NEGATIVE CONCORD ITEMS IN THE AROMANIAN DIALECT OF THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE[1]

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the class of N-words in the Aromanian dialect of Romanian. Being a cross-linguistically central topic in the typological study of negation, the semantic status of the N-words remains a controversial subject. While the Standard Romanian N-words have benefited from various interpretations in the literature (as existential quantifiers under negation, universal quantifiers above negation, free choice items, negative polarity items or negative quantifiers), the N-word paradigms in the South-Danube dialects of Romanian have not been studied yet. This paper offers an analysis and a classification of the Aromanian N-words (or Negative Concord Items), serving also as a typological characterization of the negation system in this dialect.

Keywords: *negation; N-words; Negative Concord; typology; dialectology; Aromanian; Romanian.*

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1. Introduction

The subject of negation in Romanian has gained interest in the 20 past years and a great number of studies have been published on this topic: PhD theses and monographic studies (Dominte 2003; Iordăchioaia 2010; Ionescu 2017a), collective volumes (Ionescu (ed.) 2004), and articles dealing with different aspects of negation, such as: the Negative Concord (Isac 2004; Fălăuș 2007), the status of the N-words (Farkas 2006; Fălăuș 2008; Iordăchioaia/Richter 2015), the Double Negation (Ionescu 2017b), the Negative Fragment Answers (Ionescu 2016), and the Jespersen Cycle (Ionescu 2014).

Nevertheless, there is no uniform and detailed description of the negation system in the Aromanian dialect of Romanian. The reader can find information about the verbal negation in the description of the Aromanian verb (Nevaci 2006, 2013a) and about the negative pronouns and negative adverbs (Nevaci 2011: 126, 2013a: 21, 2013b: 100, 201). In addition, the double use of the indefinite/negative pronouns and pronominal adjectives is discussed in Nevaci (2011: 48, 2013b: 31).

The Aromanian dialect is one of the three South-Danube historical dialects of the Romanian language, together with Megleno-Romanian and Istro-Romanian. The Aromanian dialect is spoken mainly in Romania, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Republic of North Macedonia, and Serbia, by approximately 600.000 active speakers (Nevaci 2013b: 18). The Aromanian dialect has many sub-dialects, the most important being Farsherot, Grabovean, Gramostean, and Pindean[3].

During our research, we have gathered a corpus of examples containing expressions of negation in the Aromanian dialect, taken from the bibliography. For this paper, the sources of the examples are oral Aromanian texts, recorded during dialectal inquiries (Nevaci 2013b), examples taken from lexicographic definitions from Aromanian dictionaries (DDA 1963/2013) or from *Basme aromâne* (BA) "Aromanian fairy-tales".

[3] For detailed descriptions of the Aromanian sub-dialects, see Nevaci (2013b, 2018), Saramandu/Nevaci (2018).

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The paper is structured in four sections. In the second part, we offer a theoretical overview on the concepts of Negative Concord, Double Negation, and N-words. The third section contains the analysis of the Negative Concord Items in the Aromanian dialect. The last section presents the conclusions and further perspectives of our research.

2.N-words and Negative Concord – a Theoretical Overview

Negative Concord (NC) is a phenomenon in which (at least) two negative constituents give rise to a mononegative reading. Example (1) from Standard Romanian[4] contains the Negative Marker (NM) *nu* "no" and the N-word *nimic* "nothing" and the two negations combine into a single one. Romance and Slavic languages are characterized by NC, as well as Greek, Japanese, Hungarian, and Nonstandard English, among others.

(1) ***Nu*** *am mâncat* ***nimic***.
NM AUX eaten nothing
"I didn't eat anything."

The NC languages are further divided according to the NC type they make use of. On the one hand, there are strict NC languages[5], such as Romanian, Greek, Hungarian, and the Slavic languages, where an NCI must always co-occur with the NM for a sentence to be well-formed. On the other hand, there are non-strict NC languages, such as Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese, where an N-word in preverbal position is incompatible with the NM (2a), while the presence of the NM is obligatory when the NCI occurs in post-verbal position (2b). There is also another type of NC, called Negative Spread, which occurs in the presence of (at least) two NCIs, without the NM (3). Negative Spread characterizes languages like Italian, Spanish, Catalan, and Portuguese.

4 We call "Standard Romanian" the official language spoken in Romania (it is also the former North-Danube historical dialect of the Romanian language).

5 For the distinction between strict and non-strict NC, see Giannakidou (1998: 186).

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(2) a. ***Nessuno (*non)*** *ha visto Mario*. (Italian, Giannakidou 2006: 349)
nobody NM AUX seen Mario
"Nobody saw Mario."

b. *Mario *(**non)** ha visto **nessuno***.
Mario NM AUX seen nobody
"Mario didn't see anybody."

(3) ***Ninguem*** *viu* ***nada***. (Portuguese, Giannakidou 2006: 348)
nobody saw nothing
"Nobody saw anything."

Languages such as Standard English, German, and Dutch are non-NC languages, being characterized by Double Negation (DN). A DN structure consists of two negative elements whose negations cancel each other out, the result being a positive reading (4). Double Negation also occurs in some NC languages, like the Romance languages, but it is not allowed in others, such as the Slavic languages, Greek, and Hungarian.

(4) *I did**n't** see **nobody***. (Penka 2011: 15)
"I saw somebody."

The term *N-word* was introduced in Laka (1990) and it denotes the nominal and adverbial negative constituents occurring in NC constructions and also featuring as negative fragment answers (5). Cross-linguistically, it is a heterogeneous class of words in terms of distribution and semantic properties (Giannakidou 2006: 328).

(5) *Ce a cumpărat?* ‖***Nimic***. (Romanian)
what AUX bought ‖ nothing
"What did he buy? ‖ Nothing."

The semantic status of the N-words is a controversial subject in the literature on negation. There are two main directions of analysis, named the *licensing paradigm* and the *poliadicity paradigm* (Ionescu 2017a). The first paradigm gathers the approaches with non-negative N-words, considering that the N-words are obligatorily licensed by the sentential NM. Thus, the N-words have been interpreted as indefinites (Ladusaw 1992), Negative Polarity Items (Giannakidou 1998), or Free Choice Items

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(Farkas 2006)[6]. The second paradigm consists of analyses of the N-words in terms of Negative Quantifiers. The N-words are considered to possess negative force and the structures with Negative Concord are interpreted using the *Polyadic Quantifier Theory* (de Swart/Sag 2002; Iordăchioaia 2010). In this latter approach, the NC structure is seen as a polyadic quantifier, and the negative quantifiers compose via a mechanism called *resumption*.

In what concerns the N-words in Standard Romanian, there are analyses belonging to both aforementioned paradigms. The N-words have been considered existential quantifiers obligatory in the scope of negation (Ionescu 2004) or Free Choice Items (Farkas 2006), and newer researches have included them in the class of Negative Quantifiers (Fălăuş 2008; Iordăchioaia 2010; Iordăchioaia/Richter 2015). In this paper, we treat Standard Romanian N-words as Negative Concord Items, as a class that differs both from NPIs (such as *vreun* "any") and from Germanic Negative Quantifiers (like *nobody*).

According to a typology of N-words developed in Giannakidou (1998), languages are divided into 5 classes, based on the following criteria: the existence of NC, the status of the N-words, and the possibility of N-words having non-negative/existential interpretations. Being characterized by strict NC and one N-word paradigm, Standard Romanian has been included in the 4th language type, together with the Slavic languages (Cristescu 2020). N-words in Standard Romanian are Negative Concord Items and they can also occur independent of the sentencial NM (6). Moreover, in Standard Romanian, two NCIs can yield DN readings, in special (pragmatic) contexts (7).

(6) *Maria cam exagerează, dar Ion* ***niciodată***. (Iordăchioaia 2010: 93)
Maria pretty exaggerates, but John never
"Maria pretty much exaggerates, but John never does."

(7) ***NIMENI nu*** *moare* ***niciodată.***
nobody NM die never
"Nobody ever dies (Everybody dies one day)."

[6] For other approaches to N-words, see Penka (2011) and Giannakidou/Zeijlstra (2017).

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3. Negation in the Aromanian Dialect. The Negative Concord Items

From Nevaci (2011: 48) we find out that in *Codex Dimonie*, an old Aromanian religious text, the indefinite pronoun *ținiva* "someone, anyone" is interpreted as a negative pronoun when it co-occurs with a negated verb. The author further mentions that the same homonymy is met in the Aromanian writers' texts from the 18th century.

After analyzing a corpus of about 100 contexts containing Aromanian N-words, we have classified them into two paradigms. Type 1 Aromanian N-words are NCIs in negative contexts and indefinites in positive contexts. Therefore, we talk about two homonymous classes of words. In example (8), the indefinite/NCI *vărnu* "anybody, somebody, nobody" displays this homonymy. As can be seen in examples (8), (9), and (11), an Aromanian NCI must always co-occur with the sentential NM. Therefore, the Aromanian dialect is characterized by strict NC, as well as Standard Romanian.

(8) *Vine* ***vărnu****?* ‖***Nu*** *viḑui* ***vărnu****.* (Nevaci 2013b: 154)
came someone? ‖NM saw no one
"Has anyone/someone come?‖I haven't seen anyone."

(9) ***Vârnu nu*** *putea s-ńeargă s'lu veadă* (*BA* 26/13, *apud* Nevaci 2006: 135)
nobody NM can CONJ-go CONJ him see
"Nobody could go to see him."

(10) *va-l´ĭ aǧútă* ***vârnu*** (DDA 1963: 1117)
will-them help someone
"Someone will help them."

(11) ***ținiva nu*** va s-l*'i avdă* (Weigand 1894: 13/8-9, *apud* Saramandu *et al.* 2018: 59)
nobody NM will CONJ-them hear
"Nobody will hear them."

(12) *la poártă* ***ținivá*** *bate* (DDA 1963: 1072)
at gate someone knocks
"Someone knocks at the gate."

In Table 1, we have gathered all the Type 1 Aromanian NCIs found in our corpus, together with their correspondents in Standard Romanian and in English.

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Table 1

Type 1 Aromanian NCIs

N-word	Aromanian	Standard Romanian	English
N-person	*văr (vărnu, vârnu) (M), vără (vârnă) (F), ţiniva*	*nimeni, niciunul (M), niciuna (F)/ cineva, vreunul (M), vreuna (F)*	*nobody/somebody/ anybody*
N-thing	*ţiva, işţiva*	*nimic/ceva*	*nothing/something/ anything*
N-time	*vloară, vără oară, vărnăoară*	*niciodată, nicicând/ cândva, vreodată*	*never/sometimes, ever*
N-place	*ĭuva*	*nicăieri, niciunde/undeva*	*nowhere/somewhere*
N-DET	*văr (vărnu, vârnu) (M), vără (vârnă) (F)*	*niciun/vreun (M), nicio/vreo (F)*	*no*

Type 2 Aromanian N-words occur only in NC constructions and they never acquire non-negative/existential meaning. They are always Negative Concord Items. The NCI *can* "no one, nobody" from example (13) is used in the Gramostean sub-dialect.

(13) ***can*** *di noĭ* ***nu*** *s'dúse* (DDA 1963: 243)
none of us NM CONJ-lelf
"None of us left."

(14) *aúsŭlu* ***puté nu*** *s'minduí* (DDA 2013: 1224)
old man never NM CONJ-think
"The old man never thought."

We also introduced in the class of Type 2 Aromanian NCIs the adverbs *iĉ, iĉi, dip, can* "not at all", as they occur obligatorily with the sentencial NM:

(15) ***Ici****, s-****nu*** *ti ved cama.* (Nevaci 2013b: 201)
not at all SUBJ-NM you see more
"I shall never see you at all."

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(16) ***dip*** ***nu*** *mi-aspár* (DDA 1963: 388)
not at all NM REFL.1.sg-fear
"I am not scared at all."

In Table 2, we have gathered all the Type 2 Aromanian NCIs found in our corpus, together with their correspondents in Standard Romanian and in English.

Table 2

Type 2 Aromanian NCIs

N-word	Aromanian	Standard Romanian	English
N-person	*can (M), cană (F) nițiun*	*nimeni, niciunul*	*nobody*
N-thing	*can, cană*	*nimic*	*nothing*
N-time	*nițidânâoară, puté*	*niciodată*	*never*
N-manner	*iĉ, iĉi, dip, can*	*deloc*	*not at all*
N-DET	*can (M), cană (F), nițiun (M), nițiună (F)*	*niciun (M), nicio (F)*	*no*

The Aromanian dialect is not unitary, but it consists of many sub-dialects, each with its particularities. There are also differences regarding the NCIs. For example, the counterparts of the Farsherot *văr* "no one/someone/anyone" are the Gramostean *vârnu* and *can* (an NCI) and the Grabovean *ținiva* (cf. Nevaci 2011: 48).

Besides the contexts with NC, the NCIs in the Aromanian dialect are able to occur in contexts without the NM[7]. These structures include: negative fragment answers (17-18), gapping constructions (19), disjunctive coordinations (21), superlative constructions (20), copulative coordinations (22), and adjuncts (23). As it can be noticed from example (17), both the Farsherot *văr* and the Gramostean *can* are used as negative fragment answers. Moreover, both Type 1 and Type 2 Aromanian NCIs are able to occur independently of the NM.

[7] Examples (17-24) have been transposed into the Aromanian dialect by Manuela Nevaci, who is a native speaker of the Farsherot sub-dialect and whom we are very grateful to. For the original Romanian examples and their references, see Ionescu (2017a).

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(17) *Vini **văr**?* ‖ ***Văr/Can**.*
came someone/anyone? ‖ nobody
"Has someone/anyone come? ‖ Nobody."

(18) *Ți acumpârași?* ‖ ***Țiva**.*
what bought ‖ nothing
"What have you bought? ‖ Nothing."

(19) *Tini ai di tuti, ama mini **țiva**.*
you have of all, but I nothing
"You have got all, but I have got nothing."

(20) *Ion easti analt ca **văr** alt di la el dit clasă.*
John is tall as no one other from at him from classroom
"John is tall like no one else in his classroom."

(21) *Va mi duc ică la mari, ică **ĭuva ici**.*
will I go wither at sea, or nowhere at all
"I will go either to the sea or nowhere."

(22) *Am acumpurată ḑați trandafili și **vără** garofilă.*
AUX bought ten roses and no carnation
"I bought ten roses and no carnations."

(23) *Arămași cu **țiva** tu mănă.*
left with nothing in hand
"There was nothing left in your hand."

A property that the Aromanian dialect shares with Standard Romanian in terms of negation is the possibility of the NCIs to yield DN readings. In example (24) we have a dialog, where B objects to A's utterance and the first N-word is pronounced with emphasis (hence, the capital letters). The DN reading comes from the interaction between two negations. The first negation comes from the NCI "văr", while the second one is given by the NC structure resulted from the interaction between the NM "nu" and the NCI "vloară"[8]:

[8] For an extensive discussion on DN and many similar examples in Standard Romanian, see Iordăchioaia (2010).

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(24) A: *Aici oamińi* ***nu*** *arăd* ***vloară****.*
these people NM lie never
"These people never lie."

B: *VĂR* ***nu*** *arădi* ***vloară****.*
nobody NM lie never
"Nobody never lies. (Every man lies at some point.)"

It is interesting that the Aromanian dialect differs from Standard Romanian in terms of NCI paradigms. Standard Romanian makes use of different words to express an NCI (*nimeni* "nobody"), an NPI (*vreunul* "any"), and an indefinite (*cineva* "someone"), while Aromanian uses only one word (for example, *văr*) to express all of these, with contextual differences.

Etymologically, the Aromanian NCIs come from various languages, such as Latin (*nițiun* < *neque unus*; *vărnu* < *vere unus*), Turkish (*dip* < *dib*; *iĉ* < *hâtch*), or Greek (*puté* < *ποτέ).*

4. Conclusions and Further Perspectives

This paper offers a typological analysis of the class of N-words in the Aromanian dialect of Romanian. Both Standard Romanian and the Aromanian dialect are characterized by strict NC, but they differ with respect to the N-word paradigms. While Standard Romanian displays one NCI paradigm, with no indefinite/existential readings, the Aromanian N-words have been classified in two types: Type 1 Aromanian N-words are indefinites in positive contexts and NCIs in negative contexts, while Type 2 Aromanian N-words are always NCIs, obligatorily co-occurring with the NM. Nevertheless, the Aromanian and the Standard Romanian NCIs share two properties. On one hand, they are able to occur independently of the NM and to convey negative meaning. There are certain contexts allowing an NCI to occur in the absence of the NM, one of them being as a negative fragment answer. On the other hand, they are able to yield DN readings, in certain contexts. All these features can place the Aromanian negation in the 5th language paradigm of Giannakidou's typology of negation, together with Greek (Cristescu 2020).

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The classification of the NCIs and the analysis of the NC phenomenon in the Aromanian dialect will offer valuable data for a future monographic description of the negation systems across the South-Danube dialects of the Romanian language.

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