NEGATION IN MOKPE AND TWO RELATED COASTAL BANTU LANGUAGES OF CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT Negation has recently constituted a fascinating area of study both in descriptive and theoretical linguistics because of the varying positions that the negative morpheme occupies in the world's languages and the need to determine the position of this morpheme at Deep Structure. In addition, while some languages employ a single negative morpheme ubiquitously, some others employ more than three morphemes, with the use of many of the morphemes predicated on the tense of the verb. This paper investigates the structure of negative constructions in Mokpe and two related coastal Bantu languages of Cameroon. Although Mokpe and these other languages employ two or more negative morphemes, these morphemes are not free variants; the use of any of them is constrained by the tense/aspect of the verb under consideration. A "Principles and Parameters Theory" treatment of negation in Mokpe is offered.

Key Words: Negation, Principles and parameters theory, Morphemes, Tense, Aspect, Mokpe, Bantu.

INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates the structure of negation in Mokpe and two related coastal Bantu languages of Cameroon. According to Crystal (1993: 231), negation is a process or construction in grammatical and semantic analysis which typically expresses the contradiction of a sentence's meaning. The expression of negation in the world's languages may entail either the addition of a free morpheme (as *not* in English, *ne…pas* in French, *sɨ́* in Bafut, etc.) or a bound morpheme (as *-Vghi* in Efik) to a proposition or a verb, with the intention of reversing the truth-value of that proposition. As Trask (1993: 179) observed, the expression of negation varies widely among languages.

Research within Chomsky's generative grammar paradigm aims to define the nature of the language faculty comprehensively and explicitly. According to Crystal (2000: 54) the reason for this is to determine the range of possibilities which the human brain allows when it comes to the construction of languages. The assumption here is that to reach this goal it is necessary to study all the world's languages in order to appreciate the scope of the human linguistic options.

In many Bantu languages, the negation morpheme usually stands out clearly and coexists with other functional categories including tense, aspect and mood

(Chumbow & Tamanji, 1994). Sometimes, the form of the morpheme varies, depending on the tense of the construction in which it is found, and therefore it is possible for one to identify the negation morphemes and match them with the various tenses. This makes the occurrence of negation morphemes in such languages predictable. Mokpe, however, presents a unique situation whereby, given the interaction between phonological and morpho-syntactic processes the negation morpheme replaces all the functional categories in the sentence, especially tense. This interaction between phonology and morpho-syntax complicates the investigation as one finds it fairly difficult to isolate the negation morphemes. One has the impression that there are many of these morphemes whose distribution is not predictable and they are (maybe) in complementary distribution. The educated guess is that Mokpe makes use of four negation morphemes which are translated as the negation morpheme *not* in English.

We examine this construction in this paper in a bid to identify two issues, namely:

(a) The various negative markers.
(b) The syntactic distribution of these morphemes.

We demonstrate that the seemingly many morphemes that mark negation in Mokpe are analysed into only two, not five morphemes; and that the other three are a result of the interaction between phonology and morpho-syntax. Because these morphemes replace tense morphemes in Mokpe, we make comparative illustration of Mokpe with two other closely related languages to show the marked contrast between the structure and distribution of negative morphemes in Mokpe and the related languages of Nfaw and Oroko.

The "split-infl" (Split Inflection) hypothesis of Pollock (1989), which has become generally accepted in the Principles and Parameters Theory (PPT), assumes that adverbs and the negation morphemes are generated at different positions in the Deep (D-) Structure. Pollock's proposals are that the verb and its inflections should be treated as distinct heads at the deep structure and that the verb may raise to adjoin to its inflection prior to surface structure. This hypothesis gains credence when we consider Bantu languages like Mokpe wherein tense, aspect, mood are marked as separate morphemes both at deep and surface structure. It also assumes that these elements do not move from one syntactic position to another, as their surface syntactic representation would seem to indicate. This hypothesis generated much research within this framework seeking to determine clause structure. In the case of Mokpe where the negative morpheme replaces the other functional morphemes in the negative construction, it will be interesting to see how this will be accounted for within the split-infl hypothesis. The results attained from our investigation will enhance the literature of negation in the world's languages, and contribute to the debate on the position of the negation morpheme in the D-Structure.

The paper is constructed as follows: The first section illustrates the structure of negation in Mokpe, determining the various negative morphemes in the language and their distribution. The second section briefly compares these morphemes and their distribution with those of two other closely related languages

of Nfaw and Oroko. The third section suggests a PPT treatment of negation in Mokpe.

NEGATION IN MOKPE

I. Linguistic Classification

Mokpe is a coastal Bantu language of Cameroon spoken by about 32,200 people (Grimes, 2002). According to Guthrie's (1971) numerical classification, it is A22. In *Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun*, it is in Zone 6 and coded as 621. Mokpe has a complex array of varieties because the language is situated in an economically vibrant area which has attracted so many non-indigenes to settle in the land. For more on the varieties of the language, see Moka (1999).

For the discussions in this paper, it will be necessary for us to identify some of the foundational essentials about the structure of the language, beginning with the phonology.

II. Phonology:Vowel Deletion and Glide Formation

In Mokpe, there is a constraint on contiguous syllabic peaks across morpheme boundaries. When morphological and syntactic processes result in the juxtaposition of two syllabic peaks, Mokpe, as with many other Bantu languages, employs a number of mechanisms to avoid ungrammaticality. Two of such mechanisms are in order here: vowel deletion and glide insertion/formation. Consider the data in (1) below for illustration:

(1)   a.   /ìmá + èlèlà/ → [ìmêlèlà]   "which duck?"
(1)   b.   /ìmá + ìkúlɛ̀/ → [ìmîkúlɛ̀]   "which house?"

From these data one notices that when the first vowel here is /a/ it deletes. However, when the first of two vowels is a round vowel as in (2a) or a high front unrounded vowel as in (2b), that vowel completely devocalises. This is shown in (2) below.

(2)   a.   /mó + ɛ́mɛ̀/   → [ŋmwɛ́mɛ̀]   "bat"
             /mó + íbɛ̀/   → [ŋmwíbɛ̀]   "thief"

(2)   b.   /lì + ɛ́ndɛ̀/ → [ljɛ̌ndɛ́]   "to go"
             /lì + ɔ̌kɔ̀/   → [ljɔ̌kɔ̀]   "to wash"

III. Morphology

Mokpe is a typical Bantu language with the following verb structure: STEM = ROOT+ (EXTENSIONS) + FINAL VOWEL (FV).

The final vowel (FV) is /a/ like in many typical Bantu languages. But as far as Mokpe is concerned, sometimes vowel deletion or vowel harmony may lead to the replacement of the final /a/ in certain tenses. For this reason, Lyonga (2002) suggested that "verbs in Mokpe can be classified into three groups…. That is, they belong to the -a, -ɛ, and -ɔ groups." But as we will demonstrate in the data below, the -ɛ, and -ɔ groups are fairly predictable.

(3)   a. *lìtútá*   "to sweep"   (3) b. *ljěndé*   "to go"
         lìwówà   "to take"   *lìtémè*   "to stand"
         lìβándʒá   "to jump"   *lìwókɔ̀*   "to dress"
         lìlá   "to eat"   *lìkókɔ̀*   "to calculate"
         lìwáŋgá   "to run"   *ljǒkɔ̀*   "to wash"
         lìzráká   "to dance"

Most of the verbs in (3a) end with the /a/ FV. In (3b), the verbs either end in /ɛ/ or /ɔ/. This is because, as it is seen, the root vowel is also either /ɛ/ or /ɔ/ respectively. Generally in this language, whenever the root vowel is a mid low back lax vowel, the FV /a/ is obliged to harmonise with it.

With this brief background information, let us now turn to the discussion of Mokpe negation.

IV. Mokpe Negation Morphemes

Negation in Mokpe is intricately related to tense. Because of this, we will discuss negation *vis à vis* tense.

To begin with, consider the following data.[1]

(4) a. *à wèlì lěmbà.*   (4) b. *à zrê ndʒé lěmbà.*
       he be   sing   he NEG be   sing
       "He is   singing."   "He is   not singing."

(5) a. *à mó wà.*   (5) b. *à zró wì.*
       he P₁ speak   he NEG speak
       "He has just spoken."   "He has not just spoken."

(6) a. *à má tút è ndáwɔ̀.*   (6) b. *à zrí tút è ndáwo.*
       he P₂ sweep the house   he NEG sweep the house
       "He swept the house."   "He did not sweep the house."

(7) a. *à wàné jâ.*   (7) b. *à zrá wǎnè.*
       he carry   he NEG carry
       "He carried."   "He did not carry."

The data in (4-7) suggest a number of verifiable issues:
(i) The negative morpheme seems to always replace the tense morpheme.

(ii) There seem to be four different morphemes for negation in this language namely, *zre*, *zro*, *zri* and *zra.*

(iii) Sometimes, the negative morpheme influences the verb structure, as in (4).

In the discussion that follows, we seek to investigate these issues and then try to determine what the real morphemes are which mark negation in this language.

(8) a.

Verb Stem	Pres. Prog. Positive	Present Prog. Negative		Gloss
ówà	*à wélìlŏwà*	*à zró*	*wì*	"speak"
éjà	*à wélìlèjà*	*à zré*	*jâ*	"cry"
ókɔ̂	*à wélìlŏkɔ̀*	*à zró*	*kɔ́*	"wash"
èmbâ	*à wélìlĕmbà*	*à zré*	*mbá*	"sing"
òkâ	*à wélìlŏkà*	*à zró*	*kà*	"play"

From the data in (8a), one will realise that the vowel of the negative morpheme is identical with the vowel of the vowel-initial verb root. When the negative morpheme is collocated with verbs with initial root consonants, the situation is different.

(8) b.

Verb Stem	Pres. Prog. Positive	Present Prog. Negative		Gloss
βándʒá	*à wélìlì βándʒá*	*à zrá*	*βándʒá*	"jump"
lâ	*à wélìlì lâ*	*à zrá*	*lá*	"eat"
wángâ	*à wélìlì wàngá*	*à zrá*	*wángá*	"run"
nángá	*à wélìlì nàngá*	*à zrá*	*nàngá*	"sleep"
zrá	*à wélìlì zrá*	*à zrá*	*zrî*	"dance"

(8) c.

Verb Stem	Pres. Prog. Positive	Present Prog. Negative		Gloss
íkâ	*à wélìlĭkâ*	*à zrí*	*ká*	"put"
ìβɛ̂	*à wélìlìβɛ̂*	*à zrî*	*βɛ̂*	"cook"
àgbâ	*à wélìlàgbâ*	*à zrâ*	*gbá*	"climb"
àndâ	*à wélìlàndâ*	*à zrâ*	*ndâ*	"buy"

The data in (8b) now show the negative morpheme with a single vowel /a/. This leads us to conclude that the vowel of the negative morpheme was deleted in (8a) by the vowel deletion rule discussed earlier. Notice that the forms in the positive present progressive surface in (8b) with an additional /i/ which was missing in (8a). This is more evidence of V_1 deletion.

The data in (8c) show /i/-initial and /a/-initial vowel verbs. These verbs behave as those in (8a) where the negative marker loses its vowel to the V_1 deletion rule while retaining the stem initial vowel.

Given this discussion and given the fact that the other varieties of the nega-
tive morpheme except /zri/ and /zra/ are in complementary distribution and are
predictable, we conclude that all but these two are not negative morphemes,
because the others are derivable by a phonological rule. The data in (8c) may
tempt one to conclude that /zri/ is also predictable, but when one considers the
data in (6b), it will be clear that /zri/ is not as predictable as the other variants.

This said we are left only with /zra/ and /zri/ as possibilities of negative
morphemes in Mokpe. The question to answer next is when do we use /zra/
and when do we use /zri/? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine
their behaviour with other functional categories.

Lyonga (2002) provided data which suggest that /zra/ and /zri/ are used with
different tenses; but as we will realise in this paper, it is more a question of
aspect rather than tense. In this regard, we examine the two morphemes in the
different tenses in Mokpe.

IV. An overview of tenses in Mokpe

Lyonga (2002) identified 10 tenses for Mokpe. However, we note that these
tenses are not all morphologically marked. In our study, we consider that there
are only three tenses in the language: the present, future and past tenses. These
are briefly illustrated below.

1. The present tense
This tense is not marked by any morpheme. The data in (9) illustrate this:

(9) a. *nà tút è ndáwò.*   (9) b. *nà wótò kàβà.*
     I   sweep he house   I   wear   dress
     "I   sweep the house (everyday)."   "I   wear a dress (everyday)."

2. The past tense
The past tense is marked in Mokpe in two ways. It can either be marked by
the suffixation of /i/ to the verb root, as shown in (10a) and (11a) or by using
the morpheme /má/ placed before the verb (as shown in 10b and 11b).

(10) a. *nà tút ì.*   (10) b. *nà má tútà.*
       I   sweep TNS   I   TNS sweep
       "I   swept."   "I   swept."

(11) a. *nà wót ì.*   (11) b. *nà má wótò.*
       I   wear TNS   I   TNS wear
       "I   wore."   "I   wore."

It should be noted that once the morpheme /ma/ is used, the suffix /-i/ is no
longer needed. It is not actually clear when to use which of these past tenses.
Tests with native speakers suggest that the two can be used interchangeably
with no meaning effect. However, the form with the suffix /-i/ is more appro-

priate in narrating past events that occurred in a sequence.

Besides these two past tenses, it is possible to express an action which took place in the distant past by the use of the morpheme *eja/ejai*. This is succinctly illustrated in (12),

(12) a. *à ɓándʒéjâ.*   (12) b. *à wáŋgéjâ.*
      he jump   he run
      "He jumped (long ago)."   "He ran (long ago)."

Apart from these morphologically marked tenses, other actions that took place at other times (for example, distant past) are expressed using an adverb of time. However as it will be seen below, the clitic *oo* is used in expressing future events. It is hardly used by native speakers.

With this brief information on tenses, we now turn to the initial question: when do we use /zri/ and when do we use /zra/? Consider the data below:

(13) a. Present tense- third person singular

Pres. Prog. Positive	Present Prog. Negative	Gloss
à wélìlí ɓándʒà	*à zrá ɓándʒá*	"jump"
à wélìlì lâ	*à zrá lá*	"eat"
à wélìlì wǎŋgá	*à zrá wáŋgá*	"Run"

(13) b. Present perfect-third person singular

Pres. Perf. Positive	Present Perf. Negative	Gloss
á má ɓāndʒà	*à zrí ɓándʒí*	"jump"
á mā lâ	*à zrí lélí*	"eat"
á mā wǎŋgá	*à zrí wáŋgí*	"run"

Notice that the perfective aspect in these data is marked with the high tone on the subject marker /a/, compare with the subject marker in (13c) below where /ma/ is used to signal the time of the event-past,

(13) c. Simple past tense

Simple Past Positve	Simple Past Negative	Gloss
à mà ɓándʒá	*à zrá ɓándʒí*	"jump"
à mà lâ	*à zrá lě:jì*	"eat"
à mà wǎŋgá	*à zrá wǎŋgì*	"run"

(13) d. Past perfective

Past Perfective Pos.	Past Perfective Negative	Gloss
à mà ɓándʒá	*à zrí ɓándʒè*	"jump"
à mà lâ	*à zrí lě:jè*	"eat"
à mà wǎŋgá	*à zrí wǎŋgè*	"run"

An examination of the data in (13) reveals that it is possible to use /zra/ in both the present and past tenses. However, where the construction is rendered in the perfective mood, the negation morpheme changes to /zri/. This leads us to conclude that the /i/ of this morpheme must be an independent morpheme for perfective. This said, we conclude, contrary to Lyonga (2002), that the difference between /zra/ and /zri/ is motivated by aspectual factors and not tense.

This leads us to another assumption that Mokpe makes use of only one negative morpheme, which is /zra/, and that the perfective morpheme is /i/; /zri/ is therefore a derivative of /zra/ and the aspectual marker /i/. That is, when /zra/ and /i/ are collocated, vowel deletion (See II) takes place.

3. The distant future tense

Generally, there is no future tense marker in the language. However there are certain contexts in which an action can be expressed with the clitic oo, and this is possible only when the action is in the future. Our investigation of the usage of this morpheme does not give us any clear picture of when it is used. The only sure observation that we can make about it is that it is related to some future activity. Lyonga (2002: 69)[2] referred to this tense as the distant future and observed that it "…expresses actions of the future with no definite time. It is difficult to determine when the action could take place." The data in (14) illustrate this tense and its relation to the negation marker.

(14) a. *ǹdʒɔ̀kɛ̀ à óó wɔ́tɔ̀* (14) b. *ǹdʒɔ̀kɛ̀ à zrá óó wɔ́tɔ̀*
     Njoke SM TM dress   Njoke SM NEG TM dress
     "Njoke will put on his dress."   "Njoke will not put on his dress."

Notice here that interestingly the negation marker does not replace the tense marker as it does with the other cases already discussed above.

V. Negation Effects on the Verb

An examination of the data in (13) reveals that an introduction of the negation morpheme affects the verb. The verbs in (13b) and (13c) surface with a final /i/, while that in (13d) surfaces with /e/, (13a), surfaces with the traditional /a/ final vowel (FV). This means that whether /zra/ or /zri/ is used, the final vowel of the verb must be replaced.

Recall our discussion of IV. 2 and the data in (10-11) where we said that it is possible for the past tense to either be /i/ suffixed to the verb or /ma/ placed before the verb. This suggests that the two morphemes are actually the underlying morphemes for the past tense in Mokpe, but that they are complementary. In other words whenever we use /ma/, we cannot use the suffix /i/ and vice versa. However, since the negative morpheme replaces all the other functional categories in the negative construction (see VI), it is obligatory for the /i/ suffix to be used. This therefore explains why the introduction of the negation marker in the past tense constructions results in the suffixation of /i/ to the

verb, replacing the final vowel. As to why the verbs in (13d) surface with /e/ is out of the scope of this paper. What should be pointed out here is that there is ample evidence to the effect that it is not part of the negative morpheme, because these verbs also take this final /e/ in some affirmative constructions.

VI. Relation between Negation and Other Functional Categories.

In Mokpe, the negation morpheme is mutually exclusive with other functional morphemes of tense, aspect and mood. Consider the data in (15), part of which was presented in (13).

(15) a. Tense
   /a/ is third person singular

Pres. Perf. Positive	Present Perf. Negative	Gloss
á má βāndʒà	*à zrí βándʒí*	"jump"
á mā lâ	*à zrí lelí*	"eat"
á mā wǎŋgá	*à zrí wángí*	"run"

(15) b. Aspect

nà mà ɸé lìtútà.	*nà zrí tútè.*
I TNS ASP sweep	I NEG sweep
"I had swept."	"I had not swept."

(15) c. *nà ɸé èjáí lìtútà.*[(3)]   *nà zrá tút êjáí.*
   I ASP TNS sweep   I NEG sweep TNS
   "I swept long ago."   "I did not sweep."

What we observe with these data is that whatever functional category occurs between the verb and the subject in the positive construction is either replaced or displaced by the negative marker in the negative construction. The question to be answered here is, given Pollock's split-infl hypothesis which assumes that each of these functional categories (tense, negation, aspect and mood, etc.) projects its own node, how will the negative phrase be analysed? This is a question that, we devote a later part of this paper to.

VII. Negation in Other Construction Types in Mokpe

Having examined negation in simple classical constructions in the previous sections, we examine the way negation is expressed in other kinds of constructions in Mokpe.

1. Quantifier negation
This refers to the negation of utterances expressing a notion of quantity. Unlike in English where the use of inherently negative quantifiers such as "nobody" bars the employment of a negative operator; Mokpe makes use of both the

negative quantifier and negative operator. This particular negative morpheme is however not determined by the kind of quantifier word used, but by aspect of the sentence. The data in (16) and (17) illustrate:

(16) a. *mòtò à mà ówà ŋgówà.* [4]
   person SM TS kill pig
  "Somebody killed a pig."

(16) b. *tó   mòtò à   zrá ówí ŋgówà.*
   NEG person SM NEG kill pig
  "Somebody did not kill a pig."

(17) a. *tò éjá é gbèéné ŋwéèlê.*
   nothing SM happen tomorrow
  "Nothing will happen tomorrow."

(17) b. *tò éjá é zrá gbèéné ŋwéèlê.*
   nothing SM NEG happen tomorrow
  "Something will not happen tomorrow."

The quantifier construction contains a negative particle /tò/ which is placed at the beginning of the sentence. The negative marker then comes in the normal position just before the verb. It will either assume the /zri/ or the /zra/ form, depending on the aspect of the sentence.

2. Existential negation

We refer here to the negation of the utterances which denote existence. Existence is expressed by the use of forms of the copula "be" such as /wéli/. When these forms are in the negative constructions, /wéli/. becomes /èndʒê/. This is illustrated in (18) and (19).

(18) a. *ò wéli mbòndʒì.*   (18) b. *ò   zré ndʒé mbòndʒì.*
   there be   flower   there NEG be flower
  "There is a flower."   "There is no flower."

(19) a. *à wélí ánù.*   (19) b. *à zrê ndʒé ánù.*
   ḥe be   here   he NEG be   here
  "He is here."   "He is not here."

Thus the same negative markers are maintained but the copula verb "be" changes to reflect negation.

3. Double negation

In Standard English, the use of more than one negative particle in an utterance is not acceptable and is associated with stigmatised varieties such as Black

American English. Mokpe licenses the use of more than one negative particle in a sentence. Consider below:

(20) a. *nà zrá lā tɔ̀ mòlélì.*
      I NEG eat NEG food
     "I will not eat any other food."

(20) b. *wì zró wí émá í zrá dʒà.*
     we NEG say that SM NEG come
    "We did not say that we would come."

(20) c. *tɔ̀ mòtɔ̀ à zrá líŋgànì tɔ̀ jómà.*
    NEG person SM NEG like   NEG thing
    "Nobody likes anything."

In the three sentences in (20), more than one negative particle is used. However, (20b) cannot be considered as a case of double negation, because the two particles negate separate predicates where /zro/ negates the matrix clause ("we did not say") while /zra/ negates the subordinate clause ("we will not come"). Different negative particles are used because of the constraint against contiguous peaks across morphemes. This explains why the /a/ of the first is deleted in favour of the root /o/.

In this section of the paper we have examined negation in Mokpe. Our treatment considers that the NEG morpheme changes with relation to the aspect of the verb in question. The following section examines, albeit cursorily, this phenomenon in related coastal Bantu languages.

NEGATION IN RELATED COASTAL BANTU

So far our examination of negation has been restricted to Mokpe. Here, it may be useful to look at related coastal Bantu languages of Cameroon which make use of multiple negation morphemes. Here we note especially Oroko and Nfaw. Oroko distinguishes the negation morphemes /ʃa/, /si/, and /ndza/, while Nfaw employs the morphemes /ʃɛ̌/, /awe/, /aʔ/, and /sa/. Unlike in Mokpe, the distribution of these morphemes seems to be basically determined by tense.

The following section therefore examines, negation in these languages.

I. The Present Tense

Utterances in the present tense are negated by the usage of /ʃa/ in Oroko and /ʃɛ/ in Nfaw as in (21) and (22). Note that the present tense is not marked in this language, at least segmentally.

(21) a. *mùkwèlè à kónókó.*   (Oroko)
    Mukwele SM sing
    "Mukwele is singing."

(21) b. *mùkwèlè à ʃá kónókó.*
    Mukwele SM NEG sing
    "Mukwele is not singing."

(22) a. *lò lù báfàláwá.*
    we have flowers
    "We have flowers."

(22) b. *lò ʃá lú báfàláwá.*
    we NEG have flowers
    "We do not have flowers."

As we observe, in (21b), the negative morpheme /ʃa/ is placed before the verb. Note that there is no segmental tense or aspect marker in (21). In (22), the positive sentence (22a) contains a copula verb "have". The result is that the negative morpheme is no longer placed directly before the verb as in (21b) but before the copula verb. The essential fact here is that the morpheme /ʃa/ is used to negate sentences in the present tense in this language.

Examine the data in (23) on negation in the present tense in Nfaw.

(23) a. *sí dí fā.*   (Nfaw)
    we are here
    "We are here."

(24) a. *sí ʃɛ̌ fā.*
    we NEG here
    "We are not here."

Notice from these Nfaw data that unlike in the Oroko data in (21) and (22), the copula verb here is completely replaced by the negative marker. Recall our discussion of the Mokpe data in Section 1 where the negative morpheme replaces all functional categories. Nfaw in this, is similar to Mokpe even if the replaced item here is not a functional category, but a whole copula verb. This in itself is interesting enough as we wonder how the phrase marker of this construction will surface with no verb. Will we call the whole sentence a NEGP or an IP? We discuss this in more detail in Section 3. Let us now examine how negation is formed in the other tenses in the language.

Mokpe shares much with the negative marker in Oroko and Nfaw. It is /ʃá/ in Oroko, /ʃɛ̌/ in Nfaw and /zra/ in Mokpe. Virtually it is the same morpheme. The difference lies in the phonotactics of the languages. More so, only the vowel is different in Nfaw, while it is the same in Mokpe and Oroko. On the other hand, the consonant is virtually the same in the three languages. In

Mokpe, sibilants are retroflexed so that /s/, /ʃ/, /z/, and /ʒ/ are either realised as /sr/ or /zr/. Nkwenti (2000: 30) illustrates this with the following data drawn from borrowed words in Mokpe.

(25)   English   Mokpe   Gloss
    i) *trauzez*   *tòzrízrì*   "trousers"
    ii) *pastə*   *pázrítò*   "pastor"
    iii) *skul*   *zrùkúlù*   "school"

This reveals that these three related languages actually share this negative marker in common.

II. The Past Tense

The past tense is morphologically marked by the morphemes /ma/ in both Oroko and Nfaw. The morpheme /si/ is used to negate utterances in Oroko while it is either the morphemes /awe/ or /aʔ/ which seem to be in free variation.[5] Consider the data below:

(26) a. *ǹdʒùmè à má sósó.*   (Oroko)
        Njume   SM P_1 speak
        "Njume has spoken."

(26) b. *ŋ̀dʒùmè à sí sósó.*
        Njume SM NEG speak
        "Njume has not spoken."

An examination of the Oroko data in (26) reveals that, /sí/ is used to negate sentences in the past tense. This negation morpheme is positioned before the verb and it replaces the tense morpheme. This morpheme is similar to the Mokpe perfective /zri/ discussed in section IV. 2. Notice that the sentence itself is in the perfective aspect as well. This might just turn out to be the same phenomenon that we discussed in Mokpe. Note also that the tense marker in this language is also /ma/ as in Mokpe (see IV. 2).

(27) a. *à má kú bèdzí.*   (Nfaw)
        he P_1 stop cry
        "He has stopped crying."

(27) b. *à má kú àwé bèdzí.*
        he P_1 stop NEG cry
        "He has not stopped crying."

(28) a. *èkókò à má kúnì.*
        Ekoko SM P_1 fail
        "Ekoko has failed."

(28) b. *èkókò à kúnì áʔ*
      Ekoko SM   fail   NEG
      "Ekoko has not failed."

The data presented in (27) and (28) are drawn from Nfaw. Just as we noticed in (26) for Oroko, and in Section 1 for Mokpe, the tense marker here is /ma/. Two negative markers however are used to negate sentences in this language: /àwé/ and /àʔ/. Notice that (27a) and (27b) contain two words. They are serial verb constructions (Tallerman, 1998: 79-81). In this construction the negation marker /àwé/ is used and it is placed immediately before the second verb. The tense marker /ma/ is not replaced by this negative morpheme. This is certainly because the two morphemes of negation and tense, are not in the same clause. It is the matrix clause that is negated and so the tense marker stays in the first clause while the negative marker remains in the matrix clause. This discussion suggests that Mokpe and Nfaw negation morphemes behave alike with some other functional categories as tense, and they occur in mutually exclusive environments (see in VII for Mokpe).

In (28), we have a one-clause sentence. The negative morpheme used in this case is /àʔ/. Notice here that its introduction in the sentence replaces the tense marker. The very interesting point here is that this negative morpheme is suffixed to the verb unlike in the other cases discussed above where the negation morpheme was placed before the verb.

III. The Future Tense

While the future tense in Oroko is segmentally marked, it is not marked in Nfaw, as it was the case with Mokpe. Oroko uses /ko/ as the future tense marker and it is placed just before the verb. Consider the data below in order to follow the structure of negation in this tense in the two languages.

(29) a. *à   kó   sáká éfóró.*   (Oroko)
      she FUT dance   tomorrow
      "She will dance tomorrow."

(29) b. *à   sí   kó   sáká éfóró.*
      she NEG FUT dance tomorrow
      "She will not dance tomorrow."

(30) a. *à   kwɛ̌ bwéh.*   (Nfaw)
      she cut   trees
      "She will cut down trees."

(30) b. *ǎ   ʃɛ̌   kwɛ̌ bwéh.*
      she NEG cut   trees
      "She will not cut down trees."

Table 1: Showing the distribution of Negation in Mokpe, Oroko, and Nfaw

Tense	Language		
	Mokpe	Oroko	Nfaw
Presnt	*zra*	*sa*	ʃɛ̌
Past (perfect)	*zri/zra*	*si*	aʔ/awɔ
Future	*zra/oo*	*si*	ʃɛ̌

The data from Oroko (29) and that from Nfaw (30) show the different negative morphemes used by the two languages in the future tense. Oroko makes usage of /si/ while Nfaw makes usage of /ʃɛ̌/. What is noteworthy is the fact that the negation marker does not replace the future tense marker in the Oroko data, as it is the case with the other tenses. This is not surprising as we already saw this phenomenon in the discussion of Mokpe future tense (see Section 3 and the data in (14), in particular).

As we have already discussed, this comparative examination of the nature of negation in Mokpe, Oroko and Nfaw reveals interesting parallels in the distribution of the negation morphemes in these languages. The table illustrates this distribution.

The table above shows that Mokpe and Nfaw employ the same morphemes for marking the present tense to mark the future tense. Oroko on the other hand uses the same morpheme for marking the past tense to mark the future. By and large one can see clearly as we have already discussed earlier that the differences in negation morphemes in the three languages are really minimal. These differences can be traced back to phonotactic constraints of the individual languages. Further investigation of these phenomena and others in these languages and other coastal Bantu languages may reveal striking symmetries in the structures of these languages.

To summarise, it is crucial to note that essentially, in a majority of the data presented and discussed in this paper, we find empirical evidence to conclude that certain functional morphemes are mutually exclusive and even complementary with the negation markers. It is true that to a fairly limited extent some of the tense markers (future in Mokpe and Oroko) are not in complementary distribution. The question that this observation raises is how to present and analyse these constructions (those in which NEG replaces tense and/or aspect and mood) using the insights of the split-infl hypothesis of Pollock (1989).

## A PRINCIPLES AND PARAMETERS TREATMENT OF NEGATION IN MOKPE

The postulation of the split-infl hypothesis by Pollock (1989) provoked a lot of research within the Principles and Parameters Theory (PPT), with the aim of determining clause structure. The hypothesis postulates that adverbs, negation and any other property that can be reasonably ascribed to an auxiliary sys-

tem have their own functional category. These adverbs, and negation are considered distinct at D-Structure. Thus, the functional categories, tense and negation project TP and T' nodes and NEGP and NEG' nodes, respectively. The second assumption states that these adverbial elements do not move from one position to another, but rather that it is the verb that moves. In the same spirit an agreement phrase (AGRP) is postulated, with the (AGR) head occupying a higher position than the T head (Pollock, 1989; Belleti, 1990; Chomsky, 1993). Even though there have been a number of criticisms of some of the assumptions by Pollock (see Iatridou, 1990), the split-infl hypothesis has been generally accepted within the PPT and Minimalist Program (MP). The following section offers a PPT treatment of negation in Mokpe, and by extension, the coastal Bantu languages.

The basic assumption of the PPT is that language is made up of a set of fixed and invariant independent universal principles which account for the similarities that exist between human languages, and a set of finite number of values or dimensions along which variations can emerge (parameters). The theory therefore assumes that children are born with the principles while language learning involves parameter setting. The goal of the theory therefore is to identify the various parameters and how they can be set in every language. The MP on its part, offers a new architecture for generative grammar, one that is both unistratal and derivational and whose goal is to limit the architecture to what is required by "virtual conceptual necessity" (Chomsky, 1995: 169-171).

THE STATUS OF NEG IN MOKPE

In the literature, the position of NEG has been observed to vary in different languages. In some languages, NEG occurs before the verb or after it. Yet some languages including French have two negative morphemes which straddle the verb. Negation morphemes occur preverbally in Mokpe, Oroko and Nfaw. However, in the past tense in Nfaw it occurs post-verbally. Given the recurrency of its preverbal occurrence we are tempted to think that its in situ position is actually preverbally and that its post-verbal occurrence is probably because of some syntactic operation.

Considering that in the PPT and MP frameworks the negation morpheme is considered a functional category functioning as a head which projects into a NEGP, Ouhalla (1991) submitted that the NEGP should be expected to be hierarchically arranged in the same way across languages. Let us reconsider the Mokpe example (6) which we present below as (31):

(31) a. *à má tútì è ndáwò.*
     he P_2 sweep the house
     "He swept the house."

(31) b. *à zrí tútì è ndáwo.*
     he NEG sweep the house
     "He did not sweep the house."

As we observed in IV. 1, although the past tense marker is licensed to be omitted in a construction upon introduction of the negation morpheme, (31b), the tense is understood all the same. In other words, given that the negation morpheme, /zri/, is employed to negate sentences in the past perfect tense, the need for the tense morpheme to be phonetically realised becomes unnecessary in Mokpe and the two related coastal Bantu languages.

Considering that NEG is a head and that it carries a tense feature in these languages, and given that T, which is the locus of tense, is empty, the NEG morpheme raises to the head TP position. We are assuming here that /zri/ originates as the head of the NEGP. Following Radford (1997: 237), we consider that T contains an abstract/overt past tense affix (feature). NEG, which in this language has a tense feature, raises to T to adjoin to this abstract tense and NEG, as in (32).

Movement of NEG to T satisfies the requirement for a bound form to be attracted to a free form, although in this case the bound form of tense has no overt phonetic form. This leads to /zri/ ending up as a complex head comprising a bound (presumably tonal) morpheme and the free NEG morpheme. Such a movement is licensed because it is a head movement (Travis, 1984).

(32)
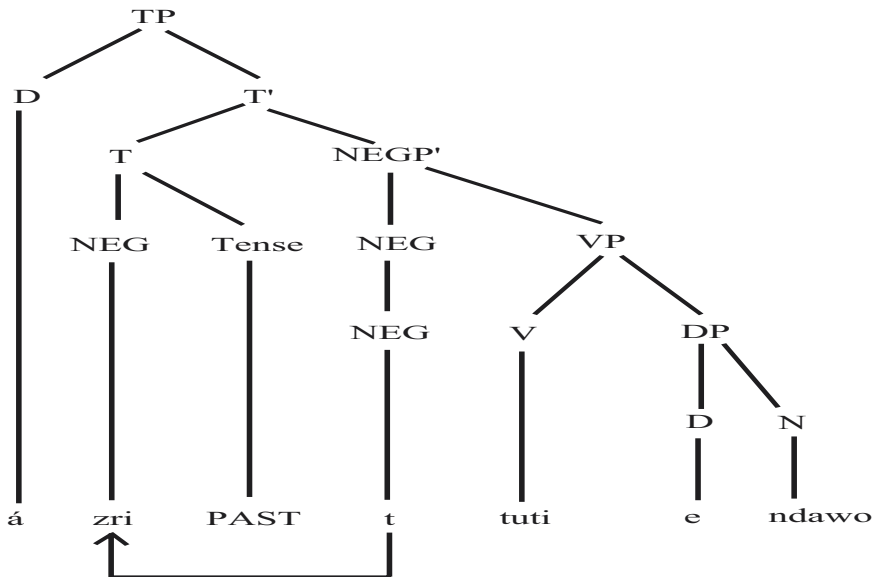
CONCLUSION

This paper set out to investigate the structure of negative constructions in Mokpe and two related coastal Bantu languages of Cameroon. We observed that the usage of the different negation morphemes is predicated on the tense/aspect of the verb. These negation morphemes are not free variants. An interesting observation is that in the present and future tenses, the negation morphemes do not change. This could be a good indication as to how the speakers of these languages perceive time.

NOTES

(1)   It would have been interesting to include the negative of the infinitive here but it is not attested in the language. All attempts at getting such forms failed. This is shown in the ungrammaticality of the following: *zrá lìtútà "not to sweep."
(2)   Ngoisah Alfred Lyonga is himself a native speaker of Mokpe and holds a Masters Degree in Applied Linguistics.
(3)   Note the structure of this construction. This is supposedly a construction in the distance past. The tense morpheme becomes a verbal suffix (as it was the case with the /i/ suffix discussed earlier) when the negation morpheme is added. It is interesting that the aspectual marker is before the tense morpheme in this construction whereas in the construction in (10a), it is the tense morpheme that comes before the aspectual morpheme. We do not discuss this relationship in any detail, because it does not affect the point that we are making here, that the negative morpheme is mutually exclusive with any functional category.
(4)   Recall here that phonetically, the first of every two vowels across morphemes deletes by V_1 deletion. However, we present the two vowels here for the argument.
(5)   This information is subject to verification. It may actually turn out to be that it has another semantic implication. We have not delved into this in this paper because we find ample evidence that it is a negative marker, the point we are making in this paper.

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APPENDIX: LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGR	=	Agreement
AGRP	=	Agreement Phrase
ASP	=	Aspect
D-Structure	=	Deep Structure
FV	=	Final Vowel
IP	=	Inflectional Phrase
MP	=	Minimalist Program
NEG	=	Negation
NEGP	=	Negative Phrase
P_1	=	Immediate Past Tense
P_2	=	Remote Past Tense
PPT	=	Principles and Parameters Theory
SM	=	Subject Marker
Split-infl	=	Split Inflection
T/TNS	=	Tense
TM	=	Tense Marker
TP	=	Tense Phrase
V	=	Verb
V1	=	First of two vowels in a sequence.