Overview

Ndebele light verbs (LVs) have adverbial meanings, e.g., already, still, first, just, again, almost, finally etc.

• Light verbs come in two types:
  1. part(iciple)-selecting: 
  2. subjunctive-selecting:

Two types of LVs: evidence from ordering

(3) [TP [Asp VP [ LVsubs LVs ubg Neg [VP main verb ]]]]  

I. When LVs co-occur: Functional LV > Lexical LV; but not vice versa  
  Functional structure (hosting LVsubs) is projected, but not selected; by LVs

II. Position of negation: Neg > Lexical LV; Neg > Functional LV

• Negation in Ndebele is loose — always on the lexical verb:
  a. A-ka-bal, neg-1-read
  b. A-ka-bale, neg-1-first-read

Two types of LVs: evidence from inflection

(4) LVsubs cannot inflect for tense:  

a. ∗u-a-lokhe  
   b. ∗u-za-lokhe

(5) LVs can inflect for tense

a. u-a-qala  
   b. u-za-qala

Basic assumptions about inflection

• every V has an unvalued Infl feature  
• functional heads (e.g. T, Asp) have a valued Infl feature (Infl:as/inf:ap/impf etc.)

When LVs co-occur:

• Val of LV:  
  - Imperfective participle  
  - Imperfective particle  

• Subjective LVs:
  - First
  - Just

Analysis: Direct and Dependent Valuation

• an agree link can be established between two unvalued F
  (Brown & Torrego, 2007)

• in such a relation, valuation is not vacuous — it is an instance of Dependent Valuation

(7) Direct Valuation:  

(8) Dependent Valuation:

Dependent Valuation: evidence from tense agreement

(15) Ngi-funa (u-bale)  

Position of negation: Neg > Lexical LV; Neg > Functional LV

• Negation in Ndebele is loose — always on the lexical verb:
  a. A-ka-bal, neg-1-read
  b. A-ka-bale, neg-1-first-read

• The complement of a LVsubs has a fixed form (e.g. lokhe requires an imperfective participle)

• The complement of a LV has to covary with T

(c) U-za-qale wa-bale  

Past T: past subjunctive

b. U-za-qale a-bale

Future T: present subjunctive

Ndebele has only two subjunctive forms: past and present/unmarked subjunctive:

• The participle/subjunctive alternation follows from the functional-lexical distinction and its consequence for the type of valuation involved.

• Subjective morphology is triggered by the inflectional deficiency of its immediate syntactic context (implemented here as Dependent Valuation).