

Negative Concord is not Multiple Agree *

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1. Introduction

This paper is a case study of negative concord (NC) in West Flemish (WF). NC is a phenomenon whereby multiple negative expressions (*n*-words, following Laka 1990) together convey a single semantic negation. (1) illustrates the phenomenon for WF.

- (1) K'(en)-een doa nooit niets niet¹ gezien.
I *en* have there never nothing not seen
'I have never seen anything there.'
- (2) K'(en)-een doa nooit gewerkt.
I *en* have there never worked
'I have never worked there.'
- (3) K'(en)-een doa niets gezien.
I *en* have there nothing seen
'I haven't seen anything there.'
- (4) K'(en)-een doa niet gewerkt.
I *en* have there not worked
'I haven't worked there.'

Each of the *n*-words *nooit*, *niets* and *niet* in (1) can express a single (sentential) negation on its own (2)-(4), but in (1) the *n*-words jointly express one sentential negation. A similar effect obtains with only two *n*-words, as shown in (5).

- (5) K'(en)-een doa nooit niet gewerkt.
I *en* have there never not worked
'I have never worked there.'

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¹ We use the orthographic *niet*, but in most contexts this word is pronounced [ni].

Negation in WF has been subject to much research over the years (see Haegeman 1995, 2002a,b, Haegeman and Zanuttini 1991, 1996 for comprehensive discussions). The purpose of this paper is to evaluate Zeijlstra's (2004) analysis of NC in WF, which advocates the mechanism of Multiple Agree (see also Penka 2007a, b for a similar analysis, and Brown 1999 for Russian). The focus of the paper is on empirical problems for Zeijlstra's analysis. For reasons of space, we will not be able to present a new analysis, but we refer to Haegeman and Lohndal (2008) for an analysis that covers the WF facts discussed here.

2. Zeijlstra (2004) on NC

In this section we review Zeijlstra's (2004, 2008) analysis of NC in terms of Multiple Agree (MA) (see also Penka 2007a,b, to appear). We present the essentials of his analysis, its application, and then finally, the problems the analysis faces when applied to WF.

2.1 Essentials of Zeijlstra's Analysis

In NC, multiple negative expressions seem to convey a single sentential negation. Zeijlstra (2004) proposes that such negative expressions are semantically non-negative indefinites, and that they are associated with an [*u*NEG] feature (2004: 245). The overt marker of sentential negation, *e.g.* West Flemish *niet*, also has an [*u*NEG] feature. Zeijlstra's thesis is that the presence of [*u*NEG] features in a language triggers the projection of NegP. Sentential negation as such is introduced by a covert negative operator *OP*_¬ in SpecNegP, associated with [*i*NEG]. In Zeijlstra's terms '*OP*_¬ (i) introduces a negation at LF, and (ii) unselectively binds all free variables under existential closure.' (2004: 247) NC-languages, which display [*u*NEG] features and hence have NegP, are said to display 'syntactic negation'. See Zeijlstra's own work for discussion and motivation of the distinction between such languages and non-NC languages with 'semantic negation'.

For Zeijlstra, NC is derived by Agree. *Op*_¬ [*i*NEG] in SpecNegP c-commands the (multiple) [*u*NEG] n-constituents on the *v*P edge. This is a departure from the standard view on Agree according to which the Probe with the uninterpretable feature c-commands the Goal with the interpretable feature. For other such cases of 'reverse Agree' cf. Adger (2003), Merchant (2004), von Stechow (2005), Baker (2008), and Merchant and Sadock (2008). As multiple negative constituents jointly express one single negation, Zeijlstra proposes NC is the result of MA (Hiraiwa 2001): the uninterpretable features on the negative marker and on the *n*-words are checked by the interpretable feature on *OP*_¬:

The central hypothesis behind the assumption that [negative concord] languages express (sentential) negation by means of syntactic negation is that negation in these languages exhibits *syntactic agreement* that, in principle, does not differ from (syntactic) person or Tense agreement. ...*n*-words are non-negative indefinites that are *syntactically marked for negation*, i.e. they bear an uninterpretable [*u*NEG] feature, that at some point during the derivation needs to

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be checked against an overt or covert element that carries an interpretable [*i*NEG] feature. This feature checking is governed by the syntactic operation Agree. Thus [negative concord] is the realisation of an agreement relation between a negative operator and an *n*-word. (2004: 244-5, our italics)

2.2 Application

Czech (9a) illustrates Zeijlstra's derivation of NC readings. The specifier of NegP hosts a covert operator with an interpretable feature, [*i*NEG]. In (9a), the verb *vidi* 'see' with the negative morpheme *ne* has the [*u*NEG] feature, and so does the *n*-word *nikoho* 'no one'. Through MA [*u*NEG] get checked and deleted (9b).

- (9) a. Milan nevidi nikoho.
Milan NEG sees no one
b. [_{NegP} OP_̄ [*i*NEG] [_{VP} *nikoho* [*u*NEG] [_{VP} Milan nevidi [*u*NEG]]]]
(Zeijlstra 2004: 250)

In (10) and (11) Zeijlstra's analysis is applied to WF. (10a) is an example containing a negative marker *niet* 'not' and the preverbal negative morpheme *en*. In terms of Zeijlstra's analysis, both *niet* and *en* carry [*u*NEG]; the two [*u*NEG] features get checked by the [*i*NEG] feature on the negative operator in SpecNegP. (10b) is a representation. In (11a), sentential negation is conveyed by means of the *n*-word, *niemand* 'no one', which may be accompanied by *niet* as well as by *en*. NC is derived as in (11b):

- (10) a. da Valère niet (en) klaapt
that Valère not (*en*) talks
'that Valère doesn't talk'
b. [_{NegP} OP_̄ [*i*NEG] [_{VP} *niet* [*u*NEG] Valère [_{V'} *en*-klaapt [*u*NEG]]]]
(Zeijlstra 2004: 255)
(11) a. da Valère tegen niemand (niet) en klaapt
that Valère against no one (not) *en* talks
'that Valère doesn't talk to anyone'
b. [_{NegP} OP_̄ [*i*NEG]
[[_{PP} tegen *niemand* [*u*NEG]] [_{VP} (*niet* [*u*NEG]) [_{VP} Valère [_{V'} *en*-klaapt
[*u*NEG]]]]]]
(Zeijlstra 2004: 255)

2.3 Problem 1 for NC as MA

A first problem that arises is conceptual: MA, in which many probes agree with one goal, dispenses with the strict locality condition on Agree. By the very nature of MA a probe need not have a local relation with the goal. The status of locality in syntax is thus called into question by MA. However, as we will show presently, this issue is not merely conceptual. Locality can be shown to play a crucial role in determining the conditions of NC in WF. We will show that, by the very absence of the locality restriction on Agree, two empirical problems arise for the MA account of WF NC. First, we will show below

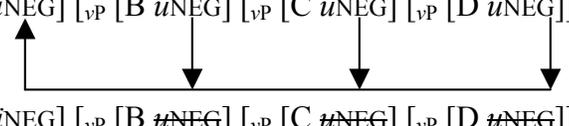
that the across-the-board application of MA to derive NC leads to the wrong predictions for NC relations among *n*-constituents. Second, the MA approach has difficulty in handling the DP-internal application of NC, and its relation to NC at the sentential level. For completeness' sake, we point out that, as a minor point tangential to the discussion of NC, Zeijlstra's specific implementation according to which the morpheme *en* is endowed with an [*u*NEG] feature is also problematic. The latter issue can be solved if following Haegeman (2000b, 2002b) and Breitbarth and Haegeman (2008) we assume that *en* is not endowed with a negative feature, but rather is a pure polarity head.

2.4 Problem 2 for NC as MA

In Hiraiwa's original conception as well as in Zeijlstra's own implementation, all uninterpretable features are 'simultaneously' eliminated by MA:

MULTIPLE AGREE (multiple feature checking) with a single probe is a *single simultaneous syntactic operation*; AGREE applies to all matched goals at the same derivational point derivationally simultaneously. (Hiraiwa 2001: 69, our italics)

Schematically, Zeijlstra's implementation of MA for the phenomenon of NC can be presented as in (12). After the merger/move to the *v*P edge of the individual *n*-constituents, each with its [*u*NEG] feature the negative operator, OP \neg with [*i*NEG], is merged in SpecNegP. MA relates [*i*NEG] 'across-the-board' to each of the individual [*u*NEG] features. Crucially, at no point is a direct relation established between the individual [*u*NEG] constituents. As mentioned above, by MA it follows that Agree can be non-local: in (12c), for instance, B *u*NEG and C *u*NEG intervene between the agreeing D *u*NEG and OP *i*NEG.

- (12) a. [_{NegP} OP \neg [*i*NEG] [_{vP} [B *u*NEG] [_{vP} [C *u*NEG] [_{vP} [D *u*NEG]]]]]] \Rightarrow Match
 b. [_{NegP} OP \neg [*i*NEG] [_{vP} [B *u*NEG] [_{vP} [C *u*NEG] [_{vP} [D *u*NEG]]]]]] \Rightarrow MA

 c. [_{NegP} OP \neg [*i*NEG] [_{vP} [B ~~*u*~~NEG] [_{vP} [C ~~*u*~~NEG] [_{vP} [D ~~*u*~~NEG]]]]]]

In (13) MA derives WF NC. The unique [*i*NEG] feature of the negative operator establishes an Agree relation with the [*u*NEG] feature of the two negative constituents in the clause, i.e. *niemand* 'no one' and *niet* 'not'. The application of MA is represented in (13b). Since it crosses the [*u*NEG] feature on *niemand*, the relation between the [*i*NEG] feature and the [*u*NEG] on *niet* is not local. In (14) we apply Zeijlstra's approach to an example with three *n*-words *nooit* 'never', *niemand* 'no one', and *niet vele* 'not much', entering into an NC relation.

- (13) a. dat er niemand niet gewerkt eet NC
 that there no one not worked has

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- b. dat er _{[NegP OP ↯ [i^{NEG} niemand [u^{NEG} niet [u^{NEG} gewerkt eet]}
-
- (14) a. dat er nooit niemand niet vele gewerkt eet NC
 that there no one not much worked has
- b. dat er _{[NegP OP ↯ [i^{NEG} nooit [u^{NEG} niemand [u^{NEG} niet vele [u^{NEG} gewerkt eet]}

In the MA account, NC is thus a one-to-many relation in which the negative operator agrees with each *n*-word and the *n*-words enter into NC by virtue of their relation to the negative operator; there is no relation between the individual *n*-words. However, Haegeman and Zanuttini (1996) have shown that in WF local relations between the negative elements play a role in determining the availability NC.²

Consider (15): in (15a) *niemand* ‘no one’ enters into an NC relation with *niet* ‘not’, in (15b) *niemand* enters into an NC relation with *niet lange* ‘not long’ and in (15c) *niet lange*, *niemand* and *niet* enter into NC.

- (15) a. dat er doa niemand niet gewerkt eet NC
 that there there no one not worked has
 ‘that no one has worked there’
- b. dat er doa niet lange niemand gewerkt eet NC
 that there there not long no one worked has
 ‘that no one has worked there for a long time’
- c. dat er doa niet lange niemand niet gewerkt eet NC
 that there there not long no one not worked has
 ‘that no one has worked there for a long time’

In terms of Zeijlstra’s approach these and similar data imply that *niet lange* ‘not long’, *niemand* ‘no one’, and the marker of sentential negation *niet* ‘not’ all carry a [u^{NEG}] feature, which is checked by the [i^{NEG}] feature on the sentential negative operator. Note crucially that *niet lange* and *niet* are in an NC relation (15c). One would thus expect that (15d), containing *niet lange* and *niet*, will also be grammatical with an NC reading, contrary to fact. (15d) can only (marginally) have a Double Negation (DN) reading. When *niet* is replaced by *niet meer* ‘no more’ the resulting (15e) has an NC reading.

- (15) d. *dat Valère doa niet lange niet gewerkt eet ??DN/*NC
 that Valère there not long not worked has
- e. dat Valère doa niet lange niet meer gewerkt eet NC
 that Valère there not long no more worked has
 ‘that Valère hasn’t worked there long any more’

The ungrammaticality of the NC reading in (15d) cannot be due to a ban on the co-occurrence of *niet lange* with *niet*, since (15c) also contains these two items and is

² For similar effects in English see Ladusaw (1991: 87), though this author does not offer any explanation.

grammatical with the desired NC reading. It is also not simply due to there being an anti-adjacency requirement on *niet lange* and *niet*: in (15g) *niet lange* and *niet* are separated by the PP *in dat us* ‘in that house’, but this in itself is not sufficient to rescue the sentence. What is needed is that *niet lange* be separated from *niet* by *niemand* ((15f), cf. also (15c)):

- (15) f. *dat ter niemand niet lange in dat us niet gewerkt eet DN/*NC
 that there no one not long in that house not worked has
 g. dat der niet lange niemand in dat us niet gewerkt eet NC
 that there not long no one in that house not worked has
 ‘that no one has worked long in that house’

Data such as those in (15) reveal that though ‘complex’ *n*-constituents such as *niet lange* ‘not long’ can participate in NC readings with *niet*, they can only do so provided they are separated from *niet* by a ‘simple’ *n*-constituent such as *niemand*. No such constraint applies to *niemand* (15a) or to the other ‘simple’ *n*-words such as *nooit* ‘never’, *niets* ‘nothing’ or *nieverst* ‘nowhere’:

- (16) a da Valère doa nooit niet gewerkt eet NC
 that Valère there never not worked has
 ‘that Valère has never worked there’
 b da Valère doa niets niet over gezeid eet NC
 that Valère nothing not about said has
 ‘that Valère has not said anything about that.’
 c da Valère nieverst niet over geklaapt eet NC
 that Valère nowhere not about talked has
 ‘that Valère has never talked about anything’

For completeness’ sake, note that, as shown in (15g), there is no adjacency requirement between the ‘simple’ *n*-constituent and *niet*.

The restriction on the derivation of NC readings for ‘complex’ *n*-constituents such as *niet lange* also applies to *n*-constituents with the negative quantifier *geen* ‘no’, which we refer to as ‘*geen*-NPs’. We illustrate this point in (17). (16c) has shown that *nieverst* and *niet* can enter into an NC relation. The *n*-constituent *geneenen student* ‘no student’ cannot enter into an NC relation with an adjacent *niet* (17a), but it can do so when it is separated from *niet* by *nieverst*: in (17b) *geneenen student*, *nieverst* ‘nowhere’ and *niet* enter into an NC relation. Alternatively, if *niet* is replaced by *niet meer* (17c), the sentence is also grammatical with an NC reading.

- (17) a. *dat ter geneenen student tegen Valère niet over klaapt DN/*NC
 that there there no student to Valère not about talks
 b. dat ter geneenen student tegen Valère niet meer over klaapt NC
 that there no student to Valère not more about talks
 c. dat ter geneenen student tegen niemand niet over klaapt NC
 that there no student nowhere not about talks
 ‘that no student talks about it to anyone’

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We conclude that both the type of *n*-constituents and their relative positions play a role in determining NC in WF. Because all *n*-constituents (*niemand*, *niet lange*, *nie*, *niet meer*, *geen-NP* etc) appear to be able to enter into NC in some combinations, Zeijlstra's (2004, 2008) MA analysis would lead us to expect that they can always *all* enter into an Agree relation with the relevant negative operator. The question arises how the application of MA as formulated as a one time across-the-board procedure can set apart combinations which allow NC from those that don't.³ (18) is a schematic representation of some of the data above to illustrate this point. On a MA approach we have to admit that *niet lange* and *niet* can enter into an NC relation in (18a), while excluding in the same constituents from entering into NC in (18b).

- (18) a. dat er doa [_{NegP}[*i*NEG] niet lange [_uNEG] niemand[_uNEG] nie[_uNEG] .. eet]
-
- b. *dat Valère doa [_{NegP} [*i*NEG] niet lange [_uNEG] niet [_uNEG] ...eet]
-

In order to describe the co-occurrence restrictions on NC in some detail. Haegeman and Zanuttini (1996: 143) classify WF *n*-constituents in terms of their internal syntax and their featural make-up. Table (19) summarizes their classification of the *n*-constituents and their associated features (from Haegeman and Zanuttini 1996: 145). [Q] is a quantificational feature; 'bare' quantifiers such as *niemand* and *niets* correspond to our 'simple' *n*-words.

(19) *Head features on negative elements and co-occurrence restrictions*

	Bare Q [NEG, Q]	Geen-NP [Q]	Nie [NEG]
Bare Q [NEG, Q]	yes <i>niemand niets</i>	yes <i>niemand geen geld</i>	yes <i>niemand nie</i>
Geen-NP [Q]	yes <i>geen mensen niemand</i>	yes <i>geen mensen geen tyd</i>	no <i>*geen mensen nie</i>
Niet meer [Q]	yes <i>niemand niet meer</i>	yes <i>geen mensen niet meer</i>	no <i>*niet meer nie</i>

Simple *n*-constituents such as *niemand* 'no one', *nieverst* 'nowhere', *nooit* 'never' and *niets* 'nothing' seem to be ambivalent in that they enter into NC with *nie*, as well as with composite constituents (*niet* + X or *geen-NPs*). On the other hand, composite constituents (*niet* + X or *geen-NPs*) cannot enter into NC with *nie*. Moreover, it looks as if NC readings are built up on the basis of stepwise local pairings: in (18a), for instance,

³ De Swart and Sag's (2002) resumption approach generalizes binary resumption to across-the-board resumption over all *n*-indefinites. To capture the WF data at hand a recursive binary resumption seems more appropriate.

niemand and *niet* can enter into NC, in (18b) *niet lange* cannot enter into NC with *niet* directly, but as seen in (18c), *niet lange* can enter into an NC relation with *nie*, provided the latter is separated from *niet lange* by *niemand*. Recall also that *niet lange* can enter into an NC relation with *niet meer* (15e).

For the derivation of NC readings Haegeman and Zanuttini (1996) propose a factorization process which extracts the negative component from all the *n*-constituents involved. This factorization operates in a stepwise binary fashion: so rather than (20a) with an across-the-board factorization, they propose a pair-wise factorization as in (20b):⁴

$$(20) \quad \begin{array}{ll} \text{a} & [x\neg][y\neg][z\neg] \quad \Rightarrow \quad [[x, y, z]\neg] \\ \text{b} & [x\neg][y\neg][z\neg] \quad \Rightarrow \quad [x\neg][[y, z]\neg] \Rightarrow [[x, y, z]\neg] \end{array}$$

The stepwise binary matching condition on NC, implies that NC is subject to a locality condition, a property that, by definition, is not part of the process of MA. So the question arises of how the MA account can handle the co-occurrence restrictions observed here and which are not discussed in Zeijlstra's work (2004, 2008).

We add here that an approach which derives NC reading by unselective binding of the *n*-constituents by one negative operator (cf. e.g. Ladusaw 1003, Acquaviva 1993, Piñar 1996, Giannakidou 1997) also would not seem to be able to derive the pair-wise relations observed here without additional machinery.

2.5 DP-internal NC

The DP in (21a) contains both the negative quantifier *geen* 'no' and a negated quantifier *niet vele* 'not many'. The DP *niet vele geen boeken*, literally 'not many no books', can only mean 'not many books'; it can not mean 'no books', nor can it mean 'many books'. Crucially, *geen* is present by virtue of the negative property of *niet vele* as shown in (21b) (cf. Haegeman 2002a). *Niet* negates the quantifier *vele*. *Geen* itself does not convey negative meaning to the DP. We propose that this is a case of DP-internal NC, where *niet vele* and *geen* enter into an Agree relation.

- (21) a. *niet vele geen boeken*
 not many (no) books
 'not many books'
 b. **vele geen boeken*

One option for representing the interpretation of (21a) might be to say that *geen* is associated with [*u*NEG], that *niet* in *niet vele* is associated with [*i*NEG], and that [*u*NEG] undergoes DP-internal Agree as in (21c,d):

- (21) c. *niet vele* [*i*NEG] *geen* [*u*NEG] ⇒ Agree
 d. *niet vele* [*i*NEG] *geen* [~~*u*~~NEG]

⁴ We have adjusted this representation in terms of our own paper. In particular we abandon the idea that *n*-words are universal quantifiers.

that *niet vele geen boeken* ultimately behaves like any other *n*-constituent, the representation (24b° fails to capture the DP-internal interdependency between the DP-internal [*u*NEG] on *niet vele* and that on *geen*.

- (24) a. T'eet ier niemand niet vele geen boeken.
 it has here no one not many no books
 'No one has many books here.'
- b. [_{NegP}OP[*i*NEG] niemand [*u*NEG] [niet vele[*u*NEG] geen[*u*NEG] boeken]...]
-

But we have seen that the availability of *geen* does depend on that of *niet vele*: (24a) does not have a variant (24c) in which *geen* would depend directly and only on the sentential negation, with MA applying as shown in (24d,e):

- (24) c. *T'eet ier niemand vele geen boeken.
 it has here no one many no books
- d. *[OP [*i*NEG] [_{Neg} niemand [*u*NEG] [_{VP} vele geen [*u*NEG]... ⇒ Agree
- e. *[OP [*i*NEG] [_{Neg} niemand [~~*u*NEG~~] [_{VP} vele geen [~~*u*NEG~~]...]
-

To capture the dependency between DP-internal *geen* in (24) and DP-internal *niet*, we need a representation which relates the [*u*NEG] features on both *geen* and *niet vele* first, prior to establishing the NC relation with the negative feature on *niemand*. This means that again a binary local relation must be established.

- (24) f [_{NegP} OP [*i*NEG] ... [_{VP} niet [*u*NEG]] vele geen [*u*NEG] ...]
-

Another consequence of the discussion is that if DP-internal NC is a process relating two *n*-constituents each of which with [*u*NEG], there must be an Agree relation between items with [*u*NEG].

3. Conclusion

We have shown in this paper that apart from the conceptual issue concerning the role of locality, the MA approach to NC has a number of empirical shortcomings when applied to WF, which we summarize briefly:

- (i) it fails to predict the binary matching restrictions on NC;
- (ii) it fails to provide a separate application for NC/MA in cases of DP-internal NC.

For reasons of space we cannot present an analysis in this paper, but refer to Haegeman and Lohndal (2008) for an analysis in terms of binary Agree which is able to deal with the empirical data discussed in the present paper.

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