

Preverbal subjects and labeling in Nguni

Negative concord. Augmentless nominals (henceforth [-A]) are licit in Nguni as *wh*-words, strict negative dependents, and negative concord items (NCIs) (see (1)). I assume they have null Ds:

- (1) Q: U-bon-e \emptyset -bani? A#1: A-ngi-bon-anga \emptyset -mntu! A#2: \emptyset -Muntu! [Zulu]
 2SSM-see-PST 1who NEG-1SM-see-NEG.PST 1person 1person
 ‘Who did you see?’ ‘I didn’t see anybody!’ ‘Nobody!’

Constituent-internal A(ugment)-Drop Concord (ADC) exists too, in the scope of local negation; ADC with the [-A] head of a complex *wh*-phrase is illicit ((2)a vs. b). I analyze ADC as negative concord (NC), a form of agreement (Zeijlstra 2008, Haegeman & Lohndal 2010; see (2)c).

- (2) a. A-ndi-bon-i (i-)zi-hlangu (e-)zi-bomvu. [Xhosa]
 NEG-1SSM -see-NEG AUG-8-shoes AUG.REL-8-red
 ‘I don’t see any red shoes.’
 b. U-Mary u-thanda zi-phi *(i-)zi-hlangu *(e-)zi-bomvu?
 AUG-1Mary 1SM -like 8-which AUG-8-shoes AUG.REL -8-red
 ‘Which red shoes does Mary like?’
 c. Agree (Neg... [DP \emptyset_D ... \emptyset_α]) \rightarrow Neg... [DP \emptyset_{uNeg} ... \emptyset_{uNeg}]

Subjects. I propose that all Nguni null Ds enter the syntax lacking values and, following Bošković (2021), uFs thwart labeling – a problem that can be surmounted by NC. Pietraszko (2021) shows that Ndebele [-A] are barred from preverbal subject positions (PVSPs) (see (3)a,b) unless the local COMP is also [-A] (see (4)a). Pietraszko attributes subject A-drop in (4)a to structural Case from matrix licenser L (Halpert 2015), facilitated by L Case-licensing the [-A] embedded CP (see (4)c). But this affords no insight into why (4)b is out. I instead reduce (4)a,b to the ADC pattern in (2)a,b: NC extends Neg-licensing from [-A] C(P) to the embedded subject ((4)d). With null D valued by NC, the clause can be labeled ((4)e).

- (3) a. *(u-)bani u-fik-ile? b. A-ngi-fun-i ukuthi *(u)mntu a-pheke.
 AUG-who_1SM-arrive-DISJ.PST NEG-1SM-want-NEG.PST COMP AUG- 1person 1-cook.SBJ
 ‘Who arrived?’ ‘I don’t want anybody to cook.’
 (4) a. A-ngi-fun-i [\emptyset -kuthi (u)Sipho a-buye].
 NEG-1SSM-want-NEG COMP 1AUG-Sipho 1SSM- come.SBJ
 ‘I don’t want Sipho to come.’
 b. U-fun-a [* (u-)kuthi *(u-)bani a-buye?
 2SSM-want *(AUG-)COMP *(AUG-)1who 1SM -come.SBJ
 ‘Who do you want to come?’
 c. L ...V... [CP \emptyset -kuthi [\emptyset -Sipho come]] d. Neg... [CP \emptyset_{uNeg} -kuthi [\emptyset_{uNeg} -Sipho come]]
 e. [? \rightarrow PhiP \emptyset_{uNeg} -Sipho T_{uPhi} come]

Extensions. The analysis explains parallels in Romance languages described in Contreras (1986), Longobardi (1994), Deprez (2000): bare Ns are illicit preverbally (see (5)) with one systematic exception: NCIs (6)a). Assuming with Zeijlstra (2008) that Romance NCIs in PVSP are licensed by silent Negation (see (6)b), this pattern is predicted: null D of *nessuno* in (6) has valued NC features so can participate in labeling ((5), (6) adapted from Deprez 2000).

- (5) a. * \emptyset -Marocchini telefonano sempre. *Moroccans always call up.* [Italian]
 b. * \emptyset -Ninos jugaban en el parque. *Children are playing in the park.* [Spanish]
 c. * \emptyset -Vinu at crentiatu sa tiadza. *Wine stained the tablecloth.* [Sardinian]
- (6) a. Nessuno ha telefonato. [Italian]
 'No one called.'
 b. $i_{\text{Neg}} \dots \emptyset_{\text{uNeg}}$ -Nessuno ha telefonato. [Adapting Zeijlstra 2008:27]

Summary. Nguni and Romance null Ds lack feature-values. Nguni augment-drop concord is negative concord which feeds labeling by valuing null Ds of [-A] preverbal subjects.

[500 words]

References

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