Kiranti double negation

A copula conjecture

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It is shown how Kiranti languages often express a semantically single clausal negation of a declarative verbal main clause with two clausal negators. We conjecture that the second negator has its origin in a copula and that the reinterpretation and integration of the copula into a negative construction follows the scenario known as a "Jespersen Cycle".

In memory of Karen Ebert (1945–2016)

1. Introduction

This paper deals with double negation in the Kiranti languages. The roughly 30 Kiranti languages are predominantly spoken in Eastern Nepal and they are notorious for their complex verbal morphology, particularly with respect to suffixes (see e.g. van Driem 1992; Ebert 1994). In some of the Kiranti languages clausal negation is also a complex matter, in particular because the marking can happen with two or more markers. In this paper the term "double negation" is used for the expression of a semantically single neutral (i.e. non-emphatic) clausal negation of a declarative verbal main clause that is expressed by two clausal negators, whether morphological or syntactic.[1] Double negation is not rare in the world's languages.

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1. We thus exclude a variety of other structures, such as doubling structures in which the negators cancel each other (Horn 1991), negative concord constructions such as *We don't need no education* or negative quantifier constructions such as *We saw nobody* (van der Auwera & Neuckermans 2004; van der Auwera and Van Alsenoy 2016). Following Miestamo (2005) we use the adjective "verbal" to exclude constructions with copulas and copula-like constructions (Veselinova 2014; 2016). We also do not include negative imperatives or optatives.

In a variety sample of the world's languages, a sample designed to bring out as much variation as possible, Van Alsenoy (2014: 187–188) found double negation in 30 out of 179 languages, i.e. in 1 out of 6 languages. English used to be such a language: in (1) negation is served by both *ne* and *nat.* Another example is the Bantu language Rund in (2): here the two negators are morphological.[2] It is this type that we find in Kiranti.

(1) Late Middle English   (Brinton & Arnovick 2011: 303)
    yet ne   wolde he nat   answere sodeynly
    yet NEG1 would he NEG2 answer   suddenly
    'Yet he would not answer suddenly'

(2) Rund   (Kamba Muzenga 1981: 4)[3]
    kì-wù-kù-pund-àp
    NEG1–2SG-TAM-dig-NEG2
    'You will not dig'

(3) Limbu   (van Driem 1987: 91)
    allɔ nam mɛ-seˑk-nɛn
    now sun NEG1-shine-NEG2
    'The sun is not shining now'

Triple negation, i.e. the expression of a semantically single neutral main clause verbal negation with three negators, is much rarer, and there is no estimate on just how rare it is. It occurs in the Vanuatu language Lewo, but also in Kiranti.

(4) Lewo   (Early 1994: 411)
    naga pe   Ø-pa   re   poli.
    3SG R.NEG1 3SS-R.go NEG2 NEG3
    'He hasn't gone'

(5) Camling   (Ebert 1997b: 30)
    pa-t-un-c-āi
    NEG1-come-NEG2–3NS-NEG3
    'They didn't come'

Quadruple negation is rarer still. (6) is an example of the Italian dialect of Càrcare and, again, Kiranti has it too.

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2. Example (11) below shows a double negation in which one marker is morphological and the other syntactic.

3. Here and elsewhere, we use the orthography found in the sources and strongly source-based glosses as well.

(6) Càrcare Italian   (Manzini 2008: 85)

      εŋ   t   εŋ   t   εŋ   lɔvi nɛːnt

      NEG1 you NEG2 yourself NEG3 wash NEG4

      'You don't wash yourself'

(7) Bantawa   (Doornenbal 2009: 271)

      i-ciŋ-nin   set-nin-ci-n

      NEG1-hang-NEG2 kill-NEG3-DUP-NEG4

      'He does not not kill himself by hanging'

The Bantawa case in (7) is a little different from the other cases of multiple negation illustrated so far, for the verbal construction contains two verbs in a so-called "compound verb" construction (Doornenbal 2009: 249). When the compound verb is in the progressive, there can even be 5 negators, perhaps because the second part of the compound in (8) historically consists of two verbs as well.

(8) Bantawa   (Doornenbal 2009: 271)

      i-ciŋ-nin   set-nin-Ø-nin-ci-n

      NEG1-hang-neg2 kill-NEG3-PROG-NEG4-DUP-NEG5

      'He is not killing himself by hanging'

Though Bantawa thus deserves a place of honor in Frans Plank's 2015 *Raritätenkabinett,* its quadruple and quintuple negation is not so much due to negation as to the compound verb construction. For this reason we focus on simpler multiple negation, viz. on double negation.

2. Overview

Table 1 gives us an idea of previous scholarship of multiple negation in the Sino-Tibetan languages. The totals are the numbers of Sino-Tibetan languages surveyed in each study. All except Dryer (2008) are studies of the languages of the whole world; Dryer (2008) is about Tibeto-Burman only.

Table 1. Multiple negation in the Sino-Tibetan languages

	Double	Triple or more	Total
Miestamo (2005)	2	0	7
Dryer (2008)	6	0	108
Dryer (2013)	12	0	139
this study[a]	12	3	156

[a] Details and references can be found in Vossen (2016).

The data sets in our work and in Dryer (2008; 2013) are not samples (in the sense of data sets that are argued to be representative); Miestamo's is but it is rather small. So it does not make sense to ask how the frequency of multiple negation in Sino-Tibetan compares with the rest of the world. It is more interesting to note that in the three studies with the fairly extensive data, each time roughly half of Sino-Tibetan languages with double negation are Kiranti languages, more particularly the Central and Eastern ones, and interestingly, they each also show that Lepcha, genetically not Kiranti, but geographically close to Eastern Kiranti, also has double negation. Furthermore, only Central and Eastern Kiranti have "triple or more" negation. We can thus conclude that though multiple negation within Sino-Tibetan is not restricted to Kiranti, it is at least typical for Kiranti. Outside of the Kiranti languages, double negation is a minority pattern. Of the 156 Sino-Tibetan languages that we surveyed, the 141 languages that do not manifest multiple negation mostly have a preverbal single negator (93), less often a postverbal single negation (40), and in some languages (8) the single negation is either preverbal or postverbal. When the negation is double, the two exponents typically embrace the verb: one part is preverbal and the other is postverbal. In Kiranti the preverbal negator is a verbal prefix and the postverbal one a verbal suffix. When

Table 2. Negation in the Kiranti languages (and Lepcha), classification by van Driem (2001)

	Western	Central		Eastern		Limbu	Lepcha
		Khambu	**Southern**	**Upper Aruṇ**	**Greater Yakkha**		
Only single	Bahing Hayu Jero Khaling Kohi Sunwar Thulung Tilung[a] Wambule	Kulung		Lohorung Mewahang Yamphu			
Single or double	Dumi				Athpare Belhare Yakkha		
Only double			Chintang				Lepcha
Double or more			Bantawa Camling			Limbu	

[a] Tilung was not included in the classification. We put it in the Western group on account of Opgenort (2011).

the Kiranti negation is triple, the second and the third negator are suffixes (or a suffix and an infix).

Table 2 gives a more detailed overview of Kiranti negation. The classification on Table 2 is the one proposed by van Driem (2001: 615). Here and elsewhere we include Lepcha. We do not subclassify the family when it is not relevant.

We can observe that single negation, the most frequent strategy in Sino-Tibetan, is also found in Kiranti. Though we don't have data for all of the Kiranti languages and strategies are not exactly following van Driem's classification, a clear west-to-east pattern emerges. Single negation is typical for Western Kiranti, and multiple negation for Central and Eastern Kiranti. In Central and Eastern Kiranti the south (with Southern Central and Greater Yakkha Eastern) is more open to double than the north.

The prefixal negator, whether it is the sole exponent of negation or part of a multiple negation, can take various forms. At least the most important ones are listed in Table 3.[4]

Table 3. Forms of prefixal negation

Form	As single verbal prefix	As the verbal prefix of a multiple negation
ma-/me-/mɛ-/mə-/ mæ-/mu-/mü-	Bahing, Hayu, Khaling, Lohurung, Mewahang, Sunwar, Thulung, Tilung	Chintang, Dumi, Kulung, Lepcha, Limbu
mæn-/man-/maŋ-	Hayu, Yamphu	Bantawa, Kulung
ɔ-/a-/ɨ-	Jero, Kohi, Wambule	Bantawa
pa-		Camling
n-		Belhare, Yakkha

We have listed a good many lookalikes to *ma-* in the same row, hypothesizing, yet deferring to confirmation by specialists, that they are cognates. More particularly, they probably derive from what is arguably the proto Tibeto-Burman negation **ma* (Benedict 1972: 97; Matisoff 2003: 488), which is found in a large number of Tibeto-Burman languages, both East and West of Kiranti, from e.g. Kham in Western Tibet (Watters 2003: 697–698) over Bumthang in Bhutan (van Driem 1995: 200), to Akha in the borderland between Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and China (Hansson 2003: 247, 249, 251) and Cogtse Gyarong (Nagano 2003: 488) much further north in China. The forms *mæn-/man-/maŋ-* are no doubt related too, esp. if the proto Tibeto-Burman is not the simple **ma* but **ma(-C)*, where the consonant is either a glide or a nasal (Post 2015: 432). About *ɔ-/a-/ɨ-* specialists

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4. Examples will follow in (16) to (21).

disagree: for Opgenort (2004: 249) they are cognates of *ma-*, but Doornenbal (2009: 170) is skeptical and deplores the absence of an "etymological history" on the part of Opgenort's. Interestingly, these forms are also found in the reasonably close Bodic languages Nar Phu (Noonan 2003: 349), Thakali (Georg 1996: 144–145) and Chantyal (Noonan 2003: 331), all east of Kiranti. We have nothing to say about *pa-*. *n-* is intriguing because it is (close to) the nasal that ends the *mæn-/ man-/maŋ-* negation. At least for Chhattare Limbu it has been claimed that it is an allomorph of *ma-* (Tumbahang 2005; cp. also van Driem 1987: 104). We also find *n* in the negative suffix (see below). It may be this similarity between the prefix and the suffix that makes Ebert (1994), followed by Rai (2012: 164), hypothesize that the prefix and the suffix are cognates: 'Most of the suffixes seem to originate in **mVn*, which appears in various reduced forms as prefix or as suffix, and often both together' (Ebert 1994: 40). This brings us to the suffixes.

Whereas possible cognates of *ma-* function as postverbal negatives in some Sino-Tibetan languages, mostly, so it seems, in North-East India, as in e.g. Mising (Prasad 1991: 98–103) or Galo (Post 2015) and perhaps Angami (Giridhar 1980: 79–83), they don't in Kiranti. Instead the most common forms are *-ni, -n, -nə, -nən, -nin, -ina, -aina,* of which we voice the suspicion that they are related or contain related morphemes. Lookalikes occur in the rest of Sino-Tibetan too, but not, it would appear from our survey, all that frequently, nor is it obvious that they are cognates (e.g. *-no* in Chhothe (DeLancey to appear)) and we can't find any negative protoform that could be its ancestor. Ebert (1994: 40) could, of course, be right in deriving both the suffix and the prefix from one form **mVn,* especially if the protoform for *ma-* is not really **ma*, but as Post (2015: 432) suggests, **ma*(-C). Another suggestion, due to Ebert (1997b: 30), is that some of the nasal suffixes – she made the claim for Camling – have been influenced by Nepali nasal negators. Contact influence for negation may indeed be relevant, but only for the recent history, and it is difficult to see how it could have crept in the Kiranti morphology as deeply as in the quintuple marking illustrated in (8). In the next section we conjecture that these nasal forms (*-ni* etc.) are old and go back to a Tibeto-Burman copula.

3.   A Jespersen Cycle?

When a language has double negation, the first hypothesis is that it is due to what has been called "Jespersen's Cycle" or "a Jespersen Cycle". The term (in the variant with 's) goes back to Dahl (1979) and it refers to a process that received an early description in Jespersen (1917: 4). Jespersen's idea was this:

> The history of negative expression in various languages makes us witness the following curious fluctuation: the original negative adverb is first weakened, then found insufficient and therefore strengthened, generally through some additional word, and this in its turn may be felt as the negative proper and may then in course of time be subject to the same development as the original word.

Since Jespersen (1917) and Dahl (1997), our understanding of Jespersen Cycles has increased a lot (van der Auwera 2009; Devos and van der Auwera 2013; Vossen 2016). For one thing, it was discovered in various versions and in various parts of the world. Variation mostly concerns the nature of the second negator. In the simplest type the second negator is just a repetition of the first one.

(9)   Afrikaans   (Ponelis 1979: 378)
    dit lyk   nie   reg   nie
    this seems NEG1 right NEG2
    'This doesn't seem right'

In Western European languages the second negator typically derives from a word referring to a small quantity, a so-called "minimizer", like *step, point* or *crumb*, all found in the history of French, or from a word that means 'nothing', like in English. Both types of second negators originally carried an emphatic meaning, which then bleached. Thus the current French second negator is *pas*, etymologically 'step'.

(10) French
    Il ne   parle pas
    he NEG1 speaks NEG2
    'He doesn't speak'

Negative *pas* must have arisen with movement verbs: when one doesn't move a step, one does not move at all, and when the emphatic 'at all' sense wears out, it just becomes an exponent of a neutral negation.[5] In some Bantu languages the second marker comes from a negative answer article. We see it in (11), where the word *té* does double duty.

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5. A partially terminological issue is whether the early stage of a Jespersen Cycle has to involve emphasis. A negative answer is given in van der Auwera (2009). If one's answer is negative, one will normally describe the initial stage as exhibiting constructional asymmetry (in the sense of Miestamo 2005), i.e. a construction expressing neutral negation with a negator and with something that is not inherently negative. When this second "something" has been reinterpreted as a true negator, the language will have switched from constructional asymmetry to constructional symmetry.

(11) Lifunga   (Djamba Ndjeka 1996: 143)
      té na-í-mo-wɛ́n-ɛ́   té
      no 1SG-NEG1–1-see-PRES NEG2
      'No, I will not see him'

We have also learned that the Jespersen Cycle, though typically going from single
negation to double negation and then back to single negation, could also result
in triple negation. Witnessing that Kiranti has both double and triple negation
and that there are at least some variants of double negation in which the prefixal
negator is the same as the single prefixal negator of other languages, the obvious
question is whether Kiranti could also manifest a version of a Jespersen Cycle. Our
tentative answer is positive, at least for what we will henceforth call the "#*ma-* …
#*-ni* structure", i.e. the construction comprising a preverbal hypothesized cognate
of *ma-* and a postverbal hypothesized cognate of *-ni*.[6]

   In a typical Jespersen Cycle the preverbal element is the oldest negator. That
does not mean that the second element is as such less old, only that it is less old
as a negator. This is plausible for Kiranti #*ma-* … *-ni*#: only #*ma-* currently has
an ancient negative etymology. This could mean that #*-ni* originally had another
meaning. In a typical Jespersen Cycle the second element served to make the nega-
tion more emphatic. It is plausible to assume that a postposed copula can do this,
either as an afterthought or a copula taking scope over the preceding proposition,
the latter then probably appearing as a nominalization.[7] We illustrate these con-
structions with English (12) and pseudo-English (13).

(12) The dog does not chase the cat, so it is

(13) The dog not chasing the cat is

The construction is the mirror image of what can occur in Limbu, viz. the combi-
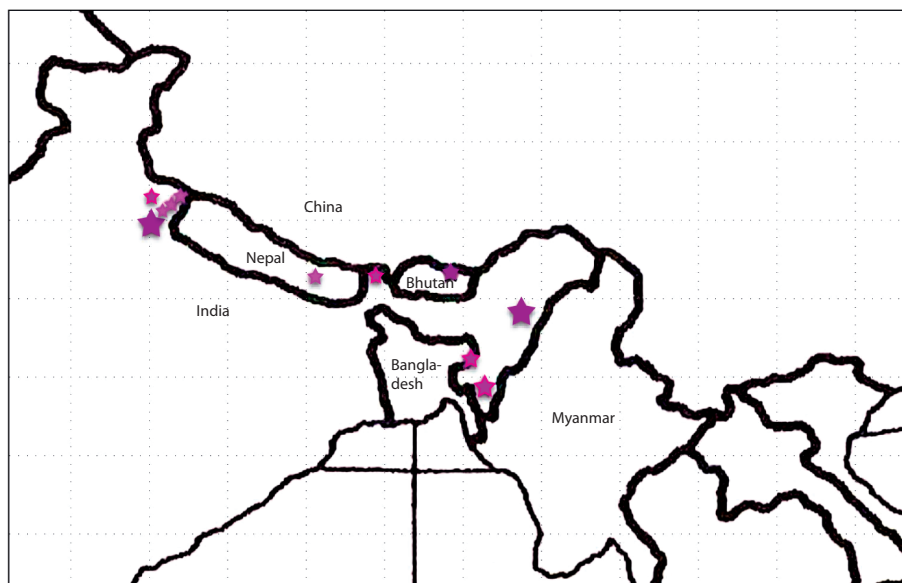nation of a positive proposition and a negative copula construction.

(14) Limbu   (van Driem 1987: 60)
      pitcha kɛ-dzɔ me·n
      beef   2-eat   NEG.be
      'It is not the case that you eat beef'
      (The speaker is somewhat horrified at the idea)

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6. We use Bauman's (1975) "#" to symbolize that we make no claim as to the exact reconstruc-
tion of the protoform.

7. The adverb "probably" seems justified given the importance of nominalization in Tibeto-
Burman (e.g. Delancey 2011).

One can also directly negate the 'eat' verb, but the form with the negated copula carries some kind of emphasis, precisely also what is expected for the onset of a Jespersen cycle.

We know of two other languages for which it has been proposed that an erstwhile positive copula has become a verbal negator, viz. the Austronesian language Lewo (Early 1994a: 425–426, 1994b: 79–80) and the Papuan language Awju (Wester 2014: 127–140).[8] So Kiranti would not be alone. A further element of support for the copula conjecture is that Tibeto-Burman indeed has or had a copula *ni*, which in the survey of Lowes (2007) shows up as such or in related functions both east and west of Central and Eastern Kiranti, as in Meithei (Chelliah 1997: 249–250, 297).

Map 1. The Tibeto-Burman copula ni (Lowes 2007)

(15)   Meithei   (Chelliah 1997: 297)
    a.   phurit-tu ə-ŋəw-pə-ni
          shirt-DIST ATT-white-NOM-COP
          'That shirt is the white one'
    b.   əy-nə phi ə-du   ləŋ-thok-lə́bə-ni
          I-CNTR cloth ATT-DIST throw-out-having-COP
          '(It is that) I have thrown out that cloth'

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8. There is also a growing literature on the development of negative copulas and existential verbs into verbal negators (see Croft 1991; Veselinova 2014; 2016).

The one Kiranti star in Map 1 concerns Hayu, which is Western Kiranti. It does not have any #-*ni* negation but #-*ni* shows up as a progressive marker (Michailowsky 1988: 99, 182). So we speculate that the reason why we don't find any obvious reflection of Lowes' Proto Tibeto-Burman *ni* copula in Central and Eastern Kiranti is that it appears there as a non-obvious reflection, to wit, as a negator. Admittedly, this conjecture does not explain why there is little evidence of the *ni* copula in Western Kiranti. So perhaps the negative function didn't so much cause the demise of *ni* as its partial safeguarding.[9]

The semantic plausibility of using a copula for emphasis and the fact that the Tibeto-Burman copula *ni* does not show up as copula in Central or Eastern Kiranti are the first two considerations to support our conjecture that the #-*ni* negator derives from a copula. A third element of support concerns the co-occurrence of

Table 4. Constellations of #*ma*- and #-*ni*

	PST	NPST	Languages and sources
Attested	#*ma*-	#*ma*-	?Bahing (Opgenort 2004: 249), Hayu (Michailovsky 1988: 161), Jero (Opgenort 2005: 139), Khaling (Ebert 1994: 44–45), Kohi (Lahaussois 2009: 20), Sunwar (Borchers 2008: 169), Thulung (Ebert 1994: 44–45), Tilung (Opgenort 2011: 268), Wambule (Opgenort 2004: 249)
	#*ma*-	#-*ni*	Chintang (Bickel et al. 2007: 49), Kulung (Tolsma 2006: 63–65, 79), Lohorung (van Driem 1992: 57, 59), Mewahang (Banjade 2009: 17), Yamphu (Rutgers 1998: 114, 135)
	#*ma*-	#*ma*- … #-*ni*	Bantawa (Doornenbal 2009: 152, 161–163)
	#-*ni*	#-*ni*	Athpare (Ebert 1994: 41–42; Ebert 1997a: 54–59)[12]
	#*ma*- … #-*ni*	#-*ni*	Dumi (van Driem 1993: 124, 149)
	#*ma*- … #-*ni*	*ma*- … #-*ni*	Belhare (Bickel 2003: 554), Camling (Ebert 1997b: 30), Lepcha (Plaisier 2007: 112–113), Limbu (van Driem 1987: 104: Ebert 1994: 41), Yakkha (Schackow 2015: 227–227)
Not attested	#-*ni*	#*ma*-	–
	#-*ni*	#*ma*- … #-*ni*	–
	#*ma*- -*ni*	#*ma*-	–

[a] Athpare has doubling -*ni* … -*ni* structures, but each *ni* goes with what was originally a separate verb (Ebert 1997a: 57–60).

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9. Also, the conjecture that *ni* survives in Central and Eastern Kiranti does not rule out that *ni* survives in other constructions, one candidate being the Limbu verb *nɛss* 'lie, be, be situated' (Michailovsky 2002: 45). In Lewo the hypothesized copula that developed into a verbal negator still also functions as a copula (Early 1994a: 425–426, 1994b: 79–80).

the #*ma*- and #-*ni* elements. In Kiranti the hypothesized gradual reanalysis of the copula as a negator is sensitive to tense. More particularly, the presence of #*ma*- and #-*ni*, either alone or together, depends on whether the sentence is past or present. Table 4 shows in a tentative way which constellations have been attested and which ones have not. Part of the tentativeness is due to the fact that it is not always clear whether some marker should be seen as related to #*ma*- or to #-*ni* (see the discussion of Table 3). In this respect, the most controversial decision is the listing of Belhare and Yakkha, since their prefix is *N-,* not straightforwardly related to #*ma*-, except perhaps as a short form of #*man*-.

In (16) to (21) each of the attested constellations is illustrated.

(16) #*ma*- for PST and NPST
       Kohi   (Lahaussois 2009: 31, 24)
       a.   dʰɔd   zamda-si-m-bi   ɔ-dhoʔd-usi
            snack put-3DU>3SG.PST-NOM-LOC NEG-find-3DU>3SG-PST
            'They did't find the snack where they had put it'
       b.   a-be-na
            NEG-give-3SG>2SG-NPST
            'He won't give it to you'

(17) #*ma*- for PST and #-*ni* for NPST
       Mewahang   (Banjade 2009: 17, 17)
       a.   o   ma-ta-ʔa
            3SG NEG-come-PST
            'He/she didn't come'
       b.   o   taʔ-ni
            3SG come-NEG
            'He/she doesn't come'

(18) #*ma*- for PST and #-*ma*- … #-*ni* for NPST
       Bantawa   (Doornenbal 2009: 166, 227)
       a.   man-ta-ŋa
            NEG-come-1SG
            'I did not come"
       b.   kʰo i-en-niŋ
            I   NEG1-hear-NEG2
            'I cannot hear it'

(19) #-*ni* for PST and NPST
       Athpare   (Ebert 1997a: 57, 55)
       a.   khat-nat,ni-na
            go-AUX.NEG-NOM
            'he didn't go'

b. yuŋ-ni-na
    stay-NEG-NOM
    'he doesn't stay'

(20) #*ma-* … #-*ni* for PST and #-*ni* for NPST
      Dumi   (van Driem 1993: 124, 149)
      a. ape: ŋə   ham-mə-ye:-Ø-nə?
          before EMPH 3PL-NEG1-come.down-PST-NEG2
          'Haven't they already come down?'
      b. aŋkɨ-ʔa   tsaŋgɨr-po sɨ   dzu-k-t-ɨ-nə
          1PL.E-ERG goat-GEN meat eat-1PL-NPST-E-NEG
          'We don't eat goat meat'

(21) #*ma-* … #-*ni* for PST and NPST
      Limbu   (van Driem 1987: 147, 91)
      a. anchɛn   kɛ-m-ba·tt-u-n-naŋ-i·?
          yesterday 2-NEG1-tell-3PL-NEG2-too-Q
          'Didn't you tell him [to do it [yesterday either?'
      b. allɔ nam mɛ-se·k-nɛn
          now sun NEG1-shine-NEG2
          'The sun is not shining now'

It seems clear that rather many constellations are allowed, but not all. #*ma-* is associated with the past: it occurs more often in the past than in the non-past, and when it occurs in the non-past, it occurs in the past as well. Conversely, #-*ni* is strongly associated with the non-past: it occurs more often in the non-past than in the past, and when it occurs in the past, it occurs in the non-past as well. This generalization captures the synchronic variation, and we furthermore offer the scenario in Figure 1 as a diachronic interpretation. (For reasons of space we drop "#" and "…".)
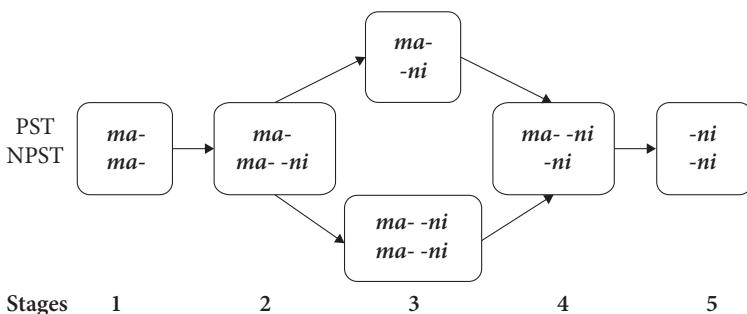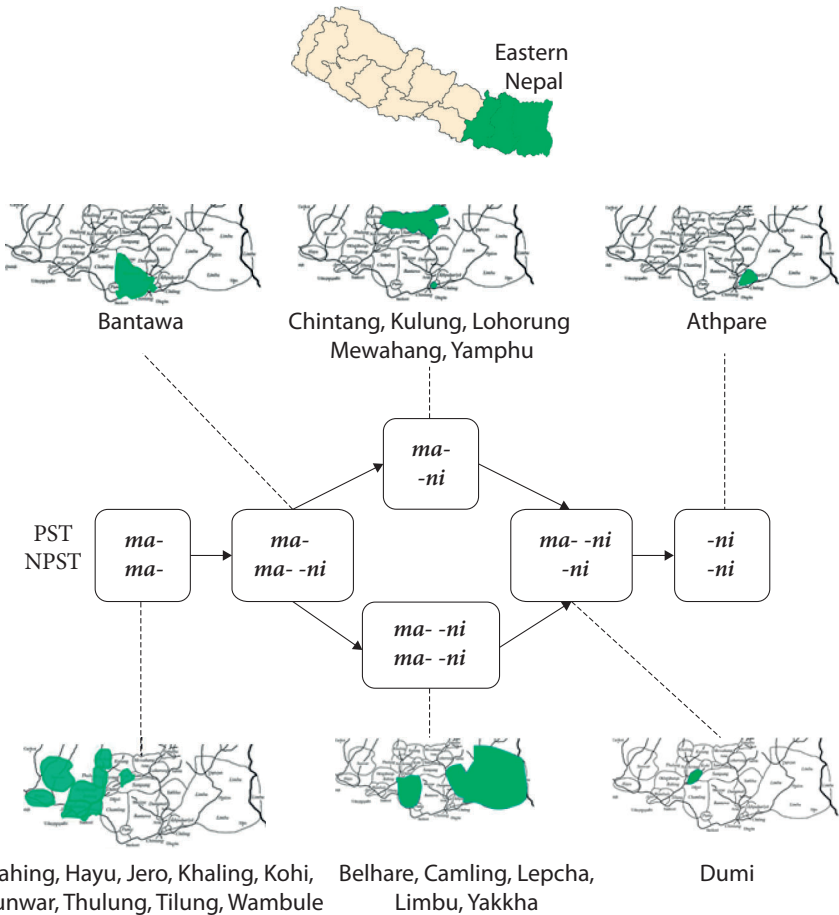

Figure 1. A Jespersen Cycle for Kiranti

We hypothesize that #-*ni* started out in the non-past, first by joining #*ma*- (stage 2), that it then either kicked out #*ma*- in the non-past (the 'upper' development in stage 3) or moved into the past and joined #*ma*- there (the 'lower' development of stage 3). What follows is a stage with #*ni*- on its own in the non-past and together with #*ma*- in the past (stage 4) and finally #*ni*- is on its own for both the past and the non-past. The scenario is furthermore a clear Jespersen scenario. On both the past and the non-past lines we see #*ma*- changing into #*ma*- … #-*ni* and ending up in #-*ni*. Map 2, displaying the spread of the Kiranti languages in Eastern Nepal, displays where the stages are realized in space.

Map 2. The Jespersen Cycle in space[10]

10. The base map – without our overlay – is due to Opgenort (2011: 254).

This model is at best a simplification. It situates every language squarely in just one stage, but languages could be in between and also in more than one stage depending on the construction. Thus the Bantawa non-past is shown in Map 2 to have an embracing negator with both a prefix and a suffix, but there are contexts in which the prefix is absent (Doornenbal 2009: 152). This could be interpreted as showing that Bantawa is on its way to the constellation exemplified by Chintang, Kulung, Lohorung, Mewahang and Yamphu. Both Belhare and Yakkha are in a similar situation: they have a prefix and suffix, and while in Belhare the prefix can remain absent (Bickel 2003: 229) in Yakkha it is the suffix that can remain absent (Schackow 2015: 229). And, of course, we don't say anything about constructions other than main clause declaratives[11] and nothing about tripling either. Also, we don't know why the copula should have started its negative career in the non-past rather than the past. There does not seem to be a reason why a copula could not develop towards negation from the past domain or why a language could not have both paths. In fact, a development from a past copula may have occurred or, better, 'may be occurring' in Bantawa. Next to #-*ni*, Bantawa has the 'past tense negative affixes' -*do*/-*da* and -*yuk*/-*yukt* (Doornenbal 2009: 163), these both have a verbal origin (Doornenbal 2009: 163) and the second one is related to a locational copula (Doornenbal 2009: 276),[12] which still also exists (Doornenbal 2009: 119 (and not only in Bantawa; see e.g. van Driem 1987: 63–64 on Limbu). Similarly, a dialect of Chintang uses *yokt* for the negative past (Bickel et al. 2007: 49).[13] This fact can be heralded as a fourth piece of circumstantial evidence for our Jespersen scenario.

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11. It is interesting that what is called a "nominal" negator may well always or typically be *ma*- (Ebert 1994: 41). It is not quite clear what counts as a nominal negator for Ebert, but from the perspective that #-*ni* started as a positive copula combining with what was probably a nominalization with #*ma*- and that the verb of the nominalization became finite in the period that the copula lost its verbal finite nature, it makes sense that constructions that remained nominal and non-finite would retain the conservative #*ma*- only pattern.

12. *do*/*da* has a different verbal origin. Doornenbal (2009: 165, 272) associates it with a verb meaning 'effect' or 'put' (also Jacques 2016), but interestingly Lowes (2006) also lists a *da* copula. Yet another negator or, more generally, irrealis marker is *wa* in Thulung (Ebert 1994: 44) and Khaling (Jacques et al. 2012: 1101–2, Lahaussois 2013), which may have the same origin as *att* in Athpare (see (19a)), hesitantly related to a verb *watt* with an unknown meaning (Ebert 1997a: 57, 73). It may be related to Limbu *wa* 'exist', where it is also used in negative perfect contexts (Michailovsky 2002: 87) (Jacques in print).

13. Outside of Kiranti, there is Mongsen Ao, in which verbal declarative main clauses are made negative with a prefixal *ma*- form only, except that in the past there is also a -*la* suffix (Coupe 2007: 292). Coupe (2007: 341–342) notes that the language also has a *la* topic marker, and speculates that both might derive from a Proto-Tibeto-Burman interrogative marker. But Lowes (2006) speculates that Mongsen Ao *la* derives from a copula.

A copula-to-negator would be independently motivated: we wouldn't only need it for *#-ni* but also for *-yuk/-yukt.* And the evidence for *-yuk/-yukt* is much more direct: Bantawa has both the copula and the negator use.

A final remark is that the Jespersen Cycle hypothesis and the conjecture that *#-ni* is an old copula are partially independent from another one. It is possible that Kiranti underwent a Jespersen Cycle with *#-ni* even if turned out that *#-ni* is not an old copula. Conversely, even if the rather specific Jespersen Cycle shown in Figure 1 is (partially) mistaken, it could still be the case that *#-ni* was an old copula. Despite this partial independence, though, the two hypotheses harmonize rather well, for a copula makes good sense as input for a Jespersen Cycle.

4. Conclusion

In this paper we offered a conjecture that a good number of double negative structures in Central and Eastern Kiranti combine the ancient *ma* negator with what used to be a copula *ni.* We further argued that this development fits what is known about the diachrony of negation as a 'Jespersen Cycle'.

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

ATT	attributive	NS	non-singular
DIST	distal	PL	plural
CNTR	contrast	PRES	present
COP	copula	PROG	progressive
DU	dual	PST	past
DUP	dual patient	Q	question
E	exclusive	R	realis
EMPH	emphatic	SG	singular
ERG	ergative	SS	same subject
GEN	genitive	TAM	tense aspect mood
LOC	locative	1	first person

NEG	negation	2	2nd person
NOM	nominalizer	3	3rd person
NPST	non-past	x>y	x agent with y patient

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