

# A Twofold Classification of Expletive Negation

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## 1. Introduction

Expletive negation (EN) is commonly considered to be a unitary phenomenon cross-linguistically (Horn 1989; Van Der Wouden 1994; Makri 2013). I will provide empirical arguments to show that in fact EN consists of distinct subtypes and I will propose a twofold partition between *weak* and *strong* EN. Moreover, I will propose an analysis of a specific case of EN in Italian I dubbed “*Surprise Negation Sentences*” showing that their properties are the result of interaction of independent syntactic principles.

## 2. Defining properties of EN

EN is a widespread phenomenon occurring in several languages. Roughly speaking, in EN clauses a negative marker does not reverse the truth-value conditions of the proposition. However, the properties of EN are much more complicated and heterogenous than that.

### 2.1. EN as a unitary phenomenon

From a semantic point of view, EN is a unitary phenomenon in which the negative operator (i) fails to reverse the polarity of the sentence and (ii) rejects *strong* negative polarity items (NPIs) (Zeijlstra 2004) and *not-also* conjunctions (Delfitto & Fiorin 2014). Consider, among other clauses (Greco 2018), two Italian EN structures: “*finché*” (“until”) clauses (1a-2a) (Renzi & Salvi 1991) and negative exclamatives (1b-2b) (Zanuttini & Portner 2003; Delfitto & Fiorin 2014)<sup>1</sup>.

- 1) a. Rimarrai      qui finché non    avrai      (\**affatto*) capito      quello che ti  
    stay.2<sup>nd</sup>SG.FUT here until    not<sub>EN</sub> have.2<sup>nd</sup>SG.FUT at all    understood what    that CL.to you  
    ho            detto.  
    have.1<sup>st</sup>SG said  
    ‘You will stay here until you will have understood what I said to you.’
- b. Che cosa non    ha      (\**affatto*) capito      Gianni!  
    what    not<sub>EN</sub> have.3<sup>rd</sup>SG at all    understood John  
    ‘What has John understood!’ (= John understood everything!)

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<sup>1</sup> Italian displays the same negative marker “*non*” (“not”) for both standard and expletive negation. I will indicate the former with the label “not<sub>SN</sub>” (Standard Negation) and the latter with the label “not<sub>EN</sub>” (Expletive Negation).

- 2) a. Rimarra*i* qui finché non avrai finito gli esercizi *e anche/\*ne-anche*<sup>2</sup>  
 stay.2<sup>nd</sup>SG.FUT here until not<sub>EN</sub> have.2<sup>nd</sup>SG.FUT finished the exercises and also not-also  
 il grafico.  
 the chart  
 ‘You will stay here until you will have finished the exercises and the chart.’
- b. Che cosa non ha fatto Gianni *e anche/\*ne-anche* Luca!  
 what not<sub>EN</sub> have.3<sup>rd</sup>SG done John and also not-also Luke  
 ‘What has John done and Luke either!’ (= John done everything and Luke did either)

Both until-clauses and negative exclamative do not allow strong NPIs and not-also conjunctions. Before going any further, it is worth spending few words on the nature of these elements.

NPIs are polarity objects requiring a particular semantic and syntactic context in order to be elicited (Giannakidou 1997-2011; Chierchia 2013; Collins & Postal 2014): they can be either *strong* or *weak* depending on whether they are licensed by an anti-veridical operator within a local syntactic domain, or not. Let us focus on a particular property of the strong types: they compulsorily require negation in order to be elicited witness the Italian minimizer “*un tubo*” (lit. “a tube”) and the adverb “*affatto*” (“at all”).

- 3) Luca *\*(non)* capisce *affatto / un tubo*.  
 Luke not<sub>SN</sub> understands at all a tube  
 ‘Luke does not understand at all.’

Consider now *not-also* conjunctions. Like strong-NPIs, these conjunctions require negation to be legitimated (Delfitto & Fiorin 2014):

- 4) Gianni *\*(non)* ha capito *e neanche* Luca.  
 John not<sub>SN</sub> has understood and not-also Luke  
 ‘John did not understand and Luke did not either.’

Crucially, as (1-2) show, EN structures reject strong-NPIs and not-also conjunctions even though they display the same negative marker “*non*” (“not”). We can therefore consider those elements as the diagnostics for EN.

## 2.2. A twofold partition of EN

Consider now the relation between EN clauses and other two negative-sensitive constructions, i.e. *weak-NPIs* like “*alzare un dito*” (“to lift a finger”) and post-verbal *n-words* like “*n-essuno*” (“nobody”): *until*-clauses license them (5a-6a), whereas negative exclamatives do not (5b-6b).

- 5) a. Rimarra*i* qui finché non avrai *alzato un dito* per aiutar-mi.  
 stay.2<sup>nd</sup>SG.FUT here until not<sub>EN</sub> have.2<sup>nd</sup>SG.FUT lifted a finger to help-me  
 ‘You will stay here until you will have lifted a finger to help me.’
- b. \*Chi non ha *alzato un dito* per aiutar-mi! (Grammatical if interrogative)  
 who not<sub>EN</sub> have.3<sup>rd</sup>SG lifted a finger to to.help-me
- 6) a. Rimarra*i* qui finché non arriverà *nessuno* ad aiutar-mi.  
 stay.2<sup>nd</sup>SG.FUT here until not<sub>EN</sub> come.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.FUT nobody to help-me  
 ‘You will stay here until someone comes to help me.’
- b. \*Che cosa non ha fatto *nessuno* per aiutar-mi!  
 what not<sub>EN</sub> have.3<sup>rd</sup>SG done nobody to help-me

<sup>2</sup> In order to increase the readability of the sentences, I leave the correspondent affirmative form of “*ne-anche*” (“not-also”), i.e. “*anche*” (“also”), which is absolutely fine with EN clauses (cfr. Delfitto & Fiorin 2014).

Weak NPIs are polarity items but, unlike strong-NPIs, they do not compulsorily require negation to be elicited. They just need *downward entailing* contexts, such as affirmative questions and affirmative protasis of conditionals as well as negative sentences. This is the case of the Italian idiomatic expressions “*alzare un dito*” (“to lift a finger”) and “*aver la più pallida idea*” (“to have the faintest idea”):

- 7) a. Luca *non* ha *alzato un dito* per aiutare Maria. (Negation)  
 Luke not<sub>SN</sub> has lifted a finger to help Mary  
 ‘Luke did not lift a finger to help Mary.’  
 b. Luca ha *alzato un dito* per aiutare Maria? (Question)  
 ‘Has Luke lifted a finger to help Mary?’  
 c. Se Luca avesse *alzato un dito* per aiutare Maria... (Conditional)  
 ‘If Luke had lifted a finger to help Mary...’  
 8) a. Luca *non* ha *la più pallida idea* di come fare. (Negation)  
 Luke not<sub>SN</sub> has the most faintest idea of how to do  
 ‘Luke does not have the faintest idea of how he could do it.’  
 b. Luca ha *la più pallida idea* di come fare? (Question)  
 ‘Does Luke have the faintest idea of how he could do it?’  
 c. Se Luca avesse *la più pallida idea* di come fare... (Conditional)  
 ‘If Luke had the faintest idea of how he could do it...’

Crucially, as (5-6) show, Italian ENs display different behaviors when we consider weak NPIs and n-words: some allow them and some others do not. We can wonder whether this pattern is consistent in all the other Italian EN clauses, i.e. negative rhetorical questions (Han 2002); not...that-clauses (unnoticed case); rather than-clauses (Espinal 2000); before-clauses (Donati 2000); who knows-clauses (Renzi & Salvi 1991); unless-clauses (Makri 2013); indirect Interrogatives (Donati 2000); and comparative clauses (Napoli & Nestor 1976). Since all EN structures do not allow strong-NPIs and not-also conjunctions (§2.1), in the next session I will just pick one of these phenomena, focusing on weak NPIs and n-words.

### 2.2.1. EN clauses that do not license weak-NPIs and n-words<sup>3</sup>

#### i) Negative Rhetorical Questions<sup>4</sup>:

- 9) a. Dopo tutto, che cosa non ha (\**affatto*) fatto Gianni per aiutare Maria?  
 after all what not has at all done John for help Mary  
 ‘What has John done to help Mary?’  
 b. Dopo tutto, chi non ha *alzato un dito* per aiutare Maria?  
 after all who not has lifted a finger for help Mary  
 i. #‘After all, who has lifted a finger to help Mary?’ (#EN)  
 ii. ‘After all, who has not lifted a finger to help Mary?’ (SN)  
 c. Dopo tutto, chi non ha aiutato *nessuno*?  
 after all who not has helped nobody  
 i. #‘After all, who has helped someone?’ (#EN)  
 ii. ‘After all, who has not helped anyone?’ (SN)

<sup>3</sup> In the next two sections I will just list the Italian ENs. See Greco (2017-2018) for a detailed analysis.

<sup>4</sup> As we know (see the previous note), Italian display the same negative marker “*non*” (“not”) for both standard and expletive negation. Since some of the following sentences yield grammaticality when *not* is interpreted as standard, I will indicate the unavailability of the expletive reading by means of the special diacritic #. When both standard and expletive interpretation are ungrammatical, I will mark it by the usual diacritic \*.

ii) *Not...that*-clauses:

- 10) a. Maria non ha (\**affatto*) partecipato che all'inizio della lezione.  
 Mary not has at all participated that at-the beginning of-the class  
 'Mary participated at the class, but just at the beginning.'  
 b. \*Maria non ha *alzato un dito* che all'inizio.  
 Mary not has lifted a finger that at-the beginning  
 c. \*Maria non ha letto *niente* che all'inizio della lezione.  
 Mary not has read nothing that at-the beginning of-the class

iii) *Rather than*-clauses:

- 11) a. Preferisco studiare tutta notte piuttosto che non uscire (\**affatto*) con te.  
 prefer.1<sup>st</sup>SG.PRS to.study all night rather than not to.go-out at all with you  
 'I prefer studying all night long rather than going out with you.'  
 b. Preferisco studiare tutta notte piuttosto che non avere la *più pallida idea* di come  
 prefer.1<sup>st</sup>SG.PRS to.study all night rather than not to have the most faint idea of how  
 risolvere il problema.  
 to.solve the problem  
 i. # 'I prefer studying all night long rather than having the faintest idea of how to solve the  
 problem.' (#EN)  
 ii. 'I prefer studying all night long rather than not having the faintest idea of how to solve the  
 problem.' (SN)  
 c. Preferisco studiare tutta notte piuttosto che non uscire con *nessuno*.  
 prefer.1<sup>st</sup>SG.PRS to.study all night rather than not to.go-out with nobody  
 i. # 'I prefer studying all night long rather than going out with someone.' (#EN)  
 ii. 'I prefer studying all night long rather than going out with nobody.' (SN)

iv) *Before*-clauses:

- 12) a. Avverti-la prima che non le succeda (\**affatto*) qualcosa.  
 let know.2<sup>nd</sup>SG.IMP-CL-her before that not CL.to her happen.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV at all something  
 'Let her know before something bad happens to her.'  
 b. Avverti-la prima che non abbia *la più pallida idea* di come fare.  
 let know.2<sup>nd</sup>SG.IMP-CL-her before that not has.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV the most faint idea of how to.do  
 i. # 'Let her know before she has the faintest idea how to do it.' (#EN)  
 ii. 'Let her know before she does not have the faintest idea how to do it.' (SN)  
 c. Avverti-la prima che non trovi *nessuno*.  
 let know.2<sup>nd</sup>SG.IMP-CL-her before that not find.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV nobody  
 i. # 'Let her know before she finds someone.' (#EN)  
 ii. 'Let her know before she does not find anybody.' (SN)

2.2.2. *EN clauses that do license weak-NPIs and n-words*i) *Who knows*-clauses:

- 13) a. Chissà che Luca non mi aiuti (\**affatto*)!  
 who-knows that Luke not CL.me help.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV at all  
 'Who knows whether Luke will help me!  
 b. Chissà che Luca non *alzi un dito* per aiutar-mi.  
 who-knows that Luke not lift.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV a finger to help-me  
 'Who knows whether Luke lifted a finger to help me!' (EN)  
 c. Chissà che Luca non aiuti *nessuno*!  
 who-knows that Luke not help.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV nobody  
 'Who knows whether Luke helped someone!' (EN)

ii) *Unless*-clauses:

- 14) a. Il vaso si romperà completamente a meno che Gianni non lo aggiusti (\**affatto*).  
 the vase CL.it break.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.FUT completely unless that John not CL.it fix.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV at all  
 ‘The vase will completely break unless John fixed it.’
- b. Il vaso si romperà completamente a meno che Gianni non *alzi un dito*  
 the vase CL.it break.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.FUT completely unless that John not 3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV a finger  
 per aggiustar-lo.  
 to to.fix-it  
 ‘The vase will completely break unless John lifted a finger to fix it.’ (EN)
- c. Il vaso si romperà completamente a meno che non lo aggiusti *nessuno* prima.  
 the vase CL.it break.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.FUT completely unless that not CL.it fix.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV nobody first  
 ‘The vase will completely break unless someone fixed it first.’ (EN)

iii) *Indirect Interrogative*-clauses:

- 15) a. Paolo si chiede se Maria non abbia (\**affatto*) aiutato Gianni.  
 Paul CL.to himself wonders whether Mary not have.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV at all helped John  
 ‘Paul wonders whether Mary helped John.’
- b. Paolo si chiede se Maria non abbia *alzato un dito* per aiutare Gianni  
 Paul CL.to himself wonders whether Mary not have.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV lifted a finger to help John  
 ‘Paul wonders whether Mary had lifted a finger to help John.’ (EN)
- c. Paolo si chiede se Maria non abbia aiutato *nessuno* all’*esame*  
 Paul CL.to himself wonders whether Mary not have.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV helped nobody to-the exam  
 ‘Paul wonders whether Mary helped someone during the exam’ (EN)

iv) *Comparative*-clause (Napoli & Nestor 1976):

- 16) a. Maria ha mangiato più mele di quante non ne abbia (\**affatto*) mangiate G.  
 Mary has eaten more apples of than not CL.them have.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV at all eaten J.  
 ‘Mary has eaten more apples than John has eaten.’
- b. Maria ha mangiato più mele di quante non ne abbia *mai* mangiate G.<sup>5</sup>  
 Mary has eaten more apples of than not CL.them have.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV never eaten J.  
 ‘Mary has eaten more apples than John has ever eaten.’ (EN)
- c. Maria ha mangiato più mele di quante non ne abbia mangiate *nessun* altro.  
 Mary has eaten more apples of than not CL.them have.3<sup>rd</sup>SG.SBJV eaten nobody also  
 ‘Mary has eaten more apples than anybody else’. (EN)

In order to have a comprehensive overview, I will indicate the relation with the four negative polarity constructions (weak-NPIs, strong-NPIs, not-also conjunction, and n-words) for each Italian EN clause in the table A: the diacritic + indicates that the syntactic element at the top of the column is legitimated in a specific EN structure; the diacritic – indicates that it is not.

<sup>5</sup> In this case I use a different weak-NPI, “*mai*” (“ever”). See Greco (2017-2018) for a detailed discussion.

	Weak-NPIs	Strong-NPIs	Not-also	N-words
Until-clauses	+	–	–	+
Who knows-clauses	+	–	–	+
Unless-clauses	+	–	–	+
Indirect-Interrogatives	+	–	–	+
Comparative-clauses	+	–	–	+
Negative Exclamatives	–	–	–	–
Rhetorical Questions	–	–	–	–
Not...that- clauses	–	–	–	–
Rather than-clauses	–	–	–	–
Before-clauses	–	–	–	–

Table A: This matrix combines 4 syntactic constructions with 10 types of EN clauses

All EN clauses reject strong-NPIs and not-also conjunction (bold area). However, with regards to weak-NPIs and N-words, two groups can be discriminated: one in which they are legitimate (light grey area) and one in which they are not (dark grey area). I will label the first class *weak* EN and the second one *strong* EN, since the former maintains some features of standard negation (i.e. they allow weak-NPIs and n-words) whereas the latter does not. Crucially, strong EN instantiates a natural class within the EN one, in which all members have a negative value.

Notice that this partition challenges the view of EN as a unitary phenomenon. Moreover, it raises several questions at different levels of interpretation among which one can isolate the following: (i) what are the syntactic contexts where negation receives its vacuous interpretation? (ii) Is EN a phenomenon grammatically distinct from standard negation or are they the same one? I will approach these issues by analyzing a specific case of Italian EN clause, i.e. Surprise Negation Sentences (Greco & Moro 2015a-b; Greco 2017-2018).

### 3. Surprise Negation Sentences: a puzzling case study

Consider the following sentence:

- 17) E *non* mi è (\*affatto) scesa dal treno Maria?!  
 and not<sub>EN CL.</sub> to me is at all got off-the train Mary  
 ‘Mary got off the train!’

The meaning of (17) could be fully paraphrased by means of the inverse copular sentence (Moro 1997) ‘The surprise is that Mary got off the train’. The sentence is affirmative regardless of the occurrence of the negative marker *not* and, therefore, it has to be considered an EN clause (as a proof, it does not allow the strong NPI *at all*). Pragmatically, sentences like (17) are limited to a restricted context in which speakers are struck by a surprised fact – hence, the label “Surprise” – and they want to communicate it. Since Snegs display a marked intonation blending the acoustic features pertaining to both questions and exclamatives, they show the combined diacritic “?!”. They are usually introduced by an *expletive* “e” (“and”) (Poletto 2005) and they host the *Ethical Dative* in the form of “*mi/ti*” (“to me/to you”). Snegs displays some other heterogenous properties as well. Let us briefly consider them.

### 3.1. Some defining properties

(i) Snegs are *strong ENs* and, therefore, they do not trigger weak-NPIs and n-words:

- 18) a. \*E Gianni non mi ha *alzato un dito* per aiutar-ti?!  
 and John not<sub>EN</sub> CL.to me have.3<sup>rd</sup>SG lifted a finger to help-you  
 b. \*E non mi è sceso dal treno *nessuno* ?!  
 and not<sub>EN</sub> CL.to me be.3<sup>rd</sup>SG got off-the train nobody

(ii) Snegs host *topicalized* phrases (Rizzi 1997) but not the *focalized* ones<sup>6</sup>:

- 19) a. E *il libro* Gianni non me *lo* ha dato a Luca?! (Topic)  
 and the book John not<sub>EN</sub> CL.to me CL.it have.3<sup>rd</sup>SG given to Luke  
 ‘The book, John gave it to Luke!’  
 b. \*E LA PENNA Gianni non mi ha dato a Luca (non il libro)?! (\*Foc)  
 and the pen John not<sub>EN</sub> CL.to me has given to Luke not the book

(iii) Snegs do not host *Wh*-elements (20a) or quantificational elements, like “*nessuno*” (“nobody”) in subject position (20b):

- 20) a. \*E da quale treno non ti è scesa Maria?!<sup>7</sup>  
 and from which train not<sub>EN</sub> CL.to you is got Mary  
 b. \*E *nessuno* mi è sceso dal treno?!  
 and nobody CL.to me is got off to-the train

(iv) The whole proposition in Snegs conveys completely new information. This appears clear when Snegs are used as answers to a particular class of questions I dubbed “*Propositional Questions*”. The content of the variable in propositional questions is an event and not just an entity and this is the reason why the answer to them can only be a whole sentence and not just a bare DP/PP:

- 21) A: ‘You seem shocked, what happened?’  
 B: ‘I met Mary at the train station’  
 B’: \*‘Mary’

The whole sentence in (21B) is both the congruent answer required by the question and the source of the new information, whereas the bare DP in (21B’) is not sufficient. On the contrary, with the label “*Entity Questions*” I call the ones in which the content of the variable is a single entity (grammaticalized as a DP, PP, etc.) and not an event. In these cases, the congruent answer can be realized by a bare DP:

- 22) A: ‘You seem shocked, whom did you meet at the train station?’  
 B: ‘Mary’

Crucially, Snegs are coherent answers to Propositional questions but not to the Entity ones, confirming the fact that the whole sentence is the source of the new information:

<sup>6</sup> The topicalized phrase is signaled by the co-reference with the resumptive clitic *lo* in a left dislocated structure (see Cecchetto 1999); the contrastive focalized phrase is signaled by both the uppercase and the contrasted information in bracket.

<sup>7</sup> This sentence may seem grammatical to some Italian native speakers because it easily interpreted as a rhetorical negative question (cfr. Greco 2018).

- 23) A: Sembri sconvolto, cos'è successo? (Propositional Questions)  
 'You seem shocked, what happened?'  
 B: Non ti ho incontrato Maria in stazione?!  
 not<sub>EN</sub> CL.to you have.1<sup>st</sup>SG met Mary in station  
 'I met Mary at the train station!'

- 24) A: Sembri sconvolto, chi hai incontrato in stazione? (Entity Questions)  
 'You seem shocked, whom did you meet at the train station?'  
 B: \*Non ti ho incontrato Maria in stazione?!  
 not<sub>EN</sub> CL.to you have.1<sup>st</sup>SG met Mary in station

(v) Snegs support presuppositional negative elements like *mica* (Cinque 1976):

- 25) E non mi è *mica* scesa dal treno Maria?!  
 and not<sub>EN</sub> CL.to me is neg got off-the train Mary  
 'The surprise is that Mary got off the train and this was in contrast with my expectation!'

(vi) Snegs display particular scope interactions. The Italian negative marker *not* usually interacts with high adverbs like “*deliberatamente*” (“deliberately”) (Cinque 1999) either scoping over it or going under its scope (26a); crucially, both these readings are ruled out in the correspondent Sneg clause (26b):

- 26) a. Luca non ha *deliberatamente* fatto cadere la penna.  
 Luke not<sub>SN</sub> has deliberately made to.drop the pen  
 i. 'Luke deliberately did not drop the pen.' (deliberately...not)  
 ii. 'Luke dropped the pen not-deliberately.' (not...deliberately)
- b. E Luca non mi ha *deliberatamente* fatto cadere la penna?!  
 and Luke not<sub>EN</sub> CL.to me has deliberately made to.drop the pen  
 i. '#Luke deliberately did not drop the pen!' (#deliberately...not)  
 ii. '#Luke dropped the pen not-deliberately!' (#not...deliberately)  
 iii. 'Luke deliberately dropped the pen!'

To sum up, we considered some heterogenous properties of Snegs: (i) Snegs are *strong* ENs (no NPIs, not-also conjunctions, n-words); (ii) Snegs host topicalized phrases, but not the focalized ones; (iii) Snegs cannot host *Wh*-elements and the Q-raising quantifiers; (iv) the whole proposition in Snegs conveys completely new and unexpected information allowing them to be answer to Propositional Questions; (v) Snegs host presuppositional negative elements, like “*mica*”; (vi) the negative marker in Snegs does not interact with high adverbs like *deliberately*; (vii) Snegs are introduced by elements considered as expletive (ex. the conjunction “*e*”; see 17). In the next section I will propose that all these properties are just consequences of the interaction of independent syntactic principles.

### 3.2. A structural analysis of Snegs

It is possible to derive all the phenomena in (i-vii) in a unitary way by proposing that: (i) the Italian negative marker “*non*” (“*not*”), generally assumed to be externally merged above the TP (Belletti 1990; Zanuttini 1996-1997; Poletto 2008) in the v\*P-phase, can also be externally merged in the CP-domain (à la Laka 1990) after the v\*P-phase; (ii) the entire TP is raised to Spec-Foc<sup>o</sup> because it carries an uninterpretable [+Foc] feature:

- 27) [CP ... [x<sup>o</sup> non ] ... [TP Foc<sup>o</sup> [... t<sub>TP</sub> ...]]  
 ↑

Let us analyze this proposal step by step, showing how it can derive the Snegs' properties seen above.



(i) *Snegs are strong ENs (no weak/strong NPIs, not-also conjunction and n-words)*: according to Zeijlstra (2004) and Giannakidou (2011), a negative operator must bind all free variables in the vP domain in order to allow them. If there is not an available negative operator, as in affirmative clauses, or if the v\*P is already closed when negation is merged, as in the Snegs case, then this kind of binding fails and all negative operator-variable structures are excluded. Consider, for example, the case of n-words: when negation is in the same phase, as in a standard negation clause, the sentence is grammatical (28a); when negation is a different phase, as in Sneg, the sentence is ungrammatical (I repeat 18b as 28b)<sup>8</sup>:

- 28) a. [v\*P \*(non) è sceso dal treno nessuno]]. (Standard negation)  
       not<sub>SN</sub> is got off-the train nobody  
       ‘Nobody got off the train.’  
   b. \* [CP E non [v\*P mi è sceso dal treno nessuno]]?! (Sneg)  
       and not<sub>EN</sub> CL.to me is got off-the train nobody

(ii) *Snegs host presuppositional negative elements, like “mica”*. The fact that “non” (“not”) is merged in the CP-domain and v\*P phase is closed, implies that the contribution of “non” to the interpretation of the sentence regards the focal properties, affecting the left periphery rather than the thematic relations established within the VP. Moreover, in the spirit of Benincà (1996), I want to suggest that this is also the reason why Snegs support presuppositional negative elements like “mica”, which affects the left periphery too.

(iii) *The negative marker in Snegs do not interact with high adverbs*: according to Mizuno (2010), Edelstein (2012) and Giorgi (2016), adverbs like *deliberately* are base generated in the v\*P-phase and, negation cannot interact with them if it is generated in the CP-phase when the v\*P is already closed.

(iv) *Snegs host topicalized elements but not the focalized ones*: if in Snegs the [Spec, FocP] is already occupied by TP, there is no more space for other focalized elements. In fact, according to Rizzi (1997), Italian displays only one focus projection. On the contrary, the topicalized elements can occur in Snegs because topic projections are available in the CP.

(v) *Snegs cannot host Wh-elements*: according to Rizzi (1997), *Wh-elements* compete for the same [Spec, FocP] position with the focalized ones; as with other focalized elements (see *iv*), if [Spec, FocP] is already occupied by TP in Snegs, then there is not an available space for them.

(vi) *Snegs are introduced by expletive “e” (“and”)*. According to Poletto (2005), expletive *and* is a Topic marker “parasitic of an already existing CP layer” and, therefore, it precedes it. She proposes the following syntactic representation:

- 29) [<sub>TopicP</sub> (Null) TopP [<sub>Topic0</sub> e [<sub>TopicP</sub> [CP]]]]

Moreover, quoting her words, “It would be tempting to assume that *e* can only represent the continuation of a Topic if there is a Focus layer active” (p. 230). This independently support the analysis of Snegs in which the occurrence of expletive *and* is preferred although optional (I repeat here 17 as 30):

- 30) [<sub>Top0</sub> E [non [<sub>focP</sub> [mi è scesa dal treno Maria]<sub>TP</sub> [Foc°] ... [<sub>tTP</sub>]]]]?!  
       ‘Maria got off the train!’

(vii) *The whole proposition in Snegs conveys completely new and unexpected information allowing them to be answer to Propositional Questions*. According to O valle & Guerzoni (2004) and Brunetti (2004), what carries new information in answers to questions moves to a fronted position occupying the [Spec, FocP] in the CP-domain. Consider the following dialog:

<sup>8</sup> For the sake of clearness, I underline the phases and not the phrasal derivation.

31) A: Che cosa ha vinto Gianni?

‘What did John win?’

B: [[<sub>FocP</sub> [Una maglietta]<sub>j</sub>] [<sub>TP</sub> ha vinto Gianni [<sub>t<sub>j</sub>]]  
           a shirt                   has won John  
 ‘John won a shirt’</sub>

The fact that *Snegs* can be used as answers to Propositional Questions, i.e. those having an event – not just an entity – as the content of the variable, confirm that their predicate is focalized as the analysis in (27) assumes (I repeat the sentence 23B as 32B):

32) A: Sembri sconvolto, cos’è successo?

(Propositional Questions)

‘You seem shocked, what happened?’

B: [<sub>CP</sub> Non [<sub>FocP</sub> [<sub>TP</sub> ti ho incontrato Maria in stazione] [<sub>Foc</sub><sup>o</sup>] [<sub>t<sub>TP</sub>]]]?!  
 ‘I met Mary at the train station!’</sub>

#### 4. Concluding remarks

In this talk I provided empirical arguments to show that in fact expletive negation consists of distinct subtypes and I proposed a twofold partition between *weak* and *strong*. More specifically, by investigating Italian, I showed that weak expletive negations structures maintain some features typically associated to standard negation (for example, they allow weak-NPIs and n-words) whereas strong expletive negation structures do not, forming a natural class within.

By concentrating on an instantiation of expletive negation in Italian (Greco & Moro 2015a-b; Greco 2017-2018) I proposed that the Italian negative marker “*non*” (“not”) receives two interpretations depending on the syntactic context: first, when *not* is merged in the TP-area (Belletti 1990; Zanuttini 1996-1997; Frascarelli 2000) in the v\*P-phase, it receives the standard negative interpretation, i.e. it reverses the truth-value conditions of a sentence; second, when it is merged in the CP-area after the v\*P-phase, it receives the expletive interpretation manifested in *Snegs*.

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