The Jespersen Cycle in South-East Asia, Oceania and Australia. [1]

An Overview

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1. Introduction

In this article I present an overview of the results of my search for indications of the presence of the Jespersen Cycle in South-East Asia, Oceania and Australia. The cycle is attested in all Germanic languages, in Northern Italian dialects and in a number of African languages as well. How widespread is this phenomenon in languages of the world? To answer this question we have to look elsewhere in the world. This paper is part of a worldwide project to establish how widespread the Jespersen Cycle is. In this project, it is my task to investigate sentence negation, so I am not discussing quantifiers or indefinites. When double, triple or quadruple negation is mentioned, two or more sentential negators are meant. This paper presents a first inventory of negative strategies in the part of the world indicated in the title.

First, I will give a short explanation of the cyclic development of multiple negation in languages, next a description of the area and language families that were explored. Third, a description of the method used and the various phenomena I searched for. Next, the results of the investigation will be discussed and conclusions and questions will close the argument. I will not give an

exhaustive list of all the references for reasons of space, but the examples will be properly referenced.

2. The Jespersen Cycle

The Danish professor in English, Otto Jespersen, did not speak of a cycle, but of "curious fluctuations" in languages in his 1917 book on 'Negation in English and other languages' (Jespersen, 1917: 4). It was Östen Dahl who coined the term Jespersen Cycle for the negative cycle that Jespersen briefly describes (Dahl, 1979: 88). A few years before Jespersen (1917), the French linguist Antoine Meillet used the phenomenon, which he called " dévelopment en spirale" (spiral development), to explain the process of grammaticalization (Meillet, 1912: 394). Whereas Jespersen wrote about formal weakening of a negative, making it necessary to bring in another element to strengthen the original negative, Meillet proposed a more semantic and pragmatic view. He stated that a word, for instance a negative, not only weakens in pronunciation, but also loses concrete meaning and expressive value (Meillet, 1912: 393). Both described how, at least in French and in most Germanic languages, the new negative gradually comes to be reanalyzed as the real negator and the original one disappears (van der Auwera, 2009: 44).

A simplified version of this is sufficient for the purpose of this paper. There are three main stages and I will give in tables 1 and 2 the French cycle as it has been extensively studied.

stage 1	ne V		NEG V	
stage 2	ne V pas		NEG V NEG	
stage 3	V pas		V NEG	

Table 1

Because language change does not occur overnight, one can insert transitory stages where a second element is not obligatory yet, and where the first negative has not yet disappeared and extend the scheme above to a five-stage picture.

stage 1	ne V		NEG V	
stage 2	ne V (pas)		NEG V (NEG)	
stage 3	ne V pas		NEG V NEG	
stage 4	(ne) V pas		(NEG) V NEG	
stage 5	V pas		V NEG	

Table 2

In fact, French has not reached stage five yet, as in writing and formal speech, *ne* still is obligatory in sentence negation.

The second negative in French, *pas*, is originally a noun, meaning 'step', denoting a small distance, which, we assume, was at first used only to strengthen negated verbs of movement and later generalized to all verbs. In the end *pas* won the competition with a number of other words denoting small amounts, the most frequent of which were *mie* 'crumb', *point* 'point' and *goutte* 'drop', often used in partitive constructions. These are not the only kinds of words that can grammaticalize into a negative. In German for instance, the negative *nicht* 'not' is formed from the old Indo-European negator *ne/ni* that univerbated with *wiht* 'thing' to deliver the post verbal negative in this language (as happened in Dutch). Most Germanic languages lost their first negative a few centuries ago. In Latin, the Indo-European *ne* was strengthened by *oenum* 'one', following *ne* immediately. *Oenum* never attracted negative meaning, but the two words univerbated to *non,* which in Old French weakened to *ne*, the start of the French cycle.

In Northern-Italian dialects the origin of the second sentence negator can also be the negative quantifier *niente* 'nothing' (Manzini, 2002: 327, 328). From African languages we learned that sentence negators developed out of minimizers can be retraced as stemming from locatives and those derived from emphatic/contrastive markers find their origins in possessive markers. In addition to all the above mentioned origins, negative adverbs meaning 'in vain' can also be the source of the new element (Devos & van der Auwera, 2009: 32-33). Next to that, there are languages like Brabantian dialects and Afrikaans that reach double negation by copying the original negator. Borrowing is another source for second negatives and some languages use the answer particle for 'no' for that purpose.

Discontinuous negation, where the two negatives surround the verb, is by far the most frequent. Concatenation of the two, and univerbation, preceding or following the verb, is very rare but does exist.

The first negative does not have to disappear. A language can also go into another direction and introduce a third or even a fourth element to keep negative force in sentence negation, producing triple and quadruple negation. This is a rare phenomenon, but there are examples found in Brabantian Dutch (1), Northern Italian dialects and Bantu languages (van der Auwera, 2009: 62-64; van der Auwera, Vossen & Devos 2011, in print).

(1) Aarschot (Pauwels, 1985: 454) Brabantian Dutch
    pas op dat ge **nie en** valt **nie**!
    take care that you NEG NEG fall NEG

'Take care that you don't fall!'

To conclude, searching for the Jespersen Cycle involves looking for languages with obligatory or optional double negation. Can we find the same origins for second negatives as in the languages above, or even add new sources to the list? Are there examples of triple and quadruple negation, and of double negation in restricted contexts, not yet generalized in Southeast Asia, Oceania and Australia?

3. The area and the language families

Our goal is to search the languages of the world for signs of the Jespersen Cycle. In this paper I will discuss a part of the world not yet thoroughly investigated for the phenomenon. The area stretches from China, Nepal to Vietnam in South-East Asia, Indonesia and the Philippines, New Guinea and Australia and all the islands of Oceania to Easter Island. The language families involved are the Austronesian, Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai, Hmong-Mien, Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian, Central Solomonic, Australian languages and the language families of New Guinea, which I group together under the name Papuan languages. Of these families, Austronesian is the largest with 1257 languages according to the 16th edition of the Ethnologue (SIL International), while several Papuan families consist of only one language.

4. Method

As the Jespersen Cycle crucially involves a double negation stage, double negation is a good starting point for the search for signs of the cycle. In fact, until now, there is no reason to assume that another process than the Jespersen cycle causes the emergence of double negation. Hypothetically, when a language family consists of three languages, one of which has double negation, and the other two have either the first or the second of these negatives, it is probable that the Cycle is at work in the family. Therefore, I searched for languages with optional or obligatory double negation, discontinuous or otherwise. I tried to find as many grammars, articles, dictionaries or word lists as I could, including information about the number and position of negative elements provided in the latest edition of the World Atlas of Linguistic Structure (WALS, edition 2011). This method yielded more languages than a sample would have and it turned out to reveal the same tendency for clustering that languages with double negation in Europe and Africa show. In this way I found information about the negation strategy of 814 languages. Table 3 shows the number of languages in a family according to Ethnologue in the second column, the number of languages in the

WALS sample in the third and in the last column is the number of languages for which I found information about negation.

	Ethnologue	WALS	#NEG
Austronesian	1257	325	392
-Non-Oceanic	710	176	188
-Oceanic	547	149	204
Australian	264	161	103
Austro-Asiatic	169	50	32
Sino-Tibetan	439	148	72
Papuan	323	252	177
Tai-Kadai	92	23	13
Centr. Solomonic	4	3	3
Hmong-Mien	38	5	4
Dravidian	85	26	18
		Total:	814

Table 3

Next, I searched Asian languages for the strategies attested in Europe and Africa, and of course for as yet unknown phenomena. Are there partitives, minimizers or emphasizers grammaticalized into negatives, as well as negative adverbs? Can we find copies of the first negative, answer particles or loanwords? Is double negation discontinuous or not, and is concatenation and maybe univerbation as rare as in the languages already studied?

When searching for the Jespersen cycle in the area, languages that show signs for it seemed to form clusters. Therefore, when I found a language with double negation I searched for grammars of languages neighboring this language and/or languages of the same family that are closely related.

5. Results

In three families, Central Solomonic, Hmong-Mien and Dravidian, no double negation was found. In all the others it turned out to be relatively frequent as is shown in table 4. In the first column is the number of languages per family about which information on negation was found, in the next column the number of languages with double negation and in the last column, the percentage of double negation in relation to the number in the first column.

language family	#NEG	double	percentage double/#NEG

Austronesian			
-Non-Oceanic	188	14	7
-Oceanic	204	69	34
Australian	103	10	10
Austro-Asiatic	32	8	25
Sino-Tibetan	72	19	26
Papuan	177	18	10
Tai-Kadai	13	2	15

Table 4

5.1. Forms and origins

The new elements, serving as second negative can be particles (2) or affixes (3), or a combination of the two (4).

(2) Rotuman (Schmidt, 2002: 830) Oceanic
    'umefe   **kat**   ma'ma'   **ra**
    plate   NEG1   clean   NEG2
    'The plates are not clean'.

(3) Camling (Ebert, 2003: 541) Sino-Tibetan
    pa-khai-**n**-uŋa
    NEG1-1s-NEG2-go
    'I didn't go'.

(4) Maisin, (Ross, 1984: 50-51), PNG Austronesian
    isaa i-yee-ye-**ka**
    NEG1 he-PG-swim-NEG2
    'He isn't swimming.'

The origin of a second negative is not easy to find. Many grammars are purely synchronic. In most cases, there is no documented history for the language, in others, the need for tracing back a negative to its origin is not felt, as the author is not aware of the Jespersen Cycle. There are those who do, and thanks to them, for many Vanuatu languages the origin of the second negator is known. For Lewo, all negative elements are known:

(5) Vanuatu: Lewo (Early, 1994: 411)

    naga **pe**   Ø-pa**re**   **poli**
    He   NEG1   3s-R-go   NEG2   NEG3
    'He hasn't gone.'

Pe, NEG1, is derived from the copula, *re*, NEG2, from a partitive meaning 'somewhat, a little' and *poli*, NEG3 from a negative word: 'absent, inexistent', which still functions as such in surrounding languages, but lost its lexical meaning in Lewo. Next to that, the language has a recent innovation in the prohibitive, forming triple negation with the negative word *toko*, originally meaning 'desist' (6).

(6) Lewo (Early, 1994: 422)

    ve   a-kan   **re**   **toko**
    NEG1.IRR   2SG-eat   NEG2   NEG3 ('desist')
    'Don't eat it!'

In Vanuatu and the southern Solomon Islands, 21 partitives/negators are found. Of these, 18 function both as negative and as partitive. In Araki, the form *re* is only a partitive, though used mainly in negative contexts (François, 2002: 64-65). In two languages, it has become a real negative and lost its function and meaning as partitive.

Doubling of a negative was found in more than one language family. It was most frequent in the Kiranti languages in Eastern Nepal (7). In Natügu, the post verbal negative is doubled (8).

(7) Limbu (Ebert, 2003: 513) Nepal, Sino-Tibetan

    kɛ-**n**-de:s-u-**n**
    2- NEG1-sow-3p- NEG2
    'You didn't sow.'

(8) Natügu (Boerger, in prep.) Reef Islands, Oceanic
    Tökölëwäu
    tö- kölë=   ä-   **u**-   **u**
    NEG1-know-   subj-   NEG2   NEG extra
    'I don't know.'

One case of an answer particle serving as second negative was found in Brao, an Austro-Asiatic language of Laos (9).

(9) Brao (Keller, 1976: 69) Austro-Asiatic
    îîm, ay **tha**   khîay   **îîm**
    no, I   NEG1   accustomed NEG2
    'No, I'm not in the habit of going.'

Loanwords were found in several language families, even loans from one family to another, though it was not always possible to establish which family borrowed from which. In (10a-b) examples are given for Roglai and Jarai. The other Austronesian languages, Rade, Jorai and Eastern Cham have the same form for their NEG2, in Chru the second negative is optional, and Haroi is the only language without a second negative in the cluster, but the preverbal negative of this language is *(s)oh*. Two Mon-Khmer languages neighbouring these Austronesian languages have the same form as second negative (10c).

(10a) Roglai (Lee, 1996: 293) Austronesian, South Vietnam
    amã   **buh**   não paq apu   **oh**
    father NEG1   go to rice field NEG2
    'Father didn't go to the rice field.'

(10b) Jarai (Lee, 1996: 302) Austronesian, South Vietnam
    kâo **bu**   homâo prâk   **ôh**
    I   NEG1   have   money NEG2
    'I don't have any money.'

(10c) Rengao (Gregerson, 1979: 54) Mon-Khmer, South Vietnam, north of Jarai.
    aw **bɪg**   loq   **oh**
    1-sg NEG1   know   NEG2
    'I don't know.'

In Central Mnong, a Mon-Khmer language spoken in Cambodia and South Vietnam, south of Jarai the form *oh* is found as well as second negative element (Phillips, 1973: 129-138).
In other cases it is obvious which family is the source of the second negative (11).

(11) Abun (Berry & Berry, 1999: 131) Irian Jaya
    yo   V … **nde**
    NEG   NEG2

Abun is a Papuan language spoken in the Indonesian part of New Guinea, and it is surrounded by Austronesian languages. The form *nde* resembles the

Austronesian pre-V single neg *ndeh in* Belait (Brunei), Kiput (North-West Borneo) and in a South Malekula dialect (Vanuatu). Other very similar forms are *nda* in Begak and Banggi (North Borneo) and in Kambera (Sumba, East Indonesia) and *ndau,* Pendau (Central Sulawesi).

Concatenation is found in a few languages and possible univerbation in Nese and Lewo, Austronesian languages spoken in Vanuatu. In Banoni, the double negation is obligatory but not discontinuous (12). In Rapanui, negation is expressed by a number of particles, some of which can occur after the verb. Most of them can concatenate with one another, and the number of particles indicates the strength of the negation. Three negatives in a row express the highest level of emphasis (13).

In Nese, there are two forms of the preverbal negative, *se* for realis and *be* for irrealis mood, which some speakers use together (14). In Lewo, older speakers combine the second negative with the first one preverbally (15). Whether these two cases are seen as one word is unclear.

(12) Banoni (Lynch & Ross, 2002: 449-450), Southwest Bougainville
    nna **ghinava maa**   tai
    he   NEG 1   NEG 2   go
    'He isn't going.'

(13) Rapanui (du Feu, 1988: 91), Chile, Easter Island
    'ina 'o   kai piri atu ki   a   koe?
    NEG NEG NEG meet awa dat prs 2s
    'Has he really not met you?'

(14) Nese (Crowley 2006: 70) Vanuatu
    Ø-**se-be**-yes-**te**
    3s:R- NEG 1a- NEG 1b-walk- NEG 2
    '(S)he did not walk.'

(15) Lewo (Early, 1994: 420) Vanuatu
    pe-re   a-pim   **re**   **poli**
    NEG 1- NEG 2   23ps-R   NEG 2   NEG 3
    'They didn't come.'

There is one example of a language that uses tone as second negative: In Thai Phake, a Tai-Kadai language spoken in India, close to Eastern Nepal, there is a preverbal negative particle *ma*, and the obligatory negative tone 6. Sentence

negation has the form *ma* V-tone 6 in this language. In (16) the verb 'to eat' is used. In declarative sentences 'eat' has tone 2: kin^2 'eat'.

(16) Thai Phake (Morey, 2008: 237) India, Assam
    ma   kin**[6]**
    NEG1   eat. NEG2
    '(I) won't eat.'

In Australia, three of the ten languages with more than one negative element have obligatory double negation, Tyeraity, Kamor and Yukulta. In Maranunggu the second, and optional, element is glossed as 'head' and it still bears this lexical meaning in other contexts (17). Gugada, in the south of Australia has double negation only with one verb. The language has otherwise one negator that can precede or follow the verb. With the verb 'to burn', however, both positions have to be filled (18). This is an example of very restricted use, even more so than the French *pas* in the beginning of its grammaticalization path.

(17) Maranunggu (Tryon, 1970: 53; 1974: 152)
    piya   ka-ŋa-ni **way**
    head   NF-I-go   NEG
    'I am not going.'

(18) Gugada (Kokata) (Platt, 1972: 36-38)
    ŋalulu   **maga**   waru   gamb**ila:dja**
    1s   NEG1   wood   burn-NEG2
    'I'm not burning the wood.'

5.2. Clustering

There are six Non-Oceanic languages in South Vietnam with double negation and they form an Austronesian cluster in this country, surrounded by Mon-Khmer languages that belong to the Austro-Asiatic family, some of which have double negation as well. The other languages with double negation are scattered around, though some can be said to form a cluster with Papuan languages.
In the Oceanic part of Austronesian, even more double negation is present, mostly in Vanuatu and around this island state. Of the 69 languages, 31 are spoken in Vanuatu, and nine more just north of this country, in the Solomon Islands. Nine of the 16 spoken in Papua New Guinea form another cluster with some Papuan languages, and the other three, Tahitian, Rotuman and Rapanui are spoken on three islands in the Pacific.

Ten languages with double negation are found in Australia: eight in the Northern Territory, one in Queensland close to the others, and one in the south of the country.

In the Sino-Tibetan family, the clustering is even clearer. East Nepal has ten languages out of nineteen, while the other nine languages are found surrounding the Nepal cluster. All belong to the Tibetan-Burman branch.

The eight Austro-Asiatic languages with double negation are neighbours of or very close to the Austronesian cluster in South Vietnam.

There is a cluster of eight languages and dialects in the Indonesian part of New Guinea, close to the border of PNG, and two are found in the Bird's Head, with one Austronesian language. In the other part of the island, seven more languages are found.

In figure 1, the clusters found up to now are shown. It is not the case, however, that within clusters only languages with double negation are found, nor that outside them there are no such languages. The frequency of languages with double negation is significantly higher in a cluster. Moreover, many languages in the area are not described yet, so it is certainly possible that there are more languages with double negation present, as well as more clusters. In addition to that, the Vanuatu cluster could eventually stretch out to the PNG cluster.

Figure 1, clusters of languages with double negation

6. Conclusions

Though in the area presented in this paper, only few languages have a documented history and none of them as long as European languages, there are

strong indications for the presence of the Jespersen Cycle. Obligatory double negation is attested, mostly surrounding the verb. When double negation is optional, the second as well as the first can be omitted, suggesting stage I and III of the cycle. The two elements can be different particles or affixes, or the second one is a copy of the first. Also, the use of the answer particle 'no' is present (example 8) as well as borrowing from other languages and even other language families (examples 9, 10).

For most languages it is impossible to find the origin of the new negative element. Vanuatu languages form the exception. We knew already from Early (1994) and van der Auwera (2009) that Lewo and Nese of the Vanuatu languages specialized in partitives as sources for a second negative, exactly what one would expect to find in the Jespersen Cycle. Eighteen more languages in Vanuatu turned out to use the partitive marker as negator. Concatenation and univerbation is attested, as well as a very restricted use of double negation in Gugada (Australia). The patterning in clusters has become clear, so the Cycle seems to be as contagious as in Europe. All these phenomena were found in European and African languages where the Jespersen Cycle is proven to be at work.

The more grammars are produced for the area, the better we can find out if now isolated cases of double negation belong to a cluster as well or if small clusters can be combined into one large one, and the more chance there is that signs of the Cycle will be found. Some proof for the Jespersen Cycle is found already, synchronically, in Vanuatu (5, 14) and Southern Vietnam (10-a-c), as well as diachronically, in Lewo (15-16). More research is needed to establish whether it is indeed the Jespersen Cycle that is at work in all cases, and if double negation is a sure sign thereof.

7. Abbreviations

1/2/3/s: 1/2/3/single; 3p: 3 plural; NEG: negative; R: realis; IRR: irrealis; PG: progressive; prs: present; NF: non-future.

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