



UDC 811.163.42'367.4=111

811.163.6'367.4=111

Original scientific article

Received on 01. 08. 2017

Accepted for publication on 11. 09. 2017

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Pleonastic negation from a cross-linguistic perspective

In recent linguistic theory, pleonastic negation is treated either as an instance of a lexically present but semantically vacuous negation, often placed in relation to negative polarity (e.g. Portner and Zanuttini 2000; Espinal 1992; van der Wouden 1994, among others) or as a special subtype of negation that differs from “proper” or sentential negation in terms of its syntactic, as well as semantic scope, and may actually be considered a form of (negative) modality (Mueller 1991; Abels 2005; Yoon 2011). We follow the latter approach and discuss pleonastic negation as it appears in different languages with the primary focus on Croatian and Slovenian. In doing so, we observe that, even though the syntactic environments in which pleonastic negation occurs are highly comparable, there seems to be a parametric variation as to the level of optionality of pleonastic negation, and to the type of mood with which pleonastic negation is used (Ilc 2012; Zovko Dinković 2015).

Based on empirical data, we argue that the difference in the scope of negation between sentential and pleonastic negation is mirrored directly in their syntactic properties: while the former licenses *n*-words, the latter cannot license them. Both types of negation, however, may trigger the Genitive of Negation in languages still displaying the Genitive of Negation in negated clauses as is the case with Slovenian.

The observations and the analysis presented in this paper are aimed at contributing to a better understanding of pleonastic negation by attempting to prove that it is neither semantically empty nor a feature of sentence negation, but rather a linguistic phenomenon akin to other means of expressing modality in language.



Key words: pleonastic negation; negative concord; modality; temporal sequencing; syntax.

1. Introduction

Unlike “proper” i.e., sentential negation, pleonastic (expletive or paratactic)¹ negation does not negate a proposition, i.e. it does not affect the truth-conditions of the structure it modifies, and is, therefore, considered to be optional. Because of this, it was often considered to be semantically empty and redundant, or as Grevisse (1988) harshly put it, “un terme qui ne joue pas le rôle qu’il a l’air de jouer; il est, logiquement, inutile”. Still, it seems that this type of negation is not completely void of meaning. Indeed, one of the crucial issues related to this phenomenon is whether constructions involving pleonastic negation carry negative meaning, primarily because pleonastic negation is standardly expressed with the same negative marker (1) as sentential negation (2):

- (1) *Bojim se da ne padneš s ljujačke.* Cro
fear-1SG.PRES REFL that not fall-2SG.PRES off swing-GEN
‘I fear that you don’t fall off the swing.’
- (2) *Dječak ne spava.*
boy-NOM not sleep-3SG.PRES
‘The boy doesn’t sleep.’

Pleonastic negation also shows a number of other common features across languages. It is predominantly associated with the speaker’s evaluation of the proposition, and thus typically appears in subordinate clauses with evaluative force, e.g. in emotive doxastics (involving verbs such as *fear* or *hope*), dubitatives (*doubt*), and negative predicates (e.g. *hinder*, *resist* or *refuse*). Due to its evaluative meaning, pleonastic negation frequently co-occurs with counterfactual moods (3a), but may also be found with the indicative (3b), the latter case not being frequently referred to and addressed in relevant literature.

- (3) a. *J’ai peur qu’il ne vienne.* Fr
I have-1SG.PRES fear that he not come-3SG.SUB
‘I fear that he may come.’ (that he doesn’t come)

¹ The term ‘paratactic’ was first used by Jespersen (1917), while the term ‘expletive’ is widely used in the linguistics of Romance languages. Van der Wouden (1994) calls this kind of negation pleonastic because he considers it redundant. Horn (2001) also uses the term ‘pleonastic negation’, but actually refers to a type of double negation.



- b. *Bojim se da ne bo prišel.* Slo
 fear-1SG.PRES REFL that not come-3SG.FUT
 ‘I fear that he might come.’

It is worth noting that the use of the future tense in (3b) in Croatian would result in a meaning that is different from the one in Slovenian: namely, it only states that the likelihood of the person coming is extremely low, without expressing actual fear.² In order to express fear of a potential event, Croatian would require the use of the conditional, or the indicative present tense of perfective verbs (4). Despite this, (4) clearly shows that in Croatian (in some instances) pleonastic negation is used with the indicative.

- (4) *Bojim se da ne dođe/bi došao.* Cro
 fear-1SG.PRES REFL that not come-3SG.PRES/come-3SG.SUB
 ‘I fear that he might come.’

Pleonastic negation may also be associated with some conjunctive elements in subordinate clauses, e.g. interrogative complements, comparatives, and temporal, conditional and concessive clauses:

- (5) *Allons avant qu’ il ne fasse froid.* Fr
 go-1PL.IMPF before that-it not make-SUB cold
 ‘Let’s go before it gets cold.’

However, pleonastic negation is not restricted to embedded clauses, but can be found in matrix clauses as well, for instance in exclamatives (6) and pseudo-interrogatives³ (7):

- (6) *Česa vsega mi ti ne poveš!* Slo
 what-GEN all-GEN me-DAT you not tell-2SG.IND
 ‘(All) the thing you say to me!’
- (7) *Zašto ne bismo posadili krumpir na krovu?* Cro
 why not plant-1PL.SUB potato on roof
 ‘Why don’t we plant potatoes on the rooftop?’

² It also has to be pointed out that such subordinate clauses in Slovenian may be interpreted as containing the expletive or sentential negation. Thus, without a proper context, sentence (3b) is ambiguous. It may either indicated the speaker’s opinion that the person will most likely not arrive (sentential negation) or the speaker’s fear/negative evaluation of the fact that the person will/might arrive (expletive negation).

³ Quirk et al. (1985: 833) analyse such sentences in English as pseudo-imperatives.



Pleonastic negation is a feature of negative concord languages, such as Romance and Slavic, and is often placed in relation with negative polarity,⁴ a matter that we discuss in more detail in chapter 2 of this paper. It has to be mentioned, though, that instances of pleonastic negation can also be found in double negation languages. In English, for example, instances of pleonastic negation are infrequent, and restricted to exclamatives and pseudo-interrogatives, such as (6) and (7), and non-factuais such as (8). Instances of pleonastic negation in Latin, another double negation language, have been reported by Makri (2013).

- (8) *I wouldn't be surprised/wouldn't wonder if it didn't rain.*
(Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 845 [4i])

Still, despite many similarities that pleonastic negation displays cross-linguistically, it also shows significant variation, particularly with regard to its optionality, mood selection and different semantic environments that trigger it. Thus, while in Romance languages pleonastic negation is reportedly always optional (cf. van den Wouden 1997),⁵ in Slavic, it may be optional as well as non-optional (cf. Abels 2005; Ilc 2012; Zovko Dinković 2015). For instance pleonastic negation in temporal *until*-clauses is never optional in Slovenian or Russian (10a), but may be optional in Croatian (10b).

- (10)a. *Pes bo cvilil, vse dokler ga *nehaš/ne nehaš*
Dog whine-FUT until it-ACC *stop-2SG.PRES/not stop-2SG.PRES
tepsti. Slo
beat
'The dog will whine until you stop beating it.'
- b. *Skrivat ću se dok svane/ne svane dan.* Cro
hide-1SG.FUT REFL until dawn-3SG.PRES/not dawn-3SG.PRES day
'I'll hide until it dawns.'

When it comes to mood selection, the occurrence of pleonastic negation may be even more puzzling, as the variation within the same language group can be observed. In Romance, pleonastic negation obligatorily requires non-indicative moods (e.g., conditionals/subjunctives), but in Slavic indicative and non-indicative moods can appear with pleonastic negation. Thus, Russian emotive doxastics pair with their French counterparts in requiring the subjunctive mood (3a), Croatian and Slo-

⁴ For a detailed account of various syntactic approaches to the issue of negative polarity and negative concord see Zovko Dinković (2013).

⁵ For a different claim see Tovena (1996, 1998), who provides arguments in favour of the claim that the optionality of expletive negation is only apparent.



venian emotive doxastics can select both moods (4). On the other hand, Croatian and Slovenian *until*-clauses (10) always require the indicative forms of perfective verbs, as is also the case in Russian.

As for different syntactic environments that give rise to pleonastic negation, it appears that a lexical item that triggers it in one language, may not trigger it in another. Thus the non-negated dubitative *dudar* ‘to doubt’ in Spanish allows pleonastic negation, whereas its French counterpart *douter* licenses it only in its negated form – *Je ne doute pas qu’il (ne) soit arrivé* – and even then it is unusual and not very common.

This paper, therefore, deals with two major research questions:

RQ1: Does pleonastic negation carry (any) negative meaning or other meanings?

RQ2: Is it possible to provide a uniform account that would cover all instances of pleonastic negation?

We attempt to provide evidence, based on empirical data, that even though the syntactic environments in which pleonastic negation occurs are highly comparable, the difference in the scope of negation between sentential and pleonastic negation is mirrored directly in their syntactic properties. Consequently, pleonastic negation may be considered a linguistic phenomenon akin to other means of expressing modality in language, i.e. it may be a function of negation in natural languages, whose purpose is to avoid categorical siding with a potentially true proposition (cf. Muller 1991, Kahrel 1996, Abels 2005, Yoon 2011 a.o.)

Before we proceed to propose our account of pleonastic negation, we briefly discuss some major viewpoints in the analyses of this issue.

2. Existing theoretical approaches to pleonastic negation

In contemporary linguistic theory, there are three main theoretical approaches to the analysis of pleonastic negation. The first of these treats the negative marker involved in pleonastic negation as being semantically empty (cf. Portner and Zanuttini 2000) – it supposedly carries no negative meaning and as such does not syntactically function as an operator. Its presence is, therefore, motivated by the derivational requirement of certain syntactic structures that give rise to negative implicature. In order to provide a derivational analysis of pleonastic negation, many proponents of this approach consider pleonastic negation to be akin to negative polarity items or NPIs (cf. Espinal 1992, 1997, 2000; van der Wouden 1994, 1997 a.o.).



The reason for this claim is twofold: pleonastic negation has to be properly licensed, and it is distributionally limited to downward entailing (cf. Ladusaw 1980) or non-veridical contexts.⁶ This contextual limitation was first noticed by Jespersen (1917: 75), who called this particular kind of negation paratactic:

A negative is placed in a clause dependent on a verb of negative import like ‘deny, forbid, hinder, doubt.’ The clause is treated as an independent sentence, and the negative is expressed as if there had been no main sentence of that particular type.

Such an approach may be problematic for at least two reasons: (i) many NPI licensors actually fail to license pleonastic negation, for instance, not all downward entailing contexts that license NPIs license pleonastic negation, and conversely (ii) pleonastic negation is licensed in contexts that are not downward entailing (11) (cf. Portner and Zanuttini 2000, Yoon 2011).

(11) a. *On voit le passé meilleur qu'il n'a été.* Fr
‘One sees the past better than it was.’

b. *Mnogi će teško raditi, osim ako **nemaju** nekoga da im pomogne.* Cro
‘Many people will work hard, unless they have someone to help them.’

Furthermore, cross-linguistic studies (cf. Makri 2013) have shown that pleonastic negation is licensed by different lexical items in different languages (eg. the verb *doubt* does not license pleonastic negation in all languages).

Seeing pleonastic negation as akin to NPIs leads to another problem, namely, its interpretation as a form of negative concord,⁷ with the operator in the matrix clause triggering a concord relationship, where the negative marker in the subordinate clause is used as a NPI. This would mean that pleonastic negation may be explained in terms of the so-called long-distance negative concord, i.e. the one that scopes across clause boundary (cf. Espinal 1992, 1997, 2000; van den Wouden 1997, 204ff; Zeijlstra 2004).

This interpretation, however, shows some serious drawbacks. First of all, pleonastic negation in NC languages cannot license strong NPIs (cf. Brown 1999b; Abels 2005; Gruet-Skrabalova 2016), and, therefore, does not give rise to the NC

⁶ Veridicality is a semantic feature that sees context as a propositional operator, i.e. an operator F is veridical iff Fp entails p : $Fp \rightarrow p$; in the opposite case F is non-veridical. All downward entailing contexts are thus also non-veridical and trigger the occurrence of negative polarity items (see Giannakidou 2002).

⁷ This builds on the fact that pleonastic negation is a phenomenon that appears in negative concord languages.



reading.⁸ Also, in a true negative concord relation, the *n*-word doesn't contribute to the negative meaning (because the negator alone suffices to negate the sentence), whereas we cannot rightfully claim that the negative marker of pleonastic negation in examples such as (3) does not contribute to the overall meaning of the sentence. Last but not least, negative concord is never subject to optionality – it either applies or does not apply – whereas pleonastic negation may be optional in some instances, and obligatory in other (see examples (10)). Finally, pleonastic negation is not limited to subordinate clauses. It can appear in matrix clauses as well (see (6) and (7)), where it evidently cannot be treated as long-distance negative concord.

The second major approach (Kahrel 1996; Katičić 2002; Yoon 2011; Makri 2013 a.o.) is mostly semantic in nature, and treats pleonastic negation as a phonological reflex of different modal heads, whose presence is pragmatically motivated and distinct from “proper” negation. Yoon (2011: viii) considers pleonastic negation to have

[a] semantic content that consists in two components: First, “expletive negation” is subject to licensing on a par with polarity items and mood markers. It thus manifests dependency to nonveridicality; Second, it also has pragmatic contribution. It triggers what we can think of as evaluative mode of negating.

In other words, this approach considers pleonastic negation to be akin to the subjunctive mood (expressing e.g. uncertainty or undesirability). Kahrel (1996: 77) states that the function of negation in constructions involving pleonastic negation changes “from a full-fledged negative into a more general marker of non-factuality”. In this way, pleonastic negation breaks up the affirmative character of an utterance and assigns it a notion of uncertainty, possibility or eventuality. This kind of interpretation provides a uniform account of pleonastic negation, treating it as a type of epistemic objective modality in the sense of Dik (1989).

Even though this approach explains the optionality of pleonastic negation, as well as different mood selection (cf. Yoon 2011; Makri 2013), it fails to explain why pleonastic negation still partly creates a negative syntactic environment that licenses the Genitive of Negation (henceforth: GoN) in some languages, and why different modal operators in various languages would consistently be spelt-out as negative markers.

The third approach to pleonastic negation attempts to answer this question. This account is predominantly syntactic and treats pleonastic negation as an instance of

⁸ As for double negation (DN) languages, pleonastic negation cannot license double negation (see e.g. Makri 2013 for Latin).



“proper” or sentential negation, which differs from it only in its scope (cf. Tovena 1996, 1998; Abels 2005; Ilc 2012 a.o.). This approach thus presupposes at least two separate reasons for the appearance of pleonastic negation: (i) the speaker’s negative evaluation of the proposition, which is implied by the (partly) negative meaning of the predicate in the main clause, and morphologically marked with the subjunctive mood (e.g. in emotive doxastics and dubitatives); and (ii) the temporal sequencing of the propositions in the matrix and the subordinate temporal clause. The apparent lack of negative force is hence thought to be caused by the environment in which pleonastic negation is found (cf. Borovikoff 1997; Brown 1999a, b; Brown and Franks 1995, 1997; Harves 2002 a.o.). Brown (1999a), for instance, claims that pleonastic negation assigns some “indeterminate truth value” (Brown 1999a: 77), as opposed to regular (sentential) negation, which “fixes the truth value as negative” (Brown 1999a: 71). However, determining the actual contexts that allow pleonastic negation turned out to be quite problematic.⁹ This was mainly evident in the fact that pleonastic negation may trigger the GoN in some Slavic languages,¹⁰ while being unable at the same time to license *n*-words¹¹, such as *nitko* ‘nobody’ (cf. Brown and Franks 1995; Brown 1999a, 1999b; Abels 2005, Ilc 2012):¹²

- (12) a. *Bojim se da ne bi *nihče/nekdo pojedel Slo*
fear-1SG.PRES REFL that not AUX nobody/somebody eat-up-SUB
torte.
cake-GEN
‘I fear that somebody may eat the cake.’

⁹ For instance, some verbs with a remarkably negative meaning, such as *doubt*, do not allow pleonastic negation.

¹⁰ Slavic languages fall into three groups regarding the GoN:

- Group 1: the GoN is almost completely absent (Croatian, Serbian), or is considered archaic (Czech),
- Group 2: the GoN is optional and alternates with the Accusative (Russian) – the genitive/accusative alternation is semantically/pragmatically motivated,
- Group 3: the GoN is completely grammaticalised and obligatory in standard varieties (Slovenian, Polish).

¹¹ Ever since Laka (1990), the term ‘*n*-words’ has been used to refer to NPIs which occur only in the scope of negation in NC languages. However, in some Slavic languages, including Croatian and Slovenian, there are two sets of polarity items which begin with *n*-: the s.c. *ni*-series which occurs only in the local scope of negation (e.g., *nitko* ‘nobody’ in Croatian), and the *ne*-series which comprises of derived indefinites which cannot occur in the scope of negation (e.g. *netko* ‘somebody’ in Croatian). Throughout the paper, we use the term ‘*n*-word’ to refer to an item of the *ni*-series.

¹² In examples such as (12) Croatian would allow the genitive only if it were partitive, i.e. if the noun were accompanied by an overt quantifying expression, e.g. *malo torte*-GEN ‘a bit of cake’, *krišku torte*-GEN ‘piece of cake’, etc.



- b. *Bojim se da ne bi *nitko/netko pojeo* Cro
 fear-1SG.PRES REFL that not AUX nobody/somebody eat-up-SUB
tortu.
 cake-ACC
 ‘I fear that somebody may eat the cake.’

The GoN would thus appear to be licensed by formal negation, regardless of whether it is expletive or not, while *n*-words must be licensed by semantic negation. Abels (2005) however, sees pleonastic negation also as semantically negative and explains the difference between the GoN and *n*-words from the perspective of different derivational process. The GoN is structural Case assigned locally by the negation to the VP complement within its scope (in the sense of e.g. Bailyn 1997, and Matushansky 2008), while *n*-words are analysed as polarity sensitive universal quantifiers, which, in addition to being properly licensed by clausemate negation, must take scope over sentential negation (i.e., the negative marker) at LF to give rise to universal negation ($\forall x \neg \phi$).¹³ Under this analysis, negative morphemes that express pleonastic negation are thus considered to be “true” negative markers, which in contrast to sentential negation acquire a different syntactic scope, and, as a consequence, cannot properly license *n*-words. We find these two claims extremely convincing as they, first, straightforwardly explain the consistency of their use, and, second, predict the syntactic, as well as semantic differences between sentential and pleonastic negation. Therefore, in what follows, we make use of Abels’s (2005) account and modify it with the semantic dimensions of the proposals put forward by Kahrel (1996), Katičić (2002), Yoon (2011) Makri (2013) a.o. to provide the analysis of our data.

¹³ Throughout the paper, we assume that Slavic *n*-words form a uniform syntactic/semantic category, and follow Abels’s (2005) proposal that Russian, and then by extension, all Slavic *n*-words are universal quantifiers. This claim, however, is not undisputed, since Slavic *n*-words seemingly fail to pass two diagnostic tests for the universals as put forward by Giannakidou (2006: 380-381), namely they cannot be used as topic in topicalization structures (universals can be topicalised), and they can be used as predicate nominals (universals cannot). Nonetheless, as already pointed out by the author, the validity of these two tests may be questionable, therefore, in what follows we will treat Slavic *n*-words as universals, as they pass all of the standard tests for universals (e.g., they can be modified by *almost*-like adverbs; they are licensed only by local negation, long distance licensing may be allowed only in infinitival/subjunctive complement clauses; they cannot bind donkey pronouns). For some linguists Slavic *n*-words display a hybrid universal-existential nature (Giannakidou 2006, a.o.), and some analyse them as being (exclusively) existential (cf. Zeijlstra 2004).



3. The analysis

3.1. *Pleonastic negation in subordinate clauses in emotive doxastics and negative predicates*

Since pleonastic negation and sentential negation share at least one distinctive feature – the GoN in languages that still display this syntactic phenomenon – we assume that the derivational processes of the two negations must at some point be identical. In particular, since the GoN can only be assigned locally to the Verbal Phrase (VP) complements (i.e., direct objects) under the scope of negation (cf. Bailyn 1997; Matushansky 2008; Ilc 2011), we believe that at some point in the derivation of sentences with sentential negation (2), as well as sentences containing pleonastic negation (1), (3b), and (4), the negative marker, the head of the negation phrase (NegP), is merged with VP. Following the now well-established syntactic accounts of negation (e.g., Zanuttini 1991; Haegeman 1995), we take NegP, a functional projection belonging to the TP-layer of projection, to be the locus of sentential negation. As soon as the negative marker is introduced into derivation and merged with VP, the genitive is locally assigned to the verbal complement within its scope. This first part of derivation explains why both sentential and pleonastic negation assign the genitive case. The subsequent steps in derivation, however, differ. With the sentential negation (2), the negative marker remains within NegP, which gives rise to sentential scope at LF (i.e., negation is interpreted as having sentential scope). The negative marker involved in pleonastic negation, on the other hand, has to move out of NegP, otherwise it would also acquire sentential scope at LF. Following Brown (1999) and Abels (2005), we assume that this operation involves movement of the negative marker from the TP-layer of projections, standardly associated with the eventive and propositional content, to the CP-layer, which anchors the proposition in the intended context syntactically (e.g., root/subordinate, interrogatives), and semantically/pragmatically (e.g., topicalisation, focalisation).¹⁴ In particular, Abels (2005) argues that in the case of emotive doxastics and negative predicates, the movement of the negative marker takes place so that the negative marker can scope over the evaluative head, which can be assumed, given Rizzi's (1997) analysis of the CP layer, to belong to the CP- rather than the TP-layer of projections. As Cinque (1999: 84–85) argues, the evaluative modality is associated with the meaning *It is a good/perfectly wonderful/bad thing that p*, and can be ex-

¹⁴ The standardly assumed hierarchical ordering of the layers of projections is: C(omplementizer)P(hrase) > T(ense)P(hrase) > V(erb)P(hrase) whereby VP, the lowest layer, presents thematic structure, TP eventive and propositional content, and CP, the highest layer, the inter-/intra-sentential relations such as subordination and focalisation.



pressed either by a bound or a free morpheme, typically associated with the non-indicative moods. The author (1999: 84) points out that evaluative modality does “not affect the truth of the proposition, but rather express the speaker’s (positive, negative, or other) evaluation of the state of affairs described in it.” Building on this observation, Abels (2005) proposes that in Russian, the negative marker has to rise from its position in NegP to the CP-layer to negate the evaluative mood, overtly expressed by the subjunctive marker, rendering its default meaning *It is a good/perfectly wonderful/bad thing that p* into *It is not a good/perfectly wonderful/bad thing that p* without affecting the truth-value of the embedded proposition. We believe that exactly the same analysis can be used for our data with some minor alterations.

First, following Kahrel (1996), Abels (2005), Yoon (2011) and Makri (2013), we assume that pleonastic negation involves evaluative force, which can either be positive or negative. In Slovenian and Croatian, though, in contrast to Russian, this evaluative mood may have overt realisation in the form of the subjunctive, or may have a phonologically null realisation (cf. examples (1), (3b), (4)). If not specified otherwise (i.e., in the default setting), this evaluative force is interpreted as either positive or neutral. The introduction of pleonastic negation changes the default interpretation into the negative one, giving rise to (stronger) negative implicatures such as uncertainty and undesirability (cf. Kahrel 1996). Thus, by resorting to pleonastic negation, the speaker in (1) turns the positive/neutral evaluation into negative: they explicitly present their fear that the proposition may come true.

Second, we argue that the movement of the negative marker from NegP to the CP-layer involves the shift in syntactic scope. While in NegP, the negative marker has sentential scope (2), but the movement to the CP-layer involves the movement to a local position (i.e., local/constituent negation), so the negative marker scopes only over the evaluative mood, leaving the proposition affirmative. Therefore, at this point, our analysis departs from Abels’s (2005) original proposal, whereby the loss of sentential scope is attributed to the inability of the moved negative marker to reconstruct after the movement in its base-generated position. The flaw of such a claim can be found in negated questions, which also involve the movement of the negative marker to the CP layer (albeit for different reasons), and yet the sentence is still interpreted as negative.

- (13) *Zakaj ne pove Janez resnice?*¹⁵ Slo
why not tell-3SG.PRES Janez truth-GEN
'Why doesn't John tell the truth?'

Abels (2005) also uses the phenomenon of reconstruction as a means of explaining why pleonastic negation cannot license *n*-words. Since Russian *n*-words are universal quantifiers, they must take scope over the negation in their licensing domain at LF, giving rise to the universal negation reading ($\forall x \neg \phi$). The licensing domain for Slavic *n*-words is standardly assumed to be the TP ever since Progovac (1994). According to Abels (2005), the movement of the negative marker to the CP-layer and its inability to reconstruct in TP make it impossible for *n*-words to take scope over the negation in their licensing domain. Once again, example (14) below shows that overtly moved negation in negative questions can properly license *n*-words.

- (14) *Zakaj ni Janez ničesar rekel?*
why not-AUX Janez nothing say-3SG.PAST
'Why did not John say anything?'

However, by adopting our proposal above, namely that pleonastic negation involves movement from a broad to a narrow scope, the reconstruction hypothesis becomes unnecessary, since we claim that *n*-words can only be licensed by negation that retains its sentential scope at all stages of derivation. Thus, in (12) the *n*-word is not properly licensed, because it contains a negative marker that does not have the sentential scope at LF. This restriction does not hold for the GoN, because its only requirement is that it be assigned locally as soon as it is under the scope of negation. As shown above, this operation takes place during the first derivational step (merging negation with VP), and what happens with the negative marker after the case is assigned is irrelevant for the case-assigning processes.

The requirements of the GoN assignment disprove the proposals put forth by Yoon (2011), and Makri (2013), that pleonastic negation is simply a spelt-out form of different modal heads, since this claim presupposes that no negative marker is involved in the derivation, and as such a new licenser for the grammaticalised genitive would have to be sought. In addition, even if pleonastic negation be analysed as being negative under their account, their claim still faces the problems of the locality condition on the GoN, as it does not include NegP taking the VP under its

¹⁵ As pointed out by one of the reviewers, the sentence is also acceptable without the movement: *Zakaj Janez ne pove resnice*. This fact, however, does not weaken our argument, since both versions yield the same semantic interpretation.



scope. In sum, the negative marker in pleonastic negation has to be base-generated in NegP, otherwise the GoN remains unaccounted for.

3.2. *Pleonastic negation in matrix clauses*

As shown by (6) and (7), pleonastic negation can also be found in matrix clauses, for example, in exclamatives (6) and pseudo-interrogatives (7). In both cases, the speaker evaluates the proposition, and by using pleonastic negation, they stress their surprise and emotional involvement. As such, this particular use of pleonastic negation shows a very close similarity with the pleonastic negation in subordinate clauses introduced by emotive doxastics and negative predicates. Therefore, in line with the analysis presented in section 3.1, we argue that the derivation of these structures involves the movement of the negative marker from NegP to the CP-layer to negate the evaluative force.

3.3. *Pleonastic negation in temporal clauses*

In Slavic *until*-clauses, pleonastic negation occurs in subordinate clauses if they contain a perfective predicate (15a), but there is no negation if the predicate is imperfective (15b), see also (10).

- (15)a. *Ta prepoved bo ostala v veljavi, dokler ne bodo predloženi novi dokazi.* Slo
 this ban will-AUX remain-3SG.FUT in validity until not
 will-AUX produce-PASS new evidence-PL
 ‘This ban will remain in force until new evidence is produced.’
- b. *Človek se uči, dokler živi.*
 person REFL learn3SG.PRES.IMPF until lives-3SG.PRES.IMPF
 ‘A person learns as long as they live.’

The crucial difference between sentences (15) lies in their temporal sequencing. While in (15b) both propositions (i.e., the propositions of the matrix and the subordinate clause) share the same time interval t , in (15a) the time intervals of both clauses differ. The time interval of the matrix clause t' excludes the time interval of the subordinate clause t'' . In fact, while both propositions are true separately, they are never true at the same time: the truth of the matrix proposition is restricted to t' , and the truth of the subordinate clause to t'' . Taking this fact into account, Abels (2005) proposes that this shift of truth values is licensed by negation which is se-



lected by the subordinator *until* (for details, see Abels (2005)). To meet this requirement, the author further assumes that negation rises at LF to the CP-position right above the subordinator *until*. Once again, the movement of the negative marker from the TP-layer to the CP-layer directly results in its inability to properly license *n*-words.¹⁶

In line with our proposal as developed so far (3.1), we claim that the movement of the negative marker can again be understood as the movement from the sentential scope (NegP) to the local scope position in CP, where negation takes scope over the subordinator *until*. Since the negative marker no longer has the sentential scope at LF, it directly follows that it cannot license *n*-words at the sentential level.

It is noteworthy that the telic/perfective status of the subordinate predicate does not solely depend on the overt perfective morphological marking of the predicate verb. Although these two, by and large, overlap, it is possible to use imperfective verbs with telic/perfective interpretation. This phenomenon can be clearly observed in *until*-clauses, in particular in cases where the imperfective verb describes or refers to the change of state. Consider, for example, sentences (16). While (16a) describes only the state of lying, and thus has the imperfective interpretation, (16b) refers to the change of the lying position: from position A to position B. In the latter case, the two propositions display identical relation as those in (15a).

(16)a. *Neprijetni vonj lahko nastane v vinu le, dokler Slo*
unpleasant odour easily forms in wine only until
leži na drožeh.
lies-3SG.PRES.IMPF on wine lees
‘The unpleasant odour in wine can form only as long as the wine sits on the wine lees.’

b. *Prvi partner potiska navzgor, dokler ne leži na*
first partner pushes upwards until not lies-3SG.PRES.IMPF on
partnerju z obrazom navzgor.
partner with face upward
‘The first partner keeps pushing upwards, until positioned on (top of) the partner, facing upwards.’

¹⁶ For an alternative approach based on Hungarian data see Ürögdi (2009).



In Croatian, but not Slovenian, however, pleonastic negation superficially appears to be optional in subordinate *until*-clauses with perfective predicates,¹⁷ as shown in (10b), repeated here as (17).

- (17) *Skrivat ću se dok svane/ne svane dan.* Cro
 hide-1SG.FUT REFL until dawn-3SG.PRES/not dawn-3SG.PRES day
 ‘I’ll hide until it dawns.’

A similar pattern is reported in Hebrew by Margulis (2016), who argues that what he labels as interruption implication – the temporal sequencing whereby the proposition of the matrix clause becomes no longer valid as soon as the proposition of the subordinate clause becomes valid – is not the inherent part of the lexical semantics of the subordinator *until* (Margulis 2016: 3). To support his claim, the author argues that interruption implication is, in fact, a scalar implicature and as such defeasible. For example, sentence (18a) is standardly interpreted with the interruption implication, which, given the right context, can be cancelled as in (18b).

- (18) a. *Mary played the piano until five/until John opened the door.*
 b. *Mary played the piano until John opened the door and perhaps even afterwards.* Margulis (2016: (6))

When analysing Hebrew equivalents of (18), Margulis (*ibid.*) observes that sentences containing pleonastic negation can only be interpreted with the interruption implication, which cannot be cancelled as in (18b). Sentences without pleonastic negation, on the other hand, allow both interpretations, i.e., with the interruption implication and without it.

Following the author’s line of reasoning, we propose that in Croatian, but not Slovenian, the speaker selects pleonastic negation only when they want to encode the interruption implication, i.e., when they want to explicitly spell-out the temporal sequencing of the two propositions in such a way that the truth value of the matrix proposition ceases as soon as the truth value of the subordinate clause becomes valid.¹⁸ So, example (17) with pleonastic negation allows only one possible interpretation – that of interruption implication, whereas its non-negative counterpart allows for the interpretation with or without interruption implication (i.e., the

¹⁷ It is noteworthy that sentences without the pleonastic negation typically occur in colloquial Croatian.

¹⁸ Our claim only partly follows Margulis’s (2016) analysis in that we see the interruption implication as scalar implicature, and that Croatian *until*-clauses allow for the defeasibility of the scalar implicature. We do not, however, follow the author’s proposal that pleonastic negation in *until* clauses can be decomposed into negation and exceptive, because this proposal at this point opens many questions that are left unanswered.

hiding may continue even after the dawn). This claim is further supported by examples (19) in which pleonastic negation is obligatory. In these examples, interruption implication is the only pragmatically motivated interpretation – for instance, in (19b) the banging against the closed door stops as soon somebody opens the door.

- (19)a. *Preklinjao ju je dok mu nije oprostila.* Cro
beg-3SG.M.PAST.IMPF her AUXuntil him not-AUX forgive-3SG.F.PAST
'He begged her until she forgave him.'
- b. *Lupat ću na vrata dok mi ne otvoriš.*
bang will on door until me-DAT not open-2SG.PRES.PERF
'I'll bang on the door until you open (to me).'

Croatian and Slovenian *before*-clauses may combine temporal meaning with causative/modal meanings. In such cases, the speaker refers to certain temporal circumstances which they perceive as undesirable. The difference between the pure-temporal and temporal/modal meanings can be observed in (20). The only possible reading of (20a) is purely temporal, and for this reason, the use of pleonastic negation is unavailable. (20b), on the other hand, can be understood as involving both temporal and modal readings. In such cases, pleonastic negation becomes acceptable, though optional, as is the case with emotive doxastics and negative predicates. In addition, this particular occurrence of pleonastic negation can also be used with the indicative mood (20b). For these reasons – the modal interpretation, optionality, and the co-occurrence with the indicative mood – we analyse such *before*-clauses in the same fashion as emotive doxastics and negative predicates in 3.1.

- (20)a. *Preden umrem, bi rada okusila ves svet.* Slo
before die-1SG.PRES AUXgladly experience-1SG.SUB whole world
a.' *Prije nego što umrem, rado bih iskusila cijeli svijet.* Cro
'Before I die, I would like to experience the whole world.'
- b. *Ustavimo Haiderja, preden (ne) bo prepozno.* Slo
stop-1PL.IMP Haider before not will too.late
b.' *Zaustavimo Haidera prije nego što (ne) bude prekasno.* Cro
'Let us stop Haider before it is too late.'

4. Discussion and conclusions

The main objective of the present paper was to present and discuss pleonastic negation from different languages with the primary focus on Croatian and Slovenian,



aiming at contributing a better understanding of pleonastic negation. With regard to RQ1 our analysis has shown that pleonastic negation is not semantically vacuous, but carries the negative meaning in the same way as sentential negation does. This conclusion is in line with proposals by Abels (2005), Tovená (1996), as well as to some extent with those by Kahrel (1996), Yoon (2011), Makri (2014), and as such provides further explanation as to why pleonastic negation is cross-linguistically obligatorily expressed with the same negative marker as sentential negation.

This observation also weakens the claims by the proponents of the theory that pleonastic negation is empty of negative meaning, since we could not identify cases in which implications associated with pleonastic negation are expressed with means other than the negative marker. In addition, we have been able to prove that the negative marker in all of the analysed examples syntactically and semantically negates, however, in contrast to sentential negation, its scope is always local. Due to its local scope, the negative marker used in pleonastic environments can never scope over the entire preposition, which is required for sentential negation.

Building on our data analysis, we have been able to provide a uniform account for the derivation of pleonastic negation (RQ2). Taking Abels's (2005) original proposal as a starting point, we have argued that in all cases of pleonastic negation the negative marker is first merged into the derivation as part of the NegP. This derivation step triggers the local assignment of the genitive case to the VP complement with the scope of the negative marker. Due to different derivational requirements the negative marker raises from NegP within the TP-layer of projections (associated with the eventive and propositional content) to the CP-layer (associated with intra-inter sentential syntactic and discursive relations). In the case of the subordinate clauses introduced by emotive doxastics and negative predicates, this analysis assumes that negation moves to the CP-layer to negate the evaluative force. In contrast to Abels (2005), we have shown that the evaluative force need not be overtly expressed by the subjunctive morphology, but can be realised as a phonetically null element, since both in Croatian and Slovenian pleonastic negation in such environments can co-occur with the indicative mood. Despite this fact, the interpretational force of the pleonastic negation is still available, since it clearly expresses the speaker's negative evaluation of the proposition. Our proposal also departs from Abels (2005) in assuming that the movement from NegP to CP involves the movement from the sentential scope position to the syntactic position that can only have local scope. Our claim that Slavic *n*-words can be properly licensed only by negation that retains the sentential scope throughout the derivation, straightforwardly explains why pleonastic negation cannot license *n*-words after the movement to CP. We find this explanation more plausible than Abels's (2005) recon-



struction proposal, whereby the moved negation cannot reconstruct at LF in NegP, resulting in its inability to license *n*-words. It is questionable if such a proposal is adequate, since in negative questions, for example, the negative marker with the sentential scope can together with the verb move overtly to CP, and it still retains the sentential scope, and can consequently properly license *n*-words. Our analysis also departs from Yoon (2011) and Makri (2014), who assume that pleonastic negation is a spelt-out form of different modal heads. Under this analysis, the negative marker is not base-generated in the TP-layer as sentential negation, but is, assuming the universal hierarchical ordering of functional projections (cf. Cinque 1999), base-generated in CP, which leaves the GoN case assignment unaccounted for.

Lastly, we have shown that in the case of pleonastic negation in subordinate *until*-clauses, movement of the negative marker from NegP to CP is triggered by the requirement of the subordinator *until* (in line with Abels 2005), so that it establishes the suitable environment for interruption implication (in the sense of Margulis 2016) to take place.

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PLEONASTIČNA NEGACIJA IZ MEĐUJEZIČNE PERSPEKTIVE

U novijoj lingvističkoj teoriji pleonastična negacija smatra se ili pojavom leksički prisutne, ali semantički prazne negacije, koja se često dovodi u vezu s niječnom polarnosti (npr. Portner i Zanuttini 2000, Espinal 1992, van der Wouden 1994, te drugi), ili posebnom podvrstom negacije, koja se razlikuje od “prave” ili rečenične negacije po svojem sintaktičkom i semantičkom dosegu te koja se doista može smatrati jednim oblikom (niječne) modalnosti (Mueller 1991, Abels 2005, Yoon 2011). U ovom radu slijedimo potonji pristup i razmatramo pojavu pleonastične negacije u različitim jezicima, s osobitim naglaskom na hrvatski i slovenski. Pritom utvrđujemo da se pleonastična negacija pojavljuje u vrlo sličnim sintaktičkim okružjima, no da istovremeno postoji parametrička varijacija u stupnju (ne)obaveznosti pleonastične negacije, kao i glagolskog načina uz koji se koristi (Ilc 2012, Zovko Dinković 2015).

Na temelju empirijskih podataka tvrdimo da se razlika u dosegu rečenične i pleonastične negacije izravno ogleda u njihovim sintaktičkim obilježjima: prva dopušta pojavljivanje n-riječi, dok ih potonja ne dopušta. S druge strane, oba tipa dopuštaju pojavu slavenskog genitiva u jezicima u kojima se on pojavljuje u niječnim surečenicama, kao što je to slučaj sa slovenskim.

Cilj je zapažanja i raščlambe iznesene u ovom radu doprinijeti boljem razumijevanju pleonastične negacije tako što će se dokazati da ona nije semantički prazna niti je oblik rečeni-



čne negacije, već jezična pojava srodna drugim sredstvima izražavanja modalnosti u jeziku.

Ključne riječi: pleonastična negacija; niječno slaganje; modalnost; vremenski slijed; sintaksa.