

Indefinites and negation in Ancient Greek

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Abstract

The history of Greek negation is interesting for our theoretical understanding of negation systems in at least two respects, which I will investigate in this presentation:

(i) Homeric Greek is a Double Negation system, while Classical Greek exhibits Negative Concord. Homeric Greek already shows signs of a diachronic development: there are two series of negative indefinites, an older plain one and a newer emphatic one. The emphatic series is formed by means of the focus-sensitive correlative negation *oudé*. The latter is the only negatively marked element to exhibit redundancy in the marking of negation in Homeric Greek. My hypothesis is that this element is responsible for the birth of [uNeg] elements of Concord in the language.

(ii) Classical Greek is a non-strict Negative Concord language. However, differently from other well-studied languages of this type (e.g. Italian, Spanish, Portuguese), it shows extremely frequent cases of pre-Infl Concord among multiple [uNeg] items, a more constrained option in Romance. A study of their distribution may help shed light on the interaction between the syntax of Focus and Negative Concord.

1 Introduction

1.1 Research questions and outlook

This study focuses on two phenomena in the history of the Greek negation system, which I show to be empirically and causally connected:

- two series of indefinites combining with negation (already in Homeric Greek):
pattern 1: *oú tis* (οὐ τις) ‘nobody’
pattern 2: *oudeís* (οὐδεῖς) ‘nobody’
- the emergence of Negative Concord (in Classical Greek):

(1) οὐκ ἐκάλεε ἐς ὄψιν ἑωυτῷ οὐδένα τῶν λογίμων Περσέων (Hdt. 3.68.2)

ouk ekálee es ópsin heōutōi **oudéna** tōn logímōn
not call:3SG in aspect himself:DAT nobody:ACC the:GEN notable:GEN
Perséōn
Persian:GEN

‘he did not summon any notable Persian into his presence’

Research questions (and prospect of answers):

- are the two series of indefinite pronouns really overlapping from a functional point of view? = no: the combination of correlative negation and cardinal numeral is an innovative pattern originating as negation strengthener
- how (and why) does Negative Concord emerge and which form does it take in Greek? = role of correlative negation as strengthening strategy. Negative Concord is functionally connected to Jespersen's Cycle: correlative negation, both as independent focus particle and as morphological building block of indefinites, functions as negation strengthener. The peculiarities of Classical Greek Negative Concord (with respect to other well-studied modern languages) can be explained by the semantic and syntactic role of focus

= both phenomena analyzed here point to a recurrent developmental cycle within negation systems, motivated by the functional pressure towards expressiveness and characterized by important structural consequences.

1.2 Featural typology of negation

(2) Strict Negative Concord

- a. **Nimeni nu** a cumpărat cartea (Romanian)
nobody not has bought book-the
'No one has bought the book'
- b. **Nimeni nu** citește **nimic** (Romanian)
nobody not read nothing
'Nobody reads anything'
- c. **Κανένας δεν** είδε το Σωκράτη (Modern Greek)
kanénas den íde to Sōkráti
nobody not saw the Socrates
'no one saw Socrates'

(3) Non-strict (= asymmetrical) Negative Concord

- a. **Non** è venuto **nessuno** (Italian)
not is come nobody
'Nobody came'
- b. **Nessuno** è venuto
nobody is come
'Nobody came'
- c. **Nessuno non** è venuto
nobody not is come
'Everybody came'
- d. ***Non nessuno** è venuto

(4) Features for Giannakidou’s (2000) categories in Zeijlstra (2004):

Type	Negative marker	Indefinites
Double Negation	[Neg]	[Neg] (Neg. Indef.)
Non-strict Negative Concord	[iNeg]	[uNeg] (n-word)
Strict Negative Concord	[uNeg]	[uNeg] (n-word)

Zeijlstra (2004) and following work: N(egative) C(oncord) as Agree; in particular, for non-strict systems:

(5) a. pre-Infl N(egative) M(arker) + post-Infl indefinite:

[NegP NM_{iNeg} [TP finite verb ... [DP indef_{uNeg}]]]

b. pre-Infl indefinite:

[NegP \emptyset _{iNeg} [TP [DP indef_{uNeg}] finite verb ...]]

\emptyset _{iNeg} may be inserted higher if the indefinite reaches the left periphery (as Last Resort)

1.3 The rise of Negative Concord

Indefinites entering NC (n-words) may have various historical sources (former negative polarity items, former negative indefinites, newly grammaticalized functional items). In the literature we find at least three hypotheses for the rise of NC:

- (a) NC arises from the restriction of licensing contexts for NPIs, yielding the development of uninterpretable formal features (Martins 2000, Zeijlstra 2004, 2008, Jäger 2008, Jäger 2010, Biberauer and Roberts 2010);
- (b) NC arises as due to changes in the internal syntax of the indefinite (Déprez 1997, 2011);
- (c) The interaction with Focus plays a role, in a process involving the reanalysis of interpretable features as uninterpretable ones (Simpson and Wu 2002, Watanabe 2004, Gianollo In press, Watanabe 2004, Gianollo 2016).

Remarkably, Greek and Romance show, at very different times in history, a comparable pattern, connected to the behavior of correlative negation (Gk. *oudé*, Lat. *nec*).

2 The rise of Negative Concord in Ancient Greek

2.1 The Ancient Greek system of negation

Since the beginning of attestation, Greek displays a modality-sensitive system of negation (Willmott 2013, Chatzopoulou 2015), in which the so-called objective *ou(k)* and the subjective *mé* negative particles alternate depending on illocutionary force and modality.

Both negative particles may morphosyntactically combine with other elements of the functional lexicon, yielding two parallel series:

(6) Lexicon of negation in Ancient Greek (selection)

Objective NM	<i>ou(k)</i>	<i>oudé</i>	<i>ού τις</i>	<i>oudeís</i>	<i>ούποτε</i>	<i>oukéti</i>	<i>ούτε</i>
		and not	nobody	nobody	never	no more	neither...nor
Subjective NM	<i>mē</i>	<i>mēdé</i>	<i>mē τις</i>	<i>mēdeís</i>	<i>mēποτε</i>	<i>mēkéti</i>	<i>mēτε</i>
		and not	nobody	nobody	never	no more	neither...nor

The *mē*-system behaves like the *ou(k)*-system in all relevant respects (two series of indefinites, Negative Concord properties), cf. Willmott (2013).

- Homeric Greek: Double Negation system
- Classical Greek: non-strict Negative Concord system
- Modern Greek: strict Negative Concord system

Previous analyses of Homeric and Classical Greek negation: Willmott (2011, 2013), Denizot (2012), Muchnová (2013*b,a*), Horrocks (2014), Chatzopoulou (2015).

2.2 Two series of indefinites in Homer

Pattern 1: m.f. *ού τις*, (οὐ τις) ‘nobody’; n. *ού τι* (οὐ τι) ‘nothing’

= Negative Marker (NM) + indefinite pronominal basis $*k^{w}i-/k^{w}e-$ (existential quantifier or variable)

- many ancient Indo-European parallels
- both pronominal and determiner uses
- particles can occur in-between: *ou gàr tis* (Il. 6.487), *ou mèn gàr tis* (Od. 8.552)

Pattern 2: m. *oudeís* (οὐδεῖς), f. *oudemía* (οὐδεμία) ‘nobody’; n. *oudén* (οὐδέν) ‘nothing’

= correlative negation *oudé* + cardinal number ‘one’

- real compound (cf. accent)
- coexists with the syntactic combination *oudè heĩs* (and *oudé tis*)
- In Homer *oudeís* occurs mostly in the neuter nom./acc. form, often adverbially as negation strengthener

The correlative negation functions here as a focus particle ‘even’: cf. MG *kanénas*, it. *nessuno*, sp. *ningún* (from. Lat. *nec* ‘not even’, cf. Gianollo 2017)

= Emphatic variant: Wackernagel (1928), Chantraine (1953), Moorhouse (1959), Landsman (1988-1989)

The emphatic series appeared later than the plain one and is traditionally considered a Greek innovation; it is still quite rare in the Homeric poems. Of the 21 attestations, 19 feature the n. nom./acc. form *oudén*, sometimes used adverbially. Apart from two VO cases (both the same formula), the others have an OV order, in conformity with the verb-final nature of Homeric Greek (Taylor 1994).

(7) Distribution of negatively marked indefinites in Homer (Denizot 2014)

	<i>óú tis</i>	<i>mé tis</i>	<i>oudeís</i>	<i>mēdeís</i>
Iliad	284	73	8	1
Odyssey	292	97	13	/

2.3 The role of correlative negation

- the new indefinites formed with *oudé* and ‘one’ (scalar endpoint) are focusing elements emphasizing negation
- the same function of *oudé* appears in the frequent combination *oudé + tis, ti* (95 cases with adjacency in Homer)
- *oudé* in its function as negative focus particle is paralleled by Latin *neque / nec* (Gianollo 2017, In press)
- for the focalizing nature of Greek correlative negation (and NM *ou* used as constituent negation) cf. Denniston (1954), Puigdollers (2006), Lambert (2012), Fogliani (2016); frequent use as stand-alone focalizing adverb (cf. co-occurrence *kaì oudé* lit. ‘and not.even’, where the coordinating function is taken by the conjunction *kaì*);
- later development: loss of emphasis through bleaching of the scalar component = cf. Jespersen’s Cycle for similar developments with the negative marker (Chatzopoulou 2012, 2015 for Greek).

(8) scalar particles:

even p:

(1) *p*

(2) presupposition: $\forall q \in C [q \neq p \rightarrow p <_{\mu} q]$

(3) alternatives come in an ordered set, where μ : contextually determined probability measure

Which type of focus with scalar particles?

= (emphatic/scalar) focus (cf. Krifka 2007 for ‘even’): alternatives ordered along a scale are evoked; the focus denotation is then the extreme of the scale.

→ 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.

2.4 The rise of Negative Concord

The only context where we see Negative Concord in Homer are contexts in which *oudé* appears, together with other negatively marked elements (Willmott 2011): cf. Delbrück’s *Ergänzungsnegation*, Jespersen’s *resumptive negation*

(9) οὐ γὰρ παυσωλή γε μετέσσειται οὐδ’ ἥβαιόν (Il. 2.386)

ou gàr pausōlē ge metéssetai **oud’** ēbaiòn
not indeed pauseNOM PT be:FUT.3SG nor in.the.least

‘for there will be no pause, not even for a short while’

(10) οὐ σύ γ’ ἂν ἐξ οἴκου σῶ ἐπιστάτη οὐδ’ ἄλλα δοίης (Od. 17.455)

ou sú g’ àn ex oíkou sōi epistátēi **oud’** hála doíēs
not you:NOM PT PT from house you:DAT suppliant:DAT nor salt:ACC give:2SG

‘if you were in your own house you would not spare a poor man so much as a pinch of salt’

Cf. also the word play in Odyssey 9, where Ulysses calls himself *Oūtis* ‘Noman’

(11) ὦ φίλοι, Οὔτις με κτείνει δόλω οὐδὲ βίηφιν (Od. 9.408)

ō philoi, **Oūtis** me kteínei dólōi **oudè** bíēphin
o friends Oūtis me:ACC kill:3SG guile:DAT and.not force:DAT

Polyphemus means: ‘My friends, it is Noman that is slaying me by guile and not by force’

The Cyclops understand: ‘My friends no one is slaying me by guile or by force’

The Cyclops’ reading is a Negative Concord structure! (Basset 1984, Willmott 2011)

2.5 Analysis

I apply to cases like (9-10) the analysis formulated in Gianollo (2017, In press) for similar structures in Latin, involving the correlative negation *nec*.

Cf. rare examples of Negative Concord involving pronouns in Late Latin:

(12) **non** est relictus ex eis **neque unus**
not be:3SG left:PT from they:ABL and.not one:NOM

‘not even one of them was left’ (Agnell. lib. pont. 121, 9th cent.)

and more frequent cases involving the correlative negation / focus particle *nec*:

- (13) et **non** dedit illi hereditatem in ea **nec** **passum**
and not give:3SG that:DAT inheritance:ACC in it:ABL and.not step:ACC
pedis

foot:GEN

‘He gave him no inheritance here, not even enough ground to set his foot on’ (act 7.5)

In conformity with the Homeric Greek Double Negation system, *oudé* is a semantically negative element in all its uses = for Homeric Greek it has to be analyzed as a [Neg] element, endowed with a semantic negation feature.

- (14) Reanalysis of *oudé*
a. *oudé* before reanalysis: [Neg], [uFoc]
b. *oudé* after reanalysis: [uNeg], [uFoc]

How does the [uNeg] feature that we have to assume for Classical Greek emerge? I propose a form of Focus Concord to apply:

- (15) FocusOp_[iFoc].....ou_[uFoc].....oudé_[uFoc]

- there is an interplay between the scope of negation and the background-focus partition of the clause. By default, the scope of sentential negation corresponds to the informational focus of the clause, i.e. the scope of event quantification (cf. Herburger 2011).
- we can assume that the same overlap between the two scope domains (of focus and of negation) obtains in the case of scalar focus on sentential negation: in order to obtain the correct interpretation (emphatic sentential negation) all elements expressing negation will have to be connected in a unique Focus chain (cf. Puskás 2000 for Hungarian multiple foci as members of a unique Focus chain, under absorption).

In turn, the syntactic dependency established by means of Focus leads itself to reanalysis in terms of innovative formal negative features:

- (16) FocusOp_[iFoc].....ou_[uFoc,iNeg].....oudé_[uFoc,uNeg]

2.6 Comparison with Jespersen’s Cycle

- (17) An interface interpretation of Jespersen’s Cycle (JC) (a.o. Meillet 1912, Schwegler 1990: 151-174, Bernini and Ramat 1996: 30-34, Eckardt 2003, 2006, Kiparsky and Condoravdi 2006):

STAGE	PLAIN NEGATION	EMPHATIC NEGATION
I	<i>ne</i>	ne...pas , <i>ne...mie</i> , <i>ne...goutte</i> , <i>ne...point</i> , ...
II	ne...pas	<i>ne...mie</i> , <i>ne...goutte</i> , <i>ne...point</i> , ...
III	<i>pas</i>	(<i>ne</i>) <i>pas du tout</i>

Parallelism with Quantifier Cycle (Willis 2011, Willis et al. 2013): existential quantification with narrow scope under negation, cf. Gianollo (In press):

(18) European Portuguese (cf. Martins 2015)

STAGE	PLAIN	EMPHATIC
I	<i>nenhum</i> N	N <i>algum</i> vs <i>algum</i> N
II	<i>nenhum</i> N, N <i>algum</i>	<i>coisíssima alguma/nenhuma</i>

(19) Diachrony of Greek

STAGE	PLAIN	EMPHATIC
I	<i>ou tis</i>	<i>oudeis</i>
II	<i>oudeis</i>	<i>kan ena</i>

(20) From Latin to Romance (e.g. from Late Latin to Italian):

STAGE	PLAIN	EMPHATIC
I	<i>nemo</i>	<i>nec (ipse) unus</i>
II	<i>nessuno</i>	(<i>nessunissimo</i>)

- Grammaticalization of n-words: pragmatic inflation and ensuing conventionalization of the licensing relation between the negative operator and emphatic elements (i.e., elements expressing scalar focus) in its scope.
- ‘conventionalization’ in this case: reanalysis of semantic features [F] / interpretable formal features [iF] as uninterpretable formal features [uF]; cf. syntactic analyses like Simpson and Wu (2002), Watanabe (2004).
- ‘emphatic’: scalar focus, expressed by DP-internal syntactic inversion in (18) and by the insertion of a focus particle in (19) and (20).
- loss of emphasis: loss of the scalar component (parallel to Jespersen’s Cycle).

3 Classical Greek: a special type of non-strict Negative Concord system

Classical Greek (5th-4th cent. BCE) is a full-fledged non-strict NC system. Differently from the non-strict Romance systems, it quite freely allows for NC among multiple negatively marked elements *preceding* the inflected verb (pre-Infl field). A structural analysis of this phenomenon corroborates the hypothesis that a form of Focus Concord exists in Ancient Greek.

3.1 Corpus study

Corpus (Text: TLG, and when available also PROIEL):

- Herodotus, historical prose
- Lysias, I-XV, oratory
- Plato, 5 works (Ap. Cri. Cra. Phd. Smp.), argumentative prose / dialogue
- Aristophanes (excluding fragments), comedy (partly metric)

Method of collection: forms of *oudeís*

- only nominative and accusative masc. and sometimes fem. (excluded n. *oudén*)
- only in sentences with finite verb forms
- checking position with respect to Infl (V) = not relevant and therefore excluded: verb ellipsis, standard of comparison, short negative answers

Key to tables: CNeg = correlative negation; Adv = adverbs other than the NM (e.g. *oudépotē* ‘never’, adverbial accusative); bold: remarkable or unexpected combinations

(21) Results of corpus study: **nominative** (tot: 193)

pre-Infl					post-Infl			
SV	CNeg S V	S NM V	NM S V	S CNeg V	NM/Adv V S	CNeg V S	VS	not rel.
102	11	1 (DN)	2	4	11	10	17	33

(22) Results of corpus study: **accusative** (tot: 114)

pre-Infl				post-Infl				
OV	CNeg O V	Adv V	Adv O V	Adv V O	NM V O	CNeg V O	VO	not rel.
26	3	2	1	1	6	3	4	66

+ 2 V Adv (where the adverb does not negate the event)

3.2 Canonical cases

- Negative Concord between pre-Infl NM and post-Infl n-word:

(23) οὐκ ἦν ἄρ' οὐδεὶς τοῦ Γλάνιδος σοφώτερος (Ar. Eq. 1097)

ouk ἔν ἄρ' **oudeis** τοῦ Γλάνιδος σοφώτερος
not be:3SG PT nobody:NOM the:GEN Glanis:GEN wise:COMP

‘Truly there is no man wiser than Glanis’

- Negative spread: one indefinite pre-Infl, the other post-Infl:

(24) καὶ τούτων βαναυσίης οὐδεὶς δεδάηκε οὐδέν (Hdt. 2.165.1)
 καὶ τούτων banausiēs **oudeís** dedáēke **oudén**
 and these:GEN handicraft:GEN nobody:NOM learn:3SG nothing:ACC
 ‘None of these has learned any common trade’

■ Double negation (Indef NM V):¹

(25) οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων ἀδικῶν τίσιν οὐκ ἀποτεῖσει (Hdt. 5.56.1)
oudeís anthrōpōn adikōn tísin **ouk** apoteísei
 nobody:NOM men:GEN do.wrong:NOM penalty:ACC not pay:3SG
 ‘No man on earth does wrong without paying the penalty’

3.3 Non-canonical cases

Two sub-groups:

- (i) indefinites in post-Infl position negating by themselves
 - (ii) multiple negative elements in pre-Infl position with a single-negation reading
- I limit the discussion to the cases in (ii).

(a) multiple n-words (pre-Infl)

(26) οὐδεὶς οὐδέν πενίᾳ δράσει (Ar. Ec. 605)
oudeís **oudèn** peníai drásei
 nobody:NOM nothing:ACC need:DAT do:3SG
 ‘No one will have to do anything (=work) because of need’

(b) NM + indefinite (+ correlative neg)

(27) ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν οὐδεὶς αὐτῶν οὐδὲ τὰ δίκαια πώποτε ἐπεχείρησεν εἰπεῖν
 all’ **oukh** hupèr humōn **oudeís** autōn **oudè** tà díkaia
 but not for you nobody:NOM they:GEN and.not the:ACC right:ACC
 pópote epekheírēsen eipeĩn
 ever attempt:3SG say:INF
 ‘Yet on your behalf not one of them has ever attempted to mention merely your just rights’ (Lys. 12.86.7)

(c) indefinites and correlative negation (order irrelevant)

(28) οὐδὲ νύκτα οὐδεὶς ἐναυλίζεται ἀνθρώπων (Hdt. 1.181.5)
oudè nýkta **oudeís** enaulízetai anthrōpōn
 nor night nobody:NOM dwell:3SG man:GEN
 ‘nor does any human creature lie there for the night’

¹Cf. discussion in Denizot (2012): although this distribution (Double negation reading when the n-word precedes) is cited as a rule in all grammars (e.g. Smyth 1956 §2760), these examples are in fact very rare (only 4 in Classical Greek) and there are exceptions.

3.4 Generalizations and analysis

Generalizations:

- In Classical Greek, multiple negative elements in pre-Infl position with a single-negation reading are attested throughout, in various forms:
 - Correlative Negation / Adverb(s) > indefinites (S/O) > V
= [uNeg] Concord chains
 - Negative Marker > indefinites > correlative negation > V
= [iNeg] + [uNeg] Concord
- Not attested as Concord structures in my corpus:
 - S > Negative Marker > V (only Double Negation)
 - Correlative Negation > .. Negative Marker > V
= *[uNeg] > [iNeg]
(as expected, since this would result in the insertion of two negative operators according to the adopted framework)

Analysis:

- All pre-Infl negatively marked elements belong to a single focus chain = semantic focus on just one logical operator (negation) by means of multiple elements agreeing in their [uNeg] (and possibly also [uFoc]) feature (and licensed by a phonetically empty operator that precedes the entire string)
- Differently from other non-strict NC languages, Classical Greek shows a rich array of focus-driven displacement operations, which may account for the variety of syntactic patterns (Devine and Stephens 1999, Matic' 2003, Goldstein 2016 a.o.). Cf. Goldstein (2016: ch. 6), especially pp. 196-200 for emphatic preposing of the NM and other negative elements (with the effect of removing contextual restrictions on quantification).
- In contrast, in Modern Italian the syntactic positions of focus and negation have to coincide (syncretism of FocP and NegP, cf. Frascarelli 2000, Isac 2004).
- But Classical Greek is similar to Modern Italian (and different from Old Italian) for its special treatment of the NM, which functions as a scope marker for both focus and negation: its insertion determines a Focus domain and blocks Concord relations with [uNeg] elements above it (which results in a Double Negation reading) = cf. Focus shells in Biberauer and Roberts (2011)
= NM as [iFoc]? and is [iFoc] = [iNeg] (= non-strict NC) with negative markers?

Classical Greek shows, more clearly than non-strict Romance varieties, that Negative Concord is not just a device to 'bridge' between the *v*P and the CP-TP phase and to express negation in the designated locus of syntactic expression and semantic interpretation. Thanks to its rich left periphery, Classical Greek allows for Negative Concord also *within* the CP-TP phase.

The limitation to one element in pre-Infl position (in the single-negation reading) often observed in non-strict modern Romance varieties is an epiphenomenon due to co-occurring, independent syntactic factors: the prerogatives of the Left Periphery and the (consequent) availability of more landing sites for [uNeg] elements in the CP-TP field in Classical Greek.

In fact, also in Romance languages multiple [uNeg] elements in the pre-Infl area are sometimes possible:

- (29) a. Francesco **mai** mi convincerà di questa teoria
 Francesco never me convince of this theory
 ‘Francesco will never convince me of this theory’
- b. **Mai nessuno** mi convincerà
 never nobody me convince
 ‘No one will ever convince me’
- c. **In nessun modo nessuno** verrà a conoscenza dell’indirizzo
 ‘In no way will anyone get to know the address’ (www.cdigorla.it/Newsletter.htm)

One could argue that the multiple n-words form in fact a single, complex constituent and occupy just one position (Spec, Foc/NegP). Their focus contribution is the same, namely the emphatic negation of the assertion: the Agree process involves both [uNeg] and [uFoc] features, and just one focused constituent is built.

4 Conclusions

The history of the Greek system of negation clearly shows a number of cross-linguistically recurrent diachronic patterns:

- (i) we observe cross-linguistic parallels in the formal renewal of indefinites belonging to the negation system: in Greek, as in Romance, correlative negation plays a crucial role. This cyclic development affecting indefinites is analogous to Jespersen’s Cycle in some important respects: both obey the functional pressures connected to the plain-emphatic alternation in the expression of negation (cf. Kiparsky and Condoravdi 2006);
- (ii) we observe a connection between changes affecting indefinites belonging to the negation system and the rise of Negative Concord (possibly through a form of Focus Concord)

The nature of the non-strict Negative Concord system of Classical Greek shows, moreover, that the prerogatives of the Left Periphery and the (consequent) availability of more landing sites for [uNeg] elements in the CP-TP field in Classical Greek allow for the creation of pre-Infl Foc + Neg chains.

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