

Negation in Metta

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Abstract

Recent typological studies of clausal negation not only focus on the basic standard negation strategies that languages use to negate declarative verbal main clauses but also discuss typology of asymmetric negation in declaratives. Asymmetric negatives may have changes in the form of the lexical verb, tense and aspect marking or other clausal modifications while symmetric negatives differ from the affirmatives only due to the addition of (a) negative marker(s). Here it is shown that asymmetric negatives in Metta (Narrow Grassfields Bantu), similar to a majority of other languages, include modifications of the perfective forms; symmetric negative constructions are prevalent, another cross-linguistically common phenomenon in negation. This paper supports findings of cross-linguistic studies on negation by showing that Metta extends its standard negation strategy to other environments such as subordinate, existential, locative, possessive, and non-verbal clauses but uses non-standard negation strategy in imperatives.

Keywords: negation, Bantu, symmetry

1 Introduction

This analysis is concerned with negation structures in Metta,¹ a little-documented dialect of Moghamo-Menemo,² a Narrow Grassfields Bantu language, whose speakers reside in the mountainous region of the South West Provinces of Cameroon. As my investigation shows, Metta negation is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Verbal negation in Metta exhibits a great deal of constructional distinction. The standard negation strategy³ extends to existential, locative, possessive and non-verbal clauses, whereas a non-standard negation strategy is used in imperatives.

This paper describes negation in Metta, contributing to the current typological studies of negation. The questions that I attempt to investigate are as follows: (1) What negation strategies does Metta use in verbal negation? (2) Do verbal negation strategies remain the same in all tense-aspect⁴ categories in Metta? (3) Is non-verbal (adjectival and nominal) negation different from verbal negation? (4) What distinction, if any, does Metta make between the negation of location, existence,

¹Linguists use a variety of names to refer to the language, e.g. Meta' (Gordon 2005, Spreda 1991, Watters and Leroy 1989), Metta? (Chibaka 2006), Metta (Sprede 1981, 1982, 1986, 2000). In this study, the language is called Metta since this is the designation used by contemporary linguists and by the Cameroonian government.

²For a detailed classification of Narrow Grassfields Bantu languages, see Nurse and Philippson (2003:229–233).

³Standard negation strategy involves “the basic means that languages have for negating declarative verbal main clauses” (Miestamo 2007:553). For example, a standard negation strategy in Russian is to place the negative particle *ne* before a verb or an auxiliary that precedes the verb.

⁴This analysis concentrates only on the indicative mood in Metta since mood categories other than indicative do not usually form standard negation contexts.

and possession? (5) How might the negation profile of Metta contribute to the typological studies of negation?

This analysis is mainly based on the data elicited from a native speaker of Metta. I will begin by providing an outline of types of negative strategies as proposed by Miestamo (2005). Next, I discuss common negation strategies utilized in Grassfields Bantu languages, then look at the data obtained from a speaker of Metta⁵ in the context of the current research into Metta (Chibaka 2006, Spreda 1991). The final section of the paper offers tentative conclusions about the negative structures of Metta from a typological perspective.

2 A general overview of negation strategies

Before examining negation structures of Metta, I briefly discuss current terminology that deals with ways of encoding negation in world languages. *Standard negation* is a basic means of expressing a negated declarative verbal clause. *Non-standard negation strategies* involve environments other than verbal declarative clauses, such as existential, imperative, locative, nominal, adjectival, possessive, and subordinate clauses.

2.1 Standard negation

A typology of standard negation strategies draws a distinction between *morphological* and *syntactic negation* (Dahl 1979, Kahrel and van der Berg 1993, Miestamo 2005, Payne 1985, 1997). Morphological operations in negation may involve the following: 1) negative morpheme is an inflectional category which may fuse with other inflectional categories (e.g. with a subject or a tense marker); 2) phonological integration of the negative morpheme with the host stem (e.g. stress/tone unity, vowel harmony, morphophonemic processes may be observed); 3) placement of the negative morpheme close to the verb root. Syntactic operations in negation usually meet the following criteria: 1) syntactic independence of the negative morpheme; 2) the negative morpheme's prosodic independence; 3) the negative morpheme may carry inflectional affixes itself; 4) a syntactic treatment of a negative particle may be prompted by the orthographic convention of writing a negative marker as a separate word.

Dahl's (1979) 240-language sample shows that morphological negation is slightly less common (found in 108 sampled languages) than syntactic negation (uninflected negative particles were found in 99 languages in addition to 40 languages with negative auxiliaries). Veselinova's (2007) areally diverse 71-language sample shows that bound morphemes as a standard negation strategy were employed by 25 languages sampled (35%). Negative particles were found in 37 languages surveyed (50%).

As shown in (1) and (2) Congo and Luvale, Niger-Congo languages employ morphological operations as its standard negation strategy:

- (1) Congo, Bantoid, Benue-Congo, Niger-Congo (Miestamo 2005:302)
- a. *ba-nuní ba-dí-dí: mba*
II-bird II-eat-IM.PST palm.nut
'The birds have eaten the palm nuts.'

⁵I extend my sincere gratitude to Michael Fomundam, who kindly served as a consultant for this research project; to Professor Noonan, the main coordinator of the project; and my co-fellow students for their contribution to this research during the Fall 2007 semester at UW-Milwaukee. Special thanks go to Edith Moravcsik and the anonymous reviewers, whose comments greatly benefited this paper.

- b. *ba-nuní ka ba-dí-dí:-a: mba kó*
 II-bird NEG II-eat-IM.PST-NEG palm.nut NEG
 ‘The birds have not eaten the palm nuts.’

(2) Luvale, Bantoid, Niger-Congo (Miestamo 2005:90)

- a. *auze mw-eza*
 there(he is) FUT.I.SG-come
 ‘There he is coming.’
- b. *k-exi kw-iza-ko*
 NEG-AUX INF-come-NEG
 ‘He will not come.’

As (1) demonstrates, Congo uses a negative circumfix *kà- -a:* on the verb, plus a clause-final clitic =*kó*. In Luvale, as exemplified in (2), the first negative prefix *ka-* is preposed to the auxiliary *exi* while the negative suffix *-ko* is verb-final.

Syntactic negation is also widely attested as a standard negation strategy in many languages, when an invariant negative particle (placed outside a verbal word) or an auxiliary verb encode negation at the verb phrase level. This strategy may be exemplified in (3) by Krongo, a Niger-Congo language:

(3) Krongo, Kadugli, Niger-Congo (Miestamo 2005:112)

- a. *n-óoní à?àŋ bílyáatà ŋ-áfàrà*
 AGR-IMPF.KNOW 1SG child CONN.M-IMPF.CRY
 ‘I know the crying boy.’
- b. *aŋ n-óoní à?àŋ ì?ìŋ é*
 NEG AGR-IMPF.KNOW 1SG 3SG NEG
 ‘I don’t know him.’

As (1)–(3) illustrate, standard negation can involve *discontinuous negative markers*.⁶ In Krongo, as shown in (3), standard negation strategy is expressed with the clitics *aŋ= =é* which appear on both sides of the negated phrase or constituent. The second clitic’s function may be emphatic as suggested by Miestamo (2005:112).

Another classification of negation by Miestamo (2005) proposes to divide negative structures into *symmetric* and *asymmetric*,⁷ based on the structural difference between positives and negatives. Structures are symmetric when positives do not differ from negatives “in any other way than by the presence of the negative marker” (Miestamo 2007:556) while in asymmetric structures further differences or asymmetries are observed. Subtypes of asymmetry (A) are divided into A/Fin (concerns the reduction or loss of finiteness of the verbal element), A/NonReal (refers to marking of a non-realized category in addition to a negative marker), A/Emph (contains marking that expresses emphasis in non-NEGatives), and A/Cat (involves changes in the marking of grammatical categories like TAM or PNG in the negative vis-à-vis the positive). Further, Miestamo proposes to differentiate between *constructional* and *paradigmatic* asymmetry which may cross-cut across the four asymmetric subtypes. The former involves a replacement of the marker of a category in question by a different marker

⁶In Veselinova’s 71-language sample, discontinuous particles were recorded in 6 languages as a standard negation strategy, suggesting this negative structure is typologically rare.

⁷Miestamo’s 297-language sample shows that symmetric standard negation is more common than asymmetric standard negation.

or its loss; the latter involves loss of grammatical distinctions across a paradigm when a category is neutralized (e.g. a category of tense, aspect, mood, person, number, gender, evidentiality, voice, etc.). For example, symmetric negation is manifested in the negated sentences in (1) and (3), which preserve the linguistic structure of the corresponding affirmatives. In (2b), a special negative auxiliary *exi* is introduced and the finite lexical verb *mweza* is transformed into an infinitive *kwiza*, signaling the loss of finiteness of the lexical verb. Such structural changes in (2b) indicate constructional asymmetry. In Miestamo's terms, (2b) illustrates the A/Fin type of asymmetry.

2.2 Non-standard negation

Non-standard strategies are any special negation strategies other than the standard means used to negate declarative verbal main clauses. Non-standard negation is often observed in existential predicates and imperative constructions. For example, the existential constructions in Babole in (4) use the stative verbal root *-è*, which has a negative form *-ètí*, whereas its standard negation strategy is *ka*-negation:

- (4) Babole, Southern Bantoid, Niger-Congo (Leitch 1993:195–196)
- a. *há-é nà m̀ngwà la botìmbá*
 LOC-be GEN salt at village
 'There is salt in the village.'
 - b. *há-ètí nà m̀ngwà la botìmbá*
 LOC-**be.NEG** GEN salt at village
 'There isn't any salt in the village.'
 - c. *à-á-dzìe-á ngámá*
 3SG-PST-eat-FIN⁸ elephant
 'He ate an elephant.'
 - d. *à-ka-á-dzìe-ak-á ngámá wèsù*
 3SG-**NEG**-PST-eat-ASP-FIN elephant all
 'He didn't eat the whole elephant.'

In Babole, *ka*-negation is used across temporal categories and with imperative and hortative moods. However, its existential (and possessive) constructions use a special negative form *ètí*, of the existential verb root *-è*, as illustrated by (4b). By contrast, in (5) Bagirmi employs the same post-verbal negator in the negated declaratives and imperative negatives:

- (5) Bagirmi, Bogo-Bagirmi, Nilo-Saharan (Miestamo 2007:558)
- a. *ab 'be*
 go home
 'Go home!'
 - b. *ab eli*
 go **NEG**
 'Do not go!'

⁸The status of the final vowel *-á* is uncertain. It is required by phonology but does not carry a distinctive meaning (Leitch 1993:194).

- c. *je j-ab eli*
 we 1PL-go NEG
 'We did not go.'

As shown in (5), in Bagirmi the same post-posed verbal negative marker *eli* is used in both declarative (5c) and imperative clauses (5b). The use of the standard negation strategy in imperatives is most likely motivated by the pressure for the overall language system's cohesion when symmetric negatives copy the linguistic structure of the affirmatives to become language-internally analogous to these affirmative structures (Miestamo 2007:559).

Existential and non-verbal clauses are often negated using non-standard strategies (Croft 1991, Veselinova 2007). For example, Veselinova's 71-language sample shows that languages either use the standard negation strategy in all negative structures, or use a two- or three-way distinction. In her sample, 21 languages (30%) utilize the standard negation strategy in non-verbal (NV), existential (Ex), locative (Loc) and possessive (Poss) constructions, while 12 languages (17%) make a three-way distinction in the negation of a) verbal, b) non-verbal and locative (NV/Loc), and c) existential and possessive (Ex/Poss) clauses. Eleven languages (15%) make a two-way distinction, employing the standard negation strategy to express negation in Loc/Ex/Poss constructions, etc. Additionally, the sampled African languages in Veselinova's sampling show a great deal of diversity in the areal distribution of standard and non-standard negation strategies.

3 Standard Negation in Grassfields Bantu

This section investigates standard negation strategies in the Narrow Grassfields Bantu languages of Cameroon. The 50+ Grassfields Bantu (GB) languages have many cognates and share a fair number of morphophonological features, so it is worthwhile to survey their negative structures to make tentative predictions about the negation strategies in Metta. Having said that, we admit that the material collected for this rapid typological survey of a few GB languages does not permit us to make any robust generalizations.

GB languages have a large number of formal tense distinctions (Watters 2003, Watters and Leroy 1989). Commonly, two or three past and as many future categories of tense are formally marked on the verb, forming symmetrical tense systems. There is also a present tense form, frequently unmarked. The perfective/imperfective and continuous/habitual aspect distinctions are also common in GB languages. Following Anderson's (1983) typology of GB tenses, Africanist scholars typically number the tenses and define them as P4 'distant' past, P3 'non-recent' or 'yesterday' past, P2 'today' past, P1 'immediate' past, P0 'present', F1 'tomorrow' future, F2 'the day after tomorrow' future, F3 'remote' future, F4 'distant' future. Note that some GB languages have less complex tense and aspect systems. For example, in Babungo F1 and F2 tenses form a single category, as do F3 and F4 tenses. In Aghem, the P4 and P3 tense categories are marked by the same past tense marker. Similarly, in Ngie P4 and P3 tenses are not formally differentiated, neither are P1 and P2 past tenses treated as separate categories (Watters 2003:247).

As stated in the previous section, discontinuous negation marking as a standard negation strategy has been found to be uncommon in the language samples of the noted typological studies. In GB languages, however, discontinuous negation marking appears to be a preferred negation strategy. The first morpheme usually occurs within the verbal predicate while the second occurs at the end of the clause. Though occurrence of double negation in GB languages is relatively well-attested (Watters 2003:250), the diachronic development of double negators is little studied. In what will follow, some

preliminary suggestions are made about the development of discontinuous negative marking in Ngie and Metta; a full investigation of this phenomenon lies beyond the scope of this paper.

Ngomba exemplifies discontinuous negative marking in (6). The first negative morpheme has three variants *ɲkaa*, *ɲkàa*, or *kà* to code negation in Ngomba four past tenses: *ɲkaa* negates a verbal predicate in ‘distant’ past, *ɲkàa* is used in ‘yesterday’ past, and *kà* in the ‘today’ and ‘immediate’ past tenses. There is also a negative marker *ké* for future tenses. The second morpheme is an invariant negative particle *pó* occurring clause-finally. However, *pó* appears to be optional when there are no other constituents to follow the verb (Satre 2002:26).

- (6) Ngomba (Satre 2002:28)
- a. *súu waa tó mó*
friend my come.IM.PST already
‘My friend has come already (he is here).’
 - b. *Ngúw kà tó*
Ngúw NEG.IM.PST come
‘Ngúw hasn’t come (he is not here).’
 - c. *Ngúw ɲtò zón*
Ngúw come.PST yesterday
‘Ngúw came yesterday.’
 - d. *Ngúw ɲkàa tó zó pó*
Ngúw NEG.PST come yesterday NEG
‘Ngúw didn’t come yesterday.’

In Ngomba, the discontinuous morpheme *ɲkàa*-*pó* in (6d) alternates with its variant *kà* in (6b) to express negation in past tenses. The language shows constructional asymmetry in the ‘yesterday’ past tense since the negative in (6d) does not preserve the tense marker of its positive counterpart, i.e., the high-tone prefix *ɲ-* and the super low tone of the lexical verb. However, the category of tense is not neutralized since the portmanteau negative morpheme *ɲkàa* expresses both the meaning of negation and past tense.

In (7), the negative marker /*kà*/ in Aghem neutralizes tense distinctions in the ‘immediate’ past and ‘today’ past tenses:

- (7) Aghem (Anderson 1979:118)
- a. *ò bò fíghâm*
he hit mat
‘He has hit the mat.’
 - b. *ò mò bò fíghâm*
he PST hit the mat
‘He hit the mat (today).’
 - c. *ò kà bó ghâmfô*
he NEG hit mat
‘He hasn’t/didn’t hit the mat.’

Aghem shows paradigmatic asymmetry in (7a)–(7c), since the negator *kà* in (7c) is used for the negation of the two past tenses. The tense distinctions are lost in the negative as exemplified by the loss of the ‘today’ tense marker *mò* in (7c).

A somewhat similar neutralization of the tense distinctions in the ‘immediate’ past and ‘today’ past tenses occurs in Bafut. Unlike in Aghem, the standard negation strategy in Bafut involves discontinuous negation marking. The first morpheme in (8) occurs clause-initially and the second follows the subject:

- (8) Bafut (Chumbow and Tanaji 1993:214–215)
- a. *mbìŋ lòò*
rain fall
‘It has rained.’
 - b. *mbìŋ lòò mə̀*
rain fall IM.PST
‘It has just rained.’
 - c. *kāā mbìŋ sɪ̀ lòò*
NEG rain NEG fall
‘It has not rained.’
 - d. **kāā mbìŋ sɪ̀ lòò mə̀*
NEG rain NEG fall IM.PST
‘It has not just rained.’

In (8c) the sentence-initial particle *kāā* and the post-subject particle *sɪ̀* negate the ‘today’ past tense and the ‘immediate’ past tense. In all other tenses, the morpheme *kāā- -wá?a* is used. A lack of one-to-one correspondences between (8a), (8b) and their negative counterpart (8c) marks asymmetry in the language’s paradigms when the distinction between the two tenses is lost in the negated clause. Specifically, the ‘immediate’ past marker *mə̀* does not occur in the negative sentence as (8d) illustrates.

Another important issue apart from the types of asymmetry and placement of negative markers is the origin and function of the negative morphemes. For example, Ngie in (9) appears to have a discontinuous negative marker which consists of the negative morpheme and a pronominal form which repeats the subject.

- (9) Ngie (Watters 2003:251)
- wə̀-ə̀ kī kɔ̃m-ɔ̃ má bə́u*
3SG-P2 NEG hit-IMP 3SG.POSS dog
‘He did not hit the dog.’

In (9), the first negative morpheme is *kī* which is used in Ngie only with past tenses; *kírì* and *kə̀rə̀* code negation in the future tense and with imperfective forms respectively. The second morpheme *má* is hypothesized to be a repeated subject in the form of a possessive pronoun which agrees in person and number with the subject. Its syntactic placement is immediately after the verb and before the object. A similar pattern of using a possessive pronominal form after the verb, in conjunction with a negative morpheme, is attested in other GB languages e.g. in Ngamambo and Ngemba (Watters 2003:251). Having said that, we must admit that the claim about the negative function of the possessive morpheme in Ngie is highly hypothetical since we lack the necessary data to support it.

In sum, in this random survey of negative structures in GB languages we have found that negation tends to be analytic (syntactic) and involves more than one morpheme. The first morpheme is attested to be preposed to the VP as in (6), (7), (9) or occurs sentence initial as in (8). The second morpheme

occurs clause-finally (6d) or post-verbally as in (8c) and (9). The function of the second morpheme, apparently, is motivated by a pragmatic factor e.g. to express emphasis. The utility of the second negative marker often remains synchronically ambiguous as our examples show, though it may be explained by the general trend in diachronic processes⁹ to strengthen the first, semantically bleached negative marker. It could also be possible that the use of the pronominal form in double negation in Ngie is motivated by pragmatic considerations.

Our limited survey also indicates that *ka*-negation is a common phenomenon in GB languages e.g. in Ngomba (6), Bafut (8), Aghem (7) as well as in Yemba (Haynes and Harro 1991:9) and Kom (Schultz 1997:36). Moreover, *ka*-negation is found in Babole (4), a Southern Bantoid language. The relatively well-attested distribution of the /*ka*/ forms suggests that historically this form was also a negative marker.

Finally, our investigation reveals that the syntactic placement of *ka* in GB languages is either sentence-initial as in Bafut (8) or pre-verbal¹⁰ as in Babole (4), Ngomba (6), and Aghem (7).

4 Negation in varieties of Metta

As noted in section 1, the analysis of Metta negation found in Spreda (1991) and Chibaka (2006) is scanty and seemingly biased in favor of the varied dialects of Metta. In addition, Spreda's (1991) research materials appear to be outdated since a recent socio-economic development with the ensuing mobility of rural populations in the South West Provinces of Cameroon has triggered rapid changes in Metta morphosyntax. Having said that, we find Spreda's and Chibaka's findings in verbal negation reasonably useful. For example, Spreda's data in (10) show that *ka*-negation in Metta involves using reflexive pronouns as the obligatorily repeated subjects:

- (10) Metta (adapted from Spreda (1991:7–8))
- a. *kà'á mǎ wǎ nǎŋ-ǎ ǎmǎ gywǎ ǎgwǎm*
 NEG I IMPF take-IMPF REFL goat hunt.LOC
 'I do not take a goat on a hunt.'
 - b. *kà'á à wǎ nǎŋ-ǎ ǎwǎ gywǎ ǎgwǎm*
 NEG you.SG IMPF take-IMPF REFL goat hunt.LOC
 'You do not take a goat on a hunt.'
 - c. *kà'á í wǎ nǎŋ-ǎ ǎwǎ gywǎ ǎgwǎm*
 NEG he IMPF take-IMPF REFL goat hunt.LOC
 'He does not take a goat on a hunt.'
 - d. *kà'á tǎ wǎ nǎŋ-ǎ ǎwǎ gywǎ ǎgwǎm*
 NEG we IMPF take-IMPF REFL goat hunt.LOC
 'We do not take a goat on a hunt.'

⁹For example, Dahl (1979:88) points to Jespersen's cycle to explain the diachronic development of negation from a single morpheme to double marking. According to Jespersen, the original negative morpheme gets semantically weakened and is found pragmatically insufficient (pragmatic unmarking). To recompense for this semantic loss, an additional morpheme is added as a negative. From a functional standpoint, the weakening process is concurrent with "the use, and eventual overuse, of emphasis" (Croft 1991:13).

¹⁰Preverbal placement of the negative morpheme is hypothesized to be "a natural universal tendency" (Croft 1991:95). In Veselinova's (2007:11) 71-language sample, 20 languages (28%) sanction pre-predicate placement of the negative particle while sentence-initial negative particles were found in 4 sampled languages (5%).

- e. *kà'á mbā mbā nìŋ-ə ɔ̀wón gywí əgwəm*
 NEG you.PL IMPF take-IMPF REFL goat hunt.LOC
 'You (pl.) do not take a goat on a hunt.'
- f. *kà'á í mbā nìŋ-ə ɔ̀wón gywí əgwəm*
 NEG they IMPF take-IMPF REFL goat hunt.LOC
 'They do not take a goat on a hunt.'

The reduced forms of the Metta reflexives are given in (11).

- (11) a. *kà'á mə wə nìŋ-ə ə-mí gywí əgwəm*
 NEG I IMPF take-IMPF REFL goat hunt.LOC
 'I do not take a goat on a hunt.'
- b. *kà'á à wə nìŋ-ə é gywí əgwəm*
 NEG you.SG IMPF take-IMPF REFL goat hunt.LOC
 'You do not take a goat on a hunt.'
- c. *kà'á í wə nìŋ-ə í gywí əgwəm*
 NEG he.SG IMPF take-IMPF REFL goat hunt.LOC
 'He does not take a goat on a hunt.'
- d. *kà'á tì wə nìŋ-ə á gywí əgwəm*
 NEG we IMPF take-IMPF REFL goat hunt.LOC
 'We do not take a goat on a hunt.'
- e. *kà'á mbā mbā nìŋ-ə ɔ̀ gywí əgwəm*
 NEG you.PL IMPF take-IMPF REFL goat hunt.LOC
 'You (pl.) do not take a goat on a hunt.'
- f. *kà'á í mbā nìŋ-ə ɔ̀ gywí əgwəm*
 NEG they IMPF take-IMPF REFL goat hunt.LOC
 'They do not take a goat on a hunt.'

In Metta, according to Spreda, reflexives have full and reduced forms (as shown in (10) and (11) respectively). The full forms are as follows: 1SG *əmí*, 2SG *əwé*, 3SG *əwí*, 1PL *əwá*, 2PL *əwón*, 3PL *əwón*. The reduced forms consist of the final vowel and tone, left after the deletion of the initial part of the pronominal stem: 2SG *é*, 3SG *í*, 1PL *á*, 2PL *ə*, 3PL *ə*. Note that 2PL and 3PL share the same form *ə*. The first person singular does not have a reduced form. The syntactic placement of the reflexive pronouns in negative clauses in (10)–(11) is immediately after the verb, similar to their postverbal position in Ngie in (9). Spreda (1991:6) posits that reflexives are used in *ka*-negated clauses and intransitive sentences as repeated subjects, as (12) shows:

- (12) *kà'á jó rī əkádí zī-ə fīm-ə ɔ̀wí*
 NEG snake from coiled be-HAB be.fat-HAB REFL
 'A snake which is mostly coiled up is not fat.' (Spreda 1991:2)

As (10)–(12) illustrate, discontinuous negative marking in Spreda's dialect of Metta includes the sentence-initial negative particle *kà'á* and a reflexive variant of a pronominal form placed immediately after the verb. Spreda (1991:6) notes that in his dialect, reflexive pronouns are also obligatory in affirmative clauses with intransitive verbs, marked for imperfective aspect. Our fieldwork data do not seem to support this statement. While Spreda's example *mə wə-ə əmí ə mbēŋ* [I go-IMP REFL LOC

bush] ‘I am going to the farm’ includes the reflexive pronoun 1SG *əmí*, our data show the absence of reflexive pronouns in Metta affirmative verbal clauses, coded for imperfective aspect (e.g. *ɪ-fōn z-é z-ə ʃíg-ə* [CL9-buffalo CL9-that CL9-IMPF eat-CONT] ‘the buffalo is eating.’).

In sum, Spreda’s notes on negation in Metta indicate that *ka*-negation is used in both transitive and intransitive clauses. In Spreda’s rendition of Metta negation, the negative marker is always sentence-initial and is accompanied by a reflexive pronoun postposed to the predicate. By contrast, in (13) Chibaka’s (2006) account of Metta negation lists two negative markers, *čèí* and *káa*, as standard negation strategies in Metta:

- (13) Metta, Chibaka (2006:120)
- a. *čèí mbì kəʔ ʃíkə*
NEG they PST eat.IMPF
‘They were not eating.’
 - b. *káa mǎrì ɲgwènə*
NEG she sleep.IMPF
‘She is not sleeping.’
 - c. *čèí mǎrì kəʔ sòə ɲgywǎ*
NEG she PST wash clothes
‘She was not washing clothes.’
 - d. *káa mǎrì kəʔ ʃík tɪŋgɔ̀m*
NEG she PST eat plantains
‘She did not eat plantains.’

In Metta, according to Chibaka (2006:11), there are two negative markers, *čèí* and *káa*, that seem to be used interchangeably. Whereas Spreda’s examples show reflexive pronouns to co-occur with *ka*-negation, Chibaka’s data do not indicate that a second negative morpheme may be part of verbal negation, as exemplified by (11). Her data confirm Spreda’s attestation of the sentence-initial placement of the negative marker. Overall, Spreda’s and Chibaka’s materials provide insufficient data and a sketchy analysis of verbal negation in Metta to allow us to make any robust conclusions on the subject under discussion.

5 Negation in Metta (based on the data elicited from a native speaker)

This section will draw on the data elicited in a semester-long collective Metta fieldwork project, aimed at gathering data from the native speaker of Metta to compile a grammatical sketch of the language. I will begin by identifying standard negation strategies in Metta, then move on to negation structures in existential, locative, possessive, non-verbal, and imperative clauses, and finally, provide an analysis of Metta negation strategies from a typological standpoint.

5.1 Standard negation in Metta

Before looking at the standard negation strategies in Metta, it is expedient to sketch out the tense system of Metta. It appears that Metta distinguishes three tenses¹¹ marked by the following morphemes:

¹¹In my analysis of the Metta tense system, I adopted the framework and the terminology commonly used in Africanist literature.

‘remote’ past	ɲàʔá (obsolete in the informant’s dialect)
‘yesterday’ past	kí
future	bírí

Unlike many GB languages, Metta does not have an elaborate set of past and future tenses. There is one future and two past tenses in Metta, one of which, the ‘remote’ past, appears to be rarely used in the informant’s dialect. The ‘remote’ past expresses events which happened in the distant past. The ‘yesterday’ past (recent past) refers to events that occurred yesterday or last week, or last month, etc. In addition, a few aspect markers are attested in the language to mark the perfective/ imperfective and habitual/continuous aspectual distinctions. The assertive perfective marker *fí* occurs in the past and future tenses to express completion of an event. Another perfective marker *čērē* ‘just’ is used to emphasize the completion of the event or process in relation to the discourse tense or to the event tense. Non-assertive perfective auxiliary *kír* ‘yet’ occurs in the past tenses and with the abilitive predicate *fír*.

The imperfective aspect is expressed by the imperfective auxiliary *w ~ f ~ t ~ z-ə* and/or the imperfective (continuous) suffix *-ə* or *-nə* postposed to the verb root. The habitual aspect may be also expressed by the post-subject *kè* marker. The ordering of tense and aspectual markers is as follows in Table 1:

-ə IMPF	bírí FUT	fí PRF kír PRF ‘yet’ kè HAB	kí Y.PST ɲàʔá R.PST čērē PRF ‘just’	verb	-ə/nə CONT
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Table 1: Ordering of tense and aspectual markers

The placement of the temporal and aspectual markers in Table 1 is illustrated in (14).

- (14) a. *yí w-é w-ə bírí jǐg-ə*
 woman CL1-that CL1-IMPF FUT eat-CONT
 ‘The woman will be eating.’
- b. *yí w-é w-ə bírí fí jǐg*
 woman CL1-that CL1-IMPF FUT PRF eat
 ‘The woman will have eaten.’
- c. *yí w-é w-ə kí jǐg-ə*
 woman CL1-that CL1-IMPF Y.PST eat-CONT
 ‘The woman was eating.’
- d. *yí w-é w-ə fí jǐg-ə*
 woman CL1-that CL1-IMPF PRF eat-CONT
 ‘The woman has been eating.’
- e. *wí z-é ní mɔ̀ ɲáʔá w-ən kwá, mɔ̀ kí jǐg ɲ-yàm bù*
 time CL9-that COMPL I REM.PST CL1-child small, I Y.PST eat CL9-meat CL9.dog
 ‘When I was a child, I ate dog meat.’

The Metta examples in (14) show a preference for the preverbal placement of tense and aspect operators in the verbal complex.

5.2 *kà*-negation

Standard negation in Metta involves basic main clauses in the declarative mood containing a verbal predicate. As the data elicited from the informant show, Metta, like many other GB languages uses *kà*-negation as its standard negation strategy, expressed in (15) by discontinuous negative marking:

(15) Imperfective aspect

- a. *fōn w-ḍ ḵḵg-ḍ fū*
 buffalo CL1-this eat-CONT leaf
 ‘The buffalo eats leaves.’
- b. *fōn w-ḍ kà ḵḵg-í fū*
 buffalo CL1-this NEG eat-NEG leaf
 ‘The buffalo does not eat leaves.’
- c. *kà fōn w-ḍ ḵḵg-í fū*
 NEG buffalo CL1-this eat-NEG leaf
 ‘The buffalo does not eat leaves.’
- d. *w-ḍd w-è w-ḍ kōm-ḍ mēḍí*
 CL1-man CL1-that CL1-IMP hit him
 ‘The man is hitting him.’
- e. *w-ḍd w-è ká w-ḍ kōm-í mēḍí*
 CL1-man CL1-that NEG CL1-IMP hit-NEG him
 ‘The man is not hitting him.’
- f. *kà w-ḍd w-è w-ḍ kōm-í mēḍí*
 NEG CL1-man CL1-that CL1-IMP hit-NEG him
 ‘The man is not hitting him.’
- g. *yí w-é w-ḍ kḵ ḵḵg-ḍ*
 woman CL1-that CL1-IMP Y.PST eat-CONT
 ‘The woman was eating.’
- h. *yí w-é ká w-ḍ kḵ ḵḵg-í*
 woman CL1-that NEG CL1-IMP Y.PST eat-NEG
 ‘The woman was not eating.’
- i. *ká yí w-é w-ḍ kḵ ḵḵg-í*
 NEG woman CL1-that CL1-IMP Y.PST eat-NEG
 ‘The woman was not eating.’

In (15), the negative morpheme *kà* may be either clause-initial (15c, 15f, 15i) or placed in the auxiliary slot (15b, 15e, 15h). Also, constructional asymmetry is observed in negated clauses when the continuous suffix *-ḍ* is replaced with the second negative marker *-í*, thus neutralizing the aspect distinction as demonstrated in (15b, 15c, 15e, 15f, 15h, 15i). Moreover, (16) lists instances of constructional asymmetry in the perfective aspect in Metta:

(16) Perfective aspect

- a. *yí w-é fḵ ḵḵg*
 woman CL1-that PRF eat
 ‘The woman has eaten.’

- b. *yí w-é kà kír jǐg-í*
 woman CL1-that NEG yet eat-NEG
 ‘The woman hasn’t eaten yet.’
- c. *kà yí w-é kír jǐg-í*
 NEG woman CL1-that yet eat-NEG
 ‘The woman hasn’t eaten yet.’
- d. *w-əd w-é fɿ bù fɿ-kīŋ f-é*
 CL1-man CL1-that PRF break CL19-pot CL19-that
 ‘The man has broken the pot.’
- e. *w-əd w-é kà kír bù-í fɿ-kīŋ f-é*
 CL1-man CL1-that NEG yet break-NEG CL19-pot CL19-that
 ‘The man hasn’t broken the pot yet.’
- f. *kà w-əd w-é kír bù-í fɿ-kīŋ f-é*
 NEG CL1-man CL1-that yet break-NEG CL19-pot CL19- that
 ‘The man hasn’t broken the pot yet.’

In (16), in addition to the variation in the syntactic position of the negative morpheme *kà*, constructional asymmetry is manifested. In (16b, 16c, 16e, 16f), the perfective marker *fɿ* is replaced with the non-assertive perfective marker *kír* ‘yet’. Negative structures with the perfective marker *čērē* ‘just’ follow the same pattern in (17):

- (17) a. *yí w-é čērē jǐg-ə*
 woman CL1-that just eat-CONT
 ‘The woman has just eaten.’
- b. *yí w-é kà kír čērē jǐg-í*
 woman CL1-that NEG yet just eat-NEG
 ‘The woman hasn’t just eaten yet.’

In (17b), constructional asymmetry in *kà*-negated clauses involves the insertion of the non-assertive perfective marker *kír* and a replacement of the final vowel *-ə* (carrying an aspectual ‘continuous’ meaning) with the negative marker *-í*. The negative in the ‘yesterday’ past also demonstrate constructional asymmetry, as (18) illustrates:

- (18) ‘Yesterday’ past
- a. *yí w-é kɿ jǐg*
 woman CL1-that Y.PST eat
 ‘The woman ate.’
- b. *yí w-é kà kɿ jǐg-í*
 woman CL1-that NEG Y.PST eat-NEG
 ‘The woman didn’t eat.’
- c. *mɔ̄ kɿ kòm-ə ŋ-gòb z-é*
 I Y.PST hit-CONT CL9-chicken CL9-that
 ‘I hit the chicken.’
- d. *mɔ̄ kɿ kà kòm-ə ŋ-gòb z-é*
 I Y.PST NEG hit-NEG CL9-chicken CL9-that
 ‘I didn’t hit the chicken.’

- e. *àwò kɪ̀ kòm-ə̄ η-gòb z-é*
 you Y.PST hit-CONT CL9-chicken CL9-that
 ‘You hit the chicken.’
- f. *àwò kà kɪ̀ kòm-ə́ η-gòb z-é*
 you NEG Y.PST hit-NEG CL9-chicken CL9-that
 ‘You didn’t hit the chicken.’
- g. *mìmēd kɪ̀ kòm-ə̄ η-gòb z-é*
 they Y.PST hit-CONT CL9-chicken CL9-that
 ‘They hit the chicken.’
- h. *mìmēd kà kɪ̀ kòm-ə́ η-gòb z-é*
 they NEG PST hit-NEG CL9-chicken CL9-that
 ‘They didn’t hit the chicken.’

In (18a, 18b), the positive and the negative clauses are symmetric since at first glance no structural change is attested in the negated counterpart. However, negated predicates in (18d, 18f, 18h) bear a constructional difference since the mid-toned final vowel in the lexical verb *kòm-ə̄* ‘hit, punch’ in the affirmative clauses in (18c, 18e, 18g) becomes a high-toned one in the corresponding negative clauses, signaling a structural change in the negatives. A tonal change is a formal non-concatenative operation which alters the word’s morphological structure (Haspelmath 2002:23). The high-toned final vowel is assumed to be associated with the reflexive/possessive forms which are placed after the verb stem and agree with the subject NP in negated sentences. Recall that Spreda’s field notes list the following reduced reflexive forms: 2SG *ê*, 3SG *í*, 1PL *á*, 2PL/3PL *ə́* (1991:8). The first person singular retains the unreduced *ə́mí*, as Spreda notes. In (18), the postverbal morphemes have the following shapes: 1SG *ə́*, 2SG *ə́*, 3SG *í*, 3PL *ə́*. The agreement pattern appears to be heavily skewed in the negated sentences as the pronominal forms are seemingly affected by the environments they occur in. We can speculate that we are dealing here with the coalescence of a few morphemes, when merging segments such as the continuous marker *-ə̄*, variants of the reflexive morpheme *ê*, *í*, *á*, or *ə́*, and the proposition morpheme *-i* become a distinct unit. Another contributing factor may be the direction of diachronic processes which will be addressed further in the paper. Though tenuous, the tonal morpheme in (18) may be treated as the second negative marker, based on its relation to the high-toned reduced reflexive forms, attested by Spreda (1991:8).

Negated clauses in the future tense in (19) seem to show constructional symmetry:

(19) **Future tense**

- a. *yí w-é bɪ̀rɪ́ wə̄ nù*
 woman CL1-that FUT go home
 ‘The woman will go home.’
- b. *yí w-é kà bɪ̀rɪ́ wə̄-í nù*
 woman CL1-that NEG FUT GO-NEG home
 ‘The woman won’t go home.’
- c. *kà yí w-é bɪ̀rɪ́ wə̄-í nù*
 NEG woman CL1-that FUT GO-NEG home
 ‘The woman won’t go home.’

- d. *yí w-é bîrî kyím η-gòb z-é*
 woman that FUT kill chicken that
 ‘The woman will kill the chicken.’
- e. *yí w-é kà bîrî kyím-í η-gòb z-é*
 woman CL1-that NEG FUT kill-NEG CL9-chicken CL9-that
 ‘The woman won’t kill the chicken.’
- f. *kà yí w-é bîrî kyím-í η-gòb z-é*
 NEG woman CL1-that FUT kill-NEG CL9-chicken CL9-that
 ‘The woman won’t kill the chicken.’

Negative constructions in (19) show a one-to-one correspondence with their affirmative counterparts in the context of standard negation. The only structural change involved is the insertion of the discontinuous negative morpheme *kà- -í*.

Before moving on to *čé*-negation as another standard negation strategy, we will make a few conclusions based on the above data. First, *kà*-negation as the standard negation strategy demonstrates to some extent syntactic flexibility: the first marker may occupy a preverbal position or the sentence-initial slot. The consultant’s usage preferences obviously lie with the former; in the later stages of the project, after consulting an older Metta speaker, he pointed out to the researchers that there is an alternative sentence-initial placement of the negative marker. This fact suggests that the sentence-initial position of *ka* may be a nearly obsolete ordering arrangement, while the preverbal insertion of the negative morpheme reflects a more common usage, embraced by the younger generations of Metta speakers. This assumption seems to contradict, however, Spreda’s (1991) and Chibaka’s (2006) materials, which show no variation in the placement of the negative morpheme *ká*; in their data it is always sentence-initial. More data are needed to ascertain whether the sentence-initial ordering of *kà* is innovative or conservative.

Next, the shape, function, and the origin of the second negative morpheme remain problematic. Synchronically, we interpret this morpheme as a negator since its variants invariably show up in all declarative paradigms. Its historical provenance may be clarified if we identify forms which are syncretic with the negator. Typological studies in Bantu languages posit that reflexives in Grassfields Bantu are syncretic with possessive pronouns (Watters 2003:252). Spreda’s (1991) and Chibaka’s (2006) lists of possessive and reflexive pronouns support this generalization, revealing that most of the full forms are cognates.¹² Spreda’s data show that reflexive forms are co-referential with the subject and agree with the subject in person and number in negated sentences. For example, the multifunctionality of the negator *i* becomes obvious in our data if we recall that in Metta this form is homophonous with the 3SG possessive pronoun *í* and the middle tense marker *í* (which, most likely, derives from a reflexive pronominal form). It seems that *í* originates from a pronominal form. The above evidence from Spreda (1991), (10), (11) and other GB languages (e.g. Ngie (9)) may buttress this claim.

The shapes of other reflexive forms appear to have been weakened. The traces of the reflexives may be found in the tonal makeup of the final vowels of lexical verbs as exemplified by the negated clauses in (18). Considering that Metta is currently undergoing rapid morphosyntactic change, we tentatively assume that the simplification of the reflexive pronominal system in negated sentences could have maximally leveled the paradigm in Metta while leaving largely intact the 3SG

¹²Chibaka’s (2006:79–80) list of possessive forms for NC1, Spreda’s (1991:7–8) list of reflexive forms, and the reflexive and the DO forms provided by our consultant bear considerable family resemblance (see Appendix B).

reflexive/possessive form. The possible functional explanation of the better preserved 3SG reflexive/possessive form is its frequency usage. Frequency asymmetry often has an effect on the direction of language change as frequent units are more easily remembered and faster retrieved (Haspelmath 2002:237). The third person singular is a category with one of the highest token frequencies in human discourse.

Another important factor that might impact the shape of the second negator in Metta, in addition to the verbal agreement with the subject NPs, is the classes of verbs to which it attaches. Evidently, more data are needed to support or rebut this claim.

The functional explanation of the insertion of the second negator may possibly be motivated by the “use, and eventual overuse of emphasis” (Croft 1991:13). Studies in negation (e.g. Croft (1991)) show that evolution of negation is cyclical, and its development from single marking to double marking is often triggered by the speakers’ pragmatic consideration to emphasize denial.

5.3 *čí*-negation

Negation in Metta may be expressed with a single negative particle *čí*. The particle is always sentence-initial, as (20) demonstrates:

- (20) a. *fōn w-ḍ jǎg-ḍ fū*
 buffalo CL1-this eat-CONT leaf
 ‘The buffalo eats leaves.’
- b. *čí fōn w-ḍ jǎg-ḍ fū*
 NEG buffalo CL1-this eat-CONT leaf
 ‘The buffalo does not eat leaves.’
- c. *fōn mǐjǐm bēzāmbē nōt-ḍ*
 buffalo every fast run-CONT
 ‘Every buffalo runs fast.’
- d. *čí fōn mǐjǐm bēzāmbē nōt-ḍ*
 NEG buffalo every fast run-CONT
 ‘Every buffalo does not run fast.’
- e. *yí w-é fǐ jǎg*
 woman CL1-that PRF eat
 ‘The woman has eaten.’
- f. *čí yí w-é kǐr jǎg*
 NEG woman CL1-that yet eat
 ‘The woman hasn’t eaten yet.’
- g. *w-ḍd w-é fǐ bù fǐ-kīŋ f-é*
 CL1-man CL1-that PRF break CL19-pot CL19-that
 ‘The man has broken the pot.’
- h. *čí w-ḍd w-é kǐr bù fǐ-kīŋ f-é*
 NEG CL1-man CL1-that yet break CL19-pot CL19- that
 ‘The man hasn’t broken the pot yet.’
- i. *yí w-é čērē jǎg-ḍ*
 woman CL1-that just eat-CONT
 ‘The woman has just eaten.’

- j. *čí yí w-é kír čērē jǐg-ǝ*
 NEG woman CL1-that yet just eat-CONT
 ‘The woman hasn’t just eaten yet.’
- k. *yí w-é kǐ jǐg*
 woman CL1-that Y.PST eat
 ‘The woman ate.’
- l. *čí yí w-é kǐ jǐg*
 NEG woman CL1-that Y.PST eat
 ‘The woman didn’t eat.’
- m. *m̄ kǐ kòm-ǝ méd*
 I Y.PST hit-CONT him
 ‘I hit him.’
- n. *čí m̄ kǐ kòm-ǝ méd*
 NEG I Y.PST hit-CONT him
 ‘I didn’t hit him.’
- o. *yí w-é bǐrǐ w̄ nù*
 woman CL1-that FUT go home
 ‘The woman will go home.’
- p. *čí yí w-é bǐrǐ w̄ nù*
 NEG woman CL1-that FUT go home
 ‘The woman won’t go home.’
- q. *yí w-é bǐrǐ kyím η-gòb z-é*
 woman CL1-that FUT kill CL9-chicken CL9-that
 ‘The woman will kill the chicken.’
- r. *čí yí w-é bǐrǐ kyím η-gòb z-é*
 NEG woman CL1-that FUT kill CL9-chicken CL9-that
 ‘The woman won’t kill the chicken.’

As can be seen by examining in (20) the instances of *čí*-negation and contrasting them to their positives, constructional-paradigmatic symmetry is manifested, in Miestamo’s sense, in the imperfective aspect (20a–20d), in the ‘yesterday’ past tense (20k–20n), and in the future tense (20o–20r). However, constructional asymmetry is revealed in the perfective aspect (20e–20i). Though the category of aspect is not blocked in the negatives (20f, 20h, 20j) since the perfective aspect marker *f̄* is replaced with its perfective counterpart *kír*, the absence of *f̄* in the negated clauses signals constructional asymmetry. This pattern of constructional asymmetry is also attested in *kà*-negation in Metta.

The blocking power of the negator *čí* may be further illustrated by (21):

- (21) a. *f̄-kīη f-é kǐ bù-ŷí*
 CL19-pot CL19-that Y.PST break-MID
 ‘The pot broke.’
- b. *čí f̄-kīη f-é kǐ bù*
 NEG CL19-pot CL19-that Y.PST break
 ‘The pot didn’t break.’

- c. *fī-kīŋ f-é kà kī bù-ʔí*
 CL19-pot CL19- that NEG Y.PST break-MID
 ‘The pot didn’t break.’

In (21a, 21b) the structural difference between the affirmative and negative clauses is manifested by the loss of the voice distinction, the middle voice marker *-ʔí*, on the verb. The non-specification of voice in the negative clause signals paradigmatic asymmetry in verbal *čí*-negation. Interestingly, in (21c) the voice distinction is preserved, which possibly can be explained by the macrofunctionality of reflexives serving both as a source for middle voice and negation marking.

6 Non-standard negation in Metta

As stated in section 2, standard negation is referred to a basic way of negating a declarative verbal main clause. In many languages, non-standard negation is attested to be found in imperative, nominal, adjectival, existential, locative, and possessive clauses, as well as subordinate clauses. This section will deal with negation in the above domains.

6.1 Existential negation

Existential negation is referred to the negation of clauses which denote the existence of a human or a non-human object. Our data in (22) indicate that in Metta, *čí* is a basic way of encoding negated existence:

- (22) a. *w-əd čəm mōʔó*
 CL1-man any
 ‘There is a nice man.’
 b. *čí w-əd čəm mōʔó*
 NEG CL1-man nice any
 ‘There is no nice man.’
 c. *fōn təfùʔə mōʔó*
 buffalo blue any
 ‘There is a blue buffalo.’
 d. *čí fōn mōʔó*
 NEG buffalo any
 ‘There is no buffalo.’
 e. *čí fōn təfùʔə mōʔó*
 NEG buffalo blue any
 ‘There is no blue buffalo.’

In (22), the standard negation marker *čí* is used in existential sentences. It occurs in the canonical slot, i.e., it appears sentence-initially.

6.2 Locative negation

Locative clauses code the spatial position of objects. In our data, negation in existential clauses involves the standard negation marker *čí*, as exemplified by (23):

- (23) a. *ɪ-fōn w-é w-ə̀ nù*
 CL1-buffalo CL1-that CL1-IMPV village
 ‘The buffalo is in the village.’
- b. *čí ɪ-fōn w-é w-ə̀ nù*
 NEG CL1-buffalo CL1-that CL1-IMPV village
 ‘The buffalo is not in the village.’

In (23b), a verbal negator *čí* is used to negate the locative construction. The negative marker *čí* is placed sentence-initial.

6.3 Negation in possessive clauses

Possessive clauses express the semantic notion of ownership which may be encoded by existential/locative structures or verbs like ‘have’ (Payne 1997:126). In Metta, a basic way of coding possession is the verb *bèrɪ* ‘to own’. To negate a possessive clause, the standard negation strategy is utilized, as seen in (24):

- (24) a. *mɔ̀ bèr ɲ-gòb*
 I own CL9-chicken
 ‘I have chickens.’
- b. *čí mɔ̀ bèr ɲ-gòb*
 NEG I own CL9-chicken
 ‘I don’t have chickens.’
- c. *mɔ̀ kà bèr-ə̀-m ɲ-gòb*
 I NEG own-NEG CL9-chicken
 ‘I don’t have chickens.’
- d. *w-ənēyí w-ə̀ bèr ɲ-gòb*
 CL1-girl CL1-this own CL9-chicken
 ‘The girl has chickens.’
- e. *w-ənēyí w-ə̀ kà bèr-í ɲ-gòb*
 CL1-girl CL1-this NEG own-NEG CL9-chicken
 ‘The girl doesn’t have chickens.’
- f. *čí w-ənēyí w-ə̀ bèr ɲ-gòb*
 NEG CL1-girl CL1-this own CL9-chicken
 ‘The girl does not have chickens.’

Negating possessive clauses does not require a special negator, as shown in (24). Metta permits the use of the standard negation operators in possessive clauses. In (24c, 24e), the standard negation strategy involving discontinuous negative marking is used, with the first morpheme *kà* positioned pre-verbally and the second morpheme, a possessive/reflexive pronominal form, postposed to the verb. Interestingly, in (24c), the second negative morpheme is manifested by the change of the tone on the final vowel on the verb and the postverbal insertion of *-m* (apparently, a reflex of the old 1SG reflexive/possessive pronoun *ə̀mɪ*). The *čí*-negation strategy is illustrated by (24b, 24f) where the negator occupies its pre-subject slot to express denial of possession.

6.4 Non-verbal negation

Non-verbal clauses are defined as having nominal or adjectival predicates. The standard negation markers *čí* and *kà* in (25) are found to service the non-verbal clauses in Metta:

- (25) a. *b-ən b-ɔ̄ yè b-ən čəm*
CL2-children CL2-those COP CL2-children good
'The children are good.'
- b. *fōn w-é ká yè fōn təfùʔə*
buffalo CL1-that NEG COP buffalo blue
'The buffalo is not blue.'
- c. *ĩ w-ə̄ wənə̄*
he CL1-IMPf sick
'He is sick.'
- d. *čí mɔ̄ w-ə̄ wənə̄*
NEG I CL1-IMPf sick
'I am not sick.'
- e. *fōn mb-ɔ̄ yè ɲ-yàm*
buffalo CL2-those COP CL9-animal
'These buffalo are animals.'
- f. *ĩ-fōn mb-ɔ̄ ká yè mĩ ɲ-gòb*
CL1-buffalo CL2-those NEG COP NAM CL9-chicken
'The buffalo are not chickens.'
- g. *Michael yè Nḡō*
Michael COP Nḡō
'Michael is Nḡō.'
- h. *Nḡō ká yè Sam*
Nḡō NEG COP Sam
'Nḡō is not Sam.'

In (25), verbal negators *ká* and *čí* are found in the adjectival and nominal predicates. The syntactic placement of *ká* and *čí*, the former after the subject NP and the latter sentence-initially, is the same as in negated verbal clauses. However, non-verbal negation does not permit discontinuous negation marking. The pronominal forms which are found postposed to the verbal predicates do not occur with non-verbal predicates.

6.5 The negative imperatives (prohibitives)

The typical second person singular imperatives involve affirmative commands and their negated counterparts, prohibitives. In (26), the affirmative singular commands (26a, 26c) are symmetric with the corresponding negative imperatives (26b, 26d):

- (26) a. *yēyà!*
come.here
'Come here!'

- b. *tē yēyà!*
 NEG come.here
 ‘Don’t come here!’
- c. *kòm-ə̀ w-ə̀d w-é!*
 hit-CONT CL1-man CL1-that
 ‘Punch the man!’
- d. *tē kòm-ə̀ w-ə̀d w-é!*
 NEG hit-CONT CL1-man CL1-that
 ‘Don’t punch the man!’

In (26), prohibitives use a special negator *tē* placed sentence initially. There is no overt second person singular pronoun in the affirmative commands and prohibitives.

6.6 Negation in subordinate clauses

In many languages, negating subordinate clauses tends to be different from the ways of negating main clauses (Payne 1985:240). In Metta, however, the standard negation strategy is also used in subordinate clauses, as shown in (27):

- (27) a. *w-ə̀d w-é k̄́ yā ní f̄́-k̄́ŋ f-é k̄́ bù-ʔí*
 CL1-man CL1-that PST say REL CL19-pot CL19-that PST break-MID
 ‘The man said that the pot broke.’
- b. *w-ə̀d w-é k̄́ yā ní čí f̄́-k̄́ŋ f-é k̄́ bù*
 CL1-man CL1-that PST say REL NEG CL19-pot CL19-that PST break
 ‘The man said that the pot didn’t break.’
- c. *w-ə̀d w-é k̄́ yā ní f̄́-k̄́ŋ f-é k̄́ k̄́ bù-ʔí*
 CL1-man CL1-that PST say REL CL19-pot CL19-that NEG PST break-MID
 ‘The man said that the pot didn’t break.’

As can be seen in (27), the method of negating of a subordinate verbal clause is identical to that of the main verbal clause; the same basic means, *čí*-negation and *k̄́*-negation strategies, are utilized to negate subordinate clauses in (27b, 27c).

7 Conclusions

The objective of this paper was to describe negation in Metta. The results of this study can now be summarized as follows. First, we have demonstrated that standard negation in Metta is syntactic (analytic) and may involve more than one way of negation marking, *k̄́*-negation or *čí*-negation. The limited data do not allow us to determine the exact distribution of the above standard negation markers and clearly identify the contexts in which one strategy is preferred over the other. It appears that Metta favors *čí*-negation in existential, locative, and non-verbal clauses. In terms of their functions, our assumption is that *čí*-negation, as a historically innovative and more recent strategy, evolved as a way to emphasize denial.

Next, one of our most important findings concerns the structure of standard *k̄́*-negation which involves discontinuous negation marking, with *k̄́* either placed before or after the subject NP and the second morpheme, a pronominal form, positioned post-verbally. The second morpheme is assumed

to have derived from a possessive/reflexive pronominal form and synchronically may be treated as a second negator. As Table 2 below shows, in some cases (e.g. in negated non-verbal clauses), the negative morpheme is not discontinuous.

Our investigation has also revealed that in Metta the domain of standard negation extends from main verbal clauses to other environments such as subordinate, existential, locative, possessive, and non-verbal clauses. From a typological standpoint, this situation is common cross-linguistically (e.g. Veselinova's (2007:11) study has shown that 21 out of 71 sampled languages use the same strategy with standard and non-standard negation). In Metta, imperative clauses provide the only context that sanctions the use of a special negative operator *tē*. This finding supports typological studies, demonstrating that a majority of languages favor non-standard negative strategies in their imperatives (Miestamo 2007:561). The nature of imperatives as prohibition speech acts and their frequency usage set them apart from the more commonly used declarative negation.

Moreover, our study has found that symmetric negation is more common than asymmetric negation with *čí*-negation while *kà*-negation shows more instances of modifications, as Table 2 illustrates:

Context	Negator	Asymmetry attested
imperfective	<i>kà</i> ...poss/refl <i>čí</i>	continuous verbal suffix <i>-ə</i> deletes or becomes high-toned none
perfective (generic)	<i>kà</i> ...poss/refl <i>čí</i>	the tense marker <i>fɪ</i> is replaced with the perfective marker <i>kɪr</i> the tense marker <i>fɪ</i> is replaced with the perfective marker <i>kɪr</i>
perfective 'just'	<i>kà</i> ...poss/refl <i>čí</i>	continuous verbal suffix <i>-ə</i> deletes; the tense marker <i>fɪ</i> is replaced with the perfective marker <i>kɪr</i> the tense marker <i>fɪ</i> is replaced with the perfective marker <i>kɪr</i>
'yesterday' past	<i>kà</i> ...poss/refl <i>čí</i>	continuous verbal suffix <i>-ə</i> deletes none
future	<i>kà</i> ...poss/refl <i>čí</i>	none none
imperative mood	<i>tē</i>	none
existential clauses	<i>čí</i>	none
locative clauses	<i>čí</i>	none
possessive clauses	<i>kà</i> ...poss/refl <i>čí</i>	continuous verbal suffix <i>-ə</i> deletes or becomes high-toned none
non-verbal negation	<i>kà</i> <i>čí</i>	the second negative morpheme deletes none
subordinate clauses	<i>kà</i> ...poss/refl <i>čí</i>	same as in main clauses same as in main clauses
middle voice	<i>kà</i> ...poss/refl <i>čí</i>	the second morpheme fuses with the middle voice marker the middle voice marker <i>-ʔí</i> deletes

Table 2: Summary of Metta negators, including distribution and attested structural changes

As Table 2 shows, asymmetry observed in negation structures in Metta refers to the A/Cat type, the most common type of asymmetry when the differences are attested in how grammatical categories are marked in the affirmative and the negative (Miestamo 2005:112). The A/Cat type involves both constructional asymmetry and paradigmatic asymmetry in Metta as exemplified in Table 2. Specifically, constructional asymmetry in Metta negatives refers to the modification of completive forms when one form is replaced with another. This asymmetry, manifested in both *kà*-negation and *čí*-negation, shows modifications of perfect or perfective forms in the 'immediate' past and 'today'

past tenses, as can be seen in Table 2. From a typological perspective, this is a common phenomenon in negation when the completive category is attested to be affected (Miestamo 2005:181).

Also, our data generally support Miestamo's (2005:181) observation that symmetric negation is more common than asymmetric negation. As Table 2 shows, the innovative *čĩ*-negation reveals more constructional symmetry than the conservative *kà*-negation, evidently, indicating that the Metta grammatical system is becoming more regular.

In our data, blocked imperfective forms have been attested, a type of paradigmatic asymmetry¹³ which is fairly common typologically (Miestamo 2005:181). As Table 2 shows, they are found with *kà*-negation in 'yesterday' past and the imperfective and perfective aspects, when the aspectual verbal suffix *-ə* denoting incomplete (continuous, durative, imperfective, progressive) meaning deletes. Additionally, in standard *čĩ*-negation, the category of voice is recorded to be neutralized, when the middle voice marker is lost in a negated clause in the 'yesterday' past tense. In sum, the neutralization of imperfective forms in all tenses except the future tense and the blocking of the middle voice marking have been identified as instances of paradigmatic asymmetry in Metta.

¹³Paradigmatic asymmetry involves neutralization, not modification, of a category such as tense, aspect, mood, evidentiality, voice, person, number, etc.

A Abbreviations

AGR	agreement	M	masculine
AUX	auxiliary	MID	middle voice
CL	class prefix	N	neuter
COMPL	complementizer	NAM	numeral agreement
CONN	connector	NEG	negative
CONT	continuous	PRF	perfective
COP	copula	PL	plural
FIN	final vowel	POSS	possessive
FUT	future	PST	past
HAB	habitual	REFL	reflexive
IMPF	imperfective	REL	relativizer
INF	infinitive	REM.PST	remote past
LOC	locative	SG	singular
		Y.PST	'yesterday' past

B Possessive, reflexive, and DO forms

Chibaka's (2006:79–80) list of possessive forms for NC1, Spreda's (1991:7–8) list of reflexive forms, and the reflexive and the DO forms provided by our consultant.

	possessive	reflexive (full)	reflexive (reduced)	reflexive (our data)	DO forms (our data)
1SG	əm̀ə̀	əm̀í	əm̀í	-m	-m
2SG	ìwê	ə̀wê	ê	wé	Ø?
3SG	mət	ə̀wí	í	í	méd
1PL	ìwə̀	ə̀wá	á	wá	wá
2PL	ìwə̀n	ə̀wə̀n	ə̀	?	wə̀n
3PL	ìwɔ̀p	ə̀wə̀n	ə̀	wə̀	?

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