

Nominal morphology and licensing in Zulu and beyond

In this talk I discuss the distribution of nominals that lack an *augment* vowel in the Bantu language Zulu. As I will discuss, a variety of factors contribute to the distribution of the augment. One notable factor is the presence of a downward-entailing environment (often negation); I show that within these environments, additional syntactic restrictions exist and argue that these restrictions are akin to those found in case-licensing languages (Halpert 2012). While recent work by Carstens and Mletshe (2013, to appear) argues based on comparison with Xhosa that these constructions are best analyzed as instances of negative concord, in this talk I will take a somewhat wider view, examining the behavior of the augment in additional non-negative contexts in Zulu, including wh-questions and prepositional constructions in Zulu. I will also expand the cross-linguistic picture somewhat, discussing similar syntactic distributions in Bantu languages like Otjiherero (Kavari et al 2012) and Luganda (Hyman and Katamba 1993), and discuss what we might learn from the similarities that emerge beyond the role of negation as a licenser.