

Chapter 13

Predicate partition for predicate-centred focus and Meeussen's Proto-Bantu “advance verb construction”

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Meeussen's (1967: 121) extensive grammatical reconstructions for Proto-Bantu contain a so-called “advance verb construction” that is comprised of an infinitive followed by a finite form of the same verb (typologically commonly called “cognate” verb) and conveys a marked type of information structure (IS) in which a predicate component is highlighted pragmatically. While Güldemann (2003: 335–337) already characterised this construction to pertain to the IS subdomain of so-called “predicate-centred focus”, he had to leave open some important structural and functional details. Since then, much more relevant data have become available, both inside and outside of Bantu. In this chapter, we attempt to specify Meeussen's (1967) proposal about his “advance verb construction” and its “relatives” by providing a cross-linguistic perspective of the relevant domain, presenting and analysing a wide range of relevant structures from across the Bantu family, and finally discussing the results of this comparative family survey regarding both the synchronic variation and the diachronic dynamics of change.

1 Introduction

Meeussen's (1967: 121) extensive grammatical reconstructions for Proto-Bantu (PB) also contain a remark on a so-called “advance verb construction”, which he describes as follows:



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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 ...) ».

The construction's generalised structure is [**Verb_{non-finite}**][Cognate_Verb_{finite}].¹ Example (1) from Sundi H131K illustrates this construction, showing one of its functions: a marked type of information structure (henceforth IS) in which one predicate component, here the state of affairs 'to read', is highlighted pragmatically. It is often used for the expression of what we call here contrastive state-of-affairs (SoA) focus as opposed to the simple predicate structure *ndyèká-tá:ngà* 'I am going to read', which lacks such a function.

- (1) Sundi H131K (Hadermann 1996: 161)
kù-tá:ng-à ndy-èká-tá:ng-à
 15INF-read-FV 1SG-NEAR.FUT-read-FV
 'I am going to READ.'

While only of minor importance in the large body of grammatical forms proposed for PB, the above pattern has been of considerable interest in the typological discussion about syntax and IS (see §2 below). It is thus worthwhile to combine a more theoretical linguistic question with the rich data of a well-known and close-knit language family and thus advance both strands of research. For Bantu, this is particularly desirable as the reconstruction of complex morphosyntactic structures is still at its beginning.

Based primarily on the geographically restricted comparative treatment of the phenomenon in Bantu languages of zones B and H by Hadermann (1996), Güldemann (2003: 335–337) already characterised the construction in (1) to pertain to the IS subdomain of so-called “predicate-centred focus” (henceforth PCF), but he had to leave open some important structural and functional details when writing:

¹This construction must be distinguished from a superficially very similar one whose structure is [INFINITIVE COGNATE_RELATIVE_VERB], as reported by Koni Muluwa & Bostoen (2014: 132–133) for Nsong B85d, by Mufwene (1987; 2013) for Kituba H10A, by Mufwene (1987) and Meeuwis (2013) for Lingala C30B, and by Guérois (2015: §10.1.6) for Cuwabo P34. Since the finite verb is a *modifier* of the infinitive, one is confronted here with a noun phrase rather than an asserted clause. It also has information structural effects and thus belongs in the wider domain at issue. However, sparsity of relevant information as well as lack of space does not allow us to include it in our discussion.

Two structural interpretations of the fronted-infinitive pattern are conceivable. [...] 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 have become available, both inside and outside of Bantu. Given this background and building on the first typological overview by Güldemann et al. (2014), the goal of the present chapter is to flesh out Meeussen’s (1967) partly vague characterisation of his “advance verb construction” in semantic and formal terms, in particular by relating it to its “relatives” in a much larger constructional space, and to fine-tune its reconstruction to PB both structurally and functionally. In §2, we provide a cross-linguistic survey of the domain. In §3, a wide range of relevant structures from across Bantu are reported, presented and discussed. In §4, we discuss the results of this comparative survey in terms of synchronic morphosyntactic and semantic-functional variation. In §5, by way of conclusion, we consider the construction’s diachronic dynamics and reassess its reconstruction with respect to PB, the ancestor of Narrow Bantu as conventionally delimited by Guthrie (1948; 1971).

2 IS-sensitive verb preposing from a wider perspective

What we call here predicate-centred focus (PCF) subsumes roughly non-term focus in opposition to nominal “term focus”, as per Dik (1997) (cf. also Hyman & Watters’s (1984) related concept of “auxiliary focus”), whereby focus is conceived here as a phenomenon on the level of a simple sentential assertion rather than larger discourse units.

The principal types of PCF and their relationships are given in Figure 1, followed by aligned English examples with preceding typical discourse contexts.

Polarity and Tense/Aspect/Modality (TAM) focus are not necessarily the only subtypes belonging to the umbrella concept of operator focus.

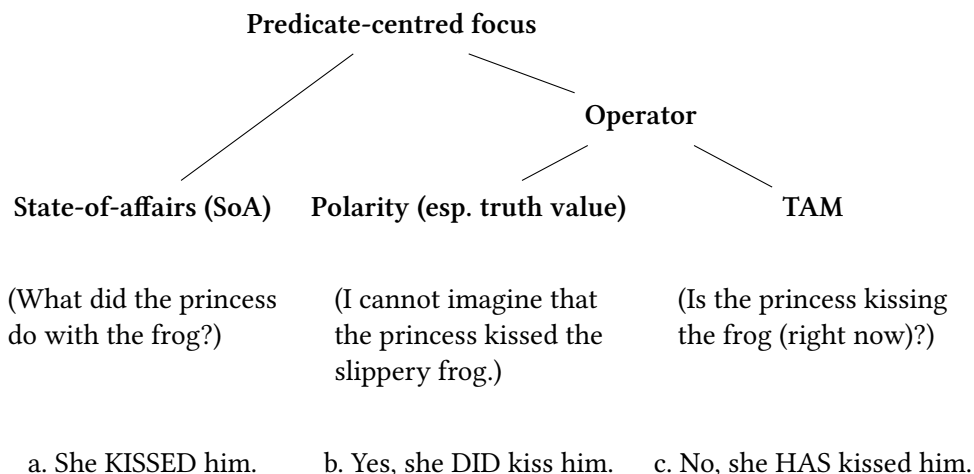


Figure 1: Basic typology of predicate-centred focus (PCF)

What follows is a cross-linguistically informed survey of structures where the predicate is partitioned or dissected into its two IS-relevant components pertaining to the SoA expression on the one hand and to the assertion on the other hand. A construction targeting pragmatically the former component renders SoA focus, while one oriented to the latter renders different types of operator focus.

A major formal mechanism of dissecting the predicate is the apparently tautological double use of the same verb called variously “predicate cleft”, “verb doubling”, “cognate object construction”, etc.² While the available literature on such structures is extensive, analyses largely deal with language-specific cases without providing a cross-linguistically representative picture. Such a systematic typology will be proposed in Güldemann (In preparation); see Güldemann et al. (2010) for a first publicly available version. The diversity of the wider domain of IS-related predicate partition is established according to various parameters summarised in Table 1 and discussed subsequently.

The first crucial distinction under I in Table 1 is triggered by the variable pragmatic role of the non-finite verb. In the case of preposed verb doubling in (1), the initial verb can either be the focus of the utterance, the case commonly called

²The terms “cognate” verb and verb “doublet” are used interchangeably merely to refer to the mutual lexical relationship without any conviction that either verb is basic and/or copied by the other.

Table 1: Some variation parameters of predicate partition/dissection

I	Pragmatic status of non-finite verb	focus vs. topic
II	Position of non-finite verb vis-à-vis clause	preposed vs. in-situ vs. postposed ^a
III	Lexical relation of finite verb vis-à-vis non-finite verb	doublet vs. light verb

^aVerb postposing plays a marginal role in Bantu and is only referred to briefly in §4.1.

“predicate cleft”, or it can be the topic, as foreshadowed in the above quotation from Güldemann (2003). Güldemann (In preparation) argues that the difference between the two patterns correlates robustly with two distinct PCF subtypes, namely SoA focus in the first vs. operator focus in the second case.

There are languages that possess both options and thereby distinguish two principal PCF types, as holds for Amharic illustrated in (2) and (3). While (2) shows a cleft structure with focus on the initial verbal noun and conveys SoA focus, (3) displays a verbal noun in topic function and accordingly renders truth value focus.³

- (2) Amharic [Semitic, Afro-Asiatic] (Andreas Wetter, p.c.)

SoA focus

mākina-w-n māt'äggän nä-w yä-t'äggän-ä
 car-DEF-OBJ repair:VN COP-3M.SG REL-repair-3M.SG
 [FOC] < I [BG]

‘He REPAIRED the car.’ [lit.: It is repairing the car that he repaired.]

- (3) Amharic [Semitic, Afro-Asiatic] (Andreas Wetter, p.c.)

Truth focus

māt'äggän-əs t'äggän-o-all
 repair:VN-TOP repair:CONV-3M.SG-AUX:3M.SG
 [TOP] < I [FOC]

‘He DID repair (the car).’ [lit.: As for repairing, he repaired.]

³For the sake of a better understanding of the IS configuration, these and most other examples are accompanied, i.e. usually followed, by a schema with underlying IS fields; these possibly involve segmental indices (i) that encode the IS status of the constituent in their scope as well as arrows that mark the scope direction (cf. Güldemann 2016 for a similar presentation of IS constructions).

This first distinction between “preposed verb focus doubling (= PrepFocDoubling)” and “preposed verb topic doubling (= PrepTopDoubling)” is summarised in Table 2. In this and following tables, “verb” refers to the non-finite verb, if not stated otherwise, in line with the explanation around Table 1.

Table 2: Preposed verb focus doubling vs. preposed verb topic doubling

Verb position:	Preposed	
IS status of verb:	Focus	Topic
Verb doubling:	PrepFocDoubling	PrepTopDoubling
IS function:	SoA	Operator

The second distinction within IS-sensitive predicate partition, given under II in Table 1, concerns the position of the non-finite verb. With pre- or postposing the non-finite verb we imply its ex-situ (aka extra-clausal) position, as opposed to an in-situ (aka intra-clausal) position. In the focus case, this type of syntactic variation corresponds with the existence of distinct IS field positions reserved for focus constituents.

Compare in this regard (4) and (5) from two closely related Bongo-Bagirmi languages, which both encode SoA focus. Example (4) from Mbay is an instance of PrepFocDoubling, parallel to (2) from Amharic; (5) on the other hand, from Bagirmi, represents a case of in-situ verb doubling (= InFocDoubling), where the non-finite form *tádà* follows the verb phrase with its object or, if the object is an initial topic marked by *ná*, the finite verb directly.

- (4) Mbay [Bongo-Bagirmi, Central Sudanic] (Keegan 1997: 148)

SoA focus

nà ndūsē lā ndūsē yé

but INF:worm_eaten FOC worm_eaten BG

[FOC] < I [BG] < I

(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.]

- (5) Bagirmi [Bongo-Bagirmi, Central Sudanic] (Jacob 2010: 129)

SoA focus

Boukar táđ djùm tén táđà

PN PFV:do gruel millet INF:do

[BG] [FOC]

(or: *djùm tén ná, Boukar táđ táđà*)

(Did Boukar cook millet gruel or did he eat it?) ‘Boukar COOKED millet gruel.’ [lit.: Boukar cooked (millet gruel) COOKING.]

Including the new pattern in (5), abbreviated here as InFocDoubling, the extended range of verb-doubling structures is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Preposed verb focus/topic doubling vs. in-situ verb focus doubling

Verb position:	Preposed		In-situ
IS status of verb:	Focus	Topic	Focus
Verb doubling:	PrepFocDoubling	PrepTopDoubling	InFocDoubling
IS function:	SoA	Operator	SoA

So far, the diversity pertained to constructions that all displayed the co-occurrence of a finite and a non-finite verb of the same lexical type. However, this is not a necessary ingredient of the domain at issue. Dissecting the predicate for the expression of PCF without any change of IS reading can also be achieved by combining a non-finite lexical verb with a finite verb that is auxiliary-like, what is called here a light-verb structure.

A language that recruits this and all previous strategies is Hausa. Example (6) demonstrates the expression of truth value focus by means of verb topic preposing, whereby the version in (6a) is a case of PrepTopDoubling, while in the version in (6b) the preposed verb topic is followed by a finite light verb ‘do’. Example (7) is a light verb structure with verb focus preposing.

- (6) Hausa [Chadic, Afro-Asiatic] (after Jaggar 2001: 542)

Truth focus

a. *sàyé-n àbinci kòò, sùn sàyaa*

buy:VN-GEN food moreover 3PL.PFV buy

- b. *sàyé-n àbinci kòò, sùn yi*
 buy:VN-GEN food moreover 3PL.PFV do
 [TOP] < I [FOC]
 ‘Buying food moreover, they bought/did.’ [they DID ...]

- (7) Hausa [Chadic, Afro-Asiatic] (Green 2007: 60)

VP focus

- sàyé-n àbinci nèè, sukà yi*
 buy:VN-GEN food FOC 3PL.PFV.DEP do
 [FOC] < I [BG]
 ‘They BOUGHT FOOD.’

The two light-verb options, PrepTopLight and PrepFocLight, increase the inventory of structures with IS-sensitive predicate dissection even further, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Verb focus/topic doubling vs. verb focus/topic light-verb structure

Verb position:	Preposed		In-situ
IS status of verb:	Focus	Topic	Focus
Verb doubling:	PrepFocDoubling	PrepTopDoubling	InFocDoubling
Light verb structure:	PrepFocLight	PrepTopLight	?
IS function:	SoA	Operator	SoA

Finally, in a language like German, where the two separated predicate components can be manipulated quite freely by means of prosody, the light-verb structure can also be employed in-situ. When emphasising the light verb *tun* ‘do’ suprasegmentally, the IS reading is truth value focus, irrespective of whether the non-finite verb is a preposed topic (= PrepTopLight), as in (8a), or an in-situ complement (= InTopLight), as in (8b) (cf. also English *do*-support).

- (8) German [Germanic, Indo-European] (personal knowledge)

Truth focus

- a. *Lesen TUT er*
 read:INF does he
 [TOP] [FOC]

b. *er TUT lesen*

he does read:INF

[FOC] [BG]

[lit.: As for reading, he DOES.] > ‘He DOES read (but ...).’

Shifting prosodic emphasis to the non-finite lexical verb results in SoA focus, again independent of whether this verb is a preposed focus (= PrepFocLight), as in (9a), or an in-situ focus (= InFocLight), as in (9b). Recall that the disambiguation in the IS reading between (8a) and (9a), as well as between (8b) and (9b), is merely achieved by prosody.

(9) German [Germanic, Indo-European] (personal knowledge)

SoA focus

a. *LESEN tut er*

read:INF does he

[FOC] [BG]

b. *er tut LESEN*

he does read:INF

[BG] [FOC]

[lit.: READING he does.] > ‘He READS (rather than sleeps).’

Table 5 presents a fuller range of constructions with a dissected predicate in PCF expression, including reference to the examples above. It displays an overall symmetrical setup where only one pattern is not yet attested, the InTopDoubling pattern, which would be the counterpart of the InTopLight structure illustrated by (8b) from German.

3 PCF with non-finite verbs in Bantu

According to §2, Meeussen’s (1967) “advance verb construction” is embedded in a larger family of related structures, which provides a better background for evaluating the former. One central result of our survey is the existence of two basic morphosyntactic schemas in Bantu-like languages with a basic word order SBJ-V-OBJ, namely ex-situ infinitive fronting, as in [I], and an in-situ counterpart, as in [II].

[I] [Verb_{non-finite} [SBJ Verb_{finite} (Other)]]

[II] [SBJ Verb_{finite} (Other) Verb_{non-finite} (Other)]

Table 5: Dissected predicate constructions for PCF

Verb position:	Verb preposing		In-situ	
IS status of verb:	Focus	Topic	Focus	Topic
Verb doubling:	PrepFocDoubling	PrepTopDoubling	InFocDoubling	?
<i>Example:</i>	<i>Amharic (2)</i> <i>Mbay (4)</i>	<i>Amharic (3)</i> <i>Hausa (6a)</i>	<i>Bagirmi (5)</i>	
Light verb structure:	PrepFoc-Light	PrepTop-Light	InFoc-Light	InTop-Light
<i>Example:</i>	<i>Hausa (7)</i> <i>German (9a)</i>	<i>Hausa (6b)</i> <i>German (8a)</i>	<i>German (9b)</i>	<i>do-support</i> <i>German (8b)</i>
IS function:	SoA	Operator	SoA	Operator

In both patterns, it is not trivial to ascertain the exact structure and function of the entire construction without information about the pragmatic status of the non-finite verb, which can be marked by segmental and/or supra-segmental encoding. This partly lacking information is at the basis of the inconclusive characterisation of the ex-situ pattern by both Meeussen (1967) and Güldemann (2003: 335–337). Due to the availability of much more data on Bantu and our cross-linguistically informed perspective, we survey the domain across a large set of languages that are known from the literature to possess them. We organise the data according to five geographical clusters. The full list of languages, including those that are so far isolated cases outside these clusters, can be found in Appendix A.

We intentionally start out in the north-west, from which the family emanated, as this area is not unlikely to host the structural diversity the modern cross-Bantu profile emerged from. The wider areal and genealogical background of the Bantu homeland is the Macro-Sudan Belt (see Güldemann 2008), which hosts a large amount of language diversity but at the same time is dominated by Niger-Congo, the genealogical higher-order group to which Bantu belongs. While this part of West Africa harbours the full range of constructions in Table 5, the available literature focusses in particular on PrepFocDoubling (aka “predicate clefts”) because this has been transferred so often into Atlantic and West African creoles. Some such works are Bynoe-Andriolo & Yillah (1975), Goodman (1985: 125–126), Gilman (1986: 39–40), Mufwene (1987), and Manfredi (1993), which in fact deal

not only with West African languages but also mention some Narrow Bantu languages such as Lingala C30B, Kuyu E51, Kituba H10A, Kongo H16, and Makhuwa P31.

3.1 Grassfields and Bantu zone A

The immediate genealogical context of Bantoid and north-western Bantu seems to be characterised by the (co)existence of InFocDoubling and PrepFocDoubling. Some languages are only reported for possessing the first structure, for example Ngwe, as in (10). See also Ibrahīm (2007) for the Ngiemboon variety of Bamileke and Makaa A83.

- (10) Ngwe [Grassfields, Mbam-Nkam, Bamileke] (Nkemnji 1995: 138)

SoA focus

Atem a kɛ? nčúū akendòŋ čúū

PN 3SG PST1 ?boil plantains boil

[BG] [FOC]

‘Atem BOILED plantains.’

In Limbum, InFocDoubling and PrepFocDoubling exist side by side, whereby we lack information about possible interpretational differences. See Bassong (2014: §V) for the same situation in Basaa A43a. This variation arises from the availability of both an in-situ and an ex-situ focus position. Regarding the first case, (11a) shows in-situ term focus, while the variant of InFocDoubling for SoA focus is given in (11b). In (12), the same opposition between term and SoA focus holds respectively for the negative cleft structures in (12a) and (12b) – the second being a case of PrepFocDoubling.

- (11) Limbum [Grassfields, Mbam-Nkam, Nka] (Ndamsah 2012: ex. (11b), resp. ex. (11a))

- a. Term focus

Nfɔ̃ tʃē yē á byē:

PN PROG eat FOC food

[BG] I > [FOC]

‘It is food that Nfor is eating.’ [Nfor eats FOOD.]

b. SoA focus

Nfɔ̃ tʃē būmī á búmí

PN PROG sleep FOC sleeping

[BG] I > [FOC]

‘It is sleeping that Nfor is sleeping, not ...’ [Nfor SLEEPS, not ...; last verb in citation form: Gratiana Ndamsah, p.c.]

- (12) Limbum [Grassfields, Mbam-Nkam, Nka] (Ndamsah 2012: ex. (3a), resp. ex. (3b))

a. Term focus

á Nfɔ̃ tʃé é tʃē būmī kā?

FOC PN REL PRO PROG sleep NEG

I > [FOC] I > [BG]

‘It is not Nfor who is sleeping.’

b. SoA focus

á būmí tʃé Nfɔ̃ tʃē būmī kā?

FOC sleep REL PN PROG sleep NEG

I > [FOC] I > [BG]

‘It is not sleep that Nfor is sleeping.’ [Nfor is not SLEEPing.]

Tuki A601, finally, is a language that seems to use only cleft-like PrepFocDoubling for SoA focus, as in (13b), which again also serves to express term focus, as in (13a)

- (13) Tuki A601 (Bilola 1997: 111, resp. 110)

a. Term focus

nambari owu Mbara a-nu-enda-m n(a) adongo

tomorrow FOC PN.1 1-FUT-go-? to village

[FOC] < i [BG]

‘It is tomorrow that Mbara will go to the village.’ [Mbara will go to the village TOMORROW.]

b. SoA focus

o-suwa owu Puta a-nu-suwa-m tsono raa

INF-wash FOC PN.1 1-FUT-wash-? clothes her

[FOC] < I [BG]

‘Putu will WASH her clothes.’

3.2 Bantu zone J

The alternation between InFocDoubling and PrepFocDoubling is not restricted to Bantu in the north-west but found elsewhere, notably in interlacustrine Bantu of zone J. The diversity in this language group is even greater, because it concerns two additional parameters.

For one thing, verb doubling, at least in the in-situ pattern, has recourse to different verbal nouns, which is associated with distinct focus subtypes. The default infinitive with class 15 **kù-* preceded by the conjunction **na* ‘and’ when following the finite verb encodes additive SoA focus. In opposition to this, the parallel pattern with the verbal noun occurring in class 14 (marked by the reflex of PB **bù-*) conveys restrictive SoA focus, as in (14a).⁴ This effect is most likely related to the use of class 14 in Ganda JE15 to express single points in time with particular reference to the noun *obu-dde* ‘occasion, time of day’ (Ashton et al. 1954: 211, 278), which seems to imply here ‘once’ and hence restrictive focus ‘only’.⁵

The example pair in (14) from Ganda JE15 exemplifies this contrast between restrictive and additive SoA focus in (14a) and (14b), respectively. An interesting point of variation of InFocDoubling in Bantu zone J compared to that illustrated above in (5) for Bagirmi and in (10) for Ngwe is that the non-finite verb can precede the object. We call this pattern “*Postverbal* InFocDoubling” as opposed to “*Final* InFocDoubling” in the other case. Example (15) shows that at least additive SoA focus is not only conveyed by InFocDoubling, as in (14b), but is also possible with PrepFocDoubling.

(14) Ganda JE15 (Jenneke van der Wal & Saudah Namyalo, p.c.)

a. Restrictive SoA focus

<i>w-a-gúl-a</i>	<i>bu-gúzí</i>	<i>kí-tábó</i>
2SG-PST-buy-FV	14-buy:NOM	7-book
[BG]	[FOC]	[BG]
‘You just/only BOUGHT the book.’		

⁴Note that this nominalisation involves the change of the final vowel to agentive *-i* (cf. Schadeberg & Bostoen 2019: 188), which can trigger (agent noun) spirantisation of the final stem consonant (cf. Bostoen 2008), as in (14a).

⁵The structural potential for such a possible alternation between two types of verbal nouns in InFocDoubling seems to be quite old in Bantu, as Watters (1981: 246–247) describes a very similar alternation in the Ekoid Bantu language Ejagham.

- ### b. Additive SoA focus

<i>néd</i> da, <i>n-Ø</i> - <i>ki-som-a</i>	<i>n'-oku</i> - <i>ki-som-a</i>
no! 1SG-PRS-7OBJ-read-FV	ADD_F-15INF-7OBJ-read-FV
[BG]	I > [FOC]
‘No, I am also READING it.’	

- (15) Ganda JE15 (Jenneke van der Wal & Saudah Namyalo, p.c.)

Additive SoA focus

<i>nédda, n'-ókú-kí-som-a</i>	<i>n-Ø-kí-sóm-á</i>
no! ADD_F-15INF-7OBJ-read-FV	1SG-PRS-7OBJ-read-FV
I > [FOC]	[BG]
'No, I am also READING it.'	

A similar range of InFocDoubling constructions has been reported by Nabirye (2016) for Soga JE16. (16a) exemplifies restrictive SoA focus with a class 14 verbal noun and (16b) shows additive SoA focus with the conjunction *na* and a class 15 verbal noun.

- (16) Soga JE16 (Nabirye 2016: 379)

- a. Restrictive SoA focus

<i>a-lii-ku-w-a</i>	<i>bu-we</i>
1-PROG-2SG.OBJ-give-FV	14-give:NOM
[BG]	[FOC]
‘(and another one who) is just giving you (freely)’	

- b. Additive SoA focus

a-ba-lamus-e *n'-oku-ba-lamus-a*
 1-2PL.OBJ-greet-SBJV ADD_F-15INF-2PL.OBJ-greet-FV
 [BG] I > [FOC]
 '(we ask father to welcome you) and even/also GREET you'

Soga adds a second piece of structural and functional variation. Example (17) involves an initial *topical* infinitive and is thus an instance of PrepTopDoubling, as schematised under [III]. The reason this sentence does not convey polarity focus, as the examples in §2 (cf. (3) from Amharic, (6) from Hausa, and (8a) from German), is that it is not a case of “maximal backgrounding” as described by Güldemann (2016). That is, the assertion domain after the initial infinitive topic *okuzimba* ‘to build’ in (17) contains more than just the finite verb *twazimbanga*, specifically an additional object phrase, which happens to be the focal assertion.

III [Verb_{non-finite}] [(SBJ) Verb_{finite} (Other)]

- (17) Soga JE16 (Nabirye 2016: 380)

Term focus

oku-zimb-a tw-a-zimb-anga ma-yumba ga nnanka

15INF-build-FV 1PL-PST-build-HAB 6-house 6:GEN certain_kind

[TOP] [BG] [FOC]

‘As for building [houses], we always built houses of a CERTAIN KIND.’

Other zone J languages also possess PrepTopDoubling, used here, as expected, for truth and other types of operator focus. Asiimwe & van der Wal’s (2019) new data for Nkore-Kiga JE13/14 strongly suggest that this language possesses this pattern and the two versions of InFocDoubling, for which see also Taylor (1985: 77–220a/b). While the authors do not disambiguate the status of an initial infinitive as a topic or focus, Jenneke van der Wal (p.c.) excludes the existence of PrepFocDoubling. Personal communication from Jean Paul Ngoboka also confirms the existence of PrepTopDoubling in Rwanda JD61, as shown in (18); the pronominal element *byo* is an explicit topic marker of class 8, which is the canonical agreement in the language for infinitives of class 15, here *kurya* ‘to eat’.

- (18) Rwanda JD61 (Jean Paul Ngoboka, p.c.)

Truth focus

ku-ry-á byó a-ra-ry-á

15INF-eat-FV TOP 1-DJ-eat-FV

[TOP] < I [FOC]

‘He DOES eat.’ [As for eating, he EATS.]

3.3 Bantu zones B and H

Bantu languages of the Kongo cluster commonly display structures with preposed infinitives. The feature was first surveyed by Hadermann (1996) and analysed by Güldemann (2003) as generically pertaining to the PCF domain. More recently, this trait has been described extensively by De Kind et al. (2015).

The structure encountered predominantly is PrepFocDoubling, as illustrated previously with (1) above from Sundi H131K. While overall comparable to the pattern across Bantu, some languages of the Kongo cluster display certain morphological specificities. For one thing, the fronted non-finite verb doublet often lacks an overt nominalising prefix, but this reflects a historical change independent of our domain (see Bostoen & de Schryver 2015). Moreover, the subject concord on

the out-of-focus finite verb referring to a class 1 referent has the marked form *ka-* rather than unmarked *u-*.

The PrepFocDoubling pattern with its specific SoA focus interpretation is associated with a more general trend towards a preverbal focus position (cf. Hadermann 1996) that derives ultimately from an original cleft-like focus construction (De Kind et al. 2015). From a functional-semantic perspective, however, it is noteworthy that one can diagnose a developmental cline away from SoA focus toward general PCF (subsuming SoA *and* operator focus) and then, in line with observations by Güldemann (2003), to temporal predicate meanings, first to focus-sensitive progressive and finally to a proximal future, as illustrated by the following examples. While the expected function of SoA focus holds for (19) from Woyo H16dK (West Kongo),⁶ (20) from Ndibu H16bZ (Central Kongo) appears to involve emphasis on the truth value in the domain of operator focus. The encroachment of general PCF on the progressive domain seems to apply to (21) from Kamba H112A (North Kongo) because Hadermann (1996: 160) cites Bouka (1989: 237) who observes that the relevant form *sàlá kàmú:sàlá*, as opposed to the canonical progressive form *wàmú:sàlá*, serves to “*renforcer l’idée de répétition dans le déroulement de l’action*” [“reinforce the idea of repetition in the unfolding of the action” (our translation)]. Example (22) from Fiote H16d (West Kongo), however, is likely to represent a case of a plain progressive, as the predicate occurs in a dependent clause which, by default, does not involve focality. Finally, example (23) from Yaka H31 (Kongoid) is an instance of future meaning.⁷

- (19) Woyo H16dK (West Kongo) (De Kind et al. 2015: 119)

SoA focus

zeng-a **ba-Ø-zeng-eza** wao

INF:cut-FV 2-PRS-cut-PFV 2PRO

‘(What ... they did to the tree?) They CUT it.’

- (20) Ndibu H16bZ (Central Kongo) (De Kind et al. 2015: 120)

Truth focus

mon-a **mbwene** N-kenda za zula ...

INF:see-FV 1SG:see:PRF 10-affliction 10:GEN 7:people

‘I have surely seen the affliction of that people ...’

⁶The Kongo subgroups indicated refer to the phylogenetic classification of the Kikongo Language Cluster (KLC) by de Schryver et al. (2015).

⁷De Kind et al. (2015: 130) discuss two possibilities for the emergence of a future reading of this construction: it develops a) directly from the present progressive as observed elsewhere in Bantu, or b) from the inflected unmarked verb via analogy to simple zero-marked verbs that can get future interpretation in some South Kongo varieties.

- (21) Kamba H112A (North Kongo) (Hadermann 1996: 160)

PCF~PROG

sàl-á kà-mú:-sàl-á

INF:work-FV 1-PROG-work-FV

‘He is working.’

- (22) Fiote H16d (West Kongo) (De Kind et al. 2015: 125)

PROG

kadi vov-a lu-Ø-vov-ang-a mu N-pamba

because INF:speak-FV 2PL-PRS-speak-IPFV-FV INE 9-vanity

‘[...] because you are speaking in the air.’

- (23) Yaka H31 (Kongoid) (De Kind et al. 2015: 131)

FUT

vuumbuk-a yi-Ø-vuumbuk-a

INF:dress-FV 1SG-PRS-dress-FV

‘I’ll dress myself.’

The good state of description of PrepFocDoubling in the Kongo cluster adds another point of structural variation to the domain. While all previous examples lack an independent expression for the S/A referent, its possible presence raises the question of its syntactic position. In a structure that is still close to a cleft, one expects that the S/A is part of the extra-focal clause domain and thus appears immediately before the finite verb and hence after the initial verbal noun, as in (12b) from Limbum and (13b) from Tuki A601. It is conceivable, however, that the S/A constituent occurs before an uninterrupted, syntactically tighter sequence of the two verbs, so that the non-finite verb is no longer initial but preverbal. We reformulate the morphosyntactic variation regarding the S/A position before or after the preposed infinitive with reference to the *non-finite verb* position as an opposition between “*Initial* PrepFocDoubling”, as in [I]a and (24) from Vili H12L (West Kongo), vs. “*Preverbal* PrepFocDoubling”,⁸ as in [I]b and (25) from Zali H16cZ (West Kongo).⁹

⁸The syntactic status of the S/A in this pattern is ambiguous as it could be an external topic or an internal subject topic. Since the necessary information is normally insufficient, we keep using the syntactically neutral semantic label S/A.

⁹This variation is the mirror image of the distinction between *Postverbal* and *Final* InFocDoubling mentioned briefly in §3.2 above.

[Ia] [Verb_{non-finite} [S/A Verb_{finite}]]

- (24) Vili H12L (West Kongo) (De Kind et al. 2015: 117)

SoA focus

ko **kú-tél-à** ñ-cétù ù-à-ñ-tél-à

no! 15INF-call-FV 1-woman 1-PRF-1SG.OBJ-call-FV

[FOC] [BG]

(Has the woman beaten Pierre?) ‘No, the woman has (only) CALLED him.’

[Ib] [S/A] [Verb_{non-finite} Verb_{finite}]

- (25) Zali H16cZ (West Kongo) (De Kind et al. 2015: 114)

PROG

i-búlu **zawúl-a** ci-Ø-zawúl-a

7-cattle INF:run-FV 7-PRS-run-FV

[TOP] [FOC] [BG]

‘The cattle is running.’

The data on the Kongo cluster available to us contain only a single example of Initial PrepFocDoubling, exemplified in (24), without much information as to whether this reflects real rarity or is coincidental. There is, however, indirect evidence that Preverbal PrepFocDoubling, as in (25), is indeed the predominant pattern, which we argue to be the reflex of a stronger degree of grammaticalisation of that construction away from its original nature as a cleft.

For one thing, the position of the S/A constituent before the preposed focal infinitive and outside the earlier background clause appears to be entrenched in a more general syntactic phenomenon. That is, the infinitive is analysed by Hadermann (1996: 158–159) as occurring in a preverbal focus position:

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, [...] » [...]

Nevertheless, Grégoire (1993) has shown that the preposing of the object is not exceptional in zones B, C, H and K, i.e. in the North-West of the Bantu domain. The occurrence of the SOV order is, according to her, linked with “the expression of the focalisation bearing on the object of the transitive verb” [...] or with “the use of a compound form of the conjugation, [...]” [...] (our translation)

This is unusual for canonical Bantu languages and even opposed to the more general Benue-Congo trait of a preverbal *extrafocal* position (cf. Güldemann 2007). The following example from Nzebi B52 clearly illustrates the preverbal focus position that applies both to nominal terms, as in (26a), and the verbal noun in Prep-FocDoubling, as in (26b). Nzebi is not part of the Kongo cluster, but belongs to the same major branch of the Bantu family, i.e. West-Coastal Bantu (Pacchiarotti et al. 2019).

(26) Nzebi B52 (Hadermann 1996: 162)

a. Term focus

bà-kà:sá bá-n'á; péndá bà:vádà

2-woman 2-DEM groundnut 2:cultivate

[TOP] [FOC] [BG]

‘These women, they cultivate GROUNDNUTS.’

b. PROG

bà-kà:sá bá-n'á; vádá bà:vádá péndà

2-woman 2-DEM INF:cultivate 2:cultivate groundnut

[TOP] [FOC] [BG]

‘These women, they ARE CULTIVATING groundnuts.’

There is another indication of increased grammaticalisation of preverbal Prep-FocDoubling in West-Coastal Bantu. That is, its syntactic pattern tying the two predicate components closer together correlates with the shift away from pragmatic constituent-oriented IS functions (namely SoA focus derived directly from term focus) toward semantic predicate-centred tense/aspect notions of progressive and future, as mentioned above and illustrated again in (26b).

It was said in §2 (cf. Table 1) that another option in the focus fronting of infinitives concerns the finite verb: it can also be a light verb rather than being lexically identical with the verbal noun. This variant of the PrepFocLight structure, as exemplified in (8a) above from German, occurs repeatedly in the Kongo cluster and elsewhere in West-Coastal Bantu and can be schematised as in [IV].

[IV] [SBJ (OBJ)] [**Verb**_{non-finite} (Other) Auxiliary~Light_Verb_{finite}] Other]

Such a structure, which in Bantu turns out to be like an inverted version of an auxiliary periphrasis, was already associated with the domain at issue by Güldemann (2003: 336–337). Thus, (27) from Shona S10 shows an instance of a well-known progressive form based on locative periphrasis, which is frequent both

inside Bantu and also more generally in the world's languages (cf. Bybee & Dahl 1989). Example (28) from Kuria JE43 demonstrates a predicate with largely cognate morphological material but the inverse word order.

- (27) Shona S10 (personal knowledge)
ndi-ri ku-taur-a
 1SG-be 15INF-talk-FV
 'I am talking.'
- (28) Kuria JE43 (Güldemann 2003: 336) < (Sillery 1936: 20)
ku-tun-a n-di
 15INF-see-FV 1SG-be
 'I am (in the act of) seeking.'

De Kind et al.'s (2015) discussion of their Kongo Bantu data confirms the proposed affinity between a structure as in (28) and focus fronting more generally in that both share behavioural properties in opposition to the canonical [AUXILIARY VERB] structure exemplified in (27). The closer alignment of the PrepFocLight structure with plain auxiliary periphrasis in turn correlates with formal and functional observations. In opposition to PrepFocDoubling, it is only attested with an infinitive immediately preceding the finite auxiliary and with tense/aspect meaning. The following examples from Sundi H131K (North Kongo) in (29) and Tsootso H16hZ (South Kongo) in (30) illustrate these facts¹⁰ as well as some variation with respect to the auxiliary, i.e. *di* as in (29) vs. *(i)na* in (30), and the nature of the nominalising prefix, i.e. infinitive class 15 in (29) vs. locative~inessive class 18 in (30).

- (29) Sundi H131K (North Kongo) (Hadermann 1996: 166)
 PROG
bùkù kù-tá:ng-à dyò kà-di
 5.book 15INF-read-FV 5.PRO 1-be
 [TOP] [FOC] [BG]
 'He is reading the book.'

¹⁰The object marker *dyò* in (29) is best analysed as a weak anaphoric pronoun, possibly even enclitic, rather than a full noun phrase.

- (30) Tsootso H16hZ (South Kongo) (Hadermann 1996: 164)

PROG

mw-à:nà mù-sákán-á kéna

1-child 18INE-joke-FV 1:be

[TOP] [FOC] [BG]

‘The child is joking.’

3.4 Bantu zones E and F

Bantu languages of zone E were among the first mentioned in the literature in connection with predicate clefts. Thus, the early paper on African-based creoles by Bynoe-Andriolo & Yillah (1975: 234) had already reported the feature for Kuyu E51. This language is not the only one possessing this and related constructions. The closely related Tharaka E54 is another language with PrepFocDoubling.¹¹ This is illustrated in (31), whereby the example (31b) seems to suggest an additional reading of operator focus. We assume that this is independent of the fact that the finite predicate is a nominal predication.

- (31) Tharaka E54 (Abels & Muriungi 2008: 704)

- a. SoA focus

i-kû-gûr-a Maria *a-gur-ire* nyondo

FOC-15INF-buy-FV PN.1 1-buy-PRF 9.hammer

I > [FOC] [SBJ BG]

‘Maria BOUGHT the hammer.’ (she did not borrow it)

- b. ? Truth focus

i-ku-nog-a Maria *a-rî mû-nog-u*

FOC-15INF-tire-FV PN.1 1-be 1-tire-ADJ

I > [FOC] [SBJ BG]

‘Maria is really tired.’ (she is not kidding!)

As opposed to PrepFocDoubling in zones B and H, languages of zone E display overt signs of a cleft-like syntactic bisection involving an identificational and focus marker before the infinitive and sometimes even traces of dependent clause-marking in the finite background clause, which suggests a historically young age of the phenomenon.

¹¹According to information by Landman & Ranero (2014: 406), the construction may also exist in Kuria JE43, although the situation remains unclear, as the authors only give a single example of a fronted focalised nominalisation of an entire verb phrase, which changes the IS configuration.

Similar to zones B and H, one can observe an alternation between initial and preverbal PrepFocDoubling, whereby the first seems more salient, which again would suggest a younger historical age. Within the framework of our project on PCF, Morimoto (2017) carried out more detailed research on the ubiquitous use of the focus proclitic *nĩ* in Kuyu E51, including in predicate clefts (cf. also Schwarz 2003). An interesting observation was that her informant produced a progressive form that not only involved a canonical progressive verb prefix but also a PrepFocDoubling structure, as given in (32). It may well be significant that this token displays the *preverbal* variant of the construction, as opposed to the initial one attested so far in contexts of SoA focus, as in (33), which seems to replicate a trend described in §3.3 toward a motivated form-meaning covariation.

(32) Kuyu E51 (Morimoto 2017: 165)

PROG

fafa w-anyú nĩ gũ-kiny-á a-rá:-kiny-a (reu)

1.father 1-2PL.POSS FOC 15INF-arrive-FV 1-PROG-arrive-FV now

[s/A] I > [FOC] [BG]

‘Your father is arriving (now) [as we speak].’

(33) Kuyu E51 (Schwarz 2003: 96)

SoA focus

a. *ne atea Abdul e-k-irɛ na mae?*

FOC what PN.1 1-do-PFV COM 6.water

I > [FOC] [SBJ BG]

‘(What did Abdul do with the water?)’

b. *ne ko-nyu-a Abdul a-nyu-irɛ mae*

FOC 15INF-drink-FV PN.1 1-drink-PFV 6.water

I > [FOC] [SBJ BG]

‘He DRANK the water.’

As already observed by Güldemann (2003: 337–338), the relevant Bantu area also hosts languages that display structures labelled in §3.3 above as PrepFoc-Light with a fronted infinitive followed by an auxiliary, cf. Sillery (1936: 20) for Kuria JE43 and Whiteley (1960: 57, 61–62) for Gusii JE42, both involving forms with imperfective meaning. Gibson (2012: §3.3–3.5), Gibson (2019) and Roth & Gibson (2019: 300–302) add Ngoreme JE401, Simbiti JE431, Rangi F33, and Mbugwe F34, of the geographically close zone F, to the list of relevant languages where the phenomenon turns up in the immediate future with auxiliary

íise and the general future with auxiliary *rí* and is expectedly largely restricted to PCF-sensitive contexts such as polar questions and affirmative main clauses.

3.5 Bantu zone K

Another hotbed of Bantu languages with fronted infinitive doubling is zone K. Such structures are attested so far in Luvale K14 (Horton 1949: 209), Kwangali K33 (Westphal 1958: 94), Manyo including Gciriku K332 (Möhlrig 1967: 206), Mbukushu K333 (Fisch 1977: 95, 103), Fwe K402 (Gunnink 2016; 2018: §11.1.2; 2019; p.c.), and both Zambian Totela K41 and Namibian Totela K411 (Crane 2019: 684–685; p.c.).

In Fwe and Totela, the syntactic analysis is sufficiently clear in order to assign the phenomenon to the PrepFocDoubling type and in both languages the expected SoA reading is indeed the most salient. Gunnink’s extensive analysis of the construction in Fwe provides other important details. Thus, only the preverbal variant is grammatical and the S/A argument occurs either clause-initially or after the finite verb. This is compatible with the finding that the compact sequence of non-finite and finite verb can in addition to SoA focus also express progressive, as shown in (34) and (35), respectively. Crane (2019; p.c.) also reports this for Namibian Totela. In the Zambian Fwe variety, the construction is even obligatory in sentences without a postverbal constituent and thus behaves similarly to PCF-sensitive “disjoint” verb forms in other Bantu languages.

- (34) Fwe K402 (Gunnink 2019: 73)

SoA focus

ka-ri ndí-aku-rir-a ku-fek-a
NEG-be 1SG.REL-PST.IPFV-cry-FV 15INF-laugh-FV
[FOC]

ndí-aku-fek-a

1SG.REL-PST.IPFV-laugh-FV

[BG]

‘I was not crying, I was LAUGHING.’

- (35) Fwe K402 (Gunnink 2018: 352)

PROG

e-N-tí ku-hór-a í-shi-hor-á
AUG-9-tea 15INF-cool-FV 9.REL-PERS-cool-FV

‘The tea is still cooling down.’

Most other instances of such constructions in zone K are hard to analyse conclusively as to whether the underlying pattern is PrepFocDoubling or PrepTopDoubling. For one thing, there is very little information about the syntax of the language-specific structures. In functional terms, the available examples are usually without discourse context and on their own can be interpreted recurrently as conveying truth value focus, which is expected for PrepTopDoubling rather than PrepFocDoubling. The treatment in Mbukushu K333 is a typical case: while (36) conveys progressive, (37) focusses on the assertion.

- (36) Mbukushu K333 (Fisch 1977: 95)

PROG

ku-w-a thi-na_ku-w-a thi-tondo

15INF-fall-FV 7-PRS-fall-FV 7-tree

‘*Der Baum fällt gerade.*’ [‘The tree is falling right now.’]

- (37) Mbukushu K333 (Fisch 1977: 103)

Truth focus

ku-yend-a tu-na_ku-yend-a

15INF-go-FV 1PL-PRS-go-FV

‘*Wir gehen ja schon.*’ [‘We DO go, don’t we.’]

Given that such authors as Horton (1949), Westphal (1958), and Möhlig (1967: 206; p.c.) even appear to analyse the initial infinitive as an extraposed topic, the structures could well be cases of PrepTopDoubling. However, generalised PCF including truth value focus can emerge from PrepFocDoubling, too (see §4.2 below), so that a conclusive assessment requires more detailed information on both form and function.

4 Summary and discussion

The data presented and discussed above show that Meeussen’s (1967: 121) “advance verb construction” is not an isolated structure, but is best appreciated when analysed within a larger cross-linguistically relevant family of constructions, which are characterised by the partition of the predicate for the expression of PCF, *and* within its wider areal context in and beyond Narrow Bantu. In the following, we discuss the variation that emerged in terms of structural properties (§4.1) as well as semantic-functional aspects (§4.2).

4.1 Morphosyntactic variation

In terms of morphosyntax, we started out in §1 above with Meeussen’s characterisation, which involves three crucial structural ingredients, namely:

1. two lexically identical verbal constituents, whereby
2. one is non-finite and the other is finite, and
3. the former syntactically precedes the latter.

However, there are a number of closely related constructions across the Bantu family that diverge from the above pattern in each of the three properties as well as various other points, which we present systematically in the following.

One type of variation that is not prefigured by Meeussen’s characterisation but widely attested across Narrow Bantu concerns the position of the possible constituent that refers to the S/A argument of the verb. Focusing on the position of the fronted non-finite verb, we speak of initial PrepFocDoubling if the S/A noun phrase occurs after the initial non-finite verb but before the finite one, while if preceding both we call the pattern preverbal PrepFocDoubling, as shown for Kuyu in (38) and (39), respectively.

[Ia] [**Verb**_{non-finite} [SBJ Cognate_Verb_{finite}]]

(38) Kuyu E51 (Mugane 1997: 148)

SoA focus

nĩ kũ-nyu-a Kamau a-nyu-ire njohi ny-ingĩ

FOC 15INF-drink-FV PN.1 1-drink-PFV 9.beer 9-lot

I > [FOC] [BG]

‘Kamau DRANK a lot of beer.’

[Ib] [S/A] [**Verb**_{non-finite} [Cognate_Verb_{finite}]]

(39) Kuyu E51 (Morimoto 2017: 165)

PROG

mw-aná nĩ kũ-rey-a a-rá:-rey-á mbó:so

1-baby FOC 15INF-eat-FV 1-PROG-eat-FV 10.bean

[TOP] I > [FOC] [BG]

‘The child is eating beans.’

A second if minor difference to Meeussen's prototype concerns the above feature 2, in that in some languages the non-finite verb is not an infinitive of class 15, but rather a verbal noun of another class (notably 14 and 18) or a bare verb stem without any inflection. The latter case is shown again in (40) by an example of PrepFocDoubling in Solongo H16aM (South Kongo).

- (40) Solongo H16aM (South Kongo) (De Kind et al. 2015: 118)

SoA focus

kin-a be-kin-ang-a
dance-FV 2-dance-IPFV-FV
[FOC] [BG]

(No, they're not fighting.) 'They're DANCING.'

A third but major deviation, also stipulated by Meeussen as feature 3 above, is that some languages possess a structure where the infinitive is placed in an in-situ focus position *after* rather than before the finite verb. This is labelled here for short InFocDoubling, the simple pattern being exemplified again in (41) from Lingala C30B. Examples (42) also from Lingala and (43) from Zulu S42 show special variants with focus-sensitive markers before the infinitive. The former displays a restrictive marker 'only, just' and would have encoded originally restrictive SoA focus, while the latter has an additive marker 'also' (< comitative **na*) and would have encoded additive SoA focus. Both patterns have, however, widened their functional range to operator-like PCF meanings such as truth and intensity.

[II] [Cognate_Verb_{finite} Verb_{non-finite}]

- (41) Lingala C30B (Meeuwis 2013: ex. 60–151)

SoA focus

a-défis-ákí yó yangó ko-défis-a, a-kabél-ákí yó té
3SG-lend-PST 2SG 3SG.IAN 15INF-lend-FV 3SG-offer-PST 2SG NEG
[BG] [FOC]

'She LENT it to you, she didn't give it.'

- (42) Lingala C30B (Joseph Koni Muluwa, p.c.)

Truth focus

a-bongís-ákí káka ko-bongis-a
1-repair-PST RES.F 15INF-repair-FV
[BG] I > [FOC]

(Having heard that somebody washed and polished his car, A asks: And he did not fix it? B replies:) 'He just REPAIRED/DID repair (it).'

- (43) Zulu S42 (Michel Lafon, p.c.)

Operator focus

ngi-ya-sab-a *no-ku-sab-a*

1SG-PCF-be_scared-FV ADD_F-15INF-be_scared-FV

[BG] I > [FOC]

‘I am so scared.’

The fourth type of variation is again covert in Meeussen’s description but is crucial for the general topic. His quite vague semantic-functional characterisation says nothing specific about the IS status of the different major constituents, in particular of the nature of the non-finite (preposed) verb. That is, PrepFocDoubling with this verb as the focus needs to be distinguished from PrepTopDoubling where the verb is a topic, triggering a different IS interpretation. Another illustrating example of the latter is (44) from Makhuwa P31.

[III] [**Verb**_{non-finite}] [Cognate_Verb_{finite}]

- (44) Makhuwa P31 (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2019)

Truth focus

o-rampelel-a *ki-naa-rampelel-a*

15INF-swim-FV 1SG-PRS.DJ-swim-FV

[TOP] [FOC]

(Don’t you know how to swim?) ‘I do know how to swim.’ [As for swimming, I DO swim.]

A final major variation relates to the above feature 1: finite verb and non-finite verb need not be lexically identical, but the former can be a generic auxiliary or another type of light verb – a phenomenon independent of other factors. The light-verb counterpart of PrepFocDoubling is PrepFocLight, as illustrated in (45) from Ntandu H16g (East Kongo).

[IV] [**Verb**_{non-finite} Auxiliary~Light_Verb_{finite}]

- (45) Ntandu H16g (East Kongo) (De Kind et al. 2015: 143)

Truth focus

nde yezu mu Ø-zing-a ka-ina

that PN.1 LOC INF-live-FV 1-to_be

[BG] [FOC] [BG]

‘... that Jesus IS (indeed) alive.’ (lit.: ... that Jesus in LIVING is.)

The InFocDoubling pattern has its relevant counterpart in an InFocLight structure. This is shown in (46) from Matengo N13, akin to English *do*-support.

[V] [Light_Verb_{finite} **Verb_{non-finite}**]

- (46) Matengo N13 (Yoneda 2009: 160)

SoA focus

Maria ju-a-tend-aje kú-telek-a

PN.1 1-PST-do-CJ 15INF-cook-FV

[BG] [FOC]

(What did Maria do?) ‘Maria COOKed.’ (lit.: Maria did COOKING.)

While no case in Bantu of a possible counterpart of PrepTopDoubling, specifically PrepTopLight, has come to our knowledge so far, there is nevertheless a third light-verb structure that takes the form of a pseudo-cleft. Since the non-finite verb occurs in a final or postposed position, we use the short label PostFocLight. We only encountered it so far in Shona S10, as illustrated in (47), but it may well exist in more languages.

[VI] [Light_Verb_{finite}] [**Verb_{non-finite}**]

- (47) Shona S10 (Peggy Jacob, field notes)

SoA focus

cha-a-it-a

ne-bhínzi

ku-dzi-bik-a

7:REL-1:DEP:PROX.PST-do-FV with-10.beans ID:15INF-10OBJ-cook-FV

[BG] I > [FOC]

(The woman ate the beans, didn’t she?) ‘She COOKed the beans.’ (lit.: What she did with the beans is COOKING them.)

The PostFocLight pattern is not attested with a PostFocDoubling counterpart and we assume that this is unlikely to exist at all. It would simply be awkward to already use the lexical element in the initial background domain whose meaning is to be focused on, in the subsequent assertion domain – that is, some nonsensical counterpart of (47) like ‘What she *cooked* with the beans is COOKING them.’

Table 6 gives the eight major morphosyntactic types that emerge theoretically from the basic parameters discussed above. Since two are not (yet) attested, the following Table 7 only presents the structure schemas of the six relevant patterns.

The above discussion does not exhaust the variation possible. A full picture requires a more fine-grained analysis for most language-specific cases recorded

Table 6: Dissected predicate constructions for PCF across Bantu

Verb position:	Verb preposing		Verb in-situ	Verb postposing
IS status of verb:	Topic	Focus	Focus ^a	Focus
Verb doublet:	[III] PrepTop-Doubling	[I] PrepFoc-Doubling	[II] InFocDoubling	[Ø] PostFoc-Doubling
<i>Meaning:</i>	‘(As for) verbing, he VERBED.’	‘(It is) VERBING (that) he verbed.’	‘He verbed VERBING.’	‘ What he verbed is VERBING. ’
<i>Example:</i>	<i>Makhuwa</i> (44)	<i>Solongo</i> (40)	<i>Lingala</i> (41)	Ø
Light verb:	[?] PrepTop-Light	[IV] PrepFoc-Light *	[V] InFoc-Light	[VI] PostFoc-Light
<i>Meaning:</i>	‘(As for) verbing, he DID.’	‘(It is) VERBING (that) he did.’	‘He did VERBING.’	‘What he did is VERBING.’
<i>Example:</i>	?	<i>Ntandu</i> (45)	<i>Matengo</i> (46)	<i>Shona</i> (47)
Primary function:	Operator (truth) focus	SoA focus	Various PCF types	SoA focus

Notes: VERB IN UPPERCASE = FOCUS; Ø = not expected to occur; ? = not (yet) attested; * = finite verb is not ‘do, make’.

^aRecall from §1, particularly (8a) from German, that the non-finite verb can in principle also have a background status, which, however, is not clearly attested yet in Bantu.

Table 7: Structure schemas of dissected predicate constructions for PCF in Bantu

No.	Label	Structure schema
[I]	PrepFocDoubling	[Verb _{non-finite} [Cognate_Verb _{finite}]]
[II]	InFocDoubling	[Cognate_Verb _{finite} Verb _{non-finite}]
[III]	PrepTopDoubling	[Verb _{non-finite}] [Cognate_Verb _{finite}]
[IV]	PrepFocLight	[Verb _{non-finite} Auxiliary~Light_Verb _{finite}]
[V]	InFocLight	[Light_Verb _{finite} Verb _{non-finite}]
[VI]	PostFocLight	[Light_Verb _{finite}] [Verb _{non-finite}]

above. Further potentially diverse parameters relate to the formal expression of the IS status of the non-finite verb beyond its mere position (e.g. (supra)-segmental or no marking), to the encoding of the out-of-focus domain(s), or to the possibility of fronting more than just a finite verb.

4.2 Semantic-functional variation

The insufficient information about the last points of possible structural variation leads us to the assessment of the semantic-functional variability in the domain at issue. We restrict the discussion to PrepFocDoubling and PrepTopDoubling, as the situation is more complete here.

On several occasions, we have referred to the considerable difficulties to determine the functional distinction of SoA vs. operator focus in verb preposing structures recruited for PCF. One major reason for this is that PrepFocDoubling and PrepTopDoubling structures that lack segmental focus and/or topic marking look superficially identical. In general, there is a considerable risk of misinterpretation when having to trust short treatments of such cases, which in future calls for a more detailed analysis by language specialists in terms of their prosodic and morphosyntactic properties as well as their semantic-pragmatic effects.

Problems not only surface in Meeussen's description but also in many later works dealing with such structures. An informative case is the contradictory interpretation of an example from Ntandu H16g (East Kongo) provided by Lubasa (1974) in a different thematic context without much discussion. It is repeated in (48) in its original form in the first two lines, followed by our annotation as well as the two different schemas of IS interpretation in terms of PrepFocDoubling as per Gilman (1986) and PrepTopDoubling as per Mufwene (1987).

(48) Ntandu H16g (East Kongo)

'He/she wants to see.' (lit.: see – he wants he sees)

tálá *ká-zól-ele* **ka-talá** (Lubasa 1974: 22)

see 1-want-PRF 1-see

[FOC] [BG] (Gilman 1986: 39)

[TOP] [FOC] (Mufwene 1987: 81, fn. 12)

Mufwene (1987: 81, fn. 12) explains in more detail:

[...], 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 [... above] example from his paper 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). (use of uppercase is ours)

However, the original source of Lubasa (1974) gives (48) in connection with another formally related example under (49) that clearly involves focus fronting. This strongly favours an analysis in terms of PrepFocDoubling, which is in line with the general situation in zone H (see §3.3, cf. also the subject concord *ka*-typical for cleft-like focus structures).

- (49) Ntandu H16g (East Kongo) (Lubasa 1974: 22)

Term focus

mw-ááná ká-túm-ini

1-child 1-send-PRF

[FOC] [BG]

‘It is a child that he/she has sent.’

There is also another reason why certain structures in Bantu and beyond may be hard to pin down in functional terms. That is, a particular construction can start out in a restricted subdomain of PCF (cf. Figure 1 of §1 for the distinction of SoA vs. operator focus) but over time expand in use within the wider PCF domain. As an example, we present in (50) the multifunctional fronting construction in Aja that is used for term focus and, in the case of PrepFocDoubling, all major types of PCF.

- (50) Aja [Gbe, Benue-Kwa, Niger-Congo] (Fiedler 2010)

[FOC] (< I) [BG]

- a. Term focus

āyú (yí) é qù

bean FOC 3SG eat

‘She ate BEANS [not ...].’

- b. SoA focus

óò, qà (yí) é qà

no! cook FOC 3SG cook

(The woman ate the beans.) ‘No, she COOKED them.’

c. Truth focus

óò, *nyó* (yí) *é nyóvi*
 no! be_beautiful FOC 3SG be_beautiful
 (She is not beautiful.) ‘No, she IS beautiful.’

d. TA focus

óò, *xó-i* *á xó-i*
 no! hit-3SG.OBJ 3SG.FUT hit-3SG.OBJ
 (The woman has hit Peter.) ‘No, she WILL hit him.’

While a conclusive identification of the PCF type remains a central challenge regarding the semantic-functional variation of the structural domain, we have also described above other possible and recurring meaning changes that should be taken into account. We refer in particular to the grammaticalisation of PCF into the marking of progressive that subsequently can progress further into the marking of future or general imperfective. This development was dealt with extensively by Güldemann (2003) and the above data add several more cases to the initial data set.

We try to capture the major functional changes of preposed verb doubling in Bantu in the semantic map of Figure 2. As can be expected in grammaticalisation, the general historical trajectory goes from pragmatics to semantics. The data available to us do not clarify whether operator focus can also directly develop into progressive. Further research is also needed regarding other semantic readings of the structure, for example, of intensity.

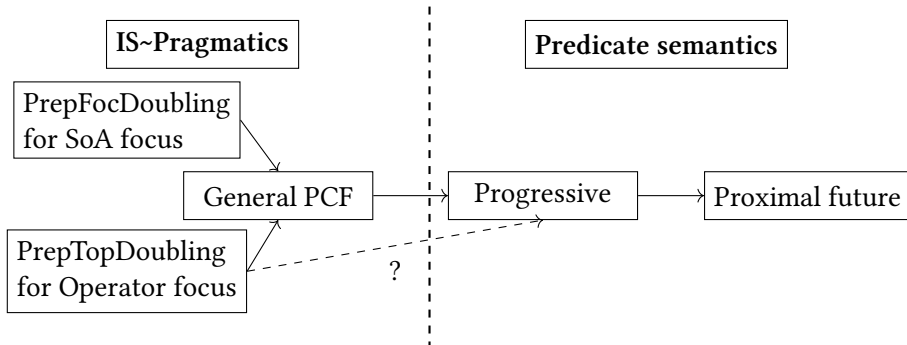


Figure 2: Semantic map for verb preposing constructions across Bantu

5 Historical assessment and conclusions

The above synchronic survey attests to the considerably increased documentation and understanding of infinitive fronting that was described only briefly and hence quite vaguely by Meeussen (1967) under the label “advance verb construction”. Its historical assessment may still be partly premature due to an incomplete knowledge about the full distribution of this family of constructions across the Bantu area. Nevertheless, we offer here a first, albeit preliminary, attempt on the basis of the above data and some cross-linguistic considerations.

A first observation can be made regarding the alternation of the position of the non-finite verb. Extra-clausal verb postposing is very rare, followed by the occasional but widely distributed option with the verb in in-situ position, while preposing is recurrent and very widespread (see Appendix A). However, in north-western Bantu and Bantoid (cf. §3.1), in-situ position and preposing appear to be equally prominent in the form of InFocDoubling and PrepFocDoubling, which matches the overall picture in the adjacent parts of the Macro-Sudan Belt. PrepFocDoubling only comes to predominate clearly across Bantu further away from the family homeland. We interpret this biased distribution of the two patterns to reflect the early coexistence of both with a later recurrent shift from the syntactically simple InFocDoubling to the more marked PrepFocDoubling. The cases of the former further south(east), including the variation in the form of the non-finite verb, could reflect either its long existence and hence sporadic retention in Narrow Bantu or its structurally latent presence connected to its universal availability. Regarding a possibly old age, it is worth considering that the quite specific pattern of InFocDoubling for additive SoA focus and other derived functions involving a focus-sensitive marker preceding the non-finite verb, such as comitative **na* in Narrow Bantu, has a wide albeit disperse geographical distribution. It occurs in the Nigeria-Cameroon border zone, for instance in the Ekoid Bantu language Ejagham (Watters 1981: 246–247), it also exists in the interlacustrine Bantu zone J languages (see §3.2), and it turns up again in the southernmost parts of the continent with Zulu (Doke 1927: 367; Michel Lafon, p.c.).¹² There is yet another possible argument for InFocDoubling being an old retention. In footnote 1 we mentioned another structure: [INFINITIVE COGNATE_RELATIVE_VERB]. Its equivalent in English is something like “VERBing that I verb” and thus

¹²It is impossible to say whether this represents parallel independent innovation or a direct link between Nguni S40 and Great Lakes Bantu J. The latter is certainly possible, as the two groups display other affinities regarding both linguistic and non-linguistic traits (cf. Güldemann 1996: 112–113; 1999a: 77; 1999b: 175, fn. 10; 2019: 299–300).

a nominalisation directly derived from the InFocDoubling pattern. The observation that this derived structure exists in at least zones B, C, H and P is compatible with the assumption that its base pattern was also present in early clades of the family tree.

Regarding another recurrent variation within PrepFocDoubling, that between a post-infinitive and a clause-initial S/A constituent or, in our terms, between initial and preverbal PrepFocDoubling, we more firmly suggest a historical change from the former to the latter. The shift of the S/A position is associated with a shift away from a bisected cleft-like to a monoclausal syntactic structure, tightening the bond between the two verbs and re-establishing a more compact predicate constituent. This formal shift correlates in an expected way with the functional change from various PCF types within the IS domain to the encoding of such temporal meanings as progressive and proximal future pertaining to predicate semantics, as observed by Güldemann (2003) and De Kind et al. (2015). It would be useful to test systematically whether initial PrepFocDoubling never develops these semantic readings.

Summarising the above observations, we propose two historical clines in (a) and (b), which link the situation in the modern languages to PB. This clade is conceived here as by Guthrie, Meeussen and their contemporaries and is thus a little lower than the ancestral node 0 in the Bantu family tree of Grollemund et al. (2015), which includes Grassfields Bantu.

- (a) **InFocDoubling* > **initial PrepFocDoubling* > preverbal PrepFocDoubling
- (b) **SoA focus* > general PCF > progressive > proximal future

The states marked in italics are proposed as PB reconstructions (and possibly of earlier ancestral stages). The cline under (a) presents the formal and the one under (b) the corresponding functional development. As InFocDoubling and initial PrepFocDoubling recurrently coexist in languages, both can be ascribed plausibly to PB.

An important issue that still remains unclear is whether PB possessed in addition to PrepFocDoubling also PrepTopDoubling, which Meeussen's (1967) admittedly indeterminate account wants to suggest. While several instances of this construction exist in Bantu and are geographically quite widespread, various caveats cast doubt on reconstructing it for PB. One is that some cases of preposed verb doubling with an operator rather than SoA focus reading could be instances of a construction conveying today generalised PCF but having emerged from a PrepFocDoubling structure that grammaticalised beyond narrow SoA focus. Furthermore, the clearer cases of PrepTopDoubling have an overall eastern Bantu

distribution further away from the north-western homeland and may thus have appeared later. Finally, one needs to consider that the construction as such recurs cross-linguistically, so that it is well possible that such cases reflect multiple independent events of innovation. Opting for the latter scenario, Meeussen’s (1967) reconstruction would have to be qualified regarding its semantic-functional characterisation. Given his intimate knowledge of Bantu one wonders in fact which particular Bantu language(s) steered him to propose the quite specific IS reading in terms of PrepTopDoubling.

A more general synchronic and diachronic question that is worthwhile investigating in the future concerns the important role of the structural domain at issue for the marking of PCF and the dynamics holding between different relevant constructions, including their diverse functional effects. For one thing, this concerns languages described above that have recourse to more than one of the six patterns listed in §4.1 (see Appendix A). It also raises the issue of the relationship between PCF-sensitive predicate partition and other relevant marking strategies, in particular the conjoint/disjoint alternation that is equally pervasive in the Bantu family (cf. e.g. Güldemann 1996: §4.3; van der Wal & Hyman 2017). Two preliminary observations emerge in this respect from the above survey. First, the conjoint/disjoint alternation in the traditional narrow sense of segmental and/or supra-segmental marking pertaining to simplex verb forms appears to have a more restricted geographical distribution than the syntactic complex dealt with here. Second, there are relatively few languages like Rwanda JD61, Matengo N13, Makhuwa P31, and Zulu S42 that possess both basic strategies. Future research must show whether these findings can be substantiated and, if so, how they can be explained.

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Abbreviations

ADD_F	additive focus	M	masculine
ADJ	adjective	NEG	negative
AUG	augment	NOM	nominalisation
AUX	auxiliary	OBJ	object
BG	background	PASS	passive
CJ	conjoint	PCF	predicate-centred focus
CONV	converb	PERS	persistive
COP	copula	PFV	perfective
DEF	definite	PL	plural
DEM	demonstrative	PN	proper name
DEP	dependent	POSS	possessive
DJ	disjoint	PRF	perfect
EMPH	emphatic	PRO	pronoun
FOC	(non-specific) focus	PROG	progressive
FUT	future	PROX	proximal
FV	default final vowel	PRS	present
GEN	genitive	PST	past
HAB	habitual	REL	relative
I	index	RES_F	restrictive focus
IAN	inanimate	S/A	subject/agent (as semantic role)
ID	identification	SBJ	subject (as grammatical relation)
INE	inessive	SBJV	subjunctive
INF	infinitive	SG	singular
IPFV	imperfective		
LOC	locative		

SoA	state-of-affairs	TOP	topic
STAT	stative	V	verb
TA(M)	tense/aspect/(modality)	VN	verbal noun

Arabic number numbers not followed by SG/PL indicate noun classes

<, > mark the scope direction of IS indices

Appendix A Predicate partition and PCF in (Narrow) Bantu

Variety	II	I	III	V	IV	VI	Source(s)
Ngiemboon [GF]	✓						Ibrahim (2007)
Ngwe [GF]	✓						Nkemnji (1995)
Limbum [GF]	✓	✓					Ndamsah (2012)
Basaa A43a	✓	✓					Bassong (2014)
Tuki A601		✓					Biloa (1997)
Makaa A83	✓						Ibrahim (2007; 2010)
Punu B43		✓					Hadermann (1996)
Nzebi B52		✓					Hadermann (1996)
Nsong B85d		✓	?				Koni Muluwa & Bostoen (2014; p.c.)
Lingala C30B	✓						Mufwene (1987); Meeuwis (2013), Joseph Koni Muluwa (p.c.)
Kituba H10A	✓						Joseph Koni Muluwa (p.c.), Mufwene (2013)
Kamba H112A		✓					Hadermann (1996)
Vili H12L		✓					De Kind et al. (2015)
Sundi H131K		✓			✓		Hadermann (1996); De Kind et al. (2015)
Kongo H16		✓			✓		Hadermann (1996); De Kind et al. (2015)
Kuyu E51		✓					Bynoe-Andriolo & Yillah (1975); Morimoto (2017)
Tharaka E54		✓					Abels & Muriungi (2008)
Rangi F33					✓		Gibson (2012; 2019)
Mbugwe F34					✓		Roth & Gibson (2019)

Variety	II	I	III	V	IV	VI	Source(s)
Rwanda JD61			✓				Jean Paul Ngoboka (p.c.)
Nkore-Kiga JE13/14	✓		✓				Taylor (1985); Asimwe & van der Wal (2019)
Ganda JE15	✓	✓					Jenneke van der Wal & Saudah Namyalo (p.c.)
Soga JE16	✓		✓				Nabirye (2016)
Ngoreme JE401					✓		Roth & Gibson (2019)
Gusii JE42					✓		Whiteley (1960)
Kuria JE43		?			✓		Sillery (1936); Landman & Ranero (2014)
Simbiti JE431					✓		Roth & Gibson (2019)
Luvala K14		?	?				Horton (1949)
Kwangali K33		?	?				Westphal (1958)
Manyo K332		?	?				Möhlig (1967, p.c.)
Mbukushu K333		?	?				Fisch (1977)
Fwe K402		✓	?				Gunnink (2016, 2018, 2019, p.c.)
Totela K41(1)		✓					Thera M. Crane (p.c.)
Ndendeule N101				✓			Tom Güldemann (field notes)
Ngoni of Tanz. N12				✓			Tom Güldemann (field notes)
Matengo N13				✓			Yoneda (2009)
Yao P21				✓			Hetherwick (1902); Sanderson (1922)
Makhuwa P31			✓				Asimwe & van der Wal (2019)
Shona S10						✓	Peggy Jacob (field notes)
Zulu S42	✓						Doke (1927), Michel Lafon (p.c.)
Copi S61	✓	✓	?				Asimwe & van der Wal (2019)

Abbreviations used in this table: GF = Grassfields; ✓ = present; ? = possibly present; I = PrepFocDoubling; II = InFocDoubling; III = PrepTopDoubling; IV = PrepFocLight; V = InFocLight; VI = PostFocLight.

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