Negative concord in English and Romance: syntax-morphology interface conditions on the expression of negation
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6 Conclusions

In the present dissertation I have attempted to explain the phenomenon of NC in various languages by exploring the interaction of morphology and syntax. It has been shown that a uniform account of the distributional patterns of n-indefinites in NC across various languages is possible if it is assumed that the output of syntax is rearranged by PF operations that are ultimately triggered by morphological constraints.

The central role that the DM model (Halle and Marantz 1993; Embick and Noyer 2007) attributes to the PF interface has been of extreme relevance to the present piece of research: it has been assumed that morphemes (or lexical items in the Minimalist Program framework) are not pre-established sound-meaning pairs. Rather, the final phonological realisation of a given morpheme is determined by the syntactico-grammatical features of the slot where it is inserted, as well as a number of language-particular conditions that may not allow the syntax-morphology mapping to be absolutely direct and transparent.

This idea has been thoroughly exploited throughout this dissertation and has motivated the underlying hypothesis that all the languages considered herein (Standard English, Non-Standard varieties of English and a number of Romance languages) have comparable syntactic structures for the expression of negation. What determines which and how syntactic terminals will be given a phonological realisation is the Vocabulary of each language.

Throughout this dissertation, it has been argued that the phenomenon of NC and the expression of negation are regulated by a Filter, which disallows the accidental co-occurrence of negative features in particular contexts. In other words, the distributional pattern of n-indefinites is affected by syntactic haplology in certain languages. Violations of the Filter in (1) are repaired by Obliteration, (2), a PF operation that deletes the negative marker syntactic terminal from the morphological representation, thus allowing sentential negation not to be phonologically realised, or Impoverishment, (2b), which, in a language like Standard English, deletes the negative feature of n-indefinites, thus causing them to surface without overt negative morphology.

(1) */negative marker/ /polarity morpheme/ if

(i) /negative marker/ and /polarity morpheme/ are adjacent, and

(ii) NEGATIVE MARKER and POLARITY MORPHEME agree.
The relevant contexts of application of Obliteration and Impoverishment have been argued to be Spell-Out domains, which have been defined according to Chomsky’s (2001, 2005) Phase Theory. This strengthens the view that phases are domains of morphological convergence.

In the particular case of Standard English, it was assumed that its three-way system of indefinites could be characterised as in (3). It was also claimed that Negº in Standard English has an EPP-feature that Attracts an n-indefinite with a negatively specified polarity feature to its Specifier.

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\begin{align*}
(3) \quad \text{Vocabulary for Standard English indefinites} \\
\text{a. } \left[+\text{polar}, +\text{negative}\right] &\leftrightarrow /\text{n}_2\text{u}/ \quad \sqrt{\text{Root}} \\
\text{b. } \left[+\text{polarity}, +\text{assertive}\right] &\leftrightarrow /\text{s}_3\text{m}/ \quad \sqrt{\text{Root}} \\
\text{c. } \text{Elsewhere} &\leftrightarrow /\text{t}_1\text{n}/ \quad \sqrt{\text{Root}}
\end{align*}
\]

The immediate consequence of n-indefinite raising is related to the violation of the Filter: after raising to Spec, NegP, n-indefinites are always in the same Spell-Out domain as the negative marker, regardless of their position, which triggers either Obliteration of the negative marker, or Impoverishment of the indefinite. Impoverishment is not attested with pre-verbal n-indefinites, which always trigger Obliteration.

Some HE data which challenge this latter assumption have also been considered. It has been claimed that any-subjects in HE can occur pre-verbally and precede the sentential negative marker because they are not polarity items but FCIs. These do not have the same licensing requirements as polarity items.

The treatment of Standard English as an NC language, and of items such as nobody and nothing as non-negative indefinites (Penka 2007) is far from uncontroversial. However, I have shown that it is possible to capture the linguistic facts of Standard English by assuming that nobody, nothing and the like do not to have quantificational force on their own and are non-negative in the sense that the
negative polarity feature they carry is uninterpretable and, thus, cannot contribute negative meaning to the clause on its own.

It has been further assumed that clausal structure (i.e. NegP is merged on top of v*P), movement of indefinites specified with a negative feature and the Filter against the accidental repetition of negative features in the same Spell-Out domain prevent Standard English from displaying overt NC. Interestingly, something similar has been observed to be the case in Standard French, which has often been problematic for existing accounts of NC in Romance. In addition, data from language acquisition showing that English children go through a multiple negation stage during which they combine an overt negative marker with n-indefinites with overt negative morphology, is understood as support for the analysis that is put forward in this dissertation.

The existence of DN in Standard English, where the co-occurrence of an overt negative marker and an n-indefinite seems to cause cancellation of negative meaning, was argued to follow from the presence of a second syntactic terminal in the structure. It was claimed that this second syntactic terminal, which is specified with an interpretable negative feature, is head-adjoined to Focº, with which it forms a complex head. This feature and the interpretable negative feature of the negative marker in Negº (which was Obliterated in co-occurring with an n-indefinite) cancel each other out.

To account for the distinction between Strict and Non-Strict NC languages / varieties, I have argued that while the former, where n-words have to obligatorily co-occur with the negative marker in all contexts, tolerate the accidental repetition of negative features, the latter owe the well-known asymmetry between pre-verbal and post-verbal n-words with respect to the (im)possibility of co-occurring with the negative marker to (i) the Filter and (ii) whether the negative marker and the n-word are in the same Spell-Out domain or not. In Romance, given Phase Sliding, post-verbal n-words are never in the same Spell-Out domain as the negative marker, thus always co-occurring with it; by contrast, pre-verbal n-words and the negative marker are always in the same Spell-Out domain, which triggers Obliteration of the latter.

Non-Standard varieties of English were shown to implement both kinds of NC. Unlike Standard English, it was assumed that Negº lacks an EPP-feature, which allows n-indefinites specified with a negative feature to remain in situ and have their feature checked by Agree. In the absence of movement, post-verbal n-indefinites are never in the same Spell-Out domain as the negative marker, thus not triggering its Obliteration. Such an analysis was supported by the observation that n-indefinites that occur as there-associates in expletive constructions do trigger Obliteration in Non-Strict NC varieties of English. It was argued that this is due to the fact that the there-associate occupies the Spec, v*P position, which is in the same Spell-Out domain as NegP when no Phase Sliding has occurred.
CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS

For the study of Non-Standard English, spontaneous data were used whenever possible. The observation of a wide number of examples from the FRED corpus not only revealed that some varieties have a system of Strict NC while others implement Non-Strict NC, but also that cases of intra-speaker variability exist, as well. That is, the data show that the same speaker switched from Strict to Non-Strict NC in his/her linguistic productions.

The status of *never* in Non-Standard British English was also explored, given the noticeable imbalance between the use of *never* and that of other *n*-words in NC constructions. I argued, on the basis of data from Strict NC varieties of Non-Standard English, that *never* should be characterised as a negator with an interpretable negative feature and an uninterpretable Focus feature.

In the case of Non-Strict NC varieties of English, it was pointed out that if *never* was assumed to be a negator, it should be affected by Obliteration when occurring with a pre-verbal *n*-indefinite. The data showed that this is not the case and suggest that some room must be left for the lexical ambiguity of *never*.

Data from AAE have also been addressed, though they were mostly taken from the literature. Data from fiction and movie scripts were also taken into account. Inspection of the examples found in various sources showed that the Strict versus Non-Strict contrast has not been of much relevance in the existing accounts of NC in AAE. It seems to be the case that while Strict NC predominates in AAE, for some speakers NC is Non-Strict. As was observed in Non-Standard varieties of British English, cases of intra-speaker variability were also observed in AAE. Special emphasis was put on accounting for the phenomenon of negative inversion, which was closely connected to Focus.

In the final part of the dissertation, the phenomenon of NC in Romance was studied using data from various representative languages. The initial assumption was that Romance NSLs are affected by the phenomenon of Phase Sliding (Gallego 2005, 2007), according to which overt *v*-to-*T* movement extends the *v*/*P* phase, forcing reprojection of *v*/*, and creating the *v*/TP domain. The adoption of Gallego’s analysis has crucial consequences for the present account: on the one hand, it allows us to find an explanation for the observation that NegP seems to select TP in some languages, but vP in some others; on the other hand, it imposes a syntactic difference between Romance and English that can explain why *n*-words behave differently with respect to the possibility of co-occurring with the sentential negative marker in some contexts.

Interestingly, distinguishing between NSLs and non-NSLs in terms of Phase Sliding allows us to group French, which is not an NSL language, with Standard English rather than with other Romance languages. This is actually a desirable move, as Standard French, like Standard English, does not allow *n*-words to co-occur with the sentential negative marker in any context.
The Vocabulary for indefinites in a Non-Strict NC Romance language like Spanish was assumed to be the one in (4). In addition, it was assumed that indefinites do not raise to Spec, NegP, which does not have an EPP-feature. Since Phase Sliding adds an extra Transfer operation that sends v*P to the interfaces prior to v*/T and C, post-verbal n-indefinites are able to co-occur with the negative marker. Pre-verbal n-indefinites, by contrast, have been argued to be in Spec, FocP in line with Isac (2002) and Espinal (in press). This means that they are always in the same Spell-Out domain as the negative marker, thus triggering the application of Obliteration to avoid violating the Filter.

(4) Vocabulary for Spanish indefinites

a. [+polarity: negative] \(/n/ /_____ \sqrt{Root}

b. Elsewhere \(/alg/ /_____ \sqrt{Root}

For a Strict NC language like Romanian, where n-words cannot be licensed in non-negative contexts, a Vocabulary like (4) was also proposed. Although I did not address the issue in depth, I discussed some data on Spanish n-indefinites surfacing with negative morphology in negative / non-negative ambiguous contexts and proposed an account based on different valuation possibilities of n-indefinites and matrix and embedded Polº heads.

Apart from Obliteration, a second PF operation, Impoverishment, has been brought into the discussion to account for Bosque’s (1980) data on the sequence no…N + alguno/ -a, which has a polar interpretation. Building on Brucart’s (1994, 1996) analysis of the phenomenon, I argued that the negative value of the polarity feature of n-indefinites could be optionally deleted (i.e. Impoverished) when occurring in a post-nominal position, which would result in the insertion of an alg-form.

For Standard French, pas was taken to be the negative marker. Unlike ne –which can be dropped in Colloquial French– pas can negate sentences on its own. The fact that, unlike other Romance n-words, French n-indefinites cannot co-occur with pas without yielding a DN reading was attributed to the fact that (i) NegP is on top of vP due to lack of Phase Sliding and that (ii) Standard French is constrained by the Filter that prevents the accidental repetition of negative features in the same Spell-Out domain.

As was argued for Standard English n-indefinites, French n-words raise to Spec, NegP to satisfy the EPP-feature of Negº. The result is that the negative marker is always Obliterated, as both pre- and post-verbal n-indefinites are in the same Spell-Out domain as the negative marker, hence triggering Obliteration. Québécois French, which allows n-words to co-occur with pas in all contexts, has been taken as evidence in favour of a syntactic haplology account of the expression of NC and negation in Standard French.
Finally, it was shown that, as was the case for Standard English, DN readings are also attested in Standard French. The explanation that has been given to this phenomenon has also been in terms of a second negative terminal merged in Focus.

In the final part of the chapter, some data from Catalan were addressed. This language is in a transitional stage in the sense that it allows the sentential negative marker to optionally co-occur with n-words. That is, Catalan is both a Strict and a Non-Strict NC language, which results in intra-speaker variability.

In line with Zeijlstra (2004), it has been assumed that the difference between Strict and Non-Strict NC is found in the interpretability of the negative feature that the negative marker bears. While the negative marker carries an uninterpretable negative feature in Strict NC languages, it bears an interpretable negative feature in Non-Strict NC. The situation of Catalan, therefore, can be reduced to the interpretability of the negative feature in the negative marker being underspecified. Such an analysis is compatible with Adger and Smith’s (2005) account of variation in the MP.

Some evidence on the use of *pas* in dialectal Catalan motivated the analysis of this particle as a polar element in certain occasions. It was shown that while in some varieties *pas* is always specified with a negative feature, it seems to carry an underspecified polarity feature that can be valued by an operator other than negation.

To conclude, the possibility has been explored that some kind of correlation exists between the interpretable / uninterpretable status of the negative feature of the negative marker, which yields the Strict versus Non-Strict NC distinction (Zeijlstra 2004), and the existence of the Filter against the accidental repetition of negative features in Spell-Out domains. It has been suggested that a morpheme containing a feature that will be interpreted at LF can be Obliterated because it can be recovered from the overt negative morphology of the co-occurring n-word. By contrast, in being semantically non-negative, negative markers in Strict NC languages trigger the presence of an abstract negative operator that negates the clause. As this element is silent in nature, Obliteration would vacuously apply. Obliteration of LF-interpretable material, therefore, results in a striking parallelism between Strict and Non-Strict NC in that only uninterpretable material is phonologically realised in the same Spell-Out domain.