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**THE SCOPE OF NEGATION AND NPIS IN
ENGLISH AND SPANISH**

Bachelor's thesis

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The Scope of Negation and NPIs in English and Spanish
(Bakalářská práce)

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Abstract:

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to compare the scope of negation and the use of negative polarity items (NPIs) in English and Spanish. Negation is compared with respect to the syntactic and semantic properties of the given languages. The first half of the thesis introduces the types of negation, examines tests for sentential negation, and then focuses on comparing the scope of negation in English and Spanish, especially on linguistic examples containing negation and a quantifier phrase. The objective of the second half is to analyse the distribution of NPIs in both languages and identify their licensing contexts. Moreover, Spanish n-words are juxtaposed with their English equivalents in order to explain their diverse behaviour in a sentence.

Key words:

negation, scope of negation, negative polarity item, n-word, negative concord, syntax, semantics.

Anotace:

Cílem této bakalářské práce je porovnat dosah negace a používání negativně polaritních výrazů (NPV) v angličtině a španělštině. Negace se porovnává s ohledem na syntaktické a sémantické vlastnosti daných jazyků. První polovina práce představuje typy negace, zkoumá testy na větnou negaci, a poté se zaměřuje na dosah negace v angličtině a španělštině, zejména na lingvistických příkladech, které obsahují jak negaci, tak kvantifikátor. Cílem druhé poloviny této práce je analyzovat distribuci NPV v obou jazycích a určit kontexty, které jsou schopné NPV licencovat. Také se porovnávají španělská n-slova s jejich anglickými ekvivalenty, a je vysvětleno jejich rozmanité chování ve větě.

Klíčová slova:

negace, dosah negace, negativně polaritní výraz, n-slovo, negativní shoda, syntax, sémantika.

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1 Introduction

Throughout history, experts have conducted extensive research into negation. According to Horn (1989, 5), it had early origins with ancient philosophers like Aristotle contemplating ideas surrounding opposition and probability within logic. Nevertheless, it was not until fairly recent times around the 1960s when detailed research began on various aspects related to negation. As far as we know, negation is present in all languages in the world. However, I find it important to emphasise that even such a basic concept like negation does not function in the same way universally. In fact, one of the most interesting questions is how negation is portrayed cross-linguistically.

There have been many influential authors who have dealt with English negation, including Laurence Horn and his *History of negation* (1989), or William Ladusaw who wrote *Expressing negation* (1990). In Spanish, it is *Sobre la negación* by Ignacio Bosque (1960) that stands out as one of the earliest but at the same time most influential work on Spanish negation. Authors who focus explicitly on variations in negation across different languages and are thus most relevant for this thesis include Zanuttini (1991), Giannakidou (1997; 2011) and Zeijlstra (2004; 2013; 2016).

This thesis deals with negation in two Indo-European languages: English and Spanish. English is a member of the Germanic language family, while Spanish belongs to the Romance language family. The whole thesis is divided into 2 main parts: The scope of negation and Negative polarity items (NPIs). The main objective is to examine the differences between the two languages regarding their syntax and semantics.

The first part introduces the basic division of negation and demonstrates how negation is expressed in both languages. Then, tests on sentential negation are discussed with a focus on whether they are applicable to both English and Spanish. Finally, the scope of negation and its effect on the interpretation of the sentence's meaning is considered. For example, we will see that negative sentences with universal quantifiers in subject position can be ambiguous in English but not in Spanish.

The second part of the thesis discusses NPIs in both languages. NPIs are known as lexical items which occur only in contexts that are negative in some way.

However, this part of the thesis demonstrates that there are some contexts capable of licensing NPIs, even though the contexts are not strictly negative. Therefore, after introducing NPIs in each language, I try to show what properties these contexts have in common and whether they account for the licensing of NPIs in non-negative contexts in both English and Spanish. Lastly, I examine the nature of Spanish n-words such as *nada* ‘nothing’ or *nadie* ‘nobody’ and compare their behaviour in sentences with their English equivalents.

I try to support all theoretical claims with relevant linguistic examples, either from the used literature or with my own examples. The linguistic examples are my own if not stated otherwise.

2 Negation and its scope

Negation is an integral part of human communication and plays an essential role in daily interactions. It involves the act of denying or asserting the opposite of a specific state, idea, or proposition. See the difference between the sentences in (1):

- (1) a) *I am hungry.*
b) *I am not hungry.*

The sentences differ in their polarity. While the sentence in (1a) exhibits positive polarity, the sentence in (1b) has negative polarity. Semantically, they cannot both be true in the same situation as one is the negation of the other. Negation occurs on various levels which I will demonstrate first on English examples.

2.1 Types of negation in English

There are various possibilities for conveying negation, namely negative operators such as *not* and other negative words like *never*, *nobody*, *nothing*, *none* or affixes. We generally divide negation into **constituent**, which is by some linguists also called partial negation, and **sentential** negation, also known as clausal negation. Constituent negation is further divided into lexical and phrasal negation:

A. Constituent

(i) Lexical

(ii) Phrasal

B. Sentential

There is another kind of negation called ‘Semantic negation’ which considers opposites such as:

- (2) a) *mother vs. father* b) *white vs. black*
c) *tall vs. short* d) *good vs. evil*

However, since the semantic negation is not grammaticalized, I will only deal with constituent and sentential negation in this thesis. In the next subsection, I describe the first of the categories.

2.1.1 Constituent negation

Lexical and phrasal negation are often referred to as constituent negation since they do not negate the whole clause but only its parts or constituents. **Lexical negation** involves negation of a lexical item, achieved by adding a negative morpheme, typically an affix. Note that **the clauses remain positive**:

- (3)
- a) *John is very **un**-happy.*
 - b) *It is **il**-legal*
 - c) *You need to **de**-activate the code.*
 - d) *This coke is **caff**eine-**free***
 - e) *I am **speech**-less*

In examples (3a)–(3c) a negative prefix is added to adjectives and a verb. Consequently, only those words are negated, not the whole sentence. The same applies for (3d) and (3e) where a negative suffix is attached to the lexical items. In other words, only the lexical items with the negative affixes in (3) are **inside the scope of negation**. All the other constituents in the sentences are **outside the scope**. Huddleston et al., (2002, 790) claim the scope of negation is ‘the part of the meaning that is negated.’

Phrasal negation is normally expressed by the negative particle ‘*not*’ which negates the meaning of an entire phrase. The scope of this negation does not extend to the whole clause, only to the part which comes after the negative particle. See the comparative schemes below in (4):

- (4) a) *He was waiting at the university, **not at home**.*
 b) *I ate the soup, **not the chicken**.*
 c) *John likes to draw, **not sing**.*
 d) *I want to spend my holidays traveling, **not reading**.*

Manasia (2014, 92) claims that also embedded non-finite verbal forms such as participle, infinitival or bare form are instances of phrasal negation if immediately preceded by *not*.

- (5) *They admit **not having worked on the project**. (negation + participle)*
 (6) *My mother decided **not to pay my rent**. (negation + infinitive)*
 (7) *She made me **not go to theatre anymore**. (negation + bare infinitive)*

Example (7) from Manasia (2014, 92)

Therefore, we see that constituent negation does not necessarily negate only one word. The whole NPs, PPs or embedded non-finite verbal forms can fall under the scope of negation. In the next section, I present **sentential negation** which is the last and most important type of negation for this thesis.

2.1.2 Sentential negation

From a semantic point of view, sentential negation is a **polarity operator**. It is an element that when applied to a clause, changes its polarity, in the sense of its truth value. Both English and Spanish require that the negation has scope over the predicate for a sentence to be negative. To achieve this in English, we add the clausal negative particle *not* or the bound morpheme *n't* right after the operator position for which Veselovská (2019) uses the symbol Ω . Therefore, the negation goes between the modal or auxiliary and the main verb like in (8) and the sentence structure reflects the one of (9).

- (8) a) *I **won't** finish my homework anytime soon.*
 b) *Jamie has **not** finished his food yet.*
 c) *I have **not** listened at all.*
- (9) **SUBJECT – Ω – NEG – VERB**

Alternatively, the sentence is negative if a negative quantifier in an operator position takes scope over the predicate, or if a negative adverb finds itself in NEG position.

- (10) a) *Nobody* works as hard as him,
b) I have *never* seen a better movie.
c) ? I gave the book to **nobody**.

In examples like (10c), Veselovská (2019, 265) argues the further to the right the negation is, the more likely it is to be restricted to constituent negation only.

In the next section, I briefly describe the introduction to Spanish negation before comparing sentential negation tests in both languages.

2.2 Types of negation in Spanish

There are only slight differences in expressing each type of negation in Spanish. In **lexical negation**, negative prefixes are also used for adjectives, adverbs, verbs, etc., much like in English:

- (11) a) *Des-contento* b) *In-creíblemente* c) *Des-ear*
‘Unhappy’ ‘Unbelievably’ ‘Discard’

However, Spanish completely **lacks the use of negative suffixes**. English words with negative suffixes *-free* or *-less* would have to be translated in Spanish using the prefix *in-* ‘un-’ or the preposition *sin* ‘without’ as in (12):

- (12) a) *Venden Coca Cola sin azúcar.*
sell_(3PL) Coca Cola without sugar
‘They sell sugar-**free** Coca Cola.’
b) *Este producto es in-coloro.*
this product is un-coloured
‘This product is colour**less**.’

While affixal negation is available in both languages, Rabadán and Izquierdo (2011, 58) claim that in Spanish it is used more sparingly than in English, with other formal options being favoured.

Phrasal negation works on the same principle as in English. It uses the negative marker *no* ‘not’ in the contrastive schemes.

- (13) a) *Estaba esperando en la universidad, no en casa.*
was_(1SG) waiting in the university NEG in home
‘I was waiting at the university, not at home.’
- b) *Comí la sopa, no el pollo.*
ate_(1SG) the soup NEG the chicken
‘I ate the soup, not the chicken.’

As for sentential negation, Spanish belongs to the group of languages that uses the negative particle as a pre-verbal negative marker. Zanuttini (1991, 11) argues that these negative preverbal markers close to the final verb are syntactic heads with the entire VP as their complement. Contrary to English, the negative marker goes before **all parts** of the predicate, including all modals and auxiliaries as in example (14). On the other hand, according to Bosque and Gutiérrez-Rexach (2018, 634), weak and clitic pronouns can intervene between the negation and the verb, whether auxiliary or not. Consider example (15) where the weak personal pronoun *le* ‘him’ takes this position.

- (14) a) *Yo no juego a los videojuegos nunca.*
I NEG play to the videogames never
‘I don’t ever play videogames.’
- b) *Yo no he jugado a los videojuegos nunca.*
I NEG have played to the videogames never
‘I have never played videogames.’
- (15) *Juan no le ha dado un libro.*
Juan NEG him has given a book
‘Juan hasn’t given him a book.’

Note that Spanish is a **negative concord language** — a language in which multiple negative elements in one sentence don't cancel each other out. That is why both the preverbal negator *no* 'not' and *nunca* 'never' are able to appear together in (14). I will address this co-occurrence of negative elements in Spanish later in chapter 3.4.

As for the position of negation, it is very similar to English, apart from the fact that the negative marker precedes all parts of the predicate.

(16) **SUBJECT – NEG – Ω – VERB**

It is also possible for Spanish negative quantifiers to induce sentential negation. In the next subsection, I show in both languages how the quantifiers substitute the negative particles and whether they can co-occur.

2.3 Negative quantifiers

Castillo (1998, 5) claims that in Standard English, only a single negation is allowed per clause, which means that the sentential negator can't co-occur with a negative quantifier:

- (17) a) *He did **not** say anything.*
 b) *He said **nothing**.*
 c) **He didn't say **nothing**.*
 d) ***Nobody** said anything.*
 e) ****Nobody** said **nothing**.*

The sentential negator must be replaced by the negative quantifier as we see in (17b) and (17d). Notice that (17c) has the sentential negative marker *n't* + the negative quantifier, and in (17e) there are two negative quantifiers in one clause. Examples with two negative elements induce double negation in Standard English¹ which often results in an overall positive meaning. That is why the meanings of the examples with asterisk in (17c) and (17e) do not correspond to the meanings of sentences (17a) and (17d), respectively.

¹ The overall positive meaning of two negative elements per clause only applies to Standard English. There are English dialects in which double negation is used frequently and induces only one semantic negation.

On the other hand, we can observe relatively free word order when it comes to negative quantifiers in English as they can appear in both preverbal and postverbal position.

Let's have a look at Spanish now. The example (18) below demonstrates that in both languages the negative quantifiers substitute NEG, but as Castillo (1998, 6) emphasises, in Spanish they must appear exactly in the same position of NEG, that is, immediately precede the VP.

- (18) a) *Nadie publicó el libro.*
nobody published the book
'Nobody published the book.'
- b) *Nunca quiere entrenar.*
never wants_(3SG) train
'Never does he want to train.'
- c) *En ningún sitio pude prestar el traje.*
in no place could_(1SG) borrow the suit
'Nowhere could I borrow the suit.'

Alternatively, we can see the negative quantifiers after the VP if the predicate is already negated like in (19a) and (19b). This is precisely because Spanish is a **negative concord language**, where two or more negative elements do not cancel each other out and induce only one negation.

- (19) a) *Juan no vio a *nadie*.*
Juan NEG saw to nobody
'Juan didn't see anybody.'
- b) *Juan no juega *nunca* a los videojuegos.*
Juan NEG plays never to the videogames
'Juan doesn't ever play videogames.'
- c) **Juan juega a los videojuegos *nunca*.*
Juan plays to the videogames never
'Juan never plays videogames.'

Therefore, the negative quantifier can either substitute the negator *no* in the same preverbal position or co-occur with it in postverbal position. However, if the predicate is not negated, it cannot occur in postverbal position and be the only negative element in the sentence as in (19c). In Spanish, there has always been a debate about the true nature of these negative quantifiers when they find themselves after the predicate. Are the elements such as *nadie* ‘nothing’ and *nunca* ‘never’ still negative quantifiers if unable to induce semantic negation on their own in this specific position? I will try to answer this question of so-called ‘**n-words**’ in chapter 3.4.

So far, I have shown that negation is divided into lexical, phrasal and sentential, and the ways of expressing each type. We also saw that adding other negative elements, such as quantifiers, to an already negated sentence leads to double negation in English, but in Spanish, they co-occur and induce only one semantic negation. In the next section, I will introduce tests that help determine if a negation is sentential or constituent and discuss whether these tests apply to both English and Spanish.

2.4 Tests for sentential negation

Firstly, let’s compare some simple examples. For instance, *James is unreliable* which contains the prefix *-un*, and *James is not reliable*, where the predicate is negated. The second sentence is indeed negative, but the first one is positive. We can see this by using the tests on sentential negation firstly introduced by Klima (1964). By adding a positive **question tag**, **neither-tag**, or a structure with **not even** to a sentence, we can determine whether the negation is only phrasal or sentential. In other words, if the whole sentence has negative polarity or not.

(20) a) *James is not reliable, is he?*

b) **James is unreliable, is he?*

(21) a) *He didn't show any mercy, neither was he sorry for what he's done.*

b) **He was merciless, neither was he sorry for what he's done.*

(22) a) *Jenny can't do the homework for you, not even on Saturday.*

b) **Jenny is unable to do the homework for you, not even on Saturday.*

All the a) examples above have negation on sentential level as they remain grammatical after adding a positive question tag in (20), *neither* in (21) and *not even* in (22). All the examples in b), however, do not survive the tests, and we can therefore conclude that they either exhibit constituent negation or no negation at all. Penka (2010, 4) points out that apart from negative markers like *not* or *n't*, the tests work also with other negative elements such as negative quantifiers, adverbs, and semi-negatives like *seldom* or *hardly*.

- (23) a) ***Nobody*** cares about Ronnie, *not even* Jake.
 b) ***I never*** take a day off, and *neither* does Jake.
 c) Jake ***hardly*** spends time with you, *does he?*

However, these tests received some criticism in the past as there are many exceptions where they don't work well. Firstly, Tubau (2020, 777) illustrates how clauses with negative quantifiers in subject position trigger positive tag questions, but clauses with negative quantifiers in object position trigger negative tag questions. See (24):

- (24) a) ***Nobody*** read the book, *did(*n't) they?*
 b) John read ***nothing***, *did*(n't) he?*

Tubau (2020, 776–777)

In the case of (24a), the negation is sentential. On the other hand, the negative element further to the right of the sentence exhibits only constituent negation as in (24b). The issue is that while example (24b) cannot have a positive question tag, it works fine for other tests on sentential negation such as *not even*.

Secondly, Penka (2010, 4) claims ‘expressions like *seldom*, *rarely*, *few*, and *little*, although they share with the negative marker and negative items the ability to license NPIs, are negative in a weaker sense.’ We can observe it on the example (25), where *rarely* should induce sentential negation.

- (25) ***David rarely*** goes to the cinema, *does he?*

However, we refer to these adverbs as partially negative because, despite their syntactic negativity, their meaning is only partially negative. Therefore, the sentence in (25) does not negate the fact that David goes to the cinema.

Lastly, Penka (2010, 4) states that the criteria are language-specific and therefore cannot be applied universally. In Spanish we can use two of the three tests mentioned to find out whether the clauses are negative or not. The equivalent of *not even* is ‘*ni siquiera*’ and of *neither* is ‘*tampoco*’. Look at the examples with sentential tests in Spanish below and notice that the **question tag test in (28) is not useful for Spanish** since the language doesn’t differentiate between positive and negative tag questions. It uses the same question tags (*no* ‘no’, *verdad* ‘true’) for both negative and affirmative sentences.

(26) *Él no fue agradable, ni siquiera conmigo*
 he NEG was kind not even with me
 ‘He was not kind, not even to me’

(27) *Él no fue agradable, y Sue tampoco*
 he NEG was kind and Sue neither
 ‘He wasn’t kind, and neither was Sue.’

(28) *Él no fue agradable, ¿no?/verdad?*
 he NEG was kind no / true
 ‘He wasn’t kind, was he?’

(29) **Él fue des-honesto, ni siquiera conmigo / y Sue tampoco*
 he was dis-honest not even with me / and Sue neither
 ‘He was dishonest, not even with me / and neither was Sue.’

The sentences with the preverbal negative marker *no* in (26) and (27) survive the tests and have sentential negation, unlike (29) where adding *ni siquiera* or *tampoco* results in ungrammaticality of the sentence as its negation is only constituent.

Apart from these tests, López (2000, 2576) shows other examples which help to recognise sentential negation in Spanish. If the connectors such as *al contrario* ‘on the contrary’, *y menos* ‘let alone’, and *que yo sepa* ‘as far as I know’ are present after negative statements like in (30), it means that the negation is sentential.

- (30) a) *Juan no canta bien. Al contrario, canta muy mal.*
 Juan NEG sing well to contrary sings very bad
 ‘Juan doesn’t sing well. On the contrary, he sings very bad.’
- b) *Juan no ha ido nunca a Roma. Y menos contigo.*
 Juan NEG has gone never to Rome. and less with you
 ‘Juan has never been to Rome. Let alone with you.’
- c) *Tus amigos no tienen ningún interés por ayudarte, que yo sepa.*
 your friends NEG have no interest for helping you that I know
 ‘Your friends don’t have any interest in helping you as far as I know.’

López (2000, 2574)

To summarise, the aim of the sections so far was to introduce the basic division of negation, discuss the different ways of exhibiting sentential negation, and to point out that the tests on sentential negation may not work the same way in the two languages. Apart from the tests by Klima, we already saw a few differences between English and Spanish: the lack of negative suffixes in Spanish, different positions of the negator in sentential negation and the position of negative quantifiers substituting the NEG or co-occurring with NEG in Spanish, respectively.

In the next sections of this chapter, I will discuss first the scope of negation in sentences where it corresponds to the syntactic order and thus is easily recognisable. Afterwards, we will see instances where the scope of negation isn't entirely evident, yet it's crucial to ascertain it for the sentence's intended meaning. Recognising the scope of negation is especially important in some sentences that are ambiguous. Some of them can have two completely opposite interpretations depending on particular constituents being inside or outside the scope. In section 2.6.1, I analyse the scope in sentences with a universal quantifier in subject position preceding negation. These constructions can be ambiguous in English but there seems to be only one possible reading for them in Spanish.

2.5 Scope reflecting the syntactic order

The scope of negation is often determined by the hierarchical order of the constituents that make up the sentence. I demonstrate this on a simple example in (31) below:

(31)

| | | |
|----|---|---------------------------------------|
| a) | <i>Not <u>many</u> people believed him.</i> | NEG has scope over <i>many</i> |
| b) | <i><u>Many</u> people did not believe him.</i> | <u>Many</u> has scope over NEG |

The meaning of the two sentences could appear the same, but that is not the case. The example (31a) means that ‘It is not the case that many people believed in him’, while the interpretation of (31b) is that ‘there were a lot of people who did not believe in him’. To clarify, let’s say that *him* refers to a presidential candidate in a country with a population of 1 million. That means that in (31b) the number of people who didn’t believe him and didn’t vote for him was large, e.g. 600,000, but at the same time, the other 400,000 people could believe him and vote for him. This, however, cannot be the interpretation (31a) where the number of people who believed him and voted for him must have been small, for example, only 2000 people out of 1 million. In this example, the scope of negation is easily recognisable because it reflects the syntactic order in the sentences. When the negator *not* appears in front of the quantifier *many* it has scope over it. In a sentence like (30a) above, where the universal quantifier is understood to fall under the scope of negation, Duffley (2024, 4) claims that universal quantification is applied to the proposition first and then negation is applied to the already quantified proposition. Conversely, in sentence (30b), the negation is applied first, and the universal quantifier is applied to the already negated proposition.

Everything described above about the English example (31) is also valid for Spanish as negation has scope over the quantifier in example (32a) but is outscoped by the quantifier phrase in (32b).

(32) a) *No muchos le creyeron.*

NEG many him believed

‘Not many believed him.’

b) *Mucha gente **no** le creyó.*

many people NEG him believed

‘Many people didn’t believe him.’

Moreover, the hierarchical order is also important in Spanish contrastive schemes with a preverbal subject like in examples (33) and (34). When the negative adverb *no* ‘not’ precedes the predicate, everything that comes after is usually in its scope. However, as the subject precedes both the negation and the verb, it is left out of the scope and does not participate in the contrastive schemes. That is the reason why, according to *Nueva gramática de la lengua Española* (2010, section 48.4a), the following sentences are considered forced or unnatural to native speakers: (The subject is underlined, and the NEG+Verb is in **bold**)

(33) ?Mi amiga **no vino** ayer, sino mi hermana.
 my friend NEG came yesterday but my sister
 ‘My friend didn’t come yesterday, but my sister (did).’

(34) ?Mi mamá **no es** la responsable por mis notas malas, sino yo.
 my mum NEG is the responsible for my grades bad but I
 ‘My mum is not the one responsible for my bad grades, but I (am).’

Thus, the preverbal subject is syntactically outside the scope of negation in both (33) and (34). The sentences cease to be unnatural if the subject is located after the verb and thus inside the scope. Due to a relatively free word order in Spanish, we can simply invert the subject and the verb and have every constituent in the scope, following the negative adverb *no*:

(35) **No vino** ayer mi amiga, sino mi hermana.
 NEG came_(3SG) yesterday my friend but my sister
 ‘It was not my friend who came yesterday, but my sister.’

(36) La responsable por mis notas malas **no es** mi mamá, sino yo.
 the responsible for my grades bad NEG is my mum but I
 ‘The person responsible for my bad grades is not my mother, but me.’

The postverbal subject in (35) and (36) is inside the scope and participates in these contrastive schemes easily.

In the next section we will see that the scope of negation cannot always be determined only by the order of the constituents in a sentence.

2.6 Scope influencing meaning

Sometimes, there can be elements which syntactically appear inside the scope of negation but semantically are outside the scope. For example, the existential indefinite pronouns such as *something*, *someone* and *some*. Duffley (2024, 4) explains it on a sentence in example (37) below:

(37) *Mary did not like **some** of his jokes.*

Duffley claims that even though the indefinite pronoun *some* in (37) is a part of the negated predicate, it is interpreted semantically as an element external to the scope of negation. Therefore, we could only paraphrase the sentence as ‘*there were some jokes of his that Mary did not like*’, whereas the interpretation ‘*Mary did not like any of his jokes*’ is impossible as shown in (38):

(38) *Mary did not like **some** of his jokes.*

a) **Mary did not like any of his jokes.*

b) ✓ *There were some jokes of his that Mary did not like.*

(39) *A María no le gustaron **algunas** de sus bromas.*

to María NEG her liked_(3sg) some from his jokes

‘*María did not like some of his jokes.*’

Duffley (2024, 4)

In the example (39) above we see the same sentence in Spanish. Just like in English, the indefinite pronoun *algunas*² ‘some’ has scope over the negation, and thus the only possible interpretation is the one of (38b).

Detecting the scope of negation is also essential when it comes to interpreting sentences like the minimal pair in (40):

² The Spanish equivalent of *some* is ‘*alguno*’. The indefinite pronoun ‘*algunas*’ is in the plural and feminine form since it agrees with the noun *bromas* ‘jokes’ in its gender and number.

- (40) a) *With no clothes Sue is attractive, isn't she?* [Constituent negation]
 b) *With no clothes is sue attractive, is she?* [Sentential negation]

(Horn 1989, 185)

The meaning is completely different since (40a) means that ‘Sue **is attractive** without clothes’ whereas (40b) tells us that ‘Sue **is not attractive** with any clothes she wears’. It is another diagnostic on sentential negation proposed by Klima (1964) where only those fronted adverbials **expressing sentential negation** trigger **inversion**. But it is also another fact that does not help in Spanish as there is no inversion in such sentences. See the examples in (41):

- (41) a) *Sue **no** es atractiva con ninguna ropa.* [Sentential negation]
 Sue NEG is attractive with no clothes
 ‘With no clothes is Sue attractive.’
 b) *Sin ropa, Sue es atractiva.* [Constituent negation]
 without clothes Sue is attractive
 ‘With no clothes Sue is attractive.’

Since there is no inversion, the only difference is that the example with sentential negation (41a) has the predicate negated by NEG whereas the example (41b) with constituent negation does not.

2.6.1 Universal quantifier subjects preceding negation

This section examines the different readings of the constructions where universal quantifier subjects appear before the negator. In English, examples such as (42) and (43) are considered ambiguous:

- (42) *Everybody didn't arrive.*
 a) Not everybody arrived (NEG>subject)
 b) Nobody arrived (subject>NEG)

(43) *All the money wasn't stolen.*

a) Not all the money was stolen (NEG>subject)

b) No money was stolen (subject>NEG)

We can interpret the examples above in two ways. It all comes down to the scope of negation and whether it has a wider or narrower scope than the quantifier subject. In other words, if the negation has scope over the QP subject as in examples (42a) and (43a) or, on the contrary, if it is the QP subject that outscopes the negation like in (42b) and (43b).

Zeijlstra (2004, 76) claims that 'the clauses with a universal quantifier preceding negation do not always give rise to well-formed expressions.' This means that *everybody* in example (42) with the meaning of (42b) is only marginally acceptable without a special intonation such as ('*EVERYBODY didn't arrive*'). Moreover, according to Horn (1989, 228), the examples above with these types of quantifiers are somewhat marked in English since less marked alternatives exist, such as '*nobody arrived*'.

Horn (1989, 229), points out that the ambiguity holds also for the suppletive variant *both* and for the corresponding binary connective *and* which he demonstrates on the examples (44) below:

(44) a) *All of them didn't come.*

b) *Both of them didn't come.*

c) *(Both) Lee and Kim didn't come.*

If the QP has wider scope than the negation, the meaning is that *none of them came*. If the negation has scope over the QP, it means that *not all of them* (or *not both of them*) *came*.

The reading of Spanish QP subjects preceding negation is different. The sentences in (45) are NOT ambiguous as the only possible interpretation is the one in which the universal quantifier subject fall under the scope of negation.

- (45) a) *Todos no llegaron.* (NEG>QP) *(QP>NEG)
 everybody NEG arrived
 ‘Everybody didn’t arrive’
- b) *Todo el dinero no fue robado* (NEG>QP) *(QP>NEG)
 all the money NEG was stolen
 ‘All the money wasn’t stolen.’

Thus, the meaning of (45a) is ‘not everybody arrived’, and of (45b) ‘not all the money was stolen’. Zeijlstra (2004, 77) claims that the reason why the interpretation where the QP subject has scope over negation is unacceptable is because negation blocks the movement of the universal quantifier to a higher position than the negative operator. The interpretation where the subject takes scope over the negation becomes possible only if the universal quantifier is base generated at a higher position than the negative operator. Zeijlstra adds that languages with a **low negative operator** accept the reading where QP takes scope over NEG, while languages with a **high negative operator** do not. Based on this, we can conclude that Spanish is a language with a high negative operator, while English has a lower negative operator. See the table below:

(46)

| Language | Position of NEG operator | QP Subject movement to a higher position than NEG operator |
|----------|--------------------------|--|
| English | Low | Allowed |
| Spanish | High | Blocked |

To conclude, in the second half of this chapter I have shown examples in which the scope of negation reflects the syntactic order of the sentences and is simply recognisable, but also those cases in which it is not. We could see in both languages that existential indefinite pronouns like *some* can be syntactically under the scope of negation but semantically have scope over negation. Then, I demonstrated that it is quite easy to recognise sentential scope with fronted negative adverbials in English due to inversion,

unlike in Spanish, in which inversion does not take place. Lastly, in 2.6.1 I analysed examples with the QP subject preceding negation and observed that there are two possible interpretations in English, whereas in Spanish only the inverse reading where negation outscopes the QP is possible. The reason is that languages with a low negative operator allow both readings, but in languages with a high negative operator only the inverse reading is possible.

In the next chapter I will first introduce what negative polarity items are. Secondly, I will focus on what contexts they can occur in and what these contexts have in common. In the last part of this chapter, I show the differences between the two languages, especially on n-words, which occur only in negative concord languages, that is, in Spanish but not in English. I try to describe their nature, compare them with their English equivalents, and describe theories on whether they behave more like negative quantifiers or non-negative indefinites such as English *any*-terms.

3 Negative polarity items

Firstly, it is important to explain what ‘polarity’ means. Polarity can simply be understood as a distinction between positive and negative forms. It is possible to see all the way from the morphological level (*happy – unhappy*) to the sentential level (*I am happy – I am not happy*). Negative polarity items (NPIs) are items with restricted distribution. They can appear only in contexts which are in some way negative. The NPIs do not induce negation themselves but they only survive in contexts with negative polarity. In other words, they need a negative element which licenses them in a sentence. However, in this chapter, I also observe some examples where NPIs survive in other contexts which are not necessarily negative. I first introduce NPIs in English in section 3.1 and Spanish NPIs in 3.2. After that, I discuss one of the most researched topics in negative polarity items in 3.3 — **the licenser question** which tries to find out what exactly the proper licensing context for NPIs is. We will see that there are contexts that are not truly negative but can license NPIs nevertheless. I explain that this is due to the concept of downward entailment and non-veridicality. Finally, in 3.4, I will analyse the nature of n-words. Based on the comparison of English and Spanish examples with negative quantifiers and NPIs, I argue that in most of the contexts, Spanish n-words are non-negative indefinites which have very similar behaviour to the indefinite NPIs like English *any*-terms. To do so, I compare various theories of linguists such as Zanuttini (1991), Ladusaw (1990), or Zeijlstra (2004).

3.1 Negative polarity items in English

As I already mentioned, the NPIs usually require a negative context to survive as shown in the examples (47)–(49) below:

(47) a) *I don't have any idea.*

b) **I have any idea.*

(48) a) *I don't dare shout at him.*

b) **I dare shout at him.*

(49) a) *I have not seen Michael at all.*

b) **I have seen Michael at all.*

Consequently, the negative polarity items *any*, *dare*, and *at all* do not survive in the affirmative sentences and give rise to ungrammaticality. The most known NPIs in English are the *any*-terms such as: *anything*, *anyone* or *anybody*. Apart from these, there are numerous other examples such as *yet*, *either*, *need*, *until*, *lift a finger* and other idiomatic expressions. The underlined elements in the examples below are those that make the sentence negative and thus allow NPIs to appear.

(50) *Nobody*/**somebody* knows ***anyone*** here.

(51) a) I *(*haven't*) got ***any*** idea.

b) I have *(*not*) seen the movie ***yet*** and John *(*hasn't*) ***either***.

c) You ***need****(*n't*) shout at me.

d) Do*(*n't*) you ***dare*** shout at me!

e) Lucas has *(*not*) ***lifted a finger*** to help me!

The negative quantifier *nobody* in (50) and the negative marker *not* (*n't*) in example (51) are called **licensors**. A licenser is the element that allows NPIs to appear without rendering the sentence ungrammatical.

I would also like to mention two other concepts closely related to NPIs: **Free choice items and Positive polarity items**. For example, ***any*-terms** are sometimes able to appear in positive sentences inducing free-choice reading. An example is given in (52) below.

(52) a) You cannot have ***anything*** you like. *any* – **negative**

b) You can have ***anything*** you like. *any* – **free choice**

These elements are often called **Free-choice items (FCIs)**. They are items with limited distribution that express freedom of choice. Menéndez-Benito (2010, 33) explains that by uttering a sentence like (52b), the speaker grants the addressee 'the unrestricted liberty of individual choice'. See more examples in (53):

- (53) a) *John will do **whatever** you want.*
 b) *You can take **any** sweets you'd like.*
 c) ***Anyone** from your family is welcome here.*

In all the sentences it seems there are no restrictions on the set of possible referents induced by the FCIs. English *any* can appear in all sentences with positive polarity if its interpretation is that of free choice.

Positive polarity items (PPIs), unlike NPIs, occur most often in sentences with positive polarity. Giannakidou (2011, 4) defines PPIs as ‘expressions that are repelled by negation and tend to escape its scope.’ Such expressions include *some*, *already*, *rather*, and speaker-oriented adverbs like *unfortunately*. For example, *rather* doesn’t survive in negative contexts (54). However, some PPIs can occur in negative sentences without making them ungrammatical (55).

- (54) **I am **rather** not enjoying myself.*

- (55) *Edith has not paid **some** money.* **somebody > not**

*Edith has not paid any money.

✓There is some money Edith has not paid.

We have seen a similar example to (55) already in section 2.6 where I discuss the influence of the scope of negation on meaning. The reason for the co-occurrence of the negator *not* and the PPI *some* is precisely because the indefinite PPI has scope over the negation, otherwise, it would not survive in the negative context. In fact, PPIs should never be outscoped by negation, and that is why they either have scope over negation like in (55), or they render a sentence grammatically incorrect as we can see in (54) with *rather*. This is also discussed in Homer (2021, 2) who compares *some* with *any* and argues that they differ in their requirements regarding their distribution. Homer claims that ‘while *some* cannot be interpreted in the semantic scope of a clausemate negation, but can appear in a positive unembedded sentence, *any* shows **the opposite properties**.’ See (56):

- (56) a) *John didn't understand something.* *NEG>SOME
 b) *John understood something.*
 c) *John didn't understand anything.*
 d) **John understood anything.*

(Homer 2021, 2)

Due to the shortage of this work, I will not describe the behaviour of PPIs and FCIs further in greater detail.

3.2 Negative polarity items in Spanish

In this section, I present some examples of Spanish NPIs. López (2000, 2591) claims that there are three types of NPIs we can differentiate, depending on the reasons that trigger their polar nature:

The first group are **n-words** such as: *nada* ‘nothing’, *nadie* ‘nobody’, *ninguno* ‘none’, *nunca* ‘never’ and *jamás* ‘nevermore’ in postverbal position. Not every linguist, however, agrees that n-words belong to this category since their behaviour in pre-verbal position differs from the classic NPIs. In chapter 3.4, I will discuss n-words in greater detail and explain why some linguists consider N-words to be NPIs, but others prefer to view them as negative universal quantifiers.

The second group are lexical units that have acquired negative polarity as a consequence of their use **to reinforce negation**. We can distinguish two types:

1. Elements that denote **a minimum quantity or a limit**. This group includes **ni-minimizers** and constructions such as *más+...+que* ‘more+...+than’, and negative polarity idioms.
2. Indefinites interpreted as quantifiers within the scope of negation. They are characterized by the absence of a determiner or by noun phrases with the indefinite *alguno* ‘some’ placed after the noun.

Lastly, there are NPIs related to the durative predicate. The preposition *hasta* ‘until’, and the adverb *todavía* ‘yet’ belong here.

See the examples of NPIs from each group in examples (57) below:

- (57) a) *No lo he visto nunca.* (n-word)
 NEG him have_(1SG) seen never
 ‘I have never seen him.’
- b) *No cometió el más mínimo error.* (minimum quantity)
 NEG commit_(3SG) the most minimal error
 ‘He didn’t make the slightest mistake.’
- c) *No veía más allá de sus narices.* (NPI idiom)
 NEG saw_(3sg) more there from their noses
 ‘He didn’t see beyond his nose.’
- d) *No hay problema alguno por mi parte.* (NP + some)
 NEG there is problem some for my part
 ‘There isn’t any problem on my part.’
- e) *No regresó hasta las seis.* (*hasta* ‘until’)
 NEG returned until the six
 ‘He didn’t return until six (o’clock).’

Since there is a myriad of NPIs in both languages (especially idiomatic phrases) and the aim of this paper is to point out the differences between English and Spanish, I will go into detail only in the category of n-words where most differences are found.

Before doing so, however, I find it important to write about the licensers and contexts that allow NPIs to occur in a sentence. In the next section, I will show that there are more elements than just sentential negative markers that are able to do so. In fact, NPIs are **not restricted to negative contexts** in English nor Spanish. Given the limited size of this paper, I will introduce this particular topic mainly on English examples.

3.3 NPIs licenser question

The licenser question is crucial to determine what qualifies as a licensing context of NPIs and what criteria these contexts must meet. Therefore, in section 3.3.1, I first introduce 4 classes of negative elements which can license NPIs. Afterwards, I discuss whether there is a common property that all these NPI licensers share. With the help of various

examples, I demonstrate that the contexts licensing NPIs do not have to be strictly negative. In doing so, I explain the concept of **downward entailment**, a very influential proposal by Ladusaw (1979), and **non-veridicality** (Giannakidou, 1997).

3.3.1 Negative elements

Negative elements are those elements that enable NPIs to appear in it. According to Zeijlstra (2004, 39), four different types of negative elements exist. First, negative markers used generally for sentential negation (*not*, *n't*). The second type are negative quantifiers such as *nothing*, *nobody*, *never* etc. Third, there are n-words, negative elements that may or may not give rise to negation depending on their syntactic position. The last group includes, for example, verbs such as *doubt*, *fear* or *fail*, which are not strictly negative, but have a clear semantic connotation. They also include some prepositions, such as *without* and *unless*. The four types of negative elements are summarized in the table below:

(58) Table adapted from Zeijlstra (2004, 39), modified with English and Spanish examples only.

| Negative elements | Properties | Examples |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Negative markers | Yield (sentential) negation | <i>Not</i> <i>No</i> (Spanish) |
| Negative quantifiers | Quantifiers that always introduce a negation. | <i>Nobody</i> , <i>nothing</i> , <i>never</i> |
| N-words | Quantifiers that introduce negation in particular syntactic configurations | <i>Nadie</i> ‘nobody’ <i>Nada</i> ‘nothing’ <i>Nunca</i> ‘never’ |
| Semi-negatives | Verbs or prepositions that have a negative connotation | <i>Doubt</i> , <i>without</i> <i>Dudar</i> , <i>sin</i> (Spanish) |

However, the question is what property unifies these four classes of negative elements. They are all able to license NPIs but as we can see from their properties in the table above, n-words do not always induce semantic negation and neither do semi-negatives. Moreover, there are other contexts where NPIs can be licensed. For instance,

Zeijlstra (2013, 806) mentions **yes/no questions, restrictive clauses of universal quantifiers** and ‘**at most N**’ constructions. See (59)–(61):

(59) *Do you ever want anything?*

(60) ***Every person** who tells the public any secret about our company will be fired.*

(61) ***At most 2 workers** did any work today.*

Perhaps, it is a good time to introduce the fact that we distinguish **strong NPIs** and **weak NPIs**. Notice that in all the examples above there is either the NPI *any*, or *ever*. These are called weak NPIs as they can appear in all negative environments, but also in the non-negative contexts presented above. Compare the weak NPIs in (59)–(61), with the strong NPIs *in years* and *until* in (62):

(62) a) **Everyone who has been to Paris in years is happy.*

b) **Has he arrived until his birthday?*

The strong NPIs above do not survive the licensing contexts which are not truly negative such as restrictive clauses of universal quantifiers or yes/no questions. They must occur in negative contexts only. On the other hand, the weak NPI *any* finds itself often in non-inherently negative contexts such as the contexts in (59)–(61). Giannakidou (2011, 7) demonstrates that **any** can be licensed also in **conditionals (if-clauses)** and in the scope of *few*:

(63) a) ***If** you say anything about this, I’ll be very upset.*

b) *{**Few** professors/***Many** professors} invited any students.*

The question is, how do we account for the difference between these non-negative licensers and the inherently negative elements? Moreover, if some non-negative elements can also license NPIs, there should be at least one syntactic or semantic property that all the licensers have in common. Even though there has been a lot of research regarding the NPIs and their licensing in terms of syntax and pragmatics, I will focus solely on the semantic approaches, mainly **downward entailment** and **non-veridicality** to explain

examples such as (59)–(63). In the next subsection, I discuss the first of the two mentioned approaches.

3.3.2 Downward entailment

One of the earliest as well as the most important proposals was made by Ladusaw (1979) in which he tries to reduce all the NPI licensing contexts to a single semantic property. He does so by claiming that all NPI licensors are **Downward Entailing (DE)**. The first condition of DE contexts is that the entailment goes **from sets to its subsets** as Xie (2022, 10) shows in the negative sentences in (64):

(64) *The linguist did not order a Prius. ↗ The linguist did not order a car.*

The linguist did not order a car. → The linguist did not order a Prius.

Xie (2022, 10)

The second property of DE contexts is their ability to license NPIs. I test this on examples with minimal pairs in (65). The first sentence always contains a negative element that we know has the ability to license NPIs. The second sentence, on the other hand, is a positive one and unable to license NPIs.

(65) a) *Nothing works. → Nothing works well.*

Something works. ↗ Something works well.

b) *Few people sing. → Few people sing loudly.*

Many people sing. ↗ Many people sing loudly.

c) *John doesn't like girls. → John doesn't like Mary.*

John likes girls. ↗ John likes Mary.

It is evident from the examples above that contrary to *some* or *many*, the negative elements *not*, *nothing* and *few* are downward entailing. Moreover, The DE also applies to contexts that are not truly negative. That explains why some universal quantifiers, semi-negatives, or 'at most N' constructions can be NPI licensors. I demonstrate that in (66):

- (66) a) *Every car has an engine.* → *Every Mercedes car has an engine.*
 b) *Few teachers invited any students.* → *Few teachers invited any law students.*
 c) *At most four guests arrived.* → *At most four guests arrived early.*

However, this proposal of downward entailment also faces some issues. The most important one is that some NPIs can be licensed in non-DE contexts as well. For example, yes/no questions are not downward entailing, even though they license NPIs as in (67):

- (67) a) *Have you seen anyone?* ⇏ *Have you seen anyone handsome?*

Moreover, some environments that permit weak NPIs like *any* and *ever* fail to license stronger ones like *in weeks*. See (68):

- (68) a) *Nobody/Only Chris has **ever** seen **anything** like this.*
 b) *Nobody/*Only Chris has been here **in weeks**.*

Even though the proposal that most NPIs are downward entailing is probably one of the most influential, the problems mentioned above have led linguists to explore other ideas about conditions under which NPIs can appear.

3.3.3 Negative hierarchy and non-veridicality

Zeijlstra (2016, 248) mentions the original proposal of Van der Wouden (1994) that we should imagine DE as some kind of negative hierarchy with 3 layers. The highest layer is the **true negation** (*not*), also referred to as **anti-morphic** in Giannakidou (1997). The second layer is occupied by so-called **anti-additive** elements (*nothing, nobody, no*), and the lowest are the non-truly negative contexts, also called '**DE-nees**'. This way, we can see how NPIs differ depending on the layers or contexts in which they can be licensed. For example, if English *any* can be licensed by the contexts in the third layer, it means it can be also licensed in all negative contexts. *Only Chris* in the example (68) belongs to the layer of DE-ness with the weakest negation and thus can license only weak NPIs such as *any*, but not strong ones like *in years*. However, the yes/no question example (67) shows that DE-ness is not always a necessary condition for licensing NPIs. To account for this, Giannakidou (1997) proposes to further extend the hierarchy of negative contexts by another layer of negativity named **non-veridicality**. Non-veridical expressions imply

uncertainty, contrary to veridical operators which assert certainty and commitment to truth. This concept has been considered to be behind the licensing of polarity items such as the English words *any* and *ever*, as an alternative to downward entailment. Sentences with true negation are often called **anti-veridical** as they completely negate the statements of the veridical ones. Non-veridical sentences are statements that do not necessarily assert the truth or falsity of their content. Etxeberria et al., (2024, 3) argue that the distributional fact about NPIs is that they are **excluded from veridical sentences** such as (69). On the contrary, they are **allowed in anti-veridical** and **non-veridical** contexts in (70)–(71):

(69) **(Veridical)**

- a) **James met any co-workers.*
- b) **Unfortunately, he met anyone.*

(70) **(Anti-veridical)**

- a) *James didn't meet any co-workers.*

(71) **(Non-veridical)**

- a) *Have you seen anyone?* (Question)
- b) *I doubt he beat anyone.* (Semi-negative)
- c) *If you see anybody, let me know.* (Conditional)

To clarify this, let's compare *unfortunately* with the non-veridical operator *doubt*. A sentence such as '*Unfortunately, he lost to everyone*' is truthful and non-illusory, therefore, *unfortunately* is a veridical operator. By contrast, a sentence '*I doubt he beat anyone*' does not have to be necessarily true. It can be seen as an additional layer of negativity (even weaker than DE-ness) and should account for those cases where NPIs, such as English *any*-terms, may appear in non-DE contexts. Etxeberria et al., (2024, 3) also claim that unlike *any*, strong NPIs such as *in years* are only grammatical in a subset of these non-veridical contexts. I demonstrate this in the summary of all 4 layers of licensing contexts in (72):

(72)

1. **True negation (anti-morphic)** (licenses both strong and weak NPIs)
 - a) *I have **not** been to Paris in years.*
 - b) *No fui a Paris en años.*
NEG go_(1SG) to Paris in years
'I have not been to Paris in years.'

2. **Anti-additive** (licenses both strong and weak NPIs)
 - a) ***Nobody** has seen Lara in years.*
 - b) *Nadie ha visto Lara en años.*
nobody has seen Lara in years
'Nobody has seen Lara in years.'

3. **DE-ness** (licenses weak NPIs only)
 - a) *I **doubt** he finds anyone.*
 - b) *Dudo que vaya a encontrar a nadie.*
doubt_(1SG) that goes_{(3SG)(SUBJ)} to find to nobody
'I doubt he finds anyone.'

4. **Non-veridical** (licenses weak NPIs only)
 - a) *Have you seen anyone?*
 - b) ?? *¿Has visto a nadie?*³
have_(2SG) seen to nobody
'Have you seen anyone?'

³ I explain in the following chapter that NPIs or n-words in Spanish cannot appear in non-rhetorical questions. The question *¿has visto a nadie?* would be grammatical if it was rhetorical, that is, if the speaker already knew the answer.

3.3.4 Non-veridicality in Spanish

Since I dealt with the licensing question only with English examples, it is time to show that the non-veridical theory also applies to Spanish examples. We saw in the table (58) that the negative elements able to license NPIs include markers for sentential negation, negative quantifiers, semi-negative verbs or prepositions, and n-words. Bosque (1980, 69) claims the group of negative elements sometimes extends to lexical units which have no apparent relation to negation, for example, the verb *poder* 'can' or the adjective *posible* 'possible'. Although these items bear no inherent negation, they can license NPIs precisely because they are non-veridical operators. These non-veridical operators which express uncertainty trigger subjunctive form of the following verb in (74).

(73) *No pegué ojo en toda la noche.*

NEG hit_{(1SG)(PAST)} eye in whole the night

'I couldn't sleep a wink the whole night.'

(74) *Puede / es posible que esta noche pegue(SUBJ) / *pega(IND) ojo.*

can / is possible that this night hit_(SUBJ) / *hit_(IND) eye

'I may get some sleep tonight / It's possible I get some sleep tonight.'

(*No*) *pegar ojo* in the examples above is a Spanish NPI idiom which normally needs a negative context as in (73). It is the equivalent of the English idiom *to not sleep a wink*. As I demonstrated in (74), it survives in this particular non-veridical context too. The same can be said about other non-veridical contexts, however, bear in mind that Spanish non-rhetorical interrogatives are NOT able to license any NPIs.

(75) *Has visto a alguien / *nadie en el trabajo?*

have_(2sg) seen to somebody / anybody in the work

'Have you seen anybody at work?'

The only type of questions where NPIs can occur in Spanish are **rhetorical**. According to López (2000, 2607), rhetorical questions differ in that they do not ask for information unknown to the speaker but constitute a kind of enunciation in which the speaker indirectly declares the information they already possess. Thus, *nadie* could appear in the example (75) if the question was rhetorical and the speaker already knew the answer. A

more obvious example of a rhetorical question is with the idiomatic NPI *mover un dedo* ‘lift a finger’ in (76) below:

- (76) *¿Cuándo has movido un dedo por alguien? Dime!*
when have_(2SG) moved a finger for someone tell me
‘When have you lifted a finger for anyone?’

Therefore, even if non-veridicality explains non-strictly negative licensing contexts in both English and Spanish, we have seen there can be minor differences between the two languages such as the usage of NPIs in questions.

In the next section I deal with the category of n-words. The aim of the subchapter will be to study their behaviour in different contexts based on several theories and compare them with their English equivalents.

3.4 Negative concord and n-words

I already mentioned in chapter 2.3 while discussing negative quantifiers that semantic negation in English is achieved by one negative element. Co-occurrence of two or more would lead to double negation. However, Spanish is a Negative concord (NC) language where multiple negatively marked elements can yield only one semantic negation. To be precise, Spanish belongs to the group of **non-strict NC languages** in which the n-words **cannot occur by themselves in post-verbal position**, they should be accompanied by a single negative marker as in (77a). However, when the n-word finds itself in **preverbal position** like in (77b), it **never co-occurs with the negative marker**.

- (77) a) *María **no** ha llamado a nadie.*
María NEG has called to nobody
‘María hasn’t called anybody.’
- b) *Nadie (*no) ha llamado.*
nobody (*NEG) has called
‘Nobody hasn’t called.’

Spanish indefinite pronouns such as *nadie* ‘nobody’, *nunca* ‘never’, *nada* ‘nothing’ and *ninguno* ‘none’ are often referred to as **n-words**. As mentioned in Etxeberria et al., (2024, 3-4), a lexical item is an n-word if:

1. It can be used in structures containing sentential negation or another negative expression yielding a reading equivalent to **one logical negation** as in (77a) above.
2. It can provide a **negative fragment answer**.

Q: *¿Que estás haciendo?*

what are_(2SG) doing

‘What are you doing?’

A: *Nada.*

nothing

‘Nothing.’

N-words are often described as syntactically dependent expressions found in languages that exhibit some form of negative concord. However, the opinions of linguists on the nature of these n-words differ. This is due to their similarity, but at the same time their difference from indefinites like English *any*-terms. It has received quite a lot of attention, for example, Bosque (1980) and Laka (1990) claim that n-words are a kind of negative polarity items in contrast to Zanuttini (1991), who argues that n-words are negative universal quantifiers. Ladusaw (1992) and Zeijlstra (2004) deny that n-words are negative quantifiers but also claim that they are different from plain NPIs. I will compare the theories with relevant examples and claim that the best solution to this problem is provided by Zeijlstra (2004), who argues that n-words are non-negative indefinites with an abstract operator. Note that some of the linguists I have mentioned often refer to various NC languages with n-words, but I am comparing these universal theories based on Spanish and English examples only.

3.4.1 N-words as NPIs

In Spanish, a negative operator denoted as 'NEG' is responsible for expressing negation and licensing present n-words. The idea that n-words are just plain NPIs without inducing negative meaning are compelling with examples like (78)–(80):

(78) *No ha llamado a nadie.*

NEG has called to nobody

‘He hasn’t called anybody.’

(79) *No dijo nada a nadie en ningún momento.*
 NEG said_(3SG) nothing to nobody at no moment
 ‘Nobody had said anything to anyone at any moment.’

(80) **Ha llamado a nadie.*
 has called to nobody
 ‘He has called anybody.’

Larrivé (2021, 4) claims that while English allows for postverbal negatives, in Spanish, the postverbal negatives require licensing by a preverbal negator much like NPIs would. In all the examples above, the **post-verbal n-words act like NPIs**. They co-occur with pre-verbal negative markers in (78) and (79) where even with multiple n-words in a single sentence there is only one semantic negation. In (80), on the other hand, the n-word *nadie* does not survive since the context is positive and there is no element licensing it. From an English perspective, we could say that Spanish n-words are not negative quantifiers, but rather a kind of indefinites or NPIs.

Laka (1990, 134) claims that another evidence where n-words behave in the same way as NPIs is when they occur after the preposition *sin* ‘without’. Notice how *nada* in (81) is the equivalent of the English NPI *anything* rather than of the universal quantifier *nothing*.

(81) *Sin nada que hacer, la vida es aburrida.*
 Without nothing that do the life is boring
 ‘Without **anything** to do, life is boring.’

We see in the example above that the behaviour of n-words such as *nada* resembles the behaviour of non-negative indefinites and is not similar to the one of universal quantifiers. That is because negative quantifiers inside prepositional phrases headed by *without* induce double negation. Take (82), for example:

(82) *I left without nobody noticing.*

Lastly, **Paratactic Negation** with semi-negative predicates is another context where n-words behave precisely like English *any*-terms. Zeijlstra (2004, 267) claims that ‘in

syntactic terms these elements carry an **interpretable negative feature [iNEG]**, and hence they can license n-words in subordinate clauses [(83)].’

(83) a) *Dudo que el bebé esté mirando a nadie .*
doubt_(1SG) that the baby is_(SUBJ) looking at nothing
‘I doubt that the baby is looking at **anybody**.’

b) *Dudo que vayan a encontrar nada.*
doubt_(1SG) that are going_(SUBJ) to find nothing
‘I doubt that they will find **anything**.’

(Zeijlstra 2004, 267)

The reason why paratactic negation is considered a popular argument in favour of n-words being like NPIs is because n-words can be licensed in **most downward entailing contexts**. Zeijlstra also indicates that there is an important pattern to see. In these DE contexts where an n-word appears outside of the main clause, the subordinate clause in Spanish is always in **subjunctive form**. There is a specific motive for that. Subjunctive clauses express uncertainty, that is, they are non-veridical. Since all DE contexts are also non-veridical, this explains their ability to license n-words in subjunctive clauses.

In the next section, I will present examples where Spanish n-words do not behave like English *any*-terms but rather as negative universal quantifiers.

3.4.2 N-words as negative universal quantifiers

A frequently cited counterargument to analyses of n-words being semantically non-negative is the observation of the opposite examples where n-words seem to induce semantic negation and behave like universal quantifiers. The first problem with the theory that n-words behave like NPIs arises in Spanish when an n-word appears in preverbal position as in the example (84):

- (84) a) *Nunca* *he* *visto esa película.*
 never have_(1SG) seen that movie
 ‘**Never** has he seen that movie.’
- b) *Nadie* *ha llamado.*
 nobody has called
 ‘**Nobody** has called.’
- c) *Nadie* (**no*) *ha llamado.*
 nobody (*NEG) has called
 ‘**Nobody** has (*not) called.’

Since Spanish is a non-strict NC language, n-words in pre-verbal position cannot co-occur with the negative marker. As a result, the n-words in example (84) are the only negative elements in a sentence. Since one of the main definitions of negative polarity items is that they need a negative context (or DE and non-veridical contexts), it seems that the n-words above are not plain NPIs, i.e. the same as English *anybody*, *anything*, or other Spanish NPIs. According to Zanuttini (1991, 108), the negative quantifier approach takes example like (84) as evidence that n-words like *nadie* resemble negative quantifiers like English *nobody*. That is because the n-word has a negative interpretation without being licensed by other elements. Moreover, Etxeberria et al., (2024, 4) claim that when n-words are in preverbal position, they can license other postverbal n-words or NPIs, as demonstrated in sentences (85). Conversely, examples in (86) illustrate that English NPIs like *anybody* and *one bit* are not grammatical in such contexts.

- (85) a) *Nadie* *dijo nada.*
 nobody said nothing
 ‘Nobody said anything.’
- b) *Nadie* *cometió el más mínimo error.*
 nobody commit_(3SG) the most minimal error
 ‘He didn’t make the slightest mistake.’
- (86) a) **Anybody* *did not eat anything.*
- b) * *One bit* *she did not eat.*

Example (86) from Etxeberria et al., (2024, 4)

According to Larrivé (2021, 4), another property Spanish n-words have in common with negative quantifiers in English is their occurrence in isolation in **fragmentary answers** as in example (87). The negative reading of a fragment answer can be expressed with a sole n-word but not with an NPI such as *anything* or *anyone* in the example (88).

- (87) a) *Que dijo Manuel? Nada.*
 what said Manuel nothing
 ‘What did Manuel say? **Nothing**.’
- b) *Quién es tu favorito? nadie, no me gustan los futbolistas.*
 who is your favourite nobody NEG me like the footballers
 ‘Who is your favourite? **Nobody**, I don't like football players.’
- (88) a) *What did Manuel say? *Anything.*
- b) *Who is your favourite? *Anyone, I don't like football players.*

In (87) it seems that n-words induce negation themselves, and therefore behave like English negative quantifiers in this context. Furthermore, the sentences in (88) where we have English examples with indefinite NPIs in fragmentary answers prove that interpreting these sole n-words as indefinite NPIs is not possible.

Lastly, **sole n-words in coordinated structures**, for example, after a disjunction, are often associated with this theory. See (89):

- (89) *Me caso contigo o con nadie.*
 I marry with you or with nobody
 ‘I marry you or **nobody** (else).’

(Zeijlstra 2004, 212)

Even in this particular structure, the n-word *nadie* does not have a licenser, yet the sentence is perfectly acceptable. Thus, all the Spanish n-words in this subchapter seem to be inherently negative and behave like English negative quantifiers. Note that there exist more contexts where n-words behave in this manner, however, I will work only with the three contexts described above due to space limitations.

As I support the theory that Spanish n-words are non-negative indefinites similar to English *any*-terms, all examples where n-words occur by themselves and are not licensed by other negative elements need to be explained. I do so in the next subchapter using the theory of the negative abstract operator. Before ending this section, I provide the summary of the results from the analysed examples in both in 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 in the table below:

(90)

| Context | Spanish | English | N-word behaviour |
|--|---|--|----------------------|
| Preverbal position | <i>Nadie habla.</i> | <i>Nobody speaks.</i> | Universal Quantifier |
| Fragmentary answers | <i>¿Quién?</i> - <i>Nadie.</i> | <i>Who?</i> - <i>Nobody.</i> | Universal Quantifier |
| N-words in coordinated structure (after a disjunction) | <i>Me caso contigo o con <u>nadie</u></i> | <i>I marry you or <u>nobody</u> (else)</i> | Universal Quantifier |
| Postverbal position | <i>No veo a <u>nadie</u>.</i> | <i>I don't see <u>anybody</u>.</i> | Indefinite NPI |
| Without + n-word | <i>Sin <u>nada</u> que hacer...</i> | <i>Without <u>anything</u> to do...</i> | Indefinite NPI |
| DE contexts | <i>Dudo que vayan a encorzar <u>nada</u>.</i> | <i>I doubt they will find <u>anything</u>.</i> | Indefinite NPI |

3.4.3 N-words with an abstract operator

Ladusaw (1992) came with a proposal that the difference between plain NPIs and n-words is that they are **self-licensing**. That means if nothing else licenses the n-word in a sentence, it is able to license itself. Zeijlstra (2004, 271) tries to explain the self-licensing with an **abstract negative operator (Op-)**. He argues that n-words are non-negative indefinites, and this abstract operator is behind their licensing. With this theory, we can explain the examples from the last section where it seems that the Spanish n-words are inherently negative and behave like negative universal quantifiers. Zeijlstra (2004, 271) explains the incorporation of the abstract operator as follows:

As NPI licensing is not a syntactic, but a semantic phenomenon, this agreement mechanism applies to n-words only, not to NPIs. Elements with uninterpretable negation [uNEG] can trigger the presence of the operator, NPIs cannot. Hence, I argue that n-words in fragmentary answers are licensed by the operator that is able to check their [uNEG] feature as in (91).

To put it more simply, the explicit negative operator (e.g. preverbal negative marker 'no') is only present with n-words if it is required for scopal reasons, otherwise not. Labelle and Espinal (2014, 205) claim that when an n-word appears in isolation with a negative interpretation, it results from the fact that its [uNEG] feature is checked by an abstract negative operator carrying [iNEG]. See the fragmentary answer below:

- (91) *¿A quién viste? A nadie.*
to who saw_(2SG) a nadie
‘Who did you see? Nobody.’
[Op_{-[iNEG]} [A *nadie*_[uNEG]]. . .]

(Zeijlstra 2004, 271)

In (91) the scope is already clear from the position of ‘*a nadie*’ in the fragmentary answer, and that is why there is no explicit negative operator. The n-word with **uninterpretable negation** [uNEG] triggers the abstract negative operator (Op₋) which in turn licenses the n-word. This is basically the explanation of the self-licensing of n-words proposed by Ladusaw (1992). The fact that n-words carry [uNEG] feature which triggers Op₋ is also relevant for examples where n-words are in preverbal position. Since Spanish is a non-strict negative NC language in which n-words in preverbal position cannot co-occur with the explicit negative marker *no*, it must be the Op₋ that licenses the first n-word as in the example (92):

- (92) *Nadie ha llamado a nadie.*
nobody has called to nobody
‘Nobody called anybody’
[NegP [Op_{-[iNEG]} *Nadie*_[uNEG+i]] [ha llamado a *nadie*_[uNEG+i]]

In (92), the n-word *nadie* carries [uNEG]. This allows Op₋ to appear and license the first n-word.

Lastly, the theory works also for the sole n-words in coordinated structure after a disjunction. Zeijlstra (2004, 272) claims there are two possibilities to account for the n-word *nadie* in (93):

(93) a) $[[Me\ caso\ contigo] \text{ o } [me\ \cancel{\#}\text{[iNEG]}\ e\ a\ s\ o\ con\ nadie\ \cancel{\#}\text{[iNEG]}]]$

I marry with you or ~~me neg~~ ~~marry~~-with nobody

‘I marry you or I don’t marry anyone.’

b) $[[Me\ caso\ contigo] \text{ o } [Op\ \text{-[iNEG]}\ con\ nadie\ \cancel{\#}\text{[iNEG]}]]$

I marry with you or with nobody

‘I marry you or nobody.’

Zeijlstra (2004, 272)

The first option is ellipsis, that is, deletion of the copy of the matrix clause with a negative marker carrying [iNEG] in the second disjunct in (93a). In example (93b) the n-word is licensed by the abstract negative operator.

I conclude the chapter by arguing that Spanish n-words are not inherently negative like English negative quantifiers, but they are no ordinary NPIs either. We can label them as non-negative indefinites, licensed by an explicit negative marker if they are in postverbal position. In cases where they are in preverbal position, in fragmentary answers and disjunctive structures, they are licensed by the abstract negative operator.

4 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to introduce some often-discussed topics in negation and find out how English and Spanish differ in them, in terms of syntax and semantics.

In the first chapter, I showed that negation can be lexical, phrasal or sentential, while illustrating the ways of expressing each type. Afterwards, I observe the usage of negative quantifiers in both languages and demonstrate that in English the negative quantifier must substitute the sentential negative marker *not*. In Spanish, the negative quantifier has to either substitute the negative marker in the same (preverbal) position or co-occur with it in postverbal position since Spanish is a non-strict NC language. Later, I applied the English tests on sentential negation and demonstrated that only some of them work in Spanish as the positive and negative question tags are unable to determine the polarity of Spanish sentences. In the last part of the first chapter, I examined examples in which the scope of negation reflects the syntactic order of the sentences and is easily recognisable, but also those cases in which it is not. We saw some negative sentences with quantifier phrases and that their interpretation might be distinct in the two languages. The examples with the QP subject preceding negation differ due to the position of the negative operator in each language. Spanish is a language with high negative operator that blocks the movement of the QP above negation. Thus, only the inverse reading where negation has scope over the QP is possible. Conversely, English has a low negative operator which allows the movement of the QP. That results in ambiguity as both readings in English are possible.

The second chapter deals with NPIs in both languages. After introducing the basic concept and examples, I focused on the licenser question which tries to explain what elements or contexts allow NPIs to occur in a sentence. I argued that the first very influential proposal was by Ladusaw (1979) who found out that there is one similar property many NPIs licensers share — downward entailment. However, since in both languages there are several contexts that license NPIs but are not DE, I demonstrate that non-veridicality is the concept that accounts for those contexts. Lastly, I compare Spanish n-words with their equivalents in English and argue that Spanish n-words are not inherently negative. I support the claim they are neither negative quantifiers nor ordinary NPIs. We can label them as non-negative indefinites, licensed by a negative marker if they are in a postverbal position. In cases where they are in a preverbal position, in

fragmentary answers and disjunctive structures, they are licensed by the abstract negative operator carrying the interpretable negative feature [iNEG].

5 Resumé

Tato práce se zabývá negací ve dvou indoevropských jazycích: angličtině a španělštině. Angličtina je germánský jazyk, zatímco španělština patří do rodiny románských jazyků. Celá práce je rozdělena na 2 hlavní části: Dosah negace a Negativně polaritní výrazy (NPV). Hlavním cílem bylo poukázat na rozdíly mezi oběma jazyky z hlediska syntaxe a sémantiky.

V první části byly představeny typy negace a jejich vyjádření v obou jazycích. Kromě větné negace dosažené použitím záporné částice byla také porovnána struktura vět se zápornými kvantifikátory. Rozdílný faktor byl především ten, že španělština patří mezi negativně shodové jazyky, kde i více negativních položek ve větě vyjadřuje pouze jednu negaci, zatímco v angličtině více negativních položek ke dvojité negaci. Poté byly aplikovány anglické testy na větnou negaci a ukázalo se, že ve španělštině fungují pouze některé z těchto testů. Konec kapitoly se zabývá dosahem negace a jejího vlivu na význam věty. Mimo jiné bylo možné pozorovat, že záporné věty s univerzálními kvantifikátory v pozici podmětu mohou být v angličtině nejednoznačné, tedy mít dva významy, ale ve španělštině je možná pouze jedna interpretace.

Druhá část práce se zabývá NPV v obou jazycích. NPV jsou známé jako slova, která se mohou vyskytovat pouze v negativních kontextech. Bylo však poukázáno na to, že v obou jazycích existují kontexty, které nejsou doopravdy negativní, ale přesto jsou schopné licencovat NPV. Tato práce dokazuje, že společné sémantické vlastnosti těchto kontextů jsou tzv. vyplývání dolů (downward entailment, DE) a neveridikalita. Nakonec byla zkoumána povaha španělských n-slov, a jejich chování ve větách se porovnávalo s anglickými ekvivalenty. Tato práce tvrdí že španělská n-slova jsou indefinita licencována abstraktním negativním operátorem.

Všechna teoretická tvrzení byla vysvětlena na relevantních lingvistických příkladech, ať už z použité literatury, nebo vlastními příklady autora. Příklady jsou autorovy vlastní, pokud není uvedeno jinak.

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