

## DOUBLING VS OMISSION: INSIGHTS FROM AFRIKAANS NEGATION - M.T. BIBERAUER

### INTRODUCTION

An often noted fact about Afrikaans is that it is a Negative Concord (NC) language which employs two superficially identical negators (*nie... nie*) wherever negation does not involve specially designated n-words. A further notable, but not often noted fact about Afrikaans NC is that both *nies* do not always surface. This paper therefore focuses on the alternation between double and single negation (henceforth: **doubling** and **omission**) structures in Afrikaans. Specifically, I hope to show that investigation of the circumstances under which “duplicate” negation material fails to surface facilitates two unique insights:

- (1) specific insight into the otherwise mysterious syntactic structure underlying NC structures in Afrikaans: among other things, the proposals in this paper are strictly incompatible with the assumption of head-final phrase structure; and, related to this,
- (2) more general insight into the sorts of factors that may trigger the syntactic equivalent of OCP effects, not only in Afrikaans, but in languages more generally.

### THE PHENOMENON

(1) illustrates the placement of the isomorphic negation elements, traditionally differentiated as *nie<sub>1</sub>*, the “real” (lexical) negator, and *nie<sub>2</sub>*, the “scope-marking” (functional) negation element, in a typical doubling structure.

- (1) *Ek verstaan **nie<sub>1</sub>** sy redenasie **nie<sub>2</sub>***

I understand not his reasoning NEG (= “I don’t understand his reasoning”)

As (2–3) show, *nie<sub>2</sub>* must be omitted under certain circumstances, circumstances which clearly do not obtain in the embedded counterparts of the relevant sentences (cf. (4)):

- (2) *Ek verstaan **nie** (\**nie*)*

I understand not (= “I don’t understand”)

- (3) *Ek verstaan dit **nie** (\**nie*)*

I understand it not (= “I don’t understand it”)

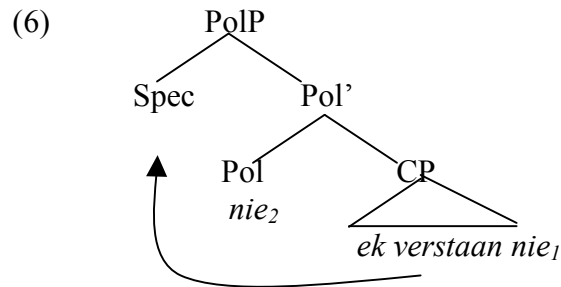
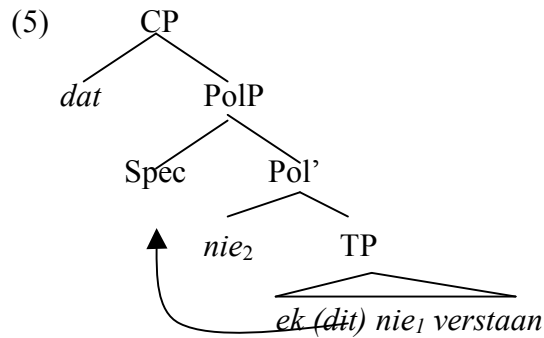
- (4) *Ek verseker jou dat ek (dit) **nie** verstaan **nie***

I assure you that I (it) not understand NEG (= “I assure you that I don’t understand (it)”)

Interpretive considerations (single *nie*-containing sentences express negation) and application of Oosthuizen’s *nie*-differentiation tests (e.g. modification and emphatic stress) clearly show that the single *nie* in (2–3) is lexical *nie<sub>1</sub>*. What is required, therefore, is an account of why functional *nie<sub>2</sub>* is absent in these structures, particularly since its presence is mandatory in their embedded counterparts (cf. (4)) and in embedded clauses more generally.

### THE PROPOSAL

Despite superficial appearances to the contrary, Afrikaans negation structures consistently involve 2 negators; under certain circumstances, however, the presence of these two elements is obscured. Specifically, I propose that functional *nie<sub>2</sub>* is subject to PF deletion whenever it is sent to Spellout in a position (a) immediately adjacent to *nie<sub>1</sub>* and (b) in the same prosodic phrase ( $\varphi$ ) as *nie<sub>1</sub>*. To see how this works, consider (5) and (6) which represent simplified versions of the tree-structures associated with (4) and (2) respectively:



Following Oosthuizen (1998), I analyse *nie<sub>2</sub>* as the overt realization of a Polarity head (Pol) which appears to be associated with the left periphery in the various unrelated languages in which it is lexicalized (cf. i.a. Laka 1990 for discussion of Basque and Holmberg 2001 on Finnish). Pol is merged so that it c-commands the entire XP that is negated (i.e. CP in main clauses, TP in embedded clauses, DP in constituent negations, etc.) and is associated with an EPP-feature that requires movement of the negated category into its specifier. In (4=5), this entails movement of the embedded TP *ek (dit) **nie<sub>1</sub>** verstaan*, with the result that *nie<sub>1</sub>* and *nie<sub>2</sub>* will not end up adjacent to one another once TP-fronting to Spec-PolP has taken place. Both *nies* are therefore spelled out. In (2=6) by contrast, V-to-C movement leaves *nie<sub>1</sub>* as the final, ultimately spelled out element in the CP which undergoes raising to Spec-PolP; *nie<sub>1</sub>* and *nie<sub>2</sub>* therefore end up adjacent to one another, a situation which, I propose, sets up the possibility of *nie<sub>2</sub>*-deletion at PF (see below). Assuming that *nie<sub>1</sub>/nie<sub>2</sub>* adjacency systematically gives rise to deletion, we would expect *nie*-deletion also to take place in matrix scrambling contexts, and this expectation is borne out (cf. *Ek verstaan sy redenasie **nie***, the scrambling counterpart of (1) and also pronominal-containing (2) which instantiates an obligatory scrambling context). Further confirmation of the proposal that CP/TP-final occurrence of *nie<sub>1</sub>* conditions *nie<sub>2</sub>* deletion is provided by contrasts observed in the adverbial domain. Consider (7–8) in this connection:

(7) *Ek verstaan eerlikwaar /waarskynlik/moontlik **nie***  
I understand honestly/probably/possibly not

(8) *Ek verstaan **nie** altyd/maklik/gou **nie***  
I understand not always/easily/quickly NEG

As (7) shows, adverbs assumed to be merged higher than the VP-domain in which *nie<sub>1</sub>* is merged (cf. Cinque 1999) consistently surface in single *nie*-containing structures wherever V-movement has taken place and the VP lacks post-*nie<sub>1</sub>* material. VP-adverbs obligatorily exhibit the opposite behaviour in these contexts (cf. (8)).

As it is well known that phonologically identical elements are not barred from surfacing in adjacent positions (cf. *He rushed in in a hurry*; and, even more strikingly in the present context, *Ek sien (**nie**) die tweede '**nie**' **nie*** = “I see (not) the second ‘nie’ not”, i.e. “I don’t see the second ‘nie’”), the question that remains is what conditions *nie<sub>2</sub>*-deletion? The crucial consideration, I argue, is whether the adjacent identical elements are to be spelled out in the same  $\phi$  or not. Using Selkirk’s (1995) prosodic mapping algorithm in terms of which the left/right edge of every maximal projection must align with the corresponding left/right edge of a  $\phi$ , I show that identical neighbours are only spelled out where they do not belong to the same  $\phi$ . As the left edges of maximal projections and  $\phi$ s must align in head-final Germanic languages, it is clear that this condition fails to be met wherever *nie<sub>1</sub>* and *nie<sub>2</sub>* are sent to Spellout in adjacent positions (cf. (6)).

I argue that the same considerations come into play in the context of an adposition-related doubling vs omission phenomenon in spoken and dialectal Afrikaans – cf. *Ek loop (in) die huis in* – ‘I walk (in) the house in’, i.e. “I walk into the house”). The Afrikaans facts therefore suggest that (at least some) “syntactic” OCP effects can be understood as the consequence of a syntactically blind PF operation which exclusively relies on prosodic phrasing to determine whether adjacent identical material may be spelled out or not. If this is correct, “syntactic” haplology in the context of alternating doubling and omission structures may emerge as a useful diagnostic to establish the structural make-up of otherwise opaque/ambiguous structures.