

SETTLEDNESS, POLARITY AND MOOD IN SPANISH COMPLEMENTS

Errapel Mejías-Bikandi
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

ABSTRACT. The paper discusses the effect of mood on the availability of an existential interpretation of negative words such as *nadie* in the complement of affective emotive factive predicates in Spanish. In these contexts, the subjunctive mood allows *nadie* to function as a NPI, and it may be interpreted either as a non-negated existentially quantified expression, $\exists x$, equivalent to *alguien*, or as negative universally quantified expression, $\forall x\bar{}$, equivalent to the English "nobody". On the other hand, the indicative mood allows only for a negative universal interpretation, as $\forall x\bar{}$. An account of this phenomenon is proposed in terms of the notion of *settledness*. A proposition expressed by an indicative complement is asserted, and the speaker is signaling their intention that it be settled in the *context set*. It is said that the proposition is *grammatically settled*. By expressing a proposition in the subjunctive mood, the speaker is not intending that it be settled at the time of utterance, and, as a consequence it is in a *grammatically unsettled state* (p/\bar{p} : a state in which it is undetermined whether p or \bar{p}). A negative word such as *nadie* is analyzed as denoting a quantity scale $\langle \forall, \exists \rangle$. Within an asserted complement, the interpretation of *nadie* is fixed at the highest, most informative, point in the scale, \forall . On the other hand, within the grammatically unsettled complement of an affective predicate, which allows for scale reversal, the interpretation of *nadie* is not fixed. This indeterminacy allows it to assume the value of the lowest point, \exists . It is noted that this possibility provides an expressive tool which may be used to add an emphatic hue to an utterance

Keywords. Spanish; mood; assertion; settledness; polarity.

RESUMEN. En este artículo se investiga el efecto del modo verbal en la interpretación de palabras negativas como *nadie*, cuando estas aparecen en el complemento de predicados fáctico-emotivos afectivos en español. En estos contextos, el modo subjuntivo permite que la palabra *nadie* funcione tanto como un elemento de polaridad negativo, interpretada como una expresión cuantificada por el operador existencial, no negado, $\exists x$, equivalente a *alguien*, o como una expresión negativa cuantificada por el operador universal, $\forall x\bar{}$. Por otro lado, el indicativo permite solo su interpretación como una expresión negativa cuantificada por el operador universal, $\forall x\bar{}$. Se ofrece una explicación en términos de la noción de *estabilización*. Una proposición expresada por un complemento en indicativo se asevera. Al aseverar la proposición, el hablante indica su intención de que esta *se estabilice* en el *conjunto contextual*. Se propone que en este caso la proposición está *gramaticalmente estabilizada*. Al expresar una proposición en modo subjuntivo, el hablante no indica su intención de que *se estabilice* en el momento en que se profiere la expresión, y como consecuencia, la proposición está en un estado *inestable* (p/\bar{p} : estado en el cual el valor de p está indeterminado). Se propone que *nadie* denota una escala de cantidad $\langle \forall, \exists \rangle$. Dentro de un complemento aseverado, la interpretación de *nadie* se fija en el punto más alto, más informativo, de la escala: \forall . Por otro lado, cuando *nadie* aparece en el complemento gramaticalmente *inestable* de un predicado fáctico-emotivo que permite una *inversión escalar*, la interpretación de *nadie* no se fija en el punto más alto de la escala. Esta falta de determinación permite que *nadie* tome el valor más bajo, \exists . Esta posibilidad dota al hablante de un recurso expresivo que puede aportar un matiz enfático.

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Palabras clave. español; modo; aserción; asentamiento; polaridad

1. Introduction.

Consider the following utterance:¹

(1) Lamento que haya nadie de mi partido que se haya visto implicado en ningún caso de corrupción.

‘I regret that anybody in my party that has been implicated in any case of corruption’

The statement was uttered by a politician commenting on the fact that a number of party members were under investigation for being involved in alleged corrupt practices. It is understood that there are members of their political party accused of corruption, this is not put into question. The speaker regrets that this is the case. It is interesting in this example, that the word *nadie*, "nobody", is interpreted with a non-negative meaning, equivalent to "anybody/somebody". This interpretation of *nadie* occurs in a non-negated context (not under the scope of a negative particle). Indeed, (1) may be paraphrased as (2):

(2) Lamento que haya *alguien* de mi partido que se haya visto implicado en *algún* caso de corrupción.

‘I regret that there is somebody in my party that has been implicated in cases of corruption’

This is unusual, as typically *nadie*, when not under the scope of a negative particle as in (4), is equivalent to "nobody", as in (3):

(3) Nadie se ha visto implicado en casos de corrupción

‘Nobody has been implicated in corruption cases’

(4) No hay nadie implicado en casos de corrupción

‘There isn't anybody implicated in corruption cases’

The same phenomenon occurs in sentences (5) and (6), where the word *nadie* appears as a preverbal subject:

(5) Me sorprende que nadie pueda decir, y quien lo ha dicho debería excusarse, que se está ocultando información.

‘I am surprised someone can say, and the person who said it should excuse themselves, that we are hiding information’

(6) Increíble que a nadie se le ocurra algo así!" (*sic*)

‘It is incredible that someone thought of something like this!’ or

‘It is incredible that anybody would think of something like this!’

In (5), the interpretation is that *someone* did say that they were hiding information, and the speaker is surprised that anybody would say that. (6) is uttered as a reaction to a new product: a set of cat ears (for kids) that are sensitive to certain brain waves, so that they

¹ Extracted from an interview in the program *La Cafetera*, 4/20/2017.

perk up, or lie, in that way signaling the wearer's mood. Again, in this case the expression *nadie* is really interpreted as an existentially quantified expression (anyone/someone), and it is understood that someone did indeed thought of something like that.

Notice that the negative interpretation of *nadie* (equivalent to "nobody") is also possible (indeed, more common) in similar grammatical contexts. Thus, contrast (5) with (7):²

(7) La ampliación está relacionada con la democracia y la libertad en Europa, pero, sobre todo, con la seguridad europea, un aspecto que me sorprende que nadie haya mencionado hoy.

‘Enlargement is about democracy and freedom in Europe but, above all, about European security, something I am surprised no one mentioned today.’

In this case, *nadie*, within the complement of the predicate *sorprender*, is interpreted as a true negative word, with the meaning of "no one"/"nobody". This is the most common interpretation. However, as (5) shows, on occasions it may receive an existential interpretation in a similar grammatical context.

Examples (1), (5) and (6) illustrate this phenomenon within the complements of emotive factive predicates, which will be the focus of this paper. However, the same phenomenon can be observed in other grammatical contexts. Example (8) is extracted from a review of a novel (the relevant part is underlined).³ In this case the interpretation of *nadie* as an existential expression occurs within an adverbial clause:

(8) Procura acompañar sus sanaciones con invocaciones místicas o piadosas, pero a pesar de su empeño siguen pareciendo rituales de magia y brujería. Y no son buenos tiempos para que nadie piense una cosa así. Los familiares del Santo Oficio escudriñan cada rincón de los reinos hispánicos buscando herejes o disidentes.

‘Although her healings are accompanied by mystical or pious invocations, they still look like magic rituals and witchcraft. And these are not good times for anybody to think something like that. The Holy Office is searching every corner of the Hispanic kingdoms looking for heretics and dissidents.’

Or, interestingly, in (9), where the negation that appears in the matrix does not affect the interpretation of the word *nadie* in the complement:⁴

(9) Si esta gente llegase aquí al poder impondría una dictadura terrible. No comprenden que nadie piense de forma diferente a ellos y no sienten el más mínimo respeto hacia la vida o los derechos humanos.

‘If these people were to reach power they would impose a terrible dictatorship. They do not comprehend that anybody would think differently from them and they do not feel the slightest respect for life or human rights’

² Debate Parlamento Europeo, 10/25/2005: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-6-2005-10-25_ES.html?redirect

³ <https://es.bookmate.com/books/xW4VsSyE>

⁴ ABC Electrónico, 06/07/1997. Contrast this, for example, with a sentence such as (i):

(i) "No comprendo que nadie saliera"
I do not understand why nobody left

In examples (1), (5) and (6) the complement verb appears in the subjunctive mood. Notice, though, that the complement of emotive factives may appear in the indicative mood too, as in (10). In this case, the word *nadie* may receive only a universal interpretation:⁵

(10) A mí también me sorprende que nadie dice nada en un país donde han muerto más de 100.000 personas en una pandemia.

‘I am also surprised that nobody says-IND anything in a country where more than 100,000 people have died during the pandemics.’

This paper discusses the interpretation of words such as *nadie* within the complement of emotive factive predicates as in (1), (5), (6) and (10). Specifically, it explores how the mood of the complement verb in these predicates affects the interpretation of the negative word. The observation is made that an existential interpretation of the word *nadie* is possible when the complement verb appears in the subjunctive mood, as in (1), (5) and (6). However, when the complement verb appears in the indicative mood, the existential interpretation of *nadie* is not available, and it must be interpreted as equivalent to "nobody", as in (7).

To illustrate this point, consider (11) and (12) below, which are shortened versions of (5) and (10):

(11) Me sorprende que nadie diga eso

‘I am surprised somebody/anybody says-SUBJ that’ or

‘I am surprised that nobody says-IND that’

(12) Me sorprende que nadie dice eso

‘I am surprised that nobody says-IND that’

Again, in (11) the word *nadie* may receive an existential interpretation, and be translated as "somebody/anybody", or a universal (negative) interpretation and be translated as "nobody". In (12), it receives only a universal (negative) interpretation, and it is translated as "nobody". In (11), a possible interpretation may be that some people do indeed "say that", and that the speaker finds this fact surprising. In (12), the only possible interpretation is one under which nobody "says that", and the speaker finds this fact surprising. Notice that in this respect, indicative complements behave similarly to independent clauses. Thus, the existential interpretation is impossible in sentences such as (13):

(13) Nadie dice eso

‘Nobody says that’

An account for this contrast will be proposed that incorporates: i) Stalnaker's notion of *context set* (Stalnaker 1978), ii) the notion of *settledness* (Kauffman 2002; Kauffman, Condoravdi, Harizanov 2006, Hoff and Schwenter 2020), iii) Israel's analysis of polarity items (Israel 1996), iv) analyses of mood that view indicative complements as propositions

⁵ Diario16, 9/11/21, <https://diario16.com/ayuso-entre-la-ofensiva-a-moncloa-y-el-pulso-a-genova/>

asserted as relevant on their own right (Jary 2002, 2009), and v) an analysis that treats *n*-words such as *nadie* as lexically ambiguous, as in Herburger (2001).

The explanation that will be proposed can be outlined as follows. A context set contains all possible worlds compatible with the beliefs of a speaker and their audience at a stage in a conversation. The context set must include a number of *unsettled* propositions, whose truth has not been determined, or *settled* yet. It might be the case that it has not been established whether it is the case that *p*, where *p*= "Mary lived in London during 2021". Consequently, the context set would include a possible world, W_a , where *p* holds, and a possible world $W_{a'}$ where $\neg p$ holds. It can be said that *p* stays in an unsettled state, *p*/ $\neg p$, until *p* is asserted. At this point, *p* is settled, which results in that $\neg p$ and $W_{a'}$ are discarded from the context set. An informative gain is achieved.

A proposition *p* expressed as an indicative complement is asserted, and the speaker signals their intention at the time of the utterance that it be settled. It is said that the proposition is *grammatically* settled: a grammatical mark, the indicative mood, indicates the speaker's intention that it be settled. On the other hand, a subjunctive complement is unasserted, and thus the speaker does not signal their intention that the proposition expressed by it be settled at the time of the utterance.⁶ The lack of intention to indicate that it be settled allows for subjunctive complements to remain *grammatically* unsettled.

Negative words such as *nadie* are analyzed as ambiguous between a universal and an existential interpretation, which constitute a quantity scale $\langle \forall, \exists \rangle$. The universal interpretation points to the highest point in the scale and the existential interpretation the lowest (the intuition being that the universal interpretation is higher in informative value). The value assigned to the word *nadie* is fixed at the highest point of the scale in an asserted, grammatically settled, proposition (and in the absence of a preceding negative particle). However, within an unasserted, grammatically unsettled, proposition, the value is not fixed at the highest point. This indeterminacy of the value assigned to *nadie* mirrors the unsettledness of the proposition.

Within an indicative complement, as in (12), which is asserted as relevant in its own right, and intended to have an effect in the context set, the word *nadie* is realized as the highest point in the scale, highest in information value. Within a subjunctive complement, as in (11), which is not asserted as relevant in its own right, the word *nadie* is not determined at the highest point in their denoted scale, and it may assume lower values. The possibility of having the interpretation as an existential occurs specifically in *affective* contexts, contexts that allow for scale reversals, where inferences may be drawn that result in a proposition of higher informative value. This in turn explains the emphatic, expressive hue that is attached to sentences such as (1), (5), (6) or (11). Under the analysis a complement in the indicative mood, as in (12) has the effect of both grammatically settling the proposition it expresses and fixing the denotation of the negative word it contains at the higher point of the scale. This analysis will be fleshed out in the following sections.

The paper will be organized in the following manner. Section 2 discusses the interpretation of negative words in Spanish. Section 3 presents Israel's analysis of polarity items. The notions of settledness, assertion and context set will be discussed in section 4. The account for the contrast between (11) and (12) will be presented in section 5, and

⁶ This may be the case for a variety of reasons, and it may be the case even in cases where the proposition is "settled" in the speaker's mind. By using the subjunctive mood, the speaker is not signaling their intention that it be settled.

additional data pertaining to the expressive use of the negative *no* in Spanish will be discussed. Section 6 will discuss the relation of the analysis proposed to some previous analyses of mood. Concluding remarks will be presented in section 7.

2. Interpretation of negative words.

A word such as *nadie* “nobody” in Spanish may appear in a preverbal position, or in a postverbal position when it is under the scope of a negation, as in (14) and (15):

(14) *Nadie vino*
‘Nobody came’

(15) *No vino nadie*
‘Nobody came’

However, it may not appear in a postverbal position when it is not under the scope of a negation as in (16):

(16) **Vino nadie*
‘Nobody came’

Other negative words like *nada* “nothing”, *nunca* “never” or *ningún* “no/none” are similar to *nadie* in this respect. These words have been generally referred as *n-words* since Laka (1990). Notice that in examples such as (14) *nadie* is similar to “nobody” in English, and it may be interpreted as an inherently negative word, that denotes a universally quantified expression. In sentence (15), on the other hand, the word *nadie* is naturally interpreted as denoting an existentially quantified expression under the scope of a negation. Sentence (15) illustrates the phenomenon of *negative concord*, the sequence of two apparently negative expressions (*no...nadie*) do not result in a double negative (positive) interpretation. In addition, the ungrammaticality of (16) seems to point to the need for specific licensing conditions for postverbal *nadie*. The phenomenon illustrated by (14)-(16) has been widely discussed.⁷

2.1. Accounting for the distribution of *n-words*.

In order to account for the intuitions regarding (14)-(16), some approaches propose an unambiguous denotation of words such as *nadie*, and explain the different distributional and semantic properties in terms of structural conditions that limit possible interpretations and well-formed expressions. For example, Zanuttini (1991) considers that the interpretation in (14) reflects the true unambiguous meaning of *nadie*.⁸ Under this analysis, *nadie* is an inherently negative word in all cases, interpreted as a universally quantified expression that contains a negative operator ($\forall x-$). This straightforwardly captures the interpretation of (14). A sentence such as (16) is argued to be ungrammatical because, in negative concord languages, a negative particle must stand on a structural relation of c-command with the tense/agreement inflectional node associated with the verb. In a case

⁷ See, among others, Bosque (1980), Laka (1990), Zanuttini (1991), Haegeman and Zanuttini (1991), Ladusaw (1992), Ladusaw (1993), Vallduví (1994), Suñer (1995), Espinal (2000), Herburger (2001), de Swart and Sag (2002), Szabolcsi (2004).

⁸ See also van der Wouden (1997)

such as (15), a movement of *nadie* to a Negative Projection position external and to the left of the tense projection is posited. The head of this negative projection is *no*. This configuration allows for the loss of the n-word's inherently negative component. This explains why (15) is not interpreted as a double negative. This configuration takes place at the level of syntactic representation that interacts with the interpretational component (LF, Logical Form), but it does not hold at the level of syntactic representation that interacts with the phonetic component (Phonetic Form, PF). Thus, the movement affects the interpretation but it is not phonetically reflected.

Alternatively, the interpretation in (15) may be taken as the unambiguous meaning of *nadie*. Under this view, *nadie* is always a NPI, subject to certain licensing conditions, such as being within the scope of a downward entailing expression, like negation (Ladusaw 1979). This is the analysis in Laka (1990).⁹ Under this view, sentence (15) is straightforwardly accounted for: *nadie* is a Negative Polarity Item (NPI), similar to the English word "anybody". The sentence is interpreted as "It is not the case that anybody came", and *nadie* denotes an existentially quantified variable under the scope of a negation ($\neg\exists x$). For sentences such as (14), where there is no overt licenser of the NPI, a silent negative element is posited at LF, that c-commands the preverbal n-word, thus licensing the NPI and providing its negative component. This silent negative is not realized phonetically (at PF), but its presence at LF licenses the NPI.

In contrast with these analyses, Herburger (2001) argues that n-words are lexically ambiguous: they can be interpreted as inherently negative words, as in (14), or they may be interpreted as NPIs (subject to licensing constraints, but not inherently negative), as in (15). The term *negative expression*, NE, is used to distinguish n-words that are interpreted as inherently negative from n-words interpreted as NPIs. As a NPI the n-word may be interpreted as an existentially quantified expression. Herburger observes that, in spite of the apparently clear-cut distribution patterns illustrated in (14)-(16), the two interpretations are not entirely in complementary distribution, and both interpretations may be obtained in similar grammatical configurations. Thus, contrasting with (16), Herburger mentions the following example from Bosque (1980), where the n-word *nada* appears postverbally and it is not under the scope of a negation:

(17) Hemos leído en alguna parte que para los budistas "zen" la meditación no consiste en "no pensar en nada", sino en "pensar en nada"

'We have read somewhere that for Zen Buddhists mediation does not consist of "not thinking of anything" but of "thinking on nothing"'

In (17), *no pensar en nada* "not to think about anything" is contrasted with *pensar en nada* "to think about nothing". Similarly, and in contrast with the favored interpretation assigned to (15), there are cases in which it is possible to interpret *nadie* as a NE even when it is under the scope of a negation, as in (18):

(18) El bebé no está mirando a nadie

'The baby is not looking at anybody'/'The baby is not looking at nobody'

⁹ See also Bosque (1980), Suñer (1995)

Herburger indicates that this sentence may receive a double negative interpretation under which the speaker wants to emphasize that the baby was indeed looking at somebody. This interpretation is less salient, as double negation tends to be pragmatically marked, and it would require that the utterance contains certain prosodic features.¹⁰

The difference in acceptance between (16) and (17), according to Herburger, results from the condition that postverbal NEs cannot take scope over an event/state quantifier that binds the event/state variable *e* associated with the verb (assuming that scopal properties of NEs closely reflect their surface position). This results in a pragmatically odd interpretation of (16), as it is pragmatically odd to state that "there is an event of coming" and then imply that "no event of coming did take place", as nobody came. On the other hand, in the case of the example in (17), *pensar en nada*, there is an event of thinking, so even though the NE does not have scope over the event quantifier, the same interpretative clash that occurs in (16) does not occur in (17).

2.2. Assuming the ambiguity thesis.

Sentence (11) shows that the two possible interpretations of *nadie* may be obtained in what appears to be the same grammatical configuration, and thus it suggests an analysis that treats *nadie* as ambiguous. The interpretation of *nadie* proposed in this paper can be accommodated under an analysis as in Herburger (2001). *Nadie* is ambiguous between an inherently negative word or a NPI, with the specification that as an inherently negative word its meaning is represented as a universal quantifier, whereas as a NPI its meaning is represented as an existential quantifier. These two values constitute a quantity scale.¹¹

¹⁰ The interpretation of n-word as NEs within the scope of a negation is very dependent on context and prosody. As an example that would support Herburger's view, consider the following sentence:

- (i) No venga usted aquí a hacer o decir nada
 - a. 'Don't come here to do or say anything'
 - b. 'Don't come here to do or say nothing'

Sentence (i) was uttered by the head of government in Spain (A), and it was addressed to the leader of the opposition (B) during a debate in parliament in 2015. It would seem that the most readily available interpretation is one under which it appears that A is telling B not to come to parliament and not to say anything (at all), as in *a*. However, another possible interpretation (and, in my view, the most salient one once context and prosody are taken into account) is one under which A is telling B not to come and say nothing, the interpretation in *b* (as in "come and say something provided that it is something substantial"). Under this interpretation, the n-word *nada* is not interpreted as a NPI even under the scope of the negation, but as NE. It is interesting that the first interpretation results in a somewhat stronger directive, which resulted in some criticism that the statement was inappropriate, as A cannot prevent B from speaking in Parliament. On the other hand, it was also claimed by others that this was an overreaction to the statement. It is interesting that the potential for ambiguity of *nada* might have been at the heart of the polemic, even allowing for some political motivation. For interest, the exchange may be viewed here, sentence (i) appears at the end: <https://www.rtve.es/play/videos/telediario/pedro-sanchez-mariano-rajoy-protagonizan-durisimo-cara-cara/3012778/>

¹¹ Slightly different approaches that also treat n-word as ambiguous are also explored in Longobardi (1987) (see also Longobardi 2017) or Ladusaw (1992). Longobardi assigns the features [+NOT, -ANY] to the word *nadie* in (14), which is thus interpreted as inherently negative. On the other hand, *nadie* in (15) is specified as [-NOT, +ANY]. The feature [+ANY] requires that the word be under the scope of a negation. Ladusaw proposes (but does not adopt) an account under which words such as *nadie* are interpreted as generalized quantifiers, within a compositional semantics. The generalized quantifier combines with predicates that denote sets of individuals. Under this view, *nadie* in (14) is defined so that the intersection of the set of

When the value is set at the highest point in the scale, it functions as a NE, and it incorporates a negation. This in turn predicts double negative interpretations as the one obtained in (19), where a preverbal *nadie* is followed by a negation:

- (19) *Nadie no vino.*
'Nobody did not come'

Sentence (19) is marked, but it may receive an interpretation under which the intended meaning is that somebody came. The interpretation is pragmatically odd, it requires certain prosodic features, and it is very context dependent.

The inherently negative character of *nadie* under the universal interpretation may be explained by Jespersen Cycle (Jespersen 1917, see also Ladusaw 1993). The cycle describes the historical development of negative words from expressions not inherently negative, but that are under the scope of a negative particle, to expressions that are inherently negative and no longer subject to the licensing constraints that affect NPIs. The incorporation of the negative meaning occurred earlier historically in Spanish in preverbal position, and this interpretation is still favored in this position. Herburger proposes that, whereas English "nobody" shows the final stage of the cycle, where the word is always inherently negative and never a NPI, Spanish *nadie* shows an intermediate stage in the cycle, where the word may function both as an inherently negative word, as in (14), or as a NPI, as in (15).

2.3. *Ambiguity and mood.*

The interpretation of *nadie* as an existentially quantified expression occurs typically when the word is under the scope of a negation, which makes the existential or universal interpretations, as in (14) and (15), equivalent. A similar situation occurs when the n-word appears within a sentential complement of a negated matrix, as in (20), or in the complement of an inherently negative predicate, as in (21):

- (20) *No creo que viniera nadie*
'I do not think that anybody came'
(21) *Evitó que nadie llegara tarde*
'S/he prevented anybody from coming'

The predicate *evitar* in (21), "to prevent", can be considered to be inherently negative in that it indicates that the state of affairs described by the proposition expressed by the complement did not take place.

The examples in (1), (5), (6) or (11), however, are different from examples such as (15), (20) or (21), in that the word *nadie* is interpreted as a (non-negated) existential quantifier (or NPI) even though it is not under the scope of a negation or an inherently negative expression. Examples (22)-(26) are ambiguous and similar to (11) in that the word *nadie*

individuals that satisfy a property P expressed by a predicate and the base set of individuals must be empty in order for the expression to be true (thus the negative and universal interpretation). On the other hand, *nadie* in (15) is defined so that the intersection of the set of individuals that satisfy P and the base of individuals is not empty. The analysis, however, assumes that the possible interpretations are in complementary distribution.

may be interpreted as an existentially quantified expression, and at the same time a universal interpretation is also available:

- (22) Es raro que nadie diga eso
 'It is strange that anybody/somebody would say-SUBJ that'/
 'It is strange that nobody says-SUBJ that'
- (23) Es lamentable que nadie piense de esa manera
 'It is unfortunate that anybody/somebody would think-SUBJ that way'/
 'It is unfortunate that nobody thinks-SUBJ that way'
- (24) ¿Crees que es normal que nadie diga eso?
 'Do you think it is normal that anybody/somebody would say-SUBJ that?'/
 'Do you think it is normal that nobody says-SUBJ that?'

Notice that in all these cases the word *nadie* may be interpreted as *alguien*, "somebody/anybody", that is, as a NPI whose meaning can be represented by a (non-negated) existentially quantified expression.¹²

As mentioned before, in these cases, as in the case of (11), the potential ambiguity in the interpretation of the word *nadie* is resolved when the subordinate verb appears in the indicative mood, as shown in (12), repeated below, or in (24) and (25), which contrast with (19) and (20) respectively:

- (12) Me sorprende que nadie dice eso
 'I am surprised that nobody says-IND that'
- (24) Es raro que nadie dice eso
 'It is strange that nobody says-IND that'
- (25) Es lamentable que nadie piensa de esa manera
 'It is unfortunate that nobody thinks-IND that way'

Notice that predicates such as *sorprenderse*, *es raro*, *lamentar/ser lamentable* are usually grouped together as *emotive factives*, and they both share the properties of selecting complements that express true information that tends to be assumed to be familiar, mutually shared or presupposed. Notice however that not all emotive factives seem to allow for an existential interpretation of *nadie*. Contrast, for example, (12), (19) or (20) with (26) and (27) below:

¹² Examples (22)-(24) illustrate the ambiguity within nominal complements of the verb, but similar ambiguities do occur in non-subordinated contexts, such as in (i):

- (i) ¿Por qué nadie querría ser proveedor de TESLA?
 a. 'Why would anybody/somebody want to be a TESLA provider?'
 b. 'Why would nobody want to be a TESLA provider?'

The interpretation of *nadie* as "nobody" in (ib) may occur in contexts such as the following: it has been contextually established that nobody wants to be a TESLA provider, and the speaker is asking why this is the case. It may be argued that in this case the proposition *nadie quiere ser proveedor de TESLA* is pragmatically settled. It is interesting to notice that under the first interpretation in *a*, (i) would be a rhetorical question (as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer), whereas under the interpretation in *b*, (i) ceases to be a rhetorical question.

- (26) Me alegra que nadie diga eso
 'I am glad that nobody says-SUBJ that'
- (27) Me gusta que nadie diga eso
 'I like that nobody says-SUBJ that'

In (26) and (27), the complement verb appears in the subjunctive mood, and yet, in contrast with (1), (5), (6), (11), (19) or (20), the word *nadie* must be interpreted as a universally quantified expression and it may not be interpreted as existentially quantified. Following Klima's seminal work on negation and polarity phenomena (Klima 1964), we can call main predicates such as the ones in (1), (5), (6), (11), (19) or (20) *+affective emotive factives*, and predicates such as the ones in (26) and (27) *-affective emotive factives*. Notice that *+affective emotive factives* are in some way "negative", in the sense that they introduce a complement that describes a situation that is contrary to expectations or accepted behavior (Backer 1970).¹³ Still, the complement is not under the scope of a negative particle, and the proposition expressed is not negated.

To summarize so far, motivation has been presented for an analysis under which *n-words* such as *nadie* are ambiguous. As an inherently negative word, it is interpreted as a universal quantifier, where as a NPI it is interpreted as an existentially quantified expression. Thus, it can be said that *nadie* denotes a quantity scale ($\langle \forall, \exists \rangle$). The two interpretations are equivalent, as (14) and (15) when the existential quantifier is negated. However, an existential interpretation is also possible in cases when the word *nadie* appears in subjunctive complements of *+affective emotive factives*, even when the expression is not negated. In these cases, changing the mood of the complement verb from the subjunctive mood to the indicative forces a universal interpretation of the *n-word*.¹⁴ The next section discusses polarity sensitive items.

¹³ Mood and polarity in emotive factives are also discussed by Linebarger (1987) and Giannakidou (2006).

¹⁴ Mood seems to affect the value assigned to the *n-word* in other subordinate constructions. Thus, consider the use of mood in relative clauses such as (i), that illustrate a relative clause in a superlative construction:

- (i) Es la mejor película que nadie haya visto nunca
 'It is the best movie that anybody has-SUBJ ever seen'

The superlative construction licenses the use of the subjunctive in the subordinate clause, and the interpretation of *nadie* as a NPI is readily available. The interpretation of *nadie* as nobody is much more marked, however. In this case, the intended interpretation seems to be in general slightly marked (contrast "It is the best movie that nobody has ever seen" with "It is the best movie I have ever seen"). It is interesting that if the mood of the subordinate verb appears in the indicative, as in (ii) only the interpretation of *nadie* as "nobody" is obtained (on the other hand, the word *nunca* may still function as a NPI, in this case licensed by negative *nadie*):

- (ii) Es la mejor película que nadie ha visto nunca
 'It is the best movie that nobody has-IND ever seen'

3. Polarity.

3.1. *Israel's analysis.*

In their analysis of Polarity Sensitive Items, Israel (1996) discusses both the *sensitivity problem* and the *licensing problem*: what types of lexical items are sensitive to polarity, and what contexts license positive or negative polarity items. Under this analysis, polarity items denote a scalar semantics, and are licensed in contexts that make available a scalar model.¹⁵ A scalar model “consists of a structured set of propositions which a speaker and hearer either share as background knowledge or can construct in context” (Israel 1996, p.641), “arranged so as to support inferential relations between them” (ibid.). To illustrate, consider:

- (28) Tom can solve the hardest problem
- (29) Tom cannot solve the hardest problem
- (30) Tom can solve the simplest problem
- (31) Tom cannot solve the simplest problem

Expressions such as *simplest problem* or *hardest problem* denote a scale: problems can be ordered from hardest to simplest. A scalar model allows us to make the following inferences from the sentences above:

i) from (28):

If Tom can solve the hardest problem, he can solve the simplest one
hard \rightarrow simple

ii) from (29):

If Tom cannot solve the hardest problem, we cannot infer that he cannot solve the simplest one
hard \nrightarrow simple

iii) from (30):

If Tom can solve the simplest problem, we cannot infer that he can solve the hardest one
simple \nrightarrow hard

iv) from (31):

If Tom cannot solve the simplest problem, he cannot solve the hardest one
simple \rightarrow hard

The set of propositions that constitute the scalar model in this case follow the informal template *Tom can solve problem of difficulty degree 1, Tom can solve problem of difficulty degree 2, Tom can solve problem of difficulty degree 3*, where degree 1 is the easiest and degree 3 the hardest: $3 > 2 > 1$. This model allows us to make inferences. If Tom can solve the problems of difficulty degree 3 (hardest), he must be able to solve problems of difficulty

¹⁵ See Fauconnier (1975), Kay (1990).

degree 1 (simplest): 3 \rightarrow 1. This is illustrated in (28). Notice however, that in (31) the negative particle allows us to make an inference in the opposite direction of the scale: if Tom cannot solve a problem of degree 1 (simplest), then he must not be able to show a problem of degree 3 (hardest) either: 1 \rightarrow 3. Thus, negation is *scale reversing*, in that it allows inferences to go from 1 to 3 (from the lowest point to the highest, simplest to hardest) instead of from 3 to 1 (from the highest to the lowest, hardest to simplest), as it would happen in the affirmative counterpart. Furthermore, notice that the inference allowed in a scale reversing context is a proposition of higher informative value: It allows to infer, not only that Tom cannot solve the easiest problem, but that Tom cannot solve any problem at all.

Scale reversing contexts license NPIs. NPIs denote the lowest point in a quantity scale, and within a scale reversing context such as that created by negation, they allow us to infer a proposition that has a higher informative value. In this sense, they are *low emphatics* (low position in a quantity scale, high information value). Israel notes that expressions denoting minimal quantities or scalar endpoints often become stereotyped as emphatic.

3.2. *N-words as low emphatics.*

This analysis may be applied to an account for the distribution of the possible interpretations of *nadie* in the examples under consideration. The word *nadie* is ambiguous between two interpretations, universal or existential. These two possible interpretations may be taken to constitute a quantity scale $\langle \forall, \exists \rangle$ (Horn 1989, Grice 1975), where the universal interpretation is high in the scale and the existential interpretation is low in the scale. The universal interpretation outranks the existential in that \forall entails \exists : if $\forall x Px$ is true for some property P, then it is necessarily the case that $\exists x Px$. The intuition is that the use of the universal quantifier provides more information than the use of the existential quantifier (Grice 1975). The universal interpretation seems to be more prevalent (in the absence of a preceding negative particle), while some constructions allow the word to denote the low point in the scale. When the expression denotes the lowest point in the scale it behaves as a NPI.

Notice that predicates that are + *affective emotive factives*, the same as negation, are scale reversing. Thus (32) allows us to infer (33):

- (32) Me sorprende que sea capaz de resolver el problema más fácil
 ‘I am surprised that they are able to solve the easiest problem’
 (33) Me sorprende que sea capaz de resolver el problema más difícil
 ‘I am surprised that they are able to solve the most difficult problem’

The same relationship does not hold when we use a predicate that is -*affective emotive factive*, as *alegrarse*. From (34) I cannot infer (35):

- (34) Me alegra que sea capaz de resolver el problema más fácil
 ‘I am glad that they are able to solve the easiest problem’
 (35) Me alegra que sea capaz de resolver el problema más difícil
 ‘I am glad that they are able to solve the most difficult problem’

Thus, *nadie* as a low emphatic NPI appears in scale reversing contexts. This description is also intuitively correct in that, as we mentioned before, the use of *nadie* in examples such as (1), (5), (6), (11) (19) or (20) does add an emphatic affect to the utterance.

To summarize, *+affective emotive/factives* are scale reversing, and as such they license NPIs within their complement, which results in the possibility of interpreting a word such as *nadie* as an existentially quantified expression, as a low emphatic.¹⁶ In the next section I discuss the notion of assertion in terms of intent to signal that a proposition be settled, and its effect in the context set.

4. Assertion and Context Set.

In this section, I will first introduce the notion of *settledness* and relate it to the notion of assertion. I will later discuss Stalnaker's notion of context set (Stalnaker 1978), and the effect of assertion. An analysis of indicative complements will then be adopted under which they are asserted as relevant in their own right (Jary 2002). In this sense, indicative complements are similar to independent (assertive) clauses, which are asserted as relevant in their own right. A subjunctive complement, on the other hand, is not asserted as relevant in its own right.

4.1. Settledness.

Notions of *settledness*, and derived notions such as *presumption of settledness* (Kauffman 2002, Arita 2009) have been used primarily in the discussion of conditional constructions. I will use this notion in its most general sense: a proposition *p* is settled when its truth value has been determined. As long as its truth value has not been determined, it remains in an unsettled state, under which the proposition may be represented as $p/\neg p$: it has the potential to be settled as *p* or $\neg p$.

Although notions of settledness and presumption of settledness have been mostly discussed in relation to the interpretation of conditionals, derived notions such as *presumed settledness* have been applied to the analysis of mood in Spanish and Romance, particularly to the analysis of mood alternation in the expression of future eventualities (Hoff 2019, Hoff and Schwenter 2019).

In this particular study, I will claim that, by asserting a proposition *p*, a speaker is signaling their intention that *p* be settled in the context set (see below). When a speaker does not assert *p*, the speaker is not signaling an intention that it be settled. Notice that under this case, the proposition may still be presumed to be settled. The speaker may choose not assert as a proposition *p* in situations where *p* is assumed to be settled, where *p* is assumed to be part of the mutual or shared knowledge, or where *p* is backgrounded. In these cases, *p* could be said to be pragmatically settled.

4.2. Context set.

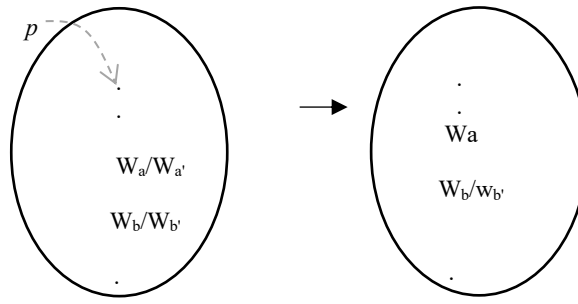
Stalnaker (1978) introduces the notion of *context set*, which provides a model within which to describe the effect of assertion in a conversational exchange. The context set is the set that contains all possible worlds that are compatible with the presuppositions held

¹⁶ An alternative account of polarity under the scope of emotive factive verbs that is based on the notion of (non)veridicality is presented in Giannakidou (2006).

by the speaker and their audience.¹⁷ In a conversational exchange, the context set C is continuously changing, as the audience typically incorporates new propositions asserted as true into C , which in turn allows them to eliminate from C all possible worlds that are incompatible with the new propositions. By communicating information, the speaker intends to have an effect on the context set. This effect on the context set is generally one of the goals of the conversational exchange.¹⁸

We can then view the context set C as changing at different stages ($s_1, s_2 \dots$) of the conversation, as possible worlds are being eliminated from the set that are incompatible with new information being asserted. Notice that under this view, the context set must contain a number of unsettled propositions. Thus, consider a proposition p whose truth value has not been established. In this case, the context set will contain a possible world W_a where p holds, and also a possible world $W_{a'}$ where $\neg p$ holds. If p is asserted, the proposition is settled in C , and $W_{a'}$, in which $\neg p$ holds is discarded from the set (36):

(36)



Thus, in the course of a conversational exchange, as information is asserted, propositions are settled and some possible worlds, that had been maintained as possible alternatives up to that point, discarded. Assertions have the effect of constraining the possibilities within the context set by allowing to discard all possible worlds that are incompatible with the information being asserted.

As an illustration, consider an assertion such as (37):

(37) Mary lived in London during 2021

If $p =$ "Mary lived in London during 2021", we can consider W_a a possible world where p holds, and $W_{a'}$ a possible world where $\neg p$ holds. Until (37) is asserted, p is in an unsettled state in C , $p/\neg p$. (37) allows us to eliminate $W_{a'}$ from the context set. We could consider W_a and $W_{a'}$ as a pair of alternates both holding as possible alternatives in C . Notice also that in its unsettled state, $p/\neg p$, the proposition may denote a quantity scale $\langle p, \neg p \rangle$, where

¹⁷ Each participant may have their own context set. Stalnaker claims that in a conversation a speaker assumes that their audience presuppose what the speaker presupposes, or at least, that there are enough shared presuppositions that a shared context set may be assumed in most cases (what he calls a *non-defective context set*)

¹⁸ A similar view may be offered in terms of the notions of *cognitive environment* (of the audience) and *cognitive effect* (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 2012). It may also be related to functional notions, such as *communicative dynamism* in Firbas (1992).

p is more informative than $\neg p$: in the case of (37), the affirmative propositions allows us to discard $\neg p$, but also propositions such as "Mary lived in Paris during 2021", etc.¹⁹

From this perspective, assertion has the effect of collapsing into one what up to the moment of the assertion were two potential alternatives. As a consequence of an assertion, the context set increases its information content. It could be said that one of the goals communicative exchange is to reduce information entropy, as information asserted during the exchange allows to resolve states where contradictory alternatives had been holding as possibilities with the potential of being realized/settled.

4.3. Mood and assertion.

The indicative mood in Spanish has been long associated with some notion of assertion (either semantic or pragmatic) since Terrel and Hooper (1974), and a relation proposed between assertion and relevance.²⁰ Within this tradition, Jary (2002) proposes that information that appears in the indicative mood is asserted as relevant in its own right. This accounts for contrasts such as the ones illustrated in (38) and (39). These examples show that, with indicative complements, the main verb may appear as a parenthetical, syntactically detached from the complement (as in 38a and 38b). On the other hand, this is not possible with subjunctive complements, as in (39a-b):

- (38) a. *Creo que viene*
 'I think that they are coming-IND'
 b. *Viene, creo*
 'They come-IND, I think'
- (39) a. *Me alegro de que venga*
 'I am glad that they are coming-SUBJ'
 b. **Venga, me alegro*
 'They come-SUBJ, I am glad'

Examples such as (38b) are taken to indicate that the complement in (38a) is asserted and relevant not simply as a constituent of a complex proposition, that is, not simply as a complement of *creer*, but on its own right. By itself, the proposition *viene* "they come" has certain cognitive effects that result in an improvement of the hearer's representation of the world. In other words, the proposition by itself has an effect on the context set, as it allows to discard possible worlds from the set that would be incompatible with the new proposition. On the other hand, (38b) shows that this is not the case with a subjunctive complement, which is not asserted and is relevant only as constituent of a complex proposition, as the complement of *me alegro*. Informally what is asserted in (38a) is that "I am glad (about something)". In this case, the complement represents information that is mutually shared by speaker and hearer, or that it is assumed by the speaker to be familiar

¹⁹ Leech's Principle of Negative Uninformativeness (Leech 1981). Also, Horn (1989).

²⁰ See, for example, and among many others, Klein (1975), Terrel (1976), Lunn (1989), Guitart (1991), Haverkate (2002), Palmer (2001), Jary (2002, 2009), De Jonge (2001), Bosque (2014).

to the hearer (Prince 1981). In this respect, by itself, the complement has no effect on the context set (or a limited cognitive effect).²¹

5. Analysis

Consider again (11) and (12), repeated below:

- (11) Me sorprende que nadie diga eso
 ‘I am surprised anybody/somebody would say-SUBJ that’/
 ‘I am surprised that nobody says-SUBJ that’
- (12) Me sorprende que nadie dice eso
 ‘I am surprised that nobody says-IND that’

It was observed that (11) is ambiguous, and *nadie* may be interpreted as a NPI, corresponding to an existentially quantified expression equivalent to *alguien* "anybody/somebody". On the other hand, in (12) *nadie* may only be interpreted as a universally quantified negative expression, equivalent to "nobody". That is, the potential ambiguity of *nadie* collapses when the complement appears in the indicative mood. In this respect, indicative complements behave like independent clauses, as in (13), also repeated below:

- (13) Nadie dice eso
 ‘Nobody says that’

The following explanation is proposed. In section 2 the word *nadie* was analyzed as ambiguous, as it may be interpreted as a universally quantified (negative) expression, or as an existentially quantified expression. These two possible interpretations may be taken to constitute a quantity scale $\langle \forall, \exists \rangle$, where \forall is higher in the scale, more informative. Assuming that "Nadie DECIR eso" = p , and "SORPRENDER que [p]" = $S(p)$, then in sentences (12) and (13), the proposition p is asserted. In the case of (12) both p and $S(p)$ are asserted. When p is asserted, the speaker intends that p be settled, as relevant in its own right, and with the expectation that this will have an effect in the context set which will result in an information gain. The indicative mood *grammatically* settles p : it is a grammatical marker that indicates the speaker's intention that p be settled.

The settled state of the proposition is in turn mirrored by the fixing of the value assigned to *nadie*, which is set at the highest point in the scale. This is intuitively natural, since in asserting a proposition the speaker must intend to have an effect that results in an information gain, and this is optimally achieved by setting the value of *nadie* in a way that it maximizes its information potential. As such, it receives the interpretation that is highest in the quantity scale, that is, the universal interpretation.

In the case of (11), where the complement appears in the subjunctive, there is only one assertion, $S(p)$. The proposition p is not asserted by itself. By not asserting p , the speaker is not indicating an intention that it be settled: the proposition is said to be *grammatically* unsettled. Now, notice that this is not the same as saying that the proposition is unsettled

²¹ A similar view is provided in Mejías-Bikandi (2014) within a Cognitive Grammar framework, where indicative complements are argued to be *independently grounded*, whereas subjunctive complements are not grounded independently of the main predicate.

in the context set (or in the speaker's mind). It might be that the speaker is focusing the assertoric force on the main predicate, backgrounding the complement. To the extent that it appears in the subjunctive, and it is not asserted, it is grammatically unsettled.

The grammatical unsettledness of the complement is mirrored by (and allows for) an indeterminacy in the value assigned to *nadie*, which may float and set at different points in the scale. This results in the possibility of receiving an existential interpretation. The subjunctive complement, being unasserted, is in some sense backgrounded. This backgrounded context creates conditions where the indeterminacy of the word may persist, where different potential instantiations of *nadie* remain available. This creates an environment within which this potential variability may be utilized for expressive purposes, in order to achieve an emphatic affect, as in (11).²²

To summarize, in the complement of *+affective emotive factives*:

-An indicative complement is asserted. In asserting the complement the speaker's intention is that the proposition expressed by it be settled in the context set. An indicative complement is thus grammatically settled.

-A subjunctive complement is not asserted. By not asserting it, the speaker is not indicating an intention that it be settled in the context set. A subjunctive complement is grammatically unsettled.

-The value of *nadie* in a grammatically settled complement is fixed at the higher point of a quantity scale.

-The value of *nadie* in a grammatically unsettled complement is undetermined, and may be set at different points in the quantity scale.

5.1. Other *n*-words.

Similar ambiguities occur are possible with other *n*-words such as *nunca* ("never/not ever"). This word is similar to *nadie*, in that it may receive an existential interpretation ($\neg\exists t$: *it is not the case that there is such a time t that*), when preceded by a negative particle, as in (40). It may also receive a universal interpretation ($\forall t\neg$: *for every time t it is not the case that*), as in (41):

(40) No lo he visto nunca

'I have not seen this ever'/'I have never seen it'

(41) Nunca lo he visto

'I have never seen it'/'Never have I seen it'

Consider sentences such as (42) and (43):

(42) Me sorprende que alguien haya hecho eso nunca

'I am surprised that somebody has-SUBJ ever done that'

²² Notice that under the existential interpretation, (11) permits the audience to infer the speaker's expectation that "nobody says things like that", which is stronger, more informative, statement.

- (43) * Me sorprende que alguien ha hecho eso nunca
 'I am surprised that somebody has-IND ever/never done that'

In (42), with a subjunctive complement, the word *nunca* is interpreted as existential, similar to the English "ever". The same interpretation is not available in the case of (43), where the complement appears in the indicative, which is ungrammatical. A more felicitous rendition would be similar to (44):

- (44) Me sorprende que nadie (nunca) ha hecho eso (nunca)
 'I am surprised that nobody has ever done that'

Notice also that the interpretation similar to the one in (42) cannot be obtained in the complement of *-affective emotive factives*, as in (45):

- (45) * Me alegra que alguien haya dicho eso nunca
 'I am happy that somebody has-SUBJ ever done that'

Notice the similarities: an expression denotes a quantity scale $\langle \forall, \exists \rangle$. Within the complement of a scale reversing predicate, it may function as a NPI, and denote the lowest point in the scale, achieving an emphatic effect. It may do so when the complement is not asserted by its own, as in (42), that is, when the complement is grammatically unsettled.

5.2. Expressive negation.

Consider the following exchange:²³

- (46) "-¿Qué ha dicho esta mañana [el alcalde]?
 - Sí, pues dice [el alcalde] que él nunca ha insultado ni descalificado a [la escritora], que él ha sido coherente en todo momento y que lamenta [el alcalde] que toda esta polémica no se haya convertido en una campaña de descalificaciones contra él."
 '-What did [the mayor] say this morning?
 - Yes, so the mayor says that he has never insulted or disqualified [the writer], that he has been consistent at every point, and that he regrets that this polemic has-SUBJ (not) been turned into a campaign to discredit him.'

In (46) a journalist is asked to describe the mayor's reaction to a particular polemic related to the concession of a prize by the city. The mayor's statements on the topic (reproduced later in the program) are vehemently delivered. The journalist reports on the mayor's statements, conveying some of this vehemence (notice, for instance, the repetition of the subject pronoun *él* in the first two reported statements). In the third statement, the complement of *lamenta* "regret" is negated, although the context makes it clear that mayor believes that this particular polemic has indeed been turned into a campaign against him. The complement appears in the subjunctive mood. I believe that in this case, the negative particle *no* is used for purely expressive purposes: it does not logically negate, but rather

²³ *Al Rojo Vivo*, 1/4/22.

emphatically points to the affirmative counterpart. By doing this, the reporter is coloring the reported statements with an emphatic affect. The effect is oddly natural, and the presence of the negation does not interfere with the intended (semantic) interpretation.

The fragment in (46) is also interesting in that it illustrates an infrequent example of expletive negation, as the negative particle in this case does not negate the complement. Expletive negation in Spanish has been associated with a limited number of grammatical constructions: comparative phrases, adverbial expressions introduced by *hasta* "until", exclamative sentences, or following the adverbial approximative expression "por poco" *almost*.²⁴ Whereas the use of expletive negation in these cases is well recognized, relatively common and somewhat conventionalized,²⁵ the example in (46) is slightly different from these cases in that it is rare, heavily dependent on context, and most likely restricted to colloquial, oral speech.²⁶ The complement in the example in (46) taken out of this very specific context would be interpreted as a negated proposition.

Interestingly, a similar reading and affect cannot be obtained with an indicative complement, as in (47):

- (47) *Lamenta que toda esta polémica no se ha convertido en una campaña contra mí*
'He regrets that this polemic has-IND not turned into a campaign against him'

I believe that a sentence such as (47), with an indicative complement, could never occur in a context such as the one illustrated in (46). That is, if (47) were uttered within the same context as (46), the result would be unnatural, and the complement interpreted as a negated proposition. In other words, the expressive use of the negation illustrated in (46) would never occur within the indicative complement of +affective emotive factives. Intuitively, it seems natural that the expressive potential of negation would be possibilited within the grammatically unsettled complement of a scale reversal predicate, as its backgrounded condition would permit expressive uses of *no* that do not interfere with its semantic interpretation.²⁷

The example in (46) is in some way similar to the example in (11). In (46), the use of the particle *no* adds an emphatic affect to the utterance within the subjunctive complement of a +affective emotive factive. This expressive use of the negation in (46) and the existential interpretation of *nadie* in (11) may be subsumed under a similar explanation. An unsettled proposition may itself be thought of as denoting a quantity scale $\langle p, \neg p \rangle$, where p is highest in the scale and $\neg p$ lowest (section 3). Examples such as (46) suggest that the proposition expressed by the grammatically unsettled complement of a +affective

²⁴ For discussion in Spanish and other languages see, for instance, Bosque (1980), RAE (2010), Espinal (1992), Espinal (2000), Pons Barbería and Schwenter (2005), Sánchez López (1996), Greco (2020), Zovko Dinković and Ilc (2017).

²⁵ Pons Barbería and Schwenter (2005) indicate that, out of a total 22 examples extracted from the RAE CREA corpus (*Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual*), in 68% of the examples the negation was interpreted as expletive.

²⁶ Interestingly, it is observed (Bosque 1980, RAE 2010) that expletive negation used to be available in earlier stages of Spanish also within the complement of predicates of *doubt* or *fear*. These particular uses are disappearing, but may still occasionally occur only in colloquial speech.

²⁷ The data also highlights the pragmatically ambiguous nature of negation (see Horn 1980), and it could also be accommodated under an analysis that treats negation as ambiguous between a logical negative meaning and an expressive/expletive meaning.

emotive factive may be instantiated at the lowest point in the scale for purely expressive purposes. In a case like (46), pragmatic conditions will direct the audience to the fact that the proposition is indeed intended to be interpreted in the affirmative sense. The expressive effect is nonetheless achieved. It is interesting to note that the possibility of a non-logical negation in this case correlates with the availability of different possible readings for the *n*-word.²⁸

In the next section I will briefly relate the analysis proposed here to De Jonge's analysis of the subjunctive as the mood that signals the contextual relevance of an alternative to the proposition expressed.

6. Contextual alternatives.

De Jonge (2001) explores the following hypothesis regarding mood in Spanish:

<i>Indicative mood:</i>	assertion of the occurrence expressed by the verb
<i>Subjunctive mood:</i>	contextual relevance of an <i>alternative</i> for the occurrence expressed by the verb.

As an illustration, consider example (48):

- (48) Quiero que aprendas
'I want you to learn-SUBJ'

The intuition is that in uttering (48) the speaker has in mind a situation that is different from the one described by the complement, namely that the hearer is not learning. This is a relevant contextual alternative evoked by the utterance of (48). A similar situation arises in the interpretation of the complement of emotive factives, as in (49):

- (49) Lamento que no estés aquí
'I regret that you are-SUBJ not here'

In this case, the interpretation of (49) evokes a relevant alternative, that "you are here", which contrasts with the situation described by the complement "you are not here". Notice that this analysis is also suggestive of the idea that in uttering (49) the speaker is not signaling an intention that the complement *p* be settled, which results in the availability of both *p*/ \neg *p* to play a role in the interpretation. In other words, the grammatical unsettledness of the subjunctive complement favors the consideration of contextual alternatives in its interpretation.

²⁸ The relation between expletive negation and negative concord has been noted before. Thus, Espinal (2000) considers expletive negation in comparative and exclamative construction and provides a minimalist syntactic account of the phenomenon: expletive negation is the result of negative absorption under specific structural conditions, as in negative concord, and licensed, in the case of expletive negatives, by a non-veridical operator (Giannakidou 1997). Pons Barbería and Schwenter (2005) discuss the expletive negative with the approximative expression *por poco* and argue that it is a consequence of the ambiguity of the adverbial expression *por poco*. Interestingly, this ambiguity is in turn explained as a result of a diachronic process that parallels the one undergone by words as *nadie*. Thus, *por poco* may be inherently negative, in which case it would not license an expletive negative, or not, in which cases it would allow the expletive use of the negation.

7. Conclusions

The paper discusses the different possible interpretations of n-words such as *nadie* within the complement of + affective, scale reversal, emotive factive predicates in Spanish. When the complement appears in the subjunctive mood, *nadie* is ambiguous: it may receive an existential interpretation, under which *nadie* could be paraphrased as *alguien*, or it may be interpreted as a negative universally quantified expression, equivalent to "nobody" in English. However, *nadie* receives only the universal interpretation, equivalent to "nobody", when the same complement appears in the indicative mood.

An analysis was proposed under which a speaker that asserts a proposition *p* is intending that *p* be settled. An indicative complement is asserted and grammatically settled. A grammatically settled complement limits the availability of possible interpretations of the word *nadie*, fixing its denotation at the highest point in an information quantity scale. On the other hand, a subjunctive complement is not asserted, the speaker is not grammatically signaling an intention that it be settled. A subjunctive complement is grammatically unsettled. Within a grammatically unsettled complement, the value assigned to the word *nadie* is not fixed at the highest point in the scale. It is undetermined, it may assume different values in the scale, and it may be interpreted as an existentially quantified expression. This interpretation in turn provides an emphatic affect. The analysis is extended to account for the expressive use of negation in subjunctive complements of +affective emotive factive predicates, where the possibility of a non-logical negation is associated with the grammatical unsettledness of the complement.

The intuition that the analysis tries to capture is that the indeterminacy associated with the grammatically unsettled state of a complement creates conditions under which the latent potential for ambiguity associated with an expression may persist, which in turn provides resources that may be utilized for expressive purposes in order to convey an emphatic affect. One could say that ambiguity thrives in unsettled states.

Errapel Mejías-Bikandi
Department of Modern Languages & Literatures, 0315
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68588-0315
USA
emejias-vicandi1@unl.edu

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