Negation in the world's languages III

Papunesia, Australia, and the Americas

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Contents

Chapter 4

Negation in Dorig

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Dorig, an Oceanic language spoken on Gaua island in northern Vanuatu, shows a wealth of constructions for encoding negative polarity. Verbs contrast 14 positive TAM categories with 9 negative; together, these form a "TAMP" [tense–aspect–mood–polarity] system made of 23 portmanteau categories. All negative TAMP morphemes are formally discontinuous, and synchronically non-compositional. Standard negation shows several forms of structural asymmetries, both constructional and paradigmatic, across polarities. Besides standard negation, Dorig has separate constructions for negating non-verbal predicates, existentials, locatives, and imperatives. While this study highlights the intricacy of negative structures in this particular language, it places them in their typological and areal contexts. Thanks to comparative tables showing all negative morphemes in the 17 languages of the Torres and Banks islands, it becomes clear that Dorig is mostly representative of regional patterns in north Vanuatu.

Keywords: negation, asymmetry of TAM systems, non-verbal predicates, Oceanic languages, Vanuatu.

1 The language

The present chapter examines the grammar of negation in Dorig, an Oceanic language of Vanuatu. Like other chapters in this volume, this study follows closely the structure of the typological questionnaire designed by the editors (Miestamo 2025 [this volume]) – including in the order and numbering of sections.

1.1 Context and sources

Dorig (ISO: wwo, Glottocode: weta1242) is one of five languages spoken on the island of Gaua, in the Banks islands of northern Vanuatu (see Figure 1). Like all

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the 138 indigenous languages of the Vanuatu archipelago (François et al. 2015), Dorig belongs to the Oceanic subgroup of the Austronesian phylum. More specifically, Dorig forms part of a dialect chain that runs around the island of Gaua – itself a portion of the broader Torres–Banks linkage (François 2014: 182).

The language's 300 speakers live mostly in the village of *Dōrig* [ⁿdɔriɣ] on Gaua's south coast; they entertain social and linguistic ties with their immediate neighbours on the island. The two languages genealogically closest to Dorig, as measured using Historical Glottometry, are Nume and Koro (François 2016b: 56; Kalyan & François 2018: 79).

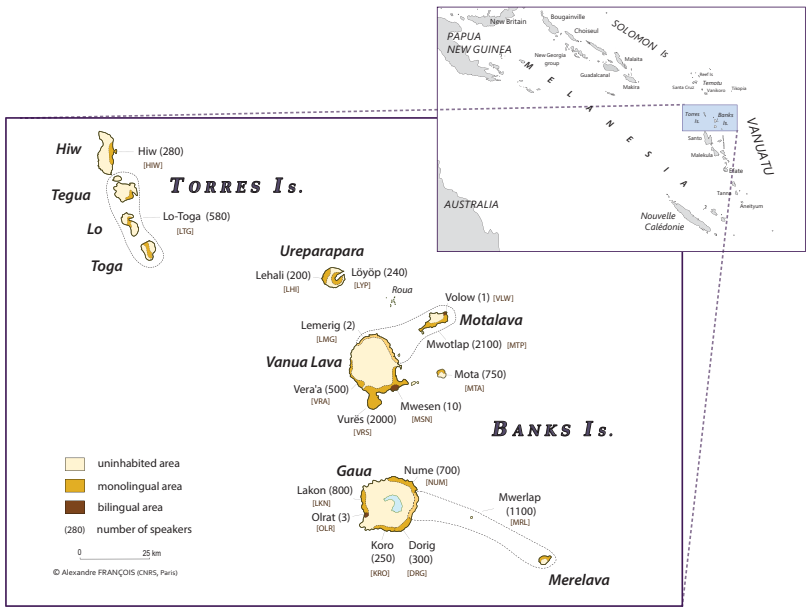

Figure 1: Location of Dorig (Gaua, Banks Islands) in northern Vanuatu

The grammar of negation shows considerable cross-linguistic variation across the vast Oceanic family (see Hovdhaugen & Mosel 1999), to say nothing of the broader Austronesian phylum (see Vossen & van der Auwera 2014) – so the present study should not be taken as representative of such large ensembles. That said, Dorig can be seen as quite typical of the grammatical structures found in its local environment of Vanuatu (especially the Torres & Banks languages) as it

shares most of their semantic categories and formal tendencies; and yet, Dorig presents several structural features that make it an original system.

Apart from a wordlist under the obsolete glossonym Wetamut (Tryon 1976), nothing was known of Dorig until I conducted fieldwork on it, as part of my 2003 survey of Banks languages. I was only able to stay in the Dorig area for nine days altogether (4–12 August 2003), with no opportunity of returning there since, due to uneasy access; a second trip scheduled in 2011 was finally cancelled due to the lack of reliable transportation.

My 2003 stay allowed me to record substantial data, thanks to my in-depth knowledge of neighbouring languages, and to the "conversational questionnaire" I had designed for that purpose (François 2019). This data collection method was supplemented by language immersion, as I began to speak and understand the language in its daily context, taking field notes and recording the spontaneous speech of native speakers. Out of 151′ of various recordings, I transcribed 67′ of narratives: this yielded a corpus of 13 texts totalling 14,300 words, partially published as François (2008), and archived online.[1] The examples cited in this study come either from my field notes or from that text corpus.[2] Whenever possible, I will provide permanent (DOI) links to sentences in their original context.[3]

This is the first ever publication dedicated entirely to the Dorig language. That said, I have presented various aspects of it in my comparative studies of the Torres–Banks area: this includes information on Dorig's phonology, with a focus on its CCVC syllabic template (François 2010: 407–408); on its vowel system (François 2005b: 461, 491); on its noun articles (François 2007); its possessive morphology (François 2005b: 486); its space system (François 2015); and its personal pronouns (François 2016b). As for the data I will provide on other languages of the Banks and Torres Islands [§4.6.3, Appendix], their main source will be my own field notes and publications; the reader is also referred to the description of Vera'a by Schnell (2011), and the grammar of Vurës by Malau (2016).

[1] My audio recordings are freely accessible at https://pangloss.cnrs.fr/corpus/Dorig.

[2] Labels of the type [AF.BP3.30b] – as in sentences (13), (20), (46) – refer to my field notes; these are archived at https://www.odsas.net/. Labels of the type [Drg.d04.Kava:41] – as in (23), (36–38), (47), (70) – are taken from my field questionnaire, which can be accessed at https://tiny.cc/AF_Q_Dorig.

[3] If an example is followed by an anchor icon ⚓ and a string of characters, adding that string to the prefix https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-000 yields a valid DOI identifier. For example, {⚓3195#S5} yields the URL https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003195#S5.

1.2 Grammatical overview

Let us begin with a short grammatical overview of Dorig, focusing on the elements relevant to the present study on negation. Dorig forms will be spelled in the language's orthography, following the conventions in Table 1.

Table 1: Orthographical conventions for Dorig

orth	*a*	*ā*	*b*	*d*	*e*	*ē*	*g*	*i*	*k*	*l*	*m*	*m̄*
IPA	a	aː	ᵐb	ⁿd	ɛ	ɪ	ɣ	i	k	l	m	n͡mʷ
orth	*n*	*n̄*	*o*	*ō*	*q*	*r*	*s*	*t*	*u*	*v*	*w*	
IPA	n	ŋ	ɔ	ʊ	k͡pʷ	r	s	t	u	v	w	

Dorig has a CCVC syllabic template, with optional consonants (François 2010: 407): e.g. *āv* [aːv] 'fire', *loq* [lɔk͡pʷ] 'wet', *wrēt* [wrɪt] 'squid', *rqa* [rk͡pʷa] 'woman', *tger* [tɣɛr] 'disappear', *mkār* [n͡mʷkaːr] 'flying fish'.

Several prefixes have a form C(V)- with an elidable vowel: e.g. *m(e)-* 'Perfect', *s(o)-* 'Irrealis', *v(a)-* 'Stative', *v(e)-* 'Attributive'. The prefix vowel normally elides when the first syllable of the phonological word can accommodate a C- prefix into the maximal CCVC template: ***m***(*e*)- + ***t****ur* 'stand' → *m-tur* [**mt**ur] 'stood'. By contrast, when a verb already starts in a consonant cluster (e.g. ***tv****ig* 'bury'), the prefix will surface as CV-, revealing its underlying vowel (e.g. *m**e**-tvig* 'buried', *s**o**-tvig* 'will bury').

Morphemes of the form C(V)- with an elidable vowel qualify as prefixes, because their surface shape is determined by syllabification rules that apply at the higher level of the phonological word. In addition, Dorig also has CV morphemes whose surface form is independent of the next morpheme: I will analyse them as proclitics, or simply particles. For example, while the Irrealis *s(o)-* is a prefix, the homophonous Sequential aspect, with its fixed shape *so* [sɔ], is better analysed as a particle rather than an affix. Compare *s(o)-* 'Irrealis' in (1) with *so* 'Sequential' in (2): these are two distinct morphemes, in shape and in meaning.

(1) *Na s-wōr bas nēr nēr **s**-mat.*
1SG IRR-bewitch all 3PL 3PL **IRR**-die
'I would bewitch them all so they'd die.' {‡3195#S5}

(2) *Ni me-tmarga, ni **so** mat.*
3SG PRF-old.man 3SG **SEQ** die
'He got old, and then died.' {‡3195#S26}

These notes on the morphophonology of Dorig will be relevant when discussing negation – in particular, when analysing morphemes as affixes or particles.

Dorig is an SVO language with fixed word order. Simple verbal clauses follow the general template in Figure 2, where the pointy brackets indicate the limits of the verb phrase:

subject ⟨ TAMP$_1$ **verb** postverb TAMP$_2$ ⟩ *object* adjuncts

Figure 2: Structure of the verb phrase

The predicate head is always the first (most leftward) lexical element after the subject. As for the (emically defined) class "postverb", it includes words whose function is to modify the verb head inside the verb phrase.[4] Postverbs are optional, and immediately follow the predicate head. They may correspond to English manner adverbs – cf. (9) *tavul* 'well' – or floating quantifiers – (1) *bas* 'all' – among others. The postverbal slot can also be occupied by a second verb, in a serial verb construction – as in (8) or (47) below.

Dorig collapses into a single paradigm the categories of Tense, Aspect, Mood, and Polarity. It is thus best described as a "TAMP" system[5] – hence the slots labelled TAMP$_1$ and TAMP$_2$ in Figure 2. A given predicate inflects for only one TAMP category at a time: e.g. a verb takes either the (positive, realis) Perfect *m(e)-* or the (positive) Irrealis *s(o)-*, but it cannot combine them. All TAMP morphemes will be listed in Table 2 [§2.1.1]. Note that TAMP is always overt, and never encoded by zero; thus a sentence like (3) is ungrammatical – by contrast with overtly-marked predicates like (12a–12b):

(3) **Na tek ni.*
1SG see 3SG

The coding of TAMP usually involves a preverbal element TAMP$_1$, whether a prefix or a particle, as we saw with Perfect *m(e)-*, Irrealis *s(o)-*, Sequential *so*. Several TAMP morphemes are discontinuous or "bipartite", involving a first element TAMP$_1$ (prefix or particle) plus a second element TAMP$_2$ (particle).[6] Exam-

[4] This lexical class of VP-internal "postverb" (sometimes called "VP-internal adverb" or "adjunct") is found in all northern Vanuatu languages (cf. François 2004: 137–142; François 2017: 316; Schnell 2011: 91; Malau 2016: 122–124; Rangelov 2022; François & Krauße forthcoming).

[5] Malau (2016: 461) also describes the neighbouring language Vurës as having a "TAMP" system, for *Tense-Aspect-Mood-Polarity*.

[6] The material in the TAMP$_2$ slot sometimes originates historically in a former postverb; but under a synchronic analysis, it can be shown to have grammaticalised into an obligatory component in a discontinuous TAMP morpheme.

ples of discontinuous TAMP morphemes include the Potential *s(o)-… lala*, or the Imperfective *t(o)-… ti*:

(4) [POTENTIAL]
Kmār ⟨***so**-briñ* ***lala***⟩ *nēk.*
1EXCL.DU **POT$_1$**-help **POT$_2$** 2SG
'We can help you.' {ꝑ2306#S41}

(5) [IMPERFECTIVE]
Rār ⟨***to**-qlil* ***ti***⟩ *o matgassōñ.*
3DU **IPFV$_1$**-roll **IPFV$_2$** ART leaf.cone
'They were rolling a leaf cone.' {ꝑ2306#S16}

(6) [IMPERFECTIVE]
Kma ⟨ ***t**-var* *o masle bē neñ* ***ti*** ⟩ *kak 'Krēwelav'.*
1EXCL.PL **IPFV$_1$**-call ART path water DEM **IPFV$_2$** QUOT (name)
'We call that river "Krēwelav".' {ꝑ3254#S28}

When the verb is transitive, its object usually follows TAMP$_2$ as in (4) or (5); but it can also exceptionally precede it, as in (6).

As we'll soon see, standard negation in Dorig always takes the form of bipartite morphemes, whose elements occupy the same slots as TAMP$_1$ and TAMP$_2$ in Figure 2. Throughout this study, I will make the choice to gloss TAMP morphemes, whether positive or negative, as bipartite – e.g. 'POT$_1$-… POT$_2$' for the Potential in (4) – even when one of their components can also occur on its own. This analytic decision is meant to avoid the trap of searching for compositionality when we're in fact dealing with entrenched, grammaticalised units of phraseology (François 2003: 31). This view can be taken as a *constructional* approach to morphosyntax – in the sense of the *Construction grammar* (Fillmore et al. 1988; Croft 2001; Barðdal et al. 2015); it will also guide my analysis of negation morphology.

2 Clausal negation

2.1 Standard negation

Miestamo (2005: 39, 2007: 553) defines *standard negation* as "the basic means that languages have for negating declarative verbal main clauses". Dorig has not one, but several morphemes that meet this definition, depending on the Tense-Aspect-Mood value of the verb.

2.1.1 Negation in declarative verbal main clauses: overview

An important characteristic of Dorig is that polarity (positive vs. negative) is really in-built inside the TAMP markers. For example, the Potential *s(o)-… lala* we saw in (4), or the Imperfective *t(o)-… ti* in (5), are incompatible with negation; they really stand for "positive potential" and "positive imperfective" respectively. Their negative counterpart is a different morpheme altogether, which is not compositional. And crucially, the relation between positive and negative TAMP categories is not a straightforward one: as we'll see in §2.1.2, the Dorig language shows a rich array of asymmetries between polarities.

Table 2 shows the complete TAMP system of Dorig, and gives a preliminary idea of how declarative verbal main clauses deal with polarity. The ellipsis "…" represents here the *verbal group*, i.e. the verbal head with its postverb(s), as per the formula in Figure 2. Whatever precedes "…" in Table 2 corresponds to TAMP$_1$ (whether a prefix or a particle); whatever follows it fits in the TAMP$_2$ slot. Some morphemes occur only in TAMP$_1$, others only in TAMP$_2$; discontinuous morphemes have morphological material on both sides of the verbal group.[7] The following subsections will help understand this table, by describing the behaviour of negation in declarative verbal clauses. Certain labels will be explained later.[8]

The table's left-hand side lists the 14 affirmative TAMP markers: e.g. the Imperfective *t(o)-… ti* shown in (5–6) above. The right column then shows the nine corresponding negative TAMP morphemes. For example, the (positive) Potential *s(o)-… lala* seen in (4) maps onto the Negative potential *(v)te… late*. Evidently – as will be discussed in §2.1.4 – there is no one-to-one correspondence across polarities, neither in terms of morphology nor semantics.

As Table 2 shows, standard negation in Dorig always takes the form of a discontinuous morpheme, of the type {NEG$_1$ … NEG$_2$}. This type of negative morpheme, known in the literature as "double negation" (Dahl 1979: 88), is present in about 10 percent of the world's languages (Dryer 2013a) – cf. *ne… pas* in Standard French. So-called double negation is widespread in Vanuatu [see §4.6.3.1]: for instance, about nearby Vera'a [Figure 1], Schnell (2011: 31) notes: "All negative TAM markers are circummorphemes". The label "double negation" is misleading, as it seems to suggest a construction where polarity would be somehow encoded

[7] Vowels in round brackets correspond to the morpheme's underlying vowel, subject to regular elision [§1.2]. The consonant *(v)* in *(v)te* is simply optional [§2.1.6]. As for the square brackets seen in the Imperative, they indicate that the form is zero in the singular, but takes the form *ar* with a non-singular agent [§2.2.2]. Finally, the abbreviation RED in the Prohibitive indicates that the verb head must show its reduplicated form [§2.2.2].

[8] For "dilatory", see fn.10. For "iamitive", "nondumitive", "continuative", "discontinuative", see §2.1.7.

Table 2: The TAMP paradigm of Dorig, showing correspondences between positive and negative morphemes

Domain	Positive polarity		Negative polarity	
Realis	Sequential	*so …*		
	Iamitive	*m(e)-… nok*	Nondumitive	*sowse … te*
	Continuative	*… mlēti*	Discontinuative	*s(o)-… nok tēmē*
	Perfect	*m(e)-…*	Negative realis	*s(o)-… tēmē*
	Stative	*v(a)-…*		
	Imperfective	*t(o)-… ti*		
	Immediate past	*qra … ti*		
	Dilatory (realis, irrealis)	*qra …*		
Irrealis	Irrealis	*s(o)-…*	Negative future	*(v)te … tēmē*
	Imperative	*[ar] …*	Prohibitive	*(v)te …*$_{\text{RED}}$ *te* *~ tog v(a)-…* *~ tog … te*
	Hortative	*o …*		
	Potential	*s(o)-… lala*	Negative potential	*(v)te … late*
	Counterfactual (apodosis)	*v(a)-…*		
Irrealis	Counterfactual (protasis)	*vit …*	Negative counterfactual	*vit (v)te … te*

twice (cf. English *I cannot not call him*); yet this is not what happens with the morphemes we are discussing here. I prefer to simply describe them as discontinuous markers, in a way parallel to some of the positive TAMP morphemes [§1.2].

The two elements of each negative morpheme occupy the same slots as the TAMP markers {TAMP$_1$ … TAMP$_2$} in Figure 2 [§1.2]. The object phrase, whether it is an NP or a pronoun, is usually located outside the boundaries of negation, after NEG$_2$, just like we saw in (4) for the positive potential. Sentences (7a) and (8a), taken from my corpus, illustrate two of the negative morphemes cited in Table 2.

(7a) shows the Nondumitive *sowse… te* 'not yet' [§2.1.7], with a nominal object. The positive counterpart of (7a) would be the iamitive (7b) [see §2.1.7]:

(7) a. [(negative) NONDUMITIVE]
Tōlkma ***sowse*** *wdōñ* ***te*** *o* *āv.*
1EXCL.TRI NDUM$_1$ set.up NDUM$_2$ ART fire
'We haven't set up the fire yet.' {⚓7437#S31}

b. [(positive) IAMITIVE]
Tōlkma ***me****-wdōñ* ***nok*** *o* *āv.*
1EXCL.TRI IAM$_1$-set.up IAM$_2$ ART fire
'We have set up the fire already.'

The Negative potential *(v)te… late* in (8a), just like its positive equivalent (8b) *s(o)-… lala*, is carried by a complex predicate (serial verb), and followed by a pronominal object:

(8) a. *Na* ***vte*** *mōl* *tētēg* ***late*** *kmur.*
1SG NEG.POT$_1$ return follow NEG.POT$_2$ 2DU
[NEGATIVE POTENTIAL] 'I won't be able to follow you.' {⚓3162#S31}

b. *Na* ***s****-mōl* *tētēg* ***lala*** *kmur.*
1SG POT$_1$-return follow POT$_2$ 2DU
[(positive) POTENTIAL] 'I'll be able to follow you.'

2.1.2 Typological classification

Dahl (1979) proposed a first typological classification of negative strategies in the world. With respect to the morphological types of exponents, Dorig negative morphemes pertain to the type he calls "circumfixal" (Dahl 1979: 100).

As far as word order is concerned, Dryer (2013b) classified languages in terms of the negator's position with respect to the clause's subject, object and verb. Dorig would belong to his subsection 144F "*Obligatory double negation in SVO languages*". Within that group, it falls under type #2 *SNegVNegO* when NEG$_1$ is a particle, or under the similar type #7 *S[Neg-V]NegO* when NEG$_1$ is a prefix.

Throughout his publications, Miestamo (2005, 2007, 2013a,b) has studied the many forms of symmetry and asymmetry found in the marking of negation in languages. Symmetrical negation is one where "affirmative and negative structures are identical except for the presence of the negative marker(s)" (Miestamo 2005: 72); all formal contrasts that correlate with negation – whether morphological, syntaxic or semantic – are then considered types of "asymmetry".

On the basis of the first facts we have seen, we can already make some observations:

- Table 2 above makes it clear that standard negation is never symmetrical: the form taken by the portmanteau TAMP morpheme changes altogether across polarities, so there is no case where positive and negative differ only by the presence of a negator. In this respect, Dorig belongs to the subtype Miestamo (2005: 170, 2013a) calls "Asymmetric standard negation only" [type Asy]; this is his least common category, found only in 17 percent of his typological sample.
- In negative clauses, the verb is always finite, just like in positive ones. Dorig does not show asymmetry in the finiteness status of the verb (subtype A/Fin in Miestamo 2005: 73, Miestamo 2013a).
- Word order is identical across polarities: Dorig is syntactically symmetrical (cf. Miestamo 2005: 153).

- The marking of Tense-Aspect-Mood categories differs across polarities: this pertains to Miestamo's (2005: 112) A/Cat type – i.e. asymmetry in the marking of grammatical categories. Note that this is even true when there is a perfect semantic correspondance, in terms of paradigm, between the positive and the negative. For example, the nondumitive in (7a) is semantically the exact counterpart of the positive iamitive (7b), and yet their morphological exponents have nothing in common.[9] This is a case of *constructional asymmetry* (2005: 52) in the expression of tense-aspect-mood (A/Cat/TAM, 2005: 116).
- Another major type of asymmetry found in Dorig is *paradigmatic asymmetry*. The layout of Table 2 shows the pervasive mismatch between positive and negative TAM, and the lack of one-to-one correspondance across polarities. Some TAM categories that exist in the positive don't have any equivalent in the negative [Sequential *so*, cf. (2)]; and some semantic contrasts made under one polarity are lost or neutralised in the other [see §2.1.4].
- In Miestamo's fine-grained quantitative typology, Dorig would belong to his category "A in both C and P" (2005: 172), i.e., Asymmetry both in constructions and in paradigms.
- Finally, section §2.1.5 will discuss yet another type of asymmetry relevant for Dorig: the one related to the "reality status" of the clause (A/NonReal). As we'll see, one possible analysis is to describe it as a a case of "paradigmatic displacement" (A/NonReal/Displc, 2005: 98).

2.1.3 Declarative statements in the realis domain

Let us now examine in more detail the way standard negation works in Dorig. For the sake of expository convenience, I will examine separately two distinct domains in modality or "reality status", respectively the REALIS and the IRREALIS. These are defined semantically, after Elliott (2000). The realis domain targets states of affairs whose temporal anchoring precedes or includes the moment of utterance, encompassing the domains 'past' and 'present'. By contrast, the irrealis domain corresponds to "unrealized state[s] of affairs" (Cristofaro 2012), events which are only virtual at the moment of utterance. While many Oceanic languages contrast realis vs. irrealis explicitly using modal morphology, Dorig and its neighbours leave the opposition unmarked; or rather, they incorporate

[9] This configuration is parallel to the one Miestamo (2005: 117) reports for Central Siberian Yupik, or for the Songhay language Koyraboro Senni.

that modal contrast in a paradigm that also encodes oppositions of tense and aspect. In other words, Dorig really uses a *set* of realis TAMP markers on the one hand, and a *set* of irrealis ones on the other hand – as suggested in the first column of Table 2.[10]

In Dorig, the negation of declarative verbal main clauses takes different forms depending on the aspect and modality of the clause; as a result, no individual morpheme can be identified as *the* marker of negation. Table 2 however suggests some regularities, or at least some trends. Essentially, negative morphemes in declarative realis statements (top half of Table 2) tend to involve a postverbal particle (TAMP_2) *tēmē*, which I will provisionally gloss 'NEG.IND' for 'Negative indicative'. By contrast, irrealis statements (negative versions of the potential, conditional, imperative…) often involve a postverbal particle *te*.

As a first approximation, one could thus propose that negation in Dorig involves a general opposition between *tēmē* (≈realis) and *te* (≈irrealis).[11] However, there are exceptions to this binary contrast: *tēmē* is sometimes found in irrealis (future) contexts, and *te* in some realis (nondumitive) statements. In order to describe the behaviour of negation in the system, it is better to delve, step by step, into the semantics of each of the negative morphemes listed in Table 2.

2.1.4 Paradigmatic asymmetries

The present section will first describe the paradigmatic asymmetries that characterise TAMP categories in the realis domain. Section §2.1.5 will then discuss the paradox that the negation used with semantically realis statements seems to be borrowed from the irrealis domain. The issue of phasal negatives will be examined in a separate section §2.1.7.

[10] The identical form between (realis) Stative *v(a)-* and (irrealis) Counterfactual *v(a)-* is best analysed, synchronically, as a mere matter of homophony, as there is no semantic link between the two TAMP categories other than a common source of grammaticalization (<**va* 'thing'). The only TAMP morpheme that really straddles the semantic boundary between the two modal domains [cf. Table 2] is the form *qra*, glossed here 'Dilatory'. This aspectual category, sometimes labelled 'Time focus' (François 2003: 199–216; 2021: 221–223), is found across north Vanuatu languages. Everywhere it is compatible with realis and irrealis readings: in a realis context, the Dilatory aspect takes on an inaugural meaning ('do X for the first time'); in an irrealis one, it forms a dilatory future, i.e. a future tense with a pragmatic orientation towards later 'will do X later' – as in (22). The common denominator of these two uses is a semantic mechanism that can be glossed '*only at time T, and not earlier*' (whence the labels "Time focus" or "Dilatory"). The realis use of *qra* would be negated using the Negative realis, while its irrealis reading would correspond to the Negative future: this can be taken as evidence that the contrast of reality status (realis vs. irrealis) is in fact operational in Dorig, in spite of the ambivalence of the positive morpheme *qra*.

[11] The etymology of these two negative elements will be discussed in §4.6.3.2.

In the affirmative, the Stative particle *v(a)-* serves to assign a stative property (whether an adjective or a stative verb) to the subject:

(9) *Na* ***va-*** *vrēgēl tavul na vara-n.*
1SG STAT- know well ART country-3SG
'I know her country well.'

This is a purely aspectual marker, underspecified with respect to tense. While its default interpretation is the present, it can equally refer to a past situation: thus *na va-vrēgēl* in (9) can translate 'I know (now)' or 'I knew (then)'.

In order to negate a sentence like (9), one cannot just combine the Stative *v(a)-* with the negation *tēmē*: such a sentence (10) is rejected as ungrammatical.

(10) **Na* ***va-vrēgēl*** *tavul* ***tēmē*** *na vara-n.*
1SG STAT-know well **NEG.IND** ART country-3SG
[*intended*: 'I don't know her country well.']

Instead, the only way to negate the Stative *va-* is to use the Negative realis *s(o)-… tēmē* (glossed NEG.R_1… NEG.R_2); as in (11):

(11) *Na* ***so-****vrēgēl* *tavul* ***tēmē*** *na vara-n.*
1SG **NEG.R_1**-know well **NEG.R_2** ART country-3SG
'I **don't** know her country well.'

The principle illustrated in (9–11) with Stative *v(a)-* also applies to other realis TAM categories. Thus, a Perfect (12a) *m(e)-* becomes (12b) *s(o)-… tēmē* when negated:

(12) a. *Na* ***m****-tek* *ni a gvur.*
1SG **PRF**-see 3SG LOC house
'I saw him at home.'

b. *Na* ***s****-tek* ***tēmē*** *ni a gvur.*
1SG **NEG.R_1**-see **NEG.R_2** 3SG LOC house
'I **didn't** see him at home.'

A clause in the Imperfective will also replace its discontinuous marker *t(o)-… ti* with the combination *s(o)-… tēmē*, as in (13):

(13) *Na lña ra ta Krō, radōn nēk* ***t****-roñ* *tavul* ***ti****, radōn*
ART voice.of HUM.PL ABL Koro some 2SG **IPFV$_1$**-hear well **IPFV$_2$** some
nēk ***s****-roñ* *tavul* ***tēmē****.*
2SG **NEG.R_1**-hear well **NEG.R_2**
'The language of Koro, some of it one understands easily, but some of it, one **doesn't** understand easily.' [AF.BP3.18b]

As a result, the negation *s(o)-… tēmē* is semantically ambiguous. A sentence like (14) may correspond to a negative Perfect, a negative Stative, or a negative Imperfective:[12]

(14) *O mērmer* ***s****-ñor* *tavul* ***tēmē****.*
ART child **NEG.R_1**-sleep well **NEG.R_2**
'The baby {did not sleep ~ doesn't sleep ~ is not sleeping} well.'

The distinctions made in positive statements are neutralised under a single, semantically vague category of "Negative realis", which encompasses most of the tense and aspect values found in the affirmative within the semantically realis domain.[13]

In sum, the semantic space of verbal aspect is cut up differently in the positive and in the negative – a configuration typical of northern Vanuatu languages in general.[14] This lack of a one-to-one correspondence between positive and negative polarities, which was obvious in Table 2 [§2.1.1], is known as *paradigmatic asymmetry* (Miestamo 2005, 2013b). When it involves the neutralisation of certain semantic distinctions, as happens here for realis TAM categories, it is called *paradigmatic neutralisation* (Miestamo 2005: 54), abbreviated "A/Cat/TAM/Neutr" (2005: 123).

2.1.5 Is there an asymmetry in reality status?

As explained at the end of §1.2, the analysis I favour is to consider all bipartite TAMP markers, whether positive or negative, as unitary morphemes, even though they appear to consist – at least etymologically – of two elements.

[12] The Negative realis is also the counterpart of certain less frequent TAMP categories shown in Table 2, such as the Dilatory aspect *qra* 'only then (in the past or future)' [see Footnote 10, and (22)], or its derivative the Immediate past *qra… ti* 'just recently' [see (79)].

[13] The only two TAM markers of the realis domain that have an exact correspondence between positive and negative polarities [cf. Table 2] are the two phasal aspects "iamitive" and "continuative"; these will be examined in §2.1.7.

[14] See François (2003: 33–37, 2005a: 132) for similar observations about the language Mwotlap; Schnell (2011: 31, 52, 95) about Vera'a; Malau (2016: 461) about Vurës.

Now, if we were to analyse the Negative realis *s(o)-… tēmē* into its components, we could not help noticing that it seems to combine the negation *tēmē* ("indicative" negation, often associated with the realis domain) with a prefix *s(o)-*, which is the same form as the positive "Irrealis". Indeed, when used alone in positive clauses, the prefix *s(o)-* is usually devoted to predicates with a meaning of conditional (1), future (20), potential (25), imperative (40) or deontic (76): this is the textbook definition of an Irrealis marker. Under this literal analysis, one could be tempted to present a sentence like (12b) with the tentative glosses in (15):

(15) *Na* ***s-tek*** ***tēmē*** *ni a gvur.*
1SG **IRR**-see **NEG.IND** 3SG LOC home
'I didn't see him at home.'

It may come as a semantic oddity that an Irrealis morpheme should be used in statements about semantically 'realis' situations, whether past (12b) or present (11, 13). Yet this is arguably due to a paradox inherent to negation itself: even when set in a realis (past or present) situation, the state-of-affairs that is being negated remains virtual, and indeed un-realised. In his major typological survey of negation, Miestamo (2005: 96) discusses this type[15] under the label "paradigmatic asymmetry in reality status" (realis vs. irrealis), and explains it in these words:

> "[T]he association between negation and non-reality on the formal level iconically reflects the association between negation and non-reality on the functional level." (ibid: 96)

Using the label "A/NonReal", Miestamo (2005: 192, 2013a) observes the distribution of this asymmetry across languages, and finds it in 13% of his sample (40 languages out of 297). While the pattern is well known across the world, in northern Vanuatu it is only found in Dorig: the other 16 languages of the Torres-Banks fail to show any link between negation and the irrealis. In that sense, Dorig is locally unique in enforcing this pattern, whereby negative statements impose an irrealis verb in semantically realis (past, present) contexts.

In languages with "A/NonReal" asymmetry, the typical pattern is one where the contrast between realis and irrealis exists in the affirmative, but is neutralised under negation, in favour of the irrealis. Thus for the Australian language Mawng, Miestamo (2013b) notes: "the negative clause is obligatorily marked for the irrealis category, whereas the affirmative can make a distinction between

[15]For other general references, see also Elliott (2000) and Cristofaro (2012).

realis and irrealis"; such a configuration constitutes a case of paradigmatic neutralisation (Miestamo 2005: 97). Yet this is not what happens in Dorig: the combination *s(o)-… tēmē*, even though it is originally based on an irrealis morpheme *s(o)-*, can in fact only receive a realis interpretation – that is, an anchoring in past or present situations. Thus in Table 3, the counterpart of perfect (16) *na m-tek nēr*, namely (17) *na s-tek tēmē nēr*, is strictly used for realis reference (past 'I didn't see them', or present 'I'm not seeing them'); it cannot have any irrealis interpretation (**I won't see them*). The latter meaning can only be expressed using one of the negations pertaining to the irrealis domain proper [§2.1.6], e.g. the Negative future *vte … tēmē* – as in (19).

Table 3: Preservation of realis/irrealis contrast across polarities

	Positive	Negative
Realis	Positive perfect (16) *Na* ***m-tek*** *nēr.* 1SG **PRF**-see 3PL 'I saw them.'	Negative realis (17) *Na* ***s-tek*** ***tēmē*** *nēr.* 1SG **NEG.R$_1$**-see **NEG.R$_2$** 3PL 'I didn't see them.'
Irrealis	Positive irrealis (18) *Na* ***s-tek*** *nēr.* 1SG **IRR**-see 3PL 'I will see them.'	Negative future (19) *Na* ***vte*** *tek* ***tēmē*** *nēr.* 1SG NEG.FUT$_1$ see NEG.FUT$_2$ 3PL 'I won't see them.'

The system shown in Table 3 could be explained using two very different analyses. Under one hypothesis, the negative sentence (17) would be seen as the symmetric counterpart of (18) – at least if one considers only the surface forms, since it consists in adding to it the negative particle *tēmē*. Yet that formal symmetry comes along with a semantic asymmetry, because the future interpretation of the affirmative (18) corresponds to a past reading in the negative. Such a configuration is called "paradigmatic displacement" by Miestamo (2005: 98), as he describes the facts of the Papuan language Alamblak:

> "The paradigm is asymmetric but has no neutralization; realis negation uses the irrealis form but the irrealis is negated differently (…). There is thus paradigmatic displacement rather than neutralization and the asymmetry is of type *A/NonReal/Displc*."

While such an interpretation would be acceptable for Dorig, I will favour a different approach. In my view, the analytical tool of "symmetry" is only meaningful if we are comparing two sentences whose sole semantic difference is polarity. Faced with a dataset like Table 3, it does not appear useful to assess whether there is symmetry, formal or semantic, between sentences (18) and (17), simply because these two sentences do not form a pair in terms of polarity. Likewise, we do not want to assess the symmetry of negation by comparing, say, English sentences *He laughed* vs. *He won't laugh*, because they do not form a polarity pair. The only sentences relevant to this assessment are those consisting of a statement in the affirmative vs. its counterpart in the negative: that is, the pair (16–17) on the one hand; and the pair (18–19) on the other hand. For a speaker of Dorig, there is no pragmatic context in which a sentence like (17) would form the negative counterpart to (18). These two distinct sentences, involving different truth-value conditions, do not enter any form of productive polarity contrast in the modern language.

In sum, I believe that the better analysis of the Dorig facts is to analyse the Negative realis marker as a single morphological unit *s(o)-… tēmē*, albeit a discontinuous one. Synchronically, that negative construction has no tie whatsoever with the positive irrealis *s(o)-* – apart from some partial homophony; yet this homophony is best ignored by the linguist, because it's irrelevant to the speaker. Under this new analysis, what Table 3 shows is rather the solidity of the contrast between realis and irrealis in the language, which remain formally distinguished both in the affirmative and in the negative. This comes in contrast with the cases of asymmetry we saw in §2.1.4 above, where certain paradigmatic contrasts in the domain of tense and aspect are neutralised under negation.

This construction-based analysis [see §1.2] is reflected in the glosses I use in Table 3. Its logical conclusion is that Dorig really doesn't have A/NonReal asymmetry, because its Negative realis morpheme *s(o)-… tēmē*, synchronically, actually counts as [+realis], regardless of its etymology. In the remainder of this paper, I will continue to gloss the discontinuous morpheme *s(o)-… tēmē* as a single semantic category of "Negative realis", irrespective of its etymological connection with the positive irrealis.

2.1.6 Declarative statements in the irrealis domain

In the affirmative, the TAMP category of Irrealis encoded with *s(o)-*, like (20), may express intention, promise, threat – in a way equivalent to an English future:

(20) *Na* ***s-la*** *āt* *min kmur.*
1SG IRR-take thither DAT 2DU
'I will give it to you.' [AF.BP3.29a]

As we saw in Table 3 [§2.1.5], the negative equivalent of this positive Irrealis *s(o)-* is not the Negative realis *s(o)-… tēmē*, but one of the irrealis negative morphemes – for example, the Negative future *(v)te … tēmē*, as in (21):

(21) *Na* ***vte*** *la* ***tēmē*** *āt* *min kmur.*
1SG NEG.FUT$_1$ take NEG.FUT$_2$ thither DAT 2DU
'I won't give it to you.' [AF.BP3.29b]

The preverbal element *vte* or *te* never occurs alone. It only exists as the first element in three discontinuous morphemes of negation, all with irrealis semantics: see Table 4.[16]

Table 4: The three main negative markers of the irrealis domain

(v)te … tēmē	Negative future	'I won't V…'
(v)te … late	Negative potential	'I can't V…'
(v)te … te	Prohibitive	'Don't V…!'

If we tried to analyse these three discontinuous negations into their components, we might propose a generic gloss 'NEG.IRR' for *(v)te*, without too much difficulty; but then, the TAMP$_2$ particle would be impossible to gloss accurately. If *tēmē* were glossed 'FUT' (so that NEG.IRR + FUT results in a negative future), this would be incompatible with the other uses of *tēmē* in past or present contexts. Likewise, *late* cannot be glossed 'POT', as it only occurs in combination with the negation. Even more problematic would be to try and gloss separately *(v)te … te*, assuming we tried to achieve a compositional meaning of prohibitive. All things considered, the only elegant analysis – which is also more realistic in terms of modelling speakers' competence – is to adopt a constructional approach, and consider each of these combinations as bipartite, unanalysable morphemes. The three negations above will thus be glossed, respectively, NEG.FUT$_1$… NEG.FUT$_2$; NEG.POT$_1$… NEG.POT$_2$; and PROH$_1$… PROH$_2$.

The Negative future, illustrated in (21), is used to negate two types of future: the one encoded by the Irrealis *s(o)-*, but also the Dilatory future marked by (22a) *qra* [Footnote 10 p.79]:

[16] Note that only the first two of these correspond to declarative sentences, and thus to standard negation proper; as for prohibitive morphemes, they will be presented in §2.2.2.

(22) a. *Dār s-sim bas, dār **qra** gāngēn.*
1INCL.DU IRR-drink finish 1INCL.DU DILAT eat.INTR
'We'll first drink, and (only later) we will have dinner.' [Drg.d04:34]

b. *Dār s-sim, la dār **te** gāngēn **tēmē**.*
1INCL.DU IRR-drink but 1INCL.DU NEG.FUT$_1$ eat.INTR NEG.FUT$_2$
'We'll drink, but we won't be having dinner.'

This is another instance of paradigmatic asymmetry, as a semantic contrast made in the affirmative (between the Irrealis and the Dilatory future) is neutralised under negation.

In reality, the Negative future is very rare in my corpus: I was only able to hear it under elicitation. Much more common are the two other types of irrealis negation: the Negative potential (21 instances in my corpus), and the various forms taken by the Prohibitive (35 instances) – for which, see §2.2.2.

In the affirmative, potential statements of the type 'I can V' are expressed using the discontinuous Potential morpheme *s(o)-… lala* – see (4) and (8a) above, or (23):

(23) *O mat neñ ni **s**-daw rōrōw **lala** o tdun.*
ART snake DIST 3SG POT$_1$-do wrong POT$_2$ ART person
'That snake can be harmful to people.' [Drg.q.Anemol.03]

The positive Potential *s(o)-… lala* combines the Irrealis prefix *s(o)-* with a TAMP$_2$ particle *lala*; the latter results from the grammaticalisation of a former postverb [§1.2] *lala* meaning '(do) successfully, e.g. when hunting'. Yet synchronically, *s(o)-… lala* must be analysed as a single (albeit discontinuous) morpheme coding for potential modality; hence the gloss POT$_1$-… POT$_2$. One reason to consider *s(o)-… lala* as grammaticalised is precisely the form of its negative counterpart. Instead of a putative form **(v)te… lala tēmē* (which would be expected if *lala* were still a postverb), the Negative potential is an unpredictable morpheme *(v)te… late*. Thus, the negative equivalent of (4) above is (24):

(24) [NEGATIVE POTENTIAL]
*Kmār **vte** briñ **late** nēk.*
1EXCL.DU NEG.POT$_1$ help NEG.POT$_2$ 2SG
'We can't help you.'

The TAMP$_2$ particle *late* results from the contraction of *lala* with **te*, which is essentially a particle of negation [see §4.6.3]; synchronically, it is unanalysable.

Whether in the positive or negative, the potential mood may refer semantically to a situation in the present or future – as in (4/24) or (8a–8b). It can also refer to a habitual possibility – as in (23), or the clause *nēk te tek late ni* in (25):

(25) *Tuar qōñ ni s-van nēk **te** tek **late** ni ni t-van ti.*
INDF day 3SG IRR-go 2SG NEG.POT$_1$ see NEG.POT$_2$ 3SG 3SG IPFV$_1$-go IPFV$_2$
'Sometimes [the sorcerer] can just walk around without being seen.'
(lit. 'Sometimes he'll walk *you can't see him* yet he's walking.') {ꞗ3195#S38}

2.1.7 The subsystem of phasal aspects

As we examined the paradigmatic asymmetries of the Dorig system, we saw how several aspect distinctions made in the affirmative are neutralised in the negative. One type of semantic boundary, though, is solid enough to be preserved across polarities: these are the contrasts involving phasal aspects with pragmatic presuppositions: 'already' vs. 'not yet', 'still' vs. 'no longer'.[17] These aspects form a subsystem of their own, with grammaticalised constructions, both in the positive and negative.

Let us call *t* the moment when a state of affairs *P* changes into its opposite state *Q* (e.g. *alive → dead*; *sick → cured*; *single → married*; *wet → dry*; etc.). If I wish to express that *t* has taken place already, I may formulate this by reference to the new state Q ('the shirt is dry already'), by using what is known as a IAMITIVE aspect.[18] Alternatively, I may use a pragmatically equivalent formulation, this time making reference to the initial state *P* ('it's no longer wet'). The latter construction, sometimes called DISCONTINUATIVE (van der Auwera 1998: 44), involves a phasal negation 'not any more, no longer'. Another possibility is that the event *t* (the change from *P* to *Q*) has not happened yet. Again, I may choose to express this by reference to *P* ('it's still wet'), which is a CONTINUATIVE; or by reference to *Q*, by employing what I'll call a NONDUMITIVE ('it's not dry yet').

Table 5 summarises these four patterns, in the form of a rectangle of phasal aspects.[19] The predicates used as examples are the adjectives *loq* 'wet' and *wow* 'dry'. The negative constructions are shown in grayed cells.

Note the binary relations that define the quadrangular structure of Table 5:

- the continuative (26) is the pragmatic equivalent of the nondumitive (27)
- the discontinuative (28) is the pragmatic equivalent of the iamitive (29)
- the discontinuative (28) is the semantic opposite of the continuative (26)
- the iamitive (29) is the semantic opposite of the nondumitive (27)

[17] For general references on phasal aspects, see Löbner (1989), van der Auwera (1993), (1998), van Baar (1997), Krifka (2000).

[18] The term "iamitive" (from Latin *iam* 'now, already') is a type of perfect that focuses on change-of-state, and often builds on speaker's expectations (Olsson 2013; Dahl & Wälchli 2016).

[19] For similar observations on other languages, see Löbner (1989), Krifka (2000). See also François (2003: 325) on Mwotlap.

Table 5: The rectangle of phasal aspects in Dorig (referring to a change of state from P to Q)

	reference to state P	reference to state Q
P→Q has not happened	CONTINUATIVE (26) *va-loq* ***mlēti*** STAT-wet CONT 'it's **still** wet'	NONDUMITIVE (27) ***sowse*** *wow* ***te*** NDUM$_1$ dry NDUM$_2$ 'it's **not** dry **yet**'
P→Q has happened	DISCONTINUATIVE (28) ***s-****loq* ***nok tēmē*** NEG.R$_1$-wet IAM NEG.R$_2$ 'it's **not** wet **any more**'	IAMITIVE (29) *va-wow* ***nok*** STAT-dry IAM 'it's dry **already**'

The following lines illustrate each of these cases, with a special focus on the negative morphemes (grayed cells in Table 5).

Dorig constrasts two types of perfect aspects: the Perfect *m(e)-* and the Iamitive *m(e)-… nok*:

(30) a. *I ntu-k* ***m****-lāg le tuar sñar.*
PERS child-1SG PRF-marry LOC other month
'My child got married last month.'

b. *I ntu-k* ***m****-lāg* ***nok****.*
PERS child-1SG PRF-marry IAM
'My child is married (now/already).'

The semantic contrast between perfect and iamitive, which is pervasive in northern Vanuatu (François 2003: 118–130), has to do with the handling of information.[20] In a Perfect sentence like (30a), the whole predicate brings new information. By contrast, (30b) entails a pragmatic presupposition: due to local cultural expectations, the event '*get married (at some point)*' is presupposed or "pre-defined", and here the focal information is whether that expected event has yet happened, or not.

Admittedly, the contrast between (30a) and (30b) is encoded through a postverb *nok* rather than through distinct TAMP morphemes. That said, these two constructions entertain clear paradigmatic relations with their negative counterparts, which form TAMP categories of their own [see Table 5]. I thus propose to take a constructional perspective here again, and consider these different combinations as TAMP categories in their own right.

Indeed, the contrast between perfect and iamitive finds its mirror image in the negative polarity. A clause in the Perfect, with no internal hierarchy of information (old vs. new), would simply be negated with the Negative realis [§2.1.4]:[21]

(31) [NEG. REALIS]
I ntu-k ***s****-lāg* ***tēmē*** *le tuar sñar.*
PERS child-1SG NEG.R$_1$-marry NEG.R$_2$ LOC other month
'My child didn't get married last month.'

The negative counterpart of the iamitive, on the other hand, is a specific construction equivalent to English 'not yet'. Among various names, that construction has sometimes been called *nondum*, after its Latin equivalent (Veselinova & Devos 2021); I propose to label it *nondumitive*, to highlight the mirror-relationship with the *iamitive*. In Dorig, the nondumitive is a discontinuous morpheme of the form *sowse … te* – as in (7) above, or (32):

(32) [NONDUMITIVE]
I ntu-k ***sowse*** *lāg* ***te****.*
PERS child-1SG **NDUM$_1$** marry **NDUM$_2$**
'My child isn't married yet.'

The nondumitive also comes with pragmatic presuppositions – the very same ones we saw with the iamitive. Thus, (32) implicitly refers to the expectation that one should marry some day; the nondumitive states that such a predefined moment has not materialised yet at the moment of utterance. Likewise in (7a), in a context where the subject was supposed to be cooking food, the (predefined) moment of lighting the fire had not taken place yet.

As far as the morphology is concerned, one must note here a puzzling case of opacity between the ordinary Realis negation *s(o)-… tēmē* on the one hand, and the Nondumitive *sowse… te* on the other hand [Table 2]. While English simply contrasts *not* with *not yet*, Dorig treats the two morphemes as formally unrelated with each other. The first element *sowse* is opaque, being found exclusively in this context; as for the second element *te*, it clearly bears a relation with the negative domain, yet not in a way that would make it easy to gloss on its own.

[20] See also Vander Klok & Matthewson (2015) for a discussion of a contrast between 'perfect' and 'already' in Javanese.

[21] If (31) didn't have a time complement, its Negative realis could also receive a present (stative) interpretation: *I ntu-k s-lāg tēmē* 'My child isn't married' [see §2.1.4].

Finally, another example of a phasal aspect with pragmatic implications is the Continuative, expressed in English with *still* – see (26) above. Dorig expresses the positive continuative with a postverb *mlēti* 'still' (glossed CONT for 'continuative'), as in (33).[22]

(33) *Ni m-mat nok, le— ni va-ēs **mlēti**?*
3SG PRF-dead IAM or 3SG STAT-alive CONT
'Is he dead already, or is he still alive?' {ɪ7437#S64}

The continuative particle *mlēti* is generally incompatible with negation.[23] As we saw in Table 5, the polarity counterpart of the Continuative is the Discontinuative 'no longer, not any more'. The latter obtains by combining the Realis negation *s(o)-… tēmē* [§2.1.5] with the iamitive postverb *nok*, as in (34):

(34) A: *Ni va-semn̄ mlēti?*
3SG STAT-sick CONT
'Is she still sick?'
B: *Obek, ni **s**-semn̄ **nok tēmē**.*
NEGEX 3SG NEG.R$_1$-sick IAM NEG.R$_2$
'No, she's **not** sick **any more**.'

Such a combination must be understood, literally, as in (35).

(35) { it is now the case } $_{\text{IAMITIVE}}$ that [*she's not sick*]$_{\text{NEG.REALIS}}$

2.1.8 Synthesis

To summarise our observations so far, standard negation in Dorig involves a wealth of morphological elements in which polarity is inextricably mixed with semantic dimensions of tense, aspect, modality – or even pragmatic presuppositions, in the case of phasal aspects. Negation is expressed by discontinuous morphemes which can hardly be given a compositional analysis, and are best understood as unanalysable constructions.

As detailed in §2.1.2, the Dorig system is characterised by different forms of asymmetry across polarities: constructional asymmetry in the expression of tense-aspect-mood; paradigmatic asymmetry regarding tense and aspect; and possibly asymmetry with respect to reality status. In fact, there are very few areas where Dorig maintains some form of stability across polarities: the contrast in reality status has resisted neutralisation, in a pattern of "paradigmatic displacement"; and phasal aspects form a neat "rectangle", with regular one-to-one correspondences between affirmative and negative.

All in all, there are so many differences between positive and negative TAMP markers that Dorig could be analysed as having two distinct sub-systems. Each polarity has its own cut-up of the semantic space, with no easy way to find correspondences across polarities – a type which Miestamo (2005: 54) calls "different-system asymmetry" (DiffSys).

[22] In (33), the dash encodes the elongated vowel [ɛ:] typical of the word *le* in questions.

[23] The only case when the continuative *mlēti* can combine with a negation is when forming a sentential reply "Not yet" – see §3.1.2 below.

2.2 Negation in non-declaratives

2.2.1 Questions

Little needs to be said about questions. Interrogative sentences make use of the same verbal categories as we saw in the declarative: e.g. Negative Realis (36), Nondumitive (37), Negative Potential (38). In these examples, interrogation is only marked by prosody.

(36) *Nēk **s**-tek **tēmē** ni?*
2SG NEG.R$_1$-see NEG.R$_2$ 3SG
'Didn't you see her?' [Drg.d12.Sintia:22]

(37) *Nēk **sowse** vārdēn̄ **te** ma ni?*
2SG NDUM$_1$ meet NDUM$_2$ with 3SG
'Haven't you met with her already?' [Drg.d12.Sintia:42]

(38) ***Te** ttās **late** kēl aqri?*
NEG.POT$_1$ bad NEG.POT$_2$ again today.FUT
'Can't it [the phone] go wrong again today?' [Drg.q.Tel:05]

2.2.2 Prohibition

In the positive, an order can be encoded by an Imperative. If the subject is dual or plural, it is encoded by a special pronoun (39b) *ar* 'IMP.2NSG' (imperative non-singular) – contrasting with (39a) Ø for 2SG:

(39) [IMPERATIVE]
a. *(Ø) sēw ma!*
(IMP.2SG) descend hither
'Come down!'

b. ***Ar*** *sēw* *ma!*
IMP.2NSG descend hither
'Come down (y'all)!'

Table 2 [§2.1.1] represented the Imperative category as *[ar]…*: this stands for the alternation between preverbal Ø and *ar*.

Another common way to formulate an order is simply to use an Irrealis clause in *s(o)-*, as in (40a–40b):

(40) [IRREALIS]
a. *Nēk* ***s****-sēw* *ma!*
2SG IRR-descend hither
'Come down!'
b. *Kmur* ***s****-sēw* *ma!*
2DU IRR-descend hither
'Come down (you two)!'

Except for the imperative prosody, such clauses are formally identical to the declarative sentences in the Irrealis – cf. (1), (20). As for the prohibitive, it involves three constructions. Speakers describe them as perfectly synonymous; and indeed, they appear to be interchangeable in all contexts. The first construction is the discontinuous morpheme *(v)te… te*. This requires the overt presence of a subject pronoun – unlike the imperative (39a) – plus reduplication of the verb, as in (41):

(41) [NEGATIVE IMPERATIVE]
Nēk ***vte*** *sēwsēw* ***te*** *ma!*
2SG **PROH$_1$** descend~RED **PROH$_2$** hither
'Don't come down!'

A non-singular subject of a Prohibitive can be either an ordinary pronoun or a special imperative pronoun. Thus, the dual equivalent of (41) can be *Ar (v)te… te* as in (64) or (75) below, but it can also take the form *Kmur (v)te… te* as in (42):

(42) *Kmur* ***vte*** *vanvan tvilag* ***te*** *vak!*
2DU **PROH$_1$** go~RED beyond **PROH$_2$** DIR
'Don't you (two) ever walk beyond that point over there!' {Ʇ3254#S7}

In terms of morphology, the Prohibitive can thus be seen as the negative counterpart of the Imperative *[ar]…* of (39), but also of the Irrealis with imperative reading *s(o)-…* of (40). This double correspondence was represented in Table 2 in §2.1.1.

The second construction consists of a clause-initial prohibitive particle *tog* and a *v(a)-* prefix, following the atypical template (43).

(43) ***Tog*** subject ⟨***v****(a)-* verb … ⟩ …

Even though it is homophonous with the Stative, the prefix *v(a)-* is likely to represent here a different morpheme, namely the Counterfactual [§2.4]. In any case, the best analysis here again is to assign a single meaning 'Prohibitive' to the construction as a whole (i.e. *tog… v(a)-* 'PROH$_1$… PROH$_2$'):

(44) ***Tog*** *nēk* ***v****-savāg* *nēk vatmẽ sa neñ!*
PROH$_1$ 2SG **PROH$_2$**-boast 2SG like FOC DIST
'Stop showing off like that!' [AF.BP3.34b]

(45) *Kmur s-van,* ***tog*** *nēk* ***va****-vavgat* *min i Wrisris.*
2DU IRR-go **PROH$_1$** 2SG **PROH$_2$**-talk~RED with PERS (name)
'As you walk together [to the Underworld], don't talk to Wrisris.'
{Ʇ3197#S12}

While (44–45) illustrate the prohibitive with a second person, (46) shows it may also be used with third person subjects:

(46) ***Tog*** *ra=rqa* ***v****-van* *gin o qāti bē!*
PROH$_1$ PL=woman PROH$_2$-go OBL ART source water
'Women must not go to the river source.' [AF.BP3.30b]

Finally, a third construction exists, that is somewhat a hybrid of the first two. It takes the form of a sequence *tog… te*, which I also gloss 'Prohibitive'. The coding of its second-person subjects is parallel to the positive counterpart we saw in (39): if the subject is singular (47), it may be encoded with a zero; but a non-singular subject (48) would involve *ar*:

(47) ***Tog*** *dōdōm* *mawmawis* ***te*** *aē!*
PROH$_1$ think~RED suffer~RED **PROH$_2$** ADV.ANAPH
'Don't worry about it!' [Drg.d04.Kava:41]

(48) *Ar* ***tog*** *vanvan rās* ***te*** *vak!*
IMP.2NSG **PROH$_1$** go~RED far **PROH$_2$** DIR
'Don't you (two) walk too far over there!' {Ʇ7437#S29}

Dorig's three prohibitive constructions are used in the same pragmatic contexts, and appear to be perfectly interchangeable – as shown in (49):

(49) a. *Nēk (v)**te** simsim **te!***
2SG PROH$_1$ drink~RED PROH$_2$

b. *Nēk **tog** simsim **te!***
2SG PROH$_1$ drink~RED PROH$_2$

c. ***Tog** nēk **v**-sim!*
PROH$_1$ 2SG PROH$_2$-drink
'Don't drink it!'

This diversity of forms for the prohibitive adds to the profusion of negative morphemes we had seen already.[24]

These three constructions can be situated within the typology of prohibitive patterns proposed by van der Auwera & Lejeune (2013). Dorig belongs to their subtype #4, labelled "special imperative + special negative":

- *special imperative*: the three prohibitives involve morphosyntactic patterns specific to them, and not found in the positive imperative (obligatory reduplication, obligatory exponence of the subject);
- *special negative*: the three prohibitives employ (bipartite) negators that are all reserved to the expression of the prohibitive, and never used in declaratives.

van der Auwera & Lejeune's (2013) typological study included a sample of six Vanuatu languages, which pertain to different subtypes. Among that sample, the language geographically closest to Dorig, namely Mwotlap, was also assigned to their subtype #4.

2.3 Negation in stative predications

The previous sections examined verbal clauses. Following the structure of the reference questionnaire (Miestamo 2025 [this volume]), we now turn to *stative predication*. As we'll see, this umbrella category encompasses quite different types of negation again.

[24] In addition, Dorig also has a marker of apprehensive modality, which in some contexts may be used as an indirect form of prohibitive: this will be briefly discussed in §4.5.

2.3.1 Equative and ascriptive predicates

In the absence of a copula like English *be*, noun phrases in Dorig are directly predicative.[25] In (50), the predicate NP is shown between brackets ⟨…⟩:

(50) *Ni ⟨o tdun vi-lwo nami kma⟩.*
3SG ART person ATTR-great POSS 1EXCL.PL
'He is a major figure for us.' {Ʇ3197#S35}

Such nominal predicates are negated using the negator *tēmē*. Whereas verbs only use it in combination with a pre-verbal TAMP element – e.g. *s(o)-… tēmē* or *vte… tēmē* – non-verbal predicates feature *tēmē* as the sole marker of negation. When *tēmē* occurs alone like this, I propose to gloss it NEG.IND [§2.1.3]. Thus compare the positive noun predicate (51a) (*X is an N*) with its negative counterpart (51b) (*X is **not** an N*):

(51) a. *O masa ⟨oror nami mēr̄mēr⟩.*
ART knife toy POSS child
'A knife is a toy for children.'

b. *O masa ⟨oror nami mēr̄mēr **tēmē**⟩.*
ART knife toy POSS child NEG.IND
'A knife is **not** a toy for children.' [Drg.d05.Naef:43]

2.3.2 Negation of attributive predicates

Dorig has a category of adjectives. Unlike verbs, adjectives can modify nouns, by means of the 'Attributive' prefix *v(e)-* (cf. (50) above). In spite of their structural difference, adjectives behave the same as stative verbs in predicate position, and take the same array of TAMP markers. Thus if the meaning is stative as in (52), the adjective inflects for the Stative aspect *v(a)-*:

(52) ***Va**-wē.*
STAT-good
'It's okay / That's fine / It's beautiful.' {Ʇ3189#S14}

In principle, adjectival predicates are negated following the same rules as for verbs [§2.1]. Thus the Stative, Perfect, or Imperfective aspects in the positive are all negated with the Negative Realis (53) *s(o)-… tēmē*:

[25] This is true of other languages in north Vanuatu – e.g. Mwotlap (François 2005a: 128), Vera'a (Schnell 2011: 32), Vurës (Malau 2016: 68), Hiw (François 2017: 326) – and widespread in Oceanic (van Lier 2016; François 2026).

(53) *Na bē-k* ***s-wē*** ***tēmē.***
ART body-1SG **NEG.R$_1$**-good **NEG.R$_2$**
'My body is aching.' (lit. my body is not well) [Drg.d02.Krae:06]

However, my corpus shows several examples, like (54), where a negated adjectives has kept the stative *v(a)-*:

(54) ***Va-wē*** ***tēmē!***
STAT-good NEG.IND
'That's not okay.' {ꝑ2306#S67}

Such a combination is excluded with stative verbs – see (10) above – but it is allowed with adjectives. This is coherent with our earlier observation about nominal predicates [§2.3.1], suggesting that *non-verbal predicates* follow simpler rules than verbal ones. Negating a non-verbal predicate only takes adding the negator *tēmē*. This is the only domain where Dorig negation shows full "symmetry" between polarities.

This principle also works with a handful of adjectives that happen to be incompatible with the stative prefix – e.g. (55) *arās* 'remote, far away'. They are simply negated by adding *tēmē*:

(55) A: *Arās soqsoq sa!*
far INTS DIST
'That's really far!'
B: *Bek! Arās* ***tēmē.***
NEGEX far NEG.IND
'Not at all! It's not far.' [Drg.q.d01.Road:21]

Finally, Dorig has a similative predicate (François 2026: 1052) *tam̄rag* 'be like…' – derived from *m̄rag* 'like…' – that behaves neither like an adjective nor like a verb. As (56) shows, this similative takes the same negation as other non-verbal predicates, namely *tēmē*:

(56) *Tam̄rag* ***tēmē*** *aēsa le Vanuatu.*
be.like NEG.IND here LOC Vanuatu
'It's not like here in Vanuatu.' [AF.BP3.28a]

2.3.3 Existential, possessive, locative predicates

In the affirmative, Dorig usually forms its existentials using the word (57) *aē*:[26]

(57) *O tne vre* ⟨***aē***⟩*, Diwtag.*
ART location.of village EX Diwtag
'There is an abandoned village, (called) Diwtag.' {ꝑ3195#S45}

The negation of an existential predicate (58a) employs a dedicated negator, namely (58b) *bek* or *obek* 'NEGEX' (Negative existential):

(58) a. *O bē* ⟨*aē*⟩*.*
ART water EX
'There is water.'
b. *O bē* ⟨***obek***⟩*.*
ART water NEGEX
'There is no water.'

Existential constructions are also used to encode predicative possession. The equivalent of English *I have an N* is a structure meaning literally "There is my N" ~ "My N exists". This may refer to alienable (59) or to inalienable (60) possession:

(59) *Namo-n o ak sōsō vi-lwo* ***aē.***
POSS-3SG ART ship paddle~RED ATTR-big EX
'He had a large canoe.' {ꝑ2306#S1}

(60) *I nti kmār nok* ***aē.***
PERS child.of 1EXCL.DU IAM EX
'We already have children.' [Drg.q.d12.Sintia:36]

Such possessive predicates are also negated using *(o)bek* – see (61):

(61) *Nēk magse-n̄, i ntō-n̄* ***obek.***
2SG alone-2SG PERS child.of-2SG NEGEX
'You are alone, you don't have children.' {ꝑ2306#S41}

[26] The original use of *aē* is as an oblique anaphoric 'about it, with it, at it, there', used in adjunct position – see (47). When used in predicate position, that adverb has grammaticalised into an existential operator (compare English *there* → *be there*). A similar path can be reconstructed in various other Oceanic languages: e.g. Mwotlap (François 2005a: 128, 2026: 1055), East Uvean (Moyse-Faurie 2018: 305).

With a definite subject, a Negative existential *obek* also serves to negate a locative predicate such as (62a):

(62) a. *Ni le mo-n o vre.*
3SG LOC POSS-3SG ART village
'He is in his village.' {⚓3197#S8}

b. *Ni* ***obek*** *le mo-n o vre.*
3SG NEGEX LOC POSS-3SG ART village
'He isn't in his village.'

We'll see in §3.1.1 how the Negative existential *obek* is also used for negative replies.[27]

Table 6 recapitulates the different constructions discussed in §2.3 on stative predications.

Table 6: Negation in some stative predications

Type of predication	Positive polarity	Negative polarity	sym?
Equational, ascriptive	SBJ ⟨NP⟩$_{PRED}$	SBJ ⟨NP ***tēmē***⟩$_{PRED}$	+
Attributive	SBJ ⟨TAM adjective⟩$_{PRED}$	SBJ ⟨*s(o)-*/TAM adjective ***tēmē***⟩$_{PRED}$	+
Existential, possessive	SBJ ⟨***aē***⟩$_{PRED}$	SBJ ⟨***obek***⟩$_{PRED}$	–
Locative	SBJ ⟨LOCATIVE⟩$_{PRED}$	SBJ ⟨***obek*** LOCATIVE⟩$_{PRED}$	–

2.4 Negation in non-main clauses

The rules of negation are identical in main and non-main clauses. Example (63) has two clauses in a causal relation {*P because Q*}. The second clause uses the Negative realis, just like an independent clause would (cf. 12b):

(63) *Kmur me-briñ na sur o āv* ***s-gān*** ***tēmē*** *na.*
2DU PRF-help 1SG CSL ART fire NEG.R$_1$-burn NEG.R$_2$ 1SG
'You helped me dodge the fire.'
(lit. 'You two helped me *so* the fire didn't burn me.') {⚓2306#S68}

In a relative clause, the subordinator *ka* inserts between the clause's subject and predicate. The relative clause in (64) features a nondumitive:

[27]The syntactic and phraseological behaviour of Dorig *obek* is parallel to that of equivalent morphemes in northern Vanuatu languages – Hiw *tego*, Vurës *odiañ* (cf. Malau 2016: 66), Mwotlap *tateh*, Lemerig *niv*, etc.; see the comparison in François (2011: 214, 219–221).

(64) *Ar te vanvan vga te vak gēn neñ sa*
IMP.2NSG PROH$_1$ go~PROH beyond PROH$_2$ DIR FOC DIST TOP
{gēn ka ***sowse*** *van* ***te*** *aē}.*
1INCL.PL SUB NDUM$_1$ go NDUM$_2$ ADV.ANAPH
'Don't you two walk beyond the point over there,
where *we haven't been yet*!' {⚓7437#S20}

The morphosyntax of negation is here identical to the one found in an independent sentence (cf. 8). Section §4.5 below will examine a type of quasi negation in quasi subordinate contexts: namely, the apprehensive *tekor* 'so that not…; for fear that…'.

I will here focus on one particular type of syndesis: conditional systems. Conditional systems in Dorig present two semantic subtypes: HYPOTHETICAL vs. COUNTERFACTUAL systems. As Table 7 shows, these two types of conditionals require different negations when the conditional protasis is negated.

Table 7: Negation in conditional protases

Type of system	Positive protasis	Negative protasis
Hypothetical	{ *kak* X *m-*V$_1$…}, Y *s(o)-* V$_2$ 'if X *did* V$_1$, then Y *would* V$_2$'	{ *kak* X ***mtē*** V$_1$ **tēmē** …}, Y *s(o)-* V$_2$ 'if X *did* ***not*** V$_1$, then Y *would* V$_2$'
Counterfactual	{ X *vit* V$_1$…}, *mrag* Y *v(a)-* V$_2$ 'if X *had* V$_1$, then Y *would have* V$_2$'	{ X *vit* (***v***)***te*** V$_1$ **te**… }}, *mrag* Y *v(a)-* V$_2$ 'if X *had* ***not*** V$_1$, then Y *would have* V$_2$'

In HYPOTHETICAL systems like (65), the conditional subordinator (English *if*) is the complementiser *kak*, usually followed (in the affirmative) by a verb in the Perfect *m(e)-*:

(65) *Kak o dmug* ***m-kot*** *nēk, nēk s-gār nēk s-dēñ o*
COMP ART mosquito PRF-bite 2SG 2SG IRR-scratch 2SG IRR-reach ART
mrān.
daylight
'If you're bitten by mosquitoes, you'll scratch yourself all night.'

If the protasis is negative as in (66), the Perfect marker *m(e)-…* is replaced by a combination *mtē… tēmē* in the usual TAMP slots:

(66) *Kak nēk* ***mtē*** *vrisa wālōg* ***tēmē*** *mi (…),*
COMP 2SG HYP.NEG run round NEG.IND with.it
nēk s-gān o mla neñ, v-marmar.
2SG IRR-eat ART scrubfowl DEM STAT-hard
[*a magic ritual to make meat tender*] 'If you don't run in circles while holding it, then when you eat the scrubfowl, [its meat] will be too hard.' {Ʇ3189#S41}

The TAMP marker *mtē… tēmē* is only found in this context (although see ex. 86). The use of the negator *tēmē*, normally reserved to realis or "indicative" modality, is somewhat paradoxical in the case of a hypothesis; but it is coherent with the use of a (realis) Perfect in the affirmative equivalent (65).

As for COUNTERFACTUAL hypotheses, they involve a dedicated counterfactual system *vit… mrag* [Table 7], as seen in (67) with two positive clauses:

(67) *Ni* ***vit*** *ttuw na mta-n,*
3SG if.CNTF hit ART eye-3SG
mrag *na mta-n* ***v****-qel ni!*
then.CNTF ART eye-3SG CNTF-blind OBL.ANA
'If he had hit her eyes, she would have become blind.' [Drg.d08.Rao:15]

In such a system, a negative protasis requires a special negation, namely *(v)te… te* – as in (68):

(68) *Na* ***vit*** ***te*** *lōblōb* ***te*** *o wrēt sa,* ***mrag***
1SG if.CNTF NEG.CNTF$_1$ pound~RED NEG.CNTF$_2$ ART squid TOP then.CNTF
v*-marmar.*
CNTF-hard
'If I hadn't pounded this squid, it would be too hard.' [AF.BP3.33a]

It is noteworthy that the negation *(v)te… te* is used both for the prohibitive [§2.2.2] and for a negative Counterfactual hypothesis. Indeed, those are two contexts when the speaker elaborates a virtual situation in contrast with reality.[28]

2.5 Negative lexicalizations

The notion of "negative lexicalization" (Veselinova 2013a) refers to the case when a negative meaning is expressed by lexical rather than morphological means. In other words, negative polarity is baked into a word's lexical semantics, rather than being part of a compositional expression. For example, English *refuse* can be seen as the negative counterpart of *accept*.

Except for the contrast between positive and negative existentials [§2.3.3], Dorig does not have clearcut cases of such a pattern. Among Dorig's neighbours, some languages show lexicalisation for meanings such as 'not want' (Teanu *mene*), or 'not know' (Hiw *yiñetog*, Teanu *mui*: François 2021). But in such cases, Dorig would use a phrasal negation: *so-mrōs tēmē* 'not want', *so-vrēgēl tēmē* 'not know'.

2.6 Other clausal negation constructions

Somewhat peripheral to the domain of negation proper is the frustrative postverb *mtēl* '(do) in vain' – e.g. (69). A common translation is often a negative construction in English, such as 'be unable to, can't':

(69) *Sō sag neñ, t-rev mlē namon o ak neñ ti,*
paddle up DIST IPFV$_1$-tow again POSS.3SG ART canoe DIST IPFV$_2$
la t-revrev ***mtēl*** *ti.*
but IPFV$_1$-tow~RED in.vain IPFV$_2$
'Once he reached the shore, he tried again to tow his boat, but *didn't manage to*.' (lit. 'but *he towed in vain*' = he tried to tow it but was NOT able to) {Ʇ2306#S35}

In spite of its English translation, this frustrative construction cannot be considered a proper instance of a negative structure in the grammar of Dorig.

3 Non-clausal negation

3.1 Negative replies

3.1.1 Equivalent of a Negative declarative clause

When answering negatively a yes/no question, Dorig can use either of two strategies:

- the 'light no', consisting of a "prosodic gesture" of the form [˥.˩.˦] uttered on a vowel /ɔ/: *Óòó* [˥ɔ.˩ɔ.˦ɔ];
- the 'heavy no', which is the Negative existential used absolutely (with no argument).

[28] Likewise, a language like Latin would use the subjunctive in both cases: the Counterfactual (*si eum occidisset* 'if she had slain him…') and the Prohibitive (*ne facias* 'don't do!').

The use of Negative existentials for negative replies is shared by all Vanuatu languages (François 2011: 220), and is in fact common typologically (Veselinova 2013b). A negative reply in Dorig will thus include the Negative existential *obek*, or its shorter variant *bek* – see (34) and (55) above, or (70):

(70) A: *Namu-k o vriñriñ va-wow nok?*
poss-1sg art thing stat-dry iam
'Are my clothes dry yet?'
B: ***Bek**, va-loq mlēti.*
negex stat-wet cont
'No, they're still wet.' [Drg.q.Adj:41]

The negation *(o)bek* may contradict a negative statement or question uttered by the addressee, in which case it may translate in English as a strong 'yes' (Fr. *si!*, Germ. *doch!*):

(71) A: *Kmur vte briñ late na!*
2du neg.pot$_1$ help neg.pot$_2$ 2sg
'You won't be able to help me!'
B: ***Obek**, va-wē!*
negex stat-good
'**Yes** (we will), that's fine!' {±2306#S21}

A dialogue like (71) shows that Dorig behaves like Japanese, in that its negative replies disagree with the polarity of the previous utterance, rather than with its propositional content (see Holmberg 2015; Miestamo 2017). In that sense, it serves as a "polarity-reversing particle" (Moser 2018: 23).

3.1.2 Equivalent of a Nondumitive clause

The standalone equivalent of the nondumitive *sowse… te* 'not yet' [§2.1.7] is a combination of *(o)bek* with the continuative marker *mlēti*. Such a combination reads literally as shown in (72).

(72) { it is still the case }$_{\text{CONTINUATIVE}}$ that [*no*]$_{\text{NEGEX}}$

This is in fact parallel to English *not yet* or French *pas encore*. Note that the negative reply *bek mlēti* can also be used as a tag in the question (73).

(73) A: *Ni m-lāg nok, le bek mlēti?*
3sg iam$_1$-marry iam$_2$ or negex cont
'Is she married, or not yet?'
B: ***Bek mlēti**.*
negex cont
'Not yet.' [Drg.d12.Sintia:33]

This combination of the negative existential *bek* with the continuative *mlēti* provides a standalone equivalent to the nondumitive (74):

(74) *Ni **sowse** lāg **te**.*
3sg **ndum$_1$** marry **ndum$_2$**
'She isn't married yet.'

In English, the relation between the clausal construction (*not… yet*) and the standalone equivalent (*Not yet.*) is formally transparent; in Dorig, it is quite opaque – compare (73–74).

3.1.3 Equivalent of a Prohibitive

A standalone prohibitive uses the interjection (75) *tog!* 'don't!'. This is the same word as the formative found in *tog … v(a)-*, one of the tamp markers for prohibitive – see (45) in §2.2.2.

(75) ***Tog**! Ar te qāgqēg vtē te!*
proh 2nsg.imp proh$_1$ throw~red away proh$_2$
'Don't! Don't you throw it away!' [Drg.d09.Karen:41]

Dorig also has a special interjection (76) *tuqa (titi)* for what can be called the "dilatory prohibitive", i.e. 'Not yet!' or 'Wait!':

(76) ***Tuqa** titi! So-wdōñ m̃o o āv.*
dilat.proh pol.imp irr-set.up before art fire
'*Not yet / Wait!* You must first set up the fire.' [Drg.d10.Bekem:10]

This sort of interjection is a common feature in northern Vanuatu – see Table 11 in the Appendix.

3.2 Negative indefinites and quantifiers

Dorig does not have inherently negative indefinites or adverbs equivalent to English *never*, *nobody*, *nothing*, *no X*, etc. These meanings are expressed by combining the expected negation with a generic noun (hyperonym) such as:

- *o tdun* '(a) person' + NEG → 'nobody'
- *o sa(v)* '(a) thing, what' + NEG → 'nothing'

In the typology of negative indefinites proposed by Haspelmath (2013a, 2013b), *sav* and *tdun* would be "generic-noun-based indefinites". (77) shows the equivalent of *nobody* in an existential clause:

(77) *Amo,* ***o tdun obek****.*
in.past ART person NEGEX
'In the olden days, [in this island] there was *nobody*.'
(lit. 'there was not a person') {Ʇ3195#S7}

The negated participant can be the syntactic subject as in (77), or an object as in (78):

(78) *Kmār s-tek tēmē* ***o sa*** *aēsei.*
1EXCL.DU NEG.R$_1$-see NEG.R$_2$ ART what here
'We haven't seen *anything* here.' [Drg.d05.Naef:08]

Just like other nouns, the NP heads *tdun* and *sa(v)* take the common noun article *o*. As we'll see in §4.3 for noun phrases in general, that article *o* remains unchanged whether the sentence is affirmative or negative.

3.3 Negative derivation and case-marking

Patterns of negative derivation (such as English *un-friendly*, *im-possible*, *time-less*) are rare in Oceanic languages, and evidently absent in Dorig.

Likewise, Dorig has no adposition similar to English *without*. In order to express a caritive meaning, one would resort to a complex sentence with a negative existential. For example, *without a child* or *childless* would be expressed by a sentence like (61) above – a strategy which is typologically very common (Veselinova 2013a: 118).

4 Other aspects of negation

4.1 The scope of negation

Dorig does not have grammaticalised devices to specify the scope of negation. As a rule, the negation is carried by the predicate head (generally, a verb) regardless of which constituent is semantically the focus of the negation:

(79) *La Wrisris, ni* ***s****-mat* ***tēmē*** *attua soqsoq,*
but Wrisris 3SG NEG.R$_1$-die NEG.R$_2$ long.ago INTS
Wrisris ni qra mat wor ti.
Wrisris 3SG RECPST$_1$ die just RECPST$_2$
'[Our god] Wrisris *didn't die* a very long time ago, he died just recently.'
{Ʇ3197#S36}

In (79), the negation formally surrounds the verb *mat* 'die', even though its semantic scope is really the time adjunct *attua* 'a long time ago' – in a way similar to its English translation.

Because the negation is only marked on the predicate head, sentence (80) would be ambiguous between three readings (a, b, c). Only prosody can here be used as a clue to identify the scope of negation.

(80) *O tdun sa* ***so****-vsōg* ***tēmē*** *o wiag neñ.*
ART person this NEG.R$_1$-plant NEG.R$_2$ ART yam that
(lit. 'This person here didn't plant those yams.')
a. 'It was *not this man* who planted those yams.'
b. 'This man *did not plant* those yams (he bought them).'
c. 'This man didn't plant *those yams* (he planted these other ones).'

That said, the scope of negation is sometimes specified using a strategy, namely topicalisation by left-dislocation. Thus, Dorig commonly has complex predicates that involve more than two lexemes – either a serial verb {V+V}, or a verb and its modifier {V+Adjective}, {V+Postverb}; such complex predicates invariably share the same TAMP marking. If that marking is negative, it has scope over the whole predicate: see the examples (8a), (11), (14), (42), (47). In a sentence like (81), the negation is thus shared by the action verb *daw* 'do' and the postverb *tavul* 'well, correctly':

(81) *Na* ***s****-daw tavul* ***tēmē****.*
1SG **NEG.R$_1$**-do well **NEG.R$_2$**
'I'm not doing it correctly.'

Dorig can sometimes break up these complex predicates, and distribute them across two separate clauses – one being topicalised, the second under focus. In such cases, each predicate head recovers its own autonomous TAMP marking. Thus compare (81) with its biclausal variant (82):[29]

(82) *Na t-daw t' sa, **va**-wē **tēmē!***
1SG IPFV$_1$-do IPFV$_2$ TOP **STAT**-good **NEG.IND**
'[The way] I'm doing it, that's not correct!' {⚓2306#S67}

Breaking apart a complex predicate may be seen as a way to specify the exact scope of the negation.

4.2 Negative polarity items

So-called *negative polarity items* (Baker 1970), or *scale reversal items* (Haspelmath 1997: 34), are words – such as English *any* or *ever* – that occur typically in negative contexts, but are also found in other forms of non-assertive sentences, such as questions, hypotheses, generic statements, etc. Dorig does not have such morphemes.

For example, the generic noun *(o) tdun* 'person' combines with a negation to yield the equivalent of 'nobody' as in (77) or (87); but it is also found in affirmative statements, as in (23) or (50). The same would be true of the inanimate *(o) sa(v)* 'what/anything' – see (78).

4.3 Marking of NPs in the scope of negation

Dorig has the following noun determiners (François 2007):

- *i* – 'personal article', reserved to human nouns with high individuation such as proper names [→ ex. (45)] or kin terms [→ (30–32), (61), (88)]
- *na* – 'possessive article' for common nouns (i.e. non-human, or human with low individuation) that are inalienably possessed (suffixed) [→ (9), (13), (53)]
- *o* – 'common article' for common nouns that are unbound: either alienably possessed as in (59), or simply unpossessed as in (7), (14), (23).
- *tuar* – 'indefinite article' for all nouns, as in (25), (87).

[29] Because *tavul* is a postverb ('well, properly'), it cannot head a predicate; its clausal equivalent is the adjective *wē* ('good, proper').

The function of these articles is mostly syntactic, that of a determiner: it's a D in a DP. Crucially, the first three articles are underspecified with respect to the features [±definite] or [±referential]: depending on the context, they may refer to an indefinite ('a', 'some') or a definite article ('the'), to a specific entity or a generic one. This explains why the same articles are compatible both with positive and negative clauses, whether they are to be interpreted as referential or not. A noun marked by one of these determiners will be ambiguous in its interpretation. The same sequence *o masa* '(a/the) knife' is thus found in positive (83a) or negative (83b) statements alike:[30]

(83) a. *Na m-tek **o** **masa** allon.*
1SG PRF-see ART knife inside
[±def] [+ref] 'I saw a/the knife inside.'

b. *Na s-tek tēmē **o** **masa** allon.*
1SG NEG.R$_1$-see NEG.R$_2$ ART knife inside
[-def] [-ref] 'I didn't see any knife inside.'

The default reading of *o masa* in (83b) is non-referential (English *any knife*); but the presence of another modifier, like a possessor (84) or a demonstrative, can override this interpretation by forcing a [+definite] reading:

(84) *Na s-tek tēmē **namo-n̄** **o** **masa** allon.*
1SG NEG.R$_1$-see NEG.R$_2$ POSS-2SG ART knife inside
[+def] [+ref] 'I didn't see your knife inside.'

In sum, noun phrases bear the same determiners in positive and negative contexts. In this respect, the Dorig system shows perfect symmetry across polarities.

4.4 Reinforcing negation

In order to reinforce its negative statements, Dorig uses an auxiliary *tē* 'Negation intensifier' (INTS.NEG), of unknown origin.[31] The reason it can be analysed as a

[30] While Dorig here behaves like its immediate neighbours, it contrasts with several languages of Vanuatu that employ different NP articles in positive vs. negative sentences. Thus Hiw (Torres Is.) contrasts two indefinite articles, one [+ref] and one [-ref] (François 2016a); further south, Araki also forces the use of *partitive* determiners in irrealis and/or negative clauses (François 2002: 54–67).

[31] The form *tē* [tɪ] is unrelated with the *te* [tɛ] we have seen as a formative in several negative morphemes [§2.1.3].

(verb-like) auxiliary is that it bears the TAMP marking instead of the lexical verb, which follows it immediately.

The ordinary negation (85a) can be compared with the intensified negation (85b):

(85) a. *Ni* ***s-vit*** ***tēmē*** *o* *sav.*
3SG NEG.R$_1$-say NEG.R$_2$ ART thing
'He didn't say anything.'

b. *Ni* ***so-tē*** *vit* ***tēmē*** *o* *sav,* *ni* *so* *mōl.*
3SG NEG.R$_1$-INTS.NEG say NEG.R$_2$ ART thing 3SG SEQ return
'He didn't **even** say anything, and left.' {±2306#S26}

This auxiliary is also attested with the perfect *m(e)-*:

(86) *Tōlnēr so* *ñor,* *i* *rār* ***m-tē*** *ñor* *tavul* ***tēmē.***
3TRI SEQ sleep PERS 3DU PRF-INTS.NEG sleep well NEG.IND
'The three of them went to sleep, but the two (brothers) didn't manage to sleep **at all**.' {±3107#S20}

This sequence *m-tē… tēmē* may well be the origin of the homophonous negation we saw in hypothetical sentences [§2.4].

4.5 Negation in complex clauses: the case of the apprehensive

Dorig does not have any coordinator that would be specialised for negation, such as Latin *neque*, or English *neither… nor*. As for subordination, special mention must be made of negative purposives, or rather their pragmatic equivalent.

When a clause P is meant to avoid the realisation of an event Q, many languages – like English – employ a negation in the subordinate clause, in a pattern {P, *so that not* Q} – e.g. *Stand firm, so you don't fall.* In Vanuatu languages, such meanings are usually expressed by a special construction called "apprehensive" – of the type {P, *lest* Q}.

In Dorig, the apprehensive linker is a form *tekor*, followed by a positive irrealis:

(87) *Na* *t-ñor* *gor* *ti* ***tekor*** *tuar* *tdun* *s-bāl.*
1SG IPFV$_1$-sleep over IPFV$_2$ APPR INDF person IRR-steal
'I sleep on it [my money] so nobody can steal it.'
(lit. 'I sleep on it *lest* anyone steals it') [Drg.d05.Naef:14]

This apprehensive particle *tekor* is grammaticalised from a verb *tekgor* [tɛkɔr] 'beware, look out' – etymologically 'watch (*tek*) over (*gor*)'. So a sentence like (87) arguably involves three underlying predicates: "I sleep on it, [*bewaring*] someone might steal it".

Even though *tekor* appears to serve as a subordinator in (87), the very same word also routinely surfaces sentence-initially as in (88), as a morpheme coding for apprehensive modality:

(88) *Ar* *te* *vanvan vga* *te* *vak gēn neñ sa*
IMP.2NSG PROH$_1$ go~RED beyond PROH$_2$ DIR FOC DIST TOP
gēn *ka* *sowse* *van te* *aē.*
1INCL.PL SUB NDUM$_1$ go NDUM$_2$ ANAPH
Tekor *kmur s-van* *wōn i* *tbi-kmur.*
APPR 2DU IRR-go find PERS ancestor-2DU
'Don't you two walk beyond the point over there, where we haven't been yet! *You might come across* [the ghost of] your ancestor.' {±7437#S21}

Even if *tekor* does not, strictly speaking, encode syntactic subordination, it does encode a form of pragmatic dependency between the two sentences. Indeed, the main function of the apprehensive modality is to present a scenario as undesirable ('you might meet an evil ghost'); this utterance, in turn, serves as a justification for an imperative or a prohibitive, whether the latter is made explicit or not.[32] As a corollary, the apprehensive is sometimes used – e.g. in (89) – as a polite or indirect variant of a prohibitive [§2.2.2]:

(89) ***Tekor*** *nēk so-dlōm* *o* *sri-n!*
APPR 2SG IRR-swallow ART bone-3SG
'[Make sure you] *don't swallow* the bones!' [Drg.q.Rerem.04]

Yet crucially for our purposes, it bears highlighting that apprehensive modality does not, in fact, pertain to negation. Such constructions are relevant to a discussion of negative polarity only insofar as they constitute a pragmatic equivalent of constructions which, in other languages, might involve negative morphology (cf. 'so *nobody* can steal it'); yet the apprehensive does not, strictly speaking, belong to the set of negative constructions.

[32] I have developed this argument about the apprehensive of Mwotlap (François 2003: 301–312; François forthcoming); see also Malau (2016: 679–680) for Vurës. For a typology of apprehensives, see Vuillermet et al. (2026).

4.6 Miscellaneous aspects of negation

4.6.1 Contrastive negation

In contrastive systems of the form {*not P (but) Q*}, some languages employ a special conjunction for 'but' (e.g. German *sondern*, Spanish *sino*). In such cases, illustrated in (90), Dorig simply uses parataxis:

(90) *Bek, o gasi āv **tēmē**, o sawi o naw wor.*
NEGEX ART smoke fire NEG.IND ART steam ART salt.water just
'No, that's not smoke, that's just steam!' [Drg.d10.Bekem:26]

4.6.2 Non-negative uses of negatives

Clausal negation is always semantically negative or prohibitive. One case, though, deserves mention, where a formally negative morpheme is routinely assigned a meaning that cannot be reduced to negation strictly speaking.

We saw in §3.1 how the negative existential *bek ~ obek* is commonly used as a negative declarative reply ('No!'). The same negation can also commonly take a broader meaning, that of politely contradicting the relevance of the addressee's utterance, even when it was not a yes/no question. This is shown in the dialogue (91):

(91) A: *Nēk t-daksa ti?*
2SG IPFV$_1$-do.what IPFV$_2$
'What are you doing?
B: ***Bek**, na m-mōl kēl ma ti na t-rev namu-k o*
NEGEX 1SG PRF-return back hither COORD 1SG IPFV$_1$-TOW POSS-1SG ART
ak ti, la na t-revrev mtēl ti.
canoe IPFV$_2$ but 1SG IPFV$_1$-TOW~RED in.vain IPFV$_2$
No (=*nothing in particular, don't worry).* Just that I was trying to tow my boat on my way back home, and I was unable to do it!'
{ŧ2306#S18}

This polite use of sentential negation is common in the daily phraseology of Vanuatu languages (François 2011: 221).

4.6.3 Diachronic notes

In the absence of ancient documents in Dorig, the language's history must be reconstructed based on language comparison with its immediate neighbours. In that perspective, the appendix provides a comprehensive list (so far unpublished) of negative morphemes in all 17 Torres–Banks languages [see the map in §1.1], based on my firsthand data.

While a full comparison would go beyond the purpose of the present study, I will at least mention here the main paths of change that can shed light on the origin of Dorig negative morphemes.

4.6.3.1 Jespersen's cycle in the Banks islands' languages

The comparison of north Vanuatu languages shows that standard negation was initially (i.e. at the level of PTB 'Proto Torres–Banks') a simple proclitic **ate=*. Mota, a conservative language spoken north of Dorig, has kept that simple system: ***ate** aras* <NEG far> 'It's not far'. Out of the 15 languages of the Banks islands, twelve later added a postverbal element, resulting in discontinuous markers. The data in (92) is a list (in IPA) of Realis negations in a few Banks languages. These are all semantically and structurally equivalent to Dorig *s(o)-… tēmē*, including their distribution across two slots TAMP$_1$… TAMP$_2$ [see §1.2]:

(92)

Lehali	/tɛt… **tæ**/
Löyöp	/tɛ… **ʧɛ**/
Mwotlap, Volow	/ɛt-… **tɛ**/
Lemerig	/(e)… **ʔæ**/
Vera'a	/(ɪʔ)… rɔs/
Nume	/veta… *mi*/
Dorig	/s(ɔ)-… tɪmɪ/
Koro	/t-… wʊs-*mɪ*/
Olrat	/tɛ… wʊs/
Lakon	/tɪ… avʊh/
Mwerlap	/ti… **tɛa**/

In five of the languages cited in (92), the element in bold reflects a proto-form **tea*. This word **tea* goes back to a former numeral 'one', found for example in the form **lavea-tea* 'six', literally '[five]-one' (François 2005b: 496). Some modern languages, like Mwotlap in (93), still reflect that form **tea* as an indefinite or partitive ('some'):

(93) *Kimi ne-myōs ne-gengen **te** en, ami lep.*
2PL STAT-want ART-food PAR TOP 2PL.IMP take
'[If] you want *some*/*any* food, help yourselves.' {ŧ7413#S250}

That partitive grammaticalised into the second element of a double negation ('not … even a little' → 'not'): see (94) for Mwotlap (François 2003: 317).

(94) *Imam* ***et****-ēglal* ***te****.*
father NEG.R$_1$-know NEG.R$_2$
'Father doesn't know.' {⚓7413#S27}

Several languages of north Vanuatu went through the same grammaticalisation path, whereby a former partitive ('some, any' < **tea* 'one') became an obligatory component of a bipartite negation.[33] This is an instance of Jespersen's Cycle.[34] In some languages, the cycle has even reached its ultimate consequence – i.e. the loss of the first component of negation. Thus in (95), the negative meaning ends up being carried by the reflex of **tea* on its own:

(95) Mwotlap (François 2003: 318)
Ino ***te****, ikē!*
1SG.PRED **NEG** 3SG.PRED
'It's not me, it's him.'

With the form *te* /tɛ/ found in neighbouring languages, the reader will have recognised the postverbal element *te* we had observed earlier in various negative constructions of Dorig: e.g. the nondumitive *sowse…* ***te*** [§2.1.7], the prohibitive *(v)te…* ***te*** or its variant *tog…* ***te*** [§2.2.2], the counterfactual protatic *vit (v)te…* ***te*** [§2.4]. That said, while a historical demonstration can show that *te* has its ultimate origin in a former quantifier **tea*, this is no longer perceptible to Dorig speakers: in synchrony, the only function that could be assigned to *te* is a general sense of "negation". Strictly speaking, *te* is not even a full-fledged *morpheme*, since it never occurs on its own: it is no more than a formative in several compound morphemes, which are semantically non-compositional.

4.6.3.2 Morpheme coalescence as the source of Dorig negators

Among the many morphological elements associated with negation in Dorig, several result from processes of coalescence, or contraction, between two formerly separate morphemes.

[33] Further south on Ambae island (Vanuatu), Hyslop (2001: 260) describes the double negation *hi … tea* in Lolovoli. For an overview of negation in several languages of Vanuatu, with an emphasis on the language Lewo, see Early (1994: 89).

[34] About Jespersen's cycle, see van der Auwera (2009) for a general account; Vossen & van der Auwera (2014) for a comparison of Austronesian languages. For case studies dedicated to other Oceanic languages, see Barbour (2015), Roversi & Næss (2019).

Thus in the negative potential *(v)te …* ***late*** [§2.1.6], the second element arguably results from a contraction of negative *te* with the former postverb **la* or *lala* coding for the potential: **la* + *te* → *late*. This reduplicated form *lala* is itself cognate with a postverbal morpheme *lai found in some Banks languages, to encode Potential modality, of the form *lai* or *le* – see the forms of the Negative potential in Table 10 of the appendix.

The other common marker of negation, namely ***tēmē***, can also be explained if we follow the path of Jespersen's cycle in north Vanuatu, and pursue our cross-linguistic comparison. Among the 12 Banks languages that have reinforced their initial negation with a second element, (94) showed not only reflexes of *tea, but also of other strengtheners: /rɔs/; /wʊs ~ avʊh/; /mi ~ mɪ/, all of unknown etymology.

My proposal is that the Dorig negation *tēmē* /tmɪ/ results from the contraction of *te* /tɛ/ (marker of negation < quantifier *tea) and of a second form **mē* /mɪ/. The latter is not a morpheme in modern Dorig, but is attested (as /mi/ or /mɪ/) as a negative formative in Dorig's two neighbours Nume and Koro. Considering the contrast between the negations in *…te* and those in *…tēmē* (see Table 2 in §2.1.1), it appears that {*te*+**mē*} would combine only in declarative utterances (as opposed to prohibitives), and under so-called "indicative" modality – covering realis contexts (past, present) as well as the rare declarative future [§2.1.6]. (Note however that the nondumitive, which is semantically realis or indicative, shows the unexpected form *te* instead of expected *tēmē*.)

The hypothesis of a coalescence {*te*+**mē*} is confirmed if we compare Dorig with its close neighbour Koro (François, field notes). In those contexts where Dorig would have *te*, Koro has a form *wōs* /wʊs/ (which it shares with Olrat /wʊs/ and Lakon /avʊh/); whereas Dorig *tēmē* systematically corresponds in Koro to an augmented negation of the form *wōsmē*. The morphomic parallelism[35] between the two languages is striking: see Table 8.

In sum, the history of negative morphemes in Dorig instantiates the Jespersen cycle in three steps:

- In Pre-Dorig, a quantifier *tea ('one, some') was grammaticalised into the 2nd element of negation in several bipartite combinations (*X… tea > *X… te*), to the point of becoming the main marker of negation.
- While some bipartite combinations in Dorig kept the bare form *te* /tɛ/, other constructions, found in declarative utterances, reinforced that second element with a suffix **mē*, yielding an augmented negation *tēmē* (parallel to the augmented negation *wōsmē* of neighbouring Koro).

[35] For the notion of *morphomic pattern*, see Aronoff (1994), Maiden (2005).

Table 8: Morphomic parallelism between negative morphemes in Dorig and Koro: bare vs. augmented forms of negation

type	meaning	Dorig	Koro
BARE NEGATION	negative imperative	*(v)te … **te***	*t- … **wōs***
	negative potential	*(v)te … la-**te***	*t- … wēs-**wōs***
	nondumitive	*sowse … **te***	*t- … **wōs** mele*
AUGMENTED NEGATION	negative realis	*s(o)-… **tēmē***	*t- … **wōsmē***
	negative future	*(v)te … **tēmē***	*vata-… **wōsmē***
	non-verbal negation	*… **tēmē***	*… **wōsmē***

- In some contexts – especially, non-verbal predicates [§2.3] – the augmented form *tēmē* now functions as the sole exponent of negation: this constitutes the final stage of a Jespersen cycle.

5 Summary

The 17 Oceanic languages of the Torres–Banks linkage of northern Vanuatu vary considerably in the forms of their words, yet share a number of structural and typological features in the internal organisation of their grammars (François 2011). This is true for the semantic domain of negation.

Thus, all Torres–Banks languages draw a formal contrast between (*a*) a set of clausal negators carried by the predicate phrase (DRG *s(o)-… tēmē*, etc.), and (*b*) a "Negative existential" word (DRG *obek*), which is itself a predicate of its own. That NEGEX word [§2.3.3] is used in existential, locative and possessive clauses, and also forms negative replies ("No !").

In most Torres–Banks languages, standard negation takes the form of bipartite morphemes, resulting historically from a Jespersen Cycle. Those morphemes are portmanteau forms that combine polarity with semantic features of Tense, Aspect, Mood: this results in a TAMP system, with often non-compositional morphemes [§2.1]. A widespread configuration in the region is the lack of one-to-one correspondence between positive and negative TAMP morphemes, either in form or in meaning – an asymmetry known as "A/Cat" in typological work (Miestamo 2005, 2013a).

Among the Torres–Banks languages, this study focused on Dorig, chosen as a solid representative of these typological tendencies. In fact, Dorig also stands out among its neighbours, due to several features that are more original.

Table 9 recapitulates all the negative constructions we examined for Dorig, with a reference to each relevant section.

Table 9: The negative constructions of Dorig: recapitulation

TAMP negators			
s(o)-V *tēmē*	'doesn't/didn't V'	Negative realis	§2.1.5
s(o)-V *nok tēmē*	'no longer V'	Discontinuative	§2.1.7
sowse V *te*	'not V yet'	Nondumitive	§2.1.7
(v)te V *tēmē*	'won't V'	Negative future	§2.1.6
(v)te V *late*	'can't V'	Negative potential	§2.1.6
(v)te V_{RED} *te* ~ *tog v(a)*-V ~ *tog* V *te*	'don't V!'	Prohibitives	§2.2.2
vit X *(v)te* V *te*	'if X hadn't V'	Negative counterfactual	§2.4
Other negative constructions			
P *tēmē*	'isn't P'	Negation of nominal, adjectival, similative predicates	§2.3.1
X *(o)bek*	'there's no X'	Negative existential	§2.3.3
X *(o)bek* LOC	'X is not at LOC'	Negative locative	§2.3.3
X POSS-Y *(o)bek*	'Y doesn't have X'	Negative possession	§2.3.3
(o)bek	'No.'	Standalone negation	§3.1.1
bek mlēti	'Not yet.'	Standalone nondumitive	§3.1.2
tog	'Don't!'	Standalone prohibitive	§3.1.3
tuqa	'Don't yet!'	Standalone dilatory prohibitive	§3.1.3
tekor + clause	'so that not V'	Apprehensive construction	§4.5

Compared to its neighbours, Dorig is original in using irrealis modality in semantically realis contexts, at least etymologically [§2.1.5]. Also unique to this language is the contrast between *te* and *tēmē* negations, bearing strong links with clausal modality (declarative vs. imperative; "indicative" vs. "subjunctive"), and only paralleled by its neighbour Koro [§4.6.3.2]. Equally noteworthy is the general insensitiveness of noun phrases and determiners to the polarity of the clause [§4.3].

In a sense, Dorig constitutes an extreme case: that of a language in which the complexities of negative constructions are all concentrated in the predicate phrase, yet virtually absent from the rest of the clause.

Abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ADV	adverb
ANAPH	anaphoric
APPR	apprehensive
ART	article for nouns
ATTR	attributive prefix for adjectives
CSL	causal linker
CNTF	counterfactual
CONT	continuative
COMP	complementiser
COORD	coordinator
DAT	dative
DEM	demonstrative
DILAT	dilatory (temporal delay)
DIR	directional
DIST	distal demonstrative
DU	dual
EXCL	exclusive
EX	existential
FOC	focus
FUT	future
HYP	hypothetical
IAM	iamitive
IMP	imperative
INCL	inclusive
INDF	indefinite
IND	indicative
INTS	intensifier
INTR	intransitive
IPFV	imperfective
IRR	irrealis
LOC	locative
NDUM	nondumitive
NEG	negative
NEGEX	negative existential
NSG	nonsingular
OBL	oblique
PAR	partitive
PERS	personal article (for humans)
PL	plural
POLIT	polite order
POSS	possessive classifier
POT	potential
PRED	predicate, predicative
PRF	perfect
PROH	prohibitive
PST	past
QUOT	quotative
R	realis
RECPST	recent past
RED	reduplication
SBJ	subject
SEQ	sequential aspect
SG	singular
STAT	stative aspect
SUB	subordinator
TAM	tense, aspect, mood
TOP	topicalizer
TRI	trial number
TRI	trial number

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Appendix: Negation in the Torres–Banks languages

While the present study was dedicated to negative constructions in the Dorig language, the very same linguistic categories can be consistently observed across all seventeen languages of the Torres and Banks Islands. In line with a very common configuration in the region (François 2011), this near-perfect isomorphism of structures goes along with an intense diversity of phonological forms.

The following tables, based on my firsthand notes, list all the negative morphemes of Torres–Banks languages, provided here for the first time in print. Forms are given in IPA. The letter 'X' refers to the predicate head – or the whole predicate phrase (e.g. complex predicate, verb+postverb, verb+verb, etc.) that carries the negative morphemes. If the head must be reduplicated, it is coded as 'X²'.

Table 10: Negative constructions in Torres–Banks languages: four clausal negations

	NEGATIVE REALIS 'did~does not X'	NONDUMITIVE 'hasn't X yet'	NEGATIVE FUTURE 'will not X'	NEG^{VE} POTENTIAL 'cannot X'
Hiw	*tati* X	*tati* X *kʷe*	*tat* X	*tat* X
Lo-Toga	*tatə* X	*tatə* X *kʷɛ*	*tat* X	*tat hɔ* X
Lehali	*tɛt* (*nɛ*) X *tæ*	*tɛt* X *kʷɔ*	*tɛt* X *tæ*	*tɛt* X *vɪstæ*
Löyöp	*tɛ*(*t*) X *ʧɛ*	*tɛ* X *ʧɛk͡pʷɛ*	(*tɛ*)*t* X *ʧɛ*	(*tɛ*)*t* X *taŋ͡mʷas ʧɛ*
Mwotlap	*ɛt* X *tɛ*	*ɛt* X *k͡pʷɛtɛ*	*tit* X *tɛ*	*tit* X *vɪstɛ*
Volow	*ɛt* X *tɛ*	*ɛt* X *tɛᵑg͡bʷɛ*	*t-* X *tɛ*	*t-* X *vɪhtɛ*
Lemerig	(*ɛʔ*) X (*k͡pʷæl*) *ʔæ*	(*ɛʔ*) X *ʔæ kiʔi*(*s*)	*mɛ* X *ʔæ*	(*ɛʔ*) X *ŋ͡mʷæs-ʔæ*
Vera'a	(*ɪʔ*) X *rɔs*	(*ɪʔ*) X *ʔɪn*	*mɛ* X *rɔs*	*mas* X *ŋ͡mʷas*
Vurës	*ɣVtV-* X	*ɣVtV-* X *tɛn*	*mit*V- X	*mit*V- X *lɛ*
Mwesen	*ɛtɛ* X	*ɛtɛ* X *vɪs*	*mɛtɛ* X	*mɛtɛ* X *lɛ*
Mota	*ɣate* X	*ɣate* X *tk͡pʷe*	*tete* X	*tete* X *lai*
Nume	*vɛta* X *mi*	*vitis* X *mi*	*manta* X	*manta* X *lɛ*
Dorig	*s*(*ɔ*)- X *tɪmɪ*	*sɔwsɛ* X *tɛ*	(*v*)*tɛ* X *tɪmɪ*	(*v*)*tɛ* X *latɛ*
Koro	*t-* X *wʊsmɪ*	*t-* X *wʊs mɛlɛ*	*v*(*tV*)- X *wʊsmɪ*	*t-* X *wɪs wʊs* ~ *t-* X *wʊswʊs*
Olrat	*tɪ* X *wʊs*	*tɪ* X *wʊs mɛlɛ*	*tɪ* X *wʊs*	*tɪ* X *ɪs wʊs*
Lakon	(*ɣ*)*a*(*tɪ*) X *avɔh*	*ɣatɪ* X *avɔh malɛ*	(*ɣ*)*a*(*tɪ*) X *avɔh*	(*ɣ*)*a*(*tɪ*) X *ɪs avɔh*
Mwerlap	*ti-* X *tɛ͡a*	*ti-* X *tɪkʷɪ tɛ͡a*	*ᵐbit* X *tɛ͡a*	*ᵐbit* X *lɪ tɛ͡a*

Table 11: Negative constructions in Torres–Banks languages:
Prohibitive constructions and standalone negations

	Clausal prohibitive 'Don't do X !'	Standalone prohibitive 'Don't!'	Negative existential = Standalone negation	Stand^{ne} nondumitive 'Not yet.'	Stand^{ne} dilatory proh^{ve} 'Don't yet! Wait!'
Hiw	*tati* X² ~ *takə* X²	*təɣɔ*	*təɣɔ*	*tɔkʷe*	*(kʷe)tukʷe*
Lo-Toga	*tatə* X² ~ *mit* X²	*tatəɣɛ*	*tatəɣɛ*	*takʷɛ*	*melakʷɛ*
Lehali	*sɛv* X²	*tɛtɣɛ*	*tɛtɣɛ ~ tɛtɣɔsɔn*	*tɔkʷɔ*	*tɔkʷɔ vɔtjæ*
Löyöp	*tɛt* X²	*tɔ*	*mɛp*	*ʧɛk͡pʷɛ*	*ʧɛk͡pʷɛ*
Mwotlap	*(ni)tɔɣ* X²	*nitɔɣ*	*tatɛh*	*tatɛh k͡pʷɛtɛ*	*makʊh*
Volow	*sap* X²	*sap*	*tatɪh*	*tatɪh tɛⁿg͡bʷɛ*	*magʊh*
Lemerig	*ʔɔkiʔi* X² ~ *ʔɛn* X² ~ *(n)ʔɔɣ (ʔɛn)* X²	*ʔɔkiʔi*	*nivɣ*	*nivɣ kiʔi(s)*	*ʔɔkiʔi*
Vera'a	*ʔɔvi(ʔi)* X²	*ʔɔviʔi*	*ɣitaɣ*	*ɣitaɣ ʔɪn*	*k͡pʷɛʔi*
Vurës	*mit*V= X ~ *kere* X² ~ *nitɔɣ* X²	*nitɔɣ*	*ɔⁿdiaŋ*	*ɔⁿdiaŋ tɛn*	*kɪti*
Mwesen	*mɛtɛ* X ~ *nitɔɣ* X²	*nitɔɣ*	*ɛnɛŋ*	*ɛnɛŋ vɪs*	*turtɪk͡pʷ*
Mota	*nipea (we)* X²	*nipea*	*taɣai*	*taɣai tuk͡pʷe*	*taɣai tuk͡pʷe*
Nume	*tɔɣ vɛ-* X²	*tɔɣ*	*ᵐbɛk*	*ᵐbɛk tuk͡pʷa ~ ᵐbɛk vaɛnti*	*tuk͡pʷa*
Dorig	*tɔɣ v(a)-* X ~ *tɔɣ* X² *tɛ ~ (v)tɛ* X² *tɛ*	*tɔɣ*	*(ɔ)ᵐbɛk*	*(ɔ)ᵐbɛk mlɪti*	*tuk͡pʷa (titi)*
Koro	*t-* X² *wʊs ~ t-* X² *lɛr*	?	*ᵐbɛk*	*ᵐbɛk mɛlɛ*	*tuk͡pʷa*
Olrat	*mɪtɪ* X² *lɛj*	*sʊw*	*taɣa*	*taɣa mɛlɛ*	*asval ti*
Lakon	*mɪtɪ* X² *lɛː*	*ta*	*ta*	*ta malɛ*	*læwʊn tɔtɔ*
Mwerlap	*(wɔ)tɔkɔr* X² ~ *tɔɣ* X²	*tuɣutu*	*tɪɣɪ*	*tɪkʷɪtɛ͡a*	*tukʷɪtɛ͡a ~ tukʷatu*