

Can there be Agree(-ment) in Creole Negative Concord?

Viviane Déprez (Rutgers University)

Within the Minimalist program, an increasing number of linguistic phenomena have been conceptually unified under the umbrella of Agree, a defining theoretical tool initially developed to model agreement relations, which has undergone significant enrichments since Chomsky (2000). Negative concord (NC) is one empirical domain argued to fall under the extended purview of Agree chiefly in Zeijlstra's (2004-2022)). NC, as Bickerton noted in *Roots of language*, is a notably frequent phenomenon across creole languages (Van der Auvera et al 2016); in stark contrast, however, agreement, just as notably, is not. This alone could question a conceptual unification of the two phenomena for creole NC, but Agree, just like Case, has abstract manifestations in various empirical domains like binding or switch reference (Baker et al 2020).

Focusing on French Based Creoles (FBC), here, we confront the core properties of Agree to the rich comparative empirical landscape of creole NC and provide evidence that besides lacking in agreeing negative morphology and requiring a controversial upward Agree (Preminger 2013), FBC NC violates hallmark properties of Agree confirmed to constrain even abstract Agree relations. As shown in (i-iii) the licensing relation between the negation *pa* and a Negative concord Item (NCI) like *pèsonn/anyen* though failing across a non-negative intervening quantifier (like NPIs) (i), violating Intervention, succeeds across another NCI (ii), violating Closest Agree (hence requiring a controversial Multiple Agree expansion (Haegeman et al 2010), also succeeds across a DP phase (iii a) a DP embedded in a PP boundary (b) with the non-c-commanding DP complement of a subject (c) and across two clausal boundaries (d), structural conditions that all violate the Phase locality condition on Agree (Baker 2008). In sum, to account for (FBC) NC, departures from standard Agree are required in directionality (upward), Intervention, Closest Agree and Phase locality. Moreover, in Zeijlstra's Agree account of Strict NC, the most common NC type in creoles, all negative elements i.e. here *pa* and NCIs have uninterpretable Neg features and can trigger an abstract negative operator. Besides failing to account for the obligatory character of Neg doubling (an NCI being able to trigger a Neg operator suffices to license another one) this approach cannot predict that, within a clause, two *pa* enforce a double negation reading (DN) (iv a.) while *pa* and an NCIs never can (iv b.).

As we show, creole NCIs have in fact licensing conditions essentially identical to those of strong and strongest NPIs save for one property; they can be licensed under reconstruction as evidenced by (v) which explains their occurrence in subject positions (Nicolae & Falau 2017). Furthermore, just like NPIs creole NCIs can be subject to differing licensing conditions across as well as within FBCs, which a macro-parametric approach to NC, like Zeijlstra's (2022) struggles to predict. For instance, in Seychelle creole, an adverbial NCI like *zanme* is not doubled in preverbal position (vi a.) but requires *pa* doubling post-verbally (vi. b), hence displaying non-strict-NC in an otherwise strict NC system. Remarkably, moreover this preverbal NCI clearly has negative force as it suffices to license post-verbal ones (c) and leads to DN(d). Comparable variations are observed in Mauritian creole and in other creoles for syntactically simple vs complex NCIs. Our account of such variations proposes that **the Interpretability of a Neg Feature depend on its structural position in a domain of computation**. The core idea is: A NegF is **interpretable** at the **Edge** of a phasal domain, and **uninterpretable** when buried inside it. Correlatively, interpretability can be affected by A. movement inside an NCI constituent (internal phase) B. movement of the NCI in a sentence structure (external phase). If these movements bring a NegF to a phase Edge interpretability ensues. Adverbial *zanme*, we propose, has a structure with a NegF at its Edge. When *zanme* occurs in Focus position at the Edge of the CP phase, its NegF is interpretable: hence its negative force. When it occurs within vP, its NegF is uninterpretable, and *pa* is required to license it. Besides accounting for the observed variations, the Phrase Edge interpretability proposal explains why NCIs have negative force in fragment answers. Being under focus, they undergo an internal movement which brings their Neg feature to their DP edge and they likewise occur in the clausal Edge of the fragment as proposed in Merchant (2001).

Data: -Violation of Neg Intervention (Universal Q intervention) (Haitian Creole)

(i)*Timoun nan pa t bay tout lapen okenn karot
child def not past give every rabbit no carrot ‘*The child did not give every rabbit any carrot’

-Violation of Closest Agree

(ii) Mary pa t bay pèsonn anyen

Mary not Past give no person nothing ‘Mary did not give anyone anything’

-Violation of Phase locality (with DP possessor, PP complement possessor, Subject Possessor)

(iii) a. Mary [_{NEG} pa [_{TP} te [_{VP} konnen [_{DP} kousen [_{DP} pèsonn]]]]]

Mary not pst know cousin nobody ‘Mary does not know anyone’s cousin

b. Ou pa gen dwa diskite sa [_{PP} ak [_{DP} chef [_{DP} pèsonn]]] PP complement possessor

You not have right discuss this with boss nobody ‘You do not have the right to discuss this with anyone’s boss’

c. [_{TP} [_{DP} Chef [_{DP} okenn moun]] pa ka fosè ou fè sa]

Boss no person no can force you do this ‘No one’s boss can force you to do that’

d. [_{CP} M’pa kwe [_{CP} Mari di [_{CP} li we pèsonn]]] Across 2 clauses

I not believe Mari say he see nobody ‘I don’t believe Mary said she saw anyone’

(iv) a. Jan pap pa vini

John not Prog not come’

John is’nt not coming.

b. Jan pap we pèsonn

John is not seeing anyone’

-Evidence for reconstruction:

(v) (se) pèsonn, mwen *(pa) te wè . pa = obligatory

(t’is) nobody I not past see ‘I did not see ANYBODY’

-Doubling obligatory with non-initial zammen

(Seychelles creole)

(vi)a. ‘Lanmour pa zanmen fini’

Love NEG ever end ‘Love never ends’

-Initial Zammen: not doubled:

b. E zanmen in ganny en bon pozisyon pour li repoze. P42

And never 3rd-pres win a good position for 3rd rest

‘And never did he manage to get a good position to rest

Initial Zammen is negative : licenses Negative-Spread and double negation

c. Remon pa frekant dimoun isi e zanmen i pou anmenn okenn zanmi dan son lakaz.”

Reimond NEG meet people here & never 3rd ConD bring any friend in 3rd poss house

Reimond does not socialize and never does he bring anyone to his home’

d. Zanmen ou pa tann Anzel ek Edme dan en kankan. p 68

Never 2sg NEG hear Anzel & Edmen in a gossip

Never do you not hear Anzel & Edmen gossip = They gossip all the time

References: Baker, M (2008). The syntax of agreement and concord. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Baker, M. and L. Camargo Souza (2020). "Agree without agreement: Switch-referent and reflexive voice in two Panoan languages." NLLT. Bickerton, D. (1981). *Roots of language*. Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers, Inc., 1981. Pp. xiii + 351. Anamaria Falaut, Andreea Nicolae. Fragment answers and double negation in strict negative concord languages. *Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT)* 26, University of Texas at Austin, May 2016, Austin, United States. ff10.3765/salt.v26i0.3813ff. fhal-01382967 Haegeman, Liliane & Terje Lohndal. 2010. Negative concord and (Multiple) Agree: a case study of West Flemish. *Linguistic Inquiry* 41:181–211. Merchant, J. (2001) Merchant, Jason. 2001. *The syntax of silence: Sluicing, islands, and the theory of ellipsis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Preminger O. (2013). ‘That’s not how you agree: a reply to Zeijlstra.’ *The Linguistic Review* 30: 491-500 Preminger, O and Polinsky, M. (2015) Agreement and semantic concord: a spurious unification. Ms. Zeijlstra, H. (2004). Sentential Negation and Negative Concord. Ph.D. dissertation, University Amsterdam. Utrecht: LOT. Van der Auwera, J. and van Alsenoy, L. (2016). On the typology of Negative Concord. *Studies in Language* Vol. 40:3 (2016) pp. 473–512.