

Negation Marking in Defaka

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Abstract

Defaka is a grossly endangered language spoken in the shared community of Nkoroo, situated in the Eastern fringe of the Niger Delta Region of Rivers State, Nigeria. It is an endangered language, with barely less than fifty fluent speakers. This paper discusses negation marking in Defaka. Negation in Defaka is basically morphological, with a clause level clitic =**re** attached to the verb. Other markers of negation are, the low toned sentence final particle **kòm** which is used to mark the unfulfilled negative, the existential negative **jáilè** and the negative imperatives **kírì** and **nìni**. Tone plays a secondary role. The characteristic tonal pattern of a negative sentence in Defaka is a falling tone; this pattern does not change even with questions, except instances where a verb with a final high tone spreads its high tone through the last syllables of an utterance, giving the utterance a final raised intonation pattern. This raised intonation pattern is also attested in the negation of some noun phrases. Double negatives occur only with the imperative.

Keywords: Defaka, negation marking, Nigeria languages.

Introduction

Language change due to migration or distance from the language's homeland, social, cultural and group loyalty may gradually lead to language shift or place the shifting language in an endangered state or outright extinction. (Hudson & Patrick 1984). This is the precarious situation in which a language like Defaka has found itself. Tsunoda, (2005.1), states that, 'In almost every part of the world, minority peoples' languages are disappearing, and this is taking place at an alarming speed. Also, a great many languages have already become extinct'. In recent times, especially in a multilingual nation like Nigeria, the imposition of the English language due to colonization has posed real threat to the survival of our indigenous languages; the worse hit, being the minority ones. Enclave languages, such as Defaka and Nkọrọọ fall within the class of endangered languages; Defaka being in a worse state than Nkọrọọ. The indigenes of Nkọrọọ are bilingual. Although the bilingual nature of the people is lope sided; only the Defaka are bilingual.

The functional domain of Defaka, has over the years reduced from being used in a healthy traditional society, to use within the Defaka ward in Nkọrọọ and its fishing settlements, to domestic and private use inside the family, to intimate use for solidarity, secrecy and religious purposes. (Jenewari 1983). Defaka is presently considered to be a minority language, labeled socially and economically useless. It suffers hostility and relegation both from the youths of Defaka origin and the Nkọrọọ as a whole. Young adults of Defaka origin whose parents did not transmit the language to, make jest of the language when it is spoken, while the Nkọrọọ consider the language as a lower class language. The stigmatization of Defaka by the Nkoroo has resulted in heavy language shift which has reduced the functional domain of Defaka to use within the Defaka ward in Nkọrọọ. Defaka and Kirika (Nkoro) are predominantly fishermen. Primarily, the Defaka engage in similar economic pursuits as the Kirika. They trade in such sea products as crayfish, periwinkles, crabs, oysters and several kinds of fishes. They engage in basket weaving, net making, thatch making, petty trading and subsistent farming. Trading activities are carried out with their surrounding neighbours-the Andoni, Ogoni and Opobo people.

1.0.Preamble

A negative clause is one which asserts that some event, situation, or state of affairs does not hold. (Payne 1997). We shall discuss negation in Defaka, under two broad strategies: clausal and constituent negation. Clausal negation is that employed in languages to negate an entire proposition, while constituent negation is associated with particular constituents of the clause. (Ikoro 1996). In Defaka, the subject, the verb or any other nominal element within the predicate phrase may be negated. If the subject is negated, it may or may not be in focus. However, negation of the predicate phrase or elements within the predicate phrase, always occur in cleft construction.

Clausal negation may entail negation of existence or negation of fact. In the former, a negative adverb **jáilè** ‘not there’ which also functions as a negative quantifier in some nominal constructions occurs, while in the latter, the basic marker of negation is the negative clitic **=re**. Other markers of negation which may occur in clausal or constituent negation are, lexical items expressing such notions as refusal, etc., modal auxiliary verbs with inherent negative connotations.

1.1 Clausal Negation

Clausal negation is marked with a clause-level clitic, **=re** attached to the verb, playing a major role. The clitic does not occur at all in negation of existence, only the negative adverb does. Compare (1a) and (b).

- 1a) ì jáilè dzíkà=tè
 1sg NEGA house =LOC

‘I am not at home’

- b) í à ééńáà éè=rè
1sg DEF food eat =NEG
‘I did not eat the food’

Two strategies are employed in clausal negation. Negation of existence hosts the negative adverbial **jáilè** ‘not there’. **jáile** appears to be a formative from a combination of **jáà** ‘thing’ and **ilè** ‘place’. This morpheme is usually the sole negator in a clause where it occurs.

- 2a) ì jáilè dzíkà=tè
1sg NEGA house =LOC
‘I am not at home’
- b) á jáile à tèè ?úú=tè
3sgf NEGA DEF playground =LOC
‘She is not at the playground’
- c) ní jáilè nùmà dòm=tè
3pl NEGA that place =LOC
‘They are not around or there’

In negation of fact, the clitic negative marker =re attaches directly to the verb, knocking off every other tense aspect marker. The tone of the last syllable of the verb to which the negative marker cliticizes is almost always low, especially when the clause has an object. Some verbs with inherent high tones, however, do not follow the rule

In declarative affirmative sentences, the last tone of the verb to which the factitive marker is attached is almost always high, as the examples in (3) show.

- 3a) ì à ééńáà éé-mà
1sg DEF food eat-FACT
‘I ate the food’
- b) á à máńgòrò kání-mà
3sg DEF mango pluck-FACT
‘She plucked the mango’
- c) wá à átákì èwé-mà

1pl DEF money steal-FACT
'We stole the money'

In the negative forms in (4) below, however, the last tone of the verb to which the negative marker cliticizes is almost always low, as against the final high tones of the verbs in the factitive affirmative in (3). This can be considered as an additional marker of negation, but this is not a consistent pattern, as we observe in (4d and e).

- 4a) ì à ééńáà éè=rè
 1sg DEF food eat =NEG
 'I did not eat the food'
- b) á à máńgòrò káni=rè
 3sgf DEF mango pluck=NEG
 'She did not pluck the mango'
- c) wá à átáki éwè=rè
 1pl DEF money steal =NEG
 'We did not steal the money'
- d) á džíkà òbìò=tè sékí=!ré
 3sgf house inside =LOC dance =NEG
 'she did not dance in the house'
- e) wá à ídò íjá=!ré
 1pl DEF farm go =NEG
 'We did not go to the farm'

Progression and futurity are expressed in the same way in negative constructions in Defaka. The marked feature here is the occurrence of the low toned future tense marker **kà** which occurs before the negative clitic. Verb stem tones take the form for the future tense, which characteristically has the last tone of the verb low, except a few exceptions with inherent final high tones, like the verb **íjá** 'go' as in (5a)

- 5a) ì à ídò íjá-kà=rè
 1sg DEF farm go-FUT=NEG
 'I am not going to the farm'
- b) í džíkà kárámà-kà=rè

2sg house leave-FUT=NEG
 ‘You are not leaving the house’

- c) wá ééɲáà éè-kà=rè
 1pl food eat-FUT=NEG
 ‘We will not eat food’

The negative habitual aspect distinguishes the forms with an object NP and those without an object NP, by means of high-low tones in the former and high tones in the later. In the affirmative however, as in (6), the reverse is the case. The forms with an object NP bear high tones while the forms without an object NP bear low tones.

Affirmative

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 6) -obj NP | + obj NP |
| ò lèlèlèlè-mà | ò jáà lélélélé-mà |
| 3sgm sell sell-FACT | 3sgm something sell sell-FACT |
| ‘He sells or used to sell’ | ‘He used to sell things’ |
| b) à tùàtùà-mà | á jáà túátúá-mà |
| 3sgf cook cook-FACT | 3sgf something cook cook-FACT |
| ‘She often cooks’ | ‘She often cooks something’ |

Negative

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 7) –object NP | + objectNP |
| wá báábáá=!ré | wá sèisèɲáà báábàà=rè |
| 1pl kill kill =NEG | 1pl snake kill kill =NEG |
| ‘We don’t normally kill’ | ‘We don’t normally kill snakes’ |
| ní ísósó=!re | ní dzíkà ísòsò=rè |
| 3pl come come =NEG | 3pl house come come |
| ‘They don’t normally come’ | ‘They don’t normally come home’ |

The tonal pattern of the –object NP negative form is emphatic, while the + object NP form is not emphatic. This raised intonation pattern is also observed in the negation of some noun phrases, especially with the 1st person singular pronoun. See Essien, (2013), for a detailed discussion on the tonal pattern of the habitual aspect.

1.1.2 The Unfulfilled Negative

The unfulfilled negative form expresses an action that has not yet been carried out. The clitic negative marker =**re** occurs alongside the low toned unfulfilled negative marker **kòm**, which usually occurs as a free morpheme clause finally. The modal auxiliary verb **m̀bè** ‘be able’ may optionally occur.

- 8a) á à ómgbìṅáà gbíì=rè kòm á m̀bè à ómgbìṅáà gbíì=rè kòm
 3sgf DEF dress sow =NEG yet 3sgf MOD DEF dress sow =NEG yet
 ‘she has not yet sowed the dress’ ‘She has not yet been able to sow the dress’
- b) ní ísò ílàà=rè kòm ní m̀bè ísò ílàà=rè kòm
 3pl come reach =NEG yet 3pl MOD come reach =NEG yet
 ‘They have not arrived yet’ ‘They have not been able to come yet’

1.1.3 The Negative Unfulfilled Future

The negative unfulfilled future occurs only in conditional clauses. The subordinate clause hosts the verbs **múmá** ‘finish’ and **sò** the desiderative, and the modal auxiliary verb **m̀béké** as the case may be.

- 9a) í sò jáà súkù múmá-mà kéidèi í sò éé-mà m̀bè ílàà=rè kòm
 2sg DES thing wash finish-FACT time 1sg DES eat-FACT MOD reach =NEG yet
 ‘I would not have eaten, by the time you would have finished washing’
- b) í m̀béké ísò-kà í tùà múmá=!rè kòm mà kàà
 2sg MOD come-FUT 1sg cook finish =NEG yet that manner
 ‘I would not have finished cooking but you can come still’.

1.1.4 Negating Complex Sentences

There are no special strategies for negating serial verb constructions and consecutive constructions. The entire construction is negated only once.

- 10a) kírí à ògĩõ tà ísò nìni
 NEG DEF Knife SER come NEG (imperative)
 ‘Don’t bring the knife’ [lit, Don’t take knife and come]
- b) àmàṅà átákí tà wíé á ámà=rè
 PN money SER keep 3sgf give =NEG
 ‘Amanya did not keep money for her’ [lit Amanya did not take money and keep for her]
- c) tàbìòmbé kúmáṅáà sónó òrì tàá ámà=rè

PN wrapper buy his wife give =NEG
'Tabiombe did not buy wrapper for his wife'

Negation is marked only once in consecutive constructions as well. The consecutive construction has a verbal particle **ke** which functions as a connective. **ke** is however, omitted if there is a different subject for the consecutive as in (11c)

- 11a) ò ì èvè kè òjíè=rè
3sgm 1sg hit CONN run =NEG
'He did not hit me and ran'
- b) á dzíkà ìjá kè jáà éè=rè
3sgf house go CONN thing eat =NEG
'She did not go home and ate'
- c) ì òkùnà ééjààn éè=rè bómà àkidi éé-mà
1sg fowl food eat =NEG PN beans eat-FACT
'I did not eat rice, while Boma ate beans.'

In coordinate sentences and embedded clauses as in (12d), negation may occur once or twice depending on the kind of construction.

- 12a) ì éé-kà=rè ì èdzè-kà=rè
1sg eat-FUT=NEG 1sg die-FUT=NEG
'I will not eat and I will not die'
- b) ì fàà-kà ì kùtálá kée -kà=rè mà kàà góò kè
1sg say-FUT 1sg lie cut-FUT=NEG that manner reason COMP
'I will say it because I will not tell a lie'
- c) ì jáà túà-kà=rè í ísò=rè nè
1sg thing cook-FUT=NEG 1sg come =NEG COND
'I will not cook until you come. [lit I will not cook if you don't come]
- d) bómà dzírí-mà ìbòbái á éè=rè
PN know-FACT PN 3sgf se =NEG
'Boma knows that Ibobai did not see her'

2. Constituent Negation

2.1 Negating Sentences with predicate nominals

No special strategies are employed in the negation of sentences with predicate nominals. Sentences with predicate nominals typically express a defining or identification relationship. The subject of the sentence is usually a noun or a pronoun or sometimes an infinitive phrase, while the complement could be a noun, an adjective, a post positional phrase or a focus construction. There are no morphologically overt copulative verbs in Defaka. What appears like copulative verbs are the toneless subject focus marker, **kə**, and the clitic auxiliary verb, **=ri**. The former is clearly not a verb, but a subject focus marker as shown in (13). **=ri** on the hand, is an auxiliary verb which performs aspectual functions in combination with the factitive and perfective suffixes, to mark present progressive and present perfect aspects respectively. **=ri**, by virtue of its syntactic and semantic features could be considered to be functioning as a copulative when it occurs in copular sentences with post positional phrase complements, as in (14). Other forms of copular constructions are expressed by juxtaposition as shown in (15).

13a) ò=kò tàbiòmbé
3sgm =FOC PN
'He is Tabiombe'

b) ò=kò tàbiòmbé=!ré
3sgm=FOC PN =NEG
'He is not Tabiombe'

14a) à ɓáí=!rí kàsi tòò=tè déi-mà
DEF man =PROG chair top =LOC stand-FACT
'The man is standing on the chair'

b) à ɓáí=!rí kàsi tòò=tè déi=rè
DEF man =PROG mat top =LOC sleep =NEG
'The man is not sleeping on the mat'

15a) ì ómgbɪnàà gbíí ɓáí=!ré
1sg dress sew man =NEG
'I am not a tailor'

b) ò ìbò=rè kòm
3sgm big =NEG yet
'He is not big yet'

- c) ò mbè ìbò=rè kòm
 3sg MOD big =NEG yet
 ‘He has not become big yet’

2.2 Imperatives

The negative imperative hosts two morphemes **kírí** and **nìni**. **nìni** is obligatory while **kírí** is optional. **kírí** is basically a negative intensifier. The tones of the negative imperative morphemes are invariant. To give a counter command to an action that had begun or completed prior to the moment of speaking, a free morpheme **ḃà** immediately follows **kírí** as in (16c and d)

- 16a) kírí kètè òni
 IMPN laugh IMPN
 ‘Don’t laugh’

- b) ì fàà á áamá-mà á ísò òni
 1sg say 3sgf give-FACT 3sgf come IMPN
 ‘I told her that she should not come’

- c) í fàà á áamá-mà á kírí ḃá áruá tùà òni
 1sg say 3sgf give-FACT 3sgf IMPN again soup cook IMPN
 ‘I told her not to cook soup again’

- d) kírí ḃá jàki ééḃáà éè òni
 IMPN again another food eat IMPN
 ‘Don’t eat another food again’

2.3 Negative Questions

Two basic types of questions are commonly negated. Yes-no questions and echo questions. A third type could be termed emphatic.

A yes-no question refers to an interrogative clause for which the expected answer is either “yes” or “no”. (Kari,2004). The characteristic tonal pattern of a negative sentence in Defaka is a falling tone on the last syllable of the verb to which the negation marker is attached, except in a few cases where a verb has an inherent final high tone. This pattern does not change in yes-no questions as well. A verb with a final high tone spreads its high tone through the last syllables of the utterance, giving the utterance a final raised intonation pattern, as in (17a and b), while elsewhere, verb stems take on the characteristic falling tone of negative sentences, but not without global raising through the entire utterance.

- 17a) àmàjà òm òbìò èkèkè́=!ré
 PN body inside equal NEG
 ‘Is Amanyà not well?’
- b) àmàjà m̀bè à kía ijá=!ré kóm
 PN not able DEF market go =NEG yet
 ‘Has Amanyà not gone to the market yet?’
- c) í m̀bè à áruá túà=rè kòm ☑
 2sg not able DEF soup cook =NEG yet
 ‘You have not yet cooked the soup?’
- d) òm̀òm̀ò=tè á m̀bè à òbójà jáà=rè kòm ☑
 now =LOC 3sgf not able DEF thatch do =NEG yet
 ‘So she still has not yet done the thatch?’

Echo questions are questions that are asked to seek clarification on a command or assertion made by a previous speaker. They are expressed with the negative imperative marker.

- 18a) ì kírí d̀zírí d̀zíkà ijá nini ☑
 1sg IMPN book house go IMPN
 ‘Shouldn’t I go to school?’
- b) á kírí bá ì ómgbìjà gbĩ̀-ka=rè ☑
 3sgf IMPN again 1sg dress sew-FUT=NEG
 ‘Is she not going to sew my dress again?’
- c) á bá lúà óó nini ☑
 3sgf again cry cry IMPN
 ‘Should she not cry again?’

The negative emphatic question is inherently a cleft construction. It expresses concern over an unpleasant situation which directly or indirectly affects the speaker. One significant feature of this question type is the fact that, the negative morpheme immediately follows the subject of the sentence and bears a high tone if the tone of the subject is low and a down-stepped high tone if the tone of the subject is high. It does not behave like typical clitics in the language. (note that clitics in Defaka bear low tones when they follow a host with a final low tone, and a

down-stepped high tone, when they follow a host with a final high tone). This raised intonation pattern expresses emphasis.

- 19a) ì èsè ísò-mà ì=ré ísò à áruá túa-mà kè
 1sg see come-FACT REL 1sg NEG come DEF soup cook-FACT COMP
 ‘I hope that, I am not the one to cook the soup?’
- b) ì èsè ísò-mà bòmá=!ré à bòm pìni kè
 1sg see come-FACT REL PN NEG DEF child flog COMP
 ‘I hope that, Boma is not the one that beat the child?’

2.4 Focus and Negation

2.4.1 Negative Argument Focus

There are no special strategies used for negative focus construction. The markers of negation are the same as in other negative constructions. Verb stem tones are not altered. The subject NP can be a noun or a pronoun.

- 20a) ì=ré jáà kè
 1sg NEG REL do COMP
 ‘It is not I who did it’
- b) á=!kó m̀birà jáà l̀l̀è=rè –mà kè
 3sgf =SFOC REL refused thing sell =NEG-FACT COMP
 ‘SHE is the one who has refused to trade’
- c) bòmá=!kó m̀bè fàà l̀l̀è-ma=rè k̀m
 PN =SFOC REL MOD say out-FACT =NEG yet
 ‘It is BOMA who has not been able to speak out yet’
- d) í=!kó íj́á-kà=rè –mà kè
 2sg =SFOC REL go-FUT =NEG-FACT COMP
 ‘It is YOU who should not go’

Non- subject argument focus hosts the non-subject focus marker òdò. The focused nominal is preposed to sentence initial position immediately followed by the focus marker.

- 21a) bòmá b̀ùòéj́nàà íj́á-kà=rè
 PN fishing go-FUT=NEG
 ‘Boma is not going fishing’

ɓùòééjàà òndò ɓòmá ijá-kà=rè-ma kè
 fishing NSFOC REL PN go-FUT=NEG-FACT COMP
 ‘It is FISHING that Boma is not going to’

b) tàbiòmbé òóóìjà jàà-kà=rè
 PN thatch do-FUT=NEG
 ‘Tabiombe is not making thatch’

òóóìjà òndò tàbiòmbé jàà-kà=ré kè
 thatch NSFOC REL PN do =NEG COMP
 ‘It is THATCH that Tabiombe is not making’

2.4.2 Negative predicate focusing.

In negative predicate focusing, as in negative argument focusing, the verb is preposed to sentence initial position. The negative predicate focus sentence is inherently cleftivized.

22a) jáà gbĩ̀=̀rè á jáà jáà kè
 thing sew =NEG REL 3sgf do do COMP
 ‘It is NOT SEWING that she does’

b) sékí=!ré á jáà jáà kè
 dance =NEG REL 3sgf do do COMP
 ‘It is NOT DANCING that she does’

Conclusion

The above data and discussion clearly reveal that negation in Defaka is basically morphological with tone playing a subordinate role. As noted by Payne (1997) and Shopen (1985), languages that exhibit morphological negation, associate the negative morpheme with the verb. This is the case with Defaka. The negative morpheme is considered a clitic due to its mobile nature and its tonal behavior, which is in consonance with the tonal behaviour of clitics in the language.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 20:3 March 2020

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS and CONVENTIONS

!	= phonetic representation of downstep
-	= morpheme break
=	= clitic break
↗	= global raise
1sg	= first person singular pronoun
2sg	= second person singular pronoun
3sgf	= third person singular feminine pronoun
3sgm	= third person singular masculine pronoun
3nt	= third person neuter pronoun
1pl	= first person plural pronoun
2pl	= second person plural pronoun
3pl	= third person plural pronoun
FACT	= factitive
NEG	= negative
DEF	= definite
LOC	= locative
PN	=personal name

FUT	= future
PF	= perfective
DES	= desiderative
PROG	=progressive
PRE	= present
REL	= relative
SER	=serializer
MOD	= modal auxiliary verb
COMPL	= complimentizer
NEGA	= negative adverb
SFOC	= subject focus marker
NSFOC	= non-subject focus marker