



SEMASIOLOGICAL CYCLICITY IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE NEGATIVE COORDINATING CONJUNCTION FROM LATIN TO MODERN FRENCH

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The Role of Pragmatics in Cyclic Language Change

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Structure of the presentation

- Negative systems
 - Double Negation vs Negative-Concord languages
 - Strong vs weak negative polarity contexts
 - Clause negation in Latin vs French
- The negative coordinating conjunction from Latin to Modern French
 - Paths, motivations, and mechanisms of change
- Conclusion: a semasiological morphosyntactic cycle

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Basic typology of negative systems (1)

- Double Negation (DN) languages: e.g. Classical Latin, Standard English
 - If two linguistic items can each express negation on their own, they will cancel one another out when appearing in the same clause
 - = Negative indefinites
 - *Nihil* *videt*
 - NegIndefNeutAccSg see-3psPresInd
 - ‘S/he sees *nothing*.’
 - *Nemo* *videt*
 - NegIndefMascNomSg see-3psPresInd
 - ‘*No-one* sees.’
 - *Nemo nihil videt*
 - ‘*No-one* sees *nothing*.’ > ‘Everybody sees something’

Basic typology of negative systems (2)

- Negative Concord (NC) languages: e.g. Vulgar Latin, French
 - Items which each express negation on their own can be combined within a clause to express only a single negation
 - = Negative Concord Items (NCIs, Breitbarth et al. 2020)
 - *Il* (ne) voit *rien*
 - SubjCIMasc NegAgr see-3psPresInd NCINon-Hum
 - ‘He sees nothing.’
 - *Personne* (ne) voit
 - NCIHum NegAgr see-3psPresInd
 - ‘**No-one** sees.’
 - *Personne* (ne) voit *rien*.
 - ‘**No-one** sees anything.’

Strong vs weak negative polarity contexts

- Strong negative polarity (NP) contexts: the clause contains a negator
- Weak NP contexts:
 - subordinate clause governed by a negated clause or by the preposition 'without'; conditionals; interrogatives; comparatives; certain temporal clauses; etc.
- DN languages
 - Typically have a separate set of negative polarity items (NPIs) representing different types of clause constituents
 - Used in both strong and weak NP contexts
 - I didn't see **anyone anywhere**
 - **If anybody** calls, tell them I'm out
- NC languages
 - Some or all NCIs will typically be able to express non-negative meanings in (a subset of) weak NP contexts
 - *Il est mort **sans que rien** ait été fait pour l'aider.*
 - 'He died **without anything** being done to help him.'
 - *A-t-on **jamaïs** vu ça ?*
 - 'Did you ever see **anything** like that?'

The negative conjunction from Latin to Modern French

- [Antoine 1962, Badiou-Monferran 2004, Buridant 2000, Foulet 1970, Gianollo 2016, Martin & Wilmet 1980; Orlandini & Poccetti 2007]
- Latin NEC/NEQUE ('neither'/'nor'/'and not')
- > Medieval French *ne* (through phonological attrition)
 - NB! Formally identical to the then standard preverbal clause negator *ne* (< Lat. NON)
- > Modern French *ni* (sometimes written *ny* until Classical French)
 - Possibly: *ne* + *iceluy* ('this') or *ne+il* ('he') (Pope 1934, Badiou-Monferran 2020)
 - More plausible alternative: simple phonological change, due to raising/fronting in certain phonological contexts
 - Attested in North(-East)ern French dialects around 1200, and sporadically elsewhere from the 14th c.
 - ja n'i fieres tu home **ni** autres ti (Aucassin, p8, end 12th c., Picard)
 - 'don't (you) strike any man **nor** others you'
 - Starts gaining frequency in the 15th c.

Latin NEQUE/NEC

- Classical Latin NEC/NEQUE can negate a clause on its own
- Only occurs in strong NP contexts
- Typically used mono- or bisyndetically to connect two negative clauses
 - Logical form: $\sim p$ & $\sim q$
 - *Caput dolet neque audio nec oculis prospicio satis* (Plaut. Amph. 1059, 3rd-2nd c. BCE)
 - ‘My head hurts, I can neither hear nor see very well with my eyes’
 - *quae mei testes non dicunt, quia non viderunt nec sciunt* (Cic. Tul. 10.24, 1st c. BCE)
 - ‘which my witnesses do not state, because they didn’t see them nor do they know of them.’
- Occasionally used to connect a positive and a negative clause
 - Logical form: p & $\sim q$
 - *Ex his omnibus longe sunt humanissimi qui Cantium incolunt, quae regio est maritima omnis, neque multum a Gallica differunt consuetudine.* (Caes. Gal. 5.14, 1st c. BCE)
 - ‘Of all the Britons, the inhabitants of Kent, an entirely maritime district, are by far the most civilized, and do not differ much from the Gallic way of life.’

French *ne/ni*

- Medieval French/Modern written French *ne/ni* doesn't normally negate a clause on its own, but must be accompanied by the preverbal clause negator *ne*
- Typically used mono- or bisyndetically to connect two negative clauses
- Logical form: $\sim p$ & $\sim q$
 - *Ne* eschipse *ne* esturman de son droit cors *nen* ert certain ; (Enéas, 205, 1155)
 - 'Neither the captain nor the pilot were [Ø] certain of the right direction;'
 - *Jo nen* ai ost qui bataille li dunne, / *Ne n'*ai tel gent ki la sue derumpet (Roland 18-19, c. 1060)
 - 'I don't have an army that can give him battle, nor do I [Ø] have men who can break his.'
 - *Je n'*aime *ni* le vin blanc *ni* le vin rouge.
 - 'I [Ø] like neither white wine nor red wine.'
 - *Je n'*aime pas le vin blanc, *ni* le vin rouge, d'ailleurs.
 - 'I don't like white wine, nor red wine, for that matter.'

Modern French *ni*

- Only occurs in strong NP contexts
 - *N'a-t-il ni bu ni mange ?*
 - 'Has[Ø] he had **neither** food **nor** drink?/Hasn't he had **any** food or drink?'
 - **A-t-il ni bu ni mange ?*
 - 'Has he had **any** food **or** drink?'
- But can combine with other NCIs to yield a single-negation interpretation
 - *Rien ni personne ne m'empêchera de faire ceci !*
 - 'Nothing **and** nobody will [Ø] prevent me from doing this!'
- Like other NCIs, it's incompatible with the postverbal standard clause negator on an NC interpretation
 - ?*Pierre n'a pas ni bu ni mangé.* [only metalinguistic interpretation]
 - 'Pierre hasn't had **neither** food **nor** drink.'
 - = Pierre has had food and/or drink
- Cannot be used to connect a negative clause with a preceding positive one (= *p & ~q)
 - **Pierre est riche ni il n'est pas marié.*
 - *Pierre est riche et il n'est pas marié.*
 - 'Pierre is rich **and** he's **not** married.'

Diachronic evolution (1)

- Data: *Base de français médiéval/Frantext*
 - Sampling: [pre-12th c.: 4 texts] [1100-1150: 8 texts] [1150-1200: 5 texts] [13th-16th c.: 5 texts/cent.] [17th-20th c.: 6-7 texts/cent.]
- The conjunction *ne* in strong negative-polarity contexts is attested from the earliest French text: *Serments de Strasbourg* (843) onwards
 - *Si Lodhuvigs sacrament, que son fradre Karlo jurat, conservat, et Karlus, meos sendra, de suo part non los tanit, si jo returnar non l'int pois, ne jo ne neuls cui eo returnar int pois, in nulla aiudha contra Lodhuuig nun li ju er.*
 - ‘If Louis keeps the oath that he has sworn to his brother Charles, and Charles, my lord, on the other hand breaks it, and if I cannot dissuade him from it — neither I nor anyone that I can dissuade from it — then I shall not help him in any way against Louis.’

Diachronic evolution (2)

- Weak negative-polarity uses are attested from the mid-11th c. onwards
 - The relative frequency of weak NP uses starts to drop in 16th c.
 - All but disappear in the course of the 18th c., with no further attestations from the 19th c. onwards in my data
 - The overall frequency of *ne* also drops gradually

Century	Total <i>ne/ny/ni</i>	Weak neg-pol uses
11 th c.	30	1 (3.7%)
1 st half 12 th c.	386	29 (7.5%)
2 nd half 12 th c.	842	110 (13%)
13 th c.	1286	141 (11%)
14 th c.	1155	162 (14%)
15 th c.	365	55 (15%)
16 th c.	1115	75 (6.7%)
17 th c.	269	15 (5.6%)
18 th c.	193	3 (1.6%)
19 th c.	267	0 (0%)

Medieval French *ne* in weak negative polarity contexts (1)

- Subordinate clauses following a negative(ly oriented) main clause
 - *Unches ne fud ami Qui al busuign failli Dum il poüst aider Ne de ren conseiller.* (Comput, 170, 1113-1119)
 - ‘There was **never** a friend who failed when there was a need to help **or** advise’
 - “*Ja mar crerez bricun, Ne mei ne altre, se de vostre prod nun !* (Roland, 221, c. 1100)
 - ‘It’ll certainly be **to your misfortune** to believe a madman, **whether** myself **or** someone else, who doesn’t speak to your advantage.”
- Comparatives of inequality
 - ...*car plus blanche ert que nois ne glace ;* (Enéas, 3994, 1155)
 - ‘...for she was **whiter than** snow **or** ice;’
- Conditionals
 - *Sel pois trover a port ne a passage, Liverrai lui une mortel bataille* (Roland, 657, c. 1100)
 - ‘**if** I can find him in a pass **or** in a gorge, I’ll wage a deadly battle against him’

Medieval French *ne* in weak negative polarity contexts (2)

- Direct and indirect Y/N interrogatives
 - *Quidez vus dunc k'il surrexist, ne qu'il vus puisse garantir ?* (Gormont, 192, c. 1130)
 - 'So do you think that he was resurrected **and** that he can protect you?'
 - *si se merveillerent dont il pot avoir si bele gent ne si bele chevalerie* (Morée, 257, 1320-24)
 - 'and they **wondered** where he could have got such fine troops **and** such fine knights'
- Concessives (often formed with antonymical expressions)
 - *...cum fus unkes si os Que me saisis, ne a dreit ne a tort ?* (Roland, 2293, c. 1100)
 - '...how did you ever dare to seize me, be it **rightly or wrongly**?'
- Temporal clauses
 - *...j'en puis porter tout ce que j'i ai, ainçois qu'il en porte riens ne qu'il i mete le pié.* (Beaumanoir, p. 167, c. 1300)
 - '...I can take all I've got there, **before** he takes any of it **or** sets foot there.'
- Relative clauses following a non-negative (typically indefinite, virtual, or superlative) antecedent
 - *Par dehors ches columbes si estoient pourtraites et escrites par prophetie toutes les aventures et toutes les conquestes qui sont avenues en Coustantinoble, ne qui avenir i devoient.* (Clari, p. 89, after 1205)
 - 'On the outside of these columns were represented and written by prophesy all the events and all the conquests **that** have taken place in Constantinoble, **or which** were going to take place there.'

Bridging context: strong > weak NP

p & ¬q

Latin

- *satis scire, origini Romanae et deos adfuisse et non defuturam uirtutem;* (Livy, Ab urbe condita 1.9.4, 1st c. BCE)
- ‘they were well assured that Rome's origin had been blessed with the favour of Heaven, **and** that worth would **not** be lacking;
- *Ex his omnibus longe sunt humanissimi qui Cantium incolunt, quae regio est maritima omnis, neque multum a Gallica differunt consuetudine.* (Caes. Gal. 5.14, 1st c. BCE)
- ‘Of all the Britons, the inhabitants of Kent, an entirely maritime district, are by far the most civilized, **and** do **not** differ much from the Gallic way of life.’
 - NB! *Neque* = *ne+que* (‘not’ + ‘and’)

Medieval French

- *Anaz en es et non es ci,* (Passion, 102, c. 1000)
- ‘He has gone **and** is **not** here,’
- *En Rencesval irai Rollant ocire, Ne Oliver n’en porterat la vie.* (Roland, 964, c. 1100)
- ‘I’ll go to Roncevaux to kill Roland, **and** Olivier will **not** save his life.’
 - dissimilation

Other similar developments in Medieval French

- Ingham 2011, Labelle & Espinal 2014, Hansen & Molinelli Fc
- A number of NCIs that etymologically incorporate a morphological negative marker similarly acquire weak negative polarity uses
 - *Nul* (< NULLUS ‘no[ne]/nobody’), *nesun* (< NE IPSE ‘self’ + UNUM ‘one’), *negun* (< NEC + UNUS) ‘no[ne]/nobody’
 - *Virun en vunt .xl. dis / Ainz que en nul port se seient mis*, (stbrend, early 12th c., v632)
 - ‘They go back and forth for 40 days before finding their way into **any** port,’
 - *Nient* (< NE GENTE[M] ‘people’) ‘nothing/anything’
 - *Se il voz weult de noient encuser, ...* (*amiamil*, c. 1200, v720)
 - ‘If he wants to accuse you of **anything**, ...’
- One even acquires straightforward positive uses
 - *Neïs* (‘[not] even’ < NE IPSE)
 - *Ne portez rien od vus d’ici, / Neïs un punt de cest cunrei*, (stbrend, early 12th c., v331)
 - ‘Don’t take anything with you from here, **not even** any of this food’
 - *Femmes fist ocire e enfanz, / Neïs les petiz alaitanz* ; (*brut2*, c. 1155, v14422)
 - ‘He had women and children killed, **even** babes at the breast ;’

Weak > strong NP (1)

- 85-90% of Medieval French uses of *ne* occur in strong NP contexts, and it does very occasionally negate a clause on its own
 - *Revenu sui d'enfer, le doleros pais, Maint en ai fors mis qui erent en eissil, Ne cil qui la charunt arunt socors par mi*, (Juise, 364, 2nd half of 12th c.)
 - ‘I have come back from hell, the sorrowful place, Many have I put out who were destroyed, **And** those who fall down there will **not** get my help,’
- > can easily be gradually reassociated with strong NP contexts
 - Possible connection with Jespersen’s Cycle: as preverbal *ne* weakens and increasingly needs to be accompanied by a second negative element in order to express standard negation, the inference that the conjunction *ne* is fully negative may gradually come to be perceived as an invited one in most contexts (cf. Traugott & Dasher 2002)

Weak > strong NP (2)

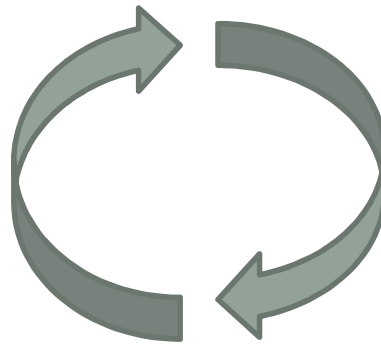
- By the late 16th c., the use of *ne/ny* in weak NP contexts is confined to:
- Subordinate clauses following a negative(ly oriented) main clause
 - Fit elle pas encore ce miracle en Cio, qu'il s'y passa sept cens ans, **sans** memoire que femme **ny** fille y eust fait faute à son honneur ? (Montaigne, 115, 1592)
 - 'Did it not also perform this miracle in Cio that seven hundred years passed **without** any recollection of a woman **or** a girl having neglected her honor?'
 - ...il est **hors de créance** que l'un **ny** l'autre se puisse sauver (Montaigne, 558, 1592)
 - '...it's **outside the credible** that one **or** the other could save himself'
- Negatively oriented rhetorical questions
 - Car, en la Metempsicose de Pythagoras et changement d'habitation qu'il imaginoit aux ames, pensons-nous que le lyon, dans lequel est l'ame de Caesar, espouse les passions qui touchoient Caesar, **ny** que ce soit luy ? (Montaigne, 519, 1592)
 - 'For, in Pythagoras' Metempsychosis and the reincarnation of souls that he imagined, do we think that the lion, which has Caesar's soul, espouses Caesar's passions, **or** that it is him?'
- Comparatives of superiority
 - Adrianus Turnebus sçavoit **plus** et sçavoit **mieux** ce qu'il sçavoit, **que** l'homme qui fut de son siècle, **ny** loing au-delà. (Montaigne, 661, 1592)
 - 'Adrianus Turnebus knew **more** and knew what he knew **better than** any other man of his century, and far beyond.'

Summary (1a)

Stages of development: semantic cycle

Stage 3. Modern
French: Strong negative
contexts only + scalar
focus particle

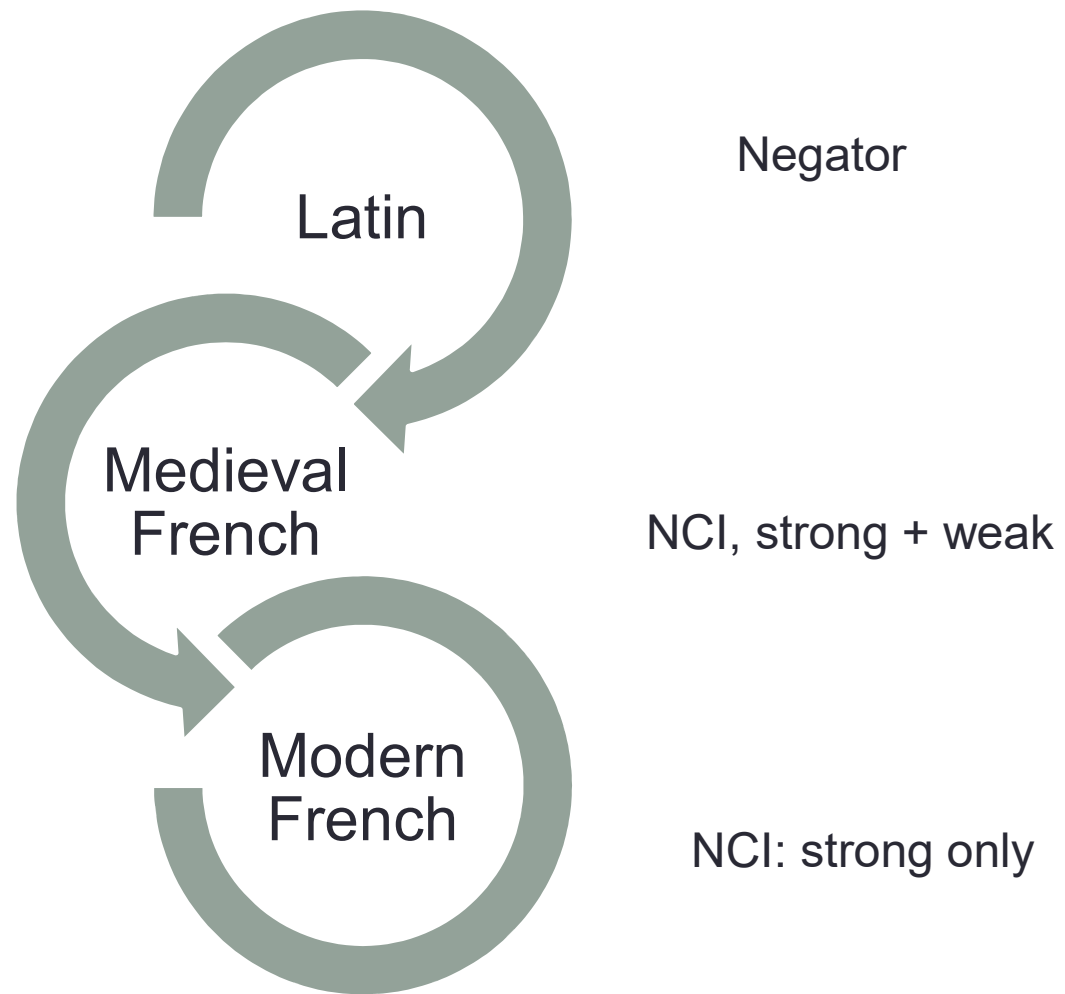
Stage 1. Latin: Strong
negative contexts only +
scalar focus particle



Stage 2. Medieval and
Renaissance French: Strong
and weak negative polarity
contexts – no scalar focus
particle use

Summary (1b)

Stages of development: syntactic spiral



Summary (2)

Features of this change

- Bi-directional
- Plausible bridging contexts can be found in either direction
- Analogy with other French NCIs, a number of which have completed broadly similar trajectories, is a possible motivating factor
 - E.g. *nul* ('no[ne]/nobody'), *jamais* ('never'), *plus* ('no more') (Stages 1-3, Ingham 2011, Hansen 2012, 2014), *nient* ('nothing'), *negun*, *nesun* ('nobody'), *néis* ('[not] even') (Stages 1+2 only, Labelle & Espinal 2014, Hansen & Molinelli Fc)

How to classify this change?

- Grammaticalization?
 - Haspelmath 1997: indefinites grammaticalize unidirectionally from positive polarity/polarity-neutral > weak negative polarity > strong negative polarity
 - Latin *NEC* > Medieval French *ne*: degrammaticalization
 - Medieval French *ne* > Modern French *ni*: regrammaticalization
 - But: unclear in what sense weak negative polarity uses could meaningfully be said to be any less grammatical than strong negative polarity uses
 - A number of French NCIs have been shown to go against Haspelmath's generalization (Hansen 2012, 2014; Hansen & Molinelli Subm.; Ingham 2011; Labelle & Espinal 2014)
 - Hoeksema 1998: indefinites can move back and forth between strong and weak negative polarity, but not from negative polarity to positive polarity (but see Labelle & Espinal 2014/Hansen & Molinelli *Fc on Old French ne/s*)
 - Jäger 2010: indefinites are subject to a diachronic "random walk" between positive and negative polarity
- Reanalysis
 - Hansen 2021: Change to the perceived contribution that an existing construction makes to the interpretation of utterances of which it forms a part, which may or may not entail changes at the level of syntactic behavior and/or part-of-speech categorization of the construction (cf. Blinkenberg 1950; Langacker 1977)
 - NB! The change from Stage 2 to Stage 3 is gradual: reanalysis can take the form of micro-steps (Traugott & Trousdale 2013)
- Cyclic change
 - Hansen 2020: Semasiological cyclicity
 - What is etymologically the same item may undergo diachronic change, only to subsequently return to a state that's very similar to its starting point (from which point the first type of change may be repeated)
 - Cases of semasiological cyclicity have previously only been adduced with respect to pragmatic markers

Thanks for your attention!

Questions? Comments?

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