A unified analysis of Negative Concord

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Traditionally, Negative Concord Languages (NCLs) have been grouped into two classes which differ with respect to the distribution of the negative marker (NM). In *strict NCLs* (Czech, (1)), the NM is obiligatory, while it can/must be omitted in designated contexts in *non-strict NCLs*. (Italian, (2); NM marked boldface, n[egative]-words in italics):

(1) *Nikdo* **ne**volá.
nobody NM-calling/'Nobody is calling.'

(2) *Nessuno* ha telefonato.
'Nobody has called.'

In contrast to extant analyses, which take the distinction to reflect a parametric choice in the feature specification of NMs, I present new evidence suggesting that (i) variation is due to the internal composition of n-words and that, as a consequence, (ii) there is no discrete distinction between strict and non-strict NCLs. An implementation in terms of a bi-featural system is presented which formalizes semantic and morphosyntactic properties of negative elements.

1. Background. Zeijlstra (2004) treats NCs as a (multiple) downward licensing configuration in which [uNEG] enters *Agree* with [iNEG]. Specifically, all n-words bear [uNEG], while (some) NMs as well as silent negative operators (OP) are assigned [iNEG]. Crucially, the interpretation of negation is determined by its overt position and the [NEG] feature is semantic in nature (but see Zeijlstra 2014). For the strict NC-example (1), this results in the parse (3), where [iNEG] on OP agrees with two [uNEG]-features on the NM and the n-word:

(3) $[_{NegP}$ OP$_{\neg[iNEG]}$ $[_{TP/vP}$ *nikdo*$_{[uNEG]}$ ***ne***$_{[uNEG]}$volá]]

In non-strict NCLs, a NM with [iNEG] checks [uNEG] on postverbal n-words, but not preverbal ones, as the n-word would c-command the NM; thus, these contexts include an OP.

2. New evidence. Greek is considered a typical strict NCL (Giannakidou 1998), as it requires the presence of the NM both with pre- and postverbal elements:

(4) a. *Pote* *(**dhen**) irthe.
never NM came

b. *(**Dhen**) irthe *pote*.
NM came never/'(S)he never came.'

However, there is an underdiscussed class of elements (*ou*-words) which display non-strict NC behavior in that preverbal occurrences of *ou*-words block NMs (see also Surányi 2006 for Hungarian).

(5) a. *Oudhepote* (***dhen**) irthe.
never NM came

b. *(**Dhen**) irthe *oudhepote*.
NM came never/'(S)he never came.'

Both the inability of the NM to intrude in (5a), and its obligatoriness in (4a) remain unaccounted for under Zeijlstra's (2004) analysis: in (5a), NM is incorrectly predicted to be optional, because it does not act as a licensor. In addition, it has been noted that the presence of a NM in (4a) is unmotivated (Penka 2011). Third, the fact that *ou*-elements license *negative spread*, in which the negative feature is distributed among any number of indefinite expressions without there being a NM (den Besten 1986) is left unexplained:

(6) a. *Oudhepote* rotise *tipota*
never asked nothing

b. **Pote* rotise *tipota*
never asked nothing/'(S)he never asked anything.'

Fourth, the assumption that NMs differ in their feature specification is problematic, as seen by the interaction of negation with quantifiers. In structures like (7), NMs with [iNEG] are expected to receive a narrow scope reading, while NMs with [uNEG] should be assigned wide scope, due to the obligatory presence of matrix scope OP (Zeijlstra 2004). Experimental facts (Baltazani 2002), as well as elicited data from Romanian, Italian and Spanish contradict this claim. In addition, (7) also demonstrates that semantic negation is dissociated from the clause initial empty negative operator.

(7) *Polla provlimata* **dhen** elisan. (Baltazani 2002: 112)
many problems NM solved
'The problems they solved are not many.'/'The problems they didn't solve are many.'

Fifth, the assumption that a single language may assign NMs either [iNEG] or [uNEG] incorrectly

predicts differences in the distribution of n-words, contrary to fact. The subjunctive NM *min,* argued to bear [iNEG] in Zeijlstra (2006) does not surface in (8a) with an *ou*-element, yet obligatory with regular n-words (8b).

(8) a. *Oudepote* na zitisis ti gnomi tu!
never NM subj ask the opinion his
'You should never ask his opinion!'

b. *Pote* na *(**min**$_{[iNEG]}$) zitisis ti gnomi tu!
never subj NM ask the opinion his

Finally, *asymmetric* systems in which an [iNEG] feature that itself does not need to be licensed legitimizes the presence of [uNEG], generate unfulfilled expectations. (5a) demonstrates that in such a system, [iNEG] on a negative OP licenses [uNEG] on the n-word. Moreover, the n-word in (5b) is lower than its counterpart in (5a). But given these two observations, it follows that the asymmetric system cannot exclude (5b), which minimally differs from (5a) only in word order.

3. Proposal. I propose that a *symmetric* system which relates the distribution of n-words to their lexical composition, more precisely their morphosyntactic properties, derives all of the above data. In a symmetric system, two features enter into a bi-directional licensing relation, similarly to phi-checking on T and case licensing on nominative DPs (Chomsky 2000). The key observation concerning *ou*-elements in Greek is that they are morphologically negative, unlike other n-words in the language. I submit that elements in the negative system come with two features, one semantic ([i/uNEG]), and one morphosyntactic ([i/uMORPH]) in nature. [iNEG] introduces a semantic negative operator, while its [uNEG] version is semantically inert. Syntactically, [iNEG] is always introduced by a covert semantic OP located in SpecNegP (evidence for this parse cames from *Negative Split*). Its function is to value [uNEG] on n-words and NMs. In addition, OP bears a morphosyntactic [uMORPH] feature, which needs to be licensed by [iMORPH] on elements with transparent morphological negation (*ou*-words or NMs). [iMORPH] is not interpreted at LF but participates in syntactic operations by triggering movement of *ou*-words into the preverbal field. Elements with [uMORPH] are syntactically inert, and do not partake in dislocation.The typology of the formatives is as in (9).

(9) a. overt NM: [uNEG, iMORPH]
b. covert operator: [iNEG, uMORPH]
c. n-words with morphologically transparent negation: [uNEG, iMORPH]
d. n-words: [uNEG, uMORPH]

In conjunction with the assumption that verbs pick up the clitic NM on its way to T°, the system correctly discriminates between (5a) and (5b). In (5b), [uNEG] on *dhen* and the *ou*-word are valued by [iNEG] on OP prior to movement (see (10a)), while *dhen* licenses [uMORPH] on OP once the verb and *dhen* have raised to T (see 10b):

(10) a. [$_{NegP}$ OP$_{[iNEG, uMORPH]}$ **dhen**$_{[uNEG, iMORPH]}$ irthe *oudhepote*$_{[uNEG, iMORPH]}$] ⇒
b. [$_{TP}$ **dhen**$_{[uNEG, iMORPH]}$ irthe [$_{NegP}$ OP$_{[iNEG, uMORPH]}$ *oudhepote*$_{[uNEG, iMORPH]}$]]

In (5a), [uNEG] on *oudhepote* is licensed by OP prior to movement (see (11a)) and [uMORPH] on OP is valued by *oudhepote* after it has moved to the preverbal field (see (11b)). *dhen* is not required, hence excluded by economy:

(11) a. [$_{NegP}$ OP$_{[iNEG, uMORPH]\ [uNEG, iMORPH]}$ irthe] *oudhepote*$_{[uNEG, iMORPH]}$] ⇒
b. *Oudhepote*$_{[uNEG, iMORPH]}$ [$_{NegP}$ OP$_{[iNEG, uMORPH]\ [uNEG, iMORPH]}$ irthe]

A similar account extends to (6a). The *ou*-element with morphosyntactic [iMORPH] values the [uMORPH] features of the OP and *tipota*; the NM is correctly predicted to be absent. Finally, in (4a), [uNEG, uMORPH] on *pote* is derivationally licensed prior to movement by [iNEG] on OP and [iMORPH] on the NM *dhen* (see (12)). Thus, the NM is obligatory.

(12) *Pote*$_{[uNEG, uMORPH]}$ [$_{NegP}$ OP$_{[iNEG, uMORPH]}$ *(**dhen**$_{[uNEG, iMORPH]}$) [~~*pote*~~$_{[uNEG, uMORPH]}$ irthe]]

Under this account, [uNEG] on NMs and n-words is always licensed prior to movement, while [uMORPH] on OP is always licensed after movement. There is no need to stipulate a high NegP for languages with NMs (contra Zanuttini 1997 and others). On the present view, NegP is always low and the high occurrence of NMs is an artifact of verb movement, which collects the clitic NMs on its way to T or Mood.