

Inward sensitive allomorphy in Bengali negation

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Bengali has two negative morphs in complementary distribution. The elsewhere form, *na*, can be used to negate progressives in (1a), but not perfects in (1b), which require *ni* and do not mark tense in (1c).

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|---|---|---|
| (1) a. <i>por-ch-i</i> (<i>na</i>)
study-PRES-1 (NA)
I am (not) studying. | b. <i>por-e-ch-i</i> (<i>*na</i>)
study-PRF-PRES-1 (<i>*NA</i>)
I have (<i>*not</i>) studied. | c. <i>por-i ni</i>
study-1 NI
I have not studied. |
|---|---|---|

Ramchand (2004) proposes that *na* and *ni* are distinct heads. Demonstrating an alternation under ellipsis, I argue against this. I present a morphological account that joins a growing body (Bonet and Harbour, 2012; Harizanov and Gribanova, 2014, a.o.) arguing for the existence of morphosyntactic inward-sensitive allomorphy, contra the strictest interpretation of Bobaljik (2000).

Under Ramchand’s account, eliding a TP with a perfect verb under Neg^o should strand *ni*. Yet the stranded negation in (2) is *na*, even when the antecedent (in bold) is a perfect.

- (2) *amake onek bar **dek-e-ch-e**, Sonya-ke kokkhono [...] na/*ni*
 1.OBL many times **call-PRF-PRES-3**, Sonya-OBL ever [...] NA/*NI
 They have called me many times, but not ever Sonya.

Eliding material under one head cannot turn it into another head, so (2) militates against Ramchand’s analysis. Since NPI licensing is a surface phenomenon (Zeijlstra, 2014), the availability of the vP-level NPI *kokkhono* in (2) also shows that *na* is not constituent negation on *Sonya*, but sentential negation like *ni*. The elided material is interpreted as a perfect, so the semantic co-occurrence restriction of *na* and Perf^o proposed by Ramchand should be active even in ellipsis contexts. Thus I propose a morphological solution: *ni* is a portmanteau of Perf^o and Neg^o.

Both fusion (Halle and Marantz, 1993) and non-terminal spellout (Starke, 2009) for portmanteaux require adjacency (for m-merge and spanning respectively). But subject agreement is below Neg^o as in (1a) and above Perf^o as in (1b), and thus separates Perf^o and Neg^o. I propose a zero allomorphy account (Trommer, 1999), where *ni* is the realisation of Neg^o in the context of a null Perf^o below it. This violates a strict reading of the generalization in Bobaljik (2000) that inward-sensitive allomorphy is not syntactically conditioned. However, I show that the alternatives are not viable. Inward sensitivity to phonology is not an option since below *ni* in (1c) is a bare verb with agreement, which is also the form of a present habitual. Neg^o would not know to surface as *ni* and not *na* if it were not sensitive to the presence of a null Perf^o below it. Outward sensitivity to syntax predicts, contra the facts in (1c), that agreement should surface outside *ni*, the realisation of Perf^o in this view. Thus a crucially weak interpretation of Bobaljik (2000) is required: the syntactic features of a head may be consumed during vocabulary insertion, but the label remains. That is to say, after vocabulary insertion, the [Perf] feature is not visible, but the label Perf^o is.

In this project, I argue using ellipsis that the distribution of the two Bengali negations is determined by morphology, not syntax or semantics. I analyse the alternation by proposing that contextual allomorphy may be inward-sensitive to syntactic labels, but not feature values, predicting that for a binary feature [$\pm F$], inward-sensitive allomorphy may be sensitive to the existence of F^o, but not a particular value of [F] on F^o. This implies binary and privative features should have different abilities to trigger inward-sensitive allomorphy, which warrants investigation.

References

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