Clause-final negative markers

as a Macro-Sudan areal feature

Dmitry Idiatov
University of Antwerp
Center for Grammar, Cognition and Typology
Dmitry.Idiatov@ua.ac.be

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

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, Mora-Mangbeta (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 atypical for them, but they occur recurrently in member languages which border on the area”): Chadic, Niloitic and Narrow Bantu

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)

• “the most significant issue that this paper leaves unresolved regarding the distribution of VONeg order in Africa” is the status of some of the outliers, that is the exact geographical extent of the area

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.)
What I argue...

- Dryer’s coverage and analysis of data can be improved in a way that would increase its relevance for the Macro-Sudan areality hypothesis.
- A more adequate (diachronic) account of this typologically unusual syntactic distribution of negative markers can be offered.

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.

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.

Excluding OV...

- Bokobaru (“Bena”) (Mande; Nigeria; Wedekind 1972:60)
  (1) wà-è gàrì yì ènè=n ɛ=r ो
  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 cross-linguistically 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)

OV&VNeg 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)

VO OV

- 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 1998, 2009) and thus is a good candidate for being an area-specific feature.
It is more inclusive geographically but also more coherent: roughly, Macro-Sudan and most of the Bantu spread zone, which is its relatively recent offshoot

**Clause-final negative markers**

- As Dryer (2009:317-319) notes himself, what is even more unusual about the position of negative markers in this part of Africa typologically is that they are often clause-final.
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 (décitique et d’emphase)” & “particules dicto-modales” (in Tura)
  - “end of sentence modal markers” (in Boko/Busa/Bokoburu)
  - “modal adverbs” (in Eton)
  - “certificatifs” (in Bafia)

In Tura, “[particules dicto-modales] expriment en général des nuances affectives qui porte sur le contenu de la proposition... appartient au style de conversation, où elle sont très courantes. Par contre, elles ne se rencontrent guère dans les récits” (Bearth 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” (Eigner 1989:225)

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

Bantu

Devis & van der Auwera (forthcoming)

- minimizers (‘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)
- negative answer particle (‘no’, ‘by no means’)
- adverbs with negative semantics (‘in vain’, ‘for free’)

Godié (Kru; Côte d’Ivoire)

Marchese (1986:204-206)

- no post-V ‘just’ & post-V negative which is still optional in some
Kongo (Kadugli; Sudan)

Reh (1985:370)

- CF negative € is “probably the emphasis particle €”

Kongo (Reh 1985:376)

(1) à ngíkkà tílg káadeq à tílg €
NEG: 1/2-FUT 1SG LOC-NEG give-TR DAT:1SG NEG
'I will not give it to you.'

Pana (Gur; Burkina Faso & Mali)

Beyer (2009:207-209)

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

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 wā.

- wā is in complementary distribution with CF particles of emphasis and polar questions.

- wā is optional or lacking in some other constructions, sometimes lacking in proverbs.

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 kind of diversity of negation patterns observed in Macro-Sudan and its recent offshoot, Bantu spread zone, is largely a direct reflection of the historical changes sketched here