

Living on the edge: On bare and non-bare NCIs across Italo-Romance

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1. Introduction

A unified landscape

- ▶ We integrate a diachronic and synchronic perspective.
- ▶ What varies historically can also vary geographically.
- ▶ We integrate dialects, local/regional spoken standard and high standard
- ▶ Data from synchrony and diachrony can be used in a unified way.

Languages investigated

- ▶ Historical varieties of standard Italian, i.e. Old Florentine and other Old Tuscan varieties (through the OVI data base)
 - ▶ Historical Italo-Romance dialects (“volgari”) (through the OVI data base)
 - ▶ Modern Italian (i.e. Italo-Romance) dialects (our own field work and ASIt data base)
 - ▶ Regional Italian: spoken standard with a geographical connotation (our own field work)
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- Questionnaire with 20 test items plus fillers
 - 10 test subjects for regional Italian
 - 10 test subjects for modern dialects

Historical varieties

Historical varieties

Livello senza titolo



Florence



Siena



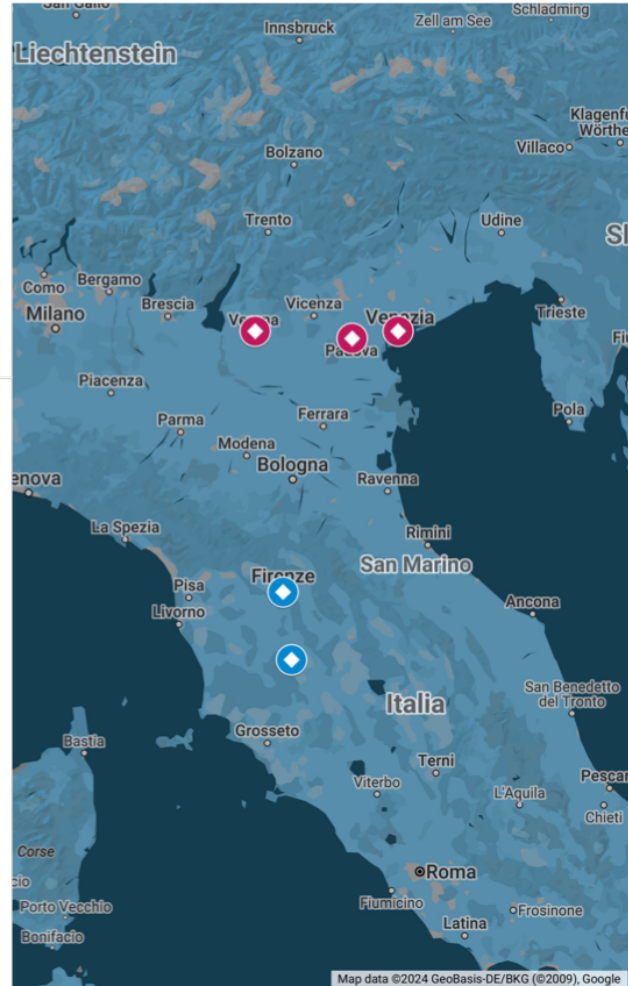
Venice



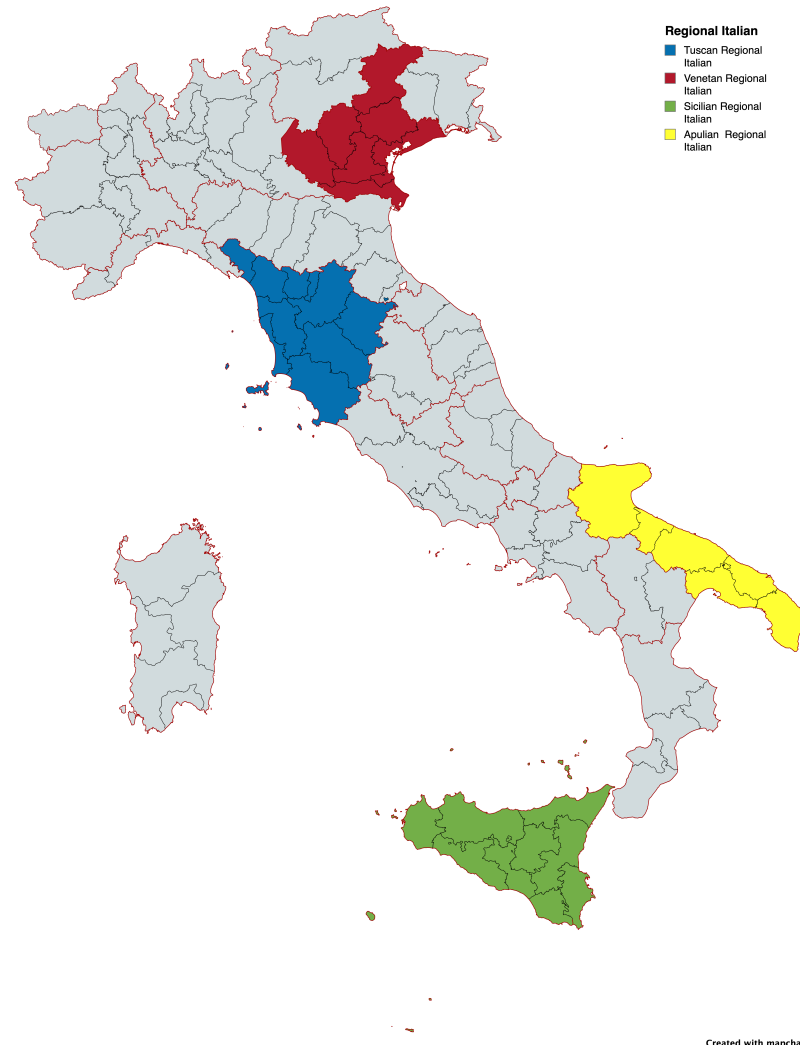
Padua



Verona



Modern varieties



2. Research question

The problem:

Italo-Romance Negative Concord Items

- ▶ Romance languages display elements that can occur in negative contexts as well as in other types of non veridical contexts, but are neither NPIs nor negative quantifiers.

- Fragment answer test:

A: Chi è partito? ‘Who left?’ (Italian)

B: Nessuno è partito ‘Nobody’

- Negative concord test:

Non è partito nessuno

not is left nobody ‘Nobody left’

NPIs usages of NCIs

- ▶ NPIs need a (c-commanding) licensor like sentential negation
- ▶ Other contexts are also reported in the literature:
- ▶ Complements of doubt verbs
- ▶ Comparative clauses
- ▶ Interrogatives
- ▶ If-clauses
- ▶ Downward entailing elements (like only)
- ▶ Languages vary according to the allowed licensor context and according to the type of NPI (hierarchy in terms of strength of the NPI)

Hierarchies

- ▶ We analyze these two variables in terms of
 - ▶ A. Licensing contexts
 - ▶ B. internal structure of the NPI/NCI
- ▶ → We provide an analysis only for the second variable, which we think is syntactic, but not for the second, which however remains empirically valid is left as food for thought.

Non veridical contexts investigated here

- ▶ Yes/no interrogative clauses:

*Hai visto **nessuno**?* ‘Have you seen anybody?’ (It.)

- ▶ If-clauses:

*Se vedi **nessuno**, dimmelo* ‘If you see anybody, tell me’

- ▶ Comparative clauses:

*È la cosa più strana che abbia detto **nessuno***
‘It is the strangest thing that anybody said’

- ▶ Free relatives:

*Chi ha fatto **niente**, lo dica* ‘Who did anything, please say that’

The domain of investigation

- ❖ We analyze the distribution of NCIs across some Italo-romance varieties crossing two variables:
 - the bare versus complex nature of the NCI, i.e. *nessuno/niente* versus *nessun X*.
 - the type of non-veridical context (see Giannakidou 1999 and subsequent works) in which the NCI occurs, i.e.
 - Interrogative clauses,
 - If-clauses,
 - Comparative structures,
 - Free relatives.

The hypothesis

- ▶ We hypothesize that the internal structure of pronominal NCIs is different from the one of complex NCIs.
- ▶ Pronominal NCIs are paired to a smaller internal structure only containing a classifier-like element of the sortal type (see Svenonius 2008) but no lexical NP projection.
- ▶ Complex NCIs contain a fully fledged nominal structure with a lexical NP and the corresponding functional projection in the IP-analogue of the DP functional structure.
- ▶ This internal difference determines a different distribution of simple and complex NCIs across the different contexts we take into account.

Previous work

- ▶ The standard analysis of QPs (see among others Baunaz (2011)):
 - a. $[_{QP} Q [_{(DP)} pro]]$
 - b. $[_{QP} Q [_{(DP)} (D) [_{NP} N]]]$
- ▶ Contrary to the standard analysis, we will argue that bare Qs do not have the same structure of quantified expressions, they are associated to a classifier-like element, as probably all pronouns are:
 - c. $[_{QP} Q [_{ClassP} THING/PERSON/PLACE/TIME/WAY]]$
- ▶ There is no lexical NP related to bare Qs.

The bare vs. complex Q dichotomy

► Old Italian (*tutto/tutto X*)

- a. seguire Idio chi à **tutto** **venduto**
follow.inf God who has everything sold
'(he can) follow God who sold all his possessions' (*Fiore* 232)
- b. à(n)no **ve(n)duto tutto** i· loro podere
have sold all the their land
'they sold all their land' (*Val di Streda* 226)

► French (*tout/tout le monde*)

- c. J'ai tout vu/%J'ai vu tout
- d. J'ai vu tout le monde/*J'ai tout le monde vu

Position of "bare" Qs in Sicilian

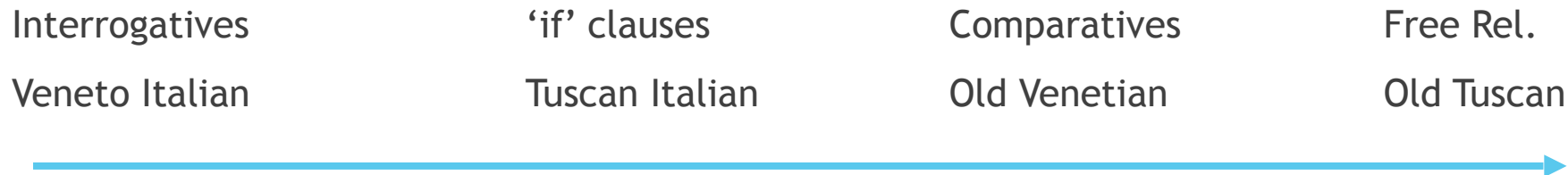
- As noticed in Garzonio and Poletto (2017), the position of the Q depends on the presence of a lexical classifier in its internal composition.

- a. *Ha* *statu* *tuttu* *fattu* *bonu.* (Sicilian, Palermo)
 has been all done well
- b. *Hannu* *statu* *fattu* *bonu* *tutti-cosi.*
 have-3PL been done well all-things
- c. **Hannu* *statu* *tutti-cosi* *fattu* *bonu.*
 have-3PL been all-things done well
 ‘Everything has been done well.’

Complex and bare NCIs

- ▶ In what follows we apply this idea to NCIs and show that they can also be split into two categories, where pronominal ones have a different internal layering that results in a different distribution.
- ▶ We surmise that this distinction is true of all quantificational items (i.e. indefinites in a broad sense), and could possibly be a new way to conceive the internal structure of all types of pronominal elements.
- ▶ Starting point: micro-variation regarding the non-veridical contexts allowing the presence of NCIs.

The implicational scale of contexts



- ▶ This distribution can be interpreted as a trend moving from weak to strong NPIs, i.e. towards a loss of non-veridical contexts or in the opposite direction as a scale depicting the acquisition of the value of a negative quantifier.
- ▶ It proceeds in a similar way to the semantic map of lexical indefinites already singled out in Haspelmath (1997), where conditional, comparative and free-choice contexts are found in this order, while interrogative is closer to negative contexts.

The implicational scale of contexts

- ▶ We assume that this micro-variation is of semantic origin and cannot be explained only in syntactic terms. What is relevant here, however, is that there is an opposition bare/complex NCI overlapping the context variation.
- ▶ One might try to implement it in terms of similarity between negation and other types of operators, the more similar they are, the easier it is for neg-words to occur in those contexts.
- ▶ In order to explain the variable contexts, one might surmise that the microvariation depends on how far in the sentence structure the NPI searches for its licenser (we know that interrogatives are lower than if-clauses and free relatives in the split CP of romance languages)

3. The data

Southern Italian varieties: NCIs only in negative contexts

- (0)
- | | | | | | | |
|----|---|-----------|--------------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| a. | ??Viristi | a nuddu, | pi' | ccasu? | | |
| | saw.2sg | to nobody | by | chance | | |
| | 'Have you seen anybody, by chance?' | | | | | |
| b. | *?Abbisami | | si | bbiri | a nuddu | 'm piazza |
| | warn=me | | if | see.2sg | to nobody | in square |
| | 'Warn me if you see someone in the square.' | | | | | |
| c. | *È | a cuasa | chiù strana | ca | rissi | nuddu |
| | is | the thing | more strange | thst | said.3sg | nobody |
| | 'It is the strangest thing that someone said.' | | | | | |
| d. | *Cu | vitti | a nuddu, | un | ddici | a virità |
| | who | saw.3sg | to nobody | Neg | says | the truth |
| | 'Who has seen somebody is not telling the truth.' | | | | | |

First step: Veneto Italian

- (1)
- a. Hai visto *nessuno* per caso?
have.2sgseen nobody for chance
'Have you seen anybody, by chance?'
-
- b. *Avvertimi se vedi *nessuno* in piazza.
warn=me if see.2sg nobody in square
'Warn me if you see someone in the square.'
- c. *È la cosa più strana che nessuno abbia detto.
is the thing more strange that nobody has said
'It is the strangest thing that someone said.'
- d. *Chi ha visto niente, non dice la verità.
who has seen nothing not says the truth
'Who has seen something is not saying the truth.'

Second step Tuscan Italian

- (2)
- a. Hai visto *nessuno* per caso?
have.2sgseen nobody for chance
'Have you seen anybody, by chance?'
- b. Avvertimi se vedi *nessuno* in piazza.
warn=me if see.2sg nobody in square
'Warn me if you see someone in the square.'
-
- c. *È la cosa più strana che nessuno abbia detto
- d. *Chi ha visto niente, non dice la verità

Third step: Old Venetian

- (3) a. Interrogative clause
Doma(n)dà **s**'el portava arma **nesuna** , dis: Sì...(*Lio Mazor*, 71)
asked if he brought weapon no said yes
- b. If clause
Et **se nìgun** domandasse de lui, vui li podé dir qu'ello sè una damisela
messenger de Yrlanda (*Tristano Veneto*, 279)
'If someone asks about him...'
- c. Comparative
la qual savea molto (...) de medisine **plui cha nìguna** damisela de
tuto lo mondo
the which knew much of medicines more than no lady of all
the world
'...who knew about medicines more than any lady in the world'
(*Tristano Veneto*, 118)

Fourth step: Old Florentine (i.e. Old Italian) and Old Tuscan

- (4)
- a. domandolo **se** egli aveva novella **niuna**
asked=him if he had news no
(*Distruzione di Troia*, 470; Old Sienese)
 - b. guardandosi intorno **se** vedesse **nessuno** cui potesse...
looking=refl around if saw nobody to whom could...
(*Fiore di rett.* 44, Old Florentine)
 - c. però che fue bello **più che neuno altro omo** che sia o sia stato
since that was nice more than no other man that is or is been
(*Prediche Genesi*, 1308, p. 54)
 - d. **chi** aveva **niente** di grano el serbava
who had nothing of wheat it= kept
'...and who had some wheat retained it.'
(*Cronaca senese*, 139; Old Sienese)

An additional factor: syntactic complexity

- (5) a. %Ha invitato nessun parente?
 has invited no relative
 ‘Has s/he invited any relative?’

Regional Italian in Veneto: *

- b. Ha invitato nessuno?
 Has s/he invited anybody?

Regional Italian in Veneto: Ok

The complexity effect

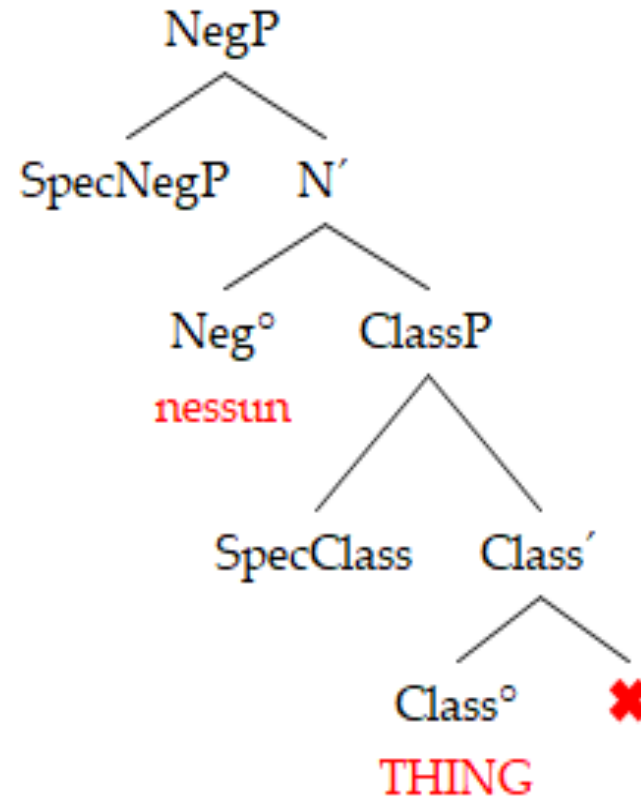
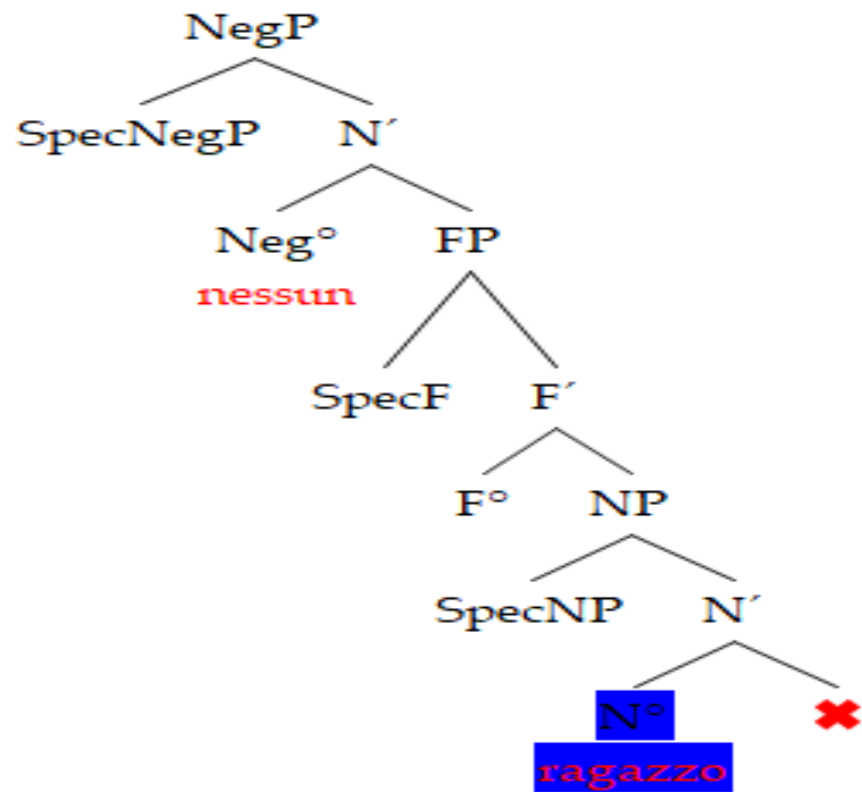
- ▶ Why are complex NCIs “more negative” in the sense that they do not occur in non-veridical contexts while simple NCIs do?
- ▶ It is rather straightforward to tie this effect to the previous cases of bare/complex quantifiers that are located in different positions in the clause, since they have a different internal structure.
- ▶ We argue that in the case of bare NCIs (which are allowed in more contexts than complex ones) the NIC is not inherently negative because it does not reach its internal edge position.

4. Discussion

The analysis

- ▶ NCI words do not have a lexical restrictor
- ▶ Their structure is not identical to the one containing a lexical noun, contrary to what generally assumed in the literature
- ▶ The structure paired to the negative determiner is smaller and contains only a classifier-like element, as we have already proposed for other types of quantifiers and for NCIs in Old Italian

Structural distinction



- ▶ Suppose that NICs can indeed be intrinsically negative (as shown by fragment answers), but negation, as any other operator requires a scope domain onto which it operates
- ▶ The classifier in some languages is too weak to be a proper domain onto which negation can operate.
- ▶ Hence, the negative operator looks outside to find one and attaches to another operator as a sort of parasitic op to get its scope domain
- ▶ This explains why negative pronouns are „less negative“ than fully fledged negative expressions with a lexical noun at their bottom.

- ▶ The amount of pruning of the classifier structure might justify the variable behavior in the different dialects/varieties.
- ▶ For instance in those varieties where the classifier is lexical, we observe cases of agreement or lack of agreement, like in Sicilian tuttucosi (with no agreement) tutticosi (with agreement)
- ▶ Investigating the amount of pruning is the next step towards understanding the variable behavior of NCIs as well as the internal structure of pronominal elements.

Further developments

- ▶ This might give us a handle to derive the other empirical finding, namely the implicational hierarchy among the contexts
- ▶ The reason of the implicational hierarchy is the height of the host-operator in the left periphery of the clause (interrogative clauses are lower than if-clauses and relatives)
- ▶ The height of the various operators in the left periphery might reflect their more simple or complex semantics
- ▶ This remains to be developed

Concluding remarks

- ▶ NCIs are a special type of indefinites which can display NPI properties.
- ▶ The microvariation they display regarding the non-veridical contexts where they can/must appear is related to their internal composition
- ▶ There is a complex/bare opposition in a way rather similar to the one found with other quantificational elements (like universal ones).
- ▶ Complex NCIs tend to be restricted to anti-veridical contexts because only the internal lexical restrictor is strong enough to be a proper domain of scope

Thank you for your attention!