

Negation in Old Indo-European Languages: the case of the Old Persian negative particle *naiy*

- ✓ Negation is a phenomenon through which a linguistic element negates a sentential element or an entire phrase. → markedness of negation, i.e. a negative particle to express propositional negation.

STANDARD NEGATION

(constituent and sentence negation)



PIE	Old Persian	Avestan	Vedic	Latin	Greek	Hittite
*ne	<i>naiy</i>	<i>nōiṭ</i>	<i>ná</i>	<i>nōn</i>	<i>οὐ</i>	<i>natta</i>

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Old Persian Negative system:

- ***naiy*** (<***na-i-ya***>): *ne + *id (ac. neutr. sg. pron. i-).

This strengthening of a negative marker is also seen in Skt. *néd.* Hitt. *natta* and Lat. *nōn*

Due to the smallness of the Old Persian Corpus, we have few occurrences of this negative particle that amount only up to 53 instances (31 of them in the Behistun Inscription).

The syntactic behaviour of *naiy* strikes us as normal: the use of tenses and moods, its preverbal position and, above all, its working as a standard sentential negator are ordinary.

Nonetheless, there are certain peculiarities:

A) the absence of a negative coordinating/correlative particle (cf. Gr. *οὔτε* / *οὐδέ* / Myc. o-u-qe; OAv *naēdā*)

B) the absence of grammaticalized negative indefinite pronouns → this also explains there is no trace of negative concord. (cf. Hom. Gr. *οὐ τίς*, Gr. *οὔτις* / *οὐδέις*; Av. *naē-čiš*, *naē-ciṭ*)

C) the absence of other types of Neg-words within the negation system (cf. Gr. *οὐ*, *οὐκ*, *οὐκί*, *οὐδέ*, *οὔτε*, *οὔτις*, *οὐδέις*, etc).

DB 1, 48-49: θātiy Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya ***naiy*** āha martiya ***naiy*** Pārsa ***naiy*** Māda ***naiy*** amāxam taumāya ***kašciy*** hya avam Gaumatam tayam magum xšaçam dītam caxriyā.

DB 4,63-65: θātiy Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya avahyarādiy Auramazdā upastām abara utā aniyāha bagāha tyaiy hatiy yaθā ***naiy*** arika āham ***naiy*** draujana āham ***naiy*** zūrakara āham ***naiy*** adam ***naimaiy*** taumā upariy arštām upariyāyam ***naiy*** škaurim ***naiy*** tunuvatam zūra akunavam.

Avestan Negation:

- Avestan presents a more complex negative system.

nōiṭ / OAv ***naēdā***, YAv ***naēdā*** (cf. Lat. *neque*; Gr. *οὔτε*)
naē (usually in contact with enclitic particles and pronouns; alone only once in YAV.): *naē-ča*, *naē-čim*, *naē-čiš*, *naē-ciṭ*, *naēdā.čiṭ*, *naēdā.čim*, etc.
naē-kay (interrogative negative pronoun)

It is plausible to propose an **Elamite origin** for the lack of a negative coordinating /correlative particle in the Old Persian negation and the absence of other Neg-words. *Avestan* shows a far more advanced negation through a variety of negative particles and negative indefinite pronouns, even though it is a closely-related language that belongs to the same Iranian family.

Since no documents in Median have been preserved, we do not know to what extent this language might have influenced (or not) the negative system in Old Persian. We only know the Median might have had more in common with Avestan due to some important phonological isoglosses, though there are numerous loanwords in Old Persian too.

An Elamite substrate distinct from the Old Persian and the rest of the Iranian languages would explain why Old Persian had not developed a negative coordination (considered not be needed) and why its negative system appears to be formally rudimentary, though completely functional.

Naiy, as the only preverbal negative marker for declarative sentences, carries out all the functions that an entire group of negative markers would perform in other languages such as Ancient Greek or Avestan that possess, so to say, a more sophisticated negative system.

Elamite Influence:

- Elamite: non- Indo-European Language.

In the Middle-Elamite Period negation began to be expressed with an invariable Neg-word, which, later on, would eventually become a negative adverb.

In the Achaemenid Elamite (circa 600-300 B.C.), which is the best attested variety of this language, the use of adverbs intensified.

/in-/ followed by a pronominal or a nominal marker.

1st p.sg. → *in-ki/gi*

3rd p. sg. → *in-ri/in-ra*

Class me → *im-me/um-me*

Class n → ***in-ni***/*in-na*

In the Achaemenid Elamite, *in-ni* was already used as **the sole negative marker**. The inanimate form *in-ni* has been generalized to all persons, so that concord has been lost (v. Fortification Tablets or Persepolis Treasury Tablets).

The Elamite language also lacks a negative coordinating particle. Thus, we can see the reduplication of the negative marker in order to express the negative coordination: **DB 51:80**: *inni ibbakra inni ištukra*.

The persistent contact between the Elamite local people and the Persians along centuries must have caused this linguistic interference. In addition to the fact that archeological findings support that the inner realms of the Achaemenid Empire were localized within the Elamite territory (Fârs), it's probable that Old Persian might have already been spoken at the beginning of the first millenium, having, therefore, a long history of linguistic contact with Elamite, specially through bilingualism.