Mappings of Multiple Negatives in (East-) Tyrolean

There exists a vast amount of linguistic literature and research concerned with the topic of multiple negation. Multiple negation forms a conceptual conundrum in natural language and may either be interpreted as semantically positive or negative varying from language to language (and in a smaller frame even from standard to non-standard form). The two distinct interpretations to this linguistic puzzle are commonly known as Double Negation (DN) and Negative Concord (NC).

This presentation aims to propose a novel syntactic and semantic analysis of poly-negated structures for a largely under-studied Austrian-German dialect. East-Tyrolean (henceforth: ET) is a non-standard variety of German found in the valley floor area of East-Tyrol in the south of Austria. In terms of multiple negation, there appears to be an unconformity between standard German and non-standard varieties, such that NC interpretations are generally not accepted in Standard German but are widely adopted in German dialects like ET and Bavarian (similar patterns can be observed for Standard English and English dialects, e.g. AAVE, Belfast English etc.). Interestingly in the case of ET, both readings, DN and NC, do find acceptance for multiply negated constructions by native speakers. In fact, the empirical evidence from experiments recently conducted by myself has shown that the syntactic arrangement of negative markers appears to determine the semantic interpretation of multiple negation in ET. Accordingly, an explanation for the understanding of DN and NC can be found in the syntactic realization of negative elements in ET clauses.

The main hypothesis is based on the expectation that ET generally adheres to NC semantics when multiple negative markers participate in clausal structures, but there is some room for speculation of additional DN appearances. These occurrences of DN readings (viz. 1), however, are fairly constrained in syntax and deviate more strongly from the acceptability rate given by native speakers than NC constructions[1]. Thus, the questions that naturally arise are how ET multiple negation is constituted on the interface of syntax and semantics and following this thought, how can the syntactic parameters for ET be systematically configured?

Consider the multiply negated sentences in (1) an example of DN and (2) an example of NC in ET.

(1) **DN:** Da Peter hot **nit**   **koane** Gschenke greg

Det Peter Perf. **NEG n-det**   gifts   get

Peter didn't get no gifts.

$[_{CP}$ Da Peter $[_C$ hot $[_{TP}$ t$_{subj}$ $[_T$ t$_{verb}$ $[_{NegP}$ null Op$^{\neg}$ $[_{Neg}$ nit $[_{vP}$ t$_{subj}$ $[_v$ t$_{verb}$ $[_{VP}$ $[_{V'}$ $[_{DP}$ Op$^{\neg}$ $[_{NP}$ koane Gschenke $[_V$ greg]]]]]]]]]]]

(2) **NC:** Da Paul hot **koa**   Auto **nit**.

Det Paul has **n-det** car **NEG**

Paul doesn't have no car.

$[_{CP}$ Da Paul $[_C$ hot $[_{TP}$ t$_{subj}$ $[_T$ t$_{verb}$ $[_{NegP}$ Op$^{\neg}_{[ineg]}$ $[_{NP}$ koa Auto $[_{Neg}$ nit$_{[uneg]}$ $[_{vP}$ t$_{subj}$ $[_v$ t$_{verb}$ $[_{VP}$ t$_{obj}$]]]]]]]]]]]

A closer look on the syntactic architecture of (1) and (2) demonstrates that sentential negation (i.e. *nit*) is positioned higher up in the structure in (1) than in (2). This asymmetry in the compositionality of negative items leads to different semantic understandings and requires a more exhaustive breakdown into syntactic and semantic segments. Considering the irregularities in the reading of (1) compared to (2), it can be claimed that within the grammar of ET, NC materializes when the negative items accumulate in Spec-NegP and Neg° positions, whereas DN occurs when one of the negatives appears outside of that defined composition.

For mappings of negatives under NegP (in its Spec and Neg° position) received as simple negation (cf. 2), we will assume Zeijlstra's view (2008: 20) that NC operates on the syntactic principle of 'Agree'. Applying this principle of negative agreement to multiple negation in ET involves one negative marker under NegP carrying an [iNeg] feature, which checks off at least one item available in the structure carrying a [uNeg] feature. The successful checking of [Neg] features in the structure consequently yields a NC reading. The element carrying [iNeg] appears preferably highest in the structure (within the scope of NegP) due to the requirement of the [iNeg] feature to c-command any [uNeg] features as proposed in Adger (2003), von Stechow (2005) and Zeijlstra (2004, 2008), inter alia. For example, in case of sentence (2) the negated object (i.e. *koa Auto*) in Spec-NegP, composed of a negative operator (Op¬) and a DP, is assumed to be the carrier of [iNeg] and the sentential negation (i.e. *nit*) occurring in Neg° to carry [uNeg].

Agree relations may explain constructions such as (2), but optional DN readings cf. (1) require the introduction of a more profound syntactic analysis. In sentence (1) clausal NEG is found in position of Neg° (c-commanded by a null Op¬), while the negated object remains lower in the structure (below *v*P). The syntax in (1) allows for three negative propositions to coexist (i.e. a null OP¬ carrying the [iNeg] feature plus the sentential NEG *nit* under NegP, and the negated object *koane Gschenke)*. On the surface structure, we can see two negatives: the negative object DP and NEG. Hence, on a semantic level conforming to the logic axiom of *double negation elimination* (cf. Horn and Wansing 2016), the syntactic realization of negative markers in (1) yields a DN interpretation.

It should be noted here that there are still some unresolved questions and alternatives to the proposed analysis, e.g. the phrasal status of negation (i.e. head-status or not), which will also be discussed. However, a main purpose of this presentation will be to describe the data situation in ET. The prospective talk will include the results of a survey with adults and one conducted with children (aged 3-9 years).

References: Adger, David (2003). *Core Syntax: A Minimalist Approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press**. Horn,** Laurence R. and **Wansing,** Heinrich, "Negation", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/negation/>. **Stechow,** Arnim von (2005). "Semantisches und morphologisches Tempus: Zur temporalen Orientierung von Einstellungen und Modalen". In: *Neue Beiträge zur Germanistik* (4). 3-6**. Zeijlstra**, Hedde (2004). *Sentential Negation and Negative Concord*. PhD Thesis. University of Amsterdam. Utrecht: LOT. **Zeijlstra**, Hedde (2008). *Negative Concord is Syntactic Agreement*. Ms. University of Amsterdam**.**