Negative Concord and the Scope of Negation

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Abstract

In Romance languages like European Portuguese, Negative Concord may not be explained in terms of the licensing of multiple underspecified polarity items by a negative operator; ignoring expletive negation, negative phrases behave as inherent negative items which may constitute a complex negative expression. However, syntactic approaches involving negative sentential projections and relying on specifier-head Agreement of negative items are not able to deal with Negative Concord. Negative Concord is captured by Neg-Absorption, an LF operation which applies in a single negative domain. In what concerns sentence negation, this domain is delimited by an overt strong negative element, the sentence marker or some negative phrase, overtly having scope over the verbal element which checked Tense.

Key words: Negative Concord, Neg-Absorption, sentence negation, scope of negation.

Resum. *La Concordança Negativa i l'Abast de la Negació*

En llengües romàniques com el portuguès europeu, no es pot explicar la concordança negativa a partir de la legitimació de múltiples elements de polaritat subespecificats per part d'un operador negatiu; deixant de banda la negació expletiva, els sintagmes negatius es comporten com elements negatius inherents que poden constituir una expressió negativa complexa. Tanmateix, les aproximacions sintàctiques que impliquen projeccions oracionals negatives i que es basen en la concordança estructural especificador-nucli dels elements negatius no poden explicar la concordança negativa. La concordança negativa es pot explicar amb l'Absorció-Neg, una operació de la FL que s'aplica en un sol domini negatiu. Pel que fa a la negació oracional, aquest domini està delimitat per un element negatiu fort explícit, el marcador de la frase o algun sintagma negatiu, que té abast explícit sobre l'element verbal que comprova Temps.

Paraules clau: Concordança Negativa, Absorció-Neg, negació oracional, abast de la negació.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Romance languages differ from standard English and other Germanic languages in allowing for Negative Concord. Thus, the examples in (1), (2) and (3) contrast in acceptability with those in (5) in presenting multiple negative items contributing to a single instance of negation for the whole sentence.

(1) a. *Não* vi *ninguém.* (European Portuguese)
not saw.1.sg no one
'I did not see anyone.'

   b. *Ninguém* disse *nada.*
nobody said nothing
'Nobody said anything.'

(2) a. *Non* ho visto *nessuno.* (Italian)
not have.1.sg seen nobody
'I did not see anybody.'
(Zanuttini 1994: 441)

   b. *Nessuno* ha detto *niente.*
nobody has said nothing
'Nobody said anything.'
(Zanuttini 1994: 441)

(3) a. *No* vino *nadie.* (Spanish)
not came.3.sg nobody
'Nobody came.'
(Laka 1990: 104)

   b. *Nadie* dijo *nada.*
nobody said nothing
'Nobody said anything.'
(Espinal 1998)

(4) a. *He does *not* read *nothing.* (Standard English)

   b. **Nobody* reads *nothing.*

In standard English the occurrence of more than one negative item within a syntactic domain yields Double Negation (cf. (4)). To express that several elements in a sole domain concur to form a single negative expression, this language uses polarity items with no intrinsic negative content under the c-command of a negative item — see *anything* in (5a) and (5b). Outside this domain, these items are not interpreted as negative, as shown in (5c).

(5) a. He does *not* read *anything.*

   b. *Nobody* reads *anything.*

   c. **Anybody* reads nothing.

Focusing Sentence Negation, recent approaches to Negative Concord have emphasized either the role of an external negative operator in licensing underspecified polarity items or the structural configurations which sanction Negative Concord between words with inherent negative content.

I will assume that, leaving aside expletive negation, in languages like Modern European Portuguese, N-words may be characterised as intrinsic negative items (see section 2). However, Negative Concord may not be reduced to a specifier-head Agreement relation. Still, as often claimed, an account of Negative Concord must assume the existence of Negative Absorption, an LF operation that converts multiple instances of negation into a single complex negative element (cf. section 3). Furthermore, the role of a sentence specific negative projection in Negative Concord does not seem to be empirically grounded (cf. section 4). An alternative account of Negative Concord is proposed and two of the major problems with sentential negation in Romance are considered: the need, in some languages, for the presence of the overt negative marker whenever the negative phrases occur in postverbal position (cf. section 5); and the contrasts, across languages, in the acceptability of preverbal negative phrases co-occurring with the sentence negative marker (cf. section 6).

2. The Negative Content of N-words

Based on contrasts like (6) and (7), Laka (1990) and Rizzi (1982) among others, assume that N-words in Romance are polarity items with no intrinsic negative value, licensed by an independent negative operator.

(6) a. * Vi   *ninguém.*   (European Portuguese)
       saw.1.sg   no one
       'I saw no one.'

   b. *Não* vi   *ninguém.*
      not   saw.1.sg no one
      'I did not see anyone.'

   c. *Ninguém* viu *ninguém.*
      nobody   saw no one
      'Nobody saw anyone.'

(7) a. * Ho   visto *nessuno.*   (Italian)
       have.1.sg seen no one
       'I saw no one.'

   b. *Non* ho   visto *nessuno.*
      not have.1.sg seen no one
      'I did not see anyone.'

   c. *Nessuno* ha   visto *niente.*
      nobody   has seen nothing
      'Nobody saw anything.'

Still, N-words in these languages behave differently from polarity items with no inherent negative content (Zanuttini (1991) and Haegeman (1995)): they may appear isolated and in contexts where no negative item c-commands them (cf. (8)). According to these properties, N-words, in Romance, pattern with standard English negative quantifiers, as illustrated by the contrasts in (9) and (10):

(8) a. *Ninguém* lhe telefonou.
     nobody him called
     'Nobody called him.'

   b. Ele telefonou a alguém? — *A ninguém.*
      he phoned to anybody to nobody
      'Did he call anybody? Nobody.'

(9) a. *Anybody didn't see anybody.

   b. *Nobody* saw anybody.

(10) Did he call anybody? — *No, *anybody*.
                             — No, *nobody*.

European Portuguese also has underspecified polarity expressions which acquire negative content under the scope of a negative item and act like positive indefinite phrases outside this domain. This is the case for *uma única pessoa* ('anybody/just a single person') in (11). While in (11a) *uma única pessoa* is interpreted as a negative phrase (i.e. 'he did not see anybody'), in (11b) the same expression has a positive meaning.

(11) a. Como era tarde, ele não viu *uma única pessoa* na rua.
         as was late he not saw a single person in the street
         'As it was late, he did not see anybody in the street.'

   b. Ele viu alguém na rua? — *Uma única pessoa.*
      he saw anybody in the street a single person
      'Did he see anybody in the street? 'Just a single person.'

Moreover, in what concerns Modern European Portuguese, N-words only occur in negative domains, being excluded from interrogative and declarative sentences, where they are still in use in Italian and Spanish. In these cases European Portuguese uses indefinite items with no negative content, such as *alguém* ('anybody'), *qualquer N* ('any N') —cf. (12), (13) and (14).[1]

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1. As shown in Martins (1997, 1998), in Old and Classical Portuguese, N-words displayed underspecified polarity features, which enabled them to appear in non negative contexts — see the following example by an author from the beginning of the XVI century:

   (i) Viste- me *nunca* andar em demanda com *ninguém* senão hua em Santarém?
       saw.2.sg me never be in fight with nobody except once in Santarém
       'Have you ever seen me fighting with anyone except for once (that one time) in Santarém?'
       (Gil Vicente apud Martins 1998:46)

(12) a. Ha telefonato *nessuno*?   (Italian)
          'Did anybody call?'
          (Zanuttini 1991: 109)

      b. *Telefonou *ninguém*?   (European Portuguese)
          called.3sg   nobody
          'Did nobody call?'

      c. Telefonou   *alguém*?
          called.3sg   anybody
          'Did anybody call?'

(13) a. Pedro duda que venga *nadie*.   (Spanish)
          'Pedro doubts that anybody will come.'
          (Laka 1990: 109)

      b. *O   Pedro duvida que venha *ninguém.*   (European Portuguese)
          the Pedro doubts that comes nobody
          'Pedro doubts that nobody will come.'

      c. O   Pedro duvida que venha *alguém.*
          the Pedro doubts that comes anybody
          'Pedro doubts that anybody will come.'

(14) a. António estaba en contra de ir a *ninguna parte.* (Spanish)
          'António was against going anywhere.'
          (Bosque 1980)

      b. *O   António estava contra irmos a *nenhum lado.*
                                                   (European Portuguese)
           the António was   against go.1pl to nowhere
          'António was against going nowhere.'

      c. O   António estava contra irmos a *qualquer lado.*
          the António was   against go.1pl to anywhere
          'António was against going anywhere.'

   Therefore, there is evidence that in some Romance languages Negative Concord
may not be reduced to structures presenting a single negative element licensing
multiple constituents with underspecified polarity features.[2]

3. The Specifier-Head Agreement Approaches

Assuming that negative constituents exhibit negative features, many syntactic stu-
dies try to subsume Negative Concord under the specifier-head Agreement rela-

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2. I also depart from the approach of Déprez (1997), since I consider that N-words in languages like
    European Portuguese have intrinsic negative content.

tion, involving (directly or indirectly) specific functional projections for sentence negation, NegP or PolP. This is the case for most of the approaches in terms of the Neg-Criterion (cf. Zanuttini (1991), Haegeman (1995), Rowlett (1997)) or the Checking Theory (cf. Zanuttini (1994), Haegeman (1998)).

3.1. Neg-Criterion

Haegeman (1995) claims that Negative Concord results from the Neg-Criterion, an universal condition which operates before Spell-Out and determines the distribution of the negative elements:

Neg-Criterion
a. A NEG-operator must be in a spec-head configuration with a X° [Neg].

b. An X° [Neg] must be in a spec-head configuration with a NEG-operator.

   Where the following definitions obtain:

c. NEG-operator: a negative phrase in a scope position.

d. Scope position: left-peripheral A'-position [Spec, XP] or [YP, XP].
    (Haegeman 1995: 106, 107).

   In Haegeman (1995) this condition is not restricted to NegP and operates whenever the negative elements may establish a specifier-head Agreement relation. Thus, the Neg-Criterion applies to the following configurations: *(i)* specifier-head of some functional projection above NegP, into where the negative items have raised, as in (15); *(ii)* specifier-head of NegP, the specifier position being occupied by a null operator identified by a c-commanding Neg-phrase (cf. (16)); *(iii)* specifier-head of NegP, where the specifier is an expletive null operator identified through a CHAIN by a postverbal negative phrase, as in (17). The following examples are from Haegeman (1995).

(15) a. $[_{AgrP}$ NEG-operator $[_{Agr°}$ Neg°] …]]
      b. *Nessuno* ha   telefonato / *Personne n*'a téléphoné.
          nobody   has called

(16) a. [[NEG-phrase]$_i$ … [… $[_{NegP}$ [NEG-operator ø / t]$_i$ $[_{Neg°}$ Neg] …]]]
      b. *A   nessuno* Gianni (%non) ha   parlato.
          to no one   Gianni (*not*)   has talked
      c. *A   nessuno* credo   che Gianni (%*non*) abbia   parlato.
          to no one   (I) believe that Gianni (non)   have(subj) talked

(17) a. [$[_{NegP}$ [NEG-operator ø]$_i$ $[_{Neg°}$ Neg]] … [NEG-phrase]$_i$]]
      b. Gianni *non* telefona   *a   nessuno.*
          Gianni not telephones to no one
          'Gianni does not call anyone.'

Haegeman (1995) argues that Negative Concord is a consequence of the Neg-Criterion. Assuming that each head has only a specifier, multiple negative specifiers must undergo Neg-Absorption so as to be interpretable as one single specifier.[3] Neg-Absorption is an LF operation involving a negative head marker and a negative quantifier, or two negative quantifiers, and converting them into a single complex negative constituent.[4]

However, the Neg-Criterion does not seem able to account for Negative Concord. In fact, it must be dissociated from Absorption: while the Neg-Criterion is an universal condition operating in languages exhibiting both Negative Concord and Double Negation, Absorption is sensitive to the properties of the lexical items across languages and within the same language. Thus, in standard English, it operates on wh-phrases, but not on Negation.

Moreover, in what concerns Portuguese, Italian and Spanish, the Neg-Criterion raises some empirical problems —contrary to fact, it predicts that examples like (18), (19) and (20), where a preverbal negative constituent co-occurs with the overt negative sentence marker, constitute the core cases of acceptability (see the configurations in (15) and (16)).

(18) * *Nunca não* lemos   esse livro.   (European Portuguese)
        never not read.1pl that book
        'We never not read that book.'

(19) * *Niente   di buono non* potrà accadere   (Italian)
        nothing good   not can   happen
        (Zanuttini 1991: 112)

(20) * *Ninguno no* vino   (Spanish)
        no one   not came
        (Jaeggli 1982: 129 apud Zanuttini 1991:122)

Hence, though Neg-Absorption seems to be implied in Negative Concord, there is no evident correlation between the Neg-Criterion and this phenomenon.[5]

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3. This proposal is incompatible with the analysis of French sentence negative markers presented in Pollock (1989). Since Absorption is possible, the compatibility of *pas* with an XP-neg in [Spec, NegP] is predicted.

4. May (1985: 21, 23) considers that Absorption deals with multiple quantifiers. It operates in configurations where a quantifier c-commands another one and derives structures where the two quantified phrases constitute a complex constituent. Zanuttini (1991) assumes that Neg-Absorption presents two different operations: quantifier Absorption and factorisation of negation. They may be conceived as simultaneous or not. In the later case, according to Zanuttini (1991), Negative Concord may arise by specifier-head Agreement.

5. Rowlett 1997 proposes a different version of the Neg-Criterion — spec-head Agreement involves a null expletive operator with no intrinsic negative content in [Spec, NegP], otherwise Double Negation would arise. This proposal seems to capture the unacceptability of (i) but it is unable to explain the availability of (ii), where [Spec, NegP] is arguably occupied by an operator with intrinsic negative value, and there are no Double Negation effects.

3.2. Checking Theory

Adopting Checking Theory, Zannuttini (1994) and Haegeman (1998) propose sentence structures like (21). In this representation, the sentence negative marker is originally generated in NegP and may raise to Pol° for feature checking purposes.

(21) $[_{CP}$ … $[_{PolP}$ Spec Pol° … $[_{TP}$ … $[_{NegP}$ Spec Neg° … $[_{VP}$ …]]]]]

According to Zannuttini (1994), the checking of Pol°, which occurs in overt syntax whenever it has strong features, may be accomplished either by moving the negative head marker into Pol° or by raising a negative phrase into [Spec, PolP]. If at least a negative constituent remains in postverbal position, a Negative Concord configuration results, as in (22) and (23):

(22) a. *Não* disse *nada.*   (European Portuguese)
        not said nothing
        'I did not say anything.'

      b. *Ninguém* disse *nada*   a *ninguém.*
        nobody said nothing to no one
        'Nobody said anything to anyone.'

(23) a. *No* ho   detto *niente.*   (Italian)
        not have said nothing
        ' I did not say anything.'

      b. *Nessuno* ha   detto *niente.*
        nobody has said nothing
        'Nobody said anything.'

At first glance, Zanuttini's proposal seems to account for the differences across Romance on the co-occurrence of negative preverbal phrases with the sentence negative marker (cf. (24)), accepting with Martins (1897, 1998) that negative items may vary across languages in their negative polarity strength.

(24) a. *Ninguém *não* disse tal   coisa.   (European Portuguese)
          nobody not said such a thing

      b. *Res*   *(no)* funciona   (Catalan)
        nothing (not) works
        (Martins 1998)

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   (i) *Ninguém *não* leu esse livro.
        nobody   not read that book
   (ii) *Ninguém* leu *nunca* esse livro à   Maria.
        nobody read never that book to the Maria
        'Nobody ever read that book to Maria'.

According to Martins, in languages like European Portuguese, negative phrases have strong neg features, which enable them to check the negative features of Pol°. Hence, their co-occurrence with a sentence negative marker with intrinsic negative value is prevented by economy. On the contrary, in languages like Catalan, N-words are polarity items underspecified for neg-features, which cannot check Pol°; thus, the presence of an overt negative marker is required. As a consequence, the neg-feature value of the weak polarity item is fixed by specifier-head Agreement.

However, this explanation is not supported by the data. First of all, as it is well known, polarity items with no intrinsic negative content are not licensed under specifier-head Agreement, but under c-command —recall the relevant examples in English and Portuguese:
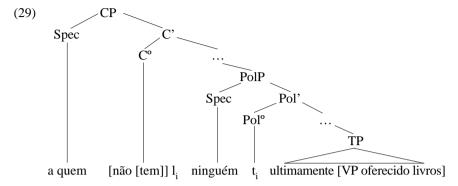
(25)   a. *Anybody* didn't see John.

      b. John did not see *anybody*.

(26)   a. *Uma única pessoa* não viu o   João. (*uma única pessoa* ≠ nobody)
         a   single person not saw the João
         ' Just one person did not see João.'

      b. O   João *não* viu *uma única pessoa*. (*uma única pessoa* = nobody)
         the João not saw a   single person
         'João did not see anybody.'

Secondly, sentences like (27) and (28) show that Checking Theory is not able to deal with Negative Concord.

(27)   a. *Nunca ninguém* me disse isso.   (European Portuguese)
         never   nobody me told   that
         'Nobody ever told me that.'

      b. *Nessuno mai* mi aveva parlato così.   (Italian)
         nobody never me had   spoken like that
         'Nobody has ever spoken to me like that.'
         (Zannuttini 1991)

(28)   a. A quem *não* tem *ninguém* ultimamente oferecido livros?
                                   (European Portuguese)
         to whom not has nobody lately   offered   books
         'To whom hasn't anybody offered books lately?'

      b. *A quem   tem *ninguém* ultimamente oferecido livros?
         to whom has nobody lately   offered   books

The examples in (27) exhibit Negative Concord, yet two negative constituents occur in preverbal position, against Checking Theory expectations, based on economy .

The sentence in (28a) is a I-to-C configuration, as represented in (29). In (29) the presence of the adverbial *ultimamente* ('lately'), following the subject and preceding the main verb and its direct object, constitutes an evidence that the subject has raised out of the VP.

(29)

a quem   [não [tem]] l$_i$ ninguém   t$_i$ ultimamente [VP oferecido livros]

As shown in (28a) vs. (28b), an overt negative marker is required, in spite of the presence of *ninguém* ('nobody') in [Spec, PolP]. Once again, this is unexpected under checking considerations: the negative phrase in [Spec, PolP] should be able to check the strong neg features of Pol°, in a derivational step previous to the raising of the verb to C°. Moreover, the overt negative marker is excluded whenever a preverbal negative phrase occurs, as in (30).

(30)   a. *Ninguém tem* ultimamente oferecido livros ao   Pedro.
          nobody   has lately   offered   books to the Pedro
          'Nobody has offered books to Pedro lately.'

       b. **Ninguém não* tem ultimamente oferecido livros ao   Pedro.
          nobody   not has lately   offered   books to the Pedro
          'Nobody has not offered books to Peter lately.'

Thus, Checking Theory does not seem to be able to deal with Negative Concord; the incompatibility of the preverbal negative phrases with the sentence negative marker in some Romance languages must be explained otherwise.

4. Sentence Negation without NegP

The contrasts in (28), repeated in (31), suggest that in (31a) the overt negative marker does not originate in NegP but is directly inserted in C° by Merge.

(31)   a. A quem *não* tem *ninguém* ultimamente oferecido livros?
          to whom not has nobody   lately   offered   books
          'To whom hasn't anybody offered books lately?'

       b. *A quem   tem ninguém ultimamente oferecido livros ?
          to whom has nobody lately   offered   books?

Accepting that all negative sentences project NegP, we must admit, as usually claimed, that Neg° may be filled either by an overt negative marker (cf. (32)) or by a null one (cf. (33)).

(32)   a.   O   João   *não* ofereceu livros   ao   Pedro   / a ninguém
             the João   not   offered   books to the Pedro   to nobody
             'João did not offer books to Pedro / to anybody.'

        b. $[_{CP}\ldots [_{XP}$ o João $[\ldots [_{NegP} [_{Neg°} \textbf{NÃO}] [\ldots [_{VP}]]]]]]$

(33)   a.   *Ninguém tem* ultimamente oferecido livros   ao   Pedro.
             nobody   has lately   offered   books to the Pedro
             'Nobody has offered books to Pedro lately.'

        b. $[_{CP}\ldots [_{XP}$ ninguém $[\ldots [_{NegP} [_{Neg°} \emptyset] [\ldots [_{VP}]]]]]]$

However, a covert Neg°, raising from Neg° into I° and then into C°, is not enough to turn (31b) into a negative sentence (see (34)), and Merge must apply, as in (31a), (cf. (35)).

(34) $*[_{CP}$A quem $[_{C°}[\textbf{Neg}\emptyset]_i$ tem$]_j [_{XP}$ *ninguém* $[_{X°}$ t$]_j [\ldots[_{NegP} [\textbf{Neg°}\ \emptyset]_i [_{VP}]]]]]]$

(35) $[_{CP} [_{C°} \textbf{NÃO} [$ tem$]] [_{XP}$ ninguém X° $[\ldots _{VP}]]]$

Summing up, the overt presence of the negative sentence marker does not systematically imply the existence of NegP (nor PolP). This fact seems to challenge the relevance of sentence specific negative projections and corroborates their lack of import in accounting for Negative Concord, a property confirmed by the availability of this phenomenon in phrasal projections different from IP. Thus, (36a) is a case of Negative Concord within PP. The negative value of the preposition *sem* ('without') is attested in (36b), where the underspecified polarity item *qualquer* ('any') acquires negative content under the c-command of *sem*.

(36)   a.   Ele fez   o   trabalho   *sem*   *nenhuma* dificuldade.
             he made the assignment without no   trouble
             'He made the assignment with no trouble.'

        b.   Ele fez o trabalho *sem qualquer* dificuldade.
             'He made the assignment without any trouble.'

5. Negative Words and Sentence Negation

An alternative analysis must be devised to account for Negative Concord without relying on projections specifically conceived to deal with sentence negation. The data previously observed suggest the following assumptions: *(i)* In Negative Concord languages N-words have inherent negative features; *(ii)* Negative Concord is a consequence of Neg-Absorption.

Two main problems remain to be explained: *(i)* How to account for the fact that in some Romance languages postverbal negative constituents require the presence of a preverbal negative element? *(ii)* How to explain that Romance languages vary in allowing for the occurrence of the sentence negative marker with a preverbal negative constituent?

The first problem, i.e. the requirement on the presence of the negative sentence marker whenever the negative phrase occurs in postverbal position, covers the examples in (37) as well as those in (38). In both cases the reason that determines the presence of the negative marker seems to be the same: possessing intrinsic negative content, N-words must occur in negative domains.

(37) a. *Ele leu *nada* a *ninguém.* (European Portuguese)
      he read nothing to nobody

   b. Ele *não* leu *nada* a *ninguém.*
     he not read nothing to nobody
     'He did not read anything to anybody.'

(38) a. *A quem tem *ninguém* ultimamente oferecido livros?
      to whom has nobody ately offered books

   b. A quem *não* tem *ninguém* ultimamente oferecido livros?
     to whom not has nobody lately offered books
     'To whom hasn't anybody offered books lately?'

This claim is compatible with the fact that negative words may fix the polarity value of these domains, when they occupy an adequate structural position. This is what happens with *ninguém* ('nobody') in (39).

(39) *Ninguém* leu *nada* a *ninguém.*
   nobody read nothing to nobody
   'Nobody read anything to anybody.'

In fact, as often mentioned, in languages with preverbal negative markers, like European Portuguese, sentence negation only applies when an overt negative item has scope over the tensed verb before Spell-Out (see Zanuttini (1991)).

Zanuttini (1997) argues that this requisite is a consequence of the hierarchy of sentence functional projections: PolP —NegP1 in Zanuttini (1997)— selects TP as its complement, so a negative item in PolP c-commands $T°$. Yet, this explanation cannot be correct, or (38a), represented in (40), should be well-formed, since *ninguém* ('nobody') c-commands $T°$ in (40).

(40) *$[_{CP}$ a quem$[_{C°}$ tem$_i]$[$_{PolP}$ ***ninguém*** $[_{Pol°} t_i][_{TP}$ ultimamente oferecido livros]]]

Instead, the following generalisation seems to capture the relevant scope requirement.

Generalisation:

In languages presenting preverbal negative markers, sentential negation only obtains if, before Spell-Out, an overt negative item takes scope over the verbal element which has checked Tense.

A negative item has scope over a verbal head either by incorporation (this is the case for the sentence negative marker *não* ('not') in (37b) and (38b)) or by local c-command, as it happens with preverbal negative phrases, like *ninguém* ('nobody') in (39).

6. Absorption and the Domain of Negation

Romance languages differ in what concerns the availability of occurrence of a preverbal negative phrase with the negative sentence marker. This is impossible in languages like European Portuguese and Italian, but allowed in French and Catalan:

(41) a. **Nunca não* dissemos tal   coisa!   (European Portuguese)
          never   not   said.1pl   such a thing
          'We never said that!'

      b. **Niente di buono   non* potrà accadere.   (Italian)
          nothing good   not   can   happen
          (Zanuttini 1991: 112)

(42) a. *Personne n'*   a   rien   dit.   (French)
          nobody   not has   nothing   said
          'Nobody said anything.'

      b. *Ningú*   (no) ha   vist *res.*   (Catalan)
          nobody   (not) has   seen anything
          'Nobody saw anything.'
          (Espinal 1998)

The examples in (41) contrast with those in (43), where Absorption between the two preverbal negative constituents has operated.[6] In (41) cancellation of negation obtains.

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6. The examples (i) and (ii) do not challenge the relevance of Neg-Absorption. Since it operates in Logical Form, in overt Syntax the negative constituents must occupy adequate positions. As shown in (iii) and (iv), independently from Negative Concord, the structures in (i) and (ii) are problematic.

   (i) [??]*Ninguém nada*   leu.
        nobody   nothing   read

   (ii) [??]*Nada(,) ninguém* leu.
        nothing   nobody   read

   (iii) a. [??]*Ele nada*   leu.
            he   nothing   read

        b. **Ele o*   *livro* leu.
            he   the   book   read

   (iv) a. [??]*Nada*, ele leu.
            nothing   he read

(43) a. *Nunca ninguém* disse isso. (European Portuguese)
　　 never nobody told me that
　　 'Nobody ever told me that.'

　　 b. *Nessuno mai* mi aveva parlato così. (Italian)
　　 nobody never CL_{dat} had spoken like that
　　 'Nobody has ever spoken to me like that.'
　　 (Zannuttini 1991)

Exploring, in a different way, an idea already presented for English (cf. Newson (1998) and Peres (1997)), I would like to propose that, in these languages and in the core case, the domain of negation be restricted to the scope domain of the negative marker. This one includes the elements the negative marker incorporates into and c-commands, but excludes the subject and the other preverbal constituents.[7] This claim is further confirmed by the unavailability of a negative reading for polarity items with no intrinsic negative content in preverbal positions —see (26) above. Only the occurrence of an overt negative marker in Cº or the presence of negative constituents in preverbal positions extends the negative domain of sentence negation to the whole sentence, as indicated by the bold brackets in (44).

(44) a. [$_{CP}$a quem [*não* tem *ninguém* ultimamente oferecido livros]]?
　　 to whom not has nobody lately offered books
　　 'To whom hasn't anybody offered books lately?'

　　 b. ela saiu [$_{CP}$ *sem* cumprimentar ninguém]
　　 she left [without greeting nobody]
　　 'She left without greeting anybody.'

　　 c. [*nunca* o Pedro esteve tão feliz!]
　　 never [the Pedro was so happy]]
　　 'Never before has Peter been so happy!'

This hypothesis suggests an explanation for the incompatibility of preverbal negative constituents with the sentence negative marker in languages like European Portuguese. In these languages the sentence negative marker has strong negative features, so it is the most relevant element to fix sentence negation. The unacceptability of examples like (45a) results from a scope conflict: the preverbal negative phrase extends the negative domain to the whole sentence, while the overt negative marker restricts it to its scope domain, XP in (45b).

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7. Although the negative marker has not scope over preverbal constituents, the whole sentence acts like a negative domain in coordination, indicating that the negative features percolate from the head to the maximal projection.

　　 (i) Ele *não* viu a Ana e a Maria *também não*.
　　　 he not saw the Ana and the Maria neither
　　　 'He did not see Ana and neither (did) Mary.'

(45) a. *Ninguém não leu   esse livro.
         nobody   not read that book

   b. *[$_{IP}$ *Ninguém* [$_{XP}$ *não* leu esse livro]]

This conflict does not arise with *ne* in French, nor with *no* in Catalan —see (42). Based on the French data, I will assume, that what explains the compatibility between preverbal negative constituents and the negative marker in these languages is the fact that the negative head has weak negative features, or, as in Catalan, is undergoing a process of changing of the strength of its negative features. In these circumstances, the negative marker does not strictly delimit the domain of sentence negation. This proposal is apparently confirmed, in French, by the exclusion of the strong negative marker *pas* from these contexts.

(46) *Personne* (n') est *pas* arrivée.

Considering (45), a question must be answered: why is it that Absorption does not apply? I assume that Absorption cannot operate across different negative domains. It must apply to a single negative domain, though this one may be extended across sentence boundaries as in the cases of long distance Negative Concord, as in (47). In these sentences, the syntactic and semantic properties involved convert the main and the subordinate clauses into a single complex scope domain for sentence negation (cf., for instance, Giannakidou and Quer (1997)).

(47) *Não* quero que tu   dês esse retrato a *ninguém.*
        not   want that you give that picture to nobody
        'I do not want you to give that picture to anybody.'

7. Conclusion

Summarising, I would like to emphasize the main proposals presented in this study:
— N-words exhibit intrinsic negative content. They must occur in negative domains,
   though they may contribute to fix their the negative polarity, whenever they
   appear in the relevant structural position. In what concerns the sentence projection, the negative domain is determined by a strong overt negative element
   which has scope over the verbal element which checked Tense before Spell-
   Out (the negative sentence marker or a Negative item).
— Negative Concord involves multiple constituents with inherent negative content. The crucial operation in allowing for Negative Concord is Neg-Absorption,
   which applies at LF over a single local negative domain, and converts different instances of negation into a single complex negative unit.

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