

How to Say “No” in Palauan

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How to say "no" in Palauan  
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In dealing with the syntax of a language other than one's native language, it is important to cast the grammar in terms of the processes and categories it clearly motivates. This becomes imperative if the final aim of our work is to develop a theory of universal grammar, rather than merely a descriptively adequate statement of the grammar of the language. The necessity to avoid imposing foreign grammatical categories on the grammar of a language has been stressed by many of the great minds in our field. The grammars of the world's languages must be motivated only in terms of their own rules and constructions, and these will provide a proper input to a theory of universal grammar. In this age of generative grammar we must avoid imposing the categories and rules of English grammar on other languages. If the sentences of the language motivate a rule similar to an English transformation, then we may, of course, posit it as a synchronic rule, but not otherwise. In this way we will develop a proper theory of universal grammar, one arrived at inductively from the independent data of many languages as witnesses. Any other approach will simply distort our view of universal grammar and not account in an equal manner for the rich diversity of the world's languages.

In the generative semantic view of language, which we shall use in this paper, there are three basic aspects to language, as schematized in (1):

semantic structure



rules

(1)

surface signal

Rules, syntactic, lexical, and phonological, convert the semantic structure to the surface signal. The surface signal is, of course, the given data in all languages. The grammars of languages consist of the rules, and, of course, in the rules of grammar languages may differ. However, there is no reason why the semantic structures of languages cannot differ, and the importance of this as a working assumption follows from what was said above. We should not simply assume that the semantic structure of all languages is identical. Rather we should formulate our rules on the basis of data of the language and set up semantic structures which will be converted by these general rules into the correct surface signal. We should not be concerned whether these semantic structures are the same as those of English or French etc. for synonymous sentences. We should only be concerned that these semantic structures will produce the surface signals by general rules. It is necessary to constrain our grammars to minimize idiosyncratic rules. This, of

course, decreases the possibility of imposing foreign rules on the grammar and causing semantic structures to appear more alike. Of course, these remarks apply to semantic structures represented as tree diagrams. Using logical formulae is a different matter, which I do not wish to go into here, except to say that the transition from a logical formula as a representation for semantic structure of a particular sentence in a natural language to a structure to which transformational rules could apply is not at all clear.

In this paper we will discuss the phenomenon of negation in Palauan, an Austronesian language spoken in the western Caroline Islands in Micronesia. I have constrained the grammar so that only rules needed outside the phenomenon of negation are posited. This is to prevent the development of an idiosyncratic analysis of Palauan negation, but rather to incorporate it into Palauan grammar as a whole. An interesting result of this study is that in some cases abstract structures posited by generative semantics for English are shown in fact to be motivated directly in Palauan, whereas in other cases the structures for Palauan are somewhat different.

The simple negative word in Palauan is diak. It is syntactically a stative verb and has a past tense form dimlak from \*di+mle+ak. The mle is the past tense marker for stative verbs. The negative is a main verb, and that which is negated is its subject. There are two moods in Palauan: a realis and an irrealis. This difference is signalled by a different set of subject pronouns as in (2):

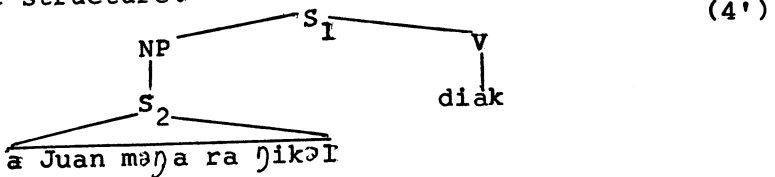
		realis	irrealis	(2)
	1st	ak	k(u)-	
Sg	2nd	kə	ʔom-	
	3rd	ŋ	lə-	
	lin	kədə	d(ə)-	
Pl	1st	(a)ki	kim-	
	2nd	kə	ʔom-	
	3rd	tə	lə-	

The irrealis mood is used in various environments: conditional, certain temporal clauses and, what concerns us here, negated sentences. Thus, the negation of sentence (3) is (4):

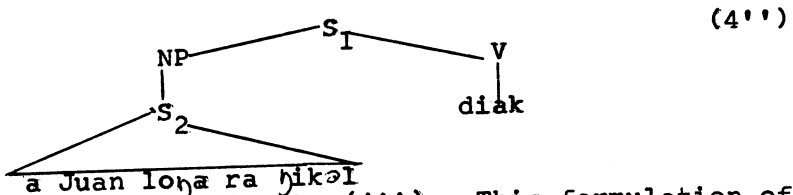
A Juan a məja ra ŋikəl. (3)  
 John is eating of fish  
 "John is eating some of the fish."

A Juan a diak loja ra ŋikəl. (4)  
 John NEG 3rd irrealis-eat of fish  
 "John isn't eating any of the fish."

loḡa is the third singular irrealis form of mḡḡa derived by regular morphophonemic rules. (4) has the abbreviated semantic structure:



Structures like those proposed by Klima(1964) for English will not work for Palauan as will become apparent below. In (4') the verb in  $S_2$  is in a sentence being negated. The sentence will be in the irrealis mood, as indicated by the inflection of the verb. The condition for marking as irrealis may be described formally in that the S affect must be commanded by the negative. Also, the scope of the negative may not cross another S-node within the sentence being negated. Thus, the verb in (4') will be marked [+irrealis] and by agreement with its subject [+3rd]. This will generate (4'')

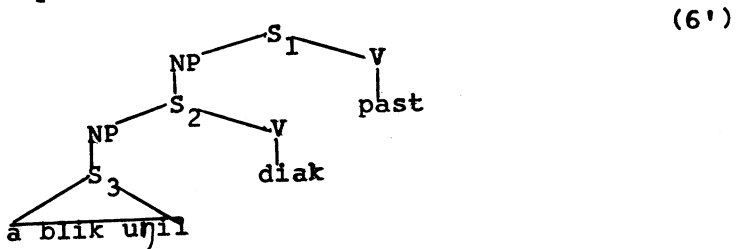


Subject Raising applies to (4''). This formulation of Raising entails raising of the embedded subject and extraposition of the remaining sentence in one step. Finally, a-Insertion applies and places an a before the concatenation of verbal elements and yields (4) above.

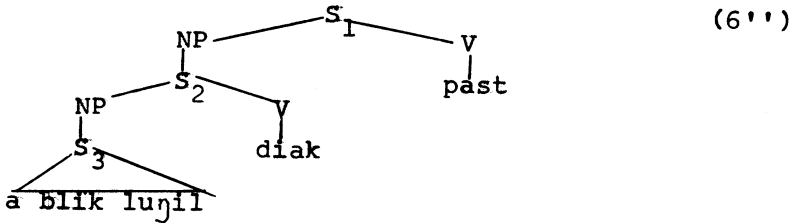
Sentence (5) has the negation (6) which has the semantic structure (6'):

A bli-k a mle ḡḡil. (5)  
 house-my past good  
 "My house was nice."

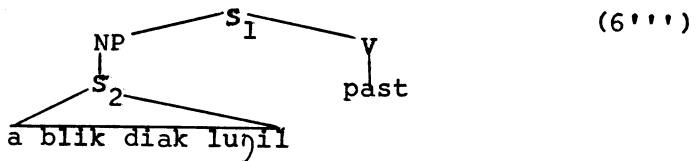
A bli-k a dimlak 1-ḡḡil. (6)  
 house-my neg-past 3rd irr-good  
 "My house wasn't nice."



Of course, in (4') a node for present tense was needed, but it did not affect the derivation and was omitted. In (6') it is needed for the derivation. The rule of Subject Raising is cyclic as (6) will demonstrate, but Negative Scope is pre-cyclic and applies to (6') first.  $S_3$  is commanded by the negative and the verb is put into the irrealis. Thus, we generate (6'')



On the cycle of  $S_3$  nothing happens. On  $S_2$  Subject Raising and Node Pruning occurs to generate (6''')



On  $S_1$  Raising and Node Pruning apply again to yield:

A blik past diak lujil. (6''')

A-Insertion applies and past diak are read out as dimlak, generating (6).

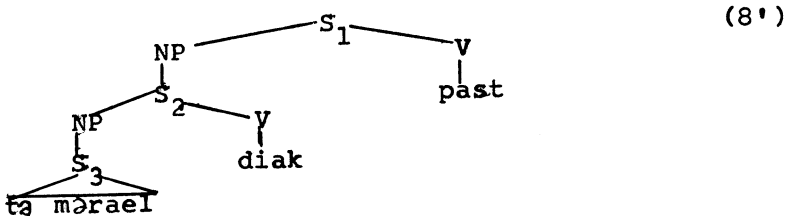
There are several crucial points to be made about the derivation of (6) With this formulation of Raising the node of past must be above diak to prevent tense from being read out on lujil, generating the ungrammatical (7):

\*A blik a diak mIe lujil. (7)

Also, this ordering of the nodes of diak and past is necessary for the proper operation of Negative Scope. If this order is reversed  $S_3$  would be commanded by the negative, but the  $S$ -node of past would intervene, and the verb would not appear in the irrealis mood. This would be ungrammatical. Finally, instead of Subject Raising we could propose an alternate rule of Predicate Lowering to generate (6). This would also be cyclic and lower the higher predicate into the verb phrase of the lower sentence. The major advantage of this approach concerns the a which introduces the verbal elements and after which the negative and tense elements occur.

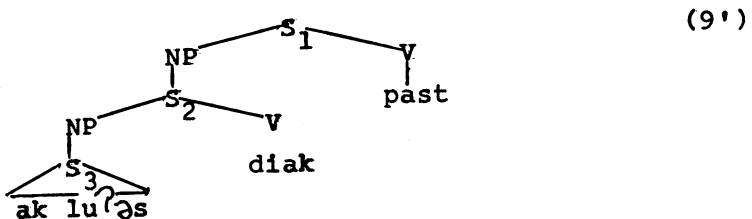
In an analysis with Predicate Lowering the a may be present in the underlying structure, and, consequently, there will be no need for a transformation of a-Insertion discussed above. However, there is good motivation for this transformation. The a will be introduced transformationally very late in the derivation. In some sentences with pronominal subjects there are clear cases of Raising, as in (8) from (8'):

Tə dimlak lorael. (8)  
they neg-past 3rd irr-walk



Negative Scope and Raising on S<sub>2</sub> and S<sub>1</sub> produce (8). Note that there is no a introducing the VP of (8). A-Insertion apparently only applies in sentences of the order NP-VP (see (11) and (12) below), when the subject is a noun, not a pronoun. Negative Scope and Raising are clearly involved here because there is no other way to get tə, the subject of the lower sentence, into its position in (8). Clear cases of Raising such as (8) only occur with sentences with second and third plural pronominal subjects and may be due to the fact that in these cases the irrealis prefixes do not distinguish singular from plural. In cases in which there is no ambiguity, the raised pronominal subject is obligatorily deleted, as in (9) from (9'):

Dimlak ku-lu<sup>ʔ</sup>s. (9)  
neg-past 1st sg irr-write  
"I didn't write."



After Negative Scope and Raising on S<sub>2</sub> and S<sub>1</sub> have applied we have the intermediate string:

Ak dimlak kulu<sup>ʔ</sup>s. (9'')

The ak is obligatorily deleted because there is no ambiguity with ku-. The obligatory pronoun deletion will also be needed in an alternative Predicate Lowering analysis to account for the differing structures of (8) and (9). Also, a sentence (10) generated by Predicate Lowering from (8'):

\*Dimlak lorael. (10)

was not accepted by my informant.

At this point we need to consider a rule of very general application in Palauan, Subject Extrapolation. This takes a full subject NP (non-pronominal) and moves it to the right of the verb, leaving a pronoun in its place. Thus, Subject Extrapolation generates (12) from (11):

A Juan a məŋa ra ɲikəl. (11)  
 John eat of fish  
 "John is eating some of the fish"

ɲməŋa a Juan ra ɲikəl. (12)

ɲ- is the third singular realis pronoun. Note that there is no a preceding the verb. This string does not meet the structural description for the a-Insertion transformation outlined above.

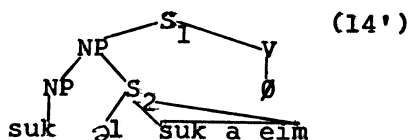
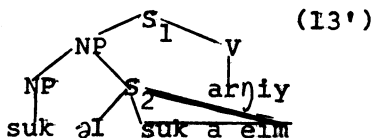
Subject Extrapolation quite regularly applies to existential sentences or sentences containing the negative. Existential sentences are formed with the existential verb "be" arɲiy or with the copula which is realized as nothing. Thus, (13) and (14) have essentially the same meaning, although (13) emphasizes the existence of the five baskets.

ɲarɲiy eim əl suk. (13)  
 exist five linker basket

ɲeim əl suk. (14)  
 five linker basket

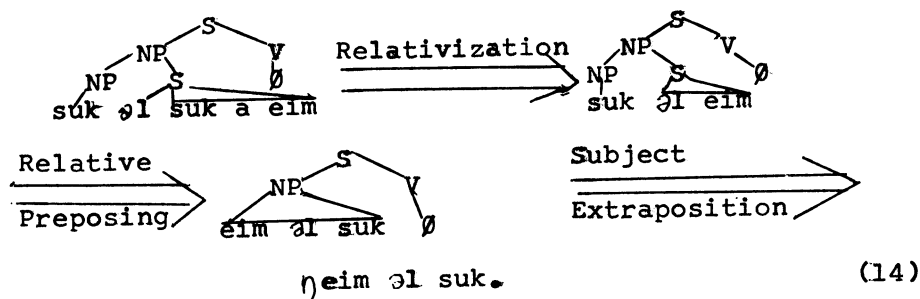
"There are five baskets."

(13) and (14) derive from underlying structures (13') and (14') by Relativization and Subject Extrapolation:

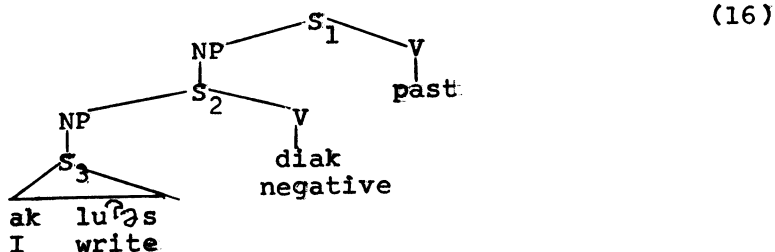


In (14') Subject Extrapolation can apply even though the

verb is null. The prefix simply attaches to the next word. The derivation for (14) is:



With the negative this rule is optional except that when it is the main verb of the derived sentence, it is obligatory. Thus, (16) is the underlying source for both (17) and (18). In (17) Subject Extraposition does not apply, while in (18) it does:



Dimlak ku-lu<sup>ʔ</sup>əs. (17)

neg-past 1st sg irr-write

ηdimlak ku-lu<sup>ʔ</sup>əs. (18)

"I didn't write."

Subject Extraposition has applied in (19)-(24), but again is optional because the negative is not functioning as the main verb of the sentence. If Subject Extraposition had not applied there would be no initial η- in these sentences and the word order would have been strictly SVO.

ηdiak a Juan a loŋa ra ηikəl. (19)  
neg John 3rd irr-eat of fish  
"John isn't eating any of the fish."

ηdiak ləkəkərey. (20)  
neg 3rd irr-small  
"It isn't small."

ηdiak k-bo ku-lim. (21)  
neg 1st irr-go 1st irr-drink  
"I won't drink."

ηdimlak k-kyey. (22)  
 neg-past 1st irr-stay  
 "I didn't stay."

ηdiak k-luwt əl rul-iy. (23)  
 neg 1st sg-again linker do-3rd sg obj  
 "I'm not doing it again."

ηdiak lə-bo lə-bes-kaw. (24)  
 neg 3rd irr-go 3rd irr-give-2nd sg obj  
 "He won't give it to you."

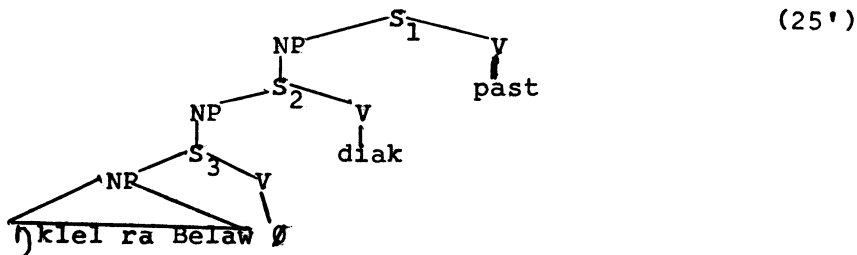
In sentences (25)-(27) the negative is the main verb of the derived sentence, and Subject Extraposition is obligatory:

ηdiak a ηkl-el ra Belaw. (25)  
 neg name-3rd sg poss loc Palau  
 "It has no Palauan name."

ηdimlak a udud-ek. (26)  
 neg-past money-1st sg poss  
 "I had no money."

ηdimlak a ʔəliwd er ηiy. (27)  
 neg-past tobacco loc 3rd sg  
 "It has no tobacco in it."

These sentences all derive from structures with the null copula as the main verb of the sentence embedded under the negative. (25'), an abbreviated underlying structure for (25), is typical:

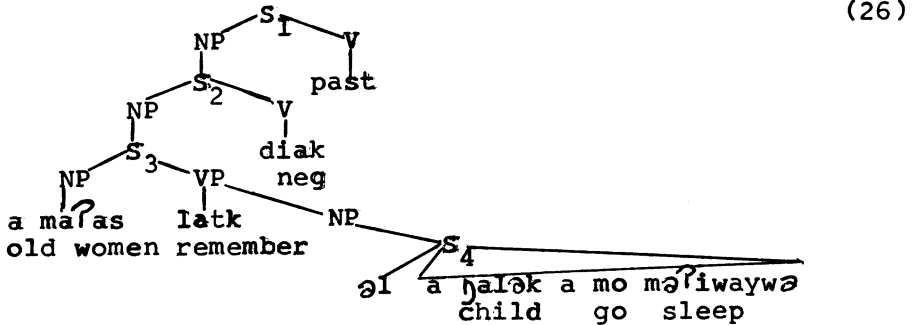


(25) is derived by applying Raising on  $S_2$  and  $S_1$ , and then Subject Extraposition.

This completes the sketch of the basic transformations to which the negative is subject. The fact that these rules apply to many other verbs in the language and are in no way idiosyncratic to the negative is strong evidence that it is a basic verb in the language.

We will now go on to investigate syntactic and semantic

constraints on Negative Scope and negation of other than main clauses. Negative Scope only affects the sentence which is immediately commanded by the negative. Negative Scope does not affect any other sentence embedded in this sentence, that is, does not cross another S-node. Thus, in (26) only the verb latk is in the scope of the negative:

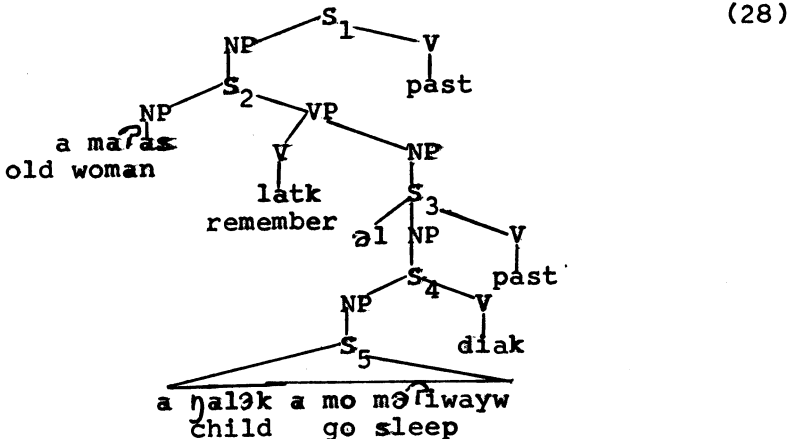


Because latk is within the scope of the negative it will be in the irrealis mood. If we apply Subject Raising of ɥalək into object position on  $S_3$  and Subject Raising on  $S_2$  and  $S_1$ , we derive (27):

A maʔas a dimlak ləlatkiy a ɥalək əɭ mo məʔiwaywə. (27)  
 "The old woman didn't remember that the child went to sleep."

The verb form ləlatkiy is a perfective in the irrealis mood with a third singular object pronoun suffix.

It is also possible that the negative be embedded lower in the tree, that is, (28) is also a perfectly well formed underlying structure:



In (28) the negative commands only  $S_5$  and, therefore, it is within its scope. Consequently, the verbs mo ma<sup>1</sup>fiwaywa will appear in the irrealis. The negative does not command  $S_2$ , and latk will remain in the realis. By a derivation of Subject Raising on  $S_4$  and  $S_3$ , and then Raising of halak to object position on  $S_2$  and finally Raising on  $S_1$ , we get:

A ma<sup>1</sup>as a lilatkiy a halak əl dimlak ləbo (29)  
ləma<sup>1</sup>fiwaywa.

"The old woman remembered the child didn't go to sleep."

We now turn to the relations between quantifiers and negation. "Nothing/anything" in Palauan is expressed by negation of a sentence containing hara(h) "what." This is similar to Mandarin Chinese. hara(h) may be perhaps be best looked upon as a general indefinite, which in a question frame functions as "what," but in a negative frame functions as "nothing/anything." (30) and (31) exemplify:

ɲdimlak k-du haraɲ. (30)  
neg-past 1st sg irr-say indef  
"I said nothing."

haraɲ kə ruɲiy? (31)  
indef you make-3rd sg obj  
"What did you make?"

The relations between the negative and other quantifiers in cases of both sentential and phrasal negation (Klima, 1964) are more complex. Let me first make the claim, to be supported below, that there is no distinction in Palauan between phrasal and sentential negation, but that all cases of negation are ultimately sentential. Apparent examples of phrasal negation are in fact sentences in which the negative functions as a verb in an embedded sentence. A corollary of this hypothesis is that in cases of apparent phrasal negation, the verb will appear in the realis mood, not the irrealis, because the negative will not command the main sentence. This is, in fact, exactly what is found. In the remainder of this paper I will use the term sentential negation versus phrasal negation in the sense of negation of the main clause versus negation of an embedded clause within the matrix sentence. They actually have more reference to the English translations, but they are useful cover terms. But, as I have said, in Palauan all negation is ultimately sentential, in that the negative functions as a predicate of a sentence with a subject which is

itself an embedded sentence.

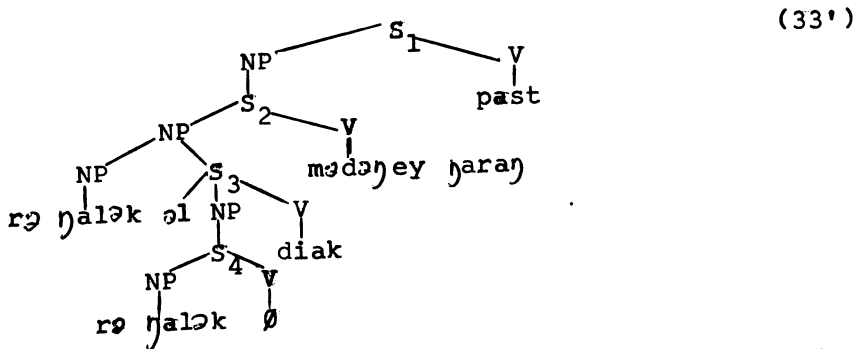
To make this clearer compare sentences (32) and (33):

A bebi 'l rə ɲalək a dimlak ləbo (32)  
 some linker pl child neg-past 3rd irr-go  
 lodɲey ɲaraɲ.  
 3rd irr-know indef

"Some of the children didn't know anything."

Dimlak əl rə ɲalək a mədɲey ɲaraɲ. (33)  
 neg-past linker pl child know indef  
 "None of the children knew anything."

(32) is a clear case of negation of the main sentence, sentential negation, as exhibited by the presence of *dimlak* in the verb phrase and the irrealis inflection of the main verb *ləbo lodɲey*. (33), however, is an example of phrasal negation, negation of an embedded sentence. Note that the main verb *mədɲey* is in the realis mood. (33) has the underlying structure (33'):



Note that the negative is in the sentence embedded in the subject of the main sentence. (33') may be paraphrased as "there does not exist any children (of a group defined in the discourse) who know anything." Various Raisings as discussed, Relativization on  $S_2$  and Relative Preposing will derive (33) from (33'). The linker *əl* in (33) surfacely signals the subordination of the negative. Various formal syntactic tests can be performed to (32) and (33) to illustrate the formal differences. Subject Extraposition, as discussed above, can only apply to elements of verb phrases in main sentences. Thus, if we apply it to (32) and (33), we derive (34), which is grammatical, and (35), which is not:

ɲdimlak a bebi 'l rə ɲalək ləbo lodɲey ɲaraɲ. (34)  
 ɲdimlak əl rə ɲalək a mədɲey ɲaraɲ. (35)

Negative Scope can only affect verbs embedded under the negative. Because (33) is an example of phrasal negation, the negative is in an embedded sentence. Consequently, in (33) the main verb cannot be under the negative and cannot be in the irrealis. Therefore, (36), a form of (32) in which the verb is in the irrealis, is ungrammatical:

\*Dimlak əl rə ɲalək a lodəɲey ɲarəɲ. (36)

Even though dimlak in (32) is not the main verb it can still take the tense of the sentence. It appears that the negative is a strong tense attracting morpheme. However, in (32) the main verb can take tense instead of the negative, as in (37):

Diak əl rə ɲalək a mlədəɲey ɲarəɲ. (37)

The infix -l- in mlədəɲey marks past tense. Note that the negative appears in the non-past form diak. A sentence in which tense appears in both morphemes is ungrammatical. However, in cases of sentential negation, in which the negative is a main verb, only the negative can take tense. Thus, (38) as a variant of (32), in which the main verb and its auxiliary take the past tense, is ungrammatical:

\*A bebi 'l rə ɲalək a diak ləblo ləmlədəɲey ɲarəɲ. (38)

More examples of phrasal negation parallel to (33) and also surfacely signalled by the subordinator əl are (39)-(40):

Dimlak əl bətək əl ɲalək a mədəɲey ɲarəɲ. (39)  
neg-past linker many linker child know  
indef

"Not many children knew anything."

Diak əl rə səʔəliɪl a mləɲitakl. (40)  
neg linker pl friends-3rd sg poss sing-past  
"None of his friends sang."

These are cases of phrasal negation because variants with the main verb in the irrealis mood are ungrammatical:

\*Dimlak əl bətək əl ɲalək a lodəɲey ɲarəɲ. (41)

\*Diak əl rə səʔəliɪl a loɲitakl. (42)

A sentence similar to (39), but a case of sentential negation, is (43):

Bətok əl ɲalək a dimlak lodəŋey (43)  
 many linker child neg-past 3rd irr-know  
 ɲarəŋ.  
 indef

"Many children didn't know anything."

The sentence is negative and is embedded in the NP which functions as the subject of the negative, as was discussed above. The verb in the sentence is within the scope of the negative and must appear in the irrealis mood. Thus, (44) is ungrammatical:

\*Betok əl ɲalək a dimlak mədəŋey ɲarəŋ. (44)

It might be objected that it is the presence of an immediately adjacent negative which triggers the irrealis mood, and, consequently, that there is no need for a recourse to the complex notion of a pre-cyclic application of Negative Scope. However, sentences like (19) and (34), in which Subject Extraposition has separated the negative from the rest of the verb phrase, but the verb phrase is still in the irrealis mood, contradicts this. (45) provides still another example:

ɲdimlak ə ta 'l ɲikəl loyuw (45)  
 neg-past one linker fish 3rd irr-take-middle  
 er tiah.  
 loc here

"No fish was caught here."

In (45) Subject Extraposition has separated the negative from the main verb, but it is still in the irrealis.

In (45) also brings up another point. Many sentences with phrasal negation of this type have paraphrases with sentential negation by using ta "one" as an indefinite. Thus, (46) with phrasal negation has the paraphrase (47) with sentential negation:

Dimlak əl rə səʔəlil a (46)  
 neg-past linker pl friends-3rd sg poss  
 məŋitakl.  
 sing

"None of his friends sang."

A ta 'l rə səʔəlil a dimlak (47)  
 one linker pl friend-3rd sg poss neg-past  
 loŋitakl.  
 3rd irr-sing

"None of his friends sang."

(47) cannot mean "one of his friends didn't sing." Syntactically (47) is a sentence with sentential negation. Not only is the verb lojitakl in the irrealis mood, but also (47) undergoes Subject Extraposition with the negative as the main verb, as in (48)

ɲdimlak a ta 'l rə səʔəlil a lojitakl. (48)

Clearly, (47) is a case of sentential negation in my definition above, that is, the negative functions surfacely as part of the verb phrase of the main sentence. In almost all cases this corresponds semantically to a negation of the main sentence: "it is not that S." However, the semantic reading of (47) is negation of the quantifier "not one of his friends sang," not negation of the sentence: "one of his friends didn't sing."

There is a related phenomenon in English. Carden(1970) and others noticed that speakers of English have different readings for certain sentences with negatives and quantifiers. For sentence (49)

All the children didn't leave. (49)

some speakers of English have readings which involve negation of the quantifier, that is, (50):

NEG-Q Not all the children left. (50)

For other speakers (49) has a reading of negation of the verb (in the terms used above, negation of the sentence), that is, (51):

NEG-V All the children stayed(NEG-leave). (51)

And for still other speakers, myself included, (49) is ambiguous between the two meanings of (50) and (51).

I get the same ambiguity in (52), which is parallel to the Palauan sentence (47):

One of his friends didn't sing. (52)

For me (52) can mean either (53) or (54)

NEG-Q None of his friends sang. (53)

NEG-V Of his friends, only one didn't sing. (54)

However, for my Palauan informant, (47)(sentence (52) is its literal translation) can only have the NEG-Q reading. In other words the Palauan sentence has only the meaning (53). There is a clear conflict in Palauan

between the syntactic structure of (47) and its meaning. (47) has the structure of a sentence with sentential negation, with the negative inside the verb phrase (NEG-V), as established above. But in its meaning the negative is construed with the quantifier (NEG-Q), as is evident from the identical meaning between (46) and (47). Presumably, there is a similar conflict between structure and meaning for English speakers who only get the NEG-Q reading for (49).

Palauan exhibits the same phenomenon with beki "all." Thus, (55) can only have the NEG-Q reading:

A rə beki 'l səʔəlil a (55)  
 pl all linker friends-3rd sg poss  
 dimlak lohitakl.  
 neg-past 3rd irr-sing  
 "All of his friends didn't sing."

(55) is structurally a clear example of sentential negation. Note that the verb lohitakl is in the irrealis mood. Yet the meaning of the sentence is negation of the quantifier. In fact, when I asked my informant for "not all of his friends sang," which overtly negates the quantifier, she gave me:

ɥdimlak lohitakl a rə beki 'l səʔəlil. (56)

which is simply a variant of (55) to which Subject Extraposition has applied.

It is evident that if two such widely structurally divergent languages such as Palauan and English exhibit these similarities in (47)-(56), there is a more general principle to capture here. What this principle would be is not apparent, but research in this area should prove to be very useful.

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