Morphological Aspects of Verbal Negation in Polish

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1   Introduction

The aim of this talk is to argue that verbal negation in Polish is a lexical (morphological) phenomenon rather than a syntactic one.

Traditionally, the negative marker *nie* is called a 'particle', e.g., Bąk (1984), Jaworski (1986), Bartnicka and Satkiewicz (1990), or a 'modulant', e.g., Jodłowski (1976), which suggests its syntactic realisation. Also most theoretical approaches usually assume a syntactic realisation of *nie*, a clitic, e.g., Willim (1990), Borsley and Rivero (1994), Śpiewak and Szymańska (1995), Witkoś (1996), or a lexical item attached in the syntax, cf. Świdziński (1992), Menantaud (1992). The only grammar that treats the negative marker as a morphological category that we are aware of is that of Saloni and Świdziński (1985).

Organization of the talk:

- arguments in favour of morphological analysis,

- problematic issues.

2   Arguments for Morphological Negation

2.1   Genitive of Negation

(1) a.   *Janek lubi Marysię.*
          John   likes Mary$_{acc}$
          'John likes Mary.'

     b.   *Janek **nie** lubi Marysi.*
          John   not likes Mary$_{gen}$
          'John doesn't like Mary.'

This is not a strong argument as GoN in Polish is fully regular and can be modelled in the syntax, e.g., Willim (1990), Witkoś (1996), Przepiórkowski (1997b, 1997a), Przepiórkowski and Kupść (1997c).

2.2 Indicative vs. subjunctive mode

Some verbs subcategorize for subjunctive complements (introduced by the complementizer *żeby*) only while negated (their non-negated counterparts take only indicative complements, introduced by *że*):

(2) a. *Przypuszczam, że   przyszedł.*
      presume-I   that$_{ind}$ came-he
      'I presume that he came.'

   b. * *Przypuszczam, żeby   przyszedł.*
      presume-I   that$_{subj}$ came-he

(3) a. **Nie** *przypuszczam, że przyszedł.*   'I don't suppose he came.'

   b. **Nie** *przypuszczam, żeby przyszedł.*   ($\approx$ 'I suppose he didn't come.')

Moreover, there is a difference in meaning between (3a) and (3b): the former has sentential negation meaning only while in the latter, the 'neg-raising' meaning can result as well, i.e., in spite of negation of the main verb, negation of the subordinate clause occurs.

Similar phenomena are also observable in other languages, where negation is arguably syntactic, hence this is not a strong argument, either.

2.3 Copula *być*

Negation of the verb *być* 'to be', more precisely, its existential variant, cf. (4), is irregular: it is (5b) rather than (5a) that is the true negation of (4), the former has a contrasting meaning.

(4) *Książka   jest na stole.*
   book$_{nom}$ is   on table

   '(the) book is on (a/the) table.'

(5) a. *Książka **nie** jest na stole (tylko na półce).*
      book$_{nom}$ not is   on table but   on shelf
      '(the) book is not on (a/the) table (but on on the shelf).'

   b. *Książki **nie** ma na stole (* tylko na półce).*
      book$_{gen}$ not has on table
      '(the) book is not on (a/the) table.'

Note also that in (5b) the subcategorization frame is different as well: the nominative subject in (4) becomes a genitive argument in (5b).[1]

It cannot be suggested that the paradigm of *nie mieć* 'not to have' is negation of the existential *być*: in the present tense, only **nie ma** (third neuter singular verb form) is used for the sentential negation of *być*, (7).[2]

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[1] This differs, of course, from GoN as it is the nominative subject here that changes its case into genitive, rather than the accusative object. Hence, we do not side here with Witkoś (1996) who treats this alteration as GoN (in the subject position).

[2] We use '*' to mark that ungrammatical sentences while '#' indicates sentences ungrammatical with the required interpretation.

(6) *Chłopcy są w szkole.*
     boys$_{nom}$ are in school
     '(the) boys are at school.'

(7) a. * *Chłopcy **nie mają** w szkole.*
         boys$_{nom}$ not have-they in school

     b. # *Chłopców **nie mają** w szkole.*
         boys$_{gen}$ not have-they in school
         Lit.: 'They have no boys at school.'

     c. *Chłopców **nie ma** w szkole.*
         boys$_{gen}$ not has in school
         'There are no boys at school.'

Moreover, in the future and past tense, a form of *być* (third neuter singular) is used again for negation:

(8) *Chłopców **nie było**/ **nie będzie** dziś w szkole.*
     boys$_{gen}$ not were not will be today in school
     '(the) boys were not/ will not be at school today.'

As (9) shows, this is not the third neuter verb form alone that matters:

(9)# *Chłopców nie miało/ nie będzie miało w szkole.*
     boys$_{gen}$ not had$_{3rd,neut}$ not [will be had]$_{3rd,neut}$ in school

Idiomatic expressions with *być* can be negated only via *nie ma*:

(10) a. *Jest czego żałować. → **Nie** ma czego żałować.*
         is something regret$_{inf}$ → not has something regret$_{inf}$
         '... → There is nothing to be sorry about.'

     b. * ***Nie** jest czego żałować.*

(11) a. *Jest gdzie się kąpać. → **Nie** ma gdzie się kąpać.*
         is where SELF bathe$_{inf}$ → not has where SELF bathe$_{inf}$
         '... → There is no place to bathe.'

     b. * ***Nie** jest gdzie się kąpać.*

In the case of the existential *być*, negation affects not only valence but also morphology of the verb and must be analysed as a lexical phenomenon.

2.4 Lexical Negation

In spite of its ubiquity, negation is not a homogeneous phenomenon and arbitrary gaps in the paradigm exist.

Some verbs become individual lexical entries while negated as their non-negated counterparts do not exist. Apart from the regularly negated verb *cierpiał* '(he) suffered', cf. (12a), there is the idiomatic verb, *nie cierpieć* 'to hate', which lacks the non-negated form, (12b). This should be distinguished from (12a), as the verb takes an infinitive complement rather than an NP.

(12) a. *Cierpiał wiele.* → ***Nie** cierpiał wiele.*
      suffered-he a lot → not suffered-he a lot
      'He suffered a lot. → He didn't suffer very much.'

    b. **(**Nie**) cierpię słuchać, jak gadasz takie bzdury.*
      not suffer-I listen$_{inf}$ as speak-you such rubbish
      'I hate listening to that rubbish you say.'

There are more verbs which do not have 'positive' counterparts and *nie* is built-in into their morphology:

(13) a. *nienawidzić* ('to hate') → **nawidzić*

    b. *niewolić* ('to imprison') → **wolić*

    c. *niepokoić* ('to disturb') → **pokoić*

    d. *niedomagać* ('to suffer from') → **domagać*

    e. *niedowidzieć* ('to have poor eyesight') → **dowidzieć*

In spite of *nie*-prefixation, however, verbs in (13) do not have syntactic properties of overtly negated verbs, unlike (14a), and they do not license *n*-words,[3] (14b).

(14) a. ***Nie** cierpię nikomu pomagać.*
      not suffer-I nobody help
      'I hate helping anybody.'

    b. *Nigdy *(nie) niepokój Jana.*
      never not disturb John
      'Don't ever disturb John.'

Apart from (13a) which takes an NP[acc] complement, there exists another lexical entry for *nie-nawidzić* 'to hate', which takes an infinitive complement. This verb behaves as overtly negated verbs do: it triggers GoN, (15a), and licenses *n*-words, (15b).

(15) a. *Jan nienawidzi pisać listów/*listy.*
      John hates write$_{inf}$ letters$_{gen/*acc}$
      'John hates writing letters.'

    b. *Jan nienawidzi nikomu pomagać.*
      John hates nobody$_{dat}$ help$_{inf}$
      'John hates helping nobody.'

On the other hand, the verb *prosić* 'to ask for' (with an infinitive complement) does not have a negated form,[4] cf. (16), Saloni and Świdziński (1985).

(16) a. *Proszę przyjść o siódmej.*
      ask-I come at seven
      'Come at seven, please.'

    b. ** **Nie** proszę przyjść o siódmej.*
      not ask-I come at seven

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[3] Polish is a Negative Concord (NC) language: in the presence of *n*-words, the verb has to be overtly negated and the single sentential negation meaning results. We deal with syntactic aspects of NC in Polish in Przepiórkowski and Kupść (1997c, 1997a, 1997b).We use the term *n*-words rather than NPIs as the status of NPIs cross-linguisticly is not clear, e.g., Laka (1990), Zanuttini (1991).

[4] This verb is idiosyncratic also in other respects as it has only first person forms.

These examples show that verbal negation cannot be treated in a uniform way: some verbs lack non-negated or negated forms as in the case of *prosić*. The simplest account for this fact is to enumerate them directly in the lexicon.

2.5   Word Order

Sentential negation: only if *nie* directly precedes a verb:

(17) *Ania **nie** mieszka w Tybindze.*
       Ania not lives   in Tübingen

       'Ania doesn't live in Tübingen.'

Constituent negation otherwise:[5]

(18) a.   ***Nie** Ania mieszka w Tybindze, tylko Adam.*
            not Ania lives   in Tübingen, only Adam.
            'It is not Ania who lives in Tübingen but Adam.'

      b.   *Ania mieszka **nie** w Tybindze, tylko w Paryżu.*
            Ania lives   not in Tübingen, only in Paris.
            'Ania does not live in Tübingen but in Paris.'

In Polish there is a class of adverbs that exhibits similar behaviour: an adverb modifies a verb only if it immediately precedes the verb, (19), cf. Śpiewak and Szymańska (1995).

(19) a.   *Tomek prawie skończył swoją książkę.*
            Tom   nearly finished his   book
            'Tom nearly finished his book.'

      b.   **Prawie Tomek skończył swoją książkę.*

      c.   **Tomek skończył prawie swoją książkę.*

      d.   **Tomek skończył swoją książkę prawie.*

Hence an analysis of *nie* as a negative adverb, as in English or French, could be postulated. The group of *prawie* 'nearly' adverbs would be a natural class where *nie* could belong to. This, however, needs further qualifications.

In the case of sentential negation, nothing can be inserted between *nie* and the verb.

Clitics cannot be inserted between *nie* and the verb:[6]

(20) a.   *Janek nie spotkał -by   go.*
            John not met   would-AUX him
            'John wouldn't meet him.'

      b.   * *Janek nie by   go spotkał.*
            John   not would-AUX him met

Even the vulgar expletive *kurwa* 'fucking' (lit. 'whore') that can separate other pairs of adjacent words.

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[5] Similar data are also considered in Śpiewak and Szymańska (1995).

[6] According to Borsley and Rivero (1994) conditionals are compounds of clitic auxiliaries, *by* 'would' in (20), and the corresponding verb form, *spotkał* in (20a) is a past participle form due to their analysis.

(21) a. *Może, kurwa, go   nie wal   tym łomem?!*
         maybe EXPL him not batter this crowbar
         'Why don't you fucking stop battering him with this crowbar?!'

   b. *Może go, kurwa, **nie** wal tym łomem?!*

   c. * *Może go **nie**, kurwa, wal tym łomem?!*

   d. *Może go **nie** wal, kurwa, tym łomem?!*

   e. *Może go **nie** wal tym, kurwa, łomem?!*

These properties, however, are not shared by *prawie* (another difference is shown in the next section):

(22) a. *Tomek prawie, kurwa, skończył swoją książkę.*
         Tom   nearly fucking finished his   book
         'Tom nearly has fucking finished his book.'

   b. *Tomek prawie ją   skończył.*
       Tom   nearly her finished
       'Tom has nearly finished it.'

These contrasts can be immediately explained if *nie* is treated as a verbal affix.[7]

2.6   Coordination

In contrast to syntactic complements, e.g., *książki* 'books' in (23a), *nie* cannot take wide scope over coordination, (23). This test is put forward in Miller (1992) as a strong argument in favour of a morphological realisation of an item: affixes, unlike syntactic items, cannot take wide scope over coordination.

(23) a. *Czytam i   rozumiem   książki.*
         read-I   and understand-I books
         'I read and understand books.'

   b. * ***Nie** [czytam i   rozumiem]   książek.*
       not   read-I   and understand-I books
       'I don't read and understand books.'

   c. ***Nie** czytam i   **nie** rozumiem   książek.*
       not read-I   and not understand-I books
       'I don't read and don't understand books.'

This property distinguishes also *nie* from *prawie*: the latter, unlike the former, can take wide scope over coordination, compare (23b) vs. (24b).

(24) a. *Tomek prawie [przeczytał] i   zrozumiał   książkę Jasia.*
         Tom   nearly read   and understood book   of John
         'Tom nearly read and understood John's book.'

   b. *Tomek prawie [przeczytał i zrozumiał] książkę Jasia.*

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[7]In Polish, unlike in English, expletive insertion within words is in general infelicitous. Thus, e.g., English *pen-fucking-cil* (heard in a British comedy) cannot be rendered by Polish *ołó-kurwa-wek*.

In Miller (1992), coordination is used as a strong argument against a postlexical clitic (PLC)[8] status of an item: postlexical clitics, unlike affixes, do not take wide scope over coordination. Moreover, assuming the analysis of *nie* as a PLC, other properties of *nie* remain unexplained: expletives (insertion is possible between weak pronominal forms or *prawie*-adverbs and a verb, unlike between *nie* and a verb), lexical idiosyncrasies (certain verbs do not have negative or positive forms) as well as morphological variation of the existential *być*.

These facts strongly argue in favour of the analysis of *nie* as an affix.

3 Problematic Issues

3.1 Questions

As (25) shows, *nie* occurs alone if it is used as a negative answer to a question:

(25) *Czy Jan   lubi   Marysię? **Nie.***
     Q   John likes Mary?   not
     'Does John like Mary? No.'

This time, however, *nie* does bear stress,[9] hence differs[10] from the sentential negation marker.

3.2 Ellipsis

Words easily undergo syntactic processes while this is not a typical behaviour of morphological categories. As (26) shows, ellipsis of the verb is possible and *nie* can be left alone.

(26) *Marysia lubi   Janka,   a   Janek   Marysi   nie.*
     Mary$_{nom}$ likes Janek$_{acc}$ and John$_{nom}$ Mary$_{gen}$ not
     'Mary likes John but John does not like Mary.'

If the verb is negated, this is not possible and *nie* must be elided as well:

(27) *Marysia **nie** lubi Janka, a   Janek Marysi (*nie).*
     Mary   not likes John   and John Mary   not
     'Mary does not like John and John (does not like) Mary.

Hence, this criterion is inconclusive as it does not give uniform results. The analysis of examples such as (26), however, depends on a particular analysis of ellipsis which is far beyond the scope of this paper.

4 Conclusions

We distinguish different types of *nie*:

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[8] PLCs, according to Miller (1992), are prosodically deficient elements that are realised in the syntax, on a par with full words.

[9] As observed in Spencer (1991), ch.9, in Polish stress is the main factor that distinguishes certain prosodically deficient pronominal forms from the full forms, e.g., *nas* 'us'.

[10] In many languages this type of negation is overtly distinct from the sentential negation marker, e.g., English *no*, French *non*, German *nein*, Russian *niet*, etc.

- sentential negation marker — affix;

- 'constituent negator', e.g., in French negation of a constituent is expressed differently than sentential negation: *pas* alone vs. *ne + pas*;

- the short negative answer to a question; in other languages usually a different form is used, e.g., English *no*, French *non*, German *nein*.

- ellipsis — depends on a particular analysis.

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