Negation and Focus Clash in Sardinian

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1. Introduction

Sardinian is a Romance language that resorts to various strategies to express total and partial questions. Apart from intonation that may mark the interrogative character of a utterance, Sardinian makes a particular use of the marker *a* (< lat. *aut* 'or') and of *fronting*. The syntactic properties of interrogative utterances presented show the incompatibility of fronting and marking through the interrogative marker *a*. We shall discuss the reasons for this incompatibility, and we shall see how negation interferes with the interrogatives. The hypothesis presented is that negation and marking are incompatible because they are associated to different focus domains that come to clash.

 Given that Sardinian has three main different varieties which can be quite distinct with respect to their phonology in particular, reference is made here to the *Logudorese* variety, other varieties nonetheless exhibiting similar phenomena. The discussion will include a consideration of so-called interrogative conjugations in Northern varieties of Italian, which demonstrate particularly interesting properties concerning the relations between negation and interrogation: when total questions and negation are not completely incompatible, their joint use can lead to profound syntactic reorganisations which recall the ones found in Sardinian.

2. Questions

2.1. Questions and their properties

It is obviously beyond the scope of this paper to present anything particularly new on interrogative utterances. The various proposals allow us to identify recurring elements that characterise interrogative structures. On the one hand, they constitute a type of utterance that makes the interlocutor the main pole of the information structure; on the other, the interlocutor is asked to *identify* a value that the speaker cannot or doesn't want to satisfy.

Finally, the expected identification can bear on one of the terms of the predication (arguments, adjuncts) or on the predicative relation as a whole. French for instance is a language where the identification procedure is marked by morphosyntactic features that have characteristic functions. In the cleft construction *C'est X que Y*, the function of the anaphoric item *c'* is to point to a class of objects which are to be identified; this class thus becomes the informational foreground of the utterance, the rest of the predication being relegated to the background of the informational structure. It is precisely the role of the complementizer *que* to signal the pre-constructed status of the predication: an utterance such as *C'est quoi que t'as acheté?* 'It is what that you has bought' "What is it that you bought?" supposes a scheme *You bought X,* and it is the identification of the entity functioning as second argument that constitutes the informational foreground of the interrogative. Thus, interrogative pronouns represent a class of objects from which the interlocutor is expected to identify and extract an occurrence or a set of occurrences. In the case of total questions, the interrogative also invites an identification; the interlocutor is expected to identify the right value among two polar values p and p'. Thus the interlocutor is put in a position to (in)validate a propositional content by the identification he is asked to provide. The complexities of the morphosyntactic mechanisms marking interrogatives no doubt reflect that of the cognitive mechanisms at stake. Negative interrogatives are even more complex in their morphosyntactic realisations and their processing costs. This is exemplified by positive questions such as *Where did you go this summer?* or *When did he come to see you?* which suppose on the part of the interlocutor the identification of determined sites locating the events referred to by the predication. The negative versions *Where didn't you go this summer?* and *When didn't he come to see you?* are more complex as they bring together the acts of negation and interrogation. They imply the identification of a site locating a *non*-event. The localisation of *what is other than what is* concerns a potentially infinite set of locating sites. In other words, given that an individual necessarily occupies a determined spatio-temporal position (Locke 1694), potential localisation sites are infinite with respect to actual ones – as proposed by Givón (1979: 135), "It is […] statistically much easier to fix a point in time by the occurrence of an event than by the infinite number of points in time at which it did not occur". This explains the further complexity of *Where didn't you go this summer?* Such a complexity explains the tendency of such utterances to convey an exclamative value (as in French *Qu'est-ce qu'il a pas dit!*). Of course, when this kind of negative interrogatives is not concerned with the localisation of an event but with the assignation of a

subjective value, the processing of the sentence is less costly. A question such as *What didn't you like in Venice?* is *a priori* more plausible than *When didn't he come to see you?* (Andrée Borillo, p. c.), would it be only because the verb *like* involves a scenario which is independent from any particular spatio-temporal setting: the function of the interrogation is the identification of an element from the class of *y* in the schema *((x) ((neg) like (y))*. The fact that a question such as *Where didn't you look for it?* to someone who has lost something is well-formed depends on the partition of potential sites, some in which a given object could be found, and some others where it is not expected to be.

Interrogatives are complex construction involving among other things word order, cliticization, and subordination. Their bleaching leads them to be constantly renewed, with correlative increase in complexity, as shown by the structural complexity of French *Quand tu pars?* as opposed to *Quand est-ce que tu pars?* "When are you leaving?" (see Foulet 1921).

2.2. Total questions in Sardinian

Sardinian resorts to two different strategies to express total questions: the use of marker *a* and fronting. The marker *a* derives from latin *aut* 'or' (Meyer-Lübke 1903; Wagner 1984: 34–35 § 17 et 332 § 370; Pittau 1972: 37–38, 41, 143–145, 157; Contini 1985, 1986; Jones 1988, 1993: 24 ff.) – and figures in sentence-initial position to signal total questions. This is illustrated in examples (1)–(4):

(1)   *A mi   podes   agiuare?*
       A CLIO1SG can2SG help
       'Could you help me?'

(2)   a. *Anne', a nos   cùmbidas?*
          Anne', a CLDO1PL invite
          'Annedda, do you invite us?'

       b. **A Anne', nos cùmbidas?*

(3)   a. *Un' àteru cafè,   a mi   lu   batis?*
          An other coffee a CLIO1SG CLDO3MSG bring
          'An other coffee, do you bring it to me?'

       b. **A un'àteru cafè, mi lu batis?*

(4)   a. *Frutta, a nde   cheres?*
          Fruit   a CL.part want2SG
          'Fruits, do you want any?'

      b. **A frutta, nde cheres?*

Example (1a) show that the particle *a* precedes the proposition that is que-ried.[1] Example (2a) illustrates the scope of the marker: Vocative *Anna* being outside the propositional core thus cannot figure within the scope of *a*. The same goes for (3a) and (4a): the particle cannot precede the thematic con-stituent, whether it be the DP *un atteru cafè* or the bare noun *frutta,* and must be in the initial position of the proposition at stake. Notice that the particle *a* is the strong element of the clitic cluster it forms with partitive *nde* in (4a). Involvement in such clusters might lead one to conclude that *a* is itself a clitic and that its clitichood dictates the observed distributional restrictions[2].

However, dialogues such as (1') can be observed where *a* appears in final position, and where no repair strategy is used despite final stress, which is otherwise a marked configuration in Sardinian: a salient feature of Sardinian phonology is to impose a trochaic binary and bi-syllabic structure on the right boundary of the word:

(1')   – *A mi   podes agiuare?*
          A CLIO1SG can2SG help
          'Could you help me?'

       – *E   a? No lu   podes   fagher tue?*
          And a? NEG CLDO3MSG can2SG do   you
          'And why? Can't you do it yourself?'

While the prosodic constraints of this marker remain to be examined more closely, the possibility to have an example such as (1') constitutes a strong argument against a clitic analysis of *a*.

The other strategy resorted to by Sardinian to express questions is that of fronting. Examples involving the fronting strategy are given in (5):

(5)   a. *Torradu   est?*
          Came.MSG be3SG
          'Did he come back?'

      b. *Famidu   ses?*
          Hungry.MSG be2SG
          'Are you hungry?'

   c. *Cumpresu   m'   as?*
      Understood.MSG CLIO1SG have2SG
      'Did you understand me?'

   d. *Cumprendende ses,   Francu?*
      Understanding   be2SG, Francu
      'Do you understand, Franck?'

   e. *La Heineken, bona   est?*
      The Heineken, good.FSG be3SG
      'Is the Heineken good?'

   f. *Drommire cheres?*
      Sleep   want2SG
      'Do you want to sleep?'

   g. *Babbu, nudda   cheret?*
      Dad   nothing want3SG
      'Dad $_i$, doesn't he$_i$ want anything?'

   h. *Innoghe istas?*
      Here   live2SG
      'Do you live here?'

   i. *In domo fit?*
      In house was3SG
      'He was home?'

In these examples, the fronted element is of different nature. It can be the auxiliated in a split verb-phrase structure (5a–f); it can be a direct object negative indefinite (5g); it can even be an adjunct (5h–i). The periphrastic future (5j) (*aere* 'have' (present indicative) + a + infinitive) and conditional (5k) (*devere* 'must' (imperfect indicative) + infinitive) can however not be fronted (Jones 1988: 185 and 1993: 147; Molinu 1999):

(5)   j. **A lu   faghere, as?*
        A CLDOMSG do   have2SG
        'Shall you do it?'

     k. **Lu   faghere, tias?*
        CLDOMSG do   should2SG
        'Should you do it?'

The main point is that fronting is thus incompatible with particle *a*; the marker *a* cannot be used along with the fronted material in the examples under (5):

(6)   a.   *A torradu est?*
'Did he come back?'

b.   *A cumprendende ses, Francu?*
'Do you understand, Franck?'

c.   *A cumpresu m'as?*
'Did you understand me?'

d.   *A famidu ses?*
'Are you hungry?'

e.   *La Heineken, a bona est?*
'Is the Heineken good?'

f.   *Babbu, a nudda cheret?*
'Dad $_i$, doesn't he$_i$ want anything?'

g.   *A innoghe istas?*
'Do you live here?'

The same goes for negation: the negative marker *no* is incompatible with fronting:

(7)   a.   *Famidu no ses?*
'Aren't you hungry?'

b.   *Innoghe no istas?*
'Don't you live here?'   (see *No istas innoghe?*)

c.   *E / de nudda no as bisondzu?*
'Don't you need anything?'   (see *No as bisondzu (d)e nudda?*)

d.   *Frutta, a no nde cheres?*
'Fruits, don't you want any?'   (see *Frutta, no nde cheres?*)

e.   *Sa Heineken, bona no est?*
'Isn't the Heineken good?'   (see *Sa Heineken, no est bona?*)

f.   *Compresu no m'as?*
'Didn't you understand me?'   (see *No m'as compresu?*)

g.   *Drommire no cheres?*
'Don't you want to sleep?'   (see *No cheres drommire?*)

Examples (6a–g) and (7a–g) show that Sardinian has a strong constraint that excludes the joint use of negation and the interrogative particle on the one hand, and of this particle with fronting in total questions. What then of partial questions?

2.3. Partial questions

Constituents involving partial questions are generally used in preverbal position, which is a privileged informational position.

(8) a. *Ite   cheres   faghere?*
       What want2SG do
       'What do you want to do?'

     b. *Chie at   appidu su café?*
       Who have3SG had   the coffee
       'Who had the coffee?'

     c. *Inue   istas?*
       Where live2SG
       'Where do you live?'

     d. *Proite b'   andas?*
       Why   CL.loc go2SG
       'Why do you go there?'

     e. *Comente as   drommidu?*
       How   have2SG slept
       'How did you sleep?'

     f. *E   frade   tou, cando (est chi) benit?*
       And brother your when (is that) come3SG
       'And your brother, when does he come?'

     g. *Sa   domo, cantu   l'   as   pagada?*
       The house how much CLDO3MSG have2SG paid.FS
       'Your house, how much did you pay it?'

Unlike what is shown by (5a-g), (9) illustrates that Sardinian negation is in principle compatible with partial question markers

(9) a. *Ite / ite est   chi no as   cumpresu?*
       What   be3SG that NEG have2SG understood.MSG
       'What didn't you understand?'

     b. *Chie / chie est   chi no at   appidu su café?*
       Who   be3SG that NEG have3SG had   the coffee
       'Who didn't have the coffee?'

     c. **Inue no istas?*
       *'Where don't you live?'

(cf. *Inue no ti tiat piaghere de istare?*
'Where wouldn't you like to live?')

c'. *Inue   no   ses   ancora istadu?*
Where NEG be2SG yet   been.MSG
'Where didn't you go yet?'

 d. *Proite no   b'   andas?*
Why   NEG CL.LOC go2SG
'Why don't you go there?'

 e. **Comente no   as   drommidu?*
 How   NEG have2SG slept.MSG
*'How didn't you sleep?'

f. ??*E   frade   tou, cando no   benit?*
 And brother your when   NEG come3SG
'And your brother, when doesn't he come?'

f'. *E   frade   tou, cando est   chi no   podet   bennere?*
And brother your when be3SG that NEG can3SG come
'And your brother, when cannot he come?'

g. ?? *Sa   domo, cantu   no   l'as   pagada?*
 The   house how much NEG CLDOMSG paid.FSG
'The house, how much didn't you pay it?'

It can already be seen that partial questions are constrained at different de-
grees: while (9a) and (9b) are fine, (9c) is unacceptable: The question *Inue
istas?* asks the interlocutor to identify an event located in the here and now
that is already validated; location is already provided by the semantics of
the stative verb *istare*. Unacceptability comes from the contradiction of lo-
cating an event that did not take place. The same goes for (9e): *comente*
asks the interlocutor to provide a modality for the existence of the process:
in order to assign a modality for the existence of the process, the latter must
however be actual at some constructional level: if the event of 'sleeping'
didn't take place, no modality of existence can be attributed to such a "non-
event".

   The asymmetry between cases under (7) and those under (9) raises the
question of why negation is compatible with (some) partial questions but
not with total ones. This question can be answered through the informa-
tional and semantic properties of negation and those of yes-no questions.

3.1. Negation as a type of judgement

A number of indications confirm the hypothesis that negative markers constitute a particular type of judgement – a negative judgement. The informational nucleus of a negative sentence thus lies in this particular type of judgement expressed by negation. Nouns in Aghem for instance – a bantu language of Cameroon – have two different forms; an in-focused one and an out-of-focus one. Direct objects normally take in-focus form, as they are associated to salient information. Under negation however, the direct object nominal take out-of-focus form, as if informational saliency had been usurped by negation. It follows that the negative sentence expresses a negative states of affairs whose exponent is the negative marker (cf. Reinach 1911). That is what is illustrated by examples (10a–c) from Hyman (1984):

(10) a. *m̀ mɔ́ zɨ̀ kɨ́-bɛ́   nɛ́*
      I PAST ate fufu:FOC today
      'I ate fufu today' (object in focus)

    b. *m̀ mɔ́ zɨ̀ nɛ́   bɛ́-'kɔ́*
      I PAST ate today fufu:OUT-OF-FOC
      'I ate fufu today' (object out of focus)

    c. *ŋ̀ ká   zɨ̀ bɛ́-' kɔ́   nɛ́*
      I NEG ate   fufu:OUT-OF-FOC today
      'I didn't eat fufu today' (object out of focus)

In (10a), the designation of the entity with object function is the informational core of the utterance, which is why the noun *bɛ́* is marked as infocus. In (10b), it is the localisation of the event which is the core of the message; that is the reason why the adjunct *nɛ́* in immediate postverbal position brings about the out-of-focus marking of the direct object. (10c) shows that the negative marker *ká* induces a shift of the informational core from the direct object, which is out-of-focus, to the negation itself. Hyman thus concludes that negation is endowed with an intrinsic focus that is responsible for the suspension of focus marking on other elements of the utterance.

    Likewise in Grébo and Wobé, some particles cliticising unto the verb signal the event as the core of the message; which is why they are known as assertive focus markers. Examples (11a) and (12a) show vowel *ɛ* and syllable *ne* related to the verb *to be* bring the focus unto the verb (Marchese 1983: 122):

(11) wobé

    a. *ɔ di-ɛ   ko*
       He ate-AF rice
       'He ate rice'

    b. *ɔ se ko di*
       He NEG rice eat
       'He didn't eat rice'

(12) grébo

    a. *ne du-da   nɛ ne*
       I   pound-PAST it   AF
       'I pounded it'

    b. *né yi   nɛ du*
       I   NEG it pound
       'I didn't pound it' / 'I have not pounded it'

These examples thus clearly establish that *assertive focus markers* are excluded with negation; being itself the exponent of a focus domain, negation suspends or blocks the marking of any other element.

    That is also demonstrated by Yukaghir, a language spoken in several small communities in the Yakut (Saha) Republic in the North-East of Russia. Yukaghir has a complex focus marking system where four types can be distinguished: predicate, subject, direct object and neutral foci. In the case of predicate focus, the verb is marked by prefix *me(r)-* and is conjugated in person and number, as shown by example (13a) (Comrie 1992: 56)[3].

(13) a. *met mer-ū-jeŋ*
        I   FOC-go-1SG
        'I *went*'

In the case of subject focus, the verb keeps the number agreement marks, but looses those of person (Maslov, p.c.)); with transitive verbs, the verbal form corresponds to the root as in (13b); with intransitives however, the non-finite verb form is suffixed with an *-l* and the subject takes either suffix *-leŋ* (see (13c)), or *-(e)k* (see (13d)):

(13) b. *(ileŋ)   met ai*
        reindeer I   shoot-NONFIN
        '*I* shot the reindeer'

    c. *ile-leŋ*   *ū-l*
       reindeer-FOC go-NONFIN
       '*The reindeer* went'

    d. *met-ek* *ū-l*
       I-FOC   go-NONFIN
       '*I* went'

As for direct object focus, the DP has the same form as the focal subject of an intransitive verb, which agrees in person and number with the subject:

(13) e. *met ile-leŋ*   *ai-meŋ*
       I   reindeer-FOC shoot-1SG (obj-FOC)
       'I shot *the reindeer*'

The fourth type of focus is identical to the predicate focus, except that the verb is not prefixed with prefix *me(r)-*, a configuration defined by Comrie as neutral focus. With no explicit marking, this focus is realised when a constituent other than the subject, object or predicate is highlighted (13f) (Comrie 1992: 58–59):

(13) f. *iⅆilwej-mirije laⱱil-ŋiń*   *kewe-ⱱ*
       PN-woman   firewood-DIR go-3SG
       'i′dilwej went for firewood / *firewood*'

The behaviour of negation seems very similar in Yukaghir and in the bantu languages just mentioned. The same structure as predicate focus sentences is manifested by negative sentences, with the caveat that the negative marker is in complementary distribution so to speak with the predicate focus marker. Examples (13g–h) show the absence of prefix *mer-* in the negative utterance which contains the negative marker *el* instead:

(13) g. *met mer-ū-jeŋ*
       I   FOC-go-1SG
       'I *went*'

    h. *met el-ū-jeŋ*
       I   NEG-go-1SG
       'I didn't (did *not*) go'

Comrie thus concludes (p.64) that «*the negative prefix is the focus, thus usurping the position of the predicate focus marker* me(r) *and also preventing focus from being marked on any other constituent of the clause*».[4]

A parallel case is found in Hungarian where verbal prefixes occupy the preverbal focus position that negative marker *nem* fills in negative sentences:[5]

(14) a. *el-ment-él*   *az iskolá-ba*
      Away-go:PAST-2SG the school-DIR
      'You went away to school'

    b. *nem ment-él*   *el*   *az iskolá-ba*
      Not go:PAST-2SG away the school-DIR
      'You didn't go (away) to school'

The negative version of (14a) shows *nem* in preverbal focal position, with the verbal prefix relegated to another position (Dezső 1982: 161)[6].

Negation marking therefore patently clashes with focus marking, and a possible analysis of this clash is to assign negation an 'on focused' value.

More support to this analysis is provided by the language of Gascony. Gascon is an Occitan language that is endowed with enunciative particles, notably *que*, *be* and *e*. Examples (15a) and (15b) show that particle *que* occupies preverbal position (Rohlfs 1970: 205–206):

(15) a. *Que las*   *ey*   *entenudos*
      That CLDO3FPL have1SG heard.FPL
      'I have heard them'

    b. *Ta pay*   *qu' ey*   *arribàt*
      Your father that be3SG come
      'Your father has come'

The origins and nature of enunciative *que* is controversial; one of the most convincing hypotheses is that a former focus process is at play (Push 1998). The enunciative *que* in (15b) would be the trace of the focalisation of the preceding constituent, the focus moving from the nominal to the verbal. This focalisation marker, Push concludes on the basis of a corpus analysis, co-occurs very rarely with negatives[7]. Negation and 'enunciative' marker thus do look like they are in complementary distribution. Interestingly, Gascon imperatives also tend to exclude *que*, which might be explained if we assume that the imperative also has intrinsic focus which is itself incompatible with the focus trace of the preverbal marker *que*[8]. The data mentioned above show that negation may interfere with other types of morpho-syntactic markers in such a way as to reconfigure the whole syntactic shape of the sentence.

3.2. The notion of Focus Clash

It is now possible to go back to the Sardinian data and to try to understand why negation is incompatible with the total negation marker on the one hand and with fronting on the other. In the light of typological data, this incompatibility, illustrated in (6) and (7), can be hypothesised to result from a *focus clash*. In other words, negation being the exponent of a specific judgement, it can enter in conflict with markers and configurations that mark the saliency of a constituent. It is however at the level of the predication globally and at that of the judgement of which it is a sign that the conflict arises: though in examples such as (5) the last stressed syllable of the fronted element alone bears main stress (cf. (5a) *Torradu est?*, (5b) *Famidu ses?*, etc.), focus extends to the whole predication. That is also the case of the Sardinian interrogative particle *a*, which essentially operates at the level of predication as a whole, not at the level of any of its constituents. Given that the negative particle *no* shares the same property, their incompatibility follows. This incompatibility can be represented in the following fashion:

(16)   *[[X] [Y]]
            | |
           +F   +F

The hypothesis can be made however that constituent question markers are compatible with negation because their focal value is circumscribed to a domain that does not concern the predication as a whole. Utterances such as (8) *Ite cheres faghere?* («What do you want to do?») involve a predicative scheme ((tu) fagher (y)) where what is queried only is the identification of the entity filling the second argument slot. Constituent questions are thus based on a presupposed or preconstructed predicative scheme that remains outside the scope of the question marker. Likewise in (8b) *Chie / chie est chi no at appidu su café?* («Who didn't have the coffee?»), the question bears on the identification and extraction of the entity filling the first argument slot; the question is therefore built on the pre-existing scheme ((x) neg ((abere) (café))). It is precisely because of this preconstructed scheme that constituent questions are compatible with negation. It is in this respect interesting to look at the Paduan interrogative conjugation.

3.3. The interrogative conjugation in Paduan

Paduan is a Romance language which, like other Northern varieties, has an interrogative conjugation. This can be agreed to emerge from a morphologisation of the enclitic in interrogatives (see Fava 2001)[9].

(17)   The interrogative conjugation in Paduan (Zamboni 1974: 42)

kántoi̯	'do I sing?'	*pę́rdoi*	'do I loose?'
kántito	'do you sing?'	*pę́rdito*	'do you loose?'
kánteo (kántelo)	'does he sing?'	*pę́rde(l)o*	'does he loose?'
kantę́moi̯	'do we sing?'	*perdę́moi*	'do we loose?'
kantę́o	'do you sing?'	*perdío*	'do you loose?'
kántei̯ (kánteli)	'do they sing?'	*pę́rde(l)I*	'do they loose?'

As shown in (17), interrogative conjugation is the result of person markers' affixation to the verb. The tableau given in (17') further illustrates the extension of such affixation in the interrogative forms of the verb: it covers the whole paradigms, while Paduan assertive conjugation only shows person markers' affixation in the second (singular) and third person forms.

(17') Assertive conjugation   Interrogative conjugation

	Assertive conjugation	Interrogative conjugation
1SG	∅	-i
2SG	te	-to
3SG	el (M) / la (F)	-lo (M) / -la (F)
1PL	∅	-i
2PL	∅	-o
3PL	i (M) / le (F)	-li (M) / -le (F)

The interrogative form of the verb, let us note, is compulsory with partial and total questions. That is shown in examples (18), where the use of assertive forms produces ill-formed sequences (Portner & Zanuttini 1996: 257–258).

(18)   a. *El   vien*
             S.CL come
             'he comes'

       b. *Vien-lo?* (* *El vien?*)
             come-S.CL
             'does he come?'

    c. *Quando vien-lo? (*Quando el vien?)*
       when   come-S.CL
       'when does he come?'

    d. *La ga magnà tuto*
       S.CL has eaten   all
       'she ate everything'

    e. *Cossa ga-la   magnà? (*Cossa la ga magnà?)*
       what has-S.CL eaten
       'what did she eat?'

The fundamental point is that the interrogative form of the verb is *incompatible* with negation (Parry 1997: 182; Zanuttini 1997: 42): the assertive form of the verb is therefore required in negative interrogatives, the person marker cliticising unto the negative (Portner & Zanuttini 1996: 258–259; Zanuttini 1997: 46–47):

(19) a. **No vien-lo?*
       NEG come-S.CL
       'Doesn't he come?'

    b. **Cossa no ga-la   magnà?*
       What NEG has-S.CL eaten
       'What didn't she eat?'

    c. *Nol   vien?*
       NEG -S.CL come
       'Doesn't he come?'

    d. *No la   ga magnà?*
       NEG S.CL has eaten
       'Hasn't she eaten?'

    e. *Cossa ze che no la   ga magnà?*
       What is that NEG S.CL has eaten
       'What it is that she didn't eat?'

Paduan data show that it is perfectly possible to formulate a question in the negative; this possibility however imposes restructuring the morpho-syntactic make-up of the sentence. The restructuring involved is quite similar to that considered for Sardinian, and it is therefore reasonable to relate it to similar causes. Completeness brings us to mention that in Paduan negation co-occurs with the interrogative verb form in some contexts. Wh-exclamatives are one such context (Zanuttini & Portner 1996: 261–262; Zanuttini 1997: 53):

(20) a. *Cossa no   ghe dise-lo!* (* *Cossa no (e)l ghe dise!*)
        What   NEG him say-S.CL
        'What things he is telling him!'

As the translation of (20a) indicates, the interrogative pronoun evokes as in many other languages a high degree value, whether this bears on the quantity or the quality of the concerned entities. The intensive reading results from a value that closes unto itself, starting and closing with the same subjective reference point. In this kind of sentence, the question-like morphosyntactic frame only superficially requires the hearer's implication. If no implication is expected on the part of the hearer, it is because the dialogical structure is short-circuited; in this case, the subjective origin of the sentence turns out to be at the same time the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* of the propositional content, and no fixed value can be brought about by the question marker. In other words, when no referential class can be associated with the interrogative marker (either because the verb valency is incompatible with such a marker or because the verb argument slots are already filled), the only available issue is to refer to the internal quantitative / qualitative make-up of the process.[10] The negative exclamative in (20a) thus points to the exclusion of a content whose qualitative properties preclude that it should have been expressed: topologically, negation marks crossing not from the positive to the negative (the non occurrence of an expected event or object), but from the positive to the negative (the occurrence of a non expected event or object). On the other hand, where the negative clause is made dependent, it precludes the interrogative form of the verb (20b).

(20) b. **Cossa che no   ghe dise-lo!*
         What   that NEG him say-S.CL
        'What things he is telling him!'

The interrogative verb is also required in partial questions introduced by *parcossa* ('why') (20c), as long as the proposition is not embedded (Zanuttini 1997: 54)[11]; embedding imposes the assertive form of the verb, as shown in (20d):

(20) c. *Parcossa no   ve-to   anca ti?*
        Why   NEG go-S.CL also you
        'Why aren't you going as well?'

    d. *Parcossa ze   che no te   ve anca ti?*
       Why   be3SG that NEG S.CL go also you
       'Why aren't you going as well?'

According to Zanuttini & Portner (1996: 262), the interrogative in (20c) would signal that the speaker knows that the interlocutor didn't come, the question presupposing that the refusal to come is unjustified. (20d) would on the contrary be a simple request of information concerning the 'non-going'.

    We can now turn back to the interrogative conjugation and ask whether there is any common denominator among the examples where the Paduan negative marker *no* is compatible with the interrogative verb form. We may suggest that negation is compatible with the interrogative verb form whenever the question is built upon a presupposed value or a pre-constructed propositional scheme (cf. Culioli 1999). In other words, negation is compatible with the interrogative verb form whenever interrogation takes as a structural basis a content which remains outside the scope of interrogation, or whenever it implies a polarization on a given value. Given that negation fundamentally operates at sentence level, its possible co-occurrence with interrogative focus on a given value of predication is thus accounted for. We also find now an explanation of compatibility of negation with interrogative markers whenever the content of predication is relegated to a dependent status. In examples such as (20c) – *Parcossa ze che no te ve anca ti!?* – we are dealing with a nuclear question whose focussed term is marked as such by the identifying copula *ze*; complementizer *che* signals that the whole predication is informationnally *backgrounded*. This *backgrounding* also is responsible for the use of assertive conjugation in this type of context – suffice it to mention French interrogatives such as *C'est quand que tu viens?* vs. * *C'est quand que viens-tu?* We may account in the same way for the presence of negation in Sardinian sentences like (8a) *Ite / ite est chi no as cumpresu?* or (8b) *Chie est chi no at appidu su café?*: identificational focus has as its domain the entity filling the direct object and the subject slots, and not the predication as a whole; in this case as well, *backgrounding* of the predicative core may account for the wellformedness of the sentence.

    It should be pointed out that interrogative sentences are not the only ones which require re-ordering of the sentence elements in presence of negation. Exclamatives show the same kind of restrictions, as illustrated in (21) (Jones 1993: 346):

(21) a. *Bellu est!*
        Nice be3SG
        'It's nice!'

> b. – *Kale   keres?*
>   Which want2SG
>   'Which one do you want?'
>
>   – *Cudda   keldzo!*
>   That one want1SG
>   'That one I want!'

As Jones (1993: 338) puts it, «(...) the fronted item is interpreted as the focus of the sentence with an effect similar to that of cleft or pseudo-cleft constructions in English». Interestingly, none of the examples above allows *as such* the insertion of the negative marker *no(n)* (cf. **Bellu no est!* and **Cudda no keldzo!*). Putting to the fore an actual property or a given object thus excludes its concomitant and correlative denial or rejection.[12] The only option once more is to reorganize the sentence elements (cf. *No est bellu!* and *No keldzo cudda!*): such a reorganization entails *defocusing* of the fronted elements in the examples in (21) and maintaining in preverbal position the only negative marker. Placed in post-verbal position, the adjective *bellu* and the deictic *cudda* are of course not deprived of informational saliency, but they are rather informationally integrated into the wider VP in the scope of negation. The same naturally holds for the interro-negatives in (7): the presence of negation implies the informational demotion of the fronted constituent, a demotion realized via syntactic reordering, leaving thus the sole negation in preverbal position.[13]

4. Conclusion

It has been shown that Sardinian interrogatives resort to various strategies whose effect is to assign informational prominence on a given content; this is particularly clear with fronting strategy, in which the fronted constituent is a head and bears primary stress (Jones 1993: 332). This strategy has been argued to be incompatible with negation, as well as with the use of particle *a*, whose function is to assign focal value to the content in its scope. Naturally, interrogation and negation are not incompatible per se (see the very existence of negative interrogatives!), but their co-occurrence tends to induce syntactic restructuring; this in turn brings evidence that the exponents of these two major modalities can clash: this clash has been argued to depend on the 'in focus' value of both interrogatives and negation.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. The interrogative particle *a* must not be confused with the homophonous preposition *a*, which can both occur in the same utterance. This is shown by examples such as *A mamma tua, a l'as bida custu mandzanu?* [a 'mam: a 'ðua a l al 'viða 'kustu man'dzanu] 'Your mother, you saw her this morning?' "Did you see your mother this morning?", where the first *a* introduces the topical direct object, whereas the second marks a total question.

2. Contini (1986: 531) classifies this particle amongst the unstressable monosyllabic forms inherited from latin forms with final consonant: *e* (< lat. *et* 'and'), *a* (< lat. *ad* 'to'), *ne* (< lat. *nec* 'neither'). This final consonant would motivate the consonant lengthening of the following word (see examples such as *'a kkan'tamusu?* 'do we sing?').

3. According to Maslova (1997: 458), predicate focus sentences represent the neutral version of nominal focus constructions.

4. Comrie mentions the exception of an object having an attributive complement; example (13i) shows that the object is marked for focus, with a still transitive verb – the intransitive conjugation being normally used with negated transitive verbs:

   (13) i. *met ama*   *ted-ile-k*   *el'-buń-meŋ*
         I   good-reindeer-FOC NEG-kill-1SG (Obj: FOC)
         'I did not kill the *good* reindeer'

   Elena Maslova (p.c.) points out that in negative interrogatives such as *kin-ek el-kel-ul* ('who didn't come?'), the nuclear interrogative is marked with the focus mark *-ek,* despite the adjacency of negation. The complexity of the marking system would deserve a fuller assessment that cannot be done here. It is worth pointing out, however, that co-occurrence of focus and negative marking is allowed when focus is restricted to an interrogative constituent (vs. the predication as a whole).

5. Hungarian verbal "prefixes" occur in preverbal position as a "default" rule and they constitute a prosodic unit with the verb (cf. Rainò 1984: 127).

6. Actually, the preverb may co-occur with the negative, as demonstrated by (14c) from Dezső (1982: 161) (see also Rainò 1984: 128):

   (14) c. A fiú nem elolvassa az újságot
         'the boy does not peruse the newspaper (but he puts it on the fire)'

   Dezső (op. cit.) points out that in this kind of context «(...) the verb is markedly emphatic and needs to be complemented».

7. Rohlfs (1970: 208) notes that the particle *que* is only used in assertives, while noting an extension to negative sentences in certain varieties.

8. Comrie (1992: 63) also points out that Yukaghir predicate focus particle *me(r)* disappears in the imperative, where the verb only has person morphology (see i. and ii.):

   i. *wie-k*   ii. *kelu-k*
      Make-IMPER: 2SG   Come- IMPER: 2SG
      'Do [it]!'   'Come!'

   It is particularly interesting to note that in the the Kru languages signaled by Marchese (1983: 124), the imperative verb is incompatible with the assertive focus markers, as shown by the examples below in Guéré and Tepo respectively:

   iii. *mu ɔɔ́*   iv. *di dɛ*
        Go market   Eat thing
        'Go to the market!'   'Eat!'
        *mu-e ɔɔ́   **di dɛ   nɪ*
         Go-AF market   Eat thing AF

9. This is still a controversial point: some see a syntactic case of subject clitic inversion, others a morphological process that would justify the recognition of an interrogative conjugation distinct from the assertive one (see De la Grasserie 1899): this would be supported by the fact that the paradigms for prefixed series and for suffixed series are distinct (see Fava 1993 and 2001 for a discussion).

10. See French sentences such as *Qu'est-ce qu'il pleure?!*, where the neutral interrogative marker *qu'est-ce que* doesn't / cannot refer to any argument of the sentence; as default, it refers to the internal quantification of the process, or to its causal value. In sentences like *Qu'est-ce qu'il a (pas) mangé comme cochonneries!* on the other hand, both qualitative and quantitative polarization are available.

11. It can be pointed out that « why » questions behave in a very different way from other question types, because such questions do not bear on the identification of a given entity or on the circumstances of the event, but rather on the *causal relationship* between such and such event.

12. All things being equal, the same reasons exclude negation in French sentences such as *Ya le train qui arrive* (cf. **Ya pas le train qui arrive*): it would be somewhat nonsensical on the one hand to bring about the existence of a given entity or situation, and at the same time to deny or reject it.

13. This phenomenon, it will be mentioned, is reminiscent of a well known kind of prosodic restructuring that occurs when adjacent stressed constituents are to be found: configurations such as Italian *metà tempo* [me'ta 'tempo] 'part time' are thus "repaired" via stress retraction, hence ['meta 'tempo] (cf. Nespor & Vogel 1989). It is then tempting to ascribe to the same general principle – some kind of OCP constraint – the *raison d'être* of these apparently very different syntactic and phonological phenomena.

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