

Arguments as Adjuncts: Negation and Object Preposing in Leggbó

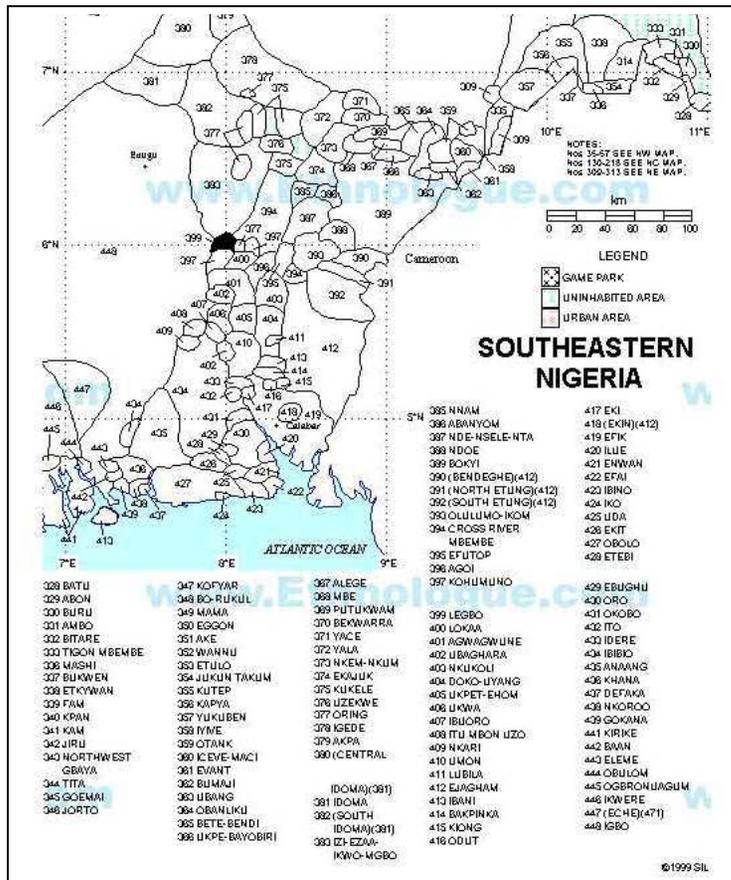
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0 Introduction

[1] Leggbó is an Upper Cross language in the Niger-Congo family spoken by about 60,000 people in southeastern Nigeria.

[2] Map (courtesy of the *Ethnologue*)



[3] Goals of presentation

- a) To show that a VO~OV alternation in Leggbó does not behave typologically like previously analyzed alternations of that type.
- b) To give an analysis of the structure of negative sentences in Leggbó.
- c) To briefly discuss some of the theoretical implications of the analysis.

1 Overview of Leggbó negation

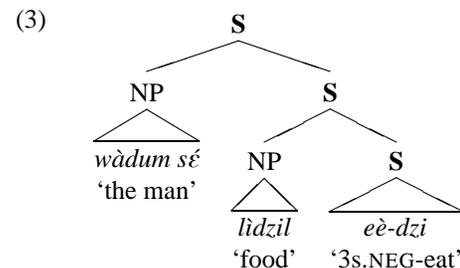
[4] Basic word order in Leggbó affirmative clauses is rigidly SVO, as illustrated in (1).¹

- (1) a. *Wàdum sé e-dzi lídzil.*
man the 3s-eat food
“The man ate food.”
- b. **Wàdum sé lídzil e-dzi.*
man the food 3s-eat

[5] In negative sentences, the surface word order is SOV, as seen in (2). Also, the verb takes on a special negative tone pattern.

- (2) *Wàdum sé lídzil eè-dzi.*
man the food 3s.NEG-eat
“The man didn’t eat food.”

[6] I will argue that the structure of negative sentences like the one in (2) is something along the lines depicted in the tree in (3)—where the arguments are adjoined above a core sentence consisting of only the verb.



¹ Nasal prefixes and all vowels in Leggbó surface with tone. Leggbó has three basic tones, high, mid, and low. High and low tones are marked with acute and grave accents respectively and mid tones are unmarked.

2 Previous analysis of VO~OV word order shifts

2.1 Verb movement (Koopman 1984)

[7] Verb movement has been used to analyze VO~OV alternations at least since the work of Koopman (1984).

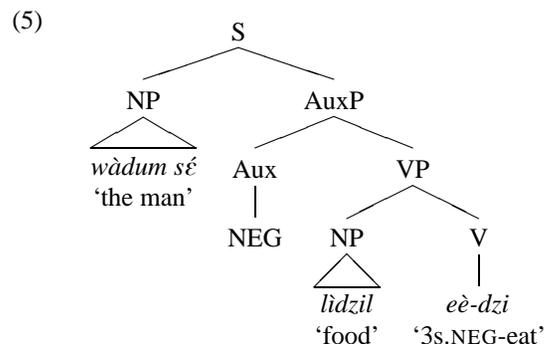
[8] Koopman (1984:28) contrasts the following two sentences from Vata.

- (4) a. $\overset{1}{n} \overset{1}{l}i$ $\overset{1}{s}a\overset{1}{k}a$
 I eat.PERF rice
 ‘I ate rice.’
- b. $\overset{1}{w}a$ $l=a$ $\overset{1}{m}O$ $\overset{1}{d}l\overset{1}{a}$
 they PERF.AUX him kill
 ‘They have killed him.’

[9] In (4a) the inflected verb is the main verb, and the basic word order is SVO, while in (4b) the inflected verb is an auxiliary, and the basic word order is SAuxOV.

[10] Koopman analyzes the alternation depicted in (4) by claiming that in SVO sentences the main verb moves from sentence-final position to a position preceding the object. When an auxiliary verb is present, however, this movement is blocked.

[11] A verb movement analysis could potentially work for Leggbó, if we posit a null negative auxiliary in the language. Under such an analysis, the sentence in (2) would have a structure like the one in (5) where NEG refers to a phonologically unpronounced negative auxiliary verb.



[12] A fact which makes such an analysis promising is that, in subordinate clauses in Leggbó, negated clauses contain an overt negative auxiliary. So, we would not have to say that negative auxiliaries are always phonologically null in the language—they would only be null in main clauses.

[13] In (6) I give an example of a negated relative clause where the (bolded) negative auxiliary appears.

- (6) *lidzil ake* ***m-bi*** *mèn-dzi*
 food which **1s-not** 1s.NEG-eat
 ‘the food which I didn’t eat’

[14] However, when we examine a wider range of data, this analysis becomes untenable. The sentences in (7) illustrate this.

- (7) a. ϵ -vóji *tàa* [ϵ -kaà **leval** ϵ -sej *nke eppya*].
 3s-want COMP 3s-carry race 3s-go at market
 ‘He wants to run a race to the market.’
- b. **Leval**_i ϵ -vóji [*tàa* ϵ -kaà \emptyset ϵ -sej *nke eppya*].
 race 3s.NEG-want COMP 3s-carry 3s-go at market
 ‘He doesn’t want to run a race to the market.’

[15] Sentence (7a) shows a basic sentence with the verb *vóji* ‘want’. Sentence (7b) shows that in negative sentences an object from the embedded clause appears before the negated verb.

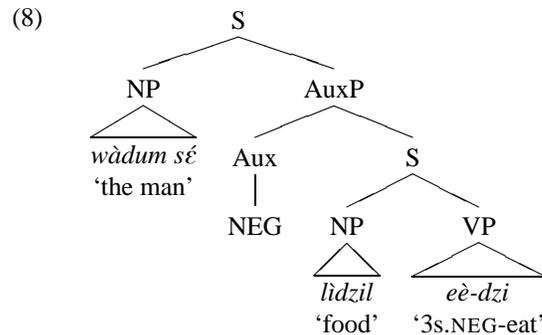
[16] Sentences like the one in (7b) cannot be derived from verb movement and indicate that something along the lines of object movement should be used to account for word order in negative sentences in Leggbó.

[17] Also, the fact that a negative verb is preceded by an object of a different verb is a strong indication that negative, and not affirmative, sentences are showing the marked word order for the language.

2.2 Baker and Kandybowicz (2002)

[18] Baker and Kandybowicz (2002) argue that Nupe, despite having superficial similarities to Vata and Gbadi, exhibits object movement.

[19] Baker and Kandybowicz posit two different basic kinds of structures where object movement takes place in Nupe. The first can be approximated for Leggbó along the lines of (8).



[20] A structure like the one in (8) accounts for word order shifts only when *one* object of a ditransitive verb moves forward.

[21] In (9) I show the basic structure of an affirmative sentence with the verb *nii* ‘give’.

(9) *Wádum sé e-nii wàé sé ntààmi.*
 man the 3s-give child the gift
 “The man gave the child a gift.”

[22] In Leggbó, unlike Nupe, both objects of a ditransitive verb move forward in negative sentence.

(10) *Wádum sé wàé sé ntààmi eè-nii.*
 man the child the gift 3s.NEG-give
 “The man didn’t give the child a gift.”

[23] Since both objects of a ditransitive verb are moved to the front in Leggbó, we can’t explain the data using a structure like the one in (8).

[24] Baker and Kandybowicz also allow for the possibility that special verb forms can cause all of their objects to front. This could potentially account for sentences like (10)—the negative form of the verb could be analyzed as one of these special verb forms.

[25] To account for Nupe, Baker and Kandybowicz crucially assume that such special verb forms can only trigger fronting of their own objects and not objects of other verbs.

[26] However, as we saw in (7b), negative verbs in Leggbó can be preceded by objects of other verbs.

3 The adjunction analysis of Leggbó negation

3.1 Adverb placement

[27] Having established that previous analysis of VO~OV word order shifts cannot account for Leggbó, it is worthwhile to look at data which will help determine the constituency of Leggbó affirmative and negative sentences.

[28] In affirmative sentences, adverbs can appear between the subject and the verb but not between the verb and the object.

(11) *Wádum sé (ɥwòòsɛ) e-dzi (*ɥwòòsɛ) lídzil.*
 man the probably 3s-eat probably food
 “The man (probably) ate (*probably) food.”

[29] In negative sentences, *ɥwòòsɛ* ‘probably’ can appear between the object and following verb.

(12) *Wádum sé (ɥwòòsɛ) lídzil (ɥwòòsɛ) eè-dzi.*
 man the probably food probably 3s.NEG-eat
 “The man (probably) didn’t eat food.”

[30] This implies a structure for negative sentences where an extra layer of phrase structure intervenes between the verb and preceding object—implying that the object must be adjoined either to a VP or an S.

3.2 Argument order in negative sentences

[31] Further evidence for an adjunction analysis comes from the behavior of ditransitive verbs in the negative.

[32] In affirmative ditransitive sentences, the order of the two objects is fixed. The recipient precedes the direct object. The sentences in (13) show this.

(13) a. *E-nii bèé lídzil.*
 3s-give children food
 “He gave children food.”
 b. **E-nii lídzil bèé.*
 3s-give food children

[33] In negatives, however, this order restriction does not hold. Either order is possible for the objects.

- (14) a. *Wàé òtáàmi nèn-nii.*
 child gift 1s.NEG.give
 “I didn’t give a child gifts.”
 b. *Òtáàmi wàé nèn-nii.*
 gift child 1s.NEG.give
 “I didn’t give a child gifts.”

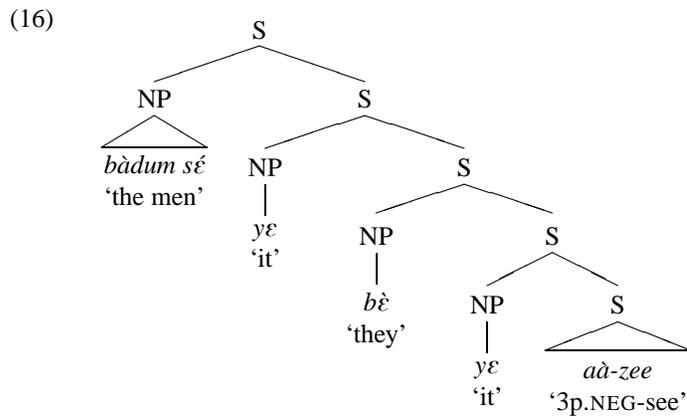
[34] Data like that in (13) and (14) is a strong indication that, in negative sentences, arguments are not in proper “argument” positions, but are in adjunct positions.

3.3 Repeated arguments

[35] One of the most striking features of Leggbó negatives is that arguments can be repeated with coreferential pronouns. Comparable repetition is not possible in affirmative sentences. Argument repetition of this sort is, perhaps, the strongest evidence in support of the adjunction analysis.

- (15) a. [*Bàdum sé*]_i *yε* *bè*_i *yε* *aà-zee.*
 men the it they it 3p.NEG.see
 “The men (they) didn’t see it (it).”
 b. [*Dzè sé*]_i *bè*_i *yε* *bè*_i *aà-numi b anii itóbo.*
 crocodiles the they it they 3s.NEG-take 3p 3s.NEG-give monkey
 “The crocodiles, they didn’t give it to the monkey.”

[36] In (16) I give my proposed tree structure for (15a).



[37] I have chosen the label “S” for all adjunction positions of the preposed arguments since, as indicated by sentences like the one in (15b), a subject pronoun can appear closer to the verb than an object pronoun, indicating that negative sentences do not need to contain an OV constituent corresponding to a VP.

4 (Non)-configurationality and Leggbó negation

[38] Under this analysis, Leggbó affirmatives have properties associated with sentences in configurational languages.

[39] Leggbó negatives, on the other hand, appear to be non-configurational insofar as there is no evidence that they contain a VP constituent and their “arguments” appear in adjunct positions.

[40] Leggbó, thus, appears to be an example of a language which exhibits a phenomenon which can be labeled *split configurationality*. This does not seem to be a generally recognized typological phenomenon—though something like it has been documented elsewhere.

[41] Bresnan and Mchombo’s (1987) analysis of Chichewa object realization could be viewed as making use of the notion of split configurationality.

[42] Gildea (2000:89–92) documents a fairly clear case of split configurationality within languages of the Carib family (spoken in South America) which, like Leggbó, are generally configurational. They become non-configurational in a particular tense/aspect.

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