NEGATION IN DAGAARE

James Angkaaraba Saanchi*

Abstract
Negation in Dagaare is marked mainly by pre-verb particles. Of the almost two dozen pre-verb particles in Dagaare, only four — ba, kʊŋ, ta and tɔɔ — are negation markers. The negation particles combine with different aspects of the verb to signal not only negation but also various other semantic relations. By some kind of negative focus however, the subject or any phrasal constituent of the predicate may be "negated" by naan or its clitic variant naa.

1. Introduction
Negation in Dagaare is marked mainly by pre-verb particles. The presence of pre-verb particles in the Verb Phrase is a phenomenon that occurs in Gur languages in general and these particles are quite many. Bendor-Samuel (1971) for instance, lists as many as 30 pre-verb particles for Dagbani (see also Wilson 1972). Dong (1981) lists 18 pre-verb particles for Dagaare.

The pre-verb particles in Dagaare perform various functions including serving as markers of tense, mood, aspect and polarity. An interesting behaviour of these pre-verb particles observed earlier by Dakubu (1989) and Bodomo (1997) is that more than one function may be carried by the same particle as example 1 shows. In 1 for instance, ta indicates both mood and polarity; ta shows that the sentence is a negative imperative construction.

1. Ta zo!
   NEG-IMP run*
   (Do not run!)

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2. Negation

In Dagaare, negation is marked by the following pre-verb particles—ba, korj, ta and too. The negation particles combine with different aspects of the verb and together signal various semantic relations.

Aspect is one of the fundamental categories of the Dagaare verb system as every Dagaare VP is marked for it. The Dagaare verb has two forms each of the perfective and imperfective aspects. These are referred to here as Perfective A and Perfective B and Imperfective A and Imperfective B.

The perfective A is the same as the bare or dictionary citation form of the verb. The perfective B suffix is a front mid vowel — /e/ or /e/ — depending on the ATR value of the root vowels. In some instances /e/ or /el/ combines the functions of both the perfective and the affirmative.

The imperfective A suffix consists mainly of a mid vowel preceded mostly by /r/. The ATR value of the suffix vowel is again dependent upon that of the root vowels. The imperfective B suffix is invariably a long front mid vowel — /e:/ or /e:/ preceded by /r/. Like the perfective B suffix, the imperfective B suffix also combines the functions of both the perfective and the affirmative. Examples of these forms are shown in table 1. More detailed discussion of Aspect and the Dagaare verb may be found in Saanchi (2003).

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Table 1. The perfective and imperfective forms of the Dagaare verb
3. Negative Pre-verb Particles

The particles ba, kuŋ, ta, and too occur before the verb in Dagaare to negate the predicate. These forms usually occur with the perfective A and imperfective A forms of the verb but not the B forms since the B forms are also affirmative markers.

3.1 Ba (Non-Future Negative)

Ba is a non-future negative marker. It is used with the perfective A and imperfective A forms of the verb to negate constructions in the present tense and it is also used in conjunction with the past tense particle, da, to negate constructions in the past tense. When used with daŋ, the remote past tense particle, it has the meaning of "never".

2a a bie ba do a zie
DEF child NEG weed DEF place
(The child has not weeded the place)

2b a monaabu ba ku a naŋkpaana
DEF buffalo NEG kill DEF hunter
(The buffalo has not killed the hunter)

2c a naŋkpaana daŋ ba ku woo
DEF hunter PAST NEG kill elephant
(The hunter has never killed an elephant)

2d a bie ba duro a zie
DEF child NEG weed-IMPERF DEF place
(The child is not weeding the place)

2e Dakura ba cero a nene
Dakura NEG chew-IMPERF DEF meat
(Dakura is not eating the meat)

2f Ayor da ba maala a sumaa
Ayor PAST NEG prepare-IMPERF DEF meal
(Ayor was not preparing the meal)

2g ?Ayor daŋ ba maala a sumaa

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With the imperfective, ba can occur with the past tense marker da, but not with the remote past marker daŋ. Thus while 2f is grammatical, 2g has doubtful grammaticality and at best is incomplete.

3.2 Kʊŋ (Future Negative)
Kʊŋ is the negative future marker. It is used with the perfective A form of the verb to indicate that an event or situation will not occur as examples 3a and 3b show.

3a a nuba kʊŋwa
DEF people NEG-FUT come
(The people will not come)

3b a bie kʊŋ gaa a tigri
DEF child NEG-FUT go DEF festival
(The child will not go to the festival)

Kʊŋ may also be used with the imperfective A form of the verb as shown in 3d and 3e. Usually this will in response to a command in the imperfective.

3d a nuba kʊŋ waana
DEF people NEG-FUT come-IMPERF
(The people will not be coming)

3e a bie kʊŋ dire a kapala
DEF child NEG-FUT eat-IMPERF DEF fufu
(The child will not be eating the fufu)

The negative future marker, kʊŋ has low tone and is thus distinguished from kʊŋ with high tone which is a sort of negative conditional marker used to indicate that an event or situation should not or would not have occurred as examples 3g–3j show. In 3h, for instance, it is clear that the
person has actually come but should not or would not have done so. Likewise in 3j it is obvious that the child has indeed eaten the yam but should not or would not have done so.

\[3g\] u kʊŋ̡a\ 3SG NEG-FUT come
    (S/he will not come)

\[3h\] u kʊŋ̡a\ 3SG should/would not come
    (S/he should not/would not have come)

\[3i\] a bie kʊŋ̡a ə a waart
    DEF child NEG-FUT chew DEF yam
    (The child will not eat the yam)

\[3j\] a bie kʊŋ̡a ə a waart
    DEF child should/would not chew DEF yam
    (The child should not/would not have eaten the yam)

3.3. Tā (Imperative Negative)

*Tā* is a negative imperative marker. *Tā* is used with the perfective form of the verb to prevent an event or situation that is just about to start from starting, while with the imperfective, *ta* is used to stop an event or situation that is already in process as the examples in 4a - 4d show.

\[4a\] ta zo\  NEG-IMP run-PERF
    (Do not run!)

\[4b\] ta nyu a zeri
    NEG-IMP drink-PERF DEF soup
    (Do not drink the soup!)

\[4c\] ta zoro
    NEG-IMP run-IMPERF
    (Do not run! i.e. Stop running!)

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4d  ta njuuro a zier
NEG-IMP drink-IMPERF DEF soup
(Do not drink the soup i.e. Stop drinking the soup!)

3.4 Tšš (Imperative Negative)

Tšš /tš:/ is also a negative imperative marker. As an imperative marker, too always goes with the imperfective A form of the verb. Too is used with the imperfective form of the verb to prevent an event or situation from beginning. Too with the imperfective thus performs a similar function as ta and the perfective does — both are used to prevent an event or situation that is just about to start from starting. Thus 4a and 4b are equivalent to 5a and 5b respectively.

5a  too zoro
NEG-IMP run-IMPERF
(Do not run!)

5b  too njuuro a zier
NEG-IMP drink-IMPERF DEF soup
(Do not drink the soup!)

There is however a slight difference between and the perfective and too with the imperfective because the latter may also be used to prevent an event which one suspects may occur even though there may be no immediate indication of this. For instance, a mother who is about to go out may also say 5b too njuuro a zier ("do not drink the soup") to a child; even though there is no present evidence to indicate that the child is about to drink the soup, the mother suspects that once she is out, the child may drink it.

The question remains whether there is a semantic difference or for that matter any difference other than stylistic between ta with the perfective and too with the imperfective since both are used to prevent an event or situation that is just about to start from starting. Native speakers express different views on this. While some say that there is no difference at all between the two, i.e. ta zo and too zoro both mean "do not run", others are of the view that ta zo expresses greater urgency than too zoro. As a
student of grammar and going by the principle that there are no perfect synonyms, one is inclined to agree with those who see a difference in the two. Ta with the perfective does seem to express a greater urgency or immediacy than too with the imperfective. This view is buttressed by the fact too with the imperfective may be used in conjunction with a hypothetical situation introduced by a conditional clause while ta with the perfective cannot. Thus while 5c is grammatical, 5d is not.

5c. ka a baa wa yi, too zoro
   COND DEF dog come out NEG-IMP run-IMPERF
   (If/when the dog comes out, do not run!)

5d. ?ka a baa wa yi, ta zo
   COND DEF dog come out NEG-IMP run-PERF

When used with the perfective form of the verb, too no longer marks the negative imperative; rather it marks a dependent conditional clause that is an admonition, a suggestion against doing something.

5e. too gaa be ka a nuba ?ame ye
   go-PERF there LINK DEF people beat 2PL
   (What if you go there and the people beat you)

5f. too nyu a zierr ka bi puo biere
   drink-PERF DEF soup LINK 2SG stomach be sick
   (What if you drink the soup and get stomach trouble?)

In 5e the clause introduced by ka —a nuba ?ame ye ("the people beat you") —is a probable consequence of the first clause introduced by too; the construction is not a command but an implied suggestion or recommendation not to go because your going there may lead to the people beating you. Likewise in 5f the clause introduced by too—nyu a zierr ("drink the soup") —is not a command but a suggestion not to drink the soup, and this is linked by ka to the second clause its probable consequence. The construction thus says that it is advisable not to drink the soup because doing so may lead to sickness.

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4. Naam and Non-VP Negation

Ba, kur, ta, and too are all used to negate the Verb Phrase. Naam or its shortened version naa on the other hand is used to negate the subject or any phrasal constituent of the Predicate. Naam negatively focuses on either the subject or a phrasal constituent of the predicate.

Dakubu and Saanchi (1997), distinguish between "broad focus" and "narrow focus" in Dagaare. Broad focus means either the Subject or the Predicate is in focus and narrow focus means that a phrasal constituent of the Predicate is in focus. The two systems of focus cannot be expressed together. They also note that focus is not expressed if the Predicate is negative or imperative suggesting that in Dagaare these features carry inherent focus.

The present presentation proposes that negative non-Predicate focus may be expressed in Dagaare. Naanl or its clitic version naa is used to negate the subject as in 6a–6e.

Moreover while none of the other negation markers may be used together with each other, it is possible to use naam together with the non-future negative marker ba as in 6d or the future negative marker kurjas in 6e.

Apart from the subject, constituents of the Predicate may also be negatively focussed. Any constituent of the Predicate, whether Object, Adjunct or a nominalized copy of the verb may be negatively focussed. The constituent is moved to the beginning of the expression and naam or naa follows it to negate it. The negatively focussed element is then joined to the rest of its clause by ka or alternatively by –ŋ suffixed to a pronoun subject as examples 6f to 6i show. In 6f for instance, the Direct Object of the sentence nuulee ("bird") is negated while in 6g the Adjunct zaam ("yesterday") is negated. Ka and –ŋ are linking elements which also topicalize the preposed constituent.

6a. bie naam child NEG (It is not a child)
6b. a bie naam
DEF child NEG
(It is not the child)

6c. a bie naa ku a nuulee
DEF child NEG kill DEF bird
(It is not the child who has killed the bird i.e. it is someone else.)

6d. a bie naam ba gaa a wë
DEF child NEG NEG go-PERF DEF farm
It is not the child who has not gone to the farm i.e. it is someone else who has not gone.)

6e. a bie naam kuŋ gaa a wë
DEF child NEG NEG-FUT go-PERF DEF farm
It is not the child who will not go to the farm, i.e. it is someone else who will not go.)

6f. nuulee naa ka a bie ku
bird NEG-FOC LINK DEF child kill
(It is not a bird that the child killed i.e. it is something else)

6g. zaami naanι ka a bie ku a nuulee
yesterday NEG-FOC LINK DEF child kill DEF bird
(It is not yesterday that the child killed the bird i.e. it is some other day)

6h. kuvu naani ka a bie ku a nuulee
killing NEG-FOC LINK DEF child kill DEF bird
(It is not killing that the child killed the bird)

6i. zaami naanι urŋ ku a nuulee
yesterday NEG-FOC 3SG-LINK kill DEF bird
(It is not yesterday that s/he killed the bird)
5. Conclusion
While the Verb Phrase in Dagaare is negated by the pre-verb particles ba, koŋ, ta and toɔ, with the perfective A or imperfective A forms of the verb, the subject may be "negated" by naa or its shortened version, naa. Any phrasal constituent of the Predicate — whether Object, Adjunct or a nominalized copy of the verb may also be preposed and "negated" by naa or nana and then linked to its clause by the linker ka or its clitic variant –ŋ in the case of a pronoun subject.
NOTE

"The following abbreviations are used in the paper:

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