Negation and the Assignment
of Arguments in Lummi

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0. This paper discusses the type of structures in Lummi which convey the notion of negation
and as part of this discussion I propose a principle of argument assignment to predicates which
has a broad application in Lummi. There are four major constructions in Lummi which can be
used to create negative sentences:

1) A. 'əw'

'əw' kʷ   nə-s-ye'-lə
Neg   COMP 1POSS-NOM-GO-PERF
"I never go"

B. 'əwənə

'əwənə'   nə-məhoy
NOT BE ANY   1POSS-BASKET
" I don't have any baskets"

C. 'əskʷəy

'əskʷəy   kʷ   'ən-s- leŋ-n-ŋ
TO BE NOT POSSIBLE COMP   2POSS-NOM-SEE-NCTRAN-PASS
"He can't see you" ("It's impossible for you to be seen")

D. ʃxʷtin "to dislike"

nə-ʃxʷtin   ti'ə skʷto'
1POSS-DISLIKE   DEM Raven
"I dislike Raven"

1. The 'əw' morpheme has been analyzed as a predicate, a member of the major and perhaps
only lexical class in Lummi (Jelinek and Demers 1994). As part of its predicate classification it
occurs at the beginning of its clause and may be marked for a pronominal subject as well as
carry an aspect morpheme. There are several different structures that can follow the initial
predicate 'əw'.

(2) A. 'əw' kʷ s-Pred

B. 'əw' s-Pred

C. 'əw' cə Pred

D. 'əw' Link Pred

E. 'əw' s-Link-Pred

F. 'əw' Pred

I will not discuss the use of these negative structures in imperatives since such a discussion is
beyond the scope of the present paper.

Constructions 2A and 2B appear to be variants in that the kʷ, which functions as a
complementizer, seems to be optional. But there is a variation in these two sentence types that
participates in the Lummi "control" system.

3A. 'əw=sən   kʷ   s-læŋ-nəxʷ   cə kʷəlʃæn
NEG-1SUB   COMP NOM-SEE-NCTRAN DET MT. BAKER
"I don't/can't see Mt. Baker"

3B. 'əw'   kʷ   nə-s-leŋ-nəxʷ   cə   kʷəlʃæn
NEG   COMP   1POSS-NOM-SEE-NCTRAN DET MT.BAKER
"I can't/don't see Mt. Baker"

Both (3A) and (3B) can be translated into the same English sentence, but they differ in the
degree of control which the subject has over the situation. In (3A), the subject has limited
control over the situation—the subject may be behind a house or tree, behind a small hill, and
may be able to do something in order to see Mt. Baker. In (3B), however, the subject does not
have control over the situation. Either it is night, or it is cloudy, or some other situation
obtains. Kuipers (1967) noted the same thing in Squamish, and this control property may likely
be common in other Straits languages.

The important point to note is that whenever the 'əw' contains a pronominal subject
marker, this morpheme is the subject of the following predicate. I argue below that the 'əw'
morpheme only permits a 3ʳᵈ person singular logical subject, although other subjects may
appear attached to this morpheme. The negative marker thus functions like the second order
predicates that are found in Lummi. These second order predicates include yəs "u' "always,"
si'it 'u' "really, truly," tiel 'u' "also," among several others. Thus one finds sentences such as
(4).

(4) yɔs=sən   'u' yæ'

ALWAYS-1SUB LINK GO
"I always go"

Although the subject marker is attached to the second order predicate, it is interpreted as the subject of the following predicate *yæ'*. Lummi, in fact allows variant word order in sentences containing both '*əw*' and a second order predicate.

(5) A. 'əw'=ə=sə=sxʷ   tłel'   nəpənəq
       NEG-Q-FUT-2SUB   ALSO   TO GIVE ADVICE
       "Won't you also give advice"

    B. tłel'=ə=sə=sxʷ   'u'   'əw' s-nəpənəq

    Same gloss as (5A).

Although both (5A) and (5B) are glossed the same, a likely focus/emphasis difference exists between these two sentences. One structural difference is that sentence (5A) does not have the s-nominalizer preceding the following complex predicate structure, and and this sentence is an example of type (2F). Examples of type (2D) are given next.

(6) A. 'əw'=sxʷ   'u'   æŋ-nəxʷ χætʃ-ŋ   qʷłəy
       NEG-2SUB   LINK   STEP ON DRY   WOOD/STICKS
       "You don't step on dry sticks"

    B. 'əw'=łə   'i'   yəhɔməst
       NEG-PERF   LINK   watch out
       "He didn't watch out"

The Link particle can also appear between the nominalizer *s-* and the predicate. Examples of (2E) appear in (7).

(7)   A. əw'=ə   s-i-łæŋ-nə-s   cə swəy'qə'
           NEG-Q NOM-LINK-SEE-NCTRAN-3POSS DET MAN
           "Didn't he see the man?"

       B. 'əw'   s-u-nəc'ə   'ɔl   s-næt
           NEG NOM-LINK-ONE JUST NIGHT
           "It's not just for one night"

Examples of type (2F) are common.

(8) A. 'əw'=yəq=sən   'ɔl   yæ'

NEG-OPT-1SUB   JUST   GO
"I just don't wish to go"

    B. 'əw'=sə=sxʷ   yæ' tɔ'l   ə   cə   'ən-sxʷ-tʃə-łæ'
       NET-FUT=2SUB GO OUT OBL   DET 2POSS-NOM-FROM-THERE
       "You will not go out to the place where you are from"

Other than the contribution of the LINK meaning, the six different types of structures (2A-F) appear variants with no meaning differences. Deeper studies of Lummi as well as comparisons with other Salish languages may change this conclusion.

2. '*əwənə* This morpheme is generally analyzed as a combination of '*əw*' "not" and *ni'* "to exist." Since vowels that to not bear stress in Lummi are generally schwa, the *ni* appears here as *nə* since the stress is on the initial syllable "*əwənə*'. The relationship between *ni'* and its appearance in '*əwənə*' is shown by the following examples:

(9) A. 'i'   ni'=łə   cə   stʃitʃi'æł yæ'
       LINK BE SOME/EXIST-PERF DET   BOYS   GO
       Then some boys went

    B. ni'   cu nił
       EXIST   THAT ONE
       "That one was born"

    C. ni'   cə   stʃæ:nəxʷ
       EXIST DET SALMON
       "Salmon exist" or "There are some salmon"

Sentences such as (9C) are discussed in Jelinek and Demers (1994) where quantificational scope differences lead to the different interpretations above.

10) A. 'əwənə'   cu   nił
       NOT EXIST   THAT ONE
       "That one died"

    B. 'əwənə'   cə stʃitʃi'æł yæ'
       NOT EXIST DET BOYS   GO
       "None of the boys went"

    C. txʷ-'əwənə'   wæt   tʃ'æŋəł
       MUT-NOT EXIST   TO BE SOMEONE   PLANT
       "Nobody's planting anymore"

The '*əwənə* predicate is intransitive and the class of possible arguments is quite open. The *tx*[w] morpheme is a prefix, and is used here to indicate that the situation being described represents a change from an earlier situation. Montler (1986) has described the same morpheme in Saanich.

4. '*əsk*[w]*əy*

This predicate appears with several related meanings, all of which are negative. When this predicate is followed by a clause it generally has the meaning "it is impossible that"

(11) A. 'i'   'əsk[w]əy'=sə   k[w]   'ən-s-læŋ-n-ŋ
    LINK NOT BE POSSIBLE-FUT   COMP   2POSS-NOM-SEE-NCTRAN-PASS
    "Then he will not be able to see you"

B. 'əsk'[w]əy'   k[w]   yæ'-s   tɬ'ə-titisən
    NOT BE POSSIBLE COMP GO-3POSS TO-FERNDALE
    "They can't travel to Ferndale"

There is another meaning that shows up with this predicate.

12) 'əsk[w]əy'   k[w]   nə-s-tɬ'e   cə sk'[w]tɔ
    TO BE WRONG COMP 1POSS-NOM-TO LIKE DET RAVEN
    "It is wrong for me to like Raven"

One might expect that (12) would receive the gloss "It is impossible for me to like Raven." There are, nevertheless other uses of '*əsk*[w]*əy*' that show that this predicate has a range of related meanings.

(13) A. 'əsk'[w]əy'   cə   st'ætʃ-ŋ
    NOT BE RIGHT DET TIDE
    "The tide is not right"

B. 'əsk'[w]əy   ti'ə   nə-sq'[w]ɔ'
    TO BE SICK DEM 1POSS-COMPANION
    "My friend is sick"

C. si'it-lə-sən   'əsk'[w]əy'   ə k[w]ətʃələqɬ
    EXTREMELY=PERF=1SUB TO BE SICK YESTERDAY
    "I didn't feeL very good yesterday"

Although I don't have forms such as '*əsk*[w]*əy-sən* , these forms could exist with the meaning "I am not feeling well."

The predicate *sx*[w]*tin* "to dislike" is the negative counterpart of the predicate *stɬi'* "to like." It is also structurally similar in that the logical subject is the possessive and the logical object serves as the subject of this intransitive pair of predicates.

(14) nə-ʃx[w]tin=sx[w]   "I dislike you" ("You are my disliking")

Conclusions. The above constructions are the major ways that negation can be expressed in Lummi. All of these constructions are intransitive and '*əw*' requires an abstract third person subject. Consider again the following sentence:

(15) 'əw-sən   k[w]   s-læŋ-nəx[w]   cə   k[w]əlʃæn

    neg-1sub   comp   nom-see-trans   det Mt. Baker

    I can't/don't see Mt. Baker

One could propose that the first person subject marker could be in some sense the subject of the predicate '*əw*'. The negative answer to this proposal lies in a Lummi property that in certain predicate pairs, the overt subject marker on the first predicate is the subject of the second predicate.

(16) Lummi Argument Assignment:

    $Pred_x$-subject (Link) $Pred_y$ [Subject is assigned to $Pred_y$]

Given principle (16), the subject marking that appears on '*əw*' will be assigned to the predicate that follows the negative morpheme. An important set of data that supports this principle is given below.

(17) 'ənæ'=sən   læŋ-t-ŋ
    COME-1SUB SEE-CTRAN-PASS
    "He came to see me"

If one were to do a linear assignment of subject one would presumably end up with a sentence that means something like "I came (in order) to be seen." The meaning, however, is that given in (17) and has been verified on numerous occasions with Mr. Charles and once several years ago with Mr. Herman Olsen, a speaker of Saanich and Lummi.

In sentence (17) only one argument of the transitive main verb is overtly marked, leaving the third person as the default.

The third person can be specified in more detail as the following sentence illustrates.

(18) 'ənæ'-sx[w]   læŋ-t-ŋ   ə   cə   si'æm
    COME-2SUB SEE-CTRAN-PASS OBL DET HIGH CLASS PERSON

"The high class person came to see me"

We have seen that the negative predicate takes a third person abstract argument and presumably has scope over an entire clause. The question arises, nevertheless, whether or not an argument can be focused in a negative structure. That is, is a Lummi sentence possible that is similar to the English one such as "It was not John that went." The Lummi negative predicate may be like the predicate *mək'ʷ* in which the scope is variable.

(19) mək'ʷ=lə=ɬ 'u' ŋa-t-0 cə stʃæ:nəxʷ
  ALL-PERF-1PLSUB LINK EAT-CTRAN-3ABS DET SALMON

"We ate all the fish"

" We all ate the fish"

"We ate the fish up completely"

Under principle (16) above the subject is assigned to the verb eat. The scope of the quantifier in this sentence can vary and is subject to the interpretations shown by the English translations above. Do negatives have the same range of interpretations?

(20) 'əw' kʷ   nə-s-læŋ-n-ɔŋəs
  NEG COMP 1POSS-NOM-SEE-NCTRAN-1/2OBJ
  "I didn't get a glimpse of you"

Could (20) have the following interpretations?

? It was *not I* who got a glimpse of you.

? I *didn't* get a glimpse of you.

? It was *not you* that I got a glimpse of.

There has been no evidence from Mr. Charles that these interpretations are available and it calls into question whether there is a difference in scope issues in quantification and scope/emphasis issues in negation.

There is a way in fact that Lummi speakers can put a negative focus on an argument. This is shown in (21)

(21) 'əw' s-niɬ ə John yæ'=lə
  NEG NOM-THAT ONE OBL JOHN GO-PERF

"It was not John that went"

Lummi speakers can negate an argument by negating the Lummi focus construction, the positive form of which is given in (22).

(22) niɬ cə John yæ'=lə
  IT/THAT DET JOHN GO=PERF
  "It was John that went"

Notice that the Lummi structure is similar to the structure of the English translations in (21). English does permit the negative quantifier *not* to appear before nouns, but these are not completely natural in modern English.

(23) A. Not John went

  B. I love not Mary.

  C. I love not Mary, but.....

Sentences of the structure (23A-B) are stylistically awkward in English, and, of course, impossible in Lummi.

It is striking, nevertheless, the means that are available for humans and their languages to express the infinitude of human thought. Principle (16), if something like it holds up as a principle of Lummi, reveals the subtlety and abstractness of the principles that humans use to interpret sequences of sound and turn them into thought.

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