

Abstract:

In this article I compare the syntactic properties of the postverbal negation *mica* in Old and Modern Italian. According to many current analyses of the doubling stages of the Jespersen cycle, new negation markers start as lexical items bearing an uninterpretable Negative feature. Gradually these items become interpretable as Negative, which eventually allows them to replace the older sentence negation marker. I will analyze the distribution of the postverbal negation *mica* in Old and Modern Italian and argue that the observed changes are not a consequence of a change in the interpretability of the Negative feature. Adopting the idea that negation is not directly represented in the syntactic spine, I analyze the diachronic development of *mica* in terms of a different parametric setting in the lexicalization and attraction properties of Focus and Existential projections.

Keywords: negation, Old Italian, n-words, Jespersen cycle

1. Introduction

The Jespersen cycle is a diachronic process where an originally non-negative lexical item undergoes a grammaticalization path becoming a new marker of sentential negation. A classic example (Jespersen, 1917) is found in the history of English, where the preverbal negative marker *ne* is at first accompanied by the reinforcer *not* (in origin a quantifier, *nāwiht* ‘nothing’; cf. Willis, Lucas and Breitbarth (2013, 7)) and then replaced by it. In the original formulation, it was assumed that the position of *not* in Present-day English before the lexical verb (but under *do*) is the same position of Old English *ne*.

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|-----|----|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| (1) | a. | ic ne secge | (Old English) |
| | b. | I ne seye not | (Middle English) |
| | c. | I say not | (Early Modern English) |
| | d. | I don't say | (Present-day English) |

It is now generally accepted that the processes that lead to the grammaticalization of new negative markers do not follow necessarily all the steps originally proposed by Jespersen. For instance, in some cases there is no evidence for the existence of a doubling stage where the combination NEG-V-NEG, as in (1b), is the standard sentential negation and not some type of emphatic construction (Larrivé, 2011). Nevertheless, cases of discontinuous negation are not rare. The examples in (2) display some cases from Italo-Romance varieties and Celtic languages (Bernini and Ramat, 1996, 18ff.).

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|-----|----|--|------------------------------|
| (2) | a. | Sta donna ki la nem pyaz miga . | (Emilian) |
| | | this woman here she=not=me pleases not | |
| | | ‘I do not like this woman.’ | |
| | b. | Kwela funna li no me pyas miga . | (western Lombard) |
| | | that woman there not=me=pleases not | |
| | | ‘I do not like that woman.’ | |
| | c. | ... ni chyffroai ef ddim . | (middle Welsh, Willis, 2011) |
| | | not stir.3SG he not | |
| | | ‘...he didn’t stir.’ | |
| | d. | Ne lavaro ket kement-se. | (Breton) |

not say.FUT.3SG not all-that
 ‘He will not say it.’

The analysis of doubling stages is crucial not only for a theoretical account of the Jespersen cycle, but more in general for a theory of negation (and polarity as a modal feature), the categorial status of negative items and the exact nature of n-words. A formal account of the Jespersen cycle in minimalist terms is offered by Roberts (2007, 64-80), who has considered negation in French. According to his proposal, the main change in the cycle regards the interpretability of a Neg-feature on the items involved in sentential negation. The preverbal marker *ne* “goes from having an interpretable Neg-feature to having an uninterpretable one, possibly via a period of variation. The postverbal element *pas* undergoes a partially reverse development, ultimately acquiring an interpretable Neg-feature” (Willis, 2011, 95). According to this view the cases of discontinuous negation are not all the same. In some cases (the “older stage” looking at the cycle) the new negation is not intrinsically negative, while in other cases (the “more recent stage”) it is the old negation that is not intrinsically negative, so that it becomes optional and then disappears.

In this article I take into exam the changes in the syntactic distribution of the item *mica*, generally considered a negative adverb (but see Manzini and Savoia, 2002), occurred from Old Tuscan (or Old Italian) varieties to Modern Italian. In origin it was a quantity noun (derived from Latin *mica(m)* ‘crumb’), presumably used in the direct object position of predicates, in order to express the smallest conceivable portion of the event.¹ This usage is already lost in the earliest attested stages of Tuscan varieties. The development of *mica* cannot be considered a standard example of the Jespersen cycle since it has not replaced the preverbal negation *non* as the standard negative marker. In fact, both in the Old Tuscan and the Modern Italian stages, *mica* is used to deny an explicit or implicit discourse assumption. In this sense it is called sometimes “presuppositional negation” (Cinque, 1977) or “emphatic negation” (Wallage, 2016). Nevertheless, Modern Italian displays cases where *mica* is the only negation and is found in preverbal position:

- (3) Mica ci vado.
 not there=go.1SG
 ‘I’m not going there.’

Such examples can be interpreted as evidence of a complete cycle of *mica*. In other words, it seems that *mica* has become inherently negative and can appear in the same position of *non*. I will argue that a similar intuition is not on the right track. In what follows I will show that there are differences between the two stages taken into exam, but these differences are not a product of a change in the syntactic encoding of sentential negation, but rather in the “internal micro-morpho-syntax” (Déprez, 2011, 222) of the negative item. More precisely, I will argue that *mica* is not inherently negative neither in Old Tuscan nor in Modern Italian.

For the Old Tuscan data I have used the database of the OVI project, a searchable collection of Italo-Romance texts from the first attestations to the beginning of the XV century.² I have searched for all the occurrences of the form *mica* (and the “northern” variant with intervocalic voicing *miga*) in texts tagged as Florentine, Sienese

¹ Minimizers are a very common source of new negative markers (see among many others Willis, Lucas and Breitbarth, 2013). For some Italo-Romance varieties there are early attestations of items derived from *mica(m)* used as quantity nouns both in negative and positive environments (cf. Parry 2013). The example in (i) shows the latter case for Old Milanese:

(i) On sté de scisceri e miga de vin d’intrà
 one bushel of chickpeas and **miga** of wine of income
 ‘One bushel of chickpeas and a little of wine as income...’ (*Lancino Curti* 6.14)

² The OVI database (searchable online at <https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/ovi>) has been created mainly for lexicographic research, so it allows only limited grammar-driven inquiries. Nevertheless, with 1960 texts, 22.3 million words and 456,000 unique forms it is a very rich textual resource.

and generically Tuscan. As chronological limit of the inquiry I have chosen the middle of the XIV century, since after that the language displays many substantial changes (like the loss of verb second syntax).

2. On the syntax of *mica* in Modern Italian

In Modern Italian, *mica* is not a marker of standard sentential negation. As shown by Cinque (1977), it is used to deny a presupposition and its distribution has pragmatic restrictions. The reasons why *mica* has not been reinterpreted as a neutral, non-emphatic marker of negation are beyond the goals of this paper (see Willis, Lucas and Breitbarth (2013, 22-23) on the possible reasons why the Jespersen cycle gets slower or stops). However, it can be argued that *mica* is not intrinsically negative. To put it simply, *mica* is an n-word (like for example the quantifier *niente* ‘nothing’ or the adverb *mai* ‘never’), which means that in a language like Italian it is a free variable interpreted in the scope of a higher operator (on this, see among many others Rizzi, 1982, 122; Acquaviva, 1994). This operator can be a sentential negation, like in (4), but also an interrogative operator, like in (5), where no negative meaning is implied:

- (4) a. Non mangia mica.
not eats not
‘S/he is not eating.’
b. Non mangia niente.
not eats nothing
‘S/he eats nothing.’
c. Non mangia mai carote.
not eats never carrots
‘S/he never eats carrots.’
- (5) a. Hai mica mangiato?
have.2SG not eaten
‘Have you eaten?’
b. Hai mangiato niente?
have.2SG eaten nothing
‘Have you eaten anything?’
c. Hai mai mangiato carote?
have.2SG never eaten carrots
‘Have you ever eaten carrots?’

The main argument to show that *mica* is an n-word is that, while in non-interrogative contexts it cannot surface after the verb without the preverbal negative marker *non*, a configuration that can be considered an instantiation of negative concord, in questions, as shown in (5a), postverbal *mica* is perfectly acceptable without *non*.³

A possible counterexample to the hypothesis that *mica* is not intrinsically negative is provided by examples like those in (6), where it is found in the preverbal space and no other negative element surfaces. From this

³ As pointed out by Pescarini and Penello (2012) a polar question can display both *non* and *mica*:

(i) Non hai mica mangiato?
not have.2SG not eaten
‘Haven’t you eaten?’

Reversing somehow their argumentation (since they discuss the optionality of *mica* in these cases), the presence of *non* in (i) does not influence the acceptability of the postverbal *mica*, but rather triggers the interpretation that the speaker considers less likely (and would be surprised by) a positive answer. I will not deal here with problems related to the polarity of yes/no questions (cf. Holmberg 2016).

position *mica* can license another n-word in postverbal position (7). It should be pointed out that this option is marginal for some speakers, but is nevertheless accepted.

- (6) a. Mica mangio carote.
not eat.1SG carrots
'I do not eat carrots.'
- b. Mica ci sono andato.
not there=am gone
'I have not gone there.'
- (7) Mica ho visto nessuno che parlava con lui.
not have.1SG seen noone that spoke with him
'I have not seen anyone speaking to him.'

However, from this point of view *mica* is not any different than other n-words, like *niente* or *mai*, which can surface before the verb as the only negative item in a sentence. Furthermore, contrary to other n-words, from the preverbal space it cannot license some polarity adverbs like *mai* 'never' or *ancora* 'yet'. This last property does not seem related to some kind of semantic clash, since *mica* can co-occur with these adverbs when it is postverbal:

- (8) a. *?Mica ci sono mai andato.
not there=am never gone
'I have never been there.'
- b. *Mica l'ho ancora fatto.
not it=have.1SG yet done
'I have not yet done it.'
- c. Non ci sono mica mai andato.
- d. Non l'ho mica ancora fatto.

This suggests that preverbal *mica* cannot be considered simply as a pragmatically marked alternative to the standard preverbal negation *non*. There are two other facts pointing to this conclusion. With a modal verb, *non* can be interpreted both as scoping over and in the scope of the modal, while preverbal *mica* can be interpreted only as having scope over the modal (Pescarini and Penello, 2012).

- (9) a. Non deve guidare.
not must.3SG drive
'It is not necessary that he drives.' ($\neg\Box$)
'It is necessary that he does not drive.' ($\Box\neg$)
- b. Mica deve guidare.
not must.3SG drive
'It is not necessary that he drives.' ($\neg\Box$)
'It is necessary that he does not drive.' $(\Box\neg)$

Further evidence suggesting that preverbal *mica* is not like *non* comes from examples like the following ones:

- (10) A: Nella salsa che hai preparato manca qualcosa.
in-the sauce that have.2SG prepared is-lacking something
'The sauce you prepared lacks something.'
- a. B: Non il sale...forse il pepe.
not the salt perhaps the pepper
- b. B: Mica il sale...forse il pepe.

not the salt perhaps the pepper
 ‘Not the salt...perhaps the pepper.’

- (11) a. Nella salsa ho dimenticato **non** il sale, ma il pepe.
 in-the sauce have.1SG forgotten not the salt but the pepper
 ‘I forgot to add the pepper to the sauce, not the salt.’
 b. *Nella salsa ho dimenticato **mica** il sale, ma il pepe.

In corrective focus constructions the negated constituent can be introduced by both *non* and *mica* if the structure is elliptical, like in (10). However, if the negated object is found in its position in a complete sentence, only *non* can be used. Following Manzini and Savoia (2011, 81), this distribution can be straightforwardly analyzed assuming that fragments like those in (10) are the product of ellipsis of a whole sentence. Interestingly, a constituent can be negated by *mica* if it is in the left peripheral focus position, so it is likely that (10b) is the elliptical version of (12).⁴

- (12) Mica il sale ho dimenticato.
 not the salt have.1SG forgotten
 ‘It is not the salt that I have forgotten.’

Summarizing, preverbal *mica* does not require the preverbal negative marker, exactly like focalized n-words like *niente* or *nessuno*; as a constituent negation it can only appear in focus position or in fragments; it has always scope over modals. All these properties can be accounted for assuming that preverbal *mica* always occupies a focus position (like FocusP in the CP, in Rizzi’s (1997) terms, or one of the lower positions proposed by Benincà and Poletto 2004). Interestingly, the fact that it can license argumental n-words but not adverbs like *mai* or *ancora* can be considered evidence that its negative concord properties are computed at the vP level and not at the Tense/Aspect layer. In other words, it can interact with arguments, as expected if it is a nominal category (Manzini and Savoia 2002). In any case, focalized n-words only marginally can license adverbs like *mai* or *ancora* when they are not subjects:

- (13) a. ?*Nessuno ho mai visto qui.
 nobody have.1SG never seen here
 ‘I have seen nobody here.’
 b. *Niente ho ancora fatto.
 nothing have.1SG yet done
 ‘I have done nothing yet.’

This distribution can be accounted assuming that *mica*, since it has to be licensed like other n-words, can either appear under the preverbal negative marker *non* (14a) or surface in a left peripheral focus position (14b). The latter possibility is another case of the phenomenon labelled by Garzonio and Poletto (2015) as “syntactic parasitism”: a lexical item with a given feature inventory (*mica* in this case) can surface in a structural position normally encoding one of the different features it is associated with (Focus in this case). As Garzonio and Poletto (2015, 147) point out discussing the grammaticalization of *neca* in Sicilian from negative cleft to CP negative marker,

“across languages negation can be encoded by different lexical items and in different positions in the clause structure. This is not only true typologically but also at a micro-comparative level. This is a potential problem

⁴ As Brunetti (2004, 111ff.) argues, the movement to the left periphery of a non contrastively focused constituent is not explicitly visible, because ellipsis of post-focal material generally applies. The contrast between examples like (10), (11) and (12) is a possible clue that all elliptical chunks as those considered here are in fact the product of movement to the left periphery.

for any syntactic theory based on the idea that semantic features have a one-to-one structural counterpart. The case of *neca*, that is the case of an element associated with [focus] encoding negation, is one of many cases suggesting that negation is not a simple element (that is a simple [neg] feature or a unique NegP position) but a complex one, formed as the result of the interaction of several abstract processes.”

- (14) a. [*non* [T [*mica* [VP]]]]
 b. [_{Focus} *mica* [T [VP]]]

The fact that *mica* can be used as constituent negation only in elliptical contexts (where T is not expressed and therefore there cannot be a preverbal *non*) or in the left periphery, but crucially not *in situ* under T, confirms this analysis. Again, *mica* is lexicalized in a focus position.

- (15) [_{Focus} *mica* [DP *il sale*]([T *ho* [VP *dimenticato*]])]

In the next section I will show how the behavior of *mica* in an earlier stage of Italian distributes according to similar factors.

3. On the syntax of *mica* in Old Tuscan texts

In this section I compare the syntactic behavior of Modern Italian *mica* to its counterpart *mica/miga* in Old Tuscan texts. In general, exactly like in Modern Italian, *mica* usually surfaces in postverbal position. As discussed by Mosegaard Hansen and Visconti (2009), there seem to be two competing forms: bare *mica* and *né mica*, which displays the same morpheme *ne-* found also in Old and Modern Italian forms like *neanche*, *nemmeno* ‘not even’, even if in this case it is usually written separate. This *ne-* is the same formant found on many n-words (like *nessuno* ‘no one’) and presumably derives from Latin *nē*, the older form of negation in Latin (already used in Latin in items grammaticalized as negative indefinites; see Gianollo *forthcoming*), or the negative coordinator *nēc*. As pointed out by Mosegaard Hansen and Visconti (2009) *né mica* seems to be the older form, gradually substituted by the simple *mica*. This conclusion is based on the observation that the construction *non...né mica* is found in the 48% of the earlier examples they have considered (while *non...mica* is found in the 40%). In later texts *non...mica* prevails: it is found in the 63% of the examples, while *non...né mica* is found only in the 33% (and finally disappears after the XVI century). The two forms, however, seem to have a different distribution already in the earlier texts. In the corpus that I have considered, there are 40 instances of postverbal *mica* (16a) and 24 instances of postverbal *né mica* (16b) used in contexts where there is sentential negation.

- (16) a. La grandezza delle magioni non cessa mica la febbre,
 the largeness of-the houses not extinguishes not the fever
 secondo che Orazio dice. (*Tesoro volgarizzato*, 7.68)
 as Horace says
 ‘The large size of a home does not extinguish the fever, as Horace says.’
 b. Dio non ajuta nè mica per preghiera se l’opera
 God not helps not due to prayer if the=deed
 non seguita la prieganza. (*Trattato di virtù morali*, 17)
 not follows the prayer
 ‘God does not help due to a prayer if there is no deed following it.’

In all these cases there is a preverbal negation, like *non* or the negative coordination *né*. Furthermore, there is one case where postverbal *né mica* appears in a conditional environment, without a preverbal negation, which

is impossible with *mica* in Modern Italian.⁵ In any case, this is further evidence that at this stage this item was not inherently negative, even when it appeared with the *né* prefix.

- (17) se ‘1 prenze dell’oste di questo [...] dottasse né mica
 if=the prince of-the=army about this doubted not
 ch’elli non fusse leale... (*Reggimento de’ principi volgarizzato*, 3.3.11)
 that=he not was loyal
 ‘If the leader of the army had any doubt about the loyalty of this man...’

However, a different picture emerges if the preverbal space is considered. In the whole corpus that I have taken into exam there is no instance of preverbal *mica*, while there are 5 examples of preverbal *né mica*, as in (18):

- (18) a. ...che’ defecti né mica son ne le donne viçi.
 since flaws not are in the women vices
 ‘...since vices are not a flaw in women.’
 (Francesco da Barberino, *Documenti d’Amore*, 1.12)
- b. Federigo di Stuffo già né-mica par
 Frederick of Hohenstaufen already not seems
 che si celi... (Monte Andrea, *Rime*, tenz. 8, son. 1)
 that REFL=hides
 ‘It already seems that Frederick of Hohenstaufen is not hiding...’

This is a striking asymmetry considering that in Modern Italian and other Italo-Romance varieties *mica* can appear in preverbal position as the only marker of sentential negation. Even more interesting is the fact that in the corpus there are 17 cases of corrective structures (considered by Mosegaard Hansen and Visconti (2009) as the origin of the modern “presuppositional” meaning of *mica*) and all present either *né mica* or a complex form where *mica* is preceded by another negation (*non* or *no*):⁶

- (19) a. E qui s’intende di riso sfrenato e del continovato,
 and here IMPERS=mean of laugh uncontrolled and of-the continued
 non miga della faccia rallegare
 not not of-the face amuse
 ‘And here one means uncontrollable and persisting laugh, not just brightening.’
 (Francesco da Barberino, *Reggimento e costumi di donna*, 1.6)
- b. sopr’ un braccio del chiaro ruscelletto,
 over an arm of-the clear stream
 tese avean reti, e non miga in pantano.
 stretched had nets and not not in bog

⁵ It should be pointed out that a comparable problem arises with other n-words in Modern Italian. While some speakers accept cases, like those in (i), where a postverbal n-word is licensed by the conditional operator, other speakers consider similar examples ungrammatical and can use only existential quantifiers in these contexts:

- (i) a. Se succede niente, chiamami.
 if happens nothing call=me
 ‘If anything happens, call me.’
- b. Se vedi nessuno di sospetto chiamami.
 if see.2SG nobody of suspicious call=me
 ‘If you see anyone suspicious, call me.’

⁶ In (19) all examples display both the negated constituent and the corrective chunk. There are also cases where only the negated part is explicit, like in (i). Again, in all these cases the form of the negation is either *né mica* or *no(n) mica*.

- (i) extima tuoi valor’ non mica degni
 prize.IMP your merits not not worthy
 ‘Do not consider adequate your merits.’ (Francesco da Barberino, *Documenti d’Amore*, 8.1)

‘They stretched the nets over an arm of the clear stream, and not in a bog.’

(Boccaccio, *Caccia di Diana*, 8)

- c. quelli che vuole essere amato non dé essere
 that that wants be.INF loved not has-to be. INF
 né mica avaro, ma molto largo
 not mean but very prodigal
 ‘Who wants to be loved must be very prodigal, not mean.’
 (*Volgarizzamento del De Amore di Andrea Cappellano*, 1.13)

There are also a couple of cases where the form *né mica* is used as a negative focalizer, roughly corresponding to ‘not at all’, where the negated constituent is not contrasted but presented as an alternative:

- (20) dond’elleno sono meno vergognose e quasi né mica vergognose
 so=they are less shy and almost not-at-all shy
 ‘So that they are less shy or almost not shy at all.’
 (*Reggimento de’ principi volgarizzato*, 2.2.19)

As said in the methodological premise, I have not conducted a quantitative survey of the texts from the second half of the XIV century, but the tendency to have a complex form and not the simple *mica/miga* in corrective structures is very strong in later texts too.

- (21) Pensa e stima chi tu se’, e
 think.IMP and prize.IMP who you are and
 non mica dove tu fosti nato.
 not not where you were born
 ‘Think about and prize who you are, not the place where you were born.’
 (*Volgarizzamento della prima deca di Tito Livio*, 1.41)

The distribution of the different forms in Old Tuscan seems to be regulated by the same factors observed for the distribution of *mica* in Modern Italian, with an important difference. While even in the earlier texts the simple form *mica* is attested, it seems that it cannot be used before T. Similarly, it cannot be used as constituent negation unless it is preceded by another negation. The form *né mica* does not have these limitations. This state of things is represented in (22).

- (22) a. [non/né [T [(né) mica [VP]]]]
 b. [*(né) mica [T [VP]]]
 c. [*(né/non) mica [DP/PP/VP]]

Thus, it appears that in Old Tuscan it is the form *né mica* (or *non mica*) that has the same complete distribution of *mica* in Modern Italian. In the next section, building on this generalization I will propose an analysis for the development of the syntactic behavior of *mica* in Italian and, more in general, of its relation with the phenomena grouped under the label ‘Jespersen cycle’.

4. Discussion

I will assume that *mica* is a quantificational polar item which takes scope over events when it appears in a sentence structure. The structural counterpart of this intuition is assuming that the standard post-verbal position

of *mica* is an Existential projection.⁷ More precisely, given that it has to precede all aspectual adverbs, this ExistP is located in the functional spine of the sentence structure and immediately dominates an AspectP (b):⁸

- (23) a. Non ho mica ancora mangiato.
not have.1SG not yet eaten
'I have not eaten yet.'
- b. [non [T ho [Exist mica [Aspect ancora [VP mangiato]]]]]

This analysis is compatible with the standard cartographic theory of the split IP/TP layer (Cinque, 1999), where some of the Aspectual specifiers can accommodate quantificational items (like *tutto* 'everything' in one the two Completive projections).

In Old Tuscan varieties the standard postverbal position is the only one that allows the free alternation of the form *mica* and the complex form *né mica*. Observable optionality can be considered a possible indication of a change in grammar (Kroch, 1989). As said in the previous section Mosegaard Hansen and Visconti (2009) argue that *né mica* is the older form. This can also be confirmed by the fact that there are some cases of *né mica* used as a quantifier (24), while there are not comparable cases with the simple *mica*. From this point of view *né mica* is similar to other items derived from a negated minimizer grammaticalized as negative quantifiers (like Old Lombard *negota* 'nothing', from *ne(c) gutta(m)* 'not a drop').

- (24) ellino mettarebbero il loro reame in pericolo
they would.put.3PL the thei kingdom in danger
per piccola ragione o per **né mica**.
for small reason or for none
'they would put their kingdom in danger for a little reason or none at all.'
(*Reggimento de' principi volgarizzato*, 1.3.6)

In any case, at the earliest attested stage both *né mica* and *mica* can be found in the sentential ExistP projection. From a synchronic point of view, this alternation is reminiscent of similar alternations regarding the negative concord phenomenon. For instance, in some negative polarity contexts the direct object can be the bare item *cosa* 'thing', like in (25a-b), while in other cases *cosa* is paired to a negative quantifier, like in (25c).

- (25) a. ...né mai non dissi **cosa**
and-not never not said.1SG thing
che disinore fosse di mio zio
that shame was of my uncle
'I never said anything that could disgrace my uncle.' (Novellino, 65b)
- b. ...ma elli non ardirà di pensare **cosa**
but he not will-dare of thinking thing
che no la possa predicare in palese.
that not it=could.3SG teach in open
'...but he will not dare to think about anything that he could not openly teach.'

⁷ I use the label Existential only to indicate that *mica* is a type of quantifier operating on the event (similarly to *ever* in English). Minimizers (and NPIs) have been analyzed in different ways concerning their quantificational nature (see Espinal 2000 on this), but since in Old Tuscan the argumental use of (*né*) *mica* is very marginal and it is a sentential element, I do not treat here the problem of its quantificational category.

⁸ Manzini and Savoia (2002) have pointed out that in some Italo-Romance dialects aspectual adverbs can precede postverbal negations similar to Italian *mica*. This variation could derive from a parametrized difference regarding the syntactic category selected by ExistP, but it can also be seen as evidence that items like *mica* are always generated in the VP and moved only in some varieties (like Italian) to a functional position in the sentence structure. Given the interactions between these negations and arguments (triggering of genitive objects, etc.) the latter hypothesis seems more likely.

(*Fiori e vita di filosafi*)

- c. ... non temerai **neuna cosa** che induca la morte.
 not will-fear.2SG no thing that brings the death
 ‘You will not fear anything that brings death.’ (*Fiori e vita di filosafi*)

The alternation in (25) is parallel to the *mica/né mica* alternation described above, with the difference that in the case of *mica/né mica* the optional negative quantification is expressed by *né*. As discussed in the previous section, the likely origin of this *né* is the Latin negative coordination particle *nēc*, as straightforwardly shown by the fact that it is effectively homophonous with the Italian negative coordinator *né* ‘neither’. I will take this etymological clue as an indication that *né* lexicalizes a negative additive Focus feature in the functional structure of *mica*.

(26) [Focus *né* [Exist *mica*]]

A similar analysis has been developed by Franco *et al.* (2015) for negative focalizers like *neanche* or *nemmeno* ‘not even’, formed by *ne-* plus *anche* ‘too’ and *meno* ‘less’, with a slightly difference: while they argue in the case of *neanche* that *anche* is found in a Focus position and *ne-* lexicalizes a coordination feature (the projection is labelled ‘&P’), I would rather propose that *ne-* (like *né* in *né mica*) is always the lexicalization of the negative additive Focus feature. It is well known from the typological literature that coordination particles are often used as additive focalizers (see König, 1991, 63-64, who cites several cases⁹). In other words, negation cannot be expressed by the means of a neutral coordination, but can be derived from the semantic operation of negative addition, which is a type of Focus (see also Hendriks, 2004, on the idea that *either* and *neither* are not conjunctions but Focus particles). Furthermore, Old Tuscan displays many cases of *né* as the first item of a sentence even in contexts where there is no possible coordination interpretation. It is tempting to consider these instances of *né* as the negated counterpart of the coordinative particle *e* ‘and’ used as a pragmatic marker (see Poletto, 2014, 22-27, on this).

The next point of my proposal is to explain the free alternation of *mica* and *né mica* in the postverbal ExistP position on the basis of two different licensing configurations: in the case of *né mica*, I assume that the preverbal negation agrees with the negative additive Focus (following Giannakidou’s (1998) terminology, I call this case “anti-veridical” concord), while in the case of bare *mica* the preverbal negation can license the postverbal existential item like any other non-veridical operator.

- (27) a. [**non** [T [Focus **né** [Exist *mica* [VP]]]]] Anti-veridical concord
 b. [**non** [T [Exist **mica** [VP]]]] Non-veridical licensing

This analysis entails the idea that negation *per se* is not a grammatical feature, but can be considered a composite of different combined features, among which there are at least Focus and Existentiality (Poletto 2008). A further consequence of this proposal is that negative concord could be seen as a complex phenomenon, comprising different types of concord, involving different types of features. I do not concentrate here on the preverbal negation *non*, but it has been argued by Manzini and Savoia (2011, 128ff.) that in Italo-Romance (and possibly in the whole Romance domain) the preverbal negation patterns with NPIs from many points of view and, therefore, it is the counterpart in the clitic space in T of postverbal negations in the verb domain. For this reason I do not use the label NEG in the syntactic representation of sentential negation.

⁹ “In many languages, the same expression can be used in both functions, i.e. in the sense of English ‘also/too’ and in the sense of ‘and’. Examples are Lat. *et(iam)*, Gk. *kaí*, Russ. *i*, Norw. *og(så)*, Lezgian *-ni*, Manam *-be*, Zulu *na-*, Sesotho *le*, and Malayalam *-um*. This affinity may also show up in expressions of emphatic conjunction. English *both...and* corresponds to expressions whose literal translation is *too... too* in Amharic (*-mm...-m*), Turkish (*de...de*), Japanese (*mo...mo*), Mandarin (*ye...ye*), Hebrew and Kannada”.

Nevertheless, the idea that (*né*) *mica* is not negative is compatible also with a more standard analysis where preverbal *non* corresponds to the negative operator (as, for instance, in Zeijlstra's (2004) model).

When used in corrective constructions or in preverbal position, the only possibility for Old Tuscan *mica* is to display the morpheme *né* or the standard constituent negation *non*. In other words, when *mica* is not in the scope of the preverbal negation and the constituent negation *non* is not used (as in 28a), the negative additive Focus head must be lexicalized, providing a non-veridical environment for the licensing of the Existential polar feature of *mica* (28b). It can be argued that in cases like (28a), which is the structure I propose for examples like (19a) or (21), Focus is expressed by syntax (Merge of *mica* with negation) and not by morphology, but here I leave aside the relation between Focus and the standard negative marker *non*.

- (28) a. [*non* [Exist *mica* [T / DP / VP]]]
 b. [Focus *né* [Exist *mica* [T / DP / VP]]]

Consider now what happens in Modern Italian. As discussed above, the form *né mica* is absent in Modern Italian. From the point of view of the internal morpho-syntax of *mica* this development can be interpreted as a raising in the morpho-syntactic functional spine, a process involved in grammaticalization, as proposed by Roberts and Roussou (2003). So, the diachronic change consists in a different lexicalization, where *mica* surfaces in the Focus position in the internal functional layer:

- (29) [Focus *mica* [Exist ~~*mica*~~]]

This explains why *mica* appears in Focus positions in the sentence structure (and in elliptical structures) and why in such case it does not need to be licensed by a separate constituent negation or by a morpheme like *né*. Compare (30) with (23).

- (30) a. Mica ho mangiato.
 not have.1SG eaten
 'I have not eaten.'
 b. [Focus [Focus *mica*] [T *ho* [Exist ~~*mica*~~ [VP *mangiato*]]]]

I leave open the problem of deciding if *mica* is generated in the postverbal space and then moved to the left periphery in examples like (30a), as represented in (30b), where it is moved through feature attraction, or is directly inserted in the surface position. However, in the case of elliptical chunks, if *mica* is analyzed as always generated under T, it must be argued that this type of ellipsis allows the PF cancellation of the base position of moved items (see van Craenenbroeck 2004 about two different types of sentential ellipsis). On the other hand, given that preverbal *mica* cannot license postverbal NPI adverbs like *ancora* 'yet', it can be assumed that it is not generated in [ExistP] but rather inside or at the edge of the verbal lexical layer.

The data I have considered in this article are empirically very interesting for the understanding of the Jespersen cycle. Minimizers are one of the main sources for new negative markers and at a first glance the evolution of *mica* could be seen as a prototypical case of the Jespersen cycle. However, it cannot be argued that *mica* has become inherently negative in Modern Italian, as it can appear in non-negative contexts like questions. Even more interestingly, cases where it seems to behave as a true negation (preverbal position, constituent negation in ellipsis) are already attested in Old Tuscan texts, where, however, it must be preceded by another constituent negation, or display the morpheme *né*, which I argued to be a marker of negative additive Focus. So, summarizing, what has changed in the history of *mica* is not the interpretability of a [Neg] feature, but the lexicalization properties of a Focus component present in the semantics of negative constructions. This idea has some consequences for the analysis of the Jespersen cycle in general.

A first element to point out is that items like *mica* change their position independently from the expression of the negative feature. I have argued that both in Old and Modern Italian *mica* is normally found in postverbal position, but it can be optionally moved to the preverbal space, and that this option is not linked to negative semantics *per se*. A similar development can be assumed for varieties like the Southern Italian dialect of Rionero in Vulture: here *manco* (in origin a focalizer meaning ‘not even’), has become obligatorily preverbal without a doubling stage and is now the standard negation. It can also license a postverbal emphatic negation similar to *mica*:

- (31) Mankə hai mica vistə i mii amicə? (Garzonio and Poletto, 2014, ex. 29)
 not have.2SG not seen the my friends
 ‘You have not seen my friends by chance, have you?’

Similar facts strongly suggest that a “NegP free” approach is preferable for a formal analysis of the Jespersen cycle, as proposed by Breitbarth (2014).¹⁰ In particular, it appears that the surface position of a negation correlates with other features, like Focus in the case discussed here.

Furthermore, the diachronic development of the distribution of *mica* is clearly related to the loss of the morpheme *né*. In this case, it seems that there is a cycle regarding the morphosyntactic expression of the semantic components of (emphatic) negation. This process, which is similar and is related to the standard Jespersen cycle, but is something different, can be observed in other cases, like in the development of the Latin preverbal negation *non* (from an unattested *ne oinom* ‘not a single one’), or the Modern Greek *den*, from Classical Greek *u de hen* ‘not even one’ (Willmott, 2013). In general, there is a link between the internal morphosyntax of these items and their surface position in the clause structure, which again suggests that this position is not exclusively dedicated to the expression of negation or polarity.

Finally, even if there are some attestations in Old Tuscan of *né mica* as a negative quantifier, like in (24), this possibility has been lost: in the case of *mica* the grammaticalization process has begun when there was already an alternation between forms with and without the morpheme *né*. So, it seems that, differently from other cases of postverbal negations developed from negative quantifiers (like English *not* or Piedmontese *nen*), the formation of a negative quantifier is not a key step of the cycle and, on the contrary, appears to be completely secondary.

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¹⁰ “Under an analysis without a functional projection NegP, the locus of cross-linguistic or historical variation in the expression of negation lies in the morphosyntactic properties of individual lexical items, not in the position, structure, or availability of a functional projection NegP” (Breitbarth, 2014, 127).

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