

The Syntax of unambiguously expressed metalinguistic negation

Ana Maria Martins

anamartins@letras.ulisboa.pt



UNIVERSIDADE
DE LISBOA



LETRAS
LISBOA



CLUL

Centro de Linguística
da Universidade de Lisboa

Goals of this presentation

- investigate the **syntax of metalinguistic negation**, displacing the research focus from *not*-sentences to (what I will refer to as) **unambiguous metalinguistic negation markers (MN markers)**
- identify the **different types of MN markers** that can be found across languages and try to understand what they have in common despite their apparent diversity (**e.g. swear words/idioms, temporal/locative deictics, *wh*- words**)
- Suggest that the crosslinguistic availability of such items attests to the cognitive reality of MN as distinct from descriptive negation (DN).
- propose that the sentential **left periphery** (in the spirit of the cartographic approach) **provides the unifying link behind the crosslinguistic diversity of MN markers** (which in turn may offer new insights into the structure of the left periphery).

Unambiguous Metalinguistic MN markers

Examples from European Portuguese (EP)

(1) A: A União Europeia (não) vai acabar.

the Union European (not) goes end.INFIN

‘The European Union will (not) come to an end.’

B: a. A União Europeia (não) vai acabar **uma ova**.

the Union European (not) goes end.INFIN MN-marker (literally, ‘a fish roe’)

b. **Uma ova** é que a União Europeia (não) vai acabar.

MN-marker is that the Union European (not) goes end.INFIN

c. (Não) vai **agora** acabar.

not goes MN-marker end.INFIN (literally, ‘now’)

d. **Qual** a União Europeia (não) vai acabar **qual** quê.

which the Union European (not) goes end-INFIN which what

e. **Uma ova / Agora / Qual**.

[isolated MN markers]

‘Like hell the European Union will (not) come to an end.’

Metalinguistic Negation vs. Descriptive Negation (Horn 1989)

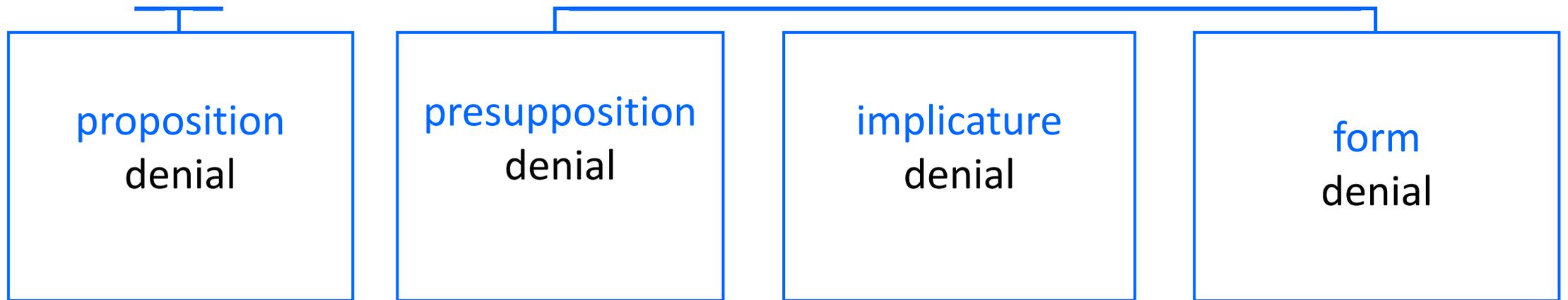
Apparent sentence negation represents either a descriptive truth-functional operator, taking a proposition **p** into a proposition **not-p** (or a predicate **P** into a predicate **not-P**), or a metalinguistic operator which can be glossed 'I object to **U**', where **U** is crucially a linguistic utterance or utterance type rather than an abstract proposition. [Horn 1989: 377]

[MN is] ...[a device for objecting to a previous utterance on any grounds whatever](#)... a speaker's use of negation to signal his or her unwillingness to assert, or accept another's assertion of, a given proposition in a given way; metalinguistic negation focuses not on the truth or falsity of a proposition, but on the assertability of an utterance [Horn 1989: 363]

Geurts' (1998) typology of denials in relation to Horn's MN/DN distinction
(adapted from Pitts 2011: 357)

Horn's descriptive

Horn's metalinguistic



Metalinguistic Negation: grounds for objecting

The grounds for objecting to an earlier utterance can be of different types:

- presupposition-failure

- (i) a. I haven't stopped smoking; I have never smoked in my life. (Burton-Roberts 1989)
b. A: He is travelling without his wife.
B: No, he's not. He isn't even married.

- rejection of conversational implicatures

- (ii) a. A: He is meeting a woman this evening.
B: No, he's not (meeting a woman this evening) – he's meeting his wife!
b. A: They had a baby and got married.
B: They didn't have a baby and get married, they got married and had a baby.

(Horn 1989: 371, 373)

Metalinguistic Negation: grounds for objecting

- criticism towards linguistic features ranging from phonetic realization to choices of register or style (the speaker expresses an attitude of disapproval, which can be mild/playful/subtle or strong/assertive/scornful)

(iii) a. A: I will make a tom[ɛɪtɔʊ] salad.

B (grinning): I don't eat tom[ɛɪtɔʊz].

A: Don't be an asshole! (If you would rather have tom[a:təʊz], go and make your own salad.)

b. I'm not a 'colored lady' – I'm a black woman! (Horn 1989: 373)

- a subjectively perceived lack of evidence for asserting or lack of truthfulness (adds to Geurts' typology – Martins 2020a)

(iv) A: I still love you. / They still love each other.

B: *Like hell.*

Diagnostic tests to identify MN (vs. DN)

- MN is excluded from out of the blue sentences
- MN does not license NPIs/n-words
- MN is compatible with PPIs (of the type excluded from ordinary negative sentences)
- MN is an instance of 'external negation'
- MN is a main clause/root phenomenon (thus it is excluded from embedded clauses)

MN is excluded from out of the blue sentences (English)

(2) A: Chris managed to solve some problems.

B: a. Chris didn't manage to solve any problems. (DN)

b. Chris didn't manage to to solve some problems – he solved them easily. (MN)
(Horn 1989: 368)

(3) [Uttered out of the blue]

a. You know what, after all Chris didn't manage to solve any problems. (DN)

b. *You know what, after all Chris didn't manage to solve some problems – he solved them easily. (failed MN)

c. *You know what, **like hell** Chris managed to solve some problems. (failed MN)

MN is excluded from out of the blue sentences (EP)

- (4)a. Oh! Hoje **não** há esquilos no jardim. (DN)
oh! today not is squirrels in.the park
'Oh! Today there aren't squirrels in the park.'
- b. # Oh! Hoje há **agora** esquilos no jardim. (unavailable MN interpretation)
oh! today is now squirrels in.the park
'Oh! today there is now squirrels in the park.'
- c. *Oh! Hoje há esquilos no jardim **uma ova**. (unavailable MN interpretation)
oh! today is squirrels in.the garden a fish.roe

Whereas DN is not limited to denial contexts, hence can occur in *initiating* and *responding* assertions (Farkas and Bruce 2010), MN is always a reaction to a previous assertion (audibly uttered or 'in the air'; cf. Geurts 1998, Martins 2020a), thus excluded from initiating assertions.

MN does not license NPIs (English)

(5) A: Chris managed to solve *some* problems.

B: a. Chris didn't manage to solve *any* problems. (DN)

b. Chris didn't manage to solve {*some*/**any* problems} – he solved them easily. (MN)

(6) A: Bill has *already* forgotten that today is Friday.

B: a. Maybe he hasn't {*yet*/**already*}, but will soon. (DN)

b. Bill hasn't {*already*/**yet*} forgotten that today is Friday, because today is Thursday. (MN)

(7) A: You *still* love me.

B: a. I don't love you *anymore*. (DN)

b. Like hell I {*still* love you / love you **anymore*}. (MN)

MN does not license NPIs/n-words (EP)

- (8) A: Tu é que conheces uma pessoa que sabe arranjar isto.
you is that know-2SG a person that knows fix-INFIN this
'You surely know someone who can fix this.'
- B: a. Eu **não** conheço *ninguém* que saiba arranjar isso. (DN)
I not know-1SG nobody that knows fix-INFIN that
'I don't know anyone who can fix that.'
- b. Eu conheço **agora** {*alguém*/**ninguém*} que saiba arranjar isso. (MN)
I know-1SG MN-marker somebody/*nobody that knows fix that
'Nonsense I know someone who can fix that!'
- A': **Não** conheces **agora** *ninguém* que saiba arranjar isto. (MN)
not know-1SG MN-marker nobody that knows fix-INFIN this
'Nonsense you don't know anyone who can fix this!'

MN does not license NPIs/n-words (EP)

(v) A: Hoje vais sair comigo.
today go-2SG go-out-INFIN with-me
'Today we will go out together.'

B: a. Eu **não** saio contigo *nem morta*. (DN)
I not go-out-1SG with-you *not-even dead* [negative intensifier]
'I will NOT go out with you.'

b. Eu saio **agora** contigo (**nem morta*). (MN)
I go-out-1SG MN-marker with-you *not-even dead*
'Like hell (I will go out with you).'

MN is compatible with PPIs (EP)

- (9) A: Tiveste uma sorte *do diabo*.
had.2SG a luck *of-the devil* [positive intensifier]
'So lucky you were!'
- B: a. *Eu *não* tive uma sorte *do diabo*. (*DN)
I not had a luck *of-the devil*
'I wasn't so lucky.'
- b. Tive *agora/lá* uma sorte *do diabo*. (MN)
had.1SG MN-marker a luck *of-the devil*
'Like hell I was so lucky.'

MN is compatible with PPIs (EP)

- (vi) A: Ele é um nadador *e peras*.
he is a swimmer *and pears* [positive intensifier]
'What a great swimmer he is!'
- B: a. *Ele *não* é um nadador *e peras*. (*DN)
he not is a swimmer *and pears*
'He is not a great swimmer.'
- b. Ele é *lá/agora* um nadador *e peras*. (MN)
he is MN-marker a good-luck *and pears*
'Nonsense he is a great swimmer.'

MN is compatible with PPIs (EP)

The paradigm in (vi) features the polarity-sensitive idiomatic expression *pintar a manta* (literally, ‘paint the blanket’; idiomatically, ‘misbehave’, especially speaking of a child), which requires an affirmative sentence. Unsurprisingly, the PPI *pintar a manta* is compatible with the MN markers, as exemplified in (v) with *agora*.

(vii) A: Como é que ele se portou?
how is that he SE behaved
‘How did he behave?’

B: a. *Pintou a manta.*
painted.3SG the blanket
‘He behaved badly.’ / ‘He acted up!’

b. # *Não pintou a manta.* (only literal interpretation)
not painted.3SG the blanket
‘He didn’t paint the blanket.’

A’: *Pintou a manta agora.* (as a reaction to (viiBa))
painted the blanket MN-marker
‘Nonsense he did.’

MN is an instance of external negation

Whereas DN displays scope ambiguity relative to matrix *not* and the adverbial reason clause, MN sentences block the reason-over-negation reading, allowing only the negation-over-reason reading, i.e. the wide scope, external negation reading against the narrow scope, internal negation one.

- (10) a. He is **not** in jail **because** he lied. (**DN**)
b. [**Reason**>**Neg**] It is because he lied that he is not in jail.
c. [**Neg**>**Reason**] It is not because he lied that he is in jail.
- (11) A: He is in (some fucking) jail because he lied.
B: He isn't in (some fucking) jail because he lied. (That doesn't add up.) (**MN**)
B': *Ele está agora na prisão porque mentiu.* (EP)
he is MN-MARKER in jail because lied.3SG
'Like hell he is in prison because he lied.'
c. [**Neg**>**Reason**] It is not because he lied that he is in jail.

MN is an instance of external negation

Kroeger (2014) on Malay/Indonesian (cf. Oseki 2011, for Japanese; and Lee 2015, 2016, for Korean):

- internal (predicate) negation is expressed by the ‘standard’ negation marker *tidak*
- external (sentential) negation is expressed by the ‘special’ negation marker *bukan*.

Sentence (vii) exemplifies that “replacing *bukan* with *tidak* forces a shift from MN to DN, resulting in a logical contradiction: (...) a person cannot grow flowers for a living without planting flowers.” (Kroeger 2014: 143).

(viii) a. Dia *bukan* menanam kembang tetapi ber-tanam kembang.

3SG NEG ACT.plant flower but MID.plant flower

‘He doesn’t (just) plant flowers but grows flowers (for a living).’

b. #Dia *tidak* menanam kembang tetapi bertanam kembang.

(Kroeger 2014: 143)

MN is a root/main clause phenomenon (EP)

(12) A: O governo anunciou que vai baixar os impostos.

'The government announced that it will lower the taxes.'

B: a. O governo anunciou *agora* que vai baixar os impostos. [root MN]

The government announced MN-MARKER that (it) will lower the taxes

b. O governo anunciou que vai baixar os impostos *agora*. [root MN]

The government announced that (it) will lower the taxes MN-MARKER

c. *Agora!* [root MN]

'The government announced that it is going to lower the taxes *my eye*'.

d. O governo anunciou que vai *agora* baixar os impostos. [unavailable MN int.]

The government announced that (it) will *now* lower the taxes

e. O governo anunciou que vai baixar *agora* os impostos. [unavailable MN int.]

The government announced that (it) will lower *now* the taxes.

'The government announced that it is *now* going to lower the taxes'.

Unambiguous MN markers

- The largest and more widespread group of unambiguous MN markers across languages is constituted by idioms and swear words (what Horn 1989 refers to as ‘formulaic external negations’), such as English *like hell, my eye, no way, nonsense, yeah right, bullshit, poppycock, fiddlesticks, your old man, like fun, like fudge, yo’ mama, my foot*.
- Besides **idioms and swear words**, other types of MN markers can be identified:
 - temporal/deictic locatives**
 - wh-* words**
 - ‘nothing’**
 - X que* expressions**

MN markers: idioms and swear words

- English: *Like hell, my eye, no way, nonsense, yeah right, bullshit, poppycock, fiddlesticks, your old man, like fun, like fudge, yo' mama, my foot*
(cf. Drozd 2001; Bolinger 1977, Horn 1989; Olza Moreno 2017)
- Spanish: *una leche* ('a blow/hit'), *(unas/las) narices* ('a/the noses'), *una mierda* ('a shit'), *los cojones* ('the balls') (cf. Olza Moreno 2017)
- Portuguese: *uma ova* ('a fish roe'), *o tanas* (obscure meaning), *uma merda* ('a shit'), *o caralho/o caraças* (slang for penis),
- French: *mon oeil!, tu parles!* (cf. Larrivé 2011)

- (13) a. *Like hell* Al and Hilary are married!
b. Al and Hilary are married *my eye!*

MN markers: idioms and swear words

- (14) a. *Mon oeil que* le roi de France est chauve. Il n'y a pas de roi de France. (French)
my eye that the king of France is bald
- b. (Le roi de France est) chauve *mon oeil*.
the king of France is bald my eye
'Nonsense the king of France is bald. There is no king of France.' (Larrivé 2011: 3 & p.c.)
- (15) A: O governo (não) vai baixar os impostos. (European Portuguese)
'The government {is/isn't} going to lower taxes.'
- B: a. *Uma ova é que* (não) vai baixar os impostos.
a fish-roe is that (not) goes lower the taxes
- b. (Não) vai baixar os impostos *uma ova*.
(not) goes lower the taxes a fish-roe
- c. *Uma ova*.
'Like hell {it's/isn't} going to lower taxes!'

MN markers: idioms and swear words

(16) A: Deberías disculparte por tu comportamiento. (Spanish)

‘You should apologize for your behavior.’

B: ¡*Una mierda* voy (yo) a disculparme!

a shit go I to apologize.REFL

‘Like hell I will apologize!’ (Olza Moreno 2017: 47)

(17) A: Juan me ha dicho que Susana tiene 40 años.

‘John told me Suzanne is 40 years old.’

B: ¡(*Las*) *Narices*! ¡Debe tener al menos 50!

the noses must have at least 50

‘No way! She must be at least 50!’ (Olza Moreno 2017:48)

MN markers: temporal/deictic locatives

European Portuguese: *lá* ‘there’; *cá* ‘here’; *agora* (‘now’); *alguma vez* (‘sometime’)

(18) A: O governo vai baixar os impostos. (European Portuguese)

‘The government is lowering the taxes

B: a. *Agora!* / *Alguma vez!* / *Agora lá!* / **Lá!*

MN.markers

b. (O governo) vai {*agora* / *lá* / *agora lá*} baixar os impostos.

the government goes MN.markers lower the taxes

c. Vai baixar os impostos *agora*.

goes lower the taxes MN.marker

d. *Alguma vez* vai baixar os impostos!

MN.marker not goes lower the taxes

‘{Like hell/Nonsense/No way/...} the government is going to lower the taxes.’

MN markers: *wh*- words

European Portuguese: *qual* ('which'), *qual quê* ('which what'), *o quê* ('the what')

(19) A: O governo vai baixar os impostos.

'The government is going to lower the taxes.'

B: a. *Qual quê*!

which what

b. *Qual* vai baixar os impostos!

which goes lower the taxes

c. Vai baixar os impostos *o quê*!

goes lower the taxes the what

d. *Qual* vai baixar os impostos {*qual quê* / *o quê*}!

which goes lower the taxes which what / the what

'The government is going to lower the taxes my eye.'

MN markers: *wh*- words

Spanish: *qué ... ni qué* {*narices* / *cojones* / *coño* / *mierda* / *leche*} ('what ... nor what {noses / balls / cunt / shit / blow}')

(ix) A: Hombre, es que como humillación no me refiero solo a los silbidos...

'Man, with 'humiliation' I don't refer just to whistles...'

B: Pero *qué* humillación *ni qué narices*. Le han silbado porque no paraba una.

but what humiliation nor what noses. him have whistled because not stopped one

'But what humiliation?! They whistled to him because he wasn't stopping goals.'

(Olza Moreno 2017:51)

MN markers: *wh*- words

Hungarian: *dehogy*

reversal particle *de* (literally ‘but’) + *wh*- word *hogy* (Farkas 2009) [but *hogy* can also be a complementizer]

“An important difference between *de* and *dehogy* is that the sister of *dehogy* is not the asserted sentence but rather the sentence at the top of the input Table”. (Farkas 2009:16)

- (x) A: Mari elment *már*.
Mari PART.left already
- B: a. *Nem, nem* ment {*még*/**már*} el. (DN)
no not left yet/*already PART
‘Mari didn’t leave yet.’
- b. *Dehogy* ment {*már*/**még*} el! (MN)
dehogy left already/*yet PART
- c. *Dehogy!*
‘Mary didn’t leave already!’

(Veronika Hegedűs p.c.; cf. Farkas 2009:113-6)

MN markers: 'nothing'

English: *nothing* (Bolinger 1977), *nothing of the sorts* (Horn 1989:566)

Portuguese: *nada* (Pinto 2010)

Rioplatense Spanish: *minga* (cf. Garcia Negroni 2017)

(20) A: He found proofs that clinched the argument.

B: He found proofs that clinched the argument *nothing*. (Bolinger 1977:45)

(21) A: O governo vai baixar os impostos.

'The government is going to lower taxes.'

B: a. Vai *nada* (baixar os impostos).

goes nothing lower the taxes

b. Vai baixar os impostos *nada*.

goes lower the taxes nothing

'Like hell (it is going to lower taxes)!

MN markers: ‘nothing’

(22) A: ¿Extraña a Néstor Kirchner?

‘Do you miss Néstor Kirchner?’

B: *Minga* lo voy a extrañar, para nada...”

nothing him go to miss for nothing

‘Not bloody likely will I miss him! Not at all!’ (García Negroni 2017:19)

(23) ¡*Minga que* se dio por vencido!

nothing QUE himself gave for defeated

‘Not bloody likely has he given up! (García-Negroni 2017:24)

(24) ¡*Minga* nos van a poner de rodillas! ¡*Minga*!

nothing us go.3SG to put on bended.knees! nothing

‘Like hell they will make us get down on bended knees! Like hell!’

(Alfredo De Angeli, Argentinian politician)

MN markers: *X que* expressions

Spanish: *ma que* ('but QUE'), *otra que* ('other QUE'), *cómo que* ('how QUE'), *minga que* ('nothing QUE') [García-Negroni 2017:24]

(25) A: Juan se dio por vencido.

'Juan has given up.'

B: a. ¡*Ma que* se va a haber dado por vencido!

but QUE himself goes to have given for defeated

'Like hell he's given up!'

b. ¡*Otra que* darse por vencido!

other QUE give.himself for defeated

'He's given up! Come on!'

c. ¿*Cómo que* se dio por vencido?

how QUE himself gave for defeated

'What do you mean he's given up?'

Word Order Patterns

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--|
| I (initial) | MN-marker [SVO] | idioms, temporal deictics, <i>wh-</i> words, 'nothing' |
| II (final) | [SVO] MN-marker | idioms, temporal deictics, <i>wh-</i> words, 'nothing' |
| III (medial) | SV MN-marker O | locative /temporal deictics |
| IV (initial-final) | MN-marker [SVO] MN-marker | <i>wh-</i> words |
| V (alone) | MN-marker | <i>most MN-markers</i> |

Other descriptive observations:

- The complementizer *que/é que* may surface in pattern I (or, alternatively, subject-verb inversion may occur)
- If a MN-marker belongs to pattern III, it does not cooccur with *que/é que*
- Different *wh-* words occur in initial and final position. This applies to patterns I, II and IV
- The 'locative' MN-markers are strictly postverbal. Hence do not occur isolated, which the other MN-markers typically do.

MN and the Left Periphery

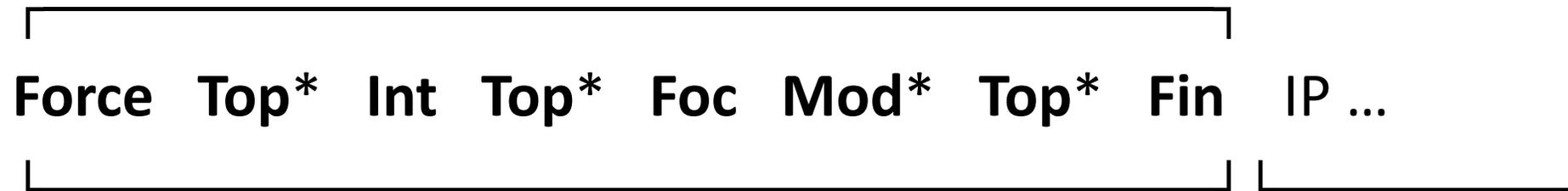
Different aspects of MN markers point to the sentential left periphery:

- non-argumental, descriptively meaningless, discourse-oriented material (expressing a speaker's evaluative attitude)
- *wh*- phrases are among MN markers
- the complementizer *que/é que* follows MN markers
- MN is a root/main clause phenomenon (Horn 1989, Martins 2014, Kroeger 2014)
- MN is 'external negation' (Horn 1989)

Actually, Topic, Focus, Emphatic/Expressive/Evaluative, as a kind of illocutionary force, have been referred in the literature as activated layers of the left periphery in MN sentences (Larrivé 2018, Giannakidou and Stravou 2009, Giannakidou and Yoon 2011, Martins 2014)

The cartography of the Left Periphery (Rizzi 1997, 2004)

LEFT PERIPHERY *a.k.a* C-system, CP space



Discourse-oriented layer

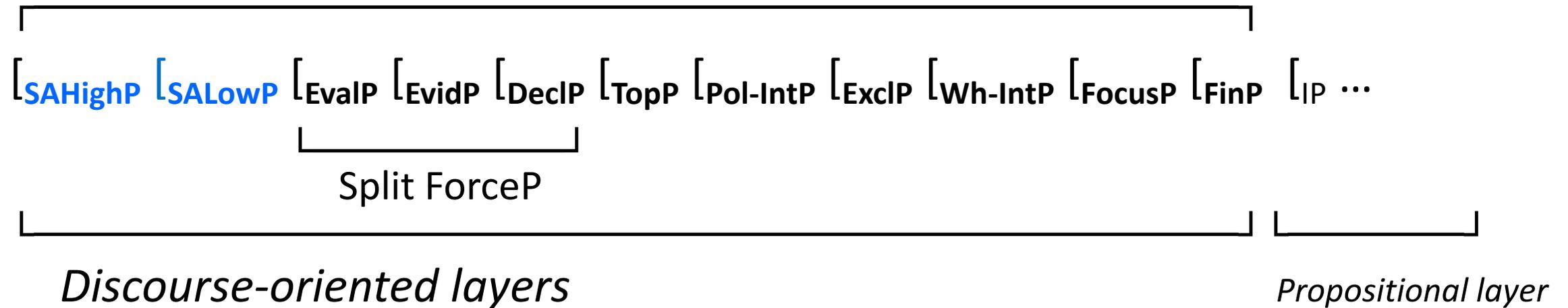
Propositional layer

Top – Topic, Int – Interrogative, Foc -Focus, Mod – (Adverbial) Modifier, Fin – Finiteness

LEFT PERIPHERY: “a system of functional heads and their projections ... delimited upward by Force, the head expressing the clausal typing...” (Rizzi 2004: 237)

The cartography of the Left Periphery (Corr 2016)

U(tterance)P above CP



*SA – Speech Act; Eval – Evaluative, Evid – Evidential, Decl -Declarative,
Pol-Int – Polar-interrogative, Excl – Exclamative*

Corr, Alice V. (2016). *Ibero-Romance and the syntax of the utterance*.
Ph.D. dissertation. University of Cambridge.

[_{SAhighP} *que*_{CONJUNCT} [_{SAlowP} *que*_{EXCL} [_{EvaIP} [_{EvidP} *que*_{QUOT} [_{DeclP} *que*_{SUBORD}

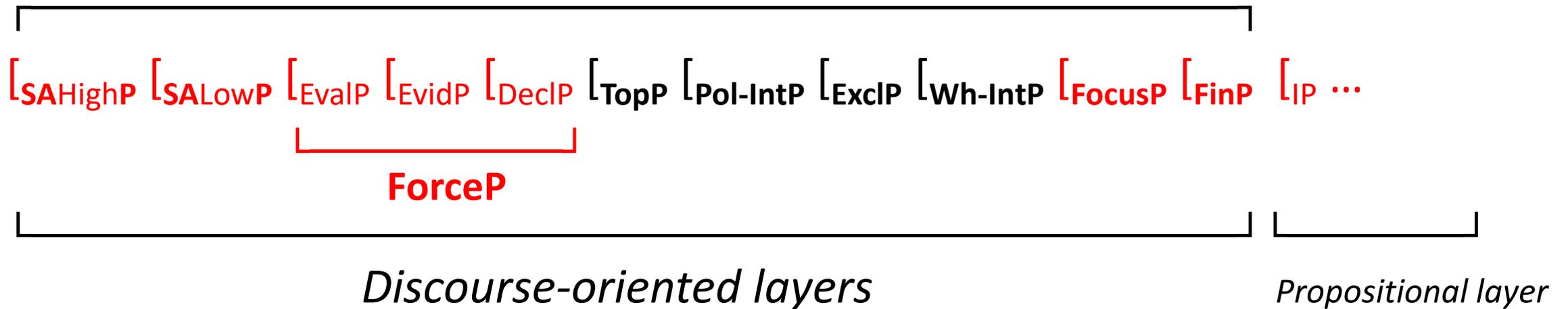
[_{TopicP} *que*_{RECOMP} [_{Pol-IntP} [_{ExclP} [_{Wh-IntP} [_{FocusP} [_{FinP} *que*_{JUSS} [IP ...]]]]]]]]]] (Corr 2016:232)

*This dissertation examines the syntax of so-called ‘illocutionary complementisers’ —that is, the repurposing of the finite complementiser *que* ‘that’ to introduce matrix clauses, with a range of utterance-related functions— across Ibero-Romance. Offering original comparative data from a range of predominantly European varieties standard and non-standard, we argue that the distinct interpretation and behaviour of each of the three types of illocutionary complementiser examined necessitates a revision and expansion of the clausal left-edge to incorporate utterance-oriented information within a dedicated domain above the CP.*

The cartography of the Left Periphery (Corr 2016)

The categories in red will be used to account for the syntax of MN markers

U(tterance)P above CP



*SA – Speech Act; Eval – Evaluative, Evid – Evidential, Decl -Declarative,
Pol-Int – Polar-interrogative, Excl – Exclamative*

Pattern I (overt complementizer)

The presence of the complementizer *é que* in Portuguese, which typically occurs in cleft structures, signals that the constituent to its left is focus. In French, mirative focus constructions with *que* are also attested in colloquial speech (Authier and Haegeman 2019). I take idioms and other MN markers that must/can cooccur with the overt complementizer to be externally merged in FocusP.

(26) [_{SAP} [_{ForceP} *mon oeil*] [_{FocusP} *mon oeil*] [_{FinP} *que*] [_{IP} *le roi de France est chauve* ...
my eye that the king of France is bold

(27) [_{SAP} [_{ForceP} *uma ova*] [_{FocusP} *uma ova*] [_{FinP} *é que*] [_{IP} *está na prisão porque mentiu...*
a fish roe is that is in prison because lied
'Nonsense he is in jail because he lied.'

Pattern I (overt complementizer or VS)

(28) [_{SAP} [_{ForceP} *una mierda* [_{FocusP} *una mierda* [_{FinP} *voy* [_{IP} (*yo*) *a disculparme...*
a shit go.1SG I to apologize
'Like hell I will apologize!'

(29) [_{SAP} [_{ForceP} *una mierda* [_{FocusP} *una mierda* [_{FinP} *que* [_{IP} (*yo*) *voy* *a disculparme...*
a shit that I go.1SG to apologize
'Like hell I will apologize!'

- A third option for Pattern I is IP ellipsis, in which case only the MN marker is pronounced.
- In Spanish, verb movement to Fin optionally arises as an alternative to merging of the complementizer, resulting in subject-verb inversion.
- In languages like English, MN markers are never followed by an overt complementizer. This kind of crosslinguistic variation might be the effect of the different types of focus structures each language allows.

Patterns I vs. Pattern II

Pattern II slightly differs from pattern I. The MN markers are again merged in FocusP. But there is IP topicalization to SAP, which derives the sentence final position of the MN marker and dispenses with the presence of the complementizer.

(30) [_{SAP} [_{ForceP} *mon oeil*] [_{FocusP} ***mon oeil***] [_{FinP} *que*] [_{IP} *le roi de France est chauve* ...

(31) [_{SAP} *le roi de France est chauve*] [_{ForceP} *mon oeil*] [_{FocusP} ***mon oeil***] [_{FinP} [_{IP} ~~*le roi de France est*~~
~~*France est chauve*~~ ...

(32) [_{SAP} [_{ForceP} *uma ova*] [_{FocusP} ***uma ova***] [_{FinP} *é que*] [_{IP} *ele está na prisão porque mentiu...*

(32') [_{SAP} *Está na prisão porque mentiu*] [_{ForceP} *uma ova*] [_{FocusP} ***uma ova***] [_{FinP} [_{IP} ~~*Está na prisão*~~
~~*porque mentiu*~~ ...

Pattern I (no overt complementizer) + Pattern II/III

The MN markers that can (or must) appear in medial position (i.e. EP temporal/locative deictics) cannot cooccur with the complementizer *é que*. I take this to signal that they cannot be focus

(33) [_{SAP} [_{ForceP} *agora* [_{FocusP} [_{FinP} [_{IP} *vai baixar os impostos* ...

MN-marker

goes lower the taxes

‘Like hell, (the government) is going to lower the taxes.’

(34) [_{SAP} *vai baixar os impostos* [_{ForceP} *agora* [_{FocusP} [_{FinP} [_{IP} ~~*vai baixar os impostos*~~ ...

(35) [_{SAP} *vai baixar* [_{ForceP} *agora* [_{FocusP} *os impostos* [_{FinP} [_{IP} ~~*vai baixar os impostos*~~ ...

(36) [_{SAP} *vai* [_{ForceP} *agora* [_{FocusP} *baixar os impostos* [_{FinP} [_{IP} ~~*vai baixar os impostos*~~ ...

Pattern III

The material following the MN marker is the focus of the objection

(37) A: O Vladimir morreu no sábado.
the Vladimir died in-the Saturday
'Vladimir died last Saturday.'

B: a. Morreu agora.
died MN-marker
'No way.'

b. Morreu agora no sábado. Morreu no domingo.
died MN-marker in-the Saturday died in-the Sunday
'No way he died last Saturday. He died last Sunday.'

c. Morreu agora no sábado. #O Vladimir tem uma saúde de ferro.
died MN-marker in-the Saturday the Vladimir has a health of iron
'No way he died last Saturday. Vladimir is the healthiest person I know.'

d. Morreu agora no sábado. Ninguém morre ao sábado.
died MN-marker in-the Saturday nobody dies in-the Saturday
'No way he died last Saturday. Nobody dies on Saturday.'

Nominal fragments & word order

MN marker in focus vs. MN markers in Force

agora precedes the fragment whereas *uma ova* (like, for example, English *my ass*) follows it. This is further evidence in favor of the different relation of idioms/swear words and deictics with FocusP. Whereas with *agora* FocusP is free to receive the fragment *vermelho* ‘red’, with *uma ova* (or *my ass*) it is not, which implies that only a topic position will be available to host the fragment.

(38) A: *Compramos um carro vermelho.*

buy.1PL a car red

‘Let us buy a red car.’

B: a. *Agora vermelho.*

AGORA red

[**SAP** [**ForceP** *agora* [**FocusP** *vermelho* ...

b. *Vermelho uma ova.*

red UMA OVA

[**SAP** *vermelho* [**ForceP** [**FocusP** *uma ova*

Red my ass.

c. **Uma ova (é que) vermelho.*

UMA OVA (is that) red

* My ass red.

Interpretative Effects

- Objections expressed by the non focal deictics are milder than those expressed by focal idioms/swear words.
- Metalinguistic negation always expresses a speaker's attitude, specifically an attitude of disapproval, which can go from mild, playful (or subtle) criticism to strong assertive (or scornful) criticism (cf. Chapman 1996). MN deictics tend to be at the bottom of the strength scale and MN idioms/swear words at the top, possibly with subtle (lexical) variations between members of the same class.

Pattern III

The MN marker *lá* and the cluster *agora lá*

The deictic locative *lá* differs from *agora* in only allowing pattern III, which can be explained if *lá* cannot stay alone in ForceP (due to some morphological or other deficiency). Under Corr's (2016) split ForceP, this can be explained if *lá* does not move beyond Evid and it is the verb that moves to Eval, like in other types of evaluative sentences in EP (e.g. Ambar 1999; Martins 2020b). Alternatively to verb movement to Eval, the deictic *agora* can be merged in Eval, resulting in the deictic cluster *agora lá*, which can occur isolated or in structures featuring patterns III/II/I.

- (39) [_{SAP} *O governo* [_{EvalP} *vai* [_{EvidP} *lá* [_{DeclP} [_{FocusP} *baixar os impostos* [_{FinP} [_{IP} ~~*Ø governo vai lá*~~
~~*baixar os impostos*~~ ...
- (40) [_{SAP} *O governo vai* [_{EvalP} *agora* [_{EvidP} *lá* [_{DeclP} [_{FocusP} *baixar os impostos* [_{FinP} [_{IP} ~~*Ø governo*~~
~~*vai lá*~~ *baixar os impostos* ...
- (41) [_{SAP} *O governo vai baixar os impostos* [_{EvalP} *agora* [_{EvidP} *lá* [_{DeclP} [_{FocusP} [_{FinP} [_{IP} ~~*Ø governo*~~
~~*vai lá*~~ *baixar os impostos* ...
- (41) * [_{SAP} *O governo vai baixar os impostos* [_{EvalP} [_{EvidP} *lá* [_{DeclP} [_{FocusP} [_{FinP} [_{IP} ~~*Ø governo vai lá*~~ *baixar os impostos*
(ungrammatical under the intended interpretation)

...

Pattern IV

Pattern IV is exclusive of *wh*- MN markers. In EP, two *wh*- words are involved, *qual* and *quê*, the former typically initial, the latter always final. I take *quê* ('what') to be a focus item that cannot stand alone, forming a complex *wh*- phrase with the determiners *o* ('the') or *qual* ('which'). But *qual* typically occupies the higher position at the outer edge of the UP space (possibly giving content to an OBJECTION Speech Act Operator).

- (42) a. [_{SAHighP} *qual* [_{SALowP} *vai baixar os impostos* [_{ForceP} [_{FocusP} *qual quê* [_{FinP} [_{IP} ~~*vai baixar os impostos*~~ ...
- b. [_{SAHighP} *qual* [_{SALowP} *vai baixar os impostos* [_{ForceP} [_{FocusP} *o quê* [_{FinP} [_{IP} ~~*vai baixar os impostos*~~ ...
- (43) [_{SAHighP} *qual* [_{SALowP} [_{ForceP} [_{FocusP} [_{FinP} [_{IP} *vai baixar os impostos* ...
- (44) [_{SAHighP} [_{SALowP} *vai baixar os impostos* [_{ForceP} [_{FocusP} *o quê* [_{FinP} [_{IP} ~~*vai baixar os impostos*~~ ...

The SAHigh MN marker *qual*

Qual seems to be the only MN marker than can convey an objection to a previous objection expressed by another MN marker, which is supporting evidence that *qual* is structurally higher than the other MN markers.

(45) A: Compramos um carro vermelho.

buy.1PL a car red

'Let us buy a red car.'

B: *Agora* vermelho.

AGORA red

A: *Qual* *agora* vermelho.

QUAL AGORA vermelho.

'Come on, don't disagree'.

(46) A: Compramos um carro vermelho.

buy.1PL a car red

'Let us buy a red car.'

B: *Vermelho* uma ova.

red UMA OVA

A: *Qual* *vermelho* uma ova. *Vá lá*.

QUAL red UMA OVA go EMPHATIC MARKER

'Don't object to it. Please agree'.

Nominal fragments & word order

(47) A: *Compramos um carro vermelho.*

buy.1PL a car red

'Let us buy a red car.'

B: a. *Agora vermelho.*

AGORA red

[_{SAP} [_{ForceP} *agora* [_{FocusP} *vermelho* ...

b. *Vermelho uma ova.*

red UMA OVA

[_{SAP} *vermelho* [_{ForceP} [_{FocusP} *uma ova*

c. *Qual vermelho.*

WH- red

[_{SAHighP} *qual* [_{SALowP} [_{ForceP} [_{FocusP} *vermelho*

d. *Vermelho o quê.*

red WH-

[_{SAP} *vermelho* [_{ForceP} [_{FocusP} *o quê*

Red my ass.

Model of conversational update proposed by Farkas and Bruce (2010)

We call here *responding assertions* those assertions that perform a responding move, and *initiating assertions* those subtypes of assertions that are not responding. Since initiating assertions and polar questions place an issue on the Table in the form of a proposition-denoting radical, moves that react to them are responding and therefore confirming or reversing. In order to capture the common denominator of responding moves, we propose to introduce two relative polarity features, [*same*] and [*reverse*], the former marking confirming moves and the latter marking reversing ones. (Farkas and Bruce 2010:106–107)

Farkas & Bruce (2010)

initiating assertions

absolute polarity features: [+], [−]

responding assertions

absolute + relative polarity features: [*same*], [*reverse*]

(48) A: Sam is (already) home.

[+]

B: a. Yes he (already) is.

[*same*, +]

confirming

b. No, he isn't (yet).

[*reverse*, −]

reversing

(49) A: Sam is not home (anymore).

[−]

B: a. No, he isn't (anymore).

[*same*, −]

confirming

b. Yes, he (still) is.

[*reverse*, +]

reversing

An extension of Farkas & Bruce (2010) to integrate MN

initiating assertions

responding assertions

absolute polarity features: [+], [−]

relative polarity features: [*same*], [*reverse*], [*objection*]

Three types of responding assertions:

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| (50) A: Sam is (already) home. | [+] | |
| B: a. Yes he (already) is. | [<i>same</i> , +] | <i>confirming</i> |
| b. No, he isn't (yet). | [<i>reverse</i> , −] | <i>reversing</i> |
| c. The hell he (already) is. | [<i>objection</i> , +] | <i>objecting</i> |
| (51) A: Sam is not home (anymore). | [−] | |
| B: a. No, he isn't (anymore). | [<i>same</i> , −] | <i>confirming</i> |
| b. Yes, he (still) is. | [<i>reverse</i> , +] | <i>reversing</i> |
| c. The hell he isn't (anymore). | [<i>objection</i> , −] | <i>objecting</i> |

relative polarity features in CP (Force) absolute polarity features in IP (Sigma/Pol)

(52) A: [**ForceP** [**FocusP** [**FinP** [**ΣP** **[+]**] [**TP** ...

B: a. [**ForceP** *[same]*] [**FocusP** [**FinP** [**ΣP** **[+]**] [**TP** ... Confirming

b. [**ForceP** *[reverse]*] [**FocusP** [**FinP** [**ΣP** **[-]**] [**TP** ... Reversing

c. [**ForceP** *[objection]*] [**FocusP** [**FinP** [**ΣP** **[+]**] [**TP** ... Objecting

(53) A: [**ForceP** [**FocusP** [**FinP** [**ΣP** **[-]**] [**TP** ...

B: a. [**ForceP** *[same]*] [**FocusP** [**FinP** [**ΣP** **[-]**] [**TP** ... Confirming

b. [**ForceP** *[reverse]*] [**FocusP** [**FinP** [**ΣP** **[+]**] [**TP** ... Reversing

c. [**ForceP** *[objection]*] [**FocusP** [**FinP** [**ΣP** **[-]**] [**TP** ... Objecting

Objection

The feature [*objection*] does not interact with the absolute polarity features [+] and [–] in the way [*reverse*] does. While [*reverse*] entails the inversion of the absolute polarity feature value of the antecedent sentence, [*objection*] copies that value. In this respect it shares a property with [*same*]. Although [*objection*] and [*reverse*] both express rejection of a previous assertion, only [*reverse*] makes a specific move to update the discourse *common ground*, by reversing the previously asserted proposition. Objection puts conversational update on stand by, the speaker's intention being in first place to express an attitude of disapproval and dissociation from an utterance. I suggest that a Speech Act operator OBJECTION interacting with the polarity features distributed between the left periphery and the IP space belong to the higher Speech Act projection of the clausal architecture (cf. Authier 2013).

What's next?

- Broaden the crosslinguistic typological coverage (are there further types of unambiguous MN markers?)
- Test and refine the analysis against new empirical evidence.
- Ask whether it is possible to unify the syntax of MN sentences with unambiguous MN markers and with *not*.

References

- Ambar, Manuela, 1999, "Aspects of the Syntax of Focus in Portuguese", in G. Rebuschi and L. Tuller, L. (eds.), *The Grammar of Focus*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 23-53.
- Authier, J.-Marc, 2013, "Phase-Edge Features and the Syntax of Polarity Particles", *Linguistic Inquiry* 44: 345-389.
- Authier, J.-Marc and Liliane Haegeman, 2019, "The Syntax of Mirative Focus Fronting: Evidence from French", in Deborah L. Arteaga (ed.), *Contributions of Romance Languages to Current Linguistic Theory*, Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory, vol 95. Cham, Springer, 39-63.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11006-2_3
- Bolinger, Dwight, 1977, *Meaning and Form*, London, Longman.
- Chapman, Siobhan, 1996, "Some observations on metalinguistic negation", *Journal of Linguistics* 32: 387-402.
- Corr, A. V., 2016, *Ibero-Romance and the syntax of the utterance*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge.
- Devos, Maud, Michael Kasombo, and Johan van der Auwera, 2010, "Jespersen cycles in Kanincin: Double, triple and maybe even quadruple negation", *Africana Linguistica* 16, 155-181.
- Devos, Maud, and Johan van der Auwera, 2013, "Jespersen cycles in Bantu: Double and triple negation", *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* 34.2, 205-274.
- Drozd, Kenneth F., 2001, "Metalinguistic sentence negation in Child English", in Jack Hoeksema, Hotze Rullmann, Víctor Sanchez-Valencia, and Ton van der Wouden (eds), *Perspectives on Negation and Polarity Items*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 49-78.
- Farkas, Donka F., 2009, "Polarity Particles in Hungarian", in M. den Dikken and R. M. Vago (eds.), *Approaches to Hungarian: Volume 11: Papers from the 2007 New York Conference*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 95-118.
- Farkas, Donka F., and Kim B. Bruce, 2010, "On Reacting to Assertions and Polar Questions", *Journal of Semantics* 27.1, 81-118.
- García Negroni, María Marta, 2017, "Metalinguistic negation and rejection discourse markers in Spanish", in Roitman, Malin (ed), *The Pragmatics of Negation: Negative meanings, uses and discursive functions*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 17-43.
- Geurts, Bart, 1998, "The mechanisms of denial", *Language* 74, 274-307.
- Giannakidou, Anastasia, and Melita Stravou, 2009, "On metalinguistic comparatives and negation in Greek", in Claire Halpert, Jeremy Hartman, and David Hill (eds), *Proceedings of the 2007 Workshop on Greek Syntax and Semantics*, MIT Working Papers in Linguistics 57, 57-74.
- Giannakidou, Anastasia, and Suwon Yoon, 2011, "The subjective mode of comparison: metalinguistic comparatives in Greek and Korean", *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 29, 621-655.

References

- Haegeman, Liliane, and Virginia Hill, 2013, “The syntactization of discourse”, in Raffaella Folli, Christina Sevdali and Robert Truswell (eds), *Syntax and its Limits*, Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press, 370–390.
- Horn, Laurence R., 1985, “Metalinguistic Negation and Pragmatic Ambiguity”, *Language* 61, 121–74.
- Horn, Laurence R., 1989, *A Natural History of Negation*, Stanford, CSLI Publications, 2001. [Originally published: Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989].
- Larrivéé, Pierre, 2011, “La définition de la négation métalinguistique”, in Jacqueline Bacha, Ammar Azouzi, and Khaled Salddem (eds), *La négation en discours*, Sousse, 53–69.
- Larrivéé, Pierre, 2018, “Metalinguistic negation from an informational perspective”, *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 3:1, 56: 1–22.
- Martins, Ana Maria, 2014, “How much syntax is there in metalinguistic negation?”, *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 32.2, 635–672.
- Martins, Ana Maria, 2020a, “Metalinguistic Negation”, in Viviane Déprez and Maria Teresa Espinal (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Negation*, Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press, 349-368.
- Martins, Ana Maria, 2020b, “Some Notes On Postverbal Subjects in Declarative (and other non *wh*-) Sentences”, *Diadorim – Journal of Linguistic and Literary Studies* 22.
- Olza Moreno, Inés, 2017, “Metalinguistic Negation and explicit echo, with reference to English and Spanish”, in Roitman, Malin (ed), *The Pragmatics of Negation: Negative meanings, uses and discursive functions*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 45–61.
- Pitts, Alyson (2011). ‘Exploiting a ‘pragmatic ambiguity’ of negation’, *Language* 87.2: 346–368.
- Pinto, Clara, 2010, *Negação metalinguística e estruturas com nada no português europeu*. M.A. dissertation. University of Lisbon.
- Rizzi, Luigi, 1997, “The Fine Structure of the Left Periphery”, in L. Haegeman (ed.), *Elements of Grammar*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 281-337.
- Rizzi, Luigi, 2004, “Locality and left periphery, in A. Belletti (ed.), *Structures and beyond: The cartography of syntactic structures*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 223–251.
- Rizzi, Luigi, 2010, “On some properties of criterial freezing”, in E. Phoevos Panagiotidis (ed.), *The complementizer phase: Subjects and operators*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 17-32.
- Rizzi, Luigi, 2017, “Types of criterial freezing”, *Rivista di Grammatica Generativa – Research in Generative Grammar*, 39, 1-19.
- Rizzi, Luigi, 2016, “Uniqueness of left peripheral focus, “further explanation” and Int”, *Syntactic Order and Structure in Syntax*, in Laura Bailey and Michelle Sheehan (eds.), Open Generative Syntax, Language Science Press.
- Speas, Peggy, and Carol Tenny, 2003, “Configurational properties of point of view roles”, in Anna Maria Di Sciullo (ed), *Asymmetry in Grammar, Vol. 1: Syntax and Semantics*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 315–344.

Internal vs. peripheral MN markers (Martins 2014)

(xi) A: They are friends.

- | | | | | | |
|-------|------------------|----------------|---------|---------|------------|
| B: a. | They are friends | <i>my eye</i> | English | } | |
| b. | Eles são amigos | <i>uma ova</i> | EP | | |
| c. | Eles são amigos | <i>agora</i> | EP | } | PERIPHERAL |
| d. | *They are | <i>my eye</i> | friends | English | |
| e. | *Eles são | <i>uma ova</i> | amigos | EP | |
| f. | Eles são | <i>agora</i> | amigos | EP | } |
| g. | Eles são | <i>lá</i> | amigos | EP | INTERNAL |
| h. | *Eles são amigos | <i>lá</i> | EP | | |

Internal vs. peripheral MN markers

| | Peripheral | Internal |
|---|------------|----------|
| Availability in isolation & nominal fragments | + | - |
| Ability to deny a negative proposition | + | - |
| Compatibility with coordinate structures featuring a sequence of events | + | - |
| Compatibility with emphatic & contrastive high constituents | + | - |
| Compatibility with idiomatic sentences | + | - |
| Compatibility with VP Ellipsis | + | - |