimwé, haanditse**kó** aya majaambo.
kuri ki-mwé ha-Ø-aandik-ye=kó a-a-a ma-jaambo
17 7-one 16SM-CJ-write-PFV=17 AUG-6-DEM₁ 6-word
‘On one, there are written these words.’
(Ifaranga, Education, 1980s)

However, -ó can also be used in a different way, to mark given information as contrastive. This is shown in the contrast between (79a) and (79b), and discussed in more detail below.

- (79) a. Igifaraánsa ndakívuga.
i-ki-faraánsa N-ra-ki-vúga
AUG-7-french 1SG.SM-PRS.DJ-7OM-speak-FV
‘French, I speak it.’
- b. Igifaraánsa có ndakívuga.
i-ki-faraánsa ki-ó N-ra-ki-vúg-a
AUG-7-french 7-CM 1SG.SM-PRS.DJ-7OM-speak-FV
‘As for as French, I speak it (unlike English or Lingala, for example).’

We first present the formal properties of the pronoun/marker, and then discuss the interpretational effects it has as a contrastive marker.

5.1 Formal properties of -o

The pronoun/particle reflects noun class and for each class there is a short and long series, as illustrated in Table 2.

When combining with a personal pronoun referring to a speech act participant, the (formally locative) form *-ho* is used. The forms are given in Table 3, and their use is illustrated in (80).

Table 2: Noun classes and the particle -ó in Kirundi

noun class and prefix	example noun	gloss	particle/pronoun	
			short series	long series
1. mu-	umuntu	‘person’	wé	wéewé
2. ba-	abantu	‘persons’	bó	bóobó
3. mu-	umusózi	‘mountain’	wó	wóowó
4. mi-	imisózi	‘mountains’	yó	yóoyó
5. ri-/Ø-	irigí	‘egg’	ryó	ryóoryó
6. ma-	amagí	‘eggs’	yó	yóoyó
7. ki-	igiteérwa	‘plant’	có	cóocó
8. bi-	ibiteérwa	‘plants’	vyó	vyóovyó
9. n-	inká	‘cow’	yó	yóoyó
10. n-	inká	‘cows’	zó	zóozó
11. ru-	urutoke	‘finger’	rwó	rwóorwó
12. ka-	akayáabu	‘cat’	kó	kókó
13. tu-	utuyáabu	‘cats’	twó	twótwó
14. bu-	ububaasha	‘power, capacity’	bwó	bwóbwó
15. ku-	kugenda	‘to go’	kwó	kwókwó
16. ha-	ahantu	‘place’	hó	hóhó
17. ku	ku nzu	‘on the house’	hó	hóhó
18. mu	mu nzu	‘in the house’	hó	hóhó
19. i	i Bujumbura	‘in Bujumbura’	hó	hóhó

Table 3: Personal pronouns for speech act participants and the particle -ó in Kirundi

1SG	je/jeewé	jehó
2SG	we/wewé	wehó
1PL	twe/tweebwé	twehó
2PL	mwe/mweebwé	mwehó

- (80) Mweebwé genda; **tweho** tuzoza ejo.

mweebwé Ø-geend-a twe-hó tu-zo-əz-a ejó
 2PL.PRO 2PL.SM-go-IMP 1PL.PRO-CM 1PL.SM-FUT-come-FV tomorrow
 ‘You go; as for us, we shall go tomorrow.’

As a contrastive topic marker, the particle typically follows the topical, left-peripheral noun, as in (81a). It cannot precede the noun it refers to, as shown in (81b), but the particle can appear initially as in (81c), or finally as in (81d), when referring to a pronominal referent that is indexed on the verb – in this case the subject marker in class 2.

- (81) a. Abáana bó baamaze kugenda kw’ishuúre.

a-ba-áana ba-ó ba-a-a-mar-ye ku-geenda kw’
 AUG-2-child 2-CM 2.SM-N.PST-DJ-finish-PFV 15-go 17
 i-shuúre
 AUG-5.school

‘As for the children, they have already gone to school.’ (but the women haven’t)

- b. (*Bó) abáana baamaze kugenda kw’ishuúre.

ba-ó a-ba-áana ba-a-a-mar-ye ku-geenda kw’
 2-CM AUG-2-child 2.SM-N.PST-DJ-finish-PFV 15-go 17
 i-shuúre
 AUG-5.school

int. ‘As for the children, they have already gone to school.’

- c. Bó, baamaze kugenda kw’ishuúre.

ba-ó ba-a-a-mar-ye ku-geenda kw’ i-shuúre
 2-CM 2.SM-N.PST-DJ-finish-PFV 15-go 17 AUG-5.school

‘As for them, they have already gone to school.’

- d. Abáana baamaze kugenda kw’ishuúre, bó.

a-ba-áana ba-a-a-mar-ye ku-geenda kw’ i-shuúre
 AUG-2-child 2.SM-N.PST-DJ-finish-PFV 15-go 17 AUG-5.school
 ba-ó
 2-CM

‘Children have already gone at school, them.’ (as opposed to women)

The same holds for objects that are pronominally represented by an object marker: the coreferring left- or right-dislocated phrase can be marked by *-o*, as shown in (82). Note that the object marker must be present here.

(82) (Context: Someone was supposed to buy charcoal, maize, and oil.)

- a. Amakára yó yaayaguze.
a-ma-kára a-ó a-a-a-*(ya)-gur-ye
AUG-6-coal 6-CM 1SM-N.PST-DJ-6OM-buy-PFV
‘As for as the charcoal, s/he bought it.’ (but the rest not)
- b. A-a-a-*(ya)-gur-ye, a-ma-kára a-ó.
1SM-N.PST-DJ-6OM-buy-PFV AUG-6-coal 6-CM
‘S/he bought it, (the) charcoal.’ (but the rest not)

The marker/pronoun also appears independently in the right context, both right- and left-dislocated, as illustrated in (83) B and B’. This seems to fulfil both functions, as a pronoun, and a contrastive topic marker.

- (83) A: Have you eaten the beans?
B: No.
A: What about the banana?
B: Naawuriye, wó.
N-a-a-wu-rí-ye u-ó
1SG.SM-N.PST-DJ-3OM-eat-PFV 3-CM
‘Thát I have eaten.’
- B’: Wó, naawuriye.
u-ó N-a-a-wu-rí-ye
3-CM 1SG.SM-N.PST-DJ-3OM-eat-PFV
‘Thát I have eaten.’

Having seen the formal properties of the pronoun/particle, we can discuss its use and interpretation in more detail.

5.2 Functional properties of -o

The presence of the particle adds a contrastive meaning, that is, the referent is contrasted with another referent. However, it can only be used with given referents, not with newly presented, focal referents. This is shown in the incompatibility of the particle with a noun in a basic cleft or pseudocleft (both constructions expressing focus, see Section 6), shown in (84) and (85), respectively.

- (84) Ni abaana (*bo) baajé. [basic cleft]

ni a-ba-áana ba-ó ba-əz-ye^H
 COP AUG-2-child 2-CM 2SM-come-PFV.REL
 ‘It’s the children who have come.’

- (85) Abaáje ni abaana (*bó). [pseudocleft]

a-ba-əz-ye^H ni a-ba-áana ba-ó
 AUG-2SM-come-PFV.REL COP AUG-2-child 2-CM
 ‘The ones who have come are the children.’

It is telling that instead of the ungrammatical (85) with the particle, the sentence in (86) comes more naturally. Here, the particle modifies the initial free relative *abaáje* ‘the ones who have come’, which is given information, as indicated in the context, and functions as the topic.

- (86) (Context: We were expecting three groups of people: adults, elderly, and children. Not all have arrived.)

Abaáje bó ni abáana.
 a-ba-əz-ye^H ba-ó ni a-ba-áana
 AUG-2SM-come-PFV.REL 2-CM COP AUG-2-child
 ‘As for the ones who have come, it’s the children.’

In the same way, the postverbal logical subject cannot be modified by -ó, as shown for Locative Inversion in (87). This is expected, as the postverbal logical subject is the focus (see Section 3.2.2). Equally expected is the fact that the preverbal locative *can* be modified by -ó, as in (88), since this has been shown to function as the topic (Nshemezimana 2020: 62).

- (87) Mu Kirundo hagiyyeyó abáana babiri (*bó).

mu Kirundo ha-a-gi-ye=yó a-ba-áana ba-biri ba-ó
 18 Kirundo 16SM-N.PST-go-PFV=19 AUG-2-child 2-two 2-CM
 ‘Kirundo, two children went there.’

- (88) (How many children have gone to Bujumbura and how many to Kirundo?)

Mu Kirundo hó hagiyyeyó abáana babiri.
 mu Kirundo ha-ó ha-a-gi-ye=yó a-ba-áana ba-biri
 18 Kirundo 16-CM 16SM-N.PST-go-PFV=19 AUG-2-child 2-two
 ‘As for Kirundo, two children went there.’

Finally, *-ó* cannot modify the object when the object is in focus following a conjoint form, as in (89), or even when it is included in VP focus following a disjoint form, as in (90). The particle can only be added when the object is dislocated, as seen by the presence of the object marker on the verb (91).

- (89) (What have you eaten?)
 Nariye umuhwi (*wó).
 N-a-Ø-rí-ye u-mu-hwí u-ó
 1SG.SM-N.PST-CJ-eat-PFV AUG-3-banana 3-CM
 ‘I have eaten a banana.’
- (90) (What have you done?)
 Naariye umuhwí (*wó).
 N-a-a-rí-ye u-mu-hwí u-ó
 1SG.SM-N.PST-DJ-eat-PFV AUG-3-banana 3-CM
 ‘I have eaten a banana.’
- (91) Naawuriye, umuhwí (wó).
 N-a-a-wu-rí-ye u-mu-hwí u-ó
 1SG.SM-N.PST-DJ-3Omeat-PFV AUG-3-banana 3-CM
 ‘I have eaten it, the banana.’

While the particle is syntactically optional in (91), the contexts for felicitous use with and without the particle are crucially different: without *-ó*, (91) is an answer to ‘What have you done with the banana?’ (focus just on the verb, the object being given information), while the presence of *-ó* requires that some alternative edible referent has been mentioned before, as in ‘So if you haven’t eaten the avocado, then what about the banana?’. This again shows the contrastive interpretation associated with the particle *-ó*.

As *-ó* can only combine with dislocated NPs, and these necessarily represent given information, the only interpretation that *umuntu* ‘person, someone, human being’ can receive in (92) is generic. Furthermore, this allows for alternatives and hence contrast with other living beings.

- (92) Umuntu wé, azoobazwa ivyó yakóze.
 u-mu-ntu wé a-zoo-báz-w-a i-bi-ó a-a-kór-ye^H
 AUG-1-person 1.CM 1SM-FUT-ask-PASS-FV AUG-8-PRO 1SM-N.PST-do-PFV.REL
 ‘Man will be held responsible for what he has done.’ (as opposed to animals or trees)

When a contrast is made between two active referents, it is infelicitous to mark the first referent by *-ó*, but it is preferred for the second referent to have the particle, either by itself or with *na-*, both illustrated in (93).

- (93) (What is the man holding and what is the woman holding? + QUIS picture)
 Umugabo (*wé) afise igikombe; umugoré nawé/wé afise isáhaáni.
 u-mu-gabo wé a-fit-ye i-ki-kombe u-mu-goré na-we/we
 AUG-1-man 1.CM 1SM-have-PFV AUG-7-cup AUG-1-woman and-1PRO/1.CM
 a-fit-ye i-sahani
 1SM-have-PFV AUG-9.plate
 ‘The man has a cup; the woman (as for her), she has a plate.’

When a non-subject is contrasted in the same way, it is naturally fronted and marked by the particle, as in (94) and (95). In both examples, a superset is introduced in the preceding question, and two contrasting subsets are mentioned in the answer.

- (94) (Does Yona buy coffee for his colleagues?)
 Yona agurira agahawá shéebuja ariko bagenziwé (bó) abagurira icáayi.
 Yona a-Ø-gur-ir-a a-ka-hawá shéebuja ariko
 Jonas 1SM-PRS.CJ-buy-APPL-FV AUG-12-coffee his.boss but
 ba-genzi-wé ba-ó a-Ø-ba-gur-ir-a i-ki-áayi
 2-colleague-POSS.1 2-CM 1SM-PRS.CJ-2OM-buy-APPL-FV AUG-7-tea
 ‘Jonas buys coffee for his boss but (as for) his colleagues, he buys them tea.’
- (95) (Did s/he iron the clothes?)
 Amashaáti yaayagooroye ariko amasume (yó) yayaretse uko.
 a-ma-shaáti a-a-a-ya-gooror-ye ariko a-ma-sume a-ó
 AUG-6-shirt 1SM-N.PST-DJ-6OM-iron-PFV but AUG-6-towel 6-CM
 a-a-a-ya-rek-ye uko
 1SM-N.PST-DJ-6OM-leave-PFV like.that
 ‘The shirts, s/he has ironed them but (as for) the towels, s/he has left them like that.’

As the particle associates with topics, it can be added to the predicate doubling construction discussed in Section 4. When present, it can highlight the concessive aspect of meaning, or give a mirative or exclamative flavour, as the underspecification of interpretations in (96) and (97) shows.

- (96) Ukwooga kó aróoze!
u-ku-óoga ku-ó a-ra-óog-ye
AUG-15-swim 15-CM 1SM-PRS.DJ-swim-PFV
'She has swum a lot.' (more than usual or than expected)
- (97) Kwandika kó uraanditse.
ku-andika ku-ó u-ra-andik-ye
15-write 15-CM 2SG.SM-PRS.DJ-write-PFV
'You have really written a lot!' (more than expected)
'Well, at least you have written.' (but it isn't very good)

The same mirative/exclamative flavour can be present when *-ó* is used with a (non-infinitival) NP, as illustrated in (98) and (99). The contrastive or exclamative interpretation is dependent on the context. Here, prosody/intonation plays an important role in removing ambiguity. For example, in the exclamative context, the construction has an exclamatory intonational reading, as in (98), while in a contrastive context, we have two intonational contours, one ascending and the other descending which respectively affect the first part and the second part of the sentence, as in (99).

- (98) (Context: You come outside after it has rained and see lots of puddles and even broken branches.)
Imvúra yó iraguuye!
i-n-vúra i-ó i-ra-gu-ye
AUG-9-rain 9-CM 9SM-PRS.DJ-fall-PFV
'It has really rained (a lot)!'
- (99) Abaana bó, arabafise.
a-ba-áana ba-ó a-ra-ba-fit-ye
AUG-2-child 2-CM 1SM-DJ-2OM-have
- a. 'As for children, s/he has them.' (but the rest not)
(Contrastive situation: Does s/he have a house, cows, and children now?)
- b. 'Children s/he has enough.'
(Exclamative situation: I am surprised that s/he has so many children!)

The surprise at the excessive extent of the event as a whole can also be marked on just the object as in (100), reinforced by the ideophone *pé*. There is no contrastive interpretation of *amáazi* 'water' here.

- (100) (Context: You are swimming in the lake, I go away for some shopping, when I come back you're still swimming there.)

Amáazi yó, urayooze pé!

a-ma-zi a-ó u-ra-ya-óog-ye pe

AUG-6-water 6-CM 2SG.SM-PRS.DJ-6OM-swim-PFV IDEO

'You have swum a long time!'

To summarise, -ó originates as a pronoun and still functions as such, but has further developed as a marker to indicate contrast on given (topical) referents. A next step in the research on this particle should include the interaction of the particle with specific contexts to specify in detail the possibilities for mirative and exclamative interpretations.

6 Copular constructions

There are four constructions in Kirundi that involve a copula and some form or relative clause: 1) the presentational, introduced by *hari(ho)*; 2) the basic cleft; 3) the pseudocleft; and 4) the reverse pseudocleft/left-peripheral NP + cleft. These constructions can be distinguished not only by their syntactic configuration but also their information structure. We discuss these in turn, after we present general information on the copula and verb 'to be', which are relevant to all four constructions. Throughout this section, we build on Lafkioui et al. (2016), who provide an in-depth discussion of these constructions on the basis of corpus data. We add to their analysis by providing further tests for the exact interpretation of each of the constructions.

6.1 Copular verbs

There are four markers involved in nominal predication: invariant *ni/si*, inflected verbs *-ri* and *ba-*, and negative presentational marker *ntaa*. We also refer to Lafkioui et al. (2016) for discussion of copulas in Kirundi.

The invariant copula used in each of the constructions mentioned is used to create a nominal predicate. As such, it does not accept valency-changing or other derivational morphology, and cannot inflect for tense, aspect, mood, and person. The only variation is the affirmative *ni* vs. negative *si*. We show its use in a predication copular clause in (101), and in a cleft in (102) and (103).

- (101) Iryo koóti ryaawe ni/si rishaásha.

i-ri-o koóti ri-aawe ni/si ri-shaásha

AUG-5-DEM₃ jacket 5-POSS.2SG COP/COP.NEG 5-new

'This jacket of yours is/is not new.'

- (102) (What did you bring us from market?)
 Ni ibitúumbura nabaázaniye.
 ni i-bi-túumbura N-a-ba-zan-ir-ye^H
 COP AUG-8-doughnut 1SG.SM-N.PST-2OM-bring-APPL-PFV.REL
 ‘It is doughnuts that I brought you.’

- (103) (This water was poured by Kabura.)
 Oya, si we yayasheshe.
 oya, si wé a-a-a-sees-ye^H
 no, COP.NEG 1.PRO 1SM-N.PST-6OM-pour-PFV.REL
 ‘No, it wasn’t him who poured it out.’

The invariant copula *ni/si* is only used to express the present tense – when tense or aspect other than the general present needs to be indicated, the copular verb *-ri* is used, a reflex of Proto-Bantu **di*. This verb is not restricted in inflection, taking prefixes for tense and a subject marker, as shown for a simple predicative clause in (104), for a cleft in (105), and for a presentational construction in (106).

- (104) (How many were the children you told me about?)
 Abo báana baari baké caane.
 a-ba-o ba-ána ba-a-ri ba-ké caane
 AUG-2-DEM₂ AUG-2-child 2SM-N.PST-be 2-few INT
 ‘These children were very few.’
- (105) (Who you were talking with?)
 Yari Jeanine aje kundamutsa.
 a-a-ri Jeanine a-əz-ye^H ku-n-ramutsa
 1SM-N.PST-be Jeanine 1SM-come-PFV.REL 15-1SG.OM-greet
 ‘It was Jeanine who came to greet me.’
- (106) A: Why are there so many people in your home? (after seeing a crowd of people at B’s place.)
 B: Hari abantu baatuúzaniye akayoga.
 ha-Ø-ri a-ba-ntu ba-a-tu-zan-ir-ye^H
 EXP-PRS-be AUG-2-person 2SM-N.PST-1PL.OMbring-APPL-PFV.REL
 a-ka-yogá
 AUG-12-beer
 ‘There are people who brought us beer.’

The verb *-ri* can and must also be used in a subordinate clause, in the past as in (107), but strikingly also in the present tense, with an impersonal subject marker *a-* as in (107b), called an expletive marker by Lafkioui et al. (2016). The invariant copula *ni/si* is unacceptable, shown in (107d), and so is normal subject inflection, as in (107c).

(107) (Context: About the noise heard the night before.)

- a. Biyumviira kó baarí abasumá baarí baaje kwiiba imódoka yíiwé.
Ba-iyumviir-a kó ba-a-rí a-ba-sumá ba-a-ri^H
2SM-think-FV COMP 2SM-N.PST-be AUG-2-thief 2SM-N.PST-be.REL
ba-əz-ye^H ku-iiba i-módoka i-iíwé
2SM-come-PFV.REL 15-steal AUG-9-car 9-POSS.1
‘They think it was the thieves who came to steal his car.’
- b. (...) kó a-Ø-rí a-ba-sumá ba-a-ri^H
(...) COMP EXP-PRS-be AUG-2-thief 2SM-N.PST-be.REL
ba-əz-ye^H ku-iiba i-módoka i-iíwé
2SM-come-PFV.REL 15-steal AUG-9-car 9-POSS.1
‘(...) that it is the thieves who came to steal his car.’
- c. * (...) kó ba-Ø-rí a-ba-sumá ba-a-ri^H
(...) COMP 2SM-PRS-be AUG-2-thief 2SM-N.PST-be.REL
ba-əz-ye^H ku-iiba i-módoka i-iíwé
2SM-come-PFV.REL 15-steal AUG-9-car 9-POSS.1
int. ‘(...) that it is the thieves who came to steal his car.’
- d. * (...) kó ni/si a-ba-sumá ba-a-ri^H ba-əz-ye^H
(...) COMP COP AUG-2-thief 2SM-N.PST-be.REL 2SM-come-PFV.REL
ku-iiba i-módoka i-iíwé
15-steal AUG-9-car 9-POSS.1
int. ‘(...) that it was the thieves who came to steal his car.’

There is a third verb of existence, which is used in presentationals. This is *-bá*, which can be translated as ‘be, exist’ in predicational constructions (108), or as ‘live’ (109). Both *-ri* and *-bá* are analysed by Meeussen (1959: 145) as “defective verbs”. While *-bá* is not used in clefts and pseudoclefts, it does occur in presentational constructions, as shown in (110).

- (108) A: How do you appreciate my children now? (A asks B, showing him his children whom he had seen some time ago.)
- B: Mbona baárabáaye beezá caane.
N-bón-a ba-á-ra-bá-ye ba-iizá caane
1SG.SM-see-FV 2SM-RMT.PST-DJ-be-PFV 2-beautiful INT
‘I see that they have become very beautiful.’

- (109) (Context: A says to B, showing her people who are sitting next to them.)
 Aba bantu baba iwacu.
 a-ba-a ba-ntu ba-Ø-bá-a iwacu
 AUG-2-DEM₁ AUG-2-person 2SM-PRS-live-FV our.home
 ‘These people live with us.’
- (110) (Context: Telling a story of the panther.)
 Haábaaye ingwe yavyáaye ibibuguru ndwi, irahéza yingiinga icuúya
 ngo kiyisigáranire abáana.
 ha-á-Ø-bá-ye i-N-gwe i-á-vyáar-ye^H
 EXP-RMT.PST-CJ-be-PFV AUG-9-panther 9SM-RMT.PST-give.birth-PFV.REL
 i-bi-buguru ndwi, i-ra-héz-a i-íngiing-a i-ki-uúya ngo
 AUG-8-cub seven 9SM-DJ-finish-FV 9SM-beg-FV AUG-7-serval in.order
 ki-yi-sigár-an-ir-e a-ba-áana
 7SM-9OM-keep-ASS-APPL-SBJ AUG-2-child
 ‘Once upon a time there was a panther who gave birth to seven cubs;
 she begged the serval to keep her children for her (during her absence).’
 (*Imigani*, Contes, 1940s – BantUGhent corpus)

The two forms *-bá* and *-ri* are in complementary distribution, even in the presentational construction. For example, *-ri* cannot be used in future tense (111) or perfective aspect (112), where instead *-bá* needs to be used.

- (111) a. Ejó hazooba ináama y’abashiingamateeká.
 ejó ha-zoo-bá-a i-náama i-a
 tomorrow EXP-FUT-be-FV AUG-5.meeting 5-CONN
 a-ba-shiingamateeká
 AUG-2-parliamentarian
 ‘Tomorrow there will be a meeting of parliamentarians.’
- b. *Ejó ha-zoo-ri i-náama i-a
 tomorrow EXP-FUT-be-FV AUG-5.meeting 5-CONN
 a-ba-shiingamateeká
 AUG-2-parliamentarian
- (112) a. Aho heepfó harabáaye isaánganya mu mwaánya uhezé.
 a-ha-o heepfó ha-Ø-ra-bá-ye i-saánganya mu
 AUG-16-DEM₂ down EXP-PRS-DJ-be-PFV AUG-5.accident 18
 mu-aánya u-her-ye^H
 3-time 3SM-finish-PFV.REL
 ‘Down there, an accident happens at the last moment.’

- b. * A-ha-o heepfó ha-Ø-ra-ri i-saánganya mu
 AUG-16-DEM₂ down EXP-PRS-DJ-be-PFV AUG-5.accident 18
 mu-aánya u-her-ye^H
 3-time 3SM-finish-PFV.REL

A question that is relevant for basic clefts is whether the invariant copula *ni* has further lost its predicative functions in a cleft and is now simply a discourse operator (Lambrecht 1994, Muller 2002, Blanche-Benvensite 2002). This has been argued for Kiitharaka (Abels & Muriungi 2008) and Kikuyu (Schwarz 2007), for example, and is suggested for Kirundi by Lafkioui et al. (2016). However, considering the variation between *ni* and *-ri* in Kirundi, fulfilling the same function, as well as the fact that the lexical verb in the cleft is marked as relative (by a high tone) suggest that the biclausal cleft structure is still present and the copula functions to create a nominal predicate.

Finally, there is a negative presentational marker *ntaa*, used in simple assertions as in (113) and (114), and in presentational constructions as in (115).

- (113) (How many members did you have in your meeting?)

Ntaa na bátatu.

ntaa na ba-tatu

NEG.COP even 2-three

‘There were not even three.’

- (114) A: I will come to you tomorrow to buy maize.

B: Ntaa bigóori biriho.

Ntaa bi-góori bi-ri=hó.

NEG.COP 8-maize 8-be.REL=16.PRO

‘There is no maize (that is here).’

- (115) A: Who were you talking to?

B: Ntaa muntu twavugana. Nari ndirimvye gusa.

ntaa mu-ntu tu-a-vúg-an-a^H N-a-ri

NEG.COP 1-person 1PL.SM-N.PST-talk-ASS-FV.REL 1SG.SM-N.PST-be

N-rírimb-ye gusa

1SG.SM-sing-PFV only

‘We weren’t talking to anyone. I had just sung.’ (lit. there wasn’t anyone we talked to)

Ntaa can be analysed as consisting of negation *nti-* and a stem *-a* (Lafkioui et al. 2016). Like *-ri*, it changes to the expletive marker *a-* in a dependent clause,

followed by negation *-ta-* and stem *-a*. These are illustrated in (116a) and (116b), respectively. This suggests that we are not dealing with a predicate of existence but one of possession ‘have’; these are known to participate in presentational constructions (cf. French *il y a*, Swahili *ku-na*, see Marten 2013).

(116) (How many students found the exam?)

- a. Ntaa n’umwe yabitoóye.
 ntaa n’ u-mwé a-á-bi-tóo-ye^H
 NEG.COP even 1-one 1SM-RMT.PST-8OM-find-PFV.REL
 ‘There is no one who found it.’
- b. Mbona (kó) ataa n’umwe yabitoóye.
 N-bón-a (kó) a-taa n’ u-mwe
 1SG.SM-see-FV (COMP) EXP-NEG.COP even 1-one
 a-á-bi-tóor-ye^H
 1SM-RMT.PST-8OM-find-PFV.REL
 ‘I see that there is no one who found it.’

6.2 Presentational

This section summarises the data and analysis by Nshemezimana (2016: chapter 6) and Nshemezimana & Mberamihigo (2021). We refer to these sources for further data and analysis of the presentational construction. The presentational construction with *hari(ho)* consists of the copular verb *-ri* inflected with the expletive subject marker *ha-* and an optional enclitic *=ho*, a noun phrase or pronoun, and a relative clause, as in (117).

(117) (Why are you here on the road?)

Hari abantu baajé kuturamutsa; turabáherekeje.
 ha-Ø-ri a-ba-ntu ba-a-əz-ye^H ku-tu-ramutsa
 EXP-PRS-be AUG-2-people 2SM-N.PST-come-PFV.REL 15-1PL.OM-greet
 tu-ra-ba-herekez-ye
 1PL.SM-DJ-2OM-accompany-PFV
 ‘There are people who came to visit us. We accompany them.’

The NP can also be introduced by the inflected⁴ verb *fit-* ‘have’ (118) or a marker *nga*, as in (119). For further discussion on these variants we refer to Nshemezimana (2016) as well as the discussion in Marten (2013) for Swahili, and here concentrate on the construction with *hari(ho)*.

⁴Note that *fit-* can only be inflected in a limited number of TAM conjugations.

- (118) (Ex.385, Nshemezimana 2016: 260)
 Urafise inaanga yiivúza.
 u-ra-fit-ye i-nanga i-i-vúz-a^H
 2SG.SM-PRS.DJ-have-PFV AUG-9-zither 9SM-REFL-play-FV.REL
 ‘You have a self-playing zither.’
 (*IragiNdanga*, Traditional culture, 2000s)
- (119) (Ex.396, Nshemezimana 2016: 260)
 Ngaabó abaáhaamvye umugabo waawe bari ku ruugi.
 nga-a-ba-o a-ba-á-haamb-ye^H u-mu-gabo
 PRSNT-AUG-2-DEM₂ AUG-2-RMT.PST-bury-PFV.REL AUG-1-husband
 u-aawe ba-ri ku ru-uugi
 1-POSS.2SG 2SM-be 17 11-door
 ‘Here they are, those who buried your husband are at the door.’
 (*UbwuzuBushasha*, Religion, 1960s)

The subject marker *ha-* is expletive in this construction, not referring to an actual location. When the clitic =*ho* is added, the resulting interpretation is slightly different, as discussed below.

- (120) (Ex. 43, Nshemezimana 2016: 41)
 Harihó umusóre yiitooye aja kurésa umukoóbwa
 ha-Ø-ri=hó u-mu-sóre a-á-i-tóor-ye^H
 EXP-PRS-be=16 AUG-1-young.man 1SM-RMT.PST-REFL-prepare-PFV.REL
 a-gi-a ku-résa u-mu-koóbwa
 1SM-go-FV 15-entice AUG-1-girl
 ‘There is a young man who went looking for a fiancée.’

While in (120) both *ha-* and =*ho* are expletive, referring – if to anything – to the current point in the discourse, they can also refer to an actual location. In this case, it is no longer a presentational construction but rather a case of Locative Inversion. For example, in (121), *ha-* and =*ho* refer to *háno mu rugó* ‘here in the courtyard’, indicating the exact place of the referent that forms the argument of the verb. The relative clause in this example only modifies the NP and could be omitted, in contrast to the presentational constructions, where the relative clause forms part of the construction.

- (121) Háno mu rugo harihó imbwá, irikó iriinyeza.
 hano mu ru-gó ha-Ø-ri=hó i-N-bwa i-ri=kó^H
 here 18 11-courtyard 16SM-PRS-be=16 AUG-9-dog 9SM-be=17.REL
 i-i-nyegez-a
 9SM-REFL-hide-FV
 ‘Here in the courtyard is a dog, which is hiding.’

An argument could be made to analyse *hari(ho)* as a unit, functioning as a “presentational marker”. If this were the case, the optionality of *=ho* is unexplained, and the ambiguity with Locative Inversion just shown would be unexpected. Furthermore, it would be unclear why the verb is marked as relative. This is instead understood naturally if these are biclausal structures: they consist of a main clause presenting the referent by means of the predicator *-ri*, and a relative clause. Another test would be to see if tense marking is added if the presentational is in the past tense.

What is special about the relative clause in this construction, though, is that it does not contain the typical backgrounded or presupposed information known from a cleft (see Section 6.3). Instead, the predicate in the relative clause forms part of the presented situation. The newly presented content is not merely the existence or presence of an entity (as in DAI), but a whole situation. The relative clause thus seems to add the same predication as in its non-presentative basic structure in (122) and (123).

- (122) (basic structure corresponding to (117))

Abantu baaje kuturamutsa.

a-ba-ntu ba-a-a-az-ye ku-tu-ramutsa

AUG-2-people 2SM-N.PST-DJ-come-PFV 15-1PL.OM-greet

‘People came to visit us.’

- (123) (basic structure corresponding to (120))

Umusóre yariútooye aja kuréssha umukoóbwa.

u-mu-sóre a-á-ra-i-tóor-ye a-gi-a

AUG-1-young.man 1SM-RMT.PST-DJ-REFL-prepare-PFV 1SM-go-FV

ku-réssha u-mu-koóbwa

15-entice AUG-1-girl

‘A young man went looking for a fiancée.’

This is also where the construction in (121) differs, as the relative clause here merely provides background information and the main point of information is the existence/presence of the dog in the courtyard.

The context in which these presentationals are used also indicates that all the information is provided as new. Therefore, these arethetic sentences, used to introduce a referent and at the same time add information about that referent. Crucially, the referent to which the NP in this construction refers is presented as non-topical, but cannot be in focus. This is evident in the unacceptability of interrogatives in the *hari* construction (124) and its incompatibility with *gusa* ‘only’ (125), for example.

- (124) * Hari iki muriko murarondera?
 ha-ri iki mu-ronder-a^H
 EXP-be what 2PL.SM-look.for-FV.REL
 ‘What are you looking for?’
- (125) Harihó umusóre (*gusa) yiítooye aja kurésha umukoóbwa.
 ha-Ø-ri=hó u-mu-sóre (*gusa)
 EXP-PRS-be=16 AUG-1-young.man (*only)
 a-á-i-tóor-ye^H a-gi-a ku-résha u-mu-koóbwa
 1SM-RMT.PST-REFL-prepare-PFV.REL 1SM-go-FV 15-entice AUG-1-girl
 ‘There is (*only) a young man who went looking for a fiancée.’

The contexts for (126) also indicate that the whole sentence is presented as one piece of new information (Lambrecht’s 1994 “sentence focus”), as the construction with *hari* cannot be used in a corrective context.

- (126) (Context 1: What happened, why are you here?
 #Context 2: Are you looking for the keys?)
 Hari amaherá yataakáye turíko turarondera.
 ha-ri a-ma-herá a-a-táakar-ye^H tu-ri=kó^H
 EXP-be AUG-6-money 6SM-N.PST-loose-PFV.REL 1PL.SM-be=17.REL
 tu-ra-ronder-a
 1PL.SM-PRS.DJ-look.for-FV
 ‘There is some lost money that we are looking for.’

Because of its presentational function, there is a definiteness effect: the presented referent should be newly introduced, and hence proper names of familiar people are not accepted.

- (127) * (adapted from (117))
 Ha-ri Petero a-a-əz-ye^H ku-tu-ramutsa
 EXP-be 1.Peter 1SM-N.PST-come-PFV.REL 15-1PL.OM-greet
 ‘There is Peter who came to visit us.’
- (128) * (adapted from (120))
 Ha-ri=hó Petero a-á-i-tóor-ye^H a-gi-a
 EXP-be=16 1.Peter 1SM-RMT.PST-REFL-prepare-PFV.REL 1SM-go-FV
 ku-résha u-mu-koóbwa
 15-entice AUG-1-girl
 ‘There is Peter who went looking for a fiancée.’

We conclude that the presentational construction in Kirundi is used forthetic sentences, and consists of an indefinite predicate marked by *hari*(=*ho*) and a relative clause. It therefore formally fits with other types of clefts, as discussed in the next subsections.

6.3 Basic clefts

Clefts are another copular construction in Kirundi, consisting of a non-verbal predicate (copula + NP) and a relative clause, as is familiar from languages all around the world. Kirundi being a pro-drop language, it does not feature an expletive in the pre-copular position; hence we follow Nshemezimana (2016) and Lafkioui et al. (2016) and call it a “basic cleft” instead of an “it-cleft”. The basic cleft is illustrated in (129). The relative clause is marked by a high tone, which is variable in its surface position, but indicated in the gloss as part of the final vowel.

(129) (Context: B and friends have come to A’s place)

A: Who are you looking for?

B: Ni wewé turondéra.

ni wewé tu-ronder-a^H

COP 2SG.PRO 1PL.SM-look.for-FV.REL

‘It’s you we’re looking for.’

For further formal description of basic clefts in Kirundi we refer to Lafkioui et al. (2016), and here we concentrate on the interpretation. Basic clefts typically express focus on the clefted constituent (the predicative noun following the copula), with the relative clause providing the presupposed, given information, and the clefted constituent being asserted as the referent to which this information applies. This can be seen in the question-answer pair in (130). Note that the basic cleft can be used for subjects and objects alike.

(130) A: Ni nde yavunye iyo ntébe?

ni nde a-a-vun-ye^H i-i-o n-tébe

COP who 1SM-N.PST-break-PFV.REL AUG-9-DEM₂ 9-chair

‘Who broke that chair?’

B: Ni Kabura yayivunyé.

ni Kabura a-a-yi-vún-ye^H

COP 1.Kabura 1SM-N.PST-9OM-break-PFV.REL

‘It was Kabura who broke it.’

Unlike the typical exhaustive interpretation that is found in *it*-clefts in English and other languages (e.g. Horn 1981, É. Kiss 1998, Declerck 1988, Hedberg 2000, Beaver & Clark 2008), the type of focus expressed by the basic cleft in Kirundi seems to be underspecified, as it occurs in various contexts. We present some of these. Apart from simple focus as in Q-A pairs, as in (131), clefts can be used in “mention some” contexts (132), which are necessarily non-exhaustive, but they function equally well in a corrective context (133), and are compatible with exhaustive *gusa* ‘only’ (134).

- (131) (Who is sitting under the tree?)
 Ni Kabura yiicáye muusi y’ígítí.
 ni Kabura a-iicar-ye^H musí y-a i-ki-ti
 COP 1.Kabura 1SM-sit-PFV.REL 18.under 19-CONN AUG-7-tree
 ‘It is Kabura who is sitting under the tree.’
- (132) (What sort of milk can I drink?)
 Ni ay’iinká woonywa, nk’ akarorero.
 ni a-a i-n-ká u-oo-nyo-a^H nk’ a-ka-rorero
 COP 6-CONN AUG-9-cow 2SG.SM-POT-drink-FV.REL for AUG-12-example
 ‘You can drink cow’s milk, for example.’
- (133) (Did you drink beer?)
 Oya ni ifanta nanyóonye (si ikiyeri).
 oya ni ifanta N-a-nyó-ye^H (si i-ki-yeri)
 no COP 9.fanta 1SG.SM-N.PST-drink-PFV.REL (not AUG-7-beer)
 ‘No, it’s a fanta that I drank (not a beer).’
- (134) Ni umuceri (gusa) nariyé (s’umuceri n’inyama).
 ni u-mu-ceri (gusa) N-a-ri-ye^H (si u-mu-ceri n’
 COP AUG-3-rice only 1SG.SM-N.PST-eat-PFV.REL (not AUG-3-rice and
 i-nyama)
 10-meat)
 ‘It’s only the rice that I ate (not rice and meat).’

It seems that basic clefts in Kirundi can even be used in *thetic* contexts, where no information is presupposed. The relative clause here functions similarly to its use in the presentationals (see further Section 6.2). Lafkioui et al. (2016: 98) also note this use, and question whether these constructions are actual basic clefts. Silvio Cruschina (p.c.) suggests that: “They could actually be specificational copular sentences or pseudoclefts with an omitted but implicit initial constituent

related to the context and a relative clause attached to the postcopular nominal phrase: e.g. ‘The driver believed that [what caused the noise] was a tree branch that hit the car’, or ‘[The unusual noise that we heard] is a child who had fallen down’.”

- (135) (Context: A dog jumps into the passing truck without the driver’s knowledge. The driver hears some kind of unusual noise but does not stop. A person who saw this recounts what happened with the driver, indicating what the driver believed the noise heard to be.)

Umushoferi yagira ngo ni ishami ry’igiti rikubise ku muduga.
u-mu-shoferi a-a-gir-a ngo ni i-shami ri-a
AUG-1-driver 1SM-N.PST-believe-FV QUOT COP AUG-branch 5-CONN
i-ki-ti ri-kubit-ye^H ku mu-duga
AUG-7-tree 5SM-hit-PFV.REL 17 3-car

‘The driver believed that it was a tree branch hitting the car.’

- (136) A: What happened? (after hearing an unusual noise)

B: Ni umwáana yitúuye haasí.
ni u-mu-áana a-i-túur-ye^H haasí
COP AUG-1-child 1SM-REFL-fall-PFV.REL down

‘It is a child who falls down.’

An in-between case is presented in (137), where the clefted constituent forms the answer to the immediate question, but the addition of the relative clause (which does not contain presupposed information) seems to answer a hidden question ‘What was going on?’ or ‘Why were you talking to this person?’, thus resulting in a larger constituent being in focus.

- (137) A: Who were you talking to outside?

B: Yari Jeanne yaríkó araánsiguurira ibiháruuro.
a-a-ri Jeanne a-a-ri=ko^H
1SM-N.PST-be 1.Jeanne 1SM-N.PST-be=17.REL
a-ra-n-siguur-ir-a i-bi-háruuro
1SM-DJ-1SG.OM-explain-FV AUG-8-mathematic
‘It was Jeanne who explained mathematics to me.’

Interestingly, the clefted constituent can be modified by *na* ‘and, also, even’ (in line with the wider non-exclusive use of the basic cleft), but the addition of the scalar additive particle *ndetse* ‘even’ renders the construction ungrammatical. At the moment we do not have a satisfying explanation.

- (138) Ni (*ndetse) n' ifanta nanyóoye.
 ni ndetse n' i-fanta N-a-nyó-ye^H
 COP even and AUG-9-fanta 1SG.SM-N.PST-drink-PFV.REL
 'It is even a fanta that I drank.'

The overall underspecified focus interpretation of the basic cleft means that its precise interpretation is highly context-sensitive, as also concluded by Lafkioui et al. (2016).

6.4 Pseudoclefts

Pseudoclefts are complex structures consisting of two parts (Den Dikken 2017, Apothéloz 2012, Roubaud 2000). The first part is a free relative clause, and the second a predicate noun, in the following example marked by the copula *ni*.

- (139) Abaádutaahanye ni abahuúngu baácu.
 a-ba-á-tu-taahan-ye^H ni a-ba-huúngu ba-áacu
 AUG-2-RMT.PST-1PL.OM-drive-PFV.REL COP AUG-2-son 2-POSS.1PL
 'Those who drove us home are our sons.'

The relative clause here functions as an NP. When the antecedent of the relative clause is a subject, we see a headless relative ("relative autonome" in Meeussen 1959: 133) – a nominalisation marked on the verb by an augment and noun class marker corresponding to the noun class of the antecedent, as in (140). Non-subject relatives, on the other hand, are marked by a pronoun ("pronom préces-sif" in Meeussen 1959), as illustrated in (141) where the pronoun *icó* precedes the relative verb (which is marked by a high tone).

- (140) Icaádukijije ni ubuntu bwa Yeésu.
 i-ki-á-tu-kiz-ye^H ni u-bu-ntu bu-a Yeésu
 AUG-7-RMT.PST-1PL.OM-save-PFV.REL COP AUG-14-grace 14-CONN Jesus
 'What saved us is the grace of Jesus.'
- (141) Icó twuúmviise ni ico tukubwííye.
 i-ki-ó tu-á-úumv-ye^H ni i-ki-o
 AUG-7-PRO 1PL.SM-RMT.PST-hear-PFV.REL COP AUG-7-DEM₂
 tu-Ø-ku-bwíír-ye^H
 1PL.SM-PRS-2SG.OM-tell-PFV.REL
 'What we heard is what we tell you.'

The two parts of the pseudocleft have a distinctive intonation, where the first part has a rising intonational contour indicating a continuation, and the second ending with a concluding intonation. This differs from the intonation of basic clefts, which form one intonational phrase. The segmentation is indicated by the brackets in (142). See again Lafkioui et al. (2016) for further discussion.

- (142) (Icó twiipfúuza) (ni ukuguma ku Mana yáacu).
i-ki-ó tu-íipfuuz-a^H ni u-ku-guma ku Mana i-áacu
AUG-7-PRO 1PL.SM-wish-FV.REL COP AUG-15-stay 17 9.God 9-POSS.1PL
‘What we wish is to stay with our God.’

Formally, pseudoclefts are copular clauses of which the first part is a free relative. The term “pseudocleft”, however, is only used for specificational copular clauses (143) and not predicational ones, even though it is perfectly possible to create a predicational copular clause of which the first term is a free relative, as in (144). The difference can be seen in the fact that the identificational copular clause or pseudocleft in (143), but not the predicational copular clause in (144), can be used to answer ‘What did you bring?’ (see Den Dikken 2013, 2017 on predicational and specificational cleft sentences).

- (143) Icó twaazanyé ni amaherá y’ishuúre. [specificational]
i-ki-ó tu-a-zan-ye^H ni a-ma-herá a-a
AUG-7-PRO 1PL.SM-N.PST-bring-PFV.REL COP AUG-6-maney 6-CONN
i-shuúre
AUG-5-school
‘What we brought is the school fees.’
- (144) Icó twaazanyé ni ciza. [predicational]
i-ki-ó tu-a-zan-ye^H ni ki-iizá
AUG-7-PRO 1PL.SM-N.PST-bring-PFV.REL COP 7-good
‘What we brought is good.’

From an interpretational point of view, the free relative forms the presupposition (hence needs to be referential) and the predicative noun is the assertion. Together, they result in identificational focus. This is illustrated in (145), where the free relative establishes that there exists something that threw him into disarray, and the postcopular noun phrase identifies this as the death of his child.

- (145) Icaámuteeye agahiinda ni urupfu rw’umwáana wíiwé.
 [i-ki-á-mu-téer-ye a-ka-hiinda]^{TOP} ni [u-ru-pfu
 AUG-7-RMT.PST-1OM-cause-PFV.REL AUG-12-disarray COP AUG-11-death
 ru-a u-ma-ána u-íiwé]^{FOC}
 11-CONN AUG-1-child 1-POSS.1
 ‘What threw him into disarray was the death of his child.’

As the first part of the pseudocleft (the free relative) relates to the previous discourse, the pseudocleft can function as a “bridge” between the old and new information (Nshemezimana 2016: 244). This is illustrated in (146). Since the free relative thus functions as a topic, it can also be marked by the contrastive topic marker *-o*, as shown in (86) above.

- (146) (Nshemezimana 2016: 244, Lafkioui et al. 2016: 90)
 (Context: Two people are discussing about the hunting profession that was practised in the past but which is no longer allowed for reasons of environmental protection. Speaking of those who still support this practice, one tells it in these terms:)
 Abashígikiye uwo mucó ni abahiígi bakiriho.
 a-ba-shígikir-ye^H u-u-o mu-có ni a-ba-hiígi
 AUG-2-support-PFV.REL AUG-3-DEM₂ 3-practice COP AUG-2-hunter
 ba-ki-ri=ho^H
 2SM-PERS-be=16.REL
 ‘Those who support this practice are the hunters who are still alive.’
 (IragiNdanga, Culture traditionnelle, 2000s)

In answers to content questions, pseudoclefts first repeat the given information from the question and then add the focused answer, as illustrated in (147).

- (147) (Nshemezimana 2016: 245, Lafkioui et al. 2016: 93–94)
- a. Abaróongoora Ekleziyá ni baandé?
 a-ba-roongoor-a^H ekleziyá ni ba-ndé?
 AUG-2-lead-FV.REL church COP 2-who
 ‘Who leads the (Catholic) church?’
 - b. Abaróongoora Ekleziyá, ni Paapa n’ábeépiskoópi.
 a-ba-róongoor-a^H ekleziyá ni paapa na a-ba-épiskoópi.
 AUG-2-lead-FV.REL church COP 1.pope and AUG-2-bishop
 ‘Those who lead the (Catholic) Church are the pope and the bishops.’
 (Yaga, Religion, 1960s)

Pseudoclefts can also be used in a contrastive context, as illustrated in (148).

- (148) (Nshemezimana 2016: 246, Lafkioui et al. 2016: 91)
 Ivyó dutuunzé si ivyaácu ni ivyáawe.
 i-bi-ó tu-túung-ye^H si i-bi-aácu ni
 AUG-8-PRCS 1PL.SM-have-PFV.REL COP AUG-8-POSS.1PL COP
 i-bi-áawe
 AUG-8-POSS.2SG
 ‘What we have is not ours, it is yours.’
 (Karaba, Theatre, 1960)

The fact that the pseudocleft can be used in “mention some” contexts, as in (149), suggests that the focus is not exclusive or exhaustive. The same conclusion is reached for the correction of an incomplete statement, as in (150a): if the statement were interpreted as exhaustive, the corrective reply should have started with ‘no’ (negating the exhaustivity), so the fact that a natural reply starts with ‘yes’ indicates a non-exhaustive focus.

- (149) (Where can I buy a book?)
 Aho wokigurira ni harya, nk’akarorero.
 a-ha-ó u-oo-ki-gur-ir-a^H ni ha-rya nka
 AUG-16-PRO 2SG.SM-POT-7OM-buy-APPL-FV.REL COP 16-DEM₃ for
 a-ka-rorero
 AUG-12-example
 ‘Where you can buy it is there, for example.’
- (150) a. Icó bakenéye ni ugushika urugó.
 i-ki-ó ba-kener-ye^H ni u-ku-shika u-ru-gó
 AUG-7-PRO 2SM-need-PFV.REL COP AUG-15-get.used.to AUG-11-home
 ‘What they need is to get used to the home.’
 b. Ego ariko barakenéye n’ugufashwa.
 ego ariko ba-ra-kener-ye na u-ku-fásh-w-a
 yes but 2SM-DJ-need-PFV also AUG-15-help-PASS-FV
 ‘Yes, but they also need to be helped.’

Example (151) shows how the cleft and pseudocleft can be used in comparable contexts, here contrasting two subjects; ‘the man’ appears in a pseudocleft and ‘the woman’ in a basic cleft.

- (151) (Who throws the stone and who throws the bottle? + photo of a man throwing a bottle and a girl throwing a stone.)
 Icupa uwuriteeye ni umugabo, ariko ibuye ni umukoobwa ariteeye.
 i-cupa u-wu-ri-teer-ye^H ni u-mu-gabo ariko
 AUG-5.bottle AUG-1-5OM-throw-PFV.REL COP AUG-1-man but
 i-buye ni u-mu-koobwa a-ri-teer-ye^H
 AUG-5.stone COP AUG-1-girl 1SM-5OM-throw-PFV.REL
 ‘The bottle, the one who throws it is the man, but the stone, it is the girl who throws it.’

In summary, pseudoclefts in Kirundi (as in other languages) are used to identify a referent, but they can be used in a range of contexts.

6.5 Reverse pseudocleft / left-peripheral NP + cleft

In the pseudoclefts discussed above, the precopular part is a free relative and the postcopular noun identifies the referent described by the free relative. These two parts can also be reversed: If the precopular constituent is a referential noun and the copula is followed by a relative, the construction is called a “reverse pseudocleft”, e.g. ‘[Unlimited internet access] is [what I want]’. Kirundi can form two such constructions, which were not yet distinguished by Nshemezimana (2016) or Lafkioui et al. (2016). They indicate that the initial constituent plays a double pragmatic role as both topic and focus. Here, we show that there are two underlying structures, and we show that the apparent double role as topic and focus may actually be split between the initial noun phrase and the clefted pronoun.

The first form of reverse pseudocleft is illustrated in (152). The postcopular part starts with a demonstrative, which either functions as a relative clause marker when it has a high tone as in (152b), or as a deictic demonstrative without the high tone, as in (152a). Note that in this reverse order, the precopular part is still the topic, and the free relative is the comment/focus, as indicated in the contexts.

- (152) Context 1: We talked about your travels and you told me you’re travelling with someone. A bit later in the conversation, you mention Jean. I ask ‘Which Jean are you talking about?’ (focus on ‘the one we will travel with’)
[#]Context 2: You tell me you will travel with someone. I ask ‘Who will you travel with?’ (focus on ‘Jean’)

- a. Jean ni uwo tuzóojáana.
 Jean ni u-u-o tu-zoo-gi-an-a^H
 1.Jean COP AUG-1-DEM₂ 1PL.SM-FUT-go-ASS-FV.REL
 ‘Jean is **that** one (that we just talked about) that we will travel with.’
- b. Jean ni uwó tuzóojáana.
 Jean ni u-u-o tu-zoo-gi-an-a^H
 1.Jean COP AUG-1-DEM₂ 1PL.SM-FUT-go-ASS-FV.REL
 ‘Jean is **the** one we will travel with.’

The other form of reverse pseudocleft also has an initial noun phrase, a copula, and a relative clause, but here we find no demonstrative but a personal pronoun as the clefted constituent. The verb is still marked relative, as in the basic cleft. In (153), the NP *abáana* ‘children’ and the pronoun *bó* both refer to the same referent, namely the children.

- (153) Abáana bakirí bató ni bó turungíka kw’ishuúre.
 a-ba-áana ba-ki-ri^H ba-tó ni ba-ó tu-rungík-a^H ku
 AUG-2-child 2SM-PERS-be.REL 2-young COP 2-PRO 1PL.SM-send-FV.REL 17
 i-shuúre
 AUG-5.school
 ‘Young children (they) are the ones we send to school.’
 ‘Young children, it’s them we send to school.’

The initial NP seems to be in focus here, as seen in the contexts for (154), and given the fact that it can form the answer to a content question, as in (155b), as alternative to the basic cleft.

- (154) #Context 1: We talked about your travels and you told me you’re travelling with someone. A bit later in the conversation, you mention Jean. I ask ‘Who is Jean?’ (focus on ‘the one we will travel with’)
 Context 2: You tell me you will travel with someone. I ask ‘Who will you travel with?’ (focus on ‘Jean’)
 Jean ni wé tuzóojáana.
 Jean ni wé tu-zoo-gi-an-a^H
 1.Jean COP 1.PRO 1PL.SM-FUT-go-ASS-FV.REL
 ‘Jean is who we will travel with.’

(155) (Who ate my food ?)

- a. Ni Kabura yabiriye. [basic cleft]
 ni Kabura a-a-bi-ri-ye^H
 COP Kabura 1SM-N.PST-8OM-eat-PFV.REL
 ‘It is Kabura who ate it.’
- b. Kabura, ni wé yabiriye. [rev. pseudocleft]
 Kabura ni wé a-a-bi-ri-ye^H
 1.Kabura COP 1.PRO 1SM-N.PST-8OM-eat-PFV.REL
 ‘Kabura, it is him who ate it.’
 ‘Kabura is who ate it.’

An alternative analysis of this “reverse pseudocleft” construction views the initial NP as a separate phrase, and the post-NP part as a basic cleft in which the pronoun is the clefted constituent. Comparing (155b) with the basic cleft in (155a), this analysis takes the pronoun *wé* to be in focus here. The initial NP actually shows some characteristics of a topic, for example the fact that a pause can follow, as indicated by the comma in (155b) above, and the fact that the initial NP cannot be questioned, shown in (156). The construction with a question word as in this example can only be interpreted as an echo question, when you haven’t heard well.

- (156) * Nde ni we tuzoojaana?
 ndé ni wé tu-zoo-gi-an-a^H
 who COP 1.PRO 1PL.SM-FUT-go-ASS-FV.REL
 int. ‘Who is the one you will travel with?’

What forms the focus is thus not the NP but the pronoun in the cleft: *wé* in (155b), *bó* in (153). Nshemezimana (2016) thus proposes that the referent that both the NP and the pronoun refer to thus fulfils a double pragmatic function: it is referential, taking a topic function, and at the same time it is asserted or identified, forming the focus. In the syntax, these functions are neatly distributed over the NP and the pronoun. In example (157), it is clear that the initial NP ‘the neighbours’ is given information in the context – what is in focus here is the fact that they are identified as the ones who compromise us with our parents.

- (157) (Nshemezimana 2016: 248, Lafkioui et al. 2016: 94)
 Igitúma tudashobóra gutéembeerana ukó dushaaká ni ukó **ababáanyi** bé
 n'ábaándi batuboná. Kenshi ababáanyi ni bó baduteéranya n'ábavyéeyi.
 i-ki-tum-a tu-ta-shóbor-a ku-téembeer-an-a ukó
 AUG-7-make-FV.REL 1PL.SM-NEG-can-FV 15-move-ASS-FV as
 tu-shaak-a^H ni ukó a-ba-báanyi be na a-ba-ndi
 1PL.SM-want-FV.REL COP that AUG-2-neighbour with and AUG-2-other
 ba-tu-bón-a^H kenshi a-ba-báanyi ni ba-ó
 2SM-1PL.OM-see-FV.REL often AUG-2-neighbour COP 2-PRO
 ba-tu-téerany-a^H na a-ba-vyéeyi
 2SM-1PL.OM-compromise-FV.REL with AUG-2-parent
 'What makes it impossible for us to go out together like we want is that
 neighbours and others could see us. Often, the neighbours are the ones
 who compromise us with the parents.'
 (*Abahungu*, Education, 1980)

However, this analysis as a topic + basic cleft is suboptimal for contexts where the initial NP does function as a focus, for example as the answer to a question, as in (158), in a correction, as in (159), or when modified by the exhaustive particle 'only', as in (160).

- (158) A: Ni ndé yandiiriye umukaaté?
 ni ndé a-a-N-rí-ir-ye^H u-mu-kaaté
 COP who 1SM-N.PST-1SG.OM-eat-APPL-PFV.REL AUG-3-bread
 'Who ate my bread?'
 B: Pita ni wé yawuriye.
 Pita ni wé a-a-wu-rí-ye^H
 Peter COP 1.PRO 1SM-N.PST-3OM-eat-PFV.REL
 'Peter, it's him who ate it.' / 'Peter is the one who ate it.'
- (159) A: Bukuru asa na sé caane.
 Bukuru a-sa-a na sé caane
 1.Bukuru 1SM-look.like-FV with his.father INT
 'Bukuru looks a lot like his father.'
 B: Oya, Butoyi ni wé basa cane.
 oya Butoyi ni wé ba-sa-a^H caane
 no 1.Butoyi COP 1.PRO 2SM-look.like-FV.REL INT
 'No, Butoyi, he's the one who looks a lot like him.'

- (160) (Tell me about your siblings.)
 Abahuúngu gusa ni bó tuvukána.
 a-ba-huúngu gusa ni ba-ó tu-vúukan-a^H
 AUG-2-boy only COP 2-PRO 1PL.SM-be.sibling-FV.REL
 ‘We only have brothers.’
 lit. ‘Boys only; it’s them that are sibling with us.’

These could be analysed either as a reverse pseudocleft (i.e. a copular construction with an identificational initial NP that is in focus), or alternatively as a fragment answer followed by a basic cleft with a coreferential pronoun. It is very possible that the construction has multiple underlying structures for what looks to be the same on the surface, but further research is required to confirm this. Further research can also confirm the focus interpretation in this construction: if what follows the initial NP is indeed a basic cleft (with the clefted personal pronoun), we would expect the focus interpretation to be the same as that of the basic cleft.

7 Conclusion

Information structure has a fundamental influence on the morphosyntax of Kirundi. It determines the word order to a large degree, with the requirements for topics in the preverbal domain and a final focus position leading to a range of subject inversion constructions. Verbal inflection is also partly determined by information structure, as shown for the behaviour of the conjoint and disjoint verb forms in a larger range of tests than considered in the literature for Kirundi so far. Newly described in this chapter are the predicate doubling constructions: topic doubling is used for verum (with pragmatic extensions of contrast, intensity, and depreciation), and doubling with an in-situ nominalisation of the same predicate results in a prototypicality reading. Equally new is the description of the agreeing particle -ó as a topic marker of a contrastive topic, or inclusive addition when used with *na*. Finally, the chapter has extended earlier descriptions of various copular constructions, pinpointing the focus interpretation of basic clefts, pseudoclefts, and reverse pseudoclefts.

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Abbreviations and symbols

Numbers refer to noun classes, unless followed by SG/PL, in which case the number (1 or 2) refers to first or second person. Tone marking follows Kirundi tradition; high tones are marked by an acute accent; low tones remain unmarked. Capital N indicates a place-assimilating nasal.

*	ungrammatical	DAI	default agreement inversion
?	degraded grammaticality	DEM _X	demonstrative of series X
#	infelicitous in the given context	DJ	disjoint
		EXP	expletive
*(X)	the presence of X is obligatory and cannot grammatically be omitted	FV	final vowel
		IDEO	ideophone
		INCP	inceptive
(*X)	the presence of X would make the sentence ungrammatical	INT	intensifier
(X)	the presence of X is optional	N.PST	near past
		OM	object marker
[] ^{FOC}	focus	PERS	persistive
[] ^H	melodic/floating high tone	POT	potential
[] ^{TOP}	topic	PRCS	precessive pronoun
ASS	associative	PRO	pronoun
AUG	augment	PRSNT	presentative
CJ	conjoint	QUOT	quotative
CM	contrastive marker	RMT.PST	remote past
CONN	connective	SM	subject marker
		VP	verb phrase

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