

Negation patterns in the Kwa language group

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There currently exists extensive literature written on the topic of negation but it has been only recently that studies of negation have begun to expand outside of the limited scope of Indo-European languages. Linguists are finding that certain patterns thought to be cross-linguistic occur mainly in this most heavily studied language family. Commonly cited patterns such as Jespersen's cycle (Jespersen 1917) are almost entirely unattested in this language group. Only Ewe displays the bipartite negation described by Jespersen. There is a consistent pattern of marking negation in Akan, Ewe, and the Northern Guang languages which involves the use of a preverbal nasal morpheme. Interestingly three Southern Guang languages do not have this preverbal nasal morpheme. Leteh, for example, instead utilizes a verbal prefix *bÉ-* which resembles a few negative verbs found in Ga-Dangme languages. The Ga-Dangme languages stand out from other Kwa languages in their use of verbal suffixes rather than prefixes. The Ghana-Togo Mountain branch of the Kwa language group also does not rely on preverbal nasal negation marking. The intent of this paper is to survey the negation strategies in a collection of Kwa (Niger-Congo) languages in order to contribute to the literature on negation and tip the scales ever so slightly away from Indo-European.

References

Jespersen, Otto. 1917. *Negation in English and other languages*. Copenhagen: A. F. Høst.