

Negative Concord in Afrikaans: filling the typological gap

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Negative Concord (NC) is the phenomenon where not every morphosyntactically negative element corresponds to a semantic negation. It has long been noted that NC languages appear to be of different types. Giannakidou (2000) distinguishes Strict NC from Non-strict NC languages. In Strict NC languages every negative indefinite (henceforth *n-word*, following Laka's (1990) terminology) must be accompanied by the negative marker. In Non-strict NC languages, by contrast, the negative marker must accompany postverbal n-words, but may not occur in clauses containing preverbal n-words. The distinction is illustrated by means of Czech (Strict NC) and Italian (Non-strict NC) in (1) and (2) below.

Zeijlstra (2004) argues that the Strict vs. Non-strict NC distinction is due to the semantic status of the negative marker: Italian *non* is semantically negative, whereas Czech *ne* is not. Assuming (i) that semantic negation must outscope vP in order to yield sentential negation (cf. Penka (2007)); (ii) that every n-word must be outscoped by a semantic negation (cf. Ladusaw (1992)); and (iii) that semantically non-negative material may license an abstract negative operator the Czech and Italian patterns follow immediately.

In Czech no overt negative element is the phonological realisation of the negative operator. Therefore an abstract negative operator induces the semantic negation and this operator, immediately c-commanding all morphosyntactically negative elements, ensures a semantic negation at LF.

In Italian, postverbal n-words must be licensed by a negation outside vP. This is either *non* (as in (2a)) or a preverbal n-word that, in its turn, is licensed by an abstract negative operator (as in (2b)). Co-occurrence of a preverbal n-word and a following *non* would violate the constraint that all n-words are outscoped by the semantic negation.

If this analysis is correct, the following picture emerges: in Non-NC (i.e. Double Negation (DN)) languages, every negative element corresponds to a semantic negation; in Strict NC languages, no overt negative element carries semantic negation; and in Non-strict NC languages, only negative markers carry semantic negation. N-words do not. This division highlights a typological gap: languages where n-words are semantically negative, but negative markers are not. In this paper, we argue that Afrikaans is a language of this type, thus filling the typological gap as indicated below:

	N-words semantically negative	N-words semantically non-negative
Negative markers semantically negative	DN languages: Dutch, German, Scandinavian	Non-strict NC: Italian, Spanish, Eur. Portuguese
Negative markers semantically non-negative	Afrikaans	Strict NC: Czech, Greek, Hebrew

That n-words in Afrikaans are semantically negative can be shown by demonstrating that any two co-occurrences of n-words standardly yield a DN reading. This is indeed the case in Afrikaans, as shown by Van der Wouden (1994) and Biberauer (2008) (see (3)).

On the other hand, Afrikaans negative markers may be stacked without adding a semantic negation. The only effect of inclusion of additional, redundant negative markers is to signal emphasis (cf. 4a); conversely, omission of the standardly required negative marker (clause-final *nie*) also does not result in loss of negative meaning (further evidence that in Afrikaans it is the n-word that is inherently semantically negative), as shown in (4b)

The only case where the negative marker is required in Afrikaans is in negative sentences lacking an n-word (5). Here, the negative marker functions to signal the abstract negative operator, similar to e.g. the Czech negative marker. Again, a second negative marker may be included, but this does not bring in any additional semantic negation.

The data above confirm the analysis that Afrikaans' n-words are semantically negative, whereas Afrikaans' negative markers are not. The fact that this fills the typological gap predicted in

Zeijlstra (2004) is taken to be further support for the assumption that internal variation with respect to the different types of NC resides in the lexicon.

- (1) a. Milan *nikomu nevolá* Czech
 Milan n-body NEG-call
 ‘Milan doesn’t call anybody’
 b. Dnes *nikdo *(ne)volá*
 Today n-body NEG.calls
 ‘Today nobody is calling’
- (2) a. Gianni *non* ha telefonato a *nessuno* Italian
 Gianni NEG has called to n-body
 ‘Gianni didn’t call anybody’
 b. *Nessuno (*non)* ha telefonato
 N-body NEG has called
 ‘Nobody called’
- (3) a. *Niemand* het *niks* teen Hans gesê *nie* Afrikaans
 N-body has nothing against Hans said NEG
 DN: ‘No-one said nothing against Hans’ ‘everyone said something against him’
 b. Hy het *niemand niks* gegee *nie*
 He has no-one nothing given NEG
 DN: ‘He gave no-one nothing’, i.e. he gave everyone something
- (4) a. Hy het *niks (nie)* teen Hans gesê (*nie*)
 He have nothing NEG against Hans said NEG
 NC: ‘He said (absolutely) nothing against Hans’
 b. Hy het *nêrens* tuis gevoel (*nie*)
 he has nowhere at-home felt NEG
 NC: ‘He felt at home nowhere’, i.e. he didn’t feel at home anywhere
- (5) Ek verstaan **(nie)* sy redenasie (*nie*) Afrikaans
 I understand NEG his reasoning NEG
 ‘I don’t understand his reasoning’

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