

Demonic Negation and the interaction of sentential polarity and Focus in Modern Irish

The aim of this study is to investigate the interaction between negation and Focus in the left periphery. The scope and semantics of negative preposing and constituent negation with respect to quantified expressions have been analysed by Collins (2020) and Etxepare & Uribe-Etxebarria (2021), and the relation between negative polarity and Focus has received considerable attention in recent years, having been investigated by Aboh (2010), De Clercq (2013, 2020), Garzonio & Poletto (2015), and Poletto (2017). With different implementations, the latter authors propose a left-peripheral projection which encodes sentential polarity, related to or even identified with FocP, which is either overtly or covertly filled by a suitable operator in the course of the derivation. I will argue that this insight is correct and propose that a negative projection is present above FocP in the left periphery, in addition to the lower PolP in the IP layer (Laka 1990). The reason why Irish is interesting in this respect is that it displays a rigid Neg-First condition (Acquaviva 1996) requiring negation and monotone decreasing quantifiers to occur exclusively in the left periphery. Sentential negation is expressed on negative complementisers, which always take wide scope (Ostrove 2013). To substantiate my claims, I will capitalize on a peculiar Irish emphatic construction, dubbed ‘demonic negation’ (DemNeg) (cf. McCloskey 1979, 2001, Ó Siadhail 1980, 1991), exemplified in (1):

- (1) a. **dheamhan** a gclois-feadh sé béicíl na ngasúr
demon aN hear-COND he shouting the.GEN.PL children.GEN
‘He wouldn’t hear the shouting of the children’
b. **dheamhan duine** a chonaic mé
demon man aL saw I
‘Not a man did I see’

Given its negative import, DemNeg only occurs in the C-domain. Irish has a series of complementisers which appear when an A’-dependency is realised. These complementisers occur with relatives, (reduced) clefts, Focus and *wh*-movement, and pronominal resumption. In (1a) DemNeg scopes over a clause introduced by the complementiser *aN*, indicative of pronominal resumption in the embedded clause (McCloskey 2001). In (1b), the embedded clause is headed by an XP followed by the *aL* complementiser, which is employed when binding of a copy occurs in the embedded clause. In (1a) DemNeg scopes over a clause in which all the argumental positions are filled and, despite the presence of the *aN* complementiser, no overt resumptive element appears in the embedded clause (cf. McCloskey 2002). On the other hand, the fact that the XP to the right of *dheamhan* can be an NP, PP, or AP indicates that *dheamhan* is not a negative quantifier exclusively taking NP complements, like English *no* (cf. (3)). A structural explanation of DemNeg must then account for the appearance of the resumptive complementiser *aN* in (1a), as well as for the position of the XP following *dheamhan* in (1b). I propose the following structures for (1a) and (1b):

- (2) a. [_{ForceP} [_{TopicP} [_{NegP} *dheamhan* [_{FocP} [_{FinP} *Op_i* *aN* [_{PolP} Pol° [_{TP} T° [_{VP} [_{EventP} *pro_i*] V°]]]]]]]]]]]]
b. [_{ForceP} [_{TopicP} [_{NegP} *dheamhan* [_{FocP} XP_i Foc° [_{FinP} *aL* [_{PolP} Pol° [_{TP} T° [_{VP} V° t_i]]]]]]]]]]]]

In (2), *dheamhan* is base-generated in the left-peripheral NegP, which accounts for its wide scope in both cases, while the lower PolP is the landing site of the finite verb, as recently argued by McCloskey (2017) and Bennett et al. (2019). (2a) follows McCloskey (2002), who claims for cases of adjunct extraction, which similarly present an *aN* complementiser without an overt resumptive pronoun, that a null temporal or locative *pro* is present in the embedded clause which agrees with a null operator base-generated in SpecCP (here FinP), below the adjunct itself. Translating McCloskey’s intuition into Higginbotham’s (1985) account, I thus propose that the resumptive form of the complementiser in the case of (1a/2a) is due to agreement of *Op* with the *pro* which corresponds to the event argument, situated in an EventP which is the syntactic realisation of the E-position proposed by Higginbotham (1985, 2005) (cf. Davidson 1966). EventP is projected in the V-domain, the syntactic domain associated with the event

description (cf. Svenonius & Ramchand 2014). The present analysis is thus in line with Acquaviva's (1996, 1997) original understanding of sentential negation as existential closure of the event variable by a negated existential operator. In (2b), where I adapt McCloskey's (2002) treatment of *aL* dependencies for ease of exposition, the XP moves to SpecFocP, triggering the *aL* complementiser. Thus, emphatic negation of the XP below DemNeg in (1b/2b) is syntactically decomposed as Focus of the XP plus the negative import of DemNeg. In addition to the interpretation in (1b), similar to that of Negative Preposing in Germanic (Haegeman 2000, Büring 2004), DemNeg can also have an interpretation as constituent or contrastive negation, as confirmed by the possibility of a continuation with non-concessive *but* (Horn 1989):

(3) Dheamhan isteach ná amach a bhí aici, ach ina staic i lár an gheata
 demon in nor out aL was at.her but in.her post in middle the.GEN gate.GEN
 'It would go neither in nor out, but stayed right in the middle of the gate'

Still, DemNeg has wide scope over the embedded clause, not only over the XP. This is demonstrated by the fact that it licenses NPIs and exceptives in the embedded clause:

- (4) a. Dheamhan tásc ná tuairisc a bhí le feiceáil ar **aon** channaí folmha
 demon report nor account aL was with seeing on any cans empty
 'No report nor account was to be seen on any empty cans'
- b. Dheamhan duine a bhí ann **ach** thú féin
 demon man aL was in.it but you self
 'No-one was there but you'

Moreover, assuming that the XP following DemNeg is in Focus explains both the fact that it bears stress, and also the use of DemNeg in fragment answers, derivable as ellipsis after Foc^o (Merchant 2004):

- (5) A: An bhfuil toitín agat? B: Dhemahan toitín (a-tá agam)
 C.INT is cigarette at.you demon cigarette aL-is at.me
 'Do you have a cigarette?' 'Not a cigarette (do I have)'

Finally, a further confirmation for the structural analysis in (2) comes from the fact that topics appear to the left of *dheamhan*:

- (6) Seachas na súile, dheamhan mórán suntais a thabhar-fadh duine di
 apart.from.the.PL eyes demon much attention.GEN aL give-COND man to.her
 'Apart from the eyes, one would not pay much attention to her'

The facts described so far are consistent with the view that sentential polarity is encoded in a left-peripheral position, where it can be realised either overtly or covertly (De Clercq 2020). While Irish is well-known in the literature for expressing sentential negation on C-heads, the data presented here show that the language employs a further left-peripheral position above FinP for the expression of sentential polarity, where DemNeg is externally merged. The morphological form of the complementiser in (1a/2a) forces an analysis of *dheamhan* as base-generated in the left periphery, but this analysis can be extended to the cases in (1b/2b) in a 'mixed' approach whereby DemNeg is merged in NegP and the XP is subsequently moved to SpecFocP. The availability of this fronting strategy provides valuable insights into the syntactic relation between sentential polarity and Focus, and into the scope and interpretation of left-peripheral negation.

SELECTED REFERENCES: Acquaviva, P. 1996. Negation in Irish and the representation of monotone decreasing quantifiers. In Borsley, R. D., and I. Roberts (eds.). *The syntax of the Celtic languages. A comparative perspective*. Cambridge: CUP • De Clercq, K. 2020. Types of negation. In Espinal, M. T., and V. Déprez (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Negation*. Oxford/New York: OUP • Etxepare, R., and M. Uribe-Etxebarria. 2021. Three strategies for constituent negation. Presentation at IGG 46, University of Siena • Higginbotham, J. 1985. On semantics. *Ling. Inq.* 16(4) • McCloskey, J. 2017. Ellipsis, polarity, and the cartography of verb-initial orders in Irish. In Aboh, E., E. Haeberli, G. Puskás, and M. Schönenberger (eds.). *Elements of comparative syntax: theory and description*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.