Short negative replies in Spanish

Luis Vicente

Leiden University

1.   Introduction

A short negative reply (also called a negative fragment) is a reply consisting of just negation and a remnant XP.[1] This construction has two variants in Spanish, which I will refer to as [*XP no*] and [*no XP*] replies –(1b) and (1c), respectively.

(1)   a.   Who did you go to the movies with?
      b.   Con Clara no   c.   No con Clara
            with C   not   not with C

The two types are not equivalent as answers to questions: while the [*XP no*] type can be considered the unmarked one, the [*no XP*] type typically has a corrective feel to it. I discuss this difference in section 2, where I argue it can be reduced to the topic/focus status of the remnant XP. After this, I turn to the syntactic derivation. I will argue that both types of replies stem from an underlying full clause that undergoes PF deletion. In addition, I will suggest that, in certain contexts, the [*no XP*] type can be given an alternative, non-elliptical derivation. The rather interesting conclusion is that "constituent negation" is not a unified construction (cf. Etxepare n.d., who reaches the same conclusion on independent grounds). Rather, the exact structure of [*no XP*] fragments depends on the finer properties of the string in question.

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[1] A word of clarification: throughout this article, the phrase "remnant XP" is used in the sense of "remnant of ellipsis". It is not intended to refer to remnant movement in any way.

2.   The meaning of the remnants

2.1. The discourse status of negative fragments

Erteschik-Shir (1998:III) points out that negative replies (whether short or not) require a context. To exemplify, suppose that a friend calls me asking (2a). In this situation, (2b) and (2c) are not felicitous answers, unless it has been previously established in the discourse that Match Point is one of the films showing tonight. If no such context exists, speakers must accommodate it.

(2) a.   Which film do you want to see tonight?
     b. (#) Match Point no
            M   P   not
     c. (#) No   Match Point
            not   M   P

Now, the two types of replies relate to the discourse background in different ways. The [*XP no*] type (2b) simply removes Match Point from the set of possible answers to the question. In contrast, the [*no XP*] type (2c) is used correctively, denying a previous (maybe implicit) assertion that Match Point is the film I want to see.[2]

What I want to propose is that this difference is a consequence of the focus/topic status of the remnant XP. In particular, the hypothesis I defend is that the remnant XP sits in a (contrastive) focus position in [*no XP*] replies.[3] Getting back to the example in (2), the relevant proposition is "I want to see x tonight", where x is a variable ranging over films. Any previous assertion (whether implicit or not) would select a specific value for the variable –in this case, Match Point. What I've described is, essentially, a process of focus assignment: given a proposition with a variable, select from the focus domain the one value that will yield a true proposition. Given this, what the negative reply does is to deny the particular value chosen as focus. From this reasoning, it follows that [*XP no*] replies involve a focus structure, and that they should be used correctively. From this, we can also understand the preference to include an overt correction (in the form of a *but* phrase) in [*no XP*] replies.

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[2] Some variation seems to exist here. An anonymous reviewer finds (2c) highly infelicitous unless the assertion is *explicitly* included in the immediately previous discourse. I don't share this judgement, since I can accept an implicit assertion. I suggest this is due to idiolectal differences on how easily context accommodation is allowed to happen.
[3] Etxepare (n.d.) has also reached the same conclusion on independent grounds.

In contrast, in [*XP no*] replies, the remnant XP surfaces in a topic position.[4] In this case, no previous assertion is made, so the remnant XP doesn't acquire a focus status. It simply remains as a topic, and therefore it doesn't result in a corrective reading (note that this doesn't mean that it cannot be contrasted with other possible answers). From this reasoning one can also derive the fact that [*XP no*] replies are the unmarked case, since its distribution restrictions are less stringent than those of [*no XP*] replies. The latter not only needs to be part of the discourse background, it also requires an assertion.

In what follows, I will present some extra asymmetries that provide empirical support for the topic/focus division outlined above.

2.2. *Existential presuppositions*

An intriguing asymmetry between [*XP no*] and [*no XP*] replies (not discussed elsewhere in the literature) is that the latter give rise to an existential presupposition with respect to the remnant XP, whereas the former don't. Example (3b) is compatible with a situation in which nobody went to the movies with me, as evidenced by the felicity of the continuation. In contrast, the same continuation is odd with the [*no XP*] reply in (3c), since this type of reply entails that someone went with me –it's just that it wasn't Clara.

(3) a.   Who did you go to the movies with?
     b.   Con Clara no ✓ De hecho,   fui solo
           with C   not   as a matter of fact I went on my own
     c.   No con Clara # De hecho,   fui solo
           not with C   as a matter of fact I went on my own

Interestingly, the same effect shows up in full replies with a focalised constituent. Crucially, it is not triggered by topics.

(4) a.   [FOC CON CLARA] no fui al   cine
                 with C   not went to.the movies
        # De hecho,   no fui con nadie
           as a matter of fact I didn't go with anybody at all
     b.   [TOP con Clara], no fui al   cine
                 with C   not went to.the movies
        ✓ De hecho,   no fui con nadie
           as a matter of fact I didn't go with anybody at all

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[4] This is also evidenced by the fact that [*XP no*] replies have the prototypical comma intonation (H-L) of topics. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

Pseudoclefts, which also have a focus structure, give rise to the same presuppositional effect.

(5)   CLARA es con quien no fui   al   cine
        C   is   with who   not went to.the movies
    # De hecho,   no fui con nadie
        as a matter of fact I didn't go with anybody at all

On the basis of these parallelisms, I propose that the post-negation position in negative short replies is a focus position, whereas the pre-negation position is a topic position.

2.3. Exhaustivity

Focalisation is usually associated with an exhaustive interpretation, whereas topicalisation is not.[5] Consequently, we can expect [*no XP*] replies to be interpreted exhaustively, as opposed to [*XP no*] replies. This seems to be correct. Consider the following examples.

(6)   a.   All three of María, Clara, and Susana said they would come to the
            party. But, in the end, which of them came?
      b.   María no   c. No María
            M   not   not M

In (6b), there is no implicature about whether Clara and Susana came. It is simply left as an open point. This is, however, not so in (6c), where there is a strong preference for an interpretation in which Susana and Clara did come to the party, i.e., María is interpreted as the exhaustive set of people who didn't come. This is expected if it is sitting in a focus position.[6]

2.4. Association with focus

The conclusion above is supported by the data below. As can be seen, [*no XP*] orders allow association with the focus particles *even*. This particle is degraded in [*XP no*] replies.

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[5] Thanks to Hedde Zeijlstra for suggesting this test.
[6] To my ear, it is marginally possible to get a non-exhaustive interpretation of (6c). This is not necessarily a problem, since the same effect arises in non-elliptical sentences. Thus, for me (i) is preferably interpreted as exhaustive, but can marginally have a non-exhaustive reading.
        (i)   [FOC MARÍA] no vino   a la fiesta
                      M   not came.3SG to the party

(7) a.   Who did you go to the movies with?
     b. *? Incluso con Clara no
            even   with C   not
     c.   Ni   siquiera con Clara
            not   even   with C

Unexpectedly, the correlation doesn't hold totally: the focus particle *sólo* 'only' is quite acceptable in both orders. At present, I have no way of accounting for the grammaticality of (8c), so I will leave it for future research.

(8) a.   Who did you go to the movies with?
     b. ?? Sólo con Clara no
            only with C   not
     c.   No sólo con Clara
            not only with C

2.5. Interim conclusion

We have seen that it is quite reasonable to treat the difference between both types of replies in terms of the topic/focus status of the remnant XP (notwithstanding example 8c). In the remainder of the paper, I concentrate on the syntactic derivation of negative fragments.

3.   Negative short replies stem from a full sentence

The main thesis I want to defend in what follows is that both types of replies are underlyingly full clauses that undergo PF deletion.[7] This point is evidenced by the connectivity test developed by Morgan (1973) and Merchant (2004).[8] In the replies in (9), we can see that anaphors can be properly bound. If these examples had no hidden structure, it would be necessary to amend binding theory so that it could apply across utterances in the case of short replies, but not otherwise. In contrast, if short replies contain a silent representation of the binder, no such modifications are necessary. The same effect is shown in (10) through (12) for conditions B and C and for variable binding.

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[7] Contrary to the analyses in Bosque (1984), Brucart (1987), and López (1999) who argue that short replies (whether negative or not) have no hidden structure.
[8] One anonymous reviewer suggests that the connectivity effects could be analysed through LF copying (cf. Chung et al 1995) rather than PF deletion. I refer the reader to Merchant (2001, 2004) for various arguments against Chung et al's analysis.

(9) a.   ¿De quién se ha reido   Juanᵢ?
           of   who   SE has laughed J
     b.   De sí mismoᵢ   no   c.   No de sí mismoᵢ
           of himself   not   not of himself

(10) a.   ¿De quién se ha reido   Juanᵢ?
           of   who   SE has laughed J
     b. * De élᵢ   no   c. * No de élᵢ
           of him not   not of him

(11) a.   ¿De quién se ha reido   Juanᵢ?
           of   who   SE has laughed J
     b. * De Juanᵢ no   c. * No de Juanᵢ
           of J   not   not of J

(12) a.   ¿De quién se ha reido   todoᵢ hombre?
           of   who   SE has laughed every man
     b.   De suᵢ mujer no   c.   No de suᵢ mujer
           of his wife not   not of his wife

Negation may also interact with other unpronounced quantificational elements, such as modals.[9]

(13) a.   ¿Con quién debe   casarse   Juan?
           with who   must.3SG get.married J
     b.   Con María no   c.   No con María
           with M   not   not with M
           [∀ > ¬ / ? ¬ > ∀]   [∀ > ¬ / ? ¬ > ∀]

Merchant's analysis of bare short replies involves left dislocation of the remnant of ellipsis prior to IP deletion, as in (14). This analysis, however, cannot be extended to negative short replies in a straightforward way. They main difficulty is that negation and the remnant XP don't form a constituent in the full reply (15), hence they cannot be moved together to the left edge of the clause. They need to reach that position independently of each other.

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[9] Note that the corresponding full negative sentences show the same pattern, i.e., mostly ambiguous but with a preference for the [∀ > ¬] reading.
    i)   Juan no debe   casarse   con María [∀ > ¬ / ? ¬ > ∀]
          J   not must.2SG get.married with M

(14) a.   What did you drink at the party? - Beer
     b.   Beer [IP I drank t]

(15) a.   What did you drink at the party?
     b.   **No**   bebí   **cerveza**
           not   drank.1SG beer

It is possible, nonetheless, to have negation and the remnant XP together as a constituent provided that they both receive heavy stress and they are contrasted with something else.

(16) a.   What did you drink at the party?
     b. ? Bebí   NO   CERVEZA * (sino vino)
           drank.1SG not beer   but wine

In fact, Depiante (2000:IV) assumes that all [*no XP*] replies arise from a structure like (16b). Given that negation and the remnant XP form a constituent here, it is straightforward to move them to the left edge of the clause prior to ellipsis. While this might actually be the correct structure underlying some short replies, it cannot be universally valid. For one, it cannot cover the following examples, which can be interpreted with negation and the remnant XP originating from different clauses.[10]

(17) a.   Which team has Juan predicted is going to win the championship?
     b.   ¡Espero   que no el Madrid!
            hope.1SG that not the M
            [= I hope that he hasn't predicted that Real Madrid is going to win]

(18) a.   Which countries has Juan said that he wants to go to on holiday?
     b.   Muchos, pero no Suecia
            several   but not Sweden
            [= he didn't say he wants to go to Sweden]

Depiante's analysis can't account either for Etxepare's (n.d.) observation that sentential adverbs may intervene between negation and the remnant XP.

(19) a.   ¿A quién le   gusta el mal vino?
   to who   CL.DAT likes the bad wine

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[10] Note that, to avoid interferences, I am not using neg-raising verbs here (thanks to Ton van der Wouden and Hedde Zeijlstra for pointing this out to me). Thus, *not predict that P* is not equivalent to *predict that not P*, and *not say that P* is not equivalent to *say that not P*.

b.   No   por lo visto / afortunadamente a   todo el mundo
     not   apparently   fortunately   to everybody

We conclude that Depiante's analysis, although initially appealing, cannot be extended to the cases discussed here. What is needed is an analysis in which negation and the remnant XP do not end up forming a constituent.

4.   The analysis

In a nutshell, the structure I want to propose for negative short replies is the following. The remnant XP move to the topic or focus positions, as appropriate (see above) and then TP-ellipsis (marked with the curved line) applies.[11]

(20)   TopP*

        topic   ΣP

                 no   FocP

                       focus   TP
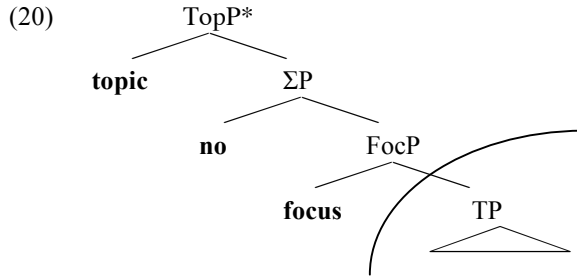
ΣP is the category proposed by Laka (1990) to accommodate polarity-related material. This choice is motivated by the fact that *no* can be substituted by the affirmative marker *sí* 'yes', as in (21).[12] The interpretation of such examples is

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[11] An anonymous reviewer points out that, given this derivation, one can overgenerate ungrammatical non-elliptical counterparts of [*no XP*] fragments. Compare (1b) to (i).

    i) * No con María fui   al   cine
          not with M   went.1SG to.the movies

The reviewer suggests that (i) constitutes evidence against placing *no* in ΣP –instead, he seems to suggest a Depiante-style analysis. I appreciate the problem (which for the time being I can only solve by stipulating that ellipsis is required to apply in the structure in 20), but I believe it is independent of the specifics of my analysis. For one, examples like (17), (18), and (19) lack a grammatical non-elliptical counterpart, independently of where one wishes to generate negation. The same point was made by Morgan (1973:738-739), who noted the lack of a source for the negative fragment in (ii). This is an issue I must relegate to future research.

    ii)   Who did Martha talk to? – Not Kissinger
    iii) * Martha talked to not Kissinger
    iv) * Not Kissinger Martha talked to

[12] Thanks to Jakub Dotlačil for raising this point.

parallel to English VP ellipsis. Affirmative replies differ from their negative counterparts in various aspects (e.g., the very limited availability of [*sí XP*] orders). Due to space constraints, I won't say anything else about this subtype of replies, though interested readers are referred to Vicente (in progress) for some extra discussion.

(21) a.   Apparently, no student has managed to pass the exam
     b.   Juan sí
           J   yes
           "Juan has (managed to pass the exam)"

In (20), I have assumed, without discussion or argument, that negation is base generated straight in Σ, rather than being raised from below. In Vicente (in progress), I attempt to provide an answer on the basis of the interaction of negation with other quantificational elements (in particular, *muchos* 'many', *todos* 'all', and *deber* 'circumstantial must'). The evidence is conflicting. While the scope data of *muchos* and *todos* seem to favour a base generation analysis of negation, the scope possibilities of *deber* point in the opposite direction. However, sentences with multiple quantifiers are difficult to judge, and I must leave this issue open until I clearer data are available.

    To close off this section, I want to point out that this analysis can account for the fact that NPIs can*not* (somewhat surprisingly) appear in negative replies. This is shown in (22).[13] I would like to suggest that this is due to the general impossibility in Spanish of combining sentential negation with a left dislocated NPI –cf. (23b). If the remnant XPs have moved to the left periphery in (22), it is expected they will prevent the use of *no*, in the same way as (23b).

(22) a.   What has Juan read?
     b. * Ningún libro no   c. * No ningún libro
        any   book not   not any   book
     d. ✓ Ningún libro
        any   book

(23) a.   Juan *(no) ha leido ningún libro
        J   not has read any   book
     b.   [NINGÚN LIBRO] (*no) ha leido Juan
         any   book   not has read J

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[13] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

5.   Some thoughts on constituent negation

My analysis, as sketched above, assumes that all [*no XP*] replies have the same
underlying derivation, i.e., with negation and the remnant XP originating as
separate constituents. The question is whether this analysis can cover all cases.
Recall from section 3 that Depiante (1999) had proposed that, in [*no XP*] replies,
the whole [*no XP*] string originated as a constituent. While this analysis cannot
be universally correct, as shown through the examples in (17) and (18), it might
actually be adequate for some cases. Consider the following examples.

(24) a.   Dijiste   que ibas a ir   al cine   con María
           said.2SG that were going to the movies with M
           (y)   no con Clara
           and   not with C
           [≠ you didn't say that you were going with Clara]
      b.   Dijiste   que ibas a ir   al cine   con María,
           said.2SG that were going to the movies with M
           pero no   con Clara
           but   not with C
           [= you didn't say that you were going with Clara]

(25) a. * Dijiste   que ibas a ir   al cine   con María,
           said.2SG that were going to the movies with M
           (y)   con Clara no
            and with C   not
      b.   Dijiste   que ibas a ir   al cine   con María,
           said.2SG that were going to the movies with M
           pero con Clara no
           but   with C   not

These examples show the effects of adding a contrastive negative fragment to a
full sentence. If the fragment is joined using either *y* 'and', or nothing at all
(24a), the high reading of negation is impossible. This reading, however,
surfaces again if the fragment is joined with *pero* 'but' (24b). On top of that, in
the first case it is ungrammatical to have an [*XP no*] order (25a), whereas this is
possible in fragments with *pero* (25b).

So, suppose there is a possibility of adjoining negation to any given
constituent and then using it as a fragment (as Depiante proposes) is generally
available. Then, it could be the case that *no XP* fragments can be formed in two
ways, i.e., Depiante-style and in the way I have proposed in section 4. The (a)
examples above would exemplify the former type of derivation. Bear in mind

that both the high reading of negation and [*XP no*] orders require the availability of left-peripheral positions that the remnant XP can move to. Therefore, the properties observed in (24a) and (25a) follow if these fragments consist just of negation merged directly to the remnant. Since they contain no left peripheral positions, there is no way to derive high readings of negation or [*XP no*] orders. I remain agnostic as to whether negation is adjoined to or takes the remnant as its complement.

(26)

XP

no   PP

con Clara
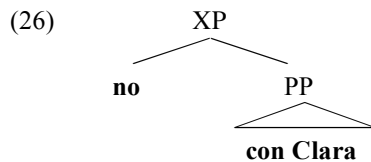
In contrast, the examples in (24b) and (24b) conform to the structure and analysis I proposed in section 4. The obvious question at this point is why it is the case that fragments joined with *y* 'and' or with nothing at all force the analysis in (26), but those joined with *pero* 'but' don't. The behaviour of *pero* is expected, since it usually can only be used to conjoin clauses,[14] but the behaviour of *y* is unexpected. It can coordinate constituents of any category, so one would expect examples like (24a) and (25a) to be ambiguous between DP and CP coordination. At this point, I have nothing interesting to offer in this respect.[15]

The discussion in this section points to what I believe is a quite intriguing conclusion, namely, that "constituent negation" is not a unified construction. Rather, the exact analysis of [*no XP*] sequences is dependent on finer properties of the strings themselves. This is not a standard assumption in the literature, but, interestingly, it is the same conclusion that Etxepare (n.d.) reaches on totally independent grounds.

I want to finish with some examples that show that the syntax of constituent negation and negative fragments might plausibly be even more complex than I have suggested. As (27) shows, it is not necessary that a negative fragment be
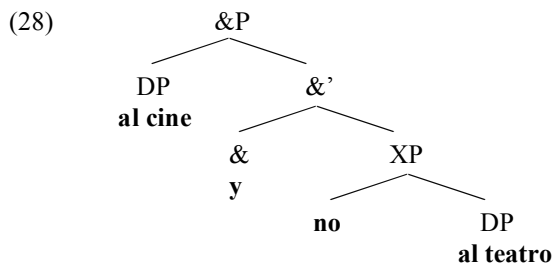
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[14] The syntax of *but* still remains largely obscure, even in studies on coordination. The statement that it can only conjoin clauses is only a strong tendency, not an absolute, as implied by the existence of examples like *a short but interesting book*. Caroline Heycock (p.c.) also points out *I talked to three boys but (to) seven girls*, which contrasts with **I talked to boys but (to) girls* (and which further contrasts with the grammatical *I didn't talk to boys but (to) girls*, provided by Mark de Vos, p.c.).

[15] Hedde Zeijlstra (p.c.) proposes that the possibility of *y* coordinating two CPs in this construction might be excluded pragmatically, i.e., by Grice's Maxim of Manner (avoid ambiguity). Another possibility is that *y* always coordinates the smallest possible constituents. For reasons of space, though, I cannot explore these hypotheses any further.

adjacent to its correlate, even in cases of non-elliptical second conjuncts (note that in this case, the correlate must bear focal stress, so as to identify is as such).

(27) Juan ha   ido AL CINE   con María, (y) no al   teatro
     J   has gone to the movies with M   and not to the theatre

It is tempting to try and analyse (27) as a case of extraposition, with *(y) no al teatro* '(and) not to the theatre' moving rightwards. However, since there is a conjunction present, it seems plausible to start off with a coordinate structure, as in (28). However, since this would require movement of a conjunct out of a coordinate structure, it would amount to a violation of the Coordinate Structure Constraint.

(28)

```
              &P
         ┌────┴────┐
        DP        &'
      al cine   ┌──┴────┐
               &        XP
               y    ┌───┴───┐
                   no      DP
                        al teatro
```

The obvious solution seems to be to assume a larger structure for the fragment, which also undergoes ellipsis.

(29) Juan ha   ido [[AL CINE   con María],
     J   has gone   to the movies with M
     (y) [no al   teatro ~~con María~~]]
     and not to the theatre with M

However, since the correlate of the fragment can itself be dislocated as well, that would force us into larger and larger ellipses within the fragment. Since at a certain point we would have to start resorting to dislocation of the remnant XP, this suggests that constituent negation as well can derive from two sources.

(30) [[AL CINE   ha dicho Juan que ha ido   con María]
        to the movies has said J   that has gone with M
      [(y) no   al   teatro [~~ha dicho Juan que ha ido~~ *t* ~~con María~~]]]
        and not to the theatre has said J   that has gone   with M

And so on, to infinity and beyond…

Acknowledgements

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