

Negation and quotation

Negation for many languages of West Africa involves a clause final marker. In *U̇t-Ma'in* (ISO 639-3 gel, Kainji, Benue-Congo, Niger-Congo), there are two distinct negation patterns that are constructionally-conditioned: certain auxiliary constructions employ two markers of negation, one in the auxiliary position preceding the main semantic verb and the other the clause final =*da*. All other constructions employ only the clause final negation marker =*da*.

In multiclause structures, there can be ambiguity when the only indication of negation occurs on the right-most edge of the multiclause structure. Does the final negator have scope over the matrix clause (i) or only the complement clause (ii)?

- (1) (i) S V [S V] =NEG
(ii) S V [S V=NEG]

- (2) Faru̇k-u̇ hyan ė mu̇gun da.
fàròk-ò fán é mǎ-g-ṣn dà
 king-C1.SUBJ see C2.OBJ return-PST-DIST NEG
 (i) “The king saw that they did NOT RETURN.”
 (ii) “The king did NOT SEE that they returned.”

- (3) Faru̇k zu̇, “U̇m hyan u̇n da’. Wa sa wa tomu̇ ya’ag u-bu.
 a. *fàròk zṣ=m #PITCH↑ hján ēn=dà*
 king say=1SG.SUBJ see 3PL=NEG
 “The king said, ‘I did not see them (the advisors) (return).’ ”

- b. *wā sà wá tōmū já?ágùbū*
 “He wanted to also send his children.”

The two meanings in (2) lead to the same conclusion, namely that there was no evidence that the people sent by the king had returned—either (i) the people did *not return* (scope of negation is only the complement clause) or (ii) the king did *not see* the people (scope of negation includes the matrix clause), with the result that the next action by the king is to “send some other people”. During a later episode in the same story, in (3) there is no such ambiguity, there is no way to interpret it as “he did not say ‘I see them’.” The prosodic cues of PAUSE and PITCH can also assist in disambiguating in situations such as (3). In this way, reported speech clauses behave morphosyntactically distinctly from other types of multiclause complement taking structures.

When a double marked negative clause occurs within a report as in (4), there is no question of ambiguity as to the clause under the scope of negation, as the negated clause is flanked on both edges by the NEG.AUX and the clause final enclitic.

- (4) *músá zṣ kwàtu ònjá ṣm=dá sèg=ò bṣ=dā*
 PN say ring.C7 DEM.C7 1SG.SUBJ=NEG loan=ASSOC 2SG=NEG
 ‘Musa said, “That ring, I will not loan you...”’

Given the large number of languages in West Africa that are reported to have clause final negation markers as well as the large number of languages to have “double” negation, careful attention to the behavior of negation in regards to reported speech is warranted.