Negation in Lotha

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Abstract

This paper attempts to describe negation in Lotha, spoken in Wokha district, Nagaland. Lotha is a generic name and refers to both the linguistic group and the ethno-cultural entity. Lotha are racially Mongoloid. Linguistically, it has been classified under the Ao group of the Naga sub-branch of the Tibeto-Burman languages (Lewis et.al, 2015). Normally a negative sentence is the negative counterpart of an affirmative sentence, and is used to communicate that, some proposition communicated by the affirmative sentence is false. In Lotha there are three different ways to express negation. The default sentential negation in Lotha is the prefix n-. The other syntactic negator in Lotha is ti- and the third negation is 'mek' referred to as negative indefinite. The negative prefix n- occurs with the non-imperative form of a verb as a kind of statement in the utterance of the speaker. While the negative prefix, ti- occurs with the imperative form of a verb which designates to a grammatical mood expressing a command, a request or an exhortation. In the imperative form, negative commands are expressed by using the verb stem in combination with the negative marker found in declarative sentences.

Keywords: Lotha, Nagaland, Tibeto-Burman, Negation

Introduction

The Lothas with an approximate population of 1, 66,343 (Census of India, 2001) inhabit the Wokha district of Nagaland. The speakers of Lotha are scattered all over Nagaland but the majority are concentrated mainly at Wokha district of Nagaland. Lotha has no script of its own and has adopted Roman script introduced by the British and the American Missionaries in the late 19th century. Lotha has a number of varieties but, the variation is mainly at the phonological level, that is, the accent of the speaker, which varies from village to village. However, for the purpose of literary works, the variety spoken in central villages, particularly in and around Wokha town is used. The present study is based on the language spoken in Wokha town, of Wokha district in Nagaland.

1.   Negatives in Lotha

Normally a negative sentence is the negative counterpart of an affirmative sentence, and is used to communicate that, some proposition communicated by the affirmative sentence is false. In Lotha there are three different ways to express negation. The default sentential negation in Lotha is the prefix /n-/. The other negator in Lotha is /ti-/ and the third negation is /me/ referred to as prohibitive negative. The negative prefix n- occurs with the non-imperative form of a verb as a kind of statement in the utterance of the speaker. While the negative prefix, /ti-/ occurs with the imperative form of a verb which designates to a grammatical mood expressing a command, a request or an exhortation. In the imperative form, negative commands are expressed by using the verb stem in combination with the negative marker found in declarative sentences.
In Lotha an affirmative statement is transformed into its opposite denial by the negative markers /n-/, /ti-/, /me/, and /mo/. The occurrences of negation in the language vary with respect to different types of sentence constructions found in the language i.e. declaratives, imperatives, interrogatives and indefinite.

1.1. The Negative /n-/

The default sentential negation in Lotha is the prefix /n-/ as seen in (2) and has the widest scope in a clause. However, when the verb takes tense marking such as the future the negative /n-/ loses its scope and the negative /me/ is employed as seen in (3) which occur in the final position of a construction.

1. *ombɔ*   *ɲa*   *pʰanti-a*   *la*
    3P.MAS   morning   wake   PRES
    'He wakes up early'

2. *ombɔ*   *ɲa*   *n-pʰanti*
   3P.MAS   morning   NEG-wake
   'He did not wake up early'

2. *ombɔ na*   *ɲa*   *pʰanti-v*   *mek*
    3P.MAS NOM   morning   wake-FUT   NEG
    'He will not wake up early'

In a negative interrogative construction, the negative */n-/* occur in both yes/no interrogatives and wh- interrogatives as in (4) and (5). In both yes/no and wh- the interrogatives occur in the final position of a construction and the negation /n-/ as always occur in the medial position of a construction pre verbally.

3. *ni*   *na*   *a*   *sə*   *ci*   *n- həŋ*   *tʃɔ*   *alo*

'haven't you seen my shirt'

4. *otʃɔ*   *n-roa*   *la*
    who   NEG-come   QM
    'who is not coming'

5.   *a na*   *ni*   *ezov –ji*   *ndioli*   *n-ŋa*   *la*
     1P NOM   2P   tell det   QM   NEG listen QM
     'why don't you listen to what I told you?'

2.2. The Negative /ti-/

The negative */ti-/* occur with the imperative form of a verb which designates to a grammatical mood expressing a request or an exhortation. It is employed in an imperative construction and cannot occur interchangeably with the negative */n-/*. Following are some of the instances where the /ti-/ is employed in a construction.

6. *kipəŋ-ci*   *ti-kʰana*
    door- DET NEG-close
    'Don't close the door'

7.   *fəro-ci*   *peləŋ-poni*   *na*   *ti-phia*
     dog-DET   bed-PSTP   NOM   NEG-feed
     'don't feed the dog on the bed'

8. *jokɔ-ci*   *osə*   *cilo*   *ti-hana*
    necklace-DET   dress   DEM   NEG-wear
    'don't wear the necklace with that dress'

The negative /ti-/ occur always pre verbally in the medial position of a verb; it can also occur in the initial construction of an imperative clause as in (10) and (11).

9.   *ti-tʲoa*
     NEG -say
     'don't say it'

10. *ti-tsʰoa*
     NEG -do
     'don't do it'

The negative /ti-/, however cannot be used interchangeably with the negative /n-/ as it cannot occur in an imperative or interrogatives and adding it will make the sentence meaningless and ungrammatical as seen in (12) and (13).

*12. *kipəŋ-ci*   *n-kʰana*
     door-DET   NEG -close

*13. *a na   ni   ezov-ci   ndioli ti-ŋa   la*
     1P NOM   2P   tell-DET   QM   NEG-listen   QM

2.3. The Negative /me/

The negation */me/* performs as the prohibitive marker in a construction. In a prohibitive construction the negative /me/ is always accompanied by the prohibitive particle /ka/ (14) and (15).

14. *otsə   tso-ka*
    rice   eat PROH
     'eat rice'

15. *otsə   tso   me-ka*
    rice   eat   NEG PROH
    'don't eat rice'

16. *jipvə-ka*
    sleep PROH
    'you sleep

17. *jipvə   me-ka*
    sleep   NEG PROH
    'don't sleep'

The negative */me/* can occur in an interrogative construction and can be reduplicated as seen in (18). The negative */me/* however cannot be reduplicated in wh-interrogative constructions (19) and by reduplicating the negation in a wh-interrogative construction will result in ungrammatical sentence (20).

18. *ni-no   pəŋnoi   me me*

2P NOM   teacher   NEG NEG

'Are you a teacher?

19. *otʃɔ-co*   *pəŋnoi*   *me*

   who-NOM   teacher   NEG

  'Who is not a teacher?

20.* *ocho-jo pəŋnoi me me*

   who- NOM teacher NEG NEG

2.4. Negative Indefinites

     The negative indefinites are inherently negatives and are accompanied by the default negation /*n-*/ in a construction. The inventory of negative indefinites in the language following Penka (2011) is shown in table 1:

Table1. Inventory of negative indefinites

Negative indefinites	*Lotha*	Gloss
Person	*otʃiame*	'nobody'
Thing	*Ntiame*	'nothing'
Place	*kvəlohame*	'nowhere'
Det	*Me*	'no'

     Negative indefinites in Lotha are /*otʃiame*/ 'nobody', /*ntiame*/ 'nothing', /*kvəlohame*/ 'nowhere' and /*me*/ 'no'. When the negative indefinites occur as a one word response to an interrogative sentence, the inherent negatives remains the same as seen in the following instances.

21.(a) *co otʃɔ la*   (b) *otʃiame*

    'who is that'   'nobody'

22. (a) *co ndo la*   (b) *ntiame*

    'what is that'   'nothing'

23.(a) *co kvəlo la*   (b) *kvəlohame*

    'Where is that'   'nowhere'

     In a clause construction the occurrence of negative indefinites alone may meant ungrammatical therefore it is always accompanied by the negative marker /*n-*/. The occurrence of

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negative indefinites along with the negative marker also results to a double negative construction.

24. *tsəpvə   i   ntia   n   cə*
   pot   LOC   nothing   NEG   there
   'there's nothing in the pot'

25. *ncə   co   otʃia   n-tso*
   yesterday NOM nobody NEG-eat
   'nobody ate yesterday'

26. *a jɔ   kvəloha   n-ji*
   1P NOM   nowhere   NEG-go
   'I am not going anywhere'

Conclusion

The process of negation in Lotha is morphologically formed by prefixing the negative marker to its constituents. Negation is expressed by three negative prefixes */n-/, /ti-/* and */me/.* The negative */n-/* is the default sentential negator in Lotha and it has the widest scope in a clause construction. However, the scope is limited to tense because when the verb takes future tense the negation */n-/* loses its scope and the negator /me/ is employed which occurs in the final position of a sentence construction. The negative */ti-/* occurs with the imperative form of a verb which designates to a grammatical mood expressing a request or an exhortation. Although both the negatives */n-/* and */ti-/* occur in both declarative and interrogative constructions they cannot be used interchangeably. The negation /*me*/ performs as a prohibitive negator and is always accompanied by the prohibitive particle /*ka*/. However, in an interrogative clause /*me*/ is reduplicated for the purpose of emphasis but cannot be reduplicated in wh- clause construction. The negative indefinites are inherently negatives and are accompanied by the default negation /n-/ in a construction. Negative indefinites in Lotha are /*otʃiame*/ 'nobody', /*ntiame*/ 'nothing', /*kvəlohame*/ 'nowhere' and /*me*/ 'no'. When the negative indefinites occur as a one word response to an interrogative sentence, the inherent negatives remain the same. The occurrence of negative indefinites along with the negative marker */n-/* results to a double negative construction.

Abbrevations

1p	First Person
2p	Second Person
3p	Third Person
DEM	Demonstratives
DET	Determiners

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LOC	Locative
MAS	Masculine
NEG	Negative
NOM	Nominative
PRES	Present Tense
PROH	Prohibitive
PSPT	Postposition
QM	Question Marker
SG	Singular
FUT	Future Tense

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