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OLD VENETAN AND THE TYPOLOGY OF NEGATIVE CONCORD

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Abstract Partial and optional Negative Concord (NC) systems represent a challenge for any theory dealing with the syntax–semantics interface of negative dependencies. In this article I describe the NC concord system of Old Venetan varieties. These medieval northeastern Italo-Romance dialects present a system of partial strict NC. More precisely, Old Venetian is a strict NC language, while Old Paduan and Old Veronese allow the presence of some negative words in the pre-T(ense) space without the pre-T sentential negator. In the article I argue, also on the basis of a comparison with Modern Venetan dialects which have maintained a similar NC system, that strict NC, that is the presence of the negative marker, is a repair strategy emerging when the feature [uNeg] of negative words is blocked by other features, like [Focus], and is not able to make visible the covert negative operator *Op*.

1 Introduction

The typology of Negative Concord (NC) languages is one of the main aspects considered in recent studies on the relation between syntax and semantics in the system of negation. Since the comparative analyses conducted by Ladusaw (1992), Haegeman et al. (1995), Zanuttini (1997), Giannakidou (2000), Corblin & Tovena (2001), Zeijlstra (2004) and Longobardi (2014), among many others, there is a general consensus that there is a distinction between NC languages and the so-called 'Double Negation' languages, that is languages in which negative items[1] display compositionality effects, so that two negative items produce a semantic positive polarity.

(1) (a) *Ja ne videl nikogo.* Russian, Negative Concord
I not saw nobody
'I saw nobody.'

1 For the moment I adopt the pre-theoretical label 'negative item' to identify functional items associated with negative semantics. As it will become clear from the discussion, a formal characterization of these elements is crucial for any proposed analysis of NC.

(b) *Nikto menja ne videl.* Russian, Negative Concord
Nobody me not saw
'Nobody saw me.'

(c) *I did not see nobody.* English, Double Negation
= I saw somebody.

However, NC languages are not a uniform group. As originally discussed by Giannakidou (1997), who proposed the terminology I adopt here, there are two types of NC: strict and non-strict NC (see also Giannakidou & Zeijlstra 2017).

(2) (i) Strict NC: Any negative item always requires the presence of the marker of standard sentential negation, regardless of its position in the sentence.

(ii) Non-strict NC: The negative item can appear without the negative marker when it is in the preverbal space (more precisely in the pre-T space), or if there is another negative item in the preverbal space.

Following this distinction, Russian in (1 a and 1 b) is a strict NC language, while Modern standard Italian is a non-strict NC language, as exemplified in (3).

(3) (a) Italian, Neg item in preverbal position
Nessuno mi ha visto.
nobody me= has seen
'Nobody saw me.'

(b) Italian, Neg item in postverbal position
Non ho visto nessuno.
not have seen nobody
'I saw nobody.'

(c) Italian, Neg item+negation in preverbal position
**Nessuno non mi ha visto.*
nobody not me= has seen
= (3 a)

(d) Italian, Neg item in preverbal position+Neg item in postverbal position
Nessuno ha visto nessuno.
nobody has seen nobody
'Nobody saw anyone.'

This typology has been analysed taking into consideration the nature of negative items in the different languages. While negative items in Double Negation languages are almost unanimously considered true negative quantifiers, which introduce an independent negative operator, there is no similar consensus on negative items in NC languages. Some authors (Haegeman & Zanuttini 1996, De Swart & Sag 2002, and more recently, Iordăchioaia 2010) consider them negative quantifiers, postulating that there is some mechanism blocking the compositional interpretation of multiple negative operators. Other authors consider them a special type of negative polarity items (NPIs). This approach has been developed since Ladusaw (1992), and considers negative elements like the Italian *nessuno* 'nobody' as indefinites bound under the scope of negation or other non-veridical operators. These different analyses obviously offer different approaches to the strict/non-strict NC dichotomy. For example, Zeijlstra (2004) has developed a theory of NC considered as an instance of the operation Agree (Chomsky 2001). The feature involved in this operation is [Neg]: an interpretable negative feature [iNeg] marks the presence of an overt Negative Operator *Op*, while an uninterpretable negative feature [uNeg] marks the presence of a potential covert Negative Operator *Op*. In this approach, in languages with Double Negation like English, all the negative items (indefinites, adverbs and the negative marker *not*) are [iNeg], so they introduce multiple *Ops* in a clause, which interact semantically. On the other hand, in NC languages negation is encoded in syntax. Zeijlstra argues that strict NC is observed in languages where the standard negative marker carries a feature [uNeg], and has to be licensed by an abstract negative operator *Op*, like all the other negative elements of the clause. However, in non-strict NC languages, the standard negative marker has the feature [iNeg] and introduces the negative operator by itself. The absence of the negative marker with other preverbal negative words is explained in the following way. Negative words in preverbal position, that is higher than the position of the standard negative marker, do not c-command the Negative Operator, so they are not under its scope and cannot be licensed through Agree. For this reason, preverbal negative words in non-strict NC languages can self-license by triggering the insertion of a covert *Op* with the feature [iNeg] by virtue of their unlicensed [uNeg] feature. In this approach, thus, the typology of NC depends on the lexical specification of negative words regarding the feature [Neg]:

Negative marker	Negative words	
[iNeg]	[iNeg]	Double Negation language
[uNeg]	[uNeg]	Strict NC language
[iNeg]	[iNeg]	Non-strict NC language

Longobardi (2014) has developed a formal typology in a parametric schemata model, which accounts also for languages with post-T negative markers, like French or Piedmontese, or Germanic languages. This proposal is based on the interaction of the two features [+/-NOT], roughly corresponding to Zeijlstra's [i/uNeg], and [+/-ANY]. The latter is positively specified on elements receiving existential interpretation in the scope of negation. In other words, it identifies NPIs. The main hypothesis is that negative words in Romance are specified for both [+NOT] and [+ANY], while the pre-T negative marker is [+NOT] in Italian, but not, for example, in French, where only the post-T *pas* is [+NOT]. The non-strict NC configuration observed in languages like Italian or Spanish derives from a Fundamental Asymmetry Hypothesis: 'the +NOT value can always be interpreted (semantically activated) in pre-Infl (J.G *that is pre-T*) position (of the sentence over which it is meant to have scope) in all Romance languages. In post-Infl (J.G *that is post-T*) position (of the sentence over which it is meant to have scope) it is interpreted only if the simple propositional negation of the language is itself post-Infl (J.G *that is post-T*)' (Longobardi 2014: 288, see also Zanuttini 1997 on the Romance variation regarding the position of the negation marker). This explains why, in languages like colloquial French, negative items like *personne* 'nobody' can appear without the [+NOT] negation marker both in pre-T and post-T positions.

A fact that makes this picture more complex is the existence of languages where NC is optional, in the sense that it distributes according to the categorial status and the structural position of the involved negative items. For instance, Garzonio & Poletto (2012) have discussed the behaviour of *niente* 'nothing' in Old Italian, which can appear without the preverbal negative marker when it remains in the vP. Szabolcsi (2018) has analysed the different behaviour of pairs like *senki* 'nobody' and *senki sem* lit. 'nobody nor' in Hungarian: the first item requires the negation marker *nem* 'not', while the latter appears in the preverbal space without *nem*. In other words, the first element behaves as a strict, the second as a non-strict NC item. Notice that *nem* and *sem* are not equivalent, since *sem* may accompany negative words in postverbal position as well.

In this article I describe the NC system of three Old Venetan varieties: Old Venetian, Old Paduan and Old Veronese. These medieval Northern Italo-Romance varieties present more cases of strict NC than Modern, or even Old Italian (i.e. the variety attested by medieval texts from Florence). Even more interestingly, they present dialectal variation according to systematic and predictable parameters related to the type of negative element and its position in the clause structure. This type of variation strongly supports the view that negative items in NC systems are not identical to negative quantifiers of the

English type. However, it also shows that NC cannot be analysed uniquely in terms of the semantic properties of negative elements.

The article has the following structure. In section 2, I describe the NC system of Old Venetan both from a qualitative point of view and by a quantitative analysis of two selected texts. In section 3, I briefly compare the medieval varieties with Modern Venetan in order to show the diachronic side of the variation. In section 4, I discuss this system and propose a general theory about NC. Section 5 offers some concluding remarks.

2 Negative Concord in Old Venetan

In this section I describe the NC system of Old Venetan varieties. More precisely, I take into consideration three separate varieties attested in texts coming from three different centres: Venice, Padua and Verona. Although there are attestations from all the three cities going back at least to the second half of the 13th century, the three varieties are not attested in a uniform way throughout the Middle Ages. Venetian is attested in a continuous way for all the 14th century, but it presents some internal variation.[2] Paduan provides some legal and practical texts from the first half of the 14th century (and some earlier poetry), but the bulk of attestations are from the second half and the end of the 14th century. Finally, the majority of texts attesting Old Veronese are religious, practical and legal texts from around the beginning or early in the second half of the 14th century. Notice that in the 15th century the language of many texts shows cases of influence from the Tuscan variety.

For the analysis of NC in these varieties, I have selected three separate types of negative items. The first type is represented by bare quantifiers corresponding to *nobody* and *nothing*, and DPs or PPs containing the D quantifier corresponding to *no*.[3] The second type is the adverb corresponding to *never*, which can present morphologically complex forms. Finally, the third element I have examined is the negative coordination particle *né* or *ni* 'and not, nor, neither', which can coordinate both clauses and smaller constituents, like DPs or PPs. It can also be found at the beginning of a sentence as an additive or scalar focus particle, like the Latin *nec*, from which it derives Gianollo (2017). I have considered the behaviour of all these types of items in the preverbal space, that is before the inflected verb. When they are postverbal, the presence

2 For instance, the texts from the village of Lio Mazor, used by Benincà (2006) for the analysis of V2, present several phonological and morphological peculiarities when compared with texts from Venice, like the absence of the suffix *-s* in the 2sing. person of verbs (cf. Castro 2017).

3 Notice that in general, similarly to what happens in Italian and in many Italo-Romance varieties, the item corresponding to *nobody* is the masculine singular of the adjectival modifier corresponding to *no*.

of the preverbal (i.e. the pre-T) negation *non*/*no* (or of another negative item in the preverbal space) is systematic in all the three varieties.

(4) (a) *non può nexun merchadante che vada in questi luogi*
not can no merchant that goes to these places
conprar marchadantia [...]
buy goods
'No merchant going to those places can buy goods ...'
(Ven., *ZdC*, 1310 ca., p. 49)

(b) *e sì no morì nessun animale del povolo de Israel.*
and so not died no animal of.the people of Israel
'and no animal of the people of Israel died.'
(Pad., *BI*, 1390 ca., Exod. 8)

(c) *imperçò ch' el no fe ma' nessuna rea consa.*
since he not did never no evil thing
'since he never did anything evil.' (Ver., *LS*, after 1350, p. 95)

The second and third type of negative elements behave in a similar way in all the three varieties. Both 'never' and the negative coordination particle require in most cases the presence of the pre-T negation *no*(*n*). In other words, these elements display strict NC. In the following examples, I provide some cases for both elements in each of the three varieties.

(5) Venice

(a) *E sì te digo qe né ti né altri uncamai no*
and so you= tell that nor you nor other never not
enganai fraudevolmentre [...]
fooled deceptively
'I tell you that I never fooled either you or anyone else ...'
(*Panf.*, 1250 ca., p. 69)

(b) *vino uncha mai el non bevì* [...]
wine never he not drank
'he never drank wine ...' (*CI.*, 1301 ca., p. 189)

Padua

(c) *çamai no voi' altro deporto.*
never not want other amusement
'I never want a different amusement.' (*LSP*, 13th cent., p. 806)

(d) *uxandola in questo muodo la dona may no*
using=it in this way the woman never not
se ingravierave.
would.become.pregnant
'using it in this way, the woman would never become pregnant.'
(*Ser.*, 1390 ca., 352)

Verona

(e) [...] *ke mai no serà sença mortal guerra.*
that never not will.be without mortal war
'... that will never exist without a mortal war.'
(*AG*, 1310 ca., p. 52)

(f) *mai no pote faro terra de loro e mai no la*
never not can make land of them and never not it=
farà.
will.make
'they can never get a land of their own and never will.'
(*Luc.*, 14th cent., p. 169)

(6) Venice

(a) *Qé la mea mente né la mea lengua no serve a*
since the my mind nor the my tongue not helps to
mi.
me
'Since neither my mind nor my tongue can help me.'
(*Panf.*, 1250 ca., p. 63)

(b) *'l fuogho* [...] *né per fredo, né per altra arte non*
the fire nor by cold nor by other art not
se posseva amorzare.
one=could extinguish
'the fire could not be extinguished either by the cold or any other way.' (*CI.*, 1301 ca., p. 233)

Padua

(c) *de raxon né de fato no vaia.*
of reason nor of fact not is.valid
'it is not valid either *de iure* or *de facto*' (*FN*, 1375 ca., p. 43)

(d) *Né* *no* *laga* *acrescere* *le* *ulceratiom* [...]
and.not not lets grow the ulcerations
'And it does not let the growth of ulcerations...'
(*Ser.*, 1390 ca., 129)

Verona

(e) *né* *ira* *né* *gran cor* *né* *mal talento* *logo* *no* *po*
nor wrath nor rancor nor malice place not can
trovar *en* *la* *soa* *mento.*
find in the his mind
'Neither wrath, nor rancour, nor malice have a place in his mind.'
(*AG*, 1310 ca., p. 48)

(f) [...] *né* *li* *homini* *no* *mançava* *carne* *e* *no* *beveva*
and.not the men not ate meat and not drank
vino.
wine
'...and the man did not eat meat or drink wine.'
(*Luc.*, 14th cent., p. 51)

Notice that among the examples in (6) there are cases of two DPs or PPs coordinated in the preverbal space (e.g. 6 a and 6 c, respectively) and also cases of initial *né* used to coordinate the negative sentence with a preceding sentence (e.g. 6 f). The only cases where *né* can have a non-strict NC behaviour are those where it is used to coordinate a clause with a preceding negative clause, as in (7).

(7) *la Luna* [...] *non* *può* *luxer,* *né* *può* *render* *luxe* *da*
the moon not can shine nor can give light from
ssi *naturalmentre*
self naturally
'The moon can neither shine nor naturally illuminate by herself'
(Ven., *ZdC*, 1310 ca., p. 82)

So, examining clauses with these elements, that is adverbs corresponding to *never* and the negative coordination particle, medieval Venetan varieties behave as strict NC languages. This is in line with what has already been observed for other medieval Romance domains (cf. among others Martins 2000: 193–196).

However, Venetian, Paduan and Veronese do not behave in the same way in negative clauses when there are indefinites corresponding to *nobody* or *nothing*, or DPs containing a negative D quantifier in the pre-T space.

Venetian presents strict NC also in these cases. I provide some examples in (8), where the pre-T negative element is always followed by the sentential negation marker.

(8) (a) *nesun no la possa despodestar ch'ela sia dona.*
nobody not her= can overthrow since she is woman
'nobody could overthrow her because she is a woman.'
(*VT*, ca. 1315, p. 137)

(b) *a nesun'altra persona del mondo no 'l consentirave*
to no other person of.the world not it=would.allow
'I would not permit it to any other person in the world.'
(*Panf.*, 1250 ca., p. 45)

(c) *Niente non m'è romagnudo.*
nothing not to.me=is remained
'I am left with nothing.' (*SS*, ca. 1320, p. 77)

Notice that strict NC applies with negative elements both as subjects and (indirect) objects.

On the other hand, in Paduan and Veronese, in most cases the elements of this type are not accompanied by the pre-T negative marker, displaying a non-strict NC configuration. This is exemplified by the cases in (9).

(9) Padua

(a) *nexun me'n porave departire.*
nobody me=from.it= could separate
'Nobody could separate me from it.' (*LSP*, 13th cent., p. 807)

(b) *nesuna medexina çoa così in una apostematiom de l'oio.*
no medicine is.useful so in a abscess of the eye
'No medicine is so useful against the abscess of the eye.'
(*Ser.*, 1390 ca., 294)

Verona

(c) *ke nesun homo de carno el po saver.*
that no man of flesh it= can know
'...that no living man knows.' (*GU*, 1300 ca., p. 68)

(d) *che neguna consa se pò saver se no quanto*
that no thing IMPS= can know if not how.much
Deo ne vol altrui revelar.
God of.it= wants to.other reveal
'...that one knows nothing if not what God wants to reveal to others' (*Luc.*, 14th cent., p. 14)

In order to provide a quantitative exemplification of the two different grammars found in the texts from Venice and in those from Padua or Verona, I have examined two long narrative texts. For Venice, I have considered the *Tristano Veneto*, a rather free translation of different French sources, dating from around the beginning of the 14th century (ca. 250,000 words). For Padua, I have taken the *Bibbia Istoriata Padovana*, an original collection of detailed descriptions of illustrations representing episodes from the Bible. The text is from the end of the 14th century (ca. 70,000 words). It should be pointed out that long narrative texts from Padua or Verona during this period are very rare. In the *Tristano Veneto*, there are 556 occurrences of the adverb (*ça*)*mai* 'never'. Of the first 100 occurrences, 31 are post-T, 19 are not in negative clauses (but appear in other non-veridical contexts), 47 are pre-T and are followed by the pre-T negation, and only 3 are pre-T and appear without it. In the *Bibbia Istoriata Padovana*, there are 38 occurrences of the adverb mai/may 'never'. Of these, 21 are post-T, 4 are not negative, and all the 13 pre-T occurrences are followed by the pre-T negation. This is represented in Table 1.

	Pre-T, +NC	Pre-T, −NC	Post-T	Not negative	Total
Tristano Veneto (Ven.), first 100	47	3	31	19	100
Bibbia Istoriata (Pad.)	13	0	21	4	38

Table 1 'Never'

Even if the Paduan text has fewer cases of 'never', which is not unexpected given the very peculiar type of narration, and the preferred position of the adverb is after the inflected verb, the two texts show that this element clearly presents a strict NC behaviour.

The *Tristano Veneto* displays 414 occurrences of the element *nigun*/*niguna*, which can be the bare pronoun corresponding to 'nobody' or the agreeing determiner corresponding to 'no', as in *nigun cavalier* 'no knight'. Of the first 100 occurrences of this element, 38 are post-T, 15 are not negative, 42 are pre-T and are followed by the negative marker, and only 5 appear without it. The

distribution is very similar to that of 'never'. Notice also that 3 of the 5 cases of pre-T *nigun* without the pre-T negation are found in complement clauses of a negated form of the verb 'want' with neg-raising interpretation, as in (10).[4]

(10) *ma guarda-te ben che tu non dis queste cosse ni a homo ni a femena, perqué*
'but be sure you do not say this to man or woman, because...'
io non vogio che nigun lo sepa.
I not want that nobody it= knows
'... I want that nobody discovers it.' (*Ven.*, TV, 1300 ca., p. 130)

In the *Bibbia Istoriata*, there are 25 occurrences of the element *nes(s)un/nes(s)una* with the same value of *nigun/niguna* in the *Tristano*. Of these, 12 are post-T, 1 is not negative, 4 are pre-T and are followed by the pre-T negative marker, and 8 appear without it. The distribution observed in the two texts is shown in Table 2.

	Pre-T, +NC	Pre-T, −NC	Post-T	Not negative	Total
Tristano Veneto (Ven.), first 100	42	5	38	15	100
Bibbia Istoriata (Pad.)	4	8	12	1	25

Table 2 'Nobody/No NP'

As already observed for 'never', the quantity of occurrences differs between the two texts. However, the *Tristano Veneto* confirms that Old Venetian displays in general a strict NC system. The Paduan text, at a first glance, provides a blurry picture, even if the number of non-strict NC cases is double that of strict ones. Interestingly, in one of the four cases of strict NC there is also the negative coordination particle in the pre-T space (11), while in another, *nessuna* appears in a causative adjunct PP (*per nessuna chaxon* 'for no reason').

4 In (10), the context clearly shows that the negative indefinite *nigun* in subject position is interpreted in the scope of the negation in the main clause. Notice that this configuration is impossible in standard Italian (where *non voglio che nessuno lo sappia* unambiguously means 'I do not want that nobody knows it') or in French (Kayne 1981; see also Rizzi 1982 and Longobardi 1991), but is attested in some varieties of spoken Italian and in Spanish. Negative objects do not display this type of island effect also in standard Italian. According to Longobardi (2014) this shows that in Spanish and languages behaving in a similar way, these elements are lexically ambiguous. i.e. can drop [+NOT].

(11) *Nessuno de vu né de quilli che habita in fra vu*
no one of you nor of those that lives among you
no debia magnare sangue.
not must eat blood
'No one of you or of those who live with you is permitted to eat blood.' (*Pad.*, BI, 1390 ca., Lev. 17)

The presence of strict NC with non-argumental PPs containing a negative D quantifier is observed also in other texts from Padua and Verona. For instance, expressions like *per nesun tempo* 'lit. for no time' are equivalent to 'never' and, exactly like it, trigger strict NC.

(12) *lo to amor unca per nesun tempo / no deventa*
the your love ever for no time not becomes
reo [...]
evil
'your love never becomes wicked' (*Ver.*, AG, 1310 ca., p. 53)

This suggests that the syntactic position of negative elements in the pre-T space is another relevant parameter for the distribution of strict and non-strict NC in these varieties, besides their categorial status or semantic construal. From this point of view, some significant data are provided by the Old Veronese poetic text *Leggenda di Santa Caterina*, where there are two cases of pre-T object DPs containing *nexun*(*a*), and both display strict NC. I report one of them in (13).

(13) *nexuna altra richeza no à questo bon homo.*
no other wealth not has this good man
'This good man has no other riches.' (*Ver.*, SC, 1300 ca., p. 260)

The analysis I propose in Section 4 is built upon these observations. However, before we proceed to the discussion, I add a comparison with Modern Venetan varieties in the next section.

3 A comparison with Modern Venetan varieties

The data presented in this section are taken from Pedrocco (2017) and Solivo (2017), who have conducted similar research on the strict NC system of Pellestrina and Zeminiana, respectively. Pellestrina is an island in the southern Venetian Lagoon with a population of about 5000 people. Zeminiana is a small town between Padua and Treviso with a population of about 1000 people. These studies have shown that the two varieties display many instances of

strict NC, contrary to what can be observed in Italian or other Italo-Romance areas. The stability of the NC system in Venetan is in general an interesting phenomenon, since we know that many other Romance domains have lost it since the Middle Ages (cf. among others Martins 2000; Gianollo 2018). It should also be pointed out that these varieties have lost any trace of the medieval V2 system and have developed a system of subject clitics like the other northern Italo-Romance dialects. I will not discuss this stability in this article, but it is likely linked to the fact that these varieties, like Modern Venetian, have not gone beyond the first stage of the Jespersen cycle and have the preverbal *no* as the standard sentential negation marker.

The main data I discuss here are reported in (14) and (15).

(14) Pellestrina

(a) *Nianche* *(*no*) *a* *m-à* *saludao.* (Pedrocco 2017: 55)
neither not she= me=has greeted
'She even has not greeted me.'

(b) *NISSUNI* *(*no*) *le* *salude,* *chele do comari.* (Pedrocco 2017: 68)
nobody not they= greet those two gossips
'They greet really NOBODY ... those two blabbermouths.'

(c) *Nissun* (*no*) *l-à* *parlà* *male de ti.* (Pedrocco 2017: 66)
nobody not he=has talked bad of you
'Nobody has spoken ill of you.'

(15) Zeminiana

(a) *Nianca* *(*no*) *i me gà* *dito* *niente de stasera.*
neither not they=to.me=has told nothing about tonight
(Solivo 2017: 44)
'They even have told me nothing about tonight.'

(b) *NESSUNO* (*no*) *e* *gà* *saeudà.* (Solivo 2017: 57)
nobody not they= has greeted
'They have greeted really NOBODY.'

(c) *Nessuno* (**no*) *gà* *parlà* *mae de ti.* (Solivo 2017: 56)
nobody not has talked bad of you
'Nobody has spoken ill of you.'

In (14) and (15), I have reported the more common judgements on the relevant dialectal stimuli, as the authors interviewed about 15 speakers per town and there is some minimal variation among them. These examples show an

interesting scale regarding the acceptability of the presence of the preverbal negation with different types of negative elements in the preverbal space. The negative additive or scalar focaliser *nianche*/*nianca* (*neanche* in Italian) modifying the clause requires the pre-T negative marker in both the varieties. A focalised negative indefinite object obligatorily requires the negation in Pellestrina and optionally presents it in Zeminiana. Finally, a negative indefinite pronoun in subject position optionally allows the presence of the pre-T negation in Pellestrina, while in Zeminiana it cannot be followed by it. So, Pellestrina has more cases of strict NC, but the three types of items are in the same order on the scale of acceptability. These data confirm that the syntactic position of the negative item, and not only its categorial status, is relevant for the emergence of the strict NC configuration. More precisely, if the negative element is unambiguously higher than the standard subject position, as for instance in the case of focalised objects in (14 b) and (15 b), the presence of strict NC is very likely. A preliminary analysis of this configuration, simply treating clitics as parts of the complex T head, is represented below (in 16 a, the right-dislocated subject is not represented, since its presence or absence does not change the distribution of NC).[5]

(16) (a) [$_{\text{FocusP}}$ *NISSUNI* [$_{\text{TP}}$ [T *no le salude*] [$_{\text{vP}}$ ~~*NISSUNI*~~]]]
(b) [$_{\text{FocusP}}$ *NESSUNO* [$_{\text{TP}}$ [T *no e gà*] [$_{\text{vP}}$ *saeudà* ~~*NESSUNO*~~]]]

When the negative indefinite occupies the subject position, strict NC is banned, as represented in (17). Here I leave aside the problem of the final position of subject bare quantifiers, which could be higher than that of standard DP subjects in Italo-Romance, but it can be assumed that in a derivational account these elements also move through the SpecT position.

(17) (a) [$_{\text{TP}}$ *Nissun* [T (*no*) *l-à*] [$_{\text{vP}}$ *parlà male de ti*]] (Pellestrina)
(b) [$_{\text{TP}}$ *Nessuno* [T (**no*) *gà*] [$_{\text{vP}}$ *parlà mae de ti*]] (Zeminiana)

In the next section, I will discuss the Old Venetan data on the basis of these observations.

5 Assuming that the negative adverb occupies the Mod(ifier)P position of the split CP (Rizzi & Bocci 2017), the structure of the first sentences would be the following:

(a) [$_{\text{ModP}}$ Nianche [$_{\text{TP}}$ [T no a m-à] [$_{\text{vP}}$ saludao]]] (Pellestrina)
(b) [$_{\text{ModP}}$ Nianche [$_{\text{TP}}$ [T no i me gà] [$_{\text{vP}}$ dito [niente][de stasera]]]] (Zeminiana)

4 Analysis

Both medieval and Modern Venetan varieties present cases where a negative indefinite quantifier, moved from the vP to the pre-T space (likely to FocusP inside the CP layer), triggers the presence of strict NC. I would exclude an analysis in terms of licensing of the negative element before the application of Move to the Focus position, or to the position where V2 is satisfied in the medieval varieties. The main reason to exclude that NC is computed *in situ* is provided by the fact that elements like *né*/*ni* in Old Venetan and *nianche*/*nianca* in the modern varieties, which must be merged above T, always trigger strict NC. The same could be true for 'never' in Old Venetan, since there is no decisive evidence suggesting that it is always moved from the Aspect layer below T to a CP position, like ModP (cf. Cinque 1999, Rizzi & Bocci 2017).

As mentioned in the introduction, a large majority of the theoretical proposal about the distribution of NC are based on a discussion regarding the independent semantic contribution of negative words (for instance in terms of the features [i/uNeg] or [+/-NOT]). However, while the opposition between Double Negation and NC languages is resolved in a satisfactory way by these proposals, the distinction between different types of NC is normally resolved by assuming either that languages display lexical variation in their inventory of items entering into negative dependencies (as for example in Déprez 2000 and subsequent works), or that the difference is the result of different lexical feature specification and syntactic operations (as in Zeijlstra's 2004 analysis in terms of Agree). Longobardi's (2014) system is peculiar from this point of view, since the relevant parameter (parameter 3 in his typology) relates to the negative marker. It is assumed that in languages like Romanian (and likely the whole Slavonic group), which are strict NC languages in the traditional classification, it is the pre-T negative marker which can be ambiguous: in some cases it introduces semantic negation, while in others it is simply a scope marker licensing a negative element.[6]

The Old Venetan situation clearly shows that both the lexical feature specification of the negative word and its syntactic position can be relevant. Furthermore, it can be shown that the dialectal (and partially diachronic) variation described in Section 2 (and Section 3) is not related to a different semantic status of the involved negative elements in different Venetan varieties. In fact, one could assume that in Old Paduan and Old Veronese, where pre-T negative indefinites usually display non-strict NC, these elements can introduce an

6 'P3 asks if the basic sentential negative morpheme can sometimes fail to be interpreted, that is, can drop [+NOT]: this seems to arise only in languages with N-words specified for both [+NOT] and [+ANY], perhaps as a surface diachronic generalization to pre-Infl position of the strategy of doubling an N-word which arises in post-Infl ones' (Longobardi 2014: 253).

independent negative *Op* when they are preverbal, while in Old Venetian negative indefinites are standard NPIs, like the other elements presenting strict NC. According to a similar view, one could hypothesise that 'nobody', 'nothing' and 'no' are special NPIs in Old Paduan and Old Veronese (like for instance n-words: Laka 1990; Ladusaw 1992), carrying a feature [uNeg], while in Old Venetian they have no [Neg] feature at all. However, as already suggested in Section 2 about non-negative instances of both 'nobody' and 'never', there is no clear difference between the three varieties regarding the distribution of the three types of elements in other non-veridical (but non-negative) contexts. More precisely, all the three types can be found in interrogative clauses, in conditional clauses and with comparatives. In (18) I provide a couple of examples involving the element corresponding to 'never' and *né*, which in non-negative contexts is normally used as a disjunction particle.

(18) (a) […] *se Dio me volesse mai vegnire a favelare*
if God to.me= would.like never come to speak
'…in case God would come to speak with me'
(Pad., *BI*, 1390 ca., Num. 23)

(b) *Domandà se lo barber, né Ser Zacharia li mes*
asked if the barber nor sir Z. to.him=put
pena nesuna, dis: no.
penalty no said no
'When asked if the barber or Sir Zacharia imposed him any penalty, he answered: no.' (Ven., *Lio Mazor*, 1312, p. 45)

In (18 a), *mai* is licensed under conditional se 'if', while in (18 b), *né* is licensed in a subordinate yes/no question. Notice that the Old Venetian example (18 b) also contains *nesuna*, which is licensed in the interrogative clause similarly to *né*. What is relevant here is that negative indefinites of this type are found in the same contexts also in Old Paduan and in Old Veronese, where they normally do not trigger strict NC. In (19), *negum* is licensed (with a meaning similar to 'any') in a temporal conditional clause.

(19) *el polmom del porco e de l'agnelo e de l'orso,*
the lung of.the pork and of the lamb and of the bear
quando negum de quisti ven metù su le scortegaùre dei
when no of these comes put on the bruises of.the
piè, ge çoa
feet to.it=helps
'If the lung of the pork, of the lamb, or of the bear, any one of these, is put on the bruises of the feet, it heals them.' (Pad., *Ser.*, 1390 ca., B45)

Interestingly, in Old Venetan all these negative elements can be found in a larger set of non-veridical contexts than in the modern varieties (or in standard Italian, where, for instance *né* is only used in true negative contexts).

Concluding this part, there is no evidence that negative lexical elements are semantically different in the three varieties we are considering.[7]

Following Longobardi (2014), one possibility is to assume that, while Old Venetian is a strict-NC language (a type 4 language in his system) because *no(n)* can be [-NOT], Old Paduan and Old Veronese have an unambiguously [+NOT] *no(n)*, but negative words with different specification: negative indefinites are [+NOT], while 'never' and the negative coordination particle are [-NOT]. This is potentially possible according to the typology, because there is a parameter controlling the possibility to drop [+NOT] from items specified for [+ANY]. This parameter (parameter 4) distinguishes Italian (type 1) and Spanish (type 2).[8] Of course, it should be assumed that negative indefinites and the other two categories here taken into consideration are treated differently. This, however, would leave unexplained the optional presence of *no(n)* with negative indefinites.

As we have observed above, Old Paduan and Old Veronese, that is the varieties displaying non-strict NC with negative indefinites, also present some exceptions to this rule. These exceptions are normally of two types:

i. the negative indefinite is contained in an adverbial PP;

ii. the negative indefinite is a preverbal object.

There are few cases of negative indefinite subjects with strict NC, but it cannot be excluded that in those cases the subject is in Focus position, or in any case higher than specT. From this point of view, the following Old Veronese example is very relevant.

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7 Notice, furthermore, that in Old Venetian negative indefinites can appear in isolation:

(i) *Doma(n)dà:* *Chi* *fo* *a la com(en)çada?* *Dis:* *Nesun* [...]
asked who was at the star said nobody
'When asked: who was present at the beginning, answered: nobody [...]'
(Ven., *Lio Mazor*, 1312, 66)

From this point of view Old Venetian behaves exactly like Romanian or Slavic languages. The standard analysis of these cases involves the presence of a pre-T negation in the elided part of the fragment answer Pereltsvaig (2004).

8 'P4 asks the same question with respect to dropping the feature [+NOT] from general N-words additionally marked [+ANY]: again it is plausible that doing so is just obligatory for languages which already drop it from the simple negation, hence the implication with [−] at P3' (Longobardi 2014: 253).

(20) *Dunca ve' che çescaun serave pleno che nexuno plu*
thus see that eachone would.be full that nobody more
no 'n vorave.
not =of.it= would.want
'Thus ensure that each one is so sated that no one wants more of it.'
(Ver., *Luc.*, 14th cent., p. 182)

Notice that this is the only case of strict NC with *nexuno* in this text, and here the negative indefinite cannot be in the standard subject position since it is separated from the inflected verb by *plu* 'more'. Assuming that *plu* is located in the ModP projection here, one possible structural analysis is represented in (21).

(21) [$_{\text{FocusP}}$ *che* [$_{\text{FocusP}}$ *nexuno* [$_{\text{ModP}}$ *plu* [$_{\text{TP}}$ *no 'n vorave* [$_{\text{vP}}$]]]]]

Putting together what we have observed to this point, a possible explanation of the Old Paduan and the Old Veronese distribution of strict NC is to assume that only negative elements in specT can surface without the preverbal negation. This is reminiscent of the system developed by Haegeman & Zanuttini (1996), in the sense that in their terms negative elements must move through the specifier of the negative head in order to block the compositional computation of negative operators. Another point to stress is that Old Venetan varieties present V2 syntax, so it is possible that in some main clauses, the adjacency between a negative indefinite subject and the inflected verb should be interpreted assuming that they occupy the specifier and the head of the CP projection involved in the V2 syntax (cf. Wolfe 2018). The pre-T negative marker moves to CP with the inflected verb. It must be said that cases of preverbal negative indefinite subjects in main clauses are rare in the Old Venetan texts. For instance, of the eight cases of preverbal *nessuno* with NC in the *Bibbia Istoriata*, all of them are subjects, but only two are found in main clauses. Both of these are main clauses coordinated with a previous main clause, so the conditions of V2 could be different.

In general, thus, the absence of the pre-T negation is related to a spec–head agreement configuration between the inflected verb and a negative indefinite subject. This obviously raises the problem of Old Venetian, where strict NC is almost systematic. Why does not the spec–head agreement configuration allow the absence of *no* in Old Venetian? This relates to another potential problem of the syntactic theory of NC developed by Zeijlstra (2004), regarding the nature of the preverbal negation in strict NC systems. As observed by Szabolcsi (2018), the assumption that in strict NC languages all negative items and the sentential negation marker carry the feature [uNeg] and must be licensed under *Op* does not explain why the sentential negation is obligatory in these

systems. The problem could be resolved by assuming that preverbal negation is simply an agreement morpheme, which for instance can be argued for some Slavic languages like Czech. However, this assumption is problematic for other strict NC systems, like Hungarian or Old Venetan, where pre-T negation is not part of verb morphology but is clearly an independent head, as in many other Romance systems (cf. Zanuttini 1997 on this). Szabolcsi (2018), following some insights provided by Chierchia (2013), resolves the problem assuming that in Hungarian the preverbal negator *nem* actually carries the feature [iNeg] and the Focus particle *sem* introduces a disembodied negative operator which licenses all the [uNeg] items in the clause. Here, I will develop a slightly different idea.

First, I will follow Manzini & Savoia (2011: 152) who, given that Romance preverbal negators can appear in other non-veridical environments, propose that they are always n-words which do not correspond to a negative operator *per se*. In their words, the negative operator 'is therefore not introduced by any morpholexical constituent, but rather is semantically implied by the presence of the negative polarity clitic (or other negative polarity material).' More precisely, my claim is that the pre-T negative marker is [uNeg] also in non-strict NC systems. Using Szabolcsi's (2015; 2018) terminology, the negative operator is always disembodied. This intuition about the implication of a silent negative *Op* can be developed in the following way. Assuming that the Logical Form of negative clauses always contains *Op*, this element must be visible at the interfaces, even if it is not introduced by overt material. Similar reasoning lies behind the Visibility Condition proposed by Déprez (2011), according to which [Neg] must be visible at the TP 'edge' for semantic computation.

My proposal is to consider the pre-T negation marker as a type of repair strategy element which satisfies the visibility condition of *Op* being specified as [uNeg]. This condition must be satisfied at the edge of TP in languages with preverbal negation, like those I am considering here, but the proposal could be extended to systems with postverbal negation, assuming that languages can vary according to the locus where the visibility of the negative *Op* must be satisfied (e.g. vP).[9] This explains why in strict NC systems the preverbal negation is obligatory (while the presence of the other negative elements can be analysed in the well-known Zeijlstran Agree system discussed above).

At this point, the variation I have described becomes relevant. The main difference between the Old Venetian and the Old Paduan/Old Veronese systems is that the latter usually allows non-strict NC cases when there is a

9 Notice that in Longobardi's (2014) system this aspect too is regulated by a parameter (parameter 1: +/- strong Neg°). I adopt an analysis without NegP (see Breitbarth 2014: 127, and Poletto 2017 on this), but the general idea can be implemented in a similar system.

negative indefinite in subject position. I interpret this difference in terms of a less restrictive satisfaction of the visibility condition on the edge of TP. A negative indefinite in a spec–head relation with the inflected verb is sufficient to make the disembodied negative *Op* visible. Notice that if the indefinite item is in a different preverbal position, *no* is again present. This suggests an interesting possibility to explain the existence of different types of NC with preverbal negative elements. Consider the two different structures represented in (22), which show what happens in the Old Paduan/Old Veronese system.

(22) (a) *Op*(iNeg) [$_{\text{ForceP}}$ *che* [$_{\text{FocusP}}$ [XP(uNeg) + (Foc)][$_{\text{FinP}}$ [$_{\text{TP}}$ *no*(uNeg) T ...]]]]

(b) *Op*(iNeg) [$_{\text{ForceP}}$ *che* [$_{\text{TP}}$ [DP(uNeg)] ⋈(uNeg) T ...]]] ◁ no NC △ NC

The structure in (22 b) represents a case of non-strict NC with a negative indefinite as subject. The structure in (22 a) is a case of strict NC with a focalised negative element. In principle, the XP in (22 a) could also be the subject, moved to FocusP from specT. However, as shown by cases like (20), in this case *no* is present. This means that movement to a higher position blocks the visibility of the negative *Op*. I interpret this by assuming that when an element with a feature [uNeg] is moved for the checking of a [Focus] feature, it is not able to satisfy the visibility condition of the negative operator. The same could be said for *né*: since it is sensitive to Focus, it cannot make the negative operator visible, unless it is activated by a higher sentential negation (recall that the only cases of *né* without strict NC are those where it is used to coordinate two negative clauses). Finally, a similar reasoning applies to 'never'. In this case, it is not [Focus], but more likely a quantificational feature like [Exist] that blocks the visibility mechanism, even if the inflected verb lands in the head of the projection hosting the adverb.

(23) *Op*(iNeg) [$_{\text{ForceP}}$ *che* [$_{\text{ModP}}$ [*mai*(uNeg) + (Exist)] [$_{\text{TP}}$ *no*(uNeg) T ...]]] NC

The relation of the interaction between [i/uNeg] and [Focus] and the emergence of NC in Romance has accurately been described and discussed by Gianollo (2018). In late Latin, multiple truly negative items could appear in association with focus (triggering 'negative redundancy'). From these structures NC emerged, where elements associated with Focus lost independent negative semantics, that is [iNeg]. This interaction between features, which is similar to movement restrictions captured by Relativised Minimality mechanisms (Rizzi 1990 and subsequent work), is the reason behind the existence of different 'grades' of strict NC. When strict NC always applies, as in Old Venetian, or in Slavonic, the negative operator is made visible only by the pre-T negative marker bearing [uNeg]. This implies that in a hypothetical hierarchy

of features, [uNeg] is made invisible even by features triggering A-movement. In systems of 'partial' strict NC, like those of non-Venetian Venetan varieties, [Focus] and [Exist] made [uNeg] invisible. In standard Italian, where NC is always non-strict, [uNeg] is always visible, even when combined with other features. Thus, interlinguistic variation in negative dependencies is regulated by the following separate factors:

i. the feature specification of negative elements;

ii. the *locus* where the Visibility Condition of *Op* (iNeg) is satisfied;

iii. the relative strength of the feature [uNeg] among the other formal features.

Summarizing, while in other approaches the difference between strict and non-strict NC is explained by assuming that negative indefinites, negative adverbs and the negation marker can have different feature specifications in the same language, this proposal links the variation to the relative strength of the [Neg] feature in relation to other features with which it can interact.

The advantage of a similar system is that it can explain even more fine-grained distinctions in the distribution of strict NC by enlarging the set of features interacting with [uNeg]. For instance, Déprez & Poletto (2019) notice that in Old Italian a negative preverbal subject triggers strict NC if it is bare, but appears without the preverbal negation if it is a complex DP containing a negative indefinite. However, a certain level of implication is expected. For instance, my hypothesis excludes a language where [Focus] does not block the visibility of the negative operator, but features involved in A-movement, like Case, block it. A tentative implicational scale is represented in (24).

(24) [Focus] > [Exist] > [Case]

5 Conclusion

In this article I have described the NC system and the variation it displays in medieval Venetan varieties. The most interesting property emerging from this description is that an opposition between strict and non-strict NC can be found in the same language and is linked both to the category and the structural position of the negative item. Since there are not clear differences in the semantics of negative words of these varieties, I have explained their different behaviour assuming that variation is caused by the way different formal features interfere with the visibility of a covert negative operator provided by the feature [uNeg] of negative words. In other words, the typology of NC

arises in relation to different hierarchical relations among formal features and to the relative strength of [uNeg] in a similar hierarchy.

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