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Negation and polarity-reversing effect of an interrogative marker in Pwo Karen*

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Summary

In Pwo Karen, main clauses are negated by *ʔé*, subordinate clauses by *lə ... bá*, and imperative clauses by *laxì*. In addition to these negators, the expression *bá vâ*, which consists of the verb *bá* ‘be right’ and the interrogative marker *vâ*, can be used as a negator. Conversely, when the negator *ʔé*, which is used at the end of the main clause, is followed by the interrogative marker *vâ*, the sentences may be used as affirmative ones. Thus, we can say that in Pwo Karen, polarity may be reversed by the presence of an interrogative marker.

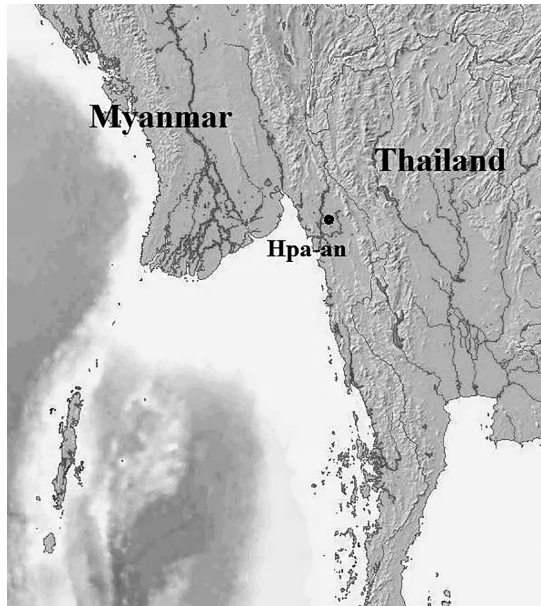
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1. Introduction

Pwo Karen is one of the languages of the Karenic branch of Tibeto-Burman. It has several dialectal groups. Kato (2017, 2019) lists four Pwo Karen dialectal groups that are not intelligible to each other: Western Pwo Karen, Htoklibang Pwo Karen, Eastern Pwo Karen, and Northern Pwo Karen. For the classification of the Pwo Karen dialects and a detailed discussion of their characteristics, see Kato (1995, 2009), Dawkins and Phillips (2009a, b), and Phillips (2017, 2018). The dialect treated in this paper is the Hpa-an dialect that belongs to Eastern Pwo Karen. It is spoken around Hpa-an, the capital of Karen State, Myanmar. For the location of Hpa-an, see the map. The Pwo Karen dialects spoken in nearby cities such as Hlaingbwe and Kawkaik can be included here. In this paper, the language name “Pwo Karen” refers to the Hpa-an dialect. The purpose of this paper is to show the patterns of forming negative sentences (clauses) in Pwo Karen and to argue that polarity can be reversed by the presence of an interrogative marker in this language.



Map Location of Hpa-an

Pwo Karen is an analytic SVO-type language, which is the same as other Karenic languages. The SVO-type word order of the Karenic languages is unique among Tibeto-Burman languages, which are predominantly of the SOV-type. The basic structure of a verb-predicate clause in Pwo Karen can be represented as in (1). The bracketed elements are optional.

- (1) (NP1) (verb particle(s)) V (verb particle(s)) (NP2) (NP3) (adverbial elements)
verb complex

In (1), ‘NP’ represents a noun phrase and ‘V’ a verb. In the case of an intransitive verb, only NP1 can appear. In the case of a monotransitive verb, NP1 and NP2 can appear; here, NP1 typically denotes the agent and NP2 the patient. In the case of a ditransitive verb, NP1, NP2, and NP3 can appear. To take the typical ditransitive verb *phílân* ‘to give’ as an example, NP1 is the agent, NP2 the recipient, and NP3 the theme, as is seen in the sentence *jə phílân ʔə láiʔàʊ* (1SG - give - 3SG - book) ‘I gave him a book’. Before and after the verb, various verb particles may appear. I call the part comprising of the verb and the verb particle(s), that is, the underlined part in (1), a ‘verb complex’. In the position of ‘adverbial elements’, adverbs, adpositional phrases, adverbial particles, and numeral classifier phrases may occur. A concatenated type serial verb construction may appear in the position of ‘V’ (for serial verb constructions in Pwo Karen, see Kato (2004, 2017, 2019)). In addition to the elements shown in the schema, after the adverbial elements, another verb may occur, which is the second verb of a separated-type serial verb construction, such as the second verb *θl̄* ‘can’ in the sentence *jə nân k̄ā θl̄* (1SG - drive - car - can) ‘I can drive a car’. Furthermore, some adverbial elements may appear clause-initially. Sentence (2) is an example of a clause with a monotransitive verb. In (2), *nə* ‘2SG’ is NP1; *kó* ‘cake’ is NP2; *ʔán* ‘eat’ is the verb; *mə* ‘IRR’ and *bá* ‘OPP’ are verb particles; and *ʔáʔá* ‘much’ (adverb), *l̄ə jə ʔéin phən* ‘inside my house’ (adpositional phrase), and *çl̄* ‘too’ (adverbial particle) are adverbial elements. The part consisting of the verb and verb particles, *mə ʔán bá*, is a verb complex.

- (2) *nə mə ʔán bá kú ʔáʔá l̄ə jə ʔéin phən çl̄*
2SG IRR eat OPP cake much LOC 1SG house inside too

‘You will also get a chance to eat a lot of cake inside my house.’

Since the discussion in this paper, especially in Sections 4 and 5, is related to interrogative sentences, let us examine how interrogative sentences are formed in Pwo Karen. Polar questions (yes-no questions) are indicated by the sentence-final particle *ʔá*, as in (3). *ʔá* may also be pronounced *ʔá*, *ʔā*, or *ʔà*, but I use *ʔá*, the form with the falling tone, as the representative form because it is the most frequently used one. In content questions (wh-questions), the sentence-final particle *l̄é*, instead of *ʔá*, occurs, as in (4). I call the particles *ʔá* and *l̄é* “interrogative markers” in the present paper.

- (3) nə mə ʔán m̩ ɤá
 2SG IRR eat rice Q

‘Will you eat (rice)?’

- (4) nə mə ʔán chənɔ́ lɛ́
 2SG IRR eat what Q

‘What will you eat?’

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces negators in Pwo Karen and discusses their typological characteristics among the Karenic languages and their origins. Section 3 defines the notion of negators in Pwo Karen. Section 4 describes the expression *bá ɤá* (right - Q), which literally means ‘(Is that) right?’, and regards it as another negator in Pwo Karen. Section 5 describes the behavior of the negator *ʔé* that is used with the interrogative marker *ɤá* and discusses its non-negative meaning. Section 6 presents the concluding remarks.

2. Negators in Pwo Karen

In this section, after introducing three Pwo Karen negators, that is, *ʔé*, *lə* ... *bá*, and *lax̩*, I will discuss their typological characteristics among the Karenic languages and consider their origins.

First, when the main clause is negated, the adverbial particle *ʔé* is used as a negator. It is placed in the predicate-final position, as in (5) and (6).

- (5) ʔəkhâjò ʔəwê ʔɔ́ ʔé
 now 3SG be NEG

‘He is not (here) now.’

- (6) ʔəwê ʔán bá m̩ dâi ʔé
 3SG eat OPP rice still NEG

‘He has not managed to eat (rice) yet.’

Note that another expression containing a verb and an interrogative marker, that is, *bá ɤá* (right - Q), can be used to negate the main clause, as will be discussed in Section 4.

Second, when the subordinate clause is negated, the verb particle *lə* is placed immediately before the verb and the adverbial particle *bá* (in rapid speech, it may be pronounced *wá*) is placed in the predicate-final position, as in (7). That is, “double negation” (Dryer

2005) is employed in a subordinate clause. I will treat this combination of the morphemes *lə* and *bá* as a single negator and represent it as *lə ... bá* in the present paper.

- (7) ʔəwê lə ɣê lá jò bá ʔəkhúçòn, jə bá mà
 3SG NEG come LOC here NEG because 1SG must do

‘Because he did not come here, I have to do.’

The particle *bá* may also be placed immediately after the verb, as in (8):

- (8) ʔəwê lə ɣê bá lá jò ʔəkhúçòn, jə bá mà
 3SG NEG come NEG here here because 1SG must do

‘Because he did not come here, I have to do.’

Sometimes, the negator *lə ... bá* may be used in a main clause, as in (9). In this case, the sentence has a special pragmatic function: that is, it typically presupposes that the hearer wants to know the reason for something, and the sentence shows the reason.¹ Thus, (9) can be translated into English as ‘It is because she could not find you’ or ‘It is that she could not find you’.

- (9) lə dá nə bá
 NEG see 2SG NEG

‘It is because (she could) not find you.’ (Sporadic 0-01)

In this usage of the negator *lə ... bá*, the second syllable *bá* may be omitted, as in (10) and (11):

- (10) nə lə nə nə wēnân
 2SG NEG believe 2SG elder.sister

‘It is that you do not believe your elder sister.’ (Sporadic 0-01)

- (11) lî khô lê θí lə lò mənmuúnàn
 go where Q also NEG tell niece (=the speaker)

‘It is that (he) did not tell me where (he would) go.’ (Sporadic 0-01)

The use of *lə ... bá* in a main clause can be syntactically characterized by the fact that a

¹ This function is somewhat similar to that of the Japanese *no=da* (のだ) construction.

structure used for a subordinate clause is employed for a main clause; thus, we can consider this usage of *lə ... bá* to be an example of insubordination (for the concept of insubordination, see Evans and Watanabe (2016) and Beijering et al. (2019)).

Lastly, for negation of an imperative sentence, the adverbial particle *ləxì* (also pronounced as *xì*, *ləkhì*, or *khì*) is used. It is placed at the end of the predicate, as in (12).

(12) *dó* *jə* ***ləxì***
 hit 1SG PROH

‘Don’t hit me.’

Manson (2017) summarizes the patterns observable in the negation of declarative sentences in the Karenic languages. He groups them into five types as follows (I represent the types with the symbols NEG (=negative marker) and V (=verb)):

I) The negative marker is placed immediately before the verb:

NEG V

II) The negative marker is placed immediately before the verb and a second marker is placed immediately after the verb:

NEG V NEG

III) The negative marker is placed immediately before the verb and a second marker is placed in the clause-final position:

NEG V NEG

IV) The negative marker is placed immediately after the verb:

V NEG

V) The negative marker is placed in the clause-final position:

V NEG

Manson assumes that Type I is the original pattern of the Karenic languages. In Pwo Karen today, Types I, II, III, and V can be observed: (5) is an example of Type V, (7) and

(9) of Type III, (8) of Type II, and (10) and (11) of Type I. Thus, in Pwo Karen, only Type IV is not present. A Pa-O example of Type IV from Cooper (2018: 29) is presented in (13). According to Manson, aside from Pwo Karen, Type I is observed in Kayan, Lahta, Gekho, and Paku; Type II in Sgaw; Type III in Bwe, Geba, and Sgaw; Type IV in Pa-O; and Type V in Monu (Manu), Kayaw, Kayah, and Palaychi.

(13) khwè phré lən phé bá tâw na mók.cók [Pa-O] (Cooper 2018)
 1SG buy come give hit NEG 2SG orange

‘I didn’t buy you oranges.’

The verb particle *lə* (see (7) through (11)), which is used in subordinate clauses, originates from the Proto-Karen negative marker **ta* (Manson 2017: 157).² The Proto-Karen **ta* comes from the Proto-Tibeto-Burman prohibitive (negative imperative) marker **ta* (Benedict 1972: 97; Matisoff 2003: 162; LaPolla 2003: 27). Sgaw Karen, which I assume is genealogically close to Pwo Karen (cf. Shintani 2003), uses the negator *tə ... bā* in both main and subordinate clauses, and it is evidently cognate with the Pwo Karen negator *lə ... bá* (see (7) through (9)) because these Pwo and Sgaw negators show a regular phonological correspondence both in the first and second syllables. The first morpheme *tə* in Sgaw Karen occurs immediately before the verb, and the second morpheme *bā* is placed immediately after the verb or in the clause-final position, as is the case with Pwo Karen negator *lə ... bá*. Judging from the regularity of phonological correspondence, Pwo Karen *lə ... bá* can be traced back at least to the lowest common proto-language of Pwo Karen and Sgaw Karen. Manson (2017) assumes that Sgaw Karen *bā* originates from the homophonous intransitive verb meaning ‘correct, appropriate, suitable’ of the same language. Pwo Karen also has a cognate verb *bá* (see Section 4) with the same meaning. Therefore, if Manson’s assumption is correct, it is highly possible that the grammaticalization of the verb meaning ‘correct, appropriate, suitable’ into a negative marker happened at the stage of the lowest proto-language of Pwo Karen and Sgaw Karen.

When we observe the usage of negative markers in the Karenic languages, it seems that Proto-Karen **ta* had already been used as a general negative marker at the Proto-Karen stage. It is unclear why the Proto-Tibeto-Burman prohibitive marker **ta* became a general negative marker in Proto-Karen. Ding (2014: 206) shows that the “deontic negator” *tja* in Prinmi, which is used to “convey one’s desire and/or expectation as differing from others in an interpersonal communication context”, is typically used in a negated imperative sen-

² Forms corresponding to Pwo Karen *lə* in many other Karenic languages still preserve the onset of the Proto-Karen negative marker **ta*, e.g., Sgaw Karen *tə*. The Proto-Karen onset **t* became *l* in Pwo Karen in two morphemes: *lə* ‘negative marker’ and the numeral *lən* ‘one’ (see Matisoff’s (2003: 262) Proto-Tibeto-Burman form **tan* ‘one’).

tence. However, Ding argues that its use is not confined to expressing negation in the imperative and that essentially it is used to indicate “conflict of desire between people”. When we consider the reason that the Proto-Tibeto-Burman prohibitive marker became a general negative marker in Proto-Karen, it would be worthwhile to refer to the usage of the deontic negator in Prinmi.

The origin of the sentence-final particle $\mathcal{?}\acute{e}$ (see (5) and (6)) is unknown. There is no corresponding homophonous word in Pwo Karen. Since no negator that phonologically corresponds with it is found among the other Karenic languages, it would be safe to say that this particle is an innovative form that emerged uniquely in Pwo Karen.³ Therefore, I assume that Pwo Karen $l\partial \dots b\acute{a}$ was originally used both in main and subordinate clauses, as is the case with the cognate negator $t\partial \dots b\acute{a}$ in contemporary Sgaw Karen. If this is the case, Pwo Karen $\mathcal{?}\acute{e}$, which is placed at the end of a main clause, did not emerge as the result of “Jespersen’s cycle”.⁴ If Pwo Karen had followed Jespersen’s cycle, then the second syllable $b\acute{a}$ in the negator $l\partial \dots b\acute{a}$, instead of $\mathcal{?}\acute{e}$, should have remained in main clauses. However, this did not happen, and the particle $\mathcal{?}\acute{e}$, whose etymology is unknown, came into use. Thus, when the negative particle $\mathcal{?}\acute{e}$ emerged, something else that had nothing to do with Jespersen’s cycle would have happened; however, what happened is unknown at the moment.

Lastly, the negative imperative marker $l\partial x\grave{i}$ originates from a verb complex consisting of $l\partial$ ‘NEG’ and the verb $y\grave{i}$ ‘good’. This is evident from the fact that the prohibitive marker in Western Pwo Karen is $l\partial\text{-}y\acute{e}$ (not-good) and that in Sgaw Karen is $t\partial\text{-}y\bar{e}$ (not-good).

3. Definition of Pwo Karen negators

It would be necessary here to give a precise definition of “negators” in Pwo Karen. The forms $\mathcal{?}\acute{e}$, $l\partial \dots b\acute{a}$, and $l\partial x\grave{i}$ listed in Section 2, have two grammatical features in common, which will be described below.

First, the morpheme $n\bar{a}n$, which appears immediately before a numeral classifier, indicates the non-existence of entities or events when it co-occurs with $\mathcal{?}\acute{e}$, $l\partial \dots b\acute{a}$, and $l\partial x\grave{i}$. In an affirmative sentence, it represents a vague small number, as in (14). It can be translated as ‘a few’ or ‘some’ in English.

³ Negators corresponding regularly to $\mathcal{?}\acute{e}$ are widely found in many of the dialectal groups of Pwo Karen, e.g., $\mathcal{?}e?$ in Western Pwo (Kato 1995) and $\mathcal{?}e'$ in Northern Pwo (Phillips 2017), except Htoklibang Pwo, which uses the form $t\partial \dots b\acute{a}$, a borrowing from Sgaw Karen, both in main and subordinate clauses (Kato 2009). Thus, $\mathcal{?}\acute{e}$ can be considered an old form that can be traced back to the Proto-Pwo Karen stage.

⁴ Jespersen’s cycle is a phenomenon in which the first element in a double negation disappears and the second element remains (Jespersen 1917). This terminology was coined by Dahl (1979) to refer to Jespersen’s hypothesis. For further details of this phenomenon, see, e.g., Devos and van der Auwera (2013).

- (14) *jə mə ʔáncà nə chə nān mèin*
 1SG IRR ask 2SG thing a.few NC [kind]

‘I will ask you a few kinds of questions.’ (Short novel IV-04)

When co-occurring with *ʔé*, *lə ... bá*, and *ləxì*, *nān* indicates that the number of entities or events is zero. Sentences (15), (16), and (17) are examples with *ʔé*, *lə ... bá*, and *ləxì*, respectively. The morpheme *nān* has this meaning only when it co-occurs with these negative forms. Therefore, in this paper, I will refer to the morpheme of this usage as “*nān* of the negative polarity item use” and gloss it as ‘any’, as in (15), (16), and (17) (for the concept of negative polarity items, see, e.g., Haspelmath (1997)).

- (15) *thōn jò chə ʔó nān mèin ʔé*
 around here thing be any NC [kind] NEG

‘There is nothing around here.’ (Conversation 002)

- (16) *ʔəwê mà lə bá nān mèin bá nó ʔəkhúcòn ...*
 3SG do NEG right any NC [kind] NEG that because

‘Because he could not do anything ...’ (Folktale I-04)

- (17) *ʔán bá lā nān yà ləxì*
 eat OPP HORT any NC [human] PROH

‘Please anyone don’t eat (this).’ (Essay II-12)

Second, *ʔé*, *lə ... bá*, and *ləxì* allow the particle *lən* ‘anymore’ to occur in the same clause. In (18), (19), and (20), *lən* can occur in virtue of the presence of *ʔé*, *lə ... bá*, and *ləxì*, respectively.

- (18) *thōun θí bá lən ʔé*
 endure also right anymore NEG

‘I cannot even stand anymore.’ (Conversation 003)

- (19) *phũdàikò lə ʔó lən bá ləkhâin jò ...*
 PN NEG be anymore NEG after this

‘After Phudaikaw passed away ...’ (Essay III-08)

(20) $\gamma\hat{e}$ $n\bar{i}$ $l\hat{a}N$ $l\hat{a}x\bar{i}$
 come get anymore PROH

‘Don’t bring it anymore.’ (Conversation 001)

The particle $l\hat{a}N$ cannot appear in an environment where either of $\gamma\hat{e}$, $l\hat{a} \dots b\acute{a}$, or $l\hat{a}x\bar{i}$ is not present. Taking the simple short sentence $m\hat{a} l\hat{a}N \gamma\hat{e}$ (do - anymore - NEG) ‘(I) will not do anymore’ as an example, if $\gamma\hat{e}$ is removed from this sentence, the obtained sentence $*m\hat{a} l\hat{a}N$ (do - anymore) is ungrammatical. Thus, the particle $l\hat{a}N$ can also be considered a negative polarity item.

In this paper, I define a form that can co-occur with $n\bar{a}N$ of the negative polarity item use and with the particle $l\hat{a}N$ ‘anymore’ as a negator. Thus, $\gamma\hat{e}$, $l\hat{a} \dots b\acute{a}$, and $l\hat{a}x\bar{i}$ are regarded as negators, though, in fact, another negator will be added to these in the next section. The category of negators is not a word class, but a set of forms belonging to various word classes that have these two features in common.⁵

4. Negation with an expression containing an interrogative marker

In Pwo Karen, negation that does not employ either of the negators $\gamma\hat{e}$, $l\hat{a} \dots b\acute{a}$, and $l\hat{a}x\bar{i}$ can also be observed. Interrogative sentences may pragmatically be used to express negative meaning. For example, (21), which is an interrogative sentence that literally means ‘Is our lack of knowledge a good thing?’ actually shows that the speaker does not think that lack of knowledge is a good thing. Sentence (22) seems to be a question that literally means ‘Do you have to be in such a hurry?’ but the speaker does not think that the addressee has to hurry. The interrogative marker $l\hat{e}$ (see (4)), which is usually used in a content question, is sometimes used in a polar question to express a strong doubt, as in this example. Sentence (23) also takes the form of an interrogative sentence, but the speaker wants to say that there is not anyone that is more stupid than “you”. That is, these sentences are used as rhetorical questions to express the speaker’s skepticism about some situations expressed in the sentences.

(21) $p\hat{e}$ $j\hat{o}$ $ch\hat{a}\theta\bar{i}ch\hat{a}b\acute{a}$ $\gamma\hat{s}$ $\zeta\hat{a}$ $n\acute{o}$ $mw\bar{e}$ $ch\hat{a}y\bar{i}$ $\varkappa\hat{a}$
 IPL this knowledge be few TOP COP good.thing Q

‘Is our lack of knowledge a good thing?’ (Essay IV-03)

⁵ Forms that have common grammatical features often belong to different word classes. For example, “interrogative words” in English belong to various word classes, e.g., what (noun), whose (determiner), where (adverb), etc. The case of Japanese negators is another example. The Japanese negator *-nai* that is used for verbs is a suffix, and the negator *nai* that is used for adjectives is a kind of adjective; furthermore, these two negators phonologically resemble each other but have different origins.

- (22) nə bá kəlôN chē phōphōjò lē, həyà
 2SG must hurry thing this.much Q hey

‘Do you have to be in such a hurry?’ (Conversation 027)

- (23) dōunláu khúdà jò ʔə̀nkhài náin nē mə ʔó dài ʔá
 world surface this stupid than 2SG IRR be still Q

‘Is there anyone more stupid than you in this world?’ (Sporadic 0-01)

Moreover, in Pwo Karen, an expression that contains the interrogative marker *ʔá* has been conventionalized as a form for negation. The Hpa-an dialect frequently uses the expression *bá ʔá* in order to indicate negation, as shown in (24). *bá ʔá* means ‘Is (it) right?’ in isolation and is put at the end of the predicate of the main clause when it indicates negation. It never occurs in a subordinate clause. *bá* is a stative verb meaning ‘right, correct, appropriate, suitable’. The same form *bá* is also used as an active verb, which means ‘to hit’, and probably the meaning of ‘right’ comes from this meaning. *ʔá* is an interrogative sentence-final particle, that is, an interrogative marker (see (3)), and tends to be pronounced *ʔá* (with the high-level tone instead of the falling tone) when it is followed by another sentence-final particle.

- (24) l̩ bá ʔá bō
 go right Q BO

‘(He) did not go.’

The expression *bá ʔá* indicating negation seems to have evolved from an interrogative sentence containing a separated-type serial verb construction with *bá* as the second verb, as in (25):

- (25) ké cəxwà, nə phà bá ʔá
 well king 2SG guess right Q

‘Now, Your Majesty, can you correctly guess (the quiz)?’ (Folktale 019)

In (25), the verbs *phà* ‘guess’ and *bá* ‘be right’ constitute a serial verb construction, in which the second verb *bá* retains its original meaning. In (24), however, *bá* does not retain its original meaning, but is used with *ʔá* to negate the verb *l̩* ‘to go’, and the sentence can be paraphrased with the negator *ʔé* into the sentence *l̩ ʔé* (go - NEG) ‘(He) did not go’ without changing the propositional meaning of the sentence. *bá ʔá* in this use occurs highly frequently in daily conversation and expresses a strong negation as compared to *ʔé*. It is

typically used when the speaker wants to strongly deny the hearer's assumption. Let us consider (26) as an example. This is a series of utterances consisting of a question and an answer. Speaker A asks speaker B if she (speaker B) has difficulty speaking Pwo Karen. Speaker B thinks that speaker A assumes that she has some difficulty speaking Pwo Karen, and she uses *bá vâ* to strongly deny it.

(26) A: khlàin phlòun khâ nó, chəkáčəyè ʔó chī vâ
 speak Pwo time TOP difficulty be too Q

‘When you speak Pwo Karen, do you have any difficulty?’

B: ʔó bá vâ bò. dú ván lá phlòun klà dùr
 be right Q BO big up LOC Pwo among SFP

‘I don’t have any. (Because) I grew up among Pwo Karen people.’ (Interview 001)

When *bá vâ* is used to denote a negative meaning, it is usually followed by the sentence-final particle *bò* or *nè* (*nê*). It is possible that these sentence final particles function here as a means to indicate that the sentence is not a question but a negative statement. Without the particles *bò* or *nê*, a sentence containing *bá vâ* is likely to be interpreted as an interrogative, as in (25). Let me explain a little about the basic usage of *bò* and *nê* here. The particle *bò* is often used in an interrogative sentence, as in (27), and has the function of softening the question. The particle *nê* is usually used in a declarative sentence, as in (28), to indicate that the speaker expects that the hearer has some knowledge about the information that the sentence conveys.

(27) hə lì ké vâ bò
 1PL go become Q BO

‘Is it OK if we go?’ (Conversation 003)

(28) məkhó jə yê, kā kəthái nè
 earlier 1SG come car tight NE

‘When I came earlier, the road was busy (as you know).’ (Sporadic 0-01)

Below are other examples of *bá vâ* (see (29) through (33)) with negative meaning. Note that all these examples have *bò* or *nè* following *bá vâ*.

(29) jə m̀àb̀óun bá ch̀è bá ʔá b̀ò
 1SG donate OPP thing right Q BO

‘I didn’t have the opportunity to donate.’ (Narrative 025)

(30) l̀ò ǹè bá ʔá b̀ò, m̀ū
 tell 2SG right Q BO mother

‘I wasn’t speaking about you, dear my wife.’ (Sporadic 0-01)

(31) θ̀à̀m̀é bá ʔá ǹè
 fear right Q NE

‘I don’t fear (my wife).’ (Sporadic 0-01)

(32) bá l̀ò ch̀à l̀óθ̀à bá ʔá ǹè, h̀ə̀ʔ̀à
 must tell ache each.other right Q NE hey

‘Hey, we don’t have to speak ill of each other.’ (Conversation 027)

(33) θ̀à̀ìnk̀h̀ā̀ǹθ̀á ch̀áin b̀é j̀ò θ̀í ʔ́án ʔ́wí bá ʔ́á ǹè
 lime sour like this also eat delicious right Q NE

‘Such sour limes are not good.’ (Movie <khw̄j̄ànw̄ech̄in̄>)

Now, let us discuss the possibility of *bá ʔá* as a negator. As already mentioned in Section 3, I regard a form that can co-occur with *n̄ān* of the negative polarity item use and with the particle *l̀ə̀n* ‘anymore’ as a negator. In (34) and (35), *bá ʔá* co-occurs with *n̄ān* and *l̀ə̀n*, respectively.

(34) ch̀ə̀k̀ách̀ə̀ʔ̀è ʔ́ó n̄ān m̀èin bá ʔ́á b̀ò
 difficulty be any NC[kind] right Q BO

‘There is no difficulty at all.’ (Interview 001)

(35) h̀ə ʔ́é bá l̀ə̀n bá ʔ́á b̀ò
 1PL come OPP anymore right Q BO

‘We will not be able to come anymore.’ (Sporadic 0-01)

Considering the ability of co-occurring with both *n̄ān* of the negative polarity item use and *l̀ə̀n* ‘anymore’, I regard *bá ʔá* as another Pwo Karen negator in addition to the three negators listed in Section 3. Further, as already mentioned in Section 3, the category of Pwo

Karen negators is not a word class, but a set of various forms that have two common grammatical features, that is, co-occurring with *nāN* of the negative polarity item use and with the particle *lən* ‘anymore’. I consider that *bá kâ* is an expression consisting of a verb and a particle that has been idiomatized as a negator. Since the sentence-final particle *bò* or *nè* usually appears after *bá kâ*, there is room to consider the entire *bá kâ bò* and *bá kâ nè* as negators. This issue remains to be addressed in future studies.

Semantically, *bá kâ* is equivalent to the negator *ʔé*. Thus, one would expect that Sentence (37) with *ʔé*, which is a negation of (36), can be paraphrased with *bá kâ* as is shown in (38); however, (38) is somewhat awkward, and (39) is preferred. Sentence (39) can also mean ‘He does not speak Pwo Karen’, which is a negation of the sentence *ʔawê khlàin phlòun* (3SG - speak - Pwo) ‘He speaks Pwo Karen’.

(36) ʔawê khlàin phlòun bá
3SG speak Pwo right

‘He can speak Pwo Karen.’ (Literally: ‘He rightly speaks Pwo Karen’)

(37) ʔawê khlàin phlòun bá ʔé
3SG speak Pwo right NEG

‘He cannot speak Pwo Karen.’

(38) ? ʔawê khlàin phlòun bá bá ká bò
3SG speak Pwo right right Q BO

Intended meaning: ‘He cannot speak Pwo Karen.’

(39) ʔawê khlàin phlòun bá ká bò
3SG speak Pwo right Q BO

‘He cannot speak Pwo Karen. / He does not speak Pwo Karen.’

To summarize this section: *bá kâ* (right - Q), a form that was originally not related to negation, has been idiomatized to denote negation, and can be recognized as another negator in Pwo Karen.

5. Negator used for non-negative meaning

In Section 4, we have seen that negative meaning may be expressed in a form that originally had nothing to do with negation. Conversely, a negator may be used to express a non-negative meaning in Pwo Karen. Specifically, when the negator *ʔé* occurs with the

interrogative marker *ʋá*, negative meaning may disappear.

Before turning to such examples, see (40), which contains the negator *ʔé*. As seen from the translation, the negative meaning of the negator is retained in (40). In this example, *ʔé* is followed by the interrogative marker *ʋá*, and *ʋá* is often pronounced *ʋā* with the mid-level tone when it occurs after *ʔé*. When *ʔé* and *ʋá* co-occur in this way, the coalescent form *jā* (glossed as NEG+Q), as in (41), is used more frequently than the original form *ʔé ʋā*. These two sentences ((40) and (41)) have the same propositional meaning.

(40) *jə́ nɔ́ nə́ kò ʔé ʋā bə́*
 1SG TOP 2SG call NEG Q BO

‘As for me, you did not invite me?’

(41) *jə́ nɔ́ nə́ kò jā bə́*
 1SG TOP 2SG call NEG+Q BO

‘As for me, you did not invite me? (Conversation 027)’

In (40) and (41), the negative meaning of *ʔé* followed by *ʋá* is retained. However, when the negator *ʔé* is followed by the interrogative marker *ʋá*, there are two cases in which its negative meaning disappears.

First, see (42). In this example, the speaker expects the hearer to approve the fact that Pwo Karens often speak Burmese in Hpa-an. Thus, in the first case, *ʔé ʋā* (= *jā*) is used in a way to express that the speaker expects the hearer’s approval.

(42) *ʔè dá ʋáN lé thəʔàN, phlòUN θè nɔ́ khlàin pəjàn*
 if meet up LOC Hpa-an Pwo PL TOP speak Burman
ʔá jā
 many NEG+Q

‘If (they) meet up here in Hpa-an, Pwo Karens often speak Burmese, don’t they?’
 (Interview 001)

With this use of *ʔé ʋā* (= *jā*), the sentence-final particle *nè* often occurs, as in (43) and (44):

(43) *ʋə́N nɔ́ mə́ lə́ bá jā nè*
 hear if COP tell right NEG+Q NE

‘If I have heard (the word), I am sure I can tell (it), you know?’ (Interview 001)

- (44) ʔə, bá málú ʔá jǎ nè
 hmm must study many NEG+Q NE

‘Hmm, (I) have to study much, you know?’ (Interview 001)

The second case is that the speaker aims to present new information to the hearer. A typical example is (45). In the situation in which this sentence is used, the hearer does not know the speaker’s name; thus, the speaker tells the hearer his name for the first time. In this usage of ʔé ʋǎ (= *jǎ*), the sentence-final particle *bò* usually appears. (46) and (47) are other examples. ʔé ʋǎ *bò* (= *jǎ bò*) occurs highly frequently in daily speech of the speakers of the Hpa-an dialect.

- (45) jə mèin mwē cəʔéphlòun jǎ bò
 1SG name COP PN [male] NEG+Q BO

‘My name is Kyaw Eh Phlone.’ (Sporadic 0-01)

- (46) ʔətʋéʔəcòun nɔ́ lɔ́ jǎ bò
 experience that EMP NEG+Q BO

‘(I think that what is important is) an experience.’ (Interview 001)

- (47) bá khlàin lé phlòun jǎ bò
 must speak LOC Pwo NEG+Q BO

‘(I would say) we have to speak in Pwo Karen.’ (Interview 001)

Now, let us again consider sentences (40) and (41). These sentences, like examples (45) through (47), end with ʔé ʋǎ *bò* (= *jǎ bò*). Therefore, (40) and (41) can also be used as non-negative sentences to present new information. For example, they can be used in the following situation: At a party, the hearer has forgotten that he himself had invited the speaker. The speaker then utters sentences (40) or (41) in order to let the hearer know that the hearer himself invited the speaker. In this situation, these sentences can be translated as ‘As for me, you invited me’. The fact that the hearer invited the speaker was treated here as new information. Thus, (40) and (41) can be used as either negative or affirmative sentences.

After ʔé ʋǎ *bò* (= *jǎ bò*), the sentence final particle *nè* may be further added when the speaker wants the hearer to approve the new information that the sentence conveys, as in (48):

(48) l̥ wê j̄ā b̥ò n̄è
 tell EMP NEG+Q BO NE

‘(I will) tell you (about that), OK?’ (Sporadic 0-01)

To summarize this section: when the negator *ɲé* co-occurs with the interrogative marker *ʋá*, the sentence can be used as an affirmative statement.

6. Concluding remarks

As we have seen above, main clauses in Pwo Karen are negated by *ɲé*, subordinate clauses by *l̥ ... bá*, and imperative sentences by *l̥x̄*. Moreover, negation of main clauses can be achieved by using the expression *bá ʋá* (right - Q), whose original meaning is ‘Is (it) right?’, which has nothing to do with negation. The form *bá ʋá* that denotes negation can be considered another negator in Pwo Karen. Conversely, when the negator *ɲé* co-occurs with the interrogative marker *ʋá*, it does not always denote negation. The key points are as follows:

- a) The Pwo Karen expression consisting of a verb and an interrogative marker, *bá ʋá* (right - Q), has been idiomatized into a negator.
- b) When the Pwo Karen negator *ɲé* is followed by the interrogative marker *ʋá*, the sentence can be used as an affirmative statement.

It is worth noting that the interrogative marker *ʋá* is involved in both (a) and (b). That is, in Pwo Karen, polarity can be reversed by the effect of an interrogative marker. Here, we need to consider why interrogativity can reverse polarity. As shown in (21) through (23), interrogativity may be used to express skepticism about the situations expressed in the sentences. Skepticism is a negative emotion. Thus, these sentences are interrogative in form, but are, in effect, pragmatically negative. This would be the reason that the polarity is reversed by an interrogative marker. That is, an interrogative sentence can express skepticism, and skepticism is psychologically connected with negation.

Considering that an expression containing an interrogative marker has become a negator in Pwo Karen, it might be possible that an interrogative marker itself is grammaticalized as a negator in some languages. Lucas (2018) says that there do not appear to be any documented cases of a negator deriving from a particle marking polar interrogatives. However, Dryer (2009) suggests that many clause-final negators of central African languages could originate from clause-final question particles, and Wilmsen (2013) claims that the negator *-š* in some Arabic dialects has an interrogative origin.⁶ Pwo Karen is not a language in

⁶ See also Lucas (2018), which offers a critique of Wilmsen’s proposals.

which an interrogative marker itself becomes a negator. Nevertheless, since an interrogative marker has the effect of reversing polarity in this language, it would not be surprising if somewhere in the world there is a language that has developed an interrogative marker as a negator.

Abbreviations

BO	the sentence-final particle <i>bò</i>	PL	plural
COP	copular verb	PN	personal name
EMP	emphasis	PROH	prohibitive
HORT	hortative	Q	question
IRR	irrealis	S	subject
LOC	locative	SFP	sentence-final particle
NC	numeral classifier	SG	singular
NE	the sentence-final particle <i>nè</i>	TOP	topic
NEG	negative marker or particle	V	verb
NP	noun phrase	1	first person
O	object	2	second person
OPP	verb particle denoting opportunity	3	third person

Transcription

The transcription used in this study was phonemic. Consonant phonemes are /p, θ [θ~t̪θ~t̪], t, c [t̪], k, ʔ, ph [p^h], th [t^h], ch [t̪^h], kh [k^h], b [β], d [d~d̪], ɕ, x, h, ɣ, ʋ, m, n, ɲ, (ŋ), ŋ, w, j, l, (r [r~r̪~r̪̄])/. The bracketed consonants mainly occur in loan words. Rhymes are /i [ǎi], i, u [u~ǎu], i [i], u, e, ə, o, ε, a, ɔ, ai, au, əŋ [əŋ~ǎ], aŋ [ǎŋ~ǎ̄], oŋ [oŋ~ǎ̄], ein [ein~ei], əuŋ [əuŋ~əu], ouŋ [ouŋ~ou], ain [ain~aī]/. There are four tones: high-level /á/ [55], mid-level /ā/ [33~334], low-level /à/ [11], and falling /â/ [51]. Pwo Karen has atonic syllables, which can occur in all positions except in utterance final. The only rhyme that can occur in atonic syllables is /ə/, and atonic syllables are transcribed with no tone marking.

I formerly transcribed the vowel phoneme /i/ [i] as /ɪ/. However, the symbol /ɪ/ is difficult to distinguish from /i/ when they are written with a tone sign. Compare, for example, /í/ and /i/. Moreover, /ɪ/ and /i/ are hard to distinguish from each other in some IPA fonts in italics. Therefore, I presently use /i/ instead of /ɪ/.

In an example, a period shows the end of a sentence and a comma shows the border of adjacent clauses.

Data

In the brackets after the English translation of each example, the author's material number is shown. Materials used in this paper are as follows: Folktale 019 and Folktale I-04 are folktales; Essay II-12, Essay III-08, and Essay IV-03 are essays; Short novel IV-04 is a short novel; Conversation 001, Conversation 002, Conversation 003, and Conversation 027 are conversation data; Narrative 025 is a narrative; Movie <*khwījānwéchin*> is a Pwo Karen movie; Sporadic 0-01 contains data sporadically collected during my research (such data as found in conversation with Pwo Karen people, Pwo Karen TV programs, Pwo Karen movies, or Pwo Karen essays); and Interview 001 is an interview program from an internet Pwo Karen news. Examples without a material number were acquired through elicitation.

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