

A meaningless negation?

- The presence of a negative marker in Korean *nci*-clauses 'since' as in (1) has been claimed to be **irrelevant to the calculation of the truth conditions of the sentence**.
- Therefore, the negative marker has been viewed as a case of **expletive negation**, i.e. a negative expression with a null semantics because it has been absorbed (Espinal 1992, 2000) and, in this sense, it is never obligatory (van der Wouden 1994).

(1) [*Nay-ka syawe-lul (an) ha-nci*] *cham olay toyessta.*
I-NOM shower-ACC NEG do-since very long.time became
'It has been a long time since I took a shower.'

Against the expletive view, we claim that the negative marker in the *since*-clause does indeed contribute to the sentence meaning by expressing full negation.

Previous accounts

1. J. Yoon (1994): *olay* and *an* form a double negation construction.

J. Yoon claims that, being part of a double negation construction, the negative meaning of *an* is neutralized. The other negative element would be *olay* 'a long time', which the author describes as having a relativized negative meaning.

But *olay* 'a long time' is not a semantically negative element:

- When *an* is not present but *olay* is, the sentence is not negative.
- Only negative markers license NPIs in Korean, but *olay* cannot, as in (2).

(2) [*Ciwu-ka amwuto *(an) manna-nci*] *olay toyessta.*
Jiwoo-NOM anyone (NEG) meet-since long.time became
'It has been a long time since Jiwoo met anyone.'

2. S. Yoon (2011): the presence of *an* triggers a desirability scale.

S. Yoon claims that *an* is an evaluative mood marker that conveys the speaker's attitude and expresses undesirability of the situation described in the sentence (e.g. 'not taking a shower for a long time' in (1)).

But the desirability readings are not intrinsically associated with *an*.

- The desirability readings come from world knowledge, as shown in (3) below.
- Adding *an* to sentence (3) is not likely to trigger undesirability.

(3) [*Minho-ka kenkang-ul wihay tampay-lul #(an) phiwu-nci*] *olay toyessta.*
Minho-NOM health-ACC for tobacco-ACC (NEG) smoke-since long.time became
'It has been a long time since Minho {did not smoke/#smoked} for health.'

Our observations

1. Started vs finished readings

Korean *since*-clauses convey different meanings depending on the presence or absence of the negative marker:

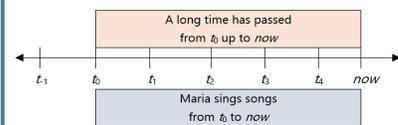
- Without *an*, sentence (4) is **ambiguous** between a **Positive** and a **Negative Reading**.
- With *an*, sentence (5) is **not ambiguous** as it has a **Negative Reading** only.

(4) [*Malia-ka nolay-lul puwlu-nci*] *olay toyessta.*
Maria-NOM song-ACC sing-since long.time became

(5) [*Malia-ka nolay-lul an puwlu-nci*] *olay toyessta.*
Maria-NOM song-ACC NEG sing-since long.time became

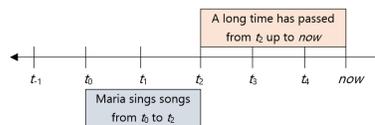
POSITIVE READING

'It's been a long time since Maria started singing songs'
(= Maria has been singing songs for a long time)



NEGATIVE READING

'It's been a long time since Maria finished singing songs'
(= Maria has **not** sung any songs for a long time)



2. For the last time reading

Korean *since*-clauses may contain modifiers such as *macimakulo* 'for the last time' depending on the presence or absence of the negative marker:

- Without *an*, the presence of *macimakulo* is allowed.
- With *an*, the presence of *macimakulo* generates ungrammaticality.

(6) [*Nay-ka macimakulo syawe-lul *(an) ha-nci*] *olay toyessta.*
I-NOM for.the.last.time shower-ACC (NEG) do-since long.time became
'It has been a long time since I took a shower for the last time.'

3. Expectation of iteration reading

Korean *since*-clauses may convey an expectation of iteration of the eventuality expressed in it depending on the presence or absence of the negative marker:

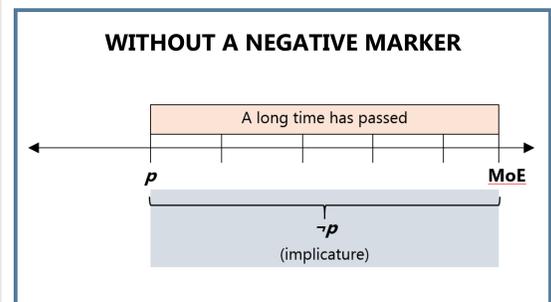
- Without *an*, any eventuality can be part of the construction.
- With *an*, eventualities conceptualized as having **one single instance generate ungrammaticality**.

(7) [*Ku-ka *(an) cwuku-nci*] *olay toyessta.*
he-NOM (NEG) die-since long.time became
'It has been a long time since he died.'

Our account

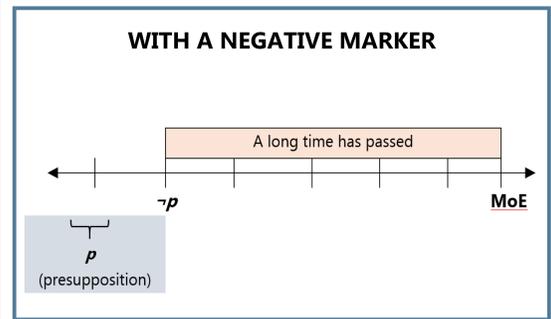
1. Without a negative marker, negation is only an implicature.

- Without a negative marker, the sentence asserts that the eventuality *p* in the *since*-clause held at some point a while ago. The temporal expression, *olay* in our examples, measures the time interval between the point when *p* held and the moment of enunciation (MoE). For the semantics of *since*, see Brée (1985) and Wickboldt (1998).
- The interpretation that **not *p*** held between the point when *p* held and the MoE is an **implicature**. As such, it can be cancelled, which is shown by the availability of the **Positive Reading**.
- The compatibility with the modifier *macimakulo* 'for the last time' is due to the availability of *p* in the assertion.



2. With a negative marker, negation is in the assertion.

- With a negative marker, the sentence triggers the presupposition that *p* occurred until some point, and the sentence asserts that **a long time has passed since the point when not *p*** (i.e., *p* stopped holding).
- The incompatibility with *macimakulo* is due to the **unavailability of *p* in the assertion** (see Cépeda 2017 for a related account on *until*-clauses)
- One-instance eventualities cannot satisfy the **expectation of iteration** because **it is presupposed that *p* already occurred**.
- Therefore, the negative marker in Korean *since*-clauses **does indicate negation**, which is actively present in the assertion.



Conclusion

An expletive account for the negative marker in Korean *since*-clauses is not accurate. The presence or absence of the negative marker affects the truth conditions of the sentence.

Our account overcomes the problems of the previous approaches and avoids postulating an ad-hoc meaningless negation.