

Re-Evaluating French Negative Concord

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- **The story so far:**



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- There is a clear picture of what constitutes negative concord.
- French does not fit into this picture and has been treated as an outlier.
- **My story:**
- French is a normal double negation language.
- Our picture of negative concord is wrong.



- **Negative Concord:**



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- Any instance in which an iteration of at least two independently negative elements yields a single negation reading.



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- **Neg-word:**



- **Negative Concord:**
- Any instance in which an iteration of at least two independently negative elements yields a single negation reading.
- **Neg-word:**
- A negative indefinite that takes part in negative concord (Giannakidou & Zeijlstra 2017).



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- **Negative Doubling:**
- A neg-word and a negative marker, both associated with semantic negativity independently from each other, yielding a single negation reading when occurring in the same clause.
- **Negative concord languages usually have both.**



- Italian: **both** spread and doubling.



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- **No ambiguity.**



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- **No ambiguity.**
- (1) Gianni non telefona a nessuno.
Gianni NEG call to nobody
'Gianni doesn't call anyone'
'Gianni doesn't call nobody.'
- (2) Ieri nessuno ha detto niente
Today nobody has said nothing
'Today, nobody has said anything.'
'Today, nobody has said nothing.'



Negative Concord in French

- Any combination of the negative marker *pas* and a neg-word yields a double negation reading:

- (3) a. *Personne mange.*
nobody eats
'Nobody eats.'
- b. *Personne mange **pas**.*
nobody eats NEG
'Nobody doesn't eat.'
- c. *Marie mange rien.*
Marie eats nothing
'Marie does not eat anything.'
- d. *Marie mange **pas** rien.*
Marie eats NEG nothing
'Marie does not eat nothing.'

DOUBLE NEGATION!



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CONCORD!
DOUBLE NEGATION!



- De Swart & Sag (2002), Zeijlstra (2009), and Penka (2011): French has negative concord, but in a unique way.



- Big idea: **Resumptive quantification**



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- Reduces the number of semantic negators to one by merging negative quantifiers.
- Works really well with French negative spread.



- Recall:

- (4) *Personne mange rien.*
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- Ambiguity in readings.



- Recall:

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- Ambiguity in readings.
- One reading involves only one semantic negation.



- Neg-words are quantificational: $\neg\exists x$



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- Independently, two quantifiers can merge by way of resumption:
- (5) a. Every student likes herself.
 $[EVERY^{STUDENT}, SELF](LIKE)$
 $\forall x LIKE(x, x)$
- b. Every student bought a different book.
 $[EVERY^{STUDENT}, DIFFERENT^{BOOK}](BUY)$
 $BOOK \cap BUY_a \neq BOOK \cap BUY_b$
 for all $a, b \in STUDENT$ such that $a \neq b$
- c. Five hundred companies own three thousand computers.
 $[FIVE HUNDRED^{COMPANIES}, THREE-THOUSAND^{COMPUTERS}](OWN)$
 $\parallel COMPANY \cap OWN_y^{Computer} \parallel = 500 \wedge \parallel$
 $COMPUTER \cap OWN_x^{Company} \parallel = 3000$



- (6) $Q_{E'}^{A,B}(R) = Q_{E^2}^{A \times B}(R)$
where A and B are subsets of the universe of discourse E ,
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- Rule of composition parallel to function application:
- Speaker/hearer decide which rule is at work– **ambiguity!**
- When two negative quantifiers are merged into one negative quantifier, only one source of negative force remains– **concord!**



- (7) Personne aime personne.
 nobody loves nobody
 'Nobody loves anybody.'
 a. $[\text{NO}_{E}^{\text{HUMAN}, \text{HUMAN}}](\text{LOVE})$
 b. $[\text{NO}_{E^2}^{\text{HUMAN} \times \text{HUMAN}}](\text{LOVE})$
 c. $\neg \exists x, y \text{ LOVE}(x, y)$



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 a. $[\text{NO}_E^{\text{HUMAN}}, [\text{NO}_E^{\text{HUMAN}}](\text{LOVE})$
 b. $\text{NO}(\text{HUMAN}, \{x \mid \text{NO}(\text{HUMAN}, \{y \mid x \text{ LOVE } y\})\})$
 c. $\text{HUMAN} \cap \{x \mid \text{HUMAN} \cap \{y \mid x \text{ LOVE } y\} = \emptyset\} = \emptyset$
 d. $\neg \exists x \neg \exists y \text{Love } xy$



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- languages vary with respect to whether they leave negative markers out of their negative concord systems or not.



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- It generalizes an ability for negative concord languages to have the negative marker not participate in their negative concord system.
- This has so far only been attested for French, which shouldn't follow if this were parametric variation.



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- If that were the case, (9) would have a licit concord reading:
- (9) Gianni non non telefona a Maria.
Gianni NEG NEG call to Maria
'Gianni doesn't not call Maria.'
'Gianni doesn't call Maria.'



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- Also: De Swart & Sag (2002) predicts that concord constructions are always ambiguous under neutral intonation.
- However, Italian negative spread is not ambiguous:
- (1) Gianni non telefona a nessuno.
Gianni NEG call to nobody
'Gianni doesn't call anyone'
'Gianni doesn't call nobody.'
- (2) Ieri nessuno ha detto niente
Today nobody has said nothing
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- Zeijlstra (2008): negative concord as syntactic agreement.
Zeijlstra (2009): direct criticism of De Swart & Sag (2002).



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Zeijlstra (2009): direct criticism of De Swart & Sag (2002).
- Big ideas: **i.** non-negativity of neg-words in negative concord languages. **ii.** split between semantic and formal features.



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- Non-negative neg-words: if they do not contribute their own negative force, they can never trigger a multiple negation reading.
- (10) a. Giovanni non ha detto niente a nessuno.
Giovanni NEG has said nothing to nobody
⊃ ⊃ ⊃
'Giovanni didn't say nothing to nobody.'
- b. Giovanni non ha detto niente a nessuno.
Giovanni NEG has said nothing to nobody
 ⊃
'Giovanni didn't say anything to anybody.'

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- What about negative spread in Italian?



- Negative dependencies are handled by way of syntactic [i/uNeg] features.
- *non* ('not'): [iNeg], neg-words: [uNeg]
- What about negative spread in Italian?
- (11) Nessuno_[uNeg] ha detto niente_[uNeg].
 nobody has said nothing
 'Nobody said anything.'



- Solution: $OP^{\neg[iNeg]}$.



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- (12) Nessuno ha detto niente.
 $OP_{\neg[iNeg]}$ nobody_[uNeg] has said nothing_[uNeg]
 \neg
 'Nobody said anything.'



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- In a double negation language like English, there is no reason to assume any formal negation features:
- (13) a. John saw nothing.

John saw nothing.

b. John didn't see anything.

⌋
'John didn't see anything.'

c. John didn't see nothing.

'John didn't see nothing (= did see something).'
'John didn't see anything.'



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- French neg-words are non-negative carriers of [uNeg]
- *pas* ('not') is semantically negative and does not carry formal [Neg]-features.
- ... which is why it does not take part in negative concord and can trigger double negation.



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- Unchecked [uNeg] on the neg-word triggers insertion of OP_{\neg} as in Italian...

- (3d) Marie mange pas rien.
 $OP_{\neg[iNeg]}$ Marie eats NEG nothing $_{[uNeg]}$
 \neg \neg
 'Marie does not eat nothing.'
 # 'Marie does not eat anything.'



- Unchecked [uNeg] on the neg-word triggers insertion of OP_{\neg} as in Italian...
- (3d) Marie mange pas rien.
 $OP_{\neg[iNeg]}$ Marie eats NEG nothing $_{[uNeg]}$
 \neg \neg
 'Marie does not eat nothing.'
 # 'Marie does not eat anything.'
- ...which contributes a second instance of semantic negativity.



- French negative spread works just like Italian negative spread, thanks to OP \rightarrow :



- French negative spread works just like Italian negative spread, thanks to OP_{\neg} :

- (4) $OP_{\neg[iNeg]}$ $Personne$ $mange$ $rien$.
 $nobody_{[uNeg]}$ $eats$ $nothing_{[uNeg]}$
 \neg
 'Nobody eats anything.'



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 nobody eats nothing.
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- if neg-words are non-negative negative dependencies and trigger the insertion of OP_{\neg} : no second source of negative force.



- **However:** Zeijlstra undergenerates.
- recall that (4) was ambiguous:
- (4) *Personne mange rien.*
 nobody eats nothing.
 'Nobody eats anything.'
 'Nobody eats nothing.'
- if neg-words are non-negative negative dependencies and trigger the insertion of OP_{\neg} : no second source of negative force.
- **Features can never derive ambiguity:** either an item has a feature, or it doesn't.



- **Paradox:** Zeijlstra (2008) can handle Italian, but not French.
De Swart & Sag (2002) can handle French, but not Italian.
- What does this mean for our definitions?



- Recall that French negation patterned like this:

	Double Negation	Single Negation
negative markers		x
neg-words		x
neg-word + negative marker	x	
neg-word + neg-word	x	x



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- In German, a similar pattern emerges:
- Double negation with negative spread:

- (14) a. Niemand schläft nicht.
 nobody sleeps not
 'Nobody doesn't sleep.'
 # 'Nobody sleeps.'
- b. Sven isst nicht nichts.
 Sven eats not nothing
 'Sven doesn't eat nothing.'
 # 'Sven doesn't eat anything.'



- Ambiguity with negative spread:



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- (15) a. Niemand sieht niemanden.
nobody sees nobody
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- b. Niemand isst nichts.
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- Ambiguity with negative spread:
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 'nobody sees nobody'
- b. Niemand isst nichts.
 nobody eats nothing
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- Weiß (2002): all languages allow for negative indefinites to enter into concord relations, with prescriptive pressure being the only deterring factor.



The Theoretical Upshot

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- Negative spread is widely available
- There seems to be a split when it comes to ambiguity.
- De Swart & Sag (2002) and Zeijlstra (2008) are not incompatible!



- If neg-words are simple existential quantifiers, with negative force located on an operator above, the way two of them are composed becomes a non-issue.



- If neg-words are simple existential quantifiers, with negative force located on an operator above, the way two of them are composed becomes a non-issue.
- Since resumptive quantification produces the Cartesian product of two sets as in (6), the output is identical with that of function application:



- (16) Nessuno ha detto niente.
 OP \neg nobody has said nothing
 $\neg \quad \exists \quad \quad \quad \exists$
 'Nobody said anything.'
 a. $[\neg[\exists_E^{\text{HUMAN}}, [\exists_E^{\text{THING}}]]](\text{SAY})$
 b. $\neg\exists x,y \text{ SAY } x,y$

Function Application



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Function Application

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Quantifier Resumption



- Non-negative neg-words can combine with resumptive quantification in a way that derives the concord-only reading.



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- Non-negative neg-words can combine with resumptive quantification in a way that derives the concord-only reading.
- **Negative doubling**: a non-integral part of De Swart & Sag (2002), but arises naturally in Zeijlstra (2008).
- **Two operations** (Quantifier resumption, function application), **two types of languages** (negative vs. non-negative neg-words), **three phenomena** (ambiguous negative spread, nonambiguous negative spread, negative doubling)



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- **True negative spread**: two neg-words obligatorily yielding a single negation reading.
- **Neg-word** an indefinite independently associated with negativity.



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- Negative spread is universally available: OP_{\neg} is unnecessary—quantifier resumption does the work.
- Thus, no formal features pertaining to negation are needed.
- (4) *Personne mange rien.*
nobody eats nothing.
'Nobody eats anything.'
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Quantifier Resumption
Function Application



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- *ne* used to be the negative marker in 17th century French, but was supplanted by *pas*.
- *ne* is frequently found in the vicinity of neg-words without contributing any semantic negativity on its own:
- (18) a. *Personne ne mange.*
 nobody *ne* eats
 'Nobody eats.'
- b. *Marie ne mange rien.*
 Marie ne eats nothing
 'Marie does not eat anything.'



- Zeijlstra (2009) notes that in modern French, *ne* is never associated with negative force, and appears in several non-negative contexts:



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- (19)
 - a. Jean (ne) voit que Marie.
 Jean ne sees comp Marie
 'Jean only sees Marie'
 - b. Jean est plus malin que Pierre (ne) l'est.
 Jean is more smart than Pierre ne it-is
 'Jean is smarter than Pierre is'
 - c. Il a barricadé la porte de peur crainte qu'on (n')
 He has blocked the door of fear that they ne
 entre chez lui.
 enter with him
 'He blocked the door for fear that people might come in'



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- Zeijlstra: *ne* is a non-negative NPI, with the added ability to be licensed without being c-commanded by its licenser.
- Makri (2013): 'expletive negation', where a negative marker becomes a non-negative NPI, inserted mostly for emphasis.
- expletive negation is non-negative— French stays a double negation language.



Expletive Negative Concord

- French *ne* is not alone in causing confusion.



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- (20) a. Ik heb nooit gerookt.
I have never smoked
'I have never smoked.'
- b. Ik heb nooit niet gerookt.
I have never NEG smoked
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- Zeijlstra (2010): firmly lexicalized two-word expressions, cannot be split up.



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- (21) a. Ich habe niemals geraucht.
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- b. Ich habe niemals nicht geraucht.
I have never NEG smoked
'I have never ever smoked.'
- c. NIEMALS habe ich nicht geraucht.
never have I NEG smoked
'%I have never ever smoked.'



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- Expletive negation is inherently non-negative— never part of negative concord.



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- With concord constructions showing up in all languages, we may need to make our definitions less strict.
- I need a more complete picture of negative spread in non-Indo-European languages, and will most likely bother some of you about this.



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