Romance n-words *are* negative quantifiers!

In this analysis we argue that n-words in Romanian are negative quantifiers.

1. Negative concord-Romanian is a strict negative concord language (NC), as the sentential negative marker is always required in order to license an n-word, regardless of its position in the sentence (1):

(1) a. *Nimeni* *(**nu**) a venit   b. *(**Nu**) stiu   *nimic*   [NC]

     nobody neg has come   neg know.1sg nothing

2. N-words are not NPIs - The traditional analysis of n-words as negative polarity items (NPIs) (Ladusaw 1992, Laka 1990) predicts they should have an existential interpretation in typical polarity contexts (questions, conditionals, scope of negative predicates, etc.) just like in (2a) for Italian. This prediction is not borne out in Romanian (2b):

(2) a. E venuto *nessuno* ?   (*Italian*)   b. *A venit *nimeni* ?   (*Romanian)*

     Has come nobody   Has come nobody

Moreover, the various diagnostics (scope properties, long-distance licensing of anaphora or topicalisation) that Giannakidou 2002 uses for Greek show that Romanian n-words cannot be analyzed as indefinites or existential quantifiers. She also predicts that a sentence with the sentential negation and several n-words always has an interpretation containing a single semantic negation in strict NC languages.

3. The double negation puzzle: two or more n-words-Contrary to what is generally argued, we show that double negation reading is available in Romanian with two or several n-words arguments of the same predicate (3-4). Pragmatic or syntactic factors (like topicalization) may sometimes force the reading with double negation as shown in (5) and (6):

(3) *Nimeni* **nu** iubeste pe *nimeni*. [NC/DN]   (4) *Nimeni* **nu** spune *nimic nimănui*.   [NC/DN]

    Nobody neg loves ACC nobody   Nobody neg says nothing nobody.DAT

(5) *Nimeni* **nu** moare *niciodata* [DN]   (6) *Nici o scrisoare*, Maria **nu** a scris *nimănui* [DN only]

    Nobody neg dies never   No letter   Maria neg has written nobody-DAT

    The facts of Romanian thus give rise to the following **paradox**:

(7) (a) a sentence with sentential negation and an n-word is always interpreted as containing only one semantic negation (it never has a double negation reading)

(b) a sentence with two or more n-words arguments of the same predicate can have a double negation reading

4. Solution – a polyadic approach-In order to account for the data, we analyze Romanian n-words as inherently negative quantifiers. The paradox in (7) is then solved by adopting an analysis of n-words in terms of polyadic quantifiers (Swart & Sag 2002). Two derivations are thus possible for a sentence with two or several n-words: iteration and resumption. Iteration consists in *separately* interpreting each monadic quantifier (binding one variable), which in the case of two negative quantifiers gives rise to a double negation reading (8a). The negative concord reading is derived by an operation of resumption: a sequence of negative quantifiers is reinterpreted as a single polyadic quantifier binding several variables (8b):

(8) a. NO_x , NO_y (LOVE (x,y))   [DN]   b. $NO_{x,y}$ LOVE (x,y)   [NC]

The possibility of having two distinct derivations accounts for the ambiguity of a sentence with several negative quantifiers (3-4). Moreover, this analysis accounts for the contrast between (7a) and (7b) in Romanian. Iteration and resumption are only possible with two quantifiers of the same type, more precisely with anti-additives. Since the sentential negation is a propositional operator, it does not bind individual variables (unlike negative quantifiers). Consequently, its co-occurrence with an n-word cannot be interpreted as a double negation and this correctly predicts the generalization in (7a).

The availability of DN readings represents a serious challenge for any theory that takes n-words in strict NC languages to be non-negative. Furthermore, n-words in Romanian are shown to be very similar to their Germanic counterparts (scope-splitting, binding properties, NPI-licensing). Our analysis of n-words as negative quantifiers is further supported by the evolution in diachrony: n-words never had an existential reading in Romanian (unlike what we find in other Romance languages). This constitutes a strong argument in favor of our hypothesis on their inherent negative meaning.

REFERENCES: CORBLIN, F. & TOVENA , L., 2003, «L'expression de la negation dans les langues romanes », D. Godard (éds), p. 281-343; GIANNAKIDOU, A., 2002, « N-words and Negative Concord », *The Linguistics Companion*, Blackwell, Oxford; LADUSAW, W., 1992, « Expressing Negation », *Semantics and Linguistic Theory* (SALT) II : 237-259, Cornell University, Ithaca; LAKA, I., 1990, *Negation in Syntax : On the nature of functional categories and projections*, PhD dissertation, MIT; De SWART, H. & SAG, F., 2002, « Negation and Negative Concord in Romance », *Linguistics & Philosophy* 25 : 373-417.