Predicative and propositional negation in the Oceanic language Teop

Ulrike Mosel

Teop, an Oceanic language spoken in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, has two types of declarative negation constructions:

1) The Double Negator *sa*(*ka*) … *haa* negates predicates formed by Verb Complexes, Noun Phrases, Prepositional Phrases, or pronouns, e.g. ‘(did) not fall’, ‘(is) not a human’, ‘(is) not at the edge of the reef’, ‘(is) not us’.
2) The Predicative Exisistential Negator *ahiki* ‘not exist’ governs a non-specific Noun Phrase or Complement Clause, e.g. ‘(there is) not any mango’, ‘(it was) not (the case) that she answered’.

The *ahiki*-complement-clause construction negates a whole proposition, e.g. ‘(there is) a mango’, ‘she answered’. If the proposition is given by the context, *ahiki* may form a clause by itself in the sense of ‘no’ and function as a negative pro-sentence or an emphatic anaphoric holistic negation, e.g. ‘It was not finished, no.’

The Teop data and a brief overview of other languages with distinct propositional negation constructions show that these constructions are not as unusual as claimed by Horn (2020:12) and Miestamo (2017:248f) and, consequently, deserve more attention in linguistic typology than in Mietsamo (2025).

Horn, Laurence R. 2020. Negation and opposition. In: Déprez, Viviane and M. Teresa Espinal.*The Oxford Handbook of Negation,* 7-25. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Miestamo, Matti. 2017. Negation. In: Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald & R. M. W. Dixon (eds.), The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Typology, pp. 405-439.

Miestamo, Matti. 2025. Questionnaire for describing the negation system of a language. In Matti Miestamo & Ljuba Veselinova (eds.), *Negation in the world’s languages III: Papunesia, Australia, and the Americas*, 21–36. Berlin: Language Science Press. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.17788121