

A TALE OF TWO NEGATIONS: HIGH VS. LOW ‘no’ IN SPANISH STRIPPING

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1. Introduction

At a descriptive level, *stripping* (Hankamer & Sag 1976) is a phenomenon involving a sentence coordinated with an XP preceded by an adverbial element. In this presentation, we focus on cases in which this adverbial element is *no* ‘not’:

- (1) Llegó Sonia, pero no Bruno. (2) Llegó Sonia, no Bruno.
arrived Sonia but not Bruno arrived Sonia not Bruno
'Sonia arrived, but not Bruno.'

The standard view is that stripping structures are elliptical clauses where the remnant XP and negation survive deletion (e.g., Depiante 2000, Saab 2008):

- (3) [&P [CP Llegó Sonia] [& {Ø | pero} [CP no Llegó Bruno]

The literature usually takes the conjunction, typically *pero* ‘but’, to be optional, i.e., there is a single structure in which it may surface or not.

We challenge the assumption that the conjunction is optional, and instead argue that examples such as (1) and (2) instantiate two distinct syntactic structures.

- ✓ Negation in *pero*-NEG-XP patterns such as (1) is clause-internal.
- ✓ Negation in NEG-XP patterns such as (2) is clause-external.

3. The distribution of *pero*

Vicente (2006) and Kolokonte (2008) claim that the remnant XP in the NEG-XP type of stripping is a contrastive focus. In Rooth’s (1992) system, this interpretation arises when the f-value of α contains a previously uttered proposition β .

- For Spanish NEG-XP stripping, $[\beta]^o \in [\alpha]^f$ is satisfied only if negation is not taken as part of the propositional content of α .

This follows straightforwardly if *no* ‘not’ in these configurations is high negation:

- (12) a. $[\beta \text{ Llegó Sonia}], \text{no } [\alpha \text{ llegó BRUNO}_F]$. cf. (2)
b. $[\beta]^o = \text{Sonia arrived}$
c. $[\alpha]^f = \{x \text{ arrived} \mid x \in D_e\}$
d. $[\beta]^o \in [\alpha]^f$

As for *pero*-NEG-XP patterns, we take it that the distribution of *pero* ‘but’ follows from its information structural requirements:

- The conjunction *pero* needs to link two clauses, each containing a pair of constituents that contrast with their counterparts in the other clause.
- These can be analyzed as a contrastive topic and an information focus; see Sæbø (2003) on German *aber*, and Umbach (2005) on English *but*.

Extending Kolokonte’s (2008) characterization of *pero*-NEG-XP patterns, we argue that the remnant XP is the focus, while (propositional) negation is the contrastive topic. We take it that contrastive topics evoke alternative questions (Büring 2003):

- (13) a. Llegó Sonia, pero $[\alpha \text{ NO}_{CT} \text{ llegó BRUNO}_F]$. cf. (1)
b. $[\alpha]^{ct} = \{\{\text{POL}(x \text{ arrived}) \mid x \in D_e\} \mid \text{POL} \in D_{\{+,-\}}\}$
 $= \{\text{who arrived?}, \text{who didn't arrive?}\}$

Since *pero* ‘but’ requires *no* ‘not’ to be part of the computation of propositional alternatives, it follows that the latter cannot be an instance of high negation.

- (14) GENERALIZATION ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF *pero*
In sequences of the form *pero no* ‘but not’ in Spanish stripping clauses, *no* ‘not’ is always an instance of (low) propositional negation.

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2. High negation in Spanish stripping

If *pero* ‘but’ were truly optional, acceptability contrasts such as (4) vs. (5) would be unexpected:

- (4) No llegó SONIA, no Bruno.
not arrived Sonia not Bruno
'Sonia didn't arrive, not Bruno.'
→ *Sonia didn't arrive, Bruno (maybe) did.*
- (5) *No llegó SONIA, pero no Bruno.
not arrived Sonia but not Bruno
'Sonia didn't arrive, but not Bruno.'

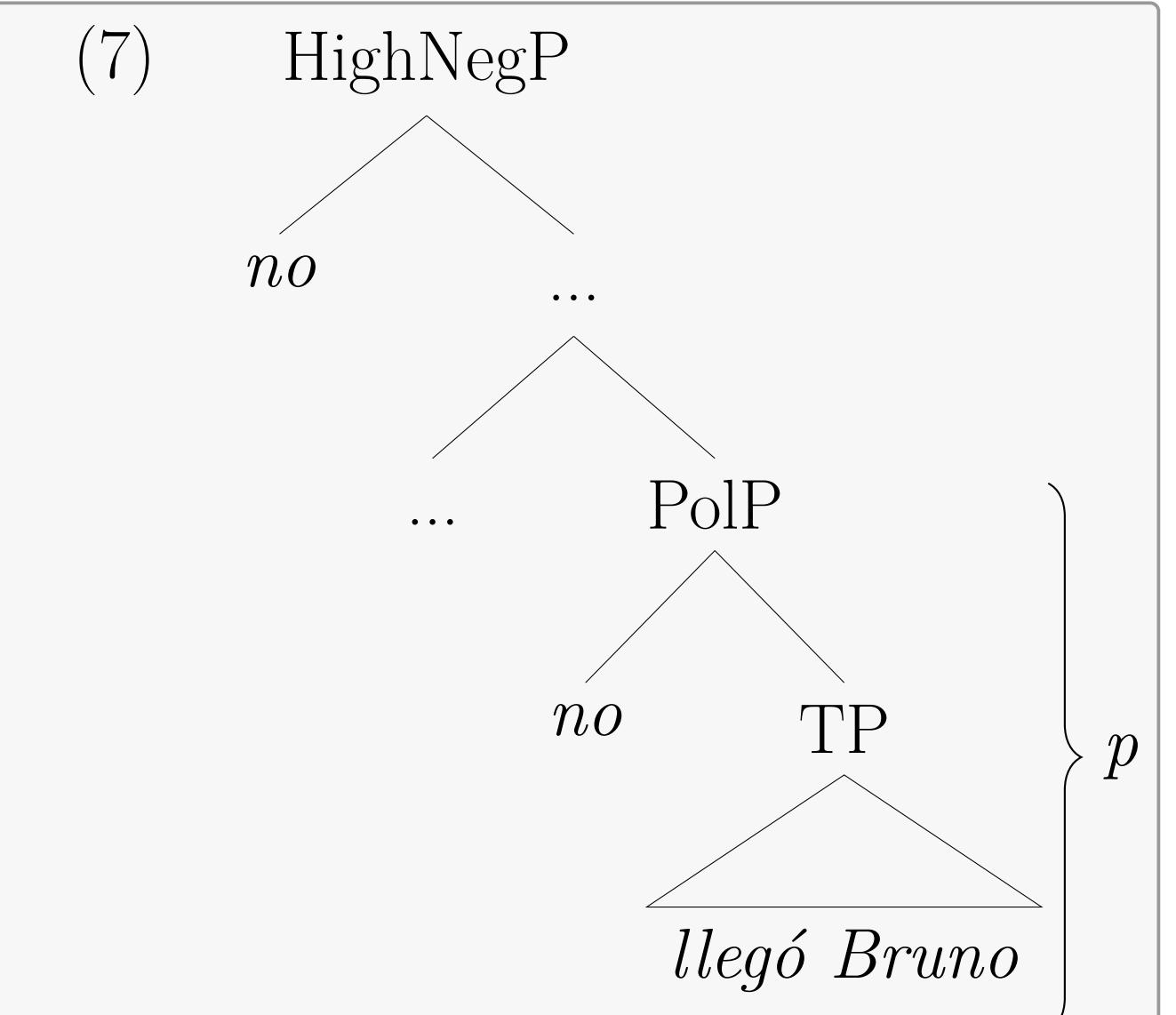
The interpretation in (4) requires an underlying representation containing two negations:

- (6) No llegó SONIA, no \neg –llegó Bruno.
not arrived Sonia not not arrived Bruno

Since propositional negation cannot iterate or “stack” in this manner (Collins 2018), one of these negative elements must be of a different type.

- We claim that the overt *no* in Spanish NEG-XP configurations realizes *high negation*.
- This is an operator that affects the illocutionary status of the sentence rather than its propositional content (Repp 2013, Romero 2015, Goodhue 2022).

1. High negation occupies a clause-external position in the left periphery of the sentence.
2. Unlike standard propositional negation in PolP, high negation is truth-conditionally vacuous.
3. It scopes over an assertion operator ASSERT that combines with the proposition (Goodhue 2022), which yields $\neg \text{ASSERT}(p)$.
4. Accordingly, the elliptical structure in (4) roughly means ‘it is not the case that the speaker is committed to the claim that Bruno didn’t arrive.’
5. NEG-XP stripping structures recruiting high negation function as *illocutionary denials*.



This analysis is supported by the interaction of necessity modals and negation. In Spanish, the combination of negation + modal as in the sequence *no debe* ‘not must’ can be interpreted as either $\neg > \square$ or $\square > \neg$. Stripping of the *pero*-NEG-XP type displays this ambiguity:

- (8) Sonia debe subir de peso, pero no Bruno.
Sonia must go.up of weight but not Bruno
'Sonia must gain weight, but not Bruno.'
- (9) [[HighNegP ... [[PolP no [TP debe]
covert movement

✓ $\neg > \square$, ✓ $\square > \neg$

However, NEG-XP patterns are unambiguously interpreted with negation taking scope over the modal—e.g., (10). This follows if covert movement of the modal (Iatridou & Zeijlstra 2013) cannot reach positions that are external to the proposition:

- (10) Sonia debe subir de peso, no Bruno.
Sonia must go.up of weight not Bruno
'Sonia must gain weight, not Bruno.'
- (11) [[HighNegP no ... [[PolP Pol [TP debe]
covert movement

✓ $\neg > \square$, ✗ $\square > \neg$

4. Differences between NEG-XP and *pero*-NEG-XP

The analyses in (12a) and (13a), which hinge on whether negation is part of the proposition, account for several contrasts between NEG-XP and *pero*-NEG-XP configurations:

- (15) Vino alguien, pero no Sonia.
came somebody but not Sonia
'Somebody came, but not Sonia.'
- (16) *Vino alguien, no Sonia.
came somebody not Sonia
'Somebody came, but not Sonia.'

On the one hand, the *pero*-NEG-XP pattern in (15) raises the issue of who the person who came is. This is straightforwardly captured under our analysis, as it predicts that an implicit question (i.e., *who came?*) remains unanswered:

- (17) a. Vino alguien, pero $[\alpha \text{ NO}_{CT} \text{ vino SONIA}_F]$
b. $[\alpha]^{ct} = \{\{\text{POL}(x \text{ came}) \mid x \in D_e\} \mid \text{POL} \in D_{\{+,-\}}\}$
 $= \{\text{who came?}, \text{who didn't come?}\}$

By contrast, in the unacceptable NEG-XP configuration in (16), the condition on contrastive foci (i.e., $[\beta]^o \in [\alpha]^f$) is not satisfied, therefore the sentence is unacceptable;

- (18) a. $[\beta \text{ Vino alguien}], \text{no } [\alpha \text{ vino SONIA}_F]$
b. $[\beta]^o = \{\text{Somebody came}\}$
- c. $[\alpha]^f = \{x \text{ came} \mid x \in D_e\}$
d. $[\beta]^o \notin [\alpha]^f$

Identifying the split between NEG-XP and *pero*-NEG-XP is crucial for the study of stripping.

- ✓ Without it, examples belonging to different configurations can easily be conflated, leading to contradictory reports about the behavior of the construction.
- ✓ A structural distinction in terms of high and low negation provides a clearer empirical basis for future work on the construction.