2026. Proceedings of the Workshop on Turkic and Languages in Contact with Turkic 10. 217–231.

Turkish negative concord via downward Agree

Isaac Warren*

Abstract. In this paper I present novel data from Turkish on the distribution of negative concord items (NCIs) and their interaction with neither/nor constructions. From this I argue that NCIs are licensed as a result of configurations where they c-command their licensor in the syntax, rather than being licensed by any particular LF configuration. I propose an account of Turkish negative concord in which NCIs are universal quantifiers, licensed through a downward-probing Agree.

Keywords. negation; negative concord; coordination; Turkish

1. Introduction. This paper investigates the licensing mechanism for negative concord items (NCIs) in Turkish. To do this, I present novel data on the interaction of NCIs and neither/nor constructions, and show that this interaction is problematic for accounts of negative concord that make use of an upward-probing model of Agree (Zeijlstra 2004, 2008, Penka 2011, Jeretič 2022, among others) or restrictions on LF configurations (Linebarger 1980, Kelepir 2001, Öney 2024, among others). Based on the novel data I argue NCIs are licensed in configurations where they c-command a licensor in overt syntax, and I propose that they are licensed through an exclusively downward-probing model of Agree. This is consistent with a semantic treatment of NCIs as universal quantifiers that obligatorily scope outside negation; the obligatory scope facts follow from the syntactic licensing mechanism that I propose.

In many negative concord languages, sentential negation is at least sometimes obligatory in the presence of NCIs. This paper focuses on Turkish, which is such a language. In Turkish, the syntactic position of the NCI does not affect the requirement for clausemate sentential negation (unlike in e.g. Italian; see Section 2.1.1) as exemplified in (1). In (1a), the NCI *kimse* 'nbody'[1] is in the direct object position, and in (1b), it is in the subject position. In both cases, the sentence is not accepted without the sentential negation *-mA*.[2]

(1) a. Ben **kimse-yi** gör***(-mü)**-yor-um.
1SG nbody-ACC see*(-NEG)-PROG-1SG
'I don't see anybody.'

b. **Kimse** ben-i gör***(-mü)**-yor.
nbody 1SG-ACC see*(-NEG)-PROG
'Nobody sees me.'

The pattern in (1) does not always hold for sentences containing neither/nor constructions. In Turkish, neither/nor constructions are lists of at least two XPs, where each XP is preceded by

* Thanks to everyone who provided me with the Turkish judgments that make up parts of this paper: Yağmur Kiper, Metehan Oğuz, Burak Öney, Deniz Özyıldız, and especially my consultants, Deniz Çıtak and Aden Tezölmez. Thanks also to Paloma Jeretič, Stefan Keine, Travis Major, Ethan Poole, and Harold Torrence, as well as two anonymous reviewers for the Tu+10 proceedings, for their helpful comments on this project. Author: Isaac Warren, University of California, Los Angeles (iwarren@g.ucla.edu).

[1] When possible, my English gloss for these words will be along the lines of 'nbody,' 'nthing,' etc. as a neutral 'middle ground' between words like *anybody* and *nobody*, each of which has distinct distributional facts. This terminology is based on Giannakidou (2000) and subsequent literature.

[2] In citation forms, capital letters are used as a placeholder for segments that change depending on phonological factors like vowel harmony and hiatus resolution. In (1), *-mA* surfaces as *-mü*.

the particle *ne* and the last XP is optionally preceded by the additive particle *dA*. For the default SOV word order, sentential negation is optional when an NCI like *kimse* 'nbody' is the subject over a neither/nor construction, as shown in (2a). However, this is not true for sentences whose subject is a neither/nor construction and whose object is an NCI: sentential negation is obligatory in (2b).[3]

(2) a. Bu parti-ye **kimse** [ne Ali-'yi ne (de) Ayşe-'yi] davet et**(-me)**-ti.
this party-DAT nbody [NE ali-ACC NE (also) ayşe-ACC] invitation do(-NEG)-PST
'Nobody invited either Ali or Ayşe to this party.'

b. Bu parti-ye [ne Ali ne (de) Ayşe] **kimse-yi** davet et***(-me)**-ti.
this party-DAT [NE ali NE (also) ayşe] nbody-ACC invitation do*(-NEG)-PST
'Neither Ali nor Ayşe invited anybody to this party.'

Given the consistent requirement of sentential negation seen in (1), it is surprising that this asymmetry appears with the addition of neither/nor constructions. The asymmetry is also striking in that it is the opposite of the asymmetry we can observe in an English parallel, namely negative polarity items (NPIs) like *anybody*:

(3) a. * **Anybody** invited [neither John nor Mary] to this party.

b. [Neither John nor Mary] invited **anybody** to this party.

A typical explanation of the English facts is that NPIs like *anybody* are subject to a semantic restriction, where they must appear within the surface scope of a downward-entailing operator (Klima 1964; Linebarger 1980; Ladusaw 1980). If we grant that Turkish NCIs are subject to a similar constraint governing their scope relationship to downward-entailing operators, then we must explain how sentential negation and neither/nor constructions seem to create different licensing patterns. Semantic conditions of this kind have been proposed for Turkish by Kelepir (2001) and Öney (2024). On views like theirs, Turkish NCIs like *kimse* 'nbody' are not semantically negative. Instead, they are quantifiers that require some relationship to negation at LF (for Kelepir, NCIs are narrow-scope existentials; for Öney, they are wide-scope universals).

This type of semantic analysis contrasts with a group of analyses in which negative concord is associated with the operation Agree (Chomsky 2001). This idea is exemplified for various languages by (Zeijlstra 2004, 2008), Penka (2011), and Deal (2022), among others; this kind of analysis has been applied to Turkish by Jeretič (2022). On all of these accounts, strict negative concord languages make use of a covert negative operator (written as ∅, NegOp, or Op¬) that enters an Agree relation with both the sentential negation and any NCIs present in the sentence.

The rest of this paper proceeds as follows. In Section 2, I describe the properties of Turkish NCIs and neither/nor constructions, as well as their interaction; Section 2.3 includes data that has not been previously reported, from which I argue that the relevant difference between sentences like (2a) and (2b) is a difference in c-command. In Section 3, I present a proposed analysis of Turkish negative concord, which makes use of a downward-probing Agree and treats NCIs as universal quantifiers; on my analysis, Op¬ is absent. In Section 4 I briefly conclude.

[3] I have put brackets around neither/nor constructions in (2) and all following examples; this is meant only to make the examples easier to read. As I discuss below, I take many neither/nor constructions to actually be coordinations of CPs, so my bracketing does not necessarily correspond to constituency.

2. Syntactic properties of NCIs and neither/nor.

2.1. PROPERTIES OF TURKISH NCIS. On the surface, NCIs often resemble negative polarity items (NPIs). While it is unclear that the difference between NCIs and NPIs is fundamental, the labels are widely used in the literature, based on a cluster of syntactic properties. The following list, based on Laka (1990), Quer (1993), Vallduví (1994), Görgülü (2020), and Kamali & Zeijlstra (2024), among others, shows diagnostics for placing an element in one of the two categories:

(4) a. NCIs can occur in isolation (i.e., as elliptical answers); NPIs cannot.
b. NCIs can be modified by *almost* or *absolutely*; NPIs cannot.
c. NCIs are grammatical in subject position; NPIs are not.
d. NCIs are licensed only by (syntactic) negation; NPIs are also licensed in some syntactically affirmative contexts, like polar questions, antecedents of conditionals, and under adverbs like *rarely*.
e. NCIs cannot be licensed long-distance (they require clausemate negation); NPIs can be licensed by an element in a higher clause.

As a representative neg-word from Turkish I use *kimse* 'nbody.' *Kimse* patterns most like an NCI; this can be shown by applying the above diagnostics to *kimse*. First, *kimse* is accepted as an elliptical answer (5):

(5) Q: Kim gel-di? A: Kimse.
who come-PST nbody
'Who came? Nobody.' (elliptical answer)

The next test is that of modifiability by adverbs like *almost* and *definitely*. This is possible for *kimse* (6):

(6) Neredeyse kimse-yi gör-me-di-m.
almost nbody-ACC see-NEG-PST-1SG
'I saw almost nobody.' (modified by *almost*)

Kimse can appear in subject position (7):

(7) Kimse beni gör-me-di.
nbody 1SG.ACC see-NEG-PST
'No one saw me.' (subject position)

The next set of diagnostics gives mixed results. All speakers allow *kimse* in affirmative polar questions (8a). Judgments are split on the acceptability of *kimse* in an affirmative conditional antecedent,[4] such as (8b). No speakers allow *kimse* to co-occur with adverbials like *nadiren* 'rarely,' as in (8c):

[4] Existing analyses of Turkish negative concord also include varying reports on the acceptability of constructions like (8b); Öney (2024) reports that this type of sentence is acceptable, while Kamali & Zeijlstra (2024) report that it is not.

(8) a. Kimse-yi gör-dü-n mü?
nbody-ACC see-PST-2SG Q
'Did you see anybody?' (affirmative polar question)

b. % Kimse-yi gör-ür-se-n bana haber ver.
nbody-ACC see-AOR-COND-2SG 1SG.DAT news give
Int.: 'If you see anybody, let me know.' (%affirmative conditional)

c. * Kimse-yi nadiren gör-ür-üm.
nbody-ACC rarely see-AOR-1SG
Int.: 'I rarely see anybody.' (*downward-entailing adverbial)

The final diagnostic that I discuss here is locality: NCIs must be in the same clause as their licensor, while NPIs can be licensed long-distance. In this respect *kimse* patterns as an NCI (9).

(9) * Demet [sen kitab-ı kimse-ye ver-di-n] san-mı-yor.
demet 2SG book-ACC nbody-DAT give-PST-2SG think-NEG-PROG
Int.: 'Demet doesn't think [you gave the book to anybody.]' (Kayabaşı & Özgen 2018:88)

To summarize:

Diagnostic	NPI	NCI	*kimse*
Can occur in isolation/as an elliptical answer	✗	✓	✓
Can be modified by *almost* or *absolutely*	✗	✓	✓
Can appear in subject position	✗	✓	✓
Licensed in (affirmative) polar questions	✓	✗	✓
Licensed in antecedents of (affirmative) conditionals	✓	✗	%
Licensed by DE adverbials like *rarely*	✓	✗	✗
Licensed by negation in a higher clause	✓	✗	✗

Table 1. Comparison of *kimse* with canonical NPIs and NCIs

This shows that neg-words are not guaranteed to pattern exactly like prototypical NPIs or prototypical NCIs. In this paper I refer to Turkish neg-words as NCIs, not because they match the expected pattern perfectly, but because they match the expected pattern for NCIs more closely than the expected pattern for NPIs.

2.1.1. COMPARISON TO OTHER NEGATIVE CONCORD LANGUAGES. Typologically, negative concord languages can be sorted into 'strict' and 'non-strict' negative concord languages (Giannakidou 2000; Zeijlstra 2004, 2008). An example of a 'non-strict' negative concord language is Italian; it is 'non-strict' because there are some syntactic positions where an NCI may appear without requiring a clausemate sentential negation. This is shown in (10): in (10a) the NCI *nessuno* 'nbody' is a non-subject, and it is not licit without the clausemate sentential negation *non*. Meanwhile, in (10b), *nessuno* is the subject; the sentential negation *non* is not obligatory, and when it is present, a different meaning is observed (namely, a double negation reading).

(10) a. Italian (Zeijlstra 2008:2-3)
Gianni ***(non)** ha telefonato a **nessuno**.
gianni *(NEG) has called to **nbody**
'Gianni has not called anybody.'

b. **Nessuno** (#**non**) ha telefonato.
nbody (#NEG) has called
'Nobody has called.'

Italian contrasts with Czech, which is an example of a 'strict' negative concord language. In Czech, the position of a negative element does not affect its licensing conditions; sentential negation must be present. This is shown in (11) for the NCI *nikdo* 'nbody' in subject position.

(11) Czech (Zeijlstra 2008:3)
Dnes **nikdo *(ne)**-volá.
today nbody NEG-call
'Today nobody calls.'

As shown in (1) above (repeated here as 12), NCIs in Turkish are generally not accepted without sentential negation, regardless of the NCI's syntactic position. In (12a), the NCI is a direct object, and in (12b) it is a subject; the sentential negation *-mA* is required in both cases.

(12) a. Ben **kimse-yi** gör***(-mü)**-yor-um.
1SG nbody-ACC see*(-NEG)-PROG-1SG
'I don't see anybody.'

b. **Kimse** ben-i gör***(-mü)**-yor.
nbody 1SG-ACC see*(-NEG)-PROG
'Nobody sees me.' (=1)

In this respect Turkish patterns with strict negative concord languages such as Czech.

2.2. PROPERTIES OF NEITHER/NOR CONSTRUCTIONS. Turkish neither/nor constructions may occur with or without sentential negation; (13a) shows this optionality. When sentential negation is present, both negative concord readings and double negation readings are possible, shown in (13b). The possibility of both readings is unique in the landscape of Turkish negative concord.

(13) a. [Ne Ali ne Beste] gel-di.
NE ali NE beste come-PST
'Neither Ali nor Beste came.' (Jeretič 2022:1150)

b. [Ne Ali ne Beste] gel-me-di.
NE ali NE beste come-NEG-PST
i. 'Neither Ali nor Beste came.'
ii. 'Neither Ali nor Beste didn't come.' (Jeretič 2022:1150)

As is typical for Turkish, neither/nor subjects may optionally control plural agreement on the verb, as shown in (14). Regardless of the verbal agreement, when sentential negation is present, the meaning is consistent with either a wide-scope conjunction ($\wedge > \neg$) or a narrow-scope disjunction ($\neg > \vee$).

(14) Bu parti-ye [ne Ali ne Ayşe] gel(-me)-di-ler.
this party-DAT NE ali NE ayşe come(-NEG)-PST-PL
'Neither Ali nor Ayşe came to this party.'
(*Not:* #'Either Ali or Ayşe may have come to this party, but not both.')

In some structures such as polar questions and conditionals, sentential negation is obligatory with neither/nor constructions. (15) shows a neither/nor construction in a polar question, and (16) shows a neither/nor construction in the antecedent of a conditional; in both cases, sentential negation is required.

(15) [Ne Hasan ne (de) Mehmet] okul-a git-***(me)**-di mi?
NE hasan NE (also) mehmet school-DAT go-NEG-PST Q
'Didn't either Hasan or Mehmet go to school?' (Gračanin-Yüksek 2023:11)

(16) Ahmet [ne bira ne (de) şarap] iç-**{mez/*er}**-se on-a kola ver.
ahmet NE beer NE (also) wine drink-{NEG.AOR/*AOR}-COND 3SG-DAT coke give
'If Ahmet doesn't drink beer or wine, give him Coke.' (Gračanin-Yüksek 2023:16)

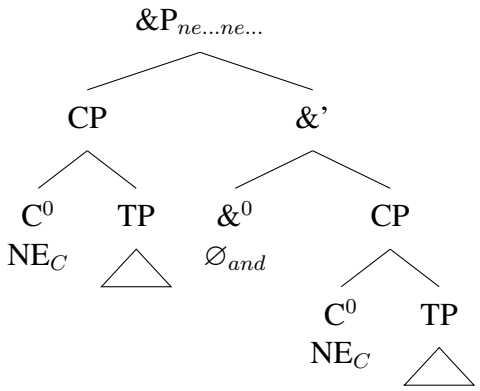
Because the sentential negation *-mA* is required when neither/nor constructions co-occur with the question particle *mI* and conditionals (15-16), I follow Jeretič (2022) and Gračanin-Yüksek (2023) in treating negative-predicate[5] neither/nor constructions as DP coordinations by default. Affirmative-predicate neither/nor constructions are coordinations of (possibly elided) CPs. (17) shows how this structural assumption derives the facts observed in (15-16): the negative-predicate version of (16) involves a DP coordination, while the affirmative-predicate version is ruled out because it is a CP coordination, where *ne* realizes the C head NE_C. The conditional C *-se* competes for the same spot on the clausal spine, and the derivation fails.

(17) a. $[_{CP}\ [_{TP}$ ahmet $[_{NeP}\ \text{NE}_{DP}$ bira NE_{DP} şarap] iç-mez-] se]
b. *$[_{CP}$ ahmet$_i$ $[_{\&P}\ [_{CP}$ **NE**$_C$ t$_i$ bira iç-er-**se**] $\&^0$ $[_{CP}$ **NE**$_C$ t$_i$ şarap iç-er-**se**]]]

For this reason I adopt the view from Gračanin-Yüksek (2023) that neither/nor constructions are either: coordinations of CPs, whose head NE_C is semantically negative; or coordinations of DPs, where the coordinating head is null and *ne* is the spell-out of an adjunct to each DP, which I refer to as NE_{DP}. Clausal coordination structures have no special restrictions on their distribution; DP coordination structures require a clausemate negation and therefore pattern with NCIs. Due to space limitations in this paper I focus mainly on the CP coordination structure, shown in (18).

[5] Here I use 'negative-predicate' and 'affirmative-predicate' in a purely morphosyntactic sense: negative-predicate clauses contain the sentential negation *-mA*, and affirmative-predicate clauses do not.

(18)



As noted in Jeretič (2022), this structural ambiguity provides an explanation for the apparent optionality of double negation readings when sentential negation is present. When sentential negation is present, a 'negative concord' (or 'single negation') reading corresponds to the structure containing a DP coordination and one matrix negation. Meanwhile, the double negation reading corresponds to a CP coordination, like (18), where sentential negation is present in each clause, and NE$_C$ also has negative semantics.

2.3. INTERACTION OF NCIS AND NEITHER/NOR CONSTRUCTIONS. Based on (2), I described NCIs as being licensed when they are subjects co-occurring with a neither/nor construction as their object. Here I refine the generalization slightly, and argue that, without sentential negation,[6] NCIs are licensed if they c-command a neither/nor construction.

Ditransitive sentences demonstrate this generalization cleanly; in (19-24), we see that the type of argument (subject, IO, or DO) does not affect the c-command condition on licensing. Assuming that for preverbal constituents, farther left constituents c-command farther right constituents, the acceptable sentences in (19-21) contain an NCI argument that asymmetrically c-commands a neither/nor construction. In (22-24), the NCI does not c-command a neither/nor construction, and the sentences are not accepted.

(19) Kimse [ne Ali-'ye ne Ayşe-ye] hediye ver-di.
nbody NE ali-DAT NE ayşe-DAT gift give-PST
'Nobody gave either Ali or Ayşe gifts.' (S$_{NCI}$ >IO$_{neither/nor}$ >DO)

(20) Kimse Ayşe-'ye [ne hediye ne para] ver-di.
nbody ayşe-DAT NE gift NE money give-PST
'Nobody gave Ayşe either gifts or money.' (S$_{NCI}$ >IO>DO$_{neither/nor}$)

(21) Ali kimse-ye [ne hediye ne para] ver-di.
ali nbody-DAT NE gift NE money give-PST
'Ali gave nobody either gifts or money.' (S>IO$_{NCI}$ >DO$_{neither/nor}$)

(22) * [Ne Ali ne Ayşe] kimse-ye para ver-di.
NE ali NE ayşe nbody-DAT money give-PST
Int.: 'Neither Ali nor Ayşe gave anybody money.' (*S$_{neither/nor}$ >IO$_{NCI}$ >DO)

[6] When sentential negation is present, all sentences in (19-24) are accepted. I omit the versions with negation because they hide the interaction between NCIs and neither/nor that interests me here.

(23) * [Ne Ali ne Ayşe] bana kimse göster-di.
NE ali NE ayşe 1SG.DAT nbody show-PST
Int.: 'Neither Ali nor Ayşe showed me anybody.' (*$S_{neither/nor}$ >IO>DO_{NCI})

(24) * Ali [ne Ayşe-'ye ne Demet-'e] kimse göster-di.
ali NE ayşe-DAT NE demet-DAT nbody show-PST
Int.: 'Ali showed nobody to either Ayşe or Demet.' (*S>$IO_{neither/nor}$ >DO_{NCI})

Arguments may also appear in orders other than the ones above. When scrambled NCI arguments appear over neither/nor constructions, they are licit without sentential negation (25-26).

(25) Ali kimse-yi [ne Ayşe-'ye ne Demet-'e] göster-di.
ali nbody-ACC NE ayşe-DAT NE demet-DAT show-PST
'Ali showed nobody to either Ayşe or Demet.' (S>DO_{NCI} >$IO_{neither/nor}$)

(26) Kimse-yi [ne Ali ne Ayşe] gör-dü.
nbody-ACC NE ali NE ayşe see-PST
'Neither Ali or Ayşe saw anybody.' (DO_{NCI} >$S_{neither/nor}$)

This generalization, that NCIs may be licensed without sentential negation if they c-command a neither/nor construction, also holds when these elements are adjuncts. This is shown for an adjoined neither/nor construction in (27), and an adjoined NCI in (28).

(27) a. Ali kimse-yi [ne az ne fazla] sev-er.
ali nbody-ACC NE little NE too.much like-AOR
'Ali doesn't like anybody too little or too much.'

b. *Ali [ne az ne fazla] kimse-yi sev-er.
ali NE little NE too.much nbody-ACC like-AOR

(28) a. Asla [ne Ali ne Ayşe] okul-a gid-er.
never NE ali NE ayşe school-DAT go-AOR
'Neither Ali nor Ayşe ever goes to school.'

b. * [Ne Ali ne Ayşe] asla okul-a gid-er.
NE ali NE ayşe never school-A go-AOR

Additionally, linear order (of an NCI preceding neither/nor) is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for NCI licensing. Constituents may be scrambled to a post-verbal position in Turkish; it has been argued that post-verbal constituents are in a position that c-commands the rest of the sentence (Kural 1997; Kornfilt 2005; Öney 2023). This is supported by the ability of postverbal elements to take wide scope (29) and bind reflexives (30).

(29) a. Herkes dün ara-mış **üç kişi-yi**.
everyone yesterday call-PST.EVID three person-ACC
'Everyone called three people yesterday.' ($3 > \forall$,*$\forall > 3$)

b. Üç kişi dün ara-mış **herkes-i**.
three person yesterday call-PST.EVID everyone-ACC
'Three people called everyone yesterday.' ($\forall > 3$,*$3 > \forall$; Kural 1997:505)

(30) Kendi$_i$ komşu-su döv-müş **adam-ı**$_i$.
self neighbor-3SG.POSS beat-PST.EVID man-ACC
'His own$_i$ neighbor beat the man$_i$.' (Öney 2023:20)

NCIs in the post-verbal field can also be licensed by neither/nor constructions elsewhere in the sentence, as shown in (31); that is, linear order is not a necessary condition for licensing. The acceptability of (31) is consistent with the generalization that c-command is the deciding factor in licensing NCIs.

(31) [Ne Ali ne Ayşe] gör-dü kimse-yi.
NE ali NE ayşe see-PST nbody-ACC
'Neither Ali nor Ayşe saw anybody.' (O_{NCI} >$S_{neither/nor}$)

Additionally, NCIs inside complex constituents require sentential negation to be licensed, even when they appear to the left of a neither/nor construction. This is shown below for an NCI as the object of a postposition (32a), in a *by*-phrase (32b), and as a genitive possessor (32c).

(32) a. Kimse hakkında [ne Zeynep ne Beste] konuş*(-ma)-tu.
nbody about NE zeynep NE beste talk-*(-NEG)-PST
'Neither Zeynep nor Beste talked about anybody.' (about NCI>neither/nor)

b. Kimse tarafından [ne Ali ne Ayşe] gör-ül*(-me)-dü.
nbody by NE ali NE ayşe see-PASS*(-NEG)-PST
'Neither Ali nor Ayşe was seen by anybody.' (by NCI>neither/nor)

c. Kimse-nin fotoğraf-ı-na [ne Zeynep ne Beste] bak*(-ma)-tı.
nbody-GEN photo-3.POSS-DAT NE zeynep NE beste look*(-NEG)-PST
'Neither Zeynep nor Beste looked at anybody's photo/photos of anybody.' (possessor NCI>neither/nor)

Finally, NCIs are licensed as the coordinands of a neither/nor construction, provided that the NCIs are not inside larger coordinated constituents. (33) shows coordinated NCIs inside a neither/nor construction, which are accepted with or without sentential negation; 34 shows a coordination of clauses containing NCIs, and sentential negation is required.

(33) [Ne hiçbirşey-i ne kimse-yi] isti(-mi)-yor-um.
NE nthing-ACC NE nbody-ACC want(-NEG)-PROG-1SG
'I want neither anything nor anybody.'

(34) [Ne Ali kimse-yi gör*(-m)-üyor ne Ayşe kimse-yi gör*(-m)-üyor].
NE ali nbody-ACC see*(-NEG)-PROG NE ayşe nbody-ACC see*(-NEG)-PROG
'Neither Ali sees anybody, nor does Ayşe see anybody.'

3. Proposal. Any analysis of the interaction between NCIs and neither/nor constructions must capture several details of each of those objects. I propose the following analysis:

(35) a. Neither/nor constructions correspond to two syntactic structures: a coordination of DPs, and a coordination of CPs (Jeretič 2022); these coordinations have silent heads (Gračanin-Yüksek 2023). In the former, *ne* is an adjunct which I call NE_{DP}; in the latter it is a C head which I call NE_C.

b. Coordinating heads project Kaynean coordination structures (Kayne 1994; Johannessen 1998), in which the last junct is a complement to the head, and all other juncts sit in specifiers.

c. NCIs are licensed via Agree (Zeijlstra 2004, 2008; Penka 2011; Deal 2022). Each NCI bears the feature [uNeg], and licensors including the sentential negation *-mA* and NE_C bear the feature [iNeg].

d. Agree probes downwards.

e. The left-periphery negative operator Op$\neg$ is not present.

f. Semantically, NCIs have a base of (non-negative) universal quantification.

g. Constituents may freely scramble to higher positions, and Agree probes can be checked after scrambling operations.

As I have described it, the c-command licensing requirement for NCIs is a dependency of the kind often modeled using the operation Agree (Chomsky 2001). I propose using a model wıth the ingredients listed in (36), which is close to the classical version of Agree.

(36) a. For any category of feature F such as ϕ-features or Neg(ative), syntactic heads may bear an Agree feature of the form [uF] (uninterpretable F) or [iF] (interpretable F).

b. If an uninterpretable feature is present in a syntactic structure when that structure is spelled out, the derivation crashes.

c. When heads bearing [uF] are merged into a syntactic structure, they check (i.e., 'launch a probe') within their search domain for an head bearing [iF].

d. If an head bearing [iF] is present in that search domain, the [uF] on the probe-launching head is 'checked' and deleted.

e. For any node X that launches an Agree probe, that probe's search domain is the c-command domain of X (i.e., Agree probes downwards).

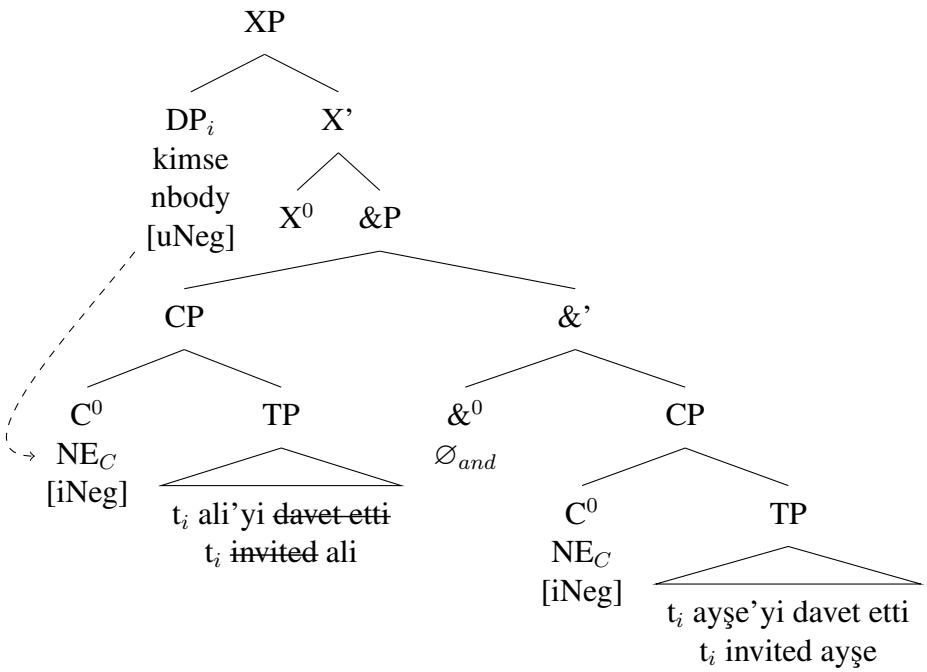
This collection of assumptions makes the correct predictions for sentences like (2a) and (2b). The versions of these sentences that lack sentential negation are repeated here as (37).

(37) a. Kimse [ne Ali-'yi ne Ayşe-'yi] davet et-ti.
nbody NE ali-ACC NE ayşe-ACC invitation do-PST
'Nobody invited either Ali or Ayşe.'

b. * [Ne Ali ne Ayşe] kimse-yi davet et-ti.
NE ali NE ayşe nbody-ACC invitation do-PST
Int.: 'Neither Ali nor Ayşe invited anybody.'

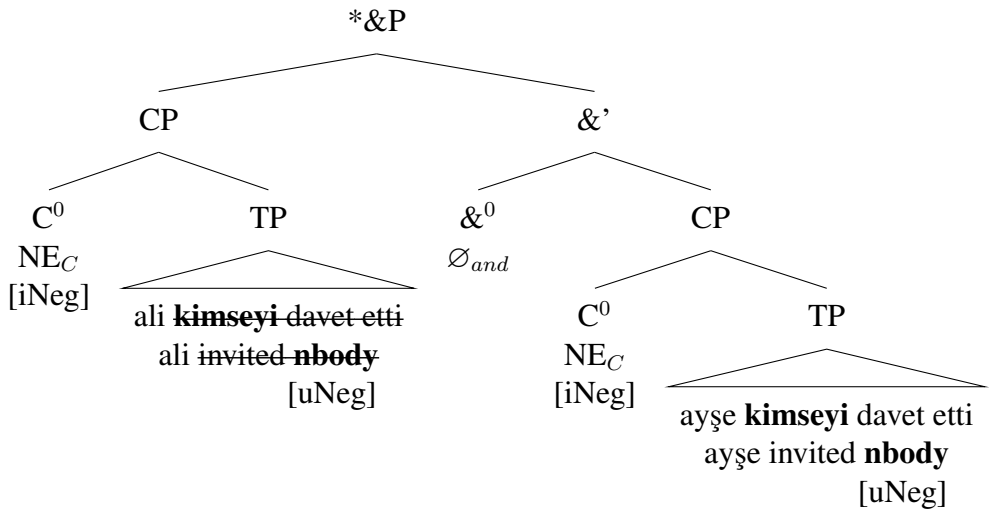
Assuming that both of these sentences are in fact coordinations of CPs, the sentence in (37a) is licit because the NCI *kimse* 'nbody' has scrambled, via ATB-movement, to a position that c-commands the [iNeg] present on each NE_C. For convenience I call this position the specifier of some XP, where X^0 is a functional head that enables scrambling. The structure of (37a) is (38):

(38)



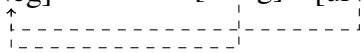
Meanwhile, the sentence in (37b) is ruled out because *kimse* has not moved to a position where it c-commands an [iNeg], so its Agree feature remains unchecked, as shown in (39).

(39)



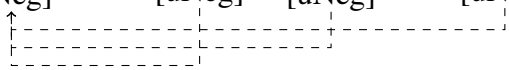
My proposal contrasts with other Agree-based analyses in the literature. In an influential account of the typology of negative concord, (Zeijlstra 2004, 2008) makes use of an upward-probing model of Agree, as well as a covert negative operator, Op¬, in the left periphery. NCIs bear [uNeg], and Op¬ bears [iNeg] and can be inserted in the left periphery as a last-resort repair for clauses containing an unchecked [uNeg]. On a view like Zeijlstra's, the split between non-strict and strict negative concord languages comes about through the feature specification of each language's canonical sentential negation: in non-strict negative concord languages like Italian, sentential negation bears [iNeg]; in strict negative concord languages like Czech, sentential negation bears [uNeg]. This results in structures like the following:

(40) [$_{CP}$ maria [$_{NegP}$ non ha [$_{VP}$ detto niente a nessuno]]] (=10a; Italian)
[iNeg] [uNeg] [uNeg]



(41) [$_{NegOpP}$ Op¬ [$_{CP}$ [$_{TP}$ nessuno ha [$_{VP}$ visto mario]]]] (=10b; Italian)
[iNeg] [uNeg]

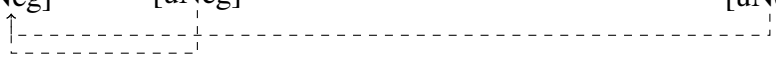
(42) [$_{NegOpP}$ Op¬ [$_{CP}$ dnes nikdo [$_{NegP}$ ne-[$_{VP}$ volá nikoho]]]] (=11; Czech)
[iNeg] [uNeg] [uNeg] [uNeg]



Due to the descriptive similarities between Turkish and Czech, Jeretič (2022) applies the same logic to Turkish negative concord constructions: NCIs, as well as the sentential negation *-mA* and the coordinating head of all neither/nor constructions,[7] bear [uNeg], and must be checked by a relatively high Op¬. However, because this analysis uses an upward-probing Agree, it incorrectly predicts that constructions where an NCI and a neither/nor construction co-occur in a clause, but neither one c-commands the other, will be accepted, as shown in (44).

(43) * Kimse hakkında [ne Zeynep ne Beste] konuş-tu.
nbody about NE zeynep NE beste talk-PST
'Neither Zeynep nor Beste talked about anybody.'

(44) [Op¬ [$_{TP}$ [$_{PP}$ kimse hakkında]$_i$ [$_{NeP}$ [$_{TP}$ zeynep ~~t_i konuştu~~] ne [$_{TP}$ beste t_i konuştu]]]]
[iNeg] [uNeg] [uNeg]



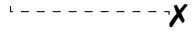
This analysis makes a similar prediction for NCIs below other arguments inside the juncts of a neither/nor construction. (45) shows a sentence like the ungrammatical one in (2b), and (46) shows the structure predicted by an upward-probing Agree account.

(45) * Ne Ali ne Ayşe kimse-yi davet et-ti.
NE ali NE ayşe nbody-ACC invitation do-PST
Int.: 'Neither Ali nor Ayşe invited anybody.' (≈2b)

(46) [Op¬[$_{NeP}$ [$_{TP}$ ali ~~kimseyi davet etti~~] ne [$_{TP}$ ayşe kimseyi davet etti]]]
[iNeg] [uNeg] [uNeg] [uNeg]

An analysis of the kind I propose correctly rules these sentences out. In both (43) and (45), the NCI *kimse* does not c-command NE$_C$, which bears [iNeg]. This is shown in (47) and (48), which are structures for (43) and (45), respectively.

(47) [[$_{PP}$ kimse hakkında]$_i$ [$_{\&P}$ [$_{CP}$ NE$_C$ zeynep ~~t_i konuştu~~] [$_{CP}$ NE$_C$ beste t_i konuştu]]]
[uNeg] [iNeg] [iNeg]



[7] Jeretič uses a different structure for neither/nor constructions than the one I described above: she treats *ne* as the coordinating head. This point holds for either version of the coordinated structures.

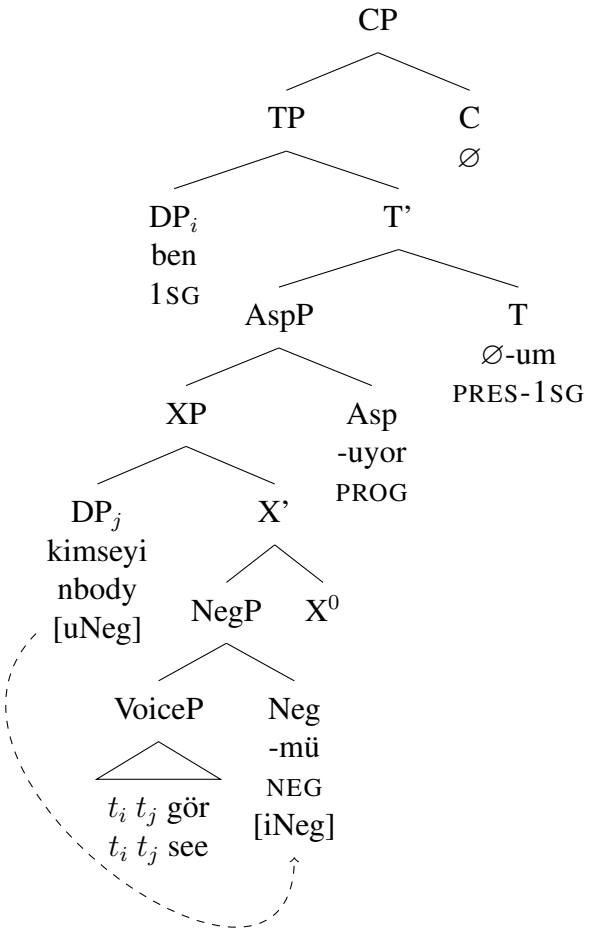
(48) [$_{\&P}$ [$_{CP}$ NE$_C$ ali ~~kimseyi davet etti~~] [$_{CP}$ NE$_C$ ayşe kimseyi davet etti]]
[iNeg] [uNeg] [iNeg] [uNeg]
✗ ✗

I now turn my attention to simpler, 'canonical' NCI sentences. On a downward-probing Agree model, it is not immediately clear how a sentence like (1a), repeated as (49), is licit.

(49) Ben kimse-yi gör-mü-yor-um.
1SG nbody-ACC see-NEG-PROG-1SG
'I don't see anybody.'

In (49), the NCI *kimse* is in the direct object position. Based on my stated assumptions about the clausal structure of Turkish, one would assume that *kimse* is asymmetrically c-commanded by the sentential negation *-mA*: the opposite of the configuration needed to license *kimse*. For this reason I appeal to the ready availability of scrambling in Turkish. In structures with licensed NCIs that are anywhere farther left than sentential negation, I assume that a scrambling operation has taken place, positioning the NCI in a position that c-commands that sentential negation. For (49), I must therefore posit a structure like (50), where the NCI *kimse* has been raised to a specifier of XP, a functional projection for scrambling.

(50)



It has been argued that Turkish NCIs have the semantic force of universal quantifiers that obligatorily scope outside of negation. Öney (2024) takes this view, and analyzes NCI licensing in terms of restrictions on LF configurations, parallel to the characterization of English NPIs as obligatorily narrow-scope existentials in Klima (1964). On Öney's analysis of Turkish, NCIs arrive at their required wide-scope position through covert movement; the analysis works, but it does abandon the otherwise robustly-attested scope rigidity of Turkish. Moreover, it is not clear why an NCI within a PP, as in (32), should not be able to covertly raise to a wide-scope position at LF.

An Agree-based system like the one I propose is consistent with a treatment of NCIs as wide-scope universals, but also provides some explanation for those observed scope facts: NCIs must scope outside negation because they must c-command negation in the narrow syntax. A syntactic model produces the expected results without the need for positing covert movement or additional LF restrictions.

4. Conclusion. Above, I have described the interaction between NCIs and neither/nor constructions in Turkish. I have adopted an analysis of neither/nor constructions in which *ne X ne Y* corresponds to one of two structures: a coordination of DPs, and a coordination of CPs. The former is itself an NCI, and the latter includes C heads that are both syntactically and semantically negative. I have argued that NCIs are licensed by a downward-probing Agree when they c-command a head bearing [iNeg]. I have appealed to scrambling operations that move unlicensed NCIs into c-commanding positions where they may be licensed, even when that scrambling is string-vacuous. Such a downward-Agree based system is able to capture the facts more completely than either upward-Agree systems or LF restrictions.

References

Chomsky, Noam. 2001. Derivation by phase. In Michael Kenstowicz (ed.), *Ken Hale: A life in language*, 1–52. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Deal, Amy Rose. 2022. Negative concord as downward agree. In Özge Bakay, Breanna Pratley, Eva Neu & Peyton Deal (eds.), *Proceedings of NELS 52*, 235–244. Amherst, Mass.: Graduate Linguistics Students Association.

Giannakidou, Anastasia. 2000. Negative ... concord? *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 18(3). 475–523.

Gračanin-Yüksek, Martina. 2023. Negation that isn't. *Languages* 8(4). 250–275. https://doi.org/10.3390/languages8040250.

Görgülü, Emrah. 2020. Negative sensitive items in Turkish: Negative polarity or negative concord? *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi (RumeliDE Journal of Language and Literature Studies)* 21. 724–749. https://doi.org/10.29000/rumelide.841253.

Jeretič, Paloma. 2022. Exceptionally optional negative concord with Turkish *neither...nor*. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 41(3). 1147–1200. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11049-022-09556-z.

Johannessen, Janne Bondi. 1998. *Coordination*. Oxford University Press.

Kamali, Beste & Hedde Zeijlstra. 2024. Negative dependencies in Turkish. *Languages* 9(11). 342.

Kayabaşı, Demet & Murat Özgen. 2018. A Phase-Based Account of NPI-Licensing in Turkish. *Poznań Studies in Contemporary Linguistics* 54(1). 83–113. https://doi.org/10.1515/psicl-2018-0003.

Kayne, Richard. 1994. *The antisymmetry of syntax*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
Kelepir, Meltem. 2001. *Topics in Turkish syntax: Clausal structure and scope*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT dissertation.
Klima, Edward. 1964. Negation in English. In Jerry Fodor & Jerrold Katz (eds.), *The Structure of Language*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
Kornfilt, Jaklin. 2005. Asymmetries between pre-verbal and post-verbal scrambling in Turkish. In Joachim Sabel & Mamoru Saito (eds.), *The Free Word Order Phenomenon: Its Syntactic Sources and Diversity*, 163–180. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110197266.163.
Kural, Murat. 1997. Postverbal constituents in Turkish and the Linear Correspondence Axiom. *Linguistic Inquiry* 28(3). 498–519.
Ladusaw, William A. 1980. *Polarity sensitivity as inherent scope relations*. New York: Garland.
Laka, Itziar. 1990. *Negation in syntax: On the nature of functional categories and projections*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT dissertation.
Linebarger, Marcia Christine. 1980. *The grammar of negative polarity*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT dissertation.
Öney, Burak. 2023. Right dislocation in Turkish. In Daria A. Bikina & Hande Sevgi (eds.), *Proceedings of the Workshop on Turkic and Languages in Contact with Turkic 8*, 15–29. Lexington, Kentucky: Linguistic Society of America. https://doi.org/10.3765/adr7zv36.
Öney, Burak. 2024. On the quantificational force of Negative Sensitive Items in Turkish. In Yao Zhang, Fengyue Zhao, Youngdong Cho & Yifan Wu (eds.), *Proceedings of SALT 34*, 734–754. Lexington, Kentucky: Linguistic Society of America. https://doi.org/10.3765/3xrz7531.
Penka, Doris. 2011. *Negative indefinites*. Oxford University Press.
Quer, Josep. 1993. *The syntactic licensing of negative items*: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona MA thesis.
Vallduví, Enric. 1994. Polarity items, n-words and minimizers in Catalan and Spanish. *Probus* 6(2-3). 263–294.
Zeijlstra, Hedde. 2004. *Sentential negation and negative concord*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam dissertation.
Zeijlstra, Hedde. 2008. Negative concord is syntactic agreement. Ms, University of Amsterdam. https://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/000645.