

NEGATION IN KAVALAN¹

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1. Introduction

One issue in the studies of negation concerns categorizing the negative elements (as in Dahl 1979; Payne 1985; Ouhalla 1990; Kahrel and van den Berg 1994; Haegeman 1995; Mosel 1999 and others). Identifying the syntactic category of a negative element not only explains its syntactic distribution, but also helps to discuss the syntactic structure of the corresponding negative construction.

This paper attempts to examine three hypotheses of the syntactic category of the negator *mai* in Kavalan². We will argue for analyzing *mai* as a negative auxiliary verb.

2. Literature Review

Mosel (1999) mentions that negative elements may belong to a wide range of syntactic categories, such as verbs, auxiliaries, particles, affixes, and so on. Payne (1985) also proposes some criteria for recognizing a negative verb. It is claimed that “a negative verb always has at least some properties of regular verbs, such as occurrence with a verbal complementizer or inflection for mood, tense, aspect, person, or number” (Payne 1985: 207). Payne further divides negative verbs into two major groups: one is a higher verb taking a full sentential complement and the other is “a finite auxiliary verb to the lexical verb, which in turn typically occurs in some non-finite form” (Payne *ibid*: 207).

According to Payne (1985), for a negative marker to be analyzed as a higher verb, two features are required. One is the existence of a sentential boundary between the negative verb and the lexical verb. Take Fijian for example, there is a complementizer *ni* between the negative verb *sega* and the full sentential complement (as shown in (1)).

(1) Fijian (Payne 1985: 210)

E sega [_s *ni a yacomai ena siga Vakaraubuka ko Jone*]
PCL Neg that Past arrive on day Friday ART John
'John didn't arrive on Friday.'

The other feature is that the complement selected by the higher negative verb is generally finite in the sense that it may contain the tense/aspect markings and/or the subject. For example in Tongan, the higher negative verb *'ikai* takes a complement

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² This paper focuses on the most frequently used negator *mai*. There are other negative elements in Kavalan, such as *usa* 'be not', *naRin* 'don't', *sukaw* 'not good; not allowed'; *Rayngu* 'not know; incapable of' and *taqa* 'not want' (see Yeh (2005)).

that obligatorily contains an embedded aspect *ke* and the subject pronoun *ne*, as shown in (2).

(2) Tongan (Payne 1985: 209)

- a. *Na'e 'ikai* [_s *ke ne fai 'a e ngaauue*]
 Asp Neg Asp he do Abs the work
 'He didn't do the work.'
- b. * *Na'a ne 'ikai* [_s *ke fai 'a e ngaauue*]
 Asp he Neg Asp do Abs the work

As seen in (2b), moving the subject pronoun *ne* out of the embedded complement to the matrix clause results in ungrammaticality.

On the other hand, Payne proposes that, in the purest case, a negator being classified as a negative auxiliary verb is “marked with **all** the basic verbal categories of person, number, tense/aspect and mood (if these are realized in the language concerned), whereas the lexical verb assumes an invariant, participial form. [Moreover,] there will be no evidence, like the presence of complementizers, for a full sentential boundary between the negative verb and the lexical verb...” (Payne 1985: 212). Evenki negator *ə* is such a pure auxiliary verb, as illustrated in (3).

(3) Evenki³ (Payne 1985: 213)

- a. *Nuŋan baka-ŋkī-n*
 he find-Past-3Sg
 'He found.'
- b. *Nuŋan ə-ŋkī-n baka-ra*
 he Neg-Past-3Sg find-PART
 'He didn't find.'

In the affirmative sentence (3a), the tense inflection *-ŋkī* and the person/number agreement are carried by the lexical verb. In the negative counterpart (3b), however, both of these inflections are carried by the negative auxiliary verb *ə*, whereas the lexical verb *baka* takes a participial form suffixed by *-ra* instead. In addition, as seen in (3b), there is no complementizer or other evidence for a full sentential boundary between the negative auxiliary *ə* and the following lexical verb.

mai, the most frequently used negator in Kavalan which is a verb-initial language, appears on initial examination to behave like a verb, since it occurs clause-initially, attracts nominative bound pronouns and carries tense/aspect markers as shown in (4)-(6)⁴.

³ Evenki is “a member of the northern or Siberian subgroup of the Tungus family” (Payne 1985: 212).

⁴ Glossing: AV: Actor Voice; NAV: Non-actor Voice; Ncm: noun-class marker; Pfv: perfective; DM: discourse marker; Neg: negator; Nom: nominative; Obl: oblique; Gen: genitive; Sg: singular; Compl: complementizer; Loc: Locative.

(4) (Occur in clause-initial position)

a. *p-m-ukun tu wasu 'nay ci buya*
 AV-hit Obl dog that Ncm BUYA
 'Buya hits that dog.'

b. *mai p-m-ukun tu wasu 'nay ci buya*
 Neg AV-hit Obl dog that Ncm BUYA
 'Buya doesn't hit that dog.'

(5) (Attract bound pronouns)

a. *p-m-ukun-iku tu wasu 'nay*
 AV-hit-1Sg.Nom Obl dog that
 'I hit that dog.'

b. *mai-iku p-m-ukun tu wasu 'nay*
 Neg-1Sg.Nom AV-hit Obl dog that
 'I don't hit that dog.'

(6) (Carry tense/aspect markers)

a. *p-m-ukun-ti tu wasu 'nay ci buya*
 AV-hit-Pfv Obl dog that Ncm BUYA
 'Buya have hit that dog.'

b. *mai-ti p-m-ukun tu wasu 'nay ci buya*
 Neg-Pfv AV-hit Obl dog that Ncm BUYA
 'Buya doesn't hit that dog anymore.'

This paper therefore attempts to examine the syntactic category of *mai* based on Payne's (1985) proposals. In addition to testing the possibilities of *mai* being a higher verb or an auxiliary verb, we also consider the third possibility: *mai* as an initial main verb (V1) taking a verbal complement as in a serial verb construction. We conclude that *mai* is a negative auxiliary.

The presentation is organized as follow. We at first briefly introduce Kavalan, and then present the examinations of *mai* as an initial main verb in a serial verb construction, a higher verb taking a full sentential complement, or an auxiliary verb to lexical verb. Finally we will give a conclusion.

3. Description of Kavalan

Kavalan is one of the Formosan languages spoken by the aboriginals living in the plains of Eastern Taiwan. The population is about 820 now⁵; however, less than 100 can speak Kavalan fluently (Chang 2000a). In Nov. 2002, Kavalan tribe is legitimately recognized as the 11th Taiwan aboriginal tribe.

Kavalan is a verb-initial language, and the basic word order is VOS in that the grammatical subject in nominative case tends to be placed in the sentence-final position

⁵ The data is cited from the website of the Council of Indigenous Peoples, Executive Yuan, Taiwan. (<http://others.apc.gov.tw/popu/9403/aprp5803.htm>)

(as discussed in Yeh 2004), as illustrated in (7) and (8)⁶.

(7) *p-m-ukun tu wasu 'nay (ya) ci buya*
 AV-hit Obl dog that (Nom) Ncm BUYA
 'Buya hits that dog.'

(8) *pukun-an-na_i ni buya_i (ya) wasu 'nay*
 hit-NAV-3Sg.Gen Gen BUYA (Nom) dog that
 'Buya hits that dog.'

As can be seen, Kavalan has two voice options, Actor Voice (AV) and Non-actor Voice (NAV). In AV clauses, the actor is selected to be the sentence subject (as in (7)), while in NAV clauses, it is the non-actor (e.g., patient) that is the grammatical subject (as in (8)). The actor in a NAV clause is marked with genitive case (8), and the patient in an AV clause is marked with oblique case (7).

Moreover, there are two types of bound pronouns in Kavalan: nominative bound pronouns (such as *-iku* in (5)) and genitive bound pronouns (such as *-na* in (8)). Chang (1997; 2000a) has argued that these two types of pronouns have different morphological status. The nominative ones are pronominal clitics, while the genitive ones are verbal agreement affixes that only occur in NAV clauses.

In terms of negation, *mai* is the most commonly used negator in Kavalan. It is used to negate sentences with all types of non-nominal predicates (including verbal, adjectival, and locative, as in (9)-(11))⁷. The adding of *mai* to the clause-initial position of the positive counterparts does not change the word order or the form of the main predicates.

(9) (Verbal)

a. *p-m-ukun tu wasu 'nay ci buya*
 AV-hit Obl dog that Ncm BUYA
 'Buya hits that dog.'

b. *mai p-m-ukun tu wasu 'nay ci buya*
 Neg AV-hit Obl dog that Ncm BUYA
 'Buya doesn't hit that dog.'

(10) (Adjectival)

a. *ibabaw ci buya*
 tall Ncm BUYA
 'Buya is tall.'

⁶ Based on discourse data, Yeh (2004) argues for a strong tendency of VOS order in Kavalan, contrary to the common observation of word order as VSO in AV clauses as discussed in Lee (1997), Chang (1997, 2000a) and Liao (2004).

⁷ In Yeh et al. (1998), negative locative sentences and negative possessive/existential sentences are grouped together. Kavalan is however in a different case. Negative locative sentences, structurally different from negative possessive/existential sentences, are rather parallel to, and therefore should be classified with negative declarative constructions.