

The Syntax of Sentential Negation in Tigrinya

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Setting the Scene

Tigrinya (Ethiosemitic, SOV)

- (1) mis dim-ay ji-ts'awet
 with cat-POSS.1S S.1S-play.IPFV
 'I play with my cat.'
- (2) mis dim-ay **?aj-Ø-ts'awet-in**
 with cat-POSS.1S NEG-S1S-play.IPFV-NEG
 'I do not play with my cat.'

QUESTION 1

Where are *?aj-* and *-(i)n* in the syntax?

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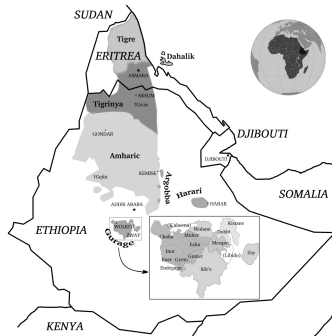
- 1 Introduction
- 2 Negation in Habitual Present
- 3 Negation in Past
- 4 Negation in Progressive
- 5 Conclusion

Background on Tigrinya

Tigrinya is an Ethio-semitic language spoken in Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia.

It is a head-final language with **SOV** word order.

It is *pro-drop*.



(Weninger:2011; credit: Ronny Meyer)

- (3) Tɛsfay n-it-a t'irmuz sɛbir-u-wa
 Tesfay DOM-that-FS bottle break.GER-S.3MS-O.3FS
 'Tesfay broke the bottle.'

Background on Tigrinya

Tigrinya displays **non-concatenative root morphology**: words are formed through a triconsonantal root system, in which roots constitute their semantic core.

In verbs, TAM information is obtained through transfixed vowel templates.

Semitic

Imperfective (= non-past) & Perfective (= past)

Ethio-semitic

Imperfective (= non-past) & Gerundive (= past)
+ Perfective (a suppletive form for the Gerundive!)

(4) ji-səbbir
 S.3MS-break.IPFV
 ‘He breaks.’

(5) səbir-u
 break.GER-S.3MS
 ‘He broke.’

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The puzzle

Tigrinya (Ethiosemitic, SOV)

- (6) mis dim-ay **?aj-Ø-ts'awet-in**
 with cat-POSS.1S NEG-S1S-play.IPFV-NEG
 'I do not play with my cat.'

QUESTION 1

Where are *?aj-* and *-(i)n* in the syntax?

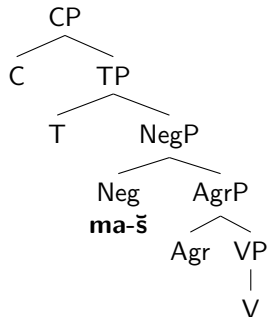
...in Neg°?

Pollock (1989) for English:

Negation is structurally encoded in a functional projection NegP headed by *not*.

Benmamoun et al. (2013) *ma-* and *-š*
for Moroccan Arabic:

- (7) a. **ma-ža-t-š** Nadia
neg-come.past.3fs-neg Nadia
'Nadia didn't come.'
- b. Nadia **ma-ši** fə-l-madrassa
Nadia neg-neg in-the-school
'Nadia is not at school.'
(from Benmamoun et al. (2013: 69 and 73, (1) and(13)))



...in NegP?

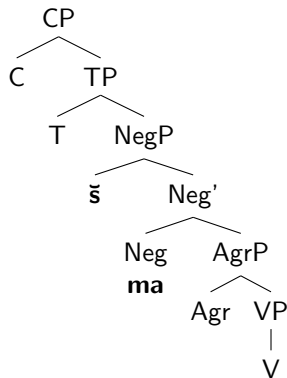
Pollock (1989) for French:

ne is the head of the French NegP and *pas* is a phrase found in its specifier.

French

- (8) Je **ne** jou-e **pas** avec mon
 I NEG play.PRES-S.1S NEG with my
 chat.
 cat
 'I do not play with my cat.'

Ouhalla (1990, 1993); Shlonsky (1997);
 Benmamoun (2000) for different dialects of
 Arabic (again, *ma-* and *-š*):



So far:

Sentential Negation in Tigrinya:

2 negative exponents **?aj-** and **-(i)n**

express **1** sentential negation

... who's the “real” negator between the two?

If there is a context in Tigrinya in which one of them
can express negation alone,
we have the answer!

Relative Clauses

Relative clauses are prenominal and marked by the prefix $z(i)-$.

- (9) a. $\text{ʔit-om } \text{ʔanɛ } z\text{-i-nbɛb-om}$ mɛts'hafti
 DEM-MP I REL-S.1S-read.IPFV-O.3MP book.MP
 ʔab-ti $\text{ʔarmadyo } \text{ʔall-ɛwo}$
 PREP-DEM.MS cabinet AUX.PRES-S.3MP
 'The books that I read are in the cabinet.'
- b. $\text{ʔit-om } \text{ʔanɛ } z\text{-ɛj-Ø-nbɛb-om}$ mɛts'hafti
 DEM-MP I REL-NEG-S.1S-read.IPFV-O.3MP book.MP
 ʔab-ti $\text{ʔarmadyo } \text{ʔall-ɛwo}$
 PREP-DEM.MS cabinet AUX.PRES-S.3MP
 'The books that I do not read are in the cabinet.'

ʔaj- is the "real" negator!

QUESTION 2

Why is $-(i)n$ dropped in relative clauses?

Toward an Analysis (QUESTION 1)

Zanuttini (1991, 1997) for Italian:

There are multiple NegP projections in the syntax.

Bell (2004); Poletto (2008, 2017); De Clercq (2013, 2020) a.o..

- ʔaj- and $-(i)n$ are affixes \implies heads
- ʔaj- negates RCs \implies in **Neg°**
- Sjors 2018 = $-(i)n$ etymologically emphatic particle \implies in **Pol°**

Semitic:

Ethio-Semitic (Demeke, 2003): NegP & PolP

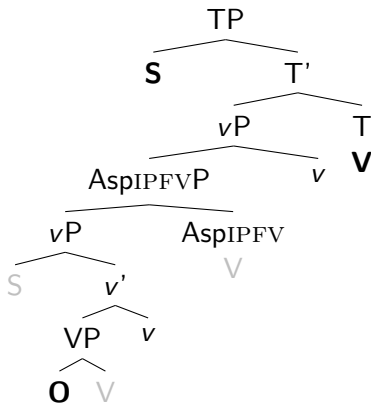
Modern Arabic dialects (Soltan, 2011) : NegP & PolP

Jordanian Arabic (Alqassas, 2019) : NegP & AgrPolP

A Tentative Analysis (QUESTION 1)

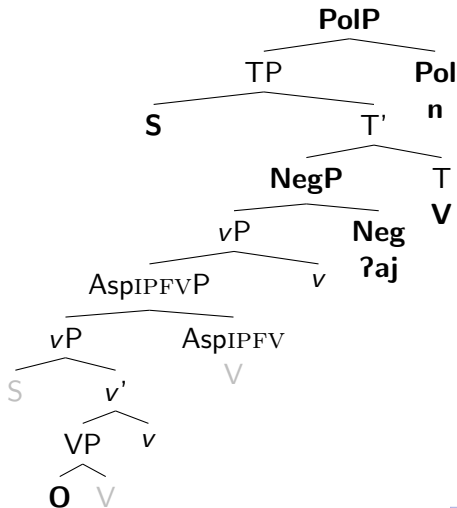
A simple declarative **SOV** clause in Tigrinya.

A vP shell on top of every aspectual projection à la Harwood (2014); Deal (2009); Bošković (2014) a.o..



A Tentative Analysis (QUESTION 1)

A simple negative declarative clause with order **S O ?aj- V -(i)n**.



Toward an Analysis (QUESTION 2)

Either:

- COMPETITION: $z(i)-$ and $-(i)n$ occupy the same position
- MOVEMENT: one blocks the movement of the other or one blocks a movement in the derivation

Imperatives

- (11) a. ti-site
S.2MS-drink.IMP
'Drink!'
- b. **?aj**-ti-site
NEG-S.2MS-drink.IMP
'Don't drink!'
- (12) a. ti-re?ajε-ni
S.2MS-look.IMP-O.1S
'Look at me!'
- b. **?aj**-ti-re?ajε-ni
NEG-S.2MS-look.IMP-O.1S
'Don't look at me!'

QUESTION 3

Why is *-(i)n* dropped in imperative clauses?

Imperatives & Negation

Imperatives seem to be incompatible with negation in some languages.

Italian (cf. also Spanish, Modern Greek, etc.)

- (13)
- a. Mangi-a!
eat.IMP-S.2S
'Eat!'
 - b. *Non mangi-a!
NEG eat.IMP-S.2S
Intended: 'Don't eat!'
 - c. Non mangi-are!
NEG eat.INF
'Don't eat!'

Several analyses in the literature consider MOVEMENT and/or the presence of a FEATURE to check or the involvement of an OPERATOR.

Kayne (1991, 1992, 2000); Zanuttini (1991, 1997); Laka (1994); Rivero and Terzi (1995); Tomić (1999); Han (2001)

Toward an Analysis (QUESTION 2 & 3)

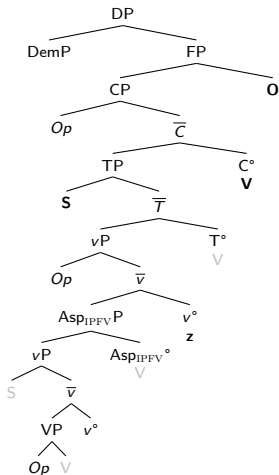
Either:

- COMPETITION: $z(i)-$ and $-(i)n$ occupy the same position
- MOVEMENT: one blocks the movement of the other or one blocks a movement in the derivation

A Tentative Analysis (QUESTION 2)

A simple (restrictive, object) relative clause with order **S z(i)-V O**.

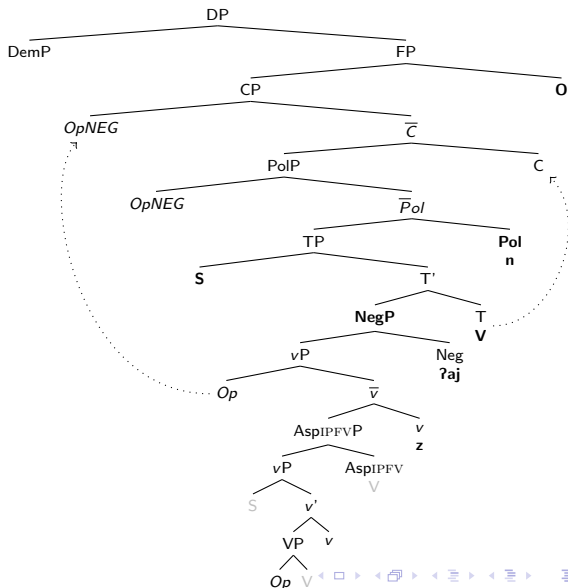
(For a head-initial and LCA analysis of RCs in Tigrinya see Cacchioli (2023).)



A Tentative Analysis (QUESTION 2)

A simple NEGATIVE
(restrictive, object)
relative clause with
order **S z(i)-?aj-V O**.

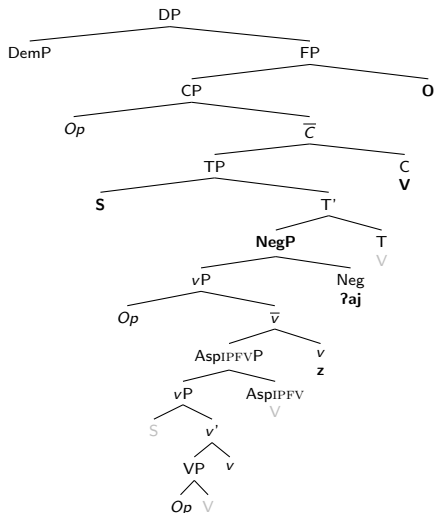
CLASH!



A Tentative Analysis (QUESTION 2)

A simple NEGATIVE
(restrictive, object)
relative clause with
order **S z(ɨ)-ʔaj-V O**.

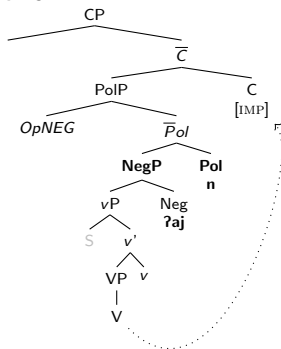
OKAY!



A Tentative Analysis (QUESTION 3)

A negative imperative clause with order **?aj-V**.

CLASH!



OKAY!

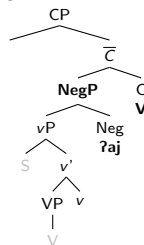


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The Gerundive Puzzle

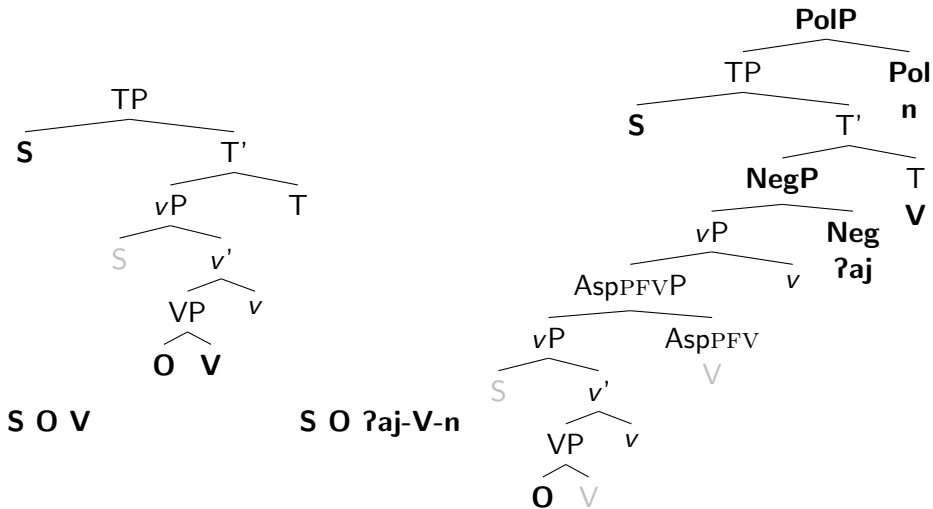
- (14)
- a. mis dim-ay tɛts'iwit-ɛ
with cat-POSS.1S play.GER-S.1S
'I played with my cat.'
 - b. *mis dim-ay **?aj-tɛts'iwit-ɛ-n**
with cat-POSS.1S NEG-play.GER-S.1S-NEG
'I did not play with my cat.'
 - c. mis dim-ay **?aj-tɛts'iwɛti-ku-n**
with cat-POSS.1S NEG-play.PFV-S.1S-NEG
'I did not play with my cat.'

QUESTION 4

Why can't the gerundive be negated?

Note that the Gerundive doesn't allow any prefixes (in RCs *z(i)-* 'which, who', in complement clauses *kɛmz(i)-* 'that', in other subordinate clauses *k(i)-* 'to' (Cacchioli, 2023, in preparation).

A Tentative Analysis (QUESTION 4)



The Gerundive does not move. A perfective suppletive form is used to negate the past.

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Negation here, Negation there

- (15)
- a. mis dim-ay ji-ts'awet ?all-εxu
with cat-POSS.1S S.1S-play.IPFV AUX.PRES-S.1S
'I am playing with my cat.'
- b. mis dim-ay ji-ts'awet **j-ell-εxu-n**
with cat-POSS.1S S.1S-play.IPFV NEG-AUX.PRES-S.1S-NEG
'I am not playing with my cat.'
- c. mis dim-ay **?aj-Ø-ts'awet-n** ?all-εxu
with cat-POSS.1S NEG-S.1S-play.IPFV-NEG AUX.PRES-S.1S
'I am not playing with my cat.'
- d. *mis dim-ay **?aj-Ø-ts'awet-n** **j-ell-εxu-n**
with cat-POSS.1S NEG-S.1S-play.IPFV-NEG NEG-AUX.PRES-S.1S-NEG
Intended: 'I am not playing with my cat.'

For the moment, my consultants claim that (15b) and (15c) mean exactly the same thing.

QUESTION 5

How to explain this optionality?

A Tentative Analysis (QUESTION 5)

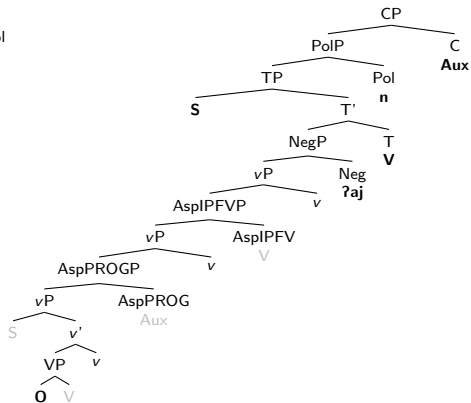
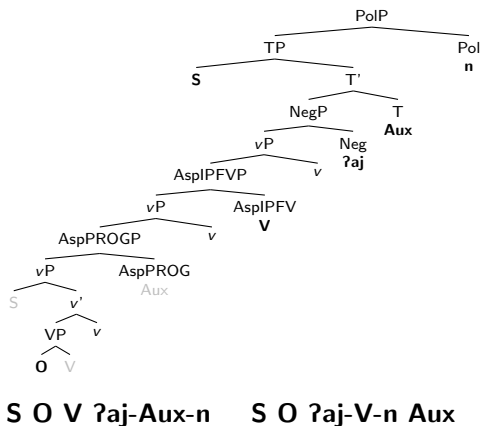


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To sum up

I tentatively proposed that:

- ① **?aj-** → NegP and **-(i)n** → PolP
- ② in relative clauses **-(i)n** doesn't appear because it blocks a movement (of the V or of the Op)
- ③ in imperative clauses **-(i)n** doesn't appear because it blocks a movement (of the V or of the Op)
- ④ the Gerundive cannot be negated because it does not move, so a suppletive Perfective form is inserted
- ⑤ the optionality in Progressive is given by different movements of the elements (V & Aux)

Thank you!

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