

Negation in Lamnso

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Abstract

Negation is a grammatical phenomenon on which descriptive and theoretical linguists have been working on for over the years. Since there is no unique syntactic position that negative markers or particles occupy, their varying positions need to be determined especially at the deep structure level of language. This paper, therefore focuses its attention on what obtains with *yo'* / *la'* (not) in Lamnso (a semi Bantu language spoken in the larger parts of the Bui Division of the Northwest Region), within the theoretical considerations of the principles and parameters theory. Unlike in English and other languages where the negative particles of “not” are generated below the TP (Tense Phrase) and in some cases as bound morphemes, the Lamnso *yo'* and *la'* manifest two distinct features. Firstly, they operate as a free morpheme and secondly they are generated below the TP (as in English) and secondly above the VP in all contexts of time-specifications (tenses) at the D-Structure. However, at the S-Structure, while *la'* remains constantly generated below the TP within the Conditional Phrase (ConP), the *yo'* Neg morpheme for the present tense (P0), the past tense (P1), the future tenses (F1, F2 and F3) moves to the head of the Agreement Phrase (AgrP) Agr, while remaining constant below the TP for P2 and P3.

Keywords: negation, Lamnso, grammar, syntactic, deep structure, principles, parameters, Bantu, tense, phrase.

Introduction

Negation is a phenomenon with varying definitions in relation to the various disciplines. In language and in syntax in particular, it is a “process or construction in a grammatical and semantic analysis which typically expresses the contradiction of a sentence’s meaning (Crystal 1993:231). The expression of this phenomenon as it has been observed by Trask (1993), differs from one language to the other.

Negative markers or particles may take the form of free morphemes or bound morphemes as demonstrated by Tanda and Neba (2005:201). They note that the expression of negation in most languages of the world may entail either the addition of a free morpheme (as ‘not’ in English, ‘ne...pas’ in French ... etc.) or a bound morpheme as (- Vghi in Efik) to a proposition or a verb, with the intention of reversing the truth-value of that proposition.

Whether free or bound morphemes as markers of negation, it is of prime importance to further determine the linguistic options in terms of their distribution in the sentence. Crystal (2000:54) stresses on this, saying that the reason is to determine the range of possibilities which the human brain allows when it comes to the construction of human languages.

Generally in many Bantu languages as intimated by Chumbow&Tamanji (1994), the negative particles or morphemes stand out clearly and usually co-exist with other functional categories including tense, aspect and mood. Tanda and Neba (ibid) points out that sometimes the form of the morpheme varies, depending on the tense of the verb in the sentence. Consequently, it is possible for one to identify the negation morphemes and match them with their tenses.

This paper focuses on two issues: a) the identification and presentation of the negative marker and its forms; b) the syntactic presentation and the distribution of this negative marker. The analysis of the syntactic distribution of the negative marker falls within the “Split-Infl” (Split-Inflection) hypothesis (Pollock 1989),

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Now embedded within the Principles and Parameters Theory (PPT). According to Pollock (*ibid*), adverbs and negation particles or morphemes are generated at different positions in the Deep (D-) structure and verbs, together with their inflections, are considered as distinct heads at the D- structure. These verbs may rise to adjoin to their inflections at the surface structure level.

Looking at what obtains in Lamnso, firstly this hypothesis gain credence with regards to tenses and negative markers that are marked as separate morphemes both at deep and surface structure levels and secondly these markers do not move from one syntactic position to another, as their surface representations would seem to indicate.

Structurally, the paper is organized as follows:

- 1) Brief presentation of Lamnso
- 2) Methodology: data collection and presentation
- 3) Analysis within the PPT
- 4) Conclusion.

1. LAMNSO

According to Ethnologue (2019), we have the following description of Lamnso:

ISO 639-3 : Lns

Alternate Names	: v, Banso, Lamnsok, Lamnso, Nshó, Nso, Nso', Panso
Antonym	: Lamso'
Population	: 240,000 (in Cameroon (2005 Sil)) increasing. 72,000 monolinguals
Ethnic population	: 240,000
Location	: Northwest region: Bui Division, east Jakiri and Kumbo Subdivisions, Northwest Bamenda, Kumbo area. ❖ Parts of Nigeria
Status	: Wider communication (used by speakers of many other languages)
Clarification	: Niger, Congo, Atlantic Congo, Volta-Congo, Benin-Congo, Bantoid, Souther, wide Grassfield, Narrow Grassfield, Ring, East.
Language use	: Vigorous.

2. Methodology: Data Collection/Presentation

The Lamnso corpus in this paper is partly designed by this writer and self-established and administered, being a native speaker of the language. The other part of the corpus was adopted and adapted from the Lamnso dictionary (ɣwà' Nsàv: 2015), Fónkpu(2017, 2013, 2010, 2009, 2008, 2007 and 2005).

2.1 The Negation Markers /Particles of “Not”

Like in most languages, negation is intrinsically associated with tense. For this reason, I will be presenting the “not” markers within the overall tense system in Lamnso.

2.1.1 Yo' Within the Lamnso Tense System

According to ɣwà' Nsàv (2015), Lamnso has a verb system, expressing tense, aspect and mood in the following order

- (i) (Subject) (Tense) (Aspect) verb (Aspect)

Tense is mainly marked by tense particles but in some cases it involves specific tone patterns on the verb. Generally Lamnso manifests seven tenses as we see in tables below:

Table 1 :Present Tense and ‘yo’

Present progressive	<p>Wàn yì kibán Child eat fufu ‘A child is eating fufu’</p>
	<p>Wàn yo’ Ø yì kibán Child Not Po eat fufu ‘A child is not eating fufu’</p>

Table 2 :Future Tense and ‘yo’

Today	<p>Wàn yíyì kibán Child F1 eat fufu ‘A child will eat fufu’</p>
	<p>Wàn yo’ yí yì kibán Child not F1 eat fufu ‘A child will not eat fufu’</p>
Sometimes later	<p>Wàn wíyì kibán Child F2 eat fufu ‘A child will eat fufu’</p>
	<p>Wàn yo’ wí yì kibán Child not F2 eat fufu ‘A child will not eat fufu’</p>
Sometimes further	<p>Wàn ghànyì kibán Child F3 eat fufu ‘A child will eat fufu’</p>
	<p>Wàn yo’ ghàn yì kibán Child not F3 eat fufu ‘A child will not eat fufu’</p>

Table 3 Past Tense and ‘yo’

Today	Wàn kì yì kibán Chil P1 eat fufu ‘A child ate fufu’
	Wàn yo’ Ø (la)yì kibán Child not P1 eat fufu ‘A child did not eat fufu’
Yesterday	Wàn -ee yì kibán Child P2 eat fufu ‘A child ate fufu’
	Wàn -eeyo’oo lo yì kibán Chil P2 not Asp eat fufu
Long (time) ago	Wàn -eè yì kibán Child P3 eat fufu ‘A child ate fufu’
	Wàn -eèyo’oò lo yì kibán Child P3 not Asp eat fufu ‘A child did not eat fufu’

In Lamnso, Po is generally not marked in the simple and negative declarative and perfective usages as illustrated in table above. Consequently, we can give it a null (Ø) marker in subsequent examples. Po goes both for present and progressive usages.

The future tense, like in most Bantu and African languages, has three time-specifications: F1 that is marked by “yí”, F2 by “wíy” and F3 by “ghàn” as we see in table 2 above. In negative usages, the ‘yo’ marker /particle precedes the tense markers and are realized as free morphemes.

Concerning the past, we still have three time-specifications: P1 marked by ‘kì’, P2 marked by a bound –vv (- ee) cluster and P3 marked equally by a bound –vv (- eè) cluster. With the negative usage, the past time-specifications reveal interesting results. Firstly, the P1 marker becomes null (Ø). Secondly, the P2 and P3 tense markers (-vv and -vv) affixed to subject nouns, now precede the negation particle, which in its turn undergoes a kind of vowel harmony with the tense (yo’oò for P3). Thirdly, it should be noted that the -vv / -vv changes according to the noun classes of subjects.

2.1.2 La’ Within the Lamnso Tense System

In the conditional usage, ‘not’ marked by ‘la’ behaves in the same way as its counterpart ‘yo’ in perfective declarative constructions. Let us thus consider the tables below.

Table 4 Present Tense and ‘la’

Po	À wàn yí kibán... cond child eat fufu If a child eats / is eating fufu...
	À wàn Ø la’ yí kibán... cond child Po not eat fufu If a child does not eat fufu...

Table 5 Future Tense and ‘la’

F1	À wàn yíyí kibán... cond child F1 eat fufu If a child will eat fufu...
	À wàn yí la’ yí kibán cond child F1 not eat fufu If a child will not eat fufu...
F2	À wàn wíyí kibán... cond child F2 eat fufu If a child will eat fufu...
F2	À wàn wíy la’ yí kibán... cond child F2 not eat fufu If a child will not eat fufu...
F3	À wàn ghànyí kibán... cond child F3 eat fufu If a child will eat fufu...
	À wàn ghàn la’ yí Kibán... cond child F3 not eat fufu If a child will not eat fufu...

Table 6 Past Tense and ‘la’

P1	<p>À wàn kì yì Kibán...</p> <p> </p> <p>cond Child P1 eat fufu</p> <p>If a child ate fufu...</p>
	<p>À wàn kì la' yì Kibán...</p> <p> </p> <p>cond child P1 not eat fufu</p> <p>If a child did not eat fufu...</p>
P2	<p>À wàn -ee yì Kibán...</p> <p> </p> <p>cond child P2 eat fufu</p> <p>If a child ate fufu...</p>
	<p>À wàn -ee la' yì kibán</p> <p> </p> <p>cond child P2 not eat Fufu</p> <p>If a child did not eat fufu...</p>
P3	<p>À wàn -eè yì Kibán...</p> <p> </p> <p>cond chil P3 eat fufu</p> <p>If a child ate fufu...</p>
	<p>À wàn -eè la' yì kibán...</p> <p> </p> <p>cond child fufu</p> <p>P3 not eat</p> <p>If a child did not eat fufu...</p>

La', as demonstrated above, follows all the tenses in Lamnso. Interesting to note here is the fact that unlike in Table 3 where the perfective negative usage within the P1 time-specification results in the deletion of the tense marker 'kì', the conditional usage within the P1 time-specification maintains the tense marker 'kì'.

3. A Principles And Parametres Treatment Of Yo' And La'

A lot of research on the Principles and Parameters Theory was provoked with the Split- Inf Hypothesis of Pollock (1989) with the aim of determining clause structure (Tanda and Neba (2005:215). Adverbs, negation and any other property that can be ascribed reasonably to an auxiliary system have their own functional categories and are considered distinct at the level of the D-Structure. Consequently, functional categories, viz, tense and negation project TP and T¹ nodes and NEGP and NEG¹ nodes respectively. Secondly, adverbial elements are considered static and only verbs do move from one position to another. In like manner, an agreement phrase (AGRP) is postulated, with the (AGR) head occupying a higher position than the T head (Pollock 1989, Belletti 1990, Chomsky (1993). Despite a number of criticisms (see Iatridou 1990), the Split-Inf hypothesis has been generally accepted with the PPT and the minimalist program (MP).

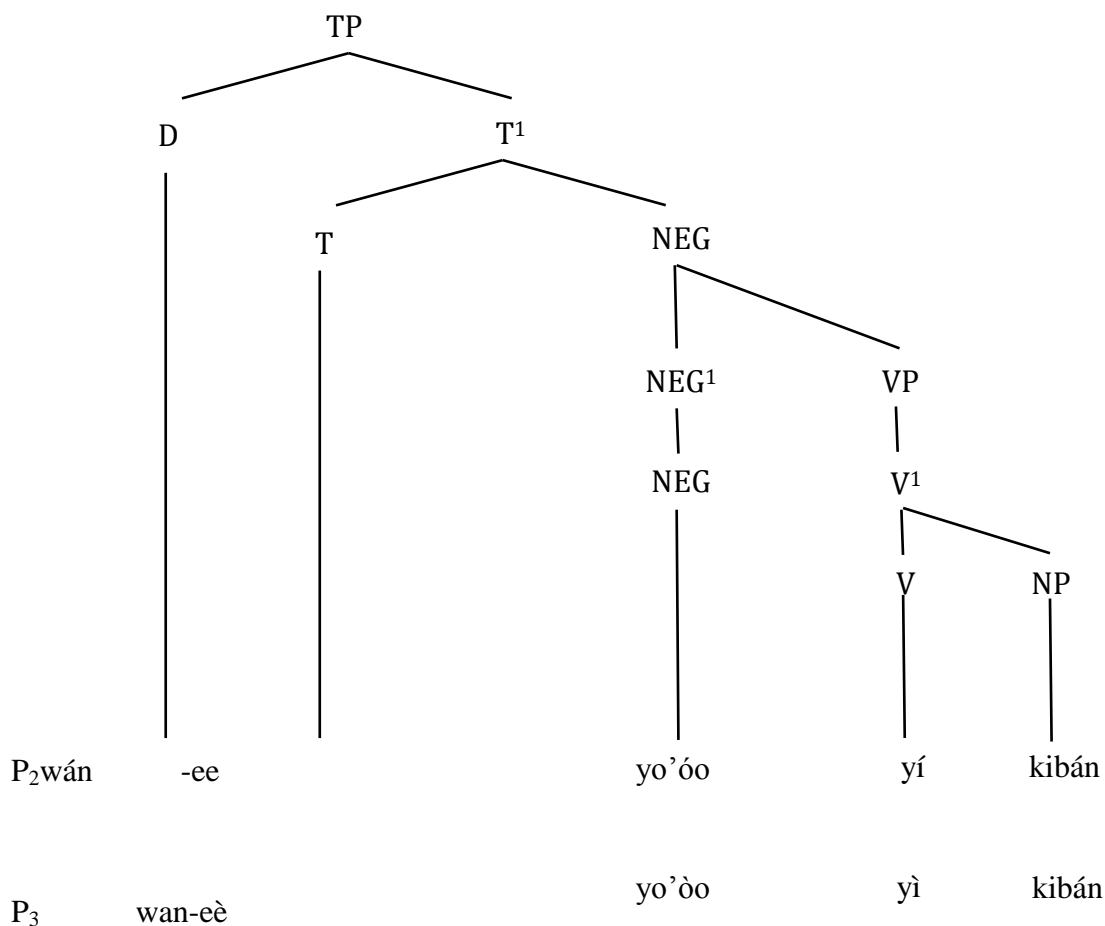
As intimated by Tanda & Neba (ibid), the basic assumption of the PPT is that language is made up of a set of fixed and invariant independent universal principles which account for the similarities that exist between human languages and a set of finite number of values or dimensions along which variations can emerge (parameters). Children according to this theory are born with principles while language learners are involved with parameter setting. Thus, the aim of this theory is to identify the various parameters and how they can be set in every language. The section that follows offers thus a PPT treatment of negation in Lamnso.

3.1 the Status of Negin Lamnso

In earlier works mentioned above, the position of the negative particle has been observed to vary from language to language. In some languages, NEG occurs before the verbs and in some it occurs after. In some, such as in French, two negative morphemes straddle the verbs (Tanda & Neba 2005:216). In Lamnso, the two negation markers (yo' and la' under study) occur pre-verbally in all context of usages, as demonstrated in the previous examples. Considering that in the PPT and MP frameworks, the negation morpheme is considered a functional category functioning as a head that projects in NEGP, Ouhalla (1991) advanced that NEG should be expected to be hierarchically arranged in the same way across languages.

Bearing this in mind, we move from the premise that NEG in Lamnso is generated below the TP and above the VP. Evidence to back up this claim comes from the P2 and P3 constructions as we see below:

(1)

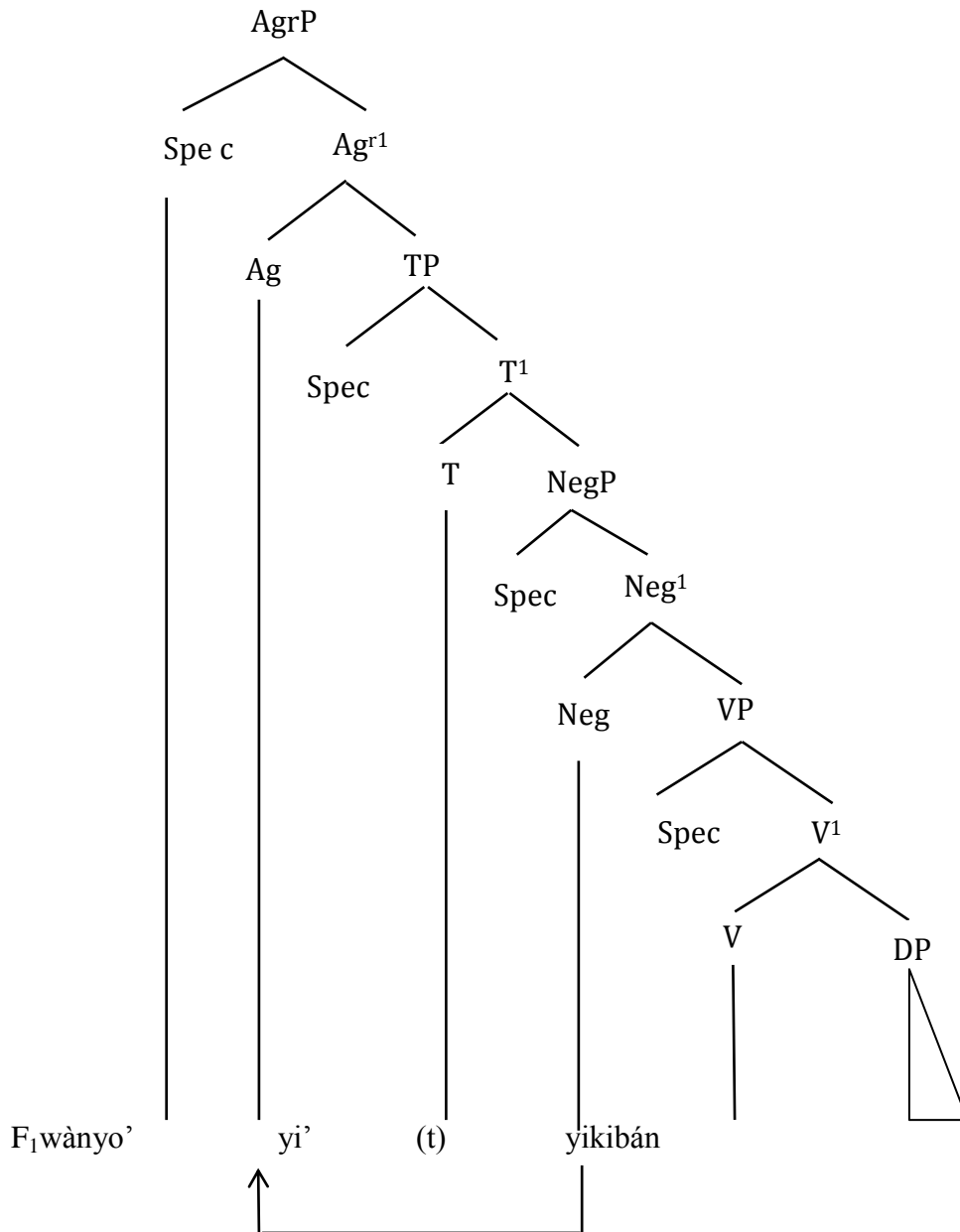


NB: It should be noted that these P₂ and P₃ at the same time should be interpreted too as S-structures. In other words P₂/P₃D –structures = P₂/P₃S –structures.

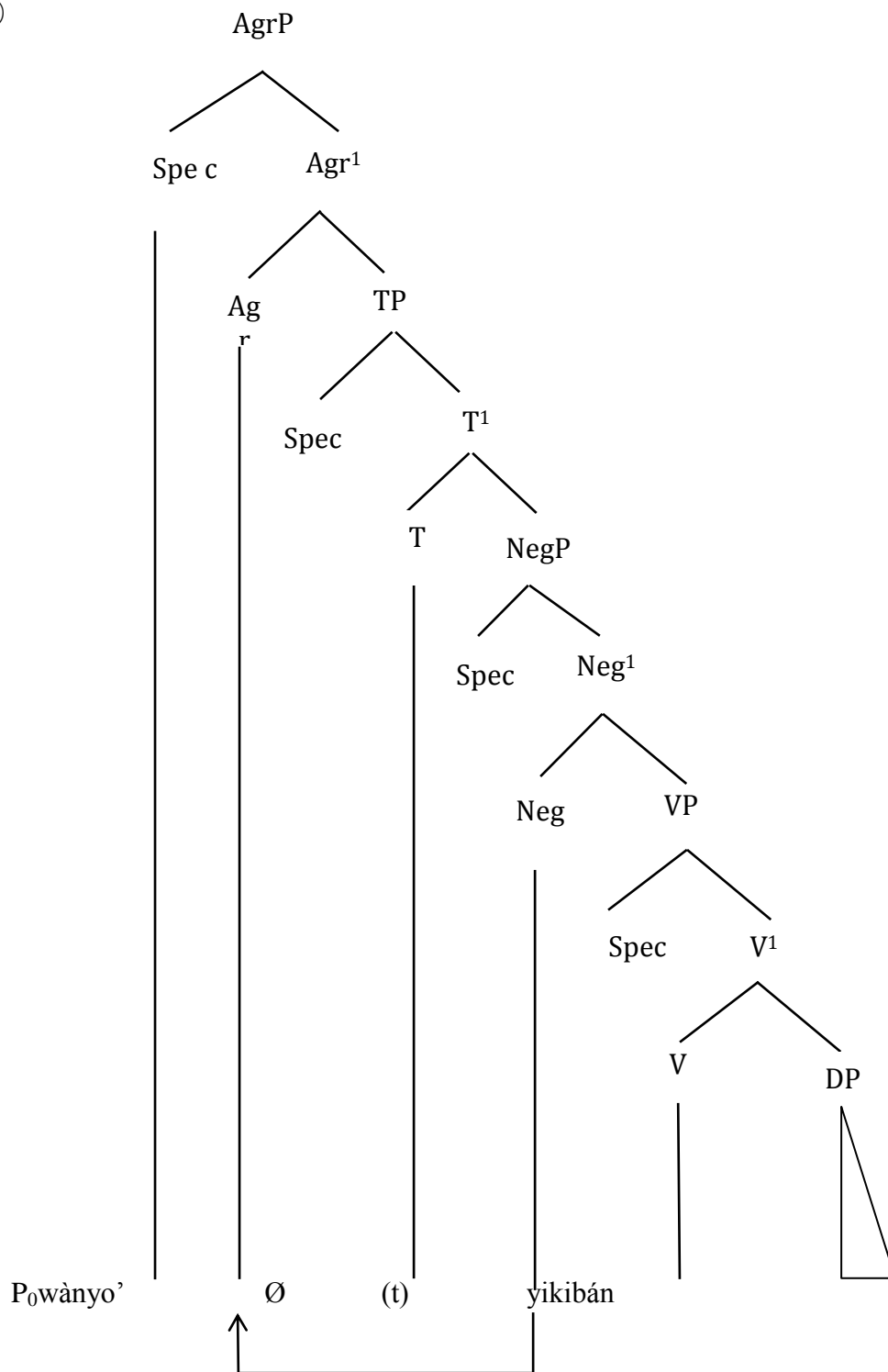
Having now determined the D –structure NEG position, let us examine the rest of the tenses in relation to what obtains at their S –structure.

Since the Neg markers for F₁, F₂, F₃, Po (∅) and P1 (∅) are generated above the TP, we have to determine the landing sites of these markers or the host nodes. Considering that Neg is a head and that it carries tense and agreement features and given that Agr, which is the locus of tense and negation is empty, the NEG markers in the following tenses (F₁, F₂, F₃, P1 and P2) raise up to the Agr Position. Here, we are assuming that ‘yo’ originates as the head of the NEG P. Following the split-inf hypothesis, we consider that Agr contains an abstract/overt Neg affix (feature). Consequently Neg, which in this language has agreement future, raises to Agr to adjoin to this abstract agreement as demonstrated below with F₁, P0 and P1 respectively:

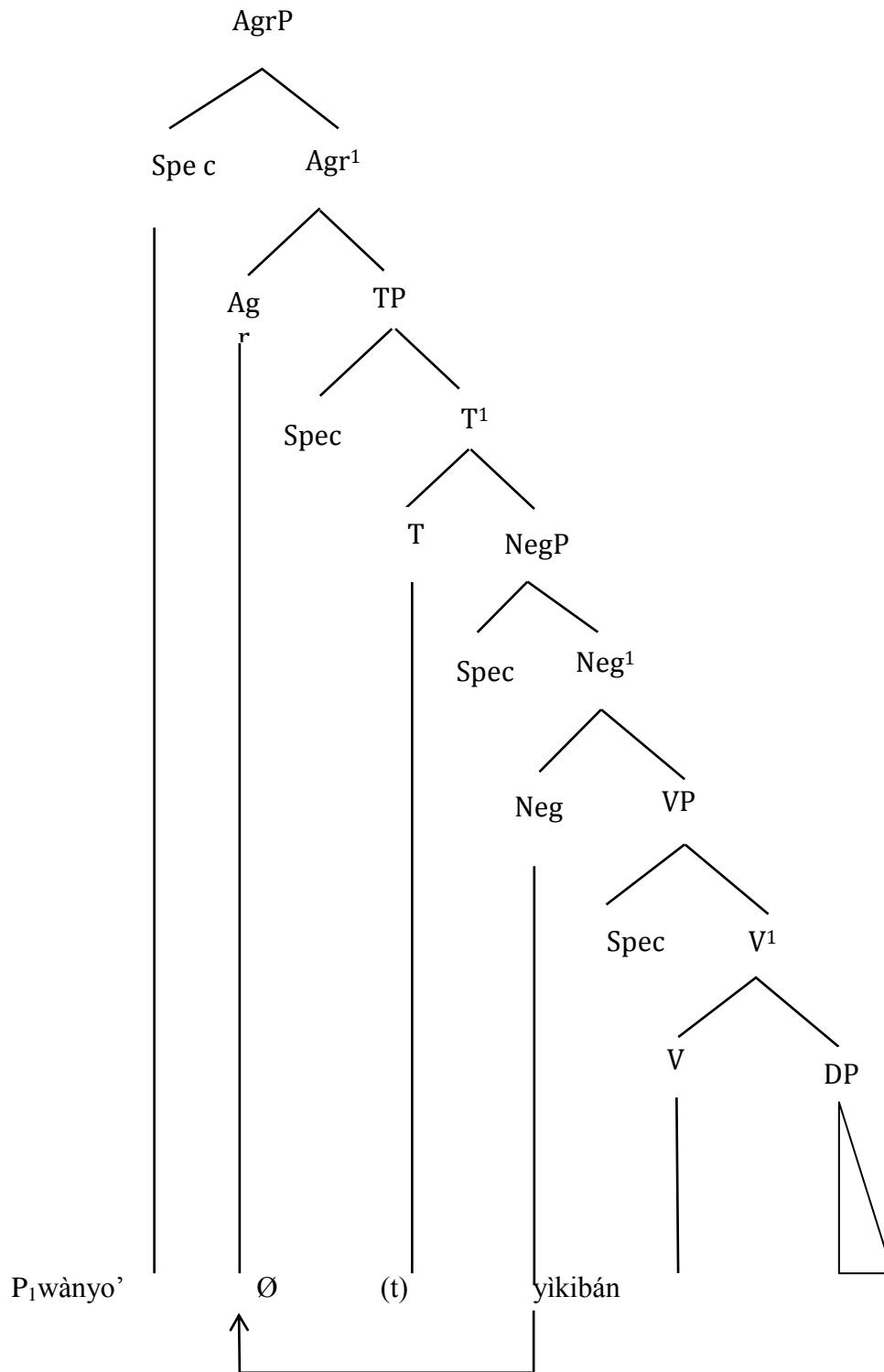
(2)



(3)

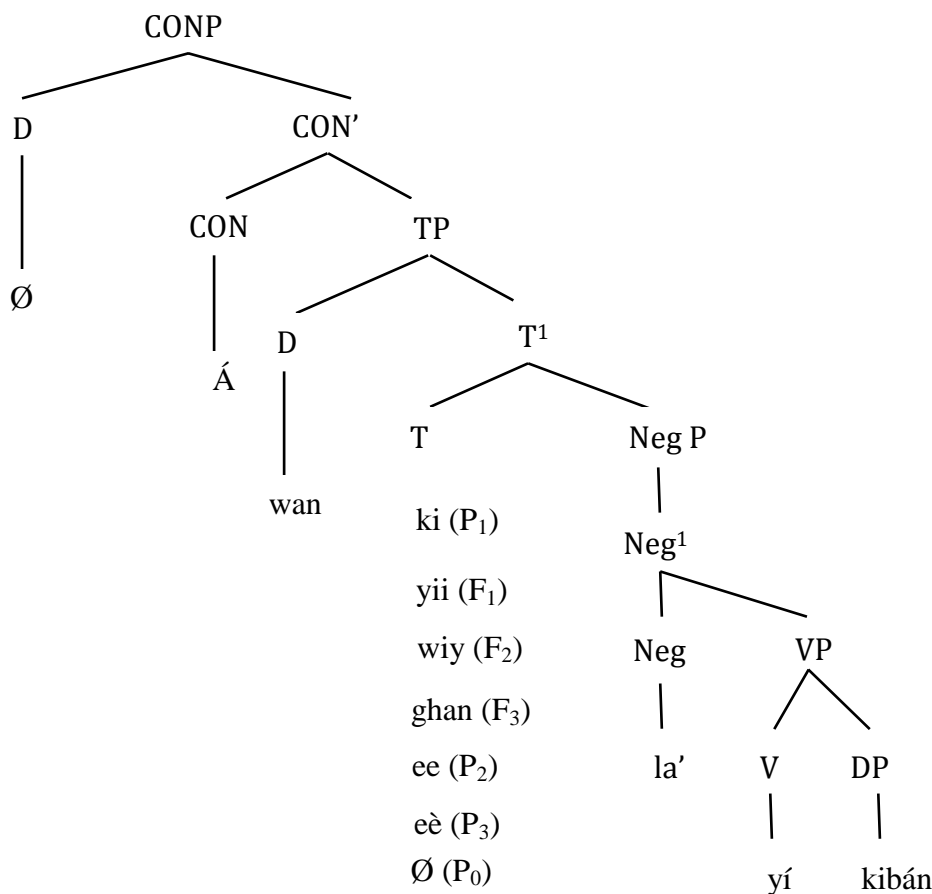


(4)



Since within the PPT and the Split-Inf hypothesis, all features can be said to project, we can postulate a CONP with CON as its head. This CON, as seen from what obtains in Lamnso, is generated above the TP.

(5)



4. Conclusion

Negation, in Lamnso as demonstrated above, is a grammatical phenomenon employing the free morphemes *yo'* and *la'* with regards to the perfect declarative and conditional usages. Within the Principles and Parameters Theory analysis, these morphemes are generated either at the in-situ or ex-situ levels below or above the TP, depending on the types of tenses used. Specifically, in-situ generations involve no movement and are generated below the TP. The tenses, in which these in-situ generations are realized, are the P and P3 for *yo'* and all the tenses for the *la'* morpheme. Ex-situ generations on their part involve a head transformational movement for *yo'* from NEG to AGR and these movements are only possible within the P0, P1, F1, F2 and F3 time-specifications.

Abbreviations

- | | |
|---|--|
| P0 = Present/ Present progressive tense | P1 = Past tense (Today) |
| P2 = Past tense (Yesterday) | P3 = Past tense (Long (time) ago) |
| F1 = Future (Today) | F2 = Future (Sometime later) |
| F3 = (Sometime further) | PPT = Principles and Parameters Theory |
| TP = Tense Phrase | AGR = Agreement |
| AGRP = Agreement Phrase | NEG = Negation |
| NEGP = Negation Phrase | CON = Conditional |
| CONP = Conditional Phrase. | MP = Minimalist Program |
| D- Structure = Deep Structure | S- Structure = Surface Structure |
| (t) = Transformational movement | Split- Inf = Split- Inflectional |

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