

# Dependency and discourse-configurationality

## A study of Avar negation

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### 1. Goals

- Introduce a peculiar example of the interaction between negation and finiteness in the Northeast Caucasian language Avar, where negation marking varies depending on tense.
- Offer a tentative analysis capturing the observed distribution.

### 2. Problem statement

- In Avar, the negation marker cannot combine with a past tense form (exx. 1–3)
- (I concentrate on synthetic verb forms today but the phenomenon extends to analytic forms as well)

(1)	a. <b>Present</b>	b. <b>Future</b>	c. <b>Past</b>
	murad w-ač'-una	murad w-ač'-ina	murad w-ač'-ana
	Murad.ABS M-come-PRS	Murad.ABS M-come-FUT	Murad.ABS M-come-PST
	'Murad is coming.'	'Murad will come.'	'Murad has come.'

- To negate a non-past event, the suffix *-ro* attaches to the finite form of the verb

(2)	a. <b>Present</b>	b. <b>Future</b>
	murad w-ač'-una-ro	murad w-ač'-ina-ro
	Murad.ABS M-come-PRS-NEG	Murad.ABS M-come-FUT-NEG
	'Murad is not coming.'	'Murad will not come.'

- In order to express the meaning of negated past tense, a different negation marker, *-č'o* attaches to an untensed stem:

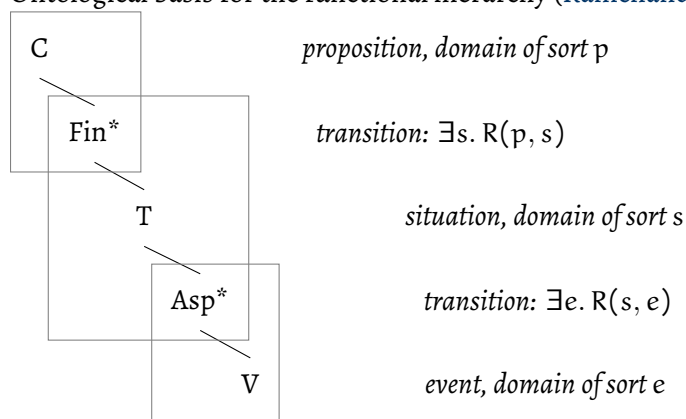
- (3) a. \*murad w-ač'-ana-ro Murad.ABS M-come-PST-NEG 'Murad hasn't come.'
- b. murad w-ač'-in-č'o Murad.ABS M-come-NMLZ-NEG

- We're therefore facing two questions:
  - Why are there two distinct markers?
  - Why do the markers attach to different stems?

### 3. Towards a solution

- My preliminary analysis of Avar negation in the past tense will be to posit an existential structure in which the negation marker is the negative existential copula.
- I couch this analysis in the framework of Ramchand & Svenonius (2014), whereby the functional hierarchy has semantic underpinnings.

- (4) Ontological basis for the functional hierarchy (Ramchand & Svenonius 2014)



#### 3.1. Analysing the stems

- For the non-past tenses the stem is trivially that of the present or future tense.
- The stem combining with -č'o to yield the negated past tense is the *masdar* (i.e., a deverbal nominal).
- It is the same form that can appear in all argument positions:

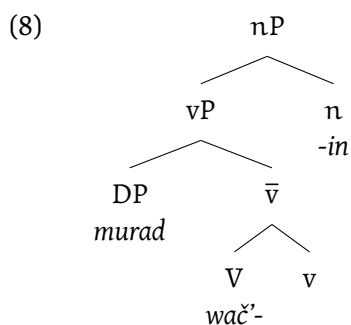
- (5) [mun w-ač'- in- aldasa] rak' b-oχana dir  
 2SG:ABS M-come-NMLZ-SUPEL heart.ABS N-rejoice.PST 1SG:GEN  
 'Your arrival has made me happy.'

- (6) kinaldago ʔabi š:wezab-una daran-bazaralde [niʃ r-ač'-in-aʃ ]  
 everyone.LOC blow.ABS deliver-PST trade.LAT 1PL:ABS PL-come-NMLZ-ERG  
 'Our shift to market economy gave everyone a blow.' (каратта.рф/?p=1288)
- (7) dos-da ʔala [kayat heresijab b-uk'-in ]  
 he-LOC know.PRS letter.ABS fake.N N-be-NMLZ  
 'He knows that the letter is fake.'

- I posit that the verbal form combining with -č'o is an event nominal

### 3.2. Structure of Avar nominalisations

- Following Polinsky, Radkevich & Chumakina (2014) and Rudnev (2015) I treat Avar masdars as vP-level nominalisations



- All arguments are introduced inside the nominalisation.
- Both case assignment and agreement are also licensed internally to it.
- As far as their semantic interpretation is concerned, Avar masdars are event descriptions (Davidson 1967, Kratzer 2012, Ramchand 2008; Champollion 2014).

(9)  $\llbracket \text{Murad wač'in} \rrbracket = \lambda e. \text{come}'(e, m)$

- There are other options, such as treating the masdar as denoting
  - either a state resulting from the event described by vP
  - or the unique eventuality/state described by the vP (Salanova 2007: §3)

### 3.3. Analysing negation markers

- I treat structures with -ro as monoclausal constructions
- Structures with -č'o involve a masdar clause and a negative copula

### 3.3.1. -č'o is a copula

- I view -č'o as a reduced variant of *heč'o* 'be.PRS', the suppletive negative form of the copula/auxiliary *CM-uk'* 'be'.

(10) **Auxiliary uses**

amma nife-ca žaq'a hał- ul b-ic- ine heč'o  
 but 1PL-ERG today this.OBL-GEN N-speak-INF COP:NEG:PRS  
 'But we are not going to discuss this today.'

(<http://maarulal.ru/2009/12/26/>)

(11) a. **Locative uses**

rasul šahar-al- da heč'o  
 Rasul.ABS city- OBL-LOC COP:NEG:PRS  
 'Rasul is not in town.'

b. **Possessive uses**

rasuli-l ładi heč'o  
 Rasul-GEN wife.ABS COP:NEG:PRS  
 'Rasul hasn't got a wife.'

- Because the two components of the negated past tense forms are a copula and a nominal, I analyse the form itself as a negative existential construction.

### 3.4. A toy implementation

- Ramchand & Svenonius's (2014)  $\text{Fin}^*_{\text{pres}}$  element anchors the *time* parameter of the set of situations described by the TP to the utterance time:

$$(12) \quad \llbracket \text{Fin}^*_{\text{pres}} \rrbracket = \lambda R. \lambda p. p = \text{Assertion}(\exists s. R(s) \wedge s_t = s_t^*)$$

$$(13) \quad \llbracket \text{murad wač'una} \rrbracket = \lambda p. p = \text{Assertion}(\exists s. \text{come}'(m, s) \wedge s_t = s_t^*)$$

- ro is effectively an identity function from sets of propositions to sets of propositions with negation taking widest scope ( $\mathfrak{P}$  is a variable over sets of propositions):

$$(14) \quad \llbracket \text{-ro} \rrbracket = \lambda \mathfrak{P}. \lambda p. \neg \mathfrak{P}(p)$$

- Simplifying somewhat, I take -č'o to be an allomorph of the negative copula *heč'o* in the *present* tense.

$$(15) \quad \begin{aligned} \llbracket \text{murad wač'in} \rrbracket &= \lambda e. \text{come}'(e, m) \\ \llbracket \text{-č'o} \rrbracket &= \lambda P_{\langle vt \rangle}. \neg \exists e. P(e) \\ \llbracket \text{-č'o} \rrbracket (\llbracket \text{murad wač'in} \rrbracket) &= \neg \exists e. \text{come}'(e, m) \end{aligned}$$

- An alternative would be to posit a negated locative structure instead of an existential one (Salanova 2007).
- If -č'o is a present tense negative copula, we can explain the lack of tense marking of any kind on the negated verb: because -č'o already contains temporal information, that information would result in a contradiction if -č'o combined with a past-tense verb form.

### 3.5. Negation markers and their complements

- If both negation markers come with distinct subcategorisation requirements, and if those requirements indeed have a semantic motivation, such that *-ro* operates on a situation (description) whereas *-č'o* takes as an argument a set of events, the following prediction can be formulated:

(16) Neither *-ro* nor *-č'o* can combine with an object both bigger than vP and smaller than finite TP.

- Assuming that infinitives lexicalise a larger piece of structure than a vP but smaller than a full TP the prediction in (16) is confirmed for Avar, as shown in the examples below.

(17) insuca w-ič- ana dun školal- de inč'ogo w-uk'-ine  
father.ERG M-let-PST 1SG:ABS school.OBL-LAT go.CVB M-be- INF  
'Father allowed me not to go to school.' (Rudnev 2015: 47)

- Avar uses periphrastic converbial constructions to express event modification.
- Infinitives themselves cannot combine with either of the two negation markers:

(18) a. \*insuca w-ič- ana dun školal- de ine- ro  
father.ERG M-let-PST 1SG:ABS school.OBL-LAT go.INF-NEG  
b. \*insuca w-ič- ana dun školal- de ine- č'o  
father.ERG M-let-PST 1SG:ABS school.OBL-LAT go.INF-NEG  
(‘Father allowed me not to go to school.’) (*ibid.*)

- In the unacceptable examples above the infinitival structure in question most likely involves restructuring (cf. Wurmbrand's 2001 claim regarding the impossibility to negate restructuring infinitives).
- More work is required to see if the generalisation extends to other types of infinitival clauses attested in Avar.

## 4. Crosslinguistic comparisons

- Even though the distribution of negation markers as presented above is not terribly common across languages, comparisons can still be made.

### 4.1. A comparison with Davis 2005

- Davis 2005 presents a detailed description of various patterns of negation marking in the Salish languages.
- His patterns A and C are of particular interest.

### Pattern A: [ NEG [ (D/C) [NMLZ ... ] ]

(major strategy in the Northern Interior and Tsamosan languages, and Lushootseed)

- (19) x<sup>w</sup>?az k<sup>w</sup>= š= ?čĭ-ən-č- haš  
NEG D/C=NMLZ=see-TR-2SG.OBJ-3TR.SBJ  
'He didn't see you.' (Lillooet; Davis 2005: 4)

### Pattern C: [ NEG (IRR) INDICATIVE CLAUSE ]

- (20) λux<sup>w</sup> či ?i-łəñ  
NEG 1SG.SBJ eat  
'I'm not eating.' (Quinault; Davis 2005: 8)

- The markers are the same within a language but allow for some flexibility in the type of structure.

## 4.2. Negation in Mebengokre (Salanova 2007)

- Salanova (2007) argues for the generalised locative structure in the Jê language Mebengokre as unifying ergativity, negation, possession and aspect.
- The locative strategy is the only one available.

## 4.3. Two types of negation in Bengali (Ramchand 2004)

- Bengali possesses two distinct sentential negation markers — *ni* and *na* — occurring in different morphosyntactic environments, and with different aspectual consequences.

- (21) a. ami amṭa k<sup>h</sup>eyechi  
1SG mango.CLF eat.PRF.PRS.1SG.TR  
'I have eaten the mango.'
- b. \*ami amṭa k<sup>h</sup>eyechi na  
1SG mango.CLF eat.PRF.PRS.1SG.TR NEG  
'(I haven't eaten the mango.)'

- (22) ami amṭa k<sup>h</sup>ai ni  
1SG mango.CLF eat.1SG.TR NEG  
'I didn't eat the mango.' (Ramchand 2004: 41)

## 5. Outro

- I have described a number of restrictions on the expression and interpretation of negation in Avar.
- In particular, I have shown that the two negation markers attested in Avar differ in the type of semantic object they can compose with:

- for the present and future tenses *-ro* combines with a Fin\*P denoting a set of propositions
  - whereas past-tense negation utilises the biclausal predicational strategy.
- We have seen how the combination of a nominalisation and *-č'o* can be derived and interpreted but the question why past tense forms cannot combine with *-ro* has remained unanswered.
  - It remains to be seen whether the proposal made for *-č'o* can be made compatible with the use of *heč'o* as the auxiliary in analytic verb forms.

## A. Glosses

1 = First person, 2 = Second person, 3 = Third person, ABS = absolutive, CLF = classifier, CM = class marker, COP = copula, CVB = converb, ERG = ergative, FUT = future, GEN = genitive, INF = infinitive, IRR = irrealis, LAT = lative, LOC = locative, M = masculine, N = neuter, NEG = negative, NMLZ = nominalizer, OBJ = object, OBL = oblique, PL = plural, PRF = perfect, PRS = present, PST = past, SBJ = subject, SG = singular, SUPREL = superrelative, TR = transitive.

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