

Variation, Grammar and Lexical Choice

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1 Variation

- (1) Two different forms associated with a single interpretation (essentially the Labovian definition)

Levels of variation: ‘Language’, ‘dialect’, ‘individual’ — but we’re interested in whether the I-language is variable, and, if so, what that means.

1. optionality in the establishment of an Agree relation—reduces to lexical choice (Adger and Smith 2004)
2. optionality of feature strength (word order)—Chomsky 1995 , Henry 1995
3. optionality of manner of satisfaction of feature requirements (Move vs Merge)—Roberts and Roussou 1997.

Types 2 and 3 overlap substantially in their empirical coverage, and we probably don’t want both.

- (2) We was/were there
(3) There ’s/are three people there
(4) We looked up the number/the number up
(5) We didn’t do nothing/We did nothing/We didn’t do anything

One approach to type 1 variation (Adger and Smith 2004)

- (6) a. [F, ~~uG~~] ... [G]
b. [F] ... [G]

Same interpretable features, different formal features.

An alternative: different ways of satisfying requirements of a head—by Merge or Move.

- (7) a. [F, ~~uG~~] ... [G] → [G, [F, ~~uG~~] ... ⟨[G]⟩]
b. [F, ~~uG~~] ... [G] → [G, [F, ~~uG~~] ... [G]

Internal vs external Merge: will depend on whether a G is available in the numeration. Economy is not an issue in determining whether Merge or Move takes place.

2 Negative Concord

2.1 Basic data

From the Buckie Corpus (Smith 2001)

[... [+neg] ... NEG]

- (8) You did na think nothing about hard work that time. (r:381.17)
(9) They do na get nae love or nothing. (l:73.52)
(10) You wi na have nothing to open the morn. (w:653.5)
(11) She’ll nae get nobody better than him. (x:307.25)

- (12) There was na nobody singing. (a:384.20)
 [... [-neg] ... NEG]
 (13) They had nae sanitation or water . (b:162.56)
 (14) They've nae choice but go to the high school. (!:47.27)
 (15) She's haen nae problems. (\$:85.60)
 (16) I've nae experience, you-ken. (3:15.39)
 (17) And I've nae smell or taste, so that is annoying. (3:184.10)
 (18) She kens nothing. (n:12029)
 (19) Listen, I think you're getting nothing. (n:446.60)
 (20) But there was nothing wrong wi' it. (6:175.64)

*[NEG ... [+neg] ...]

- (21) *Nobody didna get it
 (22) *Nobody you ken was na there.
 (23) *Nobody has na been there.

[NEG ... [-neg] ...]

- (24) Nobody could help you (h:32.30)
 (25) Nobody drinks it (1:58.90)
 (26) Nobody takes the water. (1:59.11)
 (27) Nobody bothered you know (1:356.31)

2.2 Quantitative considerations

N=359				
config	[+Neg ... NEG]	[-Neg ... NEG]	[NEG ... +Neg]	[NEG ... -Neg]
N	220	128	0	11
%	61	36	0	3

2.3 NC is not NPI licensing

- Possible to have [... [-neg] ... NEG] but not [... [-neg] ... ANY].
- Different licensors:

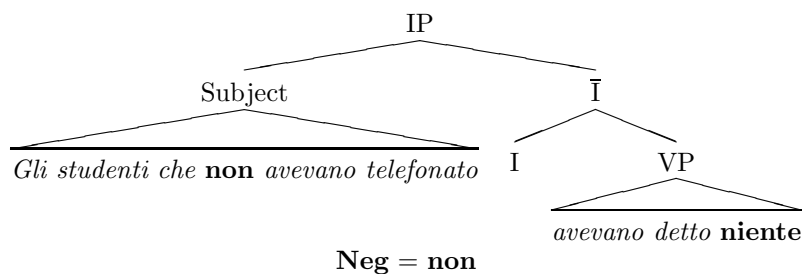
- (28) They had nae sanitation or water. (b:162.56)
 (29) *They had ony sanitation or water
 (30) Do you know anybody fae Elgin (c:169.63)
 (31) *Do you know naebody fae Elgin
 (32) *He left wi'oot talking to naebody

3 The syntax of NC

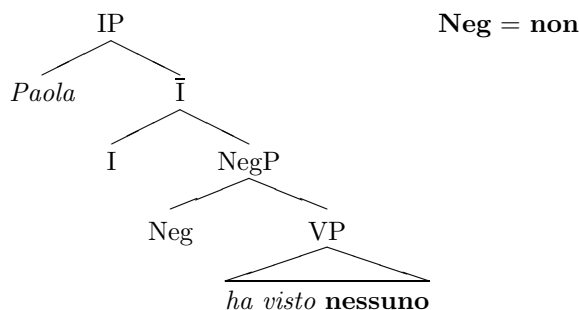
3.1 Negative Concord in Italian

- (33) Paola **non** ha visto **nessuno**
 Paola NEG have-3SG seen noone
 'Paola hasn't seen anyone.'

- (34) *Paola ha visto **nessuno**
 Paola have-3SG seen noone
 ‘Paola hasn’t seen anyone.’
- (35) *Gli studenti che **non** avevano telefonato avevano detto **niente**
 The students that NEG have telephoned have said nothing
 ‘The students who didn’t telephone said nothing.’
- (36)

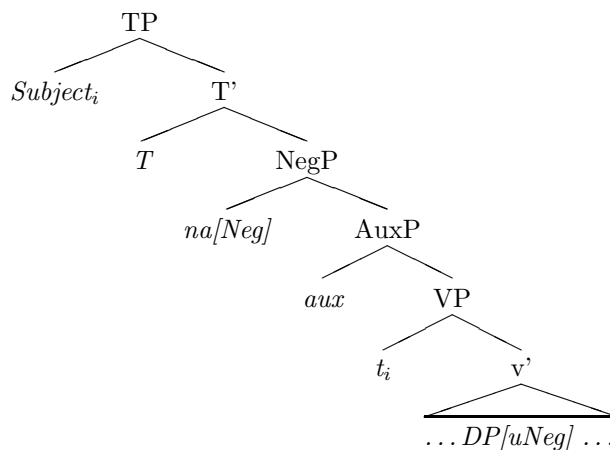


(37)



3.2 A First Stab—Rizzi 1982

(38)



Uninterpretable [neg] feature on DP is checked under c-command (via Agree).
Predictions

- (39) [... [neg] ... DP[~~u~~neg]]

i.e where there is a NEG there should be a c-commanding +neg.
but

1. Why are Negative subjects with a negative head *?
2. Why are Negative subjects with a non-negative head ok?
3. How is [... [-neg] ... NEG] possible at all (the *uneg* feature of NEG wouldn't be checked)?

The Negative Spellout Rule: If [Spec, NegP] is filled during the course of the derivation, Neg⁰ has no phonological realisation.

→ The subject has to traverse through [Spec, NegP] on its way to [Spec, TP].

(40) Naebody came.

(41) *Naebody didna come.

Other dialects

(42) No stranger ain't got to come (Howe and Walker 1999:124) (Early African American English)

(43) Nobody couldn't handle him. (Wolfram and Christian 1976:112) (Appalachian English)

NSR is parametrized.

4 Why the NSR? A different tack

Starke(2002) - Specifiers don't really exist. Everything is a head complement relation, and what look like specifiers are just XPs Merged to satisfy the Functional Sequence (fseq) C-T-v-V.

- (44)
- a. [eat which pasta] → Merge DP[v] (v=agentivity)
 - b. [these boys][eat which pasta] → Merge DP[T] (T=nominative)
 - c. [these boys] t [eat which pasta] → Merge DP[wh]
 - d. [which pasta] [these boys] t [eat t]

Follows that there is no Specifier-Head relation, so no NSR. Rather if fseq requires negation, either something bearing a Neg feature (interpretable or not) must be externally Merged or internally merged (Remerged).

- (45)
- a. V NEG → Merge DP[v] (v=agentivity)
 - b. DP V NEG → is there a +neg in the numeration?
 - c. yes: neg DP V NEG = Negative Concord
 - d. no: NEG DP V t = Negative Quantifier

Note that in a language where fseq for negation can only be satisfied once (perhaps all languages), (45) (c) followed by NEG movement is *, as is (45) (d) followed by Merge of +neg. We then derive the NSR. This essentially updates Ladusaw 1992, with the difference that n-words are not ambiguous between NQs and NPIs, rather their interpretation depends on their syntactic context.

So we predict a negative head should occur with negative objects if the proposition is to be negative. This means that in such a language:

(46) I saw noone

should not be sentential negation, which seems correct (it's focal).

If the language allows NEG movement, then sentential negation reading should be possible (e.g. Icelandic):

(47) Strákarnir höfðu hent grjóti í bílana
the.boys had thrown rock in the.cars
'the boys had thrown rocks at the cars.'

- (48) *Strákarnir höfðu grjóti hent í bílana
the.boys had rock thrown in the.cars

Icelandic is uncontroversially VO.

- (49) *Strákarnir höfðu hent engu grjóti í bílana
the.boys had thrown no rock in the.cars

- (50) Strákarnir höfðu engu grjóti hent í bílana
the.boys had no rock thrown in the.cars
'the boys hadn't thrown any rocks at the cars.'

What about non-negative concord languages? Come back to these at the end.

Merge of *never* satisfies Fseq

- (51) I never had that the last time, (x:126.0)

- (52) I never went the second day. (l:41.47)

- (53) *I did never do that.

→ and, at least in Buckie, no further neg is mergable.

- (54) *I never na do that

- (55) *He did na never come

What about subjects?

- (56) a. V DP → Merge DP[NEG, v] (v=agentivity)
b. NEG V DP → is there a +neg in the numeration?
c. yes: neg NEG V DP = but fseq is trivially satisfied, so no motivation to merge +neg
d. no: NEG t V DP = Sentential negation, but no negative concord.

Predicts

- (57) *Nobody didna come

- (58) Nobody could help you (h:32.30)

What about the other dialects where a subject occurs with a negative head? A number of possibilities: realisation of a higher negation in fseq (perhaps in low C domain) - 'ain't nobody gonna come' in AAVE. The higher negation in some dialects may be a scope marker (as in French *ne*/West Flemish *en*) rather than a realisation of true negation, and as such wouldn't be merged at the fseq Neg position at all (it could be generated as a feature on T, for example).

Summary:

- fseq approach predicts negative concord for objects and not for subjects.
- It also predicts sentential negation readings should arise with subjects, but not with objects, unless there is a head in Neg or the object raises to Neg.

What about the variability we saw in the [-Neg] ... NEG configuration?

5 Apparent variation in Negative Concord

5.1 Existentials

[∃ ... [+neg] ... NEG]

- (59) There was na nae downies, you- see. (r:154.34)

- (60) There was na nobody singing. (a:384.20)

(61) There was na nae fuss. (b:236.30)

[$\exists$... [-neg] ... NEG]

(62) There 's nae Jennifer 's in Finichty. (t:977.27)

(63) There was nae work for making barrels and that. (c:14.22)

(64) You've nae herring and makes you wonder why there 's none. (b:39.46)

(65) But there was nothing wrong wi' it. (6:175.64)

(66) But there's nae fish, there's nae white fish. (7:195.0)

(67) There was no pensions or nothing. (g:262.13)

(68) There was no pubs or nothing in Uigg. (c:247.31)

5.2 Quantitative considerations

N=90		
config	[+Neg ... NEG]	[-Neg ... NEG]
N	4	83
%	5	95

Why the difference in numbers between existentials and non-existentials?

5.3 Have with NC

(69) And I've nae smell or taste, so that is annoying. (3:184.10)

(70) She kens nothing. (n:12029)

Separating out main verb *have* from other main verbs we find that of 45 cases, 39 occur with this verb. The other 6 are all in some sense emphatic (they bear focal stress, or are information structurally odd in other ways).

(71) ??She kens nothing, does she?

(72) ??She kens nothing, doesn't she?

Suggestion: these are not negation, satisfying fseq, but rather have only a Generalized Quantifier interpretation:

(73) $\{\text{things}\} \cap \{x:\text{she knows } x\} = 0$

Perhaps these raise to a low VP scope position, but cannot raise from there to Neg.

(74)

	[[+Neg] ... NEG]	[-Neg] ... NEG]
Lexical main verbs	97% (198)	3% (6)
Existentials	5% (4)	95% (83)
Main <i>have</i>	32% (18)	68% (39)

5.4 Negative Movement and Holmberg's Generalization

(Svenonius 2000)

(75) Knut leverte ingenting inn
 Knut handed nothing in
 'Knut didn't hand anything in'

- (76) *...hvis Knut leverte ingenting inn
 ...if Knut handed nothing in
 'Knut didn't hand anything in'
- (77) *Knut har levert ingenting inn
 Knut has handed nothing in
 'Knut hasn't hand anything in'

Contrast is due to Holmberg's generalization:

- (78) Object shift cannot cross overt material in VP
- (79) Knut leverte ingenting [_{VP} t_V t_{neg} inn]
 Knut handed nothing in
- (80) hvis Knut [_{VP} leverte ingenting inn]
 if Knut handed nothing in

6 Holmberg's Generalization and NC in Buckie

The auxiliaries *have* and *be* in Buckie can appear **higher** than the negative particle, while main verbs must appear **lower**, just as in standard English.

- (81) I was **na** there
- (82) I had **na** been there
- (83) I **na** ken him

Since the auxiliaries are structurally higher than negation, Negative Movement can take place without violating HG.

- (84) *She [_{NegP} nothing [_{VP} kens t_{NEG}]]. Violates HG
- (85) She kens nothing (no sentential negation reading)
- (86) She does [_{NegP} na [_{VP} ken nothing]]

Compare:

- (87) I had [_{NegP} na [_{VP} t_{have} nae bairns that time]] (e:712.47)
- (88) And I've [_{NegP} nae smell or taste [_{VP} t_{have} t_{NEG}]], so that is annoying. (3:184.10)

and:

- (89) There was [_{NegP} na [_{VP} t_{be} nae downies]], you- see. (r:154.34)
- (90) There was [_{NegP} nae work for making barrels [_{VP} t_{be} t_{NEG}]] and that. (c:14.22)

Further prediction:

- (91) She's haen nae problems. (\$:85.60) - only Focus Reading available
- (92) I did na hav nae tools or nothing, (j:829.25) - sentential reading
- (93) You wi na have nothing to open the morn. (w:653.5) - sentential reading

Note crucially that what is relevant is the syntactic position of the verb, rather than it's status as main or auxiliary.

This movement operation is **variable** when the verb is auxiliary *have*, and, to a certain extent, *be*.

7 conclusion

Variation in Neg Concord constructions can be ‘deconstructed’ and the patterns of categoricity can be explained in terms of known constraints on negative movement in Germanic (HG) interacting with principles of UG (Fseq). However, we are still left with a variable negative movement operation. The variability here comes down to whether the properties of the higher position are satisfied by external or internal Merge—and this is just a matter of lexical choice.

Non Negative Concord languages that don’t employ negative movement (Standard English, German, Dutch etc)?