

When the Question is Why, Not How: Stress on a Clitic that Immediately Follows the Negator in Bulgarian

Cynthia Vakareliyska

University of Oregon (emerita)
vakarel@uoregon.edu

1. Introduction¹

Formal syntax analysis is concerned primarily with two issues: (a) how a particular grammatical construction in a given language or languages fits into the overarching theoretical model; and (b) how the construction is formed or operates syntactically. Both issues may be the same, or much the same, with regard to a specific construction. In some instances, however, the latter, i.e., the proposal of formal syntax rules or models to account for the existence or operation of a given construction in a language, is insufficient, because the reason behind the construction is in fact not syntactic. In these instances, the relevant question is not *how* the construction arises, but *why* it does.

This article looks at just such a construction in Bulgarian, which has vexed linguists over the past fifty years: a negative clause in which a stressed clitic immediately follows the Bulgarian negator *ne*.² (Word stress in the examples is

¹ This article is an expansion of a paper given at the Triennial Conference of Nordic Slavists in Oslo on 11 August 11, 2022. On clitic stress assignment in the context of Slavic negation generally, see Vakareliyska, forthcoming, 2023. I am grateful to my native Bulgarian speaker consultant, Professor Anissava Miltenova of the Institute of Bulgarian Literature (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences), for checking the grammaticality and naturalness of the Bulgarian examples in the article, both those I have created and those from secondary sources. I have adapted the Bulgarian and Macedonian examples from secondary sources by making the English glosses consistent with the conventions used throughout the article, and, occasionally, by slightly adjusting the English translation. Those examples that are not expressly credited to a secondary source have been created by me. I also thank Professor Mary MacRobert for suggesting the relationship to enclitics, and Professor David J. Birnbaum for directing me to sources on Proto-Slavic clitic chains. All errors and misjudgments are my responsibility alone.

² The stress on the clitic is sometimes described misleadingly as “secondary”, but in fact, it does not appear to be any weaker than the word stress on the verb. Bulgarian phonological word units do not have primary and secondary word stress on different syllables such as multisyllabic English words like *encyclopédia* do. Moreover, several educated native Bulgarian speakers have suggested to me that the relative strength of the stress on the clitic and the verb in a *ne* + clitic construction depends on context.

indicated by an acute accent mark; sentential stress is indicated by capital letters and boldface):³

(1)

(a)	Ne	SŮM	ti	go
	NEG	AUX-CL.PRES.PERF.1SG	you-CL.DAT.SG	it-CL.M/N.ACC
	dála.			
	give-PF.PERF.F.SG			

‘I haven’t given it to you.’ (adapted from Tomić 1999:23)

(b)	(Té)	ne	MÉ	pítaxa.
	(they)	NEG	me-ACC	ask-AOR.IMPF.3PL

‘They didn’t ask me.’

While clitics have been defined in different ways, this study employs the definition of clitic as a morphological entity that operates on the clause level syntactically and on the word level phonologically, not forming a phonetic word by itself, but requiring a phonological word or phrase with inherent stress as its host. Although some Proto-Slavic clitics, primarily enclitics, are believed to have had inherent stress themselves (which may be one of the factors that makes constructions like (1)(b) possible; see section 2 below), both enclitics and proclitics in modern standard Bulgarian typically are unstressed (but see again section 2 below). Therefore when an enclitic that immediately follows *ne* is stressed, syntacticians typically assume that the stress must be assigned syntactically by another constituent of the sentence, and that the issues to be resolved are (a) which constituent does the assigning, and (b) the syntactic rules and processes under which the stress is assigned.

This exception to Bulgarian prosodic rules was first noted by the Norwegian Bulgarist Kjetil Rå Hauge in his seminal 1976/1999 article, in which he observed that the negator *ne* itself is not a typical Bulgarian clitic. *Ne* acts like a Bulgarian clitic, in that it requires the main verb in the clause as its phonological host (hence in example (1)(a), the sequence *ne sŭm ti go* is a chain hosted by the main verb *dála*, while in (1)(b), the chain is *ne me*, hosted by the main verb *pítaxa*). But unlike all but one other Bulgarian morpheme that is usually considered a clitic, discussed in section 5 below,

³ The following abbreviations are used in this article: ACC–accusative, AOR–aorist, AUX–auxiliary, CL–clitic, DAT–dative, DEF–definite, F–feminine, IMPERF–imperfect, IMPF–imperfective aspect, M–masculine, NEG–negator, N–neuter, OBJEC–objective case, PERF–perfect, PF–perfective aspect, PL–plural, PRES–present, SG–singular, 1–first person, 2–second person, 3–third person.

ne may occur in first position in the clause (as in (1)(a) above), which is generally blocked to clitics by Bulgarian word order rules.

Also, in contrastive constituent negation, *ne* can be stressed through emphatic sentence intonation:

(2) *NE* čerVÉnoto, a ČÉRnoto!

NEG red-ADJ.N.SG.DEF but black-ADJ.N.SG.DEF

‘Not the *red* one, (but) the *black* one!’

In contrast to the stress on *ne* in (2), however, the stress on the clitic immediately following *ne* is not discourse-level emphatic sentence intonation. This is clear from examples (3), where, as in (1)(b) above, the identity of the referent of the clitic pronoun is not being emphasized or contrasted:

(3) *Ne* *JÁ* poznávam.

NEG her-ACC know-PRES.1SG

‘I don’t know her.’

If emphasis were intended, the clitic *ja* in (3) would be accompanied by the long-form, stressed feminine objective (i.e., non-nominative) singular pronoun *néja*, and *ja* would still be stressed:

(4) *Néja* *ne* *JÁ* poznávam.

her-OBJEC.ACC NEG her-CL.ACC know-PRES.1SG

‘I don’t know *her*.’ / ‘*Her* I don’t know.’

In (4), the doubling of the clitic pronoun by the long-form pronoun itself is the device that expresses emphasis, not the sentential stress. Similarly, to emphasize “me” in (1)(b) above, the long-form pronoun *méne* would be required, while the clitic *me* still kept the stress immediately following *ne*:

(5) *Méne* *ne* *MÉ* pítaxa.

me-OBJEC.ACC NEG me- CL.ACC ask-AOR.IMPF.3PL

‘They didn’t ask *me*.’

Nor does the stress on the auxiliary clitic *sŭm* in (1)(a) mark it for emphasis or contrast with another verb tense.

2. Background

Because of the exceptional stress on any clitic that immediately follows *ne*, in addition to the ability of *ne* to occupy clause-initial position, linguists differ regarding whether to treat *ne* in Bulgarian as a clitic or as an underlyingly stressed word. For example, Franks & King (2000:59) treat *ne* as a proclitic that is hosted by any immediately following clitic pronoun or auxiliary, while Hauge (1976 [1999]), Penčev (1984:63), Rudin (1997), and Rudin et al. (1999) have treated it as an underlyingly stressed word. Tomić (1999:24, 29) has proposed instead that Bulgarian *ne* is a kind of special clitic that cancels the cliticness of any immediately following clitic, by assigning stress to the first clitic that follows it as part of the phonological word unit.

The determination of the grammatical status of Bulgarian *ne* has repercussions for the hierarchical placement of negators in formal tree models of syntactic structure, not only for Bulgarian, but for the Slavic languages generally, and for language as a whole. Many linguists (e.g., Rivero 1991, Borsley & Rivero 1994, Brown 1999, Brown & Franks 1997, 1995, Bailyn 2004, Junghanns 1995, Harves 2002a, 2002b, Abels 2005, all regarding Russian) have proposed formal models in which a Negative Phrase, headed by the negator, heads a negative clause. Other linguists have questioned whether negative clauses that use different syntactic means to express sentential negation actually do share the same syntactic structure at some level of representation (Zanuttini 1994:427; Acquaviva 1995; Kosta 2009:284). Franks (2008:96–97) has proposed that *ne* and the following stressed clitic together compose a prosodic word that hosts the interrogative clitic *li* if it immediately follows the stressed clitic, e.g.: *Ne-TÍ-li kázax?* ‘Didn’t I tell you?’

Alternatively, Tomić (2004:240, 1996:832) views Bulgarian *ne* as a “weak operator”, that is, an inherent proclitic that, in her words, “leans upon” an inherently enclitic pronominal clitic, so that the opposite prosodic directions of the two clitics cancel each other out, resulting in a phonological word in which the stress falls according to language-specific prosodic rules. In contrast, Harizanov (2014) has argued that Bulgarian clitics simply do not participate in phonological processes that apply within prosodic words. Noting the conundrums that the issue causes for syntactic movement rules, Legendre (1998:27) has argued instead, within an Optimality Theory framework, that the assignment of stress to the clitic after *ne* is the result of the interaction of several constraints, both syntactic and prosodic.

What all these approaches have in common is that they assume that *ne* assigns stress to the clitic that immediately follows it, yet many of the analyses cited above have difficulty seeking to explain how it is possible for *ne* to assign stress to another clitic if it does not have inherent stress itself. But why assume that the stress on the clitic immediately after *ne* is assigned by *ne*? Postulating that the clitic receives the stress some other way would permit treating *ne* as a clitic, which is how it behaves in

most other circumstances. For this reason I propose putting aside, at least temporarily, (a) the issue of *how* stress assignment by *ne* fits into various syntactic models, and (b) whether *ne* itself is a clitic (which does not affect the conclusion in this study), and instead, considering *why* the clitic that immediately follows *ne* receives stress in the first place.

3. Analysis

Usually an exception to a strict syntactic or prosodic rule like the *ne* + clitic construction is not meaningless or random, but was based originally, at least, in necessity. The issue for the *ne* + clitic construction is what that necessity may have been. This requires a somewhat diachronic perspective in addition to the synchronic analysis of the construction.

If we remove the exceptional stress on the clitic pronoun *ja* in example (3) above, *ne JÁ poznávam* ‘I don’t know her’, we get the phonological word unit *ne-ja-poznávam*, with a single stressed syllable in the clause, in the main verb *poznávam*. This negative clause variant, without the clitic stress, is syntactically ambiguous to the hearer until the hearer has gotten past the first two words *ne ja*, because in clause-initial position, that clitic chain is indistinguishable, or nearly indistinguishable, from the emphatic positive equivalent of the clause, which adds the stressed feminine objective singular long-form pronoun *néja*:

(6)

(a) **Ne ja poZNÁvam.* (without stress on *ja*)

NEG her-ACC know-PRES.1SG

‘I don’t know her.’

(b) *NÉja ja poznávam.*

her-OBJEC her-CL.ACC know-PRES.1SG

‘I know *her*.’ / ‘*Her* I know.’

Note, as illustrated in (6)(b), that in Bulgarian, a clitic pronoun is not stressed when it immediately follows a stressed word such as the long-form pronoun *néja* ‘her’. Even if only one of the consecutive unstressed *ja* syllables in (b) is heard in quick speech, the sentence is still fully comprehensible, because both *néja* and *ja* mean ‘her’.

While it might be argued that first-syllable-stressed long-form *néja* in (6)(b) is distinguishable from unstressed *ne-ja* in (a), in reality this is not so. A number of studies in articulatory phonetics (see, among others, Fougeron & Keating 1997,

Barnes 2002, Borys 2003) have shown that increased force in enunciation, particularly of consonants, occurs at the edges of a prosodic domain, with the greatest force occurring at the left edge, in clause-initial position. Hence, if production of the initial *n* in the negator *ne* in (6)(a) requires a little more force in the onset of this sentence, that force can sound like stress, much in the way that in first-syllable-stress languages like Czech, a long vowel in an unstressed syllable can sound stressed to a non-native speaker: i.e., *nnne ja*. This even very slight articulatory force can result in some major syntactic ambiguity when *ne* is followed by an accusative clitic, because it sounds the same as the beginning of sentence (6)(b) *Néja ja poznávam* ‘I know *her*’ / ‘*Her* I know’.

Because of the extra force on the [n] in the unstressed form *ne* in sentence onset, the distinction between, on one hand, negative *ne* plus the clitic pronoun *ja* and, on the other, the long-form stressed pronoun *néja* can be difficult or impossible to parse until the listener is further along in the sentence, at a point where it may be hard to turn back and reparse. This ambiguity occurs not just with the 3Sg F Acc clitic, but also with the 3Sg M/N Acc clitic pronoun *go* vs. long-form 3Sg M/N Objec pronoun *négo*: **Ne go poZNÁvam* (‘I don’t know him’) vs. *NÉgo go poznávam* ‘I know *him*’ / *Him* I know.

In addition, without the exceptional stress on the clitic pronoun *ja* or *go*, the emphatic version of negative sentence (6)(a), which appears in its correct form as example (4) above (*Néja ne JA poznávam*, ‘I don’t know *her*’/ ‘*Her* I don’t know’) would be even more confusing, because there would be little to no aural difference between sentence-initial long-form stressed pronoun *néja* or *négo* and the immediately following clitic chain *ne-ja* or *ne-go*:⁴

(7) * <i>NÉja/NÉgo</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>ja/go</i>	<i>poznávam.</i>
her/him-OBJEC.ACC	NEG	her/him-CL.ACC	know-PRES.1SG
‘I don’t know <i>her</i> .’ / ‘ <i>Her</i> I don’t know.’			

This would also have been true with the 3SG DAT clitic pronouns (M/N) *mu* and (F) *i* ⁵ as well, at an earlier stage in modern Bulgarian, when a remnant of the earlier morphological case paradigm was preserved (as it still is in some dialects) in the long-form 3Sg DAT pronoun forms (M/N) *nému* and (F) *nei*:⁶

⁴ This ambiguity does not apply to the Bulgarian 3PL clitic and long-form pronouns, because they are suppletive: *gi* vs. *tjáx*.

⁵ The grave accent mark on the clitic *i* does not represent stress; it is a standard Bulgarian orthographic convention that distinguishes the pronoun from the connector clitic *i* (‘and’).

⁶ The newer standard Bulgarian DAT long-form pronouns are analytic constructions composed of the OBJECT long-form pronoun (F *néja*, M/N *négo*, which used to be the ACC forms) preceded by the clitic object marker *na* ‘to, on, of’: *na néja* ‘her-DAT’, *na nego* ‘him-DAT’.

- (8) (a) **Ne mu dádox paRíte* (without stress on clitic)

NEG him-CL.DAT give-AOR.1SG money-PL.DEF

‘I didn’t give him the money.’

- (b) *NÉmu mu dádox paríte.*

him-DAT him-CL.DAT give-AOR.1SG money-PL.DEF

‘I gave the money to *him*.’ / ‘*He*’s the one I gave the money to.’

Since the third-person clitic pronouns are the most frequently used pronoun forms, this ambiguity would certainly be very widespread. Hence exceptional stress on the third-person singular clitic pronouns immediately after *ne* serves as a *disambiguating device* between negative and positive variants of the same clause, not on the syntactic level, but post-syntactically, according to a discourse-level rule. And then, I propose, the rule was extended analogically beyond the 3Sg clitic pronouns, where the ambiguity existed in the absence of clitic stress, to any other clitics that immediately follow *ne*, including verbal auxiliaries:

- (9)(1) (a) *Ne ŠŮM ti go*

NEG AUX-CL.PRES.1SG you-CL.DAT.SG it-CL.M/N.ACC

dála.

give-PERF.PF.F.SG

‘I haven’t given it to you.’

- (b) (*Té*) *ne MÉ pítaxa.*

(they) NEG me-ACC ask-AOR.IMPF.3PL

‘They didn’t ask me.’

This explains both *how* and, more importantly, *why* this exceptional stress occurs on the clitic pronoun. Recognizing the ambiguity that the stress placement avoids indicates that the stress on the clitic is not assigned by *ne* or by any other constituent in the sentence. Hence there is no need to try to accommodate this construction within established formal syntax models.

A historical precedent for assignment of stress to a clitic is the behavior of Proto-Slavic enclinema, i.e., Slavic words (typically nouns and verbs) that historically had initial falling accent, and that behaved as if they had no inherent stress. In Proto-Slavic, these words received a surface falling accent on the first syllable, because otherwise they would have had no accent at all. Enclinema basically gave their

stress to an adjacent clitic. If both an enclitic and a proclitic were present, the word accent moved rightward from the enclitic onto the enclitic: e.g., the phrase *běsъ žé*, consisting of the enclitic noun ‘demon’ plus the emphatic clitic *že*. Otherwise, it moved leftward to the *first* proclitic: *névědō* (*ne* + know-PRES.1SG, ‘I don’t know’),⁷ or, where two clitics were present, *í nevědō* (‘and I don’t know’). This prosodic rule operated on the phonological level.⁸

In addition, in Proto-Slavic a clitic chain formed a single accentual unit even in the absence of an inherently stressed word (Garde 1976, Dybo 1981, Zaliznjak 1985). According to this model, two consecutive clitics formed a stress group, with the stress on the second, because enclitics had stronger lexical accentual valences than proclitics: hence the sequence *ne žé*, in which the emphatic clitic *že* is stressed immediately following *ne* in instances where the two clitics form a phrase in themselves.

In this respect, the stressed clitic chains are analogous to the Bulgarian *ne* + enclitic construction, and can be viewed as a precedent for the discourse-level assignment of stress on a clitic that immediately follows *ne*. In fact, the precedents of enclitics and, particularly, stressed clitic chains in Proto-Slavic suggest that perhaps modern Bulgarian clitics too still have a weak inherent stress valence that is *activated*, not externally assigned, in instances such as the Proto-Slavic example above, where a stressed syllable is needed (as suggested by Večerka 1989:41 for modern Slavic languages also). If the clitic stress is indeed inherent, then of course it is not assigned by any other element of the sentence, so that no syntactic rules need be applied. In any event, it is not necessary to attempt to determine whether modern standard Bulgarian clitics have inherent stress in order to account for the stress on a clitic immediately after *ne*, since unlike the lexical stress in Proto-Slavic clitic chains, the stress on the clitic here is motivated by discourse-level reasons.

4. Comparison with Macedonian

Comparison with similar negation constructions in Macedonian, which is closely related to Bulgarian, offers some additional insights. In modern standard Macedonian, unlike Bulgarian, clitics always must precede main verbs, which normally act as their hosts. Since, like Bulgarian, Macedonian is largely a *pro*-drop language, this means

⁷ According to modern convention, the negator *ne* immediately preceding a verb form in Old Church Slavonic (OCS) is written as part of a single orthographic word. The OCS writing systems, Glagolitic and Old Cyrillic, did not indicate breaks between words orthographically.

⁸ An enclitic could also lose its stress if it was preceded or followed by an orthotonic adjective (an adjective with a strong, independent stress), as in Early East Slavic *въ душѣ*-F.Sg.ACC *грѣшѣну*-F.Sg.ACC ‘into a sinful soul’, where the enclitic noun *душѣ* is unstressed (Valiavicharska 2013: 196). This occurred generally in M and N nouns in the NOM SG, and in F SG oblique case forms and in some SG forms of verbs (ibid.).

that Macedonian clitic pronouns are frequently in clause-initial position, unless preceded by an adverbial (see example (12) below):

(10) Macedonian:

- (a) *Go* ***GLÉdam***.
 him-CL.ACC watch-PRES.1SG
 ‘I’m watching him.’
- (b) ****GLÉdam*** *go*.

This differs from Bulgarian, in which clitics are generally barred from first position (although, as shown above, the negator *ne*, which is usually considered a clitic, can appear there):

(11) Bulgarian:

- (a) ***GLÉdam*** *go*.
 watch-PRES.1SG him-CL.ACC
 ‘I’m watching him.’
- (b) **Go* ***GLÉdam***.

In Macedonian, after the clause-initial negator *ne*, an immediately following clitic is stressed, just as in Bulgarian: *Ne* ***GÓ*** *glédam* ‘I’m not watching him’ (example from Alexander 2000: 16). But, unlike Bulgarian, Macedonian also stresses a clitic after a *stressed* word in clause-initial position:

(12) Macedonian:

- Zóšto* ***GÓ*** *glédaš?* (adapted from Alexander 2000:16)
 Why him-CL.ACC watch-PRES.2SG
 ‘Why are you watching him?’

Cf. the stress in the equivalent Bulgarian sentence, *ZaŠTÓ* *go glédaš?*

Example (12) above illustrates that in Macedonian, a clitic receives stress if some other constituent is in clause-initial position, whether that other element has inherent stress or not. The reason behind this prosodic rule is likely because Macedonian word ordering rules generally require that where there is no clause-initial overt subject or adverbial, clitics occupy first position in the clause, but the placement of *ne* or an adverbial like *zóšto* in clause-initial position forces the clitic into second position. This, of course, is the opposite of Bulgarian ordering rules, which generally require

that clitics occupy *second* position in the clause. By putting stress on the clitic, Macedonian resolves the word-order violation by treating the clitic as a stressed word.

In many Macedonian dialects, the negator *ne* followed by a clitic also results in assignment of stress, but the stress goes onto *ne*, not onto the following clitics:

- (13) *NÉ* *mu* *go* *dávam*.
 NEG him-CL. DAT it-CL.ACC give-PRES.1SG
 ‘I’m not giving him it.’ (adapted from Alexander 2000:16)

Cf. modern standard Macedonian, where *ne* followed by a clitic chain results in stress on the clitic that immediately *precedes the verb*, not on the clitic that immediately follows *ne* (unless, of course, there is only one clitic):

- (14) *Ne* *mu* ***GÓ*** *davam*.
 NEG him-CL.DAT it-CL.ACC give-PRES.1SG
 ‘I’m not giving him it.’ (adapted from Alexander 2000: 23)

Compare again with Bulgarian, where the first clitic immediately following *ne* receives the stress:

- (15) *Ne* ***MÚ*** *go* *dávam*.
 NEG him-CL.DAT it-CL.ACC give-PRES.1SG
 ‘I’m not giving him it.’

The reason for this is that unlike Bulgarian, which has free word stress, Macedonian has fixed antepenultimate word stress. As defined above, a clitic is part of a phonological word together with its host, so a phonological word containing a clitic (in this instance *go* + *dávam*) must have antepenultimate stress also. Note that in (14), the usually stressed Macedonian verb form *dávam* has no stress, because the stress has *shifted* to the antepenultimate syllable of the phonological word *go* + *dávam*, which is the clitic *go*: *gó-davam*. Hence in this case, the stress on the clitic *go* is not the result of a discourse-level prosodic rule, but is required phonologically on the *word* level under Macedonian accentuation rules.

5. The other clause-initial Bulgarian clitic: *šte*

The other Bulgarian clitic that works like *ne* is the future AUX *šte*.⁹ It too can occur in clause-initial position, and a clitic that immediately follows it is stressed:

- (16) *Šte* *ĠÓ* *glédam.*
 AUX.FUT him-ACC watch-PRES.1SG
 ‘I’ll watch him.’

Also like *ne*, *šte* has a stressed allomorph, the verb “want”, *štjá*. This verb, which is a contraction of Proto-Slavic present tense 1SG **xóštjǫ* ‘I want’, does not appear much in standard Bulgarian now, except in the negative: *ne štjá!* ‘I don’t want to!’ In this sentence it is clear that the verb *štjá* is not receiving its stress from *ne*, because the past-tense modal forms of the unstressed clitic Fut AUX *šte* are always stressed lexically, even the monosyllabic ones like *štjál*:

- (17) *Toj štěše* */štjál* *da* *rabóti* *dnés,*
 he modal-IMPERF.3SG /modal-EV.PAST.M.SG COMP work-PRES.3SG today,
 nó *ne* *É* *došǔ’l.*
 but NEG AUX.PERF.3SG come-PERF.M.SG
 ‘He was supposed to work today, but he didn’t come in.’¹⁰

Since the disyllabic past tense and monosyllabic perfect modal forms of *štjá* in (17) both have inherent stress, it appears likely that the clitic AUX *šte* would have inherent stress also. In this respect, it is relevant that both the clitics *šte* and *ne* have lexically stressed allomorphs (the verb *štjá* and the anaphoric negator *né* ‘no!’, respectively). Here too, however, it is unnecessary to determine whether *šte* itself has inherent lexical stress, because if a clitic that immediately follows it is unstressed, the initial *š* in AUX *šte* receives clause-initial increased articulatory force, just as the *n* in the clitic *ne* does, causing the clitic to be partially or fully inaudible if it consists of a high vowel:

⁹ The Slavic clitic connectors *i* ‘and’ and *a* ‘and/but’ also were proclitics in Proto-Slavic with weak accentual valences like *ne* and *šte*, and they can appear in Bulgarian in clause-initial position in elliptical sentences, but an enclitic immediately following either of them is not stressed: *Obíčam gi i gi uvažavam* ‘I love them and respect them.’

¹⁰ Note that sentence (17) also contains *ne* followed by stressed clitic verbal AUX *e*. As is characteristic for the Bulgarian *ne* + clitic construction, the stress is disambiguating, since in the absence of stress, the AUX *e* could be inaudible after the *e* in *ne*.

(18)

- (a) *Šte* *Ĭ* *dám* *paríte.*
 AUX.FUT her-DAT give-PRES.PF.1SG money-PL.DEF
 ‘I’ll give her the money.’

- (b) **Šte* *ì* *dám* *paríte.*
 AUX.FUT her-DAT give-PRES.PF.1SG money-PL.DEF
 ‘I’ll give her the money.’

- (c) *Šte* *Ě xúbavo!*
 AUX.FUT is great
 ‘It will be great!’

- (d) **Šte* *e xúbavo.*
 AUX.FUT is great
 ‘It will be great!’

As with *ne*, I postulate that the discourse rule requiring stressing of a clitic following *šte* was initiated because of ambiguity resulting from an unstressed clitic consisting of a high vowel (*ì* ‘her’-DAT, *e*-PRES.3Sg) immediately following it, and then was extended analogically to all clitics, regardless of whether aural ambiguity was present, e.g.:

- (19) *Šte* *MŮ* *dadát* *paríte.*
 AUX.FUT him-DAT give-PRES.PF.3PL money-PL.DEF
 ‘They’ll give him the money.’

In this sense the originally disambiguating stress was grammaticalized, becoming codified as a prosodic rule, and thus can be said to be a feature of the *ne* + clitic construction.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, if a post-syntactic sentence-level stress rule is indeed the explanation for the clitic stress after *ne*, we no longer need to posit that *ne* or any other syntactic entity in the sentence has assigned that stress, nor do we need to determine whether the modern Bulgarian clitic still has historical weak underlying stress, a question that cannot be answered, since whether Proto-Slavic clitics had inherent stress is a hypothesis that cannot be proven. In the case of the Bulgarian construction consisting of *ne* followed by a stressed clitic, and likely in other instances where an apparently syntactic construction is inexplicable according to syntactic rules, looking to potential reasons *why* the exceptional construction occurs can help to determine whether it is syntactic in the first place. If not, as in the case of the discourse-level stress rule in Bulgarian, it is no longer necessary to struggle to fit the exceptional construction into a given syntactic or phonological model, or to revise the model in order to accommodate it.

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