From negative cleft to external negator

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12.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the syntax and the semantics of the negator ֞aw in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (henceforth JBA) through the lens of the diachronic emergence of this negator. The negator ֞aw is a sentential external negator, whose syntactic and semantic properties will be discussed alongside a diachronic study concerning its origin. Syntactically, we propose that ֞aw, like negative DPs/PPs in English (Hagheman 2000) and Sicilian neca (Cruschina 2010; Garzonio and Poletto 2015) is merged in SpecFocP in the extended CP-domain from where it takes wide scope. Semantically, ֞aw takes propositional scope and expresses the meaning of external negation, equivalent to the independent clause: 'it is not the case'. Diachronically, ֞aw, as a single-morpheme external negation, developed from a cleft whose matrix clause negates the content of the embedded clause. Following work by Bar-Asher Siegal (2013b), we argue that the syntactic reanalysis of ֞aw is triggered by a phonological process of univerbation between the regular negator ֞ in clefts with the agreement clitic. This syntactic reanalysis involves a morphological univerbation of ֞aw (Andersen 1987). The main claim of this chapter is that the syntactic and the semantic characteristics of this negator can be better understood in the light of its historical origin. Moreover, this is an interesting example of how a similar semantic interpretation can be associated with two different syntactic structures, thus allowing a syntactic reanalysis. This type of development is not part of the Jespersen's Cycle or Croft's cycle, but constitutes the development of a non-standard negator next to the standard negator. It will be demonstrated that a similar development can be observed for the Sicilian negator neca as well (cf. Garzonio and Poletto 2015).

1 The abbreviation to the sources follows the standard abbreviations which appear in The SBL Handbook of Style (Alexander 1999: 79–80). The interlinear glosses are according to the Leipzig Glossing


In the light of this, the structure of the chapter is as follows: In section 12.2 we discuss the historical development of JBA ֞aw. In section 12.3 we review the properties of ֞aw in the first and second stages of its development, then we move on to an analysis of ֞aw in both stages. Section 12.4 widens the empirical perspective by discussing the emergence of Sicilian neca and the similarity of its properties to JBA ֞aw. The final section concludes and discusses remaining issues and recommendations for further research.

12.2 JBA ֞aw: historical development

Before embarking upon the evolution of the negative marker in JBA, a few words should be said concerning the history of Aramaic more broadly. Aramaic is a member of the Semitic language family and belongs to the Northwest Semitic subfamily. The history of Aramaic is commonly divided into five phases ( Fitzmyer 1979):

1. Old Aramaic (925–700 BC)
2. Official Aramaic (700–200 BC)
3. Middle Aramaic (200 BC–AD 200)
4. Late Aramaic (AD 200–700)
5. Neo-Aramaic (AD 700–).

Since Late Aramaic, there has been an opposition between the eastern and western dialects. Our chapter focuses on a development that took place within the eastern dialects of the late periods, a branch which includes three main dialects: JBA, Syriac, and Mandaic. Each of these dialects was spoken by a different ethnic group, Jews, Christians, and Mandaeans respectively. JBA is used to refer to the preserved material that was composed by the Jews during the Late Aramaic period, from the third century onwards, and is the main focus of the present chapter. All examples in this chapter will be drawn from the Babylonian Talmud, the largest corpus written in this dialect.

JBA has two negators for sentential negation (Schlesinger 1928: 143–53; Bar-Asher Siegal 2016: 246–53): the unmarked negator ֞, common to all branches of the Semitic languages, and the marked negator ֞aw, which appears in Aramaic and in Hebrew dialects that were heavily under the influence of Aramaic. As will be demonstrated below, diachronically, the evolution of ֞aw as reflected in the Eastern Aramaic dialects can be characterized as consisting of two stages:

Rules, with the addition of the following abbreviations: GN – geographical name; PN – proper name; RQM – Rhetorical question marker; d-in JBA is a subordination marker, i.e., it appears at the beginning of all types of embedded clauses. For the sake of simplicity, in this chapter it is always glossed with 'rel'. The choice of manuscript for each citation follows Sokoloff's (2002: 55–60) default manuscripts. We wish to thank Silvio Cruschina for informing and helping us with the data from Sicilian Mussomeli and discussing the semantics of the relevant expression with us.
Stage I: law is a contraction of two morphemes. The morphemes là and the enclitic hu (originally 3.M.SG personal pronoun) went through a process of synergism to form law, owing to the elision of the intervocalic consonant /h/. Thus là-hu became làhu, phonetically equivalent to la. The two morphemes together constitute a complete clause, with the meaning 'it is not the case', always reversing the truth-value of another clause.

This sort of contraction manifests a case of phonological univerbation in which only at the phonological level the two independent morphemes are expressed together.

Stage II: law is a single morpheme, functioning as another type of negator, which is semantically and syntactically marked, i.e. different from the regular sentential negator.

From a diachronic point of view, law underwent a process of morphological univerbation, as the two morphemes which constitute a clause were reanalysed as a single morpheme, which operates as a sentential external negator. We use the term univerbation as a descriptive term. A theoretical analysis of each stage will be provided in sections 12.3.1 and 12.3.2. Furthermore, it must be emphasized that we use the term 'Stages' to refer to diachronic developments. This means that Stage II occurred as a consequence of Stage I. These stages are not exclusive, as a language can have two types of la, in specific environments. As we will see, in certain environments la in JBA reflects stage I, and in others stage II.

Looking at this development from a cross-linguistic perspective in terms of van der Auwera (2010), the type of change can be described as type (1c).

\[ (1) \]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a. } X & \rightarrow \text{NEG} \\
\text{b. } \text{NEG}_1 X & \rightarrow \text{NEG}_1 \text{NEG}_2 \rightarrow \text{NEG}_2 \\
\text{c. } \text{NEG}_1 X & \rightarrow [\text{NEG}_1-X][\text{NEG}_2]
\end{align*}
\]

The first type illustrates the derivation of a negator from a non-negative category (2010). The second type portrays the type associated with Jespersen's Cycle (inter alia Jespersen 1917; Horn 1989; van der Auwera and Neukermans 2004; van der Auwera 2009, 2010; Breitbarth and Haegeeman 2010; Breitbarth, Lucas, and Willis 2013; Willis et al. 2013; De Clercq 2017) and with Croft's Cycle (Croft 1991; Veselinova 2013). The negator, NEG1, first co-occurs with a new category X, which then becomes NEG2, in that it needs to co-occur with NEG1 to express sentential negation, to finally replace NEG1 and become the new negator. In the third type, NEG2 and another element (X) combine to form a new negator: NEG2. The evolution of JBA la is a subtype of the third kind of diachronic process. Namely, it develops a NEG2 on the basis of NEG1+X, but instead of losing NEG1, it retains the old negator while the new negator, [NEG1-X][NEG2], is marked for certain functions. More concretely, the agreement marker (-hu) that often co-occurs with the standard negative marker (here là), criticalized to that negative marker, with the result of an emergence of the new negative marker, i.e. la. Notably, the newly created negator la does not lead to the loss of the negator là, from which it derives. Moreover, la also retains its previous functions, i.e. it can still be used either in a cleft or as an independent sentence. Crucially, such a diachronic process adds a new type of negator to the language, whose functions were previously expressed by the use of là.

12.3 Properties of la

As claimed in the introduction, we should identify two stages in the development of la in the history of Eastern Aramaic. In the following subsections, we will substantiate this claim. We will begin with the properties of la in Syriac, which according to our analysis represents Stage I, because Syriac often represents the earlier stage in the diachronic chain of the Eastern Aramaic Dialects (Bar-Asher Siegal 2016: 26–7). This stage is still manifested in certain environments in JBA too. Demonstration of the reanalysis of la in JBA will follow this analysis.

12.3.1 Stage I

In all Late Aramaic dialects the standard negator is là, the common Semitic negator (Walker 1896). In Syriac, next to là, we also encounter the form la, which has a restricted distribution, as it appears only in negation in the matrix clause of cleft sentences (Joosten 1992; Pat-El 2006). We argue that this form is a phonological univerbation of two independent morphemes at this stage: là-hu, the regular negator (là) merged with the agreement clitic (-hu, 3rd person singular, cf. Doron 1986). Thus, la on its own is a complete sentence:

\[ (2) \]
\[ \text{la}=w \]
\[ \text{NEG}=3\text{M.SG} \]

'It is not the case.' lit. 'it is not it.'

Support for this hypothesis comes from (3). Only when the verb 'to be' is absent from the main clause, as in (3a), can là and -hu merge and be pronounced as la. If the verb is present in the main clause (in the past tense, for example (see Goldenberg 1983)), as in (3b), the contraction cannot take place and the original negator là remains.

\[ (3) \]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a. la} & =w \\
\text{b. la} & =w \text{if the verb is absent} \\
\text{c. la} & =w \text{if the verb is present}
\end{align*}
\]

Notably, the newly created negator la does not lead to the loss of the negator là, from which it derives. Moreover, la also retains its previous functions, i.e. it can still be used either in a cleft or as an independent sentence. Crucially, such a diachronic process adds a new type of negator to the language, whose functions were previously expressed by the use of là.

2 Muraoka and Porten (1998: 25) propose that there is one attestation of la already in Egyptian Official Aramaic.
b. law=wa
men 'ušmah=hu
NEG=be.PST.3M.SG from coercive=3M.SG
'It was not out of coercion (lit. it is not the case that it was out of coercion)'
(Ephrem, Genesis 30, Pat-El 2006, ex. 17)

In JBA, law also retained its original use as two morphemes, in cleft sentences (cf. (17)), as well as in replies to questions:

(4) 'mar l-eh 'it l-ak niske
say.PST.3M.SG to-3M.SG exist to-2M.SG property
b-qapputqayi 'mar l-eh law
in-CN say.PST.3M.SG to-3M.SG NEG=3M.SG

'I said to him, "Do you have property in gn?" He replied, "No."
(Bar. 56b)

There are rare examples such as (5) with a 3rd feminine singular pronoun (hi: la=hki
[not+it] > labi [= läy]), as the gender of complete statements is interchangeable between masculine and feminine (Bar-Asher Siegal 2016: 67-9).

(5) mäy 'amar ..
dilmâ... lä=y
what say.PTCP.2M.SG perhaps NEG=3F.SG

'What would you say, perhaps...it is not so!'
(Tem. 8b)

The variation between law and läy clearly indicates that in this function law consists of two morphemes, as the agreement clitic can be either masculine or feminine.

12.3.2 Stage II

In most of the appearances of law in JBA, this conflation can no longer be only phonological in nature. What follows law is not necessarily a sentence. This is illustrated by (6a), a common phrase in JBA where the adverb häke 'such, so' follows the negator law. At this stage law, which usually occurs in clause-initial position, can co-occur with a copular verb that has pronominal agreement (6b), with the verb 'to be' (6c), with a feminine copula (6d, cf. (5)), or with the regular negator la, as in (6e).

(6) a. hä law häke
dem.F.SG NEG so
'[In fact] it is not so.'
(among others, Menah. 53b)

b. law gizlan-e ninhu
NEG thief-pl COP.3M.PL
'They are not thieves.'
(B. Qam. 79b)

c. law 'iskur haway
NEG prohibition bc.PST.3F.SG
'It was not a prohibition.'
(Yebam. 13b)

d. law mitâh hi
NEG thing 3F.SG
'It is not something (significant)'
(Sanh. 47b)

e. law la šanah
NEG NEG different.M.SG
'Isn't it the case that it doesn't matter?'
(Šab 113b)

Since what comes after law is not necessarily a clause (6a), it can be concluded that it is not a cleft sentence either. Furthermore, Bar-Asher Siegal (2015b: 1040-1) demonstrates that all sentences in (6) do not have the characteristics of cleft sentences in JBA. Finally, unlike the situation in Syriac (cf. 3a-c) law always appears in this context, and it is never the case that the negator la is followed by the verb to be. Thus, it is only one main clause, and the agreement features are either expressed by other copular clitics (6b, d) or with the verb to be (6c). According to this analysis, it must be concluded that at this point in the history of Aramaic, law, in these contexts, does not have an agreement feature. Thus, this stage exhibits a morphological univerbation. law, accordingly, was reanalysed as consisting of a single morpheme: a negator.

12.3.2.1 Distributional properties

Bar-Asher Siegal (2015b) demonstrates the following syntactic differences between the two negators la and law in JBA (Stage II): the standard negator law always immediately precedes the main predicate, (7)-(8), whereas law in most cases does not appear next to the verb, and tends to appear either in sentence-initial position, (9), or following the overt subject (10).

(7) 'nä la 'mari l-ak
I NEG say.PST.1.SG to-2M.SG
'I didn't tell you.'
(Git. 56b)

(8) lâ mi"rib šappir
NEG mix.PTCP.PASS.3M.SG appropriately
'It is not mixed up appropriately.'
(Šab. 156a)

(9) law l-eh qai=sünk-inan
NEG upon-3M.SG DUR=reply.PTCP.1PL
'We do not rely upon it.'
(Yebam. 35a)

(10) šmuḥ law šappir qai=mašanne
PN NEG appropriately DUR=reply.PTCP.3M.SG to-3M.SG
'pn was not answering him appropriately.'
(B. Mešā 56a)

Furthermore, Bar-Asher Siegal (2015b) notes that while la is the unmarked negator, law is marked for the following four functions: I) negative rhetorical questions, (11)-(12); II) antecedents of conditional counterfactual sentences, (13); III) to negate a sentence that had been affirmed earlier, (14) and IV) to reject contextual presuppositions (15).
appear in negative answers (18).

Moreover, as noted earlier, like the same clause, which presumably means it is ungrammatical.

'Isn't it the case that it was not purchased from him? No, it was purchased from him.'

Although at first it may seem as if law serves as the polarity particle 'no' (18) (Holmberg 2015), this is most likely not the case. As we saw in (5), the agreement can vary in this context, and therefore it should be analysed as a full sentence.

(16) d-law mànì 1-aë
NEG NEG different.M.SG

'It isn't the case that it doesn't matter?'

Moreover, as noted earlier, like là, law can still be used in clefts, (17) and it may appear in negative answers (18).
typical contexts where law appears, illustrated by means of the English examples in (20b–c), can only give rise to the external-negation reading. Crucially, as expected from external negation, they are about whether it is true that three questions were answered, and not about how many questions were left unanswered, seven or fewer. 3

(20)  a. Mike didn’t answer three questions (out of ten). (salient \textit{n≤7} or \textit{n≠3})

b. If Mike had not answered three questions (out of ten) he would have failed in the exam. (n>3)

c. Didn’t he answer three questions (out of ten)‽ (n=3)

Accordingly, we may conclude, that the semantics of law is similar in Stage I (negative matrix clause of cleft sentences, as in (19b)) and in stage II (sentential negation). In both stages law takes the widest possible scope, with respect to the clause.

12.3.3 Overview of the properties of law

Table 12.1 summarizes the properties that we discussed for law.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 12.1 The characteristics of JBA law</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>\textbf{l\textit{aw}}</td>
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<tr>
<td>derived from cleft</td>
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<tr>
<td>indicating \textit{~p}, when \textit{p} is presupposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in rhetorical question</td>
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<tr>
<td>in antecedent of conditional counterfactual</td>
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<tr>
<td>can co-occur with standard negator</td>
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<tr>
<td>clause-initial position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appears in environments in which negation is always interpreted with wide scope</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

12.4 Analysis

In terms of analysis, we would like to propose that \textit{l\textit{aw}} in JBA expresses regular sentential negation and is base-generated above IP/TP (cf. Belletti 1990; Laka 1994; Zanuttini 1996, 1997; Cormack and Smith 2002; Holmberg 2003, 2013; De Clercq 2013, 2017). Support for this claim comes from the fact that the regular negative marker always takes surface scope over tense and aspect and never follows tense morphology.

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3 Bar-Asher Siegal (2015a) notes about these environments, that besides the fact that they can only take a wide-scope external negation, also PPis are rescued in these environments (Ladusaw 1979), and they are also the environments in which German has the so-called 'light negation', i.e., the negator \textit{niicht} is in an unusual position (Schwarz and Bhatt 2006).

4 It is worth noting that with law there is no contraction of the negator and the existential marker (Bar-Asher Siegal 2016: 254):

(i) \textit{l\textit{aw} mi ika RASHBAG d-qay kwat-i}  
\textit{NEG QRM exist PN REL-stand.pTCP.3.M.SG like-1.C.SG}  
"Isn't it the case that there is PN who agrees with me?"  
(B. Bay 174b)

More support for the position of sentential negation comes from the data in (22a)–(23b).

(22) a. \textit{ika} gabra exist man  
'There is a man.'

b. \textit{hwa (ika)} gabra was,3SG exist man  
'There was a man.'

c. *\textit{la-yka} hwa  
NEG exist be.PST.3SG  
*d. *\textit{la} hwa ika gabra  
NEG be.PST.3SG exist man

In the presence of negation, a suppletive form can be used in the present tense (23a). This suppletive form seems the univerbation of the negative marker and the existential expletive. However, in the presence of the past tense this univerbation of the negator and \textit{ika} is not possible (23b). The presence of \textit{ika} is even ungrammatical (23c). The only way to negate the sentence is by means of \textit{l\textit{aw}} preceding the copular verb in the past tense. This suggests two things: 1) that \textit{l\textit{aw}} indeed precedes tense, since it is clearly the tensed copular verb that intervenes in the univerbation process between \textit{ika} and \textit{l\textit{aw}} and 2) that \textit{ika} is incompatible with the combination of negation and past tense. 4
As proposed in section 12.2, in Stage I, it could phonologically contract with the agreement marker on the copula, i.e., -bu, in IP/TP. A prerequisite for this contraction to take place is that there is only clitic agreement without the verb to be in these clefts.

\[(24) \text{la=wa} \text{ Him } '\text{itaw}=\text{wa}' \text{ FIN} \text{ exist}=\text{3P.SG} \text{ be.PST.3M.SG} \]

'It was not PN (lit. it is not the case that it was PN).'

Now, before we represent how phonological contraction could take place in JBA, we need to take a little detour to examining how clefts can be derived in syntax and to the position for focus in syntax. We will illustrate the syntax of clefts with an example from English. Belletti (2004, 2009, 2011) derives it-clefts by phrasal movement of the cleft focus to the specifier of the cleft relative, as illustrated in (25).\(^5\)

\[(25) \text{ForceP} \]
\[\text{Force} \cdots \text{T}_1\text{P} \]
\[\text{DP} \cdots \text{T}_1\text{P} \]
\[\text{it} \cdots \text{T}_1\text{P} \]
\[\text{is} \cdots \text{T}_1\text{P} \]
\[\text{vP} \cdots \text{T}_1\text{P} \]
\[\text{FocP} \cdots \text{T}_1\text{P} \]
\[\text{be} \cdots \text{T}_1\text{P} \]
\[\text{the cat} \cdots \text{T}_1\text{P} \]
\[\text{Foc} \cdots \text{T}_1\text{P} \]
\[\text{Top} \cdots \text{T}_1\text{P} \]
\[\text{FinP} \cdots \text{T}_2\text{P} \]
\[\text{that} \cdots \text{T}_2\text{P} \]
\[\text{Mary saw the-cat} \]

The idea that the cleft focus moves to a position designated to host focus, i.e., FocP, is in line with the cartographic tradition (Rizzi 1997). Rizzi (1997: 291) argues on the basis of the incompatibility of foci and wh-words that they target the same left peripheral focus position, i.e., FocP, in main clauses. The data from Italian illustrate the complementary distribution between foci and wh-words:

\[(26) \text{a. } \text{A GIANNI che cosa hai detto (non a Piero)?} \]
\[\text{To John what thing have said (not to Peter)} \]
\[\text{b. } \text{Che cosa a GIANNI hai detto (non a Piero)?} \]

Based on these and other data, Rizzi argues that CP, the layer of the clause that anchors the clause in discourse and takes care of clause typing, needs to be split up in several layers that all contribute to the mediation between discourse and the propositional content in IP. He argues that the following features or levels of structure are present at the left periphery of the clause, (27). One of these positions is the Focus phrase (FocP), which is targeted by foci and wh-question words alike.

\[(27) \text{ForceP} > \text{TopP} > \text{FocP} > \text{TopP} > \text{FinP} > \text{TP} \]

Rizzi (1997: 285) says the following about Focus in the left periphery:

The proposed element, bearing focal stress, introduces new information, whereas the open sentence expresses contextually given information, knowledge that the speaker presupposes to be shared with the hearer.

Belletti (2004, 2009, 2011), on the other hand, argues that there are two different positions for focus: the left peripheral FocP is a position dedicated to contrastive and corrective focus, whilst a Focus position above the verb phrase is dedicated to new information focus.\(^6\) Abstracting away from this distinction for now, it is argued for a cleft sentence such as (28) that the cat is the focus and that Mary saw X is the presupposed material (see Haegeeman et al. 2015: 75).

\[(28) \text{It was THE CAT that Mary saw.} \]

Following arguments put forward by Haegeeman et al. (2015), we thus adopt Belletti’s biclausal analysis for it-clefts, with he projecting its own TP, i.e., TP, the first clause, and the focus of the cleft, the cat in (29), moving to the specifier of a (contrastive) Focus phrase in the left periphery of the second clause, i.e., TP2 (Belletti 2004, 2009, 2011; Meinunger 1997, 1998; Frascardelli and Ramaglia 2013; cf. Spector Shirts 2014 in the context of Semitic languages).\(^7\) The embedded clause is a reduced clause in the sense that ForceP is missing, cf. (35).

\[^{5}\text{One of our reviewers raises the question of what the cleft focus is in it-clefts without an overt cleft focus, i.e. those of the type: it is (not) [the case] that he left. For this type of clefts we suggest that TP, selects for a DP 'the case' and that the entire embedded FinP is extracted moving to SpecFocP of the embedded CP. It is beyond any doubt that the ramifications of this proposal are beyond the scope of this chapter. We therefore leave a more detailed analysis of this type of cleft for future research.}\]

\[^{6}\text{Subject clefts and new information clefts have thus a slightly different derivation from the one depicted in (25), with the cleft focus moving to a low FocP in the matrix CP. For the sake of the discussion here, we will abstract away from the distinction between new information clefts and contrastive/corrective clefts and typically treat clefts as contrastive.}\]

\[^{7}\text{Haegeeman et al. (2015) compare biclausal and monoclausal analyses (Meinunger 1997, 1998; Frascardelli and Ramaglia 2013) for it-clefts and argue in favour of Belletti’s biclausal proposal. They do so because it-clefts are compatible with negative inversion and wh-movement. A monoclausal analysis}\]
We would like to propose that the original context in which ָלֵא was created was a biclausal structure, as in (25), illustrated for ָלֵא in (29). Owing to the absence of an overt subject in SpecTP, the two heads, i.e. the Neg head and the agreement -ָה on the verbal empty head, could be conflated phonologically.

(29) ForceP
   Force
   NegP
   Neg
   T1:P1
   ָה
   T1:P
   0-hu
   v
   FocP
   Foc
   TopP
   Top
   FinP
   Fin

 pourrait =

 (32) ForceP
   Force
   FocP
   law
   law
   NegP
   Neg
   TP
   TP
   FinP
   Fin
   Neg

Further support for this proposal of ָלֵא in SpecFocP comes from the interaction of preposed negative constituents and wh-constituents in English (Haegeman 2000).

Law is not (only) contributing emphasis on the polarity expressed by another negative or positive element in the clause (cf. Breitbarth et al. 2013), as is the case for Hungarian igen (Lipták 2013), Latin quidem (Danckaert 2014, 2015), or Flemish en (Breitbarth and Haegeman 2014), but most importantly, it changes the truth conditions of a sentence and contributes real negation. Moreover, as we saw in (6e), in combination with the regular negator, ָלֵא gives rise to double negation, i.e., the negations cancel each other out. Following work by De Clercq (2013, 2017) the latter fact indicates that the two negators must be merged in different positions and both involve a negative feature. Given that ָלֵא always precedes ָה, which—as we argued—is hosted by a NegP above TP—the natural assumption is that it is merged even higher in the structure. Consequently, what we would like to propose is that the newly created negative marker is base-generated in a left peripheral SpecFocP, the projection which was also targeted by the focus of the cleft in the first stage of the development. As such its scope is always the entire p, and accordingly this proposal captures the fact that ָלֵא is on the one hand a reverser of truth conditions (p is in its scope), providing contrastive information, and on the other hand typically occurs in contexts which are presuppositional, i.e., the root proposition to which it applies is the presupposition, the complement of FocP.

The tree structure in (32) illustrates the two positions for negation, the external negation in SpecFocP on the one hand and the regular sentential negation above TP on the other.

(32) ForceP
   Force
   FocP

Further support for this proposal of ָלֵא in SpecFocP comes from the interaction of preposed negative constituents and wh-constituents in English (Haegeman 2000).

Law is not (only) contributing emphasis on the polarity expressed by another negative or positive element in the clause (cf. Breitbarth et al. 2013), as is the case for Hungarian igen (Lipták 2013), Latin quidem (Danckaert 2014, 2015), or Flemish en (Breitbarth and Haegeman 2014), but most importantly, it changes the truth conditions of a sentence and contributes real negation. Moreover, as we saw in (6e), in combination with the regular negator, ָלֵא gives rise to double negation, i.e., the negations cancel each other out. Following work by De Clercq (2013, 2017) the latter fact indicates that the two negators must be merged in different positions and both involve a negative feature. Given that ָלֵא always precedes ָה, which—as we argued—is hosted by a NegP above TP—the natural assumption is that it is merged even higher in the structure. Consequently, what we would like to propose is that the newly created negative marker is base-generated in a left peripheral SpecFocP, the projection which was also targeted by the focus of the cleft in the first stage of the development. As such its scope is always the entire p, and accordingly this proposal captures the fact that ָלֵא is on the one hand a reverser of truth conditions (p is in its scope), providing contrastive information, and on the other hand typically occurs in contexts which are presuppositional, i.e., the root proposition to which it applies is the presupposition, the complement of FocP.

The tree structure in (32) illustrates the two positions for negation, the external negation in SpecFocP on the one hand and the regular sentential negation above TP on the other.

(32) ForceP
   Force
   FocP

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   Force
   FocP

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But see Breitbarth and Haegeman (2015) for another analysis.
Haegeaman (2000) argues that proposed negative DPs and PPs with sentential negative scope are in a left peripheral SpecFocP. The idea that proposed negative constituents are focal in nature can be traced back to Rochemont (1978: 57), who says that 'the affective conditioned inversion construction is indicative of a marked focus assignment, much like the cleft construction'. One of the crucial arguments from Rochemont is that these constituents can function as replies to wh-questions, as illustrated by the question-answer pair in (33).

(33) a. What job would John be happy with?  
b. With no job would John be happy.  

(Rochemont 1978: 79–80)

Haegeaman (2000: 27) adopts this argument and provides more support for the claim that negative constituents are focalized by showing that—like foci (cf. Rizzi 1997)—proposed negative constituents are incompatible with proposed wh-constituents in main clauses, (34), again suggesting that they also are in complementary distribution and hence target the same position.

(34) a. *On no account where should I go?  
b. *Where on no account should I go?

Also in the JBA corpus there are no attestations of law and a wh-constituent co-occurring, (35), but there are attestations of wh- and law co-occurring (36).

(35) (unattested) amyâ law 'asqu-h I-smuel  
why NEG bring.PST.3PL-3M.SG ACC-Samuel

(36) amyâ la 'asqu-h I-smuel  
why NEG bring.PST.3PL-3M.SG ACC-Samuel

‘Why didn’t they bring Samuel with them?’  

(Ber. 29a)

It thus seems that law in main clauses targets the same position as wh-constituents and negative DPs/PPs. We take this position to be SpecFocP in the left periphery, a position dedicated to focus. Unlike proposed negative constituents, which are merged clause-internally and move to the left peripheral FocP, we propose that SpecFocP is the base-generated position for law in Stage II of its development.

More support that law needs to be in a position outscoping regular sentence negation and regular non-topical subjects, i.e. high in the left periphery, comes from its interaction with universal quantifiers. Preposed negative constituents in English cannot take low scope with respect to the universal quantifier (38a), whereas the regular predicate negator allows both scopal patterns (38b).

(38) a. Under no circumstances would everyone go to the party. ¬ >¬V ∀ ⋁ ¬  
b. Everyone hasn’t arrived yet. ¬ >¬V ∀ >¬

Also for JBA, one can demonstrate that law patterns with the preposed DP and PP and takes widest scope with respect to universal quantifiers, (39)-(40), while law is interpreted as being under the scope of the universal quantification, (41).

(39) law kull-e-h 'alma 'bide NEG all-3M.SG world do.PASS.PTCP.3M.PL  
d-sâyme msan-e  
REL-wear.PTCP.3M.PL shoe-PL  

‘It is not the case that everyone is apt to wear shoes.’ (Mo’ed Qet. 24a) (¬ >¬V)

(40) law kull-e-h 'alma 'azzu lshaddûta NEG all-3M.SG world see-PASS.PTCP.3M.PL to-tsetemony  

‘It is not the case that everyone is eligible (to give) testimony.’  

(Sanh. 89a) (¬ >¬V)

(41) R. Hanina hu d-hâlkîm kull-e h 'alma 'hakkîm-e  
PN all-3M.SG REL-wise all-3M.SG world NEG wise-M  

‘It’s that which is wise, everyone (else) is not wise.’  

(Nid. 20b) (V >¬)

Given that overt subjects can precede law and that, as argued, law is base-generated in the left peripheral SpecFocP, overt subjects must target a position in the left periphery above FocP. As illustrated in (27), Rizzi (1997) argued on the basis of Italian, a pro-drop language, that there is a position above FocP for topical constituents. Since JBA is a pro-drop language, we assume—in line with other proposals for subjects in pro-drop languages—that overt subjects in cases like (41) are topics, merged in a high (topic) position (Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl 2007).9

(42) smuel law sappir gâ=miânne I-eh  
PN NEG appropriately DUR=reply.PTCP.3M.PL to-3M.SG  

‘PN was not answering him appropriately.’  

(B. Meṣi’a 56a)10

In sum, in this section, we have analysed how the JBA negator law arose as the consequence of a cliticization of the agreement marking –hu with the standard negator la. Later, in a second stage, this negator became an independent negator used to express external negative scope. We have argued in this section that its

9 See Bar-Asher Siegal (2015) for other observations which are related to the analysis of the subjects in JBA as topics.

10 This line comes after a long discussion which begins with a question by Rabbi El’azar and which was responded to by the Babylonian sage Samuel. This discussion assumes that Samuel’s response was valid, but after a long discussion this assumption is rejected by the sentence in (43). Thus, this sentence negates what has been already established as part of the common ground, hence presupposed.
base-generated position is SpecFocP, a left peripheral position of the clause dedicated to contrastive focus. Support for this idea comes from its incompatibility with wh-question words and its wide-scope interpretation over universal quantifiers. The position used for the focus of clefts has become the position for the new negator.

At this point, we would like to emphasize that according to the current analysis, both the syntax (position in the clause, non-occurrence with interrogatives, reading above quantifiers, etc.) and the semantic characteristics (widest-scope reading) of the negator law can be understood in the light of its historical origin. The main change from Stage I to Stage II is that from a biclusal cleft structure to a monoclausal structure. The regular TP-negator from Stage I gets reanalysed to become a negator that takes the position that the focus of the cleft had in the biclusal cleft structure. The following should be noted about this analysis:

1. In both structures, the TP/root clause is presupposed, and the negator takes wide scope with respect to the TP/root. It is because of the fact that the same semantic effect of negation, i.e. widest scope, can be obtained in both configurations, that negative clefts are prone to be reanalysed as external negators.
2. The reanalysis of law from a bimorphemic structure to a single morpheme goes hand in hand with the change from a biclusal structure to a monoclausal structure.

If two syntactically different constructions express the same semantics, one (or both) of the syntactic environments can easily be prone to a syntactic reanalysis.

In the following section, we would like to demonstrate that a similar type of development can be identified in another language, by pointing to similarities between our synchronic and diachronic analysis of the Aramaic law and the negator neca in the dialect of Mussomeli (Sicily). This negator also seems to be derived from a cleft (Cruschina 2010). As Garzonio and Poletto (2015) analyse its syntax, this negator is also analysed to be generated in a left peripheral FocP. Moreover, we will show that the similarities with JBA law can be demonstrated at the semantic level as well.

12.5 Cross-linguistic comparison: Sicilian neca

The negator neca in the Sicilian dialect of Mussomeli has a similar type of origin to law, since as Cruschina (2010: 36) argues, it is derived from a cleft. The path of this derivation is illustrated in (43).

(43) Un je ca → n-è-ca → neca
not it is that

In this section, we will demonstrate other similarities between these two negators. Like the JBA negator, neca cancels presuppositions or 'characterizes the negated proposition as a 'wrong expectation made by the interlocutor' (Garzonio and Poletto 2015: 140).
It has been demonstrated that JBA law is incompatible with wh-question words and this fact supports an analysis of the negator as a left peripheral focal negator. The same can be shown for neca. Our informant confirmed that neca is incompatible with regular wh-questions (48)–(49). Only clefted wh-questions are compatible with neca, (49)–(51):

(48) *A chi neca arrispunni?
to what neca answered.3SG

(49) *A cu neca arrispunni?
to whom neca answered.3SG

(50) A chi je ca neca arrispunni?
to what is that neca answered
'What is it that he (surely) didn’t answer to?'

(51) A cu je ca neca arrispunni?
to whom is that neca answered.3SG
'Whom is it that he (surely) didn’t answer to?'

When neca co-occurs with the standard negator, it can also give rise to double negation, just like law in JBA and it can license n-words in object position, (53), showing that it really contributes negation.

(52) Neca unn' arrispunni a tri dumanni ncапu a deci neca not answer.PST.3SG to three questions on to ten
'Surely) he didn’t not answer three questions out of ten.'

(53) Neca fici nenti
neca I-did nothing
'I didn’t do anything.'

In the light of this we propose the following:

1) neca reflects a diachronic change from a contraction of three morphemes to a single morpheme (negator), which also involves—in line with what we proposed for JBA—a structural change from a biclausal to a monoclausal construction.

2) neca can be analysed as an external negator, a negative marker merged in SpecFocP, in line with our analysis of JBA law and the proposal made by Garzonio and Poletto (2015).

Table 12.2 summarizes the properties of neca alongside those of law.13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>law</th>
<th>neca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>derived from cleft</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indicating -p, when p is presupposed</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in antecedent of conditional counterfactual</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can co-occur with standard negator</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>double negation with standard negator</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clause-initial position</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not compatible with wh-questions</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appears in environments in which negation is always interpreted with wide scope</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

neca and law are both derived from clefts and seem to express 'external negation' semantically, whereas syntactically, they are still within CP, but high up in the left periphery, more specifically in the specifier of a Focus phrase. This captures the fact that these negators are applied to a proposition that was already part of the common ground, and as such they always have a wide-scope reading.

12.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the development of the negative-polarity marker law from a negative cleft in JBA. It was argued that the trigger for the development was a process of phonological univerbation: a cliticization of the agreement clitic –hu with the standard negator la, and then their subsequent reanalysis as a single morpheme, i.e. as a negator. The semantics of this new negative marker differs from the regular standard negator in that the negation takes wider scope than the scope of a standard negator; it contributes external negation (in fact law in stage II retains the semantics of Stage I). On the basis of its incompatibility with wh-constituents and its wide-scope interpretation with respect to universal quantifiers, it was argued that the

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13 There seems to be one difference between law and neca: while the former appears in response to questions (4–5), the latter does not. However, as noted, this may not be a significant difference, as in fact it is more likely that in JBA this is a remnant of Stage 1 (as in real cleft-sentences, 12), and should be interpreted as an independent sentence with the meaning 'it is not true'. Neca could not appear in such a context, since it contains the complementizer ca, and therefore it does not fit such contexts.
grammaticalized negative marker law gets base-generated in a left peripheral position FocP of a monoclausal structure. This analysis does not only capture its incompatibility with wh-consituents, but also captures the wide-scope external negation reading and its status as a negative focal operator, which gives rise to a presupposition, i.e., the non-negated p is already part of the common ground. Moreover, it was proposed that this fact was relevant for the reanalysis, since wide-scope negation and the interaction with the presupposed p were already part of what characterized law in the earlier stage. Thus, the same sentences, with similar semantics, could be associated with two syntactic structures. In addition, we broadened the empirical scope and showed how the properties of law resemble the properties of the Sicilian Mussomeli neca (Cruschina 2010; Garzónio and Poletto 2015), for which Cruschina (2010) argued that it is derived from a cleft and for which Garzónio and Poletto (2015) have argued that it is base-generated in SpecFocP.

This research predicts that negative clefts may provide the ideal context for the emergence of a new negator. What we do not know at present is how common this pattern is and whether there are languages where this type of negator becomes the standard negator. More research from a cross-linguistic perspective is needed for that. In addition, this chapter presents the syntactic reanalysis as a consequence of the fact that two different syntactic structures have the same semantics. The reanalysis in this particular case involved a shift from a biclausal structure to a monoclausal structure. It would be interesting to examine whether this is always the direction of change, and whether this principle can be derived from some broader principle of reduction in complexity (see Bar-Asher Siegal (2019) for another example of such a phenomenon with expressions that contain negation).
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Contents

Series preface vii
List of abbreviations ix
Notes on contributors xv

1. Cycling through diachrony 1
   Anne Breitbarth, Lieven Danckaert, Elisabeth Witzenhausen, and Miriam Bouzouita

2. Cyclical change and problems of projection 13
   Elly van Gelderen

3. When morphological and syntactic change are not in sync: Reassessing diachronic implications of the Rich Agreement Hypothesis 33
   Eric Pütz

4. The clitic doubling parameter: Development and distribution of a cyclic change 52
   Susann Fischer, Mario Navarro, and Jorge Vega Vilanova

5. Weak elements in cycles: A case study on dative pronouns in Old Italo-Romance 71
   Jacopo Garzonio and Silvia Rossi

6. On the emergence of personal articles in the history of Catalan 88
   Judy Bernstein, Francisco Ordóñez, and Francesc Roca

7. Bare singular nouns in Middle Norwegian 109
   Kari Kinn

8. What kind of constructions yield what kind of constructions? 131
   Andreas Blümel and Marco Coniglio

9. Quantificational cycles and shifts 155
   Moreno Mitrović

10. On the relative cycle: The case of P+che relative clauses from Old to Modern Italian 177
    Cecilia Poletto and Emanuela Sanfelici

11. French negation, the Superset Principle, and Feature Conservation 199
    Karen De Clercq
Series preface

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