The pragmatics of morphological negation: pejorative and euphemistic uses of the prefix *non-* in French

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Abstract

In this paper I examine a particular type of morphological negation in French, namely, *non-*prefixation on nominal bases (e.g. *non-événement* 'nonevent', *non-violence* 'nonviolence'). Drawing on a wide range of authentic examples from the *Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé* (*TLFi*)[1], the French literary database *Frantext*[2] and the internet, I show that although the basic meaning of *non-* prefixation is negation, these types of lexemes may carry an additional nuance, which may be pejorative or euphemistic; hence the hypothesis defended in this paper that the prefix *non-* can also serve pragmatic purposes. In fact, some of the authors which have dealt with morphological negation in French (Gaatone 1971, 1987, Di Sciullo and Tremblay 1993, 1996, among others) or in English (Zimmer 1964, Algeo 1971, Bauer 1983, Horn 1989) have pointed out the meaning effects of *non-* prefixation. To develop these intuitions and to illustrate the pragmatic side of certain uses of the prefix *non-*, I build on the works by Ducrot (1980, 1984) and Horn (1985, 1989) and their account of the pragmatics of sentential negation and I propose to draw a parallel between morphological negation in the case of lexemes such as *non-événement* 'nonevent' and polemic and metalinguistic uses of sentential negation.

Raktažodžiai: pragmatika, prancūzų kalba, *non-,* morfologija, neiginys, semantika.

Key words: pragmatics, français, *non-,* morphology, negation, semantics.

1. Introduction

1.1. The prefix *non-* in contemporary French

In contemporary French, the form *non-* can attach to nouns to form nouns (henceforth [*non*-N]$_N$[3]); in this case, *non-* is a prefix that is bound to its base (Dugas 2012)[4]. The morphological types of nominal bases that license *non-* prefixation are varied: they can be complex nouns, such as nouns derived from verbs (*non-communication* 'non-communication') (1), from adjectives (*non-féminité* 'non-feminity') (2), from nouns (*non-fourchette* 'non-fork') (3):

   (1)   *Mais le principal problème reste en fait, la **non communication** dans le couple.* (www)[5]

        'Actually, the main problem is the non-communication within the couple.'

   (2)   *La **non féminité** est-elle un problème ?* (www)

        'Is non-feminity a problem?'

   (3)   *Une fourchette faite de telle manière qu'elle se plie au lieu de piquer la nourriture et qui est donc complètement inutile en tant que fourchette, c'est une **non-fourchette**.* (www)

        'A fork whose shape is such as it bends instead of sticking into the food, and which, as a consequence, is totally useless as a fork, it is a non-fork.'

Among the possible bases we also find nouns related to past participles (*non-initié* 'uninitiated') (4) and present participles (*non-combattant* 'non-combattant') (5):

   (4)   *Ce film éducatif serait doublé d'intentions, imperceptibles d'ailleurs aux **non-initiés**.* (*TLFi*)

        'This educational movie is said to be full of implications, which are not perceptible by the uninitiated.'

   (5)   *Déterminer le champ d'application des diverses branches du droit humanitaire oblige à préciser la distinction entre combattants et **non combattants**.* (www)

        'To determine the scope of the different branches of humanitarian law one needs to specify the distinction between combatants and non-combatants.'

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[3] In this paper, I choose to follow the *TLFi* which states that most of the time, nouns prefixed by *non-* are hyphenated (cf. *TLFi, s.v.* 'non-'), and I spell the [*non*-N]$_N$ with an hyphen between the prefix and its base. The spelling of the examples, however, is left unchanged, even when the [*non*-N]$_N$ are not hyphenated by the writer.

[4] *Non(-)* can attach to adjectives as well, but in this case, it is not a prefix but an adverb (Dugas 2012); among *non*-X sequences, the average distribution is 70% *non*-Adj and 30% [*non*-N]$_N$.

[5] (www) indicates that the example is from the internet.

Last, the prefix *non-* can attach to simplex nouns (*non-soleil* 'non-sun') (6), including nouns related to pronouns (*non-moi* 'nonego') (7), nouns related to infinitives (*non-vouloir* 'not wanting') (8), and proper nouns (*non-Mozart* 'non-Mozart') (9):

(6) *Le soleil couchant est un soleil mourant, un **non-soleil**, parce qu'il se dissout dans ses couleurs.* (www)

'The setting sun is a dying sun, a non-sun, because it dissolves in its colors.'

(7) *Qui osera affirmer que, dans l'état de veille, nous soyons tous constamment lucides et maîtres de repousser ces obsessions du **non-moi** ?* (*TLFi*)

'Who could say that, in waking state, we are constantly lucid and able to push away these obsessions of the nonego?'

(8) *Je traverse une crise de **non vouloir** que rien ne fait espérer qui passera.* (*TLFi*)

'I am going through a crisis of not wanting; there is no hope it will pass.'

(9) *Un **non-Mozart** qui n'y connait absolument rien en musique, trouvera obligatoirement un accord de quinte (…) très harmonieux.* (www)

'A non-Mozart who is absolutely not knowledgeable in music will necessarily find that a quinte-chord is very harmonious.'

These examples also illustrate the various semantic types of nouns the prefix *non-* can attach to: processes and events (1), properties (2), artifacts (3), human beings (4)-(5)-(9), natural kinds (6), abstractions (7)-(8).

1.2. The three interpretations of [*non*-N]$_N$

Three different interpretations of the prefix *non-* can be identified: what I call the "ontological" interpretation (10), the "complementary" interpretation (11), and the "contrary" interpretation (12):

(10) *Toute sa vie durant, Gandhi est demeuré convaincu du bien-fondé de la **non-violence**.* (www)

'For all his life, Gandhi has been convinced of the legitimacy of nonviolence.'

(11) *La cuisine italienne est l'une des cuisines les plus intéressantes et simples dans le monde, et est appréciée par à peu près tout le monde, jeunes et vieux, les Italiens et les **non-Italiens**.* (www)

        'Italian cuisine is one of the most interesting and one of the easiest cuisine in the world, and is appreciated by almost everyone, young and old people, the Italians and the non-Italians.'

(12) *Je suis dingue de plantations. Les fleurs, par contre, bof, je m'en fiche ! Serais-je une* **non-femme** *?* (www)

        'I love plantations. But flowers, I don't care! Could I be a nonwoman?'

In (10), *non-* has an ontological reading and quantifies over the base noun; the [*non-*N]$_N$ refers to an event which has not occurred or to the absence of an object or of an individual. For instance, *non-violence* is the absence of violence (10), *non-communication* is the absence of communication (1). This interpretation is by far the most frequent, with around 73% of [*non-*N]$_N$.

In (11), where *non-* has a complementary reading, the referent of the base noun (*Italien* 'Italian') and that of the derived noun (*non-Italien* 'non-Italian') are seen as the two complementary sets of a larger set including them. As Cruse (1986) puts it, "the essence of a pair of complementaries is that between them they exhaustively divide some conceptual domain into two mutually exclusive compartments, so that what does not fall into one of the compartments must necessarily fall into the other" (Cruse 1986: 198). In (11), the set of people enjoying Italian cuisine is composed of the set of Italian people and the set of non-Italian people; every individual necessarily belongs to one of these two sets. Example (5) also illustrates this complementary reading. The overall frequency of [*non-*N]$_N$ with the complementary reading is 23%.

In (12), the prefix *non-* leads to a contrary interpretation: as I shall show in the following sections, the negation conveyed by *non-* affects one or several stereotypical properties of the referent of the base noun. In example (12), the stereotypical property attached to the referent 'woman' by the speaker is the property of being fond of flowers; since the speaker does not like flowers, she questions her 'womanliness'. The contrary interpretation is numerically marginal, with only 4% of [*non-*N]$_N$.

2. Pejorative uses of [*non-*N]$_N$

The pejorative uses of [*non-*N]$_N$ correspond to the contrary interpretation (cf. (12) above), where the referent of the derived lexeme is described as lacking one or several properties of the referent of the

base. As pointed out before, these lexemes are not frequent; among the 2404 [*non*-N]$_N$ which have been collected for this paper, 96 tokens have been identified as exhibiting a contrary interpretation, that is, having a pejorative value. Besides, it seems that the [*non*-N]$_N$ which display this meaning effect are genre- and register- sensitive, being mainly used in fiction, the news, blogs and informal discussions on the internet (forums).

The pejorative meaning effect arises because the referent of the [*non*-N]$_N$ is viewed as a bad exemplar of the semantic category of the referent of the base. For instance, a *non-match* 'non-match' (13) is a match where the players perform badly and which is most probably not very entertaining for the spectators. Other examples are given below, such as *non-journaliste* 'nonjournalist', *non-journal* 'non-television news' (14) and *non-ville* 'non-city' (15):

(13) *Personne n'a été bon, on a vraiment fait un **non-match**.* (www)
'No one played well, we truly played a non-match.'

(14) *Jean-Pierre Pernod est un **non journaliste**, dans un **non journal**, où le degré zéro de l'information est fait pour les plus de 85 ans plus très frais psychiquement.* (www)
'Jean-Pierre Pernod is a non-journalist, in a non-television news, where the zero degree of information is made for people older than 85 and in bad psychological health.'

(15) *Sarcelles c'est l'archétype de la **non-ville**, le chef d'œuvre de l'aberration urbanistique.* (*TLFi*)
'Sarcelles epitomizes the non-city, the masterwork of urban aberration.'

I shall first briefly review how this interpretation has been accounted for in the literature (section 2.1), and then propose my own analysis (section 2.2).

2.1. State of the art

What I call the "contrary" interpretation has not been described for French, but several authors working on the negative prefixes *non-* and *un-* in English have been interested in it (Algeo 1971, Bauer 1983, Horn 2002a, 2002b, Plag 2003, Hamawand 2009, a.o.), though not under the label "contrary interpretation". Besides, the idea of (negative) evaluation conveyed by negation has been emphasized on several occasions: "Unlustaffekte" of negatively-affixed words (Wundt 1886, Jespersen 1917, Zimmer 1964), "evaluatively negative" content (Horn 2002a). Two observations

have been made about this interpretation of [*non*-N]$_N$: (i) [*non*-N]$_N$ denote referents which lack certain properties of the referent of the base noun; (ii) [*non*-N]$_N$ have meaning effects related to the affects and emotions of the speaker. As said above, these two points are closely linked: the evaluative, pejorative effect comes from the fact that the referent denoted by the [*non*-N]$_N$ is seen as not being a N in its own right: *a non-match* is not a 'real' match, *a non-journalist* is not a 'real' journalist, and so on and so forth.

As far as I know, Algeo (1971) was the first to describe these pejorative meaning effects of *non-* prefixation on nominal bases. Examples (16)-(18) illustrate what he calls the "pejorative use" of *non-*, where the referent of the derived noun "possesses the accidents, but not the substance named"; this pejorative *non-* is "unfavorably critical in its implications" (1971: 95) (see also Bauer 1983 and Plag 2003 for a similar analysis), cf.:

(16) *Jordan was and remains a **non-country**, created out of sandscape by Britain to pay off a dynastic debt.* (Algeo 1971: 99)

(17) (with reference to an article suggesting, without proving, improper financial dealings) *The best that could be said for the Connally **nonexposé** was that it cleared the air.* (Algeo 1971: 100)

(18) *"**noncandidate**": one who is declared candidate but whose election is so unlikely that he can be set aside as a possible contender.* (Algeo 1971: 94f)

Horn (2002a, 2002b), in turn, proposed an interesting account of the English prefix *un-* on nominal bases which I mention here because their interpretation is very similar to the contrary interpretation of [*non*-N]$_N$. Note, however, that according to Horn nouns prefixed by *un-* have two interpretations: (i) Class A: "class A *un*-nouns of the form *un*-X do not satisfy the structural criteria for the category X but share its function, evoking a superset category encompassing both X and *un*-X" (Horn 2002b: 66). To put it differently, a *un*-N is almost a N, like an N, but not a N, as illustrated in (19)-(20):

(19) *"**unturkey**": used for mock turkey breasts made from soy sold at natural foods store.*

(20) *"**unpotato**": Jerusalem artichokes are roasted with thyme at Craft.*

As a matter of fact, an *unturkey* (19) is not a turkey and an *unpotato* (20) is not a potato.

(ii) Class B: a class B *un*-noun "is a member of the category (…), but a peripheral or non-prototype member (cf. Rosch 1978), one lacking a functionally significant (but not criterial) property associated with the category in question" (Horn 2002b: 67). It means that a *un*-N is barely a N, but is nonetheless a N (21)-(22):

(21) *Meet Tom Cruise, the* **unsuperstar** *of superstardom.*

(22) *"***unwomen***": label for women in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale (1985) who, because they are not fertile, are shipped to the colonies as slave labor.*

In (21), Tom Cruise is indeed a *superstar*; in (22), the characters of the novel are *women*.

Finally, mention should be made of the description made by Hamawand (2009: 69) of the English prefix *non-*, and more precisely, what he calls the "privative *non-*". This author also emphasizes the evaluative flavor of privative *non-*: in his view, this interpretation can be "critical in tone". Hamawand argues that with privative *non-*, [*non*-N]$_N$ denote referents with missing properties, and gives the following examples: "a non-book is a book that is devoid of value", "a non-event is an event that is devoid of excitement", "a non-person is a person who is devoid of importance" (ibid.).

2.2. My account of the pejorative uses of [*non*-N]$_N$

I claim that in their contrary interpretation, [*non*-N]$_N$ denote referents which do not possess the stereotypical properties of the base noun. The base noun refers to the best exemplar of the category, and the derived noun refers to an individual (object, human, etc.) which does not belong to the stereotype. A stereotype is "a socially determined minimum set of data with respect to the extension of a category" (Geeraerts 2008: 26). Like prototypes, stereotypes "involve semantic information that is salient within a category but that is not sufficient to adequately characterize the category as a whole", but the difference is that stereotypes are "prototypes seen from a social angle" (Geeraerts 2008: 26). The data collected so far show that, in the contrary interpretation, the referent of a noun prefixed by *non-* is a member of the category denoted by the base noun: a *non-femme* 'nonwoman' (12) is a woman, a *non-match* 'non-match' (13) is a match, a *non-journaliste* 'non-journalist' (14) is a journalist, a *non-ville* 'non-city' (15) is a city, etc. So these [*non*-N]$_N$ are very similar to Horn's "Category B" described above. What is more likely to count as a stereotypical property for a given referent partially depends on the type of referent: the stereotypical properties of, for instance, an

artifact such as *chair* or *house* are different from the stereotypical properties of a natural kind such as *dog* or *tiger*. Chairs and houses have been manufactured and built to serve a specific purpose, so chairs and houses will be said to have stereotypical properties which are related to that specific purpose. For example, as a stereotypical chair is made to sit on, and a stereotypical house is built for humans to live in, and one can expect a chair to have a seat and a house to have a roof, walls, windows and doors. Besides, the analysis of a wide range of data from the *TLFi,* Frantext and the web reveals that the contrary interpretation of [*non*-N]$_N$ has a preference for certain semantic types of bases, namely bases denoting artifacts (e.g. *fourchette* 'fork' (3)), bases denoting natural kinds (e.g. *soleil* 'sun' (6)), and bases denoting human beings performing social activities (e.g. *journaliste* 'journalist' (14)). Nevertheless, this preference for a certain type of base is not very marked and other types of bases are possible, such as bases denoting events (e.g. *communication* 'communication' (1)). The data thus suggest that in their contrary interpretation, [*non*-N]$_N$ are semantically underspecified: the semantics of the base noun is hardly ever sufficient to decide which stereotypical properties are negated. Moreover, it is worth noticing that contrary [*non*-N]$_N$ are often used with a gloss that indicates which stereotypical properties are being negated, as in (23) (the square brackets in bold **[ ]** in the example (23) correspond to the two stereotypical properties mentioned by the speaker):

(23) *Thomas Covenant est loin d'être un héros classique, mais plutôt un **non-héros** [qui amène le malheur sur tous les personnages qui croisent son chemin.] [Il refuse avec obstination le rôle de sauveur qu'on veut lui voir jouer].* (www)
'Thomas Covenant is far from being a classical hero; he is rather a nonhero **[**who brings misfortune to the characters who cross his way.**]** **[**He stubbornly refuses the role of savior one wants him to play**]**.'

Since the stereotypical properties attached to a given referent may vary from one speaker to another, several contrary interpretations may correspond to one [*non*-N]$_N$. As defined by Zimmer (1964: 21), "two contrary terms represent areas at the opposite poles of a given dimension and leave some room for other possibilities between them." In example (24), the stereotypical properties at stake are related to the physical appearance of stereotypical women, whereas in (25) the property which is negated is related with having a liking for flowers:

(24) *Je suis petite, menue, je ne me maquille pas, ne porte pas de jupe ni de talons, j'ai les cheveux et les ongles courts. (…) Et je n'ai pas de poitrine ! Mais est-ce que ça fait de moi une **non-femme**??* (www)

'I am small, thin, I don't wear makeup, I don't wear skirts or high heels, I have short hair and short nails. (…) And I have no breasts! But does that make me a nonwoman?'

(25) *Je suis dingue de plantations. Les fleurs, par contre, bof, je m'en fiche ! Serais-je une **non-femme**?* (www)

'I love plantations. But flowers, I don't care! Could I be a nonwoman?'

In other words, the context, rather than the semantics of the base noun, directs the interpretation towards the negated stereotypical properties. One hypothesis, which I shall not develop in this paper, is that under this reading *non-* behaves very much like an evaluative prefix[6].

3. Euphemistic uses of [*non-*N]$_N$

The euphemistic uses of [*non-*N]$_N$ correspond to the ontological interpretation (cf. (10) above), where the prefix *non-* quantifies over the base noun and where the [*non-*N]$_N$ refers to an event which has not occurred or to the absence of an object or of an individual. More precisely, one can talk of euphemistic effect of [*non-*N]$_N$ when the [*non-*N]$_N$ replaces the antonym of the base noun. Examples of euphemistic uses of [*non-*N]$_N$ are given below with *non-victoire* 'non-victory' and *non-emploi* 'non-employment':

(26) *D'abord, évacuer le réel en le débaptisant: il n'y a pas eu défaite mais seulement "**non-victoire**".* (*TLFi*)

'First of all, one shall evacuate reality by renaming it: it was not a defeat, but only a "non-victory".'

(27) *Elle nous exhorte à «se jeter dans la bataille » de « la problématique (…) de notre **non-emploi**». Elle nous le dit texto : faut rien attendre de l'ANPE. La clé, c'est «notre réseau». J'ai au moins appris un truc: pour résoudre par moi-même ma problématique*

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[6] Evaluative morphology can be defined as morphology "through which the speaker expresses a quantitative or qualitative evaluation on the fact which is being described, its participants or on the speech act and its participants" (Fradin et al. 2009: 235, my translation). The question whether *non-* can be analyzed as an evaluative prefix is outside the scope of this paper.

> *de retour vers le non-non-emploi, faut que j'aille frapper fissa chez mon voisin de palier.* (www)
>
> 'She urges us to rush into the battle of the problem of our non-employment. She tells us bluntly: you shouldn't expect anything from the Employment Agency. The key is your network. I have learnt at least one thing: to solve my problem of return towards non-non-employment, I have to knock at my neighbor's door.'

Again, this interpretation is not frequent: less than 5% of [*non*-N]$_N$ which have the ontological reading are used euphemistically. Among the 1755 ontological [*non*-N]$_N$ collected for this study, 84 tokens have been identified as possessing a euphemistic value. As hypothesized for pejorative uses of [*non*-N]$_N$, [*non*-N]$_N$ with a euphemistic value seem to be characteristic of non-academic writing such as news and web discussions.

I will show that several conditions have to be met for a [*non*-N]$_N$ with an ontological reading to be euphemistic (section 3.1). It will also be claimed that euphemistic [*non*-N]$_N$ are a form of politeness (section 3.2).

3.1. Constraints on the euphemistic reading of [*non*-N]$_N$

The euphemistic uses of [*non*-N]$_N$ are much less frequent than the pejorative uses, because several conditions must be met for the [*non*-N]$_N$ to be euphemistic. First of all, the referent of the base noun must be stereotypically "positive", e.g. *victoire* 'victory', *gentillesse* 'kindness', *emploi* 'work'. Second, the base noun must have a lexicalized antonym (whose referent must be stereotypically "negative"), e.g.: *défaite* 'defeat', *méchanceté* 'nastiness', *chômage* 'unemployment'. I understand antonymy as contradiction, as opposed to contrariety (for detailed definitions of these notions, see a.o. Lyons 1977: 217-236). The two terms are contradictory when they "exhaust the possibilities along a given dimension" (Zimmer 1964: 21). So in the case of two contradictory terms, "if we deny that one term applies to some situation, we effectively commit ourselves to the applicability of the other term; and if we assert one term, we implicitly deny the other" (Cruse 1986: 198f). This is why *non-amour* 'non-love' in (28) does not have a euphemistic meaning:

(28) *Au contraire de ce que croient ceux que je n'aime pas, et qui ne me jugent que sur mon **non-amour** pour eux, je suis quelqu'un de fidèle, d'absurdement fidèle.* (*TLFi*)

> 'Unlike those who think that I do not love, and who judge me by my non-love for them, I am faithful, absurdly faithful.'

As a matter of fact, *amour* 'love' is not very likely to be the base of an [*non*-N]$_N$ with a euphemistic meaning effect, since *non-amour* 'non-love' does not necessarily mean *haine* 'hatred', but could be also paraphrased as *indifférence* 'indifference'.

3.2. Euphemism and politeness

A euphemism can be defined as "the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant" (*Merriam Webster online*[7]*, s.v.* 'euphemism'). Algeo (1971: 91) notices that "often the twentieth-century affinity for *non-* seems to be due to kindness or delicacy". He gives the following examples:

> A sixteen-year-old does not want to be a child or a minor; *nonadult* is less onerous (…). The government has laws relating to *noncitizens*, who seem less menacing than aliens (…). A *nonsuccess* is better than a failure. An Associated Press writer referred to Mr. Humphrey's *nongain* when the candidate he was backing did not survive the Minnesota primaries, it is clear that old politicians never lose, they only male nongains. In Japan and Korea, the military had a policy of *nonfraternization*, which was in no way directed against brotherhood. (Algeo 1971: 91)

As a matter of fact, this general "euphemizing tendency [is] reflected across a variety of politeness phenomena" (Horn 2002a: 4). Besides, the role of attenuation in negative politeness has been well described in literature (Brown and Levinson 1987: 263ff).

Euphemism is very close to litotes, which refers to an "understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of the contrary (as in "not a bad singer" or "not unhappy") (*Merriam Webster online, s.v.* 'litotes'). The difference between the euphemism and the litotes is that between mere attenuation and understatement, two phenomena described, among others, by Israel (2006, 2011). Attenuation, or semantic weakening, "simply says less", whereas "understatement says less and means more" (Israel 2006: 143). Horn describes sentential litotes as the "pragmatic strengthening of a sentential negation (…) to express the force of a negative evaluation rather than

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[7] http://www.merriam-webster.com/

simply the absence of a positive one" (2002a: 4). Example (29) is an instance of litotes, since *non-démocratie* 'non-democracy' is interchangeable with *dictature* 'dictatorship':

(29) *Le Président de la République cumule les fonctions de chef d'État et de gouvernement. Bien que ce pourrait être une marque de **non-démocratie**, ces pays offrent des libertés individuelles qui ne laissent guère la place à une **dictature**.* (www)
'The President is the Head of state and government. Although this could be a sign of non-democracy, these countries have individual freedoms which do not leave room for a dictatorship.'

In a nutshell, the central claim of the previous sections is that, in addition to their lexical meaning, [*non*-N]$_N$ can have meaning effects which can be described as pragmatic, i.e. which involve broader contextual information. Clearly, such a pragmatic meaning justifies a parallel with the pragmatic accounts of sentential negation.

4. *Non-* prefixation and the pragmatic uses of sentential negation

4.1. The prefix *non-* and the adverb *non*

In contemporary French the prefix *non-* is homographic with the adverb *non* 'no', which has a discursive and pragmatic function: as a matter of fact, its most common use is to answer negatively to a (positive)[8] question, such as in (30):

(30) – *C'était un bon match ?* - 'Was it a good match?'
– ***Non**, l'équipe de France a très mal joué.* - '**No**, the French team played very badly.'

The adverb *non* can also appear in the so-called "questions interro-négatives" (interronegative questions) (Riegel et al. 2009: 680), such as (31), where the speaker provides an alternative to her interlocutor; it is also used in questions which are said to be "oriented" toward an affirmative answer (32) (cf. Borillo 1978, Léon 1992, Le Querler 1994):

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[8] The adverb *si* is used to answer negatively to a negative question:
- *Ce n'était pas un bon match?* 'Wasn't it a good match?'
- *Si, c'était un bon match.* '**Yes**, it was a good match.'

(31) *Est-ce une vipère ou **non** ?*

'Is it a viper or not?'

(32) *Il fait froid, **non** ? (= Il fait froid, n'est-ce pas? / tu ne trouves pas ?)*

'It's cold outside, isn't it?' (= 'Don't you find it cold outside?')

Finally, *non* is also used in affirmative contexts, to express opposition and double eventuality, where two different pieces of information are opposed in the same utterance (33):

(33) a. *Il a agi **non** par méchanceté **mais** par bêtise.*

'He acted not out of nastiness, but out of stupidity.'

b. *Il a acheté une maison en Sardaigne, **non** en Sicile.*

'He bought a house in Sardinia, not in Sicilia.'

In sum, the sentential adverb *non* appears in various syntactic and semantic environments. All of these uses have a negative meaning in common, but they can also be a means of expressing rejection (30), opposition (31), alternative (33) or even doubt (32).

With this background, the prefix *non-* exemplified in the previous sections is not fundamentally different from the adverb *non* exemplified in (30) to (33), since both of them undeniably express negation. Furthermore, the meaning effects of contrary and ontological [*non*-N]$_N$ identified in this paper may to some extent be compared to the various uses of the adverb *non* which have been briefly sketched above[9]. More generally, the fact that negation has obvious pragmatic properties is an additional argument in favor of an analysis of contrary and ontological [*non*-N]$_N$ which takes into account the fact that they may possess pragmatic properties.

4.2. *Non-* prefixation and the pragmatics of sentential negation

Ducrot (1984) distinguishes between descriptive negation, metalinguistic negation, and polemic negation, explained and exemplified below:

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[9] A detailed comparison of the adverb *non* and of the meaning effects of [*non*-N]$_N$ would take us too far afield; discussion of these matters will be deferred to another paper.

(i) Metalinguistic negation (34) "contradicts the very words of an actual discourse to which it is opposed" (Ducrot 1984: 217).

(34)   *Jules ne chante pas bien, il chante comme un dieu.* (Horn 1995: 158)
       'Jules doesn't sing well, he sings like a god.'

(ii) Polemic negation (35) displays an opposition between the speaker of the negative utterance and the utterer that he stages.

(35)   *Paul n'est pas grand, il est plutôt petit.* (Ducrot 1984: 204)
       'Paul is not tall, he is rather small.'

(iii) In the case of descriptive negation (36), what is negated is the content of the utterance.

(36)   *Pierre n'est pas intelligent.* (Ducrot 1984: 218)
       'Pierre isn't clever.'

Note that for Ducrot (1984), "every negative utterance is not a refutation of a saying, nor of a thought, but every negative utterance summons, fictively, a polemic dialogue" (Moeschler 1992: 65). Hence his definition of descriptive negation as a delocutive derivation from polemic negation:

If I can describe Peter by saying "He isn't clever", it is because I attribute to him a property which would justify the speaker's position in the crystallized dialogue underlying the polemic negation: saying of someone that he is not intelligent, it is attributing to him the (pseudo-) property which would legitimate opposing an utterer who would have asserted that he is clever. (Ducrot 1984: 218, translated by Moeschler 1992: 65)

Ducrot (1980, 1984) also introduced the notion of polyphony, which he analyzes in terms of points of view attributed to utterers. These utterers are "beings who are supposed to express themselves through the utterance, without for all that being attributed precise words" (Ducrot 1984: 204). In other words, polyphony refers to the multiplicity of points of view which an utterance can simultaneously represent.

This polyphonic analysis of negation, alongside with the idea that a polemic dialogue underlies every negative utterance, helps to account for the pragmatic aspects of [*non*-N]$_N$. If I assume that morphological negation, to be more exact, *non-* prefixation on nominal bases, shares commonalities with sentential negation (because the prefix *non-* and the adverb *non* are related), the pejorative and euphemistic uses of [*non*-N]$_N$ can be described as having a polemic and polyphonic flavor. Thus I hold that a parallel can be drawn between certain instances of [*non*-N]$_N$ and metalinguistic/polemic negation, which expresses "the unwillingness of the speaker to assert something in a given way, or to accept another's assertion of it in a given way" (Horn 1989: 375).

This parallel can be made in the case of the pejorative use of [*non*-N]$_N$. In the following example, *non-communication* 'non-communication' is used in a context where different points of view conflict: baby talk is considered by many women to be a kind of communication, yet the speaker does not agree and thus refuses to call it "communication":

(37) *Pour communiquer avec les enfants du premier âge, des générations de mères ont cru bien faire en imitant le parler "bébé". Le "parler bébé", c'est de la **non-communication**.* (*Frantext*)
'To communicate with infants, generations of mothers thought they were doing the right thing and imitated "baby talk". "Baby talk" – that's non-communication.'

To take another example, given in (15) and repeated in (38): the utterer of *non-ville* ('non-city') views Sarcelles as lacking the stereotypical properties of a city, and denies it the label of a city:

(38) *Sarcelles c'est l'archétype de la **non-ville**, le chef d'œuvre de l'aberration urbanistique.* (*TLFi*)
'Sarcelles epitomizes the non-city, the masterwork of urban aberration.'

I conclude that pejorative [*non*-N]$_N$ are polemic and polyphonic; they are polyphonic because they are polemic. Litotic uses of [*non*-N]$_N$ (cf. example (29)) are polemic and polyphonic as well. On the other hand, while euphemistic uses of [*non*-N]$_N$ do display a polyphonic meaning, they are not polemic. As mentioned in the previous section, they express something unpleasant in a pleasant way and in this respect are obviously polyphonic. But they are not polemic since they function like other phenomena of negative politeness, which "seek to avoid the negative consequences to a

hearer's face which might arise from some action of the speaker's" (Israel 2011: 11). For instance, speaking of a *non-victory* is less harsh than speaking of a *defeat* (cf. example (26), repeated below):

(39) *D'abord, évacuer le réel en le débaptisant: il n'y a pas eu défaite mais seulement "**non-victoire**".* (*TLFi*)

'First of all, one shall evacuate reality by renaming it: it was not a defeat, but only a "non-victory".'

5. Concluding remarks and future work

This paper has, hopefully, provided insights into the pragmatic properties of some [*non*-N]$_N$ lexemes in French. In the tradition of Algeo (1971) and Horn (1985, 1989, 2002a, 2002b) for English, it has been argued that the contrary and ontological interpretations of [*non*-N]$_N$ may trigger several meaning effects – such as pejoration and euphemism – depending on the base noun and crucially on the context of utterance. These meaning effects are most probably characteristic of specific genres and registers, namely, those where the writer's subjectivity and lexical creativity can be expressed; a systematic corpus analysis taking into account the genre and register of the data would be needed to confirm or disconfirm this hypothesis. Moreover, the relatively low frequency of these pragmatic readings of [*non*-N]$_N$ may explain why they have been very little studied. Finally, similarities have been suggested in this paper between certain instances of [*non*-N]$_N$ and the pragmatic uses of sentential negation (Ducrot 1980, 1984).

That pejorative contrary [*non*-N]$_N$ and euphemistic ontological [*non*-N]$_N$ represent pragmatic uses of *non-* prefixation on nominal bases does not, however, mean that their linguistic status is the same. The latter clearly function as names: *non-emploi* 'non-employment' refers to *chômage* 'unemployment', *non-victoire* 'non-victory' refers to *défaite* 'defeat', etc. On the contrary, pejorative [*non*-N]$_N$, because of their evaluative and polemic/metalinguistic value, do not assign a name to extralinguistic reality: what are the referents of *non-femme* 'nonwoman' (24-25), *non-communication* 'non-communication' (37), *non-ville* 'non-city' (38)? These [*non*-N]$_N$ are qualifying, not classifying; as the examples given in the case of *non-*femme 'nonwoman' illustrate, the reference of these lexemes is not stable as it may differ from one individual to another.

Interestingly, the additional pragmatic flavor of [*non*-N]$_N$ described in this paper has been observed for other phenomena involving negation, such as negative polarity items, which have an "emotional" rhetoric (Israel 2004, 2011): they have an informative value, but convey an affective

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value as well, since they are emotionally loaded and may express disapproval. Future work could consist in a more thorough study of the parallel between morphological negation and pragmatic negation, namely with the comparison of the descriptive use of sentential negation (36) with two other groups of [*non*-N]$_N$: ontological [*non*-N]$_N$ devoid of euphemistic value (e.g. *non-violence* 'nonviolence' in (10)) and complementary [*non*-N]$_N$ (e.g. *les Italiens et les non-Italiens* 'the Italians and the non-Italians' in (11)). More specifically, further investigation is required to determine whether the "emotional" meaning effect of certain [*non*-N]$_N$, which has been described in this work, is present in these lexemes as well. Overall, it is clear that [*non*-N]$_N$ displaying pragmatic properties raise interesting questions, particularly with regard to the place and role of pragmatics in word formation.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the reviewers for their comments and suggestions. I am also indebted to Christopher Piñón who helped me proofreading this paper. All remaining errors are mine.

List of abbreviations

[*non*-N]$_N$	noun built via *non-* prefixation on a nominal base
non-X	noun or adjective (X) preceded by *non*
non-Adj	adjectival sequence with *non*
F	Frantext
TLFi	*Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé*
www	internet

Sources

Frantext. ATILF – CNRS & Université de Lorraine. http://www.frantext.fr/

TLFi Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé. http://atilf.atilf.fr/

COW (COrp[us/ora] from the Web). http://hpsg.fu-berlin.de/cow/colibri/

GlossaNet. http://glossa.fltr.ucl.ac.be/

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The pragmatics of morphological negation: pejorative and euphemistic uses of the prefix *non-* in French

Edwige Dugas

Summary

In this paper I examine a particular type of morphological negation in French, namely *non-*prefixation on nominal bases (e.g. *non-violence* 'nonviolence'). Drawing on a wide range of authentic examples from the *Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé* (*TLFi*), the French literary database *Frantext* and the internet, I show that although the basic meaning of *non-* prefixation is negation, the nouns prefixed by *non-* (abbreviated as [*non*-N]$_N$) may carry an additional nuance, which can be pejorative or euphemistic; hence the hypothesis defended in this paper that the prefix *non-* can also serve pragmatic purposes.

After having briefly described the morphological and semantic variety of nominal lexemes which can be the input of *non-* prefixation, I show that [*non*-N]$_N$ can have three different readings, namely what I call the "complementary" interpretation (e.g. *les Italiens et les non-Italiens aiment la cuisine italienne* 'Italians and non-Italians like Italian cuisine'), the "ontological" interpretation (e.g. *Toute sa vie durant, Gandhi est demeuré convaincu du bien-fondé de la non-violence* 'For all his life, Gandhi was convinced of the legitimacy of nonviolence'), and the "contrary interpretation" (e.g. *Les fleurs, je m'en fiche. Serais-je une non-femme?* 'Flowers, I don't care! Could I be a nonwoman?). In the second section, I describe the pejorative and euphemistic uses of [*non*-N]$_N$. The pejorative uses have been noticed by several authors (a.o. Gaatone 1971, 1987, Di Sciullo and Tremblay 1993, 1996 for French, Zimmer 1964, Algeo 1971, Bauer 1983, Horn 1989 for English); I show that these uses arise when the [*non*-N]$_N$ have a contrary interpretation and that they are quite frequent. I also emphasize the importance of the discourse context compared to the semantics of the base noun. Then I address the euphemistic uses of [*non*-N]$_N$, which are linked to the ontological interpretation, and which are more constrained and thus less frequent; I note that these uses function almost as a politeness device. The fourth section provides an attempt to draw a parallel between certain uses of [*non*-N]$_N$ and the polemic and metalinguistic uses of sentential negation, as they have been described by Ducrot (1980, 1984) and Horn (1985, 1989).

Morfologinio neiginio pragmatika: pejoratyvinis ir eufemistinis priešdėlio *non-* vartojimas prancūzų kalboje

Edwige Dugas

Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje aptariamas ypatingas morfologinio neiginio tipas prancūzų kalboje, t.y. daiktavardžių *non-* prefiksacija (pvz., *non-violence* 'nesmurtas'). Remiantis gausiu pavyzdžiais, surinktais iš *Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé* (*TLFi*), iš prancūzų kalbos tekstyno *Frantext* ir iš interneto, parodoma, kad nors *non-* priešdėlio pagrindinė reikšmė yra neigimas, daiktavardžiai su priešdėliu ne- (sutrumpinti kaip [*non*-N]$_N$) gali rodyti ir papildomą reikšmės atspalvį - pejoratyvinį arba eufemistinį; taigi šiame straipsnyje daroma prielaida, kad priešdėlis *non-* gali turėti ir pragmatinę paskirtį.

Glaustai aprašius morfologinę ir semantinę daiktavardžių, prie kurių galima pridėti *non-* priešdėlį, įvairovę, parodoma, kad [*non*-N]$_N$ galima interpretuoti trejopai, t.y. a) laikantis "alternatyvios" reikšmės sampratos (pvz., *les Italiens et les non-Italiens aiment la cuisine italienne* 'Italai ir ne-italai mėgsta italų virtuvę'); b) laikantis "ontologinės" reikšmės sampratos (pvz. *Toute sa vie durant, Gandhi est demeuré convaincu du bien-fondé de la non-violence* 'visą savo gyvenimą Gandhi buvo įsitikinęs ne-smurto teisėtumu' ir c) laikantis „priešingos" reikšmės sampratos (pvz. *Les fleurs, je m'en fiche. Serais-je une non-femme?* 'Gėlės? Man nerūpi! Argi aš ne-moteris?). Antrojoje straipsnio dalyje aptariama eufemistinė ir pejoratyvinė [*non*-N]$_N$ vartosena. Į pejoratyvinę vartoseną anksčiau yra atkreipę dėmesį keli autoriai (Gaatone 1971, 1987, Di Sciullo ir Tremblay 1993, 1996 prancūzų kalboje; Zimmer 1964, Algeo 1971, Bauer 1983, Horn 1989 anglų kalboje). Straipsnyje parodoma, kad tie vartosenos atvejai atsiranda tada, kai [*non*-N]$_N$ turi priešingą reikšmę ir kad jie yra gana dažni. Taip pat pabrėžiama kalbinio konteksto svarba, palyginta su priešdėlėto daiktavardžio semantika. Toliau apžvelgiami [*non*-N]$_N$ eufemistinės vartosenos atvejai, susiję su „ontologine" interpretacija, kurie yra retesni. Pastebima, kad tokius atvejus paprastai galima laikyti mandagumo apraiškomis. Straipsnio pabaigoje bandoma išvesti paralelę tarp tam tikrų [*non*-N]$_N$ vartosenos atvejų ir poleminių bei metalingvistinių sakinio neiginio atvejų, kaip juos yra aptarę Ducrot (1980, 1984) ir Horn (1985, 1989).