

Chapter 5

Other uses

5.1 Introduction

There are many other uses of *ba* apart from the main verb, pre-verb and post-verb function in the preceding chapters. This chapter describes the other functions which do not fall under the earlier chapters. Topics covered include negation, lexicalization, subordination, question words, and expressive verbs.

5.2 Negation

Negation in Sgaw is marked by a circumfix *tə- ... -ba*. Gilmore (1898) described negation in Sgaw by calling *tə* a prefix and *ba* as affix. He describes *ba* as a negative particle being used to close a negative sentence. He also mentions that *ba* is pronounced colloquially as *bə*. One of the interesting facts about *ba* is that no matter what its function is, it never changes phonological shape, except in the negative. Speakers use several variations in phonetic form with the negative. *ba*, *bo* and *bə* are used interchangeably with no meaning or grammatical function difference. Jones (1961) calls *tə ... ba* a discontinuous negative morpheme.

5.2.1 Simple negation

This section describes negation in Sgaw Karen. The next section deals with double negative constructions.

Negation can have either narrow scope (over a predicate) or sentential scope (over the whole sentence). Each of these is marked in different ways. Narrow scope negation has *tə-* before the predicate being negated and then the predicate is immediately followed by *ba*. In sentential scope negation *tə-* again occurs before the predicate being negated, and *ba* occurs sentence final.

Example (123) is a typical example of simple negation.

- 123) *ə-tə-doʔ.ne* ***ba*** *jwa* *ə.ɓɔ.ə.mu* *dī* *pʰo.θa* *ə.θoʔ* *tə-ya.ya*
 3-not-receive NEG God kingdom as children as one-CLF
 V ADV N N SUB N SUB QNT

They did not receive God's kingdom as children. [Mason_Mk 10:15]

Note how the predicate element being negated is surrounded by *tə-* initially and *ba* finally. It is also common for the negated predicate to be at the end of the clause, as in (124) and (125), but unlike sentential negation only the predicate is under the scope of negation:

- 124) *du* *da.ɔ.da.ɔ* *tə-θe* ***ba***
 fast food not-able NEG
 V N V ADV

Cannot fast [Mason_Mk 2:20]

- 125) *θo.le* *ə.bwe* *tə-ba* ***ba***
 car price not-reasonable NEG
 N N V ADV

The price of the car is not reasonable. [Con 3/10 (3)]

Note that in (125) there are two instances of *ba* – the first meaning reasonable and the second marking negation.

The followings examples show the negation of intransitive verbs

- 126) *nə-mi* *jɔ* *ɔ* *ne* *ə-blɛʔ* *tə-a* ***ba***
 2s-if step 3 TOP 3-powder not-many NEG
 SUB V PRO P N V ADV

If you step on that, it won't be much powder. [Harvest 22]

- 127) *jə-θa.kuʔ-lɔ* *jə.θaʔ* *dɔʔ* *xe.lɔ.kwi* *ə-kʰɔ.pʰiʔ*
 1s-bend-down myself and untie 3-shoe
 V PRO CONJ V N
ə-bli *ne* *jə-tə-ye* *tə-ba*
 3-rope TOP 1s-not-good NEG-correct
 N P V V

For me to bend down and untie his shoelace, I am not worthy.

[Mason_Mk 1:7]

- 128) *tə-me* *ba* *dī* *bwa.kweʔ.liʔ* *tə.pʰa* *ə.θoʔ.ne* *lɔ*
 not-be NEG as writer PL as Pf
 V NEG SUB N QNT ADV Pf

[They] are not like the experts in the law.

Lit: [They] are not like writers. [Mason_Mk 1:22]

- 129) *tə-jiʔ* *ba* *dɔʔ* *da* *zu* *ye* *tʰɔ*
 not-long NEG and thing rain good climb
 V ADV CONJ N V ADJ V

Not so long [now] and it will rain more. [Harvest 12]

- 130) *bɔ.θo* *pʰo* *tə-diu* *ne* *ə-mo* *tə-o* *ba*
 tiger little one-CLF TOP 3-mother not-exist NEG
 N DIM QNT P N V ADV

The little tiger does not have its mother. [P&T 1]

- 131) *bwa.kjo.pʰo* *ne* *o* *ə.ɣa.kʰi.sʰi* *tə-o* *ba*
 student TOP exist twenty not-exist NEG
 N P V NUM V ADV

There existed no more than twenty students. [Elephant3]

Ability can also be negated as in (132) and (133):

- 132) *pʰo.θa-pʰo* *tə.nɔ* *ne* *tʰɔ* *tə-θe* *ba*
 child-little some TOP climb not-able NEG
 N QNT P V V ADV

Some little children cannot climb. [Elephant13]

- 133) *nə-ɔ* *ja* *tə-θe* *ba*
 2s-eat 1s not-able NEG
 V PRO V ADV

You cannot eat me. [P&T 16]

When transitive verbs are negated with narrow scope *ba* occurs immediately after the verb:

- 134) *ba.ma.nu.lə zo.jo.ha ə.blɛ.ə.bɔ dɔ? bwa.p^ha.ɹifɛ ə.blɛ.ə.bɔ tɔp^ha*
 why John disciple and Pharisee disciples PL
 Q Name N CONJ N N QNT
du da.ɔ.da.ɔ dɔ? nə.blɛ.nə.bɔ tɔ.p^ha tɔ-du ba
 fast food and disciple PL not-fast NEG
 V N CONJ N QNT V ADV
da.ɔ.da.ɔ lɛ
 food Pf
 N Pf

Why do John's disciples and the Pharisees' disciples fast and your disciples do not fast? [Mason_Mk 2:18]

- 135) *lə da tɔ-s^ho.gə.mo ba ə.bu*
 COMPL thing NEG-think NEG inside
 P N V ADV LCLZR

Without having thought [P&T 21]

When there is an adverb modifying the verb *ba* appears after the adverb, and never between the verb and adverb:

- 136) *jə-ma dī ə.ya tɔ-θe lə? ba*
 1s-do as other not-able anymore NEG
 V SUB N V ADV ADV

I can no longer do like others. [P&T 12]

- 137) *nə-ge xe tɔ-ŋɔ ko? ba*
 2s-go.back run not-easy also NEG
 V V V ADV ADV

It is also not easy to run back. [Elephant7]

- 138) *tɔ-me ə.nɔ.gɔ ba*
 not-be real NEG
 V ADV ADV

[It's] not real. [P&T 15]

- 139) *da o.ɓwi?o.θa tɔ-k^hlu? se.kɔ? ba*
 thing rest not-free also NEG
 N V V ADV ADV

[Someone] is not free to rest. [Harvest 16]

- 140) *a.wε tε-tʰɔ da tə-tʰɔ.ḡa? lə? ḡa*
 3 say-climb thing not-reach anymore NEG
 PRO V N V ADV ADV

His speech does not come out. [Elephant15]

As mentioned above when used in negative constructions *ḡa* is often changed phonologically, as the following examples show:

- 141) *tə-θe ḡo*
 not-able NEG
 V ADV
 [It/someone] is not able. [P&T 17]]
- 142) *nə-hi?.ne jə-ma tə-θe ḡo nɔ*
 2s-take 1s-wife not-able NEG EMPH
 V N V ADV Pf
 You cannot take my wife! [P&T 38]
- 143) *dwa? ge da tə-ḡa ḡo*
 calculate go.back thing not-able NEG
 V V N V ADV
 [They] cannot recalculate. [Elephant18]
- 144) *pə-tə-ḡa ma ə lɔ.pə.θa?*
 we-not-OBLIG make bad each other
 V V V RFLX

We should not make trouble with each other. [P&T 24]

In example (144) only the pre-verbal *tə-* is present which has scope over the obligation modal marker *ḡa*, and there is no post-verb *ḡa*.

- 145) *jə-tə-si.ŋɔ lə? θu ḡa*
 1s-not-judge later 3 NEG
 V ADV PRO ADV

I do not judge you.

Lit: It is not the case that I judged you. [P&T 42]

Other examples can be seen below:

- 146) *tə-me lə da.ɣe ə.ɣu.ə.ɣa ɬa*
 not-be with reason other NEG
 V P N ADV ADV
 It is not for another reason. [P&T 25]
- 147) *tə-kɔʔ wɛ tə-ɬa wɛ ɬa*
 not-suitable 3 not-right 3 NEG
 V PRO V PRO ADV
 It is not suitable nor right. [P&T 40]
- 148) *nə-tə-ɬa ɔ tʰoʔ.mi.pʰo i ləʔ ɬa*
 2s-not-arrive eat piglet this later NEG
 V V N DET ADV ADV
 It is not the case that you have to eat this piglet. [P&T 43]
- 149) *tə-hɛ ma ɬu bwa ɬa*
 not-come do near 1pl NEG
 V V V PRO ADV
 It does not come near us. [Elephant8]
- 150) *ə.wɛ tə-hɛ lu xuu da.kə.mɛʔ.kə.mɔ lə bwa ləʔ ɬa*
 3 not-come chase find problems with 1pl later NEG
 PRO V V V N P PRO ADV ADV
 It does not come to find problems with us. [Elephant17]
- 151) *tə-ɬa da ɔ ɔ lə tʰo.pʰo.liʔ.pʰo ɬa*
 not-encounter thing eat 3 by bird NEG
 V N V PRO P N ADV
 It is not eaten by birds. [Harvest 11]
- 152) *ə.wɛ.θe tə-ʃə sʰo ɬu ɬa*
 3pl not-step early paddy NEG
 PRO V ADV N ADV
 They do not thresh rice early. [Harvest 25]

Evidence for only the newly asserted material of an utterance being negated can be found in sentences with a topical noun phrase. Here the topic (old information) is assumed to be true and only the comment (new information) is being negated:

- 153) *a.wε i ne tə-me ə.du.ə.da ba*
 3 this TOP not-be enemy NEG
 PRO DET P V N ADV

As for them, [they] are not enemy. [Elephant11]

5.2.2 Double negation

This section discusses complex negative sentences. In many of these examples *ba* occurs twice. The structure of the negation is as above for simple negative clauses: *tə-verb () ba*. The elements that occur in the parenthesis are typically a noun phrase, but sometimes a sentence or a pronoun may be present.

- 154) *tə-t^hi ba wε nɔ.tə.blɔ ba*
 not-see NEG 3s never NEG
 V NEG PRO ADV ADV

He never sees it. [P&T 20]

In example (154) the first *ba* after the verb ‘see’ feels to me like it is marking ability, rather than negation. Then the sentence would be translated ‘he never is able to see it’.

The examples below show some of the complexity of “double negative” sentences. As these are the only examples found and they all occur in translated material, I have not done any further analysis. By looking through the complete Bible I would expect to collect additional examples that would help sort out the patterns found.

- 155) *tə-me ba jə-hε koʔ-ge bwa ə.tɔ.ə.lo ba*
 not-be NEG 1s-come call-back people righteous NEG
 V ADV V V N ADJ ADV

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

Lit: It is not true that I have come to call back righteous people.

[Mason_Mk 2:17]

- 156) *da.kuu.da.θoʔ ə.lɔ.li ne bwa tə-s^haʔ klaʔ ba*
 clothing old TOP people not-sew patch NEG
 N ADJ P N V V ADV
 ɔ lə da ə.θɔ nɔ.də.ya ba
 3 with thing new nobody NEG
 PRO P N ADJ N ADV

No one sews a patch of new (cloth) on an old garment. [Mason_Mk 2:21]

- 157) *tə-θa-tʰɔ* *ba* *wɛ* *ba*
 not-ripe-climb NEG 3 NEG
 V ADV PRO NEG

It did not produce grain.

Lit: It did not ripen. [Mason_Mk 4:7]

- 158) *da.na* *tə.pʰa* *θe.ŋa* *ɔ* *dɔʔ* *tə-diuʔ*
 evil PL know 3 and not-let
 N QNT V PRO CONJ V

gə.do *ba* *ɔ* *ba* *lɔ*
 talk NEG 3 NEG DECL
 V ADV PRO ADV Pf

The spirits knew him and he did not let them speak. [Mason_Mk 1:34]

- 159) *pə-kə-haʔ.ɣɔ* *ne* *me* *nə-tə-paʔ* *ba* *lə* *da.nɔ.tə.mi* *ba* *fiə*
 1pl-IRR-destroy TOP be 2s-not-keep NEG at nothing NEG Q
 V P V V ADV P N ADV Pf

Don't you care that we are about to die? [Mason_Mk 4:38]

Lit: We will be destroyed and won't you keep it as nothing?

5.3 Source of negation

With only a few hundred years of written materials in Sgaw it is not possible to identify the diachronic changes and reanalysis that have happened with respect to *ba* and negation.

One possible source would be from the lexical meaning 'correct'. This assumes that *tə-* was the original negative marker in Karen and that the addition of *ba* to mark negation is more recent. Supporting evidence for this claim comes from other Karen languages. Manson (2010) describes the pattern of negation across seven Karen languages listed in Table 11, where the preverbal element can be clearly seen as being cognate across all the Karen languages, while the post-verbal/clause final marker has at least four different forms.

Table 11: Patterns of negation in Karen languages (adapted from Manson 2010)

Grammar	Pattern	Language	Pre-verbal marker	Other marker
NEG V	Pre-verbal	Kayan	<i>sá</i>	-
NEG V NEG	Pre-verbal & Post-verbal	Sgaw	<i>tá-</i>	<i>báʔ</i>
		Pwo	<i>làʔ</i>	<i>bá</i>
NEG V (X) NEG	Pre-verbal & clause final	Sgaw	<i>táʔ</i>	<i>báʔ</i>
		Bwe	<i>dá</i>	<i>nɔ</i>
		Geba	<i>tā</i>	<i>nɔʔ</i>
V (X) NEG	Clause final	Palaychi	-	<i>ché</i>
		Kayah	-	<i>to</i>

More supporting evidence that ‘correct’ is the source of negative *bá* can be seen in the following example:

- 160)
nə-θe.nɔ
kə.sɔ.dɔ
bá
- 2s-remember
also
Pf
- V
ADV
Pf
- You remember, right? (P&T 13)

Here the clause final *bá* is functioning as a tag question, which has scope over the whole clause. So if the source of negative *bá* is the verb ‘correct’, then the first use would be with wide scope negation ‘it is not correct that...’. After several generations of speakers using this pattern *bá* would have lost its ‘correct’ meaning and been reinterpreted as only marking negation. Once this happened, *bá* was then able to be used for narrow scope negation.

5.3.1 Subordination

The syllable *bá* occurs in the subordinator *bá.s^ha*. The morpheme *s^ha* does not occur as an independent word in modern Sgaw, so its source cannot be identified at present. The subordinator *bá.s^ha* occurs clause initial in adversative clauses

(examples (161) to (163)) and clause final before *θa.na.ke* ‘though’ to form a complex subordinator with a concessive meaning (example (164)).

- 161) *ḡa.s^ha lə.k^hi.ne ə-mo ne t^hɔʔ.mi mo p^haʔ.do ne*
 but later 3s-mother TOP pig mother big TOP
 SUB TEMP N P N N ADJ P
θi.θa.da.kwi ə-p^ho lə
 die.leave 3s-child Pf
 V N Pf
 But later its mother, the big mother pig, died and left its child. [P&T 3]
- 162) *ḡa.s^ha tə.s^hɔ.tə.s^hɔ ne ɓuʔ.lə lə pə tfo*
 but step.by.step TOP near at 1pl school
 SUB ADV P V P PRO N
 But step by step it is closer to our school. [Elephant9]
- 163) *ḡa.s^ha ne pə-ma lə da.zu kla*
 but TOP 1pl-do in rain among
 SUB P V P N LCLZR
 But we do it in the rain. [Harvest17]
- 164) *pə-bli da ḡa.s^ha θa.na.ke,*
 1pl-afraid thing but though
 V N SUB CONJ
 Although we were afraid ... [Elephant12]

Another subordinator with the morpheme *ḡa* is *ḡa.tə.ḡa* ‘probably’:

- 165) *ḡa.tə.ḡa kə-t^hi ne da o lə ə.lo*
 probably IRR-see get thing exist LOC on
 SUB V V N V P LCLZR
 Probably will see something on it (if he could find any fruit on it.)
 [Mason_Mk 11:12]

The fossilized phrase *ḡa.tə.ḡa* connects the sentence with the previous sentence and shows the comment or prediction of the speaker. The direct meaning is ‘right not right’ and the closest meaning to English would be ‘probably’.

5.3.2 Related to

ba.xa marks a relationship between two noun phrases. Often the conjunction/preposition *dɔʔ* ‘and’, ‘with’ occurs before the second noun phrase. This use can be seen as an extension of the lexical meaning ‘touch’. *ba.xa* is a verb as it can be negated. This construction is common in the Sgaw Bible.

- 166) *da.doʔ.blə ba.xaʔ da.bɔ.ja lɔ.ge ə.θaʔ lə*
 baptism related repentance go.back oneself COMPL
 N V N V RFLX P
da.bla da.dɛ.baʔ ə.ɣe lɔ
 forgive sin reason Pf
 V N N Pf
 Baptism related to repenting so sins are forgiving. [Mason_Mk 1:4]

- 167) *je.fuʔ hɛ lə nə.zə.ɹaʔ ba.xaʔ dɔʔ ɡɔ.ɡa.li.la*
 Jesus come from Nazareth related with Galilee
 Name V P Name V P Name
 Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee. [Mason_Mk 1:9]

- 168) *da.ba.jo ba.xaʔ dɔʔ ə.i.tə.xa*
 worry related with present.time
 N V P N
 Worries related to the present time. [Mason_Mk 4:19]

- 169) *da θaʔ.ba.ə ba.xaʔ dɔʔ da ma.θə.ju*
 thing disgust relate.to with thing desolate
 N V V P N V
 The abomination of desolation
 Lit: The disgusting thing related to the desolate thing. [Mason_Mk 13:14]

5.3.3 Question words

The Sgaw reason question word ‘why’ is also composed with *ba*. *ba.mə.nu* can occur either clause initial or clause final with the question illocutionary for marker *le*.

Examples are shown below:

- 170) *bwa tə-ɣa i ɡə.do kə.ma jwa ba.mə.nu.le*
 people one-CLF this speak wrong God why
 N QNT DET V V N Q
 Why does this person speak wrong to God? [Mason_Mk 2:7]

- 171) *bwa θi.gwa ɔ ba.mə.nuu.ə.xo.lɛ*
 people ask 3 why
 N V PRO Q

People asked him why. [P&T 36]

- 172) *ba.mə.nuu.ə.xo.lɛ ne me.lə da.zu ə.xo hɔ.kʰo ge*
 why TOP due.to rain due.to earth go.back
 Q P SUB N SUB N V
kaʔ.ba ka.da.ge bu
 cover back paddy
 V V N

Why it is due to the rain makes the ground cover back the rice.
 [Harvest10]

- 173) *ba.mə.nuu.ə.xo ne pə-ma di.ne.ə.xo ne nə.mu do*
 why TOP 1pl-do like.that TOP smell.good great
 Q P V ADV P V V

Why is it if we make so, the smell is sweeter. [Harvest26]

A possible source for this question word could be the ‘arrive’, ‘come to be’ meaning.
 So support for this can be seen in the following example question:

- 174) *ba diʔ.lɛ pʰo.do.kʰwa*
 arrive what nephew
 V Q N

What happened nephew? [Elephant16]

5.3.4 Expressive words

There are a number of fossilized constructions that can be seen to have some internal parts, but are no longer able to be separated. These words are listed here to show that not only has *ba* grammaticalized into grammatical markers, but also lexicalized into new complex lexemes many different parts of speech.

Compound nouns derived from verbs:

ba.kuʔ.ba.ka ‘a wide gash’ Lit: happen-cut-happen-(?)

Epistemic adverbials:

ba.ta.ba ‘perhaps’ Lit: correct-not-correct

ḡa.kʰəʔ.tə.ḡa.kʰəʔ ‘probably, maybe’ Lit: arrive-time-not-arrive-time

Illness and injury:

ḡa.kʰi.tuʔ.ḡa.kʰi.taʔ ‘have leprosy’

ḡa.saʔ ‘be connected; take a disease’

ḡa.sʰɛʔ ‘be wounded by some pointed instrument’

ḡa.tə.muʔ ‘have a cold’

ḡa.da.dɛ.baʔ ‘suffer punishment’

ḡa.tiʔ ‘get pinched’

ḡa.do.ḡa.tʰiʔ ‘be wounded’

ḡa.nuuʔ ‘have leprosy’

ḡa.da.xo have itch or mange

Encounter/suffer

ḡa.xɛ.θaʔ.kə.lə ‘have temptation’

ḡa.suu ‘meet, as in travelling’

ḡa.tə.səʔ ‘be caught in a snare’

ḡa.tʰiʔ ‘be hit as by the edge or prominent part of a thing’

ḡa.ḡliʔ ḡa.ḡlaʔ.ḡa.ḡlɛʔ ‘be caught, as by a hook’

ḡa.kʰəʔ ‘get wet’

ḡa.sə.tʰəʔ ‘get wet on the underside, as things in a leaky boat’

ḡa.da.e.loʔ ‘get into a quarrel’

ḡa.tuuʔ ḡa.tuuʔ.ḡa.ka ‘get cut by a knife’

ḡa.tuuʔ.ḡa.xɛ ‘cut off, hurt, wounded’

Speaker attitude adverbials

ḡa.kʰəʔ ‘suitable, proper’

ḡa.kʰəʔ ḡa.da.ḡa.də ‘negligently, carelessly’

ḡa.jə ‘emphatic affirmation’