Nonverbal and verbal negations in Kabyle (Berber)

A typological perspective

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Our aim in this paper is to show that there is a correlation between tense-aspect asymmetries with respect to negation, and the encoding of distinct non-verbal negations: semantically and morphologically, perfect/perfective negations are related to locative-existential nonverbal negative forms (of the type “there is not”), whereas imperfective negations are related to equative-attributive nonverbal negative forms (of the type “it is not”). Enlarging the scope of the study from Kabyle (Berber) to other African languages, we ultimately propose to consider emphasis on this opposition between attribution-equation and location-existence as a typological feature linked to the predominance of aspect over tense and mode in the organisation of the verbal system.

Introduction

Our aim in this paper is to show that there is a correlation between tense-aspect asymmetries with respect to negation, and the encoding of distinct non-verbal negations. In fact, the values taken by these non-verbal negations correspond to the semantic core values of aspectual forms: in Kabyle (Berber, Afroasiatic) for instance, perfect/perfective negatives are related to locative-existential nonverbal negation (of the type “there is not”), whereas imperfective negatives are related to equative-attributive nonverbal negation (of the type “it is not”). This correlation will be investigated briefly in some other African languages belonging to different phyla and presenting similar language facts (Hausa (Chadic, Afroasiatic), Yoruba (Kwa, Niger-Congo), San (Mande, Niger-Congo), Tashelhiyt and Tuareg (Berber, Afroasiatic)).

We will first present the problem of tense-aspect asymmetry with respect to negation, then move on to the analysis of non-verbal negations in the abovementioned languages. We will then show that verbal negation, in its interaction with tense-aspects in Kabyle, semantically mirrors the opposition between attributive and existential nonverbal negations.
We will ultimately propose to consider this opposition between attribution-equation and existence, which underlies the negative asymmetries under consideration, as a typological feature linked to emphasis on aspect rather than tense and mode in the organization of the verbal system.

1. Position of the problem

It is common among the languages of the world to find tense-aspect systems that are asymmetrical with respect to affirmative vs. negative. Such asymmetries are of various kinds: generally, tense-aspect distinctions are fewer in the negative than in the affirmative; some systems have tense-aspects restricted to the negative subsystem, others use different types of negative markers or auxiliaries to negate different tense-aspects. The variation in that respect is considerable.

A useful and insightful reference on this problem is Contini-Morava (1989). This book deals with affirmative-negative asymmetry in Swahili, in a pragmatic and semantic framework. It presents a detailed account of the various meanings of Swahili verb forms, ascribing the asymmetrical pattern to (1989:171–174): difference in semantic categorization (dependency and location in time versus temporal limitation and probability of the affirmative) and difference in related pragmatic values (describe states of affair that actually occur versus forestall a possible expectation of the contrary by mentioning a state of affairs that fails to occur).

This mapping between semantics and pragmatics appears to be also related to the values, or number and kind of oppositions inside each subsystem. Contini-Morava (1989:171–172) mentions such distinctions as:

for the affirmative domain: “main event/secondary event, potential/actual, simultaneous/sequential, iterative/unique, temporally connected/logically connected, etc. [...] state/activity, habitual/ongoing, completed/uncompleted, present relevance/lack of present relevance, etc.”

and for the negative domain: “restricted vs. unrestricted opportunity to occur, high vs. low contrast with expectation of the affirmative, context-free, “state”-like vs. context-bound, “event”-like negation, change of state likely vs. unlikely, etc.”

Our study of tense-aspect asymmetry in Kabyle in a different framework (Mettouchi 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 2000, 2001) has led us to similar conclusions, and to the hypothesis that, beyond differences linked to the complex interplay of context, verb-type, subject-type, clause-type, discourse type, etc., tense-aspects have semantic core values with which negation interacts to produce various meanings in context.

An investigation of the functions and meanings of nonverbal negations (Mettouchi 1996a and 1996b) has led us to define basic values for nonverbal negations that are ultimately related to those we have discovered for imperfective and perfect/perfective\textsuperscript{1} verbal negations.
It is this correlation that we are going to present in this paper, in order to support the view put forward by many linguists (among whom Givón 1984), that negation in natural language is not a logical marker that allows a neat symmetrical distinction between truth and falsity, but a complex cognitive operator, which we think is at the basis of (and interacts with) language categories based on systematic oppositions, such as, in our case, the category of aspect.

2. Nonverbal negation in Kabyle

Kabyle is a Berber language spoken in the North of Algeria, by approximately 3 million speakers, many more if we add the emigrated communities in France, Canada, etc. It belongs to the Afroasiatic phylum. The basic word order is VSO, which alternates with a SVO order in topicalized contexts. It is primarily a spoken language, but several novels have been published since the 1970s, and there is a very dynamic Kabyle press which started mostly in the 1980s.

For Kabyle data, we have worked on corpora which we have collected ourselves, composed of face-to-face conversation, political speeches, and a novel.

In actual use of language, more than one third of negations are nonverbal, and among those nonverbal negations, approximately half are attributive and half existential.²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEGATIVE</th>
<th>AFFIRMATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attribution</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maci d argaz i d'iri ny…</td>
<td>d argaz i d'iri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTRNEG COP man that COP'bad or…³</td>
<td>COP man that COP'bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'It was not the husband who was bad or…'</td>
<td>'It was the husband who was bad'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ulas⁴ msakit ašu ara č-nt</td>
<td>y-la wašu ara č-nt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Existence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>existneg poor-pl what that eat(aorist)-3plf</td>
<td>3MS-be(perf) what that eat(aorist)-3plf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'There was not, poor girls, anything for them to eat (poor girls, there was nothing to eat for them)'</td>
<td>'There was something for them to eat'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nonverbal negations are used for constituent negation and focalization, as in the examples above, or for sentential negation, of the type just below.

maci nk ad xDm-γ, nitnti ad smuqul-nt
ATTRNEG me aim work(imperf)-1s they-f aim watch(imperf)-3plf
‘No way I’m going to work while they’re going to watch…’
The characteristic feature of non-verbal negations is that they are invariable as far as tense-aspect or agreement are concerned. These negations often occur with relative clauses which contain finite verb forms, and which therefore provide referential anchoring differing from the speech situation (which is the default anchoring when non-verbal negations are not completed by a subordinate clause).

Semantically speaking, attributive negation indicates conflicting views on a given theme. On a pragmatic level, there is debate between the speaker and his co-speaker as to the degree of validity of the statement, and this debate involves modal standpoints. Attributive-equeative negation is used for metalinguistic negative judgments.

On the other hand, the semantic characteristic of existential negation is to assess the lack of coincidence between the situation which is referred to and prior expectations. On a pragmatic level, this type of negation seldom involves debate between speakers and conflicting viewpoints. The speaker only provides information as to the fact that the expected situation does not hold, or that the expected person or thing is absent or not located in a given place.

This contrast between interactive, modal and sometimes polemical negation on the one hand, and descriptive, informational negation on the other, is the essential distinction that we will bear in mind when we broach the subject of aspaeual negations.

Other Berber languages\(^5\) also distinguish between attributive and existential negations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Verbal Neg</th>
<th>Attributive Neg</th>
<th>Existential Neg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tashelhiyt</td>
<td>(ur \ldots (yat))</td>
<td>(ur d)</td>
<td>(la\h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuareg (Ahaggar)</td>
<td>(ur)</td>
<td>(ur \text{`i}y)</td>
<td>(aba)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three other African languages under study\(^6\) also distinguish between attributive and existential negations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Verbal Neg</th>
<th>Attributive Neg</th>
<th>Existential Neg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ader Hausa (Chadic)</td>
<td>(b`a/b`a\ldots ba)</td>
<td>(b`a \ldots ba)</td>
<td>(baab`u)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoruba (Niger-Congo–Kwa)</td>
<td>(\text{k`o})</td>
<td>(\text{`o/k\text{`i}i\text{`e}})</td>
<td>(\text{`o si})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San (Niger-Congo–Mande)</td>
<td>(b`a/b`e\ldots w`a)</td>
<td>(b`e\ldots w`a)</td>
<td>(\ldots b`\text{`a}m ba)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the semantics of those non-verbal negations have been described by linguists, they have seldom been analyzed in depth. Horn (1989:448–452) mentions a few examples of such nonverbal negations, and relates them to former philological or philosophical analyses of negation, such as the Hegelian dichotomy between significant and insignificant negation (1989:451). Horn (1989:448) also makes the following observation “The negator used in nonexistence statements and other verbal environments is often formally distinct from the one used in negative identity statements and/or for constituent (especially nominal) negation.” This observation is rephrased at various points of his development: “in many languages, as touched on above, a special negative existential form can be isolated from both the general predicational negation and the special emphatic or constituent negator, if any” (1989:451), thus forming a “recurring
morphosyntactic split between one negation employed for straightforward negative predications (predicate denials) and for nonexistence claims and another employed for negating identity statements or non-verbal constituents” (1989:451).

Those remarks, which were not further developed in Horn (1989) seem to reinforce our claim that beyond the variety of negative forms, an underlying system that transcends morphosyntactic distinctions can be brought to light.

Various approaches can be chosen to reach this aim. Ours is based on the following hypothesis: existential and equative-attributive negations are marked encodings of the two semantic poles that underlie the notion/operation of negation in general, namely subjective assessment, and referential stocktaking. In that respect, we follow Culioli’s hypotheses as stated for instance in (1988:112): “Il existe une opération primitive de négation liée d’un côté à la valuation subjective (bon/mauvais, d’où rejet, refus) et de l’autre à la localisation spatio-temporelle (présence/absence; vide; apparition/disparition; itération).”

In some languages this distinction is not marked morphosyntactically while in others, such as Kabyle, it is.

Further remarks can be made about this binary system of nonverbal negations, which allow to consider the possibility of bridges between the verbal and the nonverbal domains:

Attributive negation is closer than existential negation to verbal negation in general.

The affirmative counterpart of existential negation (in Berber in general) is a verbal predicate in the perfect/-ive.

And in fact, the study of verbal negation in Kabyle, which we will now present, shows striking similarities with this binary organization of the nonverbal negative system.

3. Verbal negations

In Kabyle, two thirds of negations are verbal, and use the preverbal negator ur.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFFIRMATIVE SUBSYSTEM</th>
<th>NEGATIVE SUBSYSTEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AORIST</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( a(d) + \text{aorist} \approx 30% )</td>
<td>( a \text{wr}^k + \text{aorist} &lt; 0.5% ) (negative optative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((ad \ y-Du - ad \ y-krz))</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\text{aorist (imperative)} \approx 1%</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IMPERFECTIVE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( ur + \text{imperfective} \approx 35% )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( (i-TDu - i-kRz) )</td>
<td>( (ur \ i-TDu - ur \ i-kRz) ) (including ( \approx 5% ) IMPERATIVES)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( a(d) + \text{imperfective} &lt; 1% )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( (ad \ i-TDu - ad \ i-kRz) )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( la + \text{imperfective} &lt; 1% )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( (la \ i-TDu - la \ i-kRz) )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERFECT/-IVE</strong></td>
<td>( ur + \text{negative perfect/-ive} \approx 65% )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( y-Da - y-krz )</td>
<td>( ur \ y-Di - ur \ y-krz )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Percentages are to be read (and added) vertically. Figures are approximations of counts made on our conversational corpus (30 minutes).

Examples are based on two verb stems, \( D \) (come) and \( K\) (plough). A basic utterance is composed of a personal affix and a radical. The radical combines a root and an aspectual scheme. Verbs cannot appear without their personal affixes, nor in a non-finite form.

\( y-Da \): 3SM-COME(PERF.): ‘he came/has come’

Basic utterance = personal affix \((y/i; \text{3rd sg.masc})\) + radical \((Da)\)

RADICAL: \( Da = \text{root} \ (D) + \text{aspectual scheme} \ (a^9)\).

There are four aspectual themes (Aorist, Perfect/-ive, Negative Perfect/-ive, Imperfective). The first three themes are opposed on the basis of apophonia, and the fourth is prefixed or has tensed (or geminated) consonants. Some of those aspectual themes (aorist and imperfective) can be preceded by preverbs: \( ad \) marks the potential quality of the predication. It is a modal preverb. Its range of meanings covers future, generic, potential, plausible, habit in the past, complement clauses. \( La \) indicates simultaneity (only with imperfective).

The perfect/-ive is used in narratives, and in the assessment of situations or actions (Mettouchi 2000). In independent and main clauses, it refers to past or present with states and stative predicates, and to past with dynamic predicates. In subordinate clauses, the temporal distinction disappears. It is mostly a non-dynamic aspect whose interpretation also depends on diathesis: in the perfect/-ive, a basic utterance can be interpreted differently according to the status of the subject (agent or experiencer).

This has led us to consider that the perfect/-ive in Kabyle is very permeable to the way the referential event or situation is construed. The perfect/-ive indicates that the situation or event or state is construed as “being the case”.

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\( a \text{wr}^k \): The footnote is not relevant to the main content and can be ignored.
The bare imperfective has habitual and progressive meanings (Mettouchi 1998, 2001). The progressive is the marked value, currently renewed by the introduction of preverb *la*. The habitual is the unmarked value, and some of its uses compete with those of *ad+aorist*, especially in past contexts. For both values, emphasis is put on the subject as agent or topic. In fact, the imperfective is incompatible with stative predicates, and never allows the stative reading observed with the perfect/-ive, in cases where the verb is compatible with both diatheses.

In the negative subsystem, it takes on in many contexts a prospective meaning, which explains why in most grammatical descriptions the form *ur*+imperfective is considered as the counterpart of the *ad+aorist* form (which very often refers to future time) in the negative subsystem. This has led us to consider that the imperfect in Kabyle is dynamic (agent-oriented), and thematic in its information structure. The negative perfect/-ive (Mettouchi 2000, 2001) is synchronically the counterpart of the perfect/-ive in negative contexts, but it also has residual counterfactual meanings in positive subordinate hypothetical clauses.\(^{11}\)

We can notice that in the perfect/-ive, the system is more or less symmetrical, with a perfect and a so-called negative perfect, which are not always morphologically distinct. On the contrary, in the imperfective, there is a high degree of asymmetry:

- Preverbed forms do not appear in the negative (except for the special case of a *wr+aorist*).
- In the negative, the aorist represents less than 0.5% of occurrences, some of its pragmatic values being conveyed by the imperfect.

A hypothesis to account for this “asymmetrical” asymmetry would be that the negative morpheme *ur* behaves like a preverb and directly modifies the aspectual scheme. This view (Mettouchi 1995, 1996b and 2001) is supported by the fact that *ur* is a former verb (Prasse 1972:244) which has lost its inflections and has therefore become a particle, and also by the fact that it triggers the same word-order changes as preverbs.\(^{12}\)

Our view is that the range of pragmatic values in negative contexts is conveyed thanks to this interaction between preverbal negation (*ur*) and aspect, and in relation to speech situations and contextual influence. We will argue that the range of pragmatic values taken on by verbal negation in relation to aspect\(^{13}\) originates in a narrower and more abstract system of oppositions, which is based, in Kabyle, on a non-duration and non-temporal definition of aspect. This different definition, based on Culüoli’s utterer-centred theory,\(^{14}\) has been formulated in Danon-Boileau (1991: 19) “l’aspect sanctionne, non une quantité d’action, mais la relation entre le but du process et l’état de la réalité au moment de l’énonciation”.\(^{15}\) Such a definition of aspect is compatible with the “uncompleted vs. completed” terminology, if those terms are not taken as describing the unfolding of a process along a time-line, but the assessment of the coincidence, or non-coincidence between the representation of the completed process or stabilized state and the situation of reference.
Along those lines, and thanks to a corpus-based study of more than 700 affirmative and negative sentences, we have been able to characterize semantically the various aspects of Kabyle as follows:

The perfect/-ive marks the coincidence between the representation of the completed process or stabilized state and the situation of reference, the emphasis being laid on the latter. Hence the “objective” undertones of that aspectual form.

The negative perfect/-ive marks the disjunction between the representation of the completed process or stabilized state and the situation of reference, the emphasis being also laid on the latter, just like for perfect/-ive. This emphasis on the situation of reference for both perfect/-ives explains the fact that the distinction between negative perfect/-ive and perfect/-ive is losing ground.

The imperfective marks the non-coincidence between the representation of the completed process and the situation of reference, the emphasis being laid on the former. Hence the “subjective” undertones of that aspectual form: the process or the predication are construed as intentional, or debatable. In terms of agency, the features of agentivity and intentionality are enhanced; in terms of information structure, the viewpoint of the speaker on the predication prevails, thus triggering possible polemical and modal meanings.

The aorist does not relate the representation of the completed process or stabilized state to the situation of reference, it functions on one level only, that of representation. Hence its compatibility with states as well as processes, and the fact that it is always preceded by an irrealis modal preverb in Kabyle. It cannot be negated in Kabyle, except for very rare cases (optative-prohibitive).

Having described the system of aspectual oppositions in those terms, we can relate the three aspectual forms that appear in the negative to the two non-verbal negations whose semantics we described in part 2:

(negative) perfect/-ive and existential negations share an emphasis on the situation of reference, by which prior expectations are gauged,

imperfective and equative-attributive negations share a feature of interpretation, debatable judgment on a theme/topic.¹⁶

The existence of a common territory between the imperfective aspect and attributive negation, and between the perfect/-ive aspect and existential negation is brought to light in the nonverbal glosses of the following examples:

(1) Yiwt ur  T  iD  i-Wit  ara, tis  snat
one  NEG  ACC 3SF  PROX  3SM-hit(NEG.PRF)  NEG2  time  two
i-ÇGr  asn  akeKwaz  i-tuh.
3SM-throw(PRF)  DAT3PLM  stick  3SM-go(PRF).
First he didn’t hit her, and secondly he threw his stick towards them and left.
(1') ulaš  tiyrit.
existneg  beating.
There is/was/has (had) been no beating

(2) ur byi-n  ara  ad  eiwn-n
neg  want(NEG.PERF)-3mpl  neg2  irr  help(aor)-3mpl
They didn’t¹⁷ want to help

(2') ulaš  lbyi
existneg  willingness.
There is/was/has (had) been no will (to help)

(3) tlata  ny  ma  rbəa  tikal  akNi,  y-uyal  uqbl  a  t
three or if four times thus, 3ms-become(perf) before irr  acc3ms
‘Three or four times, it happened that before we let him
n-G  ad  i-ruh  a  t  iD
1pl-left(aor)  irr  3ms-go(aor)  irr  acc3ms  prox
n-Sali  s  imeLmn,  wid
1pl-make-climb(aor) to chiefs, those
go, we took him to the chiefs, those chiefs
Ni  ur  Kat-n  ara  zwr-n  šwit,
anaph  neg  hit(imperf)-3mpl  neg2  be.clever(perf)-3mpl  alittle,
they don't beat (the prisoners), they are a bit clever,
Sn-n  amk  ūmslay-n.
know(perf)-3mpl  how  talk(perf)-3mpl.
they know how to talk.’

(3’) wid  Ni,  maČi  d  iḥliyan.
those anaph  attneg  cop  brutes.
‘Those ones, they are not brutes (even if the opposite view might be sus-
tained).’

(4) ur  iyī  i-Tyīd  ara  ṭḥal  d  bxīr  i
neg  dat-1s  3ms-upset(NEG.PERF)  neg2  situation,  cop  good  rel
yi  bya-n.
dat-1s  want(perf)-3mpl
‘The situation wasn’t upsetting me, (I knew that) they wished me well.’

(4’) maČi  d  ayywbl  ṭḥal  agi
attneg  cop  trouble  situation  this
‘it was not a problem, this situation’ (even if it should have been, in someone
else’s opinion).

The glosses that were elicited in relation to verbal negations worked by pairs: attribution
and imperfective, existence and perfect/-ive. Of course some of those glosses may
seem far-fetched, but our purpose is not to show that verbal and nonverbal negations
are synonymous. Rather, our aim is to underline the existence of common semantic
features between negated aspectual forms and nonverbal negations.
This language-internal exploration of the case of Kabyle has led us to wonder whether such correspondences between attribution and imperfect/ive on the one hand, and existence and perfect/-ive on the other hand, also appeared in other languages.

The following table, which synthesizes the data in Galand (1994), represents TAM asymmetries in two Berber languages (with a verb meaning “do again”, with first person plural agreement).

We can see that in Tuareg, there are two specific negative themes instead of one for Kabyle and Tashelhiyt. Except for the aorist, there is no identity between the aspactual themes used in the positive and those used in the negative. There is a very clearcut distinction between the negative and the affirmative domains in relation to aspect.

In Tashelhiyt, the distinction only concerns aspactual themes in the perfect/-ive (perfect/-ive vs negative perfect/-ive). But otherwise there is symmetry at that level. It’s only through the order of preverbs that we can draw a line, not between affirmative and negative, but between the modal domain (the TAM particle precedes the negative marker) and the indicative domain (the negative marker precedes the TAM particle).

It is interesting to note that Tashelhiyt is said to be drifting from aspect to tense as a language (Leguill 1982). This shift from aspect (relationship between the representation of the completed process or stabilized situation and the situation of reference) to tense (position of the event-time or situation-time with respect to a deictic or translated origin) apparently has consequences on the symmetry of verbal forms as regards negation vs affirmation. Nonverbal negations are described as part of the grammar of Tashelhiyt, but there is competition with forms bearing TAM distinctions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFFIRMATIVE</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tashelhiyt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nuls (perfect)</td>
<td>ur nulis (negative perfect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ar) n'als (imperfect)</td>
<td>ur a n'als (imperfect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rad nals (“future”)</td>
<td>ur rad nals (aorist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ad nals (“optative”)</td>
<td>ur ad nals (aorist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>als (imperative 2p)</td>
<td>ur als (aorist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuareg (Ahaggar)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nulös (perfect)</td>
<td>ur nulis (negative perfect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n'talös (affirmative imperfect)</td>
<td>ur n'talös (negative imperfect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e nlös (“future”)</td>
<td>ur e nlös (aorist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>als (imperative 2p)</td>
<td>ur tulséd (negative perfect)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the three other African languages under study, verbal systems are also asymmetrical, and some links can be made between nonverbal and verbal negations, and among verbal negations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFFIRMATIVE</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>YORUBA</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø (perfective)</td>
<td>kò + Ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tì (marked perfective)</td>
<td>kò tì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nì (progressive &amp; habitual)</td>
<td><em>no negative form</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>màa nì (habitual)</td>
<td>kìì or kò kìì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>màa (ingressive-continuative)</td>
<td><em>no negative form</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ôò (future)</td>
<td>kò níí í</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(optative-imperative)</td>
<td>màà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HAUSA (Ader)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taa/ta (perfective)</td>
<td>bà tà...ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yi (aorist)</td>
<td>dàC yi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zàn (future)</td>
<td>bàà zàn...ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nàa/kà (imperfective)</td>
<td>baa (imperfective + prospective)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAN</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø (injunctive)</td>
<td>bārà + nonverbal pred. + wà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tà (perfective)</td>
<td>bā...wà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n (habitual)</td>
<td>bèè...wà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n gwè (progressive)</td>
<td>bèè gwè...wà</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all those languages, the (unmarked) perfect is treated differently from the other TAM: the only distinction between affirmative and negative is the presence of a negative marker. On the contrary, imperfective and modal forms show much variation between affirmative and negative: the use of different sets of TAM and negative markers draws a clearcut distinction between negative and affirmative. There apparently is less need to use different forms in the perfect/-ive than in the imperfective. This relative symmetry is probably related to the “objective” dimension of the perfect/-ive, which lays emphasis on the situation of reference, and presents the predication as either “being the case”, or “not being the case”. In our opinion, this special treatment of the perfect/-ive in the affirmative/negative opposition should be linked to the existence of a distinct marker for existential negation, which sets it apart from attributive negations.

This brief overview of TAM asymmetries in African languages needs to be carried further, but it points towards a phenomena that seems to have typological implications.

As for the relationship between nonverbal and verbal negation, we notice that in San, where the verb stem is inflected for aspect there is a distinct negative marker in the imperfective ( bèè...wà) and in the perfect/-ive (bà ... wà), and it is the imperfective negator that we find in attributive negations. This would tend to reinforce our claim about the correlation between attributive negation and negation of the imperfective.

**Conclusion**

Our aim in this paper was to show that there is a correlation, across languages, between tense-aspect asymmetries with respect to negation, and the encoding of distinct
non-verbal negations. Namely, if a given language presents different TAM markers in
the negative as opposed to the affirmative subsystem, and also presents different non-
verbal negations, then the core values of aspctual forms are likely to mirror the core
values of the non-verbal negations.

We have shown that in detail for Kabyle, and have provided data for other African
languages. Further investigations are necessary to specify the details of this binary re-
lationhip in languages other than Kabyle, but this opposition between interactive,
intentional and thematic on the one hand, and descriptive and informational on the
other hand seems to hold on a typological level.

Negation and aspect are therefore intimately related on a semantic plane, and this
appears all the more clearly, through asymmetries as regards negation vs affirmation,
as the verbal system of the language under consideration is predominantly aspectual.

The hypothesis that we would now like to test is the following: strictly aspectual
systems are more likely to make extensive use of nonverbal negations whereas tense-
based systems are more likely to replace them in the long run by forms with TAM
distinctions.

Notes

* I would like to thank the conveners of the conference, as well as the colleagues who have kindly
answered my queries or provided information related to my topic: Ursula Drobc, Karen Ebert,
Tom Givón, Tom Güldemann, Christa König, Derek Nurse and Ekkehard Wolff.

1. Perfect and perfective are not morphologically or morphosyntactically distinct in Berber,
hence our use of the term “perfect/perfective”. (I thank Derek Nurse and Christa König for their
useful remarks on aspctual terminology).

2. A count made on one of our conversational corpora gave the following results: number of ver-
bal negations = 60, number of existential negations (ulaš) = 15, number of attributive-equative
negations (mači) = 17.

3. In the Berber examples, capitals represent geminated or tensed consonants. Table of
abbreviations: simult.: preverb marking simultaneity with another process, or progressive
aspect (a/la); irr.: preverb marking prospective (and habit in the past) values (ad);
prox: proximal particle; perf: perfect/-ive aspect; existneg: existential negation; neg/perf:
negative perfect/-ive; attrneg: attributive negation; imperf: imperfective aspect; cop: copula;
aor: aorist; dat: dative; acc: accusative; neg: preverbal marker of negation (ur); neg2: negative
reinforcement (ara).

4. Diachronically speaking, mači is a loanword of Arabic origin, whereas ulaš is considered to
be the contraction of “ur y-Li ša”: “NEG be(negperf)-3sm thing”.

5. Examples are taken from Galand (1994)

6. Examples are taken from Caron (1990) for Hausa, Sachnine (1990) for Yoruba and Platiel
(1990) for San.

7. “There is a cognitive operation of negation linked on the one hand to subjective valuation
(good vs. bad, etc.), and on the other hand to spatio-temporal location (presence vs. absence,
extc.)”.
8. This negative marker is modal, it is composed of a nominal element plus the verbal negator \textit{ur}, and is used with the aorist aspect. Its frequency is very low, and it conveys optative-prohibitive meaning.

\texttt{A wr D y-uyal!}  
\texttt{Neg-Opt Deict. come-back(aorist)-3sm}  
\texttt{May he not come back!}

9. Except for the imperfective, aspectual distinctions are based on apophonism in Berber, so that it is not possible to consider that \textit{a} is the marker of perfect/-ive for all verbs. Sometimes it is a \textit{schwa}, sometimes/\textit{ul}/.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{y-k}rz \textit{yigr}  
  \texttt{plough(perf)-3sm field}  
  \texttt{the field is ploughed}
  \item \textit{y-k}rz \textit{wr}gz \texttt{(igr)}  
  \texttt{plough(perf)-3sm man (field)}  
  \texttt{the man ploughed/ has ploughed (the field)}
\end{itemize}

A resultative reading can occur when the verb form takes on a passive diathesis (prefix \textit{Twa}) in the perfect/-ive:

\texttt{y- Twa-k}rz \texttt{yigr}  
\texttt{plough(perf)-pass-3sm field}  
\texttt{the field has been/ploughed, and as a result it is ploughed}

10. With a special counterfactual hypothetical marker: \textit{lm}r \textit{y-Li wa}śu \textit{zri-y} (if(counterfactual) be(neg-perf)-3SM what know(perf)-1S = if I had known something).

11. The following word orders are respected in relation to TAM, negation, or subordination markers:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \texttt{y-fk}a \texttt{(give(perf)-3S)}  
  \texttt{yas (3S)}  
  \texttt{t (3sm)}  
  \texttt{id (prox)}  
  \texttt{(He gave it to her/him)}
  \item \texttt{tam/neg/sub dat. pron. acc. pron. deictic part. basic pred. utterance}
  \texttt{ur (neg)}  
  \texttt{s (3S)}  
  \texttt{t (3sm) id (prox) y-fki (give(neg-perf)-3S)}  
  \texttt{(He didn't give it to her/him)}
\end{itemize}

12. For a thorough description of these values, see Mettouchi (1998 & 2000).

13. Itself based on Benveniste’s work on the indexation of verb forms and deixtics to the speech situation.

14. “Aspect does not measure a quantity of action, but it relates the representation of the expected completion of the process (or the expected state) to the representation of actuality/reference”. Linguists who are not acquainted to the utterer-centred signed-based semantics developed by Culioli and his followers should be informed of the fact that this reading is not pragmatic, but semantic: it is not the speaker as a person in a definite situation who makes this assessment, but the utterer. The latter is a theoretical construct: the origin of TAM and determination construals.

15. The other dimension of the imperfective aspect, namely its agentive-intentional feature, does not appear as such in attributive negations, because these negations are non-dynamic, being nonverbal. Nevertheless, the shift in the imperfective, between intentionality of the agent and intentionality of the speaker is a widely acknowledged fact (cf. the ambiguity of \textit{Mrs Smith isn't seeing anyone: I'm reporting her refusal to see you vs. I'm objecting to your seeing her}), and we therefore consider that we can relate agentivity and speaker's viewpoint at the level of semantics.
17. The examples containing verbal negations are taken from our corpus, that is why the translation provides unambiguous temporal values.

18. Examples are taken from Galand (1994).


20. Christa König (whom I thank for her personal communication) remarked that existential negation was related to perfective aspect in Maa, and Ekkehard Wolff (whom I also thank for his personal communication) underlined the same phenomenon for Lamang. Further investigations, which we have not yet been able to make, should show more precisely the extent of the relationship between aspect and nonverbal negations in those languages.

References


