

# Negation

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## 1 Modes of expressing negation

Each individual language has its own way of expressing negation, and further has its own restrictions in the surface realizations of negation which can hardly be reduced to one uniform category. This chapter aims to provide an investigation of morpho-syntactic aspects of negation in natural languages, encompassing both empirical and theoretical issues concerning negation as well as related phenomena in question.

In a typological study of sentential negation, Dahl (1979) has identified three major ways of expressing negation in natural languages as a morphological category on verbs, as an auxiliary verb, and as an adverb-like particle. The first way of expressing negation is to introduce an inflectional category realized on the verb by affixation. Languages like Korean, Turkish, and Japanese show typical examples of morphological negatives, as illustrated in (1) – (3).

- (1) Korean:  
John-un ppang-ul an-mek-ess-ta.  
John-TOP bread-ACC NEG-eat-PST-DECL  
‘John didn’t eat the bread.’
- (2) Turkish:  
John elmalar-i ser-me-di-∅  
John apples-ACC like-NEG-PST-3SG  
‘John didn’t like apples.’
- (3) Japanese:  
otoko-wa bin-o kowas-anai-daroo  
man-TOP bottle-ACC break-NEG-FUT  
‘The man will not break the bottle.’

Negation of this type is an inflectional category of the verb and realized by prefixation, suffixation, or stem modification.

Another way of expressing negation is to employ a negative auxiliary verb. Negation in this type is marked with the basic verbal categories such as agreement, tense, aspect, and mood, while the main verb remains in an invariant, participle form. Finnish, Evenki, and Korean display this type of negation:

- (4) Finnish:  
 Minä e-n puhu-isi  
 I-NOM NEG-1SG speak-COND  
 ‘I would not speak.’ (Mitchell 1991)
- (5) Evenki:  
 bi dukuwūn-ma ə-cə-w duku-ra  
 I letter-ACC NEG-PST-1SG write-PART  
 ‘I didn’t write a letter.’ (Payne 1985:213)
- (6) Korean:  
 Na-nun phyenci-lul ssu-ci anh-ass-ta  
 I-TOP letter-ACC write-COMP NEG-PST-DECL  
 ‘I didn’t write a letter.’

The main difference between this type and the morphological negation is that the negative is not realized as a morphological element, but is an independent lexical element (verb root).

A third major way of expressing negation is to use an adverb-like particle. This type of negation is prevalent in English and French as well as in Scandinavian languages such as Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish. In these languages, negative markers behave like adverbs in their ordering with respect to the verb. The negative particles in the French, Norwegian, Swedish as in (7) – (9) exhibit this property:

- (7) French:  
 Dominique (n’)écrivait pas de lettre.  
 Dominique wrote NEG of letter  
 ‘Dominique did not write a letter.’
- (8) Swedish:  
 Jan köpte inte boken.  
 Jan bought NEG books  
 ‘John didn’t buy books.’ (Holmberg and Platzack 1988)
- (9) Norwegian:  
 Jens skjønte ikke dette spørsmålet.  
 Jens understood NEG this question  
 ‘John didn’t understand this question.’ (Taraldsen 1985)

In addition to these three types of negation, there appears to exist another type of negation, i.e., introducing a clitic-like element in expressing sentence negation. Italian and Spanish negative markers exhibit these properties:

- (10) Italian:  
Gianni non legge articoli di sintassi.  
Gianni NEG reads articles of syntax  
'Gianni doesn't read syntax articles.'
- (11) Spanish:  
Juan no lee artículos de sintaxis.  
Juan NEG read articles of syntax  
'Juan does not read syntax articles.'

This chapter aims to provide a descriptive observation of these four types of negation and related phenomena, focusing on languages such as English, Korean, Italian, Norwegian, etc. In particular, it concentrates on the following issues.

- What are the main ways of expressing sentential negation or negating a sentence or clause in these languages?
- What are the distributional possibilities of negative markers for sentential negation in these languages in relation to other main constituents of the sentence?
- What do the answers to these two questions imply for the theory of grammar?

The types of negation discussed in the chapter are identical in that they negate a sentence or clause in the given language. The chapter, providing a in-depth review of the morpho-syntactic properties in negation, also tries to discuss the question of if the semantic uniformity of negation entails that there is a universal functional category like Neg (cf. Pollock 1987) that, interacting with other grammatical constraints such as movement operations, allows all their distributional possibilities. It will also touch the issue of capturing the peculiar properties of each type of negation: Each individual language has its own way of expressing negation, and further has its own restrictions in the surface realizations of negation which can hardly be reduced to one uniform category.

## 2 Factors Determining the Distribution of Negation

This section discusses four main types of sentential negation across languages: morphological, auxiliary, adverbial, and negative verb. The main languages cover here include Korean, Japanese, English, Finnish, French, Swedish, Italian, and Spanish. The chapter will discuss empirical facts about the modes of expressing sentential negation and their distributional possibilities with respect to other expressions in the given sentence.

## **2.1 Morphological negation**

## **2.2 Auxiliary verb negation**

## **2.3 Adverbial negation**

## **2.4 Negative verb**

# **3 Theoretical analyses**

## **3.1 Syntax-based analyses**

## **3.2 Lexical-based analyses**

## **3.3 Construction-based analyses**

The four types of negation we have reviewed in the previous section are semantically identical in that they all crucially contribute to converting a given sentence A into another sentence B such that B is true whenever A is false. Then, the question that immediately arises is whether or not we can postulate a universal grammatical category based on this semantic concept.

Many current syntactic views of negation (Pollock 1989, Belletti 1990, Ouhalla 1990, Zanuttini 1991, Laka 1990, Haegeman 1995, among others) have been couched in the derivational view in which morphology can be generated by syntax and the surface structure position of negation is determined by constraints on movement and structure. However, empirical facts we observe from the negation of several languages including Korean, English, French and Italian shows that the evidence for the existence of the uniform syntactic category, Neg, and its maximal projection, NegP, is neither empirically nor theoretically well-grounded. The second view is lexicalist analyses assuming that morphology and syntax are independent and the surface possibilities of syntactic elements including negation are derived from lexical properties and surface structure constraints (Lapointe 1980, Di Sciullo and Williams 1987, Simpson 1991, Bresnan and Mchombo 1995, Sells 1995, Kim and Sag 2002, among others). The third view is a construction-based approach. Challenging derivational views and solving issues arising from the purely lexicalist approaches, the construction view could offer a new direction to account for the variety of properties we find in the four main types of negation across languages.

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