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# THE INCEPTIVE IN FWE

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Hilde Gunnink & Sebastian Dom - Ghent University - WOCAL 9

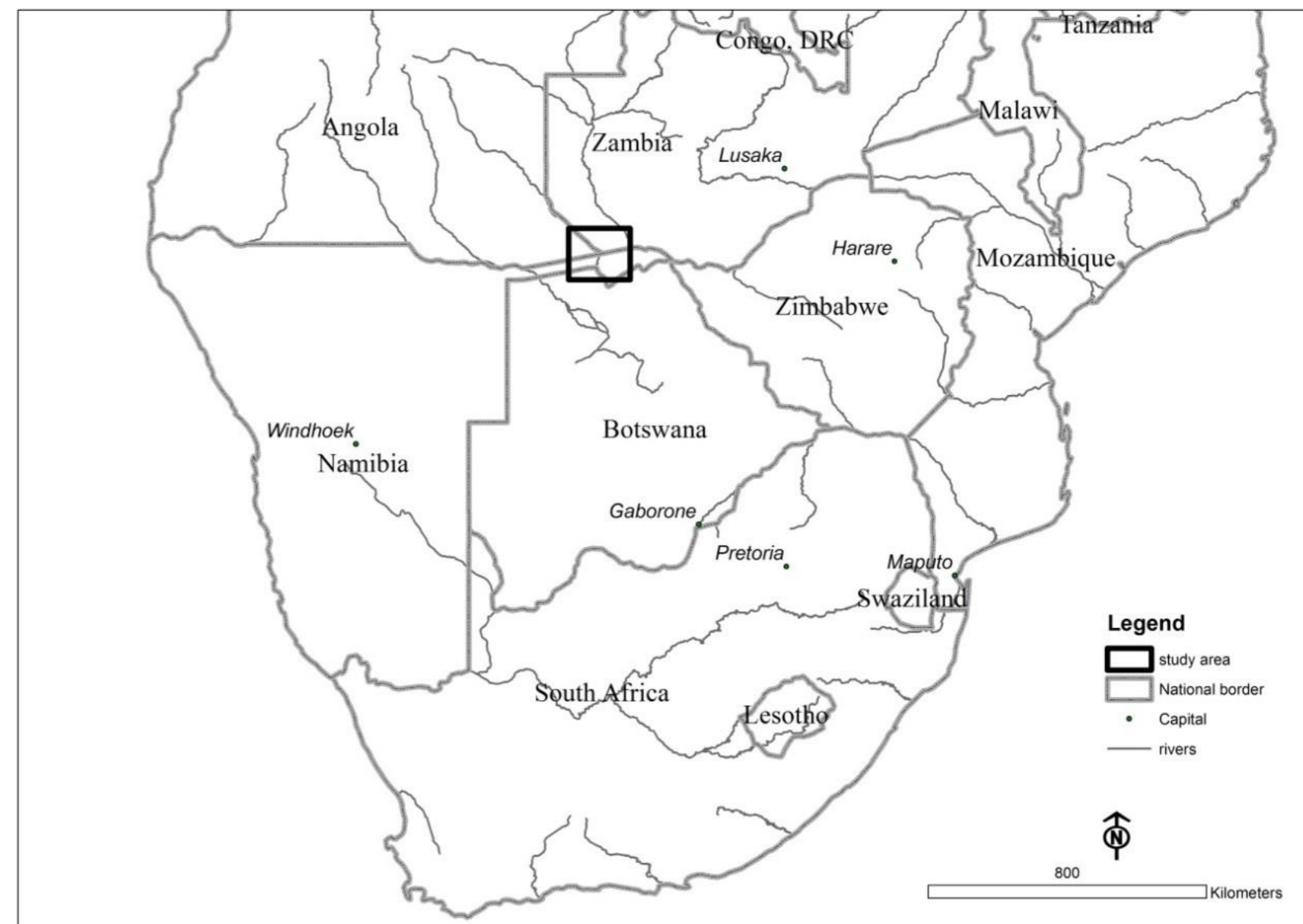
# OUTLINE

- Introduction to Fwe
- Theoretical background
- Interpretations of the Fwe inceptive
- Conclusions

FWE

# THE FWE LANGUAGE

- Bantu > Eastern Bantu > Bantu Botatwe > Fwe (K402)
- Zambia / Namibia
- +- 20,000 native speakers
- data collected on fieldwork in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017



# THE VERB IN FWE

- obligatory subject marker (SM) + verb root + final vowel (FV)

***ndì-yênd-à***                    ‘I am going.’

- prefixes before SM (Pre-initial)

***kà-ndí-yênd-à***                    ‘I was going.’

- prefixes after SM (Post-initial)

***ndì-shì-yênd-à***                    ‘I’m still going.’

- Suffixes

***ndì-yènd-âng-à***                    ‘I usually go.’

- Final vowel

***ndì-yênd-è***                    ‘I should go.’

# THE VERB IN FWE

## – Tones

*nd-ákù-bá-kùtik-à*

‘I should respect them.’

*nd-àkù-bá-kùtik-à*

‘I was respecting them.’

## – Auxiliaries

*bà-kwèsì bà-nyw-â*

‘They are drinking.’

*bà-shiní kùhùrà*

‘They have not yet arrived.’

## – Combinations of all the above

# FORM OF THE INCEPTIVE

- Pre-initial prefix shi-/she-/sha-/si-/se- (dialectal/free variation)

***shè-yì-fwâ***

Namibian Fwe

INC-SM9-die

‘It is about to die.’

***shà-yì-fwâ***

Zambian Fwe

INC-SM9-die

‘It is about to die.’

- Combines with any TAM
- Combines also with nouns



# TAM COMBINATIONS

– Present

*ndìbùtúkà*

‘I am running.’

*shè-ndìbùtúkà*

‘I am about to run.’

– Near past perfective

*nàbû:kì*

‘She has woken up.’

*shànàbû:kì*

‘She is now awake.’

– Remote past perfective

*shìnìndáciwánà*

‘I got it.’

– Past imperfective

*shàkàbátîyà*

‘They were then scared.’

# INCEPTIVE WITH NOUNS

***shé-màsíkù***

INC-night

‘It is becoming night.’

***kàré: kàré: àbàcèmbèrè shó-!ndávù***

immediately old\_woman INC-lion

‘Immediately the old woman turned into a lion.’

***shó-mùkûrù***

INC-adult

‘He is now a grown up.’

# THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

# INCEPTIVE IN THE LITERATURE

- **Inceptive** is a ‘minor’ (i.e. rarely attested) grammatical category in Nurse’s (2008) sample of Bantu languages/descriptions (Nurse 2008:161-162)
- Terminology: inceptive / inchoative / ingressive / prospective / proximative
- To our knowledge, very few (if any) in-depth descriptions exist on the inceptive in a particular Bantu language

*“The suggestions above are tentative. This all needs wider and deeper investigation.”* (Nurse 2008:162)

# AIM OF STUDY - THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

- Detailed description of inceptive construction in Fwe
  - Aspectual semantics
  - Pragmatics

*“[...] the goal of a crosslinguistically adequate theory of aspect should be the **investigation of aspectual phenomena on the sentence (or, rather, clause) level** in connection with the investigation of the **role of lexicon, conventionalized grammar, and discourse** in the constitution of these phenomena.”*

(Sasse 2002: 262)

# THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

7 'aspectual tiers' which should be taken into consideration (Sasse 2002:263)

- 1) Lexical aspect of verb phrase
- 2) Grammatical(ized) aspect
- 3) Bounding potential of determinational and quantificational characteristics of arguments
- 4) Adverbials
- 5) Aspectualizers (*begin, continue, finish, stop*)
- 6) Relational structure (diathesis, causativity, thematic roles)
- 7) Taxis (interclausal relations)

# THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

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# THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Interaction between **lexical** and **grammatical aspect** in Fwe

TAM	Lexical aspect: Activity		Lexical aspect: Change-of-state	
Present	<i>ndìbùtúkà</i>	'I am running.'	<i>ndìnúnà</i>	'I will get fat.' * <i>'I am getting fat.'</i>
Present progressive	<i>ndìkwèsi</i> <i>ndìbùtúkà</i>	'I am running.'	<i>ndìkwèsi</i> <i>ndìnúnà</i>	'I am getting fat.'
Near past perfective	<i>ndàbútùkì</i>	'I ran.'	<i>ndànúni</i>	'I am fat.' 'I got fat.'
Stative	<i>ndìbútúkìtè</i>	'I am running.'	<i>ndìnúnîtè</i>	'I am fat.' * <i>'I am getting fat.'</i>
Inceptive	<i>shèndìbùtúkà</i>	'I am about to run.'	<i>shèndìnúnà</i>	'I am getting fat.'



# INTERPRETATIONS OF THE FWE INCEPTIVE

# INTERPRETATIONS OF THE INCEPTIVE

1. Aspectual uses
  - Prospective aspect
  - Inceptive aspect
2. Pragmatic uses
  - Contrastive focus
  - Tense/aspect focus

# ASPECTUAL USES OF THE INCEPTIVE

## I. With present tense: **Prospective aspect**

With (durative) Activity verbs:

***shà-zyîmb-à***

INC.SC<sub>1</sub>-sing-FV

‘S/he is about to sing.’

***bón-è      sì-bà-bùtúk-à***

see-SBJV INC-SC<sub>2</sub>-run-FV

‘Look, they’re ready to run.’

*Observing a running match*

# ASPECTUAL USES OF THE INCEPTIVE

## I. With present tense: **Prospective aspect**

With (punctual) Activity verbs:

***ènkòmòkí shè-yì-w-â***

cup                    INC-9-fall-FV

‘The cup is about to fall.’

*Warning to someone who has put a cup at the edge of the table*

# ASPECTUAL USES OF THE INCEPTIVE

## I. With present tense: **Prospective aspect**

With Change-of-State verbs:

*ènswí*     *shà-yì-fwâ*

fish        INC-SC<sub>9</sub>-die

‘The fish is dying.’

*You have just caught a fish and it is flapping, dying*

# ASPECTUAL USES OF THE INCEPTIVE

## I. With present tense: **Prospective aspect**

With Change-of-State verbs:

*sì-bà-râ:rà*

INC-2-fall\_asleep

‘They are about to fall asleep.’

*shè-ndì-zwâtà*

INC-1SG-get\_dressed

‘I am about to get dressed.’

# ASPECTUAL USES OF THE INCEPTIVE

## I. With present tense: **Inceptive aspect**

With Activity verbs:

*káhànjìká ènyàmà àbó shì-bà-híkà*

he\_hangs\_up meat they INC-SC<sub>2</sub>-cook-FV

‘He hangs up the meat. They start cooking.’

# ASPECTUAL USES OF THE INCEPTIVE

## I. With lexical verbs 'start': **Inceptive aspect**

*shà-à-tàtikà*    *òkùshôkà*

INC-SC<sub>1a</sub>-begin AUG-INF-rain

'It is starting to rain.'

*shà-ndì-kàrisá*    *kùríshùwà*    *kùrwârà*

INC-SC<sub>1SG</sub>-begin feel            be\_sick

'I am starting to feel sick.'



# ASPECTUAL USES OF THE INCEPTIVE

## I. With present tense: **Inceptive aspect**

With Change-of-State verbs:

*shè-ndì-núnà*

INC-SC<sub>1</sub>-become\_fat

‘I am getting fat.’

*ènyàngú shè-zì-bìnzwâ*

beans INC-SC<sub>10</sub>-ripen

‘The beans are getting cooked.’

# THE IMPORTANCE OF ONSET PHASES

Change-of-state verbs without 'onset' phase

-***rá:ra*** 'fall asleep', -***zwáta*** 'get dressed', -***fwá*** 'die'

→ prospective

Change-of-state verbs with 'onset' phase

-***nuna*** 'become fat', -***bínzwa*** 'ripen'

→ inceptive

# FURTHER TESTS FOR ONSET PHASES

Progressive auxiliary *-kwèsì*

*-nuna* ‘become fat’: with onset

*à-kwèsì à-núnà*

1-PROG 1-become\_fat

‘He is getting fat.’

*-rà:ra* ‘fall asleep’: without onset

*bà-kwèsì bà-rà:rá-mò*

2-PROG 2-sleep-there

‘He (normally/regularly) sleeps there.’

\*‘He is falling asleep (now).’

# PRAGMATIC USES OF THE INCEPTIVE

## I. With present tense: **Contrastive focus**

*kà-ndì-shí-kàrì*

NEG-SC<sub>1SG</sub>-still-live

*mwà-sèshèkè*

in-Sesheke

*mwàsh-ìmúshò*

in-Imusho

*shè-ndí-'kàrà*

INC-SC<sub>1SG</sub>-live

'I do not live in Imusho anymore, I live in Sesheke.'

# PRAGMATIC USES OF THE INCEPTIVE

I. With present tense: **Contrastive focus** → **surprise**

*shà-à-yì-wóz-à*

*hàpé bùyáhò*

INC.SC<sub>1</sub>-OC<sub>9</sub>-add-FV

again like\_that

‘She adds it again.’

*Describes a large mistake in handling a financial transaction*

# PRAGMATIC USES OF THE INCEPTIVE

## II. With past, stative, nouns: **contrastive focus**

- Near past perfective + inceptive:

*nìndáùrà èzwâyì*

‘I bought salt.’

*kòno shì-ry-à-máni*

but INC-5-PST-finish

‘But it’s finished [now].’

# PRAGMATIC USES OF THE INCEPTIVE

II. With past, stative, nouns: **contrastive focus**

– Stative + inceptive:

*màsíkùsîkùkàndíshùwírè njàrà*

‘This morning, I was hungry.’

*hàno shà-ndi-kút-îté*

now INC-1SG-become\_full-STAT

‘Now, I am full.’

# PRAGMATIC USES OF THE INCEPTIVE

II. With past, stative, nouns: **contrastive focus**

– Noun + inceptive

*àrìzòrà òndávù kàsírì mùntù*

‘She turns into a lion, she is no longer a person.’

*só-!ndávù*

INC-lion

‘She is now a lion.’



# PRAGMATIC USES OF THE INCEPTIVE

## II. With past: **tense/aspect focus**

- Near past perfective + inceptive:

*shì-nd-à-tjí-wâni*

INC-1SG-PST-OM7-found

‘I got it now.’ (answer to: didn’t you get it yet?)

*βéshò shà-βà-nà-húri*

your\_father INC-2-PST-arrive

‘Has your father arrived yet?’

# CONCLUSION

# CONCLUSIONS

- Different possible interpretations of the inceptive
  - prospective aspect
  - inceptive aspect
  - contrastive focus
  - tense/aspect focus
- The inceptive as part of test kit to study lexical aspect and phasal structure of event.
- More attention to “marginal” aspects in Bantu languages
- Importance of a fine-grained model of lexical aspect, that also takes into account the presence of onset phases

# FURTHER RESEARCH

- Interaction of the inceptive with TAM constructions
- Information-structuring functions of the inceptive
- Further tests for the relevance of onset phases in change-of-state verbs

# Sebastian Dom & Hilde Gunnink

BANTUGENT - UGENT CENTRE FOR BANTU STUDIES  
GHENT UNIVERSITY

E Sebastian.Dom@ugent.be

E Hilde.Gunnink@ugent.be

[www.africanstudies.ugent.be](http://www.africanstudies.ugent.be)

[research.flw.ugent.be/bantugent](http://research.flw.ugent.be/bantugent)