

Expletive negation in Middle Hungarian
 Katalin Gugán
 Hungarian Research Institute for Linguistics
 gugan@nytud.hu

The present paper describes two types of contexts in which expletive negation (EN) was licensed in Middle Hungarian,¹ and claims that these two types cannot be given a uniform syntactic analysis, as they display different syntactic properties, and are also affected differently in a later period of change. The data stem from proceedings of witch trials and private letters included in the Diachronic Corpus of Informal Language Use (tmk.nytud.hu).

Middle Hungarian had two types of contexts in which EN appeared. In one type, it is a matrix predicate that triggers EN in the subordinate clause; negative SAY-verbs verbs such as ‘deny’ (3) and ‘forbid’, and predicates associated with negative emotion as ‘it is to be feared that’ (4) or ‘doubt’ make up this group. The inherently negative matrix verb in these constructions does not have scope over its complement, therefore the whole construction has a (single) negative meaning. It also needs to be mentioned that use of EN is optional with these matrix predicates (3). In Modern Hungarian, these matrix predicates do not license EN; examples like (1) would be interpreted as affirmative as a result of double negation.

- (1) tagadta hogy nem adott, (1743: Bosz. 420)
 deny.pst.3sg>sg that NEG give.pst3sg
 ‘She denied having given’
- (2) féltő, az Isten is el ne hagyjon. (1698: Bark. 5)
 fear.prsptcp the God also PV PROH leave.conj.3sg
 ‘I fear God would also leave us.’
- (3) Tagadgya hogy Sopori Janos Feleség hét Tánczba hitta(1743: Bosz. 289)
 deny.prs3sg>sg that Szopori János wife.3sg.acc dance.ill call.pst3sg
 ‘He denies having asked János Szopori’s wife to dance.’

EN appearing in this context shares the characteristics of ordinary sentential negation in Middle Hungarian: a) it licenses negative indefinites (4); b) clauses with EN display word order variation that is characteristic of Middle Hungarian negative sentences, that is, besides the word order pattern verb modifier (VM) – negator (NEG) – verb (V) that is dominant in this period (1), the pattern NEG – V – VM is also attested among them (5).

- (4) akkor tagadta ugyan, hogy nem cselekedett semmit, (1741: Bosz. 277)
 then deny.pst3sg>sg though that not do.pst3sg nothing.acc
 ‘Though then she denied having done anything.’
- (5) tagadta ugyan elsőben
 deny.pst.3sg>sg though first.loc
 hogy eő nem vesztette megh, (1745: Bosz. 290)
 that she NEG curse.pst.3sg>sg PV
 ‘Though she denied first having cursed her’

As only the latter, much rarer word order pattern seems to have been compatible with certain particles placing special emphasis on negation, this suggests that the second word order pattern could instantiate emphatic negation; in the case of matrix predicates licensing EN, this would mean that their complement can also feature emphatic negation. All in all, the syntactic analyses proposed for the two types of negative constructions in Old Hungarian (É. Kiss 2014) could be applied to these Middle Hungarian EN data as well. There are several potential ways to account for such constructions semantically, e.g. the mental fusion of two contradictory propositions (Horn 2010a, referred to in Salminen 2018: 7), or that the complement expresses the content of the inherently negative matrix verb (Salminen 2018: 9).

The other context licensing EN in Middle Hungarian features this in Modern Hungarian as well: this is the subtype of *until*-sentences, i.e. in which it is a temporal connective that triggers the use of EN. Similarly to the previous type, EN was not obligatory in this context either.

¹ Spoken between 1526–1772; these boundaries are, naturally, symbolic.

- (6) mindaddigh ott ült migh a Nemetek
 throughout there sit.pst3sg until the German.pl
 el nem mentek. (1723: Bosz. 39)
 away not go.pst.3pl
 ‘She sat there until the Germans left.’
- (7) Míg eljöt, csak úgy kínlódtam. (1706: Bark. 144)
 until PV.come.pst3sg only that.way suffer.3sg
 ‘I was suffering until he came.’

EN in *until*-clauses differs from ordinary sentential negation in two respects: a) there are no attested examples of negative indefinites in *until*-clauses ([8] is an *until*-clause featuring EN and an indefinite pronoun), b) these only display the word order pattern VM – Neg – V, that is, if the assumption regarding the functional difference between the two word order patterns is correct, negation in *until*-clauses cannot be emphatic.

- (8) addig ki nem ereszti,
 that.till PV NEG let.prs.3sg>sg
 még nem segít valamit a Tanún. (1754: Bosz. 158)
 until NEG help something.acc the witness.sup
 ‘He won’t let her out until she gives some help to the witness.’

With respect to Modern Hungarian, Piñón (1991) contrasts VM – NEG – V (9a) and NEG – V – VM patterns (9b) in *until*-clauses, and claims that in (9a), the subordinate clause describes an interval that is coterminous with the temporal interval of the main clause, whereas in (9b), the temporal clause gives the endpoint of the main clause situation.² On this account, negation is mandatory with perfective predicates in *until*-clauses, as *amíg* ‘until’, according to Pinon, is only compatible with imperfective predicates, and negation acts as a stativizer of the perfective predicate of the subordinate clause. The endpoint-interpretation in (9b) arises from the conventional implicature associated with *amíg*.

- (9a) Addig olvastam, amíg János nem feküdt le.
 that.till read.pst.1sg until John NEG lie.pst3sg PV
 ‘I read while John was not lying down.’
- (9b) Addig olvastam, amíg János le nem feküdt.
 that.till read.pst.1sg until John PV NEG lie.pst3sg
 ‘I read until John lay down.’

In Ürögdi’s analysis (2009), (9a)-type constructions are also accounted for by the stativizing function of ordinary sentential negation. However, type (9b) is given a different analysis. Ürögdi shows that negation in this type of construction cannot affect the aspectual interpretation of the clause in a similar fashion, as these constructions are compatible with punctual adverbials. Negation in this case is assumed to undergo LF-movement into a higher operator position in the left periphery, outside the TP-domain. According to Ürögdi, raising accounts for the inability of this kind of negation to license negative indefinites (and other special properties of this construction).

When comparing Middle and Modern Hungarian *until*-clauses, the following differences and similarities are apparent: a) The construction with a perfective verb without a negative marker (as in 7) has been retained in modern Hungarian as well (although there are significant dialectal differences in its acceptability), that is, EN remained optional at least in some variants of Hungarian with *amíg*; b) NEG – V – VM in *amíg*-clauses (as in 9a) can be assumed to be an innovation compared to Middle Hungarian; c) Whereas VM – NEG – V is an exceptional pattern in Modern Hungarian, this was associated with ordinary negation in Middle Hungarian. Still, VM – NEG – V *until*-clauses differed from ‘ordinary’ VM – NEG – V clauses in a similar fashion as in Modern Hungarian in that the former type does not admit negative indefinites. It remains to be seen (if it is possible at all to test) whether LF-movement can account for this in Middle Hungarian as well.

References

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² It is important to note that in Modern Hungarian, sentential negation regularly features the pattern NEG – V – VM.

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