Who invokes silent negation?

The view from a hybrid negative concord language

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Abstract

Zeijlstra (2004, 2022) proposes an agreement-style grammar, where negative concord items (NCI) are existentials that must be licensed by a pronounced or silent negation. The silent negations are invoked by NCIs themselves and, in strict-NC systems, by the overt but meaningless negative marker (NM). This paper addresses two main issues. First, why is NM obligatory in strict systems, if NCIs can invoke silent negation? Second, is it possible for strict and non-strict NC to co-exist in a language, if the NM is meaningless in the first and meaningfully negative in the second case? The paper focuses on Hungarian, based on but going beyond existing literature (Surányi 2006; Kenesei 2009; É. Kiss 2015; Szabolcsi 2018a,b, and others). It combines Zeijlstra's analysis for strict-NC with Chierchia's (2013) analysis for non-strict NC. Hungarian is particularly interesting, because it is a hybrid, and so it requires accounts of the two kinds of NC that are compatible.

Keywords: Hungarian, negative concord (NC), strict NC, non-strict NC, [uNeg], [iNeg], silent negation, exhaustification, syntax, semantics

Introduction: [uNeg]/[iNeg] in Zeijlstra's theory of negative concord

In seminal work, Zeijlstra (2004, 2022) analyzes negative concord as an agreement relation between items with an uninterpretable [uNeg] feature and a c-commanding operator with an interpretable [iNeg] feature and a negative (¬) semantics. When no such operator is overtly present, he postulates a null Op¬.

Zeijlstra proposes that strict and non-strict negative concord languages differ with respect to whether their Negative Markers (NM) are [uNeg] or [iNeg].

In the strict case, which I will exemplify with Russian, NM is [uNeg] and invokes the null [iNeg, ¬] operator Op¬ higher in the structure. In the non-strict case, to be exemplified with Italian, NM itself is [iNeg, ¬]. In both types, negative concord items (NCI) are assumed to be [uNeg, ∃], i.e. existentials that invoke an Op¬ if no overt negation is present (Zeijlstra 2022: 78–88).

(1)

Russian, strict NC			Italian, non-strict NC		
ne	[uNeg]		*non*	[iNeg]	¬
nikto	[uNeg]	∃	*nessuno*	[uNeg]	∃
Op¬	[iNeg]	¬	Op¬	[iNeg]	¬

(2) Op¬$_{[iNeg]}$ *ni-kto*$_{[uNeg, ∃]}$ *ne*$_{[uNeg]}$ *po-zvoni-l*.
N-one NM PFX-call-PST.3SG
'No one called.'

(3) Op¬$_{[iNeg]}$ *nessuno*$_{[uNeg, ∃]}$ *ha* *telefonato*.
N.one AUX call.PST.3SG
'No one called.'

We take this theory as a point of departure and address two questions.

(4) The redundancy question (all strict-NC languages):
Why is the [uNeg] NM obligatory in strict-NC languages in the presence of NCIs?

If NCIs are [uNeg], they are capable of invoking Op¬ on their own. If, in Italian, *Nessuno ha telefonato* is good enough, with [iNeg] Op¬ invoked by [uNeg] *nessuno*, why is **Nikto pozvonil* not good enough in Russian, with [iNeg] Op¬ invoked by [uNeg] *nikto*?

Zeijlstra has proposed two different answers to the question. According to Zeijlstra (2004), the NM is obligatory because it is part of the verbal morphology. This answer was abandoned, perhaps because while it may be correct for Czech, it is not tenable for Russian or Hungarian. Instead, Zeijlstra (2022: 86) likens the NM to agreement markers in null subject languages, which cannot be dropped even if the subject is overt:

(5) a. *Canto.* b. *Io canto*. c. **Io cant*.
sing.1SG I sing.1SG I sing

This answer also does not seem as robust as the phenomenon it seeks to explain.

Let us now turn to the other question this paper addresses.

(6) The hybridity question

Can a language have both strict and non-strict NC and an apparently unique NM? If yes, is that NM [iNeg] or [uNeg]?

Since Surányi (2006), Hungarian has been recognized as a hybrid NC language. It is a "true hybrid": the NM is never optional, unlike in Modern Greek, Russian Sign Language, or Catalan, judging by Giannakidou (2007), Kuhn and Pasalskaya (2023) and Tubau et al. (2023), respectively.

When the items *senki* 'N-one,' *semmi* 'N-thing,' *sehol* 'N-where,' etc. occur by themselves, they function as strict NCIs. When they are in the specifier of the clausal-head particle *se(m)* 'nor' (SEM), we have non-strict NC. The data below demonstrate the characteristic behavior. If the preverbal NCI is bare *senki*, the negation particle NEM must follow (strict NC, compare Russian). If preverbal *senki* is in the specifier of SEM, NEM must not follow (non-strict NC; compare Italian).[1]

(7) a1. *Ni-kto* *ne* *vide-l* *ni-chego*. *w/o NE
N-one NM see-PAST.3SG N-thing.GEN
a2. *Sen-ki* *nem* *lát-ott* *sem-mi-t*. * w/o NEM
N-one NM see-PAST.3SG N-thing-ACC
b1. *Nessuno* *ha* *visto* *niente*. * with NON
N.one AUX see.PAST.3SG N.thing
b2. *Sen-ki* *sem* *lát-ott* *sem-mi-t*. * with NEM
N-one NOR see-PAST.3SG N-thing-ACC
(all four examples) 'No one saw anything.'

[1] Glosses and notation: Russian and Hungarian NCIs consist of a particle plus a *wh*-pronoun. Following the cross-linguistic literature, they will be glossed as N-one, N-thing, etc. The verbs in the Hungarian examples, typically past 3Sg, may not be broken down into morphemes throughout the paper. The functional heads NEM, SEM and IS will be written in caps in the main text.

(8)	a1.	*Marija*	*ne*	*vide-l-a*	*ni-chego*.	* w/o NE
		Mary	NM	see-PAST.3SG-F	N-thing.GEN	
	a2.	*Mari*	*nem*	*lát-ott*	*sem-mi-t*.	* w/o NEM
		Mary	NM	see-PAST.3SG	N-thing-ACC	
	b1.	*Maria*	*non*	*ha visto*	*niente*.	* w/o NON
		Mary	NM	aux see.PAST.3SG	N.thing	
	b2.	*Mari*	*nem*	*lát-ott*	*sem-mi-t sem*.	* w/o NEM
		Mary	NM	see-PAST.3SG	N-thing-ACC NOR	

(all four examples) 'Mary didn't see anything.'

Postverbal NCIs are equally licensed in the presence of NEM and preverbal SEM, and strict (SEM-less) and non-strict (SEM-ful) NCIs freely mix in the postverbal position. (*Sehol* 'N-where' is added to demonstrate this last point.) Therefore, the two kinds of NC are not kept apart in the language.

(9) a. *Sen-ki nem lát-ott se-hol (sem) sem-mi-t (sem)*.
b. *Sen-ki sem lát-ott se-hol (sem) sem-mi-t (sem)*.
c. *Mari nem lát-ott se-hol (sem) sem-mi-t (sem)*.

Preliminary structures for the Hungarian preverbal field are as follows:

(10) a. [$_{NegP}$ *senki*$_j$ [$_{Neg'}$ *nem* [$_{TP}$ ~~senki~~$_j$ [$_{vP}$ ...]]]] cf. (7a2)
b. [$_{SemP}$ *senki*$_j$ [$_{Sem'}$ sem [$_{TP}$ ~~senki~~$_j$ [$_{vP}$ ...]]]] cf. (7b2)
c. [$_{TopP}$ *Mari*$_j$ [$_{NegP}$ [$_{Neg'}$ *nem* [$_{TP}$ ~~Mari~~$_j$ [$_{vP}$ ...]]]] cf. (8b2)

To answer the redundancy question (4) and the hybridity question (6), this paper focuses on Hungarian and combines Zeijlstra's (2004, 2022) analysis for strict-NC with Chierchia's (2013) analysis for non-strict NC:

(11) a. The standard NM, NEM is [uNeg] (as in Zeijlstra for strict-NC).

b. NCIs are not [uNeg]. They are not checked by [iNeg] and don't invoke [Op¬]. Their relation to negation is indirect. The NCI needs to be exhaustified, and the coherence of exhaustification must be ensured by an intervening semantic negation (as in Chierchia for negative polarity/negative concord licensing).

c. The intervening semantic negation is always silent. One of the elements that can invoke it is [uNeg] NEM. Therefore, NEM is not redundant.

d. For Italian, Chierchia postulates a null NEG syntactic head that has the preverbal NCI in its specifier and invokes both a silent exhaustifier and a silent negation. The clausal-head SEM in Hungarian non-strict NC is argued to be an overt counterpart of Chierchia's null NEG head.

The analysis draws on, but differs from, precursors like Surányi (2006) and Kenesei (2009). In many respects it builds on Szabolcsi (2018a,b) but revises the claim therein that the unitary NEM is [iNeg, ¬]. NEM is now argued to be [uNeg] instead.

The structure of the discussion will be as follows. Section 1 shows that some of the Hungarian NCIs are existentials, and examines an array of arguments for analyzing NEM as [uNeg]. Section 2 summarizes Chierchia's semantic proposal for weak and strong negative polarity items (NPIs) and NCIs. Section 3 turns to non-strict NC in Hungarian; it introduces Chierchia's null head NEG and argues that SEM is a counterpart, but fleshes out the analysis of SEM as the NC version of the alternative-activating particle IS. Section 4 turns to some matters of intervention and phases that the above analyses raise. Section 5 concludes.

1. Existential NCIs and a [uNeg] NM in Hungarian

The main goal of this paper is to flesh out the answer to the redundancy question as outlined in (11), with reference to Hungarian. The scenario in (11) presupposes that the language has existential NCIs and an uninterpreted, [uNeg] NM. This section aims to establish these claims, step by step.

1.1 At least some Hungarian NCIs are existentials

The issue whether Hungarian has existential NCIs is not trivial. Szabolcsi (1981: 528–535) examined a limited sample of bare (SEM-less) NCIs and, based on their word order and scope properties, analyzed them as universals that scope immediately above negation. (The analysis served as an inspiration for Giannakidou 2000, 2007 and Shimoyama 2011.) Although the universal analysis goes a long way, Surányi (2002, 2006) presented a decisive empirical argument to the effect that not all Hungarian NCIs can be universals: in some positions, they can be complements of "definiteness effect" predicates that are incompatible with universals and require non-specific indefinites.

As a background, note that Hungarian verbs whose semantics involves (CAUSE)(BECOME)AVAILABLE come in two versions: a bleached version that exhibits a "definiteness effect", i.e. only takes non-specific indefinite internal arguments, and a non-bleached, semantically full version that takes all kinds of arguments and typically imposes an existential presupposition. The two versions are distinguished by the absence vs. presence of the perfective particle *meg*. Verbs like *érkezik* 'arrive', *születik* 'be born', *történik* 'happen', etc. are bleached verbs, and their perfective counterparts *meg-érkezik*, *meg-születik*, *meg-történik,* etc. are non-bleached, full verbs. For example, *Érkezett egy vendég* 'There arrived a guest' means that we have a guest, and it can be made true by someone showing up without an invitation. By contrast, *Megérkezett egy vendég* 'A guest arrived' means that a person who had been invited has successfully changed location.[2]

(12) a. Bleached version that requires non-specific indefinite arguments
Érkezett {*egy vendég* / ** a vendég* / ** minden vendég* / ** Mari*}.
arrived a guest the guest every guest Mari
'There arrived {a guest / * the guest / *every guest / * Mari}.'

b. Non-bleached version whose arguments carry an existential presupposition
Meg-érkezett {*egy vendég* / *a vendég* / *minden vendég* / *Mari*}.
perf-arrived a guest the guest every guest Mari
'{A specific guest/the guest/every guest/Mari} arrived.'

[2] On the definiteness effect phenomenology in Hungarian, see Szabolcsi (1986), recently summarized and applied to a new domain in É. Kiss (2023).

Surányi's (2002, 2006) claim that the NCI *senki* 'N-one' can be a non-specific indefinite can be demonstrated using the bleached verb *érkezik*:

(13) *Nem érkez-ett sen-ki (sem).*
NM arrive-PST.3SG N-one NOR
'There arrived no one.'

Naturally, existential NCIs are not confined to "definiteness effect" constructions; these only serve to diagnose that the non-specific existential interpretation is forced or allowed in the given positions. To see what these positions are, observe that the Hungarian standard (non-expletive) negation marker may occur in (at least) two distinct positions. Using my own labels, these are NegP1, which is immediately preverbal, and NegP2, which precedes the contrastive focus.[3]

(14) [$_{NegP2}$ ***nem*** [$_{FocP}$ [$_{NegP1}$ ***nem*** [$_{TP}$ [$_{vP}$ ...]]]]]

Specifically, Surányi (2006: 300-301) demonstrates that focussed NCIs in NegP1 have existential force (see (15a)), and NCIs in NegP2 have universal force (see (16a)). NCIs in the postverbal field can have either interpretation (see (15b), (16b)).[4]

(15) a. [$_{NegP1}$ *SENKI* *nem* [$_{TP}$ *érkezett*]].
N-one NM arrived
b. [$_{NegP1}$ *Nem* [$_{TP}$ *érkezett* *senki*]].
NM arrived N-one
both: 'There arrived no one.' [existential force]

[3] More recently, Horvath (2006, 2010) does not postulate a syntactic position FocP. Like Rooth (1992), Brody (1990) and many others, Horvath (2006, 2010) uses "focus" to stand for "focus accent," an intonational property that correlates with introducing alternatives. In Horvath's theory, both the preverbal position and the semantic exhaustivity associated with syntactic focus are due to extra structure and a silent *only*-style operator. Although I am convinced by Horvath's proposal, for simplicity I retain the FocP notation that is widely used in the literature on Hungarian. Note that some focus-accented expressions, e.g. the specifier of IS 'too' are not exhaustive.

[4] Hungarian readers may observe that the universal-force sentences in (16) are also acceptable without the perfective *meg* particle. The reason is that the presence of a contrastive focus, here *TEGNAP* 'yesterday,' neutralizes the definiteness effect (Szabolcsi 1986; É. Kiss 2023). These complications of the definiteness effect phenomenology do not concern us here, so more straightforward examples with *meg-érkezik* are used. These examples would also work with run-of-the-mill agentive verbs like *énekel* 'sing'.

(16) a. [$_{NegP2}$ *Senki* *nem* [$_{FocP}$ *TEGNAP* [$_{TP}$ *érkezett meg*]]].
N-one NM yesterday arrived perf

b. [$_{NegP2}$ *Nem* [$_{FocP}$ *TEGNAP* [$_{TP}$ *érkezett meg* *SENKI*]]].
NM yesterday arrived perf N-one

both: 'No one who arrived did so yesterday.' [universal force, presuppositional]

The examples above represent strict-NC. Recall, however, that Hungarian is a hybrid: when the NCI occurs in the specifier of the clausal head SEM, we have non-strict NC. SemP is the negative concord counterpart of IsP (first recognized in Brody 1990). Non-strict NCIs exhibit existential vs. universal force in the same positions as strict-NCIs, so the two divisions are independent (Surányi 2002, 2006).

(17) a. [$_{SemP1}$ *SENKI* *sem* [$_{TP}$ *érkezett*]].
N-one NOR arrived

b. [$_{NegP1}$ *Nem* [$_{TP}$ *érkezett* *senki* *sem*]]].
NM arrived N-one NOR

both: 'There arrived no one' [existential force]

(18) a. [$_{SemP2}$ *Senki* *sem* [$_{FocP}$ *TEGNAP* [$_{TP}$ *érkezett meg*]]].
N-one NOR yesterday arrived perf

b. [$_{NegP2}$ *Nem* [$_{FocP}$ *TEGNAP* [$_{TP}$ *érkezett meg* *SENKI* *sem*]]].
NM yesterday arrived perf N-one NOR

both: 'No one who arrived did so yesterday' [universal force, presuppositional]

Given our agenda outlined in (11), we will focus on existential NCIs in NegP1/SemP1 or postverbal position.[5]

The negation marker has a third possible position, adjoined to V, moving to T along with V, and remaining in TP instead of moving up to NegP. When the verb has a particle, V-adjoined negation is recognizable by the *... PRT nem V...* order, instead of the usual ... *nem*

[5] Surányi (2006) argues for Hungarian and Zeijlstra (2022: 398-399) for Japanese and Korean that universal NCIs check a [uNeg] feature but subsequently move above [iNeg, ¬] because they are positive polarity items (PPIs). The present paper will not undertake analyzing universal NCIs.

V PRT... order. Gugán (2012) and É. Kiss (2015) argue that V-adjoined negation represents an archaic, Uralic construction that was productive in Old Hungarian but increasingly though not exclusively serves as expletive negation in modern Hungarian. Because "definiteness effect" predicates do not have particles, it would be difficult to diagnose the NCIs in this construction as existential vs. universal. But V-adjoined, TP-internal negation will be relevant in connection with scope in Section 1.2.1. [6]

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[6] The brief catalog of data below rounds out the picture of Hungarian negative markers. Most of these data fall outside the scope of the present paper.

Halm and Huszár (2021) propose the following positions for standard vs. expletive negation, focusing on exclamatives. The examples will contain the particle verb *le-esett* 'fell down', because some of the negation types can only be identified by noting the position of that particle (PRT).

$[_{\text{TopP*}}\ [_{\text{SpeakerDeixisP}}\ \ \textbf{[}\textbf{\textit{nem}}\textbf{(i)}\ [_{\text{NegP}}\ \ \textbf{\textit{nem}}\textbf{(ii)}\ \ [_{\text{TP}}\ [\textbf{\textit{nem}}\textbf{(iii)}+\text{T}^0\ \ ]]]]]$

The highest expletive negation, *nem*(i) is surprise negation, located in the SpeakerDeixis Phrase and operates on presuppositions. Standard negation (ii) was illustrated in the main text with NegP1 and NegP2 examples. (i) and (ii) can co-occur.

(i) *(Hát)* ***nem*** *le-es-ett?!* — expletive (surprise) negation
well NM PRT-fall-PST.3SG
'It fell down, I realize with surprise.'

(ii) ***Nem*** *es-ett* *le.* — modern standard negation
NM fall-PST.3SG PRT
'It didn't fall down.'

(i)+(ii) *(Hát)* ***nem*** {***nem*** *esett le* / ***nem*** *TEGNAP esett le* / ***nem*** *TEGNAP* ***nem*** *esett le*} ?!
'It didn't fall down / It was not yesterday that it fell down / It wasn't yesterday that it didn't fall down, I realize with surprise.'

TP-internal negation (iii) represents either Uralic-style standard negation, illustrated in (iiia) with a present-day example, or two different kinds of expletive negation (iiib,c):

(iii) a. *Le* ***nem*** *es-ett,* *akárhogy lökdös-t-em*. — Uralic-style standard negation
PRT NM fall-PST.3SG however push-PST-1SG
'It didn't fall down, however I kept pushing it.'

b. *Ha/amíg/hacsak hirtelen le* ***nem*** *es-ett*. — expletive negation
if / until / unless suddenly PRT NM fall-PST.3SG
'If/until/unless it suddenly fell down.'

c. *Mi minden le* ***(nem)*** *es-ett!* — expletive (surprise) negation, optional
what all PRT NM fall-PST.3SG
'The things that fell down!'

Standard negation can be extra-clausal (iv) when it combines with the complementizer *hogy*. Note that *valahova* 'somewhere' is a PPI that cannot occur in the immediate scope of clause-mate negation:

1.2 How do we know that Hungarian NEM is [uNeg]?

Szabolcsi (2018a,b) proposed that the unitary NM, NEM in Hungarian is [iNeg, ¬], which seemed like a simple conservative choice and was not particularly argued for. Below we examine three arguments for the Zeijlstra-style [uNeg] alternative. The gist of these arguments is that a [uNeg] negative marker does not make a semantic contribution in-situ as an overt [iNeg, ¬] item would. Instead, the ¬ operation applies higher in the structure, due to the silent Op¬ operator that the [uNeg] NEM invokes.

Sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 attempt to replicate Zeijlstra's arguments in support of the [uNeg] analysis, admittedly with partial success. Section 1.2.3, however, presents a new argument based on a Hungarian 'neither_nor' construction. Szabolcsi (2018b) found this construction to pose an insurmountable problem for the [iNeg] analysis; therefore, it makes a strong case for [uNeg].

1.2.1 Zeijlstra's argument from ¬ scoping over non-NC material preceding the NM

Zeijlstra's (2022: 80) first argument for distinguishing the NMs of strict and non-strict NC languages is that the former is able to scope over quantifying DPs that precede it. According to his analysis, the '¬ > much' reading is due to the Op¬ that Czech [uNeg] NM *ne* invokes. The same '¬ > much' reading is not obtained with Italian *non*, which is [iNeg].

(iv) ***Nem-****hogy* *le-es-ett* *volna* *vala-hova* *(meg* *sem* *mozdul-t)*.
NM-COMP PRT-fall-PST.3SG AUX some-where PRT NOR move-PST.3SG
'(It didn't even move) let alone fall down somewhere.'

Polar interrogatives exhibit inner (a) and outer (b) negation (Gärtner & Gyuris 2022):

(v) a. ***Nem*** *es-ett* *az* *eső* *sem* /\ ?
NM fall-PST.3SG the rain NOR
'Wasn't it raining, either?'

b. ***Nem*** *es-ett* *az* *eső* *is* /\ ?
NM fall-PST.3SG the rain TOO
'Wasn't it raining, too?'

Puskás (2012) discusses strong (a) and weak (b) double negation; the latter involves contrastive topic reconstruction:

(vi) a. "*Sen-ki* ***nem*** *mondott* *sem-mi-t.*
N-one NM say-PST.3SG N-thing-ACC
'Everybody said something,' lit. 'Nobody said NOthing'

b. "*Semmit* \/ "*senki* ***nem*** *mondott.*

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(19) a. *Moc nejedl*. Czech
much NM.eat.3SG.PRF
¬ > much: 'She hasn't eaten much.'
* much > ¬: 'There is much that she didn't eat.'

b. *Molto (pizza) non ha mangiato*. Italian
much pizza NM has eaten
* ¬ > much: 'She hasn't eaten much (pizza).'
much > ¬: 'There is much (pizza) that she didn't eat'

Hungarian seems to pattern with Czech, suggesting the same analysis:

(20) *Senki egy szó-t nek-em nem szól-t*.
N-one one word-ACC DAT-1SG NM speak-PST.3SG
'Nobody said one word to me.'
Op¬[iNeg] [senki egy szót nekem [nem[uNeg] szólt]]

However, invoking Op¬ is not the only way to produce the requisite scope relation. Szabolcsi (2018a) accounted for it by placing the underlined material in Spec, NegP by remnant movement, which reconstructs. Reconstruction may even involve non-local fronting (again, underlined):[7]

(21) *Sen-ki egy szó-t nek-ik az-t mondjá-k, hogy nem szól-t*.
N-one one word-ACC DAT-3SG it-ACC say-3PL COMP NM say-PST.3SG
'Nobody said a word to them, it is said.'

Even more importantly, Katalin É. Kiss (p.c.) points out that using a prefixal verb reveals that the critical reading must involve Uralic negation, where NM is adjoined to V, and the negated V moves to T (recall Section 1.1). Compare:

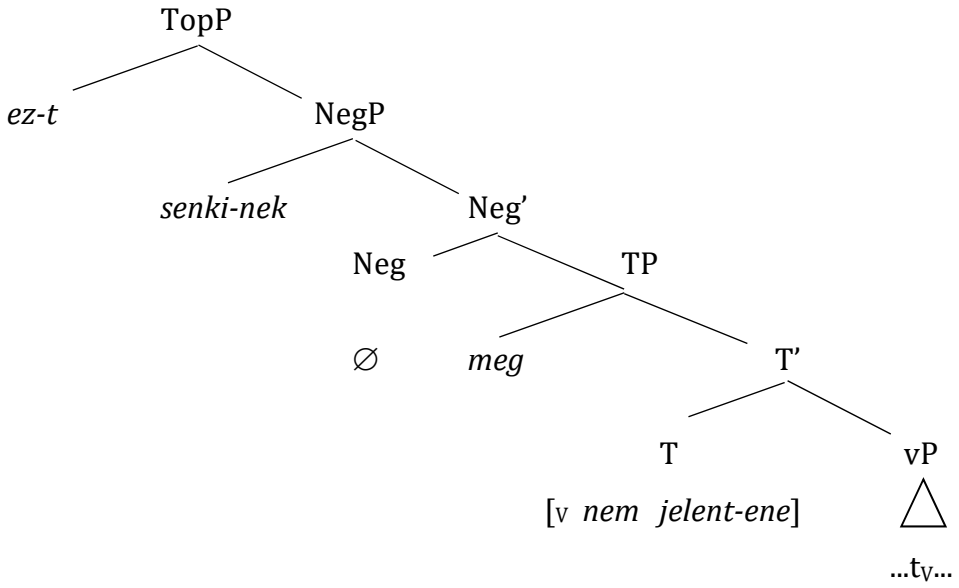
(22) a. *Sen-ki egy szó-t nek-em* ***el nem mondott*** / ****nem mondott el***.
N-one one word-ACC DAT-1SG PRT NM said
'No one said a word to me.'

[7] I thank the editor for pointing this out.

b. *So-ha egy szalmaszál-at* ***keresztbe nem tesz / ?nem tesz keresztbe***.
N-ever one straw-ACC OVER NM moves
'He never lifts a finger (lit. moves over a straw).'

É. Kiss (2015: 90) analyzes a Uralic negation example from Jókai Codex (14th–15th centuries) as follows, with the NM generated as an adjunct to the verb, adding that the NCI acts as a scope marker for negation:

(23)



this-ACC nobody-to PRT NM report-COND.3SG
'He would not report this to anybody.'

Uralic negation (but not modern negation) also enables NEM to scope over a preceding additive expression like *a kakaska is* 'even/also the little rooster':

(24) *Ha a kakas-ka* ***is*** *meg nem halt volna*,
if the rooster-DIM too PRT NM died AUX
az én mesé-m is tovább tartott volna.
the 1SG tale-POSS.1SG too longer continued AUX
'[Context: Everybody died.] If it had not been the case that the little rooster died, too, my tale would have been longer, too.'
https://mesenapok.hu/a-tyukocska-halalrol-grimm-mesek/

What should we conclude now? If only the Uralic version of NEM scopes over preceding

operators other than N-words, then Hungarian does not really have a replica of Zeijlstra's Czech example in support of a [uNeg] analysis with null Op¬. On the other hand, Sections 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 will support such an analysis of even modern negation; so why (21)–(22) do not work with modern negation remains a mystery. It is even more puzzling that English (not even a NC language) produces an interpretation parallel to Hungarian (24) with 'not > too'. The quote in (25) only makes sense on the reading 'If it were not the case that even the Newtonian philosophy is permitted to be questioned, mankind would not trust it as they now do'.

(25) "If *even the Newtonian philosophy were not* permitted to be questioned, mankind could not feel as complete assurance of its truth as they now do." (J. S. Mill 1859, *On Liberty* https://www.utilitarianism.com/ol/two.html)

Unfortunately, the cross-linguistic literature does not tend to discuss data similar to Zeijlstra's Czech–Italian contrast, even though it is central to his theory.

1.2.2 Zeijlstra's argument from fragment NCI answers

Both Zeijlstra (2022: 85) and Chierchia (2013: 238) assume that (unless NCIs are themselves negative), fragment NCI answers need an elided [uNeg] element and the [iNeg] OP¬ it invokes. Zeijlstra illustrates the case of strict-NC with Greek, and comments, "Grammatically, the NM must be present in the ellipsis. But, at the same time, it is semantically vacuous, as, in Greek, being a Strict NC language, semantic negation is always introduced by the abstract negative operator. But if the NM is semantically vacuous, it does not alter the semantics of the ellipsis site, and Merchant's identity condition is not violated either. Hence, the existence of fragment answers in Strict NC languages does not pose any problem for the analysis pursued."

(26) *Ti* *idhes?* [Op¬$_{[iNeg]}$ [*TIPOTA*$_{[uNeg]}$ [~~dhen~~$_{[uNeg]}$ ~~ida~~]]].
what see.PST.2SG N-thing NM see.PST.1SG
'What did you see? Nothing!'

The identity condition on ellipsis that Zeijlstra takes for granted is no longer assumed in recent and current literature (Kroll & Rudin 2017; Rudnev 2024; Landau 2025); among

other things, polarity mismatches are acknowledged. This, however, does not mean that the analysis in (26) with a semantically vacuous NM is untenable, but it ceases to be as important as Zeijlstra assumed.

My analysis of Hungarian fragments is a variant of (26) where only the deleted NM is [uNeg]. The NCI itself is not:

(27) *Mi-t* *lát-t-ál?* [Op¬[iNeg] [*Sem-mi-t* [~~nem~~[uNeg] ~~lát-t-am~~]]].
what-ACC see-PST-2SG N-thing-acc NM see-PST-1SG
'What did you see? Nothing'

To summarize, the [uNeg] analysis of NEM is beneficial for the treatment of NCI fragments.

But if the NCI does not participate in invoking Op¬, the question arises why NPIs do not occur as fragment answers, licensed in the same way.[8]

Hungarian weak (non-NCI) NPIs are indefinites (*vala-* 'some') in the specifier of *is* 'too' (to be discussed in Section 3.2). This combination is similar to Serbo-Croatian i-NPIs (*i-šta* 'anything').

(28) *(Mi-t* *lát-t-ál?)* *[Op¬[iNeg] [*Vala-mi-t* *is* [~~nem~~[uNeg] ~~lát-t-am~~]]].
what-ACC see-PST-2SG some-thing-ACC IS NM see-PST-1SG
'What did you see? Anything$_{NPI}$.'

Although I cannot provide a fully general answer, a significant portion of the unavailable NPI fragments must be due to the "bagel problem" of the polarity systems of Serbo-Croatian, Hungarian, and other strict-NC languages. The evocative nickname is due to Pereltsvaig (2006); an earlier analysis of Serbo-Croatian originates with Progovac (1993, 1994), and Tóth (1999) offers a detailed discussion of the Hungarian system with reference to Progovac. In these languages, NCIs and weak NPIs are in complementary distribution. NCIs require a clause-mate negation as a licensor; by contrast, weak NPIs are anti-licensed by clause-mate negation. They are only licensed by extra-clausal negation, clause-mate decreasing quantifiers like 'at most five', in antecedents of conditionals, etc. The Op¬ that

[8] I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing me to the recent literature on the identity condition in ellipsis as well as for raising the NPI question.

licenses NCIs must count as clause-mate negation. So, in its presence, the NPI *valami is* 'anything' is impossible.

The "bagel" explanation does not extend to (sub)systems that have both Op¬ and NPIs that are not anti-licensed by clause-mate negation. An anonymous reviewer informs me that Russian is a case in point: weak NPI WH-*libo* is to some extent compatible with local negation.[9] Another potential issue involves minimizers and strong NPIs.[10] These remainders have to be left to further research.

---

[9] The anonymous reviewer's observation contradicts a well-known claim about WH-*libo* in Pereltsvaig (2006); it seems that there is variation concerning the status of these items. I thank Daniar Kasenov (p.c.) for the examples below that illustrate the non-bagel character of WH-*libo* that the reviewer pointed out. I thank Natasha Korotkova (p.c.) for informing me that many tokens can also be found in corpora.

(i) *Ona ne dala mne kakogo-libo objasnenija*.
she not gave me wh.kind.of.GEN-libo explanation
'She didn't give me any explanation'

Feminine nouns (where the accusative and the genitive of negation would not be syncretic) allow both accusative and genitive:

(ii) *Ona ne dala mne kakoj-libo nadežd-y / kakuju-libo nadežd-u*.
she not gave me wh.kind.of.GEN-libo hope-GEN / wh.kind.of.ACC-libo hope-ACC
'She didn't give me any hope.'

Less frequently, *kto-libo* 'anyone' also occurs under local negation:

(iii) *On ne dayot komu-libo zaj-ti*.
he not allows who.DAT-libo enter-inf
'He doesn't allow anyone to enter.'

[10] Hungarian minimizers like *egy szó* 'one word', *egy lélek* 'one soul', etc. typically occur in the specifier of SEM, recalling the 'even' component that cross-linguistic counterparts are thought to have, or at least require extra-high stress to the same semantic effect (Surányi 2006: 305–308). But as soon as we have SEM, we enter the realm of non-strict NC, which should not be mixed up with strict-NC. Let me point out, though, that fragment answers consisting of NCI+SEM are degraded for some speakers, although not for me, and they sound perfect in co-ordinations. I am not sure what the judgments are for minimizer + SEM. The annotation (%) below is intended to suggest that cross-speaker variation is possible in (b) and (d).

(i) *Ki szólt?*
who speak.PST.3SG
'Who spoke?'

a. *Sen-ki*.
N-one
'Nobody.'

b. (%) *Sen-ki sem*.
N-one NOR

c. **Egy lélek*.
one soul
'(Not even) one soul.'

d. (%) *Egy lélek sem*.
one soul NOR

1.2.3 A new argument from SEM NEM..., SEM NEM... 'neither_nor'

The strongest argument for the [uNeg] character of the Hungarian negative marker involves a 'neither_nor' construction of the strict-NC kind, which therefore requires NMs in all its juncts. Before we turn to it, a quick background is in order.

Hungarian has two distinct SEMs, so we must keep track of which we are dealing with. Szabolcsi (2018b) argued that one SEM is a head on the clausal spine, and the other is quantifier-phrase internal. The counterpart of Chierchia's null NEG head is the clausal head SEM (see Section 3). In the present subsection we are interested in QP-internal SEM.

(29)

Head on the clausal spine:	Quantifier-phrase internal:
IS, **SEM**	MIND, VAGY, AKÁR, **SEM**
Particle follows host.	Particle precedes host.
Need not be part of a tuple.	Must be part of a tuple.
Tuple-internal connective: ÉS 'and'.	Tuple-internal connective: PEDIG.
Doesn't build quantifier words.	Builds quantifier words.
Builds non-strict NCIs.	Builds strict NCIs.

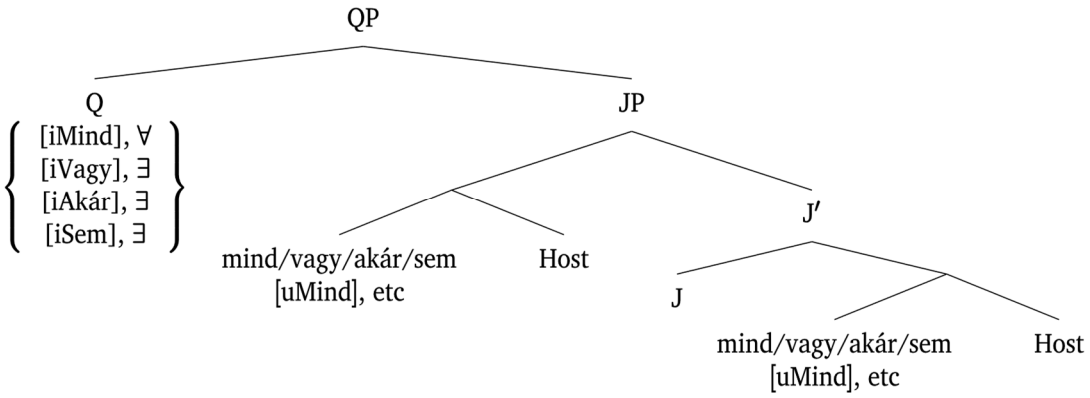
(a)	*X is*	'X too'	(d)	**vagy X*	
	X ***sem***	'nor X'		****sem*** *X*	
(b)	*X is, Y is*	'X as well as Y'	(e)	*vagy X, vagy Y*	'either X or Y'
	X ***sem****, Y* ***sem***	'not X, nor Y'		***sem*** *X,* ***sem*** *Y*	'neither X nor Y'
(c)	**is-ki*		(f)	*vala-ki*	'someone'
				sen*-ki*	'N-one'

(ii) *(Tegnap sok vendég jött,)*
yesterday many guest came
ma viszont {*sen-ki* / (%) *sen-ki sem* / * *egy lélek* / (%) *egy lélek sem*}.
today however N-one N-one NOR one soul one soul NOR
'today, however, nobody / not even one soul.'

In Section 3, I will argue that Hungarian SEM is a counterpart of Chierchia's Italian null syntactic head NEG, which requires the presence of a silent exhaustifier and a silent negation. The net effect of NEG is similar, though not identical, to Zeijlstra's [uNeg] feature on the negative marker. Chierchia (2013: 238) represents *Niente* 'nothing' as an answer to *Cosa hai comprato?* 'What did you buy?' as follows ([n-D] is a feature that needs the be checked by the exhaustifier he dubs O^S; Section 3 will explain the silent negation). Chierchia's NEG head would not accept the NPI *Alcuna cosa* 'anything' in its specifier.

(iii) O^S ¬ [$niente_{[n\text{-}D]\ i}$ $NEG_{[n\text{-}D]}$ [~~VP pro you bought t_i~~]

(30) Particles internal to propositional QPs



QP-internal 'neither_nor' takes the shape *SEM proposition α, SEM proposition β*. Being a strict-NC construction, it mandates the presence of NEM in each junct. Ellipsis is possible when both juncts have the same predicate, see the (b) versions.

(31) *Peti* ***sem*** *nem evett,* ***sem*** *nem ivott.*[11] (NM in NegP1/TP)
Peti NOR NM ate, NOR NM drank
'Peti neither ate nor drank.'

(32) a. ***Sem*** *Mari nem evett,* ***sem*** *Kati nem evett/ivott.* (NM in NegP1)
NOR Mari NM ate, NOR Kati NM ate/drank
'Neither did Mari eat, nor did Kati eat/drink.'
b. ***Sem*** *Mari* [~~nem evett~~], ***sem*** *Kati nem evett.*

(33) a. ***Sem*** *nem "Mari evett,* ***sem*** *nem "Kati evett/ivott.* (NM in NegP2)
NOR NM Mari ate, NOR NM Kati ate/drank
'Neither was it Mari who ate, nor was it Kati who ate/drank.'
b. ***Sem*** *nem "Mari* [~~evett~~], ***sem*** *nem "Kati evett.*

[11] Modern Hungarian differs from Russian (i), discussed in Tiskin (2017). The analogous NM-less pattern (ii) exists only in archaic, frozen expressions (É. Kiss 2015).

(i) *Petja ni* (**ne*) *jel, ni* (**ne*) *pil.*
Petja NOR NM ate, NOR NM drank
'Petja neither ate nor drank.'

(ii) *Peti se látott, se hallott.*
Peti NOR saw NOR heard
'Peti neither saw nor heard =
was too excited to perceive anything'

But (31) works with both Uralic and modern negation (SEM PRT NM V... and SEM NM V PRT...).

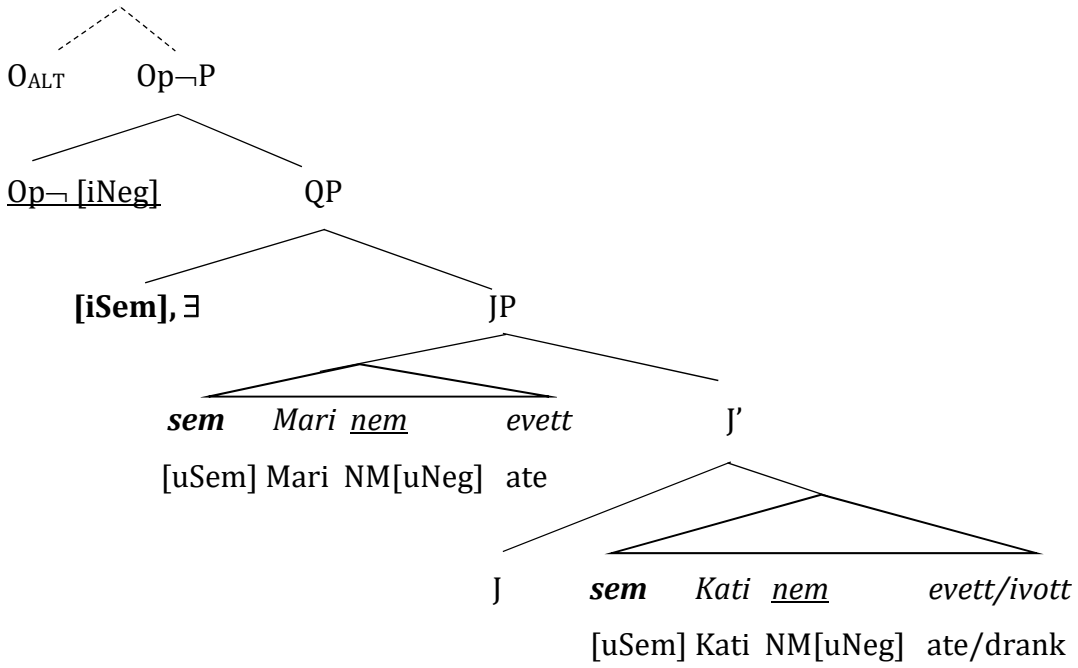
The uniform Interpretation is 'There is no true proposition in the set $\wp$', where $\wp$ = {"Mari ate", "Kati ate/drank"}. That is,

(34) $\neg\, \exists p : p \in \wp$. p is true

The critical question is this: How come the NEMs occur inside the individual juncts but ¬ scopes high above ∃?

Using (32) as an example, unless the NEMs undergo Across-the-Board LF movement, which seems implausible, the only way to compose the strings and obtain the desired meaning is (35), where Op¬P is modeled after the propositional QP. Chierchia's silent exhaustifier O_{ALT} is supplied in anticipation of Section 2.

(35)



The earlier assumption was that the Hungarian NM, NEM is [iNeg, ¬]. That made the patterns in (31)–(32)–(33) entirely puzzling. In Szabolcsi (2018b: (63)), the structure in (35) was proposed as the only possible way to derive them, lamenting its unfortunate incompatibility with the assumption about NM. But now we are arguing that NEM is generally [uNeg] and invokes Op¬, so the puzzle disappears. Those patterns offer a strong argument for the present analysis, rather than pose a problem.[12]

[12] The 'neither_nor' construction is descriptively fairly complex, so one might wonder if it is the ideal tool to argue for the [uNeg] character of the negative marker. It may be interesting that Jeretič

2. Why must NCIs be in the immediate scope of negation?

Chierchia (2013) argues that NCIs constitute a subspecies of strong NPIs, and so the reason why they must be in the scope of negation is semantic. In his theory, all NPIs have grammaticized active alternatives that must be figured into the meaning of the sentence by exhaustification.[13] The simplest weak NPIs only have denotation domain alternatives that are exhaustified by Op-EXH; NCIs need a stronger exhaustifier, dubbed O_{ALT}, for both domain and scalar alternatives, but the general rationale is the same. For simplicity, we reproduce the account of *any* (Chierchia 2013: 34–42).

Exhaustification, much like the intuitive meaning of *only*, amounts to negating non-entailed alternatives. The denotation of *any cookie* is the same as that of *a cookie*, so the relevant alternatives of *There is a(ny) cookie in the kitchen* are 'There is a chocolate chip cookie in the kitchen', 'There is an oatmeal cookie in the kitchen', etc. These alternatives are not entailed by *There is a(ny) cookie in the kitchen*, so they can be negated. But negating them leads to a contradiction: it is not possible for there to be a cookie in the kitchen while no type of cookie is instantiated.

(36) # Op-EXH (There is **any** cookie in the kitchen) =
There is a cookie in the kitchen and
NOT (there is a chocolate chip cookie in the kitchen) and
NOT (there is an oatmeal cookie in the kitchen) and …

(2025) turns to a comparable 'neither_nor' construction (*ne...ne*) to argue that the Turkish copula negation *değil* is non-negative, i.e. [uNeg] for a subset of speakers. She proposes that in clausal *ne...ne* phrases, a NC reading exists, in addition to a double negation reading that is always possible (Jeretič 2025: 22–23):

(i) *Ne Ali hasta değil ne Beste* <hasta değil>.
NE Ali sick COP.NEG NE Beste sick COP.NEG
'Neither Ali nor Beste is sick.'

[13] The line of research initiated in Chierchia et al. (2008) uses exhaustification in the accounts of negative polarity, free choice, various kinds of strengthening, and other semantic phenomena. The phonetically null exhaustifiers are freely inserted where they can do their semantically useful jobs. In this paper I will not try to make new progress with a theory of exactly where they may occur.

Chierchia argues that the inescapable logical contradiction explains the unacceptability of the NPI in a positive sentence. By contrast, if the NPI finds itself in a negative sentence, the alternatives, exhibited below, are all entailed: if there isn't any cookie in the kitchen, then there isn't one on the kitchen table, etc. Since Op-EXH only negates non-entailed alternatives, it is vacuous when applied to a negative sentence.

(37) *There isn't any cookie in the kitchen*.

a. Alternatives: there isn't a cookie in the kitchen;
there isn't an oatmeal cookie in the kitchen, ...

b. Op-EXH (There isn't any cookie in the kitchen) =
There isn't any cookie in the kitchen.

Since negation in the asserted proposition makes exhaustification vacuous, it prevents contradiction.

Chierchia's fundamental idea of why the weak NPI *any* benefits from being in the scope of negation carries over to strong NPIs like *in weeks* and *sleep a wink*, although they differ in two important ways. First, sentences with weak NPIs are saved from being contradictory by a wide range of operators, including merely downward entailing ones like *at most three Ns*, because they all are by definition entailment-reversing operators. By contrast, sentences with strong NPIs require negation or an almost-fully negative quantifier like *no Ns* for the same purpose. The second difference is that the operators that save weak NPIs can be located in a higher clause, whereas those that save strong NPIs must be clause-mate.

For example, all four sentences below are grammatical with *any rain*, but only the first two can contain *in weeks.* ((38d) would be acceptable with *think* in the place of *claim,* because *think* is a Neg-raiser.)

(38) a. *We haven't had any rain* ***in weeks***.

b. *No villages have had any rain* ***in weeks***.

c. *At most three villages have had any rain (***in weeks**)*.

d. *We don't claim that we have had any rain (***in weeks**)*.

The first difference is grounded in semantics. Chierchia (2013: 191–245) follows Krifka (1995) and Gajewski (2011) in suggesting that the exhaustification of weak NPIs only looks at the truth-conditional aspects of meaning, but the exhaustification of strong NPIs also

considers presuppositions and scalar implicatures, and the need for fully or almost-fully negative licensors follows from this. The exhaustifier of strong NPIs that Chierchia dubs O_{ALT} takes into account both domain and scalar alternatives in one fell swoop. The second difference is not known to be grounded in semantics. Zeijlstra (2022) considers the licensing of weak NPIs a pragmatic matter, and that of strong NPIs a case of syntactic Agreement. Chierchia (2013: 224–225) acknowledges that O_{ALT} needs to be clause-mate to the strong NPI but leaves locality to further work (Chierchia 2013: 224–225).

What about NCIs? Both Chierchia (2013: 227–240) and Zeijlstra (2022: 63) consider NCIs a subspecies of strong NPIs and trace the clause-bound character of their "legitimation" to the same source. For Zeijlstra, legitimation consists in syntactic [iNeg]-[uNeg] Agreement. For Chierchia, legitimation consists in exhaustification by O_{ALT}. This might be viewed as a clause-bound Agreement relation involving [iX] and [uX] (in my own expository notation, [uX] says "I have active alternatives that need to be strongly exhaustified").

(39) **O_{ALT}[iX]** Op[iNeg,¬] *Mari* *nem*[uNeg] *látott* *semmit***[uX, ∃]**
Mari NM saw N-thing.ACC

The semantic negation intervening between the [uX] element and the [iX] operator serves to maintain logical coherence and does not participate in Agreement; but if the [iX]-[uX] relation is clause-bound, then intervention will also be local.[14]

From the perspective of the redundancy question, if the relation of NCIs to semantic negation is always indirect, then it is explained why the negative marker is mandatory in strict-NC systems even in the presence of NCIs. NCIs need to find themselves in the immediate scope of negation, but they cannot invoke it themselves. The [uNeg] NM invokes Op¬. It is not redundant.

3. The other face of the hybrid: Non-strict NC in Hungarian

Although it is not an ambition of the present paper to cover Hungarian NC in its entirety,

[14] Chierchia does not seem to offer a semantic explanation of why NCIs, as opposed to strong NPIs, specifically require full negation. This will not make a descriptive difference in a strict-NC language like Hungarian that does not have quantifiers like English *no villag*es.

non-strict NC is relevant to us for two reasons. First, the belief that NCIs are [uNeg] is based on the view that in non-strict NC languages, preverbal NCIs are "self-licensers" (Ladusaw 1992). Chierchia offers a different story in terms of the null head NEG, and Hungarian supports that: clausal-head SEM is an overt counterpart of NEG. Second, we will briefly argue that the assumption that the NM NEM is [uNeg] does not interfere with the non-strict NC aspects of Hungarian.

3.1 Chierchia's null NEG and its overt counterpart SEM in Hungarian

Chierchia (2013: 233–240) states that NCIs must be exhaustified by the operator that he calls O_{ALT}. In addition, he introduces a null syntactic head NEG with the feature [[n-D]] that

(i) needs an agreeing NCI in its specifier, and

(ii) requires an abstract negation, ¬ to scope right above its projection.

The [[n-D]] feature corresponds to Zeijlstra's [uNeg] – in effect, though not in content. The difference is that [[n-D]] is checked by the exhaustifier O_{ALT}, not by ¬. Recall that the presence of negation is required for logical coherence but not for syntactic feature-checking, as with NPIs in general.[15]

(40) *Nessuno ha telefonato*. 'No one called.'

Op¬ [iNeg]	nessuno[uNeg] ha telefonato	Zeijlstra
O_{ALT}	¬ (nessuno[[+n-D]] **NEG**[[+n-D]] ha telefonato)	Chierchia

The postulation of the null head NEG may sound like an unnecessary complication in comparison with Ladusaw's (1992) and Zeijlstra's (2022) accounts of self-licensing. However, Surányi (2002, 2006) observed that Hungarian expressions occurring in the specifier of clausal-head SEM have the distribution of NCIs in non-strict NC languages. Moreover, Surányi analyzed immediately preverbal NCI+SEM as involving exhaustification, with reference to the fact that (i) such NCIs are in focus, and (ii) the otherwise dormant 'even' component of SEM is activated, triggering exhaustification. In other words, Surányi's analysis of non-strict existential NC anticipates the critical ingredients of Chierchia's

[15] Chierchia (2013: 239) briefly floats the idea that sentential negation in strict-NC languages is the overt spell-out of his own NEG. But this cannot be, since sentential negation does not require a specifier and is not involved in exhaustification, unlike his NEG.

analysis and anchors them in the fact that the NCI is the specifier of the overt clausal-head SEM. My own main contribution here is providing an explicit link to Chierchia (2013) and bringing it to bear on Zeijlstra (2022).

In this spirit, Szabolcsi (2018a,b) argued that the Hungarian clausal-head SEM 'nor' is an overt counterpart of Chierchia's NEG. The n-word SENKI is in its specifier (cf. (40)):

(41) O_{ALT} ¬ (senki[[+n-D]] **sem**[[+n-D]] telefonált)

Since Brody (1990), the received view in the literature on Hungarian is that IS 'too' is a head on the clausal spine with a focus-accented expression in its specifier. The clausal-head particle SEM is known to historically derive from the merger of IS and NEM (Surányi 2006: 281).[16] My analysis will not replicate this historical process, among other things because postverbal NCI+SEM exists but postverbal NEM does not. I assume that clausal-head SEM is the counterpart of IS in the immediate scope of negation.

All this makes for a natural connection with Chierchia's NEG, with one difference. Unlike Chierchia's NEG head, SEM does not specialize in hosting an NCI in its specifier. IS/SEM needs a focus-accented phrase, be it an NCI, a minimizer, a lexical expression or a quantifier; see Section 3.2 below.

3.2 IS has a sparse semantics: it just activates alternatives

Recall that SEM is a variant of IS in the immediate scope of negation. Szabolcsi (2017) points out that Hungarian IS, Serbo-Croatian I, and Hindi BHII (and perhaps counterparts from many other languages) build additives, NPIs, NCIs, and free choice items (FCIs), often aided by other particles. With Hungarian examples:

(42) a. *Mari is telefonált*. *Mari is* = additive
Mari IS called
'Mari too called.'

[16] Reinforcing the significance of the IS+NEM merger, Julia Horvath (p.c.) points out that in subjunctives/imperatives, NEM takes the shape of NE, and clausal-head SEM takes the shape of SE. Except for this case, the SEM/SE alternation is a matter of register, and is not conditioned by mood.

b. *Nem hiszem, hogy vala-ki is telefonált.* *valaki is* = NPI
NM think-1SG that some-one IS called
'I don't think that anyone called.'

c. *Akár-ki is telefonált* ... *akárki is* = FCI
AKÁR-who IS called ...
'Whoever it was who called... [ignorance flavor]'

d. *Még Mari is telefonált.* *még Mari is* = scalar
EVEN Mari IS called
'Even Mari called.'

e. {*Mari sem / még Mari sem / senki sem*} *telefonált.* *Mari sem, senki sem* = NCI
Mari NOR / EVEN MARI NOR / N-one NOR called
'Mari didn't call either. / Not even Mari called. / No one called.' [17]

If IS plays a critical role in building as different things as additives, NPIs, FCIs and NCIs, it must have a sparse semantics: just what is common to those expressions. The various "surface uses" of IS must be produced from this, with independently available tools.

In Fox/Chierchia style theories, all the cases in (42) involve manipulating active alternatives. Chierchia assumes that it is a lexical property of certain expressions (e.g. NPIs like *any*) that their alternatives are obligatorily active and thus must be figured into the assertion, presupposition, or implicatures of the sentence. The Hungarian/Serbo-Croatian/Hindi data suggest that activating alternatives is a function that can be delegated to a separate head in syntax. Szabolcsi (2017) proposed that the uniform sparse contribution of IS and its cross-linguistic counterparts is to seek out alternatives in the specifier and activate them. These may be domain or scalar or focus alternatives, or whatever the specifier may have.

Regarding the array in (42), perhaps the most surprising claim is that (42a) does not

[17] According to Chierchia (2013: 148), *even* presupposes that the proposition *p* in its scope is true and less likely than any other proposition *q* (according to some contextual measure). His EVEN operator is an exhaustifier like O_{ALT}: it can be phonetically silent, and in negated sentences it occurs above the negative operator. In this spirit, *Még Mari sem telefonált* is interpreted as EVEN(¬(Mary called)), i.e. for Mary not to call was the least likely, and someone else did not call. The silent negation under O_{ALT} is invoked by SEM, as discussed above.

involve a dedicated additive particle with a rich lexical semantics, only an activator of alternatives. Szabolcsi (2017) argued that the desired meaning can be derived on that basis, but that exercise is not pertinent to negative concord.[18]

Coming back to clausal-head SEM, we can now say that, like IS, it activates the specifier's alternatives and, like Chierchia's NEG, it calls for an exhaustifier and invokes an abstract negation to maintain logical coherence. Compare (41) for *senki SEM*.

3.3 Postverbal non-strict NCIs

IS can occur in the postverbal field, and so SEM can as well. We have seen in (8), repeated below, that postverbal NCI+SEM requires the presence of the negative marker NEM just as much as a postverbal bare NCI does:

(43)	a1.	*Marija*	*ne*	*vide-l-a*	*ni-chego*.	* w/o NE
		Mary	NM	see-PAST.3SG-F	N-thing.GEN	
	a2.	*Mari*	*nem*	*lát-ott*	*sem-mi-t*.	* w/o NEM
		Mary	NM	see-PAST.3SG	N-thing-ACC	
	b1.	*Maria*	*non*	*ha visto*	*niente*.	* w/o NON
		Mary	NM	aux see.PAST.3SG	N.thing	
	b2.	*Mari*	*nem*	*lát-ott*	***sem-mi-t sem***.	* w/o NEM
		Mary	NM	see-PAST.3SG	N-thing-ACC NOR	

(all four examples) 'Mary didn't see anything'

It is a question for all theories why postverbal non-strict NCIs, unlike their preverbal

[18] Szabolcsi (2017) proposes that the critical fact is that IS, like its English counterpart TOO, associates with a focus-accented expression. Focus accent, as per Rooth (1992, 1999), invokes a set of focus alternatives. According to Abusch (2010), sentences involving sets of alternatives carry the cancellable presupposition that at least one alternative is true. Szabolcsi proposes that IS removes the prejacent (in (42a), the proposition that Mari called) from the set and keeps it as an assertion. This is a stipulation, but a natural one: all focus sensitive particles single out the prejacent proposition in their own way. In the case of IS, the result will be the modified presupposition that at least one focus alternative other than the prejacent is true. That is additivity itself. Finally, because that presupposition is the sole contribution of IS, it is not cancellable, or else Crnič's (2011) non-vacuity principle would be violated. In sum, we obtain the usual behavior of IS without cramming all the ingredients into the lexical semantics of the particle. A parallel reasoning applies to SEM. *Mari sem telefonált* asserts that Mary didn't call and presupposes that someone else didn't call.

counterparts, require the presence of NM. In a theory like Zeijlstra's, where the NCI itself is [uNeg], it must be that in postverbal position it is not capable of invoking Op¬. In our theory, while postverbal SEM invokes O_{ALT}, it must be that it is not capable of also invoking a silent ¬.

The syntax of postverbal NCIs is typically not explicitly addressed in the literature, one laudable exception being Tubau et al. (2023: 18–19). Because their theory is very different from the ones considered in the present paper, I will not review the details and will resort to the following informal stipulations inspired by their work:

(44) a. Silent Op¬ is restricted to the same high regions of the clause where the overt NM occurs.
b. A postverbal strong NPI or NCI is too deeply embedded to be able to invoke such a high Op¬.

For Hungarian, we must additionally comment on the fact that SEM, like NEG, is a head on the clausal spine. Following Hallman (1997), Szabolcsi (1997) and Brody & Szabolcsi (2003) argue that almost the same functional sequence of operator heads (fseq) that occurs in the preverbal operator field above T (Agr in those papers) reiterates between T and V.[19]

(45) [C [fseq [T [fseq [Asp [fseq ... [V ...]]]]]]].

Therefore, postverbal *senki* can legitimately reside in the SemP of a lower fseq. In that case, too, SEM and its specifier *senki* must be in the immediate scope of clause-mate negation. The fact that Chierchia assumes Italian to have only one NEG per clause and it occurs above T gives the impression that invoking Op¬ is a necessary part of its job description. But there is no principled reason why that should be the case. SEM may differ from NEG due to the fact that Hungarian reiterates fseq and the SEM head can occur in the lower iterations.

3.4 The hybridity question

Recall from the Introduction that on Zeijlstra's analysis, the NM of strict-NC languages is [uNeg] but that of non-strict NC languages is [iNeg]. We have seen that Hungarian is

[19] Neg and Foc are the exceptions. Note that Cinque (1999) does not even include them in his invariant sequence.

basically a strict-NC language, but it has constructions involving clausal-head SEM that exhibit bona fide non-strict NC behavior. Can Hungarian get by with just a [uNeg] negative marker?

As was discussed in Section 1, the hallmark of an [iNeg, ¬] NM is that its semantic negation scopes in-situ, whereas a silent Op¬ operator that [uNeg] NM invokes has some limited ability to scope higher. Otherwise Op¬ has the same effect as the [iNeg, ¬] NM. Therefore, I assume that [uNeg] NEM suffices for Hungarian, despite the fact that SEM-expressions are non-strict NCIs.

Potential problems with [uNeg] NM may emerge in connection with negation in nominalizations and other sub-sentential phrases. For example, the occurrence of NEM inside a deverbal nominalization is semantically meaningful but it does not help out an NCI in the specifier position of the nominalization; that NCI needs a negation at the clausal level.[20] I assume but cannot prove that this may be accounted for in the sub-sentential syntax without postulating [iNeg, ¬] NM for in-situ scope. I am merely flagging the potential problems without attempting to provide analyses.

4. Briefly on matters related to intervention and phases

As was illustrated in (13)–(14)–(15), Hungarian has two NegPs, separated by the position of the exhaustive focus (FocP):

(46) [NegP2 *Nem* [FocP *MARI* [NegP1 *nem* [TP *telefonált*]]]].
'It is not Mary who didn't call.'

[20] The examples below merely serve to indicate what data I have in mind. For a no doubt somewhat dated analysis of Hungarian DPs, including nominalizations, see Szabolcsi (1994). Comparing (i) with (ii) shows that the presence of NEM inside the nominalization is meaningful, but the NCI *semmilyen adósság* 'no kind of debt' in the specifier requires a sentence-level SEM/NEM.

(i) [***Sem-milyen*** *adósság* *meg-fizet-és-e*] *(***sem/nem**) *fordul-t* *elő*.
N-kind debt PRT-pay-DEV-3SG SEM/NM occur-PST.3SG PRT
'For no kind of debt did its payment occur, viz. no debt was paid.'

(ii) [***Sem-milyen*** *adósság* *meg* ***nem*** *fizet-és-e*] *(***sem/nem**) *fordul-t* *elő*.
N-kind debt PRT NM pay-DEV-3SG SEM/NM occur-PST.3SG PRT
'For no kind of debt did its non-payment occur, viz. no debt went unpaid.'

Recall Surányi's (2006) fundamental observation that NegP2-level (pre-focus) NCIs are universals (∀), NegP1-level stressed NCIs are existentials (∃), and postverbal NCIs can be either (∀/∃).

Pre-focus Neg2 supports preverbal and postverbal universal NCIs (the latter requires high stress to scope up to the preverbal field), but not postverbal existential NCIs:

(47) [$_{NegP2}$ ***Senkinek***(∀) *nem* [$_{FocP}$ *MARI* [$_{NegP1}$ *nem* [$_{TP}$ *telefonált*]]]].
'For no one was it Mary who didn't call him/her.'
'It was not Mary who didn't call anyone.'

(48) [$_{NegP2}$ *Nem* [$_{FocP}$ *MARI* [$_{NegP1}$ *nem* [$_{TP}$ *telefonált* "***senkinek***(∀)]]]].
'For no one was it Mary who didn't call him/her.'
'It was not Mary who didn't call anyone.'

(49) a. [$_{NegP2}$ *Nem* [$_{FocP}$ *MARI* [$_{NegP1}$ *nem* [$_{TP}$ *telefonált* ***senkinek***(∃)]]]].
'It was not Mary who didn't call anyone.'
'For no one was it Mary who didn't call him/her.'
b. *[$_{NegP2}$ Nem [$_{FocP}$ MARI [$_{TP}$ telefonált **senkinek**(∃)]]]].
Intended: 'There wasn't anyone whom it was Mary who called him/her.'

The postverbal existential NCI is confined to be in the immediate scope of Neg1. Neg2 is separated from it by the exhaustive focus operator (whether Neg1 is present (49a) or not (49b)), and non-specific existentials do not scope up into the preverbal field (Surányi 2006: 295–296). The intervention effect is well-known from examples with universals:

(50) **Not everyone called anyone*.

Turning to the preverbal field, Surányi (2006) observed the facts in (51)–(56). Both the NM *nem* and the clausal head *sem* can be preceded by multiple NCIs (51)–(52), but there can be no more than one clausal head *sem* in the preverbal domain (53), and the clausal head *sem* cannot appear above *nem*, either lower or higher, unless they are separated by the focus phrase (54)–(56):

(51) *Sen-ki so-ha sem-mi-t nem szólt.*
N-one N-time N-thing-ACC NM spoke
'No one ever said anything.'

(52) *Sen-ki so-ha sem-mi-t sem szólt.*
N-one N-time N-thing-ACC NOR spoke
'No one ever said anything.'

(53) **Sen-ki sem sem-mi-t sem szólt.*
N-one NOR N-thing-ACC NOR spoke
Intended: 'No one said anything.'

(54) **Sen-ki sem nem szólt.*
N-one NOR NM spoke
Intended: 'No one spoke'

(55) **Sen-ki sem nem MARI-nak szólt.*
N-one NOR NM Mari-DAT spoke
Intended: 'For no one was it not Mari to whom he spoke'

(56) *Senki sem MARI-nak nem szólt.*
N-one NOR Mary-DAT NM spoke
'For no one was it Mari to whom he did not speak'

Note that the grammatical SEM NEM data in Section 1.2.3 do not contradict this, because they involved the QP-internal SEM that precedes its host, not the clausal head SEM which follows its host and is argued to be a counterpart of NEG.

Recall that we argue that both the NM and the clausal head SEM invoke OP¬ in their own ways. A simple descriptive generalization that covers (53)–(56) is this:

(57) There cannot be more than one null operator on the clausal spine linked to uninterpretable elements within the same phase.

Kenesei (2009) and, on independent grounds, Surányi (2009) argued that the Hungarian

FocP tops off a phase. If so, when SEM and NM are separated by a focus phrase, they are not in the same phase. Likewise, when the clausal head SEM occurs postverbally, it is inside vP and in a different phase.

I cannot offer an explanation for (57); however, Marcel den Dikken (p.c.) observes that both *wh*-drop and parasitic gap licensing in Dutch tolerate at most one null element at the periphery, and he suggests that these phenomena might be due to the same reason.[21]

5. Conclusion

Zeijlstra (2004, 2022) proposed that strict and non-strict negative concord languages differ with respect to the status of their sentential negative markers (NM). In the former, e.g. Slavic, NM is [uNeg] and invokes a null [iNeg, ¬] operator (Op¬). In the latter, e.g. Italian, NM itself is [iNeg, ¬]. In both, Negative concord items (NCI) are assumed to be [uNeg, ∃].

This paper addressed two questions raised by this setup. One, why is the NM obligatory in strict-NC even in the presence of NCIs, if they are capable of invoking Op¬? Two, are there hybrid systems with both strict and non-strict NC, if the NM is supposed to be [uNeg] in the one and [iNeg] in the other?

The paper put forth new arguments to the effect that the Hungarian negative marker NEM is [uNeg], but NCIs are not. Their relation to negation is indirect; they are existentials that need to be exhaustified, which in turn requires an intervening negation to maintain logical coherence (Chierchia 2013). Thus, there is no redundancy in the NM co-occurring with NCIs.

The analysis combined features of Zeijlstra's proposal for strict NC and Chierchia's

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[21] In the interest of space, I only quote the *wh*-drop examples that Marcel den Dikken kindly provided:

(i) *Heb je nou weer in je zak gestopt?*
have you now again in your pocket put
(What) have you put in your pocket now? [direct object *wh*-drop]

(ii) *Heb je de sleutels now weer in gestopt?*
have you the keys now again in put
(What) have you put the keys into now? [prepositional object *wh*-drop]

(iii) **Heb je nou weer in gestopt?*
have you now again in put
[both the direct object and the prepositional object *wh*-dropped]

proposal for non-strict NC. This does not only help answer the redundancy question but is also necessitated by the fact that Hungarian is a true hybrid NC language (Surányi 2006), where the NM is never optional. It is argued that in the non-strict NC subsystem, the clausal-head particle SEM is an overt counterpart of Chierchia's Italian null NEG head, which invokes a silent exhaustifier and a silent negation. Hybridity proves that these features can coexist.

Finally, we now see that all three Boolean operators, ∃, ∀, and ¬ present themselves in syntax in the shape of meaningless functional elements that point to silent actors at the left periphery, generalizing the picture in Szabolcsi (2015) in the spirit of Carlson (1983, 2006), whose insight initiated this line of research.

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