10 Negation – an overview

10.1 Review of the major ways in which negation is marked

One of the most complex aspects of Yélî Dnye morphosyntax is negation. We have already detailed many facts about negation, but they are distributed throughout the relevant sections: §6.1.4 on negative proclitics, §6.2.3 on negative enclitics, §7.2.1.2 on negative imperatives, §7.3.1 on negative equatives, §8.3.2 on negative counterfactuals. An overview of this important semantic function may therefore be helpful. Negation in Yélî Dnye is complex in that its expression is very various, and its reflexes distributed throughout the clause. It is marked by special verbal inflectional proclitics replacing the positive ones, by special verbal inflectional enclitics (or special uses of them), by verb suppletion and other means.

The simplest form of negation occurs in equational clauses: thus *kî pini mââwe* 'that man is a big man' becomes *kî pini daa mââwe* 'that man is not a big man'. The negative particle is constant however only in the 3rd person – there are special portmanteau forms for other person/number combinations (see Table 7.15 in §7.3.1 above), e.g. *dp:ee mââwe yoo* 'You (3 or more) are not bigmen'. The fusion of the negative – we might take the base form to be *daa* – with any pronominal element present is striking, even here where the pronominal is not an agreement clitic but an independent subject.

The expression of negation in tensed clauses with full verbs displays a series of complex paradigms. Essentially, the negative element fuses with the proclitic marking tense/aspect/mood/person/number in largely unpredictable ways, requiring rote learning. Since there are different paradigms of positive proclitics for punctual vs. continuous aspects, there are also different paradigms for the negative forms (144 cells in total). Inspection will show that the forms are not always different across the two aspects: e.g. *dîpî* occurs as a 1s Immediate Past (earlier today) form in the Continuous aspect, but as a 1s Proximate Past (yesterday) form in the Punctual aspect. This is a typical semi-systematic shunt across tenses, holding for all the first and second person forms, but there are distinct forms in each aspect for the third person in these tenses. Note too that negation sometimes appears analytic, i.e. as an unfused item – thus in the remote past continuous aspect *dê* precedes the normal positive person/number markers, except in the 3s which has a fused form. The details were given in §6.1.4.

The verbal proclitics fuse with many other kinds of information, and these fused forms may themselves have specialized negative forms. For example, we have seen in §8.3.2 that the counterfactual conditionals involve special forms in the same 144 cells for tense/mood/person in two aspects, with separate para-

digms for punctual and continuous forms, and separate paradigms for protasis and apodosis. Counterfactuals of course entertain a world which is the negative of the actual one, but that imagined world can itself be expressed negatively. Each of the forms in the protasis has a special negative form, but the apodosis has the proclitic simply prefixed with *daa* throughout. For example, for the positive sentence:

(560)   *wudî lê, pîdî m:uu* 'If I had gone (today), I would have seen it',

the negative is:

(561)   *wud:oo loo, daa pîdî m:uu* 'If I had not gone (today), I would not have seen it'.

Here *wud:oo* is the unpredictable negative form of *wudî*, *loo* is the Remote Past form of *lê* used in the Proximate Present to indicate a negative context, *daa* is the negative element in the apodosis.

Since deictics and associated motion and many other markers also fuse with the proclitic, there are many additional special negative paradigms, not all of which have been fully collected.

Finally, the proclitic position is filled by a range of special forms for negative imperatives, provided in §7.2.1.2. These take different forms for continuous and punctual aspect, and within the punctual aspect for imperatives to be carried out right away vs. later. In the second person singular forms in particular there are a range of alternates, with different nuances about the urgency of the situation or the generality of the ban.

The postverbal enclitic does not mark negation so directly, with a fused *daa* element or the like. Nevertheless, negation is generally also marked in the enclitics (which are distinct for transitive vs. intransitive verbs) either by special forms, or by a shift of use (e.g. by the use of the Remote Past transitive enclitics in the Immediate Past), although some enclitics remain the same in both positive and negative sentences of the same tense/mood. Again, there seems no way to predict these forms, or shifts, or lack of them, requiring rote learning of the paradigms. The details are given in §6.2.3.

In addition to double signalling of negation in proclitic and enclitic, negation may be marked elsewhere as well. One of these additional signals is alternation of the verb root. Just a few verbs have special suppletive forms for negative contexts. Thus *lê*, the basic verb 'to go', has the following suppletive forms (Table 10.1):

Table 10.1: Suppletive forms of the verb 'to go'.

punctual imperative:	*lili*
punctual proximate past:	*lê*
punctual proximate past in **negative** contexts:	*nê*
punctual remote past:	*loo*
punctual remote past in **negative** contexts:	*n:ee*
punctual followed root:	*lee*
invariant continuous form:	*lêpî*

Most punctual roots have a distinct Remote Past root, often involving an additional syllable, or a complete replacement of phonemes. In negative contexts this form is used not only in the Remote Past, but also in the Proximate Past, for events that happened earlier today, now with a wider person/number coverage (from 3s Remote to Monofocal Immediate Past Negative). As remarked in the introduction, this serves to give a distributed marking of negation, for example *doo ntîî* 'he did not eat it today' is composed of two elements each of which could have positive meaning, *doo* '3s Continuous aspect Remote Past', *ntîî* 'Punctual aspect Remote Past', but in combination they can only have the negative interpretation given.

The following paired examples of positive (i) and negative (ii) sentences give some sense of the way in which the marking of negation is distributed across the clause. Note for example in (562)a. the change of verb root (as if in Remote Past, although the inflections signal Immediate Past), with distinct negative proclitics and enclitics. In contrast in b. the verb root doesn't alternate because the following enclitic triggers the 'followed' root (in this case the same as in (i)). The example in d. shows how a verbless positive clause (other than an equative) may require 'positional support' in the negative a bit like English 'do support' (as in 'John didn't come'). The counterfactuals in f. show the special complexity of this construction. Note here though that the use of the Remote Past verb root in the Present Negative does not hold in Counterfactual clauses as it does in normal indicative clauses.

(562) a. (i) *nté* *dê* *ma.* *Yed:oo* *dpî* *kpaka*
             food 3IMMPI eat.TV So 2/3IMP.Defd punish
             y:e
             3d/plS.3sO.IMP.PI
             'He ate the food. So they should punish him (today)'

(ii) *nté   doo   ndîî.   Yed:oo kî ngê   kpaka*
food   NEG.3IMM   eat.REM   So   NEG.3IMP   punish
ngmê
NEG.PF.S.3sOIMP.PI
'He didn't eat the food. So he should not be punished (today)'
(or: *nté doo ma ngê. Yed:oo kî ngê kpaka ngmê.*)

b. (i) *dê   ma ngmê.   Yed:oo dpî   kpaka   déne*
3IMMP   eat PFS3sOPROX   so   3IMP.P   punish 3S3dO.IMP.P
'They2 did eat it. So they2 should be punished.'

(ii) *doo   ma ngópu.   Yed:oo kî dmye ngê kpaka*
3NEG   eat PFS3sOREMP   so   NEG2plIMP   punish
d:oo
NEG3d/plS3dO.IMP
'They2 did not eat it. So they2 should not be punished.'

c. (i) *Ghaapwé   Dâmu'nuwo kêdê   lê,   nkéli kamî*
Ghaapwé   Dâmu'nuwo CERT3IMMPI went   boat new
d:uu   m:uu
3IMM.MOT   see
'Ghaapwé went to Dâmu'nuwo, so he saw the new boat
(today)'

(ii) *Ghaapwé   Dâmu'nuwo doo   n:ee,   nkéli*
Ghaapwé   Dâmu'nuwo NEG3IMM   went.REM.NegPol boat
doo   kamî n:aa   módu
NEG3IMM   new   motion   see.REM
'Ghaapwé didn't go to Dâmu'nuwo, so he didn't see the new boat
(today)'

d. (i) *ala   ngwo t:ââ,   dishi nangê   ghêê   té*
this   time   flood   dish NEG2sIMPDefd   wash MFS.3plOIMP
'There's a flood now, so don't wash the dishes (plural),
– dîyo dpî   ghêê   té
– later 2/3SIMPDefd   wash   2sS3.OIMP
– wash them later'

(ii) *ala   ngwo t:ââ daa tóó,   dishi   ghêê*
this   time   flood NEG sitting dishes wash
té   – dîyo nangê   ghêê té
MFS.3plOIMP   – later NEG2sIMPDefd   wash MFS.3plOIMP
'There's no flood now, so wash the dishes, don't do them later'

e. (i)   *ala*   *ngwo*   *t:ââ,*   *dishi*   *dê nangê*   *ghêê*
      this   time   flood   dish   NEG2sIMPDef   wash
      dê
      MFS.dOIMP
      'There's a flood now, so don't wash the two dishes
      – *dîyo*   *dpî*   *ghêê*   *dé*
      – later   2/3SIMPDefd   wash   2sS3dOIMP
      – wash them later'

   (ii) *ala*   *ngwo*   *t:ââ*   *daa*   *tóó,*   *dishi*   *dê*
      this   time   flood   NEG   sitting   dish   Dual
      ghêê   *dé*
      wash   2sS.3dO.IMP
      – *dîyo*   *nangê*   *ghêê*   *dê*
      – later   NEG2sIMPDefd   wash   MFS.dO.IMP
      'There's no flood now, so wash the two dishes; don't wash
      them later'

f. (i)   *waa*   *lê*   *Dâmu'nuwo,*   *nkéli*   *paa*   *m:uu*
      CFAnt3IMM   go   Dâmu'nuwo   boat   CFCons3.IMM   see
      'If he had gone (today) to Dâmu'nuwo, he would have seen the boat'

   (ii) *wudoo*   *n:ee*   *Dâmu'nuwo,*   *nkéli*   *daa*
      NEGCFAnt3sIMM   goNegPol   Dâmu'nuwo   boat   NEG
      paa   *m:uu*
      CFCons3IMM   see
      'If he had not gone (today) to Dâmu'nuwo, he would not have seen
      the boat'

g. (i)   *wo*   *loo*   *Dâmu'nuwo,*   *nkéli*   *pî*   *módu*
      CFAnt3REM   go.REM   Dâmu'nuwo   boat   CFCons3REM   see.REM
      'If he had gone (before yesterday) to Dâmu'nuwo, he would have
      seen the boat'

   (ii) *wodaa*   *n:ee*   *Dâmu'nuwo,*   *nkéli*   *daa*
      NEGCFAnt3sREM   go.NegPol   Dâmu'nuwo   boat   NEG
      pê   *módu*
      CFCons3REM   see
      'If he had not gone (before yesterday) to Dâmu'nuwo, he would not
      have seen the boat'

10.2 Negation and quantification, negative polarity items

The basic positive quantifiers and their negative counterparts were given in §4.2.3. The bare noun with negation is understood as universally quantified – thus *pi daa lêpî* (person NEG going) is understood as 'nobody is going'. Contrariwise, the bare noun in positive sentences is understood as existentially quantified – thus *pi ka lêpî* (person CERT.3PRSCI going) is understood as 'some people are going'. Nouns with the augmentative plural *knî* in this respect act like bare nouns: *pi knî yi lama daa tóó* 'person AUG their knowledge not sitting, i.e. nobody knows'.

There is some fusion of negative universal quantification with the inflectional proclitics, although the partial table Table 10.2 below suggests this is largely constrained to the Remote Past specialized form *dêpwo* 'no-one/nothing VERBed', the Near Past *dadê* and the Present *dêdê*. The a. and b. sentences in example (563) below are both possible. Some of these special forms also occur with other near universal quantifiers like the negative polarity item *mdoo*, as in c.

(563) a. *pi   dêpwo   a   ya*
           person NONE.REM   3PSTC staying
           'No one stayed (behind)'

       b. *pi   yintómu dêpwo   a   ya*
           person all   NONE.REM   3PSTC staying
           'No one stayed (behind)'

       c. *y:i   mywapê mdoo   dêdê   kwo*
           there ebony   much(NEG) NEG.All.3PRSCI standing
           'There's not much ebony there'

Another such special form is *d:uu wodo* meaning 'never' (paradigm in Table 10.3):

(564) *kî   yâpwo   kêpa   pyââ   ngê   mbiye   ngê,*
       This sacred.place in.front woman ERG punting ADV
       kepe   ngê   kê   d:uu wodo t:oo
       paddling ADV CERT? NEVER   touch
       'Women never pole around the front of this sacred place, they never touch it with a paddle'

An exceptional item is negative polarity item *pye* (EVER) which glosses as 'we don't', 'one never' or the like – it typically occurs in general negative statements about behaviour with a general 1st person dual/plural interpretation (one might think about it as a pronoun, like English *one* or German *man*, taking inflections for a 3rd person singular subject, but carrying also negative universal quantifica-

Table 10.2: Universal quantification – Negatives and positives compared.

	CONTINUOUS ASPECT		PUNCTUAL ASPECT	
	NEG	**POS**	**NEG**	**POS**
FUT	*pi daa dê ya* 'No one will stay home (tomorrow or later)'	*pi yilî/yintómu a da ya* 'Many people/ everyone will stay back'	*pi ngmê ngê tpile daa wa y:oo* 'No one will give anything'	*pi yintómu (ndapî) wa y:ee ngmê* 'Everyone will give (some money)'
IMM PST today	*pi daa dê tóó* 'No one will stay' = *pi dêdê tóó*	*pi yintómu a tóó* 'Everyone is there'	*pi ngmê ngê tpile daa wa y:oo* 'Nobody will give anything'	*pi yintómu (ndapî) dê y:ee ngmê* 'Everyone will give some money'
NrPST yesterday	*pi da dê a ya** 'No one stayed behind (yesterday)'	*pi yintómo dnye a ya* 'Everyone was staying'	*pi ngmê ngê tpile daa y:oo* 'Nobody gave anything yesterday'	*pi yintómu (ndapî) kê y:ee ngmê* 'Everybody gave money'
REM days before yesterday	*pi dêpwo a ya* 'No one stayed (behind)'	*pi yintómu doo a ya* 'Everyone was staying (before yesterday)'	*pi ngmê ngê tpile daa y:ângo* 'Nobody gave anything'	*pi yintómu (ndapî) kê y:ee ngópu*** 'Everybody gave money'

* Note truncation of *daa* to *da* in this tense. Alternate would be: *pi daa ya*
** He didn't give any would be: *daa y:ângo*

Table 10.3: 'Never': Negative Universal quantification over time.

Person	Sing	Dual	Plural
1	*D:uu w:ee nê* 'I never go'	*D:uu w:ee lee knî* 'We2 never go'	*D:uu w:ee lee dmi* 'We3 never go'
2	*D:uu w:ee nê* 'You1 never go'	*D:uu w:ee lee knî* 'You2 never go'	*D:uu w:ee lee dmi* 'You3 never go'
3	*D:uu pê lê* 'He never goes'	*D:uu pê lee knî** 'They2 never go'	*D:uu pê lee dmi* 'They3 never go'

*The following sentence however suggests that *w:ee* can be used here too:
Mwonî Pikuwa y:oo tââkê d:uu w:ee ma ngmê, 'They2 never eat turtle'

tion over times; see also Table 10.3.). In the b. sentence in example (565), *wodê* is a further negative polarity item signifying 'never':

(565) a. *pye   daa   nê/n:ee*
            1plEVER   NEG   go.NEGpolNrPST/REM
            'We didn't go (yesterday)/(remote)'

b. *pye   d:uu wodê   vyuwó   yi   kêêlî ghi*
   1plEVER   NEG3HABP.Never   burn.off   those   area   CL(parts)
   'You/we should never burn that area (where we plant vanilla)'

c. *pye   d:uudpî   lê*
   1plEVER   NEG3HAB   go
   'We never go there'

d. *mt:enge pye   daa wa   ma*
   puffer   1plEVER   NEG.3FUT.PI   eat
   'We won't eat mt:enge fish (poisonous puffer)'

10.2.1 Negative polarity items, and intrinsically negative words

The particle *ngê* occurs frequently in negative proclitics. Amongst the meanings it has is something like '(not) yet', and 'not previously', and with future tenses 'never':

(566) a. *doo   taa   wo*
          NEG3IMMP   arrive.REM   sSREM.PI.IV.Weak
          'He didn't come (today)'

b. *doo   ngê taa   wo*
   NEG3IMMP   YET   arrive.REM   sSREM.PI.IV.Weak
   1. 'He hasn't yet arrived (today)'
   2. 'He had not been here before today'

c. *daa   t:aa*
   NEG3NrPST/REM.P   arrive.PROX
   'He didn't come yesterday'

d. *daa   taa   wo*
   NEG3NrPST/REM.P   arrive.REM   sSREM.PI.IV.Weak
   'He didn't come the day before yesterday'

e. *daa   ngê taa   (wo)*
   NEG3NrPST/REM.P   YET   arrive.REM   sSREM.PI.IV.Weak
   1. 'He hadn't come yet (day before yesterday), but later he came'
   2. 'He hadn't come before (he came for the first time) (the day before yesterday)'

f. *daa   wa   t:aa*
   NEG3FUT.P   3FUTPI   arrive.PROX
   'He will not come'

g. *daa   ngê wa   t:aa*
   NEG3FUT.P YET 3FUTPI arrive.PROX
   'He will never come'

There are numerous other lexical items and phrases that occur only in negative contexts (glossed here with NegPol), as illustrated in the following where the negative polarity item is in bold:

(567) a. **ghêlî k:ii**   *n:aa ngmê lê*
          Just.yetNegPol   NEG2sIMP   go
          'Don't go yet'
       b. *daa* **ghêdê**
          NEG   shortageNegPol
          'There's plenty, no shortage'
       c. *pi*   **mdoo**   *doo   n:ee*
          people   manyNegPol   NEG   came.REM.NegPol
          'Few people came, not many came'
       d. *Yidika   doo* **ngê**   *loo*
          Yidika   NEG   yetNegPol   gone.REM.P(=PRS in NegPol context)
          'Yidika hasn't gone yet' (Remote Past for Present in negative polarity context)
       e. *kêla mo* 'not any'
          A: *t:aa   ngma a   tóó?*
             betel   INDF   3CI   sitting?
             'Do you have some betelnut?'
          B: **kêla   mo,**   *daa   tóó*
             not   any   NEG   sitting
             'None at all, there's none'
       f. *pi   daa   tóó,   pi*   **chii**   *daa   kwo*
          person   NEG   sitting   person   sign.of   NEG   standing
          'There's no one, no one at all is there' (lit. 'Not a person trace standing' (*chii* takes positional *kwo*)

There are also numerous words (like English *hardly*) which have covert negative content:

(568) a. *dyninté* 'not properly', as in:
          dnyinté   a   w:ee   ngópu
          not.properly   CLS   understand   PFS3sO
          'They didn't understand properly.'

b. *dîpî* 'to fail to do something'
   dê   dîpî, doo   n:ee
   3IMM   fail   NEG3IMM   go.REM.NegPol
   'He failed to go'

c. *wop* 'lacking, without', as in:
   wop   dî   lê
   without IsIMM   go
   'I went without anything'
   d:ââ   k:oo   ntii   daa   tóó,   nté pyópu   wop
   Pot   inside salt.water   NEG   sitting pot.of.food without
   dpî   kââ
   1plIMMPI   put.standing
   'There's no salt water in the pot, we put it on without (salt)'

d. *kuu* 'to be not responsible, not at fault', as in:
   nê kuu
   'I'm not responsible. (It's not my fault.)'

e. *kwodé* 'be not wanting'
   m:iituwó   apê,   a   kwodé
   day.before.yesterday   he.said: my   not.wanting
   'The other day he said, I don't want (it)'

f. *módó* 'without reward/reason'
   mu   ngomo pââ ndîi nmyi   lama,   ala
   DEIC   house big   2PLPOSS   knowledge this
   módó   n:aa   tóó
   without.result 1sMOT   sitting
   'That big house you know I am without (its result/payment)'
   [not paid back for the work]

g. *têd:a* 'to fail to happen'
   tpile we   dê   têd:a,   kpaakpaa   u   l:êê dîy:o
   song.fest   3IMMP   fail.to.happen   funeral.feast   its   reason
   'The song fest didn't take place because of a funeral feast

h. *w:âno* ´hold back from giving´
   Weta   ngê   chîmo   w:êê   ngê
   Weta   ERG   stone.axe   hold.back   MFS3sOREMP
   'Weta held back/did not give the stone axe'

i. Possessive + *kwodé*, 'not to my (his, etc.) taste/liking'
   a   kwodé,   daa   nê   lê
   1POSS   not.taste   NEG   1sPROX   go
   'I don't want to go'

j. *nana* 'Not knowing', (see §8.4.1, Table 8.19)
    nana kwo,   *pyaa*   *ngê*   *dê*   *ma*
    3REM.NOT.KNOW   crocodile   ERG   3IMM   eat
    'He didn't know (long ago), the crocodile had just eaten it (his dog)'

With this review of the special intricacies of negation in Yélî Dnye, we conclude the description of the phonology and syntax of the language. Given the complexities of the language, and providing it survives the upheavals of the twenty first century, this is, one hopes, not the last word on the subject. The overall level of complexity in the language seems quite extraordinarily high, with the huge phoneme inventory, the many and large arrays of morphemic alternates, their non-additive 'gestalt' or distributed exponence, and the high degree of irregularity in the syntax and lexicon. It raises interesting questions about how such a system has arisen: Is it simply a consequence of millennia of isolation and the limitations of the purifying processes in cultural evolution (Wray & Grace 2007, Hajek 2004), or is it rather the result of schismogenesis (Bateson 1936:175; Thurston's 1989 esoterogeny), the active construction of difference by a Papuan group in a sea of Austronesian languages? The complexification is one thing, the idiosyncratic and unusual typological directions in which it is taken another. Yélî Dnye certainly deserves attention from a sociolinguistic and evolutionary point of view (Trudgill 2004, 2011). The complexities are not without cost. Work on the acquisition of the phonology by children (Casillas et al., 2020, Cristia & Casillas, in press) suggests that the full phoneme inventory is acquired quite late, and it seems likely that it takes a considerable time before children master the various complexities that the morphology and grammar confront them with.