Chapter 2

The expression of information structure in Tunen

Elisabeth J. Kerr

Ghent University

This chapter provides a descriptive overview of the expression of information structure in Tunen (A44, Cameroon), based primarily on original field data. The overall conclusion is that, in contrast to other Bantu languages, grammatical roles have a greater influence on syntax in Tunen than discourse roles do. A key finding is that the canonical word order S-Aux-O-V-X is compatible with a variety of information-structural contexts, rather than being an information structure-conditioned variant of an unmarked VO pattern. Non-subject information focus may be left unmarked via the canonical word order, while subject focus must be expressed via a basic cleft, showing a subject/non-subject asymmetry. The marker *á*, considered in previous work to be a monoclausal contrast marker, is argued on the basis of new data to be the specificational/identificational copula found within biclausal cleft constructions, with a subject/non-subject distinction visible between the use of a basic cleft and a reverse pseudocleft structure. In terms of topic expression, it is shown that both topical and non-topical material may occupy the subject position within the canonical word order, with no obligatory marking of topicality and no requirement to mark contrastive topics. The chapter ends with discussion of functional equivalents of passive constructions and consideration of how referent expression varies over discourse.

1 Introduction

Tunen (or "Nen", ISO 639-3 code [tvu], Guthrie code A44; Maho 2003, 2009) is a Narrow Bantu language spoken by somewhere over 35,000 people (likely around 70,000–100,000; Kerr 2024c: 33–34), predominantly in central Cameroon (Mous

2003, Gordon 2005). The language is spoken in the *Centre* region of Cameroon around the town Ndikiniméki and in an area stretching southwestwards into the *Littoral* region, reaching Douala (Dugast 1955, 1971, Mous 2003). It is therefore spoken at the far North-Western region of Narrow Bantu, bordering non-Bantu Bantoid languages of the Grassfields subgroup, and as such has various unusual properties compared to (other) Narrow Bantu languages. As well as phonological differences including the loss of final vowels and tone lowering in utterance-final position and an ATR vowel harmony system (Dugast 1971, van Leynseele 1977, van der Hulst et al. 1986, Bancel 1991, Mous 1986, 2003, Boyd 2015), Tunen's morphosyntax is more analytical than the canonical Bantu language, with the subject marker and tense marker (and the negative marker or directionality affixes, if present) separate from the verb (Dugast 1971, Mous 1997, 2003, Kongne Welaze 2010). Most relevantly for understanding the information structure of the language, Tunen is known to be highly unusual for a Bantu language in having SOV as its canonical word order (Dugast 1971, Bearth 2003, Mous 1997, 2003, 2005, 2014, Kerr 2024b,c). This chapter starts by investigating the information-structural contexts in which this SOV word order is found, and then turns to consider how else information-structural notions are expressed in the language.

The data presented in this chapter, unless indicated otherwise, are drawn from fieldwork conducted by the author under the Bantu Syntax and Information Structure (BaSIS) research project at Leiden University. The fieldwork was conducted over a total period of approximately 7 months, split across Mar–Jun 2019 (3.5 months) and Oct 2021–Feb 2022 (3.25 months), in Ndikiniméki and Yaoundé, Cameroon, with some follow-up fieldwork conducted remotely via WhatsApp. There are four dialects of Tunen: Tɔbɔ́áŋɛ, Hiliŋ, Fombo, and Ndogtuna. Tɔbɔ́áŋɛ is the standard dialect of Ndikiniméki town and the main dialect on which previous work on Tunen has been based. Most consultants for this study spoke the Tɔbɔ́áŋɛ dialect, but one consultant, EO, speaks Hiliŋ, and another consultant, DM speaks Fombo (though has lived in the Tɔbɔ́áŋɛ-speaking area for a long time). The dialects are mutually intelligible (Dugast 1971: 8), with minor differences in pronunciation and lexicon. In this chapter, consultant initials and the unique ID of the form in the corresponding Dative database are provided in square brackets alongside each example. For example, "[PM 316]" is a form provided by consultant PM with UID 316 in the database. The data consist of a mixture of elicitation based on a controlled discourse context and natural speech of different subgenres (dialogues, storytelling, instructional monologues). Further information on the data collection and information on how to access the archival corpus (Kerr 2024a) is provided in Kerr (2024c: Chapter 3).

This chapter is structured as follows. Section 2 presents evidence for S-Aux-O-V-X as the canonical word order and shows the different information-structural contexts in which this word order can appear. Section 3 discusses departures from this canonical word order, including the VO word order patterns discussed in Mous (1997, 2003). Section 4 looks at how clefts and the marker *á* are used for focus expression, Section 5 covers left-peripheral topic expression and contrastive topics, Section 6 considers how expression of the agent can be avoided using the *-átɔ* participle and *bá-* functional passive constructions, Section 7 considers how referent expression varies over discourse. Section 8 reflects briefly on how Tunen compares to other Bantu languages in its expression of information structure, and Section 9 concludes. The terminology used for information structure is explained in the general introduction to this volume (van der Wal et al. 2025 [this volume]), which also provides an introduction to the conceptual background of information structure and the methodology used in the BaSIS project.

2 Canonical word order S-Aux-O-V-X

2.1 S-Aux-O-V-X as the canonical word order

Tunen is widely known to have SOV as its canonical word order (Dugast 1971, Bearth 2003, Mous 1997, 2003, 2005, 2014, Kerr 2024b,c), specifically the subtype S-Aux-O-V-X, where Aux refers to an auxiliary element (in Tunen, the TAM complex) and X to other elements, such as locative adjuncts. This word order is highly unusual for a Bantu language, where SVO is the expected word order (Bearth 2003). Moreover, S-Aux-O-V-X is unusual in Niger-Congo and is also rare cross-linguistically, found in some languages of West and Central Africa (see e.g. Dryer & Gensler 2005, Gensler & Güldemann 2003, Güldemann 2008). S-Aux-O-V(-X) surface word order (at least in some TAM contexts) is reported for example for Mande languages (Claudi 1993, Creissels 2005, Nikitina 2011, Sande et al. 2019), Kru languages (Gensler 1994, Sande et al. 2019), and the Senufo branch of Gur (Gensler 1994), with only Tunen and its close neighbour Nyokon (Guthrie no. A45) and nearby Ewondo/Eton (A72) as Benue-Congo languages reported to show (a degree of) OV word order (Mous 2005, 2014, Kerr 2024b,c).

One question is the extent to which a language's basic word order varies dependent on information structure. In this vein, it has been claimed that the word order of some Bantu languages is better captured by making reference to discourse roles than using grammatical role-oriented labels like "SVO" (see e.g. Morimoto 2000, 2006, Good 2010, Yoneda 2011, Kerr et al. 2023). This means that a more appropriate characterisation of a language's word order may be in terms of

discourse roles like topic and focus. In this section I show that Tunen's word order is largely influenced by grammatical role (i.e. subjecthood vs. objecthood; see Kerr et al. 2023 for more discussion on the nature of grammatical role-oriented versus discourse role-oriented word order in Bantu). I show that S-Aux-O-V-X is a pragmatically neutral word order in Tunen that is compatible with various information-structural interpretations. Tunen therefore contrasts with the other Bantu languages in this volume, which show SVO canonical word order that is conditioned more strongly by information-structural considerations than by grammatical role.

2.1.1 Thetics

One typical diagnostic for a language's canonical word order is the word order found in thetic sentences. Thetics are defined as being all-new and thus differ from categorical sentences which show a topic-comment distinction (Sasse 1987, 1996, Lambrecht 1994, van der Wal et al. 2025 [this volume]). In Tunen, S-Aux-O-V-X word order is used for thetics, as illustrated in (1–3) below.[1]

(1) (Context: You are at the riverside outside the village and see an elephant, which very rarely occurs, so run to tell the others.)

mɛ	nɔ́	misəku	siəkin!
/mɛ	nɔ́	misəku	siəkinə/
SM.1SG	PST1	9.elephant	see.DUR

'Je viens de voir un éléphant !'

'I just saw an elephant!'   [PM 316]

(2) (Context: Your friend asks what happened at church.)

mɔtát	a	ná	imbə́nu	yɛ	fəkin	nɛ́	Yə́səs	ɔ
/mɔ-táta	a	ná	ɛ-mbə́nu	yɛ	fəkinə	nɛ́	Yə́səsu	ɔ
1-pastor	1SM	PST2	9-news	9.ASS	5.entrance	5.ASS	Jesus	PREP

Yɛrúsalɛm	nɔŋɔnak.
Yɛrúsalɛmɛ	nɔŋɔnɔ-aka/
Jerusalem	tell-DUR

'Le pasteur a raconté des nouvelles de l'entrée de Jésus à Jerusalem'.

'The pastor told the news of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem.'   [DM 166]

---

[1]Elicitation sessions were conducted in French and so the French translations are provided as they are what was agreed with the consultant. English translations are my own additions. The first transcription line gives a broad phonetic transcription, while the second line shows the underlying form with morpheme segmentation. The phonetic transcription is similar to the official orthography (Satre et al. 2008) but differs in transcribing surface tone, noting tonal downstep, and in not transcribing non-pronounced final vowels (which can be identified from the underlying representation line); see Kerr (2024c: Chapter 4) for further discussion. A list of glossing abbreviations can be found at the end of this chapter.

(3)　(Context: Imagine someone came in the room right now during our field
　　　session, and you are explaining to someone else later what happened.)

	tɔ́	ndɔ	bá u	miímɔ́	yi	isukúlú,	mutʃɔ́ŋɔ́	a	nɔ́	nda
/tɔ	^Hndɔ	bá ɔ	miímɔ́	yɛ	ɛ-sukúlú	mɔ-tʃɔ́ŋɔ́	a	nɔ́	nda
SM.1PL	PRS	be	PREP	9.room	ASS.9	7-school	1-criminal	1SM	PST1	VEN

bəəsú	kasɔn!
bəəsú	kasɔna/
PRO.1PL	attack

'Nous étions dans la salle de classe, un bandit est venu nous agresser !'
'We were in the classroom, a criminal came in to attack us!' [EE+EB 1847]

The consistent S-Aux-O-V(-X) word order across different types of thetics
shows that this word order is compatible with an all-new context where no
element is topical or in focus. One point of complexity here, however, is that
conversational participants can be argued to be always retrievable topics via
world knowledge (see e.g. Givón 1983, Erteschik-Shir 2007 for relevant discus-
sion). However, examples like (2) with third-person subjects provide evidence
that non-topical subjects can also be in the initial position, and example (3) fur-
ther shows that OV order is found even when the object is the first person. In any
case, regardless of the position of the subject, the word order for Tunen thetics
is markedly different from the other Bantu languages in this volume in that the
object precedes the verb in Tunen (S*OV*). Versions with VO order were judged
as ungrammatical (4).

(4)　*

	tɔ́	ndɔ	bá u	miímɔ́	yi	isukúlú,	mutʃɔ́ŋɔ́	a	nɔ́	nda
/tɔ	^Hndɔ	bá ɔ	miímɔ́	yɛ	ɛ-sukúlú	mɔ-tʃɔ́ŋɔ́	a	nɔ́	nda
SM.1PL	PRS	be	PREP	9.room	ASS.9	7-school	1-criminal	1SM	PST1	VEN

kasɔn	**bəəsu**!
kasɔna	bəəsú/
attack	PRO.1PL

int. 'Nous étions dans la salle de classe, un bandit est venu nous
agresser !'
int. 'We were in the classroom, a criminal came in to attack us!'

[EE+EB 2239]

Note also that while subject inversion constructions have been reported as
a means of detopicalising subjects in a thetic context in other Bantu languages
(Marten & van der Wal 2014), and indeed are found to express thetics in all other
languages in this volume except Teke-Kukuya, such inversion constructions are

completely ungrammatical in Tunen (regardless of the position of temporal and locative adjuncts), as shown in (5) and (6).[2,3]

(5) * {naánɛkɔla} a   ka   nyɔkɔ   {naánɛkɔla} **kíŋgə**
     /{naánɛkɔla} a   ka   nyɔ-aka   {naánɛkɔla} kíŋgə/
      yesterday   1SM PST3 work-DUR yesterday   1.chief
      int. 'Le chef a travaillé hier.'
      int. 'The chief worked yesterday.'   [JO 2629–30]

(6) * bɛ́   ká   fámáka   **bɛfɔŋɔ** naánɛkɔla ɔ   ɛtɔbɔtɔ́bɔ́.
     /bɛ́   ka   fámá-aka   bɛ-fɔŋɔ naánɛkɔla ɔ   ɛ-tɔbɔtɔ́bɔ́/
      8SM PST3 arrive-DUR 8-cow   yesterday PREP 7-field
      int. 'Les vaches sont apparues dans le champ hier.'
      int. 'The cows appeared in the field yesterday.'   [JO 2608]

This unavailability of subject inversion matches other languages in the area such as Basaá (Guthrie no. A43, Cameroon), which is shown by Hamlaoui & Makasso (2015) to not allow inversion constructions (see also Hamlaoui 2022). The unavailability of inversion constructions in Tunen means that the canonical word order S-Aux-O-V-X is the only means of expressing theticity in Tunen.

2.1.2 VP focus

Word order when the entire verb phrase is in focus (VP focus) is a second criterion that can be invoked to determine a language's canonical word order. In Tunen, VP focus questions can felicitously be answered with S-Aux-O-V-X word order patterns (7), providing further evidence for S-Aux-O-V-X as the canonical word order.[4]

(7) (What did Maria do?)
      Malíá   a   ná   biləliə   fɔfɔ́kíɛ́   ɔmbambala na   makat.
     /Malíá   a   ná   bɛ-ləliə   fɔfɔ́kíɛ́   ɔ-mbambala na   ma-kátá/
      1.Maria 1SM PST2 8-varnish anoint.DUR 3-wall   with 6-hand
      'Maria a [oint le vernis sur le mur avec la main]$_{\text{FOC}}$.'
      'Maria [applied the varnish to the wall by hand]$_{\text{FOC}}$.'   [JO 2516]

---

[2]In this chapter, the following standard conventions are used for presentation of judgements: *(X) indicates that the sentence would be ungrammatical if X were omitted (in other words, X is obligatory); (*X) indicates that the sentence would be ungrammatical if X were included; {X} ... {X} means that the judgement holds with X in either position in the sentence (not that it occurs in both at the same time).

[3]The non-inverted equivalents (with the nominal subject directly before the subject marker) are grammatical ([JO 2623, 2627]; [JO 2600-1]).

[4]Here and throughout, the scope of focus is indicated in the translation lines by square brackets with subscript FOC for "focus".

Now we have seen evidence from thetics and VP focus for S-Aux-O-V-X as the canonical word order, we can investigate the other information-structural contexts in which it occurs.

2.2 S-Aux-O-V-X for object focus

S-Aux-O-V-X word order is compatible with term focus on the theme object, as seen in the answers to the object question in (8) below, illustrated for two different consultants.

(8) (What is the man holding? (+ hand-drawn picture stimulus))

    a. mɔndɔ   a   ná   **kalɔ́tɔ**   ití.
        /mɔ-ndɔ́   a   ná   kalɔ́tɔ   itíɔ́/
        1-person 1SM PST2 9.carrot hold
        'L'homme tient [une carotte]$_{FOC}$.'
        'The man is holding [a carrot]$_{FOC}$.'   [JO 1107]

    b. mɔndɔ   a   ná   **kalɔ́tɔ**   itíɔ́   ɔ   mɔkat.
        /mɔ-ndɔ́   a   ná   kalɔ́tɔ   itíɔ́   ɔ   mɔ-kátá/
        1-person 1SM PST2 9.carrot hold PREP 3-hand
        'L'homme tient [une carotte]$_{FOC}$ à la main.'
        'The man is holding [a carrot]$_{FOC}$ in his hand.'   [PM 1264]

Both SVOX and SVXO orders were judged as ungrammatical (9a–9b).

(9) (What is the man holding? (+ hand-drawn picture stimulus))

    a. * a   ná   itíɔ́   **kalɔ́tɔ**   ɔ   mɔkata.
        /a   ná   itíɔ́   kalɔ́tɔ   ɔ   mɔ-kátá/
        1SM PST2 hold 9.carrot PREP 3-hand
        int. 'Il tient [une carotte]$_{FOC}$ à la main.'
        int. 'He is holding [a carrot]$_{FOC}$ in his hand.'   [JO 1626]

    b. * a   ná   itíɔ́   ɔ   mɔkata   **kalɔ́tɔ**.
        /a   ná   itíɔ́   ɔ   mɔ-kátá kalɔ́tɔ/
        1SM PST2 hold PREP 3-hand   9.carrot
        int. 'Il tient [une carotte]$_{FOC}$ à la main.'
        int. He is holding [a carrot]$_{FOC}$ in his hand.'   [JO 1625]

These examples provide evidence for two things. Firstly, when taken together with what we have seen for other discourse contexts, we see that S-Aux-O-V-X

is a pragmatically neutral word order in Tunen: it is possible for an all-new thetic context, VP focus, and narrow information focus on the theme object. Secondly, the examples show that information focus does not need to be morphosyntactically marked in Tunen, at least for theme objects, as the object in (8) is left in-situ without any special marking.

The Q-A pairs seen above show that S-Aux-O-V-X word order is found for information focus on the theme object. This word order is not possible in a different focus context where the object is marked by the focus-sensitive particles *ata* 'even' (10a) or *ɔ́maná* 'only' (11a). In such exclusive and exhaustive focus cases, the object must be ex-situ, typically fronted (10b) or clefted (11b), and marginally postposed (10c).[5]

(10) a. * a ná néáká mɔŋɛ́ŋ, a ná **ata bɛŋgwɛtɛ** nɛak.
        /a ná néá-aka mɔŋɛ́ŋa a ná ata bɛ-ŋgwɛtɛ néá-aka/
        1SM PST2 eat-DUR much   1SM PST2 even 8-potato eat-DUR
        int. 'Il a beaucoup mangé, il a même mangé [des patates]_FOC.'
        int. 'He ate a lot, he even ate [potatoes]_FOC.'   [PM (+DM) 2265]

     b. a ná néáká mɔŋɛ́ŋ, **ata bɛŋgwɛtɛ** a ná nɛak.
        /a ná néá-aka mɔŋɛ́ŋa ata bɛ-ŋgwɛtɛ a ná néá-aka/
        1SM PST2 eat-DUR much   even 8-potato 1SM PST2 eat-DUR
        'Il a beaucoup mangé, il a même mangé [des patates]_FOC.'
        'He ate a lot, he even ate [potatoes]_FOC.'   [PM (+DM) 2264]

     c. ? a ná néáká mɔŋɛ́ŋ, a ná néáká **ata bɛŋgwɛtɛ**.
        /a ná néá-aka mɔŋɛ́ŋa a ná néá-aka ata bɛ-ŋgwɛtɛ/
        1SM PST2 eat-DUR much   1SM PST2 eat-DUR even 8-potato
        int. 'Il a beaucoup mangé, il a même mangé [des patates]_FOC.'
        int. 'He ate a lot, he even ate [potatoes]_FOC.'   [PM (+DM) 2263]

(11) a. * a ná mɔná **ɔ́maná imítɔ́** túmbi.
        /a ná mɔ-ná ɔ́maná ɛ-mítɔ́ túmbiə/
        1SM PST2 1-child only   9-calabash return
        int. 'C'est seulement [la calebasse]_FOC qu'elle a donné à l'enfant.'
        int. 'She only gave [the calabash]_FOC to the child.'   [JO 1593]

     b. **ɔ́maná imítɔ́** á a ná mɔná túmbi.
        ɔ́maná ɛ-mítɔ́ á a ná mɔ-ná túmbiə/
        only   9-calabash COP 1SM PST2 1-child return
        'C'est seulement [la calebasse]_FOC qu'elle a donné à l'enfant.'
        'She only gave [the calabash]_FOC to the child.'   [JO 1592]

---

[5]Note that the preference for fronted over postposed differs from the previous description in Mous (1997), who only reports the postposed strategy.

Note also that there is a distinction questions and declaratives, with questions formed ex-situ rather than in the S-Aux-O-V-X order. This is illustrated in (12) below, where *yatɛ́* 'what' is fronted in the question, while the answer is provided with the canonical S-Aux-O-V-X order.[6]

(12) Q: **yatɛ́** ɔ́   ndɔ́ sin?
        /yatɛ́ ɔ   ᴴndɔ sinə/
        what sm.2sg prs see
        'Qu'est-ce que tu vois?'
        'What do you see?'   [EO 396]

      A: mɛ́   ndɔ **tunoní** sinə tɔ́lál.
        /mɛ   ᴴndɔ tɔ-noní sinə tɔ́-lálɔ́/
        sm.1sg prs   13-bird see 13-three
        'Je vois [trois oiseaux]$_{FOC}$.'
        'I see [three birds]$_{FOC}$.'   [EO 397]

Example (13a) shows that an in-situ object question is not possible.[7]

(13) a. * ɔ́   ndɔ **yatɛ́** talɛ́áka   nɛɔfɛ́nɛ eé?
          /ɔ   ᴴndɔ yatɛ́ talɛ́á-aka nɛɔfɛ́nɛ eé/
          sm.2sg prs   what cook-dur today   q
          int. 'Qu'est-ce que tu vas cuisiner aujourd'hui ?'
          int. 'What will you cook today?'   [JO 1600]

      b. **yatɛ́** ɔ́   ndɔ talɛ́áka   nɛɔfɛ́nɛ eé?
          /yatɛ́ ɔ   ᴴndɔ talɛ́á-aka nɛɔfɛ́nɛ eé/
          what sm.2sg prs   cook-dur today   q
          'Qu'est-ce que tu vas cuisiner aujourd'hui ?'
          'What will you cook today?'   [JO 1601]

---

[6]The numeral modifier of the object appears in a discontinuous position after the verb, despite also falling within the scope of focus. I will come back to the interpretation of such discontinuous modifiers in Section 3.2; see Kerr (2024c: Chapter 7) for more detailed discussion.

[7]An exception to the ban on in-situ object questions is an echo question context, in which case the object question word can be left in-situ, as in the elicited example (i) below. Note however that a clefted ex-situ question was provided as the first answer here, and short movement of the question word to the left periphery of the embedded clause is also possible.

(i) Elísabɛ́tɛ á ndɔ laa ásɛ   a ná **yatɛ́** ɔ́ndɔ́kɔ eé?
    /Elísabɛtɛ a ᴴndɔ láá a-séá   a ná yatɛ́ ɔ́ndɔ́-aka eé/
    1.Elisabeth 1sm prs   say 1sm-say 1sm pst2 what buy-dur q
    'Elisabeth dit qu'elle a acheté quoi ?'
    'Elisabeth said that she bought what?'   [EB+JO 2782]; (Kerr 2024c: 132)

We therefore see that S-Aux-O-V-X is compatible with information focus on the object in declarative sentences, while exclusive and exhaustive focus on the object – as evidenced by association with the focus-sensitive particles *ata* 'even' and *ɔ́maná* 'only' – require an ex-situ word order, and foci in questions are ex-situ. Section 4 will discuss the use of reverse pseudoclefts as a means of expressing more contrastive term focus on the object. I turn now to testing for other discourse contexts in which the canonical word order S-Aux-O-V-X can be used.

2.3 No S-Aux-O-V-X for subject focus

In contrast to focused declarative objects, focused declarative subjects cannot be left in-situ and must be focused via a cleft (14); the *á* COP cannot be omitted.[8]

(14) (Which politician died?)
  #**(á)** Píɛlə   á   ná   wə.
  /á   Pɪɛlə   á   ná   wə́/
  COP 1.Pierre 1SM.REL PST2 die
  'C'est [Pierre]$_{FOC}$ qui est mort.'
  '[Pierre]$_{FOC}$ died.'   [EO 271]

In other words, the canonical S-Aux-O-V-X word order cannot be used to express subject focus, even in a non-contrastive information focus context. This matches subject/non-subject focus asymmetries reported in other language families, where subject focus is obligatorily marked while non-subject focus may be expressed using the canonical word order (see e.g. Fiedler et al. 2010 for an overview).

For subject foci associated with the focus-sensitive particles *ata* 'even' (15) and *ɔ́maná* 'only' (15b), evidence for the subject being ex-situ is given by the obligatory presence of the copula *á*, which will be discussed further in Section 4.

(15) a. **ata** ***(á) Bitə**   a   ná   bɛŋgɛtɛ nɛak.
        /ata á   Bitə   a   ná   bɛ-ŋgɛtɛ néá-aka/
        even COP 1.Peter 1SM PST2 8-potato eat-DUR
        'Même [Peter]$_{FOC}$ a mangé des patates.'
        'Even [Peter]$_{FOC}$ ate potatoes.'   [PM 2260]

---

[8]The infelicity judgement of example (14) without the *á* COP also holds when the subject marker is expressed in the non-relative form (with a low tone).

b. (Context: You are a school teacher marking the exams for a class, and are shocked by how badly the students did.)

ɔ́maná Ɛmánúwɛlɛ	**na**	**Natanayélɛ**	**á**	**bá**	**ná**	**tɔ́mbá ɔ**
/ɔ́maná Ɛmánúɛlɛ	na	Natanayélɛ	á	bá	ná	tɔ́mba ɔ
only 1.Emmanuel	and	1.Nathaniel	COP	2SM	PST2	pass PREP

nɛkɔsɔna!
nɛ-kɔsɔna/
5-exam

'Seulement [Emmanuel et Nathaniel]$_{FOC}$ ont réussi à l'examen !'
'Only [Emmanuel and Nathaniel]$_{FOC}$ passed the exam!'   [JO 527]

For subject questions, it is harder to tell whether the canonical word order is used, as fronting of the subject question word results in the same linear order S-Aux-O-V-X and is therefore string-vacuous. As will be discussed further in Section 4, there is some evidence that subject questions are formed as clefts, as suggested for example by the relative form (visible from the high tone) of the subject marker in example (16) below.

(16) | **ɛ́yánɛ́ á** | | **lɛa na** | **hioso?** |
|---|---|---|---|
| /ɛ́yánɛ́ á | | léá na | hɛ-ɔ́sɔ/ |
| who | 1SM.REL | be with | 19-spoon |

'Qui a une cuillère ?'
'Who has a spoon?'   [EO 1433]

We will come back to the expression of subject focus via clefting in Section 4. Note that the inability for subjects to be focused in a non-clefted construction illustrates that Tunen does not have a dedicated focus position in which different grammatical roles can be focused, unlike the languages in this volume which have an immediate before verb (IBV; Li 2025 [this volume]), immediate after verb (IAV; e.g. Makhuwa; van der Wal 2025 [this volume], Rukiga; Asiimwe & van der Wal 2025 [this volume]) and sentence-final focus position (Kirundi; Nshemezimana & van der Wal 2025 [this volume]) in which subjects and non-subjects alike may be focused. This difference in availability of focus positions is discussed further in Kerr et al. (2023).

2.4 S-Aux-O-V-X for non-argument focus

Non-arguments in Tunen pattern with objects in being able to be focused in-situ in the canonical S-Aux-O-V-X order (17A). They may also be focused via

a cleft, and time adverbials are generally more flexible in their position than other adverbials/adjuncts (Kerr 2024c: 114–115). Like with what we saw above for objects, non-argument questions are generally formed by fronting/clefting (17Q1) rather than having the question word in the canonical position, although the in-situ options are accepted more so than for objects (17Q2).

(17) Q1: **hə́níə́** á   ↓ná   yayéá   miímə lúmə́kə́ eé?
           /hə́níə́ á   ᴸná   yayéá   miímə lúmə́-aka eé/
           where 1SM.REL PST3.REL 3.POSS.PRO.1 3.house build-DUR Q

           'Où est-qu'il a construit sa maison ?'
           'Where did he build his house?'   [JO 1115]

      Q2: a   ka yáyéá   miímə lúmə́kə́ **hə́ní(ə́)** eé?
           /a   ka yáyéá   miímə lúmə́-aka hə́níə́   eé/
           1SM PST3 3.POSS.PRO.1 3.house build-DUR where Q

           'Où est-qu'il a construit sa maison ?'
           'Where did he build his house?'   [JO 1118]

      A: a   ka yayéá   miímə lúmə́kə́ ɔ   **iNdíki**.
           /a   ka yayéá   miímə lúmə́-aka ɔ   iNdíki/
           1SM PST3 3.POSS.PRO.1 3.house build-DUR PREP Ndiki

           'Il a construit sa maison [à Ndiki]_FOC.'
           'He built his house [in Ndiki]_FOC.'   [JO, 1121]

Note that example (17A) also shows that a given object (here, an object already mentioned in the question) may be preverbal, providing further evidence for S-Aux-O-V-X as a pragmatically neutral word order, as the object position can be filled by focused or given objects alike.

Like we saw above for objects, non-arguments modified by the focus-sensitive particle *ə́maná* 'only' are commonly fronted (18a). However, it is also possible to have what appears to be the S-Aux-O-V-X word order with the X element modified by *ə́maná* 'only', although note that this is linearly equivalent to an alternative analysis in which the focused phrase is postposed (18b).

(18) (Context: Someone incorrectly says you have been to both Yaoundé and
       Kribi.)

      a. bɔ́ɔ, **ə́maná ɔ   Yəhənd** á   mɛ́   ná   ká hul.
          /bɔ́ɔ ə́maná ɔ   Yəhəndə á   mɛ́   ná   ka húlə́/
           no only   PREP Yaounde COP SM.1SG.REL PST2 AND return
          'Non, ce n'est que à [Yaoundé]_FOC que je suis parti(e).'
          'No, I only went to [Yaoundé]_FOC.'   [JO 1607]

b. bɔ́ɔ, mɛ ná [↓]ká hulə **ɔ́maná ɔ Yəhənd**.
   /bɔ́ɔ mɛ ná ka húlɔ́ ɔ́maná ɔ Yəhəndə/
   no SM.1SG PST2 AND return only PREP Yaounde
   'Non, ce n'est que à [Yaoundé]_{FOC} que je suis parti(e).'
   'No, I only went to [Yaoundé]_{FOC}.'   [JO 1608]

In Section 4.3.2 below, we will see that non-arguments also pattern with objects with respect to cleft formation and fragment answers.

2.5 S-Aux-O-V-X for predicate-centred focus

Finally, the canonical word order S-Aux-O-V-X can be used for predicate-centred focus (PCF), as seen already for VP focus in (7) above and as further illustrated below for polarity focus (19) and state-of-affairs (verb) focus (20), (21).

(19) Context: 'Do you see the sheep?' (polarity focus)
      mɛ́ nd(ɔ) ɛndɔ́mbá sin.
      /mɛ ^Hndɔ ɛ-ndɔ́mbá sinə/
      SM.1SG PRS 4-sheep see
      'Je vois les moutons.'
      'I see the sheep.'   [EO 695]

(20) (What did he do with the beans and the plantains? (SoA focus))
      (What happened? (thetic))
      a ka makɔndʒɛ nɛáka. a ná bilikó lu.
      /a ka ma-kɔndʒɛ néá-aka a ná bɛ-likó luə/
      1SM PST3 6-plantain eat-DUR 1SM PST2 8-bean sell
      'Il a [mangé]_{FOC} les plantains. Il a [vendu]_{FOC} les haricots.'
      'He [ate]_{FOC} the plantains. He [sold]_{FOC} the beans.'   [JO 908]

(21) (Context: Johannes dislikes the taste of cassava so normally cooks it but doesn't eat it. This time, he buys it, he cooks it, and he even eats it (which is surprising). (SoA focus))
      Yɔhánɛsɛ a ná ɛsasɔma néáká sɛ́ɛb.
      /Yɔhánɛsɛ a ná ɛ-sasɔma néá-aka sɛ́ɛbɛ/
      1.Johannes 1SM PST2 7-cassava eat-DUR even
      'Johannes a même [mangé]_{FOC} du manioc.'
      'Johannes even [ate]_{FOC} the cassava.'   [PM 2282]

We see in (21) that the canonical word order can be used for PCF for exclusive focus as well as information focus, as the exclusive focus-sensitive particle *séɛbɛ* 'only' may modify the predicate. Note here that the exclusive focus-sensitive particle *ata* 'even' seen previously is only found for term focus and cannot be used in a PCF construction (22),[9] with *séɛbɛ* (literally translatable as 'self') used instead. Unlike with *ata*, *séɛbɛ* follows the focused constituent and does not require it to be ex-situ.

(22)   a. * Yɔhánɛsɛ   a   ná   ɛsasɔma   **ata   néáká**.
          /Yɔhánɛsɛ   a   ná   ɛ-sasɔma ata   néá-aka/
          1.Johannes 1SM PST2 7-cassava even eat-DUR
          int. 'Johannes a même [mangé]$_{FOC}$ du manioc.'
          int. 'Johannes even [ate]$_{FOC}$ the cassava.'   [PM 2284]

      b. * **ata   néáká** Yɔhánɛsɛ   a   ná   ɛsasɔma.
          /ata   néá-aka Yɔhánɛsɛ   a   ná   ɛ-sasɔma/
          even eat-DUR 1.Johannes 1SM PST2 7-cassava
          int. 'Johannes a même [mangé]$_{FOC}$ du manioc.'
          int. 'Johannes even [ate]$_{FOC}$ the cassava.'   [PM 2285]

Note also that, unlike the other Bantu languages in this volume, Tunen does not have a predicate doubling construction for the expression of PCF (i.e. a construction in which an infinitival/nominal form of the verb appears together with a finite verb form; see e.g. Güldemann et al. 2015 and references therein).

So far then, we have seen that S-Aux-O-V-X is the pragmatically neutral word order in Tunen, and therefore can be taken as the canonical word order. This canonical word order is found for thetics, VP focus, information focus on the theme object, non-argument focus, and predicate-centred focus (PCF). It is not possible to use S-Aux-O-V-X word order for focus on the subject, which must instead be expressed by a cleft. More contrastive term focus is generally expressed ex-situ, as shown by association with the focus-sensitive particles *ata* 'even' and *ɔ́maná* 'only' (while more contrastive PCF can be left in-situ).

---

[9]Although a possible example of *ata* 'even' with PCF was found in the following example from a story, where *ata* modifies a clause after a left-dislocated topic:

(i)   «mɔkandʒakandʒ **ata**   á   ndɔ hɔ́ taka a   báka bá lɛ́ wɛ́ɛya
      /mɔ-kandʒakandʒa ata   a ^{H}ndɔ hɔ́ taka a   bá-aka bá lɛ́ wɛ́ɛya
      1-liar   even 1SM PRS talk truth 1SM be-DUR 2SM NEG PRO.EMPH.1
      ɔkén.»
      ɔ-kéna/
      INF-believe
      '« Un menteur, même quand il dit la vérité, on ne lui croit pas. »'
      '"Even if a liar is telling the truth, nobody believes them."'   [JO 2039]

2.6 S-Aux-O-V-X in double object constructions

Having seen that the canonical word order for Tunen transitives is S-Aux-O-V-X, let us now consider ditransitives. Here, the O slot of S-Aux-O-V-X can be filled by multiple objects, specifically in S-O$_{GOAL}$-O$_{THEME}$-V order, as previously noted by Mous (1997, 2003). I show in this section that this S-O$_{GOAL}$-O$_{THEME}$-V order is consistent across different information-structural contexts, meaning that the order of objects is not conditioned by information structure. In other words, when both objects are preverbal, the goal (i.e. recipient/beneficiary) object always precedes the theme object (23a–24). The reverse order S-O$_{THEME}$-O$_{GOAL}$-V is not grammatical (23b).

(23) ('Who is the woman giving a gourd to?' (+ photo from BaSIS stimuli))

    a.   a   nɔ́   **ɔsɔ́kɔ́ hɛtɛ́tɛ́**   indi.
        /a   nɔ́   ɔsɔ́kɔ́ hɛ-tɛ́tɛ́   índíə́/
        1SM PST1 1.other 19-gourd give
        'Elle donne une gourde à [l'autre]$_{FOC}$.'
        'She gives a gourd to [the other (woman)]$_{FOC}$.'   [PM 1541]

    b. * a   nɔ́   **hɛtɛ́tɛ́**   **ɔsɔ́kɔ́** indi.
        /a   nɔ́   hɛ-tɛ́tɛ́   ɔsɔ́kɔ́ índíə́/
        1SM PST1 19-gourd 1.other give
        int. 'Elle donne une gourde à [l'autre]$_{FOC}$.'
        int. 'She gives a gourd to [the other (woman)]$_{FOC}$.'   [PM 1542]

(24) Q: yatɛ́ (á) muəndú á   ndɔ   mɔná túmbi?
        /yatɛ́ á   mɔ-əndú a ^{H}ndɔ mɔ-ná túmbiə/
        what COP 1-woman 1SM PRS   1-child return
        'Qu'est-ce que la femme remet à l'enfant ?'
        'What is the woman returning to the child?'   [JO 1588]

     A: muəndú á ndɔ **mɔná imítə́**   túmbi.
        /mɔ-əndú a ^{H}ndɔ mɔ-ná ɛ-mítə́   túmbiə/
        1-woman 1SM PRS   1-child 9-calabash return
        'La femme remet [le calebasse]$_{FOC}$ à l'enfant.'
        'The woman returns [the calabash]$_{FOC}$ to the child.'   [JO 1587]

The same O$_{GOAL}$-O$_{THEME}$ order is also found in questions (25) and imperatives (26).

(25) ɛ́yáné̄ á   ná **himuísimuísí hɔ́ɔfɔ́** indi?
   /ɛ́yáné̄ á   ná hɛ-muísimuísi hɛ-ɔfɔ́ indíə́/
   who 1SM.REL PST2 19-cat   19-fish give
   'Qui a donné du poisson au chat ?'
   'Who gave fish to the cat?'   [EO 278]

(26) índíə́ **mɔná** imit!
   /índíə́ mɔ-ná ɛ-mítə́/
    give 1-child 9-calabash
   'Donne la calebasse à l'enfant !'
   'Give the calabash to the child!'   [JO 1594]

These data provide evidence for the S-O$_{\text{GOAL}}$-O$_{\text{THEME}}$-V-X as the canonical word order in Tunen, meaning that the 'O' of S-Aux-O-V-X covers both the theme and the goal (i.e. recipient/beneficiary) object. Note that this is in contrast to certain West African languages described as having S-Aux-O-V-X basic word order that only permit a single preverbal object (Gensler & Güldemann 2003, Creissels 2005; see Kerr 2024c: Chapter 6 for further discussion).

Note also that this canonical order is not the only word order found for double object constructions. Firstly, (24Q) above and (28a) below show that an ex-situ strategy is standard for questioning an object. Additionally, recipient objects marked by the focus-sensitive particle *ɔ́maná* 'only' must be moved out of their canonical position, typically to the left (27a) but sometimes also to the right (27b), with the canonical word order not possible (27c).[10]

(27) a. **ɔ́maná á**   **mɔná** á ndɔ imítə́   túmbi.
     /ɔ́maná á   mɔ-ná a $^{\text{H}}$ndɔ ɛ-mítə́   túmbiə/
      only COP/PREP 1-child 1SM PRS 9-calabash return
     'C'est seulement [à l'enfant]$_{\text{FOC}}$ qu'elle a donné la calebasse.'
     'She only gave a calabash [to the child]$_{\text{FOC}}$.'   [JO 1590]

   b. a   nɔ́ hɛtɛ́tɛ́ indi **ɔ́maná á**   **Ilísabɛt**.
     /a   nɔ́ hɛ-tɛ́tɛ́ índíə́ ɔ́maná á   Ilisabɛtɛ/
      1SM PST1 19-gourd give only   COP/PREP 1.Elisabeth
     'C'est uniquement [à Elisabeth]$_{\text{FOC}}$ qu'elle a donné la gourde.'
     'She only gave a gourd [to Elisabeth]$_{\text{FOC}}$.' (and nobody else)
                                                                    [PM 1559]

---

[10]I gloss *á* as COP/PREP here due to uncertainty as to how many *ás* are present underlyingly and the nature of *á* as a preposition; see the end of this section for further discussion.

   c. * muəndú á ndɔ **ɔ́maná á**   **mɔná** imítə́ túmbi.
     /mɔ-əndú a   ᴴndɔ ɔ́maná á   mɔ-ná ɛ-mítə́ túmbiə/
     1-woman 1SM PRS   only   COP/PREP 1-child 9-calabash return
     int. 'C'est seulement [à l'enfant]_FOC que la femme a donné la
     calebasse.'
     int. 'The woman only gave a calabash [to the child]_FOC.'   [JO 1591]

This pattern matches what we saw already for theme objects in (11) above. These data taken together support a general observation that exhaustively-focused elements in Tunen must be ex-situ, while information focus (for non-subjects) is typically unmarked and left in-situ in the S-Aux-O-V-X word order.

As is common cross-linguistically (see e.g. Malchukov et al. 2010), in addition to the double object construction, an alternative ditransitive construction is available in which the recipient object is introduced by a preposition. In this case, the word order is S-O_THEME-V-Prep-O_GOAL, with the goal object an oblique in the postverbal position (S-Aux-O-V-*X*). The examples below illustrate this construction in a new information focus context (28b) and in an imperative (28c).

(28)   a.   Q: (Context: BaSIS photo stimulus of woman giving another woman
           a gourd.)
           ɔwanɛ́   á   múə́ndú á   ndɔ imítə́   túmbi?
           /ɔ-anɛ́   á   mɔ-əndú á   ᴴndɔ ɛ-mítə́   túmbiə/
           PREP-who COP 1-woman 1SM.REL PRS   9-calabash return

           'À qui la femme remet la calebasse ?'
           'Who is the woman returning the calabash to?'   [JO 1583]

    b.   A: muəndú á ndɔ imítə́   túmbiə **ɔ**   **mɔn**.
           /mɔ-əndú a   ᴴndɔ ɛ-mítə́   túmbiə ɔ   mɔ-ná/
           1-woman 1SM PRS   9-calabash return   PREP 1-child

           'La femme remet la calebasse [à l'enfant]_FOC.'
           'The woman returns the calabash [to the child]_FOC.'   [JO 1586]

    c.   índíə́ imítə́   **á**   **mɔná**!
        /indíə́ ɛ-mítə́   á   mɔ-ná/
        give   9-calabash PREP 1-child

        'Donne la calebasse à l'enfant !'
        'Give the calabash to the child!'   [JO 1595]

Initial analysis suggests that S-O_THEME-V-Prep-O_GOAL is a lower-frequency pattern than S-O_THEME-O_GOAL-V, although both strategies are found across speakers. The preposition used in the prepositional variant is generally the general

preposition ɔ, but sometimes surfaces as *á* or *a*. Whether *á* is underlying low or high-toned and whether it is an allomorph, separate preposition (cf. the *á* preposition found in nearby Bantoid languages), or a borrowing from French *à* 'to, at' is a topic for further research. In any case, its status as a preposition means that these constructions can be understood as instances of the canonical S-Aux-O-V-X word order, where X here is a prepositional phrase. The generalisation is therefore that prepositional objects are postverbal, while non-prepositional objects are preverbal (with fixed O_{GOAL}-O_{THEME} order).

2.7 Section summary

This section presented evidence that S-Aux-O-V-X is a pragmatically neutral word order compatible with different information-structural contexts, and therefore should be taken as the canonical word order in Tunen. The order of objects in double object constructions is determined by grammatical role rather than information structure, with S-O_{GOAL}-O_{THEME}-V word order or a prepositional construction S-O_{THEME}-V-Prep-O_{GOAL}. While the S-Aux-O-V-X order is compatible with thetics, information focus on an object, non-argument focus, and predicate-centred focus, subjects cannot be focused in-situ, and content questions are formed ex-situ. It was noted that subject inversion of the type found in Eastern and Southern Bantu languages is also ungrammatical in Tunen and predicate doubling constructions are likewise not found. This unavailability of inversion constructions matches what was found for the Cameroonian Bantu language Basaá (Guthrie no. A43) by Hamlaoui & Makasso (2015), which they argue to be a feature of Northwestern Bantu more generally. The pragmatically neutral preverbal position of the object in Tunen is a further peculiarity compared to most other Bantu languages (Bearth 2003, Mous 1997, 2003). The neighbouring Cameroonian Bantu language Nyokon (A45) also has OV patterns, although only in a subset of TAM contexts; Ewondo (A72, Cameroon) and Tikar (Bantoid, Cameroon) also have partial OV patterns, but Tunen is the only known language with robust S-Aux-O-V-X basic word order, as discussed further in Mous (1997, 2005, 2014) and (Kerr 2024b; 2024c: Chapter 6). Finally, we saw that foci modified by the focus-sensitive particles *ata* 'even' or *ɔ́maná* 'only' cannot be expressed in-situ, showing that the preverbal object position is specific to information focus, and we saw that questions are generally formed ex-situ rather than using the S-Aux-O-V-X word order (with in-situ question formation most accepted for non-argument focus).

3 Non-canonical word order

Having seen that S-Aux-O-V-X is the canonical word order in Tunen, we can look at the use of alternative word orders in different information-structural contexts. This section considers VO orders found, both with and without the *á* marker, as well as argument fronting and discontinuous noun phrases.

3.1 VO order

Some Niger-Congo languages in Central and West Africa are known to have alternations between OV and VO word order, including Tunen's close neighbour, Nyokon (A45, Cameroon; Mous 2005). This raises the question as to whether VO is found alongside OV in Tunen. In other work I show that Tunen OV is consistent across tense/aspect contexts (Kerr 2024b, 2024c: Chapter 6), corroborating earlier work by Mous (1997, 2005). This means that there is no tense/aspect-conditioned OV/VO alternation in Tunen as reported for Nyokon and for other Niger-Congo languages, such as those of the Kwa branch (Heine 1976, Creissels 2005, 2018, Sande et al. 2019).

While OV is thus consistent across tenses in Tunen, Mous (1997, 2003) has proposed that Tunen does have a VO strategy, which is used for contrastive focus on the theme object and formed with a marker *á* preceding the object (termed a "contrast" marker by Mous 2003, although intended specifically for contrastive focus; Mous p.c.). Mous (1997) also notes that VO is found for objects modified by the focus-sensitive particle *ha* 'only'. This relates to the data reported above of rightwardly-postposed contrastive objects, which I argue to be ex-situ cases rather than in-situ (and with fronting a more common strategy). Such a description of OV vs. VO variation dependent on information structure has been picked up in summaries of Tunen word order, such as Downing & Marten (2019: 273–274).

The alternation in position of the object dependent on contrastiveness has been discussed by Güldemann (2007) as an example of a more general pattern of preverbal objects in Benue-Congo being extrafocal while postverbal objects are more contrastive. Under such an account, the prediction is therefore that OV order in Tunen is found with extrafocal objects, existing in alternation with a VO pattern used for contrastive foci.

In this section I discuss the V*á*O construction presented by Mous (1997). While the V*á*O construction is found in my field data, it is infrequent and was only seen in elicitation contexts. I show that this construction shows evidence of becoming monoclausal, but argue against *á* as a general contrast or focus marker, instead

treating it as the identificational/specificational copula as part of a bicalusal cleft construction. Next, I argue that objects modified by 'only' must be ex-situ, which can result in VO order on the surface but should not be taken as a basic VO order of the kind found in some West African languages. Finally, I show that some VO constructions are possible without *á*, although these are rare in the data and the extent to which such patterns depend on information structure rather than independent factors such as prosodic weight or predicate type needs further testing.

3.1.1 V*á*O

In Mous's (1997, 2003) analysis of Tunen syntax, he identifies an SVO construction in Tunen where the postverbal object is preceded by what he calls a "contrast marker", *á*, marking contrastive focus, as illustrated in (29) below from Mous' own elicitation data.[11]

(29) mɛ́-ndò   ní **á**   bóníàk.
     SM.1SG-PRS eat CONTR 14.yam
     'What I eat is yams.'   (Mous 2003: 304)

   A key question is whether this *á* marker is best treated as a contrast marker (CONTR), focus marker (FOC), or copula (COP). If *á* were a general focus marker, we may expect it to be able to appear on focused objects in other positions. However, it is not possible to have *á* precede the object in the canonical preverbal position (30), despite S-Aux-O-V-X being compatible with information focus on the object (as we saw in (8) above).

(30)   ('What did the woman give to the other woman?' (+ BaSIS photo
      stimulus))
     a   nɔ́   ɔsɔ́kɔ́ **(*á) hɛtɛ́tɛ́**   indiə.
     /a   nɔ   ɔsɔkɔ   á   hɛ-tɛ́tɛ́   índíə́/
     1SM PST1 1.other COP 19-gourd give
     int. 'Elle a donné à l'autre [une gourde]_FOC.'
     int. 'She gave the woman [a gourd]_FOC.'   [PM 1541, 1549]

   We should therefore not take *á* to be a general focus marker. This observation matches the data from exhaustive focus marked by the focus-sensitive particle *ɔ́maná* 'only', which requires that the object is moved from its base position (11),

---

[11]Glosses for the subject marker, tense marker, and noun have been adapted for consistency with the rest of the examples in this chapter; the CONTR gloss and data line are left unchanged.

(27). These data therefore are compatible with Mous' (1997, 2003) analysis of *á* as a contrastive focus marker, but not as a general focus marker.

One key difference in my data compared to Mous's (2003) presentation is that SV*á*O was a low frequency strategy in my corpus. In Isaac's (2007) study of 6 of the longer Tunen texts transcribed in Dugast (1975), he also reports that there were no clear examples of this construction (Isaac 2007: 61). Furthermore, the construction was even judged ungrammatical in the following elicitation session, regardless of the position of the object with respect to the postverbal adjunct (31).

(31) * a ná itíǝ {ɔ mɔkata} **á kalɔ́tɔ** {ɔ mɔkata}.
      /a ná itíǝ {ɔ mɔ-kátá} á kalɔ́tɔ {ɔ mɔ-kátá}/
      1SM PST2 hold PREP 3-hand   COP 9.carrot PREP 3-hand

      int. 'Ce qu'il tient à la main, c'est [une carotte]$_{FOC}$.'
      int. 'He is holding [a carrot]$_{FOC}$ in his hand.'   [JO 1627–8]

Instead, the focused object can be left in-situ unmarked by *á* (S-Aux-O-V-X), the typical expression of information focus, or be focused via a reverse pseudocleft cleft with *á*, as used for contrastive and exhaustive focus (see Section 4). The SV*á*O word order is therefore a less frequent pattern than it may seem from Mous' description. We will see in Section 4 that a reverse pseudocleft of the form O*á*SVX is a more common strategy for contrastive focus than the pseudocleft type here; recall as well from (10) above that fronting was preferred to postposing when an object is modified by a focus-sensitive particle. In my natural speech recordings, the V*á*O construction did not appear.

In earlier oral presentation of this work, I argued that the SV*á*O construction is a pseudocleft, on the basis of evidence of constructions with *á* showing properties of relative clauses and therefore a biclausal cleft structure (to be seen for other cleft types in Section 4). However, remotely elicited data explicitly testing this hypothesis for this low-frequency SV*á*O construction found that this construction does not allow relative tense morphology or the relative form of the subject marker, thus providing evidence for monoclausality rather than biclausality. The dataset in (32) illustrate this point.[12]

(32) a. **nɛlala á** babá **á** ↓**ná** húánána ɔwɔ́n.
         /nɛ-lala á babá á ᴸná húánána ɔ-ɔ́nɔ/
         5-spider COP 1.father 1SM.REL PST3.REL must   INF-kill

         'C'est [l'araignée]$_{FOC}$ que papa devait tuer.'
         'It's [the spider]$_{FOC}$ that dad had to kill.'   [PM 70.61]

---

[12]For these remotely-elicited data, the form ID in square brackets refers to the session number followed by the example number in this session.

b.   babá   **a**   **ná**   húánána ɔwɔ́nɔ   **á**   **nɛ́lal**.
    /babá   a   ná   húánána ɔ-ɔ́nɔ   á   nɛ-lala/
    1.father 1SM PST3 must   INF-kill CONTR 5-spider
    'Ce que papa devait tuer n'est que [l'araignée]_FOC.'
    'Dad had to kill (only) the [spider]_FOC.'   [PM 70.57]

c. * babá   **á**   **↓na**   húánána ɔwɔ́nɔ   **á**   **nɛ́lal**.
    /babá   a   ^Lna   húánána ɔ-ɔ́nɔ   á   nɛ-lala/
    1.father 1SM.REL PST3.REL must   INF-kill CONTR 5-spider

    int. 'Ce que papa devait tuer n'est que [l'araignée]_FOC.'
    int. 'Dad had to kill (only) [the spider]_FOC.'   [PM 70.62]

Here in (32a) we see a reverse pseudocleft construction, in which the focused object *nɛlala* 'spider' is followed by the *á* copula and then a reduced relative. As we will see in Section 4, the reduced relative environment is evidenced by the H tone on the class 1 subject marker *á* – which is *a* in non-dependent clause contexts (Kerr 2024c: §4.3.3.2) – in addition to the dependent clause form of the third-degree past tense marker *↓ná* (which is *ka* in main clause contexts, Dugast 1971, Mous 2003, Kerr 2024c: §4.4.5). We therefore expect to see these indicators in the relative subject marker and TAM contexts for the SV*á*O construction. However, when the SV*á*O construction is used, the subject marker and tense marker are in the main clause form (32b) and cannot be in the dependent clause form (32c). These data therefore suggest that the SV*á*O construction is not a biclausal pseudocleft and instead is grammaticalising into a monoclausal construction marking contrastive focus. Note also that the translations indicate that the SV*á*O construction gives a sense of exhaustivity. A similar idea of contrast was provided by another speaker, and so I gloss the *á* in the SV*á*O construction as CONTR for contrast, while *á* is elsewhere glossed as COP for copula.[13]

In summary then, we see that the V*á*O strategy discussed by Mous (1997, 2003) exists, with elicitation data providing evidence that it is at least in the process of becoming monoclausal and not simply a pseudocleft, as evidenced by the lack of relative SM and TAM forms. However, it is a low-frequency pattern that was not always judged as grammatical by consultants (31) and did not appear in the natural speech data at all, with a reverse pseudocleft a much more common construction for expression of contrastive focus on the object.

---

[13]In follow-up discussion of these examples, JO confirmed that both (32a) and (32b) can be felicitously continued with *, tátá á ɔndʒɛlé* ', not the lizard', supporting this idea of exhaustivity.

3.1.2 VO without á

While OV order is by far the most common word order pattern in Tunen, a few instances in my own and Dugast's (1971, 1975) data show VO order, with no *á* marker and no indication of biclausality. These instances are rare; VO was generally judged ungrammatical in elicitation, with only a few cases in which it was accepted. When checking a set of 10 natural speech texts containing approximately 400 utterances, only 4 potential VO constructions were found, but all of these can be excluded from being actual instances of VO syntax. 1 can be excluded due to being a case of secondary predication rather than a true DP object (33), 1 can be excluded due to being a case of hesitation (34), and 1 shows switching from Tunen to French (35).

(33)   (Context: EO and PM are discussing the funeral of a local figure called Papa Daniel.)

bá	sɛ	.. mukót	... mba a	ka	**híána**	**munɛn**.
/bá	séá	.. mɔ-kóto	... mba a	ka	híána	mɔ-nəni/
sm.2	say	.. 1-Bamileke	... but	sm.1 pst3	become	1-Nen

'On dit que c'est un Bamileke, mais il est devenu un Munen.'
'They say he's a Bamileke, but he became a Munen.'   [EO 1037]

(34)   (Context: PM is giving EO instructions for the QUIS map task.)

mɛ́	ndɔ	**sinə**	... **mɛnyama**	**ɛ-káhɔ**.
/mɛ	ᴴndɔ	sinə	... mɛ-nyama	ɛ-kahɔ/
sm.1sg	prs	see	... 9-animal	9-beef

'Je vois ... une vache.'
'I see ... a cow.'   [EO 664]

(35)   (PM: 'I myself saw the first vehicle he bought, it was Inyas who drove (it)-'
EO: 'I (also) saw (it)'.)

-a	ka	**tiləkə**	« **Dieu**	**haït**	**les**	**méchants** »
/a	ka	tilə-aka	« Dieu	haït	les	méchants »/
sm.1	pst3	write-dur	God.FR	hates.FR	the.FR	wicked.people.FR

'- Il avait écrit « Dieu haït les méchants ».'
'- He wrote "God hates the wicked".'   [PM 1047]

The final example, given in (36), illustrates the occasional ambiguity in classifying a construction as VO or OV. Here, the objet *tɔ́ánd͡ʒɛ* 'leaves' can be either taken to be the complement of the verb in the first clause or a fronted topic in the

second clause (with zero expression of the object in the first clause due to given-ness, for which see Section 7). Although originally transcribed as VO, when asking JO remotely in follow-up work, she interpreted the object as a fronted topic, meaning that this utterance would also be OV.

(36) (Context: JO is explaining how to make the dish *kok* [*hɛkɔkɛ* leaves boiled with smoked fish and ground peanuts].)

Mɛ	ka	ákán(a) (ɔ)	ɛmbɔ́m,	mɛ	ná	hɛkɔkɛ	kɛták,
/mɛ	ka	ákáná	ɔ	ɛ-mbɔ́ma	mɛ	ná	hɛ-kɔkɛ	kɛtáka
SM.1SG	PST3	leave	PREP	7-bush	SM.1SG	PST2	19-kok	gather-DUR

mɛ	ná	nda híáná	ɔ	ɔmbɛ́l,	mɛ	ná	**tábɔ́náka**	**tɔ́ánd͡ʒɛ**
mɛ	ná	nda híáná	ɔ	ɔ-mbɛ́la	mɛ	ná	tábɔ́ná-aka	tɔ-ánd͡ʒɛ
SM.1SG	PST2	VEN enter	PREP	3-house	SM.1SG	PST2	arrange-DUR	13-leaf

tɔbíá	mɛ	**ombokok**.	[...]
tɔ-bíá	mɛ	ombokoko/
13-bad	SM.1SG	throw.REP

'Je suis partie en brousse, j'ai cueilli le *kok*, je suis revenue à la maison, j'ai arrangé les mauvaises feuilles, je les ai jété, [...]'
'I went to the bush, I gathered *kok*, I returned home, I arranged the bad leaves, I threw them out, [...]'   [JO 1339]

However, VO constructions do sometimes show up, and some examples are found in the Dugast texts. Mous (2003) notes that objects in such VO constructions are prosodically phrased with the verb, as evidenced by H tone spread. This is illustrated in (37), where I have added an underlying representation line and adapted the glosses to show that the H tone of *kemá* 'tap' spreads rightwards onto the underlyingly L-toned class 6 prefix *ma-*.

(37) | à-ná | kèmáká | mʷɔ́lùk. |
|------|--------|----------|
| /a-ná | kemá-aka | ma-lukə/ |
| 1SM-PST2 | tap-DUR | 6-palm.wine |

'He tapped palm wine!'   (Dugast 1971: 58, Mous 2003: 304)

While such examples appear in Dugast's work, JO considered this sentence ungrammatical when asked in follow-up work. Furthermore, the validity of H tone spread as a diagnostic of syntactic phrasing is uncertain, as discussed in Kerr (2024c: 304–305).

At this stage, it is therefore not clear whether there is generalisation accounting for when these VO examples can appear and the extent to which this depends

on information structure. Multiple other factors could play a role, including pro-
sodic weight, predicates requiring extraposition, and postverbal modifier place-
ment. Prosodic weight alone would not account for example (37) above, and we
saw already in (2) above that prosodically heavy preverbal objects are possible.
However, prosodic weight is a factor that could explain the discontinuous rela-
tive clauses modiyfing objects that we will see in Section 3.2 below.

A second context in which VO order is found without *á* is with objects modi-
fied by certain modifiers, most commonly numerals, as reported in (Kerr 2024c:
Chapter 7). The default order (i.e. the most common order, found across different
information-structural contexts) for such objects is S-O-V-Mod, i.e. a discontin-
uous noun phrase. However, the object can also appear adjacent to the modifier,
leading to the VO order S-V-O-Mod. The order S-O-Mod-V is dispreferred. For
example, in the sub-DP focus context in (38) below in which the focus falls on
the numeral modifier of the theme object, V-O-Num was allowed (38a) as well as
the discontinuous order O-V-Num (38b), while the preverbal order SONumV was
considered marginal (despite SOV being generally allowed and numerals always
following the noun they modify; Dugast 1971, Mous 2003, Kerr 2020, 2024c) (38c).
The availabilty of S-V-O-Num for narrow focus on the numeral is illustrated for
another consultant in (39).

(38) ('How many people do you see?' (+ picture))

    a.   mɛ́   ndɔ sinə **bɛndɔ**   **báfandɛ**.
        /mɛ ^{H}ndɔ sinə bɛndɔ   bá-fandɛ́/
        SM.1SG PRS   see 2.person 2-two
        'Je vois [deux]$_{FOC}$ personnes.'
        'I see [two]$_{FOC}$ people.'   [JO 541]

    b.   mɛ́ ndɔ **bɛndɔ** sinə **báfandɛ**.   [JO 542]

    c. ? mɛ́ ndɔ **bɛndɔ báfandɛ́** sinə.   [JO 543]

(39) ('How many animals did he kill?')

    a   ná   ɔnɔkɔ   **mɛnyama ímoti**.
    /a   ná   ɔ́nɔ-aka mɛ-nyama ɛ́-mɔtɛ́/
    1SM PST2 kill-DUR 9-animal   9-one
    'Il en a tué [un]$_{FOC}$ (seul).'
    'He killed [one]$_{FOC}$ animal.'   [EO 1416]

The S-V-O-Num pattern was also provided for contexts other than narrow
focus on the modifier, for example with term focus on the entire object (40) and
as an answer to a polar question (polarity focus) (41b). While this VO order was

judged grammatical, it is worthwhile noting that the discontinuous S-O-V-Num order was the first response (41).

(40) (Context: MPI scope image 1/77 + ex-situ object question *yaté ɔ́ ndɔ sin?* ('What do you see?'))

mɛ́   ndɔ   sinə **bɔléá   bɔmɔ́tɛ**. bɔ́   báka   na   tunoní tuəŋ.
/mɛ   ᴴndɔ sinə bɔ-léá   bɔ́-mɔté bɔ́   bá-aka na   tɔ-noní tɔ-əŋí/
 sᴍ.1sɢ ᴘʀs   see   14-tree 14-one   14sᴍ be-ᴅᴜʀ with 13-bird 13-many

'Je vois [un arbre]_FOC. Il a beaucoup d'oiseaux.'
'I see [a tree]_FOC. It has many birds.'   [JO 1151]

(41) ('Do you see two birds?' (+ hand-drawn picture stimulus) (polarity focus))

a. ɛ́ɛ, mɛ́   ndɔ   **tunoní** sinə **tɔ́fandɛ**.
    /ɛ́ɛ mɛ   ᴴndɔ tɔ-noní sinə tɔ́-fandɛ́/
    yes sᴍ.1sɢ ᴘʀs   13-bird see   13-two

'Oui, je vois deux oiseaux.'
'Yes, I see two birds.'   [EO 1408]

b. ɛ́ɛ, mɛ́ndɔ sinə **tunoní tɔ́fandɛ**.   [EO 1409]

In general, V-O-Num examples are less common than a discontinuous order in which the object is preverbal while its modifier is postverbal, which I will discuss more in Section 3.2 below. I suggest that the S-V-O-Num order is related to the postverbal position being the preferred position for certain quantifiers like numerals, together with the desire to preserve the contiguity of the noun phrase constituent, rather than being related to the information-structural status of the noun and/or modifier. The following example shows that the universal quantifier *-kimə* 'all' can also appear in this slot when in focus.

(42) (Someone mistakenly says that not all the children did their homework (knowing that some are more studious than others).)

bɔ́ɔ, bá   ná   masɔ́ma   kiak   **bɔ́kim**.
/bɔ́ɔ bá   ná   ma-sɔ́ma   kɛa-aka bá-kimə/
no   2sᴍ ᴘsᴛ2 6-homework do-ᴅᴜʀ 2-all

'Non, c'est [tous]_FOC qui ont fait les devoirs.'
'No, [all]_FOC of them did the homework.'   [EE+EB 1824]

We therefore see that this VO order may be explained by the appearance of a quantifier element, rather than being conditioned by information-structural considerations. Section 3.2 (see also Kerr 2024c: Chapter 7) will cover such discontinuous nominals in further detail, showing that the discontinuous modifier placement is, somewhat surprisingly, the pragmatically neutral word order.

A final context where VO is found without *á* is with focus-sensitive particles, as in the example below from Mous (1997) and as already seen in Section 2 for objects modified by *ata* 'even' and *ɔ́maná* 'only'.[14],[15]

(43) mɛna   nya ha   mʷənif.
      SM.1SG.PST2 drink only 6.water
      'I drank only water.'   Mous (1997: 125)

This VO order arises due to exhaustively-focused objects needing to move from the canonical position. Recall from Section 2 that while such movement to the right is possible, movement to the left is a more common strategy. The availability of VO order here is expressed by Mous as needing to "mak[e] a statement about the relation of a particular object against other possible objects" (Mous 1997: 127); he claims that the relation is not one of focus or new information but of contrast. I follow the other authors in this volume in calling such objects focused objects of a more contrastive type than information focus (see e.g. Bianchi et al. 2015, Cruschina 2021). This requirement to be ex-situ extends across all contrastively focused terms and is not specific to objects.

Finally, it is worth noting that in elicitation contexts, most speakers reject VO examples; VO examples are therefore quite low-frequency in my corpus. These constructions could therefore be better investigated through a larger-scale corpus study with more natural speech examples and controlling for independent factors such as prosodic weight. Given the prevalence of VO orders in Benue-Congo and the variation between OV and VO in other languages with OV word order, the lack of VO in Tunen is particularly interesting from a comparative and historical perspective (see Kerr 2024c: Chapter 6 for further reflections).

3.2 Discontinuity

As noted by Mous (1997), modifiers of theme objects – including numerals, quantifiers, and relative clauses – may appear in Tunen in a discontinuous position, separated from the object by the verb, resulting in the discontinuous S-O-V-Mod order. Crosslinguistically, discontinuity is a low frequency word order strategy that relates directly to information structure: discontinuous noun phrases are used for focus on the modifier (see e.g. Louagie & Verstraete 2016), with a common pattern involving scrambling to a left-peripheral topic or focus phrase (Fanselow & Ćavar 2002). In Bantu, discontinuous noun phrases are very rare (Van de Velde

---

[14]Glosses have been standardised; the transcription line is unaltered.

[15]This example was checked in follow-up work with JO; she accepts it, but rejects it if the focus-sensitive particle is omitted.

2022: 909). In Tunen, however, discontinuous modifiers are found frequently, the modifier and object do not move to the left periphery, and they do not require narrow focus on the modifier. Instead, this word order appears to be pragmatically neutral: as I show in this section (see also Kerr 2024c: Chapter 7), it is possible with narrow focus on the postverbal modifier, with focus on the whole object, or even to introduce new discourse referents (as already observed in Isaac 2007). Note that this analysis of discontinuity as a pragmatically neutral order runs against the analysis of Mous (1997: 133), who argues that discontinuous modifiers have "contrastive force" in Tunen, likening them to postverbal objects preceded by *á* or a focus-sensitive particle 'only'.[16]

Examples of discontinuous modifiers are given below, first for the universal quantifier *-kimə* 'all' and secondly for a numeral, both in contexts where the quantity is surprising.

(44) (Context: You are a farmer who has lost all of your animals, but by a stroke of luck, you find them all again.)

  mɛ   ná   Húɛ́lɛ́ hóli ɛ́↓séá mɛ́   ná   **biá↓míá**   **bɛhɔ́sɛ**
/mɛ   ná   Húɛ́lɛ́ hólíɔ́ ɛ-séá mɛ́   ná   biámíá   bɛ-hɔ́sɛ
 SM.1SG PST2 God   thank 7-say SM.1SG.SBJV PST2 POSS.PRO.1SG.8 8-horse

bɔŋɔ **bikim**.
bɔ́ŋɔ́ bɛ́-kimə/
find 8-all

'Je remercie Dieu comme j'ai retrouvé tous mes chevaux.'
'I thank the Lord that I've found all my horses.'   [EE+EB 1827]

(45) (Context: You wake up after a party and see a surprising number of empty wine bottles in the room.)

  naánɛkɔla ɛkɔlakɔ́lá tɔ   ka **mindíŋgə** nɛ́ákɛna **ɛ́námanɛ yɛ́**
/naánɛkɔla ɛ-kɔlakɔ́lá tɔ   ka mɛ-ndíŋgə nɛ́ákɛna ɛ́-námanɛ yɛ́
 yesterday 7-evening SM.1PL PST3 4-bottle   drink   4-eight ASS.4
mɔ́luk!
mɔ́lukə/
6.wine

'Hier soir nous avons bu huit bouteilles du vin !'
'We drank eight bottles of wine last night!'   [JO 1941]

Example (41) above and example (46) below show that the modifier does not have to be new information in order to be discontinuous in Tunen. In (46), we see

---

[16]To be precise, Mous identifies the discontinuous position as the standard position for Tunen numerals and argues that numerals are inherently contrastive in that they are "selective" (Mous 1997).

a discontinuous modifier used in a polarity focus context (a subtype of predicate-centred focus), in which both the object and modifier were given through prior expression in the discourse and are therefore non-focal.

(46) (έε,) mɛ   ná **imitə**   yə   **mwənífí** indi **mɛŋéŋ** ɔ   hɛlɔ́bátɔ.
      /(έε) mɛ   ná ɛ-mítɔ́   yɛ   ma-nífɔ́ índíɔ́ mɛŋéŋa ɔ   hɛ-lɔ́bátɔ/
      yes sm.1sg pst2 9-calabash ass.9 6-water give 9.big prep 19-child
      '(Oui,) j'ai donné la grand calebasse (de l'eau) à l'enfant.'
      '(Yes,) I gave the large calabash of water to the child.'

                                            [EE+EB 1830; cf. Mous 2003: 305]

Discontinuous orders are not just found for modifiers of objects; discontinuity is also possible for quantifiers modifying subjects, as in the natural speech examples in (47) below. In (47a) we see the use of a discontinuous structure for the introduction of a discourse referent; in (47b) we see the use of the discontinuous order when concluding the explanation. In both cases, the discontinuous numeral is neither focal nor contrastive.

(47) (Context: QUIS dialogue task: EO has a picture from the end of a storyboard and must find out from PM (who has the rest of the storyboard) what happened.)

 a. mba **bɛndɔ** bá báka   háha   **balal**, yatέ bá ndɔ
     /mba bɛndɔ   bá bá-aka háaha   bá-lálɔ́ yatέ bá ᴴndɔ
      but 2.person 2sm be-dur dem.prox.loc 2-three what 2sm prs
     kɛ?
     kɛa/
     do
     'Mais il y a trois personnes ici, que font-ils?'
     'But there are three people here, what are they doing?'   [EO 581]

 b. Context: After concluding the explanation.
      mhm. ɔ́↓há   **bɛndɔ**   bándɔ wέɛya sinə **balal**.
     /mhm ɔhá   bɛndɔ   ba ᴴndɔ wέɛya sinə bá-lálɔ́/
      mhm for.that 2.person 2sm prs pro.1 see 2-three
     'Mhm. C'est pour ça que trois gens le regardent.'
     'Mhm. That's why three people are looking at him.'   [PM 597]

The postverbal modifier position therefore seems to be a neutral position rather than related to a particular information-structural configuration. I discuss

the details of the discontinuous noun phrase construction in Kerr (2024c: Chapter 7); for current purposes we can conclude that the construction is not restricted to a particular discourse context of contrastive focus (contra Mous 1997).

Finally, note that in addition to numeral and quantifier modifiers, relative clauses modifying objects are frequently discontinuously-positioned (O-V-Rel; (48), (49)), though they can also be continuous before the verb (O-Rel-V; (50)) or continuous after the verb (V-O-Rel; (51)).

(48) mɛ   ná   **wááyɛ́**   **múɔ́ndu** siəkin   **ɔwánákáná**
      /mɛ   ná   wááyɛ́   mɔ-əndú siəkinə ɔwá-á-ánákáná   ɔ
      SM.1SG PST2 DEM.DISC.1 1-woman see.DUR REL.1-1SM.REL.PST2-leave PREP

      ɔ   **bulí na**   **móto**, tátá   wɔ́n.
      bɔ-lí   na móto   tátá   wɔ́ni
      14-work with 6.motorcycle COP.NEG DEM.DIST.1

      'J'ai vu la femme qui est allée au travail avec le moto, pas l'autre.'
      'I saw the woman who went to work by motorbike, not the other one.'

[PB 2019]

(49) mɛ   ka   ámɛ   **yáyɛ́á**   **ibəŋuluəkə yí**   **búsíɔ́** siəkinə **ɔyɛ́á**
      /mɛ   ka   ámɛ   yayɛ́á   ɛ-bəŋuluəkə yɛ́   búsíɔ́ siəkinə ɔyɛ́á
      SM.1SG PST3 PRO.1SG 7.PRO.POSS.1 7-car   ASS.7 front see.DUR REL.7

      á   [↓]**ná ɔnd**, […]
      á   ^Lná ɔ́ndɔ́/
      1SM PST3 buy

      'Moi j'avais vu la première véhicule qu'il a acheté, [..]'
      'I myself saw the first vehicle he bought, […]   [PM 1084]

(50) (nɛɔfɛ́nɛ) Mɔ́tinə a   ná   **bɛlábɔ́nɛ́á bikimə** {?ɔkɔlɔkɛn} **ɔbɛ́á**
      /(nɛɔfɛ́nɛ) Mɔ́tinə a   ná   bɛ-lábɔ́nɛ́á bɛ́-kimə {ɔkɔlɔkɛna} ɔbɛ́á
      (today)   1.Martin 1SM PST2 8-food   8-all   {taste}   REL.8

      yamíá   **inyɔ́**   a   [↓]**ná**   **táléáká**   naánɛkɔla {ɔkɔlɔkɛn(a)}
      yamíá   inyɔ́   a   ^Lná   táléá-aka naánɛkɔla {ɔkɔlɔkɛna}
      9.POSS.PRO.1SG 9.mother 1SM PST3.REL cook-DUR yesterday {taste}

      (nɛɔfɛ́n).
      (nɛɔfɛ́nɛ)/
      (today)

      'Martin a goûté (aujourd'hui) toute la nourriture que ma mère a cuisiné hier.'
      '(Today), Martin has tasted all the food that my mother cooked yesterday.'

[PM 498]

(51) ba l(ε) utíbíniə **ɛbɔ́ka ɔyɛ́á mw400 mwití a ná fálɛ́**.
      /ba lɛa ɔ-tíbíniə ɛ-bɔ́ka ɔyɛ́á mwití a ná fáléá/
      2SM be INF-observe 7-place REL.7 PRO.OBJ.1 1SM PST2 tumble
      'Ils sont en train d'observer l'endroit du la personne a degringolé.'
      'They're looking at the place the guy fell.'   [PM 582]

I suggest that the variability in attachment of the relative clause modifying the object is related to independent factors such as prosodic weight and processing ease. As I am not aware of any influence of information structure on this variation, I leave the topic aside here.

3.3 Fronting

As noted in Mous (1997), another means in which word order may vary for information-structural reasons is by fronting a constituent, i.e. placing it at the beginning of the sentence. This will be discussed as a type of topic expression strategy in Section 5. In focus contexts, most apparently fronted constituents are in fact clefted, although some examples are found without a copula or relative marking, as in (52) below. Recall as well that we saw in Section 2 above that questions are formed by fronting or clefting.

(52) ('How many children do you see?')
      mɔná ɔmɔtɛ mɛ́ ndɔ sin.
      /mɔ-ná ɔ́-mɔté mɛ ᴴndɔ sinə/
      1-child 1-one SM.1SG PRS see
      'Je vois [un]_{FOC} seul enfant.'
      'I see [one]FOC child.'   [DM 147]

In some cases, a focused object may appear to be simply fronted, but further analysis shows evidence of an underlying cleft structure – specifically a reverse pseudocleft – which may be obscured by vowel elision or be ambiguous due to the noun class and tense marker. An example is in the object focus example in (53) below, where the H tone on the subject marker shows a dependent clause environment, with the copula *á* analysable as elided due to vowel elision (see Section 4 on clefts for more detail).

(53) ('What is the man holding in his hand?')
      kalɔ́tɔ **á** ná itíɔ́ ɔ mɔkat.
      /kalɔ́tɔ á-á ná itíɔ́ ɔ mɔ-kátá/
      9.carrot COP-1SM.REL PST2 hold PREP 3-hand
      'C'est [une carotte]FOC qu'il tient à la main.'
      'He is holding [a carrot]FOC in his hand.'   [JO 1630]

Such ex-situ focus constructions will be covered in more detail in Section 4 below. Fronted topic phrases are covered in more detail in Section 5 on topic expression.

While contrast at the sub-DP level (i.e. on a modifier of the noun) does not require any special marking and can be left in-situ, it can also be expressed by fronting. Example (54) shows unmarked contrast between adjectival modifiers, while (55) shows that contrastive focus at the sub-DP level can alternatively be expressed by fronting the modifier together with the non-contrasted noun. Such fronting is optional, as the noun phrase can be left in the canonical position, an instance of the canonical S-Aux-O-V-X word order (55b), or be discontinuous (55c).

(54)   ɔ   iNdíkiə **nioní**   **nɛtɛ́**$^{\downarrow}$**tɛ́** nɛ-bɔkɔyiilə tɛ́á,   **nioní**   **nɛŋɛ́ŋa**
   /ɔ   iNdíkiə nɛ-oní   nɛ-tɛ́^{L}tɛ́á nɛ-bɔkɔyiilə tɛ́   nɛ-oní   nɛ-ŋɛ́ŋa
   PREP Ndiki   5-market 5-small   5-Wednesday every, 5-market 5-big

   ɔ   ninúmbɔ́   (tɛ́).
   ɔ   nɛ-númbɔ́ (tɛ́á)/
   PREP 5-Saturday (every)

   'À Ndiki il y a un petit marché chaque mercredi et un grand marché (chaque) samedi.'
   'In Ndiki, there is a small market every Wednesday and a large market every Saturday.'   [PM 193]

(55)   a.   bɔ́ɔ, **imítɔ́**   **mɛŋɛ́ŋa** mɛ   ná   índíə ɔ   hɛlɔ́bat, tátá
      /bɔ́ɔ ɛ-mítɔ́   mɛŋɛ́ŋa mɛ   ná   índíə ɔ   hɛ-lɔ́bátɔ tátá
      no   9-calabash 9.big   SM.1SG PST2 give   PREP 19-child   COP.NEG

      ɔ   mɛ́tɛ́$^{\downarrow}$tɛ́.
      ɔ   mɛ́tɛ́^{L}tɛ́a/
      PREP 9.small

      'Non, c'est la grande calebasse que j'ai donné à l'enfant, pas la petite.'
      'No, I gave the big calabash to the child, not the small one.'
                                                                     [EE+EB 1832]

   b.   bɔ́ɔ, mɛ ná **imítɔ́ mɛŋɛ́ŋ** indiə ɔ hɛlɔ́bátɔ, (tátá ɔ mɛ́$^{\downarrow}$tɛ́tɛ́).
                                                                     [EE+EB 1834]

   c.   bɔ́ɔ, mɛ ná **imítɔ́** indiə **mɛŋɛ́ŋ** ɔ hɛlɔ́bátɔ, (tátá ɔ mɛ́$^{\downarrow}$tɛ́tɛ́).
                                                                     [EE+EB 1833]

Note here that the adjective cannot be fronted without the noun; the noun must be pied-piped. This means that term focus on the sub-DP level is marked in the same way as term focus scoping over the entire DP.

3.3.1 The right periphery

As is common crosslinguistically, the right periphery is used for afterthoughts or repairs, as in the natural speech example in (56) below, where an alternative noun is added as a suggestion for the subject.

(56) Context: PM and EO perform the QUIS map task (Skopeteas et al. 2006: 155–157), where PM must give EO directions using a map with various objects drawn on it.

hɛkɔlɛ	hɛ́	ka	báká	hɘ́ní	u	busí	**káasɛ**
/hɛ-kɔlɛ	hɛ́	ka	bá-aka	hɘ́níɘ̀	ɔ	busíɘ̀	káasɛ
19-squirrel	19sm	and	be-dur	dem.dist.loc	prep	14.front	maybe

himondokóloŋ.
hɛ-mondokóloŋo/
19-mole

'Là-bas il y a un écureuil, ou peut-être une taupe.'
'There's a squirrel there, or maybe a mole.'   [PM 707]

Further investigation of fronting and the right periphery could be done on the basis of a larger text corpus; in my field data, neither strategy was very commonly found. Instead of fronting, focus is typically expressed by the canonical word order (for non-subjects; Section 2, Section 3) or else by clefting (Section 4 below).

3.4 Section summary

Although S-Aux-O-V-X is the canonical word order, we saw in this section that other word order patterns are found in Tunen. Objects may appear postverbally in certain contexts, often with a modifier or relative (although discontinuous structures are more common). In contrast to the presentation in Mous (1997, 2003), I argued that postverbal objects preceded by the marker *á* are uncommon, although they show evidence for monoclausality. Aside from clefts, fronting is another possible strategy for focus expression, although this strategy is less commonly used for foci. Fronting for topics will be covered further in Section 5. Some modifiers are frequently discontinuous in Tunen; this is a pragmatically neutral word order pattern rather than a particular strategy for focussing the modifier, unlike what is found for other languages with (apparent) discontinuity in the nominal domain, and unusually for a Bantu language. Finally, the right periphery can be used for afterthoughts, as is common crosslinguistically.

4 Clefts and the marker *á*

We have seen already that Tunen can use clefts to express focus, which is a common strategy for question formation and found also with declaratives. This section discusses these cleft constructions and their interpretation. As clefts are composed of a copula, focused NP, and a relative clause component (Harris & Campbell 1995), I begin by describing the form of copular clauses in Tunen, before looking into clefts specifically.

4.1 Copular clauses in Tunen

A common typology of copular clauses is to split them into four types: identificational, predicational, specificational, and equative copular clauses (see e.g. Higgins 1979, Mikkelsen 2011, Heycock 2012). In this section I show that Tunen does not differentiate between identificational and specificational copular clauses, and shows no evidence for equative copular clauses as a distinct class, and so the typology can be simplified as predicational vs. identificational/specificational copular clauses.[17]

Firstly, consider predicational copular clauses, where a property is assigned to a referent. Predicational copular clauses in Tunen are formed with the copula *lɛa* 'be' or copula verb *bá(ka)* 'be' – which are generally interchangeable (Dugast 1971: 347–350, Kerr 2024c: 124–125) – as illustrated in (57) and (58) below for a non-locative (57) and locative use respectively.

(57) (Is the water clean for drinking?)
 bɔ́ɔ, má lɛ́ **bá** mas.
 /bɔ́ɔ má lɛ bá ma-ɛsɛ/
 no 6SM NEG be 6-good
 'Non, ce n'est pas pure.' 'No, it isn't potable.', 'No, it isn't clean.' [JO 612]

(58) (Where are you?)
 mɛ **lɛ** ɔ nioní.
 /mɛ lɛa ɔ nɛ-oní/
 SM.1SG be PREP 5-market
 'Je suis au marché.' 'I am at the market.'   [PM 102]

Identificational copular clauses, on the other hand, are marked by *á* COP in Tunen. Example (59) below shows the use of *á* as the copula in a clause which identifies a referent.

---

[17]I refer to the second type as "identificational/specificational" in order to remain agnostic as to whether the identificational or the specificational copular clause is the most basic/general type.

(59) wέεγε   mɔndɔ wέεγε   ɔwá tɔ́   [↓]ná siəkinə, **á**
   /wέεγε   mɔ-ndɔ wέεγε   ɔwá tɔ́   ^Lná siəkinə á
   DEM.DISC.1 1-person DEM.DISC.1 REL.1 SM.1PL PST3.REL see.DUR COP

   mutíkə wa bɔnɔŋɔ   bɔ́ iNdikiníméki(ə).
   mɔ-tíkə wa bɔ-nɔŋɔ   bɔ́ iNdikinímεkiə/
   1-mayor ASS.1 14-country ASS.14 Ndikiniméki

   'Cet homme-là que nous avons vu (hier), c'est le maire du Ndikiniméki.'
   'That man there that we saw (yesterday) is the mayor of Ndikiniméki.'

                                                                    [PM 780]

Specificational copular clauses are defined as having the structure *A is B*, where A is typically non-referential and B is referential, and A is definite (Heycock 2012). These are also marked by *á* COP in Tunen (60).

(60) mɔná ɔwá á   lέá na ɛmanya   tɔ́mbálánátɔ **á** Patiáns.
   /mɔ-ná ɔwá á   lέá na ɛ-manya   tɔ́mbálánátɔ á Patiánsɛ/
   1-child REL.1 1SM.REL be with 7-knowledge surpass.PTCP COP 1.Patience

   'L'enfant qui est le plus intelligent, c'est Patience.'
   'The smartest child is Patience.'   [JO 854]

The final type of copular clause proposed in the literature on copular clauses is equatives, where A is said to be identical to B (e.g. "The morning star is the evening star" in English). Whether or not equatives are truly a distinct class is subject to some debate (see e.g. Heycock 2012). When eliciting such examples in Tunen, consultants either rephrased the construction by using lexical verb (e.g. "A gives B") or used a specificational copula with *á* COP. The only possible example of a true equative is in the story below, which can either be analysed as a fragment or an instance of *á* COP (if the form *miaŋɔ́á* 'me' is taken to include *á*; cf. Dugast 1971). There is therefore no convincing evidence to identify a separate equatives subclass of copulars in Tunen.

(61) Context: A shepherd lied/cried wolf that there was a panther. His concerned neighbours ran over...

   bá   [↓]ná   ka fam, a ná sanέá   ɔ tuɔn,   asέá :
   /bá   ^Lná   ka fámá a ná sanέá   ɔ tɔ-ɔnɔ   a-sέá
   2SM PST3.DEP AND arrive 1SM PST2 burst.out PREP 13-laughter SM.1-say

   « **miaŋɔ́á**   mɛkɔ ! ».
   miaŋɔ́á   mɛ-kɔ/
   PRO.EMPH.1SG 9-panther

   'Quand ils sont arrivés, il a éclaté de rire, il a dit, « c'est moi la panthère ! »'   'When they arrived, he burst out laughing and said 'I'm the panther!'' [JO 2033]

In summary, Tunen forms identificational/specificational copular clauses differently from predicational clauses, as shown in Table 1 below: predicational copular clauses use the verbs *lɛa* and *bá(ka)* 'to be', while identificational and specificational clauses use *á*.

Table 1: Copular clauses in Tunen

Copular clause type	Copula element
Predicational	*-lɛa* / *-bá(ka)* 'to be'
Identificational/specificational	*á*

The predicational copula *lɛa* and *bá(ka)* take a subject marker and are negated by a negative marker (as seen in (57)). In contrast to these copula forms, the identificational/specificational copula *á* is invariant[18] and has a negative form *tátá*, glossed as COP.NEG (62).

(62) (bɔ́ɔ,) bɛ́fandɛ́   kɔndá bɛ́lálɔ́   **tátá**   bɛ́lɛndálɔ.
     /(bɔ́ɔ) bɛ́-fandɛ́ kɔndá bɛ́-lálɔ́ tátá   bɛ́-lɛ́ndálɔ/
      (no) 8-two   add   8-three COP.NEG 8-six

     'Non, deux plus trois ne font pas six.'
     'No, two plus three doesn't equal six.'   [PM 784]

Now we have seen that *á* COP is used for identificational/specificational copulars in Tunen, we can consider clefts, which I show contain *á* as a copular component, matching the common crosslinguistic pattern of identificational/specificational copular elements in clefts.

4.2 Relativisation

The next component of a cleft is a relative clause. Relative clauses are identified in Tunen by (i) a relativiser of form *ɔXá*, where the shape of X depends on the noun class of the head noun, (ii) H-tone on normally L-toned subject markers, and (iii) dependent-clause tense marking, as visible in the third-degree past tense (PST3) and in negative clauses. For example, the object relative example in (63) below shows the main clause third-degree past tense marker *ka* followed by the dependent third-degree past tense marker *↓ná* in the relative clause, as well as

---

[18]There is some indication of a human/non-human distinction with a *ɔ́* variant used for non-personified non-human animates and inanimates; see Kerr (2024c: 120) for further detail.

high tone on the class 1 subject marker *á* in the relative clause, contrasting with the low-toned main clause first person singular subject marker *mɛ*.

(63)   mɛ   **ka**   ámɛ   yáyɛ́á   ibəŋuluəkə yɛ́   búsíə́ siəkinə **ɔyɛ́á**
     /mɛ   ka   ámɛ   yáyɛ́á   ɛ-bəŋuluəkə yɛ́   búsíə́ siəkinə ɔyɛ́á
     SM.1SG PST3 PRO.1SG 7.PRO.POSS.1 7-car   ASS.7 front see.DUR REL.7

     á $^{\downarrow}$**ná**   ɔnd, [...]
     á ^{L}ná   ɔ́ndɔ/
     1SM.REL PST3.REL buy

     'Moi j'avais vu le premier véhicule qu'il a acheté, [...]'
     'I myself saw the first vehicle he bought,' [...]   [PM 1045]

In Tunen clefts, relatives are reduced in the sense of lacking the *ɔXá* relativiser. While there is no overt relativiser and while non-human noun classes and many TAM contexts have identical marking to main clauses, marking of a relative clause can still be seen by H-tone on underlyingly L-toned subject markers and the use of dependent TAM markers in third-degree past tense and negative contexts. For example, the following example provides evidence for there being a reduced relative in a Tunen cleft, as the third-degree past tense marker must be the dependent clause form $^{\downarrow}$*ná* instead of the main clause affirmative form *ka* (64). This provides evidence for a relative clause environment despite the lack of an overt relativiser.

(64)   ɔ́   yə́níə́ ikúílí á   ɛmɔ́á yɛ́ {$^{\downarrow}$**ná**|***ka**}   bɔmɔkə   mɔŋɛŋa
     /ɔ   yə́níə́ ɛ-kúílí á   ɛ-mɔ́á yɛ́ {^{L}ná|*ka}   bɔmɔ-aka mɔŋéŋa
     PREP which 7-time COP 7-dog 7SM {PST3.REL|*PST3} bark-DUR much

     eé?
     eé/
     Q
     'A quel moment le chien a-t-il beaucoup aboyé ?'
     'When did the dog bark a lot?'   [PM, 1255–6]

As non-human noun classes have H-toned subject markers in both dependent and main clauses, and as there is only a visible difference in tense marking in affirmatives in the third-degree past tense, many examples of clefts with *á* are in fact ambiguous between the biclausal or monoclausal analysis. There is likely a change in progress between the biclausal and monoclausal structures, as discussed for different languages in Harris & Campbell (1995). As the Tunen *á* marker is likely in the process of grammaticalising to being a focus marker

in a monoclausal construction, the most accurate gloss is debatable. While the presence of *á* may be obscured due to vowel elision, my consultants indicated that there was a *á* underlying even if it was elided on the surface, and therefore I maintain the copular analysis of *á* in the glossing in this chapter and gloss it as COP. I turn now to the different cleft constructions found in Tunen.

4.3 Clefts

Clefts are obligatory in Tunen for subject focus (which cannot be focused in-situ) and are used across all grammatical roles for exhaustive focus. There are two main forms of cleft in Tunen. In this section we will see that there is a basic cleft used for subject focus and a reverse pseudocleft used for non-subject focus. I argued in Section 3.1.1 above that the V*á*O construction that resembles a pseudocleft instead shows monoclausal properties, and therefore do not include it here.

4.3.1 Basic cleft

Human animate subjects must be focused with a basic cleft construction, as schematised in (65) below.[19]

(65)   Basic cleft:
       $á$ + NP$_{FOC}$ + reduced relative

Example (66) below shows the use of the basic cleft to express subject focus. The identificational/specificational copula *á* is used, followed by the focused noun phrase *Píél* 'Pierre' and then a reduced relative. The reduced relative clause environment is recognisable due to the high tone on the class 1 subject marker *á*, which is low-toned in main clause environments. Clefting the subject is obligatory in this context; leaving the subject in-situ is not felicitous (though would be grammatical in a thetic context)[20] (66b).

---

[19]At this point, it is unclear whether the primary conditioning factor for the use of a basic cleft is subjecthood or humanness, given that most examples in the data of subjects are either human or personified animals. The discussion in this chapter should therefore be taken to apply to the prototypical human subject, with the potential role of animacy on cleft structure a question for further research.

[20]The original fieldnotes for this form kept the H tone on the class 1 subject marker; based on other examples, I report the judgement with the subject marker appearing as in a thetic context.

(66) (Who shut the door?")

    a. **á** Píέl   **á**   ná nikí kwiyí.
       /á Píέlε á   ná nε-kí kwiyíə/
       COP 1.Pierre 1SM.REL PST2 5-door shut
       'C'est [Pierre]$_{FOC}$ qui a fermé la porte.'
       '[Pierre]$_{FOC}$ shut the door.'   [EO 273]

    b. # Píέl   a ná nikí kwiyí.
       /Píέlε a ná nε-kí kwiyíə/
       1.Pierre 1SM PST2 5-door shut
       int. '[Pierre]$_{FOC}$ a fermé la porte.'
       int. '[Pierre]$_{FOC}$ shut the door.'   [EO 277]

Note that fragment answers also require the *á* for subject focus (67), suggesting that they are elided from an underlying cleft structure.

(67) (Which politician died?)

    *(á) Píεlə (á   ná wə).
    /á Píεlə á   ná wə́./
    COP Pierre 1SM.REL PST2 die
    'C'était [Pierre]$_{FOC}$ (qui est mort).'
    'It was [Pierre]$_{FOC}$ (who died).'   [EO 270–1]

As we will see for other arguments below, focused XPs in clefts are typically said to have an exhaustive interpretation. This is illustrated for subject focus below with the continuation 'not another' in (68) and the confirmation from the speakers of (69) that nobody else could have eaten the rice.[21]

(68) miaŋɔ́á   á mε   ná nikí kwiyí, tátá mɔnə́muná.
    /miaŋɔ́á   á mέ   ná nε-ki kwiyíə, tátá mɔ-nə́muná/
    PRO.EMPH.1SG COP SM.1SG.REL PST2 5-door shut   not 1-another
    'C'est [moi]$_{FOC}$ qui a fermé la porte, pas un autre.'
    'It was [me]$_{FOC}$ who shut the door, not someone else.'   [EO 274]

---

[21]Note that the subject marker in (69) and in a few other examples in this chapter is low-toned, while we would expect a high tone in a relative clause environment. Such low tones could either be indication of the development from a biclausal to a monoclausal structure, or be related to a methodological issue of repeating transcriptions word-for-word, in which case consultants may have simply used the low-toned citation form of the subject marker when repeating the utterance, despite pronouncing it as a high in this context in fluent speech.

(69) á   Samuélɛ a   ná   ɔlɛ́sa nɛak.
     /á   Samuélɛ á   ná   ɔ-lɛ́sa néá-aka/
     COP 1.Samuel 1SM.REL PST2 3-rice eat-DUR
     'C'est [Samuel]~FOC~ qui a mangé du riz.' (pas quelqu'un d'autre)
     '[Samuel]~FOC~ ate rice.' (it wasn't somebody else)   [EE + EB 1661]

That being said, the question arises as to how non-exhaustive focus is expressed for subjects in Tunen. One piece of data suggesting that clefted subjects are not neccesarily exhaustive is (70) below, where the marker *á* appears after the exclusive particle *ata* 'even' modifying Nancy, in a context where Mary also has a bottle of water.

(70)   (Does Maria have a bottle of water? (+ BaSIS photo stimulus))
       ɛ́ɛ Maliá a   báka   na məndíŋgə wɔ́ mə́nif, **ata *(á)** Nansí
       /ɛ́ɛ Maliá a   bá-aka na mɔ-ndíŋgə wɔ́ ma-nífɔ́ ata á Nansí
       yes 1.Maria 1SM be-DUR with 3-bottle   ASS.3 6-water even COP 1.Nancy
       {tɔ́na} a   báka   **{tɔ́na}** na məndíŋgə wɔ́ mə́nif.
       tɔ́na a   bá-aka tɔ́na na mɔ-ndíŋgə wɔ́ ma-nífɔ́/
       also 1SM be-DUR also with 3-bottle   ASS.3 6-water
       'Oui, Maria a une bouteille de l'eau, Nancy a une bouteille de l'eau aussi.'
       'Yes, Maria has a bottle of water, Nancy also has a bottle of water.'
                                                                    [JO 2347]

It therefore seems that exhaustivity is compatible with a cleft structure and is often understood pragmatically, but strictly speaking the basic cleft is not exhaustive, as it can be used in non-exhaustive contexts (70).

4.3.2 Reverse pseudo-clefts

Non-subjects can be focused with a reverse pseudo-cleft construction, which takes the form schematised in (71).

(71)   Reverse pseudo-cleft
       NP~FOC~ + *á* + reduced relative

This is illustrated below for information focus (72), (73) and corrective focus (74) on the theme object.

(72) (What is the man holding in his hand?)

  kalɔtɔ á mɔndɔ a ná itíɔ́ ɔ mɔkata
  /kalɔtɔ á mɔ-ndɔ a ná itíɔ́ ɔ mɔ-kátá/
  9.carrot COP 1-person 1SM PST2 hold PREP 3-hand
  'C'est [une carotte]~FOC~ que l'homme tient dans sa main.'
  'The man is holding [a carrot]~FOC~ in his hand.', '[A carrot]~FOC~ is what the
  man is holding.'   [JO 1624]

(73) (What will you cook today?)

  mɔkɔnd͡ʒɛ na mɛkɔnɛ́fɛ́ á mɛ́ ndɔ talɛak.
  /mɔkɔnd͡ʒɛ na mɛkɔnɛ́fɛ́ á mɛ́ ^H^ndɔ talɛá-aka/
  6.plantain with 6.pork   COP SM.1SG.REL PRS cook-DUR
  'C'est [les plantains et le porc]~FOC~ que je vais cuisiner (aujourd'hui).'
  'I will cook [plantains and pork]~FOC~ today.', 'Plantains and pork are what I
  will cook (today).'   [PM 1512 (+ JO 1602)]

(74) bɔ́ɔ, **mɔkɔnd͡ʒɛ na mɛkɔnɛ́fɛ á** mɛ́ ndɔ talɛaka nɛɔfɛ́n.
  /bɔɔ mɔkɔnd͡ʒɛ na mɛkɔnɛ́fɛ́ á mɛ́ ^H^ndɔ talɛá-aka nɛɔfɛ́nɛ/
  no 6.plantain with 6.pork   COP SM.1SG.REL PRS cook-DUR today
  'Non, c'est [les plantains et le porc]~FOC~ que je vais préparer aujourd'hui.'
  (pas d'autres choses)
  'No, I will cook [plantains and pork]~FOC~ today.', 'No, plantains and pork
  are what I will cook today'. (and nothing else)   [PM 1516]

As the translation of (74) indicates, using a cleft construction suggests an exhaustive interpretation of the nominal, and is therefore more contrastive than the in-situ focus strategy. At this point, we may ask whether the same pattern is found as for subject clefts above, where compatibility with *ata* 'even' indicates that the cleft is not inherently exhaustive. We find that human objects modified by *ata* 'even' can appear in a cleft, although of a basic cleft structure (75a), while non-human objects modified by *ata* do not take *á* (75b), possibly due to difference in animacy.

(75) a. **ata** *(á) Natanyɛ́lɛ mɛ ná siəkin.
      /ata á Natanyɛ́lɛ mɛ ná siəkinə/
      even COP 1.Nathaniel SM.1SG PST2 see.DUR
      J'ai vu même [Nathaniel]~FOC~.'
      'I even saw [Nathaniel]~FOC~.'   [PM 2276]

b. **ata (*á)** bɛtafɛna Lídia a ná sɔák.
    /ata (*á) bɛ-tafɛna Lídia a ná sɔ́á-aka/
    even COP 8-shoe 1.Lydia 1SM PST2 wash-DUR
    'Lydia a lavé même [des chaussures]_FOC.'
    'Lydia even washed [the shoes]_FOC.'   [PM 2268]

Again then, it seems that the cleft constructions are not inherently exhaustive, although consultants generally interpret them as exhaustive and they are compatible with the exhaustive focus-sensitive particle *ɔ́maná* 'only', as seen already in (11), (27).

Reverse pseudo-clefts are not possible for subject focus, showing a subject/non-subject asymmetry (though recall the point in Footnotes 18–19 above about animacy/humanness as a potential alternative factor):

(76) (Who shut the door?)
      * Píɛ́l á á ná nikí kwiyí.
      /Piɛlə á á ná nɛ-kí kwiyí/
       Pierre COP 1SM.REL PST2 5-door shut
      int. 'C'est [Pierre]_FOC qui a fermé la porte.'
      int. 'It was Pierre who shut the door.'   [EO 276]

However, a reverse pseudocleft rather was found for sub-DP focus on the modifier of a subject (77).

(77) Q: bɛndɔ bá↓nɛ́á á ↓bá ná binək?
          /bɛndɔ bá-nɛ́á á bá ná binə-aka/
           2.person 2-how.many COP 2SM PST dance-DUR
          'Combien de personnes ont dansé ?'
          'How many people danced?'   [PM 1211]

      A: bɛndɔ bálálɔ́ á bá ná binək.
          /bɛndɔ bá-lálɔ́ á bá ná binə-aka/
           2.person 2-three COP 2SM PST2 dance-DUR
          '[Trois]_FOC personnes ont dansé.'
          '[Three]_FOC people danced.'   [PM 1214]

Non-arguments pattern with objects in being found without *á* preceding the focused XP in fragments, with the full version in the form of a reverse pseudocleft (78), (80).

(78) (Context: 'Because he went to die in his home village, they went there to get the body;')

nɛɔfénɛ á bá ná nda faman.
/nɛɔfénɛ á bá ná nda fámána/
 today COP 2SM PST2 VEN arrive.APPL

'C'est [aujourd'hui]_FOC qu'on est arrivé avec.'
'It's [today]_FOC that they arrived with it.'   [PM 1012]

Non-subject fragments are found without *á* (79), (80), thus differing from subject fragments. The focused noun phrase cannot be preceded by *á* (79b), contrasting with what we saw for subject fragments. The marker *á* also cannot follow the focused XP (79c). This suggests that the *á* is the copula part of what in non-elided form is a cleft (rather than acting as a grammaticalised focus marker).

(79) (What is the man holding?)

    a.   kalɔ́t.
        /kalɔ́tɔ/
         9.carrot
        '[Une carotte]_FOC.'
        '[A carrot]_FOC.'   [PM 1266]

    b. * á kalɔ́t
        /á kalɔ́tɔ/
        COP 9.carrot
        int. '[Une carotte]_FOC.'
        int. '[A carrot]_FOC.'   [PM 1267]

    c. * kalɔ́t á
        /kalɔ́tɔ á/
        9.carrot COP
        int. '[Une carotte]_FOC.'
        int. '[A carrot]_FOC.'   [PM 1267–8]

(80) (Where are the beans?)

    ɔ **hisíní** **núúmə** (á bilikó bɛ́ lɛ́á)
    /ɔ hɛ-sini nuumə (a bɛ-liko bɛ lɛ́á)/
    PREP 19-casserole inside COP 8-bean 8SM be

    'C'est [dans la cassérole]_FOC qu'il y a des haricots.'
    'The beans are [in the pot]_FOC (and nowhere else).'   [PM 477]

Again, the translation of (80) suggests that reverse pseudoclefted non-arguments are typically interpreted as exhaustive.

Finally, in corrective focus contexts, which are argued to be more contrastive types of foci (see e.g. Cruschina 2021), ex-situ clefting can be used, as seen already in (68) and as further illustrated in (81).

(81) (Context: Someone says incorrectly that you speak Tunen.)
   bɔ́ɔ, fɛlɛ́nd͡ʒ **á** mɛ́ nd(ɔ) ɔ́k.
   /bɔ́ɔ, fɛlɛ́nd͡ʒɛ á mɛ́ ᴴndɔ ɔ́kɔ/
   no French COP SM.1SG.REL PRS understand
   'Non, c'est [le français]_FOC que je comprends.'
   'No, it's [French]_FOC that I understand.'   [PM 93–4]

We therefore see that clefts can be used for more contrastive focus contexts than information focus, but the canonical word order is still possible for the expression of corrective/contrastive non-subject focus.

Alternatives can be marked explicitly by means of the particle *ɔbanɔ* 'rather' and/or by directly naming the incorrect argument.

(82) bɔ́ɔ, tátá mɔndɔ ɔwá ɛŋɔŋɔ á ná wə, á Acteur
   /bɔ́ɔ tátá mɔ-ndɔ ɔwá ɛ-ŋɔŋɔ á ná wə́ á Acteur
   no COP.NEG 1-person REL.1 7-politics 1SM.REL PST2 die COP 1.Acteur
   {**ɔban**} a ná wə {**ɔban**}.
   {ɔbanɔ} a ná wə́ {ɔbanɔ}/
   rather 1SM.REL PST2 die rather
   'Non, ce n'est pas le politicien qui est mort, c'est plutôt Acteur.'
   'No, it wasn't a politician who died, it was actually Acteur.'
             [EE+GE+PB 2716]

(83) mɛ́ ndɔ fɛlɛ́nd͡ʒ(ɛ) ɔ́k, **mba tátá** *(á) túnən.
   /mɛ ᴴndɔ fɛlɛ́nd͡ʒɛ ɔ́kɔ mba tátá *(á) tɔ-nəni/
   SM.1SG PRS French understand but COP.NEG *(COP) 13-Nen
   'Je comprends le français, mais pas le tunen.'
   'I understand French, but not Tunen.'   [PM 92]

(84) (Context: 'Lots of animals passed on the bridge.')
   bɔ́ɔ, **tátá** mɛnyama, á yɛ́ ná tɔmbak, (**mba**) bibəŋuluəkə.
   /bɔ́ɔ tátá mɛnyama á yɛ́ ná tɔmba-aka mba bɛ-bəŋuluəkə/
   no COP.NEG 10.animal COP 10SM PST2 pass-DUR but 8-vehicle
   'Non, ce n'est pas des animaux qui sont passés, ce sont des véhicules.'
   'No, it wasn't animals that passed, it was vehicles.'   [PM 1579]

4.4 Section summary

In summary, there are two types of cleft construction available for focus expression in Tunen, the basic cleft (*á* NP$_{FOC}$ Rel) and the reverse pseudocleft (NP$_{FOC}$ *á* Rel). Both constructions show indications of biclausality through the presence of a focused phrase, a copula, and a reduced relative clause, the latter being identifiable through relative clause subject marker and TAM forms. These cleft constructions are used for more contrastive foci types and are generally interpreted as exhaustive, but appear to not be inherently exhaustive, as they are compatible with the exclusive focus marker *ata* 'even'. Interestingly, no pseudocleft strategy was found, with the V*á*O construction shown in Section 3.1.1 above to have monoclausal properties, likely due to grammaticalisation from an earlier biclausal cleft construction. Complexities related to identification of clefts are the ambiguity of many subject marker and TAM contexts with respect to main clause versus relative clause marking and the regular vowel elision rule in Tunen, which may lead to elision of the *á* copula.

5 Left-peripheral topics (zero, *ɔ*, *aba/áká*)

As is common crosslinguistically (see e.g. Gundel 1988), Tunen topical constituents can appear in a left-peripheral position. In these cases, there are three strategies for topic expression: (i) zero-marking (i.e. fronting the topic without morphological marking), (ii) marking by the preposition *ɔ*, and (iii) marking by *aba/áká*, which elsewhere function as the conditional marker 'if'. This section will go through each strategy in turn. Note that while left-peripheral topics is one common strategy for expressing topics, topics may also be left in-situ and do not need to be fronted. These in-situ topics do not appear with any topic marking.

5.1 Zero-marking

A topical constituent can be fronted without any marking, as shown in (85) and (86) below for an aboutness topic.

(85)　**kíŋgə,** a　ka　nyɔkɔ　　naánɛkɔl.
　　　/kíŋgə a　ka　nyɔ-aka　naánɛkɔla/
　　　 1.chief 1SM PST3 work-DUR yesterday
　　　 'Le chef, il a travaillé hier.'
　　　 'The chief, he worked yesterday.'　　　　　　　　　　[JO 2625]

(86) **Nɔ́a,** yɛ́ ndɔ kɛa ɔwá á ndɔ náá.
      /Nɔa yɛ́ ^Hndɔ kɛ́á ɔwá a ^Hndɔ náá/
      Noah 7SM PRS do REL.1 1SM PRS be.sick
      'Quant à Noah, il semble qu'il est malade.'
      'As for Noah, it seems that he is sick.'   [JO 1306]

When objects are topicalised and prosodically separated from the main clause by a pause, resumption in the main clause is not required, as shown by the lack of object indexation in (87). The ability for zero indexation of objects will be covered in more detail in Section 7 below.

(87) **miímə,** mɔndɔ á ↓ná katák.
      /miímə mɔ-ndɔ á ^Lná katá-aka/
       3.house 1-person 1SM.REL PST3 destroy-DUR
      'La maison, c'est quelqu'un qui l'a détruite.'
      'The house, it's somebody who destroyed it.'   [EB+JO 2692]

It is often unclear as to whether a topical subject is fronted or left in-situ, as the canonical position of subjects is sentence-initial (*S*-Aux-O-V-X), which is linearly equivalent to the position they appear in if fronted to a left-peripheral position. For example, in (88) below, the referent of peanuts is a topic in that it is visibly present and has been previously mentioned in the discourse, and serves as the topic to which the comment of having cooled applies, but the word order is the same as what we saw for thetics in (2) above.

(88) Context: JO has shown how to dry peanuts in order to prepare the *kok*
      dish [*hɛkɔkɛ* leaves boiled with smoked fish and ground peanuts].
       tɔmbaŋa tú nú huhǝk.
      /tɔ-mbaŋa tɔ́ ná huhǝ-aka/
       13-peanut 13SM PST2 cool-DUR
      'Les arachides se sont refroidies.'
      'The peanuts have cooled.'   [JO 1358]

When studying the Dugast (1975) texts, it can be seen that topical subjects are frequently transcribed as ending with a glottal stop ʔ, which reflects a prosodic break and therefore can be taken as evidence for a left-dislocated topic (as pointed out in Isaac 2007: 59). An example is given in (89) below (I have adapted glosses for consistency). The Dugast data differ systematically from my own field data

in not having subject indexation of non-dislocated topics, i.e. in lacking a subject marker when the topic is not dislocated.[22]

(89) **wəbúə** **mon òwá ba na-ba ba ndò-hikiə?**, à nə̄-wə ton.
1.PRO.POSS.1 1.child REL.1 2SM PST2-be 2SM PRS-like 1SM PST2-die also

'Their child that they liked, he died also.'

(Dugast 1975: 395, cited in Isaac 2007: 165)

Turning now to obliques, while the neutral word order in Tunen is S-Aux-O-V-X, where X stands for other elements, including time adverbials and prepositional phrases, such items can also be fronted when they function as scene-setting topics, where the topical constituent is thus not an argument of the verb (Lambrecht 1994). This is often found for time adverbials in natural speech. Compare the elicited example with S-Aux-O-V-X order in (90) below and the natural speech example with a fronted time adverbial in (91).

(90) mɛ́ ndɔ Biə́lə sin **isiŋak**.
/mɛ ᴴndɔ Biə́lɛ sinə ɛsɛ́áŋáka/
SM.1SG PRS 1.Pierre see now

'Je vois Pierre maintenant.'
'I see Pierre now.' [EO 1412]

(91) (Context: Instructional video where JO is demonstrating how to cook the *kok* dish [*hɛkɔkɛ* leaves boiled with smoked fish and ground peanuts].)
ɛsɛ́áŋáka mɛ́ hɛkɔkɛ sɔ́áka.
/ɛsɛ́áŋáka mɛ=ᴴ hɛ-kɔkɛ sɔ́á-aka/
now SM.1SG=PROC 19-kok wash-DUR

'Maintenant, je lave le *kok*.'
'Now, I wash the *kok*.' [JO 1343]

The following examples show fronted time adverbials or prepositional phrases indicating a switch between events (92) and to set the scene at the beginning of a story (93).

---

[22]As no recordings are available for Dugast's data, dislocation is only evidenced by her ? notation, and commas, when they are used. Isaac (2007) considers the lack of subject marker to be evidence for a non-dislocated topic, but this argument is used somewhat circularly in the absence of any indication of prosody in Dugast's transcriptions. As all my consultants consistently use subject markers regardless of whether the topic is dislocated, there appears to have been a syntactic change in the time since Dugast with regards to the relation of clause-external topics and subject indexation. I discuss this further in Kerr (2024c: 363–365).

(92) (Context: 'The hawk waited and waited and waited, but he didn't see the cockroach, and his child died.')

hilóbi   hɛ́   ná   wɛ́ɛya   iti,   **isíŋáka**   ɔndʒɛlɛ́   a   n(á)   ákan
/hɛ-lóbi   hɛ́   ná   wɛ́ɛya   itíə   ɛsɛ́áŋáka   ɔ-ndʒɛlɛ́   a   ná   akáná
 19-anger   19SM   PST2   PRO.EMPH.1   hold   now   3-lizard   1SM   PST2   leave

asɛ   :   [...]
a-sɛ́á   [...]/
1SM-say [...]

'Il s'est mis en colère, maintenant le lézard est parti, il dit : [...]'
'He became enraged, and now the lizard came by, and said: [...]'

[JO 2063]

(93) (Context: Start of the story *The Chicken and the Partridge*.)

ɔ   **hí[↓]téyí**   hiɔŋɔ,   məhuə   má   sa   bá mas.
/ɔ   hítɛ́^Lyí   hɛ-ɔŋɔ   ma-huə   ma   sa   bá ma-ɛsɛ/
PREP DEM.DISC.EMPH.19 19-year 6-harvest 6SM NEG be 6-good

'Cette année, la récolte n'était pas bonne.'
'This year, the harvest wasn't good.'   [JO 1744]

Example (93) is zero-marking in the sense of having no additional morphological/phonological marking compared to the form in the canonical word order, although it shares the property of being introduced by the preposition ɔ as the examples to be discussed in the next subsection.

5.2 ɔ

Fronted topics are often marked by the general preposition ɔ PREP. The following example comes from a dialogue task based on asking each other questions about their preferences. EO first fronts the time adverbial *isiŋíáka* 'now' to shift the topic from the previous question and then introduces the topic of food by using the preposition ɔ (94).

(94) isiŋíáka, **ɔ**   **bɛlábɔ́néá ɔnɛ́**,   áká mɛsɛa   mɛ́   aŋɔ́á
/ɛsɛ́áŋáka ɔ   bɛ-lábɔ́néá ɔ-nɛ́á   áká mɛ-sɛ́á   mɛ́   aŋɔ́á
 now   PREP 8-food   INF-eat if   SM.1SG-say SM.1SG.SBJV PRO.2SG
ɛ́lɛ́ákɛ́n, yatɛ́ ɛbáka   ɔ   aŋɔ́á   hikəki,   makɔndʒɛ alɛ́(á)
ɛ́lɛ́ákɛ́na yatɛ́ ɛ-bá-aka   ɔ   aŋɔ́á   hikəkiə ma-kɔndʒɛ alɛ́á
invite   what 7SM-be-DUR SM.2SG PRO.2SG like   6-plantain or.rather

kón?
kóni/
9.rice

'Maintenant, à propos de la nourriture, si je veux t'inviter, qu'est-ce que tu aimerais, les plantains ou bien le riz ?'
'Now, with regards to food, if I were to invite you round, what would you like, plantains or rice?' [EO 966]

For the next example (95), the speaker said the *ɔ* preposition was good in the discourse context in which the food has already been mentioned and that omitting it would mean that it has not been mentioned, suggesting that the preposition marks an aboutness topic.

(95) (Why did they cook this food here?)

# (ɔ)	béɛ(bɛ)	bɛlábɔ́néá béɛbɛ,	bá	ná	taléáká	ɛlɔ́áyé
/#(ɔ)	béɛ(bɛ)	bɛ-lábɔ́néá béɛbɛ	bá	ná	taléá-aka	ɛlɔ́áyé
PREP	DEM.PROX.8 8-food		DEM.PROX.8	2SM	PST2	cook-DUR	for

ɛŋganda	yɛ	Básɛka.
ɛ-ŋganda	yɛ	básɛka/
9-holiday	ASS.9	Easter

'(Quant à cette nourriture-ci,) ils l'ont préparée pour la fête de Pâcques.'
(As for this food here,) they cooked it for Easter.' [PM 508]

5.3 *aba/áká*

A limited number of examples had *ábá* or *áka* as a marker preceding a left-peripheral aboutness/shift topic, which function elsewhere as the conditional marker 'if' and the related temporal marker 'when' (Dugast 1971: 211–212).[23] In the elicited example below, JO first gave the answer with *ábá*, and then rejected the same sentence with *ɔ* in place of *ábá*.

(96) | {ábá|*ɔ} | ɛŋganda | yɛ | buwɔ́, | yɛ́ | sá | bá yɛs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| /{ábá|*ɔ} | ɛ-ŋganda | yɛ | bu-wɔ́ | yɛ | sa | bá yɛ-ɛsɛ/ |
| {if|*PREP} | 9-celebration | ASS.9 | 14-death | 9SM | NEG | be 7-good |

'Quant à la fête du deuil, il n'était pas bon.'
'As for the funeral, it was not good.' [JO 1648–9]

---

[23]Note also *ébɛ* 'si, dans le cas où' ['if, in the case where'], which Dugast (1971: 213) lists as an alternative for *ába* (although she does not discuss whether it can be used in the same topic-marking function).

Directly after the above elicitation in the same session, JO first accepted the following sentence with ɔ alone and then suggested it with *ábá* preceding ɔ, thus combining the two strategies (97). At this point, the data are insufficient to be able to account for why both variants were accepted for (97) but not for (96).

(97) {ɔ|ábá} béɛbɛ   bɛlabɛ́nɛ́ bá ná   taléáká   ɛlɔ́áyɛ́ ɛŋganda
      /{ɔ|ábá} béɛbɛ   bɛ-labɛnɛa bá ná taléá-aka ɛlɔ́áyɛ́ ɛ-ŋganda
      PREP   DEM.PROX.8 8-food   2SM PST2 cook-DUR for   9-celebration

      yɛ   básɛk.
      yɛ   Básɛka/
      ASS.9 Easter

      'Quant à cette nourriture, on l'a preparé pour la fête du Pacques.' / 'Si c'est pour cette nourriture, on l'a preparé pour la fête du Pacques.'
      'As for this food, they cooked it for Easter.'   [JO 1650–1]

The use of a conditional marker for topics was also found in natural dialogue by other speakers. In the first example below, the marker *áká*, another form for 'if' (Dugast 1971: 212),[24] is first used before the speaker restarts using the prepositional strategy. In the second example, the speaker uses *ábá* 'if' with a prosodic break before the nominal (resulting in lowering of the final H tone via the utterance-final tone reduction rule; see Kerr 2024c: 72–74, 82).

(98) (Context: EE describes how the harvests differed between crops cultivated by women and crops cultivated by men.)
      ák(á) ɛlɔ́áyɛ́ ɔ   ... ɔ   ... **ɔtɔ́mbákɛna**   ɔ   **bɛ** ... bɛlɔŋɔté
      /áká ɛlɔ́áyɛ́ ɔ   ... ɔ   ... ɔ-tɔ́mbá-aka-ɛna ɔ   bɛ ... bɛ-lɔŋɔté
      if   for   PREP ... PREP ... INF-pass-DUR-REP PREP 8   ... 8-production

      bɛ́   balémɛndɔ́, bɛ́ sá áyɛ́ wúu(wu) ɔyáá háá;
      bɛ́   ba-lémɛndɔ́ bɛ́ sá áyɛ́ wúuwu   ɔyáá háaha/
      ASS.8 2-man   8SM NEG PRO.1 DEM.PROX.? ? DEM.PROX.LOC

      'Si on parle des... des... des cultures des hommes, il n'y a pas eu de la production cette fois-ci.'
      'If it's for... for... as for the... the mens' crops, there wasn't the production this time round.'   [EE 1700]

---

[24]Dugast (1971: 212, 318) transcribes what appears to be the same marker as *ékɛ*, translated as 'si, quand' ['if, when'].

(99) (Context: PB and PM are discussing how they were impacted by the
heavy rains that morning.)

 ába, ɔwámɛ   yɛ́ ná ká sɔ́álátákɛn.
/ábá ɔ-ámɛ   yɛ́ ná ka sɔ́álátákɛna/
 if   PREP-PRO.1 7SM PST2 AND whip.DUR.REP

'C'est moi que ça a fouetté.'
'It's me who got whipped by it.'   [PM 1784]

Compare these topical examples to the conditional example in (100) below,
where *ábá* marks the conditional protasis.

(100) **ábá** Yɔhánasɛ a   ná   ɛsasɔma nɛ́ák,   á   ndɔ náák.
/ábá Yɔhánɛsɛ a   ná   ɛ-sasɔma nɛ́á-aka a   ᴴndɔ náá-aka/
 if   1.Johannes 1SM PST2 7-cassava eat-DUR 1SM PRS be.sick-DUR

'Si Johannes va manger du manioc, il va tomber malade.'
'If Johannes eats cassava, he will get sick.'   [PM 2288]

This use of the same strategy to mark conditionals and topics has been found
in many signed and spoken languages (Haiman 1978, Traugott 1985, Janzen 1999,
i.a.) with Haiman (1978) arguing that there is an inherent link between condi-
tionality and topicality. Traugott (1985: 292) notes that markers of givenness are
one of five sources of conditional markers crosslinguistically, with examples in-
cluding Sanskrit *yád* 'topic, conditional' and Indonesian *kalua* 'if, as for'. This
analysis would suggest that the topic marker use in Tunen predates the use as
a conditional marker. I leave this for further research and retain the gloss 'if' in
this chapter without committing to 'if' as the basic or original meaning.

5.4 Multiple topics

Multiple topic expressions can appear in the left periphery. We already saw in (94)
that a frame-setting time adverbial can co-occur with a nominal topic. Another
type of multiple topic expression is illustrated in the natural speech example
from (101) below.

(101) á   móŋgolo matέ↓tέ, ɔ   máama   mə́súə́   moŋgolo
      /á   ma-óŋgolo ma-téᴸtéá ɔ   máama   mə́súə́   ma-óŋgolo
      PREP 6-mango   6-small   PREP DEM.PROX.6 PRO.POSS.1PL.6 6-mango

      má háaha   ɔ   bɔnɔŋ, ɔmá abáka   tɔ   siəkinə
      má háaha   ɔ   bɔ-noŋɔ, ɔmá a-bá-aka tɔ   siəkinə
      ASS.6 DEM.PROX.LOC PREP 14-country REL.6 1SM-be-DUR SM.1PL see.DUR

      háaha   (ɔ) uwəsú   bɔnɔŋ bɔ́ Kəməlún,
      háaha   ɔ   uwəsú   bɔ-nɔŋ bɔ́ kəməlúnə
      DEM.PROX.LOC PREP PRO.POSS.1PL.14 14.country ASS.14 Cameroon

      εbáka   ɔ   maáta hikəkiə?
      ε-bá-aka   ɔ   maáta hikəkiə/
      7SM-be-DUR SM.2SG PRO.OBJ.6 like

      'Les petites mangues, nos petites mangues-ci du pays ici au Cameroun,
      tu les aimes ?'

      'As for small mangoes, the small mangoes we get here in Cameroon, do
      you like them?'   [PM 950]

Here, we see multiple nominal topic expressions stacked in the left periphery.
Matching the pattern found in other languages (see e.g. Paul & Whitman 2017
and the other chapters in this volume), the first topic phrase (small mangoes) is
a superset of the second phrase (the small mangoes we get here in Cameroon),
showing a progressive narrowing down of the topic to which the comment re-
lates.

5.5 Contrastive topics

Unlike other languages like Rukiga (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2025 [this volume]),
contrastive topics generally have no special marking in Tunen, neither for sub-
jects nor objects. While the second topic may be optionally fronted, as indicated
by the comma notation in (102), we see in (103) and (104) that no marking is re-
quired, with the same S-Aux-O-V(-X) canonical word order used as in an all-new
thetic context.

(102) mέ   ndɔ manya ɔwá **Matέŋε** a   ka   hiəfulə fanak,   mba(,)
      /mε ᴴndɔ manya ɔwá Matέŋε a   ka   hε-əfulə fana-aka mba
      SM.1SG PRS know REL.1 *Martin* 1SM PST3 19-book read-DUR but

      Sεsília(,) mε lέ   ndɔ many.
      Sεsília   mε lε   ᴴndɔ manya/
      Cecile SM.1SG NEG PRS know

      'Je sais que Martin a lu le livre, mais quant à Cecile, je ne sais pas.'
      'I know that Martin has read the book, but I don't know about Cecile.'
                                                              [JO 907]

(103) (Context: You are a teacher explaining to the parents of the students
       Emanuel and David how each child did in their exams.)
       Ɛmánúɛ́lɛ   a   ná   tɔ́mbá, **Tɨ́witi** a   ná   kɔ.
       /Ɛmánúɛ́lɛ   a   ná   tɔ́mbá Tɨ́witi a   ná   kɔa/
       1.Emmanuel 1sm pst2 pass   1.David 1sm pst2 fail
       'Emmanuel a réussi, David a échoué.'
       'Emmanuel passed, David failed.'   [JO 533]

(104) (What did the woman hold? What did the man hold? (+ QUIS picture
       stimulus))
       (What happened? (+ QUIS picture stimulus))
        mɔndɔ́   a   ná   hiɔ́sɔ   itíɔ́. **muəndú** a   ná   ɔmbána itíɔ́.
       /mɔ-ndɔ a   ná   hɛ-ɔ́sɔ   itíɔ́ mɔ-əndú a   ná   ɔ-mbána itíɔ́/
       1-person 1sm pst2 19-spoon hold 1-woman 1sm pst2 3-knife   hold
       'L'homme tient une cuillière. La femme tient un couteau.'
       'The man held a spoon. The woman held a knife.'   [JO 629]

These data can be taken to evidence the lack of morphosyntactic marking sensitive to a feature of contrast that covers both topic and focus.

6 Functional passives (verbal participle *-átɔ*; *bá-* impersonals)

Passives are a common cross-linguistic strategy used to restructure the information in a way that demotes the agent. While many Bantu languages have a passive morpheme cognate with Proto-Bantu *-ʊ/-ɪbʊ* (Stappers 1967, Schadeberg 2003: 78–79, Guérois 2025), Tunen does not have any verbal marker of the passive, a property it shares with other North-Western Bantu languages (see also Li 2025 [this volume] for the lack of a passive morpheme in Teke-Kukuya [B77]). Sentences that may be passivised in other languages are often given as active sentences in Tunen. In active sentences, the agent must be expressed as the syntactic subject. However, if the speaker does not want to express the agent or the agent is unknown, there are two options which perform as functional equivalents of a passive construction: (i) the use of the verbal participle *-átɔ* in combination with the copular verb, and (ii) an impersonal construction with the class 2 subject marker *bá-*.

6.1 Verbal participles *-átɔ*

A copular construction with a verbal participle marked by the ending *-átɔ* can be used in order to avoid expressing the agent. The *-átɔ* form is analysed by Dugast (1971: 362) as a verbal adjective and by Mous (2003) as an adverb used as the complement of a copula to describe a resultant state, quality, or capacity. In my data, I gloss *-átɔ* as PTCP for "participle", as discussed in Kerr (2024c: 109). The participle follows either the *lɛ* or *bá* copula (Dugast 1971: 362), as illustrated in (105) below.

(105)   a.   hinyí   hɛ́   lɛ   sɔ́mb**átɔ**.
             /hɛ-nyí   hɛ́   lɛa sɔ́mba-átɔ/
             19-firewood 19SM be   cut-PTCP
             'Le bois de chauffage est coupé.'
             'The firewood is cut.'   [EE+EB 1671]

        b.   botɛ   báka   titɔ́**káto**.
             /bɔ-tɛ   bá-aka   titɔ́-aka-átɔ/
             14-savannah be-DUR   burn-DUR-PTCP
             'La savanne est brûlée.'
             'The savannah is burned.'   (Dugast 1971: 362, adapted)

An agent cannot be expressed using the comitative marker *na* 'with' in this verbal participle construction, in contrast to other Bantu languages that allow agent expression with *na* in passives, such as Rukiga (Asiimwe & van der Wal 2025 [this volume]), Makhuwa (van der Wal 2025 [this volume]) and Swahili and Shona (Fleisch 2005). When a *na*-phrase was added to (105a), it was interpreted as a discontinuous continuation of the theme object rather than as the agent (106).

(106)   # hinyí   hɛ́   lɛ   sɔ́mbátɔ   **na**   **Susan**.
          /hɛ-nyi   hɛ   lɛa sɔ́mba-átɔ na   Susána/
           19-firewood 19SM be   cut-PTCP   with 1.Susan
           int. 'Le bois du chauffage était coupé par Susanne.'
           'Le bois du chauffage et Susanne étaient coupés.'
           int. 'The firewood was cut by Susanne.'
           'The firewood and Susanne were cut.'   [EE+EB 1673]

(107)   (What wounded the hunter?)

        * a   lɛ   tanákátɔ   **na**   **mɔndɔ**.
          /a   lɛa tanáká-átɔ   na   mɔ-ndɔ/
           1SM be   wound.DUR-PTCP   with 1-person
           int. 'Il était blessé par l'homme.'
           int. He was wounded by a man.'   [JO 1615]

The participle *-átɔ* construction is therefore used when the agent is not expressed, and so constitutes a functional equivalent to the passive.

6.2 Impersonal *bá-*

If the agent is not known, an impersonal construction can also be used (Mous 2008). This construction is formed with the class 2 subject marker *bá-*, which does not agree with any referent in the discourse. Such *bá-* impersonals are found in many other Bantu languages and are commonly referred to in the Bantu literature as *ba*-passives (see e.g. Fleisch 2005, Asiimwe & van der Wal 2025 [this volume], Li 2025 [this volume], and Taylor 1999, the latter of whom shows *bá-* passives in the neighbouring Bantu language Nomaandé (A46, Cameroon)).

(108) (Context: QUIS picture of a child falling; you cannot see who pushed
       them. EK asks in Tunen 'What happened?')
       bá ná   mɔná lúmɔ́ na   mɔk   əlim.
       /bá ná   mɔ-ná lúmɔ́ na   mɔkɔ əlimə/
       2SM PST2 1-child throw with 3.stone behind
       'On a lancé une pierre à l'enfant par derrière.'
       'Someone threw a stone at the child from behind.'   [EO 439]

(109) (Context: EO is reporting a conversation he had with PM on the phone,
       telling PM that he is standing in front of the shop where car oil is sold
       so that PM can find him. 'I'm here, where they sell crude oil,')
       ...   ɔhá   **bá** ndɔ moló má   mátɔ́á sɛm.
       /[...] ɔhá   bá   ᴴndɔ moló má   ma-tɔ́á sɛma/
       ...   REL.LOC 2SM PRS 6.oil ASS.6 6-car sell
       '...où on vend les carburants pour les voitures.'
       '...where they sell oil for cars.'   [EO 1029]

(110) **bá** ná hinyí   sɔmb.
       /bá ná hɛ-nyi   sɔ́mba/
       2SM PST2 19-firewood cut
       'On a coupé le bois du chauffage.'
       'The firewood has been cut.'   [EE+EB 1672]

As with the participle construction, expression of the agent with *na* 'with' is not allowed in the *bá-* construction in Tunen (again a point of crosslinguistic variation within the Bantu family; Fleisch 2005).

(111) * **bá** ná hinyí   sɔmb na Susan.
   /bá ná hɛ-nyi   sɔ́mba na Susána/
   2SM PST2 19-firewood cut   with 1.Susan
   int. 'Le bois de chauffage était coupé par Susanne.'
   int. 'The firewood was cut by Susanne.'   [EE+EB 1674]

We therefore see that Tunen has two constructions that can be used for the demotion of the agent: the *-átɔ* participle form and the *bá-* impersonal construction. Bantu languages are known to vary as to whether and how the agent is expressed in a passive construction (Fleisch 2005). In Tunen, agent expression is not possible.

6.3 The middle prefix *bɛ́-*

Finally, note that Tunen has a prefix *bɛ́-* which Dugast (1971) treats as a passive and reflexive marker. Mous (2008) gives a detailed discussion of this marker, arguing that it is in fact a middle prefix, suggesting an etymology of a first person plural pronoun and noting a cognate form in other A40/A60 languages of Cameroon. In Kerr (2024c) I analyse it formally as a Voice head within the verbal spine. This middle prefix shows some functional overlap with the *bá-* impersonal construction, as seen in (112) below.[25]

(112) a. a-ná   **bé**-tóŋona   mɛkɔ.
      1SM-PST2 MID-transform 9:leopard
      'He transformed into a leopard.'

   b. **bá**-ná   mondo tóŋóná mɛkɔ.
      2SM-PST2 1:man transform 9:leopard
      'They transformed the man into a leopard.'
                          (Mous 2008: 310, adapted)

The overlap between these construction is to be expected considering the cross-linguistic overlap in middle/neutro-passives and passives (Guérois to appear). The interested reader can find more detail about the specific contexts of use of the *bɛ́-* prefix in Mous (2008).

---

[25]Note that the *bɛ́-* prefix is transcribed as *bé-* in Mous' 2003 orthography (see Kerr 2024c: Chapter 4 on orthographical differences between sources).

7 Referent expression in discourse

This section will show how the form of nominals in Tunen varies dependent on its information-structural status in the discourse. Referent expression across languages varies dependent on givenness/activation status, i.e. the cognitive notion of how accessible the referent is at a particular point of discourse, as affected by factors such as recency of mention and number of intervening referent expressions (Gundel et al. 1993, Ariel 2001). The general pattern is that more accessible referents are referred to with less linguistic encoding. As noted in previous work by Isaac (2007), Tunen follows this general pattern, with full noun phrases typically used to introduce new discourse referents, after which less material is used. The full scale of options for referent expression in discourse in Tunen is shown in (113) below, ordered from least to most linguistic encoding.

(113)   Tunen referent expression hierarchy
Zero/null > verbal marker > modifier only > non-emphatic pronoun >
emphatic pronoun > demonstrative > full DP > compound DP >
modified DP

The following extract from a story shows how after a subject is referred to with a compound DP (*muití émbóma* 'owner of the field'), it can then be referred to using the verbal subject marker only, that is the same noun class (class 1 SM *a*-).

(114)   a.   **muit(í) émbóma**   **a**   ná   wéɛya halén.
/mɔ-ití   H=ɛ-mbóma a   ná   wéɛya halɛ́na/
1-owner ASS=7-field   1SM PST2 PRO.1   catch
'Le propriétaire du champ l'a arreté.'
'The owner of the field caught her.'   [JO 1765]

b.   **a**   ná   wéɛya ákanána   ɔ   wáayɛ́ ɔmbɛl.
/a   ná   wéɛya ákánána   ɔ   wáayɛ́ ɔ-mbɛ́la/
1SM PST2 PRO.1   leave.APPL PREP 3.POSS.1 3-house
'Il l'a amené dans sa maison.'
'He took her into his house.'   [JO 1766]

While subjects are always expressed by a verbal subject marker (SM) in Tunen, objects can be zero-expressed, i.e. dropped. Unlike most Bantu languages, Tunen does not have any object marker slot on the verb (Kerr 2024c: 107), so there is no available object marker strategy. Again, this is a property common to North-Western Bantu languages that sets Tunen apart from the Eastern and Southern

Bantu languages in this volume (Polak 1986, van der Wal 2022: 69–70) and shows overlap with Grassfields Bantu (Bantoid) languages.

Object expression in Tunen varies dependent on givenness. When an object is first mentioned, a full/compound/modified DP is used. When the object is given (i.e. retrievable from the discourse context), it is often null, as in the example below where the object *bɛɔnɔ́* 'eggs' is first introduced with a DP and then dropped in the next clause, as indicated by '∅'.[26]

(115) a **bɛɔnɔ́** nɛakak, bɛ́ndɔ bá nɛak.
      /a **bɛ-ɔnɔ́** nɛaka-aka bɛndɔ bá ∅ nɛ́á-aka/
      1SM 8-egg make-DUR 2.person 2SM 8.OBJ eat-DUR
      'Elle pond des œufs; les hommes les mangent.'
      'She lays eggs; people eat them.'   [JO 1769]

Dropping given objects like this is very common. An example is provided in the dialogue below, where speaker PM introduces the referent *ibuŋuluəkə* 'car' and speaker EO uses zero-expression (116). The example set in (117) from a monologue instructional video shows the same zero-expression of an object when it is given, with the full DP being used at the end again (117e), where the need for re-activation can be considered in terms of both linguistic and temporal distance from the last explicit mention (the latter indicated by the timestamp next to each example). Note that the highly-accessible first-person singular subject is consistently referred to with a subject marker, which is the minimal means to express Tunen subjects.

(116) (Context: PM and EO perform the QUIS map task (PM gives instructions to EO).)

    a. mɔkátá wɔ́ bɛ́nɔ́mɛ wú búsíɔ́ **ibuŋuluəkə** yɛ́ nda báká
       /mɔ-kátá wɔ́ bɛ́nɔ́mɛ wɔ́ búsíɔ́ ɛ-buŋuluəkə yɛ́ nda bá-aka
        3-hand ASS.3 right ASS.3 front 7-car   7SM VEN be-DUR
       háha   ɔ matá.
       háaha   ɔ matá/
       DEM.PROX.LOC PREP bottom
       ''Il y a un véhicule en bas au premier embranchement à droite.'
       'There's a car at the bottom of the first road on the right.' [PM 671]

---

[26]The ability for objects to be unexpressed in Tunen raises questions about the transitivity of verbs like *nɛ́á* 'eat' in Tunen. An alternative analysis would be to say that these verbs have homophonous intransitive forms, in which case the object would not properly be considered to be "dropped" as it is not required in the verb's lexical entry. In this chapter, I use "zero expression" and "dropped" to mean that there is no object expression with a predicate that in non-given contexts takes an object.

b. ɛ́ɛ, mɛ́ ndɔ sin.
/ɛ́ɛ mɛ ᴴndɔ ∅ sinə/
yes SM.1SG PRS OBJ.7 see
'Oui, je le vois.'
'Yes, I see it.' [EO 672]

(117) (Context: JO demonstrates how to prepare the dish *kɔk*.)

a. ɛséáŋáka mɛ́ **hɛkɔkɛ** sɔ́áka
/ɛséáŋáka mɛ=ᴴ hɛ-kɔkɛ sɔ́á-aka/
now SM.1SG=PROC 19-kok wash-DUR
'Maintenant, je lave le kok.'
'Now, I wash the kok.' [JO 1343; 00:00:38]

b. mɛ́ **hɛkɔkɛ** sɔ́áka
/mɛ=ᴴ hɛ-kɔkɛ sɔ́á-aka/
SM.1SG=PROC 19-kok wash-DUR
'Je lave le kok.'
'I wash the kok.' [JO 1344; 00:00:58]

c. mɛ ná hɔ́á ɔ ɔsɔa
/mɛ ná hɔ́á ɔ ɔ-sɔ́á/
SM.1SG PST2 finish PREP INF-wash
'J'ai fini de laver.'
'I've finished washing (it).' [JO 1345; 00:01:34]

d. mɛ́ əmbəkínə ɔ mol
/mɛ=ᴴ əmbəkínə ɔ mol/
SM.1SG=PROC throw.REP PREP 6.oil
'Je (le) lance dans l'huile.'
'I'm throwing (it) into the oil.' [JO 1346; 00:01:38]

e. mɛ ná **hɛkɔkɛ** əmbínə ɔ molɔ́
/mɛ ná hɛ-kɔkɛ əmbínə ɔ molɔ́/
SM.1SG PST2 19-kok throw PREP 6.oil
'J'ai lancé le kok dans l'huile.'
'I've thrown the kok into the oil.' [JO 1347; 00:03:19]

While this strategy of zero-expression of given objects is common, it is not possible when the verb has an applicative extension, in which case overt expression of the object (by DP or pronoun) is syntactically required. Example (118) below shows that it is not grammatical to have an unexpressed recipient object with an applicativised verb form.

(118) yatɛ́ Malíá á ná {**láá**|***lɛná**} eé?
       /yatɛ́ Malíá á ná {lá|*léná} eé/
       what 1.Maria 1SM PST2 {say|say.APPL} Q
       int. 'Qu'est-ce que Maria a dit ?'
       int. 'What did Maria say?'   [JO 2448–9]

The consequence of the applicative's valency requirement means that pronominal expression is fairly frequent for recipient objects in the corpus, as the standard way of reporting speech in a story uses an applicative form of the verb 'say' (followed by the complementiser formed from -*séá* 'say'), which requires either a pronoun or lexical DP subject.

(119) ɔndʒɛlɛ́ a ná **wɛ́ɛya léná** asɛ   :   ...
       /ɔ-ndʒɛlɛ́ a ná wɛ́ɛya léná   a-séá [...]/
       3-lizard 1SM PST2 PRO.1 say.APPL 1SM-say [...]
       'Le lézard lui a dit : [...]'
       'The lizard told him: [...]'   [JO 2068]

(120) Yɔ́susu a ná **bɔ́bu léna** a   séá : [...]
       /Yɔ́susu a ná bɔ́bu léná   a-séá [...] /
       1.Jesus 1SM PST2 PRO.2 say.APPL 1SM-say [...]
       'Jésus leur a dit : [...]'
       'Jesus said to them: [...]'   [Luke 9.52: CABTAL 2019: 159]

This finding is significant as it challenges previous classification of Tunen's pronominal system, in which different pronominal forms are analysed as varying in degree of a loosely-defined notion of "emphasis" (Dugast 1971: 128–130, Isaac 2007: 49–51; Kerr 2024c: 97–100). The possible confound of the applicative verb form on pronoun use is a topic worth more detailed investigation, in order to better understand the extent to which pronoun form and frequency reflects referent accessibility rather than confounding factors such as valency requirements of the verb.

In summary then, Tunen referent expression follows crosslinguistic tendencies to use less material to refer to given/accessible referents (Gundel et al. 1993, Ariel 2001), with full noun phrases used to introduce discourse referents (Isaac 2007). Compared to other Bantu languages, Tunen is typical in its use of verbal subject markers without a lexical DP for given subjects, but unusual in lacking object markers and therefore having frequent zero-reference for objects. Pronouns can be used and are often found to meet valency requirements when the verb

has an applicative extension, suggesting a confound that could be investigated further. For our current purposes, we see that Tunen referent expression follows crosslinguistic tendencies to use more linguistic material to encode less accessible discourse referents.

8 Comparison to other Bantu languages

Before concluding, I will reflect briefly on how Tunen compares to other Bantu languages in its expression of information structure. We have seen in this chapter that Tunen is unusual for a Bantu language in the following respects: (i) grammatical roles are more important for word order than discourse roles; (ii) S-Aux-O-V-X (and not SVO) is the canonical word order; (iii) there is no morphological passive, (iv) there is no dedicated focus position, and (v) no object marking is permissible to refer to given objects. Furthermore, (vi) no inversion constructions are found, and (vii) there is no predicate doubling (unlike other Bantu languages in this volume; see also Güldemann & Fiedler 2022). These properties have been suggested before as areal features related to Tunen's position in the Northwest of the Bantu-speaking area. For example, Hamlaoui & Makasso (2015) report the same lack of inversion constructions and object marking for Basaá, another Cameroonian Bantu language of the A40 group, and Güldemann (2008) has proposed O-V-X as an areal syntactic property of the Macro-Sudan Belt (a proposed linguistic area which in which Tunen is spoken), as I discuss in Kerr (2024c: §6.7–6.8). Finally, in our own work on the BaSIS project we have shown that Tunen has no dedicated focus position and have argued that grammatical roles are less important than information-structural roles for determining Tunen's word order, which we have suggested is linked to its position in the Northwest (Kerr et al. 2023). Note that this reliance on grammatical role differs from the Cameroonian/Nigerian Bantoid language Naki studied by Good (2010), which was argued to show evidence for information structure as the principal determiner of word order, and is also distinct from Teke-Kukuya, which Li (2025 [this volume], 2024) shows has innovated a dedicated focus position (see also De Kind 2014 on Kisikongo (H16a), Bostoen & Mundeke 2012 on Mbuun (B87), and Koni Muluwa & Bostoen 2014 on Nsong (B85d)). This highlights the fact that there is variation in Northwestern Bantu and Bantoid languages in the expression of information structure, meaning that detailed studies of individual languages are required.

This is not to say however that Tunen has no similarities with other Bantu languages in its expression of information structure. Like other Bantu languages

in this volume, and as matches crosslinguistic patterns for focus marking, different cleft strategies are available to express focus (see e.g. Fiedler et al. 2010, Féry & Ishihara 2016), in which case there is typically an exhaustivity reading. Information focus can be left unmarked (for non-subjects). Also like the other languages and the crosslinguistically common pattern (Gundel 1988), topics can be left-peripheral, in which case they may be marked or unmarked. We also see overlap between Tunen and the zone B77 Bantu language Teke-Kukuya in Li (2025 [this volume]), which similarly lacks a morphological passive and has no inversion constructions. Finally, subject markers are the minimal means of subject expression, as in the other languages.

9 Summary

This chapter has shown that Tunen's canonical word order is S-Aux-O-V-X, which is compatible with various different information-structural contexts. Alternatives to the canonical S-Aux-O-V-X word order are possible for the expression of information-structural notions, with clefting a common strategy for expressing focus, and fronting a means of marking topics, which may additionally be marked by the preposition *ɔ* or *ábá/aka* 'if'. Finally, a short comparison between Tunen and other Bantu languages in terms of the expression of information structure was provided.

Further areas for research on Tunen information structure would be a more detailed corpus-based approach to frequencies of different word-order patterns, taking into account other potential factors such as prosodic weight; a prosodic analysis of potential correlates of information structure; a more detailed investigation of the use of conditional marking for introducing topics; and a more detailed study of fine-grained distinctions in referent expression, such as the use between basic and emphatic pronouns. A more detailed comparative study of languages of the Northwest as compared to Eastern and Southern Bantu languages would also be valuable, as well as a comparison of Northwestern Bantu and the Southern Bantoid languages of the Grassfields Bantu group.

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3...	Bantu noun class	PST1	first-degree past tense (a few moments ago)
1SG	1st person singular		
2SG	2nd person singular	PST2	second-degree past tense (hodiernal)
AND	anditive/thither		
APPL	applicative extension	PST3	third-degree past tense (yesterday and back)
ASS	associative marker (connective)		
		PST4	fourth-degree past tense (ancient past)
CONTR	contrast (gloss from Mous 2003)		
		PREP	preposition
COP2	non-human/inanimate copula	PRO	pronoun
DISC	discourse	PROC	procedural tense
EMPH	emphatic (greater contrast)	REP	repetitive suffix (action repeated)
EXCL	exclamation		
FR	French	SBJV	subjective mood
MID	middle	SM	subject marker
OBJ	object	VEN	venitive/hither

References

Ariel, Mira. 2001. Accessibility theory: An overview. In Ted Sanders, Joost Schilperoord & Wilbert Spooren (eds.), *Text representation: Linguistic and psycholinguistic aspects*, 29–88. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Asiimwe, Allen & Jenneke van der Wal. 2025. The expression of information structure in Rukiga. In Jenneke van der Wal (ed.), *The expression of information structure in Bantu*, 335–405. Berlin: Language Science Press. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14833614.

Bancel, Pierre. 1991. The three-way vowel harmony in Nen. *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* 17(2). 3–14. DOI: 10.3765/bls.v17i2.1659.

Bearth, Thomas. 2003. Syntax. In Derek Nurse & Gérard Philippson (eds.), *The Bantu languages*, 121–142. London, New York: Routledge.

Bianchi, Valentina, Giuliano Bocci & Silvio Cruschina. 2015. Focus fronting and its implicatures. In Enoch O. Aboh, Jeannette Schaeffer & Petra Sleeman (eds.) (Romance Languages and Linguistic Theory 8), 1–20. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. DOI: 10.1075/rllt.8.01bia.

Bostoen, Koen & Léon Mundeke. 2012. Subject marking, object-verb order and focus in Mbuun (Bantu, B87). *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 30(2). 139–154.

Boyd, Virginia Lee. 2015. *The phonological systems of the Mbam languages of Cameroon with a focus on vowels and vowel harmony*. Leiden University. (Doctoral dissertation).

CABTAL. 2019. *Hɛtɔnyɛ́ hiɔ́sɔ [Le Nouveau Testament en langue tunen]*. Yaoundé: Association Camerounaise pour la Traduction de la Bible et l'Alphabétisation (CABTAL).

Claudi, Ulrike. 1993. *Die Stellung von Verb und Objekt in Niger-Kongo-Sprachen: Ein Beitrag zur Rekonstruktion historischer Syntax*. Köln: Universität zu Köln.

Creissels, Denis. 2005. S-O-V-X constituent order and constituent order alternations in West African languages. *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* 31(2). 37–52. DOI: 10.3765/bls.v31i2.3189.

Creissels, Denis. 2018. Current issues in African morphosyntactic typology. In Tom Güldemann (ed.), *The languages and linguistics of Africa*, 712–821. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. DOI: 10.1515/9783110421668-007.

Cruschina, Silvio. 2021. The greater the contrast, the greater the potential: On the effects of focus in syntax. *Glossa: A journal of general linguistics* 6(1). 1–30. DOI: 10.5334/gjgl.1100.

De Kind, Jasper. 2014. Pre-verbal focus in Kisikongo (H16a, Bantu). *ZAS Papers in Linguistics* 57. 95–122.

Downing, Laura J. & Lutz Marten. 2019. Clausal morphosyntax and information structure. In Mark Van de Velde, Koen Bostoen, Derek Nurse & Gérard Philippson (eds.), *The Bantu languages*, 2nd edition (Routledge Language Family Series), 270–307. London & New York: Routledge.

Dryer, Matthew S. & Orin D. Gensler. 2005. Order of object, oblique, and verb. In Martin Haspelmath, Matthew S. Dryer, David Gil & Bernard Comrie (eds.), *The World Atlas of Language Structures*, 342–345. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dugast, Idelette. 1955. *Monographie de La tribu des Ndiki (Banen du Cameroun)*, vol. 1: Vie matérielle. Paris: Institut d'ethnologie Paris.

Dugast, Idelette. 1971. *Grammaire du Tunen*. Paris: Éd. Klincksieck.

Dugast, Idelette. 1975. *Contes, proverbes et devinettes des Banen: Sud-Ouest du Cameroun.* Paris: Société d'études linguistiques et anthropologiques de France.

Erteschik-Shir, Nomi. 2007. *Information structure: The syntax-discourse interface.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fanselow, Gisbert & Damir Ćavar. 2002. Distributed deletion. In Artemis Alexiadou (ed.), *Theoretical approaches to universals*, 65–107. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Féry, Caroline & Shinichiro Ishihara. 2016. Introduction. In Caroline Féry & Shinichiro Ishihara (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of information structure*, 1–18. Oxford: Oxford Unviersity Press.

Fiedler, Ines, Katharina Hartmann, Brigitte Reineke, Anne Schwarz & Malte Zimmermann. 2010. Subject focus in West African languages. In Malte Zimmermann & Caroline Féry (eds.), *Information structure: Theoretical, typological and experimental perspectives*, 234–257. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fleisch, Axel. 2005. Agent phrases in Bantu passives. In Friedrich Karl Erhard Voeltz (ed.), *Studies in African linguistic typology* (64), 93–111. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Gensler, Orin D. 1994. On reconstructing the syntagm S-Aux-O-V-Other to Proto-Niger-Congo. In Kevin E. Moore, David A. Peterson & Comfort Wentum (eds.), *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society: Special session on historical issues in African linguistics*, 1–20. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Linguistics Society. DOI: 10.3765/bls.v20i2.1486.

Gensler, Orin D. & Tom Güldemann. 2003. S-Aux-O-V-Other in Africa: Typological and areal perspective. Handout presented at a workshop on distributed predicative syntax (SPOVX), 4th World Congress of African Linguistics (WOCAL), Rutgers University.

Givón, Talmy (ed.). 1983. *Topic continuity in discourse: A quantitative cross-language study.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Good, Jeff. 2010. Topic and focus fields in Naki. In Ines Fiedler & Anne Schwarz (eds.), *The expression of information structure: A documentation of its diversity across Africa*, 35–68. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Gordon, Raymond G. Jr. 2005. Ethnologue: Languages of the world. https://www.ethnologue.com.

Guérois, Rozenn. 2025. Passive constructions. In Lutz Marten, Nancy C. Kula, Ellen Hurst & Jochen Zeller (eds.), *The Oxford guide to the Bantu languages.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Güldemann, Tom. 2007. Preverbal objects and information structure in Benue-Congo. In E. O. Aboh, K. Hartmann & Malte Zimmermann (eds.), *Focus strategies in African languages*, 83–112. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Güldemann, Tom. 2008. The Macro-Sudan belt: Towards identifying a linguistic area in Northern sub-Saharan Africa. In Bernd Heine & Derek Nurse (eds.), *A linguistic geography of Africa*, 151–185. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Güldemann, Tom & Ines Fiedler. 2022. Predicate partition for predicate-centred focus and Meeussen's Proto-Bantu "advance verb construction". In Koen Bostoen, Gilles-Maurice Schryver, Rozenn Guérois & Sara Pacchiarotti (eds.), *On reconstructing Proto-Bantu grammar*, 537–580. Berlin: Language Science Press.

Güldemann, Tom, Sabine Zerbian & Malte Zimmermann. 2015. Variation in information structure with special reference to Africa. *Annual Review of Linguistics* 1(1). 155–178.

Gundel, Jeanette K. 1988. Universals of topic-comment structure. In Michael Hammond, Edith A. Moravcsik & Jessica Wirth (eds.), *Studies in syntactic typology*, 209–242. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. DOI: 10.1075/tsl.17.

Gundel, Jeanette K., Nancy Hedberg & Ron Zacharski. 1993. Cognitive status and the form of referring expressions in discourse. *Language* 69. 274–307.

Haiman, John. 1978. Conditionals are topics. *Language* 54(3). 564–589.

Hamlaoui, Fatima. 2022. On subject inversion in Proto-Bantu relative clauses. In Koen Bostoen, Sara Pacchiarotti, Rozenn Guérois & Gilles-Maurice de Schryver (eds.), *On reconstructing Proto-Bantu grammar*, 497–537. Berlin: Language Science Press.

Hamlaoui, Fatima & Emmanuel-Moselly Makasso. 2015. Focus marking and the unavailability of inversion structures in the Bantu language Bàsàá (A43). *Lingua* 154. 35–64.

Harris, Alice C. & Lyle Campbell. 1995. *Processes that simplify biclausal structures* (Cambridge Studies in Linguistics). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 151–194. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511620553.008.

Heine, Bernd. 1976. *A typology of African languages based on the order of meaningful elements*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.

Heycock, Caroline. 2012. Specification, equation, and agreement in copular sentences. *The Canadian Journal of Linguistics/La revue canadienne de linguistique* 57(2). 209–240.

Higgins, Francis Roger. 1979. *The pseudo-cleft construction in English*. New York: Garland.

Isaac, Kendall Mark. 2007. *Participant reference in Tunen narrative discourse*. Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics. (MA thesis).

Janzen, Terry. 1999. The grammaticalization of topics in American Sign Language. *Studies in Language* 23(2). 271–306.

Kerr, Elisabeth J. 2020. The grammaticalisation of a specific indefinite determiner: Prenominal *-mɔ̀té* in Tunen. In Jenneke van der Wal, Heleen J. Smits, Sara Petrollino, Victoria A. S. Nyst & Maarten G. Kossmann (eds.), *Essays on African languages and linguistics: In honour of Maarten Mous*, 241–265. Leiden: African Studies Centre Leiden Occasional Publications.

Kerr, Elisabeth J. 2024a. *Item "Recordings and database on Tunen syntax and information structure" in collection "Bantu Syntax and Information Structure (BaSIS)". The Language Archive.* https://hdl.handle.net/1839/8f0f1a65-9a90-42e3-ae39-7bed93009b5a.

Kerr, Elisabeth J. 2024b. On OV and VO at the Bantu/Bantoid borderlands. In Yaqian Huang, Nina Hagen Kaldhol, Jun Jie Lim, Sharon Rose & Anthony Struthers-Young (eds.), *Selected Papers from the 53rd Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, 297–345. Berlin: Language Science Press. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.11210464.

Kerr, Elisabeth J. 2024c. *Tunen syntax and information structure*. Leiden University. (Doctoral dissertation).

Kerr, Elisabeth J., Allen Asiimwe, Patrick N. Kanampiu, Zhen Li, Ernest Nshemezimana & Jenneke van der Wal. 2023. Bantu word order between discourse and syntactic relations. *Linguistique et langues africaines* 9(1). DOI: 10.4000/lla.9496.

Kongne Welaze, Jacquis. 2010. Morphologie verbale du Tunen. Université de Yaoundé I. (DEA).

Koni Muluwa, Joseph & Koen Bostoen. 2014. The immediate before the verb focus position in Nsong (Bantu B85d, DR Congo): A corpus-based exploration. *ZAS Papers in Linguistics* 57. 123–135.

Lambrecht, Knud. 1994. *Information structure and sentence form: Topic, focus, and the mental representations of discourse referents* (Cambridge Studies in Linguistics 71). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511620607.

Li, Zhen. 2024. *Word order, agreement and information structure in Teke-Kukuya*. Leiden University. (Doctoral dissertation).

Li, Zhen. 2025. The expression of information structure in Teke-Kukuya. In Jenneke van der Wal (ed.), *The expression of information structure in Bantu*, 123–197. Berlin: Language Science Press. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14833608.

Louagie, Dana & Jean-Christophe Verstraete. 2016. Noun phrase constituency in Australian languages: A typological study. *Linguistic Typology* 20(1). 25–80.

Maho, Jouni Filip. 2003. A classification of the Bantu languages: An update of Guthrie's referential system. In Derek Nurse & Gérard Philippson (eds.), *The Bantu Languages*, 639–651. London: Routledge.

Maho, Jouni Filip. 2009. *NUGL online: The online version of the new updated Guthrie list, a referential classification of the Bantu Languages.* http://goto.glocalnet.net/mahopapers/nuglonline.pdf.

Malchukov, Andrej, Martin Haspelmath & Bernard Comrie. 2010. Ditransitive constructions: A typological overview. In Andrej Malchukov, Martin Haspelmath & Bernard Comrie (eds.), *Studies in ditransitive constructions: A comparative handbook*, 1–64. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter Mouton. DOI: 10.1515/9783110220377.1.

Marten, Lutz & Jenneke van der Wal. 2014. A typology of Bantu subject inversion. *Linguistic Variation* 14(2). 318–368.

Mikkelsen, Line. 2011. Copular clauses. In Klaus von Heusinger, Claudia Maienborn & Paul Portner (eds.), *Semantics* (Handbooks of Linguistics and Communication Science (HSK 33.2)), 1805–1829. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Morimoto, Yukiko. 2000. *Discourse configurationality in Bantu morphosyntax.* Stanford: Stanford University. (Doctoral dissertation).

Morimoto, Yukiko. 2006. Agreement properties and word order in comparative Bantu. *ZAS Papers in Linguistics* 43. 161–187. DOI: 10.21248/zaspil.43.2006.290.

Mous, Maarten. 1986. Vowel harmony in Tunen. In Koen Bogers, Harry van der Hulst & Marten Mous (eds.), *The phonological representation of suprasegmentals: Studies on African languages offered to John M. Stewart on his 60th birthday*, 281–295. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.

Mous, Maarten. 1997. The position of the object in Tunen. In Déchaine Rose-Marie & Vincent Manfredi (eds.), *Object positions in Benue-Kwa*, 123–137. The Hague: Holland Academic Graphics.

Mous, Maarten. 2003. Nen (A44). In Derek Nurse & Gérard Philippson (eds.), *The Bantu languages*, 283–306. London: Routledge.

Mous, Maarten. 2005. The innovative character of object-verb word order in Nen (Bantu A44, Cameroon). In Koen Bostoen & Jacky Maniacky (eds.), *Studies in African comparative linguistics with special focus on Bantu and Mande*, 411–424. Tervuren: Royal Museum for Central Africa.

Mous, Maarten. 2008. Voice in Tunen: The so-called passive prefix *Bé-*. *Studies in Slavic and General Linguistics* 33. 303–312.

Mous, Maarten. 2014. TAM-full object-verb order in the Mbam languages of Cameroon. *ZAS Papers in Linguistics* 57. 72–94. DOI: 10.21248/zaspil.57.2014.420.

Nikitina, Tatiana. 2011. Categorial reanalysis and the origin of the S-O-V-X word order in Mande. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics (JALL)* 32. 251–273. DOI: 10.1515/JALL.2011.009.

Nshemezimana, Ernest & Jenneke van der Wal. 2025. The expression of information structure in Kirundi. In Jenneke van der Wal (ed.), *The expression of information structure in Bantu*, 271–334. Berlin: Language Science Press. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14833612.

Paul, Waltraud & John Whitman. 2017. Topic prominence. In Martin Everaert & Henk van Riemsdijk (eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Syntax*, 2nd edn., 1–31. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. DOI: 10.1002/9781118358733.wbsyncom065.

Polak, Louise. 1986. Les infixes ('préfixes objets') du bantou et leur reconstruction. *Africana Linguistica* 10. 365–421.

Sande, Hannah, Nico Baier & Peter Jenks. 2019. The syntactic diversity of SAuxOV in West Africa. In Peter Jenks Emily Clem & Hannah Sande (eds.), *Theory and Description in African Linguistics: Selected Papers from the 47th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, 667–701. Berlin: Language Science Press. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.3367194.

Sasse, Hans-Jürgen. 1987. The thetic/categorical distinction revisited. *Linguistics* 25(3). 511–580.

Sasse, Hans-Jürgen. 1996. *Theticity*. Working paper 27. Cologne: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität zu Köln.

Satre, Scott Alan, Jacquis Kongne Welaze, Joseph-Alain B. Batouan, Samuel Bete & A. Flore Sebineni. 2008. *Précis d'orthographe pour La Langue Tunen*. Yaoundé: Association Camerounaise pour la Traduction de la Bible et l'Alphabétisation (CABTAL).

Schadeberg, Thilo C. 2003. Derivation. In Derek Nurse & Gérard Philippson (eds.), *The Bantu languages*, 1st edn., 71–89. London: Routledge.

Skopeteas, Stavros, Ines Fiedler, Samantha Hellmuth, Anne Schwarz, Ruben Stoel, Gisbert Fanselow, Caroline Féry & Manfred Krifka. 2006. *Questionnaire on Information Structure QUIS* (Interdisciplinary Studies on Information Structure 4). Potsdam: University of Potsdam.

Stappers, Leo. 1967. Het passief-suffix *-u-* in de Bantoe-talen. *Africana Linguistica* 3. 137–145.

Taylor, Carrie. 1999. Pronouns in Nomaande. Yaoundé: SIL Cameroon.

Traugott, Elizabeth C. 1985. Conditional markers. In John Haiman (ed.), *Iconicity in syntax: Proceedings of a symposium on iconicity in syntax, Stanford, June 24–26, 1983*, 289–308. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

van Leynseele, Hélène. 1977. Essai d'analyse historique des voyelles et consonnes du Tunen (Bantu A.44).

Van de Velde, Mark. 2022. The AMAR mechanism: Nominal expressions in the Bantu languages are shaped by apposition and reintegration. *Linguistics* 60(3). 899–931.

van der Hulst, Harry, Maarten Mous & Norval Smith. 1986. The autosegmental analysis of reduced vowel harmony systems: The case of Tunen. In Frits Beukeman & Aafke Hulk (eds.), *Linguistics in the Netherlands 1986*, 105–122. Dordrecht: Foris.

van der Wal, Jenneke. 2022. *A featural typology of Bantu agreement.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

van der Wal, Jenneke. 2025. The expression of information structure in Makhuwa-Enahara. In Jenneke van der Wal (ed.), *The expression of information structure in Bantu*, 453–509. Berlin: Language Science Press. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14833618.

van der Wal, Jenneke, Allen Asiimwe, Patrick N. Kanampiu, Elisabeth J. Kerr, Zhen Li, Amani Lusekelo, Nelsa Nhantumbo & Ernest Nshemezimana. 2025. On the expression of information structure in Bantu. In Jenneke van der Wal (ed.), *The expression of information structure in Bantu*, 1–51. Berlin: Language Science Press. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14833604.

Yoneda, Nobuko. 2011. Word order in Matengo (N13): Topicality and informational roles. *Lingua* 121(5). 754–771. DOI: 10.1016/j.lingua.2010.11.008.