NEGATION OF NON-VERBAL ANDEXISTENTIAL SENTENCES IN SLAVIC LANGUAGES
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(I hope I haven’t missed anyone, if I did, that was not intentional, please write & scold)

My goal with this exercise was to test the negation cycle described in Croft
(1991) based on comparative data. What I would like to do is collect such
data from several families but since there is time as a factor too, I might
have to settle down on Slavic and parts of Oceanic. As I said in the query
posted on LINGUIST, I collected data from grammatical descriptions
following my own negation questionnaire; in the query I asked for
translation of sentences I couldn’t find in grammars and people were
directed to my negation wiki, http://negation.scribblewiki.com. For some
languages, most of what I was looking for was missing in the grammar so
without the help of the people listed above, I wouldn’t have the dataset I
have now (see the map below; the data I have for Polabian and Old Church
Slavonic are still very incomplete).
In what follows below I will briefly introduce the diachronic negative existential cycle suggested in Croft 1991 and will then summarize the Slavic data; I still need to come up both with a more complex typology than I currently have and with a diachronic story. Since I like to see data distributed in space, I’ve put the data on maps, so please be prepared to see a quite a few of those.

In his article of 1991, Croft presents a dynamic interpretation of synchronic data. That is, he uses data from modern languages to present a hypothesis about diachronic change. He first outlines a typology of verbal negators and negative existentials; then he uses this typology to outline a diachronic process whereby a special existential negator evolves; thus verbal and existential negation are fully distinguished for a while; gradually, the existential negator starts to be used as a verbal negator in certain contexts and eventually it is fully re-interpreted in this latter function. The language types used to illustrate this process are presented below with as much Slavic data as possible. The terms ‘stable’ and ‘transitional’ in Croft’s diagram below should be interpreted in a variationist sense; that is, they refer to internal language variation, not to stability or instability in time.
Type A: the verbal negator and the existential negator are identical.

Sorbian (Upper) (West Slavic)

(1) (Stone, 1993: 666)
   a. Piju  ‘I drink’
   b. nje-piju  ‘I do not drink’

(2) Eduard Werner (p.c.)
   a. Dźiw-je kóčk-i eksistu-ja/dawa-(ja)
      wild-pl cat-pl exist-pl/give-(pl)
      ‘Wild cats exist’
   b. Dźiw-je kóčk-i nje-eksistu-ja/dawa-(ja)
      wild-pl cat-pl NEG-exist-pl/NEG-give-(pl)
      ‘Wild cats do not exist’

Type A ~ B: the verbal and the existential negators are different. The existential negator is restricted to certain contexts. In the Slavic languages of this type, it is restricted to the present tense.

Serbo-Croatian (South Slavic)

(3) (Sonja Petrović Lundberg p.c.)
   a. Meri peva  ‘Mary sings’
   b. Meri ne peva  ‘I does not sing’

(4) (Sonja Petrović Lundberg p.c.)
   a. Lma divl-jih mač-aka
      have.3.sg.pres wild-gen.pl.m cat-gen.pl.m
      ‘There are wild cats’/there is such a thing/wild cats exist/
   b. nema divl-jih mač-aka
      not-have.3.sg.pres wild-gen.pl.m cat-gen.pl.m
      ‘There aren’t any wild cats’
   c. ne beja-še divl-jih mač-aka
      NEG be.IMPF-3.sg wild-gen.pl.m cat-gen.pl.m
      ‘There were no wild cats’
Type B: the verbal and the existential negators are different. There are no contextual restrictions on the use of the existential negator.

(5) Turkish (Miestamo, 2003: 359)

a. Gel-ecek
   b. Gel-me-yecek
      come-NEG-FUT          come-FUT
      '(she) will come'     '(she) will not come'

(6) Turkish (Van Schaaik, 1994: 44-45)

a. Su var-du
   b. Su yok-tu
      water exist-PST      water NEG.EX-PST
      'There was water'   'There was no water'

Type B ~ C: the verbal and the existential negator are distinct from each other. The existential negator is used as a verbal negator in certain contexts.

Bulgarian (South Slavic)

(7) (own data)

a. Meri pee
   b. Meri ne pee
      'Mary sings'
      'Mary does not sing'

(8) (own data)

a. Ima div-i kotk-i
   have.3.sg.pres wild-pl cat-pl
   'There are wild cats'/there is such a thing/wild cats exist/

b. njama div-i kotk-i
   not-have.3.sg.pres wild-pl cat-pl
   'There aren't any wild cats'

c. njama-še div-i kotk-i
   not-haveIMPF-3.sg wild-pl cat-pl
   'There were no wild cats'

(9) (own data)

a. Meri shte pee
   b. Meri njama da pee
      'Mary will sing'
      'Mary will not sing'

Type C: there is a special negative existential predicate; it is formally identical with the verbal negator.

(10) Nunggubuyu (Heath 1984), quoted by Croft 1991

a. aŋga:='ri ana-lha:wu
   it.B= NEG.EXIST words
   'There must be no words'

b. Wa='riŋa=dugugumbi:-niŋa=jama:-'
   it.A= NEG(EX) I.fished I.did.this
   'I didn’t fish like this'

Type C ~ A: the negative existential negator is reanalyzed as a verbal negator.

(11) Marathi (Croft 1991, quoting Madhav Deshpande)

a. titho köni ähe
   there anyone EX
   'Is there anyone there’
Negation in Slavic
Summary for the LINGUIST List

b. Koní titho dzät [ots] nāhi
   anyone there goes [EMPH] NEG
   ‘Nobody goes there’

c. titho koní nāhi [āhe]
   there anyone NEG [EX]
   ‘There isn’t anyone there’

The negative existential nāhi can be used alone or with the positive form āhe ‘exist’.
Croft considers the latter construction (as in 11c.) as diachronically younger since it
is more emphatic, and thus with greater pragmatic content than the construction without
it.

Since neither type C or C ~ A are represented in the Slavic data, I will not discuss them
further here. In fact, only three of the six types suggested by Croft are attested by the
Slavic languages; these types are circled in red in the diagram below and the digit in the
circle indicates the number of language in each type.

Figure 2: Slavic Languages analyzed according to Croft’s typology from 1991

As we can see, most Slavic languages belong to Type A~B, that is there is a special
existential negator, restricted to the present tense. Bulgarian and Macedonian illustrate
type B~C in that their existential negator is used as a verbal negator for the future tense;
the Sorbian varieties are the only ones where there is no special existential negator.

In Croft’s typology, there is no distinction between special non-verbal and
special existential negators. However, both the Slavic data summarized here as well as
my broader typological database suggest that such distinction has to be made in a
typology of negation. Non-verbal and existential negators appear to have different
diachronic sources; both may be re-interpreted as verbal negators but the mechanisms
that lead to such developments appear to be distinct as well (I still need to work out the
details on these). The point is, however, that both synchronically and diachronically,
non-verbal and existential negators represent different phenomena.
Negation in Slavic
Summary for the LINGUIST List

Negation of non-verbal sentences (1)
By the standard negator: in 7 Slavic languages
Russian (East Slavic)
(12) (Timberlake 2004: 282)
On moj staršij brat
He my older brother
'he is my older brother'

(13) (Maria Koptjevskaja-Tamm, p.c.)
On ne moj staršij brat
He NEG my older brother
'he is not my older brother'

Negation of non-verbal sentences (2)
By a special negator: in 11 Slavic languages. The special non-verbal negator is restricted to the present tense
Serbian (South Slavic)
(14) (Sonja Petrović Lundberg p.c.)
a. Šta Tom rad?
what Tome work.3.sg.pres
'What does Tom do?'

b. Tom je nastavnik
Tom is teacher
'Tom is teacher'

(15) (Sonja Petrović Lundberg p.c.)
a. Je li Tom nastavnik?
is QN Tom teacher
'Is Tom a teacher?'

b. Tom nije nastavnik, on je lekar
Tom is.not teacher, he is physician
'Tom is not a teacher, he is a physician'
In the typology of non-verbal predication (Hengeveld, 1992; Stassen, 1997), it is customary to distinguish between the predication of location of a definite subject as in (16) and (17), and the predication of location of indefinite subject as in (18).

(16) Mary is here
(17) The monkeys are here
(18) There are some cats in the garden

Clauses like (18) are also referred to as **locative-presentative** constructions and they tend to exhibit a number of interesting morpho-syntactic and discourse-pragmatic characteristics. Another, somewhat looser term, that tends to be used in reference to such constructions is **existential** constructions. I do not intend to embark on a wholesale discussion here; I am only introducing the notion in a crude way as well as the most common terms used to refer to it since both the concept and the terms are necessary for the data summary. Also, I’m taking this up here because since it also customary to discuss negated clauses in comparison with their assumed positive counterparts (this approach is most probably misguided but, again, for the purposes of this summary I’ll stick to the tradition).

**Existential constructions and their negation in an unmarked TAM-category in Slavic languages**

Syntactic and lexical features that appear relevant for affirmative existential constructions in Slavic languages are as follows:

- Non-prototypical marking on the subject
- Lack of agreement between subject and predicate verb
- Weird verb

Features that appear relevant for existential constructions under negation

- Change of case (usually referred to as ‘genitive of negation’)
- A special negation marker that differs from the standard negator

In many descriptions, negation is taken to be one of the characteristic features of the existential construction in general (so there is a certain kind of circularity when defining the existential construction), (cf. also (Koptjevskaja-Tamm and Wälchli, 2001: 656-660) for further discussion).

Slavic languages show a certain amount of variation on the extent the characteristics listed above are applicable to affirmative and negative existentials in specific languages. I’m taking the above as a prototype; below I summarize the data starting with the languages that show most of the features listed above to the ones that show none.

**Serbo-Croatian:** the language most conforming to the prototype, see example (4) above

- Non-proto-typical subject (genitive case already in the affirmative construction)
- Lack of agreement
- Genitive subject is used in the negative existential construction
- Special existential negator

In Bulgarian and Macedonian, the existential construction is similar that of Serbo-Croatian, except, of course, for the case marking which is null. The subject is indefinite and there is no agreement between subject and verb.

The features relevant for the East Slavic languages, illustrated below by Belorussian are

- Lack of agreement
- Weird verb form in the affirmative sentence
Negation in Slavic
Summary for the LINGUIST List

- “genitive of negation” (case marking changes under negation)
- Special negator that differs from the standard negator

(19) Belorussian, (Marian Sloboda, p.c.)
a. Dziki-ja kat-y estc’
   Wild-pl.nom cat-pl.nom be/exist
   ‘Wild cats exist’

b. Dzik-ix kat-oy njama
   wild-pl.gen cat-pl.gen NEG.EX
   ‘Wild cats do not exist’

West Slavic languages presented a puzzle with regard to their affirmative existentials.
In the current dataset, the affirmative existential constructions I elicited look very much
like regular intransitive sentences in that the subject has a typical subject marking and
the verb agrees with it (see (20) and (22); the facts are somewhat more complex for
Upper Sorbian).

(20) Slovak (West Slavic), (Markus Ciger, p.c.)
Divok-é mač-ysú
   wild-pl cat-pl be.3.pl.pres
   ‘There are wild cats’

(21) (Markus Ciger, p.c.)
a. Divoké mačky nie sú
   wild-pl cat-pl.nom NEG.COP be.3.pl.pres
   ‘There are no wild cats’

b. Divok-ých mač-iek niet(o)
   wild-pl cat-pl.gen NEG.EX
   ‘There are no wild cats’

As shown in (21), two special (alternative) negation markers, different from the
standard negator can be used to negate existence in Slovak. One is also used in as a
special negator in non-verbal sentences, the other is a special existential negator.
However, the special existential negator niet(o) is very rarely used; the “genitive of
negation” (change of case) is observed only with the special existential negator.

In both Upper and Lower Sorbian, illustrated by Upper Sorbian below, the affirmative
existential construction looks very much like an intransitive sentence: nominative
subject, agreement between subject and predicate which is optional when the verb
dawac is used (guessing that this is infinitive right now). The standard negator is used
to negate both constructions, there does not seem to be any change of case.

(22) Upper Sorbian, Eduard Werner (p.c.)
a. Dźiw-je kóčk-i eksistu-ja/dawa-(ja)
   wild-pl cat-pl exist-pl/give-(pl)

b. Dźiw-je kóčk-i nje-eksistu-ja/dawa-(ja)
   wild-pl cat-pl NEG-exist-pl/NEG-give-(pl)
So if I am actually eliciting the right kind of data, it would be correct to say that there seems to be a decline of both the affirmative and the negative existential construction as we move west in the Slavic family. The affirmative construction seems to be the weaker of the two while the negative seems to be more persistent.

I mapped out the kind of verb used in the affirmative construction as well as the kind of negator used in negative existentials. In the East Slavic languages, the only remaining form of ‘be’ est’ is used, in South Slavic, all except Slovene, the 3 SG of the habeo verb ima; in West Slavic languages, we observe inflected forms of ‘be’ together with the intransitive ‘exist’ and ‘give’ (the latter most probably a translation loan from German Es gibt…)

Map 4.

As shown on map 5, in the majority of the Slavic languages, the existential negator in the present tense is a version of nema (< ne ‘NEG’ + ima ‘have’); it tends to be either the 3 SG PRES form or a something related to it, yet distinct (the latter is valid for Belorussian and Kashubian). Russian is the only language with the (presumably) diachronically older net (< ne je tu ((Vasmer, 1964-1973). Slovak is the only language where two special negators appear to co-exist; ‘co-exist’ is used here in a rather loose sense as niet(o) is rarely used. The non-verbal negator is used as to negate existence in Slovene and Czech, and the standard negator is used for existentials in Upper and Lower Sorbian.
Just for the sake of comparison, I mapped the verbs used in sentences expressing predicative possession such as ‘Tom has a car’ and their negated counterparts such as ‘Tom does not have a car’. As shown on map 6, most Slavic languages use the habeo verb *ima(t)*i* in such sentences; in Ukrainian there is variation between a construction with a *habeo* verb and a locative construction with *est* ‘be’. In Russian the preferred construction is the locative one; *imeti* is used for expression of abstract possession only.
On map 7, I summarize the negation of predicative possessive constructions. It is important as the negation of these constructions is clearly related to the origin of the special existential negator. As I said in the beginning, I still need to work out the story, however, it’s important to have the relevant material at hand.
There are a couple of other parameters that need to be taken into consideration when discussing the typology and diachrony of negation in Slavic. One concerns focus as a factor for choosing or not choosing to use the existential negator. The other is other verbs with special negation and their interaction with standard negation.

Focusing negation on the locative or predicking absolute absence may lead to using completely different negators. Invariably, the special existential negator is excluded from a focused construction; it is used to predicate absolute absence (languages in green in Table 1). The pertinent data are summarized in the table and on map 8.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LGNAME</th>
<th>FOCUSED NEGATION</th>
<th>ABSOLUTE ABSENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belorussian</td>
<td>Мари́я не ў Лонда́не, а ў Детро́йте.</td>
<td>Мары́ не́ма дома́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>On ne был в Москве, a следил за событи́-ямы отда́лече</td>
<td>Brата́_ГЕН_ утром/в тряхаса не было дома</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cf. Brатсы́после ётой ссоры/с прошло́й ве́сны не был дома</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>Мари́я не́ в Лонда́ни, а в Детры́.</td>
<td>кома́-и: в нёма́е</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Мари́я не́ в Лонда́ни, вона́ в Детро́ити</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>Мари́я не́ в Лондон, ами в Детро́ит</td>
<td>Мари́я на́ма/Том го́ няма</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonian</td>
<td>Том не́ в Лондон, то́х го Детро́ит</td>
<td>Том го́ нёма</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovene</td>
<td>Мари́я ни в Лондону, ампак в Детро́иту</td>
<td>Оче́та́ нёма</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Томек не был в дому вчера́. (negation of 'w domu' (... but he was somewhere else)</td>
<td>Тома не ма/Томка не было в дому вчера́. (absence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbo-Croatian</td>
<td>Мары́ не ње у Лондону, она ње у Детро́иту</td>
<td>Мери́ не код кучэ. ор Мери́ не ње куци.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kashubian</td>
<td>Мари́й ни ма в Лондине, она́ я в Дётро́же</td>
<td>Мари́й ни ма дома́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech</td>
<td>Марі́я не́ ни в Лонд́яне, я в Детро́иту</td>
<td>Марі́я не́ ма дома́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovak</td>
<td>Марі́а не́ и в Лонд́яне, я в Детро́ите</td>
<td>Марі́а не́ је дома́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Sorbian</td>
<td>Марья нjejе в Лондоне, вона я в Детро́же</td>
<td>Маря нjejе дома́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Sorbian</td>
<td>Марья нjeя в Лондоне, вона я в Детро́же</td>
<td>Маря нjeя дома́</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are several Slavic languages where verbs other than the copula and the habeo verb are negated in a special way. For instance in Slovene, the verb hoteti ‘want’ has special negated forms in the present tense nóčem ‘I do not want’, nóčeš ‘you do not want’, etc. Such special negated forms of ‘want’ are found in all South Slavic languages except Bulgarian; similar special negated forms of ‘want’ are also found in Sorbian; in Kashubian, there are special negated forms of moc ‘to be able and muszëc ‘must’ in that the regular negator nie is replaced by a special allomorph ni when negating those verbs. On map 9, I show the geographic distribution of those “lexicalizations” and we can see a nice western almost-belt shape.
Now, if we turn to expressions of standard negation in tenses other than the present, we can see that several specially negated verbs are used as standard negators (that choice depends on category).

Map 9.

Now, if we turn to expressions of standard negation in tenses other than the present, we can see that several specially negated verbs are used as standard negators (that choice depends on category).

Map 10.
Concluding remarks

The Slavic data summarized here show the following:

- Only one of Croft’s stable types is represented.
- Most Slavic languages fall into the transitional types of Croft’s typology.
- Croft’s typology should be extended to distinguish between non-verbal and existential negators.
- In the present tense, coalescence tends to occur between the standard negator and the copula verb (if there is one), and also between the standard negator and verbs such as the habeo verbs, verbs meaning ‘want’, ‘can’ and ‘must’. Such coalescent forms can be re-interpreted as standard negators for specific TAM categories. If we are looking for sources for standard negators, a diachronic model of the evolution of negation should include those as well.

This is to be continued. Many Thanks again to all who responded!

References


