

Scandinavian negative indefinites: Microvariation in object positions

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1 Introduction

In the Scandinavian languages, there are two ways of formulating the negative sentence in (1), either with a negation marker and an indefinite quantifier, (1)a, or with a negative indefinite object, (1)b.

- (1) a. Per læste måske ikke nogen bøger. Da
Per read maybe not any books
b. Per læste måske ingen bøger.
Per read maybe no books

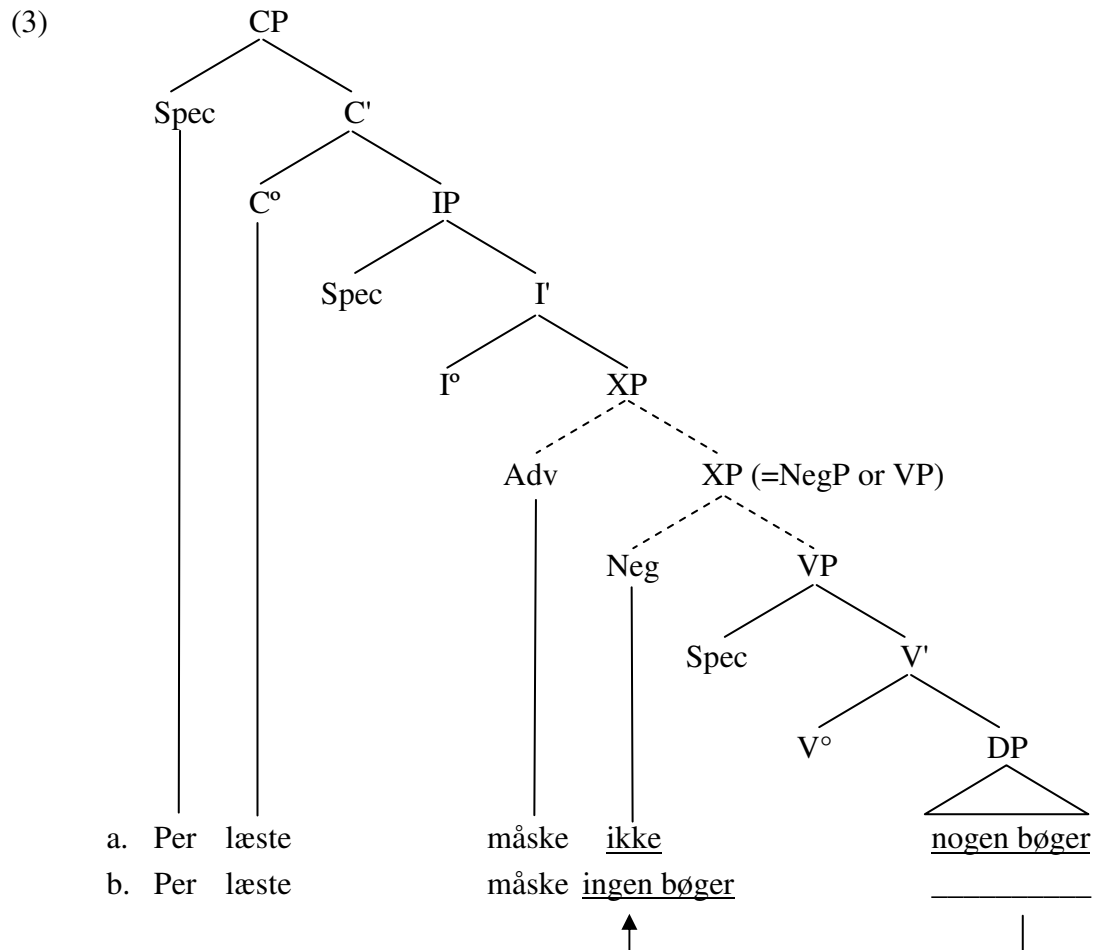
Under a sentential negation reading, a negative indefinite object cannot occur in its VP-internal base position to the right of a non-finite main verb.¹

- (2) a. Per har ikke [VP læst nogen bøger] Da
Per has not read some books
b. *Per har [VP læst ingen bøger]
Per has read no books

¹ Occurrence of a negative object *in situ* is possible if a narrow scope reading - null negation, (i)a, trifling negation, (i)b, or P negation, (i)c - can be constructed (cf. Svenonius 2002).

- (i) a. De har gitt Norge ingen poeng, og det har også/*heller ikke irene. No
they have given Norway no points and that have also/ either not the.Irish
b. Vi kan kjøpe kjøtt i Kilpisjärvi for nesten ingenting, kan vi ikke/*kan vi vel?
we can buy meat in Kilpisjärvi for almost nothing can we not/ can we
c. Vesna ser fin ut i ingen klær.
Vesna looks fine out in no clothes (= 'without clothes') (Svenonius 2002: 130-36)

The unacceptability of (2)b indicates that sentential negation is expressed outside VP in the Scandinavian languages. The negative indefinite object must undergo leftward movement (henceforth *Negative Shift*, *NegS*); cf. K. K. Christensen (1986, 1987), Rögnvaldsson (1987), Jónsson (1996), Svenonius (2000, 2002), K. R. Christensen (2005). *NegS* targets a position to the right of a sentential adverb, *SpecNegP* ($XP=NegP$) or a VP-adjoined position ($XP=VP$); cf. (3). In topological models, negative objects have been considered to occur in *a* (Jørgensen 2000), (4), or in a specialized negation slot *neg* (Heltoft 1992), (5).



(4)

| Found. field | | Nexus field | | Content field | | |
|--------------|----------|-------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------|----------|
| <i>F</i> | <i>v</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>a</i> | <i>V</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> |
| a. Per | læste | | måske <u>ikke</u> | | <u>nogen bøger</u> | |
| b. Per | læste | | måske <u>ingen bøger</u> | | | |

(5)

| Found. field | | Nexus field | | | Content field | | |
|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|----------|
| <i>F</i> | <i>v</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>a</i> | <i>neg</i> | <i>V</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> |
| a. Per | læste | | måske | <u>ikke</u> | | <u>nogen bøger</u> | |
| b. Per | læste | | måske | <u>ingen bøger</u> | | | |

While string-vacuous NegS as in (1)b is possible in all Scandinavian varieties, there is a considerable amount of cross-linguistic variation as to non-string-vacuous NegS. In particular, the varieties contrast in (a) which constituents may be crossed by NegS and (b) whether crossing of a certain constituent requires the presence of a main verb *in situ*. The following sections concentrate on the data, touching only briefly on the difficulties for syntactic analysis that arise from the distributional patterns.

2 Non-string-vacuous Negative Shift

2.1 NegS across a verb *in situ*

In Insular Scandinavian (Icelandic and Faroese), a negative indefinite object may occur to the left of a non-finite verb *in situ*, (6).

- (6) a. Ég hef engan séð _____. Ic
 I have nobody seen (Rögnvaldsson 1987: 37)
- b. Í dag hefur Petur einki sagt _____. Fa
 today has Peter nothing said

For the Mainland Scandinavian languages, in contrast, NegS across a verb is usually claimed in the literature to be stylistically marked (see K. K. Christensen 1986, Faarlund et al. 1997, Svenonius 2000 on Norwegian, Holmes & Hinchliffe 2003 on Swedish, and K. R. Christensen 2005 on Danish). It is found in literary or formal styles, referred to as *Scan1*, (7). In colloquial speech (*Scan2*), in contrast, NegS across a verb *in situ* is ungrammatical (8)a; the *ikke...nogen*-variant must be used, (8)b.

- (7) Manden havde ingenting sagt _____. Scan1
 man-the had nothing said
- (8) a. *Manden havde ingenting sagt _____. Scan2
 b. Manden havde ikke sagt noget.
 man-the had not said anything

However, at least in Danish and Swedish, NegS across a verb *in situ* is not only a matter of style but also subject to dialectal variation. Thelander (1980) observes differences between Northern (Västerbotten, Umeå) and Southern Swedish (Eskilstuna, Örebro) in the distribution of negative indefinite objects. Moreover, in a dialect study on Western Jutlandic (WJ), 15 out of 16 informants judged NegS across a verb *in situ* as unmarked.

In the *BySoc Corpus* of spoken Danish, 8 out of 114 matches (7%) on *ingenting/intet* are clause-medial objects preceding a verb *in situ*, indicating that the construction in (7) is in fact used in spoken language. In addition, a google blog search (google web for Faroese) on certain clauses, negated by *ingenting/intet* ('nothing') preceding the main verb or by the *ikke...noget*-variant, produced the results in Figure 1. While negative indefinites to the left of a main verb *in situ* are quite frequent in Icelandic and Faroese and possible in Danish and Swedish, there is no hit for this construction in Norwegian (Bokmål).

Figure 1: Percentage of negative indefinite object < main verb orders

| | <i>Ic</i> | <i>Fa</i> | <i>Da</i> | <i>Sw</i> | <i>No</i> |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>segja/sigalsige/säga/si</i> ('say') | 100,0% (1/1) | 63,6% (14/22) | 7,7% (1/13) | 17,4% ² (8/46) | 0,0% (0/3) |
| <i>heyra/hoyra/høre/höra/høre</i> ('hear') | 88,9% (16/18) | 90,0% (63/70) | 55,6% (35/63) | 11,3% (6/53) | 0,0% (0/7) |
| <i>sjá/síggjalse/se/se</i> ('see') | 83,3% (10/12) | 13,6% (8/59) | 22,2% (4/18) | 13,2% (5/38) | 0,0% (0/7) |
| <i>fál/fáalfå/få/få</i> ('receive') | 50,0% (1/2) | 43,5% (10/23) | 19,2% (5/26) | 14,3% (5/35) | 0,0% (0/2) |
| <i>gera/gera/gøre/göra/gjøre</i> ('do') | 20,0% (1/5) | 48,1% (13/27) | 15,2% (5/33) | 18,4% (9/49) | 0,0% (0/7) |
| Total | 76,3% (29/38) | 53,7% (108/201) | 32,7% (50/153) | 14,9% (33/221) | 0,0% (0/26) |

(including: (Aux) Sub_{ISG} (Aux) NegIndef V_{pres/past/part}
(Aux) Sub_{ISG} (Aux) Neg V_{pres/past/part} Indef)

The cross-linguistic variation as to NegS across a verb *in situ* is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2

| NegS | <i>Fa/WJ/Ic/Scan1</i> | <i>Scan2</i> |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| across \emptyset (= string-vacuous) | + | + |
| V | + | - |

² Instances of the saying *jag säger ingenting så har jag ingenting/inget sagt* are excluded.

Different types of movement contrast in whether or not they may cross a verb *in situ*. On the one hand, movement across a verb is not generally prohibited in Scan2. *Wh*-movement, (9)a, topicalization, (9)b, and subject movement, (9)c, may do so. Accordingly, occurrence of a negative indefinite in topic or subject position is acceptable.

- (9) a. Hva har du **kjøpt** _____. *No*
 what have you bought
- b. Bøkene har jeg **kjøpt** _____.
 books-the have I bought
- c. I går ble bøkene **kjøpt** _____.
 yesterday were books-the bought
- (10) a. Ingen av bøkene har jeg **kjøpt** _____. *No*
 none of books-the have I bought
- b. I går ble ingen bøker **kjøpt** _____.
 yesterday were no books bought

On the other hand, Object Shift cannot cross a verb *in situ* in any of the Scandinavian languages. Object Shift presupposes movement of the main verb, as captured by Holmberg's generalization (Holmberg 1986, 1999).

- (11) a. *Jeg læste ikke dem. *Da*
 b. Jeg læste dem ikke _____.
 I read them not
- (12) a. Jeg har ikke læst dem. *Da*
 b. *Jeg har dem ikke læst _____.
 I have them not read

Figure 3

| | movement across a verb <i>in situ</i> | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| | <i>wh</i> - movement | topicalization | subject raising | Negative Shift | Object Shift |
| <i>Fa/WJ/Ic/Scan1</i> | + | + | + | + | - |
| <i>Scan2</i> | + | + | + | - | - |

2.2 NegS across a preposition

According to K. R. Christensen (2005), NegS of the complement of a preposition is not permitted in the Mainland Scandinavian languages at all (neither in Scan1 nor in Scan2).

- (13) a. *Jeg har ingen peget på _____. Scan1/Scan2
 I have nobody pointed at
 b. *Jeg pegede ingen på _____.
 I pointed nobody at (Christensen 2005: 131)

However, at least some of my informants (linguists from Aarhus, referred to as AaL), display an *Inverse Holmberg Effect* (Fox & Pesetsky 2005): NegS across the preposition is ungrammatical unless it also crosses the main verb.³

- (14) a. ?Jeg har ingen peget på _____. AaL
 I have nobody pointed at
 b. *Jeg pegede ingen på _____.
 I pointed nobody at

³ Two out of my six Swedish informants display an Inverse Holmberg Effect with NegS across a preposition, too. For the others, NegS of the complement of a preposition is excluded altogether; cf. (13).

Moreover, as observed by Rögnvaldsson (1987), NegS across an indirect object gives rise to an Inverse Holmberg Effect in Icelandic. The same holds for the other varieties which permit NegS across a verb.

- (i) a. Jón hefur ekkert sagt Sveini _____. Ic
 Jón has nothing said Sveinn
 b. *Jón sagði ekkert Sveini _____.
 Jón said nothing Sveinn (Rögnvaldsson 1987: 46)
- (ii) a. Í dag hefur Petur einki givið Mariu _____. Fa
 today has Peter nothing given Mary
 b. *Í gjár gav Petur einki Mariu _____.
 yesterday gave Peter nothing Mary
- (iii) a. Jeg har ingen bøger lånt børnene _____. Da
 I have no books lent children-the
 b. *Jeg lånte ingen bøger børnene _____.
 I lent no books children-the

Notice that NegS of the direct object is compatible with finite verb movement if the indirect object undergoes leftward movement as well.

- (iv) a. Jeg lånte dem faktisk ingen bøger ____V ____IO ____DO. Da
 I lent them actually no books
 b. Børnene lånte jeg faktisk ingen bøger ____V ____IO ____DO.
 children-the lent I actually no books

(15) a. Ég hef engan **talað** **við** _____. *Ic*
 I have nobody spoken with
 b. ?Ég talaði engan **við** _____.
 I spoke nobody with (Svenonius 2000: 272)

(16) a. Måske har hun ingen snakket med _____. *WJ*
 maybe has she nobody spoken with
 b. I går snakkede hun ingen med _____.
 yesterday spoke she nobody with

(17) a. Í dag hefur Petur ongan **tosað við** _____. *Fa*
 b. *Í dag hefur Petur við ongan **tosað** _____.
today has Peter with nobody spoken
 c. Í dag tosaði Petur ongan **við** _____.
 (*✓Mið/*Tór/*Fug/*Tvø/*San/*Kla*)
 d. Í dag tosaði Petur við ongan _____.
today spoke Peter nobody with (*?Mið/?Tór/?Fug/?Tvø/?San/*Kla*)

⁴ Depending on the verb-preposition combination, the preposition is stranded or pied-piped in Icelandic; see Jónsson (1996) and Svenonius (2000). K. R. Christensen (2005) assumes that the [+negative] feature percolates in the latter case so that the whole PP must undergo NegS (but see the Faroese data in (17) below).

Figure 4

| NegS | | <i>Fa1/WJ/Ic</i> | <i>Fa2/AaL</i> | <i>Scan1</i> | <i>Scan2</i> |
|--------|-----------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| across | ∅ (= string-vacuous) | + | + | + | + |
| | V | + | + | + | - |
| | P verb <i>in situ</i> | + | + | - | - |
| | verb moved | + | - | - | - |

(18) a. *V NegIndef P

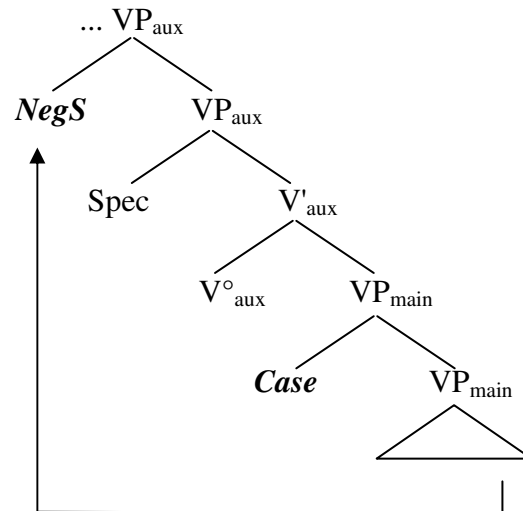
b. Aux NegIndef V P

⁵ In embedded clauses in MSc, where finite verb movement does not take place, a negative indefinite object precedes the finite verb, supporting the assumption that NegS targets a position to the left of the highest VP.

- (i)
- | | | | | | |
|----|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| a. | *... fordi | jeg | har | fået <u>ingen penge</u> . | <i>Da</i> |
| b. | *... fordi | jeg | har | <u>ingen penge</u> | fået _____. |
| c. | ... fordi | jeg | <u>ingen penge</u> | har | fået _____. |
| | <i>because I</i> | <i>no money</i> | <i>have</i> | | <i>received</i> |

⁶ The fact that irrespective of verb position, NegS of the complement of a preposition is acceptable in Fa1, WJ, and Ic and ungrammatical in Scan1 and Scan2 might be derived by parametric variation as to the availability of A'- and A-positions under Svenonius' (2000) approach: Negative indefinites that are not assigned Case by the main verb may target an A-position in Fa1, WJ, and Ic while a negative indefinite cannot even occur in an A'-position in Scan2. In Scan1, in contrast, the A'-position is accessible for the complement of a verb but not for the

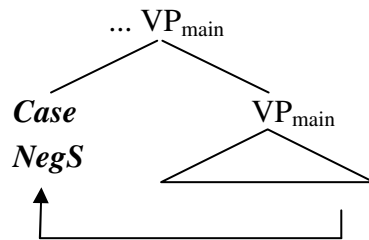
(19) a.



b. Han har ingen bøger [VP_{aux} ____ Aux [VP_{main} læst ____ o]] AaL
 he had no books read

c. Han har ingen [VP_{aux} ____ Aux [VP_{main} peget [PP på ____ o]]]
 he has nobody pointed at

(20) a.



b. Han læste ingen bøger [VP_{main} ____ v ____ o] AaL
 he read no books

c. *Han pegede ingen [VP_{main} ____ v [PP på ____ o]]
 he points nobody at

The following section shows that occurrence of an Inverse Holmberg Effect varies across constructions, arguing against the hypothesis that the Inverse Holmberg Effect is due to differences in the target positions of NegS.

2.3 NegS out of an infinitival clause

Svenonius (2000) provides the following example which shows that NegS out of a control infinitive in Icelandic is only acceptable if it also crosses the matrix main verb.⁷

- (21) a. ?Hann hefur engum skipað henni að giftast _____. *Ic*
 he has nobody ordered her to marry
 b. *Hann skipaði henni engum að giftast _____.
 he ordered her nobody to marry
 'He didn't order her to marry anybody.' (Svenonius 2000: 274)

Some of the AaL (AaL1) and WJ (WJ2) speakers show an Inverse Holmberg Effect with NegS out of an infinitival clause, too.

- (22) a. Han har ingen kager lovet at købe _____. *AaL1/WJ2*
 he has no cakes promised to buy
 b. *Han lovede ingen kager at købe _____, vel?
 he promised no cakes to buy well
 'He didn't promise to buy any cakes (did he?)'

The other AaL speakers (AaL2) do not permit long NegS at all, (23).

- (23) a. *Han har ingen kager lovet at købe _____. *AaL2*
 he has no cakes promised to buy
 b. *Han lovede ingen kager at købe _____, vel?
 he promised no cakes to buy well
 'He didn't promise to buy any cakes (did he?)'

⁷ Though slightly more marked (possibly for pragmatic reasons), long NegS out of an embedded infinitival clause is possible as well:

- (i) a. Pétur hefur engu bréfi lofað að svara _____. *Ic*
 Petur has no letter promised to reply
 b. Pétur hefur engu bréfi reynt að svara _____.
 Petur has no letter tried to reply
 c. Pétur hefur engu bréfi lofað að reyna að svara _____.
 Petur has no letter promised to try to reply (Ásgrímur Angantýsson, p.c.)

- (i) a. Jeg har ingen penge planlagt at opdrive _____ til at fortsætte projektet. *Da*
 I have no money planned to find for to continue project-the
 b. Jeg har ingen penge prøvet at opdrive _____ til at fortsætte projektet.
 I have no money tried to find for to continue project-the
 c. ?Jeg har ingen penge planlagt at prøve at opdrive _____ til at fortsætte projektet.
 I have no money planned to try to find for to continue project-the
 (Henrik Jørgensen, p.c.)

In contrast, the other WJ speakers (WJ1) permit NegS out of the infinitival clause, irrespective of the position of the matrix main verb; cf. (24). Likewise, NegS out of an infinitival clause is possible in Faroese, independent of verb movement, (25).

- (24) a. Han har ingen kager lovet at købe _____. WJ1
 he has no cakes promised to buy
 b. Han lovede ingen kager at købe _____, vel?
 he promised no cakes to buy well
 'He didn't promise to buy any cakes (did he?)'
- (25) a. Allarhelst hevur Petur einki roynt at eta _____. Fa
 probably has Peter nothing tried to eat
 b. Allarhelst royndi Petur heldur einki at eta _____.
 probably tried Peter also nothing to eat

Figure 5

| NegS | | Fa1/ WJ1 | WJ2/ Ic | Fa2 | AaL1 | AaL2 | Scan1 | Scan2 |
|--------|----------------------|---------------------------------|------------|-----|------|------|-------|-------|
| across | Ø (= string-vacuous) | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| | V | + | + | + | + | + | + | - |
| | P | verb <i>in situ</i> | | + | + | + | - | - |
| | | verb moved | | + | + | - | - | - |
| | Infin | matrix main verb <i>in situ</i> | | + | + | + | - | - |
| | | matrix main verb moved | | + | - | + | - | - |

Hence, as with NegS out of PP, there is cross-linguistic variation as to whether or not NegS out of an infinitival clause is possible at all and, if so, whether it depends on the position of the matrix main verb. In addition, Figure 5 shows that NegS out of PP and NegS out of an infinitival clause vary with regard to these parameters, pointing to the conclusion that the target position (to the left/right of the matrix main verb or adjoined to the auxiliary VP/main VP, respectively) is not decisive for the availability of NegS as such.⁸

⁸ Though the target position does in fact play a certain role. NegS just across the infinitive is not prohibited as such; it is possible under a narrow scope reading of negation in Danish, corroborating the hypothesis that the intervening constituent itself does not block NegS.

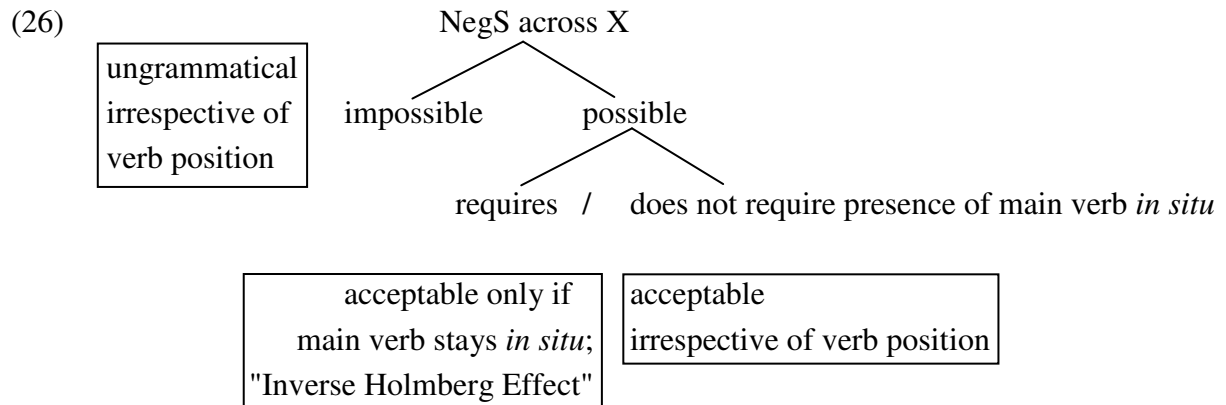
- (i) a. Han har lovet ingen kager at købe _____. WJ/AaL
 he has promised no cakes to buy
 b. Han lovede ingen kager at købe _____, ikke?
 he promised no cakes to buy not
 'He promised not to buy any cakes (didn't he?)'

Thus, whether NegS may cross just the infinitive depends on the target position (or locality) of movement.

- (ii) a. Han lovede [_____v [ingen kager at købe _____o]] ✓WJ1/✓WJ2/✓AaL1/✓AaL2
 b. Han lovede ingen kager [_____v [at købe _____o]] ✓WJ1/*WJ2/*AaL1/*AaL2

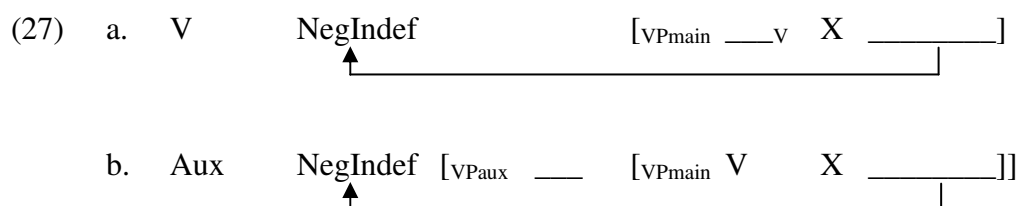
3 Conclusion ... and some more data

The preceding sections have shown that while string-vacuous NegS exists in all the Scandinavian varieties, there is a considerable amount of variation as to the availability of non-string-vacuous NegS. In particular, the varieties contrast in which constituent can be crossed by NegS and whether or not crossing depends on the presence of a main verb *in situ*.



Contrary to the widely held belief, non-string-vacuous NegS in the Mainland Scandinavian languages is not only a matter of style but is also subject to dialectal and inter-speaker variation. While Scan2 only permits string-vacuous NegS, NegS across a main verb *in situ* is possible in Scan1, AaL, and WJ, as well as in the Insular Scandinavian languages, Ic and Fa. Moreover, NegS out of PP and NegS out of an infinitival clause even require the presence of a main verb *in situ* in certain varieties while they are permitted/prohibited in others, irrespective of the presence of a verb *in situ*; cf. Figure 5.

The Inverse Holmberg Effect observed for certain constructions in some varieties indicates that the intervening elements themselves do not prohibit NegS; an additional intervening verb may cancel out the blocking effect. By the same reasoning, the starting position cannot be hold responsible for the availability of NegS. Moreover, apart from the cross-linguistic variation, there is variation across constructions as to the availability of non-string-vacuous NegS and the emergence of an Inverse Holmberg Effect. These facts suggest that the acceptability of NegS cannot be captured by its target positions (to the left/right of the main verb, adjoined to the auxiliary/mainVP) either. In Engels (2008), I account for the distribution of negative indefinites within Fox & Pesetsky's (2003, 2005) cyclic linearization model, deriving cross-linguistic variation as to non-string-vacuous NegS from differences in the availability of intermediate landing sites.



Presumably, NegS is triggered by a condition that sentential negation be expressed outside VP. On the one hand, NegS is obligatory (if possible; otherwise the *ikke...nogen*-variant must be used, see (8) above): A negative object cannot stay *in situ* in the Scandinavian languages, (28). On the other hand, a non-negative object as in (29) cannot undergo NegS.⁹ If NegS is triggered by the need to place a [+negative] constituent out of VP, it is expected that NegS cannot apply to non-negative objects while negative ones must undergo NegS.

- (28) a. *Per har læst ingen bøger. Da
 b. Per har ingen bøger læst _____.
Per has no books read

- (29) a. Per har læst bøgerne. Da
 b. *Per har bøgerne læst _____.
Per has books-the read

In contrast to the Scandinavian languages, a negative object may appear in its VP-internal base position in English. I.e., NegS does not take place overtly in this language.

- (30) a. Peter didn't read any books. En
 b. Peter read no books.
 c. I will force you to marry no one.
 i) 'I won't force you to marry anyone.'
 ii) 'I will force you not to marry anyone.' (Klima 1964: 285/86)

Similarly, occurrence of a negative indefinite object *in situ* has been possible in Finland Swedish around 1900 (see Bergroth 1917). But the sentences in (31) are ungrammatical in present-day Finland Swedish (Caroline Sandström, p.c.). Instead, as in Standard Swedish, the negative object undergoes NegS, (32)a, or the *inte...någon*-variant is used, (32)b.

- (31) a. Jag har haft ingenting att skaffa med den saken. FS
I have had nothing to do with this affair
 b. Att äta ingenting leder till döden.
to eat nothing yields to death-the (Bergroth 1917: 173)

- (32) a. Att ingenting äta leder till döden. FS
to nothing eat yields to death-the
 b. Att inte äta någonting leder till döden.
to not eat anything yields to death-the (Caroline Sandström, p.c.)

⁹ Notice that certain quantified objects in Icelandic may optionally move to the left of VP; cf. Rögnvaldsson (1987), Jónsson (1996), and Svenonius (2000).

However, a negative indefinite object may appear *in situ* in the presence of a VP-external negation marker in the Sibbo dialect (Eastern Nyland), giving rise to a negative concord reading; thereby, an additional negation marker to the immediate left of the negative object sometimes emerges and strengthens negation (Caroline Sandström, p.c.).

- (33) a. Jag har inte haft ingenting att skaffa med den saken. *Si*
 I have not had nothing to do with this affair
 b. Jag kastade inte bort ingenting.
 I threw not away nothing
 d. Jag er säker på att han inte såg inte ingenting.
 I am sure of that he not saw not nothing
 e. Han vill inte se inte ingenting.
 he will not see not nothing
 f. Han såg inte ingenting.
 he saw not nothing (Caroline Sandström, p.c.)

Likewise, VP-internal occurrence of a negative object is possible in Oevdalian if the negation marker *it* is present, (34). In addition, the negative object may undergo NegS; in this case, co-occurrence of *it* is optional, (35).

- (34) a. *Ig ar si'tt inggan. *Oe*
 b. Ig ar it si'tt inggan.
 I have not seen no one (Garbacz, to appear)
 (35) a. Ig ar inggan si'tt _____. *Oe*
 b. Ig ar it inggan si'tt _____.
 I have not no one seen (Garbacz, to appear)

Given that sentential negation is expressed by *it*, which licenses VP-internal occurrence of the negative object in (34)b, the question arises why a negative indefinite object may optionally undergo NegS in the presence of *it*, (35)b. In other words, co-occurrence of a VP-external negative marker and a negative object in NegS position gives rise to doubts regarding the trigger for (optional) NegS.

4 References

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