



**GHENT  
UNIVERSITY**

# MINIMIZING MINIMIZERS' STRUCTURE

## JESPERSEN'S CYCLE AND FOCUS

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# 'MIGA': SOME PRELIMINARY DATA

## **Venetian:**

(1) A: *I me ga dito che Giani ga preparà i bigoli*  
prepared the bigoli'

B: *Giani **no** ga (**miga**) preparà i bigoli* (N= 30, M = 7)  
at all!'

(2) A: *Parcossa ti pianzi?*

B: *Giani **no** ga ?**miga** preparà i bigoli* (N= 30, M = 4)  
bigoli at all'

'They told me that Giani has

'Giani hasn't prepared the bigoli

'Why are you crying?'

'?Giani hasn't prepared the

## **Gazzelese:**

(3) A: *I me ga dito che Giani ga parecià i bigoli*

B: *Gianni **no** ga \*(**mia**) parecià i bigoli* (N = 30, M = 7)

(4) A: *Parché pianzito?*

B: *Giani **no** ga \*(**mia**) parecià i bigoli* (N = 30, M = 7)

# PRESUPPOSITIONAL NEGATION

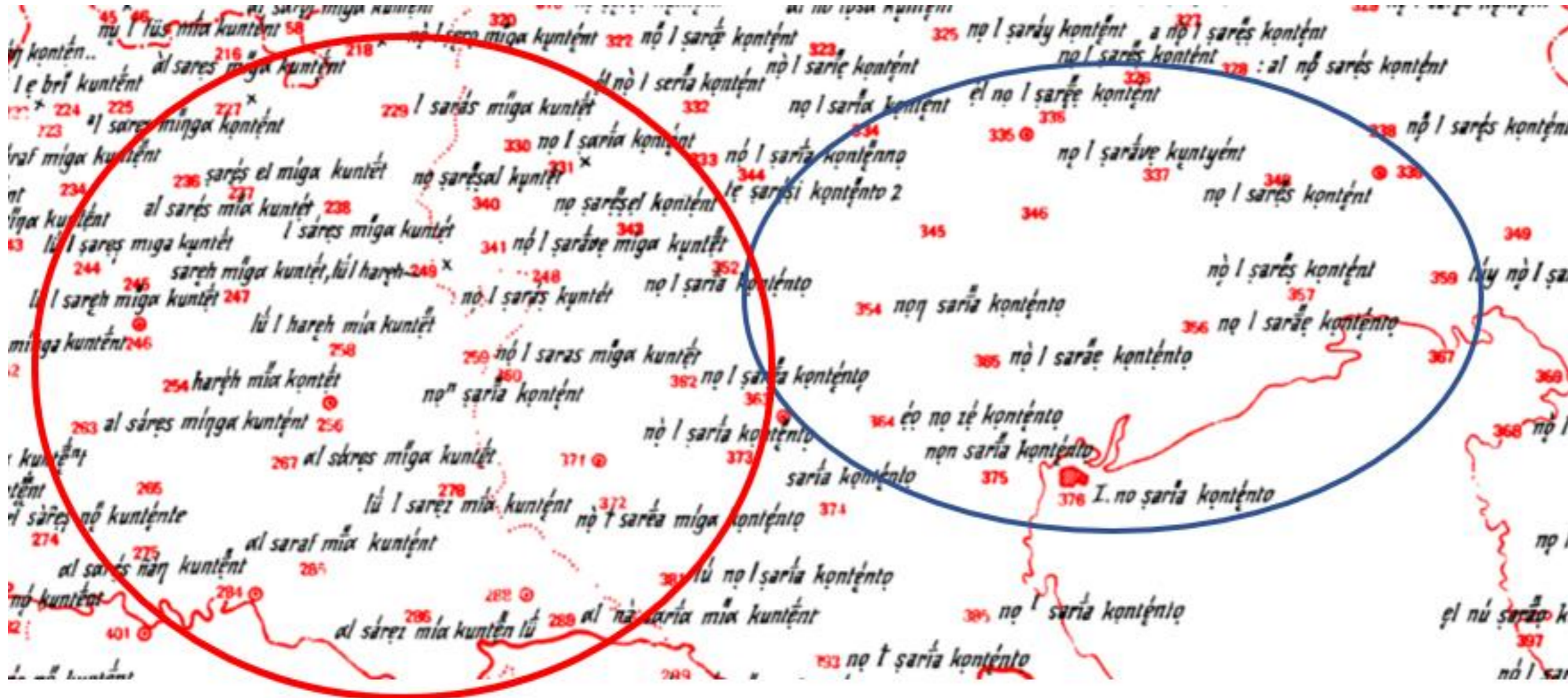
- Cinque (1976), Zanuttini (1997): In Italian, *mica* has been dubbed ‘presuppositional negation’, because “it has presuppositional value [...] it denies an expectation” [sic.] → it can apply to at-issue and not-at-issue content... *Mica* must deny old information (Squartini 2017, Cerruti 2018)
- Frana and Rawlins (2019) redefined formally the entry for *mica*:  
(5)  $\llbracket mica \rrbracket = \llbracket FALSUM \rrbracket_x = \lambda p \langle s, t \rangle \lambda w. \forall w' \in \text{Epi}_x(w) [\forall w'' \in \text{Conv}_x(w') [p \notin \text{CG}]]^1$
- *Mica* to be interpreted dynamically (cf. Krifka 2017): an operator that gives instructions on what to do with a certain given proposition. (=> unacceptability in out-of-the-blue contexts, see ex.2 )
- Based on Höhle (1992)’s VERUM FOCUS, Repp (2013)’s FALSUM.
- Venetian *miga* is FALSUM, Gazzoless *mia* is standard negation (it can appear in any negative context regardless of information structure constraints)
- *Mica*, *miga* and *mia* were introduced by Jespersen’s cycle (cf. French *pas*) (Dahl 1979, Breitbarth et al. 2020 for a review). Gazzoless is more advanced in the cycle, as *mia* became the expression of standard negation.

<sup>1</sup> $\text{Epi}_x(w)$  = the set of worlds conforming to  $x$ ’s knowledge in  $w$

$\text{Conv}_x(w')$  = set of worlds where all the conversational goals of  $x$  in  $w'$  are fulfilled (in a Gricean sense)

$\text{CG}$  = the Stalnakerian common ground at a world  $w$ , i.e. the set of propositions that the speakers assume to be true at  $w$  (c.f. Stalnaker 1978).

# PRESUPPOSITIONAL NEGATION IN VENETO

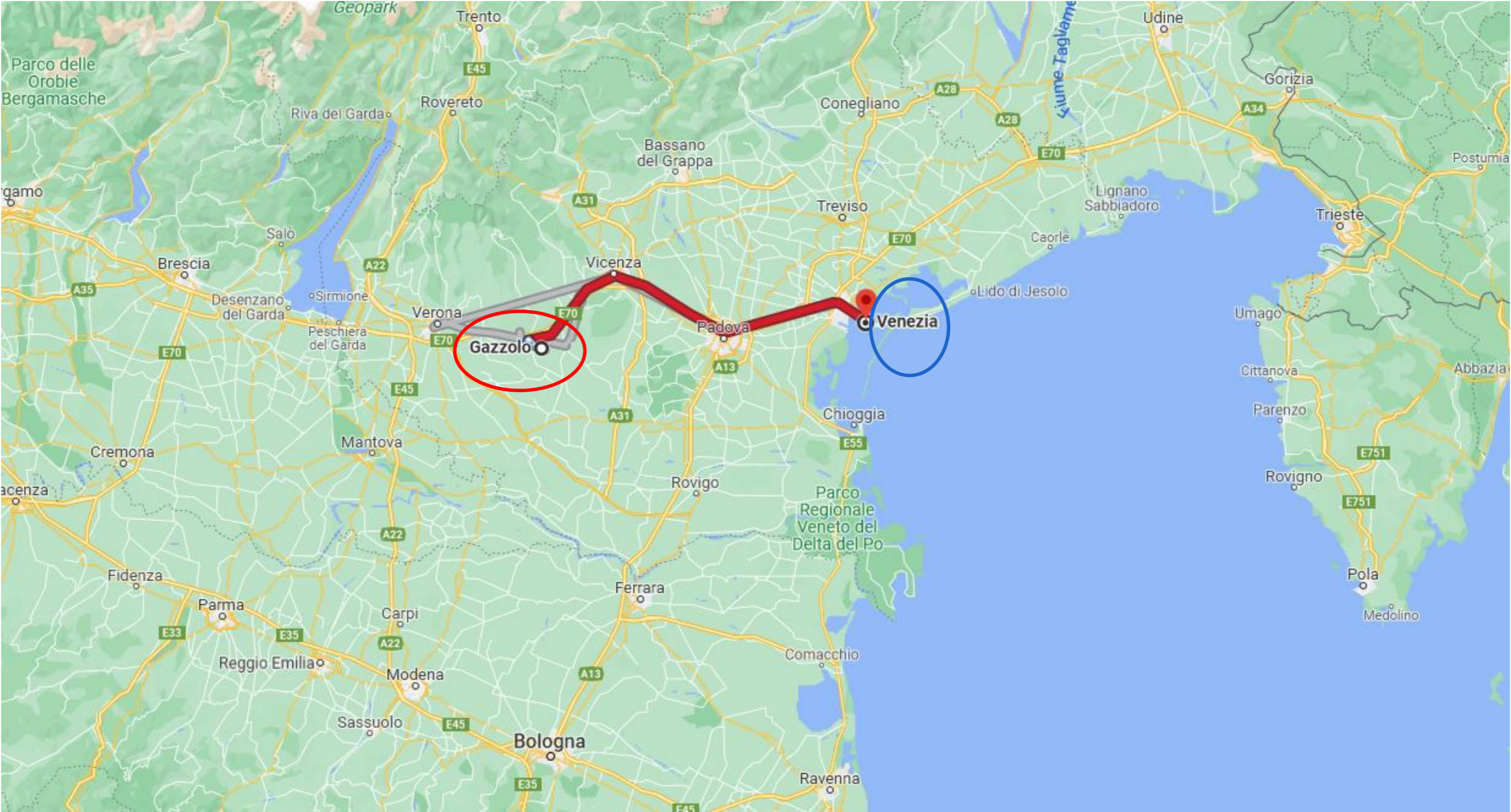


From NavigAIS maps:  
He wouldn't be happy

Borer-Chomsky conjecture: the locus of parametric variation is encoded within the features of functional heads (Baker 2008)

→ use the variation of mica in Veneto to study its matrix of features?

# PRESUPPOSITIONAL NEGATION IN VENETO



# A PUZZLE

## Venetian:

- Scope on modal (cf. Cormack and Smith 2002, Frana and Rawlins 2019)

(6) *No ti ga da meterte na cravata*

LF1) 'You **don't have to** wear a tie' NEG > MOD

LF2) 'You **must not** wear a tie' MOD > NEG

(7) *No ti ga miga da meterte na cravata*

LF1) 'You **don't have to** wear a tie' NEG > MOD

- Gapping (cf. Repp 2009)

(8) *No ti ga magnà i bigoli o le sarde?*

LF1) 'Didn't you eat the bigoli or the sardines?'  $\neg(p \vee q)$

LF2) 'What didn't you eat? The bigoli or the sardines?'  $\neg p \vee \neg q$

(9) *No ti ga miga magnà i bigoli o le sarde?*

LF1) 'Didn't you eat the bigoli or the sardines?'  $\neg(p \vee q)$

# A PUZZLE

## Venetian:

- Ban in central if-clauses (Cinque 1976)

(10) *Se no piove (\*miga), vegnì da noaltri?*

‘If it doesn’t rain, would you come over?’

- Infelicity in restrictive relative clauses (Cinque 1976)

(11) *Serco na cravata che no ti ga (?miga) messo*

‘I am looking for a tie that you haven’t worn’

- Ban with wh-questions

(12) *Cossa no ti ga (\*miga) fatto?*

‘What did you not do?’



# A PUZZLE

- Focus fronting

(13) ***Miga*** go comprà na cravata

‘I haven’t bought a tie at all’

(14) \*NA CRAVATA ***miga*** go comprà (but NA CRAVATA no go comprà) → intervention effects at Left Periphery? The ban on multiple foci

# TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF THE PUZZLE

- Based on example (7) for Italian, Frana and Rawlins suggest *miga* to be posited as a high FALSUM operator.
- Let's expand this idea:

*Miga* might be licensed via a left-peripheral operator, FALSUM. Potential positioning in FAIP, or *Focus Associated Implicature Projection*. Such projection was proposed by Bianchi, Bocci, Cruschina (2015) in order to account for corrective focus fronting.

(15) *MARINA hanno invitato* (Italian)

'They invited MARINA' (not John, not Kim...)

In their approach, FAI conventionalizes the implicature brought by focus to a set of alternatives {Marina, ~~John, Kim...~~} and meets the corrective goal of focus. Discursive function of *miga*: it is a corrective operator which evokes a set of propositional alternatives { $p$ ,  $\neg p$ }.

Moreover, they argue that FAIP is responsible for the activation of a lower FocusP, which is a possible landing site for the optional movement of the focused element (*miga* in our case)

 ForceP ... [FAIP FAI<sub>o</sub>[corr] [FocP migai [+foc] Foc<sub>0</sub>[+foc]... [TP ... ~~miga~~ ... ]]]

# TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF THE PUZZLE

- Pragmatic function: Venetian *miga* has a corrective function, hence its ungrammaticality in out-of-the-blue contexts (cf. the canonical function of focus, which is discourse-linked)
- Scope on modals: the operator FALSUM scopes high on the modal, hence the only interpretation is NEG > MOD
- Gapping: the operator FALSUM is more external and does not operate within more internal structures NEG > (p ∨ q)
- Ban on conditionals: Following Haegeman (2010), in central if-clauses we have more reduced access to left periphery because of intervention-effects
- Ban on restrictive relative clauses: Same as above
- Ban on wh-questions: Wh-elements are potentially occupying the left periphery, not allowing the presence of FALSUM
- Focus fronting: FAI activates FocusP, which is a potential landing site for *miga*, if the movement happens, then there is no other space for other foci
- Interestingly, *miga* started life as minimizer ( lit. ‘not even a crumb’). Formal models of minimizers have defined them as containing a tacit focus particle (Horn 1989, Chierchia 2013 a.o. cf. Tubau 2020). Maybe the association with focus started from here?
- In earlier works by Garzonio (2019), old Italian *mica* is described as being associated with a focus feature.
- Similarly, Lohnstein (2012, 2016) propose that with VERUM operators, a feature focus is assigned to the head Mood<sup>0</sup> , where VERUM is merged.

# THE DISAPPEARED PUZZLE

## Gazzelese:

- Scope on modal

(15) *No te ghe **mia** da meterte na cravata*

LF1) 'You **don't have to** wear a tie' NEG > MOD

LF2) 'You **must not** wear a tie' MOD > NEG

- Gapping

(16) *No ghetto **mia** magnà i bigoli o le sarde?*

LF1) 'Didn't you eat the bigoli or the sardines?'  $\neg(p \vee q)$

LF2) 'What didn't you eat? The bigoli or the sardines?'  $\neg p \vee \neg q$

- Allowed in any if-clauses

(17) *Se **no piove mia**, vegni casa?*

If it doesn't rain, would you come over?

# THE DISAPPEARED PUZZLE

- Possible on restrictive relative clauses

(18) *Serco na cravata che no te ghe mia messo*

‘I am looking for a tie that you haven’t worn’

- Possible with wh-questions

(19) *Cossa no te ghe mia fatto?*

‘What did you not do?’

- Ban on Focus fronting

(20) \**Mia go comprà na cravata*

‘I haven’t bought a tie at all’

Constraint	Venetian	Gazzolese
Exclusively Discourse related interpretation	yes	no
Negation exclusively over deontic modals	yes	no
Exclusively external position in gapping	yes	no
Ban in central if-clauses	yes	no
Ban in wh-questions	yes	no
Ban in restrictive relative clauses	yes	no
Focus	yes	no

# WHAT HAPPENED?

- Breitbarth (2014)'s theory: negative reinforcers of Jespersen's cycle have richer internal structure than the fully grammaticalized sentential negation, such internal complexity is lost in later stages of the cycle in Veneto.
- Always in Breitbarth (2014 et subs.), the impoverishment of structure is explained in terms of Minimize Structure (Van Gelderen 2008) or Structural Deficiency (Cardinaletti & Starke 1999).
- Following the economy model by Eckardt (2009), with the Avoid Pragmatic Overload Principle (APO): speakers tend to get rid of pragmatic enrichment (scales, presuppositions), when there is no clear contextual evidence to retrieve it.
- If *miga* is being used as denial with less explicit propositions ( cf. (2) as it happened for French, cf. Larrivé 2020), speakers would not get the FALSUM meaning, which is encoded (or conventionalized) by a focus feature. As a consequence, they would not posit a focus-associated implicature projection any longer.
- *Miga* is then licensed by the standard negation operator  $Op_{\neg}$ .

# STRUCTURE MINIMIZING: THE LOSS OF FOCUS

- Gazzoless *mia* does not operate as  $\{\emptyset, \neg p\}$ , but simply as  $\neg p$ . As such, the corrective meaning and the focal interpretation is lost. Its structure is minimized
- With the loss of FAIP and the previous licensing mechanism, *mia* behaves as simple negation, loosing all the constraints.
  - 1) Scope on modals: negation can precede or follow the modal in the LF
  - 2) Gapping: negation can stay outside or embed within the disjunction
  - 3) Ban in central if-clauses: negation does not require left-peripheral operations for licensing
  - 4) Ban in restrictive relative clauses: same as above
  - 5) Wh-questions: same as above
  - 6) Focus fronting: *mia* is not sensitive to the activation of FocP

→ Independent evidence: *Miga* in Venice is interpreted at PF by peculiar prosodic properties, such as the presence of a Pitch Accent on it. Preliminary evidence from Magistro, Crocco, Breitbarth (forth.) show that in Gazzolo, different prosodic properties are found. This is in line with the interpretation of the focus feature and how the last one is (not) encoded and spelled-out in the syntactic machinery.

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Thanks!

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