

Locative interrogative as origin of the postverbal negative marker in Ndengeleko

Negation in Ndengeleko is symmetric. There is a one-to-one correspondence between the members of affirmative and negative paradigms, much like in for example German (Miestamo 2005:52). There are no structural changes to the negative form compared to the affirmative form, apart from the addition of a negative marker. This paper analyzes one of the strategies for standard negation in Ndengeleko (P10); the post-verbal negative marker *kwakɔ*, which is a free-standing particle.

4 *Nee* *njeketía* *kwakɔ*.
neenga ni- yeketi -a kwakɔ
I/me 1sSM- agree -FV NEG
I do not agree!

The origin of this marker is hypothesized to be the locative interrogative *kwakɔ* /*ku-akɔ*/, literally ‘which place’. This interrogative is identical in form to the negative marker, and ambiguity can arise.

5 *utyangi* *kwakɔ*
u- tyaang -i kwakɔ
2sSM- walk -PERF NEG/where
‘didn’t you walk?’ / ‘where did you walk?’

Locatives are sources of negative markers in other Bantu languages, as in Kanincin (Devos et al. 2010). It is also suggested here, that Ndengeleko standard negation has reached the third stage of the ‘Jespersen Cycle’, which in short “describes how a negator may collocate with a strengthener, which may later become an additional exponent of negation and possibly the only one” (van der Auwera 2009). In Ndengeleko, the only exponent of negation left is the strengthener *kwakɔ*, now ‘bleached’ (Devos and van der Auwera Forthcoming) to be the neutral negator in the language. Ndengeleko might have reached this third stage relatively recently, as the marker is yet intact - it has exactly the same form as the locative interrogative, and it has not been cliticized or suffixed. However, there is sign of further grammaticalization, as the negator can be shortened to *kwa*.

The paper will also discuss the position of the negator. As pointed out by Devos et al. (2010), data from Bantu languages show that the post-verbal

