

Which one was true negation? Negation turning expletive from jussive to declarative complements

Chloé Tahar (University of Neuchâtel)

Expletive negation is a negation marker that apparently contributes no truth-functional meaning. This talk will explore the hypothesis that expletive negation originates from the semantic reanalysis of an existing true negation (see also Bar-Asher Siegal [2025]), arguing that it is a negation the truth-functional content of which turned into an implication (akin to a conventional implicature, Yoon [2011] or Krifka [2010]). The driving factor that would account for this change is the reanalysis of embedded negative jussives as embedded declaratives, leading to the loss of the former from the grammar. Integrating a long held-intuition going back to Jespersen [1917/2025] into the framework of Krifka (2014, 2020, 2024) which syntacticizes illocutionary force, this talk puts forward the idea that some performative verbs (directives and commissives) of negative semantic import subcategorize for embedded negative jussives at early stages of the history of French. Evidence from the instantiation by the preverbal negation marker of Negative Doubling and Negative Concord structures provide grounds to ascertain that negation was a true negation in jussive complements. It is demonstrated that the reanalysis of an existing negation into a non-compositional one takes place in three stages, from verbs of prohibition to verbs of apprehension, via verbs of precaution (in line with the path of semantic change outlined by Pakendorf and Schalley [2007]).

References

- Elitzur A. Bar-Asher Siegal. A formal approach to reanalysis and the early semantic stability hypothesis: Exploring the test case of the negative counterfactual marker *'ilmale* in Hebrew and Aramaic. *Linguistics*, 63(3), 2025.
- Otto Jespersen. *Negation in English and Other Languages*. Berlin: Language Science Press, 1917/2025.
- Manfred Krifka. How to interpret expletive negation under *bevor* in German. In Thomas Hanneforth and Gisbert Fanselow, editors, *Language and Logos. Studies in Theoretical and Computational Linguistics.*, pages 214–236. Akademie Verlag, 2010.
- Manfred Krifka. Embedding Illocutionary Acts. In Tom Roeper and Margaret Speas, editors, *Recursion: Complexity in Cognition*, pages 59–88. Springer, 2014.
- Manfred Krifka. Layers of assertive clauses: propositions, judgements, commitments, acts. In J. Hartman and A. Wöllstein, editors, *Propositionale Argumente im Sprachvergleich: Theorie und Empirie*, pages 1–46. Gunter Narr Verlag, 2020.

Manfred Krifka. Performative updates and the modeling of speech acts. *Synthese*, 203, 2024.

Brigitte Pakendorf and Ewa Schalley. From possibility to prohibition: A rare grammaticalization pathway. *Linguistic Typology*, 11:515–540, 2007.

Suwon Yoon. *Not in the Mood: the syntax, semantics and pragmatics of evaluative negation*. PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 2011.