Perfect and negation in Lithuanian vs. Standard Average European

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1. Perfect and negation: general remarks

The interaction of perfect and negation has not so far received any comprehensive treatment in the literature.

McCawley (1999: 179):
present perfect negated

(1) a. John hasn’t received any encouragement.
   ‘there is no event of John receiving some encouragement’
   perfect applied to a negated verb phrase
b. John has [not returned my calls] many times.
   ‘there are many past events of John not returning my calls’


☆ Two interpretations of the combination of perfect and negation are possible depending on their relative scope:

☆ the “higher interpretation” (NEG > PERF): ‘it is not true that situation V has current relevance’, cf. (1a).
☆ the “lower interpretation” (PERF > NEG): ‘situation not-V has current relevance’, cf. (1b).

In Western European languages with a distinct perfect grammatical form (e.g., English, Spanish, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Greek), its combination with negation can in principle have both interpretations depending on the context.

The “lower” interpretation of negation most easily arises in contexts where not-V and especially its direct or indirect results or consequences have pragmatic salience, e.g., ‘not eat’, ‘not drink’, ‘not sleep’ etc.

Cf. the notion of “negative facts/events” (Stockwell et al. 1973: 250–251; Horn 1989: 51–55): “There are certain cases where a negation of an event may... itself be an event... Semantically, the ‘event’ seems to be the breaking of a habitual or expected pattern of activity”.

2. General remarks on Lithuanian perfect

Auxiliary būti ‘be’ + active past participle (for the time being, I exclude from consideration constructions with passive participles), cf. (5):

(5) Tai turbūt geriausi-as anekdot-as, kok-į es-u girdėj-ęs.
   ‘This is perhaps the best joke I’ve (ever) heard.’ (LKT)

The auxiliary can occur in virtually any grammatical form, and is very often left out in the Present Tense, cf. (6). Specialized meanings triggered by particular forms of the auxiliary, e.g., annulled result with the Past Perfect or epistemic modality with the Future Perfect, won’t be considered.

The main meanings of the Perfect:

☆ subjective (subject-oriented) resultative (only with telic verbs denoting change of state of the subject): ‘the result of V holds at reference time’, cf. (6), (7).

(6) J-į ati-séd-us-i patogiai.
   3-NOM.SG.F PRIV-PST-PST-down-PST.PRT-3 PRV-RFL-comfortably
   ‘She is sitting (lit. has sat-) comfortably.’ (Servaitė 1988: 84)

(7) T-q varas-q Ėl-a buv-o ap-si-vilk-us-i
   DEM-ACC.SG summer-ACC.SG AUX-PST.3 PRIV-PFL-dress-PST.PRT-PA-NOM.SG.F
   nauj-a suknel-e.
   new-INS.SG.F dress-INS.SG
   ‘That summer Ėla was dressed (lit. “had put on”) in a new dress.’ (ibid.)

☆ experiential or existential (in principle possible with all verbs but especially favoured by atelic verbs, which do not admit the resultative meaning): ‘the situation V occurred at least once up to the reference time’, cf. (5), (8).

(8) Mažid-as buv-o žaid-ės dešimt-įs žaidim-ų.
   M-NOM.SG AUX-PST.3 play-PST.PRT.PRT-PA-NOM.SG.M ten-ACC.PL game-GEN.PL
   Dar niekuomet ne-buv-o pa-jut-ęs toki-os aistr-os grum-ti-s.
   yet never NEG-AUX-PST.PRT.PRT-PST.PRT-PST.PRT-3
tok-ı-os aist-ı-os grum-þ-s
   ‘M. had [by that time] played dozens of games. But he had never felt such a passion for it.’ (LKT)

☆ Notably, the Lithuanian perfect, unlike English or Bulgarian (Iatridou et al. 2001), does not have the “universal” or “inclusive” meaning and cannot denote a durative situation lasting up to the reference time. Thus, only (10a) with a Present tense form can serve as a felicitous translation for English (9).

(9) I have been working at the University for 2 years already.

(10) a. Universit-ės dirb-u jau dvěj-us met-us.
   university-LOC.SG work-PRES.1SG already two-ACC.PL.M year-ACC.PL

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3. Perfect and negation in Lithuanian

The Lithuanian Perfect, as has been noted already by Sližienė (1967: 70), has two morphological positions for negation, which turn out to correspond to two different scopes of negation:

- the “higher” position on the auxiliary, (11a);
- the “lower” position on the participle, (11b).

(11) a. Nei niekada ne-s-u miegoj-ęs lauke.
   The Lithuanian Perfect, as has been noted already by Sližienė (1967: 70), has two
   morphological positions for negation, which turn out to correspond to two different
   scopes of negation:
   - the “higher” position on the auxiliary, (11a);
   - the “lower” position on the participle, (11b).

b. Jau dvi dien-as es-u ne-miegoj-ęs.
   ‘I have never slept for two days already.’ (PERF > NEG)

Some corpus examples:

(12) a. J-ųs dar niekad ne-buv-o mat-ęs
   ‘I have never eaten dinner so early.’ (LKT)

b. Labai seniai ne-buv-o prarad-ęs
   ‘I have never worked for two years [and now I don’t work there].’

(13) a. Aš niekada taip anksti ne-buv-o mat-ęs
   ‘I have never worked for two years [and now I don’t work there].’

b. Gyvenim-e ne-s-u grąžin-us-i
   ‘I have never returned clothes once I had already bought them.’

(14) a. Gyvenim-e ne-s-u grąžin-us-i
   ‘I have never returned clothes once I had already bought them.’

b. ...tvirtin-dam-as, jog j-o sūn-us j-am
   ‘Claiming that his son has not returned him some debts’ [the fact that some
   particular debts have not been returned is asserted] (LKT)

The “lower” position of negation can also occur in the experiential perfect:

(15) O armij-oje es-u ne-miegoj-ęs
   ‘When I was in the army I once did not sleep for three days.’ (Google)

In many cases the opposition of the “higher” and the “lower” negations is pragmatic rather than purely semantic, cf. the following naturally occurring examples:

(16) a. Nei vien-o blog-o komentar-o a pie j-uos
   ‘I have not read a single bad comment about them.’ (Google)

b. Galbūt es-i ne-skaici-usi-
   ‘Perhaps you have not read the club’s rules and don’t know that such topics are
   not tolerated?’ [‘you are such that did not read the rules’] (Google)

(17) a. Vyr-as ne-buv-o prarad-ęs
   ‘The man did not lose conscience, but could no longer walk by himself.’ [looks
   like a neutral statement] (Google)

b. Pa-meči-au penk-is lit-us, todėl nuo ryt-o
   ‘I lost five litas, so I have not eaten anything since morning.’ (LKT)

b. ...tvirtin-dam-as, jog j-o sūn-us j-am
   ‘Of Beethoven’s symphonies I have not heard only the Third.’ (elicited)

Since LKT does not have morphological annotation, determining which verbs par-

4. Perfect and negation in the East Baltic area (preliminary observations)

Lithuanian

Looks similar to the “standard average European” type: the negation on the auxiliary
freely admits the “lower” interpretation, cf. (20), (21).

(20) Vis-u nakt-i ne-esmu gulėj-is.
   ‘I have not slept whole night.’ (Google)

(21) Es ne-esmu ėd-as u-dien-as.
   ‘I have not eaten for two days.’ (Google)

Negation on the participle seems to be possible in Latvian just in a small number of
lexicalized cases like (22).
Slavic dialects: note that due to the consistent non-occurrence of the auxiliary in the present tense, only “pluperfect” constructions with the past tense auxiliary are really indicative.

North-West Russian dialects

(22) Un var-u aizmirs-t, ka esmu ne-éd-us-i, and can.PRS.1SG forget-INF that AUX.PRS.1SG NEG-eat-PST.PA-PST.NOM.SG.F
ne-iz-gul'-je-us-i-e-s un sa-slim-us-i. NEG-PRV-sleep-PST.PA-PST.NOM.SG.F-PRV and PRV-become.sick-PST.PA-PST.NOM.SG.F 'And I can forget that I haven’t eaten, haven’t slept enough and feel sick.’ (Google)

(23) My v kolkoz-e ne by-l-i yo-šot-ši. (NEG > PERF)
w NOM kolkoz-LOC.SG.NEG AUX-PST.PL prf-go(PFV-PRF)-PST.CNV 'We did not enter the kolkhoz.’ (Novgorod oblast’, Kuz’mina, Nemčenko 1971: 183)

(24) Tr-i noč-i ne l’ok-ši by-l-a. (PERF > NEG)
three-ACC night-ACC.PL NEG lie.down(PFV)-PST.CNV AUX-PST-SG.F 'I didn’t sleep for three nights (then).’ (Novgorod oblast’, ibid.: 188)

Belorussian dialects bordering on Baltic

(25) Ja n’e by-l-a gl’adz’e-ušy.
ENOM NEG AUX-PST-SG.F see(PFV)-PST.CNV 'I had not looked.’ (Belorusia, Astrapaveck district, Mackevič, Grinaveckienė 1993: 106)

(26) Ja by-l-a jašče n’e-je-ušy.
ENOM AUX-PST-SG.F NEG AUX-PST(SG.F) NEG 'I hadn’t eaten yet.’ (Belorusia, Slavskoŭski district, ibid.)

(27) Vy, išče s malin by-l-i n’a pry-šo-ušy.
you.PL.NOM NEG AUX-PST(SG.F) NEG ‘You hadn’t yet come from picking raspberries’ (Belorusia, Polacki district, Mackevič 1957: 46)

(28) tut ni adzin čəlav’ek n’a by-u asta-ušy-si.
here nor one(NOM.SG,M) man(NOM.SG) NEG AUX-PST(SG,M) remain(PFV)-PST.CNV-RFL 'Not a single person had remained here.’ (ibid.)

Cf. the following structural parallelism between Lithuanian and dialectal Belorussian observed by Mackevič, Grinaveckienė (1993: 107):

(29) Lith. Jis buvo tris dienas ne-valg-ĕs.
Bel. Jon byu try dni n’é-je-ušy. 'The parents have not come.’ (Sino-Tibetan > Tibeto-Burman, Mathias Jenny, p.c.)

(30) Do armi-i on vutk-i n’e by-l koštova-fšy.
before army-GEN.SG.3 NAM Đảng.GEN.3 NEG AUX-PST(SG.M) try(PFV)-PST.CNV 'Before the army he had not tried vodka.’ (Adomavičiūtė, Čekmonas 1991: 100)

(31) Ja ot sam-ego ran-a by-l-a n’e jat-šy, n’e pl-fšy.
enom from very-GEN.SG.M morning-GEN.SG.NEG AUX(PFV)-PST.CNV NEG drink(PFV)-PST.CNV 'I have not eaten and drunk since morning.’ (elicited)

5. Some parallels in other linguistic areas

Standard English (Zanuttini 1996: 189–190, ex. originally from Stockwell et al. 1973)

(32) a. Mary hasn’t always paid taxes. (NEG > PERF > always)
   b. Mary has always not paid taxes. (PERF > always > NOT) vs. Italian (ibid.)

(33) a. Maria non ha sempre pagato le tasse. (= 32a, 32b)
   b. *Maria ha sempre non pagato le tasse.

Cf. also some naturally occurring English examples with “split” negated Perfect:

(34) a. They really love nursery and have sometimes not wanted to come home! (Google)
   b. I have often not slept or eaten for 2 days at a time. (Google)

However, such examples of “split Perfect” are quite rare: according to BNC (100 mil. words), have/has sometimes/often/always never occurs 10 times, while has/has never occurs about 11 000 times. Note also that examples like (32) and (34) are not even mentioned in a 800-page long study of the English verb phrase by Declerck (2006).

Irish English (Harris 1984: 312)

(35) a. I haven’t even it made yet. (NEG > PERF)
   b. I’ve a loaf not touched. (PERF > NEG)

Swedish (Larsson 2009: 175–176) — resultative constructions only

(36) a. Artikel-n är inte skriv-en. (NEG > PERF)
   paper-DEF AUX.PRS NEG write-PST.PRT
   b. Artikel-n är inte skriv-en. (PERF > NEG)
   paper-DEF AUX.PRS NEG write-PST.PRT

The position of negation correlates with scope (ibid.: 206–207):

(37) a. Dydy Sioned ddim wedi gyrredd.
   neALUX.SG.3 NOM.SG NEG become-NEG.CNV
   b. Mo’ Sioned heb gyrredd.
   neg AUX.SG NEG become-NEG.CNV

Welsh (Borsley, Jones 2005: 131)

(38) a. obu-n išu-n b-ot’q'-un gobi
   father-GEN.SG & mother-GEN.SG & HPL-come-NEG.CNV
   B-OT’Q'-UN gobi
   b. obu-n išu-n b-ot’q'-bič golī.
   father-GEN.SG & mother-GEN.SG & HPL-come-NEG.CNV
   GOLI

The position of negation correlates with scope (ibid.: 206–207):

(39) a. Žu e’xu-l usan-un y-če-un-av.
   3ABS river-INTER bathe-PFV.CNV F-AUX-PST-NEG
   'She did not bathe in the river.’ [She never bathed in the river before]
   b. Žu e’xu-l usan-bič y-če-un.
   3ABS river-INTER bathe-NEG.CNV II-AUX-PST
   'She did not bathe in the river [on some particular occasion].’ (ibid.: 207)

Burmese (Sino-Tibetan > Tibeto-Burman, Mathias Jenny, p.c.)

(40) a. Ûh ba-hmà pyò ma-thà phù.
   3 what ever say NEG-AUX-deposit NEG
   b. ba-hmà ma-pyò thà phù.
   what ever NEG-speak AUX-deposit NEG

'He didn’t say anything.’ “There seems to be no difference in meaning between the two forms, the choice being rather an individual preference, with dialectal differences in some cases.”
6. Conclusions

The “lower” interpretation of negation in perfect constructions is relatively well-attested in the languages of the Eurasia; from a purely logical stand, nothing prevents it from being universal.

The possibility of formally distinguishing between the “higher” and the “lower” interpretations of negation in perfect constructions is less trivial and deserves a detailed cross-linguistic study.

From an areal perspective, the lack of a formal distinction between the “higher” and the “lower” interpretations of negation seems to be an areal feature of the SAE languages, probably correlating with a higher degree of grammaticalization of the perfect and its eventual development into perfective or past.

The languages which can formally distinguish between the “higher” and the “lower” interpretations occur on the fringes of SAE; it seems fairly plausible that the availability of “lower” negation in some linguistic varieties of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania is an areal phenomenon.

Abbreviations


References

BNC — British National Corpus, http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/