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Indirect verum marking in 10 Bantu languages

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Bantu9, 7th June 2022
Malawi University of Science and Technology

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BaSIS
Bantu Syntax & Information Structure

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What is verum?

- **Verum focus** - term coined by Höhle (1988; 1992) for emphasis on the truth of a proposition, marked in German and English by accent

(1)　Karl HAT den Hund gefüttert.
　　　Carl has the dog fed
　　　'Carl DID feed the dog.'　　　(Höhle, cited in Lohnstein 2016:290)

- cf Watters (1979) on **polar focus** (and counter-assertive polar focus) in Aghem (Grassfields Bantu)

Verum: Is it part of information structure?

- Verum has traditionally been seen as a subtype of focus (predicate-centred focus (PCF); Güldemann 2003, 2009)
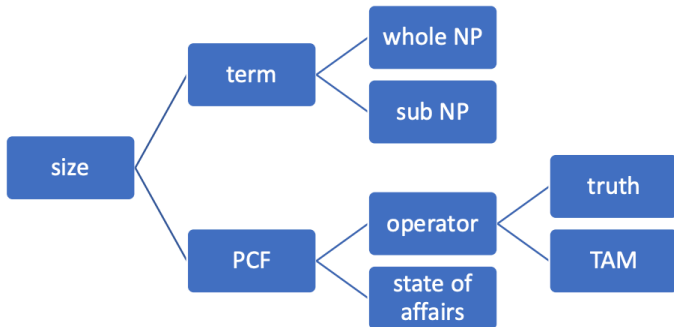

Figure 4 – Variation in the scope of the focus (building on Dik 1997:331 and Güldemann 2009)

Verum: Is it a type of focus?

- Gutzmann et al. (2020): **verum is not focus**; it is a separate notion

- Pitch accent in German and English is not an instance of focus marking, but functions to link the current proposition to a QUD (= verum)

- In some languages, these two functions have distinct markings

Glossa *a journal of general linguistics*

Gutzmann, Daniel, et al. 2020. Verum focus is verum, not focus: Cross-linguistic evidence. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 5(1): 51. 1–48. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5334/gjgl.347

RESEARCH

Verum focus is verum, not focus: Cross-linguistic evidence

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The accent pattern known as verum focus is commonly understood as an ordinary alternative focus on the truth of a proposition. This standard view, which we call the focus accent thesis (Fat), can be contrasted with the lexical operator thesis (Lot), according to which the accent pattern that looks like focus in languages like German or English is actually not an instance of focus marking, but realizes a lexical verum predicate, whose function is to relate the current proposition to a question under discussion. Although it is hard to distinguish between the Fat and the Lot on the basis of German or English, a broader cross-linguistic perspective seems to favor the Lot. Drawing from fieldwork on Tsimshianic (Gitksan) and Chadic (Bura, South Marghi), we first show that in none of these languages is verum realized in the same way that ordinary alternative focus is marked. This sheds initial doubt on the unity of verum and focus. Secondly, the Fat predicts that a language cannot have co-occuring verum and focus, if it does not allow multiple foci, and that a language should allow them to co-occur if it allows for multiple foci. Again, while it is hard to find counterexamples in German or English, some of the data from our cross-linguistic investigation favor the Lot.

Keywords: verum; focus; emphasis; accent; question under discussion

Verum: Is it part of information structure?

- Two conflicting views in the theoretical literature:
  1. Verum as subtype of focus = part of information structure (IS)
  2. Verum as separate notion

- Today: Consider this debate from the perspective of Bantu languages, which are known to mark IS morphosyntactically

RQs

- RQ1: How is verum expressed in Bantu? Is there a dedicated strategy for marking it?
- RQ2: Is verum part of IS or is it a separate notion?

⇒ Need to have data on verum marking in context of the broader system of IS-marking in Bantu...

BaSIS project

- Bantu Syntax and Information Structure (BaSIS) project, 2017-2023, Leiden University
- Investigating syntax and IS for 10 Bantu languages

BaSIS project

- Bantu Syntax and Information Structure (BaSIS) project, 2018-2023, Leiden University
- Investigating syntax and IS for 10 Bantu languages:

  - Tunen (A44)
  - Teke-Kukuya (B77)
  - Kîîtharaka (E54)
  - Kirundi (JD62)
  - Rukiga (JE14)
  - Ékegusií (JE42)
  - Kinyakyusa (M31)
  - Makhuwa-Enahara (P31)
  - Changana (S53)
  - Copi (S61)
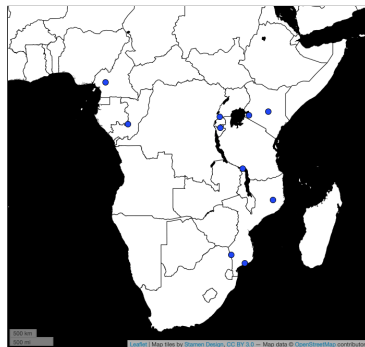
BaSIS project: Methodology

BaSIS project methodology document (inspired by QUIS; Skopeteas et al. 2016)

- Investigates syntax and information structure

- Elicitation in a controlled discourse context; picture stimuli; recording of natural speech

$\Rightarrow$ Available online[1]

The BaSIS basics of information structure

Jenneke van der Wal
August 2021

BaSIS
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[1] https://bantusyntaxinformationstructure.com/methodology/
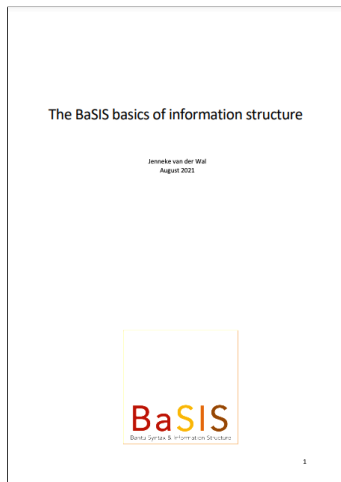
Findings

Findings: Overview

- **5 different strategies** for expressing verum, ranging from fully lexical (periphrasis, particles) to fully grammatical (verbal morphology)
- In all languages, **verum can be unmarked**
- **No strategy is unique to verum** - they are found elsewhere in the IS system for backgrounding
- **Verum is not uniquely expressed by one strategy**, intra- or interlinguistically
- **Strategies may be combined**
- ⇒ **No 1-to-1 mapping** between verum and a particular strategy

Findings: 5 different strategies to express verum

1. Simple verb form (unmarked)
2. Lexical strategies
   - Periphrasis
   - Particle
3. Dislocation of arguments from comment
4. Predicate doubling
   - Topic doubling
   - *bu-* doubling/nominalisation
5. Verbal morphology
   - Disjoint verb form
   - *ni*-form
   - Object marker doubling

Findings: 5 different strategies to express verum

	lexical	unmarked V	marked V	pred. doub.	disloc.	OM + obj.
Tunen (A44)	Y	Y	N/A	N	?	N/A
Teke (B77)	Y	Y	N/A	N	?	N/A
Gusii (JE42)	Y	N/A / ?	Y	N	?	?
Kîîtharaka (E54)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	?
Rukiga (JE14)	Y	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y
Kinyakyusa (M31)	Y	Y	N/A	Y	Y	N/A
Kirundi (JD61)	Y	N/A / ?	Y	Y	Y	?
Makhuwa (P31)	Y	N/A / Y	Y	Y	Y	N/A
Changana (S53)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	?
Copi (S61)	Y	N/A / ?	Y	Y	Y	Y

⇒ See Appendix for full data

Findings: Verum can be unmarked

(2) Context: 'Did we give the presents to Shania and Hamida?'
ɛ́ɛ, tɔka búə́bu índi.
ɛ́ɛ tɔ-ka búə́bə índiə
yes SM.1PL-PAST3 PRON.2 give
'Yes, we did give them them.' (Tunen)

(3) Context: 'He did not return you the money?'
Ndé á-bvúur-i me mi-pará.
1.PRN SM.1.PST-return-PST 1SG.PRN 4-money
'He returned me the money.' (Teke-Kukuya)

⇒ Same word order as thetics, with no additional
lexical/grammatical marking to indicate verum

Findings: Lexical strategies

Particles/periphrasis:

(4) Context: 'I don't believe that he went'
     Aabuukire **nalooli**!
     a-a-buuk-ire   **nalooli**
     SM.1-PST-go-PFV   truly
     'He really went!'   (Kinyakyusa)

(5) **Ngâŋwa** ndé   ká-wí   me   mi-pará.
     9.truth   1.PRN SM.1-PST-give.PST 1SG.PRN 4-money
     'It is true that he gave me the money.'   (Teke-Kukuya)

Findings: Lexical strategies

Periphrasis can be used to express verum:

(6) A: Maria didn't cook beans.
     B: She did cook beans.
     A: No she didn't.
     B: Ohaápéya, **mí kohoóna**!

o-o-apey-a	**mi**	**ki-o-oon-a**
1SM-PFV.DJ-cook-FV	1SG.PRO	1SG.SM-PFV.DJ-see-FV

'She did cook, I saw it!'   (Makhuwa)

Finding: Dislocation

Dislocation of arguments from the comment:

(7)   Context: You are accused of not bathing the child, which was
      one of your tasks.
      Ka-anǎ, i   tû-ka-thaamb-iir-i-e.
      12-child FOC 1PL.SM-12OM-wash-PFV-IC-FV
      'The child, we did bathe him/her.'   (Kîîtharaka)

Finding: Dislocation

Dislocation is not just found for verum in Kîîtharaka; it is also used for topicalisation in a non-verum context:

(8) Context: You are accused of not bathing the child, which was one of your tasks.
    Ka-aně, i   tû-ka-thaamb-iir-i-e.
    12-child FOC 1PL.SM-12OM-wash-PFV-IC-FV
    'The child, we did bathe him/her.'

(9) Context: What will you find for the children?
    Tw-áána n-gá-tû-cer-er-i-a   ma-buku.
    13-child 1SG.SM-FUT-12OM-find-APPL-IC-FV 8-books
    'The children, I will find books for them.'   (Kîîtharaka)

Findings: Predicate doubling

2 types of predicate doubling found for verum:

- Topicalisation of the predicate as an infinitive:

(10)   Context: Mother doubts whether I have eaten.
       Yéég' **ó-ku-rya**   n-áá-ry-a.
       yes   AUG-15-eat-FV   1SM-N.PST-eat-FV
       'Yes, I have truly eaten.'   (Rukiga)

- Nominalisation with *bu-* in Kirundi (which also has the topicalisation type):

(11)   Context: Have you eaten a snake?
       Yeemwe   n-aa-ra-rii-ye   **bu-ry-e**.
       DP   1SG.SM-PST-DJ-eat-PFV   14-eat-SBJV
       'Sure, I've really eaten (it)!'   (Kirundi)

Findings: Predicate doubling

The construction is not unique to verum: also used for contrastive
topics and intensifying or depreciative meanings:

(12)   Context: You're going out for dinner and you're asked what you
       want to eat and what you want to drink.
       (u)kurya, ndy'inyama, kunywa nywá ifanta.
       u-ku-ryá   n-rí-a   i-nyama   **ku-nywa**
       AUG-15-eat 1SG.SM-eat-FV AUG-10.meat 15-drink
          n-nyo-a   i-fanta
          1SG.SM-drink-FV AUG-9.fanta
       'For eating, I eat meat, for drinking, I drink fanta.'   (Kirundi)

Q: Are these constructions separate from verum?
See Van der Wal & Jerro's Bantu9 presentation this afternoon for
discussion of how these meanings could in fact be linked to verum

Findings: Verbal morphology

Use of disjoint verb form (DJ; opposed to conjoint form CJ) was found for verum:

(13)　O-**h**-aápéy-a　　　　　(ekútte).
　　　1SM-PFV.DJ-cook-FV　10.green.beans
　　　a. 'He did cook beans.' (Paulo didn't cook beans.)
　　　b. 'S/He cooked beans.' ('Did s/he buy beans?')
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Makhuwa)

The disjoint verb form is used elsewhere to indicate that the postverbal element is non-focal (Van der Wal & Hyman 2017)

⇒ DJ verbal morphology is used for both verum and non-verum contexts

Findings: Verbal morphology

ni-form in Kîîtharaka:

(14)   Did Muthoni sell the beans and the maize?
       Ntíménya íkû aláíríre mboócó îndî́ ímbíye **#(n)**'ááré"éndíríe
       mpeémpe.

n-ti-meny-a	ni	ku	a-ra-ir-ire	
1SG.SM-NEG-know-FV	FOC	where	1SG.SM-YPST-take-PFV	

m-booco	îndî	ni	m-biye	ni
10-beans	but	FOC	1SG.SM-know	FOC

a-ra-eend-ir-i-e	m-pempe
1SM-YPST-sell-PFV-IC-FV	10-maize

'I don't know where she took the beans but I know she sold
the maize.'   (Kîîtharaka)

Findings: OM

- In non-doubling languages like Rukiga, OM normally cannot cooccur with coreferent DP in same domain (cf. Van der Wal 2022)
- BUT this is possible under a verum or mirative reading (see Lippard et al. 2022, Liu 2022)

(15) Mbiine   y-aa-**ka**-teer-a   a-ka-ruuru.
      1.Mbiine 1sg.sm-n.pst-12-beat-fv aug-12-vote
      '(It is true that) Mbiine voted.'
      '(Surprisingly) Mbiine voted.' (He had vowed not to vote)

(16) Context: The shirts don't look like they've been washed, but the
      speaker can confirm that she saw Dan washing them.
      Daani yáázyózy' esaati.
      Daani   y-áá-**zí**-ozya   e-saati
      1.Dani   1sg.sm-n.pst-10om-wash aug-10-shirt
      'Dan CERTAINLY washed the shirts.'   (Rukiga)

Findings: Strategies may be combined

E.g. periphrasis, dislocation, disjoint verb form

(17) Masiko didn't write the letter.

Ni vyó, ikeéte yaráryanditse.

ni   bi-ó   i-keéte   a-á-ra-ri-andik-ye
COP 8-PRO   5-letter   1SM-PST-DJ-5OM-write-PFV
'It's true, she did write the letter.'   (Kirundi)

Interim summary: No 1-to-1 mapping

- None of the marked grammaticalised strategies are unique to
  verum - they are seen elsewhere in the information
  structural system as a means of backgrounding potentially
  focal information (cf Güldemann 2016 on maximal
  backgrounding)
    - simple verb underspecified for VP/V/O focus or verum
    - dislocation also used for topicalising/defocusing arguments
    - predicate doubling also used for contrastive topics and
      intensifying/depreciative readings
    - disjoint verb form also used when post-verbal not in focus
      and also for narrow verb focus
    - object marking also used for mirative
- The same form can be found with both verum and non-verum
  interpretations, depending on context
- ⇒ No 1-to-1 mapping between verum and a particular marking

Discussion

Discussion

RQ1

- RQ1: How is verum expressed in Bantu? Is there a dedicated strategy for marking it?

$\Rightarrow$ A range of strategies from fully lexical to fully grammaticalised – but no one dedicated strategy, and no strategy unique to verum
- Only lexical strategies are direct marking
- Verum is not directly marked by grammatical strategies, but arises through de-marking of other options for focus
- Maximal backgrounding (Güldemann 2016: 577) "removes all but one potential focus host from the assertion domain":
  $\Rightarrow$ truth as the only relevant alternative-generating item (=focus)

Discussion

RQ2

- RQ2: Is verum part of IS or is it a separate notion?

Gutzmann et al. (2020): if verum is focus (on the truth), then:

- it should be marked as focus
  - ⇒ Backgrounding is also used for other focus (see Güldemann 2016 on backgrounding as a form of focus marking)
  - ⇒ Term/TAM/SoA focus can be unmarked, just like verum
- it should be used in answers to yes/no questions
  - ⇒ Unmarked and dislocation are indeed used
  - ⇒ Extra 'emphasis' can be perceived when marked strategies are used

Discussion

RQ2: **Is verum part of IS or is it a separate notion?**
Gutzmann & Castroviejo-Miró (2011):

- Verum is not **truth-conditional** but **use-conditional**
  (Recanati 2004, Romero 2005, Repp 2013)
- Verum is an operator that takes proposition *p* and conveys
  that *?p* should be downdated from the Question Under
  Discussion (QUD)
- Therefore, the QUD should still be *?p* (= generate alternatives
  for *p*)

$\Rightarrow$ We find truth focus in Bantu by the discourse contexts, which
allow the verum operator but do not require it
$\Rightarrow$ truth focus is still a valid notion

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Conclusion

Conclusion

- There is no one strategy for expressing verum language-internally or cross-linguistically in Bantu
    - ⇒ 5 different strategies used to express verum: lexical, unmarked, dislocation, predicate doubling, verbal morphology

- While the lexical strategies can be said to directly encode verum, grammatical strategies (i) are always multifunctional, and (ii) seem to mark non-focus on other elements

- Truth focus seems to be a necessary condition for a downdating verum operator to apply ⇒ truth focus is still a valid notion

Thank you for listening!

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Acknowledgements

The BaSIS team: Allen Asiimwe, Patrick Kanampiu, Zhen Li, Amani Lusekelo, Nelsa Nhantumbo, Ernest Nshemezimana, Aurélio Simango
+ our consultants in Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique

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