# Negative verb clusters in Meadow Mari and Udmurt

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In this talk, we investigate the properties of negation in Meadow Mari and Udmurt. It is well-known that both languages utilize a negative auxiliary that takes morphological marking such as tense and verbal agreement, while the lexical verb appears in the so-called 'connegative form' (Saarinen 2015, Edygarova 2015, a.o.). We argue that the negative auxiliary behaves like a proclitic attaching to the lexical verb, thus forming a verb cluster. On the descriptive level, we present novel observations about the interaction of negative verb clusters and adverbial clitics in Udmurt as well as the formation of constituent negation in Meadow Mari. We couch these observations in a generative account in the framework of Distributed Morphology, and emphasize the theoretical relevance of the Meadow Mari and Udmurt data. The examples used come partly from own fieldwork with native speakers as well as from corpora (e.g. Udmurt Corpus).

The order of negation and lexical verb (Neg–V) in otherwise (non-rigid) SOV languages has been discussed in the literature (for an overview see Wagner-Nagy 2011); yet, it has not been fully explained. We propose that the negative verb and lexical verb form a verb cluster. This is supported by the fact that other constituents such as direct objects cannot intervene between Neg and V, as shown in (1). With this respect, Meadow Mari and Udmurt negative auxiliaries behave differently from Finnish and Saami negation (see Vilkuna 1998: 212–216). Furthermore, we analyse the negative verb as a (syntactic) proclitic attaching to the lexical verb. As a result of negation procliticizing, other affixes such as tense and agreement that appear on the lexical verb in affirmative contexts, are found on the negative auxiliary (2)–(3).

(1) *Mə̂j ə̂št-en o-m paša-m kert. [Meadow Mari]
     1SG do-GER NEG-1SG work-ACC can.CN
     Intended: 'I cannot do the work.'

(2) Pur-eš-na. (3) ə̂-š-na puro. [Meadow Mari]
     go-PST-1PL   NEG-PST-1PL go.CN
     'We went.'   'We didn't go.'

The formal account of the data in (1)–(3) goes as follows: Since the negation determines the form of the lexical verb and obligatorily takes semantic scope over it, it is plausible to assume that negation is a functional head generated high in the clause. The (surface) order of Neg and V can be derived from the syntactic structure NegP > TP > vP via Lowering, a (movement) operation that takes place in the postsyntactic component of grammar (cf. Embick & Noyer 2001 for English).

(4)
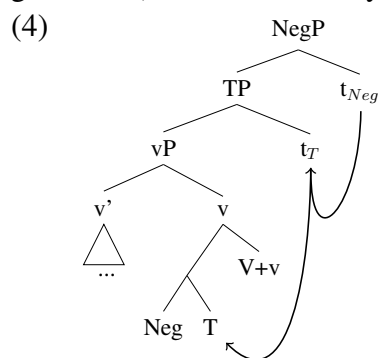
Specifically, we argue that higher functional heads such as T, Neg, etc. lower to v in order to fulfill their morphosyntactic requirement to form a complex word with v. If the complex head that lowers includes negation, which is explicitly specified as a proclitic, the whole complex head must left-adjoin to v to satisfy Neg's requirement (4). Otherwise the lowering head right-adjoins to v following the default direction for the otherwise strictly suffixing languages.

Another argument for the postsyntactic approach is provided by the interaction of negation with clitics. Udmurt allows for certain adverbial clitics such as *ńi* 'already, anymore' or *na* 'else, still' to be interleaved in the cluster (cf. Vilkuna 1998). In affirmative contexts, the clitic is typically the final element in the cluster (Arkhangelskiy 2014). In negative verb clusters, the clitic can either occur at the end of the cluster or between the negation and the lexical verb (5):

(5)　Ta peśanaj ug<=ńi>　　　kịrʒa<=ńi>.　　　　　[Udmurt]
　　 this grandma NEG.PRS.3=anymore sing.SG=anymore
　　 'This grandma doesn't sing anymore.'

In other words, the adverbial clitics can precede the lexical verb only in the presence of negation. We argue that the flexibility of clitic placement arises due to the ambivalent categorial status of these clitics: they can either be merged as heads or as phrases (i.e. adjuncts). In the former case, the verb cluster forming operation will pick them up when Neg lowers down to v (6), resulting in cluster-internal position of the clitic. In the latter case, lowering will ignore the clitics (7). Additionally, we discuss different clitic placement patterns in verb clusters with infinitives based on the Udmurt Corpus as well as native speakers' judgments which partly contradict Arkhangelskiy (2014).

(6)　$[_{NegP}$ ... $[_{ClP}$ $[_{vP}$ v+V] CL] NEG]　　(7)　$[_{NegP}$ ... $[_{vP}$ $[_{vP}$ v+V] CL] NEG]

A further argument for our perspective comes from Meadow Mari constituent negation. In this case, a copula is used with the negative auxiliary (Alhoniemi 1993, Riese et al. 2015: 110–111), as shown in (8). The copula does not have any syntactic effect as is suggested by the fact that (8) still involves PP-coordination.

(8)　T̂əj [šaχmat dene o-g-ə̂l],　a [šaške　dene] mod-ə̂n-at
　　 2SG chess　with NEG-3SG-BE, but checkers with　play-GER-2SG
　　 'You played not chess but checkers.'

As argued above, functional heads such as Neg need to be in a local relation to v which triggers Lowering. Meadow Mari constituent negations shows that in this case Lowering is impossible due to the morphological selection properties of negation (i.e. it must attach to v). Thus, the insertion of a copula is a morphological repair to save the derivation.

We have presented several arguments that the verb cluster formation process in Meadow Mari and Udmurt takes place in the postsyntactic component. Evidence for this claim came from (i) the specific morphological requirement of negation to be a proclitic, (ii) adverbial clitics in Udmurt, which can occur in two positions in the cluster only in the presence of negation; (iii) the insertion of a dummy copula in Meadow Mari, which was shown not to have any syntactic effects and was therefore analyzed as a morphological repair. Finally, we present evidence against alternative approaches to verb cluster formation based on head-movement or base-generation both of which fail to capture the optionality of clitic placement.

Time permitting, we will address the distribution of verbal agreement in affirmative and negative contexts. While person and number features are marked on the negative auxiliary in Meadow Mari, Udmurt shows an interesting split: the negative auxiliary only bears person-features, number features are marked on the lexical verb. We will show that the postsyntactic account can be extended to these facts as well.

Selected References: Arkhangelskiy (2014): Clitics in the Beserman dialect of Udmurt. Edygarova (2015): Negation in Udmurt. Embick & Noyer (2001): Movement Operations after Syntax. Saarinen (2015): Negation in Mari. Vilkuna (1998): Word order in European Uralic.