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Quantifiers as negative markers in Italian dialects*

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In this work we consider the diachronic development of two distinct types of negative markers, those originally stemming from minimizers (m-negation) and those originally deriving from a negative quantifier (q-negation).
We provide evidence in favor of the hypothesis that, despite appearances, they do not follow the same grammaticalization path. We claim that the distinct syntactic position of the two types of negation in the modern dialects depends on the distinct evolution path they have taken, which in turn depends on their original properties. While minimizers change their position during the grammaticalization cline, q-negation stays in the same position throughout the whole process. If this is correct, it means that Jespersen's cycle is not syntactically homogenous and that the result of a postverbal negative marker can be achieved by means of various strategies.

Keywords: negation; minimizers; quantifiers; Jespersen's cycle; Old Italian

1. Introduction

In her seminal work on negation in Italo-Romance, Zanuttini (1997) shows that negative morphemes in Italo-Romance varieties can be subdivided into four main classes according to the position they occupy in the clause structure. These positions, which she labels as Neg1, Neg2, etc., are represented in (1)

(1) $[\text{NEGP 1 } [\text{TP 1 } [\text{NEGP 2 } [\text{TP 2 } [\text{NEGP 3 } [\text{ASP Perfective } [\text{NEGP 4 }]...]]]]]]$

Neg1 is the position of preverbal negations like standard Italian *non*; Neg4 is the lowest negative morpheme. Neg2 and Neg3 are postverbal negations which are differentiated by the fact that the former (for instance Piedmontese *pa*) generally precedes Tense Anterior adverbs like 'already', while the latter (for instance Piedmontese *nen*) appears inside the field of aspectual adverbs (Cinque 1999).

(2) a. A l'è **pa** gia andait a ca'. (Piedmontese, Zanuttini 1997, 70)
        SCL SCL is NEG already gone to home
        'He has not already gone home.'

   b. *?A l'è **nen** gia andait to ca'.
        SCL SCL is NEG already gone to home
        'He has not already gone home.'

(3) a. *A l'è gia **pa** andait a ca'. (Piedmontese, Zanuttini 1997, 70)
        SCL SCL is already NEG gone to home
        'He has not already gone home.'

   b. A l'è gia **nen** andait a ca'.
        SCL SCL is already NEG gone to home
        'He has not already gone home.'

The position of NegP2 and NegP3 with respect to adverbs is different, moreover the two negative markers can cooccur and NegP2 always precedes NegP3:

(4) I n mandj **pa nia** soni nkoe. (S. Leonardo Rhaeto-romance)
    I NEG eat NEG NEG potatoes today

In this work we concentrate on Neg2 and Neg3, which share an interesting property: both classes are made of elements derived from quantifiers originally merged in object position. These elements have been grammaticalized and in many cases their morphology is not identical to the corresponding quantifier in synchrony.

In this paper we observe that, even if both Neg2 and Neg3 were in origin object quantifiers, the two classes etymologically derive from two distinct types of quantifiers. Neg2 markers derive from grammaticalized minimizers (and we refer to them as 'm-negation'), which in origin appeared as the head noun of a complex DP structure followed by an obligatory PP complement. Neg3 markers derive from the bare negative inanimate quantifier corresponding to English 'nothing' (we refer to them as 'q-negation'). Thus, the different etymological and syntactic origin of the two quantifiers corresponds to a different syntactic position in synchrony when they are reanalyzed as negative markers, as Zanuttini has shown.

In this work we consider the diachronic development of m-negation and q-negation and provide evidence in favor of the hypothesis that, despite appearances, they do not follow the same grammaticalization path. We claim that the distinct syntactic position of the two types of negation in the modern dialects depends on the distinct evolution path they have taken, which in turn depends on their original properties.

At first sight, the diachronic development of these two types of postverbal negative markers is similar and obeys the usual stages of the well known Jespersen's cycle. The first stage is preverbal negation (we use examples from Piedmontese texts reported by Parry 1992; 1996 and p.c.):

(5) a. Ni **non** poessa provarse che al fesa
        neither NEG could prove that he did

        contra l'estatu. (Ordinamenti 138)[1]
        against the law

        'It could not be proved that he acted against the law.'

   b. E se **non** volesa confesarse. (Ordinamenti 172)
        and if NEG wanted to confess-REFL
        'And if he did not want to confess.'

In the second stage they both start out by cooccurring with the preverbal negative marker, as the following examples show.

(6) E che l'error d'el main **ne** sia
    and that the mistake of the hands NEG be

    nent desmentià. (Comedia de l'homo)
    NEG forgotten

    'May hands' mistake not be forgotten.'

(7) Una bona donzenha e n'basta **pa**. (Ballouria 48)
    a good dozen it NEG is-enough NEG
    'A good dozen is not enough.'

At this stage they are still optional (see Parry (1996) for Piedmontese), but later on they become obligatory (this is the stage in which Piedmontese was in the XVII century and the modern Rhaeto-romance varieties of S. Leonardo di Badia and Gardena are nowadays for q-negation and some Emilian dialects are for m-negation):

(8) An tocca **nen** a mi. (El Cont Piolét 213)
    NEG touches NEG to me
    'It is not my turn.'

(9) I n mandj **nia** soni nkoe. (S. Leonardo Rhaeto-romance)
    I NEG eat NEG potatoes today
    'I do not eat potatoes today.'

In the final stage the postverbal negative marker is the only negative marker of the clause, which is the stage Piedmontese is in nowadays for q-negation and spoken French is for m-negation:

(10) S'a fussa **nen** fasne la spiegasion. (Pipino 135)
     if it were NEG done the explanation
     'If it were not explained.'

Although both negative markers seem to follow the same general grammaticalization cline, we claim that at a closer inspection, the evolutionary paths of the two types of negative markers are not similar. Q-negation does not change its position

from the beginning to the end of the process which transforms it into a negative marker. The reason for this is that the original object bare quantifier corresponding to 'nothing' in Old Italian already raises to a position dedicated to bare negative quantifiers in the functional domain of the clause, even when it is an object. When it is reinterpreted as an adverb, only the empty copy in object position is deleted, but the spell out position of the quantifier remains the same. On the contrary, m-negation changes from a DP internal position to an adverbial position located in the lower portion of IP, passing through a stage in which the original N indicating a small quantity and taking an object PP is reinterpreted as a functional item (a quantifier) of its original object DP. Only at this stage can the quantifier move into the functional domain of the clause to a position dedicated to existential quantifiers, which is not the same as the one occupied by q-negation. Therefore, the distinct position of the two negative markers originally observed by Zanuttini is a consequence of the value of the two original quantifiers which are then reanalyzed as negative markers.

The article is organized as follows: in Section 2 we provide a backward description of the diachronic path that q-negation has undergone, starting from the modern varieties and then showing that at the intermediate stage when q-negation is used as a reinforcer, it is sensitive to the aspectual properties of the verb and that this is linked to its position in the aspectual IP field already proposed in Cinque (1999). Furthermore, we show that the original negative object quantifier can already raise higher than the past participle in Old Italian and has therefore not changed its position from the beginning to the end of the cycle.

In Section 3 we analyze m-negation, which is originally a non negative object DP. It first has to be reanalyzed as a (non-negative) quantifier, which can then be moved to the space dedicated to quantifiers in the low IP portion, but crucially not to the same position of the negative quantifier.

In Section 4 we draw a comparison between the two diachronic processes and highlight some further perspectives for future research.

2.   Q-negation

2.1   Q-negation in the modern dialects

The type of negative marker stemming from the bare quantifier 'nothing' has received little attention in the literature on Romance (apart from Zanuttini's work), probably because it is only used in non standard Romance varieties, contrary to Germanic varieties, where the same type of negative marker has been widely investigated. In the Northern Italian domain, q-negation has developed into the standard negative marker in the dialectal areas of Piedmontese and some

Rhaeto-romance dialects (while in others it still combines with the preverbal negative marker, see Example (9)):

(11) a. A   parla   nen.   (Piedmontese – Turin)
          SCL speaks NEG
          'He/she does not speak.'

      b. Al ven   nia.   (Rhaeto-romance – Corvara)[2]
          he comes NEG
          'He does not come.'

Notice that the element is still homophonous with the negative quantifier meaning 'nothing' in Rhaeto-romance, while in Piedmontese, though etymologically related, the two words for the negative marker and the negative quantifier are nowadays different: *nen* is the negative marker, while *gnente* is the word for 'nothing'.

Generally, this type of negative marker is either not compatible with negative quantifiers, as in Rhaeto-romance:

(12) a. *I   n   a   nia   ody degugn.
           I   NEG have NEG   seen no one
           'I have not seen anybody.'

      b. I   n   a   ody degugn.
          I   NEG have seen no one
          'I have not seen anybody.'

Otherwise, there are strong restrictions on the co-occurrence between the two, which cannot be adjacent:[3,4]

(13) a. *A'm   dis   nen gnente.   (Piedmontese, from Zanuttini 1997)
           SCL me tells NEG nothing
           'He does not tell me anything.'

      b. *A veddu nen gnun.
           I see   NEG nobody
           'I do not see anybody.'

Zanuttini (1997) already notes that this type of negative marker occupies a very low position in the functional structure of the clause, as shown by the following examples which exploit the position of low adverbs to show the point:

(14) a. A   l'avia già   nen volu   'ntlura. (Piedmontese, Zanuttini 1997)
          SCL it had already NEG wanted then
          'He hadn't already wanted at that time.'

      b. A   l'ha   nen dine sempre tut.
          SCL it has NEG said always everything
          'He has not always said everything.'

The following detailed structure is the one proposed by Zanuttini on the basis of Cinque's hierarchy of low adverbs.

(15) [...[T Anterior *already* [ASP Terminative *anymore* [FP NEG [ASP Perfective
       always [ASP Completive *tutto*]]]]]]

An additional argument in favor of the hypothesis that q-negation is very low in
IP is the fact that in V2 Rhaeto-romance dialects, the negative marker is topicalized
to (some) SpecCP together with the verb:

(16) **Nia** desmentié ne podun-se döta chë jënt   che...
       NEG forget   NEG can-we all   those people who...
       'We cannot forget those people who...'

In these dialects, q-negation is treated as the negative morpheme which does not
trigger any special pragmatics, and is compatible with any verb type or structure
and possible with any sentence type in main as well as in embedded domains.[5]
Therefore, we draw the conclusion that it has completely grammaticalized into a true
negative marker. Unfortunately, the existing older texts for Piedmontese do not have
many instances of negative clauses showing the actual development of q-negation,
because the development was already completed around 1500. They only show
very generally that Piedmontese *nen* has undergone the Jespersen's cycle. As there
are virtually no data from Rhaeto-romance for the relevant time period, we will
resort to other varieties where we can observe the process more clearly.

In view of the diachronic path we are trying to establish, we will first examine
the behaviour of this negative marker originating from a quantifier in those Italian
varieties where it is not (yet) the standard negative marker, but nonetheless is
already a negative 'reinforcer' roughly meaning 'at all'. We take modern Venetian
and Old Italian (namely Old Florentine) into account.

2.2 An intermediate stage: non standard q-negation

Modern Italian and most Italian dialects have an adverb form *per niente* meaning
'at all'. The distribution of bare 'nothing' in Veneto dialects is restricted, and we
think revealing, with respect to the corresponding complex AdvP *per gnente*, which
also means 'at all'. Veneto varieties (where the negative marker is still a preverbal
morpheme *no*) have started, but not completed the process of turning the adverb
into a real negative marker with negative force of its own. This is the reason why
this can be more telling in view of the diachronic process we investigate here.

The syntactic position of the item *gnente* in Venetian is the same as the one
reported by Zanuttini for the standard negative marker *nen* in Piedmontese: it
occurs after the adverb *più* 'anymore', and *zà* 'already'.[6]

(17) Nol   ga più   dormio **gnente**, da   chela volta. (Venetian)
       NEG-SCL has anymore slept nothing since that time
       'Since then, he did not sleep at all anymore.'

(18) Nol   dorme zà **gnente**, co tuto sto casin. (Venetian)
       NEG-SCL sleeps already nothing, with all this noise
       'There is already the problem that with this noise he does not sleep at all.'

The element *gnente* 'nothing' seems *prima facie* incompatible with a direct object
of transitive verbs, with unaccusative and passive subjects:

(19) a. Nol   lavora **gnente**.   (Venetian)
          NEG-SCL works nothing
      b. Nol   dorme **gnente**.
          NEG-SCL sleeps nothing
      c. *Nol   leze **gnente** i   libri.
          NEG-SCL reads nothing the books
      d. *Nol   magna **gnente** la me torta.
          NEG-SCL eats nothing my   cake
      e. *Nol   riva **gnente**.
          NEG-SCL arrives nothing
      f. *Nol   ze sta arestà **gnente**.
          NEG-SCL is been arrested nothing

This has recently been noticed for some varieties of English and German by
Bayer (2008), who shows that direct objects and adverbial *nichts/nothing* are
incompatible and assumes that the negative adverb is actually located in the object
position inside the VP.

If this were the correct empirical generalization for Venetian too, q-negation
would thus be possible only with real intransitive verbs, which have no object as
shown in (19). This set of data might at first sight lead the observer to the conclu-
sion that, though q-negation is not an object but an adverbial element, it is still
merged in object position (and then moved). This would be the reason why it is
incompatible with anything else occupying the object position (either object of
transitive verb, unaccusative subjects or passives). However, a closer look at the
phenomenon reveals a more complex picture.

A subclass of unaccusative verbs are indeed compatible with q-negation,
and the same is true of subjects of psych-verbs which, according to Belletti-Rizzi
(1988), should be parallel to unaccusatives in having a subject generated in the
object position:

(20) a. No   la crese **gnente**.   (Venetian)
          NEG SCL grows nothing
      b. Nol   me piaze **gnente**.
          NEG-SCL me likes nothing

The distinction internal to the class of unaccusative verbs is the one proposed by Tortora (1997): inherently directed motion verbs are incompatible with q-negation, while non inherently directed motion verbs are indeed compatible with it.

Moreover, q-negation is not per se incompatible with an element in object position, if the object is a bare plural (defining some sort of activity, like 'read books'), the combination is indeed possible. Consider the following contrast:

(21) a. *Nol   me   leze **gnente** i   libri, sto fio.   (Venetian)
        NEG-SCL to.me reads nothing the books this boy

    b. Nol   me   leze **gnente** libri, sto fio.
        NEG-SCL to.me reads nothing books this boy

One might be lead to think that there is a distinction between definite and indefinite objects, but consider the following example:

(22) %Nol   salta   **gnente**.   (Venetian)
        NEG-SCL jumps   nothing
        *'It does not jump.'
        OK (said of a long jump athlete) 'He does not jump much.'

A verb like *saltar* 'jump' is intransitive, hence it should be compatible with q-negation. However, it is not, unless the interpretation is one of activity (for instance in the context of a professional long-jump athlete, whose job is to jump). The following contrast is even more illuminating:

(23) a. Nol   zola **gnente**, sto aereo di carta.   (Venetian)
        NEG-SCL flies nothing this plane of paper
        'This paper plane cannot fly at all.'

    b. *Nol   zola via   **gnente**, sto aereo de carta.
        NEG-SCL flies away nothing this plane of paper
        'This paper plane cannot fly away at all.'

While *zolar* 'fly' is an activity, *zolar via* 'fly away' is telic, and q-negation is only compatible with the first verb, though in neither of the two cases is there an object.

Hence, we cannot conclude that the relevant property in banning q-negation is the presence of an object. Rather, it must be related to some type of aspectual distinction which can be activated by the presence of a definite object, or be intrinsic to the type of verb or required by the presence of some verb modifiers.

That aspect is involved is also shown by cases of activity verbs which can be turned into achievements simply by adding a preposition and forming a phrasal verb. Venetian, just like English has a couple of verbs like 'eat' and 'eat up': *magnar* and *magnar fora* (literally 'eat out') where the first is an activity verb, while the second is an accomplishment verb:

(24) a. Nol   magna **gnente**.[7]   (Venetian)
        NEG-SCL eats   nothing
        'He does not eat at all.'

    b. %Nol   magna fora **gnente**.
        NEG-SCL eats   out nothing
        'He does not eat up at all.'

The second sentence is impossible in the relevant reading, unless the sentence is interpreted as considering 'eat up some X' a habit, hence turning again the verb into an activity one.[8]

Moreover, although all cases of telic verbs, accomplishment and achievement verbs are not compatible with q-negation, notice that also stative verbs, like 'live', 'be', 'stay' are banned with *gnente*:

(25) *Nol   vive **gnente** a Venessia.   (Venetian)
        NEG-SCL lives nothing in Venice
        'He does not live in Venice at all.'

Therefore, we propose the following empirical generalization:

(26) q-negation is only compatible with activities.

We will not enter a semantic explanation here, but rather focus on the fact that the adverbial use of the quantifier is sensitive to aspectual distinctions of the verb. How come this is so? To our knowledge, this has not been reported (at least in Romance) for other types of so called emphatic negation. The reason why this is so is, we think, related to the syntactic position occupied by the quantifier in the clause, which is a very low one in the aspectual field. In what follows we analyze the distribution of object *niente* in Old Italian (namely Old Florentine) and show that it moves from its object position to the low functional domain of the clause where aspectual features are encoded.

2.3 'Niente' in Old Italian

Old Italian has two forms for the bare negative quantifier corresponding to 'nothing': *niente* and *nulla*.

(27) a. Voi non avete fatto **nulla**.   (Tristano Riccardiano, 195)
        you NEG have done nothing

    b. E   non gli   par di aver fatto **niente**. (Cavalca., Esposizione, 1–31)
        and NEG to.him seems to have done nothing

Nulla can act as a negative article and agrees with the noun in number and gender, while *niente* never does:

(28) a. Come è bella cosa che l'uomo, quasi non potendo essere ferito
          how is nice thing that the man, almost NEG being.able to be hurt

          da **nulla** saetta, tutte le 'ngiurie e villanie dispregi.
          by no arrow, all the wrong and villainy dispises
                                                (Bartolomeo da San Concordio)

      b. De' quali tornesi non rimettemo **nullo** danaio in ghabella.
          of which *tornesi* NEG put no money in tax
                                                (Registro S. Maria di Cafaggio 1286)

      c. E dice, che intra li Serafini e Dio **nulli** Angioli
          and says that among the Seraph and God no other Angels

          altri sono in mezzo.
          are inbetween   (Ottimo Commento, 4)

      d. Gli uomini han **nulle** più vili cose che sè medesimi.
          the men have no more vile things than themselves
                                                (Tesoro volgarizzato da Bono Giamboni, 7–74)

The same form in the masculine, *nullo*, means 'nobody' and can have a plural form:[9]

(29) a. Che **nullo** faccia l'altrui officio.
          tha no-one do the other's work   (Capitoli di San Gilio, 2–9)

      b. E con iscala salirono in su le mura che non furono
          and with ladder climb on top the walls that NEG were

          da **nulli** sentiti.
          from no-one.PL heard   (Giovanni Villani, Nuova Cronica, 11–59)

Only the uninflected form *niente* can have an adverbial usage with the approximate meaning of 'at all':

(30) a. Questo cotale uomo sie certo che non t'ama **niente**. (Z. Bencivenni)
          this such man be sure that NEG you loves nothing

      b. E non dormono **niente**.   (Bono Giamboni, Vizi e Virtudi, 11)
          and neg sleep nothing

      c. Per ciò non si rallegrò **niente**. (Giovanni Villani, Nuova Cronica, 9–63)
          for this NEG REFL rejoiced nothing

Both forms can occur either in front of the past participle yielding optional OV order:

(31) a. E' non potrà tener **nulla** nascoso.
          he NEG will.be.able to.keep nothing hidden
                                                (Dante, Fiore, 159)

      b. Quando un altro gli domandò s'egli avea
          when another him asked if he had

          perduto **nulla**.
          lost nothing   (Tesoro volgarizzato da Bono Giamboni, 7–3)

This is true both when *niente* is the object and when it is as an adverb:[10]

(32) a. Per lo dì d'oggi, non abbiamo ancor mangiato **niente**.
          for the day of today NEG have yet eaten nothing
                                                (Tavola ritonda, 57)

      b. Io non avea niente letto tanto v'avea ancora a legere.
          I NEG had nothing read so.much there had yet to.read
                                                (Storia del San Gradale, 5)

      c. Coloro che non àno **niente** saputo di letera.
          those who NEG have nothing known of letter
                                                (Storia del San Gradale, 131)

(33) a. Queste laude intes'io bene, ma di tute l'altre no
          these praises understood I well, but of all the others NEG

          pote' io **niente** intendere.
          coud I nothing understand   (Storia del San Gradale, 7)

      b. Una cosa non si dee **niente** dimenticare.
          a thing NEG one must nothing forget
                                                (Tesoro volgarizzato da Bono Giamboni, 9–4)

      c. Egli non dovrebbe essere biasimato **niente**.
          he NEG should be blamed nothing
                                                (Tesoro volgarizzato da Bono Giamboni, 7–26)

We assume that the pre-participial position of the quantifier illustrated by the examples above is a dedicated position, as already proposed by Svenonius (2000). He describes the system of residual OV cases in Icelandic and provides arguments in favor of the idea that the cases of OV orders with negative quantifiers are instances of quantifier raising. He shows that these OV cases obey the typical restrictions of A' movement, like sensitivity to weak crossover violations, licencing of parasitic gaps, and no new binding possibility for anaphora. He further notices that QR is obligatory with negative quantifiers, while only optional (or for some speakers even ungrammatical) with other types of quantifiers.

A similar case in Romance quoted by Svenonius is the one of French *rien* (see a.o. Kayne (1975) and Obenauer (1998)). Kayne (1975) shows that French *tout/tous* 'everything' *chacun* 'each' and *rien* 'nothing' move from the VP internal position to a higher one crossing the past participle (or the infinitival verb selected by a modal).

Therefore the bare negative quantifier must occur to the left of the past participle, yielding OV, contrary to normal DP objects which are only VO:

(34) a. Il   n'a   rien   préparé.
          he   NEG has nothing prepared
      b. *Il   n'a   préparé **rien**.
          he   NEG has prepared nothing

Kayne explicitly states the transformation rule in terms of the category of quantifiers and connects the OV positioning of object quantifiers to the phenomenon of quantifier floating.

Cinque (1999) also shows that the quantifier *tutto* in modern Italian has a special dedicated positions in the low IP portion, it is located in the specifier of Completive Aspect, higher than the adverb *bene* 'well', located in VoiceP. The basic argument in favor of this analysis is that *tutto* must precede *bene* in an unmarked construction without any special focus.

Grewendorf and Poletto (2005) show that Cimbrian, a Germanic dialect spoken in the Italian Alps, is a VO language when the object is a DP, but the last cases of OV order retained by this language are precisely those with bare quantifiers. All these cases show that all bare quantifiers (even 'something', as Cimbrian shows) can move to dedicated positions outside the VP but still in the lower space for aspectual adverbs. There are other languages where quantifiers move in the syntax and we will not list them all here, we only notice that often negative quantifiers move more frequently than others (as noted by Svenonius), and that bare quantifiers are more prone to move than quantified DPs (as shown by Cimbrian). Beghelli and Stowell (1997) propose that there are at least three positions (RefP, ShareP and DistributiveP) where quantifiers can move, and that their scope properties derive from the position where the quantifier moves. The idea that different types of quantifiers move to different positions is also present in Haegeman (1995), who shows that there is a negative field to which negative quantifiers have to move in West Flemish.[11]

Therefore, in order to interpret the diachronic path of q-negation we will assume that (a) quantifiers move to dedicated positions (b) there is not a single position for all types of quantifiers, but several, each related to one type of interpretation.[12]

We will make the null hypothesis here that the OV instances with *niente/nulla* in Old Italian are similar to the other cases reported by Svenonius for Icelandic and Obenauer for French, though it is impossible to test sensitivity to weak crossover, parasitic gaps and binding possibilities with anaphora for obvious reasons.[13] Like in Icelandic, Cimbrian and French, the Old Italian bare quantifier *niente/nulla* can raise to a quantifier dedicated position crossing the past participle and yielding OV orders in a VO language.[14]

Notice that this is true irrespective of the value of the quantifier, which can either be an object or have adverbial usage, as the examples above show. Probably, the only difference between the two structures is the null copy in object position in the case of (33a), which is not present when *niente* has an adverbial meaning.

The position dedicated to the negative quantifier is evidently not a very high one as it occurs after the inflected verb in embedded clauses (Old Italian is a V2 language with verb movement to T^0 in embedded clauses; see Benincà (2006) on this). The generalization found for q-negation in Veneto dialects is evidence in favor of this idea: the quantifier moves to the aspectual field because there is a Q-position in that area (as shown by several languages) and there it interacts with aspectual features.[15] The crucial observation we have made on the basis of Old Italian is that movement to the aspectual field is not only possible in the case of adverbial *niente* but also for the direct object, as shown by Old Italian, Icelandic, French and Cimbrian. This is in a sense similar to Bayer's proposal because the position of the object and that of the adverb are the same, but reverses his perspective: it is the object which can raise to a quantifier position which can also be occupied by the adverb, not the adverb which is generated in object position.

The general conclusion of our analysis is that the position of the negative marker *nen* in Piedmontese, of adverbial *gnente* in Veneto and of object *niente* in Old Italian is always the same and it is a dedicated position to quantifiers. Therefore, this type of negative marker has never changed its original position as it often happens in cases of grammaticalization.

3.   Minimizer negation

3.1   M-negation in modern dialects

Many Italo-romance varieties display negative markers which derive from nouns expressing a small quantity, which were originally lexically related to their complement PP. We adopt here the term "Minimizer Negation" to indicate these elements (from now on simply m-negation). A partial list of m-negations, with their original referential meaning, is given in (35):

(35) 'step':   Piedmontese/Valdotain *pa*;
      'crumble': Emilian *brisa*; Milanese *miga/minga*; Veneto *mina/mia*; Italian *mica*;
      'bite':   Romansh *bucca*; Livigno Lombard *ca*
      'point':   Florentine *punto*;
      'thread':   Salentino *filu*;
      'flower':   Old Florentine *fiore*;
      'drop':   Old Venetian *gozo*.

Some of these elements have become negative markers (like *pa* in some Piedmontese dialects, *ca* in Livigno Lombard, or *bucca* in Romansh), while others have specialized as reinforcers of negation. There are two main groups of reinforcers of negation: on the one hand, adverbs which can be considered as equivalent to 'at all' in English – on the other hand, negative morphemes that are used to express the fact that an explicit or implicit assumption made by the interlocutor is wrong.[16] The difference between these two types is shown in (36), which also shows that dialects can have more than one type of reinforcer of negation.

(36) a. Mario un ha **punto** mangiato.   (Modern Florentine)
          M.NEG has   NEG   eaten
          'M. has not eaten at all.'

      b. Mario un ha **mica** mangiato.   (Modern Florentine)
          M.NEG has   NEG   eaten
          'M. has not eaten (as you have said/think).'

M-negations behave like a natural class of elements, since they display common syntactic properties. Usually they appear higher than adverbs encoding Aspect and Tense Anterior, this position is occupied by both standard negative markers and reinforcers of negation. Zanuttini (1997) proposes that this position is the specifier of a functional projection which she labels Neg2. Some examples showing that m-negations precede adverbs corresponding to 'already' are given in (37),[17] while the relevant part of the clause structure of Zanuttini's analysis (based on Cinque's (1999) hierarchy of adverbials) is provided in (38):

(37) a. A   l'ha **pa** gia   ciamà.   (Piedmontese, from Zanuttini 1997)
          SCL SCL has NEG already called
          'He has not already called.'

      b. I   n'an   **briza** beli   ciamà. (Emilian, from Colombini 2007, § 5.6.1)
          SCL NEG have NEG already called
          'They have not already called.'

      c. Non hanno **mica** già   chiamato.   (Italian, from Cinque 1999)
          NEG have   NEG already called
          'They have not already called.'

      d. Elts an   **buca** magliau trasora. (Romansh, from Manzini-Savoia 2005)
          SCL have NEG eaten   already
          'They have not already eaten.'

(38) [...[$_{FP}$ NEG [T$_{Anterior}$ *already* [ASP$_{Terminative}$ *anymore* [ASP$_{Perfective}$ *always* [ASP$_{Completive}$ *tutto*]]]]]]

Contrary to q-negations, m-negations can be adjacent to negative quantifiers. Notice that this behavior contrasts with that of French *pas*, which, even if it derives from a minimizer, cannot co-occur with a negative quantifier.

(39) a. A'm   dis   **pa** gnente.   (Piedmontese, from Zanuttini 1997)
          SCL me tells NEG nothing
          'She does not tell me anything.'

      b. A   veddu **pa** gnun.   (Piedmontese, from Zanuttini 1997)
          SCL see   NEG nobody
          'I do not see anyone.'

      c. Al n'i   **briza** arivà endsun. (Emilian, from Colombini 2007, § 2.3)
          SCL NEG is NEG   come nobody
          'Nobody has come.'

      d. A   n   vegn **mia** ninsün.   (Mantuan, from Manzini-Savoia 2005)
          SCL NEG comes NEG nobody
          'Nobody comes.'

The postverbal position of m-negations is the same in varieties which have (40a–b) and varieties which lack (40c–d) a preverbal negative marker:

(40) a. Non sente **mica**.   (Italian)
          NEG hears NEG
          'He cannot hear.'

      b. No ssienti **filu**?   (Salentino, from Rohlfs 1969)
          NEG hear   NEG
          'Don't you hear?'

      c. Lo film l'ëra **pa** dzen.   (Valdotain, from Zanuttini 1997)
          the movie SCL was NEG beautiful
          'The movie wasn't good.'

      d. El l'ha   **minga** scrivuu.   (Milanese, from Zanuttini 1997)
          He SCL has NEG   written
          'He has not written.'

However, in some varieties where the marker of standard negation is preverbal, m-negations can optionally appear in preverbal position. In this case, m-negation is the only negative element in the sentence (leaving aside additional n-words after the verb, as in (41c)), although it most probably does not occupy the same position of the preverbal negative marker, which is a head. We can explain these facts assuming that these elements carry an interpretable [Neg] feature or form a

compound with the negative operator in preverbal position, as in Zeijlstra's (2004) analysis of Negative Concord languages:

(41) a. **Mica** sente quello che dici.   (Italian)
        NEG hears that   that say
        'He does not hear what you are saying.'

     b. **Filu** sapimu la libbirtà.   (Salentino, from Rohlfs 1969)
        NEG   know   the freedom
        'We don't know what freedom is.'

     c. **Mica** abbiamo visto nessuno.   (Italian)
        NEG   have   seen nobody
        'We have not seen anybody.'

These examples show that reinforcers of negation like *mica* and *filu* can yield sentential negation and, therefore, have negative semantics. Thus we can consider them as negative markers.

3.2 Development of m-negations

All m-negations we deal with in this paper derive from nominal minimizers, that is nouns denoting "a negligible number, amount, or part of something" (Kiparsky-Condoravdi 2006, 2). In origin they appeared in semantically restricted predicates (as, for example, 'not eat a crumble of bread', 'not drink a drop of water', not move an inch (a step), etc.). In these contexts they were indefinite DPs with a prepositional complement containing another DP (the noun referring to the minimally quantified thing). These expressions can be described as emphatic negations, where emphasis is obtained negating the smallest grade of a scale. However, the minimizer retained its referential value, as shown by the lexical restriction imposed on it by the verb.

Examples of this type of quantity nouns exist in modern Italian (as in most languages), where the lexical restriction is retained:

(42) a. Non ha bevuto neanche   **una goccia** di alcool.
        NEG has drunk   not-even   a   drop   of alcohol
        'He did not drink a drop of alcohol.'

     b. Non ho incontrato **un cane.**
        NEG have met   a   dog
        'I met nobody.'

In (42a) the usage of *goccia* 'drop' is only a possible minimizer for liquids, while 'dog' in (42b) is the minimizer for animates. Vulgar minimizers also belong

to this class of quantity nouns (see Postal 2003), and share several properties with m-negations in their first evolutionary stage. Vulgar minimizers differ from standard minimizers in the fact that the last "denote minimal elements on some scale", while the former "are not narrowly restricted to particular dimensions, but can express minimality along many dimensions" (Postal 2003).

However, they behave as minimizers in that they can be modified, for example by adjectives, and can have PP complements (in this case, they have quantificational function over the noun inside the PP).[18,19]

(43) a. Non ho capito   **un emerito   tubo.**
        NEG have understood a emeritous pipe
        'I have understood nothing.'

     b. Non capiscono **un tubo di economia.**
        NEG understand   a pipe of economics
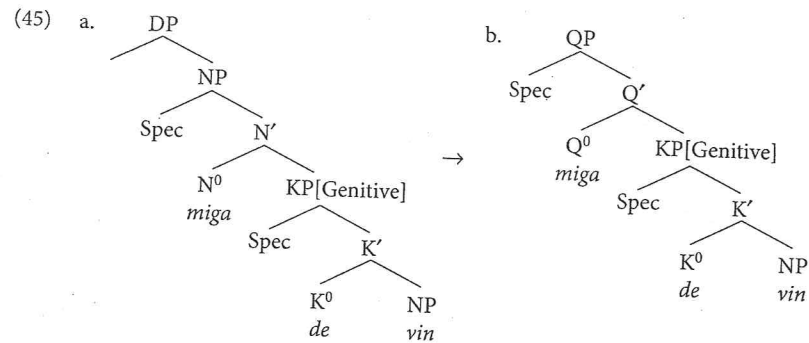   'They understand nothing of economics.'

This initial stage can be analyzed by adopting Giusti and Leko's (2005) typology of quantity expressions: minimizers in the first stage of their development can be described as Quantity Nouns.

Looking at the evolution of minimizers through Italo-Romance varieties, we see that the first attested stage is already beyond the lexical one exemplified by (42) and (43). The examples in (44) show that the minimizer *miga* in Old Milanese does not obey any lexical restriction, as it corresponds to the word 'crumble' and is associated with a liquid 'wine' in (44a) and with an abstract noun in (44b).[20]

(44) a. On   sté   de scisceri   e   **miga** de
        one staio of chickpeas   and MIGA   of

        vin   d'intrà.   (Lancino Curti 6–14)
        wine of income

        'One staio (20 l) of chickpeas and a little of wine as income...'

     b. Là   no   se   sente **miga** de male.   (Barsegapé 2430)
        there NEG   REFL feels MIGA   of pain
        'There one does not feel any pain.'

In this second step of the grammaticalization process, these elements are real quantifiers. A crucial property at this stage is that they do not receive obligatory negative interpretation and can be used in positive contexts as well: the context is positive in (44a), while in (44b) it is negative.

The development from Quantity Nouns to Quantifiers can be represented as in (45).[21]

(45) a.

```
              DP
              |
              NP
            /    \
         Spec     N'
                /    \
             N⁰       KP[Genitive]
            miga      /        \
                   Spec         K'
                              /    \
                            K⁰      NP
                            de      vin
```

→

b.

```
              QP
            /    \
         Spec     Q'
                /    \
             Q⁰       KP[Genitive]
            miga      /        \
                   Spec         K'
                              /    \
                            K⁰      NP
                            de      vin
```

At this point the minimizer has become a functional element and loses the typical properties of lexical nouns: its phi-features, the possibility of being modified, the possibility of taking PP complements and, more in general, any referential content. Standard Italian *mica*, which is a reinforcer of negation and derives from the Latin word for 'crumble' (*micam*) has lost all these properties. It cannot be modified (46a), cannot have a PP complement (46b) and cannot be used to express its original referential meaning (46c):

(46) a. Non   leggono   (*la minima) **mica** i   libri   gialli.
       NEG read   the minimal   NEG the books yellow
       'They do not read police novels.'

    b. Non   vedo   **mica** (*di) Mario questa sera.
       NEG see   NEG   of   Mario this   evening
       'I will not meet Mario this evening.'

    c. *…una   **mica** di pane.
        a   MICA   of bread

In some dialects traces of the original structure can still be found. For instance, in the Alpine Lombard variety of Quarna Sotto, when the m-negation *mia* is used, the object can appear in the genitive (partitive) case, even if it expresses a singular non-quantifiable entity:

(47) Nə   caman **mia** d əu te   frial. (Quarna Sotto, from Manzini-Savoia 2005)
     NEG-SCL call NEG of the your brother
     'They do not call your brother.'

After having become a functional element, the minimizer can undergo a further change: it is moved outside the object position where it was merged in origin.

The reason of this movement is the same we have seen above for q-negation: quantifiers move to dedicated positions in the low portion of IP even when they represent the object of the verb. At this stage the minimizer can appear alone, without any complement. We will use some examples with Old Italian *punto* in the following discussion. *Punto* can appear alone already in Old Italian (that is Old Florentine), as it is shown by the following examples:

(48) a. Perch'elli vive bestialmente, ed usa con quelli che bestialmente
       because he lives beastly   and stays with those that beastly

       vivono, né   da   loro **punto** si   parte.
       live   and-NEG from them PUNTO   REFL separates
                                              (Ottimo Commento, 19)

       '…because he lives as a beast and stays with those that live as beasts and
       does not separate from them.'

    b. In tutta la   detta oste non ebbe altra gente   che **punto**
       in all   the said   army NEG was   other people that PUNTO

       reggesse o   combattesse.
       resist   or fight   (G. Villani, Nuova Cronica, 11–216)

       'In all the foresaid army there was not anyone who did not resist or fight.'

Notice that at this stage *punto*, when used alone, is already in the position where m-negations are found, since it precedes adverbs corresponding to *(not) yet*, which, according to Cinque (1999), is in the same position of *already*, or a very close one. The reverse order is not attested.

(49) Elleno non poteano **punto** ancora essere trovate.   (Difenditore della Pace)
     they   NEG could   PUNTO   yet   to.be   found
     'They could not be found yet.'

However, in Old Florentine it is still possible to find the structure *punto di*. This suggests that the minimizer has not become a negative marker yet:

(50) Il re   d'Inghilterra fu   a   gran pericolo con sua oste […]
     the king   of England   was at great peril   with his army

     che 8 dì   stettono, che non ebbono se non poco   pane   né
     that 8 days stayed   that NEG had   but NEG little bread and-NEG

     punto di vino.
     PUNTO   of wine   (G. Villani – Nuova Cronica 13.66)

     'The king of England was in great peril with his army, since for 8 days they had
     not but a little of bread and had no wine.'

But in Literary Italian of the XVII and following centuries, which derives mainly from Old Italian, *punto* is always used alone, even if a quantifiable argument is present (which would require *punto di* in the previous stages of the language):

(51) a. Quanto a me, non ne   ho   **punto**   inquietudine.
         as   to me   NEG of-it have PUNTO   disturb
                                (P. Verri – Dialogo fra l'Imperatore Giuseppe II e un filosofo)
         'As for me, I am not disturbed at all by it.'

   b. (Non ho) **punto** paura!... Piuttosto morire, che bevere
       NEG have PUNTO   fear   rather   to-die   than to-drink
       quella medicina cattiva.
       that   medicine bad
                                                        (Collodi – Pinocchio)
       'I have no fear. Better to die than drink that bad medicine.'

As we have seen, m-negations occupy a precise position in the adverbial hierarchy, which is higher than Tense Anterior. At this point, the element originally quantifying over a DP has become a sentential element. Both standard m-negations and m-negations used as reinforcers appear in this position, which, therefore, seems to be irrelevant in order to distinguish between quantifiers and different semantic types of negation.

4. A comparison between m-negation and q-negation

We now go back to the original problem posed in the introduction. Is the diachronic evolution into negative markers of different postverbal XPs which appear to have undergone Jespersen's cycle the same, or is it different? We propose that the final positions of the two types of negative markers depend on their original status.

We have observed that minimizers are originally real DPs which take a complement genitive PP and can be modified by adjectives as any noun. We propose that the first step of the reanalysis is the one in which the minimizer is not the head noun anymore, but is turned into a quantifier of the DP whose lexical N is the original complement of the minimizer. At this point it can no longer be modified by adjectives or have a determiner. We have adopted Giusti and Leko's (2005) idea that quantity nouns and quantifiers are two different categories: in the case of minimizers the quantity noun becomes a quantifier. At this stage, the minimizer can raise to its dedicated position[22] but is still in the scope of the actual negative marker (which is the preverbal one). This is the stage documented by Old Italian. At a later stage, the minimizer itself is reanalyzed as the actual negative marker, but from this point on, it just stays in its dedicated position. This stage is the one

observed in modern dialects. So, the final position of the m-negative marker is still the one occupied by minimizers when they were quantifiers.

The path q-negation undergoes is different, as the original item is already from the beginning a negative quantifier, not a quantity noun. Therefore, it already raises to its dedicated position in the low IP portion (yielding OV orders in VO languages as Old Italian) and never changes its position. Given that the object quantifier already moves to a position inside the Aspectual field, reanalysis simply cancels the trace in object position and q-negation is directly merged in the FP where negative QPs move. This is the stage of modern dialects.

As the two original positions for minimizers and negative quantifiers are different, it follows that the position of the negative markers deriving from them will be different.

This amounts to saying that the positions where the negative markers occur are not to be labelled as NegP, which would then have the bizarre property of occurring at different heights in the sentence structure before TP1, before TP2, before or after AspP, contrary to all other functional projections CP, TP, AspP etc. which always come in the same order. No other functional projection seems to be able to jump around in the sentence as NegP is supposed to do. If our analysis of the diachronic path of m-and q-negation is correct, the positions where the negative markers are hosted are not intrinsecally NegPs, but they are still the specifiers hosting different types of quantifiers, namely what the negative markers used to be at an earlier stage of evolution.

5. Conclusion

In this work we have taken into account minimizers and the quantifier 'nothing' which become negative markers and have traced their diachronic path. A common property of the two types of elements is that they both start out as objects. In the case of m-negation, a noun becomes a quantifier and then raises to a position dedicated to quantifiers higher than Anterior Tense. In the case of q-negation, the element, being a negative quantifier, is already located in the functional space of the past participle and remains where it is. In this case reanalysis does not correspond to syntactic movement to a higher functional projection as it often happens in grammaticalization paths (see Roberts & Roussou (2003)). If our analysis is correct, it has the consequence that the two positions are not to be labelled as NegPs. They are the original quantifier positions of the two elements from which the two types of negative markers originate. If this analysis were to be extended to other types of negative markers, we could discover that there are not several NegPs in the clause, but at most one.

Notes

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1. The example is taken from the Piedmontese text *Ordinamenti dei Disciplinati e dei Racco-mandati di Dronero*, quoted by Parry (1996), end of the XIV or beginning of the XV century.

2. Notice that this structure is only possible for younger speakers, older speakers still use the same type of discontinuous negative marker exemplified by the examples of S. Leonardo reported in the introduction.

3. The same restriction reported by Zanuttini is also described by Parry (1992) for Cairo Montenotte, a dialect spoken at the border between Piedmont and Liguria.

4. There might be a relation between the fact that in Piedmontese N-words are compatible with the negative marker (modulo the adjacency restriction), while this is not the case in Rhaeto-romance and the fact that in Piedmontese the negative word 'nothing' is different from the negative marker, while in Rhaeto-romance they are identical.

5. One exception is the imperative form in S. Leonardo Rhaetoromance, which is not compatible with *n... nia*, but requires a different negative markers. Those speakers who only use *nia* for sentential negation and not the discontinuous form, can have *nia* in imperative contexts. See Poletto and Zanuttini (2003) for a detailed description of this phenomenon.

6. The phenomenon is rather widespread in the Veneto area, in some dialects the item can also occur without the preverbal negative marker, showing that *gnente* cannot be treated as a negative polarity item occurring in a negative concord structure.

7. This sentence is ambiguous between a reading in which *gnente* is the object of the verb *magnar* and a reading in which *gnente* means 'at all'. Obviously, we will consider only the second reading.

8. Notice however that the distinction cannot simply be one of telicity, as q-negation is not automatically compatible with any atelic verb: *sercar* 'to look for' is for instance atelic, but it is still incompatible with the negative quantifier.

(i) *Nol   serca   gnente   libri.
    NEG-SCL looks-for   nothing books
    'He does not look for books at all.'

Hence, the fact that *gnente* is incompatible with telic verbs seems to be only a by-product of a deeper property of the negative marker.

9. The form *nullo/a* is omophonous with the adjective meaning 'invalid' and as such it is found in predicative position:

(i) Le patte sono nulle.   (Tesoro volgarizzato da Bono Giamboni, 2–48)
     'Draws are invalid.'

10. I follow here Cinque's (2001) idea that constructions with modals and infinitival verbs are monoclausal in Romance, therefore examples with infinitival verbs or past participles are treated alike.

11. Brugger and Poletto (1995) make the same point on the basis of negative concord between the negative marker *nit* and k-words in Bavarian dialects, showing furthermore that the positions for negative quantifiers are all below the negative adverb *nie*, 'never'.

12. It is beyond the scope of this article to investigate the positions of each type of quantifiers, but notice that Beghelli and Stowell propose that the landing sites of quantifiers, namely RefP, DistP and ShareP are all higher than NegP. The fact that negative quantifiers are more frequently moved than other types might indeed suggest that the position(s) for negative QPs is lower than that for other types. This is actually what our data also indicate.

13. The database used here is the one of the OVI (Opera del Vocabolario Italiano) which contains all Old Italian texts. The occurrences of *niente* are 1914 in the corpus, but unfortunately there is no example with parasitic gaps, or binding relations that we can use as evidence.

14. We have tried to find occurrences of adverbial *niente* with adverbs in Old Italian, but we have not found any. The OVI data base has 24 cases of of *più niente* and one case of *ancora niente* where *niente* is the object and no cases of *niente più* or *ancora più* as our analysis predicts. No cases of *bene niente* or *niente bene* exist in the corpus.

15. We will not further pursue the problem concerning the interaction with Aspect here and concentrate rather on the comparison between the diachronic path of m-negation and q-negation.

16. See Cinque (1976) and Penello-Pescarini (2008) for a detailed discussion about the interpretation of *mica* in Standard Italian and other elements of this type.

17. See also the examples in the introduction.

18. In varieties of Central Italy it is possible to use vulgar minimizers as the unique negative element of a clause:

(i) a. So   un cavolo   chi   viene   stasera.
         know   a   cabbage who   comes   this evening
         'I do not know who will come this evening.'

     b. Sono   indipendenti un   cavolo.
         are   independent   a   cabbage
         'They are not independent.'

They are a very peculiar class of elements: on the one hand, they are in some sense more similar to nouns, since they can be modified and can take PP complements, what is not possible anymore for m-negations; on the other hand, they can be the unique negative element in a sentence, even in those varieties where the actual negative marker is preverbal. We leave a deeper analysis of these elements to future research, but it is clear that they must be considered together with m-negations and in some sense they appear to be in one of the previous stages of the historical development of minimizers into m-negations.

19. Notice that Postal (2003) argues that vulgar minimizers (at least in American English) are not negations. Furthermore, they never become the standard negation, while many varieties in Northern Italy have a standard m-negation. This fact could be related to their connotative meaning, which seems to be incompatible with pure functional items.

20. On negation in Old Milanese see Vai (1996).

21. An intermediate stage could be one in which the minimizer raises inside its DP to a [Num] position containing a silent numeral, as proposed by Déprez (1995; 1997) and Roberts and Roussou (2003) for French n-words, with the difference that in these cases the numeral does not correspond to zero, since the minimizer wasn't intrinsically negative.

22. It is possible to think that minimizers are a special case of existential quantifiers, we will not discuss this here.

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