

Negation in Wam (Kugama), an Adamawa language of Nigeria

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Miestamo, Matti. Questionnaire for describing the negation system of a language [revised August 2016]

General information on Wam



– *ná: wàm* ‘the Wam language’
(KUGAMA)

- Spoken in a number of villages in Mayo-Belwa LGA and Fufore LGA of Adamawa State
- Yendang group of the Adamawa language family
- 5000 speakers (Ethnologue)

Previous research on Wam

- First field trip conducted in Yola, the capital of Adamawa State, in January 2014 as part of research for my BA and later for my MA theses at St. Petersburg State University, Russia
- Second fieldwork mission to Wam communities in March – June 2017, and third (but not last) during April – May 2018 as part of my PhD project from Labex EFL (project LC2 “Areal phenomena in northern sub-Saharan Africa”)

Clausal declarative negation

- Symmetric negation

The negative marker \tilde{a} is added at the end of the corresponding positive clause. This type of negation is restricted to non-verbal predications involving the identificational copula / focus marker \grave{a} .

(1) \grave{a} $w\grave{e}p\bar{o}k\bar{i}$ $\grave{a}\text{-}r\acute{e}$
COP farmer COP-3SG
'He is a farmer'

(2) \grave{a} $w\grave{e}p\bar{o}k\bar{i}$ $\grave{a}\text{-}r\acute{e}$ \tilde{a}
COP farmer COP-3SG NEG
'He is not a farmer'

Clausal declarative negation

- Asymmetric negation

It is expressed by a **discontinuous negation marker** [ɲa_ã]. The discontinuous negation marker is found in verbal and **non-verbal** (locative) predications.

(3) *dě* *bátō*
 3SG.HUM bush
 ‘He is in the bush’

(4) *dě* *ɲā* *bátō* *ã*
 3SG.HUM NEG bush NEG
 ‘He is not in the bush’

Clausal declarative negation

- Asymmetric negation

It is expressed by a **discontinuous negation marker** [ɲa_ã]. The discontinuous negation marker is found in **verbal** and non-verbal predications.

(5) *ā* *lū-wà* *màrī*
1SG sleep-? a lot
‘I sleep a lot’

(6) *mé* *ɲā* *lū* *màrī* *ã*
1SG NEG sleep a lot NEG
‘I do not sleep a lot’

The first element of the discontinuous negation marker [ɲa]

mé	1SG	ɲā	→	míē	1SG.NEG
dě	3SG.HUM	ɲā	→	děē	3SG.HUM.NEG

dìɲsì	‘tree’	ɲā	→	dìɲ sìē	‘tree.NEG’
dzìmā	‘needle’	ɲā	→	dzì māā	‘needle.NEG’
dýéké	‘house’	ɲā	→	dýé kéē	‘house.NEG’
sējámōkū	‘tale’	ɲā	→	sējámō kūō	‘tale.NEG’

The first element of the discontinuous negation marker [ɲa]

Future clause [S + à]

- (7) *Mūsā* *sōkī*
Musa.FUT dance
‘Musa will dance’ / ‘Musa can dance’

Future negative clause [ɲā + à]

- (8) *Àlī* *ɲā* *mòkī* *hē* *ā̄*
Ali NEG.FUT eat here NEG
‘Ali will not eat here / Ali cannot eat here’

Negation in non-declaratives

- **Imperative**

(9) [bàkū-mū]

bàkī-mū

help-SG

‘Help! (addressed to one person)’

(10) [bàkū-nū]

bàkī-nū

help-PL

‘Help! (addressed to several persons)’

- **Prohibitive**

Prohibitive is introduced by *sè-*, which is followed by a pronominal addressee suffix. And it ends in the negative marker *ã*.

(11) *sè-mū bàkī ã*

PROH-SG help NEG

‘Don’t help!
(addressed to one person)’

(12) *sè-nū bàkī ã*

PROH-PL help NEG

‘Don’t help!
(addressed to several persons)’

Negation of non-main clause

Negation of a complex sentence is formed by a discontinuous negation marker [ɲa_ã]. The second element *ã* is placed at the end of a sentence regardless whether a main or a subordinate clause is negated. Negation of the main or non-main clause is marked by *ɲa*, which occurs immediately after subject.

- (13) *á kã-té bã dĕ ɲã tì éré ã*
 1SG see-PFV that 3SG NEG PROG come NEG
 ‘I saw that he is not coming’

- (14) *mé ɲã mâ-tĕ má Yálō bá lūmō ã*
 1SG NEG notice-PFV that Yalo in market NEG
 ‘I didn’t notice that Yalo was in the market’

Coordination of two negatives [ḃḃ]

The coordination of two negated elements is expressed by *ḃḃ*. It occurs in verbal and non-verbal clauses.

(15)	à	wàpḃkī	à-mé	ā̃	à	wàbèkī	<i>ḃḃ</i>	à-mé	ā̃
	COP	farmer	COP-1SG	NEG	COP	hunter	NEG.CRD	COP-1SG	NEG

‘I am not a farmer, neither am I a hunter’

The particle [mā]

[mā] in Wam is probably related to the modal particle *ma* ‘too, also, even, still’ in Hausa [Newman 2000:327]:

(16) à wèpōkī à-ré **ã**, Àlī **mā** ‘He is not a farmer, neither is Ali’

(17) -mé **nā** sã̀ nágūrá **ã** ‘I do not speak Yendang’
-mē **mā** ‘Neither do I’

(18) -‘I like football’
- mē **mā** ‘Me too’

Contrastive negation

The suffix *-r̃* occurs only in verbal predication.

- (19) *dě* *ɲā* *pō* *ā̃,* *dě* *bē-r̃*
3SG.HUM NEG farm NEG 3SG.HUM hunt-FOC?
‘He does not farm, he hunts’

- (20) *ɓ̀* *ɲā* *gbēɲtēlē* *ā̃,* *ɓ̀* *sīrīrī*
3SG.NHUM NEG wide NEG 3SG.NHUM narrow
‘It is not wide, it is narrow’

Indefinites

- ‘**nothing**’ – clausal negation and *óse* ‘anything’ (it originates from *sè* ‘thing, something’);

(21) *dé* *nā* *kèm-rī* *óse* *ã*
3SG.HUM NEG say-PFV anything NEG
‘He said nothing’/ ‘He did not say anything’

(22) *óse* *nā* *támé-rē* *ã*
anything NEG please-3SG.OBJ NEG
‘Nothing pleases him’

Indefinites

- ‘nobody’ – clausal negation and *úwēm* ‘anybody’ (it originates from *wēm* ‘person, somebody’);

(23) *dě* *nā* *kà-tē* *úwēm* *nè* *ā̃*
3SG.HUM NEG see-PFV anybody there NEG
‘He did not see anybody there’

Indefinites

- ‘**nowhere**’ – clausal negation and *śtē̄* ‘anywhere’ (it originates from *tē̄* ‘place’)

(24)	<i>mó</i>	<i>ṅā</i>	<i>hōkī-ḍ</i>	<i>śtē̄</i>	<i>ā̄</i>
	2SG	NEG.FUT	find-3SG.NHUM	anywhere	NEG
	‘You will find it nowhere’				

- ‘never’ - clausal negation [ɲa_ã];
- clausal negation [ɲa_ã] and *meti* - ‘ever’

(25) *mé* *ɲã* *yémikī* *à* *bò* *ã̃*
 1SG NEG.FUT forget PREP it NEG
 ‘I will never forget it’ (lit. ‘I will not forget it’)

(26) *mò* *mētī* *ákī-wā* *Légōs* *á?*
 2SG ever go-? Lagos QM
 ‘Have you ever been in Lagos?’

(27) *mé* *ɲã* *mētī* *ákī* *Légōs* *ã̃*
 1SG NEG ever go Lagos NEG
 ‘I have never been in Lagos’

Negation and Focus

The first element of the discontinuous negation marker *na* is not used in cleft constructions with the focus marker / identificational copula *à*

(28) *à* *dyēkē* *dě* *māà-rié* *ã* *à* *būm* *dě* *māà-rié*
 FOC house 3SG.HUM build-PFV.? NEG FOC roundhut 3SG.HUM build-PFV.?

‘It is not a house he built but a roundhut’

(29) *à* *kpàm* *māà-rí* *dyēkéè* *ã*
 FOC chief build-PFV house.? NEG

‘It is the chief who did not build a house’

- Sentence-level negation in Wam;
- Derived negative lexemes (like ‘happy’- ‘unhappy’) were not found in Wam. Only sentence-level negation is possible: ‘The person is not happy’;
- I didn’t find possibilities of multiple marking of negation in Wam so far, e.g. ‘I couldn’t **not** to ask questions’