

Dialogicity and the Emergence of Sentential Negation

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The development of sentential negation, since the original description of Jespersen's Cycle (Jespersen 1917), has typically been couched in terms of the generalization of an "emphatic reinforcing" postverbal element whose meaning bleaches over time to become a negative word (cf. Detges & Waltereit 2002; Eckardt 2006). Such approaches have been primarily sentence-based, focusing on the reanalysis of the postverbal item as a negative particle, and the replacement of older forms of negation. More recently, however, there has been considerable interest in accounting for the development of negatives from the perspective of information structure (e.g. Schwenter 2006; Hansen & Visconti 2007). These analyses share an interest in the choice of negative construction in discourse and the textual accessibility of the proposition being negated. They aim to show, using corpus data, how information-structural constraints are relaxed over time, leading to the generalization of the newer construction to more and more contexts.

In this paper I build on these recent studies to show the important interaction of information structure and dialogicity for emergent sentential negation. Focusing on the (*não*) VP *nada*, (literally '(not) VP nothing') construction(s) in naturally-occurring data from Brazilian Portuguese (BP), I show that there are emergent sentential negative constructions that are licensed solely in dialogal contexts (1):

- (1) ...resolvemos subir até o trampolim mais alto da piscina. "Carvalho, é muito alto", eu disse. "É **alto nada**, João", Carlinhos falou.
 '...we decided to climb up the highest diving board at the pool. "Damn, it's very high", I said. "**It's not high**, João", Carlinhos said.
 [http://www.screamyell.com.br/pms_cnts/tkcinco.html]

As in (1), this construction is limited to "reprise assertions" (Godard & Marandin 2006) with the illocutionary function of denying a prior assertion. The preverbal negative *não* is optional in BP (but not in Portugal), creating both full (*não* VP *nada*) and reduced (VP *nada*) variants. Crucially, however, only the full form is licensed in non-dialogal contexts such as that in (2):

- (2) O marido de Bree, [...] é dado como morto. "Só que o corpo dele não aparece em nenhum momento", disse Dávila. "Já tem site especulando que **ele não morreu nada**"
 'Bree's husband is given up for dead. "Only his body never appears", Dávila said. "There are already websites speculating that **he didn't die**"
 [http://noticias.uol.com.br/uolnews/cultura/pop]

This use of the full construction in monologal contexts (i.e. not denying an interlocutor's prior assertion) is a contextual innovation, occurring only in BP in the last decade. It therefore evidences a move from dialogal to monologal (though clearly still dialogic, as in (2)) contexts. At the same time, the reduced construction (1) is a formal innovation in BP that is nevertheless only licensed in dialogal contexts.

The analysis highlights the importance of taking a dialogic perspective: new sentential negatives emerge in strictly dialogal interaction and expand to monologal, yet dialogic and "multiply perspectivized" (Traugott 2007), contexts. More generally, this approach provides

clear empirical evidence for the source of the widespread assumption that negation is “polyphonic” (Ducrot 1984) or otherwise responsive to other viewpoints in discourse (Givón 1978; Horn 1989).