



Philosophische Fakultät



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Actual Clause Complements and "Narrative" tense in Eastern Bantu

Monday, 12 December 2022, 6:00 p.m., Zoom

This essay reports on the existence of the actual clause morphology and interpretation in selected Bantu languages. Essentially, we treat the actual clause as an embedded assertion whereby the utterer is committed not only to the truth described by the clause but that the event in the proposition cannot be unrealized at the time of the utterance. The Bantu languages in our sample mark the actual clause by a verbal prefix in a typical tense position on the lower verb and occurs as a single vowel or as a consonant/vowel combination. When actual clauses are syntactic complements, it co-occurs with verbs that may be incompatible with indicative clauses. The clause is also semantically distinct from other clause types such as the infinitive and the subjunctive. Our analysis of actual clauses as assertions explains why they are not complements of factive verbs. We argue that the source of the speaker's commitment to truth arises in part from the way actual clauses are licensed by the clauses they are dependent on. That is, we propose that actual clauses are licensed by a "contingent antecedent clause" which is taken to be a precondition for the actual clause assertion. Our approach generalizes to explain other non-complement uses of actual/narrative clause types, typically described as "narrative" tense in Bantu, which is identified by the exact same morphology.