

# Guahiboan negation: ascription and existence<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The Guahiboan languages show interesting variation in the expression of standard, ascriptive, existential and prohibitive negation. We aim to account for some of the variation with reference to the general typology of negation and to family-internal evidence. It focusses on three unusual features and thus enriches the general understanding of negation: (i) Existential negators can join standard negators, adding emphasis and eventually replace the standard negator. This process simultaneously fits both the ‘negative existential cycle’ and the Jespersen cycle and it is cross-linguistically rare. (ii) Both standard and existential negation can be expressed with an ascriptive strategy, a strategy that has not been studied well in the general typology of negation. (iii) Negators can enclose subject markers.

**Keywords:** standard negation, existential negation, prohibitive negation, ascriptive negation, Jespersen cycle, negative existential cycle

## 1. Introduction

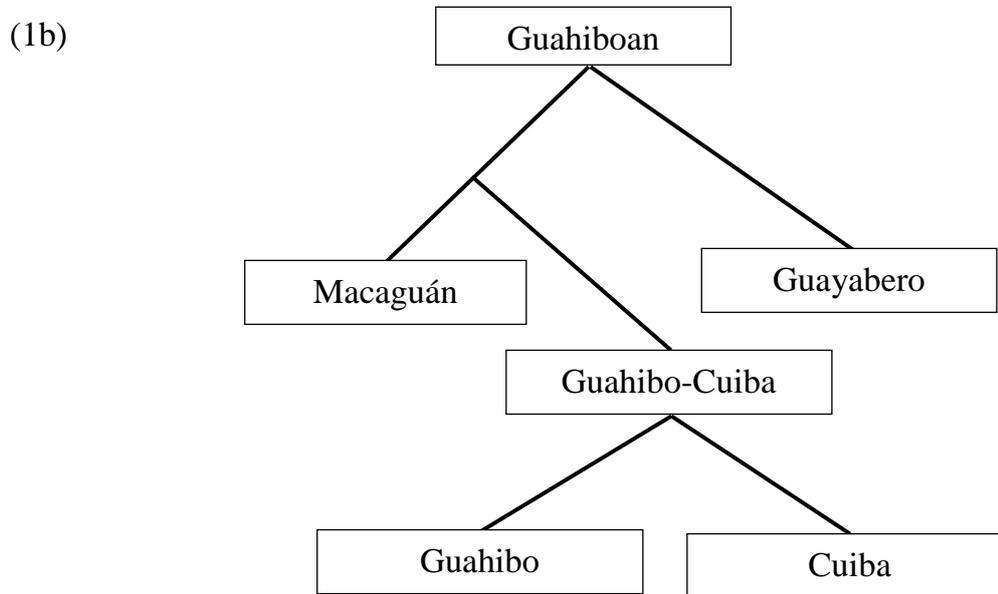
Guahiboan forms a family of four languages, mostly spoken in Colombia. In (1) we list them with their ‘glottocodes’, *i.e.*, the codes given by Glottolog (Hammarström *et al.* 2020), and for two we also list two commonly used alternative names<sup>2</sup>. The level of relatedness is shown in (1b), based on Queixalós (1993, Forthc., p.c.). Cuiba and Guahibo constitute a dialect continuum and Macaguán is closer to Guahibo than to Cuiba. Guayabero is the most divergent language.

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<sup>2</sup> Hammarström *et al.* (2020) is a world-wide classification, which, for Guahiboan, is based on Adelaar with Muysken (2004: 162), who in turn follow Queixalós (1993). Hammarström *et al.* (2020) and Kondo (1982) also mention Playero (playu1240), but this is probably best considered as a dialect of Guahibo (Queixalós 1993: 195-197, Forthc.) and we have no information on it anyway.

- (1a) Cuiba, cuib1242  
 Guahibo, guab1255, Sikuani  
 Macaguán, maca1259, Hitnü  
 Guayabero, guay1257



In this paper we describe and try to understand the negation systems in these languages. Our hypotheses are based on the existing descriptions – there are no ‘new’ data. Our account differs from the preceding ones in that we rely on what we know about the typology of negation, specifically the typology of how negation systems come about. The reason for devoting a paper-length discussion on Guahiboan negation is that the negation systems in the four languages differ in interesting ways. More particularly, we show how verbal, ascriptive and existential negation interact in ways that are at present only partially understood.

We restrict the work to standard, ascriptive, existential and prohibitive negation. These four types are illustrated with the simple English sentences in (2). We use the term ‘standard negation’ in the sense of Miestamo (2005). The term thus refers to the strategy that a language uses for verbal main clauses, as in (2a). ‘Ascriptive negation’ is used for negating the ascription of a property to a participant in the clause, as in (2b-c). ‘Existential negation’ says that a participant or a state of affairs does not exist, as in (2d-e). Finally, ‘Prohibitive negation’ is the negation of an imperative, as in (2f).

- (2)
- |    |  |                        |
|----|--|------------------------|
| a. | The actor <b>does not</b> smoke cigarettes.      | [standard negation]    |
| b. | The actor is <b>not</b> very good.               | [ascriptive negation]  |
| c. | The actor is <b>no</b> fool / <b>not</b> a fool. | [ascriptive negation]  |
| d. | There are <b>no</b> foolish actors.              | [existential negation] |
| e. | There is <b>no</b> acting in this film.          | [existential negation] |
| f. | <b>Do not</b> smoke here.                        | [prohibitive negation] |

As shown in (2), languages can use the same strategy for different kinds of negation. Thus English uses the *do not* structure for both standard and prohibitive negation. The word *not* is part of the *do not* construction, but by itself it is also used for ascriptive negation. But there may also be strategies that are more or less dedicated to a negation type. Thus the *no* negator is found in examples (2c), (2d) and (2e).

There are other types of negation, which we do not consider in this paper, such as prosentential, subordinate, phasal, privative, quantificational and conjunctive negation. Some examples are given in (3).

- (3)
- |    |   |                             |
|----|---|-----------------------------|
| a. | Do I like him? <b>No!</b>                     | [prosentential negation]    |
| b. | I asked them <b>not</b> to bother him.        | [subordinate negation]      |
| c. | He is <b>not</b> in London <b>yet</b> .       | [phasal negation]           |
| d. | He is <b>not</b> in London <b>anymore</b> .   | [phasal negation]           |
| e. | He came <b>without</b> money.                 | [privative negation]        |
| f. | <b>Nobody</b> saw me.                         | [quantificational negation] |
| g. | I <b>never</b> saw him.                       | [quantificational negation] |
| h. | I like <b>neither</b> rice <b>nor</b> quinoa. | [conjunctive negation]      |

The reason for excluding these aspects is either because there does not seem to be anything special about them in Guahiboan or because we lack the necessary information about them. The first reason is valid for quantificational negation of the type illustrated with English *nobody*: as far as we can see, the Guahiboan languages did not develop negative indefinite pronouns. The second reason is valid for privative negation, because it is documented only for Guahibo (see Queixalós 2000: 94-95, 346-348). We need to acknowledge that even for the aspects that we deal with in the paper, the data are usually suboptimal. To this extent, this paper also counts as a plea for further empirical work.

The paper has the following structure. In section 2, we start with an analysis of Guahibo. First, because this language has had the best description, thanks to the efforts by Francesc Queixalós [*i.e.*, from Queixalós (1980) onwards and culminating in Queixalós (1998, 2000)], and, second, because his work has influenced the work on the other languages. Sections 3 to 5 deal with Macaguán, Cuiba and Guaybero, respectively. The order reflects what we take to be the quality of the available descriptions. Section 6 concludes the paper.

## 2. Guahibo

For Guahibo we strongly rely on the accounts of Queixalós (1998, 2000)<sup>3</sup>. To understand Guahibo negation, one needs to know that the language has two sets of subject markers, viz. what Queixalós (1998, 2000) calls ‘verbal’ and ‘nominal’ ones, depending on the type of predicate. Except for the first person inclusive, referred to as a ‘fourth person’ in Queixalós (1998, 2000), they do not indicate number. There is a plural prefix for the second person and the first person exclusive; there is also a dual suffix (Queixalós 1998: 265-270).

	Verbal	Nominal
1st person	<i>-hü</i>	<i>-nü</i>
2nd person	<i>-me</i>	<i>-mü</i>
3rd person		<i>-Ø</i>
4th person		<i>-tsi</i>

**Table 1:** Guahibo subject marking (Queixalós 1998: 255)

The subject markers are illustrated in (4). The translations in (4) show a present tense, but a past translation would be fine too: overt tense marking only exists for the future. The subject marker in the verb is preceded by a realis marker.

<sup>3</sup> Kondo (1985) is a pedagogical grammar. For what interests us, Kondo (1985) does not differ from Queixalós (1998, 2000) very much. But there are differences: Kondo (1985) does not work with ‘verboids’, her category of ‘adjectives’ is wider, for ‘irrealis’ she uses ‘future tense root’, and the account of incorporation in the negative existential (see example (13) below) is different. The grammar sketch in the dictionary of Kondo & Kondo (2014) largely follows Kondo (1985). Interestingly, the two sets of subject markers are called ‘dynamic’ and ‘static’ (Kondo & Kondo 2014: 587). This is close to the verbal – nominal distinction of Queixalós’.

(4) Guahibo (Queixalós 1998: 256)<sup>4</sup>

- |              |                  |                  |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| a. Po-na-me. | b. Bariya-mü.    | c. Pebi-mü.      |
| walk-R-2     | happy-2          | man-2            |
| ‘You go.’    | ‘You are happy.’ | ‘You are a man.’ |

The examples in (5) shows the future counterparts. Example (5a) shows an irrealis as well as a future suffix. Examples (5b) and (5c) exhibit the future auxiliary *tsane*.

(5) Guahibo (Queixalós 1998: 171, 7, 7)

- |                   |                        |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| a. Po-nae-ena-hü. | b. Bariya tsane.       | c. Pebi tsane.         |
| go-IRR-FUT-1      | happy FUT              | man FUT                |
| ‘I will go.’      | ‘(S)he will be happy.’ | ‘(S)he will be a man.’ |

That the (a) sentences illustrate verbs and the (c) sentences nouns is relatively straightforward, but the status of the (b) sentences is less obvious because *bariyya* and words that function the same way are not adjectives. The language only has about 20 adjectives (Queixalós 1998: 99-100), and what distinguishes these from other words is that only adjectives have a non-derived attributive function. Queixalós (1998, 2000) categorizes *bariyya* as a ‘verboid’ (‘defective’ in Queixalós Forthc.). Verboids are predicative just like verbs, but they predicate in a nominal manner, *i.e.*, they use the nominal subject markers and the nominal future auxiliary. To reflect this ambivalent nature they can be called ‘ascriptive predicates’. Unsurprisingly, the large majority of the verboids refer to states, emotions and qualities (Queixalós 1998: 162). For this reason one could also be inclined to call them ‘stative predicates’. However, since not quite all of them are truly stative and there are also stative verbs proper (Francesc Queixalós p.c.), we will follow Queixalós’ terminology<sup>5</sup>.

We move to negation now. In the negative, a prefix *apo-* is used, but the verb has to exchange the realis marker for an irrealis marker, and more importantly for our purpose, for subject marking the negation chooses a nominal marker, instead of the verbal one of the affirmative. For the future,

<sup>4</sup> In the examples we take responsibility for the glosses, but we retain the orthography of the sources. As in Queixalós (Forthc.) (*cf.* also Queixalós 2011: 160) ‘realis’ and ‘irrealis’ render the French terms *factuel* ‘factual’ and *virtuel* ‘virtual’ (Queixalós 1998, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Glossing *bariyya* as ‘happy’ does not reflect the predicative function. From that point of view the gloss ‘be happy’ (which is used by Queixalós 1998) is better, but this gloss does not reflect its nominal nature. We will use the ‘happy’ gloss, because it is simpler.

the construction employs the auxiliary used for nominals instead of the suffix used for the affirmative. For nouns and verboids, the only thing that changes is the addition of the *apo* prefix.

(6) Guahibo (Queixalós 1998: 256, 308, 308)

- a. **Apo-po-nae-mü.**      b. **Apo-barüya-mü.**      c. **Apo-pebi-mü.**  
 NEG-go-IRR-2              NEG-happy-2              NEG-man-2  
 ‘You don’t go.’              ‘You are not happy.’              ‘You are not a man.’

(7) Guahibo (Queixalós 1998: 352; Francesc Queixalós p.c.)

- a. **Apo-po-nae-nü tsane.**      b. **Apo-barüya tsane.**      c. **Apo-pebi tsane.**  
 NEG-go-IRR-1      FUT              NEG-happy      FUT              NEG-man      FUT  
 ‘I won’t go.’              ‘(S)he won’t be happy.’              ‘(S)he won’t be a man.’

The facts in (6a) and (7a) suggest that the negation turns the verbal predicate into a verboid predicate. *Po-nae* in (6a) and (7a) is by itself still verbal, just as it is in the affirmative (5a). But the nominal subject marking aligns it with nouns, and the negative *apo-po-nae* thus ends up in the in-between category of verboids. This also means that standard negation is ascriptive. Thus a literal translation of (6a) becomes close to ‘you are not-ambulant’ or ‘you are a not-goer’<sup>6</sup>. This analysis is schematized in Table 2.

	Positive	negative
verb	[po-na]-me [go-R]-2.verbal ‘you go’	<del>[apo-[po-nae]]-mü [NEG-[go-IRR]]-2.nominal ‘you don’t go’</del>
verboid	<del>[barüya]-mü [happy]-2.nominal ‘you are happy’</del>	[apo-[barüya]]-mü [NEG-[happy]]-2.nominal ‘you are not happy’

**Table 2.** The Guahibo negative present-past verb as a verboid

The negative *apo-[po-nae]* is analyzed as a verboid, just like the negative and positive verboids *apo-[barüya]* and *barüya*.

<sup>6</sup> Note that we do not claim that this literal translation is ‘you are not an ambulant’ or ‘you are not a goer’. (6a) is not a matter of not ascribing a property ‘ambulant/goer’ – the ‘ambulant/goer’ meaning requires a nominalization as in e.g. *pe-po-nae-nü* POSS.3-go-IRR-M (Francesc Queixalós p.c.). Instead, (6a) involves the positive ascription of the negative property ‘not-ambulant’/‘not-goer’.

The typology of negation has so far not focussed on the use of ascriptive strategies for standard negation, though it is not unknown. For another Colombian language, Tuyuca (tuyu 1244, Tukanoan) Barnes (1994) lists no fewer than three ascriptive renderings of (something close to) ‘she didn’t come’.

- (8) Tuyuca (tuyu1244, Barnes 1994: 336)
- a. Atí-gó                      nĩ-ri-ã-wõ.  
 come-NMLZ.F.SG    be-NEG-REC-EV  
 ‘She didn’t come.’ (lit. ‘She was not a coming one.)’
- b. Atí-gó                      mēẽ    nĩ-ã-wõ.  
 come- NMLZ.F.SG    NEG    be-REC-EV  
 ‘She didn’t come.’ (lit. She was (on that occasion) not a coming one.)’
- c. Atí-e-go                      nĩ-ã-wõ.  
 come-NEG-NMLZ.F.SG    be-REC-EV  
 ‘She never came.’ (lit. ‘She is (habitually) a not-coming one.’)

Starting from Croft (1991), typologists (especially Veselinova 2013, 2014, 2016 and Veselinova & Hamari 2021) have focussed more on the use of existential strategies for standard negation. With an existential strategy ‘you don’t go’ would literally be rendered as ‘your going does not exist’. This is also a nominal strategy, just like the ‘you are not a goer’ paraphrase, and, as suggested by the English paraphrase, in an existential construction a possessive marker makes sense, as it does in Hawai’ian (hawa1245, Austronesian) in examples like (9).

- (9) Hawai’an (Veselinova 2013: 131)
- ‘A’ohe    o’u      lohe    aku                      iā      ia.  
 NEG.EX    1.POSS    hear    away.from.speaker    PART    3SG  
 ‘I can’t hear him/her.’ (lit. ‘My hearing away from him/her does not exist.’)

But this is not what we find in Guahibo. The language has possessive person prefixes that contrast with nominal markers. A second person possessive prefix, for example is *niha-*, illustrated in (10).

- (10) Guahibo (Queixalós 1998: 44)  
 niha-bo  
 2-house  
 ‘your house’

Ascription can also be seen in existential negation, which is expressed with a verboid *ahibi*.

- (11) Guahibo (Queixalós 1998: 5)  
 Peri **ahibi-Ø**.  
 cassava not.exist-3  
 ‘There is no cassava.’

The subject in (11) is third person, so there is no overt subject marker, neither a verbal nor a nominal one, but when the subject is first or second person, we see the nominal subject markers.

- (12) Guahibo (Queixalós & Jiménez 2010: 99)<sup>7</sup>  
 Xanü-atha **ahibi-nü**, abüxü taxa **ahibi-Ø**, taena-atha  
 1SG-ADD not.exist-1 yet my.father not.exist-3 my.mother-ADD  
**ahibi-Ø**  
 not.exist-3  
 ‘Even me, I didn’t exist, neither my father nor even my mother.’

*Ahibi* has a short form *abi*, appearing only in lexical items with incorporation in between *a-* and *-bi*<sup>8</sup>.

- (13) Guahibo (Queixalós 1998: 229)  
 a. **a-matamo-bi** b. **a-koxi-bi**  
 a-price-bi a-child-bi  
 ‘be cheap’ ‘be sterile’

In our view, the segmentability of *a-* and *-bi* suggests that these elements had separate meanings or functions. According to Queixalós (1998: 215) the *a-* is a derivational prefix, responsible for a fair number of verboids, including the ones in (14).

<sup>7</sup> Very special thanks are to Francesc Queixalós for finding this example. Queixalós (1998, 2000) happened not have any first or second person examples with *ahibi*.

<sup>8</sup> *Ahibi* allows incorporation too, also between *a-* and the remaining part, *-hibi* (Queixalós 1998: 215), but *abi* only has incorporated forms.

- (14) Guahibo verboids in *a-* (Queixalós 1998: 215)  
*a-behe* ‘be bad’, *a-hatu* ‘be thin’, *a-yai* ‘be exceptional’

In the forms in (13) it is clear that either *a-* or *-bi* (or both) must be exponents to realize negative meaning. In the glosses in Queixalós (1998: 229), negation is associated only with *-bi*. However, an alternative analysis is not impossible. From Veselinova’s (2013: 137) sample-based typological study we see that half of the expressions for existential negation (‘existential negators’) in the world’s languages are composed of two parts, viz. negation and existence – with the other half deriving from meanings like ‘lack, miss’. We know that *apo* is a negator and we also know that in Macaguán the cognate is *ap-*, which also exists in a short form *a-* (see section 3). There is therefore a possibility that the *a-* in *ahibi* and *a...bi* is a negator. It is perfectly possible that the *a-* in both *ahibi* and *abi* is different from that of the verboids in (14), since there is no evidence so far that *a-* in such forms reverses the polarity of *-behe*, *-hatu* or *-yai*, as none of these roots seems to exist on its own synchronically. If *a-* is negative in *abi* (and *ahibi*), it follows that *-hibi* or *-bi* is likely to have had a meaning of existence or a related meaning (like presence, staying, appearing). It would have been easy if the expression of existence (*i.e.*, positive existence), availed itself of *-bi* or *-hibi*. But, as is often the case in the world’s languages (Hengeveld 1992: 185-212), this is not the case. Positive existence is simply not marked at all.

- (15) Guahibo (Queixalós 1998: 5)  
 Pepomene.  
 river  
 ‘There is a river.’

We finish this section with the prohibitive. The closest we get to a prohibitive is a combination of an apprehensive marker *pütsa* (‘be careful’) and an imperative.

- (16) Guahibo (Queixalós 2000: 381)  
**Pütsa** Ø-wü-n-ue-ma!  
 APPR OBJ3-SEP-cry-IRR-IMP  
 ‘Do not bemoan him!’

Guahibo does allow *apo-* to combine with an imperative, but the resultant meaning is admonitive.

- (17) Guahibo (Queixalós 2000: 379)  
**Apo-po-nae-mü-re!**  
 NEG-go-IRR-2-IMP  
 ‘Don’t go (and you’ll see what happens) ... so go!’

Note that (17) has nominal subject marking, different from the (positive) imperative, which at least in its direct counterpart comes without subject marking.

- (18) Guahibo (Queixalós 2000: 379)  
 Po-na-re!  
 go-R-IMP  
 ‘Go!’

### 3. Macaguán

For Macaguán we have two accounts: Buenaventura (1993) and Lobo-Guerrero & Herrera (2000). As for negation, the two accounts differ in interesting ways, possibly because they focus on different dialects and/or idiolects<sup>9</sup>. We start with Lobo-Guerrero & Herrera’s (2000) account.

#### 3.1. Lobo-Guerrero & Herrera (2000)

Like Guahibo, Macaguán has a negative verbal prefix. In Macaguán it is *ap-*, which becomes *a-* before a consonant. Like for Guahibo, its appearance is associated with a choice of subject markers. Lobo-Guerrero & Herrera (henceforth, LG&H) (2000) rely on Queixalós (1980) (the treatment in Queixalós 1998, 2000 is different). Like for Guahibo, Macaguán has two sets of predicate subject markers and the forms are clearly cognates of the ones in Guahibo. We exclusively find the members of one set in negation, the one with *-n* and *-m*, but the difference is not taken to be associated with a verb-noun distinction, but with a mood distinction involving realis-irrealis<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Another difference is that Lobo-Guerrero & Herrera (2000) do not discuss prohibitive negation.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Realis’ – ‘Irrealis’ render the Spanish *actual* ‘actual’ – *virtual* ‘virtual’ in LG&H (2000).

	realis	irrealis
1st person	<i>-u</i>	<i>-n</i>
2nd person	<i>-me</i>	<i>-m</i>
3rd person		<i>-∅</i>
4th person		<i>-ts</i>

**Table 3:** Macaguán subject marking (LG&H 2000: 618)

As the account for the function of the subject markers sets is different in Guahibo and Macaguán, so is the account of negation. For Guahibo, Queixalós (1998) claims that negation takes one set of subject markers, because they are more nominal, but for Macaguán LG&H (2000) claim that negation takes these subject markers, not because they are more nominal, but because they are irrealis. The two approaches are not that different, however, for LG&H (2000: 620) also claim that Macaguán verboids take irrealis subject marking. But this is suspicious: it is easy to understand why negation is irrealis, but not why a verboid should take irrealis. There are two further problems. First, LG&H (2000) do not tell us which subject markers nouns take in Macaguán. If Macaguán is like Guahibo, they will take the same subject markers as the verboids, and then it is also enigmatic why nominal predicates should be irrealis. Secondly, LG&H (2000: 618) claim that the future is irrealis too. This would be a real difference with Guahibo, because in Guahibo the positive future is realis and only the negative future is irrealis. One would then also expect the subject marker of the positive future to be irrealis, but in their one relevant example, this is not the case.

- (19) Macaguán (LG&H 2000: 618)  
 Tsipe-bi-n-**me**.  
 tell-IRR-FUT-2  
 ‘You will tell.’

The second-person marker *-me* encodes realis, but the authors make us expect the irrealis ending *-m*. It is furthermore strange that the irrealis marker *-bi* would collocate with the realis subject marker *-me*. Given these problems, we will assume that Macaguán subject markers are distinguished along the nominal *vs.* verbal parameter, and that Macaguán standard negation thus uses an ascriptive strategy, just like Guahibo.

The two languages also have a similar existential negator: *ahibi* in Guahibo and *a'hibi* in Macaguán. There are no examples for Macaguán, *a'hibi* is only listed as a verboid (LG&H 2000: 620) where it is mentioned that there is a short form *a'hi* (LG&H 2000: 619). The translation for both forms is *no haber nada* 'have nothing', and we assume that this is a way to refer to an existential negator. What is interesting is that the short form *a'hi* can be added to a negated present-past verb form.

- (20) Macaguán (LG&H 2000: 619)  
**Ap-a-'pi-n a'hi.**  
 NEG-drink-IRR-1 EMPH  
 'I do not drink.'

The addition of *a'hi* is said to have an emphatic effect, and although it is frequent, it remains optional. This suggests that the existential negator has entered the domain of standard negation and that this process has turned the existential negator into an emphaticizer. We know this kind of development from other languages.

The process through which an existential negator gets used for standard negation is now mostly known as the 'negative existential cycle', but the type shown in Macaguán (20) is a special one. It is not the case that the existential negator is by itself used to express standard negation. Rather, the existential negator is added to a clause which already contains a standard negator. This type was recognized by Croft (1991: 9-11), but it has not been in focus until van der Auwera *et al.* (2021: 571-574). An example of this is (21) from the Peruvian isolate Urarina. Example (21a) shows the marker *niji/nijej* (< *ni-ji* EX-NEG) in a negative existential use. In (21b) it is added to a sentence that contains the standard negator *-ene*, making the negation emphatic<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> The similarity with Macaguán only resides in the fact that an existential negator can be added to a standard negator making it emphatic. The similarity does not extend to the morphological/grammatical status of the existential negators.

- (21) Urarina (isolate, urar1246, Olawsky 2006: 554, 556)
- a. Nukue seti-aka=ne **niji** ate taba-j.  
 creek fish-1DU=CND NEG.EX fish be.big-NMLZ  
 ‘When we fished in the creek, there were no big fish.’
- b. Nii hãꞤ **nijej** beraj-paa najj-ene rai komasaj.  
 that because NEG.EX care.for-INF be.able-NEG.3 POSS wife  
 ‘Therefore, his wife could not look after him at all.’

The construction in (21b) thus shows negation doubling, and in that sense it is also a type of what is known as a ‘Jespersen cycle’ (van der Auwera 2009; van der Auwera & Krasnoukhova 2020: 95-99); a hypothesis that Guahiboan had already received in Vossen (2016: 302-303). However, it is not a canonical example of Jespersen cycle, as with French *pas* would be, originally meaning ‘step’, or English *not*, originally meaning ‘nothing’. As an illustration of a canonical example of a Jespersen cycle take English *not*, which was once added for emphasis to a sentence already containing the standard negator *ne*. Then *not* lost its emphasis and replaced the original negator. In a way, what Macaguán illustrates in (20) is similar to the emphatic use of the negative indefinite pronoun *nada* ‘nothing’ in Spanish with experience verbs, as in (22), which shows no sign of replacing *no*.

- (22) Spanish
- No** me gusta **nada**.  
 NEG me pleases Nothing  
 ‘I don’t like it at all.’

For the negation of the future, *a’hi* merges with *tse’ne*, a merger which turns the latter into a *-tsene* suffix. Here *a’hi* is obligatory and devoid of emphasis and, different from the present-past, the prefixal negator is absent<sup>12</sup>. The loss of emphasis (*i.e.*, ‘bleaching’) and the absence of the old negator again makes sense from a Jespersen cycle point of view.

- (23) Macaguán (LG&H 2000: 619)
- Na-w-e-n-uu **a’hi**-tsene.  
 REFL-bathe-IRR-FUT-1 NEG-FUT  
 ‘I will not bathe.’

<sup>12</sup> The gloss for *a’hi*-*tsene* in the source is ‘nada-NEG.FUT’ (LG&H 2000: 619). We don’t think that *nada* can refer to an indefinite pronoun for ‘nothing’. We also cannot see any reason to attribute a negative meaning to the future marker *tsene*.

It is interesting to see that in the LG&H (2000) account, the Jespersen cycle has progressed more in the future than in the present-past. It is only for the future that the old prefixal negator can be absent. The reason for the asymmetry is not clear. It is unlikely to be a semantic one: there is no reason why emphasis should bleach faster in the expression of the future. A formal explanation is not obvious either: it is not clear why a complex form *a'hi-tsene* should bleach faster than a simple *a'hi* form.

### 3.2. Buenaventura (1993)

Based on year of publication Buenaventura (1993) appears to be an earlier account when compared to LG&H (2000). But this is not quite true. LG&H (2000) acknowledge that their work is ‘basically’ identical to a part of their earlier study, published as Lobo-Guerrero & Herrera (1984). Buenaventura (1993) makes some interesting observations regarding negation, which shed light onto the diachrony of the phenomenon, suggesting that the dialect he describes is more progressive than the one described in LG&H (2000).

There is some agreement between LG&H (2000) and Buenaventura (1993). Thus the negative prefix is identified as *a(p)-* and for the future we have to consider the *tsene* element (Buenaventura 1993: 48). As to the differences, nothing is said about two sets of subject markers, nominal and verbal. There is just one set, and it is the allegedly realis one, distinguished by LG&H (2000) or, more likely, from the perspective of Queixalós’ account of Guahibo, the verbal set.

1st person	<i>-u</i>
2nd person	<i>-me</i>
3rd person	<i>-∅</i>
4th person	<i>-ch</i>

**Table 4:** Macaguán subject marking (Buenaventura 1993: 43)

If the observation that there is just one set of markers is correct, it means that the distinction between verbal and nominal (or realis and irrealis) forms has been neutralized, but, since the sketch is limited to 11 pages, the distinction may have passed under the author’s radar. The Buenaventura text also contains a hedge with *por lo general* ‘generally’:

subject marking uses the above markers only *por lo general*, leaving one to wonder what the less common strategy would be. (24) is a negative example.

- (24) Macaguán (Buenaventura 1993: 98)  
 Kan a-tsóbu-u.  
 1SG NEG-want-1  
 ‘I don’t want (it).’

Buenaventura (1993) also mentions the form which we take to derive from a negative existential, viz. *-ji*, as in (25). In the dictionary the combination is translated as *no, ningun* ‘not, no one’ and the glossing shows NEG ... NEG.

- (25) Macaguán (Buenaventura 1993: 84)  
 A-najniúchi-**ji** jítñu kan.  
 NEG-speak-NEG jítñu 1SG  
 ‘I don’t speak jítñu (=Macaguán).’

The *a ... ji* combination is said to be common and there is no mention of an emphatic effect. From a Jespersen cycle perspective, this suggests that the emphatic effect has bleached. If the construction has indeed bleached, *-ji* is a good candidate to be the sole exponent of negation. Buenaventura (1993) does not mention this in his sketch grammar, but he offers a list of useful phrases, two of which have *aji*, the free standing variant, as the sole exponent of negation; (26) is one of them.

- (26) Macaguán (Buenaventura 1983: 100)  
 Punú níchi **ají**.  
 3 come NEG  
 ‘He/she has not come.’

When we compare Buenaventura (1993) and LG&H (2000) we can see (i) that the existential negator has intruded into the present-past sphere, which it didn’t in LG&H (2000); (ii) that the bipartite form is no longer emphatic; and (iii) that, in a Jespersen cycle manner, it has given rise to a pattern with single exponence.

Let us now move to the expression of the future. The one similarity with LG&H (2000) is that the marker *tsene* shows up and that it goes into a

univerbation with the existential negator. But there are interesting differences. First, in the LG&H (2000) account the negative future always requires the *tsene* auxiliary. This is not the case in Buenaventura (1993: 48): (27a) shows a construction with only *a-* and (27b) one with *a ...ji*.

(27) Macaguán (Buenaventura 1993: 48)

- a. **A-najniúchi-n-u.**  
NEG-speak-FUT-1  
'I will not speak.'
- b. **A-najniúchi-n-ji.**  
NEG-speak-FUT-NEG  
'He will not speak.'

Second, the *tsene* auxiliary is also possible. It appears in the form *ítsene* and possibly also *ítne*. We hypothesize that *ítsene* is a univerbation with the *-í* of an originally existential *ají* negator, different from Buenaventura (1993: 48), who glosses *ítsene* as 'FUT'. He glosses *am-* and *an-* in (28a) and (28b) as '2' and '1', respectively, but we hypothesize that the *a-* is the onset of the *ají* negator and that only *-m* and *-n* are the subject markers. Example (28c) is a third person construction and it exhibits the marker *ají* as there is no overt subject marking. If our analysis is correct, we interpret this as showing that the originally existential negator *ají* can enclose subject markers. This process is similar to what we find in Guahibo incorporation (see (13)).

(28) Macaguán (Buenaventura 1993: 48)

- a. **A-kapóne a-m-í-tsene.**  
NEG-play NEG-2-NEG-FUT<sup>13</sup>  
'You will not play.'
- b. **A-n-awiáchi a-n-í-tsene.**  
NEG-REFL-go NEG-1-NEG-FUT  
'I will not go.'
- c. **Apu pin a-níchín aj(í)í-tsene.**  
still REP NEG-come NEG-FUT  
'He/she will not come anymore.'

Interestingly, the first and second person markers in (28a-b) are different from the ones listed in Table 5. In fact, they have the shape of the

<sup>13</sup> We gloss both *a-* and *-í* with NEG, but we leave it open whether they count as two negators or one discontinuous negator.

subject markers that LG&H (2000) associate with irrealis. And thus they also correspond formally to nominal subject markers in Guahibo. This means either that the language does have two sets of markers (with the latter markers limited to particular constructions) or that the marking we find in negative forms with *ítsene* and *ítne* are relics of the ‘old’ irrealis or, rather, nominal markers.

The prohibitive uses the negative verbal prefix *a-* in combination with either an imperative or an irrealis form of the verb. For us the important observation is that the bipartite form with *a-* and *-ji* is found here too.

- (29) Macaguán (Buenaventura 1993: 47)  
**A-na-wém-ji!**  
 NEG-REFL-bathe.IRR.IMP-NEG  
 ‘Do not bathe!’

### 3.3. Conclusion on Macaguán

We hypothesize that the negation in Macaguán uses an ascriptive strategy, like in Guahibo. Different from Guahibo, Macaguán is undergoing a Jespersen cycle in the classical direction, with an ‘old’ negator on the left and renewal on the right. The new material is an erstwhile existential negator. This is unusual, but it is attested elsewhere and it constitutes a trajectory in both the Jespersen and the negative existential cycles. As is typical for a Jespersen cycle, the marker that is added to a standard negator is first emphatic and it then bleaches. The Jespersen cycle is strongest in the expression of a future, and we do not know why. The Jespersen cycle has progressed to a single exponence strategy under conditions that are not clear. The Jespersen cycle has also progressed in the sense that it has affected the prohibitive.

## 4. Cuiba

For Cuiba our main reference is the pedagogical grammar by Kerr (1995); other accounts, such as Machal (2000) or Merchán (2000) are not too useful for our purposes. In contrast to Guahibo and Macaguán, Cuiba does not have a negative verbal prefix; instead Cuiba has the negative preverbal

particle *jopa*, which is probably cognate to *apo* (cf. Queixalós 1993: 201)<sup>14</sup>. Like in Guahibo and Macaguán, the negator combines with one of two sets of subject markers. For Kerr (1995: 81), the relevant ones are the subject markers of state verbs, which we take to be the same as or close to Queixalós' verboids.

	action verbs	state verbs
1st person	-n	-n/-in
2nd person	-me	-m
3rd person	-∅	
4th person	-tsi/-chi	

**Table 5:** Cuiba subject marking (Kerr 1995: 33, 60)<sup>15</sup>

Like in Guahibo a negative verb must also occur in the irrealis and in the negative future, we get the auxiliary *tsane*<sup>16</sup>. But there is an important difference. In the present-past sphere there is also a verbal affix *-yo*, which is used in combination with the *jopa* particle<sup>17</sup>. It is obligatory in both the first and the third person, optional in the second person and impossible in the fourth person. Kerr (1995: 82) does not give examples, only paradigms.

	present-past		future	
	positive	negative	positive	negative
1st person	<i>pona-n</i>	<i>jopa pona-e-ño</i>	<i>ponáe-n</i>	<i>jopa ponáe-n chane</i>
2nd person	<i>póna-me</i>	<i>jopa pona-e-m</i> <i>jopa pona-e-m-yo</i>	<i>ponáe-na-me</i>	<i>jopa pona-e-m chane</i>
3rd person	<i>pona</i>	<i>jopa pona-e-yo</i>	<i>ponae-na</i>	<i>jopa ponáe tsane</i>
4th person	<i>pon-chi</i> <i>póna-tsi</i>	<i>jopa pona-e-tsi</i>	<i>ponae-n-chi</i>	<i>jopa ponáe tsanchi</i>

**Table 6:** The conjugation of the Cuiba verb *pona* 'go' (Kerr 1995: 32, 82)

We take the affix *-yo* to be a partial copy of the preverbal negator *jopa*<sup>18</sup>. For a Venezuelan dialect (Machal 2000: 240) notes that *jopa* itself

<sup>14</sup> Queixalós (Forthc.) speculates that the particle could be related to the Guahibo verb *hopa* 'fall down'.

<sup>15</sup> Merchán (2000: 590) also lists two paradigms, with similar forms, but she distinguishes them along what we take to be a realis – irrealis line.

<sup>16</sup> For the Venezuelan dialect described by Machal (2000: 241) the future is formed in a different way. The positive future has a *-tsi* suffix and an optional *be-* prefix; the negative one has an obligatory *be-* suffix, but both also allow a volitional interpretation, so 'I want to VERB' as well as 'I will VERB'. Kerr (1995: 202-203) describes this construction, but implicitly only as a modal construction. Interestingly the subject markers of the 'volitional-future' are identical to possessive markers (Machal 2000: 239).

<sup>17</sup> *Jopa ... yo* is also used ascriptively with verboids and nouns (Kerr 1995: 83-83).

<sup>18</sup> According to Queixalós (Forthc.) the *-yo* suffix is related to a diminutive suffix.

is often reduced to *jo*. When both *-yo* and *jopa* co-occur we are dealing with doubling (*i.e.*, with a Jespersen cycle, Vossen 2016: 302-303). However, the copying does not happen for the expression of the future. This is another difference with Macaguán, in which a Jespersen cycle had the strongest effect for the future.

The existential negator in Cuiba is the verboid *ajibi/aibi* (Kerr 1995: 62-62), as in (30)<sup>19</sup>.

- (30) Cuiba (Kerr 1995: 61)  
 Jiwi **ajibi-Ø**  
 People not.exist-3  
 ‘There are no people.’

This negator does not enter standard negation nor prohibitive negation. The latter uses **jopa** together with the irrealis stem of the verb and an imperative ending *-nde*. There is no indication that the prohibition allows copy doubling.

- (31) Cuiba (Kerr 1995: 41)  
 a. Póna-re/po-nde!  
 go-IMP/go-IMP  
 ‘Go!’  
 b. **Jopa** ponae-nde!  
 NEG go-IMP  
 ‘Don’t go!’

Interestingly, the negative existential encroaches on verboid ascriptive negation. The examples in (32) illustrate two instances of the existential negator occurring with verboids. Kerr (1995: 63) notes that speakers consider the version with *yopa* ‘more correct’, but that they can alternate between the two versions ‘without restrictions’.

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<sup>19</sup> In accordance with the analysis of Guahibo, we mark the third person with *-Ø*.

- (32) Cuiba (Kerr 1995: 62-63)
- a. Wárapa **ajibi-Ø**.  
 Travel not.exist-3  
 ‘He did not travel.’
- b. Bichoina **ajibi-Ø**.  
 Fast not.exist-3  
 ‘(S)he was not fast.’

While the Macaguán existential negator expanded its use outside of existential negation into the domain of ascriptive standard negation, in Cuiba the expansion appears to have happened into what one could call ‘ascriptive non-standard negation’.

In summary, like Macaguán, Cuiba shows the effect of a Jespersen cycle, but of a different type: one involving a partial doubling of a preverbal negator. Standard negation is again ascriptive. The existential negator does not encroach on standard negation, but it does so on verboid ascriptive negation.

## 5. Guayabero

Overall, Guayabero differs much from Cuiba, Guahibo and Macaguán (Queixalós 1993). This is also the case for negation (Queixalós 1993: 208). There are two descriptions of Guayabero negation: Waller (1974), which is a very short paper with a focus on negation, and Waller & Kondo (2012), which is a two volume practical grammar with a section on negation. The two accounts differ in non-trivial ways. Since the author of Waller (1974) is a co-author of Waller & Kondo (2012), we assume that Waller & Kondo (2012) supersedes Waller (1974), so that whenever the two accounts are at odds with each other, we rely on Waller & Kondo’s (2012) account.

In the present-past, standard negation is expressed with the suffix *-el*, which is added to what Waller & Kondo (2012: 26) call the ‘verbal base’. In the first, second and fourth person, the subject markers *-ni*, *-mi* and *-si* occur between the *-e-* and the *-l* of the suffix. In the third person subject markers follow *-el*. The future is similar; the difference being that the

suffix is *-xil*, with the subject markers coming between *xi-* and *-l*, as in (33)<sup>20</sup>.

- (33) Guayabero (Waller & Kondo 2012: 26)
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>a. Naewujna-<b>e</b>-ni-<b>l</b>.<br/>         recommend-NEG.PRS/PST-1-NEG<br/>         ‘I do not recommend.’</p> | <p>b. Naewujna-<b>xi</b>-ni-<b>l</b>.<br/>         recommend-NEG.FUT-1-NEG<br/>         ‘I will not recommend.’</p> |
|--|---|

This construction is evidently different from what we observe in the three other languages of the family. First, the negation does not involve an irrealis form. Arguably, irrealis forms do exist, however. Next to the so-called base of the verb, the authors acknowledge the existence of two root allomorphs: one is used for the present-past and the other for the future (Waller & Kondo 2012: 2, 8). It would stand to reason to consider the first root realis and the second one irrealis. Second, there are no two sets of subject markers. Throughout the paradigms we find the set in Table 7.

1st person	-n
2nd person	-m
3rd person	-on/-ow/-i/-ox
4th person	-its/-ch

**Table 7.** Guayabero subject marking (Waller & Kondo 2012: 10, 27)

The third person subject markers are unparalleled in the family and they differ from the first, second and fourth person markers in that they are word-final. The latter strongly resemble the nominal (or irrealis) forms of the other languages. A third difference is that the negative future does not employ any auxiliary, though the positive future does (*viz.* the auxiliary *-xaeł*, Waller & Kondo 2012: 8). Fourth, the standard negator is a suffix, but one that can be interrupted by subject markers. Within Guahiboan, a word-final, or suffixal, negator is not unique to Guayabero. We found it in the Cuiba copy suffix *-yo* and, more relevantly, in the Macaguán *-ji* suffix, which we derived from an existential negator. A negator that can be interrupted by subject marking is not unique either. We found it in Macaguán – in the analysis based on Buenaventura (1993).

<sup>20</sup> There is also an emphatic negative future, which Waller & Kondo (2012: 26) describe as being formed by combining both the future and the present-past negative suffixes, which is rather intriguing. The translation renders the emphatic nature with ‘never’. This makes it a quantificational negation, which falls outside the scope of this paper.

Taking a hint from the similarity between Guayabero and Macaguán (because of the word-final position of the negator, deriving from an existential negator and allowing the enclosure of subject marking), one could conjecture that the Guayabero negative suffixes relate to the Guayabero existential negator, this one being *ajil*, as in (34).

- (34) Guayabero (Waller 1974: 44)  
 Camis **ajil**.  
 shirt not.exist  
 ‘There is no shirt.’

However, we acknowledge that this is only a tentative hypothesis<sup>21</sup>. We do not know, for instance, whether *ajil* itself also allows the above kind of enclosure or whether it makes sense to consider it a verboid. There is some phonetic resemblance: both the negative suffix and the negative existential end in *-l* but this observation remains superficial. There is also some phonetic resemblance between the Guayabero negative existential *ajil* and its counterparts *ahibi*, *abi* and *a’hi*, but we lack an understanding of the sound correspondences in the family.

Finally, the prohibitive in Guayabero is very different both from the standard and the existential negation and from the prohibitive in the other three Guahiboan languages. For the prohibitive, Guayabero uses dedicated particle *nabej* in front of the verbal base.

- (35) Guayabero (Waller & Kondo 2000: 4)  
**Nabej** moejs.  
 PROH sleep  
 ‘Don’t sleep!’

To conclude: Guayabero is in general very different from the other Guahiboan languages and this is true for negation as well. Most importantly, for standard negation there is no prefix or preverbal particle, instead we find an affix that encloses some subject markers. The best we can come up with is the tentative hypothesis that the Guayabero negative affix derives from an existential negator, which encloses subject markers. If this is correct and if our analysis of Macaguán negation is also correct,

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<sup>21</sup> Rivet (1948: 205) notes in his dictionary that the form listed for the existential negator (*il n’y a pas*), viz. *híla*, *se dit pour toute négation* (‘is used for all types of negation’).

then, for negation, Guayabero is more similar to Macaguán than to Cuiba or Guahibo.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper surveyed the negation strategies of the Guahiboan languages. The focus was on standard negation. The first thing to note is that in this domain, the four Guahiboan languages show a great degree of variation. Guahibo and Macaguán use a negative prefix, but in Macaguán an existential negator may be present for emphasis and it may occur instead of the prefixal negator. Cuiba uses a preverbal particle as well as, and in some circumstances, a verbal affix. In Guayabero there is only an affix, but one that can enclose subject markers. We suggest that these differences can be accounted for in terms of the Jespersen and negative existential cycles. A second special feature of at least Guahibo, Macaguán and Cuiba is that negation changes the status of the verbal predicate, turning it into a verboid, a category in-between a verb and a noun. We describe this as an ascriptive strategy. Finally, we tentatively suggest that in Macaguán and Guayabero negators may derive from existential negators that enclose subject marking.

## Abbreviations

<b>1</b>	1st person	<b>M</b>	masculine
<b>2</b>	2nd person	<b>NEG</b>	negation
<b>3</b>	3rd person	<b>NMLZ</b>	nominalizer
<b>ADD</b>	Additive	<b>OBJ</b>	object
<b>APPR</b>	Apprehensive	<b>PART</b>	particle
<b>CND</b>	Conditional	<b>POSS</b>	possessive
<b>DU</b>	Dual	<b>PROH</b>	prohibitive
<b>EMPH</b>	Emphatic	<b>PRS</b>	present
<b>EV</b>	Evidential	<b>PST</b>	past
<b>EX</b>	Existential	<b>R</b>	realis
<b>F</b>	Feminine	<b>REC</b>	recent
<b>FUT</b>	Future	<b>REFL</b>	reflexive
<b>IMP</b>	Imperative	<b>SEP</b>	separation
<b>INF</b>	Infinitive	<b>SG</b>	singular
<b>IRR</b>	irrealis		

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