

Predicate focus in embedded clauses in Kisubi

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In this study, we document focus marking in the Bantu language Kisubi, paying particular attention to the *predicate focus* (PF) marker *ni-*. As shown in (1)-(3), Kisubi marks PF with *ni-*, which otherwise has copular and focus uses. This polysemy is not uncommon among Bantu languages, (Güldemann, 2003) a.m.o.

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| (1) <i>ni-a-téka</i>
PF-1SM-cook
'S/he is cooking.' | (2) <i>ogu ni John</i>
this COP John
'This is John.' | (3) <i>ni John!</i>
FOC John
'It's John!' |
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In our study, we provide the first overview of focus marking in Kisubi, paying particular attention to the factors that influence *ni-* as a marker of predicate focus. We document that, unlike some systems, *ni-V* is not sensitive to VP-internal constituency or clause-finality. Rather, its distribution is determined solely by whether the predicate is in focus.

Restrictions. It is commonly found that the use of the PF marker is restricted in various ways. This is true of Kisubi as well. We highlight the distribution of PF in (selected) embedded clauses, showing that there is a strict correlation between complementizer and PF marking: embedded clauses headed by *ngu* require a PF marker on the subordinate verb (when possible), while embedded clauses headed by *ki* (the short form of *nkikwo*) bar *ni-* entirely. Examples (4) and (5) are truth-conditionally equivalent.

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| (4) <i>Jane ya-n-gambila ngu *(ni-)a-teka</i>
Jane 1SM-1SG.OM-tell COMP FOC-1SM-cook
'Jane told me that she cooks.' | (5) <i>Jane ya-n-gambila ki (*ni-)a-teka</i>
Jane 1SM-1SG.OM-tell COMP FOC-1SM-cook
'Jane told me that she cooks.' |
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This pattern is replicated in other languages, e.g., Kinyarwanda (Ngoboka and Zeller, 2016), where the disjoint (i.e., PF-marked) form of the verb is barred in embedded *kó*-clauses, but possible in *ngo*-clauses. We explore what explains the correlation between a verbal marker of focus and the left periphery of the clause in Kisubi.

Towards an analysis. A plausible explanation for the restriction on PF-marking in *ki*-clauses is that such clauses are smaller, lacking the necessary projections related to information structure that *ni-* relies on. This idea is implemented in Van der Wal (2014), who shows for Makhuwa that *situative* (temporally dependent) adverbial clauses block PF-marking. We tentatively suggest a similar analysis for *ki*-clauses in Kisubi: they are *situative*, in that they are dependent on a main-clause situation. However, we also point out some empirical problems with this approach, most notably, there is no other evidence that *ki*-clauses are in any way smaller than *ngu*-clauses. We discuss solutions to this issue.