

Weak and strong NPIs: *nobody* and *anybody* in Albanian and Modern Greek

Proposal

This paper makes three claims. The first is that, although Albanian is a negative concord language similar to Modern Greek (Giannakidou 1993 & 1997), it interestingly exhibits two series of *n*-words like English and Germanic languages. This provides a set of novel data for the study of *n*-words, especially because one class of these *n*-words comprises of weak (Zwarts 1995) NPIs while the other one consists of strong (Zwarts 1995) NPIs.

The second claim is that downward monotonic (DM) operators (Ladusaw 1979) alone are insufficient to capture the entirety of the licensing environments of Albanian NPIs. The weak NPIs are licensed not only in negation, but in a variety of non-negative and non-DM environments such as questions, possibility modals and future (see next section for data). This motivates the use of the non-veridicality framework (Giannakidou 1997) for capturing the licensing conditions of Albanian NPIs, which indeed models their distribution. The novelty of the Albanian data further supports the non-veridicality theory of polarity.

The third claim is that unlike Modern Greek, where the difference between the strong and weak NPIs is purely intonational, the distributional difference in the two series of Albanian *n*-words has a morphological basis. The strong series contains as its first morpheme the NPI-*even* (Giannakidou 2007) thus further supporting a fully compositional account of the strong NPI distribution being based on its morphological specification (the NPI-*even* is only licensed in antiveridical contexts (Giannakidou 2007)).

Main Data and Analysis

DM contexts, negation in particular, license both NPIs (the strong NPIs are in bold).

- (1) Kërkova shumë, por nuk gjeta **asnjë**/ndonjë gjë. (clausal negation)
searched.1SG a-lot but NEG found nothing/anything.NPI
'I searched a lot but I found nothing/didn't find anything.'
- (2) Nuk erdhi **asnjë**/ndonjë të më shikojë. (clausal negation)
NEG came.3SG anybody.NPI SUBJ me see.SUBJ
'Nobody came to see me.'

They are, however, insufficient to capture the entirety of the licensing environments. The following include some of the non-DM contexts that license Albanian NPIs.

- (3) Mundet të kalojë ndonjëri/**asnjëri** të më kërkojë. (possibility modal)
maybe SUBJ come.3SG anybody.NPI SUBJ me search.3SG
'It is possible that anybody will come and look for me.'
- (4) Do gjej ndonjë/**asnjë** shok të më ndihmojë, mos ki hall. (future)
FUT find.1SG any.NPI friend SUBJ me help.3SG NEG have.2SG worry
'I will find some friend to help me, don't worry.'
- (5) Erdhi ndonjë/**asnjë** student të pyesi për rezultatet? (question)
came.3SG any.NPI student SUBJ ask.3SG for the-results
'Did any student come by to ask about the results?'

The distributional difference of the two series of NPIs is fully accounted for morphologically. The NPI-*even* morpheme of the strong NPI restricts its licensing environments only to negation and its absence from the weak NPI greatly increases the repertoire of licensing environments. We are thus left with two classes of NPIs: one narrowly and one widely distributed.

A puzzle

Despite this analysis, one is still faced with the following puzzle:

- (6) Ishte i sëmurë edhe i paaftë për **asnjë**/ndonjë punë fizike. (indicative)
 was sick and incapable for any.NPI work manual
 ‘He/She/It was sick and incapable of any manual work.’
- (7) Për vite të tëra ishte i pamposhtur nga **asnjë**/ndonjë rival. (indicative)
 for years entire was undefeated by any.NPI rival
 ‘For many years he/it was undefeated by any rival.’

Examples (6) and (7) exhibit a peculiar phenomenon: the licensing of a strong NPI without sentential negation¹. We have internal, lexical negation on the adjective *paaftë*. Is, then, lexical negation antiveridical in Albanian? One can easily conclude by checking if lexical negation is an operator that obeys all four of the de Morgan laws.

- (8) paaftë për (not edhe valëzim) \longleftrightarrow (paaftë për not) ose (paaftë për valëzim)
 incapable of (swim and dance) \longleftrightarrow (incapable of swim) or (incapable of dance)
- (9) paaftë për (not ose valëzim) \longleftrightarrow (paaftë për not) edhe (paaftë për valëzim)
 incapable of (swim or dance) \longleftrightarrow (incapable of swim) and (incapable of dance)

The equivalencies in (8) and (9) establish that Albanian lexical negation is antimorphic and hence antiveridical (Zwarts 1998). If we assume that Albanian “incapable” has the same denotation as Albanian “not capable”, then “incapable” does denote the complement relation, and therefore behaves like regular negation. In this regard, it is expected to license strong NPIs, and we have therefore broadened the repertoire of antiveridical licensers to include lexical complement (contradictory) negations.

Keywords: Albanian, negative polarity items, non-veridicality

References

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¹Not all speakers accept the strong NPI in this sentence, but a large portion of the speakers does.