

## Neg-Drop in Venetan varieties

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1. Venetan varieties do not present a uniform system of sentential negation. While in Venetian and some Southern Venetan varieties the pre-T negator (Neg1 in Zanuttini's 1997 system) represents the standard encoding of sentential negation, other Southern Venetan varieties and Western varieties display discontinuous negation (i.e. the pre-T negator plus a post-T/pre-V adverb, Neg2 in Zanuttini's 1997 terms). In some varieties of the latter type, the pre-T negator is optional. In this talk we will present and discuss new data showing that also varieties of the former type, with pre-T standard negation, can drop the pre-T negator in some contexts. We will propose that Neg-Drop is possible only if particular syntactic and semantic conditions are met, which can be analyzed in terms of Agree with the feature [Focus].

2. Venetan varieties can be seen as realizations of the separate stages of Jespersen's cycle. The varieties spoken near Venice do not typically display discontinuous negation in declarative sentences (1a) whereas speakers from Padua may optionally employ the post-T negator *miga* (1b). Interestingly, Veronese can be considered to be at the final stage of this change, showing an optional pre-T negator and the obligatory post-T *miga* (1c) (cf. Zamboni 1976 and ASIIt data).

- (1) a. No so cossa che fa Giani (Venice)  
not know what that does Gianni
- b. No so (miga) cossa che 'l fa Giani (Padua)  
not know not what that=he does Gianni
- c. (No) so mia cossa fassa 'l Giani (Verona)  
not know not what does.SUBJ the Gianni  
'I don't know what Gianni is doing'

3. In the Southern Venetan variety spoken in Lozzo Atestino (on the Euganei hills, near Padua), standard negation is encoded by the pre-T negator *non*. This variety has also an optional post-T adverb, *mia*, which encodes non-standard negation (usually, in declarative clauses, it negates a contextual assumption, considered wrong by the speaker; see Cinque 1976 on Italian *mica*, and Penello & Pescarini 2008 on Venetan):

- (2) a. Carlo \*(non) magna (mia) fruta  
Carlo not eats not fruits  
'Carlo does not eat fruits.'
- b. Oncò \*(non) xe (mia) luni  
today not is not Monday  
'Today it is not Monday.'

However, in yes/no questions and in sentences where pre-T material is right-dislocated, *mia* can be the only negative item in the sentence:

- (3) a. Vien-lo mia?  
comes=he not  
'Isn't he coming?'
- b. (Non) xe mia luni, oncò

not is not Monday today  
 ‘It is not Monday, today.’

Wh questions do not present this phenomenon:

(4) Quae \*(non) te ghe mia magnà?  
 which not you=have not eaten  
 ‘Which one haven’t you eaten?’

Notice, furthermore, that in yes/no questions, when *mia* is present, subject clitic inversion becomes optional, while it is always excluded without *mia*. From this point of view, this variety behaves very similarly to Paduan as described by Zanuttini (1997: 55ff.)

(5) a. Non vien-lo mia?  
 not comes=he not  
 b. No-l vien mia?  
 not=he comes not  
 c. \*Non vien-lo?  
 not comes=he  
 ‘Isn’t he coming?’

4. The account we will propose is based on analyses assuming that items like *mia* in varieties like Lozzo Atestino (i.e. post-T adverbs encoding non-standard negation) have an uninterpretable [uNeg] feature that must be licensed through Agree (cf. Zeijlstra 2004 and subsequent work). Additionally, *mia* also has a [Focus] feature, associated with its pragmatic distribution (Breitbarth et al. 2020). In standard declarative clauses like those in (2), Agree is possible through the presence of the pre-T *non* morpheme bearing interpretable [iNeg]. In the case of yes/no questions, *mia* is licensed by the [Focus] feature of a silent Operator contained in the specifier of the verb moved to left periphery (likely to Foc in Rizzi’s 1997 terms).

(6) a. [TP Carlo [T non magna [FP mia [vP fruta]]]]  
 [iNeg] [uNeg]  
 b. [FocP Ø [Foc Vien-lo [TP vien [FP mia [vP ]]]]]  
 [iFoc] [uFoc]

The case of clauses with right dislocation is more complex, but it could be argued that also in these cases a special silent operator can license *mia*. This analysis can also be extended to varieties like Loreo, discussed by Zanuttini (1997), where in yes/no questions containing the post-T negative adverb, the pre-T negator is different from the one found in standard negative clauses (*no* VS *ne*). Furthermore, this can be considered another example of ‘syntactic parasitism’ as discussed by Garzonio and Poletto (2015)(see also Gianollo 2018 on the relation between negation and focus in the diachronic cline of Romance negative words). Finally, the alternation exemplified by (5) suggests that these cases could be considered as the bridge contexts triggering the re-analysis of post-T items as [iNeg](cf. Zanuttini 1997 on the relation between subject clitic inversion and the [Neg] feature of the pre-T negator).

**Selected References** •Breitbarth, A., Lucas, C., & Willis, D. (2020). *The history of negation in the languages of Europe and the Mediterranean : volume II : patterns and processes* (Vol. 40). Oxford: Oxford University Press. •Cinque, G. (1976) “Mica”. *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell’Università di Padova*, 1, pp. 101-112. •Pescarini, N. P. D., & Penello, N. (2008). Osservazioni su mica in italiano e alcuni dialetti veneti. *Quaderni di lavoro ASIt*, 8, 43-56. •Zamboni, A. (1974). *Veneto* (Vol. 1). Pacini.