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Reviewed by Katrin Hiietam

1 Introduction

The volume *Negation in Uralic languages* is a sizable collection of papers investigating the phenomenon of negation in various Uralic languages using first and foremost the synchronic comparative descriptive typological approach. This large-scale collaborative study has its origins in a conference on Uralic negation in Vienna in 2008, and after several years of work in the form of workshops and project meetings the volume was finally published in 2015. It aims to further our typological understanding of the characteristics of negation using empirical data in a style that is accessible to a specialist as well as a general reader with an interest in linguistics.

The three editors have co-authored a thorough introduction explaining the concept of negation and outlining ways of expressing it across languages. They present the geographical and socio-linguistic background to the Uralic languages with a map illustrating areas populated by native speakers. Also, several tables are provided for ease of following the discussion.

In addition, not only have the editors compiled the volume, but each has also contributed with either an individual or joint chapter.

1.1 Uralistics

Uralistics is not a young research field. According to the editors of the volume, the beginnings of research into the Uralic languages can be traced back to early 1800, when two Finnish scholars, Sjögren and Castrén, started making trips with a view to collect language data from various Uralic language speakers in Siberia and the European parts of Russia.

Despite this relatively long history of scholarly interest, the editors of the volume feel there are no adequate comparative descriptions of the languages in question that meet current scientific standards. Extensive research and fieldwork on Uralic languages has been conducted in Finland and Estonia, for example. However, neither much of the data nor the findings from the research by the Estonian institutions were disseminated to the wider scholarly

community due to political and/or language related restrictions until the latter half of the 20th century.

Negation in Uralic in itself is not a novel topic for research, and it has been studied before, e.g. by Comrie (1981; an overview of negation in Uralic languages) and Haspelmath (1997; negation in relation to indefinite pronouns in Estonian, Hungarian, Ingrian, Mordvin, both Erzya Mordvin and Moksha Mordvin). However, this volume appears to be the first comprehensive larger scale comparative study of negation in the Uralic language family.

1.2 Negation

In the introductory chapter – “Negation in Uralic languages” – the editors present a definition of the linguistic concept of negation based on Miestamo (2005), following e.g. Givón (1978) and Payne (1985), as an operation that changes the truth value of a proposition. Such an operation can be observed in various domains of a language, and these are briefly outlined below.

The simplest form of negation is *clausal negation* (also: *standard negation* following Payne 1985), whereby simple declarative verbal clauses are negated by means of a negative marker (a particle, an affix or a negative verb) that commonly stands before the finite verb and may or may not be inflected for number and person, as illustrated in (1b) (the examples are taken from Vilkuna’s contribution on Finnish, where the standard negator – *ei* – is inflected for singular number and 3rd person):

- (1) a. *Vauva nukku-u.*
 baby.NOM sleep-3SG
 ‘The baby is sleeping.’
- b. *Vauva ei nuku.*
 baby.NOM NEG.3SG sleep.CNG
 ‘The baby is not sleeping.’

In other types of clauses, such as existential or imperative clauses or clauses with non-verbal predicates, there may exist variation. In these environments, the negator used differs from the one occurring in standard negation – *e-C* as in (2a). Therefore, it is termed a *special negator*, as exemplified in (2c) – *älä*. As before, in (2) I use the data on Finnish from Vilkuna’s paper (originally Example 12):

(2) a. Indicative negative

e-t nuku
 NEG-2SG sleep.CNG
 ‘You don’t sleep.’

b. Imperative

nuku
 sleep.IMP.2SG
 ‘Sleep!’

c. Prohibitive

älä nuku
 NEG.IMP.2SG sleep.CNG
 ‘Don’t sleep!’

I will not give examples of each type of negation in what follows, but urge the reader to get hold of a copy of the volume and browse it for types and data. The examples in (1–2) were chosen simply to give an insight into the elements in Uralic that can alter the truth value of a proposition.

As the foundation for their discussion, the editors have used Miestamo’s (2005) cross-linguistic study on negation, where he analyses negation in terms of the concept of symmetry, i. e. whether a negative clause differs syntactically from an affirmative clause other than through the presence of the negative marker. In the case of asymmetric negation, various differences can be found. Miestamo further divides asymmetric negation into four categories based on which domain has been affected: the finiteness of the lexical verb, states of affairs, emphatic markers used to signal negative polarity or grammatical (TAM – tense, aspect, mood) categories.

Drawing on the data presented in the book chapters, the editors conclude that in Uralic, the most commonly occurring asymmetry relates to the finiteness of the verb – in that, under negation, the lexical verb loses its finiteness, and the negative marker or verb becomes the finite element of the negated clause. However, the Uralic languages tend to differ as to which grammatical categories (person, number, voice) are marked on the negative auxiliary and which on the lexical verb. In imperatives, as in other non-declarative clause types, especially in non-verbal predicates, the negation strategy tends to differ from standard negation. The negator is commonly different from the one used in declaratives.

The section on *non-clausal negation* in the introductory chapter focuses on negative constructions that do not have negation as their (primary) function, for example negative replies (one-word reply or repeated verb). The focus is on the semantics of the negative reply – whether it disagrees with the propositional content of the question or with the polarity of the question. As the editors state, negative one-word replies in Uralic languages are expressed either by a negative particle, as is the case with all the languages studied in the volume, or by the negated finite verb. The section on non-clausal negation also looks at the negation of indefinite pronouns (whether they occur in negative or non-negative contexts, and whether the clausal negation marker is present or not). Much of the approach is built on Haspelmath's (1997) semantic map of indefinite pronoun functions.

Expressions of absence, such as the abessive case, privative/caritive derivations and adpositions are also addressed in the introductory chapter. In Uralic, absence is a grammaticalised category expressed by prepositions, prefixes, postpositions, postposition combinations, combinations of prepositions and case marking, derivational suffixes, and verbal suffixes.

The final section of the introductory chapter, 3.4, deals with other aspects of negation, such as the scope of negation, reinforcing negation, negative polarity and effects of negation on case marking. The editors also point out that negative polarity items, i.e. items that can occur in negative contexts but not in realis affirmatives in Uralic, tend to have meanings such as 'and, also, either', or have emphasis as their function, or are borrowed elements stemming from the Russian *ni*. Another common trait of Finnic, but not other Uralic language families, seems to be the fact that under the scope of negation objects tend to acquire case marking that has partitive semantics.

The attested devices for reinforcing negation in Uralic languages include adverbs, particles and clitics, the repetition of negators, a special emphatic negative verb (in tundra Nenets), stress and accent, word order and a special construction lacking explicit negators (Finnish). Some languages use the same emphatic element in both affirmative and negative contexts.

This concludes the brief overview of the operation of negation and the Uralic language family. Let us now move on to the case studies of selected individual Uralic languages.

Table 1. Selection of languages

Language family	Languages
Samoyedic	Forest Enets (by Florian Siegl) Tundra Nenets (by Nikolett Mus) Nganasan (by Valentin Gusev) Selkup (by Beáta Wagner-Nagy)
Ugric	Hungarian (by Katalin É. Kiss) Eastern Khanty (by Andrey Filchenko) Mansi (by Katalin Sipőcz)
Permic	Komi (by Arja Hamari) Udmurt (by Svetlana Edygarova)
Volgaic	Erzya (by Arja Hamari and Niina Aasmäe) Mari (by Sirkka Saarinen)
Saami	Skolt Saami (by Matti Miestamo and Eino Koponen) South Saami (by Rogier Blokland and Nobufumi Inaba)
Finnic	Estonian (by Anne Tamm) Livonian (by Helle Metslang, Karl Pajusalu and Tiit-Rein Viitso) Finnish (by Maria Vilkuna) Votic (by Fedor Rozhanskiy and Elena Markus)

2 Part I: Describing negation systems in Uralic languages

In the first part of the volume, which makes up the main body of the book, we find case studies of a selection of 17 languages from the language families listed in Table 1.

The individual descriptive chapters are each, for reasons of uniformity, based on a questionnaire compiled by the editors with the aim of covering negation in a systematic and comprehensive manner. This functionally oriented questionnaire is given in an appendix to the Introduction and addresses the following aspects of negation in detail: standard negation, i.e. negation of declarative verbal main clauses and other types of clausal negation, such as negation in imperatives. Thereafter it deals with non-clausal negation constructions, e.g. negative replies. Finally, complex issues such as the scope of negation and negative polarity are addressed. The editors also encouraged the authors to describe further aspects of negation that were not

outlined in the questionnaire but worth a mention. The empirical data for the discussion in these descriptive chapters was obtained from either existing descriptions or fieldwork by the authors.

3 Part II: More specific aspects of negation in Uralic languages

In the second part of the volume, several cross-Uralic theoretical aspects of negation are explored. These include indefinite pronouns in Uralic, special negators in Uralic, the privative derivational suffix in Hungarian, negation and its relation to information flow in Eastern Khanty, and language contact influencing the formation of negation in the Volga-Kama area. I will give a brief summary of each of the chapters below.

Building on Haspelmath's study of indefinite pronouns (1997), Van Alsenoy & van der Auwera present a three-fold typology for indefinites (indefinite pronouns and adverbs). By *indefinites* they mean expressions such as *anything, something, nothing* and *anywhere, somewhere, nowhere*. The authors study how these expressions are used in negative context; they discuss: neutral indefinites (which occur in positive and negative contexts, with no distributional restrictions), negative polarity indefinites (which occur in negative polarity contexts and are barred from contexts with specific reference), and negative indefinites (which occur under negation only and cannot be used as a short answer). The authors conclude that in the 21 Uralic languages under investigation (in addition to the ones included in the volume, except for South Saami, they also studied Kamas, Karelian, Veps and Northern Saami) the indefinites in negated environments tend to fall under the negative indefinite category, most of them being morphologically negative. The authors conclude that the Uralic negative indefinites tend to co-occur with clausal negation, which is the default situation typologically. However, the type of indefinites used varies across the languages. This study indeed covers a good cross-section of the languages, but it could be expanded by including a larger sample of the Uralic languages that have existing typological descriptions available.

Veselinova & Skirgård's in-depth study on a narrow aspect of negation – special negators in the Uralic languages (i.e. negators that do not occur in standard negation) – is a typological comparative study that has a broad, both synchronic and diachronic scope. It offers data from 26 languages. They

distinguish three kinds of special negators: ascriptive, existential and stative, and use semantic maps for describing these. They also try to trace the origin of the special negators and test the validity of Croft's (1991) Negative Existential Cycle. Based on the sample data, the authors offer three modifications to Croft's model: the lexicalisation of negation, constructional strength, and time depth. They tie their findings in with the areal distribution and contact with neighbouring languages, creating a notion of the areal distribution of negation strategies. For example, they find that the Finnic and Saami languages, spoken in geographically adjacent areas, have a single negation strategy. On the other hand, ascriptive and existential negators occur in languages where the neighbouring non-Uralic languages have them as well. This, of course, can be used in support of the notion of a linguistic area, where similar structural features occur in languages that are unrelated but are spoken in areas of geographical proximity (see e.g. Hickey 2015).

Kiefer examines the distribution and productivity of the privative suffix *-(V)talán/- (V)telen; -(V)tlán/- (V)tlen* in Hungarian. It is shown to attach to nouns denoting concrete objects, but not to abstract nouns carrying the suffix *-ság*, or deverbal subjects and action nouns. With adjectives, it cannot attach to monomorphemic bases. It can attach to some derived adjectives but not very productively. With verbs, the suffix attaches to transitive bases, though not to intransitive or stative ones, with the condition that it has to attach to the base directly and not to an already derivational base. Kiefer attributes this pattern to language contact with German. Hungarian has been studied widely and there is a descriptive chapter in the first part of the reviewed volume. Therefore, Kiefer's detailed study focuses on a specific morphological aspect that contributes to fine-tuning the existing accounts.

Sosa studies the functions of the subject and object in negative sentences in Khanty narratives from the point of view of information structure and flow. She analyses them according to the following categories: new, given, topic, focus. This is a pilot study based on fieldwork data obtained in the late 1980s. In analysing the data, Sosa mainly uses the Preferred Argument Structure (PAS) theory of DuBois (1987) and codes the data according to noun phrase type, animacy, person, and activation cost. The results of the study indicate that, in contrast to affirmative clauses, in negative contexts:

1. The subject of an intransitive verb (S) is generally expressed as a pronoun or a full NP.
2. The subject of a transitive verb (A) is typically the 1st person.

3. S tends to represent animate and inanimate referents equally.
4. Only given information and already mentioned arguments are expressed.

This is a preliminary study on information packaging in narratives and there is plenty of scope for expanding the same research set-up to other categories of data to see whether any variation or further patterns can be attested.

Manzelli looks at language contact between Finno-Ugric and Turkic languages in the Volga-Kama area, focusing on influences on standard negation and prohibitives. Standard negation is expressed differently in these two language families. In contrast to the Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic languages, Turkic languages mainly use morphological negation with an affix attaching to the verbal stem. Manzelli proposes the hypothesis of a connection between Udmurt and Tatar stress shift in standard negation and suggests that Turkic influence on Finno-Ugric languages is highly probable. In addition, he also attributes the existence of the synthetic negative past of Hill Mari and (Southern) Udmurt to language contact with Turkic. The same way as the paper by Veselinova and Skirgård, this contribution also looks at areal influence on the structure of the Uralic languages and finds, as has been attested before, that language contact is the most likely cause for the atypical pattern of negation found in Southern Udmurt and Hill Mari.

4 Conclusion

Negation in Uralic languages, edited by Miestamo et al., is a valuable contribution for Uralists, first and foremost, and to any linguist interested in negation in general. This volume has advanced the field of typological research as it presents data from endangered (e.g. Saami languages) and near extinct or moribund (e.g. Votic or Livonian) languages. Written in an accessible style, it is undoubtedly a good, thorough foundation for the study of the phenomenon of negation in the Uralic language families, but, as with all research, there is always scope for expansion, both in terms of descriptive accounts and, of course, detailed studies within different theoretical frameworks.

The Uralic language family has more than 17 members – hence quite a lot of work is still to be done in providing a description of negation in the remaining languages. While reading this book, I would have welcomed a

better account of negation in the Saami languages. In this volume they were represented by just two papers covering South Saami (the Western group) and Skolt Saami (the Eastern group). The largest Saami language – North Saami – has, perhaps, not been studied in depth in regard to negation yet. There appears to be only a brief mention of negation in North Saami in Pekka Sammallahti's (1998) introductory book on Saami languages and a micro account of negation in Saami languages can be found in Nelson & Toivonen (2007). Further, I was surprised not to find descriptions of languages such as Moksha, Karelian, Ludian (which is now considered a language on its own rather than a dialect of Karelian), Veps, Ingrian or perhaps even Forest Finnish in this volume.

Out of interest I set out to find out whether negation has been researched in any of the languages listed above and found, for example, that the authors of the chapter on Votic – Rozhanskiy & Markus – have conducted extensive field work on Ingrian, the data from which is stored at ELAR.¹ As the volume did not include negation in Ingrian, Rozhanskiy & Markus (2017) published a paper on the Soikkola dialect of Ingrian. They note that the other surviving dialect of Ingrian, the Lower Luga dialect, is different from the Soikkola dialect in how negation is formed. Recent accounts also seem to support this view (e.g. Saar 2017: 152–154), and give the impression that the main difference would perhaps lie in the formation of the prohibitive constructions. In the Soikkola dialect the connegative form stands in the infinitive form, whereas in the Lower Luga dialect both the negative auxiliary and the connegative take the imperative inflection. This, of course, would deserve further investigation.

These small omissions aside, I cannot overestimate the impact this collective volume has made in advancing knowledge on the Uralic languages as well as in making the findings accessible to the global research community. It is probably not a book that is kept on a bedside table for its captivating story; but rather, it is best read at the desk with a notepad and a pen at hand to jot down all the interesting research ideas that spring to mind. I certainly feel I have benefitted from reading it.

¹ <https://elar.soas.ac.uk/Collection/MPI593650> (accessed 2021-02-13).

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Abbreviations

2	2nd person
3	3rd person
CNG	connegative form of the verb
IMP	imperative form of the verb
NOM	nominative case
NEG	negation marker
SG	singular number

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