Chapter 1

Introduction

If one were to provide a native speaker of a particular language with a list of possible sentences containing a negative, this native speaker would be able to tell which, according to his/her tacit knowledge of the language, are grammatically well-formed and which are not. This native speaker, if he/she were English speaking, would be able to tell that a sentence like "Mary reads the book not" is not an acceptable sentence in English. A native speaker of English knows how a simple English sentence is negated. It could therefore be contended that a native speaker of any language has a tacit knowledge of the words and the rules which govern the pronunciation, word formation and sentence formation of that language. Knowledge of these rules can be characterised in terms of the notion "grammar" (Radford 1997:3). To hold that the native speaker has knowledge of his/her native language, is to conjecture that such a speaker has knowledge of the grammar of his/her language. A German speaker knows German grammar. An English speaker knows English grammar. Under normal circumstances where speech is not impaired, a native speaker of a language will know how to form and interpret words, phrases and sentences.

A distinction can be drawn between a native speaker's "competence", *i e* his/her knowledge and understanding of the language, and his/her "performance", *i e* what he/she does with that knowledge and understanding (Chomsky 1995: 14). This linguistic competence is the object of grammatical inquiry. As a mental capacity, linguistic competence cannot be subject to direct investigation, since the grammarian cannot directly perceive linguistic competence. Botha (1981: 34), however, states that the nature and characteristics of linguistic competence are reflected to a certain extent in the linguistic performance of speaker-hearers. The primary linguistic

data therefore take the form of observable linguistic performance, *i e* utterances and the intuitive judgements of speaker-hearers about the linguistic properties of these utterances. These intuitive judgements by speaker-hearers are conventionally called "linguistic intuitions".

Botha & Winckler (1973: 175) refer to these linguistic intuitions of the native speaker as his/her non-reasoned "judgements" or "feelings" that given utterances of his/her language have certain linguistic properties. Native speakers have intuitions about properties of utterances such as (non)acceptability, (non)ambiguity, difference in meaning, similarity in meaning, and so forth (Botha 1981: 34). These intuitions constitute, among other things, the source of intuitive (linguistic) evidence with reference to which grammatical and, ultimately, general linguistic hypotheses are justified within the framework of internal confirmatory and explanatory arguments. In short, the linguistic intuitions of the native speaker remain a major source of empirical evidence. Botha (1976: 3) also refers to the generative grammarians' "theoretic intuition". These theoretic intuitions may be taken to be non-reasoned, but nevertheless sincerely held beliefs, judgements, intuitions, or gut feelings about those aspects of natural language(s) that could not otherwise be investigated than by means of the construction of theories.

Whereas it is possible to ask a native English speaker about the acceptability or not of, for instance, a sentence containing a negative, it is impossible in terms of Biblical Hebrew (BH). BH is the language of the Hebrew Bible and was spoken in Israel from about 1200 BCE to about 400 BCE (Van der Merwe *et al* 1999: 15). BH is no longer spoken and is therefore considered a non-living language.[1] It is therefore impossible to ask a native speaker of BH about the grammar of his native language. Lyons (1968: 138) states that in the case of the so-called "dead" languages, it is naturally impossible to verify one's rules by checking with native speakers the acceptability of all the sentences accounted for by the rules. For this reason a description of any of the classical languages will inevitably be incomplete in certain respects. However, the adequacy of the description will be proportionate to the amount and variety of the material upon which it is based. Uriagereka (1998: 43) states that linguists are dealing with an unreliable "fossil record": written texts. These correspond

1 Cf Van der Merwe 1996: 131.

to the more or less formal performance of writers whose background and circumstances linguists generally do not know anything about.

Does this really mean, having to resort to the only available source of BH, *i e* the written corpus of texts, that this huge corpus should be considered as unreliable? Definitely not. Sáenz-Badillos (1993: 76) states that the preservation of Classical Hebrew is inseparably connected with the way that the text of the Bible was transmitted down the centuries. By the end of the first or the beginning of the second century CE, the consonantal text seems to have become completely stable. Within the Jewish community, awareness of the sacred character of the biblical text, ultimately extending to its smallest detail, helped to guarantee its transmission from one generation to another within the home, and especially among the community's teachers and religious officers. Sáenz-Badillos (1993: 77) states that the *soferim* or "professional scribes" played a major role in the careful conservation of the text and in determining the precise form in which it was to be read and pronounced.

Waltke & O'Connor (1990: 4) join this reasoning, contending that, in contrast to the history of most languages, the Hebrew language has exhibited a remarkable uniformity over time. BH, having been used over a long period of time, would have changed, just as any language changes over time. The English spoken today is certainly not the same as the English spoken in the time of Shakespeare. Given that BH has been retained in the sacred writings handed down from generation to generation, it indeed reflects the internal knowledge of the native speaker at that given time. One may then assume, due to this careful transmission of the text, that the text will only contain grammatical sentences representative of the competence of the scribe at that stage in the transmission process. By studying the entire corpus of BH texts, it is proposed that such a diachronic study will provide a clear picture of the BH grammar.

With regard to this research concerning the distribution and scope of the negative לֹא *lō*ʾ, the whole text of the Hebrew Bible will be utilised. From such research, even though the source is only written texts, certain conclusions can be reached regarding the form, distribution and scope of the negative לֹא *lō*ʾ. Hence, it is conjectured that this huge corpus of texts provides a clear picture of the internal knowledge of the native

speakers and should not necessarily be turned down as an "unreliable" fossil record.

In conclusion it is evident that the remarkable uniformity of the BH text contributes to a great extent to the "reliability" of the corpus of texts used in this research. Even though modern grammarians are not mother tongue speakers of BH, they are in a position to make linguistic judgements regarding the linguistic intuition of the then mother tongue speakers, in terms of their theoretic intuition based on certain theoretical assumptions and hypotheses. Botha (1976: 27) states that a hypothesis or theory is held to receive some measure of justification from the data that are explained by this hypothesis or theory.

1.1 Problem statement and hypothetical point of departure

Turning to the matter under discussion in this research, *i e* the distribution and the scope of the negative לֹא *lōʾ* in BH, the examples in (1) and (3) serve to illustrate the problematic nature of determining the exact distribution and scope of the negative לֹא *lōʾ*.

(1) Deut 7[7]

לֹא מֵרֻבְּכֶם מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים חָשַׁק יְהוָה בָּכֶם וַיִּבְחַר בָּכֶם כִּי־אַתֶּם
הַמְעַט מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים׃

lōʾ mērubbᵉkem mikkol-hāʿammîm ḥāšaq yahweh bākem wayyibḥar bākem kî-ʾattem ham ʿaṭ mikkol-hāʿammîm

Not from-to-become-numerous-you from-all-the-people loved-he lord in-you and-selected-he in-you because-you the-smallest from-all-the-people

Consider the following translations[2] of Deut 7[7].

2 Throughout this study the following seven text versions will be utilised to illustrate the problematic interpretation of the scope of the negative לֹא *lōʾ*: *The Holy Bible Revised Standard Version* (1952); *The Old Afrikaans Translation* (*Die Ou Afrikaanse vertaling* 1933); *The New Jerusalem Bible* (1985); *The New International Version* (1984); *The Jewish Bible Tanakh* (1985); *The New Afrikaans Translation* (*Die Nuwe Afrikaanse Vertaling* (1983); *The Good News Bible* (1992). Where references to these

(2) (a) RSV: *It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples*;

(b) OA: *Die Here het 'n welgevalle aan julle gehad en julle uitverkies, nie omdat julle meer was as al die ander volke nie, want julle was die geringste van al die volke. (The Lord was pleased with you and chose you, not because you were more than all the other nations, for you were the most insignificant of all the nations).*

(c) JB: *'Yahweh set his heart on you and chose you not because you were the most numerous of all peoples – for indeed you were the smallest of all'.*

(d) NIV: *The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.*

(e) JPS: *It is not because you are the most numerous of peoples that the LORD set His heart on you and chose you – indeed, you are the smallest of peoples*;

(f) NA: *Die Here het jou nie liefgekry en gekies omdat jy groter was as die ander volke nie, jy was die kleinste van almal. (The Lord did not grow fond of you and choose you because you were greater than the other nations, you were the smallest of them all).*

texts are made, only those presenting differences on certain aspects will be illustrated. Hence, not all seven texts will be quoted in all cases. The objective during the selection was to utilise these seven different versions, some older versions, and some more contemporary translations. Several other versions could have been used, but the selection of these seven versions represents the spectrum of possible translations – from literal to free. Furthermore, these text versions represent translations from Jewish, Roman Catholic and Protestant circles. Cf Naudé (2000b: 19-20) and Newmark (1988: 45) for a discussion of the spectrum of translations.

(g) GNB: *The LORD did not love you and choose you because you outnumbered other peoples; you were the smallest nation on earth".*

All the text versions in (2) vary in terms of a proper exposition of the distribution of the negative לֹא *lōʾ*. The RSV, OA, JB and JPS consider the scope of the negative to extend over the same clause, *i e* "because you were the most numerous of all peoples". However, the latter four text versions have different word orders and translate the negative and the clause over which it has scope in different positions in the clause. The NIV and GNB translate the scope of the negative to be over the clause "set his affection on you and choose you" – NIV / "love you and choose you" – GNB. The NA translates the scope of the negative to include the whole subsequent phrase: "grow fond of you and chose you because you were greater than the other nations".

Merely by reading these different versions the reader may get the impression that there is no consensus regarding the scope of the negative לֹא *lōʾ*. The question, then, is which of these translations are the most acceptable. In the Hebrew text the negative לֹא *lōʾ* immediately precedes the phrase מֵרֻבְּכֶם מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים *mērubbᵉkem mikkol-hāʿammîm*. It is not clear, however, whether this should be an indication that the scope of the negative includes only this phrase or whether the force of the negative encompasses the whole of the subsequent verse. As the example in (1) illustrates, different interpretations of the intended scope of the negative לֹא *lōʾ* render different translation possibilities, as shown in (2), which might eventually render different interpretations of the verse. The ultimate goal of any Biblical exegete, or of anyone studying the text of the Hebrew Bible, is to interpret a particular verse as acceptably as possible. Thus, it is evident that different interpretations of a particular verse could lead to great confusion as to the exact meaning that the original author wished to communicate.

Consider the example in (3), illustrating the possibility of the scope of the negative extending further than only the immediately following phrase.

(3) Ex 20[10]

וְיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה כָל־מְלָאכָה אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ־וּבִתֶּךָ עַבְדְּךָ
וְאֲמָתֶךָ וּבְהֶמְתֶּךָ וְגִרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ׃

wᵉyôm haššᵉbîʿî šabbāt layahweh ʾᵃlōheykā lōʾ-taʿᵃśeh kol-mᵉlāʾkâ ʾattâ ûbinkā-ûbittekā ʿabdᵉkā waʾᵃmātᵉkā ûbᵉhemtekā wᵉgērᵉkā ʾᵃšer bišʿāreykā

but-day the-seventh (is) sabbath to-the-lord god-your not-may-do-you any-work you and-son-your-and-daughter-your servant-your and-female-slave-your and-cattle-your and-alien-your which (is) in-gates-your

But the seventh day is the sabbath to the Lord your God. You may not do any work, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant and your cattle and your aliens which are in your gates.

Ex 20[10] is a further example illustrating the problematic nature of the scope of the negative לֹא *lōʾ*. The negative לֹא *lōʾ* immediately precedes the verb. The question is, however, whether the scope of the negative לֹא *lōʾ* ranges only over the verb or whether it extends to include more than just the verb. On the one hand, the JB, NIV, NA and GNB translate the negative preceding the verb and each noun following the verb, thus implying that the scope of the negative should extend beyond the verb.

Consider the NIV's translation as an example (4).

(4) NIV: *... but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maid-servant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.*

In the RSV, JPS and OA, on the other hand, the negative only precedes the verb, with the implication that the meaning of the negative does not ranges over the nouns following the verb. Consider the translation of the RSV as an example (5).

(5) RSV: *... but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates.*

It is the hypothesis of the researcher that the problematic nature of the scope of the negative לֹא *lō'*, as clearly illustrated in examples (1) and (3), may be successfully addressed by establishing a division between the two types of negation: sentence-negation and constituent-negation. To arrive at these answers, linguistic *tools* are needed to demarcate the exact scope of the negative לֹא *lō'*. The objective of this research is to determine the distribution and exact scope of the negative לֹא *lō'* in BH within the parameters of Chomskyan generative syntax.

1.2 Theoretical framework

Since the emergence of linguistics as a field in its own right, biblical scholars have occupied an intermediate ground. In a broad sense they have functioned primarily as philologians. At the same time many of those who have written the grammars and produced the dictionaries that are still widely used, have been cognizant of current developments among linguists and, in some cases, have been astute in their own linguistic perceptions (Bodine 1992a: 1-2). It would be readily acknowledged by most biblical scholars that linguistics is a vital sister discipline to their field.[3] Whether or not any given biblical scholar is directly involved in linguistics, most would accord it a place alongside archaeology, historiography, literary criticism, the social sciences, and whatever fields might be regarded as essential complements to biblical studies proper (Bodine 1992a: 2). With reference to this, Williamson (1993: 173) makes it clear that Hebrew studies involve far more than simply the study of language. Domestication, as a continuing process in the modern world, involves bringing to the study of Hebrew all the methods of the humanities for the elucidation of literary and historical texts. Since the discipline has over the last century and a half become adept at absorbing the approaches of cognate studies, it is not unusual to find that scholars will variously employ the methods of contemporary linguistics, traditional, modern and post-modern literary criticism, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, and so forth.

3 Cf also Gragg (1973) where the relevance of linguistics for studies on extinct languages is discussed.

Van der Merwe (2001: 18) describes the development in linguistics over the past two centuries as a movement from the study of words to the scrutiny of sentences, and eventually to the study language use. In the nineteenth century most linguists concentrated on a scrutiny of the historical dimensions of languages. By studying the form and sound of words, the development of a language can be followed and compared with the development of other languages. In the first half of the twentieth century the situation changed dramatically. There was a move away from the history of words, towards a study of the structure of language. This move is usually associated with two schools of thought. The first is that of Noam Chomsky endeavouring to explain the formal structure of language in terms of hypotheses regarding the innate linguistic capability of humans. The second is that of functional grammarians, attempting to explain the formal structure of a language in terms of the functions it fulfils (Van der Merwe 2001: 19).

The third move in the study of language that occurred in the twentieth century is the move towards pragmatics. Van der Merwe (2001: 19) refers to Mey (1993) who describes this "pragmatic turn" in linguistics as a shift from the paradigm of theoretical grammar (in particular, syntax) to the paradigm of the language user. Linguistics can then be divided into the following broad sections: phonology (the study of the sounds of a language), morphology (the study of the forms of the language), syntax (the study of how forms interrelate with other forms and combine to form sentences), semantics (the study of the meaning of forms in language) and pragmatics (the study of the use of different forms). As the focus of this research is primarily on the level of the sentence, to determine the distribution of the negative לֹא *lō'* within the sentence, and ultimately to determine the scope of the negative לֹא *lō'*, this research will focus chiefly on syntax.

According to Chomsky (1995: 4) generative grammar can be regarded as a kind of confluence of long-forgotten concerns of the study of language and mind, and the new understanding provided by the formal sciences. The first efforts to approach these problems revealed that traditional grammatical and lexical studies do not begin to describe, let alone explain, the most elementary facts about even the best-studied languages. Rather, they provide hints that can be used by the reader who already has tacit

knowledge of language, and of particular languages. The Minimalist Program, the most recent approach to Universal Grammar within the broad Chomskyan generative framework, represents the most recent and direct outgrowth of this ongoing inquiry concerning the study of language and the mind (Chomsky 1995). Perhaps the most distinctive and promising feature of this programme is its explicit programmatic commitment to explanation through the characteristic method of minimisation, consistent with Einstein's (1954) perspective that "… the grand aim of all science is to cover the greatest number of experimental facts by logical deductions from the smallest number of hypotheses or axioms" (Epstein *et al* 1996: 4).

Any theory of grammar should satisfy a number of criteria. One obvious criterion is universality, in the sense that a theory of grammar should provide us with the tools needed to describe adequately the grammar of any natural language. A theory of grammar would be of little interest if it enabled us to describe the grammar of English and French, but not that of Swahili or Chinese (Radford 1997: 5). Within the Minimalist Program it is maintained that there are universal principles and a finite array of options as to how they apply (parameters), but no language-particular rules and no grammatical constructions of the traditional sort within or across languages (Chomsky 1995: 6). Language variation is therefore reducible to a choice between certain parameters within these principles. It will be argued in this study that the theory of grammar that is associated with the Minimalist Program – and which still forms part of the broad principles and parameters framework – provides the tools for describing the distribution and the scope of the negative לֹא *lō'*, even in a non-living language like BH. In the rest of this research this theory will be referred to as "Minimalist Syntax".

1.3 Purpose and demarcation of the research

The purpose of this research is to provide a syntactic account of the distribution and scope of the negative לֹא *lō'* in BH. This research is limited to only one of the negatives[4] in BH: לֹא *lō'*. The research is further restricted

4 The negatives in BH are the following:

to one aspect of BH grammar, namely the syntax – in terms of distribution and scope – of the negative לֹא *lōʾ*. A detailed analysis of all grammatical aspects of the negative לֹא *lōʾ* falls outside the scope of this research. For the syntactic analyses in this research, the computer[5] programme *Bible-Works for Windows* Version 3.5.51[6] was utilised to determine the occurrence of the negative לֹא *lōʾ* in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS).[7] Talstra (1987:96) states that especially in the case of "dead" languages, such as

לֹא *lōʾ* - mostly in a verbal clause (sometimes in a nominal clause and with an isolated noun) negating a perfect and/or imperfect verb form.
אַל *ʾal* mostly in prohibitions.
אַיִן, אַיִן *ʾayin*, *ʾên* mostly negates verbless clauses.
לְבִלְתִּי *lᵉbiltî* mostly negates the infinitive construct.
Rare and poetic are the negatives בַּל *bal*, בְּלִי *bᵉlî*, בִּלְתִּי *biltî*. According to Cowley (1910: 479) the latter three negatives belong almost entirely to poetry.
Joüon & Muraoka (1991: 602) also refer to the negatives טֶרֶם *ṭerem* and אֶפֶס *ʾefes* which possess a peculiar nuance.
Cowley (1910: 479) add אַפְסִי *ʾafsî* to the above list of negatives.

5 Several scholars refer to the relevance of applying the computer to the study of the Bible, amongst others Claassen (1987), Sailhamer (1990) and Verheij (1990: 20).

6 Hahne (1994) stated that Bible-search software has become readily accessible to the average scholar. Unfortunately, the use of a computer to search the Bible may lend unwarranted credibility to research. However, computer-assisted biblical research is subject to the same errors as traditional research methods and opens up new potential sources of error. He maintains that comparative tests of several popular programmes (*Gramcord, Bible Windows, BibleWorks* and *The Word*) reveal considerable variation in the results of some grammatical searches. Although his paper focussed on the Greek of the New Testament, the same scenario is applicable to BH. Given that different programmes will reveal variation in search results, this fact should be kept in mind with the results of the taxonomy done here.

7 The BHS text is a reproduction of Codex Leningradensis (Codex L), a medieval manuscript in the Tiberian tradition dating to about 1008 AD. The significance of Codex Leningradensis is that it is the oldest known manuscript of the complete Hebrew Bible based upon the Ben Asher tradition (Scott 1987: 16). Kelley *et al* (1989: xiii) conjecture that BHS is the standard critical edition of the Hebrew Bible in English-speaking countries, widely used by scholars and students alike. As the searches done in this study are based on *BibleWorks for Windows* Version 3.5.51, the BH texts utilised by BibleWorks need mentioning. According to the *BibleWorks for Windows* Installation Guide and Pocket Reference (1997: 119) BHS, labelled WTT (Westminister edition) in BibleWorks as edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudoph of the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 4th corrected ed, Copyright © 1966, 1977, 1983, 1990 is used. It is evident that there is no difference between the Hebrew text of BHS (hard copy) and that of BHS (WTT) as utilised by BibleWorks and both texts are used where applicable.

BH, it is important to restrict oneself as far as possible to the registration of distributional data. Moreover, with the help of computer programmes it is quite possible to formulate and test sufficient distributional criteria for the isolation of word groups and the definition of clause boundaries. Once this task has been completed, further linguistic theory can be based on a broad and also directly accessible set of data.

The potential readers of this research will be representative of two groups: linguists with no knowledge of BH, on the one hand, and Hebraists with no knowledge of linguistics (specifically Chomskyan generative grammar), on the other. Certain linguistic concepts described in this research might be seen as over-simplified for linguists, whilst certain Hebrew-particular concepts might form part of the general knowledge of Hebraists. However, this is necessary to accommodate both groups of potential readers.

1.4 Organisation

The rest of this research is organised and divided in the following chapters. In Chapter 2 grammatical aspects of the negative לֹא *lō'* will be discussed. The sole purpose of this discussion is to describe the morphological forms of the negative לֹא *lō'* and to arrive at a coherent description of the variety of forms of the negative לֹא *lō'*. This description will indicate the variety of particles with which the negative לֹא *lō'* is likely to be combined. It will also be the point of departure for discussions in chapters to follow, and will serve as the basis for discussions regarding the syntactic distribution of the negative לֹא *lō'* and ultimately for determining the exact scope of the negative לֹא *lō'* in such syntactic distributions.

Chapter 3 gives a brief outline of the fundamental principles, assumptions and devices of Minimalist Syntax, that is, the theory of grammar which is associated with the Minimalist Program and that forms the theoretical framework for this research. Chapter 3 will also pay special attention to the description of negation in generative syntax.

The aim of Chapter 4 is to provide a syntactic analysis of the negative לֹא *lō'* preceding finite verbs. Chapter 5 analyses the negative לֹא *lō'* preceding non-verbal categories. Chapter 6 proceeds with a syntactic analysis of the negative לֹא *lō'* preceding non-finite verbs. Chapters 4-6 begin

with a discussion on the syntactic distribution of the negative לֹא *lō'* preceding respectively finite verbs, non-verbal categories and non-finite verbs. These discussions on the syntactic distribution form the point of departure for determining the exact scope of the negative לֹא *lō'*. Chapter 7 deals with exceptional uses of the negative לֹא *lō'* in peculiar constructions of which the negative לֹא *lō'* forms a part. Chapter 8 will summarise the findings of this research and will consolidate open-ended issues for purposes of future research.