

# Post-verbal clitics and particles in Bemba: partitive and focus readings

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# Introduction

- The Bantu language Bemba (Zambia and DRC) has a set of three post-verbal clitics *-po*, *-ko*, *-mo*.
- Although these clitics are clearly locative in origin, they are associated with a range of non-locative meanings such as partitive readings.
- Bemba also has a particle *fye* which in its lexical use conveys meanings such as ‘only, just, in vain’.
- *Fye* is associated with a range of interpretations (e.g. exclusive focus, intensity etc).
- The use and distribution of these post-verbal clitics and particles in Bemba – and in Bantu more broadly – remains under examined.

# Introduction

- Cross-linguistically, particles perform a range of functions and in many ways are distinguished by not fitting neatly within other parts-of-speech categories.
- Across the Bantu languages, particles are typically short, often monomorphemic, uninflected forms.
- Digo: The focus marker *che* is related to the hodiernal past copula form *che* (Nicolle 2013: 244-46)
- Kifuliiru: Positive focus copula is formed by the Gender Number Prefix + *-e/-o* previous reference marker (van Otterloo 2011: 212)
- Yao: enclitic *-pe* ‘only’, can follow any type of word (Whiteley 1966: 24, 76).
- Bafia: *Valorisateur yéè-* Guarisma (2000: 260)

# Introduction

- Comparative context: Luganda focus marker -e

Aba-lenzi	abo	a-ba-kulu	<b>b-e</b>	ba-nj-agala
2-boys	2.DEM	AUG-2-big	2-FOC	SM2-OM1SG-like

'*THE BIG BOYS* like me; It's the big boys who like me.' (Ashton et al. 1954: 441)

Mu-ki-senge	ki-no	<b>mw-e</b>	mu-sulamu	aba-genyi
18-7-room	7-DEM	18-FOC	SM18-sleep	2-guests

'It's *IN THIS ROOM* guests sleeping.' (Ashton et al. 1954: 441)

# Introduction

- Herero: Otjiherero has a small inventory of adverbials that usually have a focusing effect - e.g. *navi* - 'badly', *uriri* - 'only' (Möhlig & Kavari 2008: 285, 286-7)
- Zulu focus particle *kuphela* 'only'
- Tswana *fela* 'only' (< 'finish')
- See also Schneider-Zioga (2015), Taji (2019) on particles in specific languages and Diercks (2013) and Jerro (2016) for accounts of specific (locational) functions of particles

# Introduction

- **Aim:** This talk investigates a small group of post-verbal clitics and particles, with a focus on Bemba: *-po*, *-ko*, *-mo* and *-fye*.
- We explore the distribution of these forms as well as the range of meanings with which they are associated.

## ***Roadmap***

1. Introduction
2. *-po*, *-ko*, *-mo*
3. *fye*
4. Summary and conclusions

## **2. *-po, -ko, -mo***

# The post-verbal clitics

- *-po, -ko, -mo* are post-verbal clitics associated with the locative classes 16, 17 and 18.
- Their standard meaning is to indicate location as ‘on’, ‘there/by’ and ‘in’, respectively.

(1) Bíík-a=pó      pa-cí-puna  
put-FV=LC16    16-7-chair  
‘Put it there on the chair’

(2) N-ka-y-a=kó                      maílo  
SM1SG-FUT-go-FV=LC17          tomorrow  
‘I will go there tomorrow’

(3) N-ka-fúm-a=mó  
SM1SG-FUT-go\_out-FV=LC18  
‘I will come out of (in) there’



# The post-verbal clitics

- Non-locative meanings/uses of *-po*, *-ko*, *-mo*

(4) Ale na iwe landa=**po** [partitive]

PART CONJ PRN speak=**16**

‘And now you also say/contribute something’

(5) Buula=**po** ubuunga

Take=**16** 14meal\_flour

‘Take some meal flour’

(6) N-de uma=**po** umo

1SG-FUT beat=**16** 1.one

‘I will hit one of you’

## -ko

- (7) N-da-ku-fund-íl-á=kó [substitutive:  
SM1SG-HAB-OM2SG-teach-APPL-FV=LC17 Marten & Kula  
'I teach instead of you' (Sadler 1964: 271) 2014]
- (8) A-alí-n-sós-éel-e=kó [on behalf of]  
SM1-REM.PAST-OM1SG-speak-APPL-PFV=LC17  
'He spoke in my favour/defence' (cf. van Sambeek 1955: 85)
- (9) N-ka-ly-a=kó maílo [politeness/  
SM1SG-FUT-eat-FV=LC17 tomorrow possibility]  
'(Maybe) I will eat tomorrow'
- (10) Peel-a=kó umu-biyo [partitive]  
give-FV=LC17 1-POSS.friend  
'Give some to your friend'

## -ko

- (11) M-pel-e-ni=kó [respect/politeness]  
OM1SG-give-FV-PL=LC17  
'Give me, please'
- (12) Mw-ípúsh-é-ni=kó Kombé [emphatic]  
OM1-ask-FV-PL=LC17 Kombe  
'Also ask Kombe'
- (13) Ábá-na bá-á-!ípík-a=kó leelo [unusualness]  
2-children SM2-PAST-cook-FV=LC17 today  
'The children have (surprisingly) cooked today'

# -mo

- *-mo* mainly retains its concrete, physical locative semantics of ‘in’

(14a) Sala=**po**            iyo        u-lee-fway-a  
choose=**16**            9DEM    2sg-TNS-want-FV

(14b) Sala=**mo**            iyo        u-lee-fwaya  
choose=**18**            9DEM    2sg-TNS-want-FV  
‘choose the one you want (from in there)’

(15a) Umfwa=**ko**        ifyo        ba-lee-land-a  
listen=**17**            8DEM    2SM-TNS-talk-FV  
‘listen to what they are saying’

(15b) Umfwa=**mo**  
listen=**18**  
‘taste some (e.g. of what’s in the pot)’

## **3. Fye**

# Fye: function and meaning

- The adverb *fye* is a widely-used word (Hoch 1963: 331).
- The word *fye* has three general uses as an adverb (van Sambeek 1955: 94):
  - (a) its primary meaning is “nothing”, “empty”
  - (b) it may also be used to express “only”, “merely”, “aimlessly”, “in vain”, “nothing but”, etc;
  - (c) it may also be used to add intensity
- In some contexts (e.g. when used as ‘only’), *fye* functions as a focus particle.

# Fye: lexical meaning

- Lexical meaning of *fye* ‘empty’, ‘nothing’

(16) I-botolo li-li                      **fye**  
5-bottle SM5-COP                      fye  
‘the bottle is empty’ (van Sambeek 1955: 94)

- With metaphorical extension?

(17) Bushe w-a-i-cen-a?                      Iyoo      ndi                      **fye**  
Q                      SM2SG-PAST-REFL-hurt-FV      No                      COP.1SG fye  
‘Have you hurt yourself? No, I am well’ (Hoch 1963: 331)

# Fye: adverbial meaning

- Adverbial meaning 'only'

(18) A-m-p-ele                      **fye**                      i-cungwa  
SM1-OM1-give-PERF    fye                      5-orange  
'He only gave me an orange' (Hoch 1963: 332)

(19) Ni            n-konde                      **fye**                      esho            a-shit-ile  
COP    10-banana                      fye                      REL            SM1-buy-PST  
'It is only bananas he bought'



# Fye: adverbial meaning

- Adverbial meaning 'merely'

(20) mu-kashana **fye**  
1-girl fye

'Only a girl, i.e. not grown up' (Lammond 1957: 118)

(21) U-yu w-a **fye**  
DEM-1 1-ASS fye

'He is of no importance' (Hoch 1963: 332)

# Fye: adverbial meaning

- Intensity

(22) Tu-li                    **fye**        a-bengi  
SM1PL-COP    fye        2-many  
'We are very many' (Hoch 1963: 332)

(23) A-butuka            **fye**        ulu-bilo  
SM1-run        fye        11-speed  
'He ran very fast' (van Sambeek 1955: 94)

## **4. Syntactic distribution**

# Noun phrases

- Fye follows the noun it modifies

(25) mu-kashana    **fye**  
1-girl            fye  
'Only a girl, i.e. not grown up' (Lammond 1957: 118)

(26) Lesa    e            Mupashi,            te            mubili-**fye**  
1.God   COP    1-spirit            NEG    3-body-fye  
'God is a spirit, not simply a body' (Robertson 1904: 76, adapted)

# Noun phrases

- In noun phrases with two modifiers, *fye* can follow the noun directly, or follow another modifier.

(27)    ubu-shiku            **fye**            bu-mo  
          14-day                fye            14-one  
          'one day only' (van Sambeek 1955: 94)

(28)    umu-ntu                u-mo                **fye**  
          1-person                1-one                fye  
          'one person only' (Hoch 1963: 106)



## After intransitive verbs

- *Fye* follows the verb and precedes (other) adverbs

(31) A-butuka            **fye**            ulu-bilo  
SM1-run            fye            11-speed  
'He ran very fast' (van Sambeek 1955: 94)

(32) a-kan-inina                            **fye**            ndai  
SM1-refuse-INT                            fye            absolutely  
'He absolutely refused' (van Sambeek 1955: 94)

- This is similar to the pattern we find with transitive verbs





## After ditransitive verbs

- *Fye* follows the verb and precedes any objects

(36) A-m-p-ele                      **fye**            i-cungwa  
SM1-OM1-give-PERF    fye            5-orange  
'He only gave me an orange' (Hoch 1963: 332)

# Complex verbal constructions

- *Fye* can follow either verb in multi-verb constructions.

(37) A-lee-fwaya                      **fye**      uku-ya  
SM1-PRS-want                      fye      15-go  
'S/he just wants to go'

(38) A-lee-fwaya                      uku-ya                      **fye**  
SM1-PRS-want                      15-go                      fye  
'S/he just wants to go' [more emphasis on the verb?]

(39) \*Fye      a-lee-fwaya                      uku-ya  
FOC      SM1-PRS-want                      15-go

# Copula constructions

- *Fye* can follow the copula as the only predicate (cf. lexical meaning, above)

(40) I-botolo li-li                    **fye**  
5-bottle SM5-COP                fye  
'The bottle is empty' (van Sambeek 1955: 94)

(41) Bushe w-a-i-cen-a?                    lyoo    ndi                **fye**  
Q            SM2SG-PAST-REFL-hurt-FV    No       COP.1SG fye  
'Have you hurt yourself? No, I am well' (Hoch 1963: 331)

# Copula constructions

- *Fye* can also be used with another predicate, and then contributes more adverbial meaning

(42) Tu-li                    **fye**        a-bengi  
SM1PL-COP    fye        2-many  
'We are very many' (Hoch 1963: 332)

(43) Tw-a-li                                    **fye**        mupepi    no        ku-fika  
SM1PL-PST-COP                    fye        18-close CONJ 15-arrive  
'We have nearly arrived' (Hoch 1963: 332, 462)

# Cleft constructions

- In copula constructions, *fye* follows the focused/clefted term directly

(44) Ni                      n-konde              **fye**      esho      a-shit-ile  
COP    10-banana      fye      REL      SM1-buy-PST  
'It is only bananas he bought'

# Associative constructions

- *Fye* can function as the dependent term in an associative construction

(45) N-shiku            sh-a            **fye**  
10-day                10-ASS            fye  
'Ordinary days' (as opposed to Sundays) (Hoch 1963: 332)

(46) U-yu                w-a            **fye**  
DEM-1                1-ASS            fye  
'He is of no importance' (Hoch 1963: 332)

# Idiomatic expressions

- There are also idiomatic expressions such as *koma fye* ‘just, only’ which combine with *fye* but cannot be analysed further:

(47) Koma **fye** na-iwe u-kwat-e-ko  
Koma fye ADD-Pron2SG SM2SG-have-FV-LOC  
‘You also just want to also have some/the same’

## **5. Summary and conclusions**



# Summary

- -po,- ko, -mo are verbal clitics with extensive uses beyond locative meanings that include: partitive, substitutive, on behalf of readings, politeness, respect, emphatic, unusualness, etc.
- -mo shows less extensive uses outside of the usual physical locative meaning ('in').
- *Fye* is used with both verbal and nominal forms and also shows extensive interpretations to indicate intensity, exclusive focus and readings of empty, nothing, just, in vain, merely, etc.

# Summary

- *Fye* retains independent lexical meaning ('nothing' or 'empty'), and can be used as the sole predicate in a copula construction.
- Syntactically, it can be used as either head or modifier and enjoys a high level of categorial freedom: It can be used with nouns and verbs, after complementisers, in copula constructions and in genitive/associative constructions
- *Fye* is positionally quite restricted: In verbal constructions, it typically follows the verb immediately, preceding objects and adverbs, while in nominal constructions, there is some variation in terms of word-order

# Conclusions

- Like *fye*, the locative clitics -po, -ko, -mo have extended meanings although they also retain a locative interpretation depending on context
- Although there is some cross-over in use between *fye* and the post-verbal clitics in relation to focus, the two mainly cover different domains with the clitics restricted to verbs, and *fye* and the clitics able to co-occur
- From a typological perspective, *fye* covers a wide range of functions, from more lexical to more grammatical meanings. Some of the functions are probably better described as adverbial, while others come quite close to what is often thought of as focus-sensitive particles
- Comparative evidence shows that *fye* is linked to a wider Bantu form based on -e which is often found in focus-related contexts
- Also, several languages show a similar range from adverbial meanings to exclusive focus marking

## **6. Future directions**

# Future directions

- Forms such as *fye* give rise to important questions relating to discourse functions, syntactic distribution and combinatorial properties.
- However, the use and distribution of particles such as these require a large body of naturally occurring data and give rise for a continued need for corpus or corpora for Bemba, and Bantu languages more widely.
- Next steps involve the compilation of a larger body of naturally occurring data in an effort to better understand both these post-verbal clitics and particles, and other particles found in the language.
- Investigate the interaction of the clitics and *fye* with TAM, the conjoint-disjoint alternation, other discourse markers, negation and other pragmatic and conversational extensions and uses.

Thank you

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