Re-Evaluating French Negative Concord

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GLOW in Asia XII, Aug 6-9 2019

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- **My story:**
- French is a normal double negation language.
- Our picture of negative concord is wrong.

Negative Concord

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- This is language-specific (negative concord parameter - Haegeman (1995))
- **Neg-word:**
- A negative indefinite that takes part in negative concord (Giannakidou & Zeijlstra 2017).

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- A neg-word and a negative marker, both associated with semantic negativity independently from each other, yielding a single negation reading when occurring in the same clause.
- **Negative concord languages usually have both.**

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- **No ambiguity**.
- (1) Gianni non telefona a nessuno.
  Gianni NEG call to nobody
  'Gianni doesn't call anyone'
  # 'Gianni doesn't call nobody.'

  (2) Ieri nessuno ha detto niente
  Today nobody has said nothing
  'Today, nobody has said anything.'
  # 'Today, nobody has said nothing.'

Negative Concord in French

- Any combination of the negative marker *pas* and a neg-word yields a double negation reading:

(3) a. Personne mange.
nobody eats
'Nobody eats.'

b. Personne mange **pas**.
nobody eats NEG
'Nobody doesn't eat.'

DOUBLE NEGATION!

c. Marie mange rien.
Marie eats nothing
'Marie does not eat anything.'

d. Marie mange **pas** rien.
Marie eats NEG nothing
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- **Negative spread:** the only negative concord phenomenon in French,
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- (4) Personne mange rien.
  nobody eats nothing.
  'Nobody eats anything.' CONCORD!
  'Nobody eats nothing.' DOUBLE NEGATION!

- De Swart & Sag (2002), Zeijlstra (2009), and Penka (2011): French has negative concord, but in a unique way.

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- Big idea: **Resumptive quantification**
- Reduces the number of semantic negators to one by merging negative quantifiers.
- Works really well with French negative spread.

- Recall:

(4) Personne mange rien.
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- Ambiguity in readings.
- One reading involves only one semantic negation.

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- Independently, two quantifiers can merge by way of resumption:
- (5) a. Every student likes herself.
  [EVERY$^{\text{STUDENT}}$, SELF](LIKE)
  $\forall x$LIKE(x,x)

  b. Every student bought a different book.
  [EVERY$^{\text{STUDENT}}$, DIFFERENT$^{\text{BOOK}}$](BUY)
  $\text{BOOK} \cap \text{BUY}_a \neq \text{BOOK} \cap \text{BUY}_b$
  for all $a, b \in$ STUDENT such that $a \neq b$

  c. Five hundred companies own three thousand computers.
  [FIVE HUNDRED$^{\text{COMPANIES}}$,
  THREE-THOUSAND$^{\text{COMPUTERS}}$] (OWN)
  $\| \text{COMPANY} \cap \text{OWN}_y^{\text{Computer}} \| = 500 \wedge \|$
  $\text{COMPUTER} \cap \text{OWN}_x^{\text{Company}} \| = 3000$

Quantifier Resumption

- (6) $Q'^{A,B}_{E}(R) = Q^{A\times B}_{E^2}(R)$
  where A and B are subsets of the universe of discourse E , and $A\times B$ and R are subsets of E.

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- Rule of composition parallel to function application:
- Speaker/hearer decide which rule is at work– **ambiguity!**
- When two negative quantifiers are merged into one negative quantifier, only one source of negative force remains– **concord!**

- (7) Personne aime personne.
  nobody loves nobody
  'Nobody loves anybody.'
  a. $[\mathrm{NO}_{E}^{\mathrm{HUMAN,HUMAN}}](\mathrm{LOVE})$
  b. $[\mathrm{NO}_{E^2}^{\mathrm{HUMAN}\times\mathrm{HUMAN}}](\mathrm{LOVE})$
  c. $\neg\exists x, y \mathrm{LOVE}(x, y)$

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  a. $[NO_E^{HUMAN}, [NO_E^{HUMAN}](LOVE)$
  b. NO (HUMAN, {x| NO (HUMAN, {y|x LOVE y})})
  c. HUMAN $\cap$ {x| HUMAN $\cap$ {y|x LOVE y } = $\emptyset$} = $\emptyset$
  d. $\neg\exists x \neg\exists y$Love$xy$

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  b. $\neg\exists x\text{GIANNI CALLS}(x)$
- languages vary with respect to whether they leave negative markers out of their negative concord systems or not.

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- It generalizes an ability for negative concord languages to have the negative marker not participate in their negative concord system.
- This has so far only been attested for French, which shouldn't follow if this were parametric variation.

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- If that were the case, (9) would have a licit concord reading:
- (9) Gianni non non telefona a Maria.
  Gianni NEG NEG call to Maria
  'Gianni doesn't not call Maria.'
  # 'Gianni doesn't call Maria.'

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- However, Italian negative spread is not ambiguous:
- (1) Gianni non telefona a nessuno.
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  (2) Ieri nessuno ha detto niente
  Today nobody has said nothing
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  Zeijlstra (2009): direct criticism of De Swart & Sag (2002).
- Big ideas: **i.** non-negativity of neg-words in negative concord languages. **ii.** split between semantic and formal features.

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- (10) a. Giovanni non ha detto niente a nessuno.
  Giovanni NEG has said nothing to nobody
  # ¬ ¬ ¬
  # 'Giovanni didn't say nothing to nobody.'

  b. Giovanni non ha detto niente a nessuno.
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- This essentially turns Italian neg-words into negative dependencies.

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- Negative dependencies are handled by way of syntactic [i/uNeg] features.
- *non* ('not'): [iNeg], neg-words: [uNeg]
- What about negative spread in Italian?
- (11) Nessuno$_{[uNeg]}$ ha detto niente$_{[uNeg]}$.
  nobody has said nothing
  'Nobody said anything.'

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- (12) Nessuno ha detto niente.
  $OP_{\neg[iNeg]}$ nobody$_{[\sout{uNeg}]}$ has said nothing$_{[\sout{uNeg}]}$
  $\neg$
  'Nobody said anything.'

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  'John saw nothing.'

  b. John didn't see anything.

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  'John didn't see anything.'

  c. John didn't see nothing.

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- English neg-words and negative markers carry ¬ but not [iNeg].

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- French neg-words are non-negative carriers of [uNeg]
- *pas* ('not') is semantically negative and does not carry formal [Neg]-features.
- ... which is why it does not take part in negative concord and can trigger double negation.

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- (3d) Marie mange pas rien.
  OP¬[iNeg] Marie eats NEG nothing[~~uNeg~~]
  ¬ ¬
  'Marie does not eat nothing.'
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- Unchecked [uNeg] on the neg-word triggers insertion of OP¬ as in Italian...
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  # 'Marie does not eat anything.'
- ...which contributes a second instance of semantic negativity.

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- (4) Personne mange rien.
  OP¬[iNeg] nobody[~~uNeg~~] eats nothing[~~uNeg~~]
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- **Features can never derive ambiguity:** either an item has a feature, or it doesn't.

- **Paradox:** Zeijlstra (2008) can handle Italian, but not French. De Swart & Sag (2002) can handle French, but not Italian.
- What does this mean for our definitions?

- Recall that French negation patterned like this:

	Double Negation	Single Negation
negative markers		x
neg-words		x
neg-word + negative marker	x	
neg-word + neg-word	x	x

- In German, a similar pattern emerges:

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- Double negation with negative doubling:

(14) a. Niemand schläft nicht.
nobody sleeps not
'Nobody doesn't sleep.'
'Nobody sleeps.'

b. Sven isst nicht nichts.
Sven eats not nothing
'Sven doesn't eat nothing.'
'Sven doesn't eat anything.'

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- (15) a. Niemand sieht niemanden.
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  b. Niemand isst nichts.
  nobody eats nothing
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- Weiß (2002): all languages allow for negative indefinites to enter into concord relations, with prescriptive pressure being the only deterring factor.

The Theoretical Upshot

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- There seems to be a split when it comes to ambiguity.
- De Swart & Sag (2002) and Zeijlstra (2008) are not incompatible!

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- Since resumptive quantification produces the Cartesian product of two sets as in (6), the output is identical with that of function application:

- (16) Nessuno ha detto niente.
  OP¬ nobody has said nothing
  ¬ ∃ ∃
  'Nobody said anything.'
  a.$[\neg[\exists_E^{\text{HUMAN}}, [\exists_E^{\text{THING}}]]](\text{SAY})$ Function Application
  b. ¬∃x,y SAY (x,y)

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  a.$[\neg[\exists_E^{\text{HUMAN,THING}}]](\text{SAY})$ Quantifier Resumption
  b.$[\neg\exists_{E^2}^{\text{HUMAN}\times\text{THING}}](\text{SAY})$
  c. $\neg\exists x, y$ SAY(x, y)

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- **Negative doubling:** a non-integral part of De Swart & Sag (2002), but arises naturally in Zeijlstra (2008).
- **Two operations** (Quantifier resumption, function application), **two types of languages** (negative vs. non-negative neg-words), **three phenomena** (ambiguous negative spread, nonambiguous negative spread, negative doubling)

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- **Negative spread**: the universal ability of two neg-words to yield a single negation reading.
- **True negative spread**: two neg-words obligatorily yielding a single negation reading.
- **Neg-word** an indefinite independently associated with negativity.

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- Thus, no formal features pertaining to negation are needed.
- (4) Personne mange rien.
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  'Nobody eats anything.' Quantifier Resumption
  'Nobody eats nothing.' Function Application

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- *ne* used to be the negative marker in 17th century French, but was supplanted by *pas*.

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- *ne* is frequently found in the vicinity of neg-words without contributing any semantic negativity on its own:
- (18) a. Personne ne mange.
  nobody ne eats
  'Nobody eats.'

  b. Marie ne mange rien.
  Marie ne eats nothing
  'Marie does not eat anything.'

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- (19) a. Jean (ne) voit que Marie.
  Jean ne sees comp Marie
  'Jean only sees Marie'

  b. Jean est plus malin que Pierre (ne) l'est.
  Jean is more smart than Pierre ne it-is
  'Jean is smarter than Pierre is'

  c. Il a barricadé la porte de peur crainte qu'on (n')
  He has blocked the door of fear that they ne
  entre chez lui.
  enter with him
  'He blocked the door for fear that people might come in'

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- expletive negation is non-negative– French stays a double negation language.

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  I have never smoked
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- Zeijlstra (2010): firmly lexicalized two-word expressions, cannot be split up.

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  'I have never ever smoked.'

  c. NIEMALS habe ich nicht geraucht.
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- West Flemish: Stelling 2019, Catalan: Espinal, Tubau, etc. (Barcelona), Gallo: Samantha Becerra Zita (Nantes)

Conclusions

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- With concord constructions showing up in all languages, we may need to make our definitions less strict.
- I need a more complete picture of negative spread in non-Indo-European languages, and will most likely bother some of you about this.

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