

Influence of non-manual negation on word order in Russian Sign Language¹

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The basic word order in simple declarative clauses of Russian Sign Language (RSL) is SVO (Kimmelman 2012). However, the marker of sentential negation occupies the clause-final position and strictly follows the predicate (Kimmelman 2007). Therefore, the word order in negative constructions becomes SOV instead of SVO (1)².

Moreover, the essential feature of negative constructions in sign languages is simultaneity: a manual marker of negation is accompanied by non-manual marking of negation, such as head movements (a headshake, a head turn or backward head tilt) and/or facial expressions (lowered eyebrows, narrowed eyes and wrinkling nose). In RSL, for example, the negative headshake, being one of non-manual markers of negation, may easily spread over more than one sign because of the repeated movement of the head. Thus, several configurations are possible (1b-c).

- (1a) MOTHER BUY BOOK [RSL; elicited]
'Mother bought a book.'
- (1b) neg
MOTHER BOOK BUY NOT
- (1c) _____ neg
MOTHER BOOK BUY NOT
- (1d) _____ neg
MOTHER BOOK BUY NOT
'Mother did not buy a book.'

In this paper I investigate how negation affects the basic word order. For this purpose, I adopt the analysis suggested by Kremers (2012) for non-manual marking in sign languages that marks different syntactic structures (topic, questions, negation, etc.). This analysis takes into account only syntactic and phonological tiers without a dedicated morphological module and implies a separate autosegmental tier, which is associated with a phonological word or a phrase.

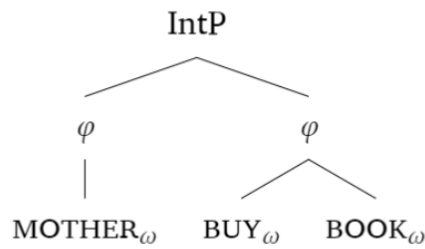
A declarative sentence '*Mother bought a book.*' has a phonological representation as in (2a). While in the corresponding negative variant '*Mother did not buy a book.*' a negative headshake appears on an autosegmental tier. This headshake must be associated with a phonological word (2b) or a phrase (2c,d).

Since the Nontangling Condition disallows association lines between non-terminal and terminal crosses, a SV Neg O word order, where non-manual negation spreads only over manual negation, is impossible (3).

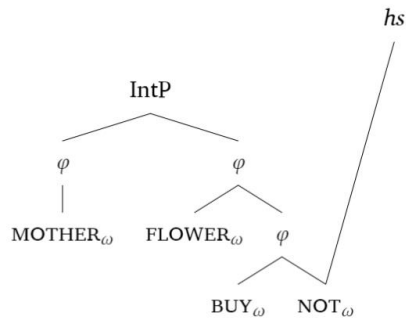
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² Sign language examples are given in small capital letters. The line above glosses indicates which sign(s) co-occurs with non-manual markers. 'neg' stands for non-manual markers of negation.

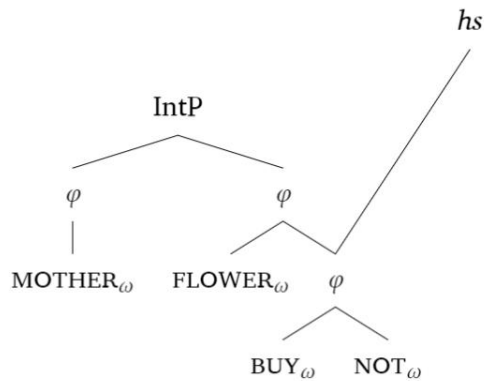
(2a)



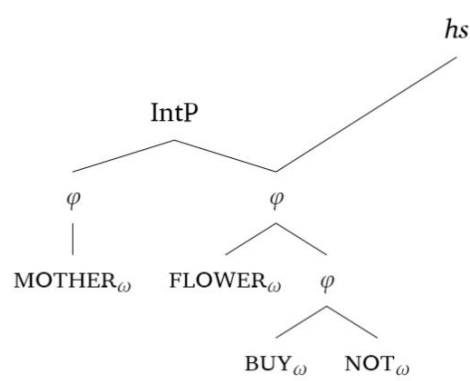
(2b)



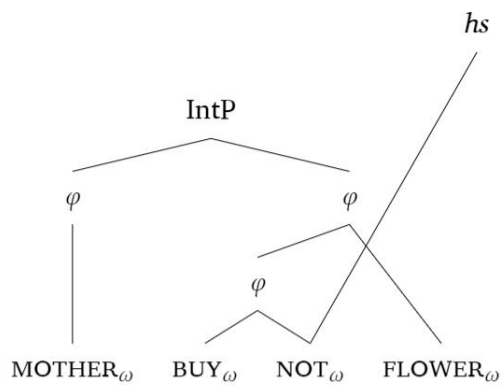
(2c)



(2d)



(3)



The presented data of RSL expands the typological knowledge about non-manual negation and negative constructions in general. The proposed analysis of this data explains the word order change in negative constructions of RSL.

References:

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4. Zeshan, Ulrike. "Hand, head and face-negative constructions in sign languages." *Linguistic Typology* 8.1 (2004): 1-58.