

NEGATION IN KURMANJI

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It has been proposed in the literature that morphemes of a certain class must occur in a certain appointed sequence (Katamba & Stonham, 2006). Similarly, Inkelas (1993) points out verbal morphemes in Nimboraan occupy slots organized in a strict hierarchical order and certain morphemes are in complementary distribution, thus the morpheme that fills a certain slot precludes all the other possible morphemes that are relevant to that slot. Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish-an Indo-Iranian language spoken in eastern Turkey and northern Iraq) shows a similar pattern. In this paper, we will show that a hierarchical morpheme ordering is available in part of the word in Kurmanji and we will analyze prefixes of negation with respect to Position Class Morphology. The data will be based on the dialect of Kurmanji spoken in Muş province in Turkey.

The internal structure of the word is a hitherto unanalyzed aspect of Kurmanji verb forms. It should be noted that it is difficult to decide what the verb root is; thus in this study while segmenting the given data, the term “verb stem” is used instead of “verb root”. Kurmanji verb forms have prefixes and suffixes and a complex organization which makes it hard to analyze these structures within only one morphological model. According to Manova and Aranoff (2010), a particular language can benefit from a combination of two morphological organizations; basically templatic and layered morphology. Adopting their views, it may be proposed that these two models may account for complex structure of verbs in Kurmanji. The current study mainly focuses on prefixes on verb stems in Kurmanji; especially the prefix position where negation and other tense morphemes (except for past continuous prefix *di-*) occur.

Negation in Kurmanji appears on verb stems as a prefix which has two phonological shapes, *n(a)-* and *n(e)-*. In the present/continuous tense, it is realized as *n(a)-* while in all other tenses it is *n(e)-* as in (1). The interesting point about negation is that the appearance of the negation prefix precludes the appearance of other tense prefixes. To illustrate, when *diçim* “I am going” is negated, the tense prefix *di-* is replaced by negation marker as in *naçim* “I am **not** going”. It seems that these prefixes occupy the same position and one blocks the other; thus they cannot occur at the same time. This blocking phenomenon does not influence tense markers which are suffixes; the suffixes remain in their positions and the negation marker is prefixed to verb stem. For instance, past perfect tense inflection occurs as a suffix on the verb so when *çubun* “We/You/They had gone” is negated, we get *neçubun* “We/You/They had not gone”. However, this blocking phenomenon is observed in all tenses except for past continuous tense. In past continuous tense, negation prefix *n(e)-* does not preclude tense prefix *di-* but precedes it as in *nediçum* “I was not going”.

We propose that in Kurmanji there are two prefix positions; one is reserved only for tense prefix of past continuous tense *di-* and the other is reserved for negation and all other tense prefixes. The blocking phenomenon considers the latter case and it can be asserted that a hierarchical morpheme ordering is available in Kurmanji and prefixes of negation hierarchically have priority over tense prefixes of the same slot; hence, when the former appears the latter is omitted as in (2). There are two potential possible candidates for that prefix position, namely negation and tense morphemes, yet merely a single element can occupy this position. What happens is that in negative sentences the negation prefix shown as [A], blocks tense prefixes represented as [B]; this shows that the former one is hierarchically prior to the latter; hence when [A] enters into the competition it wins by blocking [B] as in (3).

The same blocking process applies to the irregular cases in which tense prefixes appear as infixes on some verbs such as *radizem* “I am sleeping” and its negated form is *ranazem* “I am not sleeping”. Again, *na-* precludes *di-* prefix. Even though present subjunctive tense marker

b(i)- does not occur as infix on these verbs, negation marker still appears on them as in *runem* “I shall sit” vs. *runenem* “I shall not sit”. This may be considered as an indication of negation morpheme being hierarchically superior to tense morphemes occupying the same slot.

(1)

Verb: ČUN ‘go’	Present/Cont.	Present Subjunctive	Simple Past
1PSG Ez	dıçım / naçım	bıçım / neçım	çum / neçum
2PSG Tu	dıçi / naçi	bıçi / neçi	çuy / neçuy
3PSG Ew	dıçe / naçe	bıçe / neçe	çu / neçu
1/2/3PPL(Em,Hun,Ew)	dıçın / naçın	bıçın / neçın	çun / neçun

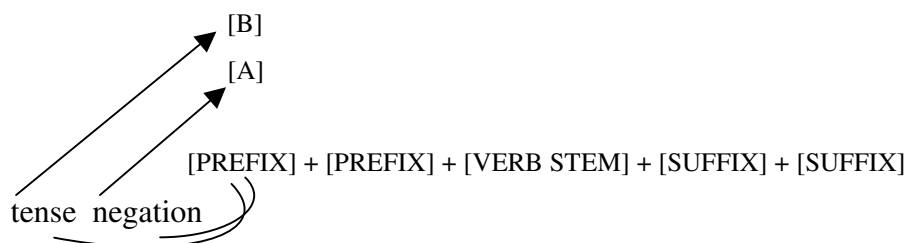
Past Cont.	Present Perfect	Past Perfect
dıçum / nediçum	çume / neçume	çubum / neçubum
dıçuyi / nediçuyi	çuyi / neçuyi	çubuyi / neçubuyi
dıçu / nediçu	çuye / neçuye	çubu / neçubu
dıçun / nediçun	çune / neçune	çubun / neçubun

e.g: *ne* - *dı* - *çu* - *m*
 negation marker past cont. tense morpheme verb stem 1st person marker

(2)

[PREFIX] + [PREFIX] + [VERB STEM] + [SUFFIX] + [SUFFIX]
negation + tense + lexical stem + agreement+ tense
tense

(3)



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