

LLA appendix: Comparative BaSIS word order datasheet

Parameters

1. **Is there a dedicated focus position?**

1.1. **Do internal arguments need to be in a particular position when focused?**

Definition: a linear position in which elements are focused (and possibly focus can be elsewhere in the clause).

Checkpoints:

- a. Can the recipient and the theme be questioned in their canonical position?
[example: if a focus-neutral ditransitive has V REC TH order, can we ask both ‘give who book’ and ‘give teacher what’?]
- b. Can the recipient and the theme be an answer to a wh question in their canonical positions?
[example: if a focus neutral ditransitive has V REC TH order, can the questions ‘who did you give a hat?’ and ‘what did you give Jane?’ both be answered as ‘give Jane hat’?]
- c. Can the recipient and the theme be modified by ‘only’ in their canonical positions?
→ answering ‘yes’ suggests that there is no dedicated focus position

1.2. **Do adverbs need to be in a particular position when focused?**

Checkpoints:

- d. Can non-arguments be questioned in their canonical position?
[example: if you normally say ‘they played football in the park’, can you ask ‘they played football where?’?]
- e. Can non-arguments be the answer to a wh question in their canonical position?
- f. Can non-arguments that are modified by ‘only’ occur in their canonical position?
→ answering ‘yes’ suggests that there is no dedicated focus position

1.3. **Can the external and internal argument be focused in the same position?**

Checkpoints:

- g. Can the external argument (EA) be questioned in the same position as internal arguments (IA)?
[example 1: IAs can be questioned in immediate postverbal position, and the EA can also be questioned postverbally in a VS subject inversion construction.
example 2: IAs are questioned in immediate before verb position or in a cleft, and the EA can also be focused in those two ways]
- h. Can the EA as the answer to a wh question occupy the same position as the IA in the answer to a wh question?
- i. Can the EA modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position(s) as the IA with ‘only’?
→ answering ‘yes’ suggests that external and internal argument behave similarly, i.e. have less influence on the word order than information structure.
→ answering ‘no’ suggests that there is a subject-object asymmetry for focus.

2. Is there a dedicated topic position?

Definition: a linear position in which elements are topical (and possibly topics can be elsewhere in the clause). A topical subject is defined here as the subject in a categorical sentence with predicate focus (Lambrecht 1994).

Checkpoints (for otherwise unmarked clauses, i.e. no cleft):

- a. Can a subject¹ interrogative phrase occur in the same position as a topical subject?
 - b. Can the subject as answer to a subject wh question occur in the same position as a topical subject?
 - c. Can a subject modified by 'only' occur in the same position as a topical subject?
 - d. Can a subject in athetic sentence occur in the same position as a subject in a categorical sentence? (check for intransitive as well as transitive)
- answering 'yes' suggests that there is no dedicated topic position
- e. Are topical arguments typically or preferably expressed in a preverbal position? (think of left-dislocation and locative inversion)
- answering 'yes' suggests that there is a preverbal topic position.

¹ 'Subject' here is understood as the single argument of an intransitive predicate, or the agent of a transitive predicate – not as the argument triggering subject marking.

		IS	GR	Tunen	Kukuya	Kĩtharaka	Kirundi	Rukiga	Kinyakyusa	Makhuwa	Copi	Changana
1	a	N	Y	N (1)(2) (3)	N (33)(34)	Y (51)(52) (53)	N (87)(88) (89)	N (111)(112)	Y (141)(142)	N (170)	Y (188)(189)	Y (216)(217) (218)
	b	N	Y	Y/ N (4)(5) (6)(7)	Y (35)(36)	Y (54)	Error! Reference source not found.	Y (113)	Y (143)	N (171)	Y (190)(191)	Y (219)(220)
	c	N	Y	N (8)(9) (10)(11) (12)(13)	Y (37)	Y (55)(56)	N (92)(93)	Y (114)	Y (144)	Y/ N (172)(173)	Y (192)(193)	Y (221)(222)
	d	N	Y	Y (14)(15)	Y/N (38)(39)	Y (57)(58) (59)	Y/N 0	Y/N (115)(116) (117)	Y (145)(146) (147)(148)	N (174)(175)	Y? (194)(195) (196)	Y/N (223)(224)
	e	N	Y	Y (14)(15)	Y (40)	Y (60)(61)	Y (95)	Y (118)	Y (149)(150)	N	-	-
	f	N	Y	Y (16)(16)	Y (41)	Y (62)(63)	Y (96)	Y (119)	Y (151)	N (176)	-	-
	g	Y	N	N (17)(18) (19)	Y (42)	Y (64)(65) (66)(67)	Y (97)	Y (120)(121) (122)	Y (152)(153) (154)	N (177)(178)	Y (199)(200) (201)	Y (225)
h	Y	N	N (20)(21) (22)	Y (43)(44)	Y (68)(69) (70)(71)	Y (98)0	Y (123)(124) (125)	Y (155)(156)	N (179)(180)	Y (199)(200) (201)	Y? (226)(227)	
i	Y	N	N (23)(24)	Y? (45)	Y (72)(73)	Y (100)	Y (126)	Y (155)(156)	N (179)(180)	Y (202)(203) (204)(205) (206)	Y (228)	
2	a	N	Y	Y (25)(26)	Y* (46)	N (77)(78) (79)	N (102)(103)	N (127)	Y? (157)(158) (159)	N (181)	N (207)	N (229)(230)
	b	N	Y	N (27)(27)	Y* (47)	N (80)0	N (104)(105) (106)(107)	N (128)	Y (160)(161)	N (182)	N (208)	N (231)(232)

c	N	Y	Y	(28)	Y*	(48)	N	(81)(82)	N	(108)	N	(129)	Y	(162)(163) (164)	N	(183)(184)	N?	(209)(210) (211)(212) (213)	N	(233)
d	N	Y	Y	(29)(30)	Y	(49)	Y	(83)(84) (85)	Y	(109)	Y	(130)(131) (132)	Y	(165)(166) (167)	N	(185)(186)	-		-	
e	Y	N	Y	(31)(32)	Y	(50)	Y	(86)	Y	(110)	Y	(133)(134) (135)(136) (137)(138) (139)(140)	Y	(168)(169)	Y	(187)	Y	(214)(215)	Y	(234)(235)

Tunen

Tunen (also known as Nen; Guthrie code A44; ISO 639-3/OLAC code tvu) is spoken in the Northwest of the Bantu area, in and around the towns of Ndikiniméki and Douala in central and littoral Cameroon. The latest estimates available are of 40,000 speakers (Eberhard et al. 2022, citing Mbongue 1997), with four dialects: Tɔ́bóányɛ (spoken in Ndikinimeki and parts of Nitoukou regions), Fombo (Yingui and parts of Ndikiniméki), Hiliŋ (Nitoukou), and Ndogtuna (Yingui and parts of Yabassi). Tɔ́bóányɛ is the standard dialect in Ndikiniméki town and the dialect on which previous literature on Tunen has been based. Data from this paper are from fieldwork conducted by the first author in Ndikiniméki and Yaoundé in Mar-Jun 2019 and Oct 2021-Feb 2022, with 8 speakers (3 female, 5 male) aged between 30 and 70. Consultant EO speaks the Hiliŋ dialect, while all other consultants speak the Tɔ́bóányɛ dialect.

Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons & Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2022. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Twenty-fifth edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>.

Mbongue, Joseph. 1997. *Macro-Approach of the Tunen Bible Translation: An Application of the Key Biblical Technical Termini*. Peter Lang, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Volume 287.

Conclusions

The pattern shows that Tunen word order is not very dependent on information structure and is more influenced by grammatical roles. There is no strong evidence for a dedicated focus position and asymmetries are found between subjects and non-subjects, suggesting that grammatical roles are more important than information structure in determining word order.

1. Is there a dedicated focus position?

1.a. Can the recipient and theme be questioned in their canonical position?

N; recipients and themes questions are formed by clefting or fronting.

NB: The canonical order for a ditransitive is S-Recip-Theme-V.

Recipient object of ditransitive cannot be questioned in-situ:

- (1) a. òwàné á múéndú ándɔ imíté túmbi?
/ɔ anɛ á mɔ-əndu a-ndɔ ɛ-mitɔ tumbiə/
PREP who FOC 1-woman 1SM-PRS 7-calebasse return
'À qui remet la femme la calebasse?'
'Who did the woman return the calebasse to?'
- b. *Muəndú ándɔ ɔwáné imíté túmbi ?
/mɔ-əndu a-ndɔ ɔ anɛ ɛ-mitɔ tumbiə/
1-woman 1SM-PRS PREP who 7-calebasse return
Int: 'À qui remet la femme la calebasse?'
Int: 'Who did the woman return the calebasse to?'

Theme object of ditransitive cannot be questioned in-situ:

- (2) a. Yaté wá[†]táná muəndú anó ɔsókó indi eé?
/yate watana muəndu a-nɔ ɔsókɔ indiə ee/
1SM-PRS 1SM-ACC 1SM-PRG 1SM-PRG 1SM-PRG 1SM-PRG 1SM-PRG 1SM-PRG

what 1.DEM.PROX 1.woman 1SM- PST1 other give Q
 ‘Qu’est-ce que cette femme vient de donner à l’autre?’
 ‘What did this woman (just) give to the other?’

- b. *Wá⁺ táná muəndú anó əsókó yaté indi eé?
 /watana muəndu a-nə əsəkə yate indiə ee/
 1.DEM.PROX 1.woman 1SM-PST1 other what give Q
 Int: ‘Qu’est-ce que cette femme vient de donner à l’autre?’
 Int: ‘What did this woman (just) give to the other?’

Theme object of transitive cannot be questioned in-situ:

- (3) a. Yaté óndə taləaka nəofəne eé?
 /yate ɔ-ndə taləaka nəofəne e/
 what 2SG.SM-PRS cook.DUR today Q
 ‘Qu’est-ce que tu vas cuisiner aujourd’hui?’
 ‘What are you going to cook today?’

- b. *óndə yaté taləaka nəofəne eé?
 /ɔ-ndə yate taləaka nəofəne e/
 2SG.SM-PRS what cook.DUR today Q
 Int: ‘Qu’est-ce que tu vas cuisiner aujourd’hui?’
 Int: ‘What are you going to cook today?’

1.b. Can the recipient and the theme be an answer to a wh question in their canonical positions?

Y for theme, N for recipient.

Focussed theme objects in a ditransitive can be left in their canonical position, but focussed recipient objects cannot:

- (4) Muəndú ándə məná imítə tumbi.
 /mə-əndu a-ndə mən-na ɛ-mitə tumbiə/
 1-woman 1SM-PRS 1-child 7-calebasse return
 ‘La femme remet le calebasse à l’enfant.’
 ‘The woman returns the calebasse to the child.’

Good in context: ‘What did the woman return to the child?’ (focus=theme)

Bad in context: ‘Who did the woman return the calebasse to?’ (focus = recip)

NB: One consultant rejected (4) in the context of focus on the theme (as well as in the recipient focus context).

- (5) Context: A to (xa) above [yaté wá⁺ táná mùəndú ànó əsókó indi eé?]
 Anó əsókó hetété indi.
 /a-nə əsəkə hɛ-tɛtɛ indiə/
 1SM-PST1 other 19-gourd give
 ‘Elle donne [une gourde]_{FOC} à l’autre.’
 ‘She just gave [a gourd]_{FOC} to the other (woman).’

For focussed recipients of a ditransitive, a cleft is typically used, and a postverbal strategy is also possible.

- (6) Context: ‘Did we give the presents to Shania or was it to Hamida?’
 Á Shánia á tóna máhánena índí.
 /á Shánia á tɔ-ná ma-hánena índiə/
 FOC Shania FOC 1PL.SM-PST2 6-present give
 ‘C’était à Shania que nous avons donné les cadeaux.’
 ‘It was Shania that we gave the presents to.’, ‘We gave the presents to Shania.’

Clefts are also possible for focussed theme objects:

- (7) Context: ‘Was it a book or was it fruits that we gave to Shania?’
 (*á) ekálate á tóna índí a Shánia.
 /(*á) ε-kálate á tɔ-ná índiə ɔ Shánia/
 FOC 7-book FOC 1PL.SM-PST2 give PREP Shania
 ‘C’est un livre que nous avons donné à Shania.’
 ‘It was a book we gave to Shania.’, ‘We gave Shania a book.’, ‘What we gave Shania was a book.’

NB: The *á* is homophonous with the focus marker *á* but may be functioning as a preposition in this context (cf *á* preceding the recipient in (6)), possibly borrowed from French.

1.c. Can the recipient and the theme be modified by ‘only’ in their canonical positions?
 N.

Recipients and theme objects modified by ‘only’ cannot be in-situ/preverbal and are typically clefted.

Theme objects modified by ‘only’ cannot be in their canonical position:

- (8) a. ómaná imíté á aná mɔná túmbi.
 /ómaná ε-míté á a-ná mɔ-ná túmbiə/
 only 7-calebasse FOC 1SM-PST2 1-child return
 ‘C’est seulement une calebasse qu’elle a donné à l’enfant.’
 ‘She only gave [a calebasse]_{FOC} to the child.’
- b. *Anó mɔná ómaná (á) imíté túmbi.
 /a-nó mɔ-ná ómaná á ε-míté túmbiə/
 1SM-PST1 1-child only FOC 7-calebasse return
 Int: ‘C’est seulement une calebasse qu’elle a donné à l’enfant.’
 Int: ‘She only gave [a calebasse]_{FOC} to the child.’

Recipient objects modified by ‘only’ cannot be in their canonical position:

- (9) a. ómaná á Ilísabet aná hetété indi.
 /ómaná á Ilísabet a-ná he-tété índiə/
 only FOC Elisabeth 1SM-PST2 19-gourd give
 ‘C’est uniquement à Elisabeth qu’elle a donné la gourde.’
 ‘She only gave the gourd [to Elisabeth]_{FOC}.’

- b. *Muəndú ándə ómaná á məná imíté túmbi.
 /mə-əndú a-ndə ómaná á məná ε-míté túmbiə/
 1-woman 1SM-PRS only FOC 1-child 7-calebasse return
 Int: ‘C’est seulement à l’enfant qu’elle remet le calebasse.’
 Int: ‘She only returns the caleasse [to the child]_{FOC}.’ [JO]

Recipient objects modified by ‘only’ also cannot be in what would be an IBV position:

- (10) *Anó hetété ómaná á Ilisabet indi.
 /a-nó hε-tété ómaná á Ilisabete índiə/
 1SM-PST1 19-gourd only FOC Elisabeth give
 Int: ‘C’est uniquement à Elisabeth qu’elle a donné la gourde.’
 Int: ‘She only gave the gourd [to Elisabeth]_{FOC}.’

An alternative strategy to fronting the constituent modified by ‘only’ is for it to be postverbal, in which case the focus marker/copula á is obligatory (though it may be obscured by vowel elision):

Postverbal theme object modified by ‘only’:

- (11) Context: ‘Do you understand Tunen?’
 Bóə, méndə ókə óman(á) á Feléndz̃(ε).
 /bóə, mε-ndə ókə ómaná á Feléndz̃ε/
 no, 1SG.SM-PRS understand only FOC French
 ‘Non, je ne comprends seulement du français.’
 ‘No, I only understand French.’
- (12) Baná kíáká ómaná nekəsona némote. Báηə mómoté kíáka.
 /ba-ná kéá-aka ómaná ne-kəsona ne-moté bá-ηə mómoté kéá-aka/
 2-child do-DUR only 5-exam 5-one 2-FUT 6-one do-DUR
 ‘Les enfants ont fait seulement un examen. Ils vont faire d’autres.’
 ‘The children have only done one exam. They will do others.’

Postverbal recipient object modified by ‘only’:

- (13) Anó hetété indi ómaná á Ilisabet.
 /a-nó hε-tété índiə ómaná á Ilisabete/
 1SM-PST1 19-gourd give only FOC Elisabeth
 ‘C’est uniquement à Elisabeth qu’elle a donné la gourde.’
 ‘She only gave the gourd to Elisabeth.’

It seems that the fronted strategy is much more common than the postverbal option.

1.d. Can non-arguments be questioned in their canonical position?

Y

Canonical word order = SOVX; adverbs can be questioned in this position (or ex situ):

- (14) Question: Aka yáyéá miímə lúméké hóni(ə) eé?
 /a-ka yáyéá miímə lúmə-aka hóniə eé/

1SM-PST3 POSS.PRO.1 house build-DUR where Q
 ‘Où est-qu’il a construit sa maison?’
 ‘Where did he build his house?’

Answer: Aka yayéá miímə lúmákə ɔ iNdíki (naánekol).
 /a-ka yayéá miímə lúmó-aka ɔ
 1SM-PST3 POSS.PRO.1 house build-DUR PREP
 iNdíki naánekola/
 Ndiki yesterday
 ‘Il a construit sa maison à Ndiki (hier).’
 ‘He built his house (yesterday) in Ndiki.’

Evidence that this is the in-situ position for non-arguments rather than an immediate after verb (IAV) focus position is given below, where the question phrase appears after an adverb *μνηεηα* ‘much’.

(15) Question: εμόά γένα βόμóκó μνηεηα ɔ γόνιό ikúlí eé?
 /ε-μόά γέ-νά βόμó-aka μνηεηα ɔ γόνιό
 7-dog 7SM-PST2 bark-DUR much PREP which
 ε-κúlí eé/
 7-time Q
 ‘Quand a le chien beaucoup aboyé?’
 ‘When did the dog bark a lot?’

Answer: εμόά γένα βόμóκó μνηεηα νέβύλύ.
 /ε-μόά γέ-νά βόμó-aka μνηεηα νε-βύλύ
 7-dog 7SM-PST2 bark-DUR much 5-night
 ‘Le chien a beaucoup aboyé pendant la nuit.’
 ‘The dog barked a lot at night.’

1.e. Can non-arguments be the answer to a wh question in their canonical position?

Y

See the answers to (14) and (15) above.

1.f. Can non-arguments that are modified by ‘only’ occur in their canonical position?

Y

The canonical position of non-arguments is postverbal (SOVX); they can be modified by ‘only’ without a change of word order:

(16) Méndə Tunəni ókə ómaná té⁺té.
 /mɛ́-ndə tu-nəni ókə ómaná tɛ́tɛ́a/
 1SG.SM-PRS 13-Nen understand only little
 ‘Je comprends seulement un peu du Tunen.’
 ‘I only understand a little Tunen.’

[JO 806]

1.g. Can the external argument (EA) be questioned in the same position as internal arguments (IA)?

N

Objects and non-arguments can be fronted ex-situ (17), or clefted ex-situ, while subjects only seem to be possible clefted ex-situ. It is hard to see whether subject wh questions are in-situ, but there is evidence that subject wh questions are ex-situ clefts (18).

(17) Yaté óndó tále neófén(ε)?
 /yaté ó-ndo tálea neófénε?/
 what 2SG.SM-PRS cook today
 ‘Qu’est-ce que tu cuisines aujourd’hui?’
 ‘What are you (sg.) cooking today?’

(18) ɔwané ó[†]ná siəkinə nánekəl?
 /ɔwané ɔ-ná siəkinə naáneəkəla/
 who 2SG.SM-PST3 see yesterday
 ‘Qui as tu vu hier?’
 ‘Who did you see yesterday?’

Here, the PST3 tense marker is [†]ná, showing a dependent clause environment (vs *kà* in main clauses). This provides evidence that subject wh questions are ex-situ cleft constructions rather than in-situ constructions, even though movement of the wh-word from the subject position is string-vacuous.

In terms of clefts, there is a different structure for subjects than non-subjects. Subjects are preceded by the focus marker á (19), while objects are followed by á.

(19) Context: ‘Who shut the door?’
 a. *(Á) Píél áná níki kwiyí.
 /á Píelə á-na nε-ki kwiyi/
 FOC Pierre 1SM.REL-PST2 5.door shut
 ‘Pierre shut the door.’
 b. *Píél á áná níki kwiyí.

1.h. Can the EA as the answer to a wh question occupy the same position as the IA in the answer to a wh question?

N – the only way to answer a subject wh question is with a cleft; objects may be focussed in-situ, postverbally, or via a different cleft construction. See examples above.

There is also a difference between subjects and non-subjects in fragment answers to wh questions. Subject fragments must be preceded by the focus marker á (20); object fragments cannot be preceded by á (21). Non-arguments pattern with objects, i.e. are not preceded by á.

(20) Context: ‘Who shut the door?’
 Á muəndú məkəmánó.
 /á mə-əndú mə-kəmánó/
 FOC 1-woman 1-tall
 ‘A tall woman.’

(21) Context: ‘What is the man holding?’
 (*á) Kalót.
 /á kalótə/
 FOC 7.carrot
 ‘Une carotte.’ / ‘A carrot.’

(22) Context: ‘From the tree?’
 Indínə ye bəle, ée.
 /e-ndínə ye bə-lea ée/
 7-foot ASSOC.7 14-tree yes
 ‘Au pied de l’arbre, oui.’
 ‘At the foot of the tree, yes.’

1.i. Can the EA modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position(s) as the IA with ‘only’ N, on the basis that arguments modified by ‘only’ are usually clefted, but external arguments modified by ‘only’ may also be postverbal.

(23) Bóə, ómaná tunóni tóláló tólea.
 /bóə ómaná tə-nóni tə-láló tó-lea/
 no only 13-bird 13-three 13-be
 ‘Non, il n’y a que trois oiseaux.’
 ‘No, there are only three birds.’

(24) Context: ‘Do you understand Tunen?’
 Bóə, méndə ókə óman(á) á Féléndz(ε).
 /bóə, mé-ndə ókə ómaná á féléndzε/
 no, 1SG.SM-PRS understand only FOC French
 ‘Non, je ne comprends seulement du français.’
 ‘No, I only understand French.’

NB: Variability in whether á follows ómaná ‘only’ seems to be due to vowel elision and the fact that ómaná ends in a high toned á, making the underlying form unclear in fast speech. In Dugast (1971) it is suggested that words like ómaná may be derived diachronically from a smaller element + á, which has grammaticalized into one word. This discussion is independent of the subject vs object status of the argument and therefore not significant for this parameter coding.

2. Is there a dedicated topic position?

2.a. Can a subject² interrogative phrase occur in the same position as a topical subject?
 Y, both appear before the subject marker/tense complex:

(25) éyáné áná himuísimuísí híófó indi?
 /éyáné á-ná hi-muísimuísí hí-ófó indiə/
 who 1SM:H-PST2 19-cat 19-fish give
 ‘Qui a donné du poisson au chat?’

² ‘Subject’ here is understood as the single argument of an intransitive predicate, or the agent of a transitive predicate – not as the argument triggering subject marking.

‘Who gave fish to the cat?’

It is hard to know for sure if this is an in-situ wh question or a cleft form, given that clefts are marked by á and high tone on the subject marker and there is no change to the tense marking for most tenses. Here, the high-toned subject marker á- could just be H tone spread from the wh-word, or could be through a cleft environment. But relevantly for this parameter question, there is no postverbal way to question a subject.

Topical subject:

(26) Context: Speaker has been discussing when to add peanuts.

Tɔmbaŋa tɔnú huhək.

/tɔ-mbaŋa tɔ-na huhə-aka/

13-peanut 13SM-PST2 cool-DUR

‘Les arachides se sont refroidies.’

‘The peanuts have cooled.’

[JO 1358]

2.b. Can the subject as answer to a subject wh question occur in the same position as a topical subject?

N.

Focussed subjects cannot be in-situ, they must be clefted:

(27) Context: ‘Who shut the door?’

a. *(Á) Píél áná níki kwiýí.

/á Píelə á-ná nɛ-kí kwiýí/

FOC Pierre 1SM.REL-PST2 5.door shut

‘Pierre shut the door.’

b. *Píél á áná níki kwiýí.

Sentences such as (27) without the á and with a low-toned subject marker are grammatical in contexts where the subject is topical.

2.c. Can a subject modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position as a topical subject?

Y (unless (28) is analysed as a cleft; see discussion in 2.a above about ómaná)

Subjects can be modified by ‘only’ in preverbal position:

(28) Context: Picture of three birds, EK says ‘There are four birds’

Bóo, ómaná tunóní tóláló tólea.

/bóo ómaná tɔ-nóní tɔ-láló tó-lea/

no only 13-bird 13-three 13-be

‘Non, il n’y a que trois oiseaux.’

‘No, there are only three birds.’

2.d. Can a subject in athetic sentence occur in the same position as a subject in a categorical sentence?

Y.

Thetic subjects appear in the position before the subject marker/tense complex in thetics:

(29) Context: ‘I just saw something shocking on the television!’ (hot news thetic)

miímə ye mabəkálén yeηéηa ye kafolíka ɔ bətínə ye Balís yíndu tit!
 /miímə ye ma-bəkáléna yeηéηa ye kafolika ɔ bətínə
 house ASSOC 6-prayer large ASSOC catholic PREP 7.city
 ye balís ye-ńdɔ titə/
 ASSOC.7 Paris 7SM-PRS burn
 ‘Une grande maison de prière catholique dans la ville de Paris est en train de brûler !’
 ‘A large Catholic cathedral in the city of Paris is burning!’

Note that Tunen thetics are SOV; see (30) below for the preverbal object placement:

- (30) Context: You see an elephant at the edge of the village, which is a rare sight, so you run back to the village to tell the others. (hot news thetic)
 Menó misəku siəkin(ə)!
 /mɛ-nó mi-səku siəkinə/
 1SG.SM-PST1 3-elephant see
 ‘Je viens de voir un éléphant!’
 ‘I just saw an elephant!’

2.e. Are topical arguments typically or preferably expressed preverbally?

Y

Topics are often left-dislocated with a prosodic break:

- (31) (#(ə) bée(ɓe) belábónéá béeɓe,) báná taléáká elóáyé ɛŋganda ye Básaeka.
 /(#(ə) bée(ɓe) ɓe-lábónéá béeɓe) bá-ná taléaka elóáyé
 PREP DEM.8 8-food DEM.8 2SM-PST2 cook.DUR for
 ɛ-ŋganda ye básɛka/
 7-holiday ASSOC.7 Easter
 ‘(quant à cette nourriture-ci,) Ils ont (le) préparé pour la fête de Pâques.’
 ‘(as for this food here,) They cooked (it) for Easter.’ [PM 508]

- (32) Isiŋiáka, úndu hikiə, ɔ bóá⁺wóá buəm(ó), ɔnyɔɔ, (ə) ɛbóka yé ɓɛtʃátʃɔ ɔfana alé, ɔ
 nyɔɔkɔ ɔ ɛbóka - ɔ ɓɛtɔbɔtɔb(ə)?
 /isiŋiáka, ɔ-ndɔ hikiə ɔ bo-áwóá bo-ɔmó ɔ-nyɔɔ
 now 2SG.SM-PRS like PREP 14-PRO.POSS.2SG 14-life INF-work
 ɔ ɛ-bóka yé ɓɛ-tʃátʃɔ ɔfana aléá ɔ
 PREP 7-place ASSOC.7 8-money count or.rather 2SG.SM
 nyɔɔ-kɔ ɔ ɛ-bóka - ɔ ɓɛ-tɔbɔtɔb/
 work-REP PREP 7-place - PREP 8-field
 ‘Maintenant, dans ta vie, aimerais-tu travailler à la banque ou bien à - aux champs?’
 ‘Now, in your life, would you rather work in a bank or work in a - on the fields?’

There is no locative inversion in Tunen.

BACK TO TOP

Kukuya

Teke-Kukuya is spoken in the Lékana District in the Plateau Department of the Republic of Congo. According to the estimation by Ethnologue in 2000, it had around 38,800 speakers by then, while for all Teke languages in Congo the number of speakers is about 900,000 according to recent survey in 2019. The Kukuya data in this paper was collected in 2019 and 2021, with 5 native speakers who were born and brought up in Lékana, with ages ranging from to 55 to 71.

Conclusion

The results of the tests show that word order in Kukuya depends more largely on information structure than syntactic roles. There is strong evidence that there is a dedicated immediate-before-verb focus position in this language, which is available for both subject and object. The preverbal domain excluding the IBV position is reserved for topical elements. What need to be further studied in the coming fieldwork is possibly the post-verbal domain where focussed elements can sometimes also occur.

1. Is there a dedicated focus position?

Kukuya appears to have an immediate-before-verb (IBV) focus position where all kind of arguments and adjuncts can be focussed. However, in some cases focussed objects and adjuncts are not restricted to the IBV position, but can also occur post-verbally. The distinction is unclear at this point.

1.a. Can the recipient and theme be questioned in their canonical position?

N

The recipient and the theme are both questioned in the IBV position (33)a (34)a, while being questioned in their canonical position is judged to be infelicitous (33)b (34)b.

- (33) a. N-kaaká ma-désu ná ndé ká-wî? [Foc=Recipient]
1-granny 6-bean who 1.PRO 1SM-give.PST
'To whom did grandmother give the beans?'
- b. *N-kaaká á-wî ma-désu kukí ná? [Foc=Recipient]
1-granny 1SM-give.PST 6-bean PREP who
Int: 'To whom did grandmother give the beans?'
- (34) a. N-kaaká kí-má ká-wî mvá? [Foc=Theme]
1-granny 7-what 1SM-give.PST 1.dog
'What did grandmother give to the dog?'
- b. #N-kaaká á-wî mvá kí-má? [Foc=Theme]
1-granny 1SM-give.PST 1.dog 7-what
Int: 'What did grandmother give to the dog?'

1.b. Can the recipient and the theme be an answer to a wh question in their canonical positions?

N

In an answer to a wh question, both the theme and the recipient occur in the IBV position (35)a (36)a, while being placed in their canonical position is infelicitous to the context (35)b (36)b.

(35) Question: ‘What did the woman give him?’
 a. Ndé mi-nkaaní ká-wî ndé. [Foc=Theme]
 1.PRO 4-paper 1SM-give.PST 1.PRO
 ‘She gave him papers.’

b. #Ndé á-wî ndé mi-nkaaní. [Foc=Theme]
 1.PRO 1SM-give.PST 1.PRO 4-paper
 Int: ‘She gave him papers.’

(36) Question: ‘To whom did he give it (the papaya)?’
 a. Ndé ló me ká-wî. [Foc=Recipient]
 1.PRO 5.PRO 1SG.PRO 1SM-give.PST
 ‘He gave it (the papaya) to me.’

b. #Ndé á-wî ló me. [Foc=Recipient]
 1.PRO 1SM-give.PST 5.PRO 1SG.PRO
 Int: ‘He gave it (the papaya) to me.’

1.c. Can the recipient and the theme be modified by ‘only’ in their canonical positions?
 No data for the recipient. When modified by ‘only’, the theme can occur both in the IBV position (37)a and in its canonical position (37)b.

(37) a. Mu-loí wúna ma-nkúru ká-wî báana. [Foc=theme]
 1-teacher only 6-pen 1SM-give.PST 2.children
 ‘The teacher gave the children only pens.’

b. Mu-loí á-wî báana wúna ma-nkúru. [Foc=theme]
 1-teacher 1SM-give.PST 2.children only 6-pen
 ‘The teacher gave the children only pens.’

1.d. Can non-arguments be questioned in their canonical position?
 YES/NO

Some adverbs such as ‘where’ and ‘when’ must occur in the IBV position (38), while some others such as ‘how’ and ‘why’ can also occur in their canonical position (39).

(38) a. Mwáana munkí ká-dzí ntsúi?
 1.child when 1SM-eat.PST 1.fish
 ‘When did the child eat fish?’

b. #Mwáana á-dzí ntsúi munkí?
 1.child 1SM-eat.PST 1.fish when
 Int: ‘When did the child eat fish?’

(39) Ba-ntaba bwě bá-kwî mu ki-má?
 2-goat 2.all 2SM-die.PST 18.LOC 7-what
 ‘Why did the all the goats die?’

1.e. Can non-arguments be the answer to a wh question in their canonical position?
 Y

Non-arguments as the answer to a wh question can occur either in IBV or their canonical position.

(40) Question: ‘Where did father buy the fish?’

Ndé á-fúum-i baa-ntsúi ku dzáandu.
 1.PRO 1SM.PST-buy-PST 2-fish 17.LOC 5.market
 ‘He bought the fish at the market.’

1.f. Can non-arguments that are modified by ‘only’ occur in their canonical position?

Y

Non-arguments modified by ‘only’ can occur either in IBV or their canonical position.

(41) Baa-ndziá báa-dzî lóoso wúna mu míaka.
 2-foreigner 2SM.PST-eat.PST 5.rice only 18.LOC 4-hand
 ‘The foreigners ate the rice only with hands.’

1.g. Can the external argument (EA) be questioned in the same position as internal arguments (IA)?

Y

EA can be questioned in IBV, as the IA in above examples (33)-(37).

(42) a. Ma-ntséke ná yi-pfuká má-dza?
 6-field who IMPF-water 6-water
 ‘Who watered the fields?’

b. Mu-kái ná ká-béer-i?
 1-woman who 1SM-beat-PST
 ‘Who did the woman beat?’

1.h. Can the EA as the answer to a wh question occupy the same position as the IA in the answer to a wh question?

Y

(43) Question: ‘Who bought the wine?’

Ma-li taará á-fúum-i.
 6-wine 1.father 1SM-buy-PST
 ‘The wine was bought by father.’

(44) Question: ‘To whom did she gave the beans?’

Ndé ma-désu mvá ká-wî.
 1.PRO 6-bean 1.dog 1SM-give.PST
 ‘She gave the beans to a/the dog.’

1.i. Can the EA modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position(s) as the IA with ‘only’?

Y

- (45) a. Wúna mvá wǔ-á-wî ba-ntaba buókó.
 only 1.dog 1RM-1SM-give.PST 2-small.goat 14.fear
 ‘It was only the dog who scared the goats.’
- b. Wúna me maamá ká-wî me ma-tabíri.
 only 1SG.PRO 1.mother 1SM-give.PST 1SG.PRO 6-gift
 ‘It was only to me that mother gave presents.’

2. Is there a dedicated topic position?

2.a. Can a subject interrogative phrase occur in the same position as a topical subject?

Y

- (46) Kí-má kí-súrik-i?
 7-what 7SM-fall-PST
 ‘What fell down?’

2.b. Can the subject as answer to a subject wh question occur in the same position as a topical subject?

Y

- (47) Question: ‘Who gave the child the oranges?’
 Bí-búru bíi-wî ndé maláala.
 8-parents 8SM-give.PST 1.PRO 6-orange
 ‘The parents gave him the oranges.’

2.c. Can a subject modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position as a topical subject?

Y

- (48) Wúna baa-ntsúú báá-ból-i [Foc=subject]
 only 2-chicken 2SM.PST-decompose-PST
 ‘Only the chicken got bad.’

A question here is whether the linear position is the same as the structural possibly multiple positions, i.e. in the above examples the subject is both IBV and initial.

2.d. Can a subject in athetic sentence occur in the same position as a subject in a categorical sentence?

Y

Athetic sentence can be expressed as SVO, in which the subject is not a given referent. (49)b is athetic sentence and has the SVO word order, in which the preverbal subject ‘rat’ is new to the hearer.

- (49) a. Kí-má kí-sí?
 7-what 7SM-do.PST
 ‘What happened?’
- b. Mpúku súruk-i kulá nzó.
 1.rat fall-PST PREP.from.above 9.house
 ‘A rat fell from the house.’

2.e. Are topical arguments typically or preferably expressed preverbally?

Y

Topical elements tend to be placed in the preverbal domain, preceding the focal element in the IBV position, as in (50)b.

- (50) a. Maamá mu-nkáání ku-ní ká-wéék-i?
1.mother 3-letter 17-which 1SM-send-PST
‘Where did mother send the letter?’
- b. Ambú, ndé mu-nkáání mfaí ká-wéék-i.
no 1.PRO 3-letter 3.capital 1SM-send-PST
‘No, she sent the letter to Brazzaville.’

BACK TO TOP

Kîtharaka

Kîtharaka is Central Bantu language [E54] spoken by Atharaka people mainly living in Tharaka Nithi county Kenya. There are approximately 220,000 Atharaka people, according to 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census report (Statistics, K. N., 2019). Kîtharaka has approximately 61,000 monolinguals with L1 literacy rate below 15% as compared to that of L2 (Kiswahili or English) that stands at 45% (Eberhard et al. 2020). The data for this study was collected during a field study in December 2019- January 2020 by Patrick Kanampiu and Jenneke van der Wal, with three native speakers (all male) of age bracket 29-47 years. Some data was elicited introspectively by Patrick.

Eberhard, D. M., Simons, G. F., & Fennig, C. D. (Eds.). (2020). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Twenty-third edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>.

Statistics, K.N., (2019). Population and Housing Census Report. Nairobi. Retrieved from <https://www.knbs.or.ke/?wpdmprom=2019-kenya-population-and-housing-census-volume-iv-distribution-of-population-by-socio-economic-characteristic>

Conclusion

Information structure is largely responsible for word order in Kîtharaka. Neither focus nor canonical positions of subject or object seem to license certain orders. This conclusion is based on the following evidence.

1. Is there a dedicated focus position?

Kîtharaka appears to have no dedicated focus position.

1.a. Can the recipient and theme be questioned in their canonical position?

Y

Both the recipient and the theme can be questioned at their canonical position. Multiple wh question is even possible for both but only in their base order:

(51) Ūyúúgú ánéénkééré twáana mbí?
ûyúúgú a-noonker-ire tû-ana m-bi
1.grandmother 1SM-give-PFV 13-children 9-what
'What did grandma give the children?'

(52) a. Apééré 'úú méémbé?
a-per-ire ûú ma-embe
1SM-give-PFV who 6-mangos
'Who did she give mangos?'

b. ??Apéere méémbé ûú?
a-per-ire ma-embe ûú
1SM-give-PFV 6-mangos who
'Who did she give mangos?'

(53) a. Ūyúúgú ánéénkéere ûú mbí?
ûyúgu a-noonk-ere ûú mbi
1.grandmother 1SM-give-PFV? who what
'What did grandmother give to whom?'

- b. *Ûyúgú ánéénkéré mbi ûû?
 ûyúgu a-neenk-ere mbi ûû
 1.grandmother 1SM-give-PFV? what who
 ‘What did grandmother give to whom?’

1.b. Can the recipient and the theme be an answer to a wh question in their canonical positions?

Y

Both recipient and theme can be answers to wh question in their canonical position:

- (54) a. Question: ‘What did the teacher give to the children?’
 Mwarimû aránenkeere twaána tûramu.
 mû-arimû a-ra-nenke-îre tû-aana tû-ramu
 1-teacher 1SM-YPST-give-PFV 12-children 12-pens
 ‘The teacher gave the children pens.’
- b. Question: ‘Who did the teacher give pens?’
 Mwarimû aránenkeere twaána tûramu.
 mû-arimû a-ra-nenke-îre tû-aana tû-ramu
 1-teacher 1SM-YPST-give-PFV 12-children 12-pens
 ‘The teacher gave the children pens.’

1.c. Can the recipient and the theme be modified by ‘only’ in their canonical positions?

Y

Both recipient and theme can be modified by only in their base position:

- (55) a. Mwarimû aránenkeere twaána akî tûramu.
 mû-arimû a-ra-nenke-îre tû-aana aki tû-ramu
 1-teacher 1SM-YPST-give-PFV 12-children only 12-pens
 ‘The teacher gave only children some pens.’
- b. Mwarimû aránenkeere twaána tûrámu akî.
 mû-arimû a-ra-nenke-îre tû-aana tû-ramu akî
 1-teacher 1SM-YPST-give-PFV 12-children 12-pens only
 ‘The teacher gave only pens to the children.’

- (56) Frída anéenkééré Kawîîra fáanta yóonka.
 Frída a-neenkeer-ire Kawîîra fanta î-onka
 1.Frída 1SM-give-PFV 1.Kawîîra 9.fanta 9-only
 ‘Frída gave Kawîîra only Fanta.’

1.d. Can non-arguments be questioned in their canonical position?

Y

In fact, they must be questioned in their canonical position following the object.

- (57) Kîmathi Akaathi rî?
 Kîmathi a-ka-thi rî?

1.Kimathi 1SM-FUT-go when?
 ‘When will Kimathi leave?’

- (58) a. Aana bacééthágî’ra mûbiira kû?
 A-ana ba-ceeth-ag-îr-a mû-biira kû
 2-children 2SM-play-HAB-APPL-FV 3-ball where
 ‘Where do children play the ball?’
- b. Aana bacééthágî’ra kû, mûbiira?
 A-ana ba-ceeth-ag-îr-a kû mû-biira
 2-children 2SM-play-HAB-APPL-FV where 3-ball
 ‘Where do children play, the ball?’
- (59) a. Arû’tháángága `nkáárî áta?
 a-rûthaang-ag-a n-kaarî ata
 1SM-repair-HAB-FV 9-car how
 ‘How does he repair cars?’
- b. Arû’tháángága áta, `nkáárî?
 a-rûthaang-ag-a ata n-kaarî
 1SM-repair-HAB-FV how 9-car
 ‘How does he repair, cars?’

1.e. Can non-arguments be the answer to a wh question in their canonical position?
 Y

The answer to (58)a and (59)a would be as follows:

- (60) Aana bacééthágîra mûbiira kîeniini.
 a-ana ba-ceeth-ag-îr-a mû-biira kî-eni-ini
 1-children 2-play-HAB-APPL-FV 3-ball 7-field-LOC
 ‘The children play the ball in the field.’
- (61) Nkáárî, arûthaga na kompiuta.
 n-kaarî a-ruth-a na kompiuta
 10-cars 1-repair-FV with computer
 ‘He repairs cars using a computer.’

1.f. Can non-arguments that are modified by ‘only’ occur in their canonical position?
 Y

- (62) Aana bacééthágîra mûbiira kîeniini gîonka.
 a-ana ba-ceeth-ag-îr-a mû-biira kî-eni-ini gî-onka
 1-children 2-play-HAB-APPL-FV 3-ball 7-field-LOC 7-only
 ‘The children play the ball only in the field.’
- (63) Nkáárî arûthaga na kompiuta yonka.
 n-kaarî a-ruth-a na kompiuta y-onka
 10-cars 1-repair-FV with computer 9-only
 ‘He repairs cars using only a computer.’

1.g. Can the external argument (EA) be questioned in the same position as internal arguments (IA)?

Y

Both subjects and objects can be questioned in immediate after verb position (in an inverse construction like (64) and in simple in-situ object question like (66)b and (67). Additionally, both subject and object can be questioned in a cleft as in (66)a and (67).

(64) Gûkuíré ûû?
 kû-ku-ire ûû
 17SM-die-PFV who
 ‘Who died?’

(Buell & Muriungi 2008)

(65) Kî-eni i-gî-ceth-ag-îr-a tw-ana tû-kûrû.
 7-field FOC-7SM-play-HAB-APPL-FV 13-child 13-old
 ‘The field plays old children.’

(66) a. I mbi áshá ágûkáánda?
 ni mbi asha a-kû-kaand-a
 FOC what 1.Asha 1SM-PRS-bake-FV
 ‘What is Asha baking?’

b. Ásha aríkáánda mbí?
 Asha a-rî-kaand-a m-bi
 1.Asha 1SM-PRS-bake-FV 9-what
 ‘What is Asha baking?’

(67) Íi mbí ûyûúgú ánéénkeeré ûû?
 ni mbi ûyûgu a-neenker-e ûû
 FOC what 1.grandmother 1SM-give-PFV who
 ‘What did grandma give who?’

1.h. Can the EA as the answer to a wh question occupy the same position as the IA in the answer to a wh question?

Y

The subject as the answer to a subject wh question (like (68)-(70)) can occupy the same position as the object in the answer to an object wh question, as in (71):

(68) Question: ‘Someone entered this place, was it you? OR Who entered this place?’
 Kûthúúngíre kaána.
 kû-thûúngîr-ire ka-ana
 17SM-enter-PFV 12-child
 ‘There entered a child.’

(69) Question: ‘There were visitors here and I can’t see what they brought us; what was brought?’
 Kûréétirwe conda na mîgááté.
 kû-reet-ir-w-e conda na mî-gaate

17SM-bring-PFV-PASS-FV 9.soda and 3-bread
 ‘There was brought soda and bread.’

- (70) Question: ‘Who was laughing?’
 Í gúkúthekaga mbiti
 ni kû-ku-thek-ag-a m-biti
 FOC 17SM-PRS-laugh-HAB-FV 9-hyena
 ‘A/the hyena laughed.’

- (71) Question: ‘What did Asha bake?’
 Áshá akáándiré mûgááté.
 asha a-kaand-ire mû-gaate
 1.Asha 1SM-bake-PFV 3-bread
 ‘Asha baked bread.’

1.i. Can the EA modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position(s) as the IA with ‘only?’
 Y

The subject can be modified by ‘only’ in the same postverbal position(s) as the object:

- (72) Kûthûngîre kaána akî.
 kû-thûngîr-ire ka-ana akî
 17SM-enter-PFV 12-child only
 ‘There entered a child only.’
- (73) Kûratóorookire ngúkú akî.
 kû-ra-toorook-ire n-gúkú akî
 17SM-YPST-escape-PFV 10-chickens only
 ‘There escaped chickens only.’

2. Is there a dedicated topic position?

Kîtharaka exhibits preference for topical elements at the preverbal position. The topicalised element can be set off by a prosodic break optionally marked by a LHL contour tone:

- (74) Méembeé, mbendeete mára 'méerú.
 ma-embe m-eend-ete ma-ra ma-eru
 6-mango 1SG.SM-want-STAT.PFV 6-DEM.DIST 6-ripe
 ‘As for mangos, I like ripe ones.’
- (75) Gavána n' áámí ímûúragiré.
 gavana ni amî î-mû-urag-ire
 1.governor FOC 9.army 9SM-1OM-kill-PFV
 ‘The governor, it’s the army who has killed him.’
- (76) Oóo, menya îndî thagana, rû-ûyî i ruingî muno.
 oóo, menya îndî thagana rû-ûyî ni rû-ingî mûno
 okay, know now tana 11-water COP 11-much INT
 ‘Okay, you know now the water in river tana is too much.’

[from spontaneous speech]

2.a. Can a subject³ interrogative phrase occur in the same position as a topical subject?

N

As we have seen, a topicalised subject typically appear preverbally. Kĩtharaka does not allow a subject interrogative at this position. Questioning preverbal arguments result to ungrammaticality. At such position, speakers often prefer a focused n' ûû (it is who) instead of ûû (who), i.e. form a cleft. It is, however, correct to use (79) when seeking a clarification on who stole, having not gotten the name of the thief well – this strongly suggests an echo-question interpretation:

(77) *Ûû áiyire?
 ûû a-iy-ire
 who 1SM-steal-PFV
 'Who stole?'

(78) Amûûria 'I ngukûûria mwarî, n'ûû agûpéere rûûtha rwa gûtaa rûûyî?'
 a-mû-ûri-a ni n-kû-kû-ûri-a mû-arî,
 1SM-1OM-ask-FV FOC 1SG.SM-PRS-2SG.OM-ask-FV 1-girl
 ni-û a-kû-pa-îre rûûtha rû-a kû-ta-a rû-ûyî?
 FOC-1.PRO 1SM-PRS-give-PFV permission 11-CONN 15SM-fetch-FV 11-water?
 'He asked her, 'let me ask you girl, who gave you permission to fetch water?'

(79) (Peter meets his friends discussing how a certain person stole and was attacked and torched by mob. He does not get the name of the thief, so he asks):
 Ûû aiya?
 ûû a-iy-a
 who 1SM-steal-FV
 'Who stole?'

2.b. Can the subject as answer to a subject wh question occur in the same position as a topical subject?

N

The subject cannot be an answer to a subject wh question in the same position as the topical subject. In such cases, the answers tend to be clefted (it cleft or other forms of cleft) as in (80)b. (80)a could be felicitous as an answer to 'what did Kĩmathi do?':

(80) Question: 'Who went to the farm?'
 a. #Kĩmathi n'áthiiré mûndaani.
 Kĩmathi ni-a-thi-ire mû-nda-ni
 1.Kĩmathi COP-1SM-go-PFV 3-farm-LOC
 'Kimathi went to the farm.'
 b. I Kĩmathi ûthiire mûndaani.
 ni Kĩmathi û-thi-ire mû-nda-ni
 FOC Kĩmathi 1RM-go-PFV 3-farm-LOC
 'Kimathi went to the farm.' / 'It's Kimathi who went to the farm.'

³ 'Subject' here is understood as the single argument of an intransitive predicate, or the agent of a transitive predicate – not as the argument triggering subject marking.

2.c. Can a subject modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position as a topical subject?

N

- (81) *Baabá wéenka (n’) ákinyiré.
 baaba we-nka ni a-kiny-ire
 1.father 1-only FOC 1SM-arrive-PFV
 ‘Only dad arrived.’
- (82) Jéení wéenka/*akî áandikiré baarûa.
 Jane we-nka/akî a-andik-ire baarûa
 1.Jane 1-alone/only 1SM-write-PFV 9.letter
 *‘Only Jane wrote a letter.’
 ‘Jane alone wrote the letter.’

2.d. Can a subject in athetic sentence occur in the same position as a subject in a categorical sentence?

Y/N

Ordinarily, thetic sentences may not be expressed as SV(O) but a Default Agreement Inversion construction is formed with a postverbal logical subject. However, the SV(O) pattern can be found in structures with idioms. In this case, the subject of the clause is usually not an available referent in actual speech context:

- (83) (There was an accident on the road and...)
 Í gûkúiré mûntû.
 ni kû-ku-ire mû-ntû
 FOC 17SM-die-PFV 1-person
 ‘Somebody died.’
- (84) Tîiri îgûû’ka.
 tîiri î-kû-ûk-a
 9.dust 9SM-PRS-rise-FV
 ‘Things are finished.’
 ‘Dust has risen.’
- (85) Gikûabûra mpogoro.
 kî-kû-abûr-a mp-ogoro
 7SM-PRS-snap-FV 9-hook
 ‘The hook has snapped.’
 ‘There is a serious problem.’

2.e. Are topical arguments typically or preferably expressed preverbally?

Y

Topicalised objects tend to be left dislocated as shown in (86). See also examples (74)-(76) given earlier.

- (86) Twáána ngá(tû)cereria mabuku.
 tû-ana n-ka-tû-cer-îr-i-a ma-buku
 12-children 1SG.SM-FUT-12OM-find-APPL-IC-FV 8-books
 ‘(the) Children, I will find books for them.’

BACK TO TOP

Kirundi

In Maho's (2009) updated Guthrie classification, Kirundi is listed as JD62. It is used by approximately 8,053,574 inhabitants of Burundi, according to the latest census carried out in 2008. The language is mutually intelligible with surrounding languages, mainly Kinyarwanda (JD61) spoken in Rwanda, as well as some languages used on Tanzanian territory, in the border regions of Burundi (south and north-east), such as Kiha (JD66) spoken in Buha (south), Kihangaza (JD65) and Kishubi (JD64) in Bushubi (northeast). Kirundi is also close to Kivinza (JD67) spoken in Uvinza in Tanzania south of Buha. The data are based on Ernest Nshemezimana's intuitions, also drawing on earlier literature and (where mentioned) the BantUGhent corpus of Kirundi.

Conclusion

Kirundi features a final focus position, and there is a strict topic-V-nontopic division.

1. Is there a dedicated focus position?

Yes, the clause-final position.

1.a. Can the recipient and theme be questioned in their canonical position?

N

In Kirundi, word order between objects in canonical the ditransive/tritransitive construction is free. Each object can appear in IAV (Kirundi belongs to symmetric languages). But all arguments must be questioned in the final position.

(87) a. CJ U-ø-há-ye umwáana ikí?
2SG.SM-PRS-give-PFV 1.child what
'What do you give to the child?'

b. CJ *Uhayé ikí umwáana?

(88) a. CJ U-ø-há-ye ikijumbu ndé?
2SG.SM-PRS-give-PFV 1.sweet.potato who
'Who do you give a sweet.potato?'

b. CJ *Uhayé ndé ikijumbu?

(89) a. CJ U-ø-gir-ye nte Kabura?
2SG.SM-PRS-make-PFV how Kabura
'What do you make Kabura?'

b. CJ *Ugize Kabura nte?

1.b. Can the recipient and the theme be an answer to a wh question in their canonical positions?

N

Answers to these questions must also be in final position. But the non-questioned object is often constrained to be pronominalized. See the following examples:

(90) Question: 'What do you give to the child?'

a. CJ N-ø-há-ye umwáana ikijumbu.

1SG.SM-PRS-give-PFV 1.child 7.sweet.potato
 ‘I give the child a sweet potato.’

b. CJ N.ra-ø-mu-ha-ye ikijumbu.
 1SG.SM-PRS-1OM-give-PFV 7.sweet.potato
 ‘I give him a sweet potato.’

c. CJ *Mpaye ikijumbu umwáana.

(91) Question: ‘Who do you give a sweet potato to?’

a. CJ N-ø-há-ye ikijumbu umwáana.
 1SG.SM-PRS-give-PFV 7.sweet.potato 1.child
 ‘I give the sweet potato to a child.’

b. CJ N-ø-ki-há-ye umwáana.
 ‘I give it to a child.’

1.c. Can the recipient and the theme be modified by ‘only’ in their canonical positions?

N

Objects modified by ‘only’ must equally be in the final position.

(92) a. CJ Tu-a-a-(mu)-ha-ye (Kabura) ibijumbu gusa.
 1PL.SM-N.PST-CJ-(1OM)-give-PFV Kabura 8.sweet.potato only
 ‘We gave Kabura/him only sweet potatoes.’

b. CJ *Twahaye ibijumbu gusa Kabura.

(93) a. CJ Tu-a-a-(bi)-ha-ye (ibijumbu) Kabura gusa.
 1PL.SM-N.PST-CJ-(8OM)-give-PFV (8.sweet.potato) Kabura only
 ‘We gave sweet potatoes/it only to Kabura.’

b. CJ *Twahaye Kabura gusa ibijumbu.

1.d. Can non-arguments be questioned in their canonical position?

Y

1.e. Can non-arguments be the answer to a wh question in their canonical position?

Y

Adverbs can be questioned in final position or postverbally (same behaviour for ‘when’, ‘how’, and ‘where’); other non-argument answers need to be in final position.

(94) a. Tu-shir-e i-n-huzu **he?**
 1PL.SM-put-SUBJ AUG-10-cloth where
 ‘Where can we put the clothes?’

b. Tu-zi-shir-e **he** i-n-huzu?
 1PL.SM-10OM-put-SUBJ where AUG-10-cloth

c. Tu-shir-e **hé** i-n-huzu ?
 1PL.SM-put-SUBJ where AUG-10-cloth

Y

- (95) Question: a. Uzoogenda mu Rumonge ryáarí?
 u-zoo-geend-a mu Rumonge ryáarí
 2SG.SM-FUT-go-FV 18 Rumonge when
- b. Uzoogenda ryáarí mu Rumonge?
 u-zoo-geend-a ryáarí mu Rumonge
 2SG.SM-FUT-go-FV when 18 Rumonge
 ‘When will you go to Rumonge?’
- Answer: a. Nzoogenda mu rumonge ejó.
 n-zoo-gend-a mu Rumonge ejó.
 1SG.SM-FUT-go-FV 18 Rumonge tomorrow
- b. *Nzoo-gend-a ejó mu Rumonge.
 ‘I will go to Rumonge tomorrow.’ (not possible as the answer of (95)a-b)

1.f. Can non-arguments that are modified by ‘only’ occur in their canonical position?
 Y – although it should be noted that this is also the dedicated focus position

- (96) Yama aza kw’ishure ku wagatanu gusa.
 a-am-a a-əz-a kw’ i-shure ku wagatanu gusa
 1SM-always-FV 1SM-come-FV 17 school 17 Friday only
 ‘He/she always comes to school on Friday only.’

1.g. Can the external argument (EA) be questioned in the same position as internal arguments (IA)?

The subject/agent has to be questioned in postverbal position in one of the inversion constructions (or in a cleft).

- (97) a. CJ Amazi i-a-zan-ye ndé? (OVS)
 6.water 6SM-N.PST-bring-PFV who
 ‘Who brought water?’
- b. CJ *Ndé a-a-zan-ye amazi? (*SVO)
 who 1SM-N.PST-bring-PFV 6.water
- c. CJ Ha-ø-əz-ye ndé?
 EXP-PRS-come-PFV who
 ‘Who comes?’
- d. CJ *Ndé a-ø-əz-ye?
 who 1SM-PRS-come-PFV
 Int: ‘Who comes?’

1.h. Can the EA as the answer to a wh question occupy the same position as the IA in the answer to a wh question?

Y

The agent/patient/benefactive can appear in the postverbal position when it functions as the answer to a wh question. For all postverbal focused elements, the conjoint verb form is used. The logical subject is postverbal in a range of locative inversion constructions, e.g. patient inversion in (99).

(98) Question: ‘What does Kabura bring for the children?’

Kabura ashiiiriye abáana imihwí.

Kabura	a-ø-ø-shíir-ye	a-ba-áana	i-mi-hwí
1.Kabura	1SM-PST-CJ-bring-PFV	AUG-2-child	AUG-4-banana

‘Kabura brings for the children bananas.’

(99) Question: ‘Who brought water?’

a. Amazi i-a-zan-ye Yohana.
6.water 6SM-N.PST-bring-PFV John
‘It’s John who brought water.’

b. #Yohana a-a-zan-ye amazi.
John 1SM-N.PST-bring-PFV 6.water

1.i. Can the EA modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position(s) as the IA with ‘only’?

Y

The subject must be postverbal when it is modified by ‘only’.

(100) a. CJ Ha-a-ø-pfu-ye Kabura gusa.
EXP-N.PST-CJ-die-PFV Kabura only
‘Only Kabura died.’

b. CJ *Kabura gusa yapfuye.

(101) a. CJ Hatwenze Kabura gusa.
Ha-a-ø-tweng-ye Kabura gusa.
EXP-N.PST-CJ-laugh-PFV Kabura only
‘Only Kabura laughed.’

b. CJ *Kabura gusa yatwenze.

2. Is there a dedicated topic position?

It seems so.

2.a. Can a subject⁴ interrogative phrase occur in the same position as a topical subject?

N

The subject must be clefted (or postverbal) and cannot occur in preverbal position.

⁴ ‘Subject’ here is understood as the single argument of an intransitive predicate, or the agent of a transitive predicate – not as the argument triggering subject marking.

(102) Yohana yavuze caane.
 Yohana a-a-vug-ye caane
 John 1SM-N.PST-speak-PFV loud
 ‘John spoke loudly.’

(103) a. Ni ndé a-a-vug-ye caane?
 COP who 1SM-N.PST-speak-PFV loud
 ‘Who spoke loudly?’

b. *Nde a-a-vug-ye caane?
 who 1SM-N.PST-speak-PFV loud

2.b. Can the subject as answer to a subject wh question occur in the same position as a topical subject?

2.c. Can a subject modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position as a topical subject?

N

Preverbal elements cannot be questioned, cannot be an answer, nor be modified by ‘only’:

(104) a. *Ndé a-ø-injir-ye?
 1.who 1SM-PRS-come.in-PFV
 ‘Who comes in?’

b. *Iki u-ø-kór-ye?
 what 2SG.SM-PRS-do-PFV
 ‘What are you doing?’

(105) a. Ni ndé a-ø-sohok-ye.^H
 COP 1.who 1SM-PRS-go.out-PFV.REL
 ‘Who (is the one who) goes out?’

b. Ni wa mwana a-ø-sohok-ye.^H
 COP 1.DEM.VI 1.child 1SM-PRS-go.out-PFV.REL
 ‘It is that child who goes out.’

c. *Wa mwana arasohotse.

(106) a. U-a-bón-ye iki?
 2SG.SM-N.PST-see-PFV what?
 ‘What did you see?’

b. *Iki u-a-bón-ye?

c. CJ N-a-bón-ye imbwa.
 1SG.SM-N.PST-see-PFV 9.dog
 ‘I saw a dog.’

d. *Imbwa nabonye.

- (107) a. Amazi i-a-zan-ye Yohana.
 6.water 6SM-N.PST-bring-PFV John
 ‘It’s John who brought water.’
- b. *Yohana a-a-zan-ye amazi.
 John 1SM-N.PST-bring-PFV 6.water
- (108) a. *Abagabo babiri gusa ba-ø-ra-sohok-ye.
 2.man 2.two only 2SM-PRS-DJ-go.out-PFV
 Int: ‘Only two men go out.’
- b. *Imbwa gusa n-a-a-bón-ye.
 9.dog only 1SG.SM-N.PST-DJ-see-PFV
 Int: ‘I saw only a dog.’

2.d. Can a subject in athetic sentence occur in the same position as a subject in a categorical sentence?

Y

Thetics can be expressed by SV(O) or V(O)S order (with indefinite subject).

- (109) a. Umuntu a-ø-ra-pfu-ye.
 1.person 1SM-PRS-die-PFV
- b. Ha-ø-ra-pfu-ye umuntu.
 EXP-PRS-DJ-die-PFV 1.person
 ‘Someone dies.’ (answer to ‘what is going on?’)

2.e. Are topical arguments typically or preferably expressed preverbally?

Y

Topical/given referents are typically expressed in the left periphery.

- (110) a. Ya nzu n-a-a-yi-gur-ye.
 9.DEM.VI 9.house 1SG.SM-N.PST-DJ-9OM-buy-PFV
 ‘That house, I bought it.’
- b. Amahera yawe, n-a-ya-shir-ye aha
 6.money 6.POSS.2SG 1SG.SM-N.PST-6OM-put-PFV here
 ku meza.
 LOC.17 9.table
 ‘Your money, I put it here on the table.’

BACK TO TOP

Rukiga

Rukiga (JE 14) belongs to the Nyoro-Ganda group. It is spoken in south western Uganda by approximately 2.3m people (UBOS, 2016). Rukiga is most times clustered and studied with Runyankore (JE 13) as one homogenous language because the two languages are highly mutually intelligible (Eberhard et al. 2020). Data for Rukiga were elicited by Allen Asiimwe and Jenneke van der Wal during fieldwork in Kabale district in January 2019 from three native speakers; two males and one female within the 25-40 age bracket. Additional data are introspective (Allen Asiimwe).

Conclusion

Based on the parameters investigated, it appears that word order in Rukiga is partly influenced by information structure.

1. Is there a dedicated focus position?

1.a. Can the recipient and theme be questioned in their canonical position?

The recipient can be questioned in its canonical position (111)a but the theme cannot (112)b. It is also very common to find the theme moved to the prenominal position (111)b, so that only the focused element appears in the postverbal position, as in (111)b.

N

(111) a. Kááka ahiir' ohá emiyembe?

Kaaka a-h-iire o-ha e-mi-yembe?
1.grandmother 1SM-give-APPL.PFV 1-who AUG-4-mango
'Who did grandmother give mangoes?'

b. Káák' émiyemb' agihiir' oha?

Kaaka e-mi-yembe a-gi-h-iire o-ha
1.grandmother AUG-4-mango 1SM-4OM-give-PFV 1-who
'Who did grandmother give the mangoes?'

(112) a. Kaaka yaaha ky' ábáana?

Kaaka ya-a-h-a ki a-ba-ana
1.grandmother 1SM-N.PST-give what AUG-2-child
'What did grandmother give the children?'

b. *Kááka yaah' ábáana ki?

*Grandmother gave children what?'

1.b. Can the recipient and the theme be an answer to a wh question in their canonical positions?

Y

Both the recipient and the theme can be answers to wh question in their canonical positions in that, (113)c can be an answer to either (113)a or (113)b.

(113) a. Waah' oh' énkofiira?

Wa-a-h-a o-ha e-n-kofiira
2SG.SBJ-N.PST-give-FV 1-who AUG-9-hat
'Who did you give a hat?'

b. Waaha kí Jéini?

- (117) a. Ba-a-yozy-a ba-ta e-gaari?
 2SM-N.PST-wash-FV 2-how AUG-9.bicycle
 ‘How did they wash the bicycle?’
- b. *Ba-a-yozy-a e-gaari ba-ta?
 2SM-N.PST-wash-FV AUG-9.bicycle 2-how
- c. E-gaari ba-a-gy-ozy-a ba-ta? (most preferred order)
 AUG-9.bicycle 2SBJ-N.PST-9.OM-wash-FV 2-how

1.e. Can non-arguments be the answer to a wh question in their canonical position?

Y

- (118) a. Question: No-o-zá ryarí Kampála?
 IPFV-2SG.SBJ-go when 23.Kampala
 ‘When are you going to Kampala?’
- b. Answer: Ni-n-zá kampala á-ha Sande
 IPFV-2SG.SBJ-go 23.Kampala AUG-16.16 9.Sunday
 ‘I will go to Kampala on Sunday.’
- c. *Ninza aha sande Kampala.

1.f. Can non-arguments that are modified by ‘only’ occur in their canonical position?

Y

- (119) Ni-n-za ó-mu ky-aro á-ha ki-ro
 IPFV-1SG.SBJ-go AUG-18.LOC 7-village AUG-16.LOC 7-day
 ki-kúru bw-onka.
 7-important 14-only
 ‘I go to the village only on the important day [Christmas].’

1.g. Can the external argument (EA) be questioned in the same position as internal arguments (IA)?

Y

Objects can be questioned in the immediate postverbal position (120). Subjects can be questioned postverbally in a default agreement inversion (122).

- (120) Hélen atwiré ki?
 Hellen a-twar-ire ki
 1.Hellen 1SM-take-PFV what
 ‘What did Hellen take?’

- (121) Haij’ oha?
 Ha-ij-a o-ha
 16SM-come-FV 1-who
 ‘Who has come?’

- (122) Haashohor’ óóha?
 ha-á-shohora o-ha

16SM-N.PST-move.out 1-who
'Who has gone out?'

1.h. Can the EA as the answer to a wh question occupy the same position as the IA in the answer to a wh question?

Y

The subject as the answer to a subject wh question can occupy the same postverbal position as the object in the answer to an object wh question. However, for the subject, a DAI is used.

(123) Question: 'What did grandmother give the children?'
Kaaka ahiir' ábáan' émiyembe.
Kaaka a-h-iire a-ba-ana e-mi-yembe
1.grandmother 1SM-give-PFV AUG-2-child AUG-4-mango
'Grandmother gave children mangoes.'

(124) Question: 'Who has come?'
Haija táata.
Ha-ij-a taata
16SM-come-FV 1.father
'Father has come.'

(125) Question: 'Who laughed?'
Haashek' ábáana, tí bantu bakuru.
ha-a-shek-a a-ba-ana ti ba-ntu ba-kuru
16SM-N.PST-laugh-FV AUG-2-children NEG 2-people 2-old
'It's the children who laughed, not old people.'

1.i. Can the EA modified by 'only' occur in the same position(s) as the IA with 'only'?

Y

The subject can be modified by 'only' in the same (postverbal) position as the object (114). For the subject, again it has to be a DAI construction (126).

(126) Haagambíre Dániel wénka.
ha-a-gamb-ire Dániel w-énka
16SM-N.PST-talk-PFV 1.Daniel 1-only
'Only Daniel talked.'

2. Is the preverbal domain reserved for topics?

Yes, with the possible exception ofthetic subjects.

2.a. Can a subject⁵ interrogative phrase occur in the same position as a topical subject?

N

Preverbal arguments cannot be questioned. Instead, a cleft, a pseudocleft or a default agreement construction (DAI) is used to question subjects.

(127) a. *Oha yija?
o-ha a-a-ij-a?

⁵ 'Subject' here is understood as the single argument of an intransitive predicate, or the agent of a transitive predicate – not as the argument triggering subject marking.

1-who 1SM-PST-come-FV
Int: 'Who has come?'

cleft

b. Nooh'ówáija?
ni o-ha o-w-a-ij-a
COP 1-who AUG-1RM-N.PST-come-FV
'Who has come?'

pseudocleft

c. Owíija n'ooha?
o-a-ij-a ni o-ha?
1RM-PST-come-FV COP 1-who
'Who has come?' / lit. 'The one who has come is who?'

DAI

d. Haija oha?
ha-ij-a o-ha
16SM-come-FV 1-who
'Who has come?'

2.b. Can the subject as answer to a subject wh question occur in the same position as a topical subject?

N

Topics occur preverbally, but preverbal arguments cannot be an answer to a wh question. Instead, to focus the subject, a cleft, pseudocleft or a default agreement construction is used.

(128) Question: 'Who has come?'

#Taata y-a-ija.
1.father 1SM-N.PST-come
'Father has come.'

2.c. Can a subject modified by 'only' occur in the same position as a topical subject?

N

In Rukiga, preverbal arguments cannot be modified by 'only':

(129) *Táátá wenká yíija.

taata w-enka a-a-ija
1.father 1-only 1SM-N.PST-come
'Only dad came.'

2.d. Can a subject in athetic sentence occur in the same position as a subject in a categorical sentence?

Y

Thetic sentences can be expressed as SV(O):

- (130) Question: ‘What is the matter?’
 Omugôngo nigunsháasha.
 o-mu-gongo ni-gu-n-shaasha
 AUG-3-back PROG-3SM-1SG.OM-hurt
 ‘My back is hurting.’

Thetic sentences can as well be expressed by DAI:

- (131) Question: ‘Why aren’t you coming out?’
 Haagiireho ómwirima.
 ha-a-z-iire=ho o-mw-irima
 16SM-N.PST-be-PFV=16 AUG-3-darkness
 ‘It is already dark.’

- (132) (I can see a shadow behind the gate)
 Hii’ ómuntu.
 ha-a-ija o-mu-ntu
 16SM-N.PST-come AUG-1-person
 ‘Someone has come.’

2.e. Are topical arguments typically or preferably expressed preverbally?

Y

Topics are typically expressed preverbally. Topicalised objects are moved to the preverbal position and they are obligatorily coindexed on the verb (133). Locative inversion constructions (134) also present locative phrases in the left periphery, and are topical. The preverbal position is therefore reserved for topics. Multiple topics are allowed in the preverbal position (139) (140) Also, in case a sentence contains a primary and a secondary topic, the secondary topic is right dislocated (Asiimwe and van der Wal forthcoming). Both the primary and secondary topics require coindexing on the verb (133).

Left dislocation

- (133) Ente ninzá kuziríisa.
 E-n-te ni-n-za ku-zi-riis-a
 AUG-10-cow PROG-1SG.SM-go 15-10OM-feed-FV
 ‘I will graze the cows.’

Locative inversion

- (134) Aha rutindo haaraabah’émótoka.
 a-ha ru-tindo ha-a-raaba=ho e-motoka
 AUG-16 11-bridge 16SM-N.PST-pass=16 AUG-9.car
 ‘On the bridge have passed cars.’

However, not all predicate types participate in locative inversion. Locative inversion is only possible with intransitive predicates (both unaccusative and unergative) plus passivised predicates. For transitive predicates to participate in locative inversion, they are first passivized.

unaccusative:

- (135) Omu nj’ óomu hagwirému omugurúsi.
 o-mu n-ju omu ha-gw-ire=mu o-mu-gurusi

AUG-18 9.house 18.DEM.PROX 16SM-fall-PFV=18 AUG-1-old.man
 ‘In this house an old man has fallen.’

unergative:

(136) Omu rufūnjo hameziréyo ebihimba.
 o-mu ru-funjo ha-mez-ire=yo e-bi-himba
 AUG-18 11-swamp 16SM-sprout.CAUS-PFV=19 AUG-8-beans
 ‘In the swamp have germinated beans.’

Transitive & passive:

(137) *Omu musiri habingiremu ábahíngi enyonyi.
 o-mu mu-siri ha-bing-ire=mu a-ba-hingi e-nyonyi
 AUG-18 3-field 16SM-chase-PFV=18 AUG-2-farmers AUG-10.birds
 ‘On the field chased the farmers the birds.’

(138) Omu musíri habingirwému enyónyi (*abahíngi).
 o-mu mu-siri ha-bing-irwe=mu e-nyonyi a-ba-hingi
 AUG-18 3-field 16SM-chase-PASS.PFV=18 AUG-10.birds AUG-2-farmers
 ‘The birds were chased from the garden (*by farmers).’

Two topics in a sentence (both left-dislocated, or one right-one left)

(139) Táát’ ebihimba abiteekíre.
 taata e-bi-himba a-bi-teek-ire
 1.father AUG-8-beans 1SM-8OM-cook-PFV
 ‘Father, the beans he cooked.’

(140) Ente záágányw’ (ámízi) go.
 e-n-te zi-a-ga-nyw-a a-ma-izi g-o
 AUG-10-cow 10SM-N.PST-6OM-drink-FV AUG-6-water 6-CM
 ‘The cows, as for the water, they drank it.’ (Asiimwe and van der Wal 2021)

BACK TO TOP

Kinyakyusa

Kinyakyusa is spoken in south-west Tanzania by more than one million people (Felberg 1996; LoT 2009). It is classified as M31 in Maho's (2009) update of Guthrie's (1948) classification. Three dialects of Kinyakyusa include Ngonde (spoken near Lake Nyasa/Malawi), Selya (spoken in north-eastern parts) and Kukwe (spoken north-western parts). The data for this article were gathered with three native speakers of Kinyakyusa during fieldwork by Amani Lusekelo, Simon Msovela, and Jenneke van der Wal, in November 2020 (2 men, 1 women; all aged 50+) in Kiwira and come from spontaneous conversation, narratives, and elicitation. Additional data were provided by Amani Lusekelo (p.c.), and checked with speakers remotely.

Conclusion

The Immediate After the Verb (IAV) position is not fully dedicated for focus but the focus position is preferably expressed postverbally. Topic is primarily located in the preverbal position. To confirm this conclusion, we deduce facts from three suggestions below.

1. Is there a dedicated focus position?

The IAV position is not dedicated for focus in Kinyakyusa. Although the focus position is likely to be postverbally, the focus position is not dedicated at the IAV position. We offer parametric reasons for this first suggestion.

1.a. Can the recipient and theme be questioned in their canonical position?

Y

Firstly, both the recipient and theme can be questioned in the postverbal position. In (141), the theme is questioned, while the recipient is questioned in (142). In both pairs of datasets, the position IAV can be occupied by either recipient or theme.

(141) a. Untupe ukump' ifiki unsekele?

u-n-tupe	u-ku-m-p-a	i-fi-ki	u-n-sekele
AUG-1-fat	1SM-PRS-1OM-give-FV	AUG-8-what	AUG-1-thin

'What does the fat one give the thin one?'

b. Untupe ukumpa unsekel' ifiki?

u-n-tupe	u-ku-m-p-a	u-n-sekele	i-fi-ki
AUG-1-fat	1SM-PRS-1OM-give-FV	AUG-1-thin	AUG-8-what

'What is the fat one giving the thin one?'

(142) a. Untupe ukumpa juani ikipaale?

u-n-tupe	u-ku-m-p-a	ju-ani	i-ki-pale
AUG-1-fat	1SM-PRS-1OM-give-FV	1-who	AUG-7-calabash

'Who is the fat one giving a calabash?'

b. Untupe ukumpa ikipale juani?

u-n-tupe	u-ku-m-p-a	i-ki-pale	ju-ani
AUG-1-fat	1SM-PRS-1OM-give-FV	AUG-7-calabash	1-who

'Who is the fat one giving the calabash?'

1.b. Can the recipient and the theme be an answer to a wh question in their canonical positions?

Y

Secondly, both the recipient and the theme can be an answer to a wh question in the IAV position. As an answer to questions in (141), (143)a shows that the theme occurs in the IAV position. In answering questions in (142), example (143)b indicates the recipient appears IAV. Both sentences (143)a and (143)b could be the correct answers to the questions (141) and (142). This becomes more plausible once the object marker is prefixed in the verb.

- (143) a. Untupe ukumpa ikipale unsekeele.
 u-n-tupe u-ku-m-p-a i-ki-pale u-n-sekele
 AUG-1-fat 1SM-PRS-1OM-give-FV AUG-7-calabash AUG-1-thin
 ‘The fat one gives the thin one a calabash.’
- b. Untupe ukumpa unsekeele ikipale.
 u-n-tupe u-ku-m-p-a u-n-sekele i-ki-pale
 AUG-1-fat 1SM-PRS-1OM-give-FV AUG-1-thin AUG-7-calabash
 ‘The fat one gives the thin one a calabash.’

1.c. Can the recipient and the theme be modified by ‘only’ in their canonical positions?

Y

The recipient can be modified by ‘only’ in its canonical postverbal position (144)a. In (144)b, the theme is modified by ‘only’ in the canonical position (not in IAV).

- (144) a. Ampele mweene Sekela isoda.
 a-m-p-ile mu-eene sekela i-soda
 1SM-1OM-give-PFV 1-only 1.Sekela AUG-9.soda
 ‘She/he has given only Sekela soda.’
- b. (Amani Lusekelo 2021)
 Ampele Sekela jeene isoda.
 a-m-p-ile sekela ji-eene i-soda
 1SM-1OM-give-PFV 1.Sekela 9-only AUG-9.soda
 ‘She/he has given Sekela only soda.’

1.d. Can non-arguments be questioned in their canonical position?

The adverbs can be questioned in the final position. Even for SVO where/when, both questions (145)a and (145)b are possible. Also, both answers (146)a and (146)b can be correct. An example in (147)a shows that both object and adverb can be questioned, both in situ. An answer to this question can be as in (147)b.

- (145) a. Atu a-biik-ile i-ki-pale kugu?
 1.Atu 1SM-put-PFV AUG-7-calabash where
 ‘Where did Atu put the calabash?’
- b. Atu a-biik-ile kugu i-ki-pale?
 1.Atu 1SM-put-PFV where AUG-7-calabash
 ‘Where did Atu put the calabash?’

(146) a. Atu a-biik-ile i-ki-pale pa-mesa.
 1.Atu 1SM-put-PFV AUG-7-calabash 16-table
 ‘Atu put a calabash on the table.’

b. Atu a-biik-ile pa-mesa i-ki-pale.
 1.Atu 1SM-put-PFV 16-table AUG-7-calabash
 ‘Atu put a calabash on the table.’

(147) a. Abiikire ifiki kuugu?
 a-biik-ile i-fi-ki kugu
 1SM-put-PFV AUG-8-what 17.where
 ‘What did she put where?’

b. Kangi ali n’ ikyura iki akibiikire musupa.
 Kangi a-li na i-ki-ura iki a-ki-biik-ile mu-supu
 also 1SM-be with AUG-7-frog 7.DEM.PROX 1SM-7OM-put-PFV 18-9.bottle
 ‘Also he has a frog which he put in a bottle.’

The postverbal free word-order seems to be restricted to recipient and theme. Kinyakyusa does not allow the question word for adverb to occur in the IAV position, as illustrated in (148). It does, however, allow multiple wh question words in the postverbal domain (as seen above), indicating the lack of a dedicated focus position.

(148) *Abiikire kuugu ifiki?
 a-biik-ile kugu i-fi-ki
 1SM-put-PFV 17.where AUG-8-what
 ‘What did she put where?’

1.e. Can non-arguments be the answer to a wh question in their canonical position?

Y

Either question can be answered by either answer, although there is a preference for Q-A congruence

(149) a. Abaana babikile ikipale pamesa.
 a-ba-ana ba-bik-ile i-ki-pale pa-mesa
 AUG-2-child 2SM-put-PFV AUG-7-calabash 16-table
 ‘Children put the calabash on the table.’

b. Abaana babikile pamesa ikipale.
 a-ba-ana ba-bik-ile pa-mesa i-ki-pale
 AUG-2-child 2SM-put-PFV 16-table AUG-7-calabash
 ‘Children put the calabash on the table.’

(150) a. Abaana babikile ikipale kugu?
 a-ba-ana ba-bik-ile i-ki-pale where
 AUG-2-child 2SM-put-PFV AUG-7-calabash where
 ‘Where did children put the calabash?’

b. Abaana babikile kugu ikipale?
 a-ba-ana ba-bik-ile where i-ki-pale

AUG-2-child 2SM-put-PFV where AUG-7-calabash
 ‘Where did children put the calabash?’

1.f. Can non-arguments that are modified by ‘only’ occur in their canonical position?
 Y

(151) Tukubuuka kukaja peene pakyaka.
 tu-ku-buuk-a ku-kaja pa-eene pa-ki-aka
 2SM-PRS-go-FV 17-home 16-only 16-7-Christmas
 ‘We go home (upcountry) only during Christmas.’

1.g. Can the external argument (EA) be questioned in the same position as internal arguments (IA)?

Y

1.h. Can the EA as the answer to a wh question occupy the same position as the IA in the answer to a wh question?

Y

Kinyakyusa allows subject inversion when the subject argument is focused **in a question (153)a** or answer (153)b. The focused subject is placed after the verb, similar to focused objects.

(152) Atulongoleele juani?
 a-tu-longol-el-e ju-ani
 1SM-1PL.OM-lead-APPL-SBJV 1-who
 ‘Who should lead us?’

(153) a. Jo jiriku (iji) jifwiire?
 jo ji-liku iji ji-fw-ile
 9.PRO 9-which 9.DEM.PROX 9SM-die-PFV
 ‘Which (animal) died?’

b. Jifwiire indeemba indiitu.
 ji-fw-ile i-n-leemba i-n-titu
 9SM-die-PFV AUG-9-hen AUG-9-black
 ‘The black hen died.’

(154) a. Fiki fikubopa?
 fiki fi-ku-bop-a
 what 8SM-PRS-run-FV
 ‘What is running?’

b. Jikubopa imbwa.
 ji-ku-bop-a i-mbwa
 9SM-PRS-run-FV AUG-9.dog
 ‘The dog runs.’

1.i. Can the EA modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position(s) as the IA with ‘only’?
 Y

In the VS structure (i.e. subject inversion), the subject can be modified by ‘only’, as shown in (156).

- (155) a. Bafwiire abakaangare (beene).
 ba-fw-ile a-ba-kaangale ba-ene
 2SM-die-PFV AUG-2-old.person 2-only
 ‘(only) (the) Old people died.’
- b. Babandu boosa bafwile aponile mweene underefa.
 a-ba-ndu ba-osa ba-fw-ile a-pon-ile mu-eene
 AUG-2-person 2-all 2SM-die-PFV 1SM-survive-PFV 1-only
 u-n-delefa
 AUG-1-driver
 ‘Everyone died; only the driver survived.’
- (156) Bikubopa beene abakangale.
 bi-ku-bop-a ba-ene a-ba-kangale
 2SM-run-FV 2-only AUG-2-elder
 ‘Only the elders run.’

2. Is there a dedicated topic position?

The preverbal position preferably hosts a topic but it is not fully dedicated for topic. We offer three reasons for this suggestion.

2.a. Can a subject⁶ interrogative phrase occur in the same position as a topical subject?
 Y

Subjects can be questioned in post- and preverbal position. In example (157), the what-question is asked, while in (158) and (159), the who-questions are asked.

- (157) Fiki figeele ulwiigi?
 fi-ki fi-igal-ile u-lu-igi
 8-what 8SM-close-PFV AUG-11-door
 ‘What closed the door?’
- (158) Juani abuukire kuugu?
 ju-ani a-buuk-ile kugu
 1-who 1SM-go-PFV where
 ‘Who went where?’
- (159) Juani akuuliire ifirato?
 ju-ani a-ku-ul-il-ire i-fi-lato
 1-who 1SM-2SG.OM-buy-APPL-PFV AUG-8-shoe
 ‘Who bought you shoes?’

There is a slight doubt, however, as to whether these are cleft constructions, considering the absence of the augment on the question words, which may indicate nominal predication.

⁶ ‘Subject’ here is understood as the single argument of an intransitive predicate, or the agent of a transitive predicate – not as the argument triggering subject marking.

2.b. Can the subject as answer to a subject wh question occur in the same position as a topical subject?

Y?

Arguments in preverbal position can marginally be answers to wh questions. In answering the wh question, arguments in the preverbal position must bear pre-prefixes, as shown in (160)b. Also, example (161)b could be an answer to (161)a.

(160) a. Juani afwiile (apa)?

ju-ani a-fw-ile apa
1-who 1SM-die-PFV 16.DEM.PROX
'Who has died here?'

b. #Utaata afwiire.

u-taata a-fw-ile
AUG-father 1SM-die-PFV
'My father died.' (not as an answer to 'who died' but only as announcement)

(161) a. (*i)Fiki fisatwiike?

i-fi-ki fi-satuk-ile
AUG-8-what 8SM-fall-PFV
'What has fallen?'

b. Imbwa jasatwike paasi.

i-mbwa ji-a-satuk-ile pa-asi.
AUG-9.dog 9SM-PST-fall-FV 16-down
'The dog fell down.'

2.c. Can a subject modified by 'only' occur in the same position as a topical subject?

Y

Lastly, arguments in preverbal position can be modified by 'only', as in (162). Even the use of jouju 'it is/is the one' (a cleft variant) is optional when 'only' modifies the argument in the preverbal position (163)-(164).

(162) Beene abapuuti batikubomba imbombo (abangi boosa bikubomba).

ba-ene a-ba-puuti ba-ti-ku-bomb-a i-mbombo a-ba-ngi
2-only AUG-2-priest 2SM-NEG-PRS-work-FV AUG-9.job AUG-2-other
ba-oosa bi-ku-bomb-a
2-all 2SM-PRS-work-FV
'Only the priests do not work. All the other people work.'

(163) Mweene Pita (jo uju) alyendile mwigali.

mu-eene Pita jo uju a-ali-end-ile mu-i-gali
1-only 1.Peter 1.PRO 1.DEM.PROX 1SM-PST-walk-PFV 18-5-car
'Only Peter came by car.'

(164) Mweene Salima jo uju ikufika.

mu-eene Salima jo uju i-ku-fika
1-only 1.Salima 1.PRO 1.DEM.MED 1SM-PRS-arrive-FV
'Only Salima is the one who arrives.'

2.d. Can a subject in athetic sentence occur in the same position as a subject in a categorical sentence?

Y

Thetic sentences can be S V (Adv) (165), S V O (166) and V S (167). This means that the preverbal position is not dedicated for topic.

(165) Iifula jikutima kula.

i-fula ji-ku-tim-a kula
AUG-9.rain 9SM-PRS-rain-FV there
'It's raining there.'

(166) Ikyura kikolire ulubwele.

i-ki-ula ki-kol-ile u-lu-bwele
AUG-7-frog 7SM-catch-PFV AUG-11-fly
'A/The frog caught a fly!'

(167) Afwiire (*u)taata.

a-fw-ile u-taata
1SM-die-PFV AUG-1.father
'My father died.'

2.e. Are topical arguments typically or preferably expressed in a preverbal position?

Y

(168) Po ikampeni akomelaga kuugu?

po i-kampeni a-kom-el-ag-a ku-ugu
then AUG-9.campaign 1SM-hit-APPL-HAB-FV 17-where
'Now where did he do campaigns?'

(169) Ikolokotwa ndiagile.

i-kolokotwa n-li-ag-ile
AUG-5.butterfly 1SG.SM-5OM-find-PFV
'I found the butterfly.'

BACK TO TOP

Makhuwa

Makhuwa (P31 in Guthrie's classification) is spoken in the north of Mozambique and the south of Tanzania. Ethnologue reports 3,960,000 speakers of the main language variant in Mozambique in 2017. The dialect studied here is Enahara, spoken on and around Ilha de Moçambique. The data were collected with a small group of native speakers, both male and female (25-70 years old), during various visits to Ilha de Moçambique between 2005 and 2019.

Conclusion

On the basis of the current parameters, it seems that word order is largely determined by information structure, but there is a difference in behaviour between the subject and the object.

1. Is there a dedicated focus position?

1.a. Can the recipient and theme be questioned in their canonical position?

N

All arguments and adjuncts must be questioned in IAV position:

(Van der Wal 2009: 225)

(170) a. CJ O-n-koh-al' éshéeni Apákhári?
2SG.SM-1OM-ask-PERF.CJ 9.what 1.Apakhari
'What did you ask Apakhari?'

b. CJ *Onkohalé Apákhári eshéeni?

1.b. Can the recipient and the theme be an answer to a wh question in their canonical positions?

N

Answers to these questions must also be IAV:

(Van der Wal 2006: 240, 241)

(171) a. Question: O-m-vah-alé esheení Teresínya?
2SG.SM-1OM-give-PERF what 1.Teresinha
'What have you given Teresinha?'

Answer: Ki-m-vah-alé ekanetá (Teresínya).
1SG.SM-1OM-give-PERF 9.pen (1.Teresinha)
'I gave (her/Teresinha) a pen.'

b. Question: O-m-vah-alé páni ekanéta?
2SG.SM-1OM-give-PERF who 9.pen
'Who did you give a pen?'

Answer: Ki-m-vah-alé Teresínya (ekanéta).
1SG.SM-1OM-give-PERF 1.Teresinha (9.pen)
'I gave (it/a pen) to Teresinha.'

1.c. Can the recipient and the theme be modified by 'only' in their canonical positions?

N?

Objects modified by ‘only’ are equally be in IAV, although this seems less strict than for interrogatives:

(Van der Wal 2009: 226)

- (172) a. CJ Mariyá o-m-vanh-é [Apútaalá paáhi] ekamitsa.
 1.Maria 1SM-1OM-give-PERF.CJ 1.Abdallah only 9.shirt
 ‘Maria gave only Abdallah a shirt.’
- b. CJ *Mariyá o-m-vanh-é ekamitsá [Apútaalá paáhi]
 1.Maria 1SM-1OM-give-PERF.CJ 9.shirt 1.Abdallah only
 Int: ‘Maria gave only Abdallah a shirt.’

(Van der Wal database)

- (173) a. Elélo Aptúli, omvanhé [kwaatu paáhi] [eyoóca], khamvánhé mwaánúni.
 elelo Aptuli o-n-vah-ale kwaatu paahi eyooca
 today 1.Abdul 1SM-1OM-give-PFV.CJ 1.cat only 9.food
 kha-o-n-vah-ale mwaanuni
 NEG-1SM-1OM-give-PFV 1.bird
 ‘Today Abdul gave food only to the cats, he didn't give to the bird.’
- b. Elélo Aptúli, omvanhé [eyoocá] [kwaátú paáhi], khamvánhé mwaánúni.
 elelo Aptuli o-n-vah-ale eyooca kwaatu paahi
 today 1.Abdul 1SM-1OM-give-PFV.CJ 9.food 1.cat only
 kha-o-n-vah-ale mwaanuni
 NEG-1SM-1OM-give-PFV 1.bird
 ‘Today Abdul gave food only to the cats, he didn't give to the bird.’

1.d. Can non-arguments be questioned in their canonical position?

N

(Van der Wal 2009: 225)

- (174) a. CJ O-n-rúw-áka tsayi eshíma?
 2SG.SM-PRS.CJ-stir-DUR how 9.shima
 ‘How do you make shima?’
- b. CJ *Onrúwáka eshímá tsayí?

(Van der Wal 2009: 226)

- (175) a. K-ííthh-el-e vayi ekokhóla?
 1SG-pour-APPL-OPT where 9.rubbish
 ‘Where shall I put the rubbish?’
- b. *Kííthhele ekokhólá vayi?

1.e. Can non-arguments be the answer to a wh question in their canonical position?

N

(no example available)

1.f. Can non-arguments that are modified by ‘only’ occur in their canonical position?

N

(Van der Wal database)

(176) Question: ‘Where do you smear nsiro?’

a. Ki-n-oott-a o-wiitho-ni paahi (nsiro).
1SG.SM-PRS.CJ-smear 17-14.face-LOC only 3.nsiro
‘I smear it only on my face (nsiro).’

b. #Ki-n-oott-a nsiro o-wiitho-ni paahi.
1SG.SM-PRS.CJ-smear 3.nsiro 17-14.face-LOC only
‘I smear it only on my face (nsiro).’

1.g. Can the external argument (EA) be questioned in the same position as internal arguments (IA)?

N

The subject/agent cannot be questioned in postverbal position.

(Van der Wal 2009: 196)

(177) a. *Aahi-phiya pani?
1SM.PST.PERF.DJ-arrive 1.who
Int: ‘Who arrived?’

(Van der Wal 2009: 267)

(178) a. O-n-thum-el-alé páni ekúwo?
2SG.SM-1-buy-APPL-PERF.CJ 1.who 9.cloth
‘Who did you buy a cloth for?’

b. Ekúwó o-n-thum-el-alé páni?
9.cloth 2SG.SM-1OM-buy-APPL-PERF.CJ 1.who
‘Who did you buy a cloth for?’

1.h. Can the EA as the answer to a wh question occupy the same position as the IA in the answer to a wh question?

N

See example below: conjoint form is not possible in subject inversion.

1.i. Can the EA modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position(s) as the IA with ‘only’?

N

The subject cannot be postverbal when it is modified by ‘only’. See explanation in Van der Wal (2009:227ff) on how these examples are pseudoclefts and not an inverted postverbal subject, as already visible from the scope of negation in (180).

(Van der Wal 2009: 229)

(179) ‘CJ’ O-khw-aalé mwanamwáne.
1-die-PERF.REL 1.child.PL
‘The one who died is a/the child.’

(Van der Wal 2009: 230)

- (180) a. ‘CJ’ E-hi-ki-moír-é ekaneta paáhi
 9-NEG-1SG-fall-PERF.REL 9.pen only
 (tsoo-kí-móra éthú ts-íncéene)
 10.PERF.DJ-fall 10.things 10-many
 ‘What I didn’t drop was just the pen (I dropped other things).’

2. Is there a dedicated topic position?

- 2.a. Can a subject⁷ interrogative phrase occur in the same position as a topical subject?
 2.b. Can the subject as answer to a subject wh question occur in the same position as a topical subject?
 2.c. Can a subject modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position as a topical subject?

N

Topics occur in the preverbal domain. Preverbal elements cannot be questioned, cannot be an answer, nor be modified by ‘only’:

(Van der Wal 2009: 170)

- (181) a. *Pani o-naa-wa?
 1.who 1SM-PRS.DJ-come
 Int: ‘Who comes?’
 b. *Eshéení o-náá-wéha?
 9.what 2SG.SM-PRS.DJ-look
 Int: ‘What do you see?’

(Van der Wal 2009: 209)

- (182) a. Ti paní o-mor-alé?
 COP 1.who 1-fall-PERF.REL
 ‘Who (is the one who) fell?’
 b. #Nlópwáná ólé oo-móra.
 1.man 1.DEM.III 1SM.PERF.DJ-fall
 ‘That man fell.’

(Van der Wal 2009: 171)

- c. O-n-khúúr’ esheeni?
 2SG.SM-PRS.CJ-chew 9.what
 ‘What are you eating?’
 d. #Ephaáwú | ki-náá-khúura.
 9.bread 1SG-PRS.DJ-chew
 ‘(the) Bread, I am eating it.’

(Van der Wal 2009: 171)

- (183) *Ekanétá y-oóriipa paáhi yoo-mór-éla vathí.
 9.pen 9-black only 9SM.PERF.DJ-fall-APPL 16-down
 Int: ‘Only the black pen fell down.’

⁷ ‘Subject’ here is understood as the single argument of an intransitive predicate, or the agent of a transitive predicate – not as the argument triggering subject marking.

- (184) *Coakí paáhi kaahí-rí-weha.
 1.Joaquim only 1SG.SM.PST.PERF.DJ-1OM-look
 Int: ‘I saw only Joaquim.’

2.d. Can a subject in athetic sentence occur in the same position as a subject in a categorical sentence?

N

Thetics are expressed by V(O)S order; preverbal subjects are topics.

(Van der Wal 2009: 191)

- (185) A-náá-khúmá maátsi íno!
 6SM-PRS.DJ-exit 6.water 17.DEM.I
 ‘Water is running here!’

- (186) Oo-vará ephepélé naphúl’ úule.
 1.PERF.DJ-grab 9.fly 1.frog 1.DEM.III
 ‘That frog caught a fly.’

2.e. Are topical arguments typically or preferably expressed in a preverbal position?

Y

Topical/given referents are typically expressed in the left periphery:

(Van der Wal 2009: 174)

- (187) Etthú ts-áú ts-ootééné o-r-eék-é
 10.things 10-POSS.2SG 10-all 2SG.SM-go-DUR-OPT
 wá-kúsh-ek-e!
 2SG.SM.SUBS-carry-DUR-OPT
 ‘All your things, go and take them!’

BACK TO TOP

Copi

Copi, S61 in Maho's (2009) update of Guthrie's classification, is spoken primarily in the provinces of Gaza and Inhambane in Mozambique, by around 303,740 people (INE 2010). The data reported here come from fieldwork by Nelsa Nhantumbo and Jenneke van der Wal in July 2019, Chidenguele, Mozambique, with two male and one female speaker aged between 24-42.

Conclusion

There seems to be a split topic-V-focus in Copi, but no dedicated postverbal focus position.

1. Is there a dedicated focus position?

1.a. Can the recipient and theme be questioned in their canonical position?

1.b. Can the recipient and the theme be an answer to a wh question in their canonical positions?

1.c. Can the recipient and the theme be modified by 'only' in their canonical positions?

N to all

In the postverbal domain, there is no requirement for the focused element to appear adjacent to the verb (IAV, as in various other zone S languages) or phrase-finally (like in Kirundi). Either position can host a wh-word, the answer to a wh question, and phrases modified by 'only'.

(188) Recipient wh

a. Vánánî:ngá másenó:rá ma:ní?
va-na-ning-a ma-senora mani
2SM-FUT-give-FV 6-carrots who
'Who will they give carrots?'

b. Hináníngá mà:ní díkáné:kà?
hi-na-ning-a mani di-kaneka
1PL.SM-FUT-give-FV who 5-mug
'Who will we give the mug to?'

(189) Theme wh

a. Vánáníngá ndiyâ:wé câ:ni?
va-na-ning-a ndiya-a-we cani
2SM-FUT-give-FV 1.sister-CONN-1.PRO what
'What will they give his sister?'

b. Vánámún!íngá cá:ní ndiyâ:wé?
va-na-mu-ning-a cani ndiya-a-we
2SM-FUT-1OM-give-FV what 1.sister-CONN-1.PRO
'What will they give his sister?'

(190) Question: 'Who will they give carrots?'

Váná(*mu)nî:ngá (másenó:rá) Go:mex.
va-na-mu-ning-a ma-senora Gomes
2SM-FUT-1OM-give-FV 6-carrots 1.Gomes
'They will give Gomes carrots.'

(191) Question: ‘Will you cook rice for the visitors?’

Ninábhikéla vafumba mba:ba.

ni-ná-bhik-el-a va-pfumba mbaba
1SG.SM-FUT-cook-APPL-FV 2-visitors 3.shima

‘I will cook shima for the visitors.’

(192) a. Theme only | Recipient

Vánáningá mábho:mú dwé | tshándza:na - vánambímún!íngá cíkê:ta.

va-na-ning-a ma-bhomu dwe tshandzana
2SM-FUT-give-FV 6-lemons only 1.niece

va-na-mbi-mu-ning-a ci-keta
2SM-FUT-NEG-1OM-give-FV 7-pineapple

‘They will give only lemons to the niece, they will not give her pineapple.’

b. Theme Recipient only

Vánáningá mábho:mú tshándza:na dwé - vánambímún!íngá cíkê:ta.

va-na-ning-a ma-bhomu tshandzana dwe
2SM-FUT-give-FV 6-lemons 1.niece only

va-na-mbi-mu-ning-a ci-keta
2SM-FUT-NEG-1OM-give-FV 7-pineapple

‘They will give only lemons to the niece, they will not give her pineapple.’

(193) a. Theme only Recipient

Vánáningá mábho:mú tshándza:na dwé - vánamb!íngá ndiyâ:we.

va-na-ning-a ma-bhomu tshandzana dwe
2SM-FUT-give-FV 6-lemons 1.niece only

va-na-mbi-ning-a ndiya-awe
2SM-FUT-NEG-1OM-give-FV 1.sister-POSS.1

‘They will give lemons only to the niece, they will not give to her sister.’

b. Recipient only | Theme

Vánáningá tshándzá:na dwé | mábho:mu - vánamb!íngá ndiyâ:we.

va-na-ning-a tshandzana dwe ma-bhomu
2SM-FUT-give-FV 1.niece only 6-lemons

va-na-mbi-ning-a ndiya-a-we
2SM-FUT-NEG-1OM-give-FV 1.sister-POSS.1

‘They will give lemons only to the niece, they will not give her to her sister.’

1.d. Can non-arguments be questioned in their canonical position?

N/Y

Questioning adverbs – there seems to be an IAV effect here, but

1. there are no ungrammatical examples of clause-final where/when/how
2. either order is accepted in multiple wh-clauses

(194) Álúngisile nja:ní mo:vha?
 a-lungis-ile njani movha
 1SM-repair-PFV how 3.car
 ‘How did he repair the car?’

(195) Urumété ha:yi mípâ:wu?
 u-rum-el-ite hayi mi-pawu
 2SG.SM-send-APPL-PFV where 4-cassava
 ‘Where did you send the cassava?’

(196) a. Pédrú ámáné c!ání aha:ni?
 Pedro a-man-e cani ahani
 1.Pedro 1SM-find-PFV what where
 ‘What did Pedro find where?’

b. Pédrú ámáné ha:yí ca:ni?
 Pedro a-man-e hayi cani
 1.Pedro 1SM-find-PFV where what
 ‘What did Pedro find where?’

1.e. Can non-arguments be the answer to a wh question in their canonical position?

Y

(197) a. U-na-y-a ditsiku Maputo?
 IPFV-2SG.SM-go-FV when Maputo
 ‘When are you going to Maputo?’

b. Ni-na-y-a Maputo ngu Sonto
 IPFV-2SG.SM-go-FV Maputo PREP Sunday
 ‘I will go to Maputo on Sunday.’

c. Ninaya ngu Sonto | Maputo.

1.f. Can non-arguments that are modified by ‘only’ occur in their canonical position?

Y

(198) Ni-na-y-a Maputo ngu Sonto dwe
 IPFV-1SG.SM-go-FV Maputo PREP Sunday only
 ‘I will go to Maputo only on Sunday.’

1.g. Can the external argument (EA) be questioned in the same position as internal arguments (IA)?

Y

1.h. Can the EA as the answer to a wh question occupy the same position as the IA in the answer to a wh question?

Y

1.i. Can the EA modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position(s) as the IA with ‘only’?

Y

Agent and patient can both be questioned and answered postverbally:

- (199) a. Kúwí:té má:ní?
ku-w-ite mani
17SM-fall-PFV who
‘Who fell?’
- b. Kúwí:té Máriíya.
ku-w-ite Mariya
17SM-fall-PFV 1.Maria
‘It was Maria who fell.’
- (200) a. Kúndíndá ma:ni cítu:lu?
ku-ndind-a mwani ci-tulu
17SM-pull-FV who 7-chair
‘Who is pulling the chair?’
- b. Kúndíndá mwán!á:ná cítu:lu.
ku-ndind-a mwanana ci-tulu
17SM-pull-FV 1.child 7-chair
‘A child is pulling the chair.’
(also OK as answer to ‘Is a dog pulling the chair?’)
- (201) a. Teré:za átíyóká ca:ni?
Teresa a-ti-yok-a cani
1.Teresa 1SM-IPFV-bake-FV what
‘What was Teresa baking?’
- b. íÍ nc!ání Teré:za angatíyò:ka?
i ncani Tereza a-nga-ti-yok-a
COP what 1.Teresa 1SM-REL-IPFV-bake-FV
‘What was Teresa baking?’
- c. Téréza átíy!óká díbhoólu.
Tereza a-ti-yok-a di-bholu
1.Teresa 1SM-IPFV-bake-FV 5-cake
‘Teresa was baking a/the cake.’

Default Agreement Inversion can have athetic interpretation or narrow subject focus, but with a transitive predicate only the narrow subject focus is allowed.

- (202) Kúhókile mwanáná dwe.
ku-hok-ile mw-anana dwe
17SM-arrive-PFV 1-child only
‘Only the child arrived.’

- (203) Kututúmí:lé Gomes dwe.
ku-tutum-ile Gomes dwe
17SM-run-PFV 1.Gomes only
‘Only Gomes ran.’

- (204) (You are wondering what the noise is that you hear, and a friend answers this.)

Ko-ph!índa mǝ:vha.
 ku-o-phind-a movha
 17SM-PROG-pass-FV 3.car
 ‘A car is passing by.’

(205) (Who is drawing water? / #What is Nelsa drawing?)

Kúr!éká mâ:tí Nê:l̥sa.
 ku-rek-a mati Nelsa
 17SM-draw-FV 6.water 1.Nelsa
 ‘Nelsa is drawing water.’

(206) Question: ‘Who is cooking rice?’ / ‘#What is Luisa cooking?’

Kubhiká Lúízá mpû:nga.
 ku-bhik-a Luisa mpunga
 17SM-cook-FV 1.Luisa 3.rice
 ‘Luisa cooked rice.’

2. Is there a dedicated topic position?

2.a. Can a subject⁸ interrogative phrase occur in the same position as a topical subject?

2.b. Can the subject as answer to a subject wh question occur in the same position as a topical subject?

N

The preverbal subject cannot be a question or an answer to a wh question, whereas topical subjects typically appear preverbally:

(207) *Mání afi:l̥é?
 mani a-f-ile
 who 1SM-die-PFV
 ‘Who died?’

(208) Question: ‘Who is cooking rice?’

#Luiza abhika mpunga
 Luisa a-bhik-a mpunga
 1.Luisa 1SM-cook-FV 3.rice
 ‘Luisa is cooking rice.’

2.c. Can a subject modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position as a topical subject?

N?

It is unclear whether preverbal ‘only’ is fully acceptable for subjects. Preverbal non-subjects cannot be modified by dwe ‘only’. This may be a subject-nonsubject asymmetry which seems to be impossible to capture otherwise.

(209) Kupíndilé tixaka tá tî:ngí tá síha:ri | kámbé pho:ngó dwé yíwî:te.
 ku-pind-ile ti-xaka t-a t-ingi t-a si-hari
 17SM-pass-PFV 10-kind 10-CONN 10-many 10-CONN 8-animals

⁸ ‘Subject’ here is understood as the single argument of an intransitive predicate, or the agent of a transitive predicate – not as the argument triggering subject marking.

kambe phongo dwe yi-w-ile
 but 9.goat only 9SM-fall-PFV
 ‘There passed many types of animals, but only a/the goat fell.’

(210) ?Gomes dwé atutúmi:lé.
 Gomes dwe a-tutum-ile
 1.Gomes only 1SM-run-PFV
 ‘Only Gomes ran.’

(211) #Mimvhúnja dwé yíbê:te.
 mi-mvhunja dwe yi-bel-ite
 4-rabbit only 4SM-enter-PFV
 ??‘Only the rabbits entered.’
 ‘The rabbits just entered (and didn’t do anything else).’

(212) Mwanáná (*dwé) ahóki:le.
 mw-anana dwe a-hok-ile
 1-child only 1SM-arrive-PFV
 ‘(only) The child arrived.’

(213) Mpu:nga (*dwé) Luiza óbhĩ:ka.
 mpunga dwe Luisa a-o-bhik-a
 3.rice only 1.Luisa 1SM-PROG-cook-FV
 ‘(only) The rice Luisa is cooking.’

2.d. Can a subject in athetic sentence occur in the same position as a subject in a categorical sentence?

2.e. Are topical arguments typically or preferably expressed preverbally?

Y

Non-subjects may occur in the left periphery of the sentence when their referents are currently accessible information.

(214) Question: ‘Are you picking oranges for Ana or for Helena?’
 Madímwa yá nihaphé:lá A:na.
 ma-dimwa ya ni-haph-el-a Ana
 6-orange 6.DEM.PROX 1SG.SM-pick-APPL-FV 1.Ana
 ‘These oranges I’m picking for Ana.’

(215) Question: ‘How can I break a coconut?’
 Kufá:ya ka dikhòkhò | kuni mamahelo mambí:dí.
 ku-fay-a k-a di-khokho ku-ni ma-mahelo ma-mbidi
 15-break-FV 15-CONN 5-coconuts 15-with 6-way 6-two
 ‘There are two ways to break coconuts.’

BACK TO TOP

Changana

Changana, S53 in Maho's (2009) updated Guthrie classification, is spoken in the south of Mozambique by XXX people. The mutually intelligible variant Tsonga is spoken in South Africa. The data reported here were collected in Magude, Maputo province, Mozambique, by Aurélio Simango and Jenneke van der Wal in 2019, with three male speakers aged between 25-51.

1. Is there a dedicated focus position?

1.a. Can the recipient and theme be questioned in their canonical position?

Y

It seems that the order BEN/R-TH is quite strict and each argument is questioned in situ.

(216) a. *U(mu)xavélé ngúvú ma:ni?
u-xav-el-a nguvu mani
2SG.SM-buy-APPL-PFV.CJ 9.cloth who
'Who did you buy a capulana?'

b. Uxavélé !ma:ní ngu:vu?
u-xav-el-a mani nguvu
2SG.SM-buy-APPL-PFV.CJ who 9.cloth
'Who did you buy a capulana?'

(217) A:na áxavélé vámakwá:vú yi:ní?
Ana a-xav-el-e va-makwavu yi-ni
1.Ana 1SM-buy-APPL-PFV.CJ 2-sisters 9-what
'What did Ana buy her sisters?'

(218) a. *Kokwá:ná ányíké va-ts'óngwa:na yî:ní?
kokwana a-nyik-e va-ts'ongwana yi-ni
1.grandma 1SM-give-PFV.CJ 2-children 9-what
'What did grandmother give the children?'

b. Kokwá:ná ányíké yí:ní va-ts'óngwa:na?
kokwana a-nyik-e yi-ni va-ts'ongwana
1.grandma 1SM-give-PFV.CJ 9-what 2-children
'What did grandmother give the children?'

1.b. Can the recipient and the theme be an answer to a wh question in their canonical positions?

Y

(219) Question: 'What did the teacher give the children?'

a. Mujónzí:sí ániké svítsá:ló vátsóngwa:na.
mu-jonzisi a-nik-e svi-tsalo va-tsongwana
1-teacher 1SM-give-PFV.CJ 8-writing.things 2-children
'The teacher gave pencils to the children.'

b. Mujónzí:sí ániké vátsóngwáná svítsa:lo.
mu-jonzisi a-nik-e va-tsongwana svi-tsalo

1-teacher 1SM-give-PFV.CJ 2-children 8-writing.things
 ‘The teacher gave the children pencils.’

(220) Question: ‘Who did the teacher give a book?’

Mujónzí:sí áník!é Xjosé (a) bu:ku.

mu-jonzisi	a-nik-e	Jose	a	buku
1-teacher	1SM-give-PFV.CJ	1.Jose	A	5.book

‘The teacher gave José a book.’

1.c. Can the recipient and the theme be modified by ‘only’ in their canonical positions?

Y

It is possible for ‘only’ to modify either argument, but there seems to be a preference for IAV.

(221) Question: ‘Did she get water for the goats and the cows?’

a. Tombá:sí á-kel-á mbú:tí má:tí ntsena.
 1.Tombasi 1SM-scoop-APPL-FV 6-water 9.goat only
 ‘Tombasi scooped water only for the goats.’

b. Tombá:sí ákelá mbú:tí nts!éná ma:ti.

Tombasi	a-k-el-a	mbuti	ntsena	ma-ti
1.Tombasi	1SM-scoop-APPL-FV	9.goat	only	6-water

‘Tombasi scooped water only for the goats.’ (not other animals)

(222) a. Mujónzí:sí áník!é svítsá:ló ntsé:ná

vátsóngwa:na.

mu-jonzisi	a-nik-e	svi-tsalo	ntsena	va-tsongwana
1-teacher	1SM-give-PFV.CJ	8-writing.things	only	2-children

‘The teacher gave pencils only to the children.’ (remark speaker: maybe there were adults here too)

b. Mujónzí:sí áník!é ntsé:ná svítsá:ló vátsóngwa:na.

mu-jonzisi	a-nik-e	ntsena	svi-tsalo	va-tsongwana
1-teacher	1SM-give-PFV.CJ	only	8-writing.things	2-children

‘The teacher gave only pencils to the children.’

1.d. Can non-arguments be questioned in their canonical position?

Y/N

Locative ‘where’ must appear IAV, it seems, whereas temporal ‘which day’ can be in either position. It remains to be seen whether this is a D-linking effect.

(223) a. U-xav-é kwíí a huku?
 2SG.SM-buy-PFV.CJ where A chicken

b. *U-xav-é a huku kwíí?
 2SG.SM-buy-PFV.CJ A chicken where
 ‘Where did you buy the chicken?’

(224) a. Ukumé lá:píx síkú mu:ni?
 u-kum-e lapix siku muni
 2SG.SM-find-PFV.CJ 9.pencil 5.day when?
 ‘Which day did you find a pencil?’

b. Uyíkúmé yi:nkámá mûní (a) la:píx?
 u-yi-kum-e yi-nkama mu-ni a lapix
 2SG.SM-9OM-find-PFV.CJ ?-3.hour when A 5.pencil
 ‘At what time did you find the pencil?’

- 1.e. Can non-arguments be an answer to a wh question in their canonical position?
 1.f. Can non-arguments that are modified by ‘only’ appear in their canonical position?
 1.g. Can the external argument (EA) be questioned in the same position as internal arguments (IA)?
 Y

(225) Kú-kók-á !má:ni xí-tu:lu?
 17SM-pull-FV who 7-chair
 ‘Who (of these people) is pulling the chair?’

- 1.h. Can the EA as the answer to a wh question occupy the same position as the IA in the answer to a wh question?

(226) Question: ‘What is in the pot?’
 Kú-svék-íw-á féjau.
 17SM-cook-PASS-FV beans
 ‘Beans were cooked.’

(227) (Hearing a noise on top of the mini-bus) **CHECK**
 Kú-tsútsúm-á hu:ku.
 17SM-run-FV 9.chicken
 ‘There is a chicken running.’

- 1.i. Can the EA modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position(s) as the IA with ‘only’?
 Y – ‘only’ associates with the subject even in VSO order

(228) Kú-pím-él-á mu-xávísí rá:lí ntse:na.
 17SM-measure-APPL 1-seller tapioca only
 ‘Only the seller is measuring tapioca.’

2. Is there a dedicated topic position?

- 2.a. Can a subject interrogative phrase occur in the same position as a topical subject?
 N
 Subjects cannot be questioned preverbally.

(229) *Mani a-heetshemul-ile?
 who 1 SM-sneeze-PFV.DJ
 ‘Who sneezed?’

Instead, a cleft or inversion construction may be used:

- (230) a. Kú-heetsemul-é mâ:ni?
 17SM-sneeze-PFV.CJ who
 ‘Who sneezed?’
- b. Í 'mání a-nga-heetshemû:l-a?
 COP who 1SM-PST.REL-sneeze-FV
 ‘Who (is it that) sneezed?’

2.b. Can the subject as answer to a subject wh question occur in the same position as a topical subject?

N

The answer to a subject question cannot be preverbal.

- (231) Question: ‘Who sneezed?’
 #Xjosé a-heetshémul-î:le.
 1.Jose 1SM-sneeze-PFV.DJ
 ‘Jose sneezed.’

Instead, a cleft is used (and an inversion construction would also be possible):

- (232) (i) Mî:na ní-nga-heetsemû:l-a.
 COP 1SG.PRO 1SG.SM-sneeze-FV
 ‘I sneezed.’

2.c. Can a subject modified by ‘only’ occur in the same position as a topical subject?

N

- (233) *Ntsena kokwana a-luz-ile.
 only 1.grandparent 1SM-lose-PFV.DJ
 Int: ‘Only grandpa died.’

2.d. Can a subject in athetic sentence occur in the same position as a subject in a categorical sentence?

No conclusive data.

2.e. Are topical arguments typically or preferably expressed in a preverbal position?

Y

- (234) Nsí:mú u-ngá-nyík-!íw-á hí hõ:sí y-á
 músa:va.
 5.machamba 2SG.SM-POT-give-PASS-FV P 9.chair 9-CONN ground
 ‘You can be given a machamba by the regulo.’

- (235) A hú:kú nixavé (á) bazá:r, a senó:rá
 A 9.chicken 1SG.SM-buy-PFV.CJ A 5.market A 5.carrot

ni(ri)xavé á ndlele:ni.
1SG.SM-buy-PFV.CJ A 9.road-LOC
'The chicken I bought at the market, the carrot(s) I bought along the way.'

BACK TO TOP

Abbreviations

ASSOC	associative
AUG	augmentative
CJ	conjoint
CM	contrastive topic marker
CONN	connective
DEM	demonstrative
DJ	disjoint
EXP	experiencer
F.PST	far past
FV	final vowel
HAB	habitual
IC	inner causative
IMPF	imperfect
INT	intensifier
MED	medial
N.PST	near past
OM	object marking
OPT	optative
PERF	perfect
POT	potential
PREP	preposition
PRO	pronoun
REP	repetitive
RM	relative marker
SM	subject marking)
STAT	stative
SUBS	substantive
YPST	yesterday past