

# The Pragmatic Functions of the Auxiliary Verbs *za* ‘come’ and *ya* ‘go’ in isiXhosa

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## **Abstract**

This study focuses on the syntactic and pragmatic functions of the isiXhosa auxiliary verbs *za* ‘come’ and *ya* ‘go’ when followed by subjunctive or past consecutive lexical verbs. Analysis of the auxiliaries’ occurrence in a 60,000-word database reveals that both auxiliaries introduce new predicates into the discourse. *Za* links a new predicate to a discourse old predicate in coordinated clauses. By contrast, *ya* introduces new predicates involving discourse old constituents. The study presents new insights into the grammaticalization paths of itive and ventive semantics of verbs of movement within the area of information structure.

**Keywords:** isiXhosa, motion verbs, grammaticalization, focus, coordination

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## 1 Introduction

The grammaticalization of deictic verbs of movement into tense and aspect markers is well documented across a vast number of languages. Ventive ‘come’ and itive ‘go’ are known to develop into future, completive and progressive markers (cf. Bybee and Dahl 1989; Bybee et al. 1994). More recently they have also been recognized as sources of other grammatical meanings (e.g., modality and voice) as they can function as imperative and passive markers (see Giacalone Ramat and Sansò 2014; Mocciaro 2014; Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2014; Kuteva et al. 2019, 12). In addition, *come* and *go* may develop various pragmatic roles, such as focus markers or indicators of new events being introduced into the discourse, functions which remain understudied despite a growing interest (see Ebert 1987, 2003; Nicolle 2002, 2007; Bourdin 2008; Devos and van der Wal 2010; Bravo 2014; Daniels 2014; Carlson 2014; Devos 2014; Kuteva et al. 2019).

The same tendency is found in the literature on the grammaticalized meanings of the isiXhosa verbs *za* ‘come’ and *ya* ‘go’ as auxiliary<sup>1</sup> verbs. In compound verbs, *za* and *ya* do not refer to deictically specified movements with goal complements (see Kuteva et al. 2019, 12), which is the meaning they exhibit as lexical verbs. Instead, as the first element of the biverbal construction, they encode grammatical meaning (tense, aspect, mood),<sup>2</sup> whereas lexical information about the predicate is specified by a complement lexical verb (inflected or non-finite). The type and function of the compound verb with the auxiliaries *za* and *ya* are determined by the grammatical form of the lexical complement, i.e., infinitive, situative, subjunctive, past consecutive (for a detailed explanation of these verb forms in isiXhosa, see Savić 2020; an account of these complement types in Southern Bantu languages is found in Crane et al. forthcoming).

The auxiliaries *za* and *ya* form the following types of compound verbs, which express:

- i. the **future tense** (see Section 1.1) with the auxiliary *za* or *ya* and an infinitive (class 15) complement; see (1–2);
- ii. the **imperfective, perfect/anterior, or prospective aspects** (see Section 1.1) in the remote past tense with the auxiliary *ya* exhibiting a suffix *-e* (or *-é*) followed by a situative (participial or circumstantial)<sup>3</sup> complement that indicates the aspectual category; see (3);
- iii. **directives** (see Section 1.2) with the subjunctive auxiliary *za* followed by a subjunctive complement; see (4);
- iv. **gradual processes** (see Section 1.2) with the auxiliary *ya* and a situative complement; see (5).
- v. various **pragmatic functions** (see Section 1.3) with the auxiliary *za* or *ya* and a subjunctive or a past consecutive (narrative past or past subjunctive) complement,<sup>4</sup> as it has been termed in many studies on isiXhosa and the other Nguni languages), exemplified in (6–7).

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed discussion on the definition of auxiliary verbs, see Haspelmath (2024).

<sup>2</sup> Auxiliary verbs in isiXhosa express a number of grammatical categories such as tense, aspect, lexical aspect/actionality/aktionsart, polarity, and evidentiality. However, in compound verbs with the auxiliaries *za* and *ya* marking tense and aspect (Section 1.3), the latter is primarily expressed in the lexical complement, although this view depends on the analysis of the tense and aspect system of isiXhosa. In compound verbs that denote gradual processes (Section 1.2), the auxiliary *ya* can also be said to express lexical aspect (Persohn 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Rose et al. (2002, 59–60, 80), Bearth (2003).

<sup>4</sup> Louw and Jubase (1963, 159–163), Davey (1973, 102–106), Oosthuysen (2016, 223–224); cf. Rose et al. (2002, 19–20, 54), Nurse (2008, 120–124).

- (1) *Ba-z-a*                      *ku-phek-a*.  
SM.2-come-FV    15-cook-FV  
‘They will cook.’ (constructed example)
- (2) *Ba-y-a*                      *ku-phek-a*.  
SM.2-go-FV    15-cook-FV  
‘They will cook.’ (constructed example)
- (3) *Nd-â-y-e*                      *ndi-phek-a*.  
SM.1SG-REMPST-go-PST    SIT.SM.1SG-cook-FV  
‘I was cooking / I used to cook (IMPF).’ (constructed example)
- (4) *Ni-z-e*                      *ni-zam-el-e*                      *u-xolo*.  
SM.2PL-come-SBJV    SM.2PL-try-APPL-SBJV    AUG-11.peace  
‘You must strive for peace.’ (Oosthuysen 2016, 225)
- (5) *U-Gobizembi*                      *w-â-hamb-a*                      *w-a-y-a*  
AUG-1A.Gobizembi    SM.1-REMPST-walk-FV    SM.1-CONS-go-FV  
*e-sondel-a*                      *kwi-nyoka*                      *leyo*.<sup>5</sup>  
SIT.SM.1SG-approach-FV    17-9.snake                      DEM.MED.9  
‘Gobizembi walked, **coming nearer and nearer** to that snake’  
(Oosthuysen 2016, 291)
- (6) *Mhlawumbi*    *u-makhulu*                      *wa-kho*                      *w-â-xelex-a*  
maybe                      AUG-1A.grandmother    POSS.1-2SG                      SM.1-REMPST-tell-FV  
*u-mama*                      *wa-kho*                      *w-a-z-a*                      *u-khokho*  
AUG-1A.mother                      POSS.1-2SG    SM.1-CONS-come-FV    AUG-1A.ancestor  
*wa-kho*                      *w-a-xelex-a*                      *u-makhulu*                      *wa-kho*.  
POSS.1-2SG    SM.1-CONS-tell-FV    AUG-1A.grandmother    POSS.1-2SG  
‘Perhaps your grandmother told this (about the benefits of breastfeeding) to your mother, **and** your (older female) ancestor **had told** this to your grandmother.’  
(Roux et al. 2001<sup>6</sup>)
- (7) *Ú-th-é*                      *emva*                      *ko-kuba*                      *e-tsh-ilo*                      *w-a-phakam-a*  
SM.1-do-PST    after                      POSS.17-that                      SIT.SM.1-say-PST    SM.1-CONS-get\_up-FV  
*w-a-y-a*                      *e-wodrobh-ini*                      *ya-khe*                      *w-a-khuph-a*  
SM.1-CONS-go-FV    LOC-9.wardrobe-LOC    POSS.9-1                      SM.1-CONS-take\_out-FV  
*e-nye*                      *i-hempe*.                      *Ú-y-é*                      *w-a-yi-khulul-a*  
ADJ.9-one    AUG-9.shirt                      SM.1-go-PST                      SM.1-CONS-OM.9-take\_off-FV

<sup>5</sup>In all the examples from other sources I added the glossing.

<sup>6</sup>Citations of corpus data used in this paper refer to published descriptions of the respective corpora, which themselves do not include page or sentence numbering.

*le*                      *bendi-fik-é*                      *e-yi-nxib-ile*  
 DEM.PROX.9      SM.1SG.PST-arrive-ANT      REL.9-OM.9-put\_on-ANT.DJ

*w-a-z-a*                      *w-a-nxib-a*                      *le.*  
 SM.1-CONS-come-FV      SM.1-CONS-put\_on-FV      DEM.9.PROX

‘After he said that, he stood up and went to his wardrobe and took out one of his shirts. **He took off** the one he was wearing when I arrived and put on another one.’  
 (Roux et al. 2001)

The auxiliary *za* differs not only semantically but also formally from its lexical counterpart. Unlike the auxiliary verb forms *baza* in (1) and *waza* in (6), as a lexical verb of movement, *za* contains a so-called ‘latent vowel’ /i-/ before the root,<sup>7</sup> which does not surface as a phoneme but alters the vowel in the preceding morpheme. Thus, vowel /a/ in class 2 subject marker *ba-* in (8) and in the remote past *-â-* in (9) transforms to /e/.

(8) *Á-bá-fàzì*                      *bé-z-à*                      *námhlánjé.*<sup>8</sup>  
 AUG-2-woman      SM.2-come-FV      today

‘The women **will come** today.’ (Riordan et al. 1969, 178)

(9) *A-ba-fazi*                      *b-ê-z-a*                      *ku-theng-a i-nyama*                      *e-si-larh-eni.*  
 AUG-2-woman      SM.2-REMPST-come-FV      15-buy-FV      AUG-9.meat      LOC-7-butcher’s-LOC

‘The women came to buy meat at the butcher’s.’ (Oosthuysen 2016, 306)

The aim of this paper is to investigate the morphosyntactic functions of the isiXhosa auxiliary verbs *za* and *ya*, as well as their role in structuring discourse. The comparative analysis will provide insights into the grammaticalization paths of itive and ventive motion verbs into the domain of information structure.

As already indicated, the formal and functional characteristics of the different types of compound verbs with auxiliary *za* and *ya* are outlined in Sections 1.1–1.3. The methodology of this study is presented in Section 2. The results are discussed in Section 3, followed by a conclusion in Section 4.

### 1.1 Auxiliary verbs *za* and *ya* in the tense and aspect system of isiXhosa

Auxiliary *za* and *ya* play an important role in the tense and aspect system of isiXhosa. Following Comrie (1976, 1985), I define ‘tense’ as the location of an event relative to the moment of speech, indicating whether an event is located in the past, present, or future (see Dahl 1985; Rose et al. 2002). Besides the present tense (10), isiXhosa has two past (11–12) and two future tenses.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Cf. McLaren (1936, 134), Davey (1973, 63), Bryant (2007, 179), and Oosthuysen (2016, 294, 253).

<sup>8</sup>Unless stated otherwise, isiXhosa examples from other sources are quoted with the tonal marking in the original, e.g., in (7) from Riordan et al. (1969).

<sup>9</sup>Note that the number of tenses in isiXhosa may vary between individual studies. In some studies the recent past is referred to as the ‘perfect’ (Louw and Jubase 1963, 41; Oosthuysen 2016, 188–190) or ‘perfective’ (Crane and Persohn 2019). Furthermore, McLaren (1936) and Nxopo (1993) do not view the two future tenses as semantically or conceptually distinct.

- (10) *Ndi-phek-a*                      *i-dinala.*  
 SM.1SG-cook-FV                      AUG-9.dinner  
 ‘I **cook** dinner / I **am cooking** dinner.’ (constructed example)
- (11) *Ndi-phek-é*<sup>10</sup>                      *i-dinala.*  
 SM.1SG-cook-PST                      AUG-9.dinner  
 ‘I **cooked** dinner / I **have cooked** dinner.’ (constructed example)
- (12) *Nd-â-phek-a*                      *i-dinala.*  
 SM.1SG-REMPST-cook-FV                      AUG-9.dinner  
 ‘I **cooked** dinner.’ (constructed example)

The semantic difference between the two past tenses has often been described as one of remoteness. While the remote past expressed by the prefixed *-â-* in (11) is indeed specialized for more distant parts of the past (the ‘discontinuous past’ in Plungian and van der Auwera (2006); cf. D-domain past in Botne 2006), the recent or near past, marked by the suffix *-é* with a high tone,<sup>11</sup> is temporally and semantically less restricted and may refer to any past point (cf. Savić 2020, 404–405). In disjoint verb forms, which primarily reflect the syntactic properties of the predicate, the recent past is marked with the suffix *-ile*.<sup>12</sup> Note that tone marking is not part of the orthography of isiXhosa and it is used here only to distinguish homographic grammatical morphemes.

Unlike the present and the past tenses, which are expressed solely with morphological markers, the future is expressed in compound verbs in which auxiliary *za* or *ya* has an infinitive lexical verb as a complement, as already shown in the previous section. In the spoken and/or less formal registers, *za* and *ya* tend to be contracted with the infinitive marker *ku-* of the lexical verb, forming the new prefixes (between the subject marker and the root) *-zo-* (13) and *-yo-* (14).

- (13) *Ndi-z-a*                      *ku-phek-a.* >                      *Ndi-zo-phek-a.*  
 SM.1SG-come-FV                      15-cook-FV                      SM.1SG-FUT-cook-FV  
 ‘I **will cook**.’ (constructed example)
- (14) *Ndi-y-a*                      *ku-phek-a.* >                      *Ndi-yo-pheka.*  
 SM.1SG-go-FV                      15-cook-FV                      SM.1SG-REMFUT-cook-FV  
 ‘I **will cook**.’ (constructed example)

Similarly to the two past tenses, the distinction between the two future tenses has also traditionally been characterized as one of remoteness. However, the near or immediate future *za ku-* can be regarded as the unmarked future marker, which can refer to any future point in time without any semantic restrictions. By contrast, the remote future *ya ku-* can be understood as a discontinuous future (by analogy with the ‘discontinuous past’ in Plungian and van der Auwera 2006; cf. ‘D-domain future’ in Botne 2006), which is restricted to future events that can only be

<sup>10</sup>I gloss the recent past only as PST, whereas remote past is glossed as REMPST.

<sup>11</sup>Du Plessis and Visser (1992, 19), Riordan et al. (1969, 154), and Davey (1973, 50) describe the tone of the suffix as falling (high-low), i.e., *-é*, whereas Cassimjee (1998, 201–207) and Oosthuysen (2016, 197) point out that the suffix may be realized with both tones.

<sup>12</sup>The conjoint/disjoint distinction in isiXhosa is found in both the present and the recent past (Savić 2020, 113).

actualized if a condition that is not met at the moment of speech is fulfilled at some point in the future (Savić 2020, 399–405). Thus, *úza kufuna* ‘he will need’ in (15) refers to a traumatized victim who already needs counselling at present, whereas *baya kugqiba* ‘they will decide’ in (16) refers to a hypothetical procedure that will only take place if the reader suffers a serious workplace injury.

- (15) *Ú-z-a ku-fun-a ii-ngcebiso i-xesha*  
 SM.1-come-FV 15-want-FV AUG-10.advice AUG-5.time  
*eli-de kwi-Masisukumeni.*  
 ADJ.5-long 17-Masisukumeni  
 ‘He will need counselling at Masisukumeni (Crisis Centre) for a long time.’  
 (adapted from Snyman et al. 2012)<sup>13</sup>

- (16) *Emva k-oko um-Komishinala na-ba-nye oo-qgirha*  
 after 17-DEM.17.MED AUG-1.commissioner COM-ADJ.2-one AUG-1A.doctor  
*ba-y-a ku-qgib-a ekubeni u-ku-khubazeka oko*  
 SM.2-go-FV 15-decide-FV LOC.that.LOC AUG-15-be\_disabled DEM.15.MED  
*ku-nzima okanye ku-nzulu kangakani na.*  
 COP.ADJ.15-difficult or COP.ADJ.15-deep to\_what\_extent Q  
 ‘After that, a commissioner and other doctors **will decide** on how severe (lit. the difficulty or the depth of) your disability is.’ (Eiselen and Puttkammer 2014)

Unlike tense, which temporally locates an event on the timeline, aspect specifies the perspective from which an event’s temporal structure is viewed, e.g., as a single completed event, as an ongoing event, a series of repetitive events, etc. (Comrie 1976). These perspectives are entailed in aspectual categories such as the perfect/anterior, perfective, imperfective, progressive, or the habitual. Following this definition, the isiXhosa present, past, and future verb forms in (10–16) do not exhibit overt aspectual markers.

The imperfective, perfect/anterior, and prospective aspects are expressed in the past and future tenses in compound verbs which consist of the auxiliary verbs *ba* ‘be’ or *ya* with a suffixed *-e/-é*.<sup>14</sup> While the auxiliary specifies the tense, its complement, the situative lexical verb, specifies the aspectual category. Auxiliary *ba* is used in the near past (17), near future (18), and remote future tenses, although it can also occur in the remote past (Davey 1973, 86), whereas *ya* is typically restricted to the remote past (19–22). The situative expresses aspect with the same morphemes that are used to mark the present, recent past, and future tenses in main<sup>15</sup> (simplex) indicative verbs: the final vowel *-a* indicates the imperfective aspect (18–19), the recent past suffix *-é* or *-ile* indicates the perfect/anterior (20), and *za ku-* (or *-zo-*) or *ya ku-* (or *-yo-*) before the lexical verb root indicates the prospective aspect (21–22).

<sup>13</sup> Example adapted to correct typographical errors in the original.

<sup>14</sup> The tone of the auxiliary suffix in uncontracted forms of these compound verbs may depend on the tense of the auxiliary. In the recent past, the suffix has the same tone as the recent past marker in non-compound verbs, i.e., *-é* (or *-ê*). In the remote past and future tenses the suffix either exhibits varying tones or its tone is subject to different interpretations (cf. Du Plessis and Visser 1992, 19, 186; Davey 1973, 50, 87, 90; Riordan et al. 1969, 154).

<sup>15</sup> i.e., non-situative and non-consecutive verbs.

- (17) *Ú-b-é*                      *e-phek-a.*                      >                      *Ebe-phek-a.*  
 SM.1-be-PST                      SIT.SM.1-cook-IPFV                      SM.1.PST-cook-IPFV  
 ‘She/He was cooking / She/He used to cook (IMPF).’ (constructed example)
- (18) *Ndi-z-a*                      *ku-b-e*                      *ndi-phek-a*                      >                      *Ndi-zo-b-e*                      *ndi-phek-a*  
 SM.1SG-come-FV                      INF-be-AUX                      SIT.SM.1SG-cook-FV                      SM.1SG-FUT-be-AUX                      SIT.SM.1SG-cook-IPFV  
 ‘I will be cooking (IMPF).’ (constructed example)
- (19) *W-â-y-e*                      *e-phek-a.*                      >                      *Waye-phek-a.*  
 SM.1-REMPST-go-AUX                      SIT.SM.1-cook-IPFV                      SM.1.REMPST-cook-IPFV  
 ‘She/He was cooking / She/He used to cook (IMPF).’ (constructed example)
- (20) *S-â-y-e*                      *si-phek-ile.*                      >                      *Sasi-phek-ile.*  
 SM.1PL-REMPST-go-AUX                      SIT.SM.1PL-cook-ANT.DISJ                      SM.1PL.REMPST-cook-ANT.DISJ  
 ‘We were cooking / We used to cook (ANT).’ (constructed example)
- (21) *Nd-â-y-e*                      *ndi-za ku-phek-a*                      >                      *Ndandi-zo-phek-a*  
 SM.1SG-REMPST-go-AUX                      SIT.SM.1SG-PRO-cook-FV                      SM.1SG.REMPST-PRO-cook-FV  
 ‘I was going to cook (PRO).’ (constructed example)
- (22) *Nd-â-y-e*                      *ndi-ya ku-phek-a .*                      >                      *Ndandi-yo-phek-a*  
 SM.1SG-REMPST-go-AUX                      SM.1SG-PRO-cook-FV                      SM.1SG.REMPST-PRO-cook-FV  
 ‘I was going to cook (PRO).’ (constructed example)

Note that the recent and remote past auxiliary verbs often merge together with the subject marker of the lexical verbs to form contracted prefixes. The phonological contractions they undergo follow different patterns, some of which are less transparent than others, e.g., *úbe* (SM.1.PST) + *e-* (SIT.SM.1) > *ebe-* for 1.PST in (17), *wâye* (SM.1.REMPST) + *e-* (SIT.SM.1) > *waye-* for 1.REMPST in (19), *sâye-* (SM.1PL.REMPST) + *si-* (SIT.SM.1PL) > *sasi-* for 1PL.REMPST in (20), or *ndâye-* (SM.1SG.REMPST) + *ndi-* (SIT.SM.1SG) > *ndandi-* for 1SG.REMPST in (21–22).

## 1.2 Modal and actional uses of the auxiliaries *za* and *ya*

The auxiliary *za* in the subjunctive, followed by a subjunctive lexical verb, expresses deontic modality, as in the directive in (4), repeated here as (23).

- (23) *Ni-z-e*                      *ni-zam-el-e*                      *u-xolo.*  
 SM.2PL-come-SBJV                      SM.2PL-try-APPL-SBJV                      AUG-11.peace  
 ‘You must strive for peace.’ (Oosthuysen 2016, 225)

Another construction with the auxiliary *ya* (with the final vowel *-a*) followed by a situative lexical verb ending in *-a* has been characterized by Persohn (2020) as denoting ‘gradual developments’ (cf. Bennie 1939, 105, 133; Oosthuysen 2016, 291). In example (24), *ya* together with its situative complement *sondela* ‘approach’ refers to the subject’s successive steps towards the snake.

- (24) *U-Gobizembi*      *w-â-hamb-a*      ***w-a-y-a***  
 AUG-1A.Gobizembi    SM.1-REMPST-walk-FV    SM.1-CONS-go-FV  
*e-sondel-a*      *kwi-nyoka*      *leyo*.  
 SIT.SM.1SG-approach-FV    17-9.snake      DEM.MED.9  
 ‘Gobizembi walked, coming nearer and nearer to that snake’ (Oosthuysen 2016, 291)

### 1.3 Pragmatic functions of the auxiliaries *za* and *ya*

The auxiliaries *za* and *ya* followed by subjunctive or past consecutive complements have received limited attention in the literature, leaving their semantic and syntactic properties largely understudied. Regarding this type of compound verb with the auxiliary *za*, Du Plessis and Visser (1992, 254–255) observe that it “occurs in successive clauses followed by a complement clause in either the Subjunctive or the Consecutive mood depending on the circumstances”, as exemplified in (25–26) with a subjunctive and a past consecutive lexical verb, respectively.

- (25) *Khà-wù-phùlaphùl-è*      ***ù-z-è***      ***ù-vùl-è***      *îi-ndlèbè*.  
 IMP-2SG-listen-SBJV    SM.2SG-come-SBJV    SM.2SG-come-SBJV    AUG-10.ear  
 ‘You must please listen **and** open your ears’ (Du Plessis and Visser 1992, 255)

- (26) *W-â-shíy-w-á*      *ké*      *ló*      *m-ntwánà*,  
 SM.2SG-REMPST-leave-PASS-FV    SO    DEM.PROX.1    1-child  
***w-á-z-à***      *ké*      ***w-á-khùlél-à***      *áphà*.  
 SM.2SG-CONS-come-FV    SO    SM.2SG-CONS-grow-FV    here  
 ‘The child was left behind **and then** grew up here’ (Du Plessis and Visser 1992, 255)

In both examples *za* does not refer to a motion event, but marks coordination between the preceding predicate (*khawuphulaphule* ‘listen’, *wâshiywa* ‘(she/he) was left’) and the predicate it is part of (*uze uvule* ‘and open’, *waza (ke) wakhulela* ‘and then grew up’). In (26), auxiliary *za* may also indicate a temporal subsequence between the predicates.

In line with this observation, Einhorn and Siyengo (1993, 47) specify the meaning of the auxiliary verb *za* as ‘(and) then’. Similarly, Oosthuysen (2016, 294) claims that “*ukuza* (to come) is extensively used with a predicate in the subjunctive mood as complement to indicate a consecutive or subsequent process”, a view he illustrates in examples (27–28). It should be noted that Oosthuysen (2016) regards the past consecutive in (28) as part of the subjunctive mood, whereas it is analysed here as a relative past tense (cf. Rose et al. 2002, 74) within the indicative mood.

- (27) *Yi-ya-ni*,      *ni-li-hlol-e*      *i-li-zwe*,      ***ni-z-e***  
 IMP-go-2PL      SM.2PL-OM.5-spy-SBJV    AUG-5-country      SM.2PL-come-SBJV

*ni-buy-el-e*                      *ku-m.*  
SM.2PL-return-APPL-SBJV    17-OM.1SG

‘Go and spy out the country **and then** return to me.’ (Oosthuysen 2016, 294)

- (28) *U-kumkani*    *w-â-b-a*<sup>16</sup>                      *no-m-sindo*                      *kunene,*  
AUG-1A.king    SM.1-REMPST-be-FV                      COM-3-anger                      really
- w-a-z-a*                      *w-a-thumel-a,*                      *w-a-ba-bulal-a*  
SM.1-CONS-come-FV                      SM.1-CONS-send-FV                      SM.1-CONS-OM.2-kill-FV
- b-onke*    *a-ba-ntu*                      *ba-loo*                      *lali.*  
2-all    AUG-2-people    PP.2-DEM.9.MED    9.village

‘The king was very angry, **so he sent** and killed all the people of that village.’ (Oosthuysen 2016, 294)

The corpus example (6), repeated here as (29), confirms that the auxiliary *waza* overtly signals coordination between two similar events, i.e., the already introduced remote past *wâxelela* ‘she told’ and the discourse new past consecutive *waxelela* ‘she told’.

- (29) *Mhlawumbi*    *u-makhulu*                      *wa-kho*                      *w-â-xelex-a*  
maybe                      AUG-1A.grandmother                      POSS.1-2SG    SM.1-REMPST-tell-FV
- u-mama*                      *wa-kho*                      *w-a-z-a*                      *u-khokho*  
AUG-1A.mother                      POSS.1-2SG                      SM.1-CONS-come-FV                      AUG-1A.ancestor
- wa-kho*                      *w-a-xelex-a*                      *u-makhulu*                      *wa-kho.*  
POSS.1-2SG                      SM.1-CONS-tell-FV                      AUG-1A.grandmother                      POSS.1-2SG
- ‘Perhaps your grandmother told this (about the benefits of breastfeeding) to your mother, **and** your (older female) ancestor **had told** this to your grandmother.’ (Roux et al. 2001)

However, the coordinated events are presented in the reverse-chronological order, thus showing that temporal subsequence or causality between the two events does not represent the inherent part of the pragmatic function of auxiliary *za*, but frequent contextual interpretations of predicate coordination. Since the subjunctive and the past consecutive already entail coordination after another predicate, the question remains whether the function of the auxiliary *za* is to signal additional pragmatic properties of the coordinated events.

With respect to *ya* as an auxiliary verb followed by a subjunctive or a past consecutive complement, Du Plessis and Visser (1992, 257) observe that it indicates the speaker’s surprise, which I interpret as the expression of mirativity; see (30):

- (30) *Ló*                      *m-fó*                      *ú-y-é*                      *w-é-mk-à.*  
DEM.1.PROX    1-man    SM.1-go-PST                      SM.1-CONS-leave-FV
- ‘This man **just merely left** (sic!).’ (Du Plessis and Visser 1992, 257)

<sup>16</sup>I added the tone to distinguish the remote past verb from the homograph past consecutive.

Einhorn and Siyengo (1993, 47) describe only the auxiliary *ya* with the past consecutive complement. They observe that it emphasizes the event denoted by the predicate<sup>17</sup>; see (31):

- (31) *Ú-y-é*                    *w-a-fik-a*.  
 SM.1-go-PST    SM.1-CONS-arrive-FV  
 ‘He **did arrive**.’ (Einhorn and Siyengo 1993, 47)

The auxiliary *ya* in example (31) can be interpreted as the expression of *verum*, i.e., an overt affirmation that the proposition holds true (cf. Gutzmann et al. 2020; Bloom Ström and Zeller 2023).

Although the accounts of the auxiliary *ya* with a past consecutive complement may seem inconsistent, the expression of surprise in (30) and *verum* in (31) imply that this compound verb functions as a marker of information structure, indicating which piece of information is known to both the speaker and the hearer.

In the corpus example (7), repeated here as (32), the events are chronologically ordered. Yet, unlike the other verbs in the example, the auxiliary verb *úyé* does not refer to a specific event. If the above accounts of this construction hold, *ya* in (32) may signal something about the information structure of the sentence, e.g., the way the event of taking off the shirt is linked to the events mentioned in the preceding discourse.

- (32) *U-th-é*            *emva*    *ko-kuba*            *e-tsh-ilo*            *w-a-phakam-a*  
 SM.1-do-PST    after    POSS.17-that    SIT.SM.1-say-PST    SM.1-CONS-get\_up-FV  
*w-a-y-a*                    *e-wodrobh-ini*            *ya-khe*            *w-a-khuph-a*  
 SM.1-CONS-go-FV    LOC.9.wardrobe-LOC    POSS.9-1    SM.1-CONS-take\_out-FV  
*e-nye*            *i-hempe.*            *Ú-y-é*            *w-a-yi-khulul-a*  
 ADJ.9-one    AUG.9.shirt    SM.1-go-PST    SM.1-CONS-OM.9-take\_off-FV  
*le*                    *bendi-fik-é*                    *e-yi-nxib-ile*  
 DEM.PROX.9    SM.1SG.PST-arrive-ANT    REL.9-OM.9-put\_on-ANT.DJ  
*w-a-z-a*                    *w-a-nxib-a*                    *le.*  
 SM.1-CONS-come-FV    SM.1-CONS-put\_on\_FV    DEM.9.PROX  
 ‘After he said that, he stood up and went to his wardrobe and took out one of his shirts. **He took off** the one he was wearing when I arrived and put on another one.’  
 (Roux et al. 2001)

Du Plessis and Visser (1992, 257) mention another compound verb with the auxiliary *ya* plus a situative verb<sup>18</sup> as its complement. According to them, this construction denotes “successive actions in the past and is translated with ‘further’ or ‘and further’”, which can be understood as expressions of coordination and additivity, as demonstrated in (33). In the domain of syntax, Du Plessis and Visser (1992, 257) stress that, unlike the other types of compound verbs with

<sup>17</sup>In addition, Einhorn and Siyengo (1993, 47) suggest that the auxiliary *ya* semantically corresponds to the adverbs ‘then’ and ‘usually’, but without providing examples that illustrate this use.

<sup>18</sup>Du Plessis and Visser (1992, 257) add that this compound verb type with auxiliary *ya* may alternatively have a non-situative indicative complement; however they do not provide examples illustrating this use.

the auxiliaries *za* and *ya* discussed in this section, an overt NP subject separates the auxiliary *ya* from its situative complement.

- (33) *Bá-y-è*                      (*ábò*                      *bà-fó*)                      *bé-sí-tshò*.  
 SM.2-GO-SBJV                      DEM.2.MED                      2-man                      SM.2-SIT-say  
 ‘Further those men said (sic!).’ (Du Plessis and Visser 1992, 257)

In summary, one syntactic property seems to distinguish the auxiliary *za* from both types of compound verbs with the auxiliary *ya* irrespective of their complements. While the auxiliary *za* with the subjunctive or past consecutive complement seems to occur only after another predicate<sup>19</sup> (25–29), the auxiliary *ya* introduces sentence-initial predicates (30–33). With respect to these auxiliary verbs’ functions, the auxiliary *za* has been associated with predicate coordination, whereas *ya* has received more varying analyses, including mirativity and verum with a past consecutive complement, and coordination and/or additivity with a situative complement.

Since auxiliary *za* and *ya* with subjunctive, consecutive, and stative complements have not been systematically compared in the literature, the question is raised as to whether their functions (predicate coordination, mirativity, verum, and additivity) overlap, i.e., how they relate to each other. Furthermore, it remains to be explored whether the two auxiliary verbs differ with respect to the type of information they introduce into the discourse. Having developed pragmatic functions from two lexical deictic motion verbs that are relational antonyms, the auxiliaries *za* and *ya* may provide novel insights into the understudied grammaticalization paths into information structure. The goal of this study is therefore to provide an account of the two auxiliary verbs’ semantic and syntactic properties.

## 2 Methodology

This study investigates auxiliary *za* and *ya* with pragmatic functions occurring in a sample from three corpora of isiXhosa (henceforth: corpus sample) that were used in the study of tense and aspect of isiXhosa by Savić (2020): the AST (African Speech Technology) Text Corpus compiled by Roux et al. (2001), the Genre Classification Corpus compiled by Snyman et al. (2012), and the NCHLT Text Corpus compiled by Eiselen and Puttkammer (2014). The corpus sample contains about 60,000 words. Approximately one third of the corpus sample used in Savić (2020) consists of original isiXhosa literature, whereas the remaining two thirds include magazine articles (including readers’ letters and cartoons), public announcements and speeches, forms and guidelines which have been translated into isiXhosa. The text excerpts selected by Savić (2020) varied in length and they contained at least one of the target verb forms which exhibited specific tense and aspect categories that were relevant for the study. As has been pointed out in the study of modal necessity in isiXhosa by Crane et al. (2024), an important advantage of using the corpus sample from Savić (2020) is that the texts have already been verified for quality and (at least partly) translated by consultants who are L1 isiXhosa speakers. Furthermore, the corpus sample was initially designed to investigate tense and aspect; hence the

<sup>19</sup> The only example of auxiliary *za* with a pragmatic function provided by Einhorn and Siyengo’s (1993, 47) is *waza wathi* ‘and then he said’. However, they do not provide a description of the construction’s semantics. Therefore it is not possible to conclude whether they suggest that this compound verb can be the main predicate in a sentence.

distribution of other grammatical features across the (parts of) texts selected is randomized. For more details about the corpus sample, see Savić (2020, 26–29) and Crane et al. (2024).

For this study, I extracted all sentences containing auxiliary *za* or *ya* with a subjunctive or a past consecutive complement, including several sentences from the preceding context. No sentences were found with either auxiliary *ya* or auxiliary *za* and a situative complement. In order to understand the semantic properties and distributions of the pragmatic functions of *za* and *ya* described in Section 1.3, I coded the following properties in the corpus extracts:

1. Morphosyntactic properties:

- i) subject agreement, tense, aspect, and mood of the auxiliaries *za* and *ya* and their complements;
- ii) syntactic environment, i.e., preceding syntactic units in the sentence;
- iii) new subject indexing (agreement) or shifts in subject indexing;

2. Semantic and information structural properties:

- iv) temporal and causal relation with the preceding predicates in the sentence or the preceding sentence;
- v) information structure of the predicate: old vs. new information of the event participants and the predicate of the sentence, i.e., the status of the predicate and the arguments based on the preceding context.

My hypothesis was that the results should show whether the auxiliaries *za* and *ya* (and their complements) differ with respect to the syntactic units that precede them in the sentence. Furthermore, the data should shed light on the two auxiliaries’ ability to introduce a new subject discourse referent, i.e., whether they allow a change of subject agreement in relation to the preceding verbs or sentences. In those examples where auxiliary *za* or *ya* marks predicate coordination the results should reveal whether they also imply temporal subsequence and/or a causal relation with the preceding event.

The expression of mirativity can be expected to represent new information, whereas verum focus in emphasized events can be expected to be part of the contrastive focus (e.g., old lexical information about the predicate, whereas its verum constitutes new information). Information structure may also reveal the motivation for emphasizing coordination before a predicate.

The advantage of coding the data for the observable, objective properties listed above is that it offers insights that minimize subjective interpretations. The amount of data is limited and the corpus is not balanced. Therefore, the frequencies of the different types of syntactic environments and the interpretations of each auxiliary are not meant to be viewed as statistically significant (in part due to the limited quantity of data), but should only provide occasional weak implications (whenever they are relevant) about the different productivity levels of the analysed forms and their functions.

### 3 Results and discussion

As shown in Table 1, in the corpus sample auxiliary *za* occurs more than three times as often as auxiliary *ya*. The two auxiliary verbs differ significantly with respect to their morphological structure, and more precisely their tense, aspect, and mood. Whereas most instances of *za*

include the past consecutive and subjunctive, *ya* is most frequent as a recent past main clause (non-consecutive and non-situative) indicative verb. The tense-aspect marking on the lexical complements (excluded from Table 1) is rather predictable: if the auxiliary verb *za* or *ya* is in the subjunctive, so is the following lexical verb, with only one exception in the database, in which the auxiliary subjunctive is followed by the past consecutive of the lexical verb. In all other cases, the lexical verb is a past consecutive, which is the case with almost all those that are introduced by auxiliary *ya*.

**Table 1:** The tense and aspect marking (TAM) of the auxiliaries *za* and *ya* (excluding their lexical complements) in the corpus sample.

AUX	Total	RECPST	REMPST	PST.CONS	REMFUT	SBJV	No TAM (CLITIC)
<i>Za</i>	139	-	-	78	-	52	8
					PERF 1		
<i>Ya</i>	41	36	2	-	-	2	-
		REL 1					

As will be shown in the following paragraphs, this distinction is directly linked to the syntactic environment in which the auxiliary verbs and the following lexical verbs occur. In the corpus sample, *za* is much more common mid-sentence (after at least one indicative main verb form), a position typical of coordinated and subordinated predicates, such as the past consecutive (34) and the subjunctive (35), as opposed to the main indicative verb of the clause. By contrast, *ya* mostly introduces the first predicate in the sentence, which is where main (non-consecutive and non-situative) indicative verbs tend to occur (36).

- (34) *U-Constance*      *ú-ya-tsho*      *ukuba*      *ú-pas-é*  
 AUG-1A.Constance    SM.1-PRS.DISJ-say    that      SM.3SG-pass-PST  
*ku-m-sebenzi*    *wo-ku-coc-a*      ***w-a-z-a***  
 17-3-job      POSS.3-15-clean-FV    SM.1SG-CONS-come-FV  
***w-a-pas-a***      *na-ko-wo-ku-qhub-a.*  
 SM.3SG-CONS-pass-FV    COM-15-POSS.3-15-drive-FV  
 ‘Constance says that she got (lit. passed at) a cleaning job **and then she got (lit. passed at)** a job as a driver.’ (Roux et al. 2001)

- (35) *Xa*      *ii-nyanga*      *zi-li-15*      *ú-gaq-a*  
 when    10-month      SM.10-COP.10-fifteen    SM.1-crawl-FV  
*a-nyuk-e*      *i-zi-tepsi*      ***a-z-e***  
 SBJV.SM.1-climb-SBJV    AUG-10-stairs    SBJV.SM.1-come-SBJV  
***a-ze-hl-e***      *e-hamb-a*      *ngomva.*  
 SBJV.SM.1.-OM.10-descend-SBJV    SIT.SM.1-walk-FV    backwards  
 ‘When (the baby is) 15 months old, it crawls up the stairs **and walks down** the stairs backwards.’ (Snyman et al. 2012)



often (relative to its total number of occurrences) as auxiliary *za*. Consistently with the two auxiliary verbs’ distribution across main, coordinated, and subordinate clauses (see Table 2), *za* tends to shift to new subject marking in coordinated predicates relative to subject marking in the preceding predicate of the same clause, whereas *ya* typically (re)introduces a subject in a new sentence.

**Table 3:** Subject indexation shift in auxiliary *za* and *ya* across main indicative (non-consecutive and non-situative) predicates and in coordinated and subordinate clauses.

AUX	Total	New subject indexation	In main clauses (excl. coordination)	In coordinated clauses	In subordinate clauses
<i>Za</i>	<b>139</b>	48 (34.53%)	7 (14.59% of all aux. <i>za</i> with subject shift)	37 (77.08% of all aux. <i>za</i> with subject shift)	4 (8.33% of all aux. <i>za</i> with subject shift)
<i>Ya</i>	<b>41</b>	28 (68.29%)	22 (78.57% of all aux. <i>ya</i> with subject shift)	1 (3.57% of all aux. <i>ya</i> with subject shift)	5 (17.86% of all aux. <i>ya</i> with subject shift)

Another striking contrast between the two auxiliaries is that no examples have been found in which the auxiliary *ya* is separated from its lexical complement, while it is common for one or more constituents (in 19 out of 48 instances), most often the subject (16 out of 48 instances), to be inserted between the auxiliary *za* and its lexical complement; see (38).

- (38) *“Bendi-fun-a u-ku-khul-a e-ku-sasaz-eni*  
 SM.1SG.PST-want-IPFV AUG-15-grow-FV LOC-15-broadcast-LOC  
*w-a-z-a u-Andile w-a-ndi-vul-el-a*  
 SM.1-CONS-come-FV AUG-1A.Andile SM.1-CONS-OM.1SG-open-APPL-FV  
*ii-ngcango,” ú-tsh-ilo u-Bonang.*  
 AUG-10.door SM.1-say-PST AUG-1A.Bonang  
 ‘‘I wanted to pursue a career as a presenter (lit. grow in presenting) and then Andile opened the doors for me,’’ said Bonang.’ (Snyman et al. 2012)

The auxiliary verb *ya* frequently refers to a different subject (relative to the preceding discourse) at the beginning of a sentence (39), or in a subordinate clause (40). However, it can also occur as the first verb in or after direct speech (41), or even at the beginning of a text (42), without a subject reference from the preceding discourse.

- (39) *Aku-zange ku-b-e-kho no-m-nye u-m-ntu*  
 SM.15-never\_do SM.15-be-PST-EXIST COM-1-one AUG-1-person  
*o-z-e ku-si-buz-a i-nto esi-yi-hamb-el-e-yo.*  
 REL.1-come-PST 15-OM.1PL-ask-FV AUG-9.thing REL.1PL-OM.9-walk-APPL-PST-REL.DISJ  
*I-y-é y-a-phel-a i-yure si-ku-le shedi.*  
 SM.9-go-PST SM.9-CONS-finish-FV AUG-hour SIT.SM.1PL-17-DEM.9.PROX 9.shed  
 ‘No one came (lit. there was no one who came) to ask what we were there for. We spent an hour (lit. an hour went by) sitting in that shed.’ (Roux et al. 2001)

- (40) *A-nga-ma-doda* *a-soloko* *e-rhan-el-wa* *ngokuba*  
 SM.6-COP.6-6-man SM.6-always\_do SIT.SM.6-suspect-APPL-PASS-FV that  
*a-ne-AIDS* *kangangokuba*  
 SM.6-COM-9.AIDS so\_much\_so  
*a-y-e* *a-xilong-el-w-e* *le*  
 SM.6-go- SBJV SM.6-diagnose-APPL-PASS-SBJV DEM.9.PROX  
*ntsholongwane* *e-ng-azi-s-w-anga.*  
 9.virus SIT.SM.1-NEG-know-CAUS-PASS-NEG.PST  
 ‘(Gay) Men (lit. **those who are men**) are always suspected of having AIDS to the extent that **they get diagnosed** without knowing.’ (Roux et al. 2001)
- (41) “*W-edwa nje qha Bra\_Ciks?*”  
 2SG-alone just only 1A.Bra\_Ciks  
*w-a-y-a* *w-a-buz-a* *u-Spokes.*  
 SM.1-CONS-go-FV SM.1-CONS-ask-FV AUG-1A.Spokes  
 “‘Were you alone, Bra Ciks?’ Spokes **asked.**’ (Roux et al. 2001)
- (42) *Ii-ndaba* *ezi-vel-a* *kwi-FIT*  
 AUG-10.news REL.10-come\_from-FV 17-9.FIT  
*I-FIT* *i-y-é* *y-a-khuph-a* *i-ngxelo*  
 AUG-9.FIT SM.9-go-PST SM.9-CONS-take\_out-FV AUG-9.statement  
*e-y-a* *ku-ma-jelo* *ee-ndaba*  
 REL.9-go-FV 17-6-source POSS.6-10.news  
*apho* *ibi-s-enz-a* *i-s-aziso (...)*  
 REL.THERE SM.9.PST-SIT-do-IPFV AUG-7-announcement  
 ‘News by FIT  
 FIT **has issued** a press release announcing (...)’ (Snyman et al. 2012)

Although the numbers in Tables 2 and 3 are not meant to indicate statistical significance (see Section 2) about the morphosyntactic properties of *za* and *ya*, they point towards the functional domains in which the two auxiliary verbs differ. *Za* seems to require a preceding predicate as in most cases it signals coordination. However, this explanation might not hold true in those instances where *za* occurs in subordinate clauses. The functional properties of *ya* are even less transparent and they can be better understood with insights about the information structure in the sentences in which auxiliary *ya* occurs. These information structural properties are discussed in Section 3.2.

### 3.2 Information structure

In this section I discuss the **discourse new** and **discourse old** information provided by the auxiliary *za*, the auxiliary *ya*, and their lexical complements in the corpus data. The temporal and causal relation between the events denoted by these compound verbs and the preceding discourse will only be addressed when relevant for the discussion.

Both auxiliary *za* and *ya* introduce discourse new information about predicates by linking them to discourse old referents. Thus, in the numerous examples in which auxiliary *za* retains

the same subject indexation as in the preceding clause, the new discourse information comprises the predicate, e.g., *waza wapasa nakowokuqhuba* ‘(and then she) got the job as a driver’ in (34), repeated here as (43). The event denoted by the second clause with auxiliary *za* occurs after the event from the first clause, thus implying that the two propositions are temporally related.

- (43) *U-Constance*      *ú-ya-tsho*      *ukuba*      *ú-pas-é*  
 AUG-1A.Constance    SM.1-PRS.DISJ-say    that      SM.3SG-PASS-PST  
*ku-m-sebenzi*    *wo-ku-coc-a*      ***w-a-z-a***  
 17-3-job      POSS.3-15-clean-FV    SM.1SG-CONS-COME-FV  
***w-a-pas-a***      *na-ko-wo-ku-qhub-a.*  
 SM.3SG-CONS-PASS-FV    COM-15-POSS.3-15-drive-FV  
 ‘Constance says that she got (lit. passed at) a cleaning job **and then she got** (lit. passed at) a job as a driver.’ (Roux et al. 2001)

Even when the auxiliary *za* exhibits subject indexation shift, the subject can be discourse old. Thus, in the first sentence in (44), *ikhompyutha* ‘computer’ is a locative argument, but it becomes the subject in the following sentence. Similarly, in example (45), auxiliary *za* agrees with the subject (*yena* ‘she/he’) that has been mentioned for the first time in the preceding clause (*umntu ongaziwayo* ‘unknown person’) within the same sentence.

- (44) *Apho,*    *oo-nobhala*    *ba-wa-fak-a*      *kwi-ikhompyutha loo*      *ma-nani.*  
 there    AUG-2A.clerk    SM.2-OM.6-put\_in-FV    17-9.computer    DEM.6.MED    6-number  
***I-z-e***      *i-ikhompyutha*      ***i-khuph-e***      *i-mali*  
 SM.9-COME-SBJV    AUG-9.computer    SM.9-take\_out-SBJV    AUG-9.money  
*eku-funek-a*      *u-yi-hlawul-e.*  
 REL.17-be\_necessary-FV    SM.2SG-OM.9-pay-SBJV  
 ‘There (at Eskom or the municipal offices), the clerks enter those numbers (from the electricity meters) into a computer. **And then** the computer **generates** the amount you have to pay.’ (Roux et al. 2001)

- (45) *Le*      *ncwadi*      *y-a-thunyel-el-w-a*      *u-m-hleli*  
 DEM.9.PROX    9.letter    SM.9-CONS-send-APPL-PASS-FV    AUG-1-editor  
*we-phepha\_ndaba*    *ngu-m-ntu*      *o-ng-az-iw-a-yo,*  
 POSS.1-5.newspaper    COP.1-1-person    REL.1-NEG-know-PASS-FV-REL.DISJ  
***w-a-z-a***      *yena*      ***w-a-yi-thumel-a***  
 SM.1-CONS-COME-FV    PRON.1    SM.1-CONS-OM.9-send-FV  
*ku-Mongameli\_Mandela*    *ngaphambi*      *ko-kuba*      *a-yi-shicilel-el-e*  
 17-1A.President\_Mandela    before      17-that      SM.1-OM.9-publish-APPL-SBJV  
*e-phepha\_ndab-eni*      *la-khe.*  
 LOC -5.newspaper-LOC    POSS.5-1  
 ‘The letter was sent to a newspaper editor by an unknown person, **who** (in turn) **sent it** to President Mandela before publishing it in his newspaper.’ (Roux et al. 2001)

Although temporal subsequence and/or causation can be interpreted as the link enabling the coordination between auxiliary *za* and the preceding predicates in (44–45), they cannot be viewed as the invariable part of this compound verb’s function. In Section 1.3, the same conclusion was drawn about auxiliary *za* in example (6=29), repeated here as (46). Similarly, in the description of a prison building in (47), *zazakhiwe* (*ngqindilili*) (lit. ‘were built thick’) and the subsequent auxiliary *za* with the past consecutive *kwafakwa* (*iintsimbi ezikwangqindilili*) (lit. ‘there were (bars) put in (that were also thick)’) do not refer to chronologically ordered events of building the prison. Instead, *kwaza* merely encodes the information about the qualities of the walls and the barred windows in the form of two coordinated predicates.

- (46) *Mhlawumbi*    *u-makhulu*                      *wa-kho*                      *w-â-xelexela*  
 maybe                      AUG-1A.grandmother                      POSS.1-2SG                      SM.1-REMPST-tell-FV  
*u-mama*                      *wa-kho*                      ***w-a-z-a***                      *u-khokho*  
 AUG-1A.mother                      POSS.1-2SG                      SM.1-CONS-COME-FV                      AUG-1A.ancestor  
*wa-kho*                      ***w-a-xelexela***                      *u-makhulu*                      *wa-kho*.  
 POSS.1-2SG                      SM.1-CONS-tell-FV                      AUG-1A.grandmother                      POSS.1-2SG  
 ‘Perhaps your grandmother told this (about the benefits of breastfeeding) to your mother, **and** your (older female) ancestor **had told** this to your grandmother.’  
 (Roux et al. 2001)

- (47) *Ii-ndonga*                      *za-le*                      *ndawo*                      *zaz-akh-iw-é*  
 AUG-10.wall                      POSS.10-DEM.9.PROX                      9.place                      SM.10.REMPST-build-PASS-ANT  
*ngqindilili*                      ***kw-a-z-a***                      ***kw-a-fak-w-a***  
 thick                      SM.15-CONS-COME-FV                      SM.15-CONS-put\_in-PASS-FV  
*ii-ntsimbi*                      *ezi-kwa-ngqindilili*                      *na-se-zi-festile-ni*.  
 AUG-10.iron                      REL.15-ADD-thick                      COM-LOC-10-window-LOC  
 ‘The walls in this place were thick (lit. built thick) **and** the windows were also **barred** with thick iron (lit. **and** bars **were put** in the windows that were also thick)’  
 (Roux et al. 2001)

Auxiliary *za* may introduce discourse new subjects, such as the non-specific referent *ukhokho* ‘ancestor’ in (46), where the old information refers to the non-specific *umakhulu* ‘grandmother’, as well as the type of event, *xelela* ‘tell’, repeated from the preceding clause. Similarly, the impersonal subject *kwaza* in (47) cannot constitute old information and the object (*iintsimbi ezikwangqindilili* ‘thick bars’) has not been mentioned before, yet the locational reference to the prison walls has been implicitly transferred from the preceding clause.

Auxiliary *za* does not require the arguments in the predicate it introduces to have a specific discourse status. Instead it builds on another proposition from the preceding discourse, with which it establishes a semantic link based on any elements (same event participant, location, event sequence, type of event, etc.) they may have in common. At the discourse level, two propositions connected by the auxiliary *za* exhibit an additive relation (see Ferrari et al. 2008, 125; Forker 2016; De Cesare 2017, 3) in that both point to the same conclusion.

Unlike auxiliary *za*, auxiliary *ya* links discourse new predicates to discourse old constituents. In (7=32), repeated here as (48), *ya* introduces a new event that involves a discourse old subject, while preparing the readers for information about the scars on the subject’s body that were

revealed while he was changing the shirt. In (41), repeated here as (49), auxiliary *ya* links the utterance in direct speech to a discourse old subject (Spokes).

- (48) *Ú-th-é emva ko-kuba e-tsh-ilo w-a-phakam-a*  
 SM.1-do-PST after POSS.17-that SIT.SM.1-say-PST SM.1-CONS-get\_up-FV  
*w-a-y-a e-wodrobh-ini ya-khe w-a-khuph-a*  
 SM.1-CONS-go-FV LOC-9.wardrobe-LOC POSS.9-1 SM.1-CONS-take\_out-FV  
*e-nye i-hempe. Ú-y-é w-a-yi-khulul-a*  
 ADJ.9-one AUG-9.shirt SM.1-go-PST SM.1-CONS-OM.9-take\_off-FV  
*le bendi-fik-é e-yi-nxib-ile*  
 DEM.PROX.9 SM.1SG.PST-arrive-ANT REL.9-OM.9-put\_on-ANT.DJ  
*w-a-z-a w-a-nxib-a le.*  
 SM.1-CONS-come-FV SM.1-CONS-put\_on\_FV DEM.9.PROX

‘After he said that, he stood up and went to his wardrobe and took out one of his shirts. **He took off** the one he was wearing when I arrived and put on another one.’

(Roux et al. 2001)

- (49) “*W-edwa nje qha Bra\_Ciks?*”  
 2SG-alone just only 1A.Bra\_Ciks  
*w-a-y-a w-a-buz-a u-Spokes.*  
 SM.1-CONS-go-FV SM.1-CONS-ask-FV AUG-1A.Spokes  
 ‘“Were you alone, Bra Ciks?” Spokes **asked.**’ (Roux et al. 2001)

The old information that links the auxiliary *ya* to the preceding discourse need not be the subject. In (42), repeated here as (50), the subject *iyure* ‘(an) hour’ is a discourse new specification of the time spent in the waiting area, whereas the situative *sikule shedi* (‘us being in the shed’) is a subordinate clause that provides old information.

- (50) *Aku-zange ku-b-e-kho no-m-nye u-m-ntu*  
 SM.15-never\_do SM.15-be-PST-EXIST COM-ADJ.1-one AUG-1-person  
*o-z-é ku-si-buz-a i-nto esi-yi-hamb-el-e-yo.*  
 REL.1-come-PST 15-OM.1PL-ask-FV AUG-9.thing REL.1PL-OM.9-walk-APPL-PST-REL.DISJ  
*I-y-é y-a-phel-a i-yure si-ku-le shedi.*  
 SM.9-go-PST SM.9-CONS-finish-FV AUG-hour SIT.SM.1PL-17-DEM.9.PROX 9.shed  
 ‘No one came (lit. there was no one who came) to ask what we were there for. We spent **an hour** (lit. **an hour went by**) sitting in that shed.’ (Roux et al. 2001)

As already shown in Section 3.1, auxiliary *ya* can introduce the first predicate in a text; see (51–52). Therefore, similar to auxiliary *za*, auxiliary *ya* does not entail that there is a temporal or causal relation with the preceding discourse. Likewise, in (51–52) the subjects cannot be described as discourse old. However, they can be interpreted as the topic, as implied by the text title in (51). Similarly, in (52) the possessor noun phrase within the ‘heavy constituent’ subject, *wenkqubo yosasazo ethandwayo e-US* ‘of a popular talk show in the US’, helps identify the talk show host Oprah Winfrey as the topic of the text. Thus, auxiliary *ya* describes topic constituents

in overtly marked discourse new, focus predicates (cf. the development of isiXhosa *ya* as a predicate focus marker in Heine et al. (1993, 110)).<sup>20</sup>

- (51) *Ii-ndaba ezi-vel-a kwi-FIT*  
 AUG-10.news REL.10-come\_from-FV 17-9.FIT  
*I-FIT i-y-é y-a-khuph-a i-ngxelo*  
 AUG-9.FIT SM.9-go-PST SM.9-CONS-take\_out-FV AUG-9.statement  
*e-y-a ku-ma-jelo ee-ndaba*  
 REL.9-go-FV 17-6-source POSS.6-10.news  
*apho ibi-s-enz-a i-s-aziso (...)*  
 REL.THERE SM.9.PST-SIT-do-IPFV AUG-7-announcement  
 ‘News by FIT  
 FIT **has issued** a press release announcing (...)’ (Snyman et al. 2012)

- (52) *U-Oprah\_Winfrey we-nkqubo yo-sasazo*  
 AUG-1A.Oprah\_Winfrey POSS.1-9.programme POSS.9-1A.broadcast  
*e-thand-w-a-yo e-U.S. ú-y-é w-a-zam-a*  
 SIT.SM.1-love-PASS-FV-REL.DISJ LOC-U.S. SM.1-go-PST SM.1-CONS-try-FV  
*u-ku-wa-diliz-a a-ma-nqatha a-se-m-zimb-eni wa-khe*  
 AUG-15-OM.6-break\_down-FV AUG-6-fat REL.6-LOC-3-body-LOC POSS.3-1  
*ku-ma-shumi a-ma-bini e-mi-nyaka.*  
 17-6-ten AUG-6-two POSS.6-4-year  
 ‘Oprah Winfrey, a talk show host from US **tried** to shed body fat for 20 years.’  
 (Roux et al. 2001)

In subordinate clauses, auxiliary *ya* provides new information about topic constituents from the main clause; see (53–54). In the adverbial clause in (53), the secret diagnoses referred to in the adverbial clause constitute focused information emphasizing the extent of the discrimination against gay men, which is provided as old information in the preceding main clause. In the relative clause in (54), even though the first person singular subject cannot be considered discourse old information, the predicate can be viewed as focused information which identifies the antecedent noun phrase from the main clause, *olona tshintsho* ‘the change’.

- (53) *A-nga-ma-doda a-soloko e-rhan-el-wa ngokuba*  
 SM.6-COP.6-6-man SM.6-always\_do SIT.SM.6-suspect-APPL-PASS-FV that  
*a-ne-AIDS kangangokuba*  
 SM.6-COM-9.AIDS so\_much\_so  
*a-y-e a-xilong-el-w-e le*  
 SM.6-go-SBJV SM.6-diagnose-APPL-PASS-SBJV DEM.9.PROX

<sup>20</sup> A similar grammaticalization of the Shangaci verb *entta* ‘go’ as a predicate focus marker has also been described by Devos and van der Wal (2010).

*ntsholongwane e-ng-azi-s-w-anga.*  
9.virus SIT.SM.1-NEG-know-CAUS-PASS-NEG.PST

‘(Gay) Men (lit. those who are men) are always suspected of having AIDS to the extent that **they get diagnosed** without knowing’ (Roux et al. 2001)

(54) *O-lona tshintsho ndi-y-é nd-a-lw-enz-a*  
SUPERL-11.PRON 11.change SM.1SG-go-PST SM.1-CONS-OM.11-do-FV  
*lo-lu-ngo-ko-moya, ú-tsh-ilo.*  
COP.11-DEM.11.PROX-INSTR-POSS.15-3.spirit SM.1-say-PST

‘‘The change **that I have made** is a spiritual one’’, she said.’ (Roux et al. 2001)

The focused information from the predicate introduced by the auxiliary *ya* need not introduce lexical information. The corpus data confirm the observation from Section 1.3 that focus can also consist only of the verum, i.e., the truth-conditionality of the proposition (cf. Gutzmann et al. 2020; Bloom Ström and Zeller 2023). This is demonstrated in (55). In the last clause the discourse old noun phrase *iziprofeto zale ndoda* ‘the prophecy of that man’ refers to the preceding utterance in direct speech, whereas the new information (and focus) in the predicate only pertains to the confirmation that the prophecy has come true.

(55) ‘‘*U-nyana wa-kho aka-sokuze*  
AUG-1A.SON POSS.1-2SG NEG.SM.1-never\_do  
*a-phumelel-e e-si-kolw-eni.*’’  
SBJV.SM.1-succeed-SBJV LOC-7-school-LOC  
*‘‘Nge-nene i-zi-profeto za-le ndoda*  
INSTR-9.truth AUG-8-prophecy POSS.8-DEM.9.PROX 9.man  
*zi-y-é z-a-yi-nyani.*’’  
SM.8-go-PST SM.8-CONS-COP.9-9.truth

‘‘Your son will never succeed in school.’’ Indeed the prophecy of that man **came true**.’ (Snyman et al. 2012)

A focus predicate with auxiliary *ya* can also indicate a contrastive topic.<sup>21</sup> In example (56), the main clause *uye ucinge* ‘you think’ and the following subordinate clause *ukuba awunako ukwenza into* ‘that you cannot do something’ refer to beliefs presumed to be held by the hearers and can therefore not be regarded as new information. Instead, they are contradicted in the following clauses, *kodwa usuke uzibone ukwimeko ekunyanzelisa* ‘but then you find yourself in a situation that forces you’ and *ukuba ume ngeenyawo* ‘that you stand in your feet’.

(56) ‘‘*U-y-e u-cing-e ukuba awu-nako*  
SM.2SG-go-SBJV SM.2SG-think-SBJV that NEG.SM.2SG-POSS  
*u-kw-enz-a i-nto, kodwa u-suk-e*  
AUG-15-do-FV AUG-9.thing but SM.2SG-suddenly\_do-SBJV

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion on the distinction between contrastive topic and contrastive focus, see Neeleman et al. (2009).

*u-zi-bon-e*                      *u-kwi-meko*                      *e-ku-nyanzelis-a*  
 SM.2SG-REFL-see-SBJV    SM.2SG-17-9.situation    REL.9-OM.2SG-force-FV

*ukuba u-m-e*                      *ng-ee-nyawo.*”  
 that    SM.2SG-stand-SBJV    INSTR-10-foot

‘**You think** you cannot do something, but then you find yourself in a situation that forces you to stand on your feet.’ (Snyman et al. 2012)

In (56), the topic is the predicate of the first subordinate clause *ukuba awunako ukwenza into* ‘that you cannot do something’. In this case, the auxiliary *ya* does not mark a focused predicate but a contrastive topic of the proposition, which is contradicted in the upcoming discourse.

#### 4 Conclusion

Auxiliary *za* introduces a predicate that combines with the preceding predicate to create a shared implication, irrespective of the discourse status of the individual constituents. The semantic link between the two propositions is based on the temporal-causal relation between the events, or on other similar properties such as location, event participants, or event type. While semantically resembling the functions of an additive marker (see Forker 2016), auxiliary *za* still behaves like a coordinating marker between two overtly expressed propositions (see De Cesare 2017, 3–4).

Auxiliary *ya* either introduces focused information in a new predicate that pertains to a topic constituent, or marks contrastive topic in a predicate which will be contradicted in the upcoming discourse; see Table 4.

**Table 4:** The different information structures encoded in the auxiliaries *za* and *ya*

Preceding discourse	Information encoded by the auxiliary verb	AUX
proposition	new (coordinated) predicate	<b>za</b>
topic constituent	focused predicate (incl. verum) or contrast	<b>ya</b>

This study shows the grammaticalization path of motion verbs in the domain of information structure. In isiXhosa, both *za* and *ya* introduce a new proposition into the discourse. Their functions differ with respect to the discourse status of the predicate. Thus, ventive *za* indicates that the predicate is semantically related to another predicate. As equal syntactic structures, the two predicates are connected through coordination without implying a specific discourse status of any elements. By contrast, itive *ya* provides new information about a topic constituent which includes a new predicate, proposition verum, or contrast.

The potential link between the pragmatic and temporal properties of the auxiliaries *za* and *ya* is noteworthy. In the domain of tense, *za* functions as the default, unmarked future auxiliary, whereas *ya* denotes discontinuous future. In past and future tense compound verbs marking aspect, *ya* is also the auxiliary which is usually restricted to the remote past, i.e., the discontinuous past. Similarly, at the information structural level, *ya* differs from *za* in that it indicates that the clause contains new information about topicalized constituents.

## Abbreviations

1A, 2A, 1–17	noun classes 1A, 2A, 1–17
1SG, 2SG	1st and 2nd person singular
1PL, 2PL	1st and 2nd person plural
ADD	additive
ADJ	adjective
ANT	anterior
APPL	applicative
AUG	augment
CAUS	causative
COM	comitative
CONS	past consecutive
COP	copula
DEM	demonstrative
DISJ	disjoint
DIST	distal
EXIST	existential
FUT	near future
FV	final vowel
HORT	hortative
INSTR	instrumental
IMP	imperative
IMPF	imperfective
LOC	locative
MED	medial
NEG	negation
OM	object marker
PASS	passive
PERF	perfect
POSS	possessive prefix
PRO	prospective
PROX	proximal
PST	recent past
REL	relative
REMFUT	remote future
REMPST	remote past
SBJV	subjunctive
SIT	situative
SM	subject marker
SUPERL	superlative

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