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Heading North

The syntactic status
of Swedish negation

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Introduction

In (the standard varieties of) Modern Swedish (MS), the negative marker *inte* 'not' shows all the characteristics of a syntactic phrase.

- i) Topicalization to [Spec,CP]
- ii) no (syntactic) cliticization to other clausal elements
- iii) no negative concord

Introduction

In Old Swedish (c. 1225–1526) (OS), the status of negation is less clear. Three negative markers: *eigh*, *äkke*, *änkte*.

The predominant marker *eigh*:

- i) Topicalization to clause initial position
- ii) Syntactic cliticization to the finite verb (*vildey* 'want not', *hadey* 'had not').
- iii) Negative concord?

Negative preposing

Both Old and Modern Swedish allow negation in clause initial position:

(1) **Eig** ma maþær af kono sinni iorþ köpæ
NEG may man of wife his land buy
'A man may not buy land from his wife.'

(2) **Inte** har Lindgren skrivit den boken!
not has Lindgren written that book
Lindgren hasn't written that book!

Negative preposing

Clause initial negation:

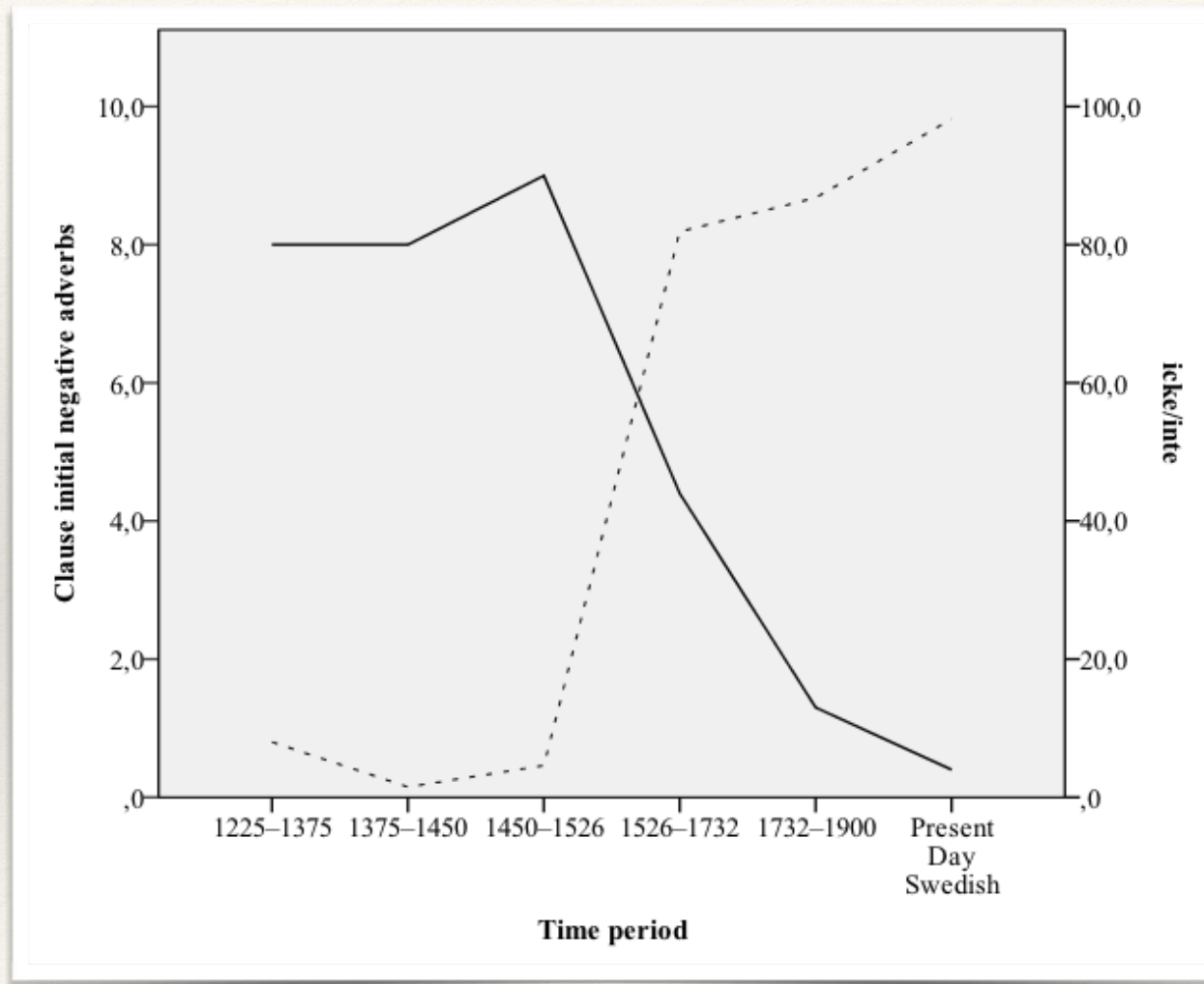
OS: approx. 8% of all occurrences of negation

MS: less than 0.5% of all occurrences of negation

A lexical change from the predominant negative marker *eigh* in Old Swedish to *icke* (<*äkke*) and *inte* (<*änkte*) in Modern Swedish.

The lexical change coincides with a significant decrease of clause initial negation.

Negative preposing



(Brandtler & Håkansson 2014: 112)

Negative preposing

The change of frequency can be traced to the syntactic status of the negative element.

Assuming Old Swedish *eigh* is a syntactic head, negation may occupy a syntactic head position, such as C^0 . This possibility is not open to the XP *inte* 'not' in Modern Swedish.

Negative clitics

Söderwall (1884: 218):

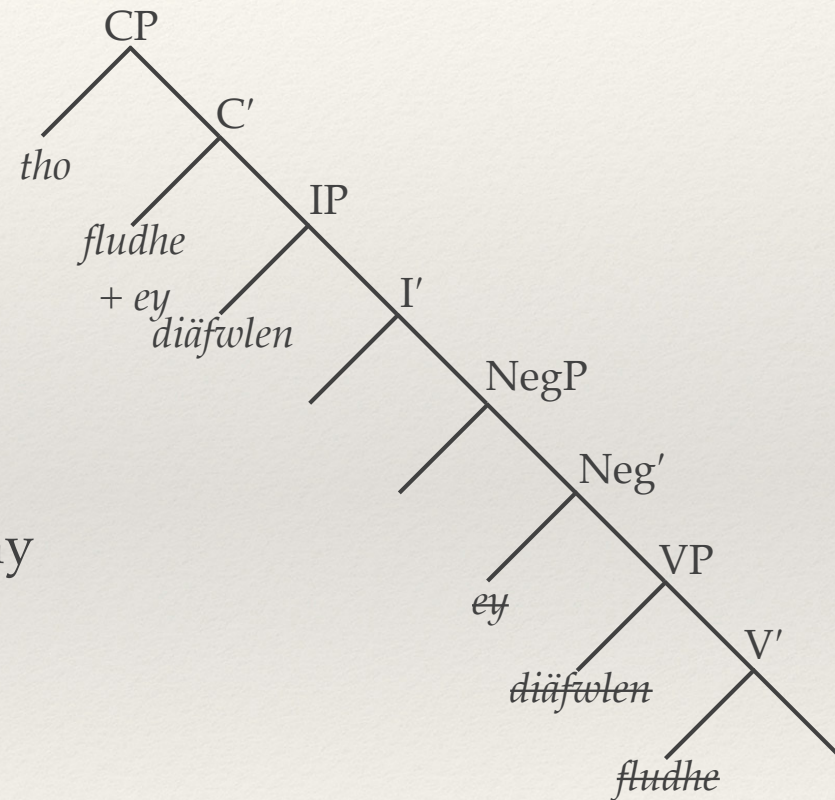
Negation in OS may cliticize to the
finite verb:

<i>vildeg</i>	'want not'
<i>tordey</i>	'would not'
<i>hadey</i>	'had not'
<i>aktadey</i>	'revered not'

Negative clitics

	Sub>Neg	Neg>Sub	Total
Definite	14	13	27
Indefinite	0	7	7
Total	14	20	34

- In OS main clauses, only *ey* may precede definite NP subjects.



Negative clitics

- In prototypical subordinate clauses, negation cannot precede the subject in OS.
- The order Neg>Sub is only possible in V1-conditionals, i.e. in subordinate clauses with V-to-C movement.

(3) Oc wil **ey** *iomfrughan æller hænnu frændir*

and want not lady.DEF or her friends

at hon fari til thzta landh

that she go to this country

If the lady and her friends do not want her to go to this country...

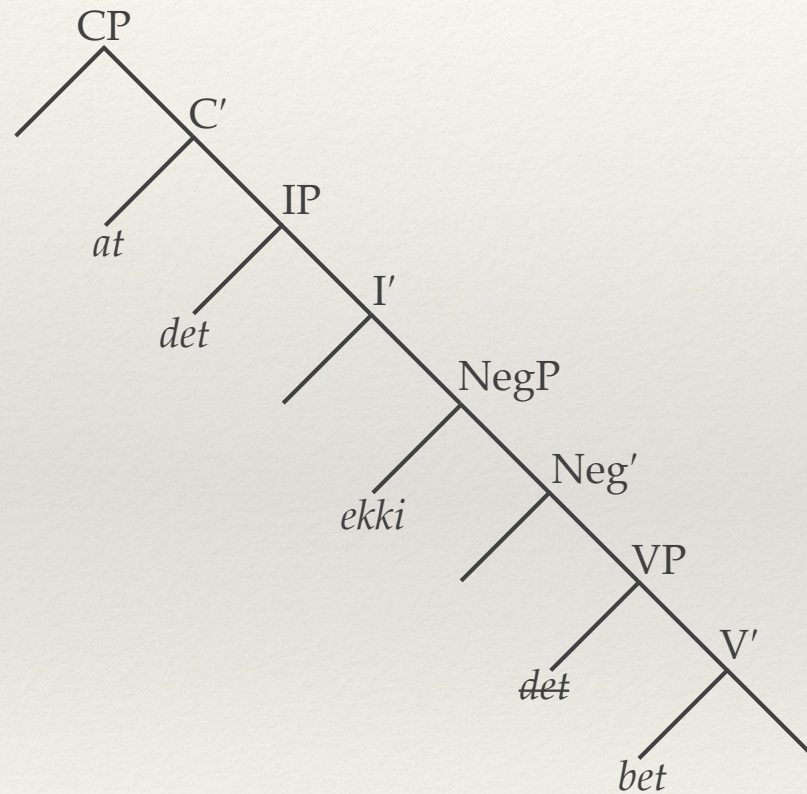
(4) haffde **ey** *thænne duali* varit

had not this sleep been

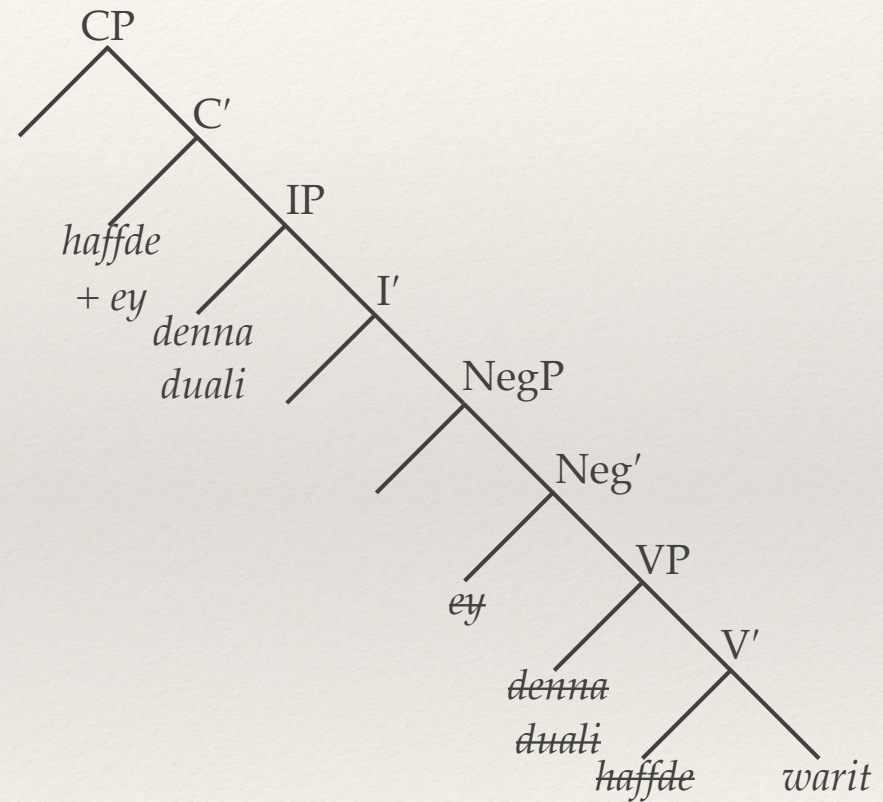
Had this rest not been...

Negative clitics

(5) Prototypical OS subord. clause



(6) V1-conditional clause



Word order

In Old Swedish instances of apparent V2-violations:

(7) hwat ey giordhe iak thin wilia fiurtan aar
why NEG did I your will fourteen years
'Why didn't I do your will for fourteen years?'

(8) hwat ey gräth thu saarlika
why NEG cried you bitterly
'Why didn't you cry bitterly?'

Word order

Two possible analyses that uphold the V2-restriction:

(9) [_{Spec,XP} huat+ey [_{X⁰} giordhe ...

[_{Spec,XP} huat [_{X⁰} ey+giordhe ...

Irrespective of which analysis one prefers, *eigh* can be related to a syntactic head position.

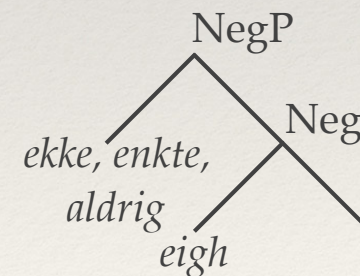
Analysis (Brandtler & Håkansson 2014)

Zeijlstra (2005):

- negative adverbs are syntactic phrases (XP).
- non-adverbial negative markers (e.g. particles and clitics) are syntactic phrase heads (X^0).

Old Swedish negative markers:

- *Eigh* is a syntactic head (X^0).
- *Ekke*, *enkte*, *aldrig* are syntactic phrases (XP).



Negative concord

Zeijlstra (2005):

"All languages with a negative marker X^0 are N[egative] C[oncord] languages."

In Old Swedish, isolated examples of negative concord:

(10) j then tima war **aldre engen** sadann man föd
in that time was never no such man born

(11) at **aldre föddis änkte** barn
that never is.born no children

The syntactic status of *eigh*

- Old Swedish *eigh* had a number of syntactic properties suggestive of a syntactic phrase head.
- By the end of the Old Swedish period (early 16th century), *eigh* was gradually replaced by *icke* (< *äkke*) and later by *inte* (< *änkte*).
- Neither *icke* nor *inte* seems to have retained any characteristic of a syntactic head.

The syntactic status of negation

- As the Germanic languages have evolved, negation has undergone a general development from preverbal particle to post-verbal adverb.
- van Gelderen (2008): the **negative cycle** – negatives develop from maximal projections to heads.
- From OS to MS: a lexical change from HEAD to SPEC

Can the negative cycle be attested in Modern Swedish?

From SPEC to HEAD

In Finland-Swedish and several dialects in Northern Sweden, negation is phonetically reduced:

(12) [ɪnt], [ont], [ott], [ɪt]

Negation may also cliticize:

(13) a. Då'nt ja vet.
 because.NEG I know

b. Ska'nt e vara?
 should.NEG I be

c. Kan't u komma?
 can.NEG you come

Negative concord

- (14) a. **int** kan här **ingen** mala.
NEG can here no-one grind
- b. Ja ä **inte** rädd för **ingan**.
I am NEG afraid for no-one
- c. Han fick **int** ändo **inga** straff.
He got NEG still no punishment

Note: Negative concord in Swedish dialects is little studied and the full extent of its existence is not yet known.

The syntactic status of *eigh*

- Finland Swedish dialects: the negative marker has changed from syntactic phrase to syntactic head, as predicted by the negative cycle.
- This analysis can account for negative V3-declaratives in (some varieties of) Finland Swedish:

(15) a. Ja **int** kan vara arg.

I NEG can be angry

b. o an **int** a ie:rhindra.

and he NEG has remembered

Summary

- We propose that the development of Swedish negation has gone through the following cyclic steps:
 - (i) Old Swedish lost the head negation *eigh*, which was replaced by the phrasal negative marker *inte*;
 - (ii) As the negative element successively underwent phonetic weakening, it could phonetically cliticize to other clausal elements (standard MS).

Summary

- (iii) In dialects where phonetic weakening has become especially widespread, phonetic cliticization has led to syntactic reanalysis (from phrase to head), such that negation can syntactically cliticize to other head elements.

- (iv) The weakened negative element is reinforced by another negative element, tentatively attested by the existence of negative concord in these dialects.