Ikalanga: A Grammar Sketch
By Rose M. Letsholo - Version 1.0

1. General Information

Ikalanga is a Bantu language spoken in northern Botswana and in southern and south western parts of Zimbabwe. In Botswana, Ikalanga is spoken in the north eastern and central districts of the country[1]. The dialect described here often referred to as Chililima, is spoken in the central district of Botswana. Ikalanga, which is closely related to Shona, is usually described as one of the dialects in the Shona cluster of languages. Shona is the major language group of Zimbabwe, one of Botswana's neighbors. In Guthrie (1967, 71 Vol 4) Ikalanga is classified as an S.16 language, an area that includes other southern Bantu languages such as Setswana, Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa, Venda and Tsonga.

2. Grammar
2.1 Phonology
2.1.1 Ikalanga Sound System

According to Mathangwane (1999) Ikalanga comprises of fifty nine consonant sounds (see consonant chart 1) and a simple vowel system with only five members. Secondary articulation plays a significant role in distinguishing phonemic sounds in Ikalanga. The secondary articulatory features that Ikalanga employs include aspiration, prenasalization, labialization, and the breathy voice feature.

---

[1] I am grateful to Joyce Mathangwane for reading this draft and giving me helpful comments.

(1) Consonants (adapted from Mathangwane, 1999: 45)

	labial	Lab. dental	dental	alveolar	Palato alveolar	palatal	Labio velar	velar	glottal
Stops Plain	p b		d					k g	
Aspirated	p <p >		t	t <t >				k	
Velarized stops	p k b g								
Fricatives plain		F v		S z					< >
Affricates plain	(p s) (b z)	t s d z		t d <t >					
Aspirated		t s t s							
Glottal									
Nasals	m			n					
Prenasalized Stops	mb		nd					g	
Affricate					nd				
Labialized stops				d				k g	
Labialized Aspirated				(t)				k <k >	
Affricates			t s d z						
Nasal									
Prenasal								g	
Fricative				s z					
Trill				r					
lateral				l					
approximants						j	W <w >		

(2)   Vowels
i   u

                o

    a

2

(3) Orthographic convention

sound	grapheme	sound	grapheme	sound	grapheme
p	p	k	kw	n	n
p	ph	k	khw	nd	nj
p	ph	k	khw	nd	nd
p k	pkh	g	g	g	ng
p s	ps	g	gw		ny
b g	bg	d	j		ng
b z	bz	f	f		ngw
b	b	v	v	g	ngw
t	t	s	s	r	r
t	th	s	sw	l	l
t	th	z	z		b
t	thw	z	zw	j	y
t s	ts		sh	w	w
t s	tsh		shw	w	wh
t s	tsh		zh	i	i
t s	tshw	t	ch	u	u
d	d	t	ch		e
d	dw	d	j		o
d z	dz	h	h	a	a
d z	dzw		h		
k	k	m	m		
k	kh	mb	mb		

2.1.2 Tone

Tone is grammatical in Ikalanga: it brings about lexical as well as clausal distinctions. Ikalanga has two basic tones: Low (usually unmarked on syllables since it is regarded as the default tone) and High indicated as [′]. The following are examples which indicate lexical differences brought about by tone:

(4)
símba   wild cat
simba   strength
sína   to not have
sina   a building block
mbíla   rock-rabbit
mbila   type of baby food

One of the most important grammatical distinctions that is brought about by tone in Ikalanga is distinguishing between subject relative clauses and declaratives. Like other

Bantu languages, Ikalanga does not have relative pronouns. Relativization is achieved through the use of morphemes (relative markers) that are morphologically identical to subject markers. The relative marker takes the same form as the subject marker because the choice of this morpheme is determined by the head noun that is being relativized just as the subject marker is determined by the head noun of the subject XP. Relative markers differ from subject markers in that they have low tones (example 5a) while subject markers have high tones (example 5b).

(5a) Nlúmé   wa-ká- ízêla
      man$_1$ RM$_1$-past-sleep
      The man who is sleeping
(5b) Nlúmé   wá-ka-ízêla.
      Man$_1$ SA$_1$-past-sleep
      The man is sleeping.

2.1.3 Syllable structure

The syllable structure of Ikalanga is predominantly CV. Although the syllable structure of Ikalanga is predominantly CV, there are instances where just the syllable nucleus occurs by itself, that is, a V or a syllabic consonant. This occurs particularly word initially although there are some instances of medial V's. Examples are given below illustrating both CV and V structures:

(6) n-nda   farm   n - CV
     su-nda   push   CV - CV
     vi-ka   avoid (e.g. a blow)   CV - CV
     thu-ma   sew   CV - CV
     ze-u-la   tear at food   CV – V - CV
     i-ku-lu   ring worm   V – CV - CV

As evident from the consonant chart numbered (1), Ikalanga makes use of various secondary articulatory processes to come up with a rich inventory of phonemically distinctive consonant sounds. These processes include aspirating stops, making stops breathy, simultaneous apiration and labialization of affricates, and labializing fricatives (see example 7). Ikalanga also has remnant consonant clusters. These include [pk], [bg] and [ps] and [bz]. Examples of words illustrating these are found in (8).

(7)   t úla   morula fruit   thúlá   bump against

t úla	morula fruit		thúlá	bump against
p andá	pillar		panda	ache
khúlá	to have a milk tooth come out		kúlá	grow
p ázhá	forehead		pázhá	have diarrhea
dwilila	continue		dililila	pour for
chálá	alive		jílá	cloth
kwálá	write		kálá	weigh
gwalá	coward		gala	sit

(8)   pkhá   dry up
        chibgá   a lanky dog
        psá   new
        bzá   burp

2.1.3 Vowel Harmony

Vowel harmony in Ikalanga occurs in both nouns and verbs. It is conditioned by the type of vowel in the verb and noun roots. Mathangwane (1999) divides Ikalanga vowels into two groups as follows: /i, u, a/ form a group she refers to as corner vowels; /e, o/ are mid vowels. Mathangwane (1999) further observes that for the most part, verb roots in Ikalanga do not allow mixed vowels from these two sets, for example, a verb root that has the vowel /u/ in the first syllable (and/or second syllable) is not likely at the same time to have /e/ or /o/ (see examples 9 & 10). However, there are exceptions to this rule as shown by the examples in (11)[2].

(9)   Set 1 /i, u, a/

        chuluk-a   jump
        landul-a   report a death
        bingan-a   visit one another
        milik-a   stand up
        pambuk-a go off course
        palul-a   tear

(10)   Set 2 [e, o] mid vowels
        monelek-a   procrastinate
        vonek-a   light
        tendek-a   point

---

[2] It is possible that these words that are exceptions to the vowel harmony rule are borrowings from Setswana, the national language of Botswana.

medzek-a   implant
womelel-a   harden/become dry

(11)
    phakel-a   get up early/do things early
    pharel-a   plaster

When verbal extensions such as the applicative morpheme, passive and causatives attach to verbal roots, the form of these extensions is determined by the type of vowel in the root, that is, the vowel extension harmonizes with the verb root vowel. Notice that the pattern described by Mathangwane (1999) whereby corner vowels and mid-vowels do not occur in the same word plays out in the following examples.

(12) The applicative: -il- (for/to/at)
    Verb root   Verb root + applicative extension –il/el
    bik-a   bik-il-a   cook for
    suk-a   suk-il-a   wash for
    labuk-a   labuk-il-a   run for
    pos-a   pos-el-a   throw for
    sendedz-a   sendedz-el-a   kindle fire for
    kokodz-a   kokodz-el-a   knock for

(13) Passive + applicative (*i-gw/e-gw*)
    bik-a   bik-igw-a   be cooked for
    sund-a   sund-igw-a   be pushed for
    bat-a   bat-igw-a   be held for
    leb-a   leb-egw-a   be talked
    pomb-a   pomb-egw-a   be tied for

(14) The causative: *-is-* (cause to do)
    kotama   kotam-is-a   cause to bend
    deluk-a   deluk-is-a   cause to descend
    pharel-a   pharel-es-a   cause to plaster
    bik-a   bik-is-a   cause to cook
    sund-a   sund-is-a   cause to push

The reciprocal morpheme *–an-* behaves differently from the other suffixes in that the vowel *–a-* does not harmonize to the vowel of the verb root.

(15) Corner vowels [i, u, a]
Verb root   reciprocal
ambul-a   ambul-an-a   undress each other
sumbik-a   sumbik-an-a   hide each other
milidz-a   milidz-an-a   lift each other
ambadz-a   ambadz-an-a   dress each other

(16) Mid vowels [e, o]

potelek-a   potelek-an-a   circle each other
pelek-a   pelek-an-a   accompany each other

2.2   Morphology
2.2.1 Affixation

Ikalanga, like other Bantu languages creates new words mainly from the process of derivational morphology. As such, the basic form of the Ikalanga word consists of prefix(-es), a root and some suffixes. The following patterns are observed for nouns and for verbs:

(17) Nouns
a. root   -teme   gourd
b. prefix + root   i-teme   gourd
c.prefix + root + suffix i-te-nyan-a   small gourd
d. prefix + root   zwi-teme   gourds
e. prefix +root + suffix zwi-te-nyan-a small gourds

In nouns, usually the prefix signals the class the noun belongs to. A more detailed discussion of the noun class can be found in section 2.4.1.

Verbs

The Ikalanga verb is quite complex since it can accommodate up to four prefixes and three to four suffixes. The verb root takes prefixes which constitute of the subject agreement morpheme (SA), the tense marker, the negative marker (NEG) and the object marker (OM) if the lexical object NP is omitted. In imperatives, WH constructions and relatives, the negative marker, which is *si-* follows the SA while in declarative constructions the negative marker *a-* precedes the SA.

(18) U-si-n-sek-e.

SA-present-NEG.-OM-laugh-Subjunctive
Don't laugh at him/her.

(19) BoNeo   a-ba-zo-n-sek-a.
      Neo$_{2a}$ NEG.-SA$_{2a}$-pres.-OM-laugh-FV
      Neo and others did not laugh at him/her.

As already pointed out in section (2.4.) the verb root also takes several affixes, some of which co-occur (see Mathangwane 2001 for the patterns of co-occurrence of these affixes). Verbal suffixes include applicatives, causatives, passives, reciprocals, and intensifiers.

(20) Applicative + reciprocal
      bat-il-an-a
      hold-APPL-RECIP.-FV
      hold for each other

(21) Applicative + passive
      bat-il-igw-a
      hold-APPL-PASS.-FV
      to be held for

(22) Causative + reciprocal
      pharel-is-an-a
      plaster-CAUSE-RECIP.-FV
      cause one another to plaster

(23) Intensifier + reciprocal
      lingis-is-an-a
      look- INT.-RECIP.-FV
      look at one another intensely

2.2.2 Reduplication

Reduplication in Ikalanga is used in adjectives to express degree or intensity and in verbs to indicate repetition of action. Only the roots are reduplicated.

(24) **Adjectives**
      -lefu-lefu
      Tall-tall
      Very tall

      -shaba-shaba
      Red-red

Very red

(25) **Verbs**
linga-linga
look-look (look repeatedly)
nunga-nunga
pick up-pick up (pick up repeatedly)

2.3   Basic word order

Although Ikalanga allows some flexibility in argument placement, its basic word order is SVO. Like other Bantu languages, Ikalanga is a pro-drop language as illustrated by example (26d). The identity of the dropped subject NP is recoverable from the obligatory subject agreement marker.

(26a)   Neo wa-ka-bona   Nchidzi.
Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_{1a}$-past-see Nchidzi$_{1a}$
'Neo saw Nchidzi.'   SVO

(26b)   Neo   wa-ka-*m*-bona.
Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-past-OM-see   SOV
Neo saw him/her.

(26c)   Wa-ka-bona   Nchidzi,   Neo.   VOS
SA$_1$-past-see   Nchidzi$_{1a}$ Neo$_{1a}$
She saw Nchidzi, Neo

(26d)   Wa-ka-bona   Nchidzi.   *pro*VO
SA$_1$-past-see   Nchidzi$_{1a}$
She saw Nchidzi.

(26e)   *Neo -ka-bonaNchidzi.
Neo$_{1a}$-past-seeNchidzi$_{1a}$
'Neo saw Nchidzi.'

(26e) is ungrammatical because the SA has been omitted[3]. In Ikalanga, OMs are preferred in discourse over full pronouns. Unlike the SA, the OM is not obligatory when the lexical NP is present. However, when the identity of the lexical object NP has been established (example 26a), the OM can be used instead of the object NP as shown in example (26b).

---

[3] The only time when the SA may be phonologically omitted, is in word games such as in (i).
 (i)   Neo   ka gala   pasi. Nchidzi   ka kama   ngombe.
         Neo$_{1a}$ past-sit   down Nchidzi$_{1a}$ past-milk cows.
This is a special usage such as the use of the present tense to focus on the present existence of works created in the past describe in English, e.g. *Jane Austen uses a sharp satiric wit to expose follies, hypocrisies and false truths*. (cited in Huddleston, R. and Pullum, G.K. 2002. *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

It is also possible for both the OM and the lexical object NP to co-occur as illustrated in (27).

(27) Neo wa-ka-*m*-bona,   Nchidzi.
     Neo_{1a} SA_1-past-OM-see $Nchidzi_{1a}$ SOV
     Neo saw him, Nchidzi.

This is used for emphatic meaning so that (27) means *Neo saw Nchidzi*, and not someone else.

Ikalanga patterns with other Bantu languages such as Swahili (see Mohammed 2001) in that modifiers come after the head they modify. The Ikalanga example (28) and the Swahili example (29) illustrate.

(28) Koloi   shaba   ya tate   bangu   ya-ka-wa

     $vehicle_9$ red   of father   mine SA_9-past-roll

     My father's red car had an accident.

(29) kikapu   kikubwa

     basket   big

2.4 Parts of speech

Ikalanga has a richer inventory of nouns and verbs than it does categories such as adverbs, adjectives and prepositions.

2.4.1   Ikalanga Nouns

It is traditionally assumed that Bantu languages have 21 noun classes since Proto-Bantu had 21 noun classes (Doke 1954). Thus, Ikalanga supposedly has 21 noun classes too although classes 12, 13, and 19 are missing from the noun class system. Noun classes play an important role in the grammatical system of Ikalanga. Each noun class is associated with a set of prefixes that signal grammatical agreement between the noun and

its modifiers. In addition, the verbal morphology that indicates grammatical agreement between the verb and the subject NP is determined by the class that a noun belongs to.

(30) Class 1   Class 2
    *n*lume   'man'   *ba*lume 'men'
    *m*baki   'builder'   *ba*baki 'builders'
    *n*diyi   'priest'   *ba*diyi 'priests'
    *n*gwanana 'girl'   *ba*nana 'girls'

    *n*lume   i-*wo*yu   'this man'   *ba*lume i-*baba* 'these men'
    *m*baki   i-*wo*yu   'this builder' *ba*baki i-*baba* 'these builders'
    *n*diyi   i-*wo*yu   'this priest'   *ba*diyi i-*baba* 'these priests'
    *n*gwanana i-*wo*yu 'this girl'   *ba*nana i-*baba* 'these girls'

(31) Class 3   Class 4
    n-ti   'tree'   *mi*-ti   'trees'
    n-siba 'feather'   *mi*siba   'feathers'
    n-tshiba 'neck'   *mi*-tshiba 'necks'
    n-sholo 'head'   *mi*-sholo 'heads'

    n-ti   i-*woyu* 'this tree'   *mi*-ti   i-*yeyi* 'these trees'
    n-siba i-*woyu* 'this feather' *mi*siba   i-*yeyi* 'these feathers'
    n-tshiba i-*woyu* 'this neck'   *mi*-tshiba i-*yeyi* 'these necks'
    n-sholo i-*woyu* 'this head'   *mi*-sholo i-*yeyi* 'these heads'

(32) Class 5   Class 6
    zhani   'leaf'   *ma*-zhani   'leaves'
    gumbo 'leg'   *ma*-kumbo   'legs'
    jasi   'coat'   *ma*-jasi   'coats'
    gudo   'baboon'   *ma*-kudo   'baboons'

    zhani   i-*leli* 'this leaf'   *ma*-zhani   i-*yawa* 'these leaves'
    gumbo i-*leli* 'this leg'   *ma*-kumbo i-*yawa* 'these legs'
    jasi   i-*leli* 'this coat'   *ma*-jasi   i-*yawa* 'these coats'
    gudo   i-*leli* 'this baboon' *ma*-kudo   i-*yawa* 'these baboons'

(33) Class 7   Class 8
    chi-dwi   'knee'   *zwi*-dwi   'knees'
    chi-bululu 'lizard'   *zwi*-bululu 'lizards'
    chi-mata 'fool'   *zwi*-mata   'fools'
    i-kokola   'elbow'   *zwi*-kokola 'elbows'

    chi-dwi   i-*chechi* 'this knee' *zwi*-dwi   i-*zwezwi* 'these knees'

chi-bululu i-*chechi* 'this lizard'   *zwi*-bululu i-*zwezwi* 'these lizards'
chi-mata i-*chechi* 'this fool'   *zwi*-mata i-*zwezwi* 'these fools'
i-kokola i-*chechi* 'this elbow'   *zwi*-kokola i-*zwezwi* 'these elbows'

(34) Class 9   Class 10
shumba   'lion'   shumba   'lions'
lori   'car'   lori   'cars'
ngombe   'cow'   ngombe   'cows'
nyoka   'snake'   nyoka   'snakes'

shumba   i-*yeyi*   'this lion'   shumba   i-*dzedzi* 'these lions'
lori   i-*yeyi*   'this car'   lori   i-*dzedzi* 'these cars'
ngombe   i-*yeyi*   'this cow'   ngombe   i-*dzedzi* 'these cows'
nyoka   i-*yeyi*   'this snake'   nyoka   i-*dzedzi* 'these snakes'

(35) Class 11
li-kuni   'log'   li-kuni   i-*gogu* this log
li-kuta   'fence'   li-kuta   i-*gogu* this fence
li-boko   'arm'   li-boko   i-*gogu* this arm
li-bante 'belt'   li-bante   i-*gogu* this belt

(36) Class 14
bushwa   'grass'   bushwa i-*gogu*   this grass
busi   'smoke'   busi i-*gogu*   this smoke
bugwa   'pass'   bugwa i-*gogu*   this pass
busimbe   'laziness'   busimbe i-*gogu* this laziness

(37) Class 15
ku-izela   'to sleep'   ku-izela   i-*koku* 'to sleep this way'
ku-ngwa   'to suckle'   ku-ngwa i-*koku*   'to suckle this way'
ku-poteleka 'to circle'   ku-poteleka i-*koku* 'to circle this way'
ku-ma   'to stand'   ku-ma   i-*koku*   'to stand this way'

(38) Class 16
pa danga   'by the kraal'   pa danga   i-*papa* 'right by the kraal'
pa benkele 'by the shop'   pa benkele i-*papa* 'right by the shop'
pa nti   'by the tree'   pa nti   i-*papa* 'right by the tree'
pa guma   'by the wall'   pa guma i-*papa*   'right by the wall'

(39) Class 17
ku ngumba   'at the house'   ku ngumba *iko* 'there at the house'
ku gwizi   'at the river   ku gwizi i-*ko*   'there at the river
ku nzi   'at home'   ku nzi i-*ko*   'there at home'
ku matombo 'at the hills'   ku matombo i-*ko* 'there at the hills'

(40)   Class 18
mu ngwina   'in the hole   mu ngwina i-*momu*   'in this hole
mu galase   'in the glass'   mu galase i-*momu*   'in this glass'
mu tshima   'in the well'   mu tshima i-*momu*   "in this well'
mu maboko 'in the hands'   mu maboko i-*momu* 'in these hands'

(41)   Class 20[4]

ku-isana	'very small boy'	ku-isana i-*koku*	'this very small boy'
kw-ananyana	'very small child'	kw-ananyana i-*koku*	'this very small child'
ku-budzana	'very small goat'	ku-budzana i-*koku*	'this very small goat'
ku-ngondzwana	'very small cow'	ku-ngondzwana i-*koku*	'this very small cow'

(42)   Class 21
zhi-ngwana 'enormous child'   zhi-ngwana i-*leli*   'this enormous child'
zhi-budzi   'enormous goat'   zhi-budzi   i-*leli*   'this enormous goat'
zhi-gumbo 'enormous foot'   zhi-gumbo i-*leli*   'this enormous foot'
zhi-boko   'enormous hand'   zhi-boko i-*leli*   'this enormous hand'

2.4.2   Ikalanga Pronominal forms

Ikalanga has three types of pronouns: full pronouns (i.e. independent ones), affixes (i.e. subject markers and object markers that cannot stand on their own and thus attach to the verb), and shortened pronouns, which attach to prepositions (e.g. 'with' or conjunctions such as 'and').

(43)   Full pronouns

imi   'I/me'
iswi   'we/us'
iwe   'you' (sg)
ingwi   'you' (pl)
iye   'he/she, him/her'
ibo   'they/them'

(44)   SA's and OM's

Subject	Object	
Nd-	ndi-	'I/me'
t-	ti-	'we/us'
u-	ku-	'you' (sg.)
m-	mu-	'you' (pl)
u-	n/m-	'he/she, him/her'

---

[4] The dimunitive morpheme *ku-* is no longer productive.

ba-   ba-   'they/them'

SAs and OMs in use

(45)   Nd-a-ka-bika.
       SA_1-past-cook
       'I am cooking/ I cooked'.

(46)   Wá-ká-ndi-bik-il-a.
       SA_1-past-OM-cook-APPL-FV
       He/she cooked for me.

(47)   Wa-ká-bika.
       SA_1-past-cook
       'You $_{(sg.)}$ are cooking/ You cooked'.

(48)   Wá-ká-ku-bik-il-a.
       SA_1-past-OM-cook-APPL-FV
       'He/she is cooking for you/ He/she cooked for you'.

(49)   Ma-ka-bika.
       SA_1-past-cook
       'You$_{(PL)}$ are cooking/ You cooked.'

(50)   Ba-ka-bika.
       SA_1-past-cook
       'They are cooking/ They cooked'.

(51)   Ta-ka-ba-bik-il-a.
       SA_1-past-OM-cook-APPL-Fv
       'We are cooking for them/We cooked for them'.

Shortened pronouns that require a host:

After the preposition *na* 'with'
(52a) Izha   na-mi.
       come with-me
(52b) *Izha na-imi.
       Comewith-me

After conjunctions such as 'and'
(53a)   Neo   na-we   mo-enda ku minda.
        Neo$_{1a}$ and-you SA_1-go   to farm
        You and Neo are going to the farm.

(53b)   *Neo   na iwe   mo-enda ku minda.
        1a.Neo   and   you   1.SA-go to farm
        You and Neo are going to the farm.

2.4.3   Ikalanga Verbs

Like other Bantu verb forms, the Ikalanga verb is structurally complex. It consists of three parts: a) the verb prefixes b) the root c) the suffixes

2.4.3.1   The root

This is the part of the verb that is free of affixes, that is, prefixes, infixes or suffixes. It is the part which cannot further be reduced morphologically (Mohammed 2001). It constitutes the lexical meaning of the verb. All verb stems end in a vowel –*a* in Ikalanga but possibly in Bantu in general.

    Examples:
(54) zan-a play
        shak-a   want

2.4.3.2   Prefixes + verb stem
Unlike in English, verbal inflectional (i.e grammatical morphemes) morphology in Ikalanga precedes the verb. Some of the verbal prefixes in Ikalanga include the subject agreement marker, the tense morpheme, aspect, negation, and conditionals, sometimes even adverbs (Letsholo 2004). These prefixes attach to the verb in specific orders, that is they do not pile harphazardly on the verb. For example, the SA has to come before the tense marker *ka-* as in (55). If the tense marker precedes the SA, then the sentence is ungrammatical as in (56).

    Examples:
(55) BoNeo   ba-ka-bik-a.
        Neo$_{2a}$ SA$_2$-past-cook-FV
        Neo and others cooked/Neo and others are cooking.

(56) *BoNeo   ka-ba-bik-a
        Neo$_{1a}$ past-SA$_1$-cook-FV
        Neo and others did not cook.

(57) Bo-Neo a-ba-zo-bik-a.
        Neo$_{2a}$ Neg-SA$_2$-past-cook-FV
        Neo and others did not cook.

(58)* Bo-Neo ba-a-zo-bik-a.
Neo$_{2a}$ SA$_2$-Neg-past-cook-FV
Neo and others did not cook.

(59) Bo-Neo a-ba-to-so-bik-a.
Neo$_{2a}$ Neg-SA$_2$-pres-never-cook-FV.
Neo and others never ever cook.

The prefixes discussed above can not be separated from the verb, that is, nothing other than other prefixes can be inserted between them and the verb.

2.4.3.3 Verb + suffixes

Ikalanga is rich in derivational morphology. The Bantu verb in general takes on more than one suffix. These suffixes are word deriving suffixes, that is, once added to the verb, the verb acquires a new meaning. Suffixes that can be added to the Ikalanga verb include: a. passive (-w/-iw) b. stative (-ik-). c. the applicative (–il-/-el-) d. causative (-is-) e. intensive (-isis-), f. reciprocal (-an-) g. reversive (-ulul-),

The passive –w/–iw-.

(60) Nyama   ya-ka-bik-iw-a   ndi   Neo.   (bika)
Meat$_9$ SA$_9$-past-cook-FV   by   Neo$_{1a}$
The meat was cooked by Neo.

Stative verbs

(61) Itilo   cha-ka-vun-ik-a.   (vuna)
Chair$_7$ SA$_7$-past-break-stative-FV
The chair is broken.

   The Causative

(62) Fojo   i-no-koshol-es-a   ngwana. (koshola)
Cigarrette$_9$ SA$_9$-pres-cough-CAUS-FV   1.child
Cigarrettes make the child cough.

The applicative

(63) Neo   u-no-suk-il-a   ngwana zwiambalo. (suka)
Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-pres.-wash-appl-FV   child$_1$ clothes$_{10}$
Neo is washing clothes for the child.

The Reciprocal

(64) Bana   ba-no-zomol-an-a.   (zomola)
Children$_2$ SA$_2$-pres-pinch-rec.-FV
The children are pinching each other.

The Intensive

(65) Mbisana   wa-ka-ling-isis-a ini?   (linga)
Boy$_1$ SA$_1$-pres-intens-FV what
What is the boy looking so intensely at?

The Reversive

(66) Sung-unul-a   nsungo   iwoyu.   (sunga)
Tie- reversive-FV   rope   this
Untie this rope.

2.5   Tense/Aspect

It is commonly believed that Bantu languages (for example, Zulu, Sotho and Swahili among others) have a five tense system. It is not obvious that this is the case in Ikalanga. The Bantu five tense system includes the following:

1. Present
2. Remote past
3. Immediate past
4. Immediate future
5. Remote future

It is not clear what the dividing line is between the remote and immediate past. Some scholars (e.g. Doke, 1954) suggests that events that occurred yesterday/day before yesterday are part of the immediate past. Events that happened two days before yesterday are referred to in the remote past. Although Ikalanga has the immediate and remote past, it does not have the same distinction in the future tense.

1. The present progressive

The present progressive is indicated by the morpheme *–o-/-no-* (illustrated in example

(67) as well as by the morpheme –*aka*-, illustrated in example (68). The morpheme *aka*- is used with verbs that express states of affairs, i.e. stative verbs. Note that this morpheme is usually used to denote the remote past.

(67) Neo   u-no-enda.
       Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-pres-go
       Neo is going/leaving.

(68) Neo   wa-ka-izela
       Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-past-sleep
       Neo is sleeping.

The Past Tense :

Ikalanga has two past tense forms: the immediate past and the remote past.

The Immediate Past

The immediate past is expressed by adding –*a*- to the subject agreement marker. It denotes activities that happened not so long ago.

(69) Neo   wa-enda.
       Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-TNS/asp-go
       Neo has gone.

The remote past

It is not very clear what the difference between the immediate past and the present perfect tense is. What is clear however, is that in Ikalanga if the tense morpheme –*ka*- is added to the sentences above, then these sentences cannot mean the action happened earlier on today. It can only mean the action happened a long time ago. It is not clear how long ago exactly, but at least some time has gone by since the action occurred.

(70) Neo   w-a-ka-enda.
       Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-TNS/asp-go
       Neo left.

The Past Continuous

The past continous is expressed by adding the auxiliary morpheme –*be*- to the remote past tense marker –*ka*-. Notice that when –*be*- is added, the sentence changes from being a simple clause to a complex one, i.e. a second agreement marker is observed. The appearance of the second agreement marker suggests that the morpheme –*be*- has full

18

verbal status or that at some point in the history of the language this morpheme had the status of a full verb and therefore required its own agreement morpheme just like any verb.

(71) Neo   wa-ka-be-e-bika.
     Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-past-been-SA$_{1a}$-cook
     Neo was cooking.

The Future Tense

Ikalanga uses the long *–noo-* to indicate futurity.

(72) Neo   u-noo-enda.
     Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-will-go
     'Neo will go'.

Future continuous

The future continuous is expressed by adding the auxiliary morpheme –be- to the future tense marker –oo-.

(73) Neo   u-noo-be-e-bika.
     Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-will-be-SA$_1$-cook.
     Neo will be cooking.

The copula verb in Ikalanga

There are two common ways of expressing the copula in Ikalanga: through the subject agreement marker or through tone. I illustrate each use below.

   a.   SA as copula

(74a) Neo   ú-léle.
      Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-sleep
      Neo is sleeping.
(74b) Nyoka   í-ndefú.
      Snake$_9$ SA$_9$-long
      The sanke is long.

   b.   through tone
(75a) Neo   ngwánána

19

      Neo   girl

      Neo is a girl.

(75b) Nlume   ńlefú

      Man_1 $tall_1$

      The man is tall

Notice that when tone is used to express the copula, a high tone is placed on the first syllable of the predicate i.e. on *ngwa-* in (75a) and on the syllabic *ń* in (75b). This tone placement contrasts with the following example where the first syllable of the attributive adjective gets a low tone.

(75c) Nlume   nlefú

      Man_1 $tall_1$

      The tall man

The copula can also be expressed through *ndi-/-i-* in constructions involving focus such as responsens to WH constructions involving focus. (76c) as a response to (76a) is infelicitous.

(76a) Ndiboani   Neo ba-a-ka-bona?

      Foc-who Neo_{1a} WH_{agr2}-SA_1-past-see

      $Who_{(PL)}$ did Neo see?

Response:

(76b) Ndi   boNchidzi.

      Foc $Nchidzi_2$

      It is Nchidzi and others.

(76c) *BoNchidzi.

      $Nchidzi_2$

      It is Nchidzi and others.

(77a) Ini   ikoku?

      Foc-what   this

      What is this?

(77b)   I-zhani.

       Foc.-$leaf_5$

       It is a leaf.

(77c)   *Ndi-zhani.

       It is-$leaf_5$

       It is a leaf.

Ikalanga Adverbs

Ikalanga has an impoverished adverb system. The rarest type of adverb is the adverb of manner.

Adverbs modifying verbs (adverbs of frequency)

(78) Neo   u-no-bika   kanjinji.
      Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-pres.-cook   many times
      Neo cooks frequently.

Adverbs of manner
Other examples : *shomanana* 'a little', *tikinini* 'little', *kwazo-kwazo* 'entirely/altogether'

(79) Neo   u-noo-bika   nyama   zubuyanana
      Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-will-cook meat$_9$ well/properly/nicely
      Neo will cook the meat well.

Adverbs of time

Some examples of time adverbs: *madeekwana* 'late afternoon/evening', *busiku* 'at night', *mangwanana* (*maphakela*) 'morning', *zhulo* 'day before yesterday', *ntolo* 'a long time ago', *ntolotolo* 'a long long time ago', *sangwenu* (*saku*) 'right now', *shule kwa ipapo* 'after that'

(80) Nchidzi   wa-ka-pedza   ikwele   makenyi.
      Nchidzi$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-past-finished   school$_7$ last year
      Nchidzi finished school last year/next year (context determines whether last year or next)

Adverbs of place
These are mainly locatives:
(81a) pa nti   by the tree
(81b) mu nsha   in the compound
(81c) ku nzi   at home

Degree adverbs

(82) Mbisana   u-no-izela   kwazo
     Boy$_1$ SA$_1$-pres-sleep   much/a lot
     The boy sleeps too much.

Prepositions

Prepositions can be used as adverbs. Simple prepositions include: *na* 'with', *sa* 'as/like',

the locative ones: *pa* 'by', *mu* 'in', *ku* 'at, to/towards', *ndi/nge* 'by', *a* 'of'

a. *na*/*ne* meaning 'by means of'

(83) Mbisana   wa-ka-baya   mbga   ne   mpanga.
     Boy$_1$ SA$_1$-past-stab dog$_9$ with   knife$_3$
     The boy stabbed the dog with a knife.

b. *na*- 'with'

(84) Nzhuzha   u-no-shaka   ku zana   na-we.
     young man$_1$ SA$_1$-pres.want to dance/play with-you
     The young man wants to dance with you.

c. *ne* meaning 'on account of/because of'
(85) Nda-fa   ne zhala.
     SA$_1$-die   of hunger$_9$
     Literally, I'm dying of hunger "I am starving".

d. *ne* meaning 'by the agency of'
(86) Mme   ba-noo-bulawa   ne   moyo.
     Mother$_1$ SA$_2$-will-killed   by   heart$_3$
     Mother will be killed by heart. "Mother will die of too much worrying".

2.4.6 Ideophones

Since Ikalanga does not have too many adverbs, ideophones are usually used in

conversation to convey adverbial meanings. They are used to express intensity of action,

color or sound. Examples are given below:

(87a) Kwa-ka-thula   ku-kati   tu!
      SA$_{17}$-past-quiet SA$_{17}$-say   ID
      It went deadly quiet.
(87b) Kuzhe   kwa-kati   zwititi!
      Outside$_{17}$ SA$_{17}$-say   ID
    Outside is very very dark!
(87c) Kwa   ka-be   ku li ku-shaba   kwa-kati   gobe!

22

SA_{17} past   cop. Inf.-red SA_{17}-say   ID
It was blood red all over!

(87d) Kwa-ka-woma   kwa-kati   ngo!
SA_{17}-past-dry SA_{17}-like   ID
'It is very dry.'

2.4.7 Clause Structure

As already pointed out in section 2.3 the basic word order of the Ikalanga sentence is SVO. The different sentence types of Ikalanga are illustrated below.

The Simple Declarative Sentence

(88)   Neo   ń-lefú.   (intransitive)
Neo_{1a} 1.-tall
Neo is tall.

(89)   Neo   w-aka-bona   Nchidzi.   (transitive)
Neo_{1a} SA_1-past-see $Nchidzi_{1a}$
Neo saw Nchidzi.

(90)   Neo   w-aka-pa   Nchidzi   buka.   (ditransitive)
Neo_{1a} SA_1-past-give $Nchidzi_{1a}$ $book_9$
Neo gave Nchidzi a book.

(91)   Neo   w-aka-suk-il-a   ngwana   ndilo.   (applicative)
Neo_{1a} SA_1-past-wash-APPL-FV $child_1$ $plate_9$
Neo washed the plate for the child.

Complex sentences
Conditionals
(92a)   Neo   ha-é-zhá,   Nchidzi   ú-nóó-ízéla.
          Neo_{1a} if-SA_1-come $Nchidzi_{1a}$ SA_1-will-sleep
          If Neo comes, Nchidzi will sleep.   (present)
(92b)   Neo   ha-á-síngá- zhé,   Nchidzi   ú-nóó-ízéla.
          Neo_{1a} if-SA_1-Neg-come $Nchidzi_{1a}$ SA_1-will-sleep
          If Neo doesn't come, Nchidzi will sleep.   (present Neg.)
(92c)   Neo   ha-á-sá- zhá,   Nchidzi   ú-nóó-ízéla.
          Neo_{1a} if-SA_1-Neg-come $Nchidzi_{1a}$ SA_1-will-sleep
          If Neo hasn't come, Nchidzi will sleep.   (present perfect)

Compound sentences

(93) Neo   wa-ka-milika   mangwanana ngono   a-a-thu   a-ka-swika.
      Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_{1a}$-past-leave morning   but   NEG-SA$_1$-yet SA$_1$-past-arrive
      Neo left in the morning but she has not yet arrived.

Embedded clauses

(94) Neo   u-no-alakana   kuti Nchidzi   u-noo-buya.
      Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-pres.-think that Nchidzi$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-will-come back
      Neo thinks that Nchidzi will come back.

(95) Neo   wa-ka-ti-dwa   a-ka-ti   ti-nunge   thula.
      Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-past-OM-tell SA$_1$-past-that SA$_1$-pick up morula fruit$_{10}$
      Neo told us to pick the fruits.

(96) Ta-ka-fanila   ku   suka ndilo   ti-sathu   ti-ka-enda.
      SA$_1$-past-should to   wash plates$_{10}$ SA$_1$-before SA$_1$-past-leave
      'We should clean the dishes before we leave.'

Interrogatives

Yes/No questions

There are two strategies of forming Yes/No questions in Ikalanga. Yes/No questions can
be formed by using the particle *a* (97) at the beginning of the sentence or using a rising
intonation at the end of the sentence (98).

(97) A   Néó   wá-ka-búyá?
      Q-part. Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-past-come back
      Has Neo come back?

(98) Néó   wá-ka-búyá?
      Neo$_{1a}$ SA$_1$-past-come back
      Has Neo come back?

WH questions

Ikalanga has three types of WH constructions: in-situ WH phrase, left edge WH phrase
and right edge WH phrase.

Object

(99a) Nchidzi   a-a-zo-bona   ani?
      Nchidzi$_{1a}$ NEG.-SA$_1$-pres.-see who
      Who didn't Nchidzi see?

(99b) Ndi-ani   Nchidzi wa-á-sá-ká-bona?
    foc-who 1a.Nchidzi WH_{agr}-1.SA-Neg-past-see
    Who didn't Nchidzi see?
(99c) Nchidzi   wa-á-sá-ká-bona   ndi-ani?
    $Nchidzi_{1a}$ WH_{agr}-SA_1-Neg-past-see   foc.-who
    Who didn't Nchidzi see?

Object WH phrases can occur in-situ as illustrated by example (99a). However, they may be moved to the left edge of the sentence as shown in example (99b). When this happens, a focus marker *ndi-* is required. Also, a WH agreement morpheme which has the same features as the object is triggered on the verb (see Letsholo 2002 for further discussion of this).

Subjects

(100a)   Ndi-ani u-sá-ká-bona   Nchidzi?
    Foc.-who WH_{agr}-Neg-past-see $Nchidzi_{1a}$
    Who didn't see Nchidzi?
(100b)   U-sá-ká-bona   Nchidzi   ndi-ani?
    WH_{agr}-Neg-past-see $Nchidzi_{1a}$ foc-who
    Who didn't see Nchidzi?
(100c)   *Ani   u-sa-ka-bona   Nchidzi?
    Who WH_{agr} –Neg.-past-see $Nchidzi_{1a}$
    Who didn't see Nchidzi?

Example (100c) is ungrammatical because the WH phrase cannot occur in a sentence initial position without the focus marker.

Relative Clauses
Object relative

Ikalanga does not have relative pronouns. Relativization is achieved in two ways: a) by moving the head NP of the relative clause to the left edge of the clause as shown in (101a & 101b). This movement triggers a relative agreement marker on the verb (notice that the relative marker has the same form as the WH agreement marker). b) by placing a low tone on the relative marker to distinguish it from the subject marker which has a high tone.

(101a)   Nlume   Neo   wa-á-ká-bóna
    Man_1 Neo_{1a} rel_1-SA_1-past-see

The man that Neo saw

(101b)　Nlume　Neo　　wa- á-sá-ká-bóna
　　　　　Man$_1$　Neo$_{1a}$　rel-SA$_1$-Neg-past-see
　　　　　The man that Neo did not see

(101c)　*Nlume wa　Neo　　á-ka-bona
　　　　　Man$_1$　rel.$_1$　Neo$_{1a}$　SA$_1$-past-see
　　　　　The man that Neo saw

In Ikalanga, the relative marker cannot be separated from the verb; that is, it cannot intervene between the head NP of the relative clause and the subject NP as evident from the ungrammaticality of (101c). Other Bantu languages such as Setswana for example, allow this as illustrated by (102).

(102) 'Monna yo　　Neo　　á-sa-mmónang
　　　　Man$_1$　rel$_1$　Neo$_{1a}$　SA$_1$-NEG-see
　　　　The man that Neo did not see'

Subject relatives

(103a)　Nlume　wa-ká-bóna　　Néo.
　　　　　Man$_1$　rel$_1$.-past-see　Neo$_{1a}$
　　　　　The man who saw Neo

(103b)　Nlume　u-sá-ká-bóná　　　Néo
　　　　　Man$_1$　rel$_1$-Neg-past-see　Neo$_{1a}$
　　　　　The man who did not see Neo

Notice that the only difference between example (102a) and (102c) is the tone: the relative marker in (103a) has a low tone while the subject agreement marker in (103c) has a high tone.

(103c)　Nlume　wá-ka-bóná　　Néo.
　　　　　Man$_1$　SA$_1$.-past-see　Neo$_{1a}$
　　　　　The man saw Neo.

Bibliography

Doke, C.M. 1954. *The Southern Bantu Languages*. London: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute.

Guthrie, M. 1967 – 71. *Comparative Bantu*. Vols. 1-4. Farnborough Heights: Gregg International Publishers.

Letsholo, R.M. 2004. Clausal and DP – Internal Agreement in Ikalanga. In *Studies in African Linguistics* Vol. 33, No. 1

Letsholo, R.M. 2002. Syntactic Domains in Ikalanga. Ph.D Dissertation. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Mathangwane, J. T. 1999. *Ikalanga Phonetics and Phonology: A Synchronic and Diachronic Study.* Stanford: CSLI Publications.

Mohammed, M.A. 2001. *Modern Swahili Grammar*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.