

THE FORMS OF NEGATION IN NORTH IBIE AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

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The interrelationship between formal and functional aspects of the negation process in North Ibie is explored. Four distinct morphological forms are identified, each of which marks a different function of negation. The affinity between these functions and those discussed in the psycholinguistic literature by Bloom (1970) is highlighted. Despite differences of form and function, negation markers in North Ibie are subject to an ordering constraint which requires that they precede the constituents falling within their scope. We interpret this constraint as extending the range of application of Dahl's (1979) Precedence Constraint, the propensity for a negation marker in simple, declarative sentences to precede the finite verb. The existence of this more general constraint is viewed as supporting at a formal level the contrastive function of negative sentences in discourse, as maintained by Givon (1978).

Dans cette étude nous explorons les relations entre les aspects formels et fonctionnels de la négation en Ibié du Nord. Quatre formes morphologiques sont identifiées chacune ayant une fonction différente. L'affinité entre ces fonctions et celles exposées dans la littérature psycholinguistique de Bloom (1970) sont à noter. Malgré les différences de forme et de fonction, les marqueurs de la négation dans la langue Ibié du Nord ont une contraintes d'ordre qui les fait précéder les constituents qui se situent à l'intérieur de leur domaine. Nous interprétons cette contraintes comme un élargissement du chap d'application de la théorie de Dahl (1979); c'est-à-dire que la contraintes de précédence du marqueur de la négation place celui-ci devant le verbe dans une phrase déclarative simple. L'existence de cette contraintes générale se voit comme corroborant au niveau formel. La fonction contrastive des phrases négatives dans le discours est comme l'a exposé Givon (1978).

0. INTRODUCTION

In this paper¹ we highlight formal aspects of the negation process in North Ibie, a variety of the Northern Edoid family spoken in Bendel State, Nigeria.² Though we do not pretend to an exhaustive descriptive analysis, we think that the data analyzed herein raise interesting theoretical questions about the process of negation both in North Ibie and in natural language as a whole. Many

of these questions arose from our attempt to square the North Ibie data with the recent literature on negation. In general, it struck us that a number of studies in this area address somewhat different aspects of the negation process, with an emphasis in syntax, semantics, or pragmatics. What we purpose to do is to suggest how these different perspectives on negation might converge and, indeed, how such a convergence could provide insight into the relationship between the formal and the functional aspects of negation in North Ibie, in particular, and in language in general.

1. REVIEW OF NEGATION STUDIES

In a recent cross-language investigation of negation, Dahl (1979) sampled 240 languages from over 40 different language families. For each of these families he focused his analysis on the formal expression of negation in simple indicative sentences, thereby excluding from consideration gerundial and participial clause structures. More specifically, he inspected these languages for the placement of morphemes of negation relative to other sentential constituents, as well as for the basic word order of the major constituents (VSO, etc.). The placement of negation markers, furthermore, was measured against the finite verb, whose most salient property was defined as the marking of tense, mood, and subject agreement.

One of Dahl's findings was that the potential to formally mark sentences as negative appears to be a universal. Of all the languages surveyed, none was unable to mark negation in simple indicative sentences. Especially relevant for us are several additional tendencies revealed by the data. At the most general level he noted that the placement of a negation marker was seldom arbitrary, even in free word order languages. Negation markers, bound or free, consistently appeared in a definite position relative to the finite verb. Of more particular value, he discovered that not only were negation markers positioned as close as possible to the finite verb, but also they exhibited a distinct preference for what he termed preverbal position, that is, a position to the left of the finite verb of the corresponding active affirmative sentence. This preference for preverbal position appeared to be independent of word order, though it was strongest in the case of uninflected negative particles in verb-initial and verb-second languages and weakest in the case of negative auxiliaries in verb-final languages. It is, therefore, this precedence strategy, the propensity in natural languages to place a negation marker in a position preceding the finite verb, to which we call attention.

From the outset of his investigation Dahl defined negation in terms of the truth value of two sentences. That is, a negation marker is such that in converting one sentence (S-1) into another (S-2), it brings about a state where S-1 is true if S-2 is false, or S-2 is true if S-1 is false. This general approach, grounded in the predicate calculus, is discussed by Lyons (1977). Lyons recog-

nizes the analytic rigor of predicate logic, which is its hallmark, but he finds that model fails to do justice to the complexity of the negation process. He warns that negation in natural language is not as simple as the logical model would lead one to believe. He goes on to suggest that there may be several kinds of negation at work in natural language, a line of research we intend to develop in this paper. As to how one might determine these kinds or functions, and how these functions might be formally expressed, he doesn't discuss. As an example of what these various kinds may be, however, he offers the results of the investigation of negation in developmental psycholinguistics. In the following, we attempt to summarize the salient points of these studies.

1.1 PSYCHOLINGUISTIC STUDIES OF NEGATION

One of the most widely cited psycholinguistic investigations of negation is Bloom's (1970) analysis of the acquisition of English. Bloom postulates that a child learning the negation process has to acquire three different semantic functions. An earlier study by McNeill and McNeill (1968), concerning negation in Japanese, was the basis for Bloom's hypothesis, and it lends support to the potential universality of these functions. In addition, it is important to realize that in Japanese differences between these functions are recognized by corresponding differences at the level of form, whereas in English there is little or no correspondence between the three postulated functions and their formal realization. With this brief preliminary, we turn to the three functions of negation discussed in psycholinguistics.

One function of negation deals with the nonexistence of a particular object in a context where there is reasonable expectation that it is present, or that it exists. This kind of negation is referred to as Nonexistence. For instance, an expression such as that in (1) is most natural in a context where one expected soap, but found none.

(1) There isn't any soap.

What we should note about this kind of negation is the speaker's use of a noun for which there is no known referent in the immediate context.

A second function of negation deals with the rejection of a suggested referent or of a proposition wherein the suggested referent assumes the role of an argument. For instance, a speaker can easily state a sentence such as (2) when lunch is before him on the table.

(2) No, I don't want any lunch.

In contrast to Nonexistence, this kind of negation involves a referent which is actually present in the immediate context, but for one reason or another it is rejected or declined by the speaker. This kind of negation is referred to as Rejection.

A third function of negation deals with the denial of an assertion which, in the most straightforward case, is made in prior context. Denial is the name given to this kind of negation. For example, (3) below might be spoken in a context where someone has just asserted that a bicycle has crashed into a fence.

(3) The bicycle did not crash into the fence.

This kind of negation does not of itself reject an entire proposition or assert that an object does not exist in the immediate context. Instead, it offers an alternative proposition, which denies the truth value of the prior assertion, maintaining that just the contrary relationship exists between the prior assertion and the word being described.

1.2 CONSTRAINTS ON FUNCTIONS OF NEGATION

Given these three functions of negation, one might naturally ask if there are not more. This is, in fact, the issue raised by Brown (1973), who suggests that it may be possible to categorize the meanings of negative sentences into any number of kinds or functions. One kind, for instance, could be labelled Refusal, as in the case of a request or command which is responded to with I won't. As speakers of natural languages we might then arrive at any number of categories of negation in English alone, being limited only by our powers of analysis. From this seeming possibility, the interesting question arises as to whether natural languages mark, in their syntactic and morphological structures, an infinite variety of negative functions. We think not, though our basis for judgment is purely intuitive at this juncture. Supposing, then, that the functions or kinds of negation in natural languages are not unlimited, we can ask what the constraints are that limit the functions that do exist. Further, if constraints do exist, where do they come from? Taking note of another of Brown's observations, we might ask, for example, if such constraints are not in some way determined by the social and cultural context.

Following another track, one might ask a less global question. That is, in this case, what is the relationship between the formal expression of negation and its context in the structure of discourse. In this regard, it is apropos to consider Givon's (1978) discussion of the close relationship between negation and discourse, at least as discourse is broadly conceived.

Givon argues that the meaning of negation in natural language is not what it is in propositional logic. With particular relevance for us, he suggests that an affirmative sentence, and its corresponding negative, differ not only in truth value, but also in what he terms discourse presuppositions. For Givon, a discourse presupposition refers to what the speaker assumes the hearer tends to believe or is likely to favor, rather than strictly what the speaker knows or what the speaker knows the hearer knows.

The basis for Givon's claim is the relationship existing between sentences such as (4a) and (4b), as opposed to (4a) and (4c).

- (4a) What's happening?
- (4b) My wife's pregnant.
- (4c) My wife's not pregnant.

Of these sentences, (4b) can be viewed as a more natural response to (4a) than (4c) would be when, for example, two friends meet on the street. It would be possible to imagine a context where (4c) would seem appropriate, but in that case it would be necessary for the speaker of (4c) to suppose that the speaker of (4a) had some reason to believe the truth of the proposition expressed in (4b). This is precisely Givon's point when he states that the discourse presupposition of a negative speech act is its corresponding affirmative; that is, in this example, (4b) is the corresponding affirmative, hence discourse presupposition, of (4c). We therefore conclude from Givon's discussion that negative sentences occur in an information context where they establish a contrast with prior information--information which the speaker assumes the addressee believes.

2. NEGATION IN NORTH IBIE

In this section we take some initial steps, which we trust will prove to be a contribution toward description of the functions of negation found in natural languages. We first note the negation markers employed in North Ibie; then in agreement with Dahl's precedence strategy, we discuss the placement of these markers. Thus, by examining these forms and the constraints on their placement, we hope to arrive at a potential relationship between the structural position of North Ibie markers of negation, and the discourse structure of negation.

By way of general overview, negation in North Ibie is marked by four distinct forms. These forms are not interchangeable, and each occurs in a distinct environment. Also, these forms manifest some allomorphic variation. In addition to being translation equivalents of English no/not, all of these forms are alike with regard to their placement. Each of them precedes the constituent or constituents with which it relates.

2.1 THE REJECTION MORPHEME

The first negation marker we consider is the form **óbó**. This marker is commonly found as a response to a yes/no question, where it serves to reject some aspect of the meaning of the question it answers. Since **óbó** has this function relative to prior discourse, we consider it a manifestation of the kind called Rejection. There is also a form **è**, which indicates acceptance of the information expressed in the yes/no question or other prior discourse to which

it relates. Either of the forms **óbó** or **è** can occur alone, or as is frequent, precede a sentence relevant to prior discourse. As a response to the yes/no question (5a), for instance, either (5b) or (5c) is acceptable.

(5a) **é-lāmī ɔ-lā** **élémí ɔ-ní āpfè**
 goat it-be-located in the yard
 'Is the goat in the yard?'

(5b) **è**
 'yes'

(5c) **óbó**
 'no'

In response to the same question, both responses of the type shown in (5d) and (5e) are also acceptable. With respect to the negation marker **óbó**, however, the meaning of the following sentence must contrast in some way with the meaning of the yes/no question. (5f), therefore, is unacceptable since its propositional content agrees, rather than contrasts, with that of (5a).

(5d) **è ɔ-lā** **élémí ɔ-ní āpfè**
 yes it-be-located in the yard
 'Yes, it is in the yard.'

(5e) **óbó ɔ-lā** **élémí ɔ-ní é-wè**
 no it-be-located in the town
 'No, it is in the town.'

(5f) **óbó ɔ-lā** **élémí ɔ-ní āpfè**
 no it-be-located in the yard
 'No, it is in the yard.'

2.2 THE DENIAL MORPHEME

The second negation marker appears to deny the truth of a prior affirmative assertion. Its primary function is not to reject that assertion as such, but through a contrary assertion, deny the existence of the declared state of affairs. In contrast to **óbó**, which is a free form, this marker is a bound form which immediately follows the subject agreement marker. Consider in this regard the affirmative-negative sentential pairs found in (6). As seen there, the negative marker **-vā-** follows the pronominal agreement marker **ɔ**.

(6a) **ɔ-ní ɔ-mōjī ɔ-ā-zè** **è-bè**
 the girl she-cont-read book
 'The girl is reading a book.'

ɔ-ní ɔ-mōjī ɔ-vā-ā-zè **è-bè**
 the girl she-neg-cont-read book
 'The girl is not reading a book.'

- (6b*) ɔ-ní ɔ-mõfĩ ɔ-ã-vã-zẽ è-bè
 the girl she-cont-neg-read book
 'The girl is not reading a book.'
- (6c) ɔ-ní ɔ-mõfĩ ɔ-´-lẽ-ẽ-zẽ è-bè
 the girl she-past-prog-cont-read book
 'The girl was reading a book.'
- ɔ-ní ɔ-mõfĩ ɔ-vã-ẽ-zẽ è-bè
 the girl she-neg-cont-read book
 'The girl was not reading a book.'
- (6d) ɔ-ní ɔ-mõfĩ ɔ-mã-ã-zẽ è-bè
 the girl she-preshab-cont-read book
 'The girl usually reads a book.'
- ɔ-ní ɔ-mõfĩ ɔ-vã-ã-zẽ è-bè
 the girl she-neg-cont-read book
 'The girl usually doesn't read a book.'
- (6e) ɔ-ní ɔ-mõfĩ ɔ-´-kpõ-ã-zẽ è-bè
 the girl she-past-pasthab-cont-read book
 'The girl used to read a book.'
- ɔ-ní ɔ-mõfĩ ɔ-vã-kpõ-ã-zẽ è-bè
 the girl she-neg-pasthab-cont-read book
 'The girl never used to read a book.'
- (6f*) ɔ-ní ɔ-mõfĩ ɔ-kpõ-vã-ã-zẽ è-bè
 the girl she-pasthab-neg-cont-read book
 'The girl never used to read a book.'
- (6g) ɔ-ní ɔ-mõfĩ ɔ-´-zẽ è-bè
 the girl she-past-read book
 'The girl read a book.'
- ɔ-ní ɔ-mõfĩ ɔ-vã-zẽ è-bè
 the girl she-neg-read book
 'The girl did not read a book.'
- (6h) ɔ-ní ɔ-mõfĩ ɔ-fẽ-zẽ è-bè
 the girl she-perf-read book
 'The girl has read a book.'
- ɔ-ní ɔ-mõfĩ ɔ-vã-zẽ è-bè
 the girl she-neg-read book
 'The girl has not read a book.'

In addition to following the subject agreement marker, the Denial marker must precede any of the various constituents which may occur subsequently. In (6a), for example, the form **-ã-** marks the construction as being continuous. If the Denial marker were to precede this aspect marker, the ungrammatical structure starred in (6b) would result. The Denial marker must precede any other aspect markers as well, such as the present habitual form **-mã-** in (6d) or the past habitual form **-kpõ-** in (6e). If any of the aspect markers

were to precede the Denial marker, as in the starred form of (6f), the result would be ungrammatical.

Finally, in structures with no overt marking of aspect, the Denial marker must precede the verb. For example, in (6g) and (6h), the form **-vā-** must precede the verb **-zē**. From the sentences considered above, it would appear that the Denial marker must precede the initial verb of a verb phrase and its accompanying aspect marker, but follow the subject agreement marker.

The Denial marker is also found in structures indicating differences of modality. In brief, a modality marker in an affirmative structure follows the subject agreement marker and precedes the aspect marker, if present, or the verb. In a negative structure, however, the Denial marker must follow the subject agreement marker but precede the modality marker. This is seen when the paired affirmative-negative sentences in (7), which contain the future modality marker **-lā-**, are compared. If the Denial marker **-vā-** were to follow the modality marker, then the ungrammatical structure (7b) would result. A similar case can be made for other markers of modality: **-dóbē-** 'can', **-ɲwémā-** 'must', **-gā-** 'certainly', **-khā-** 'ought to'.

- (7a) **ṣ-nī ṣ-mōṣī ṣ-lā-ā-zē ē-bē**
 the girl she-will-prs+-read book
 'The girl will read a book.'
- ṣ-nī ṣ-mōṣī ṣ-vā-lā-ā-zē ē-bē**
 the girl she-neg-will-prs+-read book
 'The girl will not read a book.'
- (7b*) **ṣ-nī ṣ-mōṣī ṣ-lā-vā-ā-zē ē-bē**
 the girl she-will-neg-prs+-read book
 'The girl will not read a book.'

Up to now we have considered only the manifestation of Denial with third person subjects. When we consider its manifestation with other person markers, we notice allomorphic variation. Compare the affirmative and negative sentence pairs in (8), where it can be seen that with a first person subject the morph manifesting Denial is **-mā-**, as in (8a), and with a second person singular subject the form is **-wā-**, as in (8b). With each of the remaining persons **-vā-** occurs.

- (8a) **mī-ā-zē ē-bē**
 I-cont-read book
 'I am reading a book.'
- ī-mā-ā-zē ē-bē**
 I-neg-cont-read book
 'I am not reading a book.'
- (8b) **wā-ā-zē ē-bē**
 you-cont-read book
 'You are reading a book.'

ú-wā-ā-zē ē-bē
 you-neg-cont-read book
 'You are not reading a book.'

(8c) **ṣ-ā-zē ē-bē**
 he-cont-read book
 'He is reading a book.'

ṣ-vā-ā-zē ē-bē
 he-neg-cont-read book
 'He is not reading a book.'

(8d) **ējē-ā-zē ē-bē**
 we-cont-read book
 'We are reading a book.'

ējē-vā-ā-zē ē-bē
 we-neg-cont-read book
 'We are not reading a book.'

(8e) **vā-ā-zē ē-bē**
 you-cont-read book
 'You are reading a book.'

vā-vā-ā-zē ē-bē
 you-neg-cont-read book
 'You are not reading a book.'

(8f) **ē-ā-zē ē-bē**
 they-cont-read book
 'They are reading a book.'

ē-vā-ā-zē ē-bē
 they-neg-cont-read book
 'They are not reading a book.'

Note here that the placement of these allomorphic variants of Denial conform with the placement constraints discussed above. That is, the marker of Denial, whatever its allomorphic shape, follows the pronominal agreement marker, but precedes the verb or any of the aspect or modality markers prefixed to the verb.

Further use of Denial is made in so-called existential sentences. In these, as shown in (9), the placement of the form **-vā-** follows the pattern established above. For instance, when comparing the affirmative-negative sentences in (9a), we notice that the marker **-vā-** follows the impersonal subject marker **ā-** and precedes the verb **-mē**. Comparison of the paired sentences in (9b) indicates that **-vā-**, again, follows the impersonal subject marker and, in these sentences, precedes the future modality marker **-lā-**.

(9a) **ā-mē ā-wòrì élémí ó-ní ápfē**
 imp-exist dog in the yard
 'There is a dog in the yard.'

ā-vā mē ā-wōjī élémí ó-ní āpfē
 imp-neg-exist dog in the yard
 'There isn't a dog in the yard.'

(9b) **ā-lā-ā-mē ā-wōjī élémí ó-ní āpfē**
 imp-will-cont-exist dog in the yard
 'There will be a dog in the yard.'

ā-vā-lā-ā-mē ā-wōjī élémí ó-ní āpfē
 imp-neg-will-cont-exist dog in the yard
 'There will not be a dog in the yard.'

In summary, the Denial marker, whose primary function is to negate the proposition defined by the finite verb, must precede that verb form and all markers of aspect and modality.

2.3 THE PROHIBITION MORPHEME

We now direct attention to the third negation marker in North Ibie. This marker is recognized most clearly in command structures, where one wants to order that someone refrain from performing some activity or where one wants to prohibit some activity from taking place. We therefore refer to this as a marker of Prohibition. Unlike the two previous negation markers, this one has no parallel in psycholinguistic discussions of negation. Despite this, however, Prohibition does appear to be another function of negation.

As we found with Denial, the markers of Prohibition are positioned before the verb. In contrast to Denial, however, the subject agreement marker does not precede the marker of Prohibition. Rather, when a subject agreement marker does occur, it remains attached to the verb and thus follows the Prohibition marker.

Consider the manifestation of Prohibition in commands issued to a single addressee. As comparison of the affirmative-negative pair in (10a) shows, the form **īmē** marks negation in these commands. In the instance of a multiple addressee, the second person plural subject marker **vā** is prefixed to the verb, as in (10b). The Prohibition marker **īmē** thus precedes this subject marker. Since the subject agreement marker is in all other structures obligatorily prefixed to the verb, with no forms prefixed to the subject marker, **īmē** would appear to be a free form.

(10a) **zē ó-ní è-bē**
 read the book
 'Read the book.'

īmē zē ó-ní è-bē
 neg read the book
 'Don't read the book.'

(10b) **vā zē ó-ní è-bē**
 you(pl) read the book
 'Read the book.'

ímê vā zē ô-ní è-bê
 neg you read the book
 'Don't read the book.'

(10c) **jāgwā ímê zε ô-ní è-bê**
 neg read the book
 'I beg, don't read the book.'

One further point with respect to the placement of the Prohibition marker should be mentioned. In commands involving social relationship between speaker and addressee, the form **ímê** follows the marker indicating this relationship. In (10c) above, for instance, the Prohibition marker is preceded by the form **jāgwā**, which marks this social relationship.

There is another type of statement in which we find the Prohibition marker. This is typically used in situations involving exhortation. Following Welmers (1973), we call this the Hortative mood, whose basic meaning is that one is obliged to perform some activity or enter some state to which the verb makes reference. Consideration of the affirmative-negative pairs expressing this mood in (11) helps confirm the role of **ímê** in negative exhortations. In (11b) and (11c) we find that **ímê** marks negation in Hortative statements having second person singular or second person plural subjects. With all other subject agreement markers, each of which begins with a vowel, except first person singular, the allomorph **ímêlí** occurs.

(11a) **mī-zē è-bê**
 I-read book
 'I should read a book.'

í-mā-khā-zē è-bê
 I-neg-ought to-read book
 'I should not read a book.'

(11b) **ú-zē è-bê**
 you-read book
 'You should read a book.'

ímê gjé-zē è-bê
 neg you-read book
 'You shouldn't read a book.'

(11c) **ô-zē è-bê**
 he-read book
 'He should read a book.'

ímêlí ô-zē è-bê
 neg he-read book
 'He shouldn't read a book.'

(11d) **éjé-zē è-bê**
 we-read book
 'We should read a book.'

ímèlí éjé-zè è-bè
 neg we-read book
 'We shouldn't read a book.'

(11e) **vā-zè è-bè**
 you-read book
 'You should read a book.'

ímè vā-zè è-bè
 neg you-read book
 'You shouldn't read a book.'

(11f) **é-zè è-bè**
 they-read book
 'They should read a book.'

ímèlí é-zè è-bè
 neg they-read book
 'They shouldn't read a book.'

One is puzzled by the fact that the form **ímè** (or **ímèlí**) does not occur in first person singular negative exhortations. But we suspect that it would be difficult for a speaker to exhort himself.

2.4 THE NONEXISTENCE MORPHEME

We come now to the final negation marker, the form **ǎkí**. This form is employed in structures of identification and in cleft-like structures which mark focus or topicalization. In general, we find that this form negates the identity of a given argument in a predication, rather than the entire predication. We refer to this form as the marker of Nonexistence, as in the psycholinguistic literature. There is a difference, however, in that Nonexistence in the literature refers to an object referent which does not exist in the immediate context, while Nonexistence in North Ibibio adult language refers either to a referent that does not exist or to one that does not bear the relationship specified in a preceding proposition.

In simple structures of identification, as seen in comparison of the affirmative-negative structures in (12a), the form **ǎkí** contrasts with the form **lɔ̄**. In affirmative structures **lɔ̄** occurs, while in negative structures **ǎkí** occurs. Moreover, the placement of these forms is constrained: the form **lɔ̄** must follow the nominal being identified, and **ǎkí** must precede the nominal whose identity is negated. The ungrammatical structures in (12b), where the positions of **lɔ̄** and **ǎkí** are reversed, support this. In simple structures of identification, the Nonexistence marker **ǎkí** thus appears to be in complementary distribution with the marker **lɔ̄**.

(12a) **é-lāmī lɔ̄**
 goat posfocus
 'It is a goat.'

ākī **é-lāmī**
 negfocus goat
 'It isn't a goat.'

(12b*) **lō** **é-lāmī**
 posf goat
 'It is a goat.'

* **é-lāmī ākī**
 goat negf
 'It isn't a goat.'

Somewhat more complex identification structures reveal a similar pattern. When we consider the examples in (13), we see that, though the form **ākī** must precede the argument whose identity it negates, it need not occur at the beginning of a clause.

(13a) **ō-nī** **ō-mōsē** **ō-nā** **ō-kīlā** **ō-gwījēmī**
 def man this he-be farmer
 'This man is a farmer.'

(13b) **ō-nī** **ō-mōsē** **ō-nā** **ō-gwījēmī** **lō**
 def man this farmer posf
 'It is a farmer that this man is.'

ō-nī **ō-mōsē** **ō-nā** **ākī** **ō-gwījēmī**
 def man this negf farmer
 'It is not a farmer that this man is.'

(13c) **ō-gwījēmī** **ō-nī** **ō-mōsē** **ō-nā** **lō**
 farmer def man this posf
 'It is this man who is a farmer.'

ō-gwījēmī **ākī** **ō-nī** **ō-mōsē** **ō-nā**
 farmer negf def man this
 'It is not this man who is a farmer.'

(13d) **ō-nī** **ō-mōsē** **ō-nā** **lō** **ō-kīlā** **ō-gwījēmī**
 def man this posf he-be farmer
 'It is this man who is a farmer.'

ākī **ō-nī** **ō-mōsē** **ō-nā** **lē** **ō-kīlā** **ō-gwījēmī**
 negf def man this he-be farmer
 'It is not this man who is a farmer.'

(13e) **ō-gwījēmī** **lō** **ō-nī** **ō-mōsē** **ō-nā** **ō-kīlā**
 farmer posf def man this he-be
 'It is a farmer that this man is.'

ākī **ō-gwījēmī** **lē** **ō-nī** **ō-mōsē** **ō-nā** **ō-kīlā**
 negf farmer def man this he-be
 'It isn't a farmer that this man is.'

(13f) **ō-dwōkī** **lō**
 trader posf
 'It is a trader.'

- (13g) **ᵑ-nī ᵑ-mᵑsè ᵑ-jā lᵑ**
 def man that posf
 'It is that man.'

For instance, with respect to what one might call a neutral structure, as in (13a), either of the arguments can be brought into focus. In (13b) the argument **ᵑgwīᵑēmī** is in focus, and when it is negated, it is preceded by **ākī**. And in (13c), the other argument, **ᵑnī ᵑmᵑsè ᵑnā**, is in focus, and when it is negated, again, it is preceded by **ākī**. Thus **lᵑ** follows focused arguments in affirmative statements, and **ākī** precedes them in negative statements. In both of these structures the form **ākī** occurs in medial, not in the leftmost, position. Nonetheless, it must still precede the argument it negates.

Still another variant of the focus structure is seen by comparing the affirmative-negative pairs in (13d) and (13e). In contrast to the pairs in (13b) and (13c), **ākī** here does occur as the leftmost constituent of the clause, while, at the same time, it immediately precedes the constituent it negates.

That we indeed have two different arguments brought into focus in the structures discussed above can be seen by considering the relationship between the negative structures in (13b) through (13e) and the responses in (13f) and (13g). That is, (13f) would appear to follow more naturally the negative structure (13b) than (13c). And (13g) would more naturally follow the negative structure (13c) than (13b). Similarly, in the other variant of the focus constructions in (13d) and (13e), (13f) would more naturally follow (13e) than (13d), while (13g) would more naturally follow the negative structure (13d) than (13e).

In structures other than those of simple identification, we find that the identity of individual arguments involved in a proposition, and in some cases the entire sentence expressing a proposition, can be negated by the Nonexistence marker **ākī**. With respect to the neutral focus structure in (14a), any one of the three arguments can be brought into focus. The three structures in (14b), where **ākī** occurs preceding each of the nominal arguments in turn, support this.

- (14a) **ᵑ-nī ᵑ-mᵑsè ᵑ-ᵑ-tī ē-nī è-bè nā é-nī ívjè**
 the man he-past-give the book to the children
 'The man gave the book to the children.'
- (14b) **ākī ᵑ-nī ᵑ-mᵑsè lè ᵑ-ᵑ-tī ē-nī è-bè nā é-nī ívjè**
 negf the man he-past-give the book to the children'
 'It isn't the man who gave the books to the children.'
- ākī é-nī è-bè lè ᵑ-nī ᵑ-mᵑsè ᵑ-ᵑ-tī nā é-nī ívjè**
 negf the books the man he-past-give to the children
 'It isn't the books that the man gave to the children.'

ākī é-nī ívjè lè ɔ-ní ɔ-mɔsè ɔ-´-tì é-ní è-bè nà
 negf the children the man he-past-give the book to
 'It isn't the children that the man gave the books to.'

In still another structure, the entire proposition appears to be negated by **ākī**, as in (15a) and (15b). Note, however, that (15b), where **ākī** occurs in the rightmost constituent, is a question. This change in type of speech act from statement to question may account for the fact that only in this structure does **ākī** follow the constituents which fall under its scope.

(15a) **ākī jò kī ɔ-ní ɔ-mɔsè ɔ-´-tì é-ní è-bè**
 negf so that the man he-past-give the book
nà é-ní ívjè
 to the children
 'It isn't so that the man gave the books to the children.'

(15b) **ɔ-ní ɔ-mɔsè ɔ-´-tì é-ní è-bè nà é-ní ívjè ākī jò**
 the man he-past-give the book to the children negf so
 'The man gave the books to the children, isn't it so?'

Finally, note that the identity of other types of nominals can be brought into focus, and as expected when they are negated, **ākī** precedes these nominals. For instance, the locative in the nonfocused structure (16a) is brought into focus in (16b).

(16a) **ɔ-ní ɔ-mɔsè ɔ-´-nà ló ó-ní āpfè**
 the man he-past-run in the yard
 'The man ran in the yard.'

(16b) **ākī ó-ní āpfè lè ɔ-ní ɔ-mɔsè ɔ-´-nà lò**
 negf the yard the man he-past-run in
 'It isn't the yard that the man ran in.'

Temporal elements can also be brought into focus. Thus the temporal nominal **òdè** in the nonfocused structure (17a) is brought into focus in negative structure (17b) by preposing it and positioning the form **ākī** to its left.

(17a) **ɔ-ní ɔ-mɔsè ɔ-´-lè ó-ní è-mì òdè**
 the man he-past-eat the food yesterday
 'The man ate the food yesterday.'

(17b) **ākī òdè lè ɔ-ní ɔ-mɔsè ɔ-´-lè ó-ní è-mì**
 negf yesterday the man he-past-eat the food
 'It wasn't yesterday that the man ate the food.'

3. SUMMARY

To conclude, we have argued that four different functions of negation are formally marked in North Ibie. These functions we have labelled Rejection, Prohibition, Denial and Nonexistence. Observing throughout our discussion the placement of these forms relative to the constituents they negate, we have also found that

each precedes, rather than follows, these constituents. This appears to reflect a potentially wider application of Dahl's (1979) principal finding that the negative marker precedes the finite verb in simple indicative structures. Dahl's precedence strategy may thus apply to the negation process in general and not only to the function of Denial. Further, we suggest that the predominance of this strategy may be tied to the discourse context of negation, as Givon (1978) has noted. That is, negative sentences occur in an information context where they establish a contrast with prior information. To support this contrast in a formal manner, negation markers, no matter of what function, tend to precede the constituents which they negate. Though this generalization is here confined to North Ibibio, we submit that it may have wider currency.

NOTES

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²The variety of North Ibibio discussed in this paper is that of the second author, Richard Masagbor, a native of Okpeke in Bendel State, Nigeria. North Ibibio is classified as Northern Edo by Williamson (1968).

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