**Expletive Negation, Epistemic Modality and Sentential Complementation**

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Emotive doxastics (*fear*, *hope*), inquisitive predicates (*ask*), negated veridical responsive predicates, dubitatives and negative predicates may select for sentential complements with Expletive Negation (EN), namely a negative marker (sentential negation or C0) that does not reverse the polarity of the embedded proposition. EN has been argued to be semantically vacuous (Espinal 2000), the same as real negation (Abels 2005), or to have some semantic contribution different than that of real negation (e.g. evaluative mood (Yoon 2011)). In this paper I identify some new *necessary conditions for EN-licensing* and I show that EN has the *meaning* of a weak epistemic modal.

**Condition I: Non-anaphoric semantic tense.** A comparative analysis of Classical Greek (ClGr), Russian, Hebrew, Spanish and French data with EN challenges existing analyses that EN is licensed by (subjunctive) mood. In French and Spanish, EN is licensed in the finite (subjunctive) complements of EN-selecting predicates but not in the infinitival complements that these verbs can also select. On the other hand, EN is grammatical in ClGr, Russian and Hebrew infinitives. As different diagnostics show (availability of morphological tense alternations, availability of two temporal adverbs with distinct reference (1b), licensing of an embedded subject (1c)) the distribution of EN in (infinitival) complements tracks the existence of an active tense operator in the embedded clause. In other words, EN is grammatical in complements with free or dependent tense but ungrammatical in complements with anaphoric tense (for Tense specifications see Landau 2004, a.o.). Assuming Grano’s (2012) syntactic analysis of Tense, this means that EN scopes above T. Therefore, EN is predicted to be ungrammatical in obligatory control/restructuring contexts.

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| (1) | a. | phobeisthai | to | me:te | epenegkein | pseude: | timo:rian. |
|  |  | fear.V.Inf.Pr | the.D.n.Acc. | NEG-and | bring-upon.Pst.Prfv.Inf | wrongful | punishment |

“…to dread bringing upon him a wrongful punishment” Plat. *L*. 12.943d [ClGr]

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|  | b. | Včera | oni | bojalis’ | kak | by | mafija | ix | zavtra | ne | našla |
|  |  | Yesterday | they | feared.PST | how | MOD | mafia | them | tomorrow | NEG | find.PST.PRF |

“Yesterday they feared that tomorrow he might find them.” (N.R. p.c.) [Russian]

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|  | c. | Ha-kaba’im | man’u | me-ha-es | le’hitpaset. | [Hebrew] |
|  |  | the-firemen | prevented | NEG-the-fire | spread .INF |  |

“The firemen prevented the fire from spreading.” (Landau 2002)

**Condition II: Question-selecting predicates with existential force.** By adopting current analyses of emotive doxastics, dubitatives (Anand & Hacquard 2013), rogative predicates (Uegaki 2012), and negative predicates (White et al. 2014), I show that what EN-selecting predicates have in common is that they select for <<s,t>,t > complements and that they introduce a bipartition of the doxastic alternatives of the epistemic subject (i.e. they have existential force Ǝ or ¬∀). On the basis of differences like that between (3) and (4), I depart from Anand & Hacquard’s (2013) analysis of emotive doxastics and Uegaki’s (2012) analysis of interrogatives, and I argue that the complementizer *that* (not the matrix predicate) introduces the assertion of the embedded proposition ((4b) was originally proposed by Uegaki for ⟦know⟧ w).

(3) a. John knows whether Mary closed the door. ⊭ *Mary closed the door.*

b. ⟦know whether *p*⟧w = λ*Q*∈D<st,t>: λx.∀*p* ∈*Q*[*p*(w)=1 → DOXx,w⊆ *p*].

(4) a. John knows that Mary closed the door. ⊧ *Mary closed the door.*

b. ⟦know that *p*⟧w = λ*Q*∈D<st,t>: [∃*p*∈Q[*p*(w)=1]] ∧ λx.∀*p*∈Q[*p*(w)=1 → DOXx,w⊆ *p*].

**Semantic Contribution of EN.** Under the present account (cf. Condition II), the meaning of an emotive doxastic has four components: a desirability scale, a representational component, an “uncertainty condition” (Anand & Hacquard 2013) and a probability scale. Matrix negation can target the probability scale regardless of whether EN is present or not (5a), whereas in the absence of EN it cannot target the desirability scale (5b). On the other hand, a sentence with EN cannot be a felicitous answer in a question, as shown in (6).

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| (5) | a. | Dhen | fovame | pos/ | mipos | kseri | tin | alithia. | Ime | sighuros |
|  |  | NEG | fear | that/ | lest.NEG-that | know | the | truth. | Am | sure |

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|  |  | pos | ehi | mavra | mesanihta. | [Modern Greek] |
|  |  | that | has | black | midnight |  |

“I do not fear that he knows the truth. I am sure he is totally ignorant.”

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|  | b. | Dhen | fovame | mipos/#pos | kseri | tin | alithia. | Stin |
|  |  | NEG | fear | lest.NEG-that/that | know | the | truth. | in-the |

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|  |  | pragmatikotita | to | elpizo | kiolas. |
|  |  | reality | it.CL | hope | even |

“I do not fear that he knows the truth. In fact, I even hope it.”

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| (6) | Ja | bojus’ | kak | by | on | ne | razbil | mašimu. | [Russian] |
|  | I | fear | that | MOD | he | NEG | break.PST.PRF. | car.ACC |  |

(*Will he break the car?*)#I fear that he might break the car.

These data show that EN marks a set of doxastic alternatives as equally probable, indicating that the speaker does not have any kind of evidence about their ordering. In other words, EN alters the probability scale introduced by the declarative complementizer from that in (7a) to that in (7b). The EN sentence is less informative than that with the *that*-complement and thus it triggers the scalar implicature in (7c). For that reason, an EN-complement results to an infelicitous answer in (6), while matrix negation in (5) can target either the probability or the desirability scale.

(7) a. φ **>likely** ¬φ *that-*complement

b. φ **≥ likely** ¬φ EN-complement

c. φ **= likely** ¬φ (cancellable) scalar implicature triggered by EN

Further evidence attesting the connection between EN and epistemic modality comes from epistemic modal licensing: epistemic modals are ungrammatical in sentential complements with EN (8), while they can alternate with epistemic *tha* (‘will’) in counterfactuals (9). The fact that EN asserts (7b) is also evident from its use in counterfactuals (9) and the minimal pair in (10).

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| (8) | Fovame | pos/ | \*mipos | mporei | na | fighun | ta | pedhia | simera. [MG] |
|  | Fear | that/ | lest.NEG-that | might | SBJ | leave | the | children | today |

“I fear that/ \*lest children might leave today.”

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| (9) | An | epine | afto | to | siropi, | mipos/ | tha | ghinotan | kala. |
|  | If | drink.PST | this | the | syrup, | lest.NEG-that/ | will | become | fine |

No EN: “If he drank that syrup, he *would* recover.”

EN: “If he drank that syrup, he *might* recover.”

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| (10) | Elegha | pos/ | mipos | chriazese | voithia. |
|  | say.Pst.Imfv.1SG | that/ | lest.NEG-that | need.Prs.2SG | help |

No EN: “I thought that you need help.” EN: “I wondered whether you need help.”

**Conclusions.** EN marks doxastic alternatives as equally likely, and thus it can only be selected by predicates which introduce a bipartition of the doxastic alternatives of the epistemic subject (condition II); thus selection by predicates with universal force would cause a semantic clash. The semantic contribution of EN, the fact that it scopes above Tense (condition I), its complementary distribution with epistemic modals (8) and its use in counterfactuals (9) indicate that EN acts as an epistemic modal. These findings are in accordance with recent proposals for ‘meaningful’ complementizers (Kratzer 2006, Moulton 2009, a.o.) yet licensing condition II of EN indicates that attitude predicates contribute quantification over possible worlds.