


On low verbal negation in Brazilian Portuguese

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Abstract

In this paper, I discuss a new construction in Brazilian Portuguese, whereby the negative marker *não* ‘not’, which is syncretic with other types of negation in the language, appears in the slot [Aux_V] in periphrases, a position that is not common in other Romance languages. Among its properties, this type of negation must receive intonational stress, that is, it is a focus element and, as such, it conveys a specific meaning. A comparison with other types of low negation in the same position in Italian, Catalan and French shows that the new negator in Brazilian Portuguese is not the same as the ones that may occur in those languages. Observing this negation marker in relation to low adverbs and to the lexical verb in progressive and perfective periphrases in Brazilian Portuguese, I propose a syntactic position based on the nanosyntax approach, which can explain its focus nature and semantic/pragmatic properties.

Keywords: negation markers, Brazilian Portuguese, syncretism, nanosyntax, syntax-semantics/pragmatics interface.

1. Introduction

In Brazilian Portuguese (BP) the negation marker *não* ‘not’ has a new position in the clause structure: it is possible in the slot in [*estar* ‘be’ __ GERUND] or [*ter* ‘have’ __ PARTICIPLE] periphrases (henceforth, [Aux __ V]), as in the sentences in (1):

- (1) a. Minha conexão é discada; estou *não* trabalhando com meu servidor.
 my connection is dialed am not work.GER with my server
 ‘My connection is by dial-up, I am not working with my server.’
 b. Tenho *não* feito as refeições estes dias.
 have not do.PART the meals these days
 ‘I have not had my meals these days.’

This is an interesting new phenomenon; it is commonly heard in spoken language, but it also appears in blogs, in social media on the internet, and even in the written corpora of contemporary Brazilian Portuguese, *Corpus do Português* (Davies, 2016). Other Romance languages allow negation to intervene between the auxiliary and the main verb, but those cases seem to be different from this new construction found in BP, as I discuss in this paper.¹

Given this new possibility for the position of negation in BP, I address two questions in this paper: (i) how is this new type of negation different from other types/positions of negation in BP and in Romance languages that allow negation in the slot [Aux_V]? (ii) What is the syntactic position of this new type of low verbal negation?

The paper is structured as follows: in Section 2, I review the characteristics of three types of sentential negation with *não* ‘not’ in BP, and then, I present the properties of the new construction investigated in this paper. In Section 3, I show its

¹ In standard European Portuguese, for example, as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, low negation is possible in some cases of progressive periphrases (see also footnotes 5, 10 and 26). However, the progressive periphrasis in standard European Portuguese is not formed by *estar* ‘be’+ GERUND as it is in BP (ia), but by *estar a* + INFINITIVE, as in (ib), where *a* is considered a preposition in the so-called Prepositional Infinitival Construction (PIC) (Raposo 1989: 281ff). The gerundive construction (ia), which is used in BP, is only found in southern dialects of Portugal (Gonçalves 1992, Carrilho & Pereira 2011, Pereira 2014, among others).

- (i) a. O Pedro está dormindo b. O Pedro está *a* dormir.
 the Pedro is sleep.GER the Pedro is P sleep.INF
 ‘Pedro is sleeping.’ Lit. ‘Pedro is at sleep.’

Negation may sometimes intervene in European Portuguese *estar a* progressive periphrasis, as already observed by Gonçalves (1992) in the example shown in (ii):

- (ii)? O Miguel estava *a não* cumprir o que prometeu.
 the Miguel was P not fulfill.INF the what promised
 ‘Miguel was not fulfilling what he has promised.’ (Gonçalves 1992: 136, ex. (59a))

However, southern Portuguese dialectal gerundive constructions, differently from BP, do not allow negation to occur between the auxiliary and the main verb, (iii).

- (iii) *Ele está *não* cumprindo os regulamentos. (Gonçalves 1992: 151, ex. (83b))
 he is not fulfill.GER the regulations

And indeed, although sentences as (ia) were present in the data, I found no matches for [Aux *não* VGER] in the *The Syntax-oriented Corpus of Portuguese Dialects* (CORDIAL-SIN) corpus. Hence, I consider that low negation in standard European Portuguese progressives deserves a more detailed analysis (see also footnote 5 below).

differences in relation to similar negation markers in Italian, Catalan and French. In Section 4, given its properties and since there is syncretism in negation markers in BP, as seen in Section 2 and 3, I present a proposal based on a nanosyntax approach for the syntactic position of *não* in (1), arguing that it is merged in the low left periphery in the clausal spine. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. On negation in BP

2.1. Three types of sentential negation in BP

As shown in several works, BP allows three types/positions for sentential negation: besides a pre-verbal negative marker *não* ‘not’ or its clitic form *num*, BP has two other forms for negation,² shown in (2).

- (2) a. pre-verbal negation (Neg1)
 Eu *não/num* comi o chocolate.
 I NEG NEG.CL ate the chocolate
- b. pre-verbal + final negation (Neg 2)
 Eu *não/num* comi o chocolate, *não*.
 I NEG NEG.CL ate the chocolate NEG
- c. final negation (Neg 3)
 Comi o chocolate, *não*.
 ate the chocolate NEG
 ‘(I) did not eat the chocolate bar.’

Teixeira de Sousa (2011, 2012, 2015) analyzes these different types of negation and proposes that in BP the final *não* in (2b, c) is not post-V as in French (3), but it is *post-VP*, as seen in (4) (see also Section 3.3 below):³

- (3) Je *ne* mange *pas* de chocolat.
 I not eat not of chocolate
 ‘I don’t eat chocolate.’
- (4) a. Eu *não/num* como chocolate *não*.
 I not eat chocolate not
 ‘I don’t eat chocolate.’
 b. Como chocolate, *não*.
 eat chocolate not
 ‘(I) do not eat chocolate.’
 c. *Eu *não/num* como *não* chocolate.
 d. *Como *não* chocolate.

² These types of negation have been well-studied in the literature on Brazilian Portuguese. See Schwenter (2005), Cavalcante (2007, 2012), Teixeira de Sousa (2011, 2012, 2015) among others, and references therein.

³ From this point on in the paper, I will gloss *não* as ‘not’, the marker for negation in BP.

According to the literature on these forms of negation in BP, the distinct positions where *não* occurs correspond to differences in their semantic/pragmatic meanings. Teixeira de Sousa, among others, shows that while *Neg1* in BP (5A1) is possible in all contexts as canonical sentential negation, *Neg2* in (5A2) necessarily contributes an emphatic interpretive effect to the sentence.

- (5) Q: O João comprou a casa?
 the John bought the house
 ‘Has John bought the house?’
 A1: Ele disse que *não/num* comprou. (simple negative)
 he said that not bought
 ‘He said he didn’t.’
 A2: Ele disse que *não/num* comprou, *não*. (emphatic negation)
 he said that not bought not
 ‘He said he did not.’

Neg2 may also be used when the speaker wants to correct a presupposition, as in (6). In the answer to speaker A, speaker B corrects the presupposition that if one is going to school, one should have done the homework.

- (6) A: Você fez a tarefa, né?
 you did the homework right
 ‘You did the homework, right?’
 B: *Não/num* fiz, *não*!
 not did not
 ‘No, I did not!’

Besides correcting a presupposition, *Neg2* may also introduce new information at the same time (7), even without previous discourse:

- (7) [Speaker sees interlocutor blowing on some soup]
 Não/num está quente, *não*!
 not is hot not
 ‘It’s not hot!’

However, *Neg2* cannot occur in simple, unmarked *declaratives* (cf. Schwenter 2005; Cavalcante 2007; Biberauer & Cyrino 2009, Cyrino & Biberauer 2009):

- (8) a. A Maria *não/num* vai no teatro. = simple declarative
 the Maria not go in-the theater
 ‘Mary is not going to the theatre’
 b. #A Maria *não/num* vai no teatro, *não*. ≠ simple declarative

On its turn, *Neg3* is ungrammatical in embedded sentences (9a), in sentences with an overt subject (9b) and in interrogative sentences (9c):

- (9) a. *Eu sei que livro é esse, *não*.
I know which book is this not
b. *O João comprou cigarro, *não*
the João bought cigarette not
c. *Quem você conheceu, *não*?
who you met not

Neg3 can only be used as an answer to *yes/no questions* (10) or for contrasting a presupposition (11); in the latter case, *Neg 2* may co-occur with *Neg3*:

- (10) [Context: A is checking the shopping list and asks B]

A: Você comprou biscoitos?
You bought cookies
'Did you buy cookies?'
B: Comprei, *não*. Tava muito caro!
bought not was very expensive
'I didn't. They were very expensive.'

- (11) A: Tá chovendo o dia todo!
is raining the day all
'It's been raining all day!'
B: (*Não/num*) tá chovendo agora, *não*!
not is raining now not
'It's not raining now!'

Given the properties in (5) to (11), Teixeira de Souza (2012) proposes that in BP these three different types of negation convey different semantic/pragmatic meanings. *Neg1* corresponds to semantic negation, with scope over eventualities or propositions; *Neg2* negates a presupposition referring to a specific time, hence these sentences are marked, and the second occurrence of negation is an instance of *VERUM focus* (Höhle 1992, Romero & Han 2004, among others); and *Neg3* corrects or contests something that has been directly activated in the current discourse (see also Schwenter 2005 and Teixeira de Souza 2015). She conducted several experiments, including testing the intonational contours that are associated with the different types of negation to convey different discourse meanings, and the results clearly show their diverse semantic/pragmatic properties.

As for their syntactic position, Teixeira de Sousa proposes that in BP the functional category Neg may be projected either over VP or over TP. Following the proposals in the literature (Miotto 1992, Namiuti 2008) that consider the clitic nature of pre-verbal negation, i.e., that *não* (*num*) can be amalgamated with the verb, she proposes that *Neg1* is merged over V, and the complex rises to T. *Neg2*, on the other hand, is merged in NegP above T, and since it carries an EPP feature, the whole TP moves to Spec, Neg.

As for *Neg3*, since it does not occur in a sentence that already contains negation, Teixeira de Souza (2012) proposes that it relates to the polarity of the sentence, in which case, *não* 'not' is merged high in the structure. In other words, she considers that a sentence with *Neg3* is a positive sentence that negates an assertion contextually given. Hence, in her analysis, *Neg 3* does not have a semantic function,

but a pragmatic one. Since it is restricted to matrix sentences, she proposes *não* is merged in the left periphery, either in CP or FocP.⁴

However, besides these three types of negation, BP has a new kind of low verbal negation, henceforth (BP) LVN. In the next section, I show that this construction has different properties from the three negation markers seen above.

2.2. BP LVN properties

Low verbal negation in BP as seen in (1) is different from the other three types of negation seen above in (2). Besides occurring in a new position in the structure, the negation marker *não* ‘not’ is used in specific situations.

First, BP LVN requires intonational stress; thus, it cannot be reduced to the clitic form *num*, which is possible in BP (pre-verbal) sentential negation *Neg1*, as seen above. Consider the contrast in the sentences in (12a), with pre-verbal negation and (12b), with LVN:

- (12) a. O Pedro *não/num* tem feito as refeições ultimamente.
 the Pedro not NEG.CL has do.PART the meals lately
 b. O Pedro tem *não/*num* feito as refeições ultimamente.
 the Pedro has not NEG.CL do.PART the meals lately
 ‘Pedro has not had his meals lately.’

Another property of this new construction is that that *não* may co-occur with sentential negation and double negation arises. Hence, a sentence as (13) is interpreted as its positive counterpart:

- (13) Eu *não* estou *não* fazendo nada!
 I not am not do.GER nothing
 ‘It’s not the case that I am not doing anything!’ = I am doing something

Recall that *Neg2*, which is another case of co-occurrence of negative markers in BP, does not lead to double negation, as seen above.

One may ask whether the use of BP LVN is restricted in its semantic/pragmatic meanings as is the case of the other types of BP negation, *Neg2* and *Neg3*. In fact, BP LVN indeed has a felicitous use only in certain pragmatic situations: the speaker uses LVN when, on her perspective, the addressee is unaware of some information that otherwise is related to the conversation. If that is not the case, simple negation is used, with no emphatic intonation. In the examples below, the context explicitly expresses the situation in which BP LVN is perfectly natural.

- (14) [Context: the doctor ordered the speaker to stop eating sugar, but, since she is not following his orders, she says to her friend who knows that she can’t eat sugar but sees her eat a donut]

⁴ I refer the reader to Teixeira de Souza (2012, 2015) for further details on her analysis for these three types of negation in BP.

Não estranhe! Eu *não* tenho *não* comido açúcar!⁵
 not be-surprised I not have not eat.PART sugar
 ‘Don’t be surprised! I have not avoided eating sugar!’
 ‘It’s not the case that I have not eaten sugar’ = I have eaten sugar

⁵ An anonymous reviewer points out that European Portuguese also allows double negation in the progressive periphrases with *estar a + não + INFINITIVE*, in sentences as (i):

- (i) Eu *não* estou a *não* seguir as indicações do médico,
 I not am P not follow.INF the indications of-the doctor
 estou simplesmente a fazê-lo de forma flexível.
 am simply P do.INF-3ACC of form flexible
 Lit. ‘I am not not following the doctor’s orders; I am simply doing it in a more flexible way.’

As pointed out in footnote 1, standard European Portuguese and BP differ with respect to how progressive periphrases are formed. I assume, with Gonçalves (1992), that *estar a + INFINITIVE* and *estar + GERUND* have different syntactic structures. In her leading work, she proposes that *a* in this periphrasis is an aspectual marker, a morpheme that is discontinuous with the infinitive suffix *-r*. In addition, she submits that [*estar a + INFINITIVE*] embeds an Aspect and a Tense projection, and she follows Raposo (1989) in that it also embeds a small clause (Gonçalves 1992: 135). In (iib) we have a simplified structure for (iia).

- (ii) a. O Miguel está a cumprir os regulamentos
 the Miguel is P fulfill.INF the regulations
 ‘Pedro is fulfilling the regulations.’
 b. O Miguel está [_{AspP} [_{Asp} *a* [_{TP} T [_{SC} <o Miguel> cumprir os regulamentos]]]]

Gonçalves also proposes that, since the aspectual marker *a* selects a TP, and since *não* incorporates into T in Portuguese, as seen in (iii), the possibility for intervening negation, pointed out in footnote 1, can be explained.

- (iii) ?O Miguel está [_{AspP} [_{Asp} *a* [_{TP} [_{NegP} *não*] [_T T] [_{SC} <o Miguel> cumprir os regulamentos]]]]
 the Miguel is P not fulfill.INF the regulations

On the other hand, for southern dialects gerundive progressives, Gonçalves (1992:150) proposes a smaller structure. There is no aspectual [_P *a*] projection, the morpheme *-ndo* associates to V, and, differently from the *estar a + INFINITIVE* progressive, no temporal projection is present in the gerundive structure. This configuration precludes negation to occur in *estar + GERUND* periphrases. The complex Aux+V ends up in T, and negation is only possible in the pre-auxiliary position, since *não* incorporates into the auxiliary in T.

- (iv) ... está [_{AspP} [_{Asp} *-ndo*] [_{VP} dormi-]]
 is GER sleep

In BP, however, as will be seen in section 4, I assume that the auxiliary and the main verb end up in different positions, the main verb moving only as high as the aspectual projection (see also Cyrino & Matos 2005, Cyrino 2013 and Araújo-Adriano 2024). This divide creates a slot between the two verbs, which enables negation to intervene (see also Araújo-Adriano & Cyrino 2025).

As for the possibility of intervening negation being allowed in the *estar a* progressive in European Portuguese, it is not yet clear that they have the same semantic/pragmatic properties as the Brazilian LVN, and whether they could be amenable for the analysis I propose in this paper. Hence, further studies about negation in these European Portuguese constructions are still necessary.

- (15) [Context: The speaker, after expressing that a dish was terrible in a restaurant, assumes that the hearer doesn't know how bad the service also was, but that is something the speaker wants to additionally emphasize]
 Eu não solicitei a troca porque já estava *não* gostando
 I not asked the replacement because already was not like.GER
 do atendimento.
 of-the service
 'I didn't ask for a replacement (of the dish) because I was already not happy with the service.'

Finally, when considering low verbal negation in the literature, we come up with the cases investigated for Spanish by Fábregas & González-Rodríguez (2019, 2020, 2021), in which a negative marker occurs before the bare infinitive complement of perception verbs or in a modal periphrasis, as in (16).

- (16) Spanish
 a. Juan la vio *no* obedecer.
 Juan 3CL.SG saw not obey
 'Juan saw her not obey'.
 b. Puedes *no* hablar
 can.2SG not talk
 'You cannot talk.'

Fábregas & González-Rodríguez (2019, 2020) and Fábregas & González-Rodríguez (2021) propose that negation in (16) is introduced below vP (actually, EventP, following Ramchand 2008, 2018) and operates on the descriptive content of the event. Such constructions are instances of 'inhibited eventualities', its hallmark being the non-dynamicity of the complement. Thus, if an event lacks an Initiator, it will not be able to trigger the negative-event reading.

As for periphrastic structures, not all of them allow negation in the slot [Aux_V] in Spanish. Fábregas & González-Rodríguez (2019) argue that sentences in (17) are possible because they accept both non-dynamic and stative predicates, whereas a sentence with an eventive predicate, such as the progressive periphrastic construction in (18), is not possible.

- (17) Spanish, Fábregas & González-Rodríguez (2019: 104)
 a. Comenzó *no* respondiendo.
 started not answering
 Lit. 'started not answering'
 b. Continuó *no* diciendo la verdad.
 kept on not telling the truth
 Lit. 'kept on not telling the truth'
- (18) Spanish, Fábregas & González-Rodríguez (2019: 104)
 *Está *no* comiendo.
 is not eating

Additionally, verbs that allow causativization do not permit inhibited eventualities in the inchoative reading in Spanish, since there is no Initiator, as seen in (19):

(19) Spanish, Fábregas & González-Rodríguez (2020: 747)

- a. *Vi (a) la leche *no* hervir.
saw DOM the milk not boil.INF
Intended: ‘I saw that the milk did not boil.’
- b. Vi (a) la matrona *no* hervir la leche.
saw DOM the midwife not boil.INF the milk
‘I saw the midwife not boil the milk.’

However, in BP, as opposed to Spanish, the intervening negation (BP LVN) is possible in the slot [Aux V] in periphrases with gerunds such as (18) and with participles, as seen above.⁶ Additionally, BP LVN is possible with all types of verbs such as unergatives (1a) and transitives (1b) above, and with those verbs that do not have an Initiator, as unaccusatives (20a), and in passive sentences (20b).

- (20) a. Surpreendente foi o motociclista ter *não* morrido no acidente!
surprising was the motorcyclist have not die.PARTin-the accident
‘It’s surprising the fact that the motorcyclist has not died in the accident!’
- b. Que vergonha esse político estar sendo *não* punido!
what shame this politician have been not punish.PART
‘What a shame that this politician is not being punished.’

Interestingly, besides allowing ‘inhibited eventualities’ as (16) and (17), BP allows *não* in the complement of perception verbs that include verbs that allow causativization, as in (21a), as opposed to Spanish. In fact, a sentence as (21b), an instance of BP LVN, is also perfectly grammatical.

- (21) a. Eu vi o leite *não* ferver (e ficar talhado).⁷
I saw the milk not boil.INF and become curdled
Lit. ‘I saw that the milk did not boil (and it got curdled).’
- b. O leite tinha ainda *não* fervido depois de cinco minutos.
the milk had still not boil.PART after of five minutes
‘The milk still hadn’t boiled after five minutes.’

⁶ Sentences in (16) and (17) are also grammatical in BP but are not the focus of this paper.

⁷ As noted by an anonymous reviewer, European Portuguese also allows ‘inhibited eventualities’ with perception verbs in sentences similar to (21a), seen in (i). This is also the case in BP.

- (i) Vi o leite ficar uma hora ao lume e *não* ferver! Muito estranho!
saw the milk stay one hour at-the fire and not boil.INF very strange
‘I saw the milk boil be one hour on the stove and not boil! Very strange!’

These facts show that the crucial property of BP LVN is not related to the presence/absence of an Initiator in the vP, but to its emphatic intonation and special semantic/pragmatic meanings, as seen above.

Summarizing, in this section I describe the specific properties that make LVN different from other negation types in BP and from other types of low verbal negation in a closely related Romance language, Spanish. Below, I review whether the same kind of BP low negation is possible in other Romance languages that allow negation in the slot [Aux_V].

3. Intervening negation in periphrases in some Romance languages

Since it's well-known that languages can have several negators interspersed in the clause (Zanuttini 1997, Poletto 2008, DeClercq 2013, among others), we can ask whether BP LVN could be the expression of one type of negator that may appear in the slot [Aux_V] in other Romance periphrases.

In fact, Italian's *mica*, as in (22), and Catalan's *pas* in the *no...pas* construction (23) are negation markers that may occur in [Aux_V]:

- (22) Italian, Magistro (2022: 2)
 Non l'ho *mica* invitata!
 NEG her-have.1SG mica invited.F.SG
 'I have not invited her at all!'
- (23) Catalan, Espinal (2002: 2748)
 La ministra no ha *pas* dimitit. [Catalan]
 the minister not has not resigned
 'The minister has not resigned.'

However, as I show below, these negator markers have special properties that are not present in BP LVN.

3.1. Italian *mica*

Mica 'not' has been extensively studied (Cinque 1976, Zanuttini 1997, Poletto 2008, Frana & Rawlins 2016, among many others), and it may occur in sentence initial and in sentence internal position in Italian. I concentrate on internal *mica* that occurs in the slot in [Aux_V] as in the examples below:

- (24) Italian, Magistro (2022: 5)
 Non ho *mica* passato l'esame.
 Not have.1SG not passed the-exam.
 'I have not passed the exam at all.'
- (25) Italian, Magistro (2022: 9)
 A: Maria ha mangiato la torta che hai preparato?
 Maria has eaten the cake that have.2SG prepared
 'Did Mary eat the cake you had baked?'

B: Non ho *mica* preparato la torta.
 not have.1SG not prepared the cake
 Non ho avuto per niente tempo.
 not have.1SG had for nothing time.
 ‘I hadn’t baked the cake at all. I didn’t have any time.’

- (26) Italian, Paulo Morosi (p.c.)
 Sto *mica* lavorando.
 am not working
 ‘I am not working.’

Notice that *mica* can co-occur with other negation markers in the sentence, but no double negation effect emerges:

- (27) Italian
 ...non la sto *mica* mangiando.
 not it am not eating
 ‘I am not eating it.’
 (<https://www.santalessandro.org/2020/04/09/mamma-ho-fame-e-tra-un-pasto-e-laltro-si-fa-anche-lezione-di-cucina/>) Accessed on 07-07-2024

- (28) Northern Italian Dialects, Poletto (2017: 93)
 No la go *miga* magnada NO!
 Not it have not eaten not
 ‘I did not eat it!’

As for its semantic/pragmatic properties, the literature has consistently pointed out since Cinque (1976), that *mica* requires a prior claim or a salient expectation that will be denied. It is a “supposition trigger” (Cinque 1976, Zanuttini 1997, Penello & Pescarini 2008, Pescarini 2009, Frana & Rawlins 2016, Magistro 2022, among many others). Frana and Rawlins (2016) enumerate three contexts in which *mica* is possible: (i) direct contradiction, used to deny a previous utterance, or the presupposition/implication of a previous utterance; (ii) denial of the speaker’s expectation; (iii) denial of a proposition that the “speaker is implicitly attributing to the addressee”:

- (29) Italian, Frana & Rawlins (2016: 2-3)
 a. Direct contradiction (A’s utterance asserts, presupposes, or implies *p*)
 A: Mario ha pianto quando la ragazza l’ha lasciato.
 ‘Mario cried when his girlfriend broke up with him.’
 S: Non è vero. Mario *mica* ha pianto quando la
 NEG is true Mario MICA has cried when the
 ragazza l’ha lasciato.
 girlfriend him-has left
 ‘That’s not true. Mario not-*mica* cried when his girlfriend left him!’
 b. Speaker’s expectation (S signals that (s)he previously expected *p*)
 [Context: S is baking a cake but does not have all the ingredients. When she tries it, she is surprised that the cake turned out quite well.]

S: Ah però! *Mica* è venuta male la torta.

Ah MICA is turned.out bad the cake

‘Oh! the cake not-*mica* turned out bad!’

- c. Implied inference (S infers that *p* is expected by A)

[Context: S tries to pick up a cat from the street; the cat looks scared.]

S: Non avere paura, *mica* ti faccio male.

NEG have fear MICA to.you do.1SG harm

‘Don’t be afraid, not-*mica* I am going to hurt you!’

Mica has been proposed to be merged in a low position (NegP2 in Zanuttini 1997) or in a minimizer low position (MinQ in Poletto 2008). Considering its precedence relationship with adverbs, *mica* is higher than the low adverb *già* ‘already’ (Cinque 1999),⁸ as in (30), from Zanuttini (1997):

- (30) NegP1 *non* [TP1 V+Agr [NegP2 *mica* [TP2 [AdvP *già*] [NegP3 *niente* [Asp perf V_{past part} [Asp gen/progr [AdvP *sempre*] [NegP4 NO]]]]]]]]]

In the same vein, Poletto (2017) advances a “big NegP” analysis for these four different types of negation in Italian. These negative markers first merge lower in the clausal spine, inside vP, and then move to a higher position in the clause, as shown in (31) (Poletto 2017: 90):

- (31) [NegP1 *non* [TP1 V+Agr [NegP2 *mica* [TP2 [AdvP *already*] [NegP3 *niente* [Asp perf V_{past part} [Asp gen/progr [AdvP *always*] [NegP4 NO] [vP [VP... [NegP [~~*mica*~~] [~~*niente*~~]]]]]]]]]]]]]

Poletto (2017) points out that the four different types of negation in Italian do not give rise to double negation. In that way, co-occurrence of *mica* with *non* is possible as shown in (27)-(28) above and (32) below:

- (32) Central Italian, Poletto (2017: 87)
Non ti ho *mica* detto di telefonargli.
NEG1 you I.have NEG2 told to phone.him
‘I did NOT tell you to phone him.’

Turning to BP, although occurring in [Aux_V] as the instances of *mica* considered above, LVN *não* has distinct properties:

- (i) The semantic/pragmatic properties of BP LVN are different from *mica* since the latter involves the denial of a proposition that the speaker attributes to the hearer,

⁸ As is well known, Cinque (1999) proposes the following order for low adverbs (from Schifano 2018: 2):

[not Neg1_{presuppositional} [already T_{anterior} [anytime Asp_{term} [still Asp_{continuative} [always Asp_{perfect} [hardly Neg2 [just Asp_{retrospective} [soon Asp_{proximative} [briefly Asp_{durative} [typically Asp_{generic/progressive} [almost Asp_{prospective} [completely Asp_{Sgcompletive event} [everything Asp_{PlCompletive} [well Voice [fast Asp_{celerative(process)} [again Asp_{repetitive(process)} [often Asp_{frequentative(process)} [completely Asp_{SgCompletive(process)} [v-VP . . .

whereas BP LVN conveys more information than sentential negation, expressing that the proposition is not in the common ground from the point of view of the speaker. In other words, on the pragmatic side, BP LVN conceptually encodes information that contributes to the propositions that must be assumed when processing a sentence that contains it.⁹

(ii) Considering Cinque (1999)'s hierarchy, the position of BP LVN is much lower than *mica*, since it may appear below *quase* 'almost' (above Asp_{prospective}, see footnote 8), as the following examples show:¹⁰

⁹ Negation is a universal property of natural languages, and its manifestation can take different linguistic forms, but it also can convey different meanings according to the different forms it takes. The scope of negation is traditionally understood as the *focus*, that is, where new information is encoded in the sentence. Nevertheless, as seen above, there are interpretative differences for different types of negation markers.

Given its properties, I advance that BP LVN conveys FALSUM focus, as proposed by Frana & Rawlins (2019), who consider this kind of focus as a "biased reversal" in relation to a prior expectation. FALSUM focus is a Common Ground operator, which basically says that the proposition it scopes over should not be in the Common Ground (see also Repp 2013). Whereas VERUM focus corresponds to "really", FALSUM focus corresponds to denials of a positive proposition (Frana & Rawlins 2019: 32):

- (i) a. Sam is NOT smart
- b. [assert_S [FALSUM_S [Sam is smart]]]
- (The speaker is certain about *not* adding [Sam is smart] to the Common Ground)

In this sense, BP LVN expresses FALSUM focus. The proposal is currently under further investigation.

¹⁰ As noted by an anonymous reviewer, a sentence as (33) is also possible in European Portuguese, but in the *estar a* + INFINITIVE construction. See footnote 5 for an explanation for this intervening negation, based on Gonçalves (1992).

- (i) Eu estou quase a *não* fazer (mais) os exercícios de fisioterapia.
I am almost P not do.INF more the exercises of physiotherapy
'I am in the brink of not doing the physiotherapy exercises anymore.'

Additionally, the reviewer points out that an intervening negation may occur in the presence of the focus marker *mas é* 'lit. but is', which may also appear at the end of the sentence (ii).

- (ii) Eu estou (*mas é*) a *não* perceber nada, (*mas é*).
I am but is P not perceive.INF nothing
'I definitely cannot understand any of it.'

According to the anonymous reviewer, *mas é* may intervene, along with negation, in periphrases with *ter* 'have' + PARTICIPLE, (iii).

- (iii) Ele tem *mas é não* ganhado nada com isso.
he has but is not gain.PART anything with that
'He definitely has not gained anything from that.'

Bolrinha (2017) analyzes this focus marker in European Portuguese, which looks like a *be*-cleft, and proposes it is an adjunct on its way to a complete grammaticalization.

As will be seen in section 4, I propose that BP has a Focus position in the low left periphery, into which LVN is merged. It might be possible that European Portuguese also makes use of such Focus position in the case of sentences as (ii)–(iii), where other intervening

- (33) a. Eu estou *quase não* fazendo os exercícios físicos exigidos.
 I am almost not do.GER the exercises physical required
 ‘I am in the brink of not doing the required physical exercises.’
 b. Eu tenho *quase não* feito exercícios físicos ultimamente.
 I have almost not do.PART exercises physical lately
 ‘I have rarely done physical exercises lately.’

(iii) As seen in (13) and (14) above, BP LVN, as opposed to *mica*, does give rise to double negation; hence, I assume it is not the same type of negation described in Poletto (2017)’s analysis of *mica*.

We conclude that, although having a low position in the structure, BP LVN is different from *mica* in both its syntax and semantic/pragmatic properties.

3.2. Catalan *no...pas*

Catalan, especially in the central areas of Catalunya, has an interesting way of expressing negation, which consists in the use of a composite negator *no...pas* that is distributed “around” the verb phrase, as in (34) (adapted from ex. (50) in Espinal 2002: 2748, my glosses and translation):

- (34) Catalan, Espinal (2002: 2748)
 a. *No* vindrà *pas*, en Joan.
 not come.FUT not the Joan
 ‘He will not come, Joan.’
 b. La ministra *no* ha *pas* dimitit.
 the minister not has not resigned
 ‘The minister has not resigned.’
 c. El portaveu *no* va contestar *pas* les preguntes.
 the spokesman not AUX.3SG.PAST answer not the questions
 ‘The spokesman did not answer the question.’
 d. *No* els l’has *pas* d’explicar, la recepta, als convidats.
 not 3PL.DAT CL-have not of-explain the recipe to-the.PL guests
 ‘You don’t have to explain the recipe to the guests.’
 e. *No* vaig veure’l *pas*.
 not AUX.1SG.PST see.3.SG.CL not
 ‘I didn’t see him.’

Interestingly, example (34b), where the verbal phrase forms a compound tense, shows that the negator *pas* may appear between the auxiliary and the past participle.¹¹

material besides negation, such as *mas é*, is merged. As pointed out above in footnote 5, further studies about European Portuguese intervening low negation are in order.

¹¹ According to Espinal (p.c.), *pas* may also appear after the main verb (i) for some speakers, especially in Barcelona:

- (i) *No* l’he vist *pas*
 not CL-have seen not
 ‘I have not seen him.’

However, as seen in (34c, e), this is not always the case. Espinal proposes the structure in (35) for *no... pas*, where V^n is either a verb or a verbal complex:

- (35) $no + (cl) + V^n + (cl) + pas$

Besides the position in past participle periphrases (34b), *pas* may also appear in gerund periphrases, as in (36) (Xavier Villalba, p.c.):

- (36) *No estic pas treballant.*
not am not working
'I am not working.'

Espinal (1991) describes in detail the use of the Catalan *pas*, and she points out that this discontinuous negator has two different syntactic behaviors: (i) sentential negation, as in (34) above, and (ii) constituent negation, as in (37) below.¹²

- (37) Catalan, Espinal (1991: 35, and p.c.)
No pas LA MARIA no va aprovar.
Not not the Maria not AUX.PAST pass
'It is not Maria who did not passed.'
(cancelling or confirming the speaker's expectations on Maria.)

In imperatives, *no... pas* always expresses prohibition, reinforcing the negative import of the sentence (38):

- (38) Catalan, Espinal (2002: 2751)
¡No em feu pas aquesta mal passada!
not me do not this bad passed
'Don't do this to me!'

Although presenting a clear description of the phenomena, Espinal does not analyze the syntactic position of *no* and *pas*¹³, but discusses its semantic/pragmatic properties. According to Espinal (1993, 2002), the negator has two different values in declarative sentences: (i) as a reinforcer for a negative proposition available in the context; (ii) as a rejection of a positive proposition, also available in the context, as seen in (39) (adapted from ex. (62) in Espinal 2002: 2751, my glosses and translation):

- (39) Catalan, Espinal (2002: 2751)
a. A: En Joan ja no vindrà, a aquestes hores.
the Joan already not come.FUT at these hours
'Considering the hour, Joan will not come anymore.'

¹² According to Espinal, *pas* is usually accompanied by *no*, but in some dialects *pas* may occur alone as sentential negation.

¹³ For a syntactic analysis, see Batllori & Hernanz (2013: 18-19, 23), who propose that *pas*, in this type of discontinuous negation in Catalan, is a 'low emphatic polarity particle' merged in a functional projection between FinP and VP, above the vP field.

- B: Efectivament, en Joan *no* vindrà *pas* tan tard.
effectively the Joan not come.FUT not so late
'In fact, Joan will not come this late.'
- b. A: Em fa l'efecte que em Joan ja deu haver arribat.
Me does the-effect that the Joan already must have arrived
'It seems to me that Joan must have already arrived.'
- B: No, *no* ha arribat *pas*.¹⁴ ¿No veu que no hi ha
no not has arrived not not see that not there has
la bossa on ell la sol deixar?
the bag where he it uses-to leave
'No, he hasn't arrived. Don't you see that the bag is not there where he usually leaves it?'

In interrogative sentences the speaker may use the double negator to ask about a propositional content that she suspects might be true:

- (40) Catalan, Espinal (2002: 2752)
¿*No* l'heu *pas* vist?
not 3.SG.ACC.CL-has not seen
'Haven't you seen him?'

Although the negative marker *pas* in Catalan may appear in [Aux_V], it does not look like BP LVN. First, according to Espinal (p.c.), *pas* does not need to be intonationally stressed. In fact, Espinal (1991) argues extensively that focalization is not an inherent property of the logical semantics of *no... pas*. BP LVN, in contrast, must be intonationally stressed.

Second, Espinal (1993) analyzes this form of negation in Catalan as having a quantificational domain over a set of conceptual entities of which a subdomain is selected as the negative contrasted item. Espinal shows that *no...pas* is different from the sentential negator *no* 'not' in that the former conveys propositional denial: "most frequently the speaker reinforces a negative proposition with *pas* to cancel a proposition that is either part of the most accessible context or is an inference deducible from the utterance's context" (Espinal 1993: 355). However, BP LVN is not restricted to those contexts, as seen above.

We conclude that in Catalan, although the negative maker *pas* has, in some cases, a similar position as BP LVN (that is, it may appear in the slot in [Aux_V]), it is not the same type of negation as the BP negator investigated in this paper.

3.3. A note on French *ne...pas*

It is well-known that in French, although the negation in formal/written language is formed by *ne...pas* (41a, 42a), in colloquial speech *ne* is not necessary (41b, 42b):

- (41) a. Je *n'* ai *pas* de livres.
I not have not of books
'I don't have books.'

¹⁴ On the postverbal position of *pas*, see 12.

- b. J' ai *pas* de livres.
I have not of books
'I don't have books.'
- (42) a. Je *n'* ai *pas* dit ça.
I not have not said that
'I didn't say that.'
- b. J' ai *pas* dit ça
I have not said that
'I didn't say that.'

As seen in (42), *pas* may occur in [Aux_V] in negative sentences, being an instance of low negation. Nevertheless, it does not have the semantic/pragmatic properties of BP LVN described above. *Pas* is the expression of sentential negation in French, whereas LVN in BP conveys more than negation, as it brings a presupposition (on the part of the *speaker*) that hearer is not aware of some extra information the speaker is giving when using the construction, as seen above (see also footnote 9).

Besides that, although linearly appearing in [Aux_V], the syntactic position of *pas*, when considering Cinque (1999)'s hierarchy, is actually very high,¹⁵ above the high adverbs *encore* 'still' and *déjà* 'already' (43), in contrast to BP LVN, which appears below *ainda* 'still' and *já* 'already' (44):

- (43) a. J'ai *pas encore* (**pas*) vu *Reservoir Dogs*.
I have not still seen *Reservoir Dogs*
'I still haven't seen *Reservoir Dogs*.'
- b. Qui a *pas déjà* (**pas*) fait ça?
Who has not already done that
'Who hasn't already done that?'
- (44) a. Pedro tinha *ainda não* feito a comida quando eu cheguei.
Pedro has still not done the meal when I arrived
'Pedro still hadn't fixed the meal when I arrived.'
- b. Antigamente eu comia doce, mas agora tenho *já não* feito isso.
formerly I ate sweet but now have already not done that
'In the past I used to eat sweets, but now I don't do it anymore.'

We conclude that *pas*, although possible between an auxiliary and the lexical verb in French, is different from BP LVN both in its syntax and semantics/pragmatics.

In this section, I have looked at negation markers that may appear in the slot [Aux_V] in some other Romance languages, in order to consider whether their properties are comparable to BP LVN. We conclude that this type of negation, which has not yet been analyzed in the literature on BP, does not appear to constitute the

¹⁵ Schifano (2018: 63), analyzing finite verb movement, notes that in French lexical verbs must climb over the low adverbs such as *déjà* 'already', *encore* 'still', *toujours* 'always', *complètement* 'completely', *tout* 'everything', and *bien* 'well'. In this paper, I am focusing on periphrases, whereby the lexical verb is non-finite. In this case, the non-finite lexical verb in French doesn't climb as high, as also noticed by Ledgeway and Schifano (2023: 161, footnote 19).

same type of low negation that has been described in the literature on the Romance languages seen in this section.

In the next section, I propose an analysis that takes into account the specific properties of BP LVN and the syncretism of negation markers in BP. Given this syncretism, I depart from the analyses in the traditional cartographic approach, but I explore the related nanosyntax framework, to propose that BP LVN (i) occurs in a dedicated low position in the sentence, and (ii) expresses negation and focus, which conveys an additional pragmatic effect to the utterance in which it appears.¹⁶

4. A nanosyntax approach for Brazilian Portuguese LVN

As mentioned above, the literature has proposed analyses based on a cartographic approach to syntax to explain that negation may appear in different positions in the clausal spine (Zanuttini, 1997; Poletto, 2008, 2017). Zanuttini (1997) proposes the following four different positions for negation in Italian dialects:

- (45) NegP1: position for sentential negation
- NegP2: position for presuppositional negative markers (ex. Piedmontese *pa*)
- NegP3: position for negative markers (as Piedmontese *nen*, which precedes adverbs corresponding to *sempre* ‘always’)
- NegP4: negative markers below *sempre* ‘always’, as *no* (in Milanese).

Poletto (2008) also proposes four positions for negative markers, but she relates each position to etymological types that have developed from homogeneous classes:

- (46) Neg1: scalar negative markers
- Neg2: minimizers, which are related to diachronic development (as in the Jespersen’s Cycle proposal)
- Neg3: quantifier phrases derived diachronically from words as *niente* ‘nothing’
- Neg4: Focus markers, carrying emphasis, as the polarity item *no* (‘no’)

In a more recent paper mentioned above, Poletto (2017) proposes that negation (NegP) is a complex category. She analyzes the four different projections and

¹⁶ It is not uncommon that a negative marker, when emphatic, may convey meanings other than negation. According to Breitbarth and Haegeman (2014, 2015) and Breitbarth (2022), there is a negator marker *en* in West Flemish and Southern Dialects of Dutch as a historical residue of an old pre-verbal negator marker, which underwent the Jespersen Cycle. The negator *en* occurs in negative clauses (and also in Negative Polarity Item contexts) and has a number of interpretive properties, among which: (i) it expresses an opposition between the negation of the clause it occurs in and a (positive) expectation explicitly or implicitly present in the discourse; (ii) it explicitly marks the negative clause as unexpected by selecting its positive counterpart as the most expected state of affairs. Accordingly, *en* in negative clauses expresses that the negative statement stands in contrast to expectations in the discourse, either on the side of the speaker or of the addressee (Breitbarth 2022: 161). The authors propose *en* is merged in the low left periphery and it expresses MIRATIVE focus.

discontinuous negation found in several Northern Italian dialects as the result of independent movement of structural portions of a “Big NegP” containing all the negative markers that are first merged inside the VP. However, as discussed above, although in a similar spirit to the analysis that I present below, that is, that negation starts low in the clause, Poletto’s proposal cannot explain BP LVN, since the latter has specific properties that her proposal does not predict.

I turn to a different approach to negation, one also based on the cartographic project, the nanosyntax framework, brought forth by De Clercq (2013, 2017, 2018, 2020), whereby syncretism in the morphology of negation and stacking/scope properties of negation markers take a major part. In fact, De Clercq shows how nanosyntax may provide a unified approach between sentential and constituent negation. As I propose below, this framework can account for BP LVN syncretism with other negation markers, its emphatic properties and its syntactic position.

The author focuses on the distinct types of negation markers in several unrelated languages and shows that there is a difference between *negation*, which is syntactically marked with the feature [neg], and the *morphological expression* of negation, which may appear in different forms and indicate distributional properties of negation. Accordingly, De Clercq (2013, 2017, 2018, 2020) proposes that negative markers can be arranged in a paradigm that restricts syncretism to contiguous cells. Hence, four different categories of these elements can be analyzed based on their function, semantics, scope, and the possibility of stacking over each other:¹⁷

- (47) Classification of four types of negative markers (De Clercq 2013, 2017, 2018):
- a. Pol^{Neg}: negative polarity markers (sentential scope)
She is not happy, is she?
 - b. Foc^{Neg}: focus markers (scope over untensed predicates)
She is NOT happy, isn't she?
 - c. Deg/Class^{Neg}: degree/classifying markers¹⁸ (scope over predicate terms)
She is non-professional.
 - d. Q^{Neg}: quantity markers (the lowest scope)
She is unhappy.

The syncretism and the stacking patterns of these negative markers are exemplified in Table 1:

¹⁷ It’s important to point out that De Clercq (2013, 2018) concentrates on instances of NegP as a base-generated projection on the main adjectival predicate in *copular constructions* of twenty-three languages.

¹⁸ De Clercq (2013) labelled *non-* as a Degree marker (Deg^{Neg}) since she considered gradable adjectives, following Corver (1997). To avoid misunderstandings, in De Clercq (2020: 190, ft 9) paper, she justifies the use of the label Classifying marker (Class^{Neg}) based on the fact that Corver’s term for DegP may stack over De Clercq’s Deg^{Neg}. According to the author, the distinction in the labels do not impact on her proposal.

Table 1. Syncretism in negative markers

	T ^{Neg}	Foc ^{Neg}	Class ^{Neg}	Q ^{Neg}
Greek	dhen	oxi	mi	a-
English (formal)	not	not	non	un-
English (informal)	n't	not	non	un-
French (formal)	ne ... pas	pas	non	iN-
French (informal)	pas	pas	non	iN-
Chinese	bù	bù	fěi	fěi
MS Arabic	laa	laa	ghayr-	ghayr-
Persian	na	na	qheyr-	qheyr-
Moroccan Arabic	ma (ši)	muši	muši	muši
Dutch	niet	niet	niet-	on-
Hungarian	nem	nem	nem	-tEIE
Czech	ne-	ne	ne-	ne-

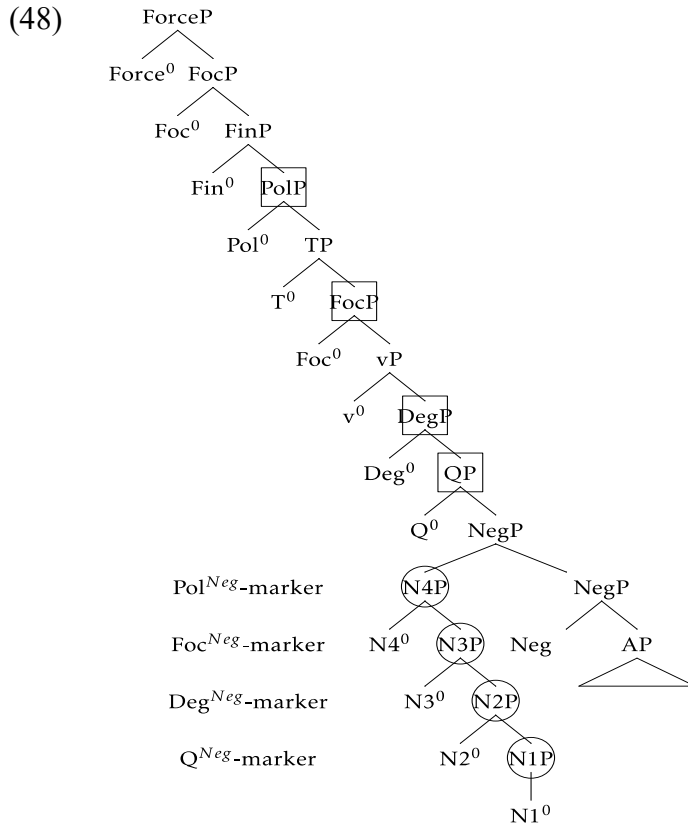
Source: De Clercq & Vanden Wyngaerd (2017: 153)

Notice that, in this framework, not only the morphosyntax, but the semantic import of the different negative markers is taken into consideration. As noted in footnote 17, De Clercq's proposal considers negative markers in copular sentences. However, extending her work to other structures, I propose an analysis for BP LVN that contributes to the nanosyntax approach to negation by examining a new form of negation in *non-copular sentences*.¹⁹

In this framework,²⁰ the negative nanospine is inserted as a complex constituent in the specifier of NegP. The split NegP is base-generated on a lexical predicate and is, thus, a predicate negator – negation is low, over the AP in De Clercq's work, as shown in (48):

¹⁹ As seen in section 2, BP has three markers for *sentential negation*, which are syncretic (*não* 'not'). BP LVN, however, is a new form of negation with *não* that contributes a specific semantic/pragmatic effect to the sentence in which it occurs. As will be seen below in (49), BP also has other types of negation markers with which LVN and sentential negation are syncretic.

²⁰ See De Clercq (2013), for a detailed proposal for the nanosyntax of negation, and Starke (2009, 2011), Caha (2009) for the nanosyntax approach in general.



Source: De Clercq (2013: 102)

De Clercq proposes that several negation interpretable features are present in the nanosyntax clause spine. In (48), negative markers N1, N2, N3 and N4 correspond to the four contiguous syntactic/semantic features that carry an interpretable [neg] value: [uQ:Neg], [uDeg/Class:Neg], [uFoc:Neg] and [uPol:neg]. However, this does not lead to multiple interpretations for negation, since there is only one feature in the Neg head (above AP in (48)) which is interpretable for negation. The other interpretable features in the spine are scope features, [iQ], [iDeg/Class], [iFoc] and [iPol]. These features get syntactically valued for negation, but are semantically interpretable for scope, i.e. for Q-scope, or Deg/Class-scope, or Foc-scope. As we will see below, the derivation proceeds by moving the relevant negative-bearing item to the specifier of the scope-bearing element to check the relevant uninterpretable features.

Considering BP, we notice that, except for Q^{Neg}, there is syncretism in negative markers:

- (49) a. Pol^{Neg}: *não*
 Eu *não* tenho comido bife.
 I not have eat.PART steak
 'I haven't eaten steak.'
- b. Foc^{Neg}: *não*
 Eu tenho comido *não* bife, mas batatas.
 I have eat.PART not steak but potatoes
 'I have eaten not steak, but potatoes.'

- c. Deg/Class^{Neg}: *não*
 Eu tenho sido um músico *não*-profissional.
 I have be.PART a musician nonprofessional
 ‘I have been a nonprofessional musician.’
- d. Q^{Neg}: *in*
 Eu tenho sido *infeliz*.
 I have be.PART unhappy
 ‘I have been unhappy.’

Given this syncretism and the properties described above, I advance a nanosyntax approach to account for BP LVN. More specifically, I propose that BP LVN is an instance of Foc^{Neg}.²¹

According to De Clercq (2013), there is no denial of a proposition previously asserted in Foc^{Neg} constructions, but modification or contrast. The function of Foc^{Neg} markers is ambiguous: “they have either a modifying function (50a) or they function as contrastive negative markers (50b) introducing new or correct information that can be added” (De Clercq 2013: 37):

- (50) a. a *not* very happy man, *not* long ago
 b. John was *not* happy, but sad.

BP LVN, as an instance of Foc^{Neg}, does not deny a proposition *previously asserted* (as Pol^{Neg} does, according to De Clercq), but it somehow modifies the main verb to convey information that is not assumed by the *speaker* to be known by the hearer. Importantly, the fact that BP LVN can co-occur with another instance of negation demonstrates the property of *stackability* of negation in the nanosyntactic tree. In other words, BP LVN is not in the same position occupied by sentential negation, Pol^{Neg}, the underlined *não* in the examples:

- (51) a. Ele não tem *não* procurado trabalho. Sai todos os dias para isso!
 He not has not looked-for work Go-out all the days for that
 Lit. ‘He has not not looked for work. He goes out every day for that.’
 Intended: It is not the case that he has not looked for work. He goes out every day in order to do that.’
- b. Na verdade, você não está *não* trabalhando.
 in-the truth you not are not working
 Você está se preparando para a sua produtividade futura.
 You are CL.REFL preparing for the your productivity future
 Lit. ‘Actually, you’re not not working. You’re preparing yourself for your future productivity.’
 Intended: ‘It is not the case that you are not working. Actually, you’re preparing yourself for your future productivity.’

²¹ To account for the three types of sentential negation in BP seen in Section 2, I assume, pending further investigation, that they are instances of Pol^{Neg}, each with specific features that trigger movement, as proposed by Teixeira de Sousa (2011, 2012, 2015) and Cavalcante (2007, 2012).

In these sentences the second *não*, Foc^{Neg} , modifies the main verb in order to emphasize information that the speaker assumes that the hearer is not aware of, whereas the first one, Pol^{Neg} , conveys sentential negation.

Notice also that the negative word *nunca* ‘never’ is a possible exponent of Pol^{Neg} in BP (52):

- (52) a. Para o caso de você, em algum momento, toivamente se esquecer;
to the case of you in some moment foolishly 3.REFL forget
eu *nunca* estou pensando em você.
I never am think.GER in you
‘In case you, in some moment, foolishly forget, I am never thinking about you.’
= I am *not* ever thinking of you
- b. O Brasil *nunca* tinha ganhado medalha no volei antes...
the Brasil never had win.PART medal in-the voley before
‘Brasil had never won a medal in volleyball before.’
= Brasil has *not* ever won a medal

Interestingly, BP LVN is possible in such a context, demonstrating once more that it is not equal to simple sentential negation in BP, but it has a specific additional Foc^{Neg} property that conveys a specific pragmatic meaning and enables the expression of double negation (53):²²

- (53) a. Para o caso de você, em algum momento, toivamente se esquecer;
to the case of you in some moment foolishly 3.REFL forget
eu *nunca* estou *não* pensando em você.
I never am not think.GER in you
Lit. ‘In case you, in some moment, foolishly forget, I am never not thinking about you.’
= I’m always thinking about you
- b. O Brasil *nunca* tinha *não* ganhado medalha no volei antes...
the Brasil never had not win.PART medal in-the voley before
Lit. ‘Brasil had never not won a medal in volleyball before.’
= Brasil has always won a medal

Foc^{Neg} markers take scope in a *low left periphery Focus Phrase*, and, as such, they must be intonationally stressed. “Consequently, they do not take scope over the tensed predicate and their scope is restricted to the *untensed predicate*” (De Clercq 2013: 30, my emphasis). In order to see the contrast between sentential negation and BP LVN, notice the contrast in (54), with *NegI*, and (55), with BP LVN. Intonational focus on *não* in the context in (55) is necessary for (55B) to be felicitous.

²² In this sense, BP LVN may be comparable to Southern Dutch Dialects and West Flemish *en*, which may occur with the negation marker *niet* or *niemand* and expresses, besides negation, MIRATIVE focus. See Breithbart & Haegeman (2015) and footnote 16 in this paper. For BP specific type of focus, see footnote 9 in this paper.

- (54) Eu *não* tenho lido jornal.
I not have read.PART newspaper
'I have not read newspapers.'
- (55) [Context: B is used to reading the newspaper every day, but now she has been sick and can't do it anymore. A doesn't know it and, seeing B is upset, asks]
A: Por que você está chateada?
Why that you are upset
'Why are you upset?'
B: Eu tenho *não* lido jornal. Odeio ficar por fora das notícias!
I have not read.PART newspaper hate stay by out of-the news
'I have not read newspapers. I hate to be out of news!'

In order to explain why *não* in BP is merged in the slot [Aux_V] in a Foc^{Neg} position in the low left periphery, as opposed to the scenario of low negation in other Romance languages seen above, I assume the long-standing proposals in the literature, whereby BP is a language that has lexical verb movement to a low functional projection (Cyrino & Matos 2005, Cyrino 2013, Tescari-Neto 2013, Araújo-Adriano 2024, among others).

Following the literature on BP, I assume that in the case of periphrases, the auxiliary moves to T, but the main verb moves only as high as the head Asp in BP (see also Araújo-Adriano 2024, Araújo-Adriano & Cyrino 2025). When BP LVN is present in the numeration, FocusP (Foc^{NegP}) is merged above AspP^{23} in the verbal low left periphery (Belletti 2004). Hence, LVN in BP remains between the auxiliary and the lexical verb both in perfect and progressive periphrases.²⁴

Therefore, (55B) includes the merge of *não* in the specifier of Foc^{Neg} and the derivation proceeds as follows. The negative spine contains N3, N2 and N1, but since the derivation involves only Foc^0 , the N1 and N2 uninterpretable features will not be projected/checked but deleted without checking (De Clercq 2013: 125ff), and the derivation will not crash.

²³ Notice also that it has been argued in the literature that FocP (and TopP) in the low left periphery are merged above AspP in some languages (see for example Ouwayda & Shlonsky 2016 and Jarrah & Abusalim 2021).

²⁴ To account for the difference between negation in LVN (i) and in (ii) below, I assume that in both instances Foc^{Neg} is syntactically projected as proposed by De Clercq (2013). However, in (i), negation scopes over the untensed predicate *lido* 'read', whereas in (ii) it scopes over the constituent *o jornal* 'the newspaper', a DP, an instance of constituent negation (see also footnote 27).

- (i) Tenho *não* lido o jornal.
have not read the newspaper
'I have not read the newspaper.'
- (ii) Tenho lido *não* o jornal, mas as revistas.
have read not the newspaper but the magazines
'I have read not the newspaper, but the magazines.'

As mentioned in the introduction, sentences as (i) display an innovative use of negation in BP, found in spoken language, in blogs and in social media. There are also many records in the *Corpus do Português* (Davies, 2016). The diachronic change that enabled this new form of negation is under investigation (see also Cyrino 2022, 2023).

Foc^{Neg} is merged and probes into vP . It then locates $[\text{uFoc:Neg}]$ on N3 and Agrees with it. Next, $[\text{iFoc:}]$ in Foc^{Neg} gets valued for negation and becomes $[\text{iFoc:Neg}]$. The uninterpretable feature $[\text{uFoc:Neg}]$ on N3 gets checked and deleted. Since, according to DeClercq (2013), Foc^0 also has an EPP property, the entire negative spine is pied-piped to $\text{Spec Foc}^{\text{NegP}}$. When Pol^0 gets merged at a later stage, its probe $[\text{iPol:}]$ cannot be valued with negative features, since there is no feature left on the negative spine that can value Pol^0 . The Pol -probe gets a default affirmative value, $[\text{iPol:Aff}]$.

The proposed (simplified) structure is seen in (56b) for the sentence in (56a) (=55B):²⁵

- (56) a. tenho *não* lido o jornal.
 b. $[\text{VP}_{\text{aux}} \text{tenho} [\text{FocPNeg } \textit{não} \text{Foc}^{\text{Neg}} [\text{AspP lido}][\text{vP} [\text{VP} <\textit{lido}> \text{ o jornal}]]]]]$

An anonymous reviewer asks whether intervening negation is allowed in non-periphrastic constructions. In other words, since it is assumed in this paper that in BP the lexical verb moves to a low position, is intervening negation allowed in a sentence as *eu não não li o jornal* ‘I did not not read the newspaper’?

The answer is that such construction is not available in BP, as seen in (57):

- (57) *eu não *não* li o jornal.
 I not not read the newspaper

The ungrammaticality of (57) in contrast to the grammaticality of (56) shows that BP LVN is restricted to periphrases.²⁶ Now, the question is why that should be the case.

The answer is provided by the nanosyntax analysis I presented in this paper. Recall that in sentential negation, Pol^{Neg} has sentential scope, whereas Foc^{Neg} takes scope over *untensed* predicates, as remarked above in the text (see also (47b)). Hence, even though the verb moves up to a low functional projection in (57), $\text{Foc}^{\text{Neg}} \textit{não}$ is not possible, since the predicate is *tensed*. On the other hand, BP LVN is possible as an instance of Foc^{Neg} , since, as seen in this paper, it takes scope over gerunds and participles, that is, *untensed* verbal forms.²⁷

²⁵ See also Araújo-Adriano & Cyrino (2025), for a more detailed analysis of BP periphrases.

²⁶ I should also add that intervening negation is possible in BP prospective periphrases, with *ir* ‘go’ + INFINITIVE (see Cyrino 2022), as in (i):

(i) Como eu vou *não* gostar de gordinho? Meu trabalho depende deles.
 how I go not like of fat.DIM my work depend of-them
 ‘How am I not going to like chubbies? My work depends on them.’

(<https://tnonline.uol.com.br/noticias/cotidiano/67,423263,17,07,procon-multa-academia-por-propaganda-classificada-como-gordofobica?d=1>) Accessed October 27, 2022

These cases were not addressed in this paper, as the syntax of negation over infinitives in prospective periphrases are still under more detailed research.

²⁷ The nanosyntax approach to negation assumed in this paper aims to bring a unified account for the differences and similarities between sentence negation and constituent negation (De Clercq 2013, 2020). Hence, given its properties, BP LVN is closer to constituent negation than to sentential negation. It may even be the case that this new form of negation

Interestingly, De Clercq (2017: 66, ft 18) notes that the use of low SpecFocP for negative markers is predicted if we consider that the position can also be the host of information structure elements in the low left periphery, such as new information subjects in Italian and the subject of certain clefts in French, as discussed in Belletti (2001, 2004, 2008, 2009: 242–265).

Indeed, in BP the same position can be filled with intonationally stressed (emphatic) subjects – Cyrino (2010, 2013) observes that sentences as (57) occur in BP (see also Belletti 2005 on strong pronoun doubling in Italian).²⁸

- (58) Peço para meu filho arrumar o quarto mas em seguida
ask to my son tidy the room but in sequence
eu estou *eu* fazendo do meu jeito.
I am I do.GER of-the my way
'I ask my son to tidy up his room, but right after I am (myself) doing it in my own way.'

In this section, I have shown that my proposal for BP LVN as Focus negation (Foc^{Neg}) under the nanosyntax framework can account for its properties and its syncretism with other negation markers in the language. This proposal is further supported by the fact that BP allows doubled subjects in emphatic subject constructions (58), arguably being merged in a low focus position in the language.²⁹

has arisen from a diachronic reanalysis of Deg/Class^{Neg} into Foc^{Neg}, that is, a change from negation scoping scope over predicate terms to negation scoping over untensed predicates (see Cyrino 2022, 2023). However, more detailed studies on these issues are still necessary.

²⁸ An anonymous reviewer observes that (58) is possible in European Portuguese if phrased as (i), with *estar a* + INFINITIVE.

- (i) ... mas em seguida, estou *eu* a fazer do meu jeito.
but in sequence am I P do of-the my way
'but right after that I'm doing it in my own way.'

European Portuguese is a null subject language, but, when focalized and corresponding to new/contrastive information, the subject must be overt, and subject verb inversion is required (Lobo 2013: 2006; 2332–2333). Thus, in (i), the verb moves to the left of the overt subject (Ambar 1999), and this explains the grammaticality of the sentence.

Brazilian Portuguese, however, has a different syntax. Being a non-null subject language with highly restricted subject verb inversion (Duarte & Figueiredo Silva 2016: 243–247), BP allows (58) because the non-null subject *eu* 'I' occupies the preverbal position (spec, TP) after vacating vP, and the second occurrence of the pronoun, the intonationally stressed pronoun *eu*, is merged in a Focus position in the low left periphery. See the simplified structure in (ii):

- (ii) [TP eu [T estou [Foc *eu* [Asp fazendo ...
I am I do.GER

²⁹ See also Araújo-Adriano & Cyrino (2025) for other evidence on the lack of adjacency in BP auxiliary constructions.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed a new construction in Brazilian Portuguese, whereby the negative marker *não* ‘not’, which is syncretic with other types of negation in the language, appears in a position that is not common in other Romance languages, and being intonationally stressed as a focus element, conveys a specific meaning. I investigated whether this low negation focus marker can be assimilated to other (low) negation markers in BP (*Neg2* and *Neg3*), and the result was that it cannot, given its specific properties. Then, I proceeded to propose a syntactic position for this negator, which occurs low in the structure.

First, I showed that BP LVN *não* does not conform to other negation markers that are low in the structure in Italian, Catalan and French. Given that BP LVN is necessarily intonationally stressed, conveys (pragmatic) focus and is syncretic with other negation markers in BP, I advanced a nanosyntax analysis, based on the work on syncretism for negation by De Clercq’s several papers, since that approach was able to capture the properties of BP LVN in a more principled way. I proposed that BP LVN is an instance of focus in the low left periphery of the sentence, which conveys, besides negation, an additional expressive meaning to the descriptive content of the clause.

I conclude the paper mentioning that research on the extent to which the grammaticality of BP LVN is perceived by speakers is underway, and the first results confirming its newness will trigger additional studies on the diachrony of the construction. Hence, besides describing and analyzing this new type of negation in BP, this study contributes to broadening the possibilities for the study of negation under a nanosyntactic approach.

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