

Cross-clausal Negation Asymmetries and the Development of Finiteness

A number of genetically unrelated languages display a striking asymmetry across matrix clauses. In those clauses, a finite verb will obligatorily display fewer functional contrasts in its morphology when the verb is negated, although the omitted contrasts may appear on a free-standing negation morpheme. Such contrasts typically include tense morphology, as well as agreement morphology in languages that have it. The major Finnic languages Estonian and Finnish belong to this class of languages. The major Dravidian languages, including Tamil, also belong to this class. This asymmetry has been documented for a broad range of languages in M. Miestamo (2003) and subsequent publications.

I will discuss a different type of asymmetry, similarly shared by these two unrelated language groups. Negation is morphologised contrastively across clauses based on their finiteness status. For languages in which a cross-clausal contrast in the phonological shape of negation elements is obligatory, this suggests that the negation element itself may bear the finiteness feature. Non-finite negation can be realised in several of these languages using a closed class element that conveys the sense of 'without' in nominal contexts (PPs and case-inflected NPs). In Estonian and Finnish, non-finite verbs can take a nominalising suffix, followed by abessive case inflection, as in the following example (L. Lindström, p.c):

Läe-si-me kooli, enda-l kodutöö tege-ma-ta. ESTONIAN
go-PST-1PL school self-ADE homework do-NOM-ABE
"We went to school, not having done our homework."

We find such a finite/non-finite asymmetry in negation marking, accompanied by a 'without' adposition or abessive case construction, not only in Finnic and Dravidian languages, but also for example across matrix and infinitival complement clauses in Irish. A negated infinitival clause is the complement of a preposition, *gan*, meaning 'without' in ordinary PPs. *Gan* functions in the clausal context as a negative non-finite complementiser.

NOMINAL CONTEXT

[*Gan a chuid seacláid-e,*] *ní raibh an páiste sásta.* IRISH
without POSS PART chocolate-GEN NEG be.PST DET child happy
"Without his chocolate, the child was not happy."

CLAUSAL CONTEXT

Is deacair le páiste [gan a chuid seacláid-e a ithe.] IRISH
COP difficult P child without POSS PART chocolate-GEN INF eat
"It's difficult for a child not to eat his chocolate."

The primary goal of this talk is to show how finite/non-finite negation asymmetries across clauses can be recreated in a radical contact language previously lacking a morphological finiteness contrast, but subsequently strongly influenced by a Dravidian language. The secondary goal is to explain why such a contact language would incorporate a clausal asymmetry, the finiteness contrast, that appears at face value to offer little if any communicative advantage. The contact language in question is Sri Lanka Malay (SLM). The language influencing it directly, for approximately three hundred years, was a local Muslim Tamil variety called Sonam. In Tamil varieties and in SLM, negated verbs cannot display overt contrastive tense morphology, and non-finite complement clauses and adjunct clauses must display distinctive non-finite negation morphology. In Sonam, non-finite negation morphology, affixed to a

lexical verb, resembles abessive case inflection in Estonian and Finnish, as an affix meaning 'without' in nominal contexts.

NOMINAL CONTEXT

Miflal Kirinde-keku poov-ille, [sor-(ill)aama.] SONAM
 Miflal Kirinda-DAT go-NEG rice-ABE
 "Miflal went to Kirinda, without rice."

CLAUSAL CONTEXT

Miflal Kirinde-keku [sor tind-aama] poov-ille. SONAM
 Miflal Kirinda-DAT rice eat-ABE go-NEG
 "Miflal went to Kirinda, not having eaten rice."

In SLM, non-finite negation morphology is also affixed to a negated lexical verb, albeit pre-verbally, rather than post-verbally. SLM has creatively extended the functional scope of a single existing negative imperative marker in Malay to include all non-finite negation contexts, including participles in adjunct clauses and infinitival complement clauses. This is attributable to language contact, given that the original Malay varieties from which SLM has descended had neither tense morphology, nor a finiteness contrast. The creativity is found in the fact that SLM did not select the literal equivalent of 'without', the complex postposition *tra-na(ng)*, which is reserved for nominal constituents that are not clausal, as seen in the following examples.

NOMINAL CONTEXT

Miflal Kirinde na si-pi, [nasi tra-na.] SLM
 Miflal Kirinda P TNS-go rice NEG-DAT
 "Miflal went to Kirinda without rice."

CLAUSAL CONTEXT

Miflal Kirinde na si-pi, [nasi jang-makan na.] SLM
 Miflal Kirinda P TNS-go rice NEG.NONFIN-eat to
 "Miflal went to Kirinda, not having eaten rice."

In this way, the functional elements underlined in the preceding SLM examples robustly mark the contrast between the clausal status of non-finite verbs, that assume some of the properties of nouns, but which retain the argument structure of ordinary verbs, and the status of ordinary nouns. A morphosyntactic process, the cross-clausal finiteness contrast in negation marking, was replicated by SLM without either borrowing or calquing the analogous Tamil (Sonam) non-finite negation morpheme. Instead, the functional scope of the nearest analogue in Malay to the Tamil element, a negative imperative marker, was expanded. The non-finite negation morpheme in SLM, *jang*, nevertheless conveys the functional meaning associated with abessive case in Tamil.

With respect to the second goal of this talk, I claim that the discourse culture associated with the Sri Lankan *sprachbund*, as interpreted by speakers of SLM, requires focusing in the right periphery of a sentence, not just of nominal constituents, but of clauses. The clause containing the most recent event normally appears in this position as the (tensed) matrix clause. Non-matrix clauses need to be marked as explicitly non-finite. This is partly motivated by the need to contrastively focus such clauses, by extraposition to the right periphery of a sentence, while continuing to mark the tense of the most recent event, expressed by the clause containing a tensed finite verb.