QUANTIFICATION AND POLARITY: 
NEGATIVE ADVERBIAL INTENSIFIERS 
(‘NEVER EVER’, ‘NOT AT ALL’, ETC.) IN HAUSA* 

Philip J. Jaggar

1. Introduction

Hausa (Chadic, Afroasiatic) has a number of time and degree adverbs which can be pragmatically added to express various kinds of quantification in clause structures, both verbal (usually) and non-verbal. Although they are not themselves negative in form, they are used to intensify the force of a negative expression, equivalent to English ‘(never) once, (never) ever, etc.’ (quantifying time frequency), and ‘(not) at all, (not) a bit, (not) in the least, (not) in any way, etc.’ (quantifying degree/extent). (Quirk et al. 1985: 785ff. refer to their function (in English) as “negative intensification”.) These adjuncts do not contain an overt negator but require a negative context, and it is their co-occurrence with a negative TAM [tense/aspect/mood] which supplies these intensive readings (in verbal clauses), i.e., in environments where the negation marker associates syntactically with the head verb. (For the sake of clarity, however, I am including a parenthesized negative (‘never, not’) operator in the text glosses.) Some of these morphologically complex adverbial intensifiers, e.g.,¹ (time frequency) ḏāɗai ‘(never) once’, faufau ‘(never) ever’, (degree) kō kāɗan ‘(not) even a bit’, sam(sam) ‘(not) at all’, are moderate/high-frequency modifiers which occur (optionally) in negative clauses in both

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¹ Transcription: ɓ/â – low tone, ḏ – falling tone (on heavy CVV or CVC syllable), high tone is unmarked; ɓ, t, etc. – long; a, i, etc. = short; b, d = laryngeal implosives, ƙ – ejective, ɗ – apical tap/roll, c and j – palato-alveolar affricates, ʙ – glottalized palatal glide. Abbreviations: F = feminine; FOC-IMPFV = focus (relative) imperfective; FOC-PFV = focus (relative) perfective; FUT = future; HAB = habitual; IMPER = imperative; IMPFV = imperfective; IO = indirect object; M = masculine; NEG = negative; PFV = perfective; PL = plural; s = singular; sJN = subjunctive; VN = verbal noun; 1/2/3/4 – first/second/third/fourth person.
spoken and written Hausa (especially the degree adverbs). Most, but not all, are listed and partially exemplified in the two large Hausa dictionaries (Bargery 1934; Abraham 1962), and the two more recent (smaller) dictionaries together include many of them (Newman & Newman 1977; R. Newman 1990).

Despite their relatively wide distribution and pragmatic significance, however, these negative intensifiers have received surprisingly little (or no) coverage in the three major (Standard Kano) Hausa reference grammars Wolff (1993), Newman (2000), and Jaggar (2001) though Parsons (1981: 248-49, 593ff.) describes some of the Hausa equivalents of absolute ‘never’, including the use of adverbial intensifiers (see below). The aim of this paper, therefore, is twofold: (1) to provide a unified semantic account of a larger (though not exhaustive) range of these negative quantificational intensifiers, including a previously undocumented form; (2) to elaborate their functional distribution, e.g., the TAMs they can co-occur with and their position in the sentence.

Although the focus is on adverbial intensifiers of time and degree which occur exclusively or primarily in negative environments—so called “NEGATIVE POLARITY ITEMS”—a number of patterns emerge following closer investigation of the interplay between their syntactic distribution and semantics.

A typologically interesting (and probably unusual) fact is that these intensifiers locate at different points on the polar negative:positive spectrum (on polarity and polarity-sensitive elements in English, see Quirk et al. 1985: 775ff., and Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 822ff.). Most of the degree adjuncts are exclusively negative polarity items, licensed in negative environments only, e.g., ko kàdàn, samsam ‘(not) even a bit, (not) at all’ (excluded from positive contexts). (Quirk et al. 1985: 597ff. use the term “minimizer” to characterize these reinforcing degree adverbs.) Others are what I term “BIPOLAR” in the sense that the same adverbial lexemes express opposite (polar) quantificational values depending on the syntactic context, i.e., in contrast to English which would obligatorily switch to distinct, sometimes polarity-sensitive adverbs. Fàufau, for example, which encodes absolute temporal zero ‘(never) ever’ in negative environments,

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2 McConnell-Ginet (1982: 182) writes of the general class of adverbs that: “We could omit them, and LF [logical form] would not suffer. In another sense, adverbs contribute virtually everything—not only to LF, but to pragmatic structure as well. They modify not only expressions, but the interpretive logic and pragmatic model that provides a basis for an explicit account of natural-language meaning in use.”
can also occur in positive clauses with covert negative verbs like 'refuse', in which case it functions as a maximal degree adverb equivalent to 'utterly, absolutely, etc.', at the same time retaining its lexicosemantic quantificational force. (Quirk et al. 1985: 589ff. refer to such degree adjuncts as “maximizers”.) Others, e.g., dàɗai, which is equivalent to ’(never) once’ in negative clauses, are used to mean universal ’always, (very) often’ in positive clauses, i.e., they behave as bipolar time frequency adverbs marking the extreme negative and positive poles on the temporal gradient. Some intensifiers, e.g., atàbau, are even more versatile and can express all the above (’(never) ever’, ’(very) often’, ’absolutely’) context-determined quantificational meanings, undergoing a time ↔ degree semantic shift in the process.

Taken together, these data indicate that the semantic notion of ”intensification” can be realized by modifiers which map and emphasize a point which is either low on the polar scale of intensity (e.g., ’never ever’, ’not at all’), and where the minimizers could in fact be said to function as negative maximizers, or high on the scale (e.g., ’always’, ’absolutely’). The same adverbialexemes, moreover, often participate in positive: negative constructions at both polar extremes. Looked at another way, within each of the time-frequency and degree adverb subclasses the facts fall out nicely and allow a semantic cut between maximal items such as (time) ’always’ and (degree) ’absolutely’ which quantify a value at the top of the scale, and minimal items such as (time) ‘never’ and (degree) ‘(not) at all’, which quantify a value at the bottom of the scale. It is these absolute zero minimal group adverbs, moreover, which cluster around the negative pole and participate as intensifiers in negative constructions. Figure (1) summarizes the distributional facts with a selection of the more important intensifiers (including those with dual degree/time membership):
These related intensive/absolute usages constitute a natural functional class, and are all covered in order to provide a more comprehensive and coherent account of the syntax and unified semantics of these poorly-understood quantificational adverbs.3

2. Negative intensifiers of time

To express the equivalent of the absolute zero adverb ‘never’, Hausa uses the (quasi-) aspectual verb taɓa ‘ever do something, do something once’ (lit. ‘touch’), normally with a (negative) perfective TAM, followed by a nonfinite VP complement (e.g., ex. 4). (Although this quantificational construction has less of a negative intensifying force than those containing the time adverbs considered below, it can combine with them so is

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3 A search of the Studies in African Linguistics title index [www.ling.ohio-state.edu/sal/titleindex.htm], produced only two titles in nearly 35 years with a reference to “adverbs/adverbial types” for any African language, and I suspect that this neglect is partly attributable to the (universal) fact that the heterogeneous syntax and semantics of adverbs are often notoriously difficult to elucidate with any precision. Cf. too Jackendoff’s (1972: 47) comment some years ago that: “the adverb is perhaps the least studied and most maligned part of speech . . . maltreated beyond the call of duty.”
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included here for comprehensiveness.) With an affirmative perfective TAM, taɓā expresses the corresponding ‘ever (do), once (do)’ reading, i.e., where English would use the time frequency adjuncts ‘ever’ or ‘once’, e.g. (declarative and interrogative main clauses),

(2) nā taɓā azūmī à Kanō
   1S.PFV once do fasting in Kano
   ‘I once fasted in Kano’

(3) kā taɓā shān tābā?
   (= positive yes-no ‘ever’ question)
   2M.PFV ever do drink.VN.of tobacco
   ‘have you ever smoked?’

(4) sā̀, bān taɓā shān tābā ba
    no NEG.1S.PFV ever do drink.VN.of tobacco NEG
    ‘no, I have never smoked’
    (= ‘never’ response with negated perfective TAM)

Though not usually noted in grammars, dictionaries and pedagogical works, taɓā is licensed to occur with a future (5, 6) or even subjunctive (7) TAM, with both a positive (= ‘ever’) and negative (= ‘never’) construal, e.g.,

(5) zā tà taɓā yārđī?
    FUT 3F ever do agree.VN
    ‘will she ever agree?’

(6) matsalōlī bā zā sū taɓā kārēwā ba
    problems NEG FUT 3PL ever do end.VN NEG
    ‘the problems will never end’

(7) nā sō nā taɓā ganinsā (cf. Abraham 1959: 150)
    1S.PFV wish 1S.SJN ever do see.VN.of.3M
    ‘I feel I’ve seen him before’

To express the semantic equivalent of ‘never’ in a verbal clause with a (negative) habitual-durative interpretation, taɓā cannot be used (it is restricted to indicating temporal frequency). Instead a negative imperfective TAM is used with a minimum degree adverb like sam(sam) ‘(not) at all’ (see § 3 for details), e.g.,
(8) \textit{samsam bā yā sallā} \\
\hspace{1em} at all NEG 3M.IMPFV pray \\
\hspace{1em} ‘he doesn’t pray at all = he never prays’

To further amplify the zero-frequency temporal force of a negative construction, one of several (near) synonymous minimal adverbs can be added, e.g., \textit{dādai} ‘(never/not) once’, \textit{fau} ‘(never) ever’ (where English can juxtapose the two adverbs for emphatic effect). (Both are also bipolar and can occur in positive clauses, see ex. 17 and following.) The time adverb \textit{dādai}, glossed here as ‘(never/not) once’, is a composite made up of the preposition \textit{dà} ‘with’ and \textit{dāi}, a clipped variant of the numeral \textit{diya} ‘one’ (cf. the corresponding English cognates ‘one’ and ‘once’). The absolute intensifier \textit{fau} ‘(never) ever’ is a lexicalized reduplicated form, probably related, on phonosemantic grounds, to the expressive ideophones \textit{fau} (indicates bright flash of light) and \textit{fau} (indicates intensity/extremeness), where the inherent intensifying lexicosemantics generalize to all functions. (Cf. the (optionally) reduplicated ideophonic degree adverb \textit{samsam} ‘(not) at all’ exemplified in (8) above and described in § 3.) Both \textit{dādai} and \textit{fau} can (and usually do) occur in sentence-initial position with a range of negative TAMs (perfective, imperfective, future, etc.), though it should be noted that speaker judgements vary regarding the acceptable positions of these and other intensifiers and I have generally gone with the majority verdicts. Examples:

(9) \textit{dādai/fau} bān gan shī ba \\
\hspace{1em} once/ever NEG.1S.PFV see 3M NEG \\
\hspace{1em} ‘I’ve never once/ever seen him’

(10) \textit{dādai/fau} bā nā yāṛḍā! \\
\hspace{1em} once/ever NEG 1S.IMPFV agree.VN \\
\hspace{1em} ‘I will never ever agree!’ (lit. ‘I am never ever agreeing’) \\

(11) \textit{dādai/fau} bā zān yāṛē masā ba \\
\hspace{1em} once/ever NEG FUT.1S forgive 3M.IO NEG \\
\hspace{1em} ‘I will never ever forgive him’

(12) \textit{yā cījē fau} ‘yāṛsā bā zā ṭā jē jāmt˚’ā ba \\
\hspace{1em} 3M.PFV be adamant ever daughter.of.3M NEG FUT 3F go university NEG \\
\hspace{1em} ‘he was adamant that his daughter would never ever go to university’

(with a mandative verb in the higher clause, see also below)
Some speakers regularly use minimal degree intensifiers such as *sam*('not at all' (above), and *(not) even a bit* in contexts corresponding to English temporal *(never ever/never once)*, i.e., in preference to such time adverbs as *dâdâi* '(never) once', *faufau* '(never) ever', e.g., *(9)* *samsam bân gan shi ba* '(I haven’t seen him at all = I’ve never (ever) seen him', *(10)* *kô kàdan bâ nà yàrdâi*! *(I will not agree one bit = I will never (ever) agree!’ etc. Cf. too the polarity-sensitive temporal *(‘never ever’)* and degree *(‘absolutely’) intensive semantics of *faufau, atâbau* etc. described below.

*Faufau* (but not *(dàdai)*) can also occur in end position for some speakers, and both minimal intensifiers can combine with the aspectual verb *taɓ̀a* ‘ever/once do’, e.g.,

(13) bân ga ĝiwā ba faufau *(dàdai)*  
NEG.1s.PFV see elephant NEG ever  
‘I’ve never ever seen an elephant’

(14) Mûsâ bâi taɓ̀a tâfiyâ Lègâs ba faufau *(dàdai)*  
Musa NEG.3M.PFV ever do go.VN Lagos NEG ever  
‘Musa has never ever been to Lagos’

(15) dàdâi/faufau bân taɓ̀a shân tâbà ba  
once/ever NEG.1s.PFV ever do drink.VN.of tobacco NEG  
‘I have never once/ever smoked’

*dàdai* can also combine with the noun *dùniyà* ‘world’ (for some speakers) to form the absolute zero phrase *dàdai dùniyà* ‘(never) once in the world’, e.g.,

(16) dàdai dùniyà bà tà taɓ̀a tâfiyâ Lègâs ba  
once world NEG 3F.PFV ever do go.VN Lagos NEG  
‘she has never once in the world been to Lagos’

Bipolar *dàdai* can be used to emphasize the positive as well as negative polarity of a clause. When occurring in positive clauses it has an assertive/factual *(always, (very) often) quantificational force and is positionally more versatile than it is in negative clauses, e.g.,
Although the time-frequency adverb ‘always’ is not usually classified as an intensifier in English at least—Quirk et al. (1985: 782ff.) simply consider ‘always’ to be the “assertive” counterpart of negative ‘never’—the distributional facts for dàdai strongly support extension of the cover-term “intensifier” to characterize its semantic role in (17-18). Because ‘always’ encodes universal quantification, therefore, dàdai, in addition to atîbak and tutur below, is simply behaving here as a top-of-the-scale, maximal intensifier, in line with its inherent lexical semantics.

Fàufau, on the other hand, is only licensed to occur in positive clauses which contain semantically negative head verbs like (19) ƙi ‘refuse’ and (20) tsàn ‘hate’, in which case it conveys the emphatic maximal meaning ‘utterly, absolutely, etc.’ When used in such (partly collocational) contexts, therefore, fàufau behaves as a maximizing degree adverb, preserving its function as an adverbial intensifier, e.g.,

(19) fàufau yā ƙi zuwā
   utterly 3F.PFV refuse come.VN
   ‘he utterly refused to come’

(20) tā tsàn māganîr fàufau
   3F.PFV hate topic.the absolutely
   ‘she absolutely hated the topic’

Both intensifiers can be used in isolation to emphatically answer a yes-no question in the negative (as a strong denial or refusal), with ellipsis of the negative clause, e.g.,

(21) zā kà tûbā?—dàdai/fàufau!
   FUT 2M repent never
   ‘will you apologize?—never!’
or a rhetorical question, e.g.,

(22) dà nì dà yìn hakà?—dàdái/ふふふ!
   and 1s and do.VN.of that never
   ‘I do that?—never!’

Another relatively common adverbial intensifier which is close in meaning and distribution (though not recorded in dictionaries/grammars) is atàbau = atàfau ‘(never) ever’ (a more archaic variant atàtau is recorded in Bargery 1934: 42 and Abraham 1962: 41 however, and is recognized by some speakers). It usually occurs in initial position, often with a communication verb in the matrix clause, and with a range of negative TAMs, especially the future, e.g.,

(23) atàfau bàn ga giwà ba
   ever NEG.1S.PFV see elephant NEG
   ‘I have never ever seen an elephant’

(24) atàbau yā cē shì bāi fài hakà ba
   ever 3M.PFV say 3M NEG.3M.PFV say this NEG
   ‘he said he never ever said this’

Notice that even though the intensifier atàbau in (24) occurs in sentence-initial position before the matrix reporting verb cē ‘say’, its pragmatic/semantic scope unambiguously falls on the VP ‘never ever said this’ in the embedded indirect reported speech clause. Example (25) also has a main clause followed by an indirect reported speech clause as the complement of cē ‘say’, each of which contains a negative TAM and an intensifier modifying and scoping its VP:

(25) sam bā tà cē atàbau bā zā tà àurē shì ba
   at all NEG 3F.PFV say ever NEG FUT 3F marry 3M NEG
   ‘she never said she would never ever marry him’

Like ふふふ, atàbau/atàfau is bipolar and is licensed in affirmative contexts with a typically negative verb expressing the highest possible pragmatic intensification, e.g.,
Like dådai/ñaufa, it can occur by itself to emphatically answer a yes-no question in the negative, e.g.,

(27) zā kā tū̄ba?—atàbau!
FUT 2M repent never
‘will you apologize?—never!’

Atàbau can also, like dådai, take on a context-sensitive temporal ‘always’ interpretation in positive frames, e.g.,

(28) atàbau yanà cikin rigimā
always 3M.IMPFV in quarrelling
‘he’s always quarrelling’

Another adverbial modifier with a similar syntactic distribution and contextual negative-positive meanings is tutur, e.g.,

(29) [intensive temporal ‘(never) ever’ with matrix mandative verb and complement negative TAM]
tā dāgē tutur bā zā tā áuré shi ba
3F.PFV insist ever NEG FUT 3F marry 3M NEG
‘she insisted she would never ever marry him’

(30) [maximal degree ‘absolutely’ with covert negative verb and positive TAM]
àbín yā faskarà tutur
thing.the 3M.PFV be impossible absolutely
‘the task has become absolutely impossible’

(31) [maximal temporal ‘always’ with positive TAM]
yanà cikin fushi tutur
3M.IMPFV in anger always
‘he’s always in a bad mood’

The low time-frequency adverb kasarai and its reduced variant sàfai ‘(not) very often, seldom, hardly ever, rarely’ are negative-polarity items
restricted to occurrence in negative sentences (I have not been able to confirm the other reported variant kàsài). If the sentence is verbal, (kà)sàfài typically co-occurs with a negative habitual (and occasionally imperfective) TAM. If the negative habitual is used, (kà)sàfài normally follows either the first bà (preferred) or final ba negative marker, e.g.,

(32) suñà zuwā kullum?–bà kàsàfài ba
3PL.IMPFV come.VN often NEG very often NEG
‘do they come often?—not very often/hardly ever’

(33) bà sàfài yakàn zō ba
NEG very often 3M.HAB come NEG
= bà yakàn zō ba sàfài
NEG 3M.HAB come NEG very often
‘he does not come very often’

(34) bà kàsàfài nakàn gan shì bā täre dà yàrinyàrsà ba
NEG very often 1S.HAB see 3M NEG with girl.of.3M NEG
‘I seldom/don’t often see him without his girlfriend’

(Kà)sàfài can also occur with an imperfective TAM to express, like the negative habitual, the low frequency of an activity/event, e.g.,

(35) bà sàfài nakè wàsan kwàllù ba
NEG very often 1S.FOC-IMPFV football NEG
‘I don’t often/hardly ever play football’

(36) bà kàsàfài ake zàfì à wannàn lòkàcìn ba
NEG very often 4PL.FOC-IMPFV heat at this time.the NEG
‘it’s not often/hardly ever hot at this time’

In (35-36) (kà)sàfài is in the focus (front) position (cf. the it-cleft in the English equivalent in ex. 36), so the neutral imperfective is replaced by a focus imperfective TAM, together with wrap-around negative bà ... ba bracketing of the entire clause.

To complete this account of time adverbs favouring negative contexts, mention should be made of the adjunct tükùna (negative) ‘(not) yet’, (positive) ‘first (of all)’, where both the ‘(not) yet’ and ‘first of all, before that/then’ readings denote a relationship between two time points, sig-
nalling a temporal sequencing prior to a specified later time point.\textsuperscript{4} Although not a quantificational intensifier in the sense used above, tükūna is bipolar. It characteristically occurs (finally) in negative verbal sentences, i.e., it is negative-oriented, with the non-assertive aspectual meaning ‘(not) yet’ e.g.,

\begin{enumerate}[label=(\arabic*)]
\item \texttt{bà tà šāshi ba tükūna} \hfill Neg 3F.PFV get up Neg yet
  \begin{flushleft}
  ‘she hasn’t got up yet’
  \end{flushleft}
\end{enumerate}

Tükūna is also admissible in positive contexts, corresponding to ‘first (of all), before then/that’, e.g.,

\begin{enumerate}[label=(\arabic*)]
\item \texttt{bàri in gamà tükūna} \hfill let.IMPER 1S.SJN finish first
  \begin{flushleft}
  ‘let me finish first’
  \end{flushleft}
\end{enumerate}

3. Negative intensifiers of degree

Hausa has a number of negative-polarity degree adverbs which are licensed to be used exclusively in negative constructions to express the absolute zero intensive meanings ‘(not) at all, (not) even a bit, (not) in the least/slightest, etc.’ (Quirk et al. 1985: 782 include quantificational ‘at all’ etc. in the category of non-assertive items which do not function to assert a positive proposition (alongside any formations), but which reinforce the pragmatic impact of the clause). The speakers I consulted adjudged these minimal degree adjuncts to be basically synonymous and interchangeable without any real meaning difference, so I have grouped the various glosses together for convenience (the English equivalents are also largely synonymous and substitutable, with ‘in the least/slightest’ probably more emphatic). Some of the more common (the list is non-exhaustive) are phrasal adverbs formed with \texttt{kō} ‘even’, e.g., (all = ‘(not) even a bit, (not) in the least/slightest, (not) at all’) \texttt{kō dāya} (lit. ‘even one’), \texttt{kō kādan} (lit. ‘even a little/bit’), \texttt{kō kusa} (lit. ‘even close’). \texttt{Kō} regularly combines with \textit{wh}-words to express meanings equivalent to non-assertive ‘any \textit{X}’ in

\textsuperscript{4}The corresponding assertive, positive-oriented ‘already’ notion is syntactically expressed with the lexical verb \texttt{rrigā} ‘to have already done s’thing’, in a co-ordinate structure with matching perfective TAMs, e.g., \texttt{sun rrigā sun ga sābōn wata} ‘they have already seen the new moon’ (3PL.PFV already do 3PL.PFV see new of moon).
negative clauses.\(^5\) Other common synonymous negative intensifiers include sam(sam), a reduplicated (more emphatic) form of the ideophonic adverb sam, with even further reduplication possible for additional effect, i.e., samsamsam. (Sam is recorded by Bargery 1934: 892 and Abraham 1962: 772 as occurring in shèkàrì sam ‘(for) a complete year’ (lit. ‘year complete’ [with a maximal value in the positive context note]), though I have not been able to verify this collocational usage with any speaker.) There is also a lexicalized (ideophonic) reduplicate kwata-\(\text{kwa}\)ta, which is bipolar unlike the above negative-oriented items, and so can occur in both negative (meanings as above) and positive (= ‘totally, completely, utterly’) constructions (cf. Yoruba kpatakpatata with a similar terminal meaning and distribution).\(^6\) As minimal degree adjuncts, these modifiers are free to co-occur with any (negative) TAM, falling within the scope of the clausal negation. Positional norms are illustrated in the negative declarative main clauses below (some speakers consider the clause-initial position to be marginally more emphatic):

\[(39)\] ban gànè ɓa kò dàya
   NEG.1S.PFV understand NEG even one
   ‘I don’t understand at all’

\[(40)\] anmàm kò kàdan wannàn bài karyà zúcyàrà ɓa
   but even a bit this NEG.3M.PFV break heart.of.3M NEG
   ‘but this didn’t discourage him even a bit’

\[(41)\] bài kai bà ɓa kò kusa
   NEG.3M.PFV reach NEG even close
   ‘it doesn’t reach anywhere near’

\(^5\) Another set of morphologically complex kò-formed process adverbs includes the (near) synonymous ta kòwàcà hanyà (lit. ‘through every/any way’) – ta kò yàyà (lit. ‘through even how’) – kò ta yàyà (lit. ‘even through how’) – ta kòwàkà hàn (lit. ‘through any circumstance’). Unlike the negative-polarity kò dàya, kò kàdan etc. adjuncts, these are functionally bipolar lexemes, regularly used in both positive and negative clauses, equivalent to (positive) ‘somehow, by whatever means’ and (negative) ‘in any way, by any means’ respectively. Cf. zàm kàmuu ìkààn kò ta yàyà ‘I’ll finish the work some-\(\text{how}\)’ and ìbònci bài ìsa bà kò ta yàyà ‘the food wasn’t in any way sufficient’ (where the adverb intensifies the pragmatic impact of the positive and negative predicates).

\(^6\) Elders (2000: 450ff.) reports a similar ‘(not) at all’ and ‘completely’ distribution for a subset of ideophones in Mundang (Niger-Congo, Chad, Cameroon).
(42) bàn san shì ba sam
   NEG.1S.PFV know 3M NEG at all
   ‘I don’t know him at all’

(43) sam bàbù ruwā
    (= non-verbal existential)
    at all there is not water
    ‘there’s no water at all’

(44) bàshē sù mā samsam bā sān ā bugā shī
    3PL too at all NEG 3PL.IMPFV want.VN.of 4PL.SJN publish 3M
    ‘well they too didn’t want it published at all’

(45) sun cē samsamsam kadà sū bā dà taliāfī gā manōmā
    3PL.PFV say at all NEG 3PL.SJN give subsidies to farmers
    ‘they said under no circumstances should they give subsidies to
     farmers’

(46) bàn dāmu ba kwata-kwata
    NEG.1S.PFV be bothered NEG in the least
    ‘I’m not bothered in the least’

Bipolar kwata-kwata can also occur in positive clauses to convey the
maximally emphatic meaning ‘completely, entirely, totally, etc.’, with a
variety of verbs (semantically positive and negative), e.g.,

(47) kudi yā fārē kwata-kwata
    money 3M.PFV finish completely
    ‘the money is completely finished’

(48) nā māntā kwata-kwata
    1S.PFV forget totally
    ‘I totally forgot’

(49) tā warkē kwata-kwata
    3F.PFV recover completely
    ‘she recovered completely’

4. Summary

This paper has taken a detailed look at a typologically interesting class
of adverbial intensifiers of time frequency and degree which has been
largely ignored in standard descriptions of negative constructions and
adjuncts in Hausa (and probably other African languages), and in doing so opens up clear avenues of linguistic research. Although the data are varied and complex, a distributional examination reveals a cluster of functionally homogeneous lexemes whose related meanings are explicable in terms of their inherent quantificational semantics and the polar positive: negative syntactic contexts in which they occur. A fuller account would confront an even larger corpus of negative intensifiers, including determiners such as ‘not one’, ‘not a single’, and idiomatic negative-polarity phrasal verbs such as ‘(not) say a word’, ‘(not) sleep a wink’, etc., in addition to linearization principles determining the ordering restrictions on these adjuncts in relation to other clausal constituents.

References

