



Nondums in Bantu languages: Types, variation and paths of change

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Bantu languages are known to be verb centered (Nurse 2008: 21). Many categories including TAM but also polarity, focus, deixis, taxis, etc. are typically expressed on the verb. In a Bantu language like Kirundi ‘not yet’ is rendered entirely by verbal affixes, i.e., a combination of the standard negative prefix and the inceptive prefix occurring before and after the subject prefix, respectively.

In Kirundi negative ‘not yet’ is symmetrical with affirmative ‘already’, as seen in (1). However, in many Bantu languages ‘not yet’ constructions involve isolated negatives which cannot be formally linked to an affirmative form. Based on a convenience sample of 100 languages this paper investigates ways of expressing ‘not yet’ in Bantu. At least three types can be distinguished. The first involves the use of a negative phasal adverb, as seen in (2). The second makes use of a persistive auxiliary void of negative morphology, illustrated in (3). The third combines standard negative marking with a (dedicated) tense marker, as in (4), a (dummy) auxiliary, as in (5), or both, as in (6). If symmetrical negation is involved, we investigate whether *nondums* always pair with iamitives, the Kirundi case, or whether other pairings are attested.

After identifying these and possibly other types, we zoom in and make hypotheses about possible paths of change through attested micro-variations in the expression of ‘not yet’.

- (1) Kirundi JD62 (Meeussen 1959 cited in Schadeberg 1990: 7-9)
 - a) ‘already’
tu-ráa-kúbuur-a
SP1PL-INC-turn-FV
‘Have we already turned’
 - b) ‘not yet’
ńti-tu-ráa-kúbuur-a
NEG-SP1PL-INC-turn-FV
‘We are not turning yet’
- (2) Luvale K14 (Horton 1949: 162)
kanda vamanyaise kulya
NOT_YET SP2-finish-SBJV 15-eat-INF
‘They have not yet finished eating’
- (3) Manda N11 (Bernander 2017: 263)
a-akona ku-lemb-a
SP1-PERS 15-write-INF
‘she hasn’t written yet’ (litt.: ‘she is still to write’)
- (4) Matuumbi P13 (Odden 1996: 66)
ni-ná-kalaang-a ǀj
SP1SG-NOT.YET-fry-FV NEG
‘I haven’t yet fried’



- (5) Shona S10 (Fortune 1955: 353)
kwete, ha-ta-ti ta-i-on-a
no NEG-SP1PL-PST-AUX SP1PL-PST-OP9-see-PART
'No, we have not yet seen it.'
- (6) Shangaji P312 (*fieldnotes*)
si-ná-tthí o-cuúw-a
NEG.SP1SG-INC-AUX 15-know-INF
'I did not yet know'

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