

From Double Negation to Negative Concord in the history of Latin

i. Aim and scope I investigate the interplay between sentential negation and indefinites in some Late Latin texts (III-IV century CE), with the aim of tracing to this stage later developments affecting the early Romance varieties. I show by means of a corpus study that negative indefinites like *nemo* ‘no one’, *nihil* ‘nothing’, and adj. *nullus* ‘no’ are conservative in their placement with respect to the verb when they are used with object function, in that they overwhelmingly surface in a OV order at a time in which the unmarked position for objects is already post-verbal. I argue that the persistence of OV order with negative indefinites in Late Latin is a sign of an early restructuring in the system of sentential negation, precluding to the Romance systems. I propose a parsimonious interpretation of this diachronic process in terms of one crucial change in the formal features of the negative marker *nōn*, with a number of significant consequences for the relation with the indefinite pronouns.

ii. From Latin to Romance At first sight the negation systems of Latin and of the Romance languages, even at their earliest documented stages, seem to differ profoundly: according to Giannakidou’s (2000) categories, Latin is a D(ouble) N(egation) language, whereas Old Romance varieties productively display N(egative) C(oncord). Moreover, most of the indefinite pronouns and adverbs interacting with negation have undergone lexical substitution from Latin to Romance, and their etymological sources often differ substantially from language to language. There is however one characteristic that I will argue to be common to Latin and Old Romance, and to be due to inheritance / successful diachronic transmission: the ‘high’ position of the Latin negative marker *nōn* and its standard Romance continuations (e.g. It. *non*, Sp. and Cat. *no*, Pt. *não*, Fr. *ne*, Rom. *nu*) in the split-TP area, above the landing site of the inflected verb (Infl), cf. Zanuttini 1997, Rowlett 1998, Poletto 2014a. According to Danckaert (2012 cf. 1), in the Classical Latin Infl-final grammar the (remnant) *v*/VP with the various arguments moves to a Spec in the TP-domain in order to satisfy TP’s EPP requirement. This Spec being higher than the position of the negation, *nōn* surfaces between the non-finite verb and the inflected auxiliary, as in (2).

(1) (Danckaert 2012: 313): [_{Subj}P[EPP] [_{VP} S O V] [_{Subj}⁰ [_{NegP} Neg⁰ [_{TP} T⁰ t_{VP}]]]]

(2) *legati* *profecti* *non* *sunt* (Cic. de inv. 2.29)
 ambassadors:NOM left:PTCP.NOM not are:AUX.3PL
 ‘the ambassadors did not leave’

‘Low’ post-Infl negative markers are Romance innovations resulting from separate instantiations of Jespersen’s Cycle (Poletto 2014a). Also the further differentiation between strict and non-strict NC systems is to a large extent language-specific. The appearance of NC in Medieval varieties (Posner 1984, Martins 2000, Parry 2013), however, is pan-Romance, and can be argued to follow from Late Latin developments concerning the syntax of the pre-Infl negator, coupled with more general changes affecting clausal syntax.

iii. Late Latin More specifically, Late Latin witnesses (a) the shift from a Infl-final to a Infl-initial grammar, with loss of EPP-driven *v*/VP-movement leading to a constant increase in VO orders (cf. Ledgeway, 2012: 225-235 for the quantitative data collected by various scholars and the relative references, and Danckaert 2012 for a formal analysis of the loss of systematic object preposing), and (b) the reanalysis of the negative marker from specifier of a projection in the split-TP domain to (specifier and later) head of a NegP in pre-Infl position, carrying an interpretable formal feature [iNeg]. A negative marker that is a syntactic head is, according to Zeijlstra’s (2004) generalization, invariably connected to NC; yet Latin documents, despite attested examples of reinforced negation (Molinelli 1988), never show systematic negative doubling or spread. I propose that Late Latin is, in fact, a ‘concealed non-strict NC language’, in which ‘new’ n-words (i.e. concord [uNeg] indefinites) have not been grammaticalized yet,

but ‘old’ N(egative) I(ndefinites) already show signs of the new grammar for negation. NIs like *nemo* ‘nobody’ and *nihil* ‘nothing’ bring about a negative operator of their own (cf. Zeijlstra 2011), thus they become incompatible with the new Neg⁰ in a single negation reading. The ‘old’ NIs are not featurally reanalyzed, but rather made (provisionally) compatible with the new LL syntax by systematically displacing them outside the c-command domain of Neg⁰, i.e. pre-Infl, resulting, for object NIs, in systematic OV order. My corpus investigation shows that OV order of NIs is even more consistent in Late Latin texts than in early Classical Latin texts, where their flexible placement conforms to the general pattern observed for the Classical grammatical system. The steady OV order for negative indefinites does not seem to be paralleled by similar phenomena affecting NPIs or other quantificational elements. The persistence of OV orders with negative objects during the shift from OV to VO is well known from the history of Germanic (cf. Jónsson 1996, Svenonius 2000, Pintzuk and Taylor 2006) and Romance (cf. Kayne 1975, Poletto 2014b). I argue that in Late Latin this movement option may be exploited to avoid a clash with the newly activated NegP projection, and may be subject to information-structural constraints: many of these pre-V object NI are emphatic / focused (3); NIs are very often found in (focusing) replacive (‘not x but y / y not x’) and exceptive (‘no one but x’) negation, and may be fronted with stranding of the remnant NP.

(3) *levantes autem oculos suos neminem viderunt nisi solum Iesum*
 raising then eyes their no one:ACC saw:3PL if.not alone.ACC Jesus.ACC
 ‘When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus’ (Vulg. Matth. 17.8)

In concomitance with the loss of the OV option, and probably also because of their decreasing frequency due to the stricter constraints of use, NIs become obsolete and are typically not continued in Romance (with few exceptions, e.g. Old French *nul* ‘no’, Rom. *nimeni* ‘no one’).

iv. Further developments A number of (sometimes innovative) N(egative) P(olarity) I(tems) are used within the c-command domain of the negative head. Some of these NPIs are transmitted to Romance (e.g. *aliquis unus* ‘some or other’ > **alicunus*), some are first grammaticalized in the different varieties. In course of time, these elements become organized into series, i.e., despite their heterogeneous etymological sources, they assume a largely homogeneous syntactic behavior, at least with respect to their formal [uNeg] feature (e.g. Spanish *nada* ‘nothing’, originally positive *res nata* ‘born thing’, and *ningun*, originally negative *nec unus* ‘not (even) one’, cf. Willis, Lucas, Breitbarth 2013: 37).

v. Conclusions The two main parameter resetting events affecting the syntax of negation are located in Late Latin and concern the featural specification of the negative marker *nōn*, but also the general shift from an Infl-final to an Infl-initial language. These ‘catastrophic’ events combine with gradual, often language-specific grammaticalization processes affecting individual lexical items (indefinite pronouns and adverbs) that interact with the negative marker. The ensuing developments often proceed at different paces, but they eventually converge in the creation of *series* (Haspelmath 1997, Willis, Lucas, Breitbarth 2013).

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