

Ellipsis and negative fragments answers

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OUTLINE OF THE TALK

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2. The basic data
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5. The analysis: fragment answers
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1 INTRODUCTION

- Some southern dialects of Dutch feature fragments answers of the type in (1)B:

(1) A: Wie heeft’em gezien? - B: Niemand nie.
who has.he seen no-one not
“Who did he see?” – “No-one.” [Asse Dutch]

→ **negative concord** reading: 2 negative elements (*niemand* ‘no-one’ and *nie* ‘not’), but only 1 negative meaning

- Merchant (2004): fragment answers involve movement of the fragment to the specifier of a clause-peripheral node, followed by ellipsis of TP

→ **Main claim:** (1) is derived from (2) in two steps:

(2) B: Hij heeft niemand nie gezien.
he has no-one not seen
“He didn’t see anyone.” [Asse Dutch]

Step 1: Fronting of *niemand nie*

(3) [Hij heeft niemand nie gezien]
he has no-one not seen
→ [Niemand nie [TP hij heeft t_{niemand nie} gezien]]
no-one not he has seen

Step 2: Ellipsis of TP

(4) [Niemand nie [~~TP hij heeft gezien~~]]

→ prerequisite for this analysis: *niemand nie* has to form one single constituent

2 THE BASIC DATA

- “n-word + *nie*”: not only as fragment answer; also IP-internally and sentence-initially:

(5) a. Hij heeft niemand nie gezien.
he has no-one not seen
“He didn’t see anyone.”
b. Niemand nie heeft’em gezien.
no-one not has.he seen
“He hasn’t seen anyone.” [Asse Dutch]

- The same pattern occurs with other n-words, such as the negative adverbs *nergens* ‘nowhere’ and *nooit* ‘never’:

(6) a. Ik ben nergens nie geweest.
I am nowhere not been
“I haven’t been anywhere.”
b. Nergens nie ben ik geweest.

nowhere not am I been
“I haven’t been anywhere.”

- c. A: Waar zijde geweest? - B: Nergens nie.
where are.you been nowhere not
“Where have you been?” – “Nowhere.” [Asse Dutch]

- (7) a. Hij gaat nooit nie naar ’t school.
he goes never not to the school
“He never goes to school.”
b. Nooit nie gaat’em naar ’t school.
never not goes.he to the school
“He never goes to school.”
c. A: Wanneer gaat’em naar ’tschool? - B: Nooit nie.
when goes.he to the.school never not
“When does he go to school?” – “Never.” [Asse Dutch]

3 BACKGROUND: NEGATIVE CONCORD

- Giannakidou (2000:458):
Negative Concord (NC) = “situations where negation is interpreted just once although it seems to be expressed more than once in the clause.”

- Two varieties of NC:

① Negative concord proper: obligatory negative marker (NM) plus an n-word

- (8) a. Balázs *(**nem**) látott **semmit**.
Balázs not saw.3sg n-thing
“Balázs didn’t see anything.”
*“Balázs didn’t see nothing.”
b. **Senki** *(**nem**) jött el
no-one not came PERF
“No-one came along.”
c. Balázs *(**nem**) beszélt **senkivel semmiről**
Balázs not spoke no-one nothing
“Balázs didn’t talk about anything with anyone.” [Hungarian]

② Negative spread: co-occurrence of two or more n-words without NM

- (9) a. **Nadie** (* **no**) le ha dado **nada a nadie**
no-one not cl has given nothing to no-one
“No-one has given anything to anyone.”
b. **NADA** (***no**) le ha dado Juan **a nadie**.
no-thing not cl has given Juan to no-one
“Juan has not given anything to anyone.” [Spanish: L. Vicente, p.c.]

4 PREREQUISITE FOR THE ANALYSIS: “N-WORD + NIE” = 1 CONSTITUENT

⇒ Main claim: “n-word + *nie*” = 1 constituent

Overview

- 4.1 Supporting evidence
 - 4.1.1 Verb second
 - 4.1.2 Coordination
 - 4.1.3 Complement of extraposed PPs
 - 4.1.4 Position to the left of DP arguments
 - 4.1.5 Co-occurrence with indefinite DP arguments
- 4.2 The syntactic structure of *niemand nie*

4.1 Supporting evidence

4.1.1 Verb second

- Dutch = verb second language → finite verb: always sits in the second position in declarative sentences, with exactly 1 constituent preceding it.

- (10) a. Ik heb hem gisteren gezien.
I have him yesterday seen
“I saw him yesterday.”
- b. Gisteren heb ik hem gezien.
yesterday have I him seen
“I saw him yesterday.”
- c. *Gisteren ik heb hem gezien.
yesterday I have him seen
- d. *Ik gisteren heb hem gezien.
I yesterday have him seen [Dutch]

- “n-word + *nie*” can precede the finite verb → 1 constituent

- (11) a. **Niemand nie** heb ik gisteren gezien.
no-one not have I yesterday seen
“I didn’t see anyone yesterday.”
- b. **Nooit nie** zou ik da doen.
never not would I that do
“I would never do that!” [Asse Dutch]

- Moreover, “n-word + *nie*” can be subject to long distance movement.

- (12) a. Hij zei dat’em **niemand nie** gezien had
he said that.he no-one not seen had
“He said that he hadn’t seen anyone.”
- b. **Niemand nie** zei’em dat’em ^{t_{niemand nie}} gezien had.
no-one not said.he that.he seen had
“He said that he hadn’t seen anyone.” [Asse Dutch]

4.1.2 Coordination

- Two sequences of “n-word + *nie*” can be coordinated.

- (13) a. Hij heeft mij **nooit nie of nergens nie** geholpen.
he has me never not or nowhere not helped
“He didn’t ever help me anywhere.”
- b. **Nooit nie of nergens nie** heeft hij mij geholpen.
never not or nowhere not has he me helped
“He didn’t ever help me anywhere.” [Asse Dutch]

→ Coordination: only between (like) constituents → “n-word + *nie*” = 1 constituent

4.1.3 Complement of extraposed PPs

- *Nie* cannot by itself occur in extraposed position (cf. (14)a), but when a PP argument containing *niemand* ‘no-one’ is extraposed, *nie* is extraposed with it (cf. (14)b).

- (14) a. *Hij zou da voor niemand doen nie.
he would that for no-one do not
b. Vroeger deed'em da nog voor zijn vrienden, maar nu zou'em
previously did.he that still for his friends but now would.he
da doen voor niemand nie.
that do for no-one not
"He used to do that for his friends, but now he wouldn't do it for
anyone." [Asse Dutch]

→ *nie* must be part of the DP complement of the preposition

4.1.4 Position to the left of DP arguments

- Haegeman (1995:117): the sentence negator *nie* cannot easily occur to the left of DP arguments in Dutch in a non-contrastive reading (cf. (15))

- (15) a. Ik denk dat hij de auto niet gekocht heeft.
I think that he the car not bought has
"I think that he didn't buy the car."
b. *? Ik denk dat hij niet de auto gekocht heeft.
I think that he not the car bought has [Dutch]

- "n-word + *nie*" can precede a DP argument (cf. (16)).

- (16) Ik denk dat niemand nie den auto gekocht heeft.
I think that no-one not the car bought has
"I think that no-one has bought the car." [Asse Dutch]

→ *nie* is part of the DP containing the n-word, and not a sentence negator

4.1.5 Co-occurrence with indefinite DP arguments

- When a sentence contains a sentence negator *nie* 'not' and an indefinite DP argument, *nie* fuses with the indefinite article *nen* 'a' of the DP, forming *geen* 'no'.

- (17) a. *Ik denk dat'em nie nen boek heeft gelezen.
I think that.he not a book has read
b. Ik denk dat'em geen boek heeft gelezen.
I think that.he no book has read
"I think that he didn't read a book." [Asse Dutch]

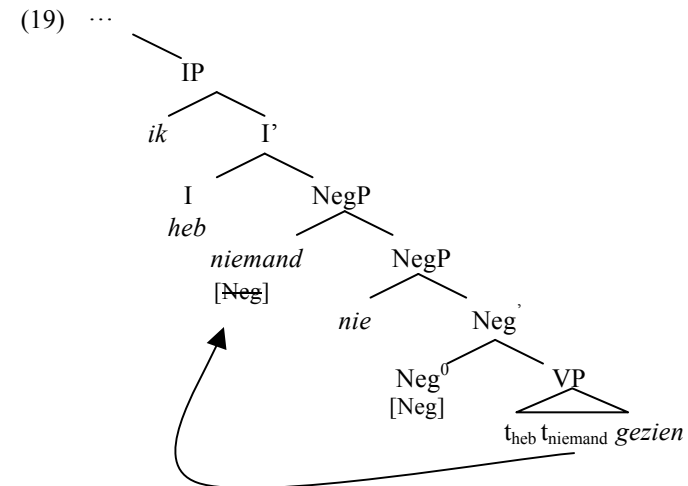
- *Nie* in the sequence "n-word + *nie*" does *not* obligatorily incorporate into the indefinite article. ↪ see also section 6.2 on page 7

- (18) Ik denk da niemand nie nen boek heeft gelezen.
I think that no-one not a book has read
"I think that no-one has read a book." [Asse Dutch]

→ *nie* in (18) is not a sentence negator, but is part of the DP containing *niemand*.

4.2 The syntactic structure of *niemand nie*

- Haegeman's (1995) analysis of *k'ee niemand nie gezien* 'I have no-one not seen' in Lapscheure Dutch:



→ **step 1:** n-words move to [spec, NegP] to check a Neg-feature
step 2: n-words and *nie* undergo Neg-absorption (parallel to Wh-absorption)

- Haegeman's account does not carry over to Asse Dutch:

① the n-word and *nie* do not form a constituent ⇔ the data from Asse Dutch discussed in 4.1

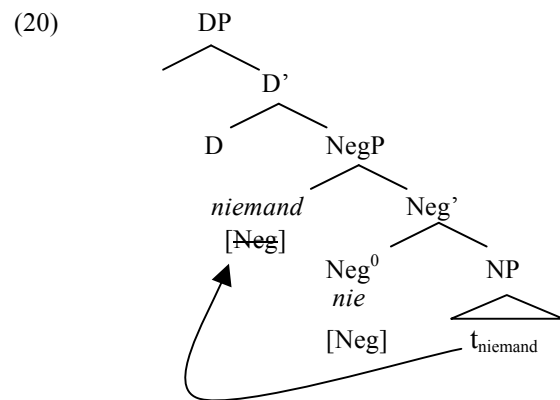
② Haegeman can offer no straightforward account of negative fragment answers

- New analysis:

→ *niemand* and *nie* are one constituent

→ there is a NegP inside the DP, with *nie* as its head

→ Haegeman (1995): negative elements move to the Spec of NegP → *niemand* moves to the Spec of the DP-internal NegP, which results in the order *niemand nie*:

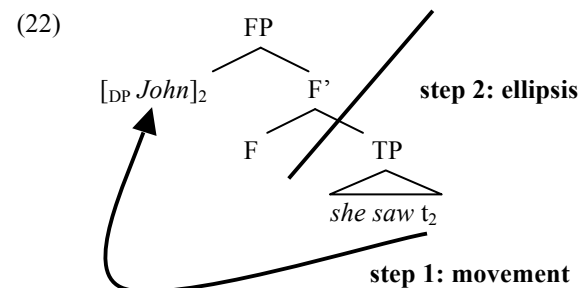


5 THE ANALYSIS: FRAGMENT ANSWERS

- Merchant (2004:704): “[T]here is considerable evidence to support the idea that fragment answers are derived from full sentential structures, subject to ellipsis, and that the fragment moves from its base position.”

→ Analysis of fragment answers: the fragment constituent moves to the left periphery of the clause (FP in Merchant 2004), followed by ellipsis of TP:

(21) A: Who did she see?
B: John [_{TP} she saw].



- Analysis of fragment answer *niemand nie* ‘no-one not’ in (23): since the n-word and *nie* form 1 constituent, they can move to [Spec, FP] = **step 1**

(23) A: Wie heeft’em gezien? - B: Niemand nie.
who has.he seen no-one not
“Who did he see?” – ‘No-one.’ [Asse Dutch]

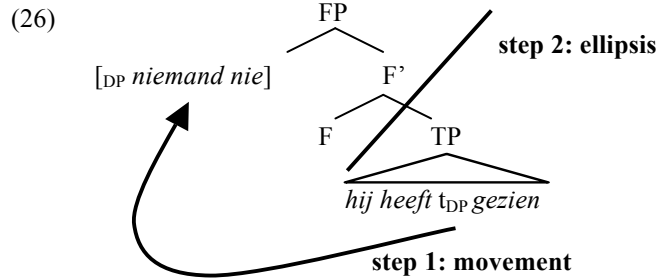
Step 1:

(24) [Hij heeft niemand nie gezien]
he has no-one not seen
→ [Niemand nie [_{TP} hij heeft t_niemand nie gezien]]
no-one not he has seen

Then TP is elided = **step 2**

Step 2:

(25) [Niemand nie [_{FP} hij heeft t_{niemand nie} gezien]]



6 EXTENSION OF THE ANALYSIS: NEGATIVE SPREAD

Overview

- 6.1 Negative spread in southern Dutch
- 6.2 The structural ambiguity of “n-word + *nie*”

6.1 Negative spread in southern Dutch

- Negative spread: two or more n-words expressing only one negation
→ in some southern dialects of Dutch: *nie* occurs optionally with two or more n-words

(27) Ik heb **niemand niks (nie)** gegeven.
I have no-one nothing not given
“I didn’t give anything to anyone.” [Asse Dutch]

- The sequence “n-word n-word + *nie*” differs from the sequence “n-word + *nie*” in several respects:

① *Niemand niks nie* cannot occur to the left of the finite verb:

(28) ***Niemand niks (nie)** heb ik gegeven.
no-one nothing not have I given [Asse Dutch]

② Sequences of two n-words and *nie* cannot be coordinated:

(29) *Hij heeft **nooit niks (nie)** en **nergens niks (nie)** gezien.
he has never nothing not and nowhere nothing not seen
[Asse Dutch]

③ *Niemand niks nie* cannot occur as the complement of an extraposed PP

(30) a. *Hij zou t_{voor niemand niks nie} doen voor **niemand niks** (**nie**).
he would do for no-one nothing not
[Asse Dutch]

④ The sequence “n-words + *nie*” cannot easily precede DP arguments:

(31) ?? Hij heeft **nooit niemand nie** da boek gegeven.
he has never no-one not that book given [Asse Dutch]

⑤ When the sequence occurs with an indefinite DP, *nie* must ‘fuse’ with the indefinite article to form *geen* ‘no’:

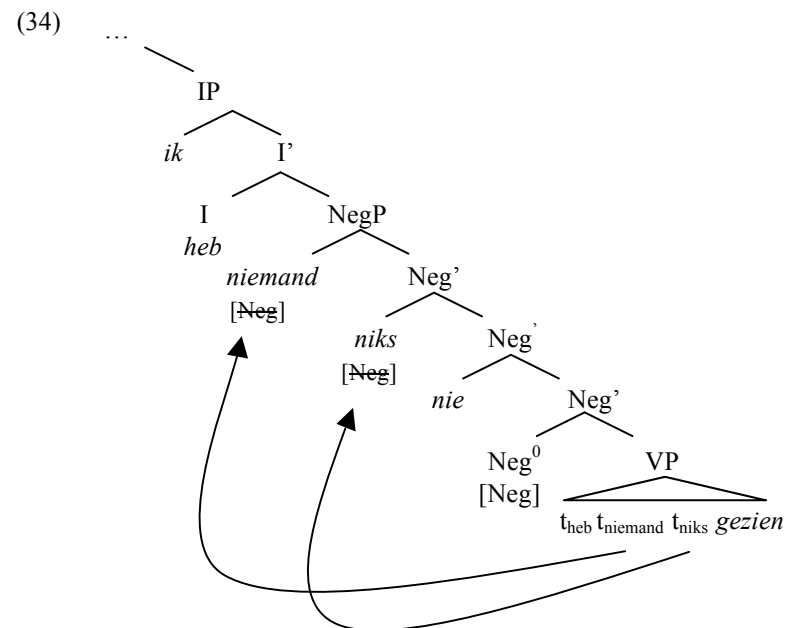
(32) a. *Hij heeft **nooit niemand nie** nen boek gegeven. (NC)
he has never no-one not a book given
b. Hij heeft **nooit niemand geen** boek gegeven.
he has never no-one no book given
“He never gave anyone a book.” [Asse Dutch]

⑥ *Niemand niks nie* cannot occur as a fragment answer:

(33) A: Wie heeft hij wat gegeven? - B: **Niemand niks** (* **nie**).
who has he what given no-one nothing not
“Who did he give what? – “No-one nothing.” [Asse Dutch]

→ *niemand niks nie* does not form a constituent

- Haegeman (1995):



→ Haegeman’s (1995) analysis can be used to analyze negative spread

6.2 The structural ambiguity of “n-word + nie”

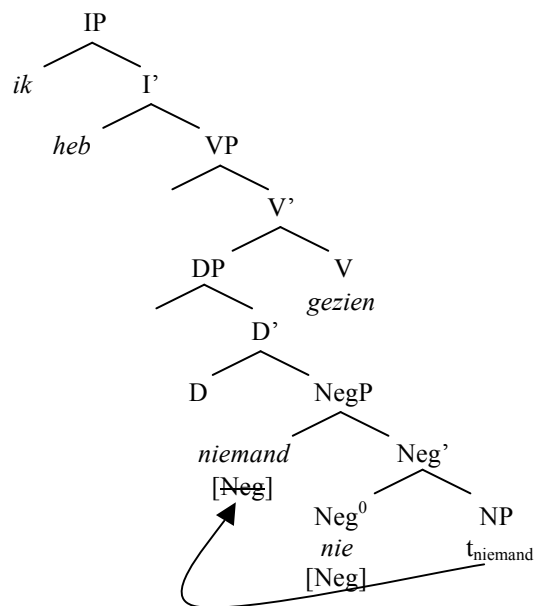
- Two different structures:

- ① *niemand nie* in fragment answers: **1 constituent, a DP with an internal NegP**
- ② *niemand niks nie*: all **specifiers of a NegP dominating the VP**

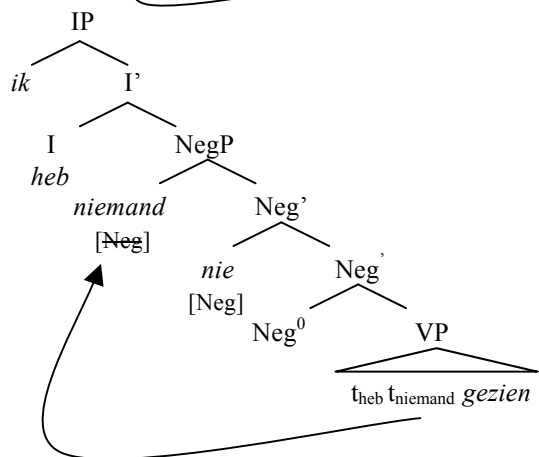
Prediction: The structure used for two or more n-words should also be available for sentences with just one n-word and *nie*.

→ A sentence like *Ik heb niemand nie gezien* ‘I have no-one not seen’ is structurally ambiguous:

①



②



- **Supporting evidence:** sentences with an indefinite DP

(35)a: *nie* 'not' = inside the DP → indefinite article remains as it is

(35)b: *nie* 'not' = specifier of clausal NegP → *nie* and *een* 'a' form *geen* 'no'

(35) a. Ik denk da niemand nie nen boek gelezen heeft.
I think that no-one not a book read has
"I think that no-one has read a book."

b. Ik denk da niemand geen en boek gelezen heeft.
I think that no-one no book read has
"I think that no-one has read a book." [Asse Dutch]

→ structure of "n-word + *nie*" = ambiguous in sentences such as *Ik heb niemand nie gezien* 'I have no-one not seen':

- it can either be one constituent, or
- it can be part of the NegP dominating VP, parallel to negative spread.

In other contexts *niemand nie* forms one constituent (cf. fragment answers)

7 OPEN QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS

- Not all n-words combine as easily with *nie*:

(36) a. Ik heb er geeneneene (*nie) gezien.
I have there no.one not seen
"I haven't seen a single one."

b. A: Wat hebde gekocht? - B: Niks (?nie).
what have.you bought nothing not
"What did you buy?" - "Nothing." [Asse Dutch]

- *nooit nie* 'never not' and *nergens nie* 'nowhere not' behave like *niemand nie* 'no-one not' → they should also be analyzed as one constituent, having a NegP inside AdvP

→ constituent negation would also imply a position for a NegP inside all kinds of projections → further research

8 CONCLUSIONS

- Main claim: fragment answers such as *niemand nie* ‘no-one not’ are derived by movement of *niemand nie* to a left peripheral position, followed by ellipsis of the TP containing the rest of the clause.
- *Niemand nie* forms one constituent in these fragment answers. The DP contains a NegP headed by *nie*, to the specifier of which *niemand* moves. This is confirmed by data concerning verb second, coordination, complements of extraposed PPs and the co-occurrence with (indefinite) DP arguments.
- Negative spread - two or more n-words co-occurring (with an optional *nie*) - is analyzed differently: the n-words occupy the (multiple) spec-positions of a NegP dominating the VP.
- Sentences such as *ik heb niemand nie gezien* ‘I have no-one not seen’ are structurally ambiguous. *Niemand nie* ‘no-one not’ can be seen as one constituent, or be analyzed as negative spread.

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