Chapter 5
Other uses

5.1 Introduction

There are many other uses of *ɓa* 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- ... -ɓa*. Gilmore (1898) described negation in Sgaw by calling *tə* a prefix and *ɓa* as affix. He describes *ɓa* as a negative particle being used to close a negative sentence. He also mentions that *ɓa* is pronounced colloquially as *bə*. One of the interesting facts about *ɓa* 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. *ɓa, bo* and *ɓɔ* are used interchangeably with no meaning or grammatical function difference. Jones (1961) calls *tə ... ɓa* 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 *ɓa*. In sentential scope negation *tə-* again occurs before the predicate being negated, and *ɓa* occurs sentence final.

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

123)

ə-tə-ɗoʔ.ne	6a	jwa	ə.6ɔ.ə.mɯ	di	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 6a 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)

ɗu	da.ɔ.da.ɔ	tə-θe	6a
fast	food	not-able	NEG
V	N	V	ADV

Cannot fast [Mason_Mk 2:20]

125)

θo.le	ə.bwe	tə-6a	6a
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 6a – 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	6a
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-θə.kuʔ-lɔ	jə.θaʔ	ɗɔʔ	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-6a
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 ɓa dĩ bwa.kwɛʔ.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 ɓa dɔʔ da zu ɣe 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) *ɓɔ.θo pʰo tə-dɯ ne ə-mo tə-o ɓa*
    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.ya.kʰi.sʰi tə-o ɓa*
    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 ɓa*
    child-little some TOP climb not-able NEG
    N   QNT P   V   V   ADV

Some little children cannot climb. [Elphant13]

133) *nə-ɔ ja tə-θe ɓa*
    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 *ɓa* occurs immediately after the verb:

134) ɓa.mə.nɯ.lə zɔ.jo.ha ə.blɛ.ə.bɔ ɗɔʔ bwa.pʰa.ɹiʃɛ ə.blɛ.ə.bɔ təpʰa
    why   John   disciple and   Pharisee   disciples PL
    Q   Name   N   CONJ N   N   QNT

    ɗu   da.ɔ.da.ɔ ɗɔʔ   nə.blɛ.nə.ɓɔ tə.pʰa tə-ɗu   ɓa
    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   tə-sʰo.gə.mo ɓa   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 ɓa appears after the adverb, and never between the verb and adverb:

136) jə-ma ɗi   ə.ya   tə-θe   ləʔ   ɓa
    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   tə-ŋɔ   koʔ   ɓa
    2s-go.back run   not-easy also   NEG
    V   V   V   ADV ADV
    It is also not easy to run back. [Elephant7]

138) tə-me   ə.nɔ.gɔ ɓa
    not-be real   NEG
    V   ADV   ADV
    [It's] not real. [P&T 15]

139) da   o.ɓwiʔ.o.θa tə-kʰluʔ se.kɔʔ ɓa
    thing rest   not-free also   NEG
    N   V   V   ADV ADV
    [Someone] is not free to rest. [Harvest 16]

140) ə.wɛ   tɛ-tʰɔ   da   tə-tʰɔ.ɓaʔ ləʔ   ɓa
      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 *ɓa* is often changed phonologically, as the following examples show:

141) tə-θe   ɓo
      not-able   NEG
      V   ADV

[It/someone] is not able. [P&T 17)]

142) nə-hiʔ.ne jə-ma   tə-θe   ɓo   nɔ
      2s-take   1s-wife   not-able   NEG   EMPH
      V   N   V   ADV   Pf

You cannot take my wife! [P&T 38]

143) dwaʔ   ge   da   tə-ɓa   ɓo
      calculate   go.back   thing not-able   NEG
      V   V   N   V   ADV

[They] cannot recalculate. [Elephant18]

144) pə-tə-ɓa   ma   ə   lɔ.pə.θaʔ
      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 *ɓa,* and there is no post-verb *ɓa.*

145) jə-tə-si.ŋɔ   ləʔ   θɯ   ɓa
      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.ye   ə.yɯ.ə.ya **ɓa**
not-be with reason other   NEG
V   P   N   ADV   ADV

It is not for another reason. [P&T 25]

147) **tə-kɹə?**   wɛ   tə-ɓa   wɛ   **ɓa**
not-suitable 3   not-right 3   NEG
V   PRO V   PRO ADV

It is not suitable nor right. [P&T 40]

148) **nə-tə-ɓa**   ɔ   tʰo?.mi.pʰo i   lə? **ɓa**
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 ɓɯ   bwa **ɓa**
not-come do near 1pl NEG
V   V   V   PRO ADV

It does not come near us. [Elephant8]

150) **ə.wɛ** **tə-hɛ**   lu   xɯ   da.kə.mɛ?.kə.mɔ lə   bwa lə? **ɓa**
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-ɓa**   da   ɔ   ɔ   lə tʰo.pʰo.li?.pʰo **ɓa**
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-jɔ**   sʰo   ɓɯ   **ɓa**
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) *ə.wɛ   i   ne   tə-me   ə.dɯ.ə.da   ɓa*
     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 *ɓa* occurs twice. The structure of the negation is as above for simple negative clauses: *tə*-verb ( ) *ɓa*. The elements that occur in the parenthesis are typically a noun phrase, but sometimes a sentence or a pronoun may be present.

154) *tə-tʰi   ɓa   wɛ   nɔ.tə.blɔ   ɓa*
     not-see   NEG   3s   never   NEG
     V   NEG   PRO   ADV   ADV

He never sees it. [P&T 20]

In example (154) the first *ɓa* 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   ɓa   jə-hɛ   koʔ-ge   bwa   ə.tɔ.ə.lo   ɓa*
     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.kɯ.da.θoʔ   ə.lɔ.li   ne   bwa   tə-sʰaʔ   klaʔ   ɓa*
     clothing   old   TOP   people   not-sew   patch   NEG
     N   ADJ   P   N   V   V   ADV

     ɔ   lə   da   ə.θɔ   nɔ.də.ya   ɓa
     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*   **ɓa**   *wɛ*   **ɓa**
    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-dɯʔ*
    evil   PL   know   3   and   not-let
    N   QNT   V   PRO   CONJ   V

    gə.do **ɓa** *ɔ*   **ɓa** *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.yɔ*   *ne*   *me* *nə-tə-paʔ*   **ɓa** *lə* *da.nɔ.tə.mi* **ɓa** *ɦa*
    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 *ɓa* 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 *ɓa* 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	sə́	-
NEG V NEG	Pre-verbal & Post-verbal	Sgaw	tə-	ɓáʔ
		Pwo	lə̀ʔ	bà
NEG V (X) NEG	Pre-verbal & clause final	Sgaw	təʔ	ɓáʔ
		Bwe	də	nɔ
		Geba	tə̄	nɔ́ʔ
V (X) NEG	Clause final	Palaychi	-	chɛ́
		Kayah	-	to

More supporting evidence that 'correct' is the source of negative *ɓa* can be seen in the following example:

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

Here the clause final *ɓa* is functioning as a tag question, which has scope over the whole clause. So if the source of negative *ɓa* 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 *ɓa* would have lost its 'correct' meaning and been reinterpreted as only marking negation. Once this happened, *ɓa* was then able to be used for narrow scope negation.

5.3.1 Subordination
The syllable *ɓa* occurs in the subordinator *ɓa.sʰa*. The morpheme *sʰa* does not occur as an independent word in modern Sgaw, so its source cannot be identified at present. The subordinator *ɓa.sʰa* occurs clause initial in adversative clauses

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

161) ɓa.sʰa   lə.kʰi.ne   ə-mo   ne   tʰɔʔ.mi   mo   pʰaʔ.ɗo   ne
but   later   3s-mother TOP   pig   mother   big   TOP
SUB   TEMP   N   P   N   N   ADJ   P

θi.θə.ɗa.kwi   ə-pʰo   lɔ
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) ɓa.sʰa   tə.sʰɔ.tə.sʰɔ   ne   ɓuʔ.lɔ   lə   pə   tʃo
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) ɓa.sʰa   ne   pə-ma   lə   ɗa.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   ɓa.sʰa   θə.na.ke,
1pl-afraid   thing   but   though
V   N   SUB   CONJ

Although we were afraid … [Elephant12]

Another subordinator with the morpheme *ɓa* is *ɓa.tə.ɓa* 'probably':

165) ɓa.tə.ɓa   kə-tʰi   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 *ɓa.tə.ɓa* 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

ɓa.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'. *ɓa.xa* is a verb as it can be negated. This construction is common in the Sgaw Bible.

166)

da.doʔ.ɓlə	*ɓa.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.ɓaʔ*	*ə.ye*	*lɔ*
forgive	sin	reason	Pf
V	N	N	Pf

Baptism related to repenting so sins are forgiving. [Mason_Mk 1:4]

167)

je.ʃuʔ	*hɛ*	*lə*	*nə.zə.ɹaʔ*	*ɓa.xaʔ*	*dɔʔ*	*gɔ.ga.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.ɓa.jo	*ɓa.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.ɓa.ə*	*ɓa.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 *ɓa. ɓa.mə.nu* can occur either clause initial or clause final with the question illocutionary for marker *lɛ*. Examples are shown below:

170)

bwa	*tə-ɣa*	*i*	*gə.do*	*kə.ma*	*jwa*	*ɓa.mə.nu.lɛ*
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   θi̟.gwa   ɔ   ɓa.mə.nɯ.ə.xo.lɛ
     people   ask   3   why
     N   V   PRO   Q

     People asked him why. [P&T 36]

172) ɓa.mə.nɯ.ə.xo.lɛ   ne   me.lə   ɗa.zu   ə.xo   hɔ.kʰo   ge
     why   TOP   due.to rain   due.to earth   go.back
     Q   P   SUB   N   SUB   N   V

     kaʔ.ɓə   kə.ɗa.ge   ɓɯ
     cover   back   paddy
     V   V   N

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

173) ɓa.mə.nɯ.ə.xo   ne   pə-ma   ɗi̟.ne.ə.xo   ne   nə.mu   ɗo
     why   TOP   1pl-do   like.that   TOP   smell.good great
     Q   P   V   ADV   P   V   V

     Why is it is 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) ɓa   ɗiʔ.lɛ   pʰo.ɗo.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 ɓa grammaticalized into grammatical markers, but also
lexicalized into new complex lexemes many different parts of speech.

Compound nouns derived from verbs:

ɓa.kɯʔ.ɓa.ka   'a wide gash' Lit: happen-cut-happen-(?)

Epistemic adverbials:

ɓa.tə.ɓa   'perhaps' Lit: correct-not-correct

ɓa.kʰə?.tə.ɓa.kʰə?	'probably, maybe' Lit: arrive-time-not-arrive-time

Illness and injury:

ɓa.kʰi.tu?.ɓa.kʰi.ta?	'have leprosy'
ɓa.sa?	'be connected; take a disease'
ɓa.sʰɛ?	'be wounded by some pointed instrument'
ɓa.tə.mɯ?	'have a cold'
ɓa.da.dɛ.ba?	'suffer punishment'
ɓa.ti?	'get pinched'
ɓa.do.ɓa.tʰi?	'be wounded'
ɓa.nɯ?	'have leprosy'
ɓa.da.xo	have itch or mange

Encounter/suffer

ɓa.xɛ.θa?.kə.lɔ	'have temptation'
ɓa.sɯ	'meet, as in travelling'
ɓa.tə.sɔ?	'be caught in a snare'
ɓa.tʰi?	'be hit as by the edge or prominent part of a thing'
ɓa.ɓli? ɓa.ɓla?.ɓa.ɓlɛ?	'be caught, as by a hook'
ɓa.kʰɔ	'get wet'
ɓa.sɔ.tʰɔ	'get wet on the underside, as things in a leaky boat'
ɓa.da.e.lo?	'get into a quarrel'
ɓa.tɯ? ɓa.tɯ?.ɓa.ka	'get cut by a knife'
ɓa.tɯ?.ɓa.xɛ	'cut off, hurt, wounded'

Speaker attitude adverbials

ɓa.kʰə?	'suitable, proper'
ɓa.kʰɔ ɓa.da.ɓa.dɔ	'negligently, carelessly'
ɓa.jə	'emphatic affirmation'