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A Scandinavian perspective on polarity sensitivity

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Issues

- Negative polarity data.
- Some comparison with Swedish.
- Free choice items and the extension *som helst*
- Negative polarity items preceding their licensor
- The contribution of micro- and macro-comparative syntax

1. Negative polarity items

(1) *Polarity item (Giannakidou 1998, 17)*

A polarity item is an expression whose distribution is limited by sensitivity to some semantic property of the context of appearance.

2. Diversity in licensing

- Negative polarity items often licensed in numerous contexts, one example is Norwegian singular indefinite *noen* 'a/any':

(2) *Norwegian*

a. *Negation*

Jeg har **ikke** sett noen bil.
I have Neg seen Det.npi car
'I haven't seen a(ny) car.'

b. Yes/no-*questions*

Har du lest noen bok i det siste**?**
have you read Det.npi book in the last
'Have you read a(ny) book lately?'

c. *Antecedent of conditionals*

i. **Hvis** de har noen interesse av å saksøke oss, får de bare gjøre det.
if they have Det.npi interest of to sue us, let they just do it
'If they have an(y) interest in suing us, just let them do it.'

ii. **Har** de noen interesse av å saksøke oss, får de bare gjøre det.
have they Det.npi interest of to sue us, let they just do it
'If they have an(y) interest in suing us, just let them do it.'

d. *Restriction of universal quantifier*

Alle som har sett noen mistenkelig person, bes melde seg til politiet.
Everyone as have seen Det.npi suspicious person, is.asked report Refl to the.police
'Everyone who has seen a(ny) suspicious person, is asked to report to the police.'

e. *Comparatives*

i. … står for meg som **vakrere enn** noen kvinne.
… stands for me as more.beautiful than Det.npi woman
'… strikes me as more beautiful than any woman.'

ii. Det er **mer enn** noen alminnelig lønnstaker har fått …
that is more than Det.npi regular employee has got
'That's more than any regular employee has gotten.'

f. *Superlatives*

Arkeologene har blottlagt det **best** bevarte golvet fra noen middelalderkirke her i landet.
the archaeologists have revealed the best kept floor from Det.npi middle age church here in the.country
'The archaeologists have revealed the best kept floor of any MA church in this country.'

g. bare *'only'*

Bare 42 prosent hadde noen som helst glede av dette fradraget.
only 42 percent had Det.npi as rathest rejoice of this deduction
'Only 42 percent had a rejoice at all from this deduction.'

h. *"Negative" verbs*

Han **tviler på** at "verdisponsing" er blitt noen ny trend i norsk næringsliv.
he doubts on that "value sponsorship" is become Det.npi new trend in Norw. business life
'He doubts that "value sponsorship" has become a new trend in Norwegian business.'

i. *Complements of* før *'before'*

Før de tar noen som helst avgjørelse, trenger de flere opplysninger.
before they take Det.npi as rathest decision, need they more information
'Before they take a decision at all, they need more information.'

j. *Complements of negative preposition* uten *'without'*

Finite **Uten** at de tok noen avgjørelse, gikk de hjem for dagen.
without that they took Det.npi decision, went they home for the.day
'Without taking a decision, they left for the day.'

Nonfinite **Uten** å ta noen avgjørelse, gikk de hjem for dagen.
without to take Det.npi, went they home for the.day
'Without taking a decision, they left for the day.'

Nominal **Uten** noen grunn gikk de til angrep.
without Det.npi reason went they to attack
'They attacked without a reason.'

k. **Affirmative episodic context*

*Igår kveld så jeg noen innbruddstyv i hagen.
yesterday evening saw I Det.npi in the.garden
*'Yesterday evening I saw any burglar in the garden.'

- Peculiarity of Norwegian and Danish: only the singular count determiner *noen/nogen* is polarity sensitive:

(3) a. *Han har noen bil.
he has Det.NPI car

b. Han har **ikke** noen bil.
he has Neg Det.NPI car
'He doesn't have a car.'

c. Han har noen biler.
he has Det.pl cars
'He has some cars.'

d. Han har ikke noen biler.
he has Neg Det.pl cars
'He doesn't have any cars.'

- Regular indefinite article:

(4) a. Han har en bil.
he has a car.
'He has (got) a car.'

b. Han har ikke en BIL, bare en sykkel.
he has Neg a CAR, just a bicycle.
'He doesn't have a CAR, he has a bicycle.'

c. Han har ikke ÉN bil, han har to.
he has Neg A car, he has two
'He doesn't have ONE car, he has two.'

- Contrastive focus on the singular indefinite NOEN crashes under fronting:

(5) a. Han har **ikke** NOEN bil, ikke engang en lekebil.
he has Neg Det.NPI car, not even a toy-car
'He doesn't have ANY car, not even a toy car.'

b. *NOEN bil har han **ikke** __, ikke engang en lekebil.
Det.NPI car has he Neg __, neg even a toy-car

- Contrastive focus on the head noun is fine under fronting:

(6) a. Han har ikke noen BIL, han har en sykkel.
he has Neg Det.NPI CAR, he has a bicycle
'He doesn't have a CAR, he has a bicycle.'

b. Noen BIL har han ikke __, men han har en sykkel.
Det.NPI CAR has he Neg __, but he has a bicycle
'He doesn't have a CAR, he has a bicycle.'

3. Scandinavian variation

- Danish and Norwegian contrast with Swedish (Nivre 2002, Rosqvist 2004). Swedish *någon* is more liberal in its distribution than Danish *nogen* (cf. Jensen 1999) and Norwegian *noen*.

(7) *Swedish; data from Nivre (2002)*

a. Hon har **inte** köpt någon bil. (p. 4)
she has Neg bought Det.(NPI?) car
'She has not bought a car.'

b. Hon har köpt någon bil. (p. 4)
she has bought Det car
'She has bought a/some car.'

c. Jag talade med någon medicinsk expert. (p. 12)
I spoke with Det medical expert
'I spoke with a/some medical expert.'

d. Hon åt någon smörgås til lunch. (p. 12)
she ate Det sandwich for lunch
'She had a/some sandwich for lunch.'

e. Jag fick prata med någon assistant eller (någon) sekreterare. (p. 13)
I got-to talk with Det assistant or (Det) secretary
'I got to talk with an/some assistant or secretary.'

f. Jag läste i någon tidning att bensinpriset skulle gå upp. (p. 13)
I read in Det newspaper that petrol-price should go up
'I read in a/some newspaper that the petrol price was to rise.'

g. Hon skulle gå ut med någon överklasstönt. (p. 13)
she should og out with Det upper-class-jerk
'She was to date some upper class jerk.'

h. Jag blev påkörd av någon jävla idiot på cykel. (p. 13)
I was run-over by Det bloody idiot on bicycle
'I got run over by a/some bloody idiot running a bicycle.'

4. Variation at the level of individual lexical items

- Norwegian *noensinne*/*noengang* 'ever' vs. Swedish *någonsin*/*någon gång* 'ever'.
- Both items are polarity sensitive in Norwegian, but only *någonsin* in Swedish.

(8) *Norwegian; data from Lindstad (1999)*

a. *Clausemate sentential negation*
T. var overrasket over at han ikke noen gang/noensinne hadde foraktet G. …
T. was surprised over that he Neg ever had despised G. …
'T. was surprised that he hadn't ever despised G.'

b. *Sentential negation in a superordinate clause*
Jeg kan sannelig ikke huske at jeg noensinne/noengang har sett en bedre debut…
I can really Neg remember that I (ever) has seen a better debut (ever) …
'I can't recall that I have ever seen a better debut, really.'

c. *Scalar endpoints*
Det var hans første verdenscupseier noensinne/noengang.
It was his first world-cup-victory ever
'It was his first world cup victory ever.'

d. *Restriction of comparative*
I dag kan han bare konstatere at konflikten er mer fastlåst enn noensinne/noengang.
in day can he only register that the.conflict is more deadlocked than ever
'Today he can only register that the conflict is more deadlocked than ever.'

e. *Negative quantifier*
Ingen film har noensinne/noengang spilt inn så mye på premierehelgen.
no movie has ever played in so much on premiere.weekend
'No movie has ever made that much money during its premiere weekend.'

f. *Negative adverb*
…, men aldri noensinne/noengang har jeg hørt dem spille så storslått som her.
…, but never ever have I heard them play as magnificent as here
'…, but I have never ever heard them play as magnificent as here.'

g. *Negative correlative adverb*
… verken H. eller F. kommer noensinne/noengang til å havne i den situasjonen.
… neither H. nor F. comes ever to to end-up in that situation
'… neither H. nor F. will ever end up in such a situation.'

h. *Negative preposition* uten *'without'*
…, men **uten** at det noen gang/noensinne bikker over.
…, but without that it ever turns over
'…, but without ever tottering.'

i. *Antecedent of conditional*
Skal jeg noensinne/noengang få det svaret, må jeg satse nå.
shall I ever get that answer, must I go-for-it now
'If I'll ever get that answer, I'll have to go for it now.'

j. Yes/no-*question*
Har De noensinne/noengang drømt om å være kongelig?
have You ever dreamt about to be royal
'Have You ever dreamt of being royal?'

k. *Negative verb*
NN benektet at han noensinne/noengang har lovet å splitte sitt forslag.
NN denied that he ever has promised to split his offer
'NN denied that he has ever promised to split his proposal.'

l. *Restriction of universal quantifier*
… som gjør alle selskaper du noensinne/noengang har vært i gørrkjedelige.
… as makes all parties you ever has been in deadly.boring
'… which makes all parties, that you have ever been to, deadly boring.'

m. *Focus adverb* bare *'only'*
Bare en norsk løper har noensinne/noengang gjort det.
only one Norwegian athlete has ever done it
'Only one Norwegian athlete has ever accomplished that.'

(9) *Swedish; data from Waldmann (2002) and Rosqvist (2004)*

a. *Sentential negation, Waldmann (2002, 56)*
Han har *(**inte**) någonsin gjort det.
he has (Neg) ever done it
'He hasn't ever done it.'

b. Yes/no-*question, Waldmann (2002, 56)*
Har han någonsin gjort det**?**
has he ever done it
'Has he ever done it?'

c. *Negative adverb, Rosqvist (2004, 12)*
Vi kommer **aldrig** någonsin at selja resor til Sälen för hela familjen.
we come never ever to sell travels to Sälen for whole the.family
'We will never ever sell travels to Sälen for the whole family.'

d. *Negative preposition* utan *'without', Rosqvist (2004, 12)*
Utan att någonsin förfalla til obelevad skjutjärnsjournalistik, …
without to ever revert to ill-mannered
'Without ever reverting to "revolver journalism", …

e. *Complement of negative verb, Rosqvist (2004, 13)*
Men han bestred att han någonsin aktivt samarbetat med polisen…
but he denied that he ever actively cooperated with the.police
'But he denied that he had ever actively cooperated with the police…'

f. *Comparative, Rosqvist (2004, 13)*
Chefens roll är **svårare än** någonsin.
the.boss's role is harder than ever
'The boss's role os harder than ever.'

g. *Superlative, Rosqvist (2004, 13)*
Det var den **grymmaste** musiken som någonsin funnits!
it was the nicest musikk as ever exist
'It was the nicest music there ever was.'

h. *Restriction of universal quantifier, Rosqvist (2004, 13)*
Varje iakttagere som någonsin besökt en bilmässa…
every spectator as ever visited a motorshow
'Every spectator that has ever visited a mortorshow…'

i. *Antecedent of conditional, Rosqvist (2004, 13)*
…, **om** de <u>någonsin</u> blir verklighet, …
…, if they ever become reality, …
'…, if they ever turn real.'

- Fronting and licensing to the left of negation is blocked, as in (all?) other languages:

(10) *Swedish; data from Waldmann (2002, 56)*

a. *<u>Någonsin</u> har han **inte** gjort det.
ever has he Neg done it

b. *Han har <u>någonsin</u> **inte** gjort det.
he has ever Neg done it

5. Free choice items in Scandinavian

- Scandinavian free choice items described and analysed in Sæbø (2001).
- Formed by adding *som helst* 'as rathest' to a *wh*-word or –phrase (Norwegian):

(11)a.	*hva*	*hva som helst*	what as rathest	'anything/whatever'
b.	*hvem*	*hvem som helst*	who as rathest	'anyone/whoever'
c.	*når*	*når som helst*	when as rathest	'whenever'
d.	*hvilken bil*	*(en) hvilken bil som helst* *(en) hvilken som helst bil*	(a) which as rathest car (a) which car as rathest	'any car' 'any car'

(12)a. Han gjør <u>hva som helst</u> for penger.
he does what as rathest for money
'He does anything for money.'

b. Han gjør ikke <u>hva som helst</u> for penger.
he does Neg what as rathest for money
'He doesn't do (just) anything for money.'

6. *som helst* 'as rathest'

- Attaches to NQs (13), NPIs (14), and FCIs (15):

(13)a. Jeg tenker best i stillhet, om den er tvungen betyr **ingenting som helst…**
I think best in silence, if it is forced means nothing as rathest
'I think best when it's silent, whether it's forced means nothing at all...'

b. Og **ingen som helst kan** faktisk komme og fortelle deg hva du skal gjøre…
and nobody as rathest can actually come and tell you what you shall do
'And no one at all can just come and tell you what to do…'

c. … den gir **ingen som helst praktisk løsning** på de nasjonale problemer.
… it gives no as rathest practical solution on the national problems
'… it affords no practical solution at all for the national problems.'

(14)a. Av den grunn trenger ikke en etnisk gruppe nødvendigvis å dele **noenting som helst**.
of that reason need Neg an ethnic group necessarily to share anything as rathest
'For that reason, an ethnic group need not share anything at all.'

b. Åssen **kan noen som helst** vite det?
how can Pron.NPI as rathest know that
'How can anyone at all know that?'

c. Har politikerne **noen som helst kredibilitet**?
has the.politicians Pron.NPI as rathest credibility
'Do the politicians have any credibility at all?'

(15) a. Alle er født med evner til å lære **hva som helst**.
everybody is born with abilities to learn which as rathest
'Everybody is born with the ability to learn anything at all.'

b. … **hvem som helst** kan stille som kandidat og kjempe om stemmene til …
… who as rathest can stand as candidate and fight about the.votes of …
'.. whoever/anyone can stand for candidate and fight for the votes of …'

c. Les og send epost fra en **hvilken som helst datamaskin** hvor som helst i verden!
read and send email from a which as rathest computer where as rathest in the.world
'Read and send email from any computer anywhere in the world.'

- *Som helst* could function as a useful probe into the compositional semantics of polarity sensitive items generally.
- *Som helst* has roughly the same effect as adding contrastive stress on *noen* when *noen* is negative polarity, recall (5) above:

(16) a. Han har **ikke** lest noen som helst bok.
he has Neg Det.NPI as rathest bok
'He hasn't read any book at all.'

b. *Noen som helst bok har han **ikke** lest.
Det.NPI as rathest book has he Neg read

7. Strong negative polarity item

- Norwegian *slettes*/*slett*, Danish *slet* (Jensen 1999, 2000)

(17) Slettes *left-adjacent to negation*

a. … men denne dobbelt-CD'en med Grieg er heller **slettes ikke** å forakte.
… but his double CD with Grieg is either SLETTES Neg to despise
'… but this Grieg double CD is not at all to despise.'

b. Selv om Jack er en skogens mann, er **slettes ikke** Tom Cruise det.
even if Jack is a forest's man, is SLETTES Neg Tom Cruise that
'Even if Jack is a man of the forest, Tom Cruise isn't that at all.'

c. Det er **slettes ikke** alle som er skikket til å ta vare på barna sine…
it is SLETTES Neg everybody as is able to to take care of the.children their
'Not at all everybody is able to take proper care of their children.'

(18) Slettes *left-adjacent to negative quantififer*

a. Dette er […] **slettes ingen** rettferdig bok.
this is […] SLETTES no fair book
'This is not at all a fair book.'

b. At jeg dukker opp igjen er **slettes ingen** umulighet
that I turn up again is SLETTES no impossibility
'That I will turn up again is not at all impossible.'

c. For vi gjør **slettes ingenting**,vi bare rusler pent omkring…
because we do SLETTES nothing, we just stroll gently around
'Because we do nothing at all, we just stroll gently around the place.'

- And that's it.

8. Peculiarities part I

(19) *Norwegian DPs, examples from Julien (2002, 281)*

a. Ho var **ikkje** stor-e jent-a.
she was not big-W girl-Def.Fem.sg
'She was no big girl.'

b. Vi gikk **ikkje** lang-e stykkje-t.
we walked not long-W part-Def.Neut.sg
'We didn't walk a long distance.'

c. Dei sa **ikkje** mange ord-a.
they said not many word-Def.pl
'They did not say many words.'

- Similar constructions in the other Nordic languages?

9. Peculiarities part II

- There seems to be a great amount of negative polarity items licensed to the immediate left of their licensor in the Scandinavian languages.
- *heller*, *overhodet*/*overhovedet*, *ennå*/*endnu*, *slett(es)*/*slet* (Norwegian/Danish).
- Different from negative indefinites in (non-strict, Giannakidou 1998) negative concord languages:

(20) *Italian*

a. *(**Non**) ha telefonato *nessuno*.
Neg has phoned nobody
'Nobody called.'

b. ***Nessuno*** (*non) ha telefonato.
nobody Neg has phoned
'Nobody called.'

c. ***Nessuno*** (*non) ha telefonato a *nessuno*.
nobody Neg has phoned to nobody
'Nobody called anybody.'

10. Contributions from micro-comparative studies

- It has been claimed that polarity sensitivity in general is to a large extent idiosyncratic, i.e., there is great diversity in speakers' grammaticality judgements, and there is minute variation crosslinguistically.
- Different polarity items also seem to be sensitive to different things. There has been a long ongoing discussion in the literature regarding the issue of aspectual adverbs and their affinity to various semantic notions.
- *Allerede* 'already', *ennå* 'yet', *fremdeles* 'still', *lenger* '*(any) longer*'
- Close attention to the distribution of negative polarity items with respect to other properties?
- How to delineate the distribution of a given polarity item?
- Focus on a few decisive contexts. Are there any?
- Macro-comparative syntax; polarity items licensed to the immediate left of negation, theoretical import?

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