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NEGATION IN ALBANIAN: N-WORDS

Abstract. This article analyzes negative indefinites (n-words) in Albanian. These items include a prefixed element and an indefinite, and obligatorily require the occurrence of the negative marker, NM. Complementarily, the indefinite element can occur alone in negative contexts. This distribution, specifically the types of negative doubling, is explained by assuming that the negative operator is not realized by a lexical constituent within the syntactic structure. The idea is that negation is postulated and made available to interpretation by the presence of NM and n-words. The Chomskyan notion of I-Merge and the lexical properties of n-words provide the crucial syntactic tools to connect doubling and other phenomena to the phasal Spell-out procedure.

Keywords: negation; n-words; indefinites; morphology; interrogative; Albanian

NEGACJA W ALBAŃSKIM: SŁOWA NIEOKREŚLONE (N-WORDS)

Abstract. Niniejszy artykuł analizuje negatywne słowa nieokreślone (n-words) w albańskim. Te jednostki morfologiczne obejmują elementy prefiksalne i morfemy nieokreślone, które wymagają współwystępowania markerów negacji (NM). Element nieokreślony może także występować samoistnie w kontekście negacji. Taka dystrybucja, a konkretnie typy dubletów negacji, daje się wyjaśnić, gdy przyjmiemy, że operator negacji nie jest realizowany przez jednostkę leksykalną w strukturze syntaktycznej. Wnosimy, że negacja jest postulowana i możliwa do interpretacji przy obecności negatywnych markerów i negatywnych słów nieokreślonych. Idea Chomskiego dotycząca I-Merge i leksykalne właściwości słów nieokreślonych dostarczają istotnych narzędzi syntaktycznych pozwalających połączyć dublowanie i inne zjawiska z procedurą fazowego spell-outu.

Słowa kluczowe: negacja; słowa negatywne; słowa nieokreślone; morfologia; forma pytająca; albański

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INTRODUCTION

In the literature on negation Negative Concord (NC) refers to languages where the co-occurrence of two or more negative elements in the same clause corresponds to one negation (Zeijlstra, 2022). Generally, this regards the combination of the negative marker (NM) with a negative indefinite (n-word), as in Italian *non viene nessuno* 'nobody comes', where the NM *non* 'not' co-occurs with the negative argument *nessuno* 'nobody'. It is possible to distinguish Strict NC languages, where the doubling is mandatory, from Non-Strict NC languages, where the pre-verbal position of the negative element excludes the NM. This is the case of Italian and other languages, as discussed in Section 2.

Albanian has Strict Negative Concord, whereby negative indefinites and adverbials obligatorily combine with the NM *nuk, nëng/nik* and *s*, or, in imperatives and dependent contexts, *mos/mas*. The negative indefinites are composed of a negative modifier or a minimizer, such as *as, kurr(ë), fare* or *mos* and an indefinite, i.e., according to the regional varieties, the wh- word *kush* 'who?' or *një* 'one', *njeri* 'person', and *gjë* 'thing'; the latter can also occur alone in negative contexts. The sentence-like form *jo* 'not' will not be considered. This morphosyntactic organization appears both in Tosk varieties, the spoken language of Southern Albania (also including the Standard Language) and the Italo-Albanian (Arbëresh) dialects, and in Gheg, the Northern Albanian variety.

We will concentrate on the co-occurrence of the NM and n-words, including the indefinite elements that enter the composition of n-words, which, as noted, can be used alone in the scope of negation or other operators. We start by adopting the analysis of negation taken up in literature, whereby the so-called (negative) polarity words are indefinites introducing a variable 'x', which requires a negated existential closure operator (Acquaviva, 1994, p. 114; Manzini & Savoia, 2011, pp. 130, 152 ff.; Manzini & Pescarini, 2024). Negation, therefore, is not lexicalized by a negative quantifier, namely a morpho-lexical constituent, but it is postulated or recalled by the presence of n-words, including the NM.

Our data compare different Albanian varieties: the Tosk varieties of Lushnjë and Korça, in the South of Albania, the Gheg variety of Shkodër, and the Arbëresh varieties, i.e. the Tosk varieties spoken in South-Italy after the migration from Albania at the end of 15th century. Here, we consider the dialects of S. Benedetto Ullano (Calabria), S. Costantino Albanese (Basilicata) and Chieuti (Apulia). We will use n-word to refer to Albanian negative indefinites,

i.e. indefinites selected in negative sentences, and NM for the clausal negation marker *nuk/s*.

1. N-WORDS IN ALBANIAN

Albanian n-words do not have the force to introduce a negative interpretation by themselves, but require the presence of the negative clausal marker, namely *nuk/ s/ mos*. Consequently, Albanian varieties show systematic NC, whether the n-word follows the verb, examples in (a), or is dislocated in first position, examples in (b), as a focalized element. The examples illustrate the occurrence and distribution of negative words in the sentence in different varieties. Two properties vary: the form of the prefixed piece that combines with the indefinite and the human indefinite, i.e. the word for 'one'. The current spelling is used with some adjustments in accordance with regional pronunciations; *ç/tʃ* is transcribed as *tsh*.[1]

(1) a.   s   më   pa   as-njeˈri
         NM OCl.1sg   see.Past.3sg   nobody
         'Nobody saw me'
     a'. s   pash   as-gjë
         NM   see.Past.1sg   nothing
         'I saw nothing'
     b.   as-njeˈri   s   më   pa
         nobody   NM   OCl.1sg   see.Past.3sg
         'Nobody saw me'
     b'. as-gjë   nuk   ndodh-i
         nothing   NM   happen-Past.3sg
         'Nothing happened'   Lushnjë

(2) a.   unë   nuk   shiko-i   as-një/ as-njeˈri
         I   NM   look.at-1sg   nobody
         'I look at nobody'

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[1] Abbreviations: Acc = accusative, Asp = aspect particle, CP = CP phase, DE = downward exhaustification, φ = nominal features, Impf = imperfect, Inf = infinitive, INFL = inflection. IPrt = interrogative particle *a*, Min = minimizer, Mood = mood, NC = negative concord, NM = negative marker, NPI = negative polarity item, Obl = oblique, OCl = Object Clitic, Prt = particle, Past = past, PP = past participle, pl = plural, Q = interrogative, SCl = subject clitic, sg = singular, vP = vP phase. Prt indicates the clausal introducers *të* of Tosk and *me* of Gheg.

a'. nuk   më   tho-të   as-gjë
     NM   OCl.1sg   say-3sg   nothing
     '(S)he doesn't tell me anything'

b.   as-një   nuk   më   sheh
     nobody   NM   OCl.1sg   see.3sg
     'Nobody sees me'

b'. (ai) as-gjë   nuk   më   tho-të
     he nothing   NM   OCl.1sg   tell-3sg
     'He tells me nothing'   Korça

(3) a. nuk   m thre-t   kërr-kush
        NM   OCl.1sg   call-3sg nobody
        'Nobody calls me'

a'. nuk   n^{d}o:dh   kërr-gjɐ
    NM   happen.3sg   nothing
    'Nothing happens'

b. kërr-kush   nuk   m   thre-t
    nobody   NM   OCl.1sg   call-3sg
    'Nobody calls me'

b'. kërr-gjɐ   nuk   n^{d}o:dh
    nothing   NM   happen.3sg
    'Nothing happened'   Shkodër

As shown, n-words may occur both in post-verbal and in pre-verbal position. The post-verbal position is usually admitted in Albanian, exactly like in Italian, and generally associated with a weak focus. Pre-verbal position is generally connected to the discourse-linked focus.

An interesting comparison is provided by the Arbëresh dialects. In fact, some dialects preserve the obligatory NC, as the variety of Chieuti in (4), which applies the same distribution seen in (1–3). In other varieties the negative word in first or preverbal position, where it implements a focal occurrence, excludes the NM, as in the variety of S. Benedetto, in (5) and S. Costantino, (6).[2] This property may be traced back to the contact with Romance neighboring dialects, where—like in Italian—a negative word in pre-verbal position of the sentence is sufficient to trigger the negative interpretation (Rizzi, 1982; Chierchia, 2013; Manzini & Pescarini, 2024).

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[2] Partial negative concord also characterizes the Arbëresh variety of Piana degli Albanesi, in Sicily. As in the Arbëresh dialects exemplified in the text, the dialect of Piana shows in turn a distribution similar to that of Italian, where a negative subject in pre-verbal position excludes the NM (Garzonio & Messina, 2023).

(4) a. ngë   shoh   mos-njaˈri
         NM   see.1sg   nobody
         'I see nobody'

     a'. ngë   shoh   mos-gjë
         NM   see.1sg   nothing
         'I see nothing'

     b. mos-njaˈri   ngë   më   thëre-t
         nobody   NM   OCl.1sg   call-3sg
         'Nobody calls me'

     b'. mos-gjë   ngë   bër-en
         nothing   NM   make.Past-3pl
         'They made nothing!'   Chieuti

(5) a. ngë   më   thërre-t   mos-njëˈri
         NM   me   call-3sg   nobody
         'Nobody calls me'

     b. mos-njëˈri   më   thërre-t
         nobody   OCl.1sg   call-3sg
         'Nobody calls me'   S. Benedetto

(6) a. sot   fare-njiri   ha   (fare-)gjë
         today   nobody   eat.3sg   nothing
         'Today nobody eats anything'

     b. fare-gjë   bë-n   këta!
         nothing   make.Past-3pl   these
         'These made nothing!'   S. Costantino

In the presence of two (or more) n-words the NM is required, as typically in varieties with NC, in (7i,ii), including the conservative Arbëresh varieties, in (8).

(7) i. ktu   nuk   shiko-n   gjë   njeˈri
         here   NM   see-3sg   thing   one
         'Here, no one sees anything'   Lushnjë

     ii. kërr-kush   nuk   sheh   kërr-gjɐ
         no one   NM   see.3sg   nothing
         'Nobody sees anything'   Shkodër

(8)   sod   mos-njari   ngë   ha   mos-gjë
         today   nobody   NM   eat.3sg   nothing
         'Today, nobody eats anything'   Chieuti

In non-Strict-NC Arbëresh dialects the NM may be missing, cf. (9i,ii).

(9)   i.   fare-njiˈri   ha   (fare-)gjë
           nobody   eat.3sg   (no)thing
           'Nobody eats anything'   S. Costantino

     ii.   sod   mos-njeˈri   ha   (fare-)gjë
        today   nobody   eat.3sg   nothing
        'Today, nobody eats anything'   S. Benedetto

When the NM is inserted before the matrix verb, we find NC with the n-word in the dependent clause; as noticed, the n-word requires to be read in combination with the NM, as in (10–11) and (12) for Arbëresh.

(10) i.   nuk bëso-j   të   shiko-j   (as)njeˈri
       NM believe-1sg   Prt   see-1sg   nobody
       'I do not think I see anyone'   Lushnjë

    ii.   nuk mendo-j   të   shoh   as-k-ënd   / as-gjë
       NM think-1sg   Prt   see.1sg   nobody-Acc   / nothing
       'I think to see nobody/ nothing'   Korça

(11)   nuk mëndaj   me   pa   (kërr-)k-en
       NM think-1sg   Prt   see.PP   nobody-Acc
       'I do not intend to see anyone'   Shkodër

(12) i.   s   dua   sa   të   vi-nj   (fare-)njiˈri
       NM   want.1sg   Prt   Prt   come-3sg   nobody
       'I don't want anybody to come'   S. Costantino

    ii.   ngë dua   (mos-)njaˈri   të   vinj
       NM want.1sg   nobody   Prt   come-3sg
       'I don't want anybody to come'   Chieuti

Example (11) illustrates the Gheg non-finite complement clause where the particle *me* (the preposition 'with') introduces the reduced past participle of the verb (Manzini & Savoia, 2018; Savoia & Baldi, in press).

1.1 SIMPLE INDEFINITES

Simple indefinites are allowed in both negative and other existential contexts, where they are interpreted in the scope of an operator, such as negation, in (a,a'), or interrogative (irrealis), in (b,b') (cf. Section 2). The latter is introduced by prosodic properties, in (13b,b'–14b,b'), or, optionally, by the particle *a*, in (15b,b').

(13) a.   s   më   pa   njeˈri

           NM   OCl.1sg   see.Past.3sg   one/ person

           'Nobody saw me'.

     a'.   s   ndodh-i   gjë

           NM   happen.Past-3sg   thing

           'Nothing happened'

     b.   ka   njeˈri?

           have.3sg   anybody

           'Is there anybody?'

     b'.   pe   gjë?

           see.Past.2sg   thing?

           'Did you see anything?'   Lushnjë

(14) a.   nuk   më   sheh   njëˈri

           NM   me   see.3sg   one/ person

           'No one sees me'

     a'.   nuk   shiko-i   gjë

           NM   look.at-1sg   thing

           'I look at nothing'

     b.   po   më   sheh   njeˈri?

           Prt   OCl.1sg   see.3sg   anybody

           'Is anybody seeing me?'

     b'.   pe   gjë?

           see.Past.2sg   thing?

           'Did you see anything?'   Korça

(15) a.   nuk   erdh-i   kush

           NM   come.Past.3sg   person

           'Nobody came'

     a'.   nuk   nᵈodh-i   gjʁ

           NM   happen.Past.3sg   thing

           'Nothing happened'

     b.   (a)   erdh-i   kush?

           IPrt   come.Past.3sg   anybody

           'Did anybody come?'

     b'.   a   ka   nᵈodh   gjʁ?

           IPrt   have.3sg   hepen.PP   thing?

           'Didn't anything happen?'   Shkodër

The occurrence of the simple indefinite in the scope of negation or the irrealis operator is also attested in Arbëresh dialects, as in (16–17).

(16) a. ngë   më   sëre-t   njaˈri
         NM   OCl.1sg   call-3ag   nobody
         'Nobody calls me'

     a'. ngë   bër-a   gjë
         NM   do.Past-1sg nothing
         'I did nothing'

     b. ka   ardhur   njaˈri?
         have.3sg   come.PP   anyone
         'Did anyone come?'

     b'. cet-i   gjë?
         be.Past-3sg   thing
         'Did anything happen?'   Chieuti

(17) a. ngë   më   thërre-t   njëˈri
         NM   me   call-3sg   nobody
         'Nobody calls me'

     a'. ngë   pe-v-a   (fare-)gjë
         NM   see-Past-1sg   nothing
         'I did see nothing'

     b. vje-n   njëˈri?
         come-3sg   anybody
         'Is anyone coming here?'

     b'. qe   gjë?
         be.Past.3sg   thing
         'Did anything happen?'   S. Benedetto

Negative indefinites differ from 'somebody/something', in (18–22), where the formatives *di-* 'know', *ndo-* from *në do* 'if one wishes' (Mann, 1977; Demiraj, 1986) give a presuppositional specific reading referring to the universe of discourse.

(18) a. pe   ndo-njeˈri ? / ndo një gjë?
         see.Past.2sg   someone? / something?
         'Did you see someone? / something?'

     b. nuk pa-sh   ndo-njeˈri / ndo një gjë
         NM   see.Past.1sg   someone / something
         'I didn't see someone/ something'   Lushnjë

(19) a.   vje-n   di-kush?
         come-3sg   someone
         'Is somebody coming?'   Korça

(20) a.   a   vje-n   ndo-kush?
         IPrt   come-3sg   someone
         'Is somebody coming?'
     b.   nuk   shah   di-k-end / di-tsha   (tshi mendosha)
         NM   see.1sg   someone-Acc/something   (of which I thought)
         'I do not see somebody/ something of which I thought   Shkodër

(21) a.   vjen   ndo-njiˈri?
         come.3sg   someone?
         'Is someone coming?'   S. Costantino

(22) a.   ndodh-i   ndo-gjë-gjë?
         Happen.Past-3sg   something
         'Did something happen?
     b.   ngë   pa-tsh   ndo-njaˈri   (tshi njih-ja)
         NM   see.Past-1sg   someooone   (which know.Impf-1sg)
         'I didn't see someone (which I knew)'   Chieuti

Simple indefinites require negative reading in combination with NM even in the first position, where NC is obligatory, in (23a,b–24a,b).

(23) a.   njeˈri   nuk   më   pa
         nobody   NM   OCl.1sg   see.Past.3sg
         'Nobody saw me'
     b.   (as)gjë   nuk   bë-n!
         nothing   NM   do-3sg
         '(s)he did nothing'   Lushnjë

(24) a.   (kurr-)kush   nuk   më   ka   pa
         nobody   NM   OCl.1sg   have.3sg   seen.PP
         'Nobody saw me'
     b.   (kërr-)gjɐ   nuk   më   ka   prek
         nothing   NM   OCl.1sg   have.3sg   touch.PP
         'Nothing touched me'   Shkodër

Thus, simple indefinites on a par with n-words are associated with the requirement that the NM is necessary for the negation to be postulated.

2. SYNTACTIC APPROACHES TO N-WORDS

The idea that negation is implemented by an overt constituent, for example the clitic *non* in Italian (or *nuk* in Albanian), is the traditional way of dealing with NC. Rizzi (1982) separates the negative clitic, Italian *non* or French *ne*, identified with the ordinary negative constituent of sentence, from the NPIs, the n-words, defined negative quantifier-like elements, seen as existential quantifiers (Laka, 1990). Rizzi concludes that the Romance n-words do not have a true negative status since they occur in modal (irrealis) environments, such as interrogatives, without introducing negative meaning, as in indirect question (25) (Rizzi, 1982, p. 122):

(25)   Mi chiedo se *nessuno* abbia poi contattato Gianni.
       'I wonder whether anybody has eventually contacted Gianni'   Italian

In other words, these items are only a special type of indefinite.

NC and non-strict concord phenomena are the crucial topic discussed in the literature (Chierchia, 2013; Zeijlstra, 2022; Manzini & Pescarini, 2024). Indeed, there are languages such as Italian, where the presence of a n-word in preverbal position excludes the NM, which occurs only if it precedes the n-word, as in (26a) vs (26b) (Rizzi, 1982, 121).

(26) a.   Mario *non* ha visto *nessuno*
           Mario *neg* has seen *nobody*
     b.   nessuno ha visto Mario
           nobody has seen Mario   Italian

The idea is that the structural position of the n-word *nessuno* 'nobody' characterizes the scope of negation. The negative clausal operator *neg* is independently realized or incorporated by the n-word that, in Rizzi, moves to the head *neg*, as in (27).

(27) [nessuno$_i$ [+ neg]]   [e_i ha visto Mario]
     nobody   has seen Mario   Italian

Haegeman and Zanuttini (1991) use the Neg Criterion, modelled on the *Wh*-Criterion of Rizzi (1996), by which the negative clitic in the head position of a NegP requires a Neg operator in its Spec and vice versa. The head-Spec configuration implements an agreement relation, yielding a single negation interpretation, which originates between C and INFL or within VP. According to Turano (1994, 1995, 2000), n-words are negative quantifiers, which must

be c-commanded by the scope licenser, i.e. the NM *nuk/mos*, or the interrogative particle *a*. C-command explains doubling and licensing of simple indefinites if preceded by the NM.

The idea that a subject n-word in the first position somehow implements the properties of the negative operator returns in minimalist analyses. Zeijlstra (2022) explains the ability of n-words to replace the negation head preserving the idea that NC is an agreement relation between a single interpretable negative feature [iNEG]. The latter must c-command elements with an uninterpretable negative feature, [uNEG], the n-words (Zeijlstra, 2022, p. 259). In the absence of the negative element carrying [iNEG], a covert operator Op¬[iNEG] is inserted, so that we have two possibilities. This is the case in Italian, where the interpretable negative feature [iNEG] is introduced by the NM *non*, and *nessuno*, associated with the uninterpretable feature [uNEG], obtains the negative interpretation, see (28a). If *nessuno* occurs in a pre-verbal position, the NM is not realized and the covert operator Op¬[iNEG] is introduced, as in (28b).

(28) a. [non$_{[iNEG]}$ telefona   [$_{vP}$ nessuno $_{[uNEG]}$] …
          NM   calls   nobody
          'He does not call anybody'   Italian
     b. Op¬[iNEG] [nessuno$_{[uNEG]}$ telefona …
          nobody   calls…
          'Nobody is calling'

Strict-NC is therefore explained by assuming that all n-words of a language are [uNEG], with the result that they combine freely in the domain of the covert operator Op¬[iNEG], in (29):

(29) [Op$_{¬[iNEG]}$ [s$_{[uNEG]}$ më   pa   [$_{vP}$ as-nje′ri$_{[uNEG]}$] …
                    NM   me   saw   nobody
                    'Nobody saw me'   Lushnjë

Obviously, this mechanism could also apply to postverbal negative subjects, thus deriving sentences such as Italian **viene nessuno* in the sense 'nobody comes' (Chierchia, 2013, p. 230). Garzonio and Messina (2023) refer to the Zeijlstra approach. Manzini and Pescarini (2024, p. 674) criticize the ad hoc distinction between semantic and syntactic negative properties, whereby, according to Zeijlstra, French *pas* is semantically negative but lacks the feature [uNEG]. As a consequence, it combines with *ne*, but it is excluded by n-words [uNEG], as in (30):

(30) [Op$_{\neg[iNEG]}$ [je ne$_{[iNEG]}$ mange *pas [$_{vP}$ rien$_{[uNEG]}$] …
         SCl NM   eats   Min   nothing
           'I eat nothing'   French

According to Chierchia (2013, p. 234), NPIs which block NC are n-words endowed with a negative feature which enters "into a concord relation with abstract negation". The feature [+n-D] of NPIs such as Italian *nessuno*, implies a covert negation, as in (31), where O$_{Alt}$ is a focus operator introducing a scalar reading for indefinites.

(31) O$_{Alt}$ ¬ [nessuno[+n-D]]   non [+n-D]   ha chiamato …
          Nobody   NM   has called
            'Nobody called'   Italian

Covert entities end up reproducing exactly the structure with overt NC as in (26a)!

We follow a different conceptualization, where n-words are existential indefinites (Chierchia, 2013), bound by operators present in the sentence, and sentential negation amounts to closure of the variable "by a negated existential operator" (Acquaviva, 1994). We also apply this analysis to the negative marker (NM) and assume that it is itself a type of indefinite n-word. Negative operator is, therefore, triggered by the occurrence of n-words in the clause. N-words are indefinites which realize a variable 'x' associated with a lexical restriction, which in Albanian corresponds to the prefixed element. If we are on the right track, and negation is not represented within the syntax, we would expect that NC is the more natural state of things.

In what follows, a negative sentence such as (1a'), here repeated in (32a), has the representation in (32b), where the NM *s* 'not' and the n-word *asgjë* 'nothing' introduce the argumental *x* variable.

(32) a. s   pash   as-gjë
         NM   see.Past.1sg   nothing
          'I saw nothing'   Lushnjë

     b. ¬ ∃x [$_C$ s$_x$ pashë$_{INFL}$ [$_{vP}$ … as-gjë$_x$] 'I saw nothing'

We adopt the conclusion of Chomsky (2021, 2024) that the head movement, the traditional mechanism of (verb) agreement, is excluded as a non-genuine syntactic rule. This sweeps away the cartographic treatments of NC and no probe-goal mechanism based on [+/-interpretable] features is allowed (Zeijlstra, 2022). In Chomsky's strong minimalist model, both Internal Merge

and External Merge "implement the simplest structure-building operation", where "EM is associated with θ-roles and IM with discourse/information-related functions" (Chomsky, 2021, pp. 15, 18). Chomsky (p. 36) relates verb inflectional morphology to the amalgamation operation, where Merge creates inflected verbs [INFL, [v, root]], which realize the properties of the C-INFL phase. If the objects constructed in syntax are mapped by Transfer operation onto interpretable representations (Chomsky, 2015), we conclude that morphology is part of the syntactic computation, and lexical elements are endowed with interpretive content (Manzini & Savoia, 2018). Agreement manifests the identity between referential features corresponding to the same arguments.

3. NEGATIVE CONCORD IN ALBANIAN

N-words can be related to the D(ownward)-E(xhaustification)[3] procedure of the referential domain (Chierchia, 2013). With some n-words exhaustification of the alternative interpretations is successful by (a covert) negation: "NPIs are indefinites that activate scalar and domain alternatives which must be exhaustified [as Italian *nessuno*]", and both n-words and NPIs share "strong exhaustification" for end-of-scale, excluding additive possibilities (Chierchia, 2013, pp. 232, 233). Other NPIs are available in non-end-scale exhaustification, as, for instance, in the scope of other operators which open presuppositional alternatives. Our data shows that some Albanian n-words support an end-of-scale exhaustification and trigger the negative operator to fulfil this property. By contrast, simple indefinites occur in DE contexts with graduate exhaustification, as in contexts of focus/interrogative. Thus, Albanian n-words like *as-njeˈri* 'nobody' differ from Italian n-words such as *nessuno* 'nobody', which obtain an indefinite reading in interrogatives.

Consider now Albanian NC. N-words occur in both preverbal and postverbal positions, as shown in (1a,b–6a,b). In Albanian the postverbal position of the subject is canonical, on a par with many Romance languages. This means that, excluding movement to Spec-XP, it corresponds to Spell-out of E-Merged DPs at the vP phase, as in (33a). No special condition is requested,

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[3] Indefinites like 'some' introduce a scalar interpretation of meaning that requires a procedure on the part of the speaker that compares the meaning, the quantity, in relation to possible alternatives provided by entailments, presuppositions, implicatures in the context. The search for meaning in context is exhaustification. Negative words grammaticalize this search, orienting it towards the minimum values of the scale.

and some functional property, e.g. weak focus or discourse-linking, may be involved. In (33), *kurrkush* 'nobody' is inserted at the edge of vP Phase, in (33b), and is merged with the verb by agreement in INFL, in (33c); OCl realizes in CP the IA and the NM is merged in CP in (33d). The relevant selection restriction in (33e), associates the NM *nuk* to all n-word contexts. The derivational requirements are fulfilled, and the sentence is understood.

(33) a. $(\neg\exists x)$ [(C) [NM   [OCl [INFL $_\varphi$ [$_{vP}$ DP …   (cf. (3a))
                          nuk_x më   thret $kurrkush_x$
                          not   me   calls   nobody
                          'Nobody calls me'   Shkodër

   b. < $thret_\varphi$, $kurrkush_\varphi$ > $\rightarrow$ [$_{INFL\varphi}$ thret [kurrkush]]
   c. < më, [$_{INFL\varphi}$ thret [kurrkush]] > $\rightarrow$ [$_{INFL}$më, [$_\varphi$ thret [kurrkush]]]
   d. < nuk, [$_{INFL}$më, [$_\varphi$ thret [kurrkush]]] > $\rightarrow$ [$_{CP}$ nuk [$_{INFL}$më, [$_\varphi$ thret [kurrkush]]]]
   e. nuk $\leftarrow\rightarrow$ __ (OCl) INFL/n-word (kurrkush, kërrgjë)

It is of note that literature generally aims to formulate the relation between this order and the scope of negative operator, a point that doesn't seem crucial.

   Thematic and case properties do not interact with NC. The pre-verbal subject in varieties with obligatory doubling does not show special properties in comparison with oblique n-words in focal position in (34i,ii) (Chierchia, 2013, p. 237), as suggested in (35).

(34) i.   asnjeˈr-i-t   nuk i-a   dha-shë…
          nobody-Obl-Def   NM him-it give.Past-1sg
          'I gave it to no one!'   Lushnjë
     ii. kurr-ku-it   nuk   i-a j   ap
          nobody-Obl-Def   NM   him-it   give-1sg
          'I give it to no one!   Shkodër

(35) $(O_{Alt}\ \neg)$ [$kurkuit_x$ nuk_x i_x-a jap… 'I didn't give it to nobody'

This also holds for Arbëresh varieties without mandatory NC, where n-words in pre-verbal position in (36i,ii) exclude the NM *nëng*.

(36) i.   mos-njeˈri-u   i-a   dhe-v-a
          nobody-Obl   it-him/her   give-Past-1sg
          'I haven't given it to anyone'   S. Benedetto
     ii. fare-njiˈri-u   i-a   dhe?
          nobody-Obl   it-him/her give-Past-2sg

'Didn't you give it to nobody?'   S. Costantino

We may think that the pre-verbal position of n-words excludes them from the sentence derivation. Chomsky (2024) proposes that phrases occurring at the phase edge are merged by I(nternal)-M(erge), and boxed, where they are accessible for interpretation at the Conceptual-Intensional system.

> The element E is IM-ed to the phase edge as being put in a box, separate from the ongoing derivation D. E must however be accessible to D at later phase levels for interpretation at the interfaces. (Chomsky, 2024, p. 8)

IM-generated DPs are "immune to theta-marking" and "will be accessed for instructions at later phases" (p. 9). Therefore, *clausal* categories such as "force- and information-related (interrogative, topic, focus)" (Chomsky, 2024, p. 5) are legitimized by IM. Interestingly, IM does not distinguish between A- and A'-movement, DP-INFL vs [$_C$ DP, and takes place at vP- or CP edge-phase, also deriving (quantified/topicalized) first position subjects (Chomsky, 2024, p. 9). This approach provides us with a simple theory for NC.

First, in varieties with NC, whether the n-word is pre-verbal or post-verbal, *nuk* is however requested by (33e). However, there are reasons to support the conclusion that the pre-verbal subjects is in a topical/focal position (Manzini & Savoia, 2007, 2011). If so, this complies with the Chomsky's IM formulation, which we adopt in (37) 'Nobody calls me', where *kurrkush* 'nobody' is IM-boxed at the CP-edge, while the earlier copy *kurrkush* is deleted by Economy. EM (by amalgamation) introduces the theta-marked EA by the INFL agreement.

(37) [x   [$_C$ NM   [OCl   [INFL $_φ$ [$_{vP}$ DP …
        kurrkush   nuk   më   thre-t   kurrkush
        nobody   not   me   calls   nobody
            'Nobody calls me'   Shkodër

In (37) *nuk* is E-Merged to INFL, based on its selection properties, and triggers negative interpretation. The interpretive properties of *kurrkush* are externalized at the matrix and accessible at the CI interface. Similarly in complement clauses introduced by the NM *mas/mos*, the n-word can be IM-ed. A reasonable hypothesis is that the NM is in turn IM-ed as in (38).

(38) du   tshi   [x   [NM   [$_C$ Prt … [vP …
                    kurrkush   mas   me   ardh$_{PP}$ kurrkush
            'I want nobody comes'   Shkodër

Before concluding on this point, let us consider Arbëresh varieties with Italian-like NC, where both the first-position subject and focalized elements exclude the NM, as in (39):

(39) fare-njiˈri   ha   (fare-)gjë
     nobody   eat.3sg   (no)thing
     'Nobody eats anything'   S. Costantino

 Even if one wanted to distinguish the subject's position from the focal/topical one as in the traditional approach, this separation would work in a vacuous way if IM can target the vP edge independently of the subjecthood of the boxed DP. The position in the matrix is reached by externalization criteria. Therefore, the same interpretation at interfaces is available. We can wonder why in these dialects the first position is sufficient to trigger negation, like in Italian. The immediate answer is that *farenjiˈri* 'nobody' in (39) is lexically restricted by a weak DE context, with the risk of being otherwise understandable, as we will see below.

    Indefinites are existential elements free to occur in the theta domain within VP or in boxed domain, in interrogative and negative contexts. The rest of the work is done by interpretation at CI, in (40):

(40) $(\neg\; \exists x/\; O_{Alt})$ [x   [$_C$ (NM)   [INFL $_\varphi$ [$_{vP}$ DP …'Nobody came'
                                       (nuk)   erdhi   kush$_x$ Shkodër

The alternation between n-words and simple indefinites is excluded in the interrogative contexts with indefinite reading. More precisely, n-words (or simple indefinites) require *nuk/s* in negative questions, (41a,a'; 42a,a'; 43a,b). Differently from Italian *nessuno* 'nobody' or *niente* 'nothing', Albanian n-words cannot occur in the scope of the interrogative operator, where only indefinites are possible.

(41) a.   nuk   ndodh-i   (as-)gjë?
          NM   happen.Past-3sg   nothing
          'Did nothing happen?
     b.   ndodh-i   gjë?   *as-gjë
          happen.Past-3sg   thing
          'Has anything happened?'   Lushnjë

(42) a.   a   nuk   vje-n   (kurr-)kush?
          IPrt   NM   come-3sg   nobody
          'Is no one coming?'

b. a   vje-n   kush?   * kurr-kush?
   IPrt   come-3sg anyone?
   'Is anyone coming?'   Shkodër

(43) a. nik   vje-n   (fare-)njiˈri?
     NM   come.3sg nobody?
     'Is no one coming?'
   b. vje-n   njiˈri?   *fare-njiˈri
     NM   come.3sg anybody?
     'Is anybody coming?'   S. Costantino

The indirect interrogatives introduced by *në* 'if' or the IPrt *a* show the same properties. N-words require the NM within the dependent sentence, in (44a–45a), whereas the simple indefinite is possible in any case, as in (44b) and (45b).

(44) a. nuk e   di   në (as-njeˈri) nuk vjen   (as-)njeˈri
     NM OCl.3sg know.1sg if nobody   NM come-3sg nobody
     'I don't know if nobody comes'
   b. nuk e   di   në vje-n   njeˈri / *asnjeˈri
     NM OCl.3sg know.1sg if come-3sg anyone
     'I don't know if anyone comes'   Lushnjë

(45) a. do-sh-a   mɛ dit   a   nuk vje-n   (kurr-)kush
     want-Impf-1sg Prt know.PP IPrt NM come-3sg nobody
     'I would want to know if nobody/ anyone is coming'
   b. nuk e   di   a   vje-n   kush / *kurrkush
     NM OCl.3sg know.1sg IPrt come-3sg anybody
     'I don't know if anyone comes'   Shkodër

Indefinites are degree scale DE elements and may occur independently of the NM.

4. MORPHOSYNTAX OF N-WORDS

The varied nature of negative prefixes in n-words recalls the properties that literature generally associates with the so-called minimizers, namely original bare nouns which combine with or replace a negative head in introducing negative reading. Garzonio and Poletto (2008, p. 60ff.) note that "many Italo-romance varieties display negative markers which derive from nouns expressing a small quantity, which were originally lexically related to their complement PP," as in (46i) for French and (46ii) for the Piedmontese dialect of Trecate.

(46) i.   Je ne   veux pas   de cadeaux
           I   not   want Min(imizer)   of gifts
           'I don't want gifts'   French
     ii.   a   beva   mia (d viŋ)
           SCl.3sg drink   Min of wine
           'He doesn't drink (wine)'   Trecate (Piedmont)

In Gallo-Romance and Romansh varieties we find NMs such as *miga*/*mia*
'crumb', *pas* 'step', *buka/betsh* 'bite', etc., which can occur alone or combine
with the negative clitic, as the French *pas*.

Minimizers may be understood as lexical elements endowed with a mini-
mal degree DE content which defines the elementary 'part–whole' relation-
ship, (⊆), with the indefinite, essentially a partitive, in (46ii) (Savoia & Baldi,
2023). Rhaeto-Romance data in (47) show a sort of graduation between vari-
eties with *non* in (47a), the only minimizer in (43b), and varieties which com-
bine them, as in (47c).[4]

(47) a.   el   nu   baiva (vin/ nülja)
           he   NM   drinks (wine/ nothing)
           'He don't drink wine/anything'   Müstair (Romansh)
     b.   jou   bef   betsh   (vegn)
           I   drink   Min/NM   wine
           'I don't drink wine'   Donat (Romansh)

     c.   al   ne   ber   nia   (vin)
           SCl NM   drinks Min/NM   (wine)
           'He don't drink anything/ wine'   Pieve di Marebbe (Ladin)

As (47b) shows, the minimizer triggers negation like any NM. Furthermore,
NM and minimizer can combine, as in (47c), where the postverbal NM is the
n-word *nia*, so minimizer-like elements can be n-words. This is not unex-
pected, because NMs are originally a type of indefinite quantifier, as Latin
(and Italian) *non* from *ne-unus*.

We can conclude that all these elements share a similar content, as in (48),
and they occur either alone or combined, according to the morpho-syntactic
selection restrictions of the language.

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[4] The process by which the word initially used to combine with NM, ends up excluding it and
functioning alone, as *betsch* in (47b), is a classic example of the Jespersen's negation cycle (Jespersen,
1917).

(48) [$_N$ minimal degree ($\subseteq$) [indefinite]]

 Moreover, NMs may be IM-ed, like other n-words, e.g. in imperatives, in (49i,ii,iii), where the NM *betsh* of Donat, the n-word *nülja* of Müstair and the Albanian NM *mos* realize the trigger at the C-I phase edge, in (49iv).

(49) i. betsh   fe   kwaiʎ!
        Min/NM   do.2sg   it
        'Don't do it!'   Donat

     ii. nülja   baiver   vin!
        nothing drink.Inf wine
        'Don't drink wine!'   Müstair

     iii. mos   pi   ver
        NM   drink.2sg   wine
        'Don't drink wine!'
        NM do-2sg   Lushnjë

     iv. [mos$_\varphi$ [$_C$ pi$_{INFL}$ [$_{vP}$ ver$_\varphi$

Now, the notion of NC becomes more explicit, insofar as it is associated with a nominal property, namely the degree content assigned to the indefinite argument. In NC contexts, the doubling of negative elements relies on the unification of featural properties referring to the same argument.

Consider now the nature of the Albanian prefixes in (50a), indefinites in (50b) and the NM in (50c) (Mann, 1977; Orel, 2000; cf. Demiraj, 1986, p. 522ff.).

(50) a. as = indefinite minimizer
        mos = *$me+kwe$ 'and not'
        fare = minimizer '*seed*'
        kërr(ë)/kurr(ë) = *kur 'when'+$në$
   b. një = 'one'
        njëˈri = 'person'
        kush$_{Nom}$ = who
        gjë = thing
   c. nuk = $ne+q\underset{\smile}{u}$ 'and not'

We conclude that the prefixed element in Albanian n-words is, in turn, a type of degree classifier that modifies the indefinite argument, see (51).

(51) [$_N$ kurr$_{degree}$ ($\subseteq$) [indefinite]]

The simplest way of explaining the obligatory co-existence *nuk…n-words* is to assume that Albanian n-words are degree indefinites that need an "end-of-scale" classifier to be correctly interpreted. Based on this lexical property, they select the NM in the preverbal position where the degree property agrees with the argument, in (52).

(52) a.   nuk n^{d}odh kërrgjɐ   'Is nothing happening(?)'   Shkodër

      b.   < kurr$_{DEφ}$, gjɐ$_{Nφ}$ > → [$_{Nφ}$ kurr [gjɐ]]

      c.   [$_C$ NM   [INFL   [$_{vP}$ DP
          nuk$_{DEφ}$ n^{d}odh   *kurr$_{DEφ}$-indefinite*

      d.   kurr ←→ nuk [INFL   [__ [gjɐ / kush]]

(52a) is derived by E-merging negative arguments as in (52b); the compound is constructed in vP phase, agreeing with the verb in INFL, in (52c), based on the selection properties in (52d). Syntactically, this is unproblematic, given that nothing prevents NC if the n-words/NMs are simply triggers.

5. SYNTACTIC CONTEXTS: FINAL COMMENTS

Manzini and Pescarini (2024, p. 678) relate NC to the syntactic parameters in (53), where CNM = Clause Negative Marker.

(53) Parameters of NC.	C-I phase	vP phase
Parameter I: Where CNMs are merged?	YES/NO	YES/NO
Parameter II: n-EPP?	YES/NO	YES/NO
If n-EPP: YES, then		
Parameter III: Is n-EPP satisfied via IM?	YES/NO	YES/NO

Specifically, parameter II refers to the Spec-head mechanism, as NMs do not need to be E-Merged if "the same feature is carried by another goal in the probe's search space". This parameterization obtains interesting generalizations. For instance, Romanian is characterized as a full negative concord language, (I) NM in C-I phase, (II) NC, (III) no IM. French as a partial NC language, where NM are inserted both in C-I and vP phase, but the latter does not admit NC with other n-words, and *ne* in C-I is obligatory; IM is not applied and *ne* combines with negative subjects. Finally, Italian lacks vP n-words, but applies IM, and NC is blocked because the subject is in "a Spec-head configuration with the relevant phase head probe." Obviously, this notion of IM,

based on the probe-goal movement, is different from the one that I have discussed in Section 3, where IM is the syntactic property that accounts for the first position in non-strict-NC (Italian, Arbëresh). In the scale of Manzini and Pescarini, Albanian distribution coincides with that of Romanian: NM in C-I phase, the n-word occurring in subject position requires the NM. However, Albanian has polarity indefinites which can implement the negative meaning in NM contexts.

Before closing, consider the relation between phases and the lexical objects E-Merged in Spell-out domains in (54ab).

(54)   IM   [$_C$ NM   INFL | | (IM) [$_{vP}$ [$_{VP}$

   a.   nuk$_\varphi$ *verb*$_\varphi$ n-word$_\varphi$/indefinite$_\varphi$

   b.   n-word$_\varphi$/indefinite$_\varphi$ nuk$_\varphi$

In (54) the fully inflected n-word is associated with the Spell-Out domain in vP, while C-INFL hosts the non-inflected n-words *nuk/s/mos*. Otherwise, the inflected n-words can occur as non-derivational IM elements. This asymmetry is generally echoed in the distribution of agreeing lexical elements in Spell-Out domains, C-INFL, vP and DP (Manzini et al., 2022), where Elsewhere types of externalization show up. The distribution of n-words may be expressed in (55).

(55) Asymmetry in NC
     a. Partial negative-agreement (NM): unrealized or IM lexical subject
     a. Full negative-agreement (inflected n-words) in vP

The NM contributes to lexicalizing the negative variable within C-INFL phase. The inflected n-words are E-Merged to Spell-Out domain of vP, namely the theta-domain of the sentence, where they contribute to identifying the arguments and are transferred to CI interface. C-INFL phase is involved in the externalization of the modal properties of the clause, and referential properties have a derivational status.

In summary, let us state the following:
  i.   Negative concord is free: the n-words postulate negation as lexical modifiers/quantifiers.
 ii.   In languages where a n-word in first position blocks NC, we assumed that Chomsky-style IM segregation is applied, with clausal effects.
iii.   In this case we can expect that the negative reading is associated with the only boxed n-word.

iv.   Lexical properties of n-word and NMs are relevant in determining their distribution, and are expressed by the selection restrictions of lexical elements.

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