

## Negative Concord in Old Italian and the internal structure of negative indefinites

In this talk we offer an analysis of some Old Italian (OI) data that show the relationship between the fine-grained internal morphosyntax of some negative indefinites and Negative Concord (NC). The issues we intend to address are: (i) the nature of n-words and NPIs; (ii) the behavior of these elements with respect to NC, and (iii) their distribution.

Our proposal combines Zeijlstra's (2004) analysis of NC as an Agree mechanism with the idea that NC is sensitive to the internal structure of n-words (see Martins 2000, Déprez 2011, a.o.). We argue that a combination of these approaches is necessary to account for the mechanisms that determine NC, while NPI licensing is a different type of dependency (Giannakidou 2002).

The data taken from the corpus OVI suggest that OI has optional NC, and there is a clear change around the turn of the XIV century towards a non-strict NC system, like the Modern Italian (MI) one.. The apparent NC optionality is illustrated in (1) (see also Garzonio & Poletto 2012).

- (1) a. *E **neuno** di voi si spaventi...*  
and no.one of you REFL= fear-SUBV  
'and may none of you get scared...' (OVI, VeV 69)
- b. ***Neuno non** andasse poscia in paradiso...(ibid. 78)*  
and no.one not went-3SG-SUBV afterwards in heaven  
'(so) no one would go to heaven afterwards'

This is in conformity with Martins (2000), who shows that in Old Romance the negative marker is optional with *preverbal* negatively marked elements (NMEs)<sup>1</sup>. However, our data show that this is also the case with *postverbal* NMEs, see the difference between (2a) and (2b).

- (2) a. *Ma **non** valse **neente**...*  
but not helped-3SG nothing  
'but it did not help...' (OVI, VeV 82)
- b. *E fede senza opera, overo opera senza fede, **è neente** a potere aver paradiso*  
and faith without deed or deed without faith is nothing to can-INF have-INF heaven  
'And faith without deeds or deeds without faith are worth nothing to reach heaven' (OVI, *ibid.* 30)

In OI, the optionality of NC is not due to a competition between two grammars (see Kroch 1989), but can be derived as the output of systematic restrictions within a single grammatical system. NC displays a complex, though clear pattern: Garzonio & Poletto (2012) show that adverbs (e.g. *mai* ('never'), *mica* (lit. 'crumble')) always obey strict NC, whereas only arguments obey NC 'optionally'. The NME *niente/ne(i)ente* ('nothing', 'not at all'), which has both an adverbial, and an argumental reading, can be taken as paradigmatic: it displays obligatory NC when it is an adverb (meaning 'not at all'), and optional NC when it is an argument.

Our study explores the NC pattern of more tokens than those previously investigated and reveals that NC is 'optional' in a very restricted set of cases. Specifically, no NC is attested a) when NMEs are merged in a copular/existential construction (Cop/Ex), see (2b); b) with verbs that select the preposition *da* 'from' or *a* 'to' see (3); or c) when a NME is embedded inside a manner/reason adverbial PP (e.g. *per niente*, lit. 'for nothing'). The NC pattern is summarized in (4).

- (3) *...che Dio producesse in essere le cose **dal niente**.*  
that God produced-SBJV in be-INF the things from.the nothing  
'that God created the things in actual existence from nothing' (OVI, Ottimo Commento 627)

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<sup>1</sup> We use the pretheoretical term NME to refer to all elements that start out with the *ne-* morpheme, since the term n-words implies a particular syntax and semantics.

- (4) a. Adverbial *niente* → Obligatory NC  
 b. No NC → Cop/Ex; Verb + *da/a*; manner/reason PPs

We account for the generalization in (4) by proposing that the absence of NC is related to the internal syntax of NMEs.

We argue, in the spirit of Déprez's (2011) proposal for French, that NMEs can have different morphosyntactic structures, which in turn behave differently with respect to NC. For instance, the internal structure of the element *niente* can be analyzed in two ways. One possibility is shown in (5a), where the *n*-morpheme is located in a quantifier position on top of *ente* (lit. 'being', probably a light noun). The other possibility is given in (5b), where the *n*-morpheme is located in a high adjectival position similar to that of numerals inside a DP (here AdjP). This NME does not behave as a real negative element, but is of adjectival type (as in *I molti ragazzi* = 'The many boys', Giusti 1993). This proposal is in line with Giusti & Leko's (2001) and Cardinaletti & Giusti's (2005) idea that quantifiers can split into two classes, one selecting a whole DP as its complement, and one located in an adjective-like position inside the DP.

- (5) a. [<sub>QP</sub> *ni-* [<sub>nP</sub> *ente*]] Adverbials, (4a)/arguments  
 b. [<sub>PP</sub> *da*<sub>[DP Ø/-]</sub> [<sub>AdjP</sub> *ni-* [<sub>nP</sub> *ente*]]] see (3)

NC only occurs with QPs, i.e. when NMEs spell out the structure in (5a). When the NME is analyzed as a predicate, it does not trigger NC because it is not a QP and as such it does not encode an unvalued negative feature that is relevant for NC (see Zeijlstra 2004). Our analysis accounts for the distribution of other indefinites as well (e.g. *alcuno* = (not) anyone). We will discuss an interesting asymmetry between the distribution of *n*-words and of *alcun*-words: the order *n*-word *c*-commanding an *alcun*-word is much more frequent than the reverse order. Crucially, whenever an *alcun*-word *c*-commands a NME, the *alcun*-word does not have a negative meaning (i.e. *alcuno* = some). In our analysis, *alcun*-words are QPs with no unvalued negative feature (see above). We propose to analyse *alcun*-words differently from *n*-words (see Giannakidou 2002, among others). *Alcun*-words are NPIs that must be licensed either by an NPI-licensor (e.g. *if*-operator), or, by a *c*-commanding *n*-word. The order *alcun*-word as NPI > *n*-word is not attested due to the missing NPI-licensor.

In sum, the NC pattern of OI is explained in terms of the feature-specification and the internal structure of NMEs and other (negative) indefinites (e.g. NPIs). Time permitting, we will show that further predictions on the syntax of these elements are indeed borne out.

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