

## CHAPTER 23

## Negation

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## 23.1 Introduction

This chapter explores (standard) negation in Bantu languages. This is a vast research area of which many (mostly formal) aspects have received ample attention in the previous literature (e.g. Westphal 1958b; Kamba Muzenga 1981; Güldemann 1996; 1999a; Nurse 2008; Devos and Van der Auwera 2013). The present chapter aims to summarize the existing literature, at the same time pointing out some interesting areas for further research (e.g. the expression of metalinguistic negation, phasal polarity expressions like ‘not yet’, the relation of negation to information structure, and negative indefinites). Four main topics are addressed. The first topic (section 23.2) concerns the variation in the formal means of encoding negation in Bantu languages. Although negation is typically expressed through verbal inflection, this still allows for considerable variation: affixes, auxiliaries, and particles typically found in the vicinity of verbs are all known to mark negation. Moreover, different strategies can combine, leading to patterns of double, triple, and even quadruple negation. The language-internal and cross-linguistic variation in the expression of negation is suggestive of change, which is the topic of section 23.3. The genesis of verb-internal negative markers and renewal of negation through Jespersen Cycles are rather well-studied paths of change. Still, dedicated expressions of metalinguistic negation as a by-product of processes of change in the expression of standard negation and the possible relevance of prohibitives and negative existentials for renewal within the negative system of Bantu languages are interesting areas for further research. The third topic (section 23.4) compares negative verb systems to affirmative ones. The relation is typically asymmetric in nature and the example, par excellence, of this asymmetry, i.e. the expression of ‘not yet’, is given special attention. The fourth and last topic (section 23.5) considers the relation between negation and information structure. What can the behaviour of negative verb forms with respect to the conjoint/disjoint alternation and the presence or absence of an augment on a post-verbal noun tell us about (intrinsic) focus carried by negation? The chapter closes with a brief look at negative indefinites in Bantu languages.

## 23.2 Negation as a verbal category in Bantu

Section 23.2.1 presents five common strategies for the expression of negation in Bantu languages. The most pervasive strategies concern verbal affixes. Periphrastic negation is also attested, and so are pre-verbal and post-verbal particles, which tend to come close to the verb and may be absorbed by it. Section 23.2.2 then goes on to discuss the ways in which these strategies may combine to express standard negation. Patterns of double, triple, and even quadruple negation are presented.

## 23.2.1 Common negation strategies in Bantu languages

Bantu languages are verb-centred (Nurse 2008: 21), and negation represents one of the many categories that are usually expressed by verbal inflection. Figure 23.1 is a template of a typical Bantu verb form.

Negation is usually expressed in the pre-initial or the post-initial slot; i.e. before or after the subject marker. Examples from Swahili and Lungu serve to illustrate the pre-initial and the post-initial strategy, respectively.<sup>1</sup>

## (1) Swahili

ha-tu-ta-lim-a  
NEG-SM1PL-FUT-cultivate-FV  
‘We will not work on the field.’

## (2) Lungu (Bickmore 2007: 184)

tú-táa-ku-ful-a  
SM1PL-NEG-PROG-wash-FV  
‘We are not washing.’

The pre-initial and the post-initial strategy are by far the commonest negation strategies in Bantu languages and of long standing (Meeussen 1967: 114; Kamba Muzenga 1981; Nurse 2008: 184). Proto-Bantu reconstructions have been suggested for morphemes in both positions. Most pre-initial

<sup>1</sup> All glosses from examples taken from the literature have been adjusted to the conventions of the present volume.

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
pre-initial	initial	post-initial	formative	pre-radical	radical	pre-final	final
TAM/NEG	subject	NEG	TAM	object	verb root	derivation/TAM	final

**Figure 23.1** Bantu linear verb structure

(adapted from Meeussen 1967)

negative markers are reflexes of *\*(n)ka* (cf. the Swahili pre-initial *ha-*) and to a lesser extent of *\*(n)t*, *\*(n)ta*, and *\*ti/ci* (Nurse 2008: 181; Kamba Muzenga 1981). The pre-initial and the subject marker recurrently carry a LH tonal pattern, irrespective of the lexical tone of the morphemes involved (Meeussen 1967: 114; Nurse 2008: 181, 184). Most post-initial negative markers are reflexes of *\*ti/ci* and less frequently of *\*ta* (cf. the Lungu post-initial *-taa-*), *\*ka* and *\*ca* (Nurse 2008: 180; Kamba Muzenga 1981). Nurse (2008: 184) indicates that the tone of the post-initial typically contrasts with the tone of the subject marker and the root. Whether the post-initial carries its lexical tone or whether some other pattern prevails when the subject marker and the root do not have the same tone remains unclear. Some Bantu languages have a non-pre-initial negative marker which follows the formative rather than the subject marker. Digo is a case in point (Nicolle 2013: 88–89, 92–95). It has a pre-initial negative marker *ta-* for the negation of main declarative clauses, (3a), a post-initial negative marker *-si-* for the negation of subjunctives and conditionals, (3b), and a post-formative negative marker *-sa-* for the negation of potentials and sequentials, (3c).

(3) Digo (Nicolle 2013: 88, 93, 95)

- a. *ta-hu-many-a*  
NEG-SM2PL-know-FV  
'We do not know.'
- b. *a-si-nge-hend-a*  
SM2-NEG-COND-do-FV  
'If they had not done ...'
- c. *n-ka-sa-kpwedz-a*  
SM1SG-COND-NEG-15.come-FV  
'If I don't come ...'

I treat the post-formative negative marker as a subtype of the post-initial strategy. Examples of other Bantu languages with a post-formative negative marker are Fang (Ondo-Mebiame 1992: 600) and Changana (Sitoe 2001: 233).

When the pre-initial and the (extended) post-initial strategy co-occur in one and the same language, the choice between one and the other strategy tends to depend on clause type (Meinhof 1906: 65; Meeussen 1967: 114; Güldemann 1996; 1999a). As already suggested by the Digo examples in (3a,c), the pre-initial strategy tends to be used for standard negation, whereas the post-initial strategy tends to be reserved for more marked negation types. Likewise in Swahili, the pre-initial negative marker *ha-* is used for standard negation (1), while the post-initial negative marker *-si-* is used to negate subjunctives and relatives, as seen in (4) and (5), respectively.<sup>2</sup>

(4) Swahili

*u-si-lim-e*  
SM2SG-NEG-cultivate-SBJV  
'Do not cultivate! / You should not cultivate.'

(5) Swahili

*wa-si-po-lim-a*  
SM2-NEG-REL16-cultivate-FV  
'When/Where they do not cultivate ...'

Two other negation strategies synchronically available in Bantu languages show the same clause-type dependent distribution: pre-verbal particles and periphrastic negation, respectively. The former is not, strictly speaking, a verbal category. The Mbala pre-verbal negative particle *lo* in (6a), for example, can be separated from the verb by another element usually serving to strengthen the negation (Moyo-Kayita 1981: 77). Such is the case in (6b), where an adverb is inserted between *lo* and the verb.

(6) Mbala (Ndolo 1972: 75, 77)

a. *gágònusa ló ga-loomb-idi giluùngu*  
1.woman NEG SM1-ask-PFV 7.gourd  
'The woman has not asked for the gourd.'

<sup>2</sup> Note that Swahili uses yet another post-initial negative marker, i.e. *-to-*, for the negation of infinitives.

- b. gágònusa ló shèla ga-hos-idi  
 1.woman NEG really SM1-talk-PFV  
 ‘The woman has not at all talked.’

Still, it is well known that the pre-initial and the post-final slot of a Bantu verb form typically attract grammaticalized or grammaticalizing elements (Güldemann 2003a). Pre-verbal negative particles might thus develop into pre-initial negative prefixes.

Periphrastic negation typically involves an inherently negative auxiliary followed by an infinitive, as in the Manda example in (7): *-koto* is a reduced form of the inherently negative verb *-kotoka* ‘stop, leave (off), stop’ (Bernander 2017: 325; 2018a<sup>3</sup>).

- (7) Manda (Bernander 2017: 323)

mwa-kóto ku-túmíl-a sénde jóha  
 SM2PL.FUT.OBLI-NEG INF-use-FV 10.money 10.all  
 mú-gímbe  
 18-14.alcohol  
 ‘You should not spend all the money on alcohol.’

Post-verbal negation represents yet another negation strategy in Bantu languages. In Ndengeleko standard negation involves the post-verbal negator *kwáakv/kwáa*, as seen in (8).

- (8) Ndengeleko (Ström 2013: 273)

luno nzíbwike kwáaku ki-tabu  
 today SM1SG.forget.PFV NEG 7-book  
 ‘Today I have not forgotten my book.’

Post-verbal negation mostly occupies the post-final slot (suffix or enclitic) or the position immediately following the verb (particle). However, in a number of languages the post-verbal negator can be separated from the verb and typically occurs in clause-final position. Lingala is a case in point, as seen in (9).

- (9) Lingala (Meeuwis 1998: 40)

na-kok-í ko-kend-a na ndakó nayé té  
 SM1SG-can-PRS 15-go-INF to 9.house POSS1 NEG  
 ‘I cannot go to her house.’

This is remarkable as clause-final markers are not a prominent morphosyntactic feature of Bantu languages (Idiatov 2018). Idiatov (2018) argues that the clause-final position might well be an areal feature, the Bantu languages being outliers of an area spanning the east of West Africa and parts of Central Africa where clause-final negation is most prominent.

<sup>3</sup> For more on (intrinsic) negative verbs and the expression of negation in Bantu languages, see Bernander et al. (2023).

Whereas the verb-internal negative markers are widespread and long-standing, the other three strategies (pre-verbal and post-verbal marking and negative auxiliaries) are restricted in distribution and formally highly diverse, suggesting that they have resulted from relatively recent grammaticalization processes (Nurse 2008: 184). Moreover, post-verbal negative particles are characterized as *Wanderwörter* by Nurse (2008: 57, 180) implying that they are prone to borrowing.

### 23.2.2 Negative stacking in Bantu languages

In the examples above negation is expressed by a single negative strategy. However, double, and less frequently triple or even quadruple markings of negation are attested as well. One Bantu negation strategy which occupies the final slot in the verb template has not been mentioned so far because it always combines with the pre-initial, or less frequently, the post-initial strategy for the expression of negation. It concerns a final vowel *-i* or a vowel copy suffix and is mostly found in negative general presents (Meinhof 1906: 64; Werner 1919: 116; Meeussen 1967: 110; Kamba Muzenga 1981: 271; Nurse and Philippson 2006: 184; Nurse 2008: 180–181, 268–269). In Chimwiini (10) the final *-i* is used in combination with the pre-initial *ha-* for the expression of the negative habitual. In Koti the same final is used in combination with the post-initial negative marker to form the negative (narrative) infinitive or the negative situative (11), both arguably ‘timeless’ verb forms. In Lucazi the negative present (12) involves both the pre-initial negative marker *ka-* and a vowel copy suffix.

- (10) Chimwiini (Kisseberth and Abasheikh 2004: xxxiii)

ha-waa-kóm-i  
 NEG-SM2-reach-NEG  
 ‘They can’t reach.’

- (11) Koti (Schadeberg and Mucanheia 2000: 89)

ki-hí-c-í va-meéza  
 SM1sg-NEG-eat-NEG 16-6.table  
 ‘me not eating at the table’

- (12) Lucazi (Fleisch 2000: 187)

ká-tu-hét-e  
 NEG-SM1pl-arrive-NEG(VH<sup>4</sup>)  
 ‘We are not going to arrive.’

Exactly the same final vowels are also involved in the expression of positive near-past forms (Grégoire 1979; Nurse

<sup>4</sup> The glossing abbreviation VH stands for ‘vowel harmony’.

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and Philippson 2006: 183–187; Nurse 2008: 269–272). The final vowel *-i* with a near-past meaning is mostly found in languages that are geographically distant from languages where it is used to mark negative general present meanings. Fwe forms an exception to this pattern as it uses the final vowel *-i* in the near past perfective as well as in the negative present (Gunnink 2018: 402, n. 43). The vowel copy suffix more regularly occurs with both functions in single languages. Lucazi is a case in point, as seen in (13), where the vowel copy suffix is used in a verb form expressing a (positive) anterior.

- (13) Lucazi (Fleisch 2000: 154)  
 và-nà-hét-è  
 SM2-ANT-reach-FV(VH)  
 ‘they have reached’

This recurring formal overlap (whether attested in single languages or not) between expressing positive near-past and negative non-past meanings suggests a semantic link, which, however, remains to be uncovered. Perhaps the so-called (positive) ‘stative’ use (Nurse 2008: 268, 270; Nurse and Philippson 2006: 184, 186) of the final *-i* could shed some light on the issue.

Another frequent pattern (possibly the most frequent one) of double negative marking involves a verb-internal negative marker (pre-initial or post-initial) in combination with a post-verbal particle (either immediately following the verb or clause-final, cf. Devos and Van der Auwera 2013 for an overview). Examples of post-verbal negative markers combining with a pre-initial and a post-initial negative marker for the expression of negation are given in (14) and (15), respectively.

- (14) Ruwund (Nash 1992: 696)  
 kè-z-in-à-p  
 NEG.SM1-come-PRS.CONT<sup>5</sup>-FV-NEG  
 ‘He is not coming. / He has not come. / He did not come.’
- (15) Nzebi (Marchal-Nasse 1989: 421)  
 bi-voonda bí-saa-díβæg-a ma-póónzí vɛ  
 2-elder SM2-NEG.PRS-close-FV 6-basket NEG  
 ‘The elders do not close the basket.’

Less frequent patterns include the co-occurrence of two pre-verbal negative markers, a pre-verbal and a pre-initial negative marker, a pre-initial and a post-initial negative marker, a pre-verbal and a post-verbal negative marker, a final negative marker and a post-verbal negative marker, and two post-verbal negative markers, illustrated in that order in (16) to (21).

<sup>5</sup> The glossing abbreviation CONT stands for ‘continuous’.

- (16) Kwezo (Forges 1983: 330)  
 lo gwâmi nga-swěg-a  
 NEG NEG SM1SG-hide-FV  
 ‘I do not hide.’
- (17) Nsambaan (Koni Muluwa, personal communication)  
 Marie te ke-yím-á lóó  
 Mary NEG NEG.SM1-sing-FV NEG  
 ‘Mary does not sing.’<sup>6</sup>
- (18) Changana (Sitoe 2001: 233)  
 a-hí-nga-tá-nghén-á  
 NEG-SM1PL-NEG-FUT-enter-FV  
 ‘We will not enter.’
- (19) Tumbuka (Young 1932: 140)  
 iai kuti n-ku-ku-khumb-a cha  
 no NEG SM1SG-PROG-OM2SG-want-FV NEG  
 ‘No, I don’t want you.’
- (20) Guta (Dembetembe 1986: 7)  
 ha-ndzí-zíw-í-ba zviro zvácho  
 NEG-SM1SG-know-NEG-NEG 8.thing DEMII8  
 ‘I don’t know the things.’
- (21) Salampasu (Ngalamulume 1977: 82)  
 náá-déd-élo-kú mu-tondú ba  
 SM1SG.PRS-cut-PFV-NEG 3-tree NEG  
 ‘I have not cut a tree.’

I can now give an updated and slightly adapted version of Güldemann’s (1996: 253) table of morphologically complex negation types. Table 23.1 shows which negation strategies are known to combine in Bantu languages. It distinguishes (in morphotactic/syntagmatic order) between 1) pre-verbal negation marker, 2) pre-initial negation marker, 3) post-initial negation maker, 4) final negation marker, and 5) post-verbal negation marker. Fields for combinations that are not in the right morphotactic or syntagmatic order are shaded black. If the field contains a number, the combination is attested and the number value refers to the relevant example. Fields with question marks are unattested but conceivable. Grey shaded fields concern combinations of identical slots within the verbal word. The combination of two pre-initial negative markers is not shaded grey, as it is conceivable that pre-verbal negative markers morphologize twice. If, for example, both obligatory pre-verbal negative markers in (16) morphologize and remain recognizable as distinct morphemes, this would result in double marking at the pre-initial position.

<sup>6</sup> Note that the presence of the pre-initial negative marker in Nsambaan appears to be restricted to some fused forms including a vowel-initial subject marker.

**Table 23.1** Combinations of Bantu negation strategies

	pre-verbal	pre-initial	post-initial	final	post-verbal
pre-verbal	(16)	(17)	?	?	(19)
pre-initial		?	(18)	(10), (12)	(14)
post-initial				(11)	(15)
final					(20)
post-verbal					(21)

Table 23.1 does not include the possibility of triple-negation marking. As shown by the examples in (17) and (20), triple negation does occur in Bantu languages (see also Devos et al. 2010 and Devos and Van der Auwera 2013). In Changana negation can be marked by three different negation markers within the verb (Sitoe 2001: 233). The negative future in (22) is a case in point.<sup>7</sup>

(22) Changana (Sitoe 2001: 233)

a-hí-nga-nghén-í  
NEG-SM1PL-NEG-enter-NEG  
'We will not enter.'

However, stacking of negative markers appears to be more frequent with (more recent) pre-verbal or post-verbal negative markers, as is the case with the double pre-verbal and post-verbal negative markers in Kwezo and Salampasu, respectively. In Kwezo the expression of negation typically (but according to Forges (1983: 378) not obligatorily so) involves an additional post-verbal negative marker, identical to the first pre-verbal negative marker, i.e. *lo*. An example of triple negative marking in Kwezo is given in (23).

(23) Kwezo (Forges 1983: 216)

ló gwâmi nga-swêg-a ídondó ló  
NEG NEG SM1SG-hide-FV 9.meat NEG  
'I have not hidden the meat.'

The third-person singular counterpart of the Salampasu example in (21) contains a segmental trace of the old pre-initial negative marker *ka-*, as can be seen in (24), which thus represents another example of triple-negation marking.

(24) Salampasu (Ngalamulume 1977: 82)

káá-déd-élo-kú mu-tóndú ba  
NEG.SM1-cut-PFV-NEG 3-tree NEG  
'He hasn't cut a tree.'

<sup>7</sup> It does not become clear from Sitoe (2001) what the difference in meaning is between the negative future in (22) and the one in (18).

One more example of stacking of post-verbal negative markers leading to triple negative marking is given in (25).

(25) Vili (Ndouli, personal communication)

minú i-sé-sumb ku vé bi-tébi  
I SM1SG-NEG-buy NEG NEG 8-banana  
'We have not bought bananas.'

In Kanincin stacking of post-verbal negative marking may eventually lead to quadruple negative marking. For now, the potential fourth negative marker (a locative possessive pronoun agreeing with the subject marker, i.e. *kwáám* in (26)) still has emphatic overtones.

(26) Kanincin (Devos et al. 2010)

ki-n-àà-búl-ááj p-ènd kwáám mwààn  
NEG-SM1SG-PRS-hit-PFV NEG-NEG NEG/at\_all 1.child  
'I have not (at all) hit the child.'

These patterns of redundant triple- or even quadruple-negation marking are admittedly rare, but they do show that negation is a category prone to renewal. In section 23.3 I look at some possible mechanisms behind such renewals.

## 23.3 Grammaticalization and cyclical change

The variety in the formal means of expressing negation as well as the combination of different means into a single negative strategy are suggestive of change. This section discusses six (hypothesized) pathways of change pertaining to negative constructions in Bantu languages. Section 23.3.1 briefly discusses the genesis of the pre-initial and the post-initial negation strategies. Renewal through Jespersen Cycles is discussed in section 23.3.2. Section 23.3.3 looks at the renewal of prohibitive strategies and the possible extension of prohibitive negation to other negation types. Signs of negative existential cycles in Bantu languages are discussed in Section 23.3.4.

### 23.3.1 The genesis of pre-initial and post-initial negation

The first two pathways concern the genesis of the two main Bantu negative strategies, i.e. post-initial and pre-initial negation. Güldemann (1996; 1999a) links the former to periphrastic negation involving a negative auxiliary followed by an infinitive and the latter to the merger of an illocutionary particle (mostly a negative copula) with a (dependent) finite verb form.



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Although some historical/comparative evidence exists for the first pathway most support for Güldemann's hypothesis comes from the functional correlation between the simplex and complex constructions in question in present-day languages (but see the Manda data in (50) for a language-internal account of this grammaticalization pathway). Both post-initial and periphrastic negation are typically used to negate verbal nouns, subjunctives, imperatives, relatives, and dependent clauses (Güldemann 1999a: 555). Examples of post-initial versus periphrastic negation to negate subjunctives have been given in (4) and (7), respectively. The examples in (27) and (28) involve relatives. Makwe uses the post-initial negative marker *-ka-*, whereas Ruund makes use of the negative auxiliary *-lik* 'stop, refuse'.

## (27) Makwe (Devos, field notes)

líi-na      lyá-wá-ká-kú-cem-ííte      wa-zeé  
 5-name    5.CON-SM2-NEG-OM2SG-call-PFV    2-parent  
 wáako  
 2.POSS2SG  
 'a name which your parents did not call you by'

## (28) Ruwund (Nash 1993: 670)

côm      (ci)-ni-lik-in-a      ku-kàt  
 7.thing    REL7-SM1SG-refuse-PRS.CONT-FV    15-like.INF  
 'the thing which I don't like'

For the second pathway, which suggests that the origin of the pre-initial negative marker lies in the merger of a negative copula with a dependent verb form, Güldemann (1996: 285–297; 1999a) finds two types of evidence. First, negative copulas are often phonetically similar to or even homophonous with pre-initial negative markers. Nyanja can serve to illustrate this. It makes use of the pre-initial negative marker *si-* (29a), which functions as a negative copula in the language (29b).

## (29) Nyanja (Stevick 1965: 174, cited from Güldemann 1999a: 568)

- a. si-ti-dza-pit-a  
    NEG-SM1pl-FUT-go-FV  
    'We won't go.'
- b. lelo      si      laciwili  
    today    NEG.COP    Tuesday  
    'Today isn't Tuesday.'

Second, negative tenses making use of the pre-initial negative strategy show characteristics typical of dependent tenses. The second type of evidence mainly concerns segmental and supra-segmental properties of the subject marker which are shared by negative and dependent tenses, but also shared TAM morphology, as shown by data from

Makwe. The affirmative past imperfective in Makwe has either a zero marker (30a) or *-na-* (30b) in the formative slot, depending on whether a conjoint or disjoint tense is involved. The negative counterpart, however, is marked by the TAM marker *-ci-*, which also marks the relative past imperfective, as shown in (30c,d).

## (30) Makwe (Devos 2008)

- a. a-lék-á ...    //SM1-leave-PST.IPFV.CJ//  
    'He was leaving ...'
- b. á-ná-léék-a    //SM1-PST.IPFV.DJ-leave-FV//  
    'He was leaving.'
- c. a-u-ci-léék-a    //NEG-SM2SG-PST.IPFV-leave-FV//  
    'You were not leaving.'
- d. pá-á-ci-léék-a    //REL16-SM1-PST.IPFV-leave-FV//  
    'when he was leaving'

## 23.3.2 Jespersen Cycles and negative stacking

The third pathway concerns recurrent patterns of double and even triple negation in Bantu languages. In a number of Bantu languages the main negative strategies, i.e. pre-initial or post-initial negation, are accompanied by a post-verbal negative particle, either occurring in the position immediately following the verb (14) or further away, typically in sentence-final position (15). Inspired by Bantu grammarians who link double negation to French *ne ... pas* and following Güldemann (1996: 256–258), Güldemann and Hagemeijer (2006: 7), Güldemann (2008b: 165), Nurse (2008: 57), and Güldemann (2011: 117), who explicitly link instances of double negation to Jespersen Cycles, Devos and Van der Auwera (2013) show that Jespersen Cycles are indeed in progress in Bantu languages and they identify some of the recurrent sources for post-verbal negative markers.<sup>8</sup> A first source, which cross-linguistically frequently takes part in Jespersen Cycles, concerns negative (answer) particles. In Ngombe the addition of the negative particle *ngása* 'nothing, never, alone' has a generalizing effect (i.e. 'not at all'), as seen in (31). In Duma the negative particle *v'*, also meaning 'nothing', is an obligatory exponent of negation, for which see (32).

<sup>8</sup> Dahl (1979: 88) coined the term 'Jespersen's Cycle' when referring to the following paragraph from Jespersen (1917: 4): 'The history of negative expressions in various languages makes us witness the following curious fluctuation: the original negative adverb is first weakened, then found insufficient and therefore strengthened, generally through some additional word, and this in turn may be felt as the negative proper and may then in course of time be subject to the same development as the original word.' Cf. Van der Auwera (2009; 2010).

- (31) Ngombe (Rood 1958: 334)

ó-ta-yán-á ngása  
SM2SG-NEG-go-FV nothing  
'You are not at all going.'

- (32) Duma (Mickala-Manfoumbi 1988: 144, 163)

besú kà-lì-bóm-à mútu vè  
we NEG-SM1PL-kill-FV 1.person NEG  
'We do not kill the person.'

Locative pronouns constitute a second recurrent source of post-verbal negative markers in Bantu languages. In Zeela the class 16 locative pronoun *-po* suffixed to a negative verb form can have either a locative or an emphatic negative reading, as seen in (33). In Ruwund suffixation of the locative pronoun *-p(a)* is obligatory for the expression of negation, cf. (14) and (34).

- (33) Zeela (Kabange Mukala, personal communication, cited from Devos and Van der Auwera 2013)

n-ki-mú-kupiil-ée-pó  
SM1SG-NEG-OM1-hit-PFV-16.LOC  
'I have not hit him there.' / 'I have not hit him at all.'

- (34) Ruwund (Nash 1992: 696)

ki-na-tèk-aap ma-long  
NEG-SM1SG.P2-place-FV.NEG 6-plate 16  
pa mes  
9.table  
'I did not place the plates on the table.'

Locatives are not mentioned as a possible source of negative markers in the typological literature (cf. Heine et al. 1993, Heine and Kuteva 2002, Van der Auwera 2009, 2010). However, Devos and Van der Auwera (2013) argue that it is their derived partitive meaning, illustrated in (35) for Ruwund and for which see also Persohn and Devos (2017), rather than their original locative meaning, which causes their recruitment in a Jespersen Cycle.

- (35) Ruwund (Nash 1992: 971)

ku-pund-àp  
15-dig-INF.PART<sup>9</sup>  
'to dig a bit'

Possessives are another cross-linguistically rare source of post-verbal negative markers in Bantu languages. They occur in two forms; either the bare possessive stem or a locative possessive pronoun, typically agreeing with the subject marker in person and number. Bare possessive stems are also used as post-verbal negative markers outside Narrow Bantu, in Grassfields Bantu (Asongwed 1980; Mihas 2009),

<sup>9</sup> The glossing abbreviation PART stands for 'partitive'.

Jukunoid (Koops 2009; Anyanwu 2012) and Adamawa-Ubangi (Tucker and Bryan 1966; Dryer 2009). Within Bantu they are either an optional or an obligatory part of negation, as in closely related Enya (36) and Lengola (37), respectively. When optional they are said to mark some kind of emphasis, which is, however, often left untranslated.

- (36) Enya (Spa 1973: 115)

mítá-timból-ángáábó  
SM6.NEG.PFV-turn-FV.NEG-(POSS2)  
'They have not turned.'

- (37) Lengola (Ikamanya 1977: 40)

sí-lim-áni sá-lim-ésé  
NEG.SM1SG-work- NEG.SM1-work-NEG(<POSS1)  
NEG(<POSS1SG)  
'I have not worked.' 'S/He has not worked.'

Locative possessive pronouns are mostly optional for the expression of negation. Whereas they have a generalizing effect in some languages, for which see (38), they appear to be conventionalized in others, as in (26), i.e. they are typically but not obligatorily present and their presence does not appear to cause a change in meaning.

- (38) Ruwund (Nash 1992: 532)

kí-na-lánd-ín-aap kwaam yôm  
NEG-SM1SG.PST-buy-PFV-FV.NEG 17.POSS1SG 8.thing  
yivûd  
8.many  
'I didn't buy many things at all.'

Devos and Van der Auwera (2013) argue that possessives are recruited in Jespersen Cycles because of their use as emphatic or (contrastive) focus markers, illustrated in (39) and (40), respectively.

- (39) Enya (Spa 1973: 132)

wá-timból-ak-ε-ánde  
SM1.PRS-turn-PLUR<sup>10</sup>-FV-POSS1  
'S/He really turns'.

- (40) Ntandu (Mfulani 1963: 76)

η-kum-iní kwámo  
SM1SG-arrive-PFV 17.POSS1SG  
'I have arrived.' (i.e. I thought I never would)

As can be gathered from (38) and the examples (23)–(26) in the preceding section, Jespersen Cycles in Bantu languages can result in stacking of negative markers rather than in replacement of an original negative marker by a post-verbal one. Although erosion and loss of especially the pre-initial negative marker are attested (e.g. Ndengeleko in (8)), the

<sup>10</sup> The glossing abbreviation PLUR stands for 'pluractional'.

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inherited verb-internal negative markers are often retained and a new Jespersen Cycle can set in at a doubling and even a tripling stage (cf. the potential quadruple negation in Kanincin (26)).<sup>11</sup> A very interesting but little-studied by-product of Jespersen Cycles is the use of an older negative strategy for what has been referred to as metalinguistic negation. In his seminal article on metalinguistic negation, Horn (1985) argues that the distinction between descriptive and metalinguistic negation is an instance of pragmatic ambiguity. The sentence in (41), for example, could be an instance of descriptive negation, implying that Max has no or less than three children. However, it could also be used in a metalinguistic way, to imply that Max has no less than four children. In the latter case negation does not function as a truth-functional operator but it indicates the unwillingness of the speaker to assert something in a given way.

(41) English (Horn 1985: 139)

Max doesn't have three children.

Horn (1985) notes that languages tend not to make a morphological distinction between descriptive and metalinguistic negation. Very little is known about the expression of metalinguistic negation in Bantu languages. Examples of metalinguistic negation like the one from Ruwund in (54d), in section 23.3.3, are only rarely found in grammatical descriptions. However, there are some cases where metalinguistic negation appears to involve a dedicated negative strategy. Shona presents a doubtful case. The expression of what Horn (1985: 139) refers to as scalar metalinguistic negation involves standard negation (cf. the use of the pre-initial negative marker *ha-*) and a conventionalized (but not obligatory) reduplicated pronoun co-referential with the complement of the negative verb form

(42) Shona (Dembetembe 1986: 7)

ha-í-si      mvúrá      íyoyo      yanáyá  
NEG-SM9-be   9.rain   DEM9.RED<sup>12</sup>   REL9.PST.rain

nhási      masakáti  
this      afternoon

'It rained heavily this afternoon.' (lit. 'It is not rain which fell this afternoon.')

More convincing cases are found in languages which synchronically attest different stages of a Jespersen Cycle, one of which is then wholly or partly reserved for metalinguistic negation. Kanincin is a case in point. Negation in Kanincin regularly involves triple marking. Two strategies involving double negation are still available in the language. One is only used to emphatically confirm something (43), whereas this is the preferred although not the only reading of the other double negation strategy (43b).

<sup>11</sup> For other instances of triple and even quadruple negation in the languages of the world, see Van der Auwera et al. (2016) and Vossen (2013).

<sup>12</sup> The glossing abbreviation RED stands for 'reduplication'.

(43) Kanincin (Devos et al. 2010: 175)

a. w-él-ááj      àànc      kà-kwíít      p-ènd  
SM2SG-say-TAM      that      NEG.SM1-hold.TAM      NEG-NEG

díílóŋ      kà-kwíít-ènd      diìlòŋ  
5.plate      NEG.SM1-hold-NEG/META<sup>13</sup>      5.plate

'You said that she did not have the plate but she most certainly has it.'

b. n-áá-mán-ààŋ      kámésh      kí-kámésh-âp  
SM1SG-TAM-see-TAM      12.cat      NEG-12.cat-NEG/META

'I have seen a cat, an enormous/very beautiful cat.' (/ 'I have seen a cat, it is not a cat.')

### 23.3.3 Renewal of prohibitive strategies and beyond

A fourth pathway of change (and possibly an important impetus for the first pathway) concerns prohibitive constructions. On the basis of a sample of 100 Bantu languages Devos and Van Olmen (2013) find that Bantu prohibitive strategies show great formal variety ranging, in order of decreasing frequency, from negative subjunctives (44) and negative auxiliary constructions (45) through constructions with prohibitive markers (46) and negative infinitives (47) to negative indicatives (48) and negative imperatives (49).

(44) Shangaji (Devos, field notes)

u-si-khol-e  
SM2SG-NEG-grasp-SBJV  
'Don't grasp!'

(45) Ndali (Nurse 2007c)

many-e      u-bal-e  
know-SBJV      SM2SG-count-SBJV  
'Don't count!'

(46) Ruwund (Nash 1992: 814)

ku-tek      ma-long      pa      mes      bwat  
15-place.INF      6-plate      16      9.table      PROH  
'Don't put the plates on the table!'

(47) Mbala (Moyo-Kayita 1981: 78–79)

gú-dy-a      lo      /      lo      gú-dy-a  
15-eat-INF      NEG      NEG      15-eat-INF  
'Don't eat!'

(48) Shimaore (Rombi 1983: 60)

ka-u-si-som-a  
NEG-SM2SG-NEG-read-FV  
'Don't read!' / 'You do not read.'

<sup>13</sup> The glossing convention META stands for 'metalinguistic'.



- (49) Nzebi (Marchal-Nasse 1989: 505)

sa-vád-á      penda  
 NEG-plant-IMP    peanut  
 ‘Don’t plant the peanuts!’

At least thirty-nine languages in the sample exhibit more than one strategy. Such cross-linguistic and language-internal variation is indicative of change. Devos and Van Olmen (2013) attribute change in the expression of prohibition to a number of factors, one of which has to do with the face-threatening nature of prohibitives which pressures languages to come up with ‘new variants whose pragmatic force is freed from the history of existing formulas’ (Evans 2007: 393 and in different wordings also Hopper and Traugott 2003: 42). Another factor concerns the conventionalization of functional subtypes like warnings and cessatives. The conventionalized prohibitive in (45) most probably has its origin in a warning (e.g. ‘know that you will fall’ > ‘don’t fall’).

Next to taking an unstable form, prohibitives are also claimed to be ‘a major conduit through which innovation occurs’ (Nurse 2008: 191). Nurse (2008: 191–193) suggests that prohibitive constructions involving an auxiliary followed by (the infinitive of) a full verb might—after the reduction of the auxiliary to CV—spread to other negation types. Güldemann (1996; 1999a) argues that such constructions are typically used for non-main negation types.<sup>14</sup> This expectation is borne out in Manda, where the negative cessative verb *-kotok-* ‘leave (off), stop’ has spread from marking prohibitives (50a), to three of the four other non-main negation types mentioned by Güldemann (1996; 1999a): negative subjunctives (50b), negative infinitives (50c), and negative hypotactical adverbial clauses (50d). *-kotok-* is not used to negate relatives in Manda.

- (50) Manda (Bernander 2017: 328)

a. Ø-kotok-ayi    ku-tumbul-a    ku-lov-a    somba  
 Ø-NEG-SBJV2    15-begin-INF    15-fish-INF    10.fish  
 ‘Don’t begin to fish.’

- b. (Bernander 2018a: 658)

u-koto      ku-gend-a    na    mundu  
 SM2SG-NEG    15-walk-INF    with    1.person

oyu    ndava    mwifi  
 DEM1    because    1.thief

‘You shouldn’t hang out with him because he is a thief.’

- c. (Bernander 2017: 324)

ku-kotok-a    ku-y-a    wakapi  
 15-NEG-INF    15-be-INF    alone  
 ‘to not be alone’

- d. (Bernander 2018a: 659)

ku-y-ayi      ngati    i-kotok-ayi      ku-dindol-a  
 15-be-SBJV2    COND    SM9-NEG-SBJV2    15-open-FV  
 mapema  
 early  
 ‘if I hadn’t opened early’

### 23.3.4 Negative existential cycles in Bantu languages?

A fifth pathway of change involves dedicated negative existential constructions (Bernander et al. 2022). In many Bantu languages negative existentials are formed by applying standard negation strategies to an affirmative existential construction. Shangaji is a case in point. Existentials are negated through the use of the pre-initial negative marker *kha-* (which in (51) is merged with the class 17 locative prefix *u-*).

- (51) (Devos, field notes)

leélo    khu-na      má-tthónddowaá-wo  
 today    NEG.SM17-be.with    6-star-17.LOC  
 ‘Today there are no stars.’

However, dedicated negative existentials are attested as well. They typically involve an adjective or adverb meaning ‘vain, empty, only’ (often a reflex of PB *\*-twever* ‘in vain, empty, only’ (Bastin et al. 2002; Angenot-Bastin 1977)) or a verb with a negative lexical meaning, as seen in (52) and (53), respectively.

- (52) Matuumbi (Odden 1996: 304)

uláa    ndupú  
 rain    18.only  
 ‘There is no rain.’

- (53) Ruwund (Nash 1992: 840)

p-ìkil      côm  
 SM16-not.be    7.thing  
 ‘There is nothing there.’

The Ruwund strategy, involving the negative verb *-iikil* and a locative subject marker, shows signs of expanding its usage range as it is also attested in prohibitives (54a) and other negative deontic expressions (54b), negative tag questions (54c), and a particular type of metalinguistic negation (expressing strong affirmation) (54d).

<sup>14</sup> Nurse (2008: 193, n. 25), however, notes that several languages in zones A and C have negative morphemes of the shapes [le, de, le, de] which may derive from the cessative auxiliary *-dèka* ‘let, let go, cease, allow’ (Bastin et al. 2002). In Nen (A44) the negative marker *-le-* appears to be restricted to non-main negation types but in Nugunu (A62), for example, the post-initial negative marker *-de-* is used for all negation types (Nurse 2007).

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(54) Ruwund (Nash 1992: 842)

- a. p-ìikil      wa-mu-lej  
NEG.EXIST   SM2SG.NAR-OM1-tell  
'Don't tell her/him.'
- b. kw-ìikil      ku-làb      ku shikòl  
NEG.EXIST   15-be.late.INF   17   school  
'Better not be late for school.'
- c. p-ìikil      wà-cì-landin  
NEG.EXIST/TAG   SM1.PST-OM7-buy.PFV  
'S/He did not buy it, did s/he?'
- d. a-màn-a      mar      kw-ìikil  
SM2-saw-PST   6.difficulty   NEG.EXIST/META  
mutàpu  
3.way  
'They suffered terribly.' (lit. 'they saw difficulty, there is no way')

Rather than spreading towards standard negation, as would be expected in a true Negative Existential Cycle (cf. Croft 1991, Veselinova 2016), the existential negator remains restricted to marked negation types in Ruwund. As shown in Bernander et al. (2020), the expansion of existential negators into the domain of standard negation indeed does not appear to be common in the Bantu languages. In a geographically diverse sample of ninety-three languages the only clear cases of a negative existential marker becoming the standard negative marker occur in language varieties heavily influenced by contact. Pogolo, a language heavily influenced by Swahili, is a case in point. It uses a reduced form of Standard Swahili *hapana* 'no' (< *ha-pa-na* //NEG-SM16-be.with// 'there is no') for the expression of standard negation.

(55) Pogolo (Nurse 2007c)

- hapa-tu-hemer-a  
NEG-SM1PL-buy-FV  
'We are not buying.'

## 23.4 Asymmetric negation and the case of 'not yet'

Bantu languages pervasively display asymmetric negation. Nevertheless, negative tenses tend to be described as counterparts of affirmative tenses. The 'not yet' tense, however, commonly falls out of this pattern, as it is often expressed through a specialized form which on formal grounds cannot be linked to an affirmative counterpart. Section 23.4.1 discusses the symmetric versus asymmetric nature of Bantu negation and a preliminary account of the expression of 'not yet' in Bantu languages is presented in section 23.4.2.

### 23.4.1 Symmetric or asymmetric negation?

Meeussen (1967: 114) indicates that 'negative tenses in Proto-Bantu may have differed radically from affirmative tenses (as in some languages), or they may have been derivable from them in a regular way (as in some other languages); it is not possible as yet to present any definite conclusions'. Some present-day Bantu languages indeed have what Miestamo (2005) refers to as 'symmetric negation', at least within the domain of standard negation. Ndengeleko, which simply adds a post-verbal negative marker to the affirmative verb form, is a case in point. However, mixed systems with asymmetries on a syntagmatic as well as on a paradigmatic level appear to be the rule rather than the exception. In Swahili, for example, the negative future is suggestive of symmetric negation. The pre-initial negative marker is added to the affirmative future to express a negative future. No further changes on a formal or a functional level are involved.

(56) Swahili

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a. affirmative future | b. negative future    |
| tu-ta-imb-a           | ha-tu-ta-imb-a        |
| SM1PL-FUT-sing-FV     | NEG-SM1PL-FUT-sing-FV |
| 'We will sing.'       | 'We will not sing.'   |

However, the negative present involves the addition of the pre-initial negative marker *ha-*, the substitution of the final vowel *-a* by *-i*, and the omission of the present (progressive) formative *-na-*. Moreover, as well as displaying syntagmatic asymmetry the negative present also reflects paradigmatic asymmetry, as it serves as a negative equivalent of the present progressive, the general present, and the present habitual (cf. Nurse 2007c).<sup>15</sup>

(57) Swahili

- |  |
|--|
| a. affirmative present progressive               |
| tu-na-imb-a                                      |
| SM1PL-PROG-sing-FV                               |
| 'We are singing.'                                |
| b. negative progressive/general present/habitual |
| ha-tu-imb-i                                      |
| NEG-SM1PL-sing-NEG                               |
| 'We are not singing.' / 'We do not sing.'        |
| c. affirmative general present                   |
| tu-a-imb-a                                       |
| SM1PL-PRS-sing-FV                                |
| 'We sing.'                                       |

<sup>15</sup> Contini-Morava (1989: 30) furthermore shows that in discourse the negative present can correspond to all Swahili main affirmative tenses.

## d. affirmative habitual

sisi hu-imb-a  
 we HAB-sing-FV  
 ‘We habitually sing.’

This paradigmatic asymmetry is typical for Bantu languages (and beyond), the negative system usually displaying less categorial (i.e. TAM and other categories expressed on a Bantu verb) distinctions than the affirmative system.<sup>16</sup> Although it is generally acknowledged that TAM distinctions under negation differ from those under affirmation and thus deserve to be studied in their own right (as explicitly stated by inter alia Givón 1975a, Contini-Morava 1989, and Fleisch 2000), many grammars present negative tenses as mere equivalents of positive tenses. However, as also indicated by Nurse (2008: 196), at least two tenses regularly fall out of this pattern, the ‘not yet’ and the ‘no longer’ tenses. They are typically regarded as isolated negatives, exclusively belonging to the negative domain. Languages like Kirundi, where expressions of phasal polarity (Van Baar 1997; Kramer 2018) form a symmetrical system, ‘not yet’ being realized as ‘not (already do/undergo X)’ and ‘no longer’ as ‘not (still do/undergo X)’, thus seem to be the exception rather than the rule.<sup>17</sup>

(58) Kirundi (Meeussen 1959: 124, 138, 128, 139; Schadeberg 1990: 7–9)

- |                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. ‘already’                     | ‘not yet’                    |
| tu-ráa-kúbuur-a                  | ńti-tu-ráa-kúbuur-a          |
| SM1PL-INC <sup>18</sup> -turn-FV | NEG-SM1PL-INC-turn-FV        |
| ‘Have we already swept?’         | ‘We are not yet sweeping.’   |
| b. ‘still’                       | ‘no longer’                  |
| tú-gi-kubuur-a                   | ńti-tu-gi-kubuur-a           |
| SM1PL-PER-turn-FV                | NEG-SM1PL-PER-turn-FV        |
| ‘We should still sweep.’         | ‘We are no longer sweeping.’ |

The ‘not yet’ tense in Matuumbi, referred to by Odden (1996: 66) as the ‘negative persistive’, illustrates a pattern of more frequent recurrence. Odden (1996: 66) describes Matuumbi standard negation as symmetrical, seeing that it involves merely the addition of the post-verbal element *li/líli* to the affirmative verb form. He then goes on to state that there is one tense used in main clauses which has no positive counterpart, i.e. the negative persistive. As seen in (59), it

is marked by the formative *-na-* as well as by the post-verbal negative marker.

(59) Matuumbi (Odden 1996: 66)

ni-ná-kalaang-a    lĩ  
 SM1SG-YET-fry-FV    NEG  
 ‘I haven’t yet fried.’

Löfgren (2018: 15) finds that the most common phasal polarity item in Eastern Bantu languages is ‘not yet’ followed by ‘still’, ‘already’, and finally ‘no longer’. In Swahili, for example, ‘not yet’, ‘still’, and ‘already’ have formally unrelated dedicated expressions, whereas ‘no longer’ can only be expressed indirectly, as a possible negative inference from ‘already’ (60a).<sup>19</sup>

(60) Swahili

- |   |
|---|
| a. ‘already’  |
| wa-mesha-imb-a  |
| SM2-ALREADY-sing-FV                                       |
| ‘They have already sung.’ / ‘They are no longer singing.’ |
| b. ‘not yet’  |
| (bado) ha-wa-ja-imb-a                                     |
| still NEG-SM2-YET-sing-FV                                 |
| ‘They have not yet sung.’                                 |
| c. ‘still’  |
| wa-nga-li    wa-ki-imb-a                                  |
| SM2-STILL-be    SM2-SIT-sing-FV                           |
| ‘They are still singing.’                                 |

Bantu languages thus adhere to a cross-linguistic tendency following which ‘not yet’ tenses as opposed to ‘no longer’ tenses are encoded by special grammatical means (Kozinskij 1988: 522–523). In section 23.4.2 I give a short overview of the morphosyntax of ‘not yet’ expressions in Bantu languages (cf. also Veselinova and Devos 2021).

### 23.4.2 ‘Not yet’ in Bantu languages

Based on a geographically stratified sample of 141 Bantu languages, Veselinova and Devos (2021) distinguish three structurally distinct types of ‘not yet’ expressions in Bantu languages. These are, in decreasing order of frequency: constructions including a (dedicated) bound morpheme, auxiliary constructions, and adverbial expressions.

<sup>16</sup> Miestamo and Van der Auwera (2011: 12) suggest that this cross-linguistic tendency is pragmatically motivated. As negatives typically occur in contexts where the corresponding affirmative is somehow present, not all properties (tense, aspect, mood, etc.) of the negated state of affairs need to be specified.

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted, however, that the inceptive *-ráa-* and the persistive *-gi-* appear to be rare in indicative affirmative tenses. However, they are regularly used in negative indicative tenses.

<sup>18</sup> The glossing abbreviation INC stands for ‘inceptive’.

<sup>19</sup> Another non-dedicated expression of ‘no longer’ in Swahili involves the use of the negative present in combination with *tena* ‘again’ (Mpiranya 2015: 103). *ha-wa-imb-i tena* (NEG-SM2-sing-NEG.PRS again) ‘They are not singing any more’ / ‘They are no longer singing.’

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An example of a bound morpheme has been given in (59) for Matuumbi. Whereas in Matuumbi the construction with the formative *-na-* is dedicated to the expression of ‘not yet’, a similar construction in Chichewa only expresses ‘not yet’ in specific contexts, as shown by the data in (61a,b). The ‘not yet’ reading can be made explicit by including the persistive marker *-be* in the construction, for which see (61c).<sup>20</sup>

## (61) Chichewa (Kiso 2012: 156–157)

- a. si-ndi-na-kuman-e                      na-ye  
NEG-SM1SG-REC-meet-SBJV    COM-him  
‘I haven’t met him.’
- b. context ‘The king is expected to arrive’  
mfumu    si-i-na-fik-e  
9.king    NEG-SM9-REC-arrive-SBJV  
‘The king hasn’t arrived yet.’
- c. a-mfumu    s-a-na-fik-e-be  
2-king       NEG-SM2-REC-arrive-SBJV-PER  
‘The king hasn’t arrived yet.’

Veselinova and Devos (2021) find five kinds of auxiliaries in periphrastic expressions of ‘not yet’: 1) auxiliaries (synchronically) dedicated to the ‘(not) yet’ sense, 2) copulas, 3) quotative verbs (i.e. reflexes of *\*ti* ‘(be/do) thus, like this/that’ (Güldemann 2002: 68) and *\*gamb* ‘speak, answer’ (Bastin et al. 2002), which are often used to introduce quotes in Bantu languages (Güldemann 2002; 2008a)), 4) lexical verbs like ‘know’ or ‘start’, and finally 5) auxiliaries expressing ‘still’ or ‘already’. An example of each kind is given in (62)–(66).

## (62) Kagulu (Petzell 2008: 146)

- si-ng’hati                      ni-lim-e  
NEG.SM1SG-YET    SM1SG-cultivate-FV  
‘I have not yet cultivated’

## (63) Fwe (Gunnink 2018: 377)

- ka-ndi-shi-ní                      ku-shésh-iw-a  
NEG-SM1SG-PER-COP    15-marry-PASS-INF  
‘I am not yet married.’

## (64) Shona (Güldemann 2008a: 490)

- ha-u-sa-ti                                      wa-ndi-on-a  
NEG-SM2SG-NEG.PRF-QUOT    SM2SG.ANT-OM1SG-see-FV  
  
ndi-chi-rw-a  
SM1SG-SIT-fight-FV  
‘You have not yet seen me fighting ...’

## (65) Chifundi (Lambert 1958: 49)

- k’aju-a                                      vyaa  
SM1SG.NEG.know-FV    give.birth  
‘She has not yet had a baby.’ (lit. ‘she has not yet given birth’)

## (66) Manda (Bernander 2017: 263)

- a-akona    ku-lemb-a  
SM1-PER    15-write-INF  
‘She hasn’t written yet.’ (lit. ‘she is still to write’)

Adverbs similarly may or may not be dedicated to the sense of ‘(not) yet’. The Ruwund adverb *kal* expresses ‘already’ in affirmative constructions and ‘not yet’ in negative constructions. The Luvalé adverb *kanda*, on the other hand, appears to be dedicated to the sense of ‘not yet’.

## (67) Ruwund (Nash 1992: 759)

- ù-lond-in-àp                                      kal                      côm  
SM2SG-say-IMM<sup>21</sup>.PST-NEG    already    7.thing  
‘You haven’t yet said a thing.’

## (68) Luvalé (Horton 1949: 162)

- kanda    va-manyis-e                      kulya  
not.yet    SM2-finish-SBJV    15-eat-INF  
‘They have not yet finished eating.’

As can be gathered from the preceding examples, ‘not yet’ constructions typically include negative marking. The bound morpheme, auxiliary, or adverb either behaves like a negative polarity item, always co-occurring with negation, or is also found in affirmative constructions. The formative *-na-* in Matuumbi (59) and the adverb *kal* (67) in Ruwund can serve to illustrate the former and the latter case, respectively. Optionality or even absence of negation are much rarer in ‘not yet’ expressions. Optional negative marking is found in Kagulu. The portmanteau morpheme *si-*, expressing both negation and first person singular can be replaced by the simple first-person singular subject marker *ni-*, as seen in (69).

## (69) Kagulu (Petzell 2008: 146)

- ni-ng’hati                                      ni-lim-e  
SM1SG-NOT.YET    SM1SG-cultivate-SBJV  
‘I have not yet cultivated.’

Absence of negation tends to combine with a bound morpheme, an auxiliary, or an adverb expressing a persistive meaning (‘still’), as seen in (70) from Ruri, (66) from Manda, and (71) from Makwe, respectively.

<sup>20</sup> The noun *mfumu* belongs to classes 9/2 (Myers-Scotton and Orr 1980: 3). The class 2 form in (61c) probably is a respectful plural.

<sup>21</sup> The glossing abbreviation IMM stands for ‘immediate’.

- (70) Ruri (Nurse 2007c)

ci-caa-li ku-gul-a  
SM1PL-PER-COP 15-buy-INF

‘We haven’t bought yet.’

- (71) Makwe (Devos 2008: 410)

méedi ya-ni-púngúuk-a akiíni báado  
6.water SM6-PFV.DJ-decrease-FV but still

ku-púngúk-íiy-a  
15-decrease-EXCE<sup>22</sup>-INF

‘The tide has gone out but it has not gone out completely yet.’

### 23.5 Some notes on negation in relation to focus and quantification

The last section of this chapter discusses negation in relation to focus and quantification. Negation is often assumed to carry intrinsic focus (Hyman and Watters 1984; Givón 1978b). Consequently, negative verb forms tend to be categorized as ‘in focus’, i.e. as carrying predicative focus. In Zulu, for example, default negative counterparts of transitive sentences typically involve an object marker co-referential with the post-verbal nominal object (72a). The presence of the object marker implies that the nominal object is dislocated and out of focus and the predicate carries polarity focus (Zeller 2021). Polarity focus in Zulu is grammatically controlled: the object marker is included even if the object clearly presents the new information (72b).

- (72) Zulu (Zeller 2021)

u-John a-ka-m-thand-i u-Mary  
AUG-1a.john NEG-SM1-OM1-like-NEG AUG-1a.Mary

a. ‘John doesn’t like Mary.’

b. ‘John doesn’t like MARY.’ (in answer to ‘Who does John like’)

Alternatively, Givón (1975a) suggests that (at least) the verb is typically presupposed in negative utterances. As a consequence, negative sentences typically involve post-verbal or complement focus. Bearing both analyses in mind, I investigate how negation relates to two types of alternations attested in Bantu languages, both of which are typically but not exclusively characterized in terms of information structure: 1) the conjoint/disjoint alternation (chapter 21) and 2) the presence or absence of an augment (chapter 14) on the post-verbal noun. Finally, section 23.5.3 takes a look at the expression of negative indefinites in Bantu languages.

<sup>22</sup> The glossing abbreviation EXCE stands for ‘excessive’.

#### 23.5.1 Negation and the conjoint/disjoint alternation

Van der Wal (2017c) shows that the conjoint/disjoint alternation, whereby a single tense can take two different forms depending on an information-structural difference in the interpretation of the verb and/or what follows, tends to be restricted to affirmative tenses (cf. also Hyman and Watters 1984, Hyman 1999b). Haya, where the alternation is almost exclusively marked supra-segmentally, can serve as an example. The affirmative Past 1 tense has a different tonal pattern depending on whether the verb is clause-final (and ‘in focus’), as in (73a), or followed by a post-verbal element (and ‘in even focus’ or ‘out of focus’), as in (73b). The negative Past 1, however, cannot take part in the alternation. As seen in (73c,d), the tonal pattern of the verb remains the same whether the verb is in clause-final position or not (Hyman 1999b: 160–164).

- (73) Haya (Hyman 1999b: 160–161)

a. disjoint	b. conjoint	
bá-á-kôm-a	ba-a-kom-a	káto
SM2-P1-tie-FV	SM2-P1-tie-FV	káto
‘They have tied.’	‘They have tied Káto.’	
c. ti-bá-á-kom-a	d. ti-bá-á-kom-a	káto
NEG-SM2-P1-tie-FV	NEG-SM2-P1-tie-FV	káto
‘They haven’t tied.’	‘They haven’t tied Káto.’	

A few languages, however, allow a conjoint/disjoint alternation in at least some negative tenses. Southern Sotho, where the alternation is marked tonally on the last syllable of the verb, is a case in point (Van der Wal 2017: 34).

- (74) Southern Sotho (Letsh’eng 1995: 57, cited from Van der Wal 2017c: 34–35)

a. conjoint	
ha-kí-ja-búá	hahólo
NEG-SM1SG-PRF-talk	much
‘I haven’t talked much.’	
b. disjoint	
ha-kí-ja-búá	
NEG-SM1SG-PRF-talk	
‘I haven’t talked.’	

In similar fashion, some languages that make use of a pre-initial strategy for standard negation and a post-initial strategy for the negation of more marked clause types apply the latter strategy to negate an extra-focal predicate in a declarative clause (Güldemann 1996: 283). Makhuwa can serve to illustrate this. Standard negation



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involves the inherited pre-initial negative marker *kha-*, as seen in (75a). However, if the predication is extra-focal, the post-initial negative strategy is used, as in (75b). Note that the latter is normally reserved for non-basic conjugations.

(75) Makhuwa (Van der Wal 2009: 219)

- a. *kha-ń-thúma*  
NEG.SM1-PRS-buy  
'He doesn't buy (it).'
- b. *o-hi-ń-thúma*      *esheeni*  
SM1-NEG-PRS-buy      what  
'What doesn't he buy?'

Notwithstanding these exceptions, conjoint/disjoint or other information-structural alternations are typically neutralized in negative tenses. This can be explained in two different ways (cf. also Van der Wal 2017c: 35). Following Hyman and Watters (1984) and Hyman (1999b), the neutralization can be ascribed to the intrinsic focus of negative verb forms which exempts them from taking part in focus oppositions. Following Givón (1975a), on the other hand, it can be attributed to the fact that negative tenses inherently involve complement focus rather than predicate focus. An argument in favour of Givón's (1975a) analysis is that negative tenses tend to be formally similar to conjoint tenses rather than to disjoint tenses. The former, rather than the latter, are typically associated with complement focus (Van der Wal 2017c).

### 23.5.2 Negation and the presence/absence of an augment on the post-verbal noun

It is a well-known fact that languages that have the +/-augment alternation tend to use augmentless forms after negative predicates (see already Torrend 1891 and De Blois 1970). In Luganda (Hyman and Katamba 1993b; Van der Wal and Namyalo 2016), for example, negative predicates license augmentless forms, as can be seen in (76a). The form with the augment is ungrammatical (76b).<sup>23</sup>

(76) Luganda (Hyman and Katamba 1993b: 218)

- a. *te-ya-lába*      *bi-kópo*      *binó*  
NEG-SM1.PST-see      8-cup      DEM8  
'He didn't see these cups.'
- b. \**te-ya-lába*      *e-bi-kópo*      *binó*  
\*NEG-SM1.PST-see      AUG-8-cup      DEM8

<sup>23</sup> For an interesting exception to this rule after the focus particle 'even/also', see Van der Wal and Namyalo 2016: n. 11.

However, a few languages (mostly Nguni languages?) do allow alternative forms of the post-verbal noun after negative verb forms. Augmentless nouns are then typically translated with English *any*, as can be seen in (77) for Xhosa.

(77) Xhosa (Carstens and Mletshe 2015: 762)

- a. *a-ndi-bon-anga*      *ba-ntwana*  
NEG-SM1SG-see-NEG.PST      2-child  
'I didn't see any children.'
- b. *a-ndi-bon-anga*      *a-ba-ntwana*  
NEG-SM1SG-see-NEG.PST      AUG-2-child  
'I didn't see (the) children.'

In sum, despite some exceptions, negative verb forms typically combine with augmentless forms, thus neutralizing the +/-augment alternation. Interesting in this respect is the fact that augmentless nouns are also typically associated with post-verbal focus, as seen in (78a,b) from Luganda.

(78) Luganda (Hyman 1999b: 171)

- a. *y-à-gúl-á*      *bí-kópò*      *(bìnó)*  
SM1-PST-buy-FV      8-cup      DEM8  
'He bought (THESE) CUPS.'
- b. *y-à-gúl-à*      *e-bi-kópò*      *(bìnó)*  
SM1-PST-buy-FV      AUG-8-cup      DEM8  
'He bought these cups.'

Again, negative verb forms appear to favour the member of the alternation which is associated with post-verbal focus. This gives weight to Givón's (1975a) hypothesis that negation inherently involves post-verbal rather than predicate-centred focus.

### 23.5.3 Negative indefinites in Bantu languages

Some languages which have retained the augment drop it in environments typical for negative polarity items. In Kisanande, augmentless nouns are ungrammatical in assertive contexts but grammatical (although not obligatory) in non-assertive contexts like negatives, conditionals, and questions (Progovac 1993). Except for this use of augmentless nouns, Bantu languages appear to adhere to Haspelmath's (1997) observation that negative polarity items, N-words, and negative quantifiers are scarce in African languages (see also Van Alsenoy 2011 and Zerbán and Krifka 2008).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> N-words refer to indefinites that normally only occur with sentential negation but can also be used in elliptical short-answer sentences (Laka 1990). Negative quantifiers are negative indefinites that occur in sentences without a clausal negator (see e.g. Van der Auwera and Van Alsenoy 2018). So French *personne* 'nobody' is an N-word but its English equivalent is a negative quantifier, cf. *Personne n'est venu* 'Nobody came'.



Instead, negative indefinites tend to be expressed by one of two strategies, both involving generic nouns. The first involves a generic noun in combination with sentential negation, as illustrated for Ruwund in (79).

(79) Ruwund (Nash 1993: 284)

nì-men-àp          muntu  
SM1SG-see-NEG   1.person

‘I see no one. / I don’t see anyone. / I don’t see a person.’

To avoid ambiguous readings the indefinite numeral one can be added in combination with the emphatic particle *even*, as can be seen in (80).

(80) Ruwund (Nash 1993: 481)

nà-mù-men-ààp          àap   kapamp   kàmwĩng  
SM1SG.PST-OM1-see-NEG   even   12.time   12.one

‘I never saw him.’ (lit. ‘I didn’t see him even one time.’)

The second strategy involves a negative existential construction. This is the preferred strategy for negative indefinites in subject position. An example from Kanincin is given in (81).

(81) Kanincin (Michael Tshibanda Kasombo, personal communication)

kw-ìikíl          mûncw   wàà-búl-àŋ          mwáàn  
SM17-be.not   1.person   SM1.REL.PST-hit-PRF   1.child

‘No one has hit the child.’ (lit. ‘there is no one who hit the child.’)

The first strategy can also be used to express indefinite subjects in negative sentences but only in combination with an additional marker of indefiniteness, as illustrated in (82).

(82) Kanincin (Michael Tshibanda Kasombo, personal communication)

kábúruk   àap   kàmwĩŋ   kèèz-ààŋ          pënd  
12.gazelle   even   12.one   SM12.PST.come-PRF   NEG

‘Not even one gazelle has come.’

## 23.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented an overview of the formal ways of expressing (standard) negation in Bantu languages. It has discussed the genesis of different negation strategies and their renewal through processes of grammaticalization and cyclical change. Special attention has been paid to the expression of ‘not yet’, a negative tense which typically does not have a formal affirmative counterpart. Next, the relation of Bantu negative tenses to two alternations in Bantu grammar that are known to be sensitive to information structure, i.e. the conjoint/disjoint distinction and the presence or absence of an augment on a post-verbal noun, has been investigated. Negative tenses appear to favour the member of the alternation typically associated with post-verbal focus. Finally, ways of circumscribing negative indefinites have been looked at briefly.

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