

Quirky n-words in Polish: NPIs, Negative Quantifiers or neither?

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The standard accounts of the so-called n-words in Slavic languages take them to be Negative Polarity Items (NPIs) licensed by the presence of an antimorphic contexts, i.e. roughly speaking, by the presence of overt negation marker on the verb. It has been noticed however that in certain environments the same lexical items occur without a c-commanding licenser, i.e. they seem to be functioning as negative quantifiers in languages like (standard) English. The ambivalent behaviour is illustrated for Spanish in (1) (examples from Herburger (1998)):

- (1) a. Nadie vino
Nobody came
b. *(No) vino nadie
Neg came nobody

Roughly speaking, a postverbal n-word requires the licensing negation, whereas a preverbal one does not. The literature splits with respect to the treatment of those items. One approach takes it to be the case of lexical ambiguity. The other stand proposes to treat them univocally, i.e. either as NPIs or as Negative Quantifiers (NQs). In what follows I will try to show that even in Polish (and possibly Slavic in general), which is a strict Negative Concord language, we do find cases of n-words without a sentential negation licenser. This is not to say that the Spanish n-words should be equated with the Slavic ones. The Spanish preverbal n-words are true negative quantifiers in the sense that they *always prohibit* the occurrence of the negative marker and contribute negation that scopes above the event variable. Polish quirky cases, on the other hand, are not productive, occur in a very restricted syntactic environment, and the negation they contribute always have narrow scope w.r.t. the event variable.

I will try to show that Polarity Item behaviour of n-words in Polish corresponds to negative-marking of the predicate, whereas NQ use corresponds to the lack thereof. It should be kept in mind, however, that by NPI behaviour I mean the distributional restriction of being in the scope of sentential negation, and not 'being existential' (as assumed in the literature of

the early 90's). My aim will be to establish what the semantic or syntactic constraints on negative-marking are.

1. Basic facts

Progovac (2000) observes that in certain types of adjuncts *ni*-words in Serbian/Croatian can occur without overt negation marker. The Italian example (4) due to Zanuttini (1991):

- | | | |
|-----|---|---------------|
| (2) | Rekao je to sa n-i-malo zlobe
<i>(He) said it with not-even-little malice</i> | <i>Manner</i> |
| (3) | ?Pojavio se sa ničim u torbi
<i>(He) appeared with nothing in his bag.</i> | ??? |
| (4) | E rimasto con niente in mano
<i>(He) is left with nothing in hand</i> | ??? |
| (5) | On plače zbog ničega
<i>He is-crying for nothing</i> | <i>Reason</i> |

Progovac refers to examples (2) and (3) as Manner adverbials. She does not label the Italian example (4), but by analogy with (3) I suspect she would call it a Manner adverbial too. Example (5) is, in Progovac's terminology, Reason adverbial. I agree with Progovac w.r.t. the label given to example (2) and arguably (5). Yet, I think it is a mistake to subsume the remaining two examples under the Manner umbrella.

It is not the case, however, that all kinds of adverbials in S/C allow unlicensed *n*-words, i.e. with some of them the presence of overt negation is obligatory:

- | | | |
|-----|---|--------------|
| (6) | *Uradio je to u nijednom gradu
'He did that in no town.' | <i>Place</i> |
| (7) | *Rekao je to nijednom prilikom
'He said that at no occasion.' | <i>Time</i> |

Interestingly, the same split among adverbials is present in Polish:

- | | |
|-----|--|
| (8) | a. Odszedł z niczym . ¹
'He left with nothing.' |
| | b. Jego zamiary spęły na niczym
<i>His intentions crawled at nothing</i> |

'His intentions were not realized.'

- c. Pokłóciliśmy się o **nic**.
We quarrelled refl about/for nothing

In Manner adverbials unlicensed n-words seem to be much worse in Polish and Bulgarian than in S/C:

- (11) ??Powiedział to z **żadną** ironią² (Polish)
 'He said it with no irony.'

- (12) ??Kaza go s **nikakwa** ironia (Bulgarian)
 'He said it with no irony.'

What is it exactly about Polish and Bulgarian that makes them pattern together, as opposed to S/C? I propose that it is the presence of the preposition *bez* ('without'), which licenses the occurrence of n-words in Polish and Bulgarian. Thus, in both languages there is a perfect way of expressing the

¹The reviewer suggests that the negation contributed by n-words in quirky cases is present only in the implicature. I tend to disagree, however, since quantification is always subject to contextual restrictions (cf. Westerståhl (1989)). Thus, in those cases there is a contextually identifiable domain ranging over things that are important; and there is an event of leaving, where there is no *x* in this domain such that he left with *x*. This assumption is reinforced by Double Negation readings of quirky cases:

- (9) On nie odszedł z **niczym**.
he neg left with nothing
 'He didn't leave with nothing.' (= 'He left with something')

Note also that the quirky cases discussed here are rather different from 'expletive negation', which is expressed as a verbal particle and does not contribute any negative quantifier whatsoever, as the gloss shows:

- (10) a. Nigdzie nie pójdziesz zanim tego **nie** napiszesz.
nowhere neg go_{2nd-sg-fut} before this neg write_{2nd-sg-fut}
 'You won't go anywhere until you write it.'
 b. Boję się żeby ktoś **nie** przyszedł.
scare_{1st-sg} refl that_{subj} someone neg come_{3rd-sg-past}
 'I am afraid that someone (might) come.'

What's more, the expletive negation seems to be parasitic on the matrix negation in (10a), or on adversity predicate in (10b), neither of which is true of the quirky cases.

²The reviewer observes that the quirky cases seem to involve bare n-words only, and suggests that the 'negative' meaning might come from the determiner. This is an interesting suggestion in itself, and the one corroborated by (11) and (12), the investigation of which, however, would require a different paper. Let me only observe that S/C Manner adverbial in (2) involves an n-word in a modifier position.

same semantics:

- (13) a. Powiedział to bez żadnej ironii
He said it without no irony

This stands in opposition to S/C equivalent of 'without', in the context of which other items, i.e. *i*-pronouns have to be used.

To the group of adverbials licensing the occurrence of NQ mentioned by Progovac we could add directional PPs, as in (14):

- (14) Ta droga (nie) prowadzi **donikąd**
This road (neg) leads to-nowhere

However, the n-word in a determiner position embedded in the same PP is ungrammatical, confirming the reviewer's observations (cf. fn.2):

- (15) Ta droga *(nie) prowadzi do **żadnego** domu.
this road (neg) leads to no house

Analogously to S/C, Time and Place adverbials do not allow any unlicensed use of n-words:

- (16) *Powiedział to nigdy /przy żadnej okazji /w żaden piątek *Time*
He said it never /at no occasion /in no Friday

- (17) *Rozmawialiśmy nigdzie /na żadnej stacji /w żadnej garderobie
We talked nowhere /at no station /in no cloakroom
Place

Progovac assumes that this unexpected split between adverbials is due to the fact that Manner and Reason adverbials are somehow peripheral to the predicate and that is why they do not mark the predicate as negative. Furthermore, she assumes that negativization operates on event structure and that TIME and PLACE are obligatory participants in the event structure. That is why they negative-mark the predicate.

I would like to pursue the observation that Negativization is strictly connected to event semantics, but at the same time I do not find it satisfactory to say that TIME and PLACE are somehow more essential to the predicate than other adverbials. Thus, in the next section I will propose a semantic account of adverbial split. Section 3 will incorporate syntactic requirements into the semantic analysis.

2. Event semantics solution

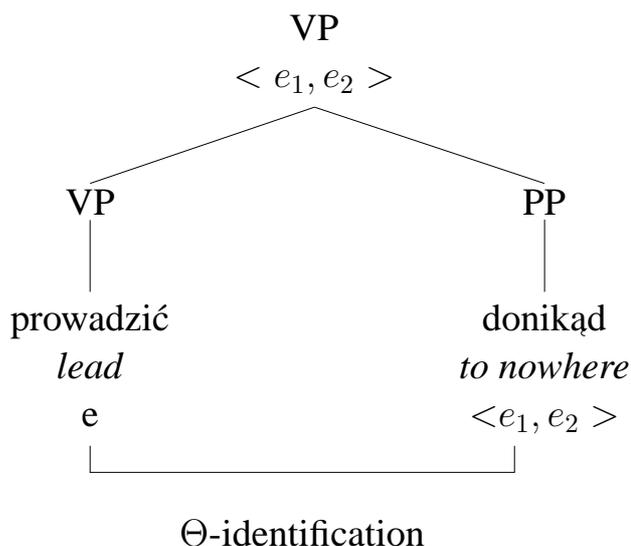
2.1 Directional PPs

Let us first consider example (14) repeated as (18), but this time without the optional negation marker:

- (18) Ta droga prowadzi do-nikąd
This road leads to-nowhere

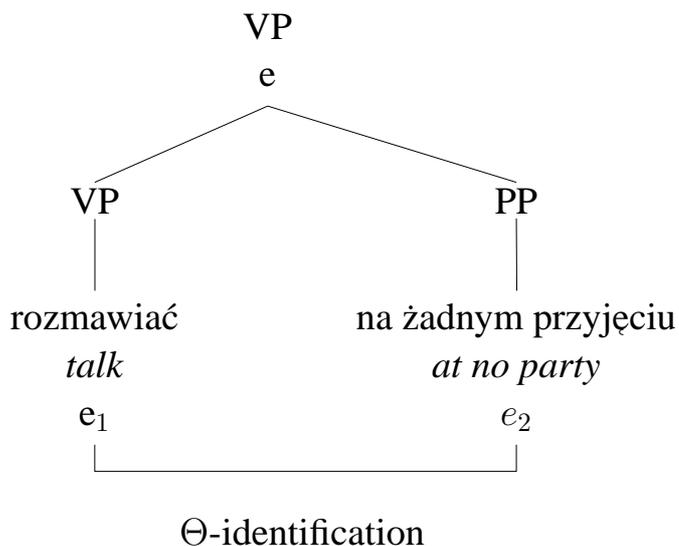
Higginbotham (1995, 2000) analyses examples of this type as accomplishment predicates, even though the verb would actually be classified as an activity under Vendler's (1967) typology. The formation of an accomplishment predicate is possible due to the presence (in certain languages) of a phenomenon that Higginbotham calls *Switch headedness*. This simply means that certain languages allow the semantic head to differ from the syntactic head of certain constructions. This, in turn, is due to the presence in a language of *accomplishment prepositions*. I assume that *do* ('to') in Polish is such a preposition as it is unambiguously always interpreted as telic and can never have a locative interpretation. *Accomplishment prepositions* have two event positions, the first of which undergoes Θ -identification with the event variable encoded by the Verb. The formation of an accomplishment 'macroevent' is schematically represented in (19):

(19) Switch Headedness



Let us now compare this schema with the way atelic/locative interpretation of a PP is achieved:

(20)



What is the difference between the two ways that might be relevant for our purposes, i.e. negative-marking of the predicate? In the former case, i.e. in the telic interpretation, it is only the first event variable of the accomplishment preposition that undergoes Θ -identification with the event variable encoded by the Verb. On the other hand, in the case of a locative preposition, the preposition encodes only one event variable and this variable undergoes Θ -identification. So, impressionistically speaking, in the locative case all the event variables get identified.

Building on the above observation let me make the following proposal:

- (21) **The adverbial negative-marks the verbal predicate iff all the event variables encoded by the Verb and the adverbial undergo Θ -iden-tification.**

(21) is inspired by Reinhart and Reuland's (1993) Reflexivization operation, which restricts the operation of BT to argument positions within a predicational domain. Thus certain cases of 'logophoric' reflexives are simply exempted from BT. Negative-marking in (21) operates in the same way, allowing 'logophoric' n-words to occur.

Thus, in the case of a goal of motion PP, the second event variable of the PP, the one that provides the 'telos' cannot undergo Θ -identification. Consequently, a directional PP does not have the ability to negative-mark the predicate and 'logophoric' n-words embedded in a directional PP are allowed.

Analogously to goal of motion constructions, in source of motion sentences there is no complete Θ -identification of the event variables. Consider the following sentence:

- (22) Ten człowiek pojawił się /przyszedł znikąd
This man appeared refl /came from-nowhere

Let us find out whether *z* (from) can be analysed along the lines of accomplishment prepositions. As noted by Folli (2001, p.151), a preposition is not an accomplishment one if it has a locative interpretation, i.e. if the following statement is true:

if the ball rolled under the table is true, then there is a place x (i.e. under the table), where the ball ends up being.

The same is not true about accomplishment prepositions:

if John walked to the office, there is no such place x (i.e. to the office) where John ends up at the end of his walk.

z patterns with accomplishment prepositions in this respect:

if Ten człowiek przyjechał z Gdańska ('This man came from Gdańsk'), then there is no place x (i.e. z Gdańska) where he started his journey.

- (26) ?Pojawio się sa **nicim** u torbi³ (S/C)
 He appeared refl with nothing in bag.
- (27) E rimasto con **niente** in mano (Italian)
 Is left with nothing in hand

Contra Progovac (2000), who labels the S/C (and Italian) examples as Manner adverbials, it seems to me that those examples have a strong depictive flavour. The question that arises at this point is how are depictives different from other verbal adjuncts and how this difference affects the possibilities of n-word licensing. Following Hinterhölzl (2001) I would like to argue that in the case of depictives there is no identification of events at all. If, as assumed by Hintehölzl, a depictive is a two place predicate containing an event argument *e*, and an individual argument *x* (*z niczym* (*x, e*)), then what gets identified is the argument of the verb (whether external or internal) and the individual argument of the depictive. Crucially we are still dealing with two events. One point in favour of this distinction is noted by Hinterhölzl: the event expressed by the depictive predicate and the event expressed by the verb overlap, but there is no implication that the depictive event was incepted or terminated simultaneously with the inception/termination of the matrix event.

If so, then all the above examples comply with the proposal in (21) in a trivial way: since there is no event variable identification, there is no negative-marking. Consequently, n-words are predicted to occur.

³The reviewer suggests that the negation in (26) and (27) is different from (25). As I argue in the main text (cf. also fn.2) this is not necessarily the case provided we separate semantics from pragmatics. Also, I do not see any obvious way of analysing (26) and (27) as elliptical structures, as the reviewer suggests referring to Giannakidou (2002). Even though I agree that fragment answers, equatives and coordinations might be cases of ellipsis, with depictive quirky sentences (28) is as close as we get to ellipsis:

- (28) On odszedł ~~i on nie odszedł~~ z niczym.
he left and he neg left with nothing
 'He left and he didn't leave with nothing.' (= He left with something)

2.3 Resultatives⁴

There are also some examples of resultative constructions where n-words may occur without the formal licenser.

- (29) a. Buty mu na **nic** przemokły
Shoes him at nothing got-wet
 'His shoes got totally wet.'
- b. Czy spodziewałeś się kiedy, że moje małżeństwo w takie **nic**
Prt expected refl when that my marriage in such nothing
się obróci?
refl turn
 'Did you expect at any time that my marriage would turn into nothing?'

Doroszewski (1958)

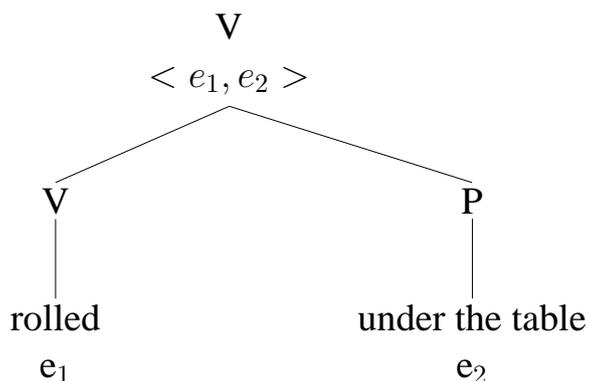
Again, the nature of the prepositions involved, i.e. *na* and *w* needs to be established. Both of the prepositions seem to have a locative interpretation, as in (30), as well as directional one in (31):

- (30) Piłka toczyła się na ścieżce/ w lesie
Ball rolled refl at path_{LOC}/ in forest_{LOC}
 'Ball was rolling on the path'
- (31) Piłka toczyła się na ścieżkę./ w las
Ball rolled refl at path_{ACC}/ in forest_{ACC}
 'The ball was rolling onto the path'

As evidenced by (30) neither *na* nor *w* can be classified as accomplishment prepositions. If so, they must have only one event position. In Higginbotham's view then, the accomplishment illustrated in (31) is achieved via telic pair formation at the level of V projection: the preposition joins the verb and supplies the second coordinate of an accomplishment, as e.g. in (32):

⁴A variety of constructions are called resultatives in the literature. A remark that is in order is that some of the examples included in this section might not be treated as resultatives by all researchers. Thus, Folli (2001) would not call examples (33) resultatives. The terminology, however, is not crucial for our purposes.

(32) Telic pair formation

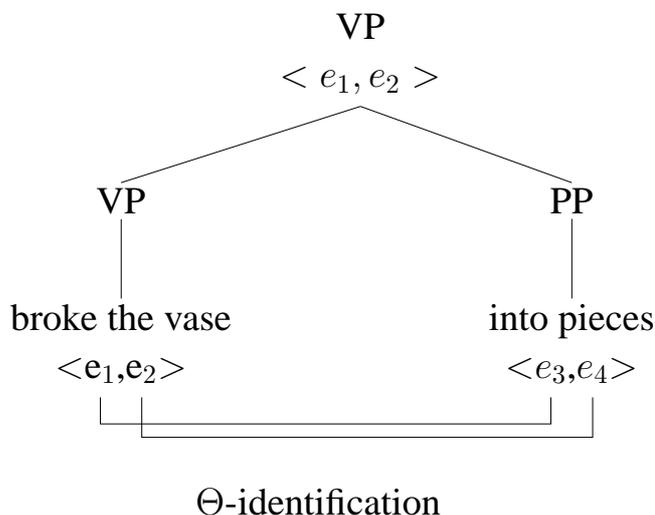


It is crucial, however, to pinpoint that in Polish most of the resultatives involve telic verbs formed by means of a prefix, as e.g. in (33):

- (33) Piotr po-rąbał szafę na kawałki (w pięć minut)
Piotr chopped-up wardrobe at pieces (in five minutes)
 'Piotr chopped up the wardrobe into pieces in five minutes.'

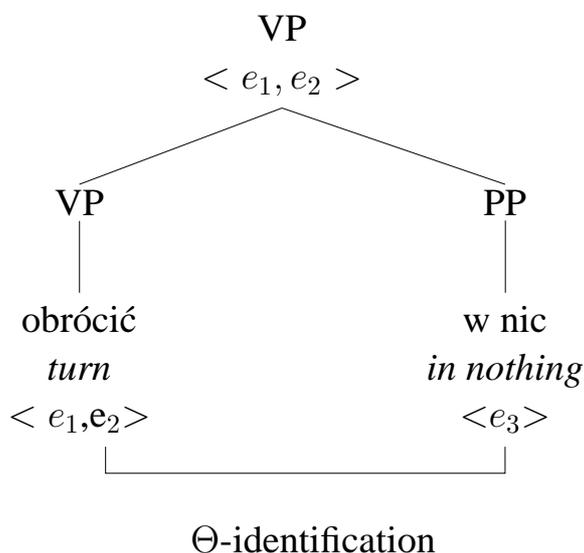
Hence, the structure probably reduces to regular adjunction, as in Folli (2001), because it is not up to the preposition to provide the telos - the verb comes already equipped with an endpoint. Without further inquiring into availability of telic pair formation in Polish, let me just note a difference between English and Polish that is crucial for our purposes. The structure of *John broke the vase into pieces* looks as follows:

(34)



As we see, in English all the event variables get identified. In Polish, on the other hand, the preposition has only one event position and this event position gets identified with the second event variable of the V, as below:

(35)



Now it is clear that the first event variable of the verb encoding the activity part is left unidentified in resultative constructions in Polish. Hence, there is no negative-marking and the occurrence of n-words is predicted. The theoretical possibility exists that if the verb was an achievement, the identification would be total and would predict impossibility of n-words with achievement verbs. This prediction seems to be borne out, since it is difficult to think of any achievement resultatives of the type in (36):

(36) **Bomba wybuchła w nic*
Bomb exploded in nothing

Yet, I endorse Folli's conviction that the majority (if not all) of the achievement verbs are actually used as accomplishments, i.e. the development part (V) is a definitional property of the Verb.

Thus resultatives provide the reason for the conjunctive formulation in (21). They are the case where 'logophoric' n-words are grammatical due to not all of the verbal event positions being identified.

2.4 Problems with the semantic account

The obvious problems with this approach are (37) and (38), where the former is (8c) repeated for convenience:

- (37) Pokłóciliśmy się o nic
We quarrelled refl for?/about? nothing
- (38) Rozmawialiśmy o niczym
We talked about nothing

On the face of it, it seems that full Θ - identification is involved at least in (38). Hence the acceptability of n-words is unexpected. One way to go about explaining examples of this kind would be to say that in the above cases the n-word does not convey any negative quantifier: neither wide nor narrow scope negation and the respective sentences actually mean that we quarrelled or talked about something unimportant. This line of argumentation is actually pursued quite often as e.g. in Błaszczak (2000, p. 243) when she concludes:

(...) in a few cases in which n-words occur without such a licenser (i.e. overt negation - P.J.), they cannot be interpreted quantificationally. On the contrary, in such cases they appear to be a part of idiomatic expression or they are interpreted predicatively.

This, in my view, is just a reflection of the confusion concerning the ways to make sense of narrow scope negation⁵. If we decide to dismiss those cases as non-negative usage, then we see that this particular criterion cuts the pie in a totally unpredictable way, i.e. it cuts across the two examples of depictives repeated below:

- (39) Odszedł z **niczym**
He left with nothing
- (40) Powrócił do kraju **nikim/jako nikt**
He returned to country no-one/as no-one

It is clearly not the case that in (40) he dematerialized on his return to the country, whereas (39) might still be viewed as contributing narrow scope negation. Yet, once we start to wonder about the distinction between negative and non-negative uses, it is not clear where to put the demarcation line. Thus, as pointed out to me by Peter Svenonius (p.c.), (39) could be uttered in a situation when he left with his hand in his pocket. It's just that the speaker does not view this information as relevant. Clearly, negative quantification is almost never absolute, not even in constructions with sentential

⁵Whenever I talk about narrow scope negation I take it to mean narrow with respect to the event variable.

negation. Thus, (41) does not normally imply that there was not a single person downtown:

- (41) Maria poszła do miasta, ale nikogo nie spotkała
Maria went to town, but nobody_{ACC} neg met
 'Maria went downtown but didn't meet anyone.'

Therefore, I conclude that dismissing examples (37) and (38) as non-negative cannot be right, since negative quantification in those cases is relativized to the contextually relevant set of individuals, and is a matter of language use rather than any grammatical principle. Last but not least, accepting the non-negative use criterion would leave us with a tripartite division within the n-word system: NPIs, NQs and non-negative use - a solution which seems suspicious on conceptual grounds.

Obviously, the question why negative quantification in the quirky cases is strongly relativized and the negation necessarily falls under the scope of the event variable remains unresolved.⁶ But if so, then we definitely have a problem with examples (37) and (38). Let us first consider the latter. We saw that in the case of a locative *rozmawiać na żadnym przyjęciu* ('talk at no party') full identification has taken place (cf. (20))

Note, however that the status of *na żadnym przyjęciu* is a bit different from that one of *o niczym* ('about nothing') since *o* is not a locative or directional preposition at all. It seems that it might be analysed as Theme - an argument of the verbal predicate. The preposition is clearly selected by the verb *rozmawiać* ('talk').

The status of (37) is even less clear: it is probably ambiguous between Theme and Reason. Note, however, that the same preposition *o* is used. Clearly, something more must be involved.

⁶Note that a similar situation holds in the cases of Spanish postverbal n-words, contra the reviewer's suggestion:

- (42) Pedro quiere hacer un viaje a ninguna parte
Pedro wants make a trip to no place

Herburger (1998)

It is not true that (42) is truth-conditionally equivalent to English negative quantifier (in e.g. *This road leads nowhere*). Instead, it behaves like Slavic quirky n-words, the only difference being the availability of (non-bare) determiner n-words.

3. Negative marking and c-command

The alternative is to seek explanation in terms of one of the Thematic Hierarchies present in the literature and its relevance for syntactic mapping in the spirit of UTAH. Let us first try Larsonian (1988:382) hierarchy:

- (43) Thematic Hierarchy
 Agent > Theme > Goal/Source > Obliques (Manner, Location, Time,...)

Even a cursory look at the above hierarchy tells us that it is not going to prove useful for our purposes. We have seen up to now that Theme, Goal/Source and arguably Manner allow n-words, so the prediction is that Agent must pattern with them. This is clearly wrong. There are no unlicensed n-words in subject position. On the other hand, Larson would probably group Reason with Obliques, i.e. low in the structure, and we have seen that Reason also licenses n-words⁷. Even if we assume that it is higher than Location and Time, there is no clear way to relate this hierarchy to negative-marking.

On the other hand, we might be better off if we assume the hierarchy that Nilsen (1998) arrives at for Norwegian and Czech:

- (44) [[[[[[DP_{IO} [V DP_{DO} PP_{dir/dat/result/depict/PP_{c-loc}] PP_{instr}] PP_{dir/dat}] PP_{tel}] PP_{atel}] PP_{loc}] DP_{hab}] PP_{temp}]}

On this hierarchy it is only the highest projections that do not allow n-words. We have evidence for PP_{loc} and PP_{temp}, but note that *nigdy* (never) might just as well be treated as habitual (on the analogy with 'every day') and still it would be predicted to be high enough in the structure in order to negative-mark the predicate.

Suppose now that firstly: (i) there are two NegPs (in the spirit of Zanuttini (1991)), with the second one lower and relevant for constituent or narrow scope negation, and secondly (ii) negative-marking reduces to c-command relation. Neg₂P would crucially have to be no higher than below PP_{loc}. Whether it c-commands aspectual PPs or is c-commanded by them is debatable. The Polish equivalent of *He did it in no time at all* is clearly unacceptable:

- (45) *Zrobił to w żadną godzinę
He did it in no hour

⁷Even if Polish example (37) is ambiguous between Reason and Theme reading, Progovac provides the relevant example from S/C.

The ungrammaticality of (45) seems to suggest that Neg₂P is c-commanded by aspectual PPs. Note however that (45) most probably involves total identification. Suppose that *in X time* encodes two event variables (assumption in accordance with Higginbotham (1995) because it spans the temporal distance between the starting point and the endpoint of the event. The verb is an accomplishment and also has two event variables. Then we have negative-marking of the predicate and the impossibility of n-words is predicted.⁸

Thus a solution might be something of a conjoined syntactico- semantic requirement:

- (46) **An adverbial negative-marks the predicate iff**
(i) it c-commands Neg₂P, and
(ii) all the event variables of the V and P are identified

In this case the ungrammaticality of (45) does not tell us anything about the position of Neg₂P with respect to the telic PP. This revised version of the requirement on negative-marking helps us to account for the two problems that stood out under the purely semantic account. Firstly, examples of the kind in (38) are predicted since even though they might involve full Θ -identification, the n-word is (embedded in) a constituent that is not high enough in the structure, i.e. they do not comply with (i). Secondly, we have shown that Manner adverbials also allow 'unlicensed' n-words. Since Manner necessarily fulfils requirement in (ii), it has to be the case that it is unable to c-command Neg₂P because of its low position in the structure.

4. Conclusion and residual problems

In the present paper I have attempted to show that n-words in Polish can also occur without a sentential negation, contrary to standard assumptions concerning strict Negative Concord languages. This phenomenon, however, is restricted to strictly defined contexts. I have argued that the availability of 'unlicensed' n-words turns on the issue of what the adverbial PP is predicated of. This intuition is formalized using Higginbothamistic view on l-(exical) syntax, where the nature of Θ -identification of the adverbial with the verb is of fundamental importance. The semantic requirement, however, turns out to be insufficient. Hence the syntactic position of the PP on the hierarchy of thematic roles also has to be taken into consideration. In case

⁸Note incidentally that total identification is also involved in the atelic PP *mutatis mutandis*: *przez* (for) would have only one event variable encoding the duration and so would the activity verb.

any of the requirements is violated, the PP does not mark the predicate as negative. Consequently, 'logophoric' use of n-words is allowed in those contexts. The considerably impoverished productivity of the data is due to independent reasons, as I argue in Jabłońska (in preparation).

I have also argued that what is usually dismissed as representing a non-negative use of n-words should actually be viewed as negative quantification taking narrow scope with respect to the event variable.

Last but not least, it should be pointed out that this account does not explain the availability of n-words in primary predicates of the type⁹:

- (47) Żaden z niego lekarz!
None of him doctor
 'He is no doctor!'

I assume that those are still examples of negative quantification use of n-words. Yet, it is not immediately obvious how one could talk about Θ -identification in this case apart from the very trivial sense that there is no identification involved at all. Such a solution cannot obviously be right, since it would lead to an unrestricted use of n-words in primary predicates. I leave this issue for future research.

An interesting observation for which I thank the reviewer is that other strict NC languages like Greek do not allow their n-words to be used as predicate nominals, as argued in Giannakidou (2002). This fact is arguably due to their universal nature. Polish is different in this respect, which seems to point to the availability of existential reading of n-words in Polish (or Slavic in general). This is confirmed by the impossibility of scrambling the quirky n-word, as in (48):

- (48) *Ta droga **donikąd** prowadzi.
this road to-nowhere leads

This might be the reason of the crosslinguistic difference between Greek (which requires nominalization for the quirky n-words to be acceptable) on the one hand, and Slavic on the other.

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⁹Thanks to Ora Matushansky for pointing it out to me.

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