

# Not in the first place

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**Abstract** In this article, I provide a unified explanation for two puzzling phenomena concerning sentence-initial negation: the ban on True Negative Imperatives that is attested in many languages and the ban on sole negative markers in sentence-initial position in V-to-C languages. I argue that both phenomena can be explained once it is assumed after Han (2001) that operators encoding the illocutionary force of a speech act take scope from matrix  $C^\circ$  and may not be outscoped by negation. Consequently, a morphosyntactically negative element can appear in a position in  $C^\circ$  or SpecCP only if it is semantically non-negative or if it can reconstruct to a lower position.

**Keywords** Imperatives · Negation · Negative concord · Speech acts · Verb second

## 1 Introduction: two phenomena

As negation is an operator that applies to complete propositions, one might perhaps expect negative markers to appear in sentence-initial position. However, negative markers cross-linguistically rather tend to occur in the so-called middle field of the clause (cf. Payne 1985; Horn 1989). In fact, in several cases negation is even banned from sentence-initial position. In this article, I discuss two such cases: (i) the ban on True Negative Imperatives that is attested in many languages and (ii) the ban on single negative markers in sentence-initial position in V-to-C languages.

In this article, I argue that both phenomena can be explained in a unified way as a result of the interplay between the syntactic and semantic properties of negative markers and the fact that operators that encode the illocutionary force of a speech act take scope from  $C^\circ$ .

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