

THE FINAL NIE IN AFRIKAANS NEGATIVE SENTENCES*

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1. Introduction

An interesting syntactic property of Afrikaans is the use of the so-called *double negative* in sentences which express a negative proposition by means of a negation word like *geen* ('no', 'none', 'not (any)'); *geeneen* ('no one'); *geensins* ('by no means', 'in no way'); *g'n* ('never', 'not'); *nêrens* ('nowhere'); *nie* ('not'); *niemand* ('nobody'); *niks* ('nothing'); *nooit* ('never'). In terms of this property such a negative sentence contains, as a general rule, a second 'negation word' in final position, viz. the item *nie*. The phenomenon may be illustrated with the following examples.¹

(1) Subject initial main clauses

- (a) *Sy sluit nooit die deur NIE*
she locks never the door not
'She never locks the door'
- (b) *Hulle is g'n so arm NIE*
they are not so poor not
'They aren't all that poor'

(2) Subordinate clauses

- (a) *Jan beweer dat hy niks onthou NIE*
John claims that he nothing remembers not
'John claims that he remembers nothing'

- (b) *Ek twyfel of hulle regtig geen kontant het NIE*
 I doubt whether they really no cash have not
 'I doubt whether they really have no cash'
- (3) Topicalisation constructions
- (a) *Nêrens voel sy veilig NIE*
 nowhere feels she safe not
 'Nowhere does she feel safe'
- (b) *Met niemand anders het dit gebeur NIE*
 with nobody else has it happened not
 'It happened to nobody else'
- (4) Interrogative constructions
- (a) *Wil jy dan geensins betrokke raak NIE?*
 want you then in no way involved become not
 'Don't you want to become involved at all?'
- (b) *Wie het nie opgedaag NIE?*
 who has not arrived not?
 'Who hasn't arrived?'
- (5) Imperative constructions
- (a) *Moet geeneen vertrou NIE*
 must no-one trust not
 'Don't trust anyone'
- (b) *Moenie dit doen NIE!*
 must-not it do not
 'Don't do it!'

With the exception of a few well-known works such as (Klima 1964), (Kraak 1966) and (Jackendoff 1972), the description of sentential negation received relatively little attention in the early versions of Chomskyan generative grammar. And it was not until the publication of especially (Pollock 1989) that the syntax of negation became a topic of serious research within

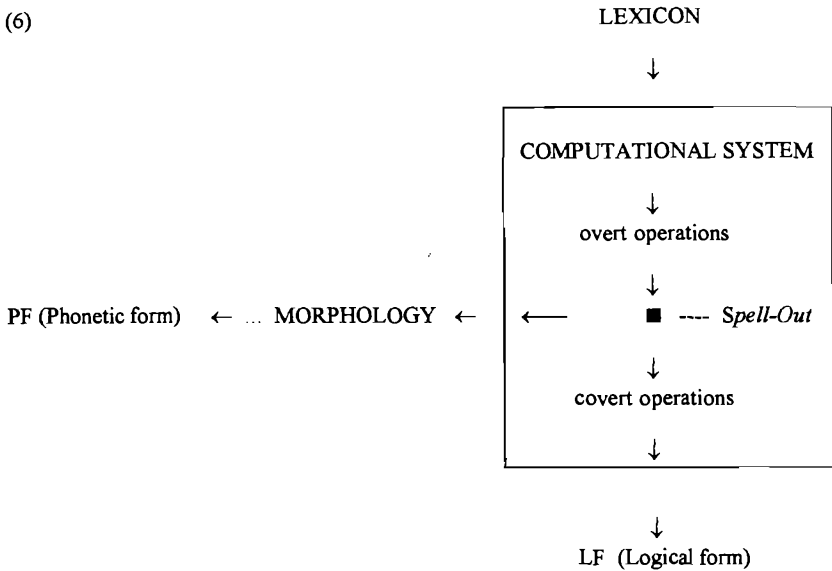
the Principles and Parameters framework; this renewed interest is still evident in the Minimalist Program, the most recent development within the Principles and Parameters model.² As far as negation in Afrikaans is concerned, (Waher 1978) still represents the only detailed description within the broad generative approach.³

It is not the aim of this paper to give an overview of the various proposals in the literature regarding the description of sentential negation. Also, no attempt will be made to give either a detailed description of sentential negation in Afrikaans or a comparative analysis of this phenomenon in Afrikaans and any other language. The aim of the paper is much more modest: it will examine the possibilities which the Minimalist Program presents for the syntactic description of the final *nie* in Afrikaans negative sentences, and more specifically subject initial clauses like those in (1) and (2). The discussion will focus on two general questions: (a) what is the categorial status of the final *nie*, and (b) where and how is it generated in sentence structure? The rest of the paper is organised as follows. By way of background, section 2 gives a brief overview of some of the relevant assumptions and mechanisms of the Minimalist Program. In section 3 various possible descriptions of the final *nie* are critically examined, after which an analysis is outlined which appears not only to express the relevant facts, but to be compatible also with the assumptions and mechanisms of the Minimalist Program. In section 4 a brief summary is given of the major findings, and some potential problems are also noted for further investigation.

2. Some minimalist assumptions and mechanisms

The organisation of the grammar within the Minimalist Program may be represented schematically as in (6) below.⁴ *Spell-Out* in (6) marks the (arbitrary) point at which the derivation of a sentence is split into two separate parts, respectively yielding its PF (sound) and LF (meaning) representations. Operations which take place before *Spell-Out* form part of the overt syntax and are reflected in the perceptible PF representation of the sentence. Operations

(6)



which take place after Spell-Out, and which lead to LF, form part of the covert syntax, hence their effects are not phonologically visible.

The derivation of a sentence starts with the selection of *substantive items* from the lexicon, each item consisting of a set of features. Two general types of features are distinguished, viz. *lexical-categorial (LC) features* and *formal (F) features*, which are interpreted at the two interface levels PF and LF. LC-features consist of semantic features; categorial features like [nominal], [verbal]; and (presumably) phonological features.⁵ The F-features of substantive items relate to, amongst others, morphological properties such as tense, case and agreement (person, number, gender), and are each selected with a particular value (+/-). The substantive categories are selected independently of each other, and are subsequently projected and merged with one another through the operations of the Generalised Transformation, the only structure-building mechanism within the Minimalist Program.

For a well-formed sentence to be derived, the various substantive items must be licensed for interpretation at the PF and LF levels. To this end a further system of *functional categories* is postulated, generated above and to the left of the system of substantive categories. Functional categories include, amongst others, AgrS (subject agreement), AgrO (object agreement), and T (Tense), each consisting of a set of F-features, the same F-features that are associated with the substantive categories. In contrast to those of the substantive categories, however, the F-features of the functional categories are not specified for particular values. Licensing of a substantive category is then effected by moving its F-features upwards and to the left, into positions where they can be checked against the corresponding features of a functional category. During checking the F-feature of a substantive category supplies a particular feature value to the relevant F-feature of a functional category, provided that the two categories (or more specifically, their F-features) are structural sisters. The movement of F-features is effected by Move-F, one of the operations of the Generalised Transformation (GT).

The F-features of the functional categories belong to two types, viz. *V-features* and *N-features*. A V-feature, on the one hand, must agree with the corresponding F-feature of a substantive head. Since feature checking is only possible in a sisterhood relationship, it follows that the F-feature of the substantive head must be adjoined to the relevant functional head. N-features, on the other hand, must agree with the corresponding features associated with phrases. In this case the relevant phrase moves to the Specifier (Spec) position of the functional category X so that it forms the sister of the first projection XP¹ above the functional head.⁶ Given that the features of a functional head X are, via percolation; also available at its projections, hence also at XP¹, checking can proceed in accordance with the sisterhood condition. In short, V-features are checked in head-head configurations, and N-features in Spec-head configurations.

Two further assumptions regarding F-features should be noted here. The first concerns the question of feature strength. The F-features (i.e. both the V- and N-features) of a *functional head* may be either *strong* or *weak*, with the possibility of parametric variation between languages. Zwart (1997) proposes, for example, that the V- and N-features of Agr are both strong in Dutch, a proposal that will be accepted for Afrikaans as well.⁷ Strong features must

be checked (i.e. supplied with a value) in the overt syntax, before Spell-Out, otherwise the derivation will crash at PF. The checking of weak features, by contrast, can be 'postponed' until the covert syntax, after the point of Spell-Out; weak features are not visible at PF and can occur unchecked at that level.

The second assumption concerns interpretation at the PF level. To be interpreted (i.e. lexically realised) at PF, the F-features of a *substantive head* must be combined with LC-features within a categorial head. Suppose for instance that the F-features of a substantive head Y are adjoined to a functional head X to form the morphosyntactic complex X^1 . If X^1 does not contain any LC-features, it will not constitute a legitimate (interpretable) PF-object, which means that it will not be lexically realised. In such a case one of the following operations may be performed.

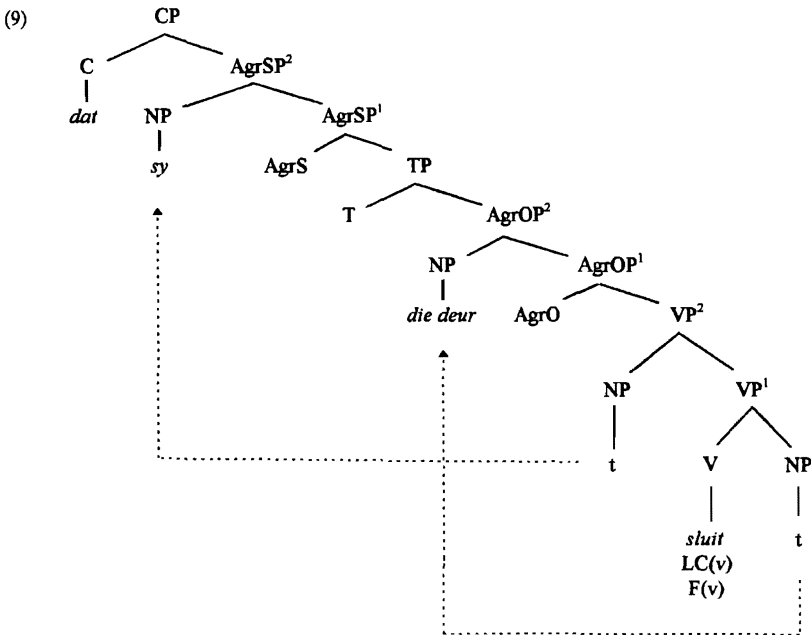
- (I) If there is a further functional head Z higher up in the structure which does contain LC-features, X^1 can be adjoined to Z by means of Move-F to form the morphosyntactic complex Z^1 . Z^1 will then qualify as an interpretable PF-object, since it contains both F- and LC-features. The operation is only permissible, however, if it will result in an F-feature of Z being supplied with a value; in other words, Z will *attract* X^1 only if Z can gain an F-feature value in the process.
- (II) Suppose there is not an appropriate functional head Z higher up in the structure. In such a case the LC-features of the substantive head Y must be moved overtly to X^1 -- i.e. before Spell-Out -- just like its F-features, to form a legitimate PF-object. This is effected by Move-LC, a further movement operation of GT. It should be noted, though, that the overt movement of LC-features represents a 'costly' operation in terms of grammatical computation, one that is available only as a 'last resort'.

The preceding overview of minimalist assumptions and mechanisms can be made concrete with reference to the examples in (7) and (8).

(7) *dat sy die deur sluit*

(8) *Sy sluit die deur*

The structure underlying the embedded sentence in (7) can be represented roughly as in (9) below.⁸ This structure has been derived by Lexical Selection and the GT-operations Project and Merge. The subject *sy* and the direct object *die deur* in (8) have already been moved overtly to [Spec, AgrS] and [Spec, AgrO], respectively; these two operations are required so that the strong N-features of AgrS and AgrO can be checked before Spell-Out. Notice that (9) exhibits an initial SVO-order (or in more general terms, *Spec-head-complement*), the only underlying word order that is provided for within the Minimalist Program.⁹

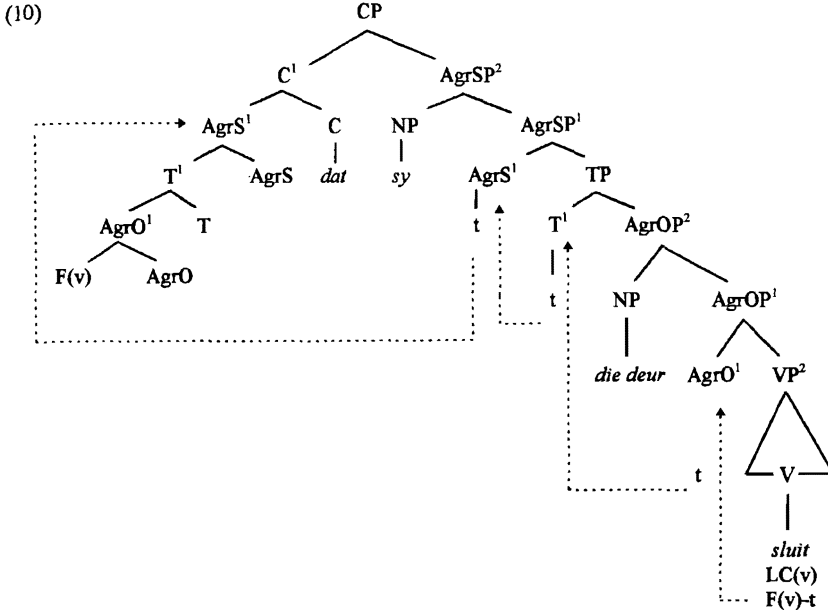


Given that the V-features of Agr (and probably those of T as well) are strong in Afrikaans, it follows that the F-features of the V *sluit* -- indicated as F(v) in (9) -- must also move before Spell-Out. This involves at least three operations. Firstly, F(v) is adjoined to AgrO, yielding

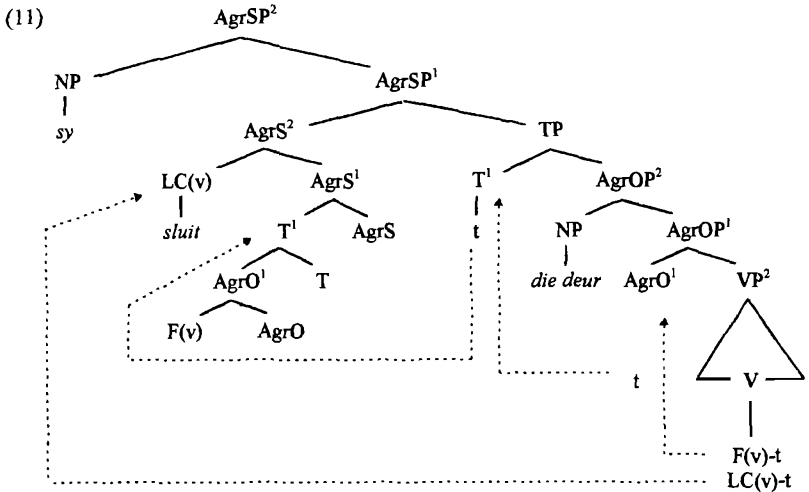
the two-segment category AgrO^1 with $F(v)$ and AgrO as its daughter-constituents; the strong V-features of AgrO can be checked in this configuration. Secondly, AgrO^1 is adjoined to T to form the two-segment category T^1 with AgrO^1 and T as its daughters, a configuration in which the V-feature of T can be checked. Thirdly, T^1 is adjoined to AgrS yielding the two-segment category AgrS^1 , which provides the configuration for checking the strong V-features of AgrS . The problem, however, is that AgrS^1 does not contain any LC-features, which means that it does not constitute an interpretable object at PF. This problem can be overcome in terms of the proposal (I) above, that is, by adjoining AgrS^1 to the functional head C, a further instance of Move-F. C obviously contains LC-features, since it can be spelled out as the complementiser *dat*. Hence, by adjoining AgrS^1 to C, a two-segment category C^1 can be formed in which $F(v)$ is combined with LC-features. The important question, of course, is whether C has anything to gain by such an operation, that is, whether C contains a V-feature which can be supplied with a value via AgrS^1 -to-C. Zwart (1997) argues on the basis of agreement facts that C must indeed contain such a V-feature: in various dialects of Dutch, Frisian and German the complementiser agrees in person and/or number with the subject and the inflected verb, a phenomenon which can only be accounted for in terms of Move-F to C.¹⁰ Given Zwarts' analysis, C thus attracts AgrS^1 in order to obtain an F-feature value; as a consequence, a legitimate PF-object -- the two-segment head C^1 -- is created, one which contains both F- and LC-features.

The effect of the four overt operations involving $F(v)$ can be illustrated in the structure (10) below. Since the LC-features of the V *sluit* -- indicated as LC(v) -- do not have to be moved in the overt syntax, the V is spelled out in its initial position under the VP; (10) thus reflects the surface SOV word order of the embedded sentence in (7).¹¹

Consider next the main clause in (8). The structure underlying (8) is almost identical to that presented as (9) above for the embedded sentence in (7). The only difference is that (9), in the case of the main clause (8), does not contain a CP dominating AgrSP^2 , since (8) is not introduced by a complementiser (e.g. *dat*). In short, the embedded sentence in (7) represents a CP, and the main clause in (8) an AgrSP . As in the case of (7), the F-features of the V *sluit* in (8) must be moved overtly so that the strong V-features of Agr and T can be checked before



Spell-Out. Three operations are involved in this, viz. (i) F(v)-to-AgrO, (ii) AgrO¹-to-T and (iii) T¹-to-AgrS, with F(v) eventually forming part of the two-segment category AgrS¹. However, AgrS¹ does not contain any LC-features, which means that it does not constitute a legitimate PF-object. The derived structure moreover lacks a higher functional category with LC-features -- like C, as in the case of the embedded sentence (7) -- to which AgrS¹ can be adjoined by means of Move-F. Since F(v) cannot be interpreted without LC-features, the derivation will therefore crash at PF. The only solution to this problem is to adjoin the LC-features of the V *sluit* to AgrS¹ before Spell-Out (cf. the last resort proposal (II) above). This will then yield the two-segment category AgrS², a legitimate PF-object containing both F- and LC-features. One of the consequences of moving the LC-features of the V *sluit* to AgrS in the overt syntax is that *sluit* will be lexically spelled out in the second structural position of the sentence. This is in accordance with the surface SVO word order of the main clause (8). The structure (11) below illustrates the various overt operations involving F(v) and LC(v) in the derivation of (8).



The examples in (7) and (8) are both positive declarative sentences. In the next section we will examine whether the assumptions and mechanisms outlined above can provide a framework for the description of negative declarative sentences in Afrikaans, and more specifically of the structural position of the final *nie*.

3. Negative sentences and the syntax of the final *nie*

Consider again the negative sentences in (1)-(5). The (bold-faced) negation words in these sentences belong to various substantive categories, viz. N (*niemand*, *niks*, *geeneen*); A (*g'n*, *nooit*, *nêrens*, *nie*, *geensins*); and DET (*geen*, *g'n*). Omitting such a word from a negative sentence results in ungrammaticality (or a change of meaning), as illustrated in (12).¹²

- (12)(a) *Sy sluit *(nooit) die deur nie*
 (b) *Hulle is *(g'n) so arm nie*
 (c) *Jan beweer dat hy *(niks) onthou nie*
 (d) *Ek twyfel of hulle regtig *(geen) kontant het nie*

A further general property of negation words is that they can be modified by adverbs like *glad* ('by no means', 'altogether', 'at all'); *absoluut* ('absolutely'); *hoegaamd* ('at all', '(nothing) whatever'); *ongeveer* ('just about'); *omtrent*, *bykans* ('almost', 'nearly'):

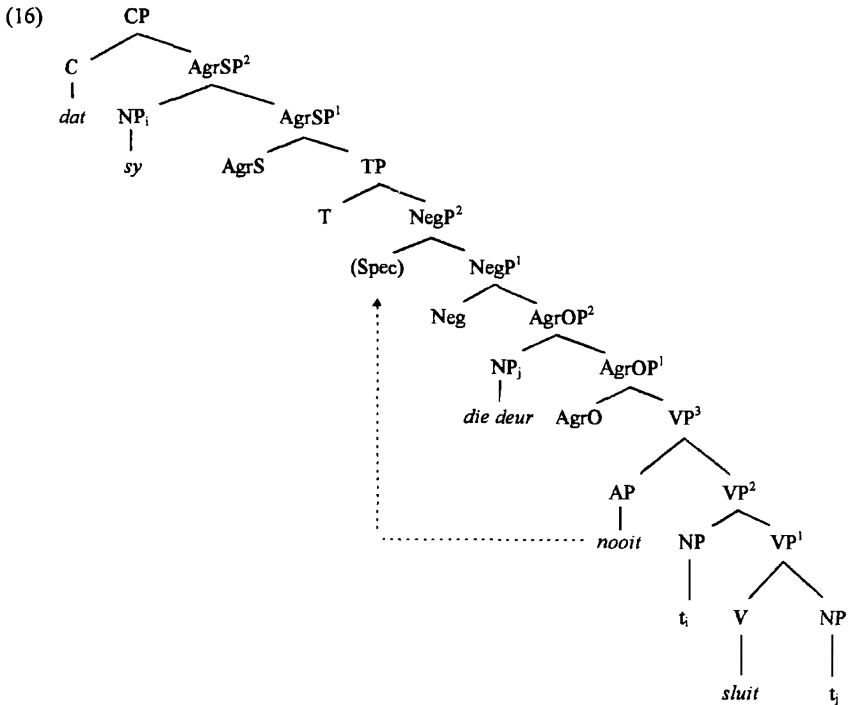
- (13)(a) *Hulle was glad nie betrokke nie*
they were entirely not involved not
'They weren't involved at all'
- (b) *Ons voel omtrent nêrens veilig nie*
we feel almost nowhere safe not
'We feel safe almost nowhere'
- (c) *Jan sê dat hy absoluut niks onthou nie*
John says that he absolutely nothing remembers not
'John says that he remembers absolutely nothing'
- (d) *Dit blyk dat sy bykans nooit die gereg maak nie*
it seems that she almost never the dish makes not
'It seems that she almost never makes the dish'

As mentioned above, it is not the aim of this paper to give a detailed analysis of the syntax of sentential negation in Afrikaans. The following assumptions about the selection and licensing of the relevant negation words, for example, will be accepted here without further discussion.

- (14)(a) Negation words are selected in the form of F- and LC-features.
- (b) A negation word contains an F-feature [+neg] that has to be checked against the corresponding F-feature of a *functional head Neg*, where checking implies that the functional head is supplied with an F-feature value.
- (c) The functional head Neg has a *strong N-feature*; this means that a substantive phrase with the F-feature [+neg] must be moved to [Spec, Neg] before Spell-Out, where feature checking can then take place in a Spec-head configuration.
- (d) The functional head Neg occurs in a structural position between T and AgrO.¹³

These assumptions can be made concrete with reference to the embedded sentence in (15). The structure underlying (15) may be represented roughly as in (16). In this structure the subject *sy* and the direct object *die deur* have already been moved overtly to the Specifier positions of AgrS and AgrO, respectively; for ease of exposition the overt movements involving the F-features of the V *sluit* are not indicated (cf. structure (10) above). The AP *nooit* is represented in (16) as an adverbial that is adjoined to the VP; the final *nie* is ignored for present purposes.

(15) *dat sy nooit die deur sluit nie*



Overt movement of the AP *nooit* to [Spec, Neg] yields the surface word order of the sentence in (15), with *nooit* preceding the direct object *die deur*. The AP may also occur to the right of the object, however, as in (17).

(17) *dat sy die deur nooit sluit nie*

It is not clear exactly how the word order in a sentence like (17) can be accounted for. One possibility might be that Neg does not have a fixed hierarchical position between T and AgrO, but that it can also be projected between AgrO and VP. The word order difference between sentences like those in (15) and (17) could then be ascribed to the variable position of Neg. Another possibility might be to postulate a further functional category above Neg in structures of the type (16), one to which the object could be moved overtly to derive the word order in (17).¹⁴ The merits of these suggestions, and for that matter the whole question of word order variation in Afrikaans negative sentences, fall outside the scope of this paper and will not be investigated further here.

This brings us to the analysis of the final *nie* in negative sentences (henceforth, NIE). A first question concerns the type of category to which NIE belongs. One possibility is to regard NIE as a member of the class of negation words like *nooit*, *niemand*, *nie*, etc., that is, to classify it as a substantive item. This leads to two predictions: (i) omitting NIE from a negative sentence should result in ungrammaticality (or a change of meaning), and (ii) NIE should be modifiable by adverbs like *glad*, *omtrent*, *absoluut*, etc. Both predictions are incorrect. The examples in (18) show that it is possible to omit NIE without causing ungrammaticality (or a change of meaning), and the examples in (19) show that NIE cannot be modified.

(18)(a) *Ek sien niemand (NIE)*

I see no-one (not)

'I don't see anybody'

(b) *Jy help my nooit (NIE)*

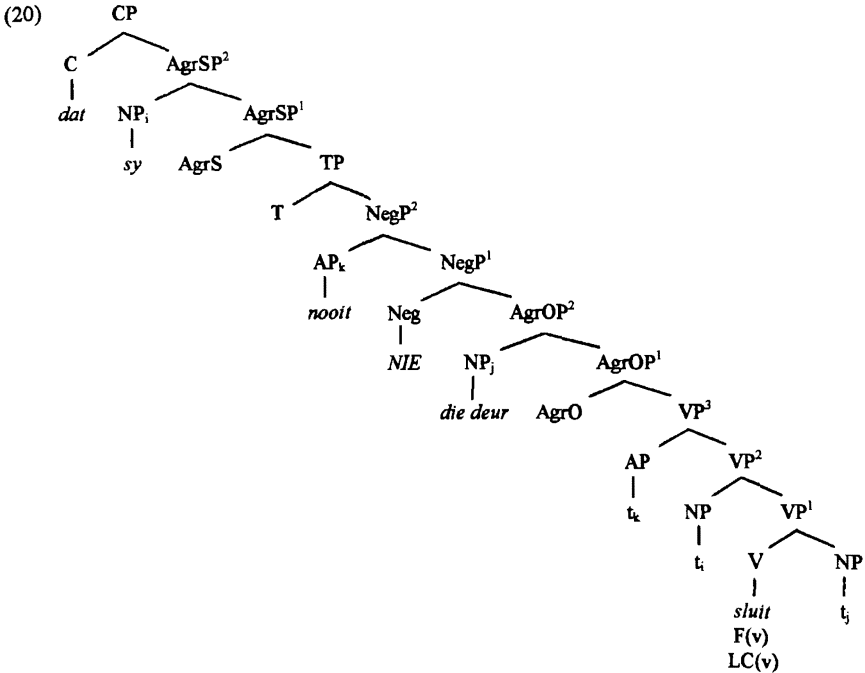
you help me never (not)

'You never help me'

- (c) *Hiervoor het ek geen oplossing (NIE)*
 here-for have I no solution (not)
 ‘For this I have no solution’
- (d) *Sy beweer dat dit nêrens veilig is (NIE)*
 she claims that it nowhere safe is (not)
 ‘She claims that it isn’t safe anywhere’
- (e) *Dis vir my duidelik dat niks hom sal onderkry (NIE)*
 it-is for me clear that nothing him will under-get (not)
 ‘It’s clear to me that nothing will get the better of him’
- (f) *Hulle verseker my dat daar geen antwoord by sy kantoor is (NIE)*
 they assure me that there no answer at his office is (not)
 ‘They assure me there’s no answer at his office’
- (19)(a) *Hulle was nie betrokke (*glad) NIE*
 they were not involved (*at all) not
 ‘They weren’t involved’
- (b) *Ons voel nêrens veilig (*omtrent) NIE*
 we feel nowhere safe (*almost) not
 ‘We don’t feel safe anywhere’
- (c) *Jan sê dat hy niks onthou (*absoluut) NIE*
 John says that he nothing remembers (*absolutely) not
 ‘John says that he remembers nothing’
- (d) *Dit blyk dat sy nooit die gereg maak (*bykans) NIE*
 it seems that she never the dish makes (*nearly) not
 ‘It seems that she never makes the dish’

Apparently, then, NIE is not a substantive item, which leaves only one other possibility, viz. that it represents a functional item. Given this conclusion, the question arises to which specific functional category NIE belongs. An obvious proposal would be to analyse NIE as a phonetic realisation of the functional category Neg, that is, as the head of NegP in a structure like (16).

On this proposal the structure underlying the embedded sentence in (15) will take roughly the form in (20). The subject *sy*, the object *die deur*, and the adverbial *nooit* have already been moved overtly in (20); the various overt movements involving F(v), i.e. the F-features of the V *sluit*, are not indicated.



However, an analysis along the lines in (20), with NIE representing the head of NegP, is problematic in various respects. Firstly, NIE does not appear in sentence-final position, but to the left of the direct object *die deur* and the V *sluit*. Since only leftward, upward movements are provided for within the Minimalist Program, NIE cannot be moved to the right into final position. To derive the surface word order of (15), both the V and the object would therefore have to move overtly to positions to the left of NIE. However, it is not at all clear which positions, if any, could serve as possible landing sites for these two constituents. In the case of

the object *die deur*, (20) does not contain an apparent Specifier position to which the NP could be moved; and even if such a position were postulated, it is not clear how/whether the relevant operation could be motivated in terms of strong N-feature checking. In the case of the V *sluit*, it could be argued that both F(v) and LC(v) are adjoined to Neg. But this then raises the question why LC(v) has to be moved overtly. This cannot be because F(v) will be stranded in Neg without LC-features: Neg already contains such features (spelled out as NIE), and F(v) will in any case be combined in the course of the derivation with the LC-features in C (cf. the representation in (10) above).

A second problem with the analysis in (20) concerns sentences containing two NIE's, one associated with sentential negation (NIE₂), and the other with constituent negation (NIE₁; cf. note 1). Consider the following examples; in each case NIE₁ is associated with the preceding negation word.

- (21)(a) *Ek sal jou nooit (NIE₁) vergeet NIE₂*
 I will you never (not) forget not
 'I will never forget you'
- (b) *Niemand anders (NIE₁) het opgedaag NIE₂*
 no-one else (not) has arrived not
 'No-one else arrived'
- (c) *Dit blyk dat sy absoluut niks (NIE₁) kan onthou NIE₂*
 it seems that she absolutely nothing (not) can remember not
 'It seems that she can remember absolutely nothing'
- (d) *Jy weet mos dat ons nie sommer (NIE₁) vir jou sal jok NIE₂*
 you know of-course that we not just (not) for you will lie not
 'You should know that we won't lie to you for no reason'

NIE₁ shares at least two general properties with the sentence-final *nie*, NIE₂. Firstly, as shown in (21), NIE₁ can be omitted without causing ungrammaticality or a change of meaning. And secondly, NIE₁ cannot be modified:

- (22)(a) *Ek sal jou nooit (*glad) NIE₁ vergeet NIE₂*
 (b) *Niemand anders (*bykans) NIE₁ het opgedaag NIE₂*
 (c) *Dit blyk dat sy niks (*absoluut) NIE₁ kan onthou NIE₂*

It thus seems reasonable to take NIE₁ (like the sentence-final *nie*) to be a functional item, rather than a substantive item like the negation words *nooit*, *niemand*, *nie*, etc. Within the Minimalist Program a functional category is projected only if it is necessary for the licensing of a substantive item X, in other words, if it can be checked against a particular F-feature of X. Each F(x) will thus result in the projection of one, and only one, corresponding functional category. This explains, for example, why a structure with only one finite, intransitive verb cannot have more than one AgrS or T. Consider now the assumption (14)(b) above. In terms of (14)(b) the functional category Neg is projected only if the structure contains a substantive category with a [+ neg] F-feature. It furthermore follows from the general assumption about the occurrence of functional categories that the selection of such a substantive category cannot result in the projection of more than one Neg. The problem which sentences like those in (21) pose for the analysis in (20) should now be obvious: each of these sentences contains two functional items NIE, which implies that the structure must contain two functional categories Neg. In fact, though, each sentence contains only one substantive item with a [+ neg] feature, which means that only one Neg can be projected. If NIE₁ is taken to be the phonetic realisation of the single projected Neg, NIE₂ would thus be left without a structural position, and vice versa.

A third problem for the analysis in (20) concerns sentences like the following:

- (23)(a) *Sy wend geen poging aan NIE om my te help NIE*
 she turns no attempt on not for me to help not
 ‘She makes no attempt to help me’
 (b) *Dis nie duidelik NIE of hy sal kom NIE*
 it-is not clear not whether he will come not
 ‘It’s not clear whether he will come’

- (c) *Baie mense sal nie die grondwet lees NIE as dit net in een taal geskryf is NIE*
 many people will not the constitution read not if it only in one language written is not
 ‘Many people won’t read the constitution if it is only written in one language’
- (d) *Daar is geen kans NIE dat die Springbokke hulle opponente sal onderskat NIE*
 there is no chance not that the Springboks their opponents will underestimate not
 ‘There’s no chance that the Springboks will underestimate their opponents’
- (e) *Sy wil niks doen NIE as jy vir haar gaan lag NIE*
 she will nothing do not if you for her go laugh not
 ‘She doesn’t want to do anything if you’re going to laugh at her’
- (f) *Ek was nie seker NIE of jy ook wou saamkom NIE*
 I was not sure not whether you also wanted-to along-come not
 ‘I wasn’t sure whether you would have liked to come along as well’

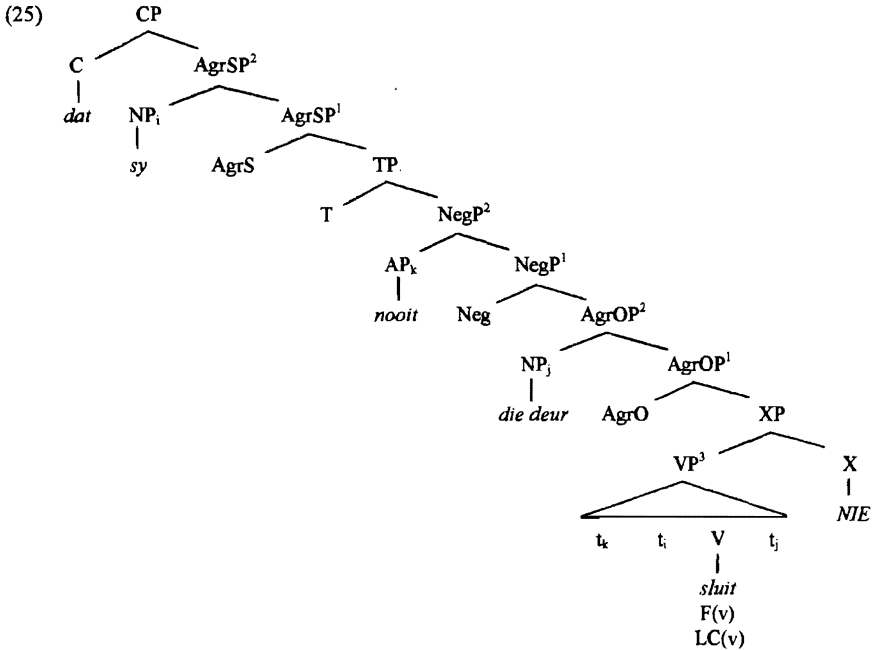
The sentences in (23) each contain two NIE’s, one in the main clause and one in the subordinate clause. If NIE is the phonetic realisation of the functional category Neg, it follows that every main and subordinate clause in these examples must contain a functional head Neg. In terms of the assumption (14)(b), however, a Neg can only be projected if the relevant structure contains a substantive item with the F-feature [+neg]. The main clauses in (23) each contain such an item (viz. the negation words *geen, nie, niks*), but not the subordinate clauses. Since the non-occurrence of a negation word implies the non-occurrence of Neg, the final *nie* in the subordinate clauses in (23) is therefore left without a structural position.

A similar problem is found with sentences like those in (24) below, each of which contains a NIE without any accompanying negation word. Here, too, the non-occurrence of a negation word implies the non-occurrence of Neg, leaving NIE without a structural position. It should be noted, however, that the acceptability judgements of native speakers vary considerably with regard to sentences of the type in (24); some speakers find such sentences unacceptable or at best marginally acceptable.¹⁵

- (24)(a) *Ek kan tog onmoontlik alleen die werk doen (NIE)*
 I can surely impossible alone the work do (not)
 ‘Surely I can’t be expected to do the work on my own’
- (b) *Jy hoef my nouliks daarvan te oortuig (NIE)*
 you have-to me hardly it-of convince (not)
 ‘You hardly have to convince me of that’
- (c) *Hy is weinig meer as ‘n beginner (NIE)*
 he is little more than a beginner (not)
 ‘He’s little more than a beginner’
- (d) *Jy vra verniet of ek jou sal help (NIE)*
 you ask in-vain whether I you will help (not)
 ‘It’s no use asking me to help you’
- (e) *?Ek sou dit kwalik sonder sy hulp kon regkry (NIE)*
 I would it hardly without his help could right-get (not)
 ‘I would hardly have been able to manage it without his assistance’
- (f) *?Ons het skaars gesit (NIE), toe begin die lawaai al weer*
 we have scarcely sat (not), then begins the noise yet again
 ‘We had hardly sat down when the racket started again’

In sum, then, the proposal to analyse NIE as the phonetic realisation of the functional head Neg, as in the structure (20), seems to be unacceptable. Given that NIE is a functional item, as was argued above, there is the question of which other functional category it could belong to, and in which hierarchical position the relevant category would be projected. Suppose such a category X is postulated, one which can be spelled out as NIE. Even though NIE appears in sentence-final position in the visible PF-representation, X cannot be projected in this position. The reason for this is that functional categories (e.g. Agr, T, C) occur to the left and above the system of substantive categories within the Minimalist Program. To put it differently, neither in main clauses nor in subordinate clauses is it possible to project a functional category to the right and/or below the VP.¹⁶ Hence X must be one of the functional categories above the VP. Suppose now for the sake of the argument that X is projected directly above the VP in the

derivation of an embedded sentence like the one in (15), *dat sy nooit die deur sluit NIE*. The structure underlying (15) would then roughly take the form in (25). In this structure the subject *sy*, the object *die deur* and the adverbial *nooit* have already been moved overtly; the movement operations involving F(v) are not indicated.

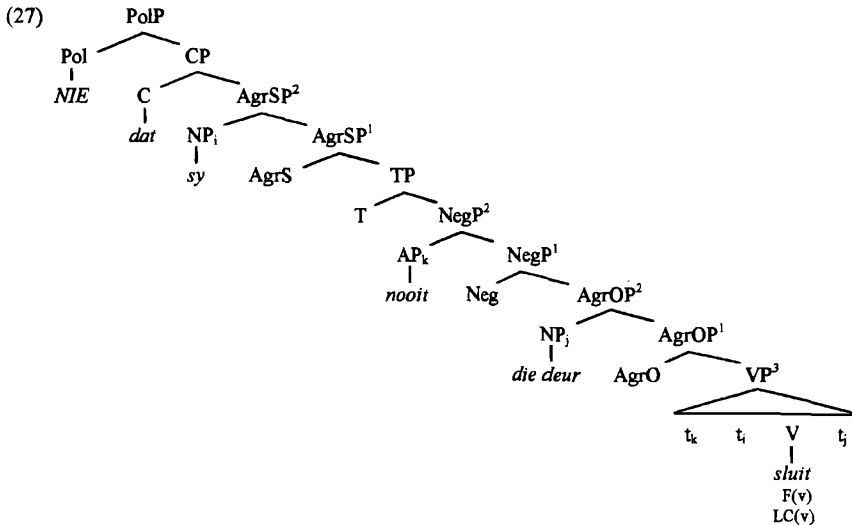


In structural terms the VP in (25) represents the complement of the functional head X. Notice that the VP forms a *left-complement* of X, thereby expressing the fact that NIE occupies the sentence-final position in the surface word order. In section 2, however, it was pointed out that the Minimalist Program provides for only one general, underlying word order, viz. *Spec-head-complement*. Thus, even though the complement-head order in the structure (25) can describe the sentence-final position of NIE in (15), it is unacceptable on general theoretical grounds, which raises serious doubts about the merit of an analysis along the lines in (25).¹⁷

We have now examined various proposals for the analysis of NIE, and it was argued in each case that there are empirical and/or theoretical considerations which reflect negatively on the merit of the proposal. We turn now to a possible alternative which is apparently not subject to the same objections. The central hypotheses of this proposal may be formulated as follows:

- (26)(a) NIE is the phonetic realisation of a functional head which can be indicated with the category label *Pol(arity)*.
- (b) Pol is projected as the topmost functional category in sentence structure, e.g. above AgrSP in sentence-initial main clauses and above CP in embedded sentences.
- (c) Pol is projected in accordance with the universal underlying word order postulated within the Minimalist Program, viz. Spec-head-complement; in other words, Pol is projected upwards and to the left in sentence structure, taking its relevant sister-constituent (e.g. AgrSP or CP) as a *right-complement*.

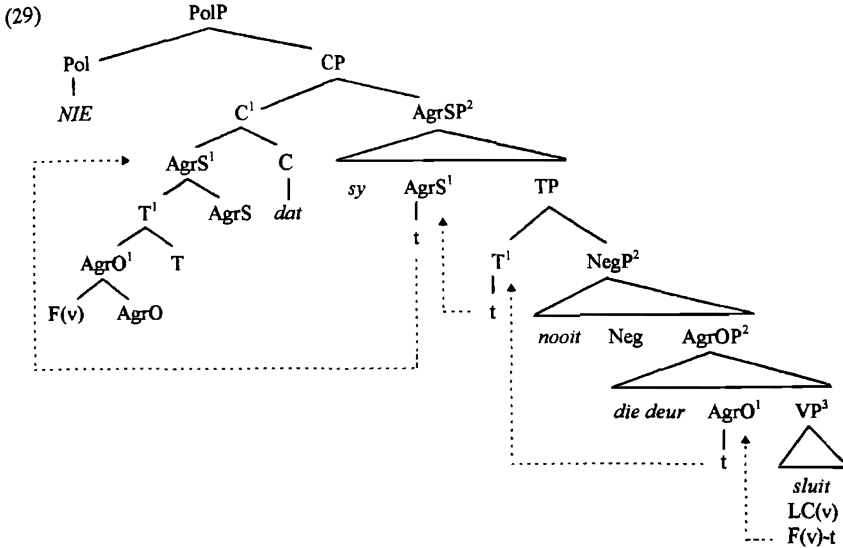
In terms of these hypotheses, the structure underlying the embedded sentence in (15) may be represented as in (27) below. The subject *sy*, the object *die deur* and the adverbial *nooit* have already been moved overtly; the movement operations involving F(v) are not indicated (cf. the representation in (10) above).



The question now is how the surface word order of (15), with NIE in sentence-final position, can be derived from the underlying structure (27). Within the Minimalist Program there seems to be only one possibility, viz. to move the entire CP overtly to the specifier position of Pol. Overt movement of a phrase YP to the Spec of a functional head X is only possible, however, if YP contains a particular F-feature that must be checked before Spell-Out against the corresponding *strong N-feature* of X. In other words, X will attract YP only if X can gain a feature value in the process. If CP-to-Pol is the only way in which NIE can end up in sentence-final position, it thus follows that CP contains an F-feature that must be checked against the corresponding F(= N)-feature of Pol. And since the operation is an overt one, it also follows that the relevant feature of Pol must be *strong*. Given these conclusions, the obvious question is which F-feature is involved in CP-to-Pol. Apparently such a feature cannot be associated with one of the substantive phrases in (27), i.e. with the VP, the subject *sy*, the object *die deur*, or the AP *nooit*. If this were the case, Pol would simply attract one of these phrases, and NIE would not end up in sentence-final position. The feature also cannot be exclusively associated with C (and via percolation, with CP) since Pol, according to the hypothesis (26)(b), is postulated in subject-initial main clauses as well, which lack a (C)P. This then suggests the following working hypothesis, in terms of which the relevant feature is associated with V:

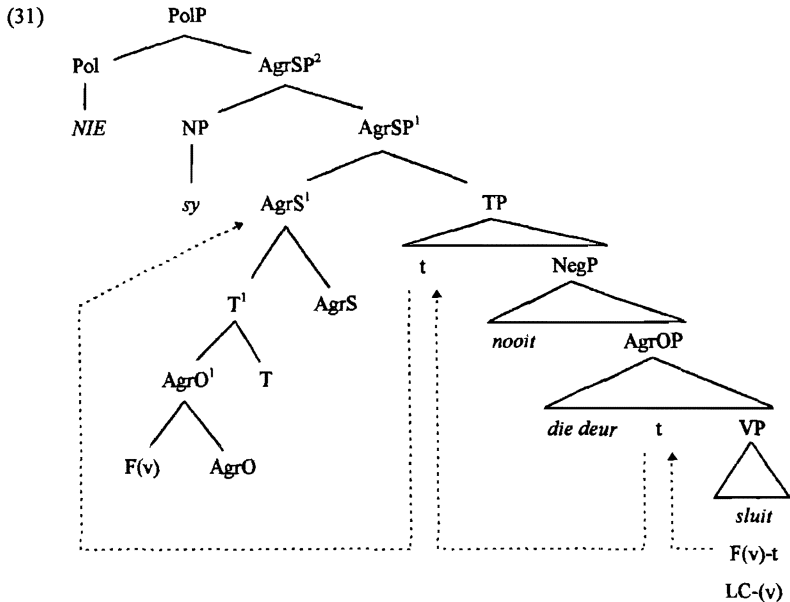
- (28) Verbs have an F-feature [pol] with a particular value in 'negative polarity' sentences (e.g. sentences containing negation words like *niemand*, *nooit*, *nie*, etc.); this feature is checked against the corresponding *strong N-feature* of the functional category Pol, which means that the N-feature is supplied with a value.¹⁸

Given (28), it could be argued that [pol] forms part of the F-features, F(v), of the V *sluit* in (27) (though cf. note 18). It was explained in section 2 that F(v) is involved in at least four overt movement operations in such an embedded sentence structure, viz. (i) F(v)-to-AgrO, (ii) AgrO¹-to-T, (iii) T¹-to-AgrS, and (iv) AgrS¹-to-C (cf. the representation in (10)). In the case of (27) the effect of these operations may be illustrated as follows:



The last operation in (29), i.e. AgrS¹-to-C, results in F(v) being incorporated into the complex functional head C¹. F(v) is furthermore available via percolation at the projections of C¹, in this case the maximal projection CP. In terms of the hypothesis (28) [pol] is associated with F(v); at this stage of the derivation it is also the only F-feature that is still unchecked. Hence, since the CP contains an F-feature that can supply a value to the corresponding strong N-feature of the functional head Pol, it follows that the CP is attracted to [Spec, Pol] in the overt syntax. In this way, then, the surface word order of the embedded sentence in (15) can be derived, with NIE in sentence-final position.

The above analysis of embedded negative sentences like the one in (15) also holds for subject-initial main clauses with NIE, except of course that such main clauses do not contain a CP. Consider again the example in (1)(a), repeated here as (30). In the derivation of this sentence the F-features of the V are moved to the functional head AgrS via at least three operations, viz. F(v)-to-AgrO, AgrO¹-to-T, and T¹-to-AgrS. (31) illustrates the effect of these operations.

(30) *Sy sluit nooit die deur NIE*

The last movement operation in (31), T¹-to-AgrS, results in F(v) being stranded in a functional head AgrS¹ which does not contain any LC-features, and which therefore does not constitute a legitimate (interpretable) PF-object. The structure moreover lacks a C(P) with LC-features to which AgrS¹ can be adjoined. Although the functional head Pol contains LC-features (spelled out as NIE), it does not have a V-feature that can attract AgrS¹ for checking purposes: in terms of the proposed analysis Pol only contains a strong *N-feature*, which must be supplied with a value in a Spec-head configuration. The only way in which F(v) can be combined with LC-features in (31) is thus to adjoin LC(v), as a last resort, to AgrS¹ (cf. the representation in (11) above). What is important about the structure (31), however, is that F(v) -- and therefore the [pol]-feature as well -- forms part of AgrS¹, and is furthermore also available at AgrSP² via percolation. Hence for the strong N-feature of Pol to be supplied with a value, AgrSP² is

attracted to [Spec, Pol], where feature checking can take place in a Spec-head configuration. This yields the surface word order of the sentence in (30), with NIE in final position.

The preceding discussion sketched the outlines of a possible minimalist analysis of NIE, one which incorporates the hypotheses in (26) and (28). To end this section, let us briefly consider two empirical consequences of the proposed analysis. In terms of (28), the occurrence of NIE (as the phonetic realisation of the functional category Pol) is ascribed to the presence of an F-feature [pol], which is assumed, as a working hypothesis, to form part of the feature composition of V. On this analysis, then, the presence of NIE is not dependent on the presence of a negation word such as *nooit*, *niemand*, *nie*, etc. Hence it should be possible to get well-formed sentences (i) with a negation word but without NIE, and (ii) with NIE but without a negation word. Both predictions appear to be correct. Firstly, as was illustrated with the examples in (18), NIE can be omitted from sentences containing a negation word like *nooit*, *nie*, *geen*, etc. without causing ungrammaticality or a change of meaning. And secondly, it is apparently possible for NIE to occur in sentences that do not contain a negation word, as was illustrated in (23) and (24).

4. Summary

This paper examined the possibilities which the Minimalist Program presents for the analysis of the sentence-final *nie* in Afrikaans negative sentences. A brief overview was given in section 2 of the relevant minimalist assumptions and mechanisms, and against this background various possible analyses of NIE were critically examined in section 3. It was argued that NIE does not represent a substantive item, and more specifically, that it cannot be classified as a member of the class of negation words. One possibility, then, is to analyse NIE as the phonetic realisation of the functional category Neg, where the projection of Neg is determined by the selection of a substantive item with the F-feature [+ neg], that is to say, a negation word like *nooit*, *geen*, *niks*, *nie*, etc. Another possibility is to analyse NIE as the realisation of a functional category X, not Neg, which is projected above and to the right of the VP. It was argued on the basis of

empirical and theoretical considerations that neither of these possibilities provides an acceptable framework for the description of NIE. We subsequently considered a third possibility, one which incorporates the hypotheses in (26) and (28), summarised in (32).

- (32)(a) Verbs have an F-feature [pol] with a particular value in ‘negative polarity’ sentences (e.g. sentences which contain a negation word like *niemand*, *nooit*, *geen*, *nie*, etc.); the presence of this feature induces the projection of a functional category Pol(arity) for checking purposes.
- (b) Pol is projected in accordance with the (universal) underlying order Spec-head-complement, and forms the topmost functional category in sentence structure; NIE represents the phonetic realisation of the functional head Pol.
- (c) Pol has a strong N-feature [pol], which must be supplied with a value in a Spec-head configuration before Spell-Out; Pol accordingly attracts a phrase in the overt syntax which contains, via percolation, the [pol]-feature associated with V.

A central premise of the proposed analysis, as expressed in (32)(b), is that NIE represents a functional item which initially occupies the first structural position of the sentence, i.e. the head position of PolP. However, the operation in (32)(c) results in NIE ending up in sentence-final position before Spell-Out, thus accounting for the surface word order of negative sentences. In terms of (32)(a), the presence of NIE is ascribed to the presence of an F(v)-feature [pol], and not to the selection of a negation word or to the projection of a functional category Neg. It thus follows that NIE should be able to occur without a negation word, and vice versa; empirical support for these consequences was presented in (18), (23) and (24). In short, then, it would appear that the proposed analysis provides an adequate description of the relevant facts within the framework of minimalist assumptions and mechanisms outlined in section 2. Obviously, this does not imply that the analysis is without potential problems. Questions such as the following, for example, still need to be addressed:

- (33)(a) The exact content of the notion ‘polarity’, and more specifically ‘negative polarity’, in (32)(a).
- (b) The connection, if any, between ‘negative polarity’ on the one hand and ‘sentential negation’ on the other.
- (c) The grammatical function of NIE (which intuitively serves as some sort of scope marker, an item which delimits the structural domain of ‘negative polarity’).
- (d) The grammatical similarities/differences between the NIE that is associated with sentential negation and the NIE that is associated with constituent negation.
- (e) The question whether [pol] represents an F-feature that is (exclusively) associated with verbs, or whether it (initially) enters a structure via the lexical selection of a negation word (or a negative-entailment item) (cf. notes 15 and 18).
- (f) The question whether the functional category Pol is exclusively associated with ‘negative polarity’, in other words, whether provision should also be made for the projection of a ‘positive counterpart’ in structures with a ‘positive polarity’.

To end, one further potential empirical problem should be noted. In all the examples of negative sentences that were presented in this paper, NIE appears in sentence-final position, which is the standard pattern in Afrikaans. But NIE can also occur in non-final position, as illustrated by the pairs of sentences in (34) and (35).

- (34)(a) *Niemand is afgestuur in daardie wedstryd NIE*
no-one was sent-off in that match not
‘No-one was sent off in that game’
- (b) *Hy wil nêrens heen gaan in die aand NIE*
he wants-to nowhere to go in the evening not
‘He doesn’t want to go anywhere in the evenings’
- (c) *Ek kon nie ’n oplossing kry vir die probleem NIE*
I could not a solution get for the problem not
‘I couldn’t find a solution for the problem’

- (d) *Sy het niks gesê op die vergadering NIE*
 she has nothing said at the meeting not
 'She said nothing at the meeting'
- (e) *Niemand is beseer in die aanval NIE*
 no-one was hurt in the attack not
 'No-one was hurt in the attack'
- (35)(a) *Niemand is afgestuur NIE in daardie wedstryd*
 (b) *Hy wil nêrens heen gaan NIE in die aand*
 (c) *Ek kon nie 'n oplossing kry NIE vir die probleem*
 (d) *Sy het niks gesê NIE op die vergadering*
 (e) *Niemand is beseer NIE in die aanval*

The examples in (35) each have an 'extraposed' PP in sentence-final position, which is clearly problematical for the proposed analysis of NIE (cf. the hypotheses in (32)(b, c)).¹⁹ This problem, like the questions in (33), is left here as a topic for further investigation. It should however be noted that the problem posed by the examples in (35) is not confined to negative sentences. As the examples in (36) show, PP's can apparently occur freely in different structural positions in positive sentences as well. As far as could be ascertained, a proper account of this phenomenon has not yet been presented within the Minimalist Program, at least not for Afrikaans.

- (36)(a) *Sy het op die vergadering iets gesê*
 she has at the meeting something said
 'She said something at the meeting'
- (b) *Sy het iets op die vergadering gesê*
 (c) *Sy het iets gesê op die vergadering*

NOTES

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1. In addition to sentential negation, as in (1)–(5), the final *nie* is also found with constituent negation in Afrikaans, that is, in cases where a specific phrase is negated by means of a negation word. This is illustrated by the examples in (i).

- (i)(a) *Hy sit altyd op die bank, [nooit op die stoel NIE]* (PP negated)
 he sits always on the sofa, never on the chair not
 'He always sits on the sofa, never on the chair'
- (b) *Die man, [nie die vrou NIE], het vir my gebel* (NP negated)
 'The man, not the woman not, has for me telephoned
 'The man phoned me, not the woman'
- (c) *Hulle is gesond, maar [nie baie fiks NIE]* (AP negated)
 they are healthy, but not very fit not
 'They're healthy, but not very fit'

The syntax of constituent negation falls outside the scope of this paper and will not be considered further here.

2. See Haegeman 1995 and the references cited there; see also Hornstein 1995 and Langer 1995.
3. But see also Robbers 1992. For general, non-generative, descriptions of negation in Afrikaans see Ponelis 1979; Donaldson 1993. See e.g. Den Besten 1986 in connection with the origin of the 'double negative' in Afrikaans.
4. The overview in section 2 is based primarily on Chomsky 1994, 1995; and Zwart 1997. See also Bennis 1994, 1995; Broekhuis & Den Dikken 1993; Cook & Newson 1996: ch. 9; Epstein, Thráinsson & Zwart 1996; Marantz 1995; Radford 1997; Taraldsen 1996; Zwart 1993.
5. See Zwart 1997: 160-173 for the proposal that phonological features are only added after Spell-Out, in a post-syntactic PF-component Morphology.
6. It is assumed for the purposes of this paper that the F- and LC-features associated with a phrase XP are always moved as a whole during overt movement of XP; see Zwart 1997: 186ff.
7. See Zwart 1997: 157-159, 202-204.

8. See Zwart 1993 and Hoekstra & Zwart 1994 for the proposal that C(P) is split into the two functional categories Wh(P) and Top(P); see Oosthuizen 1996 for an application of this proposal in the analysis of word order phenomena in Afrikaans wh-questions. It is also generally accepted in the literature that NP forms part of the functional category DP (Determiner Phrase). For ease of exposition these two proposals will not be implemented here.
9. See Kayne 1993; Chomsky 1994: 25-31; Bennis 1995.
10. See Zwart 1997: 136-146, 204-205.
11. It is possible in non-standard varieties of Afrikaans (including Colloquial Afrikaans) for an embedded sentence that is introduced by an overt complementiser to have the surface SVO order associated with subject initial main clauses. For examples and discussion see Robbers 1997 and the references cited there. It is not clear exactly how this phenomenon can be accounted for within the minimalist framework outlined in this section. See Zwart 1997: 234-241 for an analysis of similar embedded verb second phenomena in Yiddish, Icelandic, Mainland Scandinavian and Frisian.
12. A sentence like (12)(a) *Sy sluit (nooit) die deur nie* is acceptable without the negation word (i.e. the time adverbial *nooit*), but then the *nie* functions as a negation word, with the sentence expressing a meaning that can be paraphrased roughly as 'She *definitely* doesn't lock the door', that is, without a time indication.
13. See e.g. Pollock 1989.
14. A possibility that could be considered here is to postulate a functional category *Focus* above AgrOP, which overtly attracts a substantive category with the F-feature [+ focus]. See Langer 1995 for an analysis of 'scrambling' phenomena in German in terms of the feature [focus].
15. Although the examples in (24) do not contain any negation words, they all entail negative expressions. For example, (c) implies that he *hasn't* got much experience and (d) that I will *not* help you. In each case the negative entailment can be traced to a specific item, viz. *onmoontlik*, *nouliks*, *weinig*, *verniet*, *kwalik*, and *skaars*, respectively. For ease of reference these items may be termed 'negative-entailment items' (or 'entailment-reversing items'). The differences/similarities between negative-entailment items and negation words such as *nooit*, *nie*, *niks*, *geen*, etc. will not be investigated in this paper. See e.g. Hoeksema (n.d.) and the references cited there for discussion of entailment-reversing items in Dutch and English.
16. A functional category like DP (see note 8) can of course occur to the right under the VP as the complement of a transitive V. But such a structure is the result of Merge, whereas the type of structure under discussion concerns the projection of a functional category on the basis of the F-feature composition of a V (or possibly a negation word). DP is projected on the basis of the F-features of a substantive category lower down in the

structure (i.e. contained within the DP), after which the DP is merged with a categorial head, e.g. V.

17. This conclusion follows irrespective of where in the structure X is projected, that is, it also holds if X appears above T(P), Neg(P), Agr(P) or C(P).
18. This hypothesis raises two important questions. First, which substantive category serves as the initial 'source' of the F-feature [pol], in other words, as part of which category's feature composition is [pol] introduced into the computational system? One possibility might be that [pol] represents an F(v), so that it enters the derivation via the lexical selection of a verb; (28) is formulated in terms of this possibility. Another possibility might be for [pol] to be introduced via the selection of a negation word (or a negative-entailment item like *nouliks*, *weinig*, *kwalik*, etc. as in (24); see note 15); [pol] could then be 'picked up' at the appropriate functional category during overt head-to-head movement of F(v), e.g. by adjoining F(v) to the functional head Neg in the course of the derivation. Although [pol] is referred to as an F-feature that is associated with verbs in (28) and in the rest of the discussion (i.e. the first possibility mentioned above), this is done purely for the sake of convenience. The essential aspects of the analysis below would also hold if [pol] is combined with F(v) at a later stage of the derivation (as expressed by the second possibility). The second question raised by the hypothesis (28) concerns the exact content of the notion 'negative polarity sentence' on the one hand, and the relationship, if any, between sentential negation and 'negative polarity' on the other hand. These questions will not be investigated further here.
19. As shown by the examples in (i), sentences like those in (35) can also occur with a final NIE, that is, with two NIE's (see also (23) for similar examples). It is not clear whether/how this phenomenon relates to the problem under discussion.
 - (i)(a) *Niemand is afgestuur NIE in daardie wedstryd NIE*
 - (b) *Hy wil nêrens heen gaan NIE in die aand NIE*
 - (c) *Ek kon nie 'n oplossing kry NIE vir die probleem NIE*

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