

Non-Verbal Predication in Kihavu (JD52)

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Introduction

Introduction (1/3)

Non-verbal predication, like in (1), exhibits a wide range of cross-linguistic variability.

(1) Mugisha is a teacher.

We report today on how Kihavu (Bantu, JD52; Maho 2009) expresses non-verbal predication.

Main takeaways

- Kihavu has both stage- and individual-level copulas.
- Kihavu collapses the distinction between specificational and equational sentences.
- But, Kihavu uniformly distinguishes identificational sentences

We compare our findings with some closely related Bantu languages, which show similar—but not identical—morphological and syntactic variation (Gibson and Guérois, 2019; Schneider-Zioga and Mutaka, 2015; Schneider-Zioga, 2018) and speculate about some structural issues.

Roadmap

1. Introduction
2. Language Background
3. Overview of nonverbal predication
4. Nonverbal predication in Kihavu
5. Micro-typology and Analysis
6. Conclusion

Language Background

Kihavu (JD52; Maho 2009) — or Haavu — is a Great Lakes Bantu language spoken on the island of Idjwi and surrounding areas in South Kivu DRC. Kihavu is closely related to other languages spoken on the shores of Lake Kivu, including Mashi (JD53) and Kinyarwanda (JD61). (See Birusha 1985 for a grammatical description.)

The data presented here comes from novel fieldwork in Kansas City, where we have been working with a native speaker who represents a large community of Bashi/Bahavu/Congolese refugees from South Kivu in Kansas and Missouri. Elicitations were conducted largely using Kiswahili as the elicitation language.

Overview of nonverbal predication

Higgins 1979

Since Higgins (1979), we distinguish four types of non-verbal clauses:

1. “Pure” predication
2. Specification
3. Equation
4. Identification

A great deal of subsequent work has attempted to “reorganize” and/or collapse some of these distinctions (Moro, 1997; Mikkelsen, 2005; den Dikken, 2006) a.m.o. For descriptive purposes, we’ll assume this four-way classification.

Pure predication (1/1)

In predicational clauses, the post-copular element describes a property of the subject.

(2) Mugisha is sick / tall / on a boat / a doctor

Broadly, predicational sentences answer the question *What is Mugisha?*

Specification (1/1)

In specificational clauses, the pre-copular clause introduces a “set”, and the post-copular element specifies one member of the set.

(3) The teacher is Mugisha

Again, broadly, specificational sentences answer the question, *Who is the teacher/...?* It is also possible to answer with an *inverse specificational* sentence.

(4) Mugisha is the teacher.

Equation (1/1)

In equational clauses, two referential expresses are “equated”; they’re asserted to be identical.

- (5) a. Superman is Clark Kent
- b. Mary’s mother is Susan’s mother, too

Finally, identificational clauses typically involve a demonstration (i.e., pointing).

(6) [pointing] That's Mugisha.

Interim summary

In English, all four types of nonverbal predication are morphologically identical, using the copula *be*.

	English	Kihavu
Predication	<i>be</i>	<i>-li/-ba</i>
Specification	<i>be</i>	<i>-o</i>
Equation	<i>be</i>	<i>-o</i>
Identification	<i>be</i>	\emptyset

As we show below, Kihavu makes multiple morphological distinctions between these categories.

Nonverbal predication in Kihavu

Predication in Kihavu (1/3)

Kihavu has two copulas for expressing “pure” predication. *-li* is used for “temporary” and/or non-inherent predication \rightsquigarrow **stage-level** copula.

- (7) Mugisha a-li mu-lwala
Mugisha 1SM-COP-_{LI} 1AGR-sick
'Mugisha is sick.'
- (8) Mugisha a-li i=Kalehe
Mugisha 1SM-COP-_{LI} LOC=Kalehe
'Mugisha is in Kalehe.'

Predication in Kihavu (2/3)

Inherent or permanent properties are expressed with the copula *-ba* \rightsquigarrow
individual-level copula

(9) Mugisha a-ba Muhavu
Mugisha 1SM-COP-_{BA} Muhavu
'Mugisha is Muhavu.'

(10) Mugisha a-ba mu-ganga
Mugisha 1SM-COP-_{BA} 1AGR-doctor
'Mugisha is a doctor (his whole life; it's his job).'

Predication in Kihavu (3/3)

The copulas *-li* and *-ba* are both clearly (nondefective) verbs.

- They inflect for tense/aspect
- They reflect agreement with the subject (the first DP).

This contrasts with related Bantu languages which often use the “defective” invariant copula *ni* for individual-level predication. *Ni* does not inflect for tense/aspect/agreement (cf, Kinande (JD42) as reported in Mutaka 2010)

It also contrasts with languages that lack a distinct lexical item for predication, and instead uses tonal contrasts (e.g., Cuwabo Guérois 2015)

Specification in Kihavu (1/4)

Specificational sentences use a form of the relative pronoun *-o* (*ye* with class 1 nouns).

(11) mw-alimu w-ani ye-∅ Murhulla
1NC-teacher 1AGR-POSS 1AGR-RP Murhulla
'My teacher is Murhulla.'

(12) ba-turanyi b-ani ba-o Murhulla na Mugisha
2NC-neighbor 2AGR-POSS 2AGR-RP Murhulla and Mugisha
'My neighbors are Murhulla and Mugisha.'

Specification in Kihavu (2/4)

The relative pronoun is not diagnostically verbal: it doesn't inflect for tense/aspect. Indeed, non-present tense specificational sentences may appear with a copula as well:

- (13) o-mw-alimu ye-∅ w-a-lire Mugisha
1AUG-1NC-teacher 1AGR-RP 1SM-PST-COP-_{LI} Mugisha
'The teacher was Mugisha.'

We'll use the term "relative pronoun" per Bantuist convention, but we're agnostic as to the category of *-o*. As we discuss later, we assume it is a focus marking strategy.

Specification in Kihavu (3/4)

In Specificational clauses, the relative pronoun reflects agreement with the *second* DP (Béjar and Kahnemuyipour, 2017; Schneider-Zioga, 2018). Compare the specificational vs. predicational sentences below

(14) *Specification*

gi-shambo ye- \emptyset omw-ana
7NC-thief 1AGR-RP 1NC-child

‘The thief is the child.’

(15) *Predication*

gi-shambo ki-li omw-ana
7NC-thief 7SM-COP_{-LI} 1NC-child

‘The thief is a child.’

Specification in Kihavu (4/4)

The relative pronoun agrees with the first DP in inverse specificational sentences. Again, (16) is an appropriate answer to *Who is the thief?*

- (16) Mugisha ye-∅ gi-shambo
Mugisha 1AGR-RP 7NC-thief
'Mugisha is the thief'

Equation in Kihavu (1/2)

The relative pronoun also appears in equational sentences.

- (17) nyina wa Mugisha ye-∅ (na) nyina wa
1NC.mother 1SM.LNK Mugisha 1SM-∅ (and) 1NC.mother 1SM.LNK
Murhulla
Murhulla
'Mugisha's mother is also Murhulla's mother.'

Equation in Kihavu (2/2)

As with specification, equation can involve agreement with the post-copular element, as well as an “inverse” order.

- (18) o-mw-iirhanyi ky-o na gi-shambo
1AUG-NC-killer 7AGR-RP also 7NC-thief

‘The killer is also the thief.’

- (19) o-mw-iirhanyi ye-∅ na gi-shambo
1AUG-NC-killer 1AGR-RP also 7NC-thief

‘The killer is also the thief.’

In other words, equational sentences look exactly like specificational sentences.

Identification in Kihavu (1/2)

Identificational clauses do not have an overt copula (or have a null copula).

(20) [Pointing across the street]

olira Mugisha
1NC.DEM Mugisha

'That's Mugisha.'

Identification in Kihavu (2/2)

Identificational sentences appear to be invariant for tense.

(21) [A man just walks past us and then goes into the store. Who was that?]

olira Mugisha

1NC.DEM Mugisha

'That was/is Mugisha.'

Summary (1/5)

We summarize our findings for Kihavu below

	English	Kihavu
Predication (SL)	<i>be</i>	<i>-li</i>
Predication (IL)	<i>be</i>	<i>-ba</i>
Specification	<i>be</i>	<i>-o</i>
Equation	<i>be</i>	<i>-o</i>
Identification	<i>be</i>	\emptyset

Reiterating our finding with respect to tense:

- **Predication** : The copulas *-li* and *-ba* both inflect for tense.
- **Specification/Equation** : The relative pronoun appears in front of the a copular form *-li* (past) and *-ba* (future)
- **Identification** : There is *never* overt copular material in identificational sentences.

Summary (3/5)

	Present	Past
Predication (SL)	<i>-li</i>	<i>-li</i>
Predication (IL)	<i>-ba</i>	<i>-ba</i>
Specification	<i>-o</i>	<i>-o -li</i>
Equation	<i>-o</i>	<i>-o -li</i>
Identification	\emptyset	\emptyset

Summary (4/5)

We find near maximal distinctions between categories:

- Across Higgins's (1979) four categories, Kihavu has three mechanisms for nonverbal predication
- Kihavu groups together specification and equation (Heycock and Kroch, 1999, 2002; Rothstein, 2001; den Dikken, 2006; Béjar and Kahnemuyipour, 2017) *pace* (Mikkelsen, 2005)
- Specification (and possibly equation) canonically involve an “reversal” of arguments consistent with den Dikken (2006) and Mikkelsen (2005) (among many others).

- Unlike what others have found, identification does not get grouped together with any other category (contra e.g., Moltmann 2013).

Micro-typology and Analysis

Micro-typological comparison (1/2)

Looking at some closely related languages, we find considerable overlap.

	Kihavu) (JD52)	Kinande (JD42)	Nyala East (JE32f)	English	Spanish
Predication (SL)	<i>-li</i>	<i>-li</i>	<i>-li</i>	<i>be</i>	<i>estar</i>
Predication (IL)	<i>-ba</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>-li</i>	<i>be</i>	<i>ser</i>
Specification	<i>-o</i>	<i>-o(/ni)</i>	<i>nje</i>	<i>be</i>	<i>ser</i>
Equation	<i>-o</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>nje</i>	<i>be</i>	<i>ser</i>
Identification	∅	<i>-o</i>	<i>nje</i>	<i>be</i>	<i>ser</i>

Micro-typological comparison (2/2)

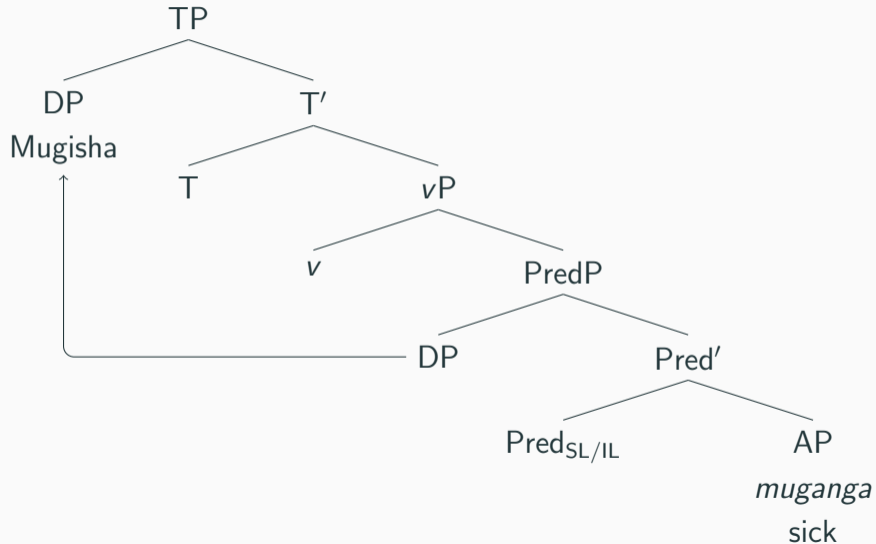
- There is a general division between Predication and the other three categories.
- Specification, equation, and identification tend to group together—the exception being Kihavu.

Predication structures (1/2)

We'll posit a (fairly) standard view of predication structures for Kihavu:

- There is a distinct Pred head embedded under a light verb *v*.
- The stage/individual distinction comes from choosing different Pred relations.
- The combination of *v*+Pred results in either *-li* or *-ba* (Finholt, 2022)

Predication structures (2/2)



Specification and focus (1/3)

Specification (and sometimes equation) are thought to involve focus semantics (Heggie, 1988). This seems to be true in Kihavu as well: *-o* also appears in focus constructions.

(22) inde w-a-fire
who 1SM-PST-die
'Who died?'

(23) a-ba-turanyi **ba-o** ba-a-fire
2AUG-2NC-neighbor 2AGR-RP 2SM-PST-die
'The NEIGHBORS died.'

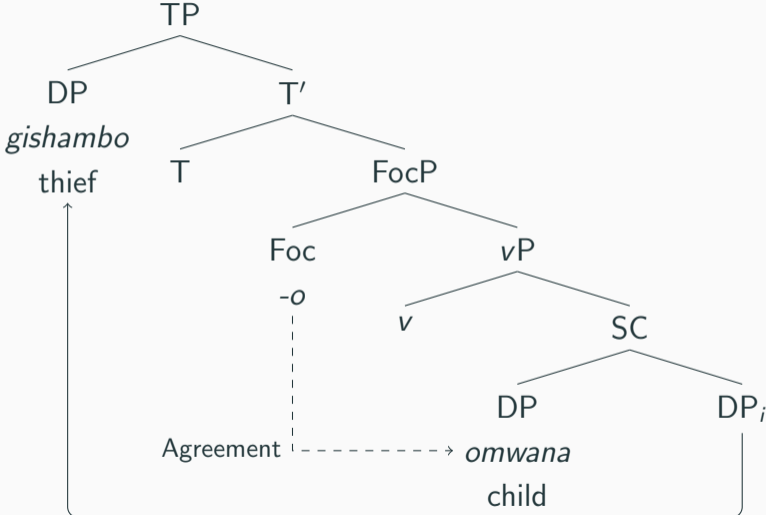
-o is always preverbal and obligatorily agrees with the (sole) argument in front.

Specification and focus (2/3)

This overlap supports the idea that specificational (and equational) sentences are fundamentally focus constructions.

- We assume predicate fronting (den Dikken, 2006) and
- The Focus head *-o* agrees with the element in focus, which may remain low in the structure, or promote to spec-TP in inverse specification.
- FocP is situated above the verbal domain, below Tense (Ndiyarigaje, 1999)

Specification and focus (3/3)



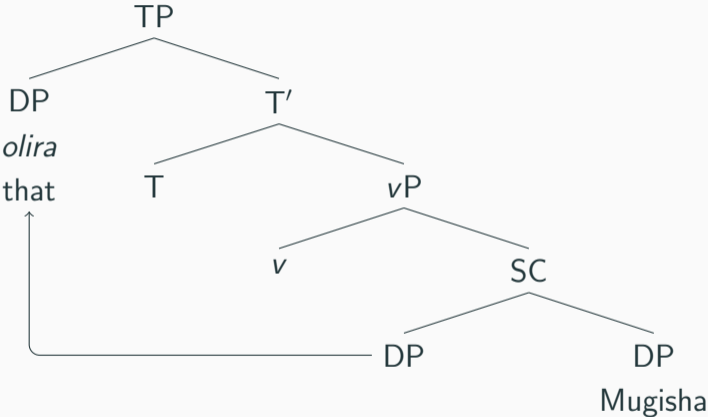
Structure for identification (1/3)

Identification is typically subsumed as a “form” of specification (Mikkelsen, 2005; den Dikken, 2006; Moltmann, 2013).

- This is supported by the cross-linguistic picture: identificational sentences often use the same strategies as specification, i.e., focus marking as in Kinande and Nyala East.

However Kihavu treats Identification as distinct from Specification/Equation. We assume that identification lacks the FocP headed by *-o*—but it may have some other FocP.

Structure for identification (2/3)



Structure for identification (3/3)

We concede that the internal structure of identification is obscure to us.

However, given that other languages do have explicit material in these constructions, based on crosslinguistic analogy, we conclude that there is some functional material in identificational sentences.

Conclusion

Conclusion

- We find that Kihavu makes near maximal distinctions in non-verbal predication, differing from related languages in have a null-copula strategy for identificational sentences.
- As the outlier among closely related languages, identificational sentences remain mysterious to us.
- We intend to further explore patterns of syncretism across languages. Which categories tend to collapse, and why?

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