

Title: **Negative interrogatives**

Category: Oral

Typological work on negation has concentrated on the negation of declarative main clauses with verbal predicates (e.g., Dahl 1979, Miestamo 2005). In recent years the range of topics has widened and attention has also been paid to negative imperatives (van der Auwera & Lejeune 2005) as well as non-verbal and existential negatives (Eriksen 2005, Veselinova 2007). However, there is no typological survey of negative interrogatives to date. This paper aims to fill this gap with respect to polar interrogatives (yes/no-questions); information questions (wh-questions) will not be addressed.

The study is based on an extensive language sample. To the extent possible, the sample will include at least one language from each of the genera listed by Dryer (2005). Frequency counts will be based on an areally and genealogically balanced subsample of the overall variety sample. The data is drawn from reference grammars and other available sources as well as from personal communication with specialists of particular languages. The central research question is how negative polar interrogatives are expressed in the world's languages. Special attention will be paid to how they differ from negative declaratives on the one hand and positive polar interrogatives on the other.

In many languages negative polar interrogatives are expressed by the regular combination of negative and interrogative marking. In German (1), polar interrogatives are formed by placing the finite verb at the beginning of the clause and declarative negatives by placing the negative marker *nicht* in a postverbal position. Negative polar interrogatives simply combine these two constructions and show no special effects.

In some languages negative polar interrogatives show special structural characteristics vis-à-vis either declarative negatives or positive polar interrogatives, or both. In Estonian (Erelt 2003), positive polar interrogatives are marked by the particle *kas* (2b) and negation by a construction involving the negative auxiliary *ei* (2c). Negative polar interrogatives, however, are marked by a special particle *ega* (2d). In Halkomelem (Galloway 1993), positive polar interrogatives are expressed by the interrogative auxiliary *lí* (3b) and negatives with the negative auxiliary *ʔwə* (3c), but these cannot cooccur, and negative interrogatives have the interrogative suffix *-ə* on the negative auxiliary (3d). In Igbo (Green & Igwe 1963), positive polar interrogatives are marked by low tone before the verb, but negative interrogatives do not have a distinct tonal question form. In Egyptian Arabic (Gary & Gamal Eldin 1982), the marking of negation in declaratives depends on aspect, the perfective using the discontinuous marker *ma-... f* and the imperfective having a choice between *ma-... f* and preverbal *mif*. However, this restriction does not apply in negative interrogatives, and *mif* can be used in perfectives as well.

This study will explore how common it is for negative interrogatives to show special structural characteristics that are not straightforwardly derivable from the properties of negative declaratives and positive polar interrogatives, and whether and how the special properties of negative interrogatives can be classified into cross-linguistic types. The data will be analysed in terms of the notion of asymmetry as defined by Miestamo (2005). Functional explanations will also be sought for the cross-linguistic findings.

Negative interrogatives are especially interesting in languages where positive polar interrogatives and negative declaratives have some properties in common. These include languages in which positive polar interrogatives and negative declaratives share a morphological form (e.g., Imonda) and languages in which polar interrogation is expressed by the disjunction of a positive predicate and its negation (e.g., Kobon). In Imonda (Seiler 1985), polar interrogation can be expressed with the suffix *-m* on the verb (4b). The suffix *-m* is also used in negative declaratives with the negative particle *sě* (4c). Negative interrogatives are expressed by a special construction involving the negative particle *auia* and the auxiliary verb *fə* 'do' (4d). In Kobon (Davies 1989), polar interrogation is expressed by repeating the verb in a negative form (5b). The closest thing to a negative interrogative can be formed by adding *aka* 'or' at the end of a negative clause which results in a leading question (5d) (this element can also follow an affirmative with the same effect). Languages such as Imonda and Kobon will be given special attention in the paper and the solutions they adopt to form negative interrogatives will be discussed in detail.

- (1) German (constructed examples)
- a. *du singst*
2SG sing.2SG
'You sing.'
- b. *singst du ?*
sing.2SG 2SG
'Do you sing?'
- c. *du singst nicht*
2SG sing.2SG NEG
'You don't sing.'
- d. *singst du nicht ?*
sing.2SG 2SG NEG
'Don't you sing?'
- (2) Estonian (Erelt 2003: 108 [except 2c which is constructed by the author])
- a. *sa tule-d täna meile*
2SG come-2SG today 2PL.ALL
'You will come to visit us today.'
- b. *kas sa tule-d täna meile ?*
Q 2SG come-2SG today 2PL.ALL
'Will you come to visit us today?'
- c. *sa ei tule täna meile*
2SG NEG come today 2PL.ALL
'You won't come to visit us today.'
- d. *ega sa (ei) tule täna meile ?*
NEG.Q 2SG NEG come today 2PL.ALL
'Won't you come to visit us today?'
- (3) Halkomelem (Galloway 1993: 238–239, 314–315)
- a. *k^wəc-l-əx^w-cəl* *tə* *x^wəx^wɛyə*
see-happen.to-3SG.OBJ-1SG.SUBJ DEF fly
'I see a fly.'
- b. *lí-cx^w* *k^wəc-l-əx^w* *θə* *Súsel lí tə x^wéɛ ?*
Q-2SG.SUBJ see-happen.to-3SG.OBJ DEF.F Susan in DEF path
'Do you see Susan in the path?'
- c. *?əwə lí-s yəθəst-àləm*
NEG.3 AUX-3 tell-2PL
'They didn't tell you folks.'
- d. *?əw-é lí-s yəθəst-àləm ?*
NEG.3-Q AUX-3 tell-2PL
'Didn't they tell you folks?'
- (4) Imonda (Seiler 1985: 92, 171, 174)
- a. *těla-pef ha-pia-f*
husband-POSSMOT-come-PRES
'Your husband is coming.'
- b. *ne uagl-f-me ?*
2 go-PRES-NEG/Q
'Are you going?'
- c. *ehe sě eg-l-uagl-f-me*
3 NEG follow-OBJ.NSG-go-PRES-NEG/Q
'He does not follow them.'
- d. *kapul õm ha-pia auaiə fə-i-me ?*
plane yesterday MOT-come NEG do-PST-Q
'Didn't the plane come yesterday?'
- (5) Kobon (Davies 1989: 5, 22, 78, 94)
- a. *yad kaj mid-öp*
1SG pig be-PERF.3SG
'I have a pig.'
- b. *ne kajap mid-öp (aka) mid-ag-öp ?*
2SG pig INDEF be-PERF.3SG (or) be-NEG-PERF.3SG
'Have you any meat?'
- c. *nipe ip hag ñ-ag-a*
3SG 1SG.OBJ say give-NEG-RMPST.3SG
'He did not tell me.'
- d. *kale kañim mid-ag-öp aka ?*
2PL banana be-NEG-PERF.3SG or
'You haven't any bananas?'

Auwers, J. van der. 2006. Why languages prefer prohibitives? *Journal of Foreign Languages* 2006 (1). 1–25.

Dahl, Ö. 1979. Typology of sentence negation. *Linguistics* 17. 79–106.

Davies, J. 1989. *Kobon*. London: Routledge.

Dryer, M. 2005. Genealogical language list. In M. Haspelmath, M. Dryer, D. Gil & B. Comrie (eds.), *The world atlas of language structures*, 584–644. Oxford: OUP.

Erelt, M. 2003. Syntax. In M. Erelt (ed.), *Estonian language*, 93–129. Tallinn: Estonian Academy Publishers.

Eriksen, P. 2005. On the typology and the semantics of non-verbal predication. Oslo: University of Oslo dissertation.

Galloway, B. 1993. *A grammar of Upriver Halkomelem*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gary, J. & S. Gamal-Eldin. 1982. *Cairene Egyptian Colloquial Arabic*. London: Croom Helm.

Green, M. M. & G. E. Igwe. 1963. *A descriptive grammar of Igbo*. London: OUP.

Miestamo, M. 2005. *Standard negation: The negation of declarative verbal main clauses in a typological perspective*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Seiler, W. 1985. *Imonda, a Papuan language*. Canberra: Australian National University.

Veselinova, L. 2006. Towards a typology of negation in non-verbal and existential sentences. Paper given at the 80th Annual Meeting of the LSA, University of New Mexico. [www.ling.su.se/staff/ljuba/Non-verbalNegation01.pdf]