Observe that the zero vector is orthogonal to every vector in $\mathbb{R}^n$ because $\mathbf{0}^T\mathbf{v} = 0$ for all $\mathbf{v}$.

The next theorem provides a useful fact about orthogonal vectors. The proof follows immediately from the calculation in (1) above and the definition of orthogonality. The right triangle shown in Fig. 6 provides a visualization of the lengths that appear in the theorem.

M 2 The Pythagorean Theorem

Two vectors $\mathbf{u}$ and $\mathbf{v}$ are orthogonal if and only if $\|\mathbf{u}+\mathbf{v}\|^2 = \|\mathbf{u}\|^2 + \|\mathbf{v}\|^2$.

Orthogonal Complements

To provide practice using inner products, we introduce a concept here that will be of use in Section 6.3 and elsewhere in the chapter. If a vector $\mathbf{z}$ is orthogonal to every vector in a subspace W of $\mathbb{R}^n$, then $\mathbf{z}$ is said to be **orthogonal to** W. The set of all vectors $\mathbf{z}$ that are orthogonal to W is called the **orthogonal complement** of W and is denoted by $W^\perp$ (and read as "W perpendicular" or simply "W perp").

EXAMPLE 6 Let W be a plane through the origin in $\mathbb{R}^3$, and let L be the line through the origin and perpendicular to W. If $\mathbf{z}$ and $\mathbf{w}$ are nonzero, $\mathbf{z}$ is on L, and $\mathbf{w}$ is in W, then the line segment from $\mathbf{0}$ to $\mathbf{z}$ is perpendicular to the line segment from $\mathbf{0}$ to $\mathbf{w}$; that is, $\mathbf{z}\cdot\mathbf{w} = 0$. See Fig. 7. So each vector on L is orthogonal to every $\mathbf{w}$ in W. In fact, L consists of *all* vectors that are orthogonal to the $\mathbf{w}$'s in W, and W consists of all vectors orthogonal to the $\mathbf{z}$'s in L. That is,

$$L = W^\perp \quad \text{and} \quad W = L^\perp$$

The following two facts about $W^\perp$, with W a subspace of $\mathbb{R}^n$, are needed later in the chapter. Proofs are suggested in Exercises 29 and 30. Exercises 27–31 provide excellent practice using properties of the inner product.

1. A vector $\mathbf{x}$ is in $W^\perp$ if and only if $\mathbf{x}$ is orthogonal to every vector in a set that spans W.
2. $W^\perp$ is a subspace of $\mathbb{R}^n$.