

# Negation in Dangme

Regina Oforiwah Caesar  
University of Education, Winneba

## 1. Introduction

This paper presents a descriptive analysis of negation in Dangme. It considers the negative morpheme in Dangme, and how some of its allomorphs are used in the language. The segmental variants of the negative morpheme in Dangme are [wē] or [bé] or [-í] or [']. The choice of any depends largely on the shape of the verb stem. I consider the segmental [wē] allomorph as the underlying form since all the other allomorphs are derived from one another. Data for this paper was collected mainly from Dangme students of the University of Education, Winneba, and as a native speaker, I also provided some of the data for this work. The purpose of this paper is to examine these allomorphs of the negative in Dangme.

This paper is organized into three sections. In the first section, I give a brief background of Dangme. I include background on the vowel system of Dangme and discuss only the verbal system of Dangme which is relevant to this study. I then briefly discuss the lexical and grammatical functions of tone in Dangme. In the second, I examine the negation strategies: morphological, syntactic, lexical and phonological. I also discuss factors affecting the choice of a negative morpheme in Dangme. The last section summarizes and concludes the paper.

### 1.1. Background of Dangme

Dangme belongs to the Kwa group of Niger-Congo family of languages. It is spoken in two regions of Ghana- Eastern and Greater Accra, mainly in South-Eastern Ghana. The Dangme people inhabit the coastal area of the Greater Accra Region, east of Accra, and part of the Eastern Region of Ghana. Its closest linguistic neighbours are Ga, Akan and Ewe. Dangme has seven dialects: Ada, Nugo, Kpone, Gbugblaa/Prampram, Osudoku, Se, and Krobo (Yilo and Many).

There are several small communities east of the Volta Region that trace their origins to Dangmeland; most of these have shifted to Ewe as the language of daily life, but others have not (Dakubu 1966; Sprigge 1969 cited in Ameke and Dakubu 2008:215). Patches of speakers are also found in Togo- Nyetoe and Gatsi. Abbreviations<sup>1</sup> used are explained in the footnote below.

### 1.2. The Vowel System of Dangme

In this section, I will briefly summarize the vowel system of Dangme which are directly relevant to this study. Dangme has twelve vowel phonemes, seven oral vowels /i, e, ε, a, u, o, ɔ/ which can be lengthened as /ii, ee, εε, aa, uu, oo, ɔɔ/ and five nasalized vowel /ã, ê, ï, ü, ɔ̃/. The oral-nasal distinctions of the vowels of Dangme are linguistically essential. If an oral and a nasalized vowel occur at the same environment, meaning is distinguished. For instance:

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#### <sup>1</sup> Abbreviations

ADV Adverb, AOR Aorist, AUX Auxiliary, C Consonant, DET Determiner, EMP Emphatic, HAB Habitual Aspect, IMP Imperfective, IND Independent, INGRE Ingressive, LOC Locative, PART Particle, POSS, PERF Perfective, Possessive, POSTp Post –position, PP Post-position, PRES Present Tense, , PROG Progressive Aspect, NEG Negative Morpheme, 1SG First Person Singular, 1SG.OBJ First person Singular Object, , 2PL Second Person Plural, 3PL Third Person Plural.

- 1(a). **Tā** hí.  
war good.NEG  
'War is not good.'
- (b). **Tā** à kù.  
palm tree DET break.PERF  
'The palm tree has broken.'
- 1(c). Yò ò **pà** hwónyú ò.  
woman DET drink.PERF soup DET  
'The woman drank the soup.'
- (d). Yò ò **pã** lò ò.  
woman DET dressed fish/meat DET  
'The woman dressed the fish/meat.'

Syllable nucleuses in Dangme are formed by the twelve vowel phonemes. There are three types of syllable structure in Dangme (Ablorh-Odjidja et al. 1977, 1990: 10). A one place syllable consists of a subject pronoun *i* 'I', *a* 'they' etc, and a two-place syllable consists of a single consonant as in *bō* 'cloth' *há* 'knife' *ngā* 'grass', *tsō* 'tree' etc. The three-place syllable is made up of a single consonant sound followed by the lateral /l/ and a vowel for instance, *nlà* 'dream', *nglà* 'burnt', *hlò* 'peel' *ngmlē* 'bell'.

Unlike Akan and other languages that have established vowel harmony system, the form of vowel harmony in Dangme is not the classical type. Height and rounding harmony is seen in some aspects of negation as would be discussed in this paper.

### 1.3. The Verbal System of Dangme

In this section, I will give a short overview of those characteristics of the verb in Dangme that are of interest for the purpose of this article. 'Dangme has a verbal system where every verb phrase contains one main verb' (Dakubu 1987:56; Adi 1997:42). For example:

2. Àblá yè àkùtúhí.  
Àblá eat.PERF oranges  
'Àblá has eaten oranges.'

Dangme like other Kwa languages has no tense. What exists instead is the aorist which refers to a past action in the indicative mood. As Dakubu (1987:60) puts it: "In the Dangme verb system, tense is of secondary importance. Of course, it is perfectly possible in the language to indicate whether an event took place in the past, is taking place in the present or is to happen in the future, for example by using adverbial expression of time, like *mwɔnɛ ɔ* 'today', *hwɔɔ* 'tomorrow'. However, in the structure of the VP itself, it is not relations of tense or time sequence that are important so much as relations of the kind commonly called aspectual". For example:

3. Ádégù gbè tò ɔ'.  
Ádégù kill.AOR goat DET  
'Ádégù killed the goat.'

The independent verb co-occurs with verbal features of aspect, polarity and mood. The primary modal contrast in Dangme is between real action, event or state and non-real action, event or state. Aspect is made up of the perfective and imperfective (Dakubu, 1987:61-63). The perfective aspect expresses the idea of an action taking place during a period of time which is regarded as complete. The imperfective aspect is in two folds: the progressive and the habitual. The progressive has two functions. It indicates that the action of the verb is ongoing or habitual, while the habitual aspect indicates only habitual action, event or state expressed by the verb. **ngɛ...e** or **hii...e** is a discontinuous auxiliary verb which combines with the independent verb to mark the progressive aspect. Complements of transitive verbs are preposed before the verb while the **-e** is suffixed to the verbs to express the progressive in Dangme. See examples (4a-4d).

- 4a. Dèdé ngɛ̀ là-é.  
Dèdé be.at: sing-PROG  
'Dèdé is singing.'
- 4b. Pàpáà hiì hù-é.  
Pàpáà be.at: farm-PROG  
'Pàpáà is farming.'

4c. Àtá ngè ní yè-é.  
 Àtá be.at: food eat-PROG  
 ‘Àtá is eating food.’

4d. Bàbá hǐ pá gbè-é.  
 Bàbá be.at: river beat-PROG  
 ‘Bàbá is fishing in the river.’

Examples (4a & 4b) are intransitive and they express that the act of singing and farming respectively are ongoing. At the same time, example (4a) can also mean ‘Dèdè is into singing’ while (4b) can mean ‘Pàpáà is into farming’. These interpretations involve the use of the progressive aspect to express a habitual state of affairs. Examples (4c & 4d) are however transitive and they have their noun objects occurring in between the verb group (S Aux OV) as in Gungbe, Fõn and Ewe (see Aboh, 1998, 2004, 2009; Heine & Claudi, 2001).

The habitual is marked on the verb stem by a suffix, {-ɔ}. The suffix has an allomorph which involves a vowel of a verb stem. For instance:

5(a) È bà-á.	(b) È yē-ɔ.	(c) È sì-í.
3SG come-HAB	3SG eat-HAB	3SG fry-HAB
‘He comes.’	‘He eats.’	‘He fries.’

#### 1.4. The Tone System in Dangme

Dangme has three phonemic tone levels (high, mid, low). These perform lexical and grammatical functions, as illustrated by examples (6) and (7) respectively.

##### 1.4.1. Lexical Tone

In Dangme, words with the same morphological representation may differ in meaning due to tone contrast. For example:

<i>Nouns</i>	<i>Verbs</i>
6(a) má ---- ‘dough’	7(a) sá-----‘snatch’
mā-----‘herrings’	sā-----‘rot’
mà-----‘town’.	sà-----‘sieve’
(b) lé ---- ‘firewood’	(b) ngá-----‘close’
lē----- ‘he/she/it’	ngā-----‘greet’
lè----- ‘canoe’	ngà-----‘squeeze’

In 6(a & b), the change in tone assigned to the morphological forms {ma} and {le} has resulted in different meanings: *dough*, *herrings*, *town* and *firewood*, *he/she/it* and *canoe* respectively. The same can be said about example 7(a & b) where {sa} and {nga} contrast in meaning due to tone change.

##### 1.4.2. Grammatical Tone

The second function of tone in Dangme is grammatical and it is realized at the clause level. A change in tone on any lexical morpheme or lexical item, changes the TAM of the clause. This is exemplified in (8) below:

8 (a) À bà wè.	(b) Á bà wè.
3PL come.PERF home.	3PL come home.
‘They came home.’	‘They should come home.’

In example 8(a), all the morphemes bear low tones, and these render the clause into the aorist. 8(b), has only the subject in the high tone expressing the potential. Contrast in tone also results in negation in Dangme. This can be done in both the perfective and imperfective. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the principles that govern the formation of negation in Dangme.

## 2. The Negation Strategies

Dangme negation in the declarative employs two different strategies, the choice of which depends on the shape of the verb. One of them involves a post-verbal particle *wē*. This negative morpheme has allomorphs that will be discussed in this paper. The choice of any of these allomorphs depends largely on the phonological features of the main verb. Negation in Dangme involves tone and assimilation. Assimilation is based on whether the verb is round or not, height, etc. The charts below show the general distribution of negative morphemes in the language.

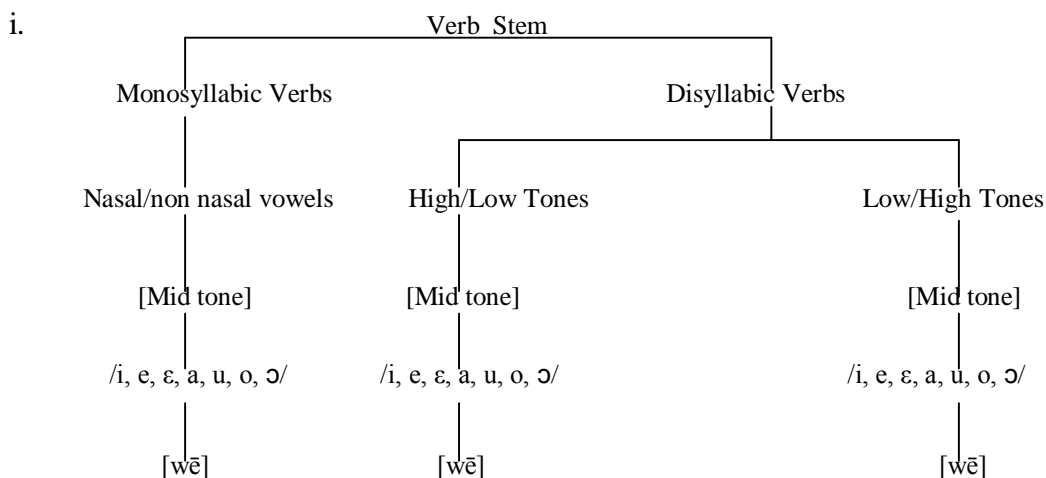


Diagram (i) illustrates the general characteristics of monosyllabic and disyllabic verb stems that take the underlying negative marker, [wē] to form their negative.

ii.

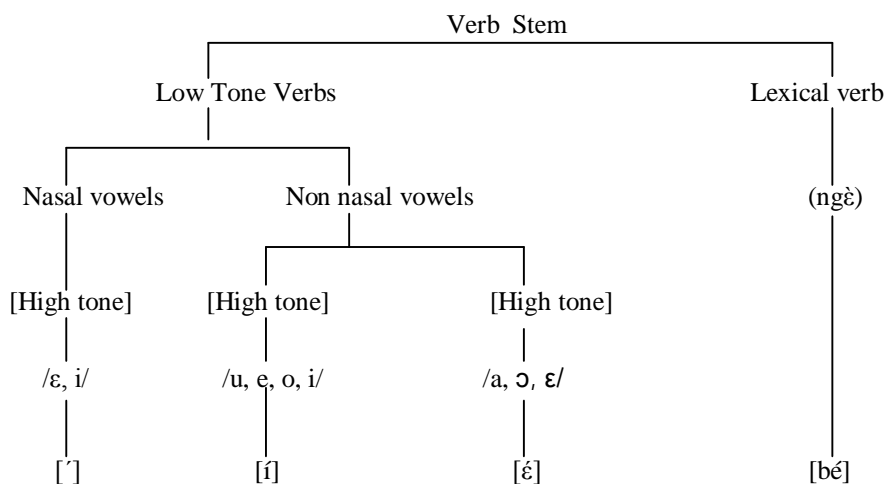


Table (ii) illustrates the different shapes a low tone verb takes in Dangme negation. I begin with the morphological and syntactic negation strategies.

### 2.1. Morphological and Syntactic Negation

The discussion of morphological and syntactic negation examines the forms verbs take in the various TAMs.

There is only one way of negating sentences in the imperfective in Dangme, that is, the distinction between the progressive and the habitual disappears in the negative. The first example is the segment

{wē}. {wē} is a post-verb particle which occurs clause finally with intransitive verb roots that bear the high tone in monosyllabic verbs as in 9(a-d). In disyllabic verbs, verbs that bear the high and low tones and the low and high tones also co-occur with the {wē} segment. Consider examples 9(e-i) and 10(j-n) respectively.

9. (a)	lá	‘sing’	lá	wē	‘did not sing’
(b)	gbó	‘die’	gbó	wē	‘did not die’
(c)	sú	‘sprout’	sú	wē	‘did not sprout’
(d)	tsí	‘prepare’	tsí	wē	‘did not prepare’
(e)	tsákà	‘mix up’	tsákà	wē	‘did not mix up’
(f)	tsákè	‘change’	tsákè	wē	‘did not change’
(g)	bútù	‘capsize’	bútù	wē	‘did not capsize’
(h)	kpénè	‘roll’	kpénè	wē	‘did not roll’
(i)	mímìé	‘shake’	mímìé	wē	‘did not shake’
(j)	kàné	‘read’	kàné	wē	‘did not read’
(k)	pèné	‘untie’	pèné	wē	‘did not untie’
(l)	gólé	‘belch’	gólé	wē	‘did not belch’
(m)	sàné	‘slip’	sàné	wē	‘did not slip’
(n)	kàsé	‘learn’	kàsé	wē	‘did not learn’

Examples 9(a-d) may be used to indicate the imperfective with the use of aspectual markers that are suffixed to the verb root. For example:

*Affirmative*

*Negated sentence*

10(a)	Í	<b>lá-á.</b>	(a)	Í	<b>lá</b>	wē.					
	1SG	sing-HAB		1SG	sing	NEG					
		‘I sing.’				‘I sing not.’					
(b)	Í	ngè	<b>lá-é.</b>	(b)	Í	<b>lá</b>	wē.				
	1SG	be.at:	sing-PROG		1SG	sing	NEG				
		‘I am singing.’					‘I am not singing.’				
(c)	Gbé	<b>gbó-ɔ.</b>	(c)	Gbé	ò	<b>gbó</b>	wē.				
	Dog	die-HAB		Dog	DET	die	NEG				
		‘Dog dies.’					‘The Dog has not died.’				
(d)	Gbé	ò	<b>ngè</b>	<b>gbó-é.</b>	(d)	Gbé	ò	<b>gbó</b>	wē.		
	Dog	DET	be.at:	die-PROG		Dog	DET	die	NEG		
		‘The dog is dying.’							‘The dog is not dying.’		
(e)	Màá	<b>tsí-ò</b>	má	kú.	(e)	Màá	<b>tsí</b>	wē	má	kú.	
	Mother	prepare-HAB	má	kú.		Mother	prepares	NEG	‘má	kú’	
		‘Mother prepares ‘má kú.’							‘Mother does not prepare ‘má kú.’		
(f)	Màá	<b>ngè</b>	má	kú	<b>tsí-é.</b>	(f)	Màá	<b>tsí</b>	wē	má	kú.
	Mother	be.at	má	kú	prepare-PROG		Mother	prepare	NEG	‘má	kú’
		‘Mother is preparing ‘má kú.’								‘Mother is not preparing ‘má kú.’	

In sentences 10(a’-f’), negation has brought about a change in the aspectual markers in the affirmative (10a-f). This has resulted in the habitual and the progressive markers {a} and {ngè...-e} not occurring in the negative. In addition, the habitual and the progressive sentences in 10(e-f) give evidence that {wē} occurs immediately after the verb. The fact that it appears to occur clause-finally in the intransitive clauses in 10(a-d) is that nothing else comes after the verb (10a’-d’).

## 2.2. Lexical Negation

Lexically, negation can be expressed in the present with the verb {ngè} ‘be.at’ which can also mean ‘to have’. The morpheme {ngè} changes to {bé} ‘not to be.at’ or ‘not to have’ in the negative. For example:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>11(a) Àkù <b>ngè</b> tsù ǒ mì.<br/>         Àkù be.at room DET POSTp<br/>         ‘Àkù is in the room.’</p>                     | <p>(b) Àkù <b>bé</b> tsù ǒ mì.<br/>         Àkù be.NEG room DET POSTp<br/>         ‘Àkù is not in the room.’</p>                         |
| <p>(c) Máté <b>ngè</b> sùkà fúú.<br/>         Máté has money plenty<br/>         ‘Máté has plenty money.’</p>                      | <p>(d) Máté <b>bé</b> sùkà fúú.<br/>         Máté has.NEG money plenty<br/>         ‘Máté does not have much money.’</p>                 |
| <p>(e) Àdò <b>ngè</b> zùgbá à nò hè wàmì.<br/>         Àdò has land DET PP power<br/>         ‘Àdò has control over the land.’</p> | <p>(f) Àdò <b>bé</b> zùgbá à nò hè wàmì.<br/>         Àdò has.NEG land DET PP power<br/>         ‘Àdò has no control over the land.’</p> |

The {ngè} used in sentence 11(a) is functioning as ‘be present’. The {ngè} in 11(c & e) expresses possession.

## 2.3. Phonological Factors Conditioning Negative Allomorphs

Another way that verbs are negated in Dangme is through the addition of the negative marker [-i] to verb stems. This negative marker induces both progressive and regressive assimilation in Dangme. It is so pervasive that it cuts across most of the negation processes in Dangme. When {-i} is attached to verb stems that end in [ɔ, u, a, e, o], the final shape that the verb form assumes is largely determined by phonological factors such as assimilation and tone. Each of these verb forms will be discussed in succession. I begin with verb stems that end in the back low mid vowel [ɔ].

### 2.3.1. Progressive Assimilation and Negation

Progressive assimilation influences the form a negative morpheme takes in Dangme. When [i] is attached to verb stems which end in the back mid vowel [ɔ] and bear the low tone, progressive assimilation occurs. As a result, there is a shift in tongue height and the front high vowel [i] changes to [ɛ]. See examples 12(a-f).

- |                                      |   |  |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <p>12 (a) pò<br/>         ‘wet’</p>  | <p>pò -i<br/>         ‘wet-NEG’</p>     | <p>pò-é<br/>         ‘is not wet’</p>      |
| <p>(b) dò<br/>         ‘hot’</p>     | <p>dò -i<br/>         ‘hot-NEG’</p>     | <p>dò-é<br/>         ‘is not hot’</p>      |
| <p>(c) hò<br/>         ‘insert’</p>  | <p>hò -i<br/>         ‘insert-NEG’</p>  | <p>hò-é<br/>         ‘did not insert’</p>  |
| <p>(d) ylò<br/>         ‘wither’</p> | <p>ylò -i<br/>         ‘wither-NEG’</p> | <p>ylò-é<br/>         ‘did not wither’</p> |
| <p>(e) hlò<br/>         ‘peel’</p>   | <p>hlò -i<br/>         ‘peel-NEG’</p>   | <p>hlò-é<br/>         ‘did not peel’</p>   |
| <p>(f) slò<br/>         ‘advise’</p> | <p>slò -i<br/>         ‘advise-NEG’</p> | <p>slò-é<br/>         ‘did not advise’</p> |

### 2.3.2. Negation in CVCV Roots

The formation of the negative with a limited number of CVCV verb stems is similar to the monosyllabic types discussed in (12a-b) above, but in addition, the negative marker [-i] which has become [ɛ̃] as a result of the progressive assimilation is infixes into the verb stem of the disyllabic verbs. See examples (13) and (14):

- 13 (a) sɔ̀lé ‘pray’      sɔ̀-*i*-lé      sɔ̀-ɛ̃-lé ‘did not pray’  
CVCV                      CV-NEG-CV                      CV-NEG-CV
- (b) bɔ̀lé ‘surround’      bɔ̀-*i*-lé      bɔ̀-ɛ̃-lé ‘did not surround’  
CVCV                      CV-NEG-CV                      CV-NEG-CV
- 14 (a) Òsófó ɔ̀ sɔ̀lé há lè.      (b) Òsófó ɔ̀ sɔ̀-ɛ̃-lé há lè.  
Pastor DET pray.AOR for 3SG.OBJ      Pastor DET CV-NEG-CV for 3SG.OBJ  
‘The pastor prayed for her.’      ‘The pastor did not pray for her.’
- (c) Pà-hì bɔ̀lé wɔ̀.      (d) Pà-hì bɔ̀-ɛ̃-lé wɔ̀.  
River-PL surround 1PL.OBJ      River-PL CV-NEG-CV 1PL.OBJ  
‘We are surrounded by rivers.’      ‘We are not surrounded by rivers.’

Examples 14 (b & d) have the vowel [ɛ̃] functioning as the derived negative marker, infixes into the verb stem.

Negation is also formed through the suffixation of the negative marker [-i] to verb stems which end in the high rounded vowel [u] and bear a low tone. In dealing with such verbs, it is realized that the vowel of the verb stem [u] and the negative marker [-i] are at the same tongue level so, the two coexist. (See sentence 15).

- 15(a) Kùngwó ɔ̀ bù hlùí nò.      (b) Kùngwó ɔ̀ bù-í hlùí nò.  
Fowl DET cover egg POSTp      Fowl DET cover-NEG egg POSTp.  
‘The fowl is sitting on eggs.’      ‘The fowl is not sitting on eggs.’
- (c) Àplé sí ɔ̀ nù nyù.      (d) Àplé sí ɔ̀ nù-í nyù.  
Goat DET drink.PERF water.      Goat DET drink.PERF-NEG water.  
‘The goat drank water.’      ‘The goat has not drank water.’
- (e) Òfórí pù lòhwé ɔ̀.      (f) Òfórí pù-í lòhwé ɔ̀.  
Ofori burry.AOR animal DET      Ofori burry.AOR-NEG animal DET  
‘Ofori buried the animal.’      ‘Ofori did not burry the animal.’

Sentences 14(a-d) & 15(a-f) present other sets of affirmative and negative forms of verbs in Dangme. Each of these has the same aspectual markers as presented and discussed in examples 10(a-f) above.

### 2.3.3. Negation and Regressive Assimilation

In this section, I will examine another type of assimilation that occurs in negation in Dangme. This involves the negation of the verbs in the perfective or aorist.

In forming the negative in the perfective or the aorist, the negative marker [-i] is attached to certain monosyllabic and disyllabic verbs which end in the final /a/ vowel and bear the low tone. In the process of negation, the final /a/ vowel of the verb stem changes to /ɛ̃/. In the process of negation, two changes occur: first, the low unrounded vowel /a/, changes to mid, /ɛ̃/ and, second, the low tone becomes high tone. Consider the following:

For example: 16. (a) pà -i → pé 'did not borrow'  
 (b) bà -i → bé 'did not come'

There is a rise in tongue height as well as a rise in tone. Table 1 below presents some examples of these verbs:

**Table 1**

Affirmative Form	Negative Form	Gloss
sà	sé	not burnt
kà	ké	not long
nà	né	not seen
dà	dé	not straight/correct
bà	bé	not come
yà	yé	not gone
ngmà	ngmé	not written
juà	jué	not sold
mlà	mlé	not wait
nlà	nlé	not dream
tlà	tlé	not miss
sià	sié	not tell
pià	pié	not push
hià	hié	not pull out
fià	fié	not boast

Pairs of sentences in 17(a) -18(b) indicate these types. The sentences numbered (a), are affirmative and those numbered (b) are the negated forms.

17 (a) À **bà.** (b) À **bé.**  
 3PL come.PERF 3PL come.PERF.NEG  
 'They have/had come.' 'They have/had not come.'

18 (a) Mànsá **pà** kùtsá à. (b) Mànsá **pé** kùtsá à.  
 Mànsá borrow.AOR sponge DET. Mànsá borrowAOR.NEG sponge DET.  
 'Mànsá borrowed the sponge.' 'Mànsá did not borrow the sponge.'

There are verbs which end in the mid front vowel /e/. When the negative marker [-i] is attached to any of these verb stems, the /i/ segment influences the /e/, making it /i/. That is /e/ in a low tone becomes /i/ in a high tone in the environment of the negative. There is therefore a rise in tongue height as well as a rise in tone. Table 2 below presents examples of these verbs.

**Table 2**

Affirmative Form	Negative Form	Gloss
lè	lí	not know
kpè	kpí	not met
gbè	gbí	not beaten/killed/put off
klè	klí	not big
slè	slí	not swum
jè	jí	not left
bè	bí	not passed by
tè	tí	not flew
yè	yí	not eaten
pè	pí	not exceeded
dè	dí	not intoxicated
kè	kí	not given

Sentences 19(a) - 20(b) below exemplify pairs of sentences in which these verbs occur.



- 19(a) Tòlòó **yè** ní ò. (b) Tòlòó **yí** ní ò.  
 Tòlòó eat.PERF food DET Tòlòó eat.PERF.NEG food DET  
 ‘Tòlòó has/had eaten the food.’ ‘Tòlòó has/had not eaten the food.’
- 20(a) Àsàfò **ó kpè** hìé. (b) Àsàfò **ó kpí** hìé.  
 Church DET meet.AOR ADV Church DET meet.AOR.NEG ADV  
 ‘The church met yesterday.’ ‘The church did not meet yesterday.’

Verbs in tables 1 and 2 have similar phonological characteristics. First, all verbs in the affirmative are in the low tone. These become high in their negative forms. Second, the vowels of all the affirmative verbs shifted from a lower tongue level to a higher tongue level. That is, the low vowel /a/ became low mid /ɛ/ and the high mid /e/ became high vowel /i/ in the negative.

Another phonological feature that affects the appearance of the affirmative verb in the negative in Dangme, is in monosyllabic verbs with the high mid back vowels. This occurs where in the environment of the negative, the final [o] vowel of certain monosyllabic verbs with low tones are raised as high vowels [ui] in their negative formation. The negative morpheme /i/ assimilates a vowel of the verb stem. This results in a mid rounded vowel, becoming high vowel /u/. The negative marker maintained the high tone as it is in example 15-20. This form is exemplified as below:

- 21(a) Kòfí **hò** sùkúú yà. (b) Kòfí **hùí** sùkúú yà.  
 Kòfí go.PERF school PART Kòfí go.PERF.NEG school PART  
 ‘Kòfí has gone to school.’ ‘Kòfí has not gone to school.’
- 22(a) À **sò** kàá á kpè. (b) À **sùí** kàá á kpè.  
 3PL agree.PERF that 3PL meet 3PL agree.PERF.NEG that 3PL meet  
 ‘They have agreed to meet.’ ‘They have not agreed to meet.’

### 2.3.4. Tone Change and Negation

In addition to the negative markers discussed above, Dangme has another way of forming its negatives. This is purely phonological. Supra-segmental elements such as tone and nasality play a role in the realization of this form of negation in Dangme (Caesar, 2005). I discuss verbs ending with a low tone oral *è* and *ì* in this section.

The low tone of certain monosyllabic verbs with nasalized vowel express the affirmative, and these become negative if the tone changes to high. In other words, in the environment of the negative, the low tone becomes a high tone. See table 3.

Table 3 below gives examples of these forms of verbs.

**Table 3**

Affirmative Form	Negative Form	Gloss
pè	pé	not sounded
lè	lé	not nurtured
sè	sé	not messaged
nè	né	not rained
yè	yé	not fetched
kè	ké	not picked
gbè	gbé	not dismantled
kpè	kpé	not sown/ made
ngmè	ngmé	not laid/locked/poured
tsì	tsí	not covered
sì	sí	not fried
mì	mí	not swallowed
zì	zí	not urinated
hì	hí	not good
pì	pí	not staked/supported
fì	fí	not tied

Sentences 23(a)-24(b) exemplify this form of negation in sentences:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>23(a) Nyù ́ t̃é.<br/>water DET clear.PERF<br/>‘The water has settled.’</p>         | <p>(b) Nyù ́ t̃é.<br/>water DET clear.PERF.NEG<br/>‘The water has not settled.’</p>       |
| <p>24. (a) Ngml̃é ́ p̃é.<br/>Bell DET sound.PERF<br/>‘The bell has been sounded’.</p> | <p>(b) Ngml̃é ́ p̃é.<br/>Bell DET sound.PERF.NEG<br/>‘The bell has not been sounded.’</p> |
| <p>25. (a) Mámà fī gálí ́.<br/>Mámà tie.AOR gari DET<br/>‘Mámà tied the gari.’</p>    | <p>(b) Mámà fī gálí ́.<br/>Mámà tie.AOR.NEG gari DET<br/>‘Mámà did not tie the gari.’</p> |

In (23), (24), and (25) above, the verb stems *t̃é*, *p̃é* and *fī*, in expressing the positive form of the verb, bear low tones. Their negative forms have a high tone as in *t̃é*, *p̃é* and *fī*. If the positive form (with the low tone) is the unmarked and the underlying form, then the negative form of these verbs can be said to be realized with high tones.

### 3. Conclusion

In this paper, I have investigated the processes involved in the formation of negation in the Dangme language. I identified the negative morpheme as {w̃é} with {-í}, {´} and {bé} as its allomorphs. The paper looked at the distribution of these allomorphs in relation to aspect.

In dealing with lexical negation, it was realized that {ng̃é} ‘be.at’ becomes {bé} ‘not be.at’ or ‘not have’.

The paper revealed that monosyllabic verb stems which end in all the vowels of Dangme that bear the high tone select {w̃é} as their negative marker, and in disyllabic ones, verb stems that bear the high and low tones and low and high tones respectively, also select the {w̃é} segment in their negative formation. Also, certain monosyllabic and disyllabic verbs that are marked with low tones choose the negative markers {-í}. I identified that progressive and regressive assimilation play a significant role in this process of negation. The choice of a negative marker depends largely on the shape of the verb stem.

It was also noted that negation could also be formed to indicate the aorist or the perfective. Most of these verbs formed are phonologically determined. Thus, in forming negation in the perfective, verb root with low tones are said to express the affirmative and when the low tones change to high tones, negation is expressed. In dealing with tone, it was realized that lexemes with the same segmental representation may have different meanings depending on tone contrast, that is, the low tone of certain monosyllabic verbs express the affirmative and these become negative with a high tone.

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