

**A formal typology of indefinites interacting with negation
and its diachronic consequences**

Chiara Gianollo – Università di Bologna

In this talk I spell out the diachronic consequences of the formal typology of indefinites interacting with negation that emerges by combining Zeijlstra's (2004, 2008) and Penka's (2011) analysis of negative concord as syntactic agreement with Chierchia's (2004, 2006, 2013) modeling of NPI-licensing as exhaustification of alternatives.

Indefinites impose lexically encoded conditions on their quantificational domain and on their alternatives, which amount to scope preferences and constraints. These conditions may change through time, in ways that can also impact on the indefinites' polarity requirements, as diachronic comparative work has shown (Haspelmath 1997, Jäger 2010, Labelle & Espinal 2012, Willis, Lucas & Breitbarth (ed.) 2013, Gianollo 2018). Formal diachronic accounts can support synchronic models by providing etymological correlates for assumed meaning components and by showing the role that the surrounding semantic-pragmatic and syntactic context has in the processes of semantic reanalysis.

Among the classes of indefinites that take narrow scope with respect to propositional negation, the typology adopted in this work distinguishes between a syntactic and a pragmatic licensing mechanism. Indefinites that either directly encode a negative operator (negative indefinites like *nobody*) or evoke an (abstract) c-commanding negative operator (negative concord items like Italian *nessuno*), which license them syntactically, are distinguished from negative polarity indefinites, which are subject to a pragmatic licensing condition requiring them to be in downward-entailing contexts. Under Chierchia's (2013) alternative-based account of polarity, this condition is accounted for by capitalizing on the obligatory activation of alternatives by polarity-sensitive indefinites. Different 'flavors' of NPIs are linked to different types of lexically determined alternatives, which in turn require different (abstract) operators for their licensing.

In my talk I will deal in particular with NPIs that undergo exhaustification by the E (*even*) operator and I will analyze cases in which they are historically reanalyzed as negative concord items, thus shifting from a pragmatic to a syntactic licensing mechanism. In this diachronic process, focus and the interaction between lexically encoded and focally induced alternatives play a crucial role, according to a cyclic development that is remindful of Jespersen's Cycle, with respect to both its triggering causes and its outcome (Kiparsky and Condoravdi 2006, Eckardt 2006). Drawing from the diachronies of Greek and Romance, I show that it is possible to identify an etymological base for the polarity-sensitivity of some existentials and for their subsequent grammaticalization into negative concord items. Specifically, I analyze a type of polarity-sensitive indefinites that is characterized by the combination of a focus-sensitive component (the negative focus particle *oudé* in Greek and *nec* in Latin) and an existential core, represented in both languages by the cardinal numeral 'one'. The syntactic and semantic properties of the negative focus particle are instrumental in creating the conditions for a reanalysis in terms of negative concord, which entails the creation of a syntactic dependency and the concomitant loss of the emphatic scalar reading originally associated with the newly grammaticalized indefinites. The resulting account promises to throw light on the 'polar versatility' (Martins 2000) of Early Romance polarity items, which exhibit both NPI and NCI uses.

References

- Chierchia, Gennaro. 2004. Scalar implicatures, polarity phenomena and the syntax/pragmatics interface. In Adriana Belletti (ed.), *Structures and Beyond*, 39–103. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chierchia, Gennaro. 2006. Broaden your views: implicatures of domain widening and the ‘logicality’ of language. *Linguistic Inquiry* 37(4). 535–590.
- Chierchia, Gennaro. 2013. *Logic in grammar: Polarity, Free Choice, and intervention*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eckardt, Regine. 2006. *Meaning change in grammaticalization. An enquiry into semantic reanalysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gianollo, Chiara. 2018. *Indefinites between Latin and Romance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Haspelmath, Martin. 1997. *Indefinite pronouns*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jäger, Agnes. 2010. Anything is nothing is something. On the diachrony of polarity types of indefinites. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 28(4). 787–822.
- Kiparsky, Paul & Cleo Condoravdi. 2006. Tracking Jespersen’s Cycle. In Brian Joseph & Angela Ralli (eds.), *Proceedings of the Second International Conference of Modern Greek dialects and linguistic theory*, 172–197. Patras: University of Patras.
- Labelle, Marie & M. Teresa Espinal. 2014. Diachronic changes in negative expressions: the case of French. *Lingua* 145. 194–225.
- Martins, Ana Maria. 2000. Polarity Items in Romance: Underspecification and Lexical Change. In Susan Pintzuk, George Tsoulas & Anthony Warner (eds.), *Diachronic Syntax. Models and Mechanisms*, 191–219. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Penka, Doris. 2011. *Negative indefinites*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Willis, David, Christopher Lucas & Anne Breitbarth (eds.). 2013. *The history of negation in the languages of Europe and the Mediterranean*, vol. 1: Case studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zeijlstra, Hedde. 2004. *Sentential negation and Negative Concord: Universiteit van Amsterdam dissertation*.
- Zeijlstra, Hedde. 2008. *Negative Concord is syntactic agreement*. Ms. University of Amsterdam, available at <http://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/000645>.