

NEGATION IN QIANG GRAMMAR¹

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ABSTRACT

In Qiang grammar, negation occurs both at the clause and the constituent level. Negation in indicative sentences is marked by the negative adverbial /mə-/ which is prefixed to verbal and adjectival predicates. Clauses can have more than one verb. However, the negative adverbial prefix almost always falls on the final verb in an independent clause. In sentences with more than one clause, this rule still holds true regardless of the order of the clauses in the sentence.

Negative imperative forms are created by prefixing the negative imperative /tɕi-/ to a verb. The semantic impact of these clauses can be weakened with mood markers resulting in an utterance that resembles a suggestion. A weaker imperative form occurs when the word /je/ 'can' is negated and the entire preceding sentence string is nominalized by the verbal suffix /-s/.

Qiang negative interrogative constructions are generated with the negative adverbial prefix /mə-/ and a sentence final /tɕia/.

Constituent negation is a little used aspect of Qiang grammar. It materializes when a negated predicate is nominalized by the verbal suffix /-m/. This is the only opportunity for a negative adverbial prefix to fall anywhere else in the sentence string than with the last verb in an independent clause.

Chinese loans have influenced everyday Qiang usage. This process has affected negation and it is described herein.

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This paper examines the negation of indicative, imperative and interrogative clauses, including a discussion of the negative adverbial prefix placement in multi-verb clauses. In addition, non-negative uses of the negative adverbial prefix and Chinese influence are reviewed.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Qiang reside mainly in Wenchuan, Li, Mao, Songpan and Heishui counties in the northwestern region of Sichuan province. Genetically, the language is classified in the Sino-Tibetan phylum, the Tibeto-Burman family, the Qiangic branch. There are about 200,000 ethnic Qiang, roughly half of whom still speak one of the Qiang dialects. Qiang is an SOV language which has a rich segmental inventory.

Negation in Qiang is expressed by the negative adverbial prefix /mə-/ ([m~mə~me~mi~mo]) and the negative imperative prefix /tɕi-/ ([tɕa~tɕe~tɕə~tɕo]).² This paper discusses how indicative and imperative clauses are negated and illustrates a borrowed negative form. Section two outlines negation, both verbal and adjectival, at the clause level; while section three describes constituent negation in Qiang. Section four presents the effects of Chinese on Qiang negation and section five summarizes the article.

2.0 CLAUSAL NEGATION

Various prefixes and suffixes can collocate with the negative adverbial prefix /mə-/ or the negative imperative /tɕi-/. Schematically represented in (1) are the directional (DIR), negative adverbial, negative imperative and continuative (CA) markers in the order that they precede the verb. The adverbial negative prefix (NEG) and the negative imperative prefix (NI), can occupy the same slot, but not simultaneously. Change of state aspect (CSA), person (P) and question marking (QM) suffixes are represented schematically in the sequence in which they follow the verb.³

(1) Prefixes → Verb ← Suffixes

DIR + (NEG,NI) + CA + **VERB** + CSA + P + QM

² The negative adverbial prefix /mə-/ and the negative imperative prefix /tɕi-/ are often subject to the feature spreading process commonly known as vowel harmony. The point of articulation of the verb's vowel, as well as other factors, can influence the quality of the vowel in the negative prefix.

³ The presentation of affixes has been simplified somewhat to cover the examples in this paper. See Sun (1981), Huang (1997) and Liu (1998) for a complete discussion of Qiang verbs and their affixes. Abbreviations are defined at the end of the article.

The negative adverbial prefix /mə-/ also collocates with adjectives when they are occupying the predicate slot. Shown schematically in (2), it can precede the adjective and optionally follow the directional verbal prefix.

- (2) Prefixes → Adjective
DIR + NEG + **ADJECTIVE**

2.1 NEGATIVE INDICATIVE AND INTERROGATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

2.1.1 Adjectives

Adjectives usually assume the role of a postpositional modifier of nouns in indicative constructions, as /ɲiqkʰaq/ 'black' does in (3).

- (3) suxu ɲiqkʰaq tʂe zupu tsuxqu-la hæ'm dzə.
cow black DM mountain backside-LOC Grass eat
'The black cow is grazing there on the back side of the mountain.'

Adjectives functioning as modifiers cannot be negated. Adjectives are similar to verbs in that they can accept person marking (agreement) and serve as predicates without requiring a copula. They differ from verbs in that they can be nominalized by the definite and indefinite suffixes /le, te, ke/, and accept the postpositive adverb /-qale/ 'very'. Example (4) illustrates a negated adjective.

- (4) tʰə ɣul səf tʂo-qu ma-bæʰ.
that walnut tree that-CL NEG-big
'That walnut tree is not big.'

If the negated adjective is moved to another position in the clause it becomes ungrammatical as shown in (5), with the exception of nominalized negated adjectives. This condition is manifest when the nominal suffix /-m/ meaning 'the one who....' is added to the adjective. This is discussed in section 3.0 under constituent negation.

- (5) *tʰə ɣul səf ma-bæʰ. tʂoqu hũ.*
that walnut tree NEG-big that MW be
'Ungrammatical'

Table 1 lists some adjectives and their negative counterparts.

Table 1. Adjectives

Positive form		Negative form	
k ^h ue	'hot'	me-k ^h ue	'not hot'
məpa	'cold'	ma-mba	'not cold'
də	'warm'	ma-də	'not warm'
q ^h a	'bitter'	ma-q ^h a	'not bitter'

Certain Qiang adjectives can also accept directional prefixes. In this context, the negative prefix follows the directional prefix and precedes the adjective as seen in table 2.

Table 2. Adjectives with Directional Prefixes

Positive Form		Negative Form	
fesi	'correct'	fie-me-si	'not correct'
hexsi	'happy'	fie-me-xsi	'not happy'
fegi	'low'	fie-me-gi	'not low'
ham	'ripe'	fia-mə-m	'not ripe'
hoqu	'lose'	fio-mə-qu	'not lose'

2.1.2 Verbs

Indicative clauses are negated when the negative verbal prefix /mə-/ is affixed to a verb. This rule holds true regardless of the role structure of the verb.

- (6) qa-tə sīhūwe ʒdʒi-jy.
 1PS-GEN stomach ache-CSA
 'My stomach aches.'

Negating the clause in (6) simply requires the addition of the negative adverbial prefix /me-/ to the verbal predicate as shown below in (7).

- (7) qa-tə sīhūwe me-ʒdʒi-jy.
 1PS-GEN stomach NEG-ache-CSA
 'My stomach does not ache.'

An example of an intransitive clause and its negated form are seen in (8) and (9).

- (8) qopu ə-ɸi-jy
 3PS DIR-die-CSA
 'He died'

- (9) qopu ə-mə-ɸi
 3PS DIR-NEG-die
 'He did not die.'

In some languages the manner of negating existential verbs differs from the norm. But examples (10) and (11) show that with Qiang existential verbs the pattern of negation follows the norm.

- (10) qa dzikʉ qæqə.
 1PS money have
 'I have (some) money.'

- (11) qa dzikʉ mə- qqə⁴.
 1PS money NEG- have
 'I do not have (any) money.'

Verbs which can form either intransitive or transitive clauses are also negated as per (1), as illustrated in the two examples below.

- (12) qa nəŋ sə-me-zæ
 1PS yesterday DIR-NEG-eat
 'Yesterday, I didn't eat.'

- (13) qa nəŋ pie pies sə-me-zæ
 1PP yesterday pork DIR-NEG-eat
 'Yesterday, I didn't eat any pork.'

The negative comparison is formed by using the comparative marker /nə/ with the negative adverbial prefix /mə-/ as illustrated in (14).

- (14) qa ʔü- nə dzikʉ mə- qqæ.
 1PS 2PS- COMP money NEG- have
 'I don't have as much money as you.'

⁴ Due to Qiang syllable structure constraints, as [mə-] prefixes to the verb, the [æ] in [qæqə] elides.

Qiang negative interrogative sentences differ only slightly from the indicative form. In addition to the negative adverbial prefix /mə-/ a sentence final question particle /tɕia/ is applied, as in example (15).

- (15) tse ləyɿ le ʔũ-tɕ mə- hũ tɕia?
 this book DM 2PS-GEN NEG - be QM
 'Isn't this book yours?'

The interrogative form differs from the negative interrogative only in that the negative verbal prefix is missing from the verb stem as seen below.

- (16) tse ləyɿ le ʔũ-tɕ hũ tɕia?
 this book DM 2PS-GEN be QM
 'Is this book yours?'

Compare this with the negative indicative form in (16).

- (17) tse ləyɿ le ʔũ-tɕ mə- hũ.
 this book DM 2PS-GEN NEG- be
 'This book is not yours.'

Qiang polarity questions are generated by reproducing the verb form with the question marker. The first verb slot is positive and the second is negated as per the examples below.

- (18) ʔũ madɿ-jy-n-a mə- madɿ-jy-n-a?
 2PS tired-CSA-2PS-QM NEG- tired-CSA-2PS-QM
 'Are you tired or not?'
- (19) ʔũ kuɕa-n-a ku-mə- ɕa-n-a?
 2PS stomach: ? -2PS -QM stomach-NEG- ?-2PS-QM
 'Do you have diarrhea or not?'
- (20) ʔũ tɕ^{hi}-n-a me-tɕ^{hi}-n-a?
 2PS want-2PS-QM NEG- want-2PS-QM
 'Do you want it or not?'

2.2 NEGATIVE IMPERATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

The strongest form of Qiang negative imperative constructions may be formed by prefixing the negative imperative /tɕi-/ to the verb. Two types of /tɕi-/ constructions are possible. The first is severe in tone as in a command from an authoritative figure to a subordinate as in (21-22):

- (21) mægæ¹-ŋi-la hə⁴w əwu pəs
overcast sky-CONJ-LOC Hey! Mother today

mægæ¹ ɕi xə⁴kudzi
overcast therefore clothes, food products

ha-tɕi-faj wəu.

DIR-NI-(of the sun) to shine upon :2PP M

'On overcast days, she will call out, "Hey! mom, today is overcast so do not dry your laundry outside."' ⁵

- (22) ɣual-la he-tɕi- ɤəj
out-LOC DIR-NI- arrive
'Do not go outside!'

The second /tɕi-/ type construction should be considered as a strong suggestion, such as a loving mother would give a child. The first type of /tɕi-/ construction is softened by the appearance of the sentence final rhetorical marker /wu/ following the verb as in (23) and (24).

- (23) ili zə tɕe- mə²zəj wə⁶.
2PP affair NI- seek. M
'You all, don't look for those things.'

- (24) qopu ɣqun.i sə-tɕi-ɤzən wə.
3PS Mao county DIR- NI- allow M
'Don't let him go to Mao county.'

⁵ The "she" in this sentence is the ghost of the daughter who resides on top of the mountain behind her mother's house. She provides weather warnings so the mother will be able to wash the clothes effectively.

⁶ Since two different /tɕi-/ prefixes can occur in the same slot before the verb, they can be confused. Care should be taken to distinguish the verbal prefix /tɕi-/, a prohibitive, with the homophonous verbal prefix /tɕi-/ representing continuation. See Huang (1997) for a more detailed explanation of continuation. A third homophone /tɕi/ meaning 'only' also exists in Qiang; however, it is a free standing word and not a prefix.

A third weaker type of negative imperative form occurs in Qiang grammar when someone is told they “cannot” do something. Verbs in Qiang can be nominalized when the verbal suffix /-s/ is added. When /je/ ‘can’ is negated, the section of the clause that precedes /je/ is simultaneously nominalized by the nominal suffix /-s/. Consider:

- (25) ʔū pəs gus fa-s
 2PS today clothes (of the sun) to shine upon-NOM

mə- j⁷ wa.

NEG- can M

Literally: ‘Today, you cannot (have) clothes that (receive) sunshine.
 ‘You cannot dry (your) clothes today.’ (Used by daughter talking to her sick mother who refuses to convalesce.)

If the nominal suffix /-s/ is deleted from the verb that precedes /je/ ‘can’ then the sentence becomes ungrammatical as attested by the grammatical example in (26) and the ungrammatical one in (27).

- (26) mamu tʰə məj laxʂa dzə-s
 Mother there wild mushrooms these eat-NOM

mə- j-jy.

NEG- can-CSA

Literal: ‘Mother eating these wild mushrooms is prohibited.’

Free: ‘Mom, (you) must not eat these wild mushrooms.’ (They are rotten.)

- (27) * mamu tʰə məj laxʂa dzə
 mother there wild mushrooms these eat

mə- j-jy. *

NEG-can-CSA

Ungrammatical!

⁷ When the negative morpheme prefixes to /je/ ‘can’ to form /məj/ the /e/ in /je/ elides.

2.3 NEGATIVE PREFIX PLACEMENT IN INDEPENDENT CLAUSES

Clauses can have more than one verb, but the negative adverbial prefix /mə-/ can only collocate with the final verb in an independent clause as shown below in (28 - 31).

(28)/mə-/ verb

..... verb, /mə-/ verb

..... verb, verb, /mə-/ verb

(29) qa | VERB
 | fiə-m-tɕi-zæ.
1PS | DIR-NEG-CA-write
 'I still have not written.'

(30) qa | VERB | VERB
 | fiə-zə | do-m-tɕi-jæ.
1PS | DIR-write | DIR-NEG-CA-finish:1PS
 'I still have not finished writing.'

(31) qa | VERB | VERB | VERB
 | fiə-zə | do-j | mə-tɕi-dzɑ
1PS | DIR-write | DIR-finish | NEG-CA-able:1PS
 'I still will not be able to finish writing.'

In sentences with two or more clauses, the negative adverbial prefix /mə-/ still falls on an independent clauses final verb regardless of the clause's position in the sentence. This condition is represented schematically in (32) and illustrated in (33-34) and (37).

(32) independent clause dependent or independent clause
 mə-/ verb..... verb

(33) qa | VERB | | VERB | VERB | VERB
 | mə-dzɑ⁸ | | sə- ɣpa | ka | tɕi.
1PS | NEG-able | CONJ also | DIR-try hard | go | want
 'Although I want to go very much, I am not able.'

⁸ The verb root /dzɑ/ changes to /dʒɑ/ since the subject is in the first person.

- (34)

VERB qopu mā-dzə 3PS NEG-able	ɲi mi CONJ other people	VERB tə-ɸusi DIR -ask
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VERB ɲi bəl after do	VERB kə go:3PS
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 'He was not able to do it, so he went to ask others (for help).'

With noun-verb compounds, the negative marker prefixes to the verbal component of the compound. In (35) the noun /dzəkʏ/ 'source' cannot stand alone and is fused together with the existential verb /le/ 'have' to mean 'know'. Consider examples (35) and (36).

- (35) qa dzəkʏ-lə.
 1PS source-have
 'I know'
- (36) qa dzəkʏ-me-lə.
 1PS source-NEG-have
 'I do not know'

Similarly, the verb /tup/ 'suffer' cannot stand alone, but is negated by placing /mə-/ in front of /tuʔ/ 'beat'. See (37) and (38).

- (37) kʰumutɕi-tɕ tɕymi le mə-χsa
 Khumuji's (name)- GEN child DM NEG- obedient

 ɕi tup-tua.
 because suffer-beating:FUT
 'Because Khumji's child is not obedient, (he) will get spanked.'

⁹ The /u/ in /tu/ elides when the prefix is added.

- 'Because Biemji's child is obedient, (he) will not get spanked.'

‘After a time, (the father) would not agree to stay (with them, then he) said, “I have eaten (your food) and drunk (your wine) and my heart is satisfied, therefore I must be going.”’

The two examples below illustrate a combination of a verbal and an adjectival negation.

- (41) ʔū mā- kə ɦe-me- se.
 2PS NEG- go DIR-NEG- be all right
 'It isn't right for you not to go.'
- (42) ʔū mā- z ɦe-me- se.
 2PS NEG- eat DIR-NEG- be all right
 'It isn't right for you not to eat.'

3.0 CONSTITUENT NEGATION

3.1 Nominalized Adjectival Predicates

Constituent negation in Qiang is a little observed phenomenon. It can occur in two ways. The first type happens when the verbal suffix /-m/ 'the one who....' nominalizes an adjectival predicate. (43) and (44) illustrate the positive and negative sides of this form.

- (43) tɕymi ɦe-xsi-m lə-w ɲuwə' ɦie.
 child DIR-happy-NOM that-CL top set down
 'The happy child played with the top.'
- (44) tɕymi ɦe-me-xsi-m lə-w ɲuwə' ɦie.
 child DIR-NEG-happy-NOM that-CL top set down
 'The unhappy child played with the top.'

3.2 'NOT ONLY.....' FORMS

A second type of constituent negation occurs when [me-tɕʰi] 'only' is placed after the sentence topic. Observe the following examples:

- (45) sku le qopu-tɕ jænɲu me- tɕʰi ɲi
 thief DM 3PS-GEN potato NEG- only CONJ
- qopu-tɕ qʰal le la tɕ-sku ku.
 3PS-GEN flat bread that also DIR - steal like that
 The thief stole not only his potato, but also his flat 'bread.'

The verb [ɦū] 'be' is optional in this situation as shown in the examples above and below.

- ## 4.0 MANDARIN CHINESE INFLUENCE

(47) me-te panfa læ t̥sə t̥ɪndʒo'li t̥ɪ
NEG-obtain means AM at this point 1PP only

mæ-zi-jə' ɸi.
NEG- have-1PP because
'At this time, there is no other way (to procreate) because there is
no one but us.'

Because the above example has two negative markers this raises the question “Why does the free translation have a negative sense?” However, this is not a double negative construction alone, but rather a double negative coupled with another negative. Since /təi/ ‘only’ is semantically tied to the first negative adverbial prefix /me-/ , this produces a semantically negative sentence.

- (48) *lau-t^ha* *tu* *təi^hū* *le* *la* *me-te* *panfa* *lə*,
noisy-PT after husband DM also NEG-obtain method AM
- tsæmbe* *le* *n̥a* *setsu* *ma-dzə-jy* *fiat^ha*
wife (Step-mother) also and unite NEG-able-CSA afterwards
- təymi* *le* *fi-w-ta* *kutʂə* *ku* *kə*
children DM two-CL-G wild vegetables (edible) cut go
- sa* *ji* *n̥i* *guæχqə* *tʂitsə* *me- le-p* *kə-w*
E say after backpack bottom NEG- have-GEN that way-CL
- ke* *əudzu* *n̥i* *lun̥ixqæ'-la*
that way give a carry (on the back) after primeval forest-LOC

ha- ta- jy.

DIR- carry-CSA

'After fighting, the husband had no way of reconciling (the situation) with his wife. Then (he) gave each child a bottomless backpack (basket) saying, "We will go to the forest to gather some wild vegetables."'

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The issues that influence negation in Qiang grammar can be summarized as follows:

- Verbs can be negated by the negative adverbial prefix /*mə-*/ and the negative imperative prefix /*təi-*/, while adjectives can only be negated by the negative adverbial prefix /*mə-*/ if they are in the predicate slot.
- The negative adverbial prefix /*mə-*/ always prefixes to the last verb in an independent clause.
- Constituent negation can occur if negated adjectives have been nominalized by the suffix /*-m*/ or in "not...only" constructions.
- Negation of /*je*/ 'can' requires that the material to the left of it in a sentence be nominalized by the verbal suffix /*-s*/.
- The negative Chinese phrase /*me-te panfa*/ 'no alternative' has been absorbed into Qiang and is commonly utilized.

Abbreviations

1PS	first person singular	E	emphasis
1PP	first person plural	FORM	formative
2PS	second person singular	FUT	future tense
2PP	second person plural	GEN	genitive marker
3PS	third person singular	G	goal
3PP	third person plural	LOC	locative marker
AM	aspect marker	M	mood
CA	continuative aspect	NOM	nominalisation
CL	classifier	NEG	negative mood
CONJ	conjunction	NI	negative imperative
COMP	comparison	P	person
CSA	change of state aspect	PM	pause marker
DM	determiner marker	PT	particle
DIR	directional verbal prefix	QM	question marker
EA	experiential aspect		

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