# Negation in Tiv

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**Abstract**

*The article explores and discusses negation in Tiv syntax under the universal context of negator as an element that changes the truth value of a proposition. It identifies the negative markers in the language and gives a description of the positions in the structure that they are marked, and with the resultant structural change. The justification for this work is premised on the fact that negation in Tiv is not formally explored and it is hoped that the work will present a formal account of negation in the language for cross-linguistic studies. Data for discussion were obtained through participant observation and the Author's native introspection. For analysis, the work adopted the constructs of the Principles and Parameters (P and P) approach. The scope of the study covers important aspects like subject and object negation, as well as negation in relative structures. In the article, it is presented that Tiv has two exponent markings for negation; ei 'no' in the CP domain and ga 'not' in the IP domain. The article goes ahead to show that imperative marks negation sentence initial (CP domain), while the declarative marks it sentence final (IP). In the analysis, it is discovered that negation in sentence initial position is for force of negation. The analysis also discloses that, although the negation in declaratives is marked in situ in sentence final position, the negated element can be extraposed for focus. The study concludes that negation in Tiv is characterized by scope and the aspect of left/right periphery marking is typical to edge feature percolation.*

**Key words**: Negation, Exponent, Marking, Sentence, Syntax, Tiv.

## Introduction

Negation is considered a universal property, as most human languages exhibit one form of sentential negation or the other (Forest, 1993, Miestamo, 2005).In sentential negation, truth value of a sentence is negated to not-true. In essence, one can agree that negation changes the truth value of an utterance, thus marking its polar contrary. Ways vary in which languages mark sentential negation; other languages mark it as a single exponent, while others, yet mark it as a double exponent. As a universal category of languages, the surface manifestations languages characterize in the syntax of their negation forms the basis of analysis in most researches and it is on this same vein that the current work sets to investigate the syntax of negation in Tiv, which if, more succinctly put, is about the licensing of negation in Tiv.

The aim of the work is therefore to determine the linear order of the negative markers relative to other constituents in the structure. The objectives are to determine whether this double exponent marking constitute periphery marking, and whether these negative markers in their periphery forms could be analyzed as constituents in the CP and VP domains, respectively. Another objective is to determine the semantic effects of the negative markers in terms of the scope of the negation. In other words, major focus in the work shall be on the character and structural position of the negative within the sentence with the attendant syntactic constraints.

## Theoretical Orientation of the Study

The study is anchored around the Principles and Parameters approach (Culicover, 1997; Chomsky, 2004), which interprets the ultimate goal of generative linguistics as being to account for the

intuitive human linguistic competence. This forms the pivot for a linguistic theory where competence is conceived of as a Universal Grammar (UG) embedded in a set of basic universal principles, shared by all languages of the world. Also, there is a set of parameters which help determine the way languages select rules that account for their surface ordering. This is collectively referred to as the principles and parameters approach, which thesis is that languages are different in various but limited and non-arbitrary ways.

Approached from this way, a linguistic theory naturally, concerns with those properties of UG as they are common to all human languages and specific to individual languages. This informs generative linguistics to majorly concern with formulating what concerns the grammar of any language, rather than concerns with details of one or more specific languages. Chomsky (2004:104), attests no less to this where he says 'we can seek to discover theories that meet the conditions of descriptive and explanatory adequacy- that are true, respectively of, L (particular grammar) and of $S_0$ (universal grammar)'. Against this background, this study seeks to establish the basic architecture of negation in Tiv, with a view to determine the degree of variance and the parameters that occasion this variance. This will inevitably contribute to further cross linguistic studies in the syntax of negation.

## Brief Review of Cross-linguistic Studies on Negation Syntax

Negation is assumed to be a universal element in human language (principle). What is specific (parametric) is its relative order in given structures in languages; that is, its surface manifestations. A cross-linguistic study of negation focuses on its character as well as its structural position within the sentence. Languages have various strategies for marking sentential negation, evidenced in the structural position of the negative particle as well as the number of

negative markers involved for languages. Pfau (2004) identifies English and German among languages that use an independent negative particle; while Turkish and French characterize an affixal negative element that is attached to the verb (Dahl, 1979, 1993; Payne, 1985). Also, French in the literature is cited among languages known for split negation. An examination of the structure of sentences bearing negation displays negation to be, either in sentence initial position, preverbal, post- verbal, or in sentence final position. The present study seeks to determine such ordering in the case of Tiv, since it is a variance among languages.

Adopting the case grammar model, Fujita (1975:49) ascribes two components to a sentence: 'modality (M) and proposition (P); stating further that 'negation together with tense , aspect, mood and modal auxiliary verbs belong to M component'. This interprets that the M component is structured and incorporated into the verboid component of the sentence in surface ordering. This position, Fujita (1975) argues, is obtainable in the case of English and Japanese; where the negation is attracted to the V of the sentence. Commenting on the relative position of ordering in the structure, Fujita differentiates between English and Japanese that, in English, NEG. appears after the first auxiliary verb (AV) and before the main verb (MV),... while in Japanese, NEG. is invariably located after the MV.

The difference between the two languages with regard to the position of the NEG. within the V is accounted for based on typology; where English (being SVO language) is prepositional, while Japanese (being SOV language) is postpositional. This is seen in the examples in Japanese below where the negativization of (1a is 1b) and then in English in (2), is the position of the relative marker, relative to the AV and MV.

1a. kare wa eigo ga wakaru
he English understand
'He understands English'

1b. kare wa eigo ga wakara **nai**
not
'He doesn't understand English'
2. He does **not** understand English

Still on the syntactic properties of negation, Crysman (2010:270), while investigating the morphological and syntactic properties of discontinuous negative marking in Hausa indicates that the language 'exhibits three different ways of expressing VP negation: in the subjunctive, negative force is signaled by an independent "inhibitive marker" *kadà,* in the continuative, it is expressed by long high negative marker *bā,* whereas in all other tense /aspect/mood (TAM) categories, a discontinuous *bà – ba* is used'. He further states that even though negation is signaled twice in these cases, only one single negation is used. The following examples illustrate the instances in Hausa:

3. kadà ki bā shì kōmē (*ba)!
NEG 2.SG.F.SUBJ give him anything
'Don't you (f) give him anything'

4. bā tā sōyà kàzā (*ba)
NEG. CONT 3.SG.F.CONT fry chicken
'She is not frying chicken'

5. yarinya ba ta dawo *(ba)
Girl NEG 3.SG.F.CPL return NEG
'The girl didn't return'

6. malamai ba su ji kome ba
Teachers NEG 3.P.CPL hear anything NEG

Crysman (2010) further asserts that word order in Hausa is strictly (SVO), with tense/aspect/ mood (TAM) markers immediately preceding the lexical verb, where in the discontinuous negation, the initial marker is found strictly left adjacent to the TAM markers, sometimes undergoing fusion with these markers. The final *ba* surfaces at the end of the VP, following all core arguments (Newman, 2000; Jaggar, 2001). It is their view that in Hausa, both the initial and final *ba* are not characterized as optional in marking NEG, and that tone plays an important role in defining the shape of the NEG marker *ba* in Hausa.

In Italian Poletto(2010) indicates that the NEG marker 'is located in the same position in all constructions in which it occurs; further, averring that the constructions be either a contrastive or informational one, with NEG occupying the focus position in the CP layer. She argues further that even though negation in Italian is marked in sentence final and sentence initial positions, the one in sentence final is related with the one in sentence initial, citing that NO is always located in the Focus layer in the CP, its presence in sentence final position being a result of IP fronting. This is seen in her example (7a), analyzed as (7b):

7a. NO ghe so ndà NO!
not there am gone NO

7b. [specGroundP [IP no ghe so nda][Ground$^{o}$[CPfocus NO][finP[IP ~~no ghe so ndà~~]]]
[Fin$^{o}$[IP ~~no ghe so ndà~~]]]

## Basic Linguistic Information on Tiv

Tiv is an ethno-linguistic group in Africa that belongs to the Bantoid group of the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo group of Bantu languages (Crozier and Blench, 1976; Greenberg, 1977). There is linguistic evidence in support that Tiv belongs to the Tivoid group of languages which display a genetic tone system, with low tones causing automatic down-step. The group is a class language, and manifests a rich concord system characterized as a major distinguishing feature of the Bantoid groups (Watters and Leroy, 1989; Blench, 2016)

Tiv is spoken by over four million speakers in Benue state alone (Tser, 2013). They occupy the North Central States of Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa and Plateau. Some are found in Cross River and Adamawa States of Nigeria, and also in the Republic of Cameroon in Central Africa. Evidence from its grammar indicates that Tiv exhibits a head-first parameter setting, thus making it a head initial language and displays the word order SVO. The language displays a rich tense system as well as a tonal system that often plays a very crucial role in its grammar. The language is morphologically classified as fusional, owing to ample evidence of inflectional operations in its morphological processes, mostly on stems undergoing affixal processes of both prefixation and suffixation, used for tense marking and plural formation.

## Negation in Tiv

### Exponents of Negation Marking

Tiv, like most languages that behave like it, have two exponents for

marking sentential negation. These are *ei* 'no' and *ga* 'not'. *Ei* is marked in word initial position and *ga* 'not' is marked in word final position. The negative connectives thus serve as change signals in the truth value of propositions in Tiv, as seen in the example (8a, 8b, and 8c.), which are proposition, question and negation, respectively:

8a. Afa ngu va-n
N. be.V come-PROG
'Afa is coming'
8b. Afa ngu va-n-a?
N. be.V come.PROG.
'Is Afa coming?'
8c. **ei**, Afa ngu va-n **ga**
NEG-no N. be.V come-PROG NEG-not
'No, Afa is not coming'

From the example (8c) can be seen an instance of NEG markers and their relative positions in the structure. The language maintains a fixed position for its NEG markers, that is, *ei* 'no' is fixed in word initial position, while *ga* 'not' is always in word final position (*ei* ------- *ga*). The base position of *ei* 'No' in sentence initial position marks the syntactic status of the negative element for semantic purposes of focus. In the example (9) that follows, (9b) is the negated answer to (9a).

9a. a va?
INDF-pro V.PST-come
'did he come?'
9b. ei!
NEG-no (Focus)
'no'

By serving as final focus marker, attention is given to the negation criterion, as to its reading, which in the instance in (9b), displays internal reading. The marker *ei* 'No' in sentence final position is compatible with imperatives, but not with declaratives. This means that NEG- ei 'No' can be tagged with voice, for imperative force, hence its realization in sentence initial position (CP domain). This is illustrated in the example (10) for imperative and (11) for declarative, respectively.

10a. Tersoo va?
N. V.PST-come
'did Tersoo come?'

10b. **ei**! A va**ga**
NEG-no 3SG.SUBJT V.PST-come NEG-not
'no, he did not come'

The example (10) above, parallels to (11) below, to mark the declarative voice:

11. civir ngu va- n **ga**
N. be V.come-PROG NEG-not
'Civir is not coming'

In example (10b) is instantiated the NEG-tag with imperative voice. Negation is marked in sentence final position. This means that Tiv has two exponent positions for marking negation in structure; sentence initial position and sentence final position (Poletti, 2010). These two exponent marking positions are completely tenable in the case of imperative constructions, as exemplified in (10b), while declarative constructions carry one NEG marker, usually in word final position, as exemplified in (11). The emphatic *ei* 'No' of the imperative voice in sentence initial position can be accounted for based on the locus of the negative force it conveys. It is for this

semantic reason that it is generated in that position, as such; it can be used for response to questions that require force of negation without the accompaniment of any other constituent (see 9b). It shares this statutory role with its counterpart *een* 'yes' for affirmative tags. It can be said then that the imperative allows the use of short tags, which is used for the semantic purposes of focus. For purposes of substantiation, (10a) above is reproduced below as (12a) and its affirmative as (12b)

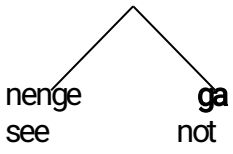
12a. Tersoo va?
N. V.PST-come
'did tersoo come?'

12b. **een,** Tersoo va
Affirmative N. V.PST-come
'yes, Tersoo came'

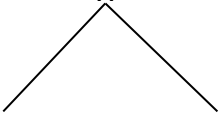
## Negation and Word Order

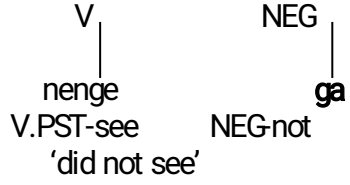
The negation component is generally associated with groups of words that make up the verboid domain (Fujita, 1975). This makes obvious, why sentential negation is most attractive to the verbal component of the sentence. This is illustrated in diagram, using binary principle (Radford, 2006), to mark headedness and the projection principle.

13a.

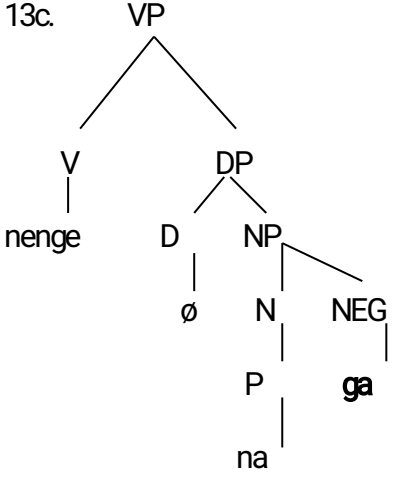



13b.






13c.




nenge na **ga**
V.PST-see 3SG-pro NEG-not
'did not see him'

The example (13) gives credence to the fact that sentential negation is structurally attracted to the
VP. The diagrams in (13a, b, c), all depict the position of the NEG relative to the verb in a structure. In (13b), the NEG is based in word final position, relative to the verb, while in (13c), the NEG precedes

the pronoun. Here, it is observed that the pronoun serves as the complement of the verb, and that the NEG expands right wards is an instance of complement license. The verb licenses which constituents can structurally occur next to it. The NEG in word final position indicates complement negation, and shows that the NEG has scope over the entire sentence. This means that the NEG is based generated and marked in situ.

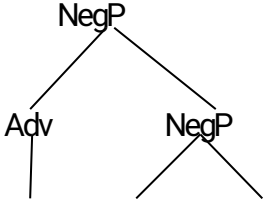
In Tiv, as in several other languages, sentential negation is realized in the clause structure NegP, and could be found between FinP and TP. This position accounts for NEG, both in in situ markings and for extraposed constituents. This entails the leftward movement of a constituent, normally to sentence initial position, to achieve focus. This indicates that apart from in situ marking, which is in word final position, NEG could be marked within the sentence. This is done when for semantic reasons of focus, a constituent is extraposed, yet the NEG is marked on the final position of the extraposed constituent. The example in (14) is illustration point:

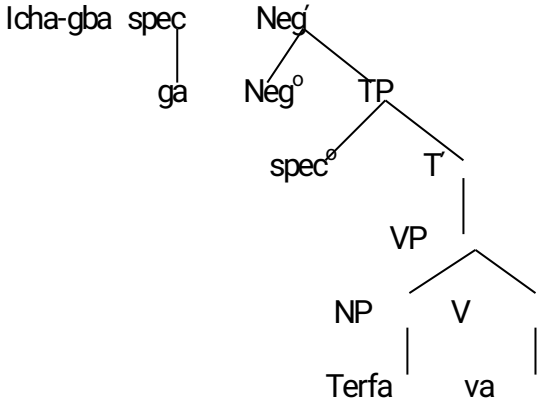
14a. Terfa va [ icha-gba] [**ga**]]
N. V.PST-come ADV-far- fall NEG-not
'Terfa came not quite long ago'

14b. [ icha-gba] [**ga**]] Terfa va
ADV.far-fall NEG-not N. V.PST-come
'Not long ago, Terfa came'

A tree diagram can be used to indicate constituent representation in the structure depicting extraposition, labeled (14c):

14c.



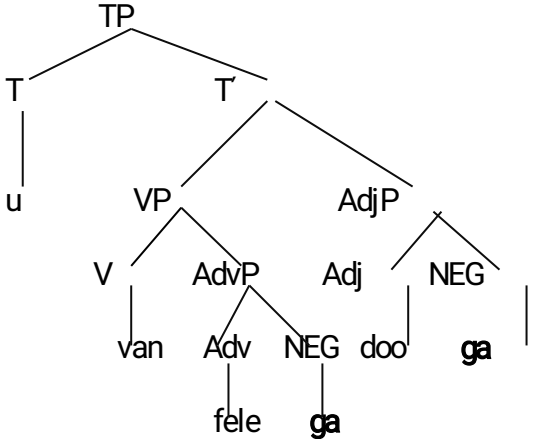



In example (14a), is seen instance of sentential negation, where the verb subcategorizes for an adverbial phrase of time, *icha-gba* 'quite long' and the NEG-*ga* 'not', to give negative force. As regards the status of headship, the fact that the NEG-*ga* 'not', is labeled separately is indication that it is a separate functional head. In (14b) can be seen, extraposition of an adverbial bearing negative force, from sentence final position, to sentence initial position. Although the NEG enjoys wide scope over the entire sentence, this scope is however narrowed, when a particular constituent is chosen for focusing. This is purely for semantic considerations. In (14c), a tree diagram illustrates the movement of the extraposed constituent from the lower VP domain to the higher domain in the TP-(NegP).This is an instance of AdvP extraposition.

Apart from AdvP extraposition, other constituents could be negated and extraposed for focus effect. This happens in the case of and NPs as shown in the example (15 and 16):

15a. [u va -n fele] [**ga**]] [doo] [ **ga**]]
to V.Prst-come PRG quick NEG-not good NEG-not
'to not come quick is not good'

15b.




Example (15a) is an instance of extraposition with NEG, while (15b) is the tree diagram representation of (15a). The sentence is characterized by negation of the two clauses in the structure; both the AdvP and the AdjP are separately marked for negation. This could be explained that the two clauses carry separate heads; as such negation has to be marked on each head. This is necessary for the semantic interpretation; in the sense that it is possible to mark negation on just one clause and mark a positive tag on the other clause, all within the sentence. The negation in this instance is marked in situ, where there is involved movement of the infinitive marker from the VP domain to the TP domain as a $T^{\emptyset}$.

16a. [$_{NP}$ kwagh- fa- n ve] [**ga**]] ka kwagh u kpiligh –iyol

thing-know-PROG 3PL.SUBJ NEG-not it thing of surprise-body
'that they lack knowledge is a thing of surprise'

The structure in (16) exemplifies NP head negation in a relative construction. The NP carries the subject, and it is the subject that is negated, leaving out the relativized NP which serves as the complement of the relative NP. There are instances where the relative complement too, is negated, carrying a separate NEG marking, separate from the marking of the relative head, as shown in (16b):

16b. [NP kwagh-fa- n ve] [**ga**]] ka [kwagh u kpiligh-iyol] [**ga**]]
thing-know-PROG 3PL.SUBJ NEG-not it thing of surprise-body NEG-not
'their lack of knowledge is not a thing of surprise'

The issue for determination in the example (16b) is the locus of the negation force. Here, the issue of wide scope is discountenanced as the negative head is borne separately by each NP clause. One plausible reason for this could be locality constraints, where the NEG cannot extend scope across other clauses in relative constructions. This, one can safely conclude, is an instance of single clause negation marking in Tiv.

Tiv characterizes instance of object negation. Take the following example (17):

17. seefan va a or **ga**
N. V.PST-come with SG-person NEG-not
'Seefan did not come with anyone'

In the structure (17), *or* 'person' serves as the object of the sentence and is negated. This is an instance of complement negation, and

because the NEG is marked in sentence final position, we can conclude that the negative object licences sentential negation in situ. This parallels to (14b and 15), where negation is characterized by movements that are assumed to involve adjunction of the moved constituent to a maximal projection (Haegeman, 1996)

## Negation, Scope and Conjoined Structures

Negation in Tiv could also be examined in terms of its marking, relative to its scope in coordinate structures. In the example (18) that follows, (18a and 18b) are separate constructions, while (18c) is an instance of conjoined structure and negation.

18a. Tar se **ga**
N. V.PST-laugh NEG-not
'Tar did not laugh'

18b. kwase na kpaa se **ga**
Wife 3SG.pro.POSS too V.PST-laugh NEG-not
'his wife too, did not laugh'

18c. Tar man / vea kwase na (ve) se**ga**
N. and / with wife 3SG.pro.POSS they V.PST-laugh NEG-not
'Tar and/ with his wife did not laugh'

The example (18c) is an instance of conjoined and commutative construction. It is observed that Tiv has only one negative marker for both constructions, and it is in the VP-domain in word final position. This parallels to such languages like Hausa, (Crysman, 2010), that use a different marker for each conjunct. This single exponent marking is an instance of periphery marking (left), in case of declaratives as in (18c), and right periphery marking, in the case of

imperatives, is an instance of edge feature percolation. This feature percolation is best appreciated in the light of Anderson (1992, 2005), which indicates that edge feature percolations distribute morpho-syntactic features to the periphery of phrasal constituents. This accounts for initial and final exponent markings, in imperative sentences and single exponent marking in final position, for declaratives in Tiv.

## Conclusion

Negation in Linguistics is an important area of study since it covers a wide range of issues. Negation in Tiv syntax gives some useful insights into the grammar of Tiv by providing significant hints on the nature of negation, and thereby contributing new empirical evidence into the theory of syntax. In the study, lists of negation elements in the language are identified and their positions in the sentence are given. Also, the article has described what possible effects these negative elements have on the sentence; whether the negated element is marked in situ, or is extraposed for focus effect.

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