# Surprise Negation Sentences (Snegs)

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## 1. Surprise Negation: a puzzling case study

By "Surprise Negation" we define a particular type of negative marker belonging to the class of "**expletive negations**" as discussed in Zanuttini (1997), Zeijlstra (2004) and Horn (2010), i.e. one which does not reverse the polarity of the sentence, does not license NPI, etc. Pragmatically, Snegs are limited to a restricted context in which a speaker is struck by an **unexpected** fact (hence, the label "Surprise") and s/he wants to communicate it (hence, the **affirmative polarity** and the **assertive force**). Snegs display a **marked intonation** blending acoustic features pertaining to both questions and exclamatives (hence the *?!* combined diacritic):

(1)    Ieri,    **non** è         scesa dal    treno Maria ?!
       (Yesterday Sneg be.3${}^{rd}$sing.pres. got    off-the train Maria)
       "Yesterday, Maria got off the train!"

## 2. Empirical support for Snegs

The preliminary question is whether Snegs are syntactically encoded or they are just a semantic/pragmatic phenomenon. We want to argue that the former hypothesis is true.

### 2.1 Ethical Dative as a diagnostics for Sneg
In Italian, the same negative marker *non* can express both a propositional negation (PN) and a Sneg. However the presence of an **Ethical Dative** (ED) (see Cuervo 2003; Boneh and Nash 2012) can only be associated with the Sneg reading (in the marked intonation):

(2) a. Ieri,    **non** è         scesa dal    treno Maria?/?!
       (Yesterday  not  be.3${}^{rd}$ sing.pres. got   off-the train  Maria)                    (Sneg/PN)
     "Yesterday, Maria did not get off the train / Yesterday, Maria got off the train!"
    b. Ieri,    **non ti**    è         scesa dal    treno Maria?!         (Sneg/*PN)
     (Yesterday  not  you.ED  be.3${}^{rd}$ sing.pres. got    off-the train  Maria)
     "Yesterday, Maria got off the train!"

The co-occurrence of ED and negative marker *non* qualifies as a diagnostics for Snegs.

### 2.2 Snegs and the Left-periphery: the incompatibility with Focus Phrases
A further proof that Snegs are syntactically encoded is that a contrastive focalized element cannot be present (3c), whereas it is usually permitted in affirmative (3a) and negative clauses (3b):

(3) a.  GIANNI è            sceso dal    treno  (non Maria)                    (Affirmative)
       (Gianni   be.3${}^{rd}$ sing.pres. got    off-the train  (not Maria))
       "Gianni got off the train, not Maria"
    b.  GIANNI non è            sceso dal    treno (non Maria)                        (PN)
       (Gianni    not be.3${}^{rd}$ sing.pres. got   off-the train  (not Maria))
       "Gianni did not get off the train but Maria did"
    c. * GIANNI non  ti      è             sceso dal    treno (non Maria)?!       (*Sneg)
       (Gianni    Sneg you.ED be.3${}^{rd}$sing.pres. got   off the train   (not Maria))

However, Snegs are completely acceptable with Topic Phrase, witness CLLD structures:

(4) Maria non te       l'       ho                    vista scendere dal    treno?!
   (Maria Sneg you.ED cl.3$^{rd}$sing have.3$^{rd}$ sing.pres. seen get        off the train)
   "I saw Maria get off the train!"

Notably, a pre-verbal subject-like phrase should be analyzed as a hanging topic, as the presence of a right dislocation implies:

(5) Maria  non  ti       arriva                *(lei)?!
   (Maria Sneg you.ED arrive.3$^{rd}$ sing.pres she)
   "Maria arrives!"

### 2.3 Snegs as root clauses

When it comes to the  root vs embedded clausal types, Snegs qualify as root. Consider two different types of embedded clauses: one introduced by a bridge verb (6), selecting a full-fledge CP layer (Benincà & Poletto 2004), and another introduced by a factive predicate (7), selecting a reduced CP layer (Haegeman 2005). Snegs cannot co-occur with any of them regardless the CP-structure.

(6)  Luca dice             che non (ti)    è               scesa dal    treno Maria
   (Luca say.3$^{rd}$sing.pres. that not you.ED be.3$^{rd}$sing.pres. got   off-the train Maria)
   "Luca says that Maria didn't get off the train"                        (PN/*Sneg)

(7) Mi      dispiace            che non (ti)   sia               scesa dal    treno Maria
   (To me regret.3$^{rd}$sing.pres. that not  you.ED be.3$^{rd}$sing.pres.subj. got   off the train  Maria)
   "I regret that Maria didn't get off the train"                        (PN/*Sneg)

These data support the hypothesis that Snegs are not pragmatic or semantic phenomena; they are rather encoded syntactically in a specific way.

## 3. Excluding simple-minded solutions

Starting from the fact that Snegs share some semantic and prosodic features with other linguistic structures, i.e. Rhetorical questions and Exclamatives, we could considerer them as belonging to some more general linguistic categories. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

### 3.1 Snegs are not Rhetorical questions

Snegs share with negative rhetorical questions (NRQ) a few properties: (i) they have an assertive force, (ii) they involve a negative marker (even though their meaning is affirmative) and (iii) they display an interrogative intonation. However Snegs can be distinguished from NRQ for at least two reasons: (i) NRQs are not necessary root clauses (8) unlike Snegs; (ii) typical yes-no RQ-element such as *After all* (Han 2002) cannot occur in Snegs (9).

(8) Dopo tutto, dimmi cosa  non ha                    fatto Laura  per Luca?    (NRQ/*Sneg)
   (After all    tell-me what not  have.3$^{rd}$ sing.pres. done Laura  for Luca)
   "After all, tell me what Laura hasn't done for Luca?"

(9) *Dopo tutto, non  ti       è               scesa dal    treno Maria?!
   (After all,     Sneg you.ED be.3$^{rd}$ sing.pres. got   off the train Maria)

### 3.2 Snegs are not Exclamatives

An alternative analysis is to considerer Snegs as negative exclamative clauses since they share an expletive negation, but this is not the case. According to Zanuttini and Portner (2003), exclamatives are factive in nature, they generate scalar implicatures, and they cannot be an answer to a question. Snegs do not match at least two of these features: i) Snegs are not factives inasmuch they cannot be embedded in factive predicates (7); ii) Snegs can be an answer to a question:

(10) A: Cosa succede?
        What's happen?
   B: a. *Che cosa non ha fatto Gianni!                          (*Exclamative)
          What did not John do!
      b. Non è                    scesa dal     treno Maria?!              (Sneg)
          "Maria got off the train!"

## 4. Toward a structural analysis

In the previous sections we have seen that Snegs are neither rhetorical questions nor exclamatives and, at the same time, we showed that they have a specific syntactic behavior: i) they are affirmative in meaning and do not license NPI; ii) they are root clauses; iii) they are incompatible with FocP but allows TopP; iv) the pre-verbal subject is in topic position; v) they are disambiguated by the presence of an ED.

### 4.1 Proposal

To explain all these facts concerning Snegs, we propose that the entire TP is raised to Spec-Foc° and *non* occupies the position of a higher head in the CP-field (Rizzi 1997) licensing phonetically null $Foc^o$ head:

(11)   $[_{CP} \dots [_{X^\circ} non ] \dots TP Foc^\circ [\dots t_{TP} \dots] ]$

We assume that the Sneg-morpheme activates all *foci* c-commanded by it, i.e. at least FocP in CP and FocP in TP (see Belletti 2002 for the latter structure). We also propose that the head *non* is externally merged and, due to its propositional nature, it selects the entire TP as an argument (which is forced to raise in the structure to get a local configuration).

### 4.2 Some consequences

The data seen in the previous sections follow for principled reasons, given the analysis in (11):

(i)     Snegs host topicalized elements but not focalized ones: if the [Spec,FocP] is already occupied by the TP, there is no more space to license another focalized element in the same clause; on the contrary, the topicalized elements are free to occupy the Top positions in a higher portion of the CP-structure (Benincà & Poletto2004).

(ii)    Snegs are root phenomena: usually embedded clauses are endowed with a reduced CP layer and they lack the FocP (see Haegeman 2004). For this reason Snegs cannot be embedded. As regards the bridge-verb clauses, selecting a full-fledge CP layer (Benincà & Poletto 2004), the incompatibility with Snegs is a consequence of an independent restriction: bridge verbs do not allow the focalization of the inflected TP (12b) but only of the TP-internal elements (12a). Given that Snegs focalize the entire TP, they cannot be embedded even in bridge-verb clauses.

(12) a. Dico             che, ROMA, pensano        sia           sporca (non NY)
       (Say.3$^{rd}$ sing.pres. that Rome think.I$^{st}$plur.pres. be.3$^{rd}$subj.pres. dirty (not NY))
       "I just say that ROME they consider dirty (not NY)"
    b. * Dico           che, CHE ROMA SIA       SPORCA pensano
     (Say.3$^{rd}$sing.pres. that, that Rome be.3$^{rd}$subj.pres. dirty      think.I$^{st}$plur.pres.)

(iii)         The unavailability of the pre-verbal subject: since the Sneg morpheme activates all foci in its c-command domain, the subject can only occupy the lower focus position right above the VP (Belletti 2002). If the subject is in a pre-verbal position, it is topicalized (since the focus is already occupied by the TP).

(iv)        If *non* in Snegs is not a real instance of a propositional negation, as follows by assuming that the Sneg-morpheme is generated in the CP layer rather than in a TP internal position (Zanuttini 1997), then it is easy to explain why Snegs cannot host NPI, since the adequate negative context is lacking.

Along with (i)-(iv), our analysis also predicts that WH-elements cannot co-occur with Snegs because they both compete for the same Spec-FocP position (distinguish Snegs from NRQs, which allow WH-elements):

(13)      Da     quale treno non (ti)      è              scesa Maria?/?!        (PN/*Sneg)
       (From which train not you.ED be.3$^{rd}$sing.pres. got   Maria)
       "From which train didn't Maria get off?"

## 5. Toward a comparative analysis of Snegs

Our analysis also suggests a comparative program of research, especially since Snegs obligatorily involve a post-verbal subject position. The immediate prediction is that Snegs should not exist in non-pro-drop languages. As for independent evidence on the existence of a Foc° head licensed by the negative morpheme, interesting data come from Latin. In this language, in *nonne* – used in rhetorical questions - the clitic head *–ne* shows up that is arguably the head of a high CP-phrasal head combined with the negative morpheme *non* in Snegs (see Ernout and Thomas 1953 for a detailed analysis of Latin *-ne*). *Vidisti-ne Romam?* (Did not you see Rome?) vs. *Nonne Romam vidisti?* (S/he not saw-*ne*; "Didn't s/he see Rome?!"); and notably *ne* is also a subordinate conjunction in "negative" final clauses in Latin.

*Belletti* (2002), *Aspect of the low IP area*, in Rizzi (eds.) The structure of CP and IP, Oxford University Press, Oxford: 16-51. **Benincà - Poletto** (2004), *Topic, Focus and V2: Defining the CP sublayers*, in Rizzi (eds.) The structure of CP and IP, Oxford University Press, Oxford: 52-75. **Boneh - Nash** (2012), *Core and non-core datives in French*, in Fernández & Exteparre (eds.) Variation in Datives, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 22-49. *Cuervo* (2003), *Datives at Large*, Ph.D. dissertation MIT. **Ernout - Thomas** (1953), *Syntaxe Latine*, Paris, Éditions Klicksieck. *Haegeman* L. (2004). *Topicalization, CLLD and the left periphery*, in Maienborn, Frey & Shaer (eds.) Proceedings of the Dislocated Elements Workshop, ZAS Papers in Linguistics (35): 157-192. **Han** (2002*), Interpreting interrogatives as rhetorical questions*, Lingua, (112): 201–229. **Horn** (2010), *The expression of negation*, Berlin-New York, De Gruyter Mouton. *Moro* (2003), *Notes on vocative case: a case study in clause structure*, in Schroten, Sleeman & Verheugd, Romance languages and linguistic theory, John Benjamins, Amsterdam and Philadelphia: 251– 265. *Rizzi* (1997), *The fine structure of the left periphery*, in Haegeman (eds.) Elements of grammar: A handbook of generative syntax, Kluwer, Dordrecht: 281-337. *Rowlett* (1998), *Sentential Negation in French*, Oxford University Press, Oxford. **Zanuttini** (1997), *Negation and Clausal Structure*, Oxford University Press, Oxford. **Zanuttini – Portner** (2003), *Exclamative clauses: At the syntax-semantics interface*, Language 79(3): 39–81. *Zeijlstra* (2004), *Sentential Negation and Negative Concord*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Amsterdam, LOT Publications, Utrecht.