

The History of Negation in the Languages of Europe and the Mediterranean. Volume 1: Case studies

Ed. by David Willis, Christopher Lucas & Anne Breitbarth

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 553 pages. ISBN 978-0-19-960253-7

Received: 18-02-2015

Accepted: 20-02-2015

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The book reviewed here is the first part of a two-volume publication that aims to go over the history of negation in different languages of Europe and the Mediterranean. This first volume presents wide research from a diachronic and a synchronic point of view and constitutes the first large-scale comparative history of negation aiming to advance models of historical syntax more generally. In order to do so, it showcases common and divergent features and patterns in the development of the expression of negation and indefinites in selected languages of Europe and the Mediterranean. It integrates perspectives from three areas: formal models of change –in grammar, sound and meaning, and grounded in language acquisition–, the study of grammaticalization, and models of language contact.

This first volume is rather empirical and concentrates on describing case studies about French, Italo-Romance, English, High German, Low German and Dutch, Brythonic Celtic, Greek, Slavonic, Arabic and Afro-Asiatic, and Mordvin, whereas the second part (yet to be published) aims to present an integrated framework to explain, in more theoretical terms, general mechanisms and processes involved in the diachronic development of the expression of negation and indefinites.

The value of this first publication is already evident in the introduction that heads the book, written by the editors (David Willis, Christopher Lucas and Anne Breitbarth), all of them leading researchers on the concerned topic. This fine-grained preliminary text is a welcome introduction for the reader to review core concepts and most salient historical developments when studying negation. The expression of sentential negation and Jespersen's cycle are considered from a descriptive and a theoretical point of view. The development of a new negative marker (minimizer, generalizer indefinite or adverbial reinforcer) and the replacement of an existing one is also analysed crosslinguistically. Other aspects that are addressed in detail from a crosslinguistic point of view are: the relationships between the expression of negation in existentials and that of ordinary sentential negation (the so-called *Croft cycle*); indefinites and their cyclic development (quantifier cycle and free-choice cycle); the definition of *standard negation*, *sentential negation*, *constituent negation*, (*strict* and *non-strict*) *negative concord*, *double negation* and *negative spread*, and also the difference

between *negative quantifiers* and *negative polarity items*. Aspects related to negative imperatives and prohibitives, commonalities of patterning and historical developments are also considered.

The introduction is followed by ten chapters –written by experts in the study of negation– with a similar structure that makes them homogeneous in the frame of a collectively written volume. Such structure is: presentation of the language concerned, discussion of the changes regarding the expression of sentential negation, aspects concerning indefinites in the scope of negation and possible interactions of these with the expression of negation, including the phenomenon of negative concord. Additionally, comments and explanations on distinctive features of each language or group of languages are also presented: negation of infinitives, negative imperatives, negative complementizers, constituent negation, negative auxiliaries, etc. The monograph is completed with two very useful indices of languages and subjects, and by an exhaustive list of reference studies.

In chapter two, Maj-Britt Mosegaard Hansen analyses in detail the expression of negation from Medieval to Contemporary French, and pays special attention to both the pragmatics of variable clause negation (mainly in the second and fourth stages of Jespersen's cycle –with a higher degree of variation) and to the past, present and future of the '*ne* deletion phenomenon'. The fine-grained way in which the author presents the parallels between the negative, the infinitive and the quantifier cycle stands out significantly.

The history of negation in Italo-Romance is studied in the third chapter by Mair Parry, who remarks the importance of synchronic and diachronic variation in negative structures in Italo-Romance languages and dialects for theoretical studies, formal and functional analyses. Negative strategies in finite declarative clauses, interrogatives and exclamatives, 'expletive' negation, constituent negation, negative imperatives or prohibitives, negated infinitives, negative pronouns and adverbs are considered. A special emphasis is used to determine the key factors in the process of grammaticalization of postverbal markers of negation which are of key importance in Italian dialects.

The third chapter, by Richard Ingham, is dedicated to the unstable syntactic expression of negation in English over 1200 years. The principal features of the grammar of negation in Modern English are outlined as the current point of arrival for the study of the changes experimented in the last centuries. I am referring, mainly, to changes in the syntax of negative clauses, which involve the reanalysis of negative markers in different stages (in English, Jespersen's cycle is considered to be constituted by five stages). He also analyses in detail whether a NegP must be postulated or not in terms of formal analysis, both from a semantic and from a syntactic point of view.

Chapter five, about Negation in the history of High German, is written by Agnes Jäger, who remarks the main changes in the field, concerning German negative particles along Jespersen's cycle (from preverbal clitic to bipartite negative particle, to single verb-independent negative particle); the behaviour of negative indefinites (from a three-set system including NPI indefinites to a two-set system with just the opposition between normal indefinites and n-indefinites) and the change from a language exhibiting negative concord (NC) to a non-NC

Language. Questions concerning narrow focus, constituent negation, negative subjunctions and disjunctions are also addressed.

Chapter five, by Anne Breitbarth, on negation in the history of Low German and Dutch, is perfectly well contextualised by a brief summary of all section's contents, which provides the backbone of the chapter and makes comprehension easier. As many other languages described in this volume, Low German and Dutch underwent the directional development in the expression of negation Jespersen's cycle. The facts that determine variation are: the period of time, the dialect, colonization's background and the type of verb and its position, among others. Theoretical aspects and formal features concerning the development of negation both from a semantic and a syntactic point of view are also very well explained. Also remarkable is the evidence provided by the languages studied in this chapter regarding indefinites in the scope of negation, the change in their licensing conditions and the shared tendency to form series building up paradigm pressure which causes analogical changes in individual members.

David Willis, in chapter seven, about Brythonic Celtic languages, presents the two different and independent Jespersen cycles that Welsh (postverbal negative particle *dim*) and Breton (particle *ket*) have undergone; as for Cornish, it participates in Jespersen's cycle only to a very limited degree. The broad outline of the system of indefinite negative items originating from polarity items is also outstanding. It is worth noticing that in this chapter the usefulness of comparative data to understand linguistic phenomena becomes obvious as the concomitances with negative cycles in other Romance languages are evident.

Jo Willmott, in chapter eight, when analysing negation in Greek, focusses on a historical approach to explain the synchronic data and to go further in evidence useful for theoretical studies. Some specific examples are: the nature of the meaning and relationship between the two ancient Greek negators *ou* and *mē*; the differences from the prototypical Jespersen's cycle in the case of the process from the marker *ou* to *den*, and *min* to *mē* (it is worth consulting the detailed characterization of all values held by these elements), and the relation of these markers with the independently complex and developing system of modality (and the fine-grained functional hierarchy postulated by Cinque); and the process from Greek being a non-strict to a strict negative-concord language.

As for the development of negation in Slavonic languages, in chapter nine David Willis accounts for three different tendencies. First, he states a certain stability in the main features of the negative system (the inherited expression of standard sentential negation, the distinction between a *ni*-series of core negative indefinites and other negative polarity indefinites that have remained almost unchanged; furthermore, strict negative concord has become an increasingly entrenched feature in all the Slavonic languages). Secondly, several striking indices of change are observed when studying the categorial marking of genitive case on direct objects in the scope of negation (assignment can be either optional, stable or in decline diachronically, synchronically and crosslinguistically). The author presents a characterisation and critical review of the different theoretical approaches that have been used to analyse this phenomenon and makes his own proposal.

Chapter ten, by Christopher Lucas, is another excellent piece of evidence of the importance of comparativism and crosslinguistic view in linguistic studies. Even if the existing literature on the diachrony of negation across Afro-Asiatic is

very slight, the review of Jespersen's cycle in Arabic, Coptic, Modern South Arabian, Berber, Jerusalem Domari, Ethiopian Semitic, and Lowland East Cushitic shows significant developments that have taken place. Furthermore, data offered may be useful to reconstruct unexplored areas of morphology and syntax in these and other close languages. The development of indefinites in the scope of negation is also revised: the reader is provided with a valuable and well-organised explanation of the system of 'negative quantifiers' or 'inherently/semantically negative' n-words and all other indefinites (including weak and strong NPIs) in Classical and Modern Standard Arabic, Palestinian/Cairene Arabic, Maltese, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Ethiopian Semitic Hebrew. In general terms, trends of both standstill and internal change are evident in the diachronic syntax of sentential negation and indefinite systems studied. Additionally, the analysis of 'contact' as a trigger of the specific developments related to negation brings to reject the existence of functional pressures proposed to account for the prevalence of negative concord cross-linguistically.

Finally, Arja Hamari presents the eleventh chapter, about negation in the history of the Mordvin languages, from the Uralic language family, which display a complex panorama regarding the number of negative markers (diachronically and synchronically) and their morphosyntactic characteristics (for example, regarding the old negative pre-Proto-Mordvin auxiliaries of the unmarked past tense, imperative and optative moods). One of the most important pieces of evidence shown in the chapter is the interwoven changes between the development of negation in Mordvin languages and the appearance of new predicate categories: on the one hand, some fossilized negative auxiliary forms were used to negate some of these categories, but for others new negative auxiliaries developed. The counter example of Mordvin languages –with a negative auxiliary head, but no inherently negative indefinites and hence no negative concord– is a fresh contribution to the comparative framework of the volume.

The quality of the state of the art and the value of the huge amount of data presented are undeniable –even if we really miss one or more specific chapters about Ibero-Romance languages and dialects, with more information than a few examples in the introduction. Overall, by its empirical focus and its wide coverage of cutting-edge issues, this monograph will be the standard reference for linguistic researchers (typologists, historical linguists, and formal linguists). To sum up: we are looking forward to the publication of the second volume.