Negation in Dime

Mulugeta Seyoum (Ethiopian Languages Research Centre and Leiden University Centre for Linguistics)[1]

1. Introduction

Every language has mechanisms to express negation. Variant forms of negatives in different languages may be expressed through the position of negative markers, their form, interpretation, and the way in which they are used. Formally, negative morphemes can appear as verbal affixes, free morphemes, or even verb forms (Payne 1985). For instance, Hamar negative imperatives are formed by way of the verb *gärä* 'leave, stop' following the negated lexical verb as in, *kumä* 'eat!' vs. *kuman gärä* 'don't eat!' (Lydall 1976: 427), while in some other languages such as in Maale there are portmanteau morphemes indicating both negation and aspect (Amha 2001: 223).

In some languages, like Lithuanian, the negative marker precedes the verb, whereas in others, like Japanese, it follows the verb (Collberg & Hakansson 1999: 30). Occasionally, languages allow for double negation, while others use single negation exclusively. In Turkish (Asli & Kerslake 2005), the negative marker is inflected according to person, while the verb always remains in a neutral form.

In agglutinative[2] languages the negative marker is part of the verbal inflection. Since Dime, like most Ethiopian languages, is an agglutinative

[2] In agglutinative languages the morphemes are joined together relatively "loosely" (e.g. Hungarian). In such kinds of languages, it is usually easy to determine where the boundaries between morphemes are. For instance, in Swahili each bound morpheme carries (ordinarily) only one meaning. Dime morphology also fits this general pattern.

language, the verb is inflected for negation. This paper deals with negation in verbal and nominal clauses and in polar and non-polar interrogatives.

2. Negation in Dime[3]

2.1 Negation in verbal clauses

In Dime, negation is always marked by -**káy**, while the affirmative is unmarked. Compare the following affirmative and negative constructions, illustrated in (a) and (b) below, respectively:

(1) a. nú ʔadéén   'he comes'
    b. nú ʔad-kay   'he does not come'

The verb morphology of Dime does not distinguish between perfective and imperfective aspect in negative constructions. This seems to be a specific feature of Dime. The verb only shows the negation marker **-káy**. From the point of view of word-order typology, Dime belongs to the class of SOV languages, and, more specifically regarding the position of negation, to the sub-type SOV-NEG. Our point of reference here is a survey by Dryer (1988), who studies the position of the sentential negation marker in SOV languages. Most of the 345 SOV languages he considered showed the location of NEG as either SOV-NEG or SO-NEG-V.

The Dime negative morpheme is expressed by either **-ká**, **-káy** or **-k'áy**. The variant **-ká** is a reduced form of **-káy** and it occurs in non-final clause position affixed to a copula or a main verb. The morpheme -**k'áy,** whose onset consonant is glottalized, occurs following ejective consonants and the velar nasal (**ŋ**). This means that the occurrence of each allomorph is conditioned by their environment.

In negatives, the aspectual distinctions are neutralized, as shown below: when compared with the non-negative correspondents, it is clear that the aspectual differences do exist in the affirmative.

---

[3] Dime is an endangered Omotic language, spoken in the southern region of Ethiopia by a population of 5,400 individuals (1994 census). Dime is the least studied language among the South Omotic groups.

(2) a. ná   ʔíní   ʔád-káy
        3SF.SUBJ   today   come-NEG
        'She does not come today'
    b. ná   gáʁim   ʔád-káy
        3SF.SUBJ   tomorrow come-NEG
        'She will not come tomorrow'
    c. ná   nááʁi   ʔád-káy
        3SF.SUBJ   yesterday come-NEG
        'She didn't come yesterday'
    d. wótú   gáʁim   wunt'-i-k'áy
        1PL.SUBJ   tomorrow work-NEG
        'We will not work tomorrow'

The negative forms of the verb **wunt'** in (2d) and the paradigm of **tíŋ** 'go' in (3) illustrate that the initial consonant, **k**, of the negative marker changes to **k'** after ejectives and **ŋ**.

(3)   ʔaté   tíŋ-k'áy   'I do/will/did not go'
        wótú   tíŋ-k'áy   'We do/will/did not go'
        yáay   tíŋ-k'áy   'You do/will/did not go.'
        yesé   tíŋ-k'áy   'You do/will/did not go'
        nú   tíŋ-k'áy   'He does/will/did not go'
        ná   tíŋ-k'áy   'She does/will/did not go'
        kété   tíŋ-k'áy   'They do/will/ did not go'

After verbs ending in consonants other than ejectives and **ŋ**, the negative suffix is -**káy**, as, for example, **kété gaaz-káy** 'they will not curse'. The neutralization of the aspectual differences in negative construction is not a general feature of the Omotic languages. For example, Aari has a perfective and imperfective negative marker **k-** and **-y-**, respectively (Bender 1991: 97).

   In Dime, refusal is expressed through a slightly different negative construction. As already mentioned and demonstrated in example (3), tense-aspect is generally not expressed in negative verb forms. In the expression of refusal, however, the existential verb **déén/déét** and the morpheme -**tub,** which marks future tense, follow the negative marker -**k'á(y)/-ká(y),** as illustrated in (4).

(4)   wótú   gáʁim   wunt'-k'á-déét-tub
       1PL.SUBJ   tomorrow   work-NEG-exist-FUT
       'We shall not work tomorrow' (lit. We are expected to work tomor-
       row, but we refuse to work)

The structure of the verb in example (4) is complex as it involves two
verbs: **wunt'-** 'work' and **déét** 'exist'. The final verb **dééttub** is observed
in nominal clauses. All types of negative constructions, such as verbal or
non-verbal, independent or a subordinate are characterized by having the
suffix **-ká** or **-káy**. The negative morpheme **-káy** occurs following a cop-
ula verb, but it should be noted that it is located in the final position of a
sentence as shown below:

(5)   nú   sóó   ʔád-ká   dáh-im
       3SM.SUBJ   here   come-NEG   stay-ACC
       'He has not come yet.'
(6)   nú   nááʁe   ʔád-káy
       3SM.SUBJ   yesterday   come-NEG
       'He did not come yesterday.'
(7)   nú   kéní   yi-ká-déé
       3SM.SUBJ   dog   COP-NEG-PF
       'It was not a dog.'
(8)   ʔis-ko   kéní   yi-káy
       1SG.OBJ-GEN   dog   COP-NEG
       'I have no dog.'

In negative imperatives or prohibitions, the final vowel of the basic verb
is dropped and the special negative marker -**kóy**, rather than the negative
declarative marker -**káy,** is attached to the verb root, as in the following
examples:

(9)   Commands   Prohibitions
       yízí   'Run!'   yíz-kóy   'Do not run!'
       géhé   'Push!'   géh-kóy   'Do not push!'
       ʔólóχ   'Hurry!'   ʔólóχ-kóy   'Do not hurry!'
       dáhin   'Wait!'   dáhin-kóy   'Do not wait!'
       wúy   'Stop!'   wúy-kóy   'Do not stop!'

The use of a special negative marker for imperative and optative form is a feature of many Omotic languages. For instance, Haro (Woldemariam 2003: 201) and Maale (Amha 2001: 229) use a special negative marker for imperative and optative forms.

The verbal inflection of negative verbs is summarized in the following table:

Affirmative				Negative
Aspect marker		Person		(no person marker)
		1SG/PL	2/3SG/PL	
Imperative		No person marker	No person marker	**-koy**
IPF	**-déé**	**-t**	**-n**	**-ká/káy**
PF	**-i**	**-t**	**-n**	**-ká/káy**
FUT	**-tub**	No person marker	no person marker	**-ká-déét-tub**

Table 1: Verbal suffixes

2.2 Negative Nominal Clauses

The negative nominal clause is headed by the negative copula **yi-** and the negative marker -**káy**. Equative, attributive, existential, locative as well as possessive negative nominal clauses use **yi-káy**. In examples (10a-c) the present negative nominal clause is illustrated:

(10) a. nú   kɛ́ní   yi-káy
        3SM.SUBJ   dog   COP-NEG
        'It is not a dog.'
     b. kɛ́ní   yi-káy
        dog   COP-NEG
        'There is no dog.'
     c. ʔis-ko   kɛ́ní yi-káy
        1SG.OBJ-GEN   dog   COP-NEG
        'I have no dog.'

As mentioned earlier, in verbal constructions the negative marker **-káy**, is added to the main verb. This is illustrated in (11).

(11) kέn-ís   ʔád-káy
      dog-DEF   come-NEG
      'The dog doesn't come.'

The past negative nominal clause is constructed with the sequence **yi-ká-déé** (COP-NEG-IPF) as shown (12-13) for equative, locative, and possessive nominal clauses. If the negative nominal clause expresses some future action, the morpheme **-tub** is suffixed, as is illustrated in (14).

(12) nú   kέní   yi-ká-déé
      3SM.SUBJ   dog   COP-NEG-PF
      'It was not a dog/he had no dog.'
(13) kέní   yi-ká-déé
      dog   COP-NEG-PF
      'There was no dog.'
(14) kέní   yi-ká-déé-tub
      dog   COP-NEG-PF-FUT
      'There will be no dog.'

In connection with the past negative form illustrated above, two important facts should be noted: first, the morpheme -**déé**, which was identified as the imperfective aspect marker in main verbs, is used as the perfective aspect marker in negative nominal clauses, as in (12-14). Secondly, when it precedes the perfective marker in negative nominal clauses, and generally in medial position, the negative marker is realised as -**ká** instead of **-káy**. Importantly, the negative marker in this context should not be confused with the perfective aspect marker **-ká** in affirmative past nominal clauses, i.e., **déén-ká.**

The copula is obligatory in negative nominal clauses and in tensed nominal clauses in contrast to non-tensed ones.

Polar negative interrogatives, to which we turn in the next section, are not marked for aspect and person. Both the perfective and the imperfective negative forms have the same verbal structure. Moreover, there is no variation in the verbal form due to person, number and gender of the subject. That means no marking at all concerning the number, person and gender of the subject.

2.3 Polar negative interrogatives

In polar negative interrogatives, the marker -**áá**, which is used only with second person subjects in affirmative interrogatives, is attached to all negative interrogative verbs, irrespective of the person of the subject and the aspect of the verb.

(15) ʔaté   ʔád-k'áy-áá   'Didn't I come?'
      wɔ́tú   ʔád- k'áy-áá   'Didn't we come?'
      nú   ʔád- k'áy-áá   'Didn't he come?'
      ná   ʔád- k'áy-áá   'Didn't she come?'
      kété   ʔád- k'áy-áá   'Didn't they come?'
      yá   ʔád- k'áy-áá   'Didn't you (SG) come?
       yesé   ʔád- k'áy-áá   'Didn't you (PL) come?'

The following are sentential examples:

(16) ná   wunt'-is-im   bos-káy-áá
      3SF.SUBJ   work-DEF-ACC   finish-NEG-Q
      'Didn't she finish the work?'
(17) ná   wunt'-is-im   bos-káy-áá
      3SF.SUBJ   work-DEF-ACC   finish-NEG-Q
      'Doesn't she finish the work?'
(18) yá   bay-im   ʔíts-káy-áá
      2SG.SUBJ food-ACC   eat-NEG-Q
      'Aren't you eating the food?
(19) kété   náʁ-ó   bosin-ká   tíŋ-k'áy-áá
      3PL.SUBJ   water-LOC   place-CNJ   go-NEG-Q
      'Aren't they going to the river at all?'
(20) kén-ís   gím-á   ʔaté   yin-kó   kiyó
      dog-DEF   speak-CNV1 1SG.SUBJ   2SG.OBJ-GEN   there
      k'ót-a   dót yá   gáʔa-k'áy-áá   ʔet'-á   ʔúis-i-n
      arrive-CNV1   if 2SG.SUBJ eat-NEG-Q   say-CNV1   ask-PF-3
      'The dog asked (the hyena) by saying "If I come down to you, will
      you not eat me?"

In the remaining part of this section, we discus tag/confirmation questions. This is a type of yes/no question that consists of a declarative clause followed by a "tag" that requests confirmation or rejection of the

declarative clause (cf. Payne 1997). The examples in (21-25) question confirmation of a negative statement.

(21)   yá   kín-im   yéf-káy,   (yá)yéf-áá
      2SG.SUBJ   3MS.OBJ-ACC   see-NEG,   see-PF:Q
      'You did not see him, did you?

(22)   šiftaye   t'úlim   šál-káy,   (nú)   šál-déé
      šiftaye   swim   can-NEG,   3MS.SUBJ   can-IPF:Q
      'šiftaye can not swim, can he?'

(23)   šiftaye   t'úl-im   šál-káy,   (nú)   šál-í
      šiftaye   swim-ACC   can-NEG,   3MS.SUBJ   can-PF:Q
      'šiftaye could not swim, could he?'

(24)   ʔaté   kén-im   gís'-káy, (ʔaté)   gís'-í
      1SG.SUBJ   3PL.OBJ-ACC   beat-NEG, 1SG.SUBJ   beat-PF:Q
      'I did not beat them, did I?'

(25)   yá   t'úlim   šál-káy,   (yá)   šál-áá?
      2SG.SUBJ   swim   can-NEG,   2SG.SUBJ can-Q:2
      'You can not swim, can you?'

The structure of the verb in the "tag" question is the same as that in regular interrogative clauses.

    Confirmation questions after affirmative statements are expressed by a copy of the verb followed by the negation marker **-káy**. The suffix -**áá** is added to the verb following the negative marker for all persons. Examples:

(26)   p'et'ros   yín-im   madd-i-n,   (nú)   mad-káy-áá?
      Peter   2SG.OBJ-ACC   help-PF-3   (3MS)   help-NEG-Q
      'Peter helped you, didn't he?'

(27)   mante   sakiyó   déén-ká,   (ná)   yi-káy-áá?
      mante   there   exist-PF (3FS)   COP-NEG-Q
      'Mante was there, wasn't she?'

(28)   ʔaté   dáh-í-t,   (ʔati)   da-káy-áá?
      1SG.SUBJ   late-PF-1,   I   be late-NEG-Q
      'I'm late, am I not?

(29)   wó-n   k'iy,   šál-káy-áá?
      1PL.OBJ-DAT   go,   can-NEG-Q
      'Let's go, can't we?

2.4 Negative interrogatives clauses with content question words

Negative interrogatives clauses with content question words are suffixed with the negative marker -k'áy. In this clause type, aspect or tense distinctions are not marked on the verb:

(30) ná   ʔamóid   dime-n   tíŋ-k'áy
     3SF.SUBJ   when   dime-DAT   go-NEG
     'When is it that she does not go to Dime?'
(31) ʔáyi   ʔád-k'áy
     who   come-NEG
     'Who did not come?'
(32) ʔameh-id   níts-af   ʔád-k'áy
     how-many-PL   child-PL   come-NEG
     'How many of the children are not coming?'

To sum up, from the typological point of view Dime negative constructions display special features. It has no aspectual or tense distinction in negative constructions. In other Omotic languages aspect or tense distinctions are made in negative constructions. In some languages like Maale there are portmanteau morphemes which indicates both negation and aspect, while in other languages the negation marker is affixed to verbs either preceding or following the aspect or tense marker as in Nayi (Ephrem 2007: 49).

Dime has a single negative marker for different temporal and aspectual values, including the declarative and interrogative. In both perfective and imperfective negative polar and non-polar interrogatives, the negative marker **-k'áy/-káy** is suffixed to the verb.

In negative tag/confirmation questions, the interrogative is marked by -**áá** for all persons, preceded by the negative marker **-káy**. The negative imperative is often marked by a special negative morpheme. The final vowel of the basic verb is deleted and the special negative marker -k**óy** is suffixed to the verb. Using special negative markers for imperative and jussive is a common phenomenon in Omotic languages. Thus, Dime shares this feature with other Omotic languages (cf. 9 above).

Abbreviations used in this paper

1SG	first person singular	ABL	ablative
2SG	second person singular	INST	instrumental
3SM	third person masculine singular	PL	plural
3SF	third person feminine singular	SUBJ	subject
1PL	first person plural	OBJ	object
2PL	second person plural	NOM	nominative
3PL	third person plural	ABS	absolutive
IPF	imperfective	PF	perfective
FUT	future	COP	copula
DAT	dative	DEF	definite
ACC	accusative	RELT	relative
GEN	genitive	Q	question
M	male	F	female

References

Asli, Göksel & Celia Kerslake (2005). *Turkish: A Comprehensive Grammar*. London: Routledge.

Amha, Azeb (2001). *The Maale Language*. CNWS Publications Vol. 99. Research School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies, Universiteit Leiden. The Netherlands.

Bender, M. Lionel (1991). Comparative Aroid Syntax and Morphosyntax. *Afrika und Übersee* 74: 87-110.

Collberg, Sheila Dooly & Gisela Hakansson (1999). Negative imperatives and the parametric typology of Negation. *Working papers* 47: 25-37. Department of Linguistics. Lund University.

Dryer, Matthew (1988). Universals of negative position. In Michael Hammond, Edith Moravcsik & Jessica Wirth (eds.), *Studies in Systematic Typology*, 93-124. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Ephrem, Dejene (2007). Verb Inflection in Nayi. MA Thesis. Addis Ababa University.

Getachew, Ayen (2006). Inflectional Morphology of Kwama/North Mao/. M.A Thesis, Addis Ababa University.

Hirut, Woldemariam (2003). *The Grammar of Haro with Comparative Notes on the Ometo Linguistic Group*. PhD thesis, Addis Ababa University.

Horn, Larry (1989). *A Natural History of Negation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lydall, Jean (1976). Hamer. In M. Lionel Bender (ed.), *The Non-Semitic Languages of Ethiopia,* 393-438. London: Oxford University Press.

Mulugeta, Seyoum (2008). *The Grammar of Dime*. PhD Thesis. LOT Publication. Leiden University.

Payne, John R. (1985). Negation. In Timothy Shopen (ed.), *Language typology and syntactic description* 1, 197-242. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.