

Negative Subjunctive Clauses in Hausa: A Minimalist Analysis

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Abstract

This paper is a preliminary investigation of an important phenomenon in Hausa, hereafter, referred to as Negative Subjunctive Clauses (henceforth NSC). These negative expressions exhibit a unique negative morphology and syntactically function as subjects in canonical declarative constructions. They basically, select propositional structures as their complements and have a subjunctive flavour. Some of the NSCs examined here are counterpart to Yelwa's(1995) Positive Complement- Taking Expressions. But they significantly differ from the latter in that they prototypically display negative properties in their frozen constitution, somewhat behaving like fixed expressions in virtue of their opacity to syntactic permutation. We argue that these NSCs yield local negation effect and that they are underlyingly subject complements extraposed to the clausal position which generates obligatory movement.

Keywords: Minimalist syntax, Negative subjunctive clauses, Extraposition, Hausa

1. Introductory Remarks

In this paper we address a set of expressions we refer to as Negative Subjunctive Clauses (henceforth NSCs) in Hausa (a Chadic language predominantly spoken in Nigeria and Niger Republics and other parts sub-Saharan Africa (Newman 2000)) that exhibit a unique negative morphology and syntactically function as Subjects in canonical declarative constructions. These expressions basically select negative structures as their complements and have a subjunctive flavour. The NSCs identified here are akin to Yalwa's (1995) and Newman (2000) *ya kamata, etc.*, Complement-Taking Expressions but significantly differ from the latter in that they prototypically display negative properties in their frozen constitution, somewhat behaving like fixed expressions. They exhibit limited distribution, being strictly realisable in negative environment. A second difference between Yelwa's CTEs and those reported here is the impossibility of deriving the corresponding affirmative structures in the case of the latter. The rest of the paper is structured along the following lines. Section 2, which deals with Form and Structure of NSCs, constitute our point of departure. An overview of NCTEs in Hausa is the subject matter of Section 3. In Section 4 we present, on a first approximation, a proposed minimalist account of the syntactic operation(s) generated by these negative constructions. Section 5 concludes our discussion. We begin our discussion by exploring the morphosyntactic nature of our subject of inquiry.

2. The Form and Structure of NSCs in Hausa

The CTE, reinterpreted here as Subjunctive clauses, corresponds to English clauses such as *it is appropriate that...* are realised in both affirmative and negative constructions. The complementizer is in most cases omitted in the negative (see Newman 2000:103 for earlier treatment). The sentential CP is most often in the subjunctive, but it is not always necessary. The CP is optionally introduced by a complementizer, either *cewa* ('saying') *wai* ('it is said that') or *da* (= that). Complex sentences involving complementation are composed of a matrix clause, which constitutes the complement-taking expression (CTE/NCTE), plus a sentential complement (CP) (see Newman 2000 for similar remarks):

$$1. \text{ Matrix Clause} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{CTE} \\ \text{NCE} \end{array} \right\} + \text{ Sentential clause.}$$

Three distinct subtypes are identified and discussed here: the *ba (ka-)safai ba*, *ba lalle ba ne*, and *ba don komi ba*. The respective corresponding constructions that show the syntactic occurrences of such expressions are given in (1), (2) and (3):

2a. *ba (ka-)safai (ba) ake samun managarcin mutum ya haifi ashari ba.*

'it is not usual for a man of integrity to bear a delinquent child'

b. *ba (ka-)safai (ba) ake samun malami ya haifi jahili ba.*

'it is not usual for a reputable scholar to bear a ignorant child'

c. *ba (ka-)safai (ba)* ake samun ilimi cikin sauƙi ba.

‘it is not usual to acquire knowledge without diligence’

Even though certain structures such as “in akwai mugun nufi *ba(ka-)safai* magani yakan ci ba” are allowed. However, note the impossibility of *(ka-)safai* in non-negative environment as evident in (2’):

2’. **(ka-)safai* ake samun ilimi cikin sauƙi.

The NSCs can be scrambled around without the use of grammatical markers such as focus marker *ne/ce* or topicalization marker *kam*. The fact that these NSCs allow permutation and scrambling is evident in the following:

3a. *ba lalle ba ne* a samu arziki a Turai.

‘it is not certain that one gets rich in Europe’

a’. a samu arziki a Turai *ba lalle ba ne*.

a’’. a samu arziki, *ba lalle ba ne* aTurai;

a’’’. *ba lalle* a samu arziki a Turai ba.

b. *ba lalle ba ne* ɗa ya gaji ubansa

‘it is not certain for a child to take after his father’

c. *ba lalle ba ne* kowace mace ta haihu.

‘it is not certain for every woman to bear children’

d. *ba lalle ba ne* wadata ta sa kwanciyar hankali.

‘it is not necessarily the case that riches ensure peace of mind’

Examples (2) and (3) are different from the following ones:

4a. *ba don kome (ba)* na ke sonsa(*ba*) sai (kawai) don(kawai) yana da alƙawali.

‘it is not for any reason I like him other than the fact that he never breaks his promises’

b. *ba don kome (ba)* nake son Turai (*ba*) sai (kawai) don tsarinta.

‘it is not for any reason I like him other than the fact that he never breaks his promises’

c. *ba don kome (ba)* suke wulakanta mutane (*ba*) sai don suna da kudi.

‘it is not for any reason he treats people with contempt other than the fact that he is rich’

5. Mutanen gari na sonsa[*ba don kome ba*] sai don saki hannu da sakin fuska.

‘people like him. not for any reason other than he is amiable and generous with money’

They sometimes appear in subordinate clauses as shown by the following cases:

6i. yana sakarci [*ba don kome ba*] sai don ðan sarki ne.

ii. ba don kome (ba) yake sakarci (ba) sai don (cewa) (shi) dan sarki ne.

iii. yana fara’a [*ba don kome ba*] sai don ya ci jarabawa.

The subjunctive Tense Aspect Marker (Henceforth TAM) is phonologically zero, (i.e null) for example, kù[□] yí hàkúrí (‘you (please) be patient). The subjunctive in Hausa expresses wishes, desires, purpose, obligation, etc. In the second person, it functions as somewhat polite alternative to the imperative for expressing commands coupled with the fact that it encodes specific identity with respect to the number and gender of the addressee unlike bare imperative: kù táshí! (‘you (pl) get up’) cf. tàashí! (get up), (cf. Newman 2000, Jaggar 2001). In sequences of commands, the first one is often in the imperative with subsequent ones in the subjunctive. The subjunctive is often preceded by a modal adverbial indicating necessity, preference, etc instantiated by *sái* (‘must’) *gáará* (‘ought’), *dóolè* (‘perforce’). Subjunctive clauses usually occur in purposive ‘in order to’ sentences (frequently following the conjunction *dòmín/dòn* (because, in order to’), or as embedded objects or complements of sentences expressing volition or opinion, where the subjunctive often corresponds to an infinitive in English (Newman 2000:543).

What follows is a general outline of the form and function of the two major types of complement- Taking expressions in Hausa which are in our view, essentially, subjunctive expressions.

3. Complement- Taking Expressions: An Overview

At this juncture, we present some of the crucial NTE/NCTE ideas in the literature for ease of exposition. Complementizer Taking Expression (henceforth CTE) are mainly biclausal complementation type comprising a matrix CTE followed by a subject complement, usually expressed as propositional subjunctive TAM clause. There are five major types of matrix sentences, identified in the literature that operate as CTEs:

7a. intransitive verbal sentences

b. transitive verbal sentences with *yi* (‘do’) or *fi* (‘exceed’) and its variants,

c other transitive verbal sentences other than (b),

d. HAVE sentences with a nonconcrete predicate and

e. Identificational sentences

Bagari (1976, 1987) attempts a syntactic and semantic account of general uses of the subjunctive in both adverbial and non-adverbial clauses in Hausa. He pointed out that the subjunctive is employed to express imperatives and direct or indirect command. He further argued that a subjunctive clause can function as the extraposed subject of hortative predicates such as *kamata* ‘be suitable’ *kyautu* ‘be seemly’, *dole/tilas* ‘must’, *gara/gwamma* ‘better’. In such occurrences where a subjunctive clause functions as a sentential subject, he insisted that extraposition of the clause to post predicate position is obligatory. Other syntactic function of subjunctive identified by Bagari is its realization as a sentential object of certain verbs such as *so* ‘like;want’, *umarta* ‘command’, *sa* ‘cause’ etc. However, curiously enough much of the discussion is focussed on affirmative constructions only to the exclusion of the distribution and interpretation of their negative counterparts. Examples (7a-c) and (8a-b) (taken from Bagari 1986: 41-42) captures these two major uses of subjunctive in Hausa, respectively:

7a. *Ya kamata mù tafi yanzu*

‘we better be going’

b. *ya kyautu kà gyara halinka*

‘you better improve your manners’

c. *tilas kà gyara halinka*

‘you must improve your manners’

Note the ungrammaticality of the following due to lack of extraposition of the subjunctive clause to the higher matrix clause:

d. **kà gyara halinka ya kamata*

‘for you to improve your manners is necessary’

8a. *Audu yana so yà ci abinci.*

‘Audu wants to eat some food’

b. *Sarki ya umarce mù (da) mu kasha ka.*

‘the king ordered us to kill you’

Yelwa (1995), Newman (2000) and Jaggar (2001:571) identify CTE as basically, modal, expressing obligation, volition, responsibility, potentiality, etc, and typically corresponds to adjectival English clauses such as it is (not) good, better, appropriate, necessary, possible, etc, that ... (often more naturally rendered with modal auxiliaries like *should*, *ought to*, *must* etc. as with some factual matrix verbs, the complement clause can be introduced by an overt complementiser, such as *cêwā* ‘saying that’, *dà* ‘that’, or *wai* ‘that allegedly.’ Six structurally distinct types of modal CTE are recognized (Yelwa 1995).

Yelwa (1995) focusses on the detailed description of some aspects of Hausa complementation phenomenon and other related issues. The study precisely entails the description of the forms

and positions of subjunctive propositional complements of certain nominalised subject complements of certain groups of complement Taking Expressions/Predicates (CTEs) within the Government and Binding Theory. In the course of his discussion he considered the forms and functions of negation within these CTEs from three perspectives viz: first, he described the position and function of negative particles within the root clause; second, the position and function of the negative words within the complements; and third, the scope of negation within the CTE clause and the complement where necessary. To determine the scope of negation within the root clauses and their complements he invoked transformational operations.

In his discussion of CTEs and their negative counterparts, he argued that, in Hausa, a negated constituent may also be focussed and this is possible in various types of constituents including the NCTEs. In such syntactic processes, two transformational operations are manifest: movement, generating nominalization and the attendant structural change which affects the INFL $\langle y\acute{a} \rightarrow y\grave{a} \rangle$ and the insertion of the focus marker $n\bar{e}/c\bar{e}$. Indeed, Yalwa (Ibid) is a very insightful and resourceful discussion of negation in Hausa. However, it is noteworthy that it is very much restricted to CTE constructions in Hausa and also the analysis is developed within GB framework. We will, however, reinterpret some of the issues raised in the light of Minimalist Programme. In particular we reinterpreted movement generated by the extraposed NCTEs in terms of Copy and Merge Operation, which constitute part of our proposal. This we consider presently.

Complementiser Taking Expression (henceforth CTE) are mainly biclausal complementation type comprising a matrix CTE followed by a subject complement, usually expressed as propositional subjective TAM clause. Jaggar (2001:571) identifies CTE as basically, modal, expressing obligation, volition, responsibility, potentiality, etc, and typically corresponds to adjectival English clauses such as it is (not) good, better, appropriate, necessary, possible, etc, that ... (often more naturally rendered with modal auxiliaries like *should*, *ought to*, *must* etc. as with some factual matrix verbs, the complement clause can be introduced by an overt complementiser, such as *cēwā* “saying that”, *dà* “that”, or *wai* “that allegedly.” Six structurally distinct types of modal CTE are recognized (Yalwa 1995).

According to Newman (2000) and Jaggar (2001), three types of syntactic environments for negation in CTE constructions can be identified: if the modal CTE is characterized by an empty 3m Imperfective TAM $yan\grave{a}$ (Type3 in Jaggar’s taxonomy) the corresponding negative possessive construction employs the single negator $b\grave{a}$ and a 3m object pronoun, as in for instance: $[b\grave{a} \text{ shi } d\grave{a} \text{ \grave{a}mf\grave{a}n\grave{a}}]_{CTE} \text{ m\grave{u}r } b\grave{a}\text{r } a\grave{i}k\grave{a}n \text{ n\grave{a}n } y\grave{a}nzu$ “it’s of no use for us to stop this work now” (cf affirmative $[yan\grave{a} \text{ d\grave{a} } amfani]_{CTE} \text{ m\grave{u}r } f\grave{a}r\grave{a} \text{ a\grave{i}k\grave{a}n \text{ n\grave{a}n } y\grave{a}nzu$; “it’s of use for us to start this work now”. There are also CTE constructions that require bipartite discontinuous negative markers $b\grave{a}(a) \dots ba$ with the possibility of two positional options for the second ba . This is structurally placed either directly after the subordinating root CTE but preceding the complement (and usually any copula) or it occurs sentence – finally after the complement. The following are cases in point:

(9) a. $b\grave{a}i \text{ k\grave{a}m\grave{a}t\grave{a} \text{ ba } [Ali \text{ y\grave{a} } b\grave{a}\text{r } gar\grave{a}ns\grave{u}]$

a' *bài kàmàtā* [Ali ya bař garĩnsù] *ba*

“it is not proper that Ali left his home town”

b. *bǎ àbin kunyǎ ba nè* [mùtùm yà yi màganǎ dà surùkansā]

“it is not shameful for a man to speak to his in-laws”

b' *bǎ àbin kunyǎ ba nè* [mùtùm yà yi màganǎ dà suùkansā] *ba*.

“it is not shameful for a man to speak to his in-laws”

c. *bǎ tabbās ba nè* [sù zō]

“it's not certain they'll come”

c' *bǎ tabbās ba nè* [sù zō] *ba*.

“it's not certain they'll come”

4. A Proposed Analysis

As a general framework, we will assume recent proposals within the minimalist framework. Within minimalism movement have been recast in terms of copy and merge (Chomsky 1995). An element in a structure is copied and the new copy is merged higher up in the same structure. Nunes (1995, 2004) points out that this assumption is by no means necessary. Once copied, a copy can also be merged with a phrase marker that is assembled in “parallel” with the “source” phrase marker. This is what Nunes referred to as sideward movement. On a first approximation, these NSCs appear canonically in the subject position and function as clausal subject. They also have the effect of local negation. However, they are underlyingly subject complements extraposed to the higher clausal subject position. Since movement is involved in the derivation of these constructions this is interpreted in terms of copy and merge operation. As a descriptive term extraposition is considered to be the syntactic phenomenon whereby a constituent or a phrase appears separated from the phrase or clause rightwardly, (cf. Rajesh and Pancheva (2004:17)). This process has attracted various analyses. Perhaps, the most widely cited proposal referred to as A'-movement analysis, specifies that the discontinuous constituent is merged with its source phrase and it is moved, rightward, to its surface position. A different proposal suggests that the discontinuous constituent moves to the left and then is stranded by the source phrase (and if i may add, based on the empirical evidence before us, or clause), which moves to the left even higher- this is called in the literature the remnant movement analysis. The third and final proposal stipulates that the discontinuous constituent is assumed to be base-generated in its surface position, and different mechanisms are exploited to ensure that it is interpreted together with its source phrase or clause as the case may be- this is characterized as base-generation analysis. Below, we use extraposition partly, pretheoretically, as a description of the cases where the negative subjunctive clause is extracted from the lower clause position to the periphery of the higher matrix clause and essentially, theoretically reinterpreted in the spirit of Chomsky (1995) and Nunes (1995, 2001). According to Nunes (ibid) one of the fundamental properties of human language is that elements may be interpreted in positions different from where they are

realized phonetically. She goes on to say that this displacement property is captured, within the principles and parameters approach, by means of a movement operation relating structural positions in a phrase marker. The operation Move within the Minimalist framework (see Chomsky 1993, 1994, 1995), is characterized as follows: given the syntactic object Σ with constituents k and α , Move targets k , raises α , and merges α with k , forming Σ' ; the operation is cyclic if $\Sigma = k$ and noncyclic, otherwise. Σ' differs from Σ because k is substituted by $L = \{\gamma, \{\alpha, K\}\}$ or $L = \{\langle \gamma \gamma \rangle, \{\alpha, K\}\}$, dictated by whether movement proceeds by substitution or adjunction. Move further constitutes a chain $CH = (\alpha, t)$, a two-element pair where t (the trace of α) is a copy of α that is deleted in the phonological component in the case of overt movement, however remains available for interpretation at LF. (Chomsky 1993:35). In this conception, the displacement property of human languages Nunes (2001:2) pointed out comprises (a) copying, (b) merger (c) chain formation and (d) deletion of traces (lower copies) for the purposes of PF. Nunes (1995, 2001:2) provided an alternative proposal, which accords well with the data under consideration here, that permits constrained instances of sideward movement, where a given constituent moves from a syntactic object k to an independent syntactic object L . In particular, she further argued, that the ‘computational system copies a given constituent α of syntactic object k and merges α with a syntactic object L , which is said to have been independently assembled and is unconnected to k ’. Hence movement operations such as extraposition of negative subjunctive clauses involve the concatenation of two independent syntactic objects which Nunes called *Copy + Merge theory of movement*.

Consider the following subjunctive negative clauses (2c and 2’above) represented here as (10a-b, c):

10a. *ba (ka-)safai (ba) ake samun ilimi cikin sauki ba.*

‘ it is not usual to acquire knowledge without deligence’

b. **(ka-)safai ake samun ilimi cikin sauki.*

c. **ake samun ilimi cikin sauki ba ba (ka-)safai (ba)*

‘ to acquire knowledge without deligence it is not usual ’

An examination of above negative subjunctive clauses reveals three essential facts about their syntactic behaviour. First, the normally occur in negative environments, which underscores the ungrammaticality of (10b). Second, the [*ba (ka-)safai (ba)*] subjunctive clause need to obligatorily move leftward to the edge of the higher matrix clause, which accounts for the ill-formedness of (10c).

5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper i examined the distribution and interpretation of available NCTEs evident in the literature and reinterpreted NSCs in the light of minimalist persuasions. We have also introduced new data, which we claim to be morphosyntactically different from those in the previous works. Following Chomsky (1995) and Nunes (1995, 2004) we argued that the extraposed NSCs are base generated and submit to the copy and merge mechanism for

convergence in the course of their configurations. There are, however, certain residual issues that need to be addressed in future research. First, these constructions need to be treated within the Feature Checking Theory, for the sake of completeness. Second, it is crucial that the relevant Licensing Mechanism in deriving these structures is determined. Third, since covert movement is involved it is imperative to specify how the two principles of Last Resort and Greed are satisfied. By large, most of the new items introduced here are in essence negative polarity items in virtue of their polarity sensitivity, which demand subsequent review.

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