

Negation and First Phase Syntax

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Abstract

Negation has been a predominating subject across languages and language families, especially with regards to its relationship with predicates and verbal positions. Different theories debate on NegPs either being above or lower to TPs in the structure.

In this paper, I aim to present the two different negative positions for the two types of negative forms – the one adverbial and the other clausal – in the Indo-Aryan language of Bangla. The study is based on the relationship between the semantics of the negative operators and the event structure of the verbs on a decomposed framework as has been advanced by Ramchand (2008).

Based on the study of Bangla negative forms, their semantics, their association with the predicational heads in clauses, we find that there are two different Neg phrases projected on the functional sequence, following Cinque (1999). There is a lower NegP, having a negative operator, functioning as a modifier and there is a higher NegP, with a negative operator functioning as its head. Hence, there are two different positions for two types of negative forms, with two different roles, on the functional sequence in Bangla. The present paper thus reflects upon the representation of negation in association with the decomposed verbal stem.

Keywords: Negation, first phase syntax, event structure decomposition, Bangla, light verbs

1. Introduction

The domain of negation is as richly analysed and debated upon in literature, as is the subject of Verbs and their structure. Therefore, when examining the semantic-categorial features of the verbs using Ramchandian framework (2008) of Event Structure Decomposition, it looks rather interesting to explore ‘negation’ under this framework and study how negative

markers can be positioned on the functional sequence of the verbs' decomposed event structure. This paper aims to investigate the representation of negation, the two basic negative markers - 'ni' and 'na', in the Indo-Aryan language of Bangla, to see their association with the decomposed verbal stem, as has been advanced by Ramchand (2008). Bangla, being an agreement free

language, shows differences with regards to the projection of these two negative forms. It is interesting to note that while one of them behaves as a constituent negation and is directly a part of the decomposed verbal stem, the other is more of a sentential negative head.

Bangla, one of the widely spoken languages of the Indo-Aryan family, has two different forms of negation - one finite and the other non-finite. The finite form of negation is 'ni' whereas the non-finite form of negation, that is to say, the form of negative marker that is used with non-finite verbs is 'na'. The Bangla negative morpheme, 'na', is somewhat a special form of negation (Ramchand, 2004), used always with non-finite verbal forms, along with its use in tag questions and conditional statements.

In the present paper, I am going to propose two things. Primarily, I will be focusing on the relationship between negation and the first phase syntax, where I claim that the non-finite form of negative marker originates in the decomposed event structure of the verbal stem and has a closer relationship with the process of the event that takes place, being different from the sentential negative form in its origin as well as semantics. The second crucial fact that the study aims to point at is that in Bangla, there are two different structural positions for the two negative forms. In order to focus on the differences between the two forms, I will use Ramchand's (2008) framework of Event Structure Decomposition, which presents a finer semantic interpretation of the verbal event, which gives us a better understanding of the relation that the verb has with the particular negative form.

2. The First Phase Syntax: Event Structure Decomposition Framework (Ramchand, 2008)

Ramchand (2008) claims that the semantic content of the verb in question comes from the interpretation of the syntactic structures in which the verbs participate, such that the syntactic features and semantic attributes of the concerned verb are combined in one conjugated framework. This becomes the motivating factor for decomposing the verbal stem into its eventual and aspectual configurations. The core event of the verb is primarily decomposed into three sub-events, such that each of these sub-events in turn describe and contribute at two levels – first reflecting its own semantic domain and secondly, contributing to the meaning of the main event as a whole.

The basic assumption of the Event Structure Decomposition of Ramchand (2008) is that verbs inherently come with a combination of certain semantic features, namely, 'initiation', 'process' and 'result' and based on the presence of the combination of these semantic

features, verbs differ from one another in grammar. The verbal event is thus, decomposed into three sub-phases, projected as three sub-eventive phases, the initiation phase, process phase, result phase.

The specifier positions of these sub-eventive phases are filled in by the concerned DP, representing the sub-actions of each of the sub-phases. On the other hand, the complement positions of each of these sub-eventive phases are filled in either by the next lower sub-phase or by the ‘rhematic phase’ or the ‘rheme’, which co-describes the predicational head. Now this ‘rheme’ serves out to be a special position, serving as the complement of the sub- eventive heads, in certain cases, when either the immediately next lower-level sub-phase fails in projecting itself on the tree or when the result phase takes a complement necessarily. Rhemes can be either DPs or NPs, APs or PPs.

According to the framework, all non-stative verbs come with the ‘proc’ sub-phase essentially, even if the two other sub-phases - the ‘init’ and the ‘res’ - are not explicitly present. However, the presence of the two other sub-eventive phases, that is the presence of ‘initiation’ phase and the ‘result’ phase have been examined using different adverbial tests. For example, one of the most significant tests for figuring out the presence of the ‘initiation’ sub-phase is testing the given sentence using the adverbial phrase ‘purposely’. Therefore, we can state that,

(1)

- ⇒ √ Purposely + clause → *presence* of initiation sub-phase
 ⇒ * Purposely + clause → *absence* of initiation sub-phase

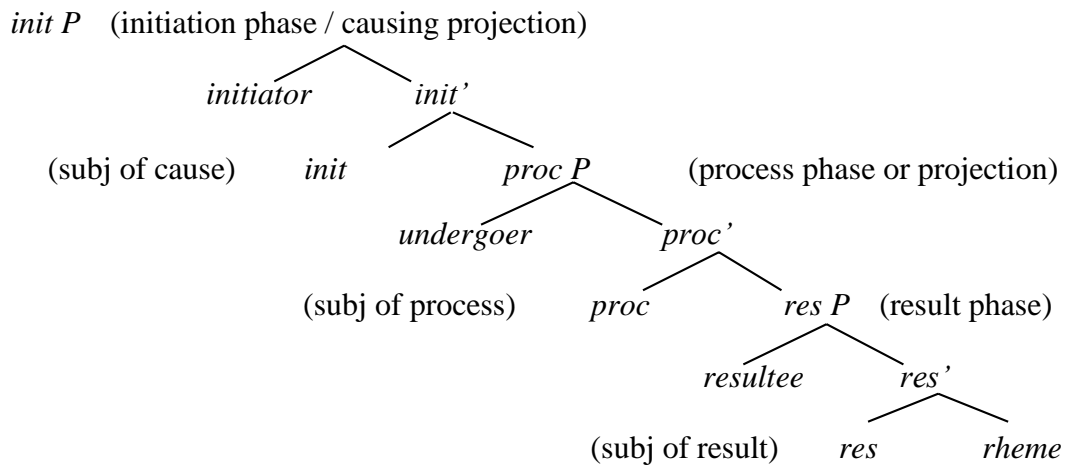
Similarly, the presence of the sub-eventive phase of ‘result’ can be tested using the adverbial ‘within an hour / for an hour’ phrases to see whether the verb comes with both the process and the result phases or it only has the process phase, with or without the ‘bounded path’. Therefore, it stands like the following:

(2)

- √ for an hour + clause absence of result sub-phase
 * within an hour + clause
 √ within an hour + clause presence of result sub-phase

The diagrammatic structure of the First Phase Syntax, as advanced by Ramchand (2008), is illustrated as in [3].

(3)



One of the crucial aspects of this model is that it establishes a connection between phrase structure and compositional semantics, and as such the set of eventive features, have been termed as semantic-categorial features in the framework. This enables us to separate out the semantic features that are structurally associated from those that are purely conceptual in nature.

3. Negation in Bangla

Bangla is an agreement free language, with two separate forms of negation, namely, ‘ni’ and ‘na’, where ‘ni’ functions as the negativity and finiteness marker similar to Malayalam ‘illa’. According to Prado and Gair (1994), ‘ni’ is the inflected perfective negative marker, occurring in the post-verbal position, as in (6), the affirmative counterpart of which is in (7).

6. ami kagodz-ta chir-ye phel-i-**ni**
 1p.s paper-def tear-cp throw-**pst-neg.perf.**
 I did not tear up the paper.

7. ami kagodz-ta chir-ye phel-ech-i
 1p.s paper-def tear-cp throw-pst-perf.
 I tore up the paper.

The negative morpheme ‘na’, on the other hand, is non-inflected form, used with non-finite verbs. In contrast to ‘ni’ which is post-verbal and always serves to negate sentences, ‘na’ can be moved across syntactically, leading to two different kinds of negation. For example, as a constituent negative marker, it negates the predicate, being positioned before it, as seen in (8) while as a sentential negative marker, it negates the tense and is post-verbally positioned as in (9). In (8), the negative morpheme ‘na’ negates just the instance of ‘eating’ and not the main verbal action of ‘going’. Therefore, here it just serves as a constituent negation, negating the embedded clausal event, without touching the main event. Whereas in sentence (9), the negative marker ‘na’ functions as a sentential negative marker, for it negates the action of ‘holding the paper’, rather completely refusing to do so at all. To be more specific, in (9), ‘na’ negates the required process ‘of holding’ the paper. Therefore, it is basically closer to the verbal action rather than the event in question. This interpretation is more prominently found in (10), where there is greater emphasis on negating the action or the process of ‘holding’. However, in (11), when the word ‘kagodz’ or ‘paper’ is topicalised for emphasis, then in this case ‘na’ seems to negate the whole event of ‘holding the paper’. Else in (9) and (10), ‘na’ focused on just negating the process of holding’ and not the entire event as such.

8. ami na khe-ye skol-e gae-chi-lam
 1p.s neg eat-cp school-loc go-pst.1p.s
 I went to school without eating.

9. ami kagodz-ta dhor-b-o na
 1p.s paper-def hold-fut-1p.s neg
 I will not hold the paper.

10. ami dhor-b-o na kagodz-ta
 1p.s hold-fut-1p.s neg paper-def
 I will not hold the paper.

11. kagodz-ta ami dhor-b-o na
 Paper-def 1p.s hold-fut-1p.snegI
 am not going to hold the paper.

This fact is also validated by Ramchand (2005) where she distinguishes between the two kinds of sentential negation. She points out that in Bangla, ‘ni’ is specified for tense and aspect features, carrying the semantic information of ‘+telic’, ‘+past’, ‘+perf’. It also acts as a quantifier that binds the time variable directly. So, ‘ni’ is incompatible with perfect participle forms in Bangla, such as ‘kheyeche’ like in (12), as it requires a tenseless verb to be associated with. So ‘khaye’ in (13), bearing no tense and aspectual information, is incompatible for the tensed finite negative morpheme ‘ni’ in Bangla.

12. * ram a:m-ta khe-ye-che ni
 Ram mango-def eat-cp-pst.perf.3p neg.pst.perf
 Ram did not eat the mango at all.

13. ram a:m-ta kha-ye ni
 Ram mango-def eat-cp neg.pst.perf
 Ram did not eat the mango at all.

On the other hand, the ‘na’ negative marker can be used with non-finite clauses, where finite verbs carry the tense and aspect informations. Thus, according to Ramchand (2005), ‘na’ in Bangla serves to be a pure negation marker. In fact it is ‘na’ that scopes over the predicational event and specifies that no event of the mentioned type happens at a particular instance such as in (9) – (10) above, where the event of holding the paper does not take place at all in the context of the discourse.

Therefore, Ramchand (2005) states that these two types of negation reflect different semantic consequences in discourse and thus, speculates that these two different negative forms in Bangla have different functional projections that they head at different levels in the grammar. A similar line of thought was given by Prado and Gair (1994), according to whom when ‘na’ functions as constituent negation it remains in in-situ position but as sentential negative marker, it raises to a position near to CP, along with the raising of the V to T. They proposed the following derivational structure for sentential negation, as in (14):

14. VP > NEGP > TP > ΣP > CP [Prado and Gair (1994), pg 246]

Thus, when V raises to T, the sentential negation has to first raise to the head of ΣP and then V raising to T has to take place, else NEG blocks the raising.

4. Negation and First Phase Syntax

As seen from the discussion above, in Bangla, the negative form, ‘na’, is used when a single specific event is to be negated; and besides being independent of tense, it is pre-verbal in non- finite clauses and post-verbal in finite clauses. Thus, it functions as an adverbial negation in the language. On the other hand, ‘ni’ occurs when the said event did not happen at all over an extended period of time. Therefore, it is associated with the time, carries aspectual and tense information along with negation. Now since these features are always present on ‘ni’, it is thus projected as the head of Neg P in the language. But it is ‘na’ in Bangla that functions as the default negative particle.

Now different linguists have put forth different structural relations of NegP with TP and AspP. Some have proposed NegP to be lower than TP while others claimed it to be higher than TP in a given structural sequence. There are scholars like Zanuttini (1991), who proposed there are two NegPs in our languages - one that is above TP and the other is immediately lower to TP, with respect to four different types of negative markers, namely – negative adverbs, strong preverbal negative markers, weak pre-verbal negative markers and negative markers as clitics on verbs. A similar proposal comes from Cinque (1999), who also identifies as many as three different positions for the occurrence of Neg P on his adverbial functional sequence, depending upon the semantic requirement of the clause in question.

In relation to these issues addressed by Zanuttini (1991) and Cinque (1999), we also have Zeljstra (2004) stating that pre-verbal negative particles that are syntactic words or affixes are all syntactic heads. However, negative adverbs are maximal projections XP and they move to spec Neg P, in case there is a [u NEG] feature there. He also gives evidence of TP dominating NegP in the Indo-Aryan language of Hindi. Further, following Ramchand (2004), he assumes that in languages like Hindi, where TP dominates NegP, the negative operator binds event variable while in languages where NegP dominates TP, the negative marker binds the temporal variables. Therefore, his primary claim is that the locus of negation in the clause stems down from the semantic properties of negation owing to which the structural position of the negative marker is not syntactically pre-determined but mainly depends upon the semantic properties of the concerned negative operator.

Based on these studies, we can say that in Bangla, the negative form ‘ni’ as in (15) binds timeas the sentence means that ‘Ram did not at all tear the dress’. However, in sentence (16), ‘ni’

has two interpretations – one meaning is that the subject ‘sister’ never had ‘a fish’ in her whole life at all, whereas the other meaning would be that in the recent past ‘sister did not eat fish at all’. However, in both these interpretations, we mean that the action of eating did not take place at all. So ‘ni’ even here binds the time variable. Thus, based on Ramchand (2004) and Zeljstra (2004), we can say that in these cases, the negative finite form, ‘ni’, in Bangla occupies the head of that NegP which dominates TP.

15. ram kapor-ta chir-ye phael-e **ni**
 ram cloth-def tear-cp throw-3p **neg.perf.pst**
 Ram did not tear the dress at all.

16. bon mach kha-ye **ni**
 sister fish eat-cp **neg.perf.pst**
 Sister did not eat fish. (She never had a fish. / She did not eat fish at all in the near past.)

How-so-ever, if we substitute the negative finite form ‘ni’ with the non-finite form ‘na’, keeping other things intact, we get a habitual reading of the sentence as in (17), where it means that the subject ‘does not eat fish at all’. Interestingly, even here the non-finitenegative form ‘na’ binds the time variable, because the habitual action of eating the fish by the subject is negated completely. So whereas the affirmative counterpart of (17) as in (18) means ‘the subject eats fish’ probably as part of daily meal, the negative form ‘na’ in (17) completely negates this daily course of event over time, stating that ‘the subject never ever eats fish’. Thus, in this case, the non-finite form ‘na’ also binds the time factor, similar to the finite negative form ‘ni’, but with a habitual reading.

17. bon mach kha-e **na**
 sister fish eat-3p **neg**
 Sister does not eat fish. (She never eats fish.)

18. bon mach kha-e
 sister fish eat-3p
 Sister eats fish.

But the scope of ‘na’ get narrowed down from the time variable in discourse to the event variable in action at a particular moment, when we introduce tense in a sentence which has the negative non-finite morpheme ‘na’ in it. As has been seen above, the tense gets identified on the verb as in (19) – (21), where in sentence (19) we get the past tense of ‘eat’; in (20) the present progressive form; and in (21) the future tense of the same verb ‘eat’. The non-finite negative form, ‘na’, here negates one instance of the given event in each of these cases but certainly does not bind the time factor. Since, ‘na’ binds event, following by Ramchand (2004) and Zelijstra (2004), we can state that in Bangla tensed clauses with the negative marker ‘na’ it is the TP that dominates NegP, quite in contrast to what happens in case of the finite negative form ‘ni’. Thus, the non-finite negative marker ‘na’ in Bangla occupies the head of this NegP, which scopes over the particular event in a given instance.

19. bon mach khe-l-o na

sister fish eat-pst-3p neg

Sister did not eat fish. (She eats fish but today she did not for some reasons)

20. bon mach kha-chch-e na

sister fish eat-prst.prog-3p neg

Sister is not eating fish.

21. ram kadz-ta kor-b-e naram

work-def do-fut-3p neg Ram will

not do the work.

Thus, in Bangla, Zelijstra’s (2003)’s claim proves out to be right that the semantics of the negative operators ‘ni’ and ‘na’ give the meaning to the clauses they are attached to and also determine whether the temporal or event variable is bound by them. Thus, there happens to be two different structural relations for negative operators in Bangla - in case of ‘ni’, NegP dominates TP while in case of ‘na’ it is dominated by TP.

Now since in the Ramchandian framework of ESD (2008), we are able to finely decompose the verbal event along the functional sequence, I propose that it is NegP that always dominates TP in Bangla, irrespective of being time bound or event bound.

5.1 The Negative Form ‘na’

In case of clauses with ‘na’, which certainly binds event more closely than time, I propose that ‘na’ negates the process of the event and so it scopes over the sub-eventive phase of ‘procP’ and modifies its state of being in the affirmative. As a result of this modification, the semantics of ‘na’ negates the process of the action concerned. Thus, ‘na’ here functions as a negative adverb. Thus, the neg operator ‘na’ originates in the spec of adverbial negative phrase as a negative adverb, within the first phase syntax, just above the ‘proc’ sub-phase, binding the sub-event of process, by being adjoined to it.

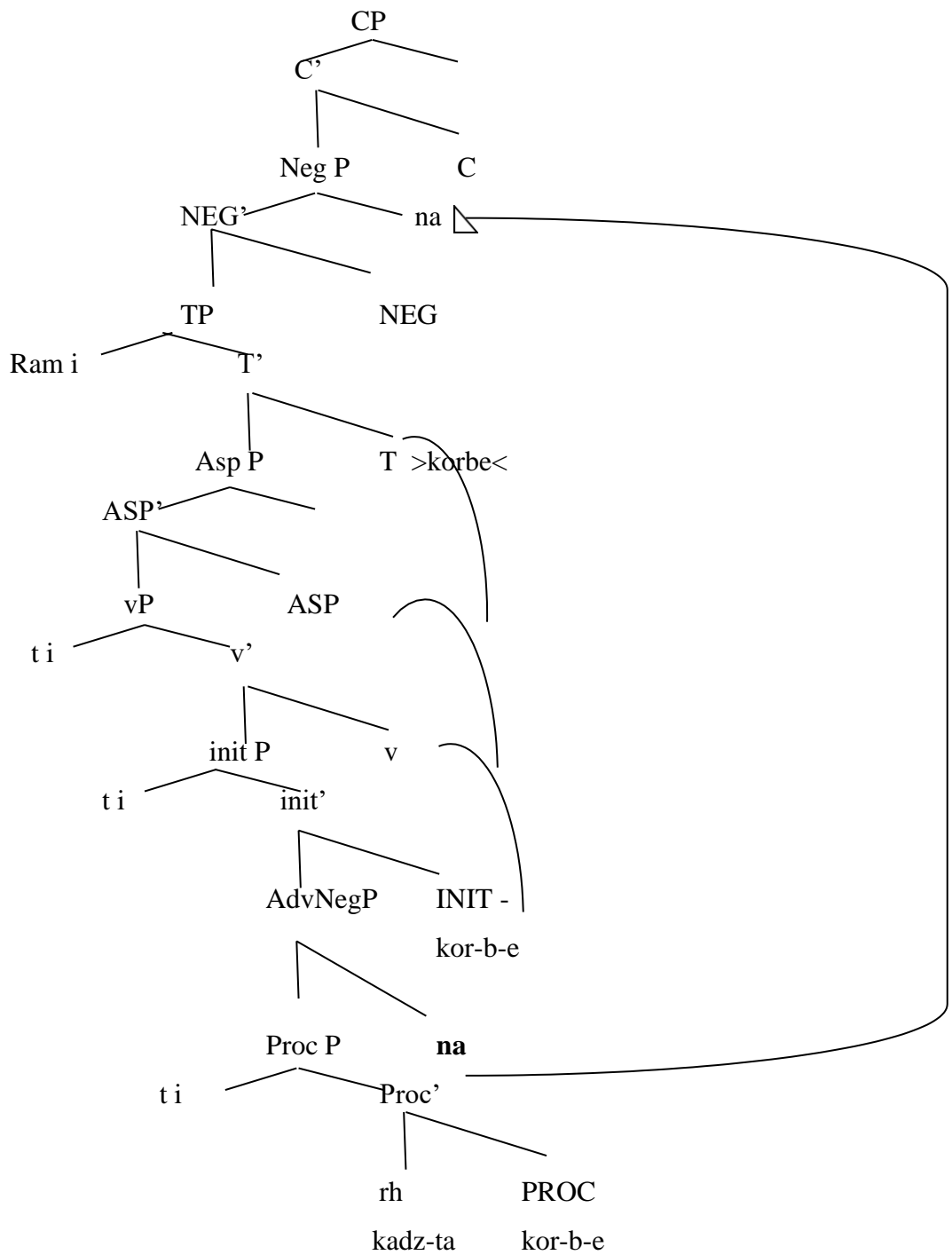
This adverbial negative marker ‘na’ originates in the spec of, say, AdvNegP, right above the ‘process’ sub-eventive phase, within the First Phase Syntax. It then raises higher up to the spec of upper NegP. As an adverbial negative operator, it modifies the sub-event of process and adds an additional meaning of negation to the event. However, since it is the only negative element and needs to negate the overall event, not just the process of the event, it raises to the spec of NegP. This also falls in line with Prado and Gair’s (1994) claim that ‘na’ as sentential negation raises to a position near to CP and also that of Ramchand’s (2004) prediction that ‘na’ functions as adverbial negation. Thus, by virtue of its adverbial properties, following Cinque (1999), the non-finite negative form ‘na’ goes up to occupy the spec of upper NegP in the functional sequence in Bangla.

Thus, in sentences from (19) – (21), ‘na’ which originates in the spec of Adv NegP, first moves to the spec of NegP, then the highest verbal copy of the concerned event from head of ‘init P’ moves to v, from which it moves to Asp head to check its aspectual features, if any, and then to T head. Else, from v head, it directly moves to get its ‘+finite’ feature checked at T. The diagrammatic representation of the derivation of (21) is shown as in (22) below:

22. Diagrammatic representation of the derivation of the sentence –

ram kadz-ta kor-b-e **na**

(Ram will not do the work.)



5.2 The Negative Form 'ni'

On the other hand, in Bangla finite clauses, with the negative marker 'ni', the negativeoperator does not modify or scope over the event, so it does not originate in the First Phase

Syntax. Since this finite negative operator does not negate the event, therefore it will originate somewhere above the vP.

Now since this ‘ni’, beside carrying ‘+neg’ feature, also carries ‘+finite’ feature, it originates, not as a separate head of a negP, but as an ‘aspectual’ element in the functional sequence. We can consider it to reflect the aspect of negativity. Thus, the Bangla finite negative form ‘ni’ originates in the head of AspP and has two interpretable features on it – [i finite] and [i neg] – which has to be checked. Therefore, it moves first to tense head, where the [u finite] feature matches with the [i finite] feature and gets checked. It then moves to head of negP, where the [u neg] feature checks the [i neg] feature. Following this, the verbal complex, which is in init head, moves to the head of vP.

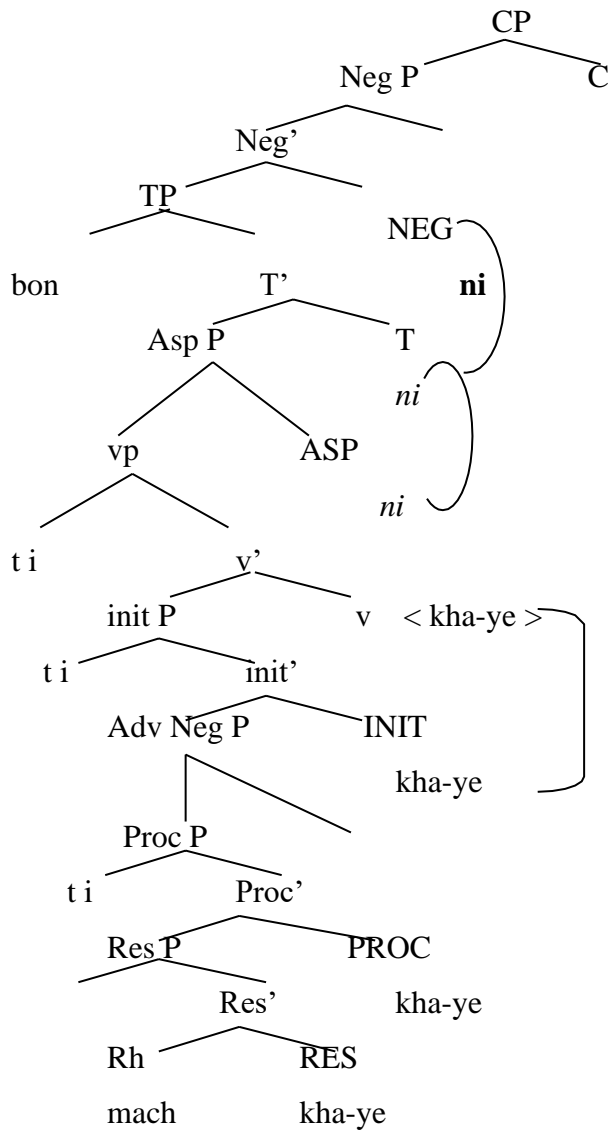
Though the ‘ni’ form scopes over the time variable and is not associated with the eventfactor, I claim that the ‘ni’ form cannot originate in the head of upper NegP, say, temporal NegP, because if it does so, the ‘+finite’ features will not be checked at the head of TP, as temporal NegP dominates TP. Therefore, the finite negative form ‘ni’ in Bangla originates lower than the TP and AspP, being lower than TP but higher than the vP, is the only possible position on the functional sequence for the ‘ni’ to originate and check the finiteness features, first at T, and then rise above to check its negative features at the head of temporal NegP.

The diagrammatic representation of a Bangla sentence with the finite negative marker ‘ni’, as in (23) is shown in (24):

23. bon mach kha-ye ni
Sister fish eat-cp neg.pst.perf
Sister did not eat fish.

24. Diagrammatic representation of Bangla finite negative marker ‘ni’ ::

bon mach kha-ye ni
(Sister did not eat fish.)



Therefore, based on the above analysis, I claim two things. First, we can say that in Bangla, the negative marker ‘na’ functions as the adverbial negative marker whereas ‘ni’ serves to be the temporal Neg head. Secondly, in Bangla, we have two NegPs on the functional sequence, following Cinque (1999) and Zunitini (1997), who proposed more than one NegPs in the sequence.

There is a lower NegP, which I term as the AdvNegP, which is within the First Phase Syntax. Being adverbial in its semantics, it functions as a constituent negative position in the grammar. Thus, within the decomposed event structure framework, it modifies the process of the event concerned, negating it. This AdvNegP selects the ‘process’ sub-eventive phase in the framework and the negative operator is inserted in the specifier position of the AdvNegP. In

Bangla, it is the non-finite tenseless negative maker ‘na’, that occupies this position in the AdvNegP.

The other NegP is higher up on the functional sequence and is more of a sentential neg position. Since it has temporal reference, I therefore term it as a Temporal NegP, which dominates TP. The head of this Temporal NegP is occupied by the finite negative marker ‘ni’ in Bangla. Thus, there are two different Neg phrases, with two different functions – one has a modifier of the action, present in its specifier position and the other phrase has its head position filled up by a tensed, finite negative operator. Hence, there are two different positions for two types of NegPs on the functional sequence in Bangla.

6. Conclusion

Thus, Zeligstra’s (2004) claim holds true that the structural position of NegP is highly dependent upon the semantics of negative operators, as to whether the negative operator binds time or event. To this, I further add that the above data shows that it is also the semantic properties of the negative operators that determine whether it functions as a syntactic head or an adverbial negation in the languages.

Thus, based on the study of Bangla negative forms, their semantics, their association with the predicational heads in clauses, we find that there are two different Neg phrases projected, with two different functions – the lower NegP has a negative operator, functioning as a modifier and the higher NegP has a negative operator functioning as its head. Hence, there are two different positions for two types of negative forms, with two different roles, on the functional sequence in Bangla.

It would be rather interesting to examine other agreement free languages similar to Bangla, like Malayalam, a member of the Dravidian group of languages, to see whether a similar structural configuration of negative form is found there in relation to the decomposed structure of the verbs. Malayalam, similar to Bangla, has two negative forms – one finite and the other non-finite (Amritavalli and Jayasaleen, 2008). Since the finite form is ‘illa’, a free morpheme, similar to Bangla ‘ni’, there might be a similar structural relation with the finite negative ‘illa’ and the predicate. However, the non-finite negative form in Malayalam is ‘-aa’, an affix, which serves as constituent negation in the language, similar to the negative affix ‘-ma’ in Nyishi, a Tibeto-Burman language. Complexities arise when we find ‘-ma’ happens to be the sole negative morpheme in Nyishi (Dey, 2017), carrying realis-irrealis information but serves both the purposes of sentential negative marker as well as constituent negative operator.

Therefore, it would be interesting to study the structural relations between these negative affixes and predicates, using the ESD framework of Ramchand (2008) and associating it with Cinque's (1999) functional sequence.

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