

Polarity Sensitivity in Inflectional Morphology

In this paper I apply the notion of polarity sensitivity to *inflectional morphology*. General polarity sensitivity research (Israel 1996, van der Wouden 1997, Progovac 1994, Tovena 1998) only discusses polarity sensitivity at the word or phrase level. I derive a prediction for the direction of polarity sensitivity in inflectional morphology and demonstrate that this prediction holds for a number of morphological categories.

Emphatic negative polarity items (NPI) denote low quantities (Fauconnier 1975, Israel 1996). Hopper and Thompson (1980) list factors contributing to the transitivity of the clause, which is a measure of the affectedness, or transmission of force, involved in the action. Some of these factors can be morphologically encoded. In the case that one morpheme signals higher affectedness than the other, *we would expect the morpheme denoting the lower value of affectedness to be preferred in negation and potentially become a negative polarity item*.

This prediction is confirmed by a number of phenomena. One of the factors influencing the transitivity is affectedness of the object. In some languages (Finnish, Basque, Russian) the level of affectedness is expressed by case marking: accusative (fully affected) or partitive (partially affected). We would expect the partitive, as denoting a lower level of affectedness, to be preferred in negation, and it does indeed happen in a number of languages. In Finnish, it has become the obligatory direct object case in negated clauses. In Russian the genitive (originally partitive) is a possible case marking for a direct object under sentential negation. In Basque partitive marking of the direct object is licensed by negation and many other downward entailing environments known to license NPIs (Laka 1990, Hualde and Ortiz de Urbina 2003).

Another factor listed by Hopper and Thompson is telicity, with telic predicates contributing to higher transitivity than atelic. The telicity distinction is expressed by the imperfective/perfective distinction in the verbal morphology in Slavic languages. Accordingly, we would expect the imperfective to become associated with emphatic negation. This is indeed the case. It is most clearly seen in imperative: while perfective is possible in positive imperatives, it is dispreferred in negative imperatives, to a different extent, in all the Slavic languages (Ivić 1958, Zenčuk 1971).

- (1) i. Beri / Voz'mi stakan. ii. Ne beri /*voz'mi stakan. [Russian]
Take-IPFV / take-PFV glass. Neg take-IPFV / take-PFV glass.
'Take a/the glass' 'Don't take a/the glass'

A third factor I explore is realis/irrealis mood, with irrealis denoting less affectedness than realis. In languages in which this distinction is morphologically expressed as indicative/subjunctive mood we would expect the subjunctive to become an NPI. This prediction is confirmed, as it has been noticed (Nathan and Winters 1984; Adger and Quer 1997, 2001; Manzini 2000) that subjunctive licensors (negation, questions, antecedents of conditionals, *before*, etc.) are typical NPI licensors. Examples from Nathan and Winters (1984):

- (2) We ate before/*after anyone arrived.
(3) Comimos antes / *después que él llegara. [Spanish]
Ate-1PL before / after that he arrived-SUBJ.
'We ate before/after he arrived'.

Examination of polarity sensitivity in inflectional morphology allowed us to provide a unified explanation of these phenomena, which have previously never been discussed together. General polarity sensitivity theories should take these phenomena into account.