

1 The Basic Phenomenon

- (1) Negative Concord (NC) is the indication at multiple points in a clause of the fact that the clause is to be interpreted as semantically negated. (Ladusaw (1992):237)

In Standard English and in logic, two surface negations cancel out each other.

- (2) I **didn't** say **nothing**.
(= I said something; $\neg(\neg\exists x[\text{I said } x]) \iff \exists x[\text{I said } x]$)

However, in Non-Standard English, and in many other languages, two expressions of negation do not cancel out each other.

- (3) a. **Nobody** said **nothing** to **nobody**.
(= 'Nobody said anything to anyone.')
- b. Maria **didn't** say **nothing** to **nobody**.
(= 'Maria didn't say anything to anyone.')
- c. Spanish
Nadie miraba a **nadie**.
n-body looked at n-body
'Nobody looked at anybody.'
- d. Italian, from Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni (2002)
Sherlock ***(non)** aveva **nessuno dubbio**.
Sherlock Neg had n- doubts
'Sherlock didn't have any doubts.'

2 Asymmetries between Pre- and Post-verbal Negation

An initial hypothesis to handle the NC data presented above could just be that there is a single negation that can be expressed more than once.

However, this hypothesis faces some immediate problems.
A negation in pre-verbal position can stand on its own.

- (4) a. (Italian, from Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni (2002))
Nessuno ha telefonato.
n-body has called
'Nobody called.'
- b. *madeup Spanish*
Juan **no** miraba a Maribel.
Juan Neg looked at Maribel
'Juan did not look at Maribel.'

But a negative phrase in postverbal position cannot stand on its own in Spanish/Standard Italian.

- (5) Italian, from Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni (2002)
*Sherlock aveva **nessuno dubbio**.
Sherlock Neg had n- doubts
'Sherlock had any doubts.'

Having two postverbal n-words by themselves does not make things any better.

- (6) *Mario ha parlato di **niente** con **nessuno**.
Mario has spoken with n-one about n-thing
'*Mario has spoken with anyone about anything.'

The asymmetry between pre- and postverbal n-words is particularly clear with postverbal n-word subjects.

- (7) Spanish, from Herburger (2001)
a. Preverbal n-word subject:
Nadie vino.
n-body came
'Nobody came.'
- b. Postverbal n-word subject:

*(No) vino **nadie**.
 not came n-body
 'Nobody came.'

A further instantiation of this asymmetry is that while a single pre-verbal n-word along with an unbounded number of postverbal n-words **obligatorily** becomes the expressions of a single abstract negation, this is not necessarily the case with two pre-verbal n-words. A double negation reading is available in Spanish.

- (8) Spanish, from Laka (1990)
- a. **Nadie no** ha venido.
 n-body not has come
 'Nobody hasn't come.'
 (*Nobody came. [judgement reported by Ladusaw (1992)])
 - b. **Nadie nunca** volvió a Cuba.
 n-body n-ever returned to Cuba
 'Nobody ever returned to Cuba.'
 'Nobody never returned to Cuba.'

It seems that sentential negation does not enter into NC in Spanish, while *nunca* 'never' can do so optionally.

It is not the case that sentential negation cannot enter into NC in any language. This is a domain in which variation is found between two varieties of Non-Standard English and between different Romance languages.

- (9) a. Nobody didn't say nothing.
 NS English Variety 1: Double Negation (= Nobody didn't say anything) or *
 NS English Variety 2: Negative Concord (= Nobody said anything.)
- b. Catalan:
Ningú (no) has vist en Joan.
 N-body Neg has seen Joan
 'Nobody has seen Joan.'

2.1 Ladusaw (1992)'s Proposal

- One abstract negation that needs to be licensed.
- An overt sentential negation can license the abstract negation.
- N-words in pre-verbal position are in positions high enough to c-command and license the abstract negation. Postverbal n-words are unable to do this.

- N-words themselves are strong-NPIs that need to be licensed by negation. Postverbal n-words without a preverbal negation are ungrammatical due to a failure of licensing.

A problem for Ladusaw (1992): the possibility of Double Negation in NC languages. Note that Ladusaw assigns * to the Spanish counterpart of 'Nobody hasn't come.'

2.2 An Unattested Pattern

In principle though, it is conceivable that there is a language that is like Catalan but lacks the pre- vs. post-verbal negation asymmetry.

In such a language, we could only have one real semantic negation but have one or more instantiations of it irrespective of whether these instantiations are pre- or post-verbal.

Potentially the Sandro Zuchhi dialect of Italian reported in a footnote in Ladusaw (1992):249 could be such a language.

3 N-words as NPIs

3.1 Similarities in Licensing

Postverbal n-words can be licensed by elements other than sentential negation/negative adverbs/preverbal negative quantifiers. In this they are like NPIs.

- (10) a. *without*:
 Lucia parti **senza** salutare **nessuno**.
 Lucia left without greeting n-one
 'Lucia left without greeting anyone.'
- b. *before*:
 Calandrino rientrò a casa **prima** che lo avesse visto **nessuno**.
 Calandrino arrived home before that him had seen n-body
 'Calandrino arrived home before anybody saw him.'
- c. *doubt*:
 Lucia **dubita** che la possa aiutare **nessuno**.
 Lucia doubts that her can help n-body
 'Lucia doubts that anybody can help her.'

This kind of licensing can sometimes lead to ambiguity.

- (11) Spanish, from Herburger (2001)
- Dudo** que **nadie** lo sepa.
doubt.1Sg that n-body it know.Subj
'I doubt that nobody/anybody knows it.'
 - Dudo** que lo sepa **nadie**.
doubt.1Sg that it know.Subj n-body
'I doubt that anybody/*nobody knows it.'
- (judgement attributed to Bosque (1980) and Laka (1990))

3.2 Dissimilarities in Licensing

But there are also environments where NPIs and English Negative Quantifiers can both appear but Spanish/Italian N-words cannot.

- (12) Restrictor of 'every' and 'no'
- Every time Dante had any questions, Virgil was there to answer.
 - Every time Dante had no questions, Virgil remained silent.
 - ***Ogni** volta che Dante aveva **nessuna dormanda**, Virgilio era là per
every time that Dante had n- questions Virgil was there to
rispondere
answer

Other environments where NPIs and English negative quantifiers are licensed but Italian/Spanish n-words are not include the following:

- (13) a. **Only** Euryclea had **any/no** clue about who this guy was.
b. Lucien was **surprised** that a rich and powerful man had **any/no** interest in him.

3.3 Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni (2002)'s Proposal

3.3.1 The Semantic Proposal

• N-words are always NPIs. In particular, they are always existential quantifiers with a presupposition that is incompatible with its entailment.

• They contribute a non-negative existential quantifier at the level of assertion and a negative existential quantifier at the level of presupposition.

- (14) For every predicate P of type et :
- $\llbracket \text{Nadie} \rrbracket(P) = \exists x[\text{person}'(x) \wedge P(x)]$

- $\llbracket \text{Nadie} \rrbracket(P)$ presupposes $\neg \exists x[\text{person}'(x) \wedge P(x)]$

This system is clearly related to Lahiri (1998)'s analysis of Hindi NPIs, but is different too. In particular, Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni (2002) use it to block licensing of N-words in the restrictor of *every*.

3.3.2 The Syntactic Proposal

• There is an abstract negation that is in a head higher than TP. Let's call this head **Foc**⁰. This negation is to be distinguished from sentential negation.

Explanation for the Double Negation reading:

- (15) $[_{FocP} \text{Nessuno} [_{Foc'} [\text{Neg}] [_{IF} \text{non e' venuto}]]]$
N-body Neg is come
'Nobody didn't come.' (= Everybody came)

• The abstract negation needs to be licensed by having an N-word in its specifier. This is a need of the abstract negation, and not of the N-word itself.

• The N-word itself is not semantically negative, but it has morphological negativity, which is enough to license the abstract negation.

• At LF, the N-word reconstructs into the scope of negation for semantic reasons.

Potential problems for the high-register Catalan handled by Ladusaw (1992). Similar facts obtain in Romanian, Friulian, and Mediaeval Spanish.

- (16) Romanian, from Herburger (2001)
- Nimeni nu** a venit.
n-body not has come
'Nobody has come.'

3.4 The Facts from Elliptical Answers and Coordinations

One argument for treating N-words as Negative Quantifiers and not as NPIs comes from their behavior in elliptical answers.

N-words can function as elliptical answers:

- (17) a. Question:
A quién viste?
whom saw-2Sg

'Whom did you see?'

b. Answer:

A nadie
n-body

'Nobody.' (intended meaning: I saw nobody.)

NPIs cannot.

(18) a. Question:

A quién viste?
whom saw-2Sg

'Whom did you see?'

b. Answer:

*A **un alma**
a soul

'A soul.' (intended meaning: I didn't see a soul.)

Similarly postverbal N-words that are part of a co-ordination can function without a licensing pre-verbal negative element.

(19) Italian

a. Voglio vedere te o nessuno.
want see you or n-body

'I want to see you or nobody.'

b. *Voglio ballare con **nessuno** o (al piú) con te.
want to-dance with n-body or at best with you

Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni (2002) show that these cases can be handled as cases involving an elided clause and as containing an abstract negation.

The N-word licenses the abstract negation. The NPI would not be able to do so, and hence is not acceptable.

3.5 A puzzle from Denials

(20) a. Speaker A

Maria non ha mangiato niente tutto oggi.
Maria Neg has eaten n-thing all day.

'Maria hasn't eaten anything all day.'

b. Speaker B

Non ha mangiato NIENTE, ha mangiato un panino!
Neg has eaten N-THING she ate a sandwich

'It is not the case that she ate nothing. She ate a sandwich.'

Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni (2002) propose that (20b) involves metalinguistic negation, where the utterance itself is not negated. But I don't see how the licensing conditions are satisfied here.

References

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