

Only and antisymmetry in Zulu and Xhosa

Vicki Carstens, Southern Illinois University

Jochen Zeller, University of KwaZulu-Natal

'Only' is expressed in Zulu and Xhosa by means of a phrase-final particle *kuphela* (see (1)).

- (1) U-Sipho u-nikez-e i-zi-nkawu a-ma-kinati *kuphela*. [Zulu]
AUG-1a.Sipho 1.SM-give-PST AUG-10-monkey AUG-6-peanuts only
- a. 'Sipho gave the monkeys only **peanuts**.' *Most speakers*
b. 'Sipho gave only **the monkeys** peanuts' *Some speakers*
c. 'Sipho only **gave** the monkeys peanuts' *Some speakers*
d. 'All Sipho did was **give the monkeys peanuts**' *Most speakers*
e. 'All that happened was **Sipho gave the monkeys peanuts**' *Most speakers*
f. *'Only **Sipho** gave the monkeys peanuts' *No speakers*

(1f) is ruled out because preverbal subject position in Nguni languages cannot host focused material (Sabel & Zeller 2006; Zeller 2008). In this talk we show that *kuphela*'s associations respect the syntactic topography of focus in Nguni and, like English *only*, a surface c-command requirement (see (2) and (3)).

(2) **Principle of Lexical Association:** an operator like only must be associated with a lexical constituent in its c-command domain. (Tancredi 1990:30).

- (3) Who do you only like <who>? ≠Who is the only person you like?
No c-command → *no association* ✓ Who do you like but not love?

(2) explains failures of association of *kuphela* to positions where focus is possible, such as clefts (see (4)).

(4a) shows that *kuphela* can associate with a clefted expression. (4b) shows that association is infelicitous when surface c-command is absent.

- (4) a. Ng'uSipho *kuphela* o-fanele ukuthi a-phek-e ekhishini. [Zulu]
COP.AUG-1a.Sipho only REL.1.SM-must-PST that 3S-cook-SBJ LOC.5.kitchen
'It's only **Sipho** who must cook in the kitchen.' *Focus +kuphela: OK for cleft*
- b. Ng'uSipho o-fanele ukuthi a-phek-e *kuphela* ekhishini. [Zulu]
COP.AUG-1a.Sipho REL.1.SM-must-PST that 3S-cook-SBJ only LOC.5.kitchen
'It's Sipho who must only **cook** in the kitchen.'
*?'It's only **Sipho** who must cook in the kitchen.' *No c-command* → *no association*

That *kuphela* follows and c-commands its associate is a serious challenge for the antisymmetry theory of Kayne 1994, under which high-to-low maps left-to-right. We show that the facts are incompatible with recent antisymmetric approaches to final particles in other languages, such as Biberauer et al 2014, Erlewine 2016. After weighing several options we conclude that *kuphela* is an adjunct, and syntax is only weakly antisymmetric in the sense of Takano 2003: adjuncts are exempt.

Selected References: Biberauer, T., A. Holmberg, & I. Roberts. A syntactic universal and its consequences. *Linguistic Inquiry* 45.2: 169-225. Erlewine, M.Y. 2016. Low sentence-final particles in Mandarin Chinese and the Final-over-Final Constraint. Ms., McGill University. Kayne, R. 1994. *The Antisymmetry of Syntax*. Cambridge: MIT Press. Takano, Y. 2003. How antisymmetric is syntax? *Linguistic Inquiry* 34.3: 516-526. Tancredi, C. 1990. Not only EVEN, but even ONLY. Ms, MIT.