Negative Concord in Afrikaans: filling the typological gap

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1. Introduction

This paper is concerned with Negative Concord (NC), i.e. the phenomenon in terms of which not every morphosyntactically negative element corresponds to a semantic negation. It has long been noted that there appear to be different types of NC languages. Thus Giannakidou (2000), for example, distinguishes Strict NC from Non-strict NC languages on the basis of the obligatoriness (Strict NC) or otherwise (Non-strict NC) of the concord marker. In this paper, we reconsider the typology of NC languages, taking Zeijlstra's (2004 *et seq.*) semantic analysis of negation systems as our point of departure. This analysis leads us to expect a type of NC system which has not previously been identified, but which we show to be instantiated by a particular variety of Afrikaans, namely the conservative spoken standard. The paper is structured as follows: section 2 introduces the relevant theoretical background and also the typological gap which forms the central focus of the paper; section 3 presents the Afrikaans negation facts; section 4 focuses on the analysis of these facts; finally, section 5 concludes by summarising the main implications of the empirical facts and their analysis.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 The typology of Double Negation and Negative Concord languages

So-called *Double Negation* (*DN*) languages, in which every morphosyntactically negative element corresponds to a semantic negation, are traditionally distinguished from so-called *Negative Concord* (*NC*) languages, in which this is not the case. The distinction is illustrated here on the basis of Dutch (DN) and Romanian (NC):

(1) a. *Niemand* heeft *niets* gezegd — Dutch
n-body has n-thing said
DN: 'Nobody said nothing', i.e. everyone said something

b. Ik heb *niet niemand* gezien
I have NEG n-body seen
DN: 'I haven't seen nobody', i.e. I did see someone

(2) a. Ion *nu* suna pe *nimeni* — Romanian
Ion NEG calls to n-body
NC: 'Ion doesn't call anybody'

b. *Nimeni nu* suna
n-body NEG calls
'Nobody calls'

Since Giannakidou (2000), it has often been argued that NC languages can be further subdivided into Strict and Non-strict NC languages. In Strict NC languages, every negative indefinite (henceforth: *n-word*, following Laka 1990) must be accompanied by a negative marker, regardless of its clausal position; otherwise the sentence is rendered ungrammatical. This is illustrated in (3) for Czech:

(3) a. Milan *(*ne*)vidi *nikoho* — Czech
Milan NEG.saw n-body — (Strict NC)
'Milan didn't see anybody'

b. Dnes *(*ne*)volá *nikdo*
today NEG.calls n-body
'Today nobody calls'

c. Dnes *nikdo* *(*ne*)volá
today n-body NEG.calls
'Today nobody calls'

In Non-strict NC languages, by contrast, only postverbal n-words must be accompanied by the negative marker; preverbal n-words are not allowed to combine with the negative marker. This is shown in (4):

(4) a. Gianni *(*non*) ha telefonato a *nessuno* — Italian
Gianni NEG has called to n-body — (Non-strict NC)
'Gianni didn't call anybody'

b. Ieri *(*non*) ha telefonato *nessuno*
Yesterday NEG has called n-body
'Yesterday nobody called'

c. Ieri *nessuno* (**non*) ha telefonato (a *nessuno*)
yesterday n-body NEG has called to n-body
'Yesterday nobody called anybody'

Against this background, Zeijlstra (2004, 2008a,b) proposes a semantic analysis of NC, which rests on the following core assumptions:

a. n-words carry a feature [uNEG] that needs to be checked against a c-commanding/higher negative operator that carries [iNEG], i.e. n-words themselves are semantically non-negative;
b. negation must be overtly marked at the vP boundary or higher;
c. if no overt element carrying [iNEG] is responsible for the feature-checking of the n-words' [uNEG] features, then an abstract [iNEG]-bearing negative operator is assumed to be present, immediately dominating all the [uNeg] elements within a particular syntactic domain (clause/island) (this follows an idea dating back to Ladusaw 1992)

In terms of this analysis, the difference between Strict and Non-strict NC languages thus reduces to the interpretability of the feature carried by the negative marker: in Non-strict NC languages, the negative marker carries [iNEG], whereas in Strict NC languages, it carries [uNEG]. This accounts for the fact that no n-word in Non-strict NC languages may establish an NC relation with a structurally lower negative marker (i,e. an element carrying [iNEG]): in accordance with assumption (a) above, the [iNEG]-carrying element can only check [uNEG] features if it c-commands them, which is not the case in examples such as (4c) above. In Strict NC languages, by contrast, no such restriction holds as none of the overt morphosyntactically negative elements carry [iNEG]; an abstract negative operator must therefore always be inserted on top of the highest element carrying [uNEG], regardless of whether it is an n-word or a negative marker (cf. assumption (c) above), with the result that the pre- or postverbal placement of n-words will not play any role in determining the realisation of the negative marker. The relevant differences are illustrated in (5-7) for Italian (Non-strict NC) and in (8-9) for Czech (Strict NC):

(5) [TP Gianni *non*[iNEG] ha telefonato a *nessuno*[~~uNEG~~]] Italian

(6) [TP *Op*¬[iNEG] nessuno [~~uNEG~~] ha telefonato a *nessuno*[~~uNEG~~]] Italian

(7) *[TP *Nessuno*[uNEG] *non*[iNEG] ha telefonato a *nessuno*[~~uNEG~~]] Italian

(8) [TP *Op*¬[iNEG] *nikdo*[~~uNEG~~] *ne*[~~uNEG~~]-volá] Czech

(9) [TP *Op*¬[iNEG] *ne* [~~uNEG~~]-volá *nikdo* [~~uNEG~~]] Czech

For Zeijlstra, then, the difference between DN and NC languages depends on the semantic value of n-words, and the difference between Strict and Non-strict NC languages is dependent on the semantic value of the negative marker. However, a typological gap now arises, as diagrammed in (10):

(10)

	N-words semantically negative	N-words semantically non-negative
Negative markers semantically negative	DN-languages: *Dutch, German, Swedish*	Non-strict NC languages: *Spanish, Italian, Portuguese*
Negative markers semantically non-negative		Strict NC languages: *Czech, Serbo-Croatian, Greek*

As (10) shows, Zeijlstra's feature-based analysis of previously identified negation systems (i.e. DN and NC systems) raises the question of whether a previously unidentified fourth type, where n-words carry [iNEG] and negative markers carry [uNEG], exists. We pursue this question in the following section.

3. In search of the missing language(s): a closer look at Afrikaans

In this section, we consider the properties of Afrikaans negation. Firstly, we demonstrate that there are two varieties of Afrikaans, which differ in respect of their expression of negation. Thereafter, we show that one of these varieties exactly meets the criteria that characterise the missing third type of negative system.

3.1 Negation in Afrikaans

Afrikaans negation has the oft-noted property that every negative sentence, regardless of whether it contains an n-word or a negative marker, ends with the (extra) negative marker *nie* (cf. Waher 1978, den Besten 1986, Robbers 1992, Oosthuizen 1998, Biberauer 2007, 2008a,b for discussion). This is illustrated below:

(11) Hy is *nie* moeg *nie*
he is NEG tired NEG
'He is not tired'

(12) Hy is *nooit* moeg *nie*
he is never tired NEG
'He is never tired'

In principle, then, Afrikaans negative sentences consist either of an n-word and a negative marker or of a combination of two negative markers. The only exception to this generalisation arises where two negative markers are spelled out adjacent to one another in the same prosodic domain; in this scenario, only one *nie* survives (see Biberauer 2007, 2008a for arguments that this scenario involves a real instance of haplology):

(13) a. Hy kom *nie* (**nie*)
he come NEG NEG
'He isn't coming'

b. Wat verstaan hy hoegenaamd *nie* (**nie*)?
what understand he absolutely NEG NEG
'What does he absolutely not understand?'

An aspect of Afrikaans negation that has not previously been noted in the literature is that there in fact appear to be two distinct varieties of this language, which differ in respect of the way in which they express negation. The properties of these varieties are the focus of the following section.

3.2 Variation in Afrikaans negation

For ease of reference, we will refer to the systems under consideration here as *Variety A* and *Variety B*. Both varieties are presently spoken in South Africa, although Variety A, which corresponds to a conservative variety of the spoken language, is losing ground to Variety B, which incorporates various prescriptively proscribed properties and is particularly common among younger speakers. Varieties A and B differ in two major respects, which we will now consider in turn.

Firstly, two n-words always yield a DN reading in Variety A. This is shown in (14):

(14) *Niemand* het *niks* gekoop *nie*
n-body has n-thing bought NEG
DN: 'No-one had bought nothing', i.e. 'Everyone bought something'

In Variety B, by contrast, multiple n-words can yield both DN and NC readings (cf. van Gass 2007, Biberauer 2008b). This is shown in (15):

(15) *Niemand* het *niks* gekoop *nie*
n-body has n-thing bought NEG
NC: 'No-one had bought anything'

Secondly, in Variety A, a negative marker *nie* may only follow an n-word if the n-word is sentence-final, as in (16), or it constitutes a fragmentary answer, as in (17); as shown in (18), it may not do so sentence-internally:

(16) Hier slaap *niemand nie*
here sleeps n-body NEG
'Nobody sleeps here'

(17) Wie het my boek gesien? *Niemand* (*nie*)
who has my book seen? n-body NEG
'Who saw my book? No-one'

(18) a. *Niemand (*nie)* het die werk voltooi *nie*
n-body NEG has the work finished NEG
'Nobody has finished the work'

b. Ek het *niemand (*nie)* gesien *nie*
I have no-one NEG seen NEG
'I saw no-one'

Like Variety A, Variety B permits both (16)- and (17)-type structures; unlike Variety A, however, it also allows *nie* to occur finally in many phrases containing an n-word, mostly leading to an emphatic effect. This is illustrated in (19-20):

(19) [*Niemand nie*] het die werk voltooi *nie*
n-body NEG has the work finished NEG
'NOBODY has finished the work'

(20) *Geen/* [*nie een van die studente nie*] het die werk voltooi *nie*
no / NEG one of the students NEG has the work finished NEG
'NONE/Not ONE of the students finished the work'

Having outlined the distinctive properties of the two varieties of Afrikaans under consideration here, we turn to the analysis of these facts.

4. Proposed analysis

In this section, we will argue that:
a. Variety A represents an instance of the missing type of negation system highlighted in (10) above, i.e. one in which all n-words carry [iNEG], while the negative marker carries [uNEG]; and
b. Variety B is a Strict NC language in which both n-words and the negative marker carry [uNEG].

4.1 Variety A

If n-words carry [iNEG] in Variety A, the expectation is that every combination of two n-words will yield a DN reading. As we saw in (14), repeated as (21) below, this is indeed the case.

(21) *Niemand*$_{[iNEG]}$ het *niks*$_{[iNEG]}$ gekoop *nie*$_{[\sout{uNEG}]}$
n-body has n-thing bought NEG
DN: 'No-one had bought nothing', i.e. 'Everyone bought something'

Moreover, we expect an n-word co-occurring with *nie* in sentence-final position, or in a fragmentary answer, to permit only an NC reading, one which results from an Agree relation between the n-word's [iNEG] feature and the [uNEG] feature on *nie*. These predictions are borne out, as (22) and (23) show:

(22) Hier slaap *niemand*$_{[iNEG]}$ *nie*$_{[\sout{uNEG}]}$
here sleeps n-body NEG
'Nobody sleeps here'

(23) Wie het my boek gesien? *Niemand*$_{[iNEG]}$ (*nie*$_{[\sout{uNEG}]}$)
who has my book seen? n-body NEG
'Who saw my book? No-one'

Analogously to all other NC languages that feature a negative marker carrying [uNEG], we assume that an abstract negative operator checks the [uNEG] features on the negative markers in structures lacking an overt negative item carrying [iNEG]. This is shown, first for Czech and then for Afrikaans, in (24-25):

(24) a. Milan *ne*-volá
Milan NEG.calls
'Milan doesn't call'

b. Milan *Op*$_{\neg[iNEG]}$ *ne*$_{[\sout{uNEG}]}$-volá

(25) a. Hy is *nie* moeg *nie*
he is NEG tired NEG
'He is not tired'

b. [Hy is *Op*$_{\neg[iNEG]}$ *nie*$_{[\sout{uNEG}]}$ moeg *nie*$_{[\sout{uNEG}]}$]

Still unexplained, however, is why a single n-word surfacing with two negative markers does not yield an NC reading; given that both instances of *nie* are analysed as [uNEG] elements, while the n-word bears [iNEG], an NC reading would seem to be what our system leads us to expect:

(26) *Niemand*$_{[iNEG]}$ het *nie*$_{[\sout{uNEG}]}$ die werk voltooi *nie*$_{[\sout{uNEG}]}$
n-body has NEG the work completed NEG
*NC: 'Nobody completed the work'
DN: 'Nobody didn't complete the work'

An important property of structures like (26) is that they are heavily restricted, necessarily requiring a DN reading wherever they occur. In order to understand these structures, let us consider their properties in a little more detail.

Strikingly, (26)-type structures can only be uttered felicitously in a very specific context, namely that in which a speaker rejects a negative presupposition uttered previously in the conversation, i.e. where they serve as a denial of a previously-asserted utterance. As with denial structures more generally (cf. Horn 1985, 1989, Gyuris to appear), these structures necessarily feature special emphasis on one of the negated elements. Thus, if the n-word is the subject of a structure of this type, as is the

case in (27a), either the n-word or the negative marker or both must receive stress for the utterance to be felicitous, as (27a-d) show:

(27) a. Speaker 1: Net Hans het *nie* die werk voltooi *nie*, né?
only Hans has NEG the work completed NEG right
'It was just Hans who didn't finish the work, right?'
Speaker 2: Nee, *NIEMAND* het *nie* die werk voltooi *nie*
no n-body has NEG the work completed NEG
'No, NO-ONE didn't finish the work' (focused subject)

b. Nee, *niemand* het *NIE* die werk voltooi *nie*
no n-body has NEG the work completed NEG
'No, nobody has NOT finished the work/No, nobody DIDN'T finish the work' (focused negative marker)

c. Nee, *NIEMAND* het *NIE* die werk voltooi *nie*
no n-body has NEG the work completed NEG
'NOBODY has NOT finished the work'

d. *Nee, *niemand* het *nie* die werk voltooi *nie*
no n-body has NEG the work completed NEG

The same is true for non-subject n-words, with the important caveat that unstressed *nie*, as in (28a), must be realised as part of a prosodic phrase distinct from the following negative marker (the significance of this point will become clear in section 4.2 below):

(28) a. Ek het vir [*NIEMAND*] [*nie*] 'n boek gekoop *nie*
I have for n-body NEG a book bought NEG
"There was NO-ONE I didn't buy a book for"

b. Ek het vir *niemand NIE* 'n boek gekoop *nie*
I have for n-body NEG a book bought NEG
'There's no-one I DIDN'T buy a book for', i.e. 'I bought a book for everyone'

c. Ek het vir *NIEMAND NIE* 'n boek gekoop *nie*
I have for n-body NEG a book bought NEG
'There was NO-ONE for whom I DIDN'T buy a book'

d. *Ek het vir *niemand nie* 'n boek gekoop *nie*
I have for n-body NEG a book bought NEG

The fact that these constructions can only be uttered felicitously in denial contexts indicates that plain double negation (i.e. the semantic effect that two negative expressions in a DN language yield) is not involved here. What happens is that the second speaker rejects a claim made by the first speaker, since Speaker 2 takes himself to be more certain about the state of affairs in question than Speaker 1. The phenomenon, where a speaker conveys strong certainty of this type, is known as

Verum Focus (Höhle 1992, Romero & Han 2004, Gyuris to appear) and is often attested in cases where a previous utterance is denied. This is illustrated below:

(29) a. Speaker 1: Mary is nice, isn't she?
Speaker 2: No, Mary is NOT/ISN'T nice

b. Speaker 1: You don't like spinach, do you?
Speaker 2: No, I DO like spinach

Romero & Han (2004) propose that there are two instances of Verum Focus: *Positive Verum Focus* and *Negative Verum Focus*. Positive Verum Focus may be signalled by emphatic *do*-support in languages like English (cf. (29b)), while Negative Verum Focus (referred to as *Falsum Focus* by Gyuris to appear), requires a stressed negative element of some description (cf. (29a)). The semantic representations that Romero & Han (2004) provide for Positive and Negative Verum Focus respectively are given in (30):

(30) $[[\text{VERUM}]] = \lambda p.\lambda w.\forall w' \in \text{Epi}_S(w)[\forall w'' \in \text{Conv}_S(w')[p \in \text{CG}_{w''}]]$
('it is for sure that we should add p to the common ground')
$[[\text{FALSUM}]] = \lambda p.\lambda w.\forall w' \in \text{Epi}_S(w)[\forall w'' \in \text{Conv}_S(w')[\neg p \in \text{CG}_{w''}]]$
('it is for sure that we should add that it is not the case that p to the common ground')

This immediately explains the readings in (27)-(28) where the second speaker expresses his certainty about the truth/falsity of the utterance made by the first speaker. It also explains why cases like (27)-(28) can only be uttered after a preceding regular negative sentence: Verum and Falsum focus necessarily operates on full propositions. What, however, remains an open question in the context of the Agree-based system proposed here is why two negations do not establish an Agree relation yielding an NC reading when one of them receives Verum Focus. The reason, we propose, is that it is a general property of Verum Focus (as well as other cases of focus) that it disrupts Agree relations. This builds on an observation dating back to Haegeman & Zanuttini (1996: 167, note 26) and Corblin et al. 2004, which, strikingly, holds in both Strict and Non-strict NC languages. Consider Strict NC Serbo-Croatian (31) (Boban Arsenijević, p.e) and Non-strict NC Italian (32) below (and see also Haegeman 1995 for West Flemish, Corblin et al. 2004 for French, Herburger 2001 for Spanish and Falaus 2007 for Romanian, all of whom note that this type of focus on negation leads to DN readings):

(31) a. Ko *nije* video *nikog*? Serbo-Croatian
who NEG.have seen n-body
'Who saw no one?'

b. *NIKO* (*nije* video *nikog*)
n-body NEG.has seen n-body
'NOBODY didn't see anybody'
(after answering a negatively biased question like *Who didn't see anybody?*)

(32) *NESSUNO* (#) *non* ha telefonato Italian
n-body NEG has called
'NOBODY has called'
(uttered after it has been suggested that somebody called)

Precisely what formally underlies this Agree-disruption is a matter that we must, for the moment, leave to future research, but we observe that Agree-disruption is not restricted to the domain of Negative Concord; other types of concord phenomena also seem to exhibit this effect. Consider, for instance, the examples in (33) and (34), where a Sequence of Tense and a Modal Concord relation are disrupted in the presence of focus intonation (cf. Zeijlstra 2008c for the Modal Concord data). In (33a) the most salient reading is the one where John's saying and Mary's illness temporally overlap; in (33b) this reading is no longer available. Likewise, (34) comes with a reading that is equivalent to the reading that the sentence would get without the auxiliary *must*; in (34b) this reading is out.

(33) John said that Mary was ill (simultaneous interpretation possible)
John said that Mary WAS ill (simultaneous interpretation impossible)

(34) The general demanded that the troops must surrender
(Modal Concord reading possible)
The general demanded that the troops MUST surrender
(Modal Concord reading excluded)

To conclude, then, the assumption that n-words in Afrikaans Variety A carry [iNEG], while *nie* carries [uNEG] correctly predicts the observed patterns. Cases that seem to undermine this analysis prove to be the result of the more generally recognised interaction between negation and focus and therefore do not pose problems for the analysis suggested.

4.2 Variety B

As illustrated above, Variety B differs from Variety A in two respects: firstly, multiple n-words may yield an NC reading in addition to the DN reading that is obligatory in Variety A, and secondly, the distribution of *nie* is freer as it may surface finally in many phrases containing an n-word whereas this possibility is very restricted in Variety A.

Semantically, the only difference between Varieties A and B is that n-words cannot be taken to carry [iNEG] in the latter. If they did, the prediction would be that two n-words would always yield a DN reading, counter fact. If, instead, we assume n-words in this variety to carry [uNEG], the fact that introducing a second n-word does not introduce a new semantic negation is accounted for. Under this proposal, then, Variety B is a Strict NC language of the familiar type since all overt instances of negation are semantically non-negative. An abstract negative operator thus always induces the semantic negation, as shown below:

(35) a. *Niemand*$_{[\text{~~uNEG~~}]}$ het *niks*$_{[\text{~~uNEG~~}]}$ gekoop *nie*$_{[\text{~~uNEG~~}]}$
n-body has n-thing bought NEG
NC: 'Nobody had bought anything'

b. [*Op*$_{\neg[\text{iNEG}]}$ *Niemand*$_{[\text{~~uNEG~~}]}$ het *niks*$_{[\text{~~uNEG~~}]}$ gekoop *nie*$_{[\text{~~uNEG~~}]}$]

The fact that *nie* may be included in non-sentence-final position in examples (19-20), repeated as (36-37), which are ruled out in Variety A, also follows under the analysis that *nie* carries [uNEG] in Variety B. For a detailed explanation of the differences between Varieties A and B regarding the distribution of *nie*, the reader is referred to Biberauer (2008c), who argues that these result from differences in the peripheral structure available to XPs in the two varieties:

(36) Ek het vir *niemand nie* 'n boek gekoop *nie*
I have for n-body NEG a book bought NEG
NC: 'I didn't buy a book for anybody'

(37) *GEEN/nie EEN van die studente nie* het die werk voltooi *nie*
no / NEG one of the students NEG has the work finished NEG
NC: 'NONE/Not ONE of the students finished the work'

Crucially, phrase-final *nie* in examples like (36)-(37) cannot be stressed and it also necessarily occupies the same prosodic phrase as the preceding n-word/sub-clausal phrase (in terms of Biberauer's analysis, it is the spellout of a left-peripheral edge of the relevant XP). This *nie*, then, is different from that in denial structures such as those illustrated in (28) above.

To conclude, then, the proposal that n-words in Variety A carry [iNEG], whereas their counterparts in Variety B carry [uNEG] facilitates an understanding of the semantic differences between these varieties. Importantly, both Variety A and Variety B exhibit the property Zeijlstra (2004 and following) ascribes to Strict NC languages – having semantically non-negative negative markers. Crucially, however, we see that languages that lack semantically negative markers may differ in respect of the semantic status of their n-words and do not require that their n-words are semantically non-negative as well. This previously unobserved fact suggests a potentially important "missing link" in the diachronic pathway via which DN languages become NC languages. More specifically, the proposal is that at least certain types of DN to NC changes may in fact progress via a pathway defined in terms of increasing formal non-negativity: while both negative markers and n-words are [iNEG] in DN languages, the existence of Afrikaans A-type systems suggests that the next stage can involve a system featuring [iNeg]-bearing n-words and [uNeg]-bearing negative markers; thereafter it then becomes possible for these latter elements to become [uNeg], ultimately delivering a Strict NC system. To the extent that it accurately characterises actually existing "intermediate" NC systems in a manner that is not readily formulable on alternative analyses, it may be possible to further evaluate the validity of the analysis suggested here by investigating diachronic developments.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, we have examined the expression of negation in Afrikaans, arguing that two distinct negation systems can in fact be identified. In one system, that associated with a conservative variety, which we designate *Variety A*, n-words are carriers of semantic negation and are therefore equipped with an interpretable [iNEG] feature. The negative marker, *nie*, by contrast, is semantically non-negative and therefore carries [uNEG]. Variety B, on the other hand, is a typical Strict NC language where all overt morphosyntactic instances of negation are semantically non-negative, with an abstract negative operator inducing semantic negation. In this variety, then, both n-words and negative markers bear [uNEG].

Furthermore, we have demonstrated that Variety A nicely fills the typological gap that arises from Zeijlstra's (2004, 2008a,b) analysis of NC. There are indeed languages where n-words are semantically active and negative markers are not:

(38)

	N-words semantically negative	N-words semantically non-negative
Negative markers semantically negative	DN-languages: *Dutch, German, Swedish*	Non-strict NC languages: *Spanish, Italian, Portuguese*
Negative markers semantically non-negative	***Afrikaans A***	Strict NC languages: *Czech, Serbo-Croatian, Greek,* ***Afrikaans B***

Finally, the Afrikaans data indicate that the traditional two-way distinction between strict and non-strict NC languages is inadequate: apart from Strict and Non-strict languages a third type of NC language exist. This refinement opens up new possibilities for the understanding of syntactico-semantic microvariation between superficially very similar systems and, by extension, of how diachronic negation-related changes, including those involved in Jespersen's famous Cycle, may have come about. Better understanding of the typological gap highlighted in this paper may, then, have far-reaching consequences.

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