

The augment in Ihanzu as a potential topic marker?

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Ihanzu is a Bantu language, spoken in north-central Tanzania. The main aim of the talk is to present a range of data from several fieldwork sessions in Ihanzu and consider the role of the augment in Ihanzu. Augments – also called ‘initial vowel’ or ‘pre-prefix’, is a morpheme that can precede nominal expressions in Bantu. In the Bantu languages that have such an augment there is quite some variation in the syntax and semantics of the augment: it has been considered a D-head with a range of different D-related meanings (existence, uniqueness, givenness), an agreement marker, or a marker for topicality (see Halpert 2025 for a recent overview and references). We explore the restrictions on the presence of the augment in Ihanzu, both noun phrase internally as well as with respect to different sentential functions and positions. We will concentrate on investigating to what extent the augment could be considered a topic marker in Ihanzu.

Halpert, C. 2025. The augment. In L. Marten et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to the Bantu Languages*, 166–180. Oxford University Press.