

The CALA 2020 Proceedings Paper 6 - 1

Anthropological Linguistics, Paper 1

**A Morphological Analysis of Negation in Amele,
Papua New Guinea**

Masahiko Nose

Shiga University, Japan

A Morphological Analysis of Negation in Amele, Papua New Guinea

Masahiko Nose^a

^a*Shiga University, Japan*

Abstract

Amele is one of the Trans-New Guinea languages spoken in Papua New Guinea. Foley (2000) described that the Trans-New Guinea languages have complicated verbal morphology, including Amele. This study examines negation in Amele, and attempts to clarify its morphological behaviors. The grammar of Amele was described by Roberts (1987), but the author of this study has conducted fieldwork and has acquired more data on negative expressions. Amele has a negator ‘qee’ (‘q’ indicates voiced dorso-labiovelar plosive), and this negator follows the element negated, as shown in Examples 1 and 2. Amele has verbal conjugations for persons and numbers, but no negative conjugation in the present tense.

- (1) Ija jo ac.
I house have
“I have a house.”
- (2) Ija jo ac qee.
I house have not
“I don’t have a house.”

That Amele has negative conjugations in its past and future tenses is unusual. Example 3 presents the conjugation of the negative past tense of the verb “hoga” (to come).

- (3)
“hoga” (to come)
- | | |
|----------------------------|------------|
| 1st person singular (1 sg) | ho-l-o-m |
| 2sg | ho-l-o-m |
| 3sg | ho-l |
| 1st person dual (1d) | ho-l-o-h |
| 2/3d | ho-l-o-sin |
| 1st person plural | ho-l-o-m |
| 2/3p | ho-l-o-in |

Thus, Amele has many types of past tenses—today’s past, yesterday’s past, the remote past, and the negative past—and each of these tenses has inflection. Typologically, another language has negative conjugations of the verb (cf. Miestamo 2007; Payne 1985), but these behaviors of the negations remain unexplained. This study observes a functional basis of the grammar and claims that Amele has grammatical positive-negative and present/past distinctions, and that it is functionally marked in its past tenses. Thus, Amele focuses on past events.

Keywords: Negation, morphology, Amele, Papua New Guinea, Finnish

Introduction

This study attempted to clarify negation in the grammar and negative expressions in Amele, a language spoken in Papua New Guinea. Amele is one of the Trans-New Guinea languages spoken in this country. Foley (2000) described that Trans-New Guinea languages have a complicated verbal morphology and that Amele has a complicated verbal morphology, which incorporates into tense, person, and number (cf. Roberts 1987). This study focuses on negation in Amele and attempts to clarify its morphological behaviors. The grammar of Amele was described by Roberts (1987), but in this study, the author has conducted fieldwork and acquired more data on negative expressions (cf. Nose 2020a, 2020b). Negation is a necessary grammatical phenomenon, and every language has negative expressions, for example, ‘not,’ ‘never’ or ‘without’ in English. This study uses Finnish (Finno-Ugric) as a contrastive sample of negations.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews a cross-linguistic study of negation, Section 3 presents the data of negative expressions in Amele, Section 4 provides the discussion and Section 5 is the conclusion.

General Remarks: Negation and the Amele Language

This section conducts a cross-linguistic review of negative expressions and their grammar and introduces the sample language, Amele, including its grammatical and sociolinguistic situations.

Amele is one of the approximately 400 Trans-New Guinea languages and the biggest language family in Melanesia. Approximately 5,000 individuals speak Amele, and almost all are bilingual with Tok Pisin, an English-based creole and the lingua franca in Papua New Guinea. Amele was described by Roberts (1987). Notably, Roberts’s study was based on the Haia dialect. The current paper is based on the Huar dialect; the two dialects have several differences regarding morpho-syntax. Amele has a fixed SOV order together with noun-adjective, noun-demonstrative, and noun-numeral orders. Amele has no voice system but rather a complicated verb morphology, including several tense features, such as the following tenses: Present, today’s past, yesterday’s past and remote past (cf. Nose 2020a, 2020b).

Negation in grammar occurs in many languages, for which there are several typological studies, for example, Payne (1985), Elliott (2000), and more recently Miestamo (2007). Amele has a negator (Neg) ‘qee’ (‘q’ is a dorso-labiovelar sound), and its position is after the element, as presented in Examples 1 and 2.

(1) Mebahic/Mebahic qee (good/good Neg; good/bad)

In Example 1, the adjective ‘mebahic’ (good) can be denied by ‘mebahic qee’ (good not). There is no single word ‘bad’ in Amele, and the negator is used to make an opposite adjective.

(2) a. Ija school meel. (I student). ‘I am a student.’
b. Ija school meel qee. (I student Neg) ‘I am not a student.’

Example 2a is an affirmative sentence and Example 2b is its negative sentence. The negator arrives after the NP, and its order is ‘NP-Neg’ (Amele has no copula). The negator ‘qee’ is partly incorporated in verb morphology in Amele and the inflections of the verb ‘oboga’ (to walk; Table 1).

	Present	Yesterday's past	Negative past	Future	Negative future
1SG	Obiga	Obigan	Oborin qee	Obig on	Obigin qee
2SG	Oboga	Obogan	Oboron qee	Obog on	Obogon qee
3SG	Oboya	Obeyan	Obor qee	Obigi on	Obini qee
1PL	Obonba	Obonban	Oborom qee	Obo-nu	Obonban qee
2and3PL	Oboiga	Oboigan	Oboron qee	Oboigaig on	Obowain qee

(SG: singular, PL: plural, 1,2,3: first person, second person, and third person)

Table 1: Affirmative and negative inflections in Amele ('oboga' to walk)

Overall, there are present, today's past, yesterday's past, remote past, and future tenses. Additionally, Amele has negative past and negative future tenses. Nevertheless, there is no negative present, and this takes the same form as the present affirmative. By contrast, there are special inflections in negative past and negative future tense.

According to typological studies on negation, such as Payne (1985), Kroeger (2005), and Miestamo (2007), there are two types of negation in the grammar: One is standard negation, and another is non-standard negation. Standard negation indicates that every language has means to express clausal negation: 'This is not my book.' Non-standard negation includes negative imperative, existential sentences, and other non-verbal clauses, including 'un-necessary,' 'im-possible' in English. Additionally, standard and non-standard negations differ, for example, Hungarian has two types of negators (e.g., Example 3).

(3) Hungarian:

- a. Nem beszél-ek magyarul.
Neg speak-1SG Hungarian
'I don't speak Hungarian.'
- b. Nincs a pénz-em.
Neg the money-1SG
'I don't have money.'
- c. Ne beszélj angolul!
Neg speak-2SG English
'Don't speak English!'

3a is an example of standard negation with the negator 'nem,' Example 3b is negative existential with the negator 'nincs.' Example 3c is negative imperative with the negator 'ne' used. Many languages have several of these types of negators.

In Table 1, the negative verbs are incorporated into verbal morphology in Amele. Notably, other languages have similar conjugations of negative verbs. For example, Finnish (Finno-Ugric) has negative verbs (Table 2). Finnish has the negator 'ei,' and this negator inflects in persons and numbers, such as 'en,' 'et,' 'ei,' 'emme,' 'ette,' 'eivat.' Verbs have also negative verb forms; the negative present has simpler forms than the affirmative present, and negative past verbs have special forms, as for example, singular '-nut' and plural '-neet.'

	Present	Negative present	Past	Negative past
1SG	Sano-n	En sano	Sano-i-n	En sano-nut
2SG	Sano-t	Et sano	Sano-i-t	Et sano-nut
3SG	Sano-o	Ei sano	Sano-i	Ei sano-nut
1PL	Sano-mme	Emme sano	Sano-i-mme	Emme sano-neet
2PL	Sano-tte	Ette sano	Sano-i-tte	Ette sano-neet
3PL	Sano-vat	Eivat sano	Sano-i-vat	Eivat sano-neet

Table 2: Negative verb inflections in Finnish ('sanoa' to say)

Thus, negative verb forms are not rare phenomena typologically (cf. Payne 1985). Nevertheless, this study needs to consider the effects of negative verbs, namely, those that contrast Finnish and Amele. Thus, this study examines negative sentences in Amele, and attempts to clarify forms and meanings. Moreover, this study explores the basic meaning of the negative particle 'qee' in Amele and attempts to describe negative verb inflections. Amele has complicated verb inflections with negation, and we contrast these with those in Finnish (Finno-Ugric).

Data in Amele

This section presents of negative expressions, and attempts to describe the forms and the meanings of the negative usages. Amele has its negator 'qee,' and this negator sits after the negated element, as shown in Examples 1 and 2. Amele has verbal conjugations in persons and numbers, but there is no negative conjugation in the present tense.

Amele has tense distinctions between the present and past tenses. Example 4a is present tense and Example 4b is today's past tense. Example 4c is the negative past form, but the meaning of Example 4c can indicate either negative present and negative past. Therefore, the negative past form is used even in the present tense. Additionally, the negator can be located both in front of the verb (Example 4c) and after the verb (Example 4d). The 'Verb-Negator' order in Example 4d is preferred, but the 'Negator-Verb' order in Example 4c is also possible.

- (4a) Ija rais jigina. [I rice eat-present tense]. 'I eat rice.'
 (4b) Ija rais jiga on. [I rice eat-today's past] 'I ate rice (today).'
 (4c) Ija rais qee je-rim [I rice neg eat-negative past] 'I did not eat rice./I do not eat rice.'
 (4d) Ija rais jerim qee.

Next, this study observes the usage of adjectives, as presented in Examples 5 and 6. Amele does not have a copula (Example 5a), and the negator locates after the adjective, representing the 'Adjective-Negator' order (Example 5b).

- (5a) Dana mebahic (man good) "The man is good."
 (5b) Dana mebahic qee (man good neg) "The man is not good." also "the man is bad"
 (6a) possible/impossible: ihoc/ihoc qee
 (6b) necessary/unnecessary: mebec/mebec qee

For example, English uses the two words 'good' and 'bad,' but Amele uses one word, 'mebahic' (good), and the opposite word, 'mebahic qee' (good neg; bad). In Example 6, Amele has a general tendency to exhibit such a contrast in the adjective/not-adjective pair. Therefore, the negator 'qee' indicates an 'opposite' meaning.

Next, we observe the difference between past and future in negative sentences. Examples 7b and 7c are affirmative forms of the verb ‘ihiga’ (to give), and Example 7a is a negative past inflection.

- (7) a. Ija ina book qee ihi-reim.
 I you book neg give (‘-reim:’ negative past inflection)
 ‘I didn’t give a book to you’
 b. present: ihiga
 c. today’s past: ihiga

In Example 8, an affirmative future is realized in ‘ihig on’ (will give), and the negative future form ‘ihi-gin’ is used in a negative situation.

- (8) Ija ina book qee ihi-gin.
 I you book neg give (‘-gin’ negative future inflection)
 ‘I will not give a book to you’
 affirmative future: ihig-on

Morphologically, negative verbs in past and future tenses have special forms. Their formation is incorporated in person/number/negative elements, which cannot be morphologically analyzed (i.e. portmanteau forms).

Next, we review negative existential sentences, such as ‘I do not have X’ (Example 9). Amele uses the ‘ac qee’ (have neg) form, and the verb ‘ac’ has no inflectional marking, that is, person, number, tense.

- (9a) Ija jo ac.
 I house have
 ‘I have a house.’
 (9b) Ija jo ac qee.
 I house have neg
 ‘I don’t have a house.’
 (9c) Ija jo ac qee moni ac qee.
 I house have not money have neg
 ‘I don’t have a house and money either.’

In Example 9, the negator is after the verb ‘ac,’ the ‘have-Neg’-order and negative verb form are not used in the verb ‘ac,’ and the verb ‘ac’ takes no inflectional element (it resembles the neutral tense).

The usage of ‘never, without’ is also notable. The strong negation ‘never’ indicates only ‘qee’ in Example 10a, and ‘not at all’ indicates ‘qee bahic’ (bahic: very) in Example 10b.

- (10a) Ija buk qee siani-gina on.
 I book neg read (negative future inflection)
 ‘I never read the book.’
 (10b) Ija buk qee bahic sian-erim.
 I book neg very read (negative past inflection)
 ‘I don’t read the book at all.’

The usage of ‘without X’ is the same form of the ‘I don’t have/There is no’ form, ‘ac qee’ (Example 11). The order is ‘Noun ac qee.’

- (11a) tea sugar ac qee ‘tea without sugar’
 (11b) car gasoline ac qee ‘car without gasoline’

Finally, we check the negative imperative (or prohibitive) in Amele (Example 12).

- (12a) Ain jeg-an alcohol.
Neg drink alcohol: positive future 2sg inflection
'Don't drink alcohol!'
- (12b) Ain mado-gon.
Neg speak : you (sg)": positive future 2sg inflection
'Don't speak!'

In Example 12, another negator 'ain/ain bahic' (don't, no; cf. Tok Pisin, *tambu*) is used for the negative imperative, and the verb takes an affirmative future inflection. The order is 'Ain-Verb,' where the 'Verb-ain' order is not possible.

Discussion

We observed various usages of negative expressions in Section 3. This section discusses our research questions. We perform a deeper morphological analysis of the negation, discuss that Amele has negative verbs, and then discuss the functional motivations of the negation, which contrasts with the negative verbs in Finnish (cf. Nose 2020a, 2020b).

First, we summarize the negative expressions in Amele. The negator 'qee' is widely used in verbs, adjectives, and in other parts of speech, and its orders are 'Neg-Verb/Verb-Neg' (their orders are flexible), 'Adjective-Neg,' 'have-Neg,' and 'X-Neg.' Overall, the 'X-Neg' order is preferable. The negator 'qee' is used for existential, non-verbal expressions (without) by using the verb 'ac' (to have). Another negator, 'ain,' is used for the negative imperative ('Ain V: 'don't V!').

Second, this study attempts to more deeply describe negation and its morphology. Amele has two types of negators, 'qee' and 'ain,' and 'qee' is widely used for verbs and adjectives. By contrast, 'ain' is used only for the negative imperative. Negative verbs are observed in Amele, and similar negative verbs are observed in Finnish (Finno-Ugric) and other languages (cf. Payne 1985). Therefore, the negative verbs are not rare grammatical phenomena cross-linguistically. Amele has a special negative verb morphology in the past and future tenses. However, the negative past form is observed in the present tense, the existential verb 'ac' takes no inflection, and its negative form 'ac qee' is used in all tenses. Thus, negative verbs have special features in past and future temporal references, but their usages are not always obligatory.

This study contrasts the negative verb morphology between Amele and Finnish. This study attempts to clarify the effect of negative verb morphology. Amele and Finnish are geneologically and typologically different, but their negative verb phenomena are partly similar. Both languages have another prohibitive negator; 'ain' and 'älä' (Don't). However, Amele has negative elements, including person/numbers; by contrast, in Finnish, negators inflect, and the negative verbs are mainly two forms: singular and plural. The negative verbs in Finnish are simpler than those in affirmative verbs, but the negative verbs in Amele become more complicated. In any case, both languages put a functional burden on the negative verb morphology.

Overall, negative meanings and usages are 'marked' in the grammar, and Amele has one negator, 'qee,' which is used in various usages. Negative verb morphology has an effect of functionally marked grammar and can be observed in other languages, for example, Finnish. However, the specific behaviors of the negative verbs differ in Amele and Finnish. Amele is morphologically complicated, and Finnish has simpler inflections.

Conclusion

This study argues that Amele has the negator 'qee,' widely used for negative expressions, except for the negative imperative particle 'ain.' The negator 'qee' is usually located after the denied element, and is widely used in adjectives and with nouns and verbs. A characteristic is that negative verb inflections are observed in the past and future tenses.

These findings indicate that negation is functionally marked in Amele; the negator 'qee' implies the meaning of 'not, opposite, there is no, without;' and the meaning of 'ain' is 'don't.' Negative verb morphology is observed in Amele, and similar grammar is observed in Finno-Ugric. The negative verb morphology is a cause of the complicated verb morphology in Amele and Finnish, but this phenomenon suggests that both languages have marked functions in verb morphology, particularly in the tense category (negative past tense). Therefore, when indicating negative past situations, a certain type of functional burden is observed.

References

- Elliott, J., R. (2000). Realis and Irrealis: Forms and Concepts of the Grammaticalization of Reality. *Linguistic Typology* 4, 55-90.
- Foley, W., A. (2000). The Languages of New Guinea. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 29, 357-404.
- Kroeger, P., R. (2005). *Analyzing Grammar: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Miestamo, M. (2007). Negation: An Overview of Typological Research. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 1, 552-570.
- Nose, M. (2020a). Past Tense Usages in Tense-rich and Tenseless Languages: A Contrastive Study. In: *Contrastive Studies in Morphology and Syntax: Morphological and Syntactic Perspectives*, M. Georgiadjis, G. Giannouloupoulou, M. Koliopoulou and A. Tsokoglou (Eds.), pp. 137-151. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Nose, M. (2020b). Chapter 8: Persons and Address Terms in Melanesia: A Contrastive Study, In: *Indigenous Language Acquisition, Maintenance, and Loss and Current Language Policies*, T. Okamura and M. Kai, (Eds.). Hershey: IGI Global.
- Payne, J., R. (1985). Negation. *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, 1, 197-242.
- Roberts, J., R. (1987). *Amele*. London: Croom Helm.