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CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

This chapter first summarises some main findings on the word order and information structure in this language and indicates some larger theoretical questions that the thesis addresses. The second section mentions some remaining puzzles throughout the thesis that are left for future research.

6.1 Main findings in the thesis

In this section, I summarise the main conclusions on the syntax and information structure of Kukuya, and reflect upon some broader theoretical questions that the thesis addresses. I mainly discuss the following questions: the interface between syntax and information structure in Kukuya; the nature of “immediate-before-verb”; the diachronic and synchronic approaches; and the “economic” characteristics that Kukuya shows.

From the description in chapter 3 of the expression of information structure

in Kukuya, we see that there is considerable variation in its word order that is influenced by information packaging. The word order of this language seems to be better captured by reference to discourse roles such as topic and focus than to syntactic roles such as subject and object, which can be seen in two facts: the first is the use of a dedicated IBV focus position that is available for arguments including subject and object as well as for adjuncts; and the initial referent in the IBV focus construction always has a topic function in the sentence, regardless of whether a subject or a non-subject is focused in IBV. However, sentence configuration in Kukuya does not completely depend on information structure, since I also showed that focus can also be expressed *in situ* for objects and adjuncts, SVO order can also express theticity and the IBV position can be also used as pragmatically neutral. If there is indeed a continuum between grammatical role-oriented and discourse role-oriented that places individual languages in different points (Kerr et al. 2023), Kukuya should be located in a position that is more towards discourse-configurational, and information-structural notions should indeed be encoded in the syntax of Kukuya. In chapter 5, I proposed that while the class 1 SM *a-* is preserved under subject focus, the SM *ka-* is used for subject agreement with a 3rd [Person] ϕ P which is co-referential with a topical agent under non-subject focus, thus Kukuya employs word order in conjunction with subject agreement to encode argument relations and information structure.

In the thesis I provided both the diachronic and synchronic accounts of the IBV focus strategy, and we can see how the two approaches complement and inspire each other. I first hypothesised that the IBV focus strategy has a cleft origin based on the shared grammatical properties between the two constructions, which builds an important baseline for the synchronic analysis. I associated the SM *ka-* of the postverbal subject *ndé* ‘s/he’ in non-subject relatives and the SM *ka-* in IBV non-subject focus, also by analogy to the SVs construction in Nzadi non-subject relatives, from which the ϕ P hypothesis arose. I treated the *ka-* as an agreement prefix and analysed the mechanism of its spell-out from the generative point of view under the Minimalist framework. What I did not discuss is the historical source of the morpheme *ka-*, which is conjectured to historically originate from an identification copula in Bostoen and Mundeke (2012) for Mbuun. The synchronic representation of IBV focus also inspired diachronic analysis,

for example the mixed mono-clausal and bi-clausal properties on this construction which implies the ongoing grammaticalisation process.

One main goal of the research was to investigate how the strict Foc-Verb adjacency can be accounted for from the structural representation of the IBV focus construction. In chapter 5, I proposed that the IBV element is placed in the specifier of a high FocP above TP and the verb head-moves to the Foc head, which ensures the focused phrase to be always linearly left-adjacent to the verb. The verb-final H tone occurrence in the situation of non-subject focus, which is distinct from the tone pattern in canonical SVO order, may suggest a different position of the verb. Under this approach, the “immediate-before-verb” effect is just explained by the spec-head adjacency. It would be interesting to compare the IBV effect with the structural analyses on the IAV focus in Bantu, which in some studies is explained by the altruistic movement of non-focal elements out of the vP (Cheng and Downing 2012), and the right-branching FocP approach that accounts for the sentence-final focus (Ndayiragije 1999). However, in Kukuya there seems to be no other independent evidence for the T-to-Foc movement of the verb, on which further studies still need to be carried out.

Throughout the thesis, I also left some further research questions, in the next subsection I go through these questions.

6.2 Remaining research questions

In this section, I give a summary of some interesting phenomena in Kukuya that have been described or mentioned in the previous chapters, which are left unaddressed in the thesis and need more research in the future. I briefly (re)introduce some but all remaining research questions following the order of the chapters.

In the grammar sketch, I showed that the diminutives in Kukuya are formed by the partial republication of the noun stem, which is accompanied by vowel modification and tone change, as shown in the repeated example in (1). It is worthwhile investigating how the republication process and the tone assignment are realised, for example in a framework such as Distributed Morphology.

- (1) *kii-ku-ko* “small banana”
bii-bû-baana “small children”
ki-bĩ-bilí “small lola tree”
ki-sî-saka “small gourd”
ki-mbu-mbaa “little fire”
ki-nzû-nzo “small house”
ki-yũ-yũ “small peanut”

In the introduction of interrogative words, I mentioned another intriguing phenomenon which is the use of an agreeing pronoun immediately after the interrogative words *ná* “who” and *-má* “what kind/type”, as shown in examples (2) and (3). It is still not clear what the exact function of the pronoun is and what the relationship is between it and the interrogative element. In example (4), when an interrogative word occurs in a postverbal position in an embedded clause, it must be preceded by the marker *ka*, whose function is still not clear either.

- (2) Ndé ki-bhiimá kíí ngúku ya ná ndé
 1.PRO 7-corpse 7.CONN 1.mother with 1.who 1.PRO
 kâ-dziik-a?
 1SM.FUT-bury-FV
 ‘With whom will s/he will bury the corpse of mother?’
- (3) Maamá kí-má ké kâ-dzií kí-yáab-a?
 1.mother 7-what 7.PRO 1SM.IMPf-like INF-know-FV
 ‘What does mother want to know?’
- (4) Ba-ntsúú ba-kíí-ká-í *(ka) ná bá-yiká bá-bí?
 2-chicken 2REL-7SM.PST-grill-PST EMP 1.who 2SM-IMPf 2-bad
 ‘The chicken that who grilled is getting bad?’

Some other questions left in the grammar sketch are for example the interpretative distinctions between the basic and emphatic forms of connectives, the functions of some occasionally occurring verbal affixes, and the use and agreement patterns of *say*-complementisers, which can only be further studied when new field data is available.

In the subject focus expressions introduced in chapter 3, I showed that preverbal focus is always allowed but a discourse-linked *wh*-subject such as “which” and “whose” cannot take the canonical SM like other *wh*-subjects. Instead, a cleft construction must be used, as shown in (5). The reason why preverbal D-linked *wh*-subjects are prohibited needs to be explained.

- (5) 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?’

In chapter 3 section 3.2.2, I showed that verb focus can also be expressed via the SOV order, as shown in (6). The answer to a question like “what did

X do to Y?” can also involve the use of the IBV focus position. It is somehow surprising to see SOV order expressing verb focus, since the focus is neither placed on the IBV element nor projected to the whole VP, it would be interesting to investigate how the IBV position can express verb focus.

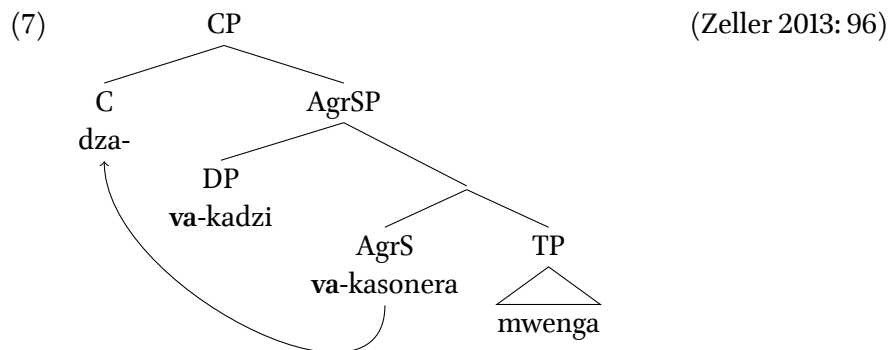
- (6) a. Ngolo Marie kí-má ká-sî?
 Ngolo Marie 7-what 1SM.PST-do.PST
 ‘What did Ngolo do to Marie?’
 b. Ngolo Marie ká-pfur-í.
 Ngolo Marie 1SM.PST-cheat-PST
 ‘Ngolo betrayed Marie.’

Some further questions on the information-structural expression that I did not discuss in detail in chapter 3 also include the relative order of multiple secondary topics, the expression of contrastive topics, and the pragmatically neutral use of the IBV position. All these questions need to be addressed in future studies.

At the end of chapter 4, I presented the Table 4.10 to show the micro-variation in the grammatical properties of Kukuya, Mbuun and Kisikongo that have all been reported to make use of the IBV focus strategy. It would be interesting to study if there are any dependencies or correlations among the features in the table. Compared to Kisikongo, it is intriguing to investigate why Kukuya lacks the subject inversion constructions. Inspired by the Subject-verb-pronoun construction in Nzadi non-subject relatives, I hypothesised an intermediate stage where there was one also a postverbal pronoun that is co-referential with the preverbal subject in the grammaticalisation process in order to account for the class 1 SM alternation. It would be worthwhile discovering more similar patterns on this SVs construction in neighbouring languages, and to study how this is related to the verb-final H tone in non-subject relatives.

To account for the syntax of subject agreement in non-subject relatives, I proposed that while a preverbal subject always shows full ϕ -agreement, agreement with an *in situ* subject only targets at the outermost head/layer of the subject DP but not the DP as a whole, and in this situation agreement

is impoverished for [Gender] because it is embedded in the *nP* and is never shown on the outermost head. The question is why the subject in Kukuya non-subject relatives cannot fully agree with T by being raised to specTP and T to C movement takes place to derive the linear Verb-Subject order, just like the non-subject relative in Shona as shown in (7). The parametric distinctions on the position of the subject and the consequent different agreement patterns between languages like Shona and Kukuya necessitate further studies.



The reason why there is the [+/-Person] distinction on the pronouns *ndé* and *bó* that I hypothesised in chapter 5 section 5.3.1.2 is not entirely clear at this point, and the speakers do not report any pragmatic difference between the choice of the SMS *ka-/ba-* versus *ki-*. A potential explanation would be that historically in Kukuya non-subject relatives there was once a postverbal pronoun that co-indexed with an animate and given preverbal subject and was reanalysed as bearing the 3rd [Person] feature; and diachronically the SVs construction is lost but the [Person] on the postverbal *ndé* and *bó* has for some reason maintained but is being weakened, so the *ki-* morphology becomes available. For the SM alternation under IBV non-subject focus, I proposed that the external argument of the verb is a φ P, and a co-referent DP is generated in the left-periphery. It would also be interesting to study the association between the historical SVs construction and the synchronic representation of the IBV non-subject focus construction. All these puzzles need to be explained by comparing Kukuya with more West-Coastal Bantu

language that display similar agreement patterns.

In chapter 5 I also proposed that the IBV focused element is placed in the specifier of a FocP that is above TP. Given the fact that postverbal focus is also available and can appear without any IBV element (see chapter 3 section 3.1), some relevant questions would be what factors motivated the language to innovate the IBV focus strategy; and if focus is syntactically present as the [Foc] feature, what does the postverbal focus tell us about the nature of that feature? Does it show that [uFoc] is located on FocP rather than the focused phrase?

The question mentioned above are all issues that have come to light because of the analyses of the information structure and syntax of the Kukuya language in this thesis. It would be interesting to see how these approaches can be applied to other West-Coastal Bantu languages to investigate the interactions among the IBV focus strategy, tone patterns and subject marking alternation, which are left for future studies.