It is likely that in any future work on Swahili syntax W. H. W's rather complex 
enomial entailment will have to be modified fundamentally, since it is based on 
applicable premises concerning the nature of starting sentences. The syntactic 
tionships of phrasal verbs will have to be investigated, and the whole question 
was re-examined and kept distinct from unfocused statements. Meanwhile 
acknowledge that W. H. W. has drawn attention to some syntactic 
ures not previously observed. The general effect of his work is that we know 
about the language.

THE INITIAL VOWEL OF THE NOUN IN ZULU

P. M. S. VON STADEN

I. The Problem

1.1. One of the characteristic features distinguishing most of the Nguni languages 
from other South African Bantu languages, is the occurrence of an initial vowel 
with the class prefixes of nouns. The extent of this phenomenon and the phonological 
forms of the vowels concerned, differ from one language to another. In 
Zulu the vowel is found before all noun class prefixes except that of class 16 
(jh-a-) and is always identical to the (morphophonemically relevant) vowel of 
the prefix. It therefore occurs as /a/ in classes 1 /um(a)-/, 3 /um(a)-/, 11 /u(lu)-/, 
14 /abu-/ 15 /uku- and 17 /u(ka)-; as /i/ in classes 4 /im(i)-/, 5 /il(i)-/, 7 /is(i)-/, 
8 /is(i)-/, 9 /in(i)- and 10 /in(i)-/, and as /a/ in classes 2 /ba-a- and 6 /ana-.

1.2. The fact that the grammatical systems of the different Nguni dialects are 
to a great extent identical, creates the impression that the grammatical status of 
the initial vowel is fundamentally the same in all dialects. Keeping in mind the 
differences mentioned above, one should, however, expect that the rules for the 
occurrence of the initial vowel, differ from one dialect to the other. This article 
deals exclusively with the initial vowel in the Zulu noun.

1.3. Existing literature confronts one with different views about the grammatical

---

*This article is based on a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts, accepted by the University of Port Elizabeth and prepared under the supervision of Professor E. B. van Wyk, now of the Rand Afrikaans University. The author is also indebted to Professor Van Wyk for valuable advice in the preparation of the article and especially in the interpretation of the data in a transformational generative framework. See 6.

†Mr. P. M. S. von Staden is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Bantu Languages at the Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg.

1 A few dialects of the Nguni group have no initial vowels, e.g., Northern Transvaal Ndebele (Zirvogel 1959:49). Initial vowels are also found sporadically in non-Nguni dialects. In certain forms of Tsonga the initial vowel is /ej/ or /i/ (Jenns 1897:289-291; Collins 1992:56), whilst in Eta it is /ə/ (Zirvogel 1958:37) and in Kgalagadi /je/ (Van der Merwe and Schaper 1943:21).

2 In some languages and dialects initial vowels are limited to certain classes only, e.g., in Sotho, classes 1, 3, 4, 11, 12 and 16 (Zirvogel 1959:49), in Lala, class 1 (Van Dyk 1960:15) and in Nguni, classes 6 and 14 (Spier 1904:72-74). Sometimes they are only tardily present in the sense that they influence morphophonemic changes, e.g., Swati (Zirvogel 1952:60) and Lala (Van Dyk 1960:16).

3 In some dialects (ubhi Zulu) occur with an invariant initial vowel, e.g., Xhosa /ej/ in classes 2, 6, 16 and 17 (Mazane 1948:55). Compare also Swati /ej/ in class 8 (Zirvogel 1952:23).

4 Although most nouns in class 17 ('i-ba-) have no initial vowel, examples such as khenwe 'right-hand sale' make it clear that an initial vowel must also be distinguished for this class.

5 The vowels are, of course, subject to morphophonemic changes, if, in specific syntactic environments, they are preceded by /ej/.

6 With locative derived nouns, an initial vowel /je/ is found in most classes, and /a/ in classes 11 and 14. Although these vowels occur only in special forms of nouns and therefore are not discussed in this article, they are used or omitted according to the same rules and in the same environments as other initial vowels.
tates of initial vowels. There are three main points of view. First, authors like Bleek (1869:150) consider them as articles equivalent to the articles of languages such as English, Afrikaans, German, etc. Within this standpoint, variations can be distinguished. For instance, Johnston (1910:224-28) considers the initial vowel a definite article, whilst McLannan (1886:20) and Torrend (Bourquin 1946:22) o not place it on the same level as either the definite or the indefinite article, but refer to treat it as an autonomous article. Dühne (1859:xx) views it as an indefinite article. Secondly, authors such as Grout (1983:292), Colenso (1903:11), T. Bryant (1905:95), Doke (1955:10), Van Eeden (1956:66) and Mzolo (1968:95), do not consider the initial vowel to have any grammatical status, but regard it as part of the class prefix. Thirdly, Engelbrecht’s opinion (1962:24) is that the position of the initial vowel is to indicate definite, individual objects. A few authors, such as Ziervogel (1967:143-44), taking into account one syntactic environment only, imply that the initial vowel has the function of indicating definiteness.

4. The authors mentioned above do not explain their points of view in modern linguistic terms but translation into a more modern idiom is no problem. The view that the initial vowel is an article, and also the opinion that its function is to indicate definite, individual matters, implies, for instance, that the initial vowel has an independent form with three phonologically definable allomorphs. Such morpheme can be formalised as [a] = /a~a~/. The form man- in masi man ‘villages’ and ama- in umusha ‘horses’ would therefore consist of [a + ma-] = /a + ma-/, [a + mi-] = /a + mi-/, and [a + ma-] = /a + ma-/, respectively.

5. The other point of view is that the initial vowel has no morphemic status, but is part of the class prefix. The forms referred to above, would then specifically be: [umw-] = /uwm-/, [imi-] = /imi-/, and [ama-] = /ama-/

6. The aim of this article is to determine whether the initial vowel in Zulu is a morpheme, and if so, what its semantic aspects and grammatical function are. The following paragraphs will investigate whether there is any difference between words with and without their initial vowels in syntactic structures where both occur. The nature of any semantic difference will be formulated as carefully and precisely as possible. It also appears, though, that in certain syntactic structures the initial vowels of all nouns are omitted. These cases will be analysed semantically to determine whether any conclusions made earlier, are also valid here. Where final conclusions will be drawn concerning the grammatical nature of initial vowels.

7. Although this study will attempt to be, as far as possible, neutral towards natural-taxonomic and transformational-generative methods of description, it will nevertheless be taxonomically orientated. Therefore, after final conclusions have been drawn, the possible treatment of initial vowels of nouns in a transformational generative grammar will be considered.

2. SYNTACTIC STRUCTURES IN WHICH NOUNS OCCUR WITH OR WITHOUT INITIAL VOWELS

2.1. In the following syntactic structures nouns may occur with or without their initial vowels: (a) Nouns used after negative (and occasionally positive) verbs or copulars (in any tense, mood or aspect) as ‘postposed’ subjects, objects, adverbial extensions, and (positive) qualitative extensions, (b) nouns used after the corresponding absolute pronouns, or before quantitative pronouns; (c) proper names used after other nouns; (d) nouns preceding concordantly related enumeratives; (e) nouns used conjunctively; and (f) nouns in copulars of identification.

2.2. The structures mentioned above are all subordinate word groups, except (a) nouns used conjunctively, and those used in copulative groups of identification, which occur in reciprocal word groups, and (b) nouns with initial vowels that appear after their absolute pronouns in appositional word groups. Especially when used with numa ‘or’, the initial vowel can also be omitted in a co-ordinate word group, but then only if the whole co-ordinate group is part of one of the above mentioned types of word groups.

2.3. It was found that in all but three of these syntactic frames nouns with initial vowels have a semantic feature which distinguishes them from those without such vowels. Nouns with initial vowels denote particular, individual objects, whilst those lacking them refer to objects in an indefinite, a general or generic context, depending on the nature of the objects referred to. Satisfactory explanations could be found for two of the three exceptions.

2.4. Since the distinction ‘particular, individual: general, generic’ does not coincide with any grammatical categories in English, it has to be rendered in different ways in translation. Individual objects, i.e., nouns with initial vowels, can be translated with the aid of the articles ‘a(n)’ or ‘the’, whilst the words ‘particular, individual’ and sometimes ‘i.e., (that is)’ can be added whenever it is necessary to stress the particular, individual nature of the object referred to. On the other hand, a variety of words and suffixes may be used to indicate the indefinite, generic, general nature of nouns without initial vowels. After negative verbs and copulars, for example, the words ‘no’, ‘not any’, ‘nothing (not anything) like (a)’ are especially suitable, whereas after positive forms it is more convenient to use ‘any’, ‘something like (a)’, etc. In some instances the words ‘in . . . capacity as (a)’, ‘the real . . . (sort/kind)’ or suffixes such as -ish are to be preferred. In normal texts, where individuality, genericity, etc., may be inferred from the
context, it may, of course, be unnecessary to differentiate between the two
categories in translation.

2.5. Nouns following negative verbs

2.5.1. As ‘postponed’ subjects

It often happens in Zulu that a noun denoting the logical (i.e., semantic) subject
of the action, appears after the verb, in which case the verb takes the subject
concord of class 17 instead of that of the logical subject. Such nouns can be referred
to as ‘postponed’ subjects. Compare the following contrasting examples in which
the noun can be used with or without the initial vowel:

\[
\text{Akufikanga abahambi} \quad \text{"No (particular, individual) travellers arrived" (lit. "There did not arrive (particular, individual) travellers") (e.g., travellers whom the speaker knows would have come, or travellers referred to previously)}
\]

\[
: \text{Akufikanga bahambi} \quad \text{"No (nothing like) travellers arrived" (lit. "There didn’t arrive any travellers") (i.e., anything which can be classified as travellers)}
\]

The semantic difference mentioned above, is clear in these examples. The noun with
an initial vowel indicates particular, individual travellers whereas the generic
aspect of being travellers is applicable when the initial vowel is omitted.

The semantic difference is the same if the noun with or without initial vowel is
used with the connective particle na-. No vowel assimilation takes place if the
initial vowel is omitted:

\[
\text{Akufikwanga nekhile} \quad \text{"Not even a/the (particular, individual) key has been found"}
\]

\[
: \text{Akufikwanga nekhile} \quad \text{"Not even any (anything like a) key has been found" (i.e., something which can be regarded as a key)}
\]

2.5.2. As objects

\[
\text{Abafumana nga ibhubezi} \quad \text{"They haven’t found a/the (particular, individual) lion" (e.g., a lion for which they had been searching, a lion that had killed the sheep, etc.)}
\]

\[
: \text{Abafumana bhubezi} \quad \text{"They haven’t found any (anything like a) lion" (i.e., anything which can be called a lion)}
\]

The same applies when the connective particle na- is used with the noun:

\[
\text{Auwgoli nezinyosi} \quad \text{"You don’t even catch the (particular, individual) bees"}
\]

\[
: \text{Auwgoli nezinyosi} \quad \text{"You don’t even catch any (anything like) bees"}
\]

2.5.3. Adverbial extensions with particles

When nouns are used in combination with particles as adverbial extensions after
negative verbs, the same applies as in the case of na- above, i.e., the semantic
difference still applies.

2.5.4. After possessive concords

The initial vowel of a noun may be omitted after a possessive concord even though
the noun may not appear immediately after the negative verb. As is the case with
the particles na-, nga-, etc., no vowel assimilation takes place if the initial vowel
of the possessor-noun is omitted:

\[
\text{Akadanga umunbili wamunhu} \quad \text{"He didn’t eat the meals of a/the (particular, individual) white person"}
\]

\[
: \text{Akadanga umunbili wamunhu} \quad \text{"He didn’t eat the meals of any (anything like a) white person" (i.e., anybody who can be regarded as a white person)}
\]

2.5.5. More than one noun following a negative verb

If two or more nouns appear after a negative verb, any one, or more, or all of them
can be used with or without the initial vowel, whilst the semantic difference will
be applicable to each noun:

\[
\text{Akamkhilelanga ngentshe uma izimbe lamuntu} \quad \text{"He didn’t throw a/the (particular, individual) stone or (particular, individual) axe of a/the (particular, individual) person at him"}
\]

\[
: \text{Akamkhilelanga ngentshe uma izimbe lamuntu} \quad \text{"He didn’t throw any (anything like a) stone or any (anything like an) axe of any (anything such as a) person at him"}
\]

\[
: \text{Akamkhilelanga ngentshe uma izimbe lamuntu} \quad \text{"He didn’t throw any stone or any axe of a/the (particular, individual) person at him"}
\]

\[
: \text{Akamkhilelanga ngentshe uma izimbe lamuntu} \quad \text{"He didn’t throw any stone or a/the (particular, individual) axe of any person at him"}
\]

\[
: \text{Akamkhilelanga ngentshe uma izimbe lamuntu} \quad \text{"He didn’t throw a/the (particular, individual) stone or any axe of any person at him"}
\]

2.6. Nouns following positive verbs

Although less frequently, nouns without initial vowels can also be used after
positive verbs in the same cases as after negative verbs.

\[
\text{Nazi umuntu ngazwi lakhe? \quad \"Do you know a/the (particular, individual) person by his (particular, individual) voice?\"}
\]

\[
: \text{Nazi umuntu ngazwi lakhe? \quad \"Do you know a/any person by (anything like) his voice?\"}
\]

\[
: \text{Nazi umuntu ngazwi lakhe? \quad \"Do you know a/any person by his (particular, individual) voice?\"}
\]

\[
: \text{Nazi umuntu ngazwi lakhe? \quad \"Do you know a/the (particular, individual) person by (something like) his voice?\"}
\]
not apply in this case. Both nouns with or without initial vowels can refer objects in either their individual capacity or their generic context, e.g.

\[ \text{Ndikuzi xebona/Zimbizu xebona} \] “It is goats that are seen” (i.e., particular, individual goats or things like goats)

The initial vowels of second and following nouns may also be omitted if the fi noun is used without the vowel, in which case no semantic difference is necessary involved.

SiSibenzi noma salakazi sakhulu/SiSibenzi noma salakazi sakhulu/SiSibe noma isalakazi sakhulu/SiSibenzi noma isalakazi sakhulu “It is a/ a labourer or old woman of an/the old man”

No satisfactory reason was found to explain why the semantic difference that applies elsewhere is not applicable here.

2.11.2. Negative copulatives: The distinction ‘particular:generic’ is, however, applicable in negative copulatives of identification. This is also true of more than one complement, when the initial vowel may be retained or omitted. It is interesting that in this case the initial vowels of second and following nouns are always retained if the first noun takes the vowel.

\[ \text{Nhlembiya noma isidudumana} \] “It is not a/the (particular, individual) lazy person or a/the (particular, individual) simpleton”

\[ \text{Nhlembiya noma isidudumana} \] “It is no (not any, nothing like a) lazy person or (anything like a) simpleton”

\[ \text{Nhlembiya noma isidudumana} \] “It is no lazy person or a/the (particular, individual) simpleton”

2.12. Proper names after certain nouns

If in subordinate word groups proper names appear after nouns that have bearing on them, the initial vowels of the proper names may be omitted with any change of meaning.

\[ \text{U姆山桑科 Osaza wadwela ukhamba} \] “Mr Osaza rushed to the river”

\[ \text{U姆山桑科 Osaza wadwela ukhamba} \] “On the entrance of Mr Osaza, Nomibali walked straight to the river”

The explanation of the lack of a semantic difference in this case seems to be that the initial vowel of the noun preceding the proper name, individualizes the whole word group, and the second initial vowel becomes semantically redundant.

2.13. Nouns before enumeratives

Nouns usually appear without their initial vowels before enumeratives. There is slight difference of emphasis between forms with and those without initial vowels. Nouns with initial vowels have more emphasis while enumeratives are emphasis if initial vowels are omitted. The distinction ‘particular:generic’ is, however, applicable.

\[ \text{Zilake zwi lnowe} \] “They have reported one (particular, individual) messag
THE INITIAL VOWEL OF THE NOUN IN ZULU

phonemic rule which necessitates the elision of one vowel, and which ma
happen to be an initial vowel, may, for instance, become operative. I
such a case a noun may continue to have an individualized meaning i
spite of the absence of an initial vowel.

3.3. None of the possible explanations considered in par. 3.2 would con
trast the conclusions of 2.14 (a)-(b). The first fully supports it. The sec
ond links up with 2.14 (b) and further confirms it. The third gives a ra
tional explanation of circumstanes where the omission of the initial vowel may be attributed to oth
than semantic factors.

3.4. VOCATIVES

Nhosi! "King!"
Jojo! "Jojo!" ("George!")

The compulsory omission of the initial vowel here seems to have a semant:
exploration. When a speaker addresses a person, he refers to his 'membership'
of class of persons with a certain common denominator, e.g., having a certain nam
being a chief, etc. A king is not addressed as an individual king, but in his capac
as a king. Similarly, Jojo in our example is not addressed as an individual "Jojo"
but as one who answers to the name of Jojo. If this explanation is correct, it follo
that the use of initial vowels in vocatives is precluded on semantic grounds.

3.5. NOUNS OF CLASS 1A AFTER KA-
Nouns of class 1a do not take initial vowels after the possessive prefix ka-

Umuzi kaCelé uthe cehashe egumeni "Celé's village is exactly on top of th
hill"

Two explanations for the omission of the initial vowel may be considered:

(a) In a very few examples the initial vowel is retained, but without an
difference when compared with the form without the vowel. Cf.: umabha
kagwayi: umakhabha ogwayi "tobacco leaves" (Doke 1968:120). This might t
an indication that all possessive — derived nouns of class 1a previou
had two forms, one with and one without the initial vowel, with a seman
distinction of 'particular: generic'. The form with initial vowel might hav
fallen into disuse so that only the form without initial vowel is still fou
the latter nowadays indicating either particular, individual objects, o
objects in their generic capacity.

(b) Vowel elision may take place to obviate possible ambiguity resultin
the use of possessive concords with related forms. As the omission of t
initial vowel would lead to less confusion, it is generally omitted.

3.6. AFTER POSSESSIVE CONCORD KWA-
If the possessive concord kwa- of the locative classes is neither used after a locativ

Informants seem to differ concerning the class to which ogwayi belongs. Some consider umabha
kagwayi yevela | umakhabha ogwayi yevela as the only correct forms, which means that the noun
both cases belongs to class 1a. Other informants agree to the first form, but consider umabha
ogwayi yevela (the noun therefore in this case belonging to class 3) as the only alternative.
nouns, nor bears any relationship with a specific locative noun, the initial vowel of the noun used after the possessive concord is always omitted, whilst the noun still denotes a particular object.

Kweka isikhatsha oxenzini wakwaNxumalo “There arrived a traveller in the village of Nxumalo’s (place)"

The omission of initial vowels after kwa- can be explained morphophonetically, although only speculatively. The final vowel -a- of possessive concords usually assimilates to the initial vowel of the following noun. When kwa- is combined with an initial vowel i-, a string /kwa/ results (according to the rule [a + u] = [o]), which, however, does not exist in Zulu. The /w/ is normally elided in such a sequence. The fact of being an uncommon sequence, seems to suggest that the initial vowel i- was earlier omitted at the word border and that, analogously, other initial vowels were also omitted. Although such a statement does not confirm the conclusion in par. 2, it is also not contrary to it.

3.7. Nouns in Relative Constructions

If a noun occurs in a relative construction and stands in a possessive relation to the antecedent (or head of the nominal phrase), the relative concord is used before the noun without initial vowel.

Umphala isihlalo lakhe lindohele uphakhele khalala “The boy whose horse kicked him, is very cross”

Also in this case a possible explanation for the omission of the initial vowel is at the morphophonemic level. The combination /o+i/ which would have occurred if the initial vowels were retained, is also uncommon at word and morpheme boundaries. The omission of the initial vowel would have the least effect on the form and structure of the word. By analogy with inadmissible combinations, initial vowels of possible combinations were also omitted. Such an explanation does not confirm the conclusion of par. 2.14, but is also not contrary to it as the omission of the initial vowel implies the interference of another system level with the semantic.

3.8. Compound Nouns

In compounds of which a noun is the second part, the latter never retains its initial vowel.

umlingama “gate-keeper” (<umini “guard” + masango “gates”)

There are two possible reasons for the omission of the initial vowel of the second noun:

(a) The noun without initial vowel is used with generic reference.

(b) The vowel of the second noun would be semantically unnecessary since the compound denotes a single concept which is individualized by the initial vowel of the first (and syntactically dominant) component of the compound.

Both explanations fit in with the conclusions of 2.14.

3.9. Nouns Transposed to Other Classes

Nouns may be derived from other nouns (preprefixing the prefixes of other class

uNkole “Ndola” (< indentation “man”)

ubuhlaza “ignorance” (< u(k)hlaza “greenness”)

They are different from compound forms in that only one noun is concerned in each case. This is no semantic problem since the initial vowel of the original prefix is replaced by that of the preprefix one. The derived noun therefore has an individualized meaning like other nouns with initial vowels.

3.10. Nouns Used Adverbially

3.10.1. The initial vowels of some nouns are omitted when used adverbially.

mathunzi “late afternoon” (< matunzi “shadows”) as in

Ubumbakhulu wafika mathunzi olukuya “Grandfather arrived home in late afternoon” (lit. at shadow-time)

nikelangenihi “daily” (< imithi “days”) as in

Isicwazi ziswenza nikelangenihi enasimini “The labourers work in fields day by day”

In these cases it is not particular, individual objects which are referred to; actions are related to general phenomena, such as shadows. The nouns with their initial vowels are therefore used in their generic capacity.

Two cases deserve special attention in this connection:

3.10.2. Nouns of class 17

The fact that a few nouns of class 17 take the full form uku- of the prefix, suggest that all nouns of this class had initial vowels originally, but that the latter into disuse because these nouns normally generalize and do not refer to particular individual matters. For example,

hude “far”/“somewhat far off” (not: a far-off place)

hudula “(some time) long ago” (not: a specific moment)

In the few cases where the initial vowel still occurs, particular, individual objects are referred to. The initial vowels may, however, be omitted in these cases, with the same semantic difference as in the case of other nouns.

Ukwindicaphanci esihle “Autumn is a pleasant time”

Akukho kwinda kululo-zwe “There is no (nothing in the nature of) such autumn in that country”

3.10.3. Adverbs Derived from Relative Stems

Many adverbs are formed by preprefixing the adverbial formative ka- to so-called relative stems.

kubahlangu “painful” (< ka- + hulungo “pain”)

Wangalakha phansi kubahlangu hangana “He threw me down so painful
It is clear that no particular pain is meant in this example, but that the phenomenon of pain is indicated. The noun without initial vowel is therefore used generally.

3.11. Nouns used conjunctively
The initial vowels of some nouns are omitted when used conjunctively.

*Mdla* “when” (cf. umzimbe “day”)
*Mdla ezalwe uMoya, uKhasanda wamesulo amelilo akhe “When Maya was born, Khasanda wiped his eyes”
*Nyabana* “when” (cf. umnyaba “year” + -ana (diminutive suffix))
*Bukha laphya nyabana hakaba uNdawane* “They built yonder when Ndawane ruled”

These nouns apparently do not indicate particular, individual objects, i.e., they are not indicative of a particular day or a particular year. The nouns therefore have a generic value which is in line with the conclusion drawn in par. 2.14 concerning nouns without initial vowels.

3.12. Negative associative copulatives
The initial vowel is never used in the negative of associative copulatives, with the result that the connective particle *nu* occurs without vowel assimilation having taken place.

*Lelo phesha nala ngoma* “This little paper has no name”

Nouns in these constructions can refer to particular, individual objects or to objects in their generic capacity. No obvious explanation could be found for this. The semantic distinction determined in par. 2, is therefore not formalized in this case. Further nouns occurring in such negative associative copulatives can, however, be used with or without their initial vowels, in which case the same semantic difference will be applicable as determined in par. 2.

*Ngubelenzani kungaka ngumenzano noma nqakalo nomuntu?* “Why am I killed so while I have no sin nor any quarrel with any person?”

*Ngubelenzani kungaka ngumenzano noma nqakalo nomuntu?* “Why am I killed so while I have no sin nor a/the (particular) quarrel with a/the (particular) person?”

3.13. After the locative particle *ku-
The initial vowels of the nouns of classes 1, 1a, and 2 are omitted after the locative particle *ku-.* Such nouns can indicate individual matters and refer to the generic nature of matters.

*Ukungazwa kuningi kakhulu kubantu* “Not to listen is very common in children”

The only explanation that can be offered for the omission of the initial vowel in these cases is that *ku-* is an old class prefix and therefore causes the initial vowel to be omitted when prefixed to a noun (cf. 3.9). Due to its new function, however, it no longer possesses its own initial vowel.

3.14. After demonstrative pronouns
When, in a subordinate word group, a demonstrative pronoun is used before a noun, the latter’s initial vowel is omitted.11

*Shesha ushayele umbhwekazi kaCele lelo-lucingo “Hurry and send Ce- daughter that telegram”*

That the initial vowel is omitted even though particular, individual objects indicated, can be ascribed to two factors:

(a) The demonstrative pronoun itself particularizes and individualizes virtue of its demonstrative meaning, making the use of the initial vowel semantically redundant.

(b) When a demonstrative pronoun occurs before a noun, vowel sequences as */o + i/* result, which in Zulu are uncommon on word and morpheme borders, and which therefore give rise to vowel elision. The initial vowel omitted because the final vowel of the demonstrative pronoun is dispensable. Although not all vowel sequences concerned are uncommon in initial vowels are always omitted by analogy with the instance mention

The first factor makes elision semantically possible, while the second causes morphophonemically. That the first reason is not for se decisive, is clear from fact that the initial vowel is retained in a reversed word order.

*lelile kashi : ibishi leli “this horse”*

These explanations are not contrary to the conclusions drawn in par. 2.

3.15. As ‘Relative stems’
Most so-called relative stems correspond to nouns in form, except for the fact that they have no initial vowels.

*ibuklungu “sore” “painful” : ubuklungu “pain”
-mazvi “wet” : amazvi “water”
-sibhado “speckled” : isibhado “spots”*

Relative stems indicate qualities, characteristics, states, etc. These meanings be related to the meanings of corresponding nouns without initial vowels, i.e., nouns with generic meanings. *Kubuklungu* “it is painful” can be interpreted referring to a state which relates to “pain”, i.e., “it (something) paiilik
Similarly *ngwe isibhado* can be taken to mean “the leopard is (something) speckled”, i.e., speckled. Cf. also *isinhle simazvi* “the bread is (something) waterlike i.e., wet. This explanation could be extended to relative items like *goloho* for which no corresponding nouns exist by assuming that they are derived from nouns which no longer appear with initial vowels (i.e., in particularized form). It would explain such “ad hoc” relatives as *milenze mubili in izinyamaane esimlenze mldile “antelope which are two-leg-things (i.e., two-legged)” which are frequently for

---

11 Although very seldom, a noun with initial vowel can also be used as an extension of explicatio adposittome word group after its demonstrative pronoun. See Van Eeden 1856:134.
in archaic language. Compare also the semantic opposition in the following sentences:

Lento ingubhlangu “This thing is a (specific) pain”
Lento ibhlangu “This thing is of the pain-kind, i.e., painful”
Lesi izivishadu “These are (particular) specks”
Lesi sizibhathu “These are of the speck-kind, i.e., speckled”

3.56. Summary
An analysis of syntactic frames and functions in which the use of initial vowels is precluded reveals the following situation:

(a) In the majority of cases the semantic nature of the constructions concerned is such that objects can only be referred to in their generic capacity. This accords with our earlier conclusion that initial vowels constitute a morpheme which functions to particularize the meanings of nouns and that the absence of such vowels coincides with a semantic feature ‘generic’.

(b) In some other cases nouns without initial vowels have particularized meanings but the overt realization thereof is made redundant by the fact that other words in the sentence also denote individuality unambiguously.

(c) In a third group of frames the meanings of nouns are either particularized or generic and the absence of an initial vowel is due to the interference of a non-semantic linguistic level which demands elision of the vowel.

The last two situations do not contradict the conclusion that initial vowels have morphemic status but merely define the distribution of ‘zero allomorphs’ of this morpheme.

4. Syntactic Structures in Which Nouns Occur Only with Initial Vowels
4.1. In the following cases it is compulsory to use initial vowels with nouns:
(a) nouns used as subjects, (b) when the object concord of the noun is used, and
(c) certain nouns used adverbially.

4.2. Nouns as Subjects
Nouns used as subjects always denote particular, individual objects and therefore take initial vowels. The only exception is figurative usage where, especially in (praise) poems, it is sometimes absent because of versification, etc. It is obvious that subjects, as actors, necessarily act in their individual capacity, i.e., someone or something that acts, must necessarily do it individually.

Ufunu intshwamba kusacane “A/tho tortoise walks slowly”

The fact that the initial vowel is used, is in accordance with the conclusion in par. 2, viz., that nouns with initial vowels have a semantic value of individualizing.

4.3. The Noun’s Object Concord Used
In par. 2.5.2 it was found that object nouns without initial vowels have a generic

12 This analysis also bears out Lanham’s (1971) contention that relatives derive from deep-structure nouns.

value. Such nouns are never used simultaneously with their object concords. If the preceding verb does include the noun’s object concord, the initial vowel is always retained.

Baxaya benke bentshela uisaba uganacilongo “They all spoke and told the teacher about the trumpets”

As the object concord specifies the object more clearly the noun referred to must denote a particular, individual object. The use of the initial vowel is therefore obligatory on semantic grounds.

4.4. Nouns Used Adverbially
Although many nouns are used adverbially without their initial vowels (see 3.10), a few retain these vowels in the same syntactic environment.

Ugoba, impela, isiminya, nembala, etc. “really”, “truly”
Izolo “yesterday”
Ngovini “(at) dawn”

In the case of izolo, the retention of the initial vowel can be ascribed to the fact that a particular day, namely the previous day, is denoted. The same also seems to apply to ugoba, impela, isiminya, nembala, etc. The concept “really” etc., implies something very specific and therefore something particular. The retention of the initial vowel in ngovini (<newii) can possibly be explained on the same grounds, seeing that a particular time of the day is indicated. These facts accord with the finding in par. 2.

5.5. Summary
When the use of initial vowels is obligatory, nouns always have particularized meanings. This confirms the conclusion concerning the morphemic status of initial vowels.

5. Conclusion
5.1. The following conclusions may be drawn from the material discussed in this paper:

(a) From a purely semantic point of view all Zulu nouns may have particularized, i.e., individualized and generic meanings.

(b) Generic meanings are always overtly marked by the absence of an initial vowel.

(c) Particularized meanings are overtly marked by the presence of initial vowels except:

(i) when particularization is unambiguously expressed by a word which is syntactically related to the noun, in which case the initial vowel is in some cases obligatorily absent and in other cases optionally absent, and

(ii) when interference from other structural levels, especially the morphophonemic, precludes the use of an initial vowel.

5.2. In taxonomic morphological terms the initial vowel must therefore be
6. Treatment of Initial Vowels in a Translational Generative Grammar of Zulu

6.1. In the preceding paragraphs the facts concerning initial vowels of nouns were investigated within a morphological framework with a taxonomic bias. Conclusions were drawn which are important for a grammar of Zulu. The next step would be to draw up rules according to which initial vowels can be handled in a translational generative grammar of Zulu. In a certain sense it would be premature to work out such rules in isolation, because a generative grammar is a well-ordered system of rules in which the nature, form, and place of each rule (at least in principle) must be determined with reference to all other rules. However, although no rules can be defined with any claim of finality, certain main facts with regard to the treatment of initial vowels emerge clearly from the preceding discussion. These main facts will now be considered.

6.2. The rules which handle initial vowels will have to account for the following facts:

(a) every Zulu noun in a sentence has either an individualized or generic meaning.
(b) individualized meanings are obligatory in some syntactic contexts and generic meanings in other contexts, whereas in yet other contexts, nouns have either the one or the other type of meaning.
(c) the semantic feature 'particular' (i.e., individual) is normally realized by a separate morpheme (i.e., an initial vowel, considered a morpheme. This morpheme has three allomorphs, as for instance found in words like 'people' (often 'wound' and usually 'beauty'). It can therefore be formalized as $\{a, 1\}$.
(d) this feature is further specified by the forms $\text{edu}$, $\text{ie}$, and $\text{imu}$ respectively are made up of the morpheme sequences $(a + \text{edu})$, $(a + \text{ie})$, $(a + \text{imu})$, $\text{edu} + \text{ie}$, $\text{ie} + \text{imu}$, and $(a + \text{imu}) + \text{edu} + \text{ie}$.

6.4. The features $\{a, 1\}$ will have to be assigned by a context-sensitive segment structure which consists of three sub-rules, one specifying the obligatory introduction of $\{a, 1\}$, another specifying the optional marking of $\{a, 1\}$, and a third ensuring that $\{a, 1\}$ and $\{a, 2\}$ are not in conflict. The ordering of the sub-rules will have to be determined, so that case (b) [see 6.2] will only apply when case (a) is not applicable, and case (c) when cases (a) and (b) yield no results. Such a segment structure rule may be expected to look somewhat as follows:

$\{a, 1\} \rightarrow \{a, 1\} \cup \{a, 2\} \cup \{a, 3\} \cup \{a, 4\}$

and is to be read as follows: (a) the feature $\{a, 1\}$ is added to a matrix headed by $\{a, 3\}$ when this matrix constitutes the first segment of a deep structure string (and also in certain other contexts), (b) either $\{a, 1\}$ or $\{a, 2\}$ is added under $\{a, 3\}$ when the preceding matrix contains the feature $\{a, 2\}$ (and also in certain other contexts), (c) the feature $\{a, 2\}$ is added under $\{a, 3\}$ in all remaining contexts. Such a rule will account for fact (b) in 6.2.2.

6.5. The next step will involve a segmentation transformation which detaches the feature $\{a, 1\}$ from the segment containing $\{a, 3\}$ and places it in a separate segment which precedes $\{a, 3\}$. This transformation can be formalized as follows:

$\{a, 1\} \rightarrow \{a, 1\} \cup \{a, 2\} \cup \{a, 3\} \cup \{a, 4\}$

Such a transformation will account for fact (c) in 6.2.2, but will be too powerful in that it will generate individualizing morphemes in contexts where they are not found. It will therefore have to be followed by series of transformations or perhaps one general transformation, which has the effect of deleting the segment $\{a, 1\}$ in certain contexts. One such transformation (or one special case of a general transformation) may be formalized as follows:

$\{a, 1\} \rightarrow \{a, 1\} \cup \{a, 2\} \cup \{a, 3\} \cup \{a, 4\}$

This rule specifies that the individualizing morpheme is to be deleted from the locative prefix $\{a, 1\}$.

6.6. The final problem concerns the realization of the forms of initial vowels. This can be handled in principle by two mechanisms: (a) by specifying the forms in the lexicon and introducing them by a lexical insertion rule, or (b) by introducing...