Negation patterns across dialects

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In this work we consider two opposite sorts of Romance varieties with respect to the negative marker, i.e. an Occitan variety where the preverbal negative marker alone is so much reduced that it can nowadays only occur in some specific syntactic contexts and two Venetan varieties where the preverbal negative marker is so widespread that it even displays strict negative concord. We will show that despite being so different, both types of dialects are sensitive to the modal environment and that the presence of the preverbal negative marker is tied to a subset of non-veridical contexts, i.e. those that contain a [−realis] verbal form.

Keywords: negation, Occitan dialects, Northern Italian dialects, modality

1. Introduction

The Jespersen cycle and the way negative markers are renewed is an ever green topic of French syntax and from the seminal work by Zanuttini (1997) also of Northern Italian dialects. Lot of work has concentrated on the way the new negative marker establishes itself, in which contexts it occurs first and what properties it displays in relation to other negative elements in the clause. In this work we rather concentrate on the old negative marker, which in Romance is generally represented by the alveolar nasal plus a vowel n + V+(n). The research question we intend to answer is the following one: can we identify common factors that enhance the presence of the preverbal negative marker across Romance? The hypothesis we will put forth is that modality is at least one of the factors that favor the presence of the preverbal negative marker in varieties that are losing the preverbal negative marker but also in those which use it more than standard Italian or Spanish. This means that among the factors influencing the Jespersen cycle (JC), we have to include modality, a proposal that to our knowledge has never been made so far. In order to do so, we will compare two dialects that are at the opposite poles of the JC spectrum, namely the Eastern Occitan variety of L'Escarène in the Nice hinterland

(France) and two North Eastern Italian varieties, the one spoken in Zemignana, at the borders of the provinces of Padua and Venice and Venetian.

While in L'Escarène the preverbal negative marker is progressively disappearing and is maintained in a limited number of contexts, in Zemignana and Venice it is very well preserved. It then extends the usage of the preverbal negative marker and gives origin to the so-called phenomenon of strict negative concord (we use here the definition by Zeijlstra 2007). In other words, the negative marker occurs both with pre- and postverbal n-words, differently from standard Italian, which is a non-strict negative concord language.

Despite being at the two extremes of the spectrum of the life span of the preverbal negative marker, the Occitan and Venetan varieties considered display some surprising similarities, which can lead us towards interesting observations on the syntactic interaction between negation and modality. As we will see, in both dialects the preverbal negative marker appears more frequently in modal contexts. We will show that the abstract common feature that has an impact on the distribution of the negative marker is the same in both cases and has to do with the [−realis] status of the construction/context.

2.   The data

2.1   L'Escarène

The first interesting observation that comes from the data gathered on Escareasc is that this dialect displays at the same time all the three stages of the Jespersen's cycle.[1] The first one is the occurrence of a preverbal negative marker alone (*noun*), the second one shows a combination of the preverbal marker with a postverbal element (typically *pa*) and at the third one, only the postverbal marker emerges. Although there is a part of variation, these three types of negation correspond to different structures.

2.1.1   *Single postverbal marker*

Negation is more frequently expressed with a single postverbal element, the un-marked *pa*, or another n-word such as *plu, rèn, jamai, degun*, and this structure emerges mainly in independent or main clauses, so with the indicative (1).

(1)   a.   Sabi   pa.
          I.ᴋɴᴏᴡ not
          'I do not know'.

      b.   Parti   pa souvèn.
          I.ʟᴇᴀᴠᴇ not often
          'I do not go away very often.'

      c.   Sènte   bouòn, troves   pa?
          It.sᴍᴇʟʟs good,   you.ᴛʜɪɴᴋ not
          'It smells good, don't you think?'.

      d.   I fèn   pu   atencioun.
          it we.ᴅᴏ ɴᴏ.ᴍᴏʀᴇ attention
          'We no longer pay attention to it.'

      e.   Fèii rèn   couma lis autres.
          I.ᴅɪᴅ nothing like   the others
          'I did not do anything like other people.'

      f.   Si   sau jamai.
          ʀᴇғʟ know never
          'You never know.'

      g.   Veirès   pu   degun.
          ʏᴏᴜ.sᴇᴇ.ғᴜᴛ ɴᴏ.ᴍᴏʀᴇ nobody
          'You will not see anybody anymore.'

      h.   Si   pouor pa faire beure u ase   que a   pa set.
          ʀᴇғʟ can   not make drink a donkey that has not thirst
          'You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink.'

      i.   Voudrìi   pa que m'=;en=vourguesses.
          I.ᴡᴀɴᴛ.ᴄᴏɴᴅ not that to.ᴍᴇ=of.ɪᴛ=you.ᴡᴀɴᴛ.sʙᴊᴠ.ɪᴘғᴠ
          'I would not want you to hold it against me.'

      j.   Cresi   pa que vouoron i   anar.
          I.ᴛʜɪɴᴋ not that they.ᴡᴀɴᴛ there go
          'I do not think that they want to go there.'

It is also found in embedded indicative or Infinitive clauses (2), but less frequently with other N-words than *pa*.

(2)   a.   Siou sugur que ti   sies   pas assè   pausà.
          I.ᴀᴍ sure   that you.ʀᴇғʟ you.ᴀʀᴇ not enough rested
          'I am sure that you did not rest enough.'

b. Pensi   que as   pa rasoun.
I.THINK that you.HAVE not right
'I think that you are not right.'

c. M=al   dich que pouia   pa lou faire perqué
to.ME=he.H̲a̲s̲ ̲s̲aid that he.COULD not it do   because
arribavapa   a s'=endurmir   bouòn' oura.
he.CAN.PST not to REFL=fall.ASLEEP good   hour
'He told me that he could not do it because he was not able to fall asleep
early.'

d. Ai   paur de pa saupre mi desbroulhar.
I.HAVE fear of not know   me manage
'I am afraid that I will not know how to manage.'

e. Es l'istòria d'un ase   qu'a   jamai quità lou siou païs.
It.IS the story of a donkey that he.HAS never left   the his   village
'It is the story of a donkey who never left his village.'

f. Dèia   sèmpre que pouria   faire rèn.
he.SAID always that he.COULD do   nothing
'He would always say that he could not do anything.'

g. Fa   quinze ans qu'èri   plus   vengù.
it.MAKES fifteen years that I.WAS no.MORE come
'I have not come for fifteen years.'

h. Pènsi   que troveras   degun per t'=ajuar
I.THINK that you.FIND.FUT nobody for you=help
'I think that you will not find anyone to help you.'

As we will see the contexts in which the preverbal negative marker can occur alone
are quite different.

2.1.2   *Single preverbal noun*

– *imperative clauses.*   The preverbal negative marker *noun* obligatorily occurs
alone with the imperative, in the singular (expressed by the Infinitive) and in the
plural (expressed by the subjunctive).

(3) a. Parle=mi!
talk.IMP.SG=to.ME
'Talk to me!' (singular)

a′. Parlà=mi!
talk.IMP.PL=to.ME
'Talk to me!' (plural).

b. Noun mi=parlar!
NEG to.ME=talk.INF
'Don't talk to me!' (singular)

b′. Noun   mi=parlès!
NEG to.ME=talk.SBJV
'Don't talk to me!' (plural).

As the examples in (3) show, the form of the negative imperative (3b),(3b′) is not the same found in positive imperatives (3a),(3a′), and the singular corresponds to an infinitival form. This type of phenomenon has been reported and analyzed by Zanuttini (1997) for Italian (see below).In the plural, the verbal form is the subjunctive one and also displays the preverbal marker *noun*.

2.1.2.2 *embedded clauses.*   The other typical context in which the preverbal negative marker occurs, once again without any postverbal negative marker, are subjunctive and conditional embedded clauses, whether it is a completive (4) or a circumstantial clause (5).[2]

(4) a. Voudrìi   que noun plòuguesse.
         I.WOULD.LIKE that NEG   rain.SBJV.IPFV
         'I would like it not to rain.'
     b. Voudrìi   que noun partesses.
         I.WOULD.LIKE that NEG   YOU.LEAVE.SBJV.IPFV
         'I would like you not to go.'
     c. Pensi   que noun siguès   embilaia.
         I.THINK that NEG   YOU.ARE.SBJV.PRS ANGRY.F
         'I think that you are not angry.'
     d. Carìa   que noun lou trouvès.
         it.MUST.BE.COND that NEG   it he.FINDS.SBJV.IPFV
         'It would be necessary for him not to find it.'
     e. Titoun es d'avis   que noun si=pourria   faire   pu   ben.
         Titoun is of.OPINION that NEG   REFL=CAN.COND DO.INF more well
         'Titoun thinks that that it could not be done better.'

(5) a. Scounde   acò, que noun   lou=trove.
         hide   this,   that NEG it=find.SBJV.PRS
         'Hide that, so that he cannot find it.'
     b. Era   stacà   en un piqué per que noun pousquesse   courre en
         It.WAS hitched in a post for that NEG   it.CAN.SBJV.IPFV run   in
         lou prà.
         the meadow
         'It was hitched to a post so that it could not run in the meadow.'

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2. The corpus does not allow to test the relative clauses, more investigation is still needed, but we expect the same behaviour in relative clauses.

c.   Se noun m'=eloigni,   pilhi   pa un dangier.
     If NEG me=I.WALK.AWAY.IND, I.TAKE not a   risk
     'If I do not walk away, I do not take a risk.'

These observations strongly suggest that there is a correlation between the presence of the negative marker *noun* and the mood of the verb. Considering that imperative and subjunctive share an aspectual [−realis] meaning/feature, this feature could trigger the occurrence of the preverbal *noun*, here without any postverbal negative marker. Another piece of evidence in favor of this analysis is the presence of the preverbal *noun* in if-clauses (5c), by definition [−realis], despite the absence of the subjunctive mood.

At this point, a kind of complementary distribution appears between these two negative markers, the postverbal marker emerging in a [+realis] clause, while the preverbal marker is devoted to [−realis] interpretations. This corresponds to the situation of the dialect spoken in Nice (Nissart), which represents a later stage of the diachronic evolution of negation.

2.1.3   *Preverbal noun and postverbal marker*

In Escareasc, which is more archaic than Nissart, a third type of negation combines this preverbal element *noun* and a postverbal marker. It occurs sometimes in independent/main clauses (6), and more frequently in embedded clauses whatever the mood, subjunctive (7) or indicative/Infinitive (8):

(6) a.   Lis enfans, noun lis   ai   pa vist.
          the children, NEG   them I.HAVE not seen
          'I have not seen the children.'
     b.   N'=aimes   pa quarqu'un?
          NEG=you.LIKE not someone?
          'Do you not like someone?'
     c.   N'=avìa   rèn   audì ni degun.
          NEG=it.HAS nothing heard nor nobody
          'He had not heard anything or anyone.'
     d.   Noun sabi   plus!
          NEG   I.KNOW anymore
          'I do not know anymore.'
     e.   Li cuòl(s) de Nissa e   de Castilhoun noun soun pa tròu aut(s).
          the passes of Nice and of Castillon   NEG are   not too high
          'The Nice and Castillon passes are not too high.'

(7) a.   Carìa   que noun plòuguesse   pu.
          it.MUST.BE.COND that NEG it.RAINS.SBJV.IPFV anymore
          'It would be necessary for it not to rain anymore.'

b. Mi=farìa   tout plen plesir   que noun
to.ME=it.MAKES.COND all   full   pleasure that NEG
lou=desias   pa.
it=you.SAY.SBJV.PRS not
'I would be glad if you did not say it.'

c. A   paour que noun sabés   rèn.
she.HAS fear   that NEG   YOU.KNOW.SBJV.PRS nothing
'She is afraid that you do not know anything.'

d. Esperèn que noun partés   pa encara.
we.HOPE that NEG   YOU.LEAVE.SBJV.PRS not yet
'We hope that you are not leaving yet.'

e. Vouor   que noun digés   rèn.
he.WANTS that NEG   YOU.SAY.SBJV.PRS nothing
'He wants you to say nothing.'

f. Quèn   que noun regardés   degun.
it.MUST.BE that NEG   look.SBJV.PRS nobody
'You must look at no one.'

(8) a. Si=crese   que noun sabi   rèn.
REFL=she.BELIEVES that NEG   I.KNOW nothing
'She believes that I do not know anything.'

b. Cresi   pa que noun parles   pa.
I.BELIEVE not that NEG   you.TALK not
'I do not believe that you do not talk.'

c. A   paour que noun parles   pa.
she.HAS fear   that NEG   you.TALK not
'She is afraid that you will not talk.'

However, except in subjunctive embedded clauses (obligatory displaying *noun* alone), this structure seems to alternate freely with the former one (9).

(9) a. Noun sabi   pa cenque fon   en la journaia. Sabi   pa cenque
NEG   I.KNOW not what   they.DO in the day   I.KNOW not what
fon   en la   journaia.
they.DO in the day
'I do not know what they do during the day.'

b. Ma noun vourìi   pa lou=laissar enfermà touta la   semaa. Ma
but NEG   i.WANT.PST not it=leave.INF locked   all   the week   but
aurii   pa vourgù lou=laissar serrar touta la   semaa.
i.HAVE.PST not wanted it=leave.INF serrar all   the week
'But I did not want to leave him shut up inside all week long.'

    c.   Noun deu   pa èstre tardi. Deu   pa èstre ton tardi.

        NEG   it.MUST not be.INF late   it.MUST not be.INF very late

        'It must not be (very) late.'

    d.   Noun cresi   pa que vouòrgon   veïr.   Cresi   pa que

        NEG   I.THINK not that they.WANT.SJBV.PRS come.INF I.THINK not that

        vouòrgoun   veïr.

        they.WANT.SJBV.PRS come.INF

        'I do not think that they want to come.'

Although the informants claim that there is no semantic-pragmatic difference in these pairs, one can wonder if it is not a remnant of an older system where different aspects were distinguished, as it has been reported by Camproux (1958) or Lafont (1967).[3] Even if the speakers are not aware of this fact, the presence of *noun* here could actually manifest an aspectual value.[4]

    We conclude our brief tour of negation by pointing out that the preverbal negative marker can only occur alone (a) with negative imperatives, (b) with [−realis] forms (present and past subjunctive, future indicative, conditional). We will now see how these two contexts are also special in Venetan varieties.

2.2   Venice

In Venetian, and more generally in Venetan dialects, negative imperatives are either marked through a different type of negative marker, which is not the head / no/ with a closed vowel, but /nɔ/ with an open vowel, which is also the form of pro-sentence negation:

(10) Ti vien?

      You come?

      'Are you coming?

      Nɔ.

      no

      'No, I am not.'

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3. For a detailed presentation, see Oliviéri et Sauzet (2016: 348–349).

4. We also have to notice that our corpus contains some exceptions, although very few, such as the following ones:

    Parles pa. / Noun parles. 'You do not talk'

    Noun plouravi. / Plouravi pa. 'I was not crying.'

    A par acò, noun vouòri de bèn en degun 'Otherwise, I do not like anybody.'

    Perqué noun travalhes? 'Why don't you work?'

    Se counouisses degun, ti farai rescountrar de gèns d'aicì. 'If you do not know anybody, I will introduce you to people from here.'

    Noun mi plas que degun noun m'invite jamai. 'I don't like it that nobody ever invites me.'

(11)   nɔ   tocar,   sa!
       NEG touch, PARTICLE
       'Do not touch!'.

(12)   nɔ   dirghe   cossí
       NEG tell.HIM so
       'Do not tell him so'.

Interestingly, the "normal" preverbal negative marker with a closed vowel is only possible if the auxiliary *sta*, a reduced form of the verb 'stay', 'remain' is added, as noted by Kayne (1992), who analyzes this as a modal auxiliary:

(13)   No   sta   tocar,   sa!
       NEG MOD touch, PARTICLE
       'Do not touch!'
       No   sta   dirghe   cussí
       NEG MOD. tell.HIM so
       'Do not tell him so'

One might wonder whether the pro-sentential form of the negative marker is actually a substitute for both negation and the modal auxiliary. If we compare Venetian and Escareasc, we immediately notice that in both languages imperatives require a special type of negative marker (or in Venetan an additional modal auxiliary). Zanuttini (1997) puts forth the generalization that those Romance languages that have a preverbal negative marker must substitute true imperative forms with suppletive forms.[5] Zanuttini's idea is that imperative forms lack the Tense projection, which is required by the preverbal negative marker, and therefore must be substituted through a form which projects it, otherwise the NegP projection cannot select TP as its complement. This analysis readily explains why the verbal form must change when a preverbal negative marker is present, but does not account for cases in which it is the negative marker that changes and not only the verbal form. Venetian and Occitan are parallel in the sense that imperatives require a special type of negative marker (or alternatively Venetian also has a different repair strategy as the modal auxiliary, and in this case it can use the standard negative marker, as noted above).

The second special case found in L'Escarène has to do with [−realis] verbal forms, and there does not seem to be any parallel between Venetian and Escareasc in this case, since Venetian always has the preverbal negative marker with all types of verbal inflection. However, there are some hints that something like modality is

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5. She defines a true imperative as a form which is unambiguously only imperative and not homophonous with any other verbal form.

relevant also for negative concord in Venetan as well. To show this, we will present data from Zemignanese, another Venetan dialect spoken in the mainland about 30 kilometers from Venice.

2.3   Zemignana

As mentioned above, Zemignanese, on a par with other Venetan dialects of the Venice province allows for strict negative concord. In Zemignanese negative concord is less frequent than in the Venetian variety we have examined above, and in particular strict negative concord seems to be limited in embedded clauses by the type of main verb. Here we report an investigation made in Solivo (2017) on 30 native speakers through a judgement test: subjects were required to place the same sentence with and without negative concord on a scale from 1 to 5.[6]

(14)   Credea che nianca   (no)l vegnese casa   magnare
       Thought that not.EVEN not he came   home eat. INF
       'I thought that he would not even come home to dinner'.

(15)   Me incorzo sempre tardi che nianca   (no)l ghe ze   el Sabo
       Me notice   always late   that not.EVEN (not) he   there is the Saturday
       de sera
       of night
       'I always notice too late that he does not even come home on Saturday night'.

In general, both variants, with and without strict negative concord are possible, although differences emerge in the judgements. The results are provided in the following tables:

The first table is referred to an embedded clause under the verb *credere* 'believe', which requires the subjunctive form in both positive and negative clauses. The second table referred to an embedded clause under the verb *incorzarse* 'to notice', which requires an indicative form on the embedded verb. We can conclude that one of the factors favoring the occurrence of the additional negative marker in strict negative concord contexts is modality.

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6. The judgement task included 50% of fillers and two conditions: mood selection on the embedded verb and main verbs that imply the truth of their complement. These two conditions were tested for the following n-words *gnanca* 'not even' *neancora* 'no yet' *nisuni* 'nobody' and *ninte* 'nothing'. In total there were 48 task sentences administered to the subjects in one session.
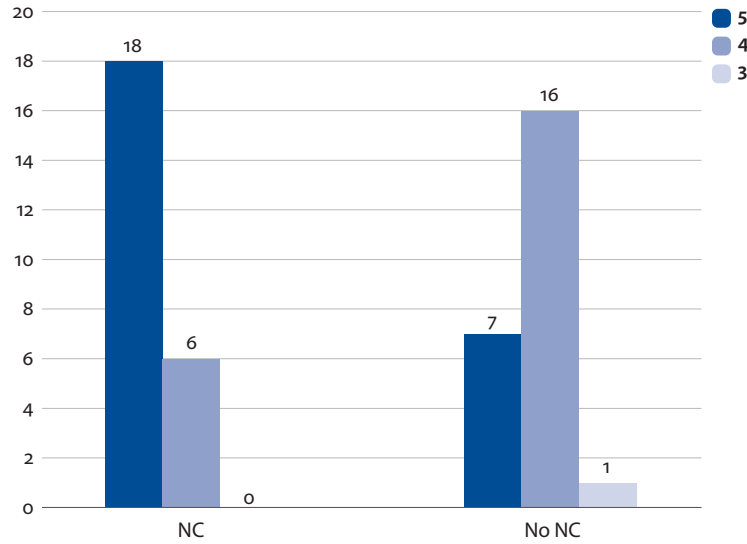
Figure 1. Negative concord with the main verb *credare* 'believe' and the adverb *nianca* 'not even'
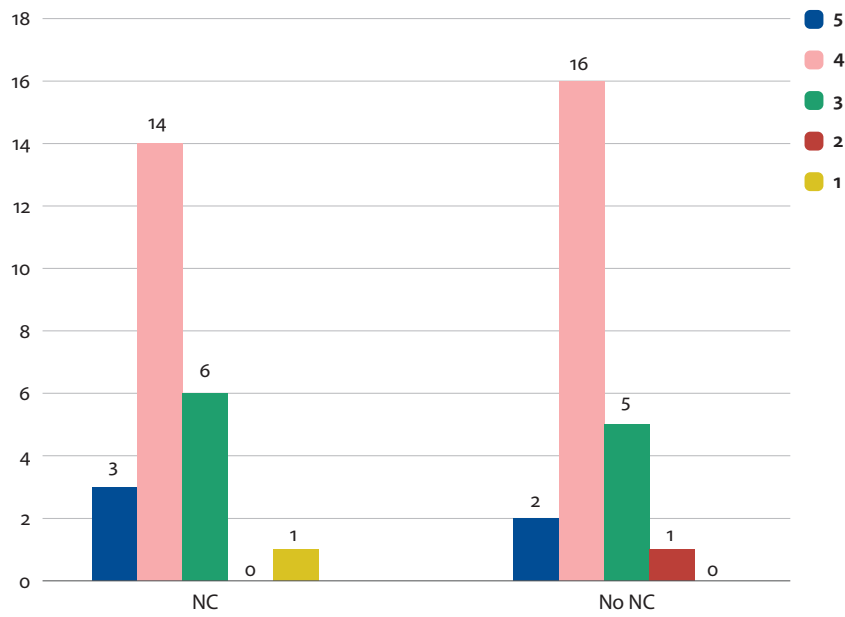

Figure 2. Strict NC with the verb *incorsarse* 'to notice' and adverb *nianca* 'not even'

3. Putting the pieces together: Negation and modality

Summing up what we have seen so far, we see that in the Occitan dialect of L'Escarène there are two contexts in which the preverbal negative marker is still preserved and can appear alone: (a) the first is the case in which the inflected verb corresponds to a subjunctive or conditional form, i.e. a [−realis] for, (b) the second is the negative imperative context, which is also [−realis].

In Venetian we also find something similar to (b), i.e. as noticed by Zanuttini (1997) real imperatives and the standard preverbal negative marker are incompatible. In Venetan negative imperatives use a different type of negative marker (in this case the pro-sentence negation) or another repair strategy with a modal auxiliary. Also Venetan dialects display sensitivity to other [−realis] verbal forms, as Zemignanese clearly shows for the extension of strict negative concord to modal environments. At this point, we wonder if there is a way of unifying these contexts in both languages. If we consider subjunctive and imperatives as two different forms of modality which both express a sort of [−realis] macrofeature, then we have the parallel we were looking for. This has the advantage that we can have a unify analysis for all contexts in both L'Escarène and Venetan: the preverbal negative marker tends to occur in modal [−realis] contexts.

This in turn means that in order to tie preverbal negation to modality in negative imperatives we need to reformulate Zanuttini's proposal in the following way: it is not the lack of Tense that blocks the co-occurrence between the preverbal negative marker with true imperative forms. It is rather the necessity to have a modal agreement between [−realis] modality and negation and this agreement can either be morphologically expressed by changing the verb into a different form or by changing the negative marker into a different form or both. More specifically, we would like to adopt Kayne's (1992) idea that the preverbal negative marker licenses a null modal element and this is the reason why in negative imperatives clitics can occur in proclisis, while in positive imperatives they only occur in enclisis even in languages like French, which do not have any other context where object clitics are enclitics. Kayne provides several arguments in favor of the presence of a null modal in negative imperatives, one of which we have already considered, namely the presence of a lexical modal auxiliary in Venetian (see above (13)). Since in Venetian the modal auxiliary is visible, it is difficult to deny its existence. The basic idea we put forth is thus that the different form the negative marker takes in negative imperatives is an agreeing form which is able to license the null modal auxiliary. There are several languages that display a richer morphology on the element

licensing a null category, like for instance Celtic languages, where null subjects are related to a stronger form of agreement on the verb. The idea to apply Kayne's hypothesis concerning the presence of a modal in negative imperatives thus explains not only (a) the presence of a lexically realized modal form in Venetian (b) the infinitival form of the lexical verb (c) the possibility of proclisis, but also (d) the different morphology of the negative marker, which is different precisely because it has to license the null modal. The reason why negation can license a modal can be seen as an effect of a sharing of the [−realis] features, or in semantic terms by the fact that both negation and modals are non-veridical, as Giannakidou (1998) pointed out.[7] The licensing of null elements through a procedure of agreement is actually rather standard (pro drop is but an example of this) so that the fact that negation can license a null modal while other elements do not is not surprising.

This means that languages like Greek, which have special forms for the negative marker in modal contexts are similar to those Romance languages where we see that imperative forms change into something else when the negative marker is present. There are other Romance varieties where we see the same effect, i.e. negative imperatives do not change the form of the verb but rather the form of the negative marker. One such case is the Rhaetoromance dialect of San Leonardo examined in Poletto and Zanuttini (2004), where the usual discontinuous negative marker *ne…nia* is substituted by the negative marker corresponding to pro-sentence negation (like in Venetian) *no*, which can occur pre- or postverbally:

(16)　Maria ne vegn nia/mine a ciasa.
　　　'Maria isn't coming home.'
　　　*Ne　le fa　nia/mine!
　　　　Not it　do not
　　　'Do not do it!'
　　　*Nia/mine le fa!

(17)　Ne le fa no!
　　　'Do not do it.'
　　　No le fa!

Notice that here it is not the verbal form which changes into an Infinitive, subjunctive or gerund, as it is the case in other Romance varieties, it is the negative marker that changes, so that the postverbal part of the discontinuous negation is substituted by the pro-sentence negative marker, which can also occur preverbally cancelling the preverbal morpheme. Furthermore, as expected under Kayne's analysis, the clitic can only be proclitic in these cases.

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7. This predicts that other non-veridical contexts like wh-interrogatives should also display the same pattern. At present, we are testing this for Venetan.

The idea that the change in the verbal form in negative imperatives is the counterpart of the change in the form of the negative marker and that both do not have to do with the lack of a Tense projection, but are rather the result of a null modal being licensed has the advantage to cover both phenomena under the same explanation. If we assume that the [−realis] feature is actually what Giannakidou refers to as non-veridical contexts, we actually expected them to have common properties, and that in some languages this is expressed through morphology. If we are correct in our view, the presence of the preverbal negative marker is sensitive to non-veridical contexts both in Romance languages that are losing it and in varieties that have extended it to strict negative concord, since this derives from a general Agree procedure. At this point one might wonder why postverbal negation does not agree (and license) the null modal, but actually there are sporadic cases in which the postverbal negative marker licenses the null modal, so that we see an infinitival form of the lexical verb depending on the modal. This has already been noticed in Benincà and Poletto (2004) for Emilian dialects where the lexical verb has an infinitival form, but the negative marker is the postverbal *mia*[8]:

(18) Movrat   mia
      Move.INF.YOURSELF not
      'Do not move'.

One might wonder why it is the case that postverbal negation licenses the null modal only in few dialects, while the preverbal negative marker invariably does so. If we make a parallel to the most well-known case of agreement, namely subject-verb agreement, we notice that V to T is in general a pre-requisite for the licensing of null subjects in SpecT. This means that since the preverbal negative marker, which is structurally close to the null modal can license it, while postverbal negation, which is not structurally close to the modal does so only in a far more restricted set of languages.

Summing up: assuming that the preverbal negative marker and the modal auxiliary agree for the [−realis] feature explains the following facts (a) why we find alternation between lexical and null modals (exactly as we find alternation between pro and lexical subjects) (b) why sometimes the negative marker changes its form, since the different morphology is the effect of the agreement procedure (c) why the infinitival form, i.e. the null modal selecting it is found mainly with the preverbal negative marker and only rarely with the postverbal one, since Agree

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8. Notice that here the clitic is in enclisis, but this is actually expected in the NIDs, since they generally have no clitic climbing even with lexical modals. Notice furthermore that these dialects have no preverbal negative marker.

plus movement licenses null elements more frequently than Agree by itself (see Guasti & Rizzi 1999 for a discussion on this).

Furthermore, it also explains why we find the preverbal negative marker with imperatives and [−realis] verbal forms in both varieties that are losing the prever-bal negative marker and varieties in which the preverbal negative marker is stable.

4. Conclusion

In this work, we have examined two opposed sets of dialects: on the one hand an Occitan variety, which is losing the preverbal negative marker and on the other hand two Venetan dialects, where the preverbal negative marker occurs in con-texts that are generally banned from standard Romance languages like Italian and Spanish. We have noticed that there are some surprising symmetries in the occur-rence of the preverbal negative marker, which allow us to establish a natural class of constructions, namely [−realis] verbal forms including subjunctive, condition-al, future indicative and negative imperatives. We have put forth an explanation in terms of agreement between non-veridical operators which share a [−realis] feature through a standard Agree operation. Since negative concord is seen as an agreement procedure, it is also plausible to think that other types of non-veridical operators like modals are subject to a similar procedure of Agree. This opens up the possibility to capture two sets of phenomena: (a) the change in the verbal form in negative imperatives and (b) the change in the form of the preverbal negative marker found in some dialects. Furthermore, it also explains why cases of null modals are also sporadically found with postverbal negative markers, though this is not the standard case as it is with the preverbal negative marker: this asymmetry is the same found with Agree+copy (i.e. movement) with respect to Agree with-out any further operation. If this idea proves to be correct for other languages, it might lead to consider modality as one of the factors involved in the JC, which is either generally considered of phonological origin, as Jespersen himself first hy-pothesized, or can depend on some pragmatic values (like focusing negation, as put forth by van der Auwera in various recent papers, see van der Auwera 2010; van Alsenoy & van der Auwera 2014). For future research, we leave the problem of the position of the preverbal negative marker, which might be related to features located in the left periphery of the clause, either through verb movement (as in the case of negative imperatives) or by selection (as in if-clauses, or embedded subjunctives).

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