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The Morphosyntax of Negation in Ethio-Semitic

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1. Introduction

In this talk, I deal with the nature of sentential negative markers in Ethio-Semitic languages ES. I examine especially the dependency of negative markers with respect to some other functional categories and try to figure out what the possible reason is.

In ES, sentential negation occurs in two ways; as negative concord and as a single occurrence. In languages which have negative concord, the negative markers are found as pre-verbal and post-verbal elements and realized affixed to the verb. In the other languages negative markers are pre-verbal elements and found prefixed to the verb. Other than these two varieties, there is no language that marks negation by a post-verbal negative marker in this language group.

There are some incompatibilities between certain types of negative markers and some types of functional categories such as main clause markers, and some types of tense markers. Such distributional restrictions concern the behavior of the negative markers themselves. For example, when the negated clause is subordinate the post-verbal negative markers disappear but not the pre-verbal negative markers. The post-verbal negative markers are also incompatible with imperatives. Furthermore, (some types of) tense markers and main verb markers are incompatible with post-verbal negative markers and some sorts of pre-verbal negative markers.

2. The Two Types of Negative Markers in ES

2.1 A Co-occurrence of Prefix and Suffix Negative Markers (PS-Group)

2.1.1 General Facts in PS-Group

(1) yonas al-hed-ä-m

(Amharic)

J. neg- go_{perf}-3_{ms} -neg

‘Jonas didn’t go’

(2) an-sappär-ä-dä (Endegeñ)

neg-break_{perf}-3ms_s-neg

‘He did not break’

(3) ’ay-mäs’-ä-n (Tigrinya)

neg-come_{perf}-3ms_s-neg

‘He did not come’

(4) an-käfät-ä-da (Ennemor)

neg-break_{perf}-3ms_s-neg

‘He did not open’

(5) al-säbbär-ä-m (Harari)

neg-break_{perf}-3ms_s-neg

‘He did not break’

(6) al-neggäd-a-w (Argobba)

neg-trade_{perf}-3ms_s-neg

‘He did not trade’ (Leslau 1997: 47)

(7) al-aqäb-hu-m (Gafat)

neg-watch_{perf}-3ms_s-neg

‘He did not watch’ (Leslau 1945: 66)

-A similar case in non-Ethio-Semitic

(8) zayd ma kan-(i)_ bi l-beet (Palestinian Arabic)

Z. neg be_{perf}3ms-neg in the-house

‘Zayd was not at home’

(9) Jean ne fut pas à la maison (French)

J. neg be_{past}3s neg in the house

‘Jean was not in the house’ (Shlonsky 1997: 15)

Proposal for French and Arabic;

- the pre-verbal element is the head of NegP and the post-verbal negative morpheme is the specifier of it (cf. Shlonsky 1997, Benmamoun 1992). See also Haegeman 1995, Zanuttini 1997, Ouhalla 1990, Haegeman & Zanuttini 1991, Rizzi 1990 among others).

Reason:

-post-verbal negative elements are in complementary distribution with negative quantifiers.

(10) a. ma rbeht walu (Moroccan Arabic)

neg earnperf-1m nothing

‘I didn’t earn anything’ or ‘I earn nothing’

b. *ma rbeht- _ walu

neg earnperf-1m-neg nothing

‘I didn’t earn anything’ or ‘I earn nothing’ (Shlonsky 1997: 16):

(11) a. Je ne gagnai rien (French)

I neg earnpast nothing

‘I didn’t earn anything’ or ‘I earn nothing’

b. *Je ne gagnai pas rien

I neg earnpast neg nothing

‘I didn’t earn anything’ or ‘I earn nothing’

- the case in ES is different

(12) a. minim al-agäññä-hu (Amharic)

nothing neg-earnperf-1ss

‘I did not earn anything’ or ‘I earn nothing’

b. minim al-agäññä-hu-m

nothing neg-earnperf-1ss-neg

‘I did not earn anything’ or ‘I earn nothing’

Another suggestion for Arabic:

- the pre- and post-verbal negative elements in Arabic are two occurrences of a single negative morpheme hence has to be treated as occupying the head of NegP (cf. Benmamoun 1999, 2000).

-the case is different in ES. Consider (13):

- (13) yi-kätbu-m al-naar (Harari)
3ms_S-take_{impf}-neg neg-Aux_{past}
'he was not writing'

2.1.2 The Post-verbal Negative Markers and Tense

-the post-verbal negative markers will not appear in the presence of some type of tense markers, henceforth I refer to them as functional tense markers FTMs.

- (14) a. 'i-mät'-all-ähu (Amharic)
1s_S-come_{impf}-Aux_{pres}-1s_S
'I will come'
b. al-i-mät'a-m
neg-1s_S-come_{impf}-neg
'I will not come'
c. *al-i-mät'-all-ähu-m
neg-1s_S-come_{impf}-Aux_{pres}-1s_S-neg
'I will not come'

- (15) a. säpär-ä-m (Ennemor)
break_{perf}-3ms_S-T_{past}
'he broke'
b. an-säpär-ä-da
neg-break_{perf}-3ms_S-neg
'he didn't break'
c. * an-säpär-ä-m-da
neg-break_{perf}-3ms_S-T_{past}-neg

‘he didn’t break’

(16) Generalization on tense and negation (preliminary version)

The post-verbal negative markers are not compatible with functional tense markers FTMs.

Questions:

-What is the reason for the incompatibility of the suffix negative markers with functional tense markers? What is the reason that all types of tense markers do not behave the same? Is really the incompatibility of tense with the suffix negative marker or with in general negation? If it is the latter, why the suffix negative marker delete in the face of tense markers? Is the post-verbal negative marker incompatible with other functional categories?

2.1.3 The Post-Verbal Negative Markers and Complementizers

(17) a. yonas s-a-y-hed n-a

(Amharic)

J. comp-neg- 3ms_s-go_{impf} come_{impr}-2ms_s

‘You have/ need to come before Jonas left.’

b. yonas ind-al-hed-ä iwäq

J. comp-neg- go_{perf}-3ms_s know_{impr}(2ms_s)

‘You have to know that Jonas doesn’t left.’

c. yonas s-a-y-hed ’i-mat’-all-ähu

J. comp-neg-3ms_s-go_{impf} 1s_s-come_{impf}-Aux_{pres}-1s_s

‘I will come before Jonas left.’

(18) b-a-ni-säwir

(Endegeñ)

if-neg-1s_s-break_{impf}

‘If I do not break’

(19) b-a-yi-säßir

(Ennemor)

if-neg-3ms_s-break_{impf}

‘If he does not break’

-the presence of the suffix negative marker in embedded clauses leads to ungrammaticality.

(20) a. *yonas s-a-y-hed-m na (Amharic)

J. comp-neg- 3ms_S-go_{impf}-neg come_{impr}(2ms_S)

‘You have to come before Jonas left.’

b. *yonas ind-al-hed-ä-m iwäq

J. comp-neg- go_{perf}-3ms_S-neg know_{impr}(2ms_S)

‘You have to know that Jonas doesn’t left.’

c. *yonas s-a-y-hed-m ’i-mat’-all-ähu

J. comp-neg- 3ms_S-go_{impf}-neg 1s_S-come_{impf}-Aux_{pres}-1s_S

‘I will come before Jonas left.’

(21) a. *b-a-ni-säwir-kä (Endegeñ)

if-neg-1s_S-break_{impf}-neg

‘If I do not break’

b. a-ni-säwir-kä

neg-1s_S-break_{impf}-neg

‘I do not break’

(22) a. *b-a-yi-säßir-ka (Ennemor)

if-neg-3ms_S-break_{impf}-neg

‘If he does not break’

b. an-yi- säßir-ka

neg-3ms_S-break_{impf}-neg

‘He does not break’

(23) Generalization on negative markers and complementizers (preliminary version)

The post-verbal negative markers are incompatible with complementizers.

2.1.4 The Post-verbal Negative Markers, Complementizers and Tense

-note that, in this language group FTMs and complementizers are incompatible

(24) . yonas s-i-hed 'i-mat'-all-ähu (Amharic)

J. comp-3ms_s-goimpf 1_{ss}-comeimpf-Auxpres-1_{ss}

'I will come when Jonas leaves.'

b. *yonas s-i-hed-all 'i-mat'-all-ähu

J. comp-3ms_s-goimpf-Auxpres 1_{ss}-comeimpf-Auxpres-1_{ss}

'I will come when Jonas left.'

- the co-occurrence of tense (FTM), complementizer and negation is ungrammatical.

(25) *yonas s-a-y-hed-all-m 'i-mat'-all-ähu (Amharic)

J. comp-neg-3ms_s-goimpf-Auxpres-neg 1_{ss}-comeimpf-Auxpres-1_{ss}

'I will come when Jonas left.'

(26) Generalization on negation, tense and complementizers (preliminary version)

The post-verbal negative elements, and FTMs are incompatible with complementizers.

2.1.5 The Post-verbal Negative Markers and Imperatives

-the occurrence of the suffix negative element is illicit in imperative and jussive constructions.

(27) a. at-ti-hid (Amharic)

neg-2ms_s-goimpr

'Don't go'

b. *at-ti-hid-m

neg-2ms_s-goimpr-neg

'Don't go'

(28) a. a-ni-sir (Endegeñ)

neg-1s_s-break_{juss}

‘Let me not break’

b. *a-ni-sir-se

neg-1s_s-break_{juss}-T_{fut}

c. *a-ni-sir-kä

neg-1s_s-break_{juss}-neg

(29) Generalization on negation and imperatives (preliminary version)

The post-verbal negative marker is incompatible with imperative forms.

2.1.6 The Post-verbal Negative Markers, Complementizers, Tense and Imperatives

-as is also the case to many natural languages, in ES imperatives do not select tense.

(30) a. hid (Amharic)

go_{impr.2ms_s}

‘go!’

b. *hid-all

go_{impr.2ms_s}-Aux_{pres}

‘go!’

- it is also ungrammatical to have the co-occurrence of the suffix negative markers and tense in imperative clauses.

(31) a. at-ti-hid (Amharic)

neg-2ms_s-go_{impr}

‘Don’t go’

b. *at-ti-hid-all

neg-2ms_s-goimpr-Aux_{pres}

‘Don’t go’

c. *at-ti-hid-all-m

neg-2ms_s-goimpr-Aux_{pres}-neg

‘Don’t go’

-In this language group, imperatives cannot be subordinate/ embedded under another clause with the overt realized complementizer.

(32) a. *indi-t-hid biy-allä-hu

(Amharic)

comp-2ms_s-goimpr saygerund.1s_s-Aux_{pres}-1s_s

‘I said that you have to go’ (lit. ‘I have said that you have to go’)

b. hid biy-allä-hu

goimpr.2ms_s saygerund.1s_s-Aux_{pres}-1s_s

‘I said that you have to go’ (lit. ‘I have said that you have to go’)

c. indi-t-hed biy-allä-hu

comp-2ms_s-goimpf saygerund.1s_s-Aux_{pres}-1s_s

‘I said that you have to go’ (lit. ‘I have said that you have to go’)

- negative imperatives also cannot be embedded under another clause with the overt presence of complementizer. Such embedding of negative imperative clauses is possible either by omitting the overt complementizer (cf. 33-b) or by using the imperfective verb form for the same purpose as in (33-c).

(33) a. *ind-at-ti-hid biy-allä-hu

(Amharic)

comp-neg-2ms_s-goimpr saygerund.1s_s-Aux_{pres}-1s_s

‘I said that do not go’ (lit. ‘I have said that don’t go’)

b. at-ti-hid biy-allä-hu

neg-2ms_s-goimpr saygerund.1s_s-Aux_{pres}-1s_s

‘I said that do not go’ (lit. ‘I have said don’t go’)

c. ind-at-ti-hed biy-allä-hu

comp-2ms_s-go_{impf} saygerund.1s_s-Aux_{pres}-1s_s

‘I said that do not go’ (lit. ‘I have said that don’t go’)

(34) *ind-at-ti-hid-m biy-allä-hu

(Amharic)

comp-neg-2ms_s-go_{impr-neg} saygerund.1s_s-Aux_{pres}-1s_s

‘I said that don’t go’ (lit. ‘I have said that don’t go’)

(35) Generalization on negation, tense, complementizers and imperatives
(preliminary version)

The post-verbal negative element, functional tense markers and
complementizers are incompatible with imperatives.

2.1.7 The Feature Structure of the Post-verbal Negative Markers (and Others)

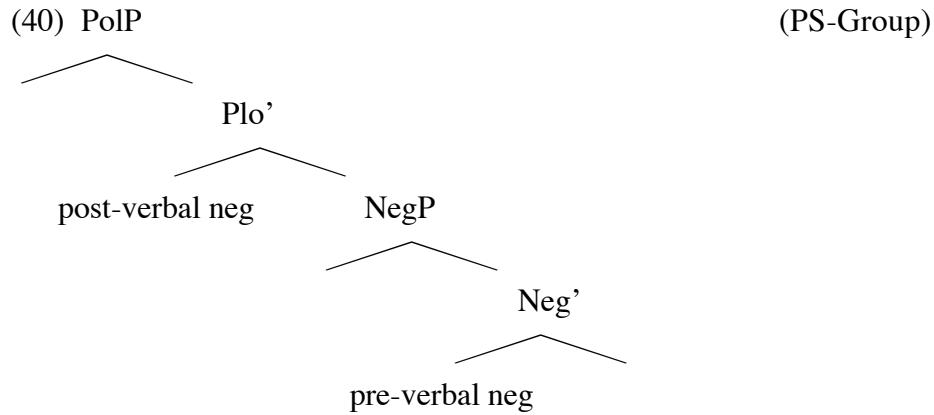
(36) The feature structure of post-verbal negative markers
+(negative) polarity feature
+force feature

(37) The feature structure of functional tense markers
±past feature
+(positive) polarity feature
+force feature

(38) The feature structure of imperatives
+force feature

(39) The feature structure of complementizers
+force feature

2.1.8 The Syntax of Pre-verbal and Post-verbal Negative Markers



2.2 Negation in P-Group

2.2.1 Tense and Negation

-In P-group as in In PS-Group, in the presence of negation the functional tense markers will disappear:

- (50) a. näqqär-ä-m (Chaha)
 pull_{perf}-3ms_s-T_{past}
 'he pulled out'
- b. an-näqär-ä
 neg-pull_{perf}-3ms_s
 'he did not pull out'
- c. *an-näqär-ä-m
 neg-pull_{perf}-3ms_s-T_{past}
 'he did not pull out' (Leslau 1992: 133)

- (51) a. The feature structure of post-verbal negative markers in PS-Group
 +(negative) polarity feature
 +force feature
- b. The feature structure of pre-verbal negative markers in both groups
 +(negative) polarity feature

(52) Generalization on negation and tense (final version)

Negative markers are incompatible with FTMs.

2.2.2 Negation and Complementizers

(53) a. yä-näqär-ä (Chaha)

comp-pull_{perf-3ms_S}

‘he who pulled out’

b. *yä-näqär-ä-m

comp-pull_{perf-3ms_S-T_{past}}

‘he who pulled out’ (Leslau 1992: 133)

-In this language group, it is not the case that every pre-verbal negative marker is compatible with complementizers. (I use the abbreviations CPNM, for those pre-verbal negative markers which cannot appear along with the complementizers and NCNM for those that can.)

(54) Generalization on negative markers and complementizers (final version)

CPNM and post-verbal negative markers are incompatible with complementizers.

(54) reads as follows: all negative markers that have +force feature are incompatible with complementizers.

3.2.3 Negation and Imperatives

(55) a. a-yi-sbär (Soddo)

neg-3ms_S-break_{jussive}

‘let he not break’

b. b-a-y-säbir

if-neg-3ms_S-break_{impf}

‘if he does not break’

- (56) t-i-säbr (Soddo)
 neg-3ms_s-break_{impf}
 ‘he does not break’

(57) Generalization on negation and imperatives (final version)

The negative markers that have +force feature (CPNMs) are incompatible with imperatives.

3.2.4 Negation and AMCMs

N.B: In Soddo and Gogot in either past or non-past simple and matrix clauses there are morphemes called main clause markers. However, in the negative clauses such elements are deleted as the Soddo examples in (58) and (59) may show. Because of such fact I refer to such elements as affirmative main clause markers and abreviate as AMCM.

- (58) a. säffär-ä-u □ säffär-o (Soddo)
 measure_{perf}-3ms_s-AMCM
 ‘he measured’
 b. *al-säffär-ä-u
 neg-measure_{perf}-3ms_s-AMCM
 ‘he did not measure’
 c. al-säffär-ä
 neg-measure_{perf}-3ms_s
 ‘he did not measure’ (Leslau 1968/ 1992: 165)

- (59) a. yi-bädr-u (Soddo)
 3ms_s-advance_{impf}-AMCM
 ‘he advances’
 b. *t-i-bädr-u
 neg-3ms_s-advance_{impf}-AMCM
 ‘he does not advance’

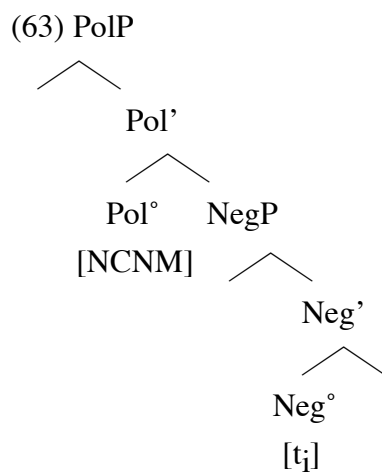
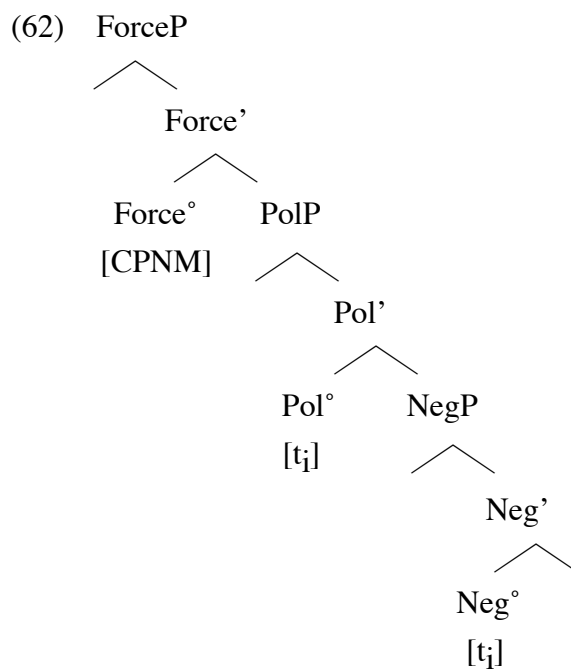
- (60) Generalization on negation and AMCM
 AMCMs are incompatible with negative markers.

2.2.5 The Syntax of Negation in P-Group

- (61) The feature structure of CPNM

+polarity feature

+force feature



4. Summary

In this talk, I have discussed that the negative markers can be encoded not only to negation but also to other features such as force. Such kind of occurrence is found in some other languages. For example, the negative marker *maa* in Standard Arabic is understood as combining the negative feature and focus feature (cf. Benmamoun 2000: 109).

I have also discussed that in Ethio-Semitic languages the pre-verbal and post-verbal negatives markers belong to different functional categories. The pre-verbal clausal negative markers, which can negate a clause, can be taken as heading their own projection in syntax, namely NegP and the post-verbal negative markers, that have the same property with affirmative markers such as FTMs and AMCMs, head a projection that has polarity value namely PolP. Such negative markers cannot negate a clause by themselves. According to Zanuttini (1994), there are two functional projections, namely PolP and NegP in relation to negation. The former is where the negative markers are interpreted whereas the latter where such negative markers projected.

The suggestion in this paper and that of Zanuttini (1994, 1997) is in sharp contrast with Laka (1990). According to Laka “negation is not a syntactic category on its own; rather, it is one of the values of a more abstract syntactic category ... which includes other sentence operators, such as affirmation” (Laka 1990: 2). However, as the data in ES show in a single negative clause, there can be morphological elements which belong to two functional categories (PolP and NegP) which contribute for the negative interpretation of the clause in question. In such cases one of the negative element values the clause exactly as what affirmative markers do, and the other simply asserts negation.