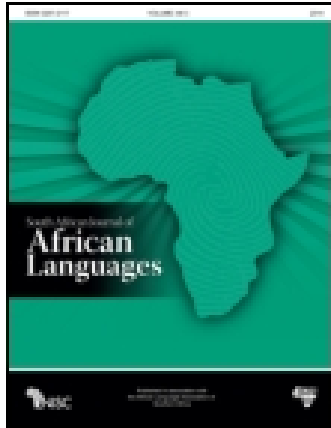


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## An analysis of the status of the secondary noun prefixes in Ndebele

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The article probes into the nature of secondary noun class prefixes in the morphology of some Nguni languages and Ndebele in particular. The secondary prefixes are known as commentary prefixes mainly because they carry overtones of sarcasm, criticism and caricature among other elements, through loading an implied meaning onto a noun construction. The overtones in reference are a reflection of how people view each other and how they evaluate other objects in their immediate environment. In some African languages like Shona, these overtones are embedded in the noun class prefixes, that is, the basic prefix. It is alleged that Ndebele, along with other Nguni languages, do not have secondary prefixes. It is argued that the semantic overtones are entrenched in the augmentative and diminutive suffixes. Contrary to what we find in Nguni literature, however, Ndebele speakers also use evaluative (commentary) prefixes to express semantic values of contempt and endearment. Consequently, this paper confirms the presence of commentary secondary prefixes in Ndebele on the one hand and discusses their categorical status in the noun classification system on the other.

### Introduction

Studies on Ndebele grammar are primarily based on Zulu grammar texts and have perpetuated the debate on whether Ndebele is a dialect of Zulu or not. Doke's (1947) *A textbook of Zulu grammar*, first published in 1927, has been the main text in the study of Ndebele grammar in secondary schools, colleges and universities. There have been other Zulu grammar books that have come after Doke (Nyembezi, 1973; Taljaard & Bosch, 1988) which have treated grammatical concepts primarily in the same 'Dokean' way (Khumalo, 2003:23). Canonici (1995) is the only one who has digressed from the Dokean school of thought. The *Isichazamazwi SesiNdebele* by Hadebe (2001) and the first and only Ndebele grammar book by Khumalo (2003) are also Dokean in outlook. All the linguists we have mentioned, accept Carl Meinhof's (1932) system of classifying Bantu nouns and concur that Ndebele/ Zulu does not have class 12 and class 13 noun constructions (commentary secondary prefixes [PRs]<sup>1</sup>). An example of a language that has classes 12 and 13 is Shona. The class prefixes are *ka-* as in *ka-komana* 'insignificant boy' and *tu-* as in *tu-komana* 'insignificant boys' respectively. A reading of the mentioned texts gives one the impression that the evaluative function in Ndebele nouns is formally expressed by diminutive and augmentative suffixes only. As a result, the treatment of evaluative affixes in Ndebele literature is inconsistent with the spoken Ndebele. In speech, the use of secondary prefixes is normal, yet in the literature they are said to be an alien phenomenon in the language. Accordingly, this article discusses Ndebele secondary prefixes and their categorical status. It will investigate the commentary prefixes, which

have not been hitherto studied, and will recommend their official acknowledgment.

### Evaluative affixes in Ndebele

Evaluation in morphology is secondary in the sense that it derives new meaning from a basic meaning. Evaluative morphology is defined by Amiot and Stosic (2014:17) as the range of processes which enable a linguistic system to build word constructions expressing diminution, augmentation, derogation and appreciation from a word base through affixation and/or reduplication. Thus evaluative affixes are used to derive evaluative meaning from a base word or root, hence evaluative affixes are also known as secondary affixes. Albair (2010:1) notes that evaluative affixation is a special component of derivational morphology in which affixes are attached to bases to form new derivations that convey meaning of either size or emotion, in the form of diminutives or augmentatives. These affixes are usually '...attached to bases such as nouns, adjectives, adverb-verbs, pronouns and interjections in order of importance...' (Prieto, 2005:23). This implies that nouns are more likely to host evaluative affixes than other bases. Accordingly, the focus of this study is on evaluative nouns. The evaluative function may be fulfilled by prefixes, infixes, suffixes or reduplication (Garbo, 2013:117). Languages express the evaluative function differently. Some languages prefer using prefixes whereas some prefer suffixes. As mentioned before, suffixes convey this function in Ndebele. However, the use of suffixes does not rule out the existence of evaluative prefixes. Grandi (2005:3) posits that a language can have both evaluative prefixes and suffixes. Evaluative suffixes in Ndebele/Zulu are discussed in detail by

Madondo (2000), Khumalo (2003), Hadebe (2006) and Mawadza (2009) among others. Madondo (2000) briefly discusses 'evaluative prefixes' in Zulu and argues that *isi-* and *oku-* are secondary prefixes. In the following sections we will consider Madondo's claim further using Ndebele data and attempt to classify these evaluative prefixes. The terms secondary prefixes and evaluative prefixes are used interchangeably in this article because they seem to serve the same function.

### Secondary prefixes

Secondary prefixes, as stated earlier, convey additional meaning whereas primary prefixes (preprefix+basic prefix) express basic meanings such as number, class and person. Secondary prefixes are made up of a preprefix and something like a basic prefix. The preprefix is either a front mid vowel *e-* or a back mid vowel *o-* and it seems the feature +back/+front is determined by the vowel of the 'basic prefix' (*-si-*, *-zi-*, *-lu-*, *-ku-*, and *-yi-*) which could suggest that maybe the underlying preprefix is *a-* (*a-* raises to be *e-* if the vowel of the 'basic prefix' is *i-* and it becomes *o-* if the 'basic prefix' vowel is *u-*). We refer to the second component of the secondary prefix as a 'basic prefix' mainly because they control concords in a sentence and they are identical to their concords except for *-yi-*. The *-yi-*<sup>2</sup> element controls the (*-i-*) concords as seen in (4b). As will be shown later, these secondary prefixes almost resemble some of the relative PRs. Beuchat (1964:21) notes that some noun PRs indicate number, class and person only whereas others, in addition to these basic meanings, have a specialized significance of indicating diminution, augmentation, derogation, location, etc. The particular connotations are added to a stem through pre-posing a secondary PR. The primary prefix is sometimes totally replaced by the secondary prefix (as illustrated in examples 2c, 2d and 2e) or the secondary prefix is added before the primary prefix (as in examples 2cc, 2dd and 2ee). The commentary secondary prefixes carry overtones of sarcasm, criticism and cartoon as they make their implied comment on an item's size or quality (Fortune, 1980:35). We can therefore claim that any noun construction which is associated with disapproval, disparagement, denigration, censure, scorn, cartoon, irony, belittling, mockery or cynicism has a secondary affix (prefix, infix or suffix). The nominal prefixes in (1c) and (1cc) fit well in the bracket of commentary noun prefixes. Consider example (1).

(1a) uThixo u-Thixo 1a-God 'God'	(1aa) *oThixo o-Thixo 2a-God *'Gods'
(1b) uNkulunkulu u-(i)N-khulu-khulu 1a-9-big-big (lit. the greatest) 'God'	(1bb) *oNkulunkulu o-(i) N-khulu-khulu 2a-9-big-big (lit. greatest) *'Gods'
(1c) isithixo isi-thixo 7-god (lit. an insignificant god) 'a god'	(1cc) izithixo izi-thixo 8-god (lit. insignificant gods) 'gods'

The nouns in (1aa) and (1bb) are unacceptable in Ndebele because there is only one true God. Though the constructions are potential class 2a nouns, they are deemed unacceptable when we are talking about 'true God'. These constructions are deemed grammatical and acceptable when we are talking about 'gods' as in *onkulunkulu/ othixo*. In this case, the primary class 2a prefix conveys evaluative meaning. It is believed that God has human characteristics both in Christianity and in Ndebele religion. Accordingly, the noun for God is found in class 1a which is a subclass of class 1 referring to human beings. The use of the root *-thixo* (god) with class 7 and class 8 prefixes is meant to denigrate the type of 'god' being talked about. The constructions in reference have an evaluative meaning, thus the prefixes in these constructions are secondary prefixes. Mohlaba (2003:7) confirms that in classes 7 and 8 we can find diminutives, derogatives and ameliorations among other things. Therefore, examples in (1) point to the fact that primary noun prefixes can express evaluation just like original secondary prefixes. However, it is important to note that this behavior seems to be limited to these noun stems only.

There are some evaluative nouns that do not make use of the primary prefix in expressing the evaluative function in the manner in which the examples used in example (1) do. The primary prefixes for the examples used in (2) are *u-* as in *u-MaMthembu* 'Miss Mthembu' and *o-* as in *o-MaMthembu* 'Miss Mthembus'. The prefixes expressing evaluation in example (2)

(2a) <b>oku</b> MaMthembu <b>oku-(u)</b> MaMthembu <b>PR-1a</b> -Miss Mthembu 'the little Miss Mthembu'	(2aa) <b>okungu</b> MaMthembu <b>oku-</b> ng- <i>u</i> -MaMthembu <b>PR-COP-1a</b> -Miss Mthembu 'the little Miss Mthembu'
(2b) <b>oku</b> ngoMaMthembu <b>oku-ng-o</b> -Ma-Mthembu <b>PR-COP-2a</b> -Miss Mthembu (lit. the little are the MissMthembus) 'the little Miss Mthembus'	(2bb) <b>ezingo</b> MaMthembu <b>ezi-ng-o</b> -MaMthembu <b>PR-COP-2a</b> -Miss Mthembu (lit. they are the Miss Mthembus) 'the old Miss Mthembus'
(2c) <b>olu</b> Mthembu <b>olu-(u)</b> Mthembu <b>PR-1a</b> - Mthembu 'the silly man Mthembu'	(2cc) <b>olungu</b> Mthembu <b>olu-ng-u</b> -Mthembu <b>PR-COP-1a</b> -Mthembu 'the silly man that is Mthembu'
(2d) <b>eyi</b> Mthembu <b>eyi-(u)</b> Mthembu <b>PR-1a</b> -Mthembu (lit. the guy Mthembu) 'the guy Mthembu'	(2dd) <b>eyingu</b> Mthembu <b>eyi-</b> ng- <i>u</i> -Mthembu <b>PR-COP-1a</b> -Mthembu (lit. the guy it is Mthembu) 'the guy Mthembu'
(2e) <b>esi</b> MaMthembu <b>esi-(u)</b> MaMthembu <b>PR-1a</b> -Miss Mthembu 'the worthless Miss Mthembu'	(2ee) <b>esingu</b> MaMthembu <b>esi-</b> ng- <i>u</i> -MaMthembu <b>PR-COP-1a</b> -Miss Mthembu (the worthless it is Miss Mthembu) 'the old Miss Mthembu'

The proper nouns to which the secondary prefixes are added in example (2) are *uMaMthembu* and *oMaMthembu*. The highlighted prefixes convey evaluative meanings and the constructed words are nouns. This could mean that the prefixes in reference are noun class prefixes. These morphemes can be prefixed to copulative words in the derivation of evaluative nouns. Refer to (2bb) and (2ee).

It should be noted that noun class prefixes are used in the derivation of nouns from other categories such as verbs, ideophones and copulatives. This therefore implies that because of the fact that secondary prefixes in (2aa), (2bb), (2cc), (2dd) and (2ee) convert copulatives to nouns, they are indeed noun class prefixes. The resultant nouns are evaluative in nature which could be an indication that these prefixes are evaluative prefixes.

A primary PR normally and regularly appears with a noun stem in the construction CL + NS. A secondary PR is, first of all, one which usually substitutes a primary PR (Fortune, 1980:35) as is the case in example (3). In example (3) the CL.1a PR *u-* is substituted by *oku-*, *olu-*, *esi-*, *eyi-* and *ezi-* respectively.

(3a)	<b>oku</b> Lobhengula	(3aa)	<b>oku</b> Mzilikazi
	<b>oku-(u)</b> -Lobhengula		<b>oku-(u)</b> -Mzilikazi
	<b>PR-1a</b> -Lobhengula		<b>PR-1a</b> -Mzilikazi
	'the insignificant Lobhengula'		'the insignificant Mzilikazi'
(3b)	<b>eyi</b> Lobhengula	(3bb)	<b>eyi</b> Mzilikazi
	<b>eyi-(u)</b> -Lobhengula		<b>eyi-(u)</b> -Mzilikazi
	<b>PR-1a</b> -Lobhengula		<b>PR-1a</b> -Mzilikazi
	'the guy Lobhengula'		'the guy Mzilikazi'

Evaluative prefixes assume the place of a primary prefix *u-* in the preceding examples. The affixation of an evaluative prefix introduces commentary meaning to the base. As a result, the combination of a secondary PR and a NS indicates a special or an abnormal specimen of an item referred to by a NS. This abnormality feature conveyed differs according to the evaluative prefix used. The commentary introduced to the noun construction through the substitution of *u-* by evaluative prefixes in the preceding examples could be an indication that the prefixed morphemes are secondary noun class prefixes.

### The shape of secondary prefixes

The shape of what we have termed a secondary PR is identical with most relative prefixes. Except for CL.2a, the rest of the CL.PRs begin with a high vowel *i-/u-* or a low vowel *a-*. On the contrary, the highlighted PRs in example in (3) begin with a mid vowel *e-/o-*. The difference between the above PRs and the primary prefixes is that in the latter the initial vowel (V1) and the terminal vowel (V2) of the PRs are identical whereas the vowels in the former PRs are dissimilar. The latter almost resemble some of the relative PRs (CL. 7 *e-si*, CL. 8 *e-zi*, CL. 9 *e-<sup>3</sup>*, CL. 11 *o-lu-* and CL.15 *o-ku*), which are a combination of a relative vowel (*a-*) and a subject concord. The evaluative prefixes (*esi-*, *ezi-*, *olu-* and *oku-*) we have been discussing resemble the relative prefixes of class 7, 8, 11 and 15 respectively. Looking at the shape of the prefixes alone, one might think that evaluative

nouns probably use relative prefixes. However, the difference between the *e-yi-* PR as in examples (3b) and (3bb) and that of the CL.9 relative prefix (*e-*) could suggest that the similarity between the units in reference (subject concords and 'basic prefixes' is a sheer coincidence just like in the case of class 1 and class 3 noun prefixes *u-mu-*). In consequence, labeling the evaluative prefixes in question as relative prefixes based on their shape would give faulty findings and will be tantamount to arguing that the evaluative nouns under study are instances of relative word constructions. However, if the concordial principle can confirm that the type of 'evaluative nouns' in question are controlled by noun class prefixes like relatives, we can then argue that these 'evaluative nouns' are actually relatives.

### Concordial agreement principle

The concordial principle is useful in distinguishing noun class prefixes from other prefixes. The principle posits that there are word forms that depend on a noun in a sentence. The dependency is represented by agreement affixes. These affixes usually resemble the classifier in some noun class prefixes. As a result, concordial affixes sound like class prefixes. McLaren (1944:16) says, '[a]greement between a noun and words which depend on it is expressed by the use of, in most cases, prefixes of the same or similar sound thereby giving a language in question an alliterative quality'. These affixes have an anaphoric and/or a cataphoric function in a sentence structure thus they always make reference to a governing noun and its class prefix. According to this principle, noun class prefixes are independent whereas other prefixes such as relative prefixes are always dependent on a class prefix. This implies that relative prefixes are incapable of generating and governing concords. The sentences in example (4) illustrate the syntax of 'evaluative nouns'.

- (4a) **Esi**MaNdaba **sona lesi esifitshane simthanda...**  
*esi*-Ma-Ndaba *si*-o-na la-*si esi*-fitshane *si*-m-thand-a  
**PR**-Miss-Ndaba **AGR**-ABS-it DEM-**AGR** ADJ  
 PR-short **SM**-OM-loveVR-TV  
 'This short MaNdaba loves ...'
- (4b) Yona le**yi eyi**mdala **yethu ithanda**....  
*i*-o-na la-*yi eyi*-(u)m-dala *i*-a-ithu *i*-thand-a  
**AGR**-ABS-it DEM-**AGRPR**-1-old **SM**-POS-our  
**SM**-loveVR-TV  
 (Lit. it this the old man our loves...)  
 'This old man of ours loves...'
- (4c) **Zonke zona lezi ezi**ngamadoda **ozibonayo**....  
*zi*-o-nke *zi*-o-na la-*zi ezi*-ng-ama-doda o-*zi*-bon-a-yo  
**AGR**-QUAN-all these-DEM **AGR**-ABS-it **PR**-COP-  
 6-man REL-**SM**-seeVR-REL suffix  
 (lit. All them these the guys are men whom you see...)  
 'All these men that you see...'
- (4d) **Lona lolu olu**nkabi **olumileyo lutshaywa**....  
*li*-o-na la-*lu olu*-(u)-(i)n-khabi a-*lu*-m-ile-yo *lu*-tshaywa  
**AGR**-ABS-it DEM-**AGR PR**-1-9-ox REL-**SM**-standVR-  
 PPT-REL suffix-**AGR**-beaten  
 (Lit. it this the man that you see is beaten ...)  
 'This standing dude is beaten...'

- (4e) **Konke lokhu okungabeTshabi sizakufaka incukuthu.**  
*ku-o-nke la-khu oku-ng-abe-Tshabi si-za-ku-fak-a*  
 in-chukuthu  
**AGR-QUAN-all DEM-AGRPR-COP-2-Tshabi**  
**SM-FT-put VR- TV 9-spear**  
 (Lit. All these the insignificant Tshabi people we will stab them by spears)  
 'In the near future we will stab all these insignificant Tshabi people using spears.'

The above examples demonstrate that the evaluative prefixes *esi-*, *ezi-*, *eyi-*, *olu* and *oku-* are independent and that they control agreement in a sentence like other noun class prefixes. The syntax of evaluative noun prefixes therefore indicates that they are noun class prefixes. Wilkes (1990:35) also notes that evaluative nominals have much in common with other nouns as far as their syntax is concerned. Moreover, their semantics is incompatible with that of relatives which further proves that they belong to the class of nouns. After making known the existence of secondary prefixes in Ndebele, it is now vital for us to look into their classification.

#### **Class status of secondary prefixes**

Secondary prefixes work with primary prefixes of classes 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 19 and 21, although Ndebele lacks classes 12 and 13. According to the examples in (1a/1aa) and (1b/1bb), *uThixo/uNkulunkulu* 'God' has no plurals because there is only one true God. Should *othixo/onkulunkulu* be used in the plural to refer to 'gods', we can argue that a noun class 2a prefix can convey both a primary and an evaluative function. The examples in (1c/1cc) point to the fact that classes 7 and 8 also express primary meanings and secondary meanings like class 2a. The class statuses of *esi-*, *eyi-* and *ezi-* are a bit tricky. It seems *esi-*, *olu-* and *eyi-* are singular forms of a plural form *ezi-*, as can be seen in example (5).

- (5a)
- |                          |                              |                                   |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>esi</b> MaNcube       | <b>ezi</b> ngMaNcube         | * <b>esi</b> ngMaNcube            |
| <b>esi</b> -Ma-Ncube     | <b>ezi</b> -ng-o-Ma-Ncube    | <b>esi</b> -ng-o-Ma-Ncube         |
| <b>PR</b> -Miss-Ncube    | <b>PR</b> -COP-2a-Miss-Ncube | <b>PR</b> -COP-2a-Miss-Ncube      |
| 'the useless Miss Ncube' | 'useless Miss Ncubes'        | (lit. the useless is Miss Ncubes) |
- (5b)
- |                   |                         |                         |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>eyi</b> Ncube  | <b>ezi</b> ngNcube      | * <b>eyi</b> ngNcube    |
| <b>eyi</b> -Ncube | <b>ezi</b> -ng-o-Ncube  | <b>eyi</b> -ng-o-Ncube  |
| <b>PR</b> -Ncube  | <b>PR</b> -COP-2a-Ncube | <b>PR</b> -COP-2a-Ncube |
| 'the guy Ncube'   | 'Ncube guys'            | (lit. the guy Ncubes)   |
- (5c)
- |                   |  |                            |
|-------------------|--|----------------------------|
| <b>olu</b> Ncube  | <b>ezi</b> ngNcube                                 | * <b>olu</b> ngNcube       |
| <b>olu</b> -Ncube | <b>ezi</b> -ng-o-Ncube                             | <b>olu</b> -ng-o-Ncube     |
| <b>PR</b> -Ncube  | <b>PR</b> -COP-2a-Ncube                            | <b>PR</b> -COP-2a-Ncube    |
| 'the silly Ncube' | (lit. the silly are the Ncubes) 'the silly Ncubes' | (lit. the silly is Ncubes) |

The prefixes *esi-*, *eyi-* and *olu-* have their plurals in *ezi-* and it seems this plural in *ezi-* noun constructions is inherited from the primary noun class prefix 2a *o-*. Note that the secondary prefix is not immediately prefixed to a plural noun. The noun is inflected for copulative prior

to accommodating evaluative prefixes. Singular-plural correspondence in example (5) might be thought to be an indication that the singulars belong to class 12 whereas the plural belongs to class 13 since these are the only remaining classes that indicate singular-plural correspondence. However, the concords of the singulars in example (5) are different from each other which make it to be unlikely that the three are members of the same class. *Isi-* uses *si-*, *eyi* uses *i-*, whereas *olu-* uses *lu-*. Example (4) provides the syntax of the prefixes in question. Members of the same noun class, though different in terms of shape, use a single concord. Consequently, this militates against the idea of classifying *esi-*, *eyi-* and *olu-* as noun class 12 members mainly because these prefixes use three different concords.

Furthermore, the SCs and the OCs generated by the 'secondary' PRs *esi-*, *ezi-*, *eyi-*, *olu-* and *oku-* correspond to the ones which are generated by the primary PRs *isi-*, *izi-*, *in-*, *ulu-* and *uku-* chiefly because the two groups of PRs have identical classifiers (note that we have italicized classifiers for the purpose of clarifying our contention). Moreover, the former group of nouns is modified by the same modifiers which modify the primary nouns of CLs 7, 8, 9, 11 and 14 which could be an indication that these evaluative prefixes, though they have different shapes, are subclasses of the primary classes in question like in the case of class 2 where we have *aba-*, *abe-* and *o-* expressing the same function. This might mean that *esi-*, *eyi-*, *ezi-* and *olu-* will be sub-classes of 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Interestingly, Canonici (1995:8) argues that the *izi-* prefix in Zulu is class 10, and not class 8 and that this prefix is either used alone as the plural of class 7 or is prefixed to the class 9 homorganic N prefix to form the class 10-9 prefix *i-zi-N-*. In other words, class 7 has class 10 as its plural and classes 9 and 11 have their plurals in class 10-9. If we take *esi-*, *eyi-*, *ezi-* and *olu-* to be sub-classes of 7, 9, 10-9 and 11 respectively then it will make sense too as to why *esi-*, *eyi-* and *olu-* have their plurals as *ezi-* because 10-9 serves as a plural for singular primary classes 7, 9 and 11. The question to tackle now will be that of the status of *oku-*. Is *oku-* a sub-class of class 15 or does it have its own class?

The evaluative prefix *oku-* is the only secondary prefix that can be attached to either a singular word base or a plural word base. This quality complicates its class status because the prefix can either function as a singular or as a plural depending on whether it is prefixed to a singular base or a plural base. Consider example (6).

- (6a) okungumfana                      okungabafana  
 oku-ng-um-fana                      oku-ng-aba-fana  
 PR-COP-1-boy                      PR-COP-2-boys  
 (lit. the insignificant is the boy)                      (lit. insignificant are the boys)
- (6b) okungubaba                      okungobaba  
 oku-ng-u-baba                      oku-ng-o-baba  
 PR-COP-1a-father                      PR-COP-2a-father  
 (lit. insignificant is the father)                      (lit. insignificant are fathers)
- 'the insignificant father'                      'the insignificant fathers'

A comparison of examples in (6) and those in (5) may indicate the peculiarity of *oku-*. The prefix *oku-* is neutral

in terms of indicating number like class 15 and any other neuter class. Class 15, like classes 14, 16–19, 21 and 23, does not indicate number. However, treating *oku-* as a class 15 prefix might not be convincing especially when we consider that class 15 is a class of infinitives and a few nouns. Taking into cognizance the derogatory nature of the *oku-COP PR-CL-NS* evaluative noun constructions, we can treat *oku-* as a class 19 prefix.

## Conclusion

We have established that isiNdebele has secondary prefixes on the one hand and primary prefixes that have a secondary function on the other. The primary prefixes that can convey evaluative function are *o-*, *isi-* and *izi-*. The secondary PRs are *esi-*, *eyi-*, *ezi-*, *olu-* and *oku-*. Except for *eyi-*, the identified secondary PRs have classifiers which are identical to those of the primary PRs of CL 7, 10/10-9 and 11. The two sets of PRs in reference generate identical modifier agreement morphemes and identical predicative concords. Modifiers that modify nouns in CLs 7, 10/10-9, 9 and 11 can modify nouns that have the PRs *esi-*, *ezi-*, *eyi-* and *olu-* respectively. This may influence one to think that maybe the secondary PRs being investigated constitute subclasses of the primary classes which will imply that we have 7a *esi-*, 8a *ezi-*, 9a *eyi-* and 11a *olu-*. Note that, 2a *o-*, is the subclass of CL 2 *aba-* and they use the same concords *ba-l-ba-* although the former PR (CL 2a) starts with a mid vowel like the secondary PRs under investigation. However, the constructions in example (5) suggest that *eyi-* is a form of *esi-* and that the two PRs are singular forms of a plural *ezi-*. This militates against the view that *eyi-* could be a subclass of CL 9. Furthermore, the *oku-* nouns are so belittling and offensive such that they undoubtedly fit well in Meinhof's derogative slots (CL 12, 13, 19, 20 and 21); thus we proposed that *oku-* should be considered for class 19 membership. The rest of the secondary nouns are relatively derogatory which may, if we are uncomfortable with doing away with Meinhof's noun classification system, qualify them to be considered as subcategories of primary classes 7, 9, 10/10-9 and 11. We recommend that Nguni linguists should look into the classification problem of the identified commentary PRs and/ or more PRs of this kind and, if necessary, come up with a new system of classifying Ndebele/ Nguni nouns.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> All abbreviations used in this article are listed below:

ABS:	Absolute Marker
ADJ:	Adjective
AGR:	Agreement
COP:	Copulative
CL:	Noun Class
DEM:	Demonstrative
FT:	Future Tense
NS:	Noun Stem
OM:	Object Marker
POS:	Possessive
PPT:	Perfect Past Tense
PR:	Prefix
QUAN:	Quantifier
REL:	Relative
SM:	Subject Marker

TV:	Terminal Vowel
VR:	Verb Root
V1:	Initial Vowel
V2:	Terminal Vowel of the PR

<sup>2</sup> One might argue that the basic prefix here is *i-* and that the *-y-* element is a result of glide insertion mainly because vowels cannot follow each other in a Ndebele syllable.

<sup>3</sup> The relative vowel *a-* merges with the subject concord *i-* to form *e-*.

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