



Phasal Polarity in the Nguni cluster (Bantu, S.40)

Axel Fleisch, University of Helsinki

In South African Nguni varieties, phasal polarity notions are expressed by way of affixes in the fairly complex verbal morphology. The concepts STILL and NO LONGER are formally related: The verb form containing the persistive affix *-sa-* ‘still’ (1) yields the “no longer”-construction when externally negated (2).

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|-----|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| (1) | si-sa-hlal-a | e-Mosesetjana | (2) | a-si-sa-hlal-i | e-Mokopane |
| | 1PL-still-live-FV | LOC-Mosesetjana | | NEG-1PL-still-live-FV.NEG | LOC-Mokopane |
| | ‘We still live in Mosesetjana’ | | | ‘We are no longer living in Mokopane’ | |

The notion ALREADY is expressed with a pre-verb *sele* (with a shorter variant, the prefix *se-*).

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|-----|----|-------------------------------------|----------------|---------|----|---|
| (3) | a. | sele | ba-fik-ile | ekhaya | b. | se-si-fik-ile |
| | | already | 3PL-arrive-PFV | at.home | | already-1PL-arrive-PFV |
| | | ‘they have already arrived at home’ | | | | ‘we have already arrived; we’re here now’ |

Besides describing basic Nguni PhP mechanics, the contribution discusses evidence for neutral v. counter-expectational usages of *sele/se-* and persistive *sa-*, telicity (*se-* ‘already’ being rather general), and strategies to paraphrase the NOT YET gap. This follows the lead of the position paper on PhP (Kramer 2017). Lexical verbs in Nguni interact with grammatical tense-aspect in intricate ways (Crane & Fleisch 2016, forthcoming; cf. also Croft 2012, Bar-el 2015). Phasal notions as expressed by *sele/se-* and *sa-* are obviously sensitive to these properties; this paper documents relevant observations and constraints discovered in systematic elicitation. Interestingly, a substantial degree of microvariation with regard to these parameters exists in what seems otherwise a fairly homogenous system across the Nguni varieties.

References

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