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Explaining clause-final negation in northern sub-Saharan Africa

synchrony vs. history

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Clause-final negation as an areal feature in Northern sub-Saharan Africa

- CF negation has recently been suggested as an areal feature in NSSA
 - Dryer (2009): Central Africa
 - Güldemann (2008): Macro-Sudan belt

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Macro-Sudan belt (Güldemann 2008)

- Macro-Sudan is a **linguistic macro-area** that runs across "a broad sub-Saharan belt from the western end of the continent to the escarpment of the Ethiopian Plateau in the east" and that must have been shaped "by **geographical factors** which have been relevant for a sufficiently **long time period**".
- Macro-Sudan is defined by **6 linguistic features**
 - logophoricity markers
 - labio-velar consonants
 - labial flaps
 - ATR vowel harmony
 - S-(Aux)-O-V-X
 - V-O-Neg

(I) Berber spread zone
(II) Chad-Ethiopia
(III) Macro-Sudan belt
(IV) Bantu spread zone
(V) Kalahari Basin

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Macro-Sudan belt (Güldemann 2008)

- The macro-area has a **concentric structure** defined by the number of features and the frequency of their occurrence within a given family.
 - "hotbed"** ("virtually all features and mostly in a regular fashion"): Benue-Congo (excluding Narrow Bantu), Adamawa-Ubangi, Bongo-Bagirmi, Moru-Mangbetu (centered around CAR)
 - "core"** ("at least three properties with intermediate or high frequency"): Gur, Kru, Kwa, Mande
 - "periphery"**: Ijoid, Songhay, Dogon, Atlantic
 - outliers / receptive neighbours** ("the features are mostly untypical for them; but they occur recurrently in member languages which border on the area"): Chadic, Nilotic and Narrow Bantu

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V-O-Neg order in central Africa (Dryer 2009)

- phenomenon: **SVNegO** & **SVONeg** (usually, Neg is clause-final, viz. **SVOXNeg**).

Lingala (Bantu C36d; DR Congo; Meeuwis 1998:40)

(1) *nakoki kokenda na ndako na ye tɛ*
1SG.can.PRS INF.go.FV PREP house PREP 3SG **NEG**
'I cannot go to her house'

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V-O-Neg order in central Africa (Dryer 2009)

- a typologically **unusual** property
- common in **central Africa** and in a pocket on and near **New Guinea**
- presumably, an **areal** phenomenon (certain branches of Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, and Afro-Asiatic)

Map 1. VO&VNeg languages in Africa, with their core area delineated (Dryer 2009:323)

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V-O-Neg order in central Africa (Dryer 2009)

- Negative markers are clause-final because they are somehow **“pragmatic”** rather than “semantic”

“One factor that may be relevant is that negative morphemes, though they are traditionally viewed as being semantic rather than pragmatic, since they (allegedly) simply change the truth value of the proposition expressed by the clause, are perhaps better viewed as indicating a particular kind of speech act, one of denying.”

(Dryer 2009:339)

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V-O-Neg order in central Africa (Dryer 2009)

- Dryer’s study is **restricted to**:
 - “neutral clausal negatives”**: negate an entire clause, which is declarative with a verbal predicate
 - negative words** rather than affixes (although the distinction “is not always easy”)
 - post-V Neg must be **obligatory**
 - post-V Neg must be obligatory **in all declarative verbal constructions** (irrespective of their TAM value, main/subordinate status, etc.)

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What I argue...

- Dryer’s coverage and analysis of data can be improved in a way that would increase its relevance for the macro-areality hypotheses involving the languages of northern sub-Saharan Africa, such as the Macro-Sudan areality hypothesis
- A more adequate (diachronic) account of this typologically unusual syntactic distribution of negative markers can be offered

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Reducing variation...

- Certain **reductionism** in Dryer’s analysis and coverage of data: “typological classification generally involves [reducing variation by] drawing arbitrary lines in what is really a typological continuum” (2009:316)
 - only Neg words
 - only Neg words in declarative verbal clauses
 - only obligatory Neg words
 - only obligatory Neg words that are obligatory in all declarative verbal constructions

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The truth is in the details, though...

“a theory of why languages are the way they are is fundamentally a theory of language change...” (Dryer 2006)

- change is typically **gradual**
- synchronic diversity** is a direct reflection of the gradualness of change

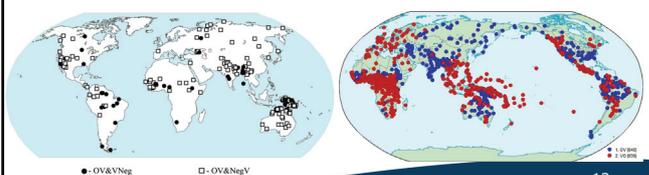
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Excluding OV...

Bokobaru (“Busa”) (Mande; Nigeria; Wedekind 1972:60)

- (1) *wà-è gàrì yí swí=ne=rò*
 3PL-HAB saddle tie scorpion = to = NEG
 ‘One does not tie a saddle to a scorpion’

“The reasons for restricting attention to VO languages in this paper derive from the fact that it is **VO languages** in Africa, rather than OV languages, which exhibit a **crosslinguistically atypical pattern** and a clear areal pattern within Africa [...] **VNeg languages [among OV]** are widely scattered as a minority type in most parts of the world, and **are not especially common in Africa**.” (Dryer 2009:314-315)



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OVXNeg & VONeg and Macro-Sudan

- From the perspective of the Macro-Sudan areality hypothesis, there is a problem of **logical incompatibility** between the two syntactic features used, V-O-Neg and S-(Aux)-O-V-X.

“Although this [= Bokobaru] is not VONeg, it is like VONeg in that the negative occurs at the end of the clause following postverbal elements. It differs from VONeg **only** in that the postverbal elements it follows are **adverbial elements** rather than objects.”

(Dryer 2009:314-315)

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- postverbal, and especially, clause-final negative markers **irrespective of the order of V and O** (and of the presence of other preverbal negative markers).
- a straightforward **diachronic account**
 - Why post-V Neg? Because...
 - Why clause-final Neg? Because...
 - Why post-O Neg? Because?...
- although, framed this way, the feature is **less restrictive**, typologically it is still rather **remarkable** (as cross-linguistically, negatives “tend to precede the verb”, Dryer 1988, 2009) and thus is a good candidate for being an **area-specific feature**
- being inclusive with respect to the OV languages from the eastern part of the MS belt as well, it becomes a better **general MS feature**

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A diachronic account

- where enough evidence is available, the most **common source** of post-V and CF negative markers appears to be various **(inter)subjective** (discourse/epistemic/emphasis/modal...) **particles/adverbs**, which are prominently present in the majority of the languages of the area and which are commonly post-V and, when post-V, frequently CF.



- In descriptions, these elements are variously referred to as:
 - “modalités de proposition” (in Birom)
 - “modalités d’énoncé” (in Banda-Linda)
 - “particules conversationnelles” (in Wobé)
 - “particules phrastiques” (in Bamana)
 - “marque terminales (déictique et d’emphase)” & “particules dicto-modales” (in Tura)
 - “end of sentence modal markers” (in Boko/Busa/Bokobaru)
 - “modal adverbs” (in Eton)
 - “certificatifs” (in Bafia)

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In Tura, “[particules dicto-modales] expriment en général des nuances affectives qui porte sur le contenu de la proposition... appartiennent au style de conversation, où elle sont très courantes. Par contre, elles ne se rencontrent guère dans les récits”

(Beath 1971:239)

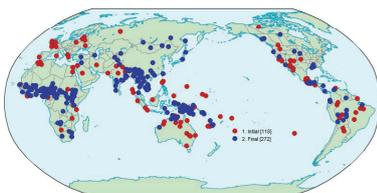
In Wobé, “[particules conversationnelles] signalent plutôt des faits relatifs à la situation de communication, par exemple à l’attitude du locuteur face à son propre énoncé ou face à celui d’interlocuteur”

(Egner 1989:225)

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A diachronic account

- It is these **(inter)subjective markers** that are **“pragmatic”** not the negative markers they may sometimes develop into
- Prominent presence of segmental (inter)subjective markers with clausal scope and syntactically oriented to the clause as a whole can be considered as a **conversational strategy** characteristic of this area



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A diachronic account

- occurrence of **multiple negative exponence** (double, sometimes triple and even quadruple) within a clause
- such negative markers are apparently relatively **easy borrowable**, unlike negators in other parts of the world but like discourse markers, focus particles and phasal adverbs (cf. Matras 2009)

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Bantu

Devos & van der Auwera (forthcoming)

- **minimizers** (from 'a bit', 'a little'), (in commands) **politeness/impatience markers** (originally, often from locative pronouns 'there')
- **contrastive focus markers** with clausal scope (originally, often from possessive pronouns)
- **adverbs with negative semantics** ('in vain', 'for free')
- **negative answer particle** ('no', 'by no means')

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Godié (Kru; Côte d'Ivoire)

Marchese (1986:204-206)

- *wù* post-V 'just' & post-V negative which is still optional in some constructions

(166) ɔ̃ ɔ̃ ɪ ɪ wù sùkÁ 'He's not eating rice.'
 he:NEG eat NEG rice

(170) wù wù zuka nã yɛlɛc 'Just look at me (I'm filthy).'
 look EMPH today my skin-DEF

(171) Naa, ŋwa-a wù sa yã n kã wù
 I-say, put-it EMPH out end I VOL look
 'So, just lay it out (your arguments)
 and I'll consider (them).'

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Krongo (Kadugli; Sudan)

Reh (1985:370)

- CF negative *é* is "probably the emphasis particle *é*"

Krongo (Reh 1985:376)

(1) *é* *n-ákká* *á?ŋ* *k-áádá-ŋ* *ù?ŋ* *é*
 NEG 1/2-FUT 1SG LOC-INF.give-TR DAT:1SG NEG
 'I will not give it to you'

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Pana (Gur; Burkina Faso & Mali)

Beyer (2009:207-209)

- CF negative marker *yà* (absent in questions and subordinate clauses) is "the same element" as focus/identification/"all-new-utterance" marker *yà*.

à *ɲùé-ré* *simá yà*
 1SG drink:TPF-NEG beer FOC
 I don't drink millet beer

(4) *simá yà* (*dé*) à *ɲùé*
 beer IDT (CM) 1SG drink:TPF
 It is millet beer, that I drink

(6) à *ɲùé* *simá yà*
 1SG drink:TPF beer FOC
 I drink millet beer (and nothing else)

(7) *dùrú-ù* *ké* *ké* *ɲifini yà*
 tree-DEF BEQUAL thing small FOC
 The tree is small (really small)

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Dzuun (Mande; Burkina Faso)

Solomiac (2007)

- There is a variety of CF negative particles, in combination with a pre-V negative auxiliary-like markers. The most common and the most neutral in its semantics CF negative marker is *wāā*.

bāā "jamaie" *byē* "jamaie" *dē* "plus" *fyéú* "jamaie"
kūrāā "jamaie" *wāā* "pas" *wāārú* "pas du tout"

- *wāā* is in complementary distribution with CF particles of emphasis and polar questions
- *wāā* is optional or lacking in some constructions, sometimes lacking in proverbs.

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A diachronic account

- diachronically, negative markers appear to be rather **unstable** in this area
- negative markers can (and apparently, in some language groups, tend to) **change** their syntactic **position** and **degree of bonding** over time
- between pre- and post-V domains, the shift always appears to occur in one direction, viz. from post-V **to pre-V**, and within the post-V domain, mostly from non-immediately post-V slot (frequently, CF) **to immediately post-V** slot
- the specificity of negation patterns observed in NSSA is largely a direct reflection of the **specific pre-existent conditions** and **historical processes** sketched here

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