Presuppositional negation in Wapishana

Wapishana is an Amazonian language which belongs to the Arawakan branch, and is spoken by 6,000 to 7,000 people in the territories of Roraima (Brazil), Venezuela, and Guyana. In this paper our aim is to analyze the expression of negation in Wapishana, mainly the contrast between what we call presuppositional and simple negation.

Negation in Wapishana is expressed, among other strategies, by the items 'auna'a', 'mana' and the prefix 'may-'. 'mana', a rarely used item, appears exclusively in imperatives sentences, and as 'auna'a expresses a simple negation, i.e., the negation of the occurrence of an event or the negation of an state, concerning a relevant time of reference:

(1) Manaa pytizan naa wyry'y
    Neg 2ps drink ? this
    "Don't drink this"

(2) Auna'a Pedro tykap kuazaze
    Neg 3ps see snake
    "Pedro does not see snake"

The prefix 'may-' has a "private" interpretation, and it is usually prefixed in an adjective:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Adjective-forming suffixes 'chi'; 'u'</th>
<th>Prefix 'may-'</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>daiauru</td>
<td>&quot;husband&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;without husband&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dani</td>
<td>&quot;genesis&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;without children&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daku</td>
<td>&quot;mouth&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;without teeth&quot;</td>
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The negation ‘auna’a can appear with the item ‘naa’, expressing in this case what we call "presuppositional negation", i.e., a negation which presupposes a previous occurrence of the event or the state being currently negated and says that the event or state is not and will be no more the case. For instance, (3) presupposes that Pedro has already seen a snake, but that is not presupposed in the simple negation in (4):

(3) Auna’a naa Pedro tykap kuazaze
    Neg 3ps see snake
    "Pedro does not see snakes any longer"

(4) Auna’a Pedro tykap kuazaze
    Neg 3ps see snake
    "Pedro does not see snakes"

We show four pieces of evidence in favor of our analyses:
(a) the interaction of ‘auna’a naa’ with adverbs such as ‘never’ – since ‘auna’a naa’ presupposes the existence of a previous occurrence it does not combine with adverbs such as ‘never’, which states that the event or state being negated does not have a previous occurrence:

(5) Auna’a naa Pedro tykap kuazaze
    Neg 3ps see snake
    "Pedro does not see snakes any longer"

(6) Auna’a Pedro tykap kuazaze
    Neg 3ps see snake
    "Pedro does not see snakes"

(b) the interaction with punctual adverbs such as ‘now’ – the negation with ‘auna’a naa’ presupposes a previous event or state and says the it is and will no longer be the case, that is why this negation is not compatible with punctual adverbs:

(7) Auna’a Pedro tykapizun kuazaze
    Neg 3ps see never snake
    "Pedro never sees snake"

(8) *Auna’a naa Pedro tykapizun kuazaze
    Auna’a naa Pedro tykap -izun kuazaze
    Neg 3ps see never snake
    "Pedro does not see snakes any longer never"

We show four pieces of evidence in favor of our analyses:
(a) the interaction of ‘auna’a naa’ with adverbs such as ‘never’ – since ‘auna’a naa’ presupposes the existence of a previous occurrence it does not combine with adverbs such as ‘never’, which states that the event or state being negated does not have a previous occurrence:

(9) *Auna’a naa ma’apai nii zakap ii kai.
    Neg ? papaya NPRES farm in now
“There is no papaya in the farm any longer now”
(10) Auna’a ma’apai nii zakap ii kai
   Neg papaya NPRES farm in now
   “There is no papaya in the farm now”

(c) the presence of ‘auna’a naa’ in sentences denoting events or states which are never the case - since ‘auna’a naa’ presupposes a previous occurrence of the event or state being negated, it does not appear in sentences with expresses events or states which are always false:

(11) Puaty auna’a pidian
    Ape Neg person
    “An ape is not a person”

(12) * Puaty auna’a naa pidian
    Ape NEG ? person
    “An ape is not a person any longer”

(d) the “presuppositional family” test – being presuppositional, we expected that the presupposed content “survives” in certain sentential environments, such as the ones below, in which if (13) presupposes (14), then the negation of (13) in (15), an interrogative and a conditional formed with (13) in (16) and (17) also presuppose (14):

(13) Ungary panibezut dia’a auna’a naa ma’apai kakan
(14) Ungary panibezut dia’a ma’apai kakan
    1ps yard posp. papaya to grow fruits
    “In my yard, papaya used to grow”
(15) Auna’a mixi’u man ungary panibezut dia’a auna’a naa ma’apai kakan
    NEG truth really 1ps yard posp. NEG ? papaya to grow fruits
    It is not true that in my yard papaya doesn’t grow any longer
(16) Ungary panibezut dia’a auna’a naa ma’apai kakan?
    1ps yard posp. NEG ? papaya to grow fruits
    “In my yard papaya doesn’t grow any longer?”
(17) Ungary panibezyt dia’a auna’a naa ma’apai kakaan unturian ma’apai
     Ungary panibezyt dia’a auna’a naa ma’apai kakan un- turia- n ma’apai
     1p yard posp. NEG ? papaya to grow fruits 1ps buy MI papaya
     “If in my yard papaya doesn’t grow, the I’m going to buy it”

Finally, the item ‘naa’ appears in other constructions and syntactic positions with different meanings, mainly in the verbal system indicating a very recent past or something about to happen. In a first analysis the item ‘naa’, which appears in the verbal system, and the item ‘naa’, which appears in negation contexts, combined with ‘auna’a’ seems to be different homophonous items.

References