

# Expletive Negation in Exclamatives - Evidence from Hungarian

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## Introduction

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## What is Expletive Negation?

- Expletive Negation: negative marker seems to have no truth-conditional effect on interpretation:

(1) *Je crains qu'elle **ne** vienne.*

I fear that'she not come.SUBJ.3SG

'I am afraid that she comes.'

(2) *Che cosa **non** mi a detto Gianni!*

what thing not to.me has told John

'What (surprising) things John told me!'

(3) *Gianni è più alto di quanto **non** sia Maria.*

Gianni is taller than of how.much not be.SUBJ.3SG Maria.

'John is taller than Mary.'

## Expletive Negation: The Big Questions

- Is expletive negation really negation?
- If so, what is being negated?
- If not, what is going on?
- Does the negative marker occupy the same syntactic position in expletive negation and in standard negation?
- Is there some mapping between the syntactic position of the negative marker and its interpretation (standard negation vs. expletive negation vs. metalinguistic negation)?

- Expletive negation in wh-exclamatives:

(4) *(hogy) János miket el **nem** olvasott!*

that John what.PL PRT not read

'What (surprising, unexpected) things John has read!'

- Expletive negation in surprise negation sentences:

(5) *(hát) **nem** el felejtettem a PIN-kódomat!*

well not PRT forgot.1SG the PIN-code.my

'I forgot my PIN-code! (unexpectedly)'

- Provide a syntactic (and semantic-pragmatic) account for Expletive Negation in wh-exclamatives and in surprise negation sentences in Hungarian
- Fill an empirical gap by looking at both syntax and semantics/pragmatics and by looking at various types of expletive negation
- See if this gets us closer to an answer to the Big Questions
- Spell out how our findings fit with current claims in the literature

### Espinal (2000)

The negative marker occupies the same syntactic position in Standard as well as Expletive Negation (Neg<sup>0</sup> of NegP above TP)

### Greco (2019)

Negator merged in v\*P phase gets us Standard Negation, negator merged in CP phase gets us Expletive Negation. (Caveat: only examined Surprise Negation Sentences.)

### Delfitto, Melloni and Vender (2019)

Expletive negation is a truth-value reversal operation just like Standard Negation, with the difference that it operates on presuppositions and implicatures, not the assertion itself. (Caveat: syntactic analysis left for later work.)



## Hungarian has 3 negation positions:

[TopP\* ... [SDP nem ... [NegP nem ... [TP [nem+T<sup>0</sup> ... ]]]]]

EN (SNEGs) SN

EN (wh-excl. a.o.)

## There is a mapping between syntax and semantics:

- High Neg position (Spec,SDP): negation at the level of presuppositions  
(Expletive Negation in surprise negation sentences)
- Middle Neg position (Spec,NegP): negation at the level of propositions  
(Standard Negation)
- Low Neg position (head-adjunction to T<sup>0</sup>): negation at the level of implicatures  
(Expletive Negation in wh-exclamatives a.o.)

## General Overview of Data



**Verb – verbal particle inversion:** negation-induced movement of V to Neg<sup>0</sup>  
(Surányi 2002) or NN<sup>0</sup> (Olsvay 2000, É. Kiss 2008):

(6) a. *János el olvasott sok könyvet.*

John PRT read many book

'John read many books.'

b. *János nem olvasott el sok könyvet.*

John not read PRT many book

'John did not read many books.'

(7) [**TopP** János [**NegP** nem [**NNP** olvasott [**TP** el olvasott János sok könyvet]]]]]

(8) *(hogy) János miket el (nem) olvasott!*

that John what.PL PRT not read

'What (surprising, unexpected) things John has read!'

- optionally introduced by the complementizer *hogy* 'that'
- no verb – verbal particle inversion
- negator wedged between the verbal particle and the verb

## Expletive Negation in Surprise Negation Sentences (SNEGs)

(9) *(hát) János nem el olvasott egy könyvet!?*

well John not PRT read a book

'John read a book! (surprisingly, as no one expected him to read a book)'

- the complementizer *hogy* 'that' is not allowed, only the discourse particle *hát* 'well' expressing surprise/hesitation
- no verb – verbal particle inversion, negator precedes verbal particle

### Interim summary:

- **Standard Negation: Neg V PRT**
- **Expletive Negation (wh-excl.): PRT Neg V**
- **Expletive Negation (SNEGs): Neg PRT V**

## Surprise Negation Sentences

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## Surprise Negation Sentences - A Detailed Look I.

(10) *(hát) János nem otthon felejtette a kulcsát!?*

well John not at.home left the key.his

'John left his keys at home! (surprisingly)'

(11) *(hát) János nem el felejtette nekem a találkozót!?*

well John not PRT forgot me the meeting

'John forgot the meeting on me! (surprisingly)'

(12) *(hát) János nem el ütött valakit/\*senkit!?*

well John not PRT hit somebody/nobody

'John hit someone! (surprisingly)'

- particular intonational pattern: blend of exclamative and question
- Ethical Dative (11)
- the negation is propositionally inert, it does not allow NPIs (12)
- We adopt DMV's proposal: EN in SNEGs negates the presupposition that the proposition is a member of the set of propositions likely to be true.

### Topicalization

- (13) a. *Hát nem el vesztette a kulcsát János!?*  
well not PRT lost the key.his John
- b. *Hát János nem el vesztette a kulcsát!?*  
well John not PRT lost the key.his
- c. *\*Hát nem János el vesztette a kulcsát!?*  
well not John PRT lost the key.his  
'John lost his keys! (surprisingly)'

### Sentence adverbials

- (14) *Hát erre véletlenül nem le vertem a poharat!?*  
well then accidentally not down beat the glass  
'Then I accidentally smashed the glass! (surprisingly)'



## Surprise Negation Sentences - A Detailed Look III.

### Focusing

(15) *Hát nem pont a helyemre parkolt le!?*

well not exactly the place.my.unto parked PRT

'It was exactly in my spot that he parked his car! (surprisingly)'

### Standard and Expletive Negation: evidence against a raising analysis

(16) *Csak azért jöttem ma be az intézetbe, hogy találkozzak*

just because came today PRT the institute.into that meet

*a professzorral, hát erre nem (pont ma) nem jött be!?*

the professor.with well then not exactly today not came PRT

'The only reason I came to the institute today was to meet the professor, and it was exactly today that she did not come! (surprisingly)'

### The negator is above the quantifier field:

- (17) *Nyomatékosan meg kértem minden diákomat, hogy ma jöjjön*  
Strongly PRT asked every student.my that today come  
*be az órára: Hát erre nem ketten is pont ma nem*  
PRT the class.onto well then not two too today not came  
*jöttek be!?*  
PRT

'I asked all my students emphatically that today they should visit the class: well as many as two of them skipped the class exactly today! (surprisingly)'

## Position of expletive negator in surprise negation sentences:

- precedes standard negators (NegP)
- precedes focused elements (FocP)
- precedes preverbal quantifiers (QP)
- follows topics (TopP) and sentence adverbials (also in the topic field)

## Stress-assignment: Neg in surprise negation sentences is predicate-external:

- (18) a. *Mari 'nem jött el.*  
Mary not came PRT  
'Mary did not come.'
- b. *(hát) Mari 'nem 'el jött!*  
well Mary not PRT came  
'Mary did come. (surprisingly)'

Proposed structure: [TopP\* [XP nem [QP [FocP [NegP [TP ... ]]]]]]

- **Similar** to Greco (2019)'s analysis: the negator is externally merged outside the extended VP (note though that this will turn out to be the correct analysis for surprise negation sentences only).
- **Different** from Greco (2019)'s analysis: focusing is perfectly OK in Hungarian surprise negation sentences, and there is no indication that the whole VP is focused.
- **Question:** What is X in XP?

## ... a dedicated functional projection?

Potential candidate: **Speaker Deixis Phrase** (Haegeman 2006, É. Kiss 2010)

(cf. also TypeP in Gyuris & Gärtner 2012). **Pros:**

- exactly the right position: {TopP\*|sentence adverbial\*} > **SDP** > Predicate
- EN in surprise negation sentences is closely connected to the point of view of the speaker and it has an evaluative function
- Abels (2005): Neg in EN is adjoined to an evaluative mood head: in SNEGs, EN might flip evaluation from likely to unlikely

## ... adjunction?

- **Pros:** might fit with Surányi (2002)'s analysis of Metalinguistic Neg.
- **Cons:** Expletive N  $\neq$  Metalinguistic N neither in SNEGs nor in general

## Wh-Exclamatives

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- (19) *(hogy) János miket el (nem) olvasott!*  
that John what.PL.ACC PRT not read.PAST.3SG  
'What (surprising, unexpected) things John has read!'

- optionally introduced by the complementizer *hogy* 'that'
- no verb – verbal particle inversion
- negator wedged between the verbal particle and the verb

### Two conditions for the (optional) availability of EN:

- **Scalarity on an external level** (Nouwen & Chernilovskaya 2015): an event is compared to alternative events

**External scalarity:** event on a scale with alternative events (20)

**Internal scalarity:** wh-referent on a scale wrt to property (21)

(20) *(Hogy) mik meg (nem) történnek!*

that what.PL PRT not happen

'What surprising things happen!'

(21) *(Hogy) milyen ügyesen (\*nem) táncolsz!*

that how well not dance

'Just how well you are dancing!'



### Availability of a non-episodic (possibly universal or generic) reading:

- (22) a. *\*?(hogy) mi meg **nem** történik!*  
that what PRT not happens  
'What a (surprising) thing happens!'
- b. *(hogy) mik meg **nem** történnek!*  
that what.PL PRT not happens  
'What (surprising) things happen!'
- c. *(hogy) mi minden meg **nem** történik! (cf. Bartos 2020)*  
that what all PRT not happens  
'What (surprising) things happen!'
- d. *(hogy) mi meg **nem** történik manapság!*  
that what PRT not happens these.days  
'What (surprising) things happen these days!'

## Position of the wh-phrase:

- Following Lipták (2006), we assume that in wh-exclamatives the wh-expression is moved to a **quantifier position** (manyP / QP):  
[CP [TopP [**QP wh** [TP ]]]]
- This is in line with the observation that the wh-phrase has a **quantificational interpretation**: plural, universal or generic

## Position of the negator:

- We argue that instead of heading its own projection, as it does in the case of standard negation, it is rather **adjoined to the T head**:  
[CP hogy [TopP János [QP miket [TP el [T' [**T<sup>0</sup> nem olvasott**] [VP ]]]]]]  
that John what.PL PRT not read

- É. Kiss (2015) proposed the same structure to account for the word order properties of standard negation in **Old Hungarian**.
- Hungarian is in this respect similar to **French**, where in the course of **Negative Cycle**, the old, abandoned morphosyntactic configuration has been repurposed as the locus of EN:

(25) a. *Elle ne vient pas.*

she not comes not

'She does not come.' (SN)

b. *Je crains qu'elle ne vienne.*

I fear that'she not come.SUBJ.3SG

'I am afraid that she comes.' (EN)

- Exclamatives are **factive**: they cannot be embedded under non-factive predicates (26):

(26) \**Úgy tudom, hogy hány filmet meg néztél!* (Lipták 2006)  
so know.1SG that how.many film PRT watched  
'I know that how many films you have watched!'

- Exclamatives convey a **conventional implicature** that the proposition is **on the top of a scale of alternative propositions** in terms of noteworthiness or surprise factor (Portner & Zanuttini 2000)
- We follow DMV (2019) in assuming that in wh-exclamatives (and in general – except surprise negation sentences), „EN corresponds to **pre-encoding implicature cancellation** syntactically.”

(27) *Mari miket meg (nem) tesz a diákjaiért!*

Mary what.PL PRT not does the student.3SG.PL.for

'What (extreme) things Mary does for her students!'

In (27) there is a **set of things** Mary might do for her students: {a, b, c, ... z}

**Assertion:** Mary does some things (e.g. {a,b,c}) for her students

**Implicature:** Mary does not do the other things {d, e, f...} and certainly not everything {a to z} for her students

**EN** cancels this implicature, giving us the quasi-universal reading: Mary does more things for her students than one would expect, potentially even everything

## Theoretical Implications

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## Hungarian has 3 negation positions:

[TopP\* ... [SDP nem ... [NegP nem ... [TP [nem+T<sup>0</sup> ... ]]]]]

EN (SNEGs) SN

EN (wh-excl. a.o.)

## There is a mapping between syntax and semantics:

- High Neg position (Spec,SDP): negation at the level of presuppositions  
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## Implications of the Proposed Analysis

- Expletive Negation in Hungarian is not a case of raising (cf. Abels 2005 on Russian)
- Expletive Negation in surprise negation sentences involves the external merge of a negator in the topic field, but it does not involve focusing of the VP (cf. Greco 2019)
- Greco (2019)'s phase-theoretic account for surprise negation sentences does not carry over to expletive negation in general in Hungarian
- special negation sentences seem to be different from the other types of expletive negation (wh-excl., until-clauses etc.): different semantic-pragmatic effect (noted by DMV 2019) and different syntax (shown here)



- Abels, Klaus. 2005. 'Expletive negation' in Russian: A Conspiracy Theory. *Journal of Slavic Linguistics* 13. 5-74. | Delfitto, D., C. Melloni, M. Vender. 2019. The (en)rich(ed) Meaning of Expletive Negation. *Evolutionary Linguistic Theory* 1: 57 – 89. | Espinal, M. T. 2000. Expletive Negation, Negative Concord and Feature Checking. *Catalan Working Papers in Linguistics*; Vol.: 8. 8. | É. Kiss, K. 2008. Tagadás vagy egyeztetés? A senki, semmi típusú névmásokról [Negation or concord? On the senki 'nobody', semmi 'nothing' type pronouns]. *Magyar Nyelv* 104: 129-143. | É. Kiss, K. 2010. An Adjunction Analysis of Quantifiers and Adverbials in the Hungarian Sentence, *Lingua* 120 506-526. | É.Kiss, K. 2015. Negation in Hungarian. In: Matti, M., Tamm, A., Wagner-Nagy, B. (eds.). *Negation in Uralic Languages*. John Benjamins. Amsterdam. 219 – 238. | Gärtner, H-M., Gyuris, B. 2012. Pragmatic Markers in Hungarian: Some Introductory Remarks. *Acta Linguistica Hungarica*, 59 (4). pp. 387-426. | Greco, M. 2019. On the Syntax of Surprise Segation Sentences: A Case Study on Expletive Negation. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*. DOI: 10.1007/s11049-019-09459-6. | Gyuris, B. 2016. A magyar nyelv tagadószós eldöntendő kérdő mondatainak jelentéséhez. *Jelentés és Nyelvhasználat* 3: 169–190. | Haegeman, L., 2006. Conditionals, Factives, and the Left Periphery. *Lingua* 116, 1651–1669. | Horn, L. 1989. *A Natural History of Negation*. Chicago, IL. University of Chicago Press. | Kálmán, L. (ed.). 2001. *Magyar leíró nyelvtan: Mondattan I*. Tinta Könyvkiadó, Budapest. | Lipták, A. 2006. Word Order in Hungarian Exclamatives. *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* 53: 343–391. | Nouwen, R., Chernilovskaya, A. 2015. Two Types of Exclamatives. *Linguistic Variation* 15:2, pp.201-224. | Olsvay, Cs. 2000. *A Syntactic Analysis of Negative Universal Quantifiers in Hungarian*. MA Thesis, ELTE, Budapest. | Simonyi, Zs. 1902. A magyar szórend VI.: A kirekesztő (tagadó) szórend. *Magyar Nyelvőr* 31:359 – 79. | Surányi, B. 2002. *Multiple Operator Movements in Hungarian*. PhD Dissertation, Utrecht: LOT. | Ürögdi, B. 2013. Adverbial clauses with-ig and the "Until-puzzle". *Acta Linguistica Hungarica*. 60. 303-363. 10.1556/ALing.60.2013.3.3. | Zanuttini, R., Portner, P. 2000. The Characterization of Exclamative Clauses in Paduan. *Language*. 76. 10.2307/417396.

**Thank you for your kind attention!**

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### Externally negated questions (Gyuris 2016) vs. SNEGs:

(28) a. *Hát 'János 'nem el utazott?*

well John not PRT travelled

'Was it not our common knowledge that John had travelled away?'

b. *Hát 'János 'nem 'el utazott!?*

well John not PRT travelled

'Well John travelled away! (surprisingly)'

- the neg particle occupies a **similar**, predicate-external **structural position** in both, but their **prosody is different**
- SNEGs **assert** p whereas questions do not
- **Ethical Dative**: SNEGs only, **-e** particle: questions only

## Aside I. - Externally Negated Questions

- silent matrix clause hyp. (Gyuris 2016, Simonyi 1902) **untenable** in SNEGS:

- (29) a. *Hát János nem (úgy volt, hogy) el utazott?*  
well John not like was that PRT travelled  
'Was it not supposed to be the case that John had travelled away?'
- b. *\*?Hát János nem (az történt, hogy) el utazott?*  
well John not that happened that PRT travelled  
'Well what happened was that John had travelled away!  
(surprisingly)'

### Metalinguistic negation (Surányi 2002):

- (30) *János nem fel hívott valakit/\*senkit, hanem föl hívott*  
John not PRT called somebody/nobody but.rather PRT called  
*valakit/\*senkit.*  
somebody/nobody

'John did not call somebody, he called somebody!'

- (31) *\*Nem János fel hívott valakit, hanem János föl hívott*  
not John PRT called somebody but.rather John PRT called  
*valakit.*  
somebody

'John did not call somebody, he called somebody!'

- (32) *Nem **nem** jött el, hanem meg halt.* (Surányi 2003:116, fn.15)  
not not came PRT but.rather PRT died  
'He did not not come, he actually died!'

### Similarities between EN and MN:

- lack of VM-V inversion
- non-licensing of NPIs and acceptability of PPIs (30)
- *nem* has to be below TopP (30 and 31)
- can be combined with SN (32)

### Differences between EN and MN:

- SNEGS lack the **corrective-contrastive flavour** (Horn 1989: not X but Y) evident in MN
- In MN, the contrasted-corrected element is **focused** (either focused-moved or in-situ), no such obligatory focusing in SNEGS
- MN and SNEG-EN **cannot be present together**, but this may be due pragmatic reasons (corrective vs. surprise-exclamative)

(33) a. *Hát 'nem 'le ejtette a tányért!?*

well not PRT dropped the plate

'He dropped the plate! (surprisingly)'

b. *Nem LE EJTETTE a tányért, hanem FÖLDHÖZ VÁGTA.*

not PRT dropped the plate but.rather ground.to cut

'He did not drop the plate, he throw it to the ground.'

## Minor remark I: Copula+Neg incorporation: Not just a matter of PF?

The 3rd person present tense indicative copula is **incorporated** into the Neg particle:

- (34) a. *János nem volt otthon.*  
John not was at.home  
'John was not at home.'
- b. *\*János nem van otthon.*  
John not is at.home  
'John is not at home.'
- c. *János nincs otthon.*  
John not.is at.home  
'John is not at home.'



## Minor remark I: Copula+Neg incorporation: Not just a matter of PF?

Incorporation is **optional** in wh-exclamatives (35) and **impossible** in SNEGs (36):

(35) a. *(hogy) mik nincsenek!*

that what.PL not.are

What (surprising) things there are!

b. *(hogy) mik nem vannak!*

that what.PL not are

What (surprising) things there are!

(36) a. *Hát nem van egy testvérem!?* (actually attested ex.)

well not is a brother.1SG

'(It turns out) I have a brother! (unexpectedly)'

b. *#Hát nincs egy testvérem!?*

well not.is a brother.1SG

intended: '(It turns out) I have a brother! (unexpectedly)'

For some speakers of Hungarian, *nem* in the standard negation position (NegP) can also be interpreted as EN:

(37) a. *Hogy miket össze nem hordasz!* (EN, standard dialect)

well what.PL PRT not gather.2SG

'What (nonsensical) things you are saying!'

b. *Hogy miket nem hordasz össze!* (EN, innovative dialect)

well what.PL not gather.2SG PRT

'What (nonsensical) things you are saying!'

## Minor remark II: An Innovation

- In many languages (e.g. Italian acc. to DMV (2019:80-81)), SN and EN occupy the **same morphosyntactic position** and the interpretation of the negator as either SN or EN is a function of context and pragmatics.
- Gugán (this conference) has argued that this was the case in Old H.
- Modern Hungarian seems similar to French (old abandoned Neg position repurposed for EN)
- Post-Modern Hungarian may represent a return to Italian-style shared syntactic position:

	<u>Old H.</u>	<u>Modern H.</u>	<u>Post-Modern H.</u>
lower Neg (head-adj. to V)	SN, EN	EN	
higher Neg (NegP)		SN	SN, EN

### On Hungarian

- Kálmán (2001) gives a brief description of certain empirical facts (without analysis).
- Ürögdi (2013) discusses EN in *amíg* 'until' clauses but she does not discuss exclamatives.

### Gaps in the literature

- Greco (2019) makes a general syntactic claim by looking only at SNEGS, but not any other types of EN.
- Delfitto, Melloni and Vender (2019) make a general semantic-pragmatic claim (encompassing all types of EN), but leave syntactic analysis for later work.