

Romanian n-words and the finite/non-finite distinction*

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1. *Introduction*

In Romanian, one or more so-called n-words (Laka 1990), such as *nimic* ‘nothing’ or *ni-meni* ‘nobody’, can follow sentential negation without contributing any negative meaning of their own. In other words, even though a Romanian clause may contain what looks like more than one negation morpheme, the clause is understood as having only one negation.

(1) a. N-a zis **nimic nimănu**i.
not-PAST.3S said n-thing n-body.DAT
“S/he didn’t say anything to anybody.”

This phenomenon, in which multiple occurrences of negative items within the same clause yield only one logical negation, is known in the literature as ‘negative concord’ (NC) (Labov 1974; Ladusaw 1992) and has been studied in a variety of languages.

In this paper I will examine the NC structures in Romanian and provide an account for the behavior of n-words in this language. It is shown that Romanian shares properties with both Slavic and Romance languages. In finite, subjunctive and imperative clauses Romanian n-words behave like polarity sensitive existentials (EQ), just like their counterparts in Polish (Blaszczałk 1998; Przepiórkowski and Kupsc 1997) and Russian (Pereltsvaig 1998, 1999)¹. In non-finite contexts they seem to be ambiguous between a negative quantifier (NQ) and an EQ reading, similarly to n-words in Spanish and Italian (Laka 1990; Zanuttini 1997; Herburger 2001; Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni 2003, among others). The resemblance to Spanish and Italian is only partial though, as Romanian pre-verbal n-words cannot license post-verbal ones, in spite of being able to occur by themselves in non-finite contexts².

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¹This pattern is actually not unique to Slavic languages; it can also be observed in some Italian dialects of the North-eastern area (Zanuttini 1997).

²Given that infinitival patterns with finite clauses, this generalization is not entirely accurate. However, for lack of a better descriptive terminology, I will refer to finite, subjunctive and imperative clauses using the term *finite* and to participles and supines by using the term *non-finite*.

The problem then in characterizing Romanian n-words is to capture the contrast between the interpretation of n-words in finite vs. non-finite clauses on the one hand, and the ungrammaticality of two n-words in the absence of negation in non-finite contexts, on the other hand.

The proposed solution builds on Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni's (2003) analysis for Spanish and Italian. It assumes that a silent negation is present in non-finite environments, which is responsible for the licensing of pre-verbal n-words in these contexts. I show that this licensing is subject to locality constraints, which explains why a post-verbal n-word cannot be licensed in the presence of a pre-verbal one. Moreover, I argue that the so called double negation reading in non-finite environments involves partial reconstruction. The pre-verbal n-word does not reconstruct to its base position but rather to a site below the silent negation and above the overt non-finite negation.

The paper is organized as follows: section (2) presents the distribution of n-words in Romanian while contrasting it to that of n-words in other languages. A number of possible analyses and their caveats are discussed in section (3). Subsection (3.4) introduces the proposed solution. Section (4) concludes.

2. *The distribution of Romanian n-words*

As mentioned in the introduction, Romanian n-words have a curious distribution: they behave differently depending on whether they occur in finite or non-finite environments.

2.1 *Finite environments*

In finite, as well as subjunctive and imperative clauses, n-words exhibit a uniform pattern: both pre-verbal and post-verbal n-words need to co-occur with negation and the sentences that contain them have NC interpretations (2 - 5).

- (2) Indicative
 - a. **Nimeni** *(**nu**) vine.
n-body not comes
“Nobody comes.”
 - b. *(**Nu**) mănâncă **nimic**.
not eats n-thing
“S/he doesn’t eat anything.”
- (3) Subjunctive
 - a. **Nimeni** să *(**nu**) plece.
n-body SUBJ. not leave.SUBJ.3S
“Nobody should leave.”
 - b. Să *(**nu**) mănânce **nimic**.
SUBJ not eat.SUBJ.3S n-thing
“S/he shouldn’t eat anything.”
- (4) Imperative - negative form
 - a. **Nimic** **nu** lua de la ei!
n-thing not take.IMP.2S from them
“Don’t take anything from them!”
 - b. **Nu** lua **nimic!**
not take.IMPERATIVE.2S n-thing
“Don’t take anything!”
- (5) Imperative - affirmative form
 - a. * **Nimic** ia de la ei!
n-thing take.IMP.2S from them
“Don’t take anything from them!”
 - b. * Ia **nimic!**
take.IMPERATIVE.2S n-thing
“Don’t take anything!”

By itself, the pattern in (2 - 5) is not very exciting: Romanian n-words seem to always require the presence of sentential negation, that is of an overt negative licensor, whether they are in-situ or to the left of the verb³. Under a popular view (Ladusaw 1992; Giannakidou 1997), this makes them be considered polarity sensitive existentials which are interpreted inside the scope of a negative operator⁴. Similar arguments have been put forth for Polish (Blaszcak 1998) and Russian (Pereltsvaig 1998), where n-words are consistently ungrammatical in the absence of sentential negation (6, 7).

(6) Polish

a. Maryśia *(nie) dała nikomu książki.	b. Nikt *(nie) przyszedł.
Mary not gave n-body book	n-body not came
“Mary didn’t give anyone a/the book.”	“Nobody came.”
(Przepiorkowski and Kupsc 1997:8)	(Blaszcak 1998:4)

(7) Russian

a. Ja ne vizhu nikogo .	b. Ja nikogo *(ne) vizhu.
I not see no one	I no one not see
“I don’t see anyone.”	“I don’t see anyone”
(Brown 1999)	(Brown 1999)

2.2 Non-finite contexts

The story of Romanian n-words becomes more interesting once we look at non-finite clauses. In this context, Romanian displays an asymmetry between the pre-verbal and post-verbal n-words. More precisely, with past participles, present participles and supines⁵, pre-verbal n-words can appear by themselves (8a - 10a) while post-verbal ones cannot (8b - 10b). The latter still need to co-occur with negation.

(8) Past Participle

a. o casă de nimeni locuită	b. o casă *(ne)locuită de nimeni
a house by n-body inhabited	a house (not)inhabited by n-body
“a house that is not inhabited by anyone”	“a house that is not inhabited by anyone”

(9) Present Participle

a. mâncare de loc aburindă	b. *(ne)mâncând de loc
food at all steaming	(not)eating n-thing
“food that is not steaming at all”	“not eating at all”

³Note that Romanian is considered to be a VSO language.

⁴See however Giannakidou (2000) and Shimoyama (2004) for an analysis of n-words as universals scoping outside negation.

⁵The infinitival construction is an exception. Here pre-verbal n-words behave like in finite contexts:

a. nimic a *(nu) mâncă	b. a *(nu) mâncă nimic
n-thing to not eat	to not eat n-thing
“not eating anything”	“not eating anything”

(10) Supine

a. iubire nicăieri de găsit love n-where SUPINE found	b. de *(ne)găsit nicăieri SUPINE (not)found n-where
“a love that cannot be found anywhere else”	
“not to be found anywhere”	

Secondly, post-verbal n-words are interpreted as entering into NC, as indicated in the translation of examples (8b - 10b), while pre-verbal n-words in conjunction with negated verbs give rise to the double negation (DN) reading (11).

(11) a. DN o carte **niciodată** necitată
a book never not-quoted
“a book never unquoted” = “a book that is always quoted”

b. ?? DN un film de **nimeni** nevăzut
a film by n-body not-seen
“a film by no one unseen” = “a film seen by everyone”⁶

It should be noted at this point that the negation showing up with the verb differs in form between the finite and non-finite environments. In indicative, subjunctive and imperative clauses it has the form *nu*, while with participles, gerunds and supines, it is instantiated as *ne*. I will get back to this distinction in section (3.2), where the properties of the two negations are examined more closely.

At first glance, the behavior of Romanian n-words in non-finite contexts coincides with that of n-words in Spanish and Italian (12 - 14).

(12) Pre-verbal n-words

a. Nadie vino. n-body came “Nobody came.” (SP, Herburger 2001:289)	b. Nessuno ha telefonato. n-body has called “Nobody called.” (IT, Guerzoni 2003)
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(13) a. DN **Nadie** **no** vino. (SP, Laka 1990 :104)

n-body not came

“Nobody didn’t come.” = “Everyone came.”

b. DN **Nessuno** **non** ho incontrato. (IT, Guerzoni (2003))

n-body not I met

“Nobody I didn’t meet.” = “I met everybody.”

(14) Post-verbal n-words

a. *(No) vino nadie . not came n-body “Nobody came.” (SP, Herburger 2001:289)	b. *(Non) ha detto niente . not past.3s said n-thing “She hasn’t said anything.” (IT, Zanuttini 1997:10)
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⁶If the pre-verbal n-word is an argument rather than an adjunct, the respective construction is perceived as being degraded (Ionescu 1999). Nevertheless, to the extent that it is interpretable, it lends itself to the DN reading.

Just like in these two languages, Romanian n-words seem to be ambiguous between a NQ and an EQ interpretation. Pre-verbally, they appear to be inherently negative, that is they do not require any (overt) licensor and the clauses in which they occur are interpreted as simple negations. If a second negative item is present, the clause lends itself to a DN reading. Post-verbal n-words, however, do not show any negative quantifier properties; they retain their EQ behavior noted in finite clauses.

2.3 *An idiosyncrasy of Romanian*

So far, it has been shown that the distribution of Romanian n-words is somewhat unusual. In finite clauses Romanian n-words behave like existential quantifiers (on a par with Polish and Russian n-words), while in non-finite clauses they show mixed NQ and EQ properties (similarly to their Spanish and Italian counterparts). Romanian turns out to be even more intricate as in non-finite environments it does not entirely resemble Spanish and Italian. In these two languages a pre-verbal n-word is able to license a post-verbal one (15). This is not the case in Romanian: example (16) is clearly ungrammatical.

(15) Two n-words

a. Nadie miraba a nadie . n-body looked at n-body “Nobody looked at anybody.” (SP, Herburger 2001:290)	b. Nessuno sapeva niente . n-body knew n-thing “Nobody knew anything.” (IT, Guerzoni 2003)
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(16) * un film de **nimeni** văzut **niciodata**

a film by n-body seen n-ever “a film that has never been seen by anyone”

The phenomenon is quite puzzling if the pre-verbal n-word had indeed inherently negative properties as the examples in (8a - 10, 11) suggest.

The table in (17) summarizes the behavior of n-words in Romanian.

(17) *Romanian*

	FINITE		NON-FINITE	
	Post-verbal	Pre-verbal	Post-verbal	Pre-verbal
<i>Must co-occur with Neg</i>	yes	yes	yes	no
<i>Interpretation with Neg</i>	NC	NC	NC	DN

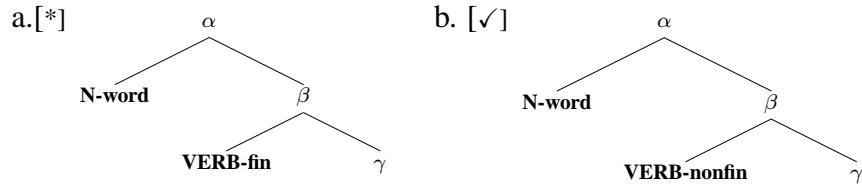
2.4 *Desiderata for an analysis*

Building upon the generalizations presented in the previous three sections, an analysis of Romanian n-words should be able to account for the following three facts.

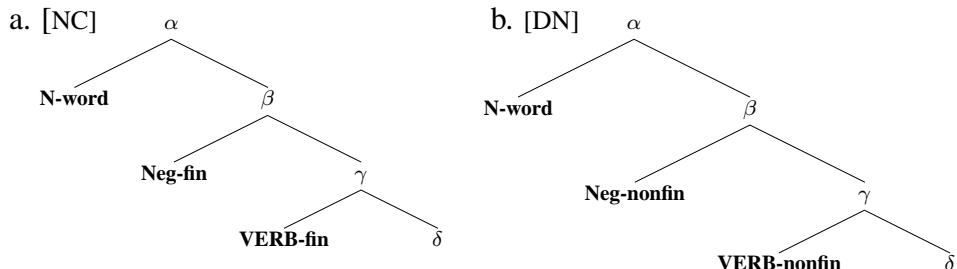
First, it should explain why in finite environments only the NC reading is possible. Second, it should derive the fact that the DN interpretation is forced in non-finite environments whenever a pre-verbal n-word co-occurs with negation. Third, it should answer the question of why a pre-verbal n-word, in spite of being able to occur by itself in non-finite contexts, cannot license a post-verbal one.

In structural terms that is to say that one should find an explanation for the contrasts in configurations (18 - 20).

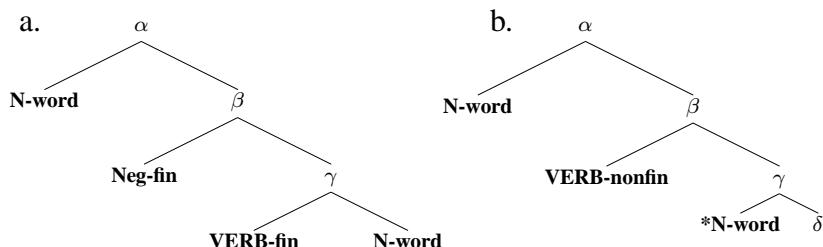
(18)



(19)



(20)



Configurations (18) and (19) contain the contrasts that model the behavior of pre-verbal n-words. They are basically two faces of the same coin. First, pre-verbal n-words in finite contexts need an overt licensor (18a), while in non-finite contexts they do not need one; they are fine by themselves as seen in (18b). On the other hand, if an overt negation is added in the non-finite structure in (19b) it yields a DN reading, while in the finite structure in (19a) it merely makes licensing happen. Finally, the third contrast in (20) opposes the behavior of post-verbal n-words in finite and non-finite contexts.

3. *Deriving the behavior of Romanian n-words*

Since Romanian n-words in non-finite contexts behave very similarly to the Spanish and Italian ones, it is reasonable to take as a starting point proposals that have been made for these languages. Subsections (3.1 - 3.3) discuss some of these approaches and test whether they can be extended to account for the Romanian pattern or not. Subsection (3.4) presents the proposed solution.

3.1 *N-words are lexically ambiguous*

It has been shown that Romanian n-words are ambiguous: sometimes, they seem to be NQs, while at other times, they behave like polarity sensitive EQs. This type of pattern makes it attractive to explore a lexical ambiguity solution to the problems described in section (2.4).

Herburger (2001) noticed that in Spanish certain sentences are ambiguous between a single and a double negation reading (21). According to her, the availability of this dual interpretation is due to the lexical ambiguity of the n-words involved in those sentences:

(21) a. **Nadie nunca** volvio a Cuba.
n-body n-ever returned to Cuba.
“Nobody ever returned to Cuba.” or “^{DN}Nobody never returned to Cuba.”

b. **Dudo que nadie** lo sepa.
doubt that n-body it knowSUBJ.3S
“I doubt that anybody knows it” or “^{DN}I doubt that nobody knows it.”

In (21a), *nunca* can be interpreted as an EQ, ‘ever’ but also as a NQ, ‘never’, thus giving rise to a single or respectively, a double negation reading of the sentence. Similarly *nadie* in (21b) is lexically ambiguous between ‘anybody’ and ‘nobody’.

A closer investigation reveals that in Romanian there are no cases of dual interpretation along the lines of examples in (21). The NQ and EQ readings that Romanian n-words give rise to are always in complementary distribution. N-words look like NQs if they occur pre-verbally in non-finite contexts, but they behave as polarity sensitive existentials everywhere else. Additionally, n-words with a polarity sensitive EQ interpretation are only licensed in the presence of negation, but not by another n-word.

Consequently, extending Herburger’s proposal for Spanish n-words to Romanian doesn’t work very well. The lexical ambiguity analysis is too permissive for Romanian: it predicts ambiguities that are not attested.

3.2 *NE has a silent variant*

A second option to be explored in trying to account for the mixed behavior of Romanian n-words is based on the observation that in this language the negation with which the verb combines has different forms depending on whether it occurs in finite (*nu*) or non-finite environments (*ne*). It is possible that the finite/non-finite variation in the pattern of n-words could be caused by the distinct properties of the two negations.

Romance languages have provided evidence that there are various types of negation, each with its specific characteristics (Zanuttini 1997). In Romanian too the form distinction between the finite and non-finite negation corresponds to a couple of syntactic distinctions. One is adjacency with the finite/non-finite verb form: only pronominal clitics (and intensifiers⁷) can come in between the negation *nu* and the finite verb form. In the case of the non-finite negation *ne*, only the intensifier *mai* ‘more, still, before, again’ can intervene. Secondly, as apparent from the description, the finite negation *nu* requires [+T] complements. This is also proved by the fact that it takes suppletive imperative forms (4, 5). In contrast, the non-finite negation *ne* requires tenseless complements.

⁷The term *intensifiers* refers to a set of 5 mono-syllabic adverbs which behave as clitics.

Consequently, it is not implausible that the form distinction between the two negations (*nu* vs. *ne*) is associated with different syntactic properties. In order to capture the mixed behavior of n-words in Romanian, let us consider that the non-finite negation *ne* has a silent variant, while the finite negation *nu* doesn't.

To spell out this hypothesis: the finite negation *nu* is always overt and it can only license the pre-verbal n-word when it is expressed. In contrast, the non-finite negation *ne* is optionally expressed, and it has the ability to license the pre-verbal n-word even in those cases when it is silent. Next I will test whether such a hypothesis accounts for the three contrasts discussed in section (2.4).

The licensing contrast: The pre-verbal n-word occurring by itself in non-finite structures (22b cf 18b) is licensed by the silent *ne*. The ungrammaticality of cases like (22a cf. 18a) correlates with the absence of an overtly realized finite negation.

(22) Licensing

a.* Pe **nimeni** a păcălit.
acc n-body PAST.3s tricked
“He didn’t trick anyone”.

b. om de **nimeni** păcălit
man by n-body tricked
“a person that nobody tricked”.

The interpretation contrast: in (19a) and (19b), the finite and respectively the non-finite negation is overtly expressed and thus both n-words get licensed. However, it is not clear why two overt negations would induce different readings: NC in one case, but DN in the other case. Thus the DN interpretation in non-finite contexts remains unexplained.

The post-verbal n-words contrast: There is no justification for why post-verbal n-words are fine in (20a) but disallowed in (20b). If the silent non-finite negation licenses the pre-verbal n-word, which presumably has moved from a post-verbal position after being licensed, why can't the other post-verbal n-words get licensed too?

A possible answer is to say that the non-finite negation can do only one licensing. The claim would be empirically motivated if examples like (23) were ungrammatical.

(23) o casă **nelocuită** de **nimeni niciodată**
a house not-inhabited by n-body n-ever
'a house that was never inhabited by anyone'

However, (23) is perfectly fine, which means that there is no support for arguing that *ne*, or its silent variant for the same matter, can only license a *single* n-word.

Summing up, a simplistic theory that postulates different syntactic properties for the two negations - one always expressed, the other optionally silent - accounts only for the first contrast mentioned in section (2.4). It undergenerates for the second contrast, as it does not predict any DN readings and it overgenerates for the third, as post-verbal n-words are predicted to be grammatical if they co-occur with a pre-verbal n-word in non-finite contexts.

3.3 Dissociating between NE and the silent negation

In this section I discuss a more elaborate silent negation analysis (Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni 2003) and in the next one I will show how it can be modified to account for the Romanian data.

Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni argue that in Spanish and Italian n-words are existential quantifiers that are felicitous only in the scope of negation or of an averidical expression such as ‘without’ or ‘doubt’, but ungrammatical otherwise. Their proposal accounts in a straightforward manner for the distribution of post-verbal n-words. However, in order to explain the behavior of the pre-verbal n-words, an additional device is needed, namely the presence of a silent negation. The abstract negation is situated somewhere below the pre-verbal n-word(s) and above the sentential negation, possibly on the Focus head (24). The pre-verbal n-word activates the silent negation at the syntactic level. Once activated the silent negation licenses semantically the pre-verbal n-word. The DN readings are derived from the interaction between the abstract negation and the overt negation.

(24) [FocP n-word₁ [Foc [neg] [IP t₁ [.....]]]]] ⁸

The advantage of extending Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni’s account to Romanian is that it will explain why the pre-verbal n-word does not need an overt licensor in non-finite clauses and why, in the same contexts, the co-occurrence of negation with a pre-verbal n-word yields a DN reading. Moreover, by placing the silent negation in a different position from the overt one accounts for the interpretation contrast between (25a) and (25b). No structural ambiguities are expected if the abstract negation and *ne* occupy the same position.

(25) a. o carte [consistent **necitată** de **nimeni**] (consistently >*ne*)
 a book consistently not-quoted by n-body
 “a book that is *literally* never quoted”
 (i.e. there is a consistent behavior where no one quotes the book)
 b. o carte [de **nimeni** consistent **citată**] (Silent Neg >consistently)
 a book by n-body consistently quoted
 “a book such that everyone sometimes fails to quote it”

Nevertheless, nothing is being said as to why in finite contexts, only the NC is possible and why in non-finite contexts a pre-verbal n-word followed by a post-verbal one is ungrammatical. If the pre-verbal n-word reconstructs to a post-verbal position in order to get licensed in the scope of the silent negation, it is very puzzling that other post-verbal n-words cannot get licensed. In other words, configurations (18a, 19a and 20b) in the desiderata section remain unexplained.

3.4 Locality, reconstruction and the silent negation

I suggest that a silent negation analysis which builds on Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni’s proposal can explain the pattern exhibited by the Romanian n-words.

Here are the ingredients: first, I assume that Romanian n-words are uniformly polarity sensitive EQs which are licensed morphosyntactically in the scope of a negative operator. Additionally, there is evidence that in Romanian, this operator must be anti-morphic, in the sense of Zwarts (1996)⁹. Secondly, this licensing is shown to be subject to locality

⁸A similar analysis was proposed by Isac (2002) for Italian, Spanish and European Portuguese. On the basis of data from finite environments, Isac argues that Romanian n-words differ from their counterparts in these languages in that they are licensed by the sentential negative marker alone and they can check focus independently.

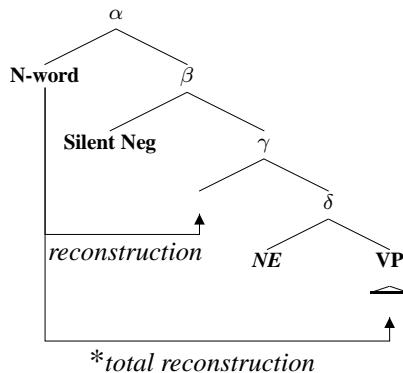
⁹Romanian n-words are grammatical only if they occur in the scope of negation or of *fără* ‘without’:

constraints. Thirdly, I argue that the DN reading involves partial reconstruction. Finally, I postulate that the silent negation is present in non-finite contexts but absent in finite ones. Below I illustrate how these ingredients can be put to work in non-finite and respectively finite clauses.

Non-finite clauses contain an abstract negation which is situated somewhere above the overt negation *ne*. The silent negation becomes active only in the presence of a pre-verbal n-word (cf. Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni 2003).

Licensing and Interpretation: Being polarity sensitive existentials which are licensed under c-command, pre-verbal n-words need to reconstruct at LF under the scope of the silent negation; otherwise they are ungrammatical. In contrast to Alonso-Ovalle and Guerzoni, I argue that pre-verbal n-words do not reconstruct to their base, post-verbal position, but rather to a site which is below the silent negation and higher than the overt negation *ne*.

(26)



If the pre-verbal n-word were to reconstruct to its base position, namely below *ne* (27a), the interpretation predicted would be the one in (27b).

(27) a. Silent Neg >*ne* >verb >N-word
 b. $\neg \neg \exists = \exists$

However, the meaning attested for examples like (28) corresponds to the LF in (29b) below, rather than to the one in (27b). This interpretation proves that the pre-verbal n-word reconstructs to a position situated somewhere below the silent negation and above the non-finite negation *ne* (29a).

(28) articol **niciodata** **necitat**
 article n-ever not-quoted
 'an article that is *always* quoted'

(29) a. Silent Neg >N-word >*ne* >verb

a. Ion a venit la petrecere **fără** **nimeni**.
 Ion PAST.3S come at party without n-body
 "Ion came to the party without anyone."

$$\text{b. } \neg \exists \neg = \forall$$

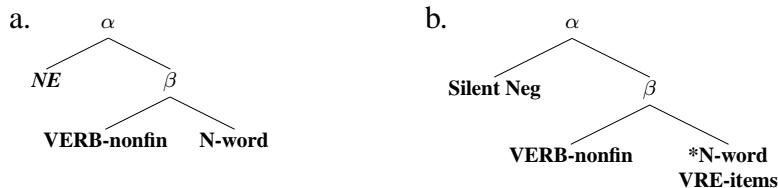
At this point, it becomes apparent that the DN reading does not come about only because of the interaction between the silent and the non-finite negation. Reconstruction has a crucial impact. Partial reconstruction yields universal readings while total reconstruction gives rise to existential interpretations.

Post-verbal n-words: Post-verbal n-words are grammatical in the scope of the non-finite negation *ne* (30a, 31a). However, they are ruled out in (30b, 31b), where they occur in the scope of the silent negation. This is quite puzzling since the silent negation was able to license the (reconstructed) pre-verbal n-word.

(30) a. o casă **nelocuită** de **nimeni**
 a house (not)inhabited by n-body
 “a house that is not inhabited by anyone”

b. * un film de **nimeni** **văzut niciodată**
 a film by n-body seen n-ever
 “a film that has never been seen by anyone”

(31)



In order to account for (30b), I argue that the post-verbal n-word is not in the *local* scope of the silent negation. In other words, it is not enough for n-words to merely be in the scope of a negative operator; they must be sufficiently close to their licensor¹⁰.

Evidence for this phenomenon comes from the fact that Romanian has two sets of NPIs: n-words and VRE-items. The two series occur in complementary distribution (Teodorescu 2004). Not only do n-words require to be in the presence of negation (2 - 5, 8b - 10b), but they also need to be clausemate with it (32a, 33a). In contrast, VRE-items can occur in the scope of all sorts of downward-entailing operators - be they merely downward-entailing, anti-additive or anti-morphic, in the sense of Zwarts (1996). When co-occurring with negation they need to be in a different clause from it. Unlike n-words, VRE-items are averse to clausemate negation (32b, 33b).

(32) *Clausemate SN*

a. N-a cumpărat **nimic**.
 not-PAST.3S bought n-thing
 “He didn’t buy anything.”

¹⁰For references on the locality constraints that influence the relation between NPIs in general and their licensors see among others Linebarger (1980); Krifka (1991); Lahiri (1998); Guerzoni (to appear); Szabolcsi (2004); Bhatt and Schwarz (2004).

b. * N-a cumpărat **vreo** **carte**.
 not-PAST.3S bought VRE-a.F book
 “He didn’t buy any book.”

(33) *Non-clausemate* SN

a. * N-am aflat [că Anca a cumpărat **nimic**].
 not-PAST.1S found out that Anca PAST.3S bought n-thing
 “I didn’t find out that Anca didn’t buy anything.”

b. N-am aflat [că Anca a cumpărat **vreo loțiune**].
 not-PAST.1S found out that Anca PAST.3S bought VRE-a.F.lotion
 “I didn’t find out that Anca bought any lotion.”

Interestingly now, the example in (30b) becomes grammatical if the post-verbal n-word is replaced with an item from the VRE-series, in this case the time adverbial *vreodata* ‘ever’.

(34) un film de **nimeni** văzut **vreodata**

a film by n-body seen ever
 “a film that has never been seen by anyone”

Example (34) together with the property of VRE-items to survive only outside the local domain of negation, indicates that post-verbal n-words are not licensed in structures like (31b) because they are too far from their licensor. The licensing domain of the silent negation extends only as far as the non-finite negation *ne*. Thus the abstract negation can license the reconstructed pre-verbal n-word but not the post-verbal one. In non-finite, as well as in finite clauses, post-verbal n-words are licensed only by the overt negation.

Let us now consider how the silent negation analysis described above operates in finite clauses. The absence of the abstract negation in finite clauses correlates with the fact that in these contexts pre-verbal n-words cannot occur by themselves (18a). Here n-words are always licensed by the overt negation *nu* in-situ, that is post-verbally. Once licensed, n-words have the option of moving to a pre-verbal position, probably for focus reasons. Given the presence of a single negation and the fact that n-words are polarity sensitive existentials, which means that they do not contribute any negative meaning of their own, only simple negation readings are predicted in finite clauses (19a).

4. Conclusion

This study has shown that Romanian n-words behave differently depending on whether they appear in finite or non-finite contexts. In the first type of environments they behave like polarity sensitive EQs, on a par with n-words in Polish and Russian, while in the second type of contexts they sometimes behave like EQs and sometimes like NQs, similarly to their Italian and Spanish counterparts. Additionally, in non-finite contexts, pre-verbal n-words cannot license post-verbal ones.

It has been argued that an analysis which takes n-words to be lexically ambiguous between EQs and NQs does not extend to the Romanian data, since these two interpretations are always in complementary distribution in this language. A simple-minded analysis that

allows for the non-finite negation to be silent does not work either, as it fails to account for the DN reading and the ungrammaticality of post-verbal n-words in non-finite clauses.

I have proposed an analysis which treats all n-words as polarity sensitive existentials and posits a silent negation in non-finite clauses. The licensing relation between the silent negation and the post-verbal n-words has been shown to be subject to locality constraints. Additionally, I have argued that the DN reading does not come about only because of the interaction between the silent and the non-finite negation. Reconstruction has a crucial impact. Partial reconstruction yields universal readings while total reconstruction gives rise to existential interpretations.

One more remark is in place. Stipulating that the silent negation is present in non-finite clauses but absent in finite ones captures the licensing and interpretation contrast between the two types of contexts. However, we would ultimately like to derive this contrast from more general properties of the language. One possibility is to relate it to a verb movement asymmetry (see also Zanuttini (1991; 1997)). The intuition is that in finite clauses there is only one negation (hence only NC readings are possible here), while in non-finite clauses there are two negations (hence the DN interpretations). To formalize this idea, one can argue that the silent negation is present in both types of contexts and that in finite clauses, the verb always raises to the overt negation head and then higher up to the silent negation head. In doing so, the two negative heads are ‘conflated’ into one. In contrast, in non-finite environments, the verb cannot reach the abstract negation head; here, it can only raise as high as the overt negation head. Therefore, the prediction would be that in non-finite clauses, the two negations are kept apart. More details as to how such a verb movement analysis works and a discussion of the relevant data are included in (Teodorescu 2004).

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