Negation in MA: Two different negators but underlyingly the same
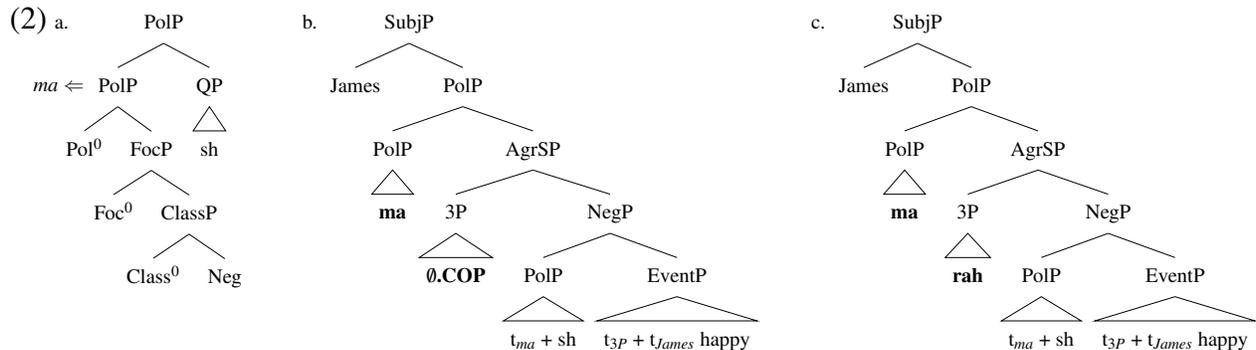
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A missing analysis: In Moroccan Arabic (MA), instances of the negator *mashi* in (1) has been proposed to be a constituent negator (De Clercq 2013 & 2020). Slime (2021) has argued that the negator in (1) is actually the discontinuous sentential negator *ma...sh* in (2). However, no analysis has been proposed to account for (1) and (2) while showing that both negators are derived from the same underlying negative structure.

(1) *James **mashi** farhan.*
James neg-$\emptyset$.cop-neg happy
'James is not happy.'

(2) *James **ma** rah **sh** farhan.*
James neg was neg happy
'James was not happy.'

Proposal: I argue that only a nanosyntactic account of negation (De Clercq 2020) can show that both negators are derived from the same underlying negative structure. De Clercq decomposes negation into the heads Pol^0(Polarity), Foc^0 (Focus), $Class^0$(Classifier), Q^0(Quantity). Each head instantiates a type of negation and they all combine to make up a negator. This decomposition allows us to propose that *ma* is composed of Pol^0, Foc^0, $Class^0$, and *sh* of Q^0. Merging these heads yields (2a). This featural breakdown of *ma* and *sh* is based on the fact that *ma*, historically, was the sentential negator in Arabic (Blau & Blau 2002). When Arabic entered stage II of Jespersen's cycle (Jespersen 1917), *ma* became deficient and most varieties of Arabic acquired a minimized form of the existential quantifier shaya [šayʔ]/'a thing', namely sh [š]/ shi [ši] (Lucas & Manfredi 2020). However, *sh* is not inherently negative because it cannot occur with NPIs in MA. Only *ma* co-occur with NPIs in MA, hence why *ma* carry the Neg feature but not *sh* (2a).

(2) a.
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            PolP
           /    \
ma ⇐   PolP      QP
       /   \      △
    Pol⁰   FocP   sh
          /    \
        Foc⁰   ClassP
              /     \
          Class⁰    Neg
```

b.
```
            SubjP
           /     \
       James      PolP
                 /    \
              PolP     AgrSP
               △      /    \
              ma     3P     NegP
                     |     /    \
                  ∅.COP  PolP   EventP
                        /   \    /    \
                   t_ma+sh  t_3P+t_James happy
```

c.
```
            SubjP
           /     \
       James      PolP
                 /    \
              PolP     AgrSP
               △      /    \
              ma     3P     NegP
                     |     /    \
                   rah   PolP   EventP
                        /   \    /    \
                   t_ma+sh  t_3P+t_James happy
```

The configurations in (2a) not only captures the compulsory presence of *ma* and *sh* for sentential negation in MA, but also allows us to capture the relationship between the negators in (1) and (2) without positing multiple NegP projections. My proposal accounts for (1) and (2) by proposing that *ma* has a polarity feature and the copular verb has a subject-verb-agreement feature (3P). The former must be checked by a polarity projection (PolP) that sits within the TP domain and the latter must be checked by a subject-agreement (AgrSP) projection that sits above NegP (De Clercq 2020). Once checked, *ma* moves to the Spec of PolP and 3P moves to the Spec of AgrSP (2b,c). The difference between (2b) and (2c) is that 3P spells out the past form of the copula ('rah\was') in (2c), while in (2b) 3P spells out the present form of the copula which is null, hence why *ma...sh* surfaces as *mashi*. Lastly, I assume that the subject moves to a SubjP position located between CP and TP (Cardinaletti 2004, Rizzi 2004). Other non-nanosyntactic accounts (Rowlett 1998, Benmamoun 2006, Bell 2004) don't decompose negation into a fine-grained structure which makes it hard to explain why the negator in (1) and (2) are underlyingly the same and, moreover, they often treat negators that show different surface forms as different.

Significance: (i) The above analysis for sentential negation in MA concludes that disimilar surface forms of negation are derived from the same underlying negative structure; (ii) This analysis is also

relevant from a diachronic perspective because it shows how *ma* acquires its missing feature/s to compensate for its deficiency and express sentence negation.

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