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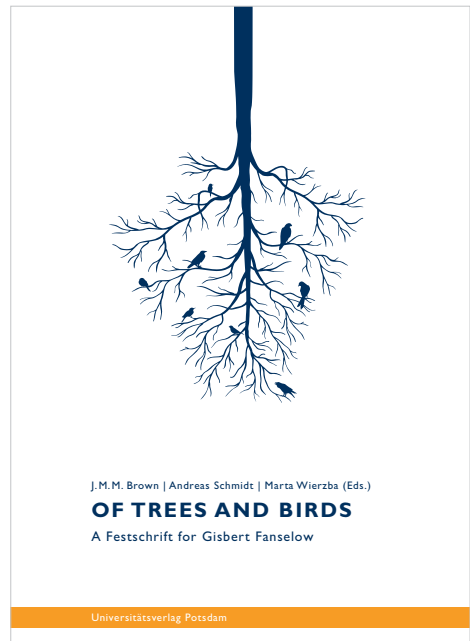
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Im Korpus gibt's keine Vögel nicht: A corpus study on Negative Concord in Eastern German dialects

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1 Introduction: Negative Concord in German dialects?

Standard German is typically classified as a language without negative concord (NC) (Haspelmath 2013). This is illustrated in (1a), which standardly only allows for the double negation reading. This classification does not extend to all German dialects and regional (sub) varieties of German, though. Weiß (1998) shows, for instance, that Bavarian sentences with more than one negative expression only have a single negation (= NC) reading, and Zimmermann (2007) reports that NC-readings with two n-words are also attested (under emphasis) in the North Saxon variety of Low German. Accordingly, (1b) has an NC-interpretation with simple negation.

(1) a. **Niemand** hat **nichts** gekauft.
         nobody   has nothing bought
         'Nobody bought nothing.' = 'Everybody bought something.'
                                            [Standard German]

b. **NÜMS**/**keenEEN** hefft **NIX** köfft.
   nobody   has nothing bought
   'Nobody bought anything.'   [Low German, North Saxon]

In this squib, we will approach the phenomenon of dialectal variation in the availability of NC from the perspective of language contact, following ideas in Fleischer (2015). Based on an evaluation of Wenker sentence 12, Fleischer (2015: 203f.) demonstrates a possible contact phenomenon concerning the possibility of prodropping the 2nd SG subject *du* 'you' in wh-interrogatives: In contrast to other dialects, the Southern and Eastern German dialects readily allow for such prodrop, thereby patterning like neighboring languages from Central and Southern Europe (Czech, Romanian, Lithuanian, …), for which prodrop is characteristic. A plausible hypothesis is that prodrop is an areal feature of Central and Eastern Europe, which spread under prolonged language contact in the times of the multi-ethnic Prussian and Habsburg empires.

The question raised in this article is whether the same can be said for NC. That is, do the more eastern varieties of German exhibit NC on a regular basis? If so, NC in Eastern Central Europe may also be an areal feature that has spread under language contact from neighboring Slavic languages, all of which are consistent NC-languages. NC is illustrated for Polish and Czech in (2a) and (2bc), respectively. According to Błaszczak (2005) and Dočekal (2015), the morphologically negative constituents in (2) are indefinite expressions in need of licensing by sentential negation; see also Zeijlstra (2004) for related discussion.

(2) a. Eva nie pokazała   nikomu tego artykułu.
       Eva NEG showed.3SG.F nobody this article.GEN
       'Eva didn't show this article to anyone.'
                                    [Polish] (Błaszczak 2005:182)

   b. Žádný strach, ten pták ti   nic   neudělá.
      no   fear   the bird you.DAT nothing NEG.do.PFV
      'No worries, the bird won't do anything to you.'
                                    [Czech] (Radek Šímík, p.c.)

c. Nenašel   jsem   žádné   ptáky.
   NEG.found.PTCP be.1SG no.ACC.PL birds.ACC
   'I didn't find any birds.'   [Czech] (Radek Šímík, p.c.)

The empirical focus of this squib is on the dialects spoken in the eastern parts of the German language area before 1945, mainly Low Prussian (Eastern Low German) and Silesian (Eastern Middle German). In addition, we will also consider the dialect from the Sudeten mountains in Northern Bohemia (East Franconian) and island dialects from Central Eastern Europe, such as formerly spoken in the Baltic states, Czechoslowakia, Romania and the former Soviet Union.

Section 2 presents the results of a preliminary corpus study on the DGD-subcorpus *OS: Deutsche Mundarten: ehemalige deutsche Ostgebiete* (section 2.1) and on an IDS-based corpus of Russian German dialects (section 2.2). It will be shown that the Eastern dialects do indeed differ from Standard German by exhibiting NC-phenomena on a regular basis. However, they also differ from their Slavic neighbors, possibly under pressure of the German standard, in that NC is not obligatory. In section 2.3, we will discuss two possible reasons for the emergence of NC in Eastern German dialects, and tentatively argue for an explanation in terms of language contact. In section 3.1, we will then compare the corpus results from section 2 with the findings of a small survey of Wenker sentence 39 at various randomly sampled data points in East and West Prussia and Silesia. In contrast to the free production data from section 2, the elicited Wenker sentences provide almost no evidence for NC in the Eastern dialects. Possible reasons for the non-convergence of the data will be discussed in section 3.2. Section 4 concludes.

2 NC in Eastern German dialects: A pilot corpus study

This section presents qualitative and quantitative findings on the emergence of NC from two corpora of Eastern German dialects. The corpora consist of transcribed recordings of free interviews in natural spontaneous language with native dialect speakers. The interviews consist of

conversations on a variety of topics, such as personal and family history, everyday life, customs and holidays. The corpora are available online and can be electronically queried to some degree.

2.1 The DGD-subcorpus OS: Qualitative findings on the availability of NC

In this section, we present some qualitative findings from the corpus *OS: Deutsche Mundarten: ehemalige deutsche Ostgebiete*, available in the DGD-database at https://dgd.ids-mannheim.de. Drawing on representative examples, it will be shown that NC is readily attested in the Eastern Low German variety of Low Prussian, in Silesian, as well as in other Eastern varieties.

The corpus contains 981 audio recordings from between 1962 and 1965 with 987 elderly native dialect speakers that were resettled to West Germany after WWII (total duration: 462 hours and 5 minutes). The corpus thereby provides representative data from the (South)Eastern German dialects from before 1945. The approximate numbers of speakers from each dialect area are as follows: Eastern Low German: 203, among which 119 speakers of Low Prussian; Silesian: 267; East Franconian (Sudeten): 7; Saxonian: 1; other (e.g. language islands): 503. The OS-corpus is searchable for tokens and token strings, and a query language allows for searching for co-occurrences of words within a given distance, and with a given ordering. It is also possible to search for non-co-occurrences, but this feature is somewhat hampered—same as the distance search—by the fact that the search is over entire documents, i.e. mostly longer texts, and by the fact that the co-occurrence search lists all individual words as hits. A proper quantitative analysis is therefore beyond the scope of this paper. It was also difficult to search for negative words, such as *niemand* 'nobody', *nichts* 'nothing', *kein* 'no', when these do not co-occur with the sentential negation marker *nicht* 'not', as simple negation was found in all of the documents.

Still, the search for strings of the form *n-word nicht* as well as more complex queries for co-occurrences of the negative determiner *kein(e/-en/em)* 'no' and negation marker at a distance (e.g. *NEAR((kein,nicht),4, true))* delivered many instances of NC in Low Prussian, Silesian, as well

as in various island varieties. Representative findings for the different dialects are shown below.

The query for *niemand nicht* 'nobody not', *NEAR((niemand,nicht),4, true)*, and *keiner nicht* yielded a total of 12 finds, illustrated in (3) and (4) (transcriptions in Standard German!):

(3) a. es war ja finster gewesen, es [hat] uns **niemand nicht** gesehen.

'It had been dark, you know, nobody saw us.'

[Kuhländchen, OS-E_00084]

b. am Heiligen Tag durften wir **niemand nichts nicht** machen

'On Christmas Day, we were not allowed to do anything.'

[Silesian, OS-E_00238]

c. denn **niemand** kann **nicht** zeigen

'since nobody can show.'   [Silesian, OS-E_00231]

(4) a. Gesehen hat ihn **keiner nicht**.

'Nobody has seen him.'   [Low Prussian, OS-E_00248]

b. es war aber auch **keiner nicht** geizig

'But nobody was tight-fisted.'   [Sudeten OS-E_00179)

c. bei uns Tanz war **keiner nicht** bei uns

'There was no dance at our village.'   [Silesian, OS-E_00055]

d. wo sie **keiner nicht** sah

'where nobody saw her'   [Baltic?, OS-E_00604]

(3b) shows that more than one n-word can be licensed by the sentential negation nicht. (3c) shows that there can be intervening material between n-word and negation.

The query for *nichts nicht* 'nothing not' and *keins nicht* 'no(thing) not' yielded a total of 17 finds, some of which are shown in (5). Notice in passing that Low Prussian (5b) allows for prodrop with 3SG subject pronominal, in line with the considerations in Fleischer (2015).

(5) a. haben aber **nichts nicht** gesehen

'but we didn't see anything' [Silesian, OS-E_00045]

b. Und für die Schafe gab ja **nichts nicht**

'And there was nothing for the sheep.'

[Low Prussian, OS-E_00251]

c. es gab auf der Welt gar **nichts nicht**, was die nicht wußten

'there was nothing at all in the world that they didn't know'
[Bielitzer Sprachinsel, OS-E_00183]

d. Rausgetraut hat sich von uns **keins nicht**.

'Nobody among us dared to go out.' [Silesian, OS-E_00045]

The most frequent NC-pattern is attested with combinations of the form *negative determiner kein(e/en/em/er) + NP + [...] + not.* The corpus contains many instances of this pattern, as illustrated in (6ab) for Silesian, and in (6c) for Low Prussian (with an elided object NP):

(6) a. **kein** Schiff fuhr **nicht**, **keine** Bahn fuhr **nicht**.

'There was no ship and there was no train.'

[Silesian, OS-E_00221]

b. ich hatte **keine** große Passion **nicht** dran am Schlittenfahren

'I didn't get a great kick out of sledding.'

[Silesian (Debau), OS-E_00011]

c. und wenn **keine nicht** waren, [...], dann konnte **keiner nicht** fangen

'and when there were none [...], then nobody could catch (any).'
[Low Prussian, OS-E_004919]

We conclude the qualitative survey with finds for the strings *nirgends nicht* 'nowhere not' (4, including *nirgends nichts* 'nowhere nothing', cf. also (11)), and *niemals nicht* 'never not' (1 find).

(7) a. wir konnten sie **nirgends nicht** finden
  'we couldn't find them anywhere'
  [island Moravia/Ostrau, OS-E_00084]

  b. wir sind **nie**, haben **nie nicht** schorfig gewesen
  'we have never been scabby' [Low Prussian, OS-E_00270]

Turning to structural generalizations and the syntax of the construction involved, the linear order is n-constituent ≺ NEG (*nicht*) in the vast majority of cases. There were no findings of the sequences *nicht niemand*, *nicht keiner* 'not nobody', *nicht nichts*, *nicht keins* 'not nothing', *nicht nirgends* 'not nowhere', or *nicht niemals* 'not never', and altogether only six hits for the sequence *nicht kein(e)* 'not no', as illustrated in (8).

(8) Brauchten wir **nicht keine** Kohlen.
  'We didn't need any coals.' [Silesian, OS-E_00119]

Moreover, a superficial glance at the data suggests that in the majority of cases the n-constituent is adjacent to the following negation. This would suggest movement of the n-constituent to the specifier of NegP for checking an uninterpretable NEG-feature (Zeijlstra 2004). In this position, the negative cluster typically follows all given material and also discourse particles located at the left edge of the verbal projection cf. *ja* in (5b). From SpecNegP, n-word or no-DP can subsequently move on to the prefield in order to satisfy additional information-structural or prosodic requirements (e.g. Fanselow & Lenertová 2011), as seen, for instance, in (6a) with two contrastively topicalized no-DPs, and in (4c) with a split negative NP! The tentative structures for midfield and prefield occurrences of n-constituents are given in (9).

(9) a. $[_{TP} ...[_{NegP}$ n-DP$_{[uNEG]}$ [nicht$_{[iNEG]}$ [$_{vP}$ ...<n-DP> ...]]]]

  b. $[_{CP}$ n-DP C [$_{TP}$ ...[$_{NegP}$ <n-DP>$_{[uNEG]}$ [nicht$_{[iNEG]}$ [$_{vP}$...<n-DP>...]]]]]

We conclude this section by pointing out that NC is optional in the Eastern German dialects, unlike in the contact languages Polish, Czech or

Russian. The overall number of finds is relatively small compared to the overall size of the corpus, and of course, there are many cases in which the n-constituent occurs alone, without sentential negation, such as (10):

(10) macht zu, Luft kommt hinein, es darf **keine Luft** hineinkommen

    'Close it! There's air coming in. There must not be air coming in.'

                      [Silesian, OS-E_00406]

The optionality of NC can be modeled in a number of ways. Firstly, the lexical inventories of the Eastern dialects may contain two varieties of n-words, namely some with and some without interpretable NEG-features. Only the latter type would require a licensing NEG-head. Alternatively, all n-constituents may be inherently non-negative, and the difference would lie in whether the licensing head in (9ab) must be overt (the NC pattern), or not. On this view, NC would be obligatory, but not always explicitly marked in the linguistic signal. Evidence for this analysis might come from the existence of sentences expressing NC with two negative n-constituents in the absence of overt sentential negation, such as in (1b) above, and in the second clause of (11) (notice the single occurrence of *nichts* in the first cause!).

(11) aber wir fanden **nichts**, war **nirgends nichts** zu finden

    'but we found nothing, nothing was to be found anywhere'

                      [Silesian, OS-E_00790]

Thirdly, the optionality of NC may be accounted for in semantic terms. On this line of thinking, all n-expressions are semantically negative, same as sentential negation. If the clause only contains a single n-expression, the interpretation will be negative. If the clause contains more than one n-expression, including sentential negation, the negative force of the additional n-expressions may be (quantifier-)absorbed under local adjacency (de Swart & Sag 2002): Absorption turns two independent generalized quantifiers into a single dyadic quantifier over relations, as shown in (12) for *nirgends nichts* in (11):

(12) $\lambda P_{<et>}.\neg\exists x[place(x) \wedge P(x)]; \lambda Q_{<et>}.\neg\exists y[thing(y) \wedge Q(y)]$

  $\Rightarrow_{\text{ABSORPTION}} \lambda R_{<eet>}.\neg\exists x, y[place(x) \wedge thing(y) \wedge R(x,y)]$

Notice that an NC-account in terms of absorption will entail treating sentential negation as a negative existential quantifier (over events) as well. We will leave it open what is the correct analysis of optional NC in the Eastern German dialects.

We will also leave it open whether NC-availability is subject to inter-speaker variability, and whether there is also intra-speaker variability. This being said, the dialect data in the OS-corpus clearly differ from Standard German regarding the availability of NC. For instance, a brief survey of the *König sub-corpus of Standard German* in the DGD-database (König 1989) compiled in 1975 yields zero finds for the strings *niemand nicht*, *keiner nicht*, *keine nicht*, *nirgends nicht*, and *nie(mals) nicht*, supporting the classification of Standard German as a non-NC language. We will come back to the question of whether NC is attested in other German dialects in section 2.3.

2.2 The corpus RuDiDat: quantitative findings on the availability of NC

This section extends the investigation to Russian German dialects spoken in language islands in Eastern Central Europe and Siberia. As shown below, NC is quite regularly found across all the dialects in the corpus, with some degree of cross-dialectal variability in the availability of NC. The IDS-hosted Russlanddeutsch corpus *RuDiDat* was compiled in the Soviet Union between the 1960s and the late 1980s (Jedig 2014). It contains data on dialects from seven different language islands, which have developed from different source dialects, and which can be accessed under http://prowiki.ids-mannheim.de/bin/view/Russlanddeutsch/WebHome. The data were recorded at the following times in these regions: Low German Mennonite (1959, Slawgorod, Altai); Northern Bavarian (1975–76, Altai, Berend 1978); Wolhynian German (late 1970s, Koktschetaw, Kasakhstan, Kiršner 1989); Swabian, South Franconian, Palatian, and Wolhynian German (1986/87, South Sibiria and Kasakhstan); Hessian (1988, Omsk).

In the following, we provide two examples from each dialect, illustrating for different types of n-words and n-constituents. The diacritic '*' marks Russian loan words, such as e.g. *nikogda* 'never' in (16b) and (19b). Notice, too, that the forms *nimmi* and *nimme* 'not anymore' in (17a) and (18b) are analyzed as containing sentential negation. The reason for this is that these forms never co-occur with sentential negation in any of the Russian German dialects. Finally, (20) shows that NC is also attested with split negative NPs:

(13) a. doi haud eewarhaupt **tjoin Interesse nich** tem Liire
'He has no interest at all in learning'

[Mennonite Low German]

b. mät söy ne gröyte Nou kunne se mii **nuscht nich** haalpe **nich**
'with such a big scar they could not help me'

(14) a. dass nu koi Kärnle **närgich et** s gwea ischt dass nu niamand niks et gsea hot sunscht
'that there was no kernel of grain anywhere, that just nobody saw anything otherwise' [Swabian]

b. **koi ergera Fraid** kenntescht mir **et** ootau
'you could give me no bigger pleasure'

(15) a. und do brauch ich **kein *Aftobus nich** mehr
'and then I no longer need the bus' [Wolhynian]

b. n unserem Dorf is **keiner nich** jechangen m *Klub
'in our village nobody went to the club'

(16) a. weil de konnde **niks net** schtecke **ka Katowwl net**
'Because they couldn't plant anything, no potatoes.'

[Hessian]

b. dä wäd ***nikogda net** irr ba uns im Dorf
'He would never get lost in our village.'

(17) a. me konnt sich **närchets** ga **nimmi** uffhalde
'One couldn't stay anywhere any longer.'

[South Franconian]

b. un dat wollte se m **kei Arbeit net** gewwe
'and they didn't want to give him work'

(18) a. n ho me **ko oings Haus njet** ho me r a **ko Guertn njet**
'and we had no house of our own, and we had no garden either'

[Bavarian]

b. dy hom **nyicheds nimme** hiigfunne
'they didn't get anywhere anymore'

(19) a. do ha mir sellemoll noch **ke Kinnr nit** ghat
'We still did't have children then.'   [Palatian]

b. fo was hascht du me *****nikogda nit** eemoll was wezeelt
   hat er gsaat
'Why did you never tell me anything, did he say.'

(20)   no wos hu me noch Hinggl Gäns no **Ende** hu mr dasjur
   kaa net

'Well, what do we have, chicken, geese, well, this year we don't
have ducks.'   [Hessian]

Table 20.1 shows the absolute number of NC-occurrences in compari-
son to the number of n-constituents. It was at times difficult to decide
whether a particular configuration exhibits NC or not, but this should
have no bearing on the overall picture. In the quantitative analysis, we
adopted the following conventions: (i.) each n-constituent in its own
VP was counted as one instance of NC; (ii.) conjoined n-constituents
were counted but once; (iii.) n-constituents with positive *mehr* 'any-
more' where not counted (as opposed to those with negative *nimmer*
'not anymore'); (iv.) two n-constituents exhibiting NC in the absence of
sentential negation were counted once. Notice that Table 20.1 sorts the
structurally ambiguous n-constituents *keine(n/m)* in the middle column

by word form only, and not by syntactic status (pronoun vs determiner).

Table 20.1: NC-occurrences across dialects and n-constituents in absolute numbers

	niemand	nichts	keiner/keins	keine(n/m)	kein	niemals	nirgends	Σ
Low Germ.	–	7/8	2/3	3/4	3/4	–	–	15/19
Swabian	1/1	2/23	0/3	2/15	4/17	–	2/6	11/65
Wolhynian	–	2/12	4/4	3/6	1/3	0/1	–	10/26
Hessian	0/1	20/42	5/6	22/45	15/27	3/3	–	65/136
Franconian	–	0/38	0/5	10/40	2/25	–	2/2	14/110
Bavarian	–	7/50	0/4	16/43	17/34	3/3	2/2	45/136
Palatian	–	8/21	–	14/15	6/7	1/1	–	29/44

Table 20.1 shows that NC is attested in all seven Russian German dialects, although not obligatorily so. Despite the overall small numbers, the table shows that the frequency of NC varies across dialects, ranging from almost systematic Mennonite Low German (15/19) to Swabian (11/65) and Franconian (14/110) at the lower end, with Wolhynian, Hessian, Bavarian and Palatian somewhere in between. In the Hessian and Bavarian dialects, NC is most often attested in absolute numbers. Some of the dialects (Wolhynian, Franconian, Bavarian) appear to show an additional variability between n-expressions (though numbers are too small to warrant firm conclusions): Argumental n-pronouns (*niemand*, *keiner*, *keins*, *nichts*) appear to exhibit NC less often than n-constituents headed by the determiner *kein*, or the n-adjuncts *nirgends* and *niemals*. This tendency does not become clearer if the middle column is sorted into n-pronouns and n-determiners, respectively, with NC being optional with both types of expressions. The same holds for *kein*, which is clearly a determiner, but which does not show obligatory NC either. The putative higher frequency of NC with determiner *kein(e/en/em)* in Wolhynian, Bavarian, and Franconian may follow for various reasons. In Wolhynian, the absence of NC with *nichts* 'nothing' may be caused by haplology blocking the sequence *nichts nich*. In Franconian and Bavar-

ian, speakers may systematically analyze the n-pronouns *nichts* and *keiner* as negative generalized quantifiers of type <et,t>, which do not require licensing by sentential negation, whereas the same may not (always) be possible with arguments headed by negative determiners. This matter requires more systematic research, leaving open the possibility that the distributions in Table 20.1 exhibit a random variability, conditioned by the small absolute numbers.

2.3 Towards an explanation

In the preceding sections, it was shown that NC is robustly attested, though not obligatory, in the Eastern German dialects (formerly) spoken in East Prussia, Silesia, the Sudeten mountains, and German language islands in Siberia. This sets these dialects apart from Standard German, which does not exhibit NC. The difference may be accounted for in either of two ways.

Firstly, NC may be considered a general feature of all German dialects. As prototypical first order natural (N1) languages in the sense of Weiß (1998) and Weiß & Strobel (2018), dialects are acquired as first languages in an unguided acquisition process without systematic instruction, that is, without explicit positive or negative evidence. Unlike N2-languages, N1-languages are not subject to systematic instruction or normative pressure from social or other language-external considerations on the proper use of language, which come in at later stages of the acquisition process in schooling. Standard German is an N2-language in this sense, as it has been subject to various shaping procedures that are not based in the language faculty as such. So perhaps NC has been purged from Standard German by normative stylistic constraints under the influence of the non-NC language Latin, as tentatively suggested in Haspelmath (2013)? Support for this line of reasoning comes from the optional availability of NC in Low German (1b), and in Bavarian (Weiß 1998: 183ff.), as well as from the occasional occurrence of NC in colloquial Standard German, as in the famous *Ton Steine Scherben* song *Keine Macht für niemand!* 'No power to anybody!'. This predicts that NC should also be found in other German dialects, including the Alemannic and Ripuarian dialects in the West, which have not been in close

contact with NC-languages of the Slavic type (except in the coal mining communities of Westphalia, perhaps).

Alternatively, NC may indeed be a special property of the Eastern varieties, with optional NC arising as a gradual and variable phenomenon under more or less intensive language contact over time (and possibly bilingualism) with the neighboring Slavic languages, all of which show systematic NC. This line of reasoning is supported by the observation that the Eastern dialects, and in particular the German island dialects in Russia, show other signs of systematic language contact. Examples are the systematic integration of Russian lexical items into the German dialect. This holds not only for content words, but also for the n-word (*nikogda*), cf. (16b), and for the sentential negation *njet* in Russian Bavarian (18a).

The two accounts are not incompatible. It may well be that NC is frowned upon in Standard German, and that NC phenomena are attested across dialects, but NC-phenomena may be still attested with a higher frequency in the Eastern contact zones with Slavic. This is confirmed by a preliminary survey of another dialect corpus in the DGD database, the Korpus *Deutsche Mundarten: Zwirner-Korpus* with transcriptions of spoken dialect data from West Germany and neighboring countries. A coarse token search for the strings *niemand nicht*, *keiner nicht* 'nobody not', *nichts nicht* 'nothing not', *nirgends nicht* 'nowhere not', and *niemals nicht* 'never not', yielded the following results (dialects in bold spoken in the Eastern regions of the language area, in contact with Slavic languages):

(21) (i) *niemand nicht:* 1 find (**1 East Brandenburgian**)

   (ii) *keiner nicht:* 8 finds (**6 Low Prussian**, 1 Rhine-Franconian, 1 Low Alemannic)

   (iii) *nicht nicht:* 19 finds (**11 Silesian**, **3 Transpomeranian**, **1 Cispomeranian**, 3 Franconian, 1 Westphalian, 1 North Saxon)

   (iv) *nirgends nicht:* 1 find (**1 Low Prussian**)

   (v) *niemals nicht:* 2 finds (1 West Low German, 1 Northern Bavarian)

Although the overall number of findings is small, we can conclude that NC is not altogether ruled out in non-Eastern dialects, such as Franconian, North Saxon, West Low German and Low Alemannic. This is different in Standard German, for which there were no findings in the König corpus. At the same time, NC is found more frequently in the Eastern varieties with a ratio of 23:7. Our tentative conclusion is that NC is possible in principle in all dialects (as N1 languages), but that the actual instantiation of this grammatical pattern is boosted under language contact with systematic NC-languages, such as Polish, or Czech, or Russian.

3 Third corpus: Wenker Sentence 39

In this section, we compare the NC-findings from section 2 with data from another dialect corpus, which allows for accessing an older stage of the dialects spoken in the border territories of West Prussia/Posen, East Prussia and Silesia. Among the Wenker sentences sent out in the 1890s to all parts of the German Empire, there is one sentence with the potential of triggering NC: This is Wenker sentence 39, which contains the pronominal n-word *nichts* 'nothing'.

(22)   Wenker Sentence 39:

   Geh nur, der braune Hund tut dir nichts!
   'Come on, just go, the brown dog won't do anything to you!'

Given the findings from spontaneous speech in section 2, the question is whether translations of sentence 39 into different dialects will also exhibit NC. The findings from randomly sampled data points are presented in 3.1. Section 3.2 discusses reasons for the observable discrepancy between the findings from the two elicitation methods free production vs translation.

3.1 (Almost) no NC in Wenker Sentence 39

To corroborate the findings from section 2, we randomly sampled 16 Wenker dialect forms each from three Eastern border regions of the for-

mer German territories: (i.) Silesia; (ii.) West Prussia, with Kulmer Land and Posen; and (iii.) East Prussia. Being part of the multi-ethnic German Reich, all three regions were bi- or multilingual with speakers of German, Polish, and, in some parts, speakers of Czech, Kashubian or Lithuanian as well. In order to control for the validity of the method, we also sampled 16 Wenker forms from each region that were filled out in one of the contact languages with obligatory NC. In most cases, this was Polish, in some cases Czech, Kashubian, or Lithuanian. The prediction was that the translations of Wenker Sentence 39 into these languages should exhibit obligatory NC. This prediction was borne out, as shown in Table 20.2, which gives the frequencies of NC in translations into dialect and contact language, respectively.

Table 20.2: Frequency of NC in translations of Wenker Sentence 39 in absolute numbers

Region	# NC German dialect	# NC Slavic contact language
Silesia	Silesian: **2**/16	15 Polish, 1 Czech: 16/16
West Prussia, Kulmer Land, Posen	Low Prussian, East Mark: **0**/16	13 Polish, 3 Kashubian: 15/15, 1 n.a.
East Prussia & Memel	Low Prussian: **0**/16	14 Polish, 2 Lithuanian: **15**/16

NC is absent in only one out of 48 translations into one of the contact languages, namely in the Lithuanian Wenker form 00104 from Annus Simuneit. Overall, the translations into contact languages are remarkably uniform, barring some dialectal differences between the Silesian and Prussian varieties of Polish. In the majority of Polish translations, the NC was realized as *nic (…) nie zrobi* or, more rarely, in the opposite order *nie zrobi (…) nic*. The Czech and Kashubian translations are almost identical, namely *nic nezrobi* (Czech) and *nic niezrobi* (Kashubian). Some Polish speakers from the Posen area and East Prussia prefer the form *uczyni* 'do, act' over *zrobi* 'do'. Finally, in the Polish Wenker form 53606

from Grzybno in West Prussia, the predicate 'do nothing' was replaced with *nie ugryzie* 'not bite' without n-word and without NC. Strikingly, though, NC is almost completely absent in the German dialect translations. The only two exceptions are found in Wenker forms from Silesia:

(23) a. Geih ok, darr brunn Hund titt derr nischte nich.
go also the brown dog does 2SG.DAT nothing not

[Wenker 09842, Hammer-Suhlau]

b. Hab ka Angst nie, da braune Hund tut da
Have no fear not the brown dog does 2SG.DAT
nix.
nothing

[Wenker 17560, Troppau]

The NC-configuration in (23a) is as expected: the n-word *nischte* 'nothing' is supported by the sentential negation *nich*. The interesting case is (23b), where the NC-configuration does not occur in the main assertion containing *nichts* 'nothing', but in the lose translation of the adhortative *Geh nur* 'Come on, just go' as *Hab keine Angst nicht* 'Have no fear'. This finding provides a possible answer to the puzzle of why NC is so rarely attested in the Wenker dialect translations.

3.2 Methodological considerations

Investigations of NC in two types of corpora (spontaneous speech vs translations) yielded conflicting results: Whereas NC is robustly attested in spontaneous speech corpora, it was almost completely absent in translations. The reason for this discrepancy seems to lie in the elicitation methods. Fleischer (2015: 205) observes a general methodological problem with translation tasks from standard language into dialects (or indeed any kind of translation task), because they may result in a bias for the (stylistic) norm set by the standard over the dialectal form. Because of this, the observed parallelism between the Standard German input and its translations into the different dialects does not conclusively show that NC does not exist in these dialects. Instead, speakers may simply

model their translations on the Standard German input, in particular as the Wenker forms were distributed by, and often filled out in the presence of local teachers. As Standard German does not exhibit NC, the corresponding dialect translations will not feature NC either. A comparable discrepancy between different elicitation methods is reported in Fleischer et al. (2012: 28ff.) in an investigation of tense forms (past vs perfect) in Hessian dialects. Whereas one group of speakers regularly opted for the perfect (over the past) in a forced choice selection task, the same speakers would employ the past tense in translations of Standard German sentences into the dialect. This suggests that dialect translations may generally show a bias for the standard pattern instantiated by the standard input sentences.

4 Conclusion

A naïve survey of two corpora with spontaneous natural language revealed that German dialects formerly spoken in Eastern Central Europe and in language islands in the Soviet Union exhibit optional negative concord. It was also shown that the frequency of NC-phenomena is higher in these dialects than in more Western German dialects. It was hypothesized that the emergence of NC in the Eastern variants was conditioned, at least in part, by intensive language contact with neighboring languages (Polish, Kashubian, Czech, Russian, Lithuanian), in which negative concord is obligatory. Finally, it was shown that NC is extremely rare in dialect translations of Wenker sentence 39 with the n-constituent *nichts* 'nothing'. This discrepancy with our findings from spontaneous language production was attributed to the different elicitation methods.

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