

A-bar-Interactions of Negation in African Languages

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In this talk, we discuss the negation systems of three West- and East-African languages. We argue that negation always involves an Agree relation between a high Neg operator and an overt expression of the negation lower in the clause, generalizing a proposal by Zeijlstra (2004, 2008) for negative concord. We show that this Agree relation interacts with other A'-dependencies in the respective languages. In Shupamem (Grasfields Bantu) and Gweno (Bantu), negation interacts with subject movement to spec,TopP leading to an obligatory resumptive pronoun in the subject's original position. In Dagbani (Mabia), negation inhibits a verbal marker on the perfective verb, a blocking effect that is also observed with other A'-dependencies. In each of these cases, the conflicting Agree relations provoke Relativized Minimality effects, which are resolved by language dependent strategies. In a nutshell, the A'-property of negation has been noted in the literature for long, however, African languages reveal much more sophisticated interactions between negation and other A'-dependencies.