

JESPERSEN'S CYCLE REDEFINED

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This paper discusses the diachronic development of sentential negation in Greek and proposes a broader definition for the Negative cycle, known as Jespersen's cycle (Jespersen 1917). This definition spells out and formalizes a background assumption in current leading research on Jespersen cycle (van der Auwera 2009, 2010, van Gelderen 2008, 2011, Kiparsky&Condoravdi 2007): that the cyclicity of the phenomenon is semantic in nature and independent from its morphosyntactic realization in each one of its crosslinguistic manifestations. The proposed definition, in (1), abstracts away from the exact realization of the Negative cycle in French (Bréal 1897/1900, Clarke 1904, Horn 1989) and other typical Jespersen languages (e.g. English, Horn 1989, Wallage 2005; Dutch, Hoeksema 1997, Zeijlstra 2004; Egyptian, Gardiner 1903; Old Norse, van Gelderen 2008; Arabic and Berber, Lucas 2007) and views Jespersen's cycle as a diachronic process that targets intensified predicate negation and elevates it to propositional.

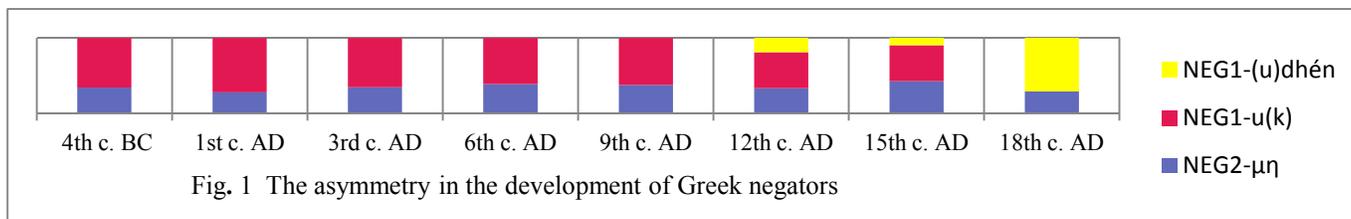
Motivation for refining and redefining the Jespersen processes comes from the history of Greek. Greek preserves a two negator contrast in all its history, from Homeric Greek (8th c. BC), NEG1: $\bar{u}(k^{[h]})$ vs NEG2: $m\bar{e}$ (exs 2, 3) to Standard Modern, NEG1: $dhe(n)$ vs NEG2: $mi(n)$ (exs 4, 5). The diachronic development of NEG1 and NEG2 in Greek exhibits an asymmetry regarding the individual course of each negator through time (see fig. 1). NEG1 is renewed, in that the functions of the Classical Greek negator $\bar{u}(k^{[h]})$ are in Modern Greek assumed by the former indefinite (u) $dh\acute{e}n$. NEG2, however, remains stable in form (with only phonological alterations, $m\bar{e} > me > mi > mi(n)$) and in its exclusive presence in nonveridical environments in the sense of Giannakidou (1998), (cf. Chatzopoulou&Giannakidou 2011, Chatzopoulou 2011). The proposed definition for Jespersen's cycle relates to the Greek data in two ways:

- (i) It explains the stability of NEG2, a fact not yet accounted for in recent relevant literature (Phillipaki&Spiropoulos 2004, Kiparsky&Condoravdi 2007, Roussou 2007, Willmott 2008). Greek NEG2, in its diachronically persistent functions: (a) as the negator of prohibitions (exs 3, 5) and (b) as a non-negative complementizer (optional question particle (ex 6) and complementizer in the scope of verbs of fear (ex 7)), always relates to a higher projection, that of Sentential Force (Rizzi 1997), and as a result escapes the Jespersen processes that by definition target predicate negation or low level negative expressions in general.
- (ii) It allows for the Greek NEG1 transformations to be viewed as an instance of Jespersen's cycle, which otherwise does not properly fall under the traditional morphosyntactic accounts of the Jespersen processes (cf. Zeijlstra 2004, de Swart 2010), as noted also in Willmott (to appear). The Modern Greek NEG1 $dhen$ has its origin in a former emphatic, yet non discontinuous, form of predicate negation, the Classical Greek indefinite $udh\acute{e}n$ (morphologically: 'not-even-one'). $Udh\acute{e}n$ followed a course from negative indefinite 'nothing' (ex 8), to negative adverb 'not-at-all', to sentential negation 'not' (ex 9) in Late Medieval, and by pervasive phonological alterations (cf. Horrocks 2010) resulted to Modern Greek $dhen$ (ex 4). By explicitly placing the Jespersen cycle regularities in the semantics, the proposed definition accommodates not only for the Greek data, but also for: Chinese and numerous languages, where propositional negation originates from verbs (van der Auwera 2005, 2006, van Gelderen 2008); German, where propositional negation never came to be expressed in a syntactically discontinuous way either (Jäger 2008, Breitbarth 2008); and Bantu languages, where even negator tripling is attested (Devos&van der Auwera, forthcoming).

Crucial in the proposed definition is the notion of intensification in the sense of C. Romero (2007), which I use to describe emphatic negation. Intensified negation is viewed here as a scale evoking or alternative evoking operation that specializes on scalar predicates, predicates that are gradable or allow for some sort of quantification. Once the intensified form of negation loses this restriction and applies to all kinds of predicates, quantifiable or not, then it can be safely diagnosed as plain propositional negation (ex 9). Thus the particular sort of semantic bleaching found in Jespersen's cycle involves loss of reference to a scale. Akin in this sense is the diachronic development of other scale evoking linguistic elements in which regular renewal has been attested: comparatives, diminutives and honorifics. The proposed approach unites typical and atypical Jespersen's cycle manifestations and views the Jespersen processes as an instance of a broader tendency active in natural language in general: scalar instability followed by degree reinforcement.

- (1) **Jespersen cycle:** Negator renewal through the semantic bleaching of intensified negation to plain propositional, further re-intensified by morphological, syntactic, prosodic or other means. If X is a negative expression, either syntactically continuous or discontinuous, and α a variable of quantities (as of individuals or times), Jespersen's cycle goes through the following stages:

STAGE I $[[X]] = \lambda P_{\langle d, \langle \alpha, t \rangle \rangle} . \lambda \alpha. [\forall d > \emptyset. \neg P(d)(\alpha)]$ (intensified predicate negation)
 STAGE II $[[X]] = \lambda p. \neg p$ (plain propositional negation)



- (2) Th^hetis d' **u:** le:t^het' ep^hetmeo:n paidos heu:¹ Homeric Greek, 8th c. BC
 Thetis **NEG1** forget.IMPER.INDIC requests child.GEN her.GEN
 'Thetis did not forget the requests of her son.' (NEG1 in negated **assertion**)
- (3) Eksauda, **me:** keut^he noo:i² Homeric Greek, 8th c. BC
 speak-out.PRES.IMP.2SG **NEG2** hide.IMP.2SG mind.DAT
 'Speak out; hide it not in your mind.' (NEG2 in a **prohibitive**)
- (4) O Jánis **dhen** írthe. Standard Modern Greek
 the John **NEG1** came.IND.3SG
 'John didn't come.' (NEG1 in negated **assertion**)
- (5) **mi** féris ton Jáni. Standard Modern Greek
NEG2 bring.SUBJ.2SG the John
 'Don't bring John.' (NEG2 in negated **subjunctive**)
- (6) **Min** ídhatē ton ándra mu, ton Lúka Kaljakúdh³ 18th c. AD
NEG2 see.PAST.IND.3PL the husband my the Lucas Kaljakudas
 'Did you happen to see my husband, Lukas Kaliakudas?' (NEG2 as a **question particle**)
- (7) Fovúnde **mi dhe** ghirísi. Standard Modern Greek
 fear.PRES.IND.3PL **NEG2 NEG1** return.SUBJ.3SG
 'They fear that he may not return.' (NEG2 NEG1 serialization amounting to **one logical negation**)
- (8) **u:den** [...] pepont^hen⁴ 4th century BC
n-thing suffer.PRES-PERF.3SG
 'Nothing at all happened to him.'
- (9) Álon na mi idhís tin Sirían, an **udhén** ipostrépsis⁵ 12th century AD
 Again to NEG2 see.PNP.2SG the.ACC Syria.ACC if **NEG1** return.PNP.2SG
 'You shall not see Syria again, if you do not return.' (negation of an **accomplishment**, bounded, non-gradable)

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¹ *Ilias* 1.495–496 [TLG].

² *Ilias* 1.363 [TLG].

³ *Folksong*, Fauriel (1824–1825), 1.118.

⁴ Isocrates, *In Callimachum*. 4.5.

⁵ *Dighenis Akritis* based on the Escorial manuscript, (ed.) S. Alexiou (1990), 453–454.