Negation markers, focus markers and Jespersen cycles in Kikongo (Bantu, H16): a comparative and diachronic corpus-based approach

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1. Introduction

In Bantu languages, negation is commonly marked verb-initially (cf. Meeussen 1967, Kamba Muzenga 1981; Güldemann 1999). Two types exist:

- Pre-initial negative marker: NEG-SC-R-FN
- Post-initial negative marker: SC-NEG-R-FN

In Kikongo (Bantu H16/H10), however, negation is considered to be doubly marked: a first negation marker appears in verb-initial position (type 1), while a second negation marker is expressed postverbally. As Laman (1912: 113) puts it in his Kikongo grammar:

I. Ka-ko.

§316 In the negation ka (ke) -ko (cf. ne-pas of the French), not, ka is put at the beginning and ko. at the end of the negative sentence or modifier.

Ka tubamweni ko. We have not seen them.

Ko is often put at the end of the sentence, even if it contains several clauses:

Ka tumweni bayizidi zono ko. We have not seen those who came yesterday.

We observe the same structure in other Kikongo varieties. The verb-initial marker (which is typically ke/ka, with allomorphs ki (1sg) and ku (2sg), precedes the verbal prefix. The postverbal marker follows after the verb, but not necessarily immediately after the verb.

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Following the research of Devos & van der Auwer (2013), in this paper we would like to give a more detailed account of double negation in one specific language cluster, i.e. Kikongo (as opposed to a wide comparative Bantu approach). Kikongo is a dialect continuum, containing several speech varieties which may differ significantly from each other. In this research, data from different varieties will be considered. These data were gathered both through elicitation (fieldwork) as through corpus research.

Being part of my Ph.D. research on Information Structure in Kikongo, attention will be paid in the first place to the role of focus markers in the Kikongo negation strategy. Focus markers play an essential role in Jespersen cycles, as it is assumed that the second negator (e.g. *pas* in French), originally has an emphatic function (cf. Devos & van der Auwer 2013: 205-206). Thus, one of the research questions will be to investigate the etymology of the second negator *ko* in Kikongo and its function as focus marker.

As a first step, however, the syntactic behavior of this negator *ko* in the contemporary Kikongo varieties will be addressed. As Laman (1912, cf. supra) claims, “*ko* is often put at the end of the sentence”. We will see, however, that the position of *ko* in Kikongo is highly variable and we will try to determine the conditioning of its position in the negative phrase.

Another issue addressed is the possible emergence of a third negative marker, as was observed by Devos & van der Auwer (2013: 248-252). This third marker is the locative possessive pronoun…
belonging to class 17. This marker also appears in negative phrases, as illustrated in the example from the Kisikongo New Testament of 1926 below:

(4) **KISIKONGO** (NT 1926: John 20, 13)

Bakatwidi Mfumu ame, kizeye ko **kwame ko** kuna bansidi.
Ba-katul-idi N-fumu ame ki-zay-idi ko
SC2-take.away-PRF NP9-chief POSS1sg NEG1.1sg-know-PRF PRON17
ku-ame ko kuna ba-n-sal-idi
PP17-POSS1sg NEG2 DEM17 SC2-OC1-leave-PRF

‘They took my Lord away and I don’t know where they have put him.’

We find thus at first sight triple negation in Kikongo as well. The etymology of this LOC POSS 17 will also be examined.

Finally, we could consider the question whether Jespersen cycles are indeed taking place in Kikongo, and if we can find attestations of the different stages of the cycle in the Kikongo (diachronic) corpus.

2. The postverbal marker **ko**

2.1. Syntactic behavior

2.1.1. Occurrence of ko as postverbal negative marker

The postverbal negative marker **ko** is used in all kinds of negative clauses: 1) main negative clause; 2) subordinate negative clause; 3) prohibitive (i.e. negative subjunctive); 4) negative non-verbal predication

Main negative clause:

(5) **KIMBATA** (KK fieldwork 2012)

Khatu, kisendila mpfumu **ko**.
Nkatu ki-send-il-a N-fumu ko
No NEG1.1sg-weed-APPL-FV NP9-chief NEG2

‘No, I am not weeding for the chief’

(6) **CIWOYO** (KK fieldwork 2012)

Bamavangila **ko** ku mphutu.
ba-ma-vang-il-a ko ku N-putu
SC2-OC6-make-APPL-FV NEG2 LOC17 NP9-Europe

‘They didn’t make them in Europe.’

Subordinate negative clause, including relative clause:

(7) **KISIKONGO** (JW, Tusansu, p. 278)

O Kurese adieyi kavovesa kw’awana **ke** balenda vutuka **ko** kuna Yerusalem? 
O Kurese adieyi ka-vov-isa kwa awana ke-ba-lend-a
AUG1 Cyrus what SC1-tell-PRF CONN17 DEM2 NEG1-SC2-can-FV
vutuk-a ko kuna Yerusalem
return-FV NEG2 DEM17 Jerusalem
'What does Cyrus tell those [the Israelites] who cannot return to Jerusalem?'

(8) KISIKONGO (JW, Tusansu, p. 57)
[...] ubatumini kuna Engipito kadi ke kwakala diaka madia ko kuna Kenani.
ubatumini kuna Engipito kadi ke-ku-akal-a diaka
u- ba-tum-id i kuna Engipito kadi ke-ku-akal-a diaka
SC1-OC2-send-PRF DEM17 Egypt because NEG1-SC17-to.be-FV also
ma-dia ko kuna Kenani.
NP6-food NEG2 DEM17 Ca'naan.
‘He has sent them to Egypt because there wasn’t any food anymore in Ca’naan.’

Prohibitive:
(9) KISIKONGO (JW, Tusansu, p. 30)
Kufinam’oko ko
ku-finam-a o ko ko
NEG1.2sg-come.near-FV AUG17 PRON17 NEG2
‘Do not come any closer’

Negative non-verbal predicate (often as initial part of cleft-construction):
(10) CIWOYO (KK fieldwork 2012)
Nan’ bulizi lipowa?
nani Ø-bul-izi li-powa
who SC1-break-PRF NP5-pot
‘Who has broken the pot?’

Minu ko yalibulizi.
minu ko ya-li-bul-izi
PRON1sg NEG2 SC1sg-OC5-break-PRF
‘It’s not me who has broken it.’

(11) KIMBATA (KK fieldwork 2012)
Nani budidi kiinzu?
nani Ø-bul-idi ki-inzu
who SC1-break-PRF NP5-pot
‘Who has broken the pot?’

Kamono ko mbudidi kyo.
ka mono ko N-bul-idi kyo
NEG1 PRON1sg NEG2 SC1sg-break-PRF PRON7
‘It’s not me who has broken it.’

The Ciwoyo example above in (10) demonstrates that the postverbal marker ko is the only negative marker in non-verbal predicates in this Kikongo variety. Such is also the case for plural participants (cf. ex. 6). This suggests that Ciwoyo in some cases already reached the third stage of a Jespersen cycle.
2.1.2. Position of NEG2 ko

With regard to the positioning of ko, the above examples already illustrate that the position of this postverbal negative marker is not fixed. This is different from the French postverbal marker pas, which is expressed IAV.

Devos & van der Auwera (2013: 213) show that the positioning of ko in Kimanyanga (Kikongo H16b) is pragmatically determined. They consider that the ‘normal’ position of ko is sentence-final (cf. also Laman 1912 supra). However, when a constituent is put under contrastive focus, the marker ko precedes this focused constituent:

(12) Kimanyanga (Makokila, cited in Devos & van der Auwera 2013: 213)
   a. ki-tuúd-idi malongá vaméezako
      1SG.NEG1-put-PRF 6.plate 16.9.table-NEG2
      ‘I have not put the plates on the table.’
   b. kituúiddiko múlónga vaméeza  (kaántsi nzúngu)
      ‘I have not put THE PLATES on the table (but the pot).’
   c. kituúiddí múlóngakó váméeza  (kaántsi múáku)
      ‘I have not put the plates ON THE TABLE (but in the kitchen)’

However, in several other varieties, it seems to be the other way around. Consider the elicited Kisikongo example below. The ‘normal’ position of the postverbal negator (without clear focus), seems to be after the object, but preceding the adjunct(s).

(13) Kisikongo (fieldwork 2013, Antwerp)
   Nkatu, ki-amwene o mpangi’aku ko mazono ku zandu.
   nkatu ki-a-mon-idi o N-pangi aku ko mazono
   No NEG1.1sg-PST-see-PRF AUG1 NP1-brother POSS2sg NEG2 yesterday
   ku Ø-zandu
   LOC17 NP9-marker
   ‘No, I didn’t see your brother yesterday at the market.’

We see the same in Kimbata, in which ko follows the object, as in (14), but precedes the adjunct, as in (15).

(14) KIMBATA (KK fieldwork 2012)
    Khatu, kisendila mpfumu ko.
    Nkatu ki-send-il-a N-fumu ko
    No NEG1.1sg-weed-APPL-FV NP9-chief NEG2
    ‘No, I am not weeding for the chief.’

(15) KIMBATA (KK fieldwork 2012)
    Ntunginzo kataleenga gaseeka, kanzi theba kazitasima ko mu kibaka.
    N-tungi-N-zo ka-ta-leng-a ga Ø-seeka kanzi
    NP1-worker-NP9-house SC1-PRES-plaster-FV LOC16 NP9-red.stone but
    N-teba ka-zi-ta-sim-a ko mu ki-baka
    NP10-kaolin NEG1-SC10-PRES-stick-FV NEG2 LOC18 NP7-wall.
'The bricklayer has plastered the wall, but the white clay (kaolin) doesn't stick well on the wall.'

However, when the adjunct is contrastively focused, the negative marker *ko* follows the focused adjunct in some varieties. Such strategy is found in several Kikongo varieties, such as Kimbata (16), Kindibu (17) and Fiote (18).

(16) KIMBATA (KK fieldwork 2012)
Mesa mayilamene ku nsadima baya unkaka.
mesa ma-yi-laman-idu ku N-sadima baya unkaka
NP6-table SC6-make-PRF LOC17 NP9-worker NP5-wood other

‘The table has been made by another carpenter.’

Kabayidikidi mo ku Mputu *ko*.
ka-ba-yidik-idu mo ku N-putu ko
NEG1-SC2-make-PRF PRON6 LOC17 NP9-Europe NEG2

‘It has not been made in Europe.’

(17) KINDIBU (NT 1923: John 7, 24)
Ke luzengi mambu mu mpolo *ko*, kansi se luzengi nkanu a unsongi.
Ke lu-zeng-i ma-ambu mu N-polo kansi se
NEG1 SC2pl-cut-SBJ NP6-word LOC18 NP9-appearance but then
lu-zeng-i N-kanu a u N-songi
SC2pl-cut-SBJ NP9-judgement CONN AUG NP9-justice

‘Don’t judge according to appearance, but (then) judge according to justice.’

(18) FIOTE (NT 1929: Matthew 6, 13)
kututualani mu mpukumumu *ko*, kansi ututanina mu nkwa mbi.
kutu-twalan-i mu N-pukumunu ko kansi
NEG1.2sg-OC1pl-bring-SBJ LOC18 NP9-temptation NEG2 but
u-tu-talin-a mu N-kwa N-bi
SC2pl-OC1pl-deliver-FV LOC18 NP1-person NP9-evil

‘And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’

In Kisikongo no such examples have been found so far. Instead, in most cases, contrastive focus on the adjunct is marked by the non-verbal predication construction *ke ... ko* (19-20)

(19) KISIKONGO (NT 1926: Corinthians I 7, 6)
Ediadi mpovèle muna nswa, *ke* mu nkanikinu *ko*.
Ediadi N-vo-v-idu muna N-swá ke mu N-kanikinu ko
DEM5 SC1sg-tell-PRF DEM18 NP9-approval NEG1 LOC18 NP9-commandment NEG2

‘But this I say by way of concession, not of commandment.’
KISIKONGO (JW: Tusansu p. 275)
O Nkand’a Nzambi awei y usongelanga vo Nzambi okala yo wantu ova ntoto ke mu nitu ko, kansi mu mwanda?
O n-kanda a N-zambi awei y u-songel-ang-a vo
AUG3 NP3-book CONN NP9-God how NP3-show-PRES-FV that
N-zambi o-kal-a ya o wa-ntu o va N-toto
NP9-God SC1-to-be-FV CONJ AUG2 NP2-man AUG16 LOC16 NP3-earth
ke mu nitu ko kansi mu mu-anda
NEG1 LOC18 NP9-flesh NEG2 but LOC18 NP3-spirit
‘How does the Bible show that God being with people on earth is not physically [lit. in flesh], but figuratively [lit. in spirit]?’

The position of ko indeed seems to be related to Information Structure, but it differs regionally in how it is used to convey contrastive focus. With regard to adjuncts, it precedes the focused adjunct in some varieties (Kimanyanga), while in others, it follows the focused adjunct (Kimbata, Kindibu, Fiote). The conditioning of the position of ko is still unclear in most cases, and this issue definitely requires further research.

What is clear, though, is that ko does not have a fixed position in the sentence. It has thus not fully been conventionalized as a neutral negative marker without focus function, as is the case with the French pas.

2.2. Origin of ko

To retrieve the possible origin of the postverbal negator ko, some different paths will be explored. First, the different uses of ko (outside negation) will be addressed. This will hopefully shed light on a possible evolution from one use to the other. Second, we will have a look in the historical Kikongo sources and see if there are differences between contemporary Kikongo and 17th century Kikongo with regard to negation strategies.

2.2.1. Different uses of ko and first hypotheses

Although ko is nowadays primarily used as a negation marker, it is also used with other functions. For instance, it looks formally exactly the same as the anaphoric pronoun of class 15 and 17. This is illustrated in the following examples:

(21) Kisikongo (NT 1926: Luke 11, 3)
O dia kweto kwa lumbu ya lumbu, utuvana ko e lumbu yawonso
O Ø-dia ku-etö kwa Ø-lumbu ya Ø-lumbu
AUG15 NP15-food PP15-POSS1pl CONN17 NP7-day CONN NP7-day
u-tu-van-a e Ø-lumbu i-awonso
SC2sg-OC1pl-give-FV AUG8 NP8-day PP8-every
Give us day by day our daily bread. (Lit.: our daily food, give it to us every day)
(22) Kisikongo (JW: Tusansu, p. 226)
“Ovo kwakaka unete, unsamunwina ko kuna unsidi, yankatula.”
ovo  ku-akaka       u-nat-idi       u-n-samunwin-a    ko
if    NP17-other  SC2sg-take-PRF  SC2sg-OC1sg-tell-FV   PRON17
kuna       u-n-sal-idi      ya-n-katul-a
DEM17     SC2sg-OC1-put       SC1-OC1-take.away-FV

‘If you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him.’

Another function of ko can be found in the Kikongo grammar of Laman (1912: 226)

“§318. Ko is used partly in the same manner as kwandi (see 168, Note), in order to emphasize or bring out a matter more strongly, partly to express a difference of opinion politely:

Muntu bela ye bela, niaka ko lutidi mu mbote
Man is always sick, but to be well is the best.

Mini ye mini mitekanga, mvula ko lutidi mu mbote
The sun which shines forth is good, but the rain is much better

Mundele ko.
Why, it is the white man.

Kamba ko?
Not so? It is so, isn’t it?

NOTE. Many adverbs and conjunctions are formed with ko, such as nako, nanako, perhaps so; mpeleko, although; kiongoloko, just so.”

Ko is thus described as some kind of focus marker by Laman (1912) for central Kikongo (Kimanyanga), but this function is not described in other grammars, such as Bentley (1887) and Ndonga Mfuwa (1995) for southern Kikongo (Kisikongo). So far, it has not been attested yet in the corpus, but this search definitely requires to be continued. The evolution from a focus marker to a negative marker fits in well within the Jespersen cycle pattern: the focus marker ko could first be used to emphasize the negation, but later lost this emphatic function and became neutral.

2.2.2. Negation and ko in 17th century Kikongo

The diachronic study of Kikongo has the extraordinary advantage compared to other Bantu languages that it has early written sources at its disposal. The first running text dates back to 1624, and consists of a catechism written in a southern Kikongo variety, translated from Portuguese. It is thus possible to examine the change in negation strategies over a period of 400 years.

When we look at negation structures in the catechism, we see that the postverbal marker ko is already used in most of the cases:
(23) KIKONGO 1624 (Bontinck & Nsasi 1978 [1624] : 84)

Kubobele ko o ngeeye bo aikaala o Zambi a mpungu bu nfuulu onso ee?
Ku-vov-ele ko o ngeye bo a-ikaal-a o
NEG1.2sg-say-PRF NEG2 AUG1 PPRO2sg that SC1-to.be-FV AUG1
Zambiampungu bu N-fulu onso ee?
NP9-God LOC NP9-place every QW
‘Haven’t you said that God is everywhere?’

(24) KIKONGO 1624 (Bontinck & Nsasi 1978 [1624] : 58)

Ya nkii bo ke mu mifuunu miame ko, [...]  
Ya nki bo ke mu mi-fuunu mi-ame ko  
because NEG1 LOC18 NP4-merit PP4-POSS1sg NEG2  
‘Because it is not by my merits [...]’

However, in several cases ko is absent. To give an idea: in the French translation, the preverbal negative marker in French ne/n’ occurs 125 times, while ko in Kikongo only occurs 85 times. The cases in which ko is absent are mostly prohibitives. Around 28 instances have been found in which ko is absent in these cases, while 9 have been found in other contexts.

(25) KIKONGO 1624 (Bontinck & Nsasi 1978 [1624] : 138)

ketussaadi munaa ilumbo yo tumingu, kanaa munaa ilumbo ya asantu,  
ke-tu-sal-i muna i-lumbu ya o tu-mingu kana  
NEG1-SC1pl-work-SBJ DEM18 NP8-day CONJ AUG13 NP13-Sunday nor  
muna i-lumbu ya a-santu  
DEM18 NP8-day CONN NP2-saint  
‘Let’s not work on Sundays, nor on the days of the Saints.’

However, also 17 examples of prohibitives with the marker ko have been found:

(26) KIKONGO 1624 (Bontinck & Nsasi 1978 [1624] : 194)

Munaa mukangalu kabobi mambu ma mieye manaa mabanga o uu ko.  
muna mu-kangalu ka-bob-i ma-ambu ma mi-eye  
LOC18 NP3-conversation NEG1.1-say-SBJ NP6-word CONN6 NP4-mockery(?)  
ama-ma-bang-a o u-u ko  
DEM6 SC6-do-FV AUG14 NP14-evil NEG2  
‘In conversation, do not say mocking words or those that hurt.’

Nevertheless, it can safely be stated that the majority of cases in which ko is absent consist of prohibitives and that the majority of prohibitives is expressed without ko. This is different from contemporary Kisikongo (considered to be the heir of the variety described in the catechism), in which prohibitives are consistently marked with ko:

(27) KISIKONGO (JW, Tusansu, p. 30)

Kufinam’oko ko  
ku-finam-a o ko ko  
NEG1.2sg-come.near-FV AUG17 PRON17 NEG2  
‘Do not come any closer’
Regarding other possible functions of ko in the 17th century Kikongo variety, only 3 instances of the 85 occurrences of the particle have been found in which it functions not as a negation marker, but as a locative pronoun or a locative prefix of class 17. No other uses have been attested.

(28) **KIKONGO 1624**  
(Bontinck & Nsasi 1978 [1624]: 124)  
[...] akatuliidi e mionyo miaa asantu Masse miaaikele ko.  
a-tatul-idie mi-onyo mia a-santu ma-se  
SC1-take.away-PRF AUG4 NP4-soul CONN4 NP2-saint NP6-father  
mi-a-ikal-idie ko  
NP4-PST-to.be-PRF PRON17  
‘[... and he] took away the souls of the holy Fathers who were there.’

(29) **KIKONGO 1624**  
(Bontinck & Nsasi 1978 [1624]: 82)  
Esseetu uaikaala o ko mazuulu.  
E se etu u-a-ikal-a o ko ma-zuulu  
AUG5 father POSS1sg SC1-to.be-FV AUG17 LOC17 NP6-heaven  
‘Our Father who is in heaven(s).’

2.2.3. On a possible evolution of ko

The data found so far do not show a clear evolutionary path of the development from ko as a locative pronoun to a negative marker. It seems, however, not illogical to assume that the third function of ko, i.e. an emphatic particle described by Laman (1912), constitutes an intermediate stage between the locative use and the negative use. In many of the world’s languages, locatives are used in focus expressions (cf. class 16 in East-Bantu, ‘there’ in English). This evolution has also been suggested by Devos & van der Auwera (2013: 244). The shift from a focus marker to a neutral negative marker forms part of a typical Jespersen cycle, in that the focus marker is originally used to emphasize or strengthen the negation, but then in a later stage got neutralized through common use. However, apart from the description by Laman (1912), no single attestation of the use of ko as a focus marker has been found. This search will be continued through a corpus-based approach, in which will be sought for instances of ko outside negation context.

3. The locative possessive pronoun of class 17

In Devos & van der Auwera (2013), it is argued that some Bantu languages even have a third negation marker. One of these is the LOC POSS pronoun belonging to class 17, which also appears in Kikongo. The following example illustrates this:

(30) **KISIKONGO (NT 1926: John 20, 13)**  
Bakatwidi Mfumu ame, kizeye ko kwame ko kuna bansidi.  
Ba-tatul-idie N-fumu ame ki-zay-idie ko  
SC2-take.away-PRF NP9-chief POSS1sg NEG1.1sg-know-PRF PRON17  
ku-ame ko kuna ba-n-sal-idie  
PP17-POSS1sg NEG2 DEM17 SC2-OC1-leave-PRF  
‘They took my Lord away and I don’t know where they have put him.’
In the following section, I will give a preliminary overview of the grammatical and semantic features of this LOC POSS 17.

As the term suggests, the marker consists of a locative prefix 17 and a possessive stem. This possessive stem is in most varieties coreferential with the subject.

(31) **KISOLONGO** (KK fieldwork 2012)
    Pé, kindééle ko, láámbalala *kwame* ndáámbalééle.
    Pe kiN-lal-idi ko lambalal-a ku-ame N-lambalal-idi
    No NEG1.1sg-sleep-PRF NEG2 lie.down-FV PP17-POSS1sg SC1sg-lie.down-PRF
    ‘No, I don’t sleep, I’m only lying down.’

(32) **FIOTE** (NT 1929 : John 1, 21)
    ba-n-yuvul-a buna nki ngeye Elia ku-aku e
    SC2-OC1-ask-FV DEM14 what PPRO2sg Elijah PP17-POSS2sg QW
    yandi u-a-vov-a ki-een-a ku-ami ko
    PPRO1 SC1-PST-say-FV NEG1.1sg-to.be-FV PP17-POSS1sg NEG2
    ‘They asked him: What then? Are you Elijah? He said: I am not.’

It is mainly used as a focus marker, which is why Laman (1912: §168) terms it ‘emphatic pronoun’:

“The independent emphatic pronouns are used when one wishes to give special emphasis to the personal pronoun .. They may be placed either immediately after a pronoun (wth or without verb), or after a verb or, in fact, after any word whatsoever. They may be used both subjectively and objectively. In the latter case they are preceded by a combined personal pronoun.

*Mono kwami nkembi dio.* I myself or I indeed have said it.

*Yeto kweto.* We (we ourselves or we indeed).

*Wenda kwaku!* Go, you!

*Nzau kwandi.* An elephant, an elephant indeed.

*Kiau kwandi nzolele sumba.* I want to buy that very one.

*Umpana kwami nlangu.* Give me water.”

As the examples below show, the LOC POSS 17 appears both in affirmative and negative clauses as a focus marker:
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(33) KINDIBU (NT 1923 : John 9, 9)
akaka vo ke wau ku-andi ko kansi u-fwanan-a
other that NEG1 DEM3 PP17-POSS1 NEG2 but SC1-ressemble-FV
yandi kansi yandi u-a-vov-a vo mono ku-ame
PPRO1 but PPRO1 SC1-PST-say-FV that PPRO1sg PP17-POSS1
‘The other said: No, it’s not him, but he looks like him. But he himself said: It is really me.’

(34) KISIKONGO (NT 1926 : John 9, 29)
Tuzeye wo vo o Nzambi wavowa kwa Mose : vo i ndiona, ke tuzeye ko kweto ko kuna katuka.
tu-zay-idi wo vo o N-zambi u-a-vov-a
SC1pl-know-PRF PRON14 that AUG1 NP9-God SC1-PST-speak-FV
kwa Mose vo i ndiona ke tu-zay-idi ko
CONNN17 Moses FM PPRO1 NEG1 SC1pl-know-PRF PRON17
ku-eto ko kuna ka-tuk-a
PP17-POSS1pl NEG2 DEM17 SC1-come.from-FV
“We know that God has spoken to Moses. But as for this man, we don’t know where he comes from.”

However, several examples have been found of the LOC POSS17 in negative clauses, in which a clear focus context is absent:

(35) KISIKONGO (NT 1926 : Luke 13, 27)
Kizeye ko kwame ko kuna nutuka
Ki-zay-id i ko ku-ame ko kuna nu-tuk-a
NEG1.1sg-know-PRF PRON17 PP17-POSS NEG2 DEM17 SC2pl-come.from-FV
“I don’t know where you come from.”

(36) FIOTE (NT 1929 : Acts 23, 5)
Paulu wavowa: Zimpangi, kizeyi kwami ko, vo yandi i ngudi anganga
Paulu u-a-vov-a ziN-pangi ki-zay-idi ko vo yandi i
Paul SC1-PST-say-FV NP10-brother NEG1.1sg NEG2 that PPRO1 FM
n-gudi a N-ganga
NP9-superior CONN NP9-priest
‘Paul said, “I didn’t know, brothers, that he was high priest.’

(37) KISOLOONGO (Tavares 1915: 150)
K’ufua kuaku ko.
Ku-fw-a ku-aku ko
NEG1.2sg-die-FV PP17-POSS2sg NEG2
‘You won’t die’
Although it is not clear in what degree the LOC POSS 17 still may have a focus function in such examples, it is reminiscent of yet another Jespersen cycle in which an emphatic pronoun may begin to lose its focus function and become neutralized in a negative construction. However, contrary to the negative marker ko, the LOC POSS 17 does not (yet?) have a negative value on its own. In some Kikongo varieties, as in the Ciwoyo examples below, ko is the only negative marker, since the verbal initial marker has begun to disappear in certain contexts, such as with plural participants and nonverbal predicates:

(39) Ciwoyo (KK fieldwork 2012)
Bamavangila ko ku mphutu.
ba-ma-vang-il-a ko ku N-putu
SC2-OC6-make-APPL-FV NEG2 LOC17 NP9-Europe
‘They didn’t make them in Europe.’

(40) Ciwoyo (KK fieldwork 2012)
Nan’ bulizi lipowa?
nani Ø-bul-izi li-powa
who SC1-break-PRF N5-pot
‘Who has broken the pot?’

Minu ko yalibulizi.
minu ko ya-li-bul-izi
PRON1sg NEG2 SC1sg-OC5-break-PRF
‘It’s not me who has broken it.’

In this perspective, it is difficult to consider the LOC POSS 17 as a negative marker in a Jespersen cycle, since it cannot express negativity by itself. The replacement of ko by kwame would rather mean the opposite, ‘It is really me who has broken it’.

4. Summary: Jespersen cycles in Kikongo?

Parallels with Jespersen cycle in French

- Negation is doubly marked
- The second negator is originally a focus marker, although more attestations of this use would be welcome
- In some varieties, such as Ciwoyo, the preverbal marker has already started to disappear in certain contexts, which is comparable to the third stage in French (Ø…pas)
Differences with Jespersen cycle in French

- The position of the postverbal negative marker ko is not fixed and seems to be pragmatically conditioned
- No attestations of stage 1 are found. In the oldest Kikongo source available, dating from 1624, stage 2 was already reached.
- A third possible negative marker, i.e. the LOC POSS 17, has been observed. However, it is not clear yet in which degree this marker still conveys a focus function. Moreover, it is never used alone to express negativity and can thus not be considered to be a negative marker on its own.

5. References


Bentley, William Holman. 1887. Dictionary and grammar of the Kongo language as spoken at San Salvador, the ancient capital of the old Kongo empire, West Africa. Londen: Baptist Missionary Society and Trübner & Co.


