



*postScriptum: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Literary Studies* ISSN: 2456-7507  
<postscriptum.co.in> Online – Open Access – Peer Reviewed – UGC Approved  
Volume II Number ii (July 2017)

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## **The Position of Sentential Negation in English and Chakma**

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### **Abstract**

According to the recent study of generative syntax, negation is a functional category in the syntactic structure within the language. NegP as a functional category occurs at different hierarchical positions cross-linguistically the board as matter of fact relating to cross-linguistic variation or parametric variation. Keeping in mind this parametric difference as traced in the above mentioned recent researches in Generative Syntax, an attempt in the present article will be taken to observe the position of negative in two typologically different languages, namely English and Chakma, in following sections. It will deal with the position of negation in English and Chakma and its position in Chakma VP structure.

### **Keywords**

negation, subject, object, specifier, parameter

## Introduction

There has been a lot of study to determine the position of negation at the level syntax in different languages. From empirical evidence, it is found, the position of negation is not the same in all languages so far studied. After critically studying a large sample of 345 languages, Dryer (1988) has noticed that SONegV (Subject-Object-Negation-Verb), SOVNeg (Subject-Object-Verb-Negation), SNegVO (Subject-Negation-Verb-Object), NegVSO (Negation-Verb-Subject-Object) and NegVOS (Negation-Verb- Object-Subject) are the most common negative sentence types. The Dravidian pattern follows SOVNeg. Dryer has proposed three basic principles, namely the branching direction principle, the negative-before-verb principle and the negative-plus-VO principle to determine the relative frequency of the different word order types existing in different languages.

In this context it can safely be stated that the cross-linguistic variation also relates to the lexical realization of the specifier and the head of NegP (Negation Phrase). The statement of Ouhalla (1990: 1912. fn. 5) can be quoted here to illustrate the point:

Languages where negation is expressed in terms of a pre-verbal element, e.g. Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, Standard Italian are those where the head, but not the specifier of NegP, is realized lexically. On the other hand, languages where negation is expressed in terms of a post-verbal element, e.g. the Occitan dialects, the Franco-Provencal dialects, are those where the Specifier, but not the head of NegP, is realized lexically. Finally, languages where negation is expressed in terms of both a pre-verbal and a post-verbal element, e.g. Standard French and a variety of Piedmontese, are those where both the Specifier and the head of NegP are realized lexically.

According to the recent study of generative syntax, negation is a functional category in the syntactic structure within the language. NegP as a functional category occurs at different hierarchical positions in the languages across the board as matter of fact relating to cross-linguistic variation or parametric variation. To drive home the matter let us mention some studies relating negation. Pollock (1989) and Chomsky (1995) have argued with empirical evidences that Tense is higher than NegP in the English language. That is, Tense dominates NegP within the VP (Verb Phrase). On the other hand, Haegeman (1995) and Zanuttini (1997) have proposed with illustrations from languages that NegP dominates TP (Tense Phrase) in West Flemish and Italian.

Keeping in mind this parametric difference as traced in the above mentioned recent researches in Generative Syntax, an attempt in the present article will be taken to observe the position of negative in two typologically different languages, namely English and Chakma, in following sections. Section 1 will deal with the position of negation in English as analysed by some linguists including Chomsky. In section 2, we will deal with Chakma Negation and its position in Chakma VP structure.

### **The position of *Neg* in the English Syntax**

It should first of all be made clear that when we talk of ‘the position of Neg’, we are not thinking of independent lexical words like *nothing*, *never*, *neither*, *noone*, *none*. These words are inserted into base phrase structure trees directly and are generated in their own structural hierarchical syntactic position. See that a word like *nothing* in English is not derived transformationally from *not* and *anything*, as was supposed and argued in early transformational syntactic study. In order to drive home the point, let us examine the following example:

1. Nothing can be done in such political state.
2. Nanda did nothing for the society.
3. Jhilik never went wrong in her decision.
4. Neither Bablu nor Babli read your article.
5. Noone thought of helping us.

The negative words in the above sentences are evidently not the outcome of the application of phrase structure rule application generating under NegP. They are generated in their own structural hierarchical positions wherever they occur in the sentential pattern. Again, in spite of being considered to be negative words, their occurrence varies depending on the argument positions in which they occur and thematic roles assigned. Hence, *nothing* is the subject in sentence 1 and the direct object in sentence 2.

Our concern is with the sentential negation as done with the help of the word *not* in *English*. For the sake of convenience in the discussion, let us consider the distribution of *not* as shown in the following sentences:

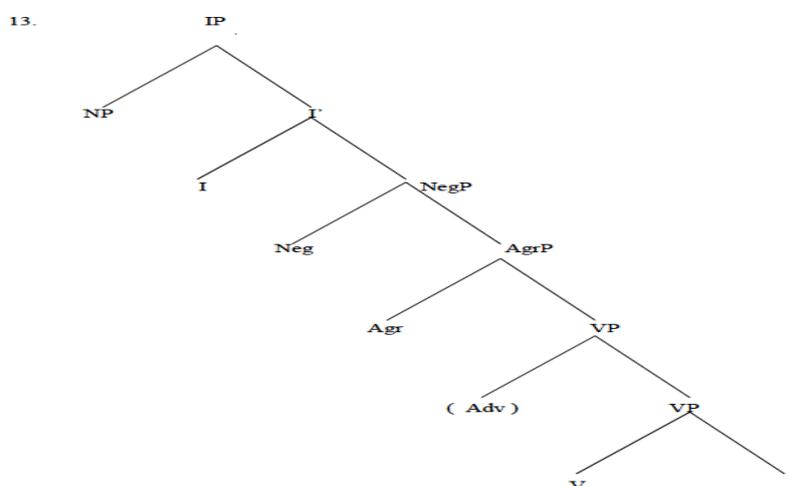
6. Oendri might not have done her duty.
7. Oendri does not play football.

8. Oendri is not in her room.
9. Oendri hasn't any problem.
10. For Oendri not to have gone .....
11. Oendri's not having bought the book .....
12. Not many players came to the field.

Notice that *not* occurs immediately after the first auxiliary if there is any auxiliary, as exemplified by 6. If there is no auxiliary, the dummy *do* is inserted by the 'do-support' syntactic rule as seen in 7. The auxiliaries *be* and *have* behave in a strange manner. They act like auxiliaries as shown in 8 and 9 even when they function as main verbs and seem to occupy the auxiliary position. But *not* occurs before the first auxiliary in infinitives as in 10 and in gerundives as in 11. In 12, *not* occurs in the sentence initial position.

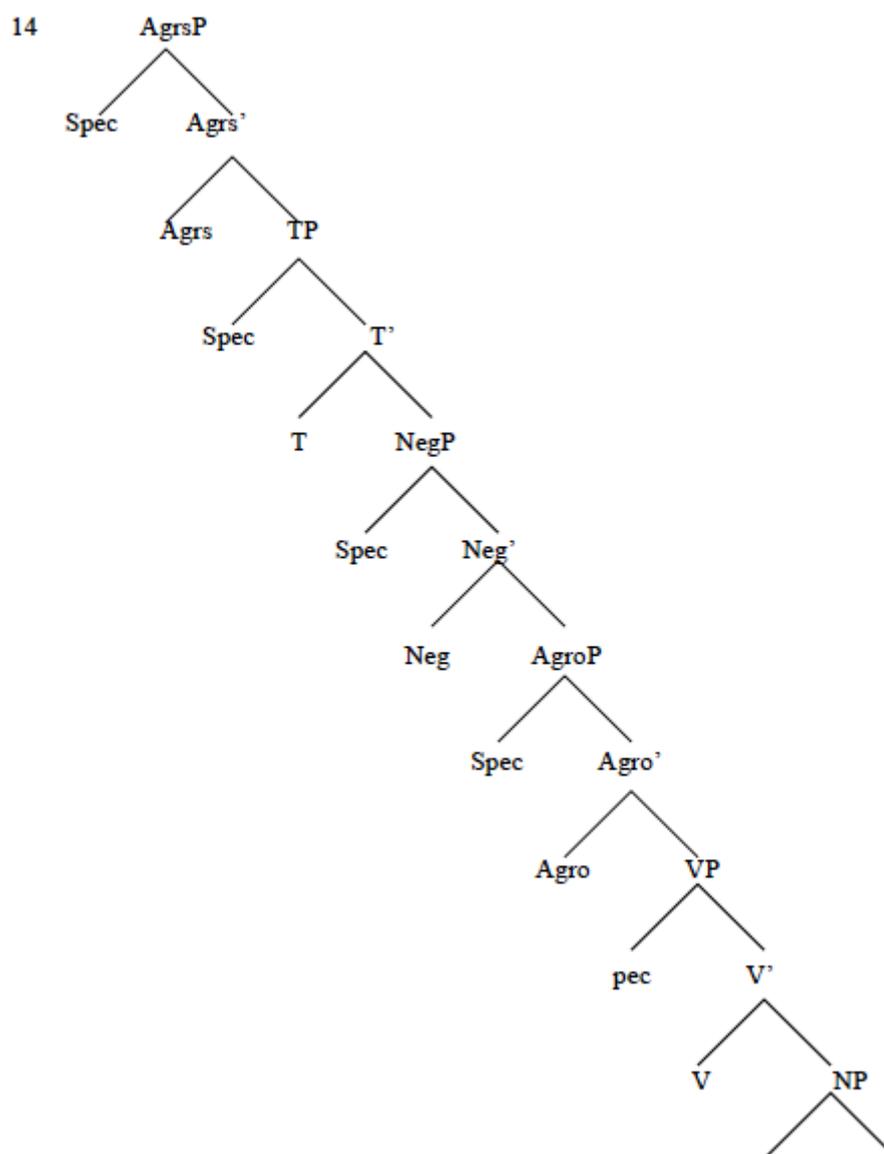
It can be argued from the above examples followed by analysis that *not* occurs in different positions. (This was one of the motivations for Klima (1964) to generate Neg in the pre-sentential position and to formulate Neg-placement rules to account for the surface position of Neg.)

Based on the theoretical and empirical study on syntactic position, the current position about how to generate *not* is that *not* is generated as the head of a NegP (Negative Phrase). Pollock (1989) first argued with adequate illustrations that every functional element needs its own phrase, and therefore, the neg element (one functional element) in a sentence also needs to have a separate NegP. He proposes the following hierarchical structure for a sentence, adopting Kayne's (1984) principle of binary branching. Here IP is Inflection Phrase dominating the sentence as it is argued that it is inflection which heads the syntactic structure.



Here I may be [  $_{-+}$  finite ] and Neg is English *not* or French *pas*. For Pollock, I contains T(ense) which is higher than Neg and dominates Neg. He generates AgrP below NegP and says that AgrP is dominated by NegP. Hence, Pollock (1989) opines that the position of Neg is below Tense and above Agr.

Chomsky (1995) in his landmark work called *Minimalist Program* proposes the following syntactic structure for the position of Neg in English. Regarding the position of Neg, Chomsky proposes that AGRsP and TP are higher than NegP.



As shown in the tree diagram in 13, Chomsky (1995) places Agr<sub>s</sub> higher than Tense and Neg and opines that the position of Neg is below TP which dominates Neg and above AgroP which is, in turn, hierarchically dominated by Neg.

It is observed from the above structural representation that the IP has been split into several different phrases - AGRsP, TP, AGRoP and NegP. Ouhalla (1991) and others expand this IP group still further by postulating Modal phrase, Aspect phrase and Passive phrase. Armed with the theoretical postulation relating English Neg, as in discussed in the present section, we will deal with Neg in Chakma.

### The Position of Neg in Chakma

We wish to reiterate the fact that the negative marker for sentential negation in Chakma is *no* (*pronounced as /nɔ/*) which is phonologically conditioned. It is a bound morpheme and it occurs on the left of the verb. In other words, it is left-adjoined to the verb. Chakma, like other Indo-Aryan languages such as Hindi, Oriya, and Assamese follows the surface word order pattern SOV and with Neg it surfaces as SONegV. It is noteworthy that if the VP in Chakma contains more than one verb, Neg occurs on the left of the rightmost verb. For instance,

15 a. mui sidu no-ja-ng

I there neg.go Agr (In Chakma Present Tense is Zero marked (See Bardhan 2007))

I Nom do not go there.

b. ami ei ham-an no-gor-y-ong

We Nom this workCla neg do Past Agr

We did not do this work.

c. tumi bojang ham no-gor-ib-a

You (Pl) bad work neg do Fut Agr

You will not do bad work.

d. tae silum uribar no-par-e

He Nom shirt wear Inf. Neg van Agr.

He cannot wear shirt.

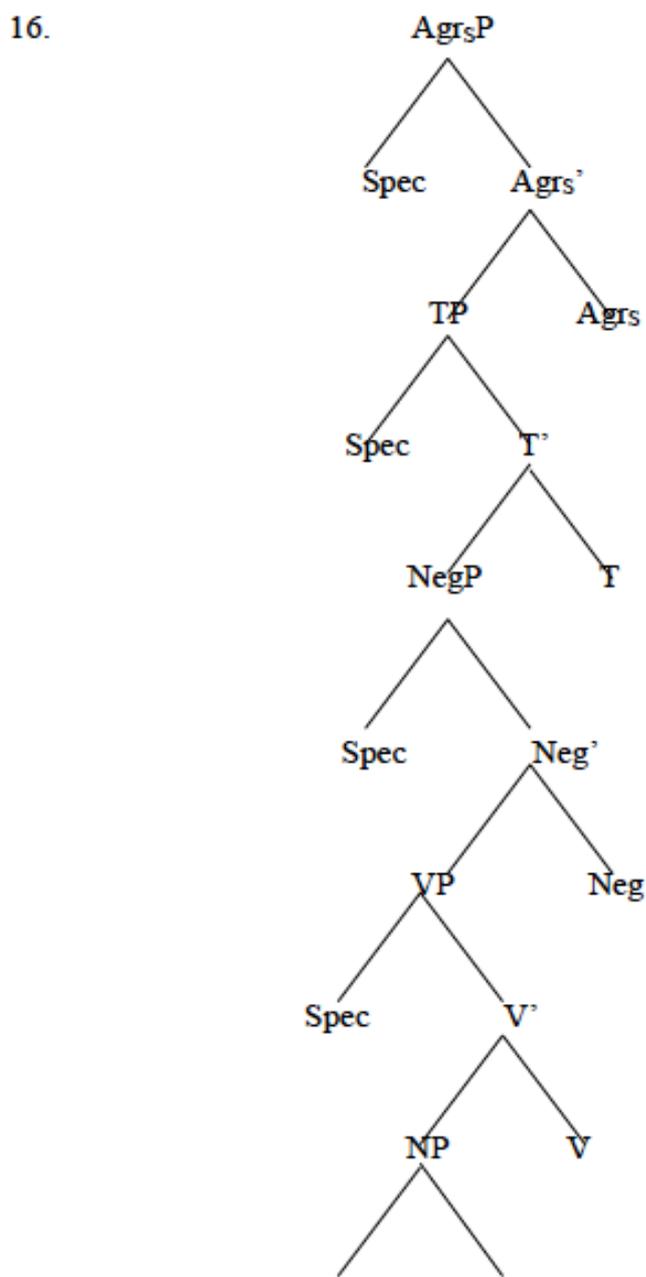
e. ram-or bajar-ot no-ja-na - - -

Ram Poss market Loc Nneg go -ing (gerund)

Ram's not going to market - - -

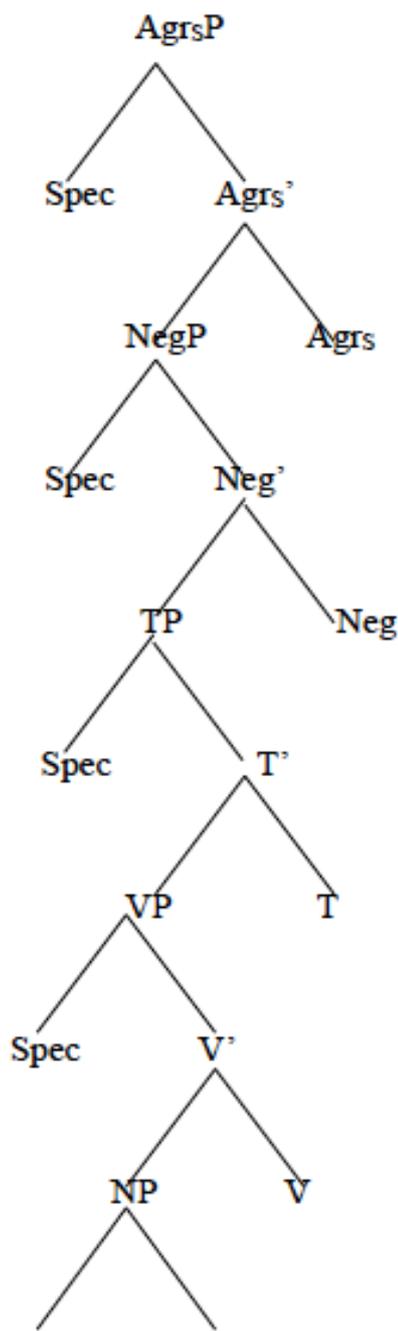
It is a universally proven fact that a language has to be either left-branching or right-branching. In Chakma like Assamese, the head of a phrase occurs to the right and governs its

complement to the left, whereas in English as shown above (Chomsky 1995), the head of a phrase occurs to the left and governs its complement to the right. That is to say, Chakma is a left-branching while English is a right-branching language. Following Chomsky and this parametric difference, existing in the languages of the world studied so far, the following as a possible structure of S(entence) in Chakma can be assumed.



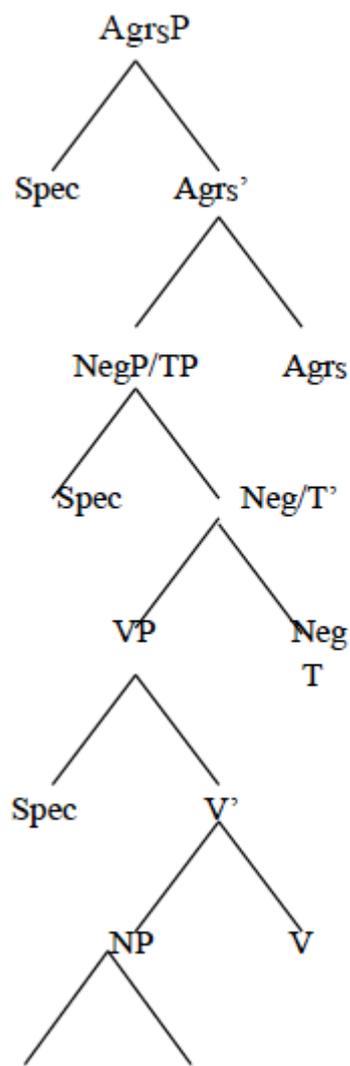
The structure (16) shows that in Chakma, TP is higher than NegP, i. e. TP dominates NegP. But we do not actually know whether TP is higher or lower than NegP in Chakma. If we assume that NegP is higher than or dominates the crucial TP, then the following is another possible structure of S in Chakma.

17.



If it is assumed that Negation and Tense do not have any structural hierarchy with respect to each other in the sentential structure, i.e., neither dominates the other and occur in the same structural node, we can postulate the following structure for Neg/ TP in Chakma as proposed by Sharma (2003) for Assamese. It should be clearly stated that so far we do not have empirical evidence for this to the best of our knowledge.

18.



We assume that Chakma does show a structural hierarchy between NegP and TP. We shall now move on to examine the hierarchy between the two in Chakma. Our analysis will be in line with that of Zanuttini who postulates a co-relation between NegP and TP in Italian. She argues that in Italian NegP is higher than TP. The empirical evidence that she has used is based on the structure of imperatives in Italian. She claims that the imperatives in Italian lack TP and they cannot be negated. Her projection of NegP higher than TP is based on the dependence of NegP on TP in imperatives in Italian.

We shall now examine the imperatives in Chakma. Consider the following sentences.

- 19 a. boi-wo    por-o  
       book-class read-Agr

Read the book.

- b.\* boi-wo no-por-o  
 book-class neg-read-Agr  
 Do not read the book.

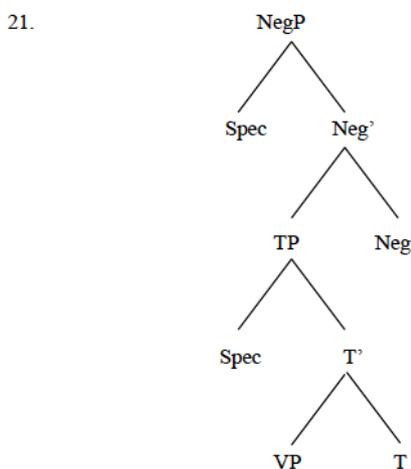
- c. boi-wo no=por-ib-a  
 book-class neg-read-Agr  
 Do not read the book.

- 20a. tare ekgalach pani do-o (do)  
 Him-to a glass water give-Agr  
 Give him a glass of water.

- b.\* tare ekgalach pani no-do-o (do)  
 Him-to a glass water neg-give-Agr  
 Do not give him a glass of water.

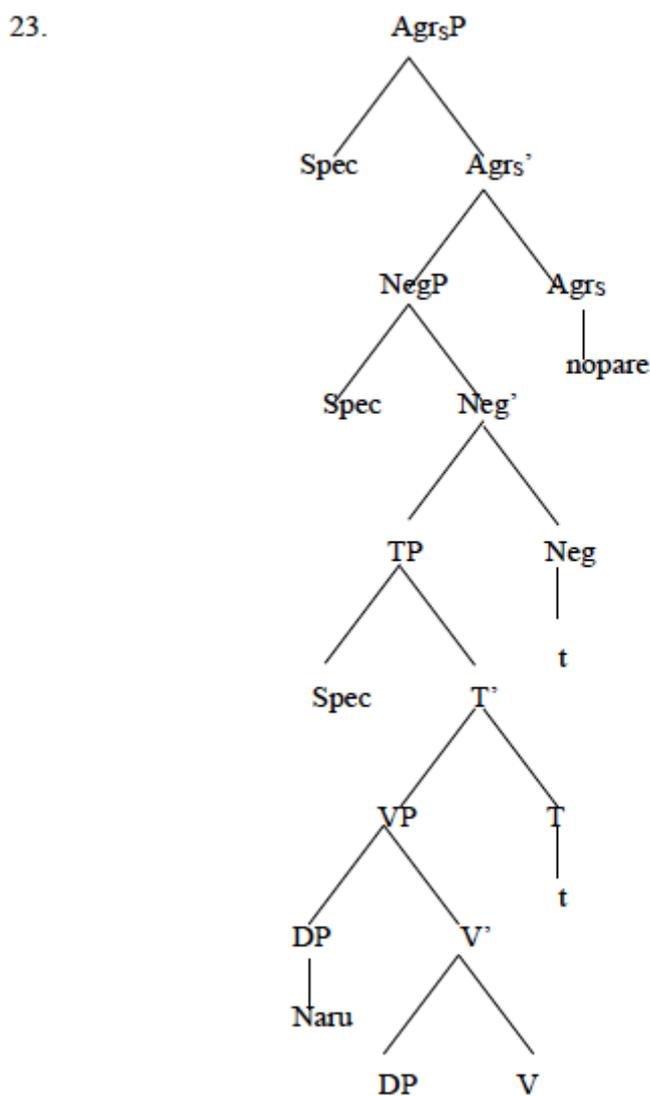
- c. tare ek galach pani no-d-ib-a  
 Him-to a glass water neg-give-Fut-Agr  
 Do not give him a glass of water.

Notice that in Chakma imperatives such as 19a and 20a involve an impoverished structure. The data in 19b and 20b show that imperatives cannot be negated. The negative imperative as represented in 19c and 20c, is formed by means of special morphology i.e., in a negative imperative structure is formed with the help of a future tense marker. We have observed that the imperatives in 19a and 20a lack TP. On the other hand, both NegP and TP are present in 19c and 20c. If NegP is possible only along with TP, the fact that there is no negative form of 19a and 20a would be due to the absence of TP. In order to express the dependence between NegP and TP, one could adopt a structure where NegP dominates TP:



We would now like to claim that in Chakma NegP is higher than TP and dominates TP. We propose to adopt the structure 17 in order to represent the position of Neg in Chakma. We shall represent the structure of the sentence 22 in the following tree-diagram.

22. Naru        boi    no-par-e  
 Naru-Nom book neg-read-Agr  
 Naru does not read book.



It can safely be stated that V first moves to T to check tense feature, then to Neg to pick up the negative morpheme *no* and finally to Agr to check agreement feature for person and number.

## Conclusion

We have noted that many linguists have proposed different positions for Neg in English. We have tried to explore and represent the position of Neg in Chakma and based on the idea of Zanuttini and Haegeman as cited earlier and we have claimed that the position of NegP in Chakma like Assamese is higher than TP and dominates TP by taking the support from the evidence of Chakma imperative structure and theoretical and empirical support of Zanuttini. . However, the present work is a very little attempt in comparison to the amount of study needed to be done Chakma syntax in general Chakma negation in particular. Several aspects relating Chakma negation such as scope, negative polarity items, its relation with copula, etc., need to be studied thoroughly.

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## Acknowledgement

For the present I express my indebtedness to Prof. Kailash Sharma's M. Phil. work on Assamese negation as cited in the paper and References. He has made a detail analysis of Assamese Negation with arguments and in a very lucid language.