

‘PRESUPPOSITIONAL’ NEGATION, MODALITY, AND THE {ADDRESSEE}

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1. Introduction

This squib deals with Italian negative adverb *mica*, which encodes presuppositional negation (Cinque 1976, Zanuttini 1997), i.e. it presupposes that someone in the communicative context expects the negated event/state of affairs to be true¹.

As Cinque (1976) pointed out, when *mica* raises to a preverbal position, this presupposition changes: preverbal *mica* presupposes that *the addressee* expects the negated event/state of affairs to be true. In section 2 I will suggest that this reading is triggered when preverbal *mica* agrees with the {addressee} feature encoded in the CP layer (Sigurðsson 2004, Baker 2008).

On the basis of this hypothesis, in section 3 I will account for the incompatibility of preverbal *mica* with some modal constructions and, in section 4, I will try to relate these phenomena to the ungrammaticality of preverbal *mica* in Northern Italian Dialects.

2. Pre- vs Post-verbal Readings

In Standard Italian and many Northern Dialects, a negative adverb of the type *mica* (< Lat. ‘crumb’) presupposes that someone in the communicative context expects the negated event/state of affairs to be true. For instance, in the sentence below the presence of *mica* in post-verbal position presupposes that someone expects Gianni to come:

- (1) Gianni non viene mica.
Gianni not comes mica
'Gianni does not come' (but someone expects Gianni to come)

In Italian, the adverb *mica* can also raise to a preverbal position. In this case, the presupposition has a slightly different flavour: as noticed by Cinque (1976), preverbal *mica* presupposes that *the addressee* expects Gianni to come.

¹ For discussion of this material, I am grateful to Paola Benincà, Andrea Cattaneo, Guglielmo Cinque, Mair Parry Nicoletta Penello.

keep Gianni from coming, while if I say 'Gianni needn't come' I am just describing a state of affairs.

- (7) Gianni non deve venire.
 Gianni not has-to come
 'Gianni mustn't come' ($\Box\neg \rightarrow$ 'keep Gianni from coming')
 'Gianni needn't come' ($\neg\Box$)

According to Zanuttini (2008), directive force depends on the activation of a functional projection (Jussive Phrase) that encodes 2nd person features. Secondly, Jussive^o enters an Agree relation with the subject, which will be assigned 2nd person features.

- (8) [_{JussiveP} Jussive^o [XP *subject* [X^o vP]]]

Moreover, Zanuttini observes that the Jussive Phrase is distinct from the Addressee operator, but she leaves open the possibility that Jussive^o might inherit person features from it. In this paper I will follow this hypothesis, suggesting that Jussive^o enters an Agree relation with the Addressee operator in order to check its 2nd person features:

- (9) [{addressee} [_{JussiveP} Jussive^o]]
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This can provide a tentative explanation for the incompatibility of preverbal *mica* with the low scope interpretation: when *mica* raises to its preverbal position, it absorbs the {addressee} feature preventing it from agreeing with Zanuttini's Jussive Phrase. It follows that the low scope reading ('necessary not') is ruled out when *mica* is preverbal:

- (10) [{addressee} [XP *mica* [_{JussiveP} Jussive^o]]]
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This analysis is independently supported by the ungrammaticality of preverbal *mica* in the context of negative imperatives². As a matter of fact,

² Some speakers allow preverbal *mica* in imperative clauses of this kind:

- (i) mica andare, eh!
 mica go, PARTICLE!
 'do not go'

(11) shows that *mica* cannot move to its preverbal position when Jussive° must agree with the {addressee} feature:

- (11) Non andare/andate!
 * Mica andare/andate!
 Not go-2.sg/2.pl
 'Do not go'

4. Dialects

In Italian, when *mica* moves before the verb, the subject does not occupy its canonical position. The subject constituent is followed by a pause (at least a virtual one), as indicated by the comma in the following example:

- (12) Gianni, mica viene.
 Gianni, mica comes
 'Gianni does not come' (but the addressee expects Gianni to come)

Following the hypothesis sketched above, I claim that the unavailability of the subject position is due to an intervention effect preventing the subject in spec-AgrS from checking – even negatively (Sigurðsson 2004) – the {addressee} feature when *mica* is preverbal:

- (13) * [{addressee} [XP *mica* [AgrSP *Gianni viene*]]]]
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The presence of the particle *eh* shows that this structure does not correspond to a canonical iussive sentence. Rather, it resembles 'elliptical' structures like the following:

- (ii) No andare, eh!
 No go, PARTICLE
 'Do not go'

Neither of these sentences display a plain sentential negation (*non*), both require a particle with an intonational raising, are very informal and have only a 2nd person singular reading. The presence of preverbal *mica/no* is always ungrammatical with 2nd person plural imperatives:

- (iii) non andate(, eh)!
 * mica andate, eh!
 * no andate, eh!
 NEG go.IMP.2.PL, PARTICLE!
 'Do not go'

If so, this can account for another puzzling property which can be observed cross-linguistically. In (many) Northern Italian Dialects, the adverb encoding presuppositional negation cannot move to the left of the verb³:

- (14) a. Gianni no (l) vien miga (Paduan)
 Gianni not (he.CL) comes miga
 'Gianni does not come'
- b. * Gianni, miga (l) vien
 Gianni miga (he.CL) comes
 'Gianni does not come'

The ungrammaticality of preverbal negation follows from my claim that the {addressee} feature is absorbed by *miga*. In particular, I argue that in Northern Italian Dialects the feature {addressee} must always be checked in order to license Subject Clitics (SCL), which, in all Northern Italian Dialects, are always obligatory when the subject is 2nd person singular⁴.

- (15) Ti *(te) vien (Paduan)
 You you.CL come
 'You come'

According to Poletto (2000: 31), SCLs are licensed in a field of dedicated positions including a Hearer projection, which hosts the 2nd person clitic:

- (16) ... [_{HearerP} *te* [_{SpeakerP} V [_{TP} ...]]]

In light of my hypothesis, in Northern Italian Dialects Hearer^o must always check the feature {addressee}, even if the subject is not 2nd person. Consequently, the intervention of the presuppositional adverb *miga* is ungrammatical:

- (17) [{addressee} [_{XP} *miga* [_{HearerP} Hearer^o]]] (Paduan)
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³ Some speakers marginally allow presuppositional negation in preverbal position. This can be due to several factors: in particular, it is worth noting that in many dialects presuppositional negation has become or is becoming the marker for sentential negation (Jespersen's cycle), impoverishing its presuppositional value.

⁴ On the other hand, in Paduan 3rd person SCL can optionally double subject DPs, as shown in (14).

This intervention, on the other hand, is allowed in languages like Italian that can license a *pro* in subject position, even when the {addressee} feature has been absorbed.

Finally, it is worth noting that in Northern Italian Dialects there is a single context where the 2nd person subject clitic is not allowed: imperatives.

- (18) (*te) magna!
 (you.SCL) eat
 'eat!'

This restriction directly follows from both Zanuttini's analysis and the proposal above, according to which the Jussive^o head absorbs the {addressee} feature preventing the licensing of the SCL with imperatives.

Conclusions

In this squib I have accounted for several properties displayed by the 'presuppositional' negative adverb *mica* when it occupies a preverbal position. Elaborating on Cinque (1976), I have claimed that the peculiar interpretation of the preverbal *mica* depends on an agree relation with the feature {addressee}.

Building on this hypothesis, I have accounted for the incompatibility of the preverbal *mica* with the 'necessary not' reading of a deontic modal. In particular, I have argued that *mica* absorbs the {addressee} feature and, in doing so, prevent a jussive interpretation of the sentence which, in turn, is connected with the 'necessary not' reading of the deontic modal.

Secondly, I have discussed the ungrammaticality of preverbal presuppositional negation in Northern Italian Dialects. I have suggested that in these dialects the {addressee} feature must always check Person features in the higher IP field (Poletto 2000) in order to license subject clitics. Therefore, a presuppositional negative marker is not allowed in preverbal position because it would absorb the {addressee} feature and prevent subject clitics from matching their Person features.

References

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