

Nguni bare nouns: licensing without Case*

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Nguni bare or *augmentless* nominals ([-A]) are licit only as strict negative dependents and *wh*-words. They may not appear in any preverbal subject position unless local to a negation-licensed [-A] COMP of a subjunctive clause (Pietraszko 2021). This pattern motivates an analysis in terms of negative concord and a labeling-theoretic approach to the EPP (Chomsky 2013): [-A] nouns have *uNeg* features which thwart agreement and labeling in [XP,YP] configurations (see also Bošković 2019, 2020 on uFs and labeling problems) unless valued by interpretable negation in a syntactic Agree relation (Zeijlstra 2008, Penka 2011, Haegeman & Lohndal 2010). A cluster of further distributional restrictions on [-A] nominals are predictable from an independently motivated Nguni clausal topography of focus (Carstens & Mletshe 2016) eliminating any role for abstract Case in explaining the facts, contra Halpert (2015) and Pietraszko (2021). The analysis is inspired by and extends to parallel restrictions in Romance languages previously attributed to the ECP and the EPP (Contreras 1986, Deprez 2000, Landau 2007, Longobardi 1994).

1 Augmentless nominals: analytical challenges

1.1 Overview

A lively debate exists on the question of whether Bantu nominals have Case-licensing requirements and accordingly whether Case can be viewed as a universal (see among others Carstens & Diercks 2013a, Carstens & Mletshe 2015, 2016, Diercks 2012, Halpert 2015, Harford 1986, Pietraszko 2021, van der Wal 2015). In the Nguni languages of southern Africa this controversy centers on the distribution of bare, so-called *augmentless* nominals (henceforth [-A], underlined in examples).¹ These lack the outer of two class prefixes which most nominals bear as exemplified in the contrast between (1) and (2).²

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¹ Zulu, Xhosa, and Zimbabwean Ndebele are very closely related and grammatically similar languages of the Nguni subgroup (Guthrie's Zone S40). Data in this paper for which sources are not explicitly identified come from my field work with native speakers of Xhosa and Zulu in Cape Town, Durban, and New Haven.

² PVSP = preverbal subject position; [-A] = augmentless, [+A] = augmented, AUG = augment; NEG = negation; SM = subject marker; OM = object marker; SBJ = subjunctive; DISJ = disjoint, a VP-final verb form; REL = relative marker, AGR = agreement, FV = final vowel, Q = question, COP = copula, PST = past, CAUS = causative, POSS = possessive, FUT = future, DEM = demonstrative, LOC = locative, COMP = complementizer, AUX = auxiliary, NCI = negative concord item, X_F means X is [+focus]. Numerals

- | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|--------|
| (1) | a. u-mu-ntu
AUG-1-person
'a/the person' | b. i-n-dawo
AUG-9-place
'a/the place' | c. u-bani?
AUG-1 who
'who?' (preverbal) | [Zulu] |
| (2) | a. Ø-mu-ntu
Ø-1-person
'nobody/anybody' | b. Ø-mi-fino
Ø-4-vegetables
'no/any vegetables' | c. Ø-bani?
Ø-1 who
'who?' (postverbal) | [Zulu] |

The distribution of [-A] nominals is constrained in several ways that play a role in the Case debate. First, [-A] nominals serve only as negative dependents and post-verbal *wh*-words, as (2) and (3) illustrate. (3)a is an object question formed with the [-A] in situ *wh*-word *bani* – 'who'? A negative answer may include the [-A] nominal *muntu* – 'anybody/nobody' as in (3)b. (3)c shows that *muntu* may be used as a negative fragment answer, but the unacceptability of (3)d arises because when *muntu* appears within a sentence, it must have the c-commanding negation that is present in (3)b.

- | | | | |
|-----|---|---|--------|
| (3) | a. U-bon-e <u>bani</u> ?
2sSM-see-PST 1who
'Who did you see?' | b. A-ngi-bon-anga <u>mu-ntu</u> !
NEG-1SM-see-NEG 1person
'I didn't see anybody!' | [Zulu] |
| | c. <u>Mu-ntu</u> !
1-person
'Nobody!' | d. *Ngi-bon-e <u>mu-ntu</u> .
1SM-see-PST 1-person
Intended: I saw somebody <i>or</i> I saw nobody. | |

A second constraint, brought to light in Halpert (2015), is the exclusion of [-A] nominals from all vP-external positions including preverbal subject position (henceforth PVSP) as shown in (4). The restriction leads Halpert to propose that [-A] forms require Case-licensing which is available only vP-internally from a clause-medial downwards probing head L, as illustrated in (5).³ Because [+A] are encased in KP shells headed by

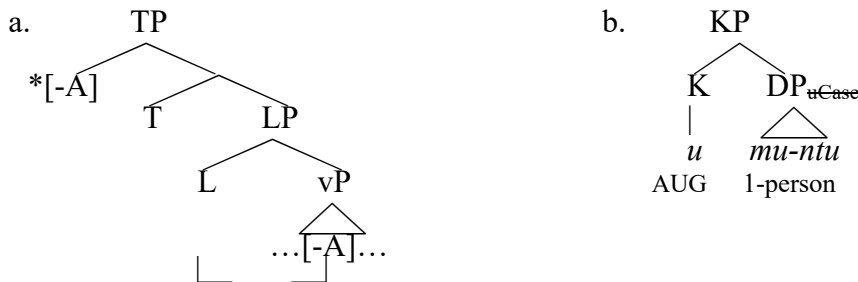
indicate noun class (number+gender). Subject agreement in person/number is 1sSM/2sSM or 1PlSM/2PlSM (first or second singular or plural) as opposed to e.g. 1SM = SM in noun class 1. [Xhosa/Zulu] = examples homophonous in the two languages. I do not mark tone, which does not play a role in the phenomena of concern.

³ APPL or CAUS adds a Case-licenser to ditransitives, in Halpert's account; this will not be relevant here.

the augment (see (5)b), they do not require Case from a clause-level functional head and so do not exhibit the same restrictions, under Halpert’s account.⁴

- (4) a. *Bani u-fik-ile? [Xhosa/Zulu]
 1who 1SM-arrive-DISJ.PST
 Intended: Who arrived?
- b. *Mu-ntu u-fik-ile /a-ka-fik-ile. [Zulu]
 1person 1SM-arrive-DISJ.PST/NEG-1SM- arrive-DISJ.PST
 Intended: Nobody arrived.

(5) Halpert (2015): A single Case-licenser L of Nguni (in)transitive clauses licenses [-A].



A third significant restriction is a clausemate requirement for negative-dependent [-A] nominals in indicative contexts as exemplified in (6). Carstens & Mletshe (2016) propose that negative-dependent [-A] bear negative concord features which must be valued in a clause-bound Agree relation with negation ((6) = Carstens & Mletshe 2016:769:(22)a).

- (6) *U-Simiso a-ka-shongo [ukuthi u-Nothando u-theng-e mi-fino]. [Zulu]
 AUG-1Simiso NEG-1SM-say COMP AUG-1Nothando 1SM-eat-PST 4-vegetables
 ‘Simiso didn’t say that Nothando bought any vegetables.’

These disparate factors all enter into debate on the question of how best to characterize the properties of [-A] nominals and whether they reveal something about Case in Nguni.

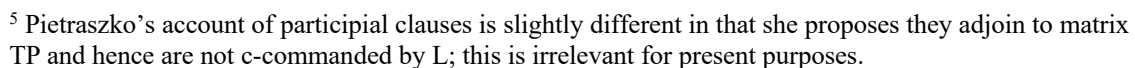
Researchers differ in their opinions of what is relevant. Halpert (2015) and Pietraszko

⁴ Under Halpert’s (2015) analysis the KP shells explain much-discussed Bantu Case anomalies in which Nguni [-A] cannot participate including hyper-raising from tensed clauses, multiple subject agreement, and overt preverbal subjects within clauses whose verbs bear the noun class morphology of infinitives. As a review lies outside this brief paper’s scope I refer the interested reader to Halpert (2015) and Pietraszko (2021) for descriptions of the facts in Zulu and Ndebele; to Harford (1986), Carstens & Diercks (2013), Diercks (2012) for analyses in terms of a complete absence of Case in Bantu; and to Baker (2003) and Carstens & Mletshe (2015) for the view that only [+A] nominals require Case. See §9 for brief discussion.

The most recent chapter in this controversy opens with some previously unnoticed instances of the PVSP restriction which Pietraszko (2021) presents as proof that the Case approach is correct. If her argument holds up, then the question may be viewed as settled. If not, the evidence that her paper brings to light requires an alternative analysis.

(7) [-A] are excluded from PVSP of (a) subjunctive, (b) relative, (c) participial clauses.

- (8) Case locality failure into dependent clauses [Pietraszko 2021:592]



1.2 Conflicting evidence

Pickiness about the properties of preverbal subjects is common, across languages.

Researchers typically relate such phenomena to the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) of Chomsky (1981); see among many others Buell (2007) and Halpert (2015) on exclusion of PPs and CPs respectively from Zulu PVSPs, and Deprez (2000) on exclusion of bare nouns from PVSPs in Romance. The EPP seems at least as plausible a source of the restrictions on [-A] nominals in (7) as is the hypothetical absence of abstract Case preverbally, particularly given Halpert's and Buell's reports of other Nguni PVSP restrictions.

Moreover, there is reason for skepticism about the Case approach in additional Ndebele data, some of which Pietraszko (2021) presents in a footnote. Pietraszko (2021:592 note 12) shows that a [-A] nominal may in fact appear in subjunctive PVSP just in case the local COMP is augmentless. Compare (9) with the well-formed (10). Here the augment drops from the COMP (*u-*)*kuthi*, a nominalization of the verb 'to say' (Pietraszko 2019), and the augment of the subject which follows it may drop as well.⁶

(9) A-ngi-fun-i [u-kuthi **(u-)Sipho* a-buy-e]. [Ndebele; Pietraszko 2021:591]
NEG-1SSM-want-NEG AUG-COMP AUG-1Sipho 1SM-come-SBJ
'I don't want Sipho to come.'

(10) A-ngi-fun-i [kuthi *(u)Sipho* a-buy-e]. [Ndebele; Pietraszko 2021:592]
NEG-1SSM-want-NEG COMP AUG-1Sipho 1SM-come-SBJ
'I don't want Sipho to come.'

Pietraszko (2021) suggests that (10) is an instance of a broad phenomenon wherein Agree with a phasal category allows the probe involved to subsequently ignore the phase

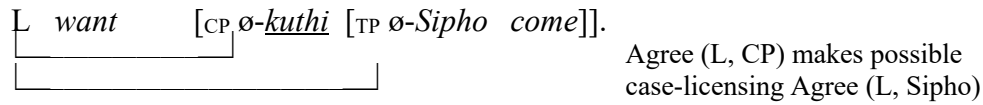
⁶ Two points concerning these examples: (i) §4.1 shows that [-A] proper names pattern syntactically like other [-A] negative dependents in all respects. (ii) Zulu has a homophonous COMP cognate to Ndebele's COMP *ukuthi*, while Xhosa's counterpart COMP is a form of the verb 'be'. Neither can augment-drop, suggesting that they are not fully nominal like the Ndebele COMP.

boundary, accessing material within it (see (11) from Rackowski & Richards 2005:582).

She accordingly characterizes (10) as support for the Case account of the PVSP exclusion of [-A] nominals. I illustrate her proposal in (12), taking the probe that hypothetically Case-licenses the CP and the preverbal subject to be Halpert’s L as in Pietraszko (2021).⁷

(11) *Principle of Minimal Compliance*: Once a probe P Agrees with a goal G, P can ignore G for the rest of the derivation (Richards 1998, Hiraiwa 2001).

(12) *Agreement unlocking a phase for Case-licensing into it*



A first problem with this approach concerns the role of negation, which is essential for augment-drop. This is clear from comparison of (10) with examples (13)a,b wherein the matrix clauses are affirmative. Augment-drop is impossible from COMP and the subject in both the statement (13)a and the question in (13)b, though for Halpert and Pietraszko the licenser L is present in every clause. In light of this pattern, a syntactic “unlocking” role for negation as sketched in (14) seems a better fit than (12) to explain (10).

(13) a. Ngi-fun-a [**(u)-kuthi* [**(u)-Sipho a-buy-e*]] [Ndebele; Sibanda p.c.]
 1sSM-want AUG-COMP AUG-1Sipho 1SM-come-SBJ
 ‘I want Sipho to come.’

⁷ An anonymous reviewer points out that Pietraszko (2019) claims Ndebele CPs are encased in DP shells headed by the augment: [_{DP} AUG [_{CP} *kuthi* [_{TP} SU...]]]. Assuming CP is a phase, Agree (L, DP) cannot suffice under (11) to unlock it for probing of the preverbal subject within it. Access is not likely improved by NEG-licensed augment-drop from COMP: clauses introduced by [-A] COMPs pattern like [-A] DPs in that they cannot control agreement or dislocate (Pietraszko 2019:72), so Pietraszko suggests that they and other [-A] nominals have null D heads; hence their structure would be [_{DP} Ø [_{CP} *kuthi* [_{TP} SU...]]]. An alternative might take the DP layer to be omissible in negation’s scope, yielding bare NPs and CPs as complements to negated verbs (note this would seem to involve syntactic licensing by NEG, in a rough parallel to English S’-deletion by certain verbs). While such an approach might make possible Pietraszko’s account of (9) vs. (10) under (12), all other arguments against the Case account to be presented in this article stand: (15) can only be explained by focus-features of [-A] nominals incompatible with indicative PVSP; a syntactic licensing role for negation vis-à-vis [-A] is independently motivated by negative concord phenomena (see §3); and L is superfluous given ample evidence that negative concord, focus, and EPP determine [-A] distribution. See also Carstens (to appear) for evidence that both [+A] and [-A] nominals are opaque to extraction, providing no support for a difference in their size (a diagnostic from Bošković (2005, 2008c).

- b. U-fun-a [*(u)-kuthi *(u)-bani a-buy-e?] [Ndebele; Pietraszko p.c.]
 2SSM-want AUG-COMP AUG-1who 1SM-come-SBJ
 ‘Who do you want to come?’

(14) *Alternative hypothesis: negation as a syntactic licenser “unlocking” CP in (10)*

NEG want ... [CP ø-kuthi [TP (u)-Sipho come]].

Given the indispensability of negation for augment-drop to succeed in these cases, a question arises as to whether the role of L can be eliminated to yield a simpler analysis.

For Pietraszko (2021:583), negation (or *wh*-hood) is purely a “semantic precondition” for augment-drop and not a structural licensing factor; in this Pietraszko builds on Halpert’s (2015) identification of Zulu [-A] nominals in negative contexts as NPIs. But her glosses indicate no semantic correlates to augment-drop from complementizers and proper names paralleling the interpretive phenomena that argue for semantic dependency of NPIs on negation (see Kadmon & Landman 1993, Chierchia 2006 on domain widening; Giannakidou et al 2019 on referential deficiency). Pietraszko’s division of labor for negation and L therefore seems arbitrary.⁸

A second problem with Pietraszko’s approach is that it gives rise to a false prediction. Pietraszko (2019) shows that the augment of an Ndebele COMP introducing an indicative clause may drop in the scope of negation, just like that of the COMP introducing

⁸ The absence of NPI-like semantic correlates to augment-drop from Ndebele COMP and proper names in Pietraszko’s examples suggests that NEG-licensing of these items is purely syntactic. Consistent with this Pietraszko (2019:72) reports that augment-drop from COMP seems to convey only emphasis, and for [-A] proper names in negation’s scope Xhosa speakers report only contrastive focus readings; see §2 on focus features of [-A]. However two Zulu speakers that I consulted reported ambiguity between contrastive focus and an NPI-like reading for [-A] proper names in negation’s scope and Galen Sibanda, the one Ndebele speaker I am able to consult, gets a focus reading for [-A] Sipho in (10) but finds more salient the reading ‘any Sipho’. This is not surprising or problematic for a syntactic approach, since syntactic NEG-licensing is generally close companion to semantic dependence rather than an opposing option: Chierchia (2006) encodes NPIs’ dependency on NEG in a morpho-syntactic feature; negative concord is syntactic Agree between NEG and local (semantic) dependents Zeijlstra (2004, 2008).

the subjunctive in (10). As noted above, Pietraszko (2021) claims that a [-A] COMP indicates an Agree relation between L and CP, unlocking the CP for L to Case-license its contents. Given this, the preverbal subject of an indicative complement to a [-A] COMP should be able to augment-drop, but (15) shows that it cannot ((15) adapted from Pietraszko 2019:587:(12a)).

- (15) A-ngi-cabang-i [(u)kuthi [*(u)-Sipho u-za-pheka]] [Ndebele]
 NEG-1SM-think-NEG AUG-COMP AUG-Sipho 1SM-FUT-cook
 ‘I don’t think Sipho will cook.’

Summing up, Pietraszko’s (2021) account of (10) wrongly predicts that when Ndebele’s indicative clause COMP drops its augment under negation in (15), Case from L should enable the local subject to augment-drop too. The account thus falls short of its goal of explaining the distribution of [-A] nominals as preverbal subjects. Analytical questions also arise from the claim that Case from L is the crucial syntactic licensing factor in Ndebele (10), since the grammaticality contrast between (10) and (13) hangs on the presence or absence of negation. In Zulu and Xhosa, COMPs cannot augment-drop (see note 6) but proper names may do so in the scope of clause-mate negation, yielding the same questions as arise in Ndebele vis-à-vis the nature of negation’s role.

This article presents an alternative approach in which negation is the syntactic licenser of augment-drop in negative contexts, analyzed as a form of negative concord. Negative concord licenses both the [-A] COMP and the [-A] subjunctive subject in (10). [-A] nominals are excluded from PVSP of indicatives like (15) because it is antipocus (Sabel & Zeller 2006, Zeller 2008); as strict negative dependents and *wh*-words, [-A] nominals have focus-features incompatible with this location. The remaining PVSP

restrictions are EPP-effects.

The rest of the article is structured as follows. §2 shows how the Nguni topography of focus and anti-focus accounts for all distributional restrictions on [-A] nominals apart from the non-indicative PVSP facts in (7) (Carstens & Mletshe 2016). §3 establishes the properties of negative concord in Xhosa and Zulu and demonstrates that the licensing of a subjunctive clause [-A] subject perfectly parallels augment-drop negative concord spreading into DPs. §4 proposes that all [-A] nominals must be syntactically licensed by NEG or interrogative C_Q and shows that of the two relations, only NEG-licensing involves feature-valuation. These factors pave the way for §5 to present an EPP-as-labeling-theoretic account of residual PVSP restrictions and of their ability to be neutralized by negative concord. §6 provides evidence that each [-A] noun has a null D which can be licensed by only one or the other of NEG or C_Q (never both) and assimilates the relations to operator-variable binding. §7 extends the labeling approach to post-verbal subjects in Nguni TECs. §8 analyzes parallels in Romance languages. §9 concludes that negative concord, focus, and *wh*-hood play vital syntactic roles in Nguni contra Pietraszko (2021), eliminating any explanatory role for abstract Case. The upshot is that all aspects of the distribution of [-A] nominals reduce to morpho-syntactic features associated with their functions as negative dependents and *wh*-words.

2. PVSP and the Focus/Case debate

2.1 Successes of a Focus-based account

§1.2 demonstrated that the Case approach advocated in Pietraszko (2021) does not fully explain the distribution of [-A] nominals in PVSPs. This is important because the viability of the approach depends on its success in the preverbal domain, since several

other restrictions identified in Halpert (2015) and attributed to Case-licensing failures for [-A] are shared by certain [+A] expressions which, under Halpert's approach, do not require Case. Thus while Halpert shows that [-A] nominals cannot be right-dislocated (diagnosed by cooccurrence of an agreeing object marker) or appear as Q of a VSQ(O) Transitive Expletive Construction (TEC), Carstens & Mletshe (2016) point out that [+A] *wh*-phrases are barred from the same range of locations, as is the expression 'only XP' (see (16) - (18)). The same is true of indicative PVSP, whether matrix or embedded: both [-A] and [+A] *wh*- phrases are excluded there, as is 'only XP' (see (19)a-c). For completeness (20) shows the same pattern for negative dependent [-A] nominals.

(16) Neither [+A] nor [-A] *wh* may clitic-dislocate [Xhosa/Zulu]

- a. *U-**m-bon-ile**_{VP} bani/u-bani?
 2sSM-3sOM-see-DISJ.PST 1who/AUG-1who
 Intended: Who did you see?
- b. *Bani /***u-bani** u-**m-bon-ile**?
 1who/AUG-1who 2sSM-3sOM-see-DISJ.PST
 Intended: Who did you see?

(17) Both [+A] and [-A] *wh* are excluded as Q of VSQO [Xhosa/Zulu]

- *Ku-fund-is-e u-Loyiso bani/u-bani i-si-Xhosa
 17SM-learn-CAUS-PST AUG-1Loyiso 1who/AUG-1who AUG-7-Xhosa
 Intended: Who did Loyiso teach Xhosa to?

(18) [+A] 'only' XP cannot be Q of VSQ(O) or clitic-dislocate [Xhosa/Zulu]

- a. *Ku-fund-is-e u-Loyiso [**U-John kuphela**] (i-si-Xhosa)
 17SM-learn-CAUS-PST AUG-1Loyiso AUG-1John only AUG-7-Xhosa
 Intended: Loyiso taught only John Xhosa.
- b. *U-**m-bon-ile**_{VP} [**U-John kuphela**]
 1SM-3sOM-see-DISJ.PST AUG-1John only
 Intended: S/he saw only John.

(19) [+/-A] *wh*- and 'only' XP are all excluded from indicative PVSP

- a. *(U-)bani u-fik-ile? [Xhosa/Zulu]
 AUG-1who 1SM-arrive-DISJ.PST
 Intended: Who arrived?

- b. *[**U-John kuphela**] u-fik-ile
 AUG-1John only 1SM-arrive-DISJ.PST
 Intended: Only John arrived.
- c. *U-cinga ukuba [(u-)bani w-emka]? [Xhosa]
 2sSM-think COMP AUG-1who 1SM-leave
 Intended: Who do you think left?

(20) [-A] negative dependents share the distributional restrictions

- a. *A-ngi-**m**-bon-i mu-ntu [Zulu; *clitic right-dislocation of [-A]]
 NEG-1sSM-1OM-see-NEG 1-person
 Intended: I don't see anybody.
- b. *A-ku-phek-anga u-Sabelo n-to! [Xhosa; *[-A] as O of VSO]
 NEG-17sSM-buy-NEG 1-Sindiswa 9-thing
 Intended: Sabelo didn't buy anything!
- c. *M-ntu a-ka-lal-i [Xhosa; *[-A] as S of SVO]
 1-person NEG-1SM-sleep-NEG
 Intended: Nobody is sleeping.

Taking *wh*-phrases and 'only XP' to be [+focus] expressions, there is a robust generalization: wherever [+focus] material is ruled out, [-A] nominals are excluded also (see (21)).

(21) Predicting [-A] distribution from [+Focus] restrictions

If XP_[+Focus] is barred from Position P, then [-A] nominals are barred from P

The distribution of [+A] *wh*-words and 'only XP' is the basis for [+/-focus] clausal positions proposed in Sabel & Zeller (2006), Zeller (2008), Carstens & Mletshe (2015), Carstens & Zeller (2020); antifocus positions include S of indicative SVO, O of VSO(O), and dislocated positions. Assuming with Carstens & Mletshe (2016) that all *wh*-words and [-A] negative dependents have focus-features in Nguni, the above patterns of exclusion follow (they cite Watanabe 2004 and Shimoyama 2011 on focus-features of negative dependents in Japanese, Sells 2006 and Giannakidou & Yoon 2016 on Korean, and Giannakidou & Zeijlstra 2017 for discussion; see also Bošković 2008a on the role of focus particles in deriving negative concord items in Serbo-Croatian). Under this

approach, the unacceptability of a [-A] subject in the embedded clause of (15) is due to the antifocus property of indicative PVSP. Table 1 is from Carstens & Mletshe (2016).⁹

Table 1: Summary of correspondences between [-A] and [+focus] material in Nguni

	Restriction #1	Restriction #2	Restriction #3	Restriction #4
Nominal type	<u>S</u> of <u>SV</u>... indicative	Clitic-dislocate	<u>O</u> of <u>VSO</u>	<u>O</u>₁ of <u>VSO</u>₁<u>O</u>₂
[+A] ‘only’ DP	X	X	X	X
[-A] neg. dep.	X	X	X	X
[+/-A] <i>wh</i> -word	X	X	variable	X

The parallels summarized in Table 1 are quite analytically significant. Consider the evidence in (17) and (19) that both [+A] and [-A] *wh*-phrases are barred from indicative PVSP and O of VSO. Under Halpert’s and Pietraszko’s approach, these identical patterns of restriction have entirely distinct origins: [-A] *wh*-phrases are excluded by an absence of Case but since [+A] do not require Case, [+A] *wh*-phrases must be excluded by a different factor -- an analytical anomaly which the focus-based account eliminates. Turning to (16) and (20)a, Halpert and Pietraszko view the ill-formedness of clitic-dislocated [-A] nominals as an indicator that in Nguni, movement is not possible from a Case-licensed position to an A’-position. The plausibility of this proposal is undermined not only by the fact that the dislocation restriction is the same for [-A] and [+A] *wh*-phrases as noted above; the pattern is also cross-linguistically pervasive: the contrasts in (22) demonstrate that *wh*-phrases, negative dependents, and negative quantifiers are quite generally resistant to dislocation even in English. For relevant discussion of such restrictions see among others Zeller (2008) on Nguni anti-focus positions, Rizzi (1997)

⁹ The variability of judgments on *wh*- as O of VSO is puzzling but as Carstens & Mletshe (2016) note, a problem for focus and Case accounts equally since it holds of both [+A] and [-A] *wh*-. §4.3:(59)-(60) provide evidence of focus projection from Nguni *wh*-phrases to their containing category. This might be relevant here, assuming with Carstens & Mletshe that S of VSO raises to Spec of a low FocusP leaving the *wh*-O as sole occupant of vP, to which it might project its focus-feature. Details exceed this paper’s scope.

on the ability of ‘no one’ to be focus but not topic, Baker (2003) for a similar account of why Kinande [-A] nominals cannot dislocate, and Kallulli (2000) for a focus-based account of why *wh*-phrases cannot clitic-double.¹⁰

- (22) a. ✓I didn’t see him, your brother. b. I didn’t see (*him,) anybody/nobody.
 c. ✓Your brother, I didn’t see him. d. *Nobody, I saw (him).
 e. You didn’t see (* him,) WHO? f. *Who, you saw (him)?
 g. *I don’t think that anybody, John saw (him).

Despite the correspondences in Table 1 and the widespread incompatibility of [+focus] expressions with dislocation, Pietraszko (2021:597) rejects any role for focus in the distribution of [-A] nominals, suggesting that Case-licensing and focus domains overlap coincidentally because Case is licensed downwards into vP by L and focus “tends to be assigned *in situ*”. But this characterization is incompatible with the fact that Q in a VSQ(O) TEC *cannot* be [+focus] *or* [-A] as shown in (17), (18), and (23)a,b.

(23) Q of VSQ can be neither [+focus] nor [-A]

- a. *Ku-theng-e u-Sindiswa [a-ma-qanda kuphela]. [Zulu/Xhosa]
 17SM-buy-PST AUG-1-Sindiswa AUG-6-eggs only
 Intended: Sindiswa bought only a book.
- b. A-ku-phek-i (u-)Zodwa *(i)suphu. [Ndebele; Pietraszko 2021:584]
 NEG-17SM-cook-NEG AUG-1Zodwa AUG-9soup
 ‘Zodwa_F didn’t cook soup.’

If focus is assigned *in situ* as Pietraszko suggests, we would expect [+focus] material to be acceptable as Q of VSQ in (23)a, contrary to fact. There is a tight correspondence between licit positions for focus material and [-A] nominals that cannot be explained away in terms of coincidental domains.

¹⁰ §5.3 discusses and analyzes one further restriction that Halpert (2015:69) cites as evidence for the claim that Case-licensing cannot feed A’-movement: [-A] cannot cleft.

Focus turns out not to be the whole story, however. Pietraszko (2021) shows that in subjunctives, relatives, and participial clauses, [+A] [+focus] expressions and [-A] nominals do not distribute identically: the former can appear in PVSP of these clause types while, as we saw in (7), [-A] nominals cannot. Herein lies the challenge of Pietraszko's new data. The relevant contrasts are illustrated in (24)-(26), from Pietraszko (2021:589-91).

a. U-fun-a ukuthi [u-**bani** a-buy-e]? [+A] *wh*-SU OK
 2sSM-want-FV COMP AUG-1who 1SM-come-SBJ
 ‘Who do you want to come?’

b. Ngi-funa ukuthi [**u-Sipho** **kuphela** a-buy-e]. [+A] *only*-SU OK
 1sSM-want-FV COMP AUG-1Sipho only 1SM-come-SBJ
 ‘I want only Sipho to come.’

c. *U-fun-a ukuthi [**bani** a-buy-e]? *[-A] in same environment
 2sSM-want-FV COMP 1who 1SM-come-SBJ
 Intended: who do you want to come?

a. U-zwe i-n-goma [**u-bani** a-yi-hlabelileyo]? [+A] *wh*-SU OK
 2sSM-heard AUG-9-song AUG-1who 1SM-9OM-sing.PST.REL
 ‘You heard the song that who sang?’

b. Ngi-zwe ingoma [**u-Sipho kuphela** a-yi-hlabelileyo]. [+A] *only*-SU OK
 1sSM-heard 9song AUG-1Sipho only 1SM-9OM-sing.PST.REL
 ‘I heard the song that only Sipho sang.’

c. *U-zwe i-n-goma [**bani** a-yi-hlabelileyo]? *[-A] *wh* SU
 2sSM-heard AUG-9-song 1who 1SM-9OM-sing.PST.REL
 ‘You heard the song that who sang?’

a. U-suk-e [u-bani e-hlabela]? [+A] *wh*-SU OK
 2sSM-leave-PST AUG-1who 1SM-sing
 ‘Who is such that you left while they were singing?’

- b. Ngi-suk-e [u-Sipho kuphela e-hlabela]. [+A] *only*-SU OK
 1sSM- leave-PST AUG-1Sipho only 1SM-sing
 ‘I left when only Sipho was singing.’
- c. *U-suk-e [bani e-hlabela]? *[-A] wh SU
 2sSM-leave-PST 1who 1SM-sing
 Intended: Who is suchthat you left while they were singing?

I adopt Pietraszko’s proposal that subjects of indicative clauses surface in TopP, a CP layer absent in subjunctives, relatives, and participial clauses as depicted in (27). TopP is inhospitable to [+focus] material including ‘only XP’ and *wh*-phrases whether [+A] or [-A]. This explains why they are excluded from PVSP of indicatives:

- (27) a. Indicative: [ForceP C [TopP SU [FinP.Ind [TP [vP ... V O (O) ...]]]]]
 b. Relative, participial, subjunctive: [FinP.Sbj C [TP SU [vP ... V O (O) ...]]]

Table 2 summarizes the contrasts between [-A] nominals and [+focus] material in Nguni PVSPs that Pietraszko describes. The relationship between focus and [-A] nominal distribution is clearly not a biconditional; (28) expands on (21) to explicitly reflect this.

Table 2: Contrasting distribution of [-A] and [+focus] material in Nguni PVSPs

Nominal type	S of SV... indicative	S of SV...non-indicative following [+A] COMP
[+A] ‘only’ DP	X	✓
[+A] <i>wh</i> -word	X	✓
[-A] negative dependent	X	X
[-A] <i>wh</i> -word	X	X

(28) [+Focus] and [-A] nominal distribution: a one-way correlation

- a. ✓If XP_[+Focus] is barred from Position P, then [-A] nominals are barred from P
 b. XIf [-A] nominals are barred from Position P, then XP_[+Focus] is barred from P

The one exception Pietraszko provides to the exclusion of [-A] from PVSPs is the ability of a [-A] negative dependent to follow a [-A] COMP exemplified in (10), repeated below.

- (10) A-ngi-fun-i [kuthi (u)Sipho a-buy-e]. [Ndebele; Pietraszko 2021:592]
 NEG-1sSM-want-NEG COMP AUG-1Sipho 1SM- come.SBJ
 ‘I don’t want Sipho to come.’

2.3 Discussion

The facts of (24)-(26) are convincing evidence that focus-features alone cannot explain all of the facts of [-A] nominal distribution, since [-A] nominals and [+focus] expressions do not pattern alike in non-indicative PVSPs. But we saw in §2.1 that the Case account suffers from redundancy with the independently motivated topography of focus in other environments. Moreover, the Case account cannot explain why a [-A] preverbal subject is licit in (10) but not in the embedded indicative (15) despite augment-drop from its COMP. And the unacceptability of a [-A] nominal in the affirmative (13)a shows that Pietraszko's account of (10) implicitly relies on two licensers, because the proposed Case-licensing is possible only when negation sanctions the presence of a [-A] COMP (examples reproduced below).

(15) A-ngi-cabang-i [(u)kuthi [(u)-Sipho] u-za-pheka]] [Ndebele]
 NEG-1SM-think-NEG AUG-COMP AUG-Sipho 1SM-FUT-cook
 'I don't think Sipho will cook.'

(13) a. Ngi-fun-a [(u)-kuthi [(u)-Sipho a-buy-e]] [Ndebele; Sibanda p.c.]
 1sSM-want AUG-COMP AUG-1Sipho 1SM-come-SBJ
 'I want Sipho to come.'

As I mentioned above, a different interpretation of the PVSP restrictions merits consideration: the EPP. EPP-effects vary across languages from the simple requirement that there be some expression in PVSP (Holmberg 2000) to fine-grained restrictions regarding the category and size of the occupant as detailed in Buell (2007) on exclusion of PPs from Zulu PVSPs, Halpert (2015) on exclusion of Zulu CPs (though Pietraszko reports them to be accepted in PVSPs of Ndebele), and Deprez (2000) on exclusion of Romance bare nominal subjects, among others. The illicitness of [-A] nominals in PVSPs seems very much akin to this family of constraints. Table 3 adds my proposal to results

of existing explorations of the EPP in Nguni languages.¹¹

Table 3: What satisfies the EPP in Nguni?

Category	Status	Comments
[+A] nominals	✓	though *[+focus] ‘only XP’ and <i>wh</i> - in indicative Spec, TopP
CPs	variable	✗Zulu (Halpert 2015, 2019), ✓Ndebele (Pietraszko 2019)
PPs	✗	See Buell (2007) on Zulu; Carstens (2022) on Xhosa
[-A] nominals	✗	Ruled out in all 3 languages

I henceforth adopt Carstens & Mletshe’s (2016) focus-based account of the restrictions in (16)-(20) and advocate an EPP-analysis of the PVSP facts in (24)-(26) approached in terms of the labeling theory of Chomsky (2013) and reflecting a generalization not yet considered, namely that [-A] nominals cannot be agreed with. This and negative concord are key factors in labeling, I will argue. After mapping out the workings of negative concord and *wh*-licensing in §3 and §4, I argue in §5 that negative concord impacts labeling in a way that neatly explains the distribution of both negative-dependent and *wh*-[-A] nominals in PSVPs.

3 Negative concord and licensing through COMP

My account builds on a parallel between the facts of augment-drop on a subjunctive subject and a hitherto unnoticed generalization about Nguni augment-drop within complex nominal expressions, many facts of which are described for Zulu in Halpert (2015). Halpert shows that augments may be dropped from modifiers within a complex [-A] nominal and describes this as augment-drop concord. Further investigation reveals concordial augment-drop to be consistently licit within complex negative dependents as in (29)a,b, but not within complex *wh*-phrases like the Xhosa (30)a-c or Zulu (31) (from

¹¹ I have found CPs to be fully acceptable in PVSP of Zulu and Xhosa non-indicative clauses. See Carstens (2022) for details and a labeling-theoretic account of the CP and PP facts in Table 3.

Halpert 2015:224), despite the *wh*-word itself being [-A]. (30)c shows that augment-drop also fails under an alternative noun-initial word order within the *wh*-phrase.¹²

(29) Augment-drop concord is possible within a complex [-A] in negation's scope

- a. A-ndi-bon-i ø-zi-hlangu ø-zi-bomvu. [Xhosa]
 NEG-1sSM-see-NEG 8-shoes 8-red
 'I don't see any red shoes.'
- b. U-Mary a-ka-thand-i ø-zin-ja ø-zin-kulu zi-ka-John.
 AUG-1Mary NEG-1SM-like-NEG 10-dogs 10-big 10-poss-1John
 'Mary doesn't like (any of) John's big dogs.'

(30) Augment-drop concord is impossible within a complex *wh*-expression

- a. U-Mary u-thanda ø-zi-phi *(i-)zi-hlangu *(e-)zi-bomvu? [Xhosa]
 AUG-1Mary 1SM-like 8-which AUG-8-shoes AUG.REL-8-red
 'Which red shoes does Mary like?'
- b. U-thanda ø-zi-njani *(i-)zin-ja *(e-)zi-ncincini? [Xhosa]
 2sSM-like 10-what.kind AUG-10-dogs AUG-10-small
 'What kind of small dogs do you like?'
- c. U-thanda *(i-)zi-nja *(e-)zi-njani *(e-)zi-ncincini? [Xhosa]
 2sSM-like AUG-10-dogs AUG-10-what.kind AUG-10-small
 'What kind of small dogs do you like?'
- (31) W-a-bona mu-phi *(u-)mu-ntu? [Zulu]
 2sSM-see-PST 1-which AUG-1-person
 'Which person did you see?'

Halpert (2015) analyzes augment-drop concord as Case concord, but the contrasts in

(29)-(31) argue against this since all the [-A] nominals in these examples occupy vP-

internal positions that Halpert analyzes as Case-licensed. Halpert points out that

augmentless *-phi* – 'which' (see her (31) and Xhosa (30)a) is possible only vP-internally,

as her account predicts; a [+A] form of *-phi* is required in vP-external locations like the

¹² Zulu 'what time' in (i)a has two [-A] members but seems to be a phrasal compound since neither *si-ni* – 'what' nor *si-kathi* – 'time' may bear an augment as shown in (i)b, regardless of syntactic context; there are inner prefixes but no augments on the second members of compounds (Halpert 2015:224). Similarly *-ni* in Xhosa 'what gender/kind' is always [-A] and must be preceded by a [-A] noun (Taraldsen 2019), but nominal modifiers nonetheless cannot augment-drop; a compounding analysis seems plausible. That both involve *-ni*, otherwise a morphologically dependent element (Zulu's verbal enclitic 'what'), lends support.

(i) a. U-zo-fika nga-si-kathi si-ni? b. ..(*Yi/i)-si-kathi (*e-/i-)si-ni...? [Zulu]
 2sSM-FUT-come NGA-7-time 7-what COP/AUG-7-time REL/AUG-7-what
 'What time will you come?' '...what time...?'

PVSP in (32) (Zulu; adapted from Halpert (2015:225 (368))). Halpert argues that the [-A] *-phi* exemplified in (31) relies on vP-internal Case-licensing. She does not suggest an account for why augment-drop concord is ruled out on the noun that *-phi* introduces.

- (32) A-ng-azi ukuthi *(u-)mu-phi u-m-sakazi o-zo-hlukanisa
 NEG-1sSM-know COMP AUG-1-which AUG-1-broadcaster 1REL-FUT-divide
 u-nyaka.
 AUG-3.year
 ‘I don’t know which DJ will be closing out the year.’

I propose instead that clause-level licensing of productive augment-drop concord is provided not by L but by NEG. It is *negative* concord, reflecting syntactic Agree between interpretable negation and unvalued, uninterpretable negation features, henceforth *uNeg* (see Zeijlstra 2004, 2008, Penka 2011 among others).¹³ I follow Haegeman & Lohndal (2010) in analyzing this as a very local relation, the reach of which may be extended through a chain of concord-bearers as illustrated in the West Flemish (33), adapted from Haegeman & Lohndal (2010:194).¹⁴ A West Flemish DP must have a negative head *niet* if NCIs are to be licit within it, much like what we have seen for augment-drop within an Nguni DP. In (34) I represent an augmentless nominal as a DP with a null D head, and an augmentless modifier α within it as having a null head as well; empirical support for null D is provided in §6.

(33) Negative concord spreading from D into DP in West Flemish

- a. dan ze [van *(**niet** vele) **geen** boeken] ketent zyn
 that they of not many no book contented are
 ‘that they are not pleased with many books’

¹³ A pronominal demonstrative can license augment-drop on material that follows it within DP (see Mbana 2021). I leave unification to future research. See §6 on augments in negative *wh*-questions.

¹⁴See Haegeman & Lohndal (2010) for complex adjacency and anti-adjacency effects which they capture via the binary Agree dependencies among concord bearers depicted in (33)b.

consistent with the well-established ability of negative concord to spread link-by-link into complex and otherwise opaque expressions as was illustrated in the West Flemish (33) (see also Haegeman & Zanuttini 1991, Hoeksma 2007, den Dikken 2002, 2006, Postal 2005 among many others on *parasitic licensing* of NPIs and NCIs).¹⁵

(37) Negative concord spreading from C to SU yields a licit [-A] preverbal subject

A-ngi-fun-i NEG-I-want	[CP ø _{uNeg} - kuthi COMP	[TP ø _{uNeg} - Sipho a-buy-e]]. 1Sipho 1SM-come-SBJ

The Ndebele facts bring to mind an aspect of Basque negative concord discussed in Laka (1990). Laka shows that there is a Basque COMP *duenik* with negative features which is licensed by matrix negation. For negative dependents to be acceptable in an embedded clause, that clause must be a subjunctive introduced by *duenik* as shown in the contrast between (38)a,b (Laka 1990:217:(53); labeled bracketing added). Under my analysis of the [-A] COMP *ø-kuthi*, both cases illustrate strategies to overcome clausal opacity for negative concord by spreading it downwards via a bridging COMP (see also Progovac 1992 for arguments that some embedded NPI-licensing in English works similarly).

- (38) a. *Inigok ez du sinisten [CP [TP ezerk eztanda egingo] duela] [Basque]
 Inigo no has believe anything explode do will that
 Intended: Inigo does not believe that anything will explode
- b. Inigok ez du sinisten [CP [TP ezerk eztanda egingo] duenik]
 Inigo no has believe anything explode do will that.NEG
 ‘Inigo does not believe that anything will explode’

In the following section I map out in detail the syntactic relations sanctioning [-A] nominals as dependents of negation and as *wh*-words. This paves the way for my labeling-theoretic analysis of the PVSP constraints in §5.

¹⁵ §5.3 presents evidence that C-T Feature Inheritance also plays a role in NEG-licensing PVSP via COMP.

4 The licensing relations

4.1 Neg-licensing: heterogeneity with uniform locality

Let us return to the first property of [-A] nominals introduced in §1.1, namely that they may surface only as *wh*-phrases and in the scope of negation. It is commonly assumed that *in situ wh*-phrases lack intrinsic quantificational force and therefore must be unselectively bound by the interrogative clause-typing C_Q (see among many others Baker 1970, Pesetsky 1987 and Cheng 1997). The syntactic reliance of negative dependents on local negation is also well-established (Haegeman 1995, Zanuttini 1997, Laka 1990/2019, Progovac 1988, 1993a, among many others). I propose the baseline requirement (39) (assuming a chain of negative concord provides an indirect strategy for NEG-licensing).¹⁶

(39) [-A] nominals must be syntactically licensed by c-commanding *i*NEG or C_Q.

The facts of [-A] nominals in negative contexts are heterogeneous and intricate. Because they will play an important role in the analysis I provide full details.

Carstens & Mletshe (2016) show that in addition to combining with a clausal negator to yield single negation readings, three Zulu [-A] nominals are acceptable negative fragment answers as exemplified in (40)a-c. This duality of function is a hallmark of true negative concord items (Valdúvı 1994, Giannakidou 2006). Other [-A] are ill-formed as fragment answers (see (40)d,c), like English NPIs: **(I didn't see) any woman!*¹⁷

¹⁶ For brevity's sake I ignore raising approaches to NCIs and Qs (Collins & Postal 2015, Cable 2010). Carstens & Mletshe (2016) report that 1/3 of the Xhosa speakers in their study accepted [-A] in polar questions. For speakers who do not, the licenser is better identified as C_{WH} but I leave this aside.

¹⁷ Carstens & Mletshe (2016) also show that Zulu *muntu* - 'nobody' and *lutho* - 'nothing' may be modified by *cishe* - 'almost', another common NC diagnostic. A third, the ability to appear in PVSP with apparent negative force, is unhelpful in Nguni due to independent factors ruling [-A] out in this location; see §1.2.

- (40) Fragment answers: a. $\sqrt{\text{Mu-ntu!}}$ b. $\sqrt{\text{Lutho!}}$ c. $\sqrt{\text{N-dawo!}}$ [Zulu]
 1-person 11 thing 9-place
 ‘Nobody!’ ‘Nothing!’ ‘No place!’
 d. $*\text{M-fazi!}$ e. $*\text{Zi-hlangu!}$
 1-woman 8-shoes
 Intended: No woman! Intended: No shoes!’

All nominals including proper names seem able to drop their augments in the scope of negation; see the Ndebele (41) from Pietraszko (2021) and the Xhosa/Zulu (42).

- (41) A-ba-bon-i (u)-Zodwa. [Ndebele; Pietraszko 2021:583]
 NEG-2SM-see-NEG AUG-Zodwa
 ‘They don’t see Zodwa.’
 (42) U-Sabelo a-ka-thand-i Zodwa/m-fazi/zin-ja. [Xhosa/Zulu]
 AUG-1Sabelo NEG-1SM-like-NEG Zodwa/1-woman/10-dogs
 ‘Sabelo doesn’t like Zodwa_F /any woman/any dogs.’

Despite their heterogeneity, all [-A] nominals in negative contexts share several syntactic constraints previewed in §1. These include the PVSP exclusion, the restrictions that (17)–(18) showed to be shared with [+focus] material, and the requirement of clausemate negation in indicatives exemplified in (43).¹⁸

- (43) a. $*\text{U-Mary}$ a-ka-shongo [ukuthi u-John u-thanda m-fazi/Zodwa]. [Zulu]
 AUG-1Mary NEG-1SM-say COMP AUG-1-John 1SM-like 1-woman/Zodwa
 Intended: Mary didn’t say that John likes any woman/likes Zoda_F.
 b. $*\text{U-Simiso}$ a-ka-zi [ukuthi u-Sabelo u-dl-e nyama]. [Zulu]
 1-1Simiso NEG-1SM-know COMP AUG-1Sabelo 1SM-eat-PST 9meat
 ‘Simiso doesn’t know that Sabelo ate any meat.’
 c. $*\text{A-ndi-cing-i}$ [ukuba u-bon-e m-ntu/Zodwa.] [Xhosa]
 NEG-1SM-think-NEG COMP 1SM-see-PST 1-person/Zodwa
 Intended: I don’t think that (s)he saw anyone/saw (any) Zoda_F.’

¹⁸ Carstens & Mletshe (2016) report that 10/10 Xhosa and 7/7 Zulu speakers in their study strongly rejected cross-clausal licensing except into subjunctives, as did all 3 Zulu and all 5 Xhosa speakers in the present study. In contrast, Halpert (2015) reports that over half the Zulu speakers in her study accepted cross-clausal licensing into indicatives. Carstens & Mletshe (2016) suggest that NEG-raising and the permeability of Bantu clauses exhibited in hyper-raising may underlie this discrepancy; Halpert (2015:240) notes a correlation in acceptability of cross-clausal dislocation and cross-clausal NEG-licensing. Pietraszko (2021) exemplifies cross-clausal licensing into the indicative complement of ‘think’, a classic NEG-raising verb.

- d. *A-ndi-qond-i [ukuba a-ba-ntwana ba-bona m-fazi]. [Xhosa]
 NEG-1SSM-believe-NEG COMP AUG-2-children 2SM-see 1-woman
 ‘I don’t believe that the children see any woman.’

The speakers I consulted also found relative and participial clauses opaque to negation-licensing, providing further evidence of its local character.¹⁹

(44) Participial adjunct clauses are opaque to cross-clausal negation-licensing

- a. U-suk-e [ku-hlabela bani?] [Ndebele; Pietraszko 2021]
 2SSM-left 17SM-sing 1who
 Lit: You left while who singing?’
- b. A-ngi-soze ngi-suke [*(u-)Sabelo e-hlabela]
 NEG-1SSM-AUX.FUT 1SSM-leave AUG-Sipho 1SM-sing
 ‘I will not leave while Sipho is singing.’
- c. A-ngi-soze ngi-suke [ku-hlabela *(u-)Sipho]
 NEG-1SSM-AUX.FUT 1SSM-leave 17SM-sing AUG-Sipho
 ‘I will not leave while Sipho is singing.’

(45) Relative clauses are opaque to negation-licensing

- A-ndi-zange ndi-yi-bon-e [_{RC} i-n-doda i-theng-e *(i)-n-cwadi.] [Xhosa]
 NEG-1SSM-NEG 1SM-9OM-see-PST AUG-9-man 9REL-buy-PST AUG-9-book
 ‘I didn’t see the man who bought a/the/any book.’

On the other hand, [-A] nominals are licit internal arguments in subjunctives under superordinate negation as shown in the Xhosa (46). This is a difference between the Nguni facts and those of Basque introduced in (38) which will be discussed in detail in §4.2.

- (46) A-ka-cel-i [ukuba *(u-)Sabelo a-bon-e m-ntu/Zodwa]
 NEG-1SM-ask-NEG COMP AUG-1-person 1SM-cook-SUBJ 1-person/Zodwa
 ‘S/he isn’t asking that Sabelo see anybody/see Zodwa_F.’

Table 4 summarizes these aspects of [-A] nominal distribution.

¹⁹ Halpert (2015:213) provides Zulu example (i) in which the head of a relative and its modifiers are [-A]. This resembles negative concord reaching into other opaque constituents as represented in (33), (34), (37).

(i) A-ngi-bon-i ba-ntu ba-gqoka zi-gqoko zi-bomvu
 NEG-1SSM-see-NEG 2-people 2-wear 8-hat 8-red
 ‘I don’t see any people wearing red hats.’

Table 4: Distributional properties of [-A] nominals (IA = internal argument)

Type of [-A] nominal	Negative fragment answer	PVSP in indicatives	PVSP in subjunctives, relatives, participials	Clausemate NEG needed for IA in indicatives	Clausemate NEG needed for IA in subjunctives
Zulu <i>lutho</i> , <i>muntu</i> , <i>ndawo</i>	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Other negative dependent	No	No	Only in Ndebele under [-A] COMP	Yes	No
Proper name	No	No	As above	Yes	No
<i>Wh</i> -phrase	N/A	No	No (but see §5.1)	No	No

The facts in (40)-(45) are best reflected by designating all negation-licensed [-A] nominals in Nguni as *strict negative dependents* including [-A] proper names, [-A] NPIs like (40)d *mfazi* – ‘any woman’, and the true NCIs *muntu* – ‘nobody’, *ndawo* – ‘no place’ and *lutho* – ‘nothing’ in (40)a-c. A question arises for the negative concord analysis of constituent-internal augment-drop: if only *muntu*, *ndawo*, and *lutho* are full-fledged NCIs (see (40)), it is unexpected that modifiers within other negative-dependent [-A] may participate in augment-drop concord. To account for this I adopt a proposal of Carstens & Mletshe (2016) that [-A] nominals which fail the fragment-answer diagnostic have negative concord features nonetheless, but they are too weak to be compatible with the silent or elided negation often posited as the licenser of negative fragment answers in negative concord languages (see (47)). Carstens & Mletshe draw a comparison to the idea that *uphi* features of T vary in whether they are compatible with *pro*-drop -- those of Italian and Spanish T are strong enough, while those of English are too weak.

(47) [OP_{iNeg} [A *nadie*_{iNeg}]...] – ‘Nobody’ [Spanish; Zeijlstra 2004:271]

4.2 The subjunctive puzzle

As we have seen, the clausemate restriction has a systematic exception: matrix negation licenses [-A] internal arguments within subjunctive complements (see the Zulu (48)).

- (48) A-ka-cel-i [ukuthi u-Sabelo a-bon-e mu-ntu/Zodwa]
 NEG-1SM-ask-NEG COMP AUG-1-person 1SM-cook-SUBJ 1-person/Zodwa
 ‘S/he isn’t asking that Sabelo see anybody/see Zodwa_F.’

On the other hand, we saw in (9) that subjunctives disallow [-A] preverbal subjects, leading Pietraszko (2021) to treat them as opaque to Agree/Case-licensing from matrix L.

- (9) A-ngi-fun-i [u-kuthi *(u-)Sipho a-buy-e]. [Ndebele; Pietraszko 2021:591]
 NEG-1SSM-want-NEG AUG-COMP AUG-1Sipho 1SM-come-SBJ
 ‘I don’t want Sipho to come.’

A [-A] nominal is licit in subjunctive PVSP only when it follows a negative-licensed [-A] COMP as in (10) (repeated below), strongly suggesting that there is clausal opacity preventing the relation Agree (Neg, [-A]) from reaching directly into subjunctives.

- (10) A-ngi-fun-i [kuthi (u)Sipho a-buy-e]. [Ndebele; Pietraszko 2021:592]
 NEG-1SSM-want-NEG COMP AUG-1Sipho 1SM- come-SBJ
 ‘I don’t want Sipho to come.’

Cross-linguistically, the exceptionality of subjunctives with respect to otherwise strict clausemate requirements is widespread and has received extensive attention (see Giannakidou & Quer 1997, Haegeman & Zanuttini 1991, Giannakidou 1998, 2009, Progovac 1993b, Picallo 1984, Penka 2011 among others). For example, Progovac (1993)b shows that NCIs are licit in the clausal complements to verbs like ‘want’ in Serbo-Croatian but not in clausal complements to verbs like ‘claim’, a contrast that she analyzes in terms of a subjunctive vs indicative distinction (see (49)-(50)). The pattern is typical for languages with NCIs; Spanish examples in (51) are from Arnaiz (1996).²⁰

²⁰ Xhosa infinitives are also transparent to negation-licensing (see (i)) as is common cross-linguistically (Giannakidou 2000). Clauses with class 17 expletive subject agreement are more transparent than those with full agreement; (ii) is judged somewhat more acceptable than the examples in (43)).

(i) A-ndi-fun-i [ku-bona m-ntu]. (ii) ??U-Sabelo a-ka-tshongo ukuba [ku-phek-e m-ntu]
 NEG-1SSM-want-NEG 15-see 1-person AUG-Sabelo NEG-1SM-say that 17SM-cook-PST 1-person
 ‘I don’t want to see anybody.’ ‘Sabelo didn’t say that anybody cooked.’

- (49) *Ne tvrđim [da vidim *nikoga*]. [Serbo-Croatian; Progovac 1993b:117]
 not claim that see no one
 Intended: I don't claim that I can see anyone.
- (50) Ne zelim [da vidim *nikoga*]. [Serbo-Croatian; Progovac 1993b:117]
 not want that see no one
 'I don't wish to see anyone.'
- (51) a. *No dijo que Juan besó a nadie. [Spanish; Arnaiz 1996:54]
 NEG said.3s that Juan kissed.3s P n-body
 'She didn't say that Juan kissed anybody.'
- b. No espero que Juan bese a nadie
 NEG expect.1s that Juan kiss.SBJ P n-body
 'I do not expect Juan to kiss anybody.'

Following Giannakidou & Quer (1997) among others, I assume that while direct cross-clausal NEG-licensing of strict negative dependents is impossible, quantifier raising (QR) can move such a negative-dependent out of a subjunctive into locality with superordinate clause negation. In contrast, it is well-established that QR is *not* possible from one indicative clause to another (on these questions see also Beghelli 1995; Cecchetto 2003, 2004; Farkas 1981; Farkas & Giannakidou 1996; Fox 2000; Johnson 2000; Szabolcsi 1997). As for the special problem of [-A] subjects in PVSP, §5 proposes that *uNeg* features give rise to labeling failures if unvalued at a point where their bearer needs to Agree; thus only valuation via COMP allows [-A] nominals to surface in PVSP.²¹

Summing up, clausemate effects add to the evidence of augment-drop concord that negative-dependent [-A] nominals have negative concord features, *uNeg*, which require

²¹ Vergara (2017) shows that Spanish object but not subject n-words are licit in subjunctive complements to 'doubt' and 'deny' and on this basis argues that apparent cross-clausal licensing in reality relies on NEG-raising from the subjunctive to a position c-commanding the subject, which is blocked from 'doubt' and 'deny' complements. A problem for a NEG-raising approach to subjunctive transparency exists in verbs like 'ask' (see (48)) since *I didn't ask that John see anybody* ≠ *I asked that John not see anybody*. In an earlier draft of this article I proposed that as an aspect of its inflectional dependency on the matrix clause, a subjunctive can include a silent copy of matrix negation in the clause-medial location of overt subjunctive negation; in Nguni this c-commands only internal arguments. Thanks to Chris Collins (personal communication) for suggesting the simpler alternative of a QR approach to subjunctive permeability.

valuation in clause-bound Agree. The opacity of subjunctive clauses is surmountable in many languages: in Basque, by a negative COMP (see (38)b); in Nguni, by QR of an internal argument or NEG-licensing of PVSP via the local COMP. In contrast, we will see in §4.3 that unselective binding of *wh*- by C_Q differs in being non-local.

4.3 The non-locality of unselective binding by C_Q

Assuming *wh*-questions involve a clause-typing C_Q (Cheng 1997) I have suggested that there is a relation [C_Q...[-A]] comparable to [NEG...[-A]] in making [-A] nominals licit.

A small, closed class of lexical items serve as *wh*-words: in Zulu, *-phi* ‘which’, *(ku-)**phi* ‘where’, *(u-)**bani* ‘who’, *(i-)**ni* ‘what,’ *-ngaki* ‘how many’, *-njani* ‘what kind/how’, *nini* – ‘when’ and *ngani* ‘why’. I assume that *wh*-features of these items make them compatible with and requiring of licensing by C_Q. While all postverbal *wh*- are [-A] in Xhosa (see (52)), Zulu allows [+A] *wh*-phrases in situ as shown in (53).²² These too by assumption have *wh*-features requiring unselective binding by C_Q.

The examples in (52) and (53) show that a [+/-A] *wh*-phrase may take matrix scope from within an embedded clause. This is a first indicator that licensing by C_Q is non-local.

(52) U-cinga ukuba u-Mary u-thanda (*u-)bani? [Xhosa: *postverbal [+A] *wh*]
 2sSM-think COMP AUG-1Mary 1SM-like AUG-1who
 ‘Who do you think Mary likes?’

(53) U-cabanga ukuthi u-Mary u-thanda (u-)bani? [Zulu]
 2sSM-think COMP AUG-1Mary 1SM-like AUG-1who
 ‘Who (exactly) do you think Mary likes?’

Both [+A] and [-A] *wh*-phrases are licit within adjuncts and relative clauses (see the Zulu

²² While there is a preference for Nguni *wh*-phrases to appear immediately after the verb, my investigation uncovered no correlates between this word order alternation and scope-taking so I leave this aside.

(54)-(55). They may also ignore the island of an embedded clause construed as a reported *wh*-question or ‘whether’ complement as illustrated in the Xhosa (56) and (57) (this test from Lasnik & Saito 1992, Watanabe 1992).

- (54) U-Mary w-a-hamba ngaphambi kokuthi u-John a-fik-e kuphi?
 AUG-1Mary 1SM-PST-leave before COMP AUG-1John 1SM-arrive-SBJ where
 ‘Where did Mary leave before [John arrived <where>]?’
- (55) U-Sabelo w-a-hlangana nowesifazane o-funa-ni/i-ni?
 AUG-1Sabelo 1SM-PST-meet with.AUG1.woman 1REL-want-9what/AUG-9what
 ‘What did Sabelo meet the woman who wants?’
- (56) U-John u-funa u-kw-azi ukuba u-Mariya u-thenge i-n-cwadi.
 AUG-1John 1SM-want AUG-15-know COMP AUG-1Mary 1SM-buy AUG-9-book
 ‘John wants to know whether Mary bought a book.’
- (57) U-John u-funa u-kw-azi ukuba u-Mariya u-thenge ntoni.
 AUG-1John 1SM-want AUG-15-know COMP AUG-1Mary 1SM-buy 9what
 ‘John wants to know what Mary bought.’ OR
 ‘What does John want to know whether Mary bought?’

A question in which a *wh*-phrase appears within an island may be answered with a single word, as in the Q and A pair of (58). This is at odds with a potential analysis in terms of covert pied-piping of the *wh*-phrase, for which a diagnostic is a requirement that the answer must repeat the whole island (see Nishigauchi 1985, Choe 1987, Pesetsky 1987 on Japanese).

- (58) Q: U-bon-e u-mu-ntu o-thanda (u-)bani? A: John [Zulu]
 2sSM-see-SBJ AUG-1-person 1REL-like AUG-1who 1John
 ‘Who did you see the person that likes?’ ‘John.’

The sole island in which *wh*-phrases are consistently ruled out is indicative PVSP, though they are fine in subjunctive PVSP as shown in the contrast of (59) with (60).

- (59) *[I-si-thombe si-ka-bani] si-lenga odong-eni. [Zulu]
 AUG-7-picture 7-POSS-1who 7SM-hang LOC.3wall-LOC
 Intended: Who does a picture of hang on the wall?

- (60) ✓U-funa ukuthi [[i-si-thombe si-ka-bani] si-leng-e odong-eni]?
 2sSM-want COMP AUG-7-picture 7-POSS-1who 7SM-hang-SBJ LOC.3wall-LOC
 ‘Who do you want a picture of to hang on the wall?’

Focus-features account for this contrast. Recall Pietraszko’s (2021) demonstration that subjunctives differ from indicatives in permitting [+focus] material in PVSP (see (61) vs (19)a,b, repeated below).

- (61) a. Ngi-funa [ukuthi ✓[u-John kuphela] a-pheke] [Ndebele; Pietraszko 2021:589]
 1SM-want COMP AUG-1John only 1-cook.SBJ
 ‘I want only John to cook.’

- b. U-funa [ukuthi ✓u-bani a-pheke]?
 2sSM-want COMP AUG-1who 1-cook.SBJ
 ‘Who do you want to cook?’

- (19) a. *(U-)bani u-fik-ile? [Xhosa/Zulu]
 AUG-1who 1SM-arrive-DISJ.PST
 Intended: Who arrived?

- b. *[U-John kuphela] u-fik-ile [Xhosa/Zulu]
 AUG-1John only 1SM-arrive-DISJ.PST
 Intended: Only John arrived.

I have adopted Carstens & Mletshe’s (2016) proposal that [-A] nominals are [+focus] expressions. Assuming there is *focus-projection* from a *wh*-phrase to its containing DP, the antifocus status of indicative PVSP explains the ill-formedness of (59) just as it does (19)a,b (see Cinque 1993, Selkirk 1984, Adger 2006, Bresnan 1971, Arregi 2016 among others on focus projection).²³ In contrast, it is unclear how these facts could be approached in terms of Case. Since *bani* in (60) is well-formed, Halpert and Pietraszko’s accounts would need to assume that it is Case-licensed, perhaps from the possessive marker *ka* (paralleling English ‘of’). But *ka* is also present in (59), yielding a conundrum

²³ There is no [+A] counterpart to *ka-bani* ‘whose/of whom’ to explore with respect to the focus projection analysis of (59) vs. (60). Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for help clarifying this.

as to the source of ill-formedness. That the focus-based approach can easily explain the contrast between (59) and (60) is an argument in its favor.

Returning to the issue of locality, the general absence of island effects suggests that there is neither feature-valuation via Agree between C_Q and *wh* nor covert raising of a *wh*-phrase to its scope position in Nguni.

5 EPP effects, obligatory subject agreement, and labeling

5.1 The ubiquity of *uNeg*

With the properties of negative- and *wh*-licensing established I return now to the PVSP restriction on [-A] nominals exemplified in (7)a and (9), repeated below.

- (7) a. *U-fun-a u-kuthi [bani a-buy-e]? [Ndebele; Pietraszko 2021:589]
 2sSM-want-FV AUG-COMP 1who 1SM-come-SBJ
 Intended: Who do you want to come?
- (9) A-ngi-fun-i [u-kuthi *(u-)Sipho a-buy-e].[Ndebele; Pietraszko 2021:591]
 NEG-1sSM-want-NEG AUG-COMP AUG-1Sipho 1SM-come-SBJ
 ‘I don’t want Sipho to come.’

I propose that a featural deficiency excludes [-A] nominals from PVSPs -- in particular, all of them, including *wh*-phrases, have *uNeg* features that block agreement and hence labeling (Chomsky 2013) for reasons to be detailed in §5.2. I have already motivated *uNeg* features for strict negative dependent [-A] nominals such as *lutho* – ‘nothing’, *mifino* – ‘any vegetables’ and the like, in preceding sections. And recall from §2.1 that *any* common noun, or proper name, or even the COMP *u-kuthi*, can become a strict negative dependent by dropping its augment. If *uNeg* is a consistent ingredient in the feature content of *all* Nguni [-A] nominals, the full productivity of this process is explained and a unified account of their exclusion from PVSP follows.

Evidence supporting this approach to [-A] *wh*-phrases is provided by Galen Sibanda

(personal communication), a native speaker of Zimbabwean Ndebele. In his judgment, the *wh*-subject of a subjunctive clause introduced by a [-A] COMP in the scope of negation may be [-A] (see (62)), the same as a common noun or proper name (see (10), repeated below). This makes perfect sense under my proposal that all [-A] nominals have *uNeg* features, including [-A] *wh*-phrases. I view (62) as valuable confirmation for this approach.²⁴

(62) A-wu-fun-i [Ø-kuthi [(u-)bani a-buy-e]]? [Galen Sibanda p.c.]
 NEG-2SSM-want-NEG COMP AUG-1who 1SM- come-SBJ
 ‘Who don’t you want to come?’

(10) A-ngi-fun-i [kuthi (u)Sipho a-buy-e]. [Ndebele; Pietraszko 2021:592]
 NEG-1SSM-want-NEG COMP AUG-Sipho 1SM-come-SBJ
 ‘I don’t want Sipho to come.’

What remains to be captured is why [-A] *wh*-phrases should require negation-licensing when they occupy PVSP but apparently in no other clausal location, given the licitness of their appearance as internal arguments in affirmative clauses like (53), repeated below.

(53) U-cabanga ukuthi u-Mary u-thanda (u-)bani? [Zulu]
 2sSM-think COMP AUG-1Mary 1SM-like AUG-1who
 ‘Who (exactly) do you think Mary likes?’

As we have seen, [-A] nominals serving as strict negative dependents rely on Agree with NEG to meet the [-A] licensing requirement in (39). But *wh*-phrases instead meet the licensing requirement through their relationship with c-commanding C_Q. Under Preminger’s (2014) proposal that agreement may licitly fail there is nothing requiring *uNeg* of [-A] *wh*-phrases to be valued in circumstances where feature-sharing is not needed for labeling.

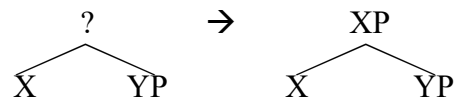
²⁴ Sibanda rates augment-drop in (10) a 5 out of 5 and in (62) as 4 out of 5, where 5 is perfect. §6 presents evidence that NEG cannot directly license a [-A] *wh*-phrase because its null D is bound by C_Q. For this reason §5.3 sketches an approach to (62) that avoids the direct NEG-licensing available in (10). The slight difference in these examples’ status likely reflects this recourse to an alternative strategy.

5.2 The labeling algorithm and unvalued features

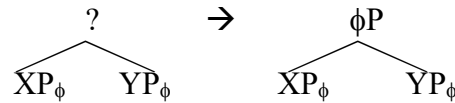
This approach has three ingredients. Following Chomsky (2013), labeling is accomplished by an algorithm that applies at the phase level. A configuration $[X, YP]$ is labeled XP based on its unique head X as in (63)a. In contrast an $[XP, YP]$ configuration lacks a unique head and must be labeled by shared features as shown in (63)b.

(63) Chomsky (2013) labeling by algorithm:

a. *A unique head labels $[X, YP]$*



b. *Shared features must label $[XP, YP]$*



Merge of an agentive subject creates an illicit $[XP, YP]$ configuration: $*[DP \ vP]$. The subject therefore raises obligatorily out of vP to a landing site where shared features can provide a label – canonically, a PVSP position associated with subject-verb agreement, in a classic EPP-effect. I maintain the standard assumption that phi-agreement with subjects is accomplished via downwards-probing Agree, as in Chomsky’s account, but its success becomes crucial for convergence once a subject has raised and labeling is attempted.

Chomsky’s labeling approach straightforwardly accounts for why agreement is obligatory with preverbal subjects in Bantu. It eliminates the need for a proposed linkage between T’s $u\text{Phi}$ and an EPP-feature proposed in Baker (2003), Baker & Collins (2002), Carstens (2005) to capture the fact that whatever precedes T must agree with it.

The second ingredient of my account is a proposal that Nguni $[-A]$ nominals are

unable to participate in the feature-sharing needed to label if they have unvalued *uNeg* features, as sketched in (64).

(64) Absent valuation, *uNeg* of a [-A] negative dependent excludes it from PVSP

*...[CP **u-kuthi** [_? **Ø_{uNeg}-Sipho** T_{uPhi}-buy-e]].
 AUG-COMP 1Sipho come-SBJ

As noted above, phi-agreement is a standard mechanism of feature-sharing for preverbal subjects. It is therefore highly relevant that [-A] nominals are never agreed with.²⁵ We have seen this in the fact that they cannot occupy *any* PVSP, even those tolerant of other [+focus] material like ‘only XP’ and [+A] *wh*-phrases (see (24)-(26); this is the core of Pietraszko’s argument for advocating that the Case account of the PVSP restriction is superior to the focus-based account. We have also seen that [-A] nominals cannot be doubled by object-marking under dislocation; see (16)-(19) and (65). (66) shows that they cannot surface as agreeing post-verbal subjects.

(65) U-m-bon-ile]_{VP} *(u-)Sipho? [Xhosa/Zulu]
 2sSM-3sOM-see-DISJ.PST AUG-1Sipho
 ‘Did you see Sipho?’

(66) U-fik-ile *(u-)Sipho.
 1SM-arrive-DISJ.PST AUG-1who
 ‘Sipho arrived.’

I accordingly propose that a *uNeg* feature of a [-A] expression renders it unable to serve as goal in an Agree relation under (67), unless successfully valued as it is in (37).²⁶

²⁵ Halpert (2015:77) argues that a [-A] nominal values subject agreement just in case it undergoes raising-to-object from a subjunctive clause (see (i)). I assume instead that agreeing T labels TP in a case like (i) (the lower copy of *muntu* is invisible to the labeling algorithm, following Chomsky 2013).

(i) A-ngi-fun-i mu-ntu [ukuthi [TP <muntu> a-phek-e i-qanda]].
 NEG-1sSM-want-NEG 1-person COMP 1SM-cook-SBJ AUG-5egg
 ‘I don’t want anyone to cook a(ny) egg.’

²⁶ As previously noted, indicative PVSPs and dislocated positions exclude [+focus] material so [-A] nominals are doubly ruled out in such positions. I leave labeling of [+A] dislocated material to future research; see Zeller (2015)a,b for relevant discussion.

(67) The Agreement Mixing Prohibition: An expression with an unvalued agreement feature may not value agreement.

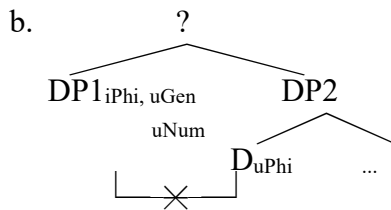
This approach converges in a significant way with a proposal in Bošković (2019, 2020, 2021) that uFs in general thwart labeling (see (68)). I explore this connection in §5.4.

(68) The presence of an uninterpretable feature blocks labeling via feature-sharing in XP-YP configurations (from Bošković 2020, 2021:10 (24)).

(67) is an update of a proposal made in Carstens (1991) to address a gap in DP-internal agreement. I pointed out there that while many languages have possessor agreement and many have nominal concord within DPs, bidirectional agreement along the lines of

(69) seems to be rare or non-existent.

(69) a. **my-masc.pl sons-1s*

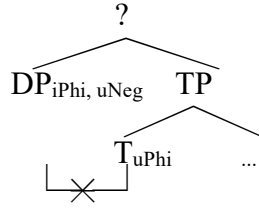


Like the problem at hand, this is compatible with the view that the goal in an Agree relation cannot itself have unvalued agreement features.²⁷ Let us take that insight as the basis for hypothesizing that labeling fails when any [-A] nominal appears in PVSP. In (70), *uNeg* cannot obtain a value in the Agree relation valuing *uPhi*. This circumstance seems to be incompatible with successful feature-sharing in PVSP.²⁸

²⁷ Norris (2014) argues that Case-concord and possessor agreement cooccur in Finnish and Skolt Saami, pointing out that such cooccurrences are expected if agreement and concord are non-overlapping in their domains of application, as he proposes (morphological vs. syntactic components). This overlap need not in principle be incompatible with my proposals here, which can be formulated so as to differentiate among varieties of features. But Carstens (2020) argues that the evidence supports the opposite conclusion. It's accordingly possible that Case-concord falls under (67)/(69), though I leave this to future research.

²⁸ An anonymous reviewer argues that if uFs probe individually problems should not arise. I take (69) as evidence that that problems *do* arise, as is the fact that a [-A] in PVSP is well-formed only if negation-licensed. See also Bošković (2009)a on failures of gender agreement with singular first conjuncts. Bošković

(70) Feature-sharing is thwarted when the goal bears unvalued agreement features



The formulation in (67) leaves the door open for successful feature-sharing without phi-agreement. This is important in relation to postverbal subjects in transitive expletive constructions (TECs) to be discussed in §7, where I argue that labeling by focus-features is possible because phi-agreement plays no role in it.

Clearly there is more to be said about [-A] *wh*-phrases since they are licit without negation-licensing outside of PVSP as demonstrated in (3)a, repeated below. If [-A] *wh*-phrases have *uNeg* features as shown in (71), why are they not ruled out in such contexts?

(3) a. U-bon-e bani?
 2sSM-see-PST 1who
 ‘Who did you see?’

(71) [TP U-bone bani_{uNeg}]?
 you-saw 1who

This brings us to the third ingredient of the account: as mentioned in §5.1, I follow Preminger (2014) in assuming that all else being equal, unvalued agreement features are licit in syntax; they do not cause derivational crashes. Recall that [-A] nominals *must* be licensed (see (39), repeated below). For negative-dependent [-A] nouns like *lutho* – ‘anything/nothing’, *mfazi* – ‘any woman’ and [-A] proper names like *Ø-Sipho* – ‘Sipho’, the only possibility is negation-licensing so we find they are licit only where their

notes that if each unvalued feature probed separately, *uNum* could be valued by [+plural] &P and *uGender* by singular DP1, but this fails in many cases (see Taraldsen et al 2018, Carstens 2019 on Xhosa).

features can be valued in a clause-bound Agree relation (*i*Neg, *u*Neg). But for [-A] *wh*-phrases, on the other hand, C_Q suffices to fulfill the licensing requirement in (39).

(39) [-A] nominals must be syntactically licensed by c-commanding *i*NEG or C_Q.

Absent valuation of their *u*Neg we might expect [-A] *wh*-phrases to surface with some kind of default morphology, but this would likely take the form of the augment. Since C_Q is an alternative licenser of augment-drop, default augments do not surface on C_Q-licensed *wh*.

Summing up, I have argued that *u*Neg features are not intrinsically in need of valuation – a freedom that they share with *u*Phi, assuming Preminger (2014). As a result, *wh*-phrases may surface in augmentless form with their *u*Neg unvalued, and augment-drop licensed by C_Q. They may not, however, surface augmentless in PVSP, unless their *u*Neg is valued via negation-licensed [-A] COMP as in (62), repeated below.

(62) A-wu-fun-i [Ø-kuthi [(u-)bani a-buy-e]]? [Galen Sibanda p.c.]
 NEG-2SSM-want-NEG COMP AUG-1who 1SM- come-SBJ
 ‘Who don’t you want to come?’

5.3 Mechanics

The mechanics of my account build on a proposal of Arregi & Nevins (2012) that agreement involves two components. The first of these, their *Agree Link*, establishes a probe-goal relationship. I build on Arregi & Nevins’ assumptions in taking Agree-Link to be common to all probe-goal relations (not just phi-valuation) and in proposing that it constitutes a very simple form of feature-sharing by confirming a match. Phi-agreement involves *Agree Copy* -- an additional step of copying the features of the goal; for person those values might be 1st or 2nd person; for noun class, any of roughly 5 gender values +

singular or plural. I propose that Agree-Copy cannot accommodate unvalued agreement features on the goal and faced with them, it aborts. Unlike Arregi & Nevins I take Agree-Copy to be available in syntax, since (in the way that I employ it here) it feeds labeling.

(72) Two-step agreement of Probe P with Goal G (Arregi & Nevins, adapted)

- a. Agree-Link: P has unvalued features triggering Agree (P,G). The result is a link between P and G establishing that a match is present.
- b. Agree-Copy: The values of the ϕ -features of G are copied onto P.

I summarize the labeling problems that arise for a [-A] preverbal *wh*-phrase in an affirmative context in (73) and for a negative dependent following a [+A] COMP in (74).

(73) Though unselective binding of *wh*- is possible long-distance, labeling fails when a [-A] *wh*-phrase is preverbal because its unvalued *uNeg* aborts Agree-Copy.

- a. *U-fun-a [(u-)kuthi [bani a-buy-e]?
2SSM-want (AUG-)COMP 1who 1SM-come-SBJ
Intended: Who do you want to come?
- b. $\overbrace{C_Q \text{ *U-funa [(u-)kuthi [? bani}_{uNeg, iPhi} T_{uPhi}]}}^{\checkmark \text{ Binding } wh\text{- by } C_Q \text{ succeeds}}$
 \times *Agree Copy (SU, T) fails*

(74) Following a [+A] COMP, *uNeg* of a [-A] negative dependent is in an opaque domain (the CP phase), cannot be valued in situ, and aborts Agree-Copy

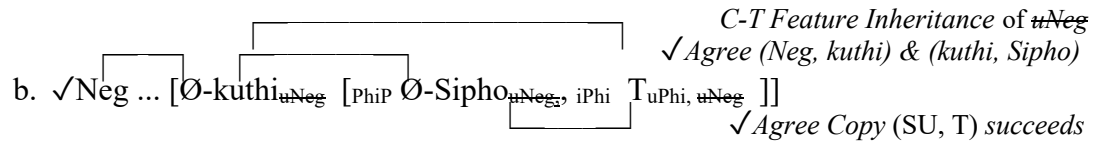
- a. *A-ngi-fun-i [u-kuthi Sipho a-buy-e].
NEG-1SSM-want-NEG AUG-COMP Sipho 1SM- come.SBJ
Intended: I don't want Sipho to come.'
- b. $\overbrace{Neg \dots [u-kuthi [? Sipho}_{uNeg, iPhi} T_{uPhi}]}}^{\times}$ *Locality blocks Neg. concord*
 \times *Agree Copy (SU, T) fails*

I turn to the grammatical cases of [-A] nominals in PVSP. I follow Arregi and Nevins (2012) in assuming that while Agree Link is established once *uPhi* finds a DP in its c-command domain, Agree Copy can take place after movement. This permits Agree Copy to be facilitated by the local concord relationship between \emptyset -*kuthi* and a preverbal

[-A] subject in (75)a,b. While there is no evidence that T ever merges bearing $uNeg$ features of its own, I assume also that negative concord in the form of valued $uNeg$ is passed down from a NEG-licensed [-A] COMP to T via Feature Inheritance (Chomsky 2007, 2008), so that T and the [-A] subject match in this feature.

(75) Labeling succeeds when COMP has a negative concord value that it can share with the embedded preverbal subject and T

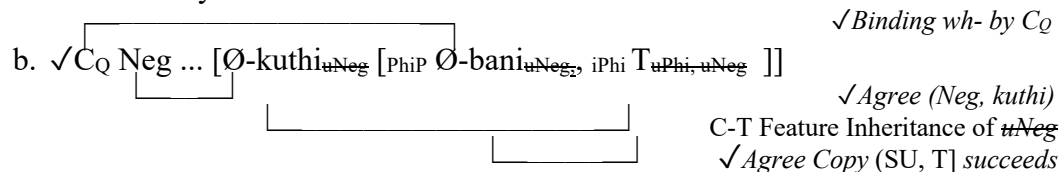
- a. A-*ngi-fun-i* [Ø-*kuthi* Ø-*Sipho* a-buy-e].
 NEG-1SSM-want-NEG COMP 1Sipho 1SM- come-SBJ
 ‘I don’t want Sipho to come.’



C-T Feature Inheritance plays an important role in the licensing of a preverbal [-A] *wh*-subject. We will see evidence in §6 that [-A] licensing by NEG and C_Q are mutually exclusive, yet a [-A] *wh*-phrase is licit in PVSP following the [-A] COMP in (76)b. Given Feature Inheritance of valued $uNeg$ I propose that Agree (T, SU) can value the subject’s $uNeg$ and permit labeling, as (76)b illustrates (though a slight cost perhaps accompanies the lack of more direct licensing; see note 24).

(76) Valuing $uNeg$ features of the preverbal subject need not rely on a direct relation with NEG given C-T Feature-Inheritance and Agree (T, SU)

- a. A-*wu-fun-i* [Ø-*kuthi* Ø-*bani* a-buy-e]?
 NEG-2SSM-want-NEG COMP 1who 1SM- come.SBJ
 ‘Who don’t you want to come?’



C-T Feature Inheritance may be relevant to the contrast in (77)a,b, presented by

Halpert (2015:114) as support for her Case-account of PVSP restrictions on [-A] nominals. These examples illustrate that in the scope of a local left edge negative adverb *ngeke* – ‘never’, a Zulu [-A] negative dependent is licit post-verbally but not preverbally.

- (77) a. Ngeke ku-fundis-e **mu-ntu**.
 never 17SM-teach-SBJ 1-person
 ‘Nobody will ever teach.’
- b. *Ngeke **mu-ntu** a-fundis-e.
 never 1-person 1SM-teach-SBJ
 Intended: Nobody will ever teach.

This contrast follows if Feature Inheritance is consistently crucial to agreement between a [-A] subject and T, continuing to assume that Nguni T does not merge bearing *uNeg* of its own. Assuming the adverb *ngeke* is adjoined, it cannot transmit features to T.

Further contrasts illustrated in (78) and (79) point towards an additional problem.

Two Zulu speakers I consulted find ‘only XP’ unacceptable in the PVSP following *ngeke* as shown in (78)b. One of the speakers also rejected the preverbal *wh*-subject following *ngeke* in (79)b, while the second speaker judged this echoic.

- (78) a. Ngeke ku-fundis-e u-John kuphela.
 never 17SM-teach-SBJ AUG-1John only
 ‘John will not/never be the only one to teach.’
- b. *Ngeke u-John kuphela a-fundis-e.
 never AUG-1John only 1SM-teach-SBJ
 Intended: John will never be the only one to teach/Only John will never teach
- (79) a. Ngeke ku-fundis-e (u)-bani?
 never 17SM-teach-SBJ AUG-1who
 ‘Who will never teach?’
- b. ??Ngeke u-bani a-fundis-e?
 never AUG-1John 1SM-teach-SBJ
 Unacceptable or echoic: ‘WHO will never teach?’

These judgments suggest that the root clause subjunctives of this construction differ from their embedded counterparts in that they include the TopP layer where [+focus] material

cannot surface. The echoic interpretation that one speaker reports for (79)b is a puzzle outside this article's scope; I leave a fuller analysis to future research.

As mentioned in footnote 10, Halpert (2015) points out one further restriction on [-A] nominals that I have so far not considered: they may not be clefted ((80) from Halpert 2015:69, adapting Sabel & Zeller 2006:273).

(80) Ng-*(**u-**)bani o-fik-ile?
 COP-AUG-1who 1REL-arrive-DISJ.PST
 'Who came?'

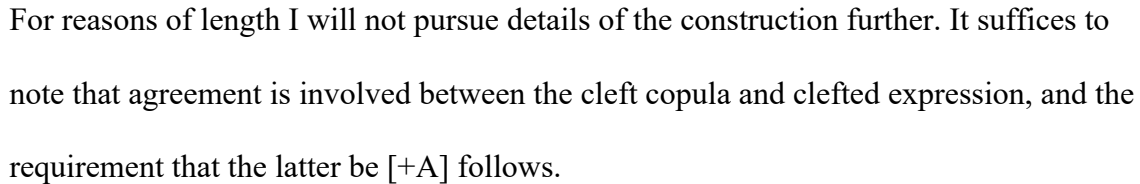
Sabel & Zeller (2006:279) show that the shape of the cleft copula obligatorily reflects the noun class of what is clefted (see (81), adapted from their (22)a and (24) (glosses added and (81)c is from my own research; Sabel & Zeller give *yudonga/ludonga* for 'it's a wall').

(81) a. ng -u-m-fana	b. y -i-mali	c. w -u-donga
1COP-AUG-1-boy	9COP-AUG-9-money	11COP-AUG-11wall
'it's a boy'	'it's money'	'it's a wall'

My analysis predicts that an augment is necessary in (80) because the cleft copula has uPhi to be valued, and agreement is impossible with [-A] nominals.

The syntax of Nguni clefts has received divergent analyses in Cheng & Downing (2013), Sabel & Zeller (2006), though these authors agree on a predicate inversion approach to the position of the cleft copula. For concreteness I adopt the account of Sabel & Zeller (2006) under which the copula raises to T and the clefted expression occupies a low Spec, Foc as depicted in (82)a. While Sabel & Zeller posit a null expletive in Spec, TP, plausibly the preverbal position is simply empty; also, the clefted expression might originate low and raise to its surface position, so that there is downward Agree (COP,

(82) a. [TP *pro* ng-FOC-T [FOCP uSipho <Foc> [VP <COP>]]]



§5.1 noted a proposal of Bošković (2020, 2021) that there is broad incompatibility between unvalued uFs and feature-sharing, as stated in (68) repeated below.

(68) builds on existing proposals that feature-checking is impossible in intermediate positions (Bošković 2008b, 2019b, Boeckx 2003). Some Bantu evidence for this comes from Schneider-Zioga’s (2009) demonstration that in Kinande, where there is obligatory *wh*-agreement on intermediate COMPs, reconstruction effects are present in short but not long dependencies, arguing that the former but not the latter are movement-derived. For this reason a bound reading is available for the fronted pronoun in (83)a but not (83)b (from Schneider-Zioga 2009:5, and see Bošković 2008b for discussion).

- 42

akasoma ___ kangikangi.

reads regularly

‘(It is) His _{k/*j} book that I think [every student]_j reads regularly.’

While this is evidence against movement from one A’-feature-checking relation to another, Bošković (2008)b argues that the limitation is more general: no category bearing uF can participate in more than one feature-checking relation. Following McCloskey (2000), licit stranding of *all* in (84)a strongly suggests that *who* does not raise via PVSP; otherwise the result should be unacceptable, as in (84)b.

(84) a. Who_i was arrested all t_i in Duke Street?

b. *They_i were arrested all t_i last night.

Another kind of evidence is the impoverishment or suppression of subject-verb agreement with extracted subjects in the phenomenon referred to as antiagreement (Ouhalla 1993), found in many Bantu languages and exemplified in (85) (see among others Kinyalolo 1991, Schneider-Zioga 2007, Diercks 2009, Henderson 2013).

(85) a. mutu ú-mozi á-ku-kít-ag-a bubo [Kilega; Kinyalolo 1991: 26: (24)]
 1person 1-one 1SM-PROG-do-HAB-FV 14that
 ‘Someone usually does that’

b. nází ú-(*á)-ku-kít-ag-a búbo?
 1who 1whAgr-(*1SM)-PROG-do-HAB-FV 14that
 ‘Who (usually) does that?’

Bošković (2008)b, (2020), (2021) argues that feature-checking has a freezing effect. He takes (68) to underly imperfection-driven movement, propelling expressions that bear uFs to positions where the offending feature can be valued and labeling via feature-sharing can therefore succeed.

My approach to the distribution of [-A] nominals is along similar lines. The commonalities are striking, but there are important caveats.

First, I mentioned the need to permit feature-sharing without phi-agreement in TECs with [-A] subjects, to be described in more detail in §7. If *any* uF blocks *any* form of labeling via feature-sharing, this ought not to be possible.

Second, while Bošković (2020) proposes that uFs thwart labeling in [XP, YP] configurations, Bošković (2021) goes further in proposing that uFs block labeling even in head-complement configurations, as a unified approach to movement. The idea that *uNeg* features remain licitly unvalued outside of [XP,YP] configurations is inconsistent with this latter view. While many approaches to negative dependents assume they move to a NegP or PolP (see Vergara 2017 for a recent example), I have argued that Nguni *wh- in situ* also have *uNeg* features. Though it is possible that they undergo string-vacuous short movement of some kind, there is no reason to think that in affirmative clauses, they raise to a position where *uNeg* can be valued.

While I cannot do full justice to this topic, these factors suggest that agreement features on the goal are different from other uFs. While they impact feature-sharing in [XP, YP] configurations as described above, agreement features are otherwise “under the radar” and ignored by the grammar as in Preminger (2014). In contrast, those *uFs* that drive movement of *wh*-phrases, topics, and the like have consequences for the C-I interface. Perhaps for or this reason they will crash a derivation if transferred unvalued, and thwart feature-sharing relations that fail to value them.²⁹

6. Null D and the licensing requirements

I turn to some empirical evidence from negative concord that [-A] nominals are headed

²⁹ I forego discussing Case given questions outside the scope as to whether it always triggers raising (Bošković 2011) or not (Bobaljik & Wurmbrand 2005), to what extent it merits the classic role attributed to it in raising (Marantz 2000), and variation in its linkage to C-I-relevant features such as specificity.

by null Ds. These function like variables in that NEG and C_Q compete to bind them.

Noting that Zulu augments and pronominal demonstratives are in complementary distribution (see (86)a), De Dreu (2008) proposes that they are both Ds (see (86)b).

- (86) a. lo (*u-)m-fazi
 1DEM AUG-1-woman
 ‘this woman’
- b.
- ```

 DP
 / \
 D ... NP
 AUGMENT/ DEM

```

Negative *wh*-questions provide compelling evidence for the null D approach to [-A] nominals. We have already seen in example (30) of §2.1 that augment-drop concord is not possible within complex *wh*-phrases in affirmative questions ((30)a,c repeated below). Comparing the negative statements in the Xhosa (87) with their *wh*- counterparts in (88) we see that augment-drop concord on modifiers within a [-A] *wh*-phrase is ruled out even with local c-commanding negation. On the other hand, Xhosa (89) shows that within a complex expression in a negative Yes/No question, augment-drop concord is licit. This makes it clear that interrogation and concordial augment-drop are compatible in the same clause, as long as there is no augment-drop concord within a *wh*-phrase.

(30) Augment-drop concord is impossible within a complex *wh*-expression

- a. U-Mary u-thanda ø-zi-phi \*(i-)zi-hlangu \*(e-)zi-bomvu? [Xhosa]  
 AUG-1Mary 1SM -like 8-which AUG-8-shoes AUG.REL-8-red  
 ‘Which red shoes does Mary like?’
- b. U-thanda ø-zi-njani \*(i-)zin-ja \*(e-)zi-ncincini? [Xhosa]  
 2sSM-like 10-what.kind AUG-10-dogs AUG-10-small  
 ‘What kind of small dogs do you like?’

(87) ✓ Augment drop concord within a complex [-A] in negation’s scope

- a. U-Simiso a-ka-theng-anga zi-hlangu zi-bomvu.  
 AUG-1Simiso NEG-1SM-buy-NEG 8-shoes 8-red  
 ‘Nandi didn’t buy (any) red shoes.’
- b. U-Nomsa a-ka-thand-i zin-ja zin-kulu zi-ka-Sabelo.  
 AUG-1Nomsa NEG-1SM-like-NEG 10-dogs 10-big 10-POSS-1Sabelo  
 ‘Sindiswa doesn’t like (any of) Sabelo’s big dogs.’

(88) X Augment-drop concord within complex *wh*-, despite c-commanding Neg

- a. U-Simiso a-ka-theng-anga zi-phi \*(i-)zi-hlangu \*(e-)zi-bomvu?  
 AUG-1 Simiso NEG-1 SM-like-NEG.PST 8-which AUG-8-shoes AUG.REL -8-red  
 ‘Which red shoes did Simiso not buy (any of)?’
- b. A-wu-thand-i \*(i-)zin-ja \*(e-)zi-njani \*(e-)zin-kulu?  
 NEG-1 SM-like-NEG AUG-10-dogs AUG.REL-10-what.kind AUG.REL-10-big  
 ‘What kind of big dogs don’t you like (any of)?’

(89) ✓ Augment drop concord within a complex [-A] in negation’s scope of a Y/N Q

- a. (Ngaba) U-Simiso a-ka-theng-anga zi-hlangu zi-bomvu?  
 Q AUG-1 Simiso NEG-1 SM-buy-NEG.PST 8-shoes 8-red  
 ‘Didn’t Simiso buy (any) red shoes?’
- b. (Ngaba) U-Nomsa a-ka-thand-i zin-ja zin-kulu zi-ka-Sabelo?  
 Q AUG-1 Nomsa NEG-1 SM-like-NEG 10-dogs 10-big 10-POSS-1 Sabelo  
 ‘Doesn’t Sindiswa like (any of) Sabelo’s big dogs?’

I consider the pattern in (87)-(89) important evidence that when C<sub>Q</sub> and NEG are both local to a [-A] nominal they compete as potential licensors. The facts follow easily from assuming that licensing is a kind of binding of a null D counterpart to the overt augment, as D is unique and structurally accessible to clause-level operators (see also Gambarage’s 2019 analysis of Nata [-A] nominals as having operator-bound null Ds). I reflect this in a revision of the base-level licensing requirement for [-A] nominals:<sup>30</sup>

(90) **[-A] licensing requirement:** null D must be unselectively bound by NEG or C<sub>Q</sub>.

We can think of null D as functioning rather like a variable, since it can have one and only one binder. C<sub>Q</sub> clearly trumps NEG when both are candidates to bind null D as depicted in (91). This is easily explained: if C<sub>Q</sub> does not bind a *wh*-phrase the resulting interpretation is perhaps a polar question, in which case the presence of the *wh*-phrase is

<sup>30</sup> While Gambarage (2019) proposes a null D operator-binding approach to [-A] nominals in Nata, the properties differ considerably: Nata [-A] nominals are licit in PVSPs, do not require surface c-command or a clause-mate licensor, their class of licensors is much broader, they may serve as predicates and, Gambarage argues, Nata augments convey speaker’s belief in the referent’s existence. Given so many contrasts our analyses differ considerably. Further consideration lies outside this paper’s scope.

anomalous (see Chomsky 1995:291 for relevant discussion), or perhaps the result is nothing intelligible at all. In contrast, NEG's primary function is to negate the clause. While it may unselectively bind and value *uNeg* of any null D in its scope, there is no need for it to do so if the binding requirement is met by C<sub>Q</sub>.<sup>31</sup>

$$(91) \quad \begin{array}{c} \text{C}_Q \dots \text{NEG} \dots [\text{DP} \quad \emptyset_{\text{D WH, uNeg}} \dots] \\ \underbrace{\hspace{1.5cm}}_{\times} \end{array}$$

The variable-binding approach provides a simple explanation for the failure of augment-drop concord within [-A] *wh*-phrases in negative contexts. While feature-valuing Agree relations are not typically analyzed as binding, the valuer of negative concord is a sentential operator, unlike valuers of phi-agreement. For these reasons I think it makes sense to view the commonality underlying licensing by NEG and C<sub>Q</sub> as a kind of A'-binding, albeit with differing characteristics in the two cases.

Summing up, to capture the similarities and differences between [-A] *wh*-phrases and [-A] negative dependents I have proposed that both are operator-bound. C<sub>Q</sub> legitimizes a [-A] serving as a *wh*-word by unselectively binding its null D, assuming Pesetsky's (1987) approach to island-impervious *wh*- in situ. Negative dependence is accounted for here in a similar way, building on the status of negation as a clausal operator and on the fact that, like *wh*-in situ, negative dependents lack independent quantificational force (see Giannakidou & Quer 1997 for helpful discussion). I summarize in (92) below.

(92) a. Negation binds [-A]'s null D through clause-bound Agree (Neg...*uNeg*)

$$\text{Agree Neg} \dots (*[\text{CP}] \dots \emptyset_{\text{D, uNeg}} \dots$$

---

<sup>31</sup> Thanks to Martha McGinnis (personal communication) for suggesting that null D is bound at the phase level when both Neg and C<sub>Q</sub> are present.

b. C<sub>Q</sub> binds a *wh*- [-A] without sensitivity to locality

$$\sqrt{C_Q \dots ([CP) \dots \emptyset_{D, wh, uNeg} \dots}$$

## 7. Focus and labeling of postverbal subjects

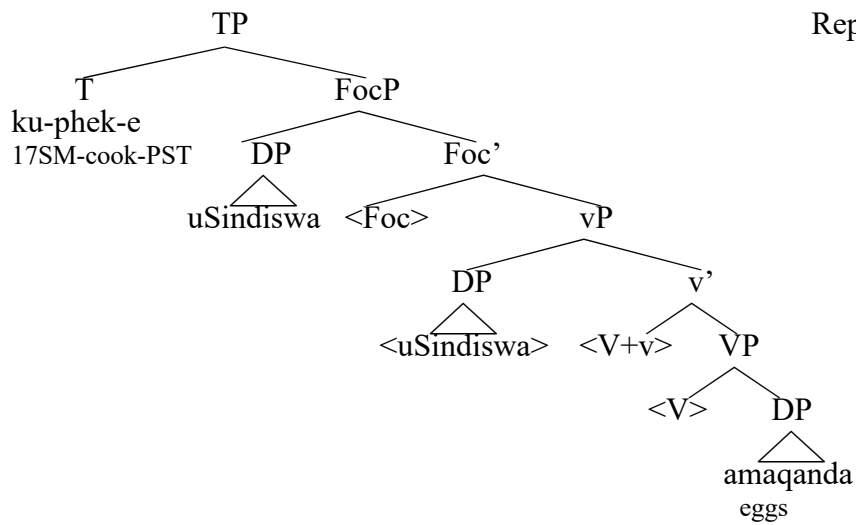
The account I have presented attributes the PVSP restriction on [-A] nominals not to Case but to labeling-theoretic issues: feature-sharing is needed to label [XP, YP] configurations but *u*Fs block it, and these include *u*Neg features of [-A] nominals.

[XP, YP] configurations arise also in VSO constructions like (93). An obligatory focus-reading for the post-verbal subject signals how labeling works in this domain.

- (93) Ku-phek-e      u-Sindiswa      a-ma-qanda.      (answers ‘Who cooked eggs?’)  
 17SM-cook-PST   AUG-1Sindiswa   AUG-6-eggs      (cannot answer ‘What happened?’)  
 ‘Sindiswa<sub>F</sub> cooked eggs.’      (cannot answer ‘What did Sindiswa cook?’)

Carstens & Mletshe (2015) propose that there is a low FocusP in Xhosa immediately dominating vP as shown in (94). In keeping with a general ban on both subject and object staying in situ (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2001) the subject of a VSO TEC must raise to Spec, Foc. Following Chomsky (2013) I assume this is necessary because a labeling failure arises in the [XP, YP] configuration [SU, vP].

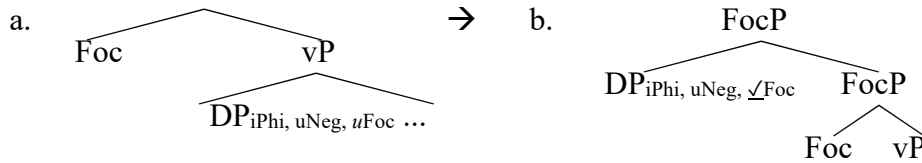
(94) Representation of (93)





According to my proposals in §5, Agree-Copy aborts when it encounters an unvalued agreement feature on a goal. I propose that since there is no phi-feature copying associated with labeling between the Focus head and a post-verbal argument bearing *uNeg*, the problem does not arise. Agree Link is established between the Focus head and a focused expression, confirming a match (represented by  $\checkmark$  in (95)b). The subject raises to Spec, Foc where the shared focus-features can label.<sup>32</sup>

(95) Labeling FocusP



The facts highlight a need for more detailed work on the comparative properties of different kinds of feature-sharing. (95) is only an initial step in this direction, but I must leave further exploration to future research.<sup>33</sup>

## 8. Extension to parallels in Romance

The analysis of [-A] nominals that I have presented was inspired by work on an exclusion of bare nouns from PVSP in Romance languages. Contreras (1986:25-27) provides the data in (96) illustrating that a Spanish preverbal subject differs from an internal argument in requiring a determiner.

<sup>32</sup> I tentatively adopt in (95) the suggestion of an anonymous reviewer that [+focus] material is formally *uFocus*. This entails that ‘only XP’ and [+A] *wh*- can surface in PVSP of non-indicative clauses because *iFocus* is available there, and similarly for focus-tolerant  $\underline{Q}_2$  of VSO<sub>1</sub> $\underline{Q}_2$ ; see Carstens & Mletche (2016). Alternative approaches are easily imaginable (including *uFocus* or an edge feature on Foc itself); I leave pursuit of the many related issues to future research.

<sup>33</sup> The licit [-A]  $\underline{Q}$  in Spec, Appl or Cause of a SV $\underline{Q}\underline{O}$  construction creates an [XP, YP] configuration. Arguably  $\underline{Q}$  surfaces in Nguni’s postverbal [+focus] position, so falls under (95).

- (96) a. Quiero café.  
‘I want coffee.’
- b. \*Café me gusta. [Spanish; Contreras 1986]  
coffee me pleases  
‘I like coffee.’
- c. El café me gusta.  
the coffee me pleases  
‘I like coffee.’

Longobardi (1994) points out that the same asymmetry characterizes bare nominals in Italian (see (97)). Only PVSP is subject to a determiner requirement.

- (97) a. \*Acqua viene giù dalle colline. [Italian; Longobardi 1994: 616]  
water comes down from-the hills
- b. Viene giù acqua dalle colline.  
comes down water from-the hills
- c. Ho presto acqua dalla sorgente.  
I took water from-the spring

Deprez (2000) shows that an identical restriction affects bare nouns in Portuguese and Sardinian as well: though permitted as objects of verbs and prepositions, they may not be preverbal subjects ((98) from Deprez 2000:256; glosses added).

- (98) a. ??Crianças estão a gritar ao telefone. [Portuguese]  
children are screaming on phone  
Intended: Children are screaming on the phone.
- b. \*Sórrikas an mandicatu su casu. [Sardinian]  
mice AUX ate the cheese  
Intended: Mice ate the cheese.

In a highly significant parallel to the Nguni facts, this restriction is consistent across clause types – determiners are required for nominals in PVSP of subjunctives and relative clauses of Spanish (99) Italian (100), Portuguese (101) and Sardinian (102).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> For assistance in assembling the data in this section my thanks to Guido Menshing for Sardinian, Andrea Calabrese for Italian, Pilar Barbosa for European Portuguese, and the late Paula Kempchinsky for Spanish and for helpful discussion.

- (99) a. No quiero que \*(el) agua entre en la casa. [Spanish]  
 NEG want.1s that the water enter.SBJ in the house  
 ‘I don’t want water to come into the house.’  
 b. Este es un maestro que \*(los) niños odian.  
 this is a teacher that the children hate  
 ‘This is a teacher that children hate.’
- (100) a. Voglio che \*(i) bambini giochini sempre in questo parco. [Italian]  
 want.1s that the children play.SBJ always in this park  
 ‘I want children always to play in this park.’  
 b. Questo è un insegnante che \*(i) bambini amano.  
 this is a teacher that the children love  
 ‘This is a teacher that children love.’
- (101) a. Eu conheci um político que \*(os) cidadãos respeitam. [Portuguese]  
 I met a politician that the citizens respect  
 ‘I met a politician that citizens respect.’  
 b. Eu não quero que \*(a) água entre na casa.  
 I NEG want that the water enter.SBJ the house  
 ‘I don’t want water to come into the house.’
- (102) a. Custu est unu professore chi (\*sos) pitzinnos aman. [Sardinian]  
 this is a teacher that the children love.PRES.IND.3PL  
 ‘This is a teacher that children love.’  
 b. Cherzo chi \*(sos) pitzinnos gioghen sempre in custu parcu.  
 want.PRES.IND.1SG that the children play.SBJ.3PL always in this park  
 ‘I want children always to play in this park.’

Table 5 summarizes the results for the Romance languages and Nguni.<sup>35</sup>

**Table 5:** Exclusion of bare nominals from preverbal subject positions

| Bare nominals    | Nguni [-A] | Italian | Spanish | Portuguese | Sardinian |
|------------------|------------|---------|---------|------------|-----------|
| SV (indicative)  | X          | X       | X       | X          | X         |
| SV (subjunctive) | X          | X       | X       | X          | X         |
| SV (rel. clause) | X          | X       | X       | X          | X         |
| SV (participial) | X          | N/A     | N/A     | N/A        | N/A       |

A unified account of these point-by-point correspondences between Nguni and Romance PVSP restrictions is a theoretically attractive goal. Absent evidence that Romance bare nominals have special Case needs, the approach to Nguni [-A] nominals in Halpert

<sup>35</sup> VS order seems predominant in Romance participials regardless of the subjects’ properties.

(2015) and Pietraszko (2021) cannot be extended to them. But negative concord plays a major syntactic role in Romance, just as in Nguni – a state of affairs that I take to be non-coincidental, like the correspondences in Table 5.

In fact, the ability of negative concord to neutralize the Ndebele PVSP restriction has a striking parallel in Romance languages discussed in Deprez (2000): negative concord items (NCIs) are a systematic exception to the exclusion of bare nominals from PVSP in (96)-(102) (see (103) adapted from Deprez 2000:254 (4); glosses added).

(103) Nessuno ha telefonato. [Italian]  
 no one has telephoned  
 ‘No one called.’

I adopt a proposal of Zeijlstra (2008) that *nessuno* has *uNeg* features which in (103) obtain valuation from a silent negation operator that c-commands PVSP (see (104)).

(104)  $iNeg \dots \emptyset_{uNeg}$ -Nessuno ha telefonato. [Adapting Zeijlstra 2008:27]

(103) is thus grammatical because of successful Neg-licensing from the left edge as in the Nguni (37), repeated below (though I assume the operator is in a CP projection and can share features with T as well, for reasons detailed in §5.3).

(37) Negative concord spreading from C to SU yields a licit [-A] preverbal subject

A-ngi-fun-i [CP  $\emptyset_{uNeg}$ -kuthi [TP  $\emptyset_{uNeg}$ -Sipho a-buy-e]].  
 NEG-I-want COMP 1Sipho 1SM-come-SBJ

Turning to Romance bare mass nouns and plurals, I suggest that they have null Ds with *uNeg* features, just like bare nouns in Nguni. These thwart agreement and hence labeling as in Nguni, yielding the familiar pattern of facts in (96)-(102) (see (105)).

(105) \*[TP Acqua<sub>uNeg</sub> T<sub>uPhi</sub> viene giù dalle colline]. = (97)a  
 water comes down from-the hills  
 $\emptyset_{uNeg}$  of acqua blocks Agree

I also extend to these expressions a proposal of Carstens & Mletshe (2016) that I advocated in §3.1 for strict negative dependents like *mifino* – ‘any/no vegetables’: their *uNeg* features are too weak to be compatible with a silent negator, just as *uPhi* of T in English is too weak for compatibility with *pro*-drop. For this reason bare plurals and mass nouns of Romance cannot be licensed in PVSP as *nessuno* is in (104). Nor can they serve as negative fragment answers as (106) shows, for the same reason: following Zeijlstra (2004, 2008) among others, negative fragment answers rely on a silent negator.

- (106) Q. Quanta acqua hai bevuto?      Ans. \*Acqua!  
           how.much water have.2s drunk?      water  
           ‘How much water have you drunk?      Intended: no water!’

Outside of PVSP, it may be that the *uNeg* features of Romance bare nouns enable them to function as negative dependents, when NEG-licensing is available:

- (107) a. Non voglio acqua.      b. NEG ....[DP  $\emptyset_{uNeg}$ -acqua]      [Italian]  
           NEG want.1s water  
           ‘I don’t want (any) water.’

Absent local negation they simply express mass or plural meanings which do not require a relation with NEG (see (108)). In this they parallel Nguni [-A] *wh*-phrases: their possession of *uNeg* features is irrelevant to their core semantic content and primary functions.

- (108) Ho presto  $\emptyset_{uNeg}$ -acqua dalla sorgente.  
           I took water from-the spring  
           ‘I took water from the spring.’

Romance bare nouns differ from their Nguni counterparts in that their null Ds do not necessarily have to be operator bound, so they are not restricted to serving as negative dependents or *wh*-words. But expressions like the Italian *nessuno* – ‘anybody/nobody’

and Xhosa *ø-mifino* ‘any/no vegetables’ have no meanings unless bound by negation; in this they are like *wh*-phrases without binding by C<sub>Q</sub>.

Returning to the licensing of preverbal *nesunno* by a silent left-edge negator in (104), a question arises regarding why this strategy fails for the three Zulu NCIs *lutho* – ‘anyplace/no place’, *muntu* – ‘anybody/nobody’ and *ndawo* – ‘anyplace/no place’ in the subjunctive PVSPs of (109). I noted in §3.1:(40), repeated below, that these three may serve as fragment answers, and on that basis I’ve hypothesized that a silent negator exists in Zulu. In indicative clauses, PVSP is inhospitable to [+focus] material as we have seen, so the exact counterpart to (104) would be doomed. But something must be said about why the silent negator doesn’t license preverbal [-A] nominal subjects in subjunctives like (109)a,b:

- (40) Fragment answers:    a. √Mu-ntu!                      b. √Lutho!                      c. √N-dawo!                      [Zulu]  
                                          1-person                      11 thing                      9-place  
                                          ‘Nobody!’                      ‘Nothing!’                      ‘No place!’
- d. \*M-fazi!                                              e. \*Zi-hlangu!  
                                          1-woman                                              8-shoes  
                                          Intended: No woman!                                              ‘No shoes!’
- (109) a. \*Ngi-funa [(ukuthi) lutho li-phuk-e]                      [Zulu]  
                                          1sSM-want (COMP) 11 thing 11SM-break-SBJ  
                                          Intended: I want nothing to break.’
- b. \*Ngi-funa [(ukuthi) mu-ntu a-phek-e]  
                                          1sSM-want (COMP) 1-person 1SM-cook-SBJ  
                                          Intended: I want no one to cook.

I take the ill-formedness of (109)a,b to indicate that a silent left-edge negator is absent in Nguni subjunctives as is consistent with the clause-medial location of overt negators within subjunctives, illustrated in (110)c (compare to (110)a and (110)b). Pietraszko proposes that the higher negation available in indicative clauses like (110)a is absent in

subjunctives, where the left periphery is truncated.

- (110) a. Ngi-cabanga ukuthi a-bafana **a-ba-phek-i**. [Ndebele; Pietraszko 2021:595]  
 1SSM-think COMP AUG-2-boys NEG1-2SM-cook-NEG  
 ‘I think that the boys do not cook.’
- b. \*Ngi-funa ukuthi a-bafana **a-ba-phek-i**.  
 1SSM-want COMP AUG-2-boys NEG1-2SM-cook-NEG  
 Intended: I want the boys not to cook.’
- c. Ngi-funa ukuthi a-ba-fana **ba-nga-phek-i**.  
 1SSM-want COMP AUG-2-boys 2SM-NEG2-cook-NEG  
 ‘I want the boys not to cook.’

Another question that arises is why exactly bare nouns are systematically endowed with  $\mu$ Neg features in Nguni and Romance, under this proposal. I conjecture that this might be a simple general strategy for equipping languages with the foundation for a negative concord system. NCIs are non-referential; if overt articles facilitate denotation and reference (Longobardi 1994), and non-referentiality correlates even partially with their absence, then bare nouns have a baseline profile more compatible with serving as NCIs than do nouns with determiners.  $\mu$ Neg features and null Ds are thus a natural-enough marriage. It is arguably efficient to supply  $\mu$ Neg features to bare nouns, in negative concord languages, especially given that the grammar can ignore them in any circumstances where they are not relevant, apart from labeling contexts.

A loose end remains in the availability of bare singular preverbal subjects in certain Romance languages, most often with generic readings ((111) is from Rinaldi 2018, p. 85:(2), citing Muller & Oliveira 2004).

- (111) Elefante é inteligente. [Brazilian Portuguese]  
 Elephant is intelligent  
 ‘Elephants are intelligent.’

I suggest that if these expressions have determiners, their feature-content excludes  $\mu$ Neg.

I must leave a deeper treatment to future research. I also leave to future research the absence of tell-tale default morphology on Romance bare nominals which lack negation-licensing.

## 9. Concluding remarks

The central claim of this article is a rather simple one: that the distribution of Nguni bare nouns follows from their nature as negative dependents and *wh*-question words. One surprising distributional fact to be captured is their exclusion from PVSPs, but Pietraszko (2021) shows that in Ndebele, negation-licensing via COMP overrides this prohibition. I have accordingly proposed that valuation of *u*Neg features is the crucial factor in this pattern. More broadly, an XP bearing unvalued agreement cannot value agreement on a probe Y and thereby thwarts feature-sharing relations on which labeling relies in [XP, YP] configurations (Chomsky 2013, Bošković 2020, 2021). The PVSP restrictions are thus a variety of EPP-effect arising from the valuation dependency that [-A] nominals have on *i*Neg; in other words, from their participation in negative concord.

§1.1 noted controversy over whether negative-dependence and *wh*-hood are relevant to the syntax of Nguni [-A] nominals. In promoting Halpert's (2015) approach Pietraszko (2021:583-84) writes:

Halpert proposes that negative polarity and *wh*-hood...are semantic preconditions on their appearance. The distribution of augmentless DPs is *additionally* regulated by purely syntactic factors, and [Halpert's] theory is a theory of the structural (not the semantic) licensing conditions.

My article has presented an array of evidence that the heavy lifters in syntactic licensing of [-A] nominals are negation, focus, and CQ. Alongside of their semantic properties I have shown that these categories play important morpho-syntactic roles in Nguni.



Abstract structural Case plays no part in this account, unlike in the analyses of Halpert (2015) and Pietraszko (2021). The case for Case in most Bantu languages hangs on the question of how to interpret a very narrow range of phenomena. A ‘no’ setting for Nguni seems within reach for Diercks’s (2012) Bantu-inspired Case parameter in (112) under my analysis of [-A] nominal distribution.

(112) Case parameter: uninterpretable Case features are/are not present in a language

A welcome simplification of our conception of Nguni grammar would result from this, consonant with the major, striking roles that other kinds of morphosyntactic features play in regulating the positions of Nguni nominals (Zeller 2008, Sabel & Zeller 2006, Carstens & Mletshe 2015, 2016, Carstens & Zeller 2020).

Much like Nguni languages, several Romance languages exclude bare nouns from PVSPs. While some prior accounts have attributed this to unvalued D-features of T or phi-feature visibility problems (Deprez 2000, Landau 2007), I have suggested instead extending the labeling account of Nguni to bare nouns in Romance, though this is speculative and leaves some open questions.

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