

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

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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:

- Two distinct negation **markers**
- Two kinds of **stems** hosting the two markers

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And at least two analytic options:

- A *morphotactic* explanation (Arregi & Nevins 2012)
- A *semantic* explanation (Ramchand & Svenonius 2014)

Proposal

- Past tense negation is a negative existential statement (cf. Salanova 2007 for Meben-gokre)

The verb is a nominalisation

It can occur in argument positions

(5) [*mun w-ač- in- aldasa*] *rak'bo ana dir*
2SG:ABS M-COME-NMLZ-SUPEL gladden.PST 1SG:GEN

'Your arrival has made me happy.'

The negation marker is a negative copula

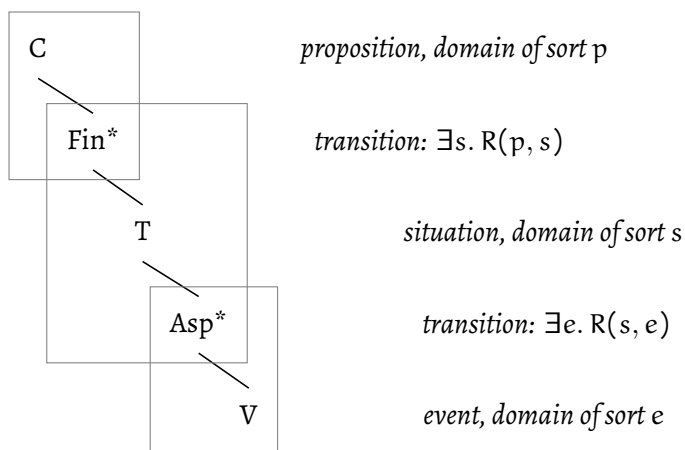
Locative

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

Possessive

- (7) *rasuli-l ladi hečo*
 Ali- GEN wife.ABS COP:NEG:PRS
 ‘Ali hasn’t got a wife.’

Assumptions (Ramchand and Svenonius 2014)



Negation in Avar non-past tenses

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

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

and returns a set of negated situations:

- (9) $\llbracket \alpha\text{-ro} \rrbracket = \lambda s. \neg \llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^g(s)$

(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

(10) *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

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

Semantic value of the negative copula

- Don't know yet but presumably it'll take (11) 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*