Fronted-infinitive constructions in Kikongo (Bantu H16): verb focus, progressive aspect and future tense

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1. Introduction: definition & illustration

1.1 Definition: a verbal construction in which the infinite verb form precedes the finite verb form.

1.2 Two functions: (cf. Hadermann 1996; Güldemann 2003)

- Focus:

(1) sónika káka basónikéni
Ø-sonik-a kaka ba-sonik-idi
NP₁₅-write-FV only SC₂-write-PRF
They only wrote (a report).

- Progressive:

(2) Ibúlu zawúla ciawúla.
I-bulu Ø-zawul-a ci-zawul-a.
NP₇-cattle NP₁₅-run-FV SC₇-run-FV
‘The cattle is running.’

1.3 Geographical distribution

- Meeussen (1967: 121): probably a wide distribution in Bantu
- Frequent in Kikongo dialect continuum

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2. Description of the FIC

2.1 Word order of the FIC

Object focus construction: (S)OV (unmarked word order in some languages)

(3) **Mphúku kaka mphóndeléénge.** [Kisolongo, KK fieldwork 2012]
    N-puku kaka N-vondidiingi.
    NP₉-rat only SC₁₅g-kill-PST1
    ‘I’ve only killed a rat.’

(4) **Mfyumú ngo kavondéza.**² [Ciwoyo, KK fieldwork 2012]
    N-fumu N-go ka-vond-eza
    NP₉-chief NP₉-leopard SC₁-kill-PFV
    The chief killed a leopard.

(5) **Bwé béénu nyóka ludyángé?** [Kimanyanga, Fieldwork Brussels 2013]
    Bwe beenu N-nyoka lu-di-ang-a e
    QW PRO₂pl NP₁₀-snake SC₂pl-eat-HAB-PFV QW
    ‘Do you eat snakes?’

Fronted-infinitive constructions in Kikongo: (S) Inf V

(6) **O Mfumu kwiza kekwiza.** [Kisikongo 1926, New Testament, 1 Corinthians 16, 21]
    O N-fumu ku-iz-a ke-ku-iz-a
    AUG₁ NP₉-chief NP₁₅-come-PFV SC₁-NP₁₅-come-PFV
    ‘The Lord is coming’

(7) **Ínzó vya ívya.** [Cizali, KK fieldwork 2012]
    I-N-zo Ø-vi-a i-vi-a.
    AUG-NP₉-house NP₁₅-burn-PFV SC₉-burn-PFV
    ‘The house is burning.’

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² Ciwoyo nouns belonging to class 5 and 7 do not display an overt noun prefix. C1 of the noun stem is regularly followed by a palatal glide. Such palatal diphthongization also occurs with the non-syllabic nasal of class 9 and SC1sg, as in ngyo, mfyumu and nzyoleza in the examples (1-3) above, but less regularly. Palatalization is only noted when realized as such by our informant.
2.2 Incompatibility FIC and preverbal object focus

The word order (S) O Inf V is ungrammatical:

(8) [Nzebi (B52), Marchal-Nasse 1988-89, cited in Hadermann 1996: 162]

a. Bâkà:sé bân’á:, péndá bâ:vádà
   ba-kase bana Ø-penda ba-vad-a
   NP₂-woman DEM₂ NP₁₀-peanut NP₂-cultivate-FV
   ‘These women grow peanuts.’

b. Bâkà:sé bân’á:, vâdá bâ:vádá péndà
   ba-kase bana Ø-vad-a ba-vad-a Ø-pende
   NP₂-woman DEM₂ NP₁₅-cultivate-FV NP₂-cultivate-FV NP₁₀-peanut
   ‘These women are growing peanuts.’

c. *Bâkà:sé bân’á:, péndá vâdá bâ:vádá:
   ba-kase bana Ø-penda Ø-vad-a ba-vad-a
   NP₂-woman DEM₂ NP₁₀-peanut NP₁₅-cultivate-FV NP₂-cultivate-FV
   Intd.: ‘These women are growing peanuts.’

(9) a. Vónda ketívónda mbwá
   Ø-vond-a ka-eti-vond-a N-bwa
   NP₁₅-kill-FN SC₁-PROG-kill-FV NP₉-dog
   He’s killing the dog.

b. *mbwa vonda ketivonda
   N-bwa Ø-vond-a ka-eti-vond-a
   NP₉-dog NP₁₅-kill-FN SC₁-PROG-kill-FV
   Intd.: He’s killing the dog.

c. Mbwá ketivónda
   N-bwa ka-eti-vond-a
   NP₉-dog SC₁-PROG-kill-FV
   He’s killing the dog.

Hadermann (1996: 162): “Ce stade, où l’objet se trouve antéposé à une forme verbale redoublée, semble être atteint par le suundi”. However, a resumptive pronoun is used to refer to the object, which does not suggest an ordinary SOV structure, but a clause-external object.
Ø-buku ndi-eka-tang-a
NP₉-book SC₁₅-FUT-read-FV
‘I’m going to read the book’

b. Mwà:nà bùkú kùtá:ngà kèkátá:ngá dyò
mu-ana Ø-buku ku-tang-a ka-eka-tang-a dyo
NP₁-child NP₉-book NP₁₅-read-FV SC₁-FUT-read-FV PRON₉
‘The child is going to read the book’

2.3 Incompatibility FIC and negation

(11) a. Lúta betilúta [Kimanyanga, Fieldwork Brussels 2013]
Ø-lut-a ba-eti-lut-a
NP₁₅-pass-FV SC₂-PROG-pass-FV
‘They are passing.’

b. báu kabetilúta ko
bau ka-ba-eti-lut-a ko
PRON₂ NEG-SC₂-PROG-pass-FV NEG
‘They are not passing’

c. *bau luta kabetiluta ko
bau Ø-lut-a ka-ba-eti-lut-a ko
PRON₂ NP₁₅-pass-FV NEG-SC₂-PROG-pass-FV NEG
Intd.: ‘They are not passing’

Contrastive example of FIC outside (12) and inside (13) negative clause:

Kadi yeno ke yeno ko Ø-vov-a
for PRON₂pl NEG PRON₂pl NEG NP₁₅-speak-FV
lu-vov-a
SC₂pl-speak-FV
‘for it is not you who speak’

Kadi ke yeno nu-vov-a ko
for NEG PRON₂pl SC₂pl-speak-FV NEG
‘for it is not you who speak’
2.4 Morphological marking of FIC

Use of the focus/inversion prefix ka- for class 1 (cf. Bostoen & Mundeke 2012)

Cf. also examples (6, 9)

(14) **Mfumú wávondózi ngyó.**  (SVO)  [Ciwoyo, KK fieldwork 2012]
N-fumu wa-vond-eza i N-go.
NP₉-chief SC₁-kill-PFV AUG₉ NP₉-leopard
The chief killed a leopard.

(15) **Mfyumú ngo kavondéza.**  (SOV)  [Ciwoyo, KK fieldwork 2012]
N-fumu N-go ka-vond-eza
NP₉-chief NP₉-leopard SC₁-kill-PFV
The chief killed a leopard.

(16) **Wéndeza nwána?**  [Ciwoyo, KK fieldwork 2012]
u-end-eza Ø-nwan-a
SC₁-go-PRF NP₁₅-fight-FV
‘Did he go fighting?’

Vé, túba tóka këndéza tuba  (FIC)
ve Ø-tub-a toka ka-end-eza Ø-tub-a
no NP₁₅-talk-FV only SC₁-go-PRF NP₁₅-talk-FV
‘No, he only went talking’

2.5 Tense-dependent semantics

FIC in present tense:

- Focus marker

(17) **Bwé béénu nyóka ludyánge?**  [Klmanyanga, Fieldwork Brussels 2013]
Bwe beenu N-nyoka lu-di-ang-a e
QW PRO₂pl NP₁₀-snake SC₂₁pl-eat-HAB-FV QW
‘Do you eat snakes?’

Nkhátu, vónda tuvóndánga zo, kánshi katudyánga zo ko.
Nkhatu Ø-vonda tu-vond-ang-a zo kansi
No NP₁₅-kill-FV SC₁pl-kill-HAB-FV PRON₁₀ but
ka-tu-di-ang-a zo ko
NEG-SC₁pl-eat-HAB-FV PRON₁₀ NEG
‘No, we kill them, but we do not eat them.’
• Present progressive marker

(18) **Ibúlu zawúla cizawúla.** [Czali, KK fieldwork 2012]

I-булу Ø-звула ci-звула.
NP7-cattle NP15-run-FV SC7-run-FV

‘The cattle is running.’

(19) **Sálá yisálá** [Ciwoyo, KK fieldwork 2012]

Ø -sal-a yi-sal-a
NP15-work-FV SC1sg-work-FV

‘I am working’

FIC in past tense:

• Focus marker

(20) **Bwé, waténgí vó yandi wavondelwé?** [Kimanyanga, Fieldwork Brussels 2013]

Bwe u-a-tang-idi vo yandi u-a-vond-idi-u e?
QW SC1-PST-read-PRF CONJ PRON1 SC1-PST-kill-PRF-PASS QW

‘Did you read that he was killed?’

**Nkhátu, wá yawílu wo**

Nkhatu Ø-u-a i-a-idiwo
No NP15-hear-FV SC1sg-PST-hear-PRF PRON14

‘No, I heard it.’

• No past progressive marker!

(21) **Bwé, tánga lukéji tángångåa ministre bukakótelengé?** [Kimanyanga, Fieldwork Brussels 2013]

Bwe Ø-tang-a lu-kezi-tang-ang-a minister
QW NP15-read-FV SC2pl-PST-read-PROG-FV minister
bu-ka-kot-iding-a e
PP14-SC1-enter-PST-FV QW

‘Were you reading when the minister entered (the room)?’

**Nkhátu, lambá tukezilambånga.**

Nkhatu Ø-lamb-a tu-kezi-lamb-ang-a
No NP15-sleep-FV SC1pl-PST-sleep-PROG-FV

‘No, we were sleeping.’
3 Geographical distribution of the different semantic functions

3.1 Verb Focus

I. Eastern Kikongo
- Kimbata (KK fieldwork 2012)
- Kimbeto (KK fieldwork 2012)

(22) sónika káka basónikéni (Kimbeko, KK fieldwork 2012)
 Ø-sonik-a kaka ba-sonik-idi
 NP₁₅-write-FV only sc₂-write-PRF
 They only wrote (a report).

II. Southern Kikongo
- Kisolongo (KK fieldwork 2012)

(23) Luta baluta. [Kintandu, Daeleman 1966: 258]
 Ø-lut-a ba-lut-a
 NP₁₅-pass-FV sc₂-pass-FV
 ‘They are just passing.’

Pé, kebenwánånga ko, kína bekínånga.
née NEG-SC₂-fight-PROG-FV NEG NP₁₅-dance-FV SC₂-dance-PROG-FV
‘No, they’re not fighting, they’re dancing.’

- Kisikongo

Ki-ku-nu-sis-a nwa n-sona ko ku-iz-a
SC₁₃g-NEG-EXPL-OC₂pl-leave-FV CONN₂pl NP₉-Orphan NEG NP₁₅-come-FV
n-ku-iza koko nu-in-a
SC₁₃g-NP₁₅-come-FV DEM₁₇ SC₂pl-to.be-FV
‘I will not leave you as orphans, I will come back to you’

III. Central Kikongo
- Kimanyanga (1912)
(26) **Yuvula tuyuvidi**

(Internal Notes: Kimanyanga, Laman 1912: 284)

\[ \text{Ø-yuvul-a tu-yuvul-idi} \]

\[ \text{NP}_{15}\text{-ask-FV SC}_{1\text{Pl}}\text{-ask-PRF} \]

‘We only ask’

- Kimanyanga (Fieldwork Brussels 2013)
  - Cf. examples (20,21)

- Kindibu

(27) **K’ikuluyambula ansiona ko, kwiza ikwiza kwa yeno.** (Kindibu 1923, New Testament: John 14, 18)

\[ \text{Ka-i-ku-lu-yambul-a a nsiona ko ku-iz-a} \]

\[ \text{NEG-SC}_{1\text{sg}}\text{-EXPL-OC}_{2\text{pl}}\text{-leave-FV CONN NP}_{9}\text{-orphan NEG NP}_{15}\text{-come-FV} \]

\[ \text{i-ku-iza kwa yeno} \]

\[ \text{SC}_{1\text{sg}}\text{-NP}_{15}\text{-come-FV CONN}_{17} \text{PRON}_{2\text{pl}} \]

‘I’m not leaving you behind as orphans, I come back to you’

IV. **Northern Kikongo**

- Suundi

(28) **Kútá:ngà ndyèkátá:ngà** (Hadermann 1996: 162)

\[ \text{Ku-tang-a ndy-eka-tang-a} \]

\[ \text{NP}_{15}\text{-read-FV SC}_{1\text{sg}}\text{-FUT-read-FV} \]

‘I’m going to read’

- Kaamba


\[ \text{Ø-sal-a ka-mu-sal-a} \]

\[ \text{NP}_{15}\text{-work-FV SC1\text{-PROG-work-FV}} \]

‘He’s working’

V. **North-western Kikongo**

- Cizali [KK fieldwork 2012]

- Ciwoyo

(30) **Ve, núngúna tóka nnungwini** (Ciwoyo, KK fieldwork 2012)

\[ \text{Ve } \text{Ø-nungun-a toka } \text{Ø-n-nungun-idi} \]

\[ \text{No } \text{NP}_{15}\text{-push-FV only SC}_{1\text{-OC}}\text{-push-PRF} \]

\[ \text{No, she only pushed him.} \]

⇒ **VERB FOCUS FUNCTION HAS A VERY WIDE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION**
3.2 **Progressive aspect**

3.2.1 **FIC**

I. **North-western Kikongo**
- Ciwoyo (KK fieldwork 2012)
  - Cf. example (19)
- Cizali
  - Cf. examples (2, 7)
- Iwoyo

(31) **Befo liya tiliya madezo.**

We’re eating beans’

- Punu (Hadermann 1996: 163)
  - Not illustrated

II. **Central Kikongo**
- Kindibu

(32) **ovo vitila keluvitila ku ntu ku Galilea**

He is leading you the way to Galilea.

III. **Southern Kikongo**
- Kisikongo

(33) **kadi kwiza kekwiz’o nkuluntu a nza yayi**

‘for the ruler of this world is coming’

IV. **Non-Kikongo languages**
- Nzebi (Hadermann 1996: 163)
  - Cf. example (8b)
3.2.2 Redundant forms

I. Northern Kikongo
- Kisundi: (INF-)SC-eti-B-a

(34) **kusola lwetisola** (Kitambika 1994: 146)
ku-sol-a lu-et-i-sol-a
NP$_{15}$-cultivate-FV SC$_{2_{pl}}$-PROG-cultivate-FV
‘you are cultivating’

II. Central Kikongo
- Kimanyanga: (INF-)SC-eti-B-a

(35) **Nwá twetinwá cóca** (Fieldwork Brussels 2013)
Ø-nu-a tu-eti-nu-a coca
NP$_{15}$-drink-FV SC$_{1_{pl}}$-PROG-drink-FV coke
‘We’re drinking a coke’

- Fiote: (INF-)SC-B-ang-a

(36) **Kadi vova luvovanga mu mpamba.** (Fiote, New Testament: 1 Corinthians 14, 9)
kadi Ø-vov-a lu-vov-ang-a mu N-pamba
because NP$_{15}$-speak-FV SC$_{2_{pl}}$-speak-PROG-FV Loc$_{18}$ NP$_{9}$-vanity
‘because you are speaking in the air’

III. Southern Kikongo
- Kizombo: INF-SC-ta-B-a

(37) **Sosa tutasosa** (Mpanzu 1994: 132)
Ø-sos-a tu-ta-sos-a
NP$_{15}$-search-FV SC$_{1_{pl}}$-PROG-search-FV
‘We’re searching’

- Kitsotso: INF SC-na INF

(38) **Kwenla luna kwenla.** (Baka 1992: 110)
ku-enl-a lu-na ku-enl-a
NP$_{15}$-go-FV SC$_{2_{pl}}$-PROG NP$_{15}$-go-FV
‘You are going’

IV. Northwestern Kikongo
- Kiyombe

(39) **Sonika ndinsonika** (De Clercq 1921: 40)
Ø-sonik-a n-di-n-sonik-a
NP$_{15}$-write-FV SC$_{1_{sg}}$-to.be-PROG-write-FV
‘I’m busy writing’
- Fiot

(40) **Minu kusala insala**  
    (Ussel 1888, cited in Hadermann 1996: 161)  
    minu          ku-sal-a        i-n-sal-a  
    PRON_{1sg}   NP_{15}-work-FV    SC_{1sg}-PROG-work-FV  
    ‘Me, I am working’

3.2.3 **Absence of the FIC: other markers**

I. **Eastern Kikongo:**
   - Kintandu: SC-ta-B-a

(41) **Bataluta nkoko.**  
    (Daeleman 1966 : 261)  
    Ba-ta-lut-a          n-koko  
    SC_{2}-PROG-pass-FV    NP_{3}-river  
    ‘They’re crossing the river’

II. **Southern Kikongo:**
   - Kisolongo: SC-B-ang-a

(42) **Nkázááku mbíz’elámbánga?**  
    (KK fieldwork 2012)  
    n-kaza-aku     N-bizi     e-lamb-ang-a?  
    NP_{1}-vrouw-POSS_{2sg}     NP_{3}-meat     SC_{1}-cook-PROG-FV  
    ‘Is your wife preparing meat?’

   - Kisikongo: SC-B-ang-a

(43) **Mbakanga**  
    (Bentley 1887: 644)  
    N-bak-ang-a  
    SC_{1sg}-catch-PROG-FV  
    ‘I am catching’

III. **Central Kikongo:**
   - Kimanyanga: SC-eti-B-a

(44) **ngieti kanga.**  
    (Laman 1912: 163)  
    N-eti-kang-a  
    SC_{1sg}-PROG-bind-FV  
    ‘I am binding’
IV. **North-western Kikongo**
- Kiyombe (Bittremieux 1927: 839): SC-eka-B-a

(45) **ndieka-sumba.**
   Ndieka-semba
   SC_{sg}-PROG-buy-FV
   "I’m buying."

⇒ **FIC as progressive marker has an equally wide geographic distribution, but runs/ran into competition with more local progressive markers (more local => more recent)**

3.3 **FIC as Future marker**

In most Kikongo languages, the Future is expressed by means of a regional future marker:

I. **Northwestern Kikongo:**
- Fiote: si-SC-B-a

(46) **si tuiza kwa yandi** (Fiote 1929, New Testament: John 14, 23)
   si-tu-iz-a kwa yandi
   FUT-SC_{1pl}-come CONN_{17} PRON_1
   ‘We will come to him.’

(47) **matoko meno si mamona mona-meso** (Fiote 1929, New Testament: Acts 2, 17)
   ma-toko ma-en-o si-ma-mon-a Ø-mona-meso
   NP_{6}-youngster PP_{6}-POSS_{2pl} FUT-SC_{6}-see-FV NP_{9}-vision
   ‘Your youth will see visions.’

- Kiyombe: SC-ela-B-a

(48) **tuelakuiza kudi nyandi** (Kiyombe 1920, New Testament: John 14, 23)
   tu-ela-ku-iz-a ku-di nyandi
   SC_{1}-FUT-NP_{15}-come-FV PP_{18}-to.be PRON_1
   ‘We will come to him.’

(49) **bamatoko menu belamona zimbonoko,** (Kiyombe 1920, New Testament: Acts 2, 17)
   ba-ma-toko ma-enu ba-ela-mon-a ziN-monoko
   NP_{2}-NP_{6}-youngster PP_{6}-POSS_{2pl} SC_{2}-FUT-see-FV NP_{10}-vision
   ‘Your youth will see visions.’
However, in some regions, the FIC is used as future marker:

II. **Central Kikongo**
   - Kindibu

(50) *ye kwiza tukwiza kwa yandi* (Kindibu 1923, New Testament John 14, 23)

\[
\text{CONJ NP}_{15}\text{-come-FV SC}_{1\text{pl}}\text{-NP}_{15}\text{-come-FV CON}_{17} \text{ PRON}_{1}
\]

‘And we will come to him.’


\[
\text{CONJ NP}_{6}\text{-youngster PP}_{6}\text{-POS}_{2\text{pl}} \text{ NP}_{15}\text{-see-FV SC}_{6}\text{-see-FV NP}_{10}\text{-vision za ma-iso CONN}_{9} \text{ NP}_{6}\text{-eye}
\]

‘Your youth will see visions.’

III. **Southern Kikongo**
   - Kisikongo

(52) *kwiza tukwiza vana kena* (Kisikongo 1926, New Testament John 14, 23)

\[
\text{NP}_{15}\text{-come-FV SC}_{1\text{pl}}\text{-NP}_{15}\text{-come-FV DEM}_{16} \text{ SC}_{1}\text{-to.be}
\]

‘And we will come to him.’

   - Kizombo

(53) *Sosa tusosa* (Mpanzu 1994: 136)

\[
\text{NP}_{15}\text{-search-FV SC}_{1\text{pl}}\text{-search-FV}
\]

‘We’ll search (tomorrow)’

IV. **Non-Kikongo**
   - Kiyaka

(54) *(vuumbuka) yivuumbuka* (Van Den Eynde 1968: 47)

\[
\text{NP}_{15}\text{-dress-FV SC}_{1\text{sg}}\text{-dress-FV}
\]

‘I’ll dress myself’

   - Kitsotso

(55) *kwiza kakwiza.* (Baka 1992: 110)

\[
\text{NP}_{15}\text{-come-FV SC}_{1}\text{-NP}_{15}\text{-come-FV}
\]

‘He’ll arrive (tomorrow).’
4 Issues for further research

(56) **Mona mbwene** nkenda za zula kiame kina muna Egipto (Kindibu NT 1923: Acts 7, 34)

\[ \text{Ø-mon-a m-mon-idi n-kenda za Ø-zula} \]

NP\text{\textsubscript{15}}-see-FV SC\textsubscript{1sg}-see-PRF NP\text{\textsubscript{10}}-affliction CONN\textsubscript{10} NP\text{\textsubscript{7}}-people

ki-ame kina muna Egipto

PP\textsubscript{7}-POSS\textsubscript{1sg} DEM\textsubscript{7} DEM\textsubscript{18} Egypt

‘I have (surely) seen the affliction of my people that is in Egypt’

(57) **Mona mbemona** k’eme zi mvil’ama, idi ku Engipiti (Kiyombe NT 1920: Acts 7, 34)

\[ \text{Ø-mon-a m-me-mon-a N-keme zì N-vila} \]

NP\textsubscript{15}-see-FV SC\textsubscript{1sg}-PRF-see-FV NP\textsubscript{10}-affliction CONN\textsubscript{10} NP\textsubscript{9}-people

ama i-di ku Engipiti

POSS\textsubscript{1} SC\textsubscript{9}-to.be LOC\textsubscript{17} Egypt

‘I have (surely) seen the affliction of my people that is in Egypt’

(58) **Nkieto unkembe ; « Nzebe ti Mesiasi, (o’ utangununu Kristu) kuiza kankuiza [...] »**

(Kiyombe NT 1920: John 4, 25)

\[ \text{N-kieto u-n-kamb-idi n-zab-idi ti Mesiasi} \]

NP\textsubscript{1}-woman SC\textsubscript{1}-OC\textsubscript{1}-tell-PRF SC\textsubscript{1sg}-know-PRF that Messiah

o’ u-tang-ulul-u Kristu ku-iz-a ka-N-ku-iz-a

DEM\textsubscript{1} SC\textsubscript{1}-read-REP-PASS Christ NP\textsubscript{15}-come-FV SC\textsubscript{1}-??-NP\textsubscript{15} come-FV

5 References


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