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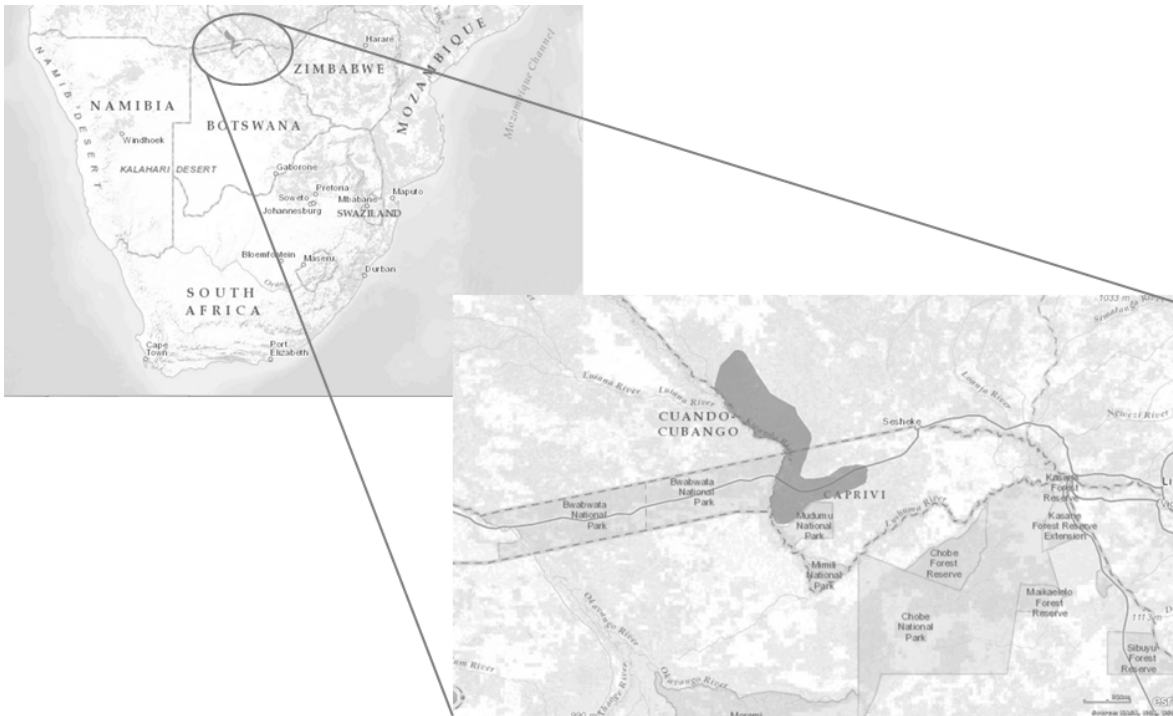
The fronted-infinitive construction in Fwe

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1. Introduction

Fwe (Bantu, K402)

- spoken on the border of Zambia (Western province) and Namibia (Zambezi region, former Caprivi strip)
- 10.000 - 20.000 speakers (Lewis et al. 2015, Sakuhuka et al. 2011)
- Bantu Botatwe: closely related to Shanjo, Totela, Subiya, more distantly to Tonga, Ila, Lenje (Bostoen 2009, de Luna 2010)

The fronted-infinitive construction (FIC) in Fwe:

Advance verb construction (Meeussen 1967: 121), fronted-infinitive construction (De Kind et al. 2015, Güldemann 2003), verb doubling (cf. Morimoto this morning):

(1) **kù-hàr-à**   **ndí-ˈhár-à**
   INF-rake-FV   SC$_{1SG}$-rake-FV
   infinitive verb   inflected verb with high-toned subject concord
   'I am raking.'

2. Formal properties of the FIC

The infinitive verb always directly precedes the inflected verb:

(2) **kù-βútùk-à**   **ndí-βùtúk-à**

INF-run-FV   SC$_{1SG}$-run-FV

'I'm running.'

(3) *****ndiβutuka kuβutuka**

Prefixes only occur on the inflected verb:

(4) *object concord*

kù-tw-ír-à   **ndí-mù-tw-ír-à**

INF-pound-APPL-FV   SC$_{1SG}$-**OC$_1$**-pound-APPL-FV

'I'm pounding for someone.'

(5) *past imperfective prefix*

kù-óngòz-à   **kà-ndí-òngóz-à**

INF-shout-FV   **PST.IPFV**-SC$_{1SG}$-shout-FV

'I was shouting.'

(6) *distal*

kù-sèβèz-à   **kà-ndí-kà-sèβèz-â**

INF-work-FV   PST.IPFV-SC$_{1SG}$-**DIST**-work-FV

'I was working there.'

Suffixes occur on both verbs:

(7) *causative suffix* **-is-**

kù-r-ís-à   **á-r-ˈís-à**   **ò-mù-cècè**

INF-eat-**CAUS**-FV   SC$_1$-eat-**CAUS**-FV   AUG$_1$-NP$_1$-child

'She is feeding the child.'

(8) *stative suffix* **-ite**

kù-zík-ìtè   **ndì-kì-zìk-îtè**

INF-hide-**STAT**   SC$_{1SG}$-REFL-hide-**STAT**

'I am hidden.'

(9) *repetitive reduplication*

kù-tóndà-tòndà   **ndí-tòndà-tôndà**

INF-watch-**REP**   SC$_{1SG}$-watch-**REP**

'I am looking around.'

Different tenses are possible:

(10) *present tense*

kù-yáshìmìs-à   **ndí-yàshìmìs-â**

INF-sneeze-FV   SC1SG-sneeze-FV

'I am sneezing.'

(11) *past tense*

kù-kékèr-à   **kà-ndí-kèkér-à**

INF-plough-FV   PST.IPFV-plough-FV

'I was ploughing.'

(12) *near future*

shunu a-βa-nce   **ku-zan-a**   **βa-zan-e**

today   AUG2-NP2-child   INF-play-FV   SC2-play-SBJV

'Today, the children will be playing.'

(13) *remote future*

zyônà   **ku-nyw-a**   **na-tu-nyw-e**

tomorrow   INF-drink-FV   FUT-SC1PL-drink-SBJV

'Tomorrow we will be drinking.'

Negation not possible:

(14) **kù-hònd-à**   **ndí-hônd-à**

INF-cook-FV   SC1SG-cook-FV

'I am cooking.'

(15) **tà-ndì-hônd-ì**

NEG-SC1SG-cook-NEG

'I do not cook.'

(16) ***kuhonda tandihondi**

3. Functions of the FIC

1. Focus on the verb
2. Obligatory if the verb is the only element in the sentence (only in the northern variety of Fwe)
3. Progressive aspect

Function #1: focus on the verb

(17) *contrastive focus:*

zyônà   **kw-ààzyá**   **cì**   **nà-nd-à-tênd-a**

yesterday   SC17-have.not   DEM7   PST-SC1SG-PST-do-FV

'Yesterday, I did nothing.'

shùnù kù-sèβèz-à ndí-sèβèz-â

today INF-work-FV SC$_{1SG}$-work-FV

'Today, I'm working.'

(18) *information focus*

question: **zì-njí nò-tênd-ì shùnù**

COP$_8$-what SC$_{2SG}$.PST-do-PST today

'What did you do today?'

answer: **kù-kékèr-à kà-ndí-kèkér-à**

INF-plough-FV PST.IPFV-SC$_{1SG}$-plough-FV

'I was ploughing.'

Focus on the verb, not on the entire VP

(19) *focus on the verb and the object*

answer to the question: 'What did you do today?'

ndì-wá ˈry-ángù kà-ndí-kèkér-à

COP$_5$-field CON$_5$-POSS$_{1SG}$ PST.IPFV-SC$_{1SG}$-plough-FV

'I was ploughing my field.'

(20) *thetic focus*

The speaker is explaining to the hearer what happens during the night, while she is asleep.

ndì-sáβúrè βá-nàkù-shàk-à kù-mí-fùnd-ìs-àng-à

COP$_5$-machete SC$_2$.REL-HAB-want-FV INF-OC$_{2PL}$-cut-CAUS-HAB-FV

'He keeps wanting to cut you with a machete.'

Focus marking also on non-progressive verbs:

(21) *A child is brought to the clinic with a broken leg. The doctor asks what happened.*

ò-mw-âncè kù-gw-à nâ-gw-ì

AUG$_1$-NP$_1$-child INF-fall-FV SC$_1$.PST-fall-PST

'The child has fallen.'

(22) *answer to the question: 'What were you doing in those times?'*

kù-zyímb-à kà-ndí-zyîmb-à

INF-sing-FV PST.IPFV-SC$_{1SG}$-sing-FV

'I used to be a singer.'

Function #2 (only in northern variety of Fwe): FIC is obligatory when the verb is the only element in the sentence

(23) a) **kù-shèk-à ndí-ˈshék-à**

INF-laugh-FV SC$_{1SG}$-laugh-FV

'I laugh, am laughing.'

b) ***ndì-shék-à**

(24) a) **ndì-yénd-à**   **mù-mù-têmwà**

SC$_{1SG}$-walk-FV   NP$_{18}$-NP$_3$-forest

'I walk in the forest.'

     b)   **kù-yènda-à**   **ndí-yênd-à**

INF-walk-FV   SC$_{1SG}$-walk-FV

'I am walking.'

     c)   ***ndì-yênd-à**

Function #3: progressive aspect:

(25) **kù-nyw-á**   **kà-βà-nyw-â**   **è-n-súndá**   **yò-nshê**

INF-drink-FV   PST.IPFV-SC$_2$-drink-FV   AUG$_9$-NP$_9$-week   CON$_9$-all

'They've been drinking the whole week.'

(26) **kù-g|ònt-à**   **á-g|ônt-à**   **à-m-ênjì**

INF-drip-FV   SC$_6$-drip-FV   SC$_6$-NP$_6$-water

'Water is dripping.'

(27) **ò-mù-nwé**   **ꜜw-ángù**   **kù-rèng-à**   **ú-rêng-à**

AUG$_3$-NP$_3$-finger   CON$_3$-POSS$_{1SG}$ INF-hurt-FV   SC$_3$-hurt-FV

'My finger is hurting.'

Not a canonical progressive: progressives are typically not stative (Comrie 1976), but verbs in the FIC can use the stative inflection:

(28) **kù-rérè**   **ndí-rèrè**

INF-sleep.STAT   SC$_{1SG}$-sleep.STAT

'I am asleep.'

(29) **kù-zík-ìtè**   **ndí-kì-zìk-îtè**

INF-hide-STAT   SC$_{1SG}$-REFL-hide-STAT

'I am hidden.'

FIC can be used for actions with a very long duration:

(30) **òzyú**   **mw-âncè**   **kù-kúr-à**   **á-ꜜkúr-à**

DEM$_1$ NP$_1$-child   INF-grow-FV   SC$_1$-grow-FV

'The child is growing.'

(31) **kù-pòt-à**   **á-kà-pòt-à**   **βà-kwâkwè**   **mwà-nàmìbìà**

INF-visit-FV   SC$_1$-DIST-visit-FV   NP$_2$-relative   NP$_{18}$-Namibia

'She's visiting her relatives in Namibia.'

The progressive use of the FIC contrasts with a more canonical progressive with -*kwesi*, only used for actions that are actually ongoing at the time of speaking:

(32) **è-fónì**   **yò-zyûmwì**   **ì-kwèsì**   **ì-rír-à**
AUG$_9$-phone   CON$_9$-someone   SC$_9$-PROG   SC$_9$-cry-FV
'Someone's phone is ringing.'

(33) **à-kwèsì**   **à-tòmbwêr-à**
SC$_1$-PROG   SC$_1$-weed-FV
'She's busy weeding.'

-*kwesi* is only used for actions with a fairly short duration:

(34) **à-kwèsì**   **à-sìngàβ-á**   **mà-fûtà**
SC$_1$-PROG   SC$_1$-apply-FV   NP$_6$-oil
'She is putting oil on her skin.'

(35) **βà-kwèsì**   **βà-fwéβ-à**   **mù-tômbwè**
SC$_2$-PROG   SC$_2$-smoke-FV   NP$_3$-cigarette
'He is smoking a cigarette.'

FIC can combine with -*kwesi* progressive to mark both focus and progressive:

(36) *Someone is walking with a container full of water on her head. The container is leaking, but she doesn't notice.*

è-cì-pùpè   **c-ákò**   **kù-zywìzy-à** **cí-kwèsì**   **cì-zywîzy-à**
AUG$_7$-NP$_7$-container   CON$_7$-POSS$_{2SG}$ INF-leak-FV   SC$_7$-PROG   SC$_7$-leak-FV
'Your container is leaking.'

4. Origin of the FIC

The fronted-infinitive is a cleft construction:

(37) **mbù-sùnsò**   **ndí-ry-à**
[copulative + noun]   [relative clause]
COP$_{14}$-relish   SC$_{1SG}$.REL-eat-FV
'It's relish that I eat.'

(38) **kù-ry-á**   **ˈndí-ry-à**
[copulative + noun]   [relative clause]
COP$_{15}$-eat-FV   SC$_{1SG}$.REL-eat-FV
'It's eating that I eat > I'm eating.'

Relative clause verb takes a high tone on the subject concord:

(39) **ndì-βàr-á**   **è-m-búkà**
SC$_{1SG}$-read-FV   AUG$_9$-NP$_9$-book
'I read a book.'

(40) **è-m-búká**   **èyò**   **ndí-ˈβár-à**   **njì-ndôtù**
AUG$_9$-NP$_9$-book   DEM$_9$ SC$_{1SG}$.REL-read-FV   COP$_9$-good
'The book that I read is good.'

The inflected verb in the FIC also takes a high tone on the subject concord:

(41) **kù-βàr-à**   **ndí-ˈβár-à**
INF-read-FV   SC$_{1SG}$.REL-read-FV
'I am reading.'

Nouns have two sets of copulative prefixes:

(42) *indefinite, e.g. class 14* **mbù-**

      mbù-sùnsò
COP$_{14}$-relish
'It's relish.'

(43) *definite, e.g. class 14* **mbó-βù-**

      mbó-βù-sùnsò
COP$_{14}$-NP$_{14}$-relish
'It's the relish.'

The FIC can also use two different copulative prefixes:

(44) *"indefinite"* **kù-**

      kù-kòw-à   **ndí-ˈków-à**
COP$_{15}$-blink-FV   SC$_{1SG}$.REL-blink-FV
'I'm blinking.'

(45) *"definite"* **kó-kù-**

      kó-kù-màn-à   **ndí-ˈmán-à**
COP$_{15}$-INF-finish-FV SC$_{1SG}$.REL-finish-FV
'I've just finished.'

Copulative prefix never takes an augment:

(46) **(ò-)βù-sùnsò**
AUG$_{14}$-NP$_{14}$-relish
'relish'

(47) **mbù-sùnsò**
COP$_{14}$-relish
'It's relish.'

(48) ***ò-mbù-sùnsò**

Infinitive in FIC also never takes an augment:

(49) **ndì-pàtéh-ìtè**   **(ò-)kù-nywá**   **è-tìyì**

SC$_{1SG}$-be.busy-STAT   (AUG-)INF-drink   AUG$_9$-tea

'I'm busy drinking tea.'

(50) **kù-nyw-á**   **ꟾndí-nyw-à**

INF-drink-FV   SC$_{1SG}$-drink-FV

'I am drinking.'

(51) ***ò-kù-nyw-á**   **ꟾndí-nyw-à**

FIC is incompatible with another cleft construction:

(52) **mù-mù-témwà**   **ndí-kì-zìk-îte**

COP$_{18}$-NP$_3$-forest   SC$_{1SG}$-REFL-hide-STAT

'It's in the forest that I'm hidden.'

(53) ***mù-mù-témwà**   **kù-zík-ìtè**   **ndí-kì-zìk-îtè**

5. Summary

- The FIC in Fwe is a cleft construction.
- The FIC marks focus on the verb or progressive aspect; the latter use probably developed out of the former (cf. Güldemann 2003).
- The focus function of the FIC explains certain restrictions on its progressive use, such as the incompatibility with another cleft construction or with negation.

GLOSSES

APPL	applicative	FUT	future	PST	past
AUG	augment	FV	final vowel	REFL	reflexive
CAUS	causative	INF	infinitive	REL	relative
CON	connective	IPFV	imperfective	REP	repetitive
COP	copulative	NP	noun class prefix	SBJV	subjunctive
DEM	demonstrative	OC	object concord	SC	subject concord
DIST	distal	PROG	progressvie	STAT	stative

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