Focus Negation is Constituent Negation in Hungarian

There is a general agreement that pre-verbal negation (1a) in Hungarian is sentential negation, and the negative particle is in NegP (É. Kiss, 2002; Puskás, 2000; Surányi, 2002). The same is held for focus negation (1b), but here NegP c-commands a clause with focus (Szabolcsi, 1981; É. Kiss, 2002; Surányi, 2002). In contrast, this paper claims that focus negation is *syntactically* constituent negation, where the negative marker adjoins and modifies the focused constituent only. I also analyze focused VP negation (1c) as constituent negation, a structure that is barely discussed in the literature. I show a sketch of my proposed structure for all three word orders in (1).

(1) a. [TopP Mari   [NegP nem [Neg olvasta   ] [IP el   a Hamletet   ]]].
        Mary.NOM   NEG   read.PST.3SG   PRT the Hamlet.ACC
      'Mary didn't read Hamlet.'

     b. [TopP Mari [FocusP [nem] [NP a   "HAMLETET]] [Focus olvasta   ] [IP el   ]].
        Mary   NEG   the HAMLET.ACC   read.PST.3SG   PRT
      'It was not Hamlet that Mary read.'

     c. [TopP Mari [FocusP [nem] [VP "EL olvasta   ]] [IP a   Hamletet   ]].
        Mary   NEG   PRT read.PST.3SG   the Hamlet.ACC
      'Mary did not READ Hamlet.'

I furthermore propose that constituent negation and sentential negation are the same *semantically*. An interpretation of negation as an operator that selects for flexible types, taken from Toosarvandani (2013), makes this possible (2). I added the case where negation modifies an argument instead of a function.

$$(2) \quad \neg X \begin{cases} \neg X, & \text{if X is a truth value} \\ \lambda Y. \neg X(Y), & \text{if X is a function} \\ \lambda Y. \neg Y(X). & \text{if X is an argument} \end{cases}$$

I adopt Toosarvandani's (2013) views that clauses with sentential negation (3a) are coordinated with other clauses, but negated constituents can be coordinated with other subclausal constituents (for example DP, in 3b)). The first conjunct in adversative coordination then always has to be a full clause with sentential negation (3a and 3c), but this is not required for constituent negation (3b). If focus negation was similar to sentential negation, where NegP c-commands a focus-containing clause, a contrast between (3b) and (3c) would be unexpected.

(3) a.   [CP Nem olvastam el   a Hamletet],   hanem [CP meg néztem ~~a Hamletet~~].
            NEG read.1SG PRT the Hamlet.ACC, but   PRT saw

      'I didn't read Hamlet, but I saw it.'

     b.   [FocusP [DP Nem a   "HAMLETET],   hanem [DP az "OTHELLÓT]   [Focus' olvastam el].
              NEG the "HAMLET.ACC, but   the "OTHELLO.ACC   read.1SG PRT

      'I read not HAMLET, but OTHELLO.'

     c.   * Nem olvastam el,   hanem meg néztem a   Hamletet.
            NEG read.1SG PRT, but   PRT saw   the Hamlet.ACC

      'I didn't read Hamlet, but I saw it.'

I discuss two counterarguments to my proposal: semantic contrast (Szabolcsi, 1981) and NPI licensing (Surányi, 2002; Kenesei, 2009); both of which indicate that the negative particle in focus negation has scope beyond the focus. (4), taken from Szabolcsi (1981), shows that a clause with focus negation can be contrasted with another clause, not only the focused constituent. As for NPI licensing, a fact is that both sentential negation (5a) and focus negation (5b) can license NPIs pre-negation.

However, assuming that the semantic interpretation of constituent negation is the same as sentential negation gives an explanation to both of these problems: a clause containing constituent negation can be contrasted the same way as a clause containing sentential negation. This same explanation also works for NPI-licensing, assuming that pre-negative NPI-licensing has only semantic conditions, following Giannakidou's (2000) claim that those NPIs are universal quantifiers that select for a clause containing negation.

(4)   Nem Máriát   veri Péter, hanem az ajtó
       NEG Maria.ACC beat Peter, but   the door
       csapódott be.
       shut   PRT

      'Peter doesn't beat Maria, the door got shot.'

(5) a.   Senki   nem olvasta el   a Hamletet.
            nobody NEG read   PRT the Hamlet.ACC

      'Nobody read Hamlet.'

     b.   Senki   nem a   "HAMLETET olvasta
            nobody NEG the HAMLET.ACC read
            el.
            PRT

      'Nobdy read HAMLET.'

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