



FACULTY
OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY
OF THE BASQUE
COUNTRY

Negation in Non-standard Varieties of English

Nagore Jaramillo Vila

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Tutor: Vidal Valmala Elguea.

Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana y Traducción e Interpretación.

Vitoria-Gasteiz

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the most prominent syntactic analyses that have been proposed in the literature for two non-standard negation phenomena: Negative Concord (NC) and Negative Inversion (NI). Linguistic theory has shown an increased interest in the study of syntactic variation and non-standard phenomena. NC, where two or more negative elements yield a single semantic negation, has been widely studied in the grammar of non-standard English. Weiss (2002) and Zeijlstra (2004) advocate that NC is the outcome of a syntactic agreement between an element bearing an [*i*Neg] feature and multiple instances of elements marked by an [*u*Neg] feature. Conversely, Blanchette (2013) claims that a NC reading is obtained by means of a feature spreading mechanism, where all negative elements contain an interpretable negative feature.

On the other hand, two main analyses have been presented for NI. An auxiliary inversion approach, proposed by Labov et al. (1968) and Foreman (1999), argues for a movement of the auxiliary to a higher left-peripheral position in the sentence, whereas an existential approach (Labov et al., 1968) considers NI constructions to be the result of an expletive deletion operation. This paper provides a critical review of the aforementioned analyses, pointing out the strengths and inconsistencies encountered in them.

Keywords: Negative Concord, Double Negation, Negative Inversion, non-standard English varieties

Table of contents

Abstract	ii
Table of contents	iii
List of abbreviations.....	iv
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Description of the phenomena	2
3. Approaches to the analysis of nonstandard negation phenomena	9
3.1. Negative concord	9
3.1.1. NC as Agree Approach (Weiss, 2002)	9
3.1.2. Multiple Agree Approach (Zeijlstra, 2004)	12
3.1.3. Feature Spreading Approach to NC (Blanchette, 2013)	17
3.2. Negative Inversion.....	20
3.2.1. The Existential Approach (Labov et al., 1968)	20
3.2.2. The Aux-to-C Approach (Labov et al., 1968)	23
3.2.3. The NegP ₂ Approach (Foreman, 1999)	25
4. Conclusion	28
References	29

List of abbreviations

NC.....	Negative Concord
NI.....	Negative Inversion
DN.....	Double Negation
StE.....	Standard English
AAVE.....	African American Vernacular English
WTE.....	West Texas English
AppE.....	Appalachian English

1. Introduction

This paper provides a literature review on the different syntactic analyses proposed for two non-standard negation phenomena: Negative Concord (NC) and Negative Inversion (NI).¹ NC is a syntactic phenomenon in which multiple instances of negative elements are semantically interpreted as single negation. For instance, this is the case of the examples in (1).

- (1) a. I don't never have no problems.
'I don't ever have (any) problems.' (AAVE; Green, 2002, p. 77)
- b. I didn't say nothing.
'I didn't say anything.' (Outer Hebrides; Tubau, 2016, p. 144)²
- c. None of them couldn't do anything.
'None of them could do anything.' (Outer Hebrides; Tubau, 2016, p. 148)

This phenomenon has been attested in a number of non-standard English varieties, including Appalachian English (AppE) (Blanchette, 2013; Wolfram & Christian, 1976), African American Vernacular English (AAVE)³ (Blanchette, 2013; Green, 2002; Labov et al., 1968), West Texas English (WTE) (Foreman, 1999) and Belfast English (Henry, 1997), among others.

NI is a non-standard syntactic phenomenon in which a sentence opens with an initial-negative auxiliary or modal followed by a non-specific indefinite subject (2a) or a quantificational subject (2b) (Matyiku, 2018). Despite its inverted word order, NI sentences are not questions since they receive a negative reading as well as a falling intonation pattern, typical of declaratives (Foreman, 1999). By way of illustration, consider the following sentences.

- (2) a. Ain't nothin' broken on me to fix.

¹ The non-standard NI phenomena that this paper examines should not be confused with the standard Negative Inversion, where a negative constituent, such as 'hardly', is raised to a higher Spec FocP position driven by its focal nature (Matyiku, 2018). In order to distinguish between both constructions, many scholars refer to this non-standard phenomenon as 'negative auxiliary inversion' (Blanchette & Collins, 2018; Green, 2014; Mayiku, 2017).

² Tubau's (2016) examples represent instances of NC in Traditional Dialects of British English gathered from the Freiburg English Dialect (FRED) corpus. In line with Tubau (2016), this paper includes the dialectal area where the examples were produced.

³ Different terms have been used in the literature to refer to this particular variety, such as 'African American English' (Green, 2002) or 'Black English' (Labov et al., 1972). In this paper, the abbreviation AAVE will be employed.

‘There is nothing broken on me to fix.’

(New York AAVE; Labov et al., 1968, p. 284)

b. Won’t everybody fit in that car.

‘Everybody won’t fit in that car.’

(WTE; Matyiku, 2017, p. 36)

Compared to the productive character of NC in many non-standard British and American English varieties, the distribution of NI is far more restricted since it has solely been attested in certain non-standard varieties in America. For instance, cases of NI have been observed in AAVE (Green, 2002, 2014; Labov, et al., 1968; Labov, 1972; White-Sustaita, 2010), Appalachian English (Blanchette, 2017; Wolfram & Christian, 1976), West Texas English (WTE) (Foreman, 1999; Matyiku, 2016, 2017), Texas Vernacular English (Salmon, 2018) and Southern White English Vernacular (Martin & Wolfram, 1998), among others. Interestingly, none of the papers that I have read for this dissertation deal with cases of NI in non-standard British English varieties. In this regard, White-Sustaita (2010) also questions why this phenomenon is not productive in non-standard British varieties.

A number of researchers have sought to determine the syntactic realization of NC and NI, driven by the fact that, in both cases, negation does not follow the same rules as in Standard English (StE). With regard to this matter, the purpose of this paper is to review the different syntactic approaches that have been proposed in the literature so as to account for the realization of negation in NC and NI.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 will describe the syntactic properties of the phenomena under investigation. The next section will be devoted to the different analyses that have been proposed for the previously mentioned non-standard negation phenomena. This section will be further subdivided into two subsections each dealing with one phenomenon, NC and NI, respectively. Both sections will present the proposals in a chronological order. Lastly, I will provide a conclusion.

2. Description of the phenomena

In Standard English, the sentence in (3a) receives a negative reading, whereas the sentence in (3b) does not. The example in (3b) in which a negative constituent (‘no breakfast’) co-occurs with sentential negation (‘-n’t’) is grammatical in StE only if it receives a Double Negation (DN) interpretation. DN is a construction in which two negations neutralize each other, leading to a semantically affirmative reading of the sentence (Blanchette, 2013).

(3) a. I saw nobody. (Tubau, 2016, p. 144)

b. John didn't eat no breakfast.

[[It is not the case that] John ate no breakfast]

(= 'John ate breakfast') (Blanchette, 2013, p. 2)

In non-standard English varieties that allow NC, sentences (3a) and (3b) are interpreted as semantically negative, even though (3b) contains more than one instance of negation. NC displays no one-to-one correspondence between overtly realized negative marking and logical semantic negation, as exemplified in (1) above and in (4) below.

(4) a. They don't have no work in the winter.

'They do not have any work in the winter.'

(AppE; Wolfram & Christian, 1976 p. 109)

b. Sometimes it didn't have no chalk, no books, no teacher.

'Sometimes there weren't any chalk, any books or any teacher.'

(AAVE; Green, 2002, p. 77)

c. I never saw nothing.

'I didn't see anything.'

(Belfast English; Henry, 1997, p. 103)

NC is a highly socially stigmatized phenomenon in English (Blanchette, 2017). In particular, this phenomenon is thought to convey a compositionality violation as it deviates from standard rules of English in terms of logic. Yet, from a descriptive and theoretical point of view, this stigmatization is not justified since NC and DN are equally productive. Actually, this construction is the norm in many Romance and Slavic languages (Horn, 2010), as illustrated in (5).

(5) a. Nessuno ha detto niente.

'Nobody said anything.'

(Italian; Zanuttini, 1997, p. 10)

b. Milan nevidi nikoho.

'Milan doesn't see anybody.'

(Czech; Zeijlstra, 2004, p. 250)

As a matter of fact, evidence from Old English and Middle English has revealed that NC constructions were the default option even in Standard English (Anderwald, 2002;

Blanchette, 2017). By way of illustration, consider the following sentences in Old English (6) and Middle English (7).

(6) *Old English* (thirteenth century; ANCRIW,II.97.1168)

he ne cnaweð nan mon

he NEG knows no man

‘He knows no man.’

(7) *Middle English* (sixteenth century; TORKINGT-E1-H, 58.328)

We might not make no sale in Christmasse week

We might not make no sale in Christmas week

‘We might not make any sale in Christmas week.’

(Wallage, 2012, p. 10)

Thus, it is clear that, on analyzing this construction from a purely linguistic perspective, there is no room for stigmatization. Regarding its syntactic properties, three patterns of NC can be distinguished: (i) NC as a result of sentential negation followed by one or more negative constituents, (ii) NC emerging from the combination of two negative constituents with a lack of sentential negation, and (iii) NC as a result of sentential negation preceded by a negative subject.

Several studies have reported that the most common pattern of NC is that in which the sentential negator (‘-n’t’) is followed by one or more negative constituents (Anderwald, 2002; Smith, 2001). For instance, the sentences in (8) exemplify this first pattern.

(8) a. We don't go nowhere.

‘We are not going anywhere.’ (Belfast English; Henry, 1997, p. 103)

b. I wisna sick or nothin’, ye ken.

‘I wasn’t sick or anything, you know.’ (Buckie; Smith, 2001, p. 115)

NC is also grammatical in contexts in which no overt sentential negation (‘-n’t’) is present. For example, consider the sentences in (9) where multiple negation is realized by means of pre-verbal ‘never’ and a post-verbal constituent.

(9) a. He never paid no dole.

‘He didn’t pay any dole.’ (Denbighshire, Wales; Tubau, 2016, p. 145)

b. We never had no sword dance.

‘We didn’t have any sword dance.’ (Isle of Man; Tubau, 2016, p. 145)

A third pattern of NC is what Labov (1972) refers to as “Negative concord to pre-verbal position” (p. 786). In this case, NC is realized by means of a negative constituent in subject position followed by sentential negation (‘-n’t’), as illustrated in (10).

(10) a. None of ‘em can’t fight.

‘None of them can fight.’ (AAVE; Labov et al., 1972, p. 786)

b. And beyond that nobody couldn’t go.

‘And beyond that nobody could go.’
(Glamorgan, Wales; Tubau, 2016, p. 148)

c. Nobody couldn’t handle him.

‘Nobody could handle him.’ (AppE; Wolfram & Christian, 1976 p. 112)

According to Anderwald (2002) and Smith (2001), the realization of this third pattern is less frequent and not productive in all the varieties of English that feature NC. For instance, the results of Smith’s (2001) qualitative analysis of NC dialects showed that this third type of NC is not produced by Buckie speakers and non-standard Inwood speakers.^{4,5} In the same line, Henry (1997) illustrates that Belfast English speakers reject this pattern.

(11) a. *Nobody didn’t go to the party.

‘Nobody went to the party.’

b. *Nothing wouldn’t surprise me.

‘Nobody would surprise me.’

(Henry, 1997, p. 103-104)

As previously mentioned, this paper is aimed at analyzing a second syntactic phenomenon: Negative Inversion (NI). In addition to the presence of Subject-Auxiliary Inversion, one of the most salient properties of this phenomenon is its subject restriction. NI is only productive with two types of subjects: (i) indefinite, non-specific subjects, including ‘nobody’ and ‘anybody’ (12) and (ii) quantificational subjects, including ‘many people’ and ‘everybody’ (13) (Matyiku, 2017, 2018).

⁴ Buckie is a dialect spoken in a small town on the northeastern coast of Scotland (Smith, 2001).

⁵ Inwood refers to a neighborhood of upper Manhattan, in the U.S. State of New York (Labov, et al., 1968).

(12) a. Don't nobody want to go to the movies.
'Nobody wants to go to the movies.' (AAVE; Green, 2002, p. 79)

b. Didn't one red cent make it back to the community.
'Not any money made it back to the community.'
(AAVE; Green, 2014, p. 216)

(13) a. Don't many of them live around here.
'Many of them don't live around here.'
(New York AAVE; Labov et al., 1968, p. 286)

b. Didn't everybody see the fight.
'Not everybody saw the fight.'
(WTE; Matyiku, 2017, p. 37)

As shown in (14), definite and specific subjects, including pronouns, proper names, definite descriptions (DPs introduced by 'the') and possessive subjects cannot appear in subject position in NI constructions (Foreman, 1999; Matyiku, 2016). Matyiku (2018) also notes that there are certain quantifiers that are rejected as possible subjects in NI constructions, as it is the case of 'some' (15a) and 'somebody' (15b).

(14) a. *Didn't Jamie see the fight. (WTE; Matyiku, 2016, p. 357)

b. *Couldn't my aunt from Chicago do more than she did.
(Southern White English Vernacular, AAE; Martin & Wolfram, 1998, p. 26)

c. *Won't the student answer the question.. (WTE; Foreman, 1999, p. 216)

(15) a. *Didn't some (of the students) show up. (AAVE; Green, 2014, p. 131)

b. *Can't somebody get in the hall. (WTE; Matyiku, 2017, p. 45)

In Blanchette and Collin's (2018), experimental work is carried out that confirms the existence of a subject restriction on NI. These authors conducted a survey in which participants were asked to rate a number of NI sentences on the basis of their naturalness.⁶ Results confirmed the aforementioned description, as negative subjects, 'any', 'many', and 'every' received higher scores than proper names, 'some', 'few' and definite DPs.

⁶ The sample consisted of mostly Appalachian English speakers, a couple speakers of AAVE and a few speakers from different areas of the United States including Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, the Pacific Northwest and Texas (Blanchette & Collin's, 2018).

Another prominent property of this phenomenon is that it is restricted to negative contexts. Data from several varieties has shown that NI explicitly requires negation of the auxiliary or modal in initial position (Green, 2002; Matyiku, 2018; White-Sustaita, 2010). In fact, the unacceptability of the sentences in (16) reveals that NI is not compatible with affirmative sentences.

- (16) a. *Can nobody beat 'em. (AAVE; Parrott, 2000, cited in Matyiku, 2018, p. 2)
 b. *Will everybody fit in that car. (WTE; Matyiku, 2017, p. 68)

Further research has shown that NI operates under the condition that sentential negation must appear in its contracted form '-n't' (Matyiku, 2017, 2018). Notice that the following sentences, where negation appears in its full form, cannot license NI.

- (17) a. *Will any of the students not go to the party. (WTE; Matyiku, 2017, p. 69)
 b. *Will not everybody fit in that car. (WTE; Matyiku, 2016, p. 259)

NI can also co-occur with NC, not only when the subject of the sentence is negative (18) (Foreman, 1999; Matyiku, 2018), but also when there are additional negative constituents in the sentence (19) (Matyiku, 2018).

- (18) a. Wouldn't no gentleman act like that.
 'A gentleman wouldn't act like that.' (WTE; Foreman, 1999, p. 210)
 b. Didn't nobody live in there then.
 'Nobody lived in there then.' (AppE; Blanchette, 2017, p. 9)
- (19) a. Ain't nobody know about no club.
 'Nobody knows about any club.' (AAVE; Labov, 1972, p. 812)
 b. Cain't nobody do nothin' right.⁷
 'Nobody can do anything right.' (WTE; Foreman 1999, p. 213)

Besides, NI is not solely restricted to occurring in main clauses as it can appear in relative clauses (20a) and embedded clauses (20b) introduced by an overt complementizer, such as 'that' or 'if' (Labov et al., 1968; Matyiku, 2018; White-Sustaita, 2010).

- (20) a. I know a way that can't nobody start a fight.

⁷'Cain't' is a WTE variation of the StE form 'can't' (Foreman, 1999).

‘I know a way that there won’t be anybody who can start a fight.’

(New York AAVE; Labov et al., 1968, p. 286)

b. Let me know if don’t nobody wanna ride the bus.

‘Let me know if not a single person wants to ride the bus.’

(AAVE; Green, 2014, p. 135)

Typically, this phenomenon is optional to the speaker and a non-inverted counterpart is also possible, as in (21b) and (22b) (Foreman, 1999; Matyiku, 2018, White-Sustaita, 2010).

(21) a. Ain’t nobody know about no club.

b. Nobody ain’t know about no club. (AAVE; Labov, 1972, p. 812)

(22) a. Didn’t everybody go to the party.

b. Everybody didn’t go to the party. (WTE; Foreman, 1999, p. 215)

However, not all varieties behave similarly in this respect. According to Foreman (1999) and Matyiku (2018), in AAVE, speakers accept non-inverted NI constructions in contexts in which the auxiliary and the subject are the only elements in the sentence bearing negative morphology (23b). In contrast, WTE speakers prefer inverted word order in similar contexts (24b).

(23) a. Wouldn’t nobody ride that bus.

b. Nobody wouldn’t ride that bus. (AAVE; Green, 2014, p. 135)

(24) a. Ain’t none of the students done their homework.

b. *None of the students ain’t done their homework. (WTE; Foreman, 1999, p. 207)

If there are additional negative constituents in the sentence, a non-inverted counterpart is acceptable in WTE, as in (25b) (Foreman, 1999).

(25) a. Ain’t nobody doin’ nothin’ wrong.

b. Nobody ain’t doin’ nothin’ wrong. (WTE; Foreman, 1999, p. 206-207)

Ultimately, it is noteworthy that some varieties, such as Texas Vernacular English and Alabama English, permit the co-occurrence of NI constructions with a clause-initial expletive (26) (Matyiku, 2018; White-Sustaita, 2010); whereas AAVE does not accept this pattern (27) (Green, 2002; Matyiku, 2018; White-Sustaita, 2010; Wolfram & Martin,

1998).

(26) a. There wouldn't nothin' go down through there.

'There wasn't anything that would go down through there.'

(Alabama English; Feagin, 1979, cited in White-Sustaita, 2010, p. 431)

b. They won't anybody hit us.

'Anybody won't hit us.' (Texas Vernacular English; Salmon, 2018, p. 62)

(27) a. * There/It didn't nobody laugh.

b. * There/It can't no man round here get enough money to buy they own farm.

(AAVE; Martin & Wolfram, 1998, p. 26)

As previously illustrated, both NC and NI, like StE, are rule-governed and generated by grammar. Thus, the key issue is to discover the principles that rule their underlying grammar.

3. Approaches to the analysis of nonstandard negation phenomena

3.1. Negative Concord

Taking into account that NC is not possible in Standard English, many scholars have assumed that the syntax of negation in NC-varieties of English differs from that of the StE, as Blanchette (2013) noted. Yet, the difference in terms of grammar between standard and non-standard English still remains a debatable issue. Therefore, in what follows, I will review the most prominent syntactic analyses that have been proposed to account for both NC and DN constructions.

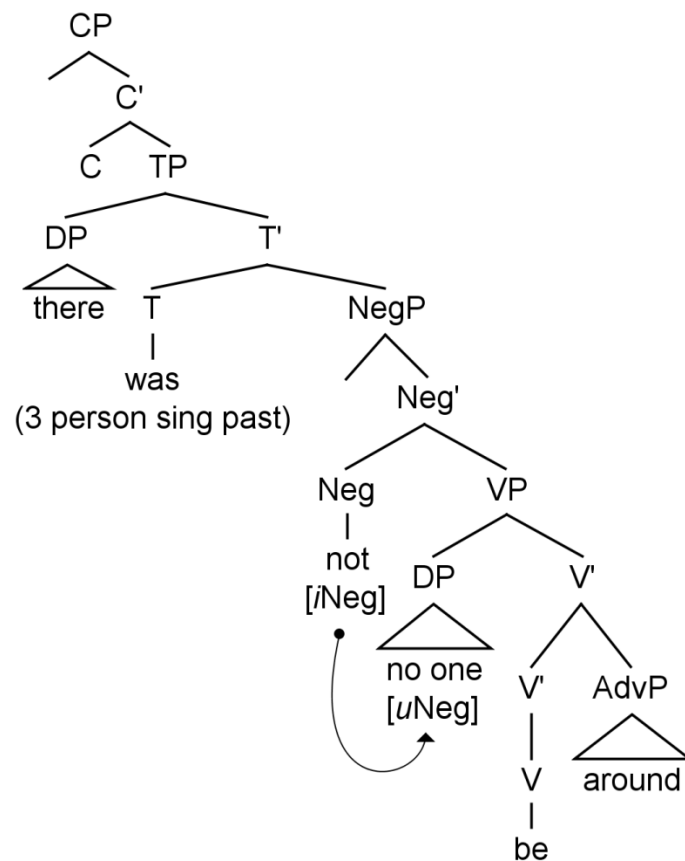
3.1.1. An Agree Approach to NC (Weiss, 2002)

Weiss (2002), in his analysis of NC, proposes a theory that blends together the semantics and syntax of negation. Typically, it has been assumed that negative indefinites, such as 'nobody', are inherently negative. In contrast, Weiss (2002) advocates for an Agreement approach to negation, claiming that English negative indefinites lack negative force; hence, they must enter in an agreement relation with a semantically negative element in the syntax. In order to do so, Weiss's (2002) proposal adopts the NegP hypothesis, in assuming that sentential negation involves a functional head that projects in the syntax to a phrasal level (NegP) (Ouhalla, 1997).

Weiss (2002) interprets n-indefinites as pronouns bearing an uninterpretable negative feature [*u*NEG] that needs to enter in an agreement relation with an interpretable negative feature [*i*NEG], which is expressed by sentential negation ('not' or its contracted form '-n't'). As such, the author claims that, in non-standard English varieties, a NC reading results from the establishment of an agreement relation between sentential negation residing in the head of NegP and n-indefinites. Under this view, the syntactic representation of a sentence displaying NC (28a) would be the following.

(28) a. There was not no one around. (Weiss, 2002, p. 138)

b.



(The arrow indicates the direction of the agree relation)

In (28b), sentential negation 'not' remains as the unique item that introduces negative force in the sentence, whereas the morphologically negative indefinite 'no one' merely mirrors the scope of sentential negation 'not'.

Weiss (2002) argues that Standard English, in harmony with other Germanic languages, is a “hidden NC-variety” (p. 138) in which negation operates under the same agreement relation as in non-standard English varieties. Yet, in StE, the negative particle in head position is mandatorily deleted at the PF due to normative pressure (Weiss, 2002). Therefore, according to this analysis, a non-standard English sentence, such as (28a) (repeated here as (29a)), and a sentence produced by a StE speaker (29b) have a similar syntactic representation to the one exemplified in (28b).

- (29) a. There was not no one around. (Weiss, 2002, p. 138)
 b. There was no one around. (Weiss, 2002, p. 137)

Weiss himself notices that fragment answers, like (30), constitute a potential problem for his analysis of n-indefinites as semantically non negative elements since ‘nothing’ in (30) is interpreted as semantically negative, even though there is no overt negative head in the sentence. Hence, it is very unlikely that n-indefinites are inherently non negative. Further examination of fragment answers by Weiss (2002) reveal that *any*-indefinites are excluded as possible fragment answers. According to the author, these results are unexpected given that both items are thought to share similar semantic meaning.

- (30) Speaker A: What did you see?
 Speaker B: Nothing.
 (Weiss, 2002, p. 139)

Weiss (2002) provides two plausible explanations for this behavioral difference. On the one hand, this mismatch between *any*-indefinites and n-indefinites may be associated with pragmatics, rather than with grammatical restrictions; on the other hand, fragment answers could be interpreted as the outcome of a VP-ellipsis operation, where everything except for the focalized n-indefinite is elided. As such, the n-indefinite would carry negative force.

However, Blanchette (2013) notices that Weiss’s (2002) analysis of n-indefinites is problematic for instances of NC that lack sentential negation. For example, consider the sentences (31) and (32) in Appalachian English, produced by the same speaker.

- (31) (He) walked through the hall and never said nothing.
 ‘He walked through the hall and never said anything.’
 (32) (He) wouldn’t sell land to nobody.

‘He wouldn’t sell land to anybody.’

(AppE; Blanchette, 2013, p. 6)

The sentence in (31) exhibits a case of NC without an overt sentential negator. Following Weiss (2002), this sentence should be analyzed as a PF-deletion of sentential negation in the head of NegP, given that sentential negation is the only element in the sentence introducing negative force. However, as noted by Blanchette (2013), it remains unclear why this deletion operation would apply in a variety like AppE, in which NC is allowed.

Furthermore, this proposal fails to predict within-speaker variation. Taking into account that both sentences in (31) and (32) were produced by the same speaker, Blanchette (2013) highlights that this hypothesis does not provide a justified explanation for the fact that this PF-deletion rule applies variably in speakers of AppE, but it does not allow variation in StE. Besides, if it is the case, as claimed by Weiss (2002), that the grammar of StE covertly deletes sentential negation, one would expect (31), which lacks overt sentential negation, not to be completely rejected by StE speakers. Yet, as highlighted by Blanchette (2013), there is no evidence confirming the view that StE speakers favor sentences in which no overt sentential negator is realized (31) over sentences like (32).

Regarding StE, I argue that this analysis of n-indefinites fails to predict DN. If we assume that negative indefinites are semantically non negative elements, it is not clear how a sentence like (3b) (repeated as (33) here), which is an attested DN construction in StE, receives a semantically affirmative reading.

(33) John didn’t eat no breakfast.

[[It is not the case that] John ate no breakfast]

(= ‘John ate breakfast’)

(Blanchette, 2013, p. 2)

Thus, Weiss’s (2002) hypothesis presents certain inconsistencies since the analysis of n-indefinites as non-negative elements is problematic in NC and DN contexts. At the same time, it fails to interpret both inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation among English speakers.

3.1.2. Multiple Agree Approach (Zeijlstra, 2004)

A major contribution to the field was driven from Zeijlstra’s (2004) Multiple Agree Approach. Zeijlstra (2004) carries out a hypothesis, the premise of which establishes an agreement relation between multiple instances of [*u*NEG] features and one negative

operator (*Op* \neg) in spec NegP. Although this hypothesis shares certain assumptions with Weiss's (2002) Agree approach, such as the identification of n-indefinites as semantically non-negative elements, it considers a number of distinctions that the aforementioned theory does not.

Zeijlstra (2004) indicates that Universal Grammar (UG) projects two alternate manifestations of negation: semantic and syntactic negation. On the one hand, semantic negation exhibits a one-to-one correspondence between semantic and morphological negation, i.e., each negative particle correlates with an instance of semantic negation. On the other hand, negation can also be realized through syntactic negation, by assuming the presence of a negative operator that dominates all negative elements in the sentence.

Basing on this semantic/syntactic distinction, the author distinguishes between the so-called Double Negation (DN) languages and Negative Concord (NC) languages. In this regard, DN languages manifest semantic negation in that every negative marker receives a lexically negative reading. Therefore, they cannot produce NC constructions.

In contrast, NC languages presuppose the presence of a unique negative operator that introduces the negative force, while the remaining negative elements in the sentence just reflect its presence. In the case of NC languages, Zeijlstra (2004) makes a further subdivision, assuming that Strict NC languages, such as non-standard English, contain a sentential negator that lacks negative force and Non-Strict NC languages, like Italian, consist of a sentential negator with an identifiable [*i*NEG] feature that stands as the realization of the negative operator.

As noted by Zeijlstra (2004), evidence of this distinction between Strict and non-Strict NC languages comes from the fact that, in Strict-NC languages, the position of the negative operator does not coincide with that of sentential negation. For instance, Zeijlstra claims that, in Strict NC languages, non-subject Negative Polarity Items (NPI) may appear to the left of sentential negation, while this is not allowed in non-Strict-NC languages. By way of illustration, consider the examples in Czech (34a) and Spanish (34b).

(34) a. Ani nohu jsem (tam) nevidel.

Neg-even a-leg-ACC.SG I-am (there) neg-seen

'I haven't been seeing anyone.'

(Czech; Zeijlstra, 2004, p. 245)

b. *Ni una sola alma no he visto

Neg-even a single soul not I-have seen

'I haven't seen anyone.'

(Spanish; Zeijlstra, 2004, p. 245)

The grammaticality of (34a) verifies that the object NPI is under the scope of a negative operator that appears higher in the structure; on the contrary, in (34b), the object is not under the scope of negation as the negative operator is realized by means of sentential negation *no* (Zeijlstra, 2004). As such, these sentences confirm Zeijlstra's (2004) distribution of NC languages.

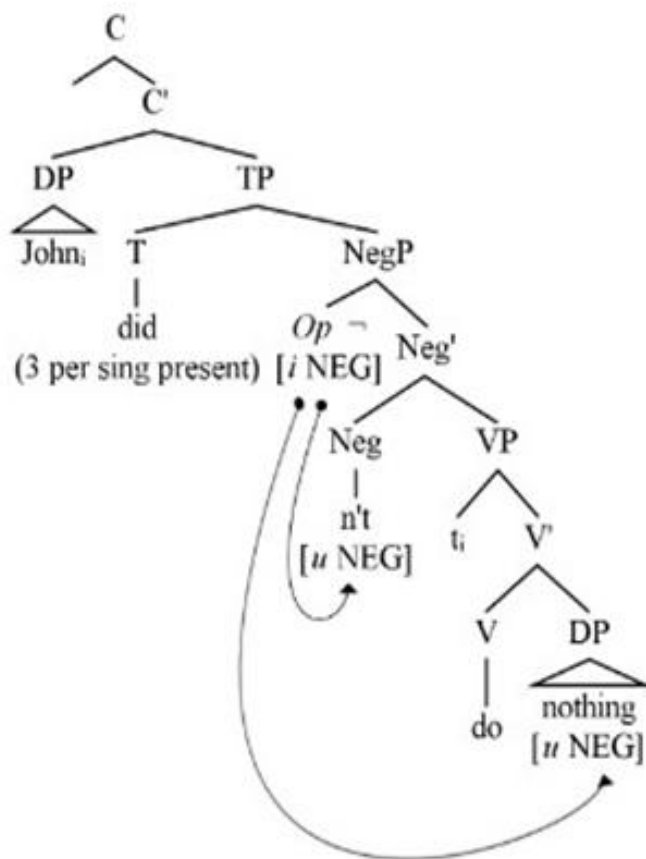
In particular, I will revise the syntactic realization of non-standard English. As previously mentioned, it is assumed that, in non-standard English, negation is a syntactic phenomenon, projecting a NegP. In addition, this theory considers that all negative elements are specified for [*uF*] except for a negative operator (*Op* \neg) in spec NegP position. On this account, Zeijlstra (2004) proposes that the feature-checking of these negative elements is achieved by means of a multiple agreement relation between the several instances of [*uF*] and the identifiable [*iF*] in the negative operator. For instance, the sentence in (35) illustrates this point clearly.

(35) a. John didn't do nothing.

‘John didn’t do anything’

(Zeijlstra, 2004, p. 258)

b.



(Adapted from Zeijlstra, 2004, p. 258, ex. 57)

(The arrows indicate the direction of the agree relation)

In (35b), the negative operator in the spec NegP position c-commands sentential negation ('-n't') in the head NegP and n-indefinite 'nothing'. This way, their negative [*u*F] is checked and deleted. Consequently, the sentence receives a semantically non-affirmative reading, despite containing more than one morphologically negative element.

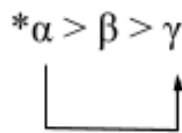
I claim that Zeijlstra's (2004) analysis, unlike Weiss's (2002) proposal, explains why NC does not require the presence of an overt sentential negator. Given that the negative operator introduces negative force in the sentence, the presence of an overt sentential negator is nonessential as it does not actively contribute to the semantics of the sentence. Thus, a NC reading would be achieved by means of a multiple agreement relation between the negative operator and the morphologically negative constituents in the sentence.

However, taking into account that the NegP appears below TP in the structure, I suggest that it is not yet clear how a negative constituent in subject position has its [*u*NEG] feature checked by the negative operator, given that it is not c-commanded by it and the checking requires c-command. One possible explanation could be that the negative constituent enters in a multiple agreement relation in its base-generated spec VP position prior to undergo movement to spec TP.

Regarding the status of StE, this approach supports Weiss's (2002) view that StE comprises an underlying NC grammar. As noted by Zeijlstra (2004), the first argument that discards the DN status of StE results from the fact that StE is dependent on syntactic negation, with the negative marker 'n't' as the head of the NegP. Hence, this variety could not be labeled as a DN variety since no semantic negation is realized. Additional support comes from the similar behavior of *any*-words in StE and *no*-words in NC languages. *Any*-words in StE indicate the negative reading of a sentence in a way that resembles that of *no*-words in NC languages (Zeijlstra, 2004). Yet, as I noticed for Weiss's (2002) analysis before, this analysis of StE does not explain why a StE speaker would give a DN reading to the sentence in (35a).

Furthermore, Zeijlstra himself observes that one major limitation of his approach is the fact that it constitutes a violation of the Defective Intervention Constraint (DIC), proposed by Chomsky (2001). DIC refers to a locality condition that outlaws the establishment of an agreement relation between a probe and a goal if there is an inactive goal between them (Chomsky, 2001).

(36)



(α , β and γ agree and $>$ represents a c-command relation)(Zeijlstra, 2004, p. 248)

In (36), the agreement relation (α, γ) is blocked by β since β is an inactive matching goal that has established a prior agreement relation with another probe. In addition, Zeijlstra (2004) notices that, in a context in which the feature of β is still active (i.e. β has not entered in an agreement relation), multiple agreement between α and β and α and γ cannot be established.

(37)

$$*\alpha > \beta > \gamma$$

(α , β and γ agree and $>$ represents a c-command relation) (Zeijlstra, 2004, p. 248)

Following Chomsky's (2001) DCI, a multiple agreement operation cannot occur in sentence (35) as sentential negator ('n't') in head position is a barrier for an agreement between the negative operator and the n-indefinite. However, Zeijlstra does not follow Chomsky's approach of DIC, but the one proposed by Hiraiwa (2001). In contrast to Chomsky (2001), Hiraiwa (2001) proposes a less strict DIC that allows a probe to agree with multiple goals in its c-commanding domain. As such, within Zeijlstra's proposal, the sentence in (35) is possible as both negative elements are c-commanded by the same negative operator.

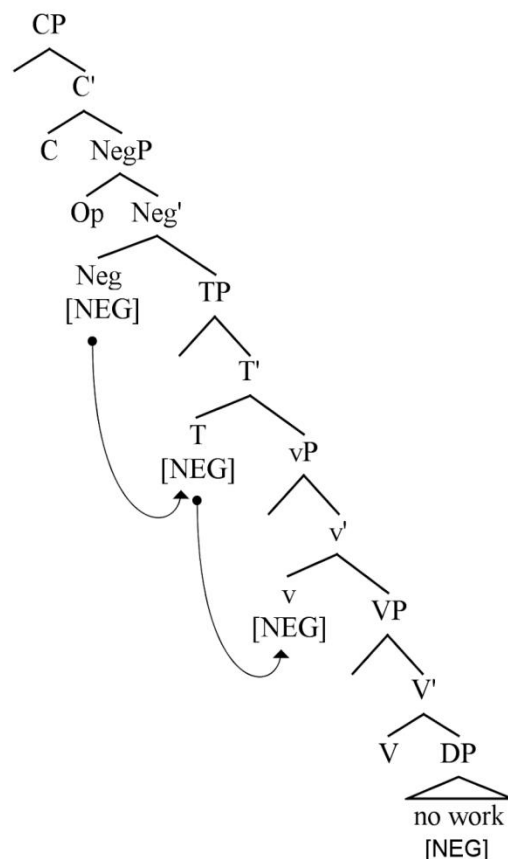
As we have seen in this section, although Zeijlstra's (2004) proposal provides a wider analysis of NC, this hypothesis has problems in trying to account for negative constituents in subject position and DN reading of StE.

3.1.3. Feature Spreading Approach to NC (Blanchette, 2013)

Blanchette (2013) argues for a Feature Spreading approach to NC. In particular, her analysis is similar to Weiss's (2002), in that she considers all varieties of English, including StE, to be underlying NC varieties (Blanchette, 2013). Yet, contrary to Weiss's (2002) and Zeijlstra's (2004) analysis of indefinites as elements lacking negative force, Blanchette (2013) argues that negative elements are semantically negative in all English varieties.

Blanchette's (2013) proposal adopts Tortora's (2009, as cited in Blanchette, 2013) feature spreading hypothesis. Tortora (2009, as cited in Blanchette, 2013) claims that the feature [finite] spreads downward from the head of TP, where it is merged, to all syntactic heads within the verb's extended projection. Assuming Tortora's (2009, as cited in Blanchette, 2013) account of feature spreading, Blanchette (2013) advocates that the negative [neg] feature is originated in the head of NegP and it spreads downward from the head of NegP to the head of vP, formatting a feature chain, called The [neg] Chain. This approach is illustrated in (38).

(38)



(Adapted from Blanchette, 2013, p. 19, ex. 32)

(The arrows indicate the direction of the feature spreading)

Nevertheless, if we assume that this system affects only head positions within the vP, the DP 'no work' will be stranded as it belongs to a different extended projection. In this regard, Blanchette (2013) claims that the spreading of the [neg] feature into the vP gives rise to the visibility of the DP to the sentential negation. This is to say, the DP 'no work' in (38) contributes to the negative reading of the sentence due to the presence of the [neg] feature in the vP.

In addition, Blanchette (2013) claims that the [neg] feature of the DP and that of The [Neg] Chain are interpreted as a single sentential negation. In fact, this reading stems from the fact that both instances of the [neg] feature are identical and both apply within the same phrase. As such, in this hypothesis, NC is the result of a single semantic negation, consisting of, at least, one member of The [Neg] Chain and a negative constituent (Blanchette, 2013).

Regarding the effectiveness of Blanchette's (2013) feature spreading approach, I argue that a particular advantage of applying this system might be that it licenses cases of NC without an overt sentential negator. By way of illustration, consider the previous example in (31) (repeated here as (39)).

(39) (He) walked through the hall and never said nothing.

'He walked through the hall and never said anything'.

(AppE; Blanchette, 2013, p. 6)

As mentioned above, NC requires the presence of one member of The [Neg] Chain and a negative constituent. If we interpret that the position of the negative marker, i.e. head NegP position, is occupied by the negative adverb 'never', this particular restriction will be satisfied.

In contrast to Weiss (2002) and Zeijlstra's (2004) analysis, the third pattern of NC (NC to pre-verbal position) does not seem to be problematic for this proposal. Although Blanchette noted that this particular type of NC was not taken into consideration when developing the proposal, I would like to acknowledge the reason why this third pattern does not contradict her hypothesis. For example, the sentence in (10c) (repeated here as (40)) displays this type of NC.

(40) Nobody couldn't handle him.

'Nobody could handle him.' (AppE; Wolfram & Christian, 1976, p. 112)

This sentence consists of a negative constituent in spec TP position and sentential negation ('-n't') in head NegP position. If we assume that 'nobody' is base-generated in spec of the lower VP, this element would stand as a negative constituent located out of The [Neg] Chain. On account of Blanchette's (2013) approach, I argue that, by means of the [neg] spreading throughout the chain, the negative constituent would become visible and identical to the [neg] feature of the chain. Once all negative elements are organized in a way that they contribute to a single semantic reading of the sentence, the negative constituent would undergo movement to spec TP position. As a result, sentential negation ('-n't') would stand as a member of the chain and 'nobody' as an independently merged negative element.

Regarding the distinction between NC and DN, Blanchette (2013) argues that the feature spreading approach can be applied to both phenomena. In the case of DN, the

author states that this reading is subject to contextual restrictions and provided two plausible explanations: (i) DN as a result of pragmatic contrast and (ii) DN as a locality restriction. Yet, for reasons of space, this paper will not go into the details of DN, but it will be taken into consideration as future object of research.

Nevertheless, Blanchette herself notices that her analysis seems to encompass a compositionality violation in not assuming that each instance of [neg] feature constitutes a negation on its own. However, Blanchette (2013) argues that this analysis is compositional since the negation component of the sentence that is transferred over the semantic module constitutes “a single negative object” (p. 23) due to the incorporation of all negative features to one single negation; yet, I believe that the underlying mechanism of agreement between the chain and independently merged negative constituents may require further explanation.

As illustrated above, all the hypotheses analyzed in this paper contain certain limitations; however, it could be concluded that Blanchette’s (2013) analysis provides the most comprehensive account for this phenomenon. Still, it is noteworthy to highlight that Weiss’s (2002), Zeijlstra’s (2004) and Blanchette’s (2013) analysis do not include NC to pre-verbal position as part of the phenomenon, even if this particular pattern is attested in some varieties of English. In this regard, further research is needed to reveal the reason for its ungrammaticality in certain varieties of English.

3.2. Negative Inversion

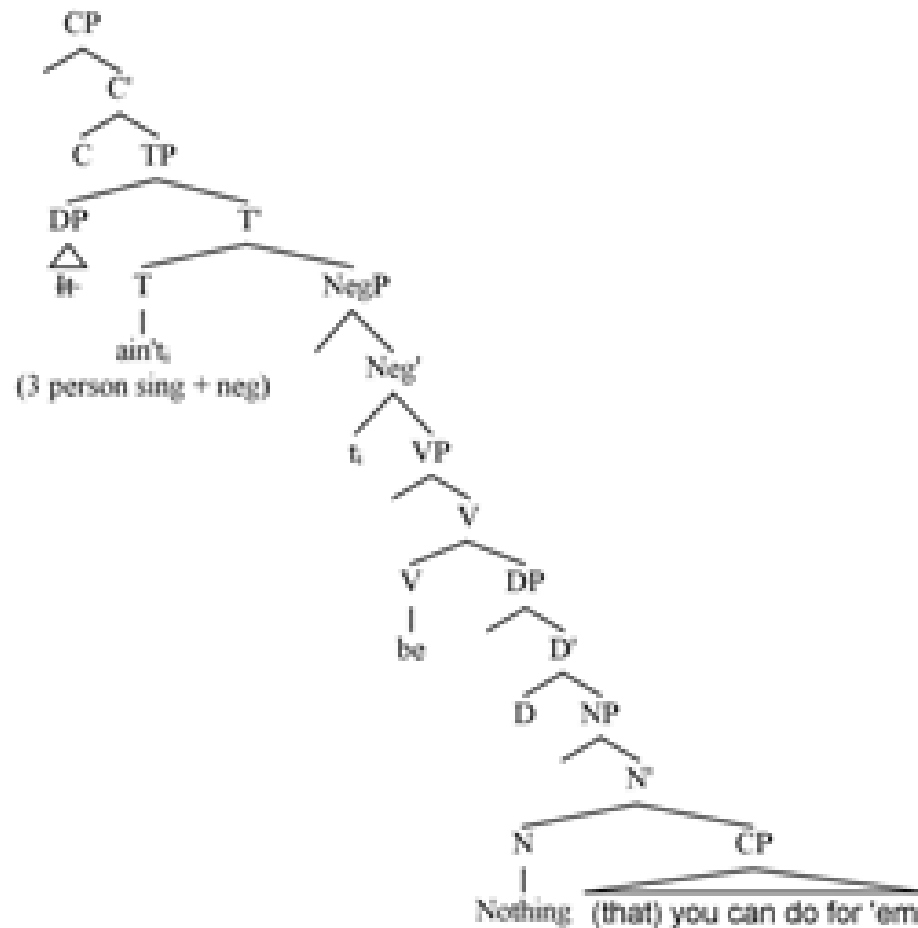
So far this paper has focused on NC. This section will discuss the syntactic representation of NI. Labov et al. (1968) provides the first analysis of NI, in which NI sentences are interpreted as the outcome of two distinctive processes: (i) deletion of an expletive pronoun or (ii) movement of the auxiliary to a higher position (C) over the subject. On this basis, the present paper is about to analyze both approaches together with a third hypothesis proposed by Foreman (1999).

3.2.1. The Existential Approach (Labov et al., 1968)

Labov et al. (1968) puts forward the Existential Approach, the premise of which correlates a sentence displaying NI with an existential construction marked by a null expletive. On this basis, the sentence in (41a) would be represented as in (41b).

(41) a. Ain’t nothin’ you can do for ‘em. (Labov et al., 1968, p. 284)

b.



Under this analysis, the sentence in (41a) results from a deletion of the expletive. Thus, inversion is not involved since the logical subject of the sentence (DP 'nothing') remains in its base-generated position. Labov, et al. (1968) claims that sentences in which the indefinite is followed by an additional predicate support this proposal. For instance, this is evident in (42) where the co-occurrence of the indefinite 'nothing' with an additional predicate cannot be derived from a single inversion operation.

(42) Ain't nothin' broken on me to fix.

'There is nothing broken on me to fix.' (AAVE; Labov et al., 1968, p. 284)

According to Labov et al. (1968), the validity of this approach is further supported by sentences with two instances of tense marking, suggesting the presence of a second clause. This is the case of (43), which contains two overt tense realizations.

(43) Ain't nothin' went down.

(Labov et al., 1968, p. 284)

White-Sutatita (2010) points out certain strengths of the Existential Approach. On account of this proposal, the co-occurrence of NI sentences with overt expletives is predicted, given that the spec position in IP would not be occupied by the logical subject of the sentence (White-sustaita, 2010). This way, the presence of an expletive in example (26a) in Alabama English and in example (26b) in Texas Vernacular English is justified.

Another advantage of this approach is that it is compatible with embedded NI sentences, as previously illustrated in (20). Given that the head position of the CP is occupied by an overt complementizer, the expletive can be originated in spec IP position and further deleted (White-sustaita, 2010).

Furthermore, as White-Sustaita (2010) notes, the final strength of this analysis is associated with the presence of the Definiteness Effect (Milsark, 1974), which points out that definite NPs cannot stand in 'there'-existential constructions. Given that NI is not compatible with definite subjects, White-Sustaita (2010) claims that the Existential Approach explains why this ban on definite NPs applies to NI and 'there'-existentials.

Nevertheless, this proposal has a number of limitations. Labov et al. (1968) recognizes that this approach cannot account for sentences in (44), where an auxiliary or modal different from 'ain't' is employed.

(44) a. Can't nobody stop it.

(Labov et al., 1968, p. 285)

'Nobody can stop it.'

b. Didn't nobody see it, didn't nobody hear it.

(Labov et al., 1968, p. 285)

'Nobody saw it, nobody heard it.'

Similarly, Foreman (1999) notes that this limitation can be applied to WTE, where NI can occur with any auxiliary that can be negated, such as 'shouldn't' or 'wouldn't'.

This proposal is also problematic for the analysis of NI sentences with positive subjects in WTE. As illustrated by Foreman (1999), NI in WTE is compatible not only with the quantifier 'many', but also with a wide range of positive subjects. For instance, empirical data revealed that proportional determiners like 'half' can be present in NI constructions, but cannot in there-existential sentences (Foreman, 1999). Compare (45a) and (45b) below.

(45) a. Didn't half the students do their homework

‘Half of the students did not do their homework.’

- b. *Are there half the students outside?

(Foreman, 1999, p. 211-212)

In the same line, Foreman (1999) notices that evidence from the combination of this phenomenon with tag questions has drawn similar conclusions. Given that tag questions require the presence of the subject in spec IP position, under Labov, et al.’s (1968) proposal, one would expect the expletive to appear in tag questions. However, notice that this is not the case in (46b).

- (46) a. Ain’t no man gonna cheat on a woman like that, is he?

‘No man is going to cheat on a woman like that, is he?’

- b. *Ain’t no man gonna cheat on a woman like that, is there?

‘*There is no man going to cheat on a woman like that, is there?’

(Foreman, 1999, p. 212)

As we mentioned before, although this analysis accounts for certain type of sentences, such as (41a), it fails to fully explain all occurrences of NI.

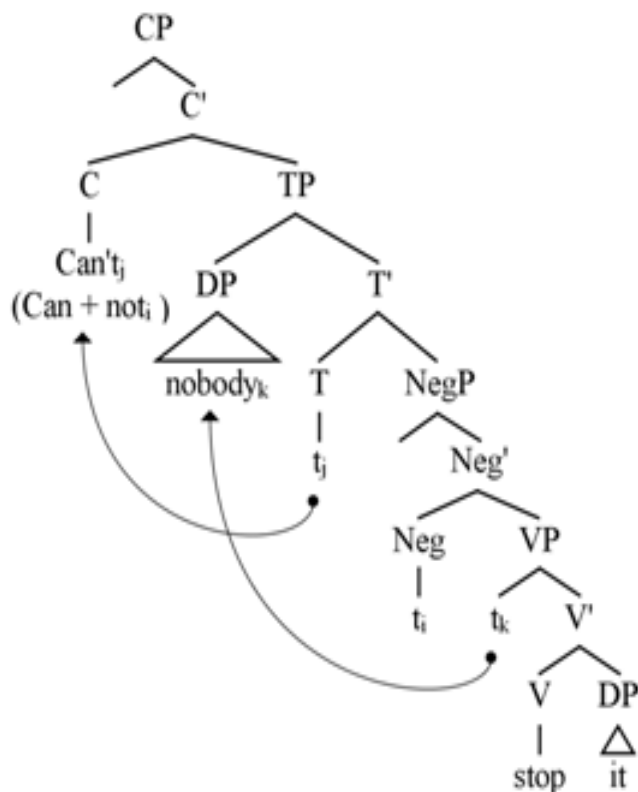
3. 2.2. The Aux-to-C Approach (Labov et al., 1968)

Having noticed that the expletive deletion theory was problematic for certain type of sentences, Labov et al. (1968) argues that sentences like (42a) undergo an additional subject-auxiliary inversion operation by analogy with question formation. As such, the underlying structure of (44a) would be the following (replicated here as (47)).

- (47) a. Can’t nobody stop it.

(Labov et al., 1968, p. 285)

b.



(the arrows indicate movement)

As illustrated above, the modal verb is raised to the head of CP and the negative indefinite ('nobody') undergoes movement to spec IP. Notice that, in this second approach, the subject is moved into spec TP rather than remaining in its base-generated spec VP position.

In particular, Labov et al. (1968) reports that this hypothesis is supported by cases of NI marked by the presence of a clause initial modal or auxiliary different from 'ain't', in which an expletive deletion operation cannot occur.

Besides, White-sustaita (2010) highlights that this approach accounts for the incompatibility of NI with overt expletive subjects in AAVE since the negative indefinite NP and the expletive compete for the same spec TP position in the structure. Yet, I argue that, if we assume this analysis applies to all instances of NI, then, it cannot be explained why NI is compatible with an overt complementizer in other English varieties.

Despite the strong points of this proposal, Foreman (1999) perceives that the behavior of non-standard NI differs from that of questions and StE NI in various respects.

On the one hand, while, in negative questions, negation does not have to undergo inversion with the auxiliary to C (48a), in NI inversion, this is not possible, i.e., negation cannot remain stranded from the auxiliary, as illustrated in (48b).

- (48) a. Will John not be going to the party?
b. *Will none of the students not go to the party. (Foreman, 1999, p. 213- 214)

Furthermore, as shown in (20), non-standard NI can appear in embedded clauses introduced by an overt complementizer (Matyiku, 2018). Foreman (1999) notices that, in contrast with this fact, subject-aux inverted questions cannot appear in complement clauses. In other words, questions cannot appear in embedded clauses since the complementizer ‘that’, located in the head of CP, blocks the raising of the auxiliary to that particular position. Therefore, Foreman (1999) suggests that the auxiliary in NI moves into an alternate position below the head CP.

The gap between these constructions widens when discussing the type of subjects they license. In this regard, Foreman (1999) argues that definite DPs are possible in StE NI (49a) and questions (49b) but not in non-standard NI (50).

- (49) a. Never would I do such a thing.
b. Are the teachers going to the party? (Foreman, 1999, p. 215)
- (50) *Didn’t the teachers go to the party. (Foreman, 1999, p. 215)

Additionally, the Existential Approach and the Aux-to-C approach have raised a number of questions. For instance, given that NI is not possible with affirmative sentences, as illustrated in (16b) (repeated here as (51)), Foreman (1999) inquires what motivates the restriction of NI to negative contexts.

- (51) *Will everybody fit in that car.
‘Everybody will fit in that car.’ (WTE; Matyiku, 2017, p. 68)

As exemplified above, this analysis is still problematic since inconsistencies between non-standard NI and questions reveal that this phenomenon does not reproduce the typical inversion operation of questions.

3. 2.3. The NegP_i Approach (Foreman, 1999)

In line with Labov et al.'s (1968) Aux-to-C approach, Foreman (1999) also considers that NI involves an inversion of the auxiliary. However, in this case, he notices that this phenomenon resembles StE 'not' initial constructions. Consider the parallel configuration of the following sentences.

- (52) a. Not everybody finished their homework.
b. Didn't everybody finish their homework. (Foreman, 1999, p. 215)

Foreman's (1999) analysis is based on the similarity between these constructions in terms of the scope of negation. He claims that, in both (52a) and (52b), negation has clausal wide scope. This is to say, these sentences can only be interpreted as 'it is not the case that every person finished his or her homework'.

In contrast, this is not the case for the sentence in (53), which bears a scope ambiguity (Foreman, 1999).

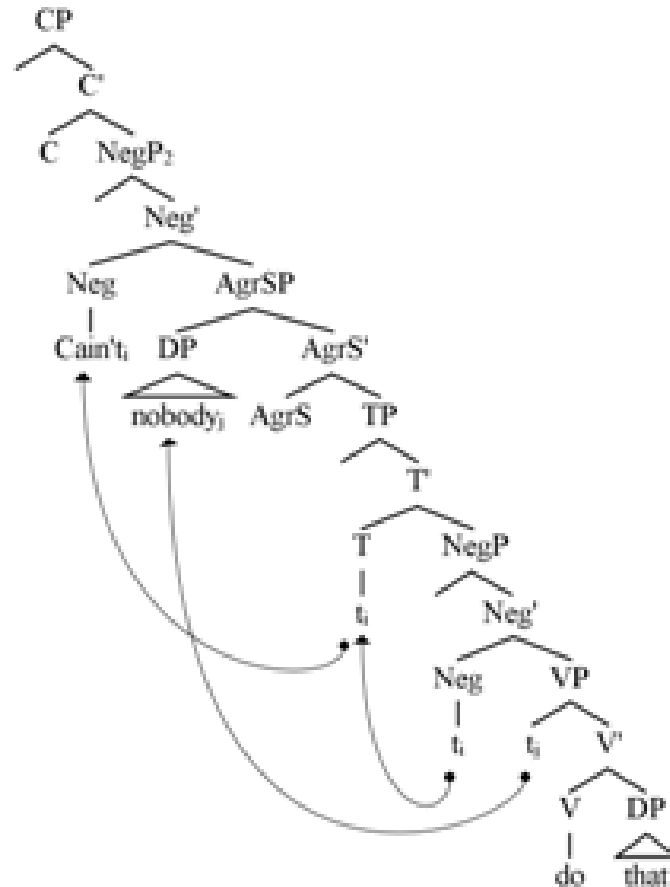
- (53) Everybody didn't go to the party. (Foreman, 1999, p. 215)

Negation in (53) can have wide scope ('it is not the case, that that every person went to the party') or narrow scope ('for everyone, it is the case that none went to the party'). On this basis, Foreman (1999) puts forward a novel account to NI in which the auxiliary raises to an additional Neg Phrase (NegP₂), located above the subject, to receive a wide scope interpretation.⁸ Thus, a NI sentence in WTE like (54a) is structured as in (54b).

- (54) a. Cain't nobody do that. (Foreman, 1999, p. 216)

⁸ Foreman (1999) follows Pollock (1989, cited in Foreman, 1999) in using NegP₂ to distinguish it from NegP.

b.



(Adapted from Foreman 1999, p. 216, ex. 31)

(The arrows indicate movement)

In line with the Aux-to-C approach, the subject (DP ‘nobody’) moves from its canonical position to occupy the subject position, in this case, spec AgrSP. Alternatively, the negative auxiliary does not shift to head CP, but to the head of NegP₂.

As noted by Foreman (1999), this novel configuration provides an explanation for the inconsistencies found in previous analyses. For instance, by leaving the head of the CP void, this structure allows NI to take place in embedded clauses as both the auxiliary and the complementizer settle distinct positions. Besides, Foreman (1999) and Matyiku (2016) claim that the insertion of an additional NegP reveals why NI is restricted to negative contexts.

With regards to the ban of NI on certain type of subjects, Foreman (1999) states that the source of the incompatibility between NI and definite subjects is associated with the presence of higher projection in the sentence to which Definite DPs must raise. Foreman

follows Kiss (1996) in assuming a surface Referential Projection (RefIP), first developed by Beghelli and Stowell's (1997). As such, Foreman proposes that the definite subject undergoes movement to RefIP, placed between CP and NegP₂, to check its existential feature. Thus, the finite DP cannot participate in the NI construction as it is no longer under the scope of negation. For instance, a sentence like '*Cain't John do that' (Foreman, 1999, p. 217) is ungrammatical as the definite nominal is not displaced to the left- peripheral RefIP position.

However, I believe that one major limitation of Foreman's (1999) proposal lies in that it does not consider other impossible subjects, such as quantificational subjects headed by 'some'. In particular, he describes the presence of a RefIP as a solution for the restriction on definite subjects, making no reference to other type of subjects. Thus, it would be interesting to analyze whether this system also accounts for the ungrammaticality of NI with certain quantificational subjects.

For reasons of space, no separate section will be devoted to the analysis of White-Sustaita's (2010) and Matyiku's (2017) proposals. Yet, it is interesting to mention that the most recent approach to NI, provided by Matyiku (2017), builds heavily on Foreman (1999), in assuming that NI sentences result from a movement of the auxiliary to a higher NegP₂.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have analyzed the different syntactic approaches that have been proposed for NC and NI. Even though all of the revised proposals contain certain limitations, I consider that, in the case of NC, Blanchette (2013) provides the most comprehensive approach to NC since it accounts for the syntax of the three different types of NC. Still, further research is needed to fully acknowledge why NC to pre-verbal position is not possible in some non-standard varieties of English.

Regarding NI, Foreman's (1999) analysis resolves the problems encountered in both analyses provided by Labov et al. (1968), by assuming a movement of the auxiliary to a second NegP, located below CP. With regard to the incompatibility of NI and definite subjects, Foreman proposes that the definite DP needs to undergo movement to a higher RefIP; hence, NI cannot occur since the DP is not under the scope of negation. Future

research could explore whether this system is also applicable to other impossible subjects in NI, as it is the case for quantification subjects headed by ‘some’.

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