

1. Introduction. This presentation concerns *ni*-initial constructions, often called “clefts”, from Kirundi (Great Lakes Bantu). I will show that the movement of the post-*ni*, or focused, constituent is derived via \bar{A} -movement (for identificational focus, [É. Kiss 1998](#)) illustrated in (1).

- (1) Ni Yohaáni a-ri u-mw-ígísha
 NI 1.Yohani 1-COP AUG-1-teacher
 ‘It’s John who is the teacher.’

In this presentation, I present syntactic evidence suggesting that forms like (1) are not bi-clausal clefts in Kirundi, as has been claimed previously ([Lafkioui et al. 2016](#); [Edenmyr 2001](#); [Ndayiragije 1999](#): p. 407). Rather, they are mono-clausal \bar{A} -movement constructions: *ni* and the XP following it are part of the left-periphery in the sense of [Rizzi \(1997\)](#). This data sheds light on the Kirundi reflex of what has been a persistent puzzle in the analysis of analogous constructions across Bantu languages (e.g. [Schwarz 2003](#); [Zentz 2016](#)). Uncited data is from elicitation with four speakers of Kirundi from January 2022.

2. Mono-clausal \bar{A} -constructions with *ni*. I present several island-sensitivity and reconstruction diagnostics, which confirm that the post-*ni* constituent is derived by \bar{A} -movement to that position. To illustrate, (2a) exemplifies an adjunct island and (2b) exemplifies Condition C reconstruction.

- (2) a. * Ni u-mu-kâte [n-a-gīy-e kw’ isoko [kubēra n-kenér-ye ___]].
 FOC AUG-3-bread 1SG.SBJ-PST-walk.REL-PFV to store because 1SG-need.REL-PFV
 ‘It’s bread that I went to the store because I need.’
 b. Ni Yohaáni₁ [*pro*_{*1/2} a-a-vúg-ye kó Petero a-a-bōn-ye ___]
 FOC 1.Yohani *pro* 1SG-see.REL-PFV C 1.Petero 1SG-PST-see-PFV
 ‘It’s Yohani₁ who he_{*1/2} said Peter saw.’

3. Analysis I. The reconstruction phenomena suggest that the \bar{A} -moved constituent is directly extracted from the clause ([Torrence 2013](#)), as illustrated in (4). Several authors observe that the remnant (TP in 4) shares properties with relative clauses (RCs), and take this to mean that *ni* is a copula selecting a RC complement ([Lafkioui et al. 2016](#); [Ndayiragije 1999](#); see [Zentz 2016](#) for an overview). I present two observations that call the remnant as RC view into question: FIRSTLY, the properties attributed to RCs are in fact more generally shared by non-matrix clauses. The remnant has a “relative tone” melody, takes the embedded form of negation, and bans disjoint *-ra-* marking; these are shared with RCs, embedded clauses, and *ni*-constructions.

SECONDLY, the post-*ni* position can be filled with elements that are otherwise impossible in the head of a RC, including adverbials (3a) and adjunct clauses (3b):

- (3) a. Ariko ni keénshi tu-ya-reéng-a
 but NI often 1PL.SBJ-PRES-6OBJ-violate-FV.REL
 ‘But it is often that we violate them (the laws)’
 ([Lafkioui et al. 2016](#): p. 82)
 b. Ni kubēra n-kenéy-e u-mu-kâté n-a-gīy-e kw’ i-sokó
 NI because 1SG.SBJ-need-PFV AUG-3-bread 1SG.SBJ-go.REL-PFV to AUG-5.store
 ‘It’s because I needed bread that I went to the store.’

Together, these data call for a non-RC analysis of the remnant, where the preposed constituent is in the left-periphery of the sole clause. A persistent problem for applying a FocP analysis ([Rizzi 1997](#)) to Bantu languages is word-order, where *ni* precedes the preposed constituent, and the strong link between this species of \bar{A} -movement and the head *ni* instantiates. I propose a two-headed approach ([Abels and Muriungi 2008](#); [Wasike 2007](#)): *ni* is a Foc⁰ which raises to a Pred⁰ immediately dominating FocP. Crucially, no additional clausal structure dominates PredP.

- (4) (Topic) [_{PredP} *ni* [_{FocP} Yohani₁ Foc [_{TP} *pro* say [_{CP} *ko* Peter see *t*₁]]]]

5. Conclusions and Extensions. This presentation shows that the \bar{A} -preposing construction involving *ni* is a monoclausal construction, rather than a biclausal cleft. If this hypothesis is on the right track, it has established a case for viewing the structure around *ni* in Kirundi as part of the functional material in the “higher” domain of clausal structure, rather than an independent and therefore highly defective clause.

References

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