Research question

What lexical items bear interpretable negation?

There are a variety of lexical items that bear some sort of negative flavor: markers of sentence negation, negative indefinites, nco-words, negative polarity items (NPIs), etc.

Do they all bear interpretable negation?

Negative concord vs. double negation

In negative concord (NC) systems, multiple negative items co-occur but result in just one semantic negation. In double negation (DN) systems, each negative item contributes its own semantic negation.

One theory of NC is detailed in Zeijlstra (2004). In this system, the difference between NC and DN systems is attributed to syntactic nco-features:

- sentence negation bears [nco] and contributes sentential negation. nco-words bear [nco] and undergo Agree with [nco]. One [nco] means one semantic negation.

DN System

Sentence negation bears [nco] and contributes sentential negation. nco-words bear [nco] and undergo Agree with [nco]. Negative items all contribute their own semantic negation. There are no nco-features because learners see no negative dependencies and do not posit nco-features (Zeijlstra 2008).

Typological distribution of neg features

So far, no negatives quantify [nco] or [nco]. nco-words have [nco], and negative quantifiers in DN languages have no nco-features. But if [nco] and [nco] are lexical features, then there should be no restriction on what lexical items may host them.

Typology of nco-features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative concord</th>
<th>Double negation</th>
<th>Predicted system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sentence negation</td>
<td>[nco] or [nco]</td>
<td>no nco features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative quantifiers</td>
<td>[nco]</td>
<td>no nco features</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is there a language with [nco] and [nco] negatives?

Such a language must . . .

A puzzle of ko-occurrence: negative indefinites in San Martín Peras Mixtec

San Martin Peras Mixtec (SMPM)

SMPM (VSO, Oto-Manguean) meets both of these criteria.

**SMPM exhibits NC**

There is a class of nco-words in the language. Those nco-words must co-occur with the marker of sentence negation.

1. Each ko-ors contain sentence negation

   Negation in SMPM is made up of ko- and a floating, rising tone:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ko-ors contain sentence negation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. ko-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. ko-ñ-ña</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. ko-ors only surface in the linear position of negation

   Material that moves to the left of negation moves to the left of ko-ors.

3. ko-ors contain a moved indefinite

   Every ko- or co-variates with a construction in which negation and the indefinite are spelled out separately, with the same scopal relations.

4. Indefinites in ko-ors are not dependent on negation

   The indefinites in question are licit in non-negative and non-downward-entailing environments, and they can move independently.

5. Broader takeaways

   A featural typology of Zeijlstra’s (2004) system implicitly suggests that [nco] is not found on negative quantifiers. But nco-features are lexical features—they should be able to disperse freely within a language’s lexicon.

SMPM data support the conjecture that negative quantifiers do not bear [nco]

Is the cross-linguistic distribution of [nco] limited to certain lexical items? If so, why?

The claim that all negative indefinites are uniformly non-negative has been explicitly made in Penka (2011).

Acknowledgments

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Selected references