Negation in Kam (Niger-Congo, Central-eastern Nigeria)

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Kam (𝘢𝓱𝓹𝘸浥m): some background
• Sub-level isolate of Adamawa(-Ubangi-Gbaya-Gur-...) (or North Volta-Congo), Niger-Congo ... ?

• Previously published research: practically nothing (about 150 words collected in Meek 1931 and in Kleinewillinghöfer 2015)

• This project: a grammar and lexicon (currently 1,350 items) of Kam, PhD project, third year just started.
The language and its speakers (ɲīŋwɔ́m)

- Some 20,000-25,000 speakers in some 27 villages
- Identify with Jukun people (KororoFa kingdom)
- Close cultural association with Jirim (Chamba Daka)
- Other groups in the environment
  - Mumuye (Adamawa)
  - Hausa and Fulani
  - Recently: Goza refugees from Borno (Glavda, Chadic)
  - Commercial: Tiv, Yendang, ...
- Actual affiliation:
  - Benue-Congo?
  - Jukun?
  - Adamawa?
  - Other?
  - For now: Niger-Congo as a practical classification.
Data

• Earlier elicited materials (basic morphosyntax + lexicon)
• Transcribed (fragmentarily) folk tales and oral history (about 30 minutes)
• Translation questionnaire with ‘stories’, based on workshop questionnaire to fill holes
• Phasal polarity questionnaire (Kramer 2017)
Scope of presentation

• Polar responses
• Constructions with sentence-final *hin*
  • Standard negation
  • Negation of identity
  • Negation of (predicative) adjectives
• Some Hausa borrowing
• Constructions with *sîrî* (negation of existence)
• Negative imperatives
• A note on phasal polarity
• An ‘if-not’/’lest’ connector
Basic polar response system

• Basic system:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>m m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>a a  (cf. Hausa)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

• Responding to negative statements (and questions):
  • usually, agreement with polarity
    letter M cāṇī jën. | m, cāṇī jën.
    letter M finish not.yet | yes, finish not.yet

‘The letter M isn’t finished yet. No, it hasn’t finished yet.’
(session_271, text)

• Informants claim this is due to Hausa influence, but I’m not sure how and if I could validate this
Other responses

• Negative
  • màsìrī: absolutely not (?

  màsìrī, mà əyī rī cù? îm rì hìn kã.
  ‘Never, not even if they would not catch me.’
  (session_286, elicitation)

• Positive (not Kam-specific)
  • ʧɔ = so!
  • yawwa = oh yes!
  • mhm, ëhɛ = aha!
  • velar click with closed mouth
  • inhaling + raising eyebrows = agreement
Main negation construction: ... ṭìn

• ṭìn
  • Phonologically peculiar: /h/ and /în/ or /ǐ/ or simply /hn/ + tone unclear
  • Sentence-final position, although followed by sentential mood particles (kà COND; yì°/yī Q) → ambiguity and no marking of scope

ī rī wūrī kībā, wò ī nyārī bì à ṭìn
1PL PROG want that blood 3PL.Poss drip soil this NEG
‘We don’t want blood to flow down.’
(session_084, text)

ū tābī nyè kī tāb ā ànyà rì, nyálīb zùb ṭìn
3SG touch hand with fish this person EMPH because thief NEG
‘He didn’t touch the fish with his hand because he was a thief.’ or ‘He touched the fish (with his hand), but not because he was a thief.’ or ‘He didn’t touch the fish because he was not a thief.’
(session_084, text)
Indefinites and existential quantification are not polarity-sensitive

ñ dōg nyī mì hèn, kòm tīʔ-āyì.
1SG see thing INDEF NEG place cover-STAT
‘I saw nothing, the place was too dark.’

nyà mà pǐ à hèn
person too come ? NEG
‘Nobody came.’
hìn + TAM categories

• Perfective aspect/past tense à is usually left unexpressed (possibly should be reanalyzed)

  àwū kīm mǐfām à vs. àwū kīm mǐfām hìn
  3SG eat meat PF 3SG eat meat NEG

  ‘He ate meat.’
  (29-01-2018, whatsapp elicitation)

• Other TAM categories are expressed together with hìn
  • Future tense (floating L tone after verb + other future constructions are not well understood)
  • Progressive aspect (preverbal rì particle)
  • Need and desire (‘accept’ verb in progressive aspect)
  • Interrogatives and conditionals (particles following hìn)
Negation of identification: also hàn

**Equation**

àñàgbàn ā mị̀ mị̀ ā hàn
woman this mother 1SG.POSS COP NEG

‘This woman is not my mother.’

**Inclusion**

Jóhn, àwū málám à hàn
John 3SG teacher COP NEG

‘John is not a teacher.’
Negation of adjectival attribution

• Some property concepts: similar to verbs or nouns
• Core adjectives have two different forms: simple vs. reduplicated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>reduplicated</th>
<th>simple</th>
<th>negated forms</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>= predicative form</td>
<td>= attributive form</td>
<td>= verbalized form</td>
<td>= negative form</td>
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<tr>
<td>= form in isolation</td>
<td>= attributive form</td>
<td>= verbalized form</td>
<td>= negative form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= basic form</td>
<td>= attributive form</td>
<td>= verbalized form</td>
<td>= negative form</td>
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| wù-wù° | wù | wù hìn | ripe |
| kpì-kpésī | kpèsī | kpèsī hìn | smooth |
| mù-músī | músī | músī hìn | full |
| lìl-leston | lèg | lèg hìn | sharp |
Negation of adjectival attribution

àŋgwɔŋ? ā tìntàm → àŋgwɔŋ? ā tɔm hìn

àŋgwɔŋyìi kà lìlëm → àŋgwɔŋyìi kà lèm hìn

house this big:PRED → house this big:NEG NEG

cà here good:PRED → village here good:NEG NEG
Long form + hìn?

àŋgwōʔ  ā  tàntàm  ī  hìn  house  this  big:PRED  ?  NEG?
‘This house is very big.’
(session_071, elicitation)

ànyàvān  ā  dùb  hìn,  àmā  àwū  dùddùb  ī  hìn  man  this  tall:NEG  NEG  but  3SG  tall:PRED  ?  NEG?
‘This man isn’t tall, but he’s very tall.’
(session_287, elicitation)

Elsewhere: translated as ‘This house is big oh!’
→ Possibly, not à hìn, but rather mhm, the ‘positive response’ word; or related to surprise
Double negation construction with mà ... hìn?

• Construction with mixed intuitions (better vs. wrong)

àwū mā lèg ī gēnērātòr sāmr-āyì hìn
3SG ? hear COMPL generator spoil-STAT NEG
‘He didn’t hear that the generator exploded.’

→ Interpretation 1 (Rahab): Hausa borrowing ‘too, also, even, still’, not a ‘correct’ translation
→ Interpretation 2 (Babangida, David): no difference in meaning, but preferred, ‘clearer’ form (only elicitation?)
Hausa negation: bà wēi ... ba

• Informants say it comes from Hausa, but everyone would also use it in Kam (= even non-Hausa speakers)

-backend-wēi i bîr ū vērī kî bâg bà
  NEG  ?  IMPRS  cut  3SG  kill  with  knife  NEG
  ‘It wasn’t necessary to kill them with a knife.’

• Possibly functionally specialized? (Not much experimentation yet)
Existential negation, with sìrī

‘positive’ copula $dī(bī) \rightarrow$ negative copula sìrī

Existential and locational negation

3PL be inside PF \rightarrow 3PL be.NEG side palace king EMPH?

‘They are inside.’ ‘They are not at the king’s palace.’

Possession with copula (vs. possession with verb)

1SG be with hoe (EMPH?) \rightarrow 1SG be.NEG dog EMPH

‘I have a hoe.’ ‘I don’t have a dog.’
Other uses of sìrī: verbs of removal or destruction

wǒ kāsī kwī à sìrī
dog break stick this be.NEG
‘The dog broke this stick.’

bàrī tāsò à sìrī
clean plate this be.NEG
‘clean your plate’

gbènì daū jū sìrī
open heap yam be.NEG
‘open the yam heaps’
Negation of imperatives

• bipartite negation construction: kǐ ... gà; separate melody?

\[ \text{kǐ} \quad \text{nǐm} \quad \text{gà!} \]
NEG eat NEG

‘Don’t eat!’

\( (nìm = \text{L underlyingly}; \text{M tone spread}) \)

\[ \text{nyò} \quad \text{kǐ} \quad \text{wōs} \quad \text{ù} \quad \text{gà.} \]
2PL NEG forget 3SG NEG

‘(The person that told the story,) don’t you forget him!’

\( (\text{wōsì} = \text{L-M underlyingly, M tone spread + rightward shift/push of underlying L tone}) \)
Phasal polarity

• Not yet = jèn
  
àyī rī bǐnbèn jèn  
3PL PROG talk not.yet
  ‘They are not yet talking.’

  Sólómónnīm nyī à n₄wàrì  
Solomoneat thing PF already
  ‘Solomon already ate.’

  already = n₄wàrì

• No longer = nàŋ hin (‘until NEG?’)
  still = tànçòŋ (‘always’)

  ñ nīm nyī nàŋ hin  
1SG eat thing until? NEG
  ‘I'm no longer eating’

  ñ rī nīm nyī tànçòŋ  
1SG PROG eat thing always
  ‘I’m still eating’
Apprehensive ‘lest’ morpheme ‘if not, in case’ connector sīkā

ĩ nāʔi kà, sīkā āyī sāmī kòm.
1PL leave here in.case 3PL spoil place
‘We leave here, lest they spoil the world.’
(session_191, text)

ĩ bàng chāngā yi? sīkà ī nyēkò sòʔi pèh sù ā.
that beer finish Q if.not IMPRS will search come ? ?
‘(that) the beer is finished? If not, it could have been brought.’
Note on ‘never’ and ‘ever’

‘Have you ever visited Lagos?’
(22-05-2018, elicitation)

‘Until today, even I have never climbed a horse.’
(session_191, text)
Yawwa!