

Sources of change in the German syntax of negation

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7.1 Main syntactic patterns of negation

The main syntactic markers of negation in the history of German are the verbal clitic Neg^o neg-particle *ni/ne*, the adverbial-like SpecNegP neg-particle *ni(c)ht*, and the n-words *nio/nie* 'never', *nioman/niemand* 'nobody', *ni(o)wilt/nihit/nichts* 'nothing' etc.¹ Figure 7.1 shows the results of the investigation of a corpus from four Old High German (OHG) texts, viz. the OHG translations of Isidor (around 800) and Tatian (before 850), Otfrid's gospel book (863–871), and the Late OHG Psalter by Notker (before 1020), and three Middle High German (MHG) texts, viz. *Nibelungenlied* (1190–1200, ms. A in comparison with B and C), the *Prose Lancelot* (before 1250), and the sermons by Berthold von Regensburg (approx. 1275). Isidor and Tatian were analysed in their entirety. For the other texts, the first 100 negated clauses were included in the corpus.²

The size of the circles in the diagrams is proportional to the number of negated clauses containing the respective type of neg-marker, which is also given in total numbers in the lines below. Grey represents the Neg^o neg-particle, black the SpecNegP neg-particle, and white the n-words. Overlaps indicate the extent of co-occurrence.

The Venn diagrams in Fig. 7.1 bring out perspicuously the main developments in the syntax of negation. In OHG, clauses were mostly negated by the Neg^o neg-particle *ni* alone (in Late OHG *ne*) on the finite verb. On average 77

¹ Apart from that, occasional negative complementizers (e.g. *nithu* 'unless'), disjunctives (e.g. *noh* 'nor'), and the special focus-indicating neg-particle *nalles* occur, which are not included in Fig. 7.1, so that the numbers for each text do not necessarily add up to the total numbers given. For a discussion of these rarer neg-markers see Jäger (2008).

² Isidor and Tatian contain 50 and 956 negated clauses, respectively. For a more detailed discussion of the corpus and methods see Jäger (2008).

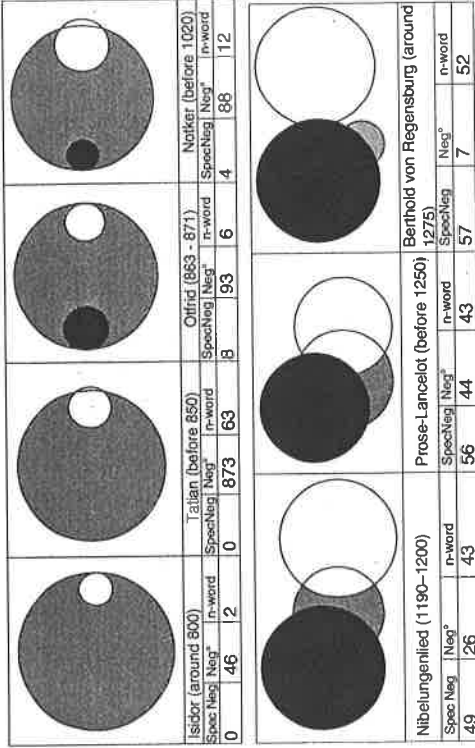


FIGURE 7.1 Proportion and co-occurrence of main types of neg-markers in OHG and MHG

per cent of all negated clauses in the OHG corpus contain this neg-particle as the only neg-marker,³ with a slight decrease towards Late OHG. Very occasionally, an n-word was used, but virtually always co-occurring with Neg^o on the finite verb. Beginning with Otfrid, a second neg-particle is grammaticalized from an adverbially used indefinite pronoun and occurs in a few negated clauses in addition to the Neg^o neg-particle. In Otfrid, the morphologically non-negative indefinite pronoun *wilt* 'anything', adverbially 'at all', is used as a reinforcing second neg-particle in SpecNegP—a development that finds its continuation even today in some Upper German dialects using *it* (< *ihit* < (*io*)*wilt*) as a neg-particle (see below). Notker, on the other hand, uses the original n-word *nieht* (< *ni(o)wilt*) 'nothing', adverbially 'in nothing'/'not at all' in this way. This formed the basis for the Modern Standard German neg-particle *nicht*. However, the Neg^o neg-particle still has a clear monopoly in marking negation.

By the time of the MHG *Nibelungenlied*, the number of negated clauses containing Neg^o *ne/en* has shrunk drastically so that this is already a minority pattern. In Berthold, Neg^o hardly plays a role any more. Yet, there are still

³ Otherwise, the Neg^o neg-particle co-occurs with other neg-markers such as n-words or occasionally a second neg-particle (cf. Fig. 7.1), or with the rarer neg-markers *noh* 'nor', *nalles* 'not', etc. not depicted here.

some rare cases where it even occurs as the only neg-marker in the clause - on average 4 per cent of the negated clauses in the MHG texts. Parallel to the decrease of Neg^o, the SpecNegP neg-particle *nîht* on the one hand, and n-words on the other hand, increase. Neg-marking a clause by means of either the SpecNegP neg-particle alone or by an n-word alone are the main syntactic patterns of negation in present-day German and were already the majority patterns in MHG with 36 per cent and 35 per cent on average, respectively, i.e. together making up over 70 per cent of negated clauses in the MHG texts. Interpreting the diagrams above as depicting a dynamic process, the area of Neg^o is shrinking in the course of the history of German, while the new neg-particle *nîht* as well as the n-words increase, and so to speak step out of the shadow of Neg^o. In this chapter, I will argue that the main causes for the observed syntactic change lie in phonetic and lexical changes w.r.t. the neg-particle according to Jespersen's Cycle on the one hand, and in lexical changes in the feature make-up of individual indefinites leading to a change in the entire system of indefinites, on the other hand.

7.2. Development of the negative particle

7.2.1 *Change along Jespersen's Cycle*

As described by Jespersen (1917), the neg-particle in German and other languages develops in a cyclical fashion—a change that has since become known as Jespersen's Cycle. After a first stage in which the negative particle is a verbal clitic (cf. (1) and (2)) it is phonetically weakened (in German from a full vowel to schwa *ni* > *ne/en*) and reinforced by a second, verb-independent neg-particle that is grammaticalized from an indefinite or minimizer; cf. (3) and (4). The phonetic reduction of the original neg-particle continues until it disappears completely and the second particle is left as the only neg-particle at the third stage; cf. (5) and (6). This neg-particle may eventually be phonetically reduced to a clitic and undergo the cycle in turn—a development that has not yet taken place in German,⁴ but can be observed in English *not/nî* or Haitian Creole *pas*.

Stage I: clitic neg-particle

- (1) *thaz* *thu* *irrimen* *ni* *máht*. Ve (= verb-final)
 that you tell NEG may
 'that you cannot tell'
 O I, 11, 52

⁴ Phonetic reduction of the neg-particle with no syntactic effect so far can be observed in Colloquial German [nɪç] > [nɪç], and esp. in Saxon dialect [nɪ].

- (2) *sí* *ni* *mohta* *inbéran* *sin* V2
 she NEG could do-without him
 'She could not do without him'
 O I, 8, 3

Stage II: clitic and free neg-particle

- (3) *daz* *ich* *drizic* *pfunt* *nîht* *ennaeme* Ve
 that I thirty pounds NEG NEG-take
 'that I would not take thirty pounds'
 Bert I, 176 (p. 30)
- (4) *Ich* *enwil* *es* *nîht* *erwînden*, *sprach* *aber* *der*
 I NEG-want it NEG desist, said but the
chune *man*. V2
 brave man.
 '“I will not desist,” said the brave man'
 Nib III, 117, 1

Stage III: free neg-particle

- (5) *sit* *wir* *ir* *nîht* *erchennen* Ve
 since we them NEG recognize
 'Since we don't recognize them'
 Nib (A) III, 84, 3
- (6) *Des* *ist* *mir* *nîht* *ze* *invote* V2
 that is me NEG to mind
 'That is not on my mind'
 Nib III, 61, 1

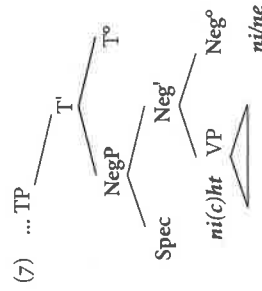
While all three stages are clearly evidenced in my historical data, one noteworthy result of the quantitative analysis is the fact that there is no evidence for a stable stage-II period in the corpus.⁵ OHG is a stage-I language, with very occasional occurrences of the stage-II pattern in later OHG. In the MHG texts of *Nibelungenlied*, the *Prose Lancelot*, and Berthold, however, the use of *nîht* alone is already far more frequent than that of the bipartite neg-particle, in contrast to the usual characterizations of MHG. Most historical grammars and textbooks take the bipartite neg-particle to be the standard in

⁵ Additional investigation of the first 100 negated clauses from the Early MHG Wiener Genesis (1060–80) confirms this result and nicely shows the transition: It still resembles OHG in that Neg^o is used far more frequently on its own than together with the SpecNegP neg-particle. The latter, however, increases in total number and occurs about as frequently on its own as together with Neg^o; see Jäger (2008).

MHG, e.g. Wolf (2000: 1356): 'Im Mittelhochdeutschen ist die doppelte Negation *ne* + *nihht* geradezu die Norm' ('In MHG, the double neg-particle *ne* + *nihht* is really the norm'; cf. also Dal 1966: 164; Grewendorf 1990: 86; Schmidt 1993: 276; Paul 1998: 398f.). However, my corpus analysis reveals that only 13, 27 and 4 per cent of negated clauses contain *ne/en* + *nihht* in the *Nibelungenlied*, *Prose Lancelot*, and Berthold, whereas the proportion of *nihht* as the only marker of negation is at 35, 28, and 45 per cent, respectively. MHG is thus already a lot closer to Modern German w.r.t. the syntax of the neg-particle than has generally been assumed so far.

7.2.2 Syntactic analysis

Following Pollock (1989), neg-particles reside in a functional projection NegP above VP. Cross-linguistically, there is variation as to the phrase-structural status of neg-particles as the head and/or specifier of NegP (Ouhalla 1990; Haegeman 1995; Zanuttini 1997).⁶ Modelling diachronic variation in analogy to cross-linguistic variation in line with Lass's (1997) Uniformity Principle, I assume the following syntactic structure for German (cf. Jäger 2005, 2008):



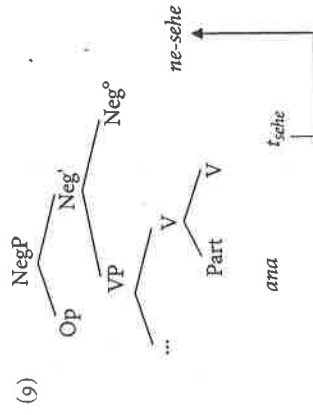
As a verbal clitic, *ni/ne* interacts in head chains, viz. verbal movement, and is thus the head Neg°, much like French *ne*. As the verb moves out of VP to any higher functional projection, it moves through Neg° according to the Head Movement Constraint and head-adjoints to *ni/ne* which moves along with it. Therefore, *ni/ne* is always bound as a proclitic to the finite verb, be it in Ve or V1/V2 clauses, cf. (1)–(4).⁷ Alternatively, one may assume that the complex of *ni/ne* + V is formed in the lexicon, and then checked in Neg°. At any rate, it is syntactically linked to the Neg° position.

⁶ Other kinds of cross-linguistic variation that have been suggested include the selectional features of Neg° (selecting TP or VP, cf. Ouhalla 1990) and the number of NegPs (Zanuttini 1997).

⁷ MHG *ne* may secondarily attach as an enclitic to an adverb or pronoun. However, this only occurs once it has moved along with the verb to second position, i.e. C°, and is generally rare. In my corpus, it only occurs in *Nibelungenlied*, e.g. *siz kvnde in baz descheiden niht der groeten* 'She could not well conceal him from the good one' *Nib* (A) I, 14, 2.

Ni(c)/ht on the other hand, does not interact with verb movement. It is in a fixed position in the topological Middle Field so that it occurs before the finite verb in Ve clauses (cf. 3, 5), but after it in V1/V2 clauses (cf. 4, 6) and generally before non-finite verb forms occupying the Right Sentence Frame (cf. 4). *Ni(c)/ht* therefore occupies SpecNegP (cf. Buring 1994; Hauptmann 1994; Haegeman 1995 for Modern German). In line with the usual assumptions on the German INFL projection and the analyses by Buring (1994) and Hauptmann (1994) for Modern German, I assume a head-final NegP in German.⁸ A head-initial NegP along the lines of Abraham (2003) would wrongly predict a consistently pre-VP placement of *ni/ne* + V even in Ve clauses. Further evidence for a head-final NegP comes from the attested word order of separable verbal particle (in V°)-*ni/ne*-Vfin:

- (8) *daz er siè fürder/ ána ne-sêhe.*
that he her further at-NEG-look
'that he would not look at her any more'
N 9, 32 (II)



Crucially, SpecNegP *ni(c)/ht* is placed left of VP which in turn may be emptied through scrambling (cf. Webelhuth 1990; Buring 1994). A position right of VP as suggested for Modern German in Grewendorf (1990) or at the right edge within VP as suggested for OHG/MHG in Abraham (2003) fails to predict the placement of *ni(c)/ht* before VP-internal constituents such as PPs (cf. 6) or predicate nouns (cf. 10), and before non-finite verbs (cf. 4), as well as the finite verb in Ve clauses (cf. 3, 5).

- (10) *daz ist niht gütikeit*
that is NEG meanness
'That is not meanness'
Bert I, 256

⁸ Compare Haegeman's (1995) analysis of West Flemish with head-final Neg° hosting *en*.

My analysis further differs from the one by Abraham (2003) as well as that by Weiß (1998) for historical German, who both stipulate rather drastic spontaneous syntactic changes (e.g. from one to two NegPs and back to capture single vs. bipartite neg-particle, from VP-internal head-adjoined Neg° to an additional functional projection NegP etc.), in that I propose that the syntactic structure itself remains unchanged with a single functional projection NegP above VP and that only the lexical filling changes. This approach is based on the heuristic assumption of the Inertial Theory of syntactic change (Keenan 1998, 2002, this volume; Longobardi 2001a) according to which syntax does not change spontaneously and no syntactic change should be assumed unless it is absolutely necessary in view of the data. OHG, MHG, and Modern German are all neatly captured by the structure in (7) and no change in syntax proper need be invoked w.r.t. negation.⁹

Jespersen's Cycle in German and other languages can thus be reinterpreted as a change within the NegP from a stage where only Neg° was overt to stage II where an additional element was grammaticalized into the specifier of NegP so that both positions were filled until, at stage III, the head Neg° could remain non-overt and only the specifier was filled until it would finally be reanalysed as Neg° (cf. Rowlett 1998; Jäger 2005 and 2008; van Gelderen 2004b and this volume).

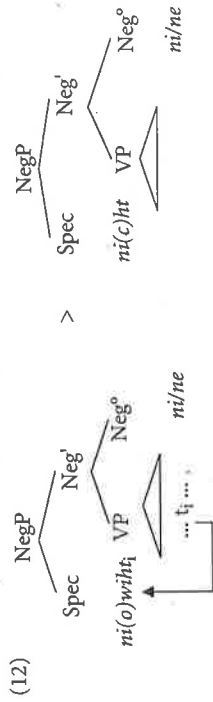
7.2.3 Grammaticalization of the second neg-particle

As discussed above, the German neg-particle *ni(c)ht* was beginning to be grammaticalized into the specifier of NegP in Late OHG. It originates in the OHG n-word *ni(o)wîht* (late OHG *niēht*) 'nothing' which could be used as a verbal argument but also clearly adverbially meaning 'not (at all)':

- (11) Ih nehábo/ niēht in geméitun só uîlo geuueînot.
 I NEG-have not at all/NEG in vain so much cried
 'I did not cry that much in vain'
 N 6, 11 (= 20, 23f.)

This development resembles that of the equivalent n-word into the neg-particle in English (*nought/nawiht* > *not*), Dutch (*niet* > *niet*), Greek (*ouden* > *dén*), etc. The development in English has been explained in generative diachronic theory in terms of a change from movement towards Merge into SpecNegP (Roberts and Roussou 1999; van Kemenade 2000, van

Gelderen 2004b and this volume: her principle 'Late Merge'). This analysis rests upon the assumption formulated in the Neg-Criterion by Haegeman and Zanuttini (1991) that n-words need to be in a Spec-head relation to a negative head, or in Minimalist terms need to locally check their neg-feature against that of the negative head. Thus the former object n-word meaning 'nothing' would move to SpecNegP for some period before learners lacking cues for this movement operation would reanalyse the item as being merged directly into that position. Applied to German on the basis of structure (7), the assumed development can be illustrated as in (12):



However, a number of issues arise from the Move-to-Merge analysis of the grammaticalization of SpecNegP. First, why was it exactly the n-word meaning 'nothing' that was grammaticalized? An obligatory movement to SpecNegP for checking reasons would presumably hold for all n-words, not just for 'nothing'. One might expect that, for instance, the most frequent n-word would be grammaticalized. In my OHG corpus, this is *nioman* 'nobody' rather than *ni(o)wîht*.

Another problem for this analysis is the fact that, besides n-words, also negative polarity items (NPIs) were grammaticalized as SpecNegP. A well-known example is French *pas* (originally 'step'). Evidence from the history of German was already briefly mentioned above: Otrid uses the original NPI-indefinite *wîht* 'anything'/'at all' as a reinforcer or second neg-particle:

- (13) thaz ér mir hiar ni dérré, ouh uûht mih ni gimérré.
 that he me here NEG let-wither also at all/NEG me NEG obstruct
 'that he won't let me wither here and not obstruct me at all'
 O I, 2, 30

Similarly, MHG *ih* (< *io*)*wîht*, which is also still used as an argument indefinite 'anything' (cf. 14), occasionally occurs as a neg-particle, even as the only neg-marker in the clause (cf. 15):

- (14) ob ich uff keynen uwern man icht zu fordern
 if I of any your man anything to claim

⁹ For an analysis of English negation without a change in syntactic structure compare van Gelderen (2004b) in contrast to van Kemenade (2000), Lenerz (1984) and Axel (this volume) arrive at comparable results for other syntactic phenomena in the history of German, viz. subordinate clauses and verbal placement.

han oder er off mich
 have or he of me

'if I have anything to claim from one of your men or he from me'

Lanc 34, 165

(15) Wir sulen den iungen herren enphahen dester baz, / daz wir ih
 we shall the young lord receive all-the better that we NEG
 verdienen des snellen rechen haz.

deserve the brave warrior's hatred
 'We shall receive the young lord all the better, so that we do not/in no
 way deserve the hatred of the brave warrior'

Nib (A) III 105, 2

This pattern survived in some Upper German dialects such as certain Bavarian (Schmeller 1872), South-East Swabian (Grimm 1890) and North-East Swiss dialects: They use *ih/et* (< *ih*) as a neg-particle instead of *nit/net*, a variant of *nicht* which is otherwise used in Upper German.

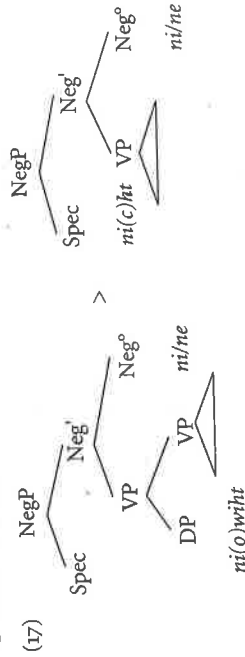
(16) Des ka it sei. Swabian (Grimm 1890: 714)
 that can NEG be
 'That's not possible'

A movement requirement along the lines of the Neg-Criterion should obviously not hold for non-n-words such as the NPI-indefinite *iowih/ih*. However, we find an exactly parallel grammaticalization development: It is first used as an argument, then also adverbially and eventually grammaticalized as a second neg-particle.

Finally, recent syntactic and semantic research has independently cast doubt on the underlying assumption of an obligatory movement of n-words to SpecNegP. Apart from the fact that not all n-words move to SpecNegP in overt syntax, even the assumption of an obligatory covert movement is problematic. Déprez (1999) shows that in Haitian Creole, *wi*-movement is subject to the ECP, yet the presumed movement of n-words into the specifier of *pas* in the case of NC (Negative Concord) constructions is not. Penka and Stechow (2001) argue for Modern German n-words that form part of idioms or are embedded under modals that these have to be *in situ* at LF to achieve the correct semantic interpretation. I will therefore assume that n-words are not inherently negative quantifiers, but possess a merely formal, uninterpretable neg-feature that can be checked non-locally under c-command by the operation Agree (Chomsky 1999; cf. also Zeijlstra 2004), see (20) below.

Without an obligatory movement of n-words to SpecNegP, the Merge-to-Move analysis of the grammaticalization of neg-particles no longer holds.

I therefore suggest an alternative analysis according to which the syntactic input configuration for the grammaticalization of the second neg-particle is the adjacency of the adverbially used n-word to SpecNegP. This also captures the intuition of Behaghel (1918) that the origin of the use of *ni(c)/ih* as a neg-particle is the adverbially used DP *ni(o)wih/ih* 'not at all/in nothing/in no way'. Adverbial use of accusative DPs is common in OHG. In contrast to the VP-internal argumental *ni(o)wih/ih*, the adverbially used DP is in a VP-adjoined position so that a string-neutral reanalysis of VP-adjoined to SpecNegP is possible as illustrated in (17):



Another advantage of this analysis is that it explains why it was the n-word 'nothing' that was grammaticalized, and not for instance 'nobody': There are no instances of adverbial 'nobody'. Furthermore, it allows a unified account of the grammaticalization of neg-particles such as German *ni(c)/ih* and English *not* and the entirely parallel development in the case of former NPIs such as German *iowih/ih* > *ih* > *it* that is also attested both in argumental ('anything') as well as adverbial use ('at all/in anything/in any way').

7.3 Indefinites in the scope of negation and Negative Concord

7.3.1 Negative Concord in OHG and MHG

OHG and MHG were Negative Concord (NC) languages: They allowed for constructions with several neg-markers in one clause that is interpreted as containing single semantic negation. In both OHG and MHG, NC basically only occurred in the form of Neg-Doubling (co-occurrence of the neg-particle and an n-word, cf. den Besten 1986) of the Neg⁰ neg-particle and an n-word:

(18) (& precept/ illis. ne cui dicerent.)
 gïbot her/ in tho thaz sie niheinagamo
 told he them then that they nobody

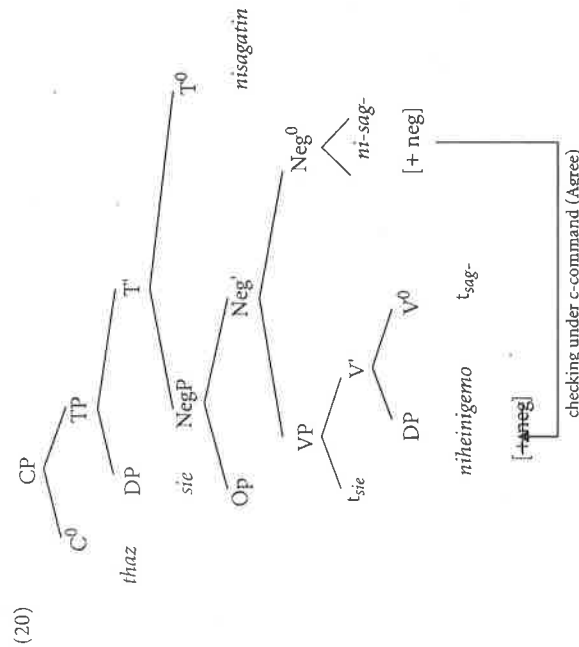
OHG

nisagatin
NEG-told
'Then he told them not to tell anybody'
T 130, 15f.

- (19) Da enwart nymand konig, er enwürð darzu
There NEG-became nobody king, he NEG-was to-it
erkorne.
chosen
'Nobody became king there, unless he was chosen'
Lanc 10, 9

MHG

As argued above, the formal neg-feature of the n-word is checked under c-command by Neg⁰. The n-word may accordingly remain *in situ*:



There are no or hardly any occurrences of NC of the type of Neg-Doubling between an n-word and the SpecNegP neg-particle *ni(c)ht*, or of so-called Neg-Spread i.e. the co-occurrence of several n-words. In other words, phrasal neg-markers generally do not co-occur, with one noteworthy exception: The MHG *dēheim/kein* 'any/no' often also co-occurs with neg-markers other than Neg⁰; cf. (21), (22). This special role is, however, due to its particular diachronic development, as will be discussed below.

- (21) wan er des niht enberm wil von dekeinem menschen
because he that NEG miss wants of any/no man
'because he does not want to miss it of any man [i.e. he wants it from everybody]'
Bert I, 24 (6)

- (22) aber sīn freude hāt niemer mēr kein ende
but his joy has never more any/no end
'but his joy will never have an end'
Bert I, 14 (4)

While co-occurrence of several phrasal neg-markers is hardly or not at all attested in OHG and MHG, this is the only type of NC in those Modern German dialects that allow for NC, e.g. Bavarian:¹⁰

- (23) Mia hod neamad nix ned gschengt
me has nobody nothing NEG given
'Nobody gave anything to me'

These dialects can therefore not simply be seen as having preserved the original historical state as is sometimes implied. Instead, we find syntactic change w.r.t. NC in German in two ways: While NC disappeared in the Standard language, a new type of NC developed in some dialects. Again, this is arguably linked to the development of the indefinites, in particular *dēheim/kein*, as will be discussed below.

7.3.2 Competing patterns

While OHG and MHG allowed NC, it was never obligatory in clauses with indefinites in the scope of negation. However, there is a significant difference between OHG and MHG concerning the main pattern competing with NC—a change that is indicative of a change elsewhere in the system.

When an indefinite pronoun or adverb occurred in the scope of negation, three basic syntactic patterns were possible both in OHG and MHG: Besides marking negation on the indefinite as well as through the clitic neg-particle on the verb, i.e. NC, negation could be marked by the Neg⁰ neg-particle only, using a type of indefinite other than an n-word (notably an NPI-indefinite), or it could be marked on the indefinite only and the neg-particle was lacking.¹¹

¹⁰ Example from Helmut Weiß, p.c.

¹¹ For a discussion of possible factors governing the choice of the different patterns, such as relative order or adjacency of indefinite and Vfin, see Jäger (2005, 2008).

TABLE 7.1 Distribution of negation patterns I, II and III in OHG and MHG

	I (NC)	II (ni/ne + V, indef.)	III (V, n-word)
OHG			
Isidor	18% (2)	82% (9)	0% (0)
Tatian	87% (60)	9% (6)	4% (3)
Otfrid	35% (6)	65% (11)	0% (0)
Notker	85% (11)	8% (1)	8% (1)
average	56%	41%	3%
MHG			
<i>Nibelungenlied</i>	17% (8)	4% (2)	79% (37)
<i>Lancelot</i>	37% (16)	2% (1)	61% (26)
Berthold	9% (4)	0% (0)	91% (42)
average	21%	2%	77%

(24) OHG/MHG syntactic patterns with indefinites in the scope of negation

- pattern I: NC (Neg° on V + n-word)
- pattern II: negation marked by neg-particle only (Neg° on V + (NPI-)indef.)
- pattern III: negation marked by n-word only (n-word, no Neg° on V)

The frequency of these three different syntactic patterns in the OHG and MHG corpus is given in Table 7.1.

NC was the majority pattern in OHG: On average 56 per cent of negated clauses including indefinites show NC.

- (25) (neque patrem quis nouit nisi filius.)
 noh then fater niueuiz nioman nibi ther sun
 nor the father NEG-knows nobody if-not the son
 'nor does anybody know the father but the son'

T 104, 5

Use of an n-word only is hardly attested (only 3 per cent on average; compare also the diagrams in Fig. 7.1). The main pattern competing with NC with 41 per cent on average was to mark negation only through the neg-particle and not to use an n-word indefinite, e.g.:

- (26) (In qua sententia nemo dubitet...)
 In dhesernu quhide ni bluchisoe eoman, ni dhiz sii chiuuissio...
 in this saying NEG doubt anybody NEG this be certainly
 'Nobody shall doubt that in this saying, it is certainly...'
 Is III, 6

In MHG, on the other hand, the main pattern competing with NC was the use of an n-word only, e.g.:

- (27) Und sie hatten nymant miteinander gewonnen dann
 And they had nobody with-each-other won than
 ein junges knebelin kleyn
 a young boy small
 'And they had no child with each other apart from a small boy'
Lanc 10, 3

In fact, this pattern is already the majority pattern and amounts to an average of 77 per cent of all clauses with an indefinite pronoun or adverb in the scope of negation in the MHG corpus. NC has decreased to an average of 21 per cent, whereas neg-marking through Neg° only—the main competing pattern in OHG—is hardly found at all any more (only 2 per cent on average).

The optionality of NC can thus be traced back to different sources: In OHG, it is due to an optionality in the choice of the type of indefinite roughly comparable to the situation in English cf. (28) (with the difference that in the non-NC language of Modern Standard English, n-words do not co-occur with the neg-particle), whereas in Slavic languages, for instance, an n-word has to be used wherever it is licensed and thus NPIs are excluded (cf. Pereltsvaig 2004).

- (28) a. I got nothing for my birthday English
 b. I didn't get anything for my birthday

The optionality of NC in MHG, by contrast, is due to the optional use of the Neg° neg-particle. This makes MHG similar to languages such as Colloquial French or West Flemish (cf. Haegeman 1995):

- (29) da Valère woarschijnlijk niemand (en)-kent West Flemish
 that Valère probably nobody NEG-knows
 'that Valère probably does not know anybody'

The change in the source of the optionality of NC is linked to a change in the system of indefinites.

7.3.3 Underlying changes in the lexicon: the system of indefinites

With the help of the features [\pm affective]¹² and [\pm negative], a third type of contexts can be distinguished with respect to polarity, besides negated, i.e. [+affective, +negative], and positive or [-affective, -negative] sentences, viz.

¹² A term used since Klima (1964) to cover all NPI-licensing contexts, negated clauses as well as weak NPI contexts. Ladusaw (1979) identified affectivity with downward entailment, whereas Giannakidou (1998) argued that the weaker notion of non-veridicality is required to capture NPI-licensing.

so-called weak NPI or [\pm affective, \pm negative] contexts. Among the latter, there are conditionals, questions, the standard of comparison, clauses dependent on negated matrix clauses ('indirect negation'), clauses dependent on adversative matrix predicates such as 'deny', 'forbid', 'fear', 'refuse', etc., restrictive clauses on universal quantifiers, the context of lexical items meaning 'hardly', 'rarely', 'before', etc. This tripartition of contexts is reflected in the fact that many languages differentiate three corresponding types of indefinite pronouns and adverbs: 'normal' (or PPIs), NPIs, and n-words, compare English *something*, *anything*, *nothing*, etc. Other languages show underspecification w.r.t. one or the other feature thus comprising of only two sets of indefinites for different polarity.

The history of German has been little investigated in this respect so far. My data indicate that OHG also showed a largely intact three-set system of indefinites including 'normal' or PPI indefinites such as *sum* 'some' and the *etes*-series (*eteslih* 'some', *eteswaz* 'something', *eteswer* 'somebody', *eteswenne* 'some time', *etewar* 'somewhere'), NPI indefinites such as *dehein* 'any' and the *io*-series (*iowihit* 'anything', *ioman* 'anybody', *io* 'ever', *iowergin/iogioner* 'anywhere'), and n-words such as *nehein* 'no' and the *ni(o)*-series (*niowihit* 'nothing', *nioman* 'nobody', *nio* 'never', *niowergin/niomer* 'nowhere'). As described above, there was a degree of optionality whether an NPI or an n-word was used in the scope of negation in OHG.

Crucial changes in the system of indefinites took place during and at the end of the MHG period.¹³ Through the change of individual lexical items, the three-set system of indefinite pronouns and adverbs was virtually reduced to a two-set system based on the opposition of [\pm negative] and underspecification w.r.t. [\pm affective]. The category of NPI indefinites basically died out, the only 'survivor' being the Modern German indefinite NPI adverb *je* 'ever'. This change happened through the extinction or shift in type of individual lexemes - developments that can be observed in a number of languages.¹⁴ Thus, the NPI *iowihit/iht* 'anything' became extinct in the standard language and the former corresponding PPI *eteswaz/etwas* 'something' came to be used in weak NPI contexts also. On the other hand, the former NPI *ieman*

'anybody' was extended in distribution to positive contexts, replacing the former PPI *eteswer* 'somebody', and turning into a 'normal' indefinite.¹⁵ Similarly, *tergen* 'anywhere' lost its restriction to NPI contexts and, in combination with *wh*-indefinites, formed new 'normal' indefinites such as *irgendwo* 'anywhere/somewhere', *irgendwie* 'anyhow/somewhat', etc. While some NPI indefinites became 'more positive', the opposite development towards 'more negative' is also attested. In MHG, several NPIs showed this tendency, notably *ieman* 'anybody' and *iht* 'anything'. Recall that the latter still occurs as the neg-particle *it/et* in some Upper German dialects. In the standard language, however, only one former NPI has permanently turned into an n-word, viz. *dehein/kein* 'any' > 'no', replacing the former n-word *nehein* that only survived in a few dialects (cf. Jäger 2007).

What is at the basis of these kinds of shifts in distributional type is the enrichment with or loss of formal features that are only licensed in specific contexts.¹⁶ As *dehein/kein* turns into an n-word, for instance, this lexical item is enriched with an uninterpretable formal neg-feature which needs to be checked against the interpretable neg-feature of (in Modern German non-overt) Neg^o so that *kein* can only occur in the scope of negation in Modern German. The more formal features a lexical item possesses, the more limited is its range of distribution. The described changes in the system of indefinites can therefore be seen as a number of interrelated changes in the lexicon.

With the virtual loss of the category of NPI-indefinites, there ceased to be an optionality of the type of indefinite in the scope of negation: n-words became basically obligatory in negated contexts. Thus it became increasingly possible to identify negation just through the indefinite without an additional neg-particle in those cases. The reduction of the indefinite system therefore, in combination with the loss of the overt Neg^o neg-particle according to Jespersen's Cycle,¹⁷ contributed to the loss of NC in German—a natural development that started well before the influence of prescriptive grammars. As mentioned above, the ratio of NC constructions amongst all clauses containing an indefinite in the scope of negation already decreased by 35 per cent on average from OHG to MHG.

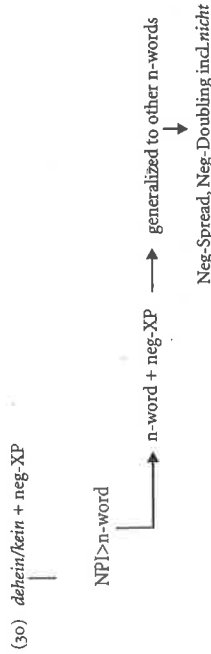
Interestingly, the change in the system of indefinites arguably also contributed to the later emergence of a new type of NC, viz. co-occurrence of several neg-XPs. The development of the former NPI *dehein/kein* plays a crucial role here. Recall that this indefinite is the only n-word that co-occurs

¹³ In Upper German dialects, by contrast, the NPI *ieman* died out and the former PPI *ete(s)wer* > Bavarian *ebhal/Swiss German öpper* was extended into weak NPI contexts.

¹⁴ An analysis in terms of underspecification theory is given in Jäger (2008, and forthcoming).

¹⁵ For the typological link between a Neg^o neg-particle and NC see Zeijlstra (2004).

to any notable extent with another neg-XP, i.e. in a Neg-Spread construction with another n-word or in a Neg-Doubling construction with the SpecNegP neg-particle *ni(c)ht* - types of NC that are virtually lacking from OHG and MHG, but represent the types of NC that are found in Modern German NC dialects such as Bavarian. The development can be reconstructed as depicted in (30):



As an original NPI, OHG *dehein* 'any' could of course co-occur with other neg-markers. Beginning in MHG, it could be used as the only marker of negation in a clause, which would constitute evidence for the learner that it is an n-word. At the same time, it could still co-occur with other neg-XPs so that there was evidence for an n-word co-occurring with another neg-XP. The learner, economizing rules, would extend this pattern to other n-words, arriving at a Bavarian-type NC system. In the standard variety, however, *kein* was assimilated to other n-words in distribution: It is only licensed in negated clauses, but not together with another overt neg-marker.

7.4 Conclusion

The main development in the syntax of negation in German described at the beginning of this chapter, viz. the SpecNegP neg-particle *ni(c)ht* on the one hand and the n-words on the other hand stepping out of the shadow of Neg^o, is the result of a combination of two processes: First, the change of the neg-particle through the phonetic reduction and reinforcement process of Jespersen's Cycle - a change in the lexical filling of NegP including the grammaticalization of the former n-word *ni(o)wilt* > *ni(c)ht* into SpecNegP starting from its adjacency to that position in its adverbial use, and second, a lexicon-based change in the system of indefinites. As NPI indefinites more or less die out, the choice of the type of indefinite becomes fixed: In clauses containing an indefinite in the scope of negation, negation is marked by the indefinite taking the form of an n-word; in the other negated clauses, negation is identified by *ni(c)ht*. Both the phonetic weakening and disappearance of the Neg^o neg-particle as well as the change in the

system of indefinites lead to the loss of the original type of NC of Neg-Doubling between Neg^o and an n-word. The lexical change in particular of *dehein/kein* from an NPI into an n-word in turn leads to the emergence of a new type of NC in some varieties of German, viz. co-occurrence of several negative XPs. Despite of these changes in the syntactic marking of negation, the actual syntactic structure remained intact.

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