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## Some remarks on Spanish sentential negation

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In this paper, I use Chomsky's (1995, 2000) Minimalist Program to propose a syntactic analysis of sentential negation in Spanish. After briefly discussing some of the main characteristics of Spanish sentential negation in the first part of the paper and reviewing some of the proposals in the literature, I present a syntactic mechanism that accounts for some of these characteristics.

Spanish sentential negation is expressed by means of an invariant marker *no* which occupies a pre-verbal position. According to Zanuttini (2001), this is the most common of the four cross-linguistic strategies for the expression of sentential negation outlined by Payne (1985)<sup>1</sup>. The negative particle *no* must be adjacent to the verb; only the pronominal clitics may intervene:

- (1)   no     se       lo       dijo  
       Neg Cl-IO-3s Cl-DO-3ms say-pret-3s  
       ‘(s)he didn’t say it to him/her’

Alternatively, a negative expression like *nunca* ‘never’, *nadie* ‘nobody’, *nada* ‘nothing’ or *ningún(o/a)* ‘no’ can also express sentential negation when it occupies a pre-verbal position. Unlike the negative marker *no*, the negative expression does not have to be adjacent to the verb.

- (2)   nunca a ella le       dijeron    la verdad  
       never to her Cl-IO-3s say-pret-3p the truth  
       ‘they never told her the truth’

Only one negative word can appear before the verb.

- (3)   \*nunca a ella no le       dijeron    la verdad  
       never to her Neg Cl-IO-3s say-pret-3p the truth  
       ‘they never told her the truth’

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<sup>1</sup> Payne's (1985) four strategies of sentential negation, as mentioned by Zanuttini (2001: 513), are (i) negating a clause by means of a negative marker which has the characteristics of a verb taking a sentential complement (found in Polynesian languages); (ii) negating a clause via a negative marker which has the properties of a finite auxiliary (carrying person, number, tense, aspect or mood affixes) followed by the lexical verb in a non-finite participial form (e.g. Evenki, a Siberian language of the Tungus family); (iii) using a negative marker which appears in the form of a “particle”, an element which can be invariant (e.g. Spanish *no*) or can exhibit sensitivity to mood (e.g. Hungarian *ne/nem*), tense or aspect (e.g. Arabic *lam/la*); and (iv) being part of the derivational morphology of the verb as an affix (e.g. Turkish *-me-*).

Multiple negative expressions, however, can occur after the verb.

- (4) a ella no le dijeron nada nunca  
to her Neg Cl-IO-3s say-pret-3p nothing never  
'they never told her anything'

Post-verbal negative expressions must be licensed by a preverbal negative word:

- (5) \*a ella le dijeron nada nunca  
to her Cl-IO-3s say-pret-3p nothing never  
'they never told her anything'
- (6) a ella nunca le dijeron nada  
to her never Cl-IO-3s say-pret-3p nothing  
'they never told her anything'

Spanish does not allow double negation. Examples (4) and (6) show that, in spite of the presence of more than one negative word, the negative interpretation of the sentence is not cancelled out, as it would happen in Standard English: *He does not want nothing = He wants something*.

Spanish, as other languages like Italian, is a *negative concord* language. This means that two or more negative words can co-occur in a sentence with a single negation interpretation, as in (4) and (6). Watanabe (2004) points out that negative concord covers at least two subcases, which are dubbed by Den Besten (1986) *negative doubling* and *negative spread*, both of which are found in Spanish. Negative doubling is defined as cases where the sentential negation marker *no* co-occurs with a negative expression, as in (4). Negative spread, on the other hand, involves two or more negative expressions without an overt sentential negation marker, as in (6). These negative expressions of negative concord languages (like *nunca*, *nadie*, *nada ninguno*) are labeled *negative concord items* (NCI). Because they can signify negation without an overt negation marker, Haegeman and Zanuttini (1996) assume that NCIs have inherent negation. Negative Polarity Items (NPIs), which are to be found in non negative concord languages like English (*any*, *anyone*, *anything*, *anywhere*, *ever*), are not inherently negative.

Watanabe (2004), following Vallduví (1994) and Giannakidou (2000), uses five diagnostic tests to distinguish between concord and polarity items:

(7)

<i>Diagnostic</i>	<b>NCI</b>	<b>NPI</b>
(i) Ability to appear in nonnegative contexts	no	yes
(ii) Ability to appear in preverbal position	yes	no
(iii) Ability to be modified by expressions like <i>casi</i> (almost)	yes	no
(iv) Ability to be used as an elliptical answer	yes	no
(v) Clause-boundedness	no	yes

Unlike NPIs, negative concord items cannot appear in nonnegative contexts.

- (8)
- a. \*¿Quieres nada?
  - b. Do you want anything?
  - c. \*Si quieres nada, avísame.
  - d. If you want anything, let me know.

NCIs can appear in preverbal position with a negative interpretation:

- (9)
- a. Nada funciona.
  - b. \*Anything works.

Like all universal quantifiers, NCIs can be modified by *casi*. Therefore, Haegeman and Zanuttini (1996) analyze NCIs as universal quantifiers with inherent negation.

- (10)
- a. No comí casi nada.
  - b. \*I didn't eat almost anything

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NCIs can be used as an elliptical answer:

- (11) a. —¿Qué viste?  
       —Nada.  
       b. —What did you see?  
       —\*Anything.

To Vallduví's diagnostic tests, Giannakidou adds that NCIs have to be licensed by a negative word from inside their own clause.

- (12) a. \*Yo no dije [que ella quisiera a nadie].  
       b. I didn't say [that she loved anyone].

Pollock (1989), Laka (1990), Zanuttini (1991), and Haegeman (1995) propose that the negative marker is the head of a functional projection NegP. Pollock's Split-I hypothesis distinguished two separate functional projections within IP, namely AgrP and TP. NegP was conveniently located between these two projections. Following later theoretical developments in Chomsky (2000), Agr is no longer considered a functional projection but a syntactic operation of feature-checking under c-command. The location of NegP has been a subject of syntactic debate. Working with different Romance languages and Italian dialects, Zanuttini (1997, 2001) identifies at least four positions for NegP. The position of this category in the Hierarchy of Projections seems to be a parameter of Universal Grammar: for (standard) Italian, Neg > T; for French and English, T > Neg. Since it is well known that, as in Italian, the highly inflected Spanish verb moves to T and the sentential negative marker is always in front of the verb, I will assume, following Zanuttini (2001), that NegP occupies a position right above TP in Spanish as well.

Haegeman and Zanuttini (1991, 1996) argue that there is a symmetry between the syntax of negation and the syntax of questions. Modeled after Rizzi's (1990) Wh-Criterion, they propose the Neg-Criterion, which establishes that there should be a Specifier-Head relation between a negative operator and a Neg head, where a neg-operator is a negative phrase in scope position. I assume some form of Haegeman and Zanuttini's Neg-Criterion yet I will recast it in terms of feature checking, according to current theoretical developments. I propose that the Spec-Head relation predicted in the Neg-Criterion occurs only as a consequence of checking a [neg] feature. Since they are inherently negative, the negative marker *no* and negative concord items possess an interpretable feature [neg]. NCIs, although

inherently negative, have to be licensed by a c-commanding negative constituent within the same clause (see examples (4, 5, 6)). On the other hand, the negative marker *no*, which is the overt Neg head in Spanish, cannot be licensed if it is c-commanded by a negative constituent within the same clause (see example (3)). Since *no* has no c-selection features, it does not select a negative expression (so there is no Spec-Head relation); therefore the negative marker would have sentential scope (over T) without being c-commanded by any negative constituent. Spanish has, however, a covert Neg head that contains a strong, uninterpretable selectional feature [ $\mu$ neg\*] which can only be checked by merging a negative expression into [Spec,Neg]. This would explain why, in Spanish sentence negation, there must be only one overt negative item in preverbal position (as shown in examples (3, 4, 5, 6)).

The canonical subject position is [Spec,T]. Since Neg > T and Spanish subjects precede the negative particle in unmarked declarative negative sentences, it is necessary to account for the subject initial position. The subject must move to a position higher than Neg. Haegeman (2000) and Holmberg et al (1993) propose that there is a functional category Fin (mnemonic for ‘finite’) which is a category contained within the split-CP, such that Fin > (Neg) > T. It is plausible to assume that Fin contains an EPP feature [ $\mu$ D\*], which triggers subject movement into [Spec,Fin]. A finite Fin selects a tensed T; a nonfinite Fin selects an untensed T. Nominative case checking may take place in tensed T or in finite Fin. Since nonfinite clauses cannot have overt subjects, nonfinite Fin may check null case. In any case, the subject in [Spec,Fin] will precede the negative marker.

Another solution is implied by Zagona (2002). It has been proposed that Spanish is a topic-initial rather than a subject-initial language (Contreras 1991, Olarrea 1996). Zagona suggests that Spanish subjects possess a [topic] feature (particularly agents and experiencers) that has to be checked by a functional category above Neg (and T, consequently), which also has a topic feature. This may force the subject to move above Neg. One may assume that the category Top (mnemonic for ‘topic’), contained within the split-CP, possesses a strong, uninterpretable feature [ $\mu$ topic\*] that requires the subject (or the constituent) with the [topic] feature to move to [Spec,Top] in order to check the feature of the Top head. This mechanism bears a strong resemblance to Rizzi’s (1990) Wh-Criterion and Haegeman’s (1995) Neg-Criterion, both of which require a Spec-Head relation between the head and another constituent with a similar feature. If Spanish is indeed a topic-initial language, this analysis may account for the subject initial position.

At a first glance, both analyses do not seem to contradict themselves. However, Zagona (2002: 227) (based upon Olarrea (1996)) claims that pre-verbal (i.e. initial) subjects display the properties of Clitic Left Dislocated (CLLD) topics, not of constituents which have undergone movement (properties

like recursiveness and connectivity with a coreferential constituent). Hernanz and Brucart (1987) argue that it is the other type of topics, the non-recursive Left Dislocated (LD) topics, which occupy the [Spec,Top] position. As this matter of subjects as topics requires further inquiry, I will subscribe for now to the analysis of the subjects as occupying the [Spec,Fin] position.

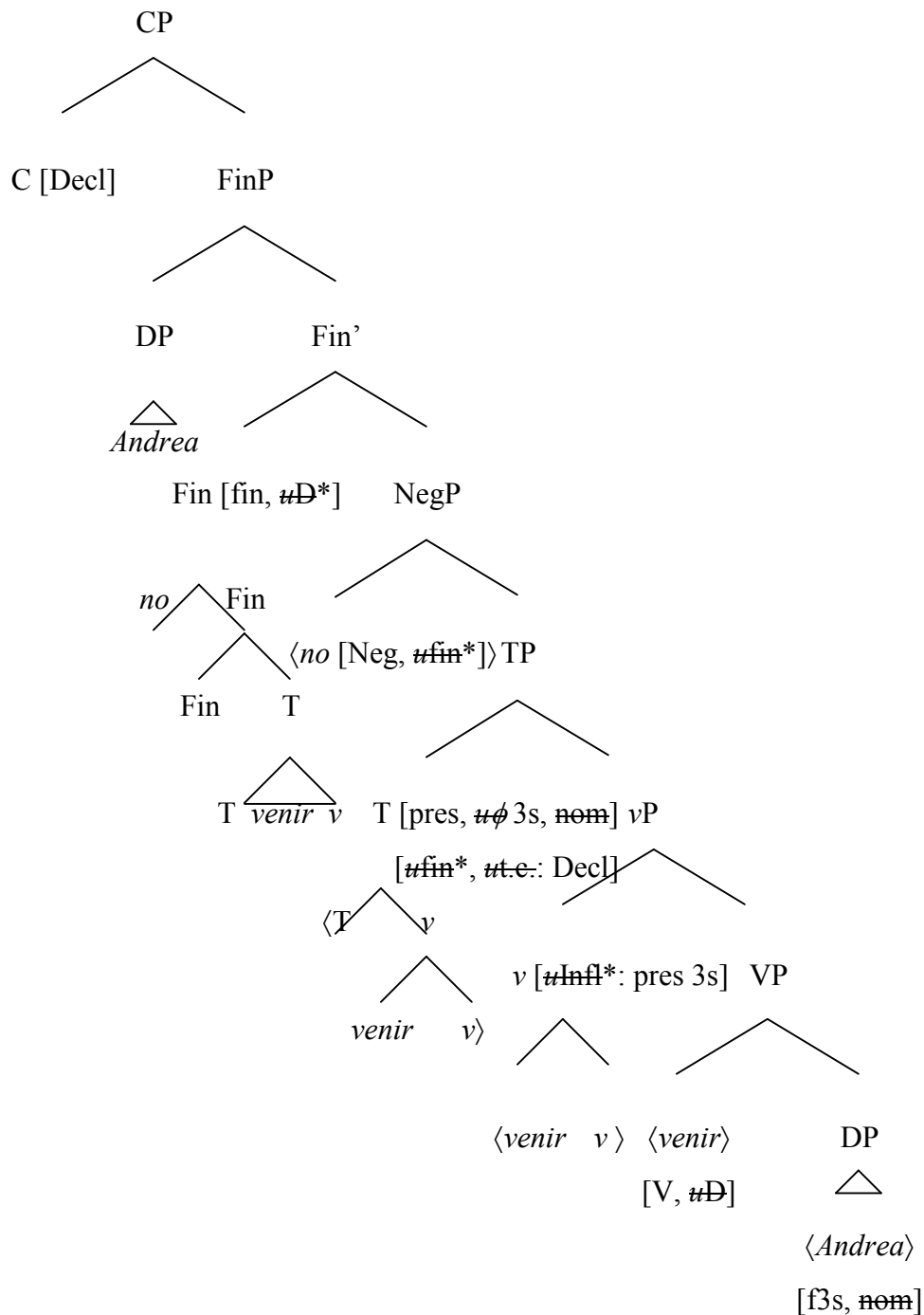
In negative sentences, the Spanish verbal complex in T is always immediately after the negative marker. This happens not only in declarative sentences, but also in interrogatives:

- (13) ¿no vino Andrea?  
not came Andrea  
'Didn't Andrea come?'  
(14) ¿por qué no vino Andrea?  
why not came Andrea  
'Why didn't Andrea come?'

In both yes/no and wh-questions, the negative marker and the verb stay together. Most Spanish dialects require a subject-verb inversion in the derivation of interrogative sentences. The conventional analysis of this inversion has the T-verb complex moving to an empty  $C^0$ , while the wh-phrase (or operator) moves to [Spec,C] to check the strong [ $uwh^*$ ] feature of the interrogative C. If this is so, the negative marker, which is a Neg head, must move along with the T-verb complex. In French, the Neg head *ne* behaves in the same way with respect to the verb. Based upon Pollock's (1989) analysis of French sentential negation, it is plausible to assume that the Neg head cliticizes to Fin and the T-verb complex undergoes head movement to Fin. In questions, the Fin complex (which contains Neg and the T-verb complex) moves to C. The head movement of T to Fin can be accounted for if one assumes that T has a strong feature (like a [ $u_{fin}^*$ ]) that triggers the incorporation of the T-verb complex to the Fin head. Neg may have a similar feature that would require its cliticization to Fin. These movements will not allow the presence of any other element (with the exception of the pronominal clitics) between the negative marker and the verb.

The following example illustrates the derivation of a negative declarative sentence along these lines:

(15) *Andrea no viene* ‘Andrea is not coming’



To account for the absence of double negation when there is more than one negative word, I assume a mechanism like Haegeman and Zanuttini’s (1996) Neg-Factorization or Watanabe’s (2004) feature copying.

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In this paper, we have seen some of the major characteristics of Spanish sentential negation as a negative concord language. The difference between negative concord and negative polarity items has been established, following the diagnostic tests presented in Watanabe (2004). Haegeman and Zanuttini's (1991, 1996) Neg-Criterion has been revised within the general theory of feature-checking. It has been proposed that Neg > T and subjects move to FinP, a functional category above NegP and TP. Fin contains an EPP feature and incorporates the negative marker and the verbal complex by means of checking a [finite] feature. This analysis accounts for both the subject initial position and the adjacency of the negative marker and the verb in declarative and interrogative sentences.

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