




Not-ACC-ing and not-NOM-that constructions: A Comparative Study of English and Italian Expletive Negation*

Sarah Rossi
Cristiano Chesi
Matteo Greco

IUSS Pavia

 0000-0003-2691-0662; sarah.rossi@iusspavia.it

 0000-0003-1935-1348; cristiano.chesi@iusspavia.it

 0000-0002-6144-8015; matteo.greco@iusspavia.it



© the authors

Received: September 9, 2024

Accepted: May 12, 2025

Advanced Publication: July 17, 2025

Published: September 26, 2025

Recommended citation: Rossi, Sarah, Chesi, Cristiano & Greco, Matteo. 2025. Not-ACC-ing and not-NOM-that constructions: A Comparative Study of English and Italian Expletive Negation. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics* 24(2): 133-169. <<https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/catjl.496>>

Abstract

This work describes and compares a relatively new construction in their Italian and English variants, namely *not-NOM-that* constructions and *not-ACC-ing* constructions respectively: *Non io che perdo le chiavi di casa per la seconda volta quest'anno* / *Not me losing my housekeys twice this year*. Despite the presence of a negative marker, these sentences retain an affirmative meaning, expressing irony, sarcasm, or self-deprecation (rephrased as 'It is ironic and surprising that I lost my housekeys twice this year'). They are predominantly used by younger generations on social media

* We are grateful to the audiences of the 33rd Colloquium on Generative Grammar (CGG33) and of the Workshop on Functional Categories, Dimensions of Meaning, and Expletiveness (FCDME2024), for their valuable feedback and discussion. We also thank the research group of the Centre de Lingüística Teòrica (CLT) at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona – particularly M. Teresa Espinal, Xavier Villalba, and Susagna Tubau – for their insightful comments and support. We also wish to thank the editors María Isabel Pérez Jiménez, Norberto Moreno Quibén, and Irene Areses Martínez, as well as to the two anonymous reviewers, for their constructive comments and suggestions, which helped us improve this work. All remaining errors are our own. This research was supported by: (i) the European Union – Next Generation EU, Mission 4, Component C2_CUP: I53D23006900001; (ii) the *PID2023-150347NB-I00* project funded by the Spanish Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación. Authors' contribution: Conceptualisation: Sarah Rossi, Matteo Greco. Corresponding author: Sarah Rossi. Writing – original draft: Sarah Rossi, Matteo Greco. Writing – review & editing: Sarah Rossi, Matteo Greco, Cristiano Chesi. Funding acquisition: Matteo Greco; Supervision: Matteo Greco.

and in informal speech. We compare the English construction with its Italian counterpart, focusing on their syntax. More specifically, we provide an in-depth structural analysis of English *not-ACC-ing* constructions claiming that they contain a focalized *Acc-ing* construction (in the sense of Lowe 2019) and Expletive Negation (following Greco 2020). We also claim that the main structural and semantic properties of Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions also derive from: (i) the presence of a high negation merged in the CP layer, (ii) the focalization of a whole chunk of structure.

Keywords: syntax; Expletive Negation; *Acc-ing* construction; colloquial Italian; colloquial English; social-media language

Resum. *Negació expletiva en varietats col·loquials de l'italià i de l'anglès: el cas de les construccions "not-ACC-ing"*

Aquest treball documenta i compara una construcció relativament nova en italià i en anglès, en concret, les construccions *not-ACC-ing* i *not-NOM-that* respectivament: *Not me losing my housekeys twice this year / Non io che perdo le mie chiavi di casa per la seconda volta quest'anno*. Malgrat la presència d'un marcador negatiu, aquestes frases conserven un significat afirmatiu, expressant ironia, sarcasme o autocrítica (parafrasejat com a 'és irònic i sorprenent que hagi perdut les meves claus de casa dues vegades aquest any'), i són utilitzades principalment per les generacions més joves a les xarxes socials i en el discurs informal. En aquest article comparem la construcció anglesa amb el seu equivalent italià i ens centrem en la seva sintaxi. Més concretament, proporcionem una anàlisi estructural de l'anglès combinant l'anàlisi de la construcció *Acc-ing* de Lowe (2019) i l'anàlisi de Greco (2020) de la negació expletiva. També afirmem que les principals propietats estructurals i semàntiques de les construccions *not-NOM-that* italianes també deriven de (i) la negació en el Sintagma Comp i (ii) la focalització d'un tros sencer d'estructura.

Paraules clau: sintaxi; negació expletiva; construcció *Acc-ing*; italià col·loquial; anglès col·loquial; llenguatge de xarxes socials

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	4. <i>Not-ACC-ing</i> constructions: a structural analysis
2. Structural properties of English <i>not-ACC-ing</i> constructions and Italian <i>not-NOM-that</i> constructions	5. A first approach to the syntax of Italian <i>not-NOM-that</i> constructions
3. Theoretical Background: Surprise Negation Sentences and <i>Acc-ing</i> constructions	6. Concluding remarks
	References

1. Introduction

If you happen to be an Italian (native) speaker, you might have come across a peculiar, relatively new construction which, to the best of our knowledge, has not been previously documented and analyzed. Superficially, it displays the following shape:

- (1) negative marker *non* + (mandatory) subject in nominative case + complementizer *che* 'that' + finite verbal form

Let us see a few examples:

- (2) Non io che perdo le chiavi di casa per la seconda
 not-NEG I-NOM that lose-PRES.IND.1SG the housekeys for the second
 volta quest'anno.
 time this year
 'Not me losing my housekeys twice this year.'
 Interpretation: It is ironic and surprising that I lost my housekeys twice this year.
- (3) Non io che mangio tutta la vaschetta di gelato
 not-NEG I-NOM that smile-PRES.IND.1SG all the tub of ice.cream
 da sola.
 by myself.
 'Not me eating the whole tub of icecream by myself.'
 Interpretation: It is ironic and surprising that I ate the whole tub of icecream by myself.

The main peculiarity of these sentences – and what makes them confusing to an unfamiliar ear – is that, despite displaying a negative marker, their polarity remains affirmative. In example (2), the speaker has indeed lost their housekeys. By uttering such a sentence, they intend to add a special flavor to the (invariably affirmative) propositional content. There is a sarcastic interpretation implying that what is being uttered goes beyond the usual state of affairs, in an unexpected/ironic/amusing way. Therefore, (2) could be paraphrased as follows: *it is ironic and surprising that I lost my housekeys twice this year*. Many of these constructions also carry a self-deprecating nuance.

For speakers unfamiliar with this type of construction, the intended meaning may not be immediately transparent, even for native speakers of Italian. This is particularly likely in the case of individuals belonging to generations older than Gen Z. These constructions are predominantly used by younger generations, primarily in written form on social media platforms and in private text-based communication, but also appear in spoken, colloquial Italian. Their productivity has drawn our attention, and we believe they merit further investigation. The sentences in (2) and (3) are based on the personal judgments of one of the authors. We now turn to a few ecologic examples, drawn from the social media platform X¹:

1. In the present section and the subsequent ones, we will present data and judgments drawn from both the existing literature and social media posts. Where not explicitly indicated, the English judgments were provided by our informants: two American women (aged 27 and 28), one Australian woman (aged 29), and one American man (aged 31). The same applies to the Italian judgments, with the distinction that no relevant works in the literature have yet addressed this matter, therefore the judgments come solely from social media and native speakers. The Italian judgments were also provided by an Italian young woman (aged 17) as well as by one of the authors (an Italian woman, aged 29).

- (4) Non io che posticipo un' uscita con amica
 not-NEG I-NOM that postpone-PRES.IND.1SG a meeting with friend
 perché non le ho ancora fatto
 because not-NEG to.her-CL-3SG.PL have-PRES.IND.1SG still made-PST.PRT
 il regalo di natale
 the present of Christmas
 'Not me postponing a meeting with a friend because I haven't gotten her a
 Christmas gift yet.'
 X post. Posted: December 19th 2024. Retrieved: December 22th 2024.
 ID: 1870042150735348181
- (5) non io che sto criticando ogni singola cosa
 not-NEG I-NOM that stay-PRES.IND.1SG criticize-GER every single thing
 dopo aver cenato con una platessa impanata sottomarca
 after have-INF dine-PSR.PRT with a plaice breaded off.brand
 #MasterChefIt
 #MasterChefIt
 'Not me criticizing every single thing after having dinner with an off-brand
 breaded plaice #MasterChefIt'
 X post. Posted: December 19th 2024. Retrieved: May 5th 2025.
 ID: 1869871356076065029
- (6) non io che mi accorgo solo adesso
 not-NEG I-NOM that me-REFL.1SG discover-PRES.IND.1SG only now
 di aver mandato fino ad ora mail per il lavoro con QUESTA foto
 to have sent until of now email for the work with THIS photo
 'Not me realizing that I have been sending emails for work with THIS photo
 until now.'²
 X post. Posted: December 5th 2024. Retrieved: December 22th 2024.
 ID: 1864710328736481410
- (7) Non io che il 14 d'agosto penso già alle
 Not-NEG I-NOM that on August 14th think-PRES.IND.1SG already of
 decorazioni per Halloween d'acquistare
 decorations for Halloween to buy
 'Not me thinking already of Halloween decorations on August 14th.'
 X post. Posted: August 14th 2024. Retrieved: August 30th 2024.
 ID: 1823645091090571488

2. The photo referenced in this post is a humorous image of a kitten taking a selfie. Use the X ID to retrieve the X post with the image.

- (8) non tu che rimarrai letteralmente senza
 Not-NEG you-2.SG.NOM that remain-FUT.IND.2SG literally without
 vestiti perché saranno miei
 clothes because will be mine
 ‘Not you literally running out of clothes because they will be all mine.’
 X post. Posted: August 14th 2024. Retrieved: August 30th 2024.
 ID: 1759353105118904805
- (9) non lei che cerca di farsi
 Not-NEG she-3.SG.NOM.FEM that try-PRES.IND.3SG to make.herself
 uscire le lacrime in tutti i modi #Temptationisland
 come.out the tears in all the ways
 ‘Not her trying to make herself cry in every possible way #Temptationisland’
 X post. Posted: July 24th 2024. Retrieved: December 22nd 2024.
 ID: 1816572633363759506
- (10) non noi che abbiamo scoperto di chi
 Not-NEG we-1.PL.NOM that have-PRES.IND.1PL discovered-PAST.PRT of who
 è la mano che tiene il cd
 is the hand that hold- PRES.IND.3SG the cd
 ‘Not us finding out whose hand is it that is holding the cd.’
 X post. Posted: May 21th 2024. Retrieved: September 1st 2024.
 ID: 1794479984368586827

Crucially, this type of construction is found in English as well, and it most likely emerged in English prior to Italian: in the literature, the English variant has been previously observed in Morris (2021) and Pereira (2023), who show that these structures are pervasive on social-media, and a structural analysis has been proposed in Rossi et al. (forthcoming, see section 4). They are also employed in oral, colloquial English, more frequently by younger people, but not necessarily. Consider, for example, the following English examples which share the same affirmative, sarcastic, self-deprecating interpretation as the previous Italian ones, and display a negative marker which does not act on polarity:

- (11) Not me having a solo dance party in my bathroom while brushing my teeth.
 (12) Not him falling off the couch.

(Examples from Pereira 2023: 3)

As it happens in Italian, (11) and (12) convey that what is being asserted is indeed happening. The speaker in (11) is dancing in the bathroom and in (12) someone fell off a couch. In (11), the speaker intends to convey that it is in fact strange but also funny that they are having a dance party in the bathroom while getting ready. In (12), it is strange, somewhat amusing and unexpected that someone fell off a couch. The main peculiarity of (11) and (12) is once again the sarcastic/ironic/unexpected/amusing/self-deprecating flavor they display.

The superficial structural make-up of the sentences we illustrated so far is exemplified in (13a). Compared to the Italian structure in (1), repeated below in (13c) for convenience, we notice that in both cases these constructions start with a negative marker. English displays an accusative subject followed by a non-finite gerund. Italian employees a nominative subject followed by the complementizer *che* ‘that’, together with a finite verbal form:

(13) English

- a. negative marker *not* + (mandatory) subject in accusative case + gerundive verbal form
- b. Not me falling off the couch.

Italian

- c. negative marker *non* + (mandatory) subject in nominative case + complementizer *che* ‘that’ + finite verbal form
- d. Non io che cado dal divano.
Not-NEG I-NOM that fall-PRES.IND.1SG off.the couch
‘Not me falling off the couch.’

To reflect these structural differences, we refer to the English variant as *not-ACC-ing* construction and to the Italian counterpart as *not-NOM-that* construction.

The aim of this work is twofold: (i) to document Italian *not-ACC-ing* constructions for the first time, drawing an explicit comparison with their English counterpart; (ii) to provide a mainly syntactic analysis of these constructions, claiming that the same core ingredients involved in the English variant of these constructions apply to Italian as well – namely, negation being merged high in the CP layer and the focalization of a large portion of structure.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 introduces the main syntactic properties of *not-NOM-that* constructions and *not-ACC-ing* constructions. Section 3 provides the necessary background on Surprise Negation Sentences and *Acc-ing* constructions. Drawing on this foundation, Section 4 presents a unified analysis of English *not-ACC-ing* constructions that accounts for the properties discussed in Section 2.1. We therefore dispose of the necessary foundation to analyze the Italian data in section 5, proposing a preliminary syntactic account based on the same core structural ingredients. Section 6 concludes the paper.

2. Structural properties of English *not-ACC-ing* constructions and Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions

In this section we provide a description of the properties characterizing English *not-ACC-ing* constructions and Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions, beginning with the former.

2.1. English *not-ACC-ing* constructions

Starting with their Expletive Negative nature, note that *not-ACC-ing* constructions consistently pass all relevant tests for Expletive Negation (EN) (Espinal 1992; Del Prete 2008; Yoon 2011; Makri 2013; Paná Dindelegan & Maiden 2013; Greco 2019, 2020; Jin & Koenig 2021; Tsiakmakis & Espinal 2022). They escape from all the phenomena usually associated with sentential negative polarity: *not-ACC-ing* constructions are incompatible with strong NPIs such as *at all* (14) (Pereira 2023). On the other hand, they admit *already* (15), which is a PPI that occurs in positive contexts and yields ungrammaticality in the scope of negation (section 3.1.1; Espinal 1997; Israel 1997; Giannakidou 2011).

(14) *Not me being tired at all.

(15) Not me already planning my vacation for next year.

Although negation does not serve its prototypical function of reversing truth-value conditions (Horn 1989; Horn & Katō 2000), it is not semantically empty. Instead, it appears to fulfill an alternative role: an ironic interpretation emerges (16), which disappears when *not* is omitted from the corresponding affirmative sentence (17):

(16) Not me already planning my vacation for next year.

Interpretation: It is unexpected and ironic that I am planning my vacation so far in advance, which is typically considered unreasonable.

(17) Me already planning my vacation for next year.

Interpretation (unmarked, default interpretation without ironic flavor): I am planning my next vacation scheduled for next year.

Negation is therefore obligatory in *not-ACC-ing* constructions; without it, these sentences would lose their distinctive ironic flavor. In *not-ACC-ing* constructions, speakers publicly commit to the truth of the proposition corresponding to the sentence (Krifka 2024). It seems clear that EN is not purely expletive, in the sense of being semantically empty (c.f. Wood 2014; Greco 2019, a.o., see section 5 for our full analysis on this matter). However, for expository convenience, we will continue to use the label ‘expletive’ throughout the paper to differentiate Standard Negation (SN) from the ‘special’ kind of negation found in *not-ACC-ing* constructions.

Not-ACC-ing constructions also exhibit numerous other interpretive and syntactic properties that characterize them as a unique case of EN in English. As we will see in section 4, these properties set them apart from their unmarked counterpart in (29b) and similar structures. Therefore, they need to be treated as a separate construction (section 5). Let us address these properties one by one here.

A first notable characteristic of *not-ACC-ing* constructions is their informational status: they consistently introduce new information. More specifically,

they are used in isolation in social media contexts where users post content in an ‘out of the blue’ manner. This explains why *not-ACC-ing* constructions are also licit as answers to ‘What is happening?’ questions (i.e. propositional questions). It is worth noting that on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), this very question is prominently displayed within the user interface as a prompt for composing posts, further reinforcing the construction’s association with new information.

(18) A: What is happening?

B: Not me already planning my vacation for next year.

Second, *not-ACC-ing* constructions are a root phenomenon. Therefore, EN does not need to be licensed by a higher c-commanding element, unlike other cases in colloquial English, as in (19) (c.f. Horn 2010; Jin & Koenig 2021). They invariably display the configuration “negative marker + subject in the accusative case + gerund”, not allowing any c-commanding licenser, a crucial aspect which will play a role in differentiating *not-ACC-ing* constructions from other types of (similar) structures (see section 4):

(19) Well, really, how can I keep from not worrying?

(Example from Horn 2010: 125)

(20) (*I can’t keep from) not me planning...

(21) a. *I said that not me having a solo dance party in my bathroom.

b. *I think that not me falling off the couch.

It is also important to note that *not-ACC-ing* constructions cannot serve as the complement of prepositions like *of* (22b), nor can they function as sentential subjects (23b):

(22) a. I am in awe of [her already planning her next vacation].

b. *I am in awe of [not her already planning her next vacation].

(23) a. Not me already planning my next vacation.

b. *[Not me already planning my next vacation] is silly.

Not-ACC-ing constructions exhibit distinctive restrictions with respect to left-peripheral and discourse-related elements. Specifically, they cannot accommodate *wh*-elements (24a), *why* (24b), nor focalized constituents (24c), while topics yield an acceptable sentence (24d):

- (24) a. *What not me already planning my vacation for next year.
 b. *Why not me already planning my vacation for next year.
 c. *THE VACATION not me already planning (not my fitness routine).
 d. The vacation, not me already planning it.

Not-ACC-ing constructions can also host adverbs like ‘definitely’ or ‘totally’, which may precede the negative marker, but are not mandatory for the sentence to be grammatical:

- (25) a. Definitely not me already planning my vacation for next year.
 b. Totally not me already planning my vacation for next year.

Other adverbs like ‘stupidly’, ‘sadly’ cannot precede the negative marker (26a,b), while no problem arises if adverbs follow the subject (26c,d):

- (26) a. *Stupidly not me texting my ex at 2am.
 b. *Sadly not me scrolling through old vacation photos on a Friday night.
 c. Not me stupidly texting my ex at 2am.
 d. Not me sadly scrolling through old vacation photos on a Friday night.

To sum up, English *not-ACC-ing* constructions are affirmative in meaning. They are EN clauses (unable to license NPIs, but they do license PPI) with a surprising/amusing/unexpected semantics. They convey new information by being possible answers to propositional questions. They interact with left-peripheral elements, as well as discourse-related constituents, admitting a topic but resisting focalized constituents, *wh*-elements and *why*. Finally, *not-ACC-ing* constructions are invariably root clauses and host adverbs with some positional restrictions. Let us now compare them to Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions.

2.2. Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions

Interestingly, English *not-ACC-ing* constructions have been adapted into Italian, albeit with notable structural differences. In English, the subject appears in the accusative case, and the verb takes the gerundive form. In Italian, the expletive negative marker *non* is followed by the complementizer *che* ‘that’, a subject in the nominative case,³ and a finite verb in the indicative mood:

3. In the present discussion, we focused on instances of *not-NOM-that* and *not-ACC-ing* constructions featuring pronouns in the nominative and accusative case. However, the subject can also be realized as a full DP, as illustrated by the following examples:
 (i) Not the professors still thinking about string theory

- (27) Non io che prendo il treno alle 5 del mattino
 Not-NEG I-NOM that take-PRES.IND.1SG the train at 5 of.the morning
 con 3 ore di sonno.
 with 3 hours of sleep
 ‘Not me taking the train at 5am on 3 hours of sleep.’

Crucially, also *not-NOM-that* constructions respond positively to relevant tests for EN: they are incompatible with neg-words such as *nessuno* ‘nobody’ and strong NPIs like *affatto* ‘at all’ (28a), but they do admit PPIs such as *già* ‘already’ (28b):

- (28) a. *Non io che saluto affatto nessuno.
 Not-NEG I-NOM that greet-PRES.IND.1SG at all nobody
 b. Non io che già prendo il treno...
 Not-NEG I-NOM that already take-PRES.IND.1SG the train...
 ‘Not me already taking the train...’

As in the English form, the typical ironic interpretation associated with negation disappears when *non* is absent in the corresponding affirmative sentence, making its presence obligatory for achieving this specific expressive reading:

- (29) a. Non io che mi alzo alle 5 del
 Not-NEG I-NOM that me-CL.REFL wake.up-PRES.IND.1SG at 5am of.the
 mattino dopo 3 ore di sonno.
 morning after 3 hours of sleep
 ‘Not me waking up at 5 am after 3 hours of sleep.’
 b. #Io che mi alzo alle 5 dopo 3 ore
 I-NOM that me-CL.REFL wake.up-PRES.IND.1SG at 5 after 3 hours
 di sonno. (unmarked, default interpretation without ironic flavor)
 of sleep
 ‘Me waking up at 5 am after 3 hours of sleep.’

Moreover, Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions also introduce new information, as shown by their use in isolation and in responses to propositional questions such as ‘*Cosa succede?*’ (‘What is happening?’):

-
- (ii) Non i professori che ancora pensano alla teoria delle stringhe.
 Not-NEG the professors that still think of.the theory of.the strings
 ‘Not the professors still thinking about string theory.’
 (iii) Not John arriving late to class again
 (iv) Non Gianni che arriva di nuovo in ritardo a lezione.
 Not-NEG Gianni that arrives of again in late to class
 ‘Not Gianni arriving late to class again.’

Naturally, when a full DP is involved, morphological case distinctions are not visible in either English or Italian. In the article, we focus on the latter cases with pronominal subjects, as they are more informative for our analysis.

- (30) A: Cosa succede?
 What happen-PRES.IND.3SG
 ‘What is happening?’
- B: Non io che mi alzo alle 5 del
 Not-NEG I-NOM that me-CL.REFL wake.up-PRES.IND.1SG at 5am of.the
 mattino dopo 3 ore di sonno.
 morning after 3 hours of sleep
 ‘Not me waking up at 5 am after 3 hours of sleep.’

Maintaining the symmetric parallelism between English and Italian, we can observe that Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions are also instances of root clauses and cannot be embedded:

- (31) *Ho detto che non io che prendo
 Have- PRES.IND.1SG said-PST.PRT that not-NEG I-NOM that take-PRES.IND.1SG
 il treno...
 the train....
 ‘*I have said that not me taking the train...’

It should also be noted that also Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions cannot function as sentential subjects:

- (32) *[Non io che prendo il treno alle 5] è stupido.
 *[Not-NEG I-NOM that take-PRES.IND.1SG the train at 5] is stupid.

Another similarity to consider is that Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions present the same restrictions w.r.t. left-peripheral elements and discourse-related constituents as the English ones. They cannot host *wh*-elements (33a), nor *perché* ‘why’ (33b), nor a focalized constituent (33c). Topics, on the other hand, yield acceptable sentences (33d):

- (33) a. *Che cosa non io che regalo?
 That what not I-NOM that gift-PRES.IND.1SG
 *What not me gifting
- b. *Perché non io che prendo il treno...?
 Why not-NEG I-NOM that take-PRES.IND.1SG the train...
 *Why not me taking the train at 5am
- c. *IL TRENO non io che prendo alle 5 del mattino.
 THE TRAIN not-NEG I-NOM that take-PRES.IND.1SG at 5am
 *THE TRAIN not me taking at 5am
- d. Il treno, non io che lo prendo alle
 The train, not-NEG I-NOM that it-CL.M.ACC take-PRES.IND.1SG at
 5 del mattino.
 5 of.the morning
 ‘The train, not me taking it at 5am.’

Our informants report that *not-NOM-that* constructions are characterized by a distinctive prosodic pattern. In Italian, for example, the sequence *non io* ‘not I-NOM’ typically features a marked rise in intonation, followed by a flatter, less dynamic contour in the remainder of the sentence. While this prosodic behavior shares certain properties with that of focalized constructions, it is not entirely identical, suggesting a unique intonational profile specific to this construction type.⁴

Finally, Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions can accommodate adverbs such as *chiaramente* ‘clearly’ and *decisamente* ‘definitely’ which may precede the negative marker. However, their presence is not mandatory for the sentence to be grammatical, as is the case in the English structure.

- (34) Chiaramente non io che prendo il treno...
 Clearly not-NEG I-NOM that take-PRES.IND.1SG the train...
 ‘Clearly/definitely not me taking the train at 5am.’

Other adverbs like *stupidamente* ‘stupidly’ and *tristemente* ‘sadly’ cannot precede the negative marker (35a,b), while they can be admitted if they follow the subject (35c,d):

- (35) a. *Stupidamente non io che prendo il treno...
 Stupidly not-NEG I-NOM that take-PRES.IND.1SG the train
 ‘*Stupidly not me taking the train at 5am.’
- b. *Tristemente non io che prendo il treno...
 Sadly not-NEG I-NOM that take-PRES.IND.1SG the train
 ‘*Sadly not me taking the train at 5am.’
- c. Non io che stupidamente prendo il treno...
 Not-NEG I-NOM that stupidly take-PRES.IND.1SG the train
 ‘Not me stupidly taking the train at 5am.’
- d. Non io che tristemente prendo il treno...
 Not-NEG I-NOM that sadly take-PRES.IND.1SG the train
 ‘Not me sadly taking the train at 5am.’

Summarizing, Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions resemble the English ones since they are affirmative in meaning and represent instances of EN clauses: they cannot license strong NPIs but do license PPIs, and they convey a surprising, amusing, or unexpected interpretation. They introduce new information and can serve as answers to propositional questions. These sentences interact with left-peripheral elements and discourse-related constituents, being incompatible with *wh*-elements, *why*, focalized constituents, but admitting topics. Additionally, *not-NOM-that* constructions are always root clauses and host adverbs, subject to cer-

4. It is important to note that this phenomenon is mostly written and relatively recent, with its use in spoken language being sporadic and primarily limited to the younger generation. As such, the description of the prosodic contour is only briefly outlined for now.

tain positional restrictions. On the other hand, Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions display a different composition, summarized in the schema in (13), repeated below for convenience:

(36) English:

- a. negative marker *not* + subject in accusative case + gerundive verbal form

Italian:

- b. negative marker *non* + subject in nominative case + complementizer *che* ‘that’ + finite verbal form Italian

Having compared the properties of the English and Italian forms, we now turn to the theoretical framework required for the analysis of English *not-ACC-ing* constructions, which will in turn inform our approach to Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions.

3. Theoretical Background: Surprise Negation Sentences and Acc-ing constructions

This section lays the conceptual groundwork for our analysis of *not-ACC-ing* constructions (see section 4) by addressing two core phenomena: (i) the expletive status of the negative marker involved, and (ii) the syntactic nature of the gerundive verbal form in English – an element absent in the Italian counterpart (cf. section 2.2 and 5). To this end, we provide an overview of the key properties of Surprise Negation Sentences and Acc-ing constructions, both of which play a crucial role in the analysis developed both for English and Italian in the following sections.

3.1. Surprise Negation Sentences

In order to draw an explicit comparison with *not-ACC-ing* constructions and *not-NOM-that* constructions, we begin by outlining the main properties of Surprise Negation Sentences (Snegs) in Italian, following Greco (2019, 2020). The meaning conveyed by Snegs is affirmative, even though they contain a negative marker. Snegs typically occur in colloquial contexts and are used by speakers to express surprise; both features that they share with *not-ACC-ing* and *not-NOM-that* constructions. As the discussion progresses, their structural and interpretive similarities will become more evident. An illustrative example is given in (37), and subsequent examples are taken from Greco (2020):

(37) E non mi è scesa dal treno Maria?!

And not-NEG to-me.CL is got off of.the train Mary

‘Mary got off the train!’

Interpretation: it surprised me that Maria got off the train.

Prosodically, Snegs are marked by a distinctive intonation pattern, which cannot be reduced to that of either exclamatives or interrogatives, hence the use of the combined punctuation (!?) (Greco 2020). Additionally, Snegs frequently include

the expletive coordinating particle *e* ‘and’ (Poletto 2005) and they often feature ethical datives, such as *mi* ‘to me’, which enhance their naturalness in discourse.

Evidence that negation in Snegs is expletive can be found in their incompatibility with negative polarity items (NPIs), such as *affatto* (‘at all’, ex. 38), and neg-words like *nessuno* ‘nobody’ (39), reproducing the same pattern showed by *not-ACC-ing* constructions in section 2. On the other hand, positive polarity items (PPIs) like *già* ‘already’ are absolutely allowed (40), whereas they are usually excluded in the scope of (Standard) Negation (41):

(38) *E non mi è affatto scesa dal treno Maria?!
And not-NEG to-me.CL is at-all got off of.the train Mary

(39) *E non mi è sceso dal treno nessuno?!
And not-NEG to-me.CL is got off of.the train nobody

(40) E Gianni non mi ha già finito i compiti?!
And Gianni not-NEG to-me.CL has already finished-PST.PRT the homework
‘Gianni already finished his homework!’

(41) *Gianni non ha già finito i compiti.
Gianni not-NEG has already finished the homework

Focusing on their semantics, Snegs usually convey new information. They can be employed as answers to propositional question of the type ‘What happened?’, while they cannot be employed as answers to entity questions, such as ‘Who got off the train?’:

(42) a. Che cosa è successo?
That what is happened
‘What happened?’

b. Non mi è scesa Maria dal treno?!
NEG to.me-CL is got-off Maria the train
‘Maria got off the train!’

(43) a. Chi è sceso dal treno?
Who is got-off of.the train
‘Who got off the train?’

b. #(E) non mi è scesa dal treno Maria?!
and NEG CL-to me is got off of.the train Mary
#‘And Maria got off the train!’

Concerning left-peripheral constituents, Snegs display a clear restriction on the type of such elements they admit. While topicalized constituents are fully compatible with the construction, focalized elements lead to ungrammaticality:

(44) E il libro, non me lo ha dato a Luca?!
 And the book NEG me-CL it-CL has given to Luca
 ‘And the book, didn’t he give it to Luca for me?’

(45) *E LA PENNA non mi ha dato a Luca, (non il libro)?!
 And the pen NEG me-CL has given to Luca, (not the book)?!
 **‘And the PEN, didn’t he give that to Luca for me (not the book)?!’

Unless we interpret topicalization and focalization as outcomes of two distinct syntactic transformations, *a là* Rizzi (1997) (see also, among many others, Cruschina 2012 and the references cited there), which interact with the syntax of Snegs, the contrast between (44) and (45) is unexpected. Crucially, all the properties of Snegs discussed here also characterize the *not-ACC-ing* and *not-NOM-that* constructions mentioned above (section 2).

On these grounds, it is worth considering the syntactic analysis proposed by Greco (2019, 2020), according to which the negative marker *non* may realize different types of negation depending on its syntactic position: when merged in the TP domain, it expresses SN (Belletti 1990; Laka 1990; Zanuttini 1996, 1997, 2001), whereas when merged in the LP, it gives rise to EN. The latter option applies to Snegs. This has the advantage of maintaining the same lexical entry for both Standard and Expletive Negation. In particular, EN is derived in the following way: it is in the CP phase that the negative marker is merged – when the v*P-phase (Chomsky 2001, we adopt the original notation) has already closed – and it selects a FocP as its argument, which is filled by a TP via movement⁵ (phases are underlined).

(46) a. [_{CP} ... [_{X^o} non ... [_{FocP} TP_i [_{Foc^o} ... [_{TP} [_{v*P} ... v^o ...]]_i]]
 b. [_{CP} E non [_{FocP} [_{TP} mi è scesa dal treno Maria] [_{Foc^o}] [... t_{TP} ...]]]?!
 and not-NEG to.me-CL is got off-the train Mary

Therefore, the domain of the v*P-phase is not accessible (Phase Impenetrability Condition) and the incompatibility of Snegs with negative-scope elements – like neg-words and NPIs – automatically follows. Following previous literature (Giannakidou 1997, 2000; Zeijlstra 2004), a negative operator is required to bind all free variables within the vP area. This binding process is essential for the operator to properly license them. If no such operator is present, as in affirmative clauses, or if the v*P phase is closed by the time negation is merged, as seen in Snegs, the binding mechanism fails to occur. Consequently, structures where the negative operator is expected to bind variables but cannot due to structural constraints such

5. In the literature, there are additional approaches suggesting that negation is externally merged in the CP layer. For instance, see Aboh (2010), for Gungbe, which is proposed to have several functional positions within the C-system; Halm & Huszár (2021) for Snegs in Hungarian; and D’Antuono (2024) for the Modern Irish emphatic marker known as Demonic Negation, which is base-generated in a polar projection immediately dominating FocP.

as phase boundaries are excluded (only phase labels are represented in the following examples):

(47) a. **neg-words*

*_[CP] E non _[v*P] mi è sceso dal treno *nessuno*]?!
and not-NEG to.me-CL is got off-the train nobody

b. **strong-NPIs*

*_[CP] E non _[v*P] mi è *affatto* scesa dal treno Maria]?!
and not-NEG to.me-CL is at all got.off of.the train Mary

Moreover, another consequence derives from the structure in (46a). It has been claimed that Standard Negation in the v*P phase domain needs a TP complement (Zanuttini 1997). In Snegs, instead, high negation selects a Focus Phrase, which, in turn, hosts the TP. For this reason, EN does not reverse the polarity of the sentence, as it acts on the presuppositional layer required by Focus (c.f. Benincà 1996 and Delfitto, Melloni & Vender 2019 for a similar approach) even though it still leans on the TP – at least phonologically. The fact that Snegs accommodate topics, while resist focalized constituents, and carry new information is predicted by that. Notice how in the following examples (from Greco 2020: 163) the predicates allow the focalization of a TP internal element (48B), whereas the focalization of the whole TP generates ungrammaticality (48B') in Indirect Questions (IQs):

(48) A: Mi chiedo _[CP1] se i turisti pensino _[CP2] che
CL-to.me wonder whether the tourists think.SUBJ.3PL that
Firenze sia bella]]. (IQ)
Firenze be-SUBJ.3SG beautiful
'I wonder whether tourists think that Firenze is beautiful.'

B: Mi chiedo _[CP1] se _{[FocP [ROMA]_i]} i turisti
CL-to.me wonder whether ROME the tourists
pensino _[CP2] che ti sia bella]] (non Firenze).
think-SUBJ.3PL that to.you-CL be-SUBJ.3SG beautiful (not Firenze)
'I wonder whether tourists think that ROME is beautiful (not) Firenze).'

B': *Mi chiedo _[CP1] se _{[FocP [CHE ROMA SIA PULITA]_i]}
CL-to.me wonder whether THAT ROME BE-SUBJ.3SG CLEAN
i turisti pensino _[CP2] _[_tTP]] (non che Firenze sia bella).
the tourists think-SUBJ.3PL not that Firenze be-SUBJ.3SG beautiful

Since the whole TP is focalized in Snegs, it follows that they cannot be embedded under c-commanding predicates, and their root nature is captured. All in all, the two basic ingredients of the Snegs analysis, i.e. the occurrence of negation in the LP and the focalization of the whole TP, are enough to catch both the syntax and semantics of Snegs.

3.2. *Acc-ing* Constructions

English *not-ACC-ing* constructions display a gerundive verbal construction, which can be related to *Acc-ing* constructions (Stowell 1982; Reuland 1983; Matsuoka 1994; Lowe 2019). This section explores the reasons behind this connection. *Acc-ing* consist in the following configuration: a subject in the accusative case is followed by a gerund, with the possibility of an optional adverb appearing between them:

(49) *Acc-ing*

[*Him* stupidly *missing* the penalty] lost us the game.

(ex. from Lowe 2019: 318)

(50) *Not-ACC-ing* construction

Not *him* stupidly *missing* the penalty.

Interpretation: It is surprising/amusing/unexpected that he stupidly missed the penalty.

Importantly, *Acc-ing* constructions are clausal rather than nominal, unlike other gerundive constructions (c.f. Lowe 2019, and references therein): they may take adverbial modification and always require a subject. That is visible in the following sentences where *there* and *it* must be present in the structure (Lowe 2019: 318):

(51) You may count on *(there) being a lot of trouble tonight.

(52) I wouldn't count on *(it) raining tomorrow.

The literature has consistently argued that gerunds, including *Acc-ing* constructions, represent reduced structures rather than full CPs (Stowell 1982: 561; c.f. also Abe 1986; Yamada 1987; Matsuoka 1994). Let us examine why that seems to be the case. One significant point concerns the inability of gerunds or *Acc-ing* constructions to co-occur with *to*. As shown in the following examples, gerunds cannot combine with *to*, which highlights their structural distinction from infinitives:

(53) a. To read books is to expand knowledge.

b. Reading books is expanding knowledge.

c. *To reading books is to expanding knowledge.

d. *To her winning the race inspired great pride.

Another key observation is that gerunds and *Acc-ing* constructions cannot serve as [+wh] complements of c-commanding verbs or prepositions, unlike infinitives:

(54) a. I don't know what to study.

b. *I don't know what studying.

c. She wondered where to travel.

d. *She wondered where traveling.

- e. They discussed when to begin.
- f. *They discussed when beginning.

(Examples adapted from Stowell 1982: 561)

The incompatibility of gerunds with *wh*-elements in (54) seems to be really related to the absence of the CP layer. In fact, when the higher c-commanding predicate does not select for a [+wh] complement (which we assume targets the Q/Foc position in Rizzi's & Bocci's (2017) account of the LP), gerunds/*Acc-ing* constructions are licit:

(55) I remember him attending the meeting.

These examples suggest that the ungrammaticality of gerunds in [+wh] contexts is indeed tied to the absence of the CP layer. While we do not aim to establish the full inventory of functional projections in *Acc-ing* constructions, for present purposes it is sufficient to assume that these are reduced structures lacking the CP layer and including only a few projections above vP – at least one of which is associated with progressive aspect. For this reason, we refer to *Acc-ing* constructions as Aspectual Phrases (AspPs) throughout the paper.

To summarize, this section provided an overview of two key topics that are critically important for the structural analysis of *not-ACC-ing* constructions: (i) the expletive function of the negative marker, correlated to its position in the left periphery and (ii) the gerundive verbal form in the English construction (the Italian counterpart will be dealt with in sections 2.2 and 5).

4. *Not-ACC-ing* constructions: a structural analysis

In this section, we follow Rossi et al. (forthcoming) syntactic analysis of *not-ACC-ing* constructions, and argue accordingly that they are not merely variants of *Snegs* and *Acc-ing* constructions, but they are separate structures in their own right, needing their own syntactic account. Moreover, we will also exclude the naive parallelism with clefts.

4.1. *Not-ACC-ing* constructions, *Snegs* and *Acc-ing* constructions: similarities and differences

As we have discussed, it is interesting to notice that English *not-ACC-ing* constructions share a number of properties with *Snegs* and *Acc-ing* constructions. Starting from the former, we can summarize their similarities as follows (see section 2 and 3.1).

First, both *not-ACC-ing* constructions and *Snegs* share the property that the negative marker in these constructions does not represent SN, but rather EN. Additionally, both constructions convey new information and are always root clauses. In both cases, EN does not require any c-commanding licenser. Furthermore, *not-ACC-ing* constructions and *Snegs* are unable to host a focalized constituent, although they both allow for a topic to appear.

Despite the many similarities shared by these two structures, they differ in certain respects. For example, the marked pragmatic interpretation of *not-ACC-ing* constructions is not exclusively tied to surprisal, as it is in Snegs. The primary intent of a speaker using a *not-ACC-ing* sentence is to convey a sarcastic, ironic, amusing, or (self-)deprecating tone. This feature does not apply to Snegs. However, it is worth noting that the ironic effect in *not-ACC-ing* constructions arises from highlighting a deviation from a usual, expected state of affairs – a characteristic they share with Snegs.

Moreover, English *not-ACC-ing* constructions cannot accommodate modals (56a), since gerunds are incompatible with modals in general (56b), whereas Snegs can (56c):

(56) a. *Not Mary must taking the train at 5am.

b. *I must taking the train at 5am.

c. E Maria non mi deve prendere il treno alle 5
 And Maria NEG CL.to-me must-PRES.IND.3SG take-INF the train at 5 of
 del mattino?!
 the morning
 ‘Mary has to take the train at 5am!’
 Interpretation: it surprised me that Maria has to take the train at 5am.

Considering the reasons outlined and the absence of a gerundive verbal form in Snegs, it is not appropriate to equate not-ACC-ing constructions with the English form of Snegs.

Now, let us consider the alternative possibility, specifically the potential parallelism between *not-ACC-ing* constructions and *Acc-ing* constructions. Both exhibit a restriction on the non-finite form of the verb, which appears in the gerundive form with the *-ing* suffix. Moreover, neither employs a nominative subject; instead, accusative case is used in both instances.

At first glance, the only apparent distinction between *not-ACC-ing* constructions and *Acc-ing* constructions lies in the presence or absence of the negative marker. However, they also diverge structurally w.r.t. embedding. *Not-ACC-ing* constructions are strictly a root phenomenon, and they exhibit ungrammaticality when embedded. They are excluded from functioning as sentential subjects, nor can they serve as the complement of a preposition such as *of*. Crucially, such restrictions do not apply to *Acc-ing* constructions:

(57) *Acc-ing* construction

a. [Her being reckless] is a great problem for us.

Not-ACC-ing construction

b. *[Not her being reckless] is a great problem for us.

Acc-ing construction

e. I am in awe of [her already planning her next vacation].

Not-ACC-ing construction

f. *I am in awe of [not her already planning her next vacation].

Therefore, we cannot consider *not-ACC-ing* constructions as pure *Acc-ing* constructions either.

4.2. *Not-ACC-ing* constructions and their differences w.r.t. reduced clefts

Despite the intuitive appeal of analyzing *not-ACC-ing* constructions as reduced versions of full clefts or relative clauses, this section will demonstrate that this analysis cannot be sustained. Consider the following examples⁶:

(58) a. Not me taking the train at 5am.

b. (It is) not me (who is) taking the train at 5am.

Note that negation performs its usual function in the full cleft in (58b), reversing the truth-conditions of the sentence. That does not apply to the *not-ACC-ing* construction in (58a), which consistently exhibits positive polarity despite the presence of the negative marker. In other words, in (58a), the speaker is indeed taking the train, while in (58b), the speaker is not taking the train - someone else is. This distinction separates *not-ACC-ing* constructions from standard full cleft sentences: in the former, negation functions as an EN, while in the latter, it behaves as SN.

Furthermore, as previously discussed, *not-ACC-ing* constructions inherently carry an ironic flavor, a feature absent in the full cleft construction, which is unmarked in its interpretation. From this it follows that only (58b), being usually unmarked, can be pragmatically marked further in such a way that the speaker conveys the opposite of the literal meaning as demonstrated in (59):

(59) It is not me who/that takes the train at 5am...

Interpretation: It is actually me who takes the train at 5m (uttered with a smirk and an ironic/sarcastic intent).

In contrast, this does not apply to a *not-ACC-ing* construction: its polarity is strictly affirmative. Only the affirmative interpretation is permissible, meaning that in (58a), the speaker is indeed taking the train and this inherently carries an ironic, surprising, or amusing undertone. Unlike full cleft constructions, a *not-ACC-ing* construction cannot be uttered with altered prosody to reverse its truth conditions or to convey irony or sarcasm. Such an interpretation is inherently fixed in *not-ACC-ing* constructions.

6. (58) has been judged as grammatical by two of our informants, while one rejects it. This variation is likely attributable to the alternation between nominative and accusative case of the subject (c.f., a.o., Denison 1996). However, this issue lies beyond the scope of the present discussion and does not affect the distinction between full clefts and *not-ACC-ing* constructions, which remains valid regardless of whether the subject in the full cleft appears in the accusative or nominative case.

Further evidence which draws apart *not-ACC-ing* constructions from clefts is given by the following crucial structural contrast. Observe how clefts can be embedded under a higher predicate, while this possibility is always excluded in *not-ACC-ing* constructions:

- (60) a. Not her already planning her next vacation.
 b. (It is) not her (who is) already planning her next vacation.
 c. I think that it is not me/I who is planning...
 d. *I think that not her already planning...

Summarizing, *not-ACC-ing* constructions have a fixed, marked, special prosody and interpretation which cannot be changed, differently from clefts. Moreover, while clefts may be embedded, this option is mandatorily excluded for *not-ACC-ing* constructions.

Based on these contrasts, we propose that *not-ACC-ing* sentences be treated as a distinct and specific syntactic construction. While they share certain properties with *Snegs* and *Acc-ing* constructions, we have already ruled out the possibility that they belong to these categories. Therefore, we seek to develop a syntactic analysis that accounts for the unique properties of *not-ACC-ing* constructions, starting from English in the next subsection and then moving to Italian in section 6.

4.3. A syntactic analysis

To account for the properties of English *not-ACC-ing* constructions discussed in (section 2.1), at least three key issues must be addressed: the representation of EN in the structure of *not-ACC-ing* constructions, the origin of their non-embeddability, and the mechanism by which the subject of a *not-ACC-ing* construction obtains accusative case. We propose that in *not-ACC-ing* constructions, the negative marker is directly merged in a high position within the LP, giving rise to the EN reading. The negative marker then selects a Focus Phrase, and the entire *ACC-ing* construction is focalized in SpecFocP:

- (61) Structure of a *not-ACC-ing* sentence in English
 $[_{CP} \dots [_{X^0} \text{not}] \dots [_{\text{FocP}} \text{Acc-ing}_{\text{Foc}^0} [\dots t_{\text{Acc-ing}} \dots]]]$

Let us illustrate this proposal step by step.

4.4. Expletive Negation

Regarding the first question, the similarities between *not-ACC-ing* constructions and *Snegs* suggest adopting Greco's (2019, 2020) analysis of EN: the negative marker *not* is merged in the CP area, instead of being merged in the IP layer, as is typical for SN. This configuration enables the negative marker in CP to be blind

w.r.t. the lower v*P phase, which is closed and impenetrable to further syntactic operations (Phase Impenetrability Condition, cf. section 3.1). Hence, the expletive reading is derived, as well as the incompatibility of *not-ACC-ing* constructions with NPIs such as *at all* and the cooccurrence with PPIs like *already*:

- (62) a. * $[_{CP} \text{Not } [_{FocP} [_{v*P} \text{me being tired at all}]_{Acc-ing} \dots [t_{Acc-ing}]]]$
 b. $[_{CP} \text{Not } [_{FocP} [_{v*P} \text{me already planning my vacation}]_{Acc-ing} \dots [t_{Acc-ing}]]]$

A key factor in distinguishing various constructions in Modern English is the difference between low and high negation. Tubau (2020) specifically argues that the position of negation, whether first-merged in a TP-internal or TP-external position, creates contrasts in phenomena such as polarity-reversing question tags, *neither/so*-coordination, and *either/too* adverbs. Additionally, this distinction has been shown to be crucial for understanding the structure of yes-no questions and their response particles (c.f. Holmberg 2015 and Wiltschko 2017).

4.5. The focalization of the *Acc-ing* construction

As it happens in Snegs, the negative marker in *not-ACC-ing* constructions is externally merged just above FocP, where it selects the FocP itself.

We propose that, in *not-ACC-ing* constructions, the entire AspP is focalized and moves to SpecFocP. The same mechanism of focalization of a whole chunk of structure was at play in Snegs. As noted in previous work (Stowell 1982; Reuland 1983; Yamada 1987; Matsuoka 1994): *Acc-ing* constructions are reduced and lack the CP layer. This structural feature suggests that *Acc-ing* constructions can undergo the same type of movement as the TP in Snegs. Although *Acc-ing* constructions contain fewer functional projections than the TP in Snegs – lacking, for instance, Tense – the crucial point is that both the an *Acc-ing* construction and a finite TP in Snegs lack the CP layer and may be focalized. Thus, we propose that the same mechanism governing Snegs applies to *not-ACC-ing* constructions: the AspP is moved to the LP of the clause, where it is focalized by landing in the specifier of FocP. While Snegs involve the movement of a finite TP, in *not-ACC-ing* constructions, it is the *Acc-ing* construction that undergoes this movement. Crucially, the *Acc-ing* construction moves as a single structural unit, accounting for its non-embeddability and the new information interpretation, just as in the case of Snegs.

The new information interpretation carried by *not-ACC-ing* constructions is captured under this proposal. As it was shown in (18), repeated below for convenience, they can be employed as answers to propositional questions, while they cannot be employed as answers to entity questions:

- (63) Propositional question
 a. What is happening?
 b. Not me already planning my vacation for next year.

(64) Entity question

- a. Who is planning their vacation for next year?
 b. *Not me already planning my vacation for next year.

According to Alonso-Ovalle & Guerzoni (2004) and Brunetti (2004), we assume that what carries new information, at least in answers, lays in the focus domain of a sentence and the rest of the sentence is deleted via ellipsis (Merchant 2001), as shown by the contrast between ‘extended’ and ‘short’ forms of answers:

(65) a. Che cosa ha vinto Gianni?

That what has won Gianni
 ‘What did Gianni win?’

- b. [Una maglietta]_{NEW} ha vinto Gianni. (Extended form)
 A shirt has won Gianni
 ‘Gianni won a shirt.’

- b’. [Una maglietta]_{NEW} (Short form)
 [_{FocP} [A shirt]_j Foc^o ... [_{TP} John won t_j]]

The fact that *not-ACC-ing* constructions can only serve as answers to propositional questions suggest that the entire *Acc-ing* construction is the focalized part, as we predict in our analysis. Moreover, if the *Acc-ing* construction realizes the focus of the sentence, we should expect some impact on the prosody of the sentences as well. We know from the literature that focus always causes some suprasegmental phonetics changes (c.f. Bocci 2008, 2007 and Frascarelli 2000), with a clear rising of the tonal function (L+H* in ToBi transcription). Crucially, this is exactly what seem to happen in *not-ACC-ing* constructions, which show a rising in the intonation at the beginning of the utterance and, then, a flatter pattern (c.f. Pereira 2023 for a spectrogram of a *not-ACC-ing* construction, even though more experimental work is needed to corroborate this claim further).

Finally, we suggest that the focalization of the *Acc-ing* construction triggered by negation is responsible for the special interpretation of *not-ACC-ing* constructions. Specifically, since negation targets FocP as its argument, it applies to the presuppositional layer given by focalization instead of the propositional layer, as is the case with SN. This hypothesis aligns with the views of Benincà (1996), Abels (2002, 2005), Greco (2017), and Delfitto et al. (2019). The idea that negation can scope over presuppositions offers significant advantages. First, it establishes that EN is irrelevant to the truth-value conditions of the sentence. Second, it supports the traditional view of negation as a semantic operator that can generate the complement set of its argument (Tovena 1996; Postal 2005).⁷

7. The idea that negation functions as a full-strength negation in some EN structures has been developed in several works, including Tovena (1996), Abels (2002, 2005), Greco (2017), Delfitto, Vender & Melloni (2019), and Cépeda (2018).

Following Greco (2017, 2019) and Delfitto, Vender, & Melloni (2019), we apply this idea to explain the “expletive effect” found in sentences with *not-ACC-ing* constructions.

Before that, recall that *not-ACC-ing* constructions can be employed as responses to ‘What is happening?’ questions. Indeed, on the social-media platform X, this question appears as on-screen text in the box where users may write their posts, as we have mentioned before.

(66) (Silent question: What is happening?)

Not me already planning my vacation for next year.

(Post under a picture of me planning the vacation)

According to the Question-Under-Discussion (QUD) approach proposed by von Stechow and Klein (1989), each sentence in a conversation responds to an implicit or explicit question. Here, the QUD is represented by the ‘What is happening?’ question, which implies that some event is taking place. The possible answers to this question form a set of (likely) events or propositions, that is the focus set from which any appropriate proposition is selected (Delfitto et al. 2019). For instance, saying “I’m already planning my vacation for next year” under a picture of me with a map shows that this event fits the expected or likely context.⁸ Crucially, in the sentence “Not me already planning my vacation for next year” negation occurs and we propose that plays a role w.r.t. the focus set, since negation targets FocP as its argument. More specifically, negation in this context indicates that the uttered sentence does not belong to focus set, falling outside the category of “likely to happen” propositions, thereby generating the surprise and ironic effect associated with *not-ACC-ing* constructions.⁹ Therefore, the *not-ACC-ing* sentence in (66) means that it does not align with what is considered likely to occur, particularly since, in the context of this specific example, it is shared knowledge that at the time of the utterance it is conventionally too early to plan a vacation.

4.6. Some welcoming consequences

The proposal in (62) also accounts for at least three additional facts: first, *not-ACC-ing* constructions are compatible with topicalized constituents but resist focalization; second, they cannot host *wh*-elements; and third, they are root phenomena and cannot be embedded under any higher c-commanding predicate. We argue that all of these restrictions can be explained by a single assumption: the focalization of the *Acc-ing* construction.

8. As Delfitto et al. (2019: 76) note, “the focus set contains all the sentences describing states of affairs that are likely to happen (or perhaps more accurately, are not very unlikely to happen) in the relevant narrative context”.

9. According to this view, negation in *not-ACC-ing* sentences functions similarly to an emphatic polarity particle, as originally discussed by Batllori & Hernanz (2013) for Spanish and Catalan. They showed that polarity particles, such as negation, can interact with contrastive focus to generate an emphatic interpretation, like the one discussed in this paper.

The first restriction on *not-ACC-ing* constructions can be explained by the movement of the *Acc-ing* construction to the focalized phrase, which leaves no room for additional focalized constituents, as there is only one focus position in the LP (Rizzi 1997), and it is already occupied by the *Acc-ing* construction. This same explanation extends to the incompatibility with *wh*-elements, which, like other focalized elements, compete for the same SpecFocP position. In contrast, topicalized items do not encounter this restriction, which allows them to be hosted in *not-ACC-ing* constructions. Finally, the focalization of the *Acc-ing* construction also accounts for its root nature. Similar to Snegs, natural languages avoid embedding structures with overly large focalized elements, such as the TP in Italian Snegs (section 3.1)

As discussed in section 3.2, we follow previous literature (Lowe 2019; Stowell 1986, *inter alia*) in analyzing *Acc-ing* constructions as structurally reduced and we assume they are AspPs, lacking both the Finiteness position in the Left Periphery and the Tense projection in the TP layer. As such, whichever position is assumed to assign nominative case is absent in *Acc-ing* constructions. Consequently, the subject receives default case, which in English surfaces as accusative, as shown in Schütze's (2001) work.

To take stock, we have argued that *not-ACC-ing* constructions constitute a distinct syntactic construction in their own right, separate from *Acc-ing* constructions proper. Rather than being simple negated versions of the latter, they also involve focalization and an Expletive Negation reading, which arises from the negation being merged in the LP.

Now, another question may arise. Since Belletti (2004), focalized constituents have been noticed to target both the LP and low IP area (with different interpretive restrictions), and so the question: is the *Acc-ing* constructions focalized in the LP or in the low IP area? We argue for the former on the basis of the expletiveness of the negative marker *not*. Expletiveness and the peculiar ironic interpretation of *not-ACC-ing* constructions could be not obtained if the negative marker stayed in the low IP area. The *v**P phase would still be open and only the Standard Negation reading would be accessible. Independent evidence come from the contrast regarding preposed adverbs we mentioned in (section 2): adverbs can only follow the subject, never precede it.

- (67) a. *Stupidly not me missing the train at 5am.
 b. Not me stupidly missing the train at 5am.
 c. *Sadly not me eating alone at home during quarantine.
 d. Not me sadly eating alone at home during quarantine.

Following Rizzi & Bocci (2017)'s account of the Left Periphery of the clause, preposed adverbs target the Mod position in the LP. Observe the sequence of positions in the LP as shown by these authors:

- (68) Force > Int > Topic > Focus > Mod > Fin

Notice how the Mod position is lower than the Focus position. Recall that in the present analysis, the whole *Acc-ing* construction is focalized in SpecFocP, i.e. in a structurally higher position than Mod. From our proposal, the contrast in (67) follows straightforwardly: when an adverb is placed inside the *Acc-ing* construction, after the subject, the sentence is grammatical; on the contrary, when an adverb is placed before the *Acc-ing* construction, it cannot find a suitable slot, as the Mod position is lower than the focalized *Acc-ing* formation.¹⁰ This constitutes further evidence towards the analysis we put forward.

Also the compatibility of *not-ACC-ing* constructions with topics is readily explained: the position where topics land (TopP) is higher than the focus position where the reduced *Acc-ing* construction is moved by virtue of being attracted by the negative marker *not*.

(69) My next vacation, not me taking already planning it.

In this analysis, we focused on describing the basic mechanisms underlying the syntax of *not-ACC-ing* constructions, aiming to account for their peculiar structure. While our analysis highlights the structural opposition between Standard Negation in lower layers of the clausal spine (v*P phase) and Expletive Negation in higher layers (CP phase), we also acknowledge the potential compatibility of our approach with those positing high projections such as the Judgment Phrase in Krifka's (2017) and subsequent work.

5. A first approach to the syntax of Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions

Building on the comparison with the structural analysis of English *not-ACC-ing* constructions, we now propose a first account on the syntax Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions.¹¹ Here we present a preliminary outline. We rule out cer-

10. As discussed in section 2, *not-ACC-ing* constructions can be preceded by adverbs like *definitely* and *totally*, but this option is excluded for any other adverb, as we expect given Rizzi's and Bocci's (2017) account of the Left Periphery. For now, it seems that only *totally* and *definitely* may be preposed in a *not-ACC-ing* and *not-NOM-that* sentence. Why that is the case remains to be established and will be topic for future investigation. For the time being, let us note that this pattern may be due to the different status certain adverbs have and their different positions in the sentential spine. For instance, *stupidly* belongs to a special class of adverbs, as has been known since early works in generative semantics (Lehrer 1975).
11. For now, we are aware of the existence of these special structures involving EN in English, Italian, and also French. Further research will highlight if they become productive in other (Romance) languages. We also point out that at this time we are not aware of *not-ACC-ing/not-NOM-that* sentences in Spanish. The French language features a construction with special negation and the same type of irony to that found in *not-ACC-ing* and *not-NOM-that* sentences in both English and Italian. To the best of our knowledge, the use of French *pas moi* constructions has not been documented in the existing literature, and we present them briefly here for the first time. The French construction typically consists of "*pas moi* + *qui* + indicative verb," though we have also identified an instance of "*pas moi* + subject + *en train de*", where *en train de* conveys progressive aspect in French. A comprehensive quantitative and syntactic analysis of French *pas moi* constructions remains a task for future research. For now, we provide some illustrative examples below, sourced

tain options and discuss the two main elements that are likely involved in these constructions: namely, high-merged negation and the focalization of an entire structural chunk.

Similar to how we examined English *not-ACC-ing* constructions, let us first start with excluding some possible options. First, Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions (70) cannot be reduced to clefts (71,72), as shown by the following contrast:

(70) *Not-NOM-that* construction

Non io che prendo il treno alle 5 con 3 ore di
Not-NEG I-NOM that take-PRES.IND.1SG the train at 5 with 3 hours of
sonno.

sleep

‘Not me taking the train at 5am on 3 hours of sleep.’

Interpretation: It is surprising and ironic that I am taking the train early in the morning having slept only a little.

(71) Cleft

Non sono io che prendo il treno alle 5...
Not-NEG be-IND.PRES.1SG I-NOM that take-PRES.IND.1SG the train at 5 am

‘It is not I/me who takes the train at 5am on 3 hours of sleep.’

(72) Cleft

Non sono io quella che prende
Not-NEG be-IND.PRES.1SG I-NOM that-FEM.SG that take--PRES.IND.1SG
il treno...

the train...

‘I am not the one who takes the train at 5am on 3 hours of sleep.’

from X (retrieved 05.11.2024, X post id:1852139962264637641). Their peculiar interpretation which concurs to make these sentences proper *not-NOM-that* constructions has been confirmed by one French informant.

- (i) Pas moi qui viens de dire bisous au chauffeur
Not me who come of say xoxo to the driver
‘Not me who’s just said “xoxo” to the driver.’

The English version of (i) would be “Not me saying xoxo to the driver”. A more apt translation to convey this would be “Not me who’s just said “xoxo” to the driver”, as indicated in the gloss. However, notice that that would not be a licit *not-ACC-ing* sentence in English. English allows only *not-ACC-ing* sentences with a gerund; therefore, there is no grammatical option to convey that the event of saying xoxo to the driver has just happened, as in (i). The only available interpretation is that the event is happening now. In the following example, (X post id: 1852838666705768478), instead, the event is happening now:

- (ii) Pas moi qui apprend comme ça que Thomas est corse mdrrrr
Not me who learns like this that Thomas is Corsican mort de rire
‘Not me learning just now that Thomas is Corsican lol.’

(70-72) all display negation as a first element.¹² However, in clefts the negative marker *non* is followed by the auxiliary *sono* (*non sono* ‘not am’), while in *not-NOM-that* constructions the negative marker *non* is followed by the subject in nominative case *io* (*non io* ‘not I’). One might suggest that the verb *to be* has been omitted, and that *not-NOM-that* constructions are in fact clefts. However, in clefts the negative marker *non* consistently instantiates SN, reversing the polarity of the proposition expressed. In contrast, in *not-NOM-that* constructions, negation does not appear to reverse the polarity of the proposition.

Crucially, a deeper contrast emerges when considering embedding: as it is the case in English, Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions resist embedding, while clefts admit it.

(73) *Not-NOM-that* construction

*Penso che non io che prendo il treno...
I.think that not-NEG I-NOM that take the train...

(74) Cleft

Penso che non sono io che prendo
I.think that not-NEG be-IND.PRES.1SG I-NOM that take-PRES.IND.1SG
il treno...
the train...
‘I think that it is not me/I who takes the train at 5am.’

(75) Cleft

Penso che non sono io quella che
I.think that not-NEG be-IND.PRES.1SG I-NOM that-FEM.SG that
prende il treno alle 5 del mattino.
take-PRES.IND.1SG the train at 5 of.the morning
‘I think that I am not the one who takes the train at 5am.’

To sum up, the impossibility to analyze Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions as clefts and their incompatibility with embedding seems to point towards them constituting a distinct and specific syntactic construction, as we claimed above for English. Let us now reconsider the structural differences between English and Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions, which must be taken into account and ultimately preclude a fully unified analysis of the two.

First, while in English the subject displays accusative case and the verb is a gerundive form, in Italian the EN marker *non* is followed by the complementizer

12. As noted by an anonymous reviewer, Italian adapts the *not-ACC-ing* sentence construction by losing the gerund and the accusative case, which affects the English original form. Formal differences could be due to independent factors, such as the fact that the default case is nominative in Italian and accusative in English, which forces the occurrence of a verbal finite tense introduced by a CP head (*che*, Engl. *that*) only in Italian. This paper primarily focuses on the syntactic structure of these clauses in each language, leaving a more in-depth discussion of the principles underlying the loanword changes to future research.

che ‘that’, the subject is in the nominative case and the verb is in the indicative mood, as we discussed. In addition to that, auxiliaries (77) and modals (78) are allowed in Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions, while in English this option is not available:

(76) Non io che prendo il treno alle 5 del mattino.
 Not-NEG I-NOM that take-PRES.1SG the train at 5 of the morning
 ‘Not me taking the train at 5am.’

(77) Non io che ho preso il treno alle 5.
 Not-NEG I-NOM that have-IND.PRES.1SG take-PRES.1SG the train at 5
 *‘Not me having taken the train at 5am.’

(78) Non io che devo prendere il treno alle 5...
 Not-NEG I-NOM that must-IND.PRES.1SG take-INF the train at 5
 *‘Not me must take the train at 5am.’

On these grounds, Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions cannot be analyzed in exactly the same way as their English counterparts, as there is no *Acc-ing* formation in Italian.

For the time being, it is important to note that the Italian and English constructions share several features and behave similarly with respect to many syntactic and semantic aspects, such as the interpretation of new information, resistance to focalized constituents, accommodation of topics, incompatibility with negative polarity items, among others (see section 2). Accordingly, we propose that the two primary mechanisms we argue are at play for English, also apply to Italian. These two mechanisms involve, as discussed, (i) the merging of negation in higher layers of the clause and (ii) the focalization of a whole chunk of structure. We do not focus on this work on the internal syntax of the structural chunk ‘io che...’, which we argue is focalized in the same way as the *Acc-ing* formation is focalized in English *not-ACC-ing* constructions.

In particular, a higher negation – namely, the one merged in the CP domain of the structure – may lead to the Expletive interpretation of negation, as discussed in section 4 for the English case. Additionally, this higher negation is incompatible with neg-words such as *nessuno* ‘nobody’ and strong NPIs like *affatto* ‘at all’, recall (28), repeated here in (79a), while it does permit PPIs such as *già* ‘already’ (79b):

(79) a. *Non io che saluto affatto nessuno.
 Not-NEG I-NOM that greet-PRES.IND.1SG at all nobody
 *‘Not me greeting no one at all.’

b. Non io che già prendo il treno alle 5
 Not-NEG I-NOM that already take-PRES.IND.1SG the train at 5am
 ‘Not me taking the train at 5am already.’

On the other hand, the focalization of an entire structural segment may account for the remaining properties that Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions share with their English counterparts, *as per* the mechanism we discussed for English. These properties include the asymmetrical behavior with different left-peripheral elements and discourse-related constituents, the introduction of new information, the root nature, and their ungrammaticality in embedding contexts. Notably, consider the inability to accommodate *wh*-elements (80a), nor *perché* ‘why’ (80b) nor a focalized constituent (80c). Topics, on the other hand, yield acceptable sentences (80d):

- (80) a. *Che cosa non io che regalo?
 What thing not-NEG I-NOM that gift
 *‘What not me gifting?’
- b. *Perché non io che prendo il treno alle 5?
 Why not-NEG I-NOM that take-PRES.1SG the train at 5
 *‘Why not me taking the train at 5am.’
- c. *IL TRENO non io che prendo alle 5.
 THE TRAIN not-NEG I-NOM that take-PRES.1SG at 5
 *‘THE TRAIN not me taking at 5am.’
- d. Il treno, non io che lo prendo alle 5.
 The train, not-NEG I-NOM that it-CL take-PRES.1SG at 5
 ‘The train, not me taking it at 5am.’

Assuming that Italian provides only one position for focalized items, these observations follow naturally. If this is correct, we would expect further presuppositional-like elements to surface in Italian not me-sentences, a prediction that is indeed borne out. Consider (81) and (82): in those cases, either the standard negator or the presuppositional negative marker *mica*¹³ (Cinque 1976; Frana & Rawlins 2015) can introduce the sentence, proving that the presuppositional layer is activated:

- (81) a. Non io che mangio la torta
 NEG I-NOM that eat-PRES.IND.1SG the cake
 ‘Not me eating the cake.’
- (82) b. Mica io che mangio la torta!
 Mica-NEG I-NOM that eat-PRES.IND.1SG the cake
 ‘Not me eating the cake.’

13. According to Cinque (1976), *mica* is a presuppositional negative marker since it denies presupposition:

- (i) Mica l’ ho mangiata io la torta!
 Mica it-CL.M.SG have eaten I-NOM the cake
 ‘I did not eat the cake (as you think).’
 Presupposition: ‘You think I eat the cake’.

We propose that the same fundamental ingredients underlying the analysis of English *not-ACC-ing* constructions (section 4) can be extended to their Italian counterparts. Specifically, we argue that (i) the negative marker is merged in the LP, where it receives an expletive interpretation, and (ii) the entire structural chunk following the negative marker is focalized. While a detailed analysis of the internal syntax of the ‘io che...’ segment in *not-NOM-that* constructions remains beyond the scope of this paper, we outline below a preliminary proposal suggesting that the Italian variant may in fact be bi-clausal in nature.

We tentatively note that a possible direction worth pursuing to analyze the syntax of Italian *not-NOM-that* constructions could be regarding them as bi-clausal structures, in line with Poletto & Zanuttini’s (2013) work on *si che/no che* sentences,¹⁴ exemplified in (84):

- (83) a. È poi arrivato Gianni? (Italian)
 Is then arrived Gianni
 ‘Did Gianni arrive in the end?’
- b. Sì che è arrivato.
 Yes that is arrived
 ‘Of course he arrived!’ / ‘Absolutely!’
- c. No che non è arrivato.
 No that neg is arrived
 ‘He did not!’ / ‘Not at all!’

(Examples from Poletto & Zanuttini 2012: 124)

Poletto & Zanuttini (2013) argue that *si/no*, i.e. the polarity particles, are merged in a higher clause, while a lower clause is introduced by the complementizer *che* ‘that’.

Let us observe a contrast that catches one of the properties of *not-NOM-that* constructions as well. When a *si che/no che* sentence is negative in its interpretation, it displays both the polarity particle *no*, as well as the negative marker *non* in the lower clause introduced by *che* (84):

- (84) a. No che non mi hanno invitato a casa loro!
 No that not-NEG me-CL have invited to home their
 ‘They did NOT invite me to their home.’

14. The Italian language makes a syntactic and semantic distinction between *no* and *non*. While *non* is a sentential clitic negation that directly precedes the verb and contributes to propositional negation (e.g., Gianni non viene ‘Gianni is not coming’), *no* typically functions as a polarity or discourse particle. It can appear in isolation as a response (Vuoi venire? –No! ‘Do you want to come? –No!’), or clause-internally in certain marked constructions with a focalizing or corrective function. Structurally, *non* is usually analyzed as occupying the TP layer, while *no* may appear in a higher left-peripheral position, associated with contrastive focus or discourse-related features (c.f., inter alia, Zanuttini 1997; Holmberg 2015; Poletto & Zanuttini 2013).

- b. **No* che mi hanno invitato a casa loro.
no that me-CL have invited to home their

The polarity particle *no* is not enough to make the whole structure negative, as one can appreciate in (84). In a similar fashion, in *not-NOM-that* constructions the negative marker *non* precedes *che* and the interpretation of such construction is always affirmative. This parallelism could suggest Italian *not-ACC-ing* constructions being bi-clausal as well: the negative marker *non* cannot “see” inside the lower clause, whose phases are impenetrable, and therefore the sentence is interpreted as affirmative. This is also in line with our analysis of English *not-ACC-ing* constructions, where the negative marker *not* cannot see inside the Acc-ing construction as it is structurally merged in a higher phase.

6. Concluding remarks

In this work, we discussed a relatively new phenomenon, namely *not-ACC-ing* constructions in English and *not-NOM-that* constructions in Italian, providing the first systematic documentation and description of the latter, as well as a first analysis of their syntax building on the comparison with the English counterpart. We highlighted that in Italian these structures have been imported with some differences. In English, *not-ACC-ing* constructions display the negative marker + subject in accusative case + gerundive verbal form (*Not me losing my housekeys twice this year*); in Italian, *not-NOM-that* have the following configuration: negative marker + subject in nominative case + complementizer *che* ‘that’ + finite verbal form (*Non io che perdo le chiavi di casa per la seconda volta quest’anno*). Both these English and Italian constructions share the same interpretation and may be rephrased as ‘It is surprising and ironic that I lost my housekeys twice this year’.

Building on the structural analysis of English *not-ACC-ing* constructions, we provide a first account of the syntax of the Italian counterpart.

For English, we combined Lowe’s (2019) analysis of *Acc-ing* constructions and Greco’s (2020) analysis of Expletive Negation. In a nutshell, we proposed the derivation in (61), repeated below:

- (85) Structure of a *not-ACC-ing* constructions in English
 $[_{CP} \dots [_{X^0} \text{not}] \dots [_{\text{FocP}} \text{Acc-ing}_{\text{Foc}^0} [\dots t_{\text{Acc-ing}} \dots]]]$

More specifically, we proposed that the negative marker *not* is merged in the CP area, instead of being merged in the IP layer, which is usual for Standard Negation. This makes it possible for the negative marker in CP to be blind w.r.t. the previous v*P phase, which is closed and impenetrable to further syntactic operations, whence the expletive reading and the incompatibility of *not-ACC-ing* constructions with NPIs such as *at all* and the cooccurrence with PPIs like *already*. We argued that the negative marker is externally merged just above FocP and selects it. Taking advantage of the proposal that *Acc-ing* constructions are just AspPs, namely reduced structures lacking the CP layer (Stowell 1982; Reuland 1983;

Yamada 1987; Matsuoka 1994), we argue that the whole Acc-ing construction is moved to the LP of the clause in the specifier of FocP. Non-embeddability and the new information interpretation follows.

On these grounds, we analyzed the syntax of *not-NOM-that* constructions suggesting that the two main components of the analysis provided for English apply to the Italian counterpart, namely (i) negation merged in a higher position and (ii) the focalization of a whole chunk of structure. Additionally, we drew on a bi-clausal analysis, consistent with Poletto & Zanuttini's (2013) work on *si che/no che* sentences, to take into account some of the peculiarities of the Italian form.

References

- Abe, Jun. 1986. The behavior of Anaphora in Gerunds. *Tsukuba English Studies* 5: 87-106.
- Abels, Klaus. 2002. Expletive (?) Negation. In Jindrich, T. (ed.). *Formal Approaches to Slavic Linguistics* 10: 1-21.
- Abels, Klaus. 2005. "Expletive Negation" in Russian: A Conspiracy Theory. *Journal of Slavic Linguistics* 13(1): 5-74.
- Aboh, Enoch O. 2010. C-Type Negation Markers on the Right Edge. In Aboh, E.O. & Essegbey, J. (eds.). *Topics in Kwa Syntax*, 109-139. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands (Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-3189-1_6>
- Batllo, Montserrat & Hernanz, M. Lluïsa. 2013. Emphatic polarity particles in Spanish and Catalan. *Lingua* 128: 9-30.
<<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2012.11.010>>
- Belletti, Adriana. 1990. *Generalized verb movement: aspects of verb syntax*. 1st edition. Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier.
- Belletti, Adriana. 2004. Aspects of the low IP area. In Rizzi, L. (ed.). *The structure of CP and IP*, 16-51. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press (Oxford studies in comparative syntax).
- Benincà, Paola. 1996. La struttura della frase esclamativa alla luce del dialetto padovano. In Lepschy, G. C. & Benincà, P. & Università degli studi di Roma 'La Sapienza' (eds.). *Italiano e dialetti nel tempo: saggi di grammatica per Giulio C. Lepschy*. Roma: Bulzoni.
- Benincà, Paola & Poletto, Cecilia. 2004. Topic, Focus, and V2: Defining the CP Sublayers. In Rizzi, L. (ed.). *The Structure of CP and IP*, 2, 52-75. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bocci, Giuliano. 2007. Criterial positions and left periphery in Italian: Evidence for the syntactic encoding of contrastive focus. *Nanzan Linguistics* (Special Issue) 3: 35-70.
- Bocci, Giuliano. 2008. On the Syntax-Prosody Interface: an analysis of the prosodic properties of postfocal material in Italian and its implications. *Nanzan Linguistics* (Special Issue) 5: 13-42.
- Brunetti, Lisa. 2004. *A unification of focus*. Padova: Unipress (RGG monografie).
- Cépeda, Paola. 2018. *Negation and Time. Against expletive negation in temporal clauses*. PhD dissertation, Stony Brook University.

- Chomsky, Noam. 2001. Derivation by phase. In Kenstowicz, M. (ed.). *Ken Hale: A Life in Language*. The MIT Press.
<<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/4056.003.0004>>
- Cinque, Guglielmo. 1976. Mica. *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Padova* 1: 101-112.
- Cruschina, Silvio. 2012. *Discourse-Related Features and Functional Projections*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
<<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199759613.001.0001>>
- D'Antuono, Nicola. 2024. The syntax of emphatic negation in Modern Irish. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 9(1).
<<https://doi.org/10.16995/glossa.10369>>
- Del Prete, Fabio. 2008. A non-uniform semantic analysis of the Italian temporal connectives prima and dopo. *Natural Language Semantics* 16(2), 157-203.
<<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11050-008-9030-6>>
- Delfitto, Denis, Melloni, Chiara & Vender, Maria. 2019. The (en)rich(ed) meaning of expletive negation. *Evolutionary Linguistic Theory* 1(1): 57-89.
<<https://doi.org/10.1075/elt.00004.del>>
- Denison, David. 1996. The case of the unmarked pronoun. In Britton, D. (ed.). *Current Issues in Linguistic Theory*, 287. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
<<https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.135.20den>>
- Espinal, M. Teresa. 1992. Expletive negation and Logical Absorption. *The Linguistic Review* 9(4).
<<https://doi.org/10.1515/tlir.1992.9.4.333>>
- Espinal, M. Teresa. 1997. Non-Negative Negation and Wh-Exclamatives. In Forget, D. et al. (eds.). *Current Issues in Linguistic Theory*, 75. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
<<https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.155.05esp>>
- Frana, Ilaria & Rawlins, Kyle. 2015. Italian “mica” in assertions and questions. In Bade, N., Berezovskaya, P. & Scholler, A. (eds.). *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung*, 234-251.
- Frascarelli, Mara. 2000. The Syntax-Phonology Interface in Focus and Topic Constructions in Italian. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands (Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory).
<<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-9500-1>>
- Giannakidou, Anastasia. 1997. *The Landscape of Polarity Items*. Groningen: University of Groningen.
- Giannakidou, Anastasia. 2000. Negative ... Concord? *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 18(3): 457-523.
<<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006477315705>>
- Giannakidou, Anastasia. 2011. Negative and positive polarity items. In Heusinger, K.V., Maienborn, C. & Portner, P. (eds.). *Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft / Handbooks of Linguistics and Communication Science*, 1660-1712. De Gruyter.
<<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110255072.1660>>
- Greco, Matteo. 2017. *Surprise Negation Sentences: expletive negation and the left periphery*. University Vita-Salute San Raffaele - IUSS Pavia.

- Greco, Matteo. 2019. On the syntax of surprise negation sentences: A case study on expletive negation. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 38(3): 775-825.
<<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11049-019-09459-6>>
- Greco, Matteo. 2020. *The syntax of surprise: expletive negation and the left periphery*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Halm, Tamás & Huszár, Anna. 2021. Expletive negation in exclamatives – Evidence from Hungarian. *Acta Linguistica Academica* 68(4): 553-583.
<<https://doi.org/10.1556/2062.2021.00445>>
- Holmberg, Anders. 2015. *The Syntax of Yes and No*. 1st edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
<<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198701859.001.0001>>
- Horn, Laurence R. 1989. *A natural history of negation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (The David Hume series).
- Horn, Laurence R. & Katō, Yasuhiko. 2000. *Negation and polarity: syntactic and semantic perspectives*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press (Oxford linguistics).
- Israel, Michael. 1997. The Scalar Model of Polarity Sensitivity: the case of the aspectual operators. In Forget, D. et al. (eds.). *Current Issues in Linguistic Theory*, 209-230. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
<<https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.155.11isr>>
- Jin, Yanwei & Koenig, Jean-Pierre. 2021. A cross-linguistic study of expletive negation. *Linguistic Typology* 25(1): 39-78.
<<https://doi.org/10.1515/lingty-2020-2053>>
- Krifka, Manfred. 2017. Negated polarity questions as denegations of assertions. In Lee, C., Kiefer, F. & Krifka, M. (eds.). *Contrastiveness in information structure, alternatives and scalar implicatures*, 359-398. Dordrecht: Springer.
<http://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-10106-4_18>
- Krifka, Manfred. 2024. Performative updates and the modeling of speech acts. *Synthese* 203(1): 31.
<<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-023-04359-0>>
- Laka, I. 1990. *Negation in Syntax: On the Nature of Functional Categories and Projections*. MIT.
- Lehrer, Adrienne. 1975. Interpreting certain adverbs: semantics or pragmatics? *Journal of Linguistics* 11(2): 239-248.
<<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022226700004552>>
- Lowe, John J. 2019. The Syntax and Semantics of Nonfinite Forms. *Annual Review of Linguistics* 5(1): 309-328.
<<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-011718-012545>>
- Makri, Maria-Margarita. 2013. *Expletive Negation beyond Romance. Clausal Complementation and Epistemic Modality*. University of York.
- Matsuoka, Mikinari. 1994. The Accusative-ing Construction and the Feature Checking Theory. *Tsukuba English Studies* 13: 117-146.
- Merchant, Jason. 2001. *The syntax of silence: sluicing, islands, and the theory of ellipsis*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press (Oxford studies in theoretical linguistics, 1).
- Morris, Colin. 2021. *Not them having a whole zoo—the rise of ironic “not”*. Blogpost. Posted: April 11th, 2021. Retrieved: May 6th 2025. <<https://colinmorris.github.io/blog/ironic-not>>

- Ovalle, Luis Alonso & Guerzoni, Elena. 2004. Double negation, negative concord and metalinguistic negation. In Debenport, A. & Yoshimura, P. (eds.). *Chicago Linguistics Society (CLS)* 38(1): 15-31. Main session. Chicago: CLS Publications.
- Pană Dindelegan, Gabriela Pană & Maiden, Martin (eds.). 2013. *The grammar of Romanian*. 1st edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pereira, Guilherme M. C. 2023. Not me getting with the times: A new kind of not-fragment in English. *Yale Working Papers in Grammatical Diversity* 5(1): 1-22.
- Poletto, Cecilia. 2005. Si and e as CP expletives in Old Italian. In Battlori, M. (ed.). *Grammaticalization and parametric variation*, 206-235. Reprinted. Oxford: Oxford University Press (Oxford linguistics).
- Postal, Paul M. 2005. *Suppose (If Only for an Hour) That Negative Polarity Items Are Negation-Containing Phrases*. Ms. New York University.
- Reuland, Eric J. 1983. Governing -ing. *Linguistic Inquiry* 14(1): 101-136.
- Rizzi, Luigi. 1997. The Fine Structure of the Left Periphery. In Haegeman, L. (ed.). *Elements of Grammar*, 281-337. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands (Kluwer International Handbooks of Linguistics).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-011-5420-8_7>
- Rizzi, Luigi & Bocci, Giuliano. 2017. Left Periphery of the Clause: Primarily Illustrated for Italian. In Everaert, M. & van Riemsdijk, H. C. (eds.). *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Syntax*, 1-30. Second Edition. Hoboken, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
<<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118358733.wbsyncom104>>
- Schütze, Carson T. 2001. On the Nature of Default Case. *Syntax* 4(3): 205-238.
<<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9612.00044>>
- Schütze, Carson T. & Wexler, Kenneth. 1996. Subject Case Licensing and English Root Infinitives. In Stringfellow, A. et al. (eds.). *Proceedings of the 20th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development*, 670-681. Conference on Language Development, Somerville, Mass: Cascadilla Press.
- Stowell, Tim. 1982. The Tense of Infinitives. *Linguistic Inquiry* 13(3): 561-570.
- Tovena, Lucia M. 1996. An expletive negation which is not so redundant. In Zagona, K. (ed.). *Current Issues in Linguistic Theory*, 263-274. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
<<https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.133.21tov>>
- Tsiakmakis, Evripidis & Espinal, M. Teresa. 2022. Expletiveness in grammar and beyond. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 7(1).
<<https://doi.org/10.16995/glossa.5807>>
- Tubau, Susagna. 2020. The asymmetric behavior of English negative quantifiers in negative sentences. *Journal of Linguistics* 56(4): 775-806.
<<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022226719000495>>
- Von Stechow, Christiane & Klein, Wolfgang. 1989. Referential Movement in Descriptive and Narrative Discourse. *North-Holland Linguistic Series: Linguistic Variations*, 39-76. Elsevier.
<<https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-444-87144-2.50005-7>>
- Wiltschko, Martina. 2017. Response particles beyond answering. In Bailey, L. R. & Sheehan, M. (eds.). *Order And Structure In Syntax I: Word Order And Syntactic Structure*. Zenodo.
<<https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.1117686>>

- Wood, Jim. 2014. Affirmative semantics with negative morphosyntax: Negative exclamatives and the New England So AUXn't NP/DP construction. In Zanuttini, R. & Horn, L. R. (eds.). *Micro-syntactic variation in North American English*, 71-114. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yamada, Makoto. 1987. 'On NP-ing constructions in English'. *English Linguistics* 4: 144-164.
<<https://doi.org/10.9793/elsj1984.4.144>>
- Yoon, Suwon. 2011. *'Not' in the Mood: The Syntax, Semantics and Pragmatics of Evaluative Negation*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Zanuttini, Raffaella. 1996. On the Relevance of Tense for Sentential Negation. In Belletti, A. & Rizzi, L. (eds.). *Parameters And Functional Heads*, 181-207. New York: Oxford University Press.
<<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195087932.003.0006>>
- Zanuttini, Raffaella. 1997. *Negation and clausal structure: a comparative study of Romance languages*. New York: Oxford University Press (Oxford studies in comparative syntax).
- Zanuttini, Raffaella. 2001. Sentential Negation. In Baltin, M. & Collins, C. (eds.). *The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory*, 511-535. 1st edition. Wiley.
<<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470756416.ch16>>
- Zeijlstra, Hedde. 2004. *Sentential negation and negative concord*. PhD dissertation, University of Amsterdam.