

The Ban on TNIs: the case of Georgian

I. True Negative Imperatives. According to Zanuttini (1994), imperatives can be divided into two types depending on their formation. The True Negative Imperatives (TNI) are formed by negating the imperative form, while ‘surrogate’ or ‘suppletive’ negative imperatives instead use a verbal form from another paradigm, e.g. the subjunctive. In most Slavic languages TNIs are grammatical; in most Romance languages they are ill formed and a suppletive imperative has to be used.

(1) TNI

Nie pracuj!
NEG work.2SG.IMP
‘Don’t work!’

Polish

(2) Non-TNI

*_i*No lee!*
NEG read.2SG.IMP
‘Don’t read’

Spanish

An important role in identification of semantic and syntactic characteristics of negation markers plays negative concord. NC has two subtypes: strict and non-strict (Giannakidou 2000). For languages with strict NC it is characteristic to have obligatory multiple negations, while for languages with non-strict NC the presence of a negation marker depends on the word order of the clause. This observation was primarily made basing on comparison between Romance and Slavic languages. For instance, in Polish the presence of the negative marker is obligatory (in 3), while in Spanish NC (3) depends on the position of negative indefinite:

(3) Polish (Haspelmath 1997)

Nikt nie przyszedł
nobody neg.came
‘Nobody came’

(4) Spanish (Haspelmath 1997)

a. *Nadie *(no) vino*
nobody neg came
‘Nobody came’

b. *No vi a nadie*
neg saw to nobody
‘I didn’t see anybody’

Basing on the typological facts about NC, Zeijlstra (2013) makes conclusions on semantic and syntactic features of negation in languages with strict and non-strict NC: negative markers in strict NC languages are semantically uninterpretable and have a [uNeg] feature, while in non-strict NC languages they are interpretable and carry [iNeg] feature.

According to Zeijlstra, non-strict NC prohibit TNIs, while languages with strict NC can allow them. This conclusion comes from obligatory V-to-C movement in imperatives. If negative marker is a syntactic head and is semantically negative, as it is the case with non-strict NC languages, then it cannot move to C as it would outscope of the negation then (negating illocutionary features is forbidden). For this reason, TNIs would be banned in non-strict NC languages. In this paper, I present data from Georgian, which is a non-strict negative concord language (Auwera et al. 2016) but nevertheless exhibits TNIs

II. The case of Georgian. Georgian has several ways of forming imperative statements, but all forms are ‘borrowed’ from other verb paradigms (aorist, present indefinite or future optative):

- a. *ga-a-k’et-o-t*
PRV.2SG-do-OPT
‘Do!’
- b. *ga-gzavni-t*
PRV.2SG-send-3SG
‘Send!’
- c. *a-ašen-e*
PRV-build-AOR
‘Build!’

Depending on the grammatical and semantic features of the formed imperative, Georgian imperatives employ one of the two negative markers: *nu* (6) or *ara* (7). *Nu* is a negation with a habitual meaning. It is used in imperative sentences only, while *ara* is also a general negation that is widely used in other paradigms.

- (6) *Ara še-m-č’am-o!*
NEG PRV-1SG.do-eat-II.OPT
‘Do not eat me’
- (7) *Nu še-m-č’am*
NEG PRV-1SG.do-eat
‘Do not eat me’

It is possible to participate in NC for both negation markers. As (8) and (9) show, Georgian exhibits Non-strict NC.

- (8) *Ara-sodes ara-peri ga-a-k’et-o-t*
NEG-ever NEG-thing PRV.2SG-do-OPT
‘Never do anything’
- (9) *Nu ga-gzavni-t nursed*
NEG PRV.2-send-3SG nowhere
‘Don’t send it anywhere’

Georgian imperative forms can be easily negated. Hence, following the definition of TNI introduced by Zanuttini (1994) one can argue that Georgian has true imperatives. Following the proposal of Han (2001) and Zeijlstra (2013), the verb carries an [IMP] feature. In example (6) *ara* takes a X0 position. This negation marker has [iNeg] feature, hence, cannot be located in C0 or SpecCP. For this reason, negation marker appears lower and moves together with the verb after merge; then the illocutionary force must be checked. This force is encoded into SpecNeg, an Op (the operator that contains illocutionary force) takes the scope from C0. After checking this feature, the negated verb and the negation marker move to the C0. The similar process happens with the imperative negated by *nu* in example (7). *Nu* cannot appear high in the tree and moves to C0 position together with the verb it merged with. V-to-C movement is triggered by illocutionary force of the clause.

Due to grammatical rules of Georgian, these sentences demand different negation markers. The imperatives can still be considered TNIs; at the same time, the sentences do exhibit Non-strict NC. This entails that both negation markers would carry [iNeg] feature and would be semantically interpretable. Hence, the following data is contrary to the proposition in Zeijlstra (2013).

References

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