

Matti Miestamo (2005) *Standard Negation. The Negation of Declarative Verbal Main Clauses in a Typological Perspective*. (Empirical Approaches to Language Typology 31.) Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. Pp. xiii, 490.

Reviewed by Angela Bartens

The volume under review is a revised version of the author's doctoral dissertation defended in 2003 at the University of Helsinki. Miestamo participated in the elaboration of the WALS (*World Atlas of Language Structures*) project while working on his dissertation and was awarded the 2005 Junior Award of the Association for Linguistic Typology after completing it. Most recently, he has extended his research on symmetric and asymmetric structures to the domain of interrogation.

The sizable volume is divided into six chapters, preceded by a preface and acknowledgments (pp. v–vi), a table of contents (pp. vii–ix), and a list of abbreviations (pp. x–xiii), and followed by four appendices (“Appendix I: Sample languages,” pp. 241–254; “Appendix II: Examples and analyses,” pp. 255–369; “Appendix III: Data table,” pp. 370–408; “Appendix IV: Lists of languages in each type,” pp. 409–411), the notes to the text (pp. 412–431), an impressive list of references (pp. 432–469), and indices of languages (pp. 470–476), authors (pp. 477–483), and subjects (pp. 484–490).

In the “Introduction” (pp. 1–25), Miestamo briefly situates his study in the framework of functional domain typology based on Basic Linguistic Theory and gives an overview of the negation patterns to be discussed. He also summarizes earlier research on negation and defines the key terms used in the study. Most importantly, the object of study, standard negation, is characterized as “the basic way(s) a language has for negating declarative verbal main clauses” (p. 3), and standard negation is divided into symmetric and asymmetric negation according to whether negatives merely add a negative marker to an affirmative structure or whether they show further structural differences as well (p. 7). At the same time, these definitions set the tone for the discussion: the interaction of negation and mood is excluded from the study and the word “structural” apparently marginalizes suprasegmental phenomena such as tonal oppositions which nevertheless constitute the only difference between affirmative and negative structures in such West African languages as Igbo (p. 119).

In “Chapter 2: Theoretical and methodological issues” (pp. 26–50), the author first addresses the issue of compiling a sample. In his study, he

makes use of three different samples: his Core Sample (CS) consists of 240 languages representative of different genera; the Extended Sample (ES) includes 57 more languages on the grounds that they pertain to the WALS sample (*a priori*, not a very solid criterion); and finally, the Restricted Sample (RS) of 179 is selected from the CS after areally stratifying the sample in order to proportionally represent all geographic macroareas. The definition of standard negation is further refined (pp. 39–45), and the establishing of correlations and functional motivations are discussed. Somewhat surprisingly, the author states that “[t]he terms *motivation* and *explanation* are used more or less interchangeably in this work.” This seems contrary to basic logic.

“Chapter 3: Classification” (pp. 51–166) is the most substantial of the text chapters. Negative constructions can be symmetric or asymmetric both on the level of individual structures and on the level of entire paradigms. Asymmetric negative constructions are divided into several types (and their subtypes) according to whether the asymmetry arises from reduced finiteness marking, additional non-real- or emphasis-marking or the divergent marking of other grammatical categories such as person, number, and gender (PNG), or tense, aspect, and mood (TAM). This discussion is very detailed. As can be gleaned from the preface (p. v), part of the examples were moved from Appendix II into the text during the elaboration of the study for publication. While it might seem at first an odd choice to present a large proportion of the analyses the results of the study are based on as part of an *appendix*, the abundance of material in chapter 3 as it is now definitely justifies presenting only the most interesting cases in the text. The discussion could have been further improved by finding exact parallel sentences for all examples but considering the number and distribution of the languages studied it is obvious that this would not have been possible. As a result of the characterization of the different types of standard negation, a number of implicational universals are proposed, e.g. “if a certain number of distinctions can be made in the negative, at least the same number of distinctions can be made in the affirmative” (p. 161). The chapter ends in a comparison with the classificational attempts made in previous studies (pp. 162–165) which nevertheless have lacked the rigor of Miestamo’s functional-formal criteria.

Although the author has initially declared that the objectives of the study are qualitative rather than quantitative (p. 29), the quantitative dimension is tackled in “Chapter 4: Quantitative data” (pp. 167–194). “Quantitative” would perhaps not be the term chosen by quantitative

linguists as it is here employed to refer to raw data and percentages, not statistical analyses. However, the percentages speak for themselves: symmetric negation is more common than the asymmetric patterns (46% vs. 30% of the RS; p. 172) among which asymmetry based on the reduction of grammatical category and finiteness marking clearly predominate (33% and 25%, respectively; p. 173). Asymmetry in the TAM domain is more common than with PNG categories (p. 175), doubtlessly because of the affinity standard negation has with the verbal domain. The author also demonstrates that the majority of languages (79%) feature but one type of asymmetry (p. 176), and is able to establish typological and areal correlations. For example, free negators are usually preposed and correlate with VO word order while bound negators tend to be postposed and correlate with OV word order (p. 182–190). As far as areal distribution is concerned, for instance symmetric negation is most frequent in Southeast Asia and in the Americas (pp. 190–191).

In “Chapter 5: Functional motivations” (pp. 195–235), the author aims at explaining (cf. *infra*) the rationale behind his data. He identifies analogy as the central motivating principle. As a consequence, language-internal analogy from form to form is cited to account for symmetric negation whereas language-external analogy from function to form is held responsible for asymmetric negation as different aspects of the functional properties of negation are grammaticalized (p. 200, 204). For example, the stativity of negation is proposed as the motivation of asymmetries deriving from reduced finiteness marking on the negative (p. 206; note, however, that stative affirmatives are not cross-linguistically characterized by reduced finiteness marking). In cases of constructional asymmetry, the same (number of) functional distinctions are made as with the corresponding affirmatives while the number of functional distinctions is usually lower in cases of paradigmatic asymmetry (p. 205). The chapter ends in a discussion of possible diachronic developments in the light of the functional motivations presented (pp. 217–231).

The main findings of the study are resumed in a short concluding chapter (pp. 236–240). The author also points out topics to be addressed by future typological research like other areas of clausal negation, the interaction between negation and other areas of grammar, and the application of the dimension of symmetry to other functional domains (p. 238).

In spite of some minor methodological problems mainly due to the size of the sample (valid generalizations come at a price, for example of the

unavailability of exactly parallel structures), this is the first comprehensive study of standard negation as defined by the author which additionally introduces the important dimensions of symmetry vs. asymmetry and constructional vs. paradigmatic which indeed can be fruitfully explored in other domains. Therefore, the volume under review is obligatory reading for anyone interested in language typology and in recent trends in the field.

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