
The parasitic licensing of a gestural NPI

Chiara Marchetiello

Trinity College Dublin

marchetc@tcd.ie

In this talk, I propose an analysis of what I argue can be classified as a gestural NPI in Neapolitan (Italo-Romance), namely the co-speech gesture [CHIN-FLICK] (‘(not) at all’; henceforth [CF]; De Jorio 1832:471). This gesture has two striking properties. First: to my knowledge, it is the first reported example of a co-speech NPI. As such, [CF] provides novel support for the *Grammatical Integration Hypothesis* of Colasanti (2023a,b), which claims that at least some co-speech gestures are simply morphemes that get externalised in the visual-gestural modality rather than the spoken modality. Second: similar to some spoken NPIs found in Dutch, Greek, etc. (Den Dikken 2002; Hoeksema 2007; Goncharov and Zeijlstra 2022), [CF] can be licensed *parasitically*, in that it relies on the successful licensing of some other NPI in the derivation. Data from a case study show that [CF] itself behaves like a NPI: it requires licensing by negation, but it does not contribute semantic negation on its own (1; contexts are omitted here). Crucially, though, [CF] is not licensed in simple negative sentences with the preverbal negative marker *nun* ‘not’; rather, some other (spoken) NPI is required elsewhere in the sentence (2). (Throughout, underline indicates the temporal alignment of the gesture with the spoken component.)

(1) * [CF] *Neapolitan (Napoli)*

Aggia	vistə	a	nisciuno
<i>I.have</i>	<i>seen</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>nobody</i>

‘I didn’t see anyone (at all)’

(2) [CF] *Neapolitan (Acerra)*

Gennarə	nun	vene	*(majə).
<i>Gennarə</i>	<i>not</i>	<i>he.comes</i>	<i>never</i>

‘Gennarə does’t (ever) come at all.’

Thus, the licensing of [CF] seems to be *parasitic* on the licensing of another clausemate NPI, as other parasitic NPIs found in spoken languages.

Selected References • Colasanti, V. (2023a). Functional gestures as morphemes: Some evidence from the languages of Southern Italy. *Glossa* 8, 1–45. • Colasanti, V. (2023b). Gestural focus marking in Italo-Romance. *Isogloss* 9, 1–39. • Den Dikken, M. (2002). Direct and parasitic polarity item licensing. *J. Comp. Germ. Linguist.* 5, 35–66. • Hoeksema, J. (2007). Parasitic licensing of negative polarity items. *J. Comp. Germ. Linguist.* 10, 163–182.