On the interpretation of Spanish n-words[1]
Elena Herburger, USC/UMD 7/18/96

In some environments, it seems that n-words[2] like *nada, nadie, ningún* should be translated as the negative quantifiers (NQs) *nothing, nobody, no,* whereas in other context they pattern more closely to the negative polarity items (NPIs) *anything, anybody, any.* Thus, in the standard paradigm exemplified in (1) and (2), the n-words in the (a) sentences occur without a licensing negation, suggesting that they are NQs. At the same time, in the (b) sentences the negation is necessary for the n-word to be acceptable, which strongly recalls the behavior of NPIs:

(1)   a. Nadie vino

    N-body came

    b. *(No) vino nadie

    Not came n-body

    'Nobody came'

(2)   a. Yo nunca habia estado en Córdoba

    I n-ever had been to Cordaba

    b. Yo *(no) habia estado en Córdoba nunca

    I not had been to Cordoba n-ever

    'I had never been to Cordoba'/'I had not ever been to Cordoba'

On the most simple-minded analysis, (1) and (2) would indicate

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[2]The term is due to Laka (1990).

that n-words are lexically ambiguous between NQs and NPIs - the n-words in the (a) sentences are NQs, while the n-words in the (b) sentences are NPIs. Less simple-mindedly, but in a similar vein, it has been argued that n-words are lexically underspecified as to whether they are NQs and NPIs and receive the relevant feature from the syntax (cf. Longobardi 1987, cited after Zanuttini 1991): when they appear in preverbal position they are assigned the feature +no by Infl, when they appear in postverbal position they carry the feature +any, cf. also van der Wouden and Zwarts (1994).

Both the approach that treats n-words as lexically ambiguous and the approach that treats them as lexically underspecified have not seemed maximally elegant to researchers in recent years. It is not surprising then that several recent studies of n-words have resisted adopting such treatments, and aimed for univocal analysis of n-words instead. On the one hand, there is what I would like to call the NPI-analysis, which maintains that n-words are univocally NPIs, cf. e.g. Bosque (1980), Laka (1990), Suñer (1995). The opposite direction is taken by the NQ analysis, which uniformly analyzes n-words as NQs (cf. Zanuttini 1991).

Clearly, the univocal analyses of n-words are appealing, but they do not come without a cost. Both the NPI-analysis and the NQ-analysis have to provide some account of what from their perspective amounts to a 'atypical' behavior of n-words, that is, the NQ-like behavior of n-words in the case of the NPI analysis (cf. (a) sentences), and their NPI-like behavior, if one adopts the NQ-analysis (cf. (b) sentences). But even if accounting for the respective 'atypical' behaviors is not straight-forward, it would seem well worth the effort if the result is an empirically successful unified account of n-words.

The ambiguist approach can not only be faulted with a lack of elegance. It also seems to suffer from a serious empirical shortcoming (cf. Ladusaw 1993, Suñer 1995): If n-words are ambiguous between NQs and NPIs, then why can the n-words in the (b) sentences not occur **without** a licensor? Unless some

independent explanation for the gap in the paradigm in (1) and
(2) is found, this consideration clearly poses a problem for an
ambiguist approach. On the other hand, the gap is expected on the
NPI-analysis, although not on the NQ-analysis. The ambiguist
approach appears to have two problems then. Not only does it seem
inelegant, it also offers no explanation for the ungrammaticality
of the (b) sentences in (1) and (2).

This paper is an attempt to argue for an ambiguist approach
to n-words, even if it is unattractive at first sight. The main
empirical fact that I would like to draw attention to the fact,
initially observed in Zanuttini (1991), that the gap in the
paradigm illustrated in (1) and (2) is only apparent; there are
in fact postverbal n-words that function as NQs, even if they are
difficult to see because their distribution is limited. But
their scarcity, I will argue, is ultimately due to pragmatic
reasons. Consequently, in and of themselves the (b) examples in
(1) and (2) are in fact grammatical, their meaning is just so
bizarre that speakers normally reject them. It is also argued
that it is preferable analyze n-words in the (a) examples as NQs,
and not as NPIs, since this allows for a more straight-forward
analysis. At the same time, I argue that the n-words in the (b)
examples are successfully analyzed as NPIs. The result of this
is an ambiguist analysis of n-words, they are both NPIs and NQs.

1. Initial n-words as NQs:

Beginning with the n-words in the (a) examples, the first
question to ask is what is the relevant dimension along which the
(a) examples differ from the (b) examples? While the contrasts in
(1) and (2) might suggest that it is preverbal (NQ-like) vs.
postverbal (NPI-like), the standard paradigm is in fact somewhat
deceptive, as is shown in Zanuttini (1991). If we also take
examples like (3) into the picture, we can see that the relevant
dimension is not preverbal vs. postverbal, but initial vs. non-

initial, where 'initial' vs. 'noninitial', where initial' means
preverbal and not preceded by another n-word (or licensor), and
'non-initial' stands for not preverbal or preverbal but preceded
by another n-word (or licensor):

(3) Nadie nunca afirmó tal cosa
     n-body n-ever confirmed such thing
     'Nobody ever confirmed such thing'

In (3), the second n-word translates as the NPI *ever* rather than
as the NQ *never*. Although it is preverbal, it is non-initial and
it is the latter fact which is responsible for the NPI-like
interpretation of *nunca* here.

Setting apart matters of elegance for the time being, the
fact that initial n-words occur without a licensor suggests that
they are NQs. This is also supported by their meaning, which
corresponds to that of NQs in English, i.e. initial *nadie* behaves
exactly like English *nobody*.

What further indicates that initial n-words are NQs is that
when they co-occur with negation, which they can under certain
pragmatic conditions, we get a double negation. This is expected
if the n-word has negative force of its own, i.e. if it is an NQ.
Consider (4):

(4) a. A Josefina, nadie no la saluda
        to Josefina, n-body not her greets

(4) translates as 'Nobody doesn't greet Josefina', i.e. everyone
greets her. Analogously, a sentence like (5)

(5) Ninguno no vino

is a double negation, effectively meaning 'everybody came' (cf.
Laka 1990). Again, the interpretation of (4) and (5) makes sense
if the initial n-word is a NQ.

Another reason for thinking of initial n-words as NQs is
that if initial n-words were indeed NPIs and licensed by some
abstract element, then we would expect other NPIs, such as the
lexical NPIs *un real* (*a red cent*), to also be licensed in initial
position (cf. Zanuttini 1991). This, however, is generally not
the case, as the contrast between (6a,b) and (7a,b) shows - the
lexical NPIs here are not licensed in preverbal positions:

(6) a. *(No) tengo un real
    Not have a red cent
    'I haven't got a red cent'

   b. *Un real tengo
    A red cent have-I
    'I've got a red cent'

(7) a. *(No) vino un alma
    not came a soul
   b. *Un alma vino
    a soul came
    'Not a soul came'

If initial n-words are NQs, then we expect that they should have
a distribution that is different from that of lexical NPIs. The
data in (6) and (7) thus provide a third argument for saying that
initial n-words are NQs.[3]

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[3] To be fair, we should also consider the following data,
due to Bosque (1980). At first sight, they seem to suggest that
at least some lexical NPIs are licensed in initial position
without there being any visible licensor. If so, this could be
used as an argument for saying that initial n-words are also NPI
that are licensed without any visible licensor.

(i) No he estado aquí en mi/la vida
   Not have been here in my/the life
(ii) En mi/la vida he estado aquí
   In my/the life have been here

Aiming at a unified treatment, the NPI-analysis takes the similarity between NQs and the n-words in the (a) examples to be a superficial one, arguing that the n-words are indeed NPIs that are licensed in the legitimate way. Concentrating on the standard paradigm and not including examples like (3), Bosque (1980), for instance, proposes that preverbal n-words originate as postverbal NPIs that occur within the scope of a negation. They then move to a left-peripheral position ('tematización'), a movement which is followed by the deletion of the negation. On this view, the n-words in the (a) examples are NPIs and not NQs.

Similarly, Laka (1990) argues that preverbal n-words surface in a functional projection ('SigmaP'), which is headed by a silent negative head. Under this view, what licenses preverbal n-words as NPIs is that they stand in an agreement relation with the silent negative head, cf. (8).[4]
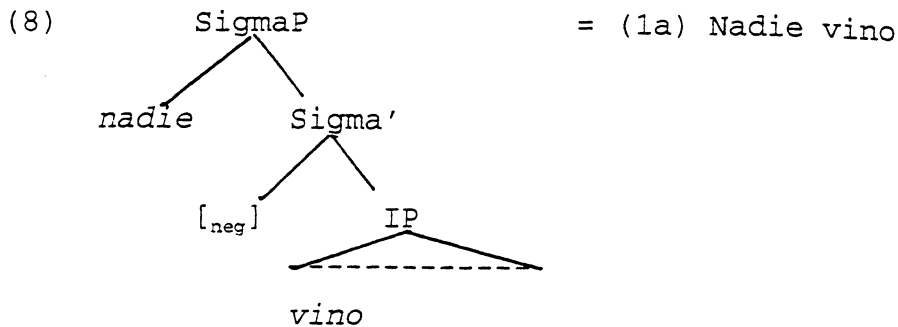

'I have never been here!'

One way to make sense out of (i) and (ii) on the current account, however, is to analyze *en mi vida/en la vida* is elliptical for *nunca en mi vida/nunca en la vida*. Depending on whether it appears initially or non-initially, *nunca* will then be analyzed as 'never' or 'ever'. If this is on the right track, then the contrast between (i) and (ii) reduces to an instance of the standard paradigm.

In this context, it is also interesting to consider (iii) vs. (iv), where the negation can be elliptical.

(iii)   I couldn't care less
(iv)   I could care less

[4]For a more elaborate analysis along similar lines, see Suñer (1995).

(8)   SigmaP   = (1a) Nadie vino

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(8)          SigmaP            = (1a) Nadie vino
            /      \
        nadie     Sigma'
                 /     \
             [neg]      IP
                      /------\
                   --------------
                     vino
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One observation that is made to support the NPI-analysis of
preverbal n-words is that other Romance languages (e.g. Rumanian,
and high register Catalan) realize the negation overtly, as shown
in (9). The same is true of medieval Spanish, cf. (10) (cf.
Bosque 1980, Suñer 1995)[5]:

(9)   Nimeni nu a venit (Rumanian)

       n-body not has come

       'Nobody has come'

(10) a. Ninguno no me quiere (Celestina)

       n-body not me likes

       'Nobody likes me'

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[5]Citing a novel by Sánchez Ferlosio, Suñer also adduces the
following dialectal data from the speech of Madrileño youth in
the 1950's:

(i)   Pues yo tampoco no te creas que habré ido más de un par
      de veces o tres
      well me n-either not you think that have-I gone more than
      a couple of times or three
      'Well me either, don't you believe that I have gone more
      than two or three times'

(ii)   ...para que ya nunca nadie no venga jamás a arreglarse a
      mi casa..
      so that n-ever n-body not come n-ever to get ready to my
      house
      '...so that nobody never ever would come to get ready in
      my house anymore...'

b. Aunque esta vida de honor, tampoco no es eterna
(Manrique)
Although this life of honor, n-either not is eternal
'Although this life of honor, is not eternal either'

Although these data are obviously significant from a historical
and cross-linguistic perspective, it is not clear how much weight
they carry for the analysis of contemporary Spanish. Notice that
we could construct a parallel argument for English: by appealing
to historical and dialectal fact, we could say that modern
Standard English NQs (*nobody, nothing*, etc.) are NPIs, because,
historically, they had to co-occur with a negative elements,
arising from 'strengthened' indefinites (cf. the Jespersen Cycle,
e.g. Horn 1989). Moreover, they still do so in certain 'negative
concord' dialects, cf. *No dogs didn't chase no cats* meaning 'No
dogs chased cats' (cf. Ladusaw 1991). Given that we do not want
to deny that *nobody* in the standard dialects of English is a NQ,
it is not clear that the data in (9) and (10) can be used as
argument for the NPI analysis.[6]

In favor of the NQ analysis of initial n-words, it may also

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[6]Adopting an NPI-analysis, Suñer (1995) argues that the
following examples of 'resumptive' negation independently support
for the claim that preverbal n-words are NPIs. The phenomenon is
shown to occur with clitic-left dislocation (i), focus movement
(ii), and echo questions (iii):

(i)   A ninguno de ellos quiera saber por qué Juan **no** les
      escribió para Navidad
      to n-one of them would-I like to know why Juan not them-
      cl wrote for Xmas

(ii) ¿En NADIE dijo Pepe que quién **no** podría confiar?
      in n-body said Pepe that who not could trust?

(iii) ¿Ninguno de los alumnos de quién **no** fueron becados?
      'None of whose students were not given a fellowship

Due to limitations of space, I will leave the discussion of these
interesting and potentially problematic data as an issue for
future research.

be noted that the NPI analysis does not account for (3), (4), (5) and (6). Thus, it does not explain why non-initial n-words that are preverbal pattern as NPIs, cf. (3). Nor does it offer an account why initial n-words can co-occur with an overt negation, cf. (4). Finally, it predicts that lexical NPIs should be acceptable preverbally, which generally does not seem to be the case, cf. (5) and (6).

Taken on its own, perhaps none of the arguments for the NQ analysis of initial n-words may be entirely conclusive. Taken together, however, they make a convincing case for treating initial n-words as NQs. This is even more true once we will take into account the fact that their are independent reasons to assume that n-words must have one interpretation where they are NQs. This will be shown in section 3. There seems no point in investing much effort and technical apparatus to show that initial n-words can be analyzed as NPIs when the NQ-analysis of initial n-words is simple and straight-forward.

2. Standard non-initial n-words are NPIs:

2.1. N-words in NPI-environments:

Turning now to the analysis of non-initial n-words in the standard paradigm, in (1b), (2b) and (3) we find that the non-initial n-word translate as NPIs rather than NQs. The same point can be made in (11). Like true NPI's, the non-initial n-words cause the sentence to be negated only once, rather than multiply:

(11) Javier nunca le pide nada a nadie
    Javier n-ever cl asks n-thing to n-body
    'Javier never asks anyone for anything'

Further support for the claim that standard non-initial n-words are NPIs comes from (12), which shows non-initial n-words in

typical NPI-environments. (The examples are due to Laka 1990,
cf. also Bosque 1980). They occur in the scope of a NQ (12a), an
adversative predicate (12b), the complement of prepositions like
sin (without) (12c), in comparatives (12d), and in the
restriction of a universal quantifier (12e):

(12) a. Nadie le dijo nada a Juan

    N-body cl said n-thing to John

    'Nobody said anything to John'

    b. Pedro duda que venga nadie

    'I doubt that anybody will come

    c. Sin nada que comer, los prisioneros murieron de hambre

    'Without anything to eat, the prisoners died of hunger'

    d. María canta mejor que ninguno de vosotros

    'Maria sings better than any of you'

    e. En esta reunión, todo aquél que tenga nada que decir,

    tendrá ocasión de hablar[7]

    'In this meeting, everyone who has anything to say will have

    a chance to talk'[8]

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[7]It should be noted that the distribution of n-words in the scope of
universal quantifiers is actually limited. The best cases involve the
determiner *todo aquel* with a relative clause that is in the subjunctive.
Sentences with *cada (each)* and *todos los* are less acceptable, if at all.

[8]It is interesting that there are some environments where NPIs
can occur in English, but where n-words are barred in Spanish.
Thus, in English *any*-type NPIs can appear in both arguments of
few, and in the restriction of *most,* but in Spanish and Italian
n-words are somewhat marginal or directly impossible in these
contexts. Similarly, in Spanish n-words are not generally
licensed in yes-no questions, unless they are rhetorical (cf.
Bosque 1980), nor are they licensed in *if*-clauses. On the other
hand, both in English and also in Italian they are licensed in
this environment. These differences in the licensing conditions
of NPIs do not show that Spanish/Italian postverbal n-words do
not function as NPIs, but they merely show that the set of
environments where Spanish n-words are licensed as NPIs is
smaller than the set of downward-entailing environments, which is
generally considered to allow for NPIs in English, cf. e.g. van
der Wouden and Zwarts (1993).

b. $\forall(x)$ person(x) $\forall(y)$ thing(y) $\neg$[asks (Javier, x, of y)][9]

These processes get the truth-conditions right. But they are
problematic because they treat the negative component of *nadie*,
for example, in two different ways, while maintaining that the
treatment is unified. When *nadie* appears initially, its negative
component is treated as semantically active, i.e. it behaves like
a regular NQ. Yet, when *nadie* functions in an NPI-like manner,
its negative component is treated as being semantically inactive,
i.e. is either considered a sheer agreement marker, or it is
deleted altogether. By doing so the NQ-analysis has the semantics
undo what is present in the syntax, and, as a consequence it runs
counter to the principle of Full Interpretation and the
compositionality of interpretation.

A further difficulty that the NQ-analysis faces, and which
it does not address, as far as I can see, is that n-words that
function as NPIs are not only licensed by other n-words or by
negation, as in the cases discussed so far, but they are also
licensed in other NPI-environments, in particular by adversative
predicates, prepositions like *sin* (*without*), in the scope of
certain quantifiers, cf. (12). Extending negative
absorption/agreement to this cases would not only face the
compositionality problem, it would also require more lexical
decomposition and more semantic categories than would be

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[9]Semantically, decomposing n-words into a universal quantifier and a
narrow scope negation ($\forall\neg$) is equivalent to decomposing them into a wide scope
negation and an existential quantifier ($\neg\exists$). Zanuttini's reason for choosing
the first option over the second one is that n-words can be modified by *quasi*
(It.)/*casi* (Sp.) (*almost*), which Zanuttini, following a widely held view,
takes to be an indication that they are universal rather than existential.

At the same time, it is also worth noting, however that n-words can
appear in existential contexts, as in (i), which generally bars universal
quantifiers (cf. Suñer 1995):

(i)   No hay nada que tu puedas hacer para convencerme
       not be n-thing that you can do to convince me
       'There isn't anything you can do to convince me'

Since I argue that non-initial n-words in the standard paradigm are NPIs and
that we therefore do not need lexical decomposition, I will not further
discuss the issue here.

2.2. The NQ-analysis:

How does the NQ analysis account for non-initial n-words in the standard paradigm? In order to account for their NPI-like behavior, the NQ-analysis has to neutralize the negative of force of these n-words. Specifically, it is proposed that non-initial n-words move at LF to a negative projection where they 'agree' with the negative head. As a result of this what are two syntactic instances of negation, namely the negation and the NQ, wind up functioning semantically as one. Thus, it is then due to SPEC-head agreement that (1b) is analyzed as being a single negation, rather than a double negation:

(13) $NEGP_1$ = (1b) No vino nadie

$nadie_i$ NEG′

no   TP

vino t_i
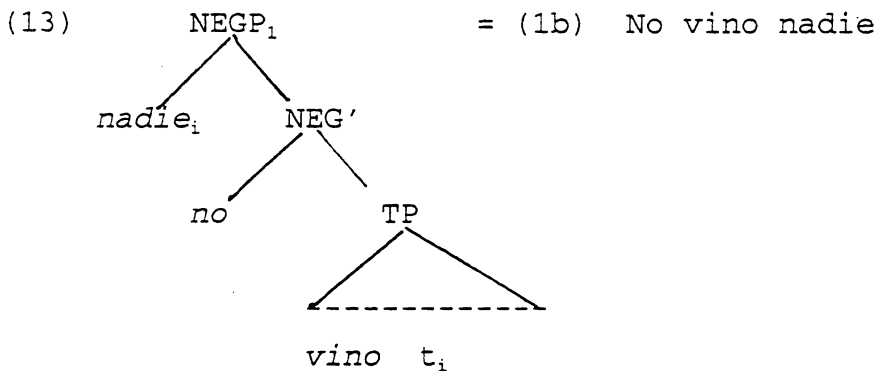
As for examples like (11), where several non-initial n-words occur, giving rise to only one instance of negation, under the NQ-analysis, these are handled by a mechanism which decomposes each n-word in the sentence into a wide-scope negation and a universal quantifier and then deletes all instances of negation except for the one with narrowest scope.

(11) Javier nunca le pide nada a nadie
      Javier never asks anything of anyone

(14) a. $\forall\neg\forall\neg\forall\neg$ --> $\forall\forall\forall\neg$

desirable. It seems fair to say then that the best way to account for non-initial n-words in the standard paradigm is to treat them as NPIs.

2.3. Cumulative Quantification:

There is one interesting possibility that I would like to consider as a way out of the compositionality problem. It consists in arguing that in examples with various n-words, as in (11) for instance, the absence of a multiple negation reading is due to the NQs being interpreted as cumulative quantifiers (cf. Déprez 1995 on French and Haitian Creole). Under this view *Nadie vió a nadie* (n-body saw n-body) is interpreted along the lines of 'nobody saw and nothing was seen'. Such an analysis would allow us to maintain that n-words in these cases function as real NQs. Since there is no decomposition and deletion of semantically relevant material, it would not face the same problems as Zanuttini's (1991) proposal.

Nevertheless, the cumulative analysis is not feasible for Spanish/Italian n-words. The problem is that cumulative quantification requires the quantifiers that are interpreted cumulatively to take the same scope at LF. Assuming that quantifier scope is essentially clause bound, we immediately run into a problem with n-words that appear several clauses deeper than their licensor. For instance, in (15), which is due to Uribe-Etxebarría (1994), the n-word occurs two embeddings down from the negation, in a context from which it presumably cannot QR out to adjoined to the matrix *nadie*:

(15) Nadie creía que María hubiese dicho que le debieras ningún
dinero
Nobody believed that Mary had$_{subj.}$ said that cl. owed$_{subj.}$ n-
money
'Nobody believed that Mary had said that you owed her any

money'

Based on sentences like (15), Uribe-Etxebarría argues that
embedded n-words are NPIs that are licensed by the matrix
negative element, rather than by a tacit intermediate 'negative
complementizers' (cf. Laka (1990), Zanuttini (1991)). As she
points out, since selection is local, the verb *decir* (*say*) in the
intermediate clause cannot be analyzed as selecting a negative
complementizer for the most deeply embedded clause containing the
NPI.

What is important for present purposes is that the relevant
element with which *ningún* would interact if it were a cumulative
quantifier would have to be the matrix *nadie*. The interaction
would not be possible, however, because the two elements are too
far apart to take the same scope. In light of this, I will assume
that non-initial n-words in the standard paradigm are NPIs. At
the same time, I maintain that initial n-words are NQs.[10]

3. Non-initial n-words that function as NQs:

Unlike the distribution of NPIs, the distribution of NQs is
not restricted by any licensing conditions, which means that NQs
should occur freely. If n-words are ambiguous between NPIs and
NQs, as I am arguing here, then we clearly expect to find n-words
without a licensor not only in initial position, but also non-
initially, and in particular, postverbally.

Building on observations of Zanuttini's (1991), I would like
to show that postverbal NQs are indeed possible in Spanish but
their distribution is severely limited by the fact that they are
scope-rigid. What I will show is that the scope-rigidity of
postverbal NQs will often (but not always!) undermine a coherent

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[10]For a detailed discussions of other problems of an
analysis of n-words that involves LF-movement, see Arnaiz (1993).

interpretation of the sentence. I claim that it is for this
reason that the (b) examples in the standard paradigm are
considered unacceptable. Strictly speaking, they are not
ungrammatical, but they result is such bizarre truth-conditions,
that speakers reject them.

Let's begin with some of Zanuttini's original examples:

(16) a. È rimasto con niente in mano
is left with nothing in hand
'He is left with nothing'

b. Ha detto ciò con nessuna malizia
'He said so with no malice'

c. Sono partita con nessun soldo in tasca e tornata con
mille dollari
'I left with no money in my pocket and came back with
$1,000'

In (16) the n-words occur without a licensor in postverbal
position within an adjunct modifier. As shown by the
translations, they are interpreted as NQs. Crucially, in (16) the
NQs do not take scope over the entire sentence, but are limited
to a narrow scope position, which I will assume translates as
narrow scope with respect to a Davidsonian event operator (cf.
Parsons 1990 a.o.), as in (17):

(17) a. $\exists e$ [Agent(e, pro) & *rimasto*(e) & *con(e,* [*niente* x] in
mano (x)]
'There was an event of him being left and it was a being
left with nothing in his hand'
b. $\exists e$ [Agent(e,pro) & *ha detto*(e) & Theme(e, *ciò*) & [*nessuna*
x: *malizia (x)*] *con* (e,x)]
'There was an event of him saying it and it was with no
malice'

c. ∃e [Agent(e,pro) & *sono partita*(e) & [*nessun x*:
soldo(x)] *con*(e,x) & *in tasca*(x)]
'There was an event of me leaving and it was a leaving with
no money in my pocket'

Since the event operator takes wide scope with respect to the NQ
in the logical forms in (17), the sentences in (16) directly
entail that there took place events of being left, saying, and
leaving, respectively. These events are modified for being
without money, and without malice. The interpretations that
result from the scope-rigidity of the NQ are fully coherent
because we know that events of leaving or of being left can be
leavings without nothing, and events of saying do not have to be
malicious. The data from Italian carry over to Spanish as well.

Another example where scope-rigidity makes pragmatic sense,
and where, as a result, a postverbal NQ is acceptable is provided
in (18):

(18) Pedro quiere hacer un viaje a ninguna parte
     Pedro wants make a trip to n- place

(18) asserts that Pedro wants to take a trip without any specific
goal, that is, he wants to just leave and see where the trip
takes him. Here the n-word clearly functions as a NQ. The fact
that it is scope rigid does not make the sentence incoherent
because trips that are trips to nowhere (in particular) clearly
exist and people do like to take such trips. (18) contrasts with
(19), which contains a negation in the matrix:

(19) Pedro no quiere hacer un viaje a ninguna parte
     Pedro not wants make a trip to n- place

Whereas (18) had only one reading, (19) has two, none of which
coincides with that of (18). Both readings of (19) are predicted
on the present analysis: on the most salient reading, the n-word

is interpreted as an NPI licensed by *no,* so that the sentence denies that Pedro wants to take any trip anywhere - it effectively asserts that Pedro wants to stay home. Along with this reading, (19) has another, less salient reading where the n-word is an NQ. Here (19) denies that Pedro wants to take a trip to nowhere, that is, it denies that he want to take a trip with no particular goal. The double-negation reading of (19) becomes salient in a context like the following, where taking a trip to nowhere is under discussion in the preceding discourse. (As in many double negation readings, the negation likes to be emphatically stressed):

(20) A pesar de que a tí te haga mucha ilusión, yo realmente NO
     quiero hacer un viaje a ninguna parte. Yo necesito saber a
     donde vamos a ir ANTES de salir'
     'Even though you may love the idea, I really DON'T want to
     take a trip to nowhere. I need to know where we are going to
     go BEFORE we leave'

If n-words are ambiguous between NQs and NPIs, then the ambiguity of (19) is easily accounted for. In contrast, it is not explained on the NPI-view. Given that all n-words are analyzed as NPIs and only preverbal ones are predicted to exhibit the semblances of NQs, it can not account for the NQ interpretation of postverbal n-words and consequently also not for the double negation reading of (19).[11]

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[11]As noted by Zanuttini (1991:175f), postverbal NQs are problematic on the NQ analysis if one assumes the so-called NEG-Criterion, whereby each negative phrase must stand in a SPEC-head relation with a negative head at LF. Given the position of negation, the NEG-Criterion forces all NQs to take sentential scope. Considering examples like (16), Zanuttini briefly suggests that perhaps the preposition *con* licenses an abstract NegP to which the NQs in these examples can move, thereby satisfying the NEG-Criterion without taking sentential scope. As the examples in the text indicate, the phenomenon is much more wide-spread and does not hinge on the presence of any one particular element.

I believe the ambiguity of examples like (19) also poses a challenge for an analysis of n-words that assumes that they are lexically underspecified as to whether they are NPIs or NQs and that they have the relevant feature filled in according to the syntactic position they occur in. Notice that for this kind of analysis to account for the two readings of (19), it would have to be proposed that the sentences has two different syntactic structures and that the assignment of the missing features is sensitive to that difference. But this seems implausible because the kind of ambiguity we see in (19) is pervasive and possible in all cases where a postverbal NQ is acceptable in the non-negated version of the sentences. Thus, the ambiguity is not only present in (19), but also in the negation of the sentences in (16), and arguably also in cases like (21):

(21) a. Es imposible que lo sepa nadie
     b. Es imposible que nadie lo sepa

Whereas (21a) is interpreted as 'It is impossible that anyone knows it' (i.e. Nobody knows it), (21b) is ambiguous between 'It is impossible that anyone knows it' and 'It is impossible that nobody knows it' (i.e. Somebody must know it) (cf. Bosque 1980, Laka 1990). The reading of (21a) and the first reading of (21b) are NPI-readings of *nadie*, where the NPI is licensed by *impossible*. In contrast, the double negation reading of (21b) is the result of *nadie* being interpreted as a NQ. (21a) lacks this kind of reading for the same reason that NQ-readings are often absent in postverbal positions (see below).

Yet another example that shows how an NQ can occur postverbally is provided by (22), where the NQ takes narrow scope relative to the event described in a small clause:

(22) María vió, con sus propios ojos, a ninguno de ellos
     atreverse a decir nada
     Mary saw, with her own eyes, n- of them dare say n-thing

The subject of (22) indeed sees an event, namely an event which is described in 'negative terms', i.e. as a situation where none of them said anything. Such a situation arises for instance when all of them stayed quiet and stared at their hands. If so, the event operator in the small clause in (22) takes scope over the NQ subject *ninguno de ellos*, cf. (23):

(23) $\exists$e [C(e) & saw(e) & with his own eyes(e) & Agent(e, Mary) & $\exists$e' [Theme(e,e') & C(e') & Agent(e', none of them) & dare say(e') & Theme(e', anything)])]
  'There was a relevant seeing by Mary which was with her own eyes and which was seeing of a relevant event where nobody dared say anything'

Clearly, in (22) the n-word occurs non-initially and functions as a NQ, not as a NPI. The fact that the NQ takes narrow scope with respect to the event operator of the small clause does not interfere with a coherent interpretation of the sentence because the wide scope of the event makes sense, given that the complement of *see* is an entire small-clause that is described in 'negative terms'.

Now that we have seen that NQs can in fact occur postverbally, let's turn to (1c) now *Vino nadie*. I would like to argue that what is significant here is that a sentence like *Nobody came* only makes sense on a wide-scope interpretation of the NQ, along the lines of 'Nobody is such that there was an event of coming where they came'. A narrow scope interpretation makes no sense, since it would mean something like 'There was event of coming where nobody came', which is incoherent. If we accept this line of argument, then (1c) will not be ungrammatical, but it will be 'unsemantic', i.e. it will be so incoherent that it will be rejected. That in the right circumstances we can in fact say what would normally be considered incoherent is shown in (24):

(24) No se movía ni una brizna de hierba, ni una triste hoja.

Not a strand of grass moved, not a sad leave

Todo era tan tierno que no tenía bastantes ojos para mirar.

    Everything was so touching that I didn't have enough eyes to see

Al final, con los brazos extendidos hacia adelante,

    Finally, with my arms streched out in front of me

→   dije bajito **a nadie** que todo era mío.

    I said softly to nobody that everything was mine.

from 'Parecía de seda' by Mercè Rodoreda

The author in (24) describes an event where the narrator said something, namely that everything was hers. This event is said to be directed towards noone. By stating this explicitly, Rodoreda presumably intended to emphasize that the narrator is by herself. Normally, we do not want to add such information. It is for reasons like this that the (b) examples in the standard paradigm are generally rejected.[12]

What we have seen then is that non-initial n-words can in fact function as NQs. When they are postverbal, their distribution is severely limited by the fact that they are scope-rigid and cannot take scope over the event operator of the clause they appear in.

4. Open questions:

There remain several issues which I have not even tried to

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[12]There is one circumstance where non-initial NQs are not scope-rigid, namely when they follow words like *exactamente* in contexts like the following: (CAPS=focus)

(i)   A: ¿A cuanta gente se lo contaste?
      B: ¡Se lo conté exactamente A NADIE!

This observation is due to J. Uriagereka (p.c.).

address. For instance, what is responsible for the narrow scope properties of postverbal NQs in Spanish and Italian? How does this relate to the general dislike of wide scope we find in English NQs? Can the synchroninc ambiguity of n-words be related to the diacronic phenomenon called the Jespersen Cycle? If n-words are indeed ambiguous as I have tried to argue, then these questions are important. Hopefully, future research will offer some answers.

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