1. INTRODUCTION

Negation is a universal component of human language. Cross-linguistic similarities exist with respect to the ways that languages express negation of verbal and non-verbal constituents, yet the individual strategies of syntactic negation that each language employs are complex and distinct. Previous scholars have described the behavior of negation in a great number of languages worldwide. However, little work exists on this phenomenon within the Chin language family, and none exists for Lutuv. The current paper describes how standard sentential negation is accomplished in Lutuv, contributing to the broader conversation on negation in the world’s languages.

2. A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF STANDARD NEGATION

Negation, by definition, “reverse[s] the truth value” of a given clause (Miestamo 2007:552). In typological studies of negation, scholars refer to two categories of negation: standard and nonstandard negation. Standard negation, the “negation of a lexical verb in a declarative main clause,” has received the most attention (Van der Auwera & Krasnoukhova 2020). Languages typically achieve standard negation using negative verbs, negative particles, or negative verbal morphemes. The latter of these methods is exemplified in English below, with the affirmative (1a) and negative (1b) constructions for the intransitive verb *run*.

(1) a. I run.  
    b. I do not run.

Nonstandard negation refers to negation in any context beyond simple declarative utterances, such as imperatives and non-verbal predicates (Miestamo 2007; Miestamo 2017; Van der Auwera & Krasnoukhova 2020; Van den Berg & Kahrel 1989). Nonstandard negation is outside of the scope of this paper, which focuses solely on the expression of standard sentential negation in Lutuv. All Lutuv data presented in the following sections were elicited using English utterances adapted from typological questionnaires by Van den Berg and Kahrel (1989) and Miestamo (2007) designed to aid linguists in the description of negation in a given language.

3. A BASIC ILLUSTRATION OF STANDARD NEGATION IN LUTUV

In Lutuv, a verb-final language, standard negation is marked postverbally (VNeg). VNeg order also occurs in other Chin languages (Delancey 2015), such as Meithei (Dryer 2008) and Mara (Sharma 2018). A comparison of affirmative (2a) and negative (2b) declaratives in Lutuv with the intransitive verb *pahmyi* ‘to laugh’ shows the presence of the negative morpheme *va* immediately following the verb in (2b). Also evident in these examples is the change from preverbal to postverbal agreement in negative utterances, a topic addressed more thoroughly below.
(2) a. i pahnyi
   1SS laugh
   ‘I laughed.’

   b. pahnyi va ang
   laugh NEG 1SS
   ‘I did not laugh.’

   The use of va to negate a declarative main verbal clause is also present in transitive utterances, as shown in the positive (3a) and negative (3b) utterances below. In (3b), the morpheme of negation va again appears postverbally with an agreement marker.

   (3) a. haatiyta na ahe a ce
       child FOC mango 3SS eat
       ‘The child eats the mango.’

   b. haatiyta ca ahe ce va yi
       child TOP mango eat NEG 3SS
       ‘The child does not eat the mango.’

   A key characteristic of Lutuv is its complex verbal agreement marking system (see Bohnert, this volume, for a full overview). While this agreement marking is often preverbal, negation (and some other structures, e.g., subordination) triggers the use of a distinct set of postverbal subject agreement markers. In the affirmative intransitive utterances below, the 1st person singular subject agreement marker i occurs before the verb caa ‘to cry’ and the 2nd person singular subject agreement marker na precedes the verb pahnyi ‘to laugh’ in (4a) and (5a), respectively. In the standard negative utterances in (4b) and (5b), however, subject agreement marking moves to the postverbal position after the negator va using an entirely different set of morphemes, 1st singular subject ang and 2nd singular subject ciy respectively.

   (4) a. i caa
       1SS cry
       ‘I cried.’

   b. caa va ang
      cry NEG 1SS
      ‘I did not cry.’

   (5) a. na pahnyi
       2SS laugh
       ‘You laughed.’

   b. pahnyi va ciy
       laugh NEG 2SS
       ‘You did not laugh.’

   The use of a special set of agreement marking morphemes after the Verb + Negator in negative declarative utterances in Lutuv is not limited to intransitive verbs; this phenomenon also extends to transitive constructions. The following example demonstrates both affirmative (6a) and negative (6b) declarative utterances using the transitive verb hmung “to see.” In the negative utterance in (6b), puv serves as a first person plural subject agreement marker and attaches to the verbal complex after negator va.

   (6) a. imaa ca hmung
       1ps 2so see
       ‘We saw you.’

   b. ca hmung va puv
       2so see NEG 1ps
       ‘We did not see you.’

   Table 1 provides the postverbal elements of standard negation in declarative utterances in Lutuv according to the corresponding person and number of the subject. These forms are composed of two morphemes: negator va plus one of six subject agreement markers. It is important to note the use of alternate contracted forms vang, vyi, and vyi, which represent negative morpheme va plus 1st singular subject, 3rd singular subject, and 3rd plural subject agreement makers, respectively. Both the full and contracted forms are accepted and utilized regularly by Lutuv speakers. However, contraction of the negator va and the subject agreement marker is not permitted in Lutuv for the 2nd person singular, 1st person plural, or 2nd person plural.
Singular | Plural
---|---
1 va ang / vang | va puv
2 va ciy | va ung ciy
3 va yi / vyi | va yi / vyi

Table 1. Post-verbal standard negation markers in declarative utterances in Lutuv.

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS
This paper provided a description of how standard sentential negation is accomplished in Lutuv. In short, it employs a system of postverbal marking for sentential negation of standard declarative utterances that incorporates a negator as well as person and number agreement with the subject. There are several avenues for future research into negation in Lutuv. One crucial area yet to be investigated is the relationship between tone and negation. Lutuv is a tonal language, but the tonal system has yet to be fully described. Any future studies on negation should consider the potential influence of tone on syntactic negation. Furthermore, much work remains to be done in describing the full range of standard and nonstandard negation strategies in verbal and nonverbal contexts in Lutuv and understanding how they both diverge from and compare to related languages.

5. REFERENCES