

The Expression of Negation in Sabde Minyag

The Minyag language (木雅語) (Qiangic, Tibeto-Burman; ISO 639-3: mvm) is a severely endangered language that is spoken by a small group of Tibetan people in the Kangding and Ya'an (雅安) Counties in the western Sichuan province of China (Huang 1985). Most Tibeto-Burman languages in Western Sichuan retain the negative prefix *ma-/mə-* which is reconstructed for Proto-Tibeto-Burman **ma-*, but Sabde Minyag (沙德木雅語) contains either preverbal or postverbal morphological negators *ŋə*, *mə*, and *tei*, some of which assimilate to the vowel pattern of adjacent verb stems or directional prefixes. The Minyag negation is more integrated in the verbal morphology; it can undergo fusion with other morphological categories, and it can appear between other inflectional suffixes. Sabde Minyag consists of two negative types— standard vs. non-standard negation. Unlike the negatives in standard negation, only the *te*-type negators are predominantly used for non-standard negation. Consider the following examples of negative structures:

- **Standard Negation**

(1a) *ʔetsí kʰə́=ji teé kʰə́-tev=ri ŋu-və=ti.*
 this dog=ERG house DIR-watch=NMLZ NEG-do=GNO:IMM
 ‘This dog does not watch the house.’

(1b) *məŋæ=yæ mən̄í-ni kə́ hæ-ndzi-ŋə-pi*
 Minyag=POSS people-PL:ERG fish DIR-eat-NEG-IMPV.3
ri tə-ló hæriŋə?
 reason one-CL INTRO
 ‘Why don’t the Minyag people like eating fish?’

(2a) *momo=ji mætətæ yú-mu-teʰə-si.*
 mother=ERG lunch DIR-NEG-drink-PFV.3:HIN
 My mother did not drink (have) lunch.

(ab) *ŋi kæŋú teé tɛ-lə nə qʰə́-tə-mv-sə.*
 1sg:ERG before house one-CL even DIR-buy-NEG-PFV.1sg:HIN
 ‘I did not buy a house (even though I was rich before).’

- **Non-Standard Negation**

(3a) *kʰə́pʰí nə-teə-vi, teə=kʰú xu!*
 beg DIR-PROH-do house=LOC go:IMP
 ‘Don’t beg! Go home!’

(3b) *zi qʰo-mv-sə=ʰv, ndó hæ-ndzi=ri tæ-ndə.*
 pig DIR-NEG-raise=LNK meat DIR-eat=NMLZ NEG-have
 ‘If (you) did not raise the pig, you would not have meat to eat.’

Negation reveals neutralization of tense-aspect distinctions where several negators drop their realis/irrealis temporal disparity in negative contexts. Furthermore, the skewing postverbal negation in Sabde Minyag reflects a recent grammaticalization of a post-head negative particle out of a negative-auxiliary verb combination, which is in close relation to the development of sentence-final aspectual-evidential auxiliaries. The rise of postverbal negation reveals a morphosyntactic mutation from auxiliary negators to morphological negators in diachrony.

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