

## The verb in the preverbal domain across Bantu: infinitive “fronting” and predicate-centered focus

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### 1 Introduction

+ Meeussen (1967: 121) reconstructs an “Advance verb construction” for Proto-Bantu involving a fronted infinitive:

A peculiar kind of sentence, with twice the same verb, the first occurrence being an infinitive, is attested frequently, and will have to be ascribed to Proto-Bantu. The meaning varies between stress of “reality”, stress of “degree”, and even “concession”: kutákuna báátákunide, “they chewed as (much as) they could”; “(as for chewing) they did chew, (but ...)”.

> infinitive before cognate finite verb, hence in the preverbal domain, cf. Suundi (H31b)

- (1) *kù-tá:ngà ndyèká-tá:ngà* vs. *ndyèká-tá:ngà*  
 INF-read 1S:FUT-read 1S:FUT-read  
 je vais LIRE. je vais lire. (Hadermann 1996: 161)

+ Güldemann (2003: 335-7) viewed this construction as pertaining first of all to the marking of information structure (IS), notably of so-called “predicate-centered focus (PCF)”, but had to leave open some important structural and functional details:

Two structural interpretations of the fronted-infinitive pattern are conceivable. Since the available sources do not give enough information, I cannot decide here which is the more appropriate one. The first analysis, which accounts in a straightforward way for the focus function, is that the initial infinitive is a preposed focus constituent in the form of a nominal term and the following finite verb is the predicate.

The second possibility is more complex, involving some form of functional reanalysis. That is, the construction may have originally had a topic-focus organization, best paraphrased as ‘As for VERBing, (I assert that) X VERBs’, and this has yielded the conventionalized reading ‘X does VERB’. Such a pattern is parallel to a similar German expression, which is typically followed by an adversative clause. In a sentence like *Spielen tut er, aber ihm fehlt ein eigenes Instrument*. ‘he does play’ [lit.: to play, does he], but he needs an instrument of his own’, a clear contrast holds between the two clauses. Important for the present discussion is that this contrast is not only conveyed by the conjunction *aber* ‘but’, but also by the structure [infinitive + dummy verb + subject] in the initial clause by virtue of its focus on the predicate.

> since then much more data on such constructions have come up, both cross-linguistically and for Bantu - the latter will be surveyed in the following

## 2 IS-sensitive verb preposing in cross-linguistic perspective

### 2.1 The concept of predicate-centered focus

+ predicate-centered focus (PCF) subsumes roughly non-term focus (as opposed to term focus in terms of Dik 1997), cf. “auxiliary focus” (Hyman and Watters 1984):

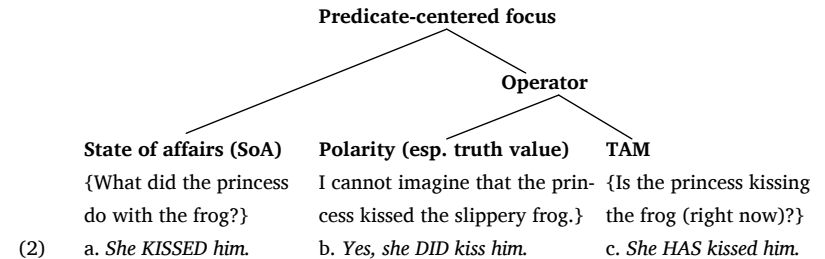


Figure 1: Basic subclassification of predicate-centered focus

### 2.2 Verb preposing from a cross-linguistic perspective

+ extensive literature on “predicate-clefts”, “verb doubling” etc. but inconclusive analyses for individual languages and cross-linguistically

> cf. Akan (Kwa, Niger-Congo) with two superficially similar cleft-like constructions:

- (3) [FOC] <I [ BG ]  
 a. *me na me ba-a ha nera*  
 1S FOC 1S come-PST here yesterday  
 I it was who came here yesterday; I (FOCUS) came here yesterday (Boadi 1974: 5-6)  
 b. *dididi na mi-didi-i*  
 eat FOC 1S-eat-PST  
 it was eating that I did [I ATE (rather than doing something else)] (Boadi 1974: 42)
- (4) [ ? ] <I [ ? ]  
 a. *me deɛ me ba-a ha nera* [with rising intonation]  
 1S ?FOC 1S come-PST here yesterday  
 I (?) came here yesterday (Boadi 1974: 6)  
 b. *ba deɛ me ba-a ha nera* [with rising intonation]  
 come ?FOC 1S come-PST here yesterday  
 I CAME here yesterday (Boadi 1974: 6)

- *deɛ* (in opposition to *na* for “exclusive focus”) analyzed as marking “inclusive/non-exclusive focus”, but actually marks a topic (cf. Marfo and Bodomo 2005, Ameka 2010)

+ attempt towards a unitary typology of the entire domain by Güldemann (in prep.) with respect to three parameters, including two distinct types of PCF-related verb preposing

- verb focus preposing (aka “predicate cleft”) vs. verb topic preposing
- verb preposing vs. “in-situ” verb
- verb doubling vs. dummy-verb structure

	Verb preposing		III Verb
	I Topic	II Focus	in-situ
<b>A Verb doubling</b>	I.A	II.A	III.A
<b>B Dummy-verb structure</b>	I.B	II.B	III.B

**Table 1: Dissected predicate constructions in PCF**

+ central distinction between II.A (verb focus preposing) and I.A (verb topic preposing), correlating robustly with two different subtypes of PCF, viz. SoA vs. operator focus

> e.g., Akan (see above); or Amharic (Semitic, Afro-Asiatic):

- (5) [ FOC ] <I [ BG ]  
*mākina-w-n māt’aggān nā-w yā-t’aggān-ä*  
 car-DEF-DO repair:VN COP-3M.S REL-repair-3M.S

He REPAIRED the car. [lit.: It is repairing the car that he repaired] (A. Wetter, p.c.)

- (6) [ TOP ] <I [ FOC ]  
*māt’aggān-əs t’aggān-o-all*  
 repair:VN-TOP repair:CONV-3M.S-AUX:3M.S

He DID repair (the car). [lit.: As for repairing, he repaired.] (A. Wetter, p.c.)

+ variation between II.A (ex-situ verb focus preposing) and III.A (in-situ verb doubling) in closely related languages used both for PCF, corresponding with two focus positions

> e.g., Sara-Bagirmi (Bongo-Bagirmi, Central Sudanic) with SoA focus:

- (7) [FOC] <I [ BG ] <I (Mbay)  
*nà ndūsō lā ndūsō yé*  
 but INF.worm.eaten G.FOC worm.eaten BG

{A: Your wood is bad. B: No, the wood is fine.} It’s just that it’s WORM-EATEN.

[lit.: It’s worm-eaten that it’s worm-eaten] (Keegan 1997: 148)

- (8) [ BG ] <I [ BG ] ]’ [FOC] (Bagirmi)  
 a. *Djùm téŋ ná, Boukar tááf tááfä.*  
 gruel millet BG PN PFV.do INF.do

- b. *Boukar tááf djùm téŋ tááfä.*  
 PN PFV.do gruel millet INF.do

{Did Boukar cook millet gruel or did he eat it?} Boukar COOKED millet gruel.

[lit.: Boukar cooked (millet gruel) cooking] (Jakob 2010: 129)

+ all three verb doubling constructions have close counterparts in dummy-verb structures  
 > e.g., German (Germanic, Indo-European) with II.B (verb focus preposing) for SoA focus in (9) vs. I.B (verb topic preposing) for truth focus in (10), disambiguated just by prosody:

- (9) [ FOC ] [ BG ]

*LESEN tut er*  
 read:INF does he

He READS (rather than sleeps). [lit.: reading he does]

- (10) [ TOP ] [FOC]

*LEsen TUT er*  
 read:INF does he

he DOES read (but ...) [lit.: as for reading, he does]

+ some languages with recourse to both verb doubling (A) and dummy-verb structure (B) without change of IS reading, and to preposing of both verb topic (I) and verb focus (II)

> e.g., Hausa (Chadic, Afro-Asiatic) with I.A in (11)a., I.B in (11)b., and II.B in (12):

- (11) [ TOP ] <I [FOC]

a. *sâyé-n àbinci kòò, sùn sâyaa*  
 buy:VN-GEN food moreover 3P.PFV buy

b. *sâyé-n àbinci kòò, sùn yi*  
 buy:VN-GEN food moreover 3P.PFV do

[lit.:] Buying food moreover, they bought/did. [they DID ...] (after Jaggar 2001: 542)

- (12) [ FOC ] <I [ BG ]

*sâyé-n àbinci nèè, sukà yi*  
 buy:VN-GEN food FOC 3P.PFV.DEF do

They BOUGHT FOOD. (Green 2007: 60)

	Preposing		III In-situ
	I Topic	II Focus	
<b>A Verb doubling</b>	(4) Akan, (6) Amharic, (11)a. Hausa	(3) Akan, (5) Amharic, (7) Mbay	(8) Bagirmi
<b>B Dummy-verb structure</b>	(10) German, (11)b. Hausa	(9) German, (12) Hausa	‘do’-support; e.g. English, Ndendeule
<b>Function</b>	Operator focus	SoA focus	PCF

**Table 2: Dissected predicate constructions in PCF across above examples**

+ summary: three construction schemas (in SBJ-V-OBJ languages)

I [[Verb<sub>non-finite</sub>]<sub>TOP</sub> [SBJ COGNATE/DUMMY.Verb<sub>finite</sub> Other ]]

II [[Verb<sub>non-finite</sub>]<sub>FOC</sub> [SBJ COGNATE/DUMMY.Verb<sub>finite</sub> Other ]]

III [ [SBJ COGNATE/DUMMY.Verb<sub>finite</sub> (Other)] [Verb<sub>non-finite</sub>] (OTHER)]

### 3 Proposed~“fronted” infinitives in Bantu

+ “predicate cleft” as a rampant feature in (West) African and Atlantic creole languages: cf., e.g., Gilman (1985), Mufwene (1987), Manfredi (1993), ...

#### 3.1 Grassfield and northwesternmost zone A

+ III.A (in-situ verb doubling) and II.A (cleft-like ex-situ verb focus preposing) also attested recurrently in the homeland area of Narrow Bantu

##### Nweh (Grassfield): in-situ doubling

+ in-situ doubling (III.A) after verb phrase

- (13) [                      BG                      ] [FOC]
- a. *Atem a kè?                      nǔú akendòη čúú*  
 PN 3S PST1                      ?:boil plantains boil  
 Atem BOILED plantains (Nkemnji 1995: 138)                      SoA focus
- b. *Atem a kè? te nǔú akendòη čúú b́*  
 PN 3S PST1 NEG                      ?:boil plantains boil NEG  
 Atem did not BOIL plantains (Nkemnji 1995: 140)                      SoA focus

##### Limbum (Grassfield): in-situ doubling and verb focus preposing

+ in-situ position for term focus as in (14)a. as source for III.A (in-situ doubling) as in (14)b.

- (14) [                      BG                      ] I> [FOC]
- a. *Nfɔ́ tǽ yē á byē:*  
 PN PROG eat FOC food  
 It is food that Nfor is eating. [Nfor eats FOOD] (Ndamsah 2012: ex.(11)b.)
- b. *Nfɔ́ tǽ b́mí á b́mí* (last verb in citation form, Ndamsah p.c.)  
 PN PROG sleep FOC sleeping  
 It is sleeping that Nfor is sleeping, not ... [Nfor SLEEPS rather than ...] (Ndamsah 2012: ex.(11)a.)                      SoA focus

+ cleft-like term focus fronting as in (15)a. as source for II.A (initial verb focus preposing) for SoA focus in (15)b.

- (15) I> [FOC] I> [                      BG                      ]
- a. *á Nfɔ́ tǽ é tǽ b́mí ká?*  
 FOC PN REL PRO PROG sleep NEG  
 It is not Nfor who is sleeping. (Ndamsah 2012: ex.(3)a.)
- b. *á b́mí tǽ Nfɔ́ tǽ b́mí ká?*  
 FOC sleep REL PN PROG sleep NEG  
 It is not sleep that Nfor is sleeping. [Nfor is not SLEEPing] (Ndamsah 2012: ex.(3)b.)                      SoA focus

##### Tuki (A601): verb focus preposing

+ cleft-like term focus fronting as in (16)a. as source for II.A (initial verb focus preposing) for SoA focus in (16)b.

- (16) [FOC] <I [                      BG                      ]
- a. *nambari owu Mbara a-nu-enda-m n(a) adongo*  
 tomorrow FOC PN.1 1-FUT-go-? to village  
 It is tomorrow that Mbara will go to the village. [Mbara will go to the village TOMORROW] (Biloa 1997: 111)
- b. *o-suwa owu Puta a-nu-suwa-m tsono raa*  
 INF-wash FOC PN.1 1-FUT-wash-? clothes her  
 Puta will WASH her clothes. (Biloa 1997: 110)                      SoA focus

#### 3.2 Zones B and H

+ preposed infinitives as a common feature: first surveyed by Hadermann (1996); generic PCF analysis by Güldemann (2003); recent, more extensive survey by De Kind (2014)

> see Appendix for attested languages

+ presumable developmental cline in terms of function/semantics (cf. Güldemann 2003):  
 SoA focus > general PCF > PROG > PROX.FUT

##### Solongo (H16?, south)

- (17)                      [FOC] [                      BG                      ]
- pe ke-be-nwananga ko, kina be-kinanga*  
 No! NEG-2-fight:PROG NEG INF:dance 2-dance:PROG  
 No, they're not fighting, they're DANCING. (De Kind et. al 2014: ex.(10)b.)                      SoA focus

##### Woyo (H16?, west)

- (18)                      [FOC] [                      BG                      ]
- nɔya ka-tub-izi ba-saliliza u N-ti zenga ba-zeng-eza wao*  
 what 1-say-PERF 2-do:APPL 3.AUG 3-tree INF:cut 2-cut-PFV 3PRO  
 What did she say that they did to the tree? They CUT it. (De Kind et. al. 2014: ex.(11))                      SoA focus

##### Ndibu (H16?, central)

- (19) [FOC] [                      BG                      ]
- mona mbwene N-kenda za zula ki-ame kina ...*  
 INF:see 1S:see:PERF 10-affliction 10:GEN 7.people 7-1S.POSS 7.DEM  
 I have surely seen the affliction of that people of mine there ... (De Kind et. al 2014: ex.(12))                      ?Truth focus

**Kaamba (H17b)**

- (20) [FOC] [ BG ]  
 a. *wà-mur-sàlá*  
 1:?-PROG-work  
 b. *sàlá kà-mú-sàlá*  
 INF:work 1-PROG-work  
 Both: he is working (Hadermann 1996: 160) PCF~PROG

[infinitive preposing serves] selon Bouka (1989: 237), à « renforcer l'idée de répétition dans le déroulement de l'action. » (Hadermann 1996: 160)

**Fiote (H12a)**

- (21) *kadi vova lu-vovanga mu N-pamba*  
 because INF:speak 2P-speak:PROG INE 9-vanity  
 because you are speaking in the air. (De Kind et. al 2014: ex.(20)) PROG

**Yaka (H33)**

- (22) *vuumbuka yi-vuumbuka*  
 INF:dress 1S-dress  
 I'll dress myself (De Kind et. al 2014: ex.(36)) FUT

+ morphosyntactic variation, notably with respect to the status of the SBJ~S/A topic

**3.2.1 Structure I: [Verb<sub>non-finite</sub> [SBJ Verb<sub>finite</sub> Other]]**

+ only example encountered in the available data - coincidence or really rare!

**Vili (H16?)**

- (23) [FOC] [ BG ]  
*ń-cétù ù-á-búlà piele ko kú-télà ń-cétù ù-à-ń-tél-à*  
 1-woman 1-PERF-beat 1.PN No! INF-call 1-woman 1-PERF-1OBJ-call  
 Has the woman beaten Pierre? No, the woman has (only) CALLED him. (De Kind et al. 2014, ex.(7)) SoA focus

**3.2.2 Structure II: [SBJ [Verb<sub>non-finite</sub> Verb<sub>finite</sub>] Other]**

+ preposed infinitive analyzed by Hadermann (1996: 158-9) as occurring in a preverbal focus position (quite unusual for “main-stream” Bantu):

Cependant, Grégoire (1993) a montré que l'antéposition de l'objet n'est pas exceptionnelle en zones B, C, H et K, c'est-à-dire au Nord-Ouest du domaine bantou. L'apparition de l'ordre SOV est, selon elle, liée à «l'expression de la focalisation portant sur l'objet du verbe transitif» ... ou à «l'emploi d'une forme composée de la conjugaison, ...» ...

**Suundi (H13b)**

- (24) [ TOP ] [ FOC ] [ BG ]  
 a. *bìkù ndyèká-tá.ngá*  
 book 1S:FUT-read  
 je vais lire le LIVRE Term~VP focus  
 b. *mw-à:nà bìkú kù-tá.ngá kèkà-tá.ngá dyò*  
 1-child 5.book INF-read 1:FUT-read 5DEM  
 c. *bìkú mw-à:nà kù-tá.ngá kèkà-tá.ngá dyò*  
 5.book 1-child INF-read 1:FUT-read 5DEM  
 l'enfant va LIRE le livre (Haderman 1996: 162) SoA focus

**Nzebi (B52)**

- (25) [ TOP ] [ FOC ] [ BG ]  
 a. *bà-kà:sá bá-n'á, péndá bà-vádà*  
 2-woman 2-DEM groundnut 2-cultivate  
 ces femmes, elles cultivent l'arachide [These women, they cultivate groundnuts.]  
 Term~VP focus  
 b. *bà-kà:sá bá-n'á, vádá bà-vádà péndà \*(péndà vádá bà-vádà)*  
 2-woman 2-DEM INF:cultivate 2-cultivate groundnut  
 ces femmes, elles sont en train de cultiver l'arachide [These women, they are cultivating groundnuts. (Haderman 1996: 162) PROG

**Fiote (H12a)**

- (26) *minu ku-sala in-sala* vs. *minu in-sala*  
 1S.EMPH INF-work 1S:PRS-work  
 moi, je suis en train de travailler moi, je travaille (Hadermann 1996: 161) PROG

**Zali (H16?)**

- (27) *i-bulu zawula ci-zawula*  
 7-cattle INF:run 7-run  
 The cattle is running. (De Kind et. al. 2014: ex.(1)) PROG

**Ndibu (H16?, central)**

- (28) *ye ma-toko ma-eno mona me-mona m-mona za ma-iso*  
 and 6-younster 6-2P.POSS INF:see 6-see 10-vision 10:GEN 6-eye  
 and your youth will see visions. (De Kind et. al 2014: ex.(3)) FUT

### 3.2.3 Structure III: [SBJ (OBJ) [Verb<sub>non-finite</sub> Auxiliary] Other]

+ locative PROG periphrasis frequent typologically (Bybee and Dahl 1989) and in Bantu:  
 [(SBJ) [LOCATIVE.COPULATIVE Verb<sub>non-finite</sub>] Other] = ‘be in/at VERBing’

> e.g. Shona (S10)

(29) *ndi-ri ku-taura*

1S-be INF-talk

I am talking.

+ inversion of auxiliary and non-finite verb creates partial isomorphism with PCF structure:

The initial infinitive is followed here by a copulative auxiliary. It can be argued that the progressive meaning arises exclusively from the locative semantics of this final verb ...

However, I also see a functional link between the additional infinitive fronting here and in the [PCF] construction ... (Güldemann 2003: 336-337)

> De Kind et al. (2014: Table 1) confirm this hypothesized affinity by shared behavioral properties, in opposition to the canonical structure [AUXILIARY VERB]

+ non-finite verb can be marked by different elements

#### Suundi (H13b)

(30) *bùkù kù-tá:ngà dyò kà-dì*

5.book INF-read 5DEM 1-be

il est en train de lire le livre (Hadermann 1996: 166)

PROG

#### Tsotso (H33)

(31) *kù-wé:lá ng'í-ná*

INF-be\_sick 1S-be

je suis malade (Hadermann 1996: 165)

IPFV~PROG

(32) *mw-à:nà mù-sákáná ké-na*

1-child INE-play 1-be

l'enfant est en train de blaguer (Hadermann 1996: 164)

PROG

#### Sikongo (H16?, south)

(33) *tala a-neyisaele mu sauka ba-ina o N-koko a yodani*

look:IMP 2-israelite INE cross 2-be AUG3 3-river GEN GN

Look! The Israelites are crossing the Jordan River. (De Kind et. al 2014: ex.(5))

#### Ndibu (H16?, central)

(34) *wau una wa-ntu mu leka be-na m-beni andi u-iz-idi*

DEM14 DEM14 2-person INE sleep 2-be 3-enemy POSS1 1-come-PFV

While the people slept, his enemy came. (De Kind et. al 2014: ex.(41))

### 3.3 Zone E

+ Kikuyu mentioned already by Bynoe-Andriolo and Yillah (1975: 234) in connection with predicate-clefts but little researched so far > ongoing field work by Y. Morimoto

+ as opposed to the phenomenon in the zones B/H, the structure here is overtly bisected and cleft-like involving an identificational/focus marker before the exposed infinitive and traces of dependent clause-marking in the background part

+ selective SoA focus: with intransitive verbs or when no nominal object is given, the focus marker *ne* must occur before the predicate

> constructional difference of non-contrastive vs. contrastive SoA focus: only contrastive focus is expressed by verb focus preposing

#### Kikuyu (E51)

(35) I> [ FOC ] [ BG ]

A: {Audu loves his car. Yesterday he took care of it.}

B: *ne gu-thabía a-ra-mé-thabi-rié kana ne gu-thodéka a-ra-mé-thodék-ire*

FOC INF-wash 1-PST-9-wash-PFV or FOC INF-fix 1-PST-9-fix-PFV

Did he wash or fix it?

SoA focus

A: *ne gu-thodéka a-ra-mé-thodék-ire*

FOC INF-fix 1-PST-9-fix-PFV

He FIXED it. (Morimoto field notes)

SoA focus

#### 3.3.1 Structure I: [Verb<sub>non-finite</sub> [SBJ Verb<sub>finite</sub> Other]]

+ more robustly attested than in zones B/H data

> possibly correlated with stronger cleft-like syntactic bisection

#### Tharaka (E54)

(36) I> [FOC] [ BG ]

a. *i-kù-gúra Maria a-gur-ire nyondo*

FOC-INF-buy 1.Maria 1-buy-PERF 9.hammer

Maria BOUGHT the hammer. (she did not borrow it) (Abels and Muriungi 2008: 704)

SoA focus

b. *i-ku-noga Maria a-rí mû-nog-u*

FOC-INF-tire 1.Maria 1-be 1-tired-ADJ

Maria is really tired. (she is not kidding!) (Abels and Muriungi 2008: 704)

?Truth focus

**Kikuyu (E51)**

- (37) I> [ FOC ] [ BG ]  
 a. *ne atea Abdul e-k-ire na mae?*  
 FOC what PN 1-do-PFV COM 6.water  
 {What did Abdul do with the water?}  
 b. *ne ko-nyua Abdul a-nyu-ire mae*  
 FOC INF-drink PN 1-drink-PFV 6.water  
 He DRANK the water. (Schwarz 2003: 96) SoA focus  
 (38) *nĩ kũ-nyua Kamau a-nyu-ire njohi ny-ingĩ.*  
 FOC INF-drink PN 1-drink-PFV 9.beer 9.lot  
 Kamau DRANK a lot of beer. (Mugane 1997: 148) ?SoA focus

**3.3.2 Structure II: [SBJ [Verb<sub>non-finite</sub> Verb<sub>finite</sub>] Other]****Kikuyu (E51)**

- (39) [TOP] [FOC] ([BG])  
 a. *Abdul ne a-thek-ire?*  
 PN FOC 1-laugh-PFV  
 Did Abdul laugh?  
 b. *Afa. Abdul ne ko-rera a-rer-ire.*  
 No! PN FOC INF-cry 1-cry-PFV  
 No. Abdul CRIED. (Schwarz 2003: 95) SoA focus  
 (40) *mw-aná ne kó-reya a-ra:-reyá*  
 1-baby FOC INF-eat 1-PROG-eat  
 The baby is eating. (Morimoto field notes) ?PROG  
 (41) *fafa w-anyú nĩ gũ-kinyá a-rá:-kinya (reu)*  
 1.father 1-2S.POSS FOC INF-arrive 1-PROG-arrive now  
 Your father is arriving (now) [as we speak]. (Morimoto field notes) ?PROG

**3.3.3 Structure III: [?SBJ [Verb<sub>non-finite</sub> Auxiliary] ?Other]****Kuria (E43)**

- + PROG structures with infinitive inversion parallel to those in zone H in Kuria (E43) and Gusii (E42)  
 (42) *ku-tuna n-di*  
 INF-seek 1S-be  
 I am (in the act of) seeking. (Güldemann 2003: 337) PROG

**3.4 Zone K**

+ restricted data amount and accordingly least clear in structural and functional terms

**Mbukushu (K333)**

Der Infinitiv kann emphatisch vor andere Verbalzeiten gesetzt werden [the infinitive can be placed emphatically before any verb form]:

- (43) *ku-wa thi-na ku-wa thi-tondo*  
 INF-fall 7-PRS-fall 7-tree  
 Der Baum fällt gerade [the tree is falling right now] PROG  
 (44) *ku-yenda nga ni yendi*  
 INF-go HEST.PST 1S go:PFV  
 Ich ging bestimmt [I did go] (Fisch 1977: 95) Truth focus  
 Sehr gebräuchlich ist das Präsens mit vorausgehendem Infinitiv im Sinne von ‘in der Tat’, ‘sicherlich’ [the present preceded by the infinitive is recurrent in the sense of ‘indeed’, ‘certainly’].  
 (45) *ku-yenda tu-na ku-yenda*  
 INF-go 1P-PRS-go  
 Wir gehen ja schon [we DO go, don’t we] (Fisch 1977: 103) Truth focus

+ Möhlig (p.c.) explicitly analyzes the preposed infinitive as a TOPIC, which happens to be compatible with the apparent operator focus reading BUT:

**Fwe (K402)**

- (46) *ta-ri ku-zyimba ndi-zyimba ku-nenga ndi-nenga*  
 NEG-be INF-sing 1S-sing INF-dance 1S-dance  
 I am not singing, I am dancing. (Gunnink 2014) SoA focus

**3.4.1 Structure II: [SBJ [Verb<sub>non-finite</sub> Verb<sub>finite</sub>] Other]****Mbukushu (K333)**

- (47) *ka-kambe ku-tjira ka-na ku-tjira*  
 11-horse INF-run.away 11-PRS-run.away  
 Das Pferd läuft gerade weg [... runs away right now] (Fisch 1977: 95) PROG

**Fwe (K402)**

- (48) *e-ci-shamu ku-temiwa ci-temiwa*  
 AUG-7-tree INF-chop:PASS 7-chop:PASS  
 The tree is being chopped. (Gunnink 2014) PROG

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Methodology

+ Bantu may possess both verb focus preposing for SoA focus and verb topic preposing for operator focus, harboring the same diversity found cross-linguistically but the specific subtype of PCF may be hard to detect in an individual language, for at least two reasons:

a) segmental structures are superficially largely identical:

- (49) [ ??? ] [ ??? ]
- |    |   |             |
|----|---|-------------|
| a. | <i>kù-tá:ngà ndyèká-tá:ngà</i>                            | Suundi      |
|    | INF-read 1S:FUT-read                                      |             |
|    | je vais LIRE [I will READ] (Hadermann 1996: 161)          | SoA focus   |
| b. | <i>ku-yenda tu-na-ku-yenda</i>                            | Mbukushu    |
|    | INF-go 1P-PRS-go  |             |
|    | Wir gehen ja schon [we DO go, don't we] (Fisch 1977: 103) | Truth focus |

> considerable risk of trusting short descriptions - detailed study in terms of semantic-pragmatic effects as well as prosodic and morphosyntactic properties necessary:

In a slightly different respect, it is not obvious either that, strictly speaking, all the cleft-related focus constructions invoked from African languages involve Clefting. For instance, Gilman (1986: 39) discusses them quite cautiously under the rather vague term of “front-focusing”. The following example from his paper [from Ntádu (H16g)] seems more to involve Topicalization than Clefting, though it certainly involves nominalization of the verb by prefix-deletion (which is common in a number of Bantu languages):

- (50) *tálá ká-zól-ele ka-talá*  
 see 1-want-?STAT 1:SUBJ-see
- a. He [really] wants to see. (Lit.: see he wants he may see.) (Mufwene 1987: 81, fn. 12)  
 [TOP] [ FOC ]  
 or  
 [FOC] [ BG ]
- b. see he wants might see (Gilman 1986: 39)
- c. He/she wants to see; literally: see he wants he might see (Lubasa 1974: 22)

> Lubasa (1974), as the original source, gives (50) in connection with his so-called “determinative mood” which in a second example, (51), clearly involves focus fronting

- (51) [ FOC ] [ BG ]  
*mw-ááná ká-túmini*  
 1-child 1-send:PST  
 it is a child that he/she has sent. (Lubasa 1974: 22)

b) a construction can start out in a restricted subdomain of PCF (i.e., SoA vs. operator) but expand over time in use towards the entire domain

> cf. focus fronting in Aja (Kwa, Niger-Congo) for object focus (as in a., SoA focus (as in (52)b.), truth focus (as in (52)c.), and TA focus (as in (52)d.)

- (52) [ FOC ] [ BG ]
- |    |   |             |
|----|---|-------------|
| a. | <i>āyú (yí) é qù</i>  |             |
|    | bean GF 3S eat  |             |
|    | She ate BEANS [not ...].  | Term focus  |
| b. | <i>óò, qà (yí) é qà</i>   |             |
|    | No! cook GF 3S cook   |             |
|    | {The woman ate the beans.} No, she COOKED them.                 | SoA focus   |
| c. | <i>óò, nyó (yí) é nyóvi</i>                                     |             |
|    | No! be.beautiful GF 3S be.beautiful                             |             |
|    | {She is not beautiful.} No, she IS beautiful.                   | Truth focus |
| d. | <i>óò, xó-ì á xó-ì</i>  |             |
|    | No! hit-3S.OBJ 3S.FUT hit-3S.OBJ                                |             |
|    | {The woman has hit Peter.} No, she WILL hit him. (Fiedler 2010) | TA focus    |

### 4.2 Semantic-functional change

+ functional change captured by an assumed semantic map which has implications for expected historical change, notably pragmatics changes to semantics

> unclear whether operator focus can directly yield progressive (cf. Mbukushu, §3.4)

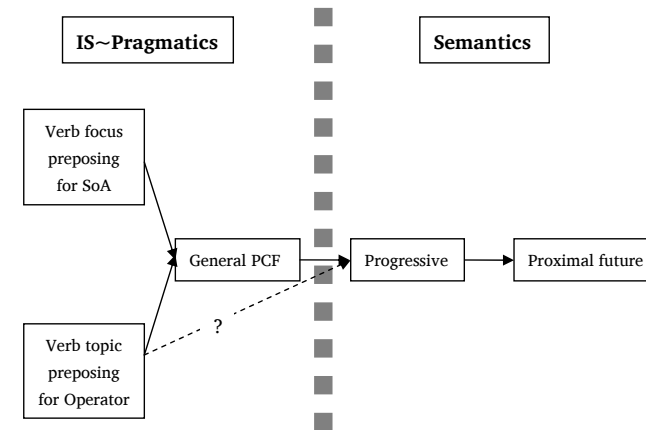


Figure 1: Preliminary semantic map for verb preposing constructions across Bantu

### 4.3 Morphosyntactic variation

- + presumed historical shift from I to II, viz. post-infinitive subject to clause-initial subject:  
[Verb<sub>non-finite</sub> [SBJ Verb<sub>finite</sub> Other]] > [SBJ [Verb<sub>non-finite</sub> Verb<sub>finite</sub>] Other]
- > shift from bisected to monoclausal syntax, tightening the bond between the two verbs and potentially reestablishing a compact predicate constituent
- > formal cline may correlate with above semantic cline, test whether I can(not) be semantic

### 4.4 Historical-comparative aspects

- + in spite of considerably increased documentation and understanding of infinitive fronting in Bantu we are thrown back to Meeussen (1967), which is short and hence quite vague:

#### What exactly should be reconstructed for Proto-Bantu?

- > topic preposing as per Meeussen (1967) vs. more robust attestation of focus preposing?
- > construction cross-linguistically frequent and quite diverse across Bantu: historical relation between or independent innovation in the different Bantu clusters?
- + as the construction encodes PCF, question of relation to other PCF strategies in Bantu (e.g., “conjont~disjont”) > geographical survey for partly complementary distribution

**Synchronic cases of polyfunctional infinitive preposing in Bantu must be evaluated in their wider structural, genealogical, and geographical context.**

## Appendix

Subgroup	Source	Language(s)
Grassfields	Ndamsah (2012)	Limbun
Zone A	Bilola (1995)	Tuki (A601)
Zone B	Hadermann (1996)	Punu (B43), Nzebi (B52)
Zone H	Hadermann (1996)	Manyanga (H16b), Yombe (H16c), Ntandu (H16g), Kaamba (H17b), Yaka (H33), Suundi (H13b), Mbundu (H21), Tsotso (H33), Holu (H33)
	De Kind et al (2013a, b)	Beko (east), Zali (west), Woyo (west), Vili (west), Kakongo (west), Ndibu (central), Manyanga (central), Fiote (central), Suundi (north), Sikongo (south), Solongo (south), Zombo (south), Tsotso (south)
Zone E	Bynoe-Andriolo and Yillah (1975)	Kikuyu (E51)
	Güldemann (2003)	Gusii (E42), Kuria (E43)
	Abels and M. (2008)	Tharaka (E54)
Zone K	Güldemann (2003)	Mbukushu (K333)
	Gunnink (2014)	Fwe (K402)

**Table 3: Infinitive preposing in Bantoid**

## Abbreviations

AUX Auxiliary, CJ Conjoint, CONN Connector, COP Copula, DEF Definite, DEM Demonstrative, DEP Dependent, EMPH Emphatic, F Feminine, FOC (Generic) focus, FUT Future, GEN Genitive, GN Geographical name, HAB Habitual, I Index, INE Inessive, INF Infinitive, IPFV Imperfective, LOC Locative, M Masculine, NEG Negative, OBJ object, P Plural, PERF Perfect, PFV Perfective, PN Proper name, POSS Possessive, POT Potential, PRO Pronoun, PROG Progressive, PROX Proximal, PRS Present, PST Past, REL Relative, S Singular, SBJ subject, SoA State-of-affairs, TA(M) Tense-aspect-(modality), TOP Topic, VN Verbal noun

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