

# The expression of information structure in Bantu

Edited by

Jenneke van der Wal

Contemporary African Linguistics 12



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# Contents

Preface	iii
<b>1 On the expression of information structure in Bantu</b> Jenneke van der Wal, Allen Asiimwe, Patrick N. Kanampiu, Elisabeth J. Kerr, Zhen Li, Amani Lusekelo, Nelsa Nhantumbo & Ernest Nshemezimana	1
<b>2 The expression of information structure in Tunen</b> Elisabeth J. Kerr	53
<b>3 The expression of information structure in Teke-Kukuya</b> Zhen Li	123
<b>4 The expression of information structure in Kîtharaka</b> Patrick N. Kanampiu & Jenneke van der Wal	199
<b>5 The expression of information structure in Kirundi</b> Ernest Nshemezimana & Jenneke van der Wal	271
<b>6 The expression of information structure in Rukiga</b> Allen Asiimwe & Jenneke van der Wal	335
<b>7 The expression of information structure in Kinyakyusa</b> Amani Lusekelo, Jenneke van der Wal & Simon Msovelwa	407
<b>8 The expression of information structure in Makhuwa-Enahara</b> Jenneke van der Wal	453
<b>9 The expression of information structure in Cicopi</b> Nelsa Nhantumbo & Jenneke van der Wal	511
<b>Index</b>	567



# Preface

In December 2017, the NWO Vidi project *Bantu Syntax and Information Structure* (BaSIS) started at Leiden University, aiming to better understand the influence that information structure has on the (morpho)syntax of Bantu languages. Having now come to the end of the project, we present our findings in this book: 8 chapters on the languages we have investigated, plus an introduction explaining the basics of information structure and our methodology (which is available for other researchers to use).

We wish to acknowledge the help we received during the project and in the writing of this book. Our heartfelt gratitude in the first place goes to all the speakers who patiently, willingly, and with lots of laughter helped us analyse their languages: Bahati Laikon Mwakasege, Peter Mwasyika Mwaipyana, Yona Mwaipaja, Pamellah Geiga Birungi, the late Joel Tumusiime, Ronald Twesigomwe, Dennis Muriuki Katheru, Philip Murithi Nyamu, Onesmus Mugambi Kamwara, Jonah Tajiri, Tabitha Giti, Jane Gacheri, Constancia Zaida Mussavele, Arlindo João Nhanthumbo, Gomes David Chemane, Hortência Ernesto, Gervásio Chambo, Engrácia Ernesto, Ali Menrage Buananli, Joaquim Nazário, N'gamo Saida Aly (Zanaira), Patient Batal, Edmond Biloungloung, Acteur Enganayat, Daniel Mbel, Angel Molel, Pierre Molel, Étienne Ondjem, and Jeanne Ong'omolaleba.

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*Preface*

the chapters and any errors within them are the responsibility of the authors alone.

It is our hope that these chapters may provide insights into the individual languages, form the basis for further comparative work, and inspire others to take information structure into account in their descriptions of other languages. We look forward to seeing further developments in the field of Bantu syntax and information structure.

Allen Asiimwe  
Patrick Kanampiu  
Elisabeth J. Kerr  
Zhen Li  
Amani Lusekelo  
Nelsa Nhantumbo  
Ernest Nshemezimana  
Jenneke van der Wal

# Chapter 1

## On the expression of information structure in Bantu

Jenneke van der Wal<sup>a</sup>, Allen Asiimwe<sup>b</sup>, Patrick N. Kanampiu<sup>c</sup>, Elisabeth J. Kerr<sup>d</sup>, Zhen Li<sup>e</sup>, Amani Lusekelo<sup>f</sup>, Nelsa Nhantumbo<sup>g</sup> & Ernest Nshemezimana<sup>h</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Leiden University <sup>b</sup>Makerere University <sup>c</sup>University of Edinburgh <sup>d</sup>Ghent University  
<sup>e</sup>Peking University <sup>f</sup>Dar es Salaam College of Education

<sup>g</sup>Universidade Eduardo Mondlane <sup>h</sup>Université du Burundi

This chapter provides an introduction to the volume. It sketches the background to the BaSIS project and methodology, explains the basics of information structure and terms in the field, exemplifies common constructions for information structure in Bantu languages (specifically cleft constructions, word order, and predicate doubling), and concisely explains the main diagnostics from the BaSIS methodology that are used in the following chapters.

### 1 Introduction

All users of all languages structure the information they give to their addressees so that the addressees can more easily incorporate the information into their current knowledge. This process involves indicating what is already known and what is new, and also which information contrasts with what the addressee might have in mind. Languages differ in terms of which linguistic strategies they have available for the language user to employ to express information structure. While Germanic languages for example use pitch accent to express what information is new or contrastive (“She saw the MAN” vs “She SAW the man”), in the Bantu (Niger-Congo) languages, morphosyntactic strategies are key for the expression of information structure (Downing & Hyman 2016, van der Wal 2015, Downing &



Marten 2019), with many different strategies available. For example, we can see in example (1) how word order reflects information structure in Kirundi. Here, the constituent in clause-final position is in focus: this final element forms the new or contrastive information (a more precise definition will follow in Section 3).

- (1) Kirundi (Chapter 5, Nshemezimana & van der Wal 2025 [this volume])<sup>1</sup>

- a. (Where did the mother (that we were talking about) give the milk to the children?)

Nya muvyéeyi yaheereye amatá 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-ba-áana **mu n-zu**

AUG-2-child 18 **9-house**

'It is [in the house]<sub>FOC</sub> that the mother gave milk to the children.'

- b. (What did the mother (that we were talking about) give to the children in the house?)

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**

'It is [the milk]<sub>FOC</sub> that the mother gave to the children in the house.'

- c. (To whom did the mother (that we were talking about) give the milk in the house?)

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**

'It is [to the children]<sub>FOC</sub> that the mother gave milk in the house.'

Another example of morphosyntactic expression of information structure in Bantu is how focus determines the form of the verb in Makhuwa-Enahara. In (2), we see that the so-called conjoint verb form (cj) is only felicitous in a context that indicates focus on the constituent following the verb, whereas the disjoint verb

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<sup>1</sup>See Section 6 and the abbreviation list at the end of this chapter for information on the representation of examples and glosses.

form (DJ) is not acceptable in such an environment (and instead is used when the focus is on the verb itself).

- (2) Makhuwa-Enahara (Kerr & van der Wal 2023: 463)

- cj #Context 1: Are you frying or grilling the fish? (focus on verb)  
Context 2: What are you grilling? (focus on object)  
Kinaánéélá ehopá.  
ki-**n**-aaneel-a            ehopa  
1SG.SM-PRS.CJ-grill-FV 9.fish  
'I'm grilling a fish.'
- dj Context 1: Are you frying or grilling the fish? (focus on verb)  
#Context 2: What are you grilling? (focus on object)  
Kinámwáaneélá (ehópa).  
ki-**na**-aaneel-a            ehopa  
1SG.SM-PRS.DJ-grill-FV 9.fish  
'I'm grilling it (the fish).'

Given these examples, an interesting question arises: how exactly does information structure influence the syntax of Bantu languages? This is the question underlying the project "Bantu Syntax and Information Structure" (BaSIS), funded by an NWO Vidi grant and hosted at Leiden University from December 2017 to July 2023. Insights into this question are important in order to develop linguistic models that accurately reflect how information structure interacts with other components of the grammar. In order to answer this more theoretical question, however, it is first necessary to better understand how information structure works cross-linguistically. Hence, the first step on the path to a better model of information structure in the grammar is to find systematic data on the expression of information structure in Bantu languages. That descriptive endeavour is the aim of this book.

This book presents detailed descriptions of the expression of information structure in the eight Bantu languages that formed part of the BaSIS project: Tunen (Cameroon), Teke-Kukuya (Congo), Kūtharaka (Kenya), Kirundi (Burundi), Rukiga (Uganda), Kinyakyusa (Tanzania), Makhuwa-Enahara (Mozambique), and Cicopi (Mozambique). While a more in-depth analysis is given for some topics in some languages, the consistent core aim is to describe the morphosyntactic strategies that are used in each language to structure information. The book is therefore aimed at Bantuists, typologists, and linguists interested in information structure.

The current chapter is intended as an introduction to the investigation of the expression of information structure in Bantu, serving as common background to the chapters on individual languages. We introduce the languages of the BaSIS project in Section 2, discuss the key conceptual notions in information structure as well as the diagnostics for information structure used in the project in Section 3, and mention three common morphosyntactic strategies for the expression of information structure in Bantu in Section 4: cleft constructions, word order, and predicate doubling. We then describe the general methodology used in the project in Sections 5 and 6 and finally provide a reading guide of what (not) to expect in the book in Section 7.

## 2 The languages in the book

As mentioned above, the Bantu languages are interesting to study for their information structure, as it seems to affect the core of the grammar, with visible effect on morphology and syntax. Another reason that such research is interesting for comparative purposes is the fact that the Bantu language family is large, comprising of some 555 closely-related languages (Hammarström 2019) spoken across a large geographical range of sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the number of languages and geographic spread, these languages show a lot of similarities: all languages have a noun class system where the class of a noun is visible in the morphology, on the noun itself and/or in the concord in the phrase and agreement in the clause; all languages apart from those in the north-west show extensive agglutinative verbal morphology, with the verb taking derivational and inflectional suffixes and prefixes; and a large majority of categories are head-initial in a large majority of languages (see for overviews of Bantu clausal and nominal syntax Downing & Marten 2019 and Van de Velde 2019, respectively). This relative grammatical similarity makes the Bantu languages important for the discovery of general linguistic principles, as it creates the possibility to study microvariation in the expression of information structure, giving us potential insight into the parameters of language variation as well as language change.

One of the strengths of the BaSIS project is its collaboration between native speaker linguists and external linguists. In this way, the investigation benefits from the inside as well as the outside perspective, with each researcher asking questions and making associations that the other would not as easily get to. The selection of languages for the project was therefore dependent on the collaborations, plus the two languages investigated by the PhD candidates, leading to what one might call a convenience sample (only that ten languages is perhaps

too small to even properly be called a sample). Although there is a fair geographical spread, the languages are very few and not at all a representative sample of the Bantu family, with a greater representation of Eastern Bantu languages. We therefore hope that this research may inspire others to explore the same questions for other (Bantu) languages in order to arrive at a more complete understanding of information structure in the family.

The languages at the start of the project were the following, each specified with its ISO code, Guthrie number,<sup>2</sup> country where it is primarily spoken, and the respective primary researcher indicated (see also the map in Figure 1, page 6):

- Tunen (ISO 639-3 [tvu], Guthrie A44, Cameroon; Elisabeth J. Kerr)
- Teke-Kukuya ([kkw], B77a, Congo; Zhen Li)
- Kîitharaka ([thk], E54, Kenya; Patrick N. Kanampiu)
- Kirundi ([run], JD62, Burundi; Ernest Nshemezimana)
- Rukiga ([nyn], JE14, Uganda; Allen Asiimwe)
- Kinyakyusa ([nyy], M31, Tanzania; Amani Lusekelo)
- Makhuwa-Enahara ([vmw], P31E, Mozambique; Jenneke van der Wal)
- Otjiherero ([her], R30, Namibia; Jekura U. Kavari)
- Changana ([tso], S53, South Africa, Mozambique; Aurélio Z. Simango)
- Cicopi ([cce], S61, Mozambique; Nelsa Nhantumbo)

The map below shows the approximate locations of these languages, based on coordinates from Glottolog (Hammarström et al. 2022). Further information about each of the languages, such as geography and demography, is given in the respective chapters.

Two of these languages unfortunately do not form part of this book, as you will have noticed. The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant delay in the fieldwork, which meant that the collaboration with Jekura Kavari planned for 2020/21 was no longer feasible. Otjiherero was therefore removed from the project. For

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<sup>2</sup>As is customary in Bantu linguistics, an alphanumeric classification is provided based on the classification of Guthrie (1948) and updated by Maho (2003, 2009) and Hammarström (2019). This Guthrie classification is based on the location of the language spoken, ranging from zone A (languages in the north-west) to zone S (languages in southern Africa).



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Figure 1: Map showing the geographical distribution of the languages in the BaSIS project after the removal of Herero.

Changana, the collaboration started with a fieldwork visit in 2019 which resulted in a database, but, unfortunately, the collaborator for the language, Aurélio Simango, passed away in January 2022, hence the work was not completed.

For the eight remaining languages, each chapter in this book describes the morphosyntactic strategies that express (some aspect of) information structure. We do not give the background on general properties of the grammar of each language, instead diving right into the expression of information structure. For some languages, the description is more in depth than for others, as for some we could draw on already published sources (e.g. Nshemezimana’s 2016 thesis on Kirundi information structure) or separate articles published during the project (e.g. Li 2020 on the Kukuya passive, and Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021 on the Rukiga contrastive topic marker). While some linguistic strategies are covered in every chapter, such as word order and clefts, each language also has its own specific topics, depending on the special features of the language, and also on the interest of the researcher(s) involved. For the data collection in all languages we used the same methodology, which we explain in detail in Sections 4 and 6. First, however, we explain the concepts related to information structure that form the research focus of the chapters in this book.

### 3 Information structure

There are two main aspects that play a role in information structure. The first is the *activation status* of referents, and the second is the *functions* that referents may take within the sentence (specifically, topic and focus). We discuss each of these in turn.

#### 3.1 Referent activation status

As introduced above, information structure looks at how we construct sentences dependent on how we want to package information for the addressee. So, what counts as information? One key component is (the mental representation of) referents, and the expressions used to refer to them. For example, we may start a story by introducing the main characters (e.g. “There was a chicken and a cockroach”), and then continue to refer to these characters over the story (“the cockroach”, “he”, “that chicken” etc.). Here, there is an important distinction between on the one hand the *referents* themselves – which can either be conceptualised as objects existing in the real world, or as mental representations existing in the minds of the speakers – and on the other hand the linguistic *expressions* used

to refer to those referents. In this way, a single referent (e.g. the chicken from the story above) may be referred to using different linguistic strategies (e.g. a noun phrase “the chicken”, pronoun “it”, or modified noun phrase “that young chicken”). *Referent tracking* looks at how such referencing works in discourse.

Referents have a certain *activation status*, relating to their cognitive accessibility. If they have not been mentioned and are not in the direct context, they are *inactive*, whereas if they are currently under discussion, they are highly *active* (see e.g. Chafe 1987). A referent’s activation status has an influence on which expressions we use to refer to it, as proposed in various guises by Givón (1976, 1983), Chafe (1976, 1987), Ariel (1990, 2001) and Gundel et al. (1993). Ariel formalises the intuition that referring expressions mark varying degrees of mental accessibility of referents, as an inverse relation between linguistic encoding and accessibility. A new referent is inaccessible (i.e. inactive), and thus requires the most linguistic encoding (e.g. full NP + modifier), whereas a previously mentioned referent is considered accessible (active), and hence needs less linguistic encoding (with zero anaphora being the lowest in the scale). The degree of accessibility forms a scale referred to as the “accessibility hierarchy”, as represented in (3) (see also the Givenness Hierarchy of Gundel et al. 1993).<sup>3</sup>

(3) Accessibility Hierarchy (Ariel 2001: 31):

full name + modifier > full name > long definite description > short definite description > last name > first name > distal demonstrative + modifier > proximate demonstrative + modifier > distal demonstrative + NP > proximate demonstrative + NP > distal demonstrative > proximate demonstrative > stressed pronoun + gesture > stressed pronoun > unstressed pronoun > cliticized pronoun > verbal person inflections > zero

The accessibility/activation status not only influences the expression used for a referent, but also which information-structural function the referent is suited to play in the sentence. This is because the referent in the function of topic (which

<sup>3</sup>Apart from prototypical referents (things, people, places), the lexical content of verbs (events, states) may also be accessible to a higher or lower degree. Givenness of events may be expressed through ellipsis (e.g. ‘Did you eat the last biscuit?’/‘I did eat the last biscuit’), and may influence the expression of the (often nominalised, Givón 2001) predicate as a topic. This is discussed further in literature on ellipsis (see e.g. Merchant 2001 on givenness of elided material), and predicate topicalisation and predicate doubling (see Güldemann & Fiedler 2022 for an overview of such constructions in Bantu). See also Hegarty et al. (2001) and Gundel et al. (2003) on discourse deixis and accessibility of entities introduced by a clause (e.g. ‘We believe her, the court does not, and *that/it* resolves the matter’, Gundel et al. 2003: 282).

will be covered in the next section) needs to be able to provide an anchoring point for the addressee to attach the new information to that is provided in a sentence, and therefore it cannot be completely new. This is captured in Lambrecht's (1994) Topic Acceptability Scale:

- (4) Topic Acceptability Scale (Lambrecht 1994: 165)
- |  |                        |                        |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|
| active > accessible > unused > brand-new anchored > brand-new unanchored | <i>more acceptable</i> | <i>less acceptable</i> |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|

Two main information-structural functions have been proposed and widely accepted within the field of information structure (although see Matić & Wedgwood 2013 and Ozerov 2018, 2021 for critical views): *topic* and *focus*. While the function of a referent and its activation status interact, they are crucially different aspects. We discuss each function in more detail in the following sections.

### 3.2 Topic

In terms of information structure, most sentences can be split into a *topic* and a *comment*.<sup>4</sup> The comment, in turn, may contain a focused constituent, with the rest as background, as represented in Figure 2 (see also Neeleman et al. 2009, for example, for a separation in this way).

topic	comment	
focus	background	

Figure 2: Functions in the clause

The topic can be defined as “what the sentence is about” (Reinhart 1981), or the “spatial, temporal, or individual framework within which the main predication holds” (Chafe 1976: 50). This can be said to hold for all subtypes of topic. The topic-comment structure helps the addressee incorporate the new information into their knowledge, where the topic serves as an anchor to attach the comment to previously known information. Consider example (5): the question in (5a) targets the action of the ‘woman’, who represents the given information and functions as a topic. In the answer to this question in (5b), the topic referent ‘woman’ is expressed by a pronoun *ndé*, and the VP is the part that answers the content

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<sup>4</sup>This concerns the sentence topic, and not the discourse topic. The latter refers to the broader topic of the paragraph or conversation; see Lambrecht (1994).

question, therefore forming the comment (and the focus in this case), expressed in SVO word order corresponding to Topic-Comment order.

- (5) Teke-Kukuya (Chapter 3, Li 2025 [this volume])

Topic-comment structure (VP focus)

a. Mu-kái kí-má ká-sî?

1-woman 7-what 1SM.PST-do.PST

'What did the woman do?'

b. [Ndé]<sub>TOPIC</sub> [á-búnum-i baa-ntaba]<sub>COMMENT</sub>.

1.PRO 1SM.PST-feed-PST 2-goat

'She fed the goats.'

Different subtypes of topic have been proposed. These subtypes are seen as conceptually distinct and this conceptual difference may correspond to differences in expression. At least in part, these different subtypes can be understood by the interaction of a referent's activation status and its topic function. When the referent is highly active and has already functioned as a topic before the current sentence, this is called a *familiarity topic* or *continuing topic* (e.g. Frascarelli & Hinterhözl 2007, Givón 1983, Reinhart 1981). In all languages in our sample, such topics are preferably expressed through a pronoun (i.e. a reduced form). This is illustrated for Tunen in (6), where the class 1 subject marker *a* is used in the second and third sentences to refer to the personified referent 'chicken', which functions as a topic in each sentence and was previously introduced by a full noun phrase *miɔkó* 'chicken'.

- (6) Tunen (database Kerr)

u bótólókiə ɔ hité<sup>1</sup>yí hinó, miɔkó a ná héáná,

ɔ bótólókiə ɔ hité<sup>L</sup>yí he-nó miɔkó a ná héáná  
PREP begin PREP DEM.DISC.EMPH.19 19-day 9.chicken 1SM PST2 become

'À partir de ce jour, la poule est devenue -'

'From this day on, the chicken has become -'

a níŋjékə na bénđo ɔmbél,

a níŋjé-aka na bénđo ɔmbéla

1SM live-DUR with 2.person 3.house

'Elle vive avec les hommes à la maison.'

'She lives with humans in their homes.'

a bɛɔnɔ̄ neakak,  
 a bɛ-ɔnɔ̄ neaka-aka  
 1SM 8-egg make-DUR  
 ‘Elle pond des œufs ;’  
 ‘She lays eggs ;’  
 bénḍɔ̄ bá neak.  
 bénḍɔ̄ bá nea-aka  
 2.person 2SM eat-DUR  
 ‘les hommes (les) mangent.’  
 ‘people eat (them).’

Naturally, the topic must sometimes change. New topics like this are called *shift topics* (Erteschik-Shir 2007). A shift topic is illustrated above in (6) where in the last phrase the topic (and subject) shift from the chicken to *béndo* ‘the people’ and is expressed with a full noun phrase, i.e. using more linguistic material. We can see the same for Kîtharaka in (7), where the topic (and subject) shifts from the referent ‘the wife’ to the referent ‘the stick’. The stick therefore forms the shift topic, and because of its relatively less accessible status, *mûti* ‘stick’ is marked with a demonstrative, rather than using a more reduced encoding.

- (7) (Previous story: Very long ago there was a man who had a wife and a daughter. They lived well until one day...) Kîtharaka (database Kanampiu & Van der Wal)

Mwekûrû akiuna nkû aakûrûtwa i mûti.  
 mû-ekûrû a-kî-un-a n-kû a-a-kûrût-w-a ni  
 1-wife 1SM-DEP-break-FV 9-firewood 1SM-PST-scratch-PASS-FV FOC  
 mû-tî  
 3-stick

‘The wife was injured by a stick while collecting firewood.’

Mûti ûyû n’wari na cûmû.<sup>5</sup>  
 mû-tî ûyû ni-w-a-rî na cûmû  
 3-stick 3.DEM.PROX FOC-3SM-PST-be with poison  
 ‘This stick was poisonous.’

A third type of topic is a *contrastive topic* (Büring 2016, Repp 2010, Vermeulen 2012), which occurs when two topics are compared – even if one of them may be

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<sup>5</sup>Note that the prefix *ni-* scopes over the verb and is independent of the initial phrase being the topic – see for further details Chapter 4 on Kîtharaka, Kanampiu & van der Wal 2025 [this volume]

implicit. Asiiimwe & van der Wal (2021) show for Rukiga that contrastive topics may be marked by a particle, as illustrated in example (8) with the class 11 particle *rwo*. This particle indicates that there is a contrast with other topical referents: here, when talking about various areas to be weeded (the topic referents), the particle indicates that the predicate holds for the banana plantation, but perhaps not for the maize garden or the sorghum field.

- (8) Rukiga (Asiiimwe & van der Wal 2021: 11)  
(Context: They have not weeded the maize garden, or there is another task they have not done)  
Orutookyé **rwó** báárubágara.  
o-ru-tookye                   **ru-o** ba-aa-ru-bagar-a  
AUG-11-banana.plantation 11-CM 2SM-N.PST-11OM-weed-FV  
'As for the banana plantation, they have weeded it.'

Contrastive topics seem to be connected to mirativity, that is, the expression of surprise (for the speaker or addressee), and also to intensive and deprecative readings. In the BaSIS languages, we see these interpretations for topic doubling (see Section 4.3), and for the use of the contrastive topic marker *-o*, as in (9). Recent research also shows a mirative interpretation of object-marker doubling, see Langa da Câmara et al. (2024), Lippard et al. (2023), Sikuku & Diercks (2021), Kerr & van der Wal (2023).

- (9) Kîtharaka (Chapter 4, Kanampiu & van der Wal 2025 [this volume])  
(Has it rained that much?)  
Mbúra **yoó** îkuúra.  
m-bura **î-o**   î-kû-ur-a  
9-rain 9-CM 9SM-PRS-rain-FV  
'It has really rained.' (intensive interpretation)

In addition to these three types of topics, a sentence may be preceded by a *frame-setting* or *scene-setting* topic. Such topics are not always arguments of the sentence. For example, a temporal phrase sets the scene in (10), and example (11) shows a location, neither of which are arguments. Such topics may well be universal: Gundel (1988: 231) states that "Every language has syntactic topic constructions in which an expression which refers to the topic of the sentence is adjoined to the left of a full sentence comment." However, note that such "types" of topics only tell us something about the strategy to express them, i.e. the form, as their function as topics is still the same, namely restricting what the comment applies to.

- (10) Makhuwa (database Van der Wal)  
 Mahíkw' éen' áalá tsinááthówa mivélo.  
 ma-hiku ene ala                tsi-naa-thow-a        mi-velo  
 6-day    INT 6.DEM.PROX 4SM-PRS.DJ-lack-FV 4-broom  
 'These days there are not many brooms.'
- (11) Kirundi (database Nshemezimana & Van der Wal)  
 Mu Rumonge amashuúre ntaruúgurura  
 mu Rumonge a-ma-shuure nti-a-raa-ugurur-a  
 18 Rumonge AUG-6-school NEG-6SM-INCP-open-FV  
 'In Rumonge schools are not open yet.'

Topics can also combine and jointly restrict what the sentence is about. This is illustrated in (12), where the time frame is specified further with each topic phrase (marked by square brackets).

- (12) Kinyakyusa (Chapter 7, Lusekelo et al. 2025 [this volume])  
 (Previous lines: Jackson has a dog which he loves very much. Also, he has a frog which he put in a bottle. It stayed and slept there.)  
 [Akabalilo kamo] [pakilo] [Jakisoni n'mbwa jake] [bo bikulonda  
 ukubuuka nkulambalala] bakikeetile ikyula.  
 a-ka-balilo ka-mo pa-kilo Jakisoni na mbwa ji-ake bo  
 AUG-12-time 12-one 16-night 1.Jackson and 9.dog 9-POSS.1 when  
 ba-ku-lond-a u-ku-buuk-a mu-ku-lambalal-a ba-ki-keet-ile  
 2SM-PRS-want-FV AUG-15-go-FV 18-15-lie.down-FV 2SM-7OM-look-PFV  
 i-ki-ula  
 AUG-7-frog  
 'One day, at night, when Jackson and his dog wanted to go to sleep, they looked at the frog.'

While speakers greatly prefer to partition sentences to first indicate the topic and then add a comment on that topic (a so-called *categorical* sentence), some sentences have no topic expression. These are *thetic* sentences, which present the information as one piece. Thetics have been said to be about the "here and now" – the topic referent is then the "stage topic" (Erteschik-Shir 1997, 2007, Gundel 1974). Thetics tend to occur when presenting a new entity, for example as in (13), or when announcing something out of the blue. In these cases, none of the referents are suitable to take on the role of topic. Since there is a well-known close association between subject and topic (Li & Thompson 1976), the (logical) subject in a thetic sentence is typically explicitly marked as *not* being the topic, for example by placing it in a postverbal position, as in (13), leading to departures

from the canonical word order. Theticity is discussed in detail in Sasse (1987, 1996, 2006).

- (13) Kinyakyusa (database Lusekelo, Msovela, and Van der Wal)  
(Previous lines: An old woman walked through the forest and was pierced by a thorn. She sat down and felt sorry for herself.)  
Nakalinga akiindile **undumyana jumo**; ingamu jaake jo Lwitiko.  
nakalinga a-kiind-ile u-n-lumyana ju-mo i-ngamu ji-ake  
soon 1SM-pass-PFV AUG-1-young 1-one AUG-9.name 9-POSS.SG  
jo Lwitiko  
9.IDCOP 1.Lwitiko  
'Soon there passed a certain boy; his name is Lwitiko.'

We thus see that the function of topic may be taken by referents that are at least identifiable, and that both topic and non-topic may be marked in languages, with the latter type visible in subjects of thetic sentences, which do not contain a topic-comment split.

### 3.3 Focus

In a categorical sentence (divided into topic and comment), the comment can be subdivided into the focus and the background, as seen above in Figure 2. We have informally referred to focus as the "new or contrastive" information, but a more formal definition is that focus "indicates the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions" (Krifka & Musan 2012: 7; see Rooth 1992, 1996, 1985 for the Alternative Semantics approach). The constituent in focus thus triggers a set of relevant alternatives. For instance, in example (14), the referent 'bread' is in focus. This means that it triggers alternatives, i.e. other things that Asha could have baked, such as cake, chapati, doughnuts, and so on. The answer in (14) expresses that Asha baked bread as opposed to those alternatives – in other words, it selects bread as the relevant alternative out of the set of alternatives generated by the question word 'what?'.

- (14) Kïitharaka (database Kanampiu & Van der Wal)  
(What has Asha baked?)  
Áshá akáándíré [mûgááté]FOC.  
Asha a-kaand-ire mû-gaate  
1.Asha 1SM-bake-PFV 3-bread  
'Asha baked bread.'  
Alternatives: {cake, bread, chapati, doughnuts, ...}  
Answer: {cake, **bread**, chapati, doughnuts, ...}

There are two axes of variation in focus: the *scope* of focus and the *type* of focus. In terms of scope, there is a distinction between term focus (meaning focus on an argument or adjunct) and predicate-centred focus (PCF; following Güldemann 2003, 2009).<sup>6</sup> Within term focus, there can be focus on the whole noun phrase (whole NP focus) or focus on only a sub-element, such as a nominal modifier (sub-NP focus). Within PCF, there can be focus on the lexical value of the verb itself (the *state of affairs*), the truth value (also called *polarity* or *verum*), tense/aspect/mood (also referred to in terms of *operator focus*), or the whole verb phrase (VP focus). This is schematically represented in Figure 3 and illustrated in the examples below.

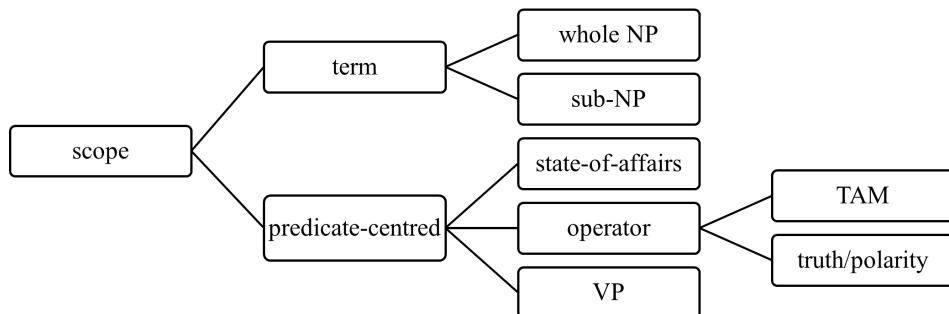


Figure 3: Different parts of the sentence which may be in focus (van der Wal 2021, building on Dik 1997, Güldemann 2009, Zimmermann 2016, Güldemann & Fiedler 2022: 540).

- (15) Term focus argument: Rukiga (Chapter 6, Asiimwe & van der Wal 2025 [this volume])
- a. Hélen atwire ki?  
Helen a-twar-ire ki  
1.Hellen 1SM-take-PFV what  
'What did Hellen take?'
  - b. Hélen atwir' ékikópo.  
Helen a-twar-ire [e-ki-kopo]FOC  
1.Hellen 1SM-take-PFV AUG-7-cup  
'Hellen took [a cup]FOC.'

<sup>6</sup>We do not take Lambrecht's (1994) *sentence focus* to belong to this overview, as it concernsthetic sentences, discussed above.

- (16) Term focus adjunct: Teke-Kukuya (Chapter 3, Li 2025 [this volume])
- Mwáana **munkí** ká-dzí ntsúi?  
1.child when 1SM.PST-eat.PST 1.fish  
'When did the child eat the fish?'
  - Ndé ntsúi [**mu ngwaalí**]FOC ká-dzí.  
1.PRO 1.fish 18.LOC 9.morning 1SM.PST-eat.PST  
'S/He ate the fish [in the morning]FOC.'
- (17) Sub-NP focus: Rukiga (Asiimwe et al. 2023: 1297)  
(Which car should we take?)
- Tu-twar-e é-mótoka é-y-ângye.  
1PL.SM-take-SBJV AUG-9.car AUG-9-POSS.1SG  
'We take *my* car.'
  - # Tu-twar-e é-mótoka y-angye.  
1PL.SM-take-SBJV AUG-9.car 9-POSS.1SG  
'We take my car.'
- (18) State-of-Affairs focus: Kiiðharaka (database Kanampiu & Van der Wal)  
I kûrîngá tú ríingiré ng'óombé – tûtíracíthaika.  
ni kû-riinga tû-riing-ire ng'-oombe tû-ti-ra-ci-thaik-a  
FOC 15-hit 1PL.SM-hit-PFV 10-cows 1PL.SM-NEG-YPST-10OM-tie-FV  
'We *hit* the cows, we didn't tie them.'
- (19) VP focus: Changana (database Simango & Van der Wal)  
(Context: Picture of a man with a pumpkin in a wheelbarrow. Is this man playing football?)  
Ángábélí bó:lú, óxixa kwe:mbe.  
a-nга-bel-i bolu a-o-xix-a kwembe  
1SM-NEG-play-NEG 5.ball 1SM-EXCL-unload-FV 5.pumpkin  
'No, he is not playing football, he is unloading a/the pumpkin.'
- (20) Verum (Cicopi; Kerr & van der Wal 2023: 485)  
(You are not eating the cake that I bought. It'll go bad.)  
Kudya hâ:dyá.  
ku-dya hi-a-dy-a  
15-eat 1PL.SM-DJ-eat-FV  
'We *are* eating (it).'

Turning now to the type of focus, we need to distinguish between the semantic and pragmatic aspects of interpretation, following Krifka (2008), Zimmermann & Onea (2011). The semantic aspects affect what Krifka (2008: 249) calls the “common ground content” and therefore the truth-conditions of the utterance, whereas the pragmatic aspects concern the “common ground management”, which does not affect the truth-conditions. It must be noted that it is not always clear whether an aspect of interpretation is rooted in the semantics or pragmatics. The types of focus are shown in the overview in Figure 4.

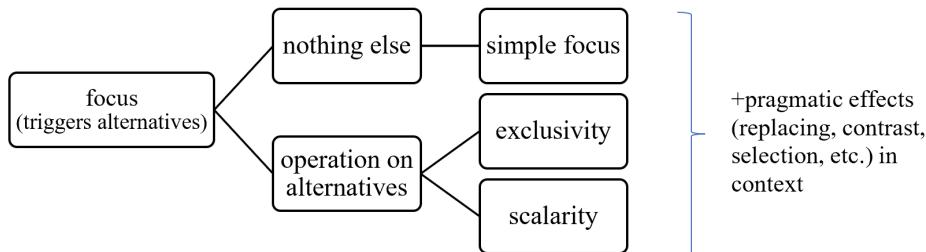


Figure 4: Types of semantic and pragmatic focus

The semantic aspect of focus concerns the set of alternatives. Under the Alternative Semantics approach to focus introduced at the start of this section, all focus types by definition trigger the generation of a set of alternatives. If nothing else happens, this is called *simple focus*, also known as “(new) information focus” (É. Kiss 1998) or “assertive focus” (Hyman & Watters 1984). For simple focus, the proposition is true for the focused referent, and there are alternatives for which we do not know if the proposition is true. This was illustrated using a question-answer context in (14) above, and is illustrated again for a simple focus context ‘Who did you meet?’ – ‘I met Alex’ in (21) below.

- (21) Alternatives: {Alex, Robin, Sam, Sacha, ...}  
 Simple focus: {Alex, Robin, Sam, Sacha, ...}

On the other hand, an additional operation can be performed on the set of alternatives. This can be a scalar ordering of the referents, for example for degree of expectedness. Another option is that there are alternatives for which the proposition is false – in other words, not only is an alternative selected, but other alternatives are excluded. This type of focus is therefore called exclusive focus. This means that “there is at least one individual other than [the intended referent] for whom the proposition does not hold” (Kenesei 2006: 147). For example, in the sentence ‘it is Alex that I met’, the focus does not stop at identifying the

referent to which the proposition holds (Alex); it also excludes (at least some of) the possible alternatives (Robin, Sam, Sacha), implying that the proposition is false for them, as indicated by the strikethroughs in (22).

- (22) Alternatives: {Alex, Robin, Sam, Sacha, ...}  
Exclusive focus: {~~Alex~~, ~~Røbin~~, Sam, Sacha, ...}

If the interpretation of the structure is that it excludes *all* the possible alternatives, it becomes *exhaustive focus* (which can be seen as a subtype of exclusive focus); see Szabolcsi (1981) for early discussion of exhaustivity; É. Kiss (1998) and many after her for discussion of the exhaustivity of Hungarian preverbal focus (e.g. Onea & Beaver 2009); and see Horn (1981), Drenhaus et al. (2011), among many others (e.g. the work of Destruel, as in Destruel et al. 2015, Destruel & DeVeaugh-Geiss 2018) for exhaustivity in clefts.

- (23) Alternatives: {Alex, Robin, Sam, Sacha, ...}  
Exhaustive focus: {~~Alex~~, ~~Robin~~, Sam, Sacha, ...}

Another aspect of focus is that a clause may contain a presupposition that there exists an entity for which the proposition is true, and this entity is then identified by the focus constituent. For instance, in the sentence ‘the person I met is Alex’, the phrase *the person I met* presupposes that there is a person whom the speaker met. This person is then identified as Alex through the focused NP ‘Alex’. The role of focus in this structure can thus be said to be *identificational*. Note here that this is a different use of “*identificational*” than used by É. Kiss (1998), who uses this term for exhaustive focus.

On a pragmatic level, many more types of focus can be described, all dependent on the discourse context. We mention three types here (see Cruschina 2021, Dik 1997, Krifka 2008 among others for further types, e.g. confirmative, mirative, expanding). A first proposed type is *replacing focus*, also known as *corrective focus*. When the speaker suspects or knows that the addressee has a different referent in mind than the one intended by the speaker, they may try to correct this and replace the wrong referent with the intended one, thereby correcting the information.

A second “flavour” of focus is *contrastive focus*. This is possibly the most confusing term, since it has been used in two ways in the literature: firstly to express a contrast with a referent that is present in the context, and secondly to express contrast with referents in the set of alternatives. To some extent these overlap, of course, since referents in the context are also alternatives to the focused referent.

However, the two definitions of contrastive focus are not identical. As the contrast with the set of alternatives can be captured as the exclusion of those alternatives, we refer to that as exclusive focus (see also Byram Washburn 2013), and take contrastive focus to involve a pragmatic contrast with a contextual referent. What others have named “contrastive focus” can therefore be seen as *exclusive focus* in a *contrastive context*. For example in ‘The children ate only *ugali* and the parents ate *rice*’, the object *ugali* excludes alternative foods, and it contrasts in this context with rice. Note that, similarly, corrective/replacing focus is *exclusive focus* in a *corrective context*, as the referent that was replaced/corrected is excluded, e.g. the rice in ‘The children ate *ugali*, not rice’. See Repp (2010), Molnár (2002) among others for further discussion on the notion of contrast, and Cruschina (2021) for a more detailed discussion on degrees of contrast. In our book, we use the term contrastive only in a pragmatic sense.

A third pragmatic type of focus is *selective focus*. This is found in a context where a set of alternatives is mentioned and one (or more) referents are selected from that set. Alternative questions such as ‘Do you want coffee or tea?’ establish a set of two referents (namely, coffee and tea) from which the addressee is to choose one. This choice, however, does not necessarily exclude the other referent and is therefore the same semantic type of focus as simple focus – the perceived exclusion of the non-selected alternative is thus in the pragmatics.

To sum up, focus relates to the generation of alternatives and, together with the background, forms the comment of a categorical sentence. Focus can be categorised in terms of the scope of the focus, with a basic split between term focus and predicate-centred focus, and in terms of the semantic and pragmatic type of focus. Semantically, all focus types trigger a set of alternatives. These alternatives may simply be there with no further operation upon them (*simple focus*), or they may be ordered (*scalar*) or (partly) excluded (*exclusive/exhaustive focus*). The pragmatic context may induce further variation in the interpretation, such as corrective focus, contrastive focus, and selective focus. Languages may express these different types of focus by different means.

## 4 Common constructions for information structure expression in Bantu

While the general aim of this chapter is to introduce the conceptual basics of information structure, it is also useful to introduce some constructions that occur in the Bantu languages covered in this book. We therefore turn now to zoom in on common constructions used for information structure expression in the Bantu

languages. In particular, we discuss cleft constructions, word order variation, and predicate doubling here. Clefts in particular are present in each of the BaSIS languages and always play a role in the expression of focus (see Gundel 1988 and Creissels 2020 for clefts as a universally available construction). There are three types of cleft constructions: *basic clefts*, *pseudoclefts*, and *reverse pseudoclefts*.

#### 4.1 Cleft constructions

Basic cleft constructions<sup>7</sup> are bi-clausal structures that comprise a matrix clause consisting of a predicative nominal (typically headed by a copula) and a relative clause that is co-indexed with the predicative argument in the main clause (see Jespersen 1937: 1949; Lambrecht 2001: 467). In Tunen for example, a basic cleft is formed for subjects by the copula *á* preceding the focused subject, followed by a reduced relative clause. This is illustrated in (24), where the high tone in the subject marker indicates relativisation (contrasting with the low-toned non-relative class 1 subject marker *a*).

- (24) Tunen (Chapter 2, Kerr 2025 [this volume])  
(Which politician died?)  
Á Píél á ná wə.  
á Píéle á ná wé  
COP 1.Pierre 1SM.REL PST2 die  
'It's Pierre who died.'  
COP [NP]FOC [reduced relative]

The pseudocleft and the reverse pseudocleft (see Collins 1991, Higgins 2015) share with the basic cleft that they contain a relative clause, a copula, and a highlighted element (Collins 1991: 482) or clefted constituent (as Hedberg & Fadden 2007 call it). The difference is in the order of these elements.

In pseudoclefts, the free relative clause presents the topic of the sentence while the post-copular nominal presents the focus (Hedberg & Fadden 2007, É. Kiss 1998). The structure in (25) below illustrates these two parts. Note that the free relative is headed in English by a question word, but in other languages a free relative is simply marked in whichever way a relative can be marked – in the case of Kîtharaka this has developed from the distal demonstrative, and in other languages in the BaSIS sample it also typically is or derives from a demonstrative.

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<sup>7</sup>We use this as the more language-neutral term for what has been called for English the “it-cleft” (Lafkioui et al. 2016); note that this is not to say that there is anything simpler about this cleft in comparison to other cleft types.

- (25) Kîtharaka (Chapter 4, Kanampiu & van der Wal 2025 [this volume])

(What did Karîmi kick?)

[ Kî-rá Karîmi á-ríng-iré ] í [ mû-bíírá ].

7-RM Karimi 1SM-kick-PFV COP 3-ball

[ free relative ] COP [ NP ]

[ cleft clause ] COP [ clefted constituent ]

'What Karîmi kicked is a ball.'

In a pseudocleft, the free relative appears at the initial position. In a reverse pseudocleft, the order is inverted so that the NP (the clefted constituent) appears at the initial position and the relative follows the copula. The relative clause in the (reverse) pseudocleft is in fact a free relative, which functions as an independent phrase (see e.g. Šimík 2018). Therefore, (reverse) pseudoclefts can simply be seen as copular clauses of which one constituent is a free relative clause (Den Dikken 2006). An example of a reverse pseudocleft is given in (26) below.

- (26) Kinyakyusa (Chapter 7, Lusekelo et al. 2025 [this volume])

(I did not find him/her in the river.)

[Ubibi jumo] jo [uju ambele].

u-bibi ju-mo jo uju a-m-pa-ile

AUG-1.grandmother 1-one 1.IDCOP 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-1SG.OM-give-PFV

'An old woman is the one who gave (him/her) to me.'

[NP] COP [free relative]

[clefted constituent] COP [cleft clause]

In a grammaticalisation process that has been shown to happen in languages all across the world (Harris & Campbell 1995, Heine & Traugott 1991), cleft constructions – particularly the basic cleft – develop from a biclausal construction into a monoclausal focus construction, as schematically represented in (27) (from van der Wal & Maniacky 2015: 9).

- (27) [copula - NP] – [relative clause] > [NP<sub>FOC</sub> Verb]

it is Maud – (the one) who made pancakes > *Maud* made pancakes

Harris & Campbell (1995) define three stages in the development from biclausal to monoclausal structures, as shown in (28). The most obvious characteristics relevant for the languages in this book are the presence and form of the copula and the marking of relativisation, which are present in stage 1, but may disappear towards stage 3.

- (28) Development cleft > focus construction (Harris & Campbell 1995: 166)

- Stage 1: The structure has all of the superficial characteristics of a biclausal structure and none of the characteristics of a monoclausal one.
- Stage 2: The structure gradually acquires some characteristics of a monoclausal structure and retains some characteristics of a biclausal one.
- Stage 3: The structure has all of the characteristics of a monoclausal structure and no characteristics of a biclausal one.

In various chapters, we will see properties indicating an in-between stage between biclausal clefts and monoclausal focus constructions, where the status of the erstwhile copula in a biclausal construction may later be analysed as a focus marker in a monoclausal construction (see discussion for Kïïtharaka and Kirundi, Chapters 4 and 5), or where the position has grammaticalised (as seen in Teke-Kukuya, Chapter 3).

On the interpretational side, the biclausal cleft typically expresses exhaustive focus, as a result of the combination of the relative clause and the predicative noun. The relative clause comes with a maximality presupposition: it refers to the complete set of referents for which the proposition holds. This maximal set of referents is then equated to the referent of the noun phrase. For example, in (29), we know that there is a unique individual who threw the oranges, and this individual is identified as Hare.

- (29) Makhuwa-Enahara (van der Wal 2009: 172)

(Who has thrown oranges?)

Namarokoló o-thlik-alé.

1.hare.PRL 1-throw-PFV.REL

‘It was Hare who threw (them).’

In a monoclausal focus construction, the exhaustive focus interpretation that used to be the result of the whole biclausal construction is now associated with the focus marker (the erstwhile copula, for example) and/or a particular position. To illustrate, for Kïïtharaka, where the basic cleft has an exhaustive interpretation, Abels & Muriungi (2008) argue that the morpheme *ni* should no longer be analysed as a copula, but as a focus marker, shown in (30).

- (30) Kîtharaka (Chapter 4, Kanampiu & van der Wal 2025 [this volume])

Í mûgaáté Áshá agûkáanda.  
 ni mû-gaate Asha a-kû-kaand-a  
 FOC 3-bread 1.Asha 1SM-PRS-bake-FV  
 ‘It’s bread that Asha is baking.’

While the aim of the chapters is not to analyse the underlying syntax in detail, but rather to provide a descriptive overview of the form-function mappings in each language, the diachronic reanalysis process is nevertheless useful to keep in mind. It is an interesting point of comparison between the Bantu languages, which vary in the extent of grammaticalisation into monoclausal focus constructions.

## 4.2 Word order

A second syntactic strategy used to express information structure is the manipulation of word order. Note here that we use the term “word order” in the chapters in this book, although in many instances we more specifically mean “constituent order”: we are typically dealing with the order in which constituent *phrases* rather than words per se are expressed.

In almost all of the BaSIS languages (see Figure 1 above), word order plays a role in the expression of information structure, as we have shown in more detail in Kerr et al. (2023). Many eastern and southern Bantu languages show (some variant of) a topic-V-focus order (see e.g. van der Wal 2009, Yoneda 2011), resulting in a restriction on preverbal focus, using so-called “subject inversion constructions” to express theticity and/or subject focus, as illustrated in (31). The logical subject here appears in the “inverted” position after the verb because it is not the topic; the topic instead is the locative ‘on the bridge’ (as indicated in the context question), which therefore appears preverbally and determines subject agreement on the verb.

- (31) Rukiga (Kerr et al. 2023: 2)

(What has happened on the bridge?)

A-ha ru-tindo ha-a-raba=hó e-motoka ny-îngi.  
 AUG-16 11-bridge 16SM-N.PST-pass=16 AUG-10.car 10-many  
 ‘On the bridge have passed many cars.’

If we think in terms of grammatical roles, these Bantu languages can be said to display SVO order with a (high) degree of flexibility (Bearth 2003, van der Wal 2015, Downing & Marten 2019, a.o.); for example, (31) shows a change to VS word order (i.e. locative inversion). However, if we describe word order in information-structural terms, as Good (2010) does, word order is not that flexible at all for some of the Bantu languages. The word order can in some languages be more insightfully described in terms of the following restrictions (i) non-topical/focal referents must be expressed after the verb, and (ii) topics are expressed preverbally, regardless of their syntactic or semantic role. In Kerr et al. (2023) we also show that three of the BaSIS languages have a dedicated focus position, defined as a position in which an element is always interpreted as focal: immediately before the verb (IBV) in Teke-Kukuya, immediately after the verb (IAV) in Makhuwa-Enahara, and clause-final in Kirundi (see example (1) above).

Nevertheless, there is a lot of variation in the use of word order to express information structure in Bantu, as can be seen in comparing the chapters of this volume (and see the discussion from a comparative perspective in Kerr et al. (2023)). One particular outlier is Tunen in the far northwest of the Bantu area, where subject inversion is impossible, and the same S-Aux-O-V word order is used to express a variety of information-structural interpretations. Tunen subjects, however, cannot be focused in their canonical position, and must be clefted, as we saw in (24) above.

### 4.3 Predicate doubling

A third type of construction that we found in the majority of languages is predicate doubling. These are constructions in which the predicate appears once in an inflected form and once in a non-finite form. There are three types of predicate doubling (see also Güldemann & Fiedler 2022, who use slightly different terminology): *cleft doubling*, *topic doubling*, and *in-situ doubling*. In cleft doubling, the non-finite form (typically an infinitive in class 15) forms the clefted constituent, as in (32), which is followed by the inflected (relative) form of the same predicate. This type of predicate doubling is typically used to express state-of-affairs focus.

- (32) Kîtharaka (database Kanampiu & Van der Wal)  
(Context: Someone thinks that you sang or cooked.)  
I kûrî́ má tûrîmiré.  
ni kû-rîma tû-rîm-ire  
FOC 15-dig 1PL.SM-dig-PFV  
'We (only) dug.'

Topic doubling involves an initial non-finite predicate, again typically an infinitive, expressed as a contrastive topic, followed by the comment containing the same predicate. This can be used in verum contexts, as illustrated in (33), and in contexts where a contrast is perceived between the mentioned action and possible other, additional actions. This in turn may invite intensive and deprecative interpretations, as described in this book for Kîtharaka (Chapter 4), Kirundi (Chapter 5), Rukiga (Chapter 6), Kinyakyusa (Chapter 7), and Cicopi (Chapter 9). See also Jerro & van der Wal (in preparation) for a semantic-pragmatic analysis of topic doubling.

- (33) Cicopi (Chapter 9, Nhantumbo & van der Wal 2025 [this volume])  
 (Context: A mother went out to work and when she returns, she can see that the children are weak. She asks the housemaid ‘Are you cooking for these children?’)  
 Kubhí:ka hábhí:ka.  
 ku-bhik-a hi-a-bhik-a  
 15-cook-FV 1PL.SM-DJ-cook-FV  
 ‘We do cook.’ (but they don’t eat)

Finally, in-situ doubling is more variable both in form and in meaning. The non-finite form here follows the inflected form of the same predicate, but this can be an infinitive or a nominalised form. The latter is illustrated for Kirundi with the class 14 derivation *butunge* in (34). The interpretation for this construction in Kirundi indicates a prototypical, proper way of carrying out the action in the doubled verb. In other languages, in-situ doubling can function to express state-of-affairs focus or an intensive reading, for example.

- (34) Kirundi (database Nshemezimana & Van der Wal)  
 (Does he keep the cows for someone else, or are they his?)  
 Inka, arazitunze butunge.  
 i-n-ka a-zi-tung-ye bu-tung-e  
 AUG-10-cow 1SM-10OM-rear-PFV 14-rear-FV  
 ‘Cows, he keeps them properly’

There is, as expected, a lot of crosslinguistic variation in which of the three predicate doubling constructions are available (if any), in the non-finite form, and in the interpretation of the construction.

Cleft constructions, word order, and predicate doubling are only three of the morphosyntactic strategies in which information structure is expressed in the

Bantu languages. We provide more specific detail on these constructions in each chapter and hope that it will be helpful to have already seen their general structure in this section.

#### **4.4 Interim summary**

Summing up Sections 3 and 4, referents have a particular information status as more or less accessible, which influences their expression, and referents may further take one of two broadly-recognised information-structural functions: topic or focus. There are different types of topic and focus, which may require different linguistic strategies of expression. Common strategies used in the Bantu languages are cleft constructions, word order variation, and predicate doubling constructions, but there are many more. In the chapters in this book, we aim to determine which semantic and pragmatic interpretations the various linguistic strategies have in each language, working from form to function. As mentioned, we do this on the basis of a common methodology using diagnostics for information structure. The next sections present this BaSIS methodology (Section 5) and explain its key diagnostics used in this book (Section 6).

### **5 Methodology**

For each language, apart from Kirundi where COVID-19 restrictions prevented fieldwork, we gathered data with at least three native speakers of the language, in locations where the language of interest was dominant in the community. Nevertheless, there is always the chance of influence from another language due to the use of a language of common communication for the elicitation process, as well as widespread multilingualism. The metalanguage used in the fieldwork was French for Tunen, Teke-Kukuya, and Kirundi; English for Kïïtharaka and Rukiga; Portuguese for Cicopi and Makhuwa-Enahara (as well as Changana); and Swahili and English for Kinyakyusa. Sessions for elicitation, as well as spontaneous discourse and narratives were recorded with audio (.wav files), and for Tunen also video (.mp4 files). The speakers all gave informed consent for the recordings and data gathering and received financial compensation for their time. Further information about the fieldwork is given in each individual chapter. The databases for all languages and Tunen recordings will soon be available in The Language Archive of the MPI (see the BaSIS collection<sup>8</sup>).

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<sup>8</sup><https://hdl.handle.net/1839/2acf92c5-e5db-445b-bcdb-3b13b7e58f3f>

The data gathering was conducted in a systematic way for each language, each researcher using the BaSIS methodology document that was developed over the course of the project. This methodology, further elaborated on in Section 6 below, draws on the Questionnaire of Information Structure – QUIS (Skopeteas et al. 2006), the Questionnaire on Focus Semantics (Renans et al. 2010), and the additional tests gathered in van der Wal (2016). The methodology document, which is freely available via the project website<sup>9</sup> and the Leiden Repository<sup>10</sup> (van der Wal 2021), grew during the project in three main ways. First, Part I was added, providing a basic introduction to understand the key concepts of information structure such that the methodology can be used by researchers new to information structure. Second, the rather artificial picture stimuli developed by the QUIS were gradually replaced by more natural pictures – compare Figure 5 and Figure 6. This change was made as the unnaturalness of the initial stimuli sometimes affected the fieldwork, for example with speakers indicating for Figure 5 that ‘there are three melons above William’s head’.

***Does William have four melons?***

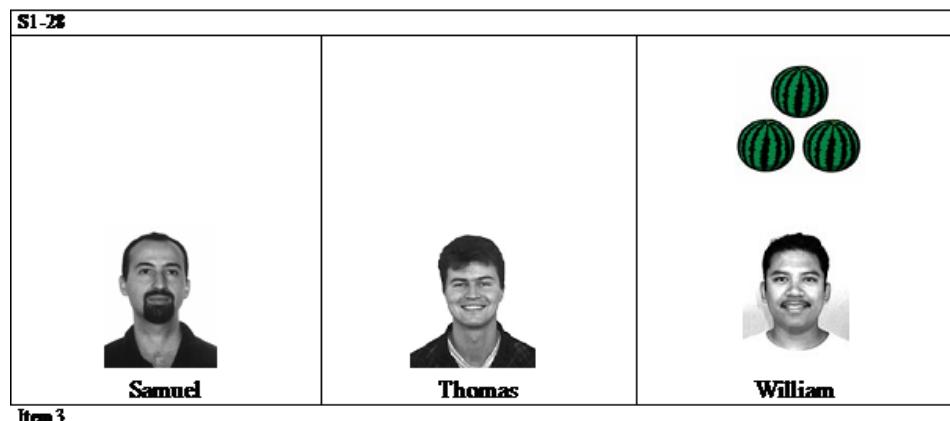


Figure 5: QUIS stimulus for corrective focus on numeral

The third addition to the methodology was Part III, where tests were added for Vergnaud licensing (abstract Case), as proposed by Sheehan & van der Wal (2018). This allows for investigation of nominal licensing, another goal of the BaSIS project (although not the focus of the chapters in this book).

<sup>9</sup><https://bantusyntaxinformationstructure.com/methodology/>

<sup>10</sup><https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/3608096>



Figure 6: BaSIS picture, which can be used as stimulus for corrective focus on numeral (e.g. “Does the woman have four knives?”)

The methodology thus consisted of three parts: Part I providing a background on information structure so as to be consistent in conceptualisation and terminology, Part II providing an overview of all the diagnostics to elicit and test different notions of information structure (see Section 6), and Part III providing tests for nominal licensing. The data collected include both (semi-)spontaneous speech and elicitation data. The (semi-)spontaneous speech data took the form of recounted recipes, folk tales, the Frog Story, personal histories, free dialogues, and the QUIS map task. The elicitation data were collected for the purposes of systematic crosslinguistic comparison (as in the comparative work on word order by Kerr et al. 2023, and on truth expression by Kerr & van der Wal 2023). Additionally, elicitation tests are useful in providing negative data, which show which constructions and interpretations are *not* possible. Here, the BaSIS elicitation tests provide explicit information-structural context, allowing importantly for both the study of grammaticality (which constructions are well-formed in the language, with the symbol \* in the data line indicating ungrammaticality) and felicity (which constructions are appropriate within the given discourse context, with the symbol # indicating infelicity).

The diagnostics in the methodology work in two directions: *function to form*, and *form to function*. An example of working from function to form is the commonly used question-answer test (also known as *question-answer congruence*), which investigates the expression of focus. As content question words are taken to be inherently focused, the answer to such a question forms the focus as well. Question-answer pairs can therefore be used to investigate focus expression. This test is illustrated for Cicopi in (35). Here, the translation of the question from Portuguese in (35a) shows us a strategy that is used to express an interrogative, and the answer to that question in (35b) also shows a focus strategy. We learn here that focus (function) on the theme argument can be expressed with the theme argument in a postverbal position (form) in Cicopi, both for interrogatives and for their answers.

- (35) Cicopi (database Nhantumbo & van der Wal)

- a. Utóselá cà:nì?  
u-to-sel-a                cani  
2SG.SM-T0-drink-FV what  
‘[What]<sub>FOC</sub> did you drink?’
- b. Nitóselá sérvhejhá.  
ni-to-sel-a                servhejha  
1SG.SM-T0-drink-FV beer  
‘I drank [beer]<sub>FOC</sub>.’

Working the other way, from form to function, is useful when a strategy has been identified and the details of its interpretation are of interest. For example, during the fieldwork we knew that Kinyakyusa has a CV nominal prefix, and wanted to investigate the interpretation of this prefix. The form-to-function tests in the methodology allowed us to test for focus and exhaustivity. If the CV prefix were a marker of exhaustive focus, meaning that this is the only referent for which the proposition is true ('he drank only *the big one*'), then it should be impossible to follow up with a clause stating the truth for another referent too and cancelling the exhaustivity ('also the small one'). This prediction turned out to be correct (36), and so we can conclude that, according to this test, the CV prefix (form) here is exhaustively focused (function).

- (36) Kinyakyusa (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 335)

- Anwile jinywaamu #n' iinaandi  
a-nw-ile        ji-nywamu na i-nandi  
1SM-drink-PFV EXH-9.big and AUG-9.small  
‘He drank (only) the big one #and also the small one.’

All the data collected through these tests, together with the relevant metadata, were entered into Online Language Databases (OLDs) for each language, which were accessed via the graphical user interface Dative<sup>11</sup>. The major benefit of Dative is that multiple users can access the database simultaneously and add data. This is crucial in a collaborative project, and this aspect worked very well.<sup>12</sup> Access to any of the databases can be granted by contacting Jenneke van der Wal and/or consulting the archival deposit in The Language Archive. An example of the Dative database layout and data/metadata input is given in Figure 7 and Figure 8 respectively.

Having introduced the basic structure of the methodology, let us now turn to consider in more detail how the methodology is applied for the investigation of information-structural concepts as introduced in Section 3 above. These sections together are intended to form the background to understanding the discussion and diagnostics in each of the individual chapters.

## 6 Information structure diagnostics

In determining the form-function mappings in the area of information structure, there are three steps:

- (37) How to diagnose information structure
1. Find out how a function is expressed;
  2. Test the precise function of each form;
  3. Test whether the function found is inherent to the form, or associated pragmatically.

The first step, function to form, can for example be a question-answer pair, as illustrated in (35) above: we know that content question words are in focus, and that the part that answers the content question is also in focus, therefore the strategy that is used in the question and the answer is a strategy used to express focus. Note that this does not necessarily mean that it is a “focus strategy”, as at this point we do not know the exact interpretation, nor whether focus is a necessary aspect of the strategy (see Matić & Wedgwood 2013 for further nuance on the latter point, and Ozerov 2022 for a critical discussion of the role of questions in information structure, seeing them as the product of diverse discourse processes).

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<sup>11</sup><https://www.dative.ca/>

<sup>12</sup>Other good aspects are the fact that Dative is quite intuitive to work with, and allows for elaborated combined search options and easy tagging of examples for properties of interest (e.g. “focus\_obj” for object focus). A major downside at the time of writing is that it is still an online database, thus requiring internet connection and power.

## 1 On the expression of information structure in Bantu

Dative Forms Corpora Resources Analysis Help Account Makhuwa

Browsing all forms. Viewing forms 1,801 to 1,900 of 1,946 (page 19 of 20)

100 items per page 16 17 18 19 20

Advanced Search Smart Search Advanced Search over Forms Browse All ?

transcription regex

Search Count Save

(1,801) ólé warumpýááwe khúshélelyáá, áá  
 /ole wa-rup-al-aawe khu-shelelya aaa  
 1.dem.dist 16-sleep-pfv.rel-poss.1 narr-dawn ah  
 kinrówá waashiníni vá  
 ki-n-row-a wa-shinuri va/  
 1sg.sm-prs.cj-go-fv 16-bird 16.dem.prox  
 'He, the next day, (he said) Ah, I'm going bird hunting.'

(1,802) aá okushé nlénsó 'nna  
 /aa o-kush-e n-lenso nna  
 ah 2sg.sm-take-sbjv 5-cloth 5.dem.prox  
 wííthúkele rmú  
 w-ii-thuk-el-e rmú/  
 2sg.sm-refl-tie-appl-sbjv 18.dem.prox  
 'Okay, take this cloth and tie it on yourself.'

(1,803) ólé ohííthukélá nlénsó 'nne  
 /ole o-h-ii-thuk-el-a n-lenso nne/  
 1.dem.dist 1sm-prfv.dj-refl-tie-appl-fv 5-cloth 5.dem.dist  
 'He tied that cloth on himself.'

(1,804) masi úle aanitsúwela éthhú  
 /masi ole aa-ni-tsuel-a ethhu  
 but 1.dem.dist 1sm.pst-hab-know-fv 9.thing  
 yaaphéhála omwírá, ookúshá nlénsó  
 e-aa-pheel-a o-n-iira o-o-kush-a n-lenso  
 9-ipfv-want-fv 15-tom-do 1sm-pfv.dj-take-fv 5-cloth  
 'nne  
 nne/  
 5.dem.dist  
 'But (as) he knew what she wanted to do to him, he took the cloth.'

Figure 7: Screenshot of Dative for the Makhuwa-Enahara Online Language Database, showing transcription of each utterance with interlinear glossing and translation.

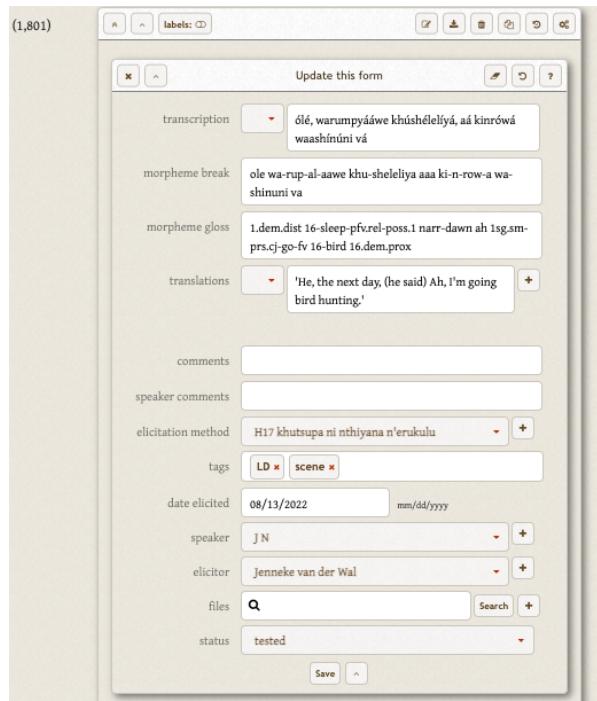


Figure 8: Screenshot of Dative for one form in the Makhuwa-Enahara OLD, showing part of the fields for data and metadata.

Continuing the same example, the second step (from form to function) might involve testing whether the strategy that is used in question-answer pairs is used for simple focus, or also exhaustive focus. If it is found that the interpretation is one of exhaustive focus, then the third step is to check whether this aspect of exhaustivity is necessarily present, or can for example be cancelled (indicating that it would be in the pragmatics and not an inherent, semantic aspect of interpretation associated with this form).

Regardless of which step or diagnostic is applied, it is essential that examples come with a discourse context. This is automatically the case for spontaneous examples and longer stretches of discourse or narrative, but should also be provided for elicited examples, so that the reader and researcher can identify how the form of the utterance relates to the information structure as visible through the discourse context. We therefore introduced a discourse context during the elicitation, either by verbal means or through use of picture stimuli, rather than working from isolated translation of the metalanguage (in which case it can be difficult to know exactly what discourse context the speaker has in mind).

In what follows, we explain and illustrate some of the diagnostics for topic (in Section 6.1), focus (in Section 6.2), and thetistics (in Section 6.3). The full set of diagnostics and explanations can be found in the methodology document (van der Wal 2021); see also the QUIS (Skopeteas et al. 2006), as well as Renans et al. (2010), van der Wal (2016) and Aissen (2023).

## 6.1 Topic diagnostics

While there is a crosslinguistic tendency for topics to be expressed sentence-initially (Gundel 1988, Aissen 2023, among others), the identification of topics has received less attention than the identification of focus.

Reinhart (1981) makes various suggestions for topic tests, among which is the periphrasis test: If a sentence can be paraphrased by ‘as for X’ or ‘I say about X that ...’, the referent that X refers to is indeed the topic. As a second test, Ameka (1991) shows that topic-marking strategies are incompatible with focus and should therefore not co-occur with inherently focal question words or (exhaustive) focus markers.

A third practical test that has turned out to be useful for identifying topics is testing for indefinites (Reinhart 1981: 66, referring to Firbas 1966). Because the topic is the point to which the information in the comment is anchored, this point must be at least identifiable, and therefore cannot be an indefinite non-specific referent. In other words, if an element is identified as a non-specific indefinite, it cannot also be a topic. Consider as an illustration examples (38) and (39). In Teke-Kukuya, topical elements tend to occur in the preverbal domain, and the preverbal NP ‘person’ in (38a) must be interpreted as definite, while the indefinite reading for the context is impossible. In (38b), when the word ‘person’ occurs postverbally, either a definite or indefinite reading is possible.<sup>13</sup>

- (38) (In)definite test: Teke-Kukuya (Chapter 3, Li 2025 [this volume])

(Context: Your mum and you are entering a dark hall, you are walking in front and your mum asks you from behind if you saw anyone in the hall.)

- a. # Me mbuurú ka-á-mún-i ni.  
1SG.PRO 1.person NEG-1SG.PST-see-PST NEG  
'I did not see the person/\*anyone.'
- b. Me ka-á-mún-i mbuurú ni.  
1SG.PRO NEG-1SG.PST-see-PST 1.person NEG  
'I did not see the person(anyone)'

<sup>13</sup>Note that this is not the immediate before verb focus position, as can be seen in the position of negation (see Chapter 3, Li 2025 [this volume], and Li 2024).

In contrast, the preverbal subject ‘person’ in Kinyakyusa (39) can be interpreted as indefinite and non-specific, thereby showing that preverbal constituents do not necessarily refer to topics.

- (39) (In)definite test: Kinyakyusa (Chapter 7, Lusekelo et al. 2025 [this volume])

Linga siku **umundu** linga ikukubuula gwinogonengepo.

linga siku u-mu-ndu linga i-ku-ku-buul-a

COND 9.say AUG-1-person COND 1SM-PRS-2SG.OM-tell-FV

gw-inogon-ang-e=po

2SG.SM-think-?-SBJV=16

‘If during another day someone tells you something, you must think.’

Weakly quantified NPs such as ‘few’ in (40), equally resist topicalisation, as they too behave as indefinites. The example in (40) shows that Makhuwa also has a subject position preverbally which can be filled by non-topics.

- (40) Makhuwa-Enahara (van der Wal 2009: 176)

Epaáwú vakhaání yoo-khúúr-íy-a.

9.bread few 9SM.PFV.DJ-chew-PASS-FV

‘Little bread was eaten.’

A final way to test topics is to distinguish subjects from topics through considering not only categorical sentences (with topic-comment) split but also thetic sentences (which do not have a topic). Investigating thetics can thus help to show whether preverbal noun phrases are best described in terms of topicality or subjechhood. For example, the availability of initial NPs in Tunen thetics shows that the word order is best described as Subject-Aux-O-V, rather than Top-Aux-O-V (Chapter 2, Kerr 2025 [this volume]).

## 6.2 Focus diagnostics

For the precise interpretation of focus, we first want to test whether a construction is about focus at all: if it does express focus, then we would expect it to allow content question words, answers to those questions, and constituents that can associate with the focus-sensitive particle ‘only’. Furthermore, we would expect “unfocusable” constituents to not be tolerated in this strategy. Such “unfocusables” are elements for which no alternative set can be generated: in our methodology, we use parts of idioms and cognate objects as tests for such unfocusable elements. The logic here is that there are no alternatives for parts of idioms in their idiomatic interpretation, as this interpretation is dependent on

other parts of the idiom. For example, while the English idiom ‘she lost her marbles’ can be interpreted as ‘she has gone crazy’, focusing the object in a cleft ‘it is her marbles that she lost’ only leaves the literal interpretation of someone losing actual glass marbles (as opposed to alternatives such as a handkerchief or pencils), no longer allowing the idiomatic interpretation (for more detail, see van der Wal 2021). The same logic holds for cognate objects, such as ‘dance a dance’ or ‘dream a dream’: there are no valid alternatives that could be triggered (what else would you dream if not a dream?) and therefore the cognate object cannot be in focus (#‘It is a dream she dreamed’). To illustrate this, the conjoint verb form in Kirundi cannot be used with a cognate object, as shown in (41), compared with the perfectly acceptable disjoint verb form in (41). This incompatibility shows the exclusive reading of the element following the conjoint verb form. Adding a relative clause to the object, in this case modifying ‘dreams’ by the relative clause ‘that are not pleasant’, makes it possible again to generate alternatives, such as dreams that are pleasant. This enables the generation of alternatives, and therefore allows the use of the conjoint verb form.

- (41) Kirundi (Chapter 5, Nshemezimana & van der Wal 2025 [this volume])

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.’

cj Naroose indoto # (zitari nziiza).

N-a-róot-ye	i-n-róoto	zi-ta-ri	n-ziza
1SG.SM-N.PST.CJ-dream-PFV	AUG-10-dream	10SM-NEG-be.REL	10-good

‘I dreamt dreams # (that were not pleasant).’

In a second step into the investigation of focus interpretation, we can test for exclusivity and exhaustivity. If a strategy is used for exclusive focus, this means that some or all of the alternatives should be excluded. We can test this by using items that do not allow exclusion and checking their acceptability in a focus strategy. There are at least five ways to test exclusivity:

- (42) Tests for exclusive and exhaustive focus

1. alternative questions;
2. universal quantifiers ‘all’ and ‘every’;
3. the focus-sensitive scalar particle ‘even’ and additive ‘also’;
4. indefinite noun-phrases;
5. a ‘mention some’ context.

We discuss these briefly here. First, when responding to an alternative question, i.e. a question that mentions two or more alternatives, an answer typically not only indicates for which referent the statement is true (e.g. Emily in (43)), but also that alternatives are excluded (in this example, Hamida), thus differing from the answer to a simple content question in which only selection of an alternative is involved (simple focus).

- (43) Rukiga (database Asiimwe & Van der Wal)
- Kéék' ogihíire Émíri ningá Hamídá?
- keeki o-gi-h-ire                   Emily nainga Hamida  
9.cake 2SG.SM-9OM-give-PFV 1.Emily or       1.Hamida
- 'Did you give Emily or Hamida a cake?'
- Naagihíire Émíri atári Hamídá.
- n-gi-h-ire                           Emily a-ta-ri           Hamida  
1SG.SM-9OM-give-PFV 1.Emily 1SM-NEG-be 1.Hamida
- 'I gave it to Emily not Hamida.'

The second test for exclusivity uses universal quantifiers 'all' and 'every'. These quantifiers are incompatible with exclusive focus, because all referents are included and therefore there can be no exclusion of alternatives from the set. A similar reasoning holds for the additive particle 'also', which indicates that more instantiations of the action/state described in the predicate have occurred for different referents, therefore making the referent it modifies non-exhaustive. Similarly, the scalar additive particle 'even' presupposes that more instantiations of the action/state described in the predicate have occurred, and in addition expresses that the object modified by 'even' is the least likely in the set of contextually relevant alternatives to make the proposition true. Therefore, none of the alternatives are excluded, and a DP modified by 'even' is predicted to be infelicitous if a focus strategy is inherently exclusive. The unacceptability of the universal quantifier and the particle 'even' in a pseudocleft construction are shown in the examples in (44) and (45), respectively. This shows that the pseudocleft in Kinyakyusa has an exclusive interpretation.

- (44) Kinyakyusa (Chapter 7, Lusekelo et al. 2025 [this volume])
- Ifi aagogile Kato fitana (\*fyooosa).<sup>14</sup>
- ifi                                   Kato fi-tana fi-osa  
8.DEM.PROX 1SM-PST-kill-PFV 1.Kato 8-cup 8-all
- 'What Kato broke is (\*all) cups.'

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<sup>14</sup>Predication is expressed here by the absence of the augment – no segmental copula is needed.

- (45) Uju nalyaganiile nagwe jo (\*joope) n'uFrida.  
 uju n-ali-aganiil-ile na-gwe jo j-oope na  
 1.DEM.PROX 1SG.SM-PST-meet-PFV with-1.PRO 1.IDCOP 1-even and  
 u-Frida  
 AUG-1.Frida  
 ‘The one I met is (\*even) Frida.’

However, the incompatibility can be remedied by specifying a set of alternatives for the universally quantified DP, either by contrasting with another whole set, e.g. ‘he broke all the cups, not all the plates’, or by adding a restrictive relative clause, e.g. ‘he broke all the cups *that are in the cupboard*, not the ones on the table’.

Indefinite non-specific phrases such as ‘someone’, ‘anything’, or ‘nobody’ cannot exclude alternatives: any (or no) referent will satisfy. To illustrate, when saying ‘I need to eat something’, the natural non-specific interpretation is that the speaker is hungry and does not care what they eat: anything will do out of the set of edible alternatives. All alternatives are therefore included. If a strategy expresses exclusive focus, it is thus predicted to be incompatible with the inclusive nature of the non-specific indefinite. This prediction is borne out for the conjoint and disjoint verb forms in Makhuwa-Enahara: the non-specific interpretation is possible after the disjoint verb form as in (46a), but unacceptable after the conjoint verb form as in (46b). The conjoint verb form is therefore said to express exclusive focus on the element directly following the verb (van der Wal 2011). In order to fit the noun *ntthu* ‘person’ into the exclusive interpretation, it is interpreted as a type (a human being), as in (46c): other types can now be excluded, and the conjoint form is acceptable.

- (46) Makhuwa-Enahara (van der Wal 2011: 1740)

- a. DJ Koríwéha ntthu.  
 ki-o-n-weh-a n-tthu  
 1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-1OM-look-FV 1-person  
 ‘I saw someone.’
- b. CJ # Ki-m-weh-alé n-tthú.  
 1SG.SM-1OM-look-PFV.CJ 1-person  
 int.: ‘I saw someone.’
- c. CJ Ki-m-weh-alé n-tthú, nki-weh-álé enáma.  
 1SG.SM-1OM-look-PFV.CJ 1-person NEG.1SG.SM-look-PFV 9.animal  
 ‘I saw a person/human being, not an animal.’

A fourth test for exclusivity is the “mention some” context. Van der Wal (2016: 270) writes that “Instances of non-exhaustive focus are found in answers to so-called mention-some questions, where the context of the question does not require, or even allow for an explicit listing of all the true alternatives” (see also Abels & Muriungi 2008).

For example, if you can usually buy milk or tomatoes in various places, there is no single correct answer to a question ‘Where can I buy milk?’. An exhaustive focus strategy is thus predicted to be infelicitous in the answer to a mention-some question. The test can therefore be used to discover which strategy is used in non-exhaustive focus (function to form), but can also be used to test suspected exhaustive focus strategies in non-exhaustive contexts (form to function).

There are a number of other tests in our methodology to test exclusivity and exhaustivity, for example the exact reading of numerals under exhaustive focus and the answers to incomplete or overcomplete yes/no questions. We illustrate here with Kinyakyusa numerals for the CV prefix and refer to the methodology document<sup>15</sup> for further tests and explanations. The meaning of numerals has been taken to have an underspecified interpretation either as the exact amount, or as a lower boundary ‘at least this amount’ (Horn 1972, Levinson 2000). However, in exhaustive focus, numerals lose their upward entailing quality and refer only to the exact quantity, because other amounts are excluded. In Kinyakyusa, a numeral in a DP with a CV marker is interpreted as the exact amount, as illustrated by the infelicity of the follow-up ‘maybe more’ in (47). The CV marker is concluded (also on the basis of other tests) to have an exhaustive interpretation (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022 and Chapter 7).

- (47) Kinyakyusa (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022)
- Singuku ntandatu syo isi syalyusigwe (#pamo n' iisiingi).  
si-nguku      ntandatu syo      isi  
EXH-10.chicken 10.six    10.IDCOP 10.DEM.PROX  
si-ali-ul-is-igw-e               pamo na i-si-ngi  
10SM-PST-buy-CAUS-PASS-FV maybe and AUG-10-other  
'It's six chickens (exactly) that were sold (#maybe more).'

A final important focus diagnostic concerns the detection of a presupposition. Whether a presupposition of existence is inherent to a linguistic strategy can be tested by asking a content question using that strategy and establishing whether the question can felicitously be answered by ‘nothing’ or ‘nobody’, i.e. the empty

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<sup>15</sup><https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/3608096>

set. We are thus testing the strategy used in the question here. If the strategy presupposes that there is a referent for which the proposition is true, then logically the answer cannot deny that. Van der Wal & Namyalo (2016) give the following examples from Luganda, showing that the postverbal focus strategy does not have a presupposition, as the SVO object question in (48) can readily be answered by ‘nobody’, whereas the strategy formed by the question word in initial position followed by the marker *gwe* does have this presupposition, considering the infelicity of the answer in (49).

- (48) Luganda (van der Wal & Namyalo 2016: 360)

- Q: W-á-kúbyé            ání?  
       2SG.SM-PST-hit.PFV who  
       ‘Who did you hit?’  
 A: Te-wá-lí.  
       NEG-16SM-be  
       ‘Nobody’, lit. ‘There is not.’

- (49) Luganda (van der Wal & Namyalo 2016: 360)

- Q: Aní gw-e w-á-kúbyê?  
       who 1-FOC 2SG.SM-PST-hit.PFV  
       ‘Who is it that you hit?’  
 A: # Te-wá-lí.  
       NEG-16SM-be  
       ‘Nobody’, lit. ‘There is not.’

Each of these tests, as well as additional ones, will come back when necessary in each chapter to show the precise interpretations of the strategies for the expression of information structure.

### 6.3 Thetics

Testing the properties of thetic sentences (sentences without a topic-comment split) is more challenging than testing for topic and focus, as thetics quite often use a strategy that is also used for other interpretations. It is therefore difficult to directly test for their thetic interpretation. For example, the canonical word order can also be felicitous in a thetic context in some languages, and subject inversion constructions are often used for thetics, but may also be used for narrow focus on the subject. The latter example of overlap is illustrated in (50): default

agreement inversion (VS word order with class 17 default agreement) can be used in Changana both in a thetic context out of the blue, as in (50a), and also with narrow subject focus, as shown for the subject modified by exhaustive ‘only’ in (50b).

- (50) Changana (van der Wal & Simango 2022: 236, 238)

- a. Kú-w-é                  mú-ya:ki.  
17SM-fall-PFV.CJ 1-bricklayer  
‘A bricklayer fell / There fell a bricklayer.’
- b. Kú-lúz-e                  ntsé:ná kókwa:na.  
17SM-lose-PFV.CJ only 1.grandparent  
‘Only grandpa passed away.’

We looked for thetics by using prototypical thetic contexts, asking speakers to describe a picture, describe the weather, or to imagine what would be said in an out of the blue (or *hot news*) context (e.g. “There is a village on a remote part of the river, where hardly any boats come to. One morning, a child comes running from the riverbank, shouting about the arrival of a ship. What does the child shout?”). It is often said that the answer to a question ‘what happened?’ is necessarily thetic, but this is not a watertight diagnostic for theticity. Because some referents are permanently or situationally available, these can be pushed into a topic function (Givón 1983, Erteschik-Shir 2007). For example, speech participants and “always available” referents such as ‘the moon’ or ‘the newspaper’ can always form the topic, even if they have not been mentioned in the previous discourse. Since speakers have a very strong preference to form categorical sentences containing a topic and comment, it is likely that such permanently available referents function as topics even in a context that might otherwise favour a thetic statement. That is, the answer to a question ‘what happened?’ (which does not present any referent as active) typically elicits a thetic answer, but if a referent is permanently available, it may be coded as a topic even in this environment.

#### 6.4 Section summary

In this section we have only briefly touched upon the main diagnostics and their logic in application for determining the expression and precise interpretation of information structure in the BaSIS languages. Additional information is provided in each chapter, as needed in order to understand the diagnostics applied for each individual language. We refer the interested reader to the methodology

document<sup>16</sup> for more extensive and detailed information on the diagnostics as well as further examples, hoping that the brief overview here may help to interpret the information in the chapters of this volume.

## 7 Reading guide

In preparing this book, we have attempted to co-ordinate the structure of each chapter so as to allow for cross-linguistic comparison. At the same time, each researcher has their own research interests, their own set of tests covered in the fieldwork, and was guided by the different nature of each individual language, meaning that the chapters also differ in content and focus.

Each of the chapters starts out with some basic information about the language, such as the demography, classification, and geography. As mentioned, we do not provide general grammatical information about the language (e.g. the noun classes or tense system), but straightaway enter into presenting and discussing the main morphosyntactic strategies involved in the expression of information structure, providing references to other sources in which more detailed background information is available on each language.

We structure the presentation for each language from form to function: we take the linguistic (mostly morphosyntactic) expression and describe which function it has. This has some drawbacks, as it does not allow one to easily search “how does language X express contrastive topics”, for example. Nevertheless, this presentation was chosen because strategies can be underspecified or multifunctional in what they express, meaning that providing an as-complete-as-possible description of the strategy will be beneficial (and also considering Matić & Wedgwood’s (2013) warning that not every strategy that is used for focus is actually a focus strategy). The chapters are therefore organised with the goal of understanding the functions of each form in a given language, with cross-linguistic comparison a secondary aim.

All descriptions and generalisations presented are illustrated with example sentences, mostly from our own fieldwork and sometimes from existing sources. As in this introductory chapter, the examples that are extracted from the Online Language Databases via Dative generally have 4 lines: the expression in the object language, a morpheme break, a gloss, and a free translation. When the surface morphophonology is transparent enough, we may give only 3 lines by merging the first line and the morpheme break. Surface tone is marked on the first line for all the languages except Kinyakyusa, which does not have tone, and Kirundi, where the standard Kirundi orthography for tone marking is used.

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<sup>16</sup><https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/3608096>

Although the chapters are quite extensive, aiming for as complete a description as possible based on the available data, there will always be interesting phenomena that are not covered. We mention some of these limitations here. Firstly, as the project concentrated on the morphosyntactic expression of information structure (believed to be of key significance in Bantu languages), less attention is paid to phonology and prosody, only mentioning it where relevant and/or known. Secondly, we stick to the level of the sentence and do not discuss what happens on the level of the discourse. In other words, we do not go into discourse particles and the overall organisation of discourse or narratives (with the exception of some discussion of referent expression over discourse, as related to referent accessibility). Finally, as stated before, the aim of the book is descriptive, and so theoretical analyses and modelling have been avoided as far as possible – the intention is for the chapters to form a stepping stone from which such formal analyses may be developed.

Despite the limitations in topics and languages we could cover in this book, we hope that the chapters contribute to a better understanding both of the individual languages and of information structure in general. We also hope that this book and the methodology document may inspire others to describe information structure in other languages too, within and outside of Bantu. This will in turn enable us to better understand the diversity of the Bantu family and make more robust crosslinguistic comparisons regarding how information structure is expressed.

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## Abbreviations and symbols

Numbers refer to noun classes except when followed by SG/PL, in which case they refer to persons. Commas indicate a pause.

*	ungrammatical	*	(X)	the presence of X is obligatory
#	infelicitous in the given context			and cannot grammatically be omitted

(*X)	the presence of X would make the sentence ungrammatical	INCP	inceptive
(X)	the presence of X is optional	INT	intensifier
AUG	augment	N.PST	near past
Aux	auxiliary	OLD	Online Language Database
CJ	conjoint	OM	object marker
CM	contrastive marker	PREP	preposition
COP	copula	PRL	predicative lowering
DEM	demonstrative	PRO	pronoun
DEP	dependent conjugation	PST	past
DISC	discourse	PST2	Tunen second-degree past tense (hodiernal)
DUR	durative/pluractional	REL	relative
DJ	disjoint	RM	relative marker
EMPH	emphatic	SM	subject marker
EXH	exhaustive	TO	Cicopi perfective tense
FV	final vowel	Top	topic
IDCOP	identificational copula	YPST	yesterday past

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# Chapter 2

## The expression of information structure in Tunen

Elisabeth J. Kerr

Ghent University

This chapter provides a descriptive overview of the expression of information structure in Tunen (A44, Cameroon), based primarily on original field data. The overall conclusion is that, in contrast to other Bantu languages, grammatical roles have a greater influence on syntax in Tunen than discourse roles do. A key finding is that the canonical word order S-Aux-O-V-X is compatible with a variety of information-structural contexts, rather than being an information structure-conditioned variant of an unmarked VO pattern. Non-subject information focus may be left unmarked via the canonical word order, while subject focus must be expressed via a basic cleft, showing a subject/non-subject asymmetry. The marker *á*, considered in previous work to be a monoclausal contrast marker, is argued on the basis of new data to be the specificational/identificational copula found within biclausal cleft constructions, with a subject/non-subject distinction visible between the use of a basic cleft and a reverse pseudocleft structure. In terms of topic expression, it is shown that both topical and non-topical material may occupy the subject position within the canonical word order, with no obligatory marking of topicality and no requirement to mark contrastive topics. The chapter ends with discussion of functional equivalents of passive constructions and consideration of how referent expression varies over discourse.

### 1 Introduction

Tunen (or “Nen”, ISO 639-3 code [tvu], Guthrie code A44; Maho 2003, 2009) is a Narrow Bantu language spoken by somewhere over 35,000 people (likely around 70,000–100,000; Kerr 2024c: 33–34), predominantly in central Cameroon (Mous



2003, Gordon 2005). The language is spoken in the *Centre* region of Cameroon around the town Ndikiniméki and in an area stretching southwestwards into the *Littoral* region, reaching Douala (Dugast 1955, 1971, Mous 2003). It is therefore spoken at the far North-Western region of Narrow Bantu, bordering non-Bantu Bantoid languages of the Grassfields subgroup, and as such has various unusual properties compared to (other) Narrow Bantu languages. As well as phonological differences including the loss of final vowels and tone lowering in utterance-final position and an ATR vowel harmony system (Dugast 1971, van Leynseele 1977, van der Hulst et al. 1986, Bancel 1991, Mous 1986, 2003, Boyd 2015), Tunen's morphosyntax is more analytical than the canonical Bantu language, with the subject marker and tense marker (and the negative marker or directionality affixes, if present) separate from the verb (Dugast 1971, Mous 1997, 2003, Kongne Welaze 2010). Most relevantly for understanding the information structure of the language, Tunen is known to be highly unusual for a Bantu language in having SOV as its canonical word order (Dugast 1971, Bearth 2003, Mous 1997, 2003, 2005, 2014, Kerr 2024b,c). This chapter starts by investigating the information-structural contexts in which this SOV word order is found, and then turns to consider how else information-structural notions are expressed in the language.

The data presented in this chapter, unless indicated otherwise, are drawn from fieldwork conducted by the author under the Bantu Syntax and Information Structure (BaSIS) research project at Leiden University. The fieldwork was conducted over a total period of approximately 7 months, split across Mar–Jun 2019 (3.5 months) and Oct 2021–Feb 2022 (3.25 months), in Ndikiniméki and Yaoundé, Cameroon, with some follow-up fieldwork conducted remotely via WhatsApp. There are four dialects of Tunen: Təbáŋe, Hilij, Fombo, and Ndogné. Təbáŋe is the standard dialect of Ndikiniméki town and the main dialect on which previous work on Tunen has been based. Most consultants for this study spoke the Təbáŋe dialect, but one consultant, EO, speaks Hilij, and another consultant, DM speaks Fombo (though has lived in the Təbáŋe-speaking area for a long time). The dialects are mutually intelligible (Dugast 1971: 8), with minor differences in pronunciation and lexicon. In this chapter, consultant initials and the unique ID of the form in the corresponding Dative database are provided in square brackets alongside each example. For example, “[PM 316]” is a form provided by consultant PM with UID 316 in the database. The data consist of a mixture of elicitation based on a controlled discourse context and natural speech of different subgenres (dialogues, storytelling, instructional monologues). Further information on the data collection and information on how to access the archival corpus (Kerr 2024a) is provided in Kerr (2024c: Chapter 3).

This chapter is structured as follows. Section 2 presents evidence for S-Aux-O-V-X as the canonical word order and shows the different information-structural contexts in which this word order can appear. Section 3 discusses departures from this canonical word order, including the VO word order patterns discussed in Mous (1997, 2003). Section 4 looks at how clefts and the marker *á* are used for focus expression, Section 5 covers left-peripheral topic expression and contrastive topics, Section 6 considers how expression of the agent can be avoided using the *-áto* participle and *bá*-functional passive constructions, Section 7 considers how referent expression varies over discourse. Section 8 reflects briefly on how Tunen compares to other Bantu languages in its expression of information structure, and Section 9 concludes. The terminology used for information structure is explained in the general introduction to this volume (van der Wal et al. 2025 [this volume]), which also provides an introduction to the conceptual background of information structure and the methodology used in the BaSIS project.

## 2 Canonical word order S-Aux-O-V-X

### 2.1 S-Aux-O-V-X as the canonical word order

Tunen is widely known to have SOV as its canonical word order (Dugast 1971, Bearth 2003, Mous 1997, 2003, 2005, 2014, Kerr 2024b,c), specifically the subtype S-Aux-O-V-X, where Aux refers to an auxiliary element (in Tunen, the TAM complex) and X to other elements, such as locative adjuncts. This word order is highly unusual for a Bantu language, where SVO is the expected word order (Bearth 2003). Moreover, S-Aux-O-V-X is unusual in Niger-Congo and is also rare cross-linguistically, found in some languages of West and Central Africa (see e.g. Dryer & Gensler 2005, Gensler & Güldemann 2003, Güldemann 2008). S-Aux-O-V(-X) surface word order (at least in some TAM contexts) is reported for example for Mande languages (Claudi 1993, Creissels 2005, Nikitina 2011, Sande et al. 2019), Kru languages (Gensler 1994, Sande et al. 2019), and the Senufo branch of Gur (Gensler 1994), with only Tunen and its close neighbour Nyokon (Guthrie no. A45) and nearby Ewondo/Eton (A72) as Benue-Congo languages reported to show (a degree of) OV word order (Mous 2005, 2014, Kerr 2024b,c).

One question is the extent to which a language's basic word order varies dependent on information structure. In this vein, it has been claimed that the word order of some Bantu languages is better captured by making reference to discourse roles than using grammatical role-oriented labels like "SVO" (see e.g. Morimoto 2000, 2006, Good 2010, Yoneda 2011, Kerr et al. 2023). This means that a more appropriate characterisation of a language's word order may be in terms of

discourse roles like topic and focus. In this section I show that Tunen’s word order is largely influenced by grammatical role (i.e. subjecthood vs. objecthood; see Kerr et al. 2023 for more discussion on the nature of grammatical role-oriented versus discourse role-oriented word order in Bantu). I show that S-Aux-O-V-X is a pragmatically neutral word order in Tunen that is compatible with various information-structural interpretations. Tunen therefore contrasts with the other Bantu languages in this volume, which show SVO canonical word order that is conditioned more strongly by information-structural considerations than by grammatical role.

### 2.1.1 Thetics

One typical diagnostic for a language’s canonical word order is the word order found in thetic sentences. Thetics are defined as being all-new and thus differ from categorical sentences which show a topic-comment distinction (Sasse 1987, 1996, Lambrecht 1994, van der Wal et al. 2025 [this volume]). In Tunen, S-Aux-O-V-X word order is used for thetics, as illustrated in (1–3) below.<sup>1</sup>

- (1) (Context: You are at the riverside outside the village and see an elephant, which very rarely occurs, so run to tell the others.)  
mε nó miséku sièkin!  
/mε nó miséku sièkinə/  
SM.1SG PST1 9.elephant see.DUR  
'Je viens de voir un éléphant !'  
'I just saw an elephant!' [PM 316]
- (2) (Context: Your friend asks what happened at church.)  
mötát a ná imbénu ye fèkin né Yésəs ɔ  
/mɔ-táta a ná ε-mbónu ye fèkinə né Yésəsu ɔ  
1-pastor 1SM PST2 9-news 9.ASS 5.entrance 5.ASS Jesus PREP  
Yerúsalem nɔjɔnak.  
Yerúsaleme nɔjɔnɔ-aka/  
Jerusalem tell-DUR  
'Le pasteur a raconté des nouvelles de l'entrée de Jésus à Jérusalem'.  
'The pastor told the news of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem.' [DM 166]

<sup>1</sup>Elicitation sessions were conducted in French and so the French translations are provided as they are what was agreed with the consultant. English translations are my own additions. The first transcription line gives a broad phonetic transcription, while the second line shows the underlying form with morpheme segmentation. The phonetic transcription is similar to the official orthography (Satre et al. 2008) but differs in transcribing surface tone, noting tonal downstep, and in not transcribing non-pronounced final vowels (which can be identified from the underlying representation line); see Kerr (2024c: Chapter 4) for further discussion. A list of glossing abbreviations can be found at the end of this chapter.

- (3) (Context: Imagine someone came in the room right now during our field session, and you are explaining to someone else later what happened.)

tó ndɔ́ bá u miímá yi isukúlú, mutʃéŋjé a nó nda  
 /tɔ́ Hndɔ́ bá ɔ miímá ye ε-sukúlú mɔ́-tʃéŋjé a nó nda  
 SM.1PL PRS be PREP 9.room ASS.9 7-school 1-criminal 1SM PST1 VEN  
 bæ̃sú kasɔ̃n!  
 bæ̃sú kasɔ̃na/  
 PRO.1PL attack

'Nous étions dans la salle de classe, un bandit est venu nous agresser !'  
 'We were in the classroom, a criminal came in to attack us!' [EE+EB 1847]

The consistent S-Aux-O-V(-X) word order across different types of thetics shows that this word order is compatible with an all-new context where no element is topical or in focus. One point of complexity here, however, is that conversational participants can be argued to be always retrievable topics via world knowledge (see e.g. Givón 1983, Erteschik-Shir 2007 for relevant discussion). However, examples like (2) with third-person subjects provide evidence that non-topical subjects can also be in the initial position, and example (3) further shows that OV order is found even when the object is the first person. In any case, regardless of the position of the subject, the word order for Tunen thetics is markedly different from the other Bantu languages in this volume in that the object precedes the verb in Tunen (SOV). Versions with VO order were judged as ungrammatical (4).

- (4) \* tó ndɔ́ bá u miímá yi isukúlú, mutʃéŋjé a nó nda  
 /tɔ́ Hndɔ́ bá ɔ miímá ye ε-sukúlú mɔ́-tʃéŋjé a nó nda  
 SM.1PL PRS be PREP 9.room ASS.9 7-school 1-criminal 1SM PST1 VEN

kasɔ̃n bæ̃sú!  
 kasɔ̃na bæ̃sú/  
 attack PRO.1PL

int. 'Nous étions dans la salle de classe, un bandit est venu nous agresser !'

int. 'We were in the classroom, a criminal came in to attack us!'

[EE+EB 2239]

Note also that while subject inversion constructions have been reported as a means of detopicalising subjects in a thetic context in other Bantu languages (Marten & van der Wal 2014), and indeed are found to express thetics in all other languages in this volume except Teke-Kukuya, such inversion constructions are

completely ungrammatical in Tunen (regardless of the position of temporal and locative adjuncts), as shown in (5) and (6).<sup>2,3</sup>

- (5) \* {naánékɔla} a ka nyɔkɔ {naánékɔla} kíŋgə  
   /naánékɔla/ a ka nyɔ-aka {naánékɔla} kíŋgə/  
   yesterday 1SM PST3 work-DUR yesterday 1.chief  
   int. ‘Le chef a travaillé hier.’  
   int. ‘The chief worked yesterday.’ [JO 2629–30]
- (6) \* bé ká fámáka bɛfɔŋɔ naánékɔla ɔ etɔbɔtɔbó.  
   /bé ka fámá-aka bɛ-fɔŋɔ naánékɔla ɔ ε-tɔbɔtɔbó/  
   8SM PST3 arrive-DUR 8-cow yesterday PREP 7-field  
   int. ‘Les vaches sont apparues dans le champ hier.’  
   int. ‘The cows appeared in the field yesterday.’ [JO 2608]

This unavailability of subject inversion matches other languages in the area such as Basaá (Guthrie no. A43, Cameroon), which is shown by Hamlaoui & Makasso (2015) to not allow inversion constructions (see also Hamlaoui 2022). The unavailability of inversion constructions in Tunen means that the canonical word order S-Aux-O-V-X is the only means of expressing theticity in Tunen.

### 2.1.2 VP focus

Word order when the entire verb phrase is in focus (VP focus) is a second criterion that can be invoked to determine a language’s canonical word order. In Tunen, VP focus questions can felicitously be answered with S-Aux-O-V-X word order patterns (7), providing further evidence for S-Aux-O-V-X as the canonical word order.<sup>4</sup>

- (7) (What did Maria do?)  
   Maliá a ná bilélié fɔfɔkié ɔmbambala na makat.  
   /Maliá a ná bɛ-lélié fɔfɔkié ɔ-mbambala na ma-kátá/  
   1.Maria 1SM PST2 8-varnish anoint.DUR 3-wall with 6-hand  
   ‘Maria a [oint le vernis sur le mur avec la main]<sub>FOC</sub>.’  
   ‘Maria [applied the varnish to the wall by hand]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ [JO 2516]

<sup>2</sup>In this chapter, the following standard conventions are used for presentation of judgements: \*(X) indicates that the sentence would be ungrammatical if X were omitted (in other words, X is obligatory); (\*X) indicates that the sentence would be ungrammatical if X were included; {X} ... {X} means that the judgement holds with X in either position in the sentence (not that it occurs in both at the same time).

<sup>3</sup>The non-inverted equivalents (with the nominal subject directly before the subject marker) are grammatical ([JO 2623, 2627]; [JO 2600-1]).

<sup>4</sup>Here and throughout, the scope of focus is indicated in the translation lines by square brackets with subscript FOC for “focus”.

Now we have seen evidence from thetics and VP focus for S-Aux-O-V-X as the canonical word order, we can investigate the other information-structural contexts in which it occurs.

## 2.2 S-Aux-O-V-X for object focus

S-Aux-O-V-X word order is compatible with term focus on the theme object, as seen in the answers to the object question in (8) below, illustrated for two different consultants.

- (8) (What is the man holding? (+ hand-drawn picture stimulus))

- a. məndə a ná kalótə ití.  
/mə-ndə a ná kalótə itíá/  
1-person 1SM PST2 9.carrot hold  
'L'homme tient [une carotte]<sub>FOC</sub>.'  
'The man is holding [a carrot]<sub>FOC</sub>' [JO 1107]
- b. məndə a ná kalótə itíá ɔ məkat.  
/mə-ndə a ná kalótə itíá ɔ mə-kátá/  
1-person 1SM PST2 9.carrot hold PREP 3-hand  
'L'homme tient [une carotte]<sub>FOC</sub> à la main.'  
'The man is holding [a carrot]<sub>FOC</sub> in his hand.' [PM 1264]

Both SVOX and SVXO orders were judged as ungrammatical (9a–9b).

- (9) (What is the man holding? (+ hand-drawn picture stimulus))

- a. \* a ná itíá kalótə ɔ məkata.  
/a ná itíá kalótə ɔ mə-kátá/  
1SM PST2 hold 9.carrot PREP 3-hand  
int. 'Il tient [une carotte]<sub>FOC</sub> à la main.'  
int. 'He is holding [a carrot]<sub>FOC</sub> in his hand.' [JO 1626]
- b. \* a ná itíá ɔ məkata kalótə.  
/a ná itíá ɔ mə-kátá kalótə/  
1SM PST2 hold PREP 3-hand 9.carrot  
int. 'Il tient [une carotte]<sub>FOC</sub> à la main.'  
int. He is holding [a carrot]<sub>FOC</sub> in his hand.' [JO 1625]

These examples provide evidence for two things. Firstly, when taken together with what we have seen for other discourse contexts, we see that S-Aux-O-V-X

is a pragmatically neutral word order in Tunen: it is possible for an all-new thetic context, VP focus, and narrow information focus on the theme object. Secondly, the examples show that information focus does not need to be morphosyntactically marked in Tunen, at least for theme objects, as the object in (8) is left in-situ without any special marking.

The Q-A pairs seen above show that S-Aux-O-V-X word order is found for information focus on the theme object. This word order is not possible in a different focus context where the object is marked by the focus-sensitive particles *ata* ‘even’ (10a) or *ómaná* ‘only’ (11a). In such exclusive and exhaustive focus cases, the object must be ex-situ, typically fronted (10b) or clefted (11b), and marginally postposed (10c).<sup>5</sup>

- (10) a. \* a ná néáká mɔŋéŋ, a ná **ata bɛŋgwɛtɛ** neak.  
      /a ná néá-aka mɔŋéŋa a ná **ata bɛ-ŋgwɛtɛ** néá-aka/  
      1SM PST2 eat-DUR much 1SM PST2 even 8-potato eat-DUR  
      int. ‘Il a beaucoup mangé, il a même mangé [des patates]<sub>FOC</sub>.’  
      int. ‘He ate a lot, he even ate [potatoes]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ [PM (+DM) 2265]
- b. a ná néáká mɔŋéŋ, **ata bɛŋgwɛtɛ** a ná neak.  
      /a ná néá-aka mɔŋéŋa **ata bɛ-ŋgwɛtɛ** a ná néá-aka/  
      1SM PST2 eat-DUR much even 8-potato 1SM PST2 eat-DUR  
      ‘Il a beaucoup mangé, il a même mangé [des patates]<sub>FOC</sub>.’  
      ‘He ate a lot, he even ate [potatoes]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ [PM (+DM) 2264]
- c. ? a ná néáká mɔŋéŋ, a ná néáká **ata bɛŋgwɛtɛ**.  
      /a ná néá-aka mɔŋéŋa a ná néá-aka **ata bɛ-ŋgwɛtɛ**/  
      1SM PST2 eat-DUR much 1SM PST2 eat-DUR even 8-potato  
      int. ‘Il a beaucoup mangé, il a même mangé [des patates]<sub>FOC</sub>.’  
      int. ‘He ate a lot, he even ate [potatoes]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ [PM (+DM) 2263]
- (11) a. \* a ná mɔná ómaná imítá túmbi.  
      /a ná mɔ-ná ómaná ε-mítá túmbiə/  
      1SM PST2 1-child only 9-calabash return  
      int. ‘C'est seulement [la calebasse]<sub>FOC</sub> qu'elle a donné à l'enfant.’  
      int. ‘She only gave [the calabash]<sub>FOC</sub> to the child.’ [JO 1593]
- b. ómaná imítá á a ná mɔná túmbi.  
      ómaná ε-mítá á a ná mɔ-ná túmbiə/  
      only 9-calabash COP 1SM PST2 1-child return  
      ‘C'est seulement [la calebasse]<sub>FOC</sub> qu'elle a donné à l'enfant.’  
      ‘She only gave [the calabash]<sub>FOC</sub> to the child.’ [JO 1592]

<sup>5</sup>Note that the preference for fronted over postposed differs from the previous description in Mous (1997), who only reports the postposed strategy.

Note also that there is a distinction questions and declaratives, with questions formed ex-situ rather than in the S-Aux-O-V-X order. This is illustrated in (12) below, where *yaté* ‘what’ is fronted in the question, while the answer is provided with the canonical S-Aux-O-V-X order.<sup>6</sup>

- (12) Q: *yaté* ó ndó sin?  
       /yaté o Hndó sinə/  
       what SM.2SG PRS see  
       ‘Qu'est-ce que tu vois?’  
       ‘What do you see?’ [EO 396]
- A: mέ ndó tunoní sinə tálá.  
  /mε Hndó to-noní sinə tó-láló/  
  SM.1SG PRS 13-bird see 13-three  
  ‘Je vois [trois oiseaux]<sub>FOC</sub>.’  
  ‘I see [three birds]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ [EO 397]

Example (13a) shows that an in-situ object question is not possible.<sup>7</sup>

- (13) a. \* ó ndó *yaté* taléáka neɔfénə eé?  
       /o Hndó yaté taléá-aka neɔfénə eé/  
       SM.2SG PRS what cook-DUR today Q  
       int. ‘Qu'est-ce que tu vas cuisiner aujourd'hui ?’  
       int. ‘What will you cook today?’ [JO 1600]
- b. *yaté* ó ndó taléáka neɔfénə eé?  
       /yaté o Hndó taléá-aka neɔfénə eé/  
       what SM.2SG PRS cook-DUR today Q  
       ‘Qu'est-ce que tu vas cuisiner aujourd'hui ?’  
       ‘What will you cook today?’ [JO 1601]

<sup>6</sup>The numeral modifier of the object appears in a discontinuous position after the verb, despite also falling within the scope of focus. I will come back to the interpretation of such discontinuous modifiers in Section 3.2; see Kerr (2024c: Chapter 7) for more detailed discussion.

<sup>7</sup>An exception to the ban on in-situ object questions is an echo question context, in which case the object question word can be left in-situ, as in the elicited example (i) below. Note however that a clefted ex-situ question was provided as the first answer here, and short movement of the question word to the left periphery of the embedded clause is also possible.

- (i) Elísabéte á ndó laa ásé a ná *yaté* óndókə eé?  
       /Elísabete a Hndó láá a-séá a ná yaté óndó-aka eé/  
       1.Elisabeth 1SM PRS say 1SM-say 1SM PST2 what buy-DUR Q  
       ‘Elisabeth dit qu'elle a acheté quoi ?’  
       ‘Elisabeth said that she bought what?’ [EB+JO 2782]; (Kerr 2024c: 132)

We therefore see that S-Aux-O-V-X is compatible with information focus on the object in declarative sentences, while exclusive and exhaustive focus on the object – as evidenced by association with the focus-sensitive particles *ata* ‘even’ and *ómaná* ‘only’ – require an ex-situ word order, and foci in questions are ex-situ. Section 4 will discuss the use of reverse pseudoclefts as a means of expressing more contrastive term focus on the object. I turn now to testing for other discourse contexts in which the canonical word order S-Aux-O-V-X can be used.

### 2.3 No S-Aux-O-V-X for subject focus

In contrast to focused declarative objects, focused declarative subjects cannot be left in-situ and must be focused via a cleft (14); the *á* COP cannot be omitted.<sup>8</sup>

- (14) (Which politician died?)  
#(á) Píelə á ná wə.  
/á Píelə á ná wé/  
COP 1.Pierre 1SM.REL PST2 die  
'C'est [Pierre]<sub>FOC</sub> qui est mort.'  
'[Pierre]<sub>FOC</sub> died.'

[EO 271]

In other words, the canonical S-Aux-O-V-X word order cannot be used to express subject focus, even in a non-contrastive information focus context. This matches subject/non-subject focus asymmetries reported in other language families, where subject focus is obligatorily marked while non-subject focus may be expressed using the canonical word order (see e.g. Fiedler et al. 2010 for an overview).

For subject foci associated with the focus-sensitive particles *ata* ‘even’ (15) and *ómaná* ‘only’ (15b), evidence for the subject being ex-situ is given by the obligatory presence of the copula *á*, which will be discussed further in Section 4.

- (15) a. *ata* \*(á) Bitə a ná bəŋgetə neak.  
/ata á Bitə a ná bə-ŋgetə néá-aka/  
even COP 1.Peter 1SM PST2 8-potato eat-DUR  
'Même [Peter]<sub>FOC</sub> a mangé des patates.'  
'Even [Peter]<sub>FOC</sub> ate potatoes.'

[PM 2260]

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<sup>8</sup>The infelicity judgement of example (14) without the *á* COP also holds when the subject marker is expressed in the non-relative form (with a low tone).

- b. (Context: You are a school teacher marking the exams for a class, and are shocked by how badly the students did.)

́maná ́mánúwélə na Natanayéle á bá ná tómbá ɔ  
 /́maná ́mánúélə na Natanayéle á bá ná tómba ɔ  
 only 1.Emmanuel and 1.Nathaniel COP 2SM PST2 pass PREP  
 nékɔɔna!  
 nɛ-kɔɔna/  
 5-exam

‘Seulement [Emmanuel et Nathaniel]<sub>FOC</sub> ont réussi à l'examen !’  
 ‘Only [Emmanuel and Nathaniel]<sub>FOC</sub> passed the exam!’ [JO 527]

For subject questions, it is harder to tell whether the canonical word order is used, as fronting of the subject question word results in the same linear order S-Aux-O-V-X and is therefore string-vacuous. As will be discussed further in Section 4, there is some evidence that subject questions are formed as clefts, as suggested for example by the relative form (visible from the high tone) of the subject marker in example (16) below.

- (16) éyáné á lea na hioso?  
 /éyáné á léá na hε-́sɔ/’  
 who 1SM.REL be with 19-spoon  
 ‘Qui a une cuillère ?’  
 ‘Who has a spoon?’ [EO 1433]

We will come back to the expression of subject focus via clefting in Section 4. Note that the inability for subjects to be focused in a non-clefted construction illustrates that Tunen does not have a dedicated focus position in which different grammatical roles can be focused, unlike the languages in this volume which have an immediate before verb (IBV; Li 2025 [this volume]), immediate after verb (IAV; e.g. Makhuwa; van der Wal 2025 [this volume], Rukiga; Asiimwe & van der Wal 2025 [this volume]) and sentence-final focus position (Kirundi; Nshemezima & van der Wal 2025 [this volume]) in which subjects and non-subjects alike may be focused. This difference in availability of focus positions is discussed further in Kerr et al. (2023).

## 2.4 S-Aux-O-V-X for non-argument focus

Non-arguments in Tunen pattern with objects in being able to be focused in-situ in the canonical S-Aux-O-V-X order (17A). They may also be focused via

a cleft, and time adverbials are generally more flexible in their position than other adverbials/adjuncts (Kerr 2024c: 114–115). Like with what we saw above for objects, non-argument questions are generally formed by fronting/clefting (17Q1) rather than having the question word in the canonical position, although the in-situ options are accepted more so than for objects (17Q2).

- (17) Q1: héníá á      ↓ná      yayéá      miímə lúmáké eé?  
       /hóníá á      L'ná      yayéá      miímə lúmá-aka eé/  
       where 1SM.REL PST3.REL 3.POSS.PRO.1 3.house build-DUR Q  
       'Où est-qu'il a construit sa maison ?'  
       'Where did he build his house?' [JO 1115]

Q2: a    ka    yáyéá      miímə lúmáké    héní(é) eé?  
       /a    ka    yáyéá      miímə lúmá-aka    héníá eé/  
       1SM PST3 3.POSS.PRO.1 3.house build-DUR where Q  
       'Où est-qu'il a construit sa maison ?'  
       'Where did he build his house?' [JO 1118]

A: a    ka    yayéá      miímə lúmáké    ɔ      iNdíki.  
       /a    ka    yayéá      miímə lúmá-aka    ɔ      iNdíki/  
       1SM PST3 3.POSS.PRO.1 3.house build-DUR PREP Ndiki  
       'Il a construit sa maison [à Ndiki]<sub>FOC</sub>.'  
       He built his house [in Ndiki]<sub>FOC</sub>. [JO, 1121]

Note that example (17A) also shows that a given object (here, an object already mentioned in the question) may be preverbal, providing further evidence for S-Aux-O-V-X as a pragmatically neutral word order, as the object position can be filled by focused or given objects alike.

Like we saw above for objects, non-arguments modified by the focus-sensitive particle *śmaná* ‘only’ are commonly fronted (18a). However, it is also possible to have what appears to be the S-Aux-O-V-X word order with the X element modified by *śmaná* ‘only’, although note that this is linearly equivalent to an alternative analysis in which the focused phrase is postponed (18b).

- (18) (Context: Someone incorrectly says you have been to both Yaoundé and Kribi.)

a. bó, ómaná ɔ Yəhənd á mé ná ká hul.  
 /bó / ómaná ɔ Yəhəndə á mé ná ka húlé/  
 no only PREP Yaounde COP SM.1SG.REL PST2 AND return  
 ‘Non, ce n’est que à [Yaoundé]<sub>FOC</sub> que je suis parti(e).’  
 ‘No, I only went to [Yaoundé]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ [JO 1607]

- b. bóo, mε ná <sup>↓</sup>ká hula ómaná o Yəhənd.  
 /bóo mε ná ka húlá ómaná o Yəhəndə/  
 no SM.1SG PST2 AND return only PREP Yaounde  
 'Non, ce n'est que à [Yaoundé]<sub>FOC</sub> que je suis parti(e)'  
 'No, I only went to [Yaoundé]<sub>FOC</sub>'. [JO 1608]

In Section 4.3.2 below, we will see that non-arguments also pattern with objects with respect to cleft formation and fragment answers.

## 2.5 S-Aux-O-V-X for predicate-centred focus

Finally, the canonical word order S-Aux-O-V-X can be used for predicate-centred focus (PCF), as seen already for VP focus in (7) above and as further illustrated below for polarity focus (19) and state-of-affairs (verb) focus (20), (21).

- (19) Context: 'Do you see the sheep?' (polarity focus)  
 mέ nd(ɔ) endómbá sin.  
 /mε Hndɔ ε-ndómbá sinə/  
 SM.1SG PRS 4-sheep see  
 'Je vois les moutons.'  
 'I see the sheep.' [EO 695]
- (20) (What did he do with the beans and the plantains? (SoA focus))  
 (What happened? (thetic))  
 a ka makondʒé néáka. a ná bilikó lu.  
 /a ka ma-kondʒé néá-aka a ná bε-likó luə/  
 1SM PST3 6-plantain eat-DUR 1SM PST2 8-bean sell  
 'Il a [mangé]<sub>FOC</sub> les plantains. Il a [vendu]<sub>FOC</sub> les haricots.'  
 'He [ate]<sub>FOC</sub> the plantains. He [sold]<sub>FOC</sub> the beans.' [JO 908]
- (21) (Context: Johannes dislikes the taste of cassava so normally cooks it but doesn't eat it. This time, he buys it, he cooks it, and he even eats it (which is surprising). (SoA focus))  
 Yəhánɛsɛ a ná esasɔma néáká séeb.  
 /Yəhánɛsɛ a ná ε-sasɔma néá-aka séebe/  
 1.Johannes 1SM PST2 7-cassava eat-DUR even  
 'Johannes a même [mangé]<sub>FOC</sub> du manioc.'  
 'Johannes even [ate]<sub>FOC</sub> the cassava.' [PM 2282]

We see in (21) that the canonical word order can be used for PCF for exclusive focus as well as information focus, as the exclusive focus-sensitive particle *séebə* ‘only’ may modify the predicate. Note here that the exclusive focus-sensitive particle *ata* ‘even’ seen previously is only found for term focus and cannot be used in a PCF construction (22),<sup>9</sup> with *séebə* (literally translatable as ‘self’) used instead. Unlike with *ata*, *séebə* follows the focused constituent and does not require it to be ex-situ.

- (22) a. \* Yôhánese a ná εsasõma ata néáká.  
       /Yôhánese a ná ε-sasõma ata néá-aka/  
       1.Johannes 1SM PST2 7-cassava even eat-DUR  
       int. 'Johannes a même [mangé]<sub>FOC</sub> du manioc.'  
       int. 'Johannes even [ate]<sub>FOC</sub> the cassava.' [PM 2284]

b. \* ata néáká Yôhánese a ná εsasõma.  
       /ata néá-aka Yôhánese a ná ε-sasõma/  
       even eat-DUR 1.Johannes 1SM PST2 7-cassava  
       int. 'Johannes a même [mangé]<sub>FOC</sub> du manioc.'  
       int. 'Johannes even [ate]<sub>FOC</sub> the cassava.' [PM 2285]

Note also that, unlike the other Bantu languages in this volume, Tunen does not have a predicate doubling construction for the expression of PCF (i.e. a construction in which an infinitival/nominal form of the verb appears together with a finite verb form; see e.g. Güldemann et al. 2015 and references therein).

So far then, we have seen that S-Aux-O-V-X is the pragmatically neutral word order in Tunen, and therefore can be taken as the canonical word order. This canonical word order is found for thetics, VP focus, information focus on the theme object, non-argument focus, and predicate-centred focus (PCF). It is not possible to use S-Aux-O-V-X word order for focus on the subject, which must instead be expressed by a cleft. More contrastive term focus is generally expressed ex-situ, as shown by association with the focus-sensitive particles *ata* ‘even’ and *ómaná* ‘only’ (while more contrastive PCF can be left in-situ).

<sup>9</sup>Although a possible example of *ata* ‘even’ with PCF was found in the following example from a story, where *ata* modifies a clause after a left-dislocated topic:

- (i) «m̥kandžakandž ata á ndo hó tak a báka bá lé wéeya  
 /mɔ-kandžakandža ata a Hndø hó tak a bá-aka bá lé wéeya  
 1-liar even 1SM PRS talk truth 1SM be-DUR 2SM NEG PRO.EMPH.1  
 ɔkén.»  
 ɔ-kéna/  
 INF-believe  
 ‘« Un menteur, même quand il dit la vérité, on ne lui croit pas. »’  
 “Even if a liar is telling the truth, nobody believes them.”

## 2.6 S-Aux-O-V-X in double object constructions

Having seen that the canonical word order for Tunen transitives is S-Aux-O-V-X, let us now consider ditransitives. Here, the O slot of S-Aux-O-V-X can be filled by multiple objects, specifically in S-O<sub>GOAL</sub>-O<sub>THEME</sub>-V order, as previously noted by Mous (1997, 2003). I show in this section that this S-O<sub>GOAL</sub>-O<sub>THEME</sub>-V order is consistent across different information-structural contexts, meaning that the order of objects is not conditioned by information structure. In other words, when both objects are preverbal, the goal (i.e. recipient/beneficiary) object always precedes the theme object (23a–24). The reverse order S-O<sub>THEME</sub>-O<sub>GOAL</sub>-V is not grammatical (23b).

- (23) ('Who is the woman giving a gourd to?' (+ photo from BaSIS stimuli))

- a. a nó əsókó hetéte indi.  
 /a nó əsókó he-téte índíá/  
 1SM PST1 1.other 19-gourd give  
 'Elle donne une gourde à [l'autre]<sub>FOC</sub>.'  
 'She gives a gourd to [the other (woman)]<sub>FOC</sub>'. [PM 1541]
- b. \* a nó hetéte əsókó indi.  
 /a nó he-téte əsókó índíá/  
 1SM PST1 19-gourd 1.other give  
 int. 'Elle donne une gourde à [l'autre]<sub>FOC</sub>.'  
 int. 'She gives a gourd to [the other (woman)]<sub>FOC</sub>'. [PM 1542]

- (24) Q: yaté (á) muəndú á ndɔ mɔná túmbi?

/yaté á mɔ-əndú a Hndɔ mɔ-ná túmbiə/

what COP 1-woman 1SM PRS 1-child return

'Qu'est-ce que la femme remet à l'enfant ?'

'What is the woman returning to the child?' [JO 1588]

- A: muəndú á ndɔ mɔná imítá túmbi.

/mɔ-əndú a Hndɔ mɔ-ná ε-mítá túmbiə/

1-woman 1SM PRS 1-child 9-calabash return

'La femme remet [le calebasse]<sub>FOC</sub> à l'enfant.'

'The woman returns [the calabash]<sub>FOC</sub> to the child.' [JO 1587]

The same O<sub>GOAL</sub>-O<sub>THEME</sub> order is also found in questions (25) and imperatives (26).

- (25) éyáné á            ná himuísimuísí hísfó indi?  
       /éyáné á            ná he-muísimuísí h-e-çfó indié/  
       who 1SM.REL PST2 19-cat            19-fish give  
       'Qui a donné du poisson au chat ?'  
       'Who gave fish to the cat?' [EO 278]

(26) índié məná imit!  
       /índié mə-ná ε-mítá/  
       give 1-child 9-calabash  
       'Donne la calebasse à l'enfant !'  
       'Give the calabash to the child!' [JO 1594]

These data provide evidence for the S-O<sub>GOAL</sub>-O<sub>THEME</sub>-V-X as the canonical word order in Tunen, meaning that the ‘O’ of S-Aux-O-V-X covers both the theme and the goal (i.e. recipient/beneficiary) object. Note that this is in contrast to certain West African languages described as having S-Aux-O-V-X basic word order that only permit a single preverbal object (Gensler & Güldemann 2003, Creissels 2005; see Kerr 2024c: Chapter 6 for further discussion).

Note also that this canonical order is not the only word order found for double object constructions. Firstly, (24Q) above and (28a) below show that an ex-situ strategy is standard for questioning an object. Additionally, recipient objects marked by the focus-sensitive particle *ómaná* ‘only’ must be moved out of their canonical position, typically to the left (27a) but sometimes also to the right (27b), with the canonical word order not possible (27c).<sup>10</sup>

- (27) a. ómaná á mɔná á ndɔ imíté túmbi.  
       /ómaná á mɔ-ná a Hndɔ ε-mítá túmbiə/  
       only COP/PREP 1-child 1SM PRS 9-calabash return  
       ‘C'est seulement [à l'enfant]<sub>FOC</sub> qu'elle a donné la calebasse.’  
       ‘She only gave a calabash [to the child]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ [JO 1590]

b. a nó hetété indi ómaná á Ilisabet.  
       /a nó he-tété índíá ómaná á Ilisabete/  
       1SM PST1 19-gourd give only COP/PREP 1.Elisabeth  
       ‘C'est uniquement [à Elisabeth]<sub>FOC</sub> qu'elle a donné la gourde.’  
       ‘She only gave a gourd [to Elisabeth]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ (and nobody else)

<sup>10</sup>I gloss *á* as COP/PREP here due to uncertainty as to how many *ás* are present underlyingly and the nature of *á* as a preposition; see the end of this section for further discussion.

- c. \* muəndú á ndɔ́ ómaná á mɔná imítá túmbi.  
 /mɔ-əndú a Hndɔ́ ómaná á mɔ-ná ε-mítá túmbiə/  
 1-woman 1SM PRS only COP/PREP 1-child 9-calabash return  
 int. ‘C'est seulement [à l'enfant]<sub>FOC</sub> que la femme a donné la  
 calebasse.’  
 int. ‘The woman only gave a calabash [to the child]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ [JO 1591]

This pattern matches what we saw already for theme objects in (11) above. These data taken together support a general observation that exhaustively-focused elements in Tunen must be ex-situ, while information focus (for non-subjects) is typically unmarked and left in-situ in the S-Aux-O-V-X word order.

As is common cross-linguistically (see e.g. Malchukov et al. 2010), in addition to the double object construction, an alternative ditransitive construction is available in which the recipient object is introduced by a preposition. In this case, the word order is S-O<sub>THEME</sub>-V-Prep-O<sub>GOAL</sub>, with the goal object an oblique in the postverbal position (S-Aux-O-V-X). The examples below illustrate this construction in a new information focus context (28b) and in an imperative (28c).

- (28) a. Q: (Context: BaSIS photo stimulus of woman giving another woman a gourd.)  
 ɔwané á mūéndú á ndɔ́ imíté túmbi?  
 /ɔ-ané á mɔ-əndú á Hndɔ́ ε-míté túmbiə/  
 PREP-who COP 1-woman 1SM.REL PRS 9-calabash return  
 ‘À qui la femme remet la calebasse ?’  
 ‘Who is the woman returning the calabash to?’ [JO 1583]
- b. A: muəndú á ndɔ́ imíté túmbiə ɔ mɔn.  
 /mɔ-əndú a Hndɔ́ ε-míté túmbiə ɔ mɔ-ná/  
 1-woman 1SM PRS 9-calabash return PREP 1-child  
 ‘La femme remet la calebasse [à l'enfant]<sub>FOC</sub>.’  
 ‘The woman returns the calabash [to the child]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ [JO 1586]
- c. índiá imítá á mɔná!  
 /indíá ε-mítá á mɔ-ná/  
 give 9-calabash PREP 1-child  
 ‘Donne la calebasse à l'enfant !’  
 ‘Give the calabash to the child!’ [JO 1595]

Initial analysis suggests that S-O<sub>THEME</sub>-V-Prep-O<sub>GOAL</sub> is a lower-frequency pattern than S-O<sub>THEME</sub>-O<sub>GOAL</sub>-V, although both strategies are found across speakers. The preposition used in the prepositional variant is generally the general

preposition *ɔ*, but sometimes surfaces as *á* or *a*. Whether *á* is underlying low or high-toned and whether it is an allomorph, separate preposition (cf. the *á* preposition found in nearby Bantoid languages), or a borrowing from French *à* ‘to, at’ is a topic for further research. In any case, its status as a preposition means that these constructions can be understood as instances of the canonical S-Aux-O-V-X word order, where X here is a prepositional phrase. The generalisation is therefore that prepositional objects are postverbal, while non-prepositional objects are preverbal (with fixed O<sub>GOAL</sub>-O<sub>THEME</sub> order).

## 2.7 Section summary

This section presented evidence that S-Aux-O-V-X is a pragmatically neutral word order compatible with different information-structural contexts, and therefore should be taken as the canonical word order in Tunen. The order of objects in double object constructions is determined by grammatical role rather than information structure, with S-O<sub>GOAL</sub>-O<sub>THEME</sub>-V word order or a prepositional construction S-O<sub>THEME</sub>-V-Prep-O<sub>GOAL</sub>. While the S-Aux-O-V-X order is compatible with thetics, information focus on an object, non-argument focus, and predicate-centred focus, subjects cannot be focused in-situ, and content questions are formed ex-situ. It was noted that subject inversion of the type found in Eastern and Southern Bantu languages is also ungrammatical in Tunen and predicate doubling constructions are likewise not found. This unavailability of inversion constructions matches what was found for the Cameroonian Bantu language Basaá (Guthrie no. A43) by Hamlaoui & Makasso (2015), which they argue to be a feature of Northwestern Bantu more generally. The pragmatically neutral preverbal position of the object in Tunen is a further peculiarity compared to most other Bantu languages (Bearth 2003, Mous 1997, 2003). The neighbouring Cameroonian Bantu language Nyokon (A45) also has OV patterns, although only in a subset of TAM contexts; Ewondo (A72, Cameroon) and Tikar (Bantoid, Cameroon) also have partial OV patterns, but Tunen is the only known language with robust S-Aux-O-V-X basic word order, as discussed further in Mous (1997, 2005, 2014) and (Kerr 2024b; 2024c: Chapter 6). Finally, we saw that foci modified by the focus-sensitive particles *ata* ‘even’ or *ómaná* ‘only’ cannot be expressed in-situ, showing that the preverbal object position is specific to information focus, and we saw that questions are generally formed ex-situ rather than using the S-Aux-O-V-X word order (with in-situ question formation most accepted for non-argument focus).

### 3 Non-canonical word order

Having seen that S-Aux-O-V-X is the canonical word order in Tunen, we can look at the use of alternative word orders in different information-structural contexts. This section considers VO orders found, both with and without the *á* marker, as well as argument fronting and discontinuous noun phrases.

#### 3.1 VO order

Some Niger-Congo languages in Central and West Africa are known to have alternations between OV and VO word order, including Tunen's close neighbour, Nyokon (A45, Cameroon; Mous 2005). This raises the question as to whether VO is found alongside OV in Tunen. In other work I show that Tunen OV is consistent across tense/aspect contexts (Kerr 2024b, 2024c: Chapter 6), corroborating earlier work by Mous (1997, 2005). This means that there is no tense/aspect-conditioned OV/VO alternation in Tunen as reported for Nyokon and for other Niger-Congo languages, such as those of the Kwa branch (Heine 1976, Creissels 2005, 2018, Sande et al. 2019).

While OV is thus consistent across tenses in Tunen, Mous (1997, 2003) has proposed that Tunen does have a VO strategy, which is used for contrastive focus on the theme object and formed with a marker *á* preceding the object (termed a "contrast" marker by Mous 2003, although intended specifically for contrastive focus; Mous p.c.). Mous (1997) also notes that VO is found for objects modified by the focus-sensitive particle *ha* 'only'. This relates to the data reported above of rightwardly-postposed contrastive objects, which I argue to be ex-situ cases rather than in-situ (and with fronting a more common strategy). Such a description of OV vs. VO variation dependent on information structure has been picked up in summaries of Tunen word order, such as Downing & Marten (2019: 273–274).

The alternation in position of the object dependent on contrastiveness has been discussed by Güldemann (2007) as an example of a more general pattern of preverbal objects in Benue-Congo being extrafocal while postverbal objects are more contrastive. Under such an account, the prediction is therefore that OV order in Tunen is found with extrafocal objects, existing in alternation with a VO pattern used for contrastive foci.

In this section I discuss the VáO construction presented by Mous (1997). While the VáO construction is found in my field data, it is infrequent and was only seen in elicitation contexts. I show that this construction shows evidence of becoming monoclausal, but argue against *á* as a general contrast or focus marker, instead

treating it as the identificational/specification copula as part of a bicalusal cleft construction. Next, I argue that objects modified by ‘only’ must be ex-situ, which can result in VO order on the surface but should not be taken as a basic VO order of the kind found in some West African languages. Finally, I show that some VO constructions are possible without *á*, although these are rare in the data and the extent to which such patterns depend on information structure rather than independent factors such as prosodic weight or predicate type needs further testing.

### 3.1.1 VáO

In Mous’s (1997, 2003) analysis of Tunen syntax, he identifies an SVO construction in Tunen where the postverbal object is preceded by what he calls a “contrast marker”, *á*, marking contrastive focus, as illustrated in (29) below from Mous’ own elicitation data.<sup>11</sup>

- (29) mé-ndò ní á bóniàk.  
SM.1SG-PRS eat CONTR 14.yam  
‘What I eat is yams.’ (Mous 2003: 304)

A key question is whether this *á* marker is best treated as a contrast marker (CONTR), focus marker (FOC), or copula (COP). If *á* were a general focus marker, we may expect it to be able to appear on focused objects in other positions. However, it is not possible to have *á* precede the object in the canonical preverbal position (30), despite S-Aux-O-V-X being compatible with information focus on the object (as we saw in (8) above).

- (30) (‘What did the woman give to the other woman?’ (+ BaSIS photo stimulus))  
a nò ɔsóká (\*á) hëtëté indiø.  
/a nò ɔsóká á hë-té té indiø/  
1SM PST1 1.other COP 19-gourd give  
int. ‘Elle a donné à l’autre [une gourde]<sub>FOC</sub>.’  
int. ‘She gave the woman [a gourd]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ [PM 1541, 1549]

We should therefore not take *á* to be a general focus marker. This observation matches the data from exhaustive focus marked by the focus-sensitive particle *ámaná* ‘only’, which requires that the object is moved from its base position (11),

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<sup>11</sup>Glosses for the subject marker, tense marker, and noun have been adapted for consistency with the rest of the examples in this chapter; the CONTR gloss and data line are left unchanged.

(27). These data therefore are compatible with Mous' (1997, 2003) analysis of á as a contrastive focus marker, but not as a general focus marker.

One key difference in my data compared to Mous's (2003) presentation is that SVáO was a low frequency strategy in my corpus. In Isaac's (2007) study of 6 of the longer Tunen texts transcribed in Dugast (1975), he also reports that there were no clear examples of this construction (Isaac 2007: 61). Furthermore, the construction was even judged ungrammatical in the following elicitation session, regardless of the position of the object with respect to the postverbal adjunct (31).

- (31) \* a ná itié {ɔ mɔkata} á kaláto {ɔ mɔkata}.  
      /a ná itié {ɔ mɔ-kátá} á kaláto {ɔ mɔ-kátá}/  
      1SM PST2 hold PREP 3-hand COP 9.carrot PREP 3-hand  
      int. 'Ce qu'il tient à la main, c'est [une carotte]<sub>FOC</sub>.'  
      int. 'He is holding [a carrot]<sub>FOC</sub> in his hand.' [JO 1627-8]

Instead, the focused object can be left in-situ unmarked by á (S-Aux-O-V-X), the typical expression of information focus, or be focused via a reverse pseudocleft with á, as used for contrastive and exhaustive focus (see Section 4). The SVáO word order is therefore a less frequent pattern than it may seem from Mous' description. We will see in Section 4 that a reverse pseudocleft of the form OáSVX is a more common strategy for contrastive focus than the pseudocleft type here; recall as well from (10) above that fronting was preferred to postposing when an object is modified by a focus-sensitive particle. In my natural speech recordings, the VáO construction did not appear.

In earlier oral presentation of this work, I argued that the SVáO construction is a pseudocleft, on the basis of evidence of constructions with á showing properties of relative clauses and therefore a biclausal cleft structure (to be seen for other cleft types in Section 4). However, remotely elicited data explicitly testing this hypothesis for this low-frequency SVáO construction found that this construction does not allow relative tense morphology or the relative form of the subject marker, thus providing evidence for monocausality rather than bicausality. The dataset in (32) illustrate this point.<sup>12</sup>

- (32) a. nɛlala á babá á              ↓ná              húánána ɔwón.  
      /nɛ-lala á babá á              Lná              húánána ɔ-ónɔ/  
      5-spider COP 1.father 1SM.REL PST3.REL must      INF-kill  
      'C'est [l'araignée]<sub>FOC</sub> que papa devait tuer.'  
      'It's [the spider]<sub>FOC</sub> that dad had to kill.' [PM 70.61]

<sup>12</sup>For these remotely-elicited data, the form ID in square brackets refers to the session number followed by the example number in this session.

- b. babá a ná húánána ɔwóno á nélal.  
 /babá a ná húánána ɔ-óno á ne-lala/  
 1.father 1SM PST3 must INF-kill CONTR 5-spider  
 'Ce que papa devait tuer n'est que [l'araignée]<sub>FOC</sub>.'  
 'Dad had to kill (only) the [spider]<sub>FOC</sub>'. [PM 70.57]
- c. \*babá á <sup>↓</sup>na húánána ɔwóno á nélal.  
 /babá a <sup>L</sup>na húánána ɔ-óno á ne-lala/  
 1.father 1SM.REL PST3.REL must INF-kill CONTR 5-spider  
 int. 'Ce que papa devait tuer n'est que [l'araignée]<sub>FOC</sub>'  
 int. 'Dad had to kill (only) [the spider]<sub>FOC</sub>'. [PM 70.62]

Here in (32a) we see a reverse pseudocleft construction, in which the focused object *nélala* 'spider' is followed by the *á* copula and then a reduced relative. As we will see in Section 4, the reduced relative environment is evidenced by the H tone on the class 1 subject marker *á* – which is *a* in non-dependent clause contexts (Kerr 2024c: §4.3.3.2) – in addition to the dependent clause form of the third-degree past tense marker <sup>↓</sup>*ná* (which is *ka* in main clause contexts, Dugast 1971, Mous 2003, Kerr 2024c: §4.4.5). We therefore expect to see these indicators in the relative subject marker and TAM contexts for the SVáO construction. However, when the SVáO construction is used, the subject marker and tense marker are in the main clause form (32b) and cannot be in the dependent clause form (32c). These data therefore suggest that the SVáO construction is not a biclausal pseudocleft and instead is grammaticalising into a monoclausal construction marking contrastive focus. Note also that the translations indicate that the SVáO construction gives a sense of exhaustivity. A similar idea of contrast was provided by another speaker, and so I gloss the *á* in the SVáO construction as CONTR for contrast, while *á* is elsewhere glossed as COP for copula.<sup>13</sup>

In summary then, we see that the VáO strategy discussed by Mous (1997, 2003) exists, with elicitation data providing evidence that it is at least in the process of becoming monoclausal and not simply a pseudocleft, as evidenced by the lack of relative SM and TAM forms. However, it is a low-frequency pattern that was not always judged as grammatical by consultants (31) and did not appear in the natural speech data at all, with a reverse pseudocleft a much more common construction for expression of contrastive focus on the object.

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<sup>13</sup>In follow-up discussion of these examples, JO confirmed that both (32a) and (32b) can be felicitously continued with, *tátá á ɔndželé* 'not the lizard', supporting this idea of exhaustivity.

### 3.1.2 VO without á

While OV order is by far the most common word order pattern in Tunen, a few instances in my own and Dugast's (1971, 1975) data show VO order, with no á marker and no indication of biclausality. These instances are rare; VO was generally judged ungrammatical in elicitation, with only a few cases in which it was accepted. When checking a set of 10 natural speech texts containing approximately 400 utterances, only 4 potential VO constructions were found, but all of these can be excluded from being actual instances of VO syntax. 1 can be excluded due to being a case of secondary predication rather than a true DP object (33), 1 can be excluded due to being a case of hesitation (34), and 1 shows switching from Tunen to French (35).

- (33) (Context: EO and PM are discussing the funeral of a local figure called Papa Daniel.)
- bá se .. mukót ... mba a ka híána munén.  
 /bá séá .. mɔ-kótó ... mba a ka híána mɔ-nəni/  
 SM.2 say .. 1-Bamileke ... but SM.1 PST3 become 1-Nen  
 'On dit que c'est un Bamileke, mais il est devenu un Munen.'  
 'They say he's a Bamileke, but he became a Munen.' [EO 1037]
- (34) (Context: PM is giving EO instructions for the QUIS map task.)
- mé ndɔ sinə ... mənyama ε-káhɔ.  
 /mɛ Hndɔ sinə ... mɛ-nyama ε-kahɔ/  
 SM.1SG PRS see ... 9-animal 9-beef  
 'Je vois ... une vache.'  
 'I see ... a cow.' [EO 664]
- (35) (PM: 'I myself saw the first vehicle he bought, it was Inyas who drove (it)'  
 EO: 'I (also) saw (it).')
- a ka tilékə « Dieu haït les méchants »  
 /a ka tilə-aka « Dieu haït les méchants »/  
 SM.1 PST3 write-DUR God.FR hates.FR the.FR wicked.people.FR  
 '- Il avait écrit « Dieu haït les méchants ».'  
 '- He wrote "God hates the wicked"' [PM 1047]

The final example, given in (36), illustrates the occasional ambiguity in classifying a construction as VO or OV. Here, the objet *tóándʒe* 'leaves' can be either taken to be the complement of the verb in the first clause or a fronted topic in the

second clause (with zero expression of the object in the first clause due to givenness, for which see Section 7). Although originally transcribed as VO, when asking JO remotely in follow-up work, she interpreted the object as a fronted topic, meaning that this utterance would also be OV.

- (36) (Context: JO is explaining how to make the dish *kok* [*hekɔkɛ* leaves boiled with smoked fish and ground peanuts].)

Mε ka ákán(a) (ɔ) εmbóm, mε ná hékɔkɛ kéták,  
 /mε ka ákáná ɔ ε-mbóma mε ná hékɔkɛ kétáka  
 SM.1SG PST3 leave PREP 7-bush SM.1SG PST2 19-kok gather-DUR  
 mε ná nda híáná ɔ ɔmbél, mε ná tábónáka tóándʒɛ  
 mε ná nda híáná ɔ ɔ-mbélá mε ná tábóná-aka tó-ándʒɛ  
 SM.1SG PST2 VEN enter PREP 3-house SM.1SG PST2 arrange-DUR 13-leaf

tóbiá mε ombokok. [...]

tó-biá mε ombokoko/

13-bad SM.1SG throw.REP

‘Je suis partie en brousse, j’ai cueilli le *kok*, je suis revenue à la maison, j’ai arrangé les mauvaises feuilles, je les ai jeté, [...]’

‘I went to the bush, I gathered *kok*, I returned home, I arranged the bad leaves, I threw them out, [...]’ [JO 1339]

However, VO constructions do sometimes show up, and some examples are found in the Dugast texts. Mous (2003) notes that objects in such VO constructions are prosodically phrased with the verb, as evidenced by H tone spread. This is illustrated in (37), where I have added an underlying representation line and adapted the glosses to show that the H tone of *kemá* ‘tap’ spreads rightwards onto the underlyingly L-toned class 6 prefix *ma-*.

- (37) à-ná kèmáká mʷ́élùk.  
 /a-ná kemá-aka ma-lukə/  
 1SM-PST2 tap-DUR 6-palm.wine

‘He tapped palm wine!’

(Dugast 1971: 58, Mous 2003: 304)

While such examples appear in Dugast’s work, JO considered this sentence ungrammatical when asked in follow-up work. Furthermore, the validity of H tone spread as a diagnostic of syntactic phrasing is uncertain, as discussed in Kerr (2024c: 304–305).

At this stage, it is therefore not clear whether there is generalisation accounting for when these VO examples can appear and the extent to which this depends

on information structure. Multiple other factors could play a role, including prosodic weight, predicates requiring extraposition, and postverbal modifier placement. Prosodic weight alone would not account for example (37) above, and we saw already in (2) above that prosodically heavy preverbal objects are possible. However, prosodic weight is a factor that could explain the discontinuous relative clauses modifying objects that we will see in Section 3.2 below.

A second context in which VO order is found without *á* is with objects modified by certain modifiers, most commonly numerals, as reported in (Kerr 2024c: Chapter 7). The default order (i.e. the most common order, found across different information-structural contexts) for such objects is S-O-V-Mod, i.e. a discontinuous noun phrase. However, the object can also appear adjacent to the modifier, leading to the VO order S-V-O-Mod. The order S-O-Mod-V is dispreferred. For example, in the sub-DP focus context in (38) below in which the focus falls on the numeral modifier of the theme object, V-O-Num was allowed (38a) as well as the discontinuous order O-V-Num (38b), while the preverbal order SONumV was considered marginal (despite SOV being generally allowed and numerals always following the noun they modify; Dugast 1971, Mous 2003, Kerr 2020, 2024c) (38c). The availability of S-V-O-Num for narrow focus on the numeral is illustrated for another consultant in (39).

- (38) ('How many people do you see?' (+ picture))

  - a.    mé    nd sin bend    bafand.  
       /me    Hnd sin bend    b-fand/  
       SM.1SG PRS    see 2.person 2-two  
       'Je vois [deux]<sub>FOC</sub> personnes.'  
       'I see [two]<sub>FOC</sub> people.' [JO 541]
  - b.    mé nd bend sin bafand.  
       [JO 542]
  - c.    ? mé nd bend bafand sin.  
       [JO 543]

(39) ('How many animals did he kill?')

  - a    ná    onko    menyama ímoti.  
       /a    ná    n-aka me-nyama -mot/  
       1SM PST2 kill-DUR 9-animal    9-one  
       'Il en a tu [un]<sub>FOC</sub> (seul).'  
       'He killed [one]<sub>FOC</sub> animal.' [EO 1416]

The S-V-O-Num pattern was also provided for contexts other than narrow focus on the modifier, for example with term focus on the entire object (40) and as an answer to a polar question (polarity focus) (41b). While this VO order was

judged grammatical, it is worthwhile noting that the discontinuous S-O-V-Num order was the first response (41).

- (40) (Context: MPI scope image 1/77 + ex-situ object question *yaté ñ ndɔ sin?*  
('What do you see?'))

mé ndɔ sinə bɔléá bɔmótε. bó báka na tunoní tuəñ.  
/mɛ Hndɔ sinə bɔ-léá bó-móté bó bá-aka na tɔ-noní tɔ-əñí/  
SM.1SG PRS see 14-tree 14-one 14SM be-DUR with 13-bird 13-many

'Je vois [un arbre]<sub>FOC</sub>. Il a beaucoup d'oiseaux.'

'I see [a tree]<sub>FOC</sub>. It has many birds.'

[JO 1151]

- (41) ('Do you see two birds?' (+ hand-drawn picture stimulus) (polarity focus))

a. éε, mé ndɔ tunoní sinə tɔfandε.

/éε mɛ Hndɔ tɔ-noní sinə tɔ-fandé/

yes SM.1SG PRS 13-bird see 13-two

'Oui, je vois deux oiseaux.'

'Yes, I see two birds.'

[EO 1408]

b. éε, méndɔ sinə tunoní tɔfandε.

[EO 1409]

In general, V-O-Num examples are less common than a discontinuous order in which the object is preverbal while its modifier is postverbal, which I will discuss more in Section 3.2 below. I suggest that the S-V-O-Num order is related to the postverbal position being the preferred position for certain quantifiers like numerals, together with the desire to preserve the contiguity of the noun phrase constituent, rather than being related to the information-structural status of the noun and/or modifier. The following example shows that the universal quantifier *-kimə* 'all' can also appear in this slot when in focus.

- (42) (Someone mistakenly says that not all the children did their homework  
(knowing that some are more studious than others).)

bóɔ, bá ná masóma kiak bákim.

/bóɔ bá ná ma-sóma kεa-aka bá-kimə/

no 2SM PST2 6-homework do-DUR 2-all

'Non, c'est [tous]<sub>FOC</sub> qui ont fait les devoirs.'

'No, [all]<sub>FOC</sub> of them did the homework.'

[EE+EB 1824]

We therefore see that this VO order may be explained by the appearance of a quantifier element, rather than being conditioned by information-structural considerations. Section 3.2 (see also Kerr 2024c: Chapter 7) will cover such discontinuous nominals in further detail, showing that the discontinuous modifier placement is, somewhat surprisingly, the pragmatically neutral word order.

A final context where VO is found without *á* is with focus-sensitive particles, as in the example below from Mous (1997) and as already seen in Section 2 for objects modified by *ata* ‘even’ and *ómaná* ‘only’.<sup>14,15</sup>



This VO order arises due to exhaustively-focused objects needing to move from the canonical position. Recall from Section 2 that while such movement to the right is possible, movement to the left is a more common strategy. The availability of VO order here is expressed by Mous as needing to “mak[e] a statement about the relation of a particular object against other possible objects” (Mous 1997: 127); he claims that the relation is not one of focus or new information but of contrast. I follow the other authors in this volume in calling such objects focused objects of a more contrastive type than information focus (see e.g. Bianchi et al. 2015, Cruschina 2021). This requirement to be ex-situ extends across all contrastively focused terms and is not specific to objects.

Finally, it is worth noting that in elicitation contexts, most speakers reject VO examples; VO examples are therefore quite low-frequency in my corpus. These constructions could therefore be better investigated through a larger-scale corpus study with more natural speech examples and controlling for independent factors such as prosodic weight. Given the prevalence of VO orders in Benue-Congo and the variation between OV and VO in other languages with OV word order, the lack of VO in Tunen is particularly interesting from a comparative and historical perspective (see Kerr 2024c: Chapter 6 for further reflections).

### 3.2 Discontinuity

As noted by Mous (1997), modifiers of theme objects – including numerals, quantifiers, and relative clauses – may appear in Tunen in a discontinuous position, separated from the object by the verb, resulting in the discontinuous S-O-V-Mod order. Crosslinguistically, discontinuity is a low frequency word order strategy that relates directly to information structure: discontinuous noun phrases are used for focus on the modifier (see e.g. Louagie & Verstraete 2016), with a common pattern involving scrambling to a left-peripheral topic or focus phrase (Fanselow & Ćavar 2002). In Bantu, discontinuous noun phrases are very rare (Van de Velde

<sup>14</sup>Glosses have been standardised; the transcription line is unaltered.

<sup>15</sup>This example was checked in follow-up work with JO; she accepts it, but rejects it if the focus-sensitive particle is omitted.

2022: 909). In Tunen, however, discontinuous modifiers are found frequently, the modifier and object do not move to the left periphery, and they do not require narrow focus on the modifier. Instead, this word order appears to be pragmatically neutral: as I show in this section (see also Kerr 2024c: Chapter 7), it is possible with narrow focus on the postverbal modifier, with focus on the whole object, or even to introduce new discourse referents (as already observed in Isaac 2007). Note that this analysis of discontinuity as a pragmatically neutral order runs against the analysis of Mous (1997: 133), who argues that discontinuous modifiers have “contrastive force” in Tunen, likening them to postverbal objects preceded by á or a focus-sensitive particle ‘only’.<sup>16</sup>

Examples of discontinuous modifiers are given below, first for the universal quantifier *-kimə* ‘all’ and secondly for a numeral, both in contexts where the quantity is surprising.

- (44) (Context: You are a farmer who has lost all of your animals, but by a stroke of luck, you find them all again.)
- |     |    |             |                                   |     |       |                      |             |      |                |         |
|-----|----|-------------|-----------------------------------|-----|-------|----------------------|-------------|------|----------------|---------|
| mε  | ná | Húélé hóli  | $\acute{\epsilon} \downarrow$ séá | mé  | ná    | biá $\downarrow$ míá | behóse      |      |                |         |
| /mε | ná | Húélé hóliá | ε-séá                             | mé  | ná    | biámíá               | be-hóse     |      |                |         |
|     |    | SM.1SG      | PST2                              | God | thank | 7-say                | SM.1SG.SBJV | PST2 | POSS.PRO.1SG.8 | 8-horse |
|     |    | bójø        | bikim.                            |     |       |                      |             |      |                |         |
|     |    | bójø        | bé-kimə/                          |     |       |                      |             |      |                |         |
|     |    | find        | 8-all                             |     |       |                      |             |      |                |         |
- ‘Je remercie Dieu comme j’ai retrouvé tous mes chevaux.’  
 ‘I thank the Lord that I’ve found all my horses.’ [EE+EB 1827]
- (45) (Context: You wake up after a party and see a surprising number of empty wine bottles in the room.)
- |            |            |           |           |           |         |          |       |         |       |
|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|----------|-------|---------|-------|
| naánékəla  | ekəlakólá  | tó        | ka        | mindíngə  | néákəna | énámane  | yé    |         |       |
| /naánékəla | ε-kəlakólá | tó        | ka        | me-ndíngə | néákəna | é-námane | yé    |         |       |
|            |            | yesterday | 7-evening | SM.1PL    | PST3    | 4-bottle | drink | 4-eight | ASS.4 |
|            |            | máluk!    |           |           |         |          |       |         |       |
|            |            | málukə/   |           |           |         |          |       |         |       |
|            |            | 6.wine    |           |           |         |          |       |         |       |
- ‘Hier soir nous avons bu huit bouteilles du vin !’  
 ‘We drank eight bottles of wine last night!’ [JO 1941]

Example (41) above and example (46) below show that the modifier does not have to be new information in order to be discontinuous in Tunen. In (46), we see

<sup>16</sup>To be precise, Mous identifies the discontinuous position as the standard position for Tunen numerals and argues that numerals are inherently contrastive in that they are “selective” (Mous 1997).

a discontinuous modifier used in a polarity focus context (a subtype of predicate-centred focus), in which both the object and modifier were given through prior expression in the discourse and are therefore non-focal.

- (46) (éε,) mε ná imitə yε mwənífí indi mεŋéŋ ɔ helbátɔ.  
 /(éε) mε ná ε-mítə yε ma-nífá índiá mεŋéŋa ɔ he-lóbátɔ/  
 yes SM.1SG PST2 9-calabash ASS.9 6-water give 9.big PREP 19-child  
 '(Oui,) j'ai donné la grand calebasse (de l'eau) à l'enfant.'  
 '(Yes,) I gave the large calabash of water to the child.'

[EE+EB 1830; cf. Mous 2003: 305]

Discontinuous orders are not just found for modifiers of objects; discontinuity is also possible for quantifiers modifying subjects, as in the natural speech examples in (47) below. In (47a) we see the use of a discontinuous structure for the introduction of a discourse referent; in (47b) we see the use of the discontinuous order when concluding the explanation. In both cases, the discontinuous numeral is neither focal nor contrastive.

- (47) (Context: QUIS dialogue task: EO has a picture from the end of a storyboard and must find out from PM (who has the rest of the storyboard) what happened.)
- mba bəndo bá báká háhá                  balal, yaté bá ndɔ  
 /mba bəndo bá bá-aka háaha                  bá-lálá yaté bá Hndɔ  
 but 2.person 2SM be-DUR DEM.PROX.LOC 2-three what 2SM PRS  
 ke?  
 kea/  
 do  
 'Mais il y a trois personnes ici, que font-ils?'  
 'But there are three people here, what are they doing?' [EO 581]
  - Context: After concluding the explanation.  
 mhmm. ɔ́há bəndo bándo wééya sinə balal.  
 /mhmm ɔhá bəndo ba Hndɔ wééya sinə bá-lálá/  
 mhm for.that 2.person 2SM PRS PRO.1 see 2-three  
 'Mhm. C'est pour ça que trois gens le regardent.'  
 'Mhm. That's why three people are looking at him.' [PM 597]

The postverbal modifier position therefore seems to be a neutral position rather than related to a particular information-structural configuration. I discuss

the details of the discontinuous noun phrase construction in Kerr (2024c: Chapter 7); for current purposes we can conclude that the construction is not restricted to a particular discourse context of contrastive focus (contra Mous 1997).

Finally, note that in addition to numeral and quantifier modifiers, relative clauses modifying objects are frequently discontinuously-positioned (O-V-Rel; (48), (49)), though they can also be continuous before the verb (O-Rel-V; (50)) or continuous after the verb (V-O-Rel; (51)).





- (50) (neəfēnε) Mátinə a ná bəlábónéá bikimə {?ɔkɔłkən} ɔbéá  
 /(neəfēnε) Mátinə a ná bə-lábónéá bέ-kimə {ɔkɔłkəna} ɔbéá  
 (today) 1.Martin 1SM PST2 8-food 8-all {taste} REL.8  
 yamíá inyέ a <sup>↓</sup>ná táléáká naánékəla {ɔkɔłkən(a)}  
 yamíá inyέ a <sup>L</sup>ná táléá-aka naánékəla {ɔkɔłkəna}  
 9.POSS.PRO.1SG 9.mother 1SM PST3.REL cook-DUR yesterday {taste}  
 (neəfén).  
 (neəfēnε)/  
 (today)  
 ‘Martin a goûté (aujourd’hui) toute la nourriture que ma mère a cuisiné  
 hier.’  
 ‘(Today), Martin has tasted all the food that my mother cooked yesterday.’

- (51) ba l(ε) utíbíniə      **ebóka** ɔyéá mwití a ná fálé.  
       /ba lea ɔ-tíbíniə      ε-bóka ɔyéá mwití a ná fáléá/  
       2SM be INF-observe 7-place REL.7 PRO.OBJ.1 1SM PST2 tumble  
       'Ils sont en train d'observer l'endroit du la personne a degringolé.'  
       'They're looking at the place the guy fell.' [PM 582]

I suggest that the variability in attachment of the relative clause modifying the object is related to independent factors such as prosodic weight and processing ease. As I am not aware of any influence of information structure on this variation, I leave the topic aside here.

### 3.3 Fronting

As noted in Mous (1997), another means in which word order may vary for information-structural reasons is by fronting a constituent, i.e. placing it at the beginning of the sentence. This will be discussed as a type of topic expression strategy in Section 5. In focus contexts, most apparently fronted constituents are in fact clefted, although some examples are found without a copula or relative marking, as in (52) below. Recall as well that we saw in Section 2 above that questions are formed by fronting or clefting.

- (52) ('How many children do you see?')  
       **móná ɔmótε** mé ndɔ sin.  
       /mɔ-ná ɔ-mótε mε Hndɔ sinə/  
       1-child     1-one SM.1SG PRS see  
       'Je vois [un]<sub>FOC</sub> seul enfant.'  
       'I see [one]<sub>FOC</sub> child.' [DM 147]

In some cases, a focused object may appear to be simply fronted, but further analysis shows evidence of an underlying cleft structure – specifically a reverse pseudocleft – which may be obscured by vowel elision or be ambiguous due to the noun class and tense marker. An example is in the object focus example in (53) below, where the H tone on the subject marker shows a dependent clause environment, with the copula á analysable as elided due to vowel elision (see Section 4 on clefts for more detail).

- (53) ('What is the man holding in his hand?')  
       kalótɔ á ná itié ɔ mokat.  
       /kalótɔ á-á ná itié ɔ mo-kátá/  
       9.carrot COP-1SM.REL PST2 hold PREP 3-hand  
       'C'est [une carotte]<sub>FOC</sub> qu'il tient à la main.'  
       'He is holding [a carrot]<sub>FOC</sub> in his hand.' [JO 1630]

Such ex-situ focus constructions will be covered in more detail in Section 4 below. Fronted topic phrases are covered in more detail in Section 5 on topic expression.

While contrast at the sub-DP level (i.e. on a modifier of the noun) does not require any special marking and can be left in-situ, it can also be expressed by fronting. Example (54) shows unmarked contrast between adjectival modifiers, while (55) shows that contrastive focus at the sub-DP level can alternatively be expressed by fronting the modifier together with the non-contrasted noun. Such fronting is optional, as the noun phrase can be left in the canonical position, an instance of the canonical S-Aux-O-V-X word order (55b), or be discontinuous (55c).

- (54) ɔ iNdíkiə nioní neté<sup>↓</sup>té ne-bokɔyiilə téá, nioní neŋéŋa  
 /ɔ iNdíkiə ne-oní ne-té<sup>L</sup>téá ne-bokɔyiilə té ne-oní ne-ŋéŋa  
 PREP Ndiki 5-market 5-small 5-Wednesday every, 5-market 5-big  
 ɔ ninúmbá (té).  
 ɔ ne-númbá (téá)/  
 PREP 5-Saturday (every)

‘À Ndiki il y a un petit marché chaque mercredi et un grand marché (chaque) samedi.’

‘In Ndiki, there is a small market every Wednesday and a large market every Saturday.’ [PM 193]

- (55) a. bóɔ, imítá meŋéŋa mε ná índíá ɔ helóbat, tátá  
 /bóɔ ε-mítá meŋéŋa mε ná índíá ɔ he-lóbátɔ tátá  
 no 9-calabash 9.big SM.1SG PST2 give PREP 19-child COP.NEG  
 ɔ mété<sup>↓</sup>té.  
 ɔ mété<sup>L</sup>téa/  
 PREP 9.small
- ‘Non, c'est la grande calebasse que j'ai donné à l'enfant, pas la petite.’  
 ‘No, I gave the big calabash to the child, not the small one.’ [EE+EB 1832]
- b. bóɔ, mε ná imítá meŋéŋi indiə ɔ helóbátɔ, (tátá ɔ mé<sup>↓</sup>tété). [EE+EB 1834]
- c. bóɔ, mε ná imítá indiə meŋéŋi ɔ helóbátɔ, (tátá ɔ mé<sup>↓</sup>tété). [EE+EB 1833]

Note here that the adjective cannot be fronted without the noun; the noun must be pied-piped. This means that term focus on the sub-DP level is marked in the same way as term focus scoping over the entire DP.

### 3.3.1 The right periphery

As is common crosslinguistically, the right periphery is used for afterthoughts or repairs, as in the natural speech example in (56) below, where an alternative noun is added as a suggestion for the subject.

- (56) Context: PM and EO perform the QVIS map task (Skopeteas et al. 2006: 155–157), where PM must give EO directions using a map with various objects drawn on it.

hekələ      hé    ka    báká    héní                u      busí    káasɛ  
 /he-kələ      hé    ka    bá-aka    héní                o      busíé    káasɛ  
 19-squirrel 19SM AND be-DUR DEM.DIST.LOC PREP 14.front maybe

himondokóloŋ.

he-mondokóloŋo/

19-mole

‘Là-bas il y a un écureuil, ou peut-être une taupe.’

‘There’s a squirrel there, or maybe a mole.’

[PM 707]

Further investigation of fronting and the right periphery could be done on the basis of a larger text corpus; in my field data, neither strategy was very commonly found. Instead of fronting, focus is typically expressed by the canonical word order (for non-subjects; Section 2, Section 3) or else by clefting (Section 4 below).

## 3.4 Section summary

Although S-Aux-O-V-X is the canonical word order, we saw in this section that other word order patterns are found in Tunen. Objects may appear postverbally in certain contexts, often with a modifier or relative (although discontinuous structures are more common). In contrast to the presentation in Mous (1997, 2003), I argued that postverbal objects preceded by the marker *á* are uncommon, although they show evidence for monoclausality. Aside from clefts, fronting is another possible strategy for focus expression, although this strategy is less commonly used for foci. Fronting for topics will be covered further in Section 5. Some modifiers are frequently discontinuous in Tunen; this is a pragmatically neutral word order pattern rather than a particular strategy for focussing the modifier, unlike what is found for other languages with (apparent) discontinuity in the nominal domain, and unusually for a Bantu language. Finally, the right periphery can be used for afterthoughts, as is common crosslinguistically.

## 4 Clefts and the marker *á*

We have seen already that Tunen can use clefts to express focus, which is a common strategy for question formation and found also with declaratives. This section discusses these cleft constructions and their interpretation. As clefts are composed of a copula, focused NP, and a relative clause component (Harris & Campbell 1995), I begin by describing the form of copular clauses in Tunen, before looking into clefts specifically.

### 4.1 Copular clauses in Tunen

A common typology of copular clauses is to split them into four types: identificational, predicational, specificational, and equative copular clauses (see e.g. Higgins 1979, Mikkelsen 2011, Heycock 2012). In this section I show that Tunen does not differentiate between identificational and specificational copular clauses, and shows no evidence for equative copular clauses as a distinct class, and so the typology can be simplified as predicational vs. identificational/specificational copular clauses.<sup>17</sup>

Firstly, consider predicational copular clauses, where a property is assigned to a referent. Predicational copular clauses in Tunen are formed with the copula *lea* ‘be’ or copula verb *bá(ka)* ‘be’ – which are generally interchangeable (Dugast 1971: 347–350, Kerr 2024c: 124–125) – as illustrated in (57) and (58) below for a non-locative (57) and locative use respectively.

- (57) (Is the water clean for drinking?)  
bóɔ, má lé bá mas.  
/bóɔ má le bá ma-ɛsɛ/  
no 6SM NEG be 6-good  
'Non, ce n'est pas pure.' 'No, it isn't potable.', 'No, it isn't clean.' [JO 612]
- (58) (Where are you?)  
mɛ lé o nioní.  
/mɛ lea o ne-oní/  
SM.1SG be PREP 5-market  
'Je suis au marché.' 'I am at the market.' [PM 102]

Identificational copular clauses, on the other hand, are marked by *á COP* in Tunen. Example (59) below shows the use of *á* as the copula in a clause which identifies a referent.

<sup>17</sup>I refer to the second type as “identificational/specificational” in order to remain agnostic as to whether the identificational or the specificational copular clause is the most basic/general type.

- (59) wéeyε məndɔ wéeyε ɔwá tó <sup>↓</sup>ná siakinə, á  
 /wéeyε mə-ndɔ wéeyε ɔwá tó <sup>L</sup>ná siakinə á  
 DEM.DISC.1 1-person DEM.DISC.1 REL.1 SM.1PL PST3.REL see.DUR COP  
 mutikə wa bɔnɔŋɔ bó iNdikiníméki(ə).  
 mə-tíkə wa bɔ-nɔŋɔ bó iNdikinímékiə/  
 1-mayor Ass.1 14-country Ass.14 Ndikiniméki  
 ‘Cet homme-là que nous avons vu (hier), c’est le maire du Ndikiniméki.’  
 ‘That man there that we saw (yesterday) is the mayor of Ndikiniméki.’  
 [PM 780]

Specificational copular clauses are defined as having the structure *A is B*, where A is typically non-referential and B is referential, and A is definite (Heycock 2012). These are also marked by *á* COP in Tunen (60).

- (60) məná ɔwá á léá na εmanya tómbálánátɔ á Patiáns.  
 /mə-ná ɔwá á léá na ε-manyā tómbálánátɔ á Patiánse/  
 1-child REL.1 1SM.REL be with 7-knowledge surpass.PTCP COP 1.Patience  
 ‘L’enfant qui est le plus intelligent, c’est Patience.’  
 ‘The smartest child is Patience.’ [JO 854]

The final type of copular clause proposed in the literature on copular clauses is equatives, where A is said to be identical to B (e.g. “The morning star is the evening star” in English). Whether or not equatives are truly a distinct class is subject to some debate (see e.g. Heycock 2012). When eliciting such examples in Tunen, consultants either rephrased the construction by using lexical verb (e.g. “A gives B”) or used a specificational copula with *á* COP. The only possible example of a true equative is in the story below, which can either be analysed as a fragment or an instance of *á* COP (if the form *mianjá* ‘me’ is taken to include *á*; cf. Dugast 1971). There is therefore no convincing evidence to identify a separate equatives subclass of copulars in Tunen.

- (61) Context: A shepherd lied/cried wolf that there was a panther. His concerned neighbours ran over...  
 bá <sup>↓</sup>ná ka fam, a ná sanéá ɔ tuɔn, aséá :  
 /bá <sup>L</sup>ná ka fámá a ná sanéá ɔ tɔ-ɔnɔ a-séá  
 2SM PST3.DEP AND arrive 1SM PST2 burst.out PREP 13-laughter SM.1-say  
 « *mianjá* *mekɔ* ! ». *mianjá* *me-kɔ*/  
 PRO.EMPH.1SG 9-panther  
 ‘Quand ils sont arrivés, il a éclaté de rire, il a dit, « c’est moi la panthère ! »’ ‘When they arrived, he burst out laughing and said ‘I’m the panther!’’ [JO 2033]

In summary, Tunen forms identificational/specification copular clauses differently from predicational clauses, as shown in Table 1 below: predicational copular clauses use the verbs *ləa* and *bá(ka)* ‘to be’, while identificational and specification clauses use *á*.

Table 1: Copular clauses in Tunen

Copular clause type	Copula element
Predicational	- <i>ləa</i> / - <i>bá(ka)</i> ‘to be’
Identificational/specification	<i>á</i>

The predicational copula *ləa* and *bá(ka)* take a subject marker and are negated by a negative marker (as seen in (57)). In contrast to these copula forms, the identificational/specification copula *á* is invariant<sup>18</sup> and has a negative form *tátá*, glossed as COP.NEG (62).

- (62) (bóo,) békandé kondá bélálá **tátá** bélendáló.  
 /(bóo) bék-fandé kondá bék-lálá **tátá** bék-léndáló/  
 (no) 8-two add 8-three COP.NEG 8-six  
 ‘Non, deux plus trois ne font pas six.’  
 ‘No, two plus three doesn’t equal six.’ [PM 784]

Now we have seen that *á* COP is used for identificational/specification copulars in Tunen, we can consider clefts, which I show contain *á* as a copular component, matching the common crosslinguistic pattern of identificational/specification copular elements in clefts.

## 4.2 Relativisation

The next component of a cleft is a relative clause. Relative clauses are identified in Tunen by (i) a relativiser of form  $\circ X \acute{a}$ , where the shape of X depends on the noun class of the head noun, (ii) H-tone on normally L-toned subject markers, and (iii) dependent-clause tense marking, as visible in the third-degree past tense (PST3) and in negative clauses. For example, the object relative example in (63) below shows the main clause third-degree past tense marker *ka* followed by the dependent third-degree past tense marker  $\downarrow ná$  in the relative clause, as well as

<sup>18</sup>There is some indication of a human/non-human distinction with a *ó* variant used for non-personified non-human animates and inanimates; see Kerr (2024c: 120) for further detail.

high tone on the class 1 subject marker *á* in the relative clause, contrasting with the low-toned main clause first person singular subject marker *me*.

- (63) *me ka áme yáyéá ibəŋuluəkə yé búsié siəkinə ɔyéá*  
*/me ka áme yáyéá ε-bəŋuluəkə yé búsié siəkinə ɔyéá*  
 SM.1SG PST3 PRO.1SG 7.PRO.POSS.1 7-car ASS.7 front see.DUR REL.7  
*á      ↓ná      ɔnd, [...]*  
*á      L<sup>ná</sup>      ɔndɔ/*  
 1SM.REL PST3.REL buy  
 ‘Moi j’avais vu le premier véhicule qu’il a acheté, [...]’  
 ‘I myself saw the first vehicle he bought,’ [...] [PM 1045]

In Tunen clefts, relatives are reduced in the sense of lacking the *ɔXá* relativiser. While there is no overt relativiser and while non-human noun classes and many TAM contexts have identical marking to main clauses, marking of a relative clause can still be seen by H-tone on underlyingly L-toned subject markers and the use of dependent TAM markers in third-degree past tense and negative contexts. For example, the following example provides evidence for there being a reduced relative in a Tunen cleft, as the third-degree past tense marker must be the dependent clause form *↓ná* instead of the main clause affirmative form *ka*

- (64) *ó yéníá ikúilí á εm̥á yé {↓ná|\*ka} bɔmɔkɔ mɔŋɛja*  
*/ɔ yéníá ε-kúilí á ε-m̥á yé {L<sup>ná|\*ka} bɔmɔ-aka mɔŋéja</sup>*  
 PREP which 7-time COP 7-dog 7SM {PST3.REL|\*PST3} bark-DUR much  
 éé?  
 eé/  
 Q  
 ‘A quel moment le chien a-t-il beaucoup aboyé ?’  
 ‘When did the dog bark a lot?’ [PM, 1255–6]

As non-human noun classes have H-toned subject markers in both dependent and main clauses, and as there is only a visible difference in tense marking in affirmatives in the third-degree past tense, many examples of clefts with *á* are in fact ambiguous between the biclausal or monoclausal analysis. There is likely a change in progress between the biclausal and monoclausal structures, as discussed for different languages in Harris & Campbell (1995). As the Tunen *á* marker is likely in the process of grammaticalising to being a focus marker

in a monoclausal construction, the most accurate gloss is debatable. While the presence of *á* may be obscured due to vowel elision, my consultants indicated that there was a *á* underlying even if it was elided on the surface, and therefore I maintain the copular analysis of *á* in the glossing in this chapter and gloss it as COP. I turn now to the different cleft constructions found in Tunen.

### 4.3 Clefts

Clefts are obligatory in Tunen for subject focus (which cannot be focused in-situ) and are used across all grammatical roles for exhaustive focus. There are two main forms of cleft in Tunen. In this section we will see that there is a basic cleft used for subject focus and a reverse pseudocleft used for non-subject focus. I argued in Section 3.1.1 above that the VáO construction that resembles a pseudocleft instead shows monoclausal properties, and therefore do not include it here.

#### 4.3.1 Basic cleft

Human animate subjects must be focused with a basic cleft construction, as schematised in (65) below.<sup>19</sup>

- (65) Basic cleft:  
    *á* + NP<sub>FOC</sub> + reduced relative

Example (66) below shows the use of the basic cleft to express subject focus. The identificational/specification copula *á* is used, followed by the focused noun phrase *Píél* 'Pierre' and then a reduced relative. The reduced relative clause environment is recognisable due to the high tone on the class 1 subject marker *á*, which is low-toned in main clause environments. Cleaving the subject is obligatory in this context; leaving the subject in-situ is not felicitous (though would be grammatical in a thetic context)<sup>20</sup> (66b).

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<sup>19</sup> At this point, it is unclear whether the primary conditioning factor for the use of a basic cleft is subjecthood or humanness, given that most examples in the data of subjects are either human or personified animals. The discussion in this chapter should therefore be taken to apply to the prototypical human subject, with the potential role of animacy on cleft structure a question for further research.

<sup>20</sup> The original fieldnotes for this form kept the H tone on the class 1 subject marker; based on other examples, I report the judgement with the subject marker appearing as in a thetic context.

(66) (Who shut the door?)

- a. á Píél á ná nikí kwiyí.  
 /á Píélə á ná ne-kí kwiyíə/  
 COP 1.Pierre 1SM.REL PST2 5-door shut  
 ‘C'est [Pierre]<sub>FOC</sub> qui a fermé la porte.’  
 ‘[Pierre]<sub>FOC</sub> shut the door.’ [EO 273]
- b. # Píél a ná nikí kwiyí.  
 /Píélə a ná ne-kí kwiyíə/  
 1.Pierre 1SM PST2 5-door shut  
 int. ‘[Pierre]<sub>FOC</sub> a fermé la porte.’  
 int. ‘[Pierre]<sub>FOC</sub> shut the door.’ [EO 277]

Note that fragment answers also require the *á* for subject focus (67), suggesting that they are elided from an underlying cleft structure.

(67) (Which politician died?)

- \*(á) Píelə (á ná wə).  
 /á Píelə á ná wə./  
 COP Pierre 1SM.REL PST2 die  
 ‘C'était [Pierre]<sub>FOC</sub> (qui est mort).’  
 ‘It was [Pierre]<sub>FOC</sub> (who died).’ [EO 270–1]

As we will see for other arguments below, focused XPs in clefts are typically said to have an exhaustive interpretation. This is illustrated for subject focus below with the continuation ‘not another’ in (68) and the confirmation from the speakers of (69) that nobody else could have eaten the rice.<sup>21</sup>

- (68) mianjá á mε ná nikí kwiyí, tátá mɔnémuná.  
 /mianjá á mε ná ne-ki kwiyíə, tátá mɔ-némunə/  
 PRO.EMPH.1SG COP SM.1SG.REL PST2 5-door shut not 1-another  
 ‘C'est [moi]<sub>FOC</sub> qui a fermé la porte, pas un autre.’  
 ‘It was [me]<sub>FOC</sub> who shut the door, not someone else.’ [EO 274]

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<sup>21</sup>Note that the subject marker in (69) and in a few other examples in this chapter is low-toned, while we would expect a high tone in a relative clause environment. Such low tones could either be indication of the development from a biclausal to a monoclausal structure, or be related to a methodological issue of repeating transcriptions word-for-word, in which case consultants may have simply used the low-toned citation form of the subject marker when repeating the utterance, despite pronouncing it as a high in this context in fluent speech.

- (69) á Samuélə a ná ɔlésa neák.  
/á Samuélə á ná ɔ-lésa néá-aka/  
COP 1.Samuel 1SM.REL PST2 3-rice eat-DUR  
'C'est [Samuel]<sub>FOC</sub> qui a mangé du riz.' (pas quelqu'un d'autre)  
'[Samuel]<sub>FOC</sub> ate rice.' (it wasn't somebody else) [EE + EB 1661]

That being said, the question arises as to how non-exhaustive focus is expressed for subjects in Tunen. One piece of data suggesting that clefted subjects are not necessarily exhaustive is (70) below, where the marker *á* appears after the exclusive particle *ata* 'even' modifying Nancy, in a context where Mary also has a bottle of water.

- (70) (Does Maria have a bottle of water? (+ BaSIS photo stimulus))  
éε Maliá a báka na məndíŋgə wó ménif, ata \*(á) Nansí  
/éε Maliá a bá-aka na mɔ-ndíŋgə wó ma-níf̚ ata á Nansí  
yes 1.Maria 1SM be-DUR with 3-bottle ASS.3 6-water even COP 1.Nancy  
{tóna} a báka {tóna} na məndíŋgə wó ménif.  
tóna a bá-aka tóna na mɔ-ndíŋgə wó ma-níf̚/  
also 1SM be-DUR also with 3-bottle ASS.3 6-water  
'Oui, Maria a une bouteille de l'eau, Nancy a une bouteille de l'eau aussi.'  
'Yes, Maria has a bottle of water, Nancy also has a bottle of water.'  
[JO 2347]

It therefore seems that exhaustivity is compatible with a cleft structure and is often understood pragmatically, but strictly speaking the basic cleft is not exhaustive, as it can be used in non-exhaustive contexts (70).

#### 4.3.2 Reverse pseudo-clefts

Non-subjects can be focused with a reverse pseudo-cleft construction, which takes the form schematised in (71).

- (71) Reverse pseudo-cleft  
NP<sub>FOC</sub> + *á* + reduced relative

This is illustrated below for information focus (72), (73) and corrective focus (74) on the theme object.

- (72) (What is the man holding in his hand?)

**kalɔtɔ** á mɔndɔ a ná itié o mɔkata  
 /kalɔtɔ á mɔ-ndɔ a ná itié o mɔ-kátá/  
 9.carrot COP 1-person 1SM PST2 hold PREP 3-hand

‘C'est [une carotte]<sub>FOC</sub> que l'homme tient dans sa main.’

‘The man is holding [a carrot]<sub>FOC</sub> in his hand.’, ‘[A carrot]<sub>FOC</sub> is what the man is holding.’ [JO 1624]

- (73) (What will you cook today?)

**mɔkɔndʒe** na mɛkɔnɛfé á mɛ ndɔ taleak.  
 /mɔkɔndʒe na mɛkɔnɛfé á mɛ Hndɔ taléá-aka/  
 6.plantain with 6.pork COP SM.1SG.REL PRS cook-DUR

‘C'est [les plantains et le porc]<sub>FOC</sub> que je vais cuisiner (aujourd'hui).’

‘I will cook [plantains and pork]<sub>FOC</sub> today.’, ‘Plantains and pork are what I will cook (today).’ [PM 1512 (+ JO 1602)]

- (74) bɔɔ, **mɔkɔndʒe** na mɛkɔnɛfé á mɛ ndɔ taleaka neɔfén.

/bɔɔ mɔkɔndʒe na mɛkɔnɛfé á mɛ Hndɔ taléá-aka neɔfén/  
 no 6.plantain with 6.pork COP SM.1SG.REL PRS cook-DUR today

‘Non, c'est [les plantains et le porc]<sub>FOC</sub> que je vais préparer aujourd'hui.’  
 (pas d'autres choses)

‘No, I will cook [plantains and pork]<sub>FOC</sub> today.’, ‘No, plantains and pork are what I will cook today.’ (and nothing else) [PM 1516]

As the translation of (74) indicates, using a cleft construction suggests an exhaustive interpretation of the nominal, and is therefore more contrastive than the in-situ focus strategy. At this point, we may ask whether the same pattern is found as for subject clefts above, where compatibility with *ata* ‘even’ indicates that the cleft is not inherently exhaustive. We find that human objects modified by *ata* ‘even’ can appear in a cleft, although of a basic cleft structure (75a), while non-human objects modified by *ata* do not take *á* (75b), possibly due to difference in animacy.

- (75) a. **ata** \*(á) Natanyéle mɛ ná sièkin.

/ata á Natanyéle mɛ ná sièkinə/  
 even COP 1.Nathaniel SM.1SG PST2 see.DUR

J'ai vu même [Nathaniel]<sub>FOC</sub>.

‘I even saw [Nathaniel]<sub>FOC</sub>.’

[PM 2276]

- b. ata (\*á) bətafəna Lídia a ná sɔák.  
 /ata (\*á) bε-tafəna Lídia a ná sɔá-aka/  
 even COP 8-shoe 1.Lydia 1SM PST2 wash-DUR  
 'Lydia a lavé même [des chaussures]<sub>FOC</sub>.'  
 'Lydia even washed [the shoes]<sub>FOC</sub>.'[PM 2268]

Again then, it seems that the cleft constructions are not inherently exhaustive, although consultants generally interpret them as exhaustive and they are compatible with the exhaustive focus-sensitive particle *ómaná* 'only', as seen already in (11), (27).

Reverse pseudo-clefts are not possible for subject focus, showing a subject/non-subject asymmetry (though recall the point in Footnotes 18–19 above about animacy/humanness as a potential alternative factor):

- (76) (Who shut the door?)  
 \* Píél á á ná nikí kwiyí.  
 /Pielə á á ná ne-kí kwiyí/  
 Pierre COP 1SM.REL PST2 5-door shut  
 int. 'C'est [Pierre]<sub>FOC</sub> qui a fermé la porte.'  
 int. 'It was Pierre who shut the door.'[EO 276]

However, a reverse pseudocleft rather was found for sub-DP focus on the modifier of a subject (77).

- (77) Q: bəndə bá↓nēá á ↓bá ná binək?  
 /bendə bá-néá á bá ná binə-aka/  
 2.person 2-how.many COP 2SM PST dance-DUR  
 'Combien de personnes ont dansé ?'  
 'How many people danced?'.[PM 1211]
- A: bəndə báláló á bá ná binək.  
 /bendə bá-láló á bá ná binə-aka/  
 2.person 2-three COP 2SM PST2 dance-DUR  
 '[Trois]<sub>FOC</sub> personnes ont dansé.'  
 '[Three]<sub>FOC</sub> people danced.'.[PM 1214]

Non-arguments pattern with objects in being found without *á* preceding the focused XP in fragments, with the full version in the form of a reverse pseudocleft (78), (80).

- (78) (Context: ‘Because he went to die in his home village, they went there to get the body;’)

**neɔfénɛ** á bá ná nda faman.  
 /neɔfénɛ á bá ná nda fámána/  
 today COP 2SM PST2 VEN arrive.APPL

‘C'est [aujourd’hui]<sub>FOC</sub> qu'on est arrivé avec.’  
 ‘It's [today]<sub>FOC</sub> that they arrived with it.’

[PM 1012]

Non-subject fragments are found without á (79), (80), thus differing from subject fragments. The focused noun phrase cannot be preceded by á (79b), contrasting with what we saw for subject fragments. The marker á also cannot follow the focused XP (79c). This suggests that the á is the copula part of what in non-elided form is a cleft (rather than acting as a grammaticalised focus marker).

- (79) (What is the man holding?)

a. kalót.

/kalótɔ/

9.carrot

‘[Une carotte]<sub>FOC</sub>.’  
 ‘[A carrot]<sub>FOC</sub>.’

[PM 1266]

b. \* á kalót

/á kalótɔ/

COP 9.carrot

int. ‘[Une carotte]<sub>FOC</sub>.’  
 int. ‘[A carrot]<sub>FOC</sub>.’

[PM 1267]

c. \* kalót á

/kalótɔ á/

9.carrot COP

int. ‘[Une carotte]<sub>FOC</sub>.’  
 int. ‘[A carrot]<sub>FOC</sub>.’

[PM 1267–8]

- (80) (Where are the beans?)

ɔ hisíní núúmə (á bilikó bέ léá)  
 /ɔ hɛ-sini nuumə (a bɛ-liko bɛ léá)/  
 PREP 19-casserole inside COP 8-bean 8SM be

‘C'est [dans la casseroles]<sub>FOC</sub> qu'il y a des haricots.’  
 ‘The beans are [in the pot]<sub>FOC</sub> (and nowhere else).’

[PM 477]

Again, the translation of (80) suggests that reverse pseudoclefted non-arguments are typically interpreted as exhaustive.

Finally, in corrective focus contexts, which are argued to be more contrastive types of foci (see e.g. Cruschina 2021), ex-situ clefting can be used, as seen already in (68) and as further illustrated in (81).

- (81) (Context: Someone says incorrectly that you speak Tunen.)

bó̄, felénd̄z	á	mé	nd(ɔ)	᷑k.
/bó̄, felénd̄z̄e	á	mé	Hndɔ	᷑kɔ/
no	French	COP	SM.1SG.REL	PRS
'Non, c'est [le français] <sub>FOC</sub> que je comprends.'				
'No, it's [French] <sub>FOC</sub> that I understand.'				[PM 93–4]

We therefore see that clefts can be used for more contrastive focus contexts than information focus, but the canonical word order is still possible for the expression of corrective/contrastive non-subject focus.

Alternatives can be marked explicitly by means of the particle *ɔbanɔ* 'rather' and/or by directly naming the incorrect argument.

- (82) bó̄, tátá məndɔ ɔwá εŋɔŋɔ á ná wə, á Acteur  
/bó̄ tátá mə-ndɔ ɔwá ε-ŋɔŋɔ á ná wə á Acteur  
no COP.NEG 1-person REL.1 7-politics 1SM.REL PST2 die COP 1.Acteur  
{ɔban} a ná wə {ɔban}.  
{ɔbanɔ} a ná wə {ɔbanɔ}/  
rather 1SM.REL PST2 die rather

'Non, ce n'est pas le politicien qui est mort, c'est plutôt Acteur.'

'No, it wasn't a politician who died, it was actually Acteur.'

[EE+GE+PB 2716]

- (83) mé ndɔ felénd̄z(ε) ᷑k, mba tátá \*(á) túnən.  
/mɛ Hndɔ felénd̄z̄e ᷑kɔ mba tátá \*(á) tɔ-nəni/  
SM.1SG PRS French understand but COP.NEG \*(COP) 13-Nen  
'Je comprends le français, mais pas le tunen.'  
'I understand French, but not Tunen.'

[PM 92]

- (84) (Context: 'Lots of animals passed on the bridge.')

bó̄, tátá menyama, á yé ná tɔmbak, (mba) bibəŋuluəkə.	
/bó̄ tátá menyama á yé ná tɔmba-aka mba bε-bəŋuluəkə/	
no COP.NEG 10.animal COP 10SM PST2 pass-DUR but 8-vehicle	
'Non, ce n'est pas des animaux qui sont passés, ce sont des véhicules.'	
'No, it wasn't animals that passed, it was vehicles.'	[PM 1579]

#### 4.4 Section summary

In summary, there are two types of cleft construction available for focus expression in Tunen, the basic cleft ( $\dot{a}$  NP<sub>FOC</sub> Rel) and the reverse pseudocleft (NP<sub>FOC</sub>  $\dot{a}$  Rel). Both constructions show indications of biclausality through the presence of a focused phrase, a copula, and a reduced relative clause, the latter being identifiable through relative clause subject marker and TAM forms. These cleft constructions are used for more contrastive foci types and are generally interpreted as exhaustive, but appear to not be inherently exhaustive, as they are compatible with the exclusive focus marker *ata* ‘even’. Interestingly, no pseudocleft strategy was found, with the V $\dot{a}$ O construction shown in Section 3.1.1 above to have monoclausal properties, likely due to grammaticalisation from an earlier biclausal cleft construction. Complexities related to identification of clefts are the ambiguity of many subject marker and TAM contexts with respect to main clause versus relative clause marking and the regular vowel elision rule in Tunen, which may lead to elision of the  $\dot{a}$  copula.

### 5 Left-peripheral topics (zero, *ɔ*, *aba/áká*)

As is common crosslinguistically (see e.g. Gundel 1988), Tunen topical constituents can appear in a left-peripheral position. In these cases, there are three strategies for topic expression: (i) zero-marking (i.e. fronting the topic without morphological marking), (ii) marking by the preposition *ɔ*, and (iii) marking by *aba/áká*, which elsewhere function as the conditional marker ‘if’. This section will go through each strategy in turn. Note that while left-peripheral topics is one common strategy for expressing topics, topics may also be left in-situ and do not need to be fronted. These in-situ topics do not appear with any topic marking.

#### 5.1 Zero-marking

A topical constituent can be fronted without any marking, as shown in (85) and (86) below for an aboutness topic.

- (85) kíŋgə, a ka nyɔkɔ naánɛkɔl.  
 /kíŋgə a ka nyɔ-aka naánɛkɔla/  
 1.chief 1SM PST3 work-DUR yesterday  
 ‘Le chef, il a travaillé hier.’  
 ‘The chief, he worked yesterday.’

[JO 2625]

- (86) Nóa, yé ndɔ́ kea ɔwá á ndɔ́ náá.  
 /Nɔa yé Hndɔ́ kék ɔwá a Hndɔ́ náá/  
 Noah 7SM PRS do REL.1 1SM PRS be.sick  
 ‘Quant à Noah, il semble qu’il est malade.’  
 ‘As for Noah, it seems that he is sick.’ [JO 1306]

When objects are topicalised and prosodically separated from the main clause by a pause, resumption in the main clause is not required, as shown by the lack of object indexation in (87). The ability for zero indexation of objects will be covered in more detail in Section 7 below.

- (87) miímə, mɔ̃ndɔ́ á              <sup>↓</sup>ná katák.  
 /miímə mɔ̃-ndɔ́ á              <sup>L</sup>ná katá-aka/  
 3.house 1-person 1SM.REL PST3 destroy-DUR  
 ‘La maison, c’est quelqu’un qui l’a détruite.’  
 ‘The house, it’s somebody who destroyed it.’ [EB+JO 2692]

It is often unclear as to whether a topical subject is fronted or left in-situ, as the canonical position of subjects is sentence-initial (*S-Aux-O-V-X*), which is linearly equivalent to the position they appear in if fronted to a left-peripheral position. For example, in (88) below, the referent of peanuts is a topic in that it is visibly present and has been previously mentioned in the discourse, and serves as the topic to which the comment of having cooled applies, but the word order is the same as what we saw for thetics in (2) above.

- (88) Context: JO has shown how to dry peanuts in order to prepare the *kok* dish [*hekɔkε* leaves boiled with smoked fish and ground peanuts].  
 tɔmbaja tú nú huhæk.  
 /tɔ̃-mbaja tó ná huhə-aka/  
 13-peanut 13SM PST2 cool-DUR  
 ‘Les arachides se sont refroidies.’  
 ‘The peanuts have cooled.’ [JO 1358]

When studying the Dugast (1975) texts, it can be seen that topical subjects are frequently transcribed as ending with a glottal stop ?, which reflects a prosodic break and therefore can be taken as evidence for a left-dislocated topic (as pointed out in Isaac 2007: 59). An example is given in (89) below (I have adapted glosses for consistency). The Dugast data differ systematically from my own field data

in not having subject indexation of non-dislocated topics, i.e. in lacking a subject marker when the topic is not dislocated.<sup>22</sup>

- (89) wəbúə mon òwá ba na-ba ba ndò-hikiə?, à nə-wə ton.  
       1.PRO.POSS.1 1.child REL.1 2SM PST2-be 2SM PRS-like     1SM PST2-die also  
       ‘Their child that they liked, he died also.’

(Dugast 1975: 395, cited in Isaac 2007: 165)

Turning now to obliques, while the neutral word order in Tunen is S-Aux-O-V-X, where X stands for other elements, including time adverbials and prepositional phrases, such items can also be fronted when they function as scene-setting topics, where the topical constituent is thus not an argument of the verb (Lambrecht 1994). This is often found for time adverbials in natural speech. Compare the elicited example with S-Aux-O-V-X order in (90) below and the natural speech example with a fronted time adverbial in (91).

- (90) mé ndɔ Biéla sin isijak.  
       /mε Hndɔ Biéle sinə eséánjáka/  
       SM.1SG PRS 1.Pierre see now  
       ‘Je vois Pierre maintenant.’  
       ‘I see Pierre now.’

[EO 1412]

- (91) (Context: Instructional video where JO is demonstrating how to cook the *kok* dish [*hekɔkɛ* leaves boiled with smoked fish and ground peanuts].)  
       eséánjáka mé hékɔkɛ sɔáka.  
       /eséánjáka me=H hékɔkɛ sɔá-aka/  
       now      SM.1SG=PROC 19-kok wash-DUR  
       ‘Maintenant, je lave le *kok*.’  
       ‘Now, I wash the *kok*

[JO 1343]

The following examples show fronted time adverbials or prepositional phrases indicating a switch between events (92) and to set the scene at the beginning of a story (93).

<sup>22</sup>As no recordings are available for Dugast’s data, dislocation is only evidenced by her ? notation, and commas, when they are used. Isaac (2007) considers the lack of subject marker to be evidence for a non-dislocated topic, but this argument is used somewhat circularly in the absence of any indication of prosody in Dugast’s transcriptions. As all my consultants consistently use subject markers regardless of whether the topic is dislocated, there appears to have been a syntactic change in the time since Dugast with regards to the relation of clause-external topics and subject indexation. I discuss this further in Kerr (2024c: 363–365).

- (92) (Context: ‘The hawk waited and waited and waited, but he didn’t see the cockroach, and his child died.’)

hilóbi hé ná wéeya iti, isínáka ɔndʒelé a n(á) ákan  
 /hε-lóbi hé ná wéeya itíá eséánjáka ɔ-ndʒelé a ná akáná  
 19-anger 19SM PST2 PRO.EMPH.1 hold now 3-lizard 1SM PST2 leave  
 ase : [...]  
 a-séá [...]/  
 1SM-say [...]

‘Il s’est mis en colère, maintenant le lézard est parti, il dit : [...]’

‘He became enraged, and now the lizard came by, and said: [...]’

[JO 2063]

- (93) (Context: Start of the story *The Chicken and the Partridge*.)

ɔ hí<sup>↓</sup>téyí híɔŋɔ, məhuə má sa bá mas.  
 /ɔ híté<sup>L</sup>yí he-ɔŋɔ ma-huə ma sa bá ma-ɛsɛ/  
 PREP DEM.DISC.EMPH.19 19-year 6-harvest 6SM NEG be 6-good  
 ‘Cette année, la récolte n’était pas bonne.’  
 ‘This year, the harvest wasn’t good.’

[JO 1744]

Example (93) is zero-marking in the sense of having no additional morphological/phonological marking compared to the form in the canonical word order, although it shares the property of being introduced by the preposition ɔ as the examples to be discussed in the next subsection.

## 5.2 ɔ

Fronted topics are often marked by the general preposition ɔ PREP. The following example comes from a dialogue task based on asking each other questions about their preferences. EO first fronts the time adverbial *isínjáka* ‘now’ to shift the topic from the previous question and then introduces the topic of food by using the preposition ɔ (94).

- (94) isínjáka, ɔ bəlábónéá ɔnɛ, áká mesea mé aŋjáá  
 /eséánjáka ɔ bə-lábónéá ɔ-néá áká mɛ-séá mé aŋjáá  
 now PREP 8-food INF-eat if SM.1SG-say SM.1SG.SBJV PRO.2SG  
 éléákén, yaté ebáka ɔ aŋjáá hikəki, makɔndžé alé(á)  
 éléákéna yaté e-bá-aka ɔ aŋjáá hikəkiə ma-kɔndžé aléá  
 invite what 7SM-be-DUR SM.2SG PRO.2SG like 6-plantain or.rather

kón?

kóni/

9.rice

'Maintenant, à propos de la nourriture, si je veux t'inviter, qu'est-ce que tu aimerais, les plantains ou bien le riz ?'

'Now, with regards to food, if I were to invite you round, what would you like, plantains or rice?' [EO 966]

For the next example (95), the speaker said the *ɔ* preposition was good in the discourse context in which the food has already been mentioned and that omitting it would mean that it has not been mentioned, suggesting that the preposition marks an aboutness topic.

- (95) (Why did they cook this food here?)

# (ɔ) bée(be) bélábónéá béebe, bá ná taléáká elóáyé  
 /#(ɔ) bée(be) bē-lábónéá béebe bá ná taléá-aka elóáyé  
 PREP DEM.PROX.8 8-food DEM.PROX.8 2SM PST2 cook-DUR for  
 eŋganda ye Básəka.  
 e-ŋganda ye básəka/  
 9-holiday ASS.9 Easter

'(Quant à cette nourriture-ci,) ils l'ont préparée pour la fête de Pâques.'  
 '(As for this food here,) they cooked it for Easter.' [PM 508]

### 5.3 *aba/áká*

A limited number of examples had *ábá* or *áká* as a marker preceding a left-peripheral aboutness/shift topic, which function elsewhere as the conditional marker 'if' and the related temporal marker 'when' (Dugast 1971: 211–212).<sup>23</sup> In the elicited example below, JO first gave the answer with *ábá*, and then rejected the same sentence with *ɔ* in place of *ábá*.

- (96) {ábá|\*ɔ} eŋganda ye buwá, yé sá bá yes.  
 /{ábá|\*ɔ} e-ŋganda ye bu-wá yé sa bá yé-ɛsɛ/  
 {if|\*PREP} 9-celebration ASS.9 14-death 9SM NEG be 7-good  
 'Quant à la fête du deuil, il n'était pas bon.'  
 'As for the funeral, it was not good.' [JO 1648–9]

<sup>23</sup>Note also *ébe* 'si, dans le cas où' ['if, in the case where'], which Dugast (1971: 213) lists as an alternative for *ábá* (although she does not discuss whether it can be used in the same topic-marking function).

Directly after the above elicitation in the same session, JO first accepted the following sentence with *ɔ* alone and then suggested it with *ábá* preceding *ɔ*, thus combining the two strategies (97). At this point, the data are insufficient to be able to account for why both variants were accepted for (97) but not for (96).

- (97) {ɔ|ábá} béebé bəlabéné bá ná taléáká elzáyé εŋganda  
 /{ɔ|ábá} béebé bə-labenea bá ná taléá-aka elzáyé ε-ŋganda  
 PREP DEM.PROX.8 8-food 2SM PST2 cook-DUR for 9-celebration  
 ye básek.  
 ye Báseka/  
 ASS.9 Easter

‘Quant à cette nourriture, on l’a préparé pour la fête du Pacques.’ / ‘Si c’est pour cette nourriture, on l’a préparé pour la fête du Pacques.’  
 ‘As for this food, they cooked it for Easter.’ [JO 1650–1]

The use of a conditional marker for topics was also found in natural dialogue by other speakers. In the first example below, the marker *áká*, another form for ‘if’ (Dugast 1971: 212),<sup>24</sup> is first used before the speaker restarts using the prepositional strategy. In the second example, the speaker uses *ábá* ‘if’ with a prosodic break before the nominal (resulting in lowering of the final H tone via the utterance-final tone reduction rule; see Kerr 2024c: 72–74, 82).

- (98) (Context: EE describes how the harvests differed between crops cultivated by women and crops cultivated by men.)  
 ák(á) elzáyé ɔ ... ɔ ... ɔtómbákéna ɔ bə ... belɔŋjté  
 /áká elzáyé ɔ ... ɔ ... ɔ-tómbá-aka-εna ɔ bə ... be-lɔŋjté  
 if for PREP ... PREP ... INF-pass-DUR-REP PREP 8 ... 8-production  
 bé balémendó, bé sá áyé wúu(wu) ɔyáá háá;  
 bé ba-lémendó bé sá áyé wúuwu ɔyáá háaha/  
 ASS.8 2-man 8SM NEG PRO.1 DEM.PROX.? ? DEM.PROX.LOC  
 ‘Si on parle des... des... des cultures des hommes, il n’y a pas eu de la production cette fois-ci.’  
 ‘If it’s for... for... as for the... the mens’ crops, there wasn’t the production this time round.’ [EE 1700]

<sup>24</sup>Dugast (1971: 212, 318) transcribes what appears to be the same marker as *éke*, translated as ‘si, quand’ [‘if, when’].

- (99) (Context: PB and PM are discussing how they were impacted by the heavy rains that morning.)

ába, ɔwámε yé ná ká sóálátákən.  
 /ábá ɔ-ámε yé ná ka sóálátákəna/  
 if PREP-PRO.1 7SM PST2 AND whip.DUR.REP  
 'C'est moi que ça a fouetté.'  
 'It's me who got whipped by it.'

[PM 1784]

Compare these topical examples to the conditional example in (100) below, where *ábá* marks the conditional protasis.

- (100) ábá Yohánasε a ná εsasɔma néák, á ndɔ náák.  
 /ábá Yohánasε a ná ε-sasɔma néá-aka a Hndɔ náá-aka/  
 if 1.Johannes 1SM PST2 7-cassava eat-DUR 1SM PRS be.sick-DUR  
 'Si Johannes va manger du manioc, il va tomber malade.'  
 'If Johannes eats cassava, he will get sick.' [PM 2288]

This use of the same strategy to mark conditionals and topics has been found in many signed and spoken languages (Haiman 1978, Traugott 1985, Janzen 1999, i.a.) with Haiman (1978) arguing that there is an inherent link between conditionality and topicality. Traugott (1985: 292) notes that markers of givenness are one of five sources of conditional markers crosslinguistically, with examples including Sanskrit *yád* 'topic, conditional' and Indonesian *kalua* 'if, as for'. This analysis would suggest that the topic marker use in Tunen predates the use as a conditional marker. I leave this for further research and retain the gloss 'if' in this chapter without committing to 'if' as the basic or original meaning.

#### 5.4 Multiple topics

Multiple topic expressions can appear in the left periphery. We already saw in (94) that a frame-setting time adverbial can co-occur with a nominal topic. Another type of multiple topic expression is illustrated in the natural speech example from (101) below.

- (101)    á    móŋgolo    maté<sup>†</sup>té,    o    máama    mésúá    móŋgolo  
       /á    ma-óŋgolo ma-té<sup>L</sup>téá    o    máama    mésúá    ma-óŋgolo  
       PREP 6-mango 6-small PREP DEM.PROX.6 PRO.POSS.1PL.6 6-mango  
       má    háaha              o    bənɔ̃ŋɔ̃,    ɔmá    abáká    tɔ̃    siəkinə  
       má    háaha              o    bə-nɔ̃ŋɔ̃,    ɔmá    a-bá-aka    tɔ̃    siəkinə  
       ASS.6 DEM.PROX.LOC PREP 14-country REL.6 1SM-be-DUR SM.1PL see.DUR  
       háaha              (ɔ)    uwəsú              bənɔ̃ŋɔ̃    bó    Kəməlún,  
       háaha              o    uwəsú              bə-nɔ̃ŋɔ̃    bó    kəməlúnə  
       DEM.PROX.LOC PREP PRO.POSS.1PL.14 14.country ASS.14 Cameroon  
       εbáká              o    maáta    hikəkiə?  
       ε-bá-aka              o    maáta    hikəkiə/  
       7SM-be-DUR SM.2SG PRO.OBJ.6 like  
       ‘Les petites mangues, nos petites mangues-ci du pays ici au Cameroun,  
       tu les aimes ?’  
       ‘As for small mangoes, the small mangoes we get here in Cameroon, do  
       you like them?’ [PM 950]

Here, we see multiple nominal topic expressions stacked in the left periphery. Matching the pattern found in other languages (see e.g. Paul & Whitman 2017 and the other chapters in this volume), the first topic phrase (small mangoes) is a superset of the second phrase (the small mangoes we get here in Cameroon), showing a progressive narrowing down of the topic to which the comment relates.

## 5.5 Contrastive topics

Unlike other languages like Rukiga (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2025 [this volume]), contrastive topics generally have no special marking in Tunen, neither for subjects nor objects. While the second topic may be optionally fronted, as indicated by the comma notation in (102), we see in (103) and (104) that no marking is required, with the same S-Aux-O-V(-X) canonical word order used as in an all-new thematic context.

- (102)    mé    ndɔ̃    manya ɔwá **Matéŋe** a    ka    hiəfulə fanak,    mba()  
       /mɛ    <sup>H</sup>ndɔ̃ manya ɔwá Matéŋe a    ka    he-əfulə fana-aka mba  
       SM.1SG PRS know REL.1 Martin 1SM PST3 19-book read-DUR but  
       **Sesília()** mɛ    lɛ    ndɔ̃ many.  
       Sesília    mɛ    lɛ    <sup>H</sup>ndɔ̃ manya/  
       Cecile    SM.1SG NEG PRS know  
       ‘Je sais que Martin a lu le livre, mais quant à Cecile, je ne sais pas.’  
       ‘I know that Martin has read the book, but I don’t know about Cecile.’

[JO 907]

- (103) (Context: You are a teacher explaining to the parents of the students Emanuel and David how each child did in their exams.)
- Emánúélε a ná tómbá, Téwiti a ná kɔ.**  
 /Emánúélε a ná tómbá Téwiti a ná kɔa/  
 1.Emmanuel 1SM PST2 pass 1.David 1SM PST2 fail  
 ‘Emmanuel a réussi, David a échoué.’  
 ‘Emmanuel passed, David failed.’ [JO 533]
- (104) (What did the woman hold? What did the man hold? (+ QUIS picture stimulus))
- (What happened? (+ QUIS picture stimulus))
- mɔndó a ná hiósɔ itíé. muəndú a ná ɔmbána itíé.**  
 /mɔ-ndɔ a ná hɛ-ɔsɔ itíé mɔ-əndú a ná ɔ-mbána itíé/  
 1-person 1SM PST2 19-spoon hold 1-woman 1SM PST2 3-knife hold  
 ‘L’homme tient une cuillière. La femme tient un couteau.’  
 ‘The man held a spoon. The woman held a knife.’ [JO 629]

These data can be taken to evidence the lack of morphosyntactic marking sensitive to a feature of contrast that covers both topic and focus.

## 6 Functional passives (verbal participle *-átɔ*; *bá*-impersonals)

Passives are a common cross-linguistic strategy used to restructure the information in a way that demotes the agent. While many Bantu languages have a passive morpheme cognate with Proto-Bantu \*-v/-ibv (Stappers 1967, Schadeberg 2003: 78–79, Guérois 2025), Tunen does not have any verbal marker of the passive, a property it shares with other North-Western Bantu languages (see also Li 2025 [this volume] for the lack of a passive morpheme in Teke-Kukuya [B77]). Sentences that may be passivised in other languages are often given as active sentences in Tunen. In active sentences, the agent must be expressed as the syntactic subject. However, if the speaker does not want to express the agent or the agent is unknown, there are two options which perform as functional equivalents of a passive construction: (i) the use of the verbal participle *-átɔ* in combination with the copular verb, and (ii) an impersonal construction with the class 2 subject marker *bá*.

## 6.1 Verbal participles -áto

A copular construction with a verbal participle marked by the ending -áto can be used in order to avoid expressing the agent. The -áto form is analysed by Dugast (1971: 362) as a verbal adjective and by Mous (2003) as an adverb used as the complement of a copula to describe a resultant state, quality, or capacity. In my data, I gloss -áto as PTCP for “participle”, as discussed in Kerr (2024c: 109). The participle follows either the *le* or *bá* copula (Dugast 1971: 362), as illustrated in (105) below.

- (105) a. hinyí            hé    le sónmbát̩.  
           /he-nyí            hé    lea sóm̩ba-áto/  
           19-firewood 19SM be cut-PTCP  
           ‘Le bois de chauffage est coupé.’  
           ‘The firewood is cut.’
- [EE+EB 1671]
- b. bote            báka    titákáto.  
           /bo-te            bá-aka tité-aka-áto/  
           14-savannah be-DUR burn-DUR-PTCP  
           ‘La savanne est brûlée.’  
           ‘The savannah is burned.’
- (Dugast 1971: 362, adapted)

An agent cannot be expressed using the comitative marker *na* ‘with’ in this verbal participle construction, in contrast to other Bantu languages that allow agent expression with *na* in passives, such as Rukiga (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2025 [this volume]), Makhuwa (van der Wal 2025 [this volume]) and Swahili and Shona (Fleisch 2005). When a *na*-phrase was added to (105a), it was interpreted as a discontinuous continuation of the theme object rather than as the agent (106).

- (106) # hinyí            hé    le sónmbát̩ **na Susan.**  
           /he-nyi            hé    lea sóm̩ba-áto na Susána/  
           19-firewood 19SM be cut-PTCP with 1.Susan  
           int. ‘Le bois du chauffage était coupé par Susanne.’  
           ‘Le bois du chauffage et Susanne étaient coupés.’  
           int. ‘The firewood was cut by Susanne.’  
           ‘The firewood and Susanne were cut.’
- [EE+EB 1673]

- (107) (What wounded the hunter?)

- \* a    le tanákáto            **na mɔnd̩o.**  
       /a    lea tanáká-áto            na mɔ-nd̩o/  
       1SM be wound.DUR-PTCP with 1-person  
       int. ‘Il était blessé par l’homme.’  
       int. He was wounded by a man.’
- [JO 1615]

The participle *-áto* construction is therefore used when the agent is not expressed, and so constitutes a functional equivalent to the passive.

## 6.2 Impersonal *bá*-

If the agent is not known, an impersonal construction can also be used (Mous 2008). This construction is formed with the class 2 subject marker *bá-*, which does not agree with any referent in the discourse. Such *bá*-impersonals are found in many other Bantu languages and are commonly referred to in the Bantu literature as *ba*-passives (see e.g. Fleisch 2005, Asiimwe & van der Wal 2025 [this volume], Li 2025 [this volume], and Taylor 1999, the latter of whom shows *bá*-passives in the neighbouring Bantu language Nomaandé (A46, Cameroon)).

- (108) (Context: QUIS picture of a child falling; you cannot see who pushed them. EK asks in Tunen ‘What happened?’)
- bá ná məná lúmá na mək əlim.  
/bá ná mə-ná lúmá na məkə əlimə/  
2SM PST2 1-child throw with 3.stone behind  
'On a lancé une pierre à l'enfant par derrière.'  
'Someone threw a stone at the child from behind.' [EO 439]
- (109) (Context: EO is reporting a conversation he had with PM on the phone, telling PM that he is standing in front of the shop where car oil is sold so that PM can find him. 'I'm here, where they sell crude oil,')
- ... əhá bá ndɔ moló má mātɔá səm.  
/[...] əhá bá Hndɔ moló má ma-tóá sema/  
... REL.LOC 2SM PRS 6.oil ASS.6 6-car sell  
'...où on vend les carburants pour les voitures.'  
'...where they sell oil for cars.' [EO 1029]
- (110) bá ná hinyí sɔmb.  
/bá ná he-nyi sómba/  
2SM PST2 19-firewood cut  
'On a coupé le bois du chauffage.'  
'The firewood has been cut.' [EE+EB 1672]

As with the participle construction, expression of the agent with *na* ‘with’ is not allowed in the *bá*-construction in Tunen (again a point of crosslinguistic variation within the Bantu family; Fleisch 2005).

- (111) \* bá ná hinyí səmb na Susan.  
/bá ná he-nyi sómba na Susána/  
2SM PST2 19-firewood cut with 1.Susan  
int. ‘Le bois de chauffage était coupé par Susanne.’  
int. ‘The firewood was cut by Susanne.’ [EE+EB 1674]

We therefore see that Tunen has two constructions that can be used for the demotion of the agent: the *-átɔ* participle form and the *bá-* impersonal construction. Bantu languages are known to vary as to whether and how the agent is expressed in a passive construction (Fleisch 2005). In Tunen, agent expression is not possible.

### 6.3 The middle prefix *bé-*

Finally, note that Tunen has a prefix *bé-* which Dugast (1971) treats as a passive and reflexive marker. Mous (2008) gives a detailed discussion of this marker, arguing that it is in fact a middle prefix, suggesting an etymology of a first person plural pronoun and noting a cognate form in other A40/A60 languages of Cameroon. In Kerr (2024c) I analyse it formally as a Voice head within the verbal spine. This middle prefix shows some functional overlap with the *bá-* impersonal construction, as seen in (112) below.<sup>25</sup>

- (112) a. a-ná      **bé-tóŋona**      mɛkɔ.  
1SM-PST2 MID-transform 9:leopard  
‘He transformed into a leopard.’
- b. **bá-ná**      mondo tóŋóná      mɛkɔ.  
2SM-PST2 1:man transform 9:leopard  
‘They transformed the man into a leopard.’
- (Mous 2008: 310, adapted)

The overlap between these construction is to be expected considering the cross-linguistic overlap in middle/neutro-passives and passives (Guérois to appear). The interested reader can find more detail about the specific contexts of use of the *bé-* prefix in Mous (2008).

<sup>25</sup>Note that the *bé-* prefix is transcribed as *bé-* in Mous’ 2003 orthography (see Kerr 2024c: Chapter 4 on orthographical differences between sources).

## 7 Referent expression in discourse

This section will show how the form of nominals in Tunen varies dependent on its information-structural status in the discourse. Referent expression across languages varies dependent on givenness/activation status, i.e. the cognitive notion of how accessible the referent is at a particular point of discourse, as affected by factors such as recency of mention and number of intervening referent expressions (Gundel et al. 1993, Ariel 2001). The general pattern is that more accessible referents are referred to with less linguistic encoding. As noted in previous work by Isaac (2007), Tunen follows this general pattern, with full noun phrases typically used to introduce new discourse referents, after which less material is used. The full scale of options for referent expression in discourse in Tunen is shown in (113) below, ordered from least to most linguistic encoding.

(113) Tunen referent expression hierarchy

Zero/null > verbal marker > modifier only > non-emphatic pronoun > emphatic pronoun > demonstrative > full DP > compound DP > modified DP

The following extract from a story shows how after a subject is referred to with a compound DP (*muití émbóma* ‘owner of the field’), it can then be referred to using the verbal subject marker only, that is the same noun class (class 1 SM *a-*).

- (114) a. **muit(i) émbóma** a ná wéeya halén.  
           /mɔ̃-ití H=ɛ-mbóma a ná wéeya haléna/  
           1-owner ASS=7-field 1SM PST2 PRO.1 catch

‘Le propriétaire du champ l’a arrêté.’

‘The owner of the field caught her.’

[JO 1765]

- b. a ná wéeya ákanána ɔ wáayé ɔmbél.  
       /a ná wéeya ákánána ɔ wáayé ɔ-mbél/  
       1SM PST2 PRO.1 leave.APPL PREP 3.POSS.1 3-house

‘Il l’a amené dans sa maison.’

‘He took her into his house.’

[JO 1766]

While subjects are always expressed by a verbal subject marker (SM) in Tunen, objects can be zero-expressed, i.e. dropped. Unlike most Bantu languages, Tunen does not have any object marker slot on the verb (Kerr 2024c: 107), so there is no available object marker strategy. Again, this is a property common to North-Western Bantu languages that sets Tunen apart from the Eastern and Southern

Bantu languages in this volume (Polak 1986, van der Wal 2022: 69–70) and shows overlap with Grassfields Bantu (Bantoid) languages.

Object expression in Tunen varies dependent on givenness. When an object is first mentioned, a full/compound/modified DP is used. When the object is given (i.e. retrievable from the discourse context), it is often null, as in the example below where the object *bəɔnó* ‘eggs’ is first introduced with a DP and then dropped in the next clause, as indicated by ‘∅’.<sup>26</sup>

- (115) a bəɔnó neakak, bénðɔ́ bá neak.  
/a bə-ɔnó neaka-aka bендɔ́ bá ∅ néá-aka/  
1SM 8-egg make-DUR 2.person 2SM 8.OBJ eat-DUR  
'Elle pond des œufs; les hommes les mangent.'  
'She lays eggs; people eat them.' [JO 1769]

Dropping given objects like this is very common. An example is provided in the dialogue below, where speaker PM introduces the referent *ibuŋuluəkə* ‘car’ and speaker EO uses zero-expression (116). The example set in (117) from a monologue instructional video shows the same zero-expression of an object when it is given, with the full DP being used at the end again (117e), where the need for re-activation can be considered in terms of both linguistic and temporal distance from the last explicit mention (the latter indicated by the timestamp next to each example). Note that the highly-accessible first-person singular subject is consistently referred to with a subject marker, which is the minimal means to express Tunen subjects.

- (116) (Context: PM and EO perform the QUIS map task (PM gives instructions to EO).)

- a. mɔ́kátá wó bénóme wú búsié ibuŋuluəkə yé nda báká  
/mɔ́-kátá wó bénóme wó búsié ε-burjuluəkə yé nda bá-aka  
3-hand Ass.3 right Ass.3 front 7-car 7SM VEN be-DUR  
háha                ∅ matá.  
háaha                ∅ matá/  
DEM.PROX.LOC PREP bottom

'Il y a un véhicule en bas au premier embranchement à droite.'  
'There's a car at the bottom of the first road on the right.' [PM 671]

<sup>26</sup>The ability for objects to be unexpressed in Tunen raises questions about the transitivity of verbs like *néá* ‘eat’ in Tunen. An alternative analysis would be to say that these verbs have homophonous intransitive forms, in which case the object would not properly be considered to be “dropped” as it is not required in the verb’s lexical entry. In this chapter, I use “zero expression” and “dropped” to mean that there is no object expression with a predicate that in non-given contexts takes an object.

- b. éε, mέ ndɔ sin.  
 /éε mε <sup>H</sup>ndɔ Ø sinə/  
 yes SM.1SG PRS OBJ.7 see  
 'Oui, je le vois.'  
 'Yes, I see it.' [EO 672]

(117) (Context: JO demonstrates how to prepare the dish *kok*.)

- a. εséáŋáka mέ hékoke sááka  
 /εséáŋáka mε=H hε-kóke sáá-aka/  
 now SM.1SG=PROC 19-kok wash-DUR  
 'Maintenant, je lave le kok.'  
 'Now, I wash the kok.' [JO 1343; 00:00:38]
- b. mέ hékoke sááka  
 /mε=H hε-kóke sáá-aka/  
 SM.1SG=PROC 19-kok wash-DUR  
 'Je lave le kok.'  
 'I wash the kok.' [JO 1344; 00:00:58]
- c. mε ná hóá ɔ ɔsca  
 /mε ná hóá ɔ ɔ-sáá/  
 SM.1SG PST2 finish PREP INF-wash  
 'J'ai fini de laver.'  
 'I've finished washing (it).' [JO 1345; 00:01:34]
- d. mέ əmbékína ɔ mol  
 /mε=H əmbékína ɔ moló/  
 SM.1SG=PROC throw.REP PREP 6.oil  
 'Je (le) lance dans l'huile.'  
 'I'm throwing (it) into the oil.' [JO 1346; 00:01:38 ]
- e. mε ná hékoke əmbínə ɔ moló  
 /mε ná hε-kóke əmbínə ɔ moló/  
 SM.1SG PST2 19-kok throw PREP 6.oil  
 'J'ai lancé le kok dans l'huile.'  
 'I've thrown the kok into the oil.' [JO 1347; 00:03:19]

While this strategy of zero-expression of given objects is common, it is not possible when the verb has an applicative extension, in which case overt expression of the object (by DP or pronoun) is syntactically required. Example (118) below shows that it is not grammatical to have an unexpressed recipient object with an applicativised verb form.

- (118)    *yaté Malíá á ná {láá}\*léná} eé?*  
/yaté Malíá á ná {lá|\*léná} eé/  
what 1.Maria 1SM PST2 {say|say.APPL} Q  
int. ‘Qu’est-ce que Maria a dit ?’  
int. ‘What did Maria say?’
- [JO 2448–9]

The consequence of the applicative’s valency requirement means that pronominal expression is fairly frequent for recipient objects in the corpus, as the standard way of reporting speech in a story uses an applicative form of the verb ‘say’ (followed by the complementiser formed from *-séá* ‘say’), which requires either a pronoun or lexical DP subject.

- (119)    *ɔndʒelé a ná wéeya léná ase : ...*  
/ɔ-ndʒelé a ná wéeya léná a-séá [...] /  
3-lizard 1SM PST2 PRO.1 say.APPL 1SM-say [...]  
‘Le lézard lui a dit : [...]’  
‘The lizard told him: [...]’
- [JO 2068]

- (120)    *Yésusu a ná bəébu léná a séá : [...] /*  
/Yésusu a ná bəébu léná a-séá [...] /  
1.Jesus 1SM PST2 PRO.2 say.APPL 1SM-say [...]  
‘Jésus leur a dit : [...]’  
‘Jesus said to them: [...]’
- [Luke 9.52: CABTAL 2019: 159]

This finding is significant as it challenges previous classification of Tunen’s pronominal system, in which different pronominal forms are analysed as varying in degree of a loosely-defined notion of “emphasis” (Dugast 1971: 128–130, Isaac 2007: 49–51; Kerr 2024c: 97–100). The possible confound of the applicative verb form on pronoun use is a topic worth more detailed investigation, in order to better understand the extent to which pronoun form and frequency reflects referent accessibility rather than confounding factors such as valency requirements of the verb.

In summary then, Tunen referent expression follows crosslinguistic tendencies to use less material to refer to given/accessible referents (Gundel et al. 1993, Ariel 2001), with full noun phrases used to introduce discourse referents (Isaac 2007). Compared to other Bantu languages, Tunen is typical in its use of verbal subject markers without a lexical DP for given subjects, but unusual in lacking object markers and therefore having frequent zero-reference for objects. Pronouns can be used and are often found to meet valency requirements when the verb

has an applicative extension, suggesting a confound that could be investigated further. For our current purposes, we see that Tunen referent expression follows crosslinguistic tendencies to use more linguistic material to encode less accessible discourse referents.

## 8 Comparison to other Bantu languages

Before concluding, I will reflect briefly on how Tunen compares to other Bantu languages in its expression of information structure. We have seen in this chapter that Tunen is unusual for a Bantu language in the following respects: (i) grammatical roles are more important for word order than discourse roles; (ii) S-Aux-O-V-X (and not SVO) is the canonical word order; (iii) there is no morphological passive, (iv) there is no dedicated focus position, and (v) no object marking is permissible to refer to given objects. Furthermore, (vi) no inversion constructions are found, and (vii) there is no predicate doubling (unlike other Bantu languages in this volume; see also Güldemann & Fiedler 2022). These properties have been suggested before as areal features related to Tunen’s position in the Northwest of the Bantu-speaking area. For example, Hamlaoui & Makasso (2015) report the same lack of inversion constructions and object marking for Basaá, another Cameroonian Bantu language of the A40 group, and Güldemann (2008) has proposed O-V-X as an areal syntactic property of the Macro-Sudan Belt (a proposed linguistic area which in which Tunen is spoken), as I discuss in Kerr (2024c: §6.7–6.8). Finally, in our own work on the BaSIS project we have shown that Tunen has no dedicated focus position and have argued that grammatical roles are less important than information-structural roles for determining Tunen’s word order, which we have suggested is linked to its position in the Northwest (Kerr et al. 2023). Note that this reliance on grammatical role differs from the Cameroonian/Nigerian Bantoid language Naki studied by Good (2010), which was argued to show evidence for information structure as the principal determiner of word order, and is also distinct from Teke-Kukuya, which Li (2025 [this volume], 2024) shows has innovated a dedicated focus position (see also De Kind 2014 on Kisikongo (H16a), Bostoen & Mundeke 2012 on Mbuun (B87), and Koni Muluwa & Bostoen 2014 on Nsong (B85d)). This highlights the fact that there is variation in Northwestern Bantu and Bantoid languages in the expression of information structure, meaning that detailed studies of individual languages are required.

This is not to say however that Tunen has no similarities with other Bantu languages in its expression of information structure. Like other Bantu languages

in this volume, and as matches crosslinguistic patterns for focus marking, different cleft strategies are available to express focus (see e.g. Fiedler et al. 2010, Féry & Ishihara 2016), in which case there is typically an exhaustivity reading. Information focus can be left unmarked (for non-subjects). Also like the other languages and the crosslinguistically common pattern (Gundel 1988), topics can be left-peripheral, in which case they may be marked or unmarked. We also see overlap between Tunen and the zone B77 Bantu language Teke-Kukuya in Li (2025 [this volume]), which similarly lacks a morphological passive and has no inversion constructions. Finally, subject markers are the minimal means of subject expression, as in the other languages.

## 9 Summary

This chapter has shown that Tunen's canonical word order is S-Aux-O-V-X, which is compatible with various different information-structural contexts. Alternatives to the canonical S-Aux-O-V-X word order are possible for the expression of information-structural notions, with clefting a common strategy for expressing focus, and fronting a means of marking topics, which may additionally be marked by the preposition *ɔ* or *ábá/aka* 'if'. Finally, a short comparison between Tunen and other Bantu languages in terms of the expression of information structure was provided.

Further areas for research on Tunen information structure would be a more detailed corpus-based approach to frequencies of different word-order patterns, taking into account other potential factors such as prosodic weight; a prosodic analysis of potential correlates of information structure; a more detailed investigation of the use of conditional marking for introducing topics; and a more detailed study of fine-grained distinctions in referent expression, such as the use between basic and emphatic pronouns. A more detailed comparative study of languages of the Northwest as compared to Eastern and Southern Bantu languages would also be valuable, as well as a comparison of Northwestern Bantu and the Southern Bantoid languages of the Grassfields Bantu group.

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## Abbreviations

1, 2, 3...	Bantu noun class	PST1	first-degree past
1SG	1st person singular		tense (a few moments ago)
2SG	2nd person singular	PST2	second-degree past
AND	anditive/thither		tense (hodiernal)
APPL	applicative extension	PST3	third-degree past
ASS	associative marker (connective)	PST4	tense (yesterday and back) fourth-degree past
CONTR	contrast (gloss from Mous 2003)	PREP	tense (ancient past) preposition
COP2	non-human/inanimate copula	PRO	pronoun
DISC	discourse	PROC	procedural tense
EMPH	emphatic (greater contrast)	REP	repetitive suffix (action repeated)
EXCL	exclamation		
FR	French	SBJV	subjective mood
MID	middle	SM	subject marker
OBJ	object	VEN	venitive/hither

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# Chapter 3

## The expression of information structure in Teke-Kukuya

Zhen Li

Peking University

This chapter introduces the expression of information structure of Teke-Kukuya which is a Bantu language spoken in the Republic of Congo. I first discuss the canonical word order of the language and what discourse functions it can have. Then the chapter describes the functions and interpretation of a dedicated immediate-before-verb (IBV) focus position that can express various types of focus. Different kinds of topical elements in Kukuya tend to occur in the preverbal domain. Passiveness is expressed via two functional constructions. The language also makes use of cleft constructions to express focus, from which some connections with the IBV focus strategy are observed. In general, the Kukuya language behaves more discourse-configurational.

### 1 Introduction

This chapter provides a description on the expression of information structure in the Kukuya language ([kkw], B77a). Kukuya is a Bantu language spoken in the Lékana district of the Republic of Congo and is a variety in the Teke group (B70). The phonology and noun class inventories of the Teke-Kukuya variety have been documented in detail by Paulian (1975) and some careful analysis on its prosodic domain was conducted by Hyman (1987). The data presented here were collected during my fieldwork in the summers of 2019 and 2021 in the Lékana district, where the Kukuya language is predominantly used in daily life, and also in Brazzaville with aged speakers who were born and brought up in Lékana. I have collected both elicited and spontaneous data during the fieldwork, but since



the marked information structural expressions such as the use of the dedicated focus position are more obviously attested in elicited sentences, the examples presented in this chapter are largely based on the elicited data and I leave more elaborated investigation on the information structure of spontaneous speech for further research. The elicitation materials for investigating information structure expressions are largely based on the methodological guide “The BaSIS basics of information structure” (van der Wal 2021) developed as part of the Bantu Syntax and Information Structure (BaSIS) project.

Kukuya was said to be “economic” (Paulian 1998, 2001) in terms of verb derivational suffixes and object marking. However, compared to many other Teke varieties, there is less phonological reduction on the nominal and verb prefixes/stems and there is rich agreement morphology in Kukuya. As we see throughout the chapter, the preverbal subject in Kukuya is always present and is only very rarely omitted, which I take as evidence for its clause-internal status rather than being a dislocated topic. In Kukuya there is much crucial morphosyntactic variation that cannot be accounted for by the traditional point of view on the grammar but must be explained with reference to information structure. In this chapter I show that the word order in Kukuya is to a large extent determined by information structure more so than by traditional grammatical roles. All kinds of topical elements tend to occur in the preverbal domain, while focused elements are usually placed in a dedicated immediate-before-verb (IBV) focus position which is rarely attested in eastern and southern Bantu languages but seems to be an areal feature shared by some West-Coastal Bantu languages (Grégoire 1993, Hadermann 1996, Bostoen & Mundeke 2011, 2012, De Kind 2014, Koni Muluwa & Bostoen 2014, Bostoen & Koni Muluwa 2021). I show that in Teke-Kukuya, this IBV position is productively exploited, and the element that is placed in the IBV position must be itself focal or part of a larger focal constituent.

The chapter is organised as follows: Section 2 introduces the canonical word order SVO and various types of focus that this word order can express; Section 3 is dedicated to illustrating different functions of the IBV focus position and interpretations associated with it, as well as some morphological and tonal variation related to this position; Section 4 introduces the expressions of (multiple) topical elements in the preverbal domain, and functional passive constructions that combine the use of IBV focus position and topic fronting; Section 5 turns to different types of cleft constructions and tries to build up some connections between the (pseudo-)cleft and the IBV focus construction; Section 6 summarises.

## 2 Canonical word order

In this section I will present the canonical SVO word order in Kukuya and show that the SVO word order can be used to express various types of focus such as argument and adjunct focus, VP focus and polarity focus. The SVO word order is also the most common way of expressing a thetic sentence.

### 2.1 SVO as canonical word order

When talking about word order, it can be sometimes problematic to generalize what the “canonical” word order is in a language, depending on different criteria and discourse types. Even synchronic variation within the language can provide different clues on its canonical word order. Here I follow the criterion that the canonical word order of a language is commonly reflected in a “topic-comment articulation” where the subject of the sentence has a discourse function of topic representing presupposed or given information, and the rest of the sentence expresses new information (Lambrecht 1994, Andrews 2007). Thus the canonical word order is expected to show up in the answer to a question such as ‘What did s/he do’ which places focus on the predicate, namely the VP. In (1) we see that to answer such a question, the SVO word order is usually attested, which has been reported to be the canonical word order of most other Bantu languages (Bearth 2003, van der Wal 2015, Downing & Marten 2019, among others).

- (1) a. Mu-kái kí-má káá-sí?  
1-woman 7-what 1SM.PST-do.PST  
'What did the woman do?'
- b. Ndé áá-búnum-i baa-ntsúú.  
1.PRO 1SM.PST-feed-PST 2-chicken  
'She fed the chicken.'

However, as we will see shortly, the felicitous answer to a VP question is not restricted to SVO word order, but can also be SOV as shown in (2), although the occurrence of SVO for VP focus largely surpasses that of SOV in my corpus and is always the first intuition of the speakers. Based on these facts, I assume that the canonical word order of Kukuya, if there is one, should be SVO. We will also see later in this chapter that any deviation of the SVO word order, to a larger or smaller extent, involves some discourse-related manipulations. The SOV word order expressing VP focus is possibly used to mark contrast on the VP (see Section 3.2), or it is in the process of being further grammaticalised from a

more marked focus construction to a pragmatically neutral word order secondary to the canonical SVO.

- (2) (visual stimulus: what are the two women doing?)

Bó ntálí bá-kâ-yílik-a.  
2.PRO 9.bed 2SM-PRS-clear.up-FV  
'They are making the bed.'

The canonical position of different kinds of adjuncts is usually postverbal and after the object(s) in a transitive construction, as illustrated in (3). Here I refer to adjuncts as adverbial phrases that add extra information (temporal, locative, manner) to the sentence, which is distinguished from adverbs which modify the verb. From (3) we can also see that in a ditransitive construction in Kukuya, the recipient object always precedes the theme. Example (4) shows that it is ungrammatical to place the locative phrase between the verb and the object, even if this adjunct is in focus. This also indicates that in Kukuya there is no IAV focus position which is well-known in many other Bantu languages. I thus conclude that the canonical constituent order in Kukuya is Subject-Verb-Object-Adjuncts.

- (3) Nkaaká áá-wî baa-ndzulí bvi-kídzá mu nkunkólo  
1.grandmother 1SM.PST-give.PST 2-cat 8-food 18.LOC 9.evening  
yi.  
9.DEM

'The grandmother gave the cats food this evening.'

- (4) (answer to 'where did you see Gilbert?')

- a. \* Me á-mún-i ku dzándu Gilbert.  
1SG.PRO PST-1SG.SM.see-PST 17.LOC 5.market Gilbert  
int: 'I saw Gilbert at the market.'
- b. Me á-mún-i Gilbert ku dzándu.  
1SG.PRO PST-1SG.SM.see-PST Gilbert 17.LOC 5.market  
'I saw Gilbert at the market.'
- c. Me ku dzándu á-mún-i Gilbert.  
1SG.PRO 17.LOC 5.market PST-1SG.SM.see-PST Gilbert  
'I saw Gilbert at the market.'

## 2.2 Focus expressions in SVO

As said above, the canonical SVO word order is usually captured when the whole VP is in focus. In this subsection I will show that the SVO word order can also be

used to express term focus, and in fact all types of arguments and adjuncts can be focused in their canonical linear position. In addition, the SVO word order can also express different types of predicate-centered focus (PCF) such as verb focus and polarity focus. I will discuss them in turn.

A question word, which is usually considered to be inherently focused, as well as its corresponding answer, are commonly seen as reliable diagnostics for focus expressions (Rooth 1992, Lambrecht 1994, Krifka 2007, van der Wal 2016). In Kukuya, an object can be focused in its canonical postverbal position. In (5a) we see that the answer to an object question can be SVO with the object being focused in its canonical position. We find in (5b) that this question can also be answered in an SOV order with the object focused in the IBV position, which will be discussed later in Section 3.1. We may also notice in (5) that the tone on the nominal prefix of the object DP and the shape of subject marker on the verb differ depending on the word order, which I will discuss in Section 5.2.

- (5) (What did father sell yesterday?)

- a. Ndé áá-ték-i              baa-ntaba<sub>[FOC]</sub>.  
1.PRO 1SM.PST-sell-PST 2-goat  
'He sold some goats.'    [SVO object focus]
- b. Ndé báa-ntabá<sub>[FOC]</sub> káá-ték-i.  
1.PRO 2-goat              1SM.PST-sell-PST  
'He sold some goats.'    [SOV object focus]

Adjuncts can also be focused in their original postverbal positions. In (6) we see that when answering to a question on the location, the locative phrase providing new information can just occur in its canonical position.

- (6) (Where did father buy the wine?)

- Taará áá-fúum-i              ma-lí [ku mfaí]<sub>[FOC]</sub>.  
1.father 1SM.PST-buy-PST 6-wine 17.LOC 9.capital  
'Father bought the wine in Brazzaville.'

As we will see in Section 3.1.1, question words are predominantly placed in the IBV position, but for some of the interrogative adjuncts, in particular the manner and reason question words *buní* 'how' and *mu kimá* 'why', they are also widely attested to occur in their canonical postverbal position as in (7).

- (7) Muu-ndziá áá-dzí              ma-ká bu-ní?

- 1-foreigner 1SM.PST-eat.PST 6-cassava 14-which  
'How did the foreigner eat the cassavas?'

An interrogative adjunct can also be placed in its canonical position in the context of a rhetorical question as in (8), which usually expresses doubt about or opposition against the previous statement, but not necessarily requests an answer.

- (8) (Context: the speaker thinks that it is impossible for the person to have seen Alain.)

Ndé á-mún-i                    Alain ku-ní?  
1.PRO 1SM.PST-see-PST Alain 17-which  
'He saw Alain, (but) where?'

An element modified by 'only' is always associated with an exhaustive focus reading. In (9a) and (9b) we see that to place an object DP modified by 'only' in its canonical postverbal position and in the IBV position are both grammatical. This shows that even exhaustive focus on the object can be expressed in the canonical SVO word order.

- (9) a. Mu-loí áá-wí                    báana                    wúna maa-nkúru.

1-teacher 1SM.PST-give.PST 2.children only 6-pen

'The teacher gave the children only pens.'

- b. Nkaaká                    wúna mvá káá-wí                    bú-ká.

1.grandmother only 1.dog 1SM.PST-give.PST 14-cassava

'The grandmother gave only the dog cassava.'

A subject can also be focused preverbally in SVO word order, as shown in the question-answer pair in (10) and the preverbal subject modified by 'only' in (11). The availability of preverbal subject focus in Kukuya is somehow exceptional considering the rigid constraint against the preverbal subject to be focal in many other Bantu languages (Morimoto 2000, Zerbian 2006, van der Wal 2009, 2015, Downing & Marten 2019). It should be noted here that I am not claiming that the preverbal subject is structurally focused *in situ*, but in a position which is structurally different from the canonical subject position, though under both circumstances the linear word order is SVO. In Section 3.3, I will distinguish the preverbal topical subject position from the focal subject in IBV position. Here I say that a topical and a focal subject, which structurally occupy different positions, overlap in their linear position in the preverbal domain.

- (10) a. Kí-má kií-súruk-i?

7-what 7SM.PST-fall-PST

'What fell down?'

- b. Mpúku áá-súruk-i.  
1.rat 1SM.PST-fall-PST  
'A/The rat fell down.'

- (11) Wúna baa-ntsúú báá-ból-i.  
only 2-chicken 2SM.PST-decompose-PST  
'Only the *chicken* got bad.'

SVO is also compatible with various types of predicate-centered focus (PCF) (Güldemann 2003, 2009) including verb focus (state-of-affairs focus) and polarity focus or verum. In (12b) SVO as the answer to the question in (12a) expresses focus on the verb and SVO is used. In (13b) SVO is used to correct the truth value of (13a), thus we see that SVO is also felicitous to express polarity focus.

- (12) a. Taará mi-féme kí-má ké káá-sí?  
1.father 4-pig 7-what 7.PRO 1SM.PST-do.PST  
'What did father do to the pigs?'  
b. Ndé áá-dzwí mi-féme.  
1.PRO 1SM.PST-kill.PST 4-pig  
'He killed the pigs.'

- (13) a. Gilbert ka-káá-bvúúr-í we mi-pará ni?  
Gilbert NEG-1SM.PST-return-PST 2SG.PRO 4-money NEG  
'Gilbert did not return you the money?'  
b. Ndé áá-bvúúr-i me mi-pará.  
1.PRO 1SM.PST-return-PST 1SG.PRO 4-money  
'He (did) returned me the money'

In the above I have shown that SVO can have different uses in terms of information structure. SVO is most commonly used as a "topic-comment structure" where the subject functions as the topic and the whole VP is focused, and it can also express term focus and different types of PCF. There is no constraint against preverbal subject focus.

### 2.3 Thetic sentences

In this subsection, I will show that the SVO word order can also be used as a thetic sentence. A thetic sentence is used to present all the information that the sentence carries in one piece, as opposed to a "categorical" sentence in which the

topic and comment can be further divided (Kuroda 1972, Sasse 1987, 1996). The thetic sentence is also referred to as “all-new” or “all focus” utterance (van der Wal 2021). The answer to a question such as ‘what happens’ can thus be used to investigate the formation of a thetic sentence, as this type of question often does not presuppose a topical referent and requires information on the whole event. In Kukuya, a thetic sentence usually surfaces in SVO. As shown in (14), to answer the question ‘what happened outside’, only (14a) with SVO is felicitous, while any deviation of this word order cannot be an appropriate answer. The answer in (14b) is only felicitous when *mwáana* ‘child’ has been already mentioned and is what the speakers are talking about. In (15) the preverbal subject is indefinite and non-specific, which are not characteristics of topic. From the context we see that it expresses a thetic meaning as there is no old information presupposed. Here we see that the distinction on definiteness of the preverbal subject may help discern a thetic SVO sentence from a categorical one.

- (14) (What happened outside?)

- a. Mvá áá-bví ku ntsá dzuná.  
1.dog 1SM.PST-fall.PST 17.LOC inside 5.hole  
‘A dog fell into the hole.’
- b. # Mwáana taará áá-béer-i.  
1.child 1.father 1SM.PST-beat-PST  
‘The child was beaten by father.’

- (15) (Context: you returned home and found some footprints on the floor, you said to your roommate:)

**Mbuurú** áá-yení.  
1.person 1SM.PST-come.PST  
‘Someone came.’

We have already seen above that the preverbal subject in SVO can be topical or focal. The availability of SVO to express the thetic meaning shows that the preverbal subject can also be non-topical (and non-focal), since there is no distinction on topic and comment in a thetic sentence. However, an answer to a question ‘what happened’ may also contain a topic expression due to the tendency to “accommodate information” in a sentence (Lewis 1979, Stalnaker 2002, von Fintel 2008, van der Wal 2016). Even if there is no identifiable topical referent in the common ground before the discourse starts, the interlocutors tend to accept the referent that occurs at the beginning of the dialogue, for example the ‘dog’ in (14a) above, to ensure a coherent communication. In this regard, SVO may never

be really “thetic”, but the preverbal subject can function as an “immediate topic” that can always rescue the discourse from not having a topic.

A question that asks about the reason may also have a thetic answer, as the reason may not contain any presupposed information known by the addressee. In the examples (16) and (17) below, a subject relative construction is used to answer this kind of *why*-questions. At first glance, the subject relative clause looks like a dedicated strategy to express a thetic meaning, just as in French a cleft can be used in a thetic sentence in which the subject is detopicalised by relativisation. However, since the question word for ‘why’ is formed as *mu kima* which literally means ‘for what’, the relativisation of the subject is more likely to nominalise the whole sentence to congruently answer the question, as the *why*-question is actually a *what*-question which targets at a nominal. For example in (16) the question literally means ‘for what are the children afraid’ which may target a certain object that causes the fear rather than a whole event, therefore the answer is interpreted as ‘*for* the crocodile that is walking in the yard’.

- (16) a. Báana mu ki-má bá-li ya buokó?  
2.children 18.LOC 7-what 2SM-COP with 14.fear  
‘Why are the children afraid?’
  - b. Mu-ŋaaní wu-kâ-dzíe ŋa kalá mbalí.  
1.crocodile 1REL-PRS-walk 16.LOC inside 9.yard  
‘A crocodile that is walking in the yard.’
- (17) a. Mu-kái mu ki-má ké káá-mal-í ŋa nzó?  
1-woman 18.LOC 7-what 7.PRO 1SM.PST-leave-PST 16.LOC 9.house  
‘Why did the woman leave home?’
  - b. Mwáana aa ndé wü-dzínim-i.  
1.child 1.CONN 1.PRO 1REL-disappear-PST  
‘Her son who disappeared.’

In (18) we see that the *mu* always requires a nominal or nominalised element following it. To answer the question in the context, only (18a) is grammatical as the reason is nominalised thus can be selected by *mu*, while (18b) the sentence is ungrammatical due to the fact that the construction after *mu* is still clausal rather than nominal. From (18a) we also see that the relativisation of the subject can nominalise the clause after *mu* as a whole, since the child becomes happy not because of the ‘father’ himself, but of the *fact* that ‘father bought him a small goat’. In this sense, the relativisation strategy above in (16) and (17) can also be considered as nominalising the whole clause for the sake of expressing the information as *one piece* (Sasse 1987).

(18) (Why is the child happy?)

- a. Mwáana li yă kí-sáábí mu taará wú-fúum-i ndé
  - 1.child COP with 7-happiness 18.LOC 1.father 1REL-buy-PST 1.PRO
  - ntaba.
  - 1.goat

‘The child is happy that father bought him a goat.’
- b. \*Mwáana li yă kí-sáábí mu taará áá-fúum-i
  - 1.child COP with 7-happiness 18.LOC 1.father 1SM.PST-buy-PST
  - ndé ntaba.
  - 1.PRO 1.goat

int. ‘The child is happy that father bought him a goat.’

In summary, a thetic meaning is commonly expressed by the canonical SVO word order in Kukuya. A subject relativisation strategy may also be used to express thetic meaning, the motivation of which seems to be nominalising the whole information in the sentence as one chunk. However, the use of relativisation may also be due to the fact that some interrogative words tend to require a nominal answer.

In the previous sections, I have shown that the canonical word order SVO is compatible with different information structural constructions. It can be used to express VP focus, term focus, predicated-centered focus and theticity. In the next section I will introduce how a deviation of this canonical word order, namely the use of the dedicated IBV focus position, is associated with information structure.

### 3 Dedicated IBV focus position

This section gives an overview on the availability and interpretation of the dedicated immediate-before-verb (IBV) focus position in Kukuya. I show that the IBV position is available for arguments including subject and object, for adjuncts and even for the infinitive predicate to get focused. Compared to the *in situ* focus strategy introduced above, the element placed in IBV often has an identificational/contrastive focus reading. The interrogative words and contrastively focused elements more strictly occur in the IBV position than other focal elements. The focal interpretation can project from the IBV position to the whole VP.

An immediate question here is how to define the “IBV” position in this language. Throughout the chapter, the notion “IBV position” refers to a particular *structural* position, whether occupied or empty, that is adjacent to the verb

Table 1: Linear slots of the preverbal domain in Kukuya

TOP	TOP	FOC	Verb
$S_{TOP}$			V
		$S_{FOC}$	V
$O_{TOP}$	$(O_{TOP})$	$S_{FOC}$	V
$S_{TOP}$	$(O_{TOP})$	$O_{FOC}$	V

and no other constituent can intervene in between. Linearly, a topical or non-focal grammatical subject in the SVO word order can also occur immediately left-adjacent to the verb, but it is not structurally placed in the IBV position, because other constituents can still be inserted between it and the verb (see Section 3.1.2). When the IBV focus position is not filled, a topical or non-focal subject just linearly overlaps the IBV position. If we consider all possible elements in the preverbal domain to occur in different slots which correspond to different structural positions (but not necessarily linear position), which is illustrated in Table 1, we see that the IBV focus position can be clearly discerned. In this table, each line represents a particular construction that will be introduced in the rest of the chapter.

### 3.1 Argument and adjunct focus in IBV

#### 3.1.1 Object and adjunct focus in IBV

In Kukuya, a question word is usually placed in the IBV position. As shown in (19a) and (19b), the questioned objects *kímá* ‘what’ and *ná* ‘who’ are both placed in the IBV position. In (19c) we see that the question word must be strictly adjacent to the verb and the intervention of another element turns the sentence ungrammatical. Example (19d) shows that to place the questioned object *kímá* ‘what’ in its canonical postverbal position is also ungrammatical.

- (19) a. Mvá **kí-má** káá-siib-i?  
           1.dog 7-what 1SM.PST-catch-PST  
           ‘What did the dog catch?’
- b. Taará **ná** káá-mún-í       ku       mu-súru?  
           1.father 1.who 1SM.PST-see-PST 17.LOC 3-forest  
           ‘Who did father see in the forest?’

- c. \* Taará ná ku mu-súru káá-mún-i?  
1.father 1.who 17.LOC 3-forest 1SM.PST-see-PST  
int. 'Who did father see in the forest?'
- d. \* Mvá áá-siib-i ki-ma?  
1.dog 1SM.PST-catch-PST 7-what  
int. 'What did the dog catch?'

In ditransitive constructions (20a) and (20b), the recipient and the patient objects are questioned in the IBV position respectively, while the other non-focal objects also occur in the preverbal domain preceding the IBV position. We see from these examples that a questioned object is strictly placed in the IBV position. We can also see in (20) that there is an agreeing pronoun following the question word. I leave the function of the pronoun to be discussed later and assume the question word and the pronoun to form one inseparable constituent in the IBV position.

- (20) a. Nkaaká ma-désu ná ndé káá-wî?  
1.grandmother 6-bean 1.who 1.PRO 1SM.PST-give.PST  
'To whom did grandmother give the beans?'  
b. Nkaaká mvá kí-má ké káá-wî?  
1.grandmother 1.dog 7-what 7.PRO 1SM.PST-give.PST  
'What did grandmother give to the dog?'

The answer to an object question also tends to occur in the IBV position, though it is not restricted to this position. As introduced in Section 2 and also as in (21), we see that the answer to a questioned object question can be SVO and SOV, with the focal answer being either in IBV or its canonical postverbal position. Here we see that both preverbal and postverbal focus strategies are available in Kukuya. In the elicitation of question-answer pairs, I had a strong impression that when I put emphatic intonation on the focal answer in French, the speakers were more likely to use the preverbal focus strategy in the corresponding translation. I will discuss the interpretational differences of the IBV and *in situ* object focus strategies in Section 3.4.

- (21) (What did mother buy yesterday?)
- a. Ndé áá-fúum-i mu-ngwa.  
1.PRO 1SM.PST-buy-PST 3-salt  
'She bought some salt.'
  - b. Ndé mú-ngwa káá-fúum-i.  
1.PRO 3-salt 1SM.PST-buy-PST  
'She bought some salt.'

In an alternative question that asks for a choice or preference, as well as in its corresponding answer, the IBV focus strategy is always used as shown in (22) and (23). SVO is viewed as infelicitous as in (23c). Here we see that when some (at least one) alternative is explicitly mentioned in the context, SOV must be used for exclusion and identification.

- (22) a. Maamá lóoso káá-télek-i wó bú-ka?  
 1.mother 5.rice 1SM.PST-prepare-PST or 14-cassava  
 'Did mother cook the rice or the cassava?'  
 b. Ndé bú-ka káá-télek-i.  
 1.PRO 14-cassava 1SM.PST-prepare-PST  
 'She prepared the cassava.'
- (23) a. We báa-ntsúú kâ-dzií kí-dzá wó kí-wáli?  
 2SG.PRO 2-chicken 2SG.PRS-like INF-eat or 7-duck  
 'Do you like to eat chicken or duck?'  
 b. Me kí-wál-í kâ-n-dzií kí-dzá.  
 1SG.PRO 7-duck PRS-1SG.SM-like INF-eat  
 'I like to eat duck.'  
 c. # Me kâ-n-dzií kí-dzá kí-wáli.  
 1SG.PRO PRS-1SG.SM-like INF-eat 7-duck  
 'I like to eat duck.'

The questioned adjuncts such as *munkí* 'when', *kuní* 'where', *buní* 'how' and *mu kimá* 'why', as inherently focal, are also most commonly placed in the IBV position, as shown in (24–26). As for the answer to an adjunct question, the focused adjunct in the answer can be either in IBV or its base position, as illustrated in (24).

- (24) a. Mwáana munkí káá-dzí ntsúí?  
 1.child when 1SM.PST-eat.PST 1.fish  
 'When did the child eat the fish?'  
 b. Ndé ntsúí mu ngwaalí káá-dzí.  
 1.PRO 1.fish 18.LOC 9.morning 1SM.PST-eat.PST  
 'S/He ate the fish in the morning.'  
 c. Ndé áá-dzí ntsúí mu ngwaalí.  
 1.PRO 1SM.PST-eat.PST 1.fish 18.LOC 9.morning  
 'S/He ate the fish in the morning.'

- (25) Li-dzwá nyama wúa, biáwe ndé **ku-ní** líi-kab-a?  
     1PL.SM-kill 1.animal 1.DEM.II 1PL.PRO 1.PRO 17-which 1PL.FUT-share-FV  
     ‘(As) we kill that animal, where will we share it?’
- (26) a. Mwáana ki-yinga **bu-ní** kíi-wir-i?  
         1.child 7-festival 14-which 7SM.PST-pass-PST  
         ‘How did the child pass the festival?’  
     b. Ndé ki-yinga **kí-bvé** kíi-wir-i.  
         1.PRO 7-festival 7-good 7SM.PST-pass-PST  
         ‘S/He passed the festival *well/happily*.’

Some interrogative adjuncts, in particular the manner and reason interrogatives *buní* ‘how’ and *mu kimá* ‘why’, are also attested to occur in their canonical postverbal position as in (27), in free variation with their counterpart in the IBV position, without triggering interpretation differences. Some interrogative adjuncts occur in the canonical postverbal position in the context of a rhetorical question, see example (8) above.

- (27) Ngo káá-kwí **mu** **ki-ma?**  
     1.leopard 1SM.PST-die.PST 18.LOC 7-what  
     ‘Why did the leopard die?’

An element modified by ‘only’ is always associated with an exhaustive focus reading. In (9) above we have already seen that to place an object DP modified by ‘only’ in the IBV position and the canonical postverbal position are both grammatical. This shows that exclusive focus is not necessarily expressed via the IBV position. Example (28) shows that when excluding some alternatives in an explicitly mentioned set, the exclusively focused phrase can either occur in IBV or its canonical position. In spontaneous speech, I also found both postverbal and preverbal distribution of the *only*-phrases, although the occurrence in the IBV position is more often attested.

- (28) a. Mu-kái áá-fúum-i ntaba yá má-sáani?  
         1-woman 1SM.PST-buy-PST 1.goat with 6-plate  
         ‘Did the woman buy a goat and some plates?’  
     b. Ndé wúna ma-sáani ká-fúum-i.  
         1.PRO only 6-plate 1SM.PST-buy-PST  
         ‘She only bought some plates.’

- c. Ndé á-fúum-i            wúna ma-sáaani.  
     1.PRO 1SM.PST-buy-PST only 6-plate  
     'She only bought some plates.'

Interestingly, where I do find restrictions on the position of phrases with exclusive (exhaustive) focus is in yes-no questions. As (29) shows, in a yes-no question the '*only*'-phrase can only occur in the IBV position but is judged to be ungrammatical in the postverbal position. This restriction does not hold when there is no '*only*'-phrase in the sentence; both SOV and SVO word order are felicitous to form a yes-no question in that case.

- (29) a. Taará wúna ma-sáání káá-swaak-í?  
       1.father only 6-plate 1SM.PST-wash-PST  
       'Did father only wash the plates?'  
   b. \*Taará áá-swaak-í            wúna ma-sáani?  
       1.father 1SM.PST-wash-PST only 6-plate  
       int. 'Did father only wash the plates?'

Contrastively focused objects and adjuncts also commonly occur in the IBV position, with rare exceptions. The postverbal locative phrase and the object in statement (30a) are corrected respectively in (30b) and (30c) in the IBV position, while correcting them postverbally is degraded. In (31) the instrumental phrase is also corrected in the IBV position. In (30b) and (31b) we also notice that the focal element in IBV can be preceded by multiple non-focal elements which can be subject, object and adjunct. I will return to discuss this in Section 4.1.

- (30) a. Nganjwâ maamá káá-wéek-i            mu-nkáání ku     Djambala?  
       9.truth 1.mother 1SM.PST-send-PST 3-letter    17.LOC Djambala  
       'Did mother send the letter to Djambala?'  
   b. Ambú, ndé mu-nkáání mfaí            káá-wéek-i.  
       no        1.PRO 3-letter        3.capital 1SM.PST-send-PST  
       'No, she sent the letter to Brazzaville.'  
   c. Ambú, ndé kí-dzídzilá káá-wéek-i.  
       no        1.PRO 7-parcel        1SM.PST-send-PST  
       'No, she sent a parcel.'
- (31) a. Ki-yélé kíí-nyánim-i            kii-mbúli mu     míaka.  
       7-hare 7SM.PST-save-PST 7-lion    18.LOC 4.hand  
       'The hare saved the lion by hand.'

- b. Ambú, ndé kii-mbúli mu mu-siá káá-nyánim-i.  
no 1.PRO 7-lion 18.LOC 3-rope 1SM.PST-save-PST  
'No, he saved the lion with a *rope*'

Some additional examples on contrastive focus with clear context are illustrated in (32) and (33). Example (32) is felicitous in the context when you did not feed the chickens and went out with your wife, when you returned home, you found that the chickens were full and there were beans on the ground. Your wife did not notice the beans and asked 'did someone feed the chickens with rice?' and you corrected her with this sentence. The speaker also suggested some possible context for (32) and (33) as shown in the brackets. From these examples we see that when displacing an element in the IBV position from its canonical position, a set of alternatives is at least implicitly available from the context.

- (32) (Context: there were bags of beans and rice, you found that the chickens were full and only the beans were reduced.)  
Mbuurú baa-ntsúú má-désu káá-búnum-i.  
1.person 2-chicken 6-bean 1SM.PST-feed-PST  
'The person/Someone fed the chickens the *beans*'
- (33) (Context: you see that the child is sitting on the ground and crying, your friend asks from some distance away 'did something hurt the child's legs?', and you correct her/him.)  
Ki-lóko mwáana mú-tswé kíí-búl-i.  
7-thing 1.child 3-head 7SM.PST-hurt-PST  
'The (particular) thing hurt the child's *head*'

An interim generalisation here is that a focal object or adjunct can be either placed in IBV position or its canonical postverbal position, while some types of foci such as question words and contrastively focused elements particularly favour the IBV position. This is in line with the idea that specific types of focus and different "degrees" of contrast can be syntactically identified (Cruschina 2021 a.o.). The IBV position, as the more marked focus position than the canonical position in terms of word order, is reserved for higher degree of contrast while the canonical postverbal position may encode less or no contrast. I will show in Section 3.4 that the IBV position usually expresses identificational focus, while assertively focused elements tend to stay in their canonical positions.

### 3.1.2 Subject focus in IBV

Subject focus in Kukuya can be expressed in three ways, namely in the IBV position, by an OSV word order or by using a pseudo-cleft construction. We will see shortly that the former two means should be considered as different realisations of the same IBV subject focus strategy.

First, to question a subject, the pseudo-cleft construction seems to be the most widely used in my corpus, and an example is shown (34a–34c). In these constructions, the subordinated clause is a relative clause with a covert head, and the predicative focused subject DP occur sentence-finally. A copula linking the relative part and the predicative DP is only visible in negative context as in (34c), in which the subject marking on the copula is by default the class 7 subject marker *kí-*.

- (34) a. Ki-kí-túm-í                mbaá ki-namá **kí-ma?**  
7REL-7SM-cause-PST 9.fire INF-burn 7-what  
'What caused the fire?'
- b. Wú-fúum-i    ma-li    taará.  
1REL-buy-PST 6-wine 1.father  
'(The one) who bought the wine is father.'
- c. Wú-dzí        baa-ntsúú ka-kí-li        mvá ni.  
1REL-eat.PST 2-chicken NEG-7SM-COP 1.dog NEG  
'(The one) who ate the chicken was not the dog.'

An alternative strategy to focus the subject is to place the subject in the IBV position, as the question word in (35), the subject modified by ‘only’ in (36) and the answer to a subject question in (37). It is noteworthy that the subject is focused in the IBV position which is structurally different from its canonical preverbal position. When a focused subject appears preverbally, no other element can occur between this subject and the verb as shown in (35b), which is not characteristic of the topical subject, therefore the focused subject must be placed in a different structural position, which is the IBV.

- (35) a. Ná    áá-ték-i        mu-ngwa?  
1.who 1SM.PST-sell-PST 3-salt  
'Who sold the salt?'
- b. \* Ná    mú-ngwa káá-ték-i?  
1.who 3-salt     1SM.PST-sell-PST  
int. 'Who sold the salt?'

- (36) Wúna baa-ntsúú báá-ból-i.  
      only 2-chicken 2SM.PST-rot-PST  
      ‘Only the chicken rotted.’

- (37) (‘Who gave the child the oranges?’)  
     Bí-búru bí-wí                  mwáana ma-láara.  
     8-parent 8SM.PST-give.PST 1.child 6-orange  
     ‘The *parents* gave the child the oranges.’

Intriguingly, an exception to the legitimacy of a preverbal focal subject is the *which*-phrase. According to many speakers, a *which*-phrase cannot be placed in IBV position in the same way as other interrogative phrases, but can only occur in a reverse pseudo-cleft sentence. We see in (38) and (39) that the *which*-phrase and *whose*-phrase are not compatible with canonical subject marking, which indicates that they cannot function as the grammatical subject of the sentence, but can only occur in a pseudo-cleft construction.

- (38) a. \*Mwáana wu-ní    áá-mún-i              Zacharie?  
      1.child    1-which 1SM.PST-see-PST Zacharie  
      int. ‘Which child saw Zacharie?’  
  b. Mwáana wu-ní    wú-mún-i      Zacharie?  
      1.child    1-which 1REL-see-PST Zacharie  
      ‘Which child is the one who saw Zacharie?’
- (39) a. Mu-káli wuu    ná    (\*á)-níak-i              mwáana?  
      1-wife    1.CONN 1.who 1SM.PST-abandon-PST 1.child  
      int. ‘Whose wife abandoned the child?’  
  b. Mu-káli wuu    ná    wú-níak-i              mwáana?  
      1-wife    1.CONN 1.who 1REL-abandon-PST 1.child  
      ‘Whose wife abandoned the child?’

A *which*-phrase is usually considered to be discourse-linked and presupposes an antecedent in the given discourse, thus does not necessarily trigger discourse-new information (Şener 2010). On the opposite, a non-discourse-linked interrogative phrase does not presuppose an antecedent and always functions as a focal phrase. As we will see throughout this chapter that the preverbal domain is available for elements of various information structural status, it thus seems unexpected that the D-linked *which*- and *whose*-phrases are not compatible with preverbal focus in a mono-clausal construction. One possible motivation for the D-linked interrogatives to prefer a cleft construction may be that the presupposed

existence makes the question as selective, which patterns with the pseudo-cleft construction. Here again it shows that different types and “degrees” of contrast and focus may be encoded through different grammatical strategies.

There are some interpretational differences between the pseudo-cleft construction and subject focus in IBV. In (40a) the subject of the embedded clause is questioned in a pseudo-cleft, and in (40b) it is questioned in the IBV position. According to the speakers, (40a) is used in the context where there is a presupposed set of candidates who killed the king, which means the speaker has already a group of suspects; while in (40b) there is no candidate invoked in the speaker’s mind. In this sense the pseudo-cleft construction is more discourse-linked than the IBV subject focus strategy.

- (40) a. Ndé kâ-tsuomó ndíri [wú-dzwí mu-kóko na].  
       1.PRO 1SM.PRS-think 1.COMP 1REL-kill.PST 1-king 1.who  
       ‘S/He is thinking about who killed the king.’
- b. Ndé kâ-tsuomó ndíri [ná áá-dzwí mu-kóko].  
       1.PRO 1SM.PRS-think 1.COMP 1.who 1SM.PST-kill.PST 1-king  
       ‘S/He is thinking about who killed the king.’

Subject focus in the IBV position is very commonly accompanied by the fronting of topical object(s) to the preverbal domain. For example, the answer to a subject question in (37) above can be alternatively expressed as in (41) in which the subject is focused in the IBV position and the given objects are all preposed to the preverbal domain, surfacing an OOSV word order. Similarly in (42), both in the question and the answer, the focused subject is placed in the IBV position with some object being fronted to the preverbal domain. The OSV word order is in fact very commonly attested in Kukuya for expressing subject focus, and we will also see in Section 4.2 that the OSV can function as an equivalent of the passive construction. I assume that this OSV construction is not a third strategy for subject focus, but it is just a different realisation of the IBV focus strategy introduced above, and here in the OSV construction some element must be marked salient as topic of the sentence and fronted to the initial position. The preposing of other preverbal constituents can also help to identify the subject as being placed in the IBV focus position.

- (41) (‘Who gave the child the oranges?’)  
       Mwáana ma-láara bí-búru bii-wî.  
       1.child 6-orange 8-parent 8SM.PST-give.PST  
       ‘The child was given the oranges by the *parents*.’

- (42) a. Taará téme ná áá-sonom-i?  
       1.father 5.hoe 1.who 1SM.PST-lend-PST  
       'Who lent father the hoe?'  
     b. Téme nkaáká áá-sonom-í taará.  
       5.hoe 1.grandmother 1SM.PST-lend-PST 1.father  
       'Grandmother lent father the hoe.'

I have shown in the previous subsection that focal objects and adjuncts can occur either in the IBV position or their canonical postverbal position. Here we see that the subject can also be focused in the IBV position, and we can generalise that all arguments and adjuncts in Kukuya can be focused in this verb-adjacent IBV position. Next I will investigate whether the IBV position can be used to express focus on an element which is structurally smaller than the argument/adjunct, namely a modifier, or on a larger constituent such as the VP.

### 3.1.3 Sub-NP focus

In this subsection I show that sub-NP focus can also be expressed by placing the NP in the IBV position, as it can express focus on a modifier. In example (43) we see that the interrogative quantifier *kwê* 'how many' occurs in the IBV position, following the NP that it modifies. From this example it is not clear whether it is the whole DP including the head noun and the quantifier that is placed in the IBV position, or solely the quantifier occupies the IBV position.

- (43) Ba-nziá ma-tsúku kwê bâ-sá ña ntsá bu-lá  
       2-foreigner 6-day how.many 2SM.FUT-stay 16.LOC inside 14-village  
       ba?  
       14.DEM  
       'How long will the foreigners stay in this village?'

The sentences in (44) were elicited with a picture in which a woman is holding three knives in her hand. In (44a) the numeral quantifier is correctly focused and takes the H tone prefix, while the nominal prefix of the head NP keeps the L tone; in (44b) it is only the head NP that is focal and takes the H tone prefix, with the quantifier following it; (44c) conveys focus on the whole quantified NP, and in this case the H tone prefix only appears on the head NP.

- (44) (visual stimuli: a woman is holding three knives in her hand.)  
     a. (Is the woman holding TWO knives?)  
        Ndé maa-mbhielé má-tíri kâ-kwaal-a.  
        1.PRO 6-knife 6-three 1SM.PRS-hold-FV  
        'She is holding *three* knives.'

- b. (Is the woman holding three spoons?)  
 Ndé máa-mbhielé ma-tíri kâ-kwaal-a.  
 1.PRO 6-knife 6-three 1SM.PRS-hold-FV  
 'She is holding three knives.'
- c. (Is the woman holding two spoons?/What is the woman holding?)  
 Ndé máa-mbhielé ma-tíri kâ-kwaal-a.  
 1.PRO 6-knife 6-three 1SM.PRS-hold-FV  
 'She is holding three knives.'

From these examples we see that only one H tone prefix can occur on the pre-verbal elements, either on an NP or its modifier, and it is only when the modifier itself is focal that it can take the H tone prefix. One question that arises from (44) is whether the H tone prefix always aligns with focus and with the IBV position. Here I suppose that the head NP and the modifier are separated in (44a), the head NP functions as a dislocated topic and only the modifier is focused in IBV, since the head NP in this case can also be elided; in (44b) and (44c) the head NP and the modifier are one constituent and only the prefix on the head NP can take the H tone which maps onto the focus reading and the IBV position.

So far in this section I have shown that the IBV focus position is available for argument focus including subject and object, adjunct focus as well as sub-NP focus on a modifier. In the next section I will look into how the IBV position is exploited beyond term focus, namely in predicate-centered focus.

## 3.2 Predicate(-centered) focus and IBV

### 3.2.1 VP focus and verb focus

In this section I refer to predicate focus as focus on the whole verb phrase. Predicate-centered focus (PCF), first defined in Güldemann (2003), indicates the focus on *part* of the predicate and can be further divided into state-of-affairs focus which is also referred to as verb focus, tense/aspect/mood (TAM) focus, and polarity focus/verum; the latter two are also referred to as operator focus.

As introduced in Section 2, VP focus in Kukuya is most commonly expressed via the canonical SVO word order. Example (45) is extracted from a written translation task done by the speakers in which they gave most answers to the VP questions in SVO word order. However, the IBV focus position can also be employed when answering a VP question, as shown in (46c). In elicitation the speakers usually cannot explain the interpretational differences between SVO and SOV when expressing VP focus, while there are in fact more pragmatic restrictions for the SOV word order to occur, as I will introduce shortly.

- (45) a. Huguette bu-kía        kí-má kâ-sá?  
           Huguette 14-tomorrow 7-what 1SM.FUT-do  
           'What will Huguette do tomorrow?'  
 b. Bu-kía,        ndé â-yé        kíe báa-ndúku.  
       14-tomorrow 1.PRO 1SM.FUT-go visit 2-friend  
       'Tomorrow she will go to visit friends.'
- (46) a. Taará kí-má ké káá-sí        ña ngwaalí?  
       1.father 7-what 7.PRO 1SM.PST-do.PST 16.LOC 9.morning  
       'What did father do in the morning?'  
 b. Ndé áá-dzwí        mi-féme.  
       1.PRO 1SM.PST-kill.PST 4-pig  
       'He killed some pigs.'  
 c. Ndé mí-féme káá-dzwí.  
       1.PRO 4-pig 1SM.PST-kill.PST  
       'He killed some pigs.'

The availability of SOV word order to express VP focus could be viewed as a counterargument for the IBV focus position, as in this case the focus is not only on the element immediate before the verb, but is on the whole predicate that contains the IBV element. I propose that we do not need to reject the hypothesis of IBV as a focus position but can revise the hypothesis to say that the IBV element should at least be part of the focus, and the IBV element as the *nucleus* of the focus set can project up to the whole verb phrase, which depends on the discourse context (Selkirk 1995: 555, Reinhart 2006, van der Wal 2009: 241).

An alternative question on the VP and its congruent answer can both be expressed by SOV as shown in (47). The yes-no question in (48a) focuses the whole VP and also uses SOV, here we see that SVO in (48b) and SOV in (48c) can both be felicitous additive responses to this question, which again shows that both SVO and SOV word order can signal focus on the whole VP.

- (47) a. We        má-sáání á-swaakí        wó bi-báa-wî  
       2SG.PRO 6-plate 2SG.PST-wash-PST or 8REL-2SM.PST-give.PST  
       we        áá-sî?  
       2SG.PRO 2SG.PST-do.PST  
       'Did you wash the plates or do your homework?'  
 b. Me        má-sáání á-n-swaak-í.  
       1SG.PRO 6-plates PST-1SG.SM-wash-PST  
       'I washed the plates.'

- (48) a. Ndé wúna bi-ko káá-swaak-í?  
 1.PRO only 8-clothes 1SM.PST-wash-PST  
 'Did he only wash the clothes?'  
 b. Ndé áá-búnum-i bii-ndomó hé.  
 1.PRO 1SM.PST-feed-PST 8-goat also  
 'He also fed the goats.'  
 c. Ndé bii-ndomó hé káá-búnum-i (hé).  
 1.PRO 8-goat also 1SM.PST-feed-PST also  
 'He also fed the goats.'

Verb focus, also known as state-of-affairs focus which locates focus on the lexical value of the verb, can be expressed in different ways in Kukuya. As mentioned in Section 2, SVO can be used to signal verb focus. The answer to a question like 'what did X do to Y?' can be used to diagnose verb focus expressions, in which the subject and the object are both topical since they are already given in the background and the focus is on the verb itself. Interestingly, we see in (49) and (50) that SVO and SOV can both signal verb focus, while OSV with the subject in IBV cannot be used as a felicitous answer.

- (49) a. Ngolo Marie kí-má káá-sí?  
 Ngolo Marie 7-what 1SM.PST-do.PST  
 'What did Ngolo do to Marie?'  
 b. Ngolo áá-pfur-í Marie.  
 Ngolo 1SM.PST-cheat-PST Marie  
 'Ngolo betrayed Marie.'  
 c. Ngolo Marie káá-pfur-í.  
 Ngolo Marie 1SM.PST-cheat-PST  
 'Ngolo betrayed Marie.'  
 d. # Marie Ngolo áá-pfur-í.  
 Marie Ngolo 1SM.PST-cheat-PST  
 int. 'Ngolo betrayed Marie.'
- (50) a. Ngúku baa-ntaba kí-má káá-sí?  
 1.mother 2-goat 7-what 1SM.PST-do.PST  
 'What did mother do to the goats?'  
 b. Ngúku áá-dzwí baa-ntaba.  
 1.mother 1SM.PST-kill.PST 2-goat  
 'Mother killed the goats.'

- c. Ngúku báa-ntaba káá-dzwí.  
1.mother 2-goat 1SM.PST-kill.PST  
'Mother killed the goats.'
- d. # Baa-ntaba ngúku áá-dzwí.  
2-goat 1.mother 1SM.PST-kill.PST  
int. 'Mother killed the goats.'

Here it is somehow problematic to explain why SOV is applicable to express verb focus; if we hypothesise the IBV to be a dedicated focus position from which the focus can project up to the whole VP, we still cannot account for why the focus on the IBV can be "transferred" to the verb. According to the focus projection hypothesis above, the object being placed in the IBV position is consistent with the whole VP being in focus, since the object is counted as within the scope of the VP focus. Here we may wonder whether the preposed objects in (49c) and (50c) indeed occupy the IBV position or they are just fronted as some topical elements. The most obvious evidence that they are placed in the IBV position rather than some higher positions lies in the H tone on the nominal prefix in (50c). I will present in Section 5.2 that this H tone marking only occurs when the preposed element is in IBV. So here we can confirm that SOV is indeed felicitous to express verb focus with the IBV position being occupied. In (49d) and (50d) we see that the answers become infelicitous when the subject is placed in IBV, this may be accounted for by an economy principle. Since verb focus here must involve something to be placed in the IBV position and both the subject and object in this question are topical, it may be easier to just place the object to the IBV position, rather than place the subject in the IBV while also topicalising the object.

Let us consider some more examples of verb focus. In the answers to the question in (51a), some other actions taken on the object 'pig' are introduced in addition to just 'washing' it, so the verb 'to kill' in (51b–51d) itself is focused. We see that (51b) is felicitous with SVO, while (51c) with SOV is infelicitous here with the additive particle *hé* and it only implies that the grandmother must have killed other animals beforehand, thus the focus can only be on the object rather than the verb. SOV in (51d) without the additive particle is felicitous to correctively focus the truth value of the verb, and in (51e) SOV with the additive particle is felicitous when the whole VP is focused as an additive action that is not related to the pig.

- (51) a. Nkaaká áá-swaak-i mu-féme?  
1.grandmother 1SM.PST-wash-PST 4-pig  
'Did grandmother wash the pig?'

- b. Ndé áá-dzwí hé mú-fème.  
1.PRO 1SM.PST-kill.PST also 4-pig  
'She also *killed* the pig.'
- c. # Ndé mú-fémé (hé) káá-dzwí (hé).  
1.PRO 4-pig also 1SM.PST-kill.PST also  
int. 'She also *killed* the pig.'  
'She also killed the *pig*.'
- d. Ndé mú-fémé káá-dzwí.  
1.PRO 4-pig 1SM.PST-kill.PST  
'She *killed* the pig.'
- e. Ndé báa-ntsúú hé káá-ká-i.  
1.PRO 2-chicken also 1SM.PST-grill-PST  
'She also *grilled* the *chicken*'.

The infelicity in (51c) above is unexpected given that we have already seen examples above in which the SOV word order can be used to express verb focus. I suggest that this infelicity is due to the presence of the additive particle *hé* which is always associated with the focal element in a sentence. This particle may disambiguate the nucleus of the focus from the domain to which it may project up, thus in (51c) it is more intuitive for the speakers to interpret the focus on the object only. In the absence of this additive particle, the SOV word order becomes a possible way of expressing verb focus as in (51d). We also see that in (51e) the presence of *hé* does not prevent the SOV word order from expressing VP focus, this may be explained by the fact that the whole VP in (51e) is new, so the VP focus reading can be rescued from the intervention of the additive particle, thus it can be an appropriate answer to (51a).

From above I have shown that when the IBV position is occupied by an object DP, it can be used to express VP focus and verb focus. Next I present another strategy for expressing predicate-centered focus, which also involves the use of the IBV focus position, namely the predicate doubling construction.

### 3.2.2 Predicate doubling

Predicate doubling was first documented by Meeussen (1967: 121) as the “advance verb construction” that can express polarity focus, intensity and concession. In many other Bantu languages, predicate doubling is a common strategy to express state-of-affairs focus and polarity focus on the verb, and is reported to be situated in different stages in the grammaticalisation path to the progressive and

future tense (Güldemann et al. 2010, 2014, Morimoto 2016). In some neighbouring languages of Teke, such as in the Kikongo group of Zone H and other Zone B languages, some of which also favour the IBV focus position, the predicate doubling construction is also well attested expressing verb focus and polarity focus, as well as progressive and future tense (Hadermann 1996, De Kind 2014, De Kind et al. 2015, Güldemann & Fiedler 2022). Some examples from these languages illustrate the phenomenon in (52–55) below.

- (52) Ku-tá:nga ndyeká-tá:nga.  
INF-read 1SG:FUT-read  
'I will read.' [Suundi H31b, Hadermann 1996: 161] (verb focus)
- (53) Mona mbwene N-kenda za zula ki-ame kina.  
INF.see 1SG.see.PERF 10-affliction 10.GEN 7.people 7-1SG.POSS 7.DEM  
'I have surely seen the affliction of that people of mine there.'  
[Ndibu H16, De Kind et al. 2015: 12] (polarity focus)
- (54) Ba-ka:sá bá-ná:, vágé bâ:vágé pénda.  
2-woman 2-DEM INF.cultivate 2-cultivate groundnut  
'These women, they are cultivating groundnuts.'  
[Nzebi B52, Hadermann 1996: 162] (progressive)
- (55) Vuumbuka yi-vuumbuka.  
INF-dress 1SG.SM-dress  
'I'll dress myself.' [Yaka H33, De Kind et al. 2015: 36] (future)

In this subsection I introduce the predicate doubling construction in Kukuya. In Kukuya, the predicate doubling construction is mainly attested as IBV doubling, while topic doubling is judged to be infelicitous and cleft doubling to be quite marginal (see the definition of these predicate doubling types in the introductory chapter of this volume). In (56), to exclusively focus the lexical value of a verb while excluding some alternatives, we see that SOV can be appropriately used in (56b) with the exclusive focus particle *wúna* preceding the preposed object, while to place the particle immediately in front of the verb in either SVO or SOV is judged to be ungrammatical as shown in (56c) and (56d). It seems that the exclusive particle can only modify nominal elements or a VP but not a bare verb. In (56e) we see that verb focus can also be expressed by placing an infinitive form of the verb immediately before the inflected verb.

- (56) a. Ngúku áá-télek-i bu-ká áá-dzí?  
1.mother 1SM.PST-prepare-PST 14-cassava 1SM.PST-eat.PST  
'Did mother prepare and eat the cassava?'

- b. Ndé wúna bu-ká káá-télek-i.  
1.PRO only 14-cassava 1SM.PST-prepare-PST  
'She only *prepared* the cassava.'
- c. ?? Ndé wúna áá-télek-i bu-ká.  
1.PRO only 1SM.PST-prepare-PST 14-cassava  
int. 'She only *prepared* the cassava.'
- d. \* Ndé bu-ká wúna káá-télek-i.  
1.PRO 14-cassava only 1SM.PST-prepare-PST  
int. 'She only *prepared* the cassava.'
- e. Ndé bu-ká wúna ki-téléké káá-télek-i.  
1.PRO 14-cassava only INF-prepare 1SM.PST-prepare-PST  
'She only *prepared* the cassava.'

One additional example of predicate doubling expressing verb focus in Kukuya is given in (57). There is an important interpretational difference between the use of SOV and predicate doubling in expressing verb focus: while (56b), (56e) and (57b) all express exclusive focus on the verb, (56b) with SOV indicates that the event is completed and the mother only prepared the cassava but does not need to go on making it, while (56e) and (57b) imply that the event is still continuing and there must be other things that need to be done with the cassava and the goats.

- (57) a. Maamá áá-dzwí baa-ntabá áá-ték-i.  
1.mother 1SM.PST-kill.PST 2-goat 1SM.PST-sell-PST  
'Mother killed the goats (and) sold (them).'
- b. Ambú, ndé bó wúna ki-téké káá-ték-i.  
no 1.PRO 2.PRO only INF-sell 1SM.PST-sell-PST  
'No, she only sold them.'

Polarity focus on the verb can be expressed neither by predicate doubling nor by SOV in Kukuya. In (58) and (59) we see that to correct a negative truth value on the verb, there is no other construction than the canonical SVO, and the speakers tend to put some intonational emphasis on the verb to express the polarity focus. SOV in (58c) and (59c) is infelicitous here, while it can actually express focus on the object or the VP or the lexical value of the verb. The predicate doubling in (58d) and (59d) is also infelicitous and implies that there are other actions that need to be done with the oranges, expressing verb focus. We see that both the SOV order and predicate doubling can trigger alternatives either on the object

or on the verb and imply a contrast with other actions or tasks that remain to be done.

- (58) a. Taará ka-káá-kí ma-láala ni?  
       1.father NEG-1SM.PST-pick.PST 6-orange NEG  
       'Did father not pick the oranges?'  
 b. Ndé áá-kí ma-láala.  
       1.PRO 1SM.PST-pick.PST 6-orange  
       'He *did* pick the oranges.'  
 c. # Ndé má-láálá káá-kí.  
       1.PRO 6-orange 1SM.PST-pick.PST  
       int. 'He *did* pick the oranges.'  
 d. # Ndé ma-láala kí-ká káá-kí.  
       1.PRO 6-orange INF-pick 1SM.PST-pick.PST  
       int. 'He *did* pick the oranges.'
- (59) a. Ndé ka-káá-bvúúr-í we mi-pará ni?  
       1.PRO NEG-1SM.PST-return-PST 2SG.PRO 4-money NEG  
       'Did s/he not return you the money?'  
 b. Ndé áá-bvúúr-i me mi-pará.  
       1.PRO 1SM.PST-return-PST 1SG.PRO 4-money  
       'S/He *did* return me the money.'  
 c. # Ndé me mí-para káá-bvúúr-i.  
       1.PRO 1SG.PRO 4-money 1SM.PST-return-PST  
       int. 'He *did* return me the money.'  
 d. # Ndé me mi-pará kí-bvúúr-á káá-bvúúr-i.  
       1.PRO 1SG.PRO 4-money INF-return 1SM.PST-return-PST  
       int. 'He *did* return me the money.'

The predicate doubling construction that expresses verb focus in Kukuya looks quite like the IBV focus construction that encodes narrow focus on the preposed DP, and predicate doubling in this case is just a particular realisation of the IBV focus, in which the predicate is doubled as an infinitive form and is focused in the IBV position. In this sense, the predicate doubling and the SOV/OSV word order are actually the same structure that places focus in the IBV position, which is also consistent with the fact that infinitives are also DPs in Kukuya and most other Bantu languages. If this is true, we may expect the fronted infinitive and

a preverbal question word to be in complementary distribution as they should compete for the unique IBV position, and this is borne out as the ungrammaticality in (60) and (61), which also shows that there is only one preverbal focus site in this language. In these examples the predicate doubling is intended to be used for expressing a *progressive* meaning, which I will introduce shortly.

- (60) \* Ndé kí-má kí-dzá kâ-dzá?  
 1.PRO 7-what INF-eat 1.SM.PRS-eat  
 int. ‘What is he/she eating?’
- (61) \* Ná kí-tsúka kâ-tsúka?  
 1.who INF-speak 1.SM.PRS-speak  
 int. ‘Who is talking?’

We have seen above that the IBV position is associated with argument and adjunct focus, as well as VP focus and verb focus. It is not clear here whether the infinitive in the predicate doubling construction should be viewed as an argument of the verb, if so, the predicate doubling is analogous to term focus on an argument DP. In fact, predicate doubling and term focus in the IBV position have some important interpretational similarities: predicate doubling usually implies the potential occurrence of other actions, while term focus in IBV also hints that some alternatives should be available for the proposition. I will discuss more on these interpretational properties in Section 3.4.

Similar to many other Bantu languages, predicate doubling in Kukuya can express progressive aspect. In examples (62) and (63) the fronted infinitive expresses a neutral progressive meaning without focusing on the verb itself. Verb focus and progressive reading are often said to have a close semantic and pragmatic relation and the progressive is considered to be an inherently focused verb category in which the “ongoing nature of the event described by the verb” constitutes the focus domain of the sentence (Hyman & Watters 1984, Güldemann 2003, De Kind 2014, De Kind et al. 2015). The predicate doubling with progressive reading is sometimes ambiguous and can only be distinguished from PCF through the pragmatic context. Example (62) can be a felicitous corrective response to focus on the progressive aspect expressing TAM focus, while predicate doubling in (63) is used outside the PCF context. In Kukuya there is a dedicated aspect marker *-kâ-* that can mark habitual as well as progressive aspect without the fronting of an infinitive verb, so the predicate doubling is not the only way of expressing progressive in Kukuya.

- (62) (Have they already eaten?)

Bó kí-dzá bá-kâ-dzá.  
2.PRO INF-eat 2SM-PROG-eat  
'They are eating.'

- (63) Mwáana wu-kái wu-kí-kwî ngúku á-yiká kí-líla

1.child 1-female 1REL-7SM-die.PST 1.mother 1SM-IMPF INF-cry  
kâ-líl-a.  
1SM.PROG-cry-FV

'The girl whose mother died is crying.'

In Kukuya grammar, the expression of immediate future tense also involves the SOV order, as in (64). The predicate doubling construction in Kukuya can also have the immediate future reading, as shown in (65).

- (64) Bó má-ko báa-fúum-a.

2.PRO 6-banana 2SM.FUT-buy-FV

'They'll buy some bananas.'

- (65) a. We ka-á-bvúúr-í ndé mi-pará ni?

2SG.PRO NEG-2SG.PST-return-PST 1.PRO 4-money NEG

'You did not return her the money?'

- b. Me mi-pará kí-bvúúrá kâ-n-bvúur-a.

1SG.PRO 4-money INF-return PRS-1SG.SM-return-FV

'I am (surely) going to return the money.'

The response in (65b) has a verum reading, meaning that the speaker will definitely return the money and does not imply that there are other things to be done with the object 'money', which differs from the interpretation in example (59d) above. The contrast between (59d) and (65b) is that, in (59d) the alternative could be 'borrow again' the money in addition to just returning it, while in (65b) the alternative is 'not to return' the money as opposed to returning it. We see that when predicate doubling has an immediate future reading, it can express polarity focus/verum, which may be due to the SOV word order grammaticalising to express certain tense, thus becoming pragmatically equal to the canonical word order; for the predicate doubling in other tenses, it cannot be used to express polarity focus/verum.

From the above presentation on the expressions of different types of predicate (-centered) focus, we see that in Kukuya VP focus (predicate focus) can be

expressed by SVO as well as SOV. The use of the IBV focus position to express VP focus can be explained by the focus projection account. Verb focus (state-of-affairs focus) can also be realised via SVO and SOV, while OSV cannot express verb focus. It remains to be investigated why the IBV focus position is also involved in expressing verb focus. The predicate doubling construction is used mostly to express verb focus and usually triggers alternatives to the verb, while polarity focus is commonly expressed by the canonical SVO word order.

### 3.3 IBV as a dedicated focus position

So far we have encountered and discussed many examples which suggest that the IBV position is always associated to some type of focus. In this subsection I will investigate some intrinsic properties of the IBV position. First I will provide more tests on whether the IBV position is really a dedicated focus position. Then I will discuss the interpretational differences between the IBV focus strategy and *in situ* focus that was introduced in the previous section, showing that the IBV position is reserved for expressing identificational focus, while the *in situ* focus strategy seems to be more frequently used to express assertive focus.

Many Bantu languages have been reported to have a dedicated focus position, most of which are the so-called immediate-after-verb (IAV) position that are commonly attested in languages such as Aghem (Watters 1979, Hyman & Polinsky 2010), Bemba (Costa & Kula 2008), Matengo (Yoneda 2011), Makhuwa (van der Wal 2009), and Zulu (Buell 2009). The immediate-before-verb (IBV) focus position is much more rarely attested only in some West-Coastal Bantu languages (WCB), which has already been described in detail for Mbuun (B87, Bostoen & Mundeke 2011, 2012), Nsong (B85, Koni Muluwa & Bostoen 2019) and in the Kikongo cluster (Hadermann 1996, De Kind 2014, De Kind et al. 2015). Here I provide some more evidence to show that the IBV in Kukuya is indeed a dedicated focus position.

At this moment, we consider first non-subject elements (the IBV and the canonical subject position will be disentangled later). We see that if some element is placed in the IBV position, it must be focal or at least within the scope of focus, while elements in other positions cannot be focal at the same time. This is illustrated in (66) and (67). In (66b) we see that a question word cannot co-occur with another element being placed in the IBV position, the ungrammaticality can only be explained by the focal status of the adverb in IBV and the generalisation that multiple foci are not allowed; (66c) is not a felicitous answer to (66a), as what is placed in the IBV position is a manner adverb but not the object which is the target of the question; (66c) can only be an appropriate answer to the question

'How did the person eat the cassava', which indicates that the adverb in the IBV must be focal. Similarly in (67), only (67b) can be a felicitous answer to (67a) while (67c) can only be the answer to the question that asks for the location. From these examples we see that if there are multiple preverbal elements (in an affirmative sentence), the IBV slot must be occupied by a focal element, while other elements in the sentence are prohibited to be focused.

- (66) a. Mbuurú kí-má káá-dzí tswáatswáá?  
           1.person 7-what 1SM.PST-eat.PST fast  
           'What did the person eat quickly?'  
 b. \*Mbuurú kí-má tswáatswáá káá-dzí?  
           1.person 7-what fast                 1SM.PST-eat.PST  
           int. 'What did the person eat quickly?'  
 c. # Mbuurú bu-ka tswáatswáá káá-dzí.  
           1.person 14-cassava fast                 1SM.PST-eat.PST  
           'The person ate the cassava *quickly*.'
- (67) a. We ná á-mún-i ku dzándu?  
           2SG.PRO who 2SG.PST-see-PST 17.LOC 5.market  
           'Who did you see at the market?'  
 b. Me Gilbert á-mún-i ku dzándu.  
           1SG.PRO Gilbert 1SG.PST-see-PST 17.LOC 5.market  
           'I saw Gilbert at the market.'  
 c. # Me Gilbert ku dzándu á-mún-i.  
           1SG.PRO Gilbert 17.LOC 5.market 1SG.PST-see-PST  
           'I saw Gilbert *at the marker*.'

Neither SOV nor OSV can be used to answer the question such as 'What happened' as in (68a) which requires a thetic answer in which the whole utterance provides the new information, thus no topic or focus is subdivided in the sentence (Kuroda 1972, Sasse 1987, 1996; also see Section 2.3). Here we see that only SVO in (68b) can be felicitous. The answers in (68c) and (68d) are both inappropriate here, as there must be some focal reading triggered by the IBV position being occupied, namely the object 'child' in (68c) and the subject 'father' in (68d), thus they are both incompatible with the thetic requirement.

- (68) a. Me a-n-yúk-i nkelé ku mbali, kí-má  
 1SG.PRO PST-1SG.SM-hear-FV 9.noise 17.LOC 9.outside 7-what  
 kí-sí?  
 7SM.PST-do.PST  
 'I heard some noise outside, what happened?'  
 b. Taará áá-béer-i mwáana.  
 1.father 1SM.PST-beat-PST 1.child  
 'Father beat the child.'  
 c. # Taará mwááná káá-béer-i.  
 1.father 1.child 1SM.PST-beat-PST  
 'Father beat the *child*.'  
 d. # Mwáána taará áá-béer-i.  
 1.child 1.father 1SM.PST-beat-PST  
 'Father beat the *child*'.

Idiom tests can also help to justify that the IBV position is indeed associated with focus function (van der Wal 2016, 2021). In idiom sentences, the idiomatic reading arises as a whole chunk and is thus considered to be non-compositional. We would predict that any part of an idiom sentence cannot be focused, since no expressions in an idiom refers to something that is accessible in the reality, thus no alternatives can be triggered for focus. Examples (69–71) illustrate several idioms in Kukuya, and all these idiom sentences surface as SVO, which is further evidence for SVO as the canonical order. Crucially, we find that when the word order is shifted to SOV, the sentence is still grammatical but the idiomatic reading is not retained, and the sentence can only have the literal meaning. These idiom tests show that the formation of SOV must have involved some discourse-related operations, namely the IBV element must be focal, as the translations indicate.

- (69) a. Ndé áá-tín-i ko li-búi.  
 1.PRO 1SM.PST-pick-PST 5.banana 5-immature  
 'S/He had a sexual relation with a child.'  
 lit.: 'S/He picked the unripe banana.'  
 b. Ndé ko li-búi káá-tín-i.  
 1.PRO 5.banana 5-immature 1SM.PST-pick-PST  
 \*\*'S/He had a sexual relation with a child.'  
 'S/He picked the unripe banana.'

- (70) a. Me a-n-dzwî ntaalí mu kíi.  
       1SG.PRO PST-1SG.SM-pick.PST 1.snake 18.LOC 7.pipe  
       'I have lost all.'  
       lit.: 'I killed a snake with a pipe.'
- b. Me ntaalí mu kíi n-dzwî.  
       1SG.PRO 1.snake 18.LOC 7.pipe PST-1SG.SM-pick.PST  
       \*'I have lost all.'  
       'I killed a snake with a *pipe*'.
- (71) a. Maa-nkala máá-dzí mbúlu.  
       6-charcoal 6SM.PST-eat.PST 9.blanket  
       'The problem becomes burning (rather than coldness when you use  
       too much charcoal).'  
       lit.: 'The coal is eating the blanket.'
- b. Maa-nkala mbúlu máá-dzí.  
       6-charcoal 9.blanket 6SM.PST-eat.PST  
       \*'The problem becomes burning (rather than coldness when you use  
       too much charcoal).'  
       'The coal is eating the *blanket*'.

So far we have seen that any non-subject constituent that is in IBV position must be interpreted as focused; now I provide examples to illustrate that it is also a dedicated focus position for a subject. Example (72) is partially repeated from (35) above, in which we see that the interrogative subject in (72a) seemingly occupies the same near position as the grammatical subject in canonical word order; however, from (72b) and (72c) we see that the focal and topical subjects are subject to different constraints on their linear position: the focal subject can only occur in the IBV position but cannot be followed by other elements in the preverbal domain as in (72b), while the topical subject can be followed by other DPs, such as by focused object in the IBV position in (72c). In other words, the focal subject has an IBV requirement while the topical subject does not, therefore they must stay in different structural positions. Similarly in (73), we see that the answer to a subject question must be adjacent to the verb as in (73a) and (73c), and another DP cannot intervene as in (73b).

- (72) a. Ná áá-ték-i mu-ngwa?  
       1.who 1SM.PST-sell-PST 3-salt  
       'Who sold the salt?'

- b. \* Ná   mú-ngwa káá-ték-i?  
 1.who 3-salt   1SM.PST-sell-PST  
 int. ‘Who sold the salt?’
- c. (What did the grandmother sell?)  
 Nkaaká           mú-ngwa káá-ték-i?  
 1.grandmother 3-salt   1SM.PST-sell-PST  
 ‘The grandmother sold some *salt*.’

(73) (Who brought the dog?)

- a. Taará   áá-yi-í               mvá.  
 1.father 1SM.PST-bring-PST 1.dog  
 ‘*Father* brought the dog.’
- b. # Taará   mvá   káá-yi-í.  
 1.father 1.dog 1SM.PST-bring-PST  
 int.‘*Father* brought the dog.’
- c. Mvá taará   áá-yi-í.  
 1.dog 1.father 1SM.PST-bring-PST  
 ‘*Father* brought the dog.’

In (74a) the subject precedes the negative marker on the verb, and the focus is on the polarity of the sentence rather than on the subject; while (74b) expresses constituent negation and the subject is somehow “inserted” between the negative marker and the verb, providing evidence that it must be situated in a different position than the subject in (74a). The interpretation in (74b) is that it is not ‘father’ but someone else that killed the leopard, so the focus is apparently on the subject. From the minimal pair in (74) the canonical subject position and the IBV can be distinguished: in (74a) the subject appears in the canonical subject position, while in (74b) the subject is placed in the IBV position. The position of the negative marker here may also support that the IBV position is indeed “immediate” before the verb, since when the IBV slot is empty as in (74a), the negative morpheme is always prefixed to the verb and prosodically phrased together with it.

- (74) a. Ngo   taará   ka-káá-dzwí               ni.  
 1.leopard 1.father NEG-1SM.PST-kill.PST NEG  
 ‘The leopard, father did *not* kill (it).’
- b. Ngo   ka   taará   áá-dzwí               ni.  
 1.leopard NEG 1.father 1SM.PST-kill.PST NEG  
 ‘The leopard was not killed by father (but by someone else).’

The analysis above has provided strong evidence on the presence of a dedicated focus position in Kukuya, i.e. everything that is in this position is focused, and this position is located immediately left-adjacent to the verb. I have also shown that the subject is focused in the IBV position which is distinct from its canonical preverbal position. When this IBV position is filled, the sentence must have undergone some discourse-related operations for information packaging, in most cases some argument or adjunct gets focused. Recall that in Section 2 we have seen that an element such as a postverbal object can also be focused in its canonical postverbal position, next I will discuss the distinction between IBV focus and non-IBV *in situ* focus with regard to their interpretation.

### 3.4 Interpretational properties of IBV focus

In the introduction on the expressions of term focus, we have already noticed that in some examples the IBV focus strategy is preferred over the *in situ* focus strategy: in the answer to an alternative question; in a contrastive focus expression; in the predicate doubling construction; and in most of the SOV sentences with a clear context in which some overt alternatives are available for the focused element. In this subsection I show more details on the interpretational distinction between IBV focus and the non-IBV focus strategies, arguing that the IBV position is usually, if not in all cases, used to express identificational focus. Here I refer to identificational focus as a focus type that identifies a referent in an existential presupposition; for example, in the English sentence ‘What I like is sunshine’, where the presupposition is that there is something that I like and this something is identified as sunshine. The concept of identificational focus is also used as a hypernym of contrastive and exhaustive foci.

I begin with comparing a minimal sentence pair that only differs in the order of the constituents. Both the sentences in (75a) and (75b) can be felicitous answers to the question ‘what did father eat?’, while they differ in interpretation as shown in the contexts. Example (75a) with SOV word order is used to identify exactly what father ate; while (75b) with SVO word order is used just to provide some new information. For example (75a) the speakers clearly told me that there must be some alternatives invoked in mind and you want to identify what exactly the correct answer is.

- (75) a. (Context: there were many dishes and in fact father ate only some fish, and you may suspect him to have eaten something else.)  
Taará báa-ntsúí káá-dzí.  
1.father 2-fish 1SM.PST-eat.PST  
‘The father ate some *fish*.’

- b. (Context: there were some fish and the father ate them all, and you just wanted to know what father ate.)

Taará áá-dzí baa-ntsúi.

1.father 1SM.PST-eat.PST 2-fish

'The father ate some *fish*'

The same distinction is attested in (76), which is a sentence extracted from a written task done by two speakers. One speaker was asked to write a letter in Kukuya to another speaker, and at the beginning of the letter after some greetings, the speaker asked the other if he saw me, using the SVO sentence in (76a). When I asked them if this sentence can be replaced by SOV as (76b), both of them judged it as infelicitous, saying that (76b) is used only when the speaker thought the other had seen someone and wanted to know who exactly he saw. From this minimal pair we see again that SOV is used for identification and SVO simply provides new information.

- (76) (At the beginning of a letter: 'How are you? Did you see Zhen yesterday?'...)

- a. We á-mún-i Zhen?  
 2SG.PRO 2SG.PST-see-PST Zhen  
 'Did you see Zhen?'
- b. # We Zhen á-mún-i?  
 2SG.PRO Zhen 2SG.PST-see-PST  
 'Did you see Zhen?'

Example (77a) is used when someone is asking about your profession. Here an identificational reading can also be deduced, since a person's career is usually the regular and unique activity that s/he is involved, and (77a) implies that the speaker lives by only selling goats but not other animals; (77b) is used in case where the speaker has a farm and s/he is just telling the others what s/he sells, in which the goats are not necessarily the only animal that the speaker sells.

- (77) a. Me báa-ntabá kâ-n-téke.  
 1SG.PRO 2-goat PRS-1SG.SM-sell  
 'I sell goats.'
- b. Me kâ-n-téké báa-ntabá.  
 1SG.PRO PRS-1SG.SM-sell 2-goat  
 'I sell goats.'

The sentences in (78) intend to express focus on the subject and are both felicitous as answers to a subject question. While (78a) is used when ‘you see that child crying and you want to know whether the father or the mother beat the child’, (78b) according to the speakers can also mean ‘it is father but not someone else that beat the child’, here it seems that both subjects here may have been placed in the same IBV position.

- (78) a. (Context: you see that child crying and you want to know whether the father or the mother beat the child.)  
Mwáana taará áá-béer-i.  
1.child 1.father 1SM.PST-beat-PST  
'The child is beaten by *Father*.'  
b. (Context: it is father but not someone else that beat the child.)  
Taará áá-béer-i mwáana.  
1.father 1SM.PST-beat-PST 1.child  
'Father beat the child.'

The sentences in (79) are examples of the construction that functions as an equivalent of the passive in Kukuya, which I will introduce in the next section. (79a) is used in the context where you discovered the theft and were worrying about your things to have been all stolen, after checking you found that only the necklace was missing, while (79b) is used when simply telling a truth that the thieves had come and a necklace was stolen.

- (79) a. Mú-dzirá báá-túr-i.  
3-necklace 2SM.PST-steal-PST  
'The necklace was stolen.'  
b. Báá-túr-i mu-dzirá.  
2SM.PST-steal-PST 3-necklace  
'They stole the necklace. (The necklace was stolen)'

Some more evidence comes from the interpretation on the word *mbuurú* ‘person’ in different positions, which is inspired by the same test used for diagnosing exclusive focus in van der Wal (2016). In Kukuya, the expression *mbuurú* can have the reading ‘person’ or ‘someone/anyone’, which depends on the context. In (80a) when *mbuurú* is placed in the IBV position, it can only have a generic reading as ‘human-being’ that contrasts with an animal; while in (80b) *mbuurú* can have either the reading ‘someone’ or ‘person’. The generic reading in (80a) is consistent with the hypothesis we make here on the IBV position being an identificational focus position (van der Wal 2016, 2021). The reading of ‘someone’ is indefinite

so is never identifiable, while the reading ‘person’ can only be identified when contrasted with ‘non-person’, namely the animals.

- (80) a. Ngo      **mbuurú** káá-dzí.  
       1.leopard 1.person 1SM.PST-eat.PST  
       ‘The leopard ate a *person* (not an animal).’
- b. Ngo      áá-dzí      **mbuurú**.  
       1.leopard 1SM.PST-eat.PST 1.person  
       ‘The leopard ate someone/the person/a person.’

The generic reading is also attested in OSV as in (81) that expresses focus on the subject. Example (81) is used when you saw a dead leopard and you were wondering how the leopard died until you found an arrow on its body which indicated that it was killed by a human. Notice here that the ‘person’ reading, though it can be definitely referring to a given person, can only show the contrast between ‘this person’ and ‘that person’ when demonstrative modifiers are present, thus in (80a) above and (81) the *mbuurú* in the IBV position cannot express contrast between different ‘persons’ but can only have the generic reading.

- (81) (Context: you saw a dead leopard and you were wondering how the leopard died until you found an arrow on its body.)  
       Ngo      **mbuurú** áá-dzwî.  
       1.leopard 1.person 1SM.PST-kill.PST  
       ‘The leopard was killed by a *person*.’

Another crucial piece of evidence supporting the IBV position as an identificational focus site lies in the negation strategy on the focal elements. In examples (82) and (83) we see that to negate the element in the IBV position, the often omitted copula can somehow “show up” with the negative marker and precede the IBV item. Example (82) means that the gecko was not eaten by the dog but by some other animals, and the negation targets only the subject (dog) and does not negate the action/sentence. Example (83) means that father bought some other things instead of the bed. Given that the copula has an identifying function, its being placed immediately before the IBV focused element suggests that the IBV element is identificationally focused. The possible presence of the copula can also provide evidence on the origin and the nature of the IBV position, namely its connection with the cleft construction that is dedicated for identification and specification, which will be discussed in Section 5.2.

- (82) Ngwangúlu ka-kí-li      **mvá** áá-dzí      ni.  
       1.gecko      NEG-7SM-COP 1.dog 1SM.PST-eat.PST NEG  
       ‘The gecko was not eaten by the *dog*’

- (83) Taará ka(-kí-li)      ntáli káá-sí      me      ni.  
       1.father NEG-7SM-COP 9.bed 1SM.PST-make.PST 1SG.PRO NEG  
       'Father did not make a *bed* for me.'

Although there is much evidence on the identificational nature of the IBV position, this position is not necessarily a dedicated exclusive focus position, from which we may see the difference between identificational and exclusive focus in this language. If the IBV position is used to express exclusive focus, we expect that an element modified by the strong quantifiers 'every/each' and 'all' should be incompatible with the IBV position, since a DP modified by these quantifiers is not exclusive (É. Kiss 1998, van der Wal 2009, 2011, 2016). However, an *every*-phrase can occur in the IBV position as shown in (84a), and to specify a set of alternatives such as 'every chicken' to contrast with 'every fish' in this example is possible but is judged to be unnecessary according to the speakers. The context of (84a) can be either 'there were several species of fish and you tasted each' or 'there were many dishes and you only tasted each fish but not other meat'. In (84b) we see that a DP modified by the universal quantifier 'all' is also compatible with the IBV position, and here again to explicitly specify the alternatives such as 'all the cakes' to show a contrast is possible but not necessary.

- (84) a. Me      ná      ntsúi á-n-dziin-i.  
       1SG.PRO every 1.fish PST-1SG.SM-taste-PST  
       'I tasted each fish.'  
       b. Me      báa-ntsúi bwé á-n-dziin-i.  
       1SG.PRO 2-fish      2.all PST-1SG.SM-taste-PST  
       'I tasted all the fish.'

In (85) we see that a DP modified by a scalar additive particle 'even' that does not exclude the alternatives can occur at IBV. In (86) the reply to an incomplete question with the additive particle 'also' can surface in the SOV word order, which again indicates that the IBV position is not necessarily an exclusive focus position.

- (85) (Context: there is a lazy boy who never did any housework but today he has washed many things, the clothes, the curtains, the plates, and...)  
       Ndé ntswê ki-tséké kíí      me      káá-swaak-í.  
       1.PRO even 7-hat      7.CONN 1SG.PRO 1SM.PST-wash-PST  
       'He even washed my hat.'

- (86) (Did Gilbert wash the clothes?)

Ndé bí-ko káá-swaak-í, ndé hé má-saaní káá-swaak-í.  
 1.PRO 8-clothes 1SM.PST-wash-PST 1.PRO also 6-plate 1SM.PST-wash-PST  
 'He washed the clothes, and he also washed the plates.'

There are also some counterarguments against the IBV position as being an identificational focus site. The first puzzle that remains to be explained is what we have already seen above: since the question words show the strongest tendency to be placed in the IBV position and if this preference is related to the identificational nature for most content questions, it is unexpected that SOV and SVO are both acceptable as the answer, if only the IBV position is employed for identificational focus.

Moreover, if the IBV position is identificational in nature which must have a presupposition of existence, a question with the IBV interrogative phrase cannot have an empty set answer, since the existence of a possible candidate is contained in the presupposition. In (87) we see that the content question can be answered by 'nobody', which indicates that there is no presupposition in the question, thus it is not necessarily identificational focus.

- (87) a. We ná á-mún-i ku mu-súru?  
           2SG.PRO 1.who 2SG.PST-see-PST 17.LOC 3-forest  
           'Who did you see the the forest?'  
 b. Mbuurú ni.  
       1.person NEG  
       'Nobody.'

For these counterarguments against the IBV to be an identificational focus position, I will leave them open for now. The assumption is that, at an earlier stage the IBV position was indeed innovated for the sake of expressing identificational focus, which can be deduced from its possible origin from a cleft construction that I will discuss in Section 5.2, but synchronically not all the uses of IBV position in all contexts are necessarily identificational, and in fact the IBV position has been observed to be in a further grammaticalisation process to become pragmatically neutral.

In this section I have introduced some syntactic and interpretational properties of the IBV focus position in Kukuya. I argued that the IBV position is a dedicated focus position which is structurally different from the canonical subject in the SVO order. I have shown that the IBV focus position is available for argument focus including subject and object, adjunct focus, sub-NP focus on a modifier as

well as various types of predicate-centered focus such as VP focus and verb focus. The element that is placed in the IBV position can be an argument NP, an adjunct PP, or an infinitive verb in the predicate doubling construction. While focus can also be expressed postverbally for non-subject constituents, IBV focus tend to have an identificational reading but in some contexts it becomes pragmatically neutral. After investigating focus expressions in this language, in the next section I introduce topic expressions.

## 4 Topical elements in the preverbal domain

In Bantu languages and in general cross-linguistically, topical elements show the general tendency to occur in the left periphery or the preverbal domain of the sentence (Gundel 1988, Henderson 2006, van der Wal 2009, 2015, Kerr et al. 2023). Likewise, the topical elements in Kukuya also tend to occur in the preverbal domain. In this section I will first introduce that in Kukuya there are multiple types of topical elements and they all tend to co-occur in the preverbal domain. As illustrated above, there is a dedicated IBV focus position in this language, and in fact this IBV position can also interact with topical expressions. We will see in this section that in many sentences in which the IBV focus slot is occupied, all other non-focal elements tend to occur in the left periphery preceding the IBV slot, leaving the verb to the right boundary of the clause. Then I will present two specific constructions that can function as the equivalent of a passive, namely the OSV and the impersonal *ba-* constructions, which can functionally compensate the absence of morphological passive marking in this language.

### 4.1 Multiple topics in the preverbal domain

I will start by classifying different types of topical elements in this language. According to different syntactic and interpretational properties, at least four types of topical elements can be distinguished, which are the topical subject, the topical object, the scene-setting topic, and the secondary topic, which all precede the IBV position. Though in this section I will not investigate in detail the structural positions that these preverbal elements may occupy, their syntactic properties that are relevant to the discussion will also be mentioned. Next I present these elements one by one.

#### 4.1.1 Topical subject

First I will investigate how the topical subject in Kukuya behaves in terms of both syntactic and information structural status. I will show that a topical subject in Kukuya can occur in various preverbal positions, while its interpretational characteristics can differ. It should be noted that the available positions for a topical subject that I mention are not necessarily different structural positions but different linear positions *relative to* other preverbal elements.

The first possible position that a topical subject can occur in is the initial position of a sentence, for example the topical subject in the SVO or SOV word order. Some examples are given in (88): in (88a) the subject is topical while the focus is on the VP, and the pronominal subject in the congruent answer (88b) is also topical since it is given and is what the predicate is about.

- (88) a. Nkaaká            kí-má  káá-sí?  
           1.grandmother 7-what 1SM.PST-do.PST  
           'What did grandmother do?'  
       b. Ndé  áá-tól-i            ma-buokó  ma-kí-ték-e.  
           1.PRO 1SM.PST-collect-PST 6-mushroom 6REL-7SM-sell-FV  
           'She collected mushrooms to sell.'

A topical subject that occurs in the sentence-initial position can often be followed by multiple other topical elements, in which case the IBV focus position cannot be empty but is always filled by a focal element. The other in-between topical elements in the preverbal domain are usually the objects of the verb. I will introduce the latter type in detail as "secondary topic" in Section 4.1.3. In example (89) we see that the subject *nkaaká* 'grandmother', which controls the class 1 subject marking on the verb, is followed by the object of the verb *buká* 'cassava' and the interrogative word in the IBV position. In (90) and (91) two answers are illustrated in which the object and the adjunct are focused in IBV, and again the subject occurs in the sentence-initial position with another topical object sandwiched between the subject and the IBV element.

- (89) Nkaaká            bu-ka            ná  ndé  káá-bí-í            kí-wâ?  
           1.grandmother 14-cassava who 1.PRO 1SM.PST-refuse-PST INF-give  
           'To whom didn't the grandma give the cassava?'  
       (90) (Did the grandma give the beans to the *cats*?)  
           Ambú, ndé  ma-désu báá-mvá káá-wí.  
           no      1.PRO 6-bean 2-dog     1SM.PST-give.PST  
           'No, she gave the beans to the dogs.'

- (91) (How did father go to Djambala?)  
Ndé Dzambála mu miilí káá-yení.  
1.PRO Djambala 18.LOC 4.leg 1SM.PST-go.PST  
'He went to Djambala on foot.'

A difference between these two kinds of sentence-initial subjects with regard to whether they are followed by other topical elements is that, when the grammatical subject is the sole argument in the preverbal domain, it can be indefinite; when the subject is followed by other preverbal elements, namely in a SXXV construction, it cannot be indefinite. In (92) the indefinite and non-specific reading can be deduced from the given context; in (93) the subject is modified by a strong quantifier 'every'. Since an indefinite non-specific element or a subject NP modified by strong quantifiers such as 'all' and 'every/each' cannot be dislocated nor a discourse topic (Rizzi 1986, Zerbian 2006, Zeller 2008, van der Wal 2009), these examples suggest that there is at least one non-dislocated subject position in the preverbal domain. In example (94) we see that in the SOV word order where the object gets focused in IBV, the subject can also be indefinite according to the context.

- (92) (Context: you returned home and found some footprints on the floor, you say to your roommate:)  
Mbuurú (nguumó) áá-yení.  
1.person 1.one 1SM.PST-come.PST  
'Someone came.'
- (93) (Context: the headmaster came to the class and distributed the candies to each of the children.)  
Ná mwáana áá-bák-i ba-bonbon.  
every 1.child 1SM.PST-get-PST 2-candy  
'Every child got candies.'
- (94) (Context: you returned home and found things are in disorder, after checking what was missing you realised that the money was stolen:)  
Mbuurú mí-pará káá-túr-i.  
1.person 4-money 1SM.PST-steal-PST  
'Someone stole the *money*'

When the initial subject is followed by other topical objects, the subject cannot be indefinite and non-specific. In examples (95) and (96), we find that while the NPs *mbuurú* and *kilóko* can have both the indefinite and definite reading which

depends on the context, they can only have the definite reading when followed by other topical elements. In other words, the initial subject must be topical if followed by other topical elements in the preverbal domain. According to most speakers it is infelicitous to place the modifier *nguumó* ‘one’ with the initial subject in the presence of other preverbal topical elements, as shown in (96a); the sentence can only become appropriate if the subject is the only preverbal element as in (96b). However, there is some intra-speaker variation on the judgement of (96a); it can be felicitous according to some speakers in the context of contrast on the direct object.

- (95) Ki-lóko mwáana **mú-tswê** kíí-bólik-i.  
 7-thing 1.child 3-head 7SM.PST-hurt-PST  
 ‘The thing in question hurt the child’s *head*.’

- (96) a. % **Mbuurú nguumó** baa-ntsúú má-désu káá-búnum-i.  
 1.person 1.one 2-chicken 6-bean 1SM.PST-feed-PST  
 ‘The person/Someone fed the chicken the *beans*.’
- b. **Mbuurú nguumó** áá-búnum-i baa-ntsúú ma-désu.  
 1.person 1.one 1SM.PST-feed-PST 2-chicken 6-bean  
 ‘One person fed the chicken the *beans*.’

A topical subject can also occur in a non-initial position preceded by another topical element which also seems to be the subject of the sentence. In example (97) and (98) the sentence can be ambiguous whether it is actually about the ‘father’ and the ‘child’ or the ‘hoe’ and the ‘lamp’, respectively. The initial elements in both sentences are obviously the possessor or at least the user of the syntactic subjects that control subject marking on the verb, which looks like the “possessor-raising” construction as in (99). In a similar construction in (100), the initial element ‘child’ is not necessarily the possessor of the syntactic subject ‘festival’ but should be an ‘experiencer’, and the sentence is indeed about the ‘child’ rather than the ‘festival’ since the Q-A pair targets the information on the ‘feeling’ of the ‘child’.

- (97) Taará téme ku-ní líi-dzinim-i?  
 1.father 5.hoe 17-which 5SM.PST-disappear-PST  
 ‘Where did father lose the hoe?’ (lit.: ‘As for father, where did (his) hoe disappear?’)

- (98) Mwáana múnda wu-kí-fúúm-í maamá ku dzándu  
1.child 3.lamp 3REL-7SM-buy-PST 1.mother 17.LOC 5.market  
áá-dzínim-i.  
3SM.PST-disappear-PST

‘The child lost the lamp that mother bought at the market.’ (lit.: ‘As for the child, the lamp that mother bought at the market disappeared.’)

- (99) Mu-kokó áá-tsilik-í njíbi mu-lieme.

1-king 1SM.PST-cut-PST 1.thief 3-finger

‘The king cut the thief the/his finger.’

- (100) a. Mwáana ki-yinga bu-ní kí-wir-i?

1.child 7-festival 14-which 7SM.PST-pass-PST

‘The child, how did the festival pass (for him/her)?’

- b. Ndé ki-yinga kí-bvé kí-wir-i.

1.PRO 7-festival 7-good 7SM.PST-pass-PST

‘(For) him/her, the festival passed well.’

These examples are reminiscent of the “double subject construction” as is attested in Chinese and Japanese, but from these examples we can observe that the initial element is clearly not an argument of the verb, so it cannot be the grammatical subject, but should be analysed as a “scene-setting” topic, which is the second type of preverbal topical element that I would like to introduce next.

#### 4.1.2 Scene-setting topic

A scene-setting topic usually sets the “spatial, temporal or individual framework” of the rest of the sentence (Chafe 1976, Li & Thompson 1976). Some examples of scene-setting topics in Kukuya are given in (101–103). In (101) the sentence-initial topic is a DP which is co-referential to the pronominal subject in the pseudo-cleft construction that follows; in (102) and (103) the scene-setting topics are adverbial phrases. What distinguishes the scene-setting topics from topical subjects or objects besides their semantic function is that a scene-setting element never functions as an argument of the verb, thus is not originated from the rest of the sentence (Lambrecht 1994), it occurs only for the sake of limiting the frame of the proposition or semantically relate the event described by the core sentence to an “external topic”. In addition, there is a further division on the relation of the scene-setting elements and the rest of the sentence in examples (100–103). In (100) and (101), the initial element is what the sentence is “about” as the whole

sentence is telling something on the ‘child’ and the ‘woman’; while in (102) and (103) the locative and temporal phrases only set the background or the scene of the sentence and the aboutness topic expression is the 1st person pronoun.

- (101) Mu-kái wu-ká-búr-í ndé mú-kái wó balaka?  
       1-woman 1REL-1SM.PST-give.birth-PST 1.PRO 1-female or 1.male  
       ‘The woman, whom she gave birth to was a girl or a boy?’

- (102) Mu mu-súru, me á-mún-i ba-kái bá-kâ-tólo  
       18.LOC 3-forest 1SG.PRO PST-1SG.see-PST 2-women 2SM-PROG-cut  
       nkwî.  
       9.firewood  
       ‘In the forest, I saw women cutting the firewood.’

- (103) Mvúla wú-yá me á-m-fúúm-á báa-ntaba nkáma.  
       3.year 3REL-come 1SG.PRO FUT-1SG.SM-buy-FV 2-goat hundred  
       ‘Next year I will buy a hundred goats.’

#### 4.1.3 Secondary topic

The third type of topical element is what I label as “secondary topic”. Crosslinguistically, an utterance can contain more than one topic under discussion simultaneously, which is often attested in the predicate-focus structure as shown in (104). In (104a) the question is on some relation between mother and the goats, and the answer in (104b) adds information to both the mother and the goats, thus here the two arguments should be both counted as topics. The question now is how to determine primary and secondary topichood.

- (104) a. Ngúku baa-ntaba kí-má káá-sí?  
       1.mother 2-goat 7-what 1SM.PST-do.PST  
       ‘What did mother do to the goats?’  
       b. Ngúku áá-dzwí baa-ntaba.  
       1.mother 1SM.PST-kill.PST 2-goat  
       ‘Mother killed the goats.’

In Nikolaeva (2001), a secondary topic is defined as “an entity such that the utterance is construed to be about the *relationship* between it and the primary topic”. The primary topic is considered to be more pragmatically salient and is closely associated with the subject function (Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011); as the secondary topic would often be realised as the object of the verb, which corresponds to some assumption that in historical terms, objects are grammaticalised

secondary topics (Givón 1984, 1990, 2001). In Vallduví's (1992) approach, the old information in the utterance can be further split into informationally more and less prominent material, namely the “link” and “tail” which correspond to the primary and secondary topic we discuss here. While the “link” is what the new information is anchored to, the “tail” entails the presence of the “link” and implies that some update is to be carried out to complete the information on the relation between it and the “link”. In other words, the primary and secondary topics stand in a certain presupposed relation: the secondary topic presupposes the existence of the primary topic, and the proposition is to add new knowledge to some relation between the primary and the secondary topics (Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011). In the above example (104), the primary topic is the ‘mother’ and the secondary topic is the ‘goats’, since the question is on what actions are done on the goats, thus the topic ‘goats’ as the patient entails the presence of the ‘mother’ as the agent.

In particular in the Kukuya language, I propose that the distinction on primary and secondary topics is grammatically encoded via word order: if there are more than one topical elements in the preverbal domain, only the primary topic can be placed sentence-initially (excluding the scene-setting topics), while the secondary topic should be non-initial. There are three informational types that involve secondary topic in Kukuya: the first type is as in example (104) in which the focus extends over the transitive predicate only, namely the verb focus expression where both arguments of the verb are given; the second type is the possessive secondary topic as in example (97) above, in which the two preverbal topics are in a possessive relation and the possessor functions as the primary topic, while the possesum is the secondary topic and the syntactic subject (Nikolaeva 2001); a similar example is given in (105).

- (105) Ngúku   ndzulí ku-ní    áá-dzinim-i?  
1.mother 1.cat   17-which 1SM.PST-disappear-PST  
‘Where did mother lose the cat?’ (lit: ‘As for mother, where did (her) cat disappear?’)

The third type of secondary topic is attested in adjunct or argument focus constructions. In example (106) and (107), when the locative interrogative word is focused in the IBV position, the object which is given in the context occurs between the initial subject and the IBV focused element, resulting in two topical elements in the preverbal domain. In (106b) the assertion updates the addressee's knowledge on the relation between uncle and the rice by adding information that it was yesterday that uncle ate the rice; here the ‘uncle’ functions as the primary topic and ‘rice’ as secondary topic. Similarly in (107), there are two preverbal

secondary topics ‘falling’ and ‘plates’ which are the two objects of the ditransitive verb ‘to launch’. The word order pattern in (106) and (107) is very commonly attested in the formulation of question-answer pairs in Kukuya.

- (106) a. Mu-pfúru **lóoso** munkí káá-dzí?  
 1-uncle 5.rice when 1SM.PST-eat.PST  
 ‘When did uncle eat the rice?’
- b. Ndé **lóoso** má-tsíká káá-dzí.  
 1.PRO 5.rice 6-yesterday 1SM.PST-eat.PST  
 ‘He ate the rice *yesterday*.’
- (107) Taará **ma-sáani bví** ku-ní káá-tí?  
 1.father 6-plate 9.falling 17-which 1SM.PST-launch-PST  
 ‘Where did father throw the plates?’

In (108) and (109) the division between primary and secondary topic is seen in the context of argument focus. In (108) the recipient object of the ditransitive verb is focused in IBV, and the topical theme object is placed in the preverbal domain as the secondary topic; in (109) it is the subject that gets focused in IBV, and both objects of the verb ‘to give’ are placed preverbally, in this case the theme ‘oranges’ is the secondary topic.

- (108) (Did the grandfather give the food to the *dogs*?)  
 Ambú, ndé **bvi-kídzá** báa-ndzulí káá-wí.  
 no 1.PRO 8-food 2-cat 1SM.PST-give.PST  
 ‘No, he gave the food to the *cats*.’
- (109) (‘Who gave the child the oranges?’)  
 Mwáana ma-láara **bí-búru** bii-wí.  
 1.child 6-orange 8-parent 8SM.PST-give.PST  
 ‘The child was given the oranges by the *parents*.’

In the above examples, it is interesting to see that the exploitation of IBV focus is usually accompanied by the “fronting” of other topical elements to the preverbal domain, while it is grammatical that the topical objects and adjuncts remain in their base positions, i.e. postverbally. The exact trigger of this topic fronting, whether syntactic or pragmatic, is left for further research. Here I propose that the Kukuya language can grammatically distinguish the primary and secondary topic by word order: the sentence-initial (excluding the scene-setting) topic is always primary while the non-initial one is secondary. Since the primary topic

usually sets the most important framework and aboutness of the main predication, while a secondary topic is less important and continuous in terms of referential accessibility and thematic importance (Givón 1990, Nikolaeva 2001, Croft 1991, Tsao 1987, Shi 2000), it is necessary that the primary topic scopes over the secondary topic, so the former is placed in the initial position.

The secondary topic must have a definite reading. In (110) we see that it is infelicitous to have an indefinite object ‘someone/one person’ occur in the preverbal domain and function as a secondary topic; in (111) the preposed object *kilóko* ‘thing’ can only be interpreted as some particular thing that has been mentioned before but cannot be indefinite non-specific, as can be deduced from the context.

- (110) ?? (Context: you are traveling in a very quiet small town and you did not see anyone on the street. Your friend said she saw a person’s figure on the way and you ask her:)

We      **mbuurú** **nguumó** ku-ní      áá-mún-i?  
2SG.PRO 1.person 1.one      17-which 2SG.PST-see-PST  
int. ‘Where did you see someone/one person?’

- (111) (Context: you have a precious gift in your home. One day you found a theft but fortunately the precious thing was not stolen.)

**míibi**    **ki-lóko** ka-káá-túr-i               ni.  
1.thief 7-thing NEG-1SM.PST-steal-PST NEG  
‘The thief did not steal the thing/\*anything.’  
\*“The thief stole nothing.”

In example (112) some sentences with minimal difference on the position of the object *mbuurú* ‘person’ are illustrated. For (112a) and (112b), as implied from the context, the preposed object can only be interpreted as definite: (112a) and (112b) have the same interpretation and can both be appropriately used in the context of (a) but neither can be used in the context of (b), which shows neither sentence can have the reading of ‘I saw nobody’; in (112c) the object is placed in the IBV position and can only have a generic reading as ‘human-being’; while in (112d) the object in its canonical postverbal position can have the indefinite reading and functions as a negative polarity item (NPI), or a definite reading can also arise according to the context.

- (112) a. (Context: your uncle asked you to call a certain person sitting under a tree nearby to come. You went but did not find the person. You returned and said to the uncle:)

**Mbuurú** me      ka-á-mún-i               ni.  
1.person 1SG.PRO NEG-PST-1SG.see-PST NEG  
‘I did not see the person/\*anyone.’

- b. (#Context: your mum and you are entering a dark hall. You are walking in front and your mum asked you from behind if you saw anyone in the hall.)  
 Me      mbuurú ka-á-mún-i                ni.  
 1SG.PRO 1.person NEG-PST-1SG.see-PST NEG  
 'I did not see the person/\*anyone.'
- c. (Context: you saw a 'monster' in the forest; you did not know what animal it was, and after coming back someone asked you if you see anybody in the forest.)  
 Me      ka    mbuurú á-mún-i                ni.  
 1SG.PRO NEG 1.person PST-1SG.see-PST NEG  
 'I did not see a person/\*anyone.'
- d. (felicitous in the context of both (a) and (b))  
 Me      ka-á-mún-i                mbuurú ni.  
 1SG.PRO NEG-PST-1SG.see-PST 1.person NEG  
 'I did not see anyone/the person.'

In this subsection I have shown that there can be multiple preverbal topical elements, which can be further divided into primary topics which include sentence-initial topical subject (also object, see next section) and scene-setting topics, and secondary topics which are usually objects of the verb. The interpretation on these topics with regard to definiteness and specificity may depend to a large extent on their relative position in the preverbal domain. An initial subject, if it is not the sole preverbal argument, and a secondary topic must be definite. There are still some further questions that need to be investigated, such as potential restrictions on the order of the preverbal elements, and the connection between IBV focus and topic fronting.

As mentioned at the beginning of the section, there is a fourth type of topical element in Kukuya, which is the topicalised object that occurs in the initial position of the sentence. The sentence-initial object is usually attested in an OSV word order as in (113) and an impersonal *ba*-construction as in (114), which can serve as functional *passives* in this language. In the next section I will introduce in detail these two functional passive constructions.

- (113) **Bii-ndomó kíi-mbúlí kí-dzí.**  
 8-sheep    7-lion    7SM.PST-eat.PST  
 'The sheep were eaten by the lion.' (lit.: 'The sheep, the lion ate them.')

- (114) Mu-tí mu      máa-ŋgúlu áli      báa-tsílik-i      mbvúlá  
3-tree 18.CONN 6-mango AUX.RPST 2SM.PST-cut.down-PST 3.year  
wú-fíŋ-a.  
3REL-pass-FV  
'The mango tree was cut down last year.'

## 4.2 Functional passives

In this subsection I introduce how Kukuya makes use of the IBV focus position and the topic fronting tendency to express the passive meaning. Two particular structures are presented, namely the OSV and the impersonal *ba-* constructions. I first discuss how the passive reading is generated through these constructions, and then display some basic syntactic and interpretational properties of both structures as well as their restrictions in use. Some of the presentation here is part of my previous work in Li (2020), and is primarily inspired by the pioneering work of Bostoen & Mundeke (2011) on similar functional constructions in another West-Coastal Bantu language Mbuun (B87).

In most Bantu languages, the passive is typically encoded by a verbal derivational suffix and a shift of grammatical roles of the arguments. In the Swahili example (115), we see that the passive marker *-iw-* is used, the patient is promoted to the subject position and controls subject marking on the verb, while the agent can be optionally expressed by a prepositional phrase. The Kukuya language systematically lacks verbal derivational suffixes, with only some unproductive residues, thus we may wonder how passiveness is expressed in Kukuya, compensating the absence of morphological passive marking.

- (115) Vy-akula vi-li-l-iw-a      (na wa-toto).  
8-food    8SM-PST-eat-PASS-FV by 2-child  
'The food was eaten by children.' [Swahili G42]

### 4.2.1 The OSV construction

The first functional passive construction in Kukuya is the OSV structure in which the object is fronted to the sentence-initial position while the subject is placed in the IBV position, as shown in (116) and (117). From these examples we can also see that both animate and inanimate subjects can have the agent reading in this functional passive construction.

- (116) Mbaá mvúlá áá-dzíib-i.  
 9.fire 3.rain 3SM.PST-extinguish-PST  
 ‘The fire was extinguished by the rain.’ (lit.: ‘The fire, the rain put it out.’) (Li 2020: 4)
- (117) Bu-ká búú mwáana nzulí áá-wool-i.  
 14-cassava 14.CONN 1.child 1.cat 1SM-snatch-PST  
 ‘The child’s cassava was snatched by the cat.’ (lit.: ‘The cassava of the child, the cat snatched it.’)

In the ditransitive constructions (118) and (119), we see that both the theme and the patient object can be fronted. The passive reading can be verified in the elicitation: when I asked the speakers to translate the French passive into Teke and there was an explicit agent in the sentence, the OSV structure was always used.

- (118) a. Báana ngúku áá-télek-i bvi-kídza.  
 2.children 1.mother 1SM.PST-prepare-PST 8-food  
 ‘The children were prepared the food by mother.’
- b. Bvi-kídza ngúku áá-télek-i báana.  
 8-food 1.mother 1SM.PST-prepare-PST 2.children  
 ‘The food was prepared for the children by mother.’
- (119) a. Mu-safuká mú-kái áá-kwá-i mu mbhiele.  
 3-safou.tree 1-woman 1SM.PST-chop-PST 18.LOC 9.knife  
 ‘The safou tree was chopped with a knife by the woman.’
- b. Mbhiele mú-kái áá-kwá-i mu mu-safuká.  
 9.knife 1-woman 1SM.PST-chop-PST 18.LOC 3-safou.tree  
 ‘A knife was used to chop the safou tree by the woman.’

For the examples above I only gave the passive translation as a stimulus. However, the OSV construction itself does not show apparent grammatical means that are dedicated to passive expression, and here I want to decompose the OSV structure to see how the passive reading has emerged. Pragmatically, passiveness is often considered as a “foregrounding and backgrounding operation” (Keenan & Dryer 2007) in which the patient is foregrounded to the sentence-initial position while the agent is backgrounded or unspecified. In this sense, a passive construction is similar to the topicalisation operation in which the patient is fronted to the sentence-initial position to become the topic of the sentence, while the agent

can remain in the original position or be demoted to a less/non-topical position. In other words, a passivised element is usually made topical. The availability of OSV structure to express passive is thus consistent with the generalisation in the above subsection that in Kukuya topical elements tend to occur in the preverbal domain, so the topical object in OSV is expressed in the sentence-initial position. Nevertheless, in the OSV construction the agent subject is always explicitly expressed, which is not expected in a canonical passive construction. In addition, recall that the OSV structure is what I have introduced for subject focus (see Section 3.1.2) and is always felicitous as an answer to a subject question, as shown in (120) and (121). The focal status of the agent is pragmatically incompatible with a prototypical passive construction in which the agent is usually demoted or even deleted.

- (120) a. Mwáana láana ná áá-wí?  
1.child 5.orange 1.who 1SM.PST-give.PST  
'Who gave the child the orange?'
  - b. Mwáana láala taará áá-wí.  
1.child 5.orange 1.father 1SM.PST-give.PST  
'Father gave the orange to the child.'
- (121) a. Wú-fúum-i ma-li ná ndé?  
1REL-buy-PST 6-wine 1.who 1.PRO  
'Who bought the wine?'
  - b. Ma-li taará áá-fúum-i.  
6-wine 1.father 1SM.PST-buy-PST  
'The wine was bought by Father.'

(Li 2020: 15)

In (122a) we can see that the OSV functional passive construction cannot have a questioned adjunct, since the IBV focus position is occupied by the agent and there is usually only one focused element in a Kukuya sentence, the interrogative phrase becomes infelicitous even in its base position; the only possible rephrasing is (122b) in which the passive reading is lost.

- (122) a. \*Mwáana taará áá-béer-i munkí?  
1.child 1.father 1SM.PST-beat-PST when  
int. 'When was the child beaten by father?'
- b. Taará mwáana munkí káá-béer-i?  
1.father 1.child when 1SM.PST-beat-PST  
'When did father beat the child?'

When I intend to elicit a sentence like ‘What was stolen by X?’ in which the “passivised” object is an interrogative phrase, the speakers still use the OSV word order as in (123). At first glance, we see that a question word can occur in the initial position of the OSV construction to express passive. However, as will be discussed in the next section, the sentence in (123a) is actually a cleft construction in which the class 1 subject marker shifts from *á-* to *ká-*; in (123b) we find that the initial question word is incompatible with the canonical subject marker. The OSV word order in (123) is not the OSV functional passive construction that we are discussing here.

- (123) a. *Kí-má mjíibi káá-túr-i?*  
     7-what 1.thief 1SM.PST-steal-PST  
     ‘What was stolen by the thief?’
- b. \* *Kí-má mjíibi áá-túr-i?*  
     7-what 1.thief 1SM.PST-steal-PST  
     int. ‘What was stolen by the thief?’

Therefore it shows that the OSV structure, though it can function as a translational equivalent of a canonical passive construction, is by no means dedicated to express passive and is at least pragmatically different from a true passive (see Bostoen & Mundeke 2011 for a similar proposal for Mbuun). The primary function of the OSV construction is to clearly delimit the different discourse roles of the subject and object, in which the object is topicalised and fronted to the initial position; the subject is focused in the IBV position and the focus reading is somehow “strengthened” by fronting the topical object. Pragmatically, the OSV construction can function as the equivalent of passive but is used only when the agent serves as the new or contrasted information, thus needs to be explicitly expressed.

#### 4.2.2 Impersonal *ba-* construction

The second equivalent of passive in Kukuya is the so-called impersonal *ba-* construction. In this construction, the verb always takes the class 2 subject marker *ba-* which is not anaphoric to any lexical or pronominal subject in the sentence or the discourse. The patient object can occur either postverbally or preverbally, while the agent is in most cases deleted or unspecified, and this is why the construction is labeled as “impersonal”. Some examples are illustrated below. In (124) and (125), the patient object occurs preverbally, and the agent is unknown and suppressed; while in (126) and (127) there is no preverbal element and the patient object occurs after the *ba-* verb.

- (124) (visual stimuli: What about the food?)

Bviilá báá-tél-i                  bví        ku        mfúúlá.  
 8.food 2SM.PST-throw-PST 9.falling 17.LOC 9.road  
 'The food was thrown onto the road.'

- (125) Mu-ŋwâ wu-kí-som-í                  báá-mpúku báá-kí-i.

3.hole     3REL-7SM-go.out-PST 2-rat                  2SM.PST-fill-PST  
 'The hole where the rats went out was filled.'

- (126) (Context: in a story, a candle was extinguished due to some unclear reason...)

Nínjáá báá-dzíib-i                  bu-dzí.  
 suddenly 2SM.PST-extinguish-PST 14-candle  
 'Suddenly the candle was extinguished.'

(Li 2020: 31)

- (127) Báá-tí                  ndé        bví        ku        mbali.  
 2SM.PST-throw.PST 1.PRO 9.falling 17.LOC 9.outside

'It was thrown outside.'                  (Saint Matthieu V:13)

In example (128) we see from the context that the agent should be 'I', and the subject marking on the verb is still *ba-*, which shows the impersonal nature of the class 2 subject marker in this construction.

- (128) (Context: you cut some firewood in the morning and you gave it to your brother who could not work.)

Nkwíi        yi-m-baal-í                  me        báá-wî                  ngândukú  
 9.firewood 9REL-1SG.SM-cut-PST 1SG.PRO 2SM.PST-give.PST 1.brother  
 aa        me.  
 1.CONN 1SG.PRO

'The firewood that I cut was given to my brother.'

Example (129) shows that both objects of the ditransitive verb can be preposed in this functional passive construction. Interestingly, from the context we see that the preverbal theme object is topical in (129a), while in (129b) the preverbal recipient object is focal. The different discourse status of the preverbal object here is reminiscent of the information structure of the preverbal subject discussed in Section 3.1.2. I propose that the preverbal objects in (129) occupy different structural positions; the preverbal object in (129b) is in the IBV focus position. In this regard, the preverbal DP of the *ba-* construction behaves more like a preverbal subject which can be either topical or focal.

- (129) (To whom did mother give the keys?)

- a. Ma-fungúla báá-wî taará.  
6-key 2SM.PST-give.PST 1.father  
'The keys were given to father.'
- b. Taará báá-wî ma-fungúla.  
1.father 2SM.PST-give.PST 6-key  
'Father was given the keys.'

In example (130) we see that the *ba-* construction is used when the preverbal DP is contrastively focused and placed in the IBV position, and (131) shows that a preverbal interrogative word can occur in the *ba-* construction. In this sense, the *ba-* construction also shows deviance from the canonical passive construction in that the functionally "passivised" element is not always topical but can also be focal.

- (130) a. Bi-ko bvi-kí-dzilík-í mú-kái ku ngulu aa  
8-clothes 8REL-7SM-reserve-PST 1-woman 17.LOC 9.inside 9.CONN  
nzó báá-túr-i.  
9.house 2SM.PST-steal-PST  
'The clothes that the lady kept in the house were stolen.'
- b. Ambú, ndé mí-pará báá-túr-i.  
no 1.PRO 4-money 2SM-steal-PST  
'No, her *money* was stolen.'

- (131) (Context: you found that the bananas on the table disappeared, and you asked father.)

Ma-ko ná báá-wî?  
6-banana 1.who 2SM.PST-give.PST  
'The bananas were given to whom?'/Who was given the bananas?'

This functional passive construction with class 2/3rd person plural subject marking is actually commonly attested in Bantu languages and beyond (Frajzyngier 1982, Keenan & Dryer 2007, Cobbinah & Lüpke 2009). A number of Bantu languages such as Básàá (Hamlaoui & Makasso 2013), Mbuun (Bostoen & Mundeke 2011), Bemba (Kula & Marten 2010), Lunda (Kawasha 2007) and Matengo (van der Wal 2015) have reported this construction as a functional passive. In all these languages the patient can either precede or follow the verb in this construction. As for the agent, in Básàá, Mbuun and Matengo, it is always unspecified and can not be present even via an oblique phrase, while in Bemba and Lunda an oblique

agent is allowed and even preferred. In Kukuya, the agent is usually deleted but sometimes it can be introduced by an oblique phrase headed by a class 18 locative pronoun *mu*. However, two situations need to be distinguished.

There are some cases in which the DP introduced by the oblique phrase seems to be the agent of the verb, as shown in (132) and (133). Though these expressions are considered to be quite marginal and rare in use, the speakers often give the active constructions as equivalent translations to them. However, (132) and (133) can be used in various contexts in which the DP in the oblique phrase does not necessarily function as the agent but rather a “causer” of the event. In (132) the context can be that someone else gave the child the orange due to father’s commission or network, while in (133) it was not necessarily your wife who caught you but perhaps your wife reported you to the police or you committed a crime due to your wife. Given that the class 18 pronoun often introduces a reason, here the oblique phrases in these two examples should be interpreted as reason phrases rather than the demoted agents.

- (132) Mwáana báá-wî                    láala        **mu**        taará.  
           1.child    2SM.PST-give.PST 5.orange 18.LOC 1.father  
           ‘The child was given an orange because of father.’
- (133) Me        báá-siib-i                    **mu**        mu-káli.  
           1SG.PRO 2SM.PST-catch-PST 18.LOC 1.wife  
           ‘I was caught because of the wife.’

The *ba-* construction with an oblique phrase cannot be a felicitous answer to a subject question. To answer the subject question in (134a), the OSV structure in (134b) is the answer par excellence, while (134c) is infelicitous here because the oblique phrase can only be interpreted as a purpose or a reason. The question-answer congruence may also have some effect here, since the question in (134a) does not involve the *ba-* construction, (134c) is not expected to be a felicitous answer.

- (134) a. Nzó        yí        yá        mú-táliki ná        ndé        áá-tsú-i?  
           9.house 9REL with 3-height 1.who 1.PRO 1SM.PST-build-PST  
           ‘The tall building was built by whom?’
- b. Yó        mii-ndéle        mii-tsú-i.  
           9.PRO 4-foreigner 4SM.PST-build-PST  
           ‘It was built by the foreigners.’

- c. # Yó báa-tsú-i mu mii-ndéle.  
 9.PRO 2SM-build-PST 18.LOC 4-foreigner  
 int. 'It was built by the foreigners.'  
 'It was built for/because of the foreigners.' (Li 2020: 30)

Based on all these examples on the oblique phrase in the *ba*- construction, I would rather conclude that the DP introduced by *mu* is never a true agent but can only function as a reason, a purpose or a method, though sometimes it can be ambiguously interpreted as the agent. In this sense, it is more plausible to still label the *ba*- construction as impersonal. Compared to the OSV structure, the *ba*-construction is used when the agent is unspecified or there is no need to express it.

To summarise, I have presented two functional passive constructions in Kukuya, namely the OSV and the impersonal *ba*- construction. Both of the constructions can serve as the translational equivalent of a prototypical passive structure. However, their syntactic and pragmatic properties differ from each other and also from the prototypical passive. The OSV construction is used when the utterance is about the patient and the agent needs to be explicitly expressed as new or contrasted information. The impersonal *ba*- construction looks more similar to the canonical passive as the agent is usually deleted, but the preverbal object can either be topical or focal, which differs from the canonical passivised element. Here these two constructions only partially overlap with some properties of the canonical passive construction and can only be treated as functional equivalents.

In this section I have shown that different types of topic expressions tend to occur in the preverbal domain in Kukuya. The topic expressions can be divided into primary and secondary topics: a primary topic often includes the topical subject or the scene-setting topics, which occur sentence-initially; a secondary topic is non-initial and is often attested in the preverbal domain accompanied by the IBV focus position being occupied. Two functional passive constructions are presented, namely the OSV construction and the impersonal *ba*-construction, which are used in different pragmatic contexts and both make use of the topic fronting tendency and the IBV focus strategy to express passive. A scheme on the mapping of word order and information structure of Kukuya is illustrated in Figure 1. In the next section I introduce cleft constructions and their connection with the IBV focus strategy.

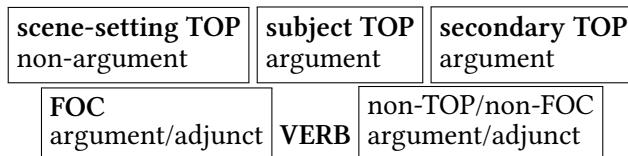


Figure 1: A scheme of information structure and word order in Kukuya

## 5 Cleft constructions

Clefts are one of the well-known focus marking devices in Bantu languages (Demuth 1987, Sabel & Zeller 2006, Cheng & Downing 2013, Hamlaoui & Makasso 2015, Lafkioui et al. 2016). In this section I present different types of cleft constructions in Kukuya and their functions in information packaging. I first give a description on the formation and interpretation of the basic cleft and (reverse) pseudo-cleft constructions, then I introduce a special construction that I label as a “reduced” cleft. I also propose and show evidence that the IBV focus construction in this language is very likely to have its origin in the cleft construction, and different intermediate grammaticalisation stages can be identified.

### 5.1 Basic cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions

As for a basic cleft, here I refer to a construction parallel to the English sentence ‘it was a pancake that we ate’, and it can also be labeled as the *it*-cleft. Syntactically, a basic cleft usually consists of two clauses: one contains a nominal predicate and one contains a free relative clause. The focus reading arises from the combination of the relative clause and the nominal predicate. The relative part of the cleft is presented as the maximal group of referents to which the predicate applies and is equated to the referent in the nominal predicate, and in this way an identificational and exclusive focus reading is rendered (van der Wal & Maniacky 2015).

In Kukuya, a basic cleft can be used to express focus on arguments and adjuncts. An example of a basic cleft in Kukuya that fulfills all the syntactic properties mentioned above is illustrated in (135). We see that the sentence contains an initial copula that takes a default class 7 subject marker, a nominal predicate that takes a H tone prefix and a relative clause with segmental relative marking. In fact, this kind of “complete” cleft construction is never uttered in natural speech. The copula is usually omitted in affirmative sentences, so a cleft construction in Kukuya is mostly formed just by a nominal predicate followed by a free relative clause. In (135) the focus is on the clefted object that occurs in the initial position,

and the following relative clause is used to exclusively identify it. When using a cleft as in (135), the speaker intends to express that the person only bought a shelf but nothing else.

- (135) (Kí-li)      kí-taabí ki-káá-fúúm-í      ndé ku dzándu.  
       7SM.PST-COP 7-shelf 7REL-1SM.PST-buy-PST 1.PRO 17.LOC 5.market  
       'It was a *shelf* that s/he bought at the market.'

In example (136a) we see that the object cleft sentence can only be a proper answer to an object question but not to a VP question, so apparently the focus reading cannot be extended to a larger constituent in a cleft. We also see that (136a) cannot be continued with an additive sentence such as 'and also some sheep', showing that the cleft sentence expresses exclusive focus. In (136b) we see that in the negative counterpart of the cleft sentence, the copula shows up and hosts the negative prefix. Here the scope of negation is not the whole sentence but only the focus. A subject cleft sentence is given in (137). In all these examples, the clefted arguments receive an exclusive focus reading.

- (136) a. Báa-ntaba ba-kí-fúúm-í      mú-kái.  
       2-goat      2REL-7SM.PST-buy-PST 1-woman  
       'It was some *goats* that the woman bought.'  
                         'What did the woman buy?' ✓  
                         'What did the woman do?' ✗  
                         '...and also some sheep' ✗
- b. Ka-kí-li      báa-ntaba ba-kí-fúúm-í      mú-kái ni.  
       NEG-7SM.PST-COP 2-goat      2REL-7SM.PST-buy-PST 1-woman NEG  
       'It was not some *goats* that the woman bought.'
- (137) Wúna mvá wu-á-wí      baa-ntaba buókó.  
       only 1.dog 1REL-1SM-give.PST 2-goat 14.fear  
       'It was only the dog who scared the goats.'

A pseudo-cleft refers to a construction that equates the referent of a headless relative clause with a nominal predicate, for example the English sentence 'what we want is pizza', and is also known as *wh*-cleft. The pseudo-cleft construction seems to be more frequently attested in Kukuya than the basic cleft and is usually used to express subject focus (see Section 3.1.2), as shown in (138). In (139) the alternative question begins with a dislocated topic *mu-kái* 'woman' and is followed by a pseudo-cleft construction sentence with the predicative focal object at the end.

- (138) a. Ki-kí-túm-í                mbaá ki-namá kí-ma?  
             7REL-7SM-cause-PST 9.fire INF-burn 7-what  
             'What caused the fire?'  
  b. Baá-fúum-i    ma-li    ba-na?  
             2REL-buy-PST 6-wine 2-who  
             'Who (*pl.*) bought the wine?'  
  c. Wú-dzí            baa-ntsúú ka-kí-li            mvá ni.  
             1REL-eat.PST 2-chicken NEG-7SM-COP 1.dog NEG  
             '(The one) who ate the chicken was not the dog.'
- (139) a. Mu-kái    wu-ká-búr-í                ndé    mú-kái    wó balaka?  
             1-woman 1REL-1SM.PST-give.birth-PST 1.PRO 1-female or 1.male  
             'The woman gave birth to a girl or a boy?'  
             lit.: 'The woman, to whom she gave birth was a girl or a boy?'  
  b. Wu-ká-búr-í                ndé    balaka.  
             1REL-1SM-give.birth-PST 1.PRO 1.male  
             'The one she gave birth to was a boy.'

In (140) a reverse pseudo-cleft sentence is illustrated. Here again we see that the reverse pseudo-cleft cannot be continued by a sentence like 'and also some sheep', which shows that it expresses exclusive focus.

- (140) Báa-ntaba (bá-li)            ba-kí-fúum-í            mú-kái.  
             2-goat        2SM.PST-COP 2REL-7SM.PST-buy-PST 1-woman  
             'The goats were what the woman bought.'  
             '...and also some sheep' X

There is also a commonly seen construction which surfaces in the OSV word order and in which the focus is placed on the initial element, as illustrated in (141). I would analyse this construction as a somehow "reduced" version of a basic cleft rather than a monoclausal construction with initial focus, for the reasons that will become clear shortly. This cleft construction is reduced in the sense that there is no segmental relative marker on the verb, but there are clues of relative marking. In (141) we see that the class 1 subject marking on the verb takes the form *ka-* rather than the canonical form *a-*, which is an indicator of relative marking on the verb. This construction is a natural way of expressing exclusive focus on the initial element but never on the whole VP, which corresponds more to the cleft construction than the IBV focus construction. Prosodically, the initial focused element is always independently phrased from the rest of the sentence,

which can also show evidence for the cleft nature of this construction (Cheng & Downing 2013). Therefore, I label this construction as a reduced cleft and will hypothesise that it can reflect an intermediate stage of the grammaticalisation process from the cleft to the IBV focus strategy. It is worth noting that this construction should be distinguished from the OSV construction presented in Section 4.2.1 in which the focus is in IBV, though they have the same linear word order.

- (141) Má-biríki taará káá-fúum-i ku mfaí.  
6-brick 1.father 1SM.PST-buy-PST 17.LOC 9.capital  
'It was some bricks that father bought from Brazzaville.'  
'...and also a motorbike' X

Some more examples of this reduced cleft construction are given in (142) and (143). The construction is most commonly attested as a content question as in (142), in which the speakers place the interrogative word at the start of the sentence. In (143) the focus is on the quantifier of the initial NP, while the whole NP occurs in the initial position. The reduced cleft is only discernible when the initial focused element is a non-subject, since a reduced subject cleft cannot be distinguished from the canonical word order when there is no relative marker, no subject marking allomorphy or word order change.

- (142) Munkí mwáana káá-dzí ntsúi?  
when 1.child 1SM.PST-eat.PST 1.fish  
'When did the child eat fish?'
- (143) (Context: the thief would have stolen more goats, but it was only a /textit{few}.)  
Baa-ntaba bá-bíibi mjíibi káá-túr-i.  
2-goat 2-few 1.thief 1SM.PST-steal-PST  
'The thief stole few goats.'

In this subsection I have presented three main types of cleft constructions in Kukuya, namely the basic cleft, (reverse) pseudo-cleft and the reduced cleft. I showed that all these constructions express exclusive focus on the clefted element. Some further research need to be carried out on the pragmatic distinctions on the cleft construction and the IBV focus strategy when they both express exclusive focus.

## 5.2 Connection between IBV focus and cleft constructions

In this subsection I provide some evidence on the connection between the cleft and the IBV focus constructions, proposing that the IBV focus strategy has its origin in the cleft. Apart from identification focus interpretation that they are both used to express, I take evidence from some shared grammatical properties on the two constructions, namely the H tone prefix on the focused NP, subject marking alternation, the verb-final H tone and the negation strategy. Next I illustrate each point with examples from both constructions.

The hypothesis that the IBV focus strategy originates from a bi-clausal cleft construction was first made in De Kind (2014) in his analysis on the preverbal focus strategy in Kisikongo. One argument he provided was that in the relative clause of the cleft construction and the SOV word order, the class 1 subject takes the same allomorphic subject prefix *ka-*, and this is also attested in Kukuya. In example (144) we see that in a subject relative the preverbal class 1 pronoun takes the subject marker *a-* on the verb; in a non-subject relative the postverbal class 1 pronominal subject takes the subject marker *ka-*. In (145) as well as in many examples above, we see that when a non-subject constituent is focused in IBV position, the class 1 subject marker alternates from *a-* to *ka-*.

- (144) a. Ndé wu-á-banám-i                      áá-tok-í                      ndziimi.  
           1.PRO 1REL-1SM.PST-wake.suddenly-PST 1SM.PST-sweat-PST much  
           ‘S/He who woke up suddenly sweated a lot.’  
    [subject relative]
- b. Ki-sáli ki-ká-lil-í                      ndé ka-kí-li                      tsítse ni.  
           7-reason 7REL-1SM.PST-cry-PST 1.PRO NEG-7SM.PST-COP clear NEG  
           ‘The reason why s/he cried was not clear.’                      [nonsubject relative]
- (145) Ndé má-láálá káá-fúum-i.  
           1.PRO 6-orange 1SM.PST-buy-PST  
           ‘S/He bought the *oranges*’.

In Ndonga Mfuwa (1995)’s description on Kisikongo relatives and also noted in De Kind (2014), the subject marker on relative verbs and in the SOV word order bears a H tone, which can corroborate the connection between the preverbal focus and the cleft construction. In Kukuya, the 1PL subject marker in the remote past tense in the SVO word order is *lii-* with a L tone, and in the relative construction (146) and the SOV order (147) below we see that the 1PL subject marker is realised as *lái-* in which a H tone is inserted. I assume that this is a grammatical

H tone that marks relative, and in these two examples we see again that the verb form in the IBV focus construction has retained some relative residue.

- (146) li-meé li-líi-li                      lii-tí                      bhií      bví  
 5-stone 5REL-1PL.RPST-COP 1PL.RPST-launch.PST 1PL.PRO 9.falling  
 ‘the stone that we had thrown away’
- (147) Bhií      áli    kí-má    líi-fúum-i?  
 1PL.PRO PST 7-what 2PL.PST-buy-PST  
 ‘What had we bought?’

Another piece of tonal evidence that can show the relative origin of the verb in the IBV focus construction is the verb-final H tone attested in non-subject extraction. In the subject relative in (148a), the tone on the verb stem is realised as HL as in its citation form, while in the non-subject relative in (148b) the tone on the verb stem is realised as H and is carried over onto the prefix of the postverbal subject NP. Here it shows that there is an emergent grammatical H tone occurring verb-finally when a non-subject argument is relativised.

- (148) a. mu-kái wú-fúum-i      mi-féme  
 1-woman 1REL-buy-PST 4-pig  
 ‘the woman who bought the pigs’                      [subject relative]  
 b. mi-féme mi-kí-fúum-i                      mú-kái  
 4-pig      4REL-7SM.PST-buy-PST 1-woman  
 ‘the pigs that the woman bought’                      [non-subject relative]

When a non-subject element is focused in the IBV position, the verb-final H tone is also attested. Since in Kukuya there is an utterance-final tone lowering rule and the verb tends to occur in the right boundary of the clause in the IBV focus construction, the verb-final H tone is only attested when there is a non-focal postverbal element in the IBV focus construction. In (149a) the subject can be either topical/non-focal or focal and the tone pattern of the verb is HL with no final H tone; in (149b) the theme object is focused in IBV, and the tone pattern on the verb is realised as H and is spread onto the prefix of the following recipient object. Similarly in (150), when the locative phrase is focused in IBV, the tone pattern on the verb shifts from HL to H and the H tone is again carried over onto the following prefix. Here again the tone pattern on the verb in the IBV focus construction clearly shows relative properties.

- (149) a. Taará áá-wí                      baa-ndzulí ma-désu.  
 1.father 1SM.PST-give.PST 2-cat      6-bean  
 ‘Father gave beans to the cats.’

- b. Taará lóoso káá-wí                    báa-nzulí.  
     1.father 5.rice 1SM.PST-give.PST 2-cat  
     'Father gave the *rice* to the *cats*.'

- (150) (Where did father buy the wine?)  
     Ndé ku dzándú káá-fúum-i            má-lí.  
     1.PRO 17.LOC 5.market 1SM.PST-buy-PST 6-wine  
     'He bought the wine *at the market*.'

So far I have shown that the verb form in the IBV focus construction resembles that in the relative clause. Now we consider how the predicative part of the cleft construction is associated with the IBV focus strategy. In many examples above we have seen that the prefix of a focused NP in the IBV position always bears a H tone. In example (151a) the postverbally focused NP does not have a H tone prefix, while in (151b) the IBV focused NP does. Similarly in (152), we see that while there are three preverbal NPs in this sentence, only the focal NP in the IBV position has a H tone prefix.

- (151) (What did father buy?)  
     a. Ndé áá-fúum-i                    ma-láala.  
         1.PRO 1SM.PST-buy-PST 6-orange  
         'He bought some oranges.'  
     b. Ndé má-láálá káá-fúum-i.  
         1.PRO 6-orange 1SM.PST-buy-PST  
         'He bought some *oranges*'.

- (152) (Did the woman give the fish to the dogs?)  
     Mu-kái baa-ntsúi báa-ndzuli káá-wí.  
     1-woman 2-fish    2-cat            1SM.PST-give.PST  
     'The woman gave the fish to the *cats*'.

In Kukuya, a predicative NP also has a H tone prefix. Since the copula is omitted in affirmative sentences, a predicative construction is usually expressed by juxtaposition of two NPs and the predicative one is marked by a H tone prefix, as illustrated in examples (153) and (154).

- (153) Ndé mú-tsúli.  
     1.PRO 1-goldsmit  
     'S/He is a goldsmith.'                    [cf. *mu-tsúli* 'goldsmith']

- (154) Ki-báka kí-báka, bu-bila.nkele múu-nkwáárá.  
 7-obtain 7-obtain 14-question 3-keeping  
 'To obtain is to obtain, the question is (how) to keep.' (Paulian 1975: 194)

In the (pseudo-)cleft constructions presented in Section 5.1, we have seen that the nominal predicate always has a H tone prefix, which is also shown in the pseudo-cleft in example (155). Since the nominal predicate is usually the focused part in a (pseudo-)cleft, I propose that the H tone prefix of the IBV focused element corresponds to that in the cleft construction. Now we have seen the association of the IBV focus construction with both the relative clause part and the nominal predication part of the cleft.

- (155) Kí-n-dzíí                me        ki-nywâ    má-dzá maa-mfé.  
 7REL-1SG.SM-please 1SG.PRO INF-drink 6-water 6-cold  
 'What I like to drink is cold water.'

To negate the focused element in the IBV focus construction, a copula with the negative prefix often appears immediately before the focused element, as shown in examples (156) and (157). The occurrence of the copula can corroborate the predicative origin of the IBV focused element and the cleft origin of the IBV focus construction.

- (156) Ngwangúlu ka-kí-li        mvá    áá-dzí                ni.  
 1.gecko        NEG-7SM-COP 1.dog 1SM.PST-eat.PST NEG  
 'The gecko was not eaten by the dog.'/'The dog did not eat the gecko.'
- (157) Taará    ka(-kí-li)        ntáli    káá-sí                me        ni.  
 1.father NEG-7SM-COP 9.bed 1SM.PST-make.PST 1SG.PRO NEG  
 'Father did not make me a bed.'

Based on all the shared grammatical properties of the IBV focus strategy and the cleft construction illustrated above, I propose that the IBV focus construction has its origin in the cleft construction. In this chapter I do not discuss in detail the grammaticalisation process of the IBV focus construction, but only propose some important intermediate stages in the grammaticalisation. In (158) there are three parallel constructions that co-exist in this language, and I suppose that diachronically the (158b) is an intermediate construction derived from (158a) whereby the relative marker in the cleft is deleted and the postverbal subject becomes pre-verbal; the IBV focus construction in (158c) is derived from (158b), whereby the preverbal subject is fronted to the sentence-initial position, leaving the focused element in the IBV position.

- (158) a. (Kí-li) báa-ntaba ba-kí-fúum-í                 mú-kái.  
7SM-COP 2-goat    2REL-7SM.PST-buy-PST 1-woman  
'It was the *goats* that the woman bought.'
- b. Báa-ntaba mu-kái káá-fúum-i.  
2-goat    1-woman 1SM.PST-buy-PST 1-woman  
'The *goats* were (what) the woman bought.'
- c. Mu-kái báa-ntaba káá-fúum-i.  
1-woman 2-goat    1SM.PST-buy-PST  
'The woman bought the *goats*'

In this section I have presented different types of cleft constructions, namely the basic cleft, the (reverse) pseudo-cleft and the reduced cleft constructions, and I have shown that these constructions all express exclusive focus on the nominal predicate. I have also shown some shared grammatical features between the cleft and the IBV focus construction, claiming that the IBV focus strategy has been grammaticalised from the cleft construction.

## 6 Summary

In the first part of this chapter, I have demonstrated that the Kukuya language has a canonical SVO word order, while any deviation from this word order is produced for the purpose of information packaging. I have shown that a focused constituent, be it an argument or an adjunct of the verb, can be placed in its canonical position or in the IBV position, while the IBV position is preferred. VP focus and verb focus can also be expressed through the canonical SVO word order or by placing the object/in infinitive verb in the IBV position. Based on these facts and some additional tests, I concluded that the IBV position is really a dedicated focus position in the language, even though the focused elements are not obligatorily placed there. There is some interpretational difference between the IBV and *in situ* focus strategies, in which the IBV focus site is more often associated with identificational focus, and the other often expresses assertive focus. As for topical elements, they all tend to occur in the preverbal domain as in most other Bantu languages, and several types of topical elements can be distinguished, namely the scene-setting topics, primary and secondary topics. Interestingly, the occurrence of some topical elements in the preverbal domain depends on whether the IBV focus position is occupied. I also gave a detailed introduction on two particular constructions that can function as translational equivalents of the passive construction. Different types of cleft constructions were also discussed. At the end

of the chapter, I showed some shared grammatical properties that can connect the IBV focus strategy and the cleft construction. Based on these connections, I propose that the IBV focus strategy, which characterises the expression of information structure in this language, has its origin in a cleft construction.

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## Abbreviations

CONN	connective
FV	final vowel
IMPF	imperfect
PRO	pronoun
RPST	remote past
SM	subject marker

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### *3 The expression of information structure in Teke-Kukuya*

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# Chapter 4

## The expression of information structure in Kîitharaka

Patrick N. Kanampiu<sup>a</sup> & Jenneke van der Wal<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Tharaka University College <sup>b</sup>Leiden University

Kîitharaka employs a variety of linguistic strategies to structure information. The preverbal domain is preferred for topicalised constituents while non-topical ones tend to be post-verbal. Various pragmatically sanctioned interpretations such as polarity focus, deprecative, contrastive and intensive readings are expressed through topic marking and predicate topic doubling. Focus can be expressed using the basic cleft (exhaustive focus), the pseudocleft and two constructions that at first look like reverse pseudoclefts. The expression of the object is regulated by accessibility, humanness, predicate type, and salience. Finally, the presence or absence of *ni*- correlates with predicate-centred focus or focus on the postverbal constituent.

### 1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of information structure in Kîitharaka. Kîitharaka is a Central Bantu language, ISO code [thk] and classified as E54 in Maho's (2009) revised Guthrie (1948) classification. It is spoken by Atharaka people mainly occupying Tharaka Central, Tharaka North and Tharaka South Sub-counties of Tharaka Nithi County of Kenya. Kîitharaka speakers are also found in eastern parts of Maara and Chuka Sub-counties, and Tharaka Sub-county in Kitui County.<sup>1</sup> There are approximately 220,000 Atharaka people, according to

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<sup>1</sup>The speakers are said to speak the Thagicû dialect, which is heavily influenced by the adjacent Kikamba language. Thagicû here refers to a variant of the present-day Kîitharaka language spoken mainly by inhabitants of Tharaka Sub-county of Kitui County and not the Proto-Eastern Bantu language mentioned in some diachronic literature.



the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census report (2019). Kîtharaka has approximately 61,000 monolinguals with L1 literacy rate below 15% as compared to that of L2 that stands at 45% (Eberhard et al. 2022). Literature on Kîtharaka morphosyntax includes the following: Lindblom (1914), Harford (1991, 1997), wa Mberia (1993), Muriungi (2005, 2008, 2014), Abels & Muriungi (2008), Kanampiu (2017), Kanampiu & Muriungi (2019).

The data for this study were collected during a field study in December 2019 and January 2020 with three native speakers (all male) of age bracket 29–47 years. This included translations, judgements, reactions to stimuli as well as traditional folk tales and a recounting of the frog story. Additional data was elicited introspectively by the first author. The data were transcribed and stored in an Online Language Database accessible through the Dative user interface that allows data sharing in a collaborative research. This database will be accessible through The Language Archive. We also refer to the introduction to this book for further information on Dative and for further background on the terms and diagnostics used for information structure.

Kîtharaka has a seven-vowel system, in which the mid-high vowels [e] and [o] are represented orthographically as ⟨î⟩ and ⟨û⟩. Furthermore, Dahl's Law is active in Kîtharaka, causing voiceless stops to become voiced when followed by another voiceless stop, for example underlying *a-kû-t-a* 's/he is throwing' is realised as *agûta*.

## 2 Word order

Information structure influences Kîtharaka word order in various ways: in preferring topics in the preverbal domain (Section 2.1), allowing unmarked focus postverbally only (Section 2.2), and encoding logical subjects postverbally when not topical (subject inversion, Section 2.3). Nevertheless, Kîtharaka does not have a dedicated focus position, and the occurrence of preverbal focus is dependent on further analysis (see also Section 5.1). See for further discussion on the discourse-configurationality of word order Kerr et al. (2023).

### 2.1 Preverbal domain

Kîtharaka prefers topics in the preverbal domain, allowing left-dislocation of subjects, as in (1) and (2), as well as objects as in (3). Dislocation of the subject can be identified by an intervening constituent between subject and verb, and/or by a prosodic break after the subject (indicated by a comma).

- (1) (Did Peter eat ugali and stew?)  
 Bita i nkima yoonká arîré.  
 Bita ni n-kima i-onka a-rî-ire  
 1.Peter FOC 9-ugali 9-only 1SM-eat-PFV  
 'Peter, it is only ugali that he ate.'
- (2) (How did the teachers do in the performance?)  
 Arímû, í baíiniré!  
 a-rimû ni ba-in-ire  
 2-teachers FOC 2SM-dance-PFV  
 'The teachers, they danced (very well)!'
- (3) (Can I buy bananas here?)  
 Ndígû nwa úgûre.  
 n-digû nwa û-gur-e  
 10-banana can 2SG.SM-buy-SBJV  
 'Bananas you can buy.'

Whether the dislocated object is resumed by an object marker on the verb depends on the predicate and various other factors, as discussed in Section 6. The dislocated topics can also be interpreted as contrastive, as in (4), and may then be marked by NA+PRO (further discussed in Section 3).

- (4) Nyóondô, ní yá kûriingíra mîsumáálí, mûchûménô ni wá kûgítáánga mbáo, nayo raandá, ni yá kûmaríria (mbáo).  
 ny-oondo ni y-a kû-riing-ir-a mî-sumaarî mû-chûmeno ni  
 9-hammer COP 9-CONN 15-hit-APPL-FV 4-nails 3-saw COP  
 w-a kû-gitaanga mbaو na=y-o raanda ni  
 3-CONN 15-cut 9.wood and=9-PRO9.plane COP 9-CONN  
 y-a kû-mar-iir-i-a (mbao)  
 15-smooth-APPL-IC-FV (9.wood)  
 'The hammer is for hitting nails; the saw is for cutting wood into pieces; and the plane is for smoothening (wood).'

We also find scene-setting topics in the left periphery, which are typically adverbials, as in (5) and (6).

- (5) Îigóró, í kûráárî na matu.  
 î-goro ni kû-ra-rî na ma-tu  
 5-yesterday FOC 17SM-YPST-be with 6-cloud  
 'Yesterday it was cloudy.'

- (6) Ai, gúgûkíá, ántû bákûyúkia báumagarûká, índî baatiga bááthaiká mwari njá.
- ai kû-kûkia a-ntu ba-kû-yûki-a ba-umagar-ûk-a índî<sup>1</sup>  
 EXCL 15-daybreak 2-person 2SM-PRS-take-FV 2SM-get.out-RECP-FV but  
 ba-a-tig-a ba-a-thaik-a mu-arî n-ja  
 2SM-PST-leave-FV 2SM-PST-tie-FV 1-lady 9-compound  
 ‘Gosh, when the day broke, they removed the ‘marûa’, and left the girl tethered in the compound.’

Multiple topics can also be found when multiple arguments are given information, for example both ‘John’ and ‘his father’ in (7).

- (7) Jónii, íthé í ndagitáári.
- Jonii íthe ni n-dagitaarî<sup>2</sup>  
 1.John his.father COP 9-doctor  
 ‘(As for) John, his father is a doctor.’

This, however, does not mean that the preverbal domain is reserved for topics, as indefinite subjects may appear in preverbal position as in the thetic sentence in (8):

- (8) (What’s the news from the market?)
- Múntû n’athûungíře ndukáaní.  
 mû-ntû ni a-ra-thûungîr-ire n-duka=ini  
 1-person FOC 1SM-YPST-enter-PFV 9-shop=LOC  
 ‘Someone entered the shop.’

Furthermore, SV(O) order is acceptable with idioms in a thetic context, as illustrated in (9). In this case, the subject of the clause is not an available referent in actual speech context.

- (9) Tîiri ìgûúka.
- tîri i-kû-ûk-a  
 9.dust 9SM-PRS-rise-FV  
 ‘Things are finished.’  
 lit. ‘Dust has risen.’

Therefore, not all preverbal referents are topical, but there is a debate about whether preverbal focus is possible in Kîîtharaka. On the one hand, it is clear that focused subjects may not appear unmarked in their canonical preverbal

position, as illustrated for interrogatives (10), answers to content questions (12), and subjects marked by the exhaustive focus-sensitive particle ‘only’, as in (13) and (14). While it is correct to use (11), the context strongly suggests an echo-question interpretation, and we conclude that unmarked focused subjects are not allowed in a canonical preverbal position.

- (10) \* Úû áiyiré?  
 úû a-a-iy-ire  
 who 1SM-N.PST-steal-PFV  
 ‘Who stole?’
- (11) (Context: Peter meets his friends discussing how a certain person stole and was attacked and torched by a mob. He does not get the name of the thief, so he asks):  
 Úû aiyá?  
 úû a-a-iy-a  
 who 1SM-PST-steal-FV  
 ‘Who stole?’
- (12) # (Who went to the farm?)  
 Kîmathi n’áthíiré mûndaaní.  
 Kîmathi ni a-thi-ire mû-nda=ini  
 1.Kîmathi FOC 1SM-go-PFV 3-farm=LOC  
 ‘Kîmathi went to the farm.’
- (13) \* Baabá wéenka n’ ákinyiré.  
 baaba we-onka ni a-kiny-ire  
 1.father 1-only FOC 1SM-arrive-PFV  
 ‘Only dad arrived.’
- (14) Jééní wéenká<sup>2</sup> n’aandíkíré baarúa.  
 Jane we-onka ni a-andík-ire baarúa  
 1.Jane 1-alone FOC 1SM-write-PFV 9.letter  
 \*‘Only Jane wrote a letter.’  
 ‘Jane alone wrote a letter.’

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<sup>2</sup>When used with animates, *-nka* (*wenka* for human and *-onka* for other animates) is ambiguous between ‘alone’ and ‘only’ but when used with inanimates, it means ‘only’. *Akî* means ‘only’ both with animates and inanimates.

- (15) \*Jééní akí (n')áandíkiré baarúa.  
 Jane akî ni a-andîk-ire baarúa  
 1.Jane only FOC 1SM-write-PFV 9.letter  
 'Only Jane wrote a letter.'

On the other hand, subjects may be focused as in (16) and (17) when preceded by *ni* (appearing as *i-* before a consonant and *n-* before a vowel).

- (16) Ámûûríá ‘Íngukûúria mwari, n’úú ágûpééré rûûtha rwá gûtâa rûûyî?’  
 a-mû-ûri-a ni n-kû-kû-ûri-a mû-arî, ni û  
 1SM-1OM-ask-FV FOC 1SG.SM-PRS-2SG.OM-ask-FV 1-girl FOC who  
 a-kû-per-ire rûûtha rû-a kû-taa rûûyî?  
 1SM-PRS-give-PFV 11.permission 11-CONN 15-fetch 11-water?  
 'He asked her, 'let me ask you girl, who gave you permission to fetch  
 water?''
- (17) (Who went to the farm? cf. (12))  
 I Kîmáthi ûthííre mûndaaní.  
 ni Kîmathi û-thi-ire mû-nda=ini  
 FOC Kîmathi 1RM-go-PFV 3-farm=LOC  
 'Kimathi went to the farm.' / 'It's Kimathi who went to the farm.'

A question for analysis is whether this is a preverbal focused element marked additionally by the focus marker *ni*, or whether it is a (biclausal) cleft in which *ni* could be a copula (see brief discussion in Section 5.1).

We can therefore conclude that the preverbal domain in Kîîtharaka is not restricted to topics, even if topics are preferably placed preverbally. We now turn to the postverbal domain.

## 2.2 Postverbal domain

The postverbal domain in Kîîtharaka consists of the non-topical information in the comment, and a right periphery for resumptive/afterthought information. Kîîtharaka does not have a dedicated position for focus; neither the immediate-after-verb (as in Makhwua-Enahara, van der Wal 2025 [this volume]) nor the final position (as in Kirundi, Nshemezimana & van der Wal 2025 [this volume]) is required or preferred for focused constituents. All internal arguments and non-arguments can be focused in the postverbal domain – only external arguments are excluded, as discussed in Section 2.3 on subject inversion. Note further that the form of the verb also makes a difference in the interpretation of the postverbal

constituents: the form prefixed by *ni* is used more naturally in predicate-centred focus and at the end of the clause, whereas the form without this marker goes together with focus on the postverbal constituent. This is discussed in more detail in Section 7.

Both the Recipient and the Theme can be questioned in their canonical position, as shown in (18) and (19), where we also see a preference to stick with the thematic order Recipient-Theme.

- (18) Úyúúgú ánénkééré twáana mbí?  
 úyûúgû a-nenker-ire tû-aná m-bi  
 1.grandmother 1SM-give-PFV 13-child 9-what  
 'What did grandma give the children?'
- (19) (Context: Grandmother had some mangoes and she gave an unknown person the mangoes.)
- Apééré 'ûû méémbé?  
 a-per-ire ûû ma-embe  
 1SM-give-PFV who 6-mango  
 'Who did she give mangoes?'
  - ?? Apéére méémbe ûû?  
 a-per-ire ma-embe ûû  
 1SM-give-PFV 6-mango who  
 'Who did she give mangoes?'

A question with multiple question words is even possible for both objects, but only in their base order Recipient-Theme, as shown in (20).

- (20) a. (Context: Grandmother gave something unknown to someone unknown)  
 Úyúgú ánénkéére ûû mbí?  
 úyûgu a-nenker-ire ûû mbi  
 1.grandmother 1SM-give-PFV who what  
 'What did grandmother give to whom?'
- b. \* Úyúgú ánénkéére mbí ûû?  
 úyûgu a-nenker-ire mbi ûû  
 1.grandmother 1SM-give-PFV what who  
 'What did grandmother give to whom?'

Furthermore, both recipient and theme can be answers to a content question in their canonical position (21), and a constituent modified by ‘only’ is allowed in either position, as in (22) and (23).

- (21) (What did the teacher give to the children?/Who did the teacher give pens?)<sup>3</sup>  
Mwarímû aránénkéére twaána tûrámu.  
mû-arimû a-ra-nenker-ire tû-aná tû-ramu  
1-teacher 1SM-YPST-give-PFV 13-child 13-pen  
'The teacher gave the children pens.'
- (22) a. Mwarimû aránénkéére twaána akî tûramu.  
mû-arimû a-ra-nenker-ire tû-aná aki tû-ramu  
1-teacher 1SM-YPST-give-PFV 13-child only 13-pen  
'The teacher gave only children some pens.'  
b. Mwarimû aránénkéére twaána tûrámu akî.  
mû-arimû a-ra-nenker-ire tû-aná tû-ramu akî  
1-teacher 1SM-YPST-give-PFV 13-child 13-pen only  
'The teacher gave only pens to the children.'
- (23) Frída anénkééré Kawíira fáánta yóonká.  
Frida a-nenker-ire Kawíira fanta ï-onka  
1.Frida 1SM-give-PFV 1.Kawíira 9.fanta 9-only  
'Frida gave Kawíira only Fanta.'

Constituents in the right periphery of the sentence may be interpreted as afterthoughts, as illustrated for a subject in (24) and for an object in (25). Note that the object referent can also be marked on the verb if it is expressed as a right-dislocated noun phrase (see also section Section 6, and that there must be a pause preceding the noun phrase, indicated by the comma.

- (24) (Context: Hyena roasted the guinea fowl and ate him whole. Where Hare arrived, he checked and found there was no guinea fowl. He asked Hyena.) Mbítí, írí kû nkáángá?  
m-bití ï-rî kû n-kanga  
9-hyena 9SM-be where 9-guinea.fowl  
'Hyena, where is the guinea fowl?"

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<sup>3</sup>Note that typically, the subject would be elided because it's already the topic.

- (25) a. Mwarímû agátuona, twaána.  
          mû-arimû a-ka-tû-on-a,                   tû-ana  
          1-teacher 1SM-FUT-12OM-see-FV 13-child  
          ‘The teacher will see them, the children.’
- b. Mwarímû akóóna (\*), twaána.  
          mû-arimû a-ka-on-a                   tû-ana  
          1-teacher 1SM-FUT-see-FV 13-child  
          ‘The teacher will see the children.’

As mentioned, the interpretation of postverbal constituents is also dependent on the form of the verb, as discussed in more detail in Section 7. We conclude that the postverbal domain typically hosts non-topical constituents, which may be focal, and which can be focused in their canonical position, i.e. there is no dedicated focus position. This also means that logical subjects can be expected to appear postverbally when non-topical, which is what we turn to next.

### 2.3 Inversion constructions

In subject inversion constructions, the logical subject appears in postverbal position. There are a number of different inversion constructions (see Marten & van der Wal 2014), which we discuss for Kîtharaka in turn. As Buell & Muriungi (2008) show, Kîtharaka does not show patient inversion (26), formal locative inversion (see below), or agreeing inversion (27), regardless of the form of the verb with or without *ni* (for which see Section 7).

- (26) a. Mûtí n’úgútwá ígúna.  
          mû-tí ni   û-kû-tw-a                   î-gûna  
          3-tree FOC 3SM-PRS-climb-FV 5-monkey  
          \*‘A/the monkey climbs the tree.’  
          lit. ‘The tree climbs a/the monkey.’
- b. Mûtí úgáatwá ígúna.  
          mû-tí û-kaa-tw-a                   î-gûna  
          3-tree 3SM-FUT-climb-FV 5-monkey  
          \*‘The/a monkey will climb the tree.’  
          lit. ‘The tree will climb the monkey.’
- (27) \* N’ yáakúa nyamû. / \*Yáakúa nyamû.  
          (ni)   î-a-ku-a                   n-yamû  
          (FOC) 9SM-PST-die-FV 9-animal  
          ‘A/The animal died.’

Canonical instrument inversion is not accepted in Kîtharaka, as illustrated in (28), with or without *ni* preceding the verb. Even if an applicative were present (which remedies inversion in Zulu, Zeller 2013), this is not accepted. Interestingly, however, we do find what looks like instrument inversion in the presence of *na* ‘with’, as in (29b) and (30b). While (30b) may not in fact be instrument inversion, as indicated in the translation, we wonder how (29b) may be interpreted. As we currently do not have enough insight into this construction, we leave it to one side here.

- (28) \* Gîcîko (i)gíkûrúa Kanyúá.  
 kî-ciko ni kî-kû-rî-a Kanyua  
 7-spoon FOC 7SM-PRS-eat-FV 1.Kanyua  
 int. ‘Kanyua has eaten with a spoon.’
- (29) a. (Context: Anyone is welcome to eat the porridge on the table. But I am afraid it’s very thick, so I wonder how you will eat it.)  
 Kanyúá ákûrúa na gîcîko.  
 Kanyua a-kû-rî-a na kî-ciko  
 1.Kanyua 1SM-PRS-eat-FV with 7-spoon  
 ‘Kanyua has used a spoon to eat.’
- b. (Context: You’re looking for a spoon to eat and there is one on the table.)  
 Gîcîko gîkú gíkûrúa \*(na Kanyúá).  
 kî-ciko kî-ku kî-kû-rî-a na Kanyua  
 7-spoon 7-DEM.MED 7SM-PRS-eat-FV with 1.Kanyua  
 ‘That spoon has been used by Kanyua to eat (so don’t use it).’
- (30) a. (Why do you look so happy?)  
 Kîmáthi ákûuya na ndeké.  
 Kîmathi a-kû-j-a na n-deke  
 1.Kîmathi 1SM-PRS-come-FV with 9-airplane  
 ‘Kimathi has come with an airplane.’ / ‘Kimathi has come by airplane.’
- b. (Why do you look so happy?)  
 Ndeké íkûuya na Kîmathi.  
 n-deke i-kû-j-a na Kîmathi  
 9-airplane 9SM-PRS-come-FV with 1.Kîmathi  
 lit. ‘The airplane has come with/brought Kimathi.’

The more frequent inversion construction is Default Agreement Inversion (DAI), and Semantic Locative Inversion (SLI) is also accepted but not used often. We first discuss the form and then the interpretation of both constructions.

In DAI, the subject marker is the default/expletive *kû-*, the original marker for locative class 17. However, since *kû-* no longer refers to an actual location, and a preverbal locative is not obligatory (see (32)), we analyse this subject marker as default agreement.

- (31) (Context: Reporting on what happened yesterday.)

Í kûrátûûbágá twáána.  
 ni kû-ra-tûûb-ag-a tû-ana  
 FOC 17SM-YPST-HAB-FV 13-child  
 ‘The children were jumping.’

- (32) (Mûthítûúní) í kûrágwiire mítí.

mû-thítû=ini ni kû-ra-gû-ire mítí  
 3-forest=LOC FOC 17SM-YPST-fall-PFV 4-tree  
 ‘(In the forest) there fell trees.’

In SLI, the subject marker is determined by a preverbal semantically locative DP – this is *semantic* locative inversion (Buell 2007), as the preverbal locative is not marked as such by locative morphology. In (33), the initial noun ‘clinic’ refers to a location but is in the non-locative noun class 7, and not marked by the locative suffix *-ini*. The subject marker on the verb shows agreement with the noun in class 7 rather than a locative class or the default *kû-*.

- (33) Kî-râni ki gî-kî i kî-ij-ag-a a-ekûrû ba-ingâ.

7-clinic 7-DEM.PROX FOC 7SM-come-HAB-FV 2-woman 2-many  
 ‘To this clinic come many women.’  
 (Buell & Muriungi 2008: 7, glosses adapted)

For SLI to apply, the locative must be an argument of the verb. This is the case in (33) because motion verbs like ‘come’ and ‘go’ take a locative complement, but for other verbs an applicative extension is used, as in (34). Note that this is still locative inversion (not instrument), as the plate is seen as a location, and the same sentence with ‘spoon’ would not be grammatical.

- (34) Q: Kû-rî wee a-rî-îr-a thaan-iini îno?

17SM-be 1.PRO 1SM-eat-APPL-FV 9.plate=LOC 9.DEM.PROX  
 ‘Is there anyone who has eaten from this plate?’

- A: Înu            i-kû-rî-îr-a            Kanyúá.  
 9.DEM.PROX 9SM-PRS-eat-APPL-FV 1.Kanyua  
 ‘This one has been eaten from by Kanyua (don’t use it).’

Scope interpretations show that the postverbal logical subject is in situ in a position below negation, in both DAI (35) and SLI (36):

- (35) Gûtiákwá rwaag̕í rûúnthe.  
 kû-ti-a-ku-a        rû-agî        rû-onthe  
 17SM-NEG-PST-die-FV 11-mosquito 11-all  
 ‘Not all mosquitoes died.’ (some are still alive)
- (36) Njírá íno ïtithíiyágá antû bóonthe.  
 n-jira    íno        ï-ti-thi-ag-a        a-ntû    ba-onthe  
 9-path 9.DEM.PROX 9SM-NEG-go-HAB-FV 2-person 2-all  
 ‘On this path not all people go (but some do).’

In tenses with an optional *ni* marker (see Section 7), the marker is present in DAI for a thetic interpretation:

- (37) (Context: You saw this and report it to the watchman so he can be alert.)  
 Ndûkáaní í kúthúúngîré muntû.  
 n-duka=ini ni    kû-thûúngîr-ire mu-ntû  
 9-shop=LOC FOC 17SM-enter-PFV 1-person  
 ‘In the shop there entered somebody.’

When the *ni* marker is absent, the focus is more on the postverbal subject, as seen in the question and answer in (38).

- (38) (Who entered the shop?)  
 Ndûkáaní kúthúúngîré antû báírî.  
 n-duka=ini kû-thûúngîr-ire a-ntû    ba-îrî  
 9-shop=LOC 17SM-enter-PFV 2-person 2-two  
 ‘In the shop there entered two people.’

Subject inversion is used when the logical subject is not the topic. This can be in thetic contexts, as illustrated in (39) for DAI and (40) for SLI, but also when the subject is in narrow focus, as shown below.

- (39) (There was an accident on the road and...)

Í gûkwíré mûntû.  
 ni kû-ku-ire mû-ntû  
 FOC 17SM-die-PFV 1-person  
 ‘Somebody died.’

- (40) Mûthítû n’ûágwîire mítí.

mû-thitû ni û-a-gû-ire mí-tî  
 3-forest FOC 3SM-PST-fall-PFV 4-tree  
 ‘In the forest trees fell.’

Three tests for focus all show that the postverbal logical subject in DAI can be focused: the inherently focal wh word is allowed, as in (41), the answer to a content question too, as in (42–44), as well as a subject modified by the exhaustive focus particle ‘only’ as in (45) and (46). As mentioned earlier, in those conjugations that allow an optional preverbal marker *ni*-, the marker cannot be present when the postverbal subject is in focus; compare to the presence of *ni* with a thetic interpretation above (see Section 7 on *ni*).

- (41) Gûkuíré ûû?

kû-ku-ire ûû  
 17SM-die-PFV who  
 ‘Who died?’

- (42) (Someone entered this place, was it you? OR Who entered this place?)

Kûthúúngrîre kaána.  
 kû-thûúngrîre ka-ana  
 17SM-enter-PFV 12-child  
 ‘There entered a child.’

- (43) (There were visitors here and I can’t see what they brought us; what was brought?)

Kûréétirwe conda na mîgááté.  
 kû-reet-w-ire conda na mî-gaate  
 17SM-bring-PASS-PFV 9.soda and 3-bread  
 ‘There was brought soda and bread.’

- (44) (Who was laughing?)  
 Í gûkúthekaga mbiti.  
 ni kû-ku-thek-ag-a m-bit  
 FOC 17SM-PRS-laugh-HAB-FV 9-hyena  
 ‘A/the hyena laughed.’
- (45) (#I) Kûthûûngûre kaána akî.  
 kû-thûûngîr-ire ka-ana akî  
 17SM-enter-PFV 12-child only  
 ‘There entered a child only.’
- (46) Kûratóórookire ngúkú akî.  
 kû-ra-toorook-ire n-gûkû akî  
 17SM-YPST-escape-PFV 10-chicken only  
 ‘There escaped chickens only.’

Buell & Muriungi’s (2008) manuscript shows that locative inversion is only accepted with passive (43), unaccusative (41) and unergative intransitive predicates (44), not with transitives (47). In our limited data, unergatives are often frowned upon and preferably expressed with a passive.

- (47) (Buell & Muriungi 2008: 8, glosses adapted)
- a. Arîmi i baendagia nyani thokooni îno.  
 a-rîmi ni ba-endi-ag-a nyani thoko=ini  
 2-farmer FOC 2SM-sell-HAB-FV 10.vegetable 9.market=LOC  
 î-no.  
 9-DEM.PROX  
 ‘Farmers sell vegetables at this market.’
  - b. \* Thokoni îno i kûendagia arîmi nyani.  
 thoko=ini î-no ni kû-endi-ag-a a-rîmi  
 9.market=LOC 9-DEM.PROX FOC 17SM-sell-HAB-FV 2-farmer  
 nyani.  
 10.vegetable  
 int. ‘At this market farmers sell vegetables.’
  - c. \* Thoko îno n’ îendagia arîmi nyani.  
 thoko î-no ni î-endi-ag-a arîmi nyani.  
 9.market 9-DEM.PROX FOC 9SM-sell-HAB-FV 2-farmer 10.vegetable  
 int. ‘At this market farmers sell vegetables.’

- (48) (Buell & Muriungi 2008: 7)

- a. Tw-ana tû-kûrû i tû-ceth-ag-a kî-eni=ini.  
13-child 13-old FOC 13SM-play-HAB-FV 7-field=LOC  
'Older children play in the field.'
- b. Kî-eni=ini i gû-ceth-ag-a tw-ana tû-kûrû.  
7-field=LOC FOC 17SM-play-HAB-FV 13-child 13-old  
'In the field play older children.'
- c. ?? Kî-eni i gî-ceth-ag-a tw-ana tû-kûrû.  
7-field FOC 7SM-play-HAB-FV 13-child 13-old  
'In the field play older children.'

However, Buell and Muriungi report that unergatives fare better with an applicative morpheme. In this case, the intuition is that the applicative encodes an explicit locative interpretation, while the locative sense is implicit in the passive.

- (49) (Buell & Muriungi 2008: 10)

- a. Tw-ana tû-kûrû i tû-ceth-ag-îr-a kî-eni=ini.  
13-child 13-old FOC 13SM-play-HAB-APPL-FV 7-field=LOC  
'Old children play in the field.'
- b. Kî-eni=ini i gû-ceth-ag-îr-a tw-ana tû-kûrû.  
7-field=LOC FOC 17SM-play-HAB-APPL-FV 13-child 13-old  
'On the field play older children.'
- c. Kî-eni i gî-ceth-ag-îr-a tw-ana tû-kûrû.  
7-field FOC 7SM-play-HAB-APPL-FV 13-child 13-old  
lit. 'The field plays older children.'

The applicative can be seen even with an unaccusative, illustrated for SLI in (50) and DAI in (51), making the locative into an argument of the verb (see also (34) above).

- (50) Barabárá n'îrákw\*(íír)íre ndúrú.

- |          |     |                       |            |
|----------|-----|-----------------------|------------|
| barabara | ni  | î-ra-ku-ir-ire        | n-duru     |
| 9.road   | FOC | 9SM-YPST-die-APPL-PFV | 9-squirrel |
- 'On the road died a squirrel.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>An alternative non-sensical interpretation has the road as the benefactive 'A squirrel died for the road'.

- (51) Barabáráani í kúráku\*(íír)ííre ndúrú.  
barabara=ini ni kû-ra-ku-ir-ire n-duru  
9.road=LOC FOC 17SM-YPST-die-APPL-PFV 9-squirrel  
'On the road there died a squirrel.'

Similar to inversion constructions, passives also encode the Theme as the pre-verbal topic and thereby structure the information. Two differences with inversion constructions are that 1) the verb is marked as passive by the suffix *-w-*, and 2) the subject can be omitted but if it is present, it is marked by *ni* (here functioning as 'by'). The passive is illustrated in a sequence from a folktale in (52).

- (52) (When Hare came back, he checked and found there was no guinea fowl.  
He asked Hyena: 'Hyena, where is the guinea fowl?'  
Mbítí yámííra: "Nírírwé í mwánki múnýáanya. Nkáángá nírírwé í  
mwanki."  
m-bití ì-a-mî-îr-a ni ì-rî-w-ire ni mû-anki  
9-hyena 9SM-PST-9OM-tell-FV FOC 9SM-eat-PASS-PFV FOC 3-fire  
mû-nyanya n-kanga ni ì-rî-îr-w-e ni mû-anki  
1-friend 9-guinea.fowl FOC 9SM-eat-APPL-PASS-FV FOC 3-fire  
'Hyena told him, it was eaten by the fire, my friend. The guinea fowl was  
eaten by the fire.'

In summary, Kîtharaka shows a preference for topical information to precede the verb and non-topical referents to follow, which accounts for left-dislocations and subject inversion. On the other hand, there is no dedicated focus position, and focused phrases do occur preverbally when preceded by *ni-*, as further discussed in the section on clefts (Section 5.1). The possible interpretations of the canonical SVO order depend on the conjugation of the verb involving the focus particle *ni-* as discussed in Section 7. For now, we first turn to additional marking of topics.

### 3 Topic marking

There are two types of structures that show evidence of topic marking in Kîtharaka. One involves a topic marker *-o* that agrees with the topical NP in class, and the other involves a combination of *na* 'with, and' and the same *-o*. The two are illustrated in (53) and (54), respectively. This marker is also found in Kirundi and Rukiga with similar functions, see Nshemezimana & van der Wal (2025 [this volume]) and Asiimwe & van der Wal (2025 [this volume]).

- (53) Ma-búkú mó í-má-úr-iré.  
 ma-buku ma-o ni ma-ur-ire  
 6-book 6-PRO FOC 6SM-lost-PFV  
 'As for the books, they are lost.'
- (54) (Context: The dog would climb to see whether the frog was hiding there.)  
 Kaána nakoó gácééke mûrinyaáani í mbí írâ óogó.  
 ka-ana na=ka-o ka-ceek-e mû-rinya=ini ni mbii í-râ  
 12-child and=12-PRO 12SM-check-SBJV 3-hole=LOC FOC what 9-be  
 a-ogo  
 16-DEM  
 'The child on the other hand, would check in the hole what is there.'

The topic marker *-o* has four context-driven interpretations, namely; polarity focus/verum, contrastive, intensive, and deprecatiave. These, together with their contexts are illustrated in (55) to (56), respectively.

- (55) (Is it really true that Brian lost the books? I don't trust what Edith says.)  
 Mabúkú mó<sup>5</sup> imauriré.  
 ma-buku ma-o ni ma-ur-ire  
 6-book 6-PRO FOC 6SM-lost-PFV  
 'As for the books, they are lost.' [polarity focus]
- (56) (Did you water the cows and the sheep? Well, the cows did not drink water...)  
 Índi cíó ng'oondú icinyúiré.  
 índi ci-o n-g'oondú ni ci-nyu-ire  
 but 10-PRO 10-sheep FOC 10SM-drink-PFV  
 '...but as for the sheep they drank.' [contrastive]
- (57) (Has it rained that much?)  
 Mbúra yoó ikuúra.  
 m-bura í-o í-kû-ur-a  
 9-rain 9-PRO 9SM-PRS-rain-FV  
 'It has really rained.' [intensive]

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<sup>5</sup>A reviewer suggested that *mabuku* is a left-dislocated topic and *mo* functions as the argument rather than a topic marker. While this has likely been the case in a previous stage of the language, the fact that a prosodic break (if one is present) would be following *mo* rather than *mabuku* shows that currently *mo* functions as a contrastive topic marker and not a pronoun in this sentence.

- (58) (Context: It has rained but you think it will not help much because there are lots of weeds in the farm that prevent you from planting early.)  
 Mbúra yoó ïkuúra.  
 m-bura î-o      î-kû-ur-a  
 9-rain 9-PRO 9SM-PRS-rain-FV  
 ‘It has rained but...’ [depreciative]

It is possible to move the marker from the pre-verbal to the post-verbal position and still maintain the various interpretations, as in the variant of (58) in (59).

- (59) Mbúra ïkuúra yoó.  
 m-bura î-kû-ur-a      î-o  
 9-rain 9SM-PRS-rain-FV 9-PRO  
 ‘It has rained but...’

It is interesting to note that these interpretations are the exact same as those found in topic doubling, discussed in Section 4.3.

Second, the combination of *na* ‘with, and’ and the pronominal clitic in *-o* is used as a contrastive or shift topic marker in Kîtharaka. We first discuss the other uses of NA+ PRO before returning to its use as a contrastive/shift topic marker, so that its origin and multifunctionality are clear. We find the combination for pronominalised complements of the preposition *na* ‘with’, for example in the instrumental (60) combination also features as a resumptive pronoun in clefts and relative clauses, as seen in (62).

- (60) Índaátúlire ñkú baabá ábuá nació mwaanki.  
 ni nda-ra-tul-ire      n-kû      baaba   a-bu-a      na=ci-o  
 FOC 1SG.SM-YPST-split-PFV 10-firewood 1.father 1SM-light-FV with=10-PRO  
 mû-anki  
 3-fire  
 ‘I split firewood for father to light the fire with it.’
- (61) (Does Thomas have a cat? + QUIS picture of Thomas with a cat and a rabbit.)  
 Ii árí nakó naká wána kayúgú.  
 ii a-rí    na=ka-o    na=ka    wana ka-yugu  
 yes 1SM-be with=12-PRO and=POL even 12-rabbit  
 ‘Yes, he has one, and also a rabbit.’

- (62) (Does William have four melons? + QUIS picture of William with three melons.)

Arí, i mathátû arí **namó**.

ari ni ma-thatû a-rí na=ma-o  
no FOC 6-three 1SM-be with=6-PRO

‘No, he has three.’ (lit. ‘it is three that he is with’)

The pronoun with *na* can also be used with an additive meaning, with a coreferential noun phrase as in (63) or without it as in (64). The same is found with *wana* ‘even’ + pro, as in (65).

- (63) Tóm **nawé** n’áráíníre.

Tom na=we ni a-ra-in-ire  
1.Tom and=1.PRO FOC 1SM-YPST-dance-PFV

‘Tom also danced.’

- (64) (The gazelle threw the child into the water. The little dog, because he was running, did not see the bank.)

Nakó na kûgwa.

na=ka-o na ku-gûa  
with=12-PRO and 15-fall

‘He too fell.’

- (65) Mûtúgí **wana** wé árí na meetho mátuúne.

Mûtugi wana we a-rí na ma-itho ma-tuune  
1.Mûtugi even 1.PRO 1SM-be with 6-eyes 6-red

‘Mûtugi among others/even he has brown eyes.’

We speculate that this additive use facilitates marking a contrastive topic. In (66), we see a bridging context in which both interpretations are plausible: as an additive marker (not just the child but also the little dog), or as a shift topic marker (the topic shifting from the child to the little dog).

- (66) Kaana kaugia, gakurû **nako** i kaugîtie.

ka-ana ka-ugi-a ka-kurû na=ka-o ni ka-ugi-îte  
12-child 12SM-run-FV 12-dog with=12-PRO FOC 12SM-run-STAT.PFV  
‘The child ran, while the little dog was also running.’

The NA+ PRO marker can only mark the second topic (the shift or contrast), as indicated by the felicitous and infelicitous placement of the marker in (67).

- (67) (What did Souza do with the beans and the carrots?)

Mboócó (\*nació) n' árarugire, kaarátí nació, éendíá.  
 m-booco na=ci-o ni a-ra-gur-ire kaarati na=ci-o  
 10-bean and=10-PRO FOC 1SM-YPST-cook-PFV 10.carrot and=10-PRO  
 a-endí-a  
 1SM-sell-FV

'The beans he cooked and the carrots he sold.'

In (68), the use of *namo* is only allowed if we have been talking about other fruits before, contrasting the mangoes to bananas and oranges, for example.

- (68) Méémbé namó mbeendéété márá méérú.

ma-embe na=ma-o n-end-îte ma-ra ma-eru  
 6-mango and=6-PRO 1SG.SM-like-STAT.PFV 6-RM 6-ripe  
 'And as for mangoes, I like ripe ones.'

Note that in these contrastive topic examples, the marker is syntactically optional, unlike in (60–62); and an optional prosodic break may follow the marker, e.g. after *namo* in (68) as judged by the first author, and the lengthened syllable (*nakoó*) in (54) above.

In its use as a shift topic marker, the NA+ PRO marker is also used as a narrative-structuring device, switching between different referents. This was illustrated in (53) above, and can again be seen in (69): Hyena and Hare are the protagonists, and the story alternates between the actions of the one and those of the other.

- (69) (Hare got hold of Hyena and beat him. Hyena cries 'My husband, the black one, leave me! Leave me alone!')

Kayúgú nakó n'wa kumírumia mmá! mmá!  
 ka-yûgû na=ka-o ni w-a ku-mî-rum-i-a mma mma  
 12-hare and=12-PRO COP 1-CONN 15-9OM-beat-SC-FV IDEO IDEO  
 'But Hare kept on beating him: whack! whack!'

Summarising this section, Kïítharaka can (but does not need to) mark contrastive topics by the marker *-o*, which follows the topic NP and agrees with it in noun class. The context determines whether the interpretation results in just a contrast on the topical referent, or a polarity focus/verum, intensive, or deprecative interpretation of the clause. When the same proposition applies to a second topic, the marker *-o* is preceded by *na* 'and'.

## 4 Predicate doubling

Güldemann & Fiedler (2019) show that across Bantu languages there are three constructions in which the infinitive and the inflected form of the verb can co-occur in the same sentence: the infinitive can appear in a cleft (70), in situ in a postverbal position (71), and as a left-peripheral topic (72).

- (70) I kûrúíngá túrííngiré ng’óombé, tûtíracíthaika. [cleft]  
       ni   kû-riinga tû-riing-ire   ng’-oombe tû-ti-ra-ci-thaik-a  
       FOC 15-hit   1PL.SM-hit-PFV 10-cow   1PL.SM-NEG-YPST-10OM-tie-FV  
       ‘We *hit* the cows, we didn’t tie them.’
- (71) Bakíbáthírá kûbathírá. [in situ]  
       ba-kî-ba-thiri-a                   kû-ba-thiria  
       2SM-DEP-2OM-finish-FV 15-2OM-finish  
       ‘They completely finished them.’
- (72) Kûrúgá nkáárúga. [topic]  
       kû-ruga n-kaa-rug-a  
       15-cook 1SG.SM-FUT-cook-FV  
       ‘I will indeed cook.’

Kîtharaka shows all three types of predicate doubling, which seems to be unique among the Bantu languages studied in our project. We present the formal and functional properties of each in turn. For completeness, we mention that predicate doubling only occurs with the infinitive, not with other nominalised forms of the predicate (as in Kirundi or Rukiga, for example).

### 4.1 Cleft doubling

In a cleft doubling structure, a preverbal infinitival verb is preceded by a focus marker/copula. The structure looks like a basic cleft with a non-infinitival noun (see Section 5.1; thus, alternatives are triggered for the clefted constituent, in this case a predicate. The structure has a state-of-affairs focus reading (focus on the verb itself). An object may follow the inflected verb and have the same SoA reading, as in (74).

- (73) (Context: We were supposed to wash the child, apply lotion, and dress him/her.)

I kûtháámbiá tûkáthaambiiré.  
 ni kû-thaamb-i-a tû-ka-thaamb-i-ire  
 FOC 15-clean-IC-FV 1PL.SM-12OM-clean-IC-PFV  
 ‘We only washed him/her (the child).’

- (74) Í kûnywá bánywiiré kawá... ìndî batírátûúra.

ni kû-nyua ba-nyu-ire kawa ìndî ba-ti-ra-tûûr-a  
 FOC 15-drink 2SM-drink-PFV coffee but 2SM-NEG-YPST-pour-FV  
 ‘They drank the coffee, but they didn’t pour it.’

The infinitive may also contain an object, as in (75), resulting in VP focus, not SoA focus, as is clear from the following contrasting clause.

- (75) (Context: We were expected to hit the cows and wash clothes.)

Í kû-riínga ng'óombé tû-riíng-ire; tû-tí-rá-bûûr-a  
 FOC 15-hit 10-cow 1PL.SM-hit-PFV 1PL.SM-NEG-YPST-wash-FV  
 n-gúo.  
 10-cloth  
 ‘We hit the cows; we didn’t wash clothes.’

## 4.2 In situ doubling

For in situ doubling, the infinitive follows inflected verb. In tenses with an optional *ni* marker, the marker must be absent, placing the focus on the infinitive (see Sections 2.2 and 7 for postverbal focus and the absence of *ni* marking on the verb marking focus, respectively).

- (76) (Did they sing/dance well?)

(#Í) báráiníre kwiína.  
 ni ba-ra-in-ire kû-ina  
 FOC 2SM-YPST-dance-PFV 15-dance  
 ‘They really danced/sang.’

With a transitive predicate, the infinitive can follow the object but cannot precede it, as in (77).

- (77) Twíiníré (kîbûco)<sup>6</sup> kwíína.  
 tû-in-ire kîbûco kû-ina  
 1PL.SM-sing-PFV kîbûco 15-sing  
 'We really sang (*kibuco*).'

In the above examples, the in-situ doubling is used in a polarity-focus context. Another possible interpretation is a high degree of doing the action, with alternatives being lesser ways of doing the action, as in (78). Some contexts, as in (79), may also allow state-of-affairs focus.

- (78) (How did Mary do in the dancing competition?)<sup>7</sup>  
 Araíníre kwíína (kúngwa).  
 a-ra-in-ire kû-ina (ku-ngwa).  
 1SM-YPST-sing-PFV 15-sing 15-self  
 'She danced amazingly well.' (nearing professional levels)
- (79) (About Bible verse Numbers 21:3: And what did the Israelites do to the enemy camp when they found them?)  
 Ba-kí-bá-thírí-á kû-ba-thírí-a.  
 2SM-DEP-2OM-finish-FV 15-2OM-finish  
 'They completely finished them.'

### 4.3 Topic doubling

In topic doubling, the infinitive occurs at the left edge of the sentence. This can be understood the same way as topicalization of a simple noun: it is simply an infinitive (noun) that is placed in the left periphery as a topic.

- (80) (How have I performed?)  
 Kwííná ûkûíina...  
 kû-iina û-kû-in-a  
 15-sing 2SG.SM-sing-FV  
 'You have sung, but...'

Notably it can involve different predicates as in (81), providing evidence that the initial infinitive is not a copy of the inflected verb but a simple topicalised phrase.

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<sup>6</sup>A traditional Tharaka romantic song/dance.

<sup>7</sup>The verb *kûina* means both 'dance' and 'sing'; we translate it as appropriate for the context.

- (81) (Do you do sports? What kind of sporting activities do you do?)  
 Gûcéétha, í mbúagáia.  
 kû-ceetha ní n-ugi-ag-a.  
 15-do.sports FOC 1SG.SM-run-HAB-FV  
 ‘As for sports, I run.’

The predicate being the topic, it is marked as not being the new information, which should therefore be elsewhere. What forms the new information depends on the arguments in the sentence: when an object is present, the focus is typically on the object or the VP as in (82), and when followed by a subject cleft, the focus is the subject as in (83). When there is no other constituent, focus on the polarity is a natural interpretation, as in (84).

- (82) (Context: Someone insisting on catching of goats.)  
 Kû-gwáátá n-tí-gwaat-a m-bûri.  
 15-catch 1SG.SM-NEG-catch-FV 9-goat  
 ‘I won’t catch a goat (but maybe something else).’
- (83) (Who is swimming? + QUIS picture of three people in different activities)<sup>8</sup>  
 Kû-butírá í mw-aáná á-kû-butír-a.  
 15-swim FOC 1-child 1SM-PRS-swim-FV  
 ‘As for swimming, it’s the child who is swimming.’
- (84) (Context: Someone is doubting whether the teachers danced.)  
 Kûíná (arímú) í baíiníré!  
 kû-iná a-rimû ni ba-in-ire  
 15-dance 2-teacher FOC 2SM-dance-PFV  
 ‘(The teachers) they did dance!’
- (85) (How will they manage to graze the cows and all those sheep?)  
 Kû-rííthía ba-káá-rííthi-a ng'-oóndu, ng'-óómbě ba-káá-thaik-a.  
 15-graze 2SM-FUT-graze-FV 10-sheep 10-cow 2SM-tie-FV  
 ‘They will graze the sheep; the cows they will tie.’

Topic doubling is also very naturally used in contexts where the infinitive is contrasted to other actions that are implied not to be carried out.

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<sup>8</sup>Note that this may not be the most natural response, which would be simply the cleft. The use of the topical material depends on whether the speaker wants to overtly express the topic or not.

- (86) (I hear you laughed at him and beat him up.)  
 Kûthéká í túthekiré... índí tûtíramûríinga.  
 kû-theka ni tû-thek-ire            ìnî tû-ti-ra-mû-riing-a  
 15-laugh FOC 1PL.SM-laugh-PFV but 1PL.SM-NEG-YPST-1OM-hit-FV  
 We did laugh (admittedly), but we didn't hit him.'

Two possible additional flavours of interpretation are possible: a depreciative and an intensive reading. In examples (87) to (89), we have a depreciative interpretation: although it is true that the actions are carried out, they did not yield much value. In (90), we have an intensive reading.

- (87) (I saw you weeded quite a large portion!)<sup>9</sup>  
 Kû-rímá í tû-rím-iré.  
 15-dig FOC 1PL.SM-dig-PFV  
 'We weeded, but...'  
 'Although we weeded...' (it's useless, the weeds will come back soon)
- (88) (How can one kill a chicken?)  
 Kw-íítá,      nwá w-iít-e,                                índí i-tí-kw-a                        rûa.  
 15-strangle can 2SG.SM-strangle-SBJV but 9SM-NEG-die-FV soon  
 'Well, you can strangle, but it doesn't die quickly.'
- (89) (I liked your game, you really played!)  
 Gû-céethă i tû-ceeth-iré,      índí n-gúkúm-án-o  
 15-play FOC 1PL.SM-play-PFV but 9-corrupt-RECP-NMLZ  
 y-á-tû-túny-a                        gî-kóómbé.  
 9SM-PST-1PL.OM-snatch-FV 7-cup  
 'We did play well, but corruption snatched the cup from us.'
- (90) (You weeded an incredible two acres in five hours while your father expected that you can only do one acre.)  
 Kûrîma itûrîmire baaba.  
 kû-rîma ni tû-rîm-ire                baaba  
 15-weed FOC 1PL.SM-weed-PFV dad  
 'We really weeded (a lot), dad.'

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<sup>9</sup>A reviewer asked whether intonation is necessary to derive the intended meaning, as witnessed to some extent in Kikuyu. For Kîtharaka, however, intonation does not license the intended meaning and a prosodic break at the end of the clause is optional.

These additional aspects of interpretation are not encoded in the semantics but pragmatics, as they can vary with the context and examples can hence be ambiguous:

- (91) Kwííná n' áíiniré bai!  
kû-iina ni a-iin-ire bai  
15-sing FOC 1SM-sing-PFV buddy  
intensive: 'Boy did she sing!' (we never knew she had such a good voice)  
depreciative: 'Well at least she sang...' (try to see the positive side)

The infinitive can be analysed as a contrastive topic, where the alternative topics are on a scale of expectation: for the intensive reading the assertion is higher than expected, and for the depreciative reading the assertion is more than zero (see Jerro & van der Wal in preparation). Interestingly, polarity focus/verum, contrast, depreciative and intensive are exactly the same interpretations as those possible for contrastive topics marked by *-o*, as exemplified in Section 3, which supports an analysis of topic doubling as the infinitive functioning as a contrastive topic.

A final interpretation occurs in the future tense, which has an optional *ni* marker on the verb. When the marker is absent, the interpretation is one of verum, as in (92), but when it is present, a deontic interpretation results.

- (92) (Context: A and B are arguing over cooking. A thinks B is unwilling to cook, then B answers:)  
Kûrúgá nkáárúga.  
kû-ruga n-ka-rug-a  
15-cook 1SG.SM-FUT-cook-FV  
'I will cook.'
- (93) (Context: You are organising a function and are told to go and sleep, but you need to prepare. Whatever else I do, ....)  
...kûrúga ínkáárúga.  
kû-ruga ni n-ka-rug-a  
15-cook FOC 1SG.SM-FUT-cook-FV  
'I must cook.'

In summary, Kûítharaka exceptionally shows three types of predicate doubling with infinitives. These are not special constructions but simply consist of the infinitive occupying a focus or topic position. When the infinitive is clefted (cleft doubling), the resulting interpretation is one of state-of-affairs focus; as a

postverbal focus (in situ doubling), the infinitive is used polarity focus/verum context and with an intensive reading; and when the infinitive is in the left-periphery (topic doubling), it functions as a contrastive topic, used with a contrastive, verum, intensive, or deprecative interpretation. It is interesting to note the influence of the pragmatics on the precise interpretation here, specifically the intensive and deprecative aspects of meaning.

## 5 Cleft constructions

Like other languages in van der Wal (2025), Kîtharaka too shows three structures that look like a basic cleft, a pseudocleft, and a reverse pseudocleft (although their underlying structures are subject to debate). All three constructions use the marker *ni*, which surfaces as *i* before a consonant and *n* before a vowel – the copula has the form *ti* in negation. The marker *ni* functions as a copula in simple predication and identification, illustrated in (94) and (95), but has been analysed as a focus marker by Abels & Muriungi (2008). We gloss it as COP in clear copula constructions, and as FOC in cleft(-like) constructions and preceding the verb (see Section 7).

- (94) (What does Jane do for a living?)  
 Jane **i** mw-arimû.  
 1.Jane COP 1-teacher  
 'Jane is a teacher.' [predicational]
- (95) (Who is the chef?)  
 Chebu **i** mw-ekûrû ûyû.  
 chef COP 1-woman 1.DEM.PROX  
 'The chef is this woman.' [specificational]

The debate about the precise status of the copula is briefly summarised in Section 5.1 but an in-depth discussion is part of further research. In what follows, our aim is to describe the information-structural interpretation of the three cleft(-like) constructions. We start with the basic cleft/preverbal focus construction in Section 5.1, followed by the pseudocleft and reverse pseudocleft in Section 5.2, and finally a related construction characterised by *ni* followed by a pronoun (NI-PRO) in Section 5.3.

### 5.1 Preverbal focus construction/basic cleft

Starting with the basic cleft, there are two conflicting perspectives in the literature for analysing this structure. On the one hand there are authors that advocate for a biclausal cleft analysis (see Bergvall 1987 for Kikuyu, Harford 1997 for Kîtharaka, Lafkioui et al. 2016 for Kirundi, and Zentz 2016 for Shona) with the structure consisting of a copula, clefted constituent, and relative clause. On the other hand it has been argued that the structure is monoclausal, hence, better analysed as a focus construction (see Clements 1984, Schwarz 2003 for Kikuyu, Muriungi 2005, Abels & Muriungi 2008 for Kîtharaka). In the current chapter we will not go into this syntactic debate (see Kanampiu & van der Wal in preparation for additional considerations to not assume Abels & Muriungi's monoclausal analysis), and after introducing the basic information about the form of the construction, we rather concentrate on the interpretation of the construction. We refer to the construction as "preverbal focus" or "basic cleft" interchangeably without committing to a syntactic analysis.

The basic cleft consists of *ni/ti* (the copula or focus particle) followed by a focused constituent, and a relative clause. Apart from argument NPs, as in (96), the focused constituent can also be a pronoun as in (97) (which will be relevant in the discussion of the NI-PRO construction in Section 5.3), a nominalised modifier (98), or an infinitive as in cleft predicate doubling (see Section 4).

- (96) (Who went to the farm?)

I Kîmáthi ûthííre mûndaaní.  
ni Kîmathi û-thi-ire mû-nda=ini  
FOC Kîmathi 1RM-go-PFV 3-farm=LOC  
'It is Kîmathi who went to the farm.'

- (97) (If she washes with water from a pool without frogs.)

I río akaabúá.  
ni rí-o a-ka-bu-a  
FOC 5-PRO 1SM-FUT-be.good-FV  
'It's then (that time) that she will heal.'

- (98) (It's alleged that the Swahili teacher was absent this morning.)

Arí t'wa gíchoíri n'wá matháábu.  
arí ti w-a gí-choiri ni w-a ma-thaabu  
no NEG.FOC 1-CONN 7-Kiswahili FOC 1-CONN 6-mathematics  
'No, it is not (the one) of Kiswahili but of mathematics.'

Note that there is no presupposition of existence in this construction, as the question in (99a) can felicitously be answered by the empty set in (99b). Here, the construction differs from the pseudocleft (compare in Section 5.2).

- (99) a. N'úú úyûúgú ápéeré meembe  
 ni úú úyûúgu a-per-ire ma-embe  
 FOC 1.who 1.grandmother 1SM-give-PFV 6-mango  
 'Who did grandma give mangoes?'  
 b. Gûtírí wě.  
 kû-ti-rî we  
 17SM-NEG-be 1.PRO  
 'Nobody.' lit. 'There isn't one.'

Abels & Muriungi (2008) show in detail that the Kîtharaka basic cleft/prenominal focus structure is used to express exhaustive focus on the initial constituent marked by *ni*. We refer to their work for valuable and intricate argumentation, and add the following diagnostics and data to arrive at the same conclusion. First, to show that the preverbal constituent is in focus, consider that questions and answers are naturally given in the preverbal focus construction, especially for subjects (although subjects may also be focused postverbally, see subject inversion in Section 2.3). Subject clefts are illustrated in (100) and object clefts in (101).

- (100) Q: Íbaaú báayá?  
 ni ba-û ba-a-y-a  
 FOC 2-who 2SM-PST-come-FV  
 'Who(pl) came?'  
 A: I Mwendé na Baráka (báayá).  
 ni Mwende na Baraka (ba-a-y-a)  
 FOC 1.Mwende and 1.Baraka (2SM-N.PST-come-FV)  
 'It's Mwende and Baraka (who came.)'  
 (101) Q: I mbi Áshá ágûkáánda?  
 ni mbi Asha a-kû-kaand-a  
 FOC what 1.Asha 1SM-PRS-bake-FV  
 'What is Asha baking?'  
 A: Ímûgaáté Áshá agûkáánda.  
 ni mû-gaate Asha a-kû-kaand-a  
 FOC 3-bread 1.Asha 1SM-PRS-bake-FV  
 'It's bread that Asha is baking.'

If part of an idiom is focused in this construction, it loses its idiomatic interpretation (though see van der Wal 2021 on types of idioms and focus), as expected if this is a focus construction. This is because no alternatives can be triggered for the object in the idiomatic reading, as this reading is dependent on both the verb and the object, as illustrated for the idiom *kûtwa mûtî* ‘to become pregnant’, lit. ‘to climb a tree’ (102).

- (102) Í mûtí mwaarí átwéeté.  
 ni mû-tî mû-ari a-tw-îte  
 FOC 3-tree 1-girl 1SM-climb-STAT.PFV  
 \*“The girl became pregnant.”  
 ‘It’s a tree that the girl climbed.’ (van der Wal 2021: 10)

The preverbal focus is naturally used in a corrective context, as in (103).

- (103) (Are these people wearing hats? + QUIS picture)  
 Éékûrú bataikírité (nkoobia), n’ aantû arúme békírité nkoobiá.  
 a-ekûrû ba-ta-ikîr-îte n-koobia ni a-ntû a-rume  
 2-woman 2SM-NEG-dress-STAT.PFV 10-hat FOC 2-person 2-male  
 ba-e-kîr-îte n-koobia  
 2SM-REFL-dress-STAT.PFV 10-hat  
 ‘The women don’t wear (hats); it’s the men who wear hats.’

The focus constituent is compatible with the exhaustive focus particle *-onka* (only) as in (104), but not with the scalar particle *wana* ‘even’ (105a).<sup>10</sup> The example in (105a) was improved by placing the particle sentence-initially as in (105b), where it has scope over the whole action and cannot be interpreted as ‘even/also tablecloths’. Given the inclusive nature of ‘even’, the incompatibility shows the exclusive nature of the construction.

- (104) (Did the teacher give the children books and pens?)  
 I tûrámu túunká mwarímû apéeré twaána.  
 ni tû-ramu tu-onka mû-arimû a-per-ire tû-aana  
 FOC 13-pens 13-only 1-teacher 1SM-give-PFV 13-child  
 ‘It is pens only that the teacher gave to the children.’

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<sup>10</sup>The particle *kinya* (a variant of the additive particle) is equally inadmissible in the structure; thanks to a reviewer for asking about this.

- (105) a. I (\*wana) ítaambáa Naómí áthaambirié.  
       ni   wana i-tambaa Naomi   a-thaamb-i-ire  
       FOC even 8-cloth 1.Naomi 1SM-clean-IC-PFV  
       ‘It’s (\*even) curtains that Naomi washed’  
       ‘It’s the tablecloths that Naomi washed (not the bedding).’
- b. (Context: Naomi was supposed to wash the bedding, but ...):  
       Wana n’íitaambaă Naómí áthaambirié.  
       wana ni   i-tambaa Naomi   a-thaamb-i-ire  
       even FOC 8-cloth 1.Naomi 1SM-clean-IC-PFV  
       ‘In addition to that it’s curtains that Naomi washed.’

The universal quantifier ‘all’ is only accepted in this construction in the context of contrasting the universality with other quantities, as indicated in the corrective contexts for (106) and (107a). Modification by a relative clause also allows for the generation and exclusion of alternatives and also makes the universal quantifier acceptable in this construction, as in (107b): all the animals in this home can be contrasted with the alternative animals outside this home.

- (106) (He tasted this cake. / He tasted two cakes.)

I kéki cionthé aronchiré.  
       ni   keki   ci-onthe a-ronch-ire  
       FOC 10.cake 10-all   1SM-taste-PFV  
       ‘It is all the cakes that he tasted.’

- (107) a. (Context 1: You bring a hen, a cow, and a goat to be slaughtered.  
       Someone says we slaughter the hen and the cow only.  
       Context 2: (In a different scenario) someone says all the *people* will die.)

Arî, í nyamû cionthé igakúá.  
       arî ni   n-yamû   ci-onthe i-ka-ku-a  
       no FOC 10-animal 10-all   10SM-FUT-die-FV  
       ‘It is all the animals that will die.’

- b. Í nyamû yoónthé írî mûciî üyû igakúá.  
       ni   n-yamû   y-onthe í-rî   mû-ciî   û-yû              í-ka-ku-a  
       FOC 9-animal 9-all   9-be 9-home 9-DEM.PROX 9SM-FUT-die-FV  
       ‘It is every animal in this home that will die.’

The indefinite quantifier *-mwe* ‘some’ necessarily requires a subset reading in a cleft: in (108) it is not ‘some beans’ but ‘some of the beans (not the other)’, as is

clear not only from the translation, but also from the impossibility of following up with the whole set. We can again understand this as the cleft construction bringing exhaustive focus.

- (108) I mbooco ímwé irâ iři gîkóómbéení gîkî, ntuúne... #wana ícíoonthé.  
 ni m-booco i-mwe i-ra i-ři kî-koombe=ini kîkî ni  
 FOC 10-bean 10-one 10-RM 10SM-be 7-cup=LOC 7.DEM.PROX COP  
 n-tuune wana ni ci-onthe  
 10-red even COP 10-all  
 ‘It’s some of the beans that are in this cup that are red... #it’s even all of them.’

Numerals lose the lower-boundary reading and instead become the exact amount in the preverbal focus construction. This is illustrated in (109a), and can be contrasted with the interpretation of a numeral modifying the object in an SVO sentence – compare (109b). The fact that the SVO order allows the follow up ‘and even more’ but the cleft/focus construction does not shows again that this construction excludes alternatives, in this case all amounts higher than 100,000.

- (109) a. Íngirí ígana áriágwá #wana í nkûrûki.  
 ni n-giri i-gana a-ři-ag-w-a wana ni  
 FOC 9-thousand 9-hundred 1SM-pay-HAB-PASS-FV even FOC  
 n-kûrûki  
 9-more  
 ‘It’s 100,000 that he is paid, #even more.’  
 b. Agwáatága/ aríágwa ngirí ígana, wana í nkûrûki.  
 a-kû-at-ag-a/ a-ři-ag-w-a n-giri i-gana  
 1SM-PRS-earn-HAB-FV/ 1SM-pay-HAB-PASS-FV 9-thousand 9-hundred  
 wana ni n-kûrûki  
 even FOC 9-more  
 ‘He earns / is paid 100,000, even more.’

Unexpectedly, an indefinite interpretation of the focused constituent is possible; specifically, the focus construction can be used in a thetic context, as in (110–112).

- (110) (Context: You're explaining what is happening, what has caused the sadness.)<sup>11</sup>

Í múúntú ákwíire.  
 ni mû-ntû a-ku-ire  
 FOC 1-person 1SM-die-PFV  
 'Somebody died.'

- (111) (Why were you running away? / Why did you scream?)

I gîintú mbónire.  
 ni kî-ntû n-on-ire  
 FOC 7-thing 1SG.SM-see-PFV  
 'I saw something.' / 'It's something I saw.'

- (112) (Why are you walking in a funny way?)

I mûgoongó úkúúmbaankana.  
 ni mû-goongo û-kûû-n-aankan-a  
 FOC 3-back 3SM-PRS-1SG.OM-ache-FV  
 'It is my back that aches.'

This can perhaps be understood as focus on the whole situation: 'it is only for this reason that I'm sad'. This interpretation is also possible for the full clefted clause in (113).

- (113) (Why are you crying?)

N'áatî múntû ágûkua/ n'ákwiré.  
 ni atî mu-ntû a-kû-ku-a/ ni a-a-ku-ire  
 FOC COMP 1-person 1SM-PRS-die-FV/ FOC 1SM-N.PST-die-PFV  
 'It is that a person has died/died (that I'm crying), and that's it.'

In summary, the preverbal focus construction/basic cleft shows all the hallmarks of an exhaustive focus interpretation (see again also Abels & Muriungi 2008). Its use in thetic contexts may be explained as an exhaustive interpretation of the whole sentence, or interpreted as a widening/bleaching of meaning in the process of grammaticalization.

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<sup>11</sup>The sentence can also be interpreted as narrow focus under a generic reading, for example in a context where people are disagreeing whether it was an animal or a person who died.

## 5.2 Pseudocleft

The pseudocleft (and the reverse pseudocleft) is a copular clause that links a free relative with a noun phrase. In the pseudocleft, the free relative precedes the copula and the noun phrase follows, as in (114) and (115).

- (114) (What did Karími kick?)  
[Kí-rá Karími á-rííng-iré] í mû-bíírá.  
7-RM Karími 1SM-kick-PFV COP 3-ball  
'What Karími kicked is a ball.'
- (115) [Bará bapéerwé tûrámu] i twáána tuunka.  
[ba-ra ba-per-w-ire tû-ramu] ni tû-ana tû-onka.  
2-RM 2SM-give-PASS-PFV 13-pens COP 13-child 13-only  
'Those that were given pens are the children only.'

The free relative is introduced by the definite relative marking, that is, the distal demonstrative ending in *-ra*, taking the noun class of what it refers to. Free relative clauses function as independent NPs, as can be seen in their use as a subject as in (116) or object as in (117).

- (116) (Muntû) [Ûra gwítiré] akáaya.  
mu-ntû û-ra û-ît-ire a-kaa-y-a  
1-person 1-RM 2SG.SM-call-PFV 1SM-FUT-come-FV  
'The one you called will come.'
- (117) Í mbeendeeté (kîntû) [kírá mbóniré].  
ni n-end-îte kî-ntû kí-ra n-on-ire  
FOC 1SG.SM-like-STAT.PFV 7-thing 7-RM 1SG.SM-see-PFV  
'I like what I saw / I like the thing that I saw'

Kîtharaka also has the reverse structure where we find a precopular noun phrase and a postcopular free relative, as in (118).

- (118) (Who is Karími in your class?)  
Karími n' [ûrá árumiré mwarímû].  
Karími ni [û-ra a-rum-ire mû-arimû]  
1.Karími COP [1-RM 1SM-insult-PFV 1-teacher  
'Karími is the one who insulted the teacher.'

Structurally, this would count as a reverse pseudocleft, because it is the exact reverse of the pseudocleft, but the term “reverse pseudocleft” has been applied mostly to constructions in which the preverbal NP is in focus. In both of the constructions above, however, the focus is on the postcopular constituent (bolded in (119) and (120)), as indicated in the accepted and unacceptable context questions for each construction.

- (119) (Context 1: Is Joy washing the dishes?  
 Context 2: Who is washing the dishes?  
 #Context 3: I am looking for Rob, who is working in a kitchen full of people. I ask ‘Who is Rob?’)  
 [Úrá û-kû-thaamb-i-a thaáni] i **Rob.**  
 1.RM 1RM-PRS-clean-IC-FV 10.plate COP 1.Rob  
 ‘The one who is washing the dishes is Rob.’
- (120) (#Context 1: Is Joy doing the dishes?  
 #Context 2: Who is washing the dishes?  
 Context 3: I am looking for Rob, who is working in a kitchen full of people. I ask ‘Who is Rob?’)  
 Rob n’ [ûrá û-kû-thaamb-i-a thaáni]  
 1.Rob COP 1.RM 1RM-PRS-clean-IC-FV 10.plate  
 ‘Rob is the one who is washing the dishes.’

We illustrate for the pseudocleft that the postcopular noun phrase is in focus, as seen in the question-answer pairs in (119) above, and that this focus identifies the correct referent among alternative referents. The inverse construction as in (120) we shall refer to as the NI+RM construction in order to not create confusion between form and function with the term “reverse pseudocleft”, and this is compared to a very similar construction in Section 5.3.

Examples (121) and (122) illustrate an infinitive and a pronominal demonstrative as the focused constituent in the pseudocleft. The contexts here indicate a choice among alternatives and a correction, respectively.

- (121) (Between getting lost in the forest and encountering wild animals, what don’t you want to experience?)  
 Bûrá ntakwéenda, í kûúra.  
 bû-ra n-ta-kû-end-a ni kû-ûra  
 14-RM 1SG.SM-NEG-PRS-like-FV COP 15-get.lost  
 ‘What I don’t want, is to get lost.’

- (122) (Is it this one that came late?)

Arí ûrá aceereerwé n'ûûrá (t'ûûyû).  
 arí û-ra a-ceererw-e ni û-ra ti û-yû  
 no 1-RM 1SM-be.late-PFV COP 1-DEM.DIST NEG.COP 1-DEM.PROX  
 ‘No, the one that was late is that one (not this one).’

The free relative establishes a presupposition of existence, which can be seen in the impossibility to answer a pseudocleft question with ‘nobody/nothing’ as illustrated in (123) and (124). Since it is presupposed that there is a referent for which the predicate is true, this cannot be denied, but instead it is expected that this referent is identified.

- (123) a. Kírá ágwáátiré i kíbí?

kí-ra a-gwaat-ire ni kí-bi  
 7-RM 1SM-catch-PFV COP 7-what  
 ‘What did he catch?’, lit. ‘What he caught is what?’

- b. <sup>#</sup>Gütíríkyó.

kû-ti-rí=kí-o  
 17SM-NEG-be=7-PRO  
 ‘Nothing.’

- (124) a. Úrá áceereerwé n'ûû?

û-ra a-ceererw-e ni ûû  
 1-RM 1SM-be.late-PFV COP who  
 ‘Who is the one who was late?’, lit. ‘Who was late is who?’

- b. <sup>#</sup>Gütíríí we.

kû-ti-rí=we  
 17SM-NEG-be=1.PRO  
 ‘Nobody / There is no one.’

Identification among alternatives entails that alternatives must be present. Since parts of idioms cannot trigger a set of alternatives within the idiomatic reading, only the literal meaning is left under focus. This is what we see in (125), from the idiom *kúoria nthang'a úthiû* ‘to make the face of the monkey rot’ which means to worsen the situation: the idiomatic reading is lost when you focus on the constituent *face of the monkey*.

- (125) Kîrá úkûóriá n'úthiú bwa ntháng'á.  
 kî-ra ú-kû-or-i-a ni úthiú bû-a n-thang'a  
 7-RM 2SG.SM-PRS-rot-IC-FV COP 14.face 14-CONN 9.monkey  
 'What you are causing to rot is the face of the monkey.'  
 \*'You are worsening the situation.'

A first diagnostic to check the exclusive reading among alternatives is that the NP can be modified by the exhaustive focus-sensitive particle 'only' (126) but not by the inclusive/scalar 'even' (127). As 'even' includes all alternatives, no referent is identified to the exclusion of others, and hence this is incompatible with the pseudocleft.

- (126) Kîrá gîonká Bita arîiré i nkíma.  
 kî-ra kî-onka Bita a-rî-ire ni n-kima  
 7-RM 7-only 1.Peter 1SM-eat-PFV COP 9-ugali  
 'What Peter ate is ugali only.'
- (127) \* Kîrá Bita ágwáátiré í (\*wana) mûkûnga.  
 kî-ra Bita a-gwaat-ire ni wana mû-kûnga  
 5-RM 1.Peter 1SM-catch-PFV COP even 3-eel  
 'What Peter caught is (\*even) eel.'

Secondly, the structures are compatible with universal quantifiers only if they allow an exclusive reading. The pseudocleft in structure (128) is felicitous because it presupposes two subsets; the people who work within the institution and the ones that work elsewhere. Those with hats, therefore, are the ones that work within the institution. The people who work elsewhere are excluded. In structure (129) the focus does not trigger any subsets. It remains inclusive, thus, infelicitous with the universal quantifier *kîra*. The conclusion here is that the pseudocleft structures express exclusive focus, and thus, disallow universal quantifiers because of their inclusive nature. The same holds for the universal quantifier 'all' in (130).

- (128) Úrá gwîkîrîte nkoobiá i kîrá muntû úrutágá ngûgí gûkû.  
 ú-ra ú-ikîr-íté n-koobia ni kîra mu-ntû  
 1-RM 1SM.REL-wear-STAT.PFV 9-hat COP each 1-person  
 a-rût-ag-a n-gûgî kû-kû  
 1SM-do-HAB-FV 9-work 17-DEM.PROX  
 'The one wearing a hat is each/every person who works within.'

- (129) \* Úrá gwíkírité nkoobíá i kírá muntû.  
 û-ra û-ikír-îte n-koobia ni kíra mu-ntû  
 1-RM 1SM.REL-wear-STAT.PFV 9-hat COP each 1-person  
 int. ‘The one wearing a hat is everyone.’
- (130) Bará békírité nkoobíá n’ antû bóonthé \*(bará barutagá ngûgí nja).  
 ba-ra ba-ikír-îte n-koobia ni a-ntû ba-onthé ba-ra  
 2-RM 2-wear-STAT.PFV 10-hat COP 2-person 2-all 2-  
 ba-rút-ag-a n-gûgí n-ja  
 RM 2-do-HAB-FV 9-work 9-outside  
 ‘The ones wearing hats are all the people who work outside.’

Thirdly, the pseudocleft structures are not compatible with non-specific indefinites, because such expressions do not refer to anything in particular and thus cannot identify or exclude. Infelicity in such contexts thus confirms the exclusive nature of the Kiiharaka pseudocleft. Instead, they can only be used with a generic interpretation. Structure (131) for instance would only make sense if it were interpreted that the speaker saw a person and not an animal. Proceeding from this premise, structure example (132) is judged infelicitous. The use of the relative marker in class 1 *ûra* (the one/who) already calls for a specific element in the clefted constituent because the speaker already knows it is a person. Identification of ‘a/the person’ requires a specific name and not a generic reference, whose use here amounts to redundancy.

- (131) (What did you see? OR There was some movement at the door. I guess it was a goat?)  
 Kírá mbóniré i muntû (ti mbûri).  
 kí-ra n-on-ire ni mu-ntû (ti mb-ûri)  
 7-RM 1SG.SM-see-PFV COP 1-person NEG 9-goat  
 ‘What I saw is a person.’
- (132) ? (Who did you see?)  
 Úrá mbóniré i muntû.  
 û-ra n-on-ire ni mu-ntû  
 1-RM 1SG.SM-see-PFV COP 1-person  
 ?’The one I saw is a person.’

Similarly, the NP in a pseudocleft can only be modified by ‘some’ if there is a contrast with ‘all’. Outside of this context, the use of the indefinite quantifier ‘some’ in the clefted constituent fails to achieve the identificational role of the focus.

- (133) (#Context 1: Did all the chickens escape?)  
 (Context 2: All the animals ran away! Chickens, cows, goats... No, actually...)  
 Irá irátoorookíre i ngûkú ímwé.  
 i-ra i-ra-toorook-ire ni n-gûkû i-mwe  
 10-RM 10SM-YPST-escape-PFV COP 10-chicken 10-some  
 'The ones that ran away are some (of the) chickens.'
- (134) (Context: Did all the chickens escape?)  
 Irá irátoorookíre n'ímwé.<sup>12</sup>  
 i-ra i-ra-toorook-ire ni i-mwe  
 10-RM 10-YPST-escape-PFV COP 10-one  
 'Only some ran away.' lit: 'The ones that ran away are some.'

Fourthly, the Kîîtharaka pseudocleft is incompatible with mention-some contexts. This is a non-exhaustive context that asks about entities without excluding alternatives. Instead, the pseudocleft is indicated as exclusive. If for instance, you are in need of a pen and you luckily meet about four people working in an office that have all sorts of pens, you are hopeful to be lent one, so you ask: *who amongst you can lend me a pen?* In the given situation, there is no one correct answer, because there are multiple people who can lend a pen. In Kîîtharaka, an SVO sentence would be acceptable in this context, but a pseudocleft as in (135) is not acceptable. The pseudocleft can only be interpreted exclusively, suggesting that the others do not have pens to lend; *it is Peter that has several pens so he can assist you with one.*

- (135) # Úrá gûúmba kûróómba i Bita.  
 ú-ra gû-ûmba kû-róómba ni Bita  
 1-RM 2SG.SM-can 15-borrow COP Peter  
 'The one you can borrow from is Peter.'

Similarly, if (136) is given as an answer to the question 'which places in Kenya can I visit for holiday?' then it cannot be taken to mean that Mombasa is one of the many places one can visit. Instead, it means Mombasa is the one good place, thus, getting an exclusive indication.

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<sup>12</sup>A reviewer asked whether it is possible to have *n'imwe ira irátoorookire* to mean 'it is some that ran away'. In our view, such a structure is not possible in the same context as it results in a different interpretation in Kîîtharaka – 'it is some; the ones that ran away.'

- (136) Kûra kwééga i Mombasa.  
 kû-ra kû-ega ni Mombasa  
 17-RM 17-good COP 17.Mombasa  
 ‘The best place is Mombasa.’  
 #’Where it is good is Mombasa.’

Fifthly, correction of falsehood is also a natural environment for the pseudocleft, as shown in (137) and (138).

- (137) (Context: Person A continues to suggest that Karîmi must be in the market because she is a trader there. Person B insists...)  
 Kûrá Karîmi árí i mûndaaní.  
 kû-ra Karîmi a-rí ni mû-nda=ini  
 17-RM 1.Karîmi 1SM-be COP 3-farm=LOC  
 ‘Where Karîmi is is on the farm.’
- (138) (Did the girl steal the ball?)  
 Arî, kará kaiyiré i kaíyí.  
 arî ka-ra ka-iy-ire ni ka-iyí  
 no 12-RM 12-steal-PFV COP 12-small.boy  
 ‘No, the one who stole is a small boy.’

Finally, although it is quite unnatural to ask the question in (139) in the form of a pseudocleft, the best answer to it starts with ‘no’. This negates the exhaustivity that is expressed in the pseudocleft, as it asks for only one of the two referents for which the predicate is true.

- (139) (Context: photo of a woman selling onions and tomatoes)  
 Kîra mwekûrû akweendia i nyaanya?  
 kí-rá mû-ékûrû a-kû-endi-a ni nyaanya  
 7-RM 1-lady 1SM-PRS-sell-FV COP 10-tomato  
 ‘What the woman is selling, is it tomatoes?’
- (140) Arî arîendia nyaanyá na itûngûrû.  
 arî a-rí-endi-a nyaanya na i-tûngûrû  
 no 1SM-PRS-sell-FV 10.tomato and 8-onion  
 ‘No, she sells tomatoes and onions.’

We conclude that the pseudocleft identifies a referent whose existence is presupposed in the free relative, and does so to the exclusion of alternatives. However, Kiitharaka speakers commonly use another structure in these contexts with the form [XP + NI-PRO + V], which is what we turn to now.

### 5.3 The NI-PRO construction

There is another construction that differs minimally from the structure we have introduced as the NI+RM construction, but as we will see it is different in its interpretation. This construction also features an initial NP followed by *ni*, but is then followed not by the relative (demonstrative) pronoun, but by the pronoun in *-o* (see Section 3 for other uses) and the verb. This is illustrated in (141), to be compared to the NI+RM construction in (142). We will refer to this as the NI-PRO construction.

- (141) (Is it Mwangi that wrote the letter?)

Bíta n'wé áandíkiré (tí Mwangi).	[NI-PRO]
Bita ni we a-andík-ire (ti Mwangi)	
1.Peter FOC 1.PRO 1SM-write-PFV (NEG.COP 1.Mwangi)	

'Peter, it is he who wrote (not Mwangi).'

- (142) (Who is Peter?)

Bíta n'ûrá áandíkiré.	[NI-RM]
Bita ni ûra a-andík-ire	
1.Peter FOC 1.RM 1SM-write-PFV	

'Peter is the one who wrote.'

While the structural parallel between the two constructions is striking, they differ on various points. A first point is that, unlike the pseudocleft which can be reversed, the NI-PRO construction cannot be reversed. That is, the phrase headed by the pronoun cannot precede *ni*, as shown in (143) and (144).

- (143) a. [Kíra úkwoóná] í [kyó úgapewá].

[kí-ra ú-kû-on-a] ni [ki-o ú-ka-per-w-a]

7-RM 2SG.SM-PRS-see-FV COP 7-PRO 2SG.SM-FUT-give-PASS-FV

'What you see is what you get.'

- b. \* [Ky-o ú-kw-oona] i [ky-o ú-ga-p-ew-a].

[ki-o ú-kû-on-a] ni [ki-o ú-ka-per-w-a]

7-PRO 2SG.SM-PRS-see-FV COP 7-PRO 2SG.SM-FUT-give-PASS-FV

- c. \* [Kyo úkwoona] i [kíra úgapewa].

[ki-o ú-kû-on-a] ni [kí-ra ú-ka-per-w-a]

7-PRO 2SG.SM-PRS-see-FV COP 7-RM 2SG.SM-FUT-give-PASS-FV

- (144) [Ûrá/ \*We ú-kû-thaamb-i-a thaání] í Rób.

1-RM/ 1.PRO 1RM-PRS-clean-IC-FV 10.plate COP 1.Rob

'The one/he who washes dishes is Rob.'

Secondly, if the copula functions like a predicate, as it does in the pseudocleft and the NI+RM construction, we expect it to change form to express different tense/aspect in the NI-PRO construction as well. The copula *ni* is replaced by the verb *-ri* in the past tense, both in copular clauses like (145), as well as in the NI+RM construction (146).

- (145) Téné mûnó mbiti na kayúgú **baarí** acooré.  
 tene mûno m-bitu na ka-yûgû ba-a-rî a-coore  
 long INT 9-hyena and 12-hare 2SM-PST -be 2-friend  
 ‘A long time ago, Hyena and Hare were friends.’
- (146) A: Are you talking about the pen that Peter was given by the teacher?  
 B: No,...  
 Karámu **ka-a-rî** ka-rá Kawíra a-gûr-ñíté.  
 12-pen 12SM-PST-be 12-RM 1.Kawíra 1SM-buy-PFV  
 ‘The pen was the one that Kawíra bought.’

Crucially, this tense/aspect-based variation is ungrammatical in the NI-PRO construction – see (147b). This not only shows us that the NI-PRO construction behaves differently from the NI+RM construction, but also that *ni* in the NI-PRO construction does not fully function like a copula between the initial NP and the rest – an important ingredient for the analysis.

- (147) a. Ny-oombá ni-y-ó ì-rá-bí-íre (y-óónka).  
 9-house COP-9-PRO 9SM-YPST-burn-PFV 9-only  
 ‘(Only) the house is what has burnt.’
- b. \* Ny-oombá **y-aa-rî-yó** ì-rá-bí-íre (yóónka).  
 9-house 9SM-PST-be-PRO 9SM-YPST-burn-PFV 9-only  
 int. ‘(Only) the house was what has burnt.’

Thirdly, in the NI-PRO construction the focus is on the referent of the preverbal NP, whereas in the NI+RM construction it cannot be. This is visible in the comparison of the context questions in (148) for the two constructions, as well as the question-answer pair in (149). We have bolded the focus.

- (148) a. (Context 1: Is Joy doing the dishes?  
 Context 2: Who is washing the dishes?  
 #Context 3: I am looking for Rob, who is working in a kitchen full of  
 people. I ask ‘Who is Rob?’)  
**Rob** n’-[we û-kû-thaamb-i-a thaáni.]  
 1.Rob COP-1.PRO 1RM-PRS-clean-IC-FV 10.plate  
 ‘Rob, it’s him washing the dishes.’

- b. (#Context 1: Is Joy doing the dishes?  
 #Context 2: Who is washing the dishes?  
 Context 3: I am looking for Rob, who is working in a kitchen full of people. I ask 'Who is Rob?')  
 Rob n'-[ûra û-kû-thaamb-i-a thaani.]  
 1.Rob COP-1.RM 1RM-PRS-clean-IC-FV 10.plate  
 'Rob is the one who is washing the dishes.'

- (149) (Where is a good place to go on a holiday? Interpretation: there are no other places that are good.)  
 Nanyukî i-kû kw-éégá.  
 9.Nanyuki COP-17.PRO 17-good  
 'Nanyuki is the place that is good.'

Concluding that the NI-PRO construction is not structurally a reverse pseudo-cleft (and thus not a copular construction), we want to know what the structure and interpretation of this construction are. As we have seen, the initial NP seems to be focused. One analysis is therefore that there is a focus position sentence-initially, in addition to the focus in the basic cleft/focus construction, but marked differently. However, there is also the post-copular independent pronoun that is co-indexed with the initial NP. Instead of taking the preverbal NP as the focus constituent, we will argue that the structure is best analysed as an initial NP followed by a basic cleft/focus construction in which the pronoun is the focused constituent: NP [FOC/COP PRO V], translatable as 'Rob, it is *him* that is doing the dishes'. This analysis fits better with the tendency for post-copular focus (see (119) and (120) above): focus is not necessarily on the initial NP but instead on the post-copular pronoun (the *kyo* in *ikyo*). As they both refer to the same referent, however, we get the impression that the initial NP represents the focus.

Regarding the second part being analysed as a basic cleft/focus construction, it was already shown in (97) above that a pronoun can be focused in the basic cleft/focus construction, with the pronoun referring to a contextually accessible referent – the same is illustrated in (150).

- (150) I-ky-o gî-tem-ag-a n-gûkû i-kurur-a.  
 COP-7-PRO 7SM-make-HAB-FV 9-chicken 9SM-crow-FV  
 'That's why Chicken crows.' lit. 'It is *that* that makes Chicken crow.'

Now let us turn to the initial NP in this construction. If it were the focus, we would expect it to be able to host (inherently focused) interrogative phrases. The fact that the initial NP cannot be a true interrogative, as in (151) and (152), shows us that the initial position is not a normal focus position. The examples in (151)

and (152) were indicated by the speakers to be felicitous only in an echo context. Had the initial position been the focus, we would expect it to be able to host a question word and the structure to be used as a true content question.

- (151) (Context: You overhear that someone was tasked to wash the plates but you didn't get the name right.)

Ūū n'-we ū-kû-thaamb-i-a thaáni?

1.who COP-1.PRO 1RM-PRS-clean-IC-FV 10.plate

'Who (is the one who) is washing the dishes?'

- (152) (Context: You overhear that something got burnt but you didn't actually get what it was.)

Mbi ni-y-ó i-rá-bí-íre?

9.what COP-9-PRO 9SM-YPST-burn-PFV

'What (is it that) has burnt?'

If the initial NP is independent of the following basic cleft, the possible prosodic break after the NP is also predicted, as in (154) and (150). This break is unexpected if the initial NP were in a focus position as part of a focus construction.

- (153) (Whose pen did the doctor borrow?)

Karámú gáakwá, ikó ndagitári araroombíre.

ka-ramu ka-akwa, ni-ka-o n-dagitari a-ra-roomb-ire.

12-pen 12-1SG.POSS COP-12-PRO 9-doctor 1SM-YPST-borrow-PFV

'My pen is what the doctor borrowed.' / 'My pen, it is *that* that the doctor borrowed.'

- (154) (There is an egg, where did it come from?)

N-gûkû i-nú, n' iy-ó i-ra-ciár-ire.

9-chicken 9-DEM.MED FOC 9-PRO 9SM-YPST-give.birth-PFV

'That chicken is who laid it.' / 'That chicken, it's *her* who laid it.'  
(pointing at chicken)

Furthermore, the NP may be separated from the basic cleft, for example as in (155), where the adverb *nûâmba* intervenes between the contextually active *aga* 'here' and the cleft/focus construction *n'oo* 'it is here'.

- (155) (One day, she went to a river, a very calm pool. If you listened you couldn't hear anything talking.)

Áugá índí âgá nûumba n'oó ngaatééthekerá.  
 a-ug-a      índí a-ga      nûumba ni    o  
 1SM-say-FV now 16-DEM.PROX maybe FOC 16.PRO  
 n-ka-teth-ik-îr-a  
 1SG.SM-FUT-help-ABL-APPL-FV  
 ‘She said, “Probably, this is where I will get help”.

So what is the function of the initial NP? Its status seems to be ambiguous, and will need more research for it to become completely clear. We propose that in at least some contexts it is a topic, for example in (147). The NI-PRO construction then forms a way to indicate both the highly accessible status of the referent (by the topical NP) and also the focus function (by the clefted pronoun).

On the other hand, in some context we see that the initial NP seems to function as a fragment answer. This is clear in (153) above, for example, and also when we look at the exhaustive focus-sensitive particle ‘only’: this cannot modify a topic NP, but it can be used in a fragment answer, as shown in (156c). In the NI-PRO construction, we see that it can modify the clefted pronoun, as in the preferred structure (156b), but it can also modify the initial NP as in (156a).

- (156) a. (How many students wrote a letter?)

Jééní wéenká n'wé áandíkiré baarúa.  
 Jeeni we-onka ni-wé a-andík-ire baarúa.  
 1.Jane 1-only COP-1PRO 1SM-write-PFV 9.letter  
 ‘Only Jane wrote a letter.’

- b. Jééní n'wé wéenká áandíkiré baarúa.

Jeeni ni-wé we-onka a-andík-ire baarúa. (preferred)  
 1.Jane COP-1PRO 1-only 1SM-write-PFV 9.letter  
 ‘Only Jane wrote a letter.’

- c. Jééní wée-nká.

1.Jane 1-only  
 ‘Only Jane.’

Topics and fragment answers cannot be the whole story, though. We find a little conundrum when we try the word ‘person’ as the initial NP, as illustrated in (157). It cannot be interpreted as a (specific or non-specific) indefinite. Instead, a generic interpretation can be forced, i.e. a human being (not a goat), or else

‘Muntu’ has to be interpreted as the name of a person. This is indicated in the three interpretations a-b-c under the example. For interpretation c, it is possible to add a prosodic break after *Muntû*, and this can be an answer to ‘Who did you see this morning?’ (context 3). In contrast, in interpretation b, a prosodic break is not very acceptable, and it can be used in contexts 1 and 2 but not 3.

- (157) (Context 1: Is it a goat or a person that entered your house?<sup>13</sup>

Context 2: I heard a goat entered your house this morning. No, ...

Context 3: Who did you see this morning?)

*Muntû n’wé mbóniré.*

mu-ntû ni we n-on-ire

1-person FOC 1.PRO 1SG.SM-see-PFV

- a. \* ‘Someone I saw.’
- b. ‘A person/human being is who I saw.’ (not a goat)  
contexts 1: ✓ 2: ✓ 3: ✗
- c. ‘Muntu is who I saw.’  
context 3: ✓

If the construction is to be analysed as a fragment answer plus cleft in all three contexts, then we would expect the initial NP to be acceptable as a fragment in all three contexts. The fragment answer in (158), however, can only be used in context A but not B (and is uninformative in context C – unless interpreted as a proper name). This means that the NI-PRO construction with interpretation b above can be analysed structurally as a fragment answer + cleft structure in context A, but must be analysed differently in context B.

- (158) Muntû.

1.person

‘A person/human being.’

1: ✓ 2: ✗ 3: ✗

Further data and targeted investigation are needed to reveal the syntactic and interpretational status of the initial NP in this construction. For now, we conclude that in some contexts it functions as a topic and in some as a fragment answer, and move our attention to the cleft-part of the construction.

If the NI-PRO construction features a basic cleft/focus construction, then we expect the same properties to hold as in that construction, that is, an exhaustive

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<sup>13</sup>A basic cleft would also be acceptable as the answer here.

interpretation. Indeed, the answer to an incomplete question using the NI-PRO construction as in (159) starts with ‘no’, as in the basic cleft and the pseudocleft. This negates the exhaustivity in the question, showing that the focus is interpreted as exhaustive.

- (159) Q: Twaarí itú tûthaambiirié thaání?  
 tû-aarí ni tu tû-thaamb-i-ire thaani  
 13-girl FOC PRO 13SM-clean-IC-PFV 10.plate  
 ‘The girls, is it them who washed plates?’  
 A: Arí ti twaarí túunká (tûthaambiirie thaani). I twaarí na twiyí.  
 arí ti tû-aarí tû-onka tû-thaamb-i-ire thaani. ni tû-aarí  
 no NEG.COP 13-girl 13-only 13SM-clean-IC-PFV 10.plate FOC 13-girl  
 na tû-iyí  
 and 13-boy  
 ‘No, it is not girls only (that washed the plates). It is boys and girls.’

Furthermore, the unacceptability of the initial NP to be modified by ‘even’ is expected if the NI-PRO construction is fundamentally the same as the basic cleft/focus construction.<sup>14</sup> The construction was improved as in (160b), where *nawé* marks *wana Kanyua* as a topic (and see Section 3 on *nawe*).

- (160) a. \* Wana Kanyúá n'wé aandíkiré baarúa.  
 wana Kanyua ni we a-andík-ire baarúa  
 even 1.Kanyua FOC 1.PRO 1SM-write-PFV 9.letter  
 int. ?‘Even Kanyua is the one who wrote a letter.’  
 b. Wana Kanyúá nawé n'aandíkiré baarúa.  
 wana Kanyua na=we ni a-andík-ire baarúa  
 even 1.Kanyua and=1.PRO FOC 1SM-write-PFV 9.letter  
 ‘Even Kanywa (she too) wrote a letter.’

Additionally, checking the indefinite interpretation of *-mwe* ‘some’ in the construction, we find that just as in the basic cleft, a subset reading is necessary, contrasting ‘some’ with ‘all’.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Note that ‘even’ is grammatical in a fragment answer. For example, a question ‘Did Jane write a letter?’ can be answered by *wana Kanyua* ‘even Kanyua’.

<sup>15</sup>Note that ‘some’ can also modify a fragment answer, as in (i).

- (i) Q: You had trees, cows, goats, maize. What did you sell?  
 A: Mî-tí i-mwé.  
 4-tree 4-one  
 ‘Some trees.’

- (161) (Did all the chickens escape?)  
 Ngúkú ímwé ició círátooróókire.  
 n-gûkû i-mwe ni ci-o ci-ra-toorook-ire  
 10-chicken 10-one FOC 10-PRO 10SM-YPST-escape-PFV  
 ‘Some of the chickens are the ones who escaped.’

In summary, there are clear arguments against analysing the NI-PRO construction as a sort of pseudocleft, and instead we propose that it is an initial NP functioning as a topic or fragment answer, plus a basic cleft/focus construction in which a pronoun coreferential with the initial NP is in exhaustive focus. The results of all the diagnostics for the three tests, where we have data, are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Diagnostics for focus and exhaustivity in Kîîtharaka cleft constructions.

	basic	pseudo	NI-PRO
wh	✓	✓	✗
answer	✓	✓	✓
only	✓	✓	✓
even	✗	✗	✗
mention some	✗	✗	✗
all	✗	✗	✗
some	subset	✗	subset
numeral	exact		
idiom	✗	✗	✗
indef	✓	✗	✗
incompl	no	no	no
answer nothing	✓	✗	N/A

## 6 Object marking and object drop

The information status of a referent influences the expression used to refer to it. In Kîîtharaka, whether an object is expressed overtly or dropped depends on the interaction of several factors. They include accessibility hierarchy, predicate type and referential properties (whether human or non-human). We will look at each of them with a view to understanding their roles in object drop, drawing on Kanampiu (forthcoming).

## 6.1 Accessibility status

We hypothesize that the Accessibility Theory by Ariel (2001) (and earlier works), and related works by Chafe (1976, 1987), Gundel et al. (1993) and Givón (1984), can be used to explain the paradigm of object marking and drop in Kîtharaka. As explained in the introductory chapter, according to Ariel (2001), referring expressions mark varying degrees of mental accessibility of referents, in an inverse relation between linguistic encoding and accessibility: A new referent is inaccessible, and thus has the most linguistic encoding (full NP, or NP + modifier when being reactivated), whereas a previously mentioned referent is considered accessible, and hence requires less linguistic encoding (with zero anaphora being the lowest in the scale). The degree of accessibility forms a scale referred to as the “accessibility hierarchy”. Accordingly, the Kîtharaka accessibility hierarchy for object referents can be constructed as follows:

- (162) Lexical NP+modifier > Lexical NP > DEM > Pron/SM/OM/PRO > Object Drop

This accessibility hierarchy correctly predicts that new referents are expressed with an expression at the far left end of the hierarchy (full lexical NP). This is illustrated in example (163) and (164), where a new referent (the guinea fowl and the wound, respectively) is introduced into the narrative.

- (163) (Context: Hare and Hyena went to the bush to hunt. They hunted for some time.)

Bakîgwímága gwa ûgú, booná nkáángá.  
 ba-kî-guím-ag-a        wa ûgu ba-on-a        n-kanga  
 2SM-DEP-hunt-HAB-FV like that 2SM-saw-FV 9-guinea.fowl  
 ‘As they were hunting, they saw a guinea fowl.’

- (164) (Context: A woman was injured by a stick while collecting firewood. The stick was poisonous.)

Aagea na kîronda kînéne mûno kûgûrû.  
 a-a-ge-a                na kî-ronda kî-nene mûno kû-gûrû  
 1SM-PST-develop-FV with 7-wound 7-big INT 17-leg  
 ‘She developed a very big wound on the leg.’

Apart from introducing a purely new referent, full lexical NPs are used to reactivate referents at paragraph or episode boundaries. If a referent is less accessible because it was mentioned several paragraphs behind, it may be expressed in the form of full NP + relative clause modifier as illustrated in (165).

- (165) (Context: They saw a guinea fowl. Hyena took the arrows and aimed, shot an killed it. They became very happy.)

Mbítí na Kayúgú báákámata nkáángá írá báűragiré, báathí n'yó bántû kathakáaní.

mbiti na ka-yûgû ba-a-kamat-a n-kaanga i-ra

1.Hyena and 1-Hare 2SM-PST-carry-FV 9-guinea.fowl 9-RM

ba-ûrag-ire bá-a-thi na=yo ba-ntû ka-thaka=ini

2SM-kill-PFV 2SM-PST-go with=9.PRO 16-someplace 12-bush=LOC

'Hyena and Hare carried the guinea fowl that they had killed to some place in the bush.'

One step further on the hierarchy, demonstratives can be used to refer to participants, actions or locations that are obviously identifiable by the hearer, either adnominally or pronominally, as illustrated for *aga* 'here' in (166).

- (166) (Context: The lady sees a handsome young man who she thinks is interested in her daughter. She decides to take charge.)

Ntitigá mwaána ûyû áagá.

ni n-ti-tig-a mû-ana û-yû aga

FOC 1SG.SM-NEG-leave-FV 1-child 1-DEM.PROX 16.DEM.PROX

'I can't leave this young man here.'

Demonstratives may also be used exophorically, as in (167), where *ûyû* 'this one' refers to the person who slapped another person, and *aagá* refers to a place where s/he has been slapped. Both are accompanied by a pointing gesture.

- (167) a. (Who slapped you?)

N'ûyû.

ni ûyû

COP 1.DEM.PROX

'It is this one.'

- b. (Where did he slap you?)

N'aagá.

ni aga

COP 16.DEM.PROX

'It is here.'

In (168), *ûgu* 'that' refers to the swelling and beating of wings by the chicken, ostensibly to frighten the mongooses; this is an example of discourse deixis, referring to the earlier described actions.

- (168) Mîrûngûuru yóoná ûgu...  
 mî-rûngûuru î-a-on-a ûgu  
 4-mongooses 4SM-PST-see-FV 14.DEM.MED  
 'When the mongooses saw that...'

Highly active objects can be expressed by an object marker on the verb, a pronoun, or simply dropped (zero expression). This choice, however, seems to be determined by factors other than information status/accessibility, involving syntactic environment (DP object vs. PP or predicate), predicate type, and animacy of the referent. We briefly discuss these here and refer to Kanampiu (forthcoming) for further details.

## 6.2 Object marker vs. independent pronoun

Pronominalising active objects happens in two ways: either by an object marker on the verb, or by a separate pronoun. In example (169), repeated from above, the referent *nkaanga* is introduced as a full NP, and in the next line (170), it is referred to in the form of an object marker as it is now active.

- (169) Bakîgwímága gwa ûgú, booná nkáángá.  
 ba-kî-guîm-ag-a gwa ûgu ba-on-a n-kanga  
 2SM-DEP-hunt-HAB-FV like that 2SM-saw-FV 9-guinea.fowl  
 'As they were hunting, they saw a guinea fowl.'
- (170) Mbiti yáárutá mûgwí yáugíá bwaa, yamîrathá, yamîrûraga.  
 m-bití î-a-rut-a mu-guî î-a-ug-i-a bwaa  
 9-hyena 9SM-PST-remove-FV 3-arrow 9SM-PST-do-IC-FV IDEO  
 î-a-mî-rath-a î-a-mî-u-rag-a  
 9SM-PST-9OM-shoot-FV 9SM-PST-9OM-kill-FV  
 'Hyena took the arrows and aimed, shot and killed it.'

The separate pronoun occurs as an enclitic after the preposition *na* 'with', as in (171), but it also occurs when pronominalising two objects, as in (172). As there is only one slot for object marking on the verb, the Recipient/Benefactive must be marked there, and a pronominalised Theme object can optionally be expressed as a separate pronoun postverbally.

- (171) a. Kîmathi náayire na kîbanga?  
 Kimathi ni a-y-ire na kî-banga  
 Kimathi FOC 1SM-come-PFV with 7-panga  
 'Did Kimathi bring (lit. come with) a panga?'

- b. *Yii, náayire na\*(kîo).*  
yii ni a-ya-ire na=kî-o  
Yes, FOC 1SM-come-PFV with=7-PRO  
'Yes, he brought (lit. came with) it.'
- (172) (Did you give Mary the carrots?)  
*Yii i \*(mû)néénkeeré (cio).*  
yii ni n-mû-nenker-ire ci-o  
yes FOC 1.SG.SM-1OM-give-PFV 10-PRO  
'Yes I gave her (them).'

The *-o* pronoun is also used in topic marking to achieve a contrastive reading, as well as a shift topic marker (see Section 3 for a description and examples). It is not encountered in our spontaneous texts as a means to mark contrastive focus – only in the **NI+PRO** construction do we find it as such (see Section 5.3).

### 6.3 Object marking vs. object drop

Basically, transitive verbs are expected to take objects. However, not all active objects that could be expressed as an object marker are actually marked, and objects may simply be dropped. Whether an object marker occurs or not seems to depend on various factors (but more research is necessary to establish the exact interactions and circumstances): dislocation, predicate type, humanness, and something like prototypicality or expectedness.<sup>16</sup> As these are not directly relevant for information structure, we only touch upon them briefly.

First, an object marker may never be present in the same domain as the coreferring object NP. That is, the object marker functions like a true pronoun, and a coreferring NP must therefore be in a dislocated position to the right or left of the sentence. Second, some predicates seem to require object marking of active referents, here illustrated by left-dislocated objects. Predicates of perception like *-ona* 'see', *-enda* 'like' (173) and *-igua* 'feel' (174) must be accompanied by object markers when the object is left dislocated, and telic predicates seem to prefer object marking more so than atelic predicates. Object drop is not licensed in such cases, regardless of the properties of the object (noun class, humanness). An overview of which predicates require or allow object marking is still outstanding.

- (173) *Kithére, i n\*(kî)endeeté.*  
kî-there ni n-kî-end-îte  
7-kitheri FOC 1SG.SM-7OM-like-PFV  
'Githeri,<sup>17</sup> I like it.'

<sup>16</sup>We acknowledge the MA thesis by Leiden University student Dominique Loviscach that helped clarify some of the factors.

<sup>17</sup>A meal of a mixture of maize and beans.

- (174) Mûrío, i ngû\*(cú)íguá.  
 mû-rio ni n-kû-cu-îgu-a  
 3-sweetness FOC 1SG.SM-PRS-3OM-feel-FV  
 'Sweetness, I feel it.'

For other predicates, object marking seems to depend mainly on humanness of the object, and noun class. Transitive verbs require obligatory object marking with dislocated class 1 and 2 human objects, as shown in (175) and (176). Non-human objects are, however, optionally object marked, as in (178) and (179), and humans in class 12/13 also receive optional object marking (177).

- (175) Mwarímû nká\*(mû)tûma.  
 mû-aarimû n-ka-mû-tûm-a  
 1-teacher 1SG.SM-FUT-1OM-send-FV  
 'The teacher, I will send him.'
- (176) I \*(mû)tûmiré, Précious.  
 ni n-mû-tûm-ire Precious  
 FOC 1SG.SM-OM-sent-PFV 1.Precious  
 'I sent her, Precious.'
- (177) Twáána ngá(tû)cereria mabuku.  
 tû-ana n-ka-tû-cer-îr-i-a ma-buku  
 12-children 1SG.SM-FUT-12OM-find-APPL-IC-FV 6-book  
 'Children, I will find books for them.'
- (178) a. Gîciáti ngû(kî)gûra.  
 kî-ciati n-kû-kî-gûr-a  
 7-broom 1SG.SM-PRS-7OM-buy-FV  
 'The broom, I have bought (it).'  
 b. Ngû(kî)gûra, gîciáti.  
 n-kû-kî-gûr-a, kî-ciati  
 1SG.SM-PRS-7OM-buy-FV 7-broom  
 'I have bought (it), the broom.'
- (179) (How can I kill a chicken?)  
 Noá ûríinge na mûraagí...  
 nwa û-riing-e na mû-raagi  
 can 2SG.SM-hit-SBJV with 3-stick  
 '... you can hit (it) with a stick...'

The phenomenon of the predicate type influencing object expression can be related to what is observed for Luguru (Marten & Ramadhani 2001) and Kinyakyusa (Lusekelo 2024). For these languages, however, the predicates involved are different from the ones in Kîtharaka. We refer to Kanampiu (forthcoming) for further discussion on the generalisation of predicate types.

A remaining question is what determines the presence or absence of the object marker when the predicate does not require it, and the object is not a human in class 1/2. In her MA thesis, Dominique Loviscach suggests that the likelihood or predictability of the object referent might play a role, where less expected objects are preferably object marked, and it is easier to drop the object (and the marker) for unsurprising objects, e.g. ‘eat rice’ can go unmarked, whereas ‘eat a cat’ would need marking. Verum is another function that might facilitate object marking. As said, these factors need further systematic research.

#### 6.4 Salience

Repetition of a full NP, as well as a combination of a demonstrative and full lexical NP can lead to a salience effect, as illustrated in (180). The referent *ndia* ‘pool’ is introduced in a conversation, then questioned, and in the answer, referring back to the already active referent, speaker A responds by using the NP+DEM combination, *ndia ìnu* ‘the/that pool’. The use of the NP+DEM for an already active referent (rather than a pronoun) emphasises the fact that this particular pool is very important to the story. It is not just any other pool that is being referred to.

- (180) (A: ‘This lady, her wound will be healed by water fetched from a pool without voices of frogs.’)

B: Î ndia îtakwaria kîûra?

î n-dia î-ta-kû-ari-a kîûra

PP9-pool 9SM-NEG-PRS-speak-FV 7-frog

‘A pool without voices of frogs?’

A: Îî, wona aathaamba na rûûyî rwa **ndia ìnu** îtakwaria kîûra.

îî wona a-a-thaamb-a na rûûyî rû-a n-dia  
yes COND 1SM-PST-wash-FV with 11-water 11-CONN 9-pool

î-nu î-ta-kû-ari-a kîûra

9-DEM.MED 9SM-NEG-PRS-speak-FV 7-frog

‘Yes, if she washes with the water from the pool without voices of frogs.’

Similarly, the order within the NP may be reversed so that the demonstrative precedes the noun (see Kanampiu & Muriungi 2019), as in (181). With this kind of order, the emphasis is on the particular day – not any other day.

- (181) Ìnu ntugû Kanyamû Nkió gakauma gakathi...  
 ì-nu n-tugû Kanyamû Nkio ka-ka-uma ka-ka-thi...  
 9-DEM.MED 9-day 12.Kanyamû Nkio 12SM-SUBS-leave 12SM-SUBS-go  
 ‘That particular day, Kanyamû Nkio would leave, and go...’

## 6.5 Excursion: Subject drop

While we have examined the expression of objects in some detail, the expression of subjects also shows an interesting feature. Subjects are prototypically given information and function as topics in Kîtharaka (although see Section 2.1 for detailed discussion). They determine subject marking on the verb in most cases, and the subject NP can easily be omitted when the referent is active, leaving the subject marker as the expression of the subject – in fact this is the more natural way to refer to active subjects. This is illustrated in (182): the daughter of the firstly-introduced man and woman is referred to by a NP+possessive, but subsequently only by the subject marker (with the “missing” NP subject indicated by Ø).

- (182) (A woman has been told that her wound will heal with water from a pool without frogs. She and her husband are wondering how they will find this pool.)  
 Mwarí wake, augá agaacwa ndia ìnu ìtakwaria kîûra.  
 mû-arí w-ake a-ûg-a a-ka-cu-a n-dia ì-nu  
 1-girl 1-POSS.1 1SM-say-FV 1SM-FUT-find-FV 9-pool 9-DEM.MED  
 ì-ta-kû-ari-a kîûra  
 9SM-NEG-PRS-speak-FV 7-frog  
 ‘His daughter said that she would find that pool without frog voices.’  
 Ø Auma agu, Ø aathi muuroni.  
 a-um-a a-gu, a-a-thi mû-uro=ini  
 1SM-move-FV 16-PRO 1SM-PST-go 3-river=LOC  
 ‘She left there and went to the river.’

Ø Aathi, keenda Ø amenya kana kûrî kîûra kîrîku, Ø aina “...”  
 a-a-thi      ka-end-a    a-menya-a      kana kû-rî kî-ûra kî-rî=ku  
 1SM-PST-go FUT-like-FV 1SM-know-FV if    17-be 7-frog 7SM-be=17  
 a-in-a  
 1SM-sing-FV

‘She went, so that she could know whether there was a frog in there,  
 and she sang “...”’

Interestingly, there seems to be a reduced inflection on subsequent verb forms such as *aina* ‘she sang’. But subject marking is still present and cannot be omitted like we saw for object marking. Nevertheless, in narratives, accessible referents that function as the topic and subject for several subsequent clauses may also be dropped altogether: no NP and no subject marker appears, and the verb in these clauses is an infinitive. This is illustrated in (183), where the Hare (class 12) is the subject marked on the verbs in the first clause, but the verbs in the second and third clause are infinitives. Note also that these clauses are introduced by *na*, showing that they indicate sequential events that are the culmination of the previously mentioned series of events. For further discussion, we refer to Kanampiu (forthcoming).

- (183) Kámîgwatá kámíogá bwéega, kámíoga muumá  
 ka-mî-guat-a      ka-mî-og-a      bu-ega ka-mî-og-a  
 12SM-9OM-catch-FV 12SM-9OM-tie-FV 14-well 12SM-9OM-tie-FV  
 mu-uma  
 3-absolutely  
 ‘He got hold (of Hyena) and tied him firmly,’  
 na kûrúma mûcîoro  
 na kû-rûma mû-cîoro  
 and 15-bite 3-stick  
 ‘then collected a strong stick,’  
 na kûmiúgia mmá! mmá! Kámîbûrá.  
 na kû-mî-ug-i-a      mma mma ka-mî-buur-a  
 and 15-9OM-do-IC-FV IDEO IDEO 12SM-9OM-beat-FV  
 ‘and went on him whack! whack! He beat him.’

In summary, an object referent is typically introduced as a full NP, reactivated when it is accessible by an NP + modifier, and highly active objects may be expressed as an independent pronoun or an object marker, or they may remain

unexpressed (object drop). Whether an object can be dropped depends primarily on the predicate and whether the object is a human in class 1/2 or not. Further research is needed to disentangle the precise factors that determine object marking and object drop. Subject NPs can also easily be dropped when referring to active referents. Typically, the subject is visible as subject marking on the inflected verb, but in sequences of events where the subject stays the same (a familiarity topic), the verb may appear in the infinitive form.

There is one final aspect of Kîtharaka grammar that we have referred to in various sections, and that is the marker *ni-* preceding the inflected verb. The marker also has a fundamental influence on the information structure, as we discuss in the next section.

## 7 Focus marker *ni* on verbs

As Muriungi (2005) indicates, Kîtharaka has three conjugational categories (tense/aspect combinations) with a choice for the presence or absence of the preverbal focus marker *ni-*, and three where the absence or presence is fixed, as summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Kîtharaka tenses and their use of *ni*

present perfective	SM-kû-VB-a	a-kû-ring-a ‘he has beaten’
present progressive	ni SM-kû-VB-a / SM-ri-VB-a	n’ a-kû-ring-a ‘he is beating’
future	SM-ka-VB-a	a-ka-ringa ‘he will beat’
perfective	(ni) SM-VB-ire	(n’)a-ring-ire ‘he beat’
yesterday past	(ni) SM-ra-VB-ire	(n’)a-ra-ring-ire ‘he beat’
remote past	(ni) SM-a-VB-ire	(n’)a-a-ring-ire ‘he beat’

The question we can ask for the “optional” conjugations (perfective, yesterday past, and remote past) is thus what determines the presence or absence of the marker. Apart from being restricted to these conjugations, there appear to be three more restrictions at the clausal level:

1. A verb in sentence-final position of a main clause must have the marker;
2. Negative verb forms and a verb in the embedded clause cannot take *ni-*;
3. When the marker is absent, the focus falls on the postverbal element.

The first restriction is evident in Muriungi (2005: 46) and illustrated in (184), where the postverbal element can be an object (184a) or an adjunct (184d), but the verb may not be clause-final without the marker *ni* on the verb (184b–184c).

- (184) a. Árárúmíírie îng’ooí.  
 a-ra-rûm-i-ire                      î-ng’ooí  
 1SM-YPST-bite-IC-PFV 5-donkey  
 ‘He fed the donkey.’
- b. Wana îng’ooí \*(n’)áárûmíírie.  
 wana î-ng’ooí ni a-ra-rûm-i-ire  
 even 5-donkey FOC 1SM-YPST-bite-IC-PFV  
 ‘Even the donkey he fed.’
- c. \* (Í) túagwííré.  
 ni tû-a-gû-ire  
 FOC 1PL.SM-PST-fall-PFV  
 ‘We fell.’
- d. Ndáráthíír’ ígoro.  
 nda-ra-thi-ire                      î-goro  
 1SG.SM-YPST-go-PFV 5-yesterday  
 ‘I went yesterday.’

This is reminiscent of the conjoint/disjoint alternation, as Abels & Muriungi (2008: 728) note in comparison with Kirundi; see especially also Morimoto (2017) for a comparison of the marker *n̄i* in closely-related Gikuyu to the conjoint/disjoint alternation.

The second restriction is shown by Muriungi (2005: 80) in his example (185c): *ni* cannot be used on a negative verb form.

- (185) (Muriungi 2005: 80, glosses adapted)
- a. Paul n’ á-rá-rúg-íre                      n-kíma.  
 1.Paul FOC 1SM-YPST-COOK-PFV 9-ugali  
 ‘Paul cooked food.’
- b. Paul a-tí-ra-rúg-a                              n-kíma.  
 1.Paul 1SM-NEG-YPST-COOK-FV 9-ugali  
 ‘Paul did not cook food.’
- c. \* Paul n’ a-tí/tá-rúg-a                              n-kíma.  
 1.Paul FOC 1SM-NEG-YPST-COOK-FV 9-ugali  
 ‘Paul did not cook food.’

The third restriction comes out in a number of tests, showing that when *ni* is absent, the element following the verb is in focus. The form with *ni* cannot be used in an object question (186), and neither is it felicitous as an answer to an object question, as shown in (187) and (188).

- (186) (\*N)ûroóníre ûû?

ni û-ra-on-ire                  ûû  
FOC 2SG.SM-YPST-see-PFV who  
'Who did you see?'

- (187) (What did Asha bake?)

Áshá (#n') akáándíré mûgááté.  
asha ni a-kaand-ire mû-gaate  
1.Asha FOC 1SM-bake-PFV 3-bread  
'Asha baked bread.'

- (188) (Who did you see at the high school reunion?)

(#I)mbóniré Kîmákû bái.  
ni n-on-ire                  Kîmakû bai  
FOC 1SG.SM-see-PFV 1.Kîmakû buddy  
'I saw Kîmakû, friend.'

Muriungi (2005: footnote 13) indicates that a question word preceded by a *ni*-marked verb may be interpreted as an echo question, but we found that the interpretation is more one of emphasis, as indicated in the context and translation of (189a). The same interpretation can be obtained by the presence of the polarity particle *ka* as in (189b). Echo questions in our data are asked with a *ni*-less verb, a rising intonation, and possibly a modification of the question word by a following -*o* pronoun, as in (189).

- (189) (Context: Someone got a stomach ache after dinner, so what could they have cooked that made this so?)

- a. N' árárugíré ìmbí?

ni a-ra-rug-ire                  m-bi  
FOC 1SM-YPST-cook-PFV 9-what  
'What (on earth) did s/he cook?!"

- b. Ká árárugíré ìmbí?

ka a-ra-rug-ire                  m-bi  
Q 1SM-YPST-cook-PFV 9-what  
'What did s/he cook?!"

- (190) (Context: You haven't heard well what someone said.)

Arárígire mbié?  
 a-ra-rug-ire            m-bi-e  
 1SM-YPST-cook-PFV 9-what-ECHO  
 'She cooked what?'

Cognate objects, which cannot be focused, can follow a verb with *ni* (191), but are awkward when *ni* is absent (191b). Since cognate objects cannot be focused (as there are no realistic alternatives), this shows that the constituent following the *ni*-less form is focused. As expected, when specifying the object with a relative clause, it becomes possible to focus the object (as alternatives can be generated outside this subset, here dreams that are not scary) and hence the verb form without *ni* is acceptable – see (191c).

- (191) a. N' ááróótíré kíróóto.

ni    a-a-root-ire            kí-root-o  
 FOC 1SM-PST-dream-PFV 7-dream-NMLZ  
 'He dreamt a dream.'

- b. \* Aróótíré kíróóto.

a-a-root-ire            kí-root-o  
 1SM-PST-dream-PFV 7-dream-NMLZ  
 'He dreamt a dream.'

- c. Aaróótíré kíróóto kiámûmakiá mûnó.

a-a-root-ire            kí-root-o            kí-a-mû-maki-a            mûno  
 1SM-PST-dream-PFV 7-dream-NMLZ 7SM-PST-1OM-scare-FV INT  
 'He dreamt a dream that really scared him.'

Similarly, an idiomatic object does not keep its idiomatic reading when *ni* is absent (192b), as opposed to when it is present (192a), again showing the focus status of the element following the *ni*-less verb.

- (192) a. N'áátwéére mûtí.

ni    a-ra-tûa-ir-e            mû-tî  
 FOC 1SM-YPST-climb-PFV-FV 3-tree  
 'She climbed a tree'  
 'She became pregnant.'

- b. Aatwééré mûtí.  
 a-ra-tw-ire              mû-tî  
 1SM-YPST-climb-PFV 3-tree  
 ‘She climbed a *tree*’ (it’s not a rock)  
 \*‘She became pregnant.’

For alternative questions, where the focus is on the object, the form without *ni* is required, shown in (193a). The form with *ni* (and a variation in constituent order) will be interpreted as a yes/no question, as in (193).

- (193) a. Suúzá arúgiiré Yénéké kîikí kaná Ngírûbatí?  
 Souza a-rug-ire Jenneke kîiki kana Wilbert  
 1.Souza 1SM-cook-PFV 1.Jenneke 9.cake or 1.Wilbert  
 ‘Did Souza bake a cake for Jenneke or for Wilbert?’ (answer:  
 Jenneke/Wilbert)  
 b. Suúzá n’árúgiiré Yénéké kaná Ngírûbatí kîikí?  
 Souza ni a-rug-ir-ire Jenneke kana Wilbert kîiki  
 1.Souza FOC 1SM-cook-APPL-PFV 1.Jenneke or 1.Wilbert 9.cake  
 ‘Did Souza bake a cake for Jenneke or for Wilbert (at all)?’ (answer:  
 yes/no)

The interpretation of the postverbal element as focus also emerges clearly when the postverbal object is modified by ‘some’. Following a verb form without *ni*, this cannot be interpreted as a lower boundary (some, perhaps all), but must be interpreted as a proper subset as in (194b), in line with focus triggering and excluding alternatives. In contrast, the form with *ni* in (194a) was said to “focus on the fact that they were slaughtered”. The continuation clauses in (194a) (actually all) and (194b) (leaving others) cannot be interchanged between the two examples.

- (194) a. Í baráurágíre ngúkú ímwe... wana íciónthe.  
 ni ba-ra-urag-ire n-gûkû i-mwe wana ni ci-onthe  
 FOC 2SM-YPST-kill-PFV 10-chicken 10-one even FOC 10-all  
 ‘They slaughtered some chickens... actually all of them.’  
 b. Baráurágíre ngúkú ímwe... baatiga irá ingí.  
 ba-ra-urag-ire n-gûkû i-mwe ba-ra-tig-a i-ra  
 2SM-YPST-kill-PFV 10-chicken 10-one 2SM-YPST-stop-FV 10-RM  
 i-ngí  
 10-other  
 ‘They slaughtered some chickens... they left others.’

From the interpretation of ‘some’, it already becomes clear that the focus following the *ni*-less verb may be exclusive. This conclusion is also supported by the interpretation of the postverbal word ‘person’ in (195): when *ni* is present, ‘person’ is interpreted as a non-specific indefinite (195a), but in the absence of *ni* as a generic ‘human being’ (195b), triggering the speakers’ comment “it was not a dog”. If the focus following a *ni*-less verb is exclusive, we can understand the incompatibility with the indefinite non-specific reading, as there are no alternatives: someone/anyone includes all referents. The generic reading, however, can exclude other species.

- (195) a. Í ndaróóníre mûntû ìgoro.  
 ni nda-ra-on-ire mû-ntû ì-goro  
 FOC 1SG.SM-YPST-see-PFV 1-person 5-yesterday  
 ‘I saw someone yesterday.’
- b. Ndaróóníre mûntû ìgoro.  
 nda-ra-on-ire mû-ntû ì-goro  
 1SG.SM-YPST-see-PFV 1-person 5-yesterday  
 ‘I saw a person yesterday.’

However, the unmarked form is also acceptable if the word ‘person’ is modified, inducing a specific meaning, as in (196).

- (196) Ndaróóníre mûntû akiiyá.  
 nda-ra-on-ire mû-ntû a-kî-iy-a  
 1SG.SM-YPST-see-PFV 1-person 1SM-DEP-steal-FV  
 ‘I saw someone stealing.’

This effect seems more general: adding further information can improve the *ni*-less form, as seen in (197).

- (197) Gûkuíré ûû?  
 kû-ku-ire ûû  
 17SM-die-PFV who  
 ‘Who died?’
- Gûkuíré mûká... #(na twaáná twíírì).  
 kû-ku-ire mû-ka na tû-ana tû-íri  
 17SM-die-PFV 1-woman and 13-child 13-two  
 ‘There died a woman... with two children.’

The (im)possibilities of focus-sensitive particles ‘even’ and ‘only’ also support the exhaustive interpretation. If the object following the verb is modified by ‘even’, the form with *ni* is preferred, as in (198a), the absence of *ni* is judged to be degraded – see (198b) (see also Abels & Muriungi 2008: 714). The same holds for the default agreement inversion in (199).

- (198) (Kimathi feeds the goats grass, sometimes the cows, but yesterday...)

- a. Kîmááthí n'árárúmíiryé kinya îng'ooí irió.  
Kimathi ni a-ra-rûm-i-ire kinya i-ng'ooi i-rio  
1.Kimathi FOC 1SM-YPST-bite-IC-PFV even 5-donkey 8-food  
'Kîmathi fed even the donkeys food.'
- b. ? Kîmááthí árárámíiryé wana îng'ooí irió.  
Kimathi a-ra-rûm-i-ire wana i-ngóói i-rio  
1.Kimathi 1SM-YPST-bite-IC-PFV even 5-donkey 8-food  
'Kîmathi fed even the donkeys food.'

- (199) \*(Í) gwakamatirwe kinya maíga.

ni kû-a-kamat-w-ire kinya ma-iga  
FOC 17SM-PST-carry-PASS-PFV even 6-stones  
'Even stones were carried away.'

If the object following the verb is modified by ‘only’, the form without *ni* must be used (200).

- (200) (Did he wash shirts and sheets?)

Árî', (#n)ábûúrire shááti cionká.  
arî a-bûûr-ire shaati ci-onka  
no 1SM-wash-PFV 10.shirt 10-only  
'No, he washed shirts only.'

The same goes for the inversion construction in (201). If the verb had *ni-*, it was indicated that this cannot be an answer to a question, but (without *wenka* ‘only’) you would need a list: there died a woman, and children, and her husband.

- (201) (#) Gûkuíre mûká wéenka.

ni kû-ku-ire mû-ka we-onka  
FOC 17SM-die-PFV 1-woman 1-only  
'Only a woman died.'

Apart from providing a range of tests arguing that the preverbal *ni*-marked noun phrase is in exhaustive focus (see Section 5.1), Abels & Muriungi (2008) also show that the postverbal constituent is in exhaustive focus when the marker *ni* is absent on the verb. One such test is the entailment test in (202): If Ruth bought a book and a pen, then the statement in (202b) without *ni* cannot be an entailment, because (evidently) this means that Ruth bought *only* a book (which is not true). The statement with *ni* in (202c), on the other hand, is acceptable as an entailment.

(202) Abels & Muriungi (2008: 713, tones added)

- a. Rúth a-gûr-íre    i-bûkú na ka-rámu.  
 1.Ruth 1SM-buy-PFV 5-book and 12-pen  
 ‘Ruth bought a book and a pen.’
- b.  $\Rightarrow$  Rúth a-gûr-íre    i-bûkú.  
 1.Ruth 1SM-buy-PFV 5-book  
 ‘Ruth bought *a book*’
- c.  $\Rightarrow$  Ruth n' á-gûr-iré    i-bûkú.  
 1.Ruth FOC 1SM-buy-PFV 5-book  
 ‘Ruth bought a book.’

If the absence of *ni* indicates (exhaustive) focus on the constituent following the verb, we may wonder whether its presence is also related to a particular interpretation. Abels & Muriungi (2008: 706) indicate a range of contexts in which the verb can take the marker *ni*-, shown in (203), as long as the focus is not exhaustively on a term.

(203) (Abels & Muriungi 2008: 706, modified)

María n' á-gûr-iré    i-bûkú.

1.Maria FOC 1SM-buy-PFV 5-book

‘Maria bought a book.’

as an answer to:

- What is the problem?    thetic
- What did Maria do?    VP focus
- It is there anything that Maria bought?              non-exh object focus
- Is there anybody who bought a book?    non-exh subject focus
- Did Maria buy a book?    polarity focus
- What did Maria do with the book?    state-of-affairs focus
- What did Maria buy?    object focus
- Who bought the book?    subject focus

We also found that *ni* must be present to express predicate-centred focus in SVO order, illustrated by verum in (204).

- (204) (Daniel didn't talk yesterday.)  
 Ndáníérí #(n')ááriirie ígóro.  
 Daniel ni a-ari-ire                              i-goro  
 1.Daniel FOC 1SM-speak-PFV 5-yesterday  
 'Daniel did talk yesterday.'

Again, the same we also find in default agreement inversion, where the form with *ni* is interpreted as a thetic sentence, as in (205a) and (206), but this reading is impossible for the *ni*-less form in (205b) (see also Section 2.3 on subject inversion).

- (205) a. (What is happening down there?)<sup>18</sup>  
 Í 'gúkùrííngwa mûbírá kiéníiní.  
 ni kû-kû-riing-w-a                          mû-biira kî-eni=ini  
 FOC 17SM-PRS-hit-PASS-FV 3-ball    7-field=LOC  
 'Football is being played at the field.'  
 b. (Context: You heard the sound of a ball)  
 Gûkûrííngwa mûbírá kiéníiní.  
 kû-kû-riing-w-a                          mû-biira kî-eni=ini  
 17SM-PRS-hit-PASS-FV 3-ball    7-field=LOC  
 \*'Football is being played at the field.'  
 'A ball has been hit on the field.'
- (206) (How is Marimanti?)<sup>19</sup>  
 I kûáárité mûnó.  
 ni kû-ar-ite                                  mûno  
 FOC 17SM-be.hot-STAT.PFV INT  
 'It's very hot.'

Considering this highly underspecified use of the presence of *ni* on the verb, and adding also that *ni* must be present on the verb when it occurs in sentence-final position, we conclude that the *ni*-form is the elsewhere form, and the absence of the marker is the marked case, being associated with exhaustive focus on the postverbal constituent.

<sup>18</sup>This question could also felicitously be answered by a basic cleft/focus construction; see Section 5.1 for use of the preverbal focus in thetic contexts.

<sup>19</sup>Note that *ni* can be omitted but only in an echo exclamative content, e.g. A: 'I heard that the sun is really scorching you guys down there!' B: *Tiga! Kwarîite mûno*. 'Tell me about it (lit. leave it)! It's damn hot!'.

The distribution and function of *ni* on the verb in Kîtharaka closely matches that of Kikuyu. For this language, Morimoto (2017) compares the two verb forms to the conjoint/disjoint alternation that is found in other eastern Bantu languages (see for example van der Wal (2025 [this volume]) for Makhuwa and Nshemezimana & van der Wal (2025 [this volume]) for Kirundi).

In conclusion, we have seen that the presence or absence of invariable pre-verbal *ni-* in Kîtharaka occurs in various tense-aspect categories, and most importantly, whether the verb or following element is in focus. The absence of *ni*- on the verb indicates that focus falls on the postverbal element; its presence is not associated with a particular interpretation, although it is indeed used with predicate-centred focus.

## 8 Summary

We have shown that Kîtharaka employs a variety of linguistic strategies to structure information. Such strategies are evident in word order, topic marking, predicate doubling, cleft constructions, object/subject marking and drop, and the use or absence of *ni* on the verb. In Section 2, we have shown that topicalised constituents are preferred in pre-verbal position while non-topical ones tend to be post-verbal, thus accounting for left dislocation, and subject inversion. There is evidently no dedicated focus position in Kîtharaka. Possible interpretations for canonical SVO order depend on tense-aspect conjugation of the verb involving the use of the focus particle *ni* as discussed in Section 7.

In Sections 3 and 4, we have illustrated how various pragmatically sanctioned interpretations such as polarity focus/verum, deprecative, contrastive and intensive readings are variably encoded through the use of the contrastive topic marker *-o* (topic marking) and co-occurrence of the infinitive and inflected form of the verb (predicate doubling). In Section 5 we have also discussed how various interpretations are encoded using the preverbal focus construction (basic cleft), the pseudocleft and the NI+RM and NI+PRO constructions (“reverse pseudocleft”). Particularly, we have indicated that the basic cleft encodes exhaustive focus on the sentence-initial constituent. We have also discussed (reverse) pseudoclefts and a similar NI-PRO structure and concluded that the two are different grammatical structures which can be analysed differently: While in the NI+RM construction the postcopular part is in focus, for the NI-PRO structure, we argue that the post-copula pronoun is in focus (which is co-indexed with the initial NP).

Our discussion has also touched on the parameters that regulate the expression of the object, either in full NP, pronoun, object marker or object drop altogether

(see Section 6). We have seen that accessibility, humanness, predicate type, and salience play some role, though more work needs to be done on this. Lastly, we have discussed the role of the invariable *ni-* on the verb and showed that its absence denotes (exclusive) focus on the post-verbal constituent. It will be interesting in further research to see the precise differences in meaning and use between the focus expressed after a *ni*-less verb, in a basic cleft, the pseudocleft, and in the NI-PRO construction.

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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 indicates surface tone including intonation; high tones are marked by an acute accent; low tones remain unmarked. The mid-close vowel [o] is realised as ⟨û⟩ while [e] is written as ⟨î⟩. What is written as ⟨c⟩ is pronounced [s], and ⟨ng’⟩ represents [ŋ].

*	ungrammatical
?	degraded grammaticality
#	infelicitous in the given context
!	downstep
*(X)	the presence of X is obligatory and cannot grammatically be omitted
(*X)	the presence of X would make the sentence ungrammatical
(X)	the presence of X is optional
ABL	able
CONN	connective
DAI	default agreement inversion

DEM.DIST	distal demonstrative
DEM.MED	medial demonstrative
DEM.PROX	proximal demonstrative
DEP	dependent conjugation
DP	determiner phrase
ECHO	echo-question
EXH	exhaustive
FV	final vowel
HAB	habitual
IC	immediate causative
IDEO	ideophone
INT	intensifier
int.	intended meaning
NA + PRO	combination of ‘and’ with pronoun
NI-PRO	combination of the copula and a pronoun (as in the “reverse pseudocleft”)
NI+RM	construction with a copula followed by a free relative clause which starts with a relative marker
N.PST	near past tense
OM	object marker
POL	polarity
PP	pragmatic particle
PRO	pronoun
QUIS	Questionnaire on Information Structure (Skopeteas et al. 2006)
RM	relative marker
SC	short causative
SLI	semantic locative inversion
SM	subject marker
STAT	stative
SUBS	subsecutive
XP	a phrase headed by an unspecified category X
YPST	yesterday past

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# Chapter 5

## The expression of information structure in Kirundi

Ernest Nshemezimana<sup>a</sup> & Jenneke van der Wal<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Université de Burundi <sup>b</sup>Leiden University

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-∅-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-∅-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-∅-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
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
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-iye      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-iye      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 <sup>H</sup> |
| 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 Yaariiye via ibijumbu vyóóse.

a-a-a-ri-ye	bi-a	i-bi-jumbu	bi-óóse
1SM-N.PST-DJ-eat-PFV	8-DEM <sub>5</sub>	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 Yariiye ibjumbu vyóóse, asigaza ibiharage (gusa).

a-a-∅-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-∅-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<sup>H</sup>  
 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-∅-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-∅-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) Ariko 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 in thetic 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-∅-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 amatá abáana mu nzu.  
nyá      mu-vyéeyi a-a-∅-há-ir-ye                      a-ma-tá  
1.DEM<sub>7</sub> 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]<sub>FOC</sub> (not outside).’

- b. Nya muvyéeyi yaheereye abáana mu nzu amatá.  
 nya mu-vyéeyi a-a-Ø-há-ir-ye a-ba-áana mu  
 1.DEM<sub>7</sub> 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.DEM<sub>7</sub> 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).<sup>1</sup> 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/aríinjiye?  
 ndé a-Ø-iinjir-ye / a-Ø-ra-iinjir-ye  
 1.who 1SM-PRS-come.in-PFV / 1SM-PRS-DJ-come.in-PFV  
 int. ‘Who comes in?’

---

<sup>1</sup>Content 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-∅-sohok-ye<sup>H</sup>  
   COP 1.who 1SM-PRS-go.out-PFV.REL  
   ‘Who (is the one who) goes out?’
  - c. Haje ndé? [subject inversion]
 

ha-∅-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-∅-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-∅-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-∅-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 túabajanye 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 túabajanye kw'ishuúre.  
 ha-rya tu-a-ri tu-ba-gi-an-ye kw' i-shuúre  
 16-DEM<sub>3</sub> 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 umuvyéeyi yiibáarutse ubushuuri.  
 i Ngozi muri zone Mwumba ku mu-sozi Karungura ha-∅-ri=hó  
 19 Ngozi 18 5.area Mwumba 17 3-hill Karungura EXP-PRS-be=16  
 u-mu-vyéeyi a-a-íibáaruk-ye<sup>H</sup> 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, harihó umuvyéeyi yiibáarutse ubushuuri.  
 ku mu-górooba u-a ejó i Ngozi ha-∅-ri=hó  
 17 3-evening 3-CONN yesterday 19 Ngozi EXP-PRS-be=16  
 u-mu-vyéeyi a-a-íibáaruk-ye<sup>H</sup> 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]<sub>FOC</sub>...  
 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-∅-kór-ye ikí  
 then yesterday 2PL.SM-RMT.PST-CJ-do-PFV what  
 ‘What did you do yesterday then?’

- A: Twaárarírimvye indírimbo.  
 tu-á-ra-rírimb-ye i-n-rírimbo  
 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 *iyó mbwá* ‘that dog’ in (28).

- (28) Duhejeje kuyigaburira, iyo mbwá.  
 tu-∅-hez-ye ku-yi-gaburira i-i-o n-bwá.  
 1PL.SM-PRS.CJ-finish-PFV 15-9OM-feed AUG-9-DEM<sub>2</sub> 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-∅-há-ye u-mw-áana iki?  
2SG.SM-PRS-give-PFV AUG-1-child what  
'What have you given to the child?'  
b. CJ \*U-∅-há-ye iki u-mw-áana?  
2SG.SM-PRS-give-PFV what AUG-1-child
- (30) a. CJ Uhaaye ikijumbu ndé?  
u-∅-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-∅-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-∅-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-∅-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 <sup>#</sup> N.ra-∅-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-∅-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-∅-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 in thetic contexts. For pragmatic restrictions on animacy in Patient Inversion, see discussion in Morimoto (2006) and Nshemezimana (2016).

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

Sinzi.	Ivyo	biizi	Imáana	gusa.
si-n-zí	i-bi-o	bi-zi	i-máana	gusa
NEG-1SG.SM-know	AUG-8-DEM <sub>2</sub>	8SM-know	AUG-9.God	only

‘I don’t know, only God knows.’

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

Amafoto	yafashe	Ernest,	nayó	Christian	sinzi.
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-∅-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?')

Haciyyeho 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.  
múri a-a-a ma-vuuriro ha-ra-bónek-a=mwó  
18 AUG-6-DEM<sub>1</sub> 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. Murí aka gakino, harimwó ibihíimba bitatu.  
 Murí a-ka-a            ka-kino ha-∅-ri=mwó i-bi-hiímba bi-tatu  
 18     AUG-12-DEM<sub>1</sub> 12-skit 16SM-PRS-be=18 AUG-8-part 8-three  
 ‘In this sketch, there are three parts.’
- b. Harimwó, murí aka gakino, ibihíimba bitatu.  
 ha-∅-ri=mwó    murí a-ka-a            ka-kino i-bi-hiímba bi-tatu  
 16SM-PRS-be=18 18     AUG-12-DEM<sub>1</sub> 12-skit AUG-8-part 8-three  
 ‘There are, in this sketch, three parts.’
- c. Harimwó ibihíimba bitatu, murí aka gakino.  
 ha-∅-ri=mwó    i-bi-hiímba bi-tatu    murí a-ka-a            ka-kino  
 16SM-PRS-be=18 AUG-8-part 8-three 18     AUG-12-DEM<sub>1</sub> 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),<sup>2</sup> or with existential reference (=*hó*) (45).<sup>3</sup> The information-structural interpretation is still the same.

- (42) Muri abo bantu harimwo uwugwaye korona.

murí a-ba-o            ba-ntu    ha-∅-ri=mwó u-wu-gwáar-ye    korona  
 18     AUG-2-DEM<sub>2</sub> 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.’

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

<sup>3</sup>It 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-∅-ri-mwó    iki?  
 AUG-16-DEM<sub>1</sub> 16SM-PRS-be=18 what
- b. a-ha-a            ha-∅-ri-yó    iki?  
 AUG-16-DEM<sub>1</sub> 16SM-PRS-be=19 what  
 ‘What’s in it here?’

- (44) Mu nzu hinjiyeyo inzoka.

mu n-zu ha-a-∅-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-DEM<sub>1</sub> 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-∅-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 hagiyeyo Minani.

i Bujumbura ha-a-∅-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-DEM<sub>2</sub> 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 a thetic context.

- (49) (Nshemezimana 2016: 120–122)

- a. O<sub>[INST]</sub>VS: Ivyo bikóreesho bikoreesha uwa Krístu n'úwutari wé.  
 i-bi-o            bi-kóreesho    bi-∅-kór-ish-a  
 AUG-8-DEM<sub>2</sub> 8-implement 8SM-PRS.CJ-do-CAUS-FV  
 u-u-a            Kristu 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<sub>[INST]</sub>: U-u-a            Kristu n'    u-u-ta-ri        wé  
 AUG-1-CONN Christ and AUG-1-NEG-be 1.PRO  
 ba-∅-kór-ish-a        i-bi-o            bi-kóreesho.  
 2SM-PRS.CJ-do-CAUS-FV AUG-8-DEM<sub>2</sub> 8-implement  
 ‘Both Christians and non-Christians use these  
 implements.’

- (50) a. SVO<sub>[INST]</sub>: Nyaa mugabo akuunda kunywá inzogá n'úmuukeenke.  
 nyaa    mu-gabo a-∅-kúund-a        ku-nyóá  
 1-DEM<sub>7</sub> 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<sub>[INST]</sub>: Nyaa mugabo akuunda kunywéesha inzogá umukenke.  
 nyaa mu-gabo a-Ø-kúund-a ku-nyó-ish-a  
 1.DEM<sub>7</sub> 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<sub>[INST]</sub>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  
 AUG<sub>9</sub>-9-drink 1.DEM<sub>7</sub> 1-man  
 ‘The man in question (not John) often drinks the drink with the straw.’
- d. \*O<sub>[INST]</sub>VS: \* Na u-mu-keenke u-Ø-kúund-a ku-nyó-a  
 with AUG-3-straw 3SM-PRS.CJ-like-FV 15-drink  
 (i-N-zogá) nyaa mu-gabo  
 AUG-9-drink 1.DEM<sub>7</sub> 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<sub>[PROP]</sub>: Vyaávuze 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<sup>H</sup> 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<sub>[PROP]</sub>: 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<sup>H</sup> 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-áana gusa  
EXP-DJ-be.hurt-PFV AUG-2-child only  
'(\*Only) the children have been hurt.'

- (56) (Nshemezimana 2016: 152)

Haraaza kaándi abatóozakoóri ngo babatízwe.  
ha-∅-ra-əz-a kaándi a-ba-tóozakoóri ngo  
EXP-PRS-DJ-come-FV also AUG-2-tax.collector for  
ba-batíz-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. (#VSO)  
ha-a-∅-sees-ye Yohana a-ma-tá.  
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 a thetic 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-∅-ra-pfú-ye u-mu-ntu.  
1SM-PRS-DJ-die-PFV AUG-1-person
- b. Ha-∅-ra-pfú-ye u-mu-ntu.  
EXP-PRS-DJ-die-PFV AUG-1-person
- c. Ha-∅-ri u-mu-ntu a-pfú-ye<sup>H</sup>.  
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.DEM<sub>7</sub> 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) deprecative (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 deprecative; 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 deprecative 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 (Gunnink 2018) and Kîtharaka (Kanampiu & van der Wal 2025 [this volume])), but instead the light verb *-kora* 'do, make' must be used, as in (70b).

- (70) a. \* Ni kurírimba ndiríimba.  
 ni ku-rírimba N-ríimb-a<sup>H</sup>  
 COP 15-sing 1SG.SM-sing-FV.REL  
 'It's singing that I sing.'  
 b. Ni kuririmba nkora.  
 ni ku-rírimba N-kór-a<sup>H</sup>  
 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. Kîtharaka and Kinyakyusa – see Kanampiu & van der Wal (2025 [this volume]) and Lusekelo et al. (2025 [this volume])):

- (71) \* Niirutse kwiiruka.  
 ni-Ø-iiruk-ye ku-iiruka  
 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 Kíítharaka and Rukiga with similar functions (see Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021, Asiimwe & 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)

Kurí kimwé, haanditsekó aya majaambo.  
 kurí ki-mwé ha-Ø-aandik-ye=kó a-a-a ma-jaambo  
 17 7-one 16SM-CJ-write-PFV=17 AUG-6-DEM<sub>1</sub> 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	particle/pronoun 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-ri-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<sup>H</sup>  
 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<sup>H</sup> 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<sup>H</sup> 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 hagiíyeyó 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 hagiíyeyó 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 <sup>H</sup>
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 aríko bagenziwé (bó) abagurira icáayi.  
 Yona a-Ø-gur-ir-a      a-ka-hawá shéebuja aríko  
 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 aríko amasume (yó) yayaretse uko.  
 a-ma-shaáti a-a-a-ya-gooror-ye      aríko 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
- 'As for children, s/he has them.' (but the rest not)  
(Contrastive situation: Does s/he have a house, cows, and children now?)
  - '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 predicational 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-DEM<sub>3</sub> 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<sup>H</sup>  
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<sup>H</sup>  
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-áana ba-a-ri ba-ké caane  
AUG-2-DEM<sub>2</sub> 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<sup>H</sup> 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-∅-ri a-ba-ntu ba-a-tu-zan-ir-ye<sup>H</sup>  
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. Biyumiira kó baarí abasumá baarí baaje kwiíba imódoka yíiwé.  
Ba-iyumiir-a kó ba-a-rí a-ba-sumá ba-a-ri<sup>H</sup>  
2SM-think-FV COMP 2SM-N.PST-be AUG-2-thief 2SM-N.PST-be.REL  
ba-əz-ye<sup>H</sup> ku-íiba i-módoka i-íiwé  
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-∅-rí a-ba-sumá ba-a-ri<sup>H</sup>  
(...) COMP EXP-PRS-be AUG-2-thief 2SM-N.PST-be.REL  
ba-əz-ye<sup>H</sup> ku-íiba i-módoka i-íiwé  
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-∅-rí a-ba-sumá ba-a-ri<sup>H</sup>  
(...) COMP 2SM-PRS-be AUG-2-thief 2SM-N.PST-be.REL  
ba-əz-ye<sup>H</sup> ku-íiba i-módoka i-íiwé  
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<sup>H</sup> ba-əz-ye<sup>H</sup>  
(...) COMP COP AUG-2-thief 2SM-N.PST-be.REL 2SM-come-PFV.REL  
ku-íiba i-módoka i-íiwé  
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-∅-bá-a        iwacu  
 AUG-2-DEM<sub>1</sub> 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-∅-bá-ye        i-N-gwe        i-á-vyáar-ye<sup>H</sup>  
 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'abashiíngamáteeká.  
 ejó        ha-zoo-bá-a        i-náama        i-a  
 tomorrow EXP-FUT-be-FV AUG-5.meeting 5-CONN  
 a-ba-shíingamáteeká  
 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-shíingamáteeká  
 AUG-2-parliamentarian
- (112) a. Aho heepfó harabáaye isaánganya mu mwaánya uhezé.  
 a-ha-o        heepfó ha-∅-ra-bá-ye        i-saánganya        mu  
 AUG-16-DEM<sub>2</sub> down EXP-PRS-DJ-be-PFV AUG-5.accident 18  
 mu-aánya u-her-ye<sup>H</sup>  
 3-time        3SM-finish-PFV.REL  
 ‘Down there, an accident happens at the last moment.’

- b. \* A-ha-o      heepfó ha-∅-ra-ri      i-saánganya      mu  
 AUG-16-DEM<sub>2</sub> down EXP-PRS-DJ-be-PFV AUG-5.accident 18  
 mu-aánya u-her-ye<sup>H</sup>  
 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-Benveniste 2002). This has been argued for Kïítharaka (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 birího.  
 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<sup>H</sup>      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<sup>H</sup>  
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<sup>H</sup>  
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-∅-ri a-ba-ntu ba-a-əz-ye<sup>H</sup> 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 inflected<sup>4</sup> 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)*.

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

- (118) (Ex.385, Nshemezimana 2016: 260)

Urafíse inaanga yiivúza.  
 u-ra-fit-ye                    i-nanga            i-i-vúz-a<sup>H</sup>  
 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<sup>H</sup>                    u-mu-gabo  
 PRSNT-AUG-2-DEM<sub>2</sub> 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 kurésha umukoóbwa  
 ha-∅-ri=hó        u-mu-sóre                    a-á-i-tóor-ye<sup>H</sup>  
 EXP-PRS-be=16 AUG-1-young.man 1SM-RMT.PST-REFL-prepare-PFV.REL  
 a-gi-a        ku-résha 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 iríinyezá.

hano mu ru-gó            ha-∅-ri=hó        i-N-bwa        i-ri=kó<sup>H</sup>  
 here 18 11-court yard 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-əz-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	yariítooye	aja	kurésha	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-résha 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 are thetic 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<sup>H</sup>  
 EXP-be what 2PL.SM-look.for-FV.REL  
 ‘What are you looking for?’
- (125) Harihó umusóre (\*gusa) yiítooye aja kurésha umukoóbwa.  
 ha-∅-ri=hó u-mu-sóre (\*gusa)  
 EXP-PRS-be=16 AUG-1-young.man (\*only)  
 a-á-i-tóor-ye<sup>H</sup> 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<sup>H</sup> tu-ri=kó<sup>H</sup>  
 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<sup>H</sup> 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<sup>H</sup> 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 for thetic 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<sup>H</sup>  
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<sup>H</sup> i-i-o n-tébe  
COP who 1SM-N.PST-break-PFV.REL AUG-9-DEM<sub>2</sub> 9-chair  
'Who broke that chair?'

- B: Ni Kabura yayivunyé.

ni Kabura a-a-yi-vún-ye<sup>H</sup>  
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'ígití.

ni Kabura a-iicar-ye<sup>H</sup> musi 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<sup>H</sup> 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<sup>H</sup> (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<sup>H</sup> (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 presententials (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 specifical 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’igit i 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<sup>H</sup>        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 yiitúuye haasí.  
ni    u-mu-áana    a-i-túur-ye<sup>H</sup>                  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<sup>H</sup>  
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<sup>H</sup>  
 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<sup>H</sup> 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 précessif" in Meeussen 1959), as illustrated in (141) where the pronoun *icó* precedes the relative verb (which is marked by a high tone).

- (140) Icaádukijje ni ubuntu bwa Yeésu.

i-ki-á-tu-kiz-ye<sup>H</sup> 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 tukubwiíye.

i-ki-ó tu-á-úumv-ye<sup>H</sup> ni i-ki-o  
 AUG-7-PRO 1PL.SM-RMT.PST-hear-PFV.REL COP AUG-7-DEM<sub>2</sub>  
 tu-∅-ku-bwiír-ye<sup>H</sup>  
 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<sup>H</sup> 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 specifical 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 specifical cleft sentences).

- (143) Icó twaaazanyé ni amaherá y'íshuúre. [specifical]  
i-ki-ó tu-a-zan-ye<sup>H</sup> 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 twaaazanyé ni ciza. [predicational]  
i-ki-ó tu-a-zan-ye<sup>H</sup> 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]<sup>TOP</sup> ni [u-ru-pfu  
 AUG-7-RMT.PST-1OM-cause-PFV.REL AUG-12-disarray COP AUG-11-death  
 ru-a u-ma-áana u-iwé]<sup>FOC</sup>  
 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<sup>H</sup> u-u-o mu-có ni a-ba-hiígi  
 AUG-2-support-PFV.REL AUG-3-DEM<sub>2</sub> 3-practice COP AUG-2-hunter  
 ba-ki-ri=ho<sup>H</sup>  
 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)
- Abaróongoora Ekleziyá ni baandé?  
 a-ba-roongoor-a<sup>H</sup> ekleziyá ni ba-ndé?  
 AUG-2-lead-FV.REL church COP 2-who  
 'Who leads the (Catholic) church?'
  - Abaróongoora Ekleziyá, ni Paapa n'ábeépiskoópi.  
 a-ba-róongoor-a<sup>H</sup> 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<sup>H</sup> 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<sup>H</sup> ni ha-rya nka  
AUG-16-PRO 2SG.SM-POT-7OM-buy-APPL-FV.REL COP 16-DEM<sub>3</sub> 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<sup>H</sup> 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-fash-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<sup>H</sup> 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<sup>H</sup>  
 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<sup>H</sup>  
1.Jean COP AUG-1-DEM<sub>2</sub> 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<sup>H</sup>  
1.Jean COP AUG-1-DEM<sub>2</sub> 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 bakíri bató ni bó turungíka kw'ishuúre.  
a-ba-áana ba-ki-ri<sup>H</sup> ba-tó ni ba-ó tu-rungík-a<sup>H</sup> 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<sup>H</sup>  
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<sup>H</sup>  
 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<sup>H</sup>  
 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<sup>H</sup>  
 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<sup>H</sup> 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<sup>H</sup> kenshi a-ba-báanyi ni ba-ó  
 2SM-1PL.OM-see-FV.REL often AUG-2-neighbour COP 2-PRO  
 ba-tu-téerany-a<sup>H</sup> 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 yandiíriye umukaaté?

ni ndé a-a-N-rí-ir-ye<sup>H</sup> 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<sup>H</sup>

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<sup>H</sup> 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<sup>H</sup>

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 <sub>X</sub>	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
		N.PST	near past
(X)	the presence of X is optional	OM	object marker
[ ] <sup>FOC</sup>	focus	PERS	persistive
[ ] <sup>H</sup>	melodic/floating high tone	POT	potential
[ ] <sup>TOP</sup>	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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# Chapter 6

## The expression of information structure in Rukiga

Allen Asiimwe<sup>a</sup> & Jenneke van der Wal<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Makerere University <sup>b</sup>Leiden University

This chapter offers a systematic descriptive analysis of the various strategies the language uses to express information structure in Rukiga. Notably, word order is determined primarily by discourse roles, the augment on modifiers encodes a restrictive reading, and predicate doubling is associated with a contrastive interpretation among other multiple readings. The particle *-o* functions as a contrastive topic marker, which is often used in topic doubling constructions to reinforce a given interpretation. Although there is a tonal remainder of the conjoint/disjoint alternation, in Rukiga, it does not directly influence information structure. Rukiga also uses three types of clefts, a common strategy used to express focus as in many other languages of the world.

### 1 Introduction

This chapter gives a general overview of the expression of information structure in Rukiga. Rukiga is a Bantu language (Guthrie classification JE14, ISO code [cgg]) of the Nyoro-Ganda group, spoken predominantly in South-Western Uganda by approximately 2.3m people (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2016). Rukiga is closely related to Runyankore with a lexical similarity of up to 94% (Eberhard et al. 2020). Because of this high mutual intelligibility and a high level of lexical and grammatical affinity, the two languages are often clustered and studied together as one language (e.g. Taylor 1985, Turamymwe 2011, Asiimwe 2014, Ndolerire 2020, among others). Together the two languages form the language cluster: Runyankore-Rukiga. Some studies on (Runyankore-)Rukiga exist. Two descriptive grammars are available, namely Morris & Kirwan (1972) and Taylor (1985).



Various other studies on Runyankore-Rukiga have been carried out, including ones on tense and aspect (Turamymomwe 2011, Asiimwe 2024a), definiteness and specificity (Asiimwe 2014), and the syntax of relative clause constructions (Asiimwe 2019). Two articles on aspects of information structure in Rukiga have been published within the Bantu Syntax and Information Structure (BaSIS) project: van der Wal & Asiimwe (2020) on the conjoint/disjoint alternation and Asiimwe & van der Wal (2021) on the contrastive marker *-o*. This chapter presents the first detailed (descriptive) study of information structure in Rukiga. It examines different strategies the language employs to express the various categories of information structure.

Data for this chapter are based on the Runyaifo variety largely spoken in Ndorwa county in Kabale district. Other dominant varieties of Rukiga include Rusigi, Ruhimba and Runyangyenzi. The rest of the dialects share a common grammar, and are quite distinct from Runyaifo. As part of the BaSIS research, data were collected during the month of January 2019 using the BaSIS project methodology, available through the Leiden Repository. Data were mainly collected through elicitation with three native speakers of Rukiga. In addition, data from natural speech in the form of narratives and recipes were also collected through interactions with the three native speakers. Additional data come from the first author who is a native speaker of Rukiga, and were checked by the three native speakers that participated in the elicitation sessions. The data were transcribed and stored in an Online Language Database accessible through the Dative user interface that allows data sharing in a collaborative research. This database will be accessible through The Language Archive. More information about Dative can be accessed via <https://www.dative.ca> (and see the introduction to this book). We also refer to the introduction to this book for further background on the terms and diagnostics used for information structure.

The chapter is structured as follows: Section 2 discusses the tonal conjoint/disjoint alternation in Rukiga. Section 3 gives an extensive discussion on word order and notes that word order in Rukiga is influenced mainly by discourse. Section 4 then looks at particle *-o* as a marker of contrastive topics, which also occurs in predicate doubling constructions, as discussed in Section 5. This section observes that predicate doubling contructions are associated with multiple readings and these readings are context-dependent. In Section 6, we discuss the optional augment on nominal modifiers in Rukiga, which is shown to express restrictiveness. Section 7 is concerned with the role of cleft constructions in the expression of focus and Section 8 examines object marking in Rukiga with a focus on the role of pragmatic object doubling. A summary of the chapter is given in Section 9.

## 2 Conjoint/disjoint residue

Some eastern and southern Bantu languages show a segmental morphological alternation in verbal conjugations known as the conjoint/disjoint alternation (see Chapter 5, Nshemezimana & van der Wal 2025 [this volume] on Kirundi and Chapter 8, van der Wal 2025b [this volume] on Makhuwa). This alternation can function as a marker of focus, as illustrated for Kimatuumbi in (1), where the disjoint verb form is marked by *eenda* whereas the conjoint form is unmarked. Using the disjoint form results in focus on the predicate, whereas the conjoint form indicates focus on the constituent following the verb (see van der Wal 2017, 2025a, for an overview of the conjoint/disjoint alternation across Bantu). Crucially, the conjoint verb form cannot appear clause-finally, whereas the disjoint form can – this is consistent across the Bantu languages.

- (1) Kimatuumbi (P13, Odden 1996: 60–61, glosses added)
  - a. CJ Ni-kat-a \* (kaámba).  
1SG.SM-cut-FV rope  
'I am cutting *rope* (not something else).'
  - b. DJ Eendá-kaat-á.  
1SG.SM.PROG.DJ-cut-FV  
'He is cutting.'
  - c. DJ Eendá-kaat-á kaámba.  
1SG.SM.PROG.DJ-cut-FV rope  
'He is *cutting* rope (not doing something else to it).'

Rukiga shows only a tonal residue of the alternation, as we argue in van der Wal & Asiimwe (2020). Rukiga is the first Bantu language for which a purely tonal alternation has been described – all other languages that are known to have the alternation mark it by segmental morphology in at least one conjugation.

In Rukiga, the tone of the verb is in some tenses affected by a process of tonal reduction (TR), as earlier described for Haya (Hyman 1999). Van der Wal & Asiimwe (2020) show how tonal reduction applies to the verb when it is not clause-final. Compare the tonal pattern of the clause-final verb in (2a) with high tones on the TAM marker and verb stem, with that in (2b) where the verb is not final and surfaces with only a suffixed high tone on the final vowel. The tone of the following constituent remains unaffected, as far as we could see.

- (2) a. María y-áá-híng-a.  
1.Maria 1SM-N.PST-dig-FV  
'Maria has dug'

- b. TR María y-aa-hing-á o-mu-siri.<sup>1</sup>  
1.Maria 1SM-N.PST-dig-FV AUG-3-field  
'Maria has dug the field.'  
(van der Wal & Asiimwe 2020: 44)

Tonal reduction can still be seen as marking the conjoint/disjoint alternation here, because it is not an automatic process, but is restricted to a subset of tenses – just as is the case for the conjoint/disjoint alternation in other languages. If TR were a tonal process applying as a general rule, we would expect it to apply across the board to all sequences of verb and following element. Instead, only the present/habitual, yesterday past, remote past, and near past conjugations in Rukiga show tonal reduction when the verb is not clause-final. For table overviews and details on the tonal behaviour of verb and object we refer to van der Wal & Asiimwe (2020).

Given the sentence-final restriction of TR being the same as that of the conjoint/disjoint alternation, we investigated whether TR has an effect on information structure as well, as is the case for other Bantu languages with the alternation (van der Wal 2017), but in Rukiga the only determining factor for the form of the verb is its appearance in final position: Tonally reduced verb forms cannot appear in final position in a main clause, as illustrated for the present habitual and the yesterday past in (3).

- (3) a. A-b-áana ba-záan-a / \*ba-zaan-a. [present habitual]  
AUG-2-children 2SM-play-FV  
'Children play.'
- b. Ekikópo, Hélen akitwííre / \*akitwiiré. [yesterday past]  
e-ki-kopo Helen a-ki-twar-ire  
AUG-7-cup 1.Hellen 1SM-7OM-take-PFV  
'The cup, Hellen took it.'
- (van der Wal & Asiimwe 2020: 48)

Even when the verb is in focus (a typical environment for the disjoint/non-reduced form), as in (4) and (5), clause-finality determines the form of the verb in Rukiga: final = no TR, as shown in (4); non-final = no TR, as shown in (5a) – the non-reduced form is not acceptable, as shown in (5b).

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<sup>1</sup>In natural speech, this is pronounced with liaison as *yaahing' ómusiri*, and the final H appears on the augment of the object.

- (4) Tí-ba-a-karang'      é-bi-nyôbwa,      bá-á-bi-shékur-a.  
 NEG-2SM-N.PST-roast AUG-8-groundnuts 2SM-N.PST-8OM-pound-FV  
 'They didn't roast the groundnuts, they pounded them.'  
 (van der Wal & Asiimwe 2020: 51)
- (5) a. TR    E-nyonyi    tí-z-aa-tambur-a      júba    kwonká  
 AUG-10.birds NEG-10SM-N.PST-walk-FV quickly but  
 z-aa-guruk-a    júba.  
 10SM-N.PST-fly-FV quickly  
 'The birds have not walked quickly, they have flown quickly.'  
 b.     \*Enyonyi tízatambura júba konká zááguruka júba.

There is no correlation between the absence of TR and verb focus, and neither do we find a correlation between the presence of TR and focus following the verb. This can be shown by placing an idiomatic object in postverbal position: since idiomatic objects can only be interpreted together with the verb, generating alternatives for a focused object results in a loss of the idiomatic meaning (van der Wal 2021). Therefore, if TR on the preceding verb would induce focus, only the literal meaning should remain, not the idiomatic one. Example (6) shows that the idiomatic reading is present, and that the TR form is required (because the verb is not final).

- (6) a. TR    Naayeyaguz' órugusyo.  
 n-aa-e-yaguz-a     o-ru-gusyo  
 1SG.SM-N.PST-REFL-scratch.CAUS-FV AUG-11-shard  
 'I was in a bad situation.'  
 lit. 'I scratched myself with a shard.'  
 b.     \*Náayéyaguz' orugúsyó.

TR equally applies in default agreement inversion (see Section 3.3.3), illustrated in (7), where the interpretation is thetic.

- (7) TR    Hiij' ómuntu.  
 ha-aa-ij-a     o-mu-ntu  
 16SM-N.PST-come-FV AUG-1-person  
 'Someone has come.'

Van der Wal & Asiimwe (2020: 56) conclude:

[...] that there is never a true minimal choice between applying TR or not, that is, there is no alternation depending on information structure, but rather a tonal rule that is sensitive to (some) constituency boundaries. There is no direct tonal marking of focus (see Hyman 1999). The options available to the speaker are to phrase a postverbal element within or outside of the same constituent as the verb, and the form of the verb follows automatically. (van der Wal & Asiimwe 2020: 56)

We refer to van der Wal & Asiimwe (2020) for more examples and a detailed exposition and argumentation of this tonal residue of the conjoint/disjoint alternation.

### 3 Word order

Word order in Rukiga is partly determined by information structure and therefore shows more flexibility than a characterisation as SVO can do justice to, as was observed already for many other Bantu languages (e.g. Morimoto 2000, Zerbian 2006, van der Wal 2009, Yoneda 2011, Bostoen & Mundeké 2012, Kerr et al. 2023, and others). Hence, word order can be viewed as enabling both syntactic and discourse functions. In this section, we show that word order in Rukiga is determined by discourse roles more than grammatical roles (Kerr et al. 2023). If a canonical order has to be specified, we indicate that the best answer to a VP question is the order given in (8), with the preverbal *Pamela* functioning as the topic, and the verb and Theme being the comment, i.e. providing the new information anchored to the topic.

- (8) (What will Pamela do?)  
Paméla a-ryá-téek-a muhógo  
1.Pamela 1SM-FUT-cook-FV 9.cassava  
'Pamela will cook cassava.'

We also find that it is common to find all active arguments expressed by subject and object markers on the verb as illustrated in (9).

- (9) (Has grandmother given the children the mangos?)  
Y-áa-gi-bá-h-a.  
1SM-N.PST-4OM-2OM-give-FV  
'She (grandmother) has given them (the mangoes) to them (the children).'

The canonical word order is also used in the context of focus on the predicate, that is, State-of-Affairs focus (10a) and polarity focus (10b). Note that it is more natural to pronominalise given arguments, as in the TAM focus in (10c).

- (10) a. (Did you write the book?)

Nshomir' ékitabó kyônka,<sup>2</sup> tindákíhandiikire.

n-shom-ire e-ki-tabo ki-onka

1SG.SM-read-PFV AUG-7-book 7-only

ti-n-ra-ki-handiik-ire

NEG-1SG.SM-F.PST-7OM-write-PFV

'I only *read* the book, I didn't write it.'

- b. (Are you sure mother bought bananas; I can't see them?)

Máama y-aa-gur-a é-mi-nekye. Ronda gye.

1.Mother 1SM-N.PST-buy-FV AUG-4-banana. look.for.IMP well

'Mother *did* buy bananas. Check properly.'

- c. (Have you bathed the children?)

Íngaaha, kwonká ninz kubnaabisa.

ngaaha kwonka ni-n-z-a ku-ba-naab-is-a

no but 1SG.SM-PRS-go-FV 15-2OM-bathe-CAUS-FV

'No but I *will* bathe them.'

In the rest of this section, we discuss the preverbal and postverbal positions and show the extent to which information structure influences word order in Rukiga. Arguments can be left- or right-dislocated and there are discourse interpretational variations depending on the order of constituents in a sentence.

### 3.1 Preverbal position

#### 3.1.1 No preverbal focus

It is generally the case that the preverbal domain is associated with topics, and focused elements are not permitted in the preverbal domain. It is therefore ungrammatical to use an interrogative word preverbally (11a), or put an answer to an interrogative element in the preverbal domain (11b).

- (11) a. \*Kí Jvani y-aa-twar-a?

what 1.Jovan 1SM-N.PST-take-FV

int. 'What has Jovan taken?'

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<sup>2</sup>Note that *kyonka* 'only' does not agree with *ekitabo* 'book' – as an adverb it takes this invariant form (ignoring dialectal variation with *kwonka*), as in *Nrya kyonka* 'I only ate (I didn't drink)'.

- b. (What has Jovan taken?)

# E-n-tébe Jóvani y-áá-twár-a.  
AUG-9-chair 1.Jovan 1SM-N.PST-take-FV  
int. 'Jovan has taken a chair.'

Grammatical subjects as focal elements cannot be questioned in the preverbal domain either. Instead, a cleft construction (12a) can be used, or a pseudocleft (12b), or default agreement inversion (DAI) (12c) – see Section 3.3.3 for more information on DAI, and Section 7 on clefts.

- (12) a. Nooh' ówíija?

ni o-ha o-u-aa-ij-a  
COP 1-who AUG-1RM-N.PST-come-FV  
lit. 'It is who who came?  
'Who has come?'

- b. Owíija n' ooja?

o-u-aa-ij-a ni o-ha  
AUG-1RM-N.PST-come-FV COP 1-who  
'Who has come?'

- c. Haija oha?

Ha-ij-a o-ha  
16SM-come-FV 1-who  
'Who has come?'

Equally, a preverbal argument cannot be modified by the focus particle 'only' as the ungrammaticality of (13) and (14) show.

- (13) \* Táátá wenká yíij-a

Taata w-enka a-aa-ij-a  
1.father 1-only 1SM-N.PST-come-FV  
'Only dad came.'

- (14) \* Emigaatí yonká omukáma aguririre ábéegi.

e-mi-gaati y-onka o-mu-kama a-gur-ir-ire a-ba-egi  
AUG-4-bread 4-only AUG-1-king 1SM-buy-APPL-PFV AUG-2-student  
'Only bread the king bought for the students.'

### 3.1.2 Preverbal topics

Topics typically appear in the preverbal domain. By topic, here we mean “what the sentence is about” (Reinhart 1981), or the “spatial, temporal, or individual framework within which the main predication holds” (Chafe 1976: 50) (see also van der Wal et al. 2025 [this volume]). This is complemented by the comment, in which some information is added to the topic. Theme and Recipient arguments appear postverbally when they are part of the comment, but when topical, they preferably occur preverbally, as illustrated in (15). When an object appears preverbally, the presence of an object marker on the verb is required (*ba-* in (15)). Note that both *abaana* ‘children’ and *kaaka* ‘grandmother’ in (15) can be analysed as topics.<sup>3</sup>

- (15) (Context: Children are seen leaving their grandmother’s house, one carrying a basket on her head.)

Abáána	kááka	yaa*(ba)há	ki?
a-ba-ana	kaaka	a-aa-ba-h-a	ki
AUG-2-child	1.grandmother	1SM-N.PST-2OM-give-FV	what

‘The children, what did grandmother give them?’

Deriving a passive verb may also be used to promote objects in the active counterpart not just to subjects but also to topics, as exemplified in (16) and further discussed in Section 3.3.5. In this example, the suffix *-w* creates a passive verb which promotes the Theme to a subject function (as seen in the subject marking), while leaving the Actor argument (the wind) in a postverbal position.<sup>4</sup>

- (16) (Who opened the window?)

Edirísá	ekaigurw'	ómuyaga.
e-dirisa	e-ka-igur-w-a	o-mu-yaga
AUG-9.window	9SM-F.PST-open-PASS-FV	AUG-3-wind

‘The window was opened by the wind.’

Locative inversion constructions equally present topical locative phrases in the left periphery, such as *aha rutindo* ‘on the bridge’ in (17) – see the discussion on inversion constructions in Section 3.3.

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<sup>3</sup>Left-dislocated subjects (as *kaaka*) occur as contrastive topics, see Section 3.1.4.

<sup>4</sup>Note that in Rukiga the demoted Actor does not require further marking, i.e. no preposition such as ‘by’ is needed.

- (17) Aha rutindo haarabah'émótoka  
a-ha ru-tindo ha-aa-rab-a=ho e-motoka  
AUG-16 11-bridge 16SM-N.PST-pass-FV=16 AUG-10.car  
'Cars have passed on the bridge.'

Locative and temporal expressions also appear sentence-initially if they help to set the scene, as illustrated in (18) and (19). Note that these may be separated from the rest of the sentence by a pause, as indicated by the comma in (19).

- (18) Omu mbága obugiineyó baahe?  
o-mu n-baga o-bugan-ire=yo ba-he?  
AUG-18 9-party 2SG.SM-find-PFV=23 2-who  
'At the party, whom did you meet?'
- (19) Erizóobá (,) Pítá yaateek' ákahúnga.  
e-ri-zooba Pita a-aa-teek-a a-ka-hunga  
AUG-5-day 1.Peter 1SM-N.PST-cook-FV AUG-12-posho  
'Today, Peter has cooked posho.'

The preverbal position is not exclusively reserved for topics, however, even if Taylor (1985: 79) notes that the initial position is the only reliable marker of topicality. Subjects in thetic sentences may appear preverbally, as in (20), and this suggests that Rukiga allows non-topical elements in the preverbal position (Kerr et al. 2023), because the subject in a thetic sentence is detopicalised (Sasse 1996, Lambrecht 1994).

- (20) (What is the matter?)  
O-mu-gôongo ni-gu-n-sháash-a.  
AUG-3-back IPFV-3SM-1SG.OM-hurt-FV  
'My back is hurting.'

It is also possible for an indefinite subject such as *omuntu* 'person, someone' to occur in a preverbal position (21–22). As indefinite non-specific referents cannot form topics, this too suggests that the preverbal position in Rukiga is not a dedicated topic position.

- (21) (Context: We are three and have different jobs to do, but don't worry about the grazing, there is somebody from outside that will do that.)  
Ente zó, omuntu naazá kuziríisa.  
e-n-te z-o o-mu-ntu n-aa-za ku-zi-ri-is-a  
AUG-10-cows 10-CM AUG-1-person IPFV-1SM-go 15-10OM-eat-CAUS-FV  
'As for the cows, someone will graze them.'

- (22) (Have you heard a loud bang?)  
Ekintu kyó kyáhirima.<sup>5</sup>  
e-ki-ntu      ki-o    ki-aa-hirim-a  
AUG-7-thing 7-PRO 7SM-N.PST-fall-FV  
‘Something (indeed) has fallen.’ (and made a very loud noise)

Note, though, that it is more natural to use a presentational subject inversion construction here (see Section 3.3.3), as in (23), to compare with (21).

- (23) E-n-te      z-ó    ha-ine      ó-mu-ntu      ó-ríku-z-á  
AUG-10-cows 10-CM 16SM-have AUG-1-person 1RM-IPFV-go-FV  
ku-zi-ríis-a  
15-10OM-eat-CAUS-FV  
‘As for the cows, there is someone who will graze them.’

Furthermore, an indefinite (non-topical) interpretation does not seem to be acceptable for preverbal objects (24), suggesting that there is a dedicated non-dislocated preverbal subject position in addition to the topic positions in the left periphery.

- (24) (Has s/he bought something?)  
\* Ekintu kyó yákígura.  
e-ki-ntu      ki-o    a-aa-ki-gur-a  
AUG-7-thing 7-CM 1SM-N.PST-7OM-buy-FV  
int. ‘The thing, s/he bought it.’

In summary, there is a preference for topical constituents to appear preverbally, either fronted or assuming a subject function through passivisation or subject inversion, but non-topical subjects may also appear in the preverbal domain.

### 3.1.3 Multiple topics

Multiple topics are allowed in the preverbal domain, both arguments (25–26) and adverbs (27–28). The topical constituents are indicated by square brackets in these examples. As for preverbal objects, they must be resumed by an object marker. The adverbs are scene-setting topics, and the arguments may be familiarity topics (active from previous discourse) or contrastive topics (see next section). Some could also be analysed as “secondary topics”, meaning “an entity such that

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<sup>5</sup>The contrastive topic marker *kyo* here is optional; it adds intensity in this case.

the utterance is construed to be about the relationship between it and the primary topic” (Nikolaeva 2001) – a typical example of a secondary topic is *ebihimba* ‘the beans’ in (25).

- (25) (Did father cook the beans?)  
 Táát’ ebihím̬ba abiteekíre.  
 [taata] [e-bi-himba] a-bi-teek-ire  
 1.father AUG-8-bean 1SM-8OM-cook-PFV  
 ‘Father, the beans, he cooked them.’
- (26) Omwán’ ámaté yáágánywa?  
 [o-mw-ana] [a-ma-te] a-aa-ga-nyw-a?  
 AUG-1-child AUG-6-milk 1SM-N.PST-6OM-drink-FV  
 ‘Has the child drunk the milk?’
- (27) (Context: Herdsman passing on information to the cattle owner.)  
 Nyómwbazý’ ómu kashéeshe tutwire énte kunywa ámáizi.  
 [nyomwebazyo] [o-mu kasheeshe] tu-twar-ire e-n-te  
 yesterday AUG-18 12.morning 1PL.SM-take-PFV AUG-10-cow  
 ku-nywa a-ma-izi  
 15-drink AUG-6-water  
 ‘Yesterday morning, we took the cows to drink water.’
- (28) Omu bwire bwa Yés’ ábant’ ábaabaire baba bain’ éndwára nk’ébibémbe,  
 hamwé n’ézíndi ndwára bakabá babashoróora.  
 [o-mu bu-ire bu-a Yesu] [a-ba-ntu a-ba-aba-ire ba-ba  
 AUG-18 14-time 14-CONN 1.Jesus AUG-2-person AUG-2RM-be-PFV 2SM-be  
 ba-ine e-n-dwara nka e-bi-bembe hamwe na e-zí-ndi  
 2SM-have AUG-10-disease like AUG-8-leprosy and and AUG-10-other  
 n-dwara] ba-ka-b-a ba-ba-shoroor-a  
 10-disease 2SM-F.PST-be-FV 2SM-2OM-discriminate-FV  
 ‘During Jesus’ time, people who were suffering from diseases like leprosy  
 and other diseases were discriminated against’, lit. ‘... they discriminated  
 them.’

### 3.1.4 Contrastive topics

A preverbal element can also form a contrastive topic, as seen for the independent pronouns *íwe* and *nyówe* in (29), and the adverbial *omu mushana* ‘during the day’ in (30), which is contrasted with *nyekiro* ‘at night’.

- (29) (QUIS map task)

Íwe oine piki ya burúrú kusha nyowe tíhó nd' ááho.  
 iwe o-ine piki y-a bururu kusha nyowe  
 2SG.PRO 2SG.SM-have 9.motorcycle 9-CONN blue but 1SG.PRO  
 ti=ho n-ri a-ho  
 NEG.COP=16 1SG.SM-be DEM-16.PROX

'You have a blue motorcycle. But for me, that is not where I am.'

- (30) Kikáá nikirond' éméré nyékiro; omumushaná kinyam' áhitagi ryómutí

murungi; kishwek'ámíísho kitagahúmbya góona.

Ki-ka-b-a ni-ki-rond-a e-mere nyekiro o-mu  
 7SM-F.PST-be-FV IPFV-7SM-look.for-FV AUG-10.food night AUG-18  
 mu-shana ki-nyam-a a-ha i-taagi ri-a o-mu-ti mu-rungi  
 3-day 7SM-sleep-FV AUG-16 5-branch 5-CONN AUG-3-tree 3-good  
 ki-shwek-a a-ma-isho ki-ta-ga-humby-a ga-oná  
 7SM-cover-FV AUG-6-eye 7SM-NEG-6OM-close-FV 6-all  
 (about the owl) 'It would look for food at night and during the day sleep  
 on a nice tree branch; when it sleeps, it does not close the eyes  
 completely.'

A contrastive topic can also be indicated by the particle *-o* – see Section 4 for a discussion on this particle. This is illustrated for the adverb *nyomwebazo* 'yesterday' in (31), where the contrast marker comes out as *bwe*.

- (31) (Did you go to school yesterday and today?)

Nyómwbázyo bwé tinshomíre.

nyomwebazyo bu-o ti-n-shom-ire  
 yesterday 14-CM NEG-1SG.SM-read-PFV

'Yesterday I did not go to study' (but I did study today)

Independent pronouns are also used to mark contrastive topics. As such, they typically occur in the preverbal position (see (32b) and (33a)), although they can also come in the final position as in (33b). These pronouns are optional in Rukiga. When absent, a contrastive reading on the topic is not obvious, as can be seen in the comparison of (32a) and (32b).

- (32) a. Naaruk'ékíibo.

n-aa-ruk-a e-ki-ibo  
 1SG.SM-N.PST-weave-FV AUG-7-basket  
 'I weaved a basket.'

- b. Nyowé naaruk'ékíibo.
- nyowe n-aa-ruk-a e-ki-ibo  
1SG.PRO 1SG.SM-N.PST-weave-FV AUG-7-basket  
'Me, I weaved a basket.' (maybe others did not weave baskets but other kinds of crafts or did other activities)
- (33) a. **Imwe mushitam' ómumíisho.**  
imwe mu-shitam-e o-mu ma-isho  
2PL.PRO 2PL.SM-sit-SBJV AUG-18 6-front  
'(For you) You sit in front.'
- b. **Mushitam' ómumíish' iimwe.**  
mu-shitam-e o-mu ma-isho imwe  
2PL.SM-sit-SBJV AUG-18 6-front 2PL.PRO  
'(For you) You sit in front.'

In summary, we have seen in this section that in Rukiga, the preverbal position is not dedicated to topics since it accommodates thetics and indefinite subjects which are non-topical. We have further demonstrated that it is possible to have multiple topics in the preverbal position, both arguments and adverbs. Objects as topics must, however, be resumed on the verb. And lastly, we have noted that contrastive topics are also marked, by being expressed as the independent personal pronoun, or by an additional contrastive particle in *-o*. Before discussing this particle further in Section 4, we first continue our presentation of word order and how it reflects information structure. The next subsection (3.2) focuses on the postverbal position. As we have shown that there is no preverbal focus in Rukiga, focused elements must come after the verb.

### 3.2 Postverbal focus

Focused elements typically appear postverbally, as seen in questions and answers for Themes and Locatives in (34) and (35).

- (34) a. Hélen atwire ki?  
Helen a-twar-ire ki  
1.Hellen 1SM-take-PFV what  
'What did Hellen take?'
- b. Hélen atwir' ékikópo.  
Helen a-twar-ire e-ki-kopo  
1.Hellen 1SM-take-PFV AUG-7-cup  
'Hellen took a cup.'

- (35) a. Amahúrire nibagagurá nkáhe?  
       a-ma-hurile      ni-ba-ga-gur-a      nkahi  
       AUG-6-newspaper IPFV-2SM-6OM-buy-FV where  
       ‘Where do I buy a newspaper?’
- b. Nibagagurá aha mídia sénta.  
       ni-ba-ga-gur-a      a-ha      midia.senta  
       IPFV-2SM-6OM-buy-FV AUG-16 9.media.centre  
       ‘They buy them at the Media Centre.’  
       ‘They are bought at the Media Centre.’

Focused elements are preferably adjacent to the verb in Rukiga, in the immediate-after-verb (IAV) position (see Watters 1979 for coining the term, and Yoneda 2011, van der Wal 2009, Buell 2009 for claims of an IAV focus position in Matengo, Makhuwa-Enahara, and Zulu, respectively). To show that the IAV position is preferred for focus, consider that an interrogative word needs to be in the IAV position, as shown in (36) and (37): different word orders are possible as long as the interrogative word is in the IAV position. In (37a–37c), the interrogative word *oha* ‘who’ must occur in the IAV position. As illustrated in (37d), the construction becomes ungrammatical once there is an intervening element between the verb and the interrogative word.

- (36) a. Kááka yaaha ky’ ábáana?  
       Kaaka      ya-aa-h-a      ki      a-ba-ana  
       1.grandmother 1SM-N.PST-give what AUG-2-child  
       ‘What has grandmother given the children?’
- b. \* Kááka yaah’ ábáána ki?  
       kaaka      a-aa-h-a      a-ba-ana      ki  
       1.grandmother 1SM-N.PST-give-FV AUG-2-child what  
       int. ‘What has grandmother given the children?’
- (37) a. Káák’ émiyembe agiihir’ óha?  
       kaaka      e-mi-yembe      a-gi-h-ire      o-ha  
       1.grandmother AUG-4-mango 1SM-4OM-give-PFV 1-who  
       ‘Who did grandmother give the mangoes?’
- b. Kááka ahiir’ óhá emiyembe?  
       kaaka      a-h-ire      o-ha      e-mi-yembe  
       1.grandmother 1SM-give-PFV 1-who AUG-4-mango  
       ‘Who did grandmother give mangoes?’

- c. Emiyembe kák' agihir' óha?  
 e-mi-yembe kaaka a-gi-h-ire o-ha  
 AUG-4-mango 1.grandmother 1SM-4OM-give-PFV 1-who  
 'Who did grandmother give the mangoes?'
- d. \*Kááka ahiir' émiyemb' óha?  
 kaaka a-h-ire e-mi-yemba o-ha  
 1.grandmother 1SM-give-PFV AUG-4-mango 1-who  
 int. 'Who did grandmother give mangos?'

Although the interrogative word must appear in the IAV position, the answer does not need to. As illustrated in (38), the Theme 'hat' can be an answer to an interrogative word in its canonical (non-IAV) position (independently of the animacy of the objects). This suggests that interrogative words are more restricted in word order than their answers.

- (38) a. Waaha kí Jéini?  
 u-aa-ha ki Jeini?  
 2SG.SM-N.PST-give-FV what 1.Jane  
 'What have you given Jane?'
- b. Naaha Jéin' énkofiira.  
 n-aa-h-a Jeini e-n-kofiira  
 1SG.SM-N.PST-give-FV 1.Jane AUG-9-hat  
 'I have given a hat to Jane.'

Unlike arguments, as we just saw, not all questioned adverbs are restricted to the IAV position. The interrogative adverb of time 'when' in Rukiga can appear in the IAV or in a non-IAV position, as shown in (39). Compare with the adverb 'where' in (40), which prefers to be in the IAV position.

- (39) a. Okaza Kampálá ryári?  
 o-ka-z-a Kampala ryari  
 2SG.SM-F.PST-go-FV 23.Kampala when  
 'When did you go to Kampala?'
- b. Okaza ryári Kampala?  
 o-ka-z-a ryari Kampala  
 2SG.SM-F.PST-go-FV when 23.Kampala  
 'When did you go to Kampala?'

- (40) a. Tuguré nkah' ébitookye?  
 tu-gur-e nkahe e-bi-tookye  
 1PL.SM-buy-SBJV where AUG-8-plantain  
 'Where should we buy plantains?'  
 b. ? Tugur' ébitookye nkahe?  
 tu-gur-e e-bi-tookye nkahe  
 1PL.SM-buy-SBJV AUG-8-plantains where  
 int. 'Where should we buy plantains?'

Objects modified by 'only' equally require an IAV position and do not allow right-dislocation, as shown in (41). Both the tonally reduced and the non-reduced form of the verb are indicated, and the order is unacceptable for either.

- (41) a. Pítá yaateek' ákahúngá kónk' érizóoba.  
 Pita a-aa-teek-a a-ka-hunga ka-onka e-ri-zooba  
 1.Peter 1SM-N.PST-cook-FV AUG-12-posho 12-only AUG-5-day  
 'Peter cooked only posho today.'  
 b. \* Pita yaa(ka)teeká/yáátéeka erizooba akahúnga kónka.  
 Pita a-aa-teek-a e-ri-zooba a-ka-hunga ka-onka  
 1.Peter 1SM-N.PST-cook-FV AUG-5-day AUG-12-posho 12-only  
 'Peter cooked only posho today.'

For completeness, we mention that multiple argument questions are ungrammatical in Rukiga, neither in situ as in (42), nor with a cleft as in (43) (unlike in for example Cicopi).

- (42) (Context: At a charity, someone gave various people various clothes.)  
 \* Yaah'oha énki? / \*Yaah'énki oha?  
 a-a-h-a o-ha enki / enki o-ha  
 1SM-PST-give-FV 1-who what / what 1-who  
 int. 'Who did s/he give what?' / 'What did s/he give who?'  
 (43) \* N' ooh' órikukurur' énki?<sup>6</sup>  
 ni o-ha o-riku-kurur-a enki  
 COP 1-who 1SM.REL-IPFV-pull-FV what  
 int. 'Who is pulling what?'

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<sup>6</sup>The sentence is equally unacceptable with the clitic form for 'what', =ki.

The present analysis confirms that Rukiga has an IAV position, although it is not a strict one because answers to interrogative questions and some adverbs are not required to be in this position. Further discussion of the word order and interpretation can be found in Kerr et al. (2023). Non-topical subjects also appear postverbally, but a subject inversion construction is used in that case, as shown in the next section.

### 3.3 Subject inversion

In subject inversion constructions, the logical subject comes after the verb and is non-topical. Marten & van der Wal (2014) identify seven subject inversion constructions in Bantu languages. These are: formal locative inversion, semantic locative inversion, instrument inversion, patient inversion, complement inversion, default agreement inversion and agreeing inversion. Passive constructions are added to the list as they present related features to the inversion constructions. Bantu languages differ in terms of the inversion constructions each language allows (for a detailed analysis of these constructions; we refer to Marten & van der Wal 2014). Below we show subject inversion constructions that are possible in Rukiga.

#### 3.3.1 No patient inversion or instrument inversion

Rukiga does not allow patient inversion (44) or instrument inversion (45), in which the preverbal element is a Theme or Instrument agreeing with the verb and the logical subject is in a postverbal position.

- (44) a. Abacáína nibombek' énkuuto.  
a-ba-caina ni-ba-ombek-a e-n-kuuto  
AUG-2-chinese IPFV-2SM-build-FV AUG-10-road  
'The Chinese are building roads.'
- b. \*Enkuuto nizibombek' abacaina.  
e-n-kuuto ni-zi-bombek-a a-ba-caina  
AUG-10-road IPFV-10SM-build-FV AUG-2-chinese  
int. 'The Chinese are building roads.'
- (45) a. Táát' akahandiikis' ákacúmu.  
taata a-ka-handiik-is-a a-ka-cumu  
1.father 1SM-F.PST-write-CAUS-FV AUG-12-pen  
'Father wrote with a pen.'

- b. \* Akacúmu kakahandiikisa táata.  
 a-ka-cumu ka-ka-handiik-is-a taata  
 AUG-12-pen 12SM-F.PST-write-CAUS-FV 1.father  
 int. ‘Father wrote with a pen.’

### 3.3.2 Locative inversion (LI)

Locative inversion is possible, but is restricted with respect to the predicate, the locative marking, as well as the locative noun classes. We first discuss the restricted locative noun classes of Rukiga. Class 17 is disappearing from Rukiga; it is not available as a locative prefix<sup>7</sup> (see examples in (46)) as in other related Bantu languages such as Luganda (JE15) (Grégoire 1975).<sup>8</sup>

- (46) a. a-ha n-tebe  
 AUG-16 9-chair  
 ‘on the chair’
- b. o-mu mu-ti  
 AUG-18 3-tree  
 ‘in the tree’
- c. \* o-ku n-tebe  
 AUG-17 9-chair  
 int. ‘on/to the chair’

However, *ku* (class 17) can be found as a noun class prefix in one lexical entry *okuzimu* (underground) and is also used in locative demonstratives (see Asiimwe 2024b) as in *kunu* ‘here/this place’, *okwo* ‘there/that place near speaker’ and *kuri(ya)* ‘there/that place (place far from both the speaker and hearer)’.

Class 18 *omu* is used productively to derive locative nouns with a meaning of containment. However, there is neither a subject nor an object marker for class 18, and class 18 nouns use the class 16 subject and object prefix marker. Only the class 16 subject and object marker *ha-* is used for all the three noun classes as shown in (47–49) (but see Asiimwe 2014, Beermann & Asiimwe 2024). Note that only classes 16 and 18 are used as enclitics to the verb, and in addition also =yo of class 23 (49), which can co-occur with noun phrases in any of the locative classes.

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<sup>7</sup>While the locative augment and prefix are written separately from the noun, following the orthography, they do not function as prepositions (yet) but form part of the NP.

<sup>8</sup>Note that the augment on the noun cannot be present when preceded by a locative prefix.

- (47) Omu rufûnjo hamezirey' ébihîmba.  
 o-mu ru-funjo ha-mer-ire=yo e-bi-himba  
 AUG-18 11-swamp 16SM-sprout-PFV=23 AUG-8-bean  
 'Beans sprout in the swamp.'
- (48) (Omu kibira) nimpakûnda.  
 o-mu ki-bira ni-n-ha-kund-a  
 AUG-18 7-forest IPFV-1SG.SM-16OM-like-FV  
 '(In the forest) I like (it) there.'
- (49) O-ku-zímu ti-há-ri=yó ky-erérezi.  
 AUG-17-underground NEG-16SM-be=23 7-light  
 'Underground there is no light.'  
 (Asiimwe 2014: 144)

Typical locative inversion in Rukiga needs formal locative marking on the locative noun, as shown in (50) for class 18 *omu-muti* 'in the tree' (and many examples below).

- (50) Omu mut' ómwo niharááramú enyonyi.  
 o-mu mu-ti omwo ni-ha-raar-a=mu e-nyonyi  
 AUG-18 3-tree 18.DEM.MED IPFV-16SM-sleep-FV=18 AUG-10.birds  
 'Birds sleep in that tree.'

Nevertheless, we also find examples with a formally unmarked locative noun in initial position, as in (51). Note that the subject marker here is still in the locative class 16 (to be distinguished from semantic locative inversion) and there is a locative enclitic (to be distinguished from Default Agreement Inversion).

- (51) Ishomer' éeri nihegyéramw' ábántu bakúru.  
 e-i-shomero e-ri ni-ha-egyer-a=mu a-ba-ntu ba-kuru  
 AUG-5-school DEM-5.PROX IPFV-16SM-learn-FV=18 AUG-2-people 2-big  
 'Older people study at this school.'  
 lit. 'This school studies older people'

So-called Semantic Locative Inversion, where the preverbal NP is semantically locative but is not formally marked as such and subject marking agrees with the preverbal locative (Marten & van der Wal 2014, Buell 2007), is attested only with a restricted number of predicates and in specific circumstances (that are yet to be determined precisely); some examples are given in (52–55). A locative enclitic is obligatorily present on the verb in both types of locative inversion, in these examples =*mu* and =*ho*.

- (52) Ebicére bikabá nibituur' ómu kidiba kiríkushangw' ómwihamba ekidiba kirimw' ámíizi.  
 e-bi-cere bi-ka-b-a ni-bi-tuur-a o-mu ki-diba  
 AUG-8-frog 8SM-F.PST-be-FV IPFV-8SM-live-FV AUG-18 7-pond  
 ki-riku-shang-w-a o-mu i-hamba, e-ki-diba ki-ri=**mu**  
 7RM-IPFV-find-PASS-FV AUG-18 5-forest AUG-7-pond 7SM-be=18  
 a-ma-izi  
 AUG-6-water  
 'The frogs used to stay in a pond in a forest. There used to be water in the pond.'
- (53) O-mw-enda gw-a-z-a=**mu** o-bu-rofa.  
 AUG-3-cloth 3-N.PST-go-FV=18 AUG-14-dirt  
 'Dirt has gone into the cloth.' / 'The cloth has become dirty.'
- (54) Orutookye rumeziremw' ámóozi.  
 o-ru-tookye ru-mer-ire=**mu** a-ma-ozi  
 AUG-11-banana.plantation 11SM-germinate-PFV=18 AUG-6-pumkin  
 'Pumpkins germinated in the banana plantation.' (nobody planted them there)
- (55) E-meezá y-aa-yaatik-a=**ho** ámá-izi.  
 AUG-9.table 9SM-N.PST-pour-FV=16 AUG-6-water  
 'Water is poured on the table.'

Formal locative inversion is only found with intransitive predicates (both unaccusative (56) and unergative (57)) and passivised predicates (59); transitive predicates are not accepted in inversion constructions (58); these are systematically passivised to ameliorate the attempted construction, as in (59). We translate the sentences into idiomatic English, but note that this reflects only the basic content and not the information structure.

- (56) unaccusative:  
 Omu nj'óomu hagwiremw' ómugurúsi.  
 o-mu n-ju o-mu ha-gw-ire=**mu** o-mu-gurusí  
 AUG-18 9.house AUG-18 16SM-fall-PFV=18 AUG-1-old.man  
 'In this house an old man fell'
- (57) unergative:  
 Omu rufúnjo hamezirey' ébihimba.  
 o-mu ru-funjo ha-mer-ire=yo e-bi-himba  
 AUG-18 11-swamp 16SM-sprout-PFV=23 AUG-8-bean  
 'In the swamp beans germinated.'

- (58) transitive:

\* Omu musiri habingiremu abahingi enyonyi / enyonyi abahingi.  
 o-mu mu-siri ha-bing-ire=mu a-ba-hingi e-nyonyi  
 AUG-18 3-field 16SM-chase-PFV=18 AUG-2-farmer AUG-10.bird  
 'On the field the farmers chased the birds.'

- (59) passive of transitive:

Omú musiri habingirwemw' ényonyi (\*abahíngi).  
 o-mu mu-siri ha-bing-w-ire=mu e-nyonyi a-ba-hingi  
 AUG-18 3-field 16SM-chase-PASS-PFV=18 AUG-10.bird AUG-2-farmer  
 'From the garden the birds were chased (\*by farmers).'

The preverbal locatives in inversion constructions function as true subjects, as they can be relativised using the subject relative strategy (60)<sup>9</sup> (even if this is not used naturally, it is judged fully grammatical), and because it triggers subject marking in complex tenses, i.e. on both the auxiliary and the lexical verb (61).

- (60) Omu nj' óomw' ahaaggwamw' ómugurúsi, harimw' émbeba.

o-mu n-ju o-mu a-ha-aa-gw-a=mu o-mu-gurusí  
 AUG-18 9-house DEM-18.PROX AUG-16.REL-N.PST-fall-FV=18 AUG-1-old.man  
 ha-ri=mu e-m-beba  
 16SM-be=18 AUG-9-rat

'In this house where an old man fell, there is a rat.'

- (61) Omu katáre hakabá hagwiremw' ómukázi.

o-mu ka-tare ha-ka-b-a ha-gw-ire=mu o-mu-kazi  
 AUG-18 12-market 16SM-F.PST-be-FV 16SM-fall-PFV=18 AUG-1-woman  
 'In the market a woman had fallen.'

Locative inversion can be used for narrow focus on the postverbal logical subject, as shown for the question-answer pairs in (62) and (63a–63c), or in thetic/presentational contexts, as in (63c) in answer to (63b).

- (62) a. Omu mut' óomwo niharááramú ki?

o-mu mu-ti omwo ni-ha-raar-a=mu ki  
 AUG-18 3-tree 18-DEM.MED IPFV-16SM-sleep-FV=18 what  
 'What sleeps in that tree?'

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<sup>9</sup>See Asiimwe (2019) for a detailed analysis of the syntax of relative clauses in Runyankore-Rukiga.

- b. Omu mut' óomwo niharáaramw' ényonyi.  
 o-mu mu-ti omwo ni-ha-raar-a=mu e-nyonyi  
 AUG-18 3-tree 18.DEM.MED IPFV-16SM-sleep-FV=18 AUG-10.bird  
 'Birds sleep in that tree.'

- (63) a. Aha rutindo haarabahó ki?  
 a-ha ru-tindo ha-aa-rab-a=ho ki  
 AUG-16 11-bridge 16SM-N.PST-pass-FV=16 what  
 'What has passed on the bridge?'  
 b. Orutindo rwaba ki?  
 o-ru-tindo ru-aa-b-a ki  
 AUG-11-bridge 11SM-N.PST-be-FV what  
 'What has happened to the bridge?'  
 c. Aha rutindo haarabah' émotoka nyíngi.  
 a-ha ru-tindo ha-aa-rab-a=ho e-motoka ny-ingi  
 AUG-16 11-bridge 16SM-N.PST-pass-FV=16 AUG-10.car 10-many  
 'On the bridge many cars have passed.'

### 3.3.3 Default Agreement Inversion (DAI)

More frequently used than locative inversion is default agreement inversion (DAI), where the subject marker is in class 16, and there is no locative enclitic on the verb. Nothing needs to precede the verb in DAI. As with LI, DAI also requires the tonally reduced form of the verb, as illustrated in (64).

- (64) a. Ha-a-shohor-a Pítá. [with TR]  
 16SM-N.PST-move.out-FV 1.Peter  
 'Peter has left.' / 'It is Peter who has moved out.'  
 b. \*Há-á-shohor-a Pítá. [no TR]  
 16SM-N.PST-move.out-FV 1.Peter  
 'Peter has left.'

DAI can be used when introducing a new referent, as in (65) and (66), in content questions regarding the postverbal logical subject and answers to those questions, as in (67), as well as when contrasting or correcting an alternative referent, shown in (68).

- (65) (Context: Out-of-the-blue statement.)  
Harihó ekintú kyangy'ékibuzire.  
ha-ri=ho e-ki-ntu ki-angye e-ki-bur-ire  
16SM-be=16 AUG-7-thing 7-POSS.1SG AUG-7SM.REL-get.lost-PFV  
'There is something that I lost.'
- (66) Hiij' ómuntu.  
ha-aa-ij-a o-mu-ntu  
16SM-N.PST-come-FV AUG-1-person  
'Someone has come.'
- (67) (Context: You see people running and gathering, and you wonder what is going on.)<sup>10</sup>  
a. Haij' óoha?  
ha-aa-ij-a o-ha  
16SM-N.PST-come-FV 1-who  
'Who has come?'  
b. Haija purésidenti.  
ha-aa-ij-a puresidenti  
16SM-N.PST-come-FV 1.president  
'The President has come.'
- (68) (Is it Ron who left?)  
Ingaaha, haagyenda Jack.  
ngaaha, ha-aa-gyend-a Jack.  
no 16SM-N.PST-go-FV 1.Jack  
'No. It is Jack who has gone.'

Furthermore, the postverbal logical subject can be modified by 'only', as shown in (69), and also by 'also/even' (70). This suggests that the postverbal logical subject may be in focus, but is not inherently interpreted as exclusive: the interpretation as 'also/even' means that the proposition is true for other referents besides Daniel, which means that the construction in which it occurs (the DAI) does not come with an inherently exclusive focus interpretation.

- (69) Haagambíre Dániel wénka.  
ha-aa-gamb-ire Daniel w-enka  
16SM-N.PST-talk-PFV 1.Daniel 1-only  
'Only Daniel talked.'

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<sup>10</sup>Although in this context, a basic cleft is preferred: *N'oha owaija?*

- (70) Haabyama ná Dániel.  
 ha-aa-byam-a na Daniel  
 16SM-N.PST-sleep-FV and 1.Daniel  
 'Even/also Daniel slept.'

In neither LI nor DAI can an object marker be used, whether for the Theme or the Agent, as shown in (71) and (72), respectively.

- (71) \* Omu musiri hazibingiremu abahingi.  
 o-mu mu-siri ha-zi-bing-ire=mu a-ba-hingi  
 AUG-18 3-field 16SM-10OM-chase-PFV=18 AUG-2-farmers  
 'On the field chased the farmers them.'
- (72) \* Aha rutindo haazirabahó.  
 a-ha ru-tindo ha-aa-zi-rab-a=ho  
 AUG-16 11-bridge 16SM-N.PST-10OM-pass-FV=16  
 'On the bridge have passed they.'

### 3.3.4 Agreeing inversion

Rukiga also seems to allow agreeing inversion, whereby the subject marker on the verb agrees with the postverbal subject. It can be difficult to distinguish this from a verb with a right-dislocated subject as in an afterthought (see further in Section 3.4). However, for afterthoughts we would expect a pause between the verb and the subject, and an indefinite interpretation of the postverbal subject would be unacceptable for an afterthought. The fact that the postverbal subject in (73) is not preceded by a pause, and there is liaison between verb and subject, suggests that this is an instance of agreeing inversion, and the indefinite interpretation is unacceptable for a dislocated phrase. Example (74) is felicitous in a thetic context (but not with contrastive focus on the subject), and could (with the right prosody) also be used as an afterthought. Note that the tones on the verb remain as in SV order, that is, the verb does not undergo TR (e.g. see (74a)), unlike in default agreement inversion (see van der Wal & Asiimwe 2020).

- (73) a. Yíij' ómuntu. [no TR]  
 a-aa-ij-a o-mu-ntu  
 1SM-N.PST-come-FV AUG-1-person  
 'Someone/a person has come.'

- b. \* Yijj' ómuntu. [with TR]  
 a-aa-ij-a o-mu-ntu  
 1SM-N.PST-come-FV AUG-1-person  
 'Someone/ a person has come.'
- (74) a. Yááyéésyamur' émbúzi (#tí nte). [no TR]  
 e-aa-esyamur-a e-n-buzi ti n-te  
 9SM-N.PST-sneeze-FV AUG-9-goat NEG 9-cow  
 'The goat sneezed (#not the cow).' (thetic)  
 'It did sneeze, the goat.' (right-dislocated)
- b. \* Yaayeesyamur' émbúzi. [with TR]  
 e-aa-esyamur-a e-m-buzi  
 9SM-N.PST-sneeze-FV AUG-9-goat  
 'The goat sneezed.'

Further research may elucidate the exact properties and use of Rukiga agreeing inversion.

### 3.3.5 Passive

The passive resembles patient inversion in Rukiga, because the Agent can be present without further marking (no "by-phrase"), as shown in (75b). The difference is that in the passive the Agent may be omitted, whereas in the (other) inversion constructions it is obligatorily present (75c). Furthermore, the verb is morphologically marked as passive by the extension -(g)w- (with its allomorphs such as *-ibw-*, *-ebw-*, *-ew-*).

- (75) a. Abakázi baahing' ómusiri.  
 a-ba-kazi ba-aa-hing-a o-mu-siri  
 AUG-2-woman 2SM-N.PST-dig-FV AUG-3-field  
 '(The) women dug a/the field.'
- b. Omusíri gwahingwá (abakázi). [passive]  
 o-mu-siri gu-aa-hing-w-a a-ba-kazi  
 AUG-3-field 3SM-N.PST-dig-PASS-FV AUG-2-women  
 'The field was dug (by women).'
- c. Omu musiri hakarabamw' \*(ábakázi). [LI]  
 o-mu mu-siri ha-ka-rab-a=mu \*(a-ba-kazi).  
 AUG-18 3-field 16SM-F.PST-dig-FV AUG-2-women  
 'On the field the women have dug.'

The preverbal referent in the passive is interpreted as topical, and the postverbal Agent may be the focus, as illustrated in the question-answer pair in (76).

- (76) a. Enju ya shwénkuru enkombekw' óha?  
 e-n-ju y-a shwenkuru e-ka-ombek-w-a o-ha  
 AUG-9-house 9-CONN 1.grandfather 9SM-F.PST-build-PASS-FV 1-who  
 'Who built grandfather's house?'  
 b. Ekombekwa Róbati.  
 e-ka-ombek-w-a Robati  
 9SM-F.PST-build-PASS-FV 1.Robert  
 'It was built by Robert.'

Apart from the passive morpheme -(g)w, Rukiga uses the class 2 prefix *ba-* in impersonal constructions, as in other Bantu languages (e.g. Kula & Marten 2010 for Bemba, van der Wal 2016 for Matengo; see also other chapters in van der Wal 2025). The impersonal *ba-* is used when the Agent is unknown or unimportant, or when it needs to be kept anonymous. The construction contains no logical subject NP and the attention is on the object. The *ba-* construction is structurally not a passive because the preverbal object, although promoted to the IS function of topic, has not assumed the grammatical role of subject. This can be seen in the fact that it is marked on the verb with coreferential object marker – in (77), the preverbal object *esimu yangye* 'my phone' is marked on the verb by the object marker *gi-*, and the same for *enuuto* 'the road' in example (79). Example (78) shows the impersonal interpretation of the *ba-*-construction.

- (77) (Context: A girl is checking her bag, removing and throwing everything down and when her friend asks what she's doing, she replies:)  
 E-símu y-angye b-áá-gí-ib-a.  
 AUG-9.phone 9-POSS.1SG 2SM-N.PST-9OM-steal-FV  
 'They have stolen my phone.' / 'My phone has been stolen.'  
 (78) (Context: Father comes back home and his daughter tells him that someone she does not know was looking for him.)  
 Taata ba-a-b-a ni-ba-ku-rond-a.  
 1.Father 2SM-N.PST-be-FV IPFV-2SM-2SG.OM-look.for-FV  
 'Father, they were looking for you.' / 'Someone was looking for you, father.'

- (79) (Context: Mother asks why we have come back home late.)  
 Twakyererwa kuhik' ómuka ahabwókuba omu kugaruka twashang'  
**énuuto bagísibire.** Náhabwékyo twabanza kwétooroora.  
 tu-aa-kyererw-a        ku-hika o-mu    ka        ahabwokuba o-mu  
 1PL.SM-N.PST-delay-FV 15-reach AUG-18 9.home because        AUG-18  
 ku-garuka tu-aa-shang-a        e-n-kuuto    ba-gi-sib-ire.  
 15-return 1PL.SM-N.PST-find-FV AUG-9-road 2SM-9OM-close-PFV.  
 nahabwekyo tu-aa-banz-a        ku-etooroora.  
 therefore        1PL.SM-N.PST-be.first-FV 15-go.round  
 'We delayed to arrive home because on our way back, we found that the road had been closed. So, we had to take a longer route.'

In this subsection, we have shown that locative inversion, default agreement inversion and to some extent agreeing inversion are available in Rukiga. In addition we briefly discussed passive constructions where the object is promoted to topic in the preverbal position while the logical subject may or may not be present in the postverbal position. We generally note that the element that appears in the preverbal position is topicalised, whereas the postverbal logical subject forms part of the new or contrasted information (whether in a thetic interpretation or as narrow focus on the subject).

### 3.4 Right periphery

What is not topical, but not focal either, can appear in the right periphery. This is for example the case for any constituents that follow the IAV focus, as in (80–81). Note that object marking in this case is optional.

- (80) Kááka yaa(ba)ha ky' ábáána?  
 kaaka        a-aa-ba-h-a        ki        a-ba-ana  
 1.grandmother 1SM-N.PST-2OM-give-FV what AUG-2-child  
 'What has grandmother given the children?'
- (81) Nitubaasá ku(bí)gura nkah' ébitookye?  
 ni-tu-baas-a        ku-bi-gura    nkahe e-bi-tookye  
 IPFV-1PL.SM-be.able-FV 15-8OM-buy where AUG-8-plantains  
 'Where can we buy plantains?'

Other examples involve an afterthought, that is, a full NP “used to clarify the referent of an earlier pronoun” (Lopez 2016: 414), as illustrated in (82). These are in Rukiga preceded by a pause.

- (82) a. (Has Peter cooked posho?)  
 Pítá yáákateéka, ákahúngá.  
 Pita a-aa-ka-teek-a a-ka-hunga  
 1.Peter 1SM-N.PST-12OM-cook-FV AUG-12-posho  
 'Peter cooked it, posho.'
- b. (Is the posho well cooked?)  
 Ka-sy-á gye a-ka-hunga  
 12SM-be.well.cooked-FV well AUG-12-posho  
 'It is well cooked, the posho.'

A secondary topic may also appear in the right periphery of the sentence (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021), illustrated in (83). Note that this secondary topic is marked by the contrastive topic marker *go*. The prosody indicates that it is not right-dislocated, as *amaizi go* cannot be preceded by a pause/prosodic break. Had the contrastive marker *go* been absent, a pause would have been acceptable in that position. Another difference is that in the presence of *-o*, both primary and secondary topics require co-indexing on the verb (compare to the optional object marking in (80) for example).

- (83) (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021: 9)  
 (Did the cows drink the water?)  
 Ente záa\*(gá)nyw' ámiízi go.  
 e-n-te zi-aa-ga-nyw-a a-ma-izi ga-o  
 AUG-10-cow 10SM-N.PST-6OM-drink-FV AUG-6-water 6-CM  
 'The cows, as for the water, they have drunk it.'

To summarise the word order properties of Rukiga, the preverbal domain preferably contains topics and may host non-topical subjects. Furthermore, Rukiga allows multiple topics and contrastive topics in the preverbal domain. However, focused elements are not allowed to appear preverbally. Interrogative constituents need to appear in IAV position (or in a cleft), and other focused constituents, for example some adverbs, may appear non-adjacent to the verb. Non-focal/non-topical constituents appear postverbally as well, exemplified by thetic subject inversions, afterthoughts, and secondary topics in the right periphery. Relevant to the marking of contrastive topics, in the next section, we discuss particle *-o* present in Rukiga as a contrastive topic marker which also performs other pragmatic roles.

## 4 Particle -o

Although Rukiga does not have dedicated focus or topic particles, it has a morphological particle that marks contrastive topics, as we discuss in Asiimwe & van der Wal (2021). Its presence in a sentence triggers an interpretational difference as indicated in (84). This particle is also found in Kîîtharaka and Kirundi with similar functions, see Kanampiu & van der Wal (2025 [this volume]) and Nshemezimana & van der Wal (2025 [this volume]).

- (84) a. Enjojo záija.  
e-n-jojo zi-aa-ij-a.  
AUG-10-elephant 10SM-N.PST-come-FV  
'(The) elephants have come.'
- b. Enjojo zó záija.  
e-n-jojo z-o zi-aa-ij-a.  
AUG-10-elephant 10-CM 10SM-N.PST-come-FV  
'As for the elephants, they have come (maybe the antelopes, the zebras, the lions etc. have not shown up)'

According to Taylor (1985), the particle encodes contrastiveness or mere emphasis such as in (85b), as the particle *ko* emphasises ‘pen’ in a contrastive manner.

- (85) (Taylor 1985: 74, glosses adapted)
- a. Y-aa-reet-a é-ki-tabo, a-ka-cumu ka-buz-ire.  
1SM-N.PST-bring-FV AUG-7-book AUG-12-pen 12SM-lose-PFV  
'He brought the book and lost his pen.' (sic)
- b. Y-aa-reet-a é-ki-tabo, a-ka-cumu k-ó ka-buz-ire.  
1SM-N.PST-bring-FV AUG-7-book AUG-12-pen 12-CM 12SM-lose-PFV  
'He brought the book, but the pen is lost.'

In addition to Taylor’s observation, Asiimwe (2014) argues that the particle triggers a contrastive reading in a sentence between referents that are familiar (86).

- (86) (Adapted from Asiimwe 2014: 236)  
(Context: To counter the claim that nobody was invited, not even the teachers.)  
Abashomésa bó twábééta.  
a-ba-shomesa ba-o tu-aa-ba-et-a  
AUG-2-teacher 2-CM 1PL.SM-N.PST-2OM-call-FV  
'As for the teachers, we have invited them.'

Without wanting to repeat the whole description and analysis in Asiimwe & van der Wal (2021), we will summarise the main morphosyntactic properties in Section 4.1, then proceed to the interpretation in Section 4.2 and finally present its combination with *na* ‘and’ in Section 4.3.

#### 4.1 Morphosyntactic properties of the particle

The particle stands as an independent morpheme and like all the other nominal elements, it is marked for noun class as Table 1 shows.

Table 1: Morphological structure of the particle -o (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021: 4)

Noun class + prefix	Example noun	Gloss	Particle
1 mu-	omuhara	girl	we
2 ba-	abahara	girls	bo
3 mu-	omuyembe	mango	gwo/gwe
4 mi-	emiyembe	mangoes	yo
5 ri-/i-	eihuri	egg	ryo
6 ma-	amahuri	eggs	go
7 ki-	ekihumi	granary	kyo
8 bi-	ebihumi	granaries	byo
9 n-	ente	cow	yo
10 n-	ente	cows	zo
11 ru-	orushare	calabash	rwo/rwe
12 ka-	akatare	market	ko
13 tu-	oturo	sleep	two/twe
14 bu-	obumanzi	bravery	bwo/bwe
15 ku-	okuguru	leg	kwo/kwe
16 ha-	aheeru	outside	ho
17 ku-	okuzimu	hell	yo
18 mu-	omwiguru	in heaven	yo/ho/mwo/mwe

The particle typically follows the noun it refers to, as in (87a). However, it is free to move to the prenominal position, seen in (87b). It can also appear after the verb as exemplified in (87c).

- (87) (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021: 5)

- a. E-n-te      z-ó      Ámos    n-aa-zá      ku-zi-ríis-a.      [Post-N]  
 AUG-10.cows 10-CM 1.Amos IPFV-1SM-go 15-10OM-feed-FV  
 'For the sake of the cows, Amos will graze them.'
- b. ...kwónka z-ó    e-n-taama    z-áá-nyw-a.      [Pre-N]  
 but      10-CM AUG-10-sheep 10SM-N.PST-drink-FV  
 '...but as for the sheep, they drank'
- c. E-n-te      ni-n-zá      ku-zi-ríis-a      z-ó.      [Post-V]  
 AUG-10-cow IPFV-1SG.SM-go 15-10OM-feed-FV 10-CM  
 'As for the cows, I will graze them.'

The particle can be used pronominally, for highly accessible referents, with just a subject (88a) or an object marker (88b). Note that although the particle is free to appear in the postverbal position, in the examples given (88) below it is in the preverbal position because topics are typically marked in the preverbal position.

- (88) (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021: 5)

- a. Bó baateek' ómucéeri.      [CM + SM]  
 ba-o ba-aa-teek-a      o-mu-ceeri  
 2-CM 2SM-N.PST-cook-FV AUG-3-rice  
 'As for them (the women), they have cooked rice.'
- b. Gw' ábakázi báágutéeka.      [CM + OM]  
 gu-o a-ba-kazi      ba-aa-gu-teek-a  
 3-CM AUG-2-woman 2SM-N.PST-3OM-cook-FV  
 'As for it (the rice) the women have cooked it.'

The particle occurs with both arguments and adverbials, as illustrated in (89a) for a subject NP and (89b) for an adverbial.

- (89) a. Ebihímba byó tibikamezire.

e-bi-himba bi-ó tí-bi-ka-mer-ire  
 AUG-8-bean 8-CM NEG-8SM-NEG-germinate-PFV  
 'As for the beans, they have not yet germinated.'

- b. Nyómwbázyo bwé tegwíre.

nyomwebazyo bu-o ti-e-gw-ire.  
 yesterday 14-CM NEG-9SM-fall-PFV  
 'Yesterday it did not rain (it rained on other days).'

In case of conjoined clauses, the particle can appear in either the first or second clause (but preferably in the second clause and not both – that would be overdoing it), as in (90).

- (90) a. (What is the woman eating and what is the man eating? + QUIS picture)

Omukázi arikuryá ápo, kándi wé omushíija arikurya' ómunekye.  
 o-mu-kazi a-riku-ri-a apo kandi w-o o-mu-shaija  
 AUG-1-woman 1SM-IPFV-eat-FV 9.apple and 1-CM AUG-1-man  
 a-riku-ri-a o-mu-nekye  
 1SM-IPFV-eat-FV AUG-3-banana

'The woman is eating an apple while the man is eating a banana.'

- b. Omukázi wé arikuryá ápo, omushíija arikury' ómunekye.

o-mu-kazi w-o a-riku-ri-a apo o-mu-shaija  
 AUG-1-woman 1-CM 1SM-IPFV-eat-FV 9.apple AUG-1-man  
 a-riku-ri-a o-mu-nekye  
 1SM-IPFV-eat-FV AUG-3-banana

'The woman is eating an apple, the man is eating a banana.'

## 4.2 Functions of -o

The particle combines with topic referents and is infelicitous in focus environments (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021). For example, the particle is incompatible with content questions which are inherently focused as shown in (91), and equally infelicitous in an answer to a content question (92).

- (91) (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021: 7)

Sáuda y-aa-teek-á ki (\*ky-o)?  
 1.Sauda 1SM.SG-N.PST-cook-FV what 7-CM  
 'What has Sauda cooked?'

- (92) (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021: 7)

(Who broke the cup?)

# Omwáná wé akyasíre.

o-mu-ana w-o a-ki-at-ire  
 AUG-1-child 1-CM 1SM.SG-7OM-break-PFV  
 'The child broke it.'

Instead, we argued that the particle *-o* is a contrastive topic marker. We can see that it is contrastive in the fact that it is infelicitous in an environment where no alternative referents are expected, as illustrated in (93).

- (93) (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021: 8)

(Context: You only have sheep and perhaps you have come back from shepherding.)

Entaama (#zó) zaanyw' ámíizi.

e-n-taama z-o zi-aa-nyw-a a-ma-izi  
AUG-10-sheep 10-CM 10SM-N.PST-drink-FV AUG-6-water

'The sheep have drunk water.'

The particle thus evokes a salient alternative topic that is either explicit or implicit. The implicature in (94) is that the maize garden they have not weeded, for example.

- (94) (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021: 11)

Orutookye rwó báárubágara.

o-ru-tookye ru-o ba-aa-ru-bagar-a  
AUG-11-banana.plantation 11-CM 1SM-N.PST-11OM-weed-FV

'As for the banana plantation, they have weeded it.'

The particle is equally felicitous in situations where only a subset is mentioned. The response (95b) to the question in (95a) with the contrastive particle indicates that the set of referents contains different kinds of food including, for example, *posho*, rice and bananas and out of the different kinds of food that were being cooked, only bananas were ready for serving. Note that with the presence of the particle, the contrasted referents need not be mentioned, and in fact the proposition is not necessarily false for the alternatives that the referent is contrasted with. As shown in (95c), the speaker may choose to say 'others I don't know'.

- (95) a. Ebyókuryá byáhiire?

e-byokurya bi-aa-sy-ire?  
AUG-8.food 8SM-N.PST-be.ready-PFV

'Is the food ready?'

- b. Ebitookye byó byáhiire.

e-bi-tookye bi-o bi-aa-sy-ire  
AUG-8-banana 8-CM 8SM-N.PST-be.ready-PFV

'As for the bananas, they are ready.'

- c. Ebitookye byó byáhire, ebíndi tibikahíire/tindíkumanya.  
 e-bi-tookye bi-o bi-aa-sy-ire e-bi-ndi  
 AUG-8-banana 8-CM 8SM-N.PST-be.ready-PFV AUG-8-other  
 ti-bi-ka-sy-ire /ti-n-riku-many-a  
 NEG-8SM-NEG-be.ready-PFV /NEG-1SG.SM-IPFV-know-FV  
 ‘As for the bananas, they are ready; the rest are not ready / I don’t know.’

The particle is equally found to mark shift topics. This is commonly observed in news anchoring where the particle is used when switching to a new news item. For this particular use, the particle occurs in the initial position preceding the topic as in the illustration in (96).

- (96) (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021: 13)  
 (Recorded on TV West 08-05-2020 from the 8pm news.)  
 Bó abanyamakúru omurí Mbarara baatung’ óbuuhwezi bw’óbuuhúnga...  
 ba-o a-ba-nya-makuru o-mu-ri Mbarara ba-aa-tung-a  
 2-CM AUG-2-NMLZ-news AUG-18-be 23.Mbarara 2SM-N.PST-get-FV  
 o-bu-hwezi bu-a o-bu-hunga...  
 AUG-14-help 14-CONN AUG-14-posho  
 ‘Journalists in Mbarara (district) have received aid in form of posho...’

The particle may in given contexts also express the speaker’s surprise at an event or situation that is beyond expectation. This gives rise to a mirative reading, as illustrated in (97) (see also Asiimwe 2023). Example (98) expresses a polarity focus but at the same time also gives a counterexpectation reading – it is surprising to the speaker that gorillas can sing.

- (97) (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021: 19)  
 (Context: Someone has a function or has organised an event and sends out invitations. For one reason or another, s/he does not expect many guests to turn up. Many guests turn up to the surprise of the host.)  
 Abantu bó bíja.  
 a-ba-ntu ba-o ba-ij-a  
 AUG-2-person 2-CM 2SM.N.PST-come-FV  
 ‘People really came.’ (many people turned up, more than those expected)
- (98) (Is it true that the gorillas sang for you?)  
 Engagi zó záátwéshongorerá!  
 e-n-gagi zi-o zi-aa-tu-eshongor-er-a  
 AUG-10-gorilla 10-CM 10SM-N.PST-1PL.OM-sing-APPL-FV  
 ‘(It is true) They have indeed sung for us!’

We further note in Asiimwe & van der Wal (2021) that two particles can occur referring to one entity as indicated in (99).

- (99) (Context: Mother is amazed by the love and special care her two-year-old twins show each other.)
- Mbwénu b-ó a-bá      b-o...!  
 DM      2-CM DEM-2.PROX 2-CM  
 ‘As for those ones...!’ (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2021: 26)

The particle, given the right context, is also associated with other pragmatic interpretations, namely intensity and verum, and may also give rise to a deprecatative interpretation as shown in (100).

- (100) E-n-júra    y-ó    y-áa-gw-a.  
 AUG-9-rain 9-CM 9-N.PST-fall-FV.  
 ‘It has rained.’
- Context 1: Someone is in doubt whether it rained in my area. [verum]<sup>11</sup>  
 Context 2: It rained really heavily and/or for a long time. [intensity]  
 Context 3: It has rained but it is no use since the crops have already  
 withered. [deprecatative]

Furthermore, the particle may be used in predicate doubling constructions (101), as we elaborate further in Section 5 with the various interpretations.

- (101) Okugyenda (**kó/kwé**), tákagyenziré... konká naazá kugyenda.  
 o-ku-gyenda ku-o ti-a-ka-gyend-ire...      konka ni-a-z-a  
 AUG-15-go 15-CM NEG-1SM-not.yet-go-PFV... but      IPFV-1SM-go-FV  
 ku-gyenda  
 15-go  
 ‘S/he has not yet gone, but... s/he will/must go.’

The particle may also be used ironically as in the context in (102).

- (102) (Context: In the context of Covid-19 pandemic, the speaker heard that the government announced that it will provide free face masks to all its citizens)
- Z-ó    ni-zi-ijj-á      ryarí báitu?  
 10-CM IPFV-10-come-FV when by.the.way  
 ‘By the way when are they (the masks) coming?’

<sup>11</sup>The verum interpretation comes out more naturally with a discourse marker *nangwa* ‘truly’ or *buzima* ‘indeed/truly’ used in the construction.

In summary, the particle not only realises a contrastive topic reading but also a wide range of pragmatic meanings including mirativity. A detailed discussion on the roles of the particle and its origin are presented in Asiimwe & van der Wal (2021).

#### 4.3 Na + PRO

The pronoun in *-o* realises an additive meaning when attached to *na* which may mean ‘with’, ‘and’, ‘also’ or ‘even’, as illustrated in (103–105). The combination *na+PRO* follows a noun, and it marks the non-initial topic, that is, some topic has to have been mentioned before in order to felicitously use *na+PRO* after another topic. In (103), the crested cranes are mentioned first, and it is added that the same proposition also holds for doves. In (104), no prior referent is mentioned explicitly in the sentence itself, but this can only be said in reaction to an earlier statement mentioning other referents (participating in the same action).

- (103) (Did you see the crested cranes?)

N-aa-reeb-a	é-n-tuuha,	e-n-dahi	na-zó
1SG.SM-see-FV	AUG-10-crested.cranes	AUG-10-dove	and-10.PRO
n-áá-zí-reeb-a.			
1SG.SM-N.PST-10OM-see-FV			
'I saw crested cranes, and also doves.'			

- (104) (Tomorrow we will iron bedsheets, trousers and skirts.)

E-sááti	na-zó,	nyénsákare ni-tu-z-á	ku-zí-gorora
AUG-10.shirts	and-10.PRO	tomorrow	IPFV-1PL.SM-go-FV
'The shirts too, we will iron them tomorrow.'			

- (105) (Context: Other animals had already sought advice from the (clever) owl.)

Wakamé yaayitw'embého nayó yaayebuuz'ekyokukóra yaaza kubúúz'			
ékihuunyira			
wakame y-aa-it-w-a	e-n-beho	na-yo	
9.Hare	9SM-N.PST-kill-PASS-FV	AUG-9-coldness	and-9.PRO
y-aa-e-buuzza	e-ki-a	o-ku-kora y-aa-za	ku-buuz-a
9SM-N.PST-REFL-ask-FV	AUG-7-CONN	AUG-15-do	9SM-N.PST-go
e-ki-huunyira			15-ask-FV
AUG-7-owl			

'The hare also felt very cold, and wondered about what to do and went to ask the owl.'

The additive meaning is also clear in the following example from a recipe.

- (106) (Make sure you wash the bucket where you put the porridge. It is thoroughly washed, there is no dirt at all.)

Reero wáamara orondé esafuriya yaawe **nay'** ógibóneze.  
 reero u-aa-mar-a o-rond-e e-safuriya  
 then 2SG.SM-N.PST-finish-FV 2SG.SM-look.for-SBJV AUG-9.saucepan  
 i-a-we na-yo o-gi-bonez-e  
 9-POSS.2SG and-9.PRO 2SG.SM-9OM-clean-SBJV  
 ‘Then you get a saucepan and clean it as well.’

The combination *na+PRO* facilitates topic shift. The topic in (107) shifts from good chairs to bad chairs and the marker can only occur with the second topic as the ungrammaticality of (107b) shows.

- (107) a. Yaareeb' éntéb' énungi n'embí **nazó** yáázíreeba.  
 a-aa-reeb-a e-n-tebe e-n-rungi na e-n-bi  
 1SM-N.PST-see-FV AUG-10-chairs AUG-10-good and AUG-10-bad  
 na-zo a-aa-zi-reeb-a  
 and-10.PRO 1SM-N.PST-10OM-see-FV  
 ‘S/he saw good chairs, and bad ones s/he also saw.’
- b. Yaareeb' éntéb' (é)nnungi (\***nazó**) n'embí yáázíreeba.  
 a-aa-reeb-a e-n-tebe e-n-rungi na-zo na  
 1SM-N.PST-see-FV AUG-10-chairs AUG-10-good and-10.PRO and  
 e-n-bi a-aa-zi-reeba  
 AUG-10-bad 1SM-N.PST-10OM-see  
 ‘S/he saw good chairs, and bad ones s/he also saw.’

The difference with the contrastive particle *-o* used by itself is that with *na+PRO*, the same predicate applies to both topics, as opposed to contrasting truth values or alternative predicates for the referents marked by *-o* alone.

We conclude that the particle *-o* and the combination *na+-o* are used in Rukiga to mark topics, either contrastively or additively. In the next section we turn to predicate doubling, in which one type also involves contrastive topicalisation, and as mentioned, this topic doubling can be combined with the *-o* particle.

## 5 Predicate doubling

In predicate doubling, the same predicate occurs twice in one clause. Rukiga shows two types of predicate doubling: topic doubling and in-situ doubling. These will be presented in turn below.

### 5.1 Topic doubling

In topic doubling, an infinitive form of the verb precedes an inflected form of the same verb, as in (108). The marker *kwo/kwe* (see Section 4) can also be added here to reinforce the various interpretations, showing that the initial infinitive typically functions as a contrastive topic. Relevant in comparison with (128) below, it is ungrammatical to add *na* ‘and, also, even’ when the construction contains the topic marker *-o* as shown in (108b).

- (108) a. Okuhínga (*kwé*) nimpíngá.  
           o-ku-hing-a   ku-o   ni-n-hing-a  
           AUG-15-dig-FV 15-CM IPFV-1SG.SM-dig-FV  
           ‘For the case of digging, I can dig.’ / ‘Digging I can do...’
- b. \*N'okuhínga (*kwé*) nimpíngá.  
       na   o-ku-hing-a   ku-o   ni-n-hing-a  
       and AUG-15-dig-FV 15-CM IPFV-1SG.SM-dig-FV  
       int. ‘For the case of digging, I can also dig.’ / ‘Even digging I can do...’

The construction can be used in a range of contexts with varying interpretations. A prototypical interpretation contrasts the topical infinitive with another action. The contrastive interpretation is made explicit in (109) by the following negative clause.

- (109) (Context: The Hare has been very lazy while the other animals worked on the field. The Hare could say:)  
       Okukóra (*kwé*), tínaakora, konká ninzá kurya.  
       o-ku-kora   ku-o   ti-n-a-kor-a                      kwonka  
       AUG-15-work 15-CM NEG-1SG.SMN.PST-work-FV but  
       ni-n-z-a                    ku-ria  
       IPFV-1SG.SM-go-FV 15-eat  
       ‘I've not worked, but I will eat.’

The contrastive interpretation is inherent to the strategy, as becomes evident from example (110): even if nothing else is said, it is clear that eating is contrasted to something else.

- (110) (Context: You are visiting someone and have only been given food.  
When you're asked how it is, you can say this and the host will know  
that you expected something else too, for example a drink; or you did  
not get satisfied.)  
Okuryá náarya...  
o-ku-ria n-aa-ri-a  
AUG-15-eat 1SG.SM-N.PST-eat-FV  
'Eating I did...'

Topic doubling can also be used to express polarity focus and verum,<sup>12</sup> as in (111). The contrast here is with the negative value of not having done the action.

- (111) (Have you spread the sorghum? Context: You want to emphasise that  
you have sowed enough seeds because the other person cannot see the  
seeds.)  
Okugutéera nágutéera.  
o-ku-gu-teera n-aa-gu-teer-a  
AUG-15-3OM-beat 1SG.SM-N.PST-3OM-beat-FV  
'I DID scatter them.'

Apart from the contrastive and polarity/verum readings, the interpretation can also be what Meeussen (1967) called "concessive" and van der Wal & Jerro (2022) have named "depreciative", as in (112). In this interpretation, the action is evaluated as being not worth a lot, and/or as the low quality potentially preventing further actions or achievements. Furthermore, it can be intensive/to a high degree, as illustrated in (113).

- (112) O-ku-támbura kw-é tw-á-támbur-a...  
AUG-15-walk 15-CM 1PL.SM-N.PST-walk-FV  
'Although we walked... (I don't know whether we'll ever arrive).'

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<sup>12</sup>Polarity focus may be used in yes/no contexts; verum is used in a corrective context, to prevent the hearer from assuming the negative statement.

- (113) (Context: You're telling somebody that you really played football, you've done it with a passion. You have maybe not done anything other than playing football.)

Okutéér' ómupííra gwé náágutééra.<sup>13</sup>

o-ku-teera o-mu-piira gu-o n-aa-gu-teer-a.

AUG-15-beat AUG-3-ball 3-CM 1SG.SM-N.PST-3OM-beat-fv

'I really played football.'

A mirative reading is also possible with a predicate doubling construction, as in (114), further illustrated in context 5 in (115), with the speaker expressing surprise that the event described indeed took place.

- (114) (Context: There is a function at school and teachers join students on the dance floor, something that is totally unexpected by the students.)

O-ku-zína b-aa-zín-a.

AUG-15-dance 2SM-N.PST-dance-FV

'Dancing, they did (to the surprise of the students)!'

That these interpretations are fully context-dependent can be seen in (115): the sentence is the same, also in terms of prosody, but the possible interpretations are many.

- (115) O-ku-hínga tu-hing-íre.

AUG-15-dig 1PL.SM-dig-PFV

Context 1: Did you really plough?

'We actually ploughed.' [polarity]

Context 2: We were expected to dig and feed the animals

'Digging we did (but we didn't feed the animals).' [contrast]

Context 3: It's planting season but there is no rain.

'We (went ahead and) ploughed anyway...' [depreciative]

Context 4: The size of the ploughed land is big.

'We really ploughed a lot!' [intensive]

Context 5: We were expected to plough only a small part of the field but to our surprise, we ploughed all of it in a short time.

'We ploughed a surprising amount!' [mirative]

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<sup>13</sup>Note that the contrastive marker here modifies and agrees with the object in class 3, not the infinitive.

The intensive and mirative interpretations can easily overlap as one may be surprised at something that is done to a high degree. Nevertheless, example (116) also shows that the two can be distinguished by their contexts.

- (116) Okuryá fene náágírya.  
o-ku-ria fene n-aa-gi-ri-a  
AUG-15-eat 9.jackfruit 1SG.SM-N.PST-9OM-eat-FV  
'Eating jackfruit, I have eaten it.'

Context 1: I have eaten a whole jackfruit. These fruits are usually big.  
[intensive]

Context 2: I don't usually eat jackfruit. I am surprised that I have eaten it and in big quantity.  
[mirative]

We noted in Section 4 that the pragmatic interpretations that are associated with particle *-o* are possible with predicate doubling as demonstrated in (115). The particle *-o* can, however, be used together with the predicate doubling construction. In fact, it is typical for the particle to appear in predicate doubling. With both linguistic strategies marking contrastive topics, their combination can be described as reinforcing the various interpretations as we illustrate in (117).

- (117) O-kw-óga (kw-é) n-áá-yog-a.  
AUG-15-swim 15-CM 1SG.SM-N.PST-swim-FV  
'I have really/indeed swum (but...).'

Context 1: Pool attendant sees me walking away from the pool area showing no sign that I entered the water.  
[verum]

Context 2: I was expected to swim and play baseball.  
[contrast]

Context 3: The water was too cold but I went ahead and swam anyway.  
[depreciative]

Context 4: I went into the pool and swam for a long time with lots of energy.  
[intensity]

Context 5: I have always feared to get into the water but hey I can swim!  
[mirative]

Note that topic doubling is not used to express VP focus or state-of-affairs (SoA) focus – when these interpretations were assessed in examples (118) and (119), respectively, the interpretation given by the speakers is one of polarity focus. Example (118) is not felicitous as answer to the VP question 'what are you doing?' (VP focus) and example (119) cannot be used to correct 'washing' by 'ironing' (SoA focus).

- (118) (Context 1: Can you dig? E.g. when you want to give somebody a job, or test them  
 #Context 2: What are you doing?)  
 Okuhînga nimpînga.  
 o-ku-hinga ni-n-hing-a  
 AUG-15-dig IPFV-1SG.SM-dig-FV  
 'I can dig (but...)'
- (119) (Context: Two pictures of Lydia washing the sheets and ironing the sheets; 'Did she wash the sheets?')  
 (Yeego, konká) n' ókuzígorora azigorwîre.  
 yeego kwonka na o-ku-zi-gorora a-zi-goror-ire  
 yes but and AUG-15-10OM-iron 1SM-10OM-iron-PFV  
 '(Yes, but) she ironed them too.'  
 #'(No), she ironed them.'

For transitive predicates, when the object is included in the infinitive, the interpretation is still one of the above-mentioned (contrastive, polarity, depreciative, intensive, mirative). The intensive and mirative interpretations are illustrated in (116) above, and see (120) for a contrast on different actions.

- (120) (Context: There is one task left to do, which is mingling *karo* 'millet bread'; the others will get the water or do the weeding. Now you volunteer to do the mingling.)<sup>14</sup>  
 [O-ku-góyá a-ka-ró] tu-ryá-ka-góy-a.  
 AUG-15-stir AUG-12-millet.bread 1PL.SM-N.FUT-12OM-stir-FV  
 'Mingling millet bread, we will do it.'

When the object instead follows the inflected verb, however, the most natural interpretation is that of object focus, as indicated in the preceding question in (121).

- (121) (What will you mingle?)  
 O-ku-góyá tu-ryá-góy-á á-ká-ro.  
 AUG-15-stir 1PL.SM-N.FUT-stir-FV AUG-12-millet.bread  
 '(As for mingling,) We will mingle millet bread'

If an object marker is present, it should be present on both verbs – neither can be omitted, as shown in (122).

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<sup>14</sup>'Mingle' is Ugandan English for stirring and preparing thick porridge-like substances.

- (122) a. Okuziríisa kó, Ámós naazá ku\*(zi)ríisa.  
 o-ku-zi-ri-is-a                           ku-ó Amos n-aa-z-á  
 AUG-15-10OM-eat-CAUS-FV 15-CM 1.Amos IPFV-1SM-go-FV  
 ku-zi-ri-is-a  
 15-10OM-eat-CAUS-FV  
 'For the case of grazing them, Amos can do it.'
- b. Oku\*(zi)ríisa kó, Ámos naazá kuziríisa.  
 o-ku-zi-ri-is-a                           ku-o Amos n-aa-z-á  
 AUG-15-10OM-eat-CAUS-FV 15-CM 1.Amos IPFV-1SM-go-FV  
 ku-zi-ri-is-a  
 15-10OM-eat-CAUS-FV  
 'For the case of grazing them, Amos can do it.'

Note also that if the object is made explicit in the first phrase, the object marker cannot be omitted on the inflected verb, as shown in (123).

- (123) Okukárya ákahúnga kó Jein yáá\*(ká)rya.  
 o-ku-ka-ria a-ka-hunga ka-o Jein a-aa-ka-ri-a  
 AUG-15-12-eat AUG-12-posho 12-CM 1.Jane 1SM-N.PST-12OM-eat-FV  
 'Jane has truly eaten (the posho).'

The subject, also functioning as a topic, can either precede the topical infinitive or the inflected verb, as shown in (124).

- (124) a. Jéín ókuryá yáarya.  
 Jein o-ku-ria a-aa-ri-a  
 1.Jane AUG-15-eat 1SM-N.PST-eat-FV  
 'Jane has eaten (it is true).'
- b. Okurya (kwó) Jein yáarya.  
 o-ku-ria ku-o Jein a-aa-ri-a  
 AUG-15-eat 15-CM 1.Jane 1SM-N.PST-eat-FV  
 'Jane has eaten (it is true/has eaten a lot).'

To summarise, in topic doubling, an infinitive form of the verb functions as the contrastive topic, and it is followed by an inflected form of the same verb. The interpretation can be that of polarity focus, a contrast with other actions, deprecative, intensive, or mirative, depending on the context of use. We now turn to the second predicate doubling construction.

## 5.2 In-situ doubling

In two cases can the non-finite form follow the same inflected verb:<sup>15</sup> when nominalised in class 14 with *bu-*, and when the infinitive is preceded by *na* ‘and/with’. The *bu-* doubling, illustrated in (125), can be seen as the verbal parallel to a nominal reduplication procedure illustrated in (126), resulting in a dismissive reading, indicated in the translation by ‘just, merely’.

- (125) (Context: I came home late, didn’t have supper.)

N-aa-byam-a                bu-byáma.  
1SG.SM-N.PST-sleep-FV 14-sleep  
'I just went to sleep.'

- (126) Ente bute neetumá wáíruk-a munóng'a?

e-n-te        bu-te    ni-e-tum-a                u-aa-iruk-a  
AUG-9-cow 14-cow IPFV-9SM-cause-FV 2.SG.SM-N.PST-run-FV  
munonga  
fast/for.long  
'Can a mere cow cause you to run so much?'

The second strategy is illustrated in (127), where either order of infinitive and inflected verb is allowed, as long as the infinitive is preceded by *na* ‘and, also, even’. On the scale of expectation, the additive *na* adds an above expectation reading; in this example perhaps it is to some degree expected that one might have a 5-minute power nap, but dreaming is one step further than napping.

- (127) (Context: You fell asleep in the office and wake up surprised.)

- a. N-áá-róot-a                \*(n') ó-ku-róóta!  
1SG.SM-PST-dream-FV even AUG-15-dream  
'I even dreamed!'
- b. N' ókuróóta nááróóta!  
'I even dreamed!'

The object can be added after either the inflected or the infinitive verb. The examples in (128) show different word orders (with an optional object noun because of the presence of the object marker), but the interpretation remains the same: you expected that they would only wash the bicycles, but they in addition repaired them, too.

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<sup>15</sup>This is called in-situ focus doubling by Güldemann & Fiedler (2022) as the non-finite form seems to function as an object in the unmoved postverbal position.

- (128) (Context: You thought they only wash bicycles.)

- a. N'ókubukánika (óbugaari) nibabukanika.  
 Na o-ku-bu-kanika o-bu-gaari  
 Even/also AUG-15-14OM-repair AUG-14-bicycle  
 ni-ba-bu-kanik-a  
 IPFV-2SM-14OM-repair-FV  
 'They even/also repair them (talking of bicycles).'
- b. Nibabukaniká n'okubukánika (óbugáari).  
 ni-ba-bu-kanik-a na o-ku-bu-kanik-a  
 IPFV-2SM-14OM-repair-FV even/also AUG-15-14OM-repair  
 o-bu-gaari  
 AUG-14-bicycle  
 'They even/also repair them (talking of bicycles).'
- c. N'ókubukánika nibabukanika (obugáari).  
 na o-ku-bu-kanika ni-ba-bu-kanik-a  
 even/also AUG-15-14OM-repair IPFV-2SM-14OM-repair-FV  
 o-bu-gaari  
 AUG-14-bicycle  
 'They even/also repair them (talking of bicycles).'
- d. Nibabukanik-a (óbugáari) n'okubukánika.  
 ni-ba-bu-kanik-a o-bu-gaari na o-ku-bu-kanik-a  
 IPFV-2SM-14-repair-FV AUG-14-bicycle even/also AUG-15-14-repair-FV  
 'They even/also repair them (talking of bicycles).'

A third type of predicate doubling known as cleft doubling (see the Kíítharaka chapter, Kanampiu & van der Wal 2025 [this volume]), is not possible in Rukiga as the ungrammatical example shows in (129). In cleft doubling, an infinitive forms the focused constituent in a cleft (see further Section 7.1), while the same predicate is also the main predicate.

- (129) \* Ni o-ku-hing-a a-hing-ire.  
 COP AUG-15-dig-FV 1SM-dig-PFV  
 int. 'It is digging that s/he did.', 'S/he dug.'

In this section, we have shown that Rukiga, just like Kíítharaka, Kinyakyusa, Makhuwa, Kirundi and Cicopi (see chapters in van der Wal 2025), uses predicate doubling as a strategy to express information structure. Two kinds of predicate doubling, namely topic and in-situ doubling, are identified in Rukiga. In-situ

doubling with *bu-* is less prevalent and allows a dismissive interpretation, while in-situ doubling with *na+infinitive* is associated with a degree higher than expectation as well as mirativity. Topic doubling is more prevalent and is associated with various context-induced interpretations. It expresses contrastive topics, verum, intensity, deprecative and mirative interpretations. We noted that the contrastive topic reading is inherent to the strategy. We further showed that the particle *-o* as a contrastive topic marker (discussed in Section 4) is often used in topic doubling constructions to reinforce a given interpretation. However, further research should be carried out to determine the precise circumstances under which the two strategies co-occur.

## 6 Augment

Rukiga presents an augment morpheme in its grammar, in the form of a vowel preceding the noun class prefix on nouns. Besides occurring on nouns, it optionally appears in the morphology of various nominal modifiers, specifically adjectives, possessives, relatives, numerals and some quantifiers. In some previous studies, the presence of an optional augment on nominal modifiers has been associated with definiteness (Morris & Kirwan 1972, Taylor 1972, 1985). By “definite” they mean that the speaker has a particular referent in mind, and expects the hearer to uniquely distinguish it from other referents. Although the augment has been associated with various semantic and pragmatic roles (see Morris & Kirwan 1972, Taylor 1972, 1985, Asiimwe 2014 on Runyankore-Rukiga), in this section we argue that the presence of the augment on nominal modifiers marks a restrictive reading, that is, it selects a subset out of a set of alternatives (Asiimwe et al. 2023) and therefore has the effect of exclusive focus. We only summarise the main points here and refer to Asiimwe et al. (2023) for a detailed analysis.<sup>16</sup>

We illustrate the interpretation of the augment as a restrictive marker when it attaches to relative clauses, adjectives, possessives and some quantifiers, beginning with relative clauses. Relative clauses in Rukiga take an optional augment. When the augment is present, it triggers a restrictive reading that is unattainable when the augment is absent. Compare (130a) and (130b):

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<sup>16</sup>The analysis of the augment presented in Asiimwe et al. (2023) compares the augment to the phenomenon of determiner spreading in Greek.

- (130) (Asiimwe et al. 2023: 1288)

a. *non-restrictive*

e-n-yungu yí            w-aa-goy-a=mu  
AUG-9-pot 9REL.PRO 2SG.SM-N.PST-mingle-FV=18  
á-ká-ro  
AUG-12-millet.bread

‘the/a pot, which you cooked millet bread in’  
(we already know which pot, there is one pot)

b. *restrictive*

e-n-yungw’ é-yí            w-aa-goy-a=mu  
AUG-9-pot AUG-9REL.PRO 2SG.SM-N.PST-mingle-FV=18  
á-ká-ro  
AUG-12-millet.bread

‘the pot that you cooked millet bread in’ (not the other pot)

The above analysis is in contrast to Taylor’s (1985) claim that the augment is itself a relative clause marker, as a relative clause reading is attainable even when the augment is absent (see (130a) above). Instead, the relative meaning is marked as a variation in tone patterns (see Asiimwe 2019).

We predicted that, if the augment on relatives marks a restrictive referent, it should be incompatible with unique referents, since there are no alternatives. This was borne out. It is infelicitous to use an augment on a relative clause that modifies a unique referent, such as the sun or the Pope. The augment on the subject relative in (131) triggers a set of alternative suns – yet in daily life outside of astronomy there are no alternative suns to consider.

- (131) (Asiimwe et al. 2023: 1289)

Ndeebir’ éízóób’ (#é)lirí hale.  
n-reeb-ire        e-i-zooba    e-ri-ri        hare  
1SG.SM-SEE-PFV AUG-5-sun AUG-5RM-be far  
‘I saw the sun, which is far.’

Furthermore, we used ‘which’ questions to test whether the augment is indeed associated with restrictive interpretation. A ‘which’ question typically selects one member from a set. It is expected that in the answer to the question, a subset is selected, and the presence of the augment as in (132b) is indeed preferred.

- (132) (Asiimwe et al. 2023: 1290)

- a. Context: At the market when looking at pieces of cloth in different colors.

Orugóye nooyendá kugura ruuha?

o-ru-goye ni-o-end-a ku-gura ru-ha  
AUG-11-cloth IPFV-2SG.SM-want-FV 15-buy 11-which

‘Which cloth do you want to buy?’

- b. Niinyendá kugur’ órugoy’ #(ó)ruríkutukura.

ni-n-end-a ku-gura o-ru-goye o-ru-riku-tukur-a  
IPFV-1SG-want-FV 15-buy AUG-11-cloth AUG-11RM-IPFV-be.red-FV

‘I want to buy a/the red cloth.’

lit. ‘I want to buy a/the cloth that is red.’

Based on such tests (for more see Asiimwe et al. 2023), we concluded that the presence of the augment on relative clauses triggers a restrictive reading while its absence means that there are no alternatives to select from.

The same holds for adjectives. Taylor (1972, 1985) equates the augment on adjectives to the definite marker in the Indo-European languages when he suggests that the presence of the augment on the adjective in (133) renders the noun *omushaija* definite while its absence in (133b) signifies an indefinite referent. However, we show that (133b) can also be used with an indefinite interpretation and therefore the question is what function the augment has on the adjective.

- (133) (Taylor 1972: 74; glosses added)

- a. o-mu-sháija mu-rungi

AUG-1-man 1-good

‘a good man’

- b. o-mu-sháj’ ó-mu-rúngi

AUG-1-man AUG-1-good

‘the good man’

Building on the work of Asiimwe (2014) and discussed in detail in Asiimwe et al. (2023), we propose that the augment realises a restrictive reading on adjectives: while the absence of the augment on the adjective *mbisi* ‘unripe’ in (134b) gives no special interpretation, its presence on *embisi* in (134a) means that there are alternative pineapples that are ripe and that the buying is restricted to the subset that is unripe.

- (134) (Asiimwe et al. 2023: 1294)

- a. Naagur' énanáás' émbísi. [+A]  
 n-aa-gur-a e-nanaasi e-n-bisi  
 1SG.SM-N.PST-buy-FV AUG-9.pineapple AUG-9-unripe  
 'I have bought the unripe pineapple.' (as opposed to a ripe pineapple)
- b. Naagur' énanaasi mbísi. [-A]  
 n-aa-gur-a e-nanaasi n-bisi  
 1SG.SM-N.PST-buy-FV AUG-9.pineapple 9-unripe  
 'I have bought an unripe pineapple.'

The example in (135) involves a ‘which’ question again. The hearer is not expected to respond to (135a) with an augmentless adjective because the question targets one referent from a set of given alternatives. Therefore, it is natural for the hearer to answer with an augment on the adjective, selecting big cups (the alternative being small cups). It is also infelicitous for the augment to be used with the adjective when the entities to select from include forks, plates, knives etc.

- (135) (Asiimwe et al. 2023: 1295)

- a. E-bi-kópo w-aa-gur-a bi-iha?  
 AUG-8-cup 2SG.SM-N.PST-buy-FV 8-which  
 'Which cups have you bought?'
- b. N-aa-gur' e-bi-kóp' é-bi-hágó.  
 1SM-N.PST-buy AUG-8-cup AUG-8-big  
 'I have bought the big cups.'
- c. # N-aa-gur' e-bi-kopo bi-hágó.  
 1SM-N.PST-buy AUG-8-cup 8-big

To further illustrate, the sentence in (136) was said as part of the instructions in the QUIS (Skopeteas et al. 2006) map task, in which one speaker has to lead another speaker through a map with various entities on crossroads. When asked whether the adjective ‘big’ could have an augment here, it was indicated that this would mean the animal has various tails from which it could choose.

- (136) ('In the middle of the road, there is a fox... no, a mongoose.')

- O-mu-terere gw-in' ó-mu-kira \_\_-mu-hágó gw-a kitaka.  
 AUG-3-mongoose 3SM-have AUG-3-tail 3-big 3-of brown  
 'The mongoose has a big brown tail.'

By using an adjective with an augment, the speaker intends to provide the hearer with extra information, so that the hearer learns that there is a choice between referents.

Possessives too allow an optional augment. We again use a context containing a ‘which’ question in (137) to show that the augment attached to possessives selects one referent from a set (see again Asiimwe et al. 2023 for further evidence).

- (137) (Context: Which garden has Mr Elephant dug?)

- a. # Warujojo y-aa-hing-á o-mu mu-siri gw-é(ye).  
1.Elephant 1SM-N.PST-dig-FV AUG-18 3-garden 3.POSS.1  
'Mr Elephant cultivated in his garden.'
- b. Warujojo y-aa-hing-á ó-mu mu-siri o-gw-é(ye).  
1.Elephant 1SM-N.PST-dig-FV AUG-18 3-garden AUG-3.POSS.1  
'Mr Elephant cultivated in his own garden (e.g. not in Mr Hare's garden).'
- c. # Y-aa-hing-a ó-mu mu-siri gw-a Wakame.  
1SM-N.PST-dig-FV AUG-18 3-garden 3-CONN Hare  
'He cultivated in Mr Hare's garden.'
- d. Y-aa-hing-a ó-mu mu-siri ó-gw-a Wakame.  
1SM-N.PST-dig-FV AUG-18 3-garden AUG-3-CONN Hare  
'He cultivated in Mr Hare's garden (and not in his).'

We further show that the use of the augment with quantifiers restricts a subset of referents. Indefinite quantifiers such as *-ingi* ‘many’, *-kye* ‘few’, *-mwe* ‘some’ as observed with relative clauses, adjectives and possessives allow an optional augment that restricts a subset of the noun. The presence of an augment selects a subset of gardens that are many in (138b) leaving the subset of gardens that are few or the rest of the gardens.

- (138) a. E-mi-siri y-a Wakamé mí-ngi e-hing-ire.  
AUG-4-garden 4-CONN 1.Hare 4-many 4SM-dig-PFV  
'Many gardens belonging to Mr Hare are ploughed.'
- b. E-mi-siri y-a Wakame e-mi-ngi e-hingire.  
AUG-4-garden 4-CONN Hare 4-many 4SM-dig-PFV  
'Most of the Mr Hare's gardens are ploughed.'

The quantifier *-mwe* ‘some’ also expresses meaning about referents excluded from a given set.<sup>17</sup> Like *-ingi* ‘many’/-*kye* ‘few’, the augment is optional on *-mwe*.

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<sup>17</sup>The quantifier without the augment can also mean ‘certain’.

The quantifier *-mwe* with the augment appears to restrict some members and exclude others in a given set. Although the referents are non-specific, in (139b) the augment selects an unspecified number of shirts that are not ironed.

- (139) a. E-saati **zi-mwé** ti-zi-gorwíre.  
 e-saati zi-mwe ti-zi-goror-íre  
 AUG-10.shirt 10-some NEG-10SM-iron-IPFV  
 ‘Some shirts are not ironed.’
- b. Esaati **ézimwé** tizigorwíre.  
 e-saati e-zi-mwe ti-zi-goror-íre  
 AUG-10.shirt AUG-10-some NEG-10SM-iron-IPFV  
 ‘Some of the shirts are not ironed.’

Further evidence that the augment is restrictive comes from the fact that the quantifier *-ona* ‘all’, which cannot trigger alternatives within its set, does not permit the augment (140). On the other hand, the quantifier *-ndi* which entails the presence of alternatives always takes an augment (141).

- (140) Enyamaishwá (\*e)zoona kú ziizire kukóra... e-nyamaishwa e-zi-ona  
 AUG-10.animal AUG-10-all  
 ku zi-ij-ire ku-kora  
 when 10SM-come-PFV 15-work  
 ‘When (the) other animals came to work...’
- (141) Enyamaishwa \*(é)zíndi kú ziizire kukóra... e-nyamaishwa e-zi-ndi  
 AUG-10.animal AUG-10-other  
 ku zi-ij-ire ku-kora...  
 when 10SM-come-PFV 15-work  
 ‘When (the) other animals came to work...’

We postulate that the augment is one of the strategies Rukiga uses to contrast or exclude referents for which the predicate does not hold. We further assert that the presence of an optional augment on modifiers brings about a restrictive meaning, such that a set of alternatives must be present from which the asserted referent is selected. The alternatives in this case are triggered at the level of the modifier, that is, at the sub-NP level, e.g. focus on an adjective like ‘tall’ triggers the alternative ‘short’ (and possibly other intermediate measures).

Although the selection from alternatives at first sight relates to exclusive focus, Asiimwe et al. (2023) show that alternatives on the level of the noun phrase

are not necessarily excluded in the examples in (142) and (143). If the noun phrase containing the augmented modifier had been interpreted as exclusive,<sup>18</sup> we would not expect the acceptability of the second clause in these examples, as these state that the predicate is not exclusively true for the subset mentioned in the first clause. This “mismatch” between the restrictive/exclusive interpretation on the sub-NP level and the non-exclusive interpretation on the NP level remains a topic for further research.

- (142) (Asiimwe et al. 2023: 1332)

Yakóbo y-aa-gabur-ir'	é-nyamaíshwa.	Pusi	e-n-tó
1.Jacob	1SM-N.PST-feed-APPL-FV	AUG-10.animal	10.cat AUG-10-young
z-aa-b-a	zi-ine	é-n-jara	na púsi é-n-kuru
10SM-N.PST-be-FV	10SM-have AUG-9-hunger	and	10.cat AUG-10-old
z-aa-b-a	zi-ine	é-n-jara	
10SM-N.PST-be-FV	10SM-have AUG-9-hunger		

‘Jacob fed the animals. The young cats were hungry, and also the old cats were hungry.’

- (143) (Asiimwe et al. 2023: 1332) Yaareeb entéb’ (é)nungí n’eémbí nazó

yáázíreeba.	a-aa-reeb-a	e-n-tebe	e-n-rungi	na e-n-bi	na-zo
	1SM-N.PST-see-FV	AUG-10-chair	AUG-10-good and	AUG-10-bad and	10.PRO
	a-aa-zi-reeb-a				
	1SM-N.PST-10OM-see-FV				

‘S/he saw good chairs, and bad ones s/he also saw.’

Another question is how the contrast on a modifier (sub-NP level) interacts with the information structure in the clause. In preliminary data, there does not seem to be any restriction: noun phrases functioning as the topic, and noun phrases functioning as the focus can occur with or without an augment on the modifier, as shown in the left-peripheral topic in (144) and the cleft in (145).

- (144) (Asiimwe et al. 2023: 1332)

E-bi-kóp’ (é-)bi-hángó n-aa-bi-teer-a=mu	á-ba-gyenyi.
AUG-8-cup	AUG-8-big
1SG.SM-N.PST-8OM-put-FV=18.LOC AUG-2-visitor	

‘As for the big cups, I have served the visitors tea in them.’

<sup>18</sup>If other sizes between small and large, or old and new, are also taken into account, then those could potentially be excluded, and in that case, the test only shows that this cannot be an exhaustive interpretation in which *all* alternatives are excluded.

- (145) N'ébikóp' (é)biháng' ébí naateeramw' ábagyenyi.  
ni e-bi-kopo (e)-bi-hango e-bi n-aa-te-er-a=mu  
COP AUG-8-cup AUG-8-big AUG-REL.PRO 1SG.SM-N.PST-put-APPL-FV=18  
a-ba-gyenyi  
AUG-2-visitor  
'It is the big cups that I have served the visitors tea in.'

We conclude in the paper that "there seems to be no correlation between "focus within the DP" (the restrictive reading of the augment) and focus in the clause: they are independent and all combinations occur" (Asiimwe et al. 2023: 1333). This too remains an interesting field for further investigation.

## 7 Cleft constructions

Rukiga features three constructions that can be described as "cleft": the basic cleft, the pseudocleft, and what looks like a reverse pseudocleft but turns out to be an NP constituent followed by a clefted pronoun. Each consists of three elements: 1) the copula *ni*, 2) the clefted constituent, and 3) the relative clause. We present relative marking here, as it will be relevant for all the three constructions.<sup>19</sup>

Non-subject relatives are marked by the proximal demonstrative functioning as the relative pronoun, as in (146b). We gloss it here as REL.PRO.

- (146) (Asiimwe et al. 2023: 1287–1288)
- a. W-aa-teek' á-ka-ró o-mu n-yúngu.  
2PL.SM-N.PST-cook AUG-12-millet.bread AUG-18 9-pot  
'You have prepared millet bread in a pot.'
  - b. e-n-yungw' (é)-yí w-aa-goy-a=mu  
AUG-9-pot AUG-9REL.PRO 2SG.SM-N.PST-mingle-FV=18.LOC  
á-ká-ro  
AUG-12-millet.bread  
'the pot that you prepared millet bread in'

Subject relatives are marked by a different tone pattern, as shown in (147).

- (147) (Asiimwe et al. 2023: 1288)
- a. Wakame y-áá-záár-a.  
9.rabbit 9SM-N.PST-give.birth-FV  
'A/the rabbit has given birth.'

<sup>19</sup>We acknowledge Melle Groen and Nina van der Vlugt for their help in investigating Rukiga clefts.

- b. wakamé y-aa-záar-a  
 9.rabbit 9RM-N.PST-give.birth-FV  
 ‘a/the rabbit which has given birth’

As discussed in Section 6, relative clauses may be preceded by an augment, which Asiimwe et al. (2023) (see also Asiimwe 2019) argue marks a restrictive relative clause.

## 7.1 Basic cleft

The basic cleft consists of the copula *ni* (or negative copula *ti*) preceding the clefted constituent, and a relative clause following it, marked with the usual markers explained above, illustrated in (148) and (149).

- (148) (What has Maria swept?)  
 N' ékibúge éki María yaakondóora.  
 ni e-ki-buga e-ki María a-aa-kondoora-a  
 COP AUG-7-compound AUG-7REL.PRO 1.Maria 1SM-N.PST-sweep-FV  
 ‘It's the compound that Maria has swept.’
- (149) (What will Pamela cook?)  
 Ni muhógo eyí Paméla aryátéeka.  
 ni muhogo e-yí Pamela a-rya-teek-a  
 COP 9.cassava AUG-9.REL.PRO 1.Pamela 1SM-FUT-cook-FV  
 ‘It's cassava that Pamela will cook.’

Basic clefts are not very commonly used, and a construction with a left-peripheral NP + cleft (see Section 7.3) is preferred for noun phrases. We do find clefts naturally with interrogatives, as in (150) and (151), and with personal pronouns, as in (152–154). Note that with clefted non-subject pronouns, the relative marker is not present, also shown in (153) and (154). Note also that example (152) shows the use of the negative copula *ti*.

- (150) N' oh' ógyénzire?  
 ni o-ha o-gyend-ire  
 COP 1-who 1SM.REL-go-PFV  
 ‘Who left?’
- (151) Ni nkahé áh' oseeriir' ómugúsha?  
 ni nkahe a-hu o-s-er-ire o-mu-gusha  
 COP where AUG-16.REL.PRO 2SG.SM-grind-APPL-PFV AUG-3-sorghum  
 ‘Where did you grind the sorghum from?’

- (152) Ekitábo nkishomíre konka tínye naakihandíkire.  
 e-ki-tabo n-ki-shom-ire konka ti nye  
 AUG-7-book 1SG.SM-7OM-read-PFV but NEG.COP 1SG.PRO  
 n-a-ki-handiik-ire  
 1SG.SM-PST-7OM-write-PFV  
 ‘The book, I have read it but I’m not the one who wrote it.’
- (153) Nizó (\*ezí) naabuganáho.  
 ni z-o e-zi n-aa-bugan-a=ho  
 COP 10-PRO AUG-REL.PRO 1SG.SM-N.PST-meet-FV=16.LOC  
 ‘They are the ones that I have met there.’
- (154) Níinye waaréeba.  
 ni inye u-aa-reeb-a  
 COP 1SG.PRO 2SG.SM-N.PST-see-FV  
 ‘It is me that you saw.’

When tested, the focus on the clefted constituent in the basic cleft comes out as exhaustive. The basic cleft cannot be followed up by a clause asserting the truth for another referent, as in (155); and it cannot be modified by ‘primarily’, as in (156), or the universal quantifier ‘all’ as in (157). These facts follow straightforwardly if the basic cleft has an inherent exhaustive meaning: ‘primarily’ indicates that the predicate is also true for other referents (other people spoke besides Sara), and ‘all’ does not exclude any referents in the set (there are no cups that did not fall); just as John also cooking posho means that Sara is not the only one. Thus, the alternatives that are necessarily present for the referents in (155–157), and for which the proposition is also true, are incompatible with the exhaustive interpretation of the cleft construction, requiring that the proposition be false for all alternatives.

- (155) (Who cooked posho?)  
 Ni Sáár’ ówaateekir’ ákahúnga (\*, na Jóoni nawe).  
 ni Saara o-u-aa-teek-ire a-ka-hunga na Jooni  
 COP 1.Sara AUG-1SM-N.PST-cook-PFV AUG-12-posho and 1.John  
 na-we  
 and-1.PRO  
 int. ‘It is Sara who cooked posho (\*, and John also).’
- (156) \* Owáágamba ni Sáár’ okukira.  
 o-u-aa-gamb-a ni Saara okukira  
 1SM.REL-1SM-N.PST-speak-FV COP 1.Saara primarily  
 int. ‘The one who spoke is primarily Sara.’

- (157) \* Ni byón' ebikóp' ébyágwa.  
 ni bi-on-a e-bi-kopo e-bi-aa-gw-a  
 COP 8-all AUG-8-cup AUG-8SM.REL-N.PST-fall-FV  
 'It is all the cups that fell.'

## 7.2 Pseudocleft

In a pseudocleft, the copula joins a free relative (FR) on its left with a noun on its right: [FR] COP [NP]. What looks like a verb in (158) is a relative clause that functions as a noun phrase, which is known as a free relative. The free relative typically creates a presupposition of existence, and the described entity is then identified by the focused noun, as in (158) we describe the existence of some who welcomed us, and this person is then identified as Peace.

- (158) (Who welcomed you?)  
 Owaatwákiira ni Piisi.  
 o-u-aa-tu-akiir-a ni Piisi  
 AUG-1SM.REL-PST-1PL.OM-receive-FV COP 1.Peace  
 'The one who welcomed us is Peace.'

The existence presupposition can be seen in the oddness to answer the pseudocleft question in (159) with 'nobody', i.e. there must be someone who took the salt. Relevant to the question in this example, note that there is an asymmetry between subjects and non-subjects here: whereas subjects can be questioned in a pseudocleft, this is unacceptable for non-subjects, presumably because they have the possibility to be questioned postverbally.

- (159) Owaatwar' ómwónyo n'ooha?  
 o-u-aa-twar-a o-mu-onyo ni o-ha  
 AUG-1SM.REL-N.PST-take-FV AUG-3-salt COP 1-who  
 'Who has taken the salt?'  
 # Tiháriho.  
 ti-ha-ri=ho  
 NEG-16SM-be=16  
 'Nobody'  
 lit. 'There isn't (who has taken the salt).'

While the NP expresses identificational focus, the focus seems to differ from that in a basic cleft in allowing modification by 'primarily' (160), thus arguing

against inherent exhaustivity, but still disallowing ‘even’ (161), ‘all’ (162), and ‘for example’ (163), which are also tests for exclusivity and exhaustivity. We suggest that this is due to the function of identification, which should select one primary referent: inclusive ‘even’ and ‘all’ do not select, and ‘for example’ is not specific enough for proper identification.

- (160) (Who spoke?)

Okukír' ówáagamba ni Sáara.  
 okukira o-u-aa-gamb-a                                   ni Saara  
 primarily 1SM.REL-1SM-N.PST-speak-FV COP 1.Saara  
 ‘It is primarily the case that it was Sara who spoke.’

- (161) (What else has Jane cooked?)

\* Eki Jéin yaateeka ni n' ákáro.  
 e-ki   ni na a-ka-ro  
 AUG-7.REL.PRO 1.Jane 1SM-N.PST-cook-FV COP and AUG-12-millet.bread  
 int. ‘What Jane has prepared is even/also millet bread.’

- (162) (What drank water?)

Ekyanyw' ámíizi n'éntaama (\*zóna).  
 e-ki-a-nyw-a      a-ma-izi      ni e-n-taama      zi-oná  
 AUG-7SM-drink-FV AUG-6-water COP AUG-10-sheep 10-all  
 ‘It is (\*all) the sheep that drank water.’

- (163) (Who has a pen?)

Oyine péeni ni (\*nka) Rónald.  
 o-ine                peeni ni    nka Ronald  
 1SM.REL-have 9.pen COP like 1.Ronald  
 ‘Who has a pen is (\*for example) Ronald.’

### 7.3 Left-peripheral NP + cleft

A direct reverse of the pseudocleft is not grammatical in Rukiga: compare the pseudocleft in (164a) with the attempt in (164b). Instead, an independent pronoun in -o must be used in this construction (see also Section 4), as in (164c).

- (164) a. [E-kí   ni sókisi.  
 AUG-7REL.PRO 1.Bill 1SM-N.PST-wash.CAUS-FV COP 10.sock  
 ‘What Bill washed is socks.’]

- b. \* Sókisi n' [e-kí/e-zí   Bíru y-aa-yózy-a].  
 10.sock COP AUG-7/10.REL.PRO 1.Bill 1SM-PST-wash.CAUS-FV

- c. Sókisi ni-zó Bíiru y-aa-yózy-a.  
 10.sock COP-10.PRO 1.Bill 1SM-PST-wash.CAUS-FV  
 ‘Socks Bill washed.’ / ‘Socks is what Bill washed.’

There are further indications, however, that the construction in (164c) is not in fact a reverse pseudocleft, but a noun phrase in the left periphery followed by a basic cleft in which the pronoun is the clefted element. First, the initial NP can be separated from the rest of the construction, as in (165), where both *amaizi* ‘water’ and *ente* ‘cows’ are topics in the left periphery.

- (165) (Did the cows eat the food I left for them?)  
 A-má-ízi e-n-te ni-gwó z-áá-nyw-a.  
 AUG-6-water AUG-10-cow COP-6.PRO 10SM-N.PST-drink-FV  
 ‘It is water that the cows have drunk,’  
 lit. ‘Water, the cows, it is that that they have drunk.’

Second, an optional prosodic break is possible between the initial NP and the rest of the clause, as in (166).

- (166) Sókisi, ni-zó Bíiru y-aa-yózy-a.  
 10.socks COP-10.PRO 1.Bill 1SM-PST-wash.CAUS-FV  
 ‘Socks is what Bill washed.’  
 lit. ‘Socks, it is that/them that Bill washed.’

The next task is then to determine the information-structural function of the initial NP. In some contexts it functions as a topic, and can co-occur with the contrastive topic marker, as in (167) and (168). Note that the dispute in the context shows that the referent is known, and also that the combination of the contrastive marker and cleft in this context result in an emphatic verum interpretation: this is true, end of discussion.

- (167) A: Carol baked mandaazi, Liz prepared chapati; and I think Jonah baked pancakes.  
 B: No, Kate baked pancakes.  
 A: Sure?  
 B: Kéeti wé niwé yaateek’ óbubânda.  
 Kate w-o ni-we a-a-teek-a o-bu-banda  
 1.Kate 1-CM COP-1.REL.PRO 1SM-PST-cook-FV AUG-14-pancakes  
 ‘It is Kate who has made pancakes.’, ‘As for Kate, it is her who made pancakes.’

- (168) (Context: There is an argument as to whether it is sheep or cows that Juma grazed.)

Entaama zó nizó yaariisa.

e-n-taama z-o ni-z-o a-aa-ri-is-a

AUG-10-sheep 10-CM COP-10-REL.PRO 1SM-N.PST-eat-CAUS-FV

‘He has (only) grazed the sheep’, ‘The sheep, it’s them that he grazed.’

The impression of focus on the initial NP in these examples is derived from the fact that the initial NP (e.g. socks) and the clefted pronoun (e.g. *zo*) refer to the same referent. Expressing it in this construction allows for the expression of both properties: it is accessible, topical (as expressed by the NP), but also in exhaustive focus (as indicated by the clefted pronoun).

The initial NP cannot be analysed as a regular focus, since an initial interrogative in this construction is ungrammatical, as seen in (169). As interrogative pronouns are taken to be in focus, their appearance initially would have been expected had the initial position be one of focus in this construction.

- (169) a. \* Enki/ki ni-kyo Paméra a-ryá-téek-a?  
 what COP-7PRO 1.Pamela 1SM-FUT-cook-FV  
 ‘What is it that Pamela will cook?’
- b. \* Oha ni-we o-waa-shohor-a?  
 1.who COP-1.PRO 1SM.REL-N.PST-move.out-FV  
 ‘Who has moved out?’

If the initial NP is a topic, as we proposed, it is unexpected that the exhaustive ‘only’ is accepted as a modifier of the initial NP. Nevertheless, this is what we find in (170), as this associates with focus and not topic.

- (170) (Which animals drank water?)

Entaamá zonká ni-zó zanyw’ ámíizi. e-n-taama zi-onka ni-zo  
 AUG-10-sheep 10-only COP-10.PRO  
 z-aa-nyw-a a-ma-iži.  
 10SM-N.PST-drink-FV AUG-6-water  
 ‘Only the sheep drank water.’

There are two possible options to analyse this: either the construction is grammaticalising to become integrated as a focus construction with a left-peripheral focus position, or the initial NP forms a phrase by itself, comparable to a fragment answer. If the construction is moving to a monoclausal focus construction

with an initial focus position (which for some reason excludes interrogatives), then the initial focused constituent must have moved from inside the clause. This movement is expected to show reconstruction effects, i.e. the referent must be interpretable in the position where it moved from. We can test this by using a universal quantifier and a possessive pronoun, as in (171). If the initial NP with the possessive pronoun has moved and reconstructs, then the pronoun should be able to be bound by the universal quantifier *buri* ‘every’ in the subject, resulting in a reading that each parent loves their own child (the distributive reading). But in fact we only get the non-distributive reading, in which there is one particular child (belonging to a third person) that every parent loves. This shows us that the initial NP is not moved and that the first analysis is not likely to be correct (at this stage of the language – it may of course grammaticalise further).

- (171) [O-mw-ana wé] ni-wé buri mu-zíir' a-ríku-künd-a.  
 AUG-1-child 1-poss.1 COP-1.PRO every 1-parent 1SM-IPFV-love-FV  
 '[His/her]<sub>k/\*i</sub> child is the one that [every parent]<sub>i</sub> loves.'  
 (only non-distributive)

The second option, the initial NP being a fragment answer, seems to account also for sentences like (172), where the initial NP is modified by ‘only’ but separated from the rest by the adverb ‘yesterday’.

- (172) E-saatí z-ônká, nyómwébazó, ni-z-ó zi-gw-ir'  
 AUG-10.shirts 10-only yesterday COP-10-PRO 10SM-fall-PFV  
 á-hâ-nsi.  
 AUG-16-down  
 'It was only the shirts, yesterday, that fell down.'  
 lit. 'The shirts, yesterday, it is them that fell down.'

If the initial NP can form a fragment answer, which is then followed up by an explicating cleft, we would expect this construction to be possible in answering a content question, which is indeed the case, as shown in (173) – note that the cleft is not obligatory.

- (173) (Which mats did Jovia weave?)  
 Emigúfu (niyó Jóviya arukíre).  
 e-mi-gufu ni-yo Jovia a-ruk-ire  
 AUG-4-short COP-4.PRO 1.Jovia 1SM-weave-PFV  
 'The short ones (it's them that she weaved)'

The construction is also used in a corrective context, as in (174).

- (174) (The cook has finally come.)

Íngaaha, mááma niwé yiija, tí mutéeki.  
ngaaha maama ni-we a-aa-ij-a ti mu-teeki  
no 1.mother COP-1.PRO 1SM-N.PST-come-FV NEG 1-cook  
'No, mother has come, not the cook.'

As the pronoun in the basic cleft is interpreted as exhaustive (see Section 7.1), it is expected that the initial coreferential NP cannot be non-exhaustive, as illustrated in (175) with 'for example' and in (176) for 'even'.

- (175) (I'm looking for someone who can lend me a pen.)

\* Nka Rónald niw' áine péeni.  
nka Ronald ni-we a-ine peeni  
like 1.Ronald COP-1.PRO 1SM.REL-have 9.pen  
int. 'For example Ronald is the one who has a pen.'

- (176) \* Nab' ábáaná nibó omushomésa abahiir' ékarámu.

na-bo a-ba-ana ni-ba-o o-mu-shomesa a-ba-h-ire  
and-2 AUG-2-children COP-2-PRO AUG-1-teacher 1SM-2OM-give-PFV  
e-karamu  
AUG-10.pencil  
'It is even children the teacher gave pencils.'

Which syntactic analysis turns out to be preferable for this construction remains a topic for further research. For now, we conclude that this is not a direct reverse of the pseudocleft (i.e. it is not a copular construction), but that the initial NP may be a topic or a fragment answer, followed by a basic cleft. As for the interpretation, it seems to combine exhaustive focus brought about by the basic cleft with the givenness expressed by the topic in initial position or the simple focus expressed in a fragment answer.

## 8 Object marking

The object marker in Rukiga can in principle not co-occur with the coreferential noun phrase in the same domain and object marking in Rukiga is hence characterised as “non-doubling” (see van der Wal 2022 and references therein for discussion on doubling object marking). This is shown in (177), where the object marker may only be present if the object is dislocated to the right of the adverb ‘today’.

- (177) a. \*Píta y-aa-ka-teek-a a-ka-húunga e-ri-zóoba.  
           1.Peter 1SM-N.PST-12OM-cook-FV AUG-12-posho AUG-5-day  
           int. ‘Peter cooked posho today.’
- b. Píta y-aa-ka-teek’ é-ri-zóob’ a-ka-húunga.  
       1.Peter 1SM-N.PST-12OM-cook AUG-5-day AUG-12-posho  
       ‘Peter cooked it today, posho.’

Note that the verb takes the tonally reduced form in (177), indicating that the object marker and the object NP are in the same domain. The non-reduced verb form on the other hand is grammatical with the object marker, see (178a), which indicates that the verb is final and the following object is not in the same domain.

- (178) a. Bamukomiré Káto. [no TR]  
       ba-mu-kom-ire Káto  
       2SM-1OM-tie-PFV 1.Kato  
       ‘They tied Kato.’
- b. \*Bamukomire Káto. [TR]  
       ba-mu-kom-ire Káto  
       2SM-1OM-tie-PFV 1.Kato  
       int. ‘They tied Kato.’

Given these properties, there are two interesting aspects in Rukiga with respect to object marking. The first is that we do not see a lot of object drop, that is, the complete absence of any form referring to the object (compare e.g. with Kii-tharaka in Chapter 5 (NsHEMEZIMANA & van der Wal 2025 [this volume]) and Makhuwa in Chapter 8 (van der Wal 2025b [this volume])). In a recipe for sorghum porridge, for example, reference to given objects is always marked through an object marker (or subject marker), as can be seen in the fragment in (179). Whether object drop is possible at all (and if so, when it occurs), remains for further research.

- (179) (When the water (cl 6) cools, you get back to that other bucket (cl 9) with a cooking stick (cl 11) and start stirring to mix the flour (cl 9) with that other porridge (cl 14) so that they both get well cooked.)

Byámará kus' okwaté gá míízí agáárugirem' ékyóya ogashuké mu baketi reero obureke buráareho

bi-aa-mar-a ku-sya o-kwat-e g-a ma-izi  
8SM-N.PST-finish 15-get.ready 2SG.SM-get-SBJV 6-DEM 6-water

a-ga-aa-rug-ir-e=mu e-ki-o ya

AUG-6RM-N.PST-come.from-APPL-SBJV=18 AUG-7-heat

o-ga-shuk-e mu baketi reero o-bu-rek-e

2SG.SM-6OM-pour-SBJV 18 9.bucket then 2SG.SM-14OM-leave-SBJV

bu-raar-e=ho

14SM-stay.for.night-SBJV=16

'When they are both well-cooked you get that other water which has been cooled and you pour it in the bucket and leave the porridge to stay for a night.'

Nínga bwábá burí bwíngí obucwánuurile nk'omu bíndi bisafuriya kugira ngu buhore reeró nyenkyakare mubúnywe búgiziré kí... burafuka.

nainga bw-a-ba bu-ri bw-ingi o-bu-cwanuur-ir-e  
or 14SM-N.PST-be 14SM-be 14-much 2SG.SM-14OM-reduce-APPL-SBJV

nka o-mu bíndi bi-safuriya ku-gira ngu bu-hor-e reero

like AUG-18 8-other 8-saucepan 15-say COMP 14SM-cool-SBJV then

nyenkyakare mu-bu-nyw-e bu-giz-ire ki...

tomorrow 2PL.SM-14OM-drink-SBJV 14SM-do-PFV what...

bu-ra-fuk-a

14SM-IPFV-cool-FV

'Or when the porridge is much, you divide it and put in other big saucepans so that it cools and you drink it tomorrow [the next day] when it has cooled.'

A second interesting point is that despite the fact that the object marker may not double the coreferring noun phrase in the same domain, both *can* co-occur under specific pragmatic contexts, as Sikuku & Diercks (2021) first noted for Lubukusu (see also Lippard et al. 2023). The interpretation is one of verum, that is, an emphatic focus on the truth of the proposition (Höhle 1992, cf. Romero & Han 2004), as illustrated in the acceptable and unacceptable contexts in (180). The first context elicits VP focus, and the second object focus, neither of which

is acceptable. Only the corrective verum in the third context is acceptable. Note, however, that this is only possible with the form of the verb that is not tonally reduced, indicating that the object NP is not in the same domain as the verb (compare (177) and (180)).

- (180) (#Context 1: ‘What did Peter do today?’  
 #Context 2: ‘What did Peter cook today?’  
 Context 3: ‘I don’t believe that Peter cooked posho today!’)  
 Píta y-áá-ka-téek-a a-ka-húúngá e-ri-zóoba.  
 1.Peter 1SM-N.PST-12OM-cook-FV AUG-12-posho AUG-5-day  
 ‘Peter cooked posho today.’ (adapted from van der Wal & Asiimwe 2020: 52)

In addition, object doubling is possible under a mirative or counterexpectation reading, as in (181), as well as an intensity interpretation (182).

- (181) (Context: It was expected that the sorghum would be ground well, which was not the case.)  
 W-áá-gu-s-a o-mu-gúsha (báasi)!  
 2SG.SM-N.PST-3OM-grind-FV AUG-3-sorghum (really)  
 ‘You have ground the sorghum (what happened? It is not fine-ground)!’
- (182) (Context: The sorgum is so fine-ground.)  
 W-áá-gu-s-a o-mu-gúsha (buzima)!  
 2SG.SM-N.PST-3OM-grind-FV AUG-3-sorghum (really)  
 ‘You have ground the sorghum (it is fine)!’

Further research into the exact contexts in which the object marker can be present is needed, specifically paying attention to what Lippard et al. (2023) call “emphatic” interpretations, and to the interaction between word order and tonal marking on the verb.

## 9 Chapter summary

The chapter has provided a descriptive analysis of information structure in Rukiga. We note that there are various strategies the language employs, using prosody, morphology, and syntax. One of the strategies is word order. Word order in Rukiga is flexible, and is determined more by discourse roles than grammatical roles. We note that topics are preferred in the preverbal position. For

example, in a locative inversion construction, the locative phrase appears in the preverbal position and acts as the topic. In the same vein, in passive constructions, erstwhile objects are promoted to subject and moved to the preverbal position to function as topics. In addition, Rukiga possesses a particle *-o* that marks contrastive topics, and there are other pragmatic interpretations associated with it, namely polarity focus/verum, deprecative, intensive and mirative. Focused elements do not occur in the preverbal domain, but are typically marked in the immediate after verb position. Non-focal and non-topical elements also appear postverbally, for example the subject in a thetic sentence (primarily in locative inversion), and other non-topical non-focal elements appear in the right periphery. Predicate doubling is another strategy that is prevalently used in Rukiga for multiple readings depending on context: in topic doubling, an infinitive functions as a contrastive focus and the resulting interpretations include polarity focus/verum, depreciation, intension, and mirativity (the same interpretations that are encoded by particle *-o*), whereas in-situ doubling with a class 14 nominalisation creates a dismissive reading, and in-situ doubling with *na* and an infinitive is used to indicate an event happening above expectation. Clefts are a common strategy used to express focus as observed in the other languages described in this book. A detailed syntactic account of cleft constructions remains for further research, but we concluded that the basic cleft has an exhaustive interpretation and that the pseudocleft is associated with identification. A third construction that superficially is reminiscent of a reverse pseudocleft was shown to involve an independent (topic or fragment answer) NP followed by a basic cleft in which a coreferential pronoun is clefted. Further research should also consider whether object drop in Rukiga is possible (and if so, under which circumstances), the role of prosody in expressing information structure, and it would also be interesting to conduct a diachronic investigation of particle *-o* and study this particle comparatively between Rukiga and other Bantu languages that have it.

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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. High tones are marked by an acute accent; low tones remain unmarked. We stick to orthography as much as possible. Orthographic ⟨k⟩ and ⟨g⟩ before [i], as well as ⟨ky⟩ and ⟨gy⟩ before other vowels, are pronounced [tʃ] and [dʒ], respectively. Although sometimes speakers pronounce [l], there is no ⟨l⟩ in orthography (instead ⟨r⟩ is used). Liaison between words is indicated by an apostrophe. Vowels before a prenasalised consonants and vowels after palatalised and labialised consonants are automatically lengthened, but written with only one symbol.

*	ungrammatical	F.PST	far past
#	infelicitous in the given context	FV	final vowel
(X)	the presence of X is obligatory and cannot grammatically be omitted	MED N.FUT	medial (demonstrative) near future tense
(*X)	the presence of X would make the sentence ungrammatical	N.PST OM	near past tense object marker
(X)	the presence of X is optional	PRO RM	pronoun relative marker
AUG	augment	SM	subject marker
CM	contrastive marker	TR	tonal reduction
CONN	connective		
DAI	default agreement inversion		

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# Chapter 7

## The expression of information structure in Kinyakyusa

Amani Lusekelo<sup>a</sup>, Jenneke van der Wal<sup>b</sup> & Simon Msovela<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Dar es Salaam <sup>b</sup>Leiden University <sup>c</sup>University of Gothenburg

This chapter presents strategies for the expression of topic and focus in sentences of Kinyakyusa (spoken in Tanzania and Malawi). In Kinyakyusa, there is no dedicated focus position immediately after the verb or elsewhere, and remarkably, focus may occur preverbally. Topic doubling, which is common in Kinyakyusa, can provide a verum, intensive or deprecative reading. Furthermore, the interpretation of the focused element in the cleft is mainly for identificational purposes. Lastly, Kinyakyusa has the V augment and CV prefix in the nominal structure. The CV prefix is an exhaustive marker.

### 1 Introduction

Kinyakyusa is spoken in south-west Tanzania and north-east Malawi by more than one million people (Felberg 1996, LoT 2009). It is classified as M31 in Maho's (2009) update of Guthrie's (1948) classification and has ISO code [nny]. The three dialects of Kinyakyusa include the southern dialect called Ngonde (spoken along the shores of Lake Nyasa/Malawi in Malawi), the eastern dialect called Selya (spoken in the mountainous parts north-east of Lake Nyasa/Malawi in Tanzania) and the western dialect called Mwamba (spoken in the mountainous parts north-west of Lake Nyasa/Malawi Tanzania). The existing literature covers the emphatic marker(s) (Mwangoka & Voorhoeve 1960), locative clitics (Persohn 2017), tense, aspect, and modality (Persohn 2020), object marking (Lusekelo 2024), the structure of conditional sentences (Lusekelo 2016), noun phrase structure (Lusekelo



2009), the V and CV “augment” (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022), and subject inversion (Msovela et al. 2023).

The description is based on data gathered from three native speakers of Kinyakyusa aged between 48 and 66 during fieldwork in November 2020 in Kiwira and come from spontaneous conversation, narratives, and elicitation. Additional data were provided by the first author, who is a Kinyakyusa native speaker, and checked with speakers remotely. We used the BaSIS project methodology, available through the Leiden Repository.<sup>1</sup> The data were transcribed and stored in an Online Language Database accessible through the Dative user interface that allows data sharing in collaborative research. More information about Dative can be accessed via <https://www.dative.ca> (and see the introduction to this book). This database will be accessible through The Language Archive. We also refer to the introduction to this book for further background on the terms and diagnostics used for information structure.

Kinyakyusa is not a tonal language as it lost its inherent (lexical) tone (Persohn 2020: 38). While other Kinyakyusa variants have 7 contrastive vowels, the variant spoken in Kiwira (probably much of Mwamba dialect) does not make a phonological distinction between i/i and ɔ/u. Variation between ɔ/u is mostly absent in speech, and although two of our speakers did produce both i and i, neither they nor the first author differentiated them meaningfully as far as we could test. We therefore represent five vowels only. Similarly, we write /l/ for the tap sound that has [l] and [ɾ] as allophonic variants. We do not represent the vowel length caused by automatic compensatory lengthening in syllables with a labialised or palatalised onset (Cy-/Cw-) and/or a prenasalised coda (-nC). Finally, note that there are two series of subject markers, where series 2 (class 1 u-/i-, class 2 bi-, class 6 gi-) is used preceding the tense marker -ku-, and series 1 (class 1 a-, class 2 ba-, class 6 ga-) is used elsewhere (see Persohn 2020: 3).

The aim of this chapter is to present the morphosyntactic ways in which Kinyakyusa speakers organise the information in a sentence. We start in Section 2 by showing to what extent information structure influences word order, including subject inversion constructions. Then in Section 3, we show the interpretations of two predicate doubling constructions: topic doubling and in-situ doubling. A topic marker *po* is discussed in Section 4; three types of clefts are analysed regarding their form and function in Section 5 (the basic cleft, pseudocleft, and reverse pseudocleft), and the CV exhaustive marker is shown in Section 6.

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<sup>1</sup><https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/3608096>

## 2 Word order

Kinyakyusa shows interesting word order properties compared to other Bantu languages. Three properties stand out. First, there is no dedicated focus position (Section 2.1). Second, the left periphery of the sentence is preferred for various kinds of topic, though nouns in focus can also occur there (Section 2.2). Third, while some verbs allow locative inversion, in general only agreeing inversion is attested in the language (Section 2.3). See also Kerr et al. (2023) and Msovela et al. (2023).

### 2.1 No dedicated focus position postverbally

Kinyakyusa canonical word order can be characterised as SVO, although given referents are typically expressed pronominally (in the form of subject and object markers). There is no dedicated focus position immediately after the verb or elsewhere. This section discusses the possibilities of focusing a noun postverbally, drawing on Kerr et al. (2023).

In the postverbal position, both the Recipient and Theme can be in focus, in either position. One of the tests for a dedicated position of focus concerns question words, as they are inherently focused. Both the Recipient and the Theme can be questioned postverbally. The Theme is questioned in (1), while the Recipient is questioned in (2).

- (1) a. Untupe ukump' ifiki unsekele?  
 u-n-tupe a-ku-m-p-a                    i-fi-ki                    u-n-sekele  
 AUG-1-fat 1SM-PRS-1OM-give-FV AUG-8-what AUG-1-thin  
 ‘What is the fat one giving the thin one?’
- b. Untupe ukumpa unsekel' ifiki?  
 u-n-tupe a-ku-m-p-a                    u-n-sekele i-fi-ki  
 AUG-1-fat 1SM-PRS-1OM-give-FV AUG-1-thin AUG-8-what  
 ‘What is the fat one giving the thin one?’
- (2) a. Untupe ukumpa juani ikipale?  
 u-n-tupe a-ku-m-p-a                    ju-ani i-ki-pale  
 AUG-1-fat 1SM-PRS-1OM-give-FV 1-who AUG-7-calabash  
 ‘Who is the fat one giving a calabash?’
- b. Untupe ukumpa ikipale juani?  
 u-n-tupe a-ku-m-p-a                    i-ki-pale                    ju-ani  
 AUG-1-fat 1SM-PRS-1OM-give-FV AUG-7-calabash 1-who  
 ‘Who is the fat one giving the calabash?’

Kinyakyusa allows any noun, the Recipient or the Theme, to be an answer to a content question (and hence be in focus) postverbally, as illustrated in (3). Both examples in (3) can be an answer to either (1a) or (1b) and also (2a) and (2b). Therefore, both Theme and Recipient can be focused in any postverbal position. Note also that the relative animacy of the two objects has no influence on the word order.

- (3) a. Untupe ukumpa ikipale unsekele.  
u-n-tupe a-ku-m-p-a            i-ki-pale            u-n-sekele  
AUG-1-fat 1SM-PRS-1OM-give-FV AUG-7-calabash AUG-1-thin  
'The fat one gives the thin one a calabash.'
- b. Untupe ukumpa unsekele ikipale.  
u-n-tupe a-ku-m-p-a            u-n-sekele i-ki-pale  
AUG-1-fat 1SM-PRS-1OM-give-FV AUG-1-thin AUG-7-calabash  
'The fat one gives the thin one a calabash.'

Modification by the exhaustive particle *-ene* 'only' is also used to test the noun in focus in any postverbal position, because the particle associates with focus. In (4a), the Recipient can be modified by 'only' in postverbal position. Likewise, the Theme modified by 'only' can occur after the Recipient, as illustrated in (4b).

- (4) a. Ampele mwene Sekela isoda.  
a-m-p-ile            mu-ene Sekela i-soda  
1SM-1OM-give-PFV 1-only 1.Sekela AUG-9.soda  
'S/he has given only Sekela soda.'
- b. Ampele Sekela jeene isoda.  
a-m-p-ile            Sekela ji-ene i-soda  
1SM-1OM-give-PFV 1.Sekela 9-only AUG-9.soda  
'S/he has given Sekela only soda.'

The focus constituent therefore does not need to appear in a dedicated position, but can appear anywhere postverbally, as shown with respect to the arguments in (1–4) above. The same is true also for adverbs, as illustrated in (5), where we also show the possibility for multiple questions.

- (5) a. Atu a-biik-ile i-ki-pale kugu?  
1.Atu 1sm-put-PFV AUG-7-calabash 17.where  
'Where did Atu put the calabash?'

- b. Atu a-biik-ile kugu i-ki-pale?  
 1.Atu 1SM-put-PFV 17.where AUG-7-calabash  
 ‘Where did Atu put the calabash?’
- c. Abiikile ifiki kugu?  
 a-biik-ile i-fi-ki kugu  
 1SM-put-PFV AUG-8-what 17.where  
 ‘What did s/he put where?’

In constructions where multiple elements are questioned, however, the order is restricted. This is shown for adverbs whereby the reverse of (5c) is not allowed; hence example (6a) is not accepted. Furthermore, there seems to be a restriction for sentences with multiple question words, as not all combinations of arguments and/or adverbials are accepted. This is illustrated in (6b). Further research is necessary to determine what the precise restrictions are.

- (6) a. \* Abiikile kugu ifiki?  
 a-biik-ile kugu i-fi-ki  
 1SM-put-PFV 17.where AUG-8-what  
 ‘What did s/he put where?’
- b. \* Untupe ukumpa juani ifiki?  
 u-n-tupe a-ku-m-p-a ju-ani i-fi-ki  
 AUG-1-fat 1SM-PRS-1OM-give-FV 1-who AUG-8-what  
 ‘Who is the fat one giving what?’

To summarise, constituents can be focused in the postverbal domain, without positional restrictions, as was shown for adverbs and object arguments (see Section 2.3 for subjects). There are restrictions on multiple content question words, but these require further investigation.

## 2.2 Topic and focus in the left periphery

Kinyakyusa prefers the preverbal domain for topics. While familiar topics are typically expressed by just a subject marker, a full NP is used for shift topics, contrastive topics, and scene-setting topics. Shift topics are illustrated in part of a narrative given in (7). Note that the distal demonstrative (in boldface) is also used here to mark the shift in topic.

- (7) (That old woman asked: "Why do you sing and lament?" She replied: "My friend said to throw away the child; she is the one who cheated me; she is called Kisugujila." Then...)

- a. Ubibi **jula** atile "mma isaga umyande amatiti aga kuti ngupe umwana".

u-bibi                   ju-la           a-ti-ile           mma is-ag-a  
AUG-1.grandmother 1-DEM.DIST 1SM-say-PFV no come-HAB-IMP  
u-myand-e              a-ma-titi         aga              kuti  
2SG.SM-lick-SBJV AUG-6-eye.discharge 6.DEM.PROX COMP  
n-ku-p-e                u-mu-ana.  
1SG.SM-2SG.OM-give-SBJV AUG-1-child

'That old woman said "No, you should come and lick these sleepies and I will give you a baby":'

- b. Looli unkiikulu **jula** amyandile amatiti mwa bibi jula.

looli u-n-kiikulu   ju-la           a-myand-ile a-ma-titi  
but AUG-1-woman 1-DEM.DIST 1SM-lick-PFV AUG-6-eye.discharge  
mu-a                  bibi           ju-la  
18-CONN 1.grandmother 1-DEM.DIST

'Then the woman licked the sleepies (on the eyes) of that old woman.'

(When she finished that old woman told her "Go to that house, when you enter you will find a baby." When she arrived in there, she indeed found a child.)

- c. Looli umwana **jula** ali n' ikilundi kimo kyene; akalinakyo ikilundi ikingi.

looli u-mu-ana   ju-la           a-li           na   i-ki-lundi ki-mo ki-ene  
but AUG-1-child 1-DEM.DIST 1SM-be with AUG-7-leg 7-one 7-only  
a-ka-li-na=kio           i-ki-lundi i-ki-ngi.  
1SM-NEG-be-with=7.PRO AUG-7-leg AUG-7-other

'But that child had one leg, he did not have the other leg.'

Having presented shift topics, we now turn to contrastive topics. Examples (8) and (9) illustrate an explicit comparison between people, referring to them by proper names. Note that subjects and objects can be placed in the preverbal domain when functioning as contrastive topics.

- (8) Amani numbwene; Saimoni ngambona.  
 Amani n-m-bon-ile                    Saimoni n-ka-m-bon-a  
 Amani 1SG.SM-1OM-see-PFV 1.Simon 1SG.SM-NEG-1OM-see-FV  
 'Amani I have seen; Simon I have not seen.'
- (9) (How many votes did Leo and his friends get?)  
 ULeo n' abinaake bakakabile nyingi. ULeo ihano, ujungi uju sita.  
 u-Leo      na    a-ba-in-aake                ba-ka-kab-ile        nyingi u-Leo  
 AUG-1.Leo and AUG-2-friend-POSS.1 2SM-NEG-get-PFV many AUG-Leo  
 i-hano      u-ju-ngi      uju                  sita  
 AUG-9.five AUG-1-other 1.DEM.PROX 9.six  
 'Leo and his friends did not get many (votes). Leo got five, another got six.'

Scene-setting topics are illustrated for a temporal adverb in (10) and a location in (11).

- (10) (Context: Beginning of a recipe.)  
 Na mmajolo nnyonyilwe ukuti mbijje umpunga.  
 na    mu-ma-jolo    n-nyonyu-il-e    ukuti n-piij-e                u-m-punga  
 and 18-6-yesterday 1SG.SM-desire-PFV COMP 1SG.SM-cook-SBJV AUG-3-rice  
 'Yesterday, I felt that I should cook rice.'
- (11) (QUIS map task)  
 Looli pang'ombe apa une nsyagile ina.  
 looli pa-nng'ombe apa                une        n-si-ag-ile                ina  
 but 16-10.cow 16.DEM.PROX 1SG.PRO 1SG.SM-10OM-find-PFV four  
 'But here at the place of cows, I found four (cows).'

Multiple topics may also appear preverbally, as in (12), taken from a recounting of the Frog Story. The comment 'they looked at the frog' is anchored to an ever more specified referent: temporal 'one day' is specified to 'at night' (scene-setting), then we learn that this statement is about Jackson and his dog (shifting back from the frog to Jackson), and then the time is even further specified as 'when they wanted to go to sleep'.

- (12) (Jackson has a dog which he loves very much. Also, he has a frog which he put in a bottle. It stayed and slept there.)

[Akabalilo kamo] [pakilo] [Jakisoni n'mbwa jake] [bo bikulonda ukubuuka nkulambalala] bakikeetile ikyula.

a-ka-balilo ka-mo pa-kilo Jakisoni na mbwa ji-ake bo  
AUG-12-time 12-one 16-night 1.Jackson and 9.dog 9-poss.1 when  
ba-ku-lond-a u-ku-buuka mu-ku-lambalala ba-ki-keet-ile  
2SM-PRS-want-FV AUG-15-go 18-15-lie.down 2SM-7OM-look-PFV  
i-ki-ula  
AUG-7-frog

'One day, at night, when Jackson and his dog wanted to go to sleep, they looked at the frog.'

Nevertheless, the preverbal domain is not reserved for topics in Kinyakyusa. First, an indefinite noun can appear preverbally, for example in (13) and (14). Note that in example (13) the word *mundu* 'person' does not have an augment and could thus be analysed as focused/clefted (see the discussion further on in this section and in Section 5.2).

- (13) Ngimba mundu ali pakusenga iliisu.

ngimba mu-ndu a-li pa-ku-senga i-li-isu  
EXCLAM 1-person 1SM-be 16-15-slash AUG-5-grass

'Oh! Someone is slashing grass / it is someone slashing grass.'

- (14) Linga siku umundu linga ikukubuula gwinogonengepo.

linga siku u-mu-ndu linga a-ku-ku-buul-a  
COND 9.day AUG-1-person COND 1SM-PRS-2SG.OM-tell-FV  
gu-inogon-ang-e=po  
2SG.SM-think-?-SBJV=16

'If during another day someone tells you something you must think.'

Second, the subject may be preverbal in a thetic sentence, as in the out-of-the-blue sentences in (15) and (16).

- (15) Ifula jikutima kula.

i-fula ji-ku-tim-a ku-la  
AUG-9.rain 9SM-PRS-rain-FV 17-DEM.DIST  
'It's raining there.'

- (16) (Context: You are sitting in a house as a small group. Someone stares out through the window. Another person asks: Why do you stare through the window?)

Ikyula kikolile ulubwele.

i-ki-ula      ki-kol-ile      u-lu-bwele  
AUG-7-frog 7SM-catch-PFV AUG-11-fly

‘A/The frog caught a fly!’ (Kerr et al. 2023: 13)

Third, focus may appear in the preverbal position. This is discussed more extensively in Section 5.2 on basic clefts, and is evidenced by the fact that the preverbal subject can be questioned (17), it can form the answer to a question (18), and it can be modified by exhaustive ‘only’ (19).

- (17) Juani akuuliile ifilato?

ju-ani a-ku-ul-il-ile                            i-fi-lato  
1-who 1SM-2SG.OM-buy-APPL-PFV AUG-8-shoe  
‘Who bought you shoes?’

- (18) a. (\*i)Fiki fisatwike?

i-fi-ki      fi-satuk-ile  
AUG-8-what 8SM-fall-PFV  
‘What has fallen?’

- b. Imbwa jasatwike paasi.

i-mbwa    ji-a-satuk-ile    pa-asi.  
AUG-9.dog 9SM-PST-fall-FV 16-down  
‘The dog fell down.’ (Kerr et al. 2023: 11)

- (19) Beene abapuuti batikubomba imbombo (abangi boosa bikubomba).

ba-ene a-ba-puuti    ba-ti-ku-bomb-a      i-mbombo a-ba-ngi  
2-only AUG-2-priest 2SM-NEG-PRS-work-FV AUG-9.job AUG-2-other  
ba-osa ba-ku-bomb-a  
2-all 2SM-PRS-work-FV

‘Only the priests do not work (all the other people work).’ (Kerr et al. 2023: 11)

The CV prefix, which introduces exhaustive focus (see Section 6 and van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022), may also occur on preverbal nouns as in (20–22), although this possibility needs specific contexts for it to express exclusive reading.

- (20) (Context: Friends visit a park. One asks about the behavior of animals in the park. A special hunter replies.)

Jingalamu jikulya ifinyamaana ifinine.

ji-n-galamu ji-ku-li-a      i-fi-nyamaana i-fi-nine  
EXH-9-lion 9SM-PRS-eat-FV AUG-8-animal AUG-8-friend  
'(Only) the lion eats other animals.'

- (21) (Context: The priests have the ability to work but they have been exempted from doing so.)

Babapuuti batikubomba imbombo (abangi boosa bikubomba).

ba-ba-puuti ba-ti-ku-bomb-a      i-mbombo a-ba-ngi      ba-osa  
EXH-2-priest 2SM-NEG-PRS-work-FV AUG-9.job AUG-2-other 2-all  
ba-ku-bomb-a

2SM-PRS-work-FV

'Only priests do not work (all the other people work).'

- (22) (Context: There are banana plants, avocado trees, and firewood trees; out of these, the firewood trees have dried.)

Gimipiki (gyene) gyumile – ifijinja fikuuma.

gi-mi-piki gi-ene gi-um-ile      i-fi-jinja      fi-ka-um-a  
EXH-4-tree 4-only 4SM-dry-PFV AUG-8-banana.tree 8SM-NEG-dry-FV

'Only the trees have dried – the banana plants are not dry.'

Object nouns with the CV exhaustive prefix cannot appear preverbally (23) – they can only occur initially with the marking for a reverse pseudocleft (*fyo ifi* in this case), further discussed in Section 5.4.

- (23) Fifitwalo \*(*fyo ifi*) batwele. Indalama bakatwala.

fi-fi-twalo      fyo      ifi      ba-twali-le      i-ndalama  
EXH-8-luggage 8.IDCOP 8.DEM.PROX 2SM-bring-PFV AUG-9.money  
ba-ka-twali-a  
2SM-NEG-bring-FV

'Only the luggage that is what they brought. As for money, they did not bring (it).' (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 336)

In summary, unlike in many other Bantu languages (see for example Chapter 8 on Makhuwa-Enahara and Chapter 9 on Cicopi in this volume, as well as for example Zerbian 2006 and Yoneda 2011 among others), whose preverbal domains are strictly dedicated to topics, the preverbal domain in Kinyakyusa may in addition host focal subjects, although preposing topical constituents is common.

### 2.3 Subject inversion

The logical subject in Kinyakyusa can appear preverbally, as in (24a), or postverbally, as in (24b) for the subject *amiisi* ‘water’.<sup>2</sup> Unlike many other eastern Bantu languages, Kinyakyusa only features Agreeing Inversion (henceforth AI), whereby the subject marker on the verb agrees with the postverbal subject. In the case of example (24b), the postverbal subject is a class 6 noun, determining the subject marker on the verb in class 6 *ga-*.

- (24) a. Amiisi gingile nnyumba.  
           a-ma-isi     ga-ingil-ile     mu-nyumba  
           AUG-6-water 6SM-enter-PFV 18-9.house  
           ‘Water entered the house.’
- b. Kusofu gingile amiisi.  
       ku-sofu     ga-ingil-ile     a-ma-isi  
       17-9.bedroom 6SM-enter-PFV AUG-6-water  
       ‘In the bedroom entered water.’ (Msovela et al. 2023: 158)

Locative inversion (LI) is a syntactic manifestation when the locative NP becomes a grammatical subject of the inverted construction, and the logical subject follows the verb. The locative subject in this case determines agreement on the verb (Bresnan & Kanerva 1989: 2, Thwala 2006: 336). While LI is quite pervasive throughout the Bantu area, it is not used as a productive construction in the Kiwira variant of Kinyakyusa. When we asked the speakers for grammaticality judgements, LI constructions were judged as unacceptable, as shown in (25a–25b), and the suggestion for improving the sentences involved a change to AI, as in (25c).

- (25) a. \* Pa-chunya pa-bon-ik-e     a-ma-bwe.  
           16-chunya 16SM-see-STAT-PFV AUG-6-stone  
           int. ‘Minerals are discovered at Chunya.’
- b. \* Mu-chunya mu-bon-ik-e     a-ma-bwe.  
           18-chunya 18SM-see-STAT-PFV AUG-6-stone  
           int. ‘Minerals are discovered in Chunya.’
- c. Mu-chunya ga-bon-ik-e     a-ma-bwe.  
           18-chunya 6SM-see-STAT-PFV AUG-6-stone  
           ‘Minerals are discovered in Chunya.’ (Msovela et al. 2023: 161)

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<sup>2</sup>This section is based on Msovela et al. (2023). For a detailed analysis, reference to the article is recommended.

An interesting exception where locative inversion seems to be acceptable is found with alternating verbs, specifically *-soka* ‘exit’ in the ‘bloody nose’ construction (26), and *-fwan-a* ‘be enough’ for ‘be fitting’ (27), where either the locative or the figure can be the subject. The precise semantic and/or pragmatic differences in interpretation and use between the two variants of these sentences remain to be determined.

- (26) a. Mu-m-bulo mu-ku-sok-a i-i-noge.  
18-9-nose 18SM-PRS-exit-FV AUG-5-nose.blood  
'In the nose comes out blood.'
- b. I-i-noge li-ku-sok-a mu-m-bulo.  
AUG-5-nose.blood 5SM-PRS-exit-FV 18-9-nose  
'Blood comes out the nose.' (Msovela et al. 2023: 162)
- (27) a. Mw-igali mu-no mu-ku-fwan-a a-ba-ndu ba-na.  
18-9.car 18-DEM.PROX 18SM-PRS-be.enough-FV AUG-2-person 2-four  
'(Inside) this car fits four people.' (Msovela et al. 2023: 162)
- b. A-ba-ndu ba-na bi-ku-fwan-a mw-igali mu-no.  
AUG-2-person 2-four 2SM-PRS-be.enough-FV 18-9.car 18-DEM.PROX  
'Four people fit in this car.'

We can analyse these examples either as locative inversion that is lexically restricted, or as exhibiting a causative-inchoative alternation – we will leave this open. That the alternation is present in a restricted number of predicates (as is typical in other languages, see e.g., Haspelmath 1993: 3–7, Creissels 2022) can be seen in the fact that a similar predicate, *ingila* ‘enter’, does not allow the alternation, as in (28). Systematic research into which predicates belong to the group of alternating verbs is welcome to clarify the interpretational and/or structural restrictions at play here.

- (28) a. Amasiugusi gingeile musukali.  
a-ma-siugusi ga-ingil-ile mu-sukali  
AUG-6-ant 6SM-enter-PFV 18-9.sugar  
'Ants entered in(to) the sugar.'
- b. Musukali gi/\*mw-ingeile amasiungusi.  
mu-sukali mu-/ga-ingil-ile a-ma-siungusi  
18-9.sugar 18SM-/6SM-enter-PFV AUG-6-ant  
'Into the sugar entered ants. (Msovela et al. 2023: 162)'

It is also interesting to note that, although the Mwamba dialect is said to cover both villages of Kiwira and Lwanga, Kinyakyusa spoken in the former (source of this study) differs in locative agreement with the one spoken in the latter described by Persohn (2020). The examples provided by Persohn (2020: 95) were not accepted by our speakers (see Msovela et al. 2023 for further comparison).

Regarding the valency types that AI can occur with in Kinyakyusa, it is accepted with the copula ‘be’, the two types of intransitives (unergatives and unaccusatives), and passives, but is not acceptable in VSO and VOS sentences. AI with the verb ‘be’ is illustrated in (29) and (30). Although LI is not accepted, note that the verb in these inversions takes the locative enclitic (=po, =ko, =mo).

- (29) Leelo baaliko abandu bahano.

leelo ba-a-li=ko a-ba-ndu ba-hano  
but 2SM-PST-be=17 AUG-2-person 2-five

‘But there were five people (contestants).’ (Msovela et al. 2023: 166)

- (30) Keeta silimo imbatata mundeko.

keeta si-li=mo i-mbatata mu-ndeko  
look 10SM-be=18 AUG-10.potato 18-9.pot

‘Look, there are potatoes in the pot.’ (Msovela et al. 2023: 166)

For unaccusative and passive predicates, the single argument takes the patient role. AI with unaccusatives in Kinyakyusa is exemplified in (31) and (32), and AI with a passive verb is illustrated in (33).

- (31) Kusofu gingeile amiisi.

ku-sofu gi-ingil-ile a-ma-isi  
17-bedroom 6SM-enter-PFV AUG-6-water

‘Water entered in the bedroom.’ (Msovela et al. 2023: 158)

- (32) Gyumile gimipiki.

gi-um-ile gi-mi-piki  
4SM-dry-PFV EXH-4-tree  
‘Only the trees dried.’

- (33) Sikulondwa syene milioni ibili ukumalikisya inyumba.

si-ku-lond-w-a si-ene milioni i-bili  
10SM-PRS-want-PASS-FV 10-only 10.million AUG-10.two  
u-ku-mal-ik-isy-a i-nyumba  
AUG-15-finish-STAT-CAUS-FV AUG-9.house

‘Only two million (not more) are needed to finish the house.’ (Msovela et al. 2023: 166)

Unergatives also allow subject inversion. These are intransitive verbs that, unlike unaccusatives, have an Agent argument. They include verbs such as *run*, *talk*, *laugh* etc. We illustrate in (34) AI with the verb *-bopa* ‘run’.

- (34) Lyabopile ijenje!

li-a-bop-ile      i-jenje  
5SM-PST-run-PFV AUG-5.cockroach

‘There ran a cockroach!’ (Msovela et al. 2023: 167)

AI in Kinyakyusa cannot occur with both the subject and the object expressed as NPs postverbally; neither VOS nor VSO order is accepted in (35) and (36), respectively, whether in a thetic context or with simple focus on the subject or object (i.e. as answer to a subject or object content question). We refer to Msovela et al. (2023) for evidence that the restriction is not on transitive predicates as such in Kinyakyusa, but rather the postverbal appearance of both the subject and object NP. This is because subject inversion with a transitive predicate is accepted if the object NP is either dislocated or pronominalised as an object marker.

- (35) \* Aapiijiile ifindu uSekela.

a-a-piij-ile      i-fi-ndu      u-Sekela  
1SM-PST-cook-PFV AUG-8-food AUG-1.Sekela

‘Sekela has cooked (some) food.’ (Msovela et al. 2023: 167)

- (36) \* Akuunyile underefwa umpiki.

a-kuuny-ile      u-n-delefwa      u-m-piki  
1SM-push-PFV AUG-1-driver AUG-3-tree

‘The driver hit a/the tree.’ (Msovela et al. 2023: 167)

Besides the formal properties of inversion that we just presented, the interpretational aspects presented hereunder cover the contexts in which VS order is used. In short, the postverbal subject in Kinyakyusa is non-topical – we find VS order being used in thetic sentences and in focusing the postverbal logical subject. In comparison with SV order, VS order is found to express a contrast. We discuss these contexts and interpretations in turn.

An SV sentence has a topic-comment articulation. The statement identifies a referent (i.e., the topic) and then comments on that referent, adding new information. In a thetic sentence, the entire proposition presents a state of affairs as new information. This means that thetics do not feature a topic expression. A thetic sentence typically marks the subject as non-topical (Sasse 1996, 2006, Lambrecht

1994). In many Bantu languages, this detopicalisation is expressed by placing the subject in a postverbal position, as also happens in Kinyakyusa.

Thetic sentences are typically used presentationally, for example at the beginning of a story as in (37); they are used to state the existence of a referent, as in (38); they are also found in “hot news”/“out of the blue” announcements as in (39).

- (37) Ulwa ijolo fijo [aliko unnyambala jumo]. Aali n' abakiikulu babili.  
 u-lu-a ijolo fijo a-a-li=ko u-n-nyambala ju-mo a-a-li  
 AUG-11-CONN long INT 1SM-PST-be=17 AUG-1-man 1-one 1SM-PST-be  
 na a-ba-kiikulu ba-bili  
 with AUG-2-woman 2-two  
 ‘A long time ago, there was a man. He had two wives.’ (Msovela et al. 2023: 170)
- (38) (QUIS map task) Linga ufkile apo, kuingama papo apo silipo injila ibili.  
 linga u-fik-ile apo ku-pingam-a papo apo  
 COND 2SG.SM-arrive-PFV 16.DEM.MED 2SG.SM-turn-FV as 16.DEM.MED  
 [si-li=po i-njila i-bili]  
 10SM-be=16 AUG-10.path AUG-10.two  
 ‘If you have arrived there, turn as there are only two paths there.’  
 (Msovela et al. 2023: 170)
- (39) Ukulinga nkiina; ikwaga jikusoka imbeba.  
 u-ku-ling-a mu-ki-in-a a-ku-ag-a [ji-ku-sok-a  
 1SM-PRS-peep-FV 18-7-hole 1SM-PRS-find-FV 9SM-PRS-get.out-FV  
 i-mbeba]  
 AUG-9.rat  
 ‘He peeped in the hole; he saw a rat getting out.’ (Msovela et al. 2023: 170)

The postverbal subject may also be in focus (not just detopicalised). Simple (new information) focus can be seen in question-answer pairs, illustrated in (40) and (41): The interrogatives are inherently focused; the constituents that replace them in the answers are also in focus.

- (40) a. Bafwile (a)baani?  
 ba-fw-ile a-ba-ani  
 2SM-die-PFV AUG-2-who  
 ‘Who(pl) died?’

- b. Bafwile Abdala, Hamisi na Juma.  
ba-fw-ile Abdala Hamisi na Juma  
2SM-die-PFV 1.Abdala 1.Hamisi and 1.Juma  
'Abdala, Hamisi, and Juma died.' (Msovela et al. 2023: 171)
- (41) a. Jo jiliku (iji) jifwile?  
jo ji-liku iji ji-fw-ile  
9.IDCOP 9-which 9.DEM.PROX 9SM-die-PFV  
'Which (animal) died?'  
b. Jifwile indemba indiituu.  
ji-fw-ile i-n-temba i-n-titu  
9SM-die-PFV AUG-9-hen AUG-9-black  
'A/the black hen died.' (Msovela et al. 2023: 171)

Among the possible interpretations of subject inversion, we note that exhaustively focused subjects are also accepted postverbally, as illustrated using the particle *ene* 'only' and the CV prefix in (42).

- (42) (What exact thing has fallen?)  
Jisatwike jeene jisimbilo.  
ji-satuk-ile ji-ene ji-simbilo  
9SM-fall-PFV 9-only EXH-9.pen  
'Only the pen has fallen.'

Given the fact that Kinyakyusa also allows preverbal focus, a follow-up research question is: What is the difference in interpretation between the preverbal and postverbal focused subject? In Msovela et al. (2023), we suggest that if a contrast is present with alternatives or expectations, the subject stays in a postverbal position, whereas if the referent is topical or no contrast set is present, the subject moves to a preverbal position. The contexts for the preverbal vs. postverbal position of *juani* 'who' in (43) illustrate this: The SV order is interpreted as an open question in (43a), whereas the VS order suggests a selection from a set of alternatives in (43b).

- (43) a. (Context: The chief has passed away and we are not sure whether the person who will now lead us will be as good.)  
Juani atulongolele?  
ju-ani a-tu-longol-el-e  
1-who 1SM-1PL.OM-lead-APPL-SBJV  
'Who should lead us?'

- b. (Context: In a choir, each of the singers can be the leader.)

Atulongolele juani?

a-tu-longol-el-e                  ju-ani  
1SM-1PL.OM-lead-APPL-SBJV 1-who

‘Who should lead us?’ (Msovela et al. 2023: 173)

For further data and discussion of subject inversion in Kinyakyusa, we again refer to Msovela et al. (2023).

### 3 Predicate doubling

In predicate doubling, a finite and non-finite form of the same predicate co-occur in the sentence. Kinyakyusa exhibits two types of predicate doubling, i.e. topic doubling and in-situ doubling, but it does not allow the third type, cleft doubling, which is attested in other languages (Güldemann & Fiedler 2022). The ungrammaticality of cleft doubling is shown in (44), and we discuss the form and interpretation of the other two types of predicate doubling in turn.

- (44) \* Ko kulima uku balimile.

ko        ku-lima        uku        ba-lim-ile  
15.IDCOP 15-cultivate 15.DEM.PROX 2SM-cultivate-PFV  
int. ‘It is cultivating that they did.’

#### 3.1 Topic doubling

Topic doubling is common in Kinyakyusa. In topic doubling, the infinitive precedes an inflected form of the same predicate. The infinitive either appears as it is, in class 15, and takes the augment, as illustrated in (45), or alternatively it may be derived into a locative class 16 with *pa-*, as illustrated in (46).

- (45) (Context: Friends are talking about sugarcanes during rain season when sugarcane is not harvested. One friend asks: Do you guys want to eat sugarcane? The other friends reply.)

U-ku-londa<sup>3</sup> tu-ku-lond-a.

AUG-15-want 1PL.SM-PRS-want-FV

‘We do want it.’

lit. ‘As for wanting, we want (but we cannot get sugarcane this season).’

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<sup>3</sup>The final vowel is not separated or glossed in the infinitive, as we view these as nouns.

- (46) (Context: You and your wife have quarreled, and a friend wants to know whether this has gone beyond repair. You answer this, to say that there is a conflict, but there is still conversation.)  
Pa-ku-joba tu-ku-job-a.  
16-15-say 1PL.SM-PRS-say-PFV  
'We (do still) talk.'  
lit. 'As for talking, we talk.'

The interpretation of topic doubling depends largely on the context. A first possible interpretation is that of polarity focus or verum, as illustrated in (47). The marker *ko* (a pronoun used as a topic marker) optionally follows the topical infinitive and is further discussed in Section 4.

- (47) (Context: Father told us to sweep when he left. Now he comes back, and we are sitting watching TV. He says: 'Why are you lazy watching TV and haven't swept?')  
Ukupyagila ko tupyagiile!  
u-ku-pyagila ko tu-pyagil-ile  
AUG-15-sweep 15.PRO 1PL.SM-sweep-PFV  
'We DID sweep!'

Second, we find an intensive reading, where the action described in the predicate is carried out above expectation, as in (48). The unexpectedness can be reinforced by the exclamation *mwé*, suggesting a mirative interpretation, as in (49) and (50).

- (48) (Context: Speaker compliments on someone's outfit.)  
Ukufwala afwele.  
u-ku-fwala a-fwal-ile  
AUG-15-wear 1SM-wear-PFV  
'He has really dressed up!'
- (49) (Context: Speaker is astonished by good state of the house.)  
Mwé ukujenga ajengile.  
mwe u-ku-jenga a-jeng-ile  
EXCLAM AUG-15-build 1SM-build-PFV  
'He really built something.' (a special house)

- (50) (Context: From Mbeya to Kiwira takes 10 hours to walk but someone arrives in 6 hours, which is extraordinary.)

Mwé, ukwenda umwana endile!<sup>4</sup>

mwe u-ku-enda u-mu-ana a-end-ile  
EXCLAM AUG-15-walk AUG-1-child 1SM-walk-PFV

‘The child (really) walked!’

A deprecative reading is also possible, indicating the bare minimum that would count as carrying out the action in the predicate but nothing that reaches expectations. In (51) and (52), the pejorative suffix *-any-*,<sup>5</sup> which occurs on the verb in the clause that follows the clause with predicate doubling, highlights the deprecative meaning.

- (51) Pakulima (po) alimile (lelo asengeenyé).

pa-ku-lima po a-lim-ile leelo a-seng-any-ile  
16-15-cultivate 16.PRO 1SM-cultivate-PFV but 1SM-slash.grass-PEJ-PFV  
‘As for cultivation, s/he did cultivate (but s/he did so sloppily).’

- (52) Pakusona umwenda (ko/po) asonile leelo asonenie.

pa-ku-sona u-mu-enda ko/po a-son-ile leelo  
16-15-sew AUG-3-clothes 15.PRO/16.PRO 1SM-sew-PFV but  
a-son-any-ile  
1SM-sew-PEJ-PFV

‘As for the sewing the clothes, s/he sewed, but did so badly.’

As already shown in example (47), and here in examples (51) and (52), the pronoun/topic marker *po/ko* may be added to introduce the infinitival topic (see Section 4). Example (53) illustrates the use of the marker once more.

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<sup>4</sup>Note also that the lexical subject here is placed after the infinitive, showing that the initial infinitive is indeed a topic in the left periphery.

<sup>5</sup>In the contexts discussed in this chapter, insertion of the suffix *-any-* adds pejorative meaning to the verb. A more detailed analysis is offered in Persohn (2020: 108) who analyses the form *-ania-* as a “combination of the reciprocal and causative extensions often gives a pluractional reading. The range of possible meanings includes reiteration, intensification or the involvement of multiple subjects or objects.”

- (53) (Context: Speaker A was talking about the contribution to water supply in the village that Speaker B did contribute. Speaker A wanted to insist on the offer Speaker B provided. Speaker A says:)

Ukubomba ko ubombile amiisi.

u-ku-bomba   ko     u-bomb-ile      a-ma-isi  
AUG-15-work 15.PRO 2SG.SM-work-PFV AUG-6-water

‘You did well for the water’

lit. ‘As for doing, you did well, as regards the water.’

### 3.2 In-situ doubling

The second type of predicate doubling is in-situ doubling, shown in (54). The infinitive here follows an inflected form of the same predicate, and it must occur with the CV exhaustive prefix and cannot occur with the V augment (see Section 6 on the CV prefix), as shown in (55).

- (54) (Is Lydia washing dishes and cooking?)

Ikusuka kukusuka.

a-ku-suk-a      ku-ku-suka  
1SM-PRS-wash-FV EXH-15-wash

‘She is just washing.’

- (55) Alimile kukulima / \*ukulima.

a-lim-ile      ku-ku-lima      / u-ku-lima  
1SM-cultivate-PFV EXH-15-cultivate / AUG-15-cultivate  
‘He (only) cultivated.’

When an object is present in this construction, it follows the infinitive and not the inflected verb, as shown in (56).

- (56) (Context: Guests visit their friend. They are offered tea while food is being prepared. They agree on taking only tea.)

- a. Tunwe kukunwa ikyai. (Tungagulila ifindu.)

tu-nu-e          ku-ku-nua   i-kyai    tu-nga-agul-il-a  
1PL.SM-drink-SBJV EXH-15-drink AUG-9.tea 1PL.SM-PROH-wait-APPL-FV  
i-fi-ndu  
AUG-8-food

‘Let us only drink tea. (We should not wait for food.)’

- b. \* Tunwe ikyai kukunwa.

tu-nu-e            i-kyai        ku-ku-nua  
 1PL.SM-drink-SBJV AUG-9.tea EXH-15-drink  
 int. 'Let us only drink tea.'

In-situ doubling brings about an interpretation as state-of-affairs focus, and (because of the CV prefix) an exhaustive reading on the predicate: Only this action and no other was performed, as seen in the context and following clause in (56) above, and illustrated again in the contrastive context in (57). Although superfluous, speakers may also add the exhaustive particle *-ene* 'only' to emphasize on the action, as in (58).

- (57) (Context: Malundi was supposed to do two activities, graze cows and cultivate a farm. He did one activity. Speaker A asks: Did Malundi graze cows and cultivate the farm? Speaker B knows exactly what Malundi did and replies.)

Mma atimile kukutima ing'ombe.  
 mma a-tim-ile        ku-ku-tima    i-ng'ombe  
 no    1SM-graze-PFV EXH-15-graze AUG-10.cow  
 'No. He only grazed cows.'

- (58) (Context: The parents travelled and expected the children to wash clothes, sweep the yard and water the flowers. Upon their return, they ask: Did you complete your tasks?)

Twasukile (kwene) kukusuka.  
 tu-a-suk-ile            ku-ene ku-ku-suka  
 1PL.SM-PST-wash-PFV 15-only EXH-15-wash  
 'We only washed.'

In summary, topic doubling in Kinyakyusa is used to express verum and a contrast between predicates, with additional pragmatically-licensed intensive, mirative, and deprecative interpretations. In-situ doubling uses the postverbal infinitive with the CV prefix and expresses exhaustive state-of-affairs focus.

## 4 Topic markers *ko* and *po*

The pronominal expressions *ko* and *po*, which we call topic markers, can be used in topic doubling in Kinyakyusa (see Section 3), and in marking a conditional clause as topic. Depending on whether the initial predicate is an infinitive in class

15 or a locative in class 16, the topic marker is *ko* or *po*, respectively, as shown in (59) and (60). Considering that both *ko/po* and the topic doubling construction mark the predicate as the (contrastive) topic, their combination is said to give extra emphasis.

- (59) Mwé, ukwenda **ko** endile!  
mwe u-ku-enda ko a-end-ile  
EXCLAM AUG-15-walk 15.PRO 1SM-walk-PFV  
'He (really) walked!'
- (60) Ikinyangwa pakusya (**po**) bikusya.  
i-ki-nyangwa pa-ku-sya po ba-ku-sy-a  
AUG-7-banana.flour 16-15-grind 16.PRO 2SM-PRS-grind-FV  
'As for banana flour, they do the grinding.'

In conditional sentences with *linga* 'if/when', *po* may be added at the end of the protasis, as illustrated in (61). The marker *po* is analysed as occurring in the protasis here, because it appears to be cliticised onto the verb and may be followed by a pause.

- (61) (QUIS map task)  
Linga gwendilepo kusyaga ing'ombe itatu.  
linga gu-end-ile=po ku-si-ag-a i-ng'ombe i-tatu  
COND 2SG.SM-walk-PFV=16 2SG.SM-10.OM-find-FV AUG-10.cow 10-three  
'When you have walked some distance, you will find three cows.'

Note that *po* may also be added in the apodosis, as illustrated in (62). Here the marker is said to be in the apodosis because a possible prosodic pause would be placed before *po*.

- (62) (QUIS map task)  
Linga ufikile piikolokotwa pala **po**<sup>6</sup> kipingama.  
linga u-fik-ile pa-i-kolokotwa pala po  
COND 2SG.SM-arrive-PFV 16-5-butterfly 16.DEM.DIST 16.PRO  
ku-pingam-a  
2SG.SM-turn-FV  
'When you arrive at the place of the butterfly, (then) you turn.'

<sup>6</sup>One of the reviewers thinks that *po* in the apodosis reads like the Swahili expression *ndipo* 'it is there/there it is...'. This reading is not straightforwardly available in Kinyakyusa. The available reading of *po* in the apodosis in Kinyakyusa is 'then...'.

It is, however, not obligatory, as illustrated in (63), though it sounds more natural with the *po* than without.<sup>7</sup>

- (63) (QUIS map task)

Linga kwisa kumyangu, kujaaga injila iji jikufyuka bwalulu. Kufyuka najo.

linga ku-is-a               ku-mi-anggu ku-ji-agga   i-njila       iji  
 COND 2SG.SM-COME-FV 17-POSS.1SG 15-9OM-FIND AUG-9.path 9.DEM.PROX  
 ji-ku-fyuk-a               bwalulu       ku-fyuka na=jo  
 9SM-PRS-CLIMB-FV northward 15-climb with=9

'If you want to reach my place, you will find a path that moves northward. You use that path.'

The information-structuring use in conditionals seems to have developed from the use of *po* as a temporal pronoun translated as 'then', illustrated in (64) from the Frog Story.

- (64) Po akasya kalyandile ukubopa.

po   a-ka-sya               ka-li-and-ile               u-ku-bopa  
 then AUG-12-antelope 12SM-PST-start-PFV AUG-15-run  
 'Then the antelope began running.'

It seems that the marker is further developing into a pragmatic particle, introducing new topics, as in (65) – this, however, requires further investigation and is outside of the scope of this chapter.

- (65) (Context: Discussion about elections and a local candidate.)

Po ikampeni akomelaga kugu?  
 po   i-kampeni               a-kom-el-ag-a               kugu  
 then AUG-10.campaign 1SM-hit-APPL-HAB-FV 17.where  
 'Now where did he do campaigns?'

Unlike in some other Bantu languages (see Rukiga, Kūtharaka, and Kirundi in this volume), the *-o* pronoun is not used as a topic marker for other noun classes, as the failed attempt at a contrastive topic marking in (66) shows. This is potentially the case because in Kinyakyusa the pronoun has developed into an identificational copula, as shown in the contrast between predicational and identificational non-verbal predication in Section 5.1.

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<sup>7</sup>This example also illustrates a narrative use of the infinitive *kujaaga*, i.e., the absence of subject inflection on the verb, and the *de facto* non-expression of the subject.

- (66) Abalimi (\*bo) mbapeele ifijinja; abafwimi (\*bo) ngabapa.  
a-ba-limi bo n-ba-p-ile i-fi-jinja  
AUG-2-farmer 2.PRO 1SG.SM-2OM-give-PFV AUG-8-banana.tree  
a-ba-fwimi bo n-ka-ba-p-a  
AUG-2-hunter 2.PRO 1SG.SM-NEG-2OM-give-FV  
'The farmers I gave banana trees; the hunters I didn't give.'

To summarise, the pronoun in *-o* (Ashton's 1945 *-o* of reference) has a meaning 'then' in class 16 *po*, and can be used to indicate the protasis or apodosis in a conditional clause. Both *po* and *ko* (class 15) are used in topic doubling constructions to mark the non-finite verb as the topic, thus functioning as a topic marker, but this use is not encountered for topics in other noun classes.

## 5 Clefts

Like other Bantu languages, Kinyakyusa has various types of cleft(-like) constructions. We present in turn the basic cleft (Section 5.2), pseudocleft (Section 5.3), and reverse pseudocleft (Section 5.4). As all types of clefts feature nominal predication, we first briefly introduce the three ways in which Kinyakyusa marks non-verbal predication in Section 5.1.

### 5.1 Non-verbal predication

The main strategy for non-verbal predication is the omission of the augment on nouns and adjectives, as illustrated in (67b).

- (67) a. u-m-manyisi  
AUG-1-teacher  
'a/the teacher'  
b. (What does Hobokera do for a living?)  
Hobokela m-manyisi.  
1.Hobokela 1-teacher  
'Hobokera is a teacher.'

Another strategy is to use an inflected form of the verb 'to be' and omission of the augment on the nominal complement. In the past tense, the inflected verb *-li* 'to be' is used, as in (68a). In the future tense, it manifests as *-ja* 'to be', as in (68b).

- (68) a. Imbunda jaali mbiine.  
          i-n-bunda      ji-a-li      n-biine  
          AUG-9-donkey 9SM-PST-be 9-ill  
          'The donkey was ill.'
- b. Jibagile ukuja mbiiki, jibagile ukuja ngambaku.  
       ji-bag-ile      u-ku-ja    mbiiki    ji-bag-ile      u-ku-ja  
       9SM-be.able-PFV AUG-15-be 9.female 9SM-be.able-PFV AUG-15-be  
       ngambaku  
       9.male  
       'It may be a female one, it may be a male one.'

The pronominal expression *-o* is the last strategy that marks non-verbal predication. The use of *-o* (in addition to the omission of the augment) results in an identificational reading, as illustrated in (67). While its origin is probably pronominal, it is analysable in contemporary Kinyakyusa as an identificational copula and we hence gloss it as such.

- (69) (Who is the teacher in this classroom?)  
       Ummanyisi \*(jo) nkiikulu uju.  
       u-m-manyisi    jo      n-kiikulu uju  
       AUG-1-teacher 1.IDCOP 1-woman 1.DEM.PROX  
       'The teacher is this woman.'

## 5.2 Basic cleft

In Kinyakyusa, cleft sentences consist of a predicative noun followed by a relative clause. Non-subject clefts are clearly analysable as such, as they are marked by a predicative noun, and by the relativiser. We illustrate both in the following examples. Predication in the basic cleft is marked by omitting the augment as in (67) and sometimes by adding the identificational copula *-o* as in (69). The proximal demonstrative functions as the relativiser, as seen in the simple relative clause in (70), where we indicate the relative clause in square brackets. The same relativiser also appears in the basic clefts in (70) and (71). For non-subject relatives, the relativiser is obligatorily present, as indicated by the parentheses for \*(*ifi*).

- (70) Findu fiki \*(*ifi*) apijile?  
       fi-ndu fi-ki    ifi      a-piij-ile  
       8-food 8-what 8.DEM.PROX 1SM-cook-PFV  
       'What food is it that s/he cooked?'

- (71) Kyo kikota kiliku iki Sekela akonywile?  
kio ki-kota ki-liku iki Sekela a-konyol-ile  
7.IDCOP 7-chair 7-which 7.DEM.PROX 1.Sekela 1SM-break-PFV  
'Which chair did Sekela break?'
- (72) Ukatagege mmiisi umwana [uju tupapile].  
u-ka-taag-ag-e mu-ma-isi u-mu-ana uju  
2SG.SM-NEG-throw-HAB-SBJV 18-6-water AUG-1-child 1.DEM.PROX  
tu-paap-ile  
1PL.SM-give.birth-PFV  
'How dare you throw into the river the child who we parented.'

For subject “clefts” it is less straightforward to determine whether they are clefts and what their structure is. On the one hand, the augment is absent on the focused noun, as in (73), and often the identificational copula is present, indicating that it is a predicative noun as expected in a cleft. But on the other hand, the relativiser is optional, as seen in (74). This can lead to ambiguity as in (75), where *aba* may be interpreted as the proximal demonstrative, or as the relativiser, as indicated in the translations.

- (73) (Who has stolen the soda (between the adults and the children)?)  
(#A)Baana biibile.  
ba-ana bi-ib-ile  
2-children 2SM-steal-PFV  
'It's the children that have stolen.'
- (74) Jo jiliku (iji) jifwile?  
jo ji-liku iji ji-fw-ile  
9.IDCOP 9-which 9.DEM.PROX 9SM-die-PFV  
'It is which (animal) that died?'
- (75) Bo baana aba biibile.  
bo ba-ana aba bi-ib-ile  
2.IDCOP 2-children 2.DEM.PROX 2SM-steal-PFV  
'It's the children who have stolen.' (demonstrative = relativiser)  
'It's these children who have stolen.' (demonstrative = deictic)

We postulate that the construction with either or both of the relativiser and the identificational copula is structurally a cleft, whereas the construction with neither relativiser nor copula merely focuses the preverbal element without a

cleft structure (see Section 2.2). This is also supported by the interpretational difference given for (76): Without *uju*, the implication is that the speaker does not know for certain if someone went to Mbeya, but with *uju* the speaker knows that someone went, but not the identity of the person. That is, the presence of *uju* adds a presupposition of existence.

- (76) Juani (uju) ikubuu ka kumbeje?  
 ju-ani uju a-ku-buuk-a ku-mbeje  
 1-who 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-PRS-go-FV 17-Mbeya  
 (no *uju*) 'Who will go to Mbeya?'  
 (with *uju*) 'Who (of these people) is it that will go to Mbeya?'

The presupposition of existence is confirmed in the impossibility to answer (77) with *najumo* 'nobody'. This can be compared to the question without *uju* in the preverbal focus position (not cleft) in (78).<sup>8</sup>

- (77) Q: Juani uju afwilepo (apa)?  
 ju-ani uju a-fw-ile=po apa  
 1-who 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-die-PFV=16 16.DEM.PROX  
 'Who is it that has died here?'  
 A: # Najumo.  
 'Nobody.'

- (78) Q: Juani afwile (apa)?  
 ju-ani a-fw-ile apa  
 1-who 1SM-die-PFV 16.DEM.PROX  
 'Who has died here?'  
 A: Najumo.  
 'Nobody.'

The interpretation of the focused element in the cleft can thus be said to at least be identificational. Interrogatives may be clefted, as illustrated above, and answers to such questions can similarly occur in a cleft, as in (79). In this example, we can see that this is a cleft by the identificational copula.

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<sup>8</sup>We are not certain whether the presence of =*po* in the one but not the other example makes a difference in meaning.

- (79) (Who died here?)

Jo umpalamani awfile.  
jo u-m-palamani a-fw-ile  
1.IDCOP AUG-1-neighbour 1SM-die-PFV  
'It's the neighbour who died.'

Furthermore, the identificational (and not correcting) function can be seen in the acceptability of (80) in context 1 but not context 2.

- (80) (Context 1: 'Who is it that you saw?'

#Context 2: 'Did you see *this* child?')  
Jo jula (uju) nalimbwene.  
jo ju-la uju n-ali-m-bon-ile  
1.IDCOP 1-DEM.DIST 1.DEM.PROX 1SG.SM-PST-1OM-see-PFV  
'It's that one (that) I saw.'

Similarly, the ungrammaticality of clefting 'nothing' as in (81) can also be explained by incompatibility with identificational focus.

- (81) \* Fyo nafimo ifi fyonangike.

fio nafimo ifi fi-onang-ik-ile  
8.IDCOP 8.nothing 8.DEM.PROX 8SM-destroy-STAT-PFV  
int. 'It is nothing that was destroyed.'

The basic cleft should be compared to the preverbal focus described in Section 2.2 and the reverse pseudocleft described in Section 5.4. Relevant for the analysis of the reverse pseudocleft are the facts that personal and demonstrative pronouns may also be clefted, as shown in (82–84) – this will become clearer in Section 5.4.

- (82) (Did they put the flask outside or did you?)

(Une) jo une mbiikile.  
une jo une n-biik-ile  
1SG.PRO 1.IDCOP 1SG.PRO 1SG.SM-put-PFV  
'(Me,) It's me who put (it) (there).'

- (83) (Context: You see that someone has climbed into the tree, you see traces, and there are various people you suspect. You ask one of them.)

Jo gwe gwakwelile mumpiki ugu?  
jo gwe gu-a-kwel-ile mu-m-piki ugu  
1.IDCOP 2SG.PRO 2SG.SM-PST-climb-PFV 18-3-tree 3.DEM.PROX  
'Is it you who climbed this tree?'

- (84) (Recipe) Po lo ulu ngwega n' umwoto ngubiika pamwanya.  
 po lo ulu n-ku-eg-a na u-moto  
 then 11.IDCOP 11.DEM.PROX 1SG.SM-PRS-take-FV and AUG-3.fire  
 n-ku-biik-a pa-mwanya  
 1SG.SM-PRS-put-FV 16-top  
 'Then it is at this time that I put fire on top (of the rice pot).'
- (85) (Did you vote at Ibililo?)  
 Eee ko kuno twasalilaga.  
 eee ko ku-no tu-a-sal-il-ag-a  
 yes 17.IDCOP 17-DEM.PROX 1PL.SM-PST-choose-APPL-HAB-FV  
 'Yes that is (the place) where we voted / it's there that we voted.'

In summary, Kinyakyusa basic clefts are marked by either or both of the identificational copula (plus absence of the augment) and the proximal demonstrative functioning as the relative marker. The clefted NP is in identificational focus, and this is where it differs from the simple preverbal focused subject, which does not come with the presupposition+identification interpretation.

### 5.3 Pseudocleft

Pseudoclefts consist of a free relative clause followed by a predicative identificational noun phrase. The free relative is marked as such by the relativiser (proximal demonstrative), as in (86) with *uju*. This sets up the presupposition that an entity described by the relative exists – in this case that there is someone who wrote this. This presupposition of existence is confirmed by the infelicity of answering the pseudocleft question in (87) by *najumo* ‘nobody’.

- (86) (Who wrote this?)  
 Uju aasimbile jila, mwana gwa nywili imbimba.  
 uju a-a-simb-ile ji-la mu-ana gu-a nywili  
 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-PST-write-PFV 9-DEM.DIST 1-child 1-CONN 10.hair  
 i-imbimba  
 AUG-10.short  
 'The one who wrote this is a/the child with short hair.'
- (87) (Context: You saw a group running past the window but didn't identify anyone.)  
 Q: Aba ubabwene bo baani?  
 aba u-ba-bon-ile bo ba-ani  
 2.DEM.PROX 2SG.SM-2OM-see-PFV 2.IDCOP 2-who  
 'Who(pl) did you see?', lit. 'The ones that you saw are who?'

A: #Najumo./#Nabamo.  
na-ju-mo/na-ba-mo  
and-1-one/and-2-one  
'Nobody.'

The entity is then identified by the nominal predicate, and because of this specificational function, predication prefers the identificational copula *-o* (88). Note that a similar structure without the copula can be interpreted as a predicational copular clause, attributing a property to the referent of the free relative: In (89), the referent 'what hurts me' is said to be dangerous. There is no identification or specification here, i.e., it is not a pseudocleft.

- (88) (Context: A soda has been stolen. There is a group of adults and a group of children – who stole the soda?)

Aba bahijile isooda bo baana (aba). [specificational]  
aba        ba-hij-ile        i-sooda        bo        ba-ana        aba  
2.DEM.PROX 2SM-steal-PFV AUG-9.soda 2.IDCOP 2-children 2.DEM.PROX  
'The ones who stole the soda are (these) children.'

- (89) Ifi fikumbaba fipala fiijo. [predicational]

ifi        fi-ku-m-bab-a        fi-pala        fiijo  
8.DEM.PROX 8SM-PRS-1SG.OM-hurt-FV 8-dangerous INT  
'What hurts me is very dangerous.'

The referent that is predicated in the pseudocleft is in identificational focus. The referent that is identified must therefore be specific enough. For the focused *mundu* 'person' in (90), the speakers commented that "It is grammatical, but it does not make sense" – this is because the free relative already gives away that it concerns a person, as it refers to class 1.

- (90) ? Uju aponile jo mundu.

uju        a-pon-ile        jo        mu-ndu  
1.DEM.PROX 1SM-recover-PFV 1.IDCOP 1-person  
'The one who recovered is a person/someone.'

Modification by 'even' (91) and 'all' (92) is ungrammatical, as these do not sufficiently identify a specific referent. They also test for exclusivity, but as shown below, the identification seems to play a more central role here than exclusivity.

- (91) Uju nalyaganiile nagwe jo (\*joope) n'uFrida.  
 uju        n-ali-aganiil-ile        na-gwe        jo        ju-ope na  
 1.DEM.PROX 1SG.SM-PST-meet-PFV with-1.PRO 1.IDCOP 1-even and  
 u-Frida  
 AUG-1.Frida  
 'The one I met is (even) Frida.'
- (92) Ifi aagogile Kato fitana (\*fyosa).  
 ifi        a-a-gog-ile        Kato    fi-tana fi-osa  
 8.DEM.PROX 1SM-PST-kill-PFV 1.Kato 8-cup 8-all  
 'What Kato broke is (\*all) cups.'

Identificational focus may here be distinguished from exclusive focus, as the interpretation of a numeral in the pseudocleft is the lower boundary and not the exact amount as would be expected if the interpretation were exclusive (compare to the CV prefix in (125)).

- (93) Isi tukulonda ndalama imilioni ibili ukumalikisyia inyumba.  
 isi        tu-ku-lond-a        ndalama i-milioni        i-bili  
 10.DEM.PROX 1PL.SM-PRS-want-FV 10.money AUG-10.million AUG-10.two  
 u-ku-mal-ik-isy-a        i-nyumba  
 AUG-15-finish-STAT-CAUS-FV AUG-9.house  
 'What we need is two million to finish the house.' (can be more)

In summary, the pseudocleft describes an entity in the free relative and identifies that entity as the referent of the noun phrase that follows the identificational copula, expressing identificational focus.

#### 5.4 Reverse pseudocleft/left-dislocation + cleft

Swapping the free relative and the identifying NP results in a reverse pseudocleft (NP COP FR), as in (94). The focus here, indicated by underlining, can be on the postcopular FR as in (94a) or the precopular NP as in (94b).

- (94) a. (Context 1: I'm talking about Bahati, but the name doesn't ring a bell for you. At that point she enters the store that we are in.)  
Bahati jo uju ikuingila.  
 Bahati    jo        uju        a-ku-ingil-a  
 1.Bahati 1.IDCOP 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-PRS-enter-FV  
 'Bahati is the one who is entering.'

- b. (Context 2: Someone enters the store that we are in, and you ask,  
 ‘Who is the one that is entering?’)  
 Bahati jo uju ikuingila.  
 Bahati   jo       uju           a-ku-ingil-a  
 1.Bahati 1.IDCOP 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-PRS-enter-FV  
 ‘Bahati is the one who is entering.’

We analyse the sentence with focus on the postcopular part (the FR, as in (94a)) as a straightforward copular construction. For the one with precopular focus (as in (94b)), we suspect that two underlying structures are possible: the first as a copular construction (i.e., a reverse pseudocleft: ‘Bahati is who is entering’) and the second with a left-peripheral NP followed by a basic cleft (‘Bahati, it’s her who is entering’), as also suggested for Kîtharaka, Kirundi, Rukiga, and Cicopi (see chapters in this volume). We discuss properties of the sentences with focus on the initial referent to show evidence for both underlying structures, starting with the reverse pseudocleft and then indicating properties for left-dislocation.

In spontaneous discussion and narratives, the construction is typically used to identify a referent, as illustrated in (95) and (96). In (95) we indicate the initial constituent in square brackets.

- (95) [Ing’ombe iji jikulile buno] jo iji tukuti indama *yaani* jikutama.  
 i-ng’ombe iji           ji-kul-ile       buno   jo     iji  
 AUG-9.cow 9.DEM.PROX 9SM-grow-PFV like.this 9.PRO 9.DEM.PROX  
 tu-ku-ti           i-ndama    yaani           ji-ku-tam-a  
 1PL.SM-PRS-say AUG-9.calf that.is(<Sw.) 9SM-PRS-moo-FV  
 ‘The cow which has grown like this, it is the one we call a calf, as it moos.’
- (96) (How many votes did Leo and his friends get?)  
 Edom jo uju akabile ikula nyingi.  
 Edom   jo       uju           a-kab-ile    i-kula       nyingi  
 1. Edom 1.IDCOP 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-get-PFV AUG-10.vote 10.many  
 ‘Edom is (the one) who got the majority votes.’

Interestingly, the construction can be used for subject questions but not object or adverb questions, as shown in (97–99). Further research is needed to pinpoint why this is.

- (97) Juani jo uju ati atulongosye?  
 ju-ani jo       uju           a-ti       a-tu-longosy-e  
 1-who 1.IDCOP 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-say 1SM-1PL.OM-lead-SBJV  
 ‘Who is it that will lead us?’ (lit. ‘Who is the one that says s/he should lead us?’)

- (98) \* Fiki fyo ifi uliile?  
 fi-ki fio ifi u-li-ile  
 8-what 8.IDCOP 8.DEM.PROX 2SG.SM-eat-PFV  
 int. 'What have you eaten?' (lit. 'What is what you've eaten?')

- (99) \* Ndili lo ulu aakubuja?  
 ndiri lo ulu a=a-ku-buj-a  
 when 11.IDCOP 11.DEM.PROX FUT=1SM-PRS-return-FV  
 int. 'When is it that s/he will return?' (lit. 'When is when s/he will return?')

The answer to an alternative question may also be phrased in a reverse pseudocleft, as in (100), translated into English with an it-cleft to reflect the interpretation rather than the structure.

- (100) (Context: speakers see a drawing of two women entering through a door, with a question 'Did two women or two children enter the house?')  
 Abakiikulu babili bo aba baalingile nnyumba.  
 a-ba-kiikulu ba-bili bo aba ba-ali-ingil-ile  
 AUG-2-woman 2-two 2.IDCOP 2.DEM.PROX 2SM-PST-enter-PFV  
 mu-n-yumba  
 18-9-house  
 'It is two women who entered the house.'

Furthermore, the construction may be used to correct the interlocutor on the identity of the subject, as illustrated in (101) and (102).

- (101) (Are the cows jumping around in the field? No, the cows are not jumping in the ground, ...)  
 looli imbene syo isi sikunyela nkibanje.  
 looli i-mbene syo isi si-ku-nyel-a mu-ki-banje  
 but AUG-10.goat 10.IDCOP 10.DEM.PROX 10SM-PRS-jump-FV 18-7-ground  
 'But it is goats which play in the ground.'
- (102) (I did not find him/her in the river.)  
 Ubibi jumo jo uju ambele.  
 u-bibi ju-mo jo uju a-m-pa-ile  
 AUG-1.grandmother 1-one 1.IDCOP 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-1SG.OM-give-PFV  
 'An old woman gave (him/her) to me.'

The initial NP in the reverse pseudocleft may be modified by the exhaustive particle *-ene* ‘only’ (103) and (104), but not by ‘even’ (105) or ‘all’ (106), suggesting an exclusive focus interpretation. This is because for ‘even’, it must be true that the proposition is true for other referents lower on the scale, and therefore no alternatives can be excluded. For example (105), this means that in addition to Salima, who is not likely to laugh, others also laughed. The same reasoning holds for ‘all’, as this includes all the members of the set.

- (103) (Context: Speakers are sure that all attendees went to the dancing party on foot except Peter who came by car.)  
Mwene Pita jo uju alyendile mwigali.  
mu-ene Pita    jo        uju            a-ali-end-ile        mu-i-gali  
1-only 1.Peter 1.IDCOP 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-PST-walk-PFV 18-5-car  
?‘Only Peter it is who came by car.’
- (104) (Context: Speakers expected many people to arrive but only one person came.)  
Mwene Salima jo uju ikufika.  
mu-ene Salima    jo        uju            a-ku-fik-a  
1-only 1.Salima 1.PRO 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-PRS-arrive-FV  
‘Only Salima is the one who arrives.’
- (105) Joope Salima (\*jo uju) asekilepo.  
ju-ope Salima    jo        uju            a-sek-ile=po  
1-even 1.Salima 1.PRO 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-laugh-PFV=16  
‘Even Salima (\*is the one who) laughed.’
- (106) \* Abandu boosa bo aba bikufwala ifitili.  
a-ba-ndu        ba-osa bo        aba            ba-ku-fwal-a        i-fi-tili  
AUG-2-person 2-all 2.PRO 2.DEM.PROX 2SM-PRS-wear-FV AUG-8-hat  
int. ‘All people are the ones wearing hats.’

The interpretation of the construction may be exclusive but is perhaps not inherently exhaustive, as the answer to an incomplete question can be answered by ‘yes’, as in (107). It is true that Moses washed shirts, therefore ‘yes’ is a good answer, but it is not true that he washed *only* shirts. Therefore, if the exhaustive interpretation were inherent to this construction, we would expect the answer to be ‘no’. This can be compared to the examples in (128) and (129) in the section on the CV exhaustive marker, where the answer is indeed ‘no’.

- (107) (Context: Speakers are shown a picture of a clothesline with various washed sheets and clothes, including shirts.)

Bule isyati syo isi Mose asukile?

bule i-syati        syo        isi              Mose a-suk-ile  
 Q    AUG-10.shirt 10.IDCOP 10.DEM.PROX 1.Mose 1SM-wash-PFV

'Is it shirts that Moses washed?'

Eena Mose asukile isyati n' imyenda izingi.

eena Mose    a-suk-ile        i-syati        na    i-mi-endna        i-gi-ngi  
 yes 1.Moses 1SM-wash-PFV AUG-10.shirt and AUG-4-clothes AUG-4-other  
 'Yes. Moses washed shirts and other clothes.'

While all these examples and contexts indicate the initial NP as a focus constituent in a reverse pseudocleft, there is some evidence that a second underlying structure is also possible. In this second analysis, the initial NP is in the left periphery, followed by a cleft in which the coreferring demonstrative is clefted (compare the chapters on Kîtharaka, Kirundi, Rukiga, and Cicopi for similar discussion), with a literal translation of (107) as 'Shirts, is it those that Moses washed?'. The same surface structure can thus be parsed in two different ways, represented in Table 1. Note that in the first structure, the demonstrative functions as the relativiser/head of the free relative clause, and in the second structure, the demonstrative is the clefted element and the relativisation is unmarked (see the optionality of the relative marker discussed in Section 5.2).

Table 1: Two underlying structures

	NP	IDCOP	DEM.PROX	(S) V	
1	NP	is	free relative	'Sara is (the one) who we like'	reverse pseudocleft
2	(NP)	is	proFOC	relative	'Sara, it is HER that we like' left dislocation + cleft

There are at least two indications for the second analysis existing next to the reverse pseudocleft analysis. First, it is possible for a prosodic break to occur between the left-peripheral NP and the cleft, as in (108) and (109).

- (108) Amiisi aga, go aga tukupijjila.

a-ma-isi        aga        go        aga              tu-ku-pijj-il-a  
 AUG-6-water 6.DEM.PROX 6.IDCOP 6.DEM.PROX 1PL.SM-PRS-cook-APPL-FV  
 'This water, it's this that we cook with.'

- (109) (Context: We find a calabash among other calabashes and want to indicate that this particular one belongs to the thin person.)  
Ikipale iki, kyo iki apeeligwe unsekele.  
i-ki-pale        iki        kio        iki        a-p-el-igw-ile  
AUG-7-calabash 7.DEM.PROX 7.IDCOP 7.DEM.PROX 1SM-give-APPL-PASS-PFV  
u-n-sekele  
AUG-1-thin  
'This calabash, it is this one that the thin one was given.'

Second, the existence of the left-peripheral NP needs to somehow be presupposed, which makes sense if it is a topic. This can be seen in the felicitous and infelicitous contexts for (110), where some set of boys must be present, and also in the clearly topical interpretation in (111): 'As for tea, I prefer this type'.

- (110) (Context 1: Which boy cut the banana?  
Context 2: Did the big boy or the small boy cut the banana?  
Context 3: #Did the big boy cut the banana?)  
(Mma) Undumyana unandi jo uju aasengile itoki.  
mma u-m-lumyana u-nandi    jo        uju        a-a-seng-ile  
no    AUG-1-boy    AUG-little 1.IDCOP 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-PST-cut-PFV  
i-toki  
AUG-5.banana  
'(No) The little boy (it is him who) cut the banana.'
- (111) (Context 1: There are different types of tea to choose from (with milk, ginger, black)  
Context 2: #Do you want tea or coffee?  
Context 3: #You want coffee, right?)  
Ikyai jo iji ngulonda.  
i-kyai    jo        iji        n-ku-lond-a  
AUG-9.tea 9.IDCOP 9.DEM.PROX 1SG.SM-PRS-want-FV  
'(as for) Tea, it's *this* that I want.'  
\*'Tea is what I want.'

It seems, therefore, that the initial NP forms a topic expression, and the demonstrative is in focus. Since both the NP and the demonstrative refer to the same referent, for example *undumyana* and *uju* in (110) refer to the same boy, this construction manages to simultaneously express a topical/given status as well as a focus function of that referent.

Summarising the discussion on the three types of clefts, Kinyakyusa shows an identificational basic cleft and pseudocleft; the difference between the two requires further study in spontaneous texts and discourse. A third focus construction is a reverse pseudocleft (copular construction NP = FR), which can alternatively be analysed as an initial NP followed by a basic cleft. In this latter construction, the clefted demonstrative refers to the same referent as the initial NP, thereby in some way allowing that referent to be both topical and focal at the same time.

## 6 The CV exhaustive marker

Apart from the V augment, nouns in Kinyakyusa can also feature a CV prefix to the noun. This has been called the “CV augment”, but van der Wal & Lusekelo (2022) show that the CV prefix behaves quite differently from the V augment and is in fact better analysed as an exhaustive marker. The following section is taken from van der Wal & Lusekelo (2022) and shows the exhaustive interpretation of the CV prefix. We will here not go into the background and reconstruction of the augment but refer to Van de Velde (2019) and Halpert (2025) for general overviews.

Mwangoka & Voorhoeve (1960) translate nouns with a CV marker in Kinyakyusa with ‘only’, and we confirm and consolidate their analysis. If the CV marker is present, the resulting interpretation is exhaustive focus on the noun, which may project to the larger phrase. That the focus encoded by the CV marker is not just simple/new information focus, but exhaustive focus can be proven by the following tests.

First, the context and co-text provided by the speakers indicate that alternatives must be present for the noun bearing the CV exhaustivity prefix. The spontaneous follow-up in (112) shows a contrast, and the failed attempt at an additive continuation in (113) shows that the alternatives must be excluded.

- (112) Abakangale batwele **fifitwalo** (indalama bakatwala).  
 a-ba-kangale ba-twäl-ile fi-fi-twalo i-ndalama  
 AUG-2-elder 2SM-bring-PFV EXH-8-luggage AUG-10.money  
 ba-ka-twäl-a  
 2SM-NEG-bring-FV

‘The elders brought only the luggage. (They did not bring money.)’  
 (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 336)

- (113) Anwile jinywamu #n'iinandi.  
a-nu-ile ji-nywamu na i-nandi  
1SM-drink-PFV EXH-9.big and AUG-9.small  
'He drank (only) the big one #and also the small one.' (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 336)

The context for the in-situ doubling construction in (114), where the infinitive takes a CV marker (see also Section 3.2), indicates exclusion of one of the supposed tasks as well. Additionally, the translation provided by the speakers frequently included Swahili *tu* or English 'only'.

- (114) (Context: He was supposed to cook and sweep.)  
Apiajile kukupiija.  
a-piaj-ile ku-ku-piija  
1SM-cook-PFV EXH-15-cook  
'He only cooked.' (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 336)

A second argument showing the exhaustivity of the CV marker is the compatibility with the focus-sensitive particle 'only' (preceding or following the noun, though not both), as shown in (115) and (116).

- (115) Uulile (kyene) kikitala (kyene).  
a-ul-ile ki-ene ki-ki-tala  
1SM-buy-PFV 7-only EXH-7-bed  
'S/he bought only the bed.' (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 336)
- (116) Ampele (mwene) junnandi (mwene).  
a-m-p-ile mu-ene ju-n-nandi  
1SM-1OM-give-PFV 1-only EXH-1-young  
'S/he has given (it) only to the young one.' (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 337)

In contrast, the CV exhaustive marker is incompatible with the scalar particle *-ope* 'even' and the additive particle *na* 'also/even' which are inclusive in nature, as shown in (117a), and (118). Nevertheless, (117b) was accepted, which we do not understand at present – a reviewer suggests that there could be a contrast between 'together' and 'separately' here.

- (117) (Context: Robert does not like cabbage. He will eat any other thing. But this time he has even eaten cabbage.)

- a. \* Lobati aliile na jikabiki (joope).  
 Lobati a-li-ile na ji-kabiki ji-ope  
 1.Robert 1SM-eat-PFV and EXH-9.cabbage 9-even  
 'Robert has even eaten cabbage.'
- b. Aliile (ifindu) fyosa na jikabiki kolumo.  
 a-li-ile i-fi-ndu fi-osa na ji-kabiki kolumo  
 1SM-eat-PFV AUG-8-food 8-all and EXH-9.cabbage together  
 'He has eaten all (types of) food, even cabbage.' (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 337)

- (118) (\*Boope) Babaana baliile.

ba-ope ba-ba-ana ba-li-ile  
 2-even EXH-2-child 2SM-eat-PFV

'(\*Even) Only the children have eaten.' (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 337)

Third, the CV marker is not accepted with universal quantifiers like 'every' and 'all', again because no alternatives can be excluded – see (119a). However, exclusion of alternatives becomes possible when subsets can be created using a restrictive relative clause, as in (119b), or if the whole set is contrasted to another set, as in (120). These examples therefore allow the presence of a CV marker.

- (119) a. \* Ipyana aagonjile fifisyesye fyosa.

Ipyana a-a-gonj-ile fi-fi-syesye fi-osa  
 1.Ipyana 1SM-PST-taste-PFV EXH-8-baked.good 8-all  
 int. 'Ipyana tasted only all cakes.'

- b. Ipyana aagonjile fifisyesye (fyosa) ifi atendekiisye unna.

Ipyana a-a-gonj-ile fi-fi-syesye fi-osa ifi  
 1.Ipyana 1SM-PST-taste-PFV EXH-8-baked.good 8-all 8.DEM.PROX  
 a-tendekesy-ile u-n-na  
 1SM-bake-PFV AUG-1-mother

'Ipyana tasted only all the cakes that her mother baked (but did not taste any other cakes).' (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 337–338)

- (120) Babandu boosa bikutuuja.  
ba-ba-ndu ba-osa ba-ku-tuuj-a  
EXH-2-person 2-all 2SM-PRS-breathe-FV  
#‘All people breathe.’  
‘Only all humans breathe.’ (follow-up reaction: ‘But cows breathe too!’) (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 338)

Fourth, the CV marker is not accepted with non-specific indefinites, as here too there are no alternatives that can be excluded. In (120), instead the word *umundu* ‘person’, which could otherwise be interpreted as ‘someone’ must here be interpreted as a generic ‘human being’. Under our hypothesis, the CV marker necessarily triggers and excludes alternatives, which is only possible if *umundu* is interpreted as generic (excluding other species) and not if it is interpreted as indefinite non-specific (including anyone and everyone).

- (121) (Context: You visit a national park, expecting to see trees and different animals, but instead...) Numbwene jumundu.  
n-m-bon-ile ju-mu-ndu  
1SG.SM-1OM-see-PFV EXH-1-person  
‘I saw only a human/person.’  
\*‘I saw someone.’ (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 338)

Fifth, idioms and cognate objects are “unfocussable” as they have no referential meaning and therefore cannot trigger alternatives. We thus predict them to be incompatible with the CV marker. At first sight, the acceptance of (122–124) seems to contradict this prediction, because the idiomatic object can take a CV marker. However, if we look at the context, we see that a contrast is indicated with other *actions* and not with other *objects*. This means that the given sentences are interpreted with the exclusion on the level of the verb phrase, and the set of alternatives is being formed for the whole idiom in the case of (122), and the whole action in the case of the cognate objects in (123) and (124), and not just the object.

- (122) (Context: As soon as he gets up in the morning, he drinks, and straight from work he goes to the bar.) Ikukoma gamisi.  
a-ku-kom-a ga-ma-isi  
1SM-PRS-hit-FV EXH-6-water  
‘He is only hitting water.’  
‘He is only getting drunk.’ (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 338)

- (123) (Context: The calves stay at home and need to be fed, and the larger cattle are taken out to graze. Gwamaka is not interested in feeding the cows at home, he only goes out to do the herding.)  
 Gwamaka ikutiima guntiimo.  
 Gwamaka a-ku-tiim-a gu-n-tiimo  
 1.Gwamaka 1SM-PRS-graze-FV EXH-3-grazing  
 'Gwamaka only grazes (a/the graze).' (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 338)
- (124) (Context: Why are you being so quiet?)  
 Ngwinogona sinyinogono.  
 n-ku-inogon-a si-nyinogono  
 1SG.SM-PRS-think-FV EXH-10.thought  
 'I'm only thinking thoughts.' (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 339)

A sixth test involves the focussing of a numeral. As explained in the introduction to this volume, numerals lose their upward-entailing quality in exhaustive focus and refer only to the exact quantity, because other amounts are excluded. In Kinyakyusa, a numeral in a DP with a CV marker is interpreted as the exact amount, as illustrated by the infelicity of the follow-up 'maybe more' in (125) and (126a). This constitutes evidence for the exhaustive interpretation, especially when compared to the use with the V augment in (126b), where a continuation 'maybe more' is felicitous (but also notice that (126a) uses the reverse pseudocleft construction, whereas (126b) does not).

- (125) Bahati ikukaba ji-milioni jimo ku-kyinja.  
 Bahati a-ku-kab-a ji-milioni ji-mo ku-ki-inja  
 1.Bahati 1SM-PRS-get-FV EXH-9.million 9-one 17-7-year  
 'Bahati earns (exactly) one million a year.' (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 339)
- (126) a. Singuku ntandatu syo isi syalyulisigwe (#pamo n' iisiingi).  
 si-n-guku ntandatu si-o isi  
 EXH-10-chicken 10.six 10-IDCOP 10.DEM.PROX  
 si-ali-ul-is-igw-e pamo na i-si-ngi  
 10SM-PST-buy-CAUS-PASS-PFV maybe and AUG-10-other  
 'It's six chickens exactly that were sold (#maybe more).'  
 b. Inguku ntandatu syalyulisigwe (pamo n' iisingi).  
 i-n-guku ntandatu si-ali-ul-is-igw-e pamo na  
 AUG-10-chicken 10.six 10SM-PST-buy-CAUS-PASS-FV maybe and  
 i-si-ngi  
 AUG-10-other  
 'Six chickens were sold (maybe more).' (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 339)

Seventh, negation targets the exhaustivity (rather than the truth) of the sentence when the CV marker is present on the object. That is, (127) does not deny that they drank soda, but rather negates that it was *only* soda that they drank. The fact that a grammatical operation like negation can target the exhaustivity also shows that exhaustivity is an inherent aspect of the meaning of the CV marker, and not a mere pragmatic implication.

- (127) Bakanwile sisooda (baaliile/baanwile n' ifingi).

ba-ka-nu-ile      si-sooda      ba-a-li-ile      /ba-a-nu-ile  
2SM-NEG-drink-PFV EXH-10.soda 2SM-PST-eat-PFV /2SM-PST-drink-PFV  
na i-fi-ngi  
and AUG-8-other

'They didn't drink only soda (they also drank other things).'

(van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 340)

Finally, the corrective answer to an incomplete yes/no question with the CV marker needs to be 'no' and cannot be 'yes' – compare to the same test in (107) above. This negation in the answer targets the exhaustivity encoded by the CV marker in the question, and can be compared to the felicitous answer 'yes' to an equally incomplete question with the V augment in (129). The question in both cases asks about a subset of the true answers (only shirts, where other things have been washed too), making the predicate true for this subset (he did wash the shirts, after all), but making the exhaustivity false (he did not wash only the shirts).

- (128) (Context: Speakers are shown a picture of a clothesline with various washed sheets and clothes, including shirts.)

- a. Bule Mose asukile sisyati?

bule Mose    a-suk-ile      si-syati  
Q    1.Moses 1SM-wash-PFV EXH-10.shirt  
'Did Moses wash only shirts?'

- b. Mma/#eena, Mose asukile isyati n' imyenda icensingi.

mma/eena Mose    a-suk-ile      i-syati      na i-mi-end  
no/yes    1.Moses 1SM-wash-PFV AUG-10.shirt and AUG-4-clothes  
i-gi-ngi.  
AUG-4-other

'No/#Yes. Moses washed shirts and other clothes.' (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 340)

- (129) (Context: Speakers are shown a picture of a clothesline with various washed sheets and clothes, including shirts.)

- a. Bule Mose asukile isyati?  
 bule Mose a-suk-ile i-syati  
 Q 1.Moses 1SM-wash-PFV AUG-10.shirt  
 ‘Did Moses wash shirts?’
- b. Eena Mose asukile isyati pa-li-kimo n’ amagolole.  
 eena Mose a-suk-ile i-syati pa-li-kimo na  
 yes 1.Moses 1SM-wash-PFV AUG-10.shirt 16-be-one with  
 a-ma-golole  
 AUG-6-sheet  
 ‘Yes. Moses washed shirts together with sheets.’ (van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022: 340)

In summary, there is overwhelming evidence that exhaustivity is inherent to the CV marker. Van der Wal & Lusekelo (2022) therefore propose that it should be analysed as an exhaustive marker; we refer to that paper for further details on the formal and interpretational properties of the marker.

## 7 Conclusion

Four concluding remarks can be summarized for this chapter. First, Kinyakyusa has no dedicated position for focus postverbally, nor does it have a dedicated position for topic preverbally. Unlike many eastern Bantu languages, Kinyakyusa allows preverbal focus (see Kerr et al. 2023), and it features only Agreeing Inversion as a productive subject inversion construction (see Msovela et al. 2023). Second, the pronominal expression *po* functions as a topic marker in the language. Third, as in other languages, cleft constructions are employed to express focus in the language. The basic cleft and pseudocleft involve identificational focus, and a construction with an initial NP and relative clause is shown to have two possible underlying structures: either a reverse pseudocleft or a topical initial NP followed by a basic cleft in which the demonstrative coreferring to the same referent is focused. Lastly, the CV prefix is shown to function as an exhaustive marker (see van der Wal & Lusekelo 2022) – it selects a noun out of the available alternatives and excludes those alternatives as false. This chapter forms the first overview of the morphosyntactic strategies used in Kinyakyusa to express information structure. While it is obviously quite incomplete, and much remains to be discovered, we hope that it may inspire further research on Kinyakyusa, as well as other Bantu languages.

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## Abbreviations and symbols

Numbers refer to noun classes unless followed by SG/PL, in which case the number refers to first or second person.

*	ungrammatical	IDCOP	identificational copula
#	infelicitous in the given context	int.	intended
(X)	the presence of X is obligatory and cannot grammatically be omitted	HAB MED	habitual medial (demonstrative)
(*X)	the presence of X would make the sentence ungrammatical	NP OM	place-assimilating nasal noun phrase
(X)	the presence of X is optional	PEJ	object marker pejorative
AI	agreeing inversion	PRO	pronoun
AUG	augment	QUIS	questionnaire on information structure (Skopeteas et al. 2006)
CONN	connective	SM	subject marker
EXH	exhaustive marker	STAT	stative
EXCLAM	exclamative	Sw.	Swahili
FV	final vowel		
FR	free relative		

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# Chapter 8

## The expression of information structure in Makhuwa-Enahara

Jenneke van der Wal

Leiden University

This chapter describes which morphosyntactic strategies Makhuwa-Enahara uses to structure the information in a sentence. Makhuwa-Enahara is a language in which word order plays an important role in expressing information structure: the preverbal domain is reserved for topics, non-topical subjects occur in subject inversion, and there is an immediate after verb (IAV) focus position. The conjoint verb form expresses exclusive focus on the IAV constituent, whereas the disjoint verb form is an elsewhere form. A topic doubling construction involving a fronted infinitive may be used to express verum, and three types of cleft sentences are used to express focus. Pronouns and (emphatic) demonstratives are used to indicate referent activation and contrast.

### 1 Introduction

Makhuwa is spoken in the north of Mozambique and the south of Tanzania. It is coded P31 in Guthrie's classification, ISO code [vmw], but there are many variants of the language: Emeetto, Emihavani, Emoniga, Enlayi, Empamela, Emarevone, Esaakha, Imithupi, Erati, Exirima, Emwaja, and the variant studied for this chapter: Enahara (P31E).

An estimated 26.5% of the Mozambican population has (a variant of) Makhuwa as their first language or language spoken most at home, which means around 5,890,000 speakers (INE 2017). This makes it the largest language in Mozambique, even before the official language Portuguese (16.8%).

Previous literature on the language includes various dictionaries, e.g. Pires Prata (1960, 1973, 1990), as well as work on tone (Cassimjee & Kisseberth 1999,



Ikorovere: Cheng & Kisselberth 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982) and morphosyntax (Esaaka: Katupha 1983, 1991; Central: Centis 2001). Specifically on information structure, Stucky (1979a,b, 1985) analyses the interaction of tone and focus, and the influence of discourse on word order for Imithupi; Kröger (2010) discusses the discourse function of inverted passives; Poeta (2016) studies referent tracking in Swahili and Emeetto; and my own work on Enahara investigates focus in the conjoint/disjoint alternation (van der Wal 2009, 2011, 2014) and the influence of information structure on word order (van der Wal 2008, 2009, 2012). For information on general grammatical properties of Makhuwa-Enahara, I refer to van der Wal (2009: chapter 2).

The data were collected during various visits to Ilha de Moçambique between 2005 and 2022; if no source is mentioned, the example comes from the two Enahara databases (one in FileMaker Pro and one Online Language Database via Dative – see <https://www.dative.ca> and the introduction to this volume), but I also draw on earlier publications and indicate the source for examples from these publications. For the data in Dative, I used the BaSIS project methodology, available through the Leiden Repository.<sup>1</sup> The data are presented in three lines, or at times in four to make the morphology transparent (transcription with surface tone, morpheme break, morpheme gloss, free translation).

The goal of the current chapter is to provide a general overview of the linguistic strategies used in Makhuwa-Enahara to structure the information in a sentence. As each sentence has a verb, I first introduce the conjoint/disjoint alternation in Section 2, so that its influence can be understood in the other sections. Most important regarding this alternation in verb forms is that the constituent directly following the conjoint verb form is interpreted as exclusive focus. Word order is a second important strategy to express information structure, with a non-focal preverbal domain, and a dedicated immediate after verb focus position, as explained along with subject inversion in Section 3. Section 4 presents a phenomenon that has not been discussed for Makhuwa previously: predicate doubling. Makhuwa uses topic doubling to express verum and contrast. In addition to the exclusive focus in the position following the conjoint verb form, Makhuwa also uses three types of copular constructions to express focus, as presented in Section 5: the basic cleft, pseudocleft, and what looks like a reverse pseudocleft. Finally, Section 6 discusses independent pronouns and (emphatic) demonstratives in their use as contrastive topic markers and referent trackers marking the relative activation of referents.

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<sup>1</sup><https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/3608096>

## 2 Conjoint/disjoint alternation

In four verbal conjugations,<sup>2</sup> Makhuwa shows two verb forms: the conjoint and the disjoint form, illustrated per conjugation in (1–4). The two forms differ in the verbal morphology, but also in the tone pattern on the following constituent: after the disjoint form, the noun appears as in citation form, e.g. *epaphélo* ‘letter’, whereas after the conjoint form, the tonally lowered form occurs: *epapheló* ‘letter’ (see also Section 3.2 on the immediate after verb position).<sup>3</sup> Note also that each conjugational category has its own tonal melody – see van der Wal (2009: 89–91) for a full overview of verbal conjugations.<sup>4</sup>

- (1)    CJ    Ki-n-lép-á                         e-papheló.  
                    1SG.SM-PRS.CJ-write-FV 9-letter  
                    ‘I’m writing a letter.’
- DJ    Ki-náá-lép-a.                         1SG.SM-PRS.DJ-write-FV  
                    ‘I’m writing (it).’
  
- (2)    CJ    Ki-lep-alé                         e-papheló.  
                    1SG.SM-write-PFV.CJ 9-letter  
                    ‘I’ve written a letter.’
- DJ    K-oo-lép-a.                             1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-write-FV  
                    ‘I’ve written (it).’
  
- (3)    CJ    K-aa-lép-á                         e-papheló.  
                    1SG.SM-IPFV-write-FV.CJ 9-letter  
                    ‘I wrote a letter.’
- DJ    K-aánáa-lép-a.                         1SG.SM-IPFV.DJ-write-FV  
                    ‘I wrote (it).’

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<sup>2</sup>The alternation is not present in other conjugations; see van der Wal (2017) for a discussion of which conjugational categories typically show the alternation.

<sup>3</sup>Note that this tonal pattern is the same that occurs with a nominal predicate and is therefore called “predicative lowering” (Schadeberg & Mucanheia 2000 for Ekoti, van der Wal 2006 for Makhuwa-Enahara, Guérois 2015 for Cuwabo), also known under the name “focus lowering” (Devos 2017 for Shangaji).

<sup>4</sup>The perfective alternatively appears in an imbricated form, where a nasal precedes the last consonant of the verbal base, e.g. *ki-le<m>p-é* ‘I have written’.

- (4) CJ K-aa-lep-álé e-papheló.  
1SG.SM-PST-write-PFV.CJ 9-letter  
'I had written a letter.'
- DJ K-aahí-lép-a.  
1SG.SM-PST.PFV.DJ-write-FV  
'I had written (it).'

The two forms do not differ in their tense-aspect semantics, as they can be used for example in a question-answer pair, as in (5), where tense and aspect are typically kept constant.

- (5) Q (CJ) Aniírhani<sup>5</sup> ehópá iye?  
a-n-iir-ih-a=ni e-hopa iye  
2SM-PRS.CJ-do-CAUS-FV=what 10-fish 10.DEM.DIST  
'What is s/he doing with/to the fish?'  
A (DJ) Anámwááríka.  
a-na-arik-a  
2SM-PRS.DJ-fry-FV  
'S/he is frying them.'

Instead, the forms differ in the relation between the verb and following constituent. The conjoint form cannot occur clause-finally, whereas the disjoint form can, as illustrated in (6).<sup>6</sup>

- (6) CJ Ki-n-tthár-á e-seetá.  
1SG.SM-PRS.CJ-follow-FV 9-sign  
'I'm following the sign.'
- CJ \* Ki-n-tthár-a.  
DJ Ki-náá-tthár-a.  
1SG.SM-PRS.DJ-follow-FV  
'I'm following (it).'

The constituent following the conjoint form is in focus. In earlier work (van der Wal 2009, 2011), I argue that the conjoint form encodes exclusive focus on

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<sup>5</sup>Class 2 (plural) marking is also used for singular referents to express respect, both on nouns and in agreement.

<sup>6</sup>Note that this concerns main clauses, as the formally identical form may be used finally in a relative clause – but the relative form does not show the alternation. See Section 5 for discussion on relative forms in clefts.

the constituent directly following it (in the immediate after verb position, see Section 3.2). The focus interpretation can be seen, for example, in the requirement for inherently focused interrogative constituents to follow a conjoint (not a disjoint) verb form, as in (7).

- (7) CJ Mwaapeyalé tsáyi nhútsí ulá?  
 mu-apey-ale tsayi n-hutsi ola  
 2PL.SM-cook-PFV.CJ how 3-sauce 3.DEM.PROX  
 'How did you cook this sauce?'  
 DJ \* Ohaápéya tsáyi nhútsí ulá?  
 o-o-apey-a tsayi n-hutsi ola  
 2SG.SM-PFV.DJ-cook-FV how 3-sauce 3.DEM.PROX  
 int. 'How did you cook this sauce?'

Among a range of tests that show the exclusive aspect of focus is the incompatibility with the inclusive focus-sensitive particle *hata* 'even'. If the predicate is true for *even* the least likely referent, then no referents are excluded. This predicts the incompatibility with the exclusive meaning of the conjoint verb form, as borne out in (8).

- (8) (I ate many animals...)  
 CJ \* ...hatá kinkhúralé mileká.  
 hata ki-n-khuur-ale mileka  
 until 1SG.SM-1OM-eat-PFV.CJ 1.giraffe  
 int. '...I even ate giraffe.'  
 DJ ...hatá koñkhúúrá miléka.  
 hata ki-o-n-khuur-a mileka  
 until 1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-1OM-eat-FV 1.giraffe  
 '...I even ate giraffe.'

The exhaustive particle *paahi* 'only' on the other hand is compatible with the conjoint form and not the disjoint, as shown in (9).

- (9) CJ Ki-n-thúm' é-tomati paáhi.  
 1SG.SM-PRS.CJ-buy 10-tomato only  
 'I buy only tomatoes.'  
 DJ \* Ki-náá-thúm' é-tomati paáhi.  
 1SG.SM-PRS.DJ-buy 10-tomato only  
 int. 'I buy only tomatoes.' (van der Wal 2011: 1739)

Exclusivity is also seen in the interpretation of the object *ntthu* ‘person’: following the disjoint verb form, it is interpreted as a non-specific indefinite ‘someone’ as in (10a), but the exclusive focus following the conjoint form in (10b) requires a set of alternatives to be generated and (partially or fully) excluded. The only way to exclude alternatives is to force a generic interpretation as ‘human being’.

- (10) a. DJ Kómwéha nítthu.  
ki-o-n-weh-a n-tthu  
1SG.SM.PFV.DJ-1OM-look-FV 1-person  
'I saw someone.'
- b. CJ Ki-m-weh-alé n-thú, nki-weh-álé e-náma.  
1SG.SM-1OM-look-PFV.CJ 1-person NEG.1SG-look-PFV 9-animal  
'I saw a person/human being, not an animal.' (van der Wal 2011:  
1740)

Similarly, a conjoint form cannot felicitously be used in a “mention some” situation. When there are clearly multiple referents for which the predicate is true, and therefore exclusion is not warranted by the context, you have to use the disjoint form, as illustrated in (11).

- (11) (Context: You went to the market and met many people; upon coming home you are asked ‘Who did you meet?’)
- DJ Koíphwánya Fernáántu.  
ki-o-n-phwany-a Fernaantu  
1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-1OM-find-FV 1.Fernando  
'I met Fernando.'
- CJ # Ki-m-phwany-alé Fernaantú.  
1SG.SM-1OM-find-PFV.CJ 1.Fernando  
'I met Fernando.'

As mentioned in van der Wal (2011), a universal quantifier cannot follow the conjoint verb form unless a contrast is made with another referent. Therefore, if there is only shima and no other dishes (context 2 in (12)), only the disjoint form may be used and not the conjoint. As shown in the different context 1 for the cj and dj forms in (12), the conjoint form is felicitous when shima can be selected from among alternatives. The disjoint form, on the other hand, is felicitously used in a polarity-focus context.

- (12) CJ (Context 1: Various dishes on the table, which s/he hasn't touched.

\*Context 2: There was just a pan of shima on the table, no other dishes.)

Ocaal' éshima yootéene.

o-c-ale e-shima e-oteene

1SM-eat-PFV.CJ 9-shima 9-all

'S/he ate all the shima.'

- DJ (Context 1: Has the sick person eaten?

Context 2: There was just a pan of shima on the table, no other dishes.)

Ohoóc' éshima yootéene (oomálíha).

o-o-c-a e-shima e-oteene o-o-mal-ih-a

1SM-PFV.DJ-eat-FV 9-shima 9-all 1SM-PFV.DJ-finish-CAUS-FV

'S/he ate all the shima (and finished it.)'

However, we need to be a bit more precise: the conjoint form is used when the following constituent is the focus or *part of the focus*. The conjoint form is also used when focus is percolated from the constituent in the immediate after verb (IAV) focus position to the verb phrase, as seen in the question-answer pair in (13), expressing VP focus.

- (13) (Context: Watching a video of a woman on the market. 'What is the woman doing?')

O-m-phím-á maakhá.

1SM-PRS.CJ-measure-FV 6.salt

'She is measuring salt.'

The constituent following the conjoint verb form can be an object (as in 13 and other examples above), an adverb as in (14), or even a dependent clause, such as the negative counterexpectational situative *ohináthhi ophiya* 'not yet having arrived' in (15) forming the answer to a content question, or the adverbial relative *mahútté wariípáyáaya* 'when the clouds became dark' in (16). The latter was indicated to have an exhaustive reading on the whole adverbial phrase: only when there were dark clouds did it rain.

- (14) CJ Killímá n' iihipá.

ki-n-lim-a ni e-hipa

1SG.SM-PRS.CJ-cultivate with 9-hoe

'I am cultivating with a hoe.'

- CJ E-shímá e-ruw-iy-é                   tsíitsáale / naínáanová.  
     9-shima 9SM-stir-PASS-PFV.CJ like.that / right.now  
     ‘(The) Shima was cooked like that/right now.’
- CJ Ni-n-rúp-á                           wa-khaámá-ni.  
     1PL.SM-PRS.CJ-sleep-FV 16-bed-LOC  
     ‘We sleep in a bed.’ (van der Wal 2014: 49, cf. van der Wal 2009: 221)
- (15) (When was the shima prepared?)  
     E-ruw-iy-é                           Coáó o-hi-ná-tthí       o-phíya.  
     9SM-stirr-PASS-PFV.CJ 1.João 1SM-NEG-CE-AUX 15-arrive  
     ‘It was prepared when João hadn’t arrived yet.’  
     (van der Wal 2014: 57)
- (16) Epúlá yaarumpé mahútté wariípályáaya.  
     e-pula e-aa-rup-ale                   ma-hutte wa<sup>7</sup>-riip-ale-aaya  
     9-rain 9SM-PST-rain-PFV.CJ 6-cloud 16-become.dark-PFV.REL-POSS.2  
     ‘It rained after the clouds had become dark.’  
     [It rained, but not all day, only when the clouds were there.] (van der Wal 2014: 59)

Further discussion on focused clauses can be found in van der Wal (2014), where I also indicate that the focused interpretation of complement clauses is still unclear: either verb form can be used preceding a complement clause (17), and the possible subtle differences in interpretation and/or use between the two is as yet unclear.

- (17) CJ Ki-n-tsúwél-a                   wiírá e-tthépó     tsi-hááná mpwína.  
     1SG.SM-PRS.CJ-know-FV COMP 10-elephant 10SM-have 4.trunk  
     ‘I know that elephants have trunks.’
- DJ K-oo-tsúwél-a                           wiírá e-tthépó     tsi-hááná mpwína.  
     1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-know-FV COMP 10-elephant 10SM-have 4.trunk  
     ‘I knew that elephants have trunks.’ (van der Wal 2014: 60)

Where the conjoint form has been analysed as expressing exclusive focus on the following constituent, the function of the disjoint verb form is less clear, and disjoint can hence be said to be an “elsewhere form” (van der Wal 2009, see also Stucky’s (1985: 56) characterisation for Makhuwa-Imithupi as “simply used to

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<sup>7</sup>Class 16 can head an adverbial relative clause with a locative (‘where...’), temporal (‘when...’), or conditional meaning (‘if...’). See van der Wal (2012) for details.

indicate that the action took place”). That is, the disjoint form is used sentence-finally, and when the following constituent is not in exclusive focus. This may be when the directly postverbal constituent cannot be focused, for example in the case of idiomatic objects (18) (see also van der Wal 2021), or when there is simply no exclusive focus on a constituent. This is the case, for example, in a subject inversion construction (see Section 3.4), a polar question (19), or when the object is already given and is not the point of the assertion, as further explained and illustrated in Section 3.3.

- (18) a. M-o-kí-ítth-á m-ma-khúvá=ni.  
 2PL.SM-PFV.DJ-1SG.OM-pour-FV 18-6-bone-LOC  
 ‘You have made me demoralised.’  
 ?‘You have poured me in the bones.’
- b. N-ki-itth-alé m-ma-khúvá=ni.  
 2PL.SM-1SG.OM-pour-PFV.CJ 18-6-bone-LOC  
 \*‘You have made me demoralised.’  
 ?‘You have poured me in the bones.’
- (19) W-oo-khúúr’ e-hópa?  
 2SG.SM-PFV.DJ-eat-FV 9-fish  
 ‘Have you eaten fish?’

For state-of-affairs focus (focus on the lexical value of the verb), speakers prefer that the verb be the only element left in the comment, being located at the end of the sentence. This automatically makes the verb form disjoint. A possible object therefore typically precedes the verb, but may also follow. This is exemplified in (20), where the object can appear in the periphery on either side – although the most natural answer would consist of just the inflected verb (and see Sections 3.1 and 3.2 on the preverbal topical status and postverbal background status of peripheral objects). Another example of state-of-affairs focus is given in (21).

- (20) (What are you doing with the fish? Are you frying or grilling it?)  
 (Ehóp’ éela) Kinámwáaneéla (ehópa).  
 e-hopa ela ki-na-aaneel-a e-hopa  
 9-fish 9.DEM.PROX 1SG.SM-PRS.DJ-grill-FV 9-fish  
 ‘{This fish} I’m grilling it {, the fish}.’

- (21) (Context: The government financially supports people during the Covid-19 crisis. The officials want a bribe to put your name on the list. So you pay the bribe but you didn't get on the list and didn't receive the money.)
- Só ninúliva paáhi (masi khaninaakéíle).
- so ni-nuu-liv-a                        paahi masi kha-ni-aakel-ale  
just 1PL.SM-PFV.PERS-pay-FV only but NEG-1PL.SM-receive-PFV  
'We only paid (but we didn't receive).'

The conjoint/disjoint alternation goes hand in hand with the immediate after verb (IAV) focus position, as word order in Makhuwa is a major marker of information structure. We turn to the influence of information structure on word order next.

### 3 Constituent order

Constituent order in Makhuwa is better characterised in terms of information structure than grammatical roles such as subject and object, and it can in that sense be called "discourse configurational" (see Kerr et al. 2023, É. Kiss 1995, van der Wal 2009). Stucky (1985: 56) writes for Makhuwa-Imithupi that:

If there is an NP at the beginning of the sentence, then that NP is what is being talked about (i.e. the topic). [...] The rest of the sentence then constitutes a comment. The organization within the comment is, so far as I can tell, based on putting novel information after the verb and expected information before the verb. (Stucky 1985: 56)

In this section I first discuss the preverbal domain with its ban on focus and preference for topics (Section 3.1), then the postverbal domain with focus immediately after the conjoint verb (Section 3.2) and non-focal information in the right periphery and/or following the disjoint verb form (Section 3.3), and finally the subject inversion construction for thetics (Section 3.4).

#### 3.1 Preverbal domain

Makhuwa has a clear restriction against preverbal focus. Neither inherently focal interrogative phrases (22), nor arguments modified by the exhaustive focus-sensitive particle *paahi* 'only' are accepted preverbally (23). Instead, subjects should appear in a cleft, and objects either in a cleft (see Section 5) or directly following the conjoint form (see Section 3.2).

- (22) a. \* Pani o-naa-w-a?  
       1.who 1SM-PRS.DJ-come-FV  
       int. 'Who comes?'  
   b. \* Eshééní o-náá-wéh-a?  
       9.what 2SG.SM-PRS.DJ-look-FV  
       int. 'What do you see?' (van der Wal 2009: 170)
- (23) a. \* E-kanétá y-oóriipa paáhi y-oo-mór-él-a                      va-thí.  
       9-pen    9-black    only 9SM-PFV.DJ-fall-APPL-FV 16-down  
       int. 'Only the black pen fell down.'  
   b. \* Coakí    paáhi k-aahí-m-geh-a.  
       1.Joaquim only 1SG.SM-PST.PFV.DJ-1OM-look-FV  
       int. 'I saw only Joaquim.' (van der Wal 2009: 171)

Furthermore, indefinite non-specific referents, which cannot form the topic, are not allowed in preverbal position. For the non-specific reading, the presentational construction in (25) is most appropriate.

- (24) # Ñtthú oomóra masi nkiníntsúwéla ti paní.  
       n-tthu    o-o-mor-a                      masi nki-n-n-tsuwel-a                      ti  
       1-person 1SM-PFV.DJ-fall-FV but    NEG.1SG.SM-PRS-1OM-know-FV COP  
       pani  
       1.who  
       'Someone fell but I don't know who it is.'
- (25) Oháávo omonré masi nkiniíntsúwéla (ti paní).  
       o-haavo    o-mor-ale                      masi nki-n-n-tsuwel-a                      ti  
       1SM-be.there 1-fall-PFV.REL but    NEG.1SG.SM-PRS-1OM-know-FV COP  
       pani  
       1.who  
       'There is someone who fell but I don't know who it is.'

Instead, the preverbal domain is reserved for topics. The prototypical topic is the subject, which may be in its canonical position, or further fronted in the left periphery. A left-peripheral position of the subject is clear in (26), as an adverbial phrase 'a long time ago' intervenes between the subject and the verb, and there is a prosodic break; in (27) the subject is marked by demonstratives (see further Section 6.2) and separated from the rest of the sentence by the adverbial clause *wahalalyáawé* 'when he stayed behind'.

- (26) Namárókoló, ekhálái ekhalaí, aa-rí m-patthaní a  
 1.hare long.ago RED 1SM.PST-be 1-friend.PRL 1.CONN  
 nsátóro.  
 1.administrator  
 ‘(the) Hare, a long time ago, (he) was the friend of the administrator.’  
 (van der Wal 2009: 183)
- (27) Ólé n-lópwán’ oolé wa-hal-aly-áawé, o-h-iýv’  
 1.DEM.DIST 1-man 1.DEM.DIST 16-stay-PFV.REL-POSS.1 1SM-PFV.DJ-kill  
 é-púri.  
 9-goat  
 ‘That man, when he stayed behind, (he) killed a goat.’

Objects often occur in a left-peripheral position as well, clearly functioning as a topic. It seems to be the case that objects can be preposed in order to “evacuate” the postverbal focus position, for example when another constituent is questioned, as in (28) and (29). A resumptive pronoun (the object marker in (30)) is present if one exists (only speech act participants and classes 1 and 2 have object markers, other classes do not).

- (28) Ekólé elá ki-pwesh-ék-é ni sheéni?  
 9.coconut 9.DEM.PROX 1SG.SM-break-DUR-SBJV with 9.what  
 ‘This coconut, what should/shall I break it with?’
- (29) (Context: You see that your friend has money.)  
 Ntsúrúkhu uyo ophwannyé vayí?  
 n-tsurukhu oyo o-phwany-ale vayi  
 3-money 3.DEM.MED 2SG.SM-find-PFV.CJ where  
 ‘Where did you get that money?’
- (30) (Context: a radio programme on child nutrition.)  
**Mwaáná** apiha mweérí sitá ohááná antséráka omváha maháatsa.  
 mw-aana a-phiy-ih-a mweeri sita o-haan-a  
 1-child 1SM.SIT-arrive-CAUS-FV 4.months six 2SG.SM-have-FV  
 o-ants-er-ak-a o-n-vaha ma-haatsa  
 2SG.SM.SIT-begin-APPL-DUR-FV 15-1OM-give 6-porridge  
 ‘The child, when s/he reaches six months, you have to start to give  
 him/her porridge.’

Contrastive topics also appear in the left periphery, as illustrated in (31) where *enanahi* ‘pineapples’ is fronted and contrasted with bananas, both being topics, and as is typical for contrastive topics, the sentence also contains a contrastive focus; in this case the quantifiers are contrasted. In (32), a particular bunch of grass is selected for the protagonist and contrasted with other bunches of grass, and again the second contrast is the addressee (hence expressed as an independent pronoun *wé*) vs. the friends.

- (31) Kithumalé enika yiícéene, **enanáhí** kithumalé vakhaáni.  
 ki-thum-ale e-nika e-inceene e-nanahi ki-thum-ale  
 1SG.SM-buy-PFV.CJ 9-banana 9-much 9-pineapple 1SG.buy-PFV.CJ  
 va-khaani  
 16-small  
 ‘I bought many bananas; pineapples I bought few.’

- (32) (Context: A mother is trying to trick her son by having the Hyena hide in the middle bunch of the cut grass. The next day she said ‘My child, fetch the grass that is in the middle.’)  
 Ari veeriyári wákushe wé, makín’ áawó poótí okúshátsa ashíkwáawo.  
 a-ri va-eriyari w-a-kush-e we ma-kin-aawo  
 6-be.REL 16-middle 2SG.SM-SUBS-carry-SBJV 2SG.PRO 6-other-POSS.2SG  
 pooti o-kush-ats-a a-shi-khw-aawo  
 can 15-carry-PLUR-FV 2-DIM-fellow-POSS.2SG  
 ‘The one that is in the middle you should go and carry, the other ones  
 your friends can carry.’

Topic shifts are typically marked by demonstratives (see also Section 6.2) and a position in the left periphery, as in (33) and (34). As can also be seen in these examples, the pragmatic marker *vano* ‘now’ is often used to mark an episode boundary – a prototypical place in narratives and discourse to switch topics.

- (33) (A: Muhammad had seven wives. B: Seven wives! I have only one and it is heavy... Now with 7 wives and not be jealous? A: But jealousy hurts. B: Jealousy hurts. A: Jealousy hurts.)  
 A: Vánó **ntthú** úle wuútsívelé... íi!  
 vano n-tthu ole o-u-tsivel-e ii  
 now 1-person 1.DEM.DIST 1SM-2SG.OM-please-SBJV EXCLAM  
 ‘Now about that person that you like... Eh!’

- (34) (He<sub>i</sub> jumped into the tree. His<sub>i</sub> friend<sub>k</sub>, when he<sub>k</sub> saw the lion<sub>m</sub>, he<sub>k</sub> fainted. The lion<sub>m</sub> came, he<sub>m</sub> smelled him<sub>k</sub>, threw sand on him<sub>k</sub>, peed on him<sub>k</sub>. He<sub>m</sub> left.)

Váno ólé<sub>i</sub>        n-tsulú ímwe,        masi a-wehá~wéh-ak-a  
 now 1.DEM.DIST 18-up 18.DEM.DIST but 1SM.SIT~RED-look-DUR-FV  
 e-tthw' íye        ts-ootéene.  
 10-thing 10.DEM.DIST 10-all  
 'Now the one up there seeing everything...'

Multiple topics are equally allowed, and occur with some frequency in narratives and spontaneous discourse, as illustrated in (35–37). This can be a mix of arguments and adverbial phrases, as was also seen above in (26) and (27). Note also that a boundary high tone may be present to indicate continuation, which in (36) results in a rising tone on the last vowel of the topic 'the/a child who starts to eat'.

- (35) (There once were a man and his wife. They got a daughter. Their daughter grew up and reached puberty. The man said:)
- Numwáár' uulá,        n-tthú o-ni-ń-thél-a,  
 1.virgin 1.DEM.PROX 1-person 1-PRS-1OM-marry-FV.REL  
 a-kush-ék-é        e-ttánká nllokó iya-íya.  
 1SM-carry-DUR-SBJV 10-basket 10.ten 10.DEM.PROX-RED  
 'This girl, the one who wants to marry her should take these ten baskets.'  
 (van der Wal 2009: 182)
- (36) (We wanted to know, this child who is starting to eat, how many times each day should s/he be fed?)
- Mwaámáne ompácéra ócă, kula nihíkú, nihááná nincíháká, ekohá tthaarú.  
 mwaamane o-n-pacer-a        o-ca kula ni-hiku ni-haan-a  
 1.child 1-PRS-start-FV.REL 15-eat each 5-day 1PL.SM-have-FV  
 ni-n-c-ih-ak-a        ekoha tthaaru.  
 1PL.SM-1OM-eat-CAUS-DUR-FV 10.times three  
 'The/a child who starts to eat, every day we have to feed him/her three times.'

- (37) Átthw' úúlúpale íyó ethw' íyu anámwáne ntokó híyáánó kхиívó entsúwélechú.
- a-tthu a-ulupale eyo e-tthu eyo anamwane ntoko  
 2-person 2-big 9.DEM.MED 9-thing 9.DEM.MED 2.child like  
 hiyaano kha-e-haavo e-n-tsuwel-eqehu  
 1PL.PRO NEG-9SM-be.there 9-PRS-know.REL-POSS.1PL
- 'Old people; those things; children like us don't know anything about.'  
 lit. 'Old people; those things; children like us; there isn't what we know.'

Finally, tail-head linking also structures the information: after an event is presented in the comment, it is then repeated at the start of the next sentence so as to establish it as the new anchoring point. In Makhuwa, this is done by using the resumptive infinitive, as in (38).

- (38) (A long time ago, when the world was virgin, there was a man and his wife.)
- Hú-nyar-ák-á mwan' áyá n-thiyána.  
 NARR-bear-DUR-FV 1.child 1.POSS.2 1-woman
- 'They gave birth to a daughter.'
- Nuunyara mwan' áya, mwaáná ohuínuwá.  
 nuu-nyar-a mw-aana aya mw-aana o-o-unnuw-a  
 RSM-bear-FV 1-child 1.POSS.2 1-child 1SM-PFV.DJ-grow-FV
- 'Having given birth to their child, the child grew.'

In summary, the preverbal domain preferentially contains topics, establishing the anchoring point for the new information in the comment. We now turn to the postverbal domain, where a dedicated focus position can be distinguished from the non-focal part of the comment, as presented in Sections 3.2 and 3.3, respectively.

### 3.2 Postverbal: IAV focus position

The position immediately after the conjoint verb form is reserved for exclusive focus, as argued in van der Wal (2011). Constituent order and verbal conjugation thus act together: both the position and the conjoint form of the verb (see Section 2) conspire to mark the focus in Makhuwa. We can see the effect of the immediate after verb (IAV) position for inherently focused interrogatives, as illustrated in (39) for the adverb 'how' and in (40) for the questioned Theme argument in a ditransitive: when postverbal (i.e. not in a cleft), these must occur in IAV position.

- (39) a. Mwaapeyalé tsáyi nhútsí ulá?  
 mu-apey-ale tsayi n-hutsi ola  
 2PL.SM-cook-PFV.CJ how 3-sauce 3.DEM.PROX  
 'How did you cook this sauce?'  
 b. \*Mwaapeyalé nhútsí ula tsayí?<sup>8</sup>  
 mu-apey-ale n-hutsi ola tsayi  
 2PL.SM-cook-PFV.CJ 3-sauce 3.DEM.PROX how  
 int. 'How did you cook this sauce?'
- (40) a. Apórosóori yaakawenlé eliivuru shéeni anámwánê?  
 a-porosoori a-aa-kaw-el-ale [e-liivuru sheeni]  
 2-teacher 2SM-2OM-distribute-APPL-PFV.CJ 10-book what  
 [anamwane]  
 2.child  
 'Which books did the teacher distribute to the children?'  
 b. \*Yaakawenle anamwane eliivuru sheeni?  
 a-aa-kaw-el-ale [anamwane] [e-liivuru sheeni]  
 2SM-2OM-distribute-APPL-PFV.CJ 2.children 10-book what  
 int. 'Which books did s/he distribute to the children?'

As mentioned in Section 2, the conjoint form of the verb combines with yet another marker: predicative lowering (PRL). Regardless of the interpretation, the lowering only applies to the IAV position, as seen in (41). The citation tones (cit) of the two objects are *ánántéko* 'workers' and *ekamítsa* 'shirts'; the lowered forms are *anaántéko* and *ekamitsa*.

- (41) a. Aakawenlé anaántéko ekamítsa. PRL-cit  
 o-a-kawel-ale a-nanteko e-kamitsa  
 1SM-2OM-distribute-PFV.CJ 2-worker 10-shirt  
 'S/he distributed shirts to the workers.'  
 b. \*Aakawenlé ánántéko ekamitsá. \*cit-PRL  
 c. Aakawenlé ekamitsa ánántéko. PRL-cit  
 o-a-kawel-ale e-kamitsa a-nanteko  
 1SM-2OM-distribute-PFV.CJ 10-shirt 2-worker  
 'S/he distributed shirts to the workers.'  
 d. \*Aakawenlé ekamítsá anaántéko. \*cit-PRL  
 e. \*Aakawenlé ekamitsa anantéko. \* PRL-PRL

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<sup>8</sup>One speaker said this might be possible as a sceptical question when the sauce is not as you think it should be. This can be understood as the question word forming its own phrase: 'You cooked the sauce. How?!'

It is also expected that arguments modified by the exhaustive focus particle ‘only’ are restricted to appear in IAV position. However, earlier data already showed that this was degraded but not completely ungrammatical (van der Wal 2009: 226), and the judgements in 2019 and 2022 allowed ‘only’ in a second (non-IAV) position, as in (42). This difference between focused interrogative phrases on the one hand and exhaustive focus with ‘only’ on the other requires further investigation.

- (42) a. Eléló Aptúlí, omvanhé [kwaatu paáhi] [eyoóca], khamvánhé mwaánúni.  
 elelo Aptuli o-n-vah-ale kwaatu paahi eyooca  
 today 1.Abdul 1SM-1OM-give-PFV.CJ 1.cat only 9.food  
 kha-o-n-vah-ale mwaanuni  
 NEG-1SM-1OM-give-PFV 1.bird  
 ‘Today Abdul gave food only to the cat, he didn’t give to the bird.’
- b. Eléló Aptúlí, omvanhé [eyoocá] [kwaátú paáhi], khamvánhé mwaánúni.  
 elelo Aptuli o-n-vah-ale eyooca kwaatu paahi  
 today 1.Abdul 1SM-1OM-give-PFV.CJ 9.food 1.cat only  
 kha-o-n-vah-ale mw-aanuni  
 NEG-1SM-1OM-give-PFV 1-bird  
 ‘Today Abdul gave food only to the cat, he didn’t give to the bird.’

In fact, the scope of ‘only’ at the end of the phrase seems to be flexible between associating with the constituent it directly follows, the constituent in IAV, or the whole VP, as indicated in the possible follow-up phrases in (43).

- (43) O-ni-m-váh-a kwaatu eyoócá paáhi...  
 1SM-PRS.CJ-1OM-give-FV 1.cat 9.food only  
 ‘S/he only gives the cat food,...’  
 ...kha-ni-m-váh-a é-tthú e-kínáku. [Theme]  
 NEG-1SM-1OM-give-FV 9-thing 9-other  
 ‘...s/he doesn’t give anything else.’  
 ...mw-alápwa kha-ni-m-váha. [Recipient]  
 1-dog NEG.1SM-PRS-1OM-give-FV  
 ‘...the dog s/he doesn’t give.’  
 ...areéke. [VP]  
 a-row-ak-e  
 1SM-go-DUR-SBJV  
 ‘...and goes away.’

For example (44), the two interpretations given were association of ‘only’ with the IAV object and with the VP.

- (44) Amáatí o-hel-el-alé maakha n-karáfá=ni paáhí.  
1.Amade 1SM-put-APPL-PFV.CJ 6.salt 18-bottle-LOC only  
'Amade put only salt in the bottle.' (He put nothing else)  
'Amade put salt in the bottle and that's it.' (He did nothing else)

Note also that the focus may not just be a *larger* constituent than the object, but can also be *smaller*, contrasting a part of the object, in sub-NP focus. As indicated in (45), the contrasted adjective can appear pronominalised by itself or as part of a full overt NP (and repetition of the verb is always optional). We can understand the focus on the adjective as still triggering alternatives on the level of the NP rather than the adjective, the alternative set consisting of {small cups, medium cups, big cups}.

- (45) (Did you buy big cups?)  
Naáta, (nithummé) (ekoopo) tsikháani.  
naata ni-thum-ale e-koopo tsik-khaani  
no 1PL.SM-buy-PFV.CJ 10-cup 10-small  
'No, (we bought) small (cups).'

Regardless of the status of the IAV focus position, Makhuwa does not allow multiple interrogatives (i.e. multiple foci), neither in postverbal position (46a), nor in a cleft (47). Multiple postverbal interrogatives were only accepted as two independent questions, with a prosodic break, as in (46b).

- (46) a. \* Omvahalé páni eshéeni?  
o-n-vah-ale pani esheeni  
2SG.SM-1OM-give-PFV.CJ 1.who 9.what  
'Who did you give what?' (database)  
b. O-m-vah-alé páni, eshéení?  
2SG.SM-1OM-give-PFV.CJ 1.who 9.what  
'To whom did you give it? what?' (van der Wal 2009: 250)
- (47) \* Ti paní oraalé vayí?  
ti pani o-row-ale vayi  
COP 1.who 1-go-PFV.REL where  
'Who went where?'

For the focus interpretation of the element in IAV as exclusive, see Section 2 on the conjoint verb form and van der Wal (2011).

### 3.3 Postverbal domain: Non-focus

Apart from the IAV focus position, the domain following the verb may also contain information that is neither topical nor focal, as well as afterthoughts in the right periphery.

Afterthoughts follow the main information of the sentence, specifying referents that were assumed by the speaker to be identifiable, but added for explicit clarity or emphasis. There may be a pause preceding the afterthought, and there is typically a phonological phrase boundary. In (48), we see two referents in the right periphery: *hiyaano* ‘we’ refers back to the contrastive topic at the beginning of the sentence and is repeated to highlight the contrast with ‘they’; and *Muhámat*’ *ę̄ehu* ‘our Muhammad’ follows after a pause (indicated by the comma).

- (48) (They believe strongly in God, when they marry in church “till death do us part”.)  
Vánó híyáanő, híyáánó niniítthára Mohúmét’ ę̄ehu [híyááno],  
[Muhámat’ ę̄ehu].  
vano hiyaano hiyaano ni-n-n-tthar-a Muhamat  
now 1PL.PRO 1PL.PRO 1PL.SM-PRS.CJ-1OM-follow-FV 1.Muhammad  
ę̄ehu hiyaano Muhamat ę̄ehu  
1.POSS.1PL 1PL.PRO 1.Muhammad 1.POSS.1PL  
‘We on the other hand, we follow our Muhammad, we, our Muhammad.’

This example also illustrates the marking of phonological phrase boundaries. In Makhuwa, high tones are normally doubled onto the next mora, unless that mora is final in the relevant constituent. The high tone on the first occurrence of *ę̄ehu* ‘our’ is not doubled onto the final syllable of the possessive (it is not *ę̄ehú*), which indicates a prosodic boundary preceding the first afterthought *hiyaano* ‘we’.

The same phonological boundary and pause can be seen in (49), as the verb surfaces as *kóhoótta* (low toned final vowel), not *kohoóttá* (high toned final vowel). The afterthought here refers back to earlier in the conversation where the speaker explained that back in the day, it was the young girls who used to apply *nsiro* (a mixture of ground treebark and water applied to the skin as a mask).

- (49) Mí kóhoótta, enúmwáari yáaka.  
mi ki-o-oott-a e-numwaari e-aka  
1SG.PRO 1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-smear-FV 9-adolescence 9-POSS.1SG  
‘I (too) used (it), in my adolescence.’

Demonstratives are also used to mark that the information in the afterthought is information that should be familiar to the listener but may require reactivation. In (50), the radio DJ reminds the listeners where to find the station with the emphatic demonstrative *yoola* (see also Sections 6.2 and 6.3 on demonstratives).

- (50) ...wiírá mwiiréké mpántta wa prógram' eጀhu yoolá wa séntu trés ponto nóove.

    wiira mu-iir-ak-e               mpantta o-a       programa       eጀhu  
    COMP 2PL.SM-do-DUR-SBJV 3.part   3-CONN 1.programme 1.POSS.1PL  
    yoola                   o-a       santu       tres   ponto nove  
    1.E.DEM.PROX 1-CONN hundred three point nine  
    ‘...so that you can be part of our programme, this one on 103.9.’

It is not always easy to distinguish afterthoughts from other constituents that are postverbal but not dislocated. A case in point are postverbal subjects: these follow the verb but are part of the new information. Subject inversion is used in thetic sentences (as further detailed in Section 3.4), where the information is presented as neither topical nor focal, but as one piece of information with the verb. In (51), the postverbal subject *ekalawa* ‘boat’ is presented as part of the presented information in the “out of the blue” sentence.

- (51) (Context: In a remote village on the river where boats hardly ever arrive, a child comes running from the river screaming.)

Yoophiyá ekaláwa!  
    e-o-phiy-a                       e-kalawa  
    9SM-PFV.DJ-arrive-FV 9-boat  
    ‘A boat arrived!’

Other constituents following a disjoint verb form can similarly be analysed as neither topical nor focal, as opposed to the constituents following the conjoint form, which must be part of the focus (see Section 2). In (52), the children are not the topic about which the information is, and neither do they form the exclusive focus, as they are active referents in the conversation and are not contrasted – they follow the DJ verb form *ninámwáápwátíha* ‘we make them lose out’, together forming the comment.

- (52) (Context: A discussion about what we should feed babies, whether fish is harmful or not, after which it is said that fish is not the problem, but we caretakers are.)

Ninámwáápwtíh' aan' eehú nláttú woóháavahatsa eyoólyá íyé tsimpwánéla.

ni-naa-aa-pwat-ih-a                    aana            eehu            n-lattu  
 1PL.SM-PRS.DJ-2OM-lose-CAUS-FV 2.children 2.POSS.1PL 3-problem  
 o-a-o-hi-aa-vah-ats-a                    eyooca iye  
 3-CONN-15-NEG-2OM-give-PLUR-FV 10.food 10.DEM.DIST  
 tsi-n-pwanel-a  
 10-PRS-improve-FV.REL

'We are making our children lose out because of not giving them the food that makes them better.'

Similarly in (53), the adverbial phrase *yavoliyá* 'when they are hungry' is not the topic, but it is given together with the verb as the new information: about dogs, we assert that they bark when hungry, possibly in a verum context. Had the verb been in the conjoint form this would have meant 'dogs bark only when hungry but not otherwise'; with the disjoint form there is no such aspect of meaning and no alternatives are implied.

- (53) (You may not believe me because they are quiet now, but...)

DJ Alápwá anáákhúwá yavoliyá.  
 alapwa a-naa-khuw-a                    a-a-vol-iy-a  
 2.dogs 2SM-PRS.DJ-bark-FV 2SM-SIT-torment-PASS-FV  
 '(the) Dogs bark when they are hungry.'

The postverbal domain hence contains the IAV focus position after the conjoint verb, and may host non-focal non-topical information as part of the comment, as well as afterthoughts in the right periphery. There is a bit more to say about postverbal subjects, which we turn to now.

### 3.4 Subject inversion

In parallel with the preference for topics in the preverbal domain, non-topical subjects in Makuwa-Enahara appear postverbally. Of the various types of subject inversion constructions (see the overview in Marten & van der Wal 2014), Makuwa only allows Agreeing Inversion, whereby the subject always determines the subject marker. Subject inversion in Makuwa expresses a thetic statement,

announcing new information (see Sasse 1996, 2006 for overviews of theticity), as in (54) and (55). See also Kröger (2010) for the function of inversion in the larger discourse for Emarevone.

- (54) (Context: Sharing the news you just heard.)

Yootsámá ekaláwá oMasákásá.  
e-o-tsam-a            e-kalawa o-Masakasa  
9SM-IPFV.DJ-sink-FV 9-boat    17-Masakasa  
'A boat sunk at Masakasa.'

- (55) O-náá-ki-weréy-á        n-thána.

3SM-PRS.DJ-1SG-hurt-FV 3-back  
'My back hurts.' (van der Wal 2009: 198)

In subject inversion, the verb may also be inflected as the narrative (marked by prefix *khu-*), which is used in sequences of events (van der Wal 2009). This is shown in the following lines from a tufo<sup>9</sup> song about the history of Ilha de Moçambique.

- (56) a. Khíyátekiya manúpá ni misíkíthi (x2).

khu-ya-tek-iy-a            ma-nupa ni    mi-sikitthi  
NARR-IPFV-build-PASS-FV 6-house and 4-mosque  
'Houses and mosques were built,'

- b. Wasańtímińkú khíyátekiya epońti (x2).

wa-santuminku    khu-ya-tek-iy-a            e-ponti  
16-Santo.Domingo NARR-IPFV-build-PASS-FV 9-bridge  
'at Santo Domingo a bridge was built,'

- c. Khíyáw' apaphóro khíyákelá ápakéti.

khu-ya-w-a            a-paphoro khu-ya-kel-a            a-paketi  
NARR-IPFV-come-FV 2-gasoline NARR-IPFV-enter-FV 2-ship  
'and there came gasoline and there entered ships.'

For the introduction of referents (entity-central thetic) and for presentational and existential thetic utterances, Makhuwa uses Agreeing Inversion with *-haavo*. This is lexicalised from *-khala* 'stay, be' and the medial demonstrative in class 16 *vo* 'there'. The noun phrase referring to the introduced referent is typically followed by a relative clause. Examples (57) and (58) illustrate the affirmative and negative form.

<sup>9</sup>Tufo is a traditional dance performed in northern Mozambique, accompanied by drums and singing.

- (57) Aháávó átthú amphééláká wiíshtárákári elaáré y' aíkwáaya.  
 a-haavo a-tthu a-n-pheel-ak-a o-istarakari elaare  
 2SM-be.there 2-person 2SM.SIT-PRS-want-DUR-FV 15-ruin 9.home  
 e-a a-nkw-aya  
 9-CONN 2-fellow-POSS.2  
 'There are people who want to ruin the home of their mates.'
- (58) ...khaávó nítthú onlyá woóhíwuryá.<sup>10</sup>  
 kha-haavo n-tthu o-n-c-a o-a-o-hi-wurya  
 NEG.1SM-be.there 1-person 1-PRS-eat-FV.REL 1-CONN-15-NEG-drink  
 '(I just want to tell you that) there is noone who eats without drinking'

As shown in van der Wal (2012), inversion constructions in Makhuwa-Enahara only take the disjoint form in conjugations that have the alternation (the conjoint form results in a pseudocleft; see Section 5.2), although conjugations without the alternation may also be used (the habitual, for example). The use and interpretation of subject inversion shows that it is only used in thetic utterances (as shown above). The postverbal subject cannot be in narrow focus, as shown for the question words in (59) and (60). This is where subject inversion in Makhuwa crucially differs from the Nguni languages, for example, which are ambiguous between theticity and subject focus in (default or locative) inversion (e.g. Buell 2005, Zerbian 2006); compare also the subject inversion constructions in other chapters in this volume.

- (59) \* Aahí-phíy-a páni?  
 1SM.PST.PFV.DJ-arrive-FV 1.who  
 int. 'Who arrived?' (van der Wal 2009: 196)
- (60) \* O-náá-wóóv-a á-ráñttáatsi páni?  
 1SM-PRS.DJ-fear-FV 2-spider 1.who  
 int: 'Who is afraid of spiders?' (van der Wal 2012: 221)

Modification by the focus particle 'only' as in (61) is equally infelicitous in affirmative subject inversion – it is allowed in negative clauses though, negating the exhaustivity, as shown in (62). To express exhaustivity on the subject, a cleft should be used.

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<sup>10</sup>This speaker speaks a slightly different variant, using *olya* for 'to eat' instead of *oca*.

- (61) (Context: Many people are gathered in front of a house. What happened?)  
 A-núú-khw-á                    á-páápa (#paáhí).  
 2SM-PFV.PERS-die-FV 2-father only  
 ‘(\*only) Father died.’
- (62) Khawaálé akúnyá paáhi, n’ aálúp’ óóriipá ahoówa.  
 kha-w-ale                    a-kunya                paahi ni a-lupa  
 NEG.2SM-come-PFV 2-white.person only and 2-person  
 a-a-o-riipa                a-o-w-a  
 2-CONN-15-be.dark 2SM-PFV.DJ-come-FV  
 ‘Not only white people came, black people also came.’

Makhuwa allows subject inversion with unaccusative (63), unergative (64), and transitive predicates (65), as well as passives (66). In contrast with Agreeing Inversion in Matengo, inversion with a transitive predicate takes VOS order in Makhuwa (not VSO, see van der Wal 2012).

- (63) (He sat down, leaned against the tree, and slept.)  
 Válé                        ni-hoó-wá                n-láikha.  
 16.DEM.DIST 5SM-PFV.DJ-come 5-angel  
 ‘Now there came an angel.’ (van der Wal 2009: 189)
- (64) Ni-húkú ni-motsa ohíyú    waa-nú-mwááryá    mw-eéri.  
 5-day    5-one      14.night 3SM.PST-PERS-shine 3-moon  
 ‘One night the moon was shining.’ (van der Wal 2009: 189)
- (65) (Context: You see trousers on the clothes line.)  
 O-núú-kátth-á                e-kaálásá    Shavyére.  
 1SM-PFV.PERS-wash-FV 10-trousers 1.Xavier  
 ‘Xavier washed (the) trousers!’
- (66) a. Noo-vár-íy-á                n-uúmmé ni-motsá.  
 5SM.PFV.DJ-grab-PASS-FV 5-toad    5-one  
 ‘One toad was caught.’ (van der Wal 2009: 189)
- b. Aa-váh-íy-a                e-kanétá anámwáne.  
 2SM.PFV.DJ-give-PASS-FV 10-pen    2.child  
 ‘The children were given pens.’ (van der Wal 2009: 198)

Given that negative indefinites such as ‘nobody’ and ‘nothing’ cannot form topics, these too have to be postverbal. Makhuwa forms such subjects in Agreeing Inversion with a negative verb, as in (67a), where the negation scopes over the postverbal subject. An alternative is the presentational construction in (67b).

- (67) (Who came?)

- a. Kha-w-aálé            n-tthu.  
NEG.1SM-come-PFV 1-person  
'Nobody came.'
- b. Khaávó owaalé.  
kha-haavo            o-w-ale  
NEG.1SM-be.there 1-come-PFV.REL  
'Nobody came.', lit. 'There isn't who came.'

To summarise, Makhuwa does not allow preverbal focus and strongly prefers a word order topic-verb-focus-rest. The IAV focus position is dependent on the use of the conjoint verb form, and what follows the disjoint verb form, if anything, is typically neither topic nor focus.

## 4 Predicate doubling

The preverbal topic can also be an infinitive, and when it is followed by an inflected form of the same predicate, as in (68), this is called predicate doubling. The predicate doubling construction (or more correctly, topic doubling) has not been described for Makhuwa.

- (68) (Did you get water?)

- Oríká (maátsi) kooríkă.  
o-rika    maatsi ki-o-rik-a  
15-draw 6.water 1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-draw-FV  
'I did (already) draw water.', lit. 'To draw (water), I did draw (it).'

The infinitive can consist of just the verb, or the verb plus object. Note the rising tone on the final vowel in (68) to add emphasis on the truth value: I really did it. Even a postverbal subject is possible for the infinitive, as in (69).

- (69) (Context: Someone discovered that Ali told a lie, and the fact that Ali lies is then confirmed in a conversation with someone who already knew that he lies.)

- W-oóth' Álí, o-h-oóth-a.  
o-otha Ali o-o-oth-a  
15-lie 1.Ali 1SM-PFV.DJ-lie-FV  
'As for Ali lying, he lies indeed.'

Note also that the object marker (if one is present) must appear on the inflected verb, and optionally appears on the infinitive too. All four logical combinations, three of which are acceptable, are shown in (70). It is unknown at this point what determines whether the object marker is present on the infinitive to distinguish (70a) and (70b) – but note the different interpretation of (70d).

- (70) a. O-thélá, o-ná-ń-thél-a. [-OM,+OM]  
 15-marry 1SM-PRS.DJ-1OM-marry-FV  
 ‘He will marry her.’
- b. O-ń-théla o-ná-ń-thél-a. [+OM,+OM]  
 15-1OM-marry 1SM-PRS.DJ-1OM-marry-FV  
 ‘He will marry her.’
- c. \* O-ń-théla o-náá-thél-a. [+OM,-OM]  
 15-1OM-marry 1SM-PRS.DJ-marry-FV  
 int. ‘He will marry her.’
- d. O-thél-á o-náá-thél-a. [-OM,-OM]  
 15-marry 1SM-PRS.DJ-marry-FV  
 ‘He will marry.’ (He must; no specific person)

Although the infinitive functions as a topic here, the interpretation of the whole construction is typically that of verum, as can be deduced from the contexts for use in (68) and (71).

- (71) (Don’t you know how to swim?)  
 O-rámpeléla, ki-náá-rampeléla.  
 15-swim 1SG.SM-PRS.DJ-swim-FV  
 ‘I do know how to swim.’

The infinitive can also be interpreted as a contrastive topic, contrasting it with a different action, as in (72).

- (72) (Hey, are you even listening to me?)  
 Wiwwá, kiíníwwá, só kináhítthúna<sup>11</sup> owáákhúla.  
 o-iwwa ki-nni-iww-a so ki-naa-hi-tthun-a o-aakhula  
 15-hear 1SG.SM-HAB-hear-FV just 1SG.SM-PRS.DJ?-NEG-want-FV 15-reply  
 ‘I am hearing you, it’s just that I don’t want to reply.’

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<sup>11</sup>At present I do not understand this verb form.

Note that polarity focus and verum can also be expressed simply by the verb itself, as in (73). That is, predicate doubling is possible but not necessary in a context of contrast on the truth.

- (73) (Daniel didn't arrive.)  
 Oophíya (hj noomóona).  
 o-o-phiy-a                hi            ni-o-m-oon-a  
 1SM-PFV.DJ-arrive-FV 1PL.PRO 1PL.SM-PFV.DJ-1OM-see-FV  
 'He did arrive (we saw him.)'

As expected with a polarity focus interpretation, the disjoint verb form is used in predicate doubling for those conjugations that have the alternation. This is the only option when the verb is final, of course, but even when it is not, the conjoint form is not acceptable, as shown in (74). The interpretation of the object does not seem to be an afterthought; rather, the verb and object together are asserted.

- (74) (Context: You're ill and they want to know whether you have already eaten something.)
- a. Ócá, kihoócá eshíma.  
 o-ca                ki-o-c-a                e-shima  
 15-eat-FV 1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-eat-FV 9-shima  
 'I ate shima.'
  - b. # Ócá, kicaalé eshimá.  
 o-c-a                ki-c-ale                e-shima  
 15-eat-FV 1SG.SM-eat-PFV.CJ 9-shima  
 int. 'I ate/did eat shima.'

Predicate doubling with a conjoint verb is not preferred, but judged acceptable only in a context that clearly indicates focus on the postverbal object, as in (75).

- (75) (What did you eat?)  
 Ócá kicaal' éshimá; owúryá kiwunryé maatsí.  
 o-ca                ki-c-ale                e-shima o-wurya ki-wury-ale                maatsi  
 15-eat 1SG.SM-eat-PFV.CJ 9-shima 15-drink 1SG.SM-drink-PFV.CJ 6.water  
 'As for eating I ate shima, as for drinking I drank water.'

Predicate doubling is most natural when a discussion has been going on and a point needs to be made, as illustrated by the contexts for (76). Context 1 is presumably out because the predicate forms the new information in the answer, but appears as a topic in the left periphery.

- (76) (#Context 1: ‘Where did you get that money?’  
 Context 2: After a discussion about being paid or not.)  
 Olívíya kinúúlívíya / koolívíya.  
 o-liv-iy-a            ki-nuu-liv-iy-a                    /  
 15-pay-PASS-FV 1SG.SM-PFV.PERS-pay-PASS-FV /  
 ki-o-liv-iy-a  
 1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-pay-PASS-FV  
 ‘I was (indeed) paid.’

The deprecative interpretation that was found for other languages (see Kî-tharaka, Rukiga, Kinyakyusa, Kirundi in this volume) is also found in Makhuwa-Enahara, as illustrated in (77) and (78), but interestingly the intensive reading does not seem possible.

- (77) O-ttíkh-á ni-náá-ttíkh-a,                    masi kha-ni-ń-tsúwel-á                feto  
 15-throw 1PL.SM-PRS.DJ-throw-FV but NEG-1PL.SM-PRS-know-FV if  
 ni-náá-kanyári.  
 1PL.SM-PRS.DJ-win-FV  
 ‘We played, but we don’t know if we’ll win.’
- (78) (If you want to lose weight, maybe you should run.)  
 O-tthyáwá ki-náá-tthyáw-a                    masi nki-m-vúkuw-a.  
 15-run            1SG.SM-PRS.DJ-run-FV but NEG.1SG.SM-PRS-diminish-FV  
 ‘I do run, but I’m not getting slimmer.’

Instead, an intensive reading is found with a relative clause, or what looks like a reverse pseudocleft, modifying the infinitive, as illustrated in (79–81). It does not form an independent clause, however, and it remains uncertain at this point what the structure of the clause is.<sup>12</sup>

- (79) Othéyá othennyáaká końkówa wiirutselátsa.  
 o-theya o-they-ale-aaka                    ki-o-onkow-a  
 15-laugh 15-laugh-PFV.REL-POSS.1SG 1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-lack-FV  
 o-ii-ruts-el-ats-a  
 15-REFL-peee-APPL-PLUR-FV  
 ‘The way I laughed I nearly peed myself.’

---

<sup>12</sup>The same construction can also be used to indicate immediacy, as in (i).

- (i) Okhúmá okhumalyááká kimwiitthenlé epuraatá.  
 o-khuma o-khum-ale-aaka                    ki-n-iith-el-ale                            epuraata  
 15-exit 15-exit-PFV.REL-POSS.1SG 1SG.SM-1OM-pour-APPL-PFV.CJ 9.slap  
 ‘As soon as I came out, I slapped him.’

- (80) Wamoralyáawé, othéyá túhéñnyááká...  
 wa-mor-ale-awe o-theya ti-o-they-ale-aaka  
 16-fall-PFV.REL-POSS.1 15-laugh COP-?-laugh-PFV.REL-POSS.1SG  
 'When s/he fell down, the way/how much that I laughed...'
- (81) Othípá túhípalyáaká, matátá otééne khiyákiweréya.  
 o-thipa ti-o-thip-ale-aaka ma-tata a-otene  
 15-dig COP-?-dig-PFV.REL-POSS.1SG 6-hand 6-all  
 khiya-ki-werey-a  
 NARR.IPFV-1SG.OM-hurt-FV  
 'The way in which I dug, both hands are hurting me!'

An alternative to express the intensive reading is to use a negated form of the auxiliary *-reere* 'to lack' and an infinitive, as in (82).

- (82) Anámwáne alé khareéré weéetta!  
 anamwane ale kha-reer-e o-eetta  
 2.children 2.DEM.DIST NEG.2SM-lack-FV 15-walk  
 'Those children walked a lot!'

Unlike other languages (cf. Kîitharaka, Kirundi, Rukiga), Makhuwa does not have in-situ doubling (83), where an infinitive follows the verb and is in focus, neither does it allow cleft doubling (84).

- (83) \* O-katth-alé o-katthá.  
 1SM-wash-PFV.CJ 15-wash  
 int. 'S/he is really washing.'
- (84) \* Otheyá/\*Ti othéyá othennyáaka.  
 otheya/ ti o-theya o-they-ale-aaka  
 15-laugh.PRL COP 15-laugh 15-laugh-PFV.REL-POSS.1SG  
 int. 'It's laughing that I did.'

It remains for future research to establish the precise interpretational possibilities of predicate doubling, as well as the possible positions of an NP subject and object in this construction.

## 5 Clefts

As cleft constructions involve predicative nouns, I first briefly present nominal predication in Makhuwa. There are three ways to form a non-verbal predicate: by

predicate lowering, the copula *ti/pi*, and existential/locative verbs (-*ri* or -*khala*) (Kujath & van der Wal 2023).

In predicate lowering, as expected the noun occurs in its lowered form, that is, without the underlying first high tone (and its surface doubling). As shown in (85), the noun *maráti* takes a LHL tone pattern in citation form, but functions as the predicate with the “lowered” LLH pattern. See van der Wal (2009: 119–125) and Kujath & van der Wal (2023) on nominal predication in Makhuwa, and van der Wal (2006) for an analysis of predicate lowering.

- |      |  |                     |
|------|--|---------------------|
| (85) | a. maráti<br>‘disease’   | LHL (citation form) |
|      | b. O-síkhíni ma-ratí.<br>14-poverty 6-disease.PRL<br>‘Poverty is a disease.’ | LLH (lowered form)  |

Predicate lowering is not possible on all (pro)nouns, and the alternative is to use the copula *ti* for the present tense, as in (86). This example also shows that for the past tense, the inflected verb -*ri* ‘to be’ is used.

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| (86) | Shtóriya yaalankáká ti / yaarí ya khálái.<br>shtoriya e-alak-ale-aka                    ti / e-a-ri    e-a        khalai<br>9.story 9-tell-PFV.REL-POSS.1SG COP / 9-PST-be 9-CONN old.times<br>‘The story that I told is/was old.’ |
|------|--|

The verb -*ri* is also used to predicate presence in a location, e.g. ‘they are in Nacala’. The future tense uses the verb -*khala* ‘stay, be’. In Makhuwa non-verbal predication, tense, location, and morphophonology of the noun are the primary factors determining the predication strategy.<sup>13</sup> We will see each of these predication strategies in the different types of cleft constructions below.

All clefts also involve a relative verb. The relative form of the verb shows a prefix agreeing with the relativised noun: in (87) it is in class 5 agreeing with *ntsípo* ‘song’. The subject in a non-subject relative may be expressed as a possessive suffix on the noun, as is the case for the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural -éhú in (87). See van der Wal (2010b) for further analysis of Makhuwa relative clauses. Since neither the form of the verb nor the prefix show specific relative morphology, I indicate relativisation in the gloss as REL at the end of the verb gloss.

<sup>13</sup>There are cases when either PRL or *ti* is possible, and here the choice seems to depend on the interpretation as predication ('Liz is a researcher') vs. identification/specification ('the researcher is Liz'), as studied in Kujath (2022), and see Kujath & van der Wal (2023).

- (87) Ntsípó niipalééhú ninaátsímiyá “ophéntána”.  
 n-tsipto ni-iip-ale-éehu ni-naa-atsim-iy-a o-phent-an-a  
 5-song 5-sing-PFV.REL-POSS.1PL 5SM-PRS.DJ-call-PASS-FV 15-love-RECP-FV  
 ‘The song that we sang is called *ophentana*.’

### 5.1 Basic clefts

The basic cleft consists of a predicative noun followed by a (free) relative clause. Subject focus obligatorily uses a (pseudo)cleft, which is why many subject questions (and answers) take the form of a cleft, as in (88), but objects (90) and adverbs (91) can be clefted as well. The copula *ti* is present in (88a), and (88b) uses predicative lowering (as indicated in the gloss); example (92) shows an alternative form of the copula, *pi*.

- (88) a. Ti paní o-tthik-ale e-rrańca?  
 COP 1.who 1-throw-PFV.REL 10-orange  
 ‘Who has thrown oranges?’  
 b. Namarokoló o-tthik-alé.  
 1.hare.PRL 1-throw-PFV.REL  
 ‘It was Hare who threw (them).’ (van der Wal 2009: 172)
- (89) (Is it Maria who is holding water?)  
 Áyo, ti María o-kush-ale maátsi.  
 yes COP 1.Maria 1-carry-PFV.REL 6.water  
 ‘Yes, it is Maria who holds water’
- (90) Etomatí tsintúmhááwé nthíyána ola?  
 e-tomati tsi-n-thum-ih-aawe n-thiyana ola  
 10-tomato.PRL 10-PRS-buy-CAUS.REL-POSS.1 1-woman 1.DEM.PROX  
 ‘Is it tomatoes that the woman is selling?’
- (91) Ti vayí / nipuro shééni ninrówááká othúmá moóce?  
 ti vayi / ni-puro sheeni ni-n-row-aaka o-thuma m-ooce  
 COP where / 5-place.PRL what 5-PRS-go.REL-POSS.1SG 15-buy 6-egg  
 ‘Where is it that I go to buy eggs?’
- (92) A-tthw’ aá-lé aa-rów-á: “Pi-ítthú  
 2-person 2.DEM.DIST 2SM.IPFV-go-FV COP-9.thing  
 e-nní-rúwan-el-áu?”  
 9-HAB-insult-APPL.REL-POSS.2SG  
 ‘Those people were like “Is this why you are insulting us?”’

Although examples with full NPs are accepted, the large majority of cleft examples concerns interrogatives, as well as demonstrative and personal pronouns. Full NPs seem to prefer the reverse pseudocleft construction discussed in Section 5.3.

The question-answer pairs above already indicate that the basic cleft is used to express focus. This is confirmed by the fact that part of an idiom loses its idiomatic meaning in a cleft (93).

- (93) Maatsi a-wury-aly-áawe.  
6.water.PRL 6-drink-PFV.REL-POSS.1  
'It's water that s/he drank.'  
\*'It's that she gave birth.'

More specifically, the Makhuwa cleft seems to have an exclusive focus interpretation, as indicated by how a constituent modified by exhaustive 'only' can appear in a cleft, as in (94) but not by scalar inclusive 'even', as in (95).

- (94) E-shima paáhi e-c-aaly-áaka (e-tthw' íí-kíná, naáta).  
9-shima.PRL only 9-eat-PFV.REL-POSS.1SG 9-thing 9-other no  
'It's only shima that I ate (other things not).'
- (95) (\*Hata) E-kokhola tsi-m-vél-íy-a.  
until 10-rubbish.PRL 10-PRS-sweep-PASS-FV.REL  
'It's (\*even) rubbish that is being swept.'

Furthermore, a continuation excluding other referents is spontaneously given (96), the universal quantifiers 'every' (97) or 'all' (98) are not accepted,<sup>14</sup> and in a mention-some situation, it is infelicitous to reply with a cleft, as in (99) (compare to (11)). All these diagnostics suggest that the clefted constituent is singled out to the exclusion of some alternatives.

- (96) E-nupá e-tek-ale Hasáani, kha-tek-álé e-kiántáali.  
9-house.PRL 9-build-PFV.REL 1.Hasan NEG.1-build-PFV 9-compound.  
'It is a house that Hamisi has built, he didn't build a compound.'

<sup>14</sup>The same surface structure with 'all' can be accepted but with a different underlying structure, where the relative clause modifies the noun rather than being a free relative. That is, the whole NP including the relative clause forms the predication.

- (i) E-liivuru ts-ootééne tsi-som-aly-áaka.  
10-book.PL 10-all 10-read-PFV.REL-POSS.1SG  
'They're all the books I've read.' (you see a stack of books that you recognise)  
\*'It's all the books that I've read.'

- (97) \*Kata n-tthú o-m-múmúl-a.  
 every 1-person.PRL 1-PRS-breathe.REL  
 int. ‘It is every person who breathes.’
- (98) Ti nyúwááno (\*otééné) uuphwanyantsáákáni.  
 ti nyuwaano a-oteene uu-phwany-ats-ale-aaka=ni  
 COP 2PL.PRO 2-all 2PL-find-PLUR-PFV.REL-POSS.1SG=PLA  
 ‘It’s (\*all of) you that I met.’
- (99) # (You went to the market and met many people. When you get home  
 someone asks ‘Who did you meet at the market?’)  
 Fernaantú o-phwany-aly-áaka.  
 1.Fernando.PRL 1-find-PFV.REL-POSS.1SG  
 ‘It’s Fernando I met.’

As the IAV position after the conjoint form is also analysed as encoding exclusive focus, one of the questions is whether (and if so, how) the interpretation of the basic cleft differs from that of the post-conjoint form, i.e. what distinguishes (100a) and (100b)?

- (100) a. Mwintharalé páni?  
 n-n-tthar-ale pani  
 2PL.SM-1OM-follow-PFV.CJ 1.who  
 ‘Who did you follow?’
- b. Ti paní onttharalényu vá?  
 ti pani o-n-tthar-ale-inyu va  
 COP 1.who 1-1OM-follow-PFV.REL-POSS.2PL PP  
 ‘Who is it that you followed?’

While more targeted investigation is required to answer that question satisfactorily, there are two clear differences: first, subjects can only be focused in clefts and not in IAV position; and second, the post-conjoint focus can project to the verb phrase, whereas in a cleft that part of the clause which is not the clefted and focused constituent is explicitly backgrounded in a relative clause.

## 5.2 Pseudoclefts

A pseudocleft is basically a copular structure in which the first part consists of a free relative and the second, predicative, part identifies the referent, e.g. ‘Who I met was Theresa’. The predicative postcopular noun is in focus here. Subjects (101) as well as objects (102) can be focused in a pseudocleft.

- (101) Iitthukenlé nlénsó noóshéerya ti páni?  
 o-ii-thuk-el-ale n-lenso ni-a-o-sheerya ti pani  
 1-REFL-tie-APPL-PFV.REL 5-cloth 5-CONN-15-be.red COP 1.who  
 ‘Who is the one wearing a red tie?’
- (102) Álé yaarúmmyááká, yaarí ashinamwáne.  
 ale a-a-rum-ale-aaka a-a-ri a-shi-namwane  
 2.DEM.DIST 2-PST-send-PFV.REL-POSS.1SG 2SM-PST-be 2-DIM-child  
 ‘The ones that I sent were my children.’

The predicative element is in focus in this construction, illustrated for interrogatives (103), answers (104), and constituents modified by ‘only’ (105).

- (103) Onuúpúwela wiira ivvale ti paní?  
 o-n-upuwel-a wiira o-ivv-ale ti pani  
 2SG.SM-PRS.CJ-think-FV COMP 1-kill-PFV.REL COP 1.who  
 ‘Who do you think is the murderer?’  
 ‘lit. You think that the one who killed is who?’
- (104) (I can’t see what is in the pan and ask what there is.)  
 Orivó nramá.  
 o-ri=vo n-rama  
 3-be=16.DEM.MED 3-rice.PRL  
 ‘What is there is rice.’
- (105) (The teacher gave pencils to the adults.)  
 Naáta, amváhiya só anamwáne.  
 naata a-m-vah-iy-a so anamwáne  
 no 2-PRS-give-PASS-FV.REL only 2.children.PRL  
 ‘No, (the ones) who were given were only the children.’

As expected, idiomatic objects lose their interpretation in a pseudocleft, as in (106).

- (106) Wookolalyáwe mwettó.  
 u-ookol-ale-awe mwetto  
 3-stretch-PFV.REL-POSS.1 3.leg.PRL  
 ‘What s/he stretched is the leg.’  
 \*‘What s/he did is die.’

The function of the pseudocleft is to identify the referent for which the predicate is true, as is particularly clear in (107) but can be seen throughout this subsection.

- (107) (A woman went to the well and couldn't carry her container of water. So she was stuck. She saw a rustle in the grass (and said) 'Hmm, who is it?')  
 "Ti mí", o-n-iír-á khutsupá.  
 COP 1SG.PRO 1-PRS-say-FV.REL 1.hyena.PRL  
 'It's me – who spoke is Hyena.'

Identification requires singling out one referent, which is why *ntthu* 'person', which can in other contexts be used for 'someone/anyone', cannot form the focus unless modified by 'one' in (108) or interpreted generically as in (109).

- (108) O-wa-alé n-tthu \*(m-mótsá).  
 1-come-PFV.REL 1-person.PRL 1-one  
 '(Only) one person came.'
- (109) E-shímá elá, o-c-aalé n-tthu; khacaálé  
 9-shima 9.DEM.PROX 1-eat-PFV.REL 1-person.PRL NEG.1SM-eat-PFV  
 e-náma.  
 10-animal  
 'This shima, who ate it was a human being, animals didn't eat it.'

Pseudoclefts thus identify one referent to the exclusion of other referents. This can be seen in correction, as in the nice combination in (110) of the basic cleft followed by a pseudocleft, as well as the ungrammaticality of inclusive 'even' in (111).

- (110) (Context: QUIS picture of three monkeys – Did that monkey steal the bread?)  
 Naáta, kahi yéná iiyalé, iiyalé t' uúla.  
 naata kahi yena o-iiy-ale o-iiy-ale ti ola  
 no NEG.COP 1.PRO 1-steal-PFV.REL 1-steal-PFV.REL COP 1.DEM.PROX  
 'No, he wasn't the one who stole (it), the one who stole (it) is this one.'
- (111) \* A-furahiy-ale hata alapwa.  
 2-be.happy-PFV.REL until 2.dog  
 int. 'Even the dogs are happy.' (lit. 'The ones who are happy are even the dogs.')

The focus here may be exclusive, but it does not seem to be exhaustive, as the pseudocleft can be used in the mention-some context in (112). Notice the different contexts in (113) and (114), where alternatives are required to make the selection.

- (112) (What is sold in this shop?)

Entúmíhíyá makhurá, ntsóró, meéle, sapáu...  
e-n-thum-ih-iy-a ma-khura n-tsoro meelee sapau  
9-PRS-buy-CAUS-PASS-FV.REL 6-oil.PRL 3-rice 6.fine.maize 9.soap  
'What is sold is oil, rice, maize, soap, ...'

- (113) (#Context 1: We're doing research into hair length. I need someone with short hair.

Context 2: I'm pointing out Nando in a group of people who don't have short hair.)

Orin' ekharári tsoókhuvéya Naantú.

o-ri-na e-kharari tsi-a-o-khuvuya Naantu  
1-be-with.REL 10-hair 10-CONN-15-be.short 1.Nando.PRL  
'The one who has short hair is Nando.'

- (114) (#Context 1: There is only one pot on the table, containing porridge.

Context 2: There are various dishes on the table but they chose only this one.)

Aciyé mahaatsa otéene.

a-c-iy-ale ma-haatsa a-oteene  
6-eat-PASS-PFV.REL 6-porridge.PRL 6-all  
'What was eaten is all the porridge.'

In this respect the pseudocleft is similar to the reverse pseudocleft, which we turn to now.

### 5.3 COP-V (reverse pseudo) clefts

Makhuwa also uses a reverse pseudocleft, in which the focused element is followed by the copula *ti/pi+relative clause*, as in (115) and (116). The prefix on the relative verb (determined by the focused referent) is often invisible/unclear/merged with the copula. Therefore, the gloss contains a question mark in some examples, and in the first line of the examples the copula is written together with the relative verb (which is how it is pronounced).

- (115) (Context: Picture of 3 different animals. Between these animals, which one flies?)

Mwaánúni tímváva.  
 mw-aanuni ti o-n-vav-a  
 1-bird COP 1-PRS-fly-FV.REL  
 'The bird is the one that flies.'

- (116) (I bought a bucket but there was something else, I forgot...)

Eparáthó títsíliyanlyáwo.  
 e-parathó ti tsi-liyal-ale-au  
 10-plate COP 10-forget-PFV.REL-POSS.2SG  
 'Plates is what you forgot.'

Not just subjects, but objects (117) and adverbials (118) can also occur in the initial position.

- (117) (Do you prefer my shirt or his shirt?)

Ekamis' aáwé pí/tímpheeláaka.  
 e-kamisa e-awe pi/ti e-m-pheel-aka  
 9-shirt 9-POSS.1 COP 9-PRS-want.REL-POSS.1SG  
 'His shirt is what I want.'

- (118) Ntsuwá noóthékuwá tímwáaka.

n-tsuwa n-a-o-thekuwa ti ?-m-w-aka  
 3-sun 3-CONN-15-set COP ?-PRS-come.REL-POSS.1SG  
 'In the afternoon is when I come.'

The construction can also be used without an initial NP, and in such use it typically refers to earlier statements (discourse deixis) as in (119), or to a manner, or it may be used as a sort of conclusion, as in (120).

- (119) Tíkíwaanale vá.

ti e?-ki-waan-ale va  
 COP 9?-1SG.OM-bring-PFV.REL 16.DEM.PROX  
 'That's why I came here.' / 'That's what brought me here.'

- (120) Tíñkhalaáaya wiírá akhilí ahááná ekúrú viícééné khaímpá owáli.

ti ?-n-khal-aya wiira akhili a-haana e-kuru  
 COP ?-PRS-stay.REL-POSS.2 COMP intelligence sm-have 9-strength  
 vinceene khampa o-wali  
 much than 14-strength  
 'Therefore intelligence is stronger than force.'

Presumably to highlight the exhaustive identification (on which see below), the reverse pseudocleft is also used with the verb ‘to be’ in the free relative, as in (121) and (122).

- (121) Patáréro kanalisatóré kalápíntééró, kalpínteéró tárí / tímí / tákhánle mpátthány’ ááká muúlúpale.  
 patarero kanalisaatore kalapinteero kalapinteero ti a-ri/ ti  
 1.builder 1.plumber 1.carpenter 1.carpenter COP 2-be.REL/ COP  
 o-ri/ ti a-khal-ale m-patthani aka m-ulupale  
 1-be.REL/ COP 2-stay-PFV.REL 1-friend 1.POSS.1SG 1-big  
 ‘Of the builder, plumber and carpenter (who are my friends), the  
 carpenter is my best/biggest friend.’
- (122) (You follow Muhammad. Why?)  
 Tári muúlúpale etiíní áaka.  
 ti a-ri m-ulupale etiini aka  
 COP 1-be.REL 1-big 9.religion 9.POSS.1SG  
 ‘That’s who is the leader of my religion.’

The initial NP in the reverse pseudocleft must be identifiable, and hence it cannot be an interrogative, as shown in (123) and (124), and neither can it be an indefinite non-specific: *ntthu* ‘person’ in (125) is instead interpreted generically.

- (123) \* Eshééni tícáalyáwo?  
 esheeni ti e-c-ale-au  
 9.what COP 9-eat-PFV.REL-POSS.2SG  
 int. ‘What is it that you eat?’
- (124) \* Pani tilepale va?  
 pani ti o-lep-ale va  
 1.who COP 1-write-PFV.REL 16.DEM.PROX  
 int. ‘Who (is the one who) has written here?’
- (125) Ñtthú táshókonlé (enámá kхиíshókhola).  
 n-tthu ti a-shokhol-ale e-nama  
 1-person COP 2-gather.shellfish-PFV.REL 9-animal  
 kha-e-n-shokhol-a  
 NEG-9-PRS-gather.shellfish-FV  
 ‘People are the ones who gather shellfish (animals don’t).’

Like the pseudocleft, the reverse pseudocleft is also typically used in contexts where a referent is identified to the exclusion of others, as in (115) above. Similarly, in (126), the speaker conveys that out of the possible people to be wearing *nsiro*, it is the young girls.

- (126) Masi ílé, hat' éwórá yaaryáká etémpú el' eélé, ashínúmwaarí, álé  
 tíyóotta más nsiro.  
 masi ile hata ewora e-yar-iy-aka e-tempu  
 but 9.DEM.DIST until 9.hour 9-bear-PASS.REL-POSS.1SG 9-time  
 ele ele a-shi-numwaari ale ti a-ootta  
 9.DEM.DIST 9.DEM.DIST 2-DIM-maiden 2.DEM.DIST COP 2-smear.REL  
 mais n-siro  
 more 3-nsiro  
 'But that, until the time I was born, that very time, girls, they are (the ones) who put nsiro more.'

Furthermore, the initial NP seems to require exhaustive focus. We use the same diagnostics again, showing that (some or all) alternatives must be excluded. First, the universal quantifier 'every' cannot appear in this construction (127).

- (127) \* Kuta mmakhuwa tímphéélá oca saána.  
 kuta m-makhuwa ti o-m-pheela o-ca saana  
 every 1-Makhuwa COP 1-PRS-want.REL 15-eat well  
 'It is every Makhuwa that wants to eat well.'

Second, the felicitous use with 'only' (128) and association of 'only' with the initial NP in (129) rather than the final NP, as well as the ungrammatical 'even' (130) also show the exclusive interpretation of the reverse pseudocleft.

- (128) Manínyá paáhí tá-wá-alé.  
 Maninya paahi ti a-w-ale  
 1.Maninha only COP 2-come-PFV.REL  
 'Only Maninha came.' / 'Maninha was the only one who came.'  
 (van der Wal 2009: 260)
- (129) Nánsi tíkúshale maátsi paáhi?  
 Nansi ti o-kush-ale maatsi paahi  
 1.Nancy COP 1-carry-PFV.REL 6.water only  
 'Is Nancy the only one holding water?'  
 \*'Is Nancy holding only water?'

- (130) (\*Hatá) Ashilópwáná támína.  
hata a-shi-lopwana ti a-n-iina  
until 2-DIM-man COP 2-PRS-dance.REL  
'(Even) The men (are the ones who) dance.'

Third, a numeral receives an exact reading in this construction, as in (131), where a minimum amount reading is not possible (as indicated by the follow-up phrase). Here, it differs interestingly with a numeral following the conjoint verb form, as in (132). Even though this is only one example, and judgements on minimum vs. exact amount are tricky, this may be one of the few environments in which we can see a difference between exclusive focus (some alternatives are excluded, but maybe not all) and exhaustive focus (all alternatives are false).

- (131) Síñku míl tí/pímpheeléhú par' otthúnél' enúpa (#poótí ophéélakátho).  
sinku mil ti?-n-pheel-eéhu para o-tthunela e-nupa  
five thousand COP-PRS-want.REL-POSS.1PL for 15-cover 9-house  
pooti o-pheel-ak-a=tho  
can 15-want-DUR-FV=REP  
'Five thousand is what we need to cover the house (#maybe more).'
- (132) Nimpheéala síñku míl par' otthúnél' enúpa (poótí ophéélakátho).  
ni-n-pheel-a sinku mil para o-tthunela e-nupa pooti  
1PL.SM-PRS.CJ-want-FV five thousand for 15-cover 9-house can  
o-pheel-ak-a=tho  
15-want-DUR-FV=REP  
'We need five thousand to cover the house (maybe more).'

Otherwise, it has proven difficult to find a context in which the reverse pseudocleft can be distinguished from the pseudocleft, and in many situations either construction can be used, as illustrated in (133) and (134).

- (133) X: 'Who is sleeping inside? Abdul?'  
Y: 'No, it's not Abdul, ...'  
a. o-n-rúp-á ti Coána.  
1SM-PRS-sleep-FV.REL COP 1.Joana  
lit. '... the one who sleeps is Joana'  
b. Coáná t' i-ń-rupa.  
1.Joana COP 1-PRS-sleep-FV.REL  
lit. '... Joana is the one who sleeps' (van der Wal 2009: 261)

- (134) (In this picture, who is drinking?)

- a. Nthiyán’ ola vá tímwúrya. (pointing)  
 n-thiyana ola            va            ti    o-n-wury-a  
 1-woman 1.DEM.PROX 16.DEM.PROX COP 1-PRS-drink-FV.REL  
 ‘This woman here is the one who is drinking.’
- b. Amwúryá maátsí athiyána.  
 a-n-wury-a            maatsi a-thiyana  
 2-PRS-drink-FV.REL 6.water 2-woman.PRL  
 ‘Who is drinking water is the woman.’

In (135), the speaker first uses the pseudocleft ‘who will know are grown-up people’ (with predicative lowering on *atthu* ‘people’, and then rephrases it as an inverse pseudocleft ‘they are the ones who will know’. The NP *áththú a khálái* ‘old people’ could be an afterthought after *atthu uúlúpalé*, or a topic of a (repetitive) next sentence, or the initial NP in a reverse pseudocleft. Given the break following this NP, though, the last analysis seems less likely.

- (135) (B: How did the capulana begin? B: I don’t know. That’s what I said, that the capulana I don’t know how it emerged, because I when I was born, I found it being worn and I also wore it.)

- B: Éyó [antthúná otsuwéla atthu uúlúpalé], átthú a khálái, [tántthún’ ótsuwéla], aá.  
 eyo            a-n-tthun-a    o-tsuwela a-tthu            a-ulupale  
 9.DEM.MED 2-PRS-want.REL 15-know 2-person.PRL 2-big  
 a-tthu    a        khalai    ti    a-n-tthun-a    o-tsuwela aa  
 2-person 2.CONN old.times COP 2-PRS-want.REL 15-know yes  
 ‘This, [who will know are older people], very old people, [that’s the ones who will know], yes.’

It is uncertain whether this construction can be analysed as a left-peripheral NP plus a basic cleft, as suggested for other languages in this volume (i.e. a literal translation as “Joanna, it is HER who is sleeping”) – one vital difference is the lack of an independent pronoun in the Makhuwa construction. That construction is only found for personal pronouns, as in (136).

- (136) (present tense: In a group of people preparing there is no cook so someone is appointed to do the cooking.)

Wé ti w' óri/waarí shawuriya.

we      ti      we      o-ri                    /o-a-ri                        shawuriya  
2SG.PRO COP 2SG.PRO 2SG.SM-be.REL /2SG.SM-PST-be.REL 1.cook

'You are (the one who is/was) the cook.'

'You, it's you who is/was the cook.'

In summary, Makhuwa-Enahara shows three types of clefts, all of which express focus. Since there is no other way of focussing a subject, focused subjects must always choose a cleft construction. The precise factors determining the choice of cleft require more detailed investigation, but two hypotheses are that 1) the pseudocleft expresses identification while the basic cleft and the reverse pseudocleft express exhaustive focus, and 2) the basic cleft is used for pronouns whereas full noun phrases are focused in the reverse pseudocleft.

In the description and analysis so far, we have seen how in Makhuwa-Enahara, verb form, constituent order, predicate doubling, and clefts are used to express the information-structural functions (topic, focus) and we have seen their precise interpretations. There is, however, another vital aspect of information structure, which is the status of referents and their degree of mental accessibility. How this influences the language is taken up in the next (and final) section.

## 6 Referent tracking

The choice of expression to refer to a referent largely depends on the status of the referent in terms of mental accessibility – see the introduction to this volume. Inspired by Ariel (1990, 2001) (and see further references on activation in van der Wal et al. 2025 [this volume]), I proposed an accessibility hierarchy of referential expressions specifically for Makhuwa (van der Wal 2010a: 195), modified as in (137), where more accessible referents tend to be coded by expressions on the right side of the hierarchy, and less accessible referents prefer expressions on the left:

- (137) N+modifier > N > DEM N DEM > N+DEM > DEM/pronoun > prefix > zero

Brand-new referents are presented by full NPs in postverbal position (see Section 3.4 on subject inversion and the presentational construction with *-haavo*), and on the other end of the continuum of accessibility, highly accessible referents are encoded as subject prefixes for subjects and object prefixes or zero for objects.

Illustrating the right end of the hierarchy, Theme objects can easily be omitted altogether if they are highly accessibly and in a class other than 1/2, as illustrated in (138) and (139). There are no examples of Recipient drop, as Recipients are typically in class 1/2 or 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> person and therefore need to be expressed by an object marker on the verb.

- (138) (Did you buy fish and wash the dishes?)

Áyo, k-oo-thúm-á                ni    k-oo-ráp-ih-a.  
 yes 1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-buy-FV and 1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-wash-CAUS-FV  
 ‘Yes, I bought (it) and I washed (them).’

- (139) (But he knew what she wanted to do; he took the cloth,)

o-o-pér-ák-ats-ááá...  
 1SM-PFV.DJ-tear-DUR-PLUR-FV

‘He tore (it)...’

ohaáváha ashíkhwáawe yaarí atháín’ ámótsa.

o-h-a-vah-a                      a-shikhw-aawe a-a-ri              a-thanu ni  
 1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-2OM-give-FV 2-fellow-POSS.1 2-PST-be.REL 2-five and  
 a-motsa  
 2-one

‘he gave (it/them) to his six friends.’

Poeta (2016) investigated the hypothesis that Makuwa would show more object drop than Swahili, given the fact that Swahili has the option of expressing the object by an object marker for all relevant noun classes, whereas Makuwa only has object markers for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person and class 1/2. Her study did not confirm this for Makuwa-Emeetto: she found a similar amount of object drop in Swahili as in Makuwa texts. Interestingly, Makuwa does use full NPs more often for anaphoric reference – see Poeta (2016) for details.

Where the encoding at the far ends of the accessibility hierarchy is relatively (!) clear, the situation in between shows interesting uses of pronominal expressions, discussed in Sections 6.1–6.3. It should be kept in mind that referent tracking is influenced by, and plays a role in structuring, the higher level of discourse and narration as well – something I will not go into in this chapter.

## 6.1 Personal pronouns

Makuwa has independent pronouns for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person, and classes 1 and 2 – see Table 1. For 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person, a short and a long form exist, where the

long form seems to be “more emphatic” (whatever this turns out to be in future research).

Table 1: Personal pronouns (van der Wal 2009: 64)

SG	1	mi / miyaano	PL	1	hī/ hiyaano
	2	we / weyaano		2	nyutse / nyuwaanotse
	2RESP	nyu / nyuwaano		cl.2	ayena(tse)
	cl.1	yena			

These independent pronouns are used after prepositions (140), in non-verbal predication, as in (107) above and (141), but more relevant for information structure, they are also used in contrastive topics and foci, illustrated in (32) and (49) above, and below in (142) for topic and (143) for focus.

- (140) Nihááná nimváháká eyoólyá ekhwáawé para yéná okhálá saáná.  
 ni-haan-a ni-m-vah-ak-a eyooca e-khw-aawe para  
 1PL.SM-have-FV 1PL.SM-1OM-give-DUR-FV 9.food 9-fellow-POSS.1 for  
 yena o-khala saana  
 1.PRO 15-stay well  
 ‘We have to give other food so that s/he stays well.’
- (141) Vá óle orí ntsulú mímwě kahi yéná mpáthháni áwo.  
 va ole o-ri n-tsulu mmwe kahi yena  
 16.DEM.PROX 1.DEM.DIST 1SM-be.REL 18-up 18.DEM.DIST NEG.COP 1.PRO  
 m-patthani au  
 1-friend 1.POSS.2SG  
 ‘Now the one who is up there is not your friend.’
- (142) Hí, nimpéél’ otthyawá, yéná omphééla weettá.  
 hi ni-n-pheel-a o-tthyawa yena o-n-pheel-a o-eetta  
 1PL.PRO 1PL.SM-PRS.CJ-want 15-run 1.PRO 1SM-PRS-want-FV 15-walk  
 ‘We want to run, s/he wants to walk.’
- (143) Áyéná tahiwaale.  
 a-yena ti a-hi-w-ale  
 2-PRO COP 1-NEG-come-PFV.REL  
 ‘They (are the ones who) didn’t come.’

Furthermore, in a list of topics all with the same predicate, the last topic can optionally be marked by *ni yena* ‘and 1.PRO’, roughly translatable as ‘him/her/it

too', which may be called marking of an "additive topic". This is possible for both subjects and objects, but only for class 1 referents that are animate, as seen in (144–146).<sup>15</sup> As mentioned, there are no independent pronouns for other classes, and demonstratives are not used in this way, as can be seen in the comparison between (144a) and (144b).

- (144) a. E-nyómpé e-n-khúúr-a ma-lashí, n' ii-púrí e-n-khúúr-á  
       9-cow     9SM-PRS.CJ-eat-FV 6-grass and 9-goat 9SM-PRS.CJ-eat-FV  
       ma-lashí, namárókolo **ni** yéná (també) o-n-khúúr-á ma-lashí.  
       6-grass 1.hare and 1.PRO also 1SM-PRS.CJ-eat-FV 6-grass  
       'The cow eats grass, the goat eats grass, the hare too eats grass.'
- b. Namárókolo o-n-khúúr-a ma-lashí, e-nyómpé  
       1.hare     1SM-PRS.CJ-eat-FV 6-grass 9-cow  
       e-n-khúúr-a ma-lashí, n' ii-púrí (\***ni** yéná/ \***n'** iílé)  
       9SM-PRS.CJ-eat-FV 6-grass and 9-goat and 1.PRO and 9.DEM.DIST  
       e-n-khúúr-a malashí (també).  
       9SM-PRS.CJ-eat-FV 6-grass also  
       'The hare eats grass, the cow eats grass, and the goat eats grass (too).'
- (145) Zyórzyé ki-nú-ń-kanyári,  
       1.Jorge 1SG.SM-PFV.PERS-1OM-win  
       Amáátí ki-nú-ń-kanyári,  
       1.Amade 1SG.SM-PFV.PERS-1OM-win  
       Ambásí també / **ni** yéná / \***n'** uúlé     ki-nú-ń-kanyári.  
       1.Ambasse also / and 1.PRO / and 1.DEM.DIST 1SG.SM-PFV.PERS-1OM-win  
       'I won from Jorge, I won from Amade, and Ambasse him too I beat.'
- (146) Sinkiyá koíkhúura, kohoócá mathaápá, ni kharáká (\***ni** yéná/\***n'** uúlé)  
       koíkhúura.  
       sinkiya     ki-o-n-khuur-a     ki-o-c-a     ma-thaapa  
       1.pumpkin 1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-1OM-eat-FV 1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-eat-FV 6-mathapa  
       ni kharaka ni yena / ni ole     ki-o-n-khuur-a  
       and 1.cassava and 1.PRO / and 1.DEM.DIST 1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-1OM-eat-FV  
       'Pumpkin I ate, I ate mathapa, and cassava I ate (too).'

For 3<sup>rd</sup> persons, Makhuwa typically uses demonstratives for pronominal reference, in contexts further specified in the following subsections.

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<sup>15</sup>I have not seen a plural counterpart.

## 6.2 (Circum)demonstratives for less accessible referents

Makhuwa has three series of demonstratives distinguished according to distance from the speaker and addressee, plus an emphatic form of each, as in Table 2.<sup>16</sup> Demonstratives are a conspicuous tool for referent tracking in Makhuwa-Enahara (although see Poeta 2016 for a different conclusion for Makhuwa-Emeetto).

Table 2: Overview demonstratives (based on van der Wal 2009: 47)

Class	Standard			Emphatic		
	PROX	MED	DIST	PROX	MED	DIST
1 <i>mwaáná</i> ‘child’	óla	óyo	óle	yóola	yóoyo	yóole
2 <i>aáná</i> ‘children’	ála	áyo	ále	yáala	yáayo	yáale
3 <i>nvéló</i> ‘broom’	óla	óyo	óle	yóola	yóoyo	yóole
4 <i>mivéló</i> ‘brooms’	íya	íyo	íye	yéyya/	yéyyo/	yéyye/
				tséyya	tséyyo	tséyye
5 <i>ntátá</i> ‘hand’	ína	íno	íne	nénna	nénno	nénne
6 <i>matátá</i> ‘hands’	ála	áyo	ále	yáala	yáayo	yáale
9 <i>emáttá</i> ‘field’	éla	éyo	éle	yéela	yéeyo	yeéle
10 <i>emáttá</i> ‘fields’	íya	íyo	íye	yéyya/	yéyyo/	yéyye/
				tséyya	tséyyo	tséyye
14 <i>orávó</i> ‘honey’	óla	óyo	óle	yóola	yóoyo	yóole
16	vá	vó	vále	vááva	váavo	váávaled
17	íno	úwo	úwe	wénno	wéwwo/	wéwwe
				wówwo		
18	mú	ŕmmo	ŕmmwe	móomu	mómmo	mwémwe/
						wómwe

My study of Makhuwa narratives (van der Wal 2010a) revealed that demonstratives are used to refer to accessible (but not active) referents, that is, demonstratives help the reactivation of referents. The pronominal demonstrative is typically found in topic shifts, and after an episode boundary. I illustrated this with the sequence in (147) (van der Wal 2010a: 197). In (147a), the topic and subject is *the Portuguese* (class 2 ‘they’). The topic shifts to the just-introduced fisherman in (147b), where the demonstrative *ole* is used. Continuing the same topic, (147c) refers to the fisherman only by a subject prefix, but in (147d) the topic shifts to the Portuguese again, and the demonstrative *ale* occurs.

<sup>16</sup>Vowel liaison may result in a pronunciation as *ula/uyo/ule*, *ila/ijo/ile*. and in lengthening.

- (147) (The Portuguese went to India. Passing on open sea, when they looked around, they saw this very island and they thought “Let’s take our boat, let’s go and take a rest on that island”. When they arrived there, ...)
- A-ím-phwányá n-lópwáná m-motsá.  
2SM.PFV.DJ-1OM-meet 1-man 1-one  
'They met a man.'
  - Ólé aa-rí nákhavokó,  
1.DEM.DIST 1SM.PST-be 1.fisherman.PRL  
'He was a fisherman,'
  - aa-ríná e-kalawa ts-áwé ts-a khavóko.  
1SM.PST-have 10-boat 10-POSS.1 10-CONN fishing  
'he had his fishing boats.'
  - Álé a-ím-wéh-áts-a.  
2.DEM.DIST 2SM.PFV.DJ-1OM-look-PLUR-FV  
'They looked at him.' (van der Wal 2010a: 197)

The distal adnominal demonstrative is also used anaphorically, and it is similarly used for reactivation of earlier-mentioned referents. In example (148), the owl (*e-tsíitsí*) is referred to in sentence 6 of the story, again four sentences later and again two sentences later, when it is referred to with a noun modified by a demonstrative (van der Wal 2010a: 93).

- (148) Hw-íir-a "Mí e-tsíitsí, ki-náá-vár-á,  
NARR-say-FV 1SG.PRO 9-owl 1SG.SM-PRS.DJ-grab-FV  
ki-náá-khúur-a".  
1SG.SM-PRS.DJ-eat-FV  
'And he (the fox) said: the owl, I will catch him and eat him.'  
[...]  
Hatá ni-húkú ni-motsá, ólé khweelí o-ím-phwány'  
until 5-day 5-one 1.DEM.DIST certainly 1SM.PFV.DJ-1OM-meet  
*e-tsíitsí...*<sup>17</sup>  
9-owl  
'Until one day he found the owl...'  
[...]

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<sup>17</sup>Note also that the verb form *o-ímphwányá* here is disjoint, as the point of the sentence if not to focus the owl (as opposed to other animals), but rather the fact that the owl was caught (which may be seen as polarity focus).

O-o-phíy-á                      válé,                      o-o-túph-á,  
 1SM-PFV.DJ-arrive-FV 16.DEM.DIST 1SM-PFV.DJ-jump-FV  
 o-o-vár-á                      e-tsíts' íle.  
 1SM-PFV.DJ-grab-FV 9-owl 9.DEM.DIST  
 'He arrived there, he jumped, (and) he caught the/that owl.'

Both the adnominal and pronominal use are illustrated in (149), where the pronominal demonstrative is used (*ólé ookhúmá*) rather than only the subject marker, in order to switch from one referent (Tortoise) to another (Leopard). But then the narrator realises that it may at that point not be entirely clear who is who, adding the full name plus demonstrative afterwards (*havárá ole*).

- (149) (Leopard<sub>i</sub> saves Tortoise<sub>m</sub> from the fire. Tortoise says "Tomorrow you must come to my<sub>m</sub> house, when the fire has stopped." He<sub>i</sub> said "I have heard you." So he<sub>m</sub> went away, crawling crawling crawling to his<sub>m</sub> house. He<sub>m</sub> arrived but the fire didn't reach (the house).)
- Masi seertú nróttó                      áyá,                      nuu-thowa-thówá moóró  
 but truly day.after.tomorrow poss.2 RSM-extinguish-RED 3.fire  
 olé,                      ólé                      oo-khúm-á,                      oo-rów-a,  
 3.DEM.DIST 1.DEM.DIST 1SM.PFV.DJ-exit-FV 1SM.PFV.DJ-go-FV  
 'But as promised, the day after, when the fire had extinguished, he<sub>i</sub> went out, he<sub>i</sub> went...'
- havárá                      ole                      oo-rów-á                      wa-khápá                      óle.<sup>18</sup>  
 1.Leopard 1.DEM.DIST 1SM.PFV.DJ-go-FV 16-1.Tortoise 1.DEM.DIST  
 '... Leopard<sub>i</sub> went to Tortoise's<sub>m</sub>'

There is yet another way in Makhuwa to (re)activate referents: circumdemonstratives. Demonstratives may occur both before and after the noun in three (re)activating contexts: first, when reactivating a referent that has not been mentioned for some time; second, in tail-head linking; and third, at episode boundaries. I repeat the illustration and explanation I gave in my earlier paper (van der Wal 2010a: 200–201):

The last mention of the subject of the first sentence in [(150)], was in sentence 70. After an episode speaking solely about the man whose wife was taken from him, the story comes back to the one who took the wife, which

<sup>18</sup>The tonal patterns on the demonstratives here derive from a combination of the following factors: adnominal vs. pronominal use, final lowering, and boundary continuation tones. See van der Wal (2009: chapter 2) for further information on tone rules.

is sentence 98 of the story. The narrator starts by referring to him with a pronominal demonstrative *ólé*, but realises that the referent is not sufficiently accessible to be identified directly. In a pseudocleft construction (who answered was the/that man who...), he adds information so as to make sure that the listeners pick the right referent, and uses the doubled demonstrative to refer to the less accessible referent.

- (150) ólé khwíira  
 ole            khu-ira  
 1.DEM.DIST NARR-say  
 ‘and he said,’  
 aakhulle t’ uúlé nlópwán’ oolé aamwaákhálé mwaár’ áw’ oole  
 a-a-akhul-ale            ti        ole            n-lopwana ole  
 1-PST-answer-PFV.REL COP 1.DEM.DIST 1-man        1.DEM.DIST  
 a-a-m-akh-ale            mwaara        awe        ole  
 1-PST-1OM-pull-PFV.REL 1.woman 1.POSS.1 1.DEM.III  
 ‘(the one) who answered was that man who had snatched his wife away,’  
 hwíra mpattháni...  
 khu-íra        m-pattháni...  
 NARR-say 1-friend  
 ‘he said: my friend...’ (van der Wal 2010a: 201)

Newly introduced referents that are presented in the comment of a sentence are often repeated at the start of the following sentence. In this repetition, two demonstratives may be used to enhance activation of the referent and make them more prominent for future reference as well. Examples (151) and (152) are from different stories, and both show the introduction of a woman (one in subject inversion, the other as object), who in the next sentence is marked by two demonstratives in order to function as the topic of that sentence.

- (151) (A long long time ago, when the world was bald, water had a tail, and the trees jumped,) Aanúúkhálá nthiyána mmotsá, aarí n’ iirukulu yuulupále.  
 a-a-nuu-khal-a            n-thiyana m-motsa a-a-ri        ni        e-rukulu  
 2SM-PST-PERS-stay-FV 1-woman 1-one        2SM-PST-be with 9-belly  
 e-ulupale  
 9-big  
 ‘There was a woman, she had a big belly.’

Ólé nthiyán' ole aakúshá ncómá áwé, oorééla maátsi opuúsu.  
ole n-thiyana ole a-o-kush-a n-coma  
1.DEM.DIST 1-woman 1.DEM.DIST 2SM-PFV.DJ-carry-FV 3-container  
awe o-o-row-el-a maatsi o-puusu  
3.POSS.1 1SM-PFV.DJ-go-APPL-FV 6.water 17-well  
'This woman carried her container and went to fetch water at the well.'

- (152) O-m̩-phwány-a n-thiyáná m-motsá.  
1SM.PFV.DJ-1OM-meet-FV 1-woman 1-one  
'He met a woman.'
- Ólé nthiyán' uule khoóthá aapáh' ólumweíku.  
ole n-thiyana ole kha-a-oth-a a-aa-pah-a  
1.DEM.DIST 1-woman 1.DEM.DIST NEG-1SM.IPFV-lie-FV 1SM-IPFV-light-FV  
o-lumwenku.  
14-world  
'This woman didn't just lie, she set the world on fire!' (van der Wal 2009: 180)

According to Ariel (2001), referents are also less accessible when they occur after an episode boundary. They need to be reestablished in the current episode, and this too happens by demonstratives in Makhwa – pronominal or circum-demonstrative. The episode in (153) ends with the mother's death, and the new episode starts with the protagonist as the (shifted) topic, marked by two demonstratives.

- (153) (Now his mother became ill. She called her son and said: "[...]. Do you remember?" He said "I remember". "That's what I am telling you")
- Ólé khú-khw-a.  
1.DEM.DIST NARR-die-FV  
'and then she died.'
  - Ólé rapásy' úúlé oo-khál-á oo-khálá  
1.DEM.DIST 1.boy 1.DEM.DIST 1SM.PFV.DJ-stay-FV RED  
oo-khálá.  
RED  
'The boy stayed and stayed and stayed.'
  - Oo-phiy-á okáthí w' oóthéla.  
14SM.PFV.DJ-arrive-FV 14.time 14.CONN 15.marry  
'(Until) it was time to get married.' (van der Wal 2010a: 203–204)

For further discussion and examples of demonstratives and reference tracking, I refer to van der Wal (2010a).

### 6.3 Emphatic demonstrative

The emphatic form of the demonstrative consists of the demonstrative with an agreeing prefix, glossed as E as in (154–157). Its function seems to be an emphatic (re-)identification of a previously established referent, or in Floor's (1998) words a “confirmative demonstrative”, translated as ‘the very (same)’. It is typically used pronominally.

- (154) Yaanúmvól' etálá hatá khúc' éshíma (**yééle** ehiníítsivelaka).  
 e-a-nuu-n-vol-a                    e-tala      hata khu-c-a      e-shima  
 9SM-PST-PERS-1OM-torment-FV 9-hunger until NARR-eat-FV 9-shima  
 yeele                                e-hi-n-n-tsivel-ak-a  
 9.EDEM.DIST 9-NEG-PRS-1OM-please-DUR-FV.REL  
 ‘He was hungry to such an extent that he ate shima (the same that he doesn't like).’
- (155) Válé                        o-khúmá ni-húkú **néíné...**  
 16.DEM.DIST 15-exit    5-day    5.EDEM.DIST  
 ‘as of that day/ from that day on...’ (van der Wal 2009: 48)
- (156) (He searched and searched for a woman. He found one woman – this woman didn't just lie, she set the world on fire (with her lies). So when he heard about this lying woman, ...)  
 ...hw-íira: “Paáhi, ki-n-iín-thél-a                        yóoyo.”  
 NARR-say only    1SG.SM-PRS-1OM-marry-FV 1.EDEM.MED  
 ‘... he said: “That's it, I will marry that very one”’
- (157) (She went straight to the police. She said ‘my husband at home has killed!’. ‘He has killed?’ She said ‘Yes. Go there and blood will be found.’)  
**Yoólé**                        mpákhá wa-ámútsy' aáwe  
 1.EDEM.DIST until    16-2.family 2.POSS.1  
 ‘She/the same went to his family's place.’ (van der Wal 2009: 48)

The emphatic demonstrative can be formally distinguished from the reduplicated demonstrative, illustrated in (158), which consists simply of a repetition of the simplex demonstrative (compare again the columns in Table 2).

- (158) ni mwalápw' ool'        oólé oo-lúm-ák-ats-íy-á...  
 and 1.dog        1.DEM.DIST RED 1SM.PFV.DJ-bite-DUR-PLUR-PASS-FV  
 'and that dog was bitten...' (van der Wal 2009: 48)

It remains to be studied when exactly the reduplicated demonstrative is used, compared to a single demonstrative, and compared to the emphatic demonstrative.

## 7 Summary and conclusion

In summary, information structure has a rather fundamental impact on the grammar of Makhuwa-Enahara. Primarily, it influences the constituent order in placing topics preverbally and having a dedicated immediate-after-verb focus position, and it is expressed in four main clause conjugations (present, present perfective, imperfective, and past perfective) where a choice is forced between the conjoint form (exclusive focus on the following constituent) and the disjoint verb form (elsewhere). The general template for a Makhuwa phrase not involving a copular construction (including clefts), is as in Figure 1, and illustrated from different spontaneous discourse and narratives in (159–163).

discourse marker	topic	comment		afterthought
		focus	background	

Figure 1: Template of Makhuwa constituent order

- (159) [Vánó...]<sub>DM</sub> [élé ekuw' éele valé]<sub>TOP</sub> [ekhumalé [tsáyi?] ]<sub>FOC</sub> ]<sub>COMM</sub>  
 vano ele        ekuwo ele        vale        e-khum-ale        tsayi  
 now 9.DEM.DIST 9.cloth 9.DEM.DIST 16.DEM.DIST 9SM-exit-PFV.CJ how  
 'Now, the capulana, where did it come from/how did it start?'
- (160) [Mí]<sub>TOP</sub> [kóhoótta]<sub>COMM</sub>, [enúmwáari yáaka.]<sub>AFT</sub>  
 mi        ki-o-oott-a        enumwaari        e-aka  
 1SG.PRO 1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-smear-FV 9.adolescence 9-POSS.1SG  
 'I too used (it), in my adolescence.'
- (161) [Vánó]<sub>DM</sub> [hw-íyá-w-aak-á khutsúpa.]<sub>COMM</sub>  
 vano khu-iya-w-ak-a        khutsupa.  
 now NARR-IPFV-come-DUR-FV 1.hyena  
 'Then came Hyena.'

- (162) [O-r-aalé [w-eetheyá ettuúra.]<sub>FOC</sub>]<sub>COMM</sub>  
 o-row-ale o-eetheya ettuura  
 1SM-go-PFV.CJ 15-wet 9.ashes  
 ‘He went to make the ashes wet.’
- (163) [Mahíkw’ éeny’ áala vá]<sub>TOP</sub> [ashínúmwaary’ otééné]<sub>TOP</sub> [amphéélá  
 [weettakátsá pwitipwííti.]<sub>FOC</sub>]<sub>COMM</sub>  
 ma-hiku ene ala va a-shi-numwaari a-oteene  
 6-day INT 5.DEM.PROX PP 2-DIM-maiden 2-all  
 a-m-pheel-a o-eett-ak-ats-a pwitipwiti  
 2SM-PRS.CJ-want-FV 15-walk-DUR-PLUR-FV naked  
 ‘These days, all the girls want to walk naked.’

To express polarity focus and verum in Makhuwa, a simple verb form suffices, but an infinitive may be placed in the left periphery of the sentence functioning as a (potentially contrastive) topic, with the same verb repeated as an inflected form – the construction known as topic doubling. Topic doubling had not been previously described for Makhuwa, and the possibilities for lexical subjects and objects in this construction, together with their interpretation and possible contexts for use, remain to be studied. This will likely also provide further insight into the expression of predicate-centred focus in general.

As in all languages, cleft sentences can also be formed to express focus in Makhuwa-Enahara, whether as a basic cleft, pseudocleft, or reverse pseudocleft. All three constructions show signs of an exclusive interpretation, and further investigation should reveal whether the distinction should be sought in a categorial difference (pronoun vs. full NP), a grammatical difference (subject vs. object), or an interpretational difference (explicit backgrounding, implied vs. encoded exclusivity).

Finally, pronouns and demonstratives are used for reactivation and contrast of mental referents. The interaction between the lack of object markers and the anaphoric use of other pronominal elements as well as NPs is currently being investigated by Teresa Poeta.

While there are numerous areas for further investigation (as indicated throughout the chapter), it can certainly be concluded that it would be impossible to analyse Makhuwa morphosyntax and constituent order without reference to information structure.

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## Abbreviations and symbols

Numbers refer to noun classes except when followed by SG/PL, in which case they refer to persons. Commas indicate a pause. The orthographic ⟨tt⟩ reflects a retroflex voiceless stop and nasalisation is indicated by a tilde under the vowel ⟨V̄⟩.

*	ungrammatical	INT	intensifier
#	infelicitous in the given context	MED	medial
(X)	the presence of X is obligatory and cannot grammatically be omitted	OM	object marker
(*X)	the presence of X would make the sentence ungrammatical	OPT	optative
(X)	the presence of X is optional	PERS	persistive
(*X)	the presence of X would make the sentence ungrammatical	PLA	plural addressee
		PLUR	plurative
CE	counterexpectational	PP	pragmatic particle
CJ	conjoint	PRL	predicative lowering
cit.	citation form	PRO	pronoun
CONN	connective	RED	reduplication
DIM	diminutive	RSM	resumptive infinitive
DJ	disjoint	REP	repetitive
DM	discourse marker	RESP	respect
E.DEM	emphatic demonstrative	SIT	situative
EXCLAM	exclamative	SM	subject marker
FV	final vowel	SUBS	subsecutive

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# Chapter 9

## The expression of information structure in Cicopi

Nelsa Nhantumbo<sup>a</sup> & Jenneke van der Wal<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Universidade Eduardo Mondlane <sup>b</sup>Leiden University

This chapter describes the information structure in Cicopi, discussing and illustrating the information-structural function of verbal inflection, word order, three types of cleft constructions, two types of predicate doubling, and the choice of referent expression. Cicopi has three different forms to mark the present tense: conjoint, disjoint/habitual, and progressive; and the perfective is marked by *-ile/-ite* or *to-*. The conditions under which these are used seems to depend not just on constituent-finality and aspect, but also on focus and maybe evidentiality. There is no dedicated focus position in Cicopi and the three clefts, as well as subject inversion, are used to express various types of focus.

### 1 Introduction

This chapter gives a general overview of the expression of information structure in Cicopi. Cicopi is a Bantu language codified as S61 in the Guthrie (1948) classification, updated by Maho (2009), with ISO code [cce]. It is spoken predominantly in South Mozambique, in the provinces of Gaza and Inhambane, by approximately 336,020 people (INE 2017). According to Ngunga & Faquir (2011), this language has 6 variants: Cindonje, Cilenge, Citonga, Cicopi, Cilambwe and Cikhambani. Cicopi was the variant used in this research because it is the reference variant (see Ngunga & Faquir 2011). Data were collected during the month of July 2019 in Chidenguele, Mozambique, with two male speakers and one female speaker aged 24–42, and were supplemented with data that were checked



with these and other native speakers. The data were entered into an Online Language Database accessible via Dative, and transcribed according to the orthography (Ngunga & Faquir 2011), with added tone marking and indication of vowel lengthening. We have done our best to mark surface tone, including downstep, but we are not certain of all tone marking (especially on the examples from the Frog Story), and further study is necessary to verify the tones and intonation and analyse the tone system.

Copi is a little-studied language. Among the studies carried out, the following stand out: Dos Santos (1941) with *Gramática da língua chope*; Bailey (1976) on the phonology and morphotonology; Nhantumbo (2009) describing morphophonological processes resulting from marking the past in Copi; Nhantumbo (2014) describing the verb in present and future; Nhantumbo (2019a) on the phonology and morphology of the verb; and Nhantumbo (2019b) describing negation marking in Cicopi.

In this chapter, the aim is to provide an overview of how information structure in Cicopi is expressed. We do this by describing the context-dependent interpretation of a number of linguistic strategies in Cicopi, i.e. from form to function. We start with verbal inflection in Cicopi, to show the use and interpretation of different verb forms (Section 2), followed by the word order (Section 3), discussing the basic word order in Cicopi, the absence of a dedicated focus position in the sentence, and subject inversion constructions. We then continue to present the form and function of three types of cleft constructions (Section 4), and predicate doubling (Section 5). We close with remarks on referent expression (Section 6).

## 2 Verbal inflection

Earlier work (Bailey 1976, Nhantumbo 2014, 2019a) primarily described the formal aspects (the morphology, tonology and morphophonology) of verbal inflection. In this section, we survey not just the form but investigate the use and meaning of the conjugations in more detail.

In some tense/aspect conjugations, Cicopi has more than one verb form. There are three forms in the present tense (Section 2.1), and two forms in the perfective (Section 2.2), whose distribution seems to be influenced or even determined by information structure (but see the discussion below for the influence of aspect and evidentiality, too, in the present tense). Their forms are given in Table 1. Two of the forms in the present tense resemble the so-called conjoint/disjoint alternation as found in other southern and eastern Bantu languages (see van der Wal & Hyman 2017 for an overview). This alternation is characterised by the two verb

forms typically sharing the same tense/aspect semantics, but showing a difference in their distribution (conjoint cannot appear clause-finally whereas disjoint can) and a difference in information structure (the conjoint form being followed by focused information, and the disjoint not). The progressive form (which Bailey 1976 calls “continuous”) constitutes its own category, but interacts with the other two forms in applying to the present situation (Nhantumbo 2005). The two perfective forms do not seem to vary in aspect. We discuss some information-structural differences below, but further research is needed to establish the exact form-meaning mappings.

Table 1: Overview of tenses with possible influence of information structure in Cicopi

	affirmative	translation	negative
present cj	SM-VB-a		
present DJ/habitual	SM-a-VB-a	I cook/am cooking	SM-ka-VB-i
present progressive	SM-o-VB-a	I am cooking	SM-ka-VB-i (+tone)
perfective TO	SM-VB-ile/-ite/-e SM-to-VB-a	I (have) cooked I (have) cooked	SM-yá-VB-a

We discuss the form, distribution, and interpretation of the present and perfective conjugations in turn.

## 2.1 Present tense

The present tense conjoint and disjoint verb form in Cicopi belong to the same conjugation, as they share one negative form (see Table 1), and they can occur in question-answer pairs, with the question in (1) containing the unmarked conjoint present form, and the answer the disjoint form marked by *a-*.

- (1) Q: Ina matutu:ma cikolwa:ni?<sup>1</sup> [conjoint]  
 ina mu-a-tutum-a ci-kolwa-ni  
 Q 2PL.SM-DJ-run-FV 7-school-loc  
 ‘Do you run at school?’

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<sup>1</sup>No tone marking.

- A: Hatútû:ma. [disjoint]  
 hi-a-tutum-a  
 1PL.SM-DJ-run-FV  
 'We (do) run.'
- A': Hígó:nda mabhu:ku. [conjoint]  
 hi-gond-a ma-bhuku  
 1PL.SM-read-FV 6-book  
 'We read books.'

The present tense forms differ in their distribution: As defining for the conjoint/disjoint alternation (van der Wal 2017), the conjoint form cannot appear in sentence-final position of a main clause, as shown in (2a) and (3b). Instead, the disjoint form must be used, as in (2b), or the conjoint form must appear in non-final position as in (2c). The progressive can also appear in sentence-final position, as shown in (3a).

- (2) a. \* Dikanéká hidwo:na. [conjoint]  
 di-kaneka hi-di-won-a  
 5-mug 1PL.SM-5OM-see-FV  
 int. 'The mug, we see it.'
- b. Dikanéká hadiwo:na. [disjoint]  
 di-kaneka hi-a-di-won-a  
 5-mug 1PL.SM-DJ-5OM-see-FV  
 'The mug, we see it.'
- c. Hiwóná dikanê:ka. [conjoint]  
 hi-won-a di-kaneka  
 1PL.SM-see-FV 5-mug  
 'We see a/the mug.'
- (3) (What are you doing?)  
 a. Hótútû:ma. [progressive]  
 hi-o-tutum-a  
 1PL.SM-PROG-run-FV  
 'We are running.'
- b. \* Hítútû:ma. [conjoint]  
 hi-tutum-a  
 1PL.SM-run-FV  
 int. 'We are running. / We run.'

Interestingly, the conjoint form is accepted in final position as a yes/no question, as in (4). This is a use that has not been described in other languages, and at the moment it is not yet well understood.

- (4) (A dog with rabies is coming towards us)

Hítútû:ma? [conjoint]  
 hi-tutum-a  
 1PL.SM-run-FV  
 'Do we run? / Should we run?'

There are indications in the penultimate lengthening that the conjoint and the progressive forms are phrased together with the following constituent(s). Based on analyses for other eastern and southern Bantu languages (e.g. Zerbian 2006 for Northern Sotho; Zeller et al. 2017, Halpert 2017 for Zulu; Devos 2008 for Makwe among others), we hypothesise that penultimate lengthening indicates the right boundary of a phonological phrase. The conjoint and progressive forms do not show lengthening on the verb (only on the object), whereas the disjoint form shows lengthening on both verb and object, as illustrated in (5). However, there seems to be variation, and dedicated investigation is needed to show the interaction between syntax, prosodic phrasing, and information structure.

- (5) a. (What are you drawing?/#Are you doing what I told you?)

Hireká mâ:ti. [conjoint]  
 hi-rek-a mati  
 1PL.SM-draw-FV 6.water  
 'We are drawing water.'

- b. (Are you doing what I said to do?/You don't draw water.)

A:thú hárê:ka (mâ:ti). [disjoint]  
 athu hi-a-rek-a mati  
 1PL.PRO 1PL.SM-DJ-draw-FV 6.water  
 'We (do) draw (water).'  
 'We *are* drawing (water).'

- c. (What are you doing now?)

A:thú ho:rê:ká mâ:ti. [progressive]  
 athu hi-o-rek-a mati  
 1PL.PRO 1PL.SM-PROG-draw-FV 6.water  
 'We are drawing water.'

When a postverbal element is in focus, the conjoint or progressive form has to be used; for example an inherently focused content question word (6) or an object modified by the exhaustive focus-sensitive particle ‘only’ (7). The disjoint form is not accepted here (with or without penultimate length), as indicated for both examples.

- (6) a. Muthúmá ca:ni? [conjoint]  
 mu-thum-a cani  
 2PL.SM-do-FV what  
 ‘What are you (pl) doing?’
  - b. \* Mathúmá ca:ni? [disjoint]  
 mu-a-thum-a cani  
 2PL.SM-DJ-do-FV what  
 int. ‘What are you (pl) doing?’
  - c. Mothúmá ca:ni? [progressive]  
 mu-o-thum-a cani  
 2PL.SM-PROG-do-FV what  
 ‘What are you (pl) doing?’
- (7) Hi-xav-a / \* h-a-xav-a / h-o-xav-a ma-fá:ka dwé.  
 1PL.SM-buy-FV / 1PL.SM-DJ-buy-FV / 1PL.SM-PROG-buy-FV 6-maize only  
 ‘We buy/are buying only maize.’

Nevertheless, while focus occurs with a conjoint form, the inverse is not true: post-conjoint constituents can be unfocussable items such as parts of idioms, as in (8), and cognate objects, as in (9). Cognate objects and parts of idioms cannot be focused, because they cannot generate any alternatives in the idiomatic interpretation (see van der Wal 2016, 2021) – what else would one be dreaming if not a dream?

- (8) Nila:vwá / nala:vwá / nola:vwá ngu pápi:lu.  
 ni-lav-w-a / ni-a-lav-w-a /  
 1SG.SM-want-PASS-FV / 1SG.SM-DJ-want-PASS-FV /  
 ni-o-lav-w-a ngu papilu  
 1SG.SM-PROG-want-PASS-FV PREP 9.letter  
 literal: ‘I am wanted by the letter.’  
 idiomatic: ‘I need to go to the toilet.’

- (9) (Context: A child is asleep and making movements.)

- a. Álórá mó:ro. [conjoint]  
 a-lor-a            m-loro  
 1SM-dream-FV 3-dream  
 ‘S/he is dreaming a dream.’
- b. Ól'ó:rá mó:ro. [progressive]  
 a-o-lor-a            m-loro  
 1SM-PROG-dream-FV 3-dream  
 ‘S/he is dreaming a dream.’

Thus, the conjoint form in Cicopi does not express (exclusive) focus on a postverbal element. This can also be seen in the possibility to modify an object by *hambi* ‘even’ (10), which is incompatible with an inherently exclusive meaning, as ‘even’ means that all other more likely items have also been washed, not excluding any alternatives.

- (10) Jhoáná ázilé ákuwúlá hambí ni máláso:ro [conjoint]  
       Joana a-z-ile      a-kuwul-a    hambi ni   ma-lasoro  
       1.Joana 1SM-LIM-PFV 1SM-wash-FV even and 6-sheet  
       ‘Joana washed even the sheets.’

The disjoint form has been called the habitual form (Nhantumbo 2005), as it expresses actions that are regularly performed. The progressive form, on the other hand, refers to an ongoing action. The difference between these two verb forms in their aspectual interpretation is illustrated in (11).

- (11) a. Hárê:k-á mâ:ti. [disjoint]  
       hi-a-rek-a            mati  
       1PL.SM-DJ-draw-FV 6.water  
       ‘We draw water (habitually, not at this moment).’
- b. Horê:k-á mâ:ti. [progressive]  
       hi-o-rek-a            mati  
       1PL.SM-PROG-draw-FV 6.water  
       ‘We are drawing water (right now).’

This does not mean that the disjoint form is obligatorily used for habituals, as can be seen in (12), which uses the conjoint form in a habitual meaning/context, because the postverbal element is in focus.

- (12) (Habitually, does she eat rice or shima?)  
 E:né ngu cíhê:ne ádyá mpû:nga. [conjoint]  
 ene ngu ci-hene a-dy-a mpunga  
 1.PROP 7-habit 1SM-eat-FV 3.rice  
 ‘S/he habitually eats rice.’

As mentioned, the progressive is used for actions that are ongoing, as illustrated again in (13), but the other two forms are acceptable as well for ongoing actions. The only difference indicated by our speakers was that *osinya* (progressive) is used when you’re seeing it now, and *yasinya* (disjoint) when you’re informing someone else.

- (13) María yásî:nyá / ósî:nyá / ásînya ko:nku.  
 Maria a-a-siny-a / a-o-siny-a / a-siny-a konku  
 1.Maria 1SM-DJ-dance-FV / 1SM-PROG-dance-FV / 1SM-dance-FV now  
 ‘Maria is dancing now.’

Nevertheless, focus again trumps aspect, because if the postverbal object is focused, the conjoint form is preferred even if the action is carried out at the time of speaking, as in (14).

- (14) (While someone is up in the tree: Are you picking these oranges for Helena or for Ana?)  
 Madímwa yá nihaphé:lá/#nóhaphé:lá A:na.  
 ma-dimwa ya ni-haph-el-a / ni-o-haph-el-a  
 6-orange 6.DEM.PROX 1SG.SM-pick-APPL-FV / 1SG.SM-PROG-pick-APPL-FV  
 Ana  
 1.Anna  
 ‘These oranges, I’m picking (them) for Ana.’

While the exact difference in use and interpretation between the three present tense forms requires more in-depth investigation, the contexts sketched by the speakers for the disjoint and the progressive form indicate not just an aspectual difference but suggest a difference in evidentiality too, as can be seen in the contexts for the two forms in (15–17). The disjoint form seems to indicate that the speaker had direct visual evidence; the evidential interpretation of the conjoint and progressive forms are not clear yet.

- (15) a. Káphínda mő:vha. [disjoint]  
 ku-a-phind-a movha  
 17SM-DJ-pass-FV 3.car  
 ‘A car is passing by.’ (You see it.)

- b. Kóph'índa mó:vha. [progressive]  
 ku-o-phind-a      movha  
 17SM-PROG-pass-FV 3.car  
 'A car is passing by.' (Someone else tells/ask you.)
- (16) a. (Context: I see someone hitting the bulls and want to inform others that are inside.)  
 Tápé(:)kwá tího:mú. [disjoint]  
 ti-a-pekw-a      ti-homu  
 10SM-DJ-hit-PASS-FV 10-bull  
 'The bulls are (being) beaten.'
- b. (Why do the bulls have these marks? – The sentence is not accepted out of the blue.)  
 Tópé(:)kwá tího:mú. [progressive]  
 ti-o-pekw-a      ti-homu  
 10SM-PROG-hit-PASS-FV 10-bull  
 'The bulls are (being) beaten.'
- (17) a. (Context: A friend passed by your field and tells you s/he has seen birds eating the maize.)  
 Sinya:na sâ:dyá mafa:ka. [disjoint]  
 si-nyana si-a-dy-a      ma-faka  
 8-bird    8SM-DJ-eat-FV 6-maize  
 '(The) birds are eating (the) maize.'
- b. (generic)  
 Tikhu:mba tídyá khô:ndze. [conjoint]  
 ti-khumba ti-dy-a      khondze  
 10-pig    10SM-eat-FV grass  
 'Pigs eat grass.'

Further and more targeted research is required to establish the precise factors determining the use of each verb form in the present tense, but aspect (habitual vs. progressive), focus (postverbal or predicate-centred), and evidentiality all seem to play a role.

## 2.2 Perfective

As mentioned, Cicopi has two forms in the perfective conjugation. The first is created with the suffix *-ile/-ite* and the second with the prefix *to-*. As shown in

Table 1 above, the two conjugations share the same negation, suggesting that their main difference is not in tense/aspect semantics.<sup>2</sup> Both encode that the event has been finished (Nhantumbo 2009). The suffixes *-ile* and *-ite* are not different morphemes, but allomorphs of the same morpheme. The allomorph *-ite* is used with stems ending in *-l* or *-t* (Nhantumbo 2014), as in (18) and (19), and with monoconsonantal verb stems (e.g. *-w-* ‘fall’ and *-dy-* ‘eat’). We refer to Nhantumbo (2019a) for further argumentation on the allomorphy.

- (18) Maria abháté dipápí:lo.  
 Maria a-bhal-ile dipapilo  
 1.Maria 1SM-write-PFV 5-letter  
 ‘Maria wrote a letter.’
- (19) Mwanâ:na adukê:te dibhúlú:ku.  
 mw-anana a-duket-ile di-bhuluku  
 1-child 1SM-try-PFV 5-trousers  
 ‘The child tried on the trousers.’

We discuss the forms *-ile/-ite* and the form *to-* in this chapter, as we see some information-structural differences between them. The *to-* form is felicitous in expressing state-of-affairs focus, i.e. supplying or contrasting the lexical value of the verb, as indicated in (20a), (22), and (23), but it is not felicitous in verum contexts, i.e. emphatic focus on the truth value, as shown in (20b) and (24a). The perfective shows the opposite behaviour and is felicitously used to express verum, as seen in (21) and (24b).

- (20) Átô:dya.  
 a-to-dy-a  
 1SM-TO-eat-FV  
 ‘S/he ate (it).’
- a. answer to ‘What happened with the food on the table?’ [SoA focus]  
 b. # correction of ‘She didn’t eat.’ [verum]
- (21) (She didn’t eat.)  
 (i:m) Ádyî:te. [verum]  
 ii a-dy-ile  
 yes 1SM-eat-PFV  
 ‘(Yes) S/he ate.’ / ‘S/he did eat.’

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<sup>2</sup>We note, though, that both forms are accepted with inchoative verbs, but there seems to be a restriction on stative verbs, e.g. for *-ziva* ‘know’ the *to-* form is not accepted while the *-ile* form is. We thank a reviewer for asking about these predicates, but have to leave this for future research.

- (22) Vátótútû:má kûmbe vátôsâmbê:la? [SoA focus]  
 va-to-tutum-a kumbe va-to-sambel-a  
 2SM-T0-run-FV or 2SM-T0-swim-FV  
 'Did they run or did they swim?'
- (23) (Did Paulo wash the beans?) [SoA focus]  
 Ihî:mhim, Paulu aákuvúlá feijáu, átô:bhî:ká dwé.  
 ihmhim Paulo a-a-kuwul-a feijao a-to-bhik-a dwe  
 no 1.Paolo 1SM-NEG-wash-FV 9.bean 1SM-T0-cook-FV only  
 'No, Paulo didn't wash the beans, he only cooked (them).'
- (24) (Paulo didn't cook the beans.) You're lying, ... [verum]  
 a. # Páulú átôbî:ká feijáu  
 Paulo a-to-bhik-a feijao  
 1.Paolo 1SM-T0-cook-FV 9.bean  
 'Paulo cooked (the) beans.'  
 # 'Paulo did cook (the) beans.'  
 b. Páulú abhíkî:le feijáu.  
 Paulo a-bhik-ile feijao  
 1.Paolo 1SM-cook-PFV 9.bean  
 'Paulo cooked (the) beans.'  
 'Paulo did cook (the) beans.'

Either form is acceptable with a postverbal focus on the object, as illustrated for content question words in (25) and for answers to object questions in (26). With VP focus either form is acceptable too, as shown in (27).

- (25) a. Mutómahá câ:ni?  
 mu-to-mah-a cani  
 2PL.SM-T0-do-FV what  
 'What did you do?'  
 b. A:nu mumahilé câ:ni?  
 anu mu-mah-ile cani  
 2PL.PRO 2PL.SM-do-PFV what  
 'What did you do?'

- (26) a. (What did you drink?)

Nitósela sérvhe:jha.  
ni-to-sel-a servhejha  
1SG.SM-TD-drink-FV beer  
'I drank beer.'

- b. (Who did grandma give the mangoes?)

Áníngilé titiyá Lu:rdi.  
a-ning-ile titiya Lurdi  
1SM-give-PFV 1.aunt 1.Lurdes  
'She gave (them to) aunt Lurdes.'

- (27) (What did you do?)

- a. Hikaláhatshi:lé hibhulá ní na:wé.

hi-khalahatsi-ile hi-bhul-a ni ni-awe  
1PL.SM-sit.down-PFV 1PL.SM-talk-FV with with-2SG.PRO  
'We sat and talked with you.'

- b. Hitókhaláhátshi hibhulá ní na:we.

hi-to-khalahatshi hi-bhul-a ni ni-awe  
1PL.SM-TO-sit.down 1PL.SM-talk-FV with with-2SG.PRO  
'We sat and talked with you.'

In summary, information structure influences the choice of verbal conjugations in Cicopi, at least in the perfective and the present, although the exact determining factors remain to be investigated.

### 3 Word order

As a "basic word order",<sup>3</sup> Cicopi uses (S)VO order in the context of VP focus. When the subject is highly active, it is preferably expressed by just the subject marker; a full NP subject is present when (re)activating the subject referent. This word order is illustrated in example (28) from the Frog story, where the boy is introduced in the first sentence, and the next line comments on this boy, adding the information that he has a frog and a dog.

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<sup>3</sup>See Kerr et al. (2023) for discussion on the extent to which grammatical roles like subject and object are useful in describing word order in Bantu languages.

- (28) (Context: There was a boy who was fond of animals.)  
 Se m'fáná wúwa, átífúyá díkhélé ni yi:mbwá.  
 se m'-fana wuwa a-ti-fuy-a di-khele ni yi-mbwa  
 so 1-boy 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-IPFV-raise-FV 5-frog and 9-dog  
 'So this boy raised a frog and a dog.'

In this section, we further discuss the information-structural functions found in the preverbal domain (Sections 3.1 and 3.2), the lack of a dedicated focus position in the sentence (Section 3.3), subject inversion constructions and their interpretation (Section 3.4), and the right periphery (Section 3.5).

### 3.1 No preverbal focus (?)

In terms of word order and the influence that information structure has on it, there seems to be a split topic-V-nontopic in Cicopi, but there is no dedicated focus position. Focused constituents occur in the postverbal domain (see Sections 3.3 and 3.4) and, as is familiar from other Bantu languages (see for example van der Wal (2025 [this volume])), focus is not allowed in the preverbal domain. This shown for question words in (29) and answers in (30), both focused subjects.

- (29) \* Mání afí:lé?  
 mani a-f-ile  
 who 1SM-die-PFV  
 'Who died?'
- (30) (Who is cooking rice?)  
 # Luiza abhika mpu:nga.<sup>4</sup>  
 Luisa a-bhik-a mpunga  
 1.Luisa 1SM-cook-FV 3.rice  
 'Luisa is cooking rice.'

Based on this generalisation, we would expect that a constituent modified by the exhaustive focus particle 'only' is also rejected. While it is true that preverbal non-subjects can never be modified by *dwe* 'only' (31), it does seem acceptable for preverbal subjects – compare (31–34), with the relevant constituent marked in boldface. Further research is needed here, as we also noted a preference in (34) for the exhaustive particle to apply to the predicate rather than to the subject.

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<sup>4</sup>This example lacks tone marking.

- (31) **Mpu:nga** (\*dwé) Luiza óbhí:ka.  
 mpunga dwe Luisa a-o-bhik-a  
 3.rice only 1.Luisa 1SM-PROG-COOK-FV  
 '(\*only) The rice, Luisa is cooking (it)'
- (32) Kupíndílé tixaka tá tî:ngí tá síha:ri, kámbé **pho:ngó dwé** yíwî:te.  
 ku-pind-ile ti-xaka t-a t-ingi t-a si-hari kambe  
 17SM-pass-PFV 10-kind 10-CONN 10-many 10-CONN 8-animal but  
**phongo dwe yi-w-ile**  
 9.goat only 9SM-fall-PFV  
 'There passed many types of animals, but only a/the goat fell.'
- (33) **Páulu dwé átsu:tí sóntô:ni.**  
 Paulo dwe a-tsul-ile sonto-ni  
 1.Paulo only 1SM-leave-PFV church-LOC  
 'Only Paulo went to church.'
- (34) # **Mimvhúnja dwé yíbê:te.**  
 mi-mvhunja dwe yi-bel-ile  
 4-rabbit only 4SM-enter-PFV  
 ?'Only the rabbits entered.'  
 'The rabbits just entered (and didn't do anything else).'

### 3.2 Preverbal topics

We do typically find topics in the preverbal domain. Although active familiar topics are naturally expressed pronominally, for example by the object marker B's answer in (35), topics may also be full NPs in the left periphery, as in (36), where the action 'to break a coconut' is presented in the question, and occurs in the left periphery in the answer.

- (35) (Context: QUIS map task, with speaker A explaining the route to speaker B.)
- A: Ni-mán-á dí-kávhâ:lu.  
 1SG.SM-find-FV 5-horse  
 'I find a horse.'
- B: Ní-dí-wô:n-i.  
 1SG.SM-5OM-see-PFV  
 'I have seen it.'

- (36) (How can I break a coconut?)

Kufá:ya ka dikho:kho, kuni mamahelo mambí:dí.  
 ku-faya k-a di-khokho ku=ni ma-mahelo ma-mbidi  
 15-break 15-CONN 5-coconuts 17SM=with 6-way 6-two  
 'There are two ways to break coconuts.'

Contrastive topics are expressed by an NP in the left periphery, requiring an object marker if the proposed constituent is a human object. The contrast may be explicit, mentioning both of the contrasting referents, as in (37) and (38), or implicit, as in (39).

- (37) (What did grandma give the girls?)

Áningilé Lídíà mafá:ka, Rozí:tá ní Laurí:nya áváníngá máphê:ra.  
 a-ning-ile Lidia ma-faka Rozita ni Laurinya a-va-ning-a  
 1SM-give-PFV 1.Lidia 6-maize 1.Rozita and 1.Laurinha 1SM-2OM-give-FV  
 ma-phera  
 6-pear  
 'She gave Lidia maize; to Rosita and Laurinha she gave pears.'

- (38) (Four of my siblings are girls.)

Vavámbí:dí vóbhilíví:la  
 va-va-mbidi va-o-bhilivil-a  
 2-?CONN-two 2SM-PROG-be.light-FV  
 'Two are light-skinned'  
 ní vavambí:dí vántí:má vo:kô:ma.  
 ni va-va-mbidi va-ntima va-a-ku-koma  
 and 2-?CONN-two 2-black 2-CONN-15-be.short  
 'and two (are) black and short.'

- (39) (Was it the house and the yard that s/he swept?)

Nyumbá:ni ayáhiyê:la.  
 nyumba-ini a-ya-hiyel-a  
 9.house-LOC 1SM-NEG-sweep-FV  
 'S/he didn't sweep the house.'

A topic may also be indicated by the locative preposition *ka*, which is used when a subset of the initial topic referent is then selected in the comment, as illustrated in (40) and (41).

- (40) (Are these people wearing hats? +QUIS picture of two women without hats and two men with hats.)

Ka vá:thu váva, avá vákúni sígo:ko majă:ha.  
 ka va-thu vava ava va=ku=ni si-goko ma-jaha  
 LOC 2-people 2.DEM.MED 2.PRO 2SM=REL=with 8-hat COP.6-man  
 'Of/between these people, the ones that have hats are the men.'

- (41) Ká kó:ká ní fâ:nta, utósélá kô:ka dwé?

ka koka ni fanta u-to-sel-a koka dwe  
 LOC coke and fanta 2SG.SM-TO-drink-FV coke only  
 'Between coke and fanta, did you drink only coke?'

When the topic shifts to a different referent, the new topic is also expressed as an NP in the preverbal domain, as in (42) from the Frog story, where, after a number of lines about the frogs, the boy is reactivated as the topic and subject and is marked by the distal demonstrative *wule* (penultimate lengthening is not transcribed in this example).

- (42) (Moving on, they saw many more frogs, in addition to the two they had seen. Those big ones who saw them turned out to be the parents of the other frogs. So, the big ones that they were seeing were jumping.)

Sê, m'pfáná wúlé átsakí:lé já ángé adí díkhéle dá:kwé di angatídilá:va.  
 se m'-fana wu-le a-tsak-ile ja a-nge a-di  
 so 1-boy 1-DEM.DIST 1SM-be.happy-PFV so 1SM-say AUG-5.DEM  
 di-khele di-akwe di a-nga-ti-di-lav-a  
 5.COP-frog 5-POSS.1 5.DEM 1SM-REL-IPFV-5OM-want-FV  
 'So, that boy was happy, so he said: this is his frog that he was looking for.'

Shift topics may be marked by a pronoun *-ona*, as in (43). In combination with *ni* 'and', it expresses that there is another referent apart from the topic referent for which the predicate also holds: *ni yona* 'and him/her too', as in (44). Both examples are from a recounting of the Frog story.

- (43) (The boy stood there in pain.)

Sê bhonyáni yó:ná yítsú:té.  
 se bhonyani y-oná yi-tsul-ile  
 and 9.mouse 9-PRO 9SM-leave-PFV  
 'As for the mouse, it is gone.'

- (44) (He turned the table over to see if by chance it would be there under the table and saw that it wasn't.)

Sê, yí:mbwá ni yó:ná, yapfététéla makó:tá to khé:né, mákotákotá yáwá ingáwá cídihúmé:té kúyá há:yi.

se yi-mbwá ni yi-ona yi-a-pf-etetel-a ma-kota to.khene  
then 9-dog and 9-PRO 9SM-PRS-hear-STAT.APPL-FV 6-cry COMP  
ma-kota~kota y-awa ingawa ci-di-hum-ete ku-ya hayi  
6-cry~RED 6.DEM could 7SM-DEP-leave-PFV 15-go where

'Then the dog too is hearing the cry to see where the cry comes from.'

In shifting from one to the next event, Cicopi also uses tail-head linking, whereby an event mentioned in (the final part of) one sentence is repeated at the start of the next sentence. This is illustrated in (45) from the Frog story, where the action of scratching the nose is first repeated in the next sentence before moving the story forward.

- (45) I bhónyá:ní yíku mólé:yá yíngámúnyárá thó:mbvú.

i bhonyani yi=ku mu-leya yi-nga-mu-nyar-a thombvu  
COP 9.mouse 9SM=REL 18-DEM.DIST 9SM-REL-1OM-scratch-FV 9.nose

'It was a bush mouse that is there that scratched him on the nose.'

Já yídímúrányílé thó:mbvú, e:ne atósá:lá acítín'o:té thó:mbvú yílé  
inkú:pfá kúpá:ndá.

ja yi-di-mu-rany-il-e thombvu ene a-to-sal-a  
so 9SM-DEP-1OM-scratch-PFV 9.nose 1.PRO 1SM-TO-stay-FV  
a-ci-ti-n'ol-ile thombvu yi-le in-ku-pfa kupanda  
1SM-CON-IPFV-touch-PFV 9.nose 9-DEM.MED LINK-15-feel 15.pain

'After scratching him on the nose, he stood there touching his nose in so much pain he felt.'

There can also be multiple topics in the left periphery, be they arguments or scene-setting adverbs, as illustrated in (46) and (47). The object *m'pawu* 'cassava' in (46) can be seen as a secondary topic here (as defined by Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011), meaning that "the utterance is construed to be about the relation that holds between it and the primary topic" (Nikolaeva 2001: 2).

- (46) (What did mother do with the cassava?)

Má:mí, m'pá:wú, axávísí:lé ayáwú:dya.

Mami m'-pawu a-xavis-ile a-ya-wu-dy-a  
1.mother 3-cassava 1SM-sell-PFV 1SM-NEG-3OM-eat-FV  
'Mother, the cassava, she sold (it), she didn't eat (it).'

- (47) (Context: When in Gaza, someone comments: you do not have mangos here. A person who knows the area better replies.)  
 Mámá:ngá, Chidéngué:lé, ka Gá:za mâ:nги.  
 ma-manga Chidenguele ka Gaza ma-ngi  
 6-mango Chidenguele LOC Gaza COP.6-many  
 ‘Mangos, in Chidenguele in Gaza, there are many.’

As subjects are typical topics, and canonically appear preverbally, it can be difficult to see in which (structural) position they are. The pronominal subject *e:ne* ‘s/he’ in (48), repeated from (12) above, is in a left-peripheral position, separated from the verb by the PP ‘by habit’.

- (48) E:né ngu cíhê:ne ádyá mpû:nga.  
 ene ngu ci-hene a-dy-a mpunga  
 1.PRO PREP 7-habit 1SM-eat-FV 3.rice  
 ‘S/he habitually eats rice.’

However, the preverbal subject can also be an indefinite, as in (49), which cannot be left-dislocated and hence provides evidence for a non-topical subject position as well. A systematic study of the prosodic properties of subjects (and other constituents) in the preverbal domain may well shine light on the syntactic status and marking of the different positions.

- (49) I:nthu áréthémúkí:lé â:wa.  
 n-thu a-rethemuk-ile a-w-a  
 1-person 1SM-slip-PFV 1SM-fall-FV  
 ‘Someone slipped and fell.’

The left periphery also hosts scene-setting topics, such as the adverbial phrases *ahá ká bhasíkéni* ‘at the bicycle’ in (50), and in (51) the phrases *ití ní wúsíkú dímwání dítshíkú* ‘one day at night’ and *inkama angadipfuxela* ‘the time that he visited him’. Each topic in these examples is indicated by square brackets.

- (50) [Ahá ká bhasíké:ni], nákwlé:lá ngu cíne:ne.  
 [aha ka bhasikeni] n-a-kwel-el-a ngu cinene  
 16.DEM.PROX LOC 5.bicycle 1SM-PRS-go.up-APPL-FV PREP 7.right  
 ‘From the bicycle here I go up to the right.’

- (51) [Ití ní wúsí:kú dímwányání dítshí:kú], [ínkámá angádípfúxé:lá], díkhé:lé  
dítingádí kó:ná múlé:yá ndání ka díbhójhé:lá.

[i-ti ni wusiku di-mwanyani di-tshiku] [in-kama  
COP-PST and night 5-other 5-day 9-time  
a-nga-di-pfuxel-a] di-khele di-ti-nga-di kona mu-leya  
1SM-REL-5OM-visit-FV 5-frog 5SM-IPFV-NEG-be 17.PRO 18-DEM.DIST  
ndani ka di-bhojhela  
inside LOC 5-bottle

‘One day at night, visiting him, the frog was not inside the bottle.’

As further illustration of topics, the following example (52) shows a scene-setting topic (*cibhabha ca mina* ‘to my left’), and in the reaction a contrastive topic (*ani* ‘me’, as opposed to you), with the two contrastive topics indicated in boldface. The exchange also shows a contrastive focus with *tihomu* ‘bulls’ being contrasted to *timbwa* ‘dogs’, in italics in the example.

- (52) (Context: QUIS map task, where speaker A explains the route to speaker B.)

A: **Cibhabha ca mî:ná** nimaná *tî:mbwa tîrâ:ru*.  
ci-bhabha ci-a mina ni-man-a *ti-mbwa ti-raru*  
7-left 7-CONN 1SG.PRO 1SG.SM-find-FV 10-dog 10-three  
‘To my left, I find three dogs.’

B: **A:ni** niwóná *tîhô:mu tî-râ:ru*.  
ani ni-won-a *ti-homu ti-raru*  
1SG.PRO 1SG.SM-see-FV 10-bull 10-three  
‘As for me, I see three bulls.’

In summary, Cicopi does not seem to allow preverbal foci (but ‘only’ remains unclear) and prefers preverbal topics. There are multiple positions in the left periphery to which subjects and non-subjects can move, one of which is a non-topical subject position. In the next section, we turn our attention to the postverbal domain.

### 3.3 No dedicated focus position

As focused constituents cannot appear in the preverbal domain, they must appear postverbally, or in a cleft (see Section 4). This is again shown for the correction in (53), where the focused object simply appears in a postverbal position.

(53) (Context: QUIS picture of a girl pulling a chair.)

- A: Mwanáná ándíndá mé:za?  
mw-anana a-ndind-a meza  
1-child 1SM-pull-FV 3.table  
'Is the child pulling a/the table?'
- B: Ihí:mhim, (mwaná:ná) ándíndá cítu:lu.  
ihimhim mw-anana a-ndind-a ci-tulu  
no 1-child 1SM-pull-FV 7.chair  
'No, the child is pulling a/the chair.'

While focus is restricted to the postverbal domain in a non-clefted sentence, there is no dedicated position for focus in Cicopi. Within the postverbal domain, there is no requirement for the focused element to appear adjacent to the verb (as in various other zone S languages, e.g. Buell 2009 for Zulu) nor phrase-finally (like in Kirundi, see Nshemezimana & van der Wal 2025 [this volume]). We show this for the Theme and Recipient arguments in a ditransitive: either position can host a question word, as shown in (54) and (55), either can form the answer to a content question, as in (56) and (57).

(54) Recipient question

- a. Vánáníngá másenórá ma:ní?  
va-na-ning-a ma-senora mani  
2SM-FUT-give-FV 6-carrot who  
'Who will they give carrots?'
- b. Hinán'íngá ma:ní díkáne:ka?  
hi-na-ning-a mani di-kaneka  
1PL.SM-FUT-give-FV who 5-mug  
'Who will we give the mug to?'

(55) Theme question

- a. Vánáníngá ndíyâ:wé câ:ni?  
va-na-ning-a ndiya-awe cani  
2SM-FUT-give-FV 1.sister-POSS.1 what  
'What will they give his sister?'
- b. Váná(mú)n'íngá cá:ní ndíyâ:wé?  
va-na-mu-ning-a cani ndiya-awe  
2SM-FUT-1OM-give-FV what 1.sister-POSS.1  
'What will they give his sister?'

- (56) (Who will they give carrots?)  
 Váná(\*mu)ní:ngá (másenó:rá) Gô:mex.  
 va-na-mu-ning-a ma-senora Gomes  
 2SM-FUT-1OM-give-FV 6-carrots 1.Gomes  
 ‘They will give Gomes carrots.’
- (57) (Will you cook rice for the visitors?)  
 Ninábhkélá vapfumba mba:ba.  
 ni-ná-bhik-el-a va-pfumba mbaba  
 1SG.SM-FUT-cook-APPL-FV 2-visitors 3.shima  
 ‘I will cook shima for the visitors.’

Interrogative adverbs can also appear in either position, as illustrated for *njani* ‘how’ and *hayi* ‘where’ in (58) and (59), respectively.

- (58) a. Álúngisile **nja:ní** mo:vha?  
 a-lungis-ile njani movha  
 1SM-repair-PFV how 3.car  
 ‘How did s/he repair the car?’
- b. Álúngisile mo:vha **nja:ní**?
- (59) a. Urumété **ha:yi** mípâ:wu?  
 u-rum-el-ile hayi mi-pawu  
 2SG.SM-send-APPL-PFV where 4-cassava  
 ‘Where did you send the cassava?’
- b. Urumété mípâ:wu **ha:yi**?

In the same way, phrases modified by the exhaustive focus particle *dwe* ‘only’ can also appear in either position, as in (60) and (61).<sup>5</sup> The prosodic break in (60a) and (61b) could be indicative of a requirement that the focus be final in some constituent, but further research into prosodic phrasing (and its relation with syntactic phrasing) is necessary to confirm this.

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<sup>5</sup>The logical possibilities are judged as follows, with bold indicating the focus (as diagnosed by contrast in a following clause):

Theme dwe Recipient	Theme dwe Recipient
<b>#Theme</b> Recipient dwe	Theme Recipient dwe
Recipient Theme dwe	<b>#Recipient</b> Theme dwe
Recipient dwe Theme	Recipient dwe Theme

- (60) a. **Theme only, Recipient**

Vánáningá mábho:mú dwé, tshándza:na – vánambímún'íngá cíkê:ta.

va-na-ning-a ma-bhomu dwe tshandzana

2SM-FUT-give-FV 6-lemons only 1.niece

va-na-mbi-mu-ning-a ci-keta

2SM-FUT-NEG-1OM-give-FV 7-pineapple

‘They will give only lemons to the niece, they will not give her pineapple.’

- b. **Recipient Theme only**

Vánáningá tshándzá:na mábho:mu dwé – vánambímún'íngá cíkê:ta.

va-na-ning-a tshandzana ma-bhomu dwe

2SM-FUT-give-FV 1.niece 6-lemons only

va-na-mbi-mu-ning-a ci-keta

2SM-FUT-NEG-1OM-give-FV 7-pineapple

‘They will give only lemons to the niece, they will not give her pineapple.’

- (61) a. **Theme Recipient only**

Vánáningá mábho:mú tshándza:na dwé – vánamb'íningá ndiyâ:we.

va-na-ning-a ma-bhomu tshandzana dwe va-na-mbi-ning-a

2SM-FUT-give-FV 6-lemon 1.niece only 2SM-FUT-NEG-give-FV

ndiya-awe

1.sister-POSS.1

‘They will give lemons to the niece only, they will not give to her sister.’

- b. **Recipient only, Theme**

Vánáningá tshándzá:na dwé, mábho:mu – vánamb'íningá ndiyâ:we.

va-na-ning-a tshandzana dwe ma-bhomu va-na-mbi-ning-a

2SM-FUT-give-FV 1.niece only 6-lemon 2SM-FUT-NEG-give-FV

ndiya-awe

1.sister-POSS.1

‘They will give lemons to the niece only, they will not give to her sister.’

In fact, Cicopi allows multiple content question words in the postverbal domain, as illustrated in (62).

- (62) Vhalério áxávheté cá:ní mâ:ni?  
 Vhalerio a-xavh-el-ile cani mani  
 1.Valerio 1SM-buy-APPL-PFV what who  
 'Who did Valerio buy what?'

For non-arguments, such multiple questions are also possible, and the word order is flexible, as shown in (63) and (64).

- (63) a. Álúngisilé câ:ni njá:ní?  
 a-lungis-ile cani njani  
 1SM-repair-PFV what how  
 'How did s/he repair what?'  
 b. Álúngisilá njá:ní câ:ni?  
 a-lungis-ile njani cani  
 1SM-repair-PFV how what  
 'How did s/he repair what?'
- (64) a. Pédrú ámáné c'á:ní aha:yi?  
 Pedro a-man-e cani ahayi  
 1.Pedro 1SM-find-PFV what where  
 'What did Pedro find where?'  
 b. Pédrú ámáné ha:yí ca:ni?  
 Pedro a-man-e hayi cani  
 1.Pedro 1SM-find-PFV where what  
 'What did Pedro find where?'

Note, however, that multiple focus seems to be possible only for question words and not for other focus constituents, as only one postverbal constituent can be modified by *dwe* 'only', as seen in the ungrammaticality of example (65).

- (65) \* Nigöndísilé vanáná dwé cíco:pi dwé.  
 ni-gond-is-ile va-nana dwe ci-copi dwe  
 1SG.SM-read-CAUS-PFV 2-child only 7-copi only  
 int. 'I taught only (the) children only Cicopi.'

Therefore, while focus appears in the postverbal domain in Cicopi, there is no dedicated focus position for objects or adverbs. We now turn to postverbal subjects, which work slightly differently.

### 3.4 Subject inversion

The postverbal domain also hosts the logical subject in subject inversion constructions. These are constructions in which the logical subject appears postverbally and a possible topic appears in a preverbal position (see Marten & van der Wal 2014 for an overview of subject inversion constructions in Bantu). Cicopi has two such constructions: Agreeing Inversion and Default Agreement Inversion (DAI), discussed in more detail below. Other possible inversion constructions are not accepted in Cicopi, such as Locative Inversion and Patient Inversion, in which respectively a locative or theme constituent appears preverbally and determines subject marking on the verb. Their unacceptability is shown in (66) for Locative Inversion,<sup>6</sup> and in (67) for Patient Inversion.

- (66) \*Ntini mulé múbete Joau.  
in-t-ini mu-le mu-bet-e Joao  
3-home-LOC 18-DEM.MED 18SM-enter-PFV 1.Joao  
'In that home/compound entered João.'
- (67) (Context: QUIS picture of a girl pulling a chair.)  
Cítúlú cí cindí:nda mwáná:ná.  
ci-tulu ci ci-ndind-a mw-anana  
7-chair 7.DEM.PROX 7SM-pull-FV 1-child  
? 'The chair is pulling the child.'  
\* 'The child is pulling the chair.'

In Agreeing Inversion, the subject marker on the verb agrees in noun class with the postverbal logical subject, as illustrated in (68) where the postverbal *mafaka* 'maize' determines the subject marker in noun class 6.

- (68) Mapháyî:lwe mafáká thémbwe:ni?  
ma-phay-il-w-e ma-faka themw-ini  
6SM-SOW-APPL-PASS-PFV 6-maize field-LOC  
'Was maize sown in the field?'

Agreeing Inversion can be used in a corrective context, as in (69), and without necessary exclusion of alternatives (given that the additive *ni* 'and/also' can be used).

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<sup>6</sup>Locative Inversion is unacceptable with or without applicative morphology

- (69) (*Mbvhuta yidya senora?* ‘Does the sheep eat carrot?’)  
 Ihî:mhím hingá mbvhú:tá dwé yídyâ:ku, yí:dyá ní fu:tu.  
 ihimhim hinga mbvhuta dwe yi-dy-a=kú yi-dy-a ni  
 no COP.NEG 9.sheep only 9SM-eat-FV=REL 9SM-eat-FV and  
 futu  
 9.tortoise
- ‘No, it’s not only the sheep; the tortoise also eats.’

It is unclear at this point which form of the verb is acceptable in Agreeing Inversion (see Section 2 on conjoint and disjoint verb forms), and which types of predicates can occur. Further research, for example on the scope of the postverbal subject relative to negation, is needed to establish the underlying structure of Agreeing Inversion in Cicopi, as well as its precise interpretation and use.

The second subject inversion construction, Default Agreement Inversion (DAI), is possible in Cicopi with unaccusative (70), unergative (73), passive, and transitive (71) predicates. The subject marker in this construction is insensitive to the person/number/gender features of the subject, remaining a default class 17, and the postverbal subject can be a question word or an answer, as illustrated in the following examples. The interpretation is discussed below.

- (70) a. Kúwî:té ma:ní?  
 ku-w-ile mani  
 17SM-fall-PFV who  
 ‘Who fell?’
- b. Kúwí:te Marî:ya.  
 ku-w-ile Mariya  
 17SM-fall-PFV 1.Maria  
 ‘It was Maria who fell.’
- (71) (Context: QUIS picture of a girl pulling a chair.)
- a. Kúndíndá ma:ni cítu:lu? [VSO]  
 ku-ndind-a mwani ci-tulu  
 17SM-pull-FV who 7-chair  
 ‘Who is pulling the chair?’
- b. Kúndíndá mwán'á:ná cítu:lu. [VSO]  
 ku-ndind-a mw-anana ci-tulu  
 17SM-pull-FV 1-child 7-chair  
 ‘A child is pulling the chair.’  
 (also OK as answer to ‘Is a dog pulling the chair?’)

DAI can have a thetic interpretation (“out of the blue”, see van der Wal et al. 2025 [this volume] and Sasse 1996, 2006), or narrow subject focus. The thetic use is illustrated in (72) and (73) with an existential/presentational or announcing function.

- (72) (Frog story)

Ká:sí kúvéní híngá n’dó:ngá wówó:má wúkú hálé.  
kasi kuveni hinga n'-donga w-a-woma wu-ku hale  
but [adv] COP.NEG 3-tree 3-CONN-dry 3SM=REL 16.DEM.MED  
'But, after all, it isn't a dry tree that is there.'

Kútíní cihâ:rí címwé:cô vácídhanáká ku ínyá:rá, cihá:rí cí cíngáyáé:má.  
ku-ti=ni ci-hari ci-mweco va-ci-dhan-ak-a=ku i-nyara  
17SM-IPFV=with 7-animal 7SM-one 2SM-7OM-call-DUR-FV=REL 9-buffalo  
ci-hari ci ci-nga-ya-em-a  
7SM-animal 7.DEM.PROX 7SM-REL-go-stand-FV

'There was an animal called a buffalo that was standing.'

- (73) Kúná ndzú:mà.

ku-n-a ndzuma  
17SM-rain-FV 9.rain  
'It's raining.'

The interpretation with narrow focus on the postverbal subject is illustrated in (74) and (75) with the exhaustive particle *dwe* ‘only’.

- (74) Kúhókile mwaná:ná dwe.

ku-hok-ile mw-anana dwe  
17SM-arrive-PFV 1-child only  
'Only the child arrived.'

- (75) Kútútumilé Gó:mes dwé.

ku-tutum-ile Gomes dwe  
17SM-run-PFV 1.Gomes only  
'Only Gomes ran.'

With a transitive verb, narrow subject focus is the only interpretation that is allowed for DAI, regardless of the word order: both VOS and VSO are acceptable but only with subject focus, as indicated in the contexts for (76) and (77); see also in (71b) above.<sup>7</sup> This is in line with what Carstens & Mletshe (2015) found for Xhosa VSO transitive expletive constructions.

<sup>7</sup>Note, though, that there is a pause between O and S in the VOS order. As mentioned, more research is needed to understand the role of prosody.

- (76) (Context 1, subject focus: I can see that someone is filling the water containers and ask: who is drawing water?  
 #Context 2, object focus: What is Nelsa drawing?)  
 Kúr'éká mā:tí Né:lsa. [VOS]  
 ku-rek-a mati Nelsa  
 17SM-draw-FV 6.water 1.Nelsa  
 'Nelsa is drawing water.'
- (77) (Who is cooking rice? / #What is Luisa cooking?)  
 Kubhiká Lúízá mpū:nга. [VSO]  
 ku-bhik-a Luiza mpunga  
 17SM-cook-FV 1.Luisa 3.rice  
 'Luisa cooked rice.'

Note that this postverbal focus in VSO is not necessarily exhaustive, as modification of the subject by the inclusive particle *hambi* ‘even’ is possible in example (78), suggesting that there are others who also ate shima (see also van der Wal et al. 2025 [this volume] for diagnostics):

- (78) Kúdyi:té hámبí Rózáríó mba:ba. [VSO]  
 ku-dy-ile hambi Rosario mbaba  
 17SM-eat-PFV even 1.Rosario 3.shima  
 'Even Rosario ate shima.'

Questions in transitive DAI require the question word to be placed adjacent to the verb, as in (79), in contrast to object question words in SVOO order, as shown in Section 3.3 above, examples (54–57). This is of course with the exception of multiple questions, where both question words occur postverbally but not necessarily verb-adjacent, as in (80).

- (79) a. Kúndindá ma:ni cítu:lu? [VSO]  
 ku-ndind-a mani ci-tulu  
 17SM-pull-FV who 7-chair  
 'Who is pulling the chair?'  
 b. \* Kubhiká mpū:nга mā:ni? [\*VOS]  
 ku-bhik-a mpunga mani  
 17SM-cook-FV 3.rice who  
 'Who is cooking rice?'

- (80) Kúbhálá mā:ní cā:ni?<sup>8</sup>  
 ku-bhal-a mani cani  
 17SM-write-FV who what  
 'Who is writing what?'

[VSO]

All three present tense verb forms (see Section 2) are acceptable in DAI, with slight differences in meaning. The progressive form is used as a question or as a progressive action (81a), the disjoint form is used to express habitual action, as we can see in (81b), and the conjoint form for punctual action as in (81c). The precise conditions for the use of each form, and their interpretations in combination with subject inversion, remain to be investigated.

- (81) a. (Context: You are wondering what noise is that you hear, and a friend answers this.)  
 Kóph'índa mó:vha. [progressive]  
 ku-o-phind-a movha  
 17SM-PROG-pass-FV 3.car  
 'A car is passing by.'
- b. (Context: There's is a road that seems to be narrow for a car or looks unused and someone ask if cars pass there. )  
 Káphínda mó:vha. [disjoint]  
 ku-a-phind-a movha  
 17SM-dj-pass-FV 3.car  
 'A car passes by.' (in a particular road, usually)
- c. (Context: Someone hears a noise and asks 'What is that noise?' / 'What is passing by?')  
 Kúphínda mó:vha. [conjoint]  
 ku-phind-a movha  
 17SM-pass-FV 3.car  
 'A car is passing by.'

In summary, Cicopi accepts only two subject inversion constructions, Agreeing Inversion and Default Agreement Inversion. Not much can be said at this stage about the former, but the latter is possible with predicates of different valencies: with intransitives it is used in thetic environments as well as with focus on the postverbal logical subject, and with transitives the logical subject must be

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<sup>8</sup>It is uncertain whether the inverse order of question words (*kúbhá:lá c'á:ní ma:ni?*) is also accepted, and if so, in which contexts.

focused. The possibilities for conjoint and disjoint verb forms and their interpretations in subject inversion remain for further research.

### 3.5 Right periphery

It is not always clear whether the postverbal logical subject is part of an inversion construction or a right-dislocated constituent. Example (82) may look like an Agreeing Inversion construction, but the context indicates that the postverbal subject is not presented as new information (because it is given in the question) but should be analysed as a right-dislocated constituent. The same is true for (83), from the Frog story, where the frog is part of the core of the story, but has not been mentioned for a while. The speaker, having referred to the frog first as ‘the animal he was looking for’ and then specifying in the right periphery as ‘his frog’.

- (82) (Why do the bulls have these marks?)

Tópé:kwá **tího:mú**.

ti-o-pekw-a                    ti-homu  
10SM-PROG-hit-pass-FV 10-bulls

‘They are (being) beaten, the bulls.’

- (83) (When the boy passed, he went to climb that tree because he saw that where he had been looking, where the mouse was, it was not the place he was looking for.)

Ayamáná cihári ci angátícílá:vá ca díkhelé dá:kwé.

a-ya-man-a       ci-hari   ci              a-nга-ti-ci-lav-a  
1SM-NEG-find-FV 7-animal 7.DEM.PROX 1SM-REL-IPFV-7OM-want-FV  
ci-a       di-khele di-akwe  
7-CONN 5-frog   5-POSS.1

‘He did not find the animal he was looking for, his frog.’

A clear afterthought interpretation of a right-peripheral constituent is also seen in (84): the narrator of the Frog story assumes that the hearer knows who/what was hitting the boy, but adds the information that this was the owl, in case it was not clear. Then, in the second part, *mámé wúlé* ‘the boy’ is right-dislocated too, and also modified by a distal demonstrative.

- (84) (That owl got tired of hearing his noise, went out and hit him.)  
 Cídímúpékílé ngu típá:pá, cíkhóvhá cílé, ató:wá hahá:tsí mámé wú:lé.  
 ci-di-mu-peks-ile      ngu ti-papa ci-khovha ci-le  
 7SM-DEP-1OM-hit-PFV PREP 10-wing 7-owl      7SM-DEM.MED  
 a-to-w-a      ha-hatsi mame wu-le  
 1SM-PST-fall-FV 16-down 1.boy 1SM-DEM.MED  
 ‘When he hit him with its wings, the/that owl, he fell to the ground,  
 the/that boy.’

A prosodic break may also indicate right dislocation, as in (85) and (86) for subject and objects.

- (85) Átô:bhíka, Páulu, feijáu.  
 a-to-bhik-a      Paulu feijau  
 1SM-T0-cook-FV 1.Paulo 10.bean  
 ‘He cooks (them) well, Paulo, the beans.’
- (86) (Description of definiteness pictures Bloom Ström. A man goes to the market. He sees a pineapple.)  
 Digwíta díwóná míko:mbva, diyâyídhu:ndha (, míko:mbva).  
 di-gwit-a      di-won-a mi-kombva di-ya-yi-dhundh-a      mi-kombva  
 5SM-finish-FV 5SM-see-FV 4-banana      5SM-NEG-4OM-like-FV 4.banana  
 ‘He looks at some bananas. He didn’t like them (the bananas).’

Object marking seems to be optional for right-peripheral constituents, as shown in the comparison between (87a) with object marker and (87b) without. Note also the lengthening on *hayi* ‘where’ in (87a) but not (87b), likely indicative of the right edge of a prosodic phrase. These properties can be interpreted as the object being dislocated in (87a) but not (87b).

- (87) a. Miixavílé ha:yí fóni ilé?  
 mu-yi-xav-ile      hayi foni      ile  
 2PL.SM-9OM-buy-PFV where 9.phone 9.DEM.MED  
 ‘Where did you buy that phone?’
- b. Muxavílé hayí fóni ilé?  
 mu-xav-ile      hayi foni      ile  
 2PL.SM-buy-PFV where 9.phone 9.DEM.MED  
 ‘Where did you buy that phone?’

The optional object marking contrasts with left-dislocated constituents, which seems to require object marking when human, as shown in (88a); compared with right-peripheral location of the same constituent in (88b), with optional object marking.

- (88) a. Vaná:ná, ngóndí:sí á\*(vá)ningíle mápâ:xta.  
          va-nana n-gondisi a-va-ning-ile       ma-paxta  
          2-child 1-teacher 1SM-2OM-give-PFV 6-bag  
          ‘The children, the teacher gave them bags.’
- b. Ngóndí:si á(vá)níngílé hambí ní mápa:xta vaná:ná.  
          n-gondisi a-va-ning-ile       hambi ni   ma-paxta va-nana  
          1-teacher 1SM-2OM-give-PFV even   and 6-bag     2-child  
          ‘The teacher gave even bags to the children.’

Object marking would be a potential further diagnostic to determine the status of constituents inside or outside the core clause, but object marking in Cicopi is still poorly understood (see Section 6).

To summarise this section on word order, the preverbal domain in Cicopi is restricted to non-focal constituents, and the postverbal domain contains non-topical constituents. Topics are preferably expressed in initial position, and focus constituents can appear in any postverbal position, although there may be a preference for the immediate-after-verb position. The right periphery contains backgrounded constituents such as afterthoughts. This is summarised in Figure 1.

topic	subject	V	non-topic	non-topic/non-focus
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Figure 1: Template for Cicopi word order

## 4 Cleft

Cleft constructions consist of a relative clause expressing the given/presupposed information, and a clefted focus constituent. Before we introduce the cleft constructions in Cicopi, we first provide information on the marking of cleft constructions, specifically the copulas and relative marking. The clefted constituent is marked by a preceding copula, and the copula can appear in three forms: segmentally as *ngu* or *i*, or suprasegmentally as a high tone. The copula *ngu* is illustrated in (89); the high tone copula can be seen in comparing (90a–90b). Example (90a) is a cleft, with a high tone on *mpú:nga* and compatible with modification

by *dwe* ‘only’ (see further below), whereas in (90b) *mpu:nga* ‘rice’ is a low-toned left-dislocated topic, which hence cannot be modified by ‘only’. We gloss the high tone as COP, together with the gloss of the first segmental morpheme.

- (89) Ngú ha:yí údímâ:ku?  
 ngu hayi u-dim-a=ku  
 COP where 2SG.SM-farm-FV=REL  
 ‘Where do you dig/farm?’ / ‘Where are you digging?’
- (90) a. Mpú:nga (dwé) Luiza abhikâ:ku.  
 mpunga dwe Luisa a-bhik-a=ku  
 COP.3.rice only 1.Luisa 1SM-cook-FV=REL  
 ‘It’s (only) the rice Luisa is cooking.’  
 b. Mpu:nga (\*dwé) Luíza óbhí:ka.  
 mpunga dwe Luisa a-o-bhik-a  
 3.rice only 1.Luisa 1SM-PROG-cook-FV  
 ‘The rice, Luisa is cooking (it).’

Relativisation is marked in (91) for the present tense by the enclitic =*ku*, and in other tenses as a prefix *nga-*, illustrated for an object relative clause in (92).

- (91) (*I ncani yiku ka dipanelá?* ‘What is in the pot?’)  
 Í féjaú yíkú ka dípáne:la  
 i fejau yi=ku ka di-panelá  
 COP 9.bean 9SM=REL LOC 5-pot  
 ‘It’s beans that are in the pot.’
- (92) Vanáná (vá) ningavawo:na vágí:te.  
 va-nana va ni-nga-va-von-a va-w-ile  
 2-child 2.DEM.PROX 1SG.SM-REL-2OM-see-FV 2SM-fall-PFV  
 ‘The(se) children that I saw fell.’

As in many languages, cleft constructions in Cicopi are used to focus constituents, and Cicopi has three related constructions to do that: the basic cleft, the pseudocleft, and the reverse pseudocleft (which may be analysed better as a NP + basic cleft). We discuss these in turn.

#### 4.1 Basic cleft

The basic cleft in Cicopi is marked by a copula *i* or *ngu* preceding the clefted constituent, and a relative clause following it, as we can see in (91) above and (93), where the relative is marked by the enclitic =*ku*.

- (93) (*Kudya mani senora?* Who is eating a/the carrot? + drawing of a sheep and a tortoise eating a carrot.)

Í mbvhû:tá ní fu:tu sídyâ:ku séno:ra.  
 i mbvhuta ni futu si-dy-a=ku senora  
 COP 9.sheep and 9.tortoise 8SM-eat-FV=REL 5.carrot

'It is the sheep and the tortoise that are eating a/the carrot.'

Basic clefts can naturally be used for interrogatives, clefting the inherently focused question word, as in (94) and (95).

- (94) Í nc'ání Teré:za angatíyo:ka?  
 i cani Tereza a-nга-ti-yok-a  
 COP what 1.Teresa 1SM-REL-IPFV-bake-FV  
 'What was Teresa baking?'

- (95) Í m'ání ándíndâ:ku cítu:lu?  
 i mani a-ndind-a=ku ci-tulu  
 COP who 1SM-pull-FV=REL 7-chair  
 'Who is pulling the chair?'

As already mentioned in Section 3.1, the question word by itself is ungrammatical in preverbal position, i.e. without the copula. Answers to content questions may also appear in a cleft, as shown in (96A2), although they do not need to, as shown in (96A1).

- (96) (What was Teresa baking?)

- A1: Téréza átíy'óká díbhóolu.  
 Tereza a-ti-yok-a di-bholu  
 1.Teresa 1SM-IPFV-bake-FV 5-cake  
 'Teresa was baking a/the cake.'
- A2: I díbholú angatíy'óká Téréza.  
 i dibholu a-nга-ti-yok-a Tereza  
 COP 5-cake 1SM-REL-IPFV-bake-FV 1.Teresa  
 'It was a/the cake that Teresa was baking.'

Similarly, in answering the question in (97), we also have two possibilities: the basic cleft as in A1 or the DAI as in A2.

- (97) Q: 'Who is pulling the chair?'

A1: Í mwán'á:ná ándíndâ:ku. [cleft]

i mw-anana a-ndind-a=ku  
COP 1-child 1SM-pull-FV=REL  
'It's the child who is pulling.'

A2: Kúndíndá mwán'á:ná cítu:lu. [VSO]

ku-ndind-a mw-anana ci-tulu  
17SM-pull-FV 1-child 7-chair  
'A child is pulling the chair.'

Clefts are not only used for eliciting and providing new information, but also to express a contrast, as in the correction from the QUIS map task illustrated in (98).

- (98) A: (I have walked and I find a bicycle.)

B: Hingá bhasiké:ní, í m'ó:vha níwónâ:ku.  
hinga bhasikeni, i movha ni-won-a=ku  
COP.NEG 9.bicycle COP 5.car 1SG.SM-see-FV=REL  
'It's not a bicycle, it's a car that I see.'

The focus on the clefted constituent comes out as exhaustive when the expression *dwe* (only) is used. Note that *dwe* can be separated from the clefted constituent but still modify it, as in the answer in (99), where *dwe* appears in final position, but is interpreted with the clefted subject *Gomes*.

- (99) Q: Í m'áni angatutu:ma?

i mani a-nга-tutum-a  
COP who 1SM-REL-run-FV  
'Who ran?'

A: Í Go:mes angatutu:ma dwé.  
i Gomes a-nга-tutum-a dwe  
COP 1.Gomes 1SM-REL-run-FV only  
'It was only Gomes that ran.'

The exhaustive interpretation seems to be an implied part of the interpretation of the basic cleft, as visible in the answer to an incomplete question. The fact that the answer in (100) contains *ihimhim* 'no', rather than *iim* 'yes', shows that the cleft in the question can be interpreted as exhaustive: the cleft question in (100)

asks, ‘Is [the sheep]<sub>EXH</sub> eating a carrot?’ and the negation applies to the exhaustivity: it is true that the sheep is eating the carrot, but it is not *only* the sheep (also the tortoise). However, an answer with ‘yes’ was also given to a similarly “incomplete” question, as in (101), showing that exhaustivity is not inherent to the basic cleft.

- (100) (Context: a drawing with a tortoise and sheep eating a carrot.)

- Q: I mbvhu:tá yídyáku sénó:rá?  
 i mbvhuta yi-dy-a=ku senora  
 COP 9.sheep 9SM-eat-FV=REL 5.carrot  
 ‘Is it the sheep that is eating a/the carrot?’
- A: Ihî:mhím, í mbvhû:ta ní fu:tu, hingá mbvhú:tá dwé yídyâ:ku séno:ra.  
 ihmhim i mbvhuta ni futu hinga mbvhuta dwe  
 no COP 9.sheep and 9.tortoise COP.NEG 9.sheep only  
 yi-dy-a=ku senora  
 9SM-eat-FV=REL 5.carrot  
 ‘No, it is the sheep and tortoise, it’s not only the sheep that eats  
 a/the carrot.’

- (101) (Context: a photo of a woman selling tomatoes and onions.)

- Q: Símá:tí axávísá:kú wansika:ti?  
 si-mati a-xav-is-a=ku wansikati  
 COP.8-tomato 1SM-buy-CAUS-FV=REL 1.woman  
 ‘Is it tomatoes the woman is selling?’
- A: Iim/Ihî:mhím sím'á:tí ní tîny'á:lá áxávísâ:kú wánsíka:ti.  
 Iim/ ihmhim si-mati ni ti-nyala a-xav-is-a=ku  
 yes/ no COP.8-tomato and 10-onion 1SM-buy-CAUS-FV=REL  
 wansikati  
 1.woman  
 ‘Yes/no, it’s tomatoes and onions that the woman is selling.’

The answer in (102) suggests that the cleft conveys an exhaustive focus: just by using the cleft, the “overcomplete” statement in the question can be corrected to exclude the cat mentioned in the question in (102).

- (102) (Context: QUIS picture of Maria with a rabbit.)

- Q: Í mvh'ú:njá ni cíwô:ngá ákúnású Marî:ya?<sup>9</sup>  
i mvhunja ni ci-wonga a-ku=na=su Mariya  
cop 5.rabbit and 7-cat 1SM-REL=with=8OM 1.Mary  
'It is a rabbit and a cat that Mary has?'  
A: Ihî:mhím, i mvhu:njá akuna:cú, akáná cíwó:ngá.  
ihimhim i mvhunja a-ku=na=cu a-ka=na ci-wonga  
no cop 9.rabbit 1SM-REL=with=7OM 1SM-NEG=with 7.cat  
'No, it is a rabbit that she has. She doesn't have a cat.'

The fact that inclusive *hambi* 'even' is not acceptable in a cleft (103) illustrates the same point: if she has fed the goats even rice, as the least likely in a range of other foodstuffs that she also gave, then rice is not the exhaustive referent for which the predicate is true.

- (103) \* Í hambí mpû:nga Laurínyá átiningile típhô:ngo.  
i hambi mpunga Laurinya a-ti-ning-ile ti-phongo  
cop even 3.rice 1.Laurinha 1SM-10OM-give-PFV 10-goat  
int. 'It's even rice that Laurinha gave to the goats.'

We have conflicting evidence for the universal quantifier *sotshe* 'all'. In principle, 'all' cannot exclude any alternatives and is therefore incompatible with exclusive focus. The unacceptability of (104) therefore suggests that the cleft has an exclusive interpretation; but the acceptability of (105) suggests differently. The explanation for this acceptability might be found in the context for examples like (105) and (106): the universal quantifier is opposed to the alternative of 'some' (i.e. 'not all'), thereby excluding at least that alternative. This opposition makes it compatible with an exclusive reading.

- (104) \* I so:tshe siketa ningaxa:va.<sup>10</sup>  
i si-otshe si-keta ni-nga-xav-a  
cop 8-all 8-pineapple 1SM-REL-buy-FV  
int. 'It's all the pineapples that I bought.'

<sup>9</sup>The enclitic object marker is used in relative clauses and with SM=na=CL 'be with'; in other environments we find a prefixal object marker.

<sup>10</sup>This example lacks tone marking.

- (105) (Context: There's a pest and someone wants to know which animals will die if they don't fumigate.)

Síhärí sô:tshé sínô:fa.

si-hari si-otshe si-na-o-f-a  
COP.8-animal 8-all 8SM-FUT-REL-die-FV  
'It's all the animals that will die.'

- (106) (Did the cat really break every single thing?)

Í s'ó:tshé ciwo:ngá cíngáfa:ya.  
I si-otshe ci-wonga ci-nga-fay-a  
COP 8-all 7-cat 7SM-REL-break-FV  
'It's everything that the cat broke.'

A "mention some" question can also be used to test exhaustivity (see the BaSIS methodology, van der Wal 2021). Such a question has multiple good answers; for the question in (107) there are typically various places in which spring onions can be bought, and this means that the answer to such a question cannot contain an exhaustive focus strategy (as it would not be true that the mentioned place is the only place where onions can be bought). The question here can be felicitously answered by the SVO sentence in (107b), but for the cleft in (107a) it was indicated that this means it would be the only place you can get them (which is not true and therefore infelicitous).

- (107) (Where can I buy spring onions?)

- # Í bazá:rá ungóxává:kú cíbhi:la.  
i bazara u-nga-ku-xav-a=ku ci-bhila  
COP market 2SG.SM-POT-15-buy-FV=REL 7-spring.onion  
'It's on the market that you can buy spring onion.'
- Ungáxává bazâ:ra.  
u-nga-xav-a bazara  
2SG.SM-POT-buy-FV market  
'You can buy (them) on the market.'

Given these data suggesting the exclusive or exhaustive interpretation of the basic cleft, it is surprising that the basic cleft is accepted with cognate objects (108) and parts of idioms (109), retaining the idiomatic interpretation; as mentioned, cognate objects and parts of idioms are "unfocusable" as they cannot generate any alternatives in the idiomatic interpretation (see van der Wal 2016, 2022). Note also that these are thetic contexts, which may be of influence on their unexpected acceptance.

- (108) (Where did you get this idea?)

Ḿl'ó:ró ningalo:ra.  
m-lo-ro ni-nga-lor-a  
cop.3-dream 1SG.SM-REL-dream-FV  
'It's a dream that I dreamt.'

- (109) (What happened with him/her?)

Díbh'á:vhú ángákha:va.  
di-bhavhu a-nga-khav-a  
cop.5-bucket 1SM-REL/PFV-kick-FV  
'It's a bucket that s/he kicked.'  
'S/He passed away.'

Finally, as Cicopi does not have a restriction against multiple foci, the focus on a clefted constituent can be combined with focus elsewhere in the clause, as illustrated in (110). In (110a) the exhaustive marker *dwé* gives exhaustive focus to the object *tikaneta* 'pens', which means that only pens were given to the children by the teacher, whereas in (110b) the focus is on *vanaña* 'children', which means that only children were given pens (which presupposes that in addition to children other people such as school staff and others could have received the pens). *Dwe* in these cases modifies the constituent immediately to its left.

- (110) a. (Context: Someone sees pens and pencils with the children and asks:

Who gave those things to the children?)

I n'góndísi angáníngá tíkáné:ta dwé, váná:na.

i n'góndisi a-nga-ning-a ti-kaneta dwé, va-nana  
cop 1.teacher 1SM-REL-give-FV 10-pen only 2-child

'It was the teacher that gave only pens to children.'

- b. (Context: Someone sees the children and the adults with pens and

ask: Who gave pens to them?)

I n'góndísi angáníngá tíkáné:ta, váná:na dwé.

i n'góndisi a-nga-ning-a ti-kaneta va-nana dwé  
cop 1.teacher 1SM-REL-give-FV 10-pen 2-child only

'It was the teacher that gave pens to the children only.'

Multiple questions with a cleft are also accepted; the subject or object can be clefted while the other interrogative remains postverbal.

- (111) a. Í nc!<sup>1</sup>á:ní angawo:mbá ma:ni?  
          i    cani a-nга-womb-a mani  
          COP what 1SM-REL-say-FV who  
          ‘Who said what?’, lit. ‘It’s what that who said?’
- b. Í m!ání angawo:mbá ca:ni?  
          i    mani a-nга-womb-a cani  
          COP who 1SM-REL-say-FV what  
          ‘Who said what?’, lit. ‘It’s who that said what?’

In summary, the clefted constituent shows some properties of an exclusive or even exhaustive focus interpretation, but its use seems to be broader than that, given the felicity in thetic contexts with idioms and cognate objects.

## 4.2 Pseudocleft

In a pseudocleft, the copula joins a free relative and a noun phrase. So, we find first the relative clause (on its left), then the copula and a noun phrase or pronoun (on its right), as we can see in (112).

- (112) (What did they see?)  
       Ací vágácívó:na i cíwó:nga.  
          a-ci              va-nга-ci-won-a    i    ci-wonga  
          AUG-7.DEM.PROX 2SM-REL-7OM-see-FV COP 7-cat  
       ‘What they saw is a cat.’

The free relative clause in the pseudocleft is headed by the demonstrative pronoun. This proximate demonstrative pronoun is joined to the augment *a-* at the beginning to form *awu* in (113) and *aci* in (117). The free relative clause describes an entity, and that entity is then identified by the focus (which is the referent of the NP or pronoun). To illustrate: the relative clause *awu ningatimulosa* ‘the one I was greeting’ in (113) presupposes that there is someone greeting someone else, and the second part identifies exactly who was being greeted: *Marta*. The context questions also indicate that the postcopular NP forms the focus, not the precopular part.

- (113) (Who were you greeting? / #Who is Marta?)  
       Awú ningatímuló:sá í Ma:rtá.  
          a-wu              ni-nга-ti-mu-los-a    i    Marta  
          AUG-1.DEM.PROX 1SG.SM-REL-IPFV-greet-FV COP 1.Marta  
       ‘The one I was greeting is Marta.’

Nevertheless, the presupposition of existence is not necessarily present, considering that the answer to a pseudocleft question can be the empty set, as seen in the felicitous answer to the question in (114).

- (114) Q: Awú atsímbítísáku mo:vhá í má:ní?  
a-wu a-tsímbítis-a=ku mo:vha i ma:ni  
AUG-1.DEM 1SM-drive-FV=REL 3.car COP who  
'Who is driving/can drive a/the car?', lit. The one driving the car is who?
- A1: Hingá:nthu.  
hinga nthu.  
COP.NEG 1.person  
'Nobody.'
- A2: Awú atsímbítísáku mo:vhá hingá:nthu.  
a-wu a-tsímbítis-a=ku mo:vha hinga nthu  
AUG-1.DEM 1SM-drive-FV=REL 3.car COP.NEG 1.person  
'Who can drive a/the car is nobody.'<sup>11</sup>

Pseudoclefts can be used to ask and answer questions. In the answer to a content question, the free relative repeats the given information and then the predicative NP brings the focus answer, as we can see in (115).

- (115) Q: Àwú atsímbítísákú mo:vhá i má:ní?  
a-wu a-tsímbítis-a=ku movha i mani  
AUG-1.DEM.PROX 1SM-drive-FV=REL 3.car COP who  
'Who is driving the car?'
- A: Àwú atsímbítísakú mo:vhá i Sá:ra.  
a-wu a-tsímbítis-a=ku movha i Sara  
AUG-1.DEM.PROX 1SM-drive-FV=REL 3.car COP 1.Sara  
'The one who's driving the car is Sara.'

The focus interpretation is also visible in (116), where the pseudocleft structure results in ungrammaticality when applying the 'even' test which is marked by *hambi* in Cicopi – this, in fact, suggests an exclusive reading. In (117), the example

<sup>11</sup>The meaning can be 'who is driving the car', but a reviewer points out that if a car is driven, it is (in the pre-self-driving era) driven by someone. The interpretation of this sentence can thus only be in a situation of finding out who has a driving licence, translated as 'who can drive a car'.

also shows the unacceptability of parts of an idiomatic expression, in this case ‘the bucket’. Although the sentence is grammatical, it does not retain its idiomatic meaning, because alternatives are generated on the level of the object {a stone, a ball, a bucket} and not the whole idiom (pass away).

- (116) \* Awu angádyá ciké:ta i hambí Arli:ndu.  
       a-wu              a-nga-dy-a     ci-keta     i     hambi Arlindu  
       AUG-1.DEM.PROX 1SM-REL-eat-FV 7-pineapple COP even 1.Arlindu  
       int. ‘The one who ate pineapple was even Arlindo.’
- (117) Ací angákhá:vá i díbhá:vhu.  
       a-ci              a-nga-khav-a     i     di-bhavhu  
       AUG-DEM.PROX 1SM-REL-kick-FV COP 5-bucket  
       ‘What s/he kicked is a bucket.’  
       \* ‘S/He passed away’

Pseudoclefts are naturally used in answers to alternative questions, identifying the referent, as illustrated in (118) and (119), as well as in selective answers such as (120), again identifying a subset.

- (118) (Who cut the banana, the big boy or the small boy?)  
       Awú angawílá nkô:mbvá m'fá:ná wándo:to.  
       a-wu              a-nga-wil-a     nkombva m'-fana   w-a     ndoto  
       AUG-1.DEM.PROX 1SM-REL-cut-FV 9.banana COP.1-boy 1-CONN small  
       ‘The one who cut the banana is the small boy.’
- (119) (Who has a parrot, Thomas or Samuel? + QUIS picture of Samuel with a parrot.)  
       Aw' ákuni cinyáná:na í S'ámué:le.  
       a-wu              a=ku=ni        ci-nyanana i     Samuel  
       AUG-1.DEM.PROX 1SM-REL=with 7-parrot     COP 1.Samuel  
       ‘The one who has a parrot is Samuel.’
- (120) (Do these people wear hats? +QUIS picture of two women without hats and two men with hats.)  
       Ka váthu vá:va, avá vákúni sígo:ko májá:há.  
       ka   va-thu   vava        a=va        va=ku=ni     si-goko ma-jaha  
       LOC 2-people 2.DEM.PROX AUG-2.PRO 2SM=REL=with 8-hats   COP.6-man  
       ‘Of/between these people, the ones that have hats are the men.’

As in other languages, the pseudocleft in Cicopi is thus typically used for identifying a referent, although it remains to be seen if this is an exhaustive identification.

### 4.3 Reverse pseudocleft/left-peripheral NP + cleft

In principle, the two parts of the copular construction in a pseudocleft can be reversed, referred to as a reverse pseudocleft, e.g. ‘the men are the ones that have hats’. However, in this construction in Cicopi, the demonstrative in the relative clause is no longer marked with the augment, as shown in (121), where we see *wu* rather than *awu*. In fact, it can be an independent pronoun, as illustrated by *yona* in (122). We give two translations, foreshadowing the alternative analysis discussed later.

- (121) (Context: We were talking about school and I mentioned Marta, but you don’t know Marta. So, you ask: ‘Who is Marta?’)

Ma:rta, i wú angárépwé:la cikólwá:ni.

Marta i wu a-nга-repwel-a ci-kolwa-ni  
1.Marta COP 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-REL.PST-fail-FV 7-school-LOC

‘Marta is the one who failed at school.’ / ‘Marta, it is her who failed at school.’

- (122) (Having climbed onto that trunk, his dog also climbed, showing him by scent that the animal we are looking for may be there. Then he sniffed.)

Yí:mbwá, ngu yóna yifémbá:kú ngu makô:ta yá yó:na.

yi-mbwa ngu yi-oná yi-femb-a=ku ngu ma-kota y-a y-oná  
9-dog COP 9-PRO 9SM-sniff-FV=REL PREP 6-nose 6-CONN 9-PRO

‘The dog is what sniffs with its snout.’

As in other Bantu languages (see Nshemezimana & van der Wal (2025 [this volume]), Asiimwe & van der Wal (2025 [this volume]), Lusekelo et al. (2025 [this volume]), Kanampiu & van der Wal (2025 [this volume])), this apparent “reverse pseudocleft” may be better analysed as a left-dislocated NP followed by a basic cleft. In this analysis, the clefted constituent is the demonstrative or personal pronoun, referring to the same referent as the initial NP. We suggest that the precopular NP functions as the topic – this would be compatible with the following prosodic break in (121) and (122) above. The clefted pronoun (*wu/yona*) then forms the focus.

This suggests that the referent to which the initial NP and the demonstrative refer must be topical information and be in focus at the same time. This is shown

in (123), where the girls are mentioned in the question and can hence be taken up as a (contrastive) topic, but since they are selected to the exclusion of the boys, they are in focus too. The topic function is expressed by the NP and the focus by the demonstrative in the cleft.

- (123) (Did the boys and girls wash their hands?)

Mahórá:na ngu wó:na mangasa:mba mandza:na, majá:há mayásá:mbá.  
 ma-horana ngu w-oná ma-nga-samb-a ma-ndza-ini ma-jaha  
 6-girl COP 6-PRO 6SM-REL-wash-FV 6-hand-LOC 6-boy  
 ma-ya-samb-a  
 6SM-NEG-wash-FV

'It was the girls who washed the hands, the boys didn't.'

'(as for) The girls, it's them who washed hands, the boys didn't.'

Idiomatic expressions do not retain their idiomatic reading in this construction, as seen in (124) – this is expected because neither topic nor focus can involve idiomatic expressions.

- (124) Dibhá:vhú, i ci éné angákhá:va.

di-bhávhú i ci ene a-nga-khav-a  
 5-bucket COP 7.DEM.PROX 1.PRO 1SM-REL-kick-FV

'The bucket, it's what s/he kicked.'

\* 'Passing away is what s/he did.'

The fact that the initial NP cannot be a question word, as shown in (125), also suggests that this is not just a reverse pseudocleft. Nevertheless, the initial NP can be modified by *dwe* 'only', as in (126). Considering the pause after *Tereza dwe* 'only Teresa', we propose that this can be analysed as a fragment answer, followed by a basic cleft, as indicated in the translations.

- (125) \* Ma:ni i wú híngámuwó:na?

mani i wu hi-nga-mu-won-a  
 who COP 1.DEM.PROX 1SM.PL-REL-1OM-see-FV  
 int. 'Who is it / Who is the one that we saw?'

- (126) (We expect to receive Pedro, Paulo, Teresa and others. Did they come?)

Tere:za dwé, i wu angá:ta ntí:ni.

Tereza dwe i wu a-nga-t-a n-t-ini  
 1.Teresa only COP 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-REL-come-FV 3-home-LOC  
 'It was only Teresa who came home.'

'Only Teresa. It's her who came home.'

In summary, there is some evidence to show that what may at first sight look like a reverse pseudocleft, actually combines an initial NP, which functions as a topic or a fragment answer, with a basic cleft in which a demonstrative pronoun (coreferent with the NP) is in focus. This may be a strategy to express both the topical and the focal function of a referent, but divided the two over the NP and clefted pronoun.

## 5 Predicate doubling

In a predicate doubling construction, the same predicate occurs twice: once in a finite and once in a non-finite form. Out of the three types of predicate doubling that Güldemann & Fiedler (2022) describe, Cicopi has two predicate doubling constructions: topic doubling and in-situ doubling (discussed below). It does not allow cleft doubling, as shown in (127), where an infinitive forms the clefted constituent.

- (127) \* I kúsé:ka hisékâ:ku.  
i ku-sek-a hi-sek-a=ku  
COP 15-laugh 1PL.SM-laugh-FV=REL  
lit. 'It's laughing that we laugh.'

In topic doubling, the infinitive precedes the inflected form of the same verb, as in (128) for the verb *-bhika* 'cook'.

- (128) (Context: A mother went out to work and when she returns, she can see that the children are weak. She asks the help 'Are you cooking for these children?')  
Kubhí:ka hábhí:ka.  
ku-bhika hi-a-bhik-a  
15-cook 1PL.SM-DJ-cook-FV  
'We do cook (but they don't eat).'

Topic doubling typically implies a contrast with an alternative predicate (e.g. cooking versus eating), and this contrast can be made explicit, as illustrated in (129). Example (130) shows the same contrast with a transitive predicate, where both verb and object are preposed.

- (129) (Context: You meet someone on the street and you don't even greet – s/he asks whether you're annoyed.)  
 Niyákŵâ:ta max kuja:ha njáhi:le.  
 ni-ya-kwat-a               max ku-jaha ni-jah-ile               'I'm not angry,  
 1SG.SM-NEG-be.angry-FV but 15-hurry 1SG.SM-hurry-PFV  
 but I am in a hurry.'
- (130) (Context: You were left at home with tasks of washing (clothes) and cooking beans. When mum comes home and sees you sitting, she is annoyed: 'You didn't do anything, you're just sitting here watching television!')  
 Niyákuwû:la ká:mbe [kubhika tifeijáu] nibhíkî:le.  
 ni-ya-kuwul-a               kambe ku-bhika ti-feijau ni-bhik-ile  
 1SG.SM-NEG-wash-FV but 15-cook 10-bean 1SG.SM-cook-PFV  
 'I didn't wash, but I *did* cook the beans.'

The object can also follow the inflected verb, but the interpretation will not be the same, as shown in (131). This example can be an answer to 'what did you cook?' (object focus) or to confirm that s/he really cooked as recommended. In contrast, when the whole verb phrase (infinitive plus object) precedes the inflected form, as in (130), object focus is not a possible interpretation.

- (131) Kubhi:ka nibhíkile tifeijau.  
 ku-bhika ni-bhik-ile               ti-feijau  
 15-cook 1SG.SM-cook-PFV 10-bean  
 'I cooked (the) beans.'

Apart from the implied or explicit contrast, the interpretation may be one of verum (emphatic focus on the truth), as illustrated in (132) and (133).

- (132) (Context: Someone gave a task and wants to confirm that it is done, saying 'You are not doing what I said').  
 Kuthu:ma háthû:ma!  
 ku-thuma hi-a-thum-a  
 15-work 1PL.SM-DJ-work-FV  
 'We are actually doing it.'
- (133) (You are not eating the cake that I bought. It'll go bad.)  
 Ku:dya hâ:dyá.  
 ku-dya hi-a-dy-a  
 15-eat 1PL.SM-DJ-eat-FV  
 'We *are* eating (it).'

Topic doubling can in the right context also have a deprecative meaning, as illustrated in (134) and (135), or an intensive reading, as in (136).

- (134) (Context: You're talking with your friends and someone else is further away; he comes towards you and you change the topic of conversation and he asks why you're laughing at him, but you say no, we're just happy.)  
Kuse:ka hasê:ka.  
ku-seka hi-a-sek-a  
15-laugh 1PL.SM-DJ-laugh-FV  
'We're just laughing.'
- (135) (Context: There are people with a bad body odour and someone appears asking what is going on with these ones.)  
Kusá:mbá vásá:mbá.  
ku-samba va-a-samb-a  
15-bathe 2SM-DJ-bathe-FV  
'They do take a bath (but they don't get clean).'
- (136) (Context: Mary is getting fat and her aunt is surprised with her. What is happening with Mary?)  
Ku:dya wâ:dya.  
ku-dya w-a-dy-a  
15-eat 1SM-DJ-eat-FV  
'She is eating too much.'

The second type of predicate doubling is called in-situ doubling. It features the infinitive in a postverbal position. The verb form of the inflected verb in the present tense can be each of the conjoint, disjoint, or progressive form (see Section 2), as shown in (137) – we do not know if this corresponds to a difference in meaning or use.

- (137) (Why are you laughing?)  
Hi-/ha-/ho-seka kúsê:ka.  
hi-/hi-a-/                hi-o-sek-a                ku-seka  
1PL.SM-/1PL.SM-DJ-/ 1PL.SM-PROG-laugh-FV 15-laugh  
'We are just laughing.'

For in-situ doubling, there are two main interpretations. The first is an intensive reading, as illustrated in (138) and (139). Note that (138) also illustrates the possibility of a post-infinitival object in in-situ doubling.

- (138) (Context: They hit the child more than a normal spanking.)

Vapékile kúpê:ka (mwanâ:na).  
 va-peki-ile ku-peka mw-anana  
 2SM-hit-PFV 15-hit 1-child  
 ‘They really hit the child.’

- (139) (Context: They walked a longer distance than usual, perhaps as far as

Xai-Xai from Chidenguele.)  
 Vátsímbíté kútsímbî:la.  
 va-tsímbil-ile ku-tsímbila  
 2SM-walk-PFV 15-walk  
 ‘They really walked!’

The second interpretation is again the depreciative, as we can see in (140).

- (140) Híthé:te kuthê:la (mâ:ti).

Hi-thel-ile ku-thela mati  
 1PL.SM-water-PFV 15-water 6.water  
 ‘We watered (the crops) (even if they don’t bear fruit).’

We summarise what we know about predicate doubling in Cicopi in Table 2.

Table 2: Predicate doubling options in Cicopi

	form	Interpretation
topic doubling	INF (O) V-fin	verum, depreciative, intensive
	INF V-fin O	object focus, confirmation
in-situ doubling	V-fin INF (O)	intensive, depreciative

The precise uses of topic doubling and in-situ doubling in Cicopi, as well as the possibilities with regard to the position of arguments (subject, object), and what these tell us about the underlying syntactic and semantic structure, remain for further research.

## 6 Referent expression

Whether referents are more active or less active in the hearer’s (and speaker’s) mind has an influence on the way they are referred to (Chafe 1987). Highly active

referents need less material for successful reference (Ariel 1990, Gundel et al. 1993), and it is therefore unsurprising that in Cicopi such active referents can be referred to by a mere subject marker when they function as subjects, as illustrated earlier in this chapter and again in (141), where we indicate a “null subject” by the empty set symbol.

- (141) (The boy and the dog were still looking for the frog and they found bees on their way and started to run.)

Se, vácípíndí:le a:hu, yímbwá yíngâdí yicótútú:ma, Ø yitsú:la.

se va-ci-pind-ile ahu yi-mbwa yi-nga-di  
so 2SM-pass-PFV 16.DEM.MED 9-dog 9SM-still-be  
yi-ci-o-tutum-a yi-tsul-a  
9SM-CON-PROG-run-FV 9SM-leave-FV

‘After that, the dog kept running, and left.’

Ø Yitsú:té yíyátúmbé:lá, akáyíwô:ne.

yi-tsul-ile yi-ya-tumbel-a a-ka-yi-won-i  
9SM-leave-PFV 9SM-go-hide-FV 1SM-NEG-9OM-see-NEG

‘He went to hide, he doesn’t see him.’

The active object can equally be expressed pronominally, by object marking on the verb, as in (142) from the QUIS map task: speaker A activates the concept ‘butterfly’, and speaker B then refers to it by an object marker *di-*.

- (142) A: Nákwlélá ngú cíné:né; nímána dipháphálátá:ni.

n-a-kwel-el-a ngu cinene; ni-man-a di-phaphalatani  
1SM-PRS-go.up-APPL-FV PREP 7.right 1SG.SM-find-FV 5-butterfly  
‘I go to the right, I find a butterfly.’

B: Nídímá:ne, nidímá:ne.

ni-di-man-e ni-di-man-e  
1SG.SM-5OM-find-PFV 1SG.SM-5OM-find-PFV  
‘I have found it.’

Out of context, it seems that the object marker can only function as a pronoun. Example (143a) shows that the object marker on the verb and the coreferent NP cannot be in the same domain – the object marker is only allowed when the coreferent NP is extraposed, as in (143b). This was tested with question words, since we know for sure that those cannot be dislocated, and therefore the object-marked object preceding the question word (e.g. *ndiyawe* ‘his sister’) must also be in situ in the same domain. The same is illustrated in (144), where the object

marker *ma-* cannot be present if the coreferent object *mamanga* ‘mangos’ is in the same domain.

- (143) a. \* Vánámún'íngá ndiyâ:wé câ:ni?  
          va-na-mu-ning-a      ndiya-awe      cani  
          2SM-FUT-1OM-give-FV 1.sister-POSS.1 what  
          ‘What will they give his sister?’
- b. Vánámún'íngá cá:ní ndiyâ:wé?  
          va-na-mu-ning-a      cani      ndiya-awe  
          2SM-FUT-1OM-give-FV what 1.sister-POSS.1  
          ‘What will they give his sister?’
- (144) U(\*ma)xaveté máma:nга mâ:ni?  
          u-ma-xav-el-ile      ma-manga mani  
          2SG.SM-6OM-buy-APPL-PFV 6-mangos who  
          ‘Who did you buy mangoes for?’

However, we do find examples of the cooccurrence of an object and an object marker, in contexts where the object referent is active. In examples (145) and (146), the verb shows penultimate lengthening, so the object seems to be phrased separately from the verb, but there is no pause to indicate dislocation. We leave further analysis of Cicopi object marking for future research, but refer to Sikuku & Diercks's (2021) findings for Lubukusu, where doubling is accepted in verum and mirative contexts when the object is given.

- (145) A: Nikwélé:lá nimáná nyú:mbá yóbhílívi:la.  
          ni-kwelel-a      ni-man-a      nyumba yi-a-ku-bhilivila  
          1SG.SM-climb-FV 1SG.SM-find-FV 9.house 9-CONN-15-be.red  
          ‘I go up and find a red house.’
- B: Nayíwó:na nyú:mba, má:ji áni já níyíwóná háhá:tshí.  
          ni-a-yi-won-a      nyumba, maji ani      ja  
          1SG.SM-DJ-9OM-see-FV 9.house but 1SG.PRO now  
          ni-yi-won-a      ha-hatsi  
          1SG.SM-9OM-see-FV 16-down  
          ‘I see (it) the house, but below.’
- (146) (Could it be that Pedro found the phone?)  
          Pédrú áyím'ání fó:ní sála:ni.  
          Pedro a-yi-man-e      foni      sala-ini  
          1.Pedro 1SM-9OM-find-PFV 9.phone 5.room-LOC  
          ‘Pedro found the phone in the room.’

Note that it is also perfectly acceptable to completely drop the object without any object marking, as illustrated in (147) and (148).

- (147) Niwoné mu:ti. [...] Ntó(yí)da:ya.  
ni-won-e        moti        ni-to-yi-day-a  
1SG.SM-SEE-PFV 9.gazella 1SG.SM-TO-9OM-kill-FV  
'I saw a gazella. I killed (it).'
- (148) (Did you eat (the) bread?)  
I:ná, nídyí:té.  
ina ni-dy-ile  
yes 1SG.SM-EAT-PFV  
'Yes, I ate (it).'

We saw in Sections 3.2 and 3.5 that mentally active referents may be expressed by a noun phrase in the left or right periphery, and in this section we have seen that they may also be expressed by a subject or object marker on the verb, or (at least in the case of objects) be omitted completely. Further research is needed to establish what determines whether an object is expressed by an object marker or dropped altogether.

## 7 Conclusion

As we said in the introduction, the aim of this chapter is to give a general overview of the expression of information structure in Cicopi, and we have provided a first description and illustration of the information-structural functions of verbal inflection, word order, three types of clefts, predicate doubling, and referent expression. We can summarise the chapter as follows.

First, Cicopi has three forms in the present tense (conjoint, which is marked by zero morpheme; disjoint/habitual, marked by *a-*; and progressive, marked by *o-*). The precise conditions under which these are used require further investigation, but it seems to depend on a complex interaction between constituent-finality, focus, aspect, and perhaps evidentiality. The conjoint/disjoint alternation in any case seems to be determined more by constituency than by focus directly. In the perfective, there are two forms, *-ile/-ite* and *to-*. The *to-* form is felicitous in expressing state-of-affairs focus (contrasting the lexical value of the verb), but is not felicitous in a verum context. The perfective *-ile/-ite* shows the opposite behaviour and is felicitously used to express verum. The alternating verb forms in Cicopi are thus restricted by a less straightforward set of conditions than is

known from other languages (see e.g. the parametric variation described by van der Wal 2017); especially the potential link with evidentiality is remarkable.

Second, as in many other Bantu languages, the preverbal domain is restricted to non-focal constituents and prefers preverbal topics, and the postverbal domain contains non-topical and focal constituents. There may be an immediate-after-verb preference for focus, but Cicopi shows no restriction to a specific focus position, and focused constituents can appear in any postverbal position. Moreover, Cicopi allows multiple question words postverbally. The relatively complex set of factors determining the use of the conjoint and disjoint verb forms may have a correlation with the lack of a focus position in Cicopi: we can imagine that the (direct or indirect) relation between verb form and focus is not as clear as in a language with a fixed focus position (such as Zulu or Makhuwa, for example), and that therefore other factors (aspect, evidentiality) are more prominent than for other languages.

Third, the basic cleft shows some properties of an exclusive focus interpretation, but its uses seem to be broader, also being accepted in thetic environments, with cognate objects and parts of idioms. Pseudoclefts are also used to express focus, and what at first sight looks like a reverse pseudocleft was shown to be analysable as an initial NP functioning as a topic or a fragment answer, followed by a clefted (demonstrative) pronoun, similar to the construction in Kirundi, Rukiga, Kiitharaka, and Kinyakyusa (see the other chapters in van der Wal 2025). Further investigation is needed to establish the precise interpretations and the underlying structure of these cleft constructions.

Fourth, Cicopi has two predicate doubling constructions: topic doubling and in-situ doubling. The topic doubling shows an interpretation of verum and can also have a depreciative and intensive meaning (as also found in Kirundi, Rukiga, and Kiitharaka), but further research is necessary to determine the precise uses of each predicate doubling construction, as well as the possibilities with regard to the position of arguments.

Finally, we have seen that active referents in Cicopi, in line with universal tendencies (Gundel 1988, Gundel et al. 1993), may be expressed by a noun phrase in the left or right periphery, particularly when indicating a shift topic, and may also be expressed just by a subject or object marker on the verb, or be omitted completely.

We hope that this chapter forms the beginning of many further discoveries about Cicopi and how it structures its information between speaker and addressee.

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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. The orthography for Cicopi has been followed, including the following conventions: b [b], bh [b], d [d], dh [d], v [v], vh [v], c [c], ch [c<sup>h</sup>], j [ʒ], x [ʃ]. Tone marking indicates surface tone including intonation (to the best of our ability, and likely incorrect in places); high tones are marked by an acute accent; low tones remain unmarked, falling tones are marked by a circumflex accent. An apostrophe (as in *m'fana*) indicates a syllabic nasal. Vowel length is indicated by /:/ and vowel nasalisation is indicated by m in the coda, as in *ihimhim* [ihɪ̯:hi̯].

*	ungrammatical	FV	final vowel
#	infelicitous in the given context	LIM	limit ('end up V-ing')
!	downstep	LINK	linker (unsure)
*(X)	the presence of X is obligatory and cannot grammatically be omitted	MED	medial
(*X)	the presence of X would make the sentence ungrammatical	OM	object marker
(X)	the presence of X is optional	PREP	preposition
AUG	augment	QUIS	Questionnaire on Information Structure (Skopeteas et al. 2006)
CJ	conjoint	POT	potential
CL	class marker	PRO	pronoun
CON	consecutive	RED	reduplication
CONN	connective	SM	subject marker
DAI	Default Agreement Inversion	STAT	stative
DEP	dependent conjugation	TO	<i>to-</i> morpheme in perfective conjugation
DJ	disjoint		

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# Name index

- Abels, Klaus, 22, 38, 200, 225–227, 231, 256, 261, 262, 313
- Aissen, Judith, 33
- Ameka, Felix Kofi, 33
- Andrews, Avery D., 125
- Apothéloz, Denis, 321
- Ariel, Mira, 8, 109, 112, 247, 494, 502, 558
- Ashton, E. O., 300
- Asiimwe, Allen, 7, 12, 15, 16, 63, 104, 106, 107, 214, 300, 335–340, 353, 354, 356, 359, 363–371, 381–389, 399, 552
- Bailey, Richard A., 512, 513
- Bancel, Pierre, 54
- Bearth, Thomas, 24, 54, 55, 70, 125
- Beaver, David, 18, 319
- Beermann, Dorothee, 353
- Bergvall, Victoria Lee, 226
- Bianchi, Valentina, 79
- Blanche-Benvensite, Claire, 313
- Bostoen, Koen, 113, 124, 153, 174, 177, 179, 272–274, 279, 280, 340
- Boyd, Virginia Lee, 54
- Bresnan, Joan, 417
- Buell, Leston C., 153, 207, 209, 212, 213, 291, 349, 354, 475, 530
- Bukuru, Denis, 272, 273
- Büring, Daniel, 11
- Byram Washburn, Mary, 19
- CABTAL, 112
- Campbell, Lyle, 21, 22, 86, 89
- Carstens, Vicki, 295, 536
- Cassimjee, Farida, 453
- Ćavar, Damir, 79
- Centis, Gino, 454
- Chafe, Wallace L., 8, 9, 168, 247, 343, 557
- Cheng, Chin-Chuan, 454
- Cheng, Lisa L.-S., 182, 185
- Clark, Brady, 319
- Claudi, Ulrike, 55
- Clements, George N., 226
- Cobbinah, Alexander, 179
- Collins, Peter Craig, 20
- Costa, João, 153
- Creissels, Denis, 20, 55, 68, 71, 418
- Croft, William, 172
- Cruschina, Silvio, 18, 19, 79, 96, 138
- Dalrymple, Mary, 169, 170, 527
- De Kind, Jasper, 113, 124, 148, 151, 153, 186
- Declerck, Renaat, 319
- Demuth, Katherine, 182
- Den Dikken, Marcel, 21, 321, 322
- Destruel, Emilie, 18
- DeVeaugh-Geiss, Joseph, 18
- Devos, Maud, 289, 455, 515
- Diercks, Michael, 12, 398, 559
- Dik, Simon C., 15, 18
- Dos Santos, Luiz Feliciano, 512

## *Name index*

- Downing, Laura J., 1, 4, 24, 71, 125, 128, 182, 185  
Drenhaus, Heiner, 18  
Dryer, Matthew S., 55, 175, 179  
Dugast, Idelette, 54, 55, 73–77, 86, 87, 98, 99, 101, 102, 106, 108, 112  
É. Kiss, Katalin, 17, 18, 20, 162, 319, 462  
Eberhard, David M., 200, 335  
Erteschik-Shir, Nomi, 11, 13, 40, 57  
Fadden, Lorna, 20  
Fanselow, Gisbert, 79  
Faquir, Osvaldo, 511, 512  
Felberg, Knut, 407  
Féry, Caroline, 114  
Fiedler, Ines, 8, 15, 24, 62, 113, 114, 148, 219, 297, 379, 423, 554  
Firbas, Jan, 33  
Fleisch, Axel, 106–108  
Floor, Sebastian, 503  
Frajzyngier, Zygmunt, 179  
Frascarelli, Mara, 10  
Gensler, Orin D., 55, 68  
Ghomeshi, Jila, 300  
Givón, Talmy, 8, 10, 40, 57, 170, 172, 247  
Good, Jeff, 24, 55, 113  
Gordon, Raymond G. Jr., 54  
Grégoire, Claire, 124, 353  
Guérois, Rozenn, 105, 108, 455  
Güldemann, Tom, 8, 15, 24, 55, 66, 68, 71, 113, 129, 143, 148, 151, 219, 279, 297, 379, 423, 554  
Gundel, Jeanette K., 8, 12, 13, 20, 33, 97, 109, 112, 114, 164, 247, 558, 561  
Gunnink, Hilde, 299  
Guthrie, Malcolm, 5, 199, 271, 407, 511  
Hadermann, Pascale, 124, 148, 153  
Haiman, John, 103  
Halpert, Claire, 443, 515  
Hamlaoui, Fatima, 58, 70, 113, 179, 182  
Hammarström, Harald, 4, 5  
Han, Chung-hye, 398  
Harford, Carolyn, 200, 226  
Harris, Alice C., 21, 22, 86, 89  
Haspelmath, Martin, 418  
Hedberg, Nancy, 20, 319  
Hegarty, Michael, 8  
Heine, Bernd, 21, 71  
Henderson, Brent, 164  
Heycock, Caroline, 86, 87  
Higgins, Francis Roger, 20, 86  
Hinterhölzl, Roland, 10  
Höhle, Tilman N., 398  
Horn, Laurence R., 18, 38, 319  
Hyman, Larry M., 1, 17, 123, 151, 153, 272, 337, 340, 512  
Instituto Nacional Estatistica, 453, 511  
Isaac, Kendall Mark, 73, 80, 98, 99, 109, 112  
Ishihara, Shinichiro, 114  
Janzen, Terry, 103  
Jerro, Kyle, 25, 224, 374  
Jespersen, Otto, 20  
Kanampiu, Patrick N., 11, 12, 21, 23, 200, 226, 246, 249, 252–254, 299, 300, 364, 380, 552  
Kanerva, Jonni M., 417  
Katupha, José M. M., 454

- Kawasha, Boniface, 179  
Keenan, Edward L., 175, 179  
Kenesei, István, 17  
Kerr, Elisabeth J., 3, 12, 16, 20, 23,  
24, 28, 34, 53–56, 61, 63, 64,  
68, 70, 71, 74, 76–80, 82, 86,  
88, 99, 102, 106, 108, 109, 112,  
113, 164, 200, 297, 340, 344,  
352, 409, 415, 449, 462, 522  
Kimenyi, Alexandre, 293  
Kirwan, Brian Edmond R., 335, 381  
Kisseberth, Charles W., 453, 454  
Kongne Welaze, Jacquis, 54  
Koni Muluwa, Joseph, 113, 124, 153  
Krifka, Manfred, 14, 17, 18, 127  
Kröger, Oliver, 454, 474  
Kujath, Elizabeth, 482  
Kula, Nancy C., 153, 179, 361  
Kuroda, Sige-Yuki, 130, 154  
Lafkioui, Mena, 20, 182, 226, 272, 309,  
311, 313, 318, 319, 321–325,  
328  
Lambrecht, Knud, 9, 15, 20, 56, 99,  
125, 127, 168, 279, 295, 313,  
317, 344, 420  
Langa da Câmara, Crisófia, 12  
Languages of Tanzania Project  
(LoT), 407  
Levinson, Stephen C., 38  
Lewis, David, 130  
Li, Charles N., 13, 168  
Li, Zhen, 7, 10, 16, 33, 63, 105, 107, 113,  
114, 174–176, 178, 181  
Lindblom, Gerhard, 200  
Lippard, Hannah, 12, 398, 399  
Lopez, Luis, 362  
Louagie, Dana, 79  
Lüpke, Friederike, 179  
Lusekelo, Amani, 13, 21, 29, 34, 36, 38,  
252, 299, 407, 408, 415, 416,  
443–449, 552  
Maho, Jouni Filip, 5, 53, 199, 271, 407,  
511  
Makasso, Emmanuel-Moselly, 58, 70,  
113, 179, 182  
Malchukov, Andrej, 69  
Maniacky, Jacky, 21, 182  
Marten, Lutz, 1, 4, 24, 57, 71, 125, 128,  
179, 207, 252, 287, 314, 352,  
354, 361, 473, 534  
Matić, Dejan, 9, 30, 41  
Mberamihigo, Ferdinand, 290, 314  
Meeussen, Achille Emile, 147, 272,  
289, 298, 311, 321, 374  
Merchant, Jason, 8  
Mikkelsen, Line, 86  
Mletshe, Loyiso, 295, 536  
Molnár, Valéria, 19  
Morimoto, Yukiko, 55, 128, 148, 256,  
264, 272, 288, 340  
Morris, Henry Francis, 335, 381  
Mous, Maarten, 53–55, 60, 67, 70–74,  
76, 77, 79–83, 85, 106–108,  
115  
Msovedla, Simon, 408, 409, 417–423,  
449  
Mucanheia, Francisco Ussene, 455  
Muller, Claude, 313  
Mundeke, Léon, 113, 124, 153, 174, 177,  
179, 340  
Muriungi, Peter, 22, 38, 200, 207, 209,  
212, 213, 225–227, 231, 253,  
255–257, 261, 262, 313  
Musan, Renate, 14  
Mwangoka, Ngapona, 407, 443

## Name index

- Namyalo, Saudah, 39  
Ndayiragije, Juvénal, 272, 273, 275, 286, 288  
Ndoleriire, Oswald, 335  
Ndonga Mfuwa, Manuel, 186  
Neeleman, Ad, 9  
Ngoboka, Jean Paul, 280  
Ngunga, Armindo, 511, 512  
Nhantumbo, Nelsa, 25, 512, 513, 517, 520  
Nikitina, Tatiana, 55  
Nikolaeva, Irina, 169, 170, 172, 346, 527  
NsHEMEZIMANA, Ernest, 2, 35, 63, 204, 214, 264, 272–274, 279, 280, 288–290, 292, 293, 295, 297, 301, 305, 314, 315, 318, 323–325, 327, 328, 337, 364, 397, 530, 552  
Ntahokaja, Jean-Baptiste, 272  
  
Odden, David, 337  
Onea, Edgar, 17, 18  
Ozerov, Pavel, 9, 30  
  
Paul, Waltraud, 104  
Paulian, Christiane, 123, 124, 189  
Persohn, Bastian, 407, 408, 419, 425  
Pires Prata, P. António, 453  
Poeta, Teresa, 454, 495, 498  
Polak, Louise, 110  
Polinsky, Maria, 153, 295  
  
Ramadhani, Deo, 252  
Reinhart, Tanya, 9, 10, 33, 144, 343  
Renans, Agata, 27, 33  
Repp, Sophie, 11, 19  
Rizzi, Luigi, 166  
Romero, Maribel, 398  
  
Rooth, Mats Edward, 14, 127  
Roubaud, Marie-Noëlle, 321  
  
Sabel, Joachim, 182  
Sabimana, Firmard, 272, 286, 288  
Sande, Hannah, 55, 71  
Sasse, Hans-Jürgen, 14, 56, 130, 131, 154, 295, 344, 420, 474, 536  
Satre, Scott Alan, 56  
Schadeberg, Thilo C., 105, 455  
Schwarz, Florian, 226, 313  
Selkirk, Elizabeth, 144  
Şener, Sekan, 140  
Sheehan, Michelle, 27  
Shi, Dingxu, 172  
Sikuku, Justine, 12, 398, 559  
Simango, Aurélio, 40  
Šimík, Radek, 21  
Skopeteas, Stavros, 27, 33, 85, 266, 384, 450, 562  
Stalnaker, Robert, 130  
Stappers, Leo, 105  
Stucky, Susan, 454, 460, 462  
Szabolcsi, Anna, 18  
  
Taylor, Carrie, 107  
Taylor, Charles, 335, 344, 364, 381–383  
Thompson, Sandra A., 13, 168  
Thwala, Nhlanhla, 417  
Traugott, Elizabeth C., 21, 103  
Tsao, Fengfu, 172  
Turamymomwe, Justus, 335, 336  
  
Vallduví, Enric, 170  
Van de Velde, Mark, 4, 79, 443  
van der Hulst, Harry, 54  
van der Wal, Jenneke, 1–3, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, 21–25, 27–29, 33–35, 37–40, 55–57, 63, 104, 106, 107,

- 110, 124, 125, 127, 128, 130,  
144, 153, 155, 160, 162, 164,  
166, 179, 182, 204, 207, 214,  
224–226, 228, 264, 272, 274,  
281, 282, 287, 299, 300, 336–  
340, 343, 349, 352, 354, 359,  
361, 363–371, 374, 380, 397,  
399, 408, 415, 416, 443–449,  
454–458, 460–464, 466, 467,  
469, 470, 473–476, 482, 483,  
491, 492, 494, 496, 498–504,  
512, 514, 516, 523, 530, 534,  
536, 537, 547, 552, 561  
van Leynseele, Hélène, 54  
Vermeulen, Reiko, 11  
Verstraete, Jean-Christophe, 79  
von Fintel, Kai, 130  
Voorhoeve, Jan, 407, 443

- wa Mberia, Kithaka, 200  
Watters, John R., 17, 151, 153, 349  
Wedgwood, Daniel, 9, 30, 41  
Whitman, John, 104  
Yoneda, Nobuko, 23, 55, 153, 281, 340,  
349, 416  
Zeller, Jochen, 166, 182, 208, 280, 292,  
515  
Zentz, Jason, 226  
Zerbian, Sabine, 128, 166, 281, 287,  
340, 416, 475, 515  
Zimmermann, Malte, 15, 17





# The expression of information structure in Bantu

The Bantu language family is spread over a large area of Africa, stretching from Cameroon to Kenya to South Africa, and comprises an estimated 555 languages. The languages show a large amount of small-scale variation while at the same time forming part of one relatively uniform family within Niger-Congo. Interestingly, the morphosyntax of these languages has been observed to be heavily influenced by information structure. Studying the expression of information structure in Bantu is therefore of great importance not only for developing cognitive models of the role of information structure in language, but also for understanding the basic grammatical structure of the Bantu languages themselves. Before modelling the interaction between syntax and information structure in Bantu, however, a thorough empirical description of the expression of information structure in Bantu should be available. That description is what this book aims to provide.

This book follows from a systematic investigation of information structure in the languages of the BaSIS research project (Bantu Syntax and Information Structure). The data come from original field research conducted using the BaSIS methodology, which was specifically developed to investigate the expression of information structure in Bantu. The book contains a comprehensive introduction chapter which explains the main terms and issues in the field of information structure, the methodology employed in the project, and common structures which characterise topic and focus expression in Bantu. The introduction is then followed by eight chapters which each give detailed descriptive overviews of the expression of information structure in a different Bantu language, namely Tunen (Guthrie classification A44, Cameroon), Teke-Kukuya (B77, Congo), Kïï-tharaka (E54, Kenya), Kirundi (JD62, Burundi), Rukiga (JE14, Uganda), Kinyakyusa (M31, Tanzania), Makhuwa-Enahara (P31, Mozambique), and Cicopi (S61, Mozambique).

Taken together, the book provides detailed information on the expression of information structure in the Bantu family. It is intended both to inform future theoretical work and to provide a methodology and model for the investigation of information structure that can be used in studies of other languages.