

MARKERS IN TIV NEGATION SYNTAX

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Abstract

The syntax of negation in Tiv, a noteworthy Benue-Congo language spoken in Nigeria, presents an interesting paradigmatic structure, characterized by notable complexities and asymmetries. Leveraging Chomsky's influential Principles and Parameters approach, this study examines the language's negation system, employing descriptive and qualitative methods to elicit and analyze the data. The findings reveal a significant interplay of pre-verbal and post-verbal negation, as Tiv's negative markers "ei", "de", and "ga" exhibit a thoughtful pattern of negation, differing from conventional expectations and highlighting the language's distinctive characteristics. This configuration is marked by the deliberate use of "ei" and "de" in imperative negation in sentence-initial positions, while "ga" effectively negates declarative statements in sentence-final positions, demonstrating a clear relationship between syntax and semantics. Ultimately, Tiv's deviation from the linguistic norm underscores its unique approach to negation, where sentence type and communicative intent guide the placement of negative markers, revealing the language's complex and effective negation system.

Keywords: Tiv, negative particle, imperative

Introduction

Language is the cornerstone of human communication, and in our daily lives, we rely on it to convey meaningful expressions (Aboh 2015). Within the realm of linguistic expression, negation plays a vital role, enabling speakers to articulate denial, contradiction, or refusal with remarkable precision (Jaszczolt 2016). In the Tiv language, negation is a fundamental concept that facilitates the subtle, yet sophisticated expression of opposition, disagreement, or rejection.

This complex linguistic mechanism allows Tiv speakers to convey the polar contrary of a particular notion, effectively expressing the opposite or negation of a statement within remarkable accuracy (Crain 2019). By employing negation, speakers can articulate disagreement, dissent, or refusal, thereby adding depth, complexity and nuance to their communicative interactions (Korta & Perry 2019).

The negation mechanism in Tiv is a

remarkable example of linguistic sophistication, permitting speakers to convey a range of negative meanings with precision and accuracy, and subtlety (Horn 2020). This capacity for nuanced expression is a hallmark of human language, and the Tiv language is no exception, offering a fascinating glimpse into the complexities of human communication.

According to Crystal (2006:303), negation is a grammatical and semantic process that typically expresses the contradiction of some or all of a sentence's meaning. The manifestation of negation varies significantly across languages, and its realization can be quite intricate. In the English language, common methods of negation include the use of negative words such as 'not', 'no', and 'never'. However, the specific strategies employed differ substantially across languages.

Negation can be applied to various sentence constituents, including verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, allowing for the

expression of negation at different levels. This ranges from negating a single word or phrase to negating an entire sentence or proposition. Languages exhibit diverse ways of marking sentential negation, with some utilizing a single exponent and others employing a double exponent. Notably, the Tiv language exhibits both strategies, marking negation as a single exponent and as a double exponent.

As a universal category in languages, the surface manifestations of negation forms in syntax provide a foundation for analysis in numerous research studies. This current study aims to investigate the markers in Tiv negation syntax, contributing to our understanding of this complex phenomenon. The Tiv language is classified within the Southern Bantoid branch of the Benue-Congo family, which is part of the Niger-Congo family (Blench, 2011). Abraham (1940, p. 6) provides valuable insights into the language's characteristics.

The Tiv language, boasting an impressive four million speakers in Benue State, Nigeria alone (Tser, 2013), showcases a remarkable array of linguistic features that underscore its unique identity. As a distinguished member of the Bantu language family (Blench, 2011), Tiv exhibits a complex and intriguing grammatical profile, replete with nuanced characteristics.

Syntactically, Tiv boasts of paradigmatic head- Initial parameter setting yielding a canonical Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order that facilitates lucid and efficacious communication (Hawkin 2014) Its opulent tense system, replete with an intricate array of temporal distinctions coupled with a tonal system that plays a vital role in conveying subtle, nuanced and semantic distinctions further underscores the language's remarkable expressiveness and communicative versatility (Sandler & Lillo- Martin 2006)

Morphologically, Tiv exhibits a fascinating fusional typology (Sanusi & Oyowole 2019), marked by an array of inflectional operations that involve both prefixation and suffixation, thereby showcasing language's remarkable morphological dexterity and adaptability. These intricate processes which are instrumental in tense marking and plural formation attest to the language's impressive, flexibility,

productivity and systemic harmony (Arnoff & Fudeman 2011) underscoring its unique typological profile.

Despite the existence of scholarly endeavors exploring Tiv grammar, research on negation in the language remains a relatively uncharted territory. Ishima's (2019) seminal work on negation in Tiv stands as a pioneering contribution to this area of study. This research seeks to build upon this foundation, investigating the diverse negative markers employed in Tiv to convey polar contrariness. By examining the positional variations of these markers within sentence structures, this study aims to elucidate whether negation markers operate within the subject or verb domain, thereby shedding light on the intricacies of Tiv's negation system.

Literature on the syntax of Negation

The syntax of negation is a fascinating realm of linguistic inquiry, delving into the intricate mechanisms governing sentence grammar. Eminent linguists, including Harris (1957), Chomsky (1957), Carnie (2006), and Radford (1997), converge on the notion that syntax encompasses the systematic study of word combinations, yielding phrases and sentences that underpin human communication.

As humans possess an innate generative capacity, enabling them to craft novel sentences, it becomes evident that language operates on a dynamic, rule-governed basis, rather than relying on arbitrary or stored combinations. Müller (2020:4) suggests that frequent or idiomatic expressions may be stored as complex units, but this does not apply to typical language sentences.

Van Valin (2001:2) astutely defines syntax as the deliberate arrangement of words within sentences, clauses, and phrases, underscoring the intricate relationships between constituent parts. This is exemplified by English word order, where the subject-verb-object sequence yields distinct meanings, diverging from alternative configurations.

The human capacity for generating novel, previously unuttered expressions underscores the presence of underlying structural patterns. Syntax seeks to elucidate these patterns, examining the relationships between words within sentences and uncovering the fundamental principles governing

language construction.

Ultimately, the grammar of a language dictates the construction of expressions, defining possible word category positions and enabling the creation of diverse expressions from a finite set of grammatical principles. This study aims to investigate the analysis of syntactic positions, particularly negative phrases, within the realm of Tiv syntax.

Negation is a fundamental syntactic process that enables the transformation of affirmative sentences into their negative counterparts. This intricate mechanism introduces a negator, thereby creating a dichotomy between two seemingly similar sentences. Ishima (2019) astutely observes that the Tiv language employs two primary strategies for negation marking: predicate negation, which negates the entire sentence, and constituent negation, which targets a specific sentence constituent.

De Swart (2010) aptly asserts that negation is a universal linguistic category, albeit with diverse modes of expression across languages. Each language possesses a standard negation marker, accompanied by unique forms of negation that distinguish it from other languages.

Mabondo (2012) provides a profound definition of negation, characterizing it as a multifaceted linguistic, cognitive, and intellectual phenomenon. Negation is an ubiquitous and richly diverse aspect of human communication, fundamental to all human thought. Mabondo posits that negative utterances are an essential feature of every human communication system, distinguishing it from animal communication systems.

Furthermore, Mabondo (2012) highlights the significance of negation in reporting the process or result of making a negative statement. This can be achieved through grammatical particles, such as 'not,' or lexical means, such as 'failed.' Alnawaisheh (2015) emphasizes the indispensable role of negation in human language, underscoring its status as a basic element of the human mind.

Methodology

This study employs a rigorous survey research design, leveraging qualitative data to elucidate the intricacies of negation in Tiv. The

investigation utilizes the interview method for data elicitation, tapping into the linguistic expertise of five competent native speakers of Tiv. The informants, comprising three males and two females, possess formal linguistics training in Tiv, ensuring a rich source of data.

The data collection process involved administering a structured questionnaire through targeted conversational settings and in-depth interviews. The researchers meticulously recorded, transcribed, and translated the informants' utterances, capturing the nuances of Tiv negation. Supplemental data were sourced from Ichian Bibilo, 'the Tiv Bible,' specifically Exodus Chapter 20, which provided valuable insights into polar contrariness.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the researcher employed intuitive perception as a competent native speaker of Tiv. A subset of the recorded utterances, exhibiting conversational structures that showcased negation, was isolated and subjected to rigorous formal analysis, grounded in the theoretical principles of Principles and Parameters (P&P).

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Principles and Parameters (P&P) theory of Universal Grammar (UG), as articulated by Chomsky (1981). This theoretical framework posits that Universal Grammar encompasses a set of shared grammatical principles across languages, alongside parameters that differentiate one language from another.

The P&P theory seeks to distill the universal essence of human language, identifying the underlying principles that govern linguistic structures. Simultaneously, it accommodates the unique characteristics of individual languages through parametric variation, thereby providing a nuanced understanding of linguistic diversity.

This theoretical framework is particularly suited for analyzing negation in Tiv grammar, as it enables the identification of universal attributes that Tiv shares with other languages, while also elucidating language-specific characteristics that distinguish Tiv from other linguistic systems.

Tiv exhibits a fascinating negation paradigm, featuring single-word negation in post-verbal position, as well as split negation in

imperatives, where the two particles occupy both preverbal and post-verbal positions.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The work has identified negative Words and Types of Negation in Tiv. Tiv boasts a concise repertoire of negative words, meticulously identified below:

- Ga: 'not' (a versatile negator employed in sentential negation)
- Ei: 'no' (an interjectional negator expressing disagreement or rejection)
- De (kera)...ga: 'do not ... not' (a complex double negation construction)

In Tiv declarative sentences, negation is elegantly achieved through the post-verbal addition of ga 'not', as exemplified in:

1. Terseer ka nomsor ga (Terseer be man not) 'Terseer is not a man'
 The multifaceted nature of ei 'no' is showcased in its capacity to serve as an independent negator, expressing disagreement or rejection, as in:
2. Ei, m soo u zaan ga (No I want to go not) 'No, I do not want to go'
 This usage aligns with Biber et al.'s (1999) observations on the independent use of negative interjections.
 Furthermore, the inseparable double negation construction de (kera)...ga 'do not ... not' is exemplified in:
3. De kera ve ga (Do.2 not come not) 'Do not come again'
 The syntactic integrity of this construction is underscored by the ungrammaticality resulting from the deletion of either particle.

Tiv negation can be broadly categorized into two types:

1. Sentential negation: Negation applies to the entire sentence, as in Terseer ka nomsor ga.
2. Constituent negation: Negation targets a specific constituent within the sentence, as in Ei, m soo u zaan ga. These distinctions underscore the complexity and nuance of Tiv's negation system.

This study presents a rich qualitative dataset, intricately woven together with a meticulous analysis. The negative particle in Tiv assumes a fascinating position within the VP domain, specifically following the object complement of the verb, as exemplified below:

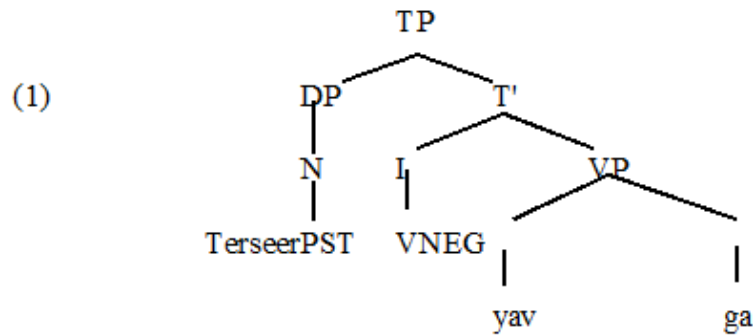
- (4a). Terseer kanomsor (Affirmative Construction)
 (Terseer be man)
 'Terseer is a man'
- (4b). Terseer kanomsor ga (Negative Construction)
 (Terseer be man Neg.)
 'Terseer is not a man'

Negation in Tiv triggers a paradigmatic shift in the truth value of propositions, as astutely observed by Ishima (2019). The affirmative proposition in 4a undergoes a truth-value reversal, yielding the negative proposition in 4b, wherein the negative particle ga 'not' ingeniously negates the proposition.

Tiv's negation paradigm exhibits remarkable versatility, with multiple strategies for applying negation beyond merely placing the negative marker within the VP domain. For instance, in the context of intransitive verbs, negation is adroitly positioned after the verb, as illustrated below:

- (5). Terseer yav ga
 (Terseer sleep.PST Neg.)
 'Terseer did not sleep'

The accompanying syntactic tree diagram masterfully illustrates the distribution of negation in Tiv, as exemplified in (5) above, providing a nuanced visual representation of the language's intricate negation system.



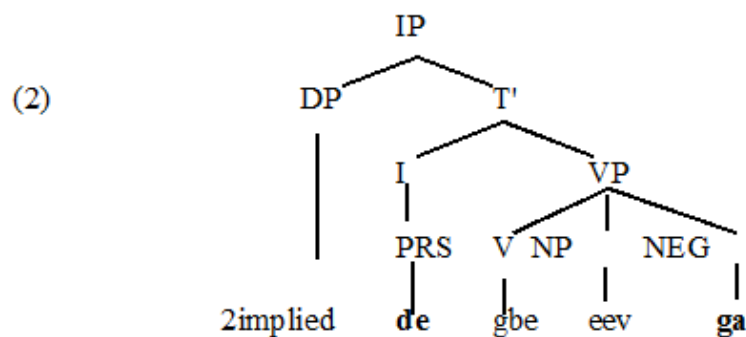
In the syntactic tree (1), the negative word is ingeniously adjoined to the post-verbal position, immediately following the intransitive verb, thereby exemplifying Tiv's unique negation paradigm.

Tiv's negation system also exhibits a fascinating phenomenon, wherein the negative markers *de* and *ga* undergo a syntactic split, yielding a complex and intriguing construction. This remarkable process is illustrated through an extract from the Tiv Bible, 'ichiagh Bibilo', which showcases the integral role of negation in Tiv's linguistic and cultural heritage, even in religious discourse.

The following examples demonstrate this captivating phenomenon:

6. De lu a mba Aondo mba ge nev ga, saa mo.
 (2SG implied (link unavailable) with gods other Neg., except me)
 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me'
7. De gbe eev ga
 (2SG implied Neg.make imageNeg.)
 'Thou shalt not make an image'

These examples masterfully illustrate Tiv's innovative approach to negation, where the interplay between syntax and semantics yields a rich and expressive linguistic system.



In the intricate tree diagram (2), the negative word undergoes a fascinating split, yielding two particles that occupy distinct syntactic positions: one preceding the verb and the other situated in the post-verbal position.

The following examples, derived from the Tiv Bible, showcase the language's complex negation paradigm:

8. De teren itii TER Aondo wou dang ga
 (2SG implied Neg.mention.Prog name of Lord God your for granted Neg.)
 'Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.'

9. Deker ma tom ave ga.
 (2SG implied Neg.hold any work hand Neg.)
 'Thou shalt not do any work.'
10. De wou or ga
 (2SG implied Neg.killNeg.)
 'Thou shalt not kill'
11. De eren idya ga
 (2SG implied Neg.doProg.adultery Neg.)
 'Thou shalt not commit adultery'
12. De iin ga
 (2SG implied Neg.steal Neg.)
 'Thou shalt not steal'
13. De we or u wan ndor a we aieiyol ga
 (2SG implied Neg.put person of neighbor with you lie body Neg.)
 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.'
14. De tem ya u or u wan ndor a we ga
 (2SG implied Neg.covert house of person of neighbouring with you Neg.)
 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house'

This dataset, extracted from the Tiv Bible, exemplifies the language's distinctive negation pattern, characterized by the split negative particle de...ga.

The imperative sentences in examples 8-13 demonstrate the language's complex negation system, which conveys prohibitive information to Christians.

A meticulous examination of these data reveals that the negative particle de...ga is an integral unit, whose deletion results in ungrammatical sentences, as illustrated in examples in the various examples stated above.

Conclusion

Negation plays a vital role in Tiv's grammatical framework, contributing to syntax, meaning derivation, and truth-value manipulation. Tiv's unique split negation paradigm, exemplified by the de...ga particle, sets it apart from other languages, underscoring the complexity and richness of human language.

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