Word order, information structure and agreement in Teke-Kukuya
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Word order and topic/focus expressions

This chapter provides a description on the expression of information structure in Kukuya. In Kukuya there is crucial morphosyntactic variation that cannot be accounted for by the traditional point of view on the grammar but must be explained with reference to information structure. In this chapter I show that the word order in Kukuya is to a large extent determined by information structure more so than by grammatical relations. All kinds of topical elements tend to occur in the preverbal domain, while focused elements are usually placed in a dedicated immediate-before-verb (IBV) focus position which is rarely attested in eastern and southern Bantu languages but seems to be an areal feature shared by most if not all West-Coastal Bantu languages (Grégoire 1993, Hadermann 1996, Bostoen and Mundeke 2011, 2012; De Kind 2014; Koni Muluwa and Bostoen 2014; Bostoen and Koni Muluwa 2021). I show that in Kukuya, this IBV position is productively exploited, the element that is placed in the IBV position must be itself focal or part of a larger focal constituent.

The chapter is organised as follows: section 3.1 introduces the canon-

ical word order SVO and various types of focus that this word order can express; section 3.2 is dedicated to illustrating different functions of the IBV focus position and interpretations associated with it, as well as some morphological and tonal variation related to this position; section 3.3 introduces the expressions of (multiple) topical elements in the preverbal domain, and functional passive constructions that combine the use of IBV focus position and topic fronting; and section 3.4 turns to different types of cleft constructions.

3.1   Canonical word order

In this section I present the canonical SVO word order in Kukuya and show that SVO can be used to express various types of focus such as argument and adjunct focus, VP focus and truth focus. The SVO order is also the most common way of expressing a thetic sentence.

3.1.1   SVO as canonical word order

When talking about word order, it can be sometimes problematic to generalise what the "canonical" word order is in a language, depending on different criteria and discourse types. Synchronic variation within the language can also provide different clues on its canonical word order. Here I follow the criterion that the canonical word order of a language is commonly reflected in a "topic-comment articulation" where the subject of the sentence has a discourse function of topic representing presupposed or given information, and the rest of the sentence expresses new information (Lambrecht 1994; Andrews 2007). Thus the canonical word order is expected to show up in the answer to a question such as "What did s/he do" which places focus on the predicate, namely the VP. In (1) we see that to answer such a question, the SVO order is usually attested, which has been reported to be the canonical word order of most other Bantu languages (Bearth 2003; van der Wal 2015; Downing and Marten 2019 among others).

(1) a. Mu-kái   kí-má   ká-sî?
     1-woman 7-what 1SM.PST-do.PST
     'What did the woman do?'

 b. Ndé   á-búnum-i   baa-ntsúú.
    1.PRO 1SM.PST-feed-PST 2-chicken
    'She fed the chicken.'

However, as we will see shortly, the felicitous answer to a VP question is not restricted to SVO, but can also be SOV as shown in (2), although the occurrence of SVO for VP focus largely surpasses that of SOV in my corpus and is always the first intuition of the speakers. Based on these facts, I assume that the canonical word order of Kukuya, if there is one, should be SVO, which is also the most common and frequent word order attested in a this language. We will also see later in this chapter that any deviation of the SVO order, to a larger or smaller extent, involves some discourse-related manipulations. The SOV expressing VP focus is possibly used to mark contrast on the VP (see section 5.2.2), or it is in the process of being further grammaticalised from a more marked focus construction to a pragmatically neutral word order secondary to the canonical SVO.

(2) (*visual stimulus: what are the two women doing?*)
    Bó   ntálí bá-kâ-yílik-a.
    2.PRO 9.bed 2SM-IMPF-clear.up-FV
    'They are making the bed.'

The canonical position of different kinds of adjuncts is usually postverbal and after the object(s) in a transitive construction, as illustrated in (3). Here I refer to adjuncts as adverbial phrases that add extra information (temporal, locative, manner) to the sentence, which is distinguished from adverbs which modify the verb. From (3) we can also see that in a ditransitive construction in Kukuya, the recipient object always precedes the theme. Example (4) shows that it is ungrammatical to place the locative phrase between the verb and the object, even if this adjunct is in focus. This also indicates that in Kukuya there is no IAV focus position which is well-known in many other Bantu languages. I thus conclude that the canonical constituent order in Kukuya is Subject-Verb-Object-Adjuncts.

(3) Nkaaká   á-wî   baa-ndzulí bvi-kídzá mu
    1.grandmother 1SM.PST-give.PST 2-cat   8-food   18.LOC
    nkunkólo yi.
    9.evening 9.DEM.I
    'The grandmother gave the cats food this evening.'

(4) (*answer to "where did you see Gilbert?"*)
    a. *Me   á-mún-i   ku   dzándu Gilbert.
       1SG.PRO PST-1SG.SM.see-PST 17.LOC 5.market Gilbert
       Int: 'I saw Gilbert at the market.'
    b. Me   á-mún-i   Gilbert ku   dzándu.
       1SG.PRO PST-1SG.SM.see-PST Gilbert 17.LOC 5.market
       'I saw Gilbert at the market.'
    c. Me   ku   dzándu á-mún-i   Gilbert.
       1SG.PRO 17.LOC 5.market PST-1SG.SM.see-PST Gilbert
       'I saw Gilbert at the market.'

3.1.2 Focus expressions in SVO

As said above, the canonical SVO word order is usually captured when the whole VP is in focus. In this subsection I will show that SVO can also be used to express term focus (focus on an argument or adjunct or a subpart of these), and in fact all types of arguments and adjuncts can be focused in their canonical linear position. In addition, SVO can also express different types of predicate-centered focus (PCF) such as verb focus and truth value focus. I will discuss them in turn.

A *wh*-element, which is usually considered to be inherently focused, as well as its corresponding answer, are commonly seen as reliable diagnostics for focus expressions (Rooth 1992; Lambrecht 1994; Krifka 2007; van der Wal 2016). In Kukuya, an object can be focused in its canonical postverbal position. In (5a) we see that the answer to an object *wh*-object question can be SVO with the object being focused in its canonical position. We find in (5b) that this question can also be answered in an SOV order with the

object focused in the IBV position, which will be discussed later in section 3.2.1. We may also notice in (5) that the tone on the nominal prefix of the object DP and the shape of subject marker on the verb differ depending on the word order, which I will discuss in chapter 4.

(5) (*What did father sell yesterday?*)
    a. Ndé á-ték-i **baa**-ntaba[FOC].
        1.PRO 1SM.PST-sell-PST 2-goat
        'He sold some GOATS.'   [SVO object focus]
    b. Ndé **báa**-ntabá[FOC] **ká**-ték-i.
        1.PRO 2-goat   1SM.PST-sell-PST
        'He sold some GOATS.'   [SOV object focus]

Adjuncts can also be focused in their original postverbal positions. In (6) we see that when answering to a question on the location, the locative phrase providing new information can just occur in its canonical position.

(6) (*Where did father buy the wine?*)
    Taará á-fúum-i   ma-lí [ku   mfaí][FOC].
    1.father 1SM.PST-buy-PST 6-wine 17.LOC 9.capital
    'Father bought the wine in Brazzaville.'

As we will see in section 3.2.1, *wh*-words are predominantly placed in the IBV position, but for some of the *wh*-adjuncts, in particular the manner and reason *wh*-words *buní* "how" and *mu kimá* "why", they are also widely attested to occur in their canonical postverbal position as in (7).

(7) Muu-ndziá á-dzí   ma-ká bu-ní?
    1-foreigner 1SM.PST-eat.PST 6-cassava 14-which
    'How did the foreigner eat the cassavas?'

A *wh*-adjunct can also be placed in its canonical position in the context of a rhetorical question as in (8), which usually expresses doubt about or opposition against the previous statement, but not necessarily requests an answer.

(8) (*The speaker thinks that it is impossible for the person to have seen Alain.*)

Ndé á-mún-i   Alain **ku-ní**?
1.PRO 1SM.PST-see-PST Alain 17-which

'He saw Alain, (but) where?'

An element modified by "only" is always associated with an exhaustive focus reading. In (9a,b) we see that to place an object DP modified by "only" in its canonical postverbal position and in the IBV position are both grammatical. This shows that even exhaustive focus on the object can be expressed in the canonical SVO order.

(9) a. Mu-loí á-wî   báana   **wúna** maa-nkúru.
         1-teacher 1SM.PST-give.PST 2.children only   6-pen

         'The teacher gave the children only pens.'

     b. Nkaaká   **wúna** mvá ká-wí   bú-ká.
         1.grandmother only   1.dog 1SM.PST-give.PST 14-cassava

         'The grandmother gave only the dog cassava.'

A subject can also be focused preverbally in SVO, as shown in the question-answer pair in (10) and the preverbal subject modified by "only" in (11). The availability of preverbal subject focus in Kukuya is somehow exceptional considering the rigid constraint against the preverbal subject to be focal in many other Bantu languages (Morimoto 2000; Zerbian 2006; van der Wal 2009, 2015; Downing and Marten 2019). It should be noted here that I am not claiming that the preverbal subject is structurally focused *in situ*, but in a position which is structurally different from the canonical subject position, though under both circumstances the linear word order is SVO. In section 5.2.1.2, I will distinguish the preverbal topical subject position from the focal subject in IBV position. Here I say that a topical and a focal subject, which structurally occupy different positions, overlap in their linear position in the preverbal domain.

(10) a. Kí-má kíí-súruk-i?
            7-what 7SM.PST-fall-PST
            'What fell down?'

        b. Mpúku á-súruk-i.
            1.rat   1SM.PST-fall-PST
            'A/The rat fell down.'

(11) Wúna baa-ntsúú báá-ból-i.
        only   2-chicken 2SM.PST-decompose-PST
        'Only the chickens got bad.'

SVO is also compatible with various types of predicate-centered focus (PCF) (Güldemann 2003, 2009) including verb focus (state-of-affairs focus) and truth focus (also known as verum focus). In (12b) SVO as the answer to the question in (12a) expresses focus on the verb and SVO is used. In (13b) SVO is used to correct the truth value of (13a), thus we see that SVO is also felicitous to express truth focus.

(12) a. Taará mi-féme kí-má ké   ká-sí?
            1.father 4-pig   7-what 7.PRO 1SM.PST-do.PST
            'What did father do to the pigs?'

        b. Ndé á-dzwí   mi-féme.
            1.PRO 1SM.PST-kill.PST 4-pig
            'He killed the pigs.'

(13) a. Gilbert ka-ká-bvúúr-í   we   mi-pará ni?
            Gilbert NEG-1SM.PST-return-PST 2SG.PRO 4-money NEG
            'Gilbert did not return you the money?'

        b. Ndé á-bvúur-i   me   mi-pará.
            1.PRO 1SM.PST-return-PST 1SG.PRO 4-money
            'He did return me the money'

In the above, I have shown that SVO can have different uses in terms of information structure. According to my intuition, SVO is most commonly used

as a "topic-comment structure" where the subject functions as the topic and the whole VP is focused, and it can also express term focus and different types of PCF. There is no constraint against preverbal subject focus.

3.1.3   Thetic sentences

In this subsection, I will show that SVO can also be used as a thetic sentence. A thetic sentence is used to present all the information that the sentence carries in one piece, as opposed to a "categorical" sentence in which the topic and comment can be further divided (Kuroda 1972; Sasse 1987, 1996). The thetic sentence is also referred to as "all-new" or "all focus" utterance (van der Wal 2021). The answer to a question such as "what happens" can thus be used to investigate the formation of a thetic sentence, as this type of question often does not presuppose a topical referent and requires information on the whole event. In Kukuya, a thetic sentence usually surfaces in SVO. As shown in (14), to answer the question "what happened outside", only (14a) with SVO is felicitous, while any deviation of this word order cannot be an appropriate answer. The answer in (14b) is only felicitous when *mwáana* "child" has been already mentioned and is what the speakers are talking about. In (15) the preverbal subject is indefinite and non-specific, which are not characteristics of topic. From the context we see that it expresses a thetic meaning as there is no old information presupposed. Here we see that the distinction on definiteness of the preverbal subject may help discern a thetic SVO sentence from a categorical one.

(14)   (*What happened outside?*)

    a. Mvá á-bvî   ku   ntsá dzuná.
        1.dog 1SM.PST-fall.PST 17.LOC inside 5.hole
        'A dog fell into the hole.'

    b. #Mwáana taará   á-béer-i.
        1.child   1.father 1SM.PST-beat-PST
        'The child was beaten by father.'

(15)   (*You returned home and found some footprints on the floor, you said to your roommate:*)

Mbuurú á-yení.
1.person 1SM.PST-come.PST

'Someone came.'

We have already seen above that the preverbal subject in SVO can be topical or focal. The availability of SVO to express the thetic meaning shows that the preverbal subject can also be non-topical (and non-focal), since there is no distinction on topic and comment in a thetic sentence. However, an answer to a question "what happened" may also contain a topic expression due to the tendency to "accommodate information" in a sentence (Lewis 1979; Stalnaker 2002; von Fintel 2008; van der Wal 2016). Even if there is no identifiable topical referent in the common ground before the discourse starts, the interlocutors tend to accept the referent that occurs at the beginning of the dialogue, for example the "dog" in (14a) above, to ensure a coherent communication. In this regard, SVO may never be really "thetic", but the preverbal subject can function as an "immediate topic" that can always rescue the discourse from not having a topic.

A question that asks about the reason may also have a thetic answer, as the reason may not contain any presupposed information known by the addressee. In the examples (16) and (17) below, a subject relative construction is used to answer this kind of *why*-questions. At first glance, the subject relative clause looks like a dedicated strategy to express a thetic meaning, just as in French a cleft can be used in a thetic sentence in which the subject is detopicalised by relativisation. However, since the *wh*-word for "why" is formed as *mu kima* which literally means "for what", the relativisation of the subject is more likely to nominalise the whole sentence to congruently answer the question, as the *why*-question is actually a *what*-question which targets at a nominal. For example in (16) the question literally means "for what are the children afraid" which may target a certain object that causes the fear rather than a whole event, therefore the answer is interpreted as "*for* the crocodile that is walking in the yard".

(16)   a.   Báana   mu   **ki-má** bá-li   ya   buokó?
           2.children 18.LOC 7-what 2SM-COP with 14.fear
           'Why are the children afraid?'

      b.   Mu-ŋaaní **wu**-kâ-dzíe   ŋa   kalá mbalí.
           1.crocodile 1REL-IMPF-walk 16.LOC inside 9.yard
           'A crocodile that is walking in the yard.'

(17)   a.   Mu-kái mu   **ki-má** ké   ká-mal-í   ŋa
           1-woman 18.LOC 7-what 7.PRO 1SM.PST-leave-PST 16.LOC
           nzó?
           9.house
           'Why did the woman leave home?'

      b.   Mwáana aa   ndé **wǔ**-dzínim-i.
           1.child   1.CONN 1.PRO 1REL-disappear-PST
           'Her son who disappeared.'

In (18) we see that the *mu* always requires a nominal or nominalised element following it. To answer the question in the context, only (18a) is grammatical as the reason is nominalised thus can be selected by *mu*, while (18b) the sentence is ungrammatical due to the fact that the construction after *mu* is still clausal rather than nominal. From (18a) we also see that the relativisation of the subject can nominalise the clause after *mu* as a whole, since the child becomes happy not because of the "father" himself, but of the *fact* that "father bought him a small goat". In this sense, the relativisation strategy above in (16) and (17) can also be considered as nominalising the whole clause for the sake of expressing the information as *one piece* (Sasse 1987).

(18)   (*Why is the child happy?*)

      a.   Mwáana li   yǎ kí-sáábí   mu   taará **wǔ**-fúum-i
           1.child   COP with 7-happiness 18.LOC 1.father 1REL-buy-PST
           ndé   ntaba.
           1.PRO 1.goat
           'The child is happy that father bought him a goat.'

b. *Mwáana li yǎ kí-sáábí mu taará
1.child COP with 7-happiness 18.LOC 1.father
á-fúum-i ndé ntaba.
1SM.PST-buy-PST 1.PRO 1.goat
Int: 'The child is happy that father bought him a goat.'

In summary, a thetic meaning is commonly expressed by the canonical SVO word order in Kukuya. A subject relativisation strategy may also be used to express thetic meaning, the motivation of which seems to be nominalising the whole information in the sentence as one chunk. However, the use of relativisation may also be due to the fact that some interrogative words tend to require a nominal answer.

In the previous sections, I have shown that the canonical word order SVO is compatible with different information structural constructions. It can be used to express VP focus, term focus, predicated-centered focus and as well as theticity. In the next section I will introduce how a deviation of this canonical word order, namely the use of the dedicated IBV focus position, is associated with information structure.

TOP	TOP	FOC	Verb
S_{TOP}			V
		S_{FOC}	V
O_{TOP}	(O_{TOP})	S_{FOC}	V
S_{TOP}	(O_{TOP})	O_{FOC}	V

Table 3.1: Linear slots of the preverbal domain in Kukuya

3.2   Dedicated IBV focus position

This section gives an overview on the availability and interpretation of the dedicated immediate-before verb (IBV) focus position in Kukuya. I show that the IBV position is available for arguments including subject and object, for adjuncts and even for the infinitive predicate to get focused. Compared to the *in situ* focus strategy introduced above, the element placed in IBV often has an identificational focus reading in which a referent is identified in an existential presupposition. The interrogative words and contrastively focused elements more strictly occur in the IBV position than other focal elements. The focal interpretation can project from the IBV position to the whole VP.

An immediate question here is how to define the "IBV" position in this language. Throughout the chapter, the notion "IBV position" refers to a particular *structural* position, whether occupied or empty, that is adjacent to the verb and no other constituent can intervene in between. Linearly, a topical or non-focal grammatical subject in SVO can also occur immediately left-adjacent to the verb, but it is not structurally placed in the IBV position, because other constituents can still be inserted between it and the verb (see section 3.3.1). When the IBV focus position is not filled, a topical or non-focal subject just linearly overlaps the IBV position. If we consider all possible elements in the preverbal domain to occur in different slots which correspond to different structural positions (but not necessarily linear position), which is illustrated in Table 3.1, we see that the IBV focus position can be clearly discerned. In this table, each line represents a particular construction that

will be introduced in the rest of the chapter.

3.2.1   Argument and adjunct focus in IBV

3.2.1.1 Object and adjunct focus in IBV

In Kukuya, a *wh*-element is usually placed in the IBV position. As shown in (19a,b), the *wh*-objects *kímá* "what" and *ná* "who" are both placed in the IBV position. In (19c) we see that the *wh*-word must be strictly adjacent to the verb and the intervention of another element turns the sentence ungrammatical. Example (19d) shows that to place the *wh*-object *kímá* "what" in its canonical postverbal position is also ungrammatical.

(19)   a.   Mvá **kí-má** ká-siib-i?
           1.dog 7-what 1SM.PST-catch-PST
           'What did the dog catch?'

       b.   Taará **ná** ká-mún-í   ku   mu-súru?
           1.father 1.who 1SM.PST-see-PST 17.LOC 3-forest
           'Who did father see in the forest?'

       c.   *Taará **ná**   ku   mu-súru ká-mún-í?
           1.father 1.who 17.LOC 3-forest   1SM.PST-see-PST
           Int: 'Who did father see in the forest?'

       d.   *Mvá á-siib-i   **ki-ma**?
           1.dog 1SM.PST-catch-PST 7-what
           Int: 'What did the dog catch?'

In ditransitive constructions (20a,b), the recipient and the patient objects are questioned in the IBV position respectively, while the other non-focal objects also tend to occur in the preverbal domain preceding the IBV position. We see from these examples that a *wh*-object is strictly placed in the IBV position. We can also see in (20) that there is an agreeing pronoun following the *wh*-word. I leave the function of the pronoun to be discussed later

and assume the *wh*-word and the pronoun to form one inseparable constituent in the IBV position.

(20) a. Nkaaká ma-désu **ná**   ndé   ká-wî?
          1-granny 6-bean   1.who 1.PRO 1SM.PST-give.PST
          'To whom did grandmother give the beans?'

      b. Nkaaká mvá **kí-má** ké   ká-wî?
          1-granny 1.dog 7-what 7.PRO 1SM.PST-give.PST
          'What did grandmother give to the dog?'

The answer to an object *wh*-question also tends to occur in the IBV position, though it is not restricted to this position. As introduced in section 2 and also as in (21), we see that the answer to a *wh*-object question can be SVO and SOV, with the focal answer being either in IBV or its canonical postverbal position. Here we see that both preverbal and postverbal focus strategies are available in Kukuya. In the elicitation of question-answer pairs, I had a strong impression that when I put emphatic intonation on the focal answer in French, the speakers were more likely to use the preverbal focus strategy in the corresponding translation. I will discuss the interpretational differences of the IBV and *in situ* object focus strategies in section 3.2.4.

(21) (*What did mother buy yesterday?*)

      a. Ndé **á**-fúum-i   **mu**-ngwa.
          1.PRO 1SM.PST-buy-PST 3-salt
          'She bought some SALT.'

      b. Ndé **mú**-ngwa **ká**-fúum-i.
          1.PRO 3-salt   1SM.PST-buy-PST
          'She bought some SALT.'

In an alternative question that asks for a choice or preference, as well as in its corresponding answer, the IBV focus strategy is always used as shown in (22) and (23). SVO is viewed as infelicitous as in (23c). Here we see that when some (at least one) alternative is explicitly mentioned in the context, SOV must be used for exclusion and identification.

(22)   a.   Maamá   lóoso ká-télek-i   wó bú-ka?
              1.mother 5.rice 1SM.PST-prepare-PST or   14-cassava
              'Did mother cook the rice or the cassava?'

         b.   Ndé   bú-ka   ká-télek-i.
              1.PRO 14-cassava 1SM.PST-prepare-PST
              'She prepared the cassava.'

(23)   a.   We   **báa-ntsúú** kâ-dzií   kí-dzá   wó kí-wáli?
              2SG.PRO 2-chicken   2SG.IMPF-like INF-eat or   7-duck
              'Do you like to eat chicken or duck?'

         b.   Me   **kí-wál-í** kâ-n-dzií   kí-dzâ.
              1SG.PRO 7-duck   IMPF-1SG.SM-like INF-eat
              'I like to eat duck.'

         c.   #Me   kâ-n-dzií   kí-dzá **kí-wáli**.
              1SG.PRO IMPF-1SG.SM-like INF-eat 7-duck
              'I like to eat duck.'

The *wh*-adjuncts such as *munkí* "when", *kuní* "where", *buní* "how" and *mu kimá* "why", as inherently focal, are also most commonly placed in the IBV position, as shown in (24)-(26). As for the answer to a *wh*-adjunct question, the focused adjunct in the answer can be either in IBV or its base position, as illustrated in (24).

(24)   a.   Mwáana **munkí** ká-dzí   ntsúi?
              1.child   when   1SM.PST-eat.PST 1.fish
              'When did the child eat the fish?'

         b.   Ndé   ntsúi **mu**   **ngwaalí**   ká-dzí.
              1.PRO 1.fish 18.LOC 9.morning 1SM.PST-eat.PST
              'S/He ate the fish in the MORNING.'

         c.   Ndé   á-dzí   ntsúi **mu**   **ngwaalí**.
              1.PRO 1SM.PST-eat.PST 1.fish 18.LOC 9.morning
              'S/He ate the fish in the MORNING.'

(25) Li-dzwá   nyama wúa,   biáwe ndé **ku-ní**
      1PL.SM-kill 1.animal 1.DEM.II 1PL.PRO 1.PRO 17-which
      líi-kab-a?
      1PL.FUT-share-FV
      '(As) we kill that animal, where will we share it?'

(26)   a. Mwáana ki-yinga **bu-ní**   kíí-wir-i?
          1.child   7-festival 14-which 7SM.PST-pass-PST
          'How did the child pass the festival?'
       b. Ndé ki-yinga **kí-bvé** kíí-wir-i.
          1.PRO 7-festival 7-good 7SM.PST-pass-PST
          'S/He passed the festival WELL/HAPPILY.'

Some *wh*-adjuncts, in particular the manner and reason interrogatives *buní* "how" and *mu kimá* "why", are also attested to occur in their canonical postverbal position as in (27), in free variation with their occurrence in the IBV position, without triggering interpretational differences. Some *wh*-adjuncts occur in the canonical postverbal position in the context of a rhetorical question, see example (8) above.

(27) Ngo   ká-kwí   **mu   ki-ma?**
      1.leopard 1SM.PST-die.PST 18.LOC 7-what
      'Why did the leopard die?'

An element modified by "only" is always associated with an exhaustive focus reading. In (9) above we have already seen that to place an object DP modified by "only" in the IBV position and the canonical postverbal position are both grammatical. This shows that exclusive focus is not necessarily expressed via the IBV position. Example (28) shows that when excluding some alternatives in an explicitly mentioned set, the exclusively focused phrase can either occur in IBV or its canonical position. In spontaneous speech, I also found both postverbal and preverbal distribution of the *only*-phrases, although the occurrence in the IBV position is more often attested.

(28) a. Mu-kái á-fúum-i   ntaba yǎ má-sáani?
          1-woman 1SM.PST-buy-PST 1.goat with 6-plate
          'Did the woman buy a goat and some plates?'

      b. Ndé wúna ma-sáani ká-fúum-i.
          1.PRO only 6-plate   1SM.PST-buy-PST
          'She only bought some plates.'

      c. Ndé á-fúum-i   wúna ma-sáani.
          1.PRO 1SM.PST-buy-PST only 6-plate
          'She only bought some plates.'

Interestingly, where I do find restrictions on the position of phrases with exclusive (exhaustive) focus is in yes-no questions. As (29) shows, in a yes-no question the "*only*"-phrase can only occur in the IBV position but is judged to be ungrammatical in the postverbal position. This restriction does not hold when there is no "only"-phrase in the sentence; both SOV and SVO are felicitous to form a yes-no question in that case.

(29) a. Taará **wúna** ma-sáání ká-swaak-í?
          1.father only 6-plate   1SM.PST-wash-PST
          'Did father only wash the plates?'

      b. *Taará á-swaak-í   **wúna** ma-sáani?
          1.father 1SM.PST-wash-PST only 6-plate
          Int: 'Did father only wash the plates?'

Contrastively focused objects and adjuncts also commonly occur in the IBV position, with rare exceptions. The postverbal locative phrase and the object in statement (30a) are corrected respectively in (30b) and (30c) in the IBV position, while correcting them postverbally is degraded. In (31) the instrumental phrase is also corrected in the IBV position. In (30b) and (31b) we also notice that the focal element in IBV can be preceded by multiple non-focal elements which can be subject, object and adjunct. I will return to discuss this in section 3.3.1.

(30) a. Ngaŋwâ maamá   ká-wéek-i   mu-nkáání ku
          9.truth   1.mother 1SM.PST-send-PST 3-letter   17.LOC
          Djambala?
          Djambala
          'Was it true that mother sent the letter to Djambala?'

      b. Ambú, ndé   mu-nkáání **mfaí**   ká-wéek-i.
          no   1.PRO 3-letter   3.capital 1SM.PST-send-PST
          'No, she sent the letter to BRAZZAVILLE.'

      c. Ambú, ndé   **kí-dzídzilá** ká-wéek-i.
          no   1.PRO 7-parcel   1SM.PST-send-PST
          'No, she sent a PARCEL.'

(31) a. Ki-yélé kíí-nyánim-i   kii-mbúli mu   míaka.
          7-hare 7SM.PST-save-PST 7-lion   18.LOC 4.hand
          'The hare saved the lion by hand.'

      b. Ambú, ndé   kii-mbúli **mu**   **mu-siá** káá-nyánim-i.
          no   1.PRO 7-lion   18.LOC 3-rope 1SM.PST-save-PST
          'No, he saved the lion with a ROPE.'

Some additional examples on contrastive focus with clear context are illustrated in (32) and (33). Example (32) is felicitous in the context when you did not feed the chicken and went out with your wife, when you returned home, you found that the chickens were full and there were beans on the ground. Your wife did not notice the beans and asked "did someone feed the chickens with rice?" and you corrected her with this sentence. The speaker also suggested some possible context for (32) and (33) as shown in the brackets. From these examples we see that when displacing an element in the IBV position from its canonical position, a set of alternatives is at least implicitly available from the context.

(32)   (*There were bags of beans and rice, you found that the chickens were full and only the beans were reduced.*)

Mbuurú baa-ntsúú **má-désu** ká-búnum-i.

1.person 2-chicken 6-bean 1SM.PST-feed-PST

'The person/Someone fed the chickens the BEANS.'

(33)   (*You see that the child is sitting on the ground and crying, your friend asks from some distance away "did something hurt the child's legs?", and you correct her/him.*)

Ki-lóko mwáana **mú-tswé** kíí-búl-i.

7-thing 1.child 3-head 7SM.PST-hurt-PST

'The (particular) thing hurt the child's HEAD.'

An interim generalisation here is that a focal object or adjunct can be either placed in IBV position or its canonical postverbal position, while some types of foci such as *wh*-words and contrastively focused elements particularly favour the IBV position. This is in line with the idea that specific types of focus and different "degrees" of contrast can be syntactically identified (Cruschina 2021, a.o.). The IBV position, as the more marked focus position than the canonical position in terms of word order, is reserved for higher degree of contrast while the canonical postverbal position may encode less or no contrast. I will show in section 3.2.4 that the IBV position usually expresses identificational focus, while assertively focused elements tend to stay in their canonical positions.

3.2.1.2 Subject focus in IBV

Subject focus in Kukuya can be expressed in three ways, namely in the canonical SVO order, by an OSV order or by using a pseudo-cleft construction. We will see shortly that the former two means should be considered as different realisations of the same IBV subject focus strategy.

First, to question a subject, the pseudo-cleft construction seems to be the most widely used in my corpus, and an example is shown (34a-c). In

these constructions, the subordinated clause is a relative clause with a covert head, and the predicative focused subject DP occur sentence-finally. A copula linking the relative part and the predicative DP is only visible in negative context as in (34c), in which the subject marking on the copula is by default the class 7 subject marker *kí-*.

(34) a. Ki-kí-túm-í   mbaá ki-namá **kí-ma**?
          7REL-7SM-cause-PST 9.fire INF-burn 7-what
          'What caused the fire?'

      b. Wǔ-fúum-i   ma-li   taará.
          1REL-buy-PST 6-wine 1.father
          '(The one) who bought the wine is father.'

      c. Wǔ-dzí   baa-ntsúú ka-kí-li   mvá ni.
          1REL-eat.PST 2-chicken NEG-7SM-COP 1.dog NEG
          '(The one) who ate the chicken was not the dog.'

An alternative strategy to focus the subject is to place the subject in the IBV position, as the *wh*-word in (35), the subject modified by "only" in (36) and the answer to a subject question in (37). It is noteworthy that the subject is focused in the IBV position which is structurally different from its canonical preverbal position. When a focused subject appears preverbally, no other element can occur between this subject and the verb as shown in (35b), which is not characteristic of the topical subject, therefore the focused subject must be placed in a different structural position, which is the IBV.

(35) a. **Ná**   á-ték-i   mu-ngwa?
          1.who 1SM.PST-sell-PST 3-salt
          'Who sold the salt?'

      b. *****Ná**   mú-ngwa ká-ték-i?
          1.who 3-salt   1SM.PST-sell-PST
          Int: 'Who sold the salt?'

(36) Wúna **baa-ntsúú** báá-ból-i.
      only   2-chicken 2SM.PST-rot-PST
      'Only the chicken rotted.'

(37)   (*"Who gave the child the oranges?"*)
    Bí-búru bíí-wî mwáana ma-láara.
    8-parent 8SM.PST-give.PST 1.child   6-orange
    'The PARENTS gave the child the oranges.'

Intriguingly, an exception to the legitimacy of a preverbal focal subject is the *which*-phrase. According to many speakers, a *which*-phrase cannot be placed in IBV position in the same way as other *wh*-phrases, but can only occur in a reverse pseudo-cleft sentence. We see in (38) and (39) that the *whose*-phrase and *which*-phrase respectively are not compatible with canonical subject marking, which indicates that they cannot function as the grammatical subject of the sentence, but can only occur in a pseudo-cleft construction.

(38)   a.   *Mu-káli wuu   ná   á-níak-i   mwáana?
        1-wife   1.CONN 1.who 1SM.PST-abandon-PST 1.child
        Int.: 'Whose wife abandoned the child?'

     b.   Mu-káli wuu   ná   **wǔ**-níak-i   mwáana?
        1-wife   1.CONN 1.who 1REL-abandon-PST 1.child
        'Whose wife abandoned the child?'

(39)   a.   *Mwáana wu-ní   **á**-mún-i   Zacharie?
        1.child   1-which 1SM.PST-see-PST Zacharie
        Int.: 'Which child saw Zacharie?'

     b.   Mwáana wu-ní   **wǔ**-mún-i   Zacharie?
        1.child   1-which 1REL-see-PST Zacharie
        lit: 'Which child is the one who saw Zacharie?'

A *which*-phrase is usually considered to be discourse-linked and presupposes an antecedent in the given discourse, thus does not necessarily trigger discourse-new information (Şener 2010). On the opposite, a non-discourse linked *wh*-phrase does not presuppose an antecedent and always functions as a focal phrase. As we will see throughout this chapter that the preverbal domain is available for elements of various information structural status,

it thus seems unexpected that the D-linked *which-* and *whose*-phrases are not compatible with preverbal focus in a mono-clausal construction. One possible motivation for the D-linked interrogatives to prefer a cleft construction may be that the presupposed existence makes the question as selective, which patterns with the pseudo-cleft construction. Here again it shows that different types and "degrees" of contrast and focus may be encoded through different grammatical strategies.

There are some interpretational differences between the pseudo-cleft construction and subject focus in IBV. In (40a) the subject of the embedded clause is questioned in a pseudo-cleft, and in (40b) it is questioned in the IBV position. According to the speakers, (40a) is used in the context where there is a presupposed set of candidates who killed the king, which means the speaker has already a group of suspects; while in (40b) there is no candidate invoked in the speaker's mind. In this sense the pseudo-cleft construction is more discourse-linked than the IBV subject focus strategy.

(40)   a. Ndé kâ-tsuomó   ndíri [**wǔ**-dzwí   mu-kóko **na**].
       1.PRO 1SM.IMPF-think 1.COMP 1REL-kill.PST 1-king   1.who
       'S/He is thinking about who killed the king.'

       b. Ndé kâ-tsuomó   ndíri [**ná** á-dzwí   mu-kóko].
       1.PRO 1SM.IMPF-think 1.COMP 1.who 1SM.PST-kill.PST 1-king
       'S/He is thinking about who killed the king.'

Subject focus in the IBV position is very commonly accompanied by the fronting of topical object(s) to the preverbal domain. For example the answer to a subject question in (37) above can be alternatively expressed as in (41) in which the subject is focused in the IBV position and the given objects are all preposed to the preverbal domain, surfacing an OOSV order. Similarly in (42), both in the question and the answer, the focused subject is placed in the IBV position with some object being fronted to the preverbal domain. The OSV order is in fact very commonly attested in Kukuya for expressing subject focus, and we will also see in section 4.2 that OSV can function as an equivalent of the passive construction. I assume that this OSV construction is not a third strategy for subject focus, but it is just a different realisation of the IBV focus strategy introduced above, and here in the OSV construction

some element must be marked salient as topic of the sentence and fronted to the initial position. The prepoposing of other preverbal constituents can also help to identify the subject as being placed in the IBV focus position.

(41) (*"Who gave the child the oranges?"*)
      Mwáana ma-láara **bí-búru** bíí-wî.
      1.child   6-orange 8-parent 8SM.PST-give.PST
      'The child was given the oranges by the PARENTS.'

(42) a. Taará téme **ná**   á-sonom-i?
          1.father 5.hoe 1.who 1SM.PST-lend-PST
          'Who lent father the hoe?'
      b. Téme **nkaaká**   á-sonom-í   taará.
          5.hoe 1.grandmother 1SM.PST-lend-PST 1.father
          'Grandmother lent father the hoe.'

I have shown in the previous subsection that focal objects and adjuncts can occur either in the IBV position or their canonical postverbal position. Here we see that the subject can also be focused in the IBV position, and we can generalise that all arguments and adjuncts in Kukuya can be focused in this verb-adjacent IBV position. Next I will investigate whether the IBV position can be used to express focus on an element which is structurally smaller than the argument/adjunct, namely a modifier, or on a larger constituent such as the VP.

3.2.1.3 Sub-NP focus

In this subsection I show that sub-NP focus can also be expressed by placing the NP in the IBV position, as it can express focus on a modifier. In example (43) we see that the interrogative quantifier *kwê* "how many" occurs in the IBV position, following the NP that it modifies. From this example it is not clear whether it is the whole DP including the head noun and the quantifier that is placed in the IBV position, or solely the quantifier occupies the IBV position.

(43)   Ba-nziá   ma-tsúku kwê   bâ-sá   ŋa   ntsá
        2-foreigner 6-day   how.many 2SM.FUT-stay 16.LOC inside
        bu-lá   ba?
        14-village 14.DEM.I
        'How long will the foreigners stay in this village?'

The sentences in (44) were elicited with a picture in which a woman is holding three knives in her hand. In (44a) the numeral quantifier is correctively focused and takes the H tone prefix, while the nominal prefix of the head NP keeps the L tone; in (44b) it is only the head NP that is focal and takes the H tone prefix, with the quantifier following it; (44c) conveys focus on the whole quantified NP, and in this case the H tone prefix only appears on the head NP.

(44)   (*visual stimuli: the woman is holding three knives in her hand.*)
    a.   (*Is the woman holding TWO knives?*)
        Ndé   maa-mbhielé **má**-tíri kâ-kwaal-a.
        1.PRO 6-knife   6-three 1SM.IMPF-hold-FV
        'She is holding THREE knives.'
    b.   (*Is the woman holding three SPOONS?*)
        Ndé   **má**a-mbhielé **ma**-tíri kâ-kwaal-a.
        1.PRO 6-knife   6-three 1SM.IMPF-hold-FV
        'She is holding three KNIVES.'
    c.   (*Is the woman holding TWO SPOONS?/What is the woman holding?*)
        Ndé   **má**a-mbhielé ma-tíri kâ-kwaal-a.
        1.PRO 6-knife   6-three 1SM.IMPF-hold-FV
        'She is holding THREE KNIVES.'

From these examples we see that only one H tone prefix can occur on the preverbal elements, either on an NP or its modifier, and it is only when the modifier itself is focal that it can take the H tone prefix. One question that arises from (44) is whether the H tone prefix always aligns with focus and with the IBV position. Here I suppose that the head NP and the modifier are

separated in (44a), the head NP functions as a dislocated topic and only the modifier is focused in IBV, since the head NP in this case can also be elided; in (44b) and (44c) the head NP and the modifier are one constituent and only the prefix on the head NP can take the H tone which maps onto the focus reading and the IBV position.

So far in this section I have shown that the IBV focus position is available for argument focus including subject and object, adjunct focus as well as sub-NP focus on a modifier. In the next section I will look into how the IBV position is exploited beyond term focus, namely in predicate-centered focus.

3.2.2   Predicate(-centered) focus and IBV

3.2.2.1 VP focus and verb focus

In this section I refer to predicate focus as focus on the whole verb phrase. Predicate-centered focus (PCF), as defined in Güldemann (2003), indicates the focus on *part* of the predicate and can be further divided into state-of-affairs focus which is also referred to as verb focus, tense/aspect/mood (TAM) focus, and truth value focus (also known as verum focus); the latter two are also referred to as operator focus.

As introduced in section 2, VP focus in Kukuya is most commonly expressed via SVO. Example (45) is extracted from a written translation task done by the speakers in which they gave most answers to the VP questions in SVO. However, the IBV focus position can also be employed when answering a VP question, as shown (46c). In elicitation the speakers usually cannot explain the interpretational differences between SVO and SOV when expressing VP focus, while there are in fact more pragmatic restrictions for the SOV order to occur, as I will introduce shortly.

(45)   a.   Huguette bu-kía   kí-má kâ-sá?
            Huguette 14-tomorrow 7-what 1SM.FUT-do
            'What will Huguette do tomorrow?'

       b.   Bu-kía,   ndé â-yé   kíe báa-ndúku.
            14-tomorrow 1.PRO 1SM.FUT-go visit 2-friend
            'Tomorrow she will go to visit friends.'

(46)   a.   Taará kí-má ké   ká-sí   ŋa   ngwaalí?
            1.father 7-what 7.PRO 1SM.PST-do.PST 16.LOC 9.morning
            'What did father do in the morning?'

       b.   Ndé á-dzwí   mi-féme.
            1.PRO 1SM.PST-kill.PST 4-pig
            'He killed some pigs.'

       c.   Ndé   mí-féme ká-dzwí.
            1.PRO 4-pig   1SM.PST-kill.PST
            'He killed some pigs.'

The availability of SOV to express VP focus could be viewed as a counter-argument for the IBV focus position, as in this case the focus is not only on the element immediate before the verb, but is on the whole predicate that contains the IBV element. I propose that we do not need to reject the hypothesis of IBV as a focus position but can revise the hypothesis to say that the IBV element should at least be part of the focus, and the IBV element as the *nucleus* of the focus set can project up to the whole verb phrase, which depends on the discourse context (Selkirk 1995: 555; Reinhart 2006; van der Wal 2009: 241).

An alternative question on the VP and its congruent answer can both be expressed by SOV as shown in (47). The yes-no question in (48a) focuses the whole VP and also uses SOV, here we see that SVO in (48b) and SOV in (48c) can both be felicitous additive responses to this question, which again shows that both SVO and SOV can signal focus on the whole VP.

(47) a. We   má-sáání á-swaakí   wó bi-báa-wî
          2SG.PRO 6-plate   2SG.PST-wash-PST or 8REL-2SM.PST-give.PST
          we   á-sî?
          2SG.PRO 2SG.PST-do.PST
          'Did you wash the plates or do your homework?'

      b. Me   má-sáání á-n-swaak-í.
          1SG.PRO 6-plate   PST-1SG.SM-wash-PST
          'I washed the plates.'

(48) a. Ndé   wúna bi-ko   ká-swaak-í?
          1.PRO only   8-clothes 1SM.PST-wash-PST
          'Did he only wash the clothes?'

      b. Ndé   á-búnum-i   bii-ndomó hé.
          1.PRO 1SM.PST-feed-PST 8-goat   also
          'He also fed the goats.'

      c. Ndé   bíi-ndomó hé   ká-búnum-i   (hé).
          1.PRO 8-goat   also 1SM.PST-feed-PST also
          'He also fed the goats.'

Verb focus, also known as state-of-affairs focus which locates focus on the lexical value of the verb, can be expressed in different ways in Kukuya. As mentioned in section 3.1.2, SVO can be used to signal verb focus. The answer to a question like "what did X do to Y?" can be used to diagnose verb focus expressions, in which the subject and the object are both topical since they are already given in the background and the focus is on the verb itself. Interestingly, we see in (49) and (50) that SVO and SOV can both signal verb focus, while OSV with the subject in IBV cannot be used as a felicitous answer.

(49) a. Ngolo Marie kí-má   ká-sî?
          Ngolo Marie 7-what 1SM.PST-do.PST
          'What did Ngolo do to Marie?'

b. Ngolo á-pfur-í   Marie.
Ngolo 1SM.PST-cheat-PST Marie
'Ngolo betrayed Marie.'

c. Ngolo Marie ká-pfur-í.
Ngolo Marie 1SM.PST-cheat-PST
'Ngolo betrayed Marie.'

d. #Marie Ngolo á-pfur-í.
Marie   Ngolo 1SM.PST-cheat-PST
Int: 'Ngolo betrayed Marie.'

(50)   a. Ngúku   baa-ntaba kí-má   ká-sî?
1.mother 2-goat   7-what 1SM.PST-do.PST
'What did mother do to the goats?'

b. Ngúku   á-dzwí   baa-ntaba.
1.mother 1SM.PST-kill.PST 2-goat
'Mother killed the goats.'

c. Ngúku   **bá**a-ntaba ká-dzwí.
1.mother 2-goat   1SM.PST-kill.PST
'Mother killed the goats.'

d. #Baa-ntaba ngúku   á-dzwí.
2-goat   1.mother 1SM.PST-kill.PST
Int: 'Mother killed the goats.'

Here it is somehow problematic to explain why SOV is applicable to express verb focus, if we hypothesise the IBV to be a dedicated focus position from which the focus can project up to the whole VP, we still cannot account for why the focus on the IBV can be "transferred" to the verb. According to the focus projection hypothesis above, the object being placed in the IBV position is consistent with the whole VP being in focus, since the object is counted as within the scope of the VP focus. Here we may wonder whether the preposed objects in (49c) and (50c) indeed occupy the IBV position or they are just fronted as some topical elements. The most obvious evidence that they are placed in the IBV position rather than some higher positions lies in the H tone on the nominal prefix in (50c). Since this H tone marking

only occurs when the preposed element is in IBV, here we can confirm that SOV is indeed felicitous to express verb focus with the IBV position being occupied. In (49d) and (50d) we see that the answers become infelicitous when the subject is placed in IBV, this may be accounted for by an economy principle. Since verb focus here must involve something to be placed in the IBV position and both the subject and object in this question are topical, it may be easier to just place the object to the IBV position, rather than place the subject in the IBV while also topicalising the object.

Let us consider some more examples of verb focus. In the answers to the question in (51a), some other actions taken on the object "pig" are introduced in addition to just "washing" it, so the verb "to kill" in (51b-d) itself is focused. We see that (51b) is felicitous with SVO, while (51c) with SOV is infelicitous here with the additive particle *hé* and it only implies that the grandmother must have killed other animals beforehand, thus the focus can only be on the object rather than the verb. SOV in (51d) without the additive particle is felicitous to correctively focus the truth value of the verb, and in (51e) SOV with the additive particle is felicitous when the whole VP is focused as an additive action that is not related to the pig.

(51) a. Nkaaká   á-swaak-í   mu-féme?
          1.grandmother 1SM.PST-wash-PST 4-pig
          'Did grandmother wash the pig?'

      b. Ndé á-dzwí   hé mú-féme.
          1.PRO 1SM.PST-kill.PST also 4-pig
          'She also KILLED the pig.'

      c. #Ndé mú-fémé (hé) ká-dzwí   (hé).
          1.PRO 4-pig   also 1SM.PST-kill.PST also
          Int: 'She also KILLED the pig.'
          'She also killed the PIG.'

      d. Ndé mú-fémé ká-dzwí.
          1.PRO 4-pig   1SM.PST-kill.PST
          'She KILLED the pig.'

    e. Ndé báa-ntsúú hé ká-ká-i.
        1.PRO 2-chicken also 1SM.PST-grill-PST
        'She also GRILLED THE CHICKEN.'

The infelicity in (51c) above is unexpected given that we have already seen examples above in which the SOV word order can be used to express verb focus. I suggest that this infelicity is due to the presence of the additive particle *hé* which is always associated with the focal element in a sentence. This particle may disambiguate the nucleus of the focus from the domain to which it may project up, thus in (51c) it is more intuitive for the speakers to interpret the focus on the object only. In the absence of this additive particle, the SOV word order becomes a possible way of expressing verb focus as in (51d). We also see that in (51e) the presence of *hé* does not prevent the SOV word order from expressing VP focus, this may be explained by the fact that the whole VP in (51e) is new, so the VP focus reading can be rescued from the intervention of the additive particle, thus it can be an appropriate answer to (51a).

From above I have shown that when the IBV position is occupied by an object DP, it can be used to express VP focus and verb focus. Next I present another strategy for expressing predicate-centered focus, which also involves the use of the IBV focus position, namely the predicate doubling construction.

3.2.2.2 Predicate doubling

Predicate doubling is first documented by Meeussen (1967: 121) as the "advance verb construction" that can express truth focus, intensity and concession. In many other Bantu languages, predicate doubling is a common strategy to express state-of-affairs focus and truth focus on the verb, and is reported to be situated in different stages in the grammaticalisation path to the progressive and future tense (Güldemann et al. 2010, 2014; Morimoto 2016). In some neighbouring languages of Teke, such as in the Kikongo group of Zone H and other Zone B languages, some of which also favour the IBV focus position, the predicate doubling construction is also

well attested expressing verb focus and truth focus, as well as progressive and future tense (Hadermann 1996; De Kind 2014; De Kind et al. 2015; Güldemann and Fiedler 2022). Some examples from these languages illustrate the phenomenon in (52)-(55) below.

(52) Ku-tá:nga ndyeká-tá:nga.
      INF-read   1SG:FUT-read
      'I will READ.'   [Suundi H31b] (Hadermann 1996: 161) [verb focus]

(53) Mona   mbwene   N-kenda   za   zula   ki-ame
      INF.see 1SG.see.PERF 10-affliction 10.GEN 7.people 7-1SG.POSS
      kina.
      7.DEM
      'I have surely seen the affliction of that people of mine there.'
                  [Ndibu H16] (De Kind et al. 2015: 12) [truth focus]

(54) Ba-ka:sɔ́ bá-ná:, vádɔ́   bâ:vádə pénda.
      2-woman 2-DEM INF.cultivate 2-cultivate groundnut
      'These women, they are cultivating groundnuts.'
                  [Nzebi B52] (Hadermann 1996: 162) [progressive]

(55) Vuumbuka yi-vuumbuka.
      INF-dress   1SG.SM-dress
      'I'll dress myself.'   [Yaka H33] (De Kind et al. 2015: 36) [future]

In this subsection I introduce the predicate doubling construction in Kukuya. In Kukuya, the predicate doubling construction is mainly attested as IBV doubling, while topic doubling is judged to be infelicitous and cleft doubling to be quite marginal. In (56), to exclusively focus the lexical value of a verb while excluding some alternatives, we see that SOV can be appropriately used in (56b) with the exclusive focus particle *wúna* preceding the preposed object, while to place the particle immediately in front of the verb in either SVO or SOV is judged to be ungrammatical as shown in (56c, d). It seems that the exclusive particle can only modify nominal elements or a VP

but not a bare verb. In (56e) we see that verb focus can also be expressed by placing an infinitive form of the verb immediately before the inflected verb.

(56) a. Ngúku   á-télek-i   bu-ká   á-dzí?
          1.mother 1SM.PST-prepare-PST 14-cassava 1SM.PST-eat.PST
          'Did mother prepare and eat the cassava?'

      b. Ndé   wúna bu-ká   ká-télek-i.
          1.PRO only 14-cassava 1SM.PST-prepare-PST
          'She only PREPARED the cassava.'

      c. ??Ndé wúna á-télek-i   bu-ká.
          1.PRO only 1SM.PST-prepare-PST 14-cassava
          Int: 'She only PREPARED the cassava.'

      d. *Ndé bu-ká   wúna ká-télek-i.
          1.PRO 14-cassava only 1SM.PST-prepare-PST
          Int: 'She only PREPARED the cassava.'

      e. Ndé bu-ká   wúna **ki-téléké**   ká-télek-i.
          1.PRO 14-cassava only   INF-prepare 1SM.PST-prepare-PST
          'She only PREPARED the cassava.'

One additional example of predicate doubling expressing verb focus in Kukuya is given in (57). There is an important interpretational difference between the use of SOV and predicate doubling in expressing verb focus: while (56b, e) and (57b) all express exclusive focus on the verb, (56b) with SOV indicates that the event is completed and the mother only prepared the cassava but does not need to go on making it, while (56e) and (57b) imply that the event is still continuing and there must be other things that need to be done with the cassava and the goats.

(57) a. Maamá á-dzwî   baa-ntabá á-ték-i.
          1.mother 1SM.PST-kill.PST 2-goat   1SM.PST-sell-PST
          'Mother killed the goats (and) sold (them).'

b. Ambú, ndé bó   wúna **ki-téké káa-ték-i.**
no   1.PRO 2.PRO only INF-sell 1SM.PST-sell-PST
'No, she only SOLD them.'

Truth focus on the verb can be expressed neither by predicate doubling nor by SOV in Kukuya. In (58) and (59) we see that to correct a negative truth value on the verb, there is no other construction than the canonical SVO, and the speakers tend to put some intonational emphasis on the verb to express the truth focus. SOV in (58c) and (59c) is infelicitous here, while it can actually express focus on the object or the VP or the lexical value of the verb. The predicate doubling in (58d) and (59d) is also infelicitous and implies that there are other actions that need to be done with the oranges, expressing verb focus. We see that both the SOV order and predicate doubling can trigger alternatives either on the object or on the verb and imply a contrast with other actions or tasks that remain to be done.

(58) a. Taará   ka-ká-kí   ma-láala ni?
1.father NEG-1SM.PST-pick.PST 6-orange NEG
'Did father not pick the oranges?'

b. Ndé á-kí   ma-láala.
1.PRO 1SM.PST-pick.PST 6-orange
'He DID pick the oranges.'

c. #Ndé má-láálá ká-kí.
1.PRO 6-orange 1SM.PST-pick.PST
Int: 'He DID pick the oranges.'

d. #Ndé ma-láala **kí-ká**   ká-kí.
1.PRO 6-orange INF-pick 1SM.PST-pick.PST
Int: 'He DID pick the oranges.'

(59) a. Ndé ka-ká-bvúúr-í   we   mi-pará ni?
1.PRO NEG-1SM.PST-return-PST 2SG.PRO 4-money NEG
'Didn't s/he return you the money?'

b. Ndé á-bvúur-i   me   mi-pará.
   1.PRO 1SM.PST-return-PST 1SG.PRO 4-money
   'S/He DID return me the money'

c. #Ndé me   mí-para ká-bvúur-i.
   1.PRO 1SG.PRO 4-money 1SM.PST-return-PST
   Int: 'He DID return me the money.'

d. #Ndé me   mi-pará **kí-bvúúrá** ká-bvúur-i.
   1.PRO 1SG.PRO 4-money INF-return 1SM.PST-return-PST
   Int: 'He DID return me the money.'

The predicate doubling construction that expresses verb focus in Kukuya looks quite like the IBV focus construction that encodes narrow focus on the preposed DP, and predicate doubling in this case is just a particular realisation of the IBV focus, in which the predicate is doubled as an infinitive form and is focused in the IBV position. In this sense the predicate doubling and the SOV/OSV orders are actually the same structure that places focus in the IBV position, which is also consistent with the fact that infinitives are also DPs in Kukuya and most other Bantu languages. If this is true, we may expect the fronted infinitive and a preverbal *wh*-word to be in complementary distribution as they should compete for the unique IBV position, and this is borne out as the ungrammaticality in (60) and (61), which also shows that there is only one preverbal focus site in this language. In these examples the predicate doubling is intended to be used for expressing a *progressive* meaning, which I will introduce shortly.

(60) *Ndé **kí-má kí-dzá** kâ-dzá?
      1.PRO 7-what INF-eat 1SM.IMPF-eat
      Int: 'What is he/she eating?'

(61) *Ná **kí-tsúka** kâ-tsúka?
      1.who INF-speak 1SM.IMPF-speak
      Int: 'Who is talking?'

We have seen above that the IBV position is associated with argument and adjunct focus, as well as VP focus and verb focus. It is not clear here whether

the infinitive in the predicate doubling construction should be viewed as an argument of the verb, if so, the predicate doubling in analogous to term focus on an argument DP. In fact, predicate doubling and term focus in the IBV position have some important interpretational similarities: predicate doubling usually implies the potential occurrence of other actions, while term focus in IBV also hints that some alternatives should be available for the proposition. I will discuss more on these interpretational properties in section 3.2.4.

Similar to many other Bantu languages, predicate doubling in Kukuya can express progressive aspect. In examples (62) and (63) the fronted infinitive expresses a neutral progressive meaning without focusing on the verb itself. Verb focus and progressive reading are often said to have a close semantic and pragmatic relation and the progressive is considered to be an inherently focused verb category in which the "ongoing nature of the event described by the verb" constitutes the focus domain of the sentence (Hyman and Watters 1984; Güldemann 2003; De Kind 2014; De Kind et al. 2015). The predicate doubling with progressive reading is sometimes ambiguous and can only be distinguished from PCF focus through the pragmatic context. Example (62) can be a felicitous corrective response to focus on the progressive aspect expressing TAM focus, while predicate doubling in (63) is used outside the PCF focus context. In Kukuya there is a dedicated aspect marker *-kâ-* that can mark habitual as well as progressive aspect without the fronting of an infinitive verb, so the predicate doubling is not the only way of expressing progressive in Kukuya.

(62)   (*Have they already eaten?*)
       Bó   kí-dzá bá-**kâ**-dzá.
       2.PRO INF-eat 2SM-PROG-eat
       'They are eating.'

(63)   Mwáana wu-kái wu-kíí-kwî   ngúku   á-yiká   **kí-líla**
       1.child   1-female 1REL-7SM.PST-die.PST 1.mother 1SM-IMPF INF-cry
       kâ-líl-a.
       1SM.PROG-cry-FV
       'The girl whose mother died is crying.'

In Kukuya grammar as well as in many other Teke languages, the expression of immediate future tense also involves the SOV order, as in (64). The predicate doubling construction in Kukuya can also have the immediate future reading, as shown in (65).

(64)   Bó   má-ko   báa-fúum-a.
       2.PRO 6-banana 2SM.FUT-buy-FV
       'They'll buy some bananas.'

(65)   a. We   ka-á-bvúúr-í   ndé mi-pará ni?
           2SG.PRO NEG-2SG.PST-return-PST 1.PRO 4-money NEG
           'You did not return her the money?'

       b. Me   mi-pará **kí-bvúúrá** kâ-n-bvúur-a.
           1SG.PRO 4-money INF-return IMPF-1SG.SM-return-FV
           'I am (surely) going to return the money.'

The response in (65b) has a truth focus reading, meaning that the speaker will definitely return the money and does not imply that there are other things to be done with the object "money", which differs from the interpretation in example (59d) above. The contrast between (59d) and (65b) is that, in (59d) the alternative could be "borrow again" the money in addition to just returning it, while in (65b) the alternative is "not to return" the money as opposed to returning it. We see that when predicate doubling has an immediate future reading, it can express truth value focus, which may be due to the SOV order being grammaticalised to express certain tense, thus becoming pragmatically equal to the canonical word order; for the predicate doubling in other tenses, it cannot be used to express truth focus.

From the above presentation on the expressions of different types of predicate(-centered) focus, we see that in Kukuya VP focus (predicate focus) can be expressed by SVO as well as SOV. The use of the IBV focus position to express VP focus can be explained by the focus projection account. Verb focus (state-of-affairs focus) can also be realised via SVO and SOV, while OSV cannot express verb focus. It remains to be investigated why the IBV focus position is also involved in expressing verb focus. The

predicate doubling construction is used mostly to express verb focus and usually triggers alternatives to the verb, while truth focus is commonly expressed by the canonical SVO order.

3.2.3 IBV as a dedicated focus position

So far we have encountered and discussed many examples which suggest that the IBV position is always associated to some type of focus. In this subsection I will investigate some intrinsic properties of the IBV position. First I will provide more tests on whether the IBV position is really a dedicated focus position. Then I will discuss the interpretational differences between the IBV focus strategy and *in situ* focus that was introduced in the previous section, showing that the IBV position is reserved for expressing identificational focus, while the *in situ* focus strategy seems to be more frequently used to express assertive focus.

Many Bantu languages have been reported to have a dedicated focus position, most of which are the so-called immediate-after-verb (IAV) position that are commonly attested in languages such as Aghem (Watters 1979, Hyman and Polinsky. 2010), Bemba (Costa and Kula 2008), Matengo (Yoneda 2011), Makhuwa (van der Wal 2009), and Zulu (Buell 2009). The immediate-before-verb (IBV) focus position is much more rarely attested only in some West-Coastal Bantu languages (WCB), which has already been described in detail for Mbuun (B87, Bostoen and Mundeke 2011, 2012), Nsong (B85d, Koni Muluwa and Bostoen 2019) and in the Kikongo cluster (Hadermann 1996; De Kind 2014; De Kind et al. 2015). Here I provide some more evidence to show that the IBV in Kukuya is indeed a dedicated focus position.

At this moment, we consider first non-subject elements (the IBV and the canonical subject position will be disentangled later). We see that if some element is placed in the IBV position, it must be focal or at least within the scope of focus, while elements in other positions cannot be focal at the same time. This is illustrated in (66) and (67). In (66b) we see that a *wh*-element cannot co-occur with another element being placed in

the IBV position, the ungrammaticality can only be explained by the focal status of the adverb in IBV and the generalisation that multiple foci are not allowed; (66c) is not a felicitous answer to (66a), as what is placed in the IBV position is a manner adverb but not the object which is the target of the question; (66c) can only be an appropriate answer to the question "HOW did the person eat the cassava", which indicates that the adverb in the IBV must be focal. Similarly in (67), only (67b) can be a felicitous answer to (67a) while (67c) can only be the answer to the question that asks for the location. From these examples we see that if there are multiple preverbal elements (in an affirmative sentence), the IBV slot must be occupied by a focal element, while other elements in the sentence are prohibited to be focused.

(66)   a. Mbuurú **kí-má** ká-dzí   tswáatswáa?
           1.person 7-what 1SM.PST-eat.PST fast
           'What did the person eat quickly?'

        b. *Mbuurú kí-má **tswáatswáa** ká-dzí?
           1.person 7-what fast   1SM.PST-eat.PST
           Int: 'What did the person eat quickly?'

        c. #Mbuurú bu-ka   **tswáatswáa** ká-dzí.
           1.person 14-cassava fast   1SM.PST-eat.PST
           'The person ate the cassava QUICKLY.'

(67)   a. We   **ná** á-mún-i   ku   dzándu?
           2SG.PRO who 2SG.PST-see-PST 17.LOC 5.market
           'Who did you see at the market?'

        b. Me   **Gilbert** á-mún-i   ku   dzándu.
           1SG.PRO Gilbert 1SG.PST-see-PST 17.LOC 5.market
           'I saw Gilbert at the market.'

        c. #Me   Gilbert **ku**   **dzándu** á-mún-i.
           1SG.PRO Gilbert 17.LOC 5.market 1SG.PST-see-PST
           'I saw Gilbert AT THE MARKET.'

Neither SOV nor OSV can be used to answer the question such as "What happened" as in (68a) which requires a thetic answer in which the whole

utterance provides the new information thus no topic or focus is subdivided in the sentence (Kuroda 1972; Sasse 1987, 1996; also see section 2.3). Here we see that only SVO in (68b) can be felicitous. The answers in (68c) and (68d) are both inappropriate here, as there must be some focal reading triggered by the IBV position being occupied, namely the object "child" in (68c) and the subject "father" in (68d), thus they are both incompatible with the thetic requirement.

(68) a. Me   a-n-yúk-i   nkelé ku   mbali,   kí-má
           1SG.PRO PST-1SG.SM-hear-FV 9.noise 17.LOC 9.outside 7-what
           kí-sî?
           7SM.PST-do.PST
           'I heard some noise outside, what happened?'

      b. Taará á-béer-i   mwáana.
           1.father 1SM.PST-beat-PST 1.child
           'Father beat the child.'

      c. #Taará mwááná ká-béer-i.
           1.father 1.child   1SM.PST-beat-PST
           'Father beat the CHILD.'

      d. #Mwáána taará   á-béer-i.
           1.child   1.father 1SM.PST-beat-PST
           'FATHER beat the child.'

Idiom tests can also help to justify that the IBV position is indeed associated with focus function (van der Wal 2016, 2021). In idiom sentences, the idiomatic reading arises as a whole chunk thus is considered to be non-compositional. We would predict that any part of an idiom sentence cannot be focused, since no expressions in an idiom refers to something that is accessible in the reality, thus no alternatives can be triggered for focus. Examples (69)-(71) illustrate several idioms in Kukuya, and all these idiom sentences surface as SVO, which is further evidence for SVO as the canonical order. Crucially, we find that when the word order is shifted to SOV, the sentence is still grammatical but the idiomatic reading is not retained, and the sentence can only have the literal meaning. These idiom tests show that the formation of SOV must have involved some discourse-related operations,

namely the IBV element must be focal, as the translations indicate.

(69) a. Ndé á-tín-i   ko   li-búi.
          1.PRO 1SM.PST-pick-PST 5.banana 5-immature
          'S/He had a sexual relation with a child.'
          lit: 'S/He picked the unripe banana.'

      b. Ndé ko   li-búi   ká-tín-i.
          1.PRO 5.banana 5-immature 1SM.PST-pick-PST
          *'S/He had a sexual relation with a child.'
          'S/He picked the unripe banana.'

(70) a. Me   a-n-dzwî   ntaalí mu   kíí.
          1SG.PRO PST-1SG.SM-pick.PST 1.snake 18.LOC 7.pipe
          'I have lost all.'
          lit: 'I killed a snake with a pipe.'

      b. Me   ntaalí mu   kíí   n-dzwî.
          1SG.PRO 1.snake 18.LOC 7.pipe PST-1SG.SM-pick.PST
          *'I have lost all.'
          'I killed a snake with a PIPE.'

(71) a. Maa-nkala máá-dzí   mbúlu.
          6-charcoal 6SM.PST-eat.PST 9.blanket
          'The problem becomes burning (rather than coldness when you
          use too much charcoal).'
          lit: 'The coal is eating the blanket.'

      b. Maa-nkala mbúlú   máá-dzí.
          6-charcoal 9.blanket 6SM.PST-eat.PST
          *'The problem becomes burning (rather than coldness when
          you use too much charcoal).'
          'The coal is eating the BLANKET.'

So far we have seen that any non-subject constituent that is in IBV position
must be interpreted as focused; now I provide examples to illustrate that it

is also a dedicated focus position for a subject. Example (72) is partially repeated from (35) above, in which we see that the interrogative subject in (72a) seemingly occupies the same near position as the grammatical subject in canonical word order; however from (72b) and (72c) we see that the focal and topical subjects are subject to different constraints on their linear position: the focal subject can only occur in the IBV position but cannot be followed by other elements in the preverbal domain as in (72b), while the topical subject can be followed by other DPs, such as by focused object in the IBV position in (72c). In other words, the focal subject has an IBV requirement while the topical subject does not, therefore they must stay in different structural positions. Similarly in (73), we see that the answer to a subject question must be adjacent to the verb as in (73a,c) and another DP cannot intervene as in (73b).

(72)   a. **Ná**   á-ték-i   mu-ngwa?
           1.who 1SM.PST-sell-PST 3-salt
           'Who sold the salt?'

       b. ***Ná**   mú-ngwa ká-ték-i?
           1.who 3-salt   1SM.PST-sell-PST
           Int: 'Who sold the salt?'

       c. (*What did the grandmother sell?*)

           Nkaaká   mú-ngwa ká-ték-i?
           1.grandmother 3-salt   1SM.PST-sell-PST
           'The grandmother sold some SALT.'

(73)   (*Who brought the dog?*)

       a. **Taará** á-yi-í   mvá.
           1.father 1SM.PST-bring-PST 1.dog
           'FATHER brought the dog.'

       b. #Taará mvá ká-yi-í.
           1.father 1.dog 1SM.PST-bring-PST
           Int: 'FATHER brought the dog.'

    c. Mvá taará   á-yi-í.
        1.dog 1.father 1SM.PST-bring-PST
        'FATHER brought the dog.'

In (74a) the subject precedes the negative marker on the verb, and the focus is on the polarity of the sentence rather than on the subject; while (74b) expresses constituent negation and the subject is somehow "inserted" between the negative marker and the verb, providing evidence that it must be situated in a different position than the subject in (74a). The interpretation in (74b) is that it is not "father" but someone else that killed the leopard, so the focus is apparently on the subject. From the minimal pair in (74) the canonical subject position and the IBV can be distinguished: in (74a) the subject appears in the canonical subject position, while in (74b) the subject is placed in the IBV position. The position of the negative marker here may also support that the IBV position is indeed "immediate" before the verb, since when the IBV slot is empty as in (74a), the negative morpheme is always prefixed to the verb and prosodically phrased together with it.

  (74)   a. Ngo   **taará** ka-ká-dzwí   ni.
              1.leopard 1.father NEG-1SM.PST-kill.PST NEG
              'The leopard, father did NOT kill (it).'
      b. Ngo   ka **taará** á-dzwí   ni.
              1.leopard NEG 1.father 1SM.PST-kill.PST NEG
              'The leopard was not killed by father (but by someone else).'

The analysis above has provided strong evidence on the presence of a dedicated focus position in Kukuya, i.e. everything that is in this position is focused, and this position is located immediately left-adjacent to the verb. I have also shown that the subject is focused in the IBV position which is distinct from its canonical preverbal position. When this IBV position is filled, the sentence must have undergone some discourse-related operations for information packaging, in most cases some argument or adjunct gets focused. Recall that in section 3.1.2 we have seen that an element such as a postverbal object can also be focused in its canonical postverbal position,

next I will discuss the distinction between IBV focus and non-IBV *in situ* focus with regard to their interpretation.

3.2.4 Interpretational properties of IBV focus

In the introduction on the expressions of term focus, we have already noticed that in some examples the IBV focus strategy is preferred over the *in situ* focus strategy: in the answer to an alternative question; in a contrastive focus expression; in the predicate doubling construction; and in most of the SOV sentences with a clear context in which some overt alternatives are available for the focused element. In this subsection I show more details on the interpretational distinction between IBV focus and the non-IBV focus strategies, arguing that the IBV position is usually, if not in all cases, used to express identificational focus. Here I refer to the identificational focus as a focus type that identifies a referent in an existential presupposition. For example in English sentence "What I like is sunshine", where the presupposition is that there is something that I like and this something is identified as sunshine. The concept of identificational focus is also used as a hypernym of contrastive and exhaustive foci.

I begin with comparing a minimal sentence pair that only differs in the order of the constituents. Both the sentences in (75a,b) can be felicitous answers to the *wh*-question "what did father eat?", while they differ in interpretation as shown in the contexts. Example (75a) with SOV word order is used to identify exactly what father ate; while (75b) with SVO word order is used just to provide some new information. For example (75a) the speakers clearly told me that there must be some alternatives invoked in mind and you want to identify what exactly the correct answer is.

(75) a. (*There were many dishes and in fact father ate only some fish, and you may suspect him to have eaten something else.*)

   Taará **báa-ntsúí** ká-dzí.
   1.father 2-fish   1SM.PST-eat.PST

   'The father ate some FISH.'

b. (*There were some fish and the father ate them all, and you just*
    wanted to know what father ate.)
    Taará   á-dzí   **baa-ntsúi.**
    1.father 1SM.PST-eat.PST 2-fish
    'The father ate some FISH.'

The same distinction is attested in (76), which is a sentence extracted from a written task done by two speakers. One speaker was asked to write a letter in Kukuya to another speaker, and at the beginning of the letter after some greetings, the speaker asked the other if he saw me, using the SVO sentence in (76a). When I asked them if this sentence can be replaced by SOV as (76b), both of them judged it as infelicitous, saying that (76b) is used only when the speaker thought the other had seen someone and wanted to know who exactly he saw. From this minimal pair we see again that SOV is used for identification and SVO simply provides new information.

(76)   (At the beginning of a letter: '*How are you? Did you see Zhen yester-*
       day?'...)
    a. We   á-mún-i   Zhen?
        2SG.PRO 2SG.PST-see-PST Zhen
        'Did you see Zhen?'
    b. #We   Zhen á-mún-i?
        2SG.PRO Zhen 2SG.PST-see-PST
        'Did you see ZHEN?'

Example (77a) is used when someone is asking about your profession. Here an identificational reading can also be deduced, since a person's career is usually the regular and unique activity that s/he is involved, and (77a) implies that the speaker lives by only selling goats but not other animals; (77b) is used in case where the speaker has a farm and s/he is just telling the others what s/he sells, in which the goats are not necessarily the only animal that the speaker sells.

(77)   a.   Me   **báa-ntabá** kâ-n-téke.
              1SG.PRO 2-goat   IMPF-1SG.SM-sell
              'I sell goats.'

        b.   Me   kâ-n-téké   **báa-ntabá.**
              1SG.PRO IMPF-1SG.SM-sell 2-goat
              'I sell goats.'

The sentences in (78) intend to express focus on the subject and are both felicitous as answer to a subject question. While (78a) is used when "you see that child crying and you want to know whether the father or the mother beat the child", (78b) according to the speakers can also mean "it is father but not someone else that beat the child", here it seems that both subjects may have been placed in the same IBV position.

(78)   a.   (*You see that child crying and you want to know whether the father or the mother beat the child.*)
              Mwáana **taará**   á-béer-i.
              1.child   1.father 1SM.PST-beat-PST
              'The child is beaten by FATHER.'

        b.   (*It is father but not someone else that beat the child.*)
              Taará   á-béer-i   mwáana.
              1.father 1SM.PST-beat-PST 1.child
              'Father beat the child.'

The sentences in (79) are examples of the construction that functions as an equivalent of the passive in Kukuya, which I will introduce in the next section. (79a) is used in the context where you discovered the theft and were worrying about your things to have been all stolen, after checking you found that only the necklace was missing; while (79b) is used when simply telling a truth that the thieves had come and a necklace was stolen.

(79)   a.   **Mú-dzirá**   báá-túr-i.
              3-necklace 2SM.PST-steal-PST
              'The necklace was stolen.'

b. Báá-túr-i   **mu-dzirá.**
    2SM.PST-steal-PST 3-necklace
    'They stole the necklace. (The necklace was stolen)'

Some more evidence comes from the interpretation on the word *mbuurú* "person" in different positions, which is inspired by the same test used for diagnosing exclusive focus in van der Wal (2016). In Kukuya, the expression *mbuurú* can have the reading "person" or "someone/anyone", which depends on the context. In (80a) when *mbuurú* is placed in the IBV position, it can only have a generic reading as "human-being" that contrasts with an animal; while in (80b) *mbuurú* can have either the reading "someone" or "person". The generic reading in (80a) is consistent with the hypothesis we make here on the IBV position being an identificational focus position (van der Wal 2016, 2020). The reading of "someone" is indefinite so is never identifiable, while the reading "person" can only be identified when contrasted with "non-person", namely the animals.

(80)   a. Ngo   **mbuurú** ká-dzí.
           1.leopard 1.person 1SM.PST-eat.PST
           'The leopard ate a PERSON (not an animal).'
       b. Ngo   á-dzí   **mbuurú.**
           1.leopard 1SM.PST-eat.PST 1.person
           'The leopard ate someone/the person/a person.'

The generic reading is also attested in OSV as in (81) that expresses focus on the subject. Example (81) is used when you saw a dead leopard and you were wondering how the leopard died until you found an arrow on its body which indicated that it was killed by a human. Notice here that the "person" reading, though it can be definite referring to a given person, can only show the contrast between "this person" and "that person" when demonstrative modifiers are present, thus in (80a) above and (81) the *mbuurú* in the IBV position cannot express contrast between different "persons" but can only have the generic reading.

(81) (*You saw a dead leopard and you were wondering how the leopard died until you found an arrow on its body.*)

Ngo **mbuurú** á-dzwî.
1.leopard 1.person 1SM.PST-kill.PST

'The leopard was killed by a PERSON.'

Another crucial piece of evidence supporting the IBV position as an identificational focus site lies in the negation strategy on the focal elements. In examples (82) and (83) we see that to negate the element in the IBV position, the often omitted copula can somehow "show up" with the negative marker and precede the IBV item. Example (82) means that the gecko was not eaten by the dog but by some other animals, and the negation targets only the subject (dog) and does not negate the action/sentence. Example (83) means that father bought some other things instead of the bed. Given that the copula has an identifying function, its being placed immediately before the IBV focused element suggests that the IBV element is identificationally focused. The possible presence of the copula can also provide evidence on the origin and the nature of the IBV position, namely its connection with the cleft construction that is dedicated for identification and specification, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

(82) Ngwangúlu ka-kí-li **mvá** á-dzí ni.
1.gecko NEG-7SM-COP 1.dog 1SM.PST-eat.PST NEG

'The gecko was not eaten by the DOG.'

(83) Taará ka(-kí-li) **ntáli** ká-sí me ni.
1.father NEG-7SM-COP 9.bed 1SM.PST-make.PST 1SG.PRO NEG

'Father did not make a BED for me.'

Although there is much evidence on the identificational nature of the IBV position, this position is not necessarily a dedicated exclusive focus position, from which we may see the difference between identificational and exclusive focus in this language. If the IBV position is used to express exclusive focus, we expect that an element modified by the strong quantifiers

"every/each" and "all" should be incompatible with the IBV position, since a DP modified by these quantifiers is not exclusive (É. Kiss 1998; van der Wal 2009, 2011, 2016). However, an *every*-phrase can occur in the IBV position as shown in (84a), and to specify a set of alternatives such as "every chicken" to contrast with "every fish" in this example is possible but is judged to be unnecessary according to the speakers. The context of (84a) can be either "there were several species of fish and you tasted each" or "there were many dishes and you only tasted each fish but not other meat". In (84b) we see that a DP modified by the universal quantifier "all" is also compatible with the IBV position, and here again to explicitly specify the alternatives such as "all the cakes" to show a contrast is possible but not necessary.

(84) a. Me   **ná**   **ntsúi** á-n-dziin-i.
          1SG.PRO every 1.fish PST-1SG.SM-taste-PST
          'I tasted each fish.'

      b. Me   **báa-ntsúi bhoî** á-n-dziin-i.
          1SG.PRO 2-fish   2.all PST-1SG.SM-taste-PST
          'I tasted all the fish.'

In (85) we see that a DP modified by a scalar additive particle "even" that does not exclude the alternatives can occur at IBV. In (86) the reply to an incomplete question with the additive particle "also" can surface in the SOV order, which again indicates that the IBV position is not necessarily an exclusive focus position.

(85) (*There is a lazy boy who never did any housework but today he has washed many things, the clothes, the curtains, the plates, and...*)
      Ndé   ntswê **ki-tséké** kíí   me   ká-swaak-í.
      1.PRO even   7-hat   7.CONN 1SG.PRO 1SM.PST-wash-PST
      'He even washed my hat.'

(86)   (*Did Gilbert wash the clothes?*)

    Ndé **bí-ko**   ká-swaak-í,   ndé hé **má-saaní**
    1.PRO 8-clothes 1SM.PST-wash-PST 1.PRO also 6-plate
    ká-swaak-í.
    1SM.PST-wash-PST

    'He washed the clothes, and he also washed the plates.'

There are also some counterarguments against the IBV position as being an identificational focus site. The first puzzle that remains to be explained is what we have already seen above: since the *wh*-words show the strongest tendency to be placed in the IBV position and if this preference is related to the identificational nature for most *wh*-questions, it is unexpected that SOV and SVO are both acceptable as the answer, if only the IBV position is employed for identificational focus.

Moreover, if the IBV position is identificational in nature which must have a presupposition of existence, a question with the IBV *wh*-phrase cannot have an empty set answer, since the existence of a possible candidate is contained in the presupposition. In (87) we see that the *wh*-question can be answered by "nobody", which indicates that there is no presupposition in the question thus it is not necessarily identificational focus.

(87) a. We   **ná**   á-mún-i   ku   mu-súru?
          2SG.PRO 1.who 2SG.PST-see-PST 17.LOC 3-forest
          'Who did you see the the forest?'

    b. Mbuurú ni.
        1.person NEG
        'Nobody.'

For these counterarguments against the IBV to be an identificational focus position, I will leave them open for now. The assumption is that, at an earlier stage the IBV position was indeed innovated for the sake of expressing identificational focus, which can be deduced from its possible origin from a cleft construction that I will discuss in the next chapter, but synchronically not all the uses of IBV position in all contexts are necessarily identificational,

and in fact the IBV position has been observed to be in a further grammaticalisation process to become pragmatically neutral.

* * *

In this section I have introduced some syntactic and interpretational properties of the IBV focus position in Kukuya. I argue that the IBV position is a dedicated focus position which is structurally different from the canonical subject in the SVO order. I have shown that the IBV focus position is available for argument focus including subject and object, adjunct focus, sub-NP focus on a modifier as well as various types of predicate-centered focus such as VP focus and verb focus. The element that is placed in the IBV position can be an argument NP, an adjunct PP, or an infinitive verb in the predicate doubling construction. While focus can also be expressed postverbally for non-subject constituents, IBV focus tend to have an identificational reading but in some contexts it becomes pragmatically neutral. After investigating focus expressions in this language, in the next section I introduce topic expressions.

3.3 Topical elements in the preverbal domain

In Bantu languages and in general cross-linguistically, topical elements show the general tendency to occur in the left periphery or the preverbal domain of the sentence (Gundel 1988; Henderson 2006; van der Wal 2009; 2015; Kerr et al. 2023). Likewise, the topical elements in Kukuya also tend to occur in the preverbal domain. In this section I first introduce that in Kukuya there are multiple types of topical elements and they all tend to occur in the preverbal domain. As illustrated above, there is a dedicated IBV focus position in this language, and in fact this IBV position can also interact with topical expressions. We will see in this section that in many sentences in which the IBV focus slot is occupied, all other non-focal elements tend to occur in the left periphery preceding the IBV slot, leaving the verb to the right boundary of the clause. Then I present two specific constructions that can function as the equivalent of a passive, namely the OSV and the impersonal *ba-* constructions, which can functionally compensate the absence of morphological passive marking in this language.

3.3.1 Multiple topics in the preverbal domain

I start from classifying different types of topical elements in this language. According to different syntactic and interpretational properties, at least four types of topical elements can be distinguished, which are the topical subject, the topical object, the scene-setting topic, and the secondary topic, which all precede the IBV position. Though in this section I will not investigate in detail the structural positions that these preverbal elements may occupy, their syntactic properties that are relevant to the discussion will be mentioned. Next I present these elements one by one.

3.3.1.1 Topical subject

First I investigate how the topical subject in Kukuya behaves in terms of both syntactic and information structural status. I show that a topical

subject in Kukuya can occur in various preverbal positions, while its interpretational characteristics can differ. It should be noted that the available positions for a topical subject that I mention are not necessarily different structural positions but different linear positions *relative to* other preverbal elements.

The first possible position that a topical subject can occur in is the initial position of a sentence, for example the topical subject in the SVO or SOV word order. Some examples are given in (88): in (88a) the subject is topical while the focus is on the VP, and the pronominal subject in the congruent answer (88b) is also topical since it is given and is what the predicate is about.

(88)   a. Nkaaká   kí-má ká-sî?
            1.grandmother 7-what 1SM.PST-do.PST
            'What did grandmother do?'
        b. Ndé á-tól-i   ma-buokó   ma-kí-ték-e.
            1.PRO 1SM.PST-collect-PST 6-mushroom 6REL-7SM-sell-FV
            'She collected mushrooms to sell.'

A topical subject that occurs in the sentence-initial position can often be followed by multiple other topical elements, in which case the IBV focus position cannot be empty but is always filled by a focal element. The other in-between topical elements in the preverbal domain are usually the objects of the verb. I will introduce the latter type in detail as "secondary topic" in section 3.3.1.3. In example (89) we see that the subject *nkaaká* "grandmother", which controls the class 1 subject marking on the verb, is followed by the object of the verb *buká* "cassava" and the interrogative word in the IBV position. In (90) and (91) are illustrated two answers in which the object and the adjunct are focused in IBV, and again the subject occurs in the sentence-initial position with another topical object sandwiched between the subject and the IBV element.

(89) **Nkaaká**   bu-ka   ná ndé ká-bí-í   kí-wâ?
      1.grandmother 14-cassava who 1.PRO 1SM.PST-refuse-PST INF-give
      'To whom didn't the grandma give the cassava?'

(90) (*Did the grandma give the beans to the CATS?*)
      Ambú, **ndé**   ma-désu báa-mvá ká-wí.
      no   1.PRO 6-bean   2-dog   1SM.PST-give.PST
      'No, she gave the beans to the DOGS.'

(91) (*How did father go to Djambala?*)
      Ndé Dzambála mu   miilí ká-yení.
      1.PRO Djambala 18.LOC 4.leg 1SM.PST-go.PST
      'He went to Djambala on foot.'

A difference between these two kinds of sentence-initial subjects with regard to whether they are followed by other topical elements is that, when the grammatical subject is the sole argument in the preverbal domain, it can be indefinite; when the subject is followed by other preverbal elements, namely in a SXXV construction, it cannot be indefinite. In (92) the indefinite and non-specific reading can be deduced from the given context; in (93) the subject is modified by a strong quantifier "every". Since an indefinite non-specific element or a subject NP modified by strong quantifiers such as "all" and "every/each" cannot be dislocated nor a discourse topic (Rizzi 1986; Zerbian 2006; Zeller 2008; van der Wal 2009), these examples suggest that there is at least one non-dislocated subject position in the preverbal domain.

(92) (*You returned home and found some footprints on the floor, you say to your roommate:*)
      Mbuurú (nguumó) á-yení.
      1.person 1.one   1SM.PST-come.PST
      'Someone came.'

(93)   (*Context: the headmaster came to the class and distributed the candies to each of the children.*)

Ná   **mwáana** á-bák-i   ba-bonbon.
every 1.child   1SM.PST-get-PST 2-candy

'Every child got candies.'

When the initial subject is followed by other topical objects, the subject cannot be indefinite and non-specific. In examples (94) and (95), we find that while the NP *mbuurú* and *kilóko* can have both the indefinite and definite reading which depends on the context, they can have the definite reading only when followed by other topical elements. In other words, the initial subject must be topical if followed by other topical elements in the preverbal domain. According to most speakers it is infelicitous to place the modifier *nguumó* "one" with the initial subject in the presence of other preverbal topical elements, as shown in (95a); the sentence can only become appropriate if the subject is the only preverbal element as in (95b). However, there is some intra-speaker variation on the judgement of (95a), it can be felicitous according to some speakers in the context of contrast on the direct object.

(94)   Ki-lóko mwáana **mú-tswê** kíí-bólik-i.
7-thing 1.child   3-head   7SM.PST-hurt-PST

'The thing in question hurt the child's HEAD.'

(95)   a.   %**Mbuurú nguumó** baa-ntsúú má-désu ká-búnum-i.
1.person   1.one   2-chicken 6-bean   1SM.PST-feed-PST

'The person/Someone fed the chicken the BEANS.'

   b.   **Mbuurú nguumó** á-búnum-i   baa-ntsúú ma-désu.
1.person 1.one   1SM.PST-feed-PST 2-chicken 6-bean

'One person fed the chicken the BEANS.'

A topical subject can also occur in a non-initial position preceded by another topical element which also seems to be the subject of the sentence. In example (96) and (97) the sentence can be ambiguous whether it is actually about the "father" and the "child" or the "hoe" and the "lamp", respectively.

The initial elements in both sentences are obviously the possessor or at least the user of the syntactic subjects that control subject marking on the verb, which looks like the "possessor-raising" construction as in (98). In a similar construction in (99), the initial element "child" is not necessarily the possessor of the syntactic subject "festival" but should be an "experiencer", and the sentence is indeed about the "child" rather than the "festival" since the Q-A pair targets to the information on the "feeling" of the "child".

(96) Taará **téme** ku-ní   líí-dzinim-i?
      1.father 5.hoe 17-which 5SM.PST-disappear-PST
      'Where did father lose the hoe? (*lit*: As for father, where did (his) hoe disappear?)

(97) Mwáana **múnda** wu-kí-fúúm-í   maamá ku   dzándu
      1.child   3.lamp 3REL-7SM-buy-PST 1.mother 17.LOC 5.market
      á-dzínim-i.
      3SM.PST-disappear-PST
      'The child lost the lamp that mother bought at the market.' (*lit*: As for the child, the lamp that mother bought at the market disappeared.)

(98) Mu-kokó á-tsilik-í   ŋíibi **mu-líeme.**
      1-king   1SM.PST-cut-PST 1.thief 3-finger
      'The king cut the thief the/his finger.'

(99) a. Mwáana **ki-yinga** bu-ní   kí-wir-i?
         1.child   7-festival 14-which 7SM.PST-pass-PST
         'The child, how did the festival pass (for him/her)?'
      b. Ndé **ki-yinga** kí-bvé kí-wir-i.
         1.PRO 7-festival 7-good 7SM.PST-pass-PST
         '(For) him/her, the festival passed well.'

These examples are reminiscent of the "double subject construction" as is attested in Chinese and Japanese, but from these examples we can observe

that the initial element is clearly not an argument of the verb so it cannot be the grammatical subject, but should be analysed as a "scene-setting" topic, which is the second type of preverbal topical element that I would like to introduce next.

3.3.1.2 Scene-setting topic

A scene-setting topic usually sets the "spatial, temporal or individual framework" of the rest of the sentence (Chafe 1976; Li and Thompson 1976). Some examples of scene-setting topics in Kukuya are given in (100)-(102). In (100) the sentence-initial topic is a DP which is co-referential to the pronominal subject in the pseudo-cleft construction that follows; in (101) and (102) the scene-setting topics are adverbial phrases. What distinguishes the scene-setting topics from topical subjects or objects besides their semantic function is that a scene-setting element never functions as an argument of the verb thus it is not originated from the rest of the sentence (Lambrecht 1994), it occurs only for the sake of limiting the frame of the proposition or semantically relate the event described by the core sentence to an "external topic". In addition, there is a further division on the relation of the scene-setting elements and the rest of the sentence in these examples. In (99) above and (100), the initial element is what the sentence is "about" as the whole sentence is telling something about the "child" and the "woman"; while in (101) and (102) the locative and temporal phrases only set the background or the scene of the sentence and the aboutness topic expression is the 1st person pronoun.

(100)   **Mu-kái**   wu-ká-búr-í   ndé   mú-kái   wó balaka?
        1-woman 1REL-1SM.PST-give.birth-PST 1.PRO 1-female or 1.male
        'The woman, whom she gave birth to was a girl or a boy?'

(101)   **Mu   mu-súru**, me   á-mún-i   ba-kái   bá-kâ-tólo
        18.LOC 3-forest   1SG.PRO PST-1SG.see-PST 2-women 2SM-PROG-cut
        nkwî.
        9.firewood
        'In the forest, I saw women cutting the firewood.'

(102) **Mvúla wǔ-yá** me â-m-fúúm-á báa-ntaba nkáma.
       3.year 3REL-come 1SG.PRO FUT-1SG.SM-buy-FV 2-goat hundred
       'Next year I will buy a hundred goats.'

3.3.1.3 Secondary topic

The third type of topical element is what I label as "secondary topic". Cross-linguistically, an utterance can contain more than one topic under discussion simultaneously, which is often attested in the predicate-focus structure as shown in (103). In (103a) the question is on some relation between mother and the goats, and the answer in (103b) adds information on both the mother and the goats, thus here the two arguments should be both counted as topics. The question now is how to determine primary and secondary topichood.

(103) a. Ngúku baa-ntaba kí-má ká-sî?
           1.mother 2-goat 7-what 1SM.PST-do.PST
           'What did mother do to the goats?'
       b. Ngúku á-dzwí baa-ntaba.
           1.mother 1SM.PST-kill.PST 2-goat
           'Mother killed the goats.'

In Nikolaeva (2001), a secondary topic is defined as "an entity such that the utterance is construed to be about the *relationship* between it and the primary topic". The primary topic is considered to be more pragmatically salient and is closely associated with the subject function (Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011); as the secondary topic would often be realised as the object of the verb, which corresponds to some assumption that in historical terms, objects are grammaticalised secondary topics (Givón 1984, 1990, 2001). In Vallduví's (1992) approach, the old information in the utterance can be further split into informationally more and less prominent material, namely the "link" and "tail" which correspond to the primary and secondary topic we discuss here. While the "link" is what the new information is anchored to, the "tail" entails the presence of the "link" and

implies that some update is to be carried out to complete the information on the relation between it and the "link". In other words, the primary and secondary topics stand in a certain presupposed relation, the secondary topic presupposes the existence of the primary topic, and the proposition is to add new knowledge to some relation between the primary and the secondary topics (Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011). In the above example (103), the primary topic is the "mother" and the secondary topic is the "goats", since the question is on what actions are done on the goats, thus the topic "goats" as the patient entails the presence of the "mother" as the agent.

In particular in the Kukuya language, I propose that the distinction on primary and secondary topics are grammatically encoded via word order: if there are more than one topical elements in the preverbal domain, only the primary topic can be placed sentence-initially (excluding the scene-setting topics), while the secondary topic should be non-initial. There are three informational types that involve secondary topic in Kukuya: the first type is as in example (103) in which the focus extends over the transitive predicate only, namely the verb focus expression where both arguments of the verb are given; the second type is the possessive secondary topic as in example (96) above, in which the two preverbal topics are in a possessive relation and the possessor functions as the primary topic, while the possessum is the secondary topic and the syntactic subject (Nikolaeva 2001), a similar example is given in (104).

(104)   Ngúku   **ndzulí** ku-ní   á-dzinim-i?
         1.mother 1.cat   17-which 1SM.PST-disappear-PST
         'Where did mother lose the cat? (*lit*: As for mother, where did (her) cat disappear?)

The third type of secondary topic is attested in adjunct or argument focus constructions. In example (105) and (106), when the locative interrogative word is focused in the IBV position, the object which is given in the context occurs between the initial subject and the IBV focused element, resulting in two topical elements in the preverbal domain. In (105b) the assertion updates the addressee's knowledge on the relation between uncle and the rice by adding information that it was yesterday that uncle ate the rice, here the

"uncle" functions as the primary topic and "rice" as secondary topic. Similarly in (106), there are two preverbal secondary topics "falling" and "plates" which are the two objects of the ditransitive verb "to launch". The word order pattern in (105) and (106) is very commonly attested in the formulation of question-answer pairs in Kukuya.

(105)   a. Mu-pfúru **lóoso** munkí ká-dzí?
          1-uncle   5.rice when 1SM.PST-eat.PST
          'When did uncle eat the rice?'

       b. Ndé **lóoso** má-tsíká   ká-dzí.
          1.PRO 5.rice 6-yesterday 1SM.PST-eat.PST
          'He ate the rice YESTERDAY.'

(106)   Taará **ma-sáani bví**   ku-ní   ká-tí?
        1.father 6-plate   9.falling 17-which 1SM.PST-launch-PST
        'Where did father throw the plates?'

In (107) and (108) the division between primary and secondary topic is seen in the context of argument focus. In (107) the recipient object of the ditransitive verb is focused in IBV, and the topical theme object is placed in the preverbal domain as the secondary topic; in (108) it is the subject that gets focused in IBV, and both objects of the verb "to give" are placed preverbally, in this case the theme "oranges" is the secondary topic.

(107)   (*Did the grandfather give the food to the DOGS?*)
        Ambú, ndé **bvi-kídzá** báa-ndzulí ká-wî.
        no   1.PRO 8-food   2-cat   1SM.PST-give.PST
        'No, he gave the food to the CATS.'

(108)   (*"Who gave the child the oranges?"*)
        Mwáana ma-láara **bí-búru** bíí-wî.
        1.child   6-orange 8-parent 8SM.PST-give.PST
        'The child was given the oranges by the PARENTS.'

In the above examples, it is interesting to see that the exploitation of IBV focus is usually accompanied by the "fronting" of other topical elements to the preverbal domain, while it is grammatical that the topical objects and adjuncts remain in their base positions, i.e. postverbally. The exact trigger of this topic fronting, whether syntactic or pragmatic, is left for further research. Here I propose that the Kukuya language can grammatically distinguish the primary and secondary topic by word order: the sentence-initial (excluding the scene-setting topics) topic is always primary while the non-initial one is secondary. Since the primary topic usually sets the most important framework and aboutness of the main predication, while a secondary topic is less important and continuous in terms of referential accessibility and thematic importance (Givón 1990; Nikolaeva 2001; Croft 1991; Tsao 1987; Shi 2000), it is necessary that the primary topic scopes over the secondary topic, so the former is placed in the initial position.

The secondary topic must have a definite reading. In (109) we see that it is infelicitous to have an indefinite object "someone/one person" occur in the preverbal domain and function as a secondary topic; in (110) the pre-posed object *kilóko* "thing" can only be interpreted as some particular thing that has been mentioned before but cannot be indefinite non-specific, as can be deduced from the context. Note here that *kilóko* "thing" is not in IBV since it precedes the negative prefix.

(109)   (*You are traveling in a very quiet small town and you did not see anyone on the street, your friend said she saw a person's figure on the way and you ask her:*)
   ??We   **mbuurú nguumó** ku-ní   á-mún-i?
   2SG.PRO 1.person 1.one   17-which 2SG.PST-see-PST
   Int: 'Where did you see someone/one person?'

(110)   (*You have a precious gift in your home. One day you found a theft but fortunately the precious thing was not stolen.*)
   ŋíibi **ki-lóko** ka-ká-túr-i   ni.
   1.thief 7-thing NEG-1SM.PST-steal-PST NEG
   'The thief did not steal the thing/*anything.'
   *'The thief stole nothing.'

In example (111) some sentences with minimal difference on the position of the object *mbuurú* "person" are illustrated. For (111a) and (111b), as implied from the context, the preposed object can only be interpreted as definite: (111a) and (111b) have the same interpretation and can both be appropriately used in the context of (a) but neither can be used in the context of (b), which shows neither sentence can have the reading of "I saw nobody"; in (111c) the object is placed in the IBV position and can only have a generic reading as "human-being"; while in (111d) the object in its canonical postverbal position can have the indefinite reading and functions as a negative polarity item (NPI), or a definite reading can also arise according to the context.

(111)   a.   (*Your uncle asked you to call a certain person sitting under a tree nearby to come, you went but did not find the person, you returned and said to the uncle:*)

Mbuurú me   ka-á-mún-i   ni.
1.person 1SG.PRO neg-pst-1sg.see-pst neg

'I did not see the person/*anyone.'

b.   (#*Your mum and you are entering a dark hall, you are walking in front and your mum asked you from behind if you saw anyone in the hall.*)

Me   **mbuurú** ka-á-mún-i   ni.
1SG.PRO 1.person NEG-PST-1SG.see-PST NEG

'I did not see the person/*anyone.'

c.   (*You saw a "monster" in the forest; you did not know what animal it was, and after coming back someone asked you if you see anybody in the forest.*)

Me   ka   **mbuurú** á-mún-i   ni.
1SG.PRO NEG 1.person PST-1SG.see-PST NEG

'I did not see a PERSON/*anyone.'

d.   (*felicitous in the context of both (a) and (b)*)

Me   ka-á-mún-i   **mbuurú** ni.
1SG.PRO neg-pst-1sg.see-pst 1.person NEG

'I did not see anyone/the person.'

In this subsection, I have shown that there can be multiple preverbal topical elements, which can be further divided into primary topics which include sentence-initial topical subject (also object, see next subsection) and scene-setting topics, and secondary topics which are usually objects of the verb. The interpretation on these topics with regard to definiteness and specificity may depend to a large extent on their relative position in the preverbal domain. An initial subject, if it is not the sole preverbal argument, and a secondary topic must be definite. There are still some further questions that need to be investigated, such as potential restrictions on the order of the preverbal elements, and the connection between IBV focus and topic fronting.

As mentioned at the beginning of the section, there is a fourth type of topical element in Kukuya, which is the topicalised object that occurs in the initial position of the sentence. The sentence-initial object is usually attested in an OSV order in (112) and an impersonal *ba*-construction in (113), which can serve as functional *passives* in this language. In the next section I will introduce in detail these two functional passive constructions.

(112) **Bii-ndomó** kíi-mbúlí kíí-dzí.
8-sheep   7-lion   7SM.PST-eat.PST
'The sheep were eaten by the lion.' (*lit*: The sheep, the lion ate them.)

(113) **Mu-tí mu**   **máa-ŋgúlu** âli   báa-tsílik-i   mbvúlá
3-tree 18.CONN 6-mango   RPST 2SM.PST-cut.down-PST 3.year
wǔ-fíŋ-a.
3REL-pass-FV
'The mango tree was cut down last year.'

3.3.2   Functional passives

In this subsection I introduce how Kukuya makes use of the IBV focus position and the topic fronting tendency to express the passive meaning. Two particular structures are presented, namely the OSV and the imper-

sonal *ba-* constructions. I first discuss how the passive reading is generated through these constructions, and then display some basic syntactic and interpretational properties of both structures as well as their restrictions in use. Some of the presentation here is part of my previous work in Li (2020), and is primarily inspired by the pioneering work of Bostoen and Mundeke (2011) on similar functional constructions in another West-Coastal Bantu language Mbuun (B87).

In most Bantu languages, the passive is typically encoded by a verbal derivational suffix and a shift of grammatical roles of the arguments. In the Swahili example (114), we see that the passive marker *-iw-* is used, the patient is promoted to the subject position and controls subject marking on the verb, while the agent can be optionally expressed by a prepositional phrase. The Kukuya language systematically lacks verbal derivational suffixes, with only some unproductive residues, thus we may wonder how passiveness is expressed in Kukuya, compensating the absence of morphological passive marking.

(114)   Vy-akula vi-li-l-**iw**-a   (na wa-toto).
       8-food   8SM-PST-eat-PASS-FV by 2-child

       'The food was eaten by children.'   [Swahili G42]

3.3.2.1 The OSV construction

The first functional passive construction in Kukuya is the OSV structure in which the object is fronted to the sentence-initial position while the subject is placed in the IBV position, as shown in (115) and (116). From these examples we can also see that both animate and inanimate subjects can have the agent reading in this functional passive construction.

(115)   Mbaá mvúlá á-dzíib-i.
       9.fire 3.rain 3SM.PST-extinguish-PST

       'The fire was extinguished by the rain.' (*lit*: The fire, the rain put it out.)   (Li 2020: 4)

(116) Bu-ká   búú   mwáana nzulí á-wool-i.
        14-cassava 14.CONN 1.child   1.cat   1SM-snatch-PST
        'The child's cassava was snatched by the cat.' (*lit*: The cassava of the child, the cat snatched it.)

In the ditransitive constructions (117) and (118), we see that both the theme and the patient object can be fronted. The passive reading can be verified in the elicitation: when I asked the speakers to translate the French passive into Teke and there is an explicit agent in the sentence, the OSV structure is always used.

(117)   a.   Báana   ngúku   á-télek-i   bvi-kídza.
              2.children 1.mother 1SM.PST-prepare-PST 8-food
              'The children were prepared the food by mother.'

        b.   Bvi-kídza ngúku   á-télek-i   báana.
              8-food   1.mother 1SM.PST-prepare-PST 2.children
              'The food was prepared for the children by mother.'

(118)   a.   Mu-safuká mú-káí á-kwá-i   mu   mbhiele.
              3-safou.tree 1-woman 1SM.PST-chop-PST 18.LOC 9.knife
              'The safou tree was chopped with a knife by the woman.'

        b.   Mbhiele mú-kái   á-kwá-í   mu   mu-safuká.
              9.knife   1-woman 1SM.PST-chop-PST 18.LOC 3-safou.tree
              'A knife was used to chop the safou tree by the woman.'

For the examples above I only gave the passive translation as a stimulus. However, the OSV construction itself does not show apparent grammatical means that are dedicated to passive expression, and here I want to decompose the OSV structure to see how the passive reading has emerged. Pragmatically, passiveness is often considered as a "foregrounding and backgrounding operation" (Keenan and Dryer 2007) in which the patient is foregrounded to the sentence-initial position while the agent is backgrounded or unspecified. In this sense, a passive construction is similar to the topicalisation operation in which the patient is fronted to the sentence-initial

position to become the topic of the sentence, while the agent can remain in the original position or be demoted to a less/non-topical position. In other words, a passivised element is usually made topical. The availability of OSV structure to express passive is thus consistent with the generalisation in the above subsection that in Kukuya topical elements tend to occur in the pre-verbal domain, so the topical object in OSV is expressed in the sentence-initial position. Nevertheless, in the OSV construction the agent subject is always explicitly expressed, which is not expected in a canonical passive construction. In addition, recall that the OSV structure is what I have introduced for subject focus (see section 3.2.1.2) and is always felicitous as an answer to a subject *wh*-question, as shown in (119) and (120). The focal status of the agent is pragmatically incompatible with a prototypical passive construction in which the agent is usually demoted or even deleted.

(119)   a. Mwáana láana   ná   á-wî?
              1.child   5.orange 1.who 1SM.PST-give.PST
              'Who gave the child the orange?'

           b. Mwáana láala   taará á-wî.
              1.child   5.orange 1.father 1SM.PST-give.PST
              'FATHER gave the orange to the child.'

(120)   a. Wǔ-fúum-i ma-li ná   ndé?
              1REL-buy-PST 6-wine 1.who 1.PRO
              'Who bought the wine?'

           b. Ma-li   taará á-fúum-i.
              6-wine 1.father 1SM.PST-buy-PST
              'The wine was bought by FATHER.'   (Li 2020: 15)

In (121a) we can see that the OSV functional passive construction cannot have a *wh*-adjunct, since the IBV focus position is occupied by the agent and there is usually only one focused element in a Kukuya sentence, the interrogative phrase becomes infelicitous even in its base position; the only possible rephrasing is (121b) in which the passive reading is lost.

(121) a. *Mwáana taará   á-béer-i   munkí?
           1.child   1.father 1SM.PST-beat-PST when

           Int: 'When was the child beaten by father?'

       b. Taará   mwáana munkí ká-béer-i?
           1.father 1.child   when 1SM.PST-beat-PST

           'When did father beat the child?'

When I intend to elicit a sentence like "What was stolen by X?" in which the "passivised" object is an interrogative phrase, the speakers still use the OSV order as in (122). At first glance, we see that a *wh*-element can occur in the initial position of the OSV construction to express passive. However, as will be discussed in the next section, the sentence in (122a) is actually a cleft construction in which the class 1 subject marker shifts from *á-* to *ká-*; in (122b) we find that the initial *wh*-word is incompatible with the canonical subject marker. The OSV order in (122) is not the OSV functional passive construction that we are discussing here.

(122) a. **Kí-má** ŋíibi **ká-túr-i?**
           7-what 1.thief 1SM.PST-steal-PST

           'What was stolen by the thief?'

       b. *Kí-má ŋíibi á-túr-i?
           7-what 1.thief 1SM.PST-steal-PST

           Int: 'What was stolen by the thief?'

Therefore, it shows that the OSV structure, though it can function as a translational equivalent of a canonical passive construction, is by no means dedicated to express passive and is at least pragmatically different from a true passive (see Bostoen and Mundeke 2011 for similar proposal for Mbuun). The primary function of the OSV construction is to clearly delimit the different discourse roles of the subject and object, in which the object is topicalised and fronted to the initial position; the subject is focused in the IBV position and the focus reading is somehow "strengthened" by fronting the topical object. Pragmatically, the OSV construction can function as the equivalent of passive but is used only when the agent serves as the new or contrasted information thus needs to be explicitly expressed.

3.3.2.2 Impersonal *ba-* construction

The second equivalent of passive in Kukuya is the so-called impersonal *ba-*construction. In this construction, the verb always takes the class 2 subject marker *ba-* which is not anaphoric to any lexical or pronominal subject in the sentence or the discourse. The patient object can occur either postverbally or preverbally, while the agent is in most cases deleted or unspecified, and this is why the construction is labeled as "impersonal". Some examples are illustrated below. In (123) and (124), the patient object occurs preverbally, and the agent is unknown and suppressed; while in (125) and (126) there is no preverbal element and the patient object occurs after the *ba-* verb.

(123) (*visual stimuli: What about the food?*)

Bviilá báá-tél-i   bví   ku   mfúúlá.
8.food 2SM.PST-throw-PST 9.falling 17.LOC 9.road

'The food was thrown onto the road.'

(124) **Mu-ŋwâ** wu-kí-som-í   báa-mpúku **báá**-kí-i.
3.hole   3REL-7SM-go.out-PST 2-rat   2SM.PST-fill-PST
'The hole where the rats went out was filled.'

(125) (*in a story, a candle was extinguished due to some unclear reason...*)
Níŋáa   **báá**-dzíib-i   **bu-dzí**.
suddenly 2SM.PST-extinguish-PST 14-candle
'Suddenly the candle was extinguished.'   (Li 2020: 31)

(126) **Báá**-tí   **ndé** bví   ku   mbali.
2SM.PST-throw.PST 1.PRO 9.falling 17.LOC 9.outside
'It was thrown outside.'   (Saint Matthieu V: 13)

In example (127) we see from the context that the agent should be "I", and the subject marking on the verb is still *ba-*, which shows the impersonal nature of the class 2 subject marker in this construction.

(127)   (*You cut some firewood in the morning and you gave it to your brother who could not work.*)

Nkwíi   yi-m-baal-í   me   **báá**-wî
9.firewood 9REL-1SG.SM-cut-PST 1SG.PRO 2SM.PST-give.PST
ngândukú aa   me.
1.brother   1.CONN 1SG.PRO

'The firewood that I cut was given to my brother.'

Example (128) shows that both objects of the ditransitive verb can be pre-posed in the this functional passive construction. Interestingly, from the context we see that the preverbal theme object is topical in (128a), while in (128b) the preverbal recipient object is focal. The different discourse status of the preverbal object here is reminiscent of the information structure of the preverbal subject discussed in section 3.1.2, I propose that the preverbal objects in (128) occupy different structural positions, the preverbal object (128b) is in the IBV focus position. In this regard, the preverbal DP of the *ba-* construction behaves more like a preverbal subject which can be either topical or focal.

(128)   (*To whom did mother give the keys?*)

   a. **Ma-fungúla** báá-wî   taará.
      6-key   2SM.PST-give.PST 1.father

      'The keys were given to father.'

   b. **Taará** báá-wî   ma-fungúla.
      1.father 2SM.PST-give.PST 6-key

      'Father was given the keys.'

In example (129) we see that the *ba-* construction is used when the preverbal DP is contrastively focused and placed in the IBV position, and (130) shows that a preverbal interrogative word can occur in the *ba-* construction. In this sense, the *ba-* construction also shows deviance from the canonical passive construction in that the functionally "passivised" element is not always topical but can also be focal.

(129)   a. **Bi-ko**   bvi-kí-dzílík-í   mú-kái ku   ngulu
             8-clothes 8REL-7SM-reserve-PST 1-woman 17.LOC 9.inside

             aa   nzó   **báá**-túr-i.
             9.CONN 9.house 2SM.PST-steal-PST

             'The clothes that the lady kept in the house were stolen.'

      b. Ambú, ndé **mí-pará báá**-túr-i.
             no   1.PRO 4-money 2SM-steal-PST

             'No, her MONEY was stolen.'

(130)   (*You found that the bananas on the table disappeared, and you asked father.*)

       Ma-ko   **ná**   **báá**-wî?
       6-banana 1.who 2SM.PST-give.PST

       'The bananas were given to whom?'/'Who was given the bananas?'

This functional passive construction with class 2/3rd person plural subject marking is actually commonly attested in Bantu languages and beyond (Frajzyingier 1982; Keenan and Dryer 2007; Cobbinah and Lüpke 2009). A number of Bantu languages such as Bàsàá (Hamlaoui and Makasso 2013), Mbuun (Bostoen and Mundeke 2011), Bemba (Kula and Marten 2010), Lunda (Kawasha 2007) and Matengo (van der Wal 2015) have reported this construction as a functional passive. In all these languages the patient can either precede or follow the verb in this construction. As for the agent, in Bàsàá, Mbuun and Matengo, it is always unspecified and can not be present even via an oblique phrase, while in Bemba and Lunda an oblique agent is allowed and even preferred. In Kukuya, the agent is usually deleted but sometimes it can be introduced by an oblique phrase headed by a class 18 locative pronoun *mu*. However, two situations need to be distinguished.

There are some cases in which the DP introduced by the oblique phrase seems to be the agent of the verb, as shown in (131) and (132). Though these expressions are considered to be quite marginal and rare in use, the speakers often give the active constructions as equivalent translations to them. However, (131) and (132) can be used in various contexts in which the DP in the oblique phrase does not necessarily function as the agent but

rather a "causer" of the event. In (131) the context can be that someone else gave the child the orange due to father's commission or network, while in (132) it was not necessarily your wife who caught you but perhaps your wife reported you to the police or you committed a crime due to your wife. Given that the class 18 preposition often introduces a reason, here the oblique phrases in these two examples should be interpreted as reason phrases rather than the demoted agents.

(131)   Mwáana **báá-wî**   láala   **mu   taará.**
        1.child   2SM.PST-give.PST 5.orange 18.LOC 1.father
        'The child was given an orange because of father.'

(132)   Me   **báá**-siib-i   **mu   mu-káli.**
        1SG.PRO 2SM.PST-catch-PST 18.LOC 1.wife
        'I was caught because of the wife.'

The *ba-* construction with an oblique phrase cannot be a felicitous answer to a subject *wh-* question. To answer the subject question in (133a), the OSV structure in (133b) is the an answer par excellence, while (133c) is infelicitous here because the oblique phrase can only be interpreted as a purpose or a reason. The question-answer congruence may also have some effect here, since the question in (133a) does not involve the *ba-* construction, (133c) is not expected to be a felicitous answer.

(133)   a. Nzó   yǐ   ya   mú-táliki **ná**   ndé   á-tsú-i?
            9.house 9REL with 3-height 1.who 1.PRO 1SM.PST-build-PST
            'The tall building was built by whom?'

        b. Yó   **míi-ndéle**   míí-tsú-i.
            9.PRO 4-foreigner 4SM.PST-build-PST
            'It was built by the foreigners.'

        c. #Yó báa-tsú-i   **mu   mii-ndéle.**
            9.PRO 2SM-build-PST 18.LOC 4-foreigner
            Int: 'It was built by the foreigners.'
            'It was built for/because of the foreigners.'   (Li 2020: 30)

Based on all these examples on the oblique phrase in the *ba-* construction, I would rather conclude that the DP introduced by *mu* is never a true agent but can only function as a reason, a purpose or a method, though sometimes it can be ambiguously interpreted as the agent. In this sense, it is more plausible to still label the *ba-* construction as impersonal. Compared to the OSV structure, the *ba-* construction is used when the agent is unspecified or there is no need to express it.

To summarise, I have presented two functional passive constructions in Kukuya, namely the OSV and the impersonal *ba-* construction. Both of the constructions can serve as the translational equivalent of a prototypical passive structure. However, their syntactic and pragmatic properties differ from each other and also from the prototypical passive. The OSV construction is used when the utterance is about the patient and the agent needs to be explicitly expressed as new or contrasted information. The impersonal *ba-* construction looks more similar to the canonical passive as the agent is usually deleted, but the preverbal object can either be topical or focal, which differs from the canonical passivised element. Here these two constructions only partially overlap with some properties of the canonical passive construction and can only be treated as functional equivalents.

∗ ∗ ∗

In this section I have shown that different types of topic expressions tend to occur in the preverbal domain in Kukuya. The topic expressions can be divided into primary and secondary topics: a primary topic often includes the topical subject or the scene-setting topics, which occur sentence-initially; a secondary topic is non-initial and is often attested in the preverbal domain accompanied by the IBV focus position being occupied. Two functional passive constructions are presented, namely the OSV construction and the impersonal *ba-*construction, which are used in different pragmatic context and both make use of the topic fronting tendency and the IBV focus strategy to express passive. A scheme on the mapping of word order and information structure of Kukuya is illustrated in (134). In the next section I introduce cleft constructions and their connection with the IBV focus strategy.

(134)

scene-setting TOP	subject TOP	secondary TOP
non-argument	argument	argument

FOC	
argument/adjunct	**VERB** ...

3.4   Cleft constructions

Clefts are one of the well-known focus marking devices in Bantu languages (Demuth 1987; Sabel and Zeller 2006; Cheng and Downing 2013; Hamlaoui and Makasso 2015; Lafkioui et al. 2016). In this section I present different types of cleft constructions in Kukuya and their functions in information packaging. I first give a description on the formation and interpretation of the basic cleft and (reverse) pseudo-cleft constructions, then I introduce a special construction that I label as a "reduced" cleft. I also propose and show evidence that the IBV focus construction in this language is very likely to have its origin in the cleft construction, and different intermediate grammaticalisation stages can be identified.

As for a basic cleft, here I refer to a construction parallel to the English sentence "it was a pancake that we ate", and it can also be labeled as the *it*-cleft. Syntactically, a basic cleft usually consists of two clauses: one contains a nominal predicate and one contains a free relative clause. The focus reading arises from the combination of the relative clause and the nominal predicate. The relative part of the cleft is presented as the maximal group of referents to which the predicate applies and is equated to the referent in the nominal predicate, and in this way an identificational and exclusive focus reading is rendered (van der Wal and Maniacky 2015).

In Kukuya, a basic cleft can be used to express focus on arguments and adjuncts. An example of a basic cleft in Kukuya that fulfills all the syntatic properties mentioned above is illustrated in (135). We see that the sentence contains an initial copula that takes a default class 7 subject marker, a nominal predicate that takes a H tone prefix and a relative clause with segmental relative marking. In fact, this kind of "complete" cleft construction is never uttered in natural speech. The copula is usually omitted in affirmative sentences, so a cleft construction in Kukuya is mostly formed just by a nominal predicate followed by a free relative clause. In (135) the focus is on the clefted object that occurs in the initial position, and the following relative clause is used to exclusively identify it. When using a cleft as in (135), the speaker intends to express that the person only bought a shelf but nothing else.

(135) (Kí-li) **kí-taabí** ki-ká-fúúm-í   ndé ku   dzándu.
       7SM-COP 7-shelf 7REL-1SM.PST-buy-PST 1.PRO 17.LOC 5.market
       'It was a SHELF that s/he bought at the market.'

In example (136a) we see that the object cleft sentence can only be a proper answer to an object question but not to a VP question, so apparently the focus reading cannot be extended to a larger constituent in a cleft. We also see that (136a) cannot be continued with an additive sentence such as "and also some sheep", showing that the cleft sentence expresses exclusive focus. In (136b) we see that in the negative counterpart of the cleft sentence, the copula shows up and hosts the negative prefix. Here the scope of negation is not the whole sentence but only the focus. A subject cleft sentence is given in (137). In all these examples, the clefted arguments receive an exclusive focus reading.

(136) a. Báa-ntaba ba-kíí-fúúm-í   mú-kái.
           2-goat   2REL-7SM.PST-buy-PST 1-woman
           'It was some GOATS that the woman bought.'
           "What did the woman buy?" ✓
           "What did the woman do?" ✗
           "…and also some sheep" ✗

       b. Ka-kí-li   báa-ntaba ba-kíí-fúúm-í   mú-kái   ni.
           NEG-7SM-COP 2-goat   2REL-7SM.PST-buy-PST 1-woman NEG
           'It was not some GOATS that the woman bought.'

(137) Wúna mvá wu-á-wî   baa-ntaba buókó.
       only   1.dog 1REL-1SM-give.PST 2-goat   14.fear
       'It was only the dog who scared the goats.'

A pseudo-cleft refers to a construction that equates the referent of a headless relative clause with a nominal predicate, for example the English sentence "what we want is pizza", and is also known as *wh*-cleft. The pseudo-cleft construction seems to be more frequently attested in Kukuya than the basic cleft and is usually used to express subject focus (see section 3.1.2), as

shown in (138). In (139) the alternative question begins with a dislocated topic *mu-kái* "woman" and is followed by a pseudo-cleft construction sentence with the predicative focal object at the end.

(138) a. Ki-kí-túm-í   mbaá ki-namá kí-ma?
           7REL-7SM-cause-PST 9.fire INF-burn 7-what
           'What caused the fire?'

       b. Baá-fúum-i   ma-li ba-na?
           2REL-buy-PST 6-wine 2-who
           'Who (*pl.*) bought the wine?'

       c. Wǔ-dzí   baa-ntsúú ka-kí-li   mvá ni.
           1REL-eat.PST 2-chicken NEG-7SM-COP 1.dog NEG
           '(The one) who ate the chicken was not the dog.'

(139) a. Mu-kái   wu-ká-búr-í   ndé **mú-kái** wó
           1-woman 1REL-1SM.PST-give.birth-PST 1.PRO 1-female or
           balaka?
           1.male
           'The woman gave birth to a girl or a boy?'
           lit: "The woman, to whom she gave birth was a girl or a boy?"

       b. Wu-ká-búr-í   ndé **balaka**.
           1REL-1SM-give.birth-PST 1.PRO 1.male
           'The one she gave birth to was a boy.'

In (140) a reverse pseudo-cleft sentence is illustrated. Here again we see that the reverse pseudo-cleft cannot be continued by a sentence like "and also some sheep", which shows that it express exclusive focus.

(140) Báa-ntaba (bá-li)   ba-kíí-fúúm-í   mú-kái.
       2-goat   2SM-COP 2REL-7SM.PST-buy-PST 1-woman
       'The GOATS were what the woman bought.'
       "*...and also some sheep*" ✗

There is also a commonly seen construction which surfaces in the OSV word order and in which the focus is placed on the initial element, as illustrated

in (141). I would analyse this construction as a somehow "reduced" version of a basic cleft rather than a monoclausal construction with initial focus, for the reasons that will become clear shortly. This cleft construction is reduced in the sense that there is no segmental relative marker on the verb, but there are clues of relative marking. In (141) we see that the class 1 subject marking on the verb takes the form *ka-* rather than the canonical form *a-*, which is an indicator of relative marking on the verb (also see chapter 4 section 4.2). This construction is a natural way of expressing exclusive focus on the initial element but never on the whole VP, which corresponds more to the cleft construction than the IBV focus construction. Prosodically, the initial focused element is always independently phrased from the rest of the sentence, which can also show evidence for the cleft nature of this construction (Cheng and Downing 2013). Therefore, I label this construction as a reduced cleft and will hypothesise that it can reflect an intermediate stage of the grammaticalisation process from the cleft to the IBV focus strategy. It is worth noting that this construction should be distinguished from the OSV construction presented in section 3.2 in which the focus is in IBV, though they have the same linear word order.

(141)   Má-biríki taará   káá-fúum-i   ku   mfaí.
        6-brick   1.father 1SM.PST-buy-PST 17.LOC 9.capital
        'It was some bricks that father bought from Brazzaville.'
        "*...and also a motobike*" ✗

Some more examples of this reduced cleft construction are given in (142) and (143). The construction is most commonly attested as a *wh*-question as (142), in which the speakers place the interrogative word at the start of the sentence. In (143) the focus is on the quantifier of the initial NP, while the whole NP occurs in the initial position. The reduced cleft is only discernible when the initial focused element is a non-subject, since a reduced subject cleft cannot be distinguished from the canonical word order when there is no relative marker, no subject marking allomorphy or word order change.

(142)   **Munkí** mwáana káá-dzí   ntsúi?
        when   1.child   1SM.PST-eat.PST 1.fish
        'When did the child eat fish?'

(143)   (*The thief would have stolen more goats, but it was only a FEW.*)
Baa-ntaba **bá**-bíibi ŋíibi ká-túr-i.
2-goat   2-few   1.thief 1SM.PST-steal-PST
'The thief stole FEW goats.'

In this section I have presented three main types of cleft constructions in Kukuya, namely the basic cleft, (reverse) pseudo-cleft and the reduced cleft. I showed that all these constructions express exclusive focus on the clefted element. Some further research need to be carried out on the pragmatic distinctions on the cleft construction and the IBV focus strategy when they both express identificational/exclusive focus.

* * *

This chapter is devoted to providing a description on the word order variation and topic/focus expressions in Kukuya. In the first part, I have demonstrated that the language has a canonical SVO word order, while any deviation from this word order is produced for the purpose of information packaging. I have shown that a focused constituent, be it an argument or an adjunct of the verb, can be placed in its canonical position or in the IBV position, while the IBV position is preferred. VP focus and and verb focus can also be expressed through the canonical SVO word order or by placing the object/infinitive verb in the IBV position. Based on these facts and some additional tests, I concluded that the IBV position is really a dedicated focus position in the language, even though the focused elements are not obligatorily placed there. There is some interpretational difference between the IBV and *in situ* focus strategies, in which the IBV focus site is more often associated with identificational focus, and the other often expresses assertive focus. As for topical elements, they all tend to occur in the preverbal domain as in most other Bantu languages, and several types of topical elements can be distinguished, namely the scene-setting topics, primary and secondary topics. Interestingly, the occurrence of some topical elements in the preverbal domain depends on whether the IBV focus position is occupied. I also gave a detailed introduction on two particular constructions that can function as translational equivalents of the passive construction. Different

types of cleft constructions were also discussed. In the next chapter, I will show some shared grammatical properties between the cleft and the IBV focus construction, claiming that the IBV focus strategy, which characterises the expression of information structure in this language, has its origin in a cleft construction.