

Domains of Negation(s) in Hungarian

Gabriella Tóth

University of Szeged

gabitoth@t-online.hu

1. Introduction

In Hungarian, negative expressions (NEs) must be licensed by the negative particle *nem* ‘not’(1). An instance of the negative particle *nem* ‘not’ can function both as propositional negation (PN) and as focus negation (FN) as in (1a and 2). PN can license both preverbal and post-verbal NEs (1a and 3). Focus Negation (FN) can only license pre-verbal NEs (4). While post-verbal NEs are assumed to remain in-situ in vP, preverbal NEs move to the specifier position of FN or PN, respectively (Olsvay 2000). FN and PN can cooccur as in (5).

- (1) a. János nem látogatott meg senkit.
János not visited perf-pfx noone
‘János did not visit anybody.’
- b. *János látogatott meg senkit.
János visited perf-pfx noone
‘János did not visit anybody.’
- (2) Nem JÁNOS látogatta meg Marit..
Not János visited perf-pfx Mari
‘Not JÁNOS visited Mari.’
- (3) János senkit nem látogatott meg
János noone not visit perf-pfx
‘János did not visit anybody.’
- (4) a. Senki nem JÁNOST látogatta meg.
Noone not JÁNOS-acc visited perf-pfx
‘It was not JOHN that noone visited.’
- b. *Nem JÁNOST látogatotta meg senki.
Not JÁNOS visited perf-pfx noone
‘It was not JOHN that noone visited.’
- (5) Nem JÁNOST nem látogatta meg senki.
Not JÁNOS not visited perf-pfx nobody
‘It was not JOHN that noone visited.’

2. Previous accounts

2.1. E. Kiss (1987)

2.1.1. Proposal

FN is constituent negation, it does not c-command NE, and cannot license NEs in vP, hence the difference between PN and FN in the licensing of post-verbal NEs.

Conclusion: Focus negation is constituent negation

2.1.1. Problem

Kenesei (2005) points out that FN cannot be constituent negation as it can license preverbal NEs that negative particles within the focussed DP cannot (6).

- (6) *Senki A MEG NEM OLDOTT FELADATOT adta be.
Nobody THE PREF. NOT SOLVED EXERCISE handed in
'Nobody handed in THE UNSOLVED EXERCISE.'

2.2. Kenesei (2005)

2.2.1. Proposal

If FN is not constituent negation, why does FN fail to license post-verbal NEs? Kenesei (2005) observes that Hungarian post-verbal NEs must be locally licensed by the negative particle in the clause. The negative particle in the matrix sentence cannot license the NE in the embedded sentence unless it moves to the specifier position of NegP headed by the negative particle as in (7) and (8).

- (7) * János nem gondolta, hogy Péter meglátogatott senkit.
János not thought that Péter pfx-visited noone
'János did not think that Péter visited noone.'

- (8) János senkit nem gondolt, hogy Péter meglátogatott.
János noone not thought that Péter pfx-visited
'János did not think that Péter visited noone.'

Kenesei (2005) argues, following (E. Kiss 2003), that focus is predicative. It creates a new predication relation, therefore it creates an independent clausal domain. On this account, whenever there is a focalised phrase in the sentence the sentence becomes biclausal. FN is in the higher clause, therefore it cannot licence NEs that are not in its specifier position.

Kenesei's conclusion: The focus (and focus negation) and post-verbal constituents are in two different clausal domains.

2.2.2. Further support for Kenesei (2005)'s analysis: The interaction of event structure and negation

PN modifies the event structure. It converts telic events into states (Verkuyl 1993). Focus negation does not modify the event structure of the sentence (cf. the contrast between (7) and (8)).

- (9)a. János egy év alatt / *egy éven át felépített egy házat.
 János a year in / a year for up-built a house
 ‘János built a house in a year/*for a year.’
- b. János %egy év alatt / egy éven át nem épített fel egy házat.
 János a year in / a year for not built up a house
 ‘János did not build a house in a year/for a year.’
- (10) Nem JÁNOS épített fel egy év alatt / % egy éven át egy házat.
 Not JÁNOS built up a year in / a year for a house
 ‘It is John who built a house in a year/*for a year.’

Conclusion: focus and event structure are encoded in two different domains
--

2.2.3. Problem

Negation of the matrix sentence can license post-verbal NEs in non-finite embedded sentences, that encodes predication relation, hence CP in Kenesei’s terms unless there is focus constituent in the embedded sentence (the contrast between (11) and (12)). The focus Phrase seems to prevent the negative particle in the matrix clause from licensing NEs in the embedded clause

- (11). János nem szándékozott meglátogatni senkit.
 János not intended pfx-visit-inf noone
 ‘János did not intend to visit noone.’
- (12) *Nem lenne jó JÁNOST meglátogatni soha.
 not would-be good JÁNOS-acc pfx-visit-inf never
 ‘It would not be good to ever visit JÁNOS.’

Conclusion: CPs are not necessarily independent domains (Chomsky 2001)
--

3. Proposal

As in a Hungarian sentence there can be two NegPs, one dominating vP (NegP_v), and another dominating FP (NegP_f), it is assumed that both vP and FP, i.e. CP-fragments whose heads are φ -complete, are strong phases in the sense of Chomsky (2001) that can have a negative/positive (polarity) extended projection (Grimshaw 1993) as part of the v and C phases, respectively.

- (13)a. [_{PolP} [_{FP} [_{TP} [_{PolP} [_{VP}]]]]]

It is shown that if a negative particle is only in PolP_f, FP is interpreted as negative. The vP, locus of the event remains affirmative. As in Verkuyl (1993), PN converts telic events into states but FN does not modify the event. When a negative particle is in PolP_v, then the event in vP is negated, hence the telic event becomes atelic. Assuming that vP (and its extended projection PolP_v) and CP (that contain FP and its extended projection PolP_f) are syntactic domains (phases (Chomsky 2001) for interpretation, then once vP (PolP_v) is created, its

content becomes inaccessible for the elements outside the vP- (PolP_v) phase. Therefore PolP_f cannot access elements in the vP domain; NEs can be licensed by Neg_f only if they move to SpecPolP_f through the edge of the extended vP.

- (14)
- a. [_{PolP} N-word not [_{FP} [_{TP} [_{PolP} [_{VP}]]]]]
 - b. [_{PolP} [_{FP} [_{TP} [_{PolP} N-word not [_{VP}]]]]]
 - c. [_{PolP} [_{FP} [_{TP} [_{PolP} not [_{VP} N-word]]]]]
 - d. * [_{PolP} not [_{FP} [_{TP} [_{PolP} [_{VP} N-word]]]]]

Conclusion: In the analysis it is claimed that vP and its extended Negative projection form a domain for the semantic interface in the v layer, while focus and its extended projection form an independent domain in the C layer. Focus negation does not access NEs in vP unless the N-word moves out through the edge of the phase to the higher phase.

References

- Chomsky, N. 2001. Derivation by phase, 1-28. Cambridge, Mass.; MITWPL, 20.
- Kenesei, I. 2005. Kettős fókusz és kettős tagadás a magyarban [Double focus and double negation in Hungarian]. Ms. Institute for Linguistics, HAS, Budapest.
- E.Kiss, K. 1986. *Configurationality in Hungarian*. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Olsvay, Cs. 2000. Negative quantifiers in the Hungarian sentence, MA Thesis, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest.
- Verkuyl, H. 1993. *A Theory of Aspectuality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.