Syntax and semantics of verbal negative markers in Buryat
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Buryat (Barguzin dialect)
• Altaic > Mongolic > Buryat > Barguzin
• SOV, strictly head-final, agglutinative, NOM-ACC-DAT case marking
Data collected in Bargahan ulus (village), Kurumkan district, the Republic of Buryatia

Negation - overview

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Non-indicative negation (b auprès =)

The only prepositional particle in Buryat, b auprès = is used for negation of imperative (prohibitive) and other non-indicative verb forms:

1. a. unta-Ø  
   b auprès-Ø  
   sleep-IMP  
   NEG=sleep-IMP  
   ‘Don’t sleep’

It can be located on the left periphery of VP, being separated from the negated verb by lexical verb – object resultative participle in (3) – or adjuncts (4).

Sometimes linear position in front of direct object or even subject is allowed but such sentences are not perfectly grammatical.

2. zagahan jär-a-to hand-Ø  
   ba auprès-g  
   fish  
   fry-PST-COM  
   NEG=be-JUSS  
   ‘Let the fish to be not fried’

3. zagahan be auprès=a to jär-a to  
   ba auprès-g  
   fish  
   NEG=onion-COM  
   fry-PST-COM  
   be-JUSS  
   ‘Let the fish to be not friéd with onion’

Existential negation (ngi =)

Negative predicate ngi = is used for existential, locative and possessive negation:

5. a. ula auprès=n sasg bØ : b auprès-na  
   b auprès=sasg=ngi  
   red flower  EX = be-PRS red flower=NEG.EX  

   1. ‘There is red flower’  
   2. ‘Red flower exists’

In case of possessive and locative negation, dative adjunct is added denoting possessor or location:

6. basagonal auprès=n sasg-agr:ngi  
   girl-DAT red flower=PL=NEG.EX  
   ‘A/the girl has no red flowers’ (Lit.: ‘There are no red flowers at a/the girl’s’)

Caritive case marker gwi (diachronically related to ngi =) can be used instead.

Possessor is in nominative. Syntactically this construction is nominal predication with either overt or zero copula:

(7) basagan(-’da) ula auprès=n sasg-agr:ngi (b auprès-na)  
   girl(DAT) red flower=PL=NEG (be-PRS)  
   ‘A/the girl has no red flowers’ (Lit.: ‘A/the girl is red-flowerless’)

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<tr>
<td>gwi</td>
<td>NOM</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngi</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>CAR(=NEG)</td>
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Nominal negation (=b auprès s and gwi =)

Constituent negation particle b auprès s is used in proper inclusion (8) and attribution sentences with nouns (9) and non-derived adjectives (9)

8. a. j di doktor-af  
   b auprès=b auprès-s  
   doctor-2SG  
   doctor=NEG=2SG  
   ‘You are a doctor’  
   ‘You are not a doctor’

9. a. ba auprès tarp:n b auprès=b auprès-s  
   b auprès=ta ba auprès=be auprès-s  
   bear  
   bear fast  
   ‘A/the bear is fast’  
   ‘A/the bear is not fast’

Caritive case is used with derived adjectives:

10. a. f jên auprès=a to tai  
    b auprès=tai jên auprès  
    soup taste-COM  
    soup taste-NEG  
    ‘Soup is tasty’  
    ‘Soup is not tasty’

Verbal negation (= gwi and =b auprès s)

Suffix -gwi is used as a standard negator (11). Paradigmatic asymmetry of negation (A/Cat/14M according to Miestamo (2005)) is attested: gwi is incompatible with several participles and all (except for one) converses.

Standard negation grammatical

Future tense, habitual participles, simultaneity verb

object and subject resultatives, perfect, 

continuous, possibility participles, other converses

Examples for finitely used future tense (11) and perfect (12) participles:

11. a. aba jär-xa  
    b auprès=a auprès-s  
    father arrive-FUT  
    ‘The father will arrive’

12. a. aldar jär-aøn  
    b auprès=a auprès-s  
    father arrive-PFCT  
    ‘A/ The father have arrived’

Past tense with -gwi or constituent negator b auprès=s can be used instead (12b):

13. a. aldar jär=a auprès-s  
    b auprès=a auprès-s  
    father arrive-PST-PFCT  
    ‘A/ The father have not arrived’

If the usage of gwi is grammatical b auprès=s cannot be used to negate verbs/clauses without an overt or implicit paired contrasting ‘correction’:

(14)sonom be auprès=s  
    ab auprès-a auprès-s  
    x auprès-x auprès-s  
    ‘Sonon present take-PST-NEG (hand-INSTR-REFL make-PST)’

‘Sonon hasn’t bought the present, but made it with his own hands’

Given this and the more grammatical status of gwi (its sensitivity to verb form) we consider gwi to be the standard negator.

Standard and sentential negation interaction

Both gwi and b auprès=s can be used to turn a proposition p into proposition “~p with opposite truth conditions (11, 13b). Differences appear when there are other scope-taking operators in the sentence:

15. a. sayana gansa sslmg=i auprès-j auprès-a auprès-j auprès-s  
    Sayana only Selmg-GA-ACC see-PST  
    ‘Sayana saw only Selmg’

b. sayana gansa [sslmg=i auprès-j auprès-a auprès-s]  
    Sayana only Selmg-GA-ACC see-PST-NEG  
    1. ‘Sayana didn’t saw only Selmg’  
    2. ‘Sayana saw not only Selmg’  
   3. ‘Sayana saw not only Selmg’

‘b auprès=s takes scope over gana’ (and presumably over the whole clause) thus resulting in true propositional negation (sentential negation in terms of Jackendoff (1969)). gwi corresponds to syntactic sentential negation (Klima 1964) which does not necessarily yield contradictory semantics. It occupies fixed position in syntactic structure – following (Zeijlstra 2004) we can suppose that it immediately dominates VP (i.e. the smallest domain containing all propositional arguments) which can be seen from the sentences with NPI-subjects (16) and objects (17).

16. a. x auprès-n auprès=ba auprès=a auprès-s  
    who-NPI water go-FUT  
    ‘Everybody can walk on the water’

b. x auprès-n auprès=ba auprès=a auprès-s  
    who-NPI water go-FUT-NEG  
    ‘Nobody can walk on the water’

17. b auprès=x auprès-j auprès=a auprès-s  
    j auprès-a auprès-s  
    who-GA-NPI see-PST-NEG 1  
    ‘I have seen nobody’

> I conclude that (at least in Buryat) standard negation is an internal (narrow-scope) operation that should be captured in terms of syntax. True (contradictory) propositional negation is in fact constituent negation (13b, 14) with the scope over the whole clause (13b, 15c).

List of glosses


Literature


