

Locations and situations. On the interaction of negation and finiteness in Avar

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Introduction

Problem statement

- Avar negation is expressed differently depending on tense

Aim

- A preliminary account of Avar negation

Background on Avar

Sociogeographic profile

- Avar-Andic (Northeast Caucasian)
- about 800,000 speakers

Linguistic profile

- morphological ergativity
- head-finality
- free word order
- agglutinative

Affirmative sentences

Present tense

- (1) *murad w-ač'-una*
Murad.ABS M-come-PRS
'Murad is coming.'

Ditto for FUT.

Past tense

- (2) *murad w-ač'-ana*
Murad.ABS M-come-PST
'Murad has come.'

Negative sentences

Present tense

- (3) *murad w-ač'-una-ro*
Murad.ABS M-come-PRS-NEG
'Murad is not coming.'

Past tense

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

Summary

We have at least two problems:

1. Two distinct negation **markers**
2. Two kinds of **stems** hosting the two markers

And at least two analytic options

1. A *morphotactic* explanation ([Arregi & Nevins 2012](#))
 - A random constraint is responsible for the absence of tense features on the nominalisation as well as a different shape of the negation marker
2. A *semantic* explanation ([Ramchand & Svenonius 2014](#))
 - There is a semantic explanation for the morphosyntactic phenomena at hand

Proposal

- Past tense negation is a negative existential statement (cf. [Salanova 2007](#) for Mebengokre)

The verb is a nominalisation

It can occur in argument positions

(5) [*mun w-ač'- in- aldasa*] *rak'boχana dir*
2SG:ABS M-COME-NMLZ-SUPEL gladden.PST ISG:GEN

'Your arrival has made me happy.'

The negation marker is a negative copula

A locative statement

- (6) *rasul šahar-al- da hečo*
 RasuL.ABS city- OBL-LOC COP:NEG:PRS
 ‘Rasul is not in town.’

Background assumptions

From Ramchand and Svenonius (2014)

- vPs denote events, TPs denote situations, CPs denote propositions
- sentential negation combines with situations

Negation in Avar non-past tenses

Sentential negation marker *-ro* combines with a situation corresponding to TP:

- (7) *murad w-ač-una-ro*
 Murad.ABS M-come-PRS-NEG
 ‘Murad is not coming.’

and returns a set of negated situations:

- (8) $[[\alpha-ro]] = \lambda s. \neg [[\alpha]]^g(s)$

(The denotation above is from [Kratzer 2012](#), and I’m aware of its problems but it’ll do for now.)

Negated past tense isn’t past tense

- (9) *murad w-ač-in-č’o*
 Murad.ABS M-come-NMLZ-NEG
 ‘Murad hasn’t come.’

It is a locative or existential structure

≈ ‘The event of Murad arriving isn’t there.’

Structure of Avar nominalisations

- Root-based nominalisations are vP-nominalisations
- All arguments are introduced inside the nominalisation
- Case assignment is negotiated internally to the nominalisation
- Agreement is also licensed inside vP
- Avar nominalisations are event descriptions

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

Semantic value of the negative copula

- Don't know yet but presumably it'll take (10) as one of its arguments and return a set of propositions denying its existence.

Concluding remarks

- We have shown how the combination of a nominalisation and *-č'o* can be derived and interpreted
- We haven't been able to address the question why past tense forms cannot combine with *-ro*

References

- Arregi, Karlos & Andrew Nevins. 2012. *Morphotactics: Basque Auxiliaries and the Structure of Spellout* (Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 86). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
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- Ramchand, Gillian & Peter Svenonius. 2014. Deriving the functional hierarchy. *Language Sciences*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2014.06.013>.
- Salanova, Andrés Pablo. 2007. *Nominalizations and aspect*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology PhD thesis. <http://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/41697>.