

Sentential Negation and Agreement in Gweno

This study investigates sentential negation in Gweno, a Bantu language (Guthrie code E.65) of Tanzania. Guldemann (1999) outlines two primary negation strategies common to Bantu languages: verb-internal through affixation, or through an unbound particle somewhere in the clause. Gweno demonstrates both patterns, but displays verb-marked negation only in the first person singular where both agreement and tense have a dedicated negative form:

- (1) n-a-ghenda ufuva
1.SG-PRES-go market
- (2) **thi-tha**-ghenda ufuva nyi
1.SG.NEG-PRES.NEG-go market 1.SG.NEG
'I do not go to the market'

Gweno's chief negation strategy, however, is through a post-verbal negation particle, also seen in (2) above. While VP or clause-final is not uncommon in Bantu, Gweno deviates from other Bantu languages in the lack of consistent form for the negation particle. In Gweno, the negative particle agrees with the subject of the sentence. I review the paradigm of these particles and their commonalities with reduced pronouns:

- (3) ku-a-ghenda ufuva **pho**
2.SG-PRES-go market **2.SG.NEG**
'you do not go to the market'
- (4) fu-von-ire **fwe**
1.PL-see-PST **1.PL.NEG**
'we did not see'

I also present the distribution of these negative particles. They may appear post-verbally and clause-finally. A similar distribution is noted by Gibson (2015) for Rangi negation.

- (5) thi-chi-minik-a **nyi** Jo barua iya
1.SG.NEG-HAB-GIVE-FV **1.SG.NEG** Jo 9.letter 9.DEM
'I do not give Jo the letter'
- (6) thi-chi-mnik-a Jo barua iya **nyi**
1SG.NEG-HAB-give-FV Jo 9.letter 9.DEM **1.SG.NEG**
'I do not give Jo the letter'

Unlike Rangi, Gweno also allows the negative particle to appear between other post-verbal constituents, such as between the arguments of a ditransitive verb, or between an argument and an adjunct:

(7) Thi-chi-vik-a bakuli **nyi** methe-nyi ka-ghu.
1.SG.NEG-HAB-put-FV bowl 1.SG.NEG table-LOC C-DEM
'I do not put the bowl on the table'

However, despite this flexibility, the negation particle is still constrained in some ways that are still being explored. For example, it may not appear between a complement and a temporal adverb:

(8) *thi-le-ghur-ie mchere **nyi** ighuo
1.SG.NEG-PST-buy-FV rice 1.SG.NEG yesterday
'I did not buy rice yesterday'

After presenting further distributional data, I contrast Gweno negation with sentential negation particles in other Bantu languages and explore language-internal similarities with other elements. Based on their mobility in the clause and similarity with reduced pronouns, I suggest Gweno negative particles are pronominal forms co-opted as independent syntactic elements used to mark negation.

References

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