

## **Post-verbal negative particles in Southern Tanzania: form, distribution and historical development**

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This paper examines the presence, distribution and historical development of post-verbal negative particles in a sample of Bantu languages found in Southern Tanzania. It focuses on 12 language varieties found in this area which employ post-verbal negative particles, including an apparent “outlier” in Matengo which employs a pre-verbal negative particle. The paper also draws on comparative data from some 20 additional languages spoken in the direct vicinity. We show that there is a high level of variation in the negative forms used, but, at the same time, a preponderance of the use of post-verbal negative particles as the primary strategy for encoding standard negation. We explore both standard negation and non-standard negation, including non-declarative and non-main clause contexts, as well as instances of non-verbal predication and copula clauses. The use of these forms as negative replies or interjections is also examined. In exploring etymologies we find sources of the post-verbal particles in negative replies, reflects of *\*-tópú* ‘only, in vain’, content interrogatives and the negative verb *-lepa*. We also discuss contact as a possible explanation for the prevalence of this negative strategy in the region.

**Keywords:** negation, Bantu, particle, grammaticalization, microvariation

## Introduction

This paper explores the presence and distribution of post-verbal negative particles, with a focus on Bantu languages of southern Tanzania. In this region, a cluster of languages can be identified that use negative particles as their main negation strategy. Variation in negation strategies across Bantu languages has long been noted (e.g. Westphal 1958, Kamba Muzenga 1981, Güldemann 1996, 1999, Nurse 2008, Devos & van der Auwera 2013). Although the dominant negation strategy is the use of verbal morphology, the use of a dedicated negative particle is also relatively widespread (Nurse 2008: 180-183, Devos forthcoming, Guérois *et al.* forthcoming).<sup>1</sup> However, such particles have a restricted distribution, with a concentration in the North-Western region of Bantu languages (Guérois *et al.* forthcoming). Interestingly, then, there is a seemingly connected area in southern Tanzania with post-verbal negative particles, which in turn borders on languages which (partly) make use of pre-verbal particles. Consider the structure shown in (1) below, from the Tanzanian language Mbunga, where clausal negation is achieved through the presence of the post-verbal negative particle **ndili**. A similar structure can be seen in (2) from Ndendeule, where the negative particle **yi** is found.<sup>2</sup>

- (1) Mbunga (P15; Odden 2003: 541)

<b>da</b>	<b>n-delek-i</b>	<b>ndili</b>
FUT	SM1SG-cook-SBJV	NEG
'I won't cook.'		

- (2) Ndendeule (N101; Ngonyani 2017: 178)

<b>n-geni</b>	<b>aki-telek-a</b>	<b>yi</b>	<b>mbatata</b>
1-guest	1SM.PT-cook-FV	NEG	10.potato
'The guest did not cook potatoes.'			

As can be seen on examination of these examples, in these constructions negation is marked solely through the presence of this independent post-verbal negative marker.

Bantu languages employ a range of different strategies to encode negation. Sentential negation in Bantu is most commonly indicated by prefixes in verb-internal position (cf. Meeussen 1967, Kamba Muzenga 1981, Güldemann 1996, Güldemann 1999, Nurse 2008). This means that negation is marked either in the pre-initial position before the subject marker or in the post-initial position after the subject marker. The post-verbal negative position is historically associated with non-standard negation contexts such as infinitives, relatives and subjunctives, as is still the case in many languages (Güldemann 1996, 1999). Alternatively, “verb-external” non-synthetic positions may include both pre- and post-verbal negative positions.

1. See also, e.g. Idiatov (2018), on post-verbal – or more precisely clause-final – negation in African languages more broadly. See Devos *et al.* (2010) for further references to studies on negation in non-Bantu African languages.

2. The codes in our examples (e.g. P15 in example (1)) refer to the referential classification by Guthrie (1967/71), see further clarification in section 1.1.

The approximately 500 Bantu languages exhibit a range of broad typological similarities. However, the language family also exhibits a high degree of microvariation – that is, small-scale variation exhibited by closely related languages or varieties – which makes it an ideal lens through which to examine processes of language contact, grammaticalization and microvariation. Recent years have seen a growing body of work examining microvariation both in Bantu languages and cross-linguistically. Micro-comparative linguistic research can be seen as a continuation of traditional dialect research, but with a focus on morphosyntax, and aims to establish with more precision how typological features are distributed geographically (Bucheli & Glaser 2002). The typological feature of negation is shown in this paper to be one in which even very closely related varieties can diverge in interesting ways – hence it is a fruitful area for microvariation research.

Therefore, the present paper adopts a microvariation approach in that we focus on a linguistic area of closely related varieties and attempt to shed light on how these varieties converge and diverge. The structural similarities in Bantu are especially high in the Eastern Bantu branch (Hinnebusch *et al.* 1981) and the cluster under examination falls within this Eastern group. We explore microvariation in relation to one specific domain: the presence of negative particles. We take a synchronic as well as diachronic approach. It is well-known that negation strategies undergo cross-linguistically comparable stages of diachronic development. A marker of negation often starts out life as a marker of emphasis before developing into a (sometimes) obligatory marker of negation. The cycle may then progress one stage further to result in a construction in which the original marker of negation is bleached of its negative semantics and/or is dropped (Dahl 1979). This and similar processes of cyclical renewal are often described as the “Jespersen’s Cycle” (after Jespersen (1917)). However, as pointed out in the recent typological literature, it is probably more correct to talk about “Jespersen’s Cycles” (or “Jespersen Cycles”), i.e., with a plural *s*, as the processes involved may differ quite extensively from language to language (van der Auwera 2009, van der Auwera and Krasnoukhova 2020), without necessarily going through all the formal and/or semantic features described above (if one follows a more liberal conceptualization of what a Jespersen’s Cycle may entail). Devos and van der Auwera (2013) examine the manifestations of the Jespersen’s Cycle in Bantu, with a focus on the distribution of post-verbal negative marking and the sources of negative markers in the Bantu languages. They identify six common sources for post-verbal negative markers found in Bantu languages: negative answer particles, other negative words, two types of locative pronouns, possessive pronouns and locative possessive pronouns.

The current work is the first systematic examination of this feature in Eastern Bantu, and indeed, within the more narrowly defined Southern Tanzania group. The goal of this paper is threefold: 1) to present a descriptive overview of the use of particles as the sole means for encoding standard negation but also other types of negation in this cluster of languages; 2) to identify common (lexical) sources and processes of grammaticalization that have given rise to these constructions; 3) to develop a micro-typology of these constructions and their clausal expansion in this cluster of Tanzanian Bantu languages.

Considering 11 language varieties (12 with the outlier Matengo) and drawing on comparative data from some 20 other languages spoken in the direct vicinity (see Appendix), we show that there is a strikingly high level of variation in the different negation forms used. Even languages that are very closely related, to the point of being mutually intelligible, can use formally distinct negation particles. What is more, we find that some of these negative particles have etymologies previously not discussed in Bantu studies, or elsewhere. Furthermore, we show that the post-verbal negators are far from being restricted to independent and declarative constructions, having spread to several more clause types and types of non-clausal negation. Against a wider comparative and socio-historical backdrop, we also try to map out the historical scenarios and patterns of diffusion that have given rise to this cluster of languages with non-canonical negative marking.

Finally, a note on the data is in order here. The data examined in this paper come from a combination of published sources, materials that have been made available to us, and our own primary data collection. The varieties surveyed in the study are largely under-described and the relationship between them still remains, in many instances, uncertain. In terms of transcription, we have represented the examples as in their original versions. In some instances, we have amended the glosses to facilitate exposition or aid comparison.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 1 presents the languages in our scope and their genealogical background, as well as the relevant contextual background on the area under examination. Section 2 constitutes an overview of post-verbal negation in the languages of the study. Section 3 examines an outlier in the micro-typology we develop here. Matengo stands in stark contrast to the other languages of the area in that it uses a pre-verbal particle as its main negation strategy. The Matengo system is therefore examined alongside two other pre-verbal negative particles that are found in the area (albeit not as the primary negation strategies). In Section 4, we turn to the origin of the post-verbal but also the pre-verbal negative particles. Section 5 discusses the wider historical implications of the negative systems we see in this area of Tanzania, in particular the role of external and internal forces in their development. Connected to this, we also address the complex question of the historical stages of change which underly the systems we see today. Although a Jespersen's Cycle scenario, as it is described for Bantu in Devos and van der Auwera (2013), appears a reasonable explanation when taken at face value, we show that a more fine-grained evaluation of the data puts such a conclusion to the test. In Section 6, we end this paper with a summary and some final remarks.

## 1. Genealogical and geographic profile of the languages surveyed

In this section, we introduce the languages included in the survey. While we make no claim that the languages included form a genetically coherent group, we label these languages 'SEQT' (South-Eastern Quarter of Tanzania), solely for the purposes of this paper. As illustrated in Map 1 in Section 1.1, they form a geographically contiguous area in the southernmost quarter of Tanzania, from Lake Malawi in the west to the Indian Ocean in the east.

As noted in the introduction, this group is defined by the use of post-verbal negative particles. The languages under consideration are listed in Table 1.

Name	Code	Name	Code
Pogolo	G51	Ndendeule	N101
Ndamba	G52	Ndengeleko	P11
Kisi	G67	Matuumbi	P13
Manda	N11	Ngindo	P14
Ngoni	N12	Mbunga	P15
Mpoto	N14		

**Table 1.** Languages of the SEQT with their Guthrie codes

### 1.1. Classification of the languages

The languages surveyed here come from different ‘zones’ in the traditional system of classifying Bantu languages,<sup>3</sup> namely zones N10, P10, G50 and G67, as will be outlined here. Firstly, the bulk of languages in our sample come from the Rufiji-Ruvuma group, comprising the N10 and P10 languages of our study. Rufiji-Ruvuma (N10, P10-P20) has post-Guthrie been understood as forming a coherent genealogical group (see Nurse (1999) and further references therein). N10 languages which have post-verbal negation include Manda (N11), Ngoni (N12), Mpoto (N14) and Ndendeule (N101). Hinnebusch (1981) refers to this group, apart from Ndendeule which was not included in his classification (but see Nurse 1988, 1999), as Tanzanian Ngoni.

Matengo (N13) also belongs to this group, but the variety that is considered central to this language lacks post-verbal negation and is therefore not part of our SEQT group. However, we will include Matengo in this paper, and provide a detailed account of its negation system, as it plays an important role from a comparative-historical perspective. In addition, it would seem that at least a variety of Matengo allows for a discontinuous negative construction with a post-verbal negative particle (a fact further discussed in §2.1).

Although we include Matengo, we leave aside Tonga (N15), which is grouped by Guthrie (1948, 1967/1971) with the rest of the N10 varieties. Tonga is spoken across the lake in Malawi, and seems instead to be more closely related to the other N-languages spoken there (in particular Tumbuka N21). Note also that Mbamba Bay Mwera (or Chinyanja or Nyasa), with the Guthrie-code N201 (from the updated

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3. The genetic unity of the Bantu languages and a proto-language were proposed as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the internal sub-classification of the language family is only partly established. Although the referential-geographic classification by Guthrie (1967/71) is strictly not genetic, it is useful for the purpose of referencing to the many languages – often with different glossonyms – of the family. In his classification of the Bantu languages, employing primarily lexical data, Guthrie (1967/71) proposed 16 zones (7 western Bantu and 9 eastern Bantu).

version by Maho (2009)), spoken on the Tanzanian side just to the south of the N10-varieties, is a Nyanja/Chewa (N30) variety (cf. Ngonyani 2020). As Mbamba Bay Mwera also shares more typological similarities in terms of negation strategies with its Malawian relatives, it is consequently excluded from our sample.

Furthermore, we do not include Mozambiquan Ngoni (no Guthrie code, here represented as N12x), which is claimed to have been spoken in the same area as Tanzanian Ngoni and the other Tanzanian N10 varieties up until roughly 80 years ago, when the speakers left for the northern provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado in Mozambique (Kröger 2011). Mozambiquan Ngoni does not have a post-verbal particle as a standard negator. However, it does have a unique set of negation strategies, some of which co-occur with the languages within our scope in other ways (Kröger 2011, n.d.). Finally, we have left out Nindi (N102) due to the lack of documentation of its grammatical system. In fact, it is most likely the case that Nindi no longer exists as a distinct linguistic community (cf. Ngonyani 2003: 1). See Persohn and Bernander (2018: fn5) for sources on the Nindi community and further information on its situation.

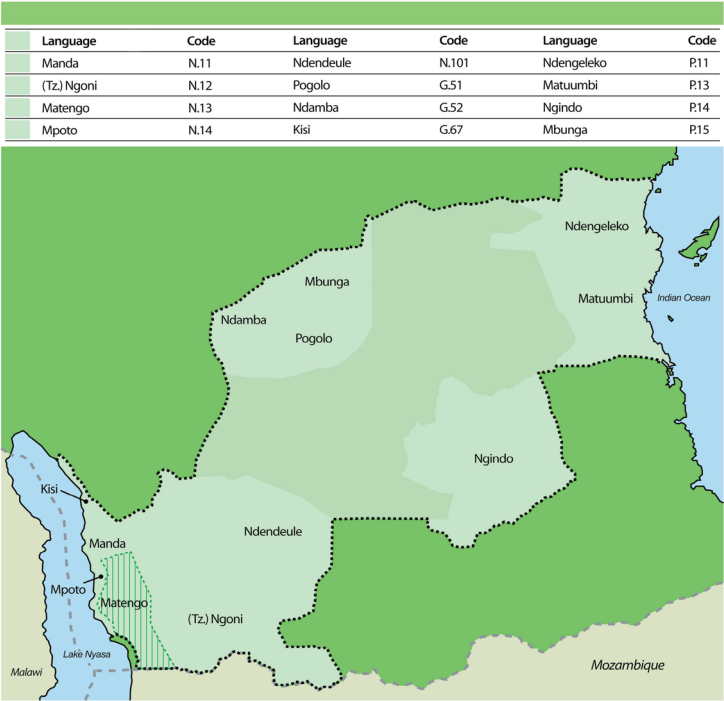
P10, referred to as Rufiji by Hinnebusch (1981), consists of Ndengeleko (P11), Matuumbi (P13), Ngindo (P14) and Mbunga (P15). P12 is the code for a separate variety of Rufiji, but as argued in Ström (2013), this is another name for the Ndengeleko variety. Rufiji refers to the delta area around the Rufiji River where the language is spoken, and can also refer to the Ndengeleko variety.

The Rufiji-Ruvuma group also comprises P20 languages. These do not have post-verbal negation and thus are not discussed in any depth in this study.<sup>4</sup> Nurse (1999) suggests an early split between Rufiji (N10, P10) and Ruvuma (P20) and then between N10 and P10 (roughly speaking), where P11-P13 (Ndengeleko and Matuumbi) are described as being spoken in a relatively isolated environment, and thus show the more conservative traits of the Rufiji-Ruvuma group. Secondly, we include Pogolo and Ndamba from the so-called Kilombero group (the G50 languages, with P15 sometimes included). Finally, we include Kisi (G67) from the Southern Highlands group (Nurse 1988, Ehret 1998, 1999, Nurse 1999, Nurse and Philippson 2003). Unlike the other G60 languages, Kisi has a single post-verbal negative particle as a standard negator.

The following map illustrates the approximate geographic location of the languages included in our survey in light-green and surrounded by a dotted line. The slightly darker green inside this area designates the Selous Game reserve. Since Matengo differs from the other languages in this area by (typically) using pre-verbal negation, it is singled out through vertical lines. The rest of Tanzania is dark green.

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4. P20 has morphological negation, but see notes on Yao in §3.2.1.



**Map 1.** Geographic distribution of the SEQT languages

See Table 5 in the Appendix for an overview of the negation strategies employed in the languages surrounding our selected group of languages.

1.2. The genealogical picture in a contact perspective

The region where our selected languages are spoken is characterized by centuries of intense contact, with a high degree of multilingualism and inter-ethnic incorporation between small and sparsely organized communities of either direct or almost direct descent, which thus speak structurally similar varieties (Nurse 1988, Park 1988, Ehret 1999). This situation has obscured the exact lineages between the varieties of this area, casting doubt on whether shared linguistic traits are due to a common ancestry or to later stages of convergence. The turmoil and dispersal of groups brought by the caravans and the slave trade, and later by the invasion of the Nguni from Southern Africa and their settlement around Songea (see e.g. Ngonyani 2001 for an account of this historical event) have further obscured the genealogical picture. The ethnonym and glossonym for Tanzanian Ngoni stems from the Nguni, although that language, with a few instances of Nguni interference, is clearly a Tanzanian Bantu language structurally (see e.g. Mous 2019, Bernander (forthcoming) for recent accounts on this matter).

Nurse (1988) claims that there is a strong relationship between the three subgroups Rufiji-Ruvuma, Kilombero and Southern Highlands, but that the linguistic resemblance vis-à-vis other Tanzanian Bantu groups is due to cultural convergence rather than any direct genealogical connection. Gonzales *et al.* (in prep), however, treat the Rufiji-Ruvuma and the Kilombero languages together as forming a genealogical grouping, a macro-version of the Rufiji-Ruvuma. Also, as mentioned above, the recent phylogenetic classification of the Bantu languages puts the three groups Rufiji-Ruvuma, Kilombero and even the whole of Southern Highlands together under the same sub-node of Eastern Bantu (Grollemund *et al.* 2015). In any case, it is clear that diffusion and convergence have worked in both directions among the different language groups, playing a key role in the linguistic development of this area.

Within this situation of contact and convergence, smaller communities have generally been more affected by influences from their larger neighbours than vice-versa. A case in point is Kisi (G67), which is a small linguistic community heavily influenced by the neighbouring N10 languages. Kisi is the only Southern Highlands language with a post-verbal particle as the standard negator.

The genealogical ambiguity that this convergence has brought with it is perhaps most apparent in the problems of assigning in-group affinities to Manda (N11) and Mbunga (P15) – as was indicated above. For Manda, Nurse (1988) reassigns the language to Southern Highlands, but recent studies (Gray and Roth 2016, see also Bernander 2018b) cast major doubt on this claim, painting a more complex picture of intra-linguistic variation. Nurse's conclusions are drawn from Manda data that originate from a northern variety of the Matumba dialect and thus from a variety both geographically and linguistically much closer to Southern Highlands, as compared to the more “prototypical” Manda.<sup>5</sup> For Mbunga, Nurse (1988: 40) concludes that “Mbunga today is phonologically a member of Rufiji-Ruvuma [N10, P10-P20], lexically more similar to Kilombero [G50]. That seems most plausibly interpreted by positing that it was originally a Rufiji-Ruvuma language, but heavily influenced lexically in recent centuries by Kilombero”.<sup>6</sup> As will be made clear in this paper, the grammatical data that we have access to also seem to point in the same direction. The historical evidence on the origins of the Mbunga (further examined in §4.1) as speakers of an Ndendeule variety (with Nguni influences) would additionally corroborate such a conclusion (but see Gonzales *et al.* in prep).

In §4.1, we flesh out these historical factors and show how they are related the descriptive parts of this paper.

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5. To be sure, little is known so far about intra-linguistic variation and the presence of dialects within the languages in our study, and how factoring in such variation would affect the conclusions on in-group consistency and lines of descent. Apart from the northern Matumba variety of Manda, Ngonyani (2001), for one, suggests that the western variety of Ndendeule has converged considerably with Ngoni as compared to the other topolects of this language.

6. Nurse (1999: 12) seems to reach the opposite conclusion when summarizing his own 1988 work. A misprint?



## 2. Negation strategies with post-verbal particles

The current section presents the formal and functional particularities of the post-verbal negative particles found in southern Tanzania. As a working definition of what can be considered a particle, we follow Dryer (2013) and define a negative particle as a negative word that does not carry any verbal inflection. All languages share the strategy of using a particle after the main predicate verb as the standard negator. As will be shown, however, the languages differ considerably in terms of what element has been chosen as a negative particle and in its distribution beyond declarative verbal main clauses.

This section is organized as follows. §2.1 presents the forms of the negative particles under discussion in the different language varieties. We examine their use in standard negation in §2.2; the use of post-verbal particles in non-standard negation in §2.3; and in negative replies and interjections in §2.4. This section is summarized in §2.5.

### 2.1. The formal realization of post-verbal negation

Table 2 summarizes the formal realizations of the various post-verbal particles employed by the languages in our study. We have chosen to use superscript numbers in the table when authors differ on which element(s) are used in a given language or on the exact formal realization of what we presume is essentially the same element.<sup>7</sup> Authors are in agreement on the markers which do not have a superscript.

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7. Odden's <ɨ> equals the first degree high vowel of Matuumbi's 7 vowel system; /i/ in IPA (Odden 1996: xi). Thus, Odden (1996) and Krumm (1912) agree on the quality of this vowel, although Krumm (1912) only provides examples with the longer form of the negative particle, indicative of erosion, as further discussed in §4.1.1.

Code	Name	Form	Source
G51	Pogolo	ndiri <sup>I</sup>	Hendle (1907) <sup>I</sup>
		nda <sup>II</sup>	Nurse (2008: appendix) <sup>II</sup>
G52	Ndamba	ng'odu <sup>I</sup> ~ ng'odo <sup>II</sup> ~ ng'o <sup>I</sup>	Novotná (2005) <sup>I</sup> Edelsten and Lijongwa (2010) <sup>II</sup>
		duhu <sup>I, II</sup>	
		ha <sup>I</sup>	
G67	Kisi	ndali	Ngonyani (2011: 135-140, passim), Gray (2015)
		he	
N11	Manda	lépa ~ lépe ~ lépi	Bernander (2017)
		hé	
N12	Ngoni	lepa ~ lepe ~ lepi	Spiss (1904), Ebner (1939: 30), Moser (1983), Ngonyani (2003)
		he	
N14	Mpoto	lepa ~ lepe ~ lepi	Botne (2019b, 2019a: 130ff) Bernander (field notes 2016)
		hee	
N101	Ndendeule	yé <sup>I, III</sup> ~jee <sup>II</sup> ~yi <sup>IV</sup>	Nurse (2008: appendix) <sup>I</sup> ; Ngonyani (2013) <sup>II</sup> ; Ngonyani (2000) <sup>III</sup> Odden (2003: 541) <sup>IV</sup>
P11	Ndengeleko	kwaako ~ kwaa	Ström (2013)
P13	Matuumbi	lɪ ~ lɪlɪ <sup>I</sup>	Odden (1996) <sup>I</sup>
		lili <sup>II</sup>	Krumm (1912) <sup>II</sup>
P14	Ngindo	ji <sup>I</sup> ~ je <sup>II</sup> ~ -je <sup>III</sup>	Odden (2003: 541) <sup>I</sup> ; Urmanchieva (2010) <sup>II</sup> Ngindo New Testament (2015) Ngindo New Testament (2015) <sup>III</sup>
P15	Mbunga	ndili, ŋodu, ha	David Odden (pc 170821)

**Table 2.** Formal realization of the post-verbal negators

As shown in Table 2, there is considerable formal variation both between and within the different languages. Some languages do indeed have several separate post-verbal markers. In other cases, we are dealing with minor differences in the phonetic realization of one and the same element. In Ngindo, the sources differ in the formal status they assign to the negative marker. In the Ngindo New Testament

(2015), it is not represented as an independent constituent but as an element suffixed to the so-called “post-final” slot of the verb stem. It should also be pointed out already at this stage that Matengo (N13) is not included in this table, as it is the only language within our contingent of languages where at least the main varieties lack a postverbal particle as standard negator. We address the Matengo situation in §3.1, where we also acknowledge the fact presented to us by one of the anonymous reviewers that at least one Matengo variety might actually make use of a post-verbal negative particle (of the form **ndeka**).

## 2.2. Standard negation

The typical strategy that a language employs to negate declarative main clauses with a verbal predicate is referred to as standard negation (Miestamo 2005, 2017); see also van der Auwera and Krasnoukhova (2020). As pointed out above, the defining characteristic of the languages included in this survey (with the exception of Matengo) is that a post-verbal particle is the only negator used in declarative verbal main clauses, i.e., standard negation.

As the negative particles generally occur without any formal changes to the verbal predicate, it is tempting to classify the languages as belonging to the language type with symmetrical standard negation, i.e., with a one-to-one correspondence between affirmative and negative paradigms (Miestamo 2005: 51-56). However, it will become apparent that there are some problems attached to such a conclusion. Firstly, there is not an exact one-to-one correspondence between affirmative and negative paradigms in the P10 languages (further discussed in the current section), due to restrictions on the co-occurrence of disjoint verb forms and negation. Secondly, there is limited yet active use of pre-verbal negative particles in the N10 languages, including in constructions which could be argued to fall within the domain of standard negation.

### 2.2.1. The syntactic position of the post-verbal particle

In the typical example, the negative form directly follows the verb, as was shown in (1) and (2) in the introduction, as well as in examples (3) and (4):

- (3) Ngindo (P14; Odden 2003: 541)

**ba-lima**            **jí**  
SM2-cultivate    NEG  
‘They are not cultivating.’

- (4) Ndamba (G52; Novotná 2005: 137)

a. **va-ana**            **va-yegh-a**            **ng’o(du)**    **machi**  
SM2-children    SM2-fetch-FV    NEG            6.water  
‘The children have not fetched water.’

- b. **tu-ku-wul-a**                      **ha**                      **mi-keka**  
 SM1PL-PROG-sell-FV    NEG                      4-mats  
 ‘We do not sell mats.’

In certain languages, such as Ndengeleko, the post-verbal particle obligatorily immediately follows the verb. This is evidenced in examples which use the conjoint verb form before the negative particle (5a). ‘Conjoint’ here refers to a morphological form of a specific TAM (e.g. the perfective in (5), in which there is a close bond between the verb and what follows (van der Wal 2017)). The conjoint form can never be sentence-final, and the constituent that follows the conjoint form can be argued to occur in an Immediately After Verb (IAV) position (Watters 1979). When this is not the case, the so-called disjoint form is used. As can be seen in (5b), the negative particle cannot follow the disjoint form (although see the Matumbi examples below):

(5) Ndengeleko (P11; Ström 2013: 273)

- a. **n-gulw-i**                      **kwáaku**  
 SM1SG-clean-PFV.CJ    NEG  
 ‘I didn’t clean.’
- b. **\*n-gulw-ile**                      **kwáaku**  
 SM1SG-clean-PFV.DJ    NEG  
 ‘I didn’t clean.’

Nothing can intervene between the conjoint form and the negative particle. An attempt at inserting an adverb between the verb form and the negative particle results in an unacceptable construction (6b). Moreover, (6c) shows that the particle cannot be used in the pre-verbal position:

(6) Ndengeleko (P11; Scott 2017)<sup>8</sup>

- a. **n-ee-yómwa**                      **kwáku**                      **malaabu**  
 SM1SG-FUT-finish    NEG                      tomorrow  
 ‘I will not finish tomorrow.’
- b. **\*neeyomwa malaabu kwaku**
- c. **\*kwaku neeyomwa malaabu**  
 Intended: ‘I will not finish tomorrow.’

The constituent following a conjoint form in IAV can be shown to have focal properties in many Bantu languages (van der Wal 2017), including Ndengeleko (Ström 2013). Negation tends to fall within the scope of focus, as argued by Givón (1978); see also Hyman and Watters (1984).

8. The Ndengeleko fieldwork data by Tessa Scott is available at the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages, University of California, Berkeley, <https://cla.berkeley.edu/>. Glosses have been added by us.

There are instances in which a disjoint form can be followed by the negation particle, however, at least in Matumbi. Odden (1984) shows that the disjoint form (‘verb-focal’ in his terminology) can be followed by the negative particle, when the verbal action is contrasted (7a). However, it cannot be used when there is contrast on the noun (7b):

(7) Matumbi (P13; Odden 1984: 282)

a. **aa-tí-teleká**      **líili**      **kindoólo,**      **aa-tí-kalaangá**  
 SM1-PST.DJ-cook   NEG   sweet.potato   SM1-PST.DJ-fry  
 ‘He didn’t cook sweet potato, he fried it.’

b. **\*aa-tí-teleká**      **líili**      **kindoólo,**      **aa-tí-teleká**      **mbá**  
 SM1-PST.DJ-cook   NEG   sweet.potato   SM1-PST.DJ-cook   rice  
 Intended: ‘He didn’t cook sweet potato, he cooked rice.’

Following this, we assume that the languages in our sample which exhibit the conjoint/disjoint distinction have a focus-based alternation, rather than a constituency-based alternation (cf. van der Wal 2017). We can assume that this is also the case in closely related Ngindo, although this remains to be tested. These are the only languages in our sample which exhibit the conjoint/disjoint distinction, and which employ a post-verbal negative particle for the tenses which have this distinction.<sup>9</sup> When the negative particle follows the conjoint form, we analyse it as intrinsically focussed, in line with question words, hence its need to follow the conjoint form.

### 2.2.2. Scope of negation / contrastive negation

Post-verbal negators typically occur immediately after the predicate verb, where they have scope over either the verb alone or the whole proposition. However, for expressing contrastive negation, the post-verbal negative particle can also appear directly after the specific clausal constituent it negates, in at least some of the SEQT languages. In example (8) it is the inherited semantics of the adjective ‘good’ that is negated, rather than the action itself, i.e., reeds were found but only of poor quality.<sup>10</sup>

(8) Mpoto (N14; Botne 2019a: 131)

**ni-hi-wee**              **hi-lala**      **hi-niahi**      **hee**  
 SM1sg-OM8-see.PFV   8-reed      8-good      NEG  
 ‘I found [saw] no GOOD reeds (i.e., reeds that were no good).’

9. Mbunga (P15) probably does not have conjoint/disjoint alternations. We do not have clear cut evidence of this, but the rudimentary data we have access to suggest structural parallels with the other Kilombero (G50) varieties, including with regard to verb morphology. Recall that Matengo, which supposedly has conjoint/disjoint alternations (van der Wal 2017, Yoneda 2017), does not have a post-verbal negator.

10. The capitalization in the translation in (8) is in the original text; in examples (9) and (10) capitalization has been added by us for emphasis.

In the Ngoni example in (9), the subject noun is within the scope of negation, resulting in the negative particle occurring before the predicate verb.

(9) Ngoni (N12; Ngonyani 2003: 86)

**Mw-ana lepa i-geg-a ma-nji**  
 1-child NEG SML.PRS-carry-FV 6-water  
 ‘It is not a CHILD that is carrying water (but someone else).’

An example of variation in scope which is dependent on where the negative particle is placed is this triptych of minimally contrasting sentences from Ndendeule.

(10) Ndendeule (N101; Ngonyani 2000: 220)

a. **mw-ana yé a-ki-tš ki-hembe**  
 1-child NEG SML-PST-take 7-knife  
 ‘It was not a child that took the knife.’

b. **mw-ana a-ki-tš yé ki-hembe**  
 1-child SML-PST-take NEG 7-knife  
 ‘The child did not take a knife.’

c. **mw-ana a-ki-tš ki-hembe yé**  
 1-child SML-PST-take 7-knife NEG  
 ‘The child took (something) not a knife.’

The strategy works in a way that is similar to constructions without a verb, as in (11) from Ndendeule and (12) from Ndamba.

(11) Ndendeule (N101; Ngonyani 2013: 181)<sup>11</sup>

**Ka-gimbwa ka ka-cəkəmbe jee**  
 12-dog DEM12 12-small NEG  
 ‘The (small) dog is not little.’

(12) Ndamba (G52; Edelsten and Lijongwa 2010: 111)

**N-ga-gol-ile ly-aka, li-huka ng’odo**  
 SMLSG-PST-mend-COMPL 5-axe 5-hoe NEG  
 ‘I mended the axe but not the hoe.’

Negation of non-verbal constructions is further examined in §2.3.3.

### 2.2.3. The use of more than one negative particle in a single language

As indicated in Table 2 and in the discussion in §2.1, roughly half of the languages of our sample employ more than one particle for negation (not considering minor phonological variation in the realization of what is ultimately the same marker).

11. The original text glosses the noun class prefix and the ensuing concord prefixes as belonging to class 21; based on the formal and functional semblance with noun class 12 we believe this is a misprint. Accordingly, we have corrected it in our gloss.

Unfortunately, we have found little description of any (fine-grained) semantic differences related to the use of one negative particle over another in a language. In those cases where the versatility of negative markers is even brought to attention, what is typically mentioned is exactly the point that no functional differences have been identified by the authors (see, e.g., Ngonyani 2003: 86, Novotná 2005: 136, Nurse 2008: appendix).<sup>12</sup> Ngonyani (2003: 86) suggests for Ngoni that the formal variation represents dialectal variation, but he does not elaborate on this claim.<sup>13</sup>

Occasionally, it is suggested that one form has a more “emphatic” reading than the other. Thus, both Bernander (2017: 316) for Manda and Botne (2019a: 130) for Mpoto claim that **lepa** (and similar forms) may have a more emphatic reading than **he(e)**, **lepa** being associated with readings such as ‘never’ and ‘not at all’, as in (13) and (14).

- (13) Manda (N11; Bernander 2017: 316)

**Sospéter a-píg-a lépa**

Sospeter SML-call-FV NEG

‘Sospeter NEVER calls.’

- (14) Mpoto (N14; Botne 2019a: 130)

**hy-a hi-hund-iti hye hi-nogh-a lepa**

10-CONN 8-become\_ripe-PFV DEM.10 8-be\_tasty-FV NEG

‘Those that are ripe are not tasty at all.’

Botne (2019a: 130) suggests that **lepa** has a more informal ring than **hee** in Mpoto. In contrast, Bernander (2017: 320) reports for Manda that **lepa** alone occurs in older Manda sources and that **lepa** is in general much more frequently used than **he** (Bernander 2017: 316). A similar situation to that in Manda is found in Mbunga, where the dominant negator is **ndili**, with only a few instances of the other markers (Odden; p.c. 17/08/2021).

Notice, finally, that unlike some other Bantu languages, including, e.g., the Eastern Bantu varieties Luhya (JE32) and Bukusu (JE31c) (Devos and van der Auwera 2013: 262), the southern Tanzanian languages do not appear to allow the stacking of different negative particles in order to reinforce the negative proposition (but see §5.1, where we entertain the idea that **ng’odo/ng’odu** in Ndamba could be the result of fusion of an erstwhile sequencing of two negative particles).

12. See also Bernander (2017: 314–316), who dedicates a section on this topic in Manda under the heading “A note on the (lack of) difference between **lépa** and **hé**” (our emphasis), explicitly showing how **lepa** and **he** are used almost interchangeably for the negation of more or less identical clausal constructions. As will be further discussed in the next paragraph, however, Bernander (ibid.) does list some pragmatic and extra-linguistic differences between Manda’s two post-verbal negative particles.

13. For Ngoni specifically, but also for other languages in our study – many of them associated with the incorporation of speakers of different varieties – a possible explanation would also be that different negative particles are connected to different strata of the language. That is, “the layering of [linguistic] material in a language or dialect which reflects its historical development and past contacts between its speakers and bearers of other linguistic and cultural traditions” (Andersen 2003: 3).

## 2.3. Post-verbal particles used for non-standard negation

### 2.3.1. Introduction

Post-verbal negation in our sample of southern Tanzanian languages is primarily associated with standard negation. However, in most languages, post-verbal negation may also be employed in non-standard contexts, although the languages differ considerably in terms of the extent to which this may occur. We follow the typologically informed taxonomy developed by Miestamo (2017) and Miestamo and Veselinova (2019) and consider non-standard contexts to be non-declaratives (§2.3.2), non-verbal predicates/copula constructions (§2.3.3) and non-main clauses (§2.3.4).

The post-verbal particles often occur as only one out of many possible strategies for non-standard negation, together with negative auxiliaries and other types of negators. Our sources are seldom specific about the contexts in which the post-verbal negator may or may not occur,<sup>14</sup> so it is possible that a given negative particle has a broader or a narrower range than we are able to present here.

### 2.3.2. Negation of non-declarative constructions

Post-verbal particles seem to be used very rarely for non-declarative negation, i.e., negation within the imperative-hortative domain (cf. van der Auwera *et al.* 2005). Instead, the use of auxiliary constructions with inherently negative lexical verbs is preferred (cf. Bernander 2018a), just as in many languages across the Bantu-speaking area (Nurse 2008: 193, Devos & van Olmen 2013). A case in point is the negator derived from the verb **kotok** ‘cease, stop’ in Manda, in example (15) inflected with a truncated variant of an original subjunctive verb form (as indicated with parentheses).<sup>15</sup>

(15) Manda (N11; Bernander 2018a: 658)

<b>u-kotó(k-e)</b>	<b>ku-génd-a</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>mú-ndu</b>	<b>uyu</b>	<b>ndáva</b>	<b>mw-íf</b>
SM2SG-NEG-SBJV	INF-walk-FV	COM	1-person	DEM1	because	1-thief

‘You shouldn’t hang out with him because he is a thief.’

In Ndendeule the post-verbal negator may in fact be used in negative imperatives, in which case the predicate verb occurs in the infinitive (16a) (see also Devos & van Olmen 2013). As seen in (16b), however, negative imperatives may also be expressed with a negative auxiliary construction, just like in other languages of our sample.

14. An exception is Novotná (2005: 136), who explicitly claims for Ndamba that post-verbal negation “applies to all verb forms, with the exception of the negative infinitive, negative subjunctive, the verb ‘**va na**’ ‘have’, and the copula ‘**a**’”.

15. See Bernander (2020) for more information on the verb forms of the Manda imperative/hortative domain.



(16) Ndendeule (N101; Ngonyani 2013: 180)

a. **ku-jend-a jee ku-ŋ-gonda!**  
 INF-go-FV NEG 17-3-farm  
 ‘Do not go to the farm!’

b. **ŋ-kə̀tə ku-jend-a ku-ŋ-gonda!**  
 SM2PL-stop INF-go-FV 17-3-farm  
 ‘Do not go to the farm!’

In Ngindo too it seems possible to form a negative imperative with post-verbal negation, but with the verb inflected with what looks like an itive **ka-** (hence the question mark) rather than the infinitive.

(17) Ngindo (P14; Odden 2003: 541)

**ka-kem-a ji!**  
 ?ITV-yell-FV NEG  
 ‘Don’t yell!’

Post-verbal negation does not seem to be employed in Ndendeule, Ngindo or any other of the languages in our study for the negation of other types of non-declarative constructions involving participants other than the addressee (hortatives, jussives, etc). Such non-imperative non-directives are commonly expressed with the subjunctive verb form in Bantu in general, as well as in the languages of our study. This is exemplified with Manda in (15).

The subjunctive is far from being confined to non-declarative contexts, however, but tends also to be used for subordination (e.g., purpose clauses), and hence in non-main clauses, as well as for expressing modality in independent clauses (cf. Nurse & Devos 2019). In all of these cases, a construction expressed with the subjunctive verb form in the language surveyed is exclusively negated with an auxiliary verb and does not seem to be able to be negated with a post-verbal particle.<sup>16</sup> Importantly, this points towards the fact that the choice of negator is not only confined to clause type but may also correlate with the specific verb form/conjugation of the affirmative counterpart (cf. Guérois *et al.* forthcoming).

### 2.3.3. Negation of non-verbal predications and copula constructions

In Bantu, non-verbal predicates – i.e., clauses where a non-verbal constituent serves as the predicate nucleus of the sentence (Dryer 2007) – may be construed with or without a copula, which may or may not be (derived from) a verb. A defining feature of Bantu copula systems appears to be the presence of multiple copula forms for distinct purposes (see Gibson *et al.* 2019). The fine-grained differences between different copula forms are beyond the scope of the current study. However, in our

16. The exception is verb forms that (partly) originate from the subjunctive but have grammaticalized further in the present-day languages, e.g., into future tense markers. Such constructions are negated with the standard negative particle. A case in point is the “Future 1” tense marker in Manda (see Bernander 2017: 171-175).

sample of southern Tanzanian languages, the post-verbal negative may be used with copula verbs to negate all types of non-verbal predication.

When used with a variable copula verb, the post-verbal negative particles may be used for negating ascriptive predicates – those which assign a description, typically to the subject – as in (18) and (19). Note the placement of the negative particle after the nominal predicate rather than the copula verb (cf. the discussion in §2.2.2):

- (18) Manda (N11; Bernander 2017: 311)

**ma-kiŋku ga-y-i' wíchu lépe pála**  
 6-arrangement SM6-COP-PFV good NEG DEM16  
 'The arrangement is not good there.'

- (19) Ndamba (G52; Edelsten and Lijongwa 2010: 121)

**Pa-lw-ene pe tu-ku-pa-yend-a pa-v-a pa-tali duhu**  
 16-11-river REL16 SM1PL-PRS-OM16-go-FV SM16-COP-FV 16-far NEG  
 'The river where we are going is not far.'

Such a construction may also be used in negative locative predicates, as illustrated in (20).

- (20) Matuumbi (P13; Krumm 1912: 47)<sup>17</sup>

**ba-b-ili lili**  
 SM2-COP-PFV NEG  
 'Er ist nich da.' ('He is not there.')

These negative particles may be used in negative existentials, as in these examples from Mpoto, which can either be formed with a subject marker referring to the "logical" subject (the pivot of the existential sentence (cf. McNally 2016) as in (21a) or with a locative subject marker as in (21b).

- (21) Mpoto (N14; Botne 2019a: 131)

a. **apa chi-y-ii hee chi-ndu**  
 here SM7-be-PFV NEG 7-thing  
 'Here, there is not a thing.'

b. **ko-ka-y-ii hee chi-leve pahi**  
 SM17-PST-be-PFV NEG 7-food 16.ground  
 'There was no food on the ground.'

Finally, negative predicative possession may also be negated with the post-verbal negator, which occurs between the copula verb and a reflex of the comitative \***na** 'with' (widely used in possessives in Bantu; cf. Creissels forthcoming).

17. The subject in this example refers to the 'master of the house' and thus the plural subject marking is used as an honorific.

- (22) Manda (N11; Bernander 2017: 311, 349)

**n-ála      w-a      ka-víli      á-y-í'      hé      na      mwána**  
 1-woman 1-CONN 12-two SM1-be(come)-PFV NEG COM 1-child  
 'The second wife did not have any children.'

Some non-verbal predicative constructions may be formed and negated without a copula, such as the identificational in (23) and the ascriptive predicates in (24) - (25). Compare the structural similarities of these constructions with those discussed as expressing contrastive negation in §2.2.2.

- (23) Ndengeleko (P11; Ström 2013: 277)

**beembe      kwáaku**  
 they NEG  
 'It's not them.'

- (24) Ngoni (N12; Moser 1983: 124)

**ma-huta      ga-haki      he**  
 6-oil 6-bad NEG  
 'Das Oel ist nicht schlecht.' ('The oil is not bad.')

- (25) Pogoro (G51; Hendle 1907: 44)

**mu-ndu      ayu      m-kullu      ndiri**  
 1-man DEM1 1-big NEG  
 'Dieser Mann ist nicht groß.' ('This man is not big.')

Although the use of post-verbal negative particles is more common in the domain of non-verbal predication and copula constructions than in the non-declaratives described (§2.3.2), alternative negative constructions also exist here.

Often the languages in our study employ alternative specialized markers for negative existentials, typically derived from a lexeme meaning 'empty, in vain' inflected with locative marking – a common strategy more generally across the Bantu family (see Bernander *et al.* forthcoming-a). A case in point is **-túpú** in Ndengeleko, as illustrated in (26).<sup>18,19</sup> (See the discussion on the use of the cognate form as a post-verbal negator in Ndamba in §4.1.2.)

- (26) Ndengeleko (P11; Ström 2013: 284)

**n-túpú      oomba      ku-lw-íi**  
 18-empty 9/10.fish 17-11-river  
 'There are no fish in the river.'

In at least Ngoni, a negative existential of this type may be further used for expressing negative possessives, by introducing a free-standing subject pronoun (27); see Bernander *et al.* (forthcoming a: 28-29) for further details on the development of such constructions.

18. Note the mismatch in locative class indexation between **túpú** and the locative noun, indicative of the specialization of this form as a negator.

19. These specialized negative existentials can either precede or follow the pivot, e.g. **ntupo** in Ndengeleko: **ntupo ilaatu/ilaatu ntupo** 'there are no shoes' (Scott 2017).

(27) Ngoni (N12; Ebner 1939: 32)

<b>ne'</b>	<b>kwawaka</b>	<b>chi-pula</b>
PRO.1SG	NEG.EX (<17-empty)	7-knife
'I don't have a knife.'		

Although it is likely that subtle functional differences exist between the use of a copula construction negated with the postverbal negator and the type of specialized forms illustrated in (26) and (27), such potential distinctions are not further explored in our references. Hence, we do not say much more about it here either. Bernander (2017: 336) reports for Manda that post-verbal negators are always an optional and felicitous alternative for expressing negative existence and similar concepts using this type of more specialized marker.

There are few attestations of the use of a reflex of the “negative predicative index” **tí(-)** ‘it is not’ (cf. Meeussen 1967: 115, Gibson *et al.* 2019), a negative invariable identificational and ascriptive copula common throughout Eastern Bantu (often expressed as **si** due to spirantization). In those languages where we found attestations of its use, viz. in Ndamba, Kisi, Ngoni, Ngindo, and in Ndengeleko as in (28), it tends to be presented, if even discussed,<sup>20</sup> as transferred Swahili code.

(28) Ndengeleko (P11; Ström 2013: 152)

<b>tu-pala</b>	<b>u-tám-a</b>	<b>ku-kááya</b>	<b>si</b>	<b>ku-hotéli</b>
SM1pl-want	INF-sit-FV	17-home	NEG.COP	17-9.hotel
'We will stay with someone (at home), not in a hotel.'				

That **si** comes from Swahili is a conclusion which we have little reason to doubt, and which is most clearly deducible from P10 languages like Ndengeleko, where *\*t/\_i*, as in *\*tí(-)*, would have resulted in the loss of the plosive consonant (cf. Hinnebusch 1981: 38-39, Ström 2013: 76-86), and not in an /s/ as in (28).

Mpoto (and Matengo), however, may use an invariable pre-verbal negative particle **nga** to negate identificational constructions in a way similar to how reflexes of *\*tí(-)* are used in other Eastern Bantu languages. Similarly, Manda and Ngoni make use of an invariable copula which is derived from the negative pre-verbal particle **na** + a copula verb. Divergent use of pre-verbal rather than post-verbal particles for negation in some contexts is further discussed in §3.2.

#### 2.3.4. Non-main clauses

We can distinguish three different subcategories of non-main or subordinate clauses: complements (which are dependent on a verb/predicator), relatives (which are dependent on and modify nominal heads) and adverbial clauses (which are

20. Thus, for example, Ngonyani (2003) does not explicitly discuss **si** as a negator in his grammar sketch on Ngoni, yet it occurs several times in the text samples at the end of his work (Ngonyani 2003: 159-160), which nicely ties in with his introductory statement of the status of the Ngoni language in relation to the heavy influence of Swahili: “speakers provided examples that show very little influence of Kiswahili. The sample text, however, illustrates heavy influence of Kiswahili in everyday Chingoni” (Ngonyani 2003: 5, see also Mous 2019: 358). For more on the influence of Swahili on Ngoni, see Mapunda & Rosendal (2015) and references cited therein.

dependent on and modify a verb phrase or an entire clause (predicate)) (cf. Thompson *et al.* 2007, Diessel 2019). Post-verbal particles may be used for all three types of non-main clauses. Again, however, they are often in competition with other negation strategies. In particular, all constructions whose affirmative counterpart is expressed with the subjunctive are typically negated with the same type of negative auxiliaries employed for non-declarative constructions, as described in §2.3.2 above, rather than with the post-verbal particle. Similarly, negative infinitives used as complements tend to be negated with pre-verbal particles (as discussed in §2.3.3 and further addressed in §3).

Ngonyani (2011: 147-157) includes a detailed description of complement clauses in Kisi, which he shows may optionally be introduced by explicit complementizers. Example (29) is a negated finite complement clause without a complementizer. The post-verbal negator **ndali** is employed in this case.

(29) Kisi (G67; Ngonyani 2011: 181-182)

<b>bha-ka-bhon-a</b>	<b>yi-gw-a</b>	<b>ndali</b>
SM2-NARR-see-FV	SM9-fall-FV	NEG

‘They discovered (that) it (the cave) was not collapsing.’

Example (30) is an example of an infinitival complement clause negated with a post-verbal particle from Manda. Example (31) is an additional illustration of the negation of the infinitive, which also functions as a deverbal noun in Pogolo.

(30) Manda (N11; Bernander 2017: 312)

<b>nénga</b>	<b>ni-hích-a</b>	<b>ku-gón-a</b>	<b>lépe</b>
PRO1SG	SM1SG-come-FV	INF-sleep-FV	NEG

‘I have come not to sleep (I have come to work).’

(31) Pogolo (G51; Hendle 1907: 38)

<b>ku-fir-a</b>	<b>ndiri</b>
INF-love-FV	NEG

‘Nicht zu lieben.’ (‘Not to love.’)

Next, post-verbal negative particles often appear in relative constructions, as in examples (32) and (33), from Ngindo and Ndendeule respectively. (Recall from the discussion around Table 1 that the post-verbal negative is treated as a post-final suffix in the Ngindo New Testament).

(32) Ngindo (P14; Ngindo New Testament 2015: Matthew 22: 11)

<b>mu-ndu</b>	<b>ju-mwe</b>	<b>o-jw-a-kwind-ite-je</b>	<b>ngobo ya</b>	<b>mpapala</b>
1-man	1-one	REL1-SM1-PST-wear-PFV-NEG	9.cloth	CONN9 9.wedding

‘a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes’

(33) Ndendeule (N101; Nurse 2008: appendix)

<b>u-gembe</b>	<b>gwa-aki-geg-a</b>	<b>yé</b>	<b>n-geni</b>
14-beer	REL14-SM1.PST-carry-FV	NEG	1-guest

‘(The) beer which the guest did not carry.’

The post-verbal negative particles may also occur in adverbial clauses, including in the hypothetical (34a) and counterfactual (34b) conditional in Kisi. In these examples the post-verbal negator **ndali** happens to occur in the hypothetical conditional clause and the alternative particle **he** in the counterfactual one. However, constructions that are formed with **ndali** as a negator of counterfactual conditionals and **he** as a negator of hypothetical conditionals are also attested.

(34) Kisi (G67; Ngonyani 2011: 160-161)

a. **bha-lofi**      **linga**    **bh-i-lut-a**      **ndali**    **linu**      **ku-manga**  
 2-fisherman    if      SM2-PRS-go-FV    NEG    today    17-beach

**bh-i-bit-a**      **ku-kabh-a**    **he**      **somba**    **nofu.**  
 SM2-PRS-go-FV    INF-catch-FV    NEG    10.fish    10.good  
 ‘If the fishermen do not go to the lake today, they will miss good fish.’

b. **a-ya**      **a-lim-i**      **he**      **ngunda**    **gho-la**  
 SM1.COND    SM1-cultivate-PFV    NEG    3.farm    3-DEM

**nga-lw-ile**      **he**    **na**      **bha-nakijiji**  
 COND.SM1-fight-PFV    NEG    COM    SM2-villagers  
 ‘Had she/he not cultivated that farm, she/he would not have fought with the villagers.’

Ndendeule has a specific way of forming negative conditionals when the dependent clause (i.e. the protasis) is a non-declarative directional of the imperative or subjunctive form. As seen in (35), the negation strategy appears to be a combination of a pre-verbal negator **na** (assimilated with the infinitive prefix), and the standard post-verbal negator **yi**. This is further explored in §3.2.

(35) Ndendeule (N101; Ngonyani 2017: 189)

**Nu-ku-yomol-a**      **yi**      **n-golok-a**      **papa**  
 NEG.COND-INF-finish-FV    NEG    2PL-sleep-FV    there  
 ‘If you don’t finish, you sleep right there.’

#### 2.4. Negative replies/interjections

Outside the realm of clausal negation, it is also important to note that the post-verbal negator may be used for other negative expressions, most typically as a negative reply or exclamation ‘no’. In the Manda example in (36), **lepe** is employed both as a negative reply in the initial position of the sentence and as a negator in the final position of the sentence.

(36) Manda (N11; Bernander 2018a: 657)

**lépe,**    **ni-pát-i’**      **lépe**  
 no      SM1SG-get-PFV    NEG  
 ‘No, I didn’t get (any).’

Those languages in our study where postverbal negators are reported as co-expressing ‘no’ include Pogolo, Ndamba and Kisi (all of the zone G languages of the study), as well as Manda and Ndendeule of zone N. In Ngoni (N12), the different sources provide different variants of ‘no’, some of which link up with negators from other languages, but not with the ones used in Ngoni.<sup>21</sup> In Mpoto (N14), ‘no’ seems to be expressed with **nga** (as further discussed in §3.2) and not with the post-verbal negator. For Pogolo (**ndala** ‘no’; **ndili/nda** ‘NEG’) and Ngindo (P14) (**ije** ‘no’; **je** ‘NEG’), the negative reply/exclamation marker and the negators are not identical but similar enough in shape to be assumed to be related. In the other languages of the Rufiji group, apart from Ngindo, we do not find any relationship between the post-verbal negator and negative replies.

In Matuumbi the negative exclamation is expressed with LOC-**tupu**, i.e., the cognate form of the negative existential described for the neighbour/close relative Ndengeleko in §2.3.3. In Ndengeleko, we find a completely different form in the negative exclamation **weyuu**:

(37) Ndengeleko (P11; Scott 2017)

<b>weyúu,</b>	<b>n-ee-luw-i</b>	<b>kwaaku</b>	<b>mpisi</b>	<b>a-ndó-teleka</b>
no	SM1SG-PST-say-PFV	NEG	1.cook	SM1-PRES.DJ-cook
‘No, I didn’t say that the chef is cooking.’				

## 2.5. Summing up: The distribution of post-verbal negation

In Table 3 we provide an overview of the distribution of the post-verbal negators in the languages of our study, based on the various clause types, as well as the use of interjection/negative replies described in the previous parts of this section. A ‘yes’ indicates the attestation of a post-verbal negator in a given clause type and a ‘no’ its absence. The table comes with a caveat, namely that as many languages of our sample are not particularly well described, we cannot be certain whether for some of them their post-verbal negator does not extend to a certain clause type or whether there is just a lacuna in the data. A hyphen is used for those instances where we lack information, whether affirmative or negative, on the presence of a negative particle.

21. Note that the table in Bernander (2017: 317), which claims that Ngoni uses both **he** and **lepa** as “negative interjections”, is erroneous.

Code	Name	Standard	Non-declarative	Non-verbal	Non-main	Replies
G51	Pogolo	yes	-	yes	yes	yes
G52	Ndamba	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
G67	Kisi	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
N11	Manda	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
N12	Ngoni	yes	no	yes	yes	no
N14	Mpoto	yes	no	yes	yes	no
N101	Ndendeule	yes	yes	-	yes	yes
P11	Ndengeleko	yes	no	yes	-	no
P13	Matuumbi	yes	no	yes	-	no
P14	Ngindo	yes	yes	-	yes	yes
P15	Mbunga	yes	-	-	-	-

**Table 3.** The distribution of post-verbal negators

Furthermore, the categories in this table are admittedly quite broad, and they obscure more fine-grained partitions, such as the division between imperatives (commands with 2nd person addressee(s)) and other non-declarative constructions in non-standard clauses, various non-verbal predicates, or the various categories of non-main clauses (as well as the subcategories within these categories). Neither does the table take into account that the subjunctive verb form is not negated with a post-verbal particle, regardless of clause type. Note also that the attestation of postverbal negators in any of the clause types does not exclude the possibility of other negative markers being used there too. In fact, in most cases (as made clear in the above sections), there are alternative forms of negation parallel to post-verbal particles (in particular in non-main contexts).

These caveats aside, the table shows that although the post-verbal negators act predominantly as standard negators they are by no means restricted to independent and declarative constructions. Moreover, the table indicates that there exists micro-variation between the languages not only in connection to their formal qualities (see Table 2), but also in their functional range.



### 3. Pre-verbal negative particles

As already hinted at in the previous sections, while there is a predominant use of post-verbal negative markers in the vast majority of the languages in the area under investigation, a limited number of languages also employ pre-verbal particles. These languages can be split into two types. On the one hand, there is Matengo, in which the pre-verbal negative particle is the standard way of encoding negation (§3.1). The second type of language also makes use of pre-verbal negative particles, but in syntactically and semantically restricted contexts (§3.2).

#### 3.1. A pre-verbal negative particle as standard negator: the case of Matengo

Matengo (N13) differs from the other languages of the area in having a pre-verbal rather than post-verbal negative particle for standard negation. The marker seems to vary slightly in its formal realizations between **ŋga** ~ **ŋgaa** (38a), but also between **ŋga(a)pa** or **ŋga(a)se**, as in (38b).<sup>22</sup>

(38) Matengo (N13; Yoneda 2019: 426, 438)

- a. **aná**    **dží-kúník-ítí**    **íhjúla**    **liábu**    **ŋga:**    **n-í-džénd-a**  
      if       SM9-rain-PRF    9.rain    tomorrow    NEG    SM1SG-FUT-go-FV  
      ‘If it rains tomorrow, I will not go.’

- b. **ŋga(a)se**    **džu-gú-butuk-íle**  
      NEG       SM1-OM2SG-run-APPL.PR  
      ‘She didn’t run after you.’

The pre-verbal negative marker is not used in non-declarative contexts or in most non-main clauses, where other strategies are employed, such as different negative auxiliary verbs and also a verb-internal post-initial prefix (**(ik)i**) (Yoneda 2000, forthcoming; Yoneda p.c. 24/12/2015; Bernander fieldnotes 2016). The negative particle is used, however, for the negation of non-verbal predications and copula constructions. Interestingly, in these contexts the negative particle occurs post-verbally.

(39) Matengo (N13; Yoneda 2000: 245)<sup>23</sup>

- n-a-b-í**                    **ŋga**    **n-a**                    **mw-alímu**  
      SM1sg-PST-be-PFV    NEG    SM1sg-AGR?    1-teacher  
      ‘I was not a teacher.’

22. There also seems to be tonal variation, with the negative particle variably being realized either with or without a final high tone.

23. We are not entirely sure about the function of **na** in this example. It is very reminiscent, however, of a similar form transparently derived (in part) from the paradigm of subject markers which serve to indicate 1st and 2nd person referents on nominal predicates in neighbouring Manda and several other languages in the area (see Bernander 2017: 82 and further references therein). This marker is occasionally referred to as a copula (e.g., for Ngoni by Ngonyani 2003: 75), but Gray (2016) shows that there are functional/semantic problems with such a designation, at least for synchronic Manda and Kisi.

- (40) Matengo (N13; Yoneda, p.c. 24/12/2015)

<b>Mw-iki-tengu</b>	<b>ji-b-i</b>	<b>ngaa</b>	<b>mi-kongu</b>
18-7-forest	SM4-be-PRF	NEG	4-tree

‘There are no trees in the forest.’

This syntactic pattern is not only reminiscent of the type of post-verbal negation discussed for the other southern Tanzanian languages. In its distributional restriction it also shows similarities with a morphologized pattern in several N-languages spoken just across Lake Nyasa: Tumbuka (N21), Chewa/Nyanja (N31), Nsenga (N41) and Nyungwe (N43) (Bernander *et al.* forthcoming-a), as well as in Chinyanja, also known as Nyasa or Mbamba Bay Mwera (N201), the Nyanja variety spoken in Tanzania directly south of Matengo (Ngonyani 2020). All these languages use verbal prefixes for standard negation except in copula constructions, which are formed with a post-final suffix (see also the Appendix). In Chinyanja, this suffix is **je**, a form which is cognate with the post-verbal particle in languages such as Ngindo (see Table 2):<sup>24</sup>

- (41) Chinyanja (N201; Ngonyani 2020: 57)

<b>íne</b>	<b>ráha</b>	<b>pa-lí-je</b>
1SG	9.comfort	16-COP-NEG

‘I was not comfortable.’

The shift in the position of the negative particle in Matengo can be taken to instantiate a structure parallel to the type of constituent negation described in §2.2.2, but where **nga** (and similar forms) has been detached from the verb to directly precede rather than follow the constituent selected for negation (cf. Nurse 2008: 183). This may be further seen in nomino-predicative constructions without a copula in Matengo, as in **nga nenga** ‘it is not me’ (Bernander fieldnotes 2016).

Before closing this section, we need to mention that one of the anonymous reviewers has provided us with Matengo data of his/hers which seem to suggest that Matengo also has a post-verbal negative particle. Apparently, this particle, of the form **ndeka**, can be used together with preverbal **nga** (and similar) to form a discontinuous negative construction, e.g., **Mwana ngasi-ju-jimb-iki ndeka** [1.child NEG-sm1-sing-PFV NEG] ‘The child did not sing.’

We did not find any attestation of **ndeka** in our Matengo sources, including older sources such as Häfliger (1909) and Zimmer (1947). We did find an attestation of this form in Johnston (1919: 181, 1922: 51) for what he refers to as Matengo (among other glossonyms), but there it is treated as a verb-internal “infix”. We would guess that this form originates from the verb **leka**, in turn a reflex of **\*dèk** ‘let go, cease, allow’, the most common verb to be grammaticalized as a negator cross-Bantu (cf. Nurse 2008: 183, Bernander *et al.* forthcoming-b), and that the

24. In other instances of non-verbal predication, Chinyanja makes use of a pre-verbal particle:

Chinyanja (N201; Ngonyani 2020: 57)

<b>íne</b>	<b>ósati</b>	<b>m-lendó</b>
1SG	NEG	1-guest

‘I am not a guest.’

development was similar to that described for **lepa** in §4.1.4). We would not know what to do with the initial /n/, though, except to note that nasals occur before many verbs used as negative markers in Eastern Bantu, perhaps as an instance of a type of nominalization (cf. Bernander *et al.* forthcoming-b).

We also checked this claim with Nobuko Yoneda, a vastly experienced researcher on Matengo. Yoneda (p.c. 03/05/2022) does not recognize this pattern of negation, nor does she find any attestations of a form **ndeka** in her records, which consist of data from the most prestigious Matengo variety spoken in Litembo, as well as from the varieties found in Maguu and Mpapa. Moreover, she notes that the perfective suffix **iki** in the example above differs formally from the more standard realization **iti**. She suggests that this fact might indicate that the example is taken from a more peripheral dialect or variety.

Taking these additional circumstances into account, we do not feel that the evidence brought to us by the reviewer is enough to reconsider Matengo as a whole as being an outlier within our grouping. To be sure, even with this pattern of discontinuous negation, Matengo would still differ from the other languages with a sole post-verbal negator. With that said, we are very thankful to the reviewer for bringing this interesting data to our attention. By doing so, s/he incidentally also points out another important fact, namely the great amount of internal variation that seems to be a characteristic of the languages of this area, as discussed, for example, with regard to Mpoto in the next section (i.e., §3.2).

### 3.2. The occurrence of preverbal negative particles in the other SEQT languages

Matengo aside, there are two other pre-verbal negative particles or prefixes found in the languages under study. Although they have broadly the same functional range, they differ slightly in form (and, as will be argued, in origin). One has the form **nga(-)** (or similar). It is therefore identical in shape to the Matengo preverbal negative particle. The other has the form **na(-)**. Some languages only have one of these forms and some have both, with the different forms devoted to different functions. Most typically, these pre-verbal negators seem to be used to negate infinitives or de-verbal nouns (42). By the introduction of a free-standing subject noun or pronoun as **lihimba** ‘lion’ in (43), the construction may be used to negate a full proposition.<sup>25</sup> This is a strategy which resembles the extension of the negative existential form to a negative possessive, discussed in relation to example (27) in §2.3.3.

(42) Mpoto (N14; Botne 2019a: 133)

<b>m-inu</b>	<b>gh-aki</b>	<b>gh-oha</b>	<b>gha-ka-leghelekel-a</b>	<b>nga = ku-tem-a</b>
6-tooth	6-POSS3SG	6-all	SM6-PST-be_loose-FV	NEG=INF-be_sharp-FV
‘Its teeth, all were loose, not sharp.’				

25. See also Bernander (2021), Veselinova & Devos (2021) and Botne (2019a: 116-117) for the prominent use of negative prefixes of this form as well as negative constructions of this type, in the formation of ‘not-yet’ constructions in this area.

(43) Ndendeule (N101; Nurse 2008: appendix)

<b>li-himba</b>	<b>na-ku-lum-a</b>	<b>ba-ndu</b>
SM5-lion	NEG-INF-bite-FV	2-people

‘Lion is not going to bite people.’

In present-day Manda, the construction with **na** + infinitive, which used to be productive, is lost, the only remnant being an invariable negative identificational and ascriptive copula **nukuya** ‘(it) is not’, consisting of the negative prefix fused with the copula verb **ya** in the infinitive (cf. Bernander 2017: 340-41). In Ngoni, where the **na** + infinitive construction is more widely employed, the cognate negative copula construction is more transparently formed of a composition of the negative **na-** operating on the infinitive prefix, the copula verb **wy-** ‘be(come)’ and the final vowel.

(44) Ngoni (N12; Ebner 1939: 32)

<b>lu-daka</b>	<b>ulu</b>	<b>na-ku-wy-a</b>	<b>lu-kere</b>
11-soil	DEM11	NEG-INF-COP-FV	11-red

‘Dieser Lehm ist nicht rot.’ (‘This soil is not red.’)

In Mpoto, the corresponding **nga(a)** occurs by itself as a negative copula and may be used, in complementary distribution with the standard post-verbal negator **hee**, to negate different types of non-verbal predicates. Botne (2019a: 148-149) describes **ngaa** in such constructions as forming a stronger denial of the proposition compared to the standard negator **hee**, as indicated in the translation in (45).

(45) Mpoto (N14; Botne 2019a: 149)

<b>n-gowo</b>	<b>ngaa</b>	<b>yi-hakau</b>
9-cloth	NEG	9-ugly

‘This cloth is [definitely] not ugly.’

In Mpoto, **nga** also surfaces in negative associative/relative constructions, in which case agreement with the subject – noun class 3 in this case – is marked with the pronominal prefix inflected on the connective **-a** (46).

(46) Mpoto (N14; Botne 2019a: 133)

<b>n-kongo</b>	<b>wa</b>	<b>nga = ku-wol-a</b>
3-tree	CONN3	NEG=INF-rot-FV

‘A tree that never rots.’

In a similar fashion, **ngá** in Manda and Mpoto, **nge(e)** in Ndengeleko and **nga~ngé~ngali** in Matuumbi (reanalysed as an initial prefix) is used with the meaning ‘without’, negating nominal constituents in caritive constructions (47), including negative infinitives (48) and, in extending into the clausal domain, “anti-circumstantial” constructions (49), where the absentee is not a nominal referent but an event (cf. Mauri & Sansò 2019, Miestamo 2020).

- (47) Ndengeleko (P11; Ström 2013: 169)

**bokobóko ya ngéé mwiiño**  
 SM9.banana.stew CONN9 without 3.salt  
 ‘banana stew without salt’

- (48) Manda (N11; Bernander 2017: 341)

**ti-hálúl-a ky-ángá ku-kópól-a**  
 SM1pl-grind-FV 7-NEG.POSS INF-pulp-FV  
 ‘we grind without pulping (it)’

- (49) Matuumbi (P13; Odden 1996: 68)

**a-abúui wa-ngalí-télek-a**  
 SM1-return 1 (< CONN1)-NEG-cook-FV  
 ‘he returned without cooking’

It needs to be mentioned that Matengo too uses its cognate preverbal negative particle for negation in these contexts, e.g., for the negation of infinitives as in (50) and in extension, the formation of a temporally unmarked construction with a free-standing pronoun as subject, as in (51).

- (50) Matengo (N13; Yoneda 2017: 436)

**María ju-í-tend-aje kú-kalang-a, ngaa kú-tutu-a**  
 1.Maria SM1-FUT-do-CJ INF-fry-FV NEG INF-boil-FV  
 ‘Maria will fry (it), not boil (it).’

- (51) Matengo (N13; Yoneda forthcoming)

**né ngaa kú-mañ-a.**  
 1SG NEG INF -know-FV  
 ‘I don’t know.’

Of interest for the historical discussion in §5, Mpoto is the only language surveyed – perhaps together with some Matengo varieties (see §3.1) – which allows the combination of the pre-verbal negator and a post-verbal negator in a declarative, verbal, main, finite clause. According to Botne (2019a: 184), the function of **ngaa** here is contrastive negative focus.

- (52) Mpoto (N14; Botne 2019a: 183)

a. **ata y-ombi Karedele ngaa a-lov-iti hee homba**  
 even 1-PRO Karedele NEG SM1-fish-PFV NEG 9.fish  
 ‘Even he, Karedele, did not catch a fish.’

b. **ndema w-aki u-mah-i muni; ngaa u-u-pal-a**  
 3.land 3-POSS3SG SM2SG-mention-PFV a\_lot NEG SM2SG-OM3-like-FV  
**lepa**  
 NEG  
 ‘His land you mention a lot; it’s not that you don’t like it at all.’

In this regard it is furthermore noteworthy that some variety(ies) of Mpoto seem to pattern more with Matengo than what is described for the language by Botne (2019a, 2019b).<sup>26</sup> In Bernander's (2016) field notes on Mpoto, the pre-verbal negator **nga(a=)** – but also the longer variants **ngatyi** ~ **ngachi**<sup>27</sup>, formally reminiscent of Matengo **ngasé** – seems to be more widely used by itself, even for standard negation, as in example (53).

- (53) Mpoto (N14; Bernander *field notes* 2016)
- |               |                |                   |
|---------------|----------------|-------------------|
| <b>ngachi</b> | <b>m-bit-i</b> | <b>ku-ng'unda</b> |
| NEG           | SM1SG-go-PFV   | LOC17-3.farm      |
- 'I have not gone to the farm.'

## 4. Etymologies and pathways of change

### 4.1. Sources of the post-verbal particles

As seen in Table 2, there is a plethora of different post-verbal negative particles, both between and also within the different southern Tanzanian languages. Based on language-internal data and/or the comparative data at hand<sup>28</sup>, we have detected four broad source types among these particles, of which at least some are clearly functionally interrelated.

#### 4.1.1. Negative replies and interjections

Firstly, many of the post-verbal negators, in particular the mono-syllabic ones **he(e)**, **ha**, **ji**, **jee~ye**, **nda**, **ng'o** (but probably not **li** in Matuumbi; see below) may be linked to negative answer words and/or interjections like 'no'. This is a common source for post-verbal negators cross-Bantu (Devos and van der Auwera 2013). Some straightforward language-internal polysemes of this kind have already been discussed in §2.4. The particle **ng'o** constitutes an example where external comparative evidence alone provides a link between predicative negation and negative replies and interjections. In this case, the Ndamba sources provide no other meanings for **ng'o** than as a negative marker. However, the cognate form is attested as a negative answer word in Ngoni (Ebner 1939: 44), and as a type of emphatic negative reply in Tumbuka (N21; Young 1932: 141-142).

26. Indeed, Botne (2019a, 2019b) reports a substantial amount of interlingual variation for Mpoto.

27. See also Botne (2019a: 134) for the discussion of a form **ngahi** 'without' which we think is related to these forms on formal grounds albeit having acquired a slightly different specific negative function. Note in addition that the particle **nga(a)** also has the function of a negative reply in Mpoto (see §2.4). In addition, it functions as an adversative coordinator 'but' (Botne 2019a: 134).

28. **ng'o** in Ndamba, discussed in the following §4.1.1, is a good example of where inferences from the comparative data alone have been utilized to detect a source when there is none in the language itself.

Many of these forms can also be linked to additional negative functions throughout the comparative data. Thus, the aforementioned **ng'o** expresses 'never' in Vidunda, G38 (Legère 2010), while functioning as an intensifier/ideophone **ng'oo** '(not) at all' in Mpoto (Botne 2019a: 204). Similarly, **jii** – an apparent cognate to the negators in Ngindo and Ndendeule – is used as an "expression of non-existence" ("Ausdruck des Nichtdaseins") in Ngoni, according to Ebner (1953: 33), e.g. **muene jii** 'he is not there' ('er ist nicht da').

#### 4.1.2. Reflexes of **\*-tópó** 'only, empty, in vain'

Secondly, the post-verbal negator **duhu** in Ndamba is a reflex of the Proto-Bantu stem **\*-tópó** 'only, empty, in vain' (Angenot-Bastin 1977, Bastin *et al.* 2003).<sup>29</sup> It is cognate with Ndengeleko **ntópó**; see example (26). It can be associated with other words with similar negative lexical meanings, formally relatable to post-verbal negators in Bantu (Devos and van der Auwera 2013), including words from other Tanzanian Bantu languages, like **bule** in Zaramo (G33) and also in Giriyama (E72a) (Deed 1964: 7), Kutu (G37), Kwere (G32) and Kami (G36) (Petzell and Aunio 2019).<sup>30</sup> It is possible that the alternative negator **ngo'do** in Ndamba (and also in Mbunga) constitutes a univerbation of **ng'o** (see §4.1.1) and **duhu**, reflexes of **\*-tópó** often being truncated to merely its initial syllable (Angenot-Bastin 1977; see e.g. Swahili (G42) **tupu** 'empty' vs. **tu** 'only, just').

#### 4.1.3. Content interrogatives

Thirdly, and a bit more surprisingly, we found a clear formal overlap between post-verbal negators and content interrogatives in some languages, namely **liili** ~ **li**

29. The phonemic differences vis-à-vis the reconstructed form can be accounted by postulating the following sound changes: 1) vowel merging from 7 > 5 vowels. 2) Dahl's Law, where voiceless stops are voiced when the following syllable also has a voiceless consonant (Davy and Nurse 1982). Kilombero and Southern Highlands have particularly consistent traces of Dahl's Law, which is otherwise an unproductive sound law in this area (Nurse 1988). 3) p-lenition where **p** > **h** (Hinnebusch 1981). The final feature is assumed not to have affected any languages south of the Ruaha River, so this particle might actually be a loan, presumably from Ruvu languages like Luguru and Vidunda where this sound change, as well as the cognate form with the original or similar meaning, have been attested (see Angenot-Bastin 1977 and Legère 2010, respectively). A reflex with similar formal characteristics is moreover found with a related function of expressing negative existence in Ngindo (Bernander *et al.* forthcoming-a).

30. Reflexes of the lexical root **\*-tópó** also often surface as negative existential markers in several Bantu languages, including the SEQT language Ndengeleko (as illustrated above), a fact discussed in detail in Bernander *et al.* (forthcoming-a). As pointed out there, the formation of negative existentials from **\*-tópó** constitutes a different diachronic route of change from its development into a post-verbal standard negator. Notice, in turn, that **bure** is most likely a loan from Swahili, in turn copied from the Arabic word **bure** [برع] 'bestow of free will', and, by extension 'in vain' (Johnson 1939: 42, TUKI 2014: 48); see also Sacleux (1939: 120), who does not provide an Arabic etymology but who attests that **bure** ~ **bule** is often equivalent to a negation in several neighbouring languages to Swahili.

in Matuumbi and **ndili** ~ **ndiri** in Pogolo and Mbunga, which are identical with the temporal interrogative ‘when’ in these languages. In Kisi, the negator **ndali** is instead identical in form to the locative interrogative ‘where’. This polysemous situation is the same in Ndengeleko with **kwaaku** ~ **kwa**, as evidenced in example (54).

- (54) Ndengeleko (P11; Ström 2013: 274)
- |                |              |                |
|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| <b>Stéfani</b> | <b>a-bii</b> | <b>kwáaku?</b> |
| Stephanie      | SM1-be.PFV   | where          |
- ‘Where is Stephanie?’

Interrogatives are not discussed as potential sources for post-verbal negators in Devos and van der Auwera (2013), although such an etymology has been suggested with specific reference to Ndengeleko by Ström (2013: 274-277). Such a pathway of extension from a content question marker into a (standard) negator has not attracted much attention nor been worked out in detail in the typological literature. Miestamo (2005: 225) does briefly note that “diachronic connections can be found between negation and interrogation in many languages” and that the motivation behind this fact is most likely related to the fact that both negators and question markers “operate in the realm of the non-realized”. He leaves any disentangling of fine-grained functional explanations or diachronic pathways for future research. In a discussion initiated by Matti Miestamo that circulated on the *Lingtyp* mailing list in 2005,<sup>31</sup> there is ample evidence from a wide variety of languages spoken across the globe where content interrogatives are used for emphatic or rhetorical denial but also for pragmatically implied negation more broadly, providing more cross-linguistic support for treating them as viable sources for negators. A similar type of pragmatically implied negative use of content interrogatives has also been reported for (Eastern) Bantu languages, e.g. by van der Mohl (1904: 71) for **rini** ‘when’ in Tete (= Nyungwe (N43)), as in (55). See also Young (1932: 141) for a similar note on **pauli** ‘how’ in Tumbuka (N21).<sup>32</sup>

- (55) Nyungwe (N43; van der Mohl 1904: 71)

a. **ninyi**      **i-bzi?**  
 what      SM9-happen  
 ‘What happened?’

b. **n-dziw-a**                      **rini**  
 SM1SG-know-FV      when  
 ‘Ich weiß es nicht.’ ~ ‘Wann sollte ich das wissen?’ (‘I don’t know.’ =  
 ‘When should I know that.’)

It would seem plausible to assume that the development of erstwhile content question markers into dedicated, standard negators stems from the conventionalization of the type of invited inference of negation witnessed in the example above. See Lucas

31. See <http://listserv.linguistlist.org/pipermail/lingtyp/2005-March/001552.html>.

32. As one of the reviewers rightly points out, **wapi** ‘where’ is also often used in a similar fashion in colloquial Swahili (G42).



(2009: 21) and further references therein for some speculations along those lines for the Arabic negator **ma** (which is generally believed to stem from a homophonous interrogative pronoun in Classical Arabic, obsolete in the modern varieties).

#### 4.1.4. Negative verb **lepa**

Lastly, the post-verbal negator **lepa** (and similar) can be linked to a verb meaning ‘fail’, viz. a verb with inherently negative semantics. See Table 4, which lists attestations in the southern Tanzanian languages of our sample as well as in surrounding languages. Uncertain cognates are indicated by question marks in the table 4.

Language	Code	lep	lep-el-	lep-alel-	lep-elel-	Source
Manda	N11			‘fail’		Bernander (2017: 318)
Matengo	N13		‘erliegen’ (‘succumb’)	‘besiegen, besiegt nicht überwinden können’ (‘defeat, defeated, cannot overcome’)		Zimmer (1947)
Mpoto	N14	‘not do’		‘fail, be unsuccessful, not succeed’	‘lose (e.g. a competition), be unsuccessful’	Botne (2019a: 256)
Moz. Ngoni	N12x	NEG.AUX				Kröger (2011)
Tz Nyanja	N201				‘fail’	Ngonyani (2020: 75)
Yao	P21		‘fail’			Sanderson (1922: 173)
Mwera	P22		? ‘be left’			Harries (1950: 71)
Makonde	P23	? <i>leva</i> ‘fail, make mistake, miss’				Kraal (2005: 365)

Table 4. Lexical reflexes of **lep** (+ extensions) and their meanings in SEQT and beyond

Although Bantu languages are renowned for forming new grammatical markers out of verbs in general (Nurse 2008: 25) and in particular negative markers out of (inherently negative) verbs (Givón 1978, Güldemann 1996: 261-284, 1999, Nurse 2008: 191-196, Bernander 2018a, Bernander *et al.* forthcoming-b), it seems to be rare for a verb to end up in a post-verbal position such as the one we are dealing with in this case. Using **lepa** as a (preposed) negative auxiliary, as it indeed is in Mozambiquan Ngoni, as illustrated in (56), would be the more expected choice.

(56) Mozambiquan Ngoni (N12x; Kröger 2011: 20)

<b>mw-aha</b>	<b>w-ani</b>	<b>n-nepa</b> (< <sup>o</sup> <b>mu-lepa</b> )	<b>ku-leta</b>
3-reason	3-which	SM2SG/PL.NEG	INF-bring

<b>nyama</b>	<b>ja</b>	<b>ku-lêngana?</b>
9.meat	CONN9	INF-be_complete
'Why do you not bring the whole meat?'		

However, the non-canonical morpho-syntactic position of a **lepa** can be taken to adhere to a more general tendency in these languages: letting verbs, inflected in non-declarative forms,<sup>33</sup> act as adverbs and other free-standing, invariable clause linkers and modifiers. See also Ngonyani (2013) for an explicit argumentation that post-verbal negators in Ngoni, Ndendeule and Kisi act as adverbials syntactically.

On a final note, it should be stressed that it is difficult to disentangle whether the recruitment of the comparatively more spectacular sources of negative verbs and interrogatives into negators instantiate a grammaticalization pathway of their own, or if they were first extended into expressing a negative reply and thus are rather part of the more common route, where a negative answer word is reanalyzed as a negative particle. Both the erstwhile interrogative **ndali** and the erstwhile negative verb **lepa** (and similar) do also carry the meaning of 'no' in those languages where they simultaneously function as negative particles.

#### 4.2. Source meanings of the pre-verbal particles

Unlike the post-verbal negators that are derived from a disparate set of sources with different original functions, both of the pre-verbal negators **nga** (etc) and **na** can be linked to two negative morphemes that are frequently attested and widely distributed as negative verbal prefixes across the Bantu family. Functionally, these are clearly reminiscent of the type of illocutionary particles / invariable copulas, like <sup>o</sup>**tí(-)** which were mentioned in §2.3.3. Güldemann (1996, 1999, 2003) associates this type of particles with the "pre-initial complex", i.e. the complex constructions comprised of a negative particle / invariable copula + finite verb which reflect the source of synthetic verb constructions with pre-initial negative verbal prefixes.

33. The variants **lepa** and **lepe** look like the verb root **lep** in the imperative verb form and the hybrid subjunctive-imperative verb form, respectively (see Devos and Van Olmen 2013).

#### 4.2.1. The origin(s) of **nga** (and similar)

We start with **nga** (and similar), which is used as the standard negator in Matengo, but which also surfaces in many of the other languages as a negator in various non-standard contexts. We suggest that this form can be linked to the negative form **\*(n)ka**, a form with a strong association with the pre-initial complex and as a marker of standard negation (Kamba Muzenga 1981, Nurse 2008, Devos forthcoming: 181). According to Nurse (2008: 188-189, 234) this form predominates as a negative prefix in Eastern Bantu and its wide distribution would indicate that its presence is not merely the result of independent innovations. See also Kamba Muzenga (1981), who even reconstructs **\*(n)ka** as a negative marker in Proto-Bantu. Kamba Muzenga (1981: 115) also shows that reflexes of **\*(n)ka** are the most frequently employed negative markers in the languages of zone P that are not included in our sample. This includes the P20 languages, which are genealogically closely affiliated with most of the languages in this study (as they form the Rufiji-Ruvuma group together), but which do not have post-verbal negation (see Appendix). Perhaps it is most revealing to compare the data from our languages with the closely related language Yao (P21), which historically has also constituted an influential linguistic community in this area. To begin with, Yao has a comparatively more common standard negation strategy, with a pre-initial prefix. As illustrated in (57), this is indeed of the form **nga-**, which appears as the morphologized variant of an otherwise similar pattern attested in Matengo (see §3.1).

(57) Yao (P21; Odden 2003: 451)

**nga-tu-kú-líl-a**

NEG-SM1PL-PRS-CRY-FV

‘We are not crying.’

The Yao data can also shed comparative light on the origin of the longer variants of the negative pre-verbal form described for Matengo (see §3.1). In both Matengo and a variety of Mpoto (see §3.2), there are transparently bimorphemic constructions consisting of the negative **nga-** plus another morpheme. Thus, the form **nga(a)pa** in Matengo can be compared with Yao, for which Steere (1871: 66) notes that “when **nga-** is followed by **pa**, it denies generally the possibility of the action or state”, translating it as ‘there is no’. Compare this also with Yao **ngapagwa** ‘nothing’ in Sanderson (1922: 178). The forms **nga(a)se** in Matengo and **ngachi ~ ngatyi** in Mpoto (also **ngahi** as per footnote 27 in §3.2) may in turn be connected to Yao **ngati** ‘(it) is/are not’ (Steere 1871: 68, Sanderson 1922: 178), a complex consisting of **nga-** and the quotative verb **ti** ‘say’.

Similarly, the caritive forms **ngé** and **ngali** in Ndengeleko and Matuumbi, respectively (see (47) and (49)), can be connected to **ngali**, also meaning ‘is/are not’ (Steere 1871: 68), **li** being a reflex of the common Bantu copula **\*dí** ‘be (at)’.

#### 4.2.2. The origin of **na**

The other pre-verbal negator **na** can in turn be connected to another reconstruction of a negative morpheme of the pre-initial complex, viz. **\*(n)ta** (Kamba Muzenga

1981, Nurse 2008), which surfaces as the regular negative pre-initial prefix in Kinga (G65; Wolff 1905) and Vwanji (G66; Eaton 2019), again two varieties closely affiliated, both geographically and genealogically, with the languages of our study. As shown by Kamba Muzenga (1981: 99, 213), with specific reference to Kinga, the omission of /t/ depends on a regular sound change in the Southern Highland (G60) languages, where voiceless plosives are deleted after a nasal. Compare this form with the negative **nta** attested in Tumbuka (N21; Young 1932), a reflex of the same form in yet another closely affiliated Bantu language, where this sound change has not taken place.

Just as with **nga** in Yao (and other P20 languages), the morpheme **na-** occurs as a canonical pre-initial prefix on finite verbs in Kinga and Vwanji. Notice, however, that the negative prefix behaves like a clitic in the sense that it may precede another pre-initial marker in Vwanji, which would suggest a relatively recent univerbation with the verbal word from what can be hypothesized to have previously been a more free-standing particle (of comparative importance for the pathways of change addressed in the next section).

(58) Vwanji (G66; Eaton 2019: 633)

**na-k'a-βa-iku-tu-di<sup>n</sup>dull-a**

NEG-FUT1-SM2-NPST-OM1PL-open-FV

'They might not open (it) for us.'

There is also a negative construction with **na** in P13, a type of 'not yet' marker, which we, following Veselinova and Devos (2021) and Devos & Veselinova (2021), believe is rather an erstwhile affirmative TA form and thus not related to this negator.

## 5. Discussion: historical implications and plausible pathways of change

### 5.1. Historical implications of contact

The Bantu languages described here stand out from a comparative perspective as they are almost completely devoid of any verb-internal negative prefixes – “by far the commonest negation strategies in Bantu languages and of long standing” (Devos forthcoming: 2, with reference to Kamba Muzenga 1981 and Nurse 2008: 184). We may assume from the Bantu-wide comparative literature – but also with the narrower comparative data in Table 5 in the Appendix – that these languages, or some proto-variety (or varieties) thereof, inherited verb-internal negation. It is most likely that this verb-internal negator was a reflex of the pre-initial prefix **\*(n)ka-**. This prefix is the predominant standard negator in Eastern Bantu (Nurse's “Savannah”) in general (Kamba Muzenga 1981: 338, Nurse 2008: 188-189, 234), but importantly also in zone P, including the P20 languages, which are directly related to most of the SEQT languages (Kamba Muzenga 1981: 115). Against the scenario of verb-internal negation in some earlier proto-stage, the lack of this verb-internal negative morphology would constitute a shared loss among the SEQT languages. Note that this would also apply to Matengo, which with its pre-verbal particle also lacks verb-internal standard negation.

At the same time, the use of different source material for the post-verbal particles (in both form and meaning) points toward the idea that the genesis of post-verbal standard negation cannot represent a shared innovation across the area, despite the syntactic similarities. Rather, it has to be understood as a complex instance of “parallel drift” or “Sapirian drift”, where a similar process of change occurs independently in the daughter languages under the influence of their common origin (cf. Robbeets & Cuyckens 2013). This process, however, must have been further enhanced by parallel processes of contact and convergence in this region of present-day Tanzania, something which would fit with the more general characterization of post-verbal negators being *Wanderwörter*, prone to spreading via contact-induced change (Devos forthcoming, Nurse (2008: 57, 108); see also Beyer (2009), Idiatov (2015) for more elaborate accounts of post-verbal negation as instances of diffusion in West African languages. A somewhat similar case is described for Northern California languages in Mithun (2021). Here, the shape of the post-verbal negators are different but they have the negative existential construction in the different languages as a common source. Mithun (2021: 703) analyses this as a parallel development due to contact, “replicating patterns of expression for purposes of renewal”.

For the SEQT languages, we assume that contact resulted in these languages having similar negative strategies despite the high level of diversity and the presence of divergent forms in even very closely related varieties. Considering what is known about languages and speakers in close contact, this is in fact not surprising. In multilingual societies, speakers tend to prefer common patterns to keep cognitive costs low, especially if the structural similarities between varieties allow for the construction of such equivalent patterns. In such a situation, extra-linguistic factors are most likely the reason for diverging forms (Kühl & Braunmüller 2014). To maintain group identity linguistically, and mark the variety as different from neighbouring varieties, transfer from one variety to another may be accompanied by neologisms to substitute the unfamiliar element. Such divergence for identity reasons typically takes only place in situations of intense contact (see Kühl and Braunmüller (2014) and references cited therein). We therefore hypothesize that what we see here is a situation of divergence (using different linguistic material for the negators) in convergence (developing similar negation constructions) due to intense linguistic contact in this area. Interesting to note is that the negators are not calques with the same source construction, which appears to be more common in linguistic areas (see for example Mithun 2021).

That contact must have played an important role becomes clear when considering the problems associated with genealogical in-group classifications involving ambiguous “borderline” varieties like Manda (Rufiji-Ruvuma or Southern Highland?) and Mbunga (Kilombero or Rufiji-Ruvuma?), described in §1. It becomes even clearer from what we know about the socio-history, in particular what occurred in the aftermath of the Ngoni migration in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. This migration forged new ethnic and linguistic communities through the incorporation of different groups within the Ngoni community, while casting others adrift. Apart from the Ngoni themselves, the aftermath of this historical event is perhaps most prominently seen in the case of Mbunga. For this group, the historical accounts

particularly mention the origin of the Mbunga linguistic community as a group of Ndendeule speakers who only arrived in the Kilombero valley in the mid-1800s (Larson 1977, Waite 1987, Ngonyani 2001, Ehret 2011: 55). Yet their set of post-verbal negative particles is directly cognate with those of their Kilombero neighbours rather than with the Ndendeule one. In the same vein, it is compelling to note that Matengo and Ndendeule are claimed to have constituted the same language community that existed before the arrival of the Ngoni (see, e.g., Park 1988: 143). That Matengo makes no use of (standard) post-verbal negation, whereas Ndendeule does, would thus suggest that the introduction of a post-verbal negator (as sole bearer of the negative reading) is a relatively new innovation; or at least that it got introduced relatively late in Ndendeule, perhaps via contact.

To this discussion we must also add Kisi. It is the only language of the Southern Highland (G60) group with a post-verbal particle as standard negator (and thus the only Southern Highland language within the scope of our study). As noted already in §1, it is a small linguistic community heavily influenced by its neighbours, including the N10 neighbours to the south (-east) (Nurse 1988: 9-10, Ngonyani 2011, Persohn & Bernander 2018). In this particular case, a contact-induced scenario of some kind is the most reasonable explanation. However, the presence of a unique combination of negative particles in the language points toward a more complex history of transfer and adaptation than just matter borrowing and the ensuing pattern re-configurations.

## 5.2. Are the south Tanzanian post-verbal negators instantiations of Jespersen's Cycle?

As mentioned at the outset of this study, the synchronic attestation of post-verbal negation in Bantu is generally assumed to be the result of Jespersen's Cycle (JC), that is, the well-renowned diachronic cycle of grammaticalization from single negation to double negation and then back to single negation again, albeit typically with a negator of a different shape and position vis-à-vis the original one (see *inter alia* (Dahl 1979), van der Auwera (2009, 2010) for broader typological accounts and Devos and van der Auwera (2013), Devos (forthcoming), Güldemann (1996: 255-256) for Bantu specifically). A diachronic trajectory of JC is typically/ traditionally envisaged as proceeding in the following way. In Stage 1 an element initially recruited for reinforcing a negative construction becomes neutralized and reinterpreted as an obligatory part in a type of discontinuous construction of double negation – Stage 2. At the final stage – Stage 3 – the original marker may disappear, leaving the erstwhile reinforcing element as the sole marker of negation. From a comparative Bantu perspective, this process typically results in the foregrounding of a post-verbal negative particle (an erstwhile reinforcer) at the expense of a verb-internal prefixal negative which undergoes erosion and loss.<sup>34</sup>

34. In many Bantu languages, however, the verb-internal negative markers are retained while a new Jespersen's Cycle set in, thus resulting in triple and even quadruple exponents of negation within a clausal construction (see Devos *et al.* 2010 for the South-Western Bantu language Kanincin (L53) and Devos & van der Auwera 2013 for Bantu languages more generally).

With this said, however, it needs to be stressed that recent typological work (van der Auwera & Krasnoukhova 2020, Krasnoukhova *et al.* 2021, van der Auwera *et al.* 2022) seems to have moved towards a broader definition of JC. Thus, the defining features for a JC laid out in van der Auwera *et al.* (2022: 567, 580) are instead the following. A JC instantiates the development of a standard negative construction from a source construction involving a standard negator plus some other element. The latter element becomes the new standard negator as the result of either the disappearance of the original negative marker, as in the process described above, or, alternatively, through fusing with the erstwhile negator. Importantly, this means that a JC, in this perspective at least, does not necessarily need to include reinforcement, doubling and/or a right to left directionality.

Given how JC has been previously described to work in Bantu, it would seem quite straightforward to suggest that the languages of our sample instantiate its last stage, a suggestion which has indeed been put forward already with regard to the individual languages Ndengeleko (Ström 2013) and Manda (Bernander 2017: 318-320). See also Devos and van der Auwera (2013), who include many of the southern Tanzanian languages of this study in their survey of JC in Bantu. As plausible as such a proposal might seem, however, the challenge is that there are typically no historical traces of any earlier stages of the cycle attested for any of these languages (see Krasnoukhova *et al.* 2021) for a general warning on postulating the presence of a postverbal single negator as the result of a JC with the lack of any historical proof). In those cases where such traces seem to exist, they turn out to be problematic in one way or another.

Thus, our old(er) source on Matuumbi, Krumm (1912) (see also Johnston 1919-1922: 161)<sup>35</sup> claims that a rarely used verb prefix **ki-** exists but that it is confined to negation of the past perfective in tandem with the post-verbal particle.

(59) Matuumbi (P13; Krumm 1912: 38)

<b>ni-ki-bweni</b>	<b>lili</b>
SM1SG-?NEG-see.PFV	NEG
'Ich habe nicht gesehen.' ('I have not seen.')	

This construction is reminiscent of and could serve to indicate the last remnant of the discontinuous negation characteristic of Stage 2 of JC. However, there are several complexities that arise in connection to such a conclusion. Firstly, the form cannot easily be linked with any common Bantu negative morphemes like **\*(n)ka-**. It could be hypothesized to be related to the Matengo negative post-initial prefix **(ik)i-** (see §3.1), but that morpheme is only used in non-standard negative contexts, which makes it a less plausible cognate. More significant is the apparent risk that this verb form merely represents a case of asymmetric negation, i.e., that **ki-** is a TA prefix of an obsolete affirmative past verb form which was only retained in its

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35. Johnston (1919-1922: 233), based on data from Johnston 1897, also mentions a pre-initial negative marker **ki-** for the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular in Ngindo. Although the data look accurate, it is hard to draw any firm conclusions from the only example provided by him, namely **kimanyi** 'I know not' (Johnston 1897). What happened to the subject marker and why is there no accompanying post-verbal negator?



negated form, negative contexts often preserving older TA constructions (see e.g. Koch (1996: 219, 2015), Nurse and Muzale (1999), Dimmendaal (2011), the latter two with specific reference to Bantu and other African languages).

Two other potential negative prefixes, namely **nga** in Ndendeule and **na** in Matuumbi (both formally identical to the pre-verbal negative particles/prefixes discussed in §3.2), provide a similar challenge. At least **na** in Matuumbi occurs in a discontinuous construction with the standard post-verbal **liili**, which is thus again reminiscent of JC Stage 2. Both prefixes also occur in negative constructions, more precisely with the specialized reading of ‘not yet’. However, as convincingly argued in the cross-Bantu study of ‘not yet’ constructions by Veselinova and Devos (2021), it is more likely that these forms are again remnants of affirmative TA prefixes that became re-associated with a negative function only at a later stage.

For the N10 languages, instances of double negation have been attested in (historical) Manda and Ngoni (see Bernander 2017: 318–320 for further elaboration) but only with the type of negated non-finite constructions discussed in §3.2, as seen in (60). See also the Ndendeule example (35) in §2.3.4 above.

- (60) Manda (N11; Bernander 2017:319, citing New Testament in Manda (1937: 1 Kor. 11:17)

<b>n-gosi</b>	<b>na-ku-linganil-a</b>	<b>lepa</b>	<b>kw-i-fwik-a</b>	<b>pa-mu-tu</b>
1-man	NEG-INF-favour-FV	NEG	INF-REFL-cover-FV	16-3-head

‘A man ought not to cover his head.’

Curiously, in Ngoni the post-verbal material used for reinforcing the negative in such a construction is not one of the standard post-verbal negative particles of the language, but either **ng’o** (or **ng’a**), and thus a form more reminiscent of post-verbal **ng’o(du)** in Ndamba and Mbunga, as in (61a). Alternatively, it is **nga**, as in (61b), and thus a form identical with both the pre-verbal negator employed in many of the languages, as well as with the reconstructed negative prefix **\*(n)ka-**.

- (61) Ngoni (N12; Ebner 1939: 30)

a. **ne**                      **na-ku-hamb-a**      **ng’o**  
 PRON1SG      NEG-INF-go-FV      NEG  
 ‘Ich gehe nicht.’ (‘I am not going.’)

b. **mu-ndu**      **uyu**      **na-ku-rual-a**              **nga**  
 1-person      DEM1      NEG-INF-be\_sick-FV      NEG  
 ‘This person is not sick.’ [Our translation as there is none in the original text.]

Recall that Mpoto attests double negative constructions with a regular finite verb, viz. (52) above, repeated here:

- (62) Mpoto (N14; Botne 2019a: 183)

a. **ata**      **y-ombi**      **Karedele**      **ngaa**      **a-lov-iti**      **hee**      **homba**  
 even      10-PRON      Karedele      NEG      SM1-fish-PFV      NEG      9.fish  
 ‘Even he, Karedele, did not catch a fish.’

- b. **ndema w-aki u-mah-i muni; ngaa u-u-pal-a**  
 3.land 3-POSS3SG SM2-mention-PFV a\_lot NEG SM2SG-OM3-like-FV  
**lepa**  
 NEG  
 ‘His land you mention a lot; it’s not that you don’t like it at all.’

However, it is quite clear from the description by Botne (2019a: 183) that it is the pre-verbal **ngaa** that is added for emphasis (or contrastive negation). This would suggest a development in contrast to the common route associated with JC in Bantu, as it would mean that *pre*-verbal material is attached to reinforce a *post*-verbal standard negator, rather than the contrary. However, it would still be in accordance with a cross-linguistically well-attested instance of a JC progressing “in reverse” from right to left (see Krasnoukhova *et al.* 2021 and further references therein). Indeed, such a development could be argued to comply better with the overall cross-linguistic preference of placing the negative marker as early as possible in the sentence and thus pre-verbally for communicative purposes (referred to in the literature as the “Neg[ative]-first” principle or with similar terms; see Krasnoukhova *et al.* (2021) for a terminological exposé).

What is more, this development would tie in with another developmental pattern of negation common for Bantu, namely the development of canonical pre-initial negative verb prefixes from pre-verbal material for the marking of standard negation. Güldemann (1996, 1999) has connected the canonical Bantu verb-internal negative pre-initial and post-initial prefixes to complex constructions. These are proposed to have formed earlier non-morphologized instantiations of parallel constructional units. In this scenario, the pre-initial negator is derived from an invariable particle – and/or finite verb forms, often stripped of any inflectional material such as subject markers. These forms have a range of illocutionary functions, roughly translatable to ‘it is not’, and are introduced to explicitly correct or contradict a previous utterance or supposition.<sup>36</sup> Both from a formal and functional perspective, the pre-verbal particles **nga** and **na** described in §3.2 fit within this description and could therefore be considered as complex precursors of pre-initial negative prefixes.

Considered within this scenario, the Mpoto examples in (52) and (62), would instantiate an (embryotic) development of a pre-initial negative marker within the pre-initial complex. This is because an illocutionary particle of the pre-initial complex can be introduced for extra denial of a proposition which is expressed by a construction already marked for negation by a post-verbal particle.

This is analogous with the construction described for Kuria (JE43) (Güldemann 1999: 567), provided here in (63), which also combines a free-standing negative particle derived from a negative copula with a post-verbal negative particle (see also Rose 2001).<sup>37</sup> One of our reviewer’s alternative Matengo data (discussed in §3.1) could also be taken as an instantiation of this very same pattern.

36. The equivalent post-initial complex is an auxiliary construction with a finite (inherently negative) verb operating on an infinitive verb (or deverbal noun); see example (16b) in §2.3.2 for an example). The post-initial complex need not concern us further here, but see Bernander (2018a) for more on (the development of) post-initial negation in this area.

37. Note, however, that Kuria also shows variation with a post-verbal prefix which is not present in Mpoto.

- (63) Kuria (JE43) (Sillery 1936: 24)

**Nte chí-ngoko u-na-cho he**  
 NEG 10-fowl SM2-COM-10.REF NEG  
 ‘The chickens you have them not.’

Matengo (and perhaps also the more Matengo-like variety of Mpoto illustrated in (53) in §3.2, with the pre-verbal particle **nga** (and similar) as standard negator would be the only language of our sample to instantiate a pre-verbal complex alone, albeit not in the canonical morphologized verb-internal form represented in Yao, as in **nga-tukúlíla** in (57) in §4.2.1, and in other closely related P20 languages.

### 5.3. Other diachronic scenarios

In light of the scarcity of strong evidence for JC as it has been described for Bantu, there are other plausible accounts for the origin of the post-verbal constructions in southern Tanzania.

One alternative would have been an origin in a discontinuous negative construction with a pre-verbal particle that was not originally a negative marker. We see this scenario in the subordinator-turned-negator described for Tumbuka (N21), a neighbouring language to our group which arguably forms a linguistic continuum with regard to the feature of post-verbal standard negation. Young’s (1932) study of Tumbuka is often cited in the comparative literature on Bantu (post-verbal) negation (Güldemann 1996: 310, 1999, Devos & van der Auwera 2013, Devos forthcoming) to illustrate the co-occurrence of periphrastic pre-verbal and post-verbal negation (64). However, more recent Tumbuka sources suggest that the pre-verbal exponent of negation has disappeared (65), with no records of any intervening phase where it was fused with a verb-internal prefix.<sup>38</sup>

- (64) Tumbuka (N21; Young (1932: 137); cited in Güldemann (1999: 572))

**mw -ana uyu kuti wa-ku-khumb -a ku -ry -a chara**  
 1-child DEM1 NEG (<COMP) SM1-PROG-want-FV INF-eat -FV NEG  
 ‘This child does not wish to eat.’ (lit. ‘With regard to wanting to eat ( I say): No!’)

- (65) Tumbuka (N21; Kishindo & Lipenga 2005: 55)

**m-sepuka wa-ka-rut-a cara**  
 1-boy SM1-PST-go-FV NEG  
 ‘Le garçon ne s’en est pas allé.’ (‘The boy did not go away.’)

Moreover, one would have to ask if the development of negation through post-verbal particles in the languages of the SEQT, as a group or in individual cases/varieties, would necessarily have involved a stage of double negation with a co-occurring pre-verbal or pre-initial negative marker at all. The possibility of a mere conventionalization and foregrounding of an invited negative inference

38. There exists an alternative post-verbal negative particle **yayi** in Tumbuka. According to Young (1932), **yayi** (*iai* in his spelling) is borrowed into Tumbuka. If true, this would be yet another instance of a contact-induced negative particle.

brought from interrogatives, as in the construction illustrated in (55) in §4.1.1, would suggest that a developmental process without an intermediate doubling stage is at least plausible. The contact scenarios presented in §5.1 could also lend support to such a conclusion.

#### 5.4. The broader patterns of negation reconfiguration in East African Bantu

Finally, it should be noted that the non-canonical post-verbal negation described for the south Tanzanian languages in this paper may adhere to a broader situation of re-innovation in the East African Bantu area (see Appendix). Nurse (2008: 190) discusses a contiguous strip of languages towards the north (G60,10, F30) with verb-initial *si-* as a single negator, clearly from the negative copula \**ti(-)*, which is “presumably replacing an older pattern” (see also the discussion in Güldemann 1996: 255-256, as well as Petzell 2010 on Kagulu [G11] more specifically).

To this characterization we could probably also add the pre-initial *na-* in two other G60 languages – Kinga and Vwanji – discussed in §3.2, as well as Matengo’s uncharacteristically free-standing pre-verbal negator (see §3.1). In other G60 and G30 languages there are also attestations of discontinuous negation strategies. In fact, when moving even further north we arrive at the various Chaga (E62) varieties of northern Tanzania which, similarly to the languages of southern Tanzania, mark standard negation through the post-verbal negator alone. Likewise, just to the south(-west) of our sample there is a set of languages (N15 and N20-N40) which also mark negation after the verb, albeit only in the restricted context of copula negation (see §3, and the Appendix). Thus, relatively recent losses and innovations of negative markers may have occurred in an even larger set of Eastern Bantu languages than in the ones discussed in this article. However, as the result for these other cases is either the development of canonical pre-initial negative prefixes, or they are confined to the negation of non-main clauses, they may have more easily gone under the radar.

## 6. Summary and conclusions

In this paper, we have identified a sub-group of Eastern Bantu languages which are notable in their use of particles as part of the negation strategies which they employ. Crucially, the scope of the study is limited to those languages which use an independent post-verbal particle in standard negation. These languages form a geographically cohesive cluster in an area in which the use of verbal affixes is otherwise the dominant strategy for standard negation. Although the languages in our study are united by having the same negation strategy, closer examination shows important microvariation in syntactic behaviour and function, distribution and form.

In terms of distribution, the post-verbal negative particle is used in standard negation and in non-verbal predication in all the languages of our survey (with the exception of Matengo, which is explored independently and in detail). However, in non-declarative constructions, the use of post-verbal negative particles is much more limited and was found only in Ndendeule and Ngindo, where it is confined to the imperative. For negation in non-declaratives, the other languages in our study

employ auxiliary constructions, which are also found in Ndendeule and Ngindo. Moreover, none of the languages negate other types of non-declaratives apart from the imperative with the post-verbal negator.

In non-verbal predication and non-main clauses, post-verbal particles are used but other negation strategies are also common. It is noteworthy that the negative auxiliary constructions are used in contexts where a subjunctive is used in the affirmative counterparts. This corroborates earlier claims that this strategy of negation correlates to a great extent with the verb form of the affirmative rather than with clause type (see Guérois *et al.* forthcoming). The use of post-verbal particles is not limited to standard negation but occurs in many other constructions (e.g., non-verbal predication and copula clauses). However, in these cases, the post-verbal negative particle is not the sole negation strategy. Interesting micro-variation patterns – e.g., with regard to the use of post-verbal negative particles for non-declarative and non-clausal negation – have also been attested.

In delimiting the scope of the present study to geographically adjacent languages, the use of negation strategies in Matengo stands out as being very similar to the other languages, with one striking difference: the negative particle is pre-verbal. There are also languages in our sample which make use of pre-verbal particles in a more restricted way, most typically for negating identificational predicates and other types of non-verbal predicative constructions, as well as infinitives. Importantly, the distributional patterns of the pre-verbal particle in Matengo show striking similarities to the other languages in our study, in that the particle is used in standard negation. In non-verbal predication and copula constructions, the same particle occurs post-verbally. This points to a possible link between Matengo and the neighbouring N languages spoken to the south-west of SEQT with verbal affixes for standard negation but a post-final suffix in the case of copula constructions.

We hypothesize that the similarity between SEQT languages when it comes to the use of particles is due to contact. At the same time, an important finding of this paper is that the particles show substantial formal variation, perhaps more than is expected based on the close relationship between the language varieties, and even in some cases mutual intelligibility. This variation, we suggest, may have its origins in sociolinguistic considerations and could be used to define in- and out-group membership. While the structural similarity would mean that the function was readily understandable by members of other neighbouring communities, the distinct formal realization could indicate group membership or distinct affiliations.

We also conclude that negation in the languages under study is not completely symmetrical. A minority of the languages in our study exhibit the so-called conjoint/disjoint distinction as part of their tense-aspect systems. In morphological terms, this means that they have two distinct forms in certain tense-aspects, the distribution of which depends on the syntactic closeness to a following constituent, as well as on focus considerations. This includes at least the Rufiji languages Ndengeleko, Matuumbi and Ngindo. In Ndengeleko, the negative particle obligatorily follows the conjoint form. The disjoint form can be followed by the negative particle in Matuumbi in a construction with an object argument and with focus on the predicate. A lack of data prevents us from drawing further conclusions regarding the conjoint/disjoint distinction and the negative particles in the languages under study.

The syntactic position related to focus appears to be an especially fruitful topic for future study, in light of the fact that another group of languages appears to have a much freer placement of the negative particle, also related to contrast. In Manda, Mpoto, Ngoni and Ndendeule, all languages of zone N, and also Ndamba, the negative particle can be placed directly after a specific clausal constituent and give a contrastive reading to this constituent. It is possible that this freedom of order is in complementary distribution with the more rigid order associated with the conjoint/disjoint distinction. Possibly connected to the question of focus/contrast, is the occurrence of more than one negative particle in a given language, notably reported for Manda and Mpoto, for which the literature suggests a difference in emphatic reading. It should be noted that these languages do not allow stacking of several negative particles in one proposition; rather, there is variation in the form of the negative particle used.

In relation to the etymology of these particles, we have been able to reconstruct source meanings which have not previously been considered, such as interrogatives and inherently negative verbs, for some of the languages. In other cases, negative particles have been shown to be derived from negative words already discussed by Devos & van der Auwera (2013), thus further corroborating their findings. Considering the grammaticalization process of these particles becoming exponents of negation, we found little evidence for previous stages of a Jespersen Cycle scenario. Consequently, we also entertain other diachronic hypotheses for the development of post-verbal negators in SEQT, including contact-induced change and the conventionalization of negation without a co-occurring pre-verbal exponent of negation. The study also suggests that Matengo and Mpoto have pre-verbal negative particles reminiscent of a more canonical Bantu pre-initial complex.

As is always the case, this survey and its findings are limited by the descriptive status of the languages and the data to which we have access, although this continues to improve as the languages are studied in more depth. In terms of future directions, given the bias of our study towards the languages of this area of Tanzania, we would naturally like to be able to examine some of the fine-grained distinctions in further detail, as well as to have more data which would allow us to check the presence/absence of these particles (and other negation strategies) across all clause types and contexts. However, a study in which the geographic scope is further extended would also no doubt yield interesting results and insights. Similarly, a cross-Bantu comparison of the presence of (post-verbal) negative particles is also in order, with the current article and previous work on negation in Bantu clearly setting out domains for examination and avenues for inquiry. We also continue to be interested in the semantics of these constructions and the different pathways of development. A more distinct pathway of inquiry would also examine to what extent the languages which pattern together in the current study exhibit other features which are suggestive of shared structural patterns (to be considered both in parallel to and distinct from inheritance and processes of language contact). And finally, the extent to which negative strategies, and particularly the form of the negative particle, is a feature which indicates group membership (or otherwise) to speakers is a question which would enable us to bring together both the aspects of structural variation and diversity we see in the area, and the complex interwoven sociohistorical linguistic history of the region. Indeed, the avenues for future research are plentiful.

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## Abbreviations and symbols

Abbreviations follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules with the following additions:

1, 2, 3 etc	noun classes
CJ	conjoint
DJ	disjoint
FV	final vowel
NARR	narrative
NEG.EX	negative existential
NPST	non-past
OM	object marker
PERS	personal pronoun
PRON	pronoun
SG	singular
SM	subject marker
◦	Tentative reconstruction/morphological representation.

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**Appendix**

In the following table, the negation strategies of the SEQT languages are presented, together with surrounding languages, for comparative purposes. The languages are given together with the Guthrie code. Languages which have a post-verbal or post-final marker as standard negator have a ‘yes’ value in the third column. This is what defines the SEQT languages. Certain languages have such a post-verbal or post-final marker only as an optional reinforcer of standard negation, which is otherwise marked with verbal affixes. Such languages have a ‘yes’ value in the fourth column. Finally, the post-verbal/post-final marker may be the only negator of copula constructions, as indicated in the fifth column. The SEQT sample (including Matengo) are indicated in bold face. A hyphen is used for those instances where we lack information, whether affirmative or negative, on the presence of a negative particle.



Name	Code	Post-verbal ~ post-final marker as sole exponent of standard NEG	Post-verbal ~ post-final marker optionally used in combination with verb-internal prefixes as exponent of NEG	Post-verbal ~ post-final marker as sole exponent of NEG in copula constructions	Source
Zaramo	G33	no	yes	no	Worms (1897: 302-305)
Kami	G36	no	yes	-	Petzell and Aunio (2019: 581-582, 586)
Kutu	G37	no	yes	-	Malin Petzell (pc. 28/01/2022)
Vidunda	G38	no	yes	-	Legère (2010)
Bena-Hehe	G62-63	no	yes	no	Priebusch (1935)
Pangwa	G64	no	(yes) <sup>39</sup>	no	Stirnimann (1983), Bernander (field notes)
Kinga	G65	no	no	no	Wolff (1905)
Vwanji	G66	no	no	no	Eaton (2019)
<b>Kisi</b>	<b>G67</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>[see references in Table 2]</b>
Nyakyusa	M31	no	no	no	Persohn (2017)
<b>N10</b>	<b>N10 (-N13)</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>[see references in Table 2]</b>

39. A post-final reinforcer is attested in Bernander (field notes) but not in Stirnimann (1983).

Name	Code	Post-verbal ~ post-final marker as sole exponent of standard NEG	Post-verbal ~ post-final marker optionally used in combination with verb-internal prefixes as exponent of NEG	Post-verbal ~ post-final marker as sole exponent of NEG in copula constructions	Source
Matengo	N13	no	no	yes	[see references in Table 2]
Tonga	N15	yes	no	-	Mkochi (2019)
Tumbuka	N21	yes	no	yes	Young (1932), Kiso (2012), Vail (1972)
Tz. Nyasa	N201	no	no	yes	Ngonyani (2020)
Che- wa-Nyanja	N31	no	no	yes	Bentley and Kulemeka (2001), Kiso (2012)
Nsenga	N41	no	no	yes	Ranger and Sidney (1928)
Nyungwe	N43	no	no	yes	van der Mohl (1904)
Sena	N44	yes	no	yes	Torrend (1900: 162)
P10	P10+	yes	no	yes	[see references in Table 2]
Yao	P21	no	no	no	Steere (1871), Sanderson (1922)
Mwera	P22	no	no	no	Harries (1950)
Makonde	P23	no	no	no	Kraal (2005)
Ndonde	P24	no	no	-	Gromova and Urb (2019)

Table 5. Structural traits of the negation systems of SEQT and surrounding languages

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**Résumé**

Cet article examine la présence, la distribution et le développement historique des particules négatives postverbales dans un échantillon de langues bantu localisées dans le sud de la Tanzanie. Il se concentre sur 12 variétés de langues existantes dans cette région qui emploient des particules négatives postverbales, y compris une « exception » évidente en Matengo qui emploie une particule négative préverbale. L'article s'appuie également sur des données comparatives d'environ 20 langues supplémentaires parlées dans le voisinage direct. Nous montrons qu'il existe un niveau élevé de variation dans les formes négatives utilisées, mais en même temps, une prépondérance de l'utilisation des particules négatives postverbales comme principale stratégie d'encodage de la négation standard. Nous explorons à la fois la négation standard et la négation non standard, y compris les contextes de clauses non déclaratives et non principales, ainsi que les situations de prédication non verbale et de clauses de copule. L'utilisation de ces formes comme réponses négatives ou interjections est également examinée. En explorant les étymologies, nous trouvons l'origine des particules postverbales dans les réponses négatives, les réflexes de \*-túpú « seulement, en vain », les interrogatifs et le verbe négatif -lepa. Nous discutons également du contact comme explication possible de la prévalence de cette stratégie négative dans la région.