A Review of Zanuttini 1997

Ton van der Wouden

(Raffaella Zanuttini: *Negation and clausal structure: a comparative study of Romance languages.*
New York/Oxford, 1997 (Oxford Studies in Comparative Syntax))

Of all the natural languages in the world, there is none without negation. Languages, however, may choose from a wealth of means to express negation. A language's favorite way to express sentential negation may be an inherently negative verb, such as Finnish *ei*, or a negative infix in a morphologically complex verb, such as Turkish *ma*, or a negative adverb or particle, such as classical Greek μή. Combinations of the various methods also occur, one of the more complex systems being the tripartite negation found in the Austronesian language Lewo (examples and glosses from Early 1994).

(1) a. President pe poru mesmesu re sane naga pisa poli   (Lewo)
         President Neg1 arrive straight Neg2 like he say Neg3
         'The president didn't arrive (at the time) he had said he would'
     b. Pe wii re poli   (Lewo)
         Neg1 water Neg2 Neg3
         'There's no water'

Still, not everything is possible: languages expressing negation without employing some kind of phonologically overt material are unheard of. As far as we know, there is no language in the world in which a change in word order or intonation or something like that is the main means to change a positive utterance into a negative one (Payne 1985, Horn 1989) (cases such as those English dialects in which *can* and *can't* cannot be distinguished phonologically (Jespersen 1917) do not count as counterexamples, as the homophony of the positive and the negative form is only accidentally present in a few lexical items and not in a systematic way).

Another important and universal aspect of negation systems seems to be their instability. Jespersen (1917, 1924), who was probably the first to stress this fact, observes (1924, 335):

(2) The general history of negative expressions in some of the best-known languages presents a curious fluctuation. The negative adverb is often weakly stressed, because some other word in the sentence has to receive a strong stress of contrast. But when the negative has become a mere proclitic or even a single sound, it is felt to be too weak, and has to be strengthened by some additional word, and this in turn may come to be felt as the negative proper, which then may be subject to the same development as the original word. We have thus a constant interplay of weakening and strengthening, which with the further tendency to place the negative in the beginning of the sentence where it is likely to be dropped [...] leads to curious results.

This cyclic process, which has become known as 'Jespersen's cycle', has been observed in many languages (Horn 1989). It is well-documented in various stages of Romance, where we find five ways of saying 'I say not':

(3) a. Ne dico   (early Latin)
         Neg say-1-sg
     b. Non dico   (standard Latin)
         Neg say-1sg
     c. Jeo ne di   (middle French)
         I Neg say-1sg

	d.	Je ne dis pas	(standard French)
		I Neg say-1sg Neg	
	e.	Je dis pas	(colloquial French)
		I say-1sg Neg	

Not only does one find immense differences between languages from different continents, negation may be implemented quite differently in neighboring languages from one and the same family as well. Take for instance the two Germanic languages English and Dutch. English usually expresses sentential negation by means of a closed set of negative auxiliaries (at least, that is one way of describing the English system), whereas Dutch uses a mix of negative adverbs such as *niet* 'not' and negative indefinites (cf. Haspelmath 1997) like *geen* 'no' (Seuren 1967):

(4)	a.	I don't like cheese	(English)
	b.	Ik houd niet van kaas	(Dutch)
		I hold-1sg Neg of cheese	
		'I don't like cheese'	
	c.	Ik lust geen kaas	(Dutch)
		I like-1sg Indef-Neg cheese	
		'I don't like cheese'	

Zanuttini's book is an in depth study of the systems of expressing sentential negation found in a large number of variants of Romance, especially from standard Italian and the many dialects spoken in and around Italy. Within these languages, one finds all stages of Jespersen's cycle (p. 14, ex. 25):

(5)	a.	*Non* abito là	(Italian)
		Neg live here	
		'I don't live here'	
	b.	Il *ne* marche *pas*	(French)
		he Neg walk-3sg Neg	
		'He doesn't walk'	
	c.	A tëm *nen* la mort	(Piedmontese)
		3-sg fear-3sg Neg the death	
		'He doesn't fear death'	

And one may even find all stages in one language or dialect, as for example in the variant spoken in the town of Cairo Montenotte (p. 14, ex. 26):

(6)	a.	Un *n*'importa	(Cairese)
		3-sg Neg matter-3sg	
		'It doesn't matter'	
	b.	U *n* bugia *nent*	(Cairese)
		3-sg Neg move-3sg Neg	
		'He doesn't move'	
	c.	Renata am piaz *nent*	(Cairese)
		Renata 1-seg-DAT pleases Neg	
		'I don't like Renata'	

Zanuttini's work fits in a tradition within generative grammar, established by Richard Kayne and others, in which one does not aim for maximal typological coverage. On the contrary, it is assumed (p. vii):

(7)   that conducting research on a set of languages that differ from one another only minimally

allows us to perform experiments in which we have controlled for external factors (i.e., gross variation among languages) and we can therefore observe the effect of changing a single variable on a battery of tests. [...] the Romance languages provide an excellent testing ground for the purposes of this study, since it is possible to find varieties that differ only minimally and precisely with respect to those properties related to the expression of sentential negation.

It is thus claimed that the languages under discussion are essentially the same, the only difference relevant for the discussion being the implementation of sentential negation.

The book, which has 150 pages main text, 30 pages notes, 10 pages bibliography and 7 pages index, consists of four parts: a short introductory chapter "Issues in the Syntax of Sentential Negation", two chapters on "Preverbal Negative Markers" and Postverbal Negative Markers", respectively, and a final chapter on "Negative Imperatives".

According to the second chapter, the negative markers that precede the finite verb may come from either of two sources. Negative markers of the first kind, which are able to negate the clause by themselves, are base-generated in a position above the projections hosting the complement clitics and the finite verb, as well as certain subject clitics known as agreement clitics; they head the syntactic projection NegP in which they occur (NegP-1). This recasts, in structural terms, the observation that such negative markers precede these types of clitics. Negative markers of the second kind cannot negate the clause by themselves. These elements originate in a lower negative projection (NegP-2) and must raise to a pre-verbal position because of their clitic nature. They thus do not head the functional projection they occur in: they are left-adjoined to some independently existing syntactic head instead.

As regards to postverbal markers of sentential negation, these come in at least three flavors in the Romance dialects under discussion. Zanuttini adopts Cinque's (1995) suggestion that sentential adverbs such as *already*, *no more* and *always* are all specifiers of their own special functional projection, while the order of these adverbial projections is fixed. Given the respective positions of the different negative elements with respect to the various adverbs, and given that each negative elements correlates with its own functional projection, one arrives at no less than three NegPs between, say, the past participle on the left and the VP complements on the right.

Combining the findings of chapters two and three, one gets at least four Negative Projections. To give an idea of the resulting complex clausal structure, ex. (140) from page 101 is repeated here as (8) (I corrected typo's such as Asp_{perf} instead of $AspP_{perf}$ and $ApsP_{gen/prog}$ for $AspP_{gen/prog}$). Note that the various prototypical markers of sentential negation are in different positions.

[insert tree here as ex. nr. 8]

Chapter 4 is devoted to negative imperatives. In most of the languages discussed, true imperatives cannot be combined with preverbal sentential negation, which is correlated with the highest NegP. Suppletive imperatives, however, may follow this negative marker (typo corrected in the third translation):

(9)   a.   *Non telefona   (Italian: p. 108, 9)
                  Neg call-IMP
        b.   Non telefonate   (Italian: p. 108: 10a)
                  Neg call-IND-2sg
                  'Don't call'
        c.   Non kántes   (Sardinian: p. 110, 19)
                  neg sing-SUBJ
                  'Don't sing'
        d.   Non parlare a nessuno   (Italian: p. 119, 43a)
                  Neg talk-INF to no-one
                  'Don't talk to anybody'
        e.   Non cadènn@   (Calabrese: p. 123, 58a)
                  Neg fall-GERUND
                  'Don't fall'

On p. 117 the following hypothesis is developed: "True imperatives lack any kind of marking for tense, aspect, or mood, whereas suppletive imperatives exhibit some; this difference could be what lies behind their different behavior with respect to pre-verbal begative markers." Following a proposal by Kayne, Zanuttini explains the difference in acceptability between (9a) on the one hand and (9b-9c) on the other hand along the following lines (details left aside). All clauses with the illocutionary force of an imperative must check certain features in C^0. Moreover, the preverbal negative marker imposes that the head of MoodP be checked. True imperative forms of main verbs cannot check mood features, due to their poor morphological specifications - hence the ungrammaticality of (9a). Indicative and subjunctive suppletive imperative forms, however, can, which explains the grammaticality of (9b-9c). The infinitive in (9d) and the gerund in (9e) are not morphologically rich enough themselves to be able to check mood features. these suppletive forms are therefore supposed to always be accompanied by auxiliary verbs which can, as they are the spell-out of mood features. These auxiliaries are covert in most Romance dialects, but overt in some:

(10)   a.   No stá me-lo dire   (Paduan: p. 122, 56a)
                  Neg stay me-it say-INF
                  'Don't tell me that'
        b.   Non sciat@ scenn@   (Tarantino: p. 124, 65a)
                  Neg go-INF going
                  'Don't go'

This is taken as an argument that some kind of auxiliary is present in all Romance languages and dialects.

There are many new data in this fine book, the analyses it contains are (typo's apart) precise and original, and many thought-provoking ideas are offered. Still, there is something to be wished for. Example (9d) given above shows that at least some of the languages discussed in the book show some kind of Negative Concord, the phenomenon that more than one negative marker corresponds to one logical negation (Haegeman & Zanuttini 1991, Ladusaw 1992, van der Wouden & Zwarts 1993). An obvious question raised by this example is then, whether all markers of sentential negation, independent of their syntactic position, may participate in this kind of negative concord. Such a question is not asked - which is somewhat strange for someone who contributed to this

field - let alone answered. And a closely related but equally unanswered question is, whether all markers of sentential negation are equally negative in the sense that they license the same set of negative polarity items (cf. van der Wouden 1997).

I also see larger problems which relate to the theoretical underpinnings of this study. If one doesn't share the author's basic assumptions, one will not be convinced by many of the analyses. This is a truism of course, but in some cases it is more relevant than in others. Many of the arguments in this monograph are quite theory-internal. It proves, for example, difficult to offer a straightforward interpretation - which is a strong form of independent evidence - for some of the postverbal negative positions (pp. 100 ff.): especially the distinction between NegP-3 and NegP-4 is hard to establish (p. 101).

But even if one is willing to accept the analyses, they raise certain problems, not just for Zanuttini's book, but for any book of this type. Under a strong interpretation of functional projections (cf., e.g., Zwarts 1993), some functional projection is present in all languages if its existence is proven for any language. According to this line of reasoning, languages such as Dutch or Italian or Chinese have an AgrO projection, in which object agreement features are checked, because of the fact that certain Bantu languages show object agreement. Along the same lines, languages such as Dutch or Chinese or Bantu must have (at least) four NegP's because there are (at least) four NegP's in Romance languages. What evidence does a Dutch or Chinese or Bantu child have to ever hypothesize so rich a structure?

On the other hand, under a weaker interpretation of functional projections, for any functional projection proposed for language X, independent evidence is needed before we may assume its existence in language X+1. Vasishth (1998) even claims that for languages such as Japanese, Korean, and Hindi, "the presence of FPs in general is not well-motivated." Under such an interpretation, one of the cornerstones of Zanuttini's reasoning is blown away, to wit, Cinque's allegedly universal hierarchy of adverbial projections. As long as there is no independent proof for all adverbial projections proposed by Cinque in all languages discussed in the book, Zanuttini cannot use these functional projections as fixed points relatively to which the position of the various Negation Projections may be derived. Zanuttini carries the burden of proof that the Romance languages discussed in the book and mentioned in its title constitute one language in the sense of (8) above, and no such proof is given.

One might also take an intermediate position, and that is probably what Zanuttini does: assume that all Romance languages are essentially the same as far as sentential negation is concerned, and refrain from speculating on other languages. But then one is still stuck with the problem, what counts as Romance. Would English count in this respect, as the Germanic language which suffered most Romance influence? Other Germanic languages probably need not be taken into account: in van der Wouden (1998) it is argued that Zanuttini's analysis of negative imperatives in Romance does not carry over in a straightforward way to their counterparts in Dutch. But perhaps the analysis does carry over to Latin, which may be seen as the youngest ancestor common to all Romance languages. And then the question of course arises why the Romance languages are so uniformly different from languages in other branches from the Indo-European family.

To conclude: negation is one of the most complex and interesting parts of human languages. Zanuttini's book is an important and welcome contribution to our knowledge of the variation in systems for the expression of sentential negation (constituent negation is hardly touched upon). The book contains a wealth of data, partly uncovered from sources unavailable for the larger part of the linguistic community, partly new. It also contains very subtle analyses of often quite subtle facts. Whether all of these analyses will keep up with the next major change in the generative theory remains to be seen; the data, however, will last for many years to come.

References

Cinque, Guglielmo (1995). Adverbs and the universal hierarchy of functional projections. *GLOW Newsletter* 31, 14-15.

Early, Robert (1994). Lewo. In Peter Kahrel & René van den Berg (eds.): *Typological Studies in Negation*, 65-92. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Haegeman, Liliane, & Raffaella Zanuttini (1991). Negative heads and the Neg Criterion. *The Linguistic Review* 8, 233-251.

Haspelmath, Martin (1997). *Indefinite Pronouns*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Horn, Laurence (1989). *A Natural History of Negation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jespersen, Otto (1917). Negation in English and other languages. *Historisk-filologiske Meddeleser* 1, 1-151. Reprinted in *Selected Writings of Otto Jespersen*, London and Tokyo: George Allen & Unwin and Sejo Publishing, 1962.

Jespersen, Otto (1924). *The Philosophy of Grammar*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Ladusaw, William (1992). Expressing Negation. In Chris Barker & David Dowty (eds.): *Proceedings of the second conference on semantics and linguistic Theory (SALT 2)*, 237-259. Columbus, Ohio State University.

Payne, John (1985). Negation. In Timothy Shopen (ed.): *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, 197-242. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Seuren, Pieter (1967). Negation in Dutch. *Neophilologus* 4, 327-263.

Vasishth, Shravan (1998). [Review of] Forget et al.: Negation and Polarity. *LINGUIST LIST* 9-1836, Thu Dec 24 1998.

van der Wouden, Ton (1997). *Negative Contexts: Collocation, polarity and multiple negation*. London & New York: Routledge.

van der Wouden, Ton (1998). Niet huilen maar: negation, directives and particles. In Sjef Barbiers, Johan Rooryck & Jeroen van de Weijer (eds.): *Small words in the big picture. Squibs for Hans Bennis*, 125-128. Leiden: HIL.

van der Wouden, Ton, & Frans Zwarts (1993). A semantic analysis of negative concord. In Utpal Lahiri & Adam Wyner (eds.): *Proceedings of the third conference on semantics and linguistic theory (SALT 3)*, 202-219. Ithaca, Cornell University Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics.

Zwart, Jan Wouter (1993). *Dutch syntax: a minimalist approach*. Groningen dissertation.