

The rise of clause-final negation in Flores-Lembata languages

The Austronesian Flores-Lembata languages in Eastern Indonesia show great variation in negation patterns. In this talk, I focus on the languages of this subgroup that use clause-final negators and on the development of this negation pattern. This is a pattern that is not considered to be inherited Austronesian but rather emerged in several Austronesian languages in Eastern Indonesia due to contact to non-Austronesian (Papuan) languages (Reesink 2002:246). The following example sentences show negation in three Flores-Lembata languages that have clause-final negators.

- (1) Central Lembata
Mo **ta**-ma sode **si**.
2SG NEG-2SG catch NEG
'You didn't catch it.' (my corpus)
- (2) Hewa
Dediʔ anak **eʔon** puas **iva**.
child little NEG satisfied NEG
'The little child is not satisfied.' (Fricke 2014:9)
- (3) Lewoingu
Go bərin na **halaʔ**.
1SG hit 3SG NEG
'I don't hit him.' (Nishiyama & Kelen 2007:69)

By comparing negation structures in these languages, I investigate the diachronic stages of the different patterns and the lexical origin of the clause-final negators. I propose a development in different phases from pre-predicate negation only (typical Austronesian), over embracing negation, as still found in Central Lembata (1) and Hewa (2), to clause-final negation only, as in Lewoingu (3). This circular development from simple negation to double negation and back to simple negation is cross-linguistically well-known and has been named Jespersen's Cycle (Jespersen 1917; Hoeksema 2009:16). Concerning the etymology of the clause-final negators in the examples, it is interesting that all three come from different sources. The Central Lembata negator *si* in (1) is a grammaticalization of the Central Lembata word *si* 'a little'. For the Hewa negator *iva* in (2) no source is known. However, the form is strikingly similar to the negator (*u*)*wa* in the non-Austronesian North Halmahera languages (Reesink 2002:247). The Lewoingu negator *halaʔ* in (3) possibly comes from Malay *salah* 'wrong'.

This study provides a supporting case for Jespersen's Cycle, with the particularity that the circular change of negation patterns has been triggered by contact. On a more local level, the reconstruction of the lexical sources for the clause-final negators is used to generate a hypothesis about the time-depth of this particular contact scenario.

Abbreviations

2SG: second person singular; NEG: negator; 1SG: first person singular; 3SG: third person singular.

References

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