

Adverbial *kuphela* ('only') in Xhosa and Zulu

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1. Introducing *kuphela*

The modifier *kuphela* in Zulu and Xhosa corresponds to the exclusive focus particle *only* in English:

- (1) a. John likes [only [DP Mary]] (adnominal use of *only*)
b. John [only [VP likes Mary]] (adverbial use of *only*)

kuphela in Xhosa and Zulu can also be used adnominally and adverbially:*

- (2) a. U-Sindiswa u-phek-e [[DP a-ma-qanda] *kuphela*].
AUG-1a.Sindiswa 1.SM-cook-PST AUG-6-egg only
'Sindiswa cooked only eggs.'
- b. U-Sindiswa u-phek-el-e [[DP u-Sabelo] *kuphela*] a-ma-qanda.
AUG-1a.Sindiswa 1.SM-cook-APPL-PST AUG-1a.Sabelo only AUG-6-egg
'Sindiswa cooked eggs only for Sabelo.'
- c. Ng-[[DP u-Sindiswa] *kuphela*] o-phek-ile.
COP-AUG-1a.Sindiswa only REL.1.SM-cook-PST.DJ
'Only Sindiswa cooked.' [Xhosa & Zulu]
- (3) U-John [[VP u-ya-sebenz-a] *kuphela*].
AUG-1a.John 1.SM-DJ-work-FV only
'John only works.' [Xhosa & Zulu]
- (4) [*Kuphela* [TP u-Sipho u-phek-e a-ma-qanda]].
only AUG-1a.Sipho 1.SM-cook-PST AUG-6-egg
- a. 'All that happened was *Sipho* cooked eggs.' [Better in Xhosa than Zulu]
b. 'Sipho only cooked eggs.' [Some Xhosa speakers]

Questions:

- What conditions determine the association of *kuphela* with a focused constituent?
- What is the syntax of adnominal and adverbial *kuphela*?

* Glosses: 1S = first person singular; APPL = applicative; AUG = augment; COP = copulative prefix; DJ = disjoint verb form; EXPL = expletive; FV = final vowel; LOC = locative marker; NEG = negation; OM = object marker; PASS = passive; POSS = possessive marker; PST = past tense; REL = relative marker; SM = subject marker.

Outline of the talk:

§2 brief background on focus semantics and expressions meaning 'only'.

§3 explores Zulu *kuphela*: where it can appear, how it can be construed, and analysis of why.

§4 addresses ways in which Xhosa *kuphela* differs from the Zulu pattern.

§5 concludes.

2. Focus and alternative-sensitive particles

Expressions like *kuphela*, 'only', are *focus-sensitive particles*.

Focus index "F" marks a syntactic constituent as focus (Jackendoff 1972); in languages such as English, it mediates between semantic and prosodic properties:

(5) John likes [Mary]_F.

(6) [John]_F likes Mary.

(5) and (6) have the same truth conditions, but differ in their focus semantics.

Focus indicates the presence of *alternatives*: in addition to its ordinary semantic value, the *focus semantic value* of any constituent X is the set of alternatives derived by replacing the meaning of the focused constituent in X with contextually plausible alternatives (Rooth 1985, 1992; Büring & Hartmann 2001):

(7) a. Ordinary semantic value of [Mary]_F:

$[[[Mary]_F]]$ = Mary

b. Focus semantic value of [Mary]_F:

$[[[Mary]_F]]^f$ = {Sue, Betty, Mary ...}

(8) a. Ordinary semantic value of [John likes [Mary]_F]:

$[[[John \text{ likes } [Mary]_F]]$ = the proposition "John likes Mary"

b. Focus semantic value of (4):

$[[[John \text{ likes } [Mary]_F]]]^f$ = {like(John, y) | y ∈ [[[Mary]_F]]^f}

= set of propositions of the form "John likes y", where y is a contextually plausible alternative to Mary. (Note that this set includes the "prejacent", the proposition "John likes Mary".)

Focus particles (focus operators) like *only*, *even* or *also* (and *kuphela*) are sensitive to the alternatives introduced by the focus; they *associate* with focus (Jackendoff 1972; Rooth 1985; Krifka 2006; Erlewine 2014a, b; a.o.). Exclusive focus particles universally quantify over alternatives defined by the focus:

Subject focus:

- (18) **U-Sipho** *kuphela* o-phek-e i-mi-fino.
 COP.AUG-1a.Sipho only REL.1.SM-cook-PST AUG-4-vegetable
 'It was only [Sipho]_F who cooked vegetables.' *subject cleft*
- (19) Ku-sebenz-a **u-John** *kuphela* e-ofisi.
 17.EXPL-work-FV AUG-1a.John only LOC-5.office
 'Only [John]_F works in the office.' *postverbal subject*

→ VP-internal material and clefted constituents are [+focus] or *focus-tolerant* and can be modified by *kuphela*.

- (20) Adnominal *kuphela*: a right DP-adjunct c-commanding a DP-internal item construed as focus:

[DP [DP uSipho]_F **kuphela**]

Adnominal *kuphela* does not have to be adjacent to the focus: it can associate with different parts of a complex DP:

- (21) a. Ngi-thand-a u-m-fowabo **ka-Maria** *kuphela*
 1S-like-FV AUG-1-brother POSS-1a.Maria only
 (hhayi u-m-fowabo ka-John)
 not AUG-1-brother POSS-1a.John
 'I like [Maria]_F's brother, not [John]_F's brother.' [*focus on DP-possessor*]
- b. Ngi-thand-a **u-m-fowabo** ka-Maria *kuphela*
 1S-like-FV AUG-1-brother POSS-1a.Maria only
 (hhayi u-dadewabo).
 not AUG-1a.sister
 'I like Maria's [brother]_F, not [her sister]_F.' [*focus on N-possessee*]

Not possible:

- (22) ***U-Sipho** *kuphela* u-phek-e i-mi-fino.
 AUG-1a.Sipho only 1.SM-cook-PST AUG-4-vegetable
 Intended: 'Only [Sipho]_F cooked vegetables.' **association with preverbal subject*
- (23) U-Sipho u-yi-phek-ile **i-mi-fino** *kuphela*
 AUG-1a.Sipho 1.SM-4.OM-cook-PST.DJ AUG-4-vegetables only
 *'Sipho cooked only [the vegetables]_F' **association with dislocated object*
- (24) *Ku-thum-el-e u-mama **i-zi-ngane** *kuphela* i-mali.
 17.SM-send-APPL-PST AUG-1a.mother AUG-10-child only AUG-9.money
 Intended: 'Mother sent only the children money.' **association with X in [V S X Y]*

Topography of focus in Zulu (and Xhosa):

[+focus] or focus-tolerant: *kuphela possible*

- i. Focus-tolerant: S[VOO...] may but need not contain [+focus] material.
- ii. [+focus]: clefted material; S in [V S X]
(Sabel & Zeller 2006; Zeller 2008; Carstens & Mletshe 2015, among others).

Anti-focus: *kuphela not possible*

- iii. Preverbal subject position is anti-focus: S of [SVO] (Zeller 2008)
- iv. Clitic right- (and left-)dislocated expressions are anti-focus: [S cl+V ...DP] (Buell 2008; Zeller 2015)
- v. X in [V S X Y] is anti-focus (sharpest if there is an overt Y) (Carstens & Mletshe 2015)

3.2 Adverbial *kuphela*

The focus particle *kuphela* can also be used adverbially. The standard use of adverbial *kuphela* is in verb focus or VP-focus constructions, when *kuphela* is adjacent to the focus:

- (25) U-John **u-ya-sebenz-a** *kuphela*.
 AUG-1a.John 1.SM-DJ-work-FV only
 'John only [works]_F.' *verb/VP-focus*
- (26) Ngi-**hlab-a** **i-khefu** *kuphela*.
 1S-stab-FV AUG-5.rest only
 'I'm only [taking a break]_F.' *VP-focus*
- (27) U-Sipho **u-phek-e** **i-mi-fino** *kuphela*.
 AUG-1a.Sipho 1.SM-cook-PST AUG-4-vegetables only
 'Sipho only [cooked vegetables]_F.' *VP focus*
- (28) U-Sipho **u-yi-phek-ile** *kuphela* i-mi-fino.
 AUG-1a.Sipho 1.SM-4.OM-cook-PST.DJ only AUG-4-vegetable
 'Sipho only [cooked]_F vegetables.' *verb focus*
- (29) a. U-John **u-ya-sebenz-a** e-ofisi *kuphela*.
 AUG-1a.John 1.SM-DJ-work-FV LOC-5.office only
 'John only [works]_F in the office.' *verb focus*
- b. U-Sipho **u-yi-phek-ile** i-mi-fino *kuphela*.
 AUG-1a.Sipho 1.SM-4.OM-cook-PST.DJ AUG-4-vegetable only
 'Sipho only [cooked]_F vegetables.' *verb focus*
 *Sipho cooked only [vegetables]_F. **association with dislocated object*

Note: some speakers initially reject constructions such as (29b), which they incorrectly process as adnominal *kuphela* associating with the preceding DP (which is right-dislocated, and therefore cannot be focused). When context is provided, all speakers accept (29b).

What construals are available for right edge *kuphela* in a double object construction, all else equal?

- (30) U-Sipho u-nikez-e i-zin-kawu a-ma-kinati *kuphela*.
 AUG-1a.Sipho 1.SM-give-PST AUG-10-monkey AUG-6-peanuts only
- a. 'Sipho gave the monkeys only [peanuts]_F.' DO-focus: *most speakers*
 b. 'Sipho gave only [the monkeys]_F peanuts' IO-focus: *most speakers*
 c. 'All Sipho did was [give the monkeys peanuts]_F.' VP-focus: *all speakers*
 d. *'[Only Sipho]_F gave the monkeys peanuts.' SUB-focus: *no speakers*

(30b) shows that some speakers can associate adverbial *kuphela* in Zulu with a non-adjacent focused DP inside the VP. This is also possible with postverbal (VP-internal) subjects, (31b):

- (31) a. Ku-sebenz-a **u-John** *kuphela* e-ofisi. (adnominal *kuphela*)
 17.EXPL-work-FV AUG-1a.John only LOC-5.office
 'Only [John]_F works in the office.'
- b. Ku-sebenz-a **u-John** e-ofisi *kuphela*. (adverbial *kuphela*)
 17.EXPL-work-FV AUG-1a.John LOC-5.office only
 'Only [John]_F works in the office.'

Note the scope difference between (31a) and (31b): (31a) means that in the office, only John works (others are in the office, but not working). (31b) means that only John works in the office, while others work elsewhere.

Question: Where is adverbial *kuphela* in Zulu?

- clause-final *kuphela* is not a low (vP-internal) adjunct:

- (32) a. U-John u-ya-sebenz-a]_{VP} *kuphela*.
 AUG-1a.John 1.SM-DJ-work-FV only
 'John only works.'
- b. *U-John u-sebenz-a *kuphela*]_{VP}.
 AUG-1a.John 1.SM-work-FV only

- (33) a. *?U-John u-ya-sebenz-a]_{VP} *kakhulu*.
 AUG-1a.John 1.SM-DJ-work-FV a.lot
- b. U-John u-sebenz-a *kakhulu*]_{VP}.
 AUG-1a.John 1.SM-work-FV a.lot
 'John works a lot.'

- Adverbial *kuphela* can associate with an agentive post-verbal subject (see (31b)).
- Adverbial *kuphela* can follow a dislocated object (see (29b)).
- But it can't be too high:
 - sentence-initial *kuphela* is dispreferred; unacceptable to most speakers with SV and VS word orders:

- (34) a. **Kuphela* u-Sipho u-phek-e i-mi-fino.
 only AUG-1a.Sipho 1.SM-cook-PST AUG-4-vegetable
 b. (*)*Kuphela* ku-sebenz-a u-John e-ofisi.
 only 17.EXPL-work-FV AUG-1a.John LOC-5.office
 Possibly acceptable with the reading:
 'All that happens here is that John works in his office.'

o negation takes scope over adverbial *kuphela*:

Context 1:

The boss acts as if John was the only one who works in the office. His colleagues are upset:

- (35) (Cha,) a-ku-sebenz-i **u-John** e-ofisi *kuphela*. NEG > ONLY
 no NEG-17.EXPL-work-NEG AUG-1a.John LOC-5.office only
 'No, it's not the case that only John works in the office.'
 (We also do a lot of work here!)

Context 2:

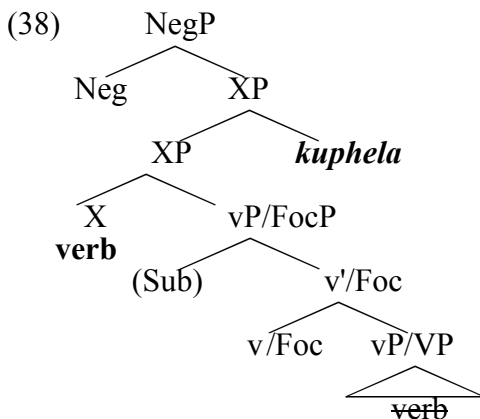
The boss feels that John doesn't do any work, while his colleagues are working hard.

- (36) #A-ku-sebenz-i **u-John** e-ofisi *kuphela*. *ONLY > NEG
 NEG-17.EXPL-work-NEG AUG-1a.John LOC-5.office only
 Intended: 'Only John doesn't do any work in the office.'
 (All the others are working here.)

In (36), *kuphela* cannot take wide scope. This reading needs to be expressed by a cleft:

- (37) **U-John** *kuphela* o-nga-sebenz-i e-ofisi. ONLY > NEG
 COP.AUG-1a.John only REL.1.SM-NEG-work-NEG LOC-5.office
 'It's only John who doesn't work in the office.'
 (All the others are working here.)

Interim conclusion: clause-final adverbial *kuphela* in Zulu is adjoined to a projection above the final landing site of the verb (and the postverbal subject), but below negation:



Prediction: *kuphela* should be able to associate with a VP-internal DP across a dislocated DP: Seems to be borne out.

- (39) U-Sipho u-zi-leth-el-e **i-n-yama** i-zin-gane *kuphela*.
 AUG-1a.Sipho 1.SM-10.OM-bring-APPL-PST AUG-9-meat AUG-10-child only
 'Sipho only brought the children [meat]_F.'
- (40) U-Sipho u-yi-leth-el-e **i-zin-gane** i-n-yama *kuphela*.
 AUG-1a.Sipho 1.SM-9.OM-bring-APPL-PST AUG-10-child AUG-9-meat only
 'Sipho only brought [the children]_F meat.'

4. *kuphela* in Xhosa

4.1 Xhosa *kuphela* can scope over negation

In the judgments of our Xhosa co-author, *kuphela* can scope either under or over negation in an expletive construction, yielding ambiguities such as the alternative interpretations listed for (41):

- (41) A-ku-phek-anga u-Sindiswa *kuphela*
 NEG-17.SM-cook-NEG.PAST AUG-1a.Sindiswa only
- a. Sindiswa isn't the only one who cooked (others cooked too). NEG > ONLY
 b. Sindiswa is the only one who didn't cook (everyone cooked besides her). ONLY > NEG

4.2 Xhosa SV constructions with initial *kuphela*

In contrast to what Zulu speakers report, our Xhosa co-author judges initial *kuphela* to be well-formed in SV clauses. As we've seen before, *kuphela* cannot be construed with a preverbal subject. Otherwise it can associate with any expression in the clause in (42).

- (42) *Kuphela* u-Sindiswa u-phek-e a-ma-qanda izolo.
 only AUG-1a.Sindiswa 1.SM-cook-PST AUG-6-eggs yesterday
- a. *'Only [Sindiswa]_F cooked eggs yesterday.'
 b. 'Sindiswa cooked eggs only [yesterday]_F.'
 c. 'Sindiswa only [cooked]_F eggs yesterday (she didn't eat them).'
 d. 'Sindiswa only [cooked eggs]_F yesterday (she didn't get anything else done).'
 e. 'All that happened was [Sindiswa cooked eggs yesterday]_F.'
 f. 'Sindiswa cooked only [eggs]_F yesterday.'

Assuming the subject is in [Spec, T], (42) suggests that Xhosa *kuphela* can adjoin to TP.

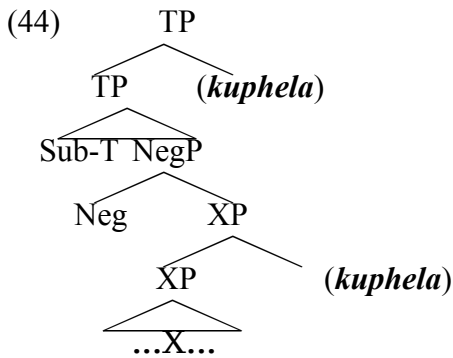
4.3 Xhosa VS constructions with initial *kuphela*

Initial *kuphela* is acceptable also in Xhosa VS constructions. It can associate with any of the post-verbal expressions in (43) or answer a "What happened?" question, in which case its associate would seem to be the whole clause. (N.b. we use a passive where, lacking an external argument, all constituents are focus-tolerant [VOX]).

- (43) *Kuphela* ku-bon-w-e a-ba-ntwana izolo
 only 17.SM-see-PASS-PST AUG-2-children yesterday

- a. 'Only [the children]_F were seen yesterday.'
 b. 'The children were seen only [yesterday]_F.' (not a different day)
 c. 'The children were only [seen]_F' (i.e. but not heard) yesterday.'
 d. 'All that happened was [the children were seen yesterday]_F.'

Interim conclusion #2: *kuphela* in the grammar of our Xhosa coauthor has broader adjunction options than in the grammars of the Zulu speakers of our study. In particular, it can adjoin to TP or below NegP.



5. Conclusion

In addition to a previously observed adnominal use, Xhosa and Zulu have adverbial *kuphela*.

Table 1: *Kuphela* in Xhosa and Zulu

Distribution	Zulu	Xhosa
[_{DP} [_{DP} <i>kuphela</i>]: right-adjoined to DPs in focus-tolerant spots	√	√
[_{TP} SU... [_{XP} V+v+X [_{VP} ...]] <i>kuphela</i>]: FOC of V, LOC, VP, or OB	√	√
[_{TP} [_{XP} V+v+X [_{VP} SU...]] <i>kuphela</i>]: Subj-FOC	√	√
[_{TP} <i>kuphela</i> [_{TP} SV...]]	X	√
[_{TP} <i>kuphela</i> [_{TP} VS...]]	%	√
[_{TP} [_{TP} [_{NegP}]] <i>kuphela</i>]	X	√
[_{TP} [_{TP} VS...] <i>kuphela</i>]	X	√
[_{ZP} <i>kuphela</i> [_{ZP}]]: rightward association with ZP (Z = D, V or T)	√	√

The distribution of *kuphela* that we have described here accords with prior findings regarding the topography of focus in Xhosa and Zulu clauses.

- (45) **Non-focus-tolerant:**
 -Preverbal subject position: S of [SVO]
 -Clitic right-dislocated
 -X in [VSXY]

In Zulu and Xhosa, DPs in these locations can neither contain adnominal *kuphela* nor be associated with adverbial *kuphela*.

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