Synchrony and diachrony of a multifunctional particle: Latin nec

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In this work I consider the Latin particle *nec* ‘and not’; ‘neither’; ‘not even’ in its diachronic development.

Latin *nec* (and its full form *neque*) was a highly *multifunctional* item, which became extremely successful diachronically.

Observing its development sheds light on the relations between the various meaning components conveyed, as well as on their syntactic implementation, and addresses the challenge posed by multifunctionality to syntax-semantics compositional isomorphism.
Structure of the presentation

1. Introduction
2. The functions of *nec*
3. An analysis of the syntactic-semantic structure
4. The diachronic development of focus-sensitive uses
5. Conclusions
Introduction: *nec*

- Transparent etymology: *neque*, with apocope of last syllable *něc* (functionally equivalent):
  - \(<\) IE negative morpheme *ne* + enclitic conjunction -*que*

- For -*que*: cf. the pair *atque / ac* ‘and (also)’.
  - Postpositive:
    - \(1\) terra mari\(que\)
      - land:ABL see:ABL and
      - ‘on land and sea’

- Romance outcomes: **correlative negation**: French *ni*, Spanish *ni*, Italian *né*, etc.; Romanian continues the form *neque > nicĩ*

- Romance outcomes: **building block of Concord indefinites = n-words**: Old French *neuns*, *nesun* etc.
  - Spanish *ninguno*
  - Italian *nessuno* (Old: *niuno*)
  - \(\rightarrow\) if a Romance indefinite is negatively marked, it is marked with *nec*!
Functions of *nec*

  1. **discourse-structuring particle**: ‘and not’; ‘furthermore, it is not the case that’; at the beginning of new textual units
  2. **correlative negation**: ‘neither...nor’
  3. **focus particle**: ‘not either’; ‘not even’

  + archaic *nec*:
  *si adgnatus nec escit* ‘If there is no agnate male kinsman’ Lex XII. 5

- all uses in (i-iii) derive from a basic meaning AND >NOT

- In all this uses *nec* is a semantically negative item, conveying a negation with sentential scope = semantic feature [Neg] (Zeijlstra 2004 and following), cf. double negation *nec non* ‘and indeed’

- In functions (ii) and (iii) *nec* is a focus-sensitive negation; in (iii) it overlaps with *ne...quidem*, another focus particle with parallel syntactic structure.
Functions of *nec*: (i) discourse connector

(i) **Discourse structuring particle**: as a discourse-structuring connector, *nec* introduces a full clause belonging to a new discourse unit, which may be connected in the discourse to a previous clause independent of the polarity of the latter.

(2) *Ex his omnibus longe sunt humanissimi qui Cantium incolunt, quae regio est maritima omnis, neque multum a Gallica differunt consuetudine*  
‘Of all the Britons the inhabitants of Kent, an entirely maritime district, are by far the most civilised, differing but little from the Gallic manner of life.’ (Caes. BG 5.14)

(3) *Accessum est ad Britanniam omnibus navibus meridiano fere tempore, neque in eo loco hostis est visus.*  
‘All ships got into Britain at around noon, and no enemy was spotted there’ (Caes. BG 5.8)
Functions of *nec*: (i) discourse connector

(4) a. Ex his omnibus longe sunt humanissimi qui Cantium of they:ABL all:ABL far are:3SG most.civilized: NOM who: NOM Kent: ACC incolunt, quae regio est maritima omnis, *neque* multum inhabit:3PL which: NOM region: NOM is maritime: NOM all: NOM and. not much a Gallic differunt consuetudine from Gallic: ABL differ: 3PL habit: ABL ‘Of all the Britons the inhabitants of Kent, an entirely maritime district, are by far the most civilised, differing but little from the Gallic manner of life.’ (Caes. BG 5.14)

b. Accessum est ad Britanniam omnibus navibus meridiano fere tempore, approached is to Britanna all: ABL ships: ABL midday: ABL around time: ABL, *neque* in eo loco hostis est visus. and. not in that place enemy: NOM is seen ‘All ships got into Britain at around noon, and no enemy was spotted there’ (Caes. BG 5.8)
Functions of *nec*: (ii) correlative negation

(ii) **Correlative negation**: we find *nec* coordinating clauses or smaller constituents.

(5) Caput dolet **neque** audio *nec* oculis prospicio satis

‘I have a headache, I can’t hear, and I can’t see well with my eyes’ (Plaut. Amph. 1059)

(6) Salve, **nec** minimo puella naso

**nec** bello pede **nec** nigris ocellis

**nec** longis digitis **nec** ore sicco

**nec** sano nimiis elegante lingua.

decoctoris amica Formiani.

ten Provincia narrat esse bellam?
tecum Lesbia nostra comparatur?
o saeclum insapiens et infacetum!

‘I greet you, lady, you who neither have a tiny nose, nor a pretty foot, nor black eyes, nor long fingers, nor dry mouth, nor indeed a very refined tongue, you mistress of the bankrupt of Formiae. Is it you who are pretty, as the Province tells us? is it with you that our Lesbia is compared? Oh, this age! how tasteless and ill-bred it is!’ (Catullus 43, LOEB translation)
Contrastive function of correlative *nec*

(7) Contrast and polarity switch:

a. *Hic nunc domi servit suo patri nec scit*
   this:NOM now house:LOC serve:3SG his:DAT father:DAT and.not know:3SG
   father
   ‘Now this one is slave to his father in his home, and his father doesn’t know it’ (Plaut. Capt. 21)

b. *Omnia habeo, neque quicquam habeo*
   everything:ACC have:1SG and.not anything:ACC have:1SG
   ‘I have everything, and nonetheless I have nothing’ (Ter. Eun. 243)

c. It. *Ho tutto né ho niente*

d. It. *Ho tutto e non ho niente*
(iii) **Additive (‘not either’) or scalar (‘not even’) focus particle**: in the stand-alone focus-particle use, the task of ensuring syntactic and semantic-pragmatic cohesion with the previous discourse is accomplished by other elements in the clause (e.g. *ita* ‘thus’ below); *nec* indicates that the interpretation requires the consideration of alternatives to the denotation of the constituent in its scope.

**(8)**

*ita* primis repulsis Maharbal cum maiore robore
thus first:ABL repulsed:ABL Maharbal:NOM with greater:ABL strength:ABL
virorum missus nec ipse eruptionem cohortium sustinuit
man:GEN sent:NOM and.not himself:NOM sally:ACC cohort:GEN sustain:3SG

‘Thus after the first forces had been repulsed also Maharbal himself who had been sent with greater manpower did not sustain the cohorts’ sortie’

(Liv. 23.18.4)
Functions of *nec*: (iii) focus particle

Examples of scalar uses:

(9) **nec** Salus nobis saluti iam esse, si cupiat, potest
and.not salvation:NOM we:DAT salvation:DAT now be:INF if desire:3SG can:3SG
‘even Salvation cannot be of salvation to us, even if she should desire to be so’ (Pl. Most. 351, 3rd-2nd cent. BCE)

(10) dico autem vobis quoniam **nec** Salomon in omni gloria sua
say:1SG yet you:DAT that and.not Salomon:NOM in all:ABL splendor:ABL his:ABL
dressed:PT be:3SG as one:NOM from this:ABL
‘Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these [lilies of the field]’ (Matth. 6.29, 4th cent. CE)

(11) **nemo** mundus, **nec** infans
nobody:NOM pure:NOM and.not infant:NOM
‘No one is pure, not even an infant (Leo M. *Serm*. 21, 5th cent. CE)

Many of the negative scalar focus particles seen in Indo-European languages also have an employ as correlative negation (cf. König 1991: Ch. 4, Haspelmath 2007). Spanish *ni* still retains both functions (Herburger 2003), unlike Italian and French, which only have the correlative negation use.
The functions of *nec*

Interim summary and proposal

Interim summary:
- In all its uses *nec* can combine with constituents of various sizes, showing no categorial restriction
- In all its uses it introduces a semantic negative operator that can take sentential scope
- In all its uses it contributes an additive component, whereby alternatives are provided by the broader surrounding discourse or by more local antecedents

Proposal:
- Across functions, *nec* shares a homogeneous internal syntactic structure, corresponding to its two basic semantic components: additivity and negation.
- The various uses can be derived from the interaction between these two operators and the surrounding structure in which the particle is merged.
- In turn, the structural position of the particle influences its pragmatic properties, in terms of the form of the evoked alternatives and the way they are retrieved.
Internal syntactic structure

- One underlying meaning: AND > NOT= cf. bimorphemic structure: negative morpheme *ne-* + enclitic conjunction -*que*
- **Linear order** of morphemes due to **prosodically triggered inversion**

Analysis for the internal syntax of (i) and (ii-iii):

(i) discourse-structuring particle

(ii-iii) correlative and focus particle
Internal syntactic structure

- Correlation: **asynletic coordination**, where conjuncts are introduced by focus particles; cf. ‘edge coordination’ (‘not only...but also’) in Bianchi & Zamparelli 2004.

Internal syntactic structure


- In fact all these constituents are arguably propositional units reduced by **ellipsis**; a proper treatment of the association of the semantic operators involved must eventually lead to such an analysis.

(12) Cic. fam. 3.5.2:

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neque enim obscuris personis [TP res
and.not indeed obscure:ABL character:ABL situation:NOM
agetur] nec parvis in causis res
develop:3SG.PASS and.not small:ABL in issue:ABL situation:NOM
agetur
develop:3SG.PASS
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‘for the persons involved are not obscure, nor are the issues trivial’

- **Syntactic flexibility is a factor in multifunctionality**: the structural position of attachment influences the semantic-pragmatic interpretation, in terms of the form that the alternatives take (influencing, in turn, the way they are retrieved from the context)
Open issue:

- Problem of lexical ambiguity: Has discourse-structuring *nec* a different lexical entry, with a conjunction & instead of a focus particle *Foc*? or can it be considered a focus operator at the discourse level (cf. Garzonio & Gianollo 2017)?

- Sentences introduced by *nec* in its use as discourse particle are never discourse-initial (cf. one-place *and* according to Zeevat & Jasinskaja). They introduce **coordinating discourse relations** (List, Narration, Result): like *and*, *nec* is used when ‘the sentence topic of the pivot is abandoned to start dealing with a new topic’ (Zeevat & Jasinskaja 2007: 325).

- Likewise, discourse-structuring *nec* introduces a **distinctness requirement**: discourse-structuring *nec* could be considered a focus particle at the discourse level, thus requiring just one lexical entry.
The stand-alone focus particle function is a later use (from Livy on, cf. Orlandini & Poccetti 2007, 2008, Pinkster 2015: 693), with the scalar reading diachronically following the additive one.

- **Additivity** (*neither*): presupposition that what is predicated about an element also holds for one of its alternatives.

- **Scalarity** (*not even*): presupposition that the alternative being predicated is striking with respect to some contextually established scale (a scale of likelihood, a measure scale, etc.).

- Scalar reading → interaction with negation: ‘even [not $x$]’: it is even the case that the most probable alternative in the widest domain (i.e. the domain that has the highest probability of containing something) does not hold = emphatic reading.
(13) a. Quis enim mundus a sordibus? nec unus etiamsi unus
who: NOM indeed clean: NOM from sins and not one: NOM even if one: GEN
diei sit vita eius in terra
day: GEN be: 3SG life: NOM he: GEN on earth
‘Who is indeed clean from sins? not even one, even if his life on earth is
one day long’ (Cypr. testim 3.54, 3rd cent. CE)

b. Ramessen civitas nunc campus est, ita ut nec unam
Ramessen: NOM city: NOM now field: NOM be: 3SG so that and not one: ACC
habitationem habeat
dwelling: ACC have: 3SG
‘the city of Rameses is a desert now, such that there isn’t even a dwelling’
(Itin. Eg. 8.1, in Bertocchi et al 2010: 82)

c. non est relictus ex eis neque unus
not be: 3SG remain: PTC of they: ABL NEQUE one: NOM
‘and of them not even one is left’ (Agnell. lib. pont. 121, 9th cent. CE)
Additive and scalar interpretation

■ systematic ambiguity:

(14) **Anche i giganti hanno iniziato in piccolo**

‘Even giants started from small beginnings’ (*anche* = *perfino*)

■ The use as additive focus particle is possible only when suitable alternatives for the focus are explicitly provided in the context, no accommodation is possible (Zeevat 1992 and following), cf. the unfelicitous use of additive particles out of the blue:

(15) **# John had dinner in New York too**

■ In the absence of these preconditions, only a scalar interpretation is possible: in that case alternatives have to be accommodated by evoking a scale, whose dimension is usually suggested by the element in focus.

■ A process of presupposition accommodation by means of scale retrieval may have been responsible for the conventionalization of a scalar meaning for *nec*: accommodation processes on the part of the hearer are costly and, if systematic enough, may lead to a reanalysis of the conditions imposed by the lexical entry (cf. Traugott & Dasher 2002, Schwenter & Waltereit 2010).

■ In turn, in Late Latin *ne...quidem*, which was a competitor of *nec* in the focus-particle use, loses productivity, thus opening an additional functional space for *nec* = loss of lexical blocking.
The use at the origin of Romance *nec*-words is the **scalar focus particle** use ‘even not *x*’.  

Focus particles are well attested cross-linguistically as formatives of **polarity-sensitive indefinites** (Haspelmath 1997: 222 ff.) and have been connected to the kind of scalar focus found in emphatic negation (Lahiri 1998, Chierchia 2013). Focus-sensitive uses may account for the frequent non-negative NPI-uses in Early Romance.

The only difference between correlative and focus particle concerns the **syntactic context** in which they are used: the stand-alone focus particle does not have an immediate syntactic correlate. Rather, it has alternatives in the context, which are retrieved in different ways yielding an additive or a scalar reading.

From additive to scalar meaning: process of **presupposition accommodation** in the absence of suitable anaphoric alternatives.
I analyzed the functions of *nec* synchronically and diachronically, and I proposed that, across functions, it shares a homogeneous internal syntactic structure, corresponding to its two basic semantic components: additivity and negation.

The various uses (multifunctionality) can be derived from the interaction between these two operators and the surrounding structure in which the particle is merged.

In turn, the structural position of the particle influences its pragmatic properties, in terms of the form of the evoked alternatives and the way they are retrieved.
GRAZIE!

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Conclusions

Literature