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MARK DONOHUE   BHOJRAJ GAUTAM   MADHAV POKHAREL

The Australian National University   *Tribhuvan University*   *Tribhuvan University*

Negative structures are generally assumed to be maximally accessible for verbal predicates, as evidenced by the requirement in many languages that nonverbal predicates be supported by a verb when negated. Indeed, the term 'standard negation' is used to refer to the negation of a declarative verbal clause, and yet this is at best highly restricted in Kusunda. We discuss the mood and nominalizing strategies that are employed to escape from the restrictions imposed by such a system.*

Keywords: negation, nominalization, irrealis, Kusunda, fieldwork

1. INTRODUCTION. This short report is on ongoing fieldwork on Kusunda, concentrating on the complications associated with negation in the language. We show that, contrary to previous analyses, there is no verbal negative suffix, and claim that 'standard negation', the means that every language has for 'negating declarative verbal main clauses' (following Payne 1985), is absent in Kusunda. The function of negation is achieved either via nominalization and the negation of the existence of the nominalization, or via interpretation of the irrealis mood. This is not expected from crosslinguistic studies of negation (e.g. Payne 1985, Horn 1989, Kahrel & van den Berg 1994, Miestamo 2000, 2005, 2007).

2. KUSUNDA. Kusunda is a language isolate from west-central Nepal. Various small notes have been published on the structure and lexicon of the language (Hodgson 1848, 1857, Grierson 1909, Reinhard & Toba 1970, Rana 2002, Pokharel 2005, Watters 2005, Watters et al. 2006), and it is mentioned in synopses of languages of the Himalayan region (e.g. Van Driem 2001:253–62), but before the publication of Watters et al. 2006 no substantial details were available on the grammar of the language.[1] The language is critically endangered, with just two speakers (speaking two differing dialects) of the language surviving as of early 2013.

In the Watters et al. 2006 description of Kusunda, various negative verbal suffixes are listed for the verbs, with different forms for realis and irrealis. Some examples from Watters et al. 2006 are presented in 1; 1a and 1b show negation in nonverbal clauses, while 1c–e illustrate the variety of verbal forms described: -*aˤu*, -*daˤu*, -*wa*. As Watters and colleagues mention, most of the forms they cite are clearly related (at least historically) to the negative suffix -*aˤu* seen in 1a.[2]

(1) a. Taŋ   kʰ-aˤu.
     water not.exist-NEG
       'There is no water.'
                                        (ex. 232a)

[1] See also John Peterson's online bibliography for South Asian languages, incuding Kusunda, at http://www.isfas.uni-kiel.de/de/linguistik/forschung/southasiabibliography, and Donohue 2013.

[2] Kusunda has nineteen underlying consonant phonemes (/p, b, t, d, ts, dz, k, g, q, m, n, ŋ, f, s, h, r, l, w, j/), three contrasting vowels (/i, a, o/) with contrastive nasalization, and three prosodies (breathiness *a̤*, tenseness *a*, and pharyngealization *aˤ*) that may cooccur on the same syllable. All phonemes are represented with IPA symbols, with some degree of vowel allophony shown (i ~ e; u ~ o), and epenthetic schwas written for phonetic clarity and to aid comparison with earlier work such as that cited in 1, which is presented as published in the original source. The principles governing vowel epenthesis and allophony are complex.

   b. Na gimi tsi-yi   odoq.
       this money 1SG-GEN is.not
         'This money is not mine.'   (ex. 227a)

   c. Gina e-g-aˤu.
       3SG give-3-NEG
         'He/She did not give.'   (ex. 184e)

   d. Gina g-əm-daˤu.
       3SG 3-eat-NEG
         'He/She did not eat.'   (ex. 185e)

   e. Tsi t-əm-wa.
       1SG 1-eat-NEG:IRR
         'I won't eat it.'   (ex. 188b)

Our data[3] indicates different analyses for the morphological and syntactic structures in these sentences. In the next section we describe the function of negation in Kusunda and present our revised analysis, explaining why this is descriptively more appropriate to the data.

3. THE MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX OF NEGATION IN KUSUNDA. Sentences that are offered as translation of negative sentences in Nepali are easily elicited in Kusunda, as in example 2. Given the Nepali prompt in 2a, the Kusunda translation in 2b is readily forthcoming.[4]

   (2) a. Nepali
          Maile   makāi khā-i-nã.
          1SG.ERG corn   eat-1SG.PST-NEG
            'I didn't eat corn.'

      b. Kusunda
          Tsi ipən t-əm-u.
          1SG corn 1-eat-'NEG'
            'I didn't eat corn.'

The problem is that the sentence in 2b can also be elicited by asking for a translation of 'I will eat corn', 'I don't want to eat corn', 'I won't eat corn', and various other possible prompts. This is because the suffix *-u*, rather than marking the negative, in fact marks a more general irrealis, which includes among its functions 'negation' as part of the general unrealized category.[5] We can compare 2b with 3, its realis counterpart, which has a similarly wide range of interpretations.

   (3) Tsi ipən t-əm-ən.
       1SG corn 1-eat-REAL
        'I ate corn.'/'I eat corn.'/'I want to eat corn.'/'I will eat corn.'

The reader should not think that negation is NOT a clearly marked category in Kusunda. Negative and positive clauses are unproblematically distinguished in commands; examples 4 and 5 show a clear contrast of polarity in imperatives.

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   [3] Reported in part online at http://kusunda.linguistics.anu.edu.au (Donohue 2013); see also §5.

   [4] The following abbreviations are used in our glosses: 1, 2, 3: first, second, third person; SG, PL: singular, plural; CHAR: manifest characteristic, ERG: ergative, EVID: evidentiality, GEN: genitive, IMP: imperative, IRR: (general) irrealis, NEG: negative, OBL: oblique, OPT: optative, PROH: prohibitive, PST: past, REAL: realis, SPEC: specific, TOP: topic.

   [5] Syncretisms between an irrealis and the function of negation are attested in other languages, such as Ungarinjin (Rumsey 1982, Miestamo 2005). Parallels with the use of the subjunctive in other languages are also clear. The realis/irrealis contrast is also used in the encoding of specific and nonspecific events, as seen in the differences between 10a and 10a′ below.

(4) Libuŋ ə-go.
 play do-IMP
  'Play!'

(5) Libuŋ ə-nin.
 play do-PROH
  'Don't play!'

Similarly, morphological contrasts in negation are demonstrable with nonverbal predicates; examples 6 and 7 show a positive and negative statement.

(6) Tsi-je gimi.
 1SG-GEN money
  '(That's) my money.'

(7) Tsi-je gimi otoq.
 1SG-GEN money NEG
  '(That's) not my money.'

With existence, we similarly see a clear contrast between existing and not existing, shown in 8 and 9.

(8) Tsi-je gimi tsi-u.
 1SG-GEN money exist-IRR
  'I have money.' (lit. 'My money exists.')

(9) Tsi-je gimi qaˤ-u.
 1SG-GEN money not.exist-IRR
  'I don't have (any) money.' (lit. 'My money does not exist.')

It is clear, then, that negation CAN be unambiguously marked in Kusunda. The area of Kusunda that does not clearly mark negation is (nonimperative) verbal clauses. There we find, pace Watters et al. 2006, that negation is NEVER unambiguously marked.[6] In the following section we revisit the sentences presented in 1, reglossing according to our understanding of the language and presenting arguments for our revised analysis.

3.1. KUSUNDA 'NEGATIVE' SENTENCES REVISITED. The sentences in 1, presented there so as to show the analysis of verbal negation given in Watters et al. 2006, are repeated in 10, with updated glosses and morphological breaks (and in some cases revised transcription), as well as a phonetic transcription of the sentence, relevant for an understanding of the differences in analysis.

(10) a. Taŋ qaˤ-u.   [taŋ(q)χaˤu]
  water not.exist-IRR
   'There is no water.'

 b. Na gimi tsi-je otoq.   [naɡimitɕijɛɔtɔq]
  this money 1SG-GEN is.not
   'This money is not mine.'

 c. Gina e-g-(d)a qaˤ-u.   [ɡinaɛɰa(ʁ)aˤu]
  3SG give-3-CHAR not.exist-IRR
   'He/She did not give.'

 d. Gina g-əm-da qaˤ-u.   [ɡinaɣəmda(ʁ)aˤu]
  3SG 3-eat-CHAR not.exist-IRR
   'He/She did not eat.'

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[6] Keeping in mind that the description in Watters et al. 2006 is primarily based on the speech of a different informant from a different area, thus potentially contaminating the comparison with both idiolectal and dialectal differences.

   e. Tsi t-əm-u-a.   [tɕitəmwa]
      1SG 1-eat-IRR-OPT
        'I won't eat it.'

Our reasons for the reanalyses shown in 10a and 10c–e are explained in the following paragraphs.

First, the existential negator should be represented with a morpheme break before the final vowel, $qa^{ʕ}$-u, and not with the first consonants separated out, as in Watters et al. 2006: k^{h}-$a^{ʕ}u$. Evidence for this is the lack of monoconsonantal suffixing roots elsewhere in the language; the identical form of the final -u to the (semantically compatible) irrealis morpheme that is elsewhere attested; and the fact that the final -u can be replaced by a final -i when the negated entity is more specific. (This 'specific' morpheme is again attested elsewhere in the language, in the verbal system and in the deictic system.) Example 10a′ shows this substitution.

   (10) a′. Taŋ $qa^{ʕ}$-i.
             water not.exist-SPEC
                'The water is not (there).'

The variation in transcription of the initial consonant of the negative existential verb might represent idiolectal differences or a different interpretation of the phonetic signal; in Nepali, the contact language of the area, a phonemic /k^{h}/ is realized as [k^{h}] ~ [kx] ~ [x], easily mistaken for the [q] ~ [qχ] ~ [χ] ~ [ʔ] that is found in Kusunda for /q/.

We do not dispute the analysis of 1b at all, though we note that our informant Gyani Maiya Sen has different forms for two of the morphemes in question, the genitive suffix (-je rather than -ji) and the negator itself (*otoq* rather than *odoq*). This represents idiolectal or dialectal variation.[7]

For 10c and 10d we argue that, rather than negation being a verbal affix, the sentences represent examples of the negative existential seen in 10a, combined with verbs appearing in nominal structures with the suffix -da 'manifest characteristic', which we describe in more detail in §4. (Note that the realization of -da following a consonant depends on whether the verb is prefixing, as in 10d, in which the consonant is part of the verb stem, or suffixing, as in 10c, where the consonant is the agreement suffix.[8] This difference in morphological conditioning is regularly attested with other morphemes.) A more morphemically direct translation of 10d, keeping in mind the use of topicalization as a strategy for expressing clausal possession, would be '(As for) her/him, the characteristic of her/him eating did not exist'.

Rather than assume that -wa represents a special 'NEG:IRR' morpheme, as in the Watters et al. analysis in 1e, we note that -u on its own is also acceptable in this context (see e.g. 2b earlier), with a slightly different interpretation. When the optative in 10e is present the sentence has a sense that the speaker is satisfied with the statement: the fact that the speaker will not eat it is a good thing. In 10e′ there is no such interpretation, and so,

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   [7] The form [oroq] is also attested for some speakers, though not for Gyani Maiya. Other examples of different, but clearly related, morphemes are not hard to find. In example 5 our -nin 'prohibitive' corresponds to -yin in Watters and colleagues' work, which is largely based on the speech of Kamala Khatri. The data reported here comes exclusively from Gyani Maiya Sen.

   [8] Note that since the 'manifest characteristic' suffix -da occupies the position of the mood suffixes of a fully inflected verb, examples such as 10c and 10d cannot display all of the (verbal) inflectional possibilities of a verb used predicatively. All verbs we have examined permit this use of the suffix -da.

by virtue of the contrast with 10e, 10e′ acquires a sense of regret at the nonrealization of the irrealis event.[9]

(10) e′. Tsi t-əm-u.
       1SG 1-eat-IRR
         'I can't/won't eat (it).'

We have argued that negation is not a regular feature of VERBAL clauses in Kusunda, other than imperatives, but that it can be found in nominal clauses, and with nominalizations.

The appearance of the 'manifest characteristic' morpheme as [a], rather than [da], in 10c is supported from data elsewhere in the language: other instances of *g + d* are reduced, such as in 11–13. In 11 we see the same sequence of third-person suffix + characteristic suffix reducing to /ga/ that was seen in 10c. In 12 and 13 we can see instances of a /g/ in the verb root combining with the characteristic suffix directly, and again the *g + da* sequence is realized as /ga/.[10]

(11) Gepən   ə-g-(d)a   qaˤ-u.
       language do-3-CHAR not.exist-IRR
         'He did not talk.'
(12) Ụki tsi-g-(d)a   qaˤ-i.
       salt 1-put-CHAR not.exist-SPEC
         'He did not put the salt (in the curry).'
(13) Dəg-(d)a   qaˤ-i.
       3.go-CHAR not.exist-SPEC
         'He did not go.'

In addition to these examples showing the regular morphophonological change of a *g-d* sequence to /g/, 24e below shows that other sequences across morpheme boundaries (in this case, *mb-d*) result in the reduction of the suffix /da/ to /a/. In common, these underlying clusters involve sequences of voiced stop phonemes.

4. NOMINALIZATION. There is not a strong noun/verb distinction in Kusunda syntax, though there is at least one suffix, *-da*, that unambiguously derives a noun. Nonetheless, inflected verbs may be used 'nominally' with no derivational morphology, as in example 14, drawn from a text about traditional food prohibitions (there is also no overt marker for relative clauses in Kusunda, neither a relativizer nor overt subordinating morphology). Here we can see that the clause *gəmua* is used both nominally, referring to the items that could not be eaten, and verbally, describing the fact that those items were not eaten. In the first part of the sentence *gəmən* is not quite so symmetrical, since the evidentiality suffix, which is not compatible with irrealis clauses, appears only on the predicative verb.

(14) [NP G-əm-ən] g-əm-ən-dzi, [NP g-əm-u-a]   g-əm-u-a.
         3-eat-REAL 3-eat-REAL-EVID 3-eat-IRR-OPT 3-eat-IRR-OPT
           'They ate what they could eat, and they didn't eat what was not allowed to
             be eaten.'

[9] The example *gipusi g-əm-u* (dairy 3-eat-IRR) 'They didn't eat dairy', describing traditional cultural restrictions on food (from Donohue 2013, 'Food prohibitions', line 23), also expresses regret. Although this is decribing traditional Kusunda life, the fact that Gyani Maiya frequently complains about how difficult life was when living in the jungle makes the regret interpretation likely.

[10] While the majority of roots are suffixing, certain high-frequency lexical items inflect for person of subject by prefixes. The verb 'go' has a suppletive form for third-person subjects (underlyingly /dg/), being /eg/ for first and second persons.

We similarly find fully inflected verbs being used nominally, as zero-headed relative clauses, or modifying overt nominals, in which case a more habitual interpretation is normal, as in 15 and 16 respectively. A more specific instance of a daughter climbing a tree can be described with a verbal predicate, as in 17.

(15) [NP T-əm-ən-dzi]   qaˁ-u.
      1-eat-REAL-EVID not.exist-IRR
     'There was none of the food that I usually eat.' (i.e. '(What) I attestedly ate, did not exist.' *not* *'I did not eat.')

(16) Nu-tə [NP [RC i-ga   soˁ-ən-i]   niŋgitse] ts(i)-i.
    2SG-TOP   tree-OBL climb-REAL-SPEC daughter exist-SPEC
    'You have a tree-climbing daughter.'

(17) Ni-je   niŋgitse i-ga   soˁ-ən-i.
    2SG.GEN-GEN daughter tree-OBL climb-REAL-SPEC
    'Your daughter climbed a tree.'

The examples of nominalization seen in 14–17 clearly involve zero-derivation: the use of fully inflected verbs in nonpredicative functions, with no signaling morphology.[11] There is one instance known to us of an overt morpheme that, when applied to a root, results in a nominal stem. The suffix -*da*, discussed in §3.1 above, expresses the concept of a 'manifest characteristic': the noun derived with this suffix must display a characteristic that results from the prior realization of the meaning described in the root, which may be nominal or verbal ('thief' can be decomposed into three morphemes, *qilaˁ-da-i* 'steal-CHAR-SPEC', with regular realization of /ai/ as [əj]). A sentence with a nominal formed with this suffix as predicate is not compatible with a future interpretation, due to the 'prior realization' part of the semantics of the suffix; for these functions, a verbal clause must be used. These restrictions and options are shown in 18–23.

(18) Gina n(u)-i   hjoq-də-j   tsi.
    3SG   person-SPEC hide-CHAR-SPEC be.NOMINAL
    'This person is the hiding one.'

(19) Tsi qilaˁ-də-j   otoq.
    1SG steal-CHAR-SPEC is.not
    'I am not a thief.'

(20) *Goraq   gina g-əm-da   qaˁ-u.
    tomorrow 3SG 3-eat-CHAR not.exist-IRR
    'He/She will not eat tomorrow.'

(21) *Goraq   tsi qilaˁ-də-j   otoq.
    tomorrow 1SG steal-CHAR-SPEC is.not
    'I will not be a thief tomorrow.'

(22) Goraq   gina g-əm-u-a.
    tomorrow 3SG 3-eat-IRR-OPT
    'He/She will not eat tomorrow.'/'He/She will eat tomorrow.'

(23) Goraq   tsi qilaˁ-t-u-a.
    tomorrow 1SG steal-1-IRR-OPT
    'I will not steal tomorrow.'/'I will steal tomorrow.'

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[11] Alternatively, we could consider these examples to be evidence not only of extensive precategoriality, such that lexical items are not underlyingly specified for word class, but that even inflected lexemes are not constrained in their ability to appear in different syntactic functions.

Some further examples of derivations with -*da* are given in 24. Note the nonuniformity of the bases to which the suffix is attached, and the obligatory appearance of the specific morpheme with the resulting nominalization when used referentially.[12]

(24) a. qila ꜥ   'steal'   qila ꜥdəj   'thief'
     b. kəba əgən 'lie'   kəbadəj   'liar'
     c. u̱la əgən 'cook (verb)'   u̱ladəj   'cook (noun)'
     d. lapa   'blood'   lapadəj   'person covered in blood'
     e. qomb   'argue/tease'   qombəj   'crazy person'
     f. dzẽõq   'pregnant woman'   dzẽõqdəj 'woman with newborn child'

We argue that the negations seen in 10c and 10d are instances of nonspecific characteristics, formed with the same suffix -*da*. There are two arguments that support this position. First, the separability of negation from the negated verb, as shown in 25 with the clitic -*ba*, shows that there is a word break between *gəmda* and *qa ꜥu*. Second, the incompatibility of a negated clause with a future-tense interpretation (in 26) parallels the semantic restrictions of the 'manifest characteristic' derived nominals seen in 20 and 21, and strongly suggests that the morpheme -*da* in these negated clauses should be analyzed as an instance of the manifest characteristic morpheme.[13]

(25) Gina g-əm-da-ba   qa ꜥ-u.
     3SG   3-eat-CHAR-also not.exist-IRR
        'He/She did not even eat.'
(26) *Goraq   gina g-əm-da   qa ꜥ-u.
      tomorrow 3SG   3-eat-CHAR not.exist-IRR
         'He/She will not eat tomorrow.'

We have described an alternative analysis of the Kusunda sentences that are offered as translations of negative sentences, with nominalization inherent to the analysis of the unambiguously negative clauses. Having negation associated with some form of nominalization is not unheard of; various Austronesian languages, such as Fijian, Palauan, and some Polynesian languages (e.g. Tongan) (Churchward 1953, Josephs 1975, Payne 1985, Dixon 1988, Miestamo 2005), employ negative verbs with nominalized clauses. In 27 and 28 the examples contain nominalized clauses that are not required for positive sentences. They differ from the Kusunda examples we have seen in that the negative morpheme is an inflecting verb, and the negative construction is not temporally restricted.

(27) Boumaa Fijian (Dixon 1988:40)
     E   sega [CP ni   la'o o   Jone].
     3SG NEG   COMP go   ART John
        'John is not going.' ('It is not (the case) that John is going.')
(28) Tongan (Churchward 1953:56)
     Na'e 'ikai [CP ke   'alu 'a siale].
     PST   NEG   COMP go   ABS Charlie
        'Charlie did not go.' ('It was not (the case) that Charlie is going.')

The Kusunda nominalized negative might be considered to be another attestation of this sort of construction, with the twist that the nominalizing morpheme must refer to an already realized state, and so is not compatible with any future interpretations (see 20

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[12] This sequence of morphemes is described in Watters et al. 2006 as a single suffix, the 'adjective-forming' -*di*.

[13] The presence of -*ba* in 25 is further evidence for the nominalized nature of the word, since -*ba* cannot apply to syntactic verbs.

and 21). This means that the unambiguous expression of standard negation is restricted to nonfuture contexts (see 22 and 23).

5. CONCLUSIONS. We have shown that (standard) negation in Kusunda is not compatible with verbal predication, but can only appear in a very restricted domain. While previous reports describe a number of negative suffixes for declarative verbs, we have shown that the previously reported negative 'suffixes' are in fact combinations of nominalizing suffix and existential negation, or irrealis (plus optative). Further, due to the semantics of the nominal derivation with *-da*, a resulting negated nominal clause cannot have a future interpretation, leaving the only possible strategy to negate a future clause ambiguous, as in 22 and 23. This state of affairs is not expected, since it severely restricts the possibilities for unambiguous 'standard negation'.

As noted in §3.1, it is not the case that verbs cannot be marked as negative, since there is a contrast between the imperative and prohibitive, seen in 4 and 5. In nonimperative moods, however, the only way to negate the verb is by nominalizing the predicate as a manifest characteristic, and then negating its existence.[14] Further, this explicit negation is restricted to nonfuture contexts as a result of the semantics of the nominal suffix *-da* described in §4. While covert nominalizations are common in Kusunda, such as those seen in 14 and 15, these are not used to encode negated verbal predicates because of the choice of the negator of existence, *qaˤu* (7), rather than the negator of identity, *otoq* (9), in this construction.

While the restrictions on unambiguous standard negation are interesting, we would also like to emphasize the differences between the two data sets (Watters et al. and our own). Watters et al. 2006 is based on intensive direct word and sentence elicitation in office environments in a major city (Kathmandu) that is outside the traditional range of any Kusunda bands, while our data contains twenty hours of narrative and conversation, recorded on site in the informant's home in Kulmohor (near Lamahi in Dang, western Nepal), during 2012–2013 (intensively during the first half of 2012, and on subsequent follow-up trips). Thanks to this corpus we have been able to examine actual preferences for different strategies in text and in conversation, and self-'repair' of utterances judged by the informant as too ambiguous for nonnative speakers to process.

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[14] Garifuna shows a split in the realization of negation. Verbs generally mark negation by affix, but nominal negation must be used with the progressive tense: *m-eremu-ha ba-dina* (NEG-sing-VRBL FUT-1SG) 'I won't sing', *m-eremu-ha-tina* (NEG-sing-VRBL-1SG) 'I didn't sing', but *mama n-eremu-ha ña* (NEG 1SG-sing-VRBL PROG) 'I'm not singing' (cf. *mama gürigia* (NEG person) 'not a person') (Kaufman 2010 and p.c.). Note that in Garifuna affixal negation is the normal case, and separate nominal negation is restricted to the progressive. We note in passing that, following the extensive grammaticalization of participle forms in northern Indo-Aryan languages, the negation of many past (participle) clauses in a language like Nepali uses the negative existential, rather than affixal negation: *malāi bhok lāge-ko chaina* (1SG.DAT hunger affect-PTCPL NEG.EXIST) 'I am not hungry'.

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[mark.donohue@anu.edu.au]