Pre-verbal focus in Kisikongo (H16a, Bantu)

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1 Introduction

The present paper aims at describing different pre-verbal focus strategies in Kisikongo (H16a), spoken in the vicinity of Mbanza Kongo, northern Angola. This western Bantu language is part of the Kikongo Language Cluster (KLC), stretching from southern Gabon to northern Angola, including Cabinda and parts of Congo-Brazzaville and Congo-Kinshasa. Kisikongo exhibits a clause-internal pre-verbal argument focus position, which has rarely been reported in Bantu languages, except in Mbuun (B87) (Bostoen and Mundeke 2012) and Nsong (B85d) (Koni Muluwa and Bostoen, this volume), both spoken in the neighboring Kwilu region of the DRC. The more extensively studied eastern and southern Bantu languages generally have a post-verbal argument focus position (cf. Watters 1979, Morimoto 2000, Creissels 2004, Güldemann 2007, Buell 2009, van der Wal 2009, among others). In addition to this mono-clausal argument focus strategy, Kisikongo also relies on different bi-clausal constructions to focus arguments, i.e. cleft-constructions.

The Kisikongo data presented in this paper originate from different sources: two Kisikongo grammars (Bentley 1887, Ndonga Mfuwa 1995), elicitation with a native Kisikongo speaker living in Belgium (Manuel André, born in 1974 in Buku Zau, near Mbanza Kongo, Angola), a digital corpus consisting of three religious texts by the Jehovah’s Witnesses (JW’s Onkanda, JW’s Tusansu, JW’s Fimpanga), an oral corpus of civil war testimonies collected in Mbanza Kongo by Inge Brinkman (Ghent University) in 2003 and also transcribed by her, and an oral corpus on culinary recipes collected by Birgit Ricquier (RMCA) with native Kisikongo speakers in Antwerp.

In Section 2, I describe the clause-internal pre-verbal focus position of non-subject arguments in Kisikongo, both functionally and syntactically. I concentrate on non-subject arguments because they trigger SOV order, while

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1 The PhD research of the author is funded through a fellowship of the Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO), and is carried out under supervision of Prof. Dr. Koen Bostoen and Prof. Dr. Gilles-Maurice de Schryver. I am grateful for their feedback on this paper and for letting me use the Kikongo text corpus of the KongoKing Research Group. I would also like to thank the organizers and participants of the workshop ‘BantuSynPhonIS: Preverbal Domains’ for their valuable comments on this research.

ZAS Papers in Linguistics 57, 2004: 95 – 122
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subjects do not. In Section 3, different types of cleft-constructions are presented with special attention to their structural characteristics, mainly variations in word order by lack of sufficient tone data. Preliminary conclusions are presented in Section 4.

2 Mono-clausal pre-verbal focus

2.1 IBV as focus position

Kisikongo exhibits a pre-verbal focus position, which can be considered the ‘immediately before the verb’ (IBV) position, as opposed to the ‘immediately after the verb’ (IAV) focus position found in eastern and southern Bantu languages. I use the term IBV to distinguish from the clause-initial position used for topics, where subjects commonly occur. This SOV word order, which is linked with object focus, is illustrated in (1).

(1) KISIKONGO² (Ndonga Mfuwa 1995: 93-96)

Ósè nàni kánètè?
o-ø-se³ [nani]FOC ka-nat idi
AUG₁-NP₅-father who SC₁-carry-PRF
‘WHOM did father carry?’

Ósè mwànà kánètè
o-ø-se [mu-ana]FOC ka-nat idi
AUG₁-NP₅-father NP₁-child SC₁-carry-PRF
‘Father carried A CHILD.’

Adverbs and auxiliaries can come inbetween the focused constituent and the main verb. In (2), the focused object is followed by the adverb kaka, ‘only’.

² The following abbreviations are used: APPL = applicative, AUGₓ = augment of class x, CONNₓ = connective, COP = copula, DEMₓ = demonstrative pronoun of class x, EXPL = expletive, FV = final vowel, FOC = focus, IPFV = imperfective, LOC = locative, NPₓ = nominal prefix of class x, NTR = neuter, OCₓ = object concord of class x, PART= particle, PASS = passive, PPₓ = pronominal prefix of class x, POSSₓ = possessive of class x, PRF = perfect, PRNₓ = pronoun of class x, PST = past, RELₓ = relative pronoun of class x, SCₓ = subject concord of class x, INTR = intransitive.

³ The noun se, ‘father’, has a zero noun prefix, which is otherwise typical of class 5, but it does trigger agreement in class 1, as evidenced by the augment and the subject concord on the verb. Such semantically motivated animate concord is common in Bantu (cf. Maho 1999: 122-126). The Kikongo nouns nkongo, ‘hunter’, and nzambi, ‘God’, which formally belong to class 9, behave in the same way (cf. examples infra).
(2) **KISIKONGO**  
*(JW’s Onkanda 2013: 61)*

*Kansi, nkanikinu mosi kaka kabavana.*  
kansi [N-kanikinu mosi]_{FOC} kaka ka-ba-van-a  
but NP\_threat one only SC\_OC\_2-give-FV  
‘However, there was one restriction.’

*Literally: ‘But, only ONE THREAT did he give them.’*

In (3), the pre-posed object *onkangwandi*, ‘his people’ precedes both the auxiliary verb and the infinitive (cf. also section 2.2.1).

(3) **KISIKONGO**  
*(Fieldwork JDK Brussels 2014)*

*Oyándi onkangwandi kelénd’o sádísa.*  
o-yandi o-N-kangu andi ke⁴-lend-a  
AUG\_1-PRN\_1 AUG\_3-NP\_3-people POSS\_1 SC\_1-can-FV  
o-sadis-a  
AUG\_15-help-FV  
‘He can help his people.’

SOV in Kisikongo can be considered to be a mono-clausal focus construction, since the object is clause-internal. This is firstly indicated by the fact that the subject can precede it, and more importantly, by the fact that it does not trigger the use of a resumptive pronoun after the verb. As shown in (4), clause-external objects are referred to by such a resumptive pronoun. The objects *o mambu mama*, ‘these problems’ and *olualu o lumbu*, ‘this area’ are left-dislocated here and constitute the topics of the three sentences. Within the main clause, they are co-referenced by the pronouns mo (class 6) and lo (class 11). Examples (b) and (c) include a so-called ‘fronted-infinitive construction’ (FIC), which is incompatible with pre-verbal focused objects (De Kind, Dom et al. forthcoming).

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4 In accordance with Ndonga Mfuwa (1995: 129, 132, 206), we analyse here the subject markers ke-, be- and me- as free allomorphs of respectively ka- (class 1), ba- (class 2) and ma- (class 6). An alternative analysis, which needs more research, would be to consider these prefixes as a contraction of ka/-ba/-ma- with a vocalic TAM marker, such as the present marker -i- found in several western Kikongo varieties (cf. Dom 2013).
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(4) KISIKONGO (Fieldnotes IB 2003)

a. **O mambu mama twasisilua mo.**
   
   o-MA-ambu mama
   
   AUG₆-NP₆-matter DEM₆
   
   [tu-a-sis-il-u-a]ᶠᵒᶜ mo
   
   SC₁ᵖˡ-PST-leave-APPL-PASS-FV PRN₆
   
   ‘These problems that they left us’
   
   Literally: ‘These problems, they LEFT them to us’

b. **O mambu mama tanga tutanganga mo.**
   
   o-MA-ambu mama [tang-a]ᶠᵒᶜ tu-tang-a
   
   AUG₆-NP₆-matter DEM₆ read-FV SC₁ᵖˡ-read-FV
   
   mo
   PRN₆
   
   ‘These problems, we WILL handle them.’

c. **Olualuolumbu langidila tulangidilanga lo.**
   
   o-lwalu o-lu-mbu
   
   AUG₁¹-DEM₁¹ AUG₁¹-NP₁¹-enclosure
   
   [langidil-a]ᶠᵒᶜ tu-langidil-ang-a lo
   
   protect-FV SC₁ᵖˡ-protect-IPFV-FV PRN₁¹
   
   ‘We are protecting our area’
   
   Literally: ‘This enclosure, we are PROTECTING it.’

2.1.1 Object focus

Although it has been shown for several languages that an alternation in focus strategies exists between so-called ‘information focus’ (or assertive focus), in which the focused constituent conveys new information, and ‘contrastive’ or ‘identificational focus’, in which alternatives to the focused constituent are excluded (cf. Kiss 1998), this distinction does not seem to be made formally in Kisikongo. In this regard, the IBV position can be considered a general focus position in Kisikongo, since both ‘information’ and ‘contrastive focus’ are expressed IBV. For object focus, this results in an (S)OV order. Information focus on the object is illustrated in (5), in which the subject is only referred to anaphorically because it constitutes given information, resulting in an OV order. Example (1) illustrates information focus on the object in which the lexical subject is repeated, resulting in an SOV order.
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(5) KISIKONGO (JW’s Onkanda 2013: 210)
Nki bavavanga atantu a Mose? Moyo andi bavavanga.
[nki]FOC ba-vav-ang-a a-tantu a mose
what SC2-seek-IPFV-FV NP2-enemy CONN Moses
[mu-oyo andi]FOC ba-vav-ang-a
NP6-soul POSS1 SC2-seek-IPFV-FV
‘WHAT were Moses’ enemies seeking? They were seeking (to take) HIS LIFE.’

Contrastive focus on the object can also be conveyed through SOV order, as in (6).

(6) KISIKONGO (JW’s Onkanda 2013: 129)
Muna voya vo menga ma Abele mekunkazila, o Nzambi moyo andi kayika. Kaini moyo Abele kavonda,
muna voy-a vo ma-enga ma abele
DEM18 speak-FV that NP6-blood CONN6 Abel
me-ku-n-kaz-il-a o-N-zambi [mu-oyo
SC6-EXPL-OC1-yell-APPL-FV AUG1-NP9-God NP3-soul
andi]FOC ka-yik-a kaini [mu-oyo abele]FOC
POSS1 SC1-referring.to-FV Cain NP3-soul Abel
ka-vond-a
SC1-kill-FV
‘When God spoke of Abel’s blood [that was crying out to him], he was speaking of Abel’s life. Cain had taken Abel’s life’
Literally: ‘In saying that the blood of Abel was crying at him, God was referring to his SOUL. Cain had killed Abel’s SOUL.’

Bentley (1887: 708, 716, 718) already observed this pre-verbal focus position in the late 19th century. He associates the examples given in (7), (8) and (9) with the notion of ‘emphasis’.

(7) 19TH CENTURY KISIKONGO (Bentley 1887: 708)
E no abiza katungidi.
[e-N-zo abiza]FOC ka-tung-idi
AUG9-NP9-house nice SC1-build-PRF
‘He built A NICE HOUSE.’
He further observes that “[t]he object when in its normal position (i.e. following the verb) is always preceded by the article [augment] in affirmative, but never in negative clauses. When the object of a verb in an affirmative clause is brought to the head of the sentence, it is not preceded by the article [augment]” (Bentley 1887: 718, italics in original). This suggests that the OV order and the use of the augment involve some kind of pragmatic conditioning. The pre-posed object in (10), the example which follows Bentley’s observation, indeed misses the augment. However, such is not the case in (7).

In the contemporary Kikongo texts I consulted, pre-verbal objects are very rarely found with the augment, thus confirming Bentley’s claim. This is also in line with Ndonga Mfuwa’s observation that absence of the augment may indicate focus on its constituent: “l’absence de l’augment devant le nominal sujet ou objet indique parfois la focalisation de celui-ci” (Ndonga Mfuwa 1995: 176). Ndonga Mfuwa (1995: 177) illustrates this with the examples in (11) and (12) below, showing that the same alternation exists with subject focus. In the first example, the subject is not focused and bears an augment. The augmentless example in (12) is an instance of subject focus, and is translated by means of a cleft-construction in French (copied in English), indicating its focus interpretation. Moreover, the verb bears a high tone subject concord, which is characteristic of relative clauses, at least in Ndonga Mfuwa’s (1995) data.
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(11) **KISIKONGO** (Ndonga Mfuwa 1995: 177)

Énzò yìvídì.

e-N-zo yi-vi-idi
AUG$_9$-NP$_9$-house SC$_9$-burn-PRF
‘The house burnt down.’
‘La maison est brûlée.’

(12) **KISIKONGO** (Ndonga Mfuwa 1995: 177)

Nzò yívìdì.

[N-zo]$_{FOC}$ yi-vi-idi
NP$_9$-house SC$_9$-burn-PRF
‘It’s a House that burnt down.’
‘C’est une maison qui est brûlée.’

2.1.2 *Adjunct focus*

Adjuncts are focused in exactly the same way as objects, i.e. in IBV position. For information focus, this is illustrated in example (13).

(13) **KISIKONGO** (Ndonga Mfuwa 1995: 94-97)

Ósè vè kávàtìdi?

o-ø-se [ve]$_{FOC}$ ka-vat-idi
AUG$_1$-NP$_5$-father where SC$_1$-cultivate-PRF
‘WHERE did the father cultivate?’

Ósè và n’dìmbà kávàtìdi.

o-ø-se [va N-dimba]$_{FOC}$ ka-vat-idi
AUG$_1$-NP$_5$-father NP$_{16}$ NP$_3$-valley SC$_1$-cultivate-PRF
‘The father cultivated IN A VALLEY.’

The example in (14) illustrates contrastive focus on the adjunct. The exclusive reading is strengthened here by the focus marker *kwandi*. This locative possessive pronoun of class 17 (*ku-andi*) is used as a focus marker throughout the KLC.
(14) **KISIKONGO**  
_(JW’s Tusansu 2013: 23)_

**Ozevo, o Yosefe wabakula vo mu luzolo lwa Nzambi kwandi kayendela kuna Engipito.**

| ozevo     | o-Yosefe  | wa-bakul-a | vo | [mu     |
|----------|----------|------------|----|---------|
| so        | AUG₁-Joseph | SC₁-understand-FV | that | LOC₁₈ |
| lu-zola   | lwa     | N-zambi]^[FOC kwandi |
| NP₁₁-will | CONN₁₁ | NP₉-God | LOC.POSS₁₇ |
| ka-end-il-a | kuna | Engipito |
| SC₁-go-APPL-FV | DEM₁₇ | Egypt |

‘So Joseph can see that it is God who has sent him down to Egypt, and for a good reason.’

Literally: ‘So Joseph understands that THROUGH THE WILL OF GOD [really] he went to Egypt.’

The pre-verbal focus position for adjuncts was also noticed by Bentley (1887: 713), for which he again evokes the term ‘emphasis’: “Adverbs of manner compounded with a locative preposition are placed at the head of the sentence, and require the applied form in the verb; such is also the case when an adverbial clause, introduced by a locative, takes the emphatic position at the head of the sentence” (Bentley 1887: 713). The examples provided by Bentley (1887) are given in (15) and (16).

Although no ‘emphatic’ function is attributed to the example in (15), it does probably have a focusing function too. The adjunct *ku makaxi*, ‘in anger’, does not just occupy the clause-initial position, or a left-dislocated clause-external position, since the verb takes a dedicated inversion/relative SC₁ *ka*—(cf. *infra*). From Bentley’s literal translation, such a left-dislocation analysis could be argued for because the locative is repeated here [in an angry mood, he is doing it in]. The resumptive pronoun *kio*, however, belongs to class 7 and refers to ‘it’ in the English translation.

(15) **19TH CENTURY KISIKONGO**  
_(Bentley 1887: 713)_

**Ku makasi kevangilanga kio.**

| ku   | ma-kasi | ke-vang-il-ang-a | kio |
|------|---------|-----------------|-----|
| LOC₁₇ | NP₆-anger | SC₁-do-APPL-IPFV-FV | PRN₇ |

‘He is doing it IN AN ANGRY MOOD.’

[Literal translation by Bentley]: ‘In an angry mood he is doing it in.’

Similarly, *mo* in example (16) probably refers to class 6 (since gender 5/6 also includes a series of objects), rather than class 18. Otherwise, the object would not be expressed, which would not be in line with the English translation provided by Bentley.
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(16) 19TH CENTURY KISIKONGO  
Muna nzo andi twawudila mo.  
[muna N-zo andi]_{FOC} tu-a-wul-il-a  
DEM$_{18}$ NP$_9$-house POSS$_1$ SC$_{1pl}$-PST-break-APPL-FV  
mo  
PRN$_6$  
‘IN HIS HOUSE we broke them.’

Other examples of pre-verbal adjuncts given by Bentley are shown in (17) and (18). It is interesting to note that the temporal adverb ezono, ‘yesterday’, does not trigger an applicative on the verb, while (formal) locative adverbs as in (15), (16) and (18) do.

(17) 19TH CENTURY KISIKONGO  
Ezono twaluaka.  
[e-zono]_{FOC} tu-a-lwak-a  
NP$_5$-yesterday SC$_{1pl}$-PST-arrive-FV  
‘We arrived YESTERDAY.’

(18) 19TH CENTURY KISIKONGO  
Muna nzo eto bakotele.  
[muna N-zo eto]_{FOC} ba-kot-il-idi  
DEM$_{18}$ NP$_9$-house POSS$_{1pl}$ SC$_2$-enter-APPL-FV  
‘They entered INTO OUR HOUSE.’

2.1.3 Focus on VP

The focusing of the entire verbal phrase may also involve an SOV or SXV order, as illustrated in (19) to (22). On the one hand, it is not surprising that VP focus is expressed by an SOV/SXV order, given the analogy with object and adjunct focus. It is interesting, though, that focus on the verbal phrase or verbal predicate is considered “the universally unmarked type of focus structure” (Van Valin and LaPolla 1997: 206), which might be an indication of canonical word order (cf. Mithun 1987: 281, Dryer 2007: 76). The examples listed below are instances of ‘marked’ or ‘explicit’ VP focus, i.e. the VP is explicitly inquired in the context. In these cases, SOV is strongly preferred. In cases of ‘unmarked’ VP focus, i.e. the ‘topic-comment’ structure, however, also SVO is allowed, which is common for Bantu languages (cf. example (29) infra). On-going statistical research on the distribution of the SOV/SXV order in Kisikongo aims
at clarifying to what extent this order is becoming more frequent compared to the canonical Bantu SVO order.

(19) KISIKONGO (Fieldwork BR Antwerp 2014)
Yándi zólele zayá [si euh] vó kúna Mbanzá Kóngo madyóko tulambánga
yandi Ø-zol-idi zay-a vo [kuna N-banza
PRN₁ SC₁-want-PRF know-FV if DEM₁₇ NP₀-city
kongo ma-dyoko tu-lamb-ang-a]FOC
Kongo NP₆-cassave SC₁₁-cook-IPFV-FV
‘She wants to know if we PREPARE CASSAVA IN MBANZA KONGO.’

(20) KISIKONGO (JW’s Tusansu 2013: 67)
Ku vita bekwendanga.
[ku Ø-vita be-kwend-ang-a]FOC
NP₁₇ NP₀-war SC₂-go-IPFV-FV
[Do you know who these men are and what they are doing?] ‘They ARE GOING OUT TO BATTLE.’

(21) KISIKONGO (JW’s Tusansu 2013: 67)
Diambu diambi kikilu bavangidi.
[di-ambu dia N-bi kikilu ba-vang-idi]FOC
NP₅-matter CONN₅ NP₀-evil truly SC₂-do-PRF
[Do you know why?] ‘They DID SOMETHING VERY BAD.’

(22) KISIKONGO (JW’s Tusansu 2013: 98)
Nga ozeye ekuma Yesu kavangilanga masivi mama mawonso? Wantu kazolanga.
Nga o-zay-idi ekuma yesu
PART SC₂₉g-know-PRF why Jesus
ka-vang-il-ang-a ma-sivi mama ma-onso
SC₁-do-APPL-IPFV-FV NP₆-miracle DEM₆ NP₆-all
[wa-ntu ka-zol-ang-a]FOC
NP₂-man SC₁-love-IPFV-FV
‘Do you know why Jesus does all these miracles? [Because] he LOVES PEOPLE.’

2.2 Syntactic properties of SOV

In the following section, I shortly describe some syntactic properties of this SOV order, and treat its behaviour in multiple verb constructions, double object constructions, ‘heavy’ object constructions and subordinate clauses.
2.2.1 Multiple verb constructions

When a pre-verbal object is the complement of an infinite verb, it does not immediately precede the infinitive, but is expressed before the conjugated or auxiliary verb. This has been illustrated in (3) and also in (23) and (24).

(23) **KISIKONGO**  
(Fieldwork JDK Brussels 2014)  
*Oyándi mankhóndo kezoláng’ o dya.*  
o yandi ma-Nkondo\(^5\) ke-zol-ang-a  
AUG\(_1\)PRN\(_1\) NP\(_6\)-banana SC\(_1\)-love-IPFV-FV  
o-dy-a  
AUG\(_{15}\)-eat-FV  
‘He likes eating bananas.’

(24) **KISIKONGO**  
(JW’s Tusansu 2013: 24)  
*“Nu alangi, nsi eto nwizidi langa.”*  
nu a-langi N-si eto nu-iz-idi lang-a  
COP NP\(_2\)-spy NP\(_9\)-land POSS\(_{1\text{pl}}\) SC\(_{2\text{pl}}\)-come-PRF spy-FV  
‘You are spies, you have come to spy our land.’

In this respect, pre-verbal constituents in Kisikongo behave differently from pre-verbal constituents in Nen (Bantu, A44). Nen is one of the few other Bantu languages known to have pre-verbal objects (cf. Mous, this volume). In this language, the pre-posed constituent is put, however, between the auxiliary and the infinitive (Mous 2005), as illustrated in (25).

(25) **NEN**  
(Mous 2005: 420)  
*ò-só è-mìòk wóm-bin hàtà*  
2SG-can LOC-stones INF:throw far  
‘You can throw far (with) stones.’

2.2.2 Double object constructions

In double object constructions having two objects with two different semantic roles, i.e. most commonly patient and recipient, two options exist. First, the

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\(^5\) All examples are transcribed according to what is heard in the recordings. Aspiration of the voiceless consonant when preceded by a non-syllabic nasal (cf. Kerremans 1980) is not realized systematically by my language consultant, which is why some variation regarding this sound change can be found in the examples presented in this paper.
recipient can be expressed pre-verbally, as in (26), while the patient is expressed post-verbally.

(26) **KISIKONGO** (Fieldwork JDK Brussels 2014) *(Oyándí), mwana kavéne malávu.*

*o-yan-di  mu-a-na  ka-van-idi  ma-lavu*

AUG₁-PRN₁  NP₁-child  SC₁-give-PRF  NP₆-alcohol

‘He gave the child alcohol.’

Second, the patient can be expressed pre-verbally, while the recipient is then expressed post-verbally, introduced by a locative connective of class 17. This is illustrated in (27).

(27) **KISIKONGO** (Fieldwork JDK Brussels 2014) *(Oyándí), malávu kavéne kwa mwána.*

*o-yan-di  ma-lavu  ka-van-idi  kwa*

AUG₁-PRN₁  NP₆-alcohol  SC₁-give-PRF  CONN₁₇

mu-a-na

NP₁-child

‘He gave the child alcohol.’

It is ungrammatical, however, to express both objects pre-verbally, as attempted in (28). This is in contrast to the SVO order, in which it is perfectly grammatical to have both recipient and patient post-verbally. In this case, the recipient precedes the patient, as in (29).

(28) *(oyandi) mwana malavu kavene*

*Intl.: ‘He gave the child alcohol.’*

(29) **KISIKONGO** (JW’s Tusansu 2013: 6) *Yave wa Nzambi ovutula Abele o moyo.*

*yave  wa  N-zambi  o-vutul-a  abele*

Jehovah  CONN₁  NP₉-God  SC₁-return-FV  Abel

o-mu-o-oyo

AUG₃-NP₃-life

‘Jehovah God will give back life to Abel.’
2.2.3 ‘Heavy’ objects

When the object consists of several constituents having the same semantic role, also two options exist. First, the ‘heavy’ object can be split, leaving one part pre-verbally and the second part post-verbally, as in (30).

(30) KISIKONGO (Fieldwork JDK Brussels 2014)  
Onkongó nkáyi zóle kavóndele ye ngo mosi.
O-nkongo N-kayi zole ka-vond-idy ye
AUG1-NP-hunter NP9-gazelle two SC1-kill-PRF and
N-go mosi
NP9-leopard one
‘The hunter killed two gazelles and one leopard.’

It is also possible to express the entire ‘heavy’ object pre-verbally:

(31) KISIKONGO (Fieldwork JDK Brussels 2014)  
Onkongó nkayi zolé ye ngo mosí kavondéle.
O-nkongo N-kayi zole ye N-go mosi
AUG1-NP-hunter NP9-gazelle two and NP9-leopard one
ka-vond-idy
SC1-kill-PRF
‘The hunter killed two gazelles and one leopard.’

Not all types of ‘heavy’ objects can be expressed pre-verbally. Such is the case for objects having a goal constituent, as in (32). The object mbeele muna zengel’e mbizi, ‘a knife to cut meat with’, is obligatory split into mbeele, ‘knife’ which is expressed pre-verbally, and the goal construction, which is expressed post-verbally.

(32) KISIKONGO (Fieldwork JDK Brussels 2014)  
Mbééle kasúmbidi muna zéngel’e mbizi.
N-beele ka-sumb-idy muna zeng-il-a
NP9-knife SC1-buy-PRF DEM18 cut-APPL-FV
e-N-bizi
AUG9-NP9-meat
‘He bought a knife to cut meat with.’

(33) *Mbéele muna zéngel’e mbizi kasúmbidi
Intd.: ‘He bought a knife to cut meat with.’

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2.2.4 Subordinate clauses

Pre-verbal objects are not restricted to main clauses. They can appear in ‘because’ clauses as in (34), or in instances of indirect speech, as in (35) and (36).

(34) KISIKONGO (Fieldwork JDK Brussels 2014)
O mwáána otíínini ekumá o se dyándi muntu kavóndele.
o-mu-ana o-tiin-idí ekuma o-Ô-se
AUG1-NP1-child SC1-flee-PRF because AUG1-NP5-father
di-andi mu-ntu ka-vond-idi
PP3-POSS1 NP1-person SC1-kill-PRF
‘The child fled because his father killed someone.’

(35) KISIKONGO (Fieldwork JDK Brussels 2014)
O mwáána vóvele kanda katángidi.
o-mu-ana Ô-vov-idí Ô-kanda ka-tang-idi
AUG1-NP1-child SC1-speak-PRF NP3-book SC1-read-PRF
‘The child said he read the book.’

(36) KISIKONGO (Fieldwork JDK Brussels 2014)
Yangúngyivúla vo mwaána kekwándánga.
i-a-ku-nyívul-a vo mu-ana
SC1sg-PST-OC2sg-ask-FV if NP1-child
ke-kwand-ang-a
SC1- beat-IPFV-FV
‘I asked you if he beat his child.’

Similar to example (32), in a goal clause the object behaves differently and should occur post-verbally:

(37) KISIKONGO (Fieldwork JDK Brussels 2014)
Oyándi nkhósi kavóndele muna ván ó luzitu
o-yandi N-kosi ka-vond-idi muna van-a
AUG1-PRN1 NP9-lion SC1-kill-PRF DEM18 give-FV
o-lu-zitu
AUG11-NP11-respect
‘He killed a lion to gain respect.’
3 Bi-clausal pre-verbal focus

In this section, I document bi-clausal focus constructions in Kisikongo. Cleft-constructions are cross-linguistically known to express focus on the clefted constituent (Harris and Campbell 1995, Lambrecht 2001, Van der Wal and Maniackey forthcoming). The use of clefts is also a common focus strategy in Kisikongo. I adhere here to the definition of Harris & Campbell (1995: 153): “The cleft (a) consists of a superordinate clause (S₁) and a subordinate clause (S₂), (b) the former containing a copula, and (c) the latter having the structure of a relative clause.”

Three main features characterize the cleft: the bi-clausal structure, the presence of the copula, and a relative-like clause. Before illustrating the different cleft-constructions in Kisikongo, it is necessary to discuss the copula and the relative-like clause.

3.1 The copula

The copula in Kisikongo takes the form of i, as described by Bentley (1887: 282):

“I, emphatic demonstrative verbal particle serving in the place of the verb "to be" in all its forms, and is equivalent to: this or that or these or those in particular is, are, or were, &c. Eyai i yame, it is mine; I dinkwa kala wowo, it is very likely; I zau jina, those were they; Yandi i mfumu, he is king.”

It can thus function both as an equative copula outside clefts and an identificational copula in cleft-constructions. Its use in non-cleft constructions is illustrated in (38).

(38) KISIKONGO (JW’s Fimpanga 2013: 109)

O nsiku i nlongiéto.

O-N-siku i N-longi eto
AUG₃-NP₃-law COP NP₁-tutor POSS₁-pl
‘The law is our tutor.’

The copula i seems to be quite invariable in form, although Bentley (1887: 282) suggests otherwise (cf. citation supra, “in all its forms”). However, some variation in the form of the copula has been attested, but these alternations
probably belong to another paradigm. As such, \textit{tu} has been attested for the 1\textsuperscript{st} plural (39), \textit{nu} for the 2\textsuperscript{nd} plural (24) and \textit{u} for the 2\textsuperscript{nd} singular (40).

(39) \textbf{KISIKONGO} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{(JW’s Tusansu 2013: 41)}
\textbf{Yeto awonso tu wan’au.}
\textit{yeto} a-onso tu wa-ana au
PR\textsubscript{1pl} CONN-all COP NP\textsubscript{2}-child POSS\textsubscript{2}
‘We are all their children.’

(40) \textbf{KISIKONGO} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{(JDK fieldwork Brussels 2014)}
\textbf{Ongéye ú nkundiáme.}
o-ngeye u N-kundi ame
AUG\textsubscript{1}-PRN\textsubscript{2sg} COP NP\textsubscript{1}-friend POSS\textsubscript{1sg}
‘You are my friend.’

Nevertheless, in cleft-constructions only the copula \textit{i} has been attested. Examples (40) and (41) clearly receive a different reading. The latter is as a cleft-construction used to focus the subject, while the former is not.

(41) \textbf{KISIKONGO} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{(JDK fieldwork Brussels 2014)}
\textbf{Ongéye yí nkundiáme.}
o-ngeye yi N-kundi ame
AUG\textsubscript{1}-PRN\textsubscript{2sg} COP NP\textsubscript{1}-friend POSS\textsubscript{1sg}
‘It is you who is my friend’

It is important to note that the copula is optional in equative sentences, where the juxtaposition of subject and nominal predicate suffices to convey the equative meaning, as may be seen from (42) and (43).

(42) \textbf{KISIKONGO} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{(Ndonga Mfuwa 1995: 110)}
\textbf{óNsìmbà ndóki.}
o-Nsimba N-loki
AUG\textsubscript{1}-Nsimba NP\textsubscript{9}-sorcerer
‘Nsimba is a sorcerer.’

(43) \textbf{KISIKONGO} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{(JW’s Tusansu 2013: 6)}
\textbf{O Kaini muntu ambi}
o-Kaini mu-ntu a N-bi
AUG\textsubscript{1}-Cain NP\textsubscript{1}-person CONN NP\textsubscript{9}-evil
‘Cain is a bad person.’
3.2 The relative clause

The second constituent of a cleft-construction is the relative-like clause. I concentrate here on indirect relatives, such as object relatives, as they are part of cleft-constructions focusing non-subject arguments. Kisikongo exhibits variation along different parameters with regard to relative clauses: the agreement on the verb, the presence of the relativizer and the position of the subject.

The first variable, already noted by Bentley (1887), is that the relative verb can agree with both the logical subject and the logical object. In case of the former, a dedicated SC for class 1 ka- (or ke-, cf. footnote 3), is used, which contrasts with the SC in non-relative clauses. For the other classes and speech participants, there is no formal difference between relative and non-relative SC, as is also illustrated in (45). Interestingly, this same SC alternation holds for mono-clausal SOV focus order as opposed to the canonical SVO order.

(44) 19TH CENTURY KISIKONGO (Bentley 1887: 707)
E nzo ketungidi yandi jividi.
e-N-zo ke-tung-idi yandi
AUG10-NP10-house SC1-build-PRF PRN1
zi-vi-idi
SC10-burn-PRF
‘The houses which he built are burnt.’

(45) 19TH CENTURY KISIKONGO (Bentley 1887: 707)
E nzo jotungidi yandi jividi.
e-N-zo zi-tung-idi yandi
AUG10-NP10-house SC10-build-PRF PRN1
zi-vi-idi
SC10-burn-PRF
‘The houses which he built are burnt.’

Although in present-day Kisikongo concordance with the logical subject seems to be more frequent, the same alternation has been attested in the contemporary Kisikongo texts I considered, as may be seen from (46) vs. (47).
A second variable is the presence of the relativizer, which in Kisikongo takes the form of a demonstrative pronoun. The previous examples all lack a relativizer, but it is perfectly grammatical to have one, as is illustrated in (48), (49) and (50):

(48) KISIKONGO (JDK fieldwork Brussels 2014)
Nkombó ndioyó ó ngo kabakídi, wónga wayíngi kákedi.
N-kombo ndioyo o-N-go ka-bak-idi
NP9-goat REL4 AUG1-NP9-leopard SC1-catch-PRF
u-onga wa-ingi ka-kal-idi
NP14-fear CONN14-much SC1-to.be-PRF
‘The goat that the leopard caught, is very frightened.’

(49) KISIKONGO (JW’s Tusansu 2013: 41)
O Mose ovangidi una kavova o Nzambi.
o-mose o-vang-idi una ka-vov-a
AUG1-Moses SC1-do-PRF REL14 SC1-speak-FV
o-N-zambi
AUG1-NP9-God
‘Moses does what God says.’
(50) **KISIKONGO** *(JDK fieldwork Brussels 2014)*

*Engándu yoyo nkongo kavondéle, yámbi yákedi.*

`e-N-gandu yoyo N-kongo ka-vond-idi`

`AUG9-NP9-crocodile REL9 NP9-hunter SC1-kill-PRF`

`ya-N-bi i-a-kal-idi`

`CONN9-NP9-evil SC9-PST-to.be-PRF`

‘The crocodile that the hunter killed, was very dangerous.’

Also in 19th century Kisikongo, this same alternation has been attested, although this is not explicitly mentioned by Bentley (1887):

(51) **19TH CENTURY KISIKONGO** *(Bentley 1887: 706)*

*Unsamunwini o mambu mana kavovele Mfiau.*

`u-N-samunwin-idi o-ma-ambu mana ka-vov-idi`

`SC1-OC1sg-report-PRF AUG6-NP6-matter REL6 SC1-speak-PRF`

`mfiau Mfiau`

‘He told me the things which Mfiau had said.’

(52) **19TH CENTURY KISIKONGO** *(Bentley 1887: 707)*

*Mankondo mambwaki tusumbidi ezono.*

`ma-nkondo ma-mbwaki tu-sumb-idi e-zono`

`NP6-plantain NP6-red SC1pl-buy-PRF NP5-yesterday`

‘The red plantain which we bought yesterday.’

A third variable is the position of the subject. Four possibilities can be distinguished. First, the subject can follow the object and precede the verb, resulting in a surface OSV order. This is illustrated in (53), and also in the previous examples (48) and (50).

(53) **KISIKONGO** *(JDK fieldwork Brussels 2014)*

*O nkúng’o wána báwiidí otoméne zéékana.*

`o-N-kunga o-wa-ana ba-a-w-idi`

`AUG3-NP3-song AUG2-NP2-child SC2-PST-hear-PRF`

`o-tom-idi zay-ikan-a`

`SC3-to.be.well-PRF know-NTR-FV`

‘The song that the children heard is well known’

Second, the subject can also appear post-verbally, resulting in a surface OVS order. This is illustrated in the previous examples (44), (45), (47), (46), (49) and (51), and in (54) and (55) below. The latter is interesting in that it combines a
non-subject (locative) relative with a pre-verbal focus position: the entire relative clause kuna nsi kuna kawutuka Zwaki, ‘from the country where Zwaki was born’ precedes the main verb katuka, ‘he came from’. This example also includes a subject relative, ona watunga e nzo eyi, ‘who built this house’. Subject relatives are not considered in this paper, but it is interesting to note that the SC is u- and not ka-, which is thus only used for indirect relatives. The demonstrative ona, used as relativizer, is different from the earlier mentioned ndioyo, although belonging to the same class 1. Ona is a distal demonstrative, referring to someone distant from the speaker, while ndioyo belongs to the paradigm which Bentley (1887: 587) calls ‘emphatic demonstratives’. Yoyo and vava in examples (50) above and (56) and (57) below belong to the same paradigm.

(54) 19TH CENTURY KISIKONGO (Bentley 1887: 708)
E fulu kivaikanga o maza kisolokele.
e-Ø-fulu ki-vaik-ang-a o-ma-aza
AUG7-NP7-place SC7-flow-IPFV-FV AUG6-NP6-water
ki-sol-uk-idi
SC7-find-INTR-PRF
‘The place where or from which the water comes out is found.’

(55) 19TH CENTURY KISIKONGO (Bentley 1887: 708)
O muntu ona watunga e nzo eyi, kuna nxi kuna kawutuka Zwaki katuka.
o-mu-ntu ona u-a-tung-a e-N-zo
AUG1-NP1-person REL1 SC1-PST-build-FV AUG9-NP9-house
eyi kuna N-si [kuna ka-wut-uk-a
DEM9DEM17 NP9-country REL17 SC1-bear-INTR-FV
zwaki] FOC ka-tuk-a
Zwaki SC1-come.from-FV
‘The man, who built this house, came FROM THE COUNTRY WHERE ZWAKI WAS BORN.’

A third possible position of the subject in non-subject relative phrases is clause-initially. This is illustrated in examples (56) and (57). Both examples consist of temporal relative clauses, in which the locative demonstrative of class 16 vava functions as relativizer.
Pre-verbal focus in Kisikongo (H16a, Bantu)

(56) **KISIKONGO** (Fieldnotes IB 2003)

Noé vava katunga e nzaza [...]  
noé vava ka-tung-a e-N-zaza  
Noah REL_{16} SC_{1}-build-FV AUG_{9}-NP_{9}-ship  
‘Noah, when building the arc [...]’

(57) **KISIKONGO** (JW’s Tusansu 2013: 31)

O Mose vava kavutuka kuna Engipito [...]  
O-Mose vava ka-vutuk-a kuna Engipito  
AUG_{1}-Moses REL_{16} SC_{1}-return-FV DEM_{17} Egypt  
‘When Moses returned to Egypt [...]’

It should be further investigated by which factors the alternation between OVS and OSV is conditioned. The SOV as indirect relative order can possibly be explained by a process of left-dislocation of the subject, in order to mark the subject as the topic of the entire sentence. This relates to the fourth option in expressing the subject in indirect relatives: if the context is clear, the subject (conveying old information) can simply be referred to anaphorically, i.e. by means of the SC on the verb. This is seen in example (52) above, and in examples (58) and (60) below. In the original text, example (60) immediately follows example (47), where the subject is already mentioned. This example also illustrates the optionality of the copula, which is left out here.

(58) **19^{th} CENTURY KISIKONGO** (Bentley 1887: 708)

E mbele ina nsumbidi ezono ividi.  
e-N-bele ina N-sumb idi e-zono  
AUG_{9}-NP_{9}-knife REL_{0} SC_{1sg}-buy-PRF NP_{5}-yesterday  
i-vil-id  
SC_{9}-be.lost-PRF  
‘The knife which I bought yesterday is lost.’

(59) **KISIKONGO** (Ndonga Mfuwa 1995: 216)

Énkomboko yinà kànte yìtékòkàngà  
e-N-kombo yina ka-nat-idi  
AUG_{9}-NP_{9}-goat REL_{9} SC_{1}-carry-PRF  
i-a-tek-uk-ang-a  
SC_{9}-PST-sell-INTR-IPFV-FV  
‘The goat he carries has already been sold.’
Pre-verbal focus in Kisikongo (H16a, Bantu)

Ndandu kabakidi ndandu yamasumu.

KISIKONGO (Fieldnotes IB 2003)

N-landu ka-bak-idi N-landu ya ma-sumu
NP₁₀-result SC₁-procure-PRF NP₁₀-result CONN₉ NP₆-sin

‘The blessings it has is only sin.’

Literally: ‘The results he brings [are] results of sin.’

3.3 Cleft-constructions

Given the variation displayed both by the copula (presence vs. absence) and by the relative clause (optionality of relativizer and flexible position of the subject), cleft-constructions in Kisikongo also vary considerably regarding their formal realization.

In example (61), a common cleft-construction is given in which the copula precedes the focused element, thus resembling the well-known IT-cleft in English and related languages (cf. Lambrecht 2001).

Kieleka, i yandi kasolele o Yave

KISIKONGO (JW’s Tusansu 2013: 57)

ki-eleka i [yandi]FOC ka-sol-idi o-Yave
NP₇-truth COP PRN₁ SC₁-choose-PRF AUG₁-Jehovah

[‘When Samuel sees Jesse's oldest son Elirab, he says to himself :’]

‘Truly, it is HIM (whom) Jehovah chose.’

The copula can, however, also follow the focused element, as byere, ‘beer’ in (62), onkhongo, ‘hunter’ in (63), dimpa, ‘bread’ in (64) and ntinu, ‘king’ in (65). The copula then precedes either a generic noun, such as malavu, ‘alcohol’, muntu, ‘person’, lekwa, ‘thing’ or a personal pronoun such as yandi, which function as head of the relative clause of the cleft-construction. This type rather resembles the inverted/reverse-pseudo cleft (cf. Hamlaoui & Makasso in press) or the reverse WH-cleft or the reverse WH-cleft. Lambrecht (2001) uses this latter term, as he himself admits, from an anglocentric point of view. Indeed, in Kisikongo no use is made of question words in this type of clefts, but rather of generic terms. Note that these generic terms must agree semantically with the clefted constituent, unlike in certain other Bantu languages where a relative head such as muntu broadens its range and becomes to be used with inanimate nouns as well (cf. Van der Wal and Maniacky forthcoming).
Pre-verbal focus in Kisikongo (H16a, Bantu)

(62) KISIKONGO (JDK fieldwork Brussels 2014)
E byére i málavu mwivi kánwini.
[e-Ø-byere]FOC i ma-lavu mu-ivi ka-nw-ini
AUG9-NP9-beer COP NP6-alcohol NP3-thief SC1-drink-PRF
‘BEER is the (type of) alcohol the thief drank.’

(63) KISIKONGO (JDK fieldwork Brussels 2014)
Ónkhóngo i muntú kawénde o mfúmu.
[o-N-kongo]FOC i mu-ntu ka-wand-idi o-N-fumu
AUG1-NP9-hunter COP NP1-person SC1-hit-PRF AUG1-NP9-chief
‘THE HUNTER is the man the chief hit.’

(64) KISIKONGO (JDK fieldwork Brussels 2014)
O nsadisi, dímpa i lekwa kasúmbidi.
o-n-sadisi [di-mpa]FOC i Ø-lekwa ka-sumb-idi
AUG1-NP1-healer COP NP5-bread COP NP7-thing SC1-buy-PRF
‘The healer, A BREAD is the thing he bought.’

(65) KISIKONGO (JDK fieldwork Brussels 2014)
Ntinú i yándi e míívi bavondéle.
N-tinu i [yandi]FOC e-mi-ivi ba-vond-idi
NP1-king COP PRN1 AUG4-NP4-thief SC2-kill-PRF
‘THE KING is the one whom the thieves have killed.’

More frequently than being expressed, the relative head is deleted, which does not seem illogical given its poor semantic value. This results in headless relatives, which are best translated in English as inverted pseudo-clefts making use of question words (i.e. a reverse WH-cleft in English), as in (66) to (68).

(66) KISIKONGO (JW’s Tusansu 2013: 104)
O Yesu i kasola o Nzambi mu kala se ntinu.
[o-Yesu]FOC i ka-sol-a o-N-zambi mu kala
AUG1-Jesus COP SC1-choose-FV AUG1-NP9-God NP18 to.be
se N-tinu PART NP1-king
‘Jesus is the One God chose to be king.’
Literally: ‘JESUS is whom God chose to be king.’
Another variable in the realization of this type of cleft-construction is the presence or absence of the copula. As was illustrated earlier, the copula can be omitted in non-cleft constructions (cf. examples (42), (43) and (60)). Comparably, it is neither required in cleft-constructions, as is shown in examples (69) and (70) below:

(69) KISIKONGO (Fieldwork JDK Brussels 2014)

Wan’ayíngi kawúta Yakobo
[wa-ana a-ingi]FOC ka-wut-a Yakobo
NP2-child CONN-many SC1-father-FV Jacob
‘Jacob fathered MANY CHILDREN.’
‘MANY CHILDREN is what Jacob fathered.’

(70) KISIKONGO (JW’s Tusansu 2013: 66)

Owu kasoneka: […]
[owu]FOC ka-sonek-a
DEM14 SC1-write-FV
‘He writes: […]’
Literally: ‘THIS [is what] he writes […]’

A final variable in the expression of cleft-constructions concerns the position of the subject. As with non-subject relatives, four options can be distinguished. First, the subject can appear post-verbally, as is illustrated in examples (61), (63), (66), (68) and (69). This results in an OVS order. Second, the subject can be expressed pre-verbally, between the object and the verb, i.e. OSV. Examples are given in (62) and (65). Third, the subject can occur clause-initially or left-dislocated, which also seems to be used for reasons of topicality. Examples are include (64), (71), (72), (73) and (74).
Pre-verbal focus in Kisikongo (H16a, Bantu)

(71) KISIKONGO

O Nzambi yandi Yesu kaka i kasadila vava kavanga e lekwa yawonso.

O Nzambi yandi [Yesu kaka][FOC] i ka-sal-il-a
AUG1-NP9-God PRN1 Jesus only COP SC1-work-APPL-FV
vava ka-vang-a e-ø-lekwa i-a-ons
DEM16 SC1-make-FV AUG8-NP8-thing PP8-CONN-all
‘Jesus is also the only one whom God used when He created all other things.’
Literally: ‘God, he, JESUS ONLY is [whom] he used when he made all things.’

(72) KISIKONGO

O Mose muna kolo kiakina i kawutuka.

O Mose [muna Ø-kolo kiakina][FOC] i
AUG1-Moses DEM18 NP7-period DEM7 COP
ka-wut_uk-a
SC1-bear-INTR-FV
‘Moses IN THAT PERIOD it is he was born.’

(73) KISIKONGO

Ó mfumú, nkhóngo i kawénde.

O N-fumu [N-kongo][FOC] i ka-wand-idi
AUG1-NP9-chief NP9-hunter COP SC1-hit-PRF
‘The chief, THE HUNTER is (whom) he hit.’

(74) KISIKONGO

O nsadisi, dimpá i kásúmbidi.

O-N-sadisi [di-mpa][FOC] i ka-summer
AUG1-NP1-healer NP5-bread COP SC1-buy-PRF
‘The healer, A BREAD is (what) he bought.’

A final possibility is to leave the subject implicit, so that it is simply referred to anaphorically by means of the SC. This is illustrated in (70) above, and (75) and (76) below:

(75) KISIKONGO

Dimpá i kásúmbidi.

[di-mpa][FOC] i ka-summer
NP5-bread COP SC1-buy-PRF
‘A BREAD is (what) he bought.’
4 Conclusion and issues for further research

In this paper, I have given an overview of different mono- and bi-clausal pre-verbal focus strategies in Kisikongo. Kisikongo does not make a distinction between ‘informative’ and ‘contrastive’ focus (cf. Kiss 1998) in focus strategies, and both constructions can be used for both focus types. Mono-clausal pre-verbal focus involves preposition of the object or adjunct in IBV position, triggering an SOV or SXV word order. Bi-clausal focus strategies are cleft-constructions which vary considerably, depending on the position and optionality of the copula, the optionality of the relative head and the position of the subject.

Although both constructions seem unrelated at first sight, there are some interesting similarities to be found. First, the same SC1 ka- is used in both focus strategies, alternating with other SCs in SVO or non-relative phrases. Second, the large variation in cleft constructions in Kisikongo actually forms a continuum on the word order level from a bi-clausal inverted pseudo-cleft to a mono-clausal SOV focus order. The optionality of the copula and the relative head, as well as the unfixed position of the subject could account for such an evolution. However, this hypothesis needs further corroboration by tonal data. The role of tone cases should be considered. It should be investigated whether the tonal pattern of pre-verbal objects in mono-clausal focus constructions correlates with the tonal pattern of focused constituents in bi-clausal cleft-constructions. A second issue related to tone concerns relative verbs. For the time being, I have not considered tonal data on relative verbs for two reasons: most corpus data lack tonal information and the elicited data were found insufficient to draw any conclusions regarding tone. The observations made from these elicited data did also not fully correspond to the existing description of relative verbs by Ndonga Mfuwa (1995). Ndonga Mfuwa (1995) consistently notes high tone SC on relative verbs, as opposed to low tones for non-relative verbs. This distinction is, however, not that clear in my data. Interestingly, however, is that in Ndonga Mfuwa’s (1995) account, the SC in SOV constructions also bears a high tone, which would corroborate the hypothesis that the mono-clausal SOV order originates from a bi-clausal cleft-construction. It remains to be investigated whether this tonal distinction can still be found in
new spontaneous discourse data, or whether the distinction is being weakened, which in turn might facilitate a pragmatic neutralization of the SOV order.

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