

**Margarita DIMITROVA***(University of Porto, Portugal)***EXPLORING NEGATION IN BULGARIAN YES-NO QUESTIONS\***

**Abstract.** *The present paper addresses negation in yes-no questions focusing on data from Bulgarian. Considering that Bulgarian yes-no questions are structures licensed by the interrogative particle **li** (Rudin 1986, Rudin et al. 1999, Izvorski 1995, Dimitrova 2020, among others), we more particularly concentrate on the relation between **li**, the negation marker and the licensing of Negative Concord. Based on the intriguing contrast concerning the blocking of Negative Concord and the behaviour of *n*-words, we will argue against the previous accounts claiming that negation in yes-no questions is expletive, i.e. void of negative content. Rather, we suggest that the blocking of Negative Concord results from the occurrence of the interrogative particle **li**. In view of the Bulgarian data and building on previous analyses, namely Dimitrova (2020), we suggest that what prevents the licensing of *n*-words and moreover contributes to the characteristic positive bias these structures denote is verb movement to functional projections of the Left Periphery accounting for the speaker's evaluations and kind of attitude (Ambar 2000, 2003, Yoon 2011, Giannakidou 2016).*

**Key words:** *yes-no questions; negation; n-words; Negative Concord*

**Маргарита ДИМИТРОВА***(Университета на Порто, Португалия)***РАЗГЛЕЖДАНЕ НА НЕГАЦИЯТА В БЪЛГАРСКИТЕ  
ДА-НЕ ВЪПРОСИ**

**Резюме.** *Настоящата статия разглежда негацията в да-не въпросите, като се фокусира върху данни от българския език. Предвид факта, че българс-*

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ките да-не въпроси представляват структури, в които въпросителната частица **ли** участва (Рудин 1986, Рудин и др. 1999, Изворски 1995, Димитрова 2020 и др.), анализът е насочен основно върху взаимодействието между **ли** и отрицателната конкордантност. Изхождайки от наблюдавания контраст между блокирането на отрицателната конкордантност и поведението на отрицателните думи (*N*-думи), както и предходни анализи, според които негацията в да-не въпросите е експлетивна, т.е. лишена от отрицателно семантично съдържание, предлагаме, че липсата на отрицателната конкордантност е резултат от позицията на частицата **ли** в изречението. В тази връзка се разглежда анализ, включващ функционални проекции от лявата периферия на изречението, които отразяват оценката на говорещия (Амбар 2000, 2003, Юн 2011, Янакидоу 2016).

**Ключови думи:** да-не въпроси; негация; *N*-думи; отрицателна конкордантност

## 1. Introduction

It has been widely discussed in the literature (Ladd 1981, Romero & Han 2004, Brown & Franks 1995, Reese 2006, Holmberg 2013, 2016, among others) that negation in yes-no questions gives rise to structural ambiguity, often reflecting the speaker's expectation regarding the truth value of the proposition. In Ladd's (1981) seminal work, the well-known distinction between two different types of negation, namely Inner and Outer negation, has been put forward. Under this analysis, Inner negation consists in a request to confirm a negative inference and typically yields negatively biased yes-no questions. Outer negation, by contrast, signals the speaker's belief that the proposition is true, resulting in positively biased questions.

Furthermore, Holmberg (2013, 2016) argues that the distribution of the negation marker in Standard English also plays a role in the expression of Inner and Outer negation. The author distinguishes between two possible positions for English *not*: (i) a "low", IP-internal position, as in (1), and (ii) a "high", IP-external position, as in (2):

- (1) Is John not coming?
- (2) Isn't John coming?

Under this analysis, the structure in (1) requests confirmation of the negative inference "John is not coming", thus yielding a negatively biased question. By contrast, (2) conveys the speaker's expectation that John is in fact coming, resulting in a positively biased interpretation. According to Holmberg (2016) the higher occurrence of *not* (realised as *n't*) is associated with the CP domain where it takes scope over the polarity variable [ $\pm$ Pol] (Holmberg 2012). Moreover, Holmberg (2016) proposes that whereas positive yes-no questions

are *neutral* and therefore denote the alternatives  $\{p, \neg p\}$  (Hamblin 1973), negative yes-no questions are inherently marked. Evidence for this claim comes, among other things, from the behaviour of the answering system.

A further issue concerning negative yes-no questions involves the distribution of the positive and negative indefinites. Building on the systematic ambiguity of negative polar questions and the distinction between Inner and Outer Negation, Ladd (1981) shows that the occurrence of positive and negative indefinites can serve as a disambiguation factor. In particular, Outer negation, i.e. positively biased yes-no questions, is compatible with positive indefinites, as in (3a), whereas Inner negation, i.e. negatively biased questions, is restricted to negative indefinites, as illustrated in (3b):

- (3) a. Isn't there some vegetarian restaurant?  
 b. Isn't there any vegetarian restaurant?

These contrasts become especially revealing in the case of Bulgarian negative yes-no questions. As shown in (4), Bulgarian negative polar questions generally allow only positive indefinites, while n-words, in the sense of Laka (1990), are excluded:

- (4) Ivan ne kupi li nešto / \*ništo?  
 John not bought something / nothing  
 "Didn't John buy something?"

As will be argued below, the incompatibility between the negation marker and n-words in such contexts follows from the presence of the interrogative particle *li* and appears to be strongly dependent on its position in the clause. Moreover, Bulgarian n-words display a particular behaviour in yes-no questions: they pattern with focus phrases and raise to a pre-verbal position.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 examines the formation of Bulgarian yes-no questions, focusing on the distribution of the particle *li* and its relation to focus-assignment. Section 3 addressed negative yes-no questions in Bulgarian, analysing the data in the light of some well-known facts about negation, Negative Concord (henceforth, NC) licensing, and the encoding of positive bias. Section 4 discussed the syntax of yes-no questions exploring the relation between so called expletive negation, positive bias, and evaluation. Section 5 sets up the conclusion remarks.

## 2. The central properties of Bulgarian yes-no questions

This section outlines the central facts concerning the formation of Bulgarian yes-no questions, focusing on the distribution of the interrogative

particle *li*, the element that licenses these structures. As widely noted in the literature (Rudin 1986, Rudin et al. 1999, Izvorski 1995, Dukova-Zheleva 2010, Dimitrova 2020 a.o.), *li* may surface in two principal positions: (i) immediately following the finite verb, as in (5a) and (ii) following an XP different from the verb, as in (5b):

- (5) a. Ivan pročete li knjigata?  
 John read.3p.sg. Q book.def  
 “Did John read the book?”  
 b. Ivan knjigata li pročete?  
 John book.def Q read.3p.sg  
 “Did John read THE BOOK  
 1?”

The contrast between the examples in (5a) and (5b) reflects the relation between *li*'s placement and information structure. Whereas (5a) is neutral and constitutes a simple request for information, the question in (5b) is focused, the focalised constituent being *knjigata* “the book”. It is therefore commonly assumed that whenever *li* follows an XP different from the verb, it assigns [Foc(us)] to this element. In Rudin et al. (1999) *li* is analysed as a complementiser generated in C°. On this account, if no focused XP raises to Spec of CP to check a [+Foc] feature, the verb moves and adjoins to *li* in C°, deriving the order verb-*li* in neutral yes-no questions. Other works, notably Dimitrova (2020), associate the occurrence of the particle *li* with the denotation of polarity features. According to this analysis, *li* functions as both a head and a maximal projection: in neutral V-*li* questions, like (5a), *li* heads Pol(arity)P(hrase) situated above T (Holmberg 2012). By contrast, in XP-*li* questions, like (5b), *li* is merged in Spec, PolP where the focalised XP raises to attach to it. As will become clearer below, in the present work we adopt this analysis of Bulgarian yes-no questions.

An important restriction on focus licensing in Bulgarian yes-no questions concerns the role of focus movement. As example (5b) shows, in order to receive [Foc] feature, the DP *knjigata* “the book” must move to a pre-verbal position. Crucially, focus is infelicitous in a postverbal position<sup>2</sup>, as illustrated in (6):

- (6) \*Ivan pročete knjigata li?  
 John read.3p.sg. book.def. Q  
 Intended reading: Did John read THE BOOK?

<sup>1</sup> Capital letters indicate focus throughout the paper.

<sup>2</sup> The question in (6) is felicitous only under a reading where *li* scopes over the entire proposition, yielding a confirmation-like interpretation.

Importantly, as shown in Dimitrova (2020), the behaviour of the focused XPs in Bulgarian yes-no questions parallels that observed for wh-words. Bulgarian is well-known as a language that requires overt wh-movement (Rudin 1988) and obligatory subject-verb inversion in wh-questions (Ambar 1988). Consequently, structures with *wh-in-situ* are ungrammatical, as illustrated in (7c).

- (7) a. Kakvo kupi Ivan?  
       What bought.3p.sg John  
       ‘‘What did John buy?’’  
    b. \*Kakvo Ivan kupi?What  
       John bought.3p.sg  
    c. \*Ivan kupi kakvo?<sup>3</sup>  
    d. John bought. 3p.sg. what

Curiously, in yes-no question, focused XPs behave somewhat like a wh-word. As shown by the examples in (5) and (6) above, focus phrases in yes-no questions are obligatorily fronted. Moreover, they function like variables whose value must be confirmed or denied in the response.

Another property of XP-*li* questions that aligns them with wh-questions concerns the position of the subject. As illustrated in (5), the subject *Ivan* can occupy a clause-initial position corresponding to that of clause-initial topics. However, when the subject remains within the clause, the subject-verb inversion is obligatory:

- (8) a. Knigata li pročete Ivan?  
       Book.def Q read.3p.sg. John  
       ‘‘Did John read THE BOOK?’’  
    b. \* Knigata li Ivan pročete?  
       Book.def Q John read.3p.sg

These examples, along with the parallels between focus yes-no questions and wh-questions, are crucial for the characterisation of the interrogative particle *li* and, moreover, suggest a connection between Bulgarian *li* and particles such as the Japanese *ka* (Miyagawa 2010). As noted by Szabolcsi (2015), *ka*, in addition to functioning as an interrogative sentence-final particle, also contributes to existential quantification and disjunction (among other contexts). Accordingly, Szabolcsi (2015) refers to

<sup>3</sup> As noted by one of the reviewers, the structure in (7c), although conditioned to some extent by the tense of the inflected verb, may appear in spoken language. We leave the study of this question for future research.

*ka* is as “quantifier particle” and claims that it indicates that the given constituent is part of a larger set corresponding to the speaker’s presuppositions and to the information available in the discourse. In a similar vein, when *li* attaches to an XP, it signals that the XP is presuppositional and part of a larger set of discourse-related alternatives, much like the behaviour of *ka* in Japanese. As a consequence, the XP represents the questioned portion of the structure. The answers to such a question do not confirm or deny the polarity of the interrogative; instead, they are associated with the XP *Ivan*:

(9) Q : Ivan li ne kupi ništo?

John Q not bought.3p.sg. nothing

“Was it John who didn’t buy anything?”

A: a. Da.

yes = (It was John who didn’t buy anything)

b. Ne.

no = (It wasn’t John who didn’t buy anything)

Cases like the one illustrated in (9) are challenging for the structure of yes-no questions and, in particular, for the value of PolP: the domain in which the polarity of the question is encoded (Holmberg 2012). The fact that these questions contain negation but are not negative suggests that negation remains within TP, thus, PolP is unvalued (or *open* in Holmberg’s (2012) lines). Crucially, no problem arises for the licensing of NC in such structures, as shown in (9).

For the purposes of this paper, the preceding discussion can be summarised in terms of the above data by pointing out to the following requirements which are crucial for the licensing of focus in Bulgarian yes-no questions:

(I) The focused constituent must move to a pre-verbal position;

(II) The interrogative particle *li* must attach to the focused constituent.

As will become clear in the subsequent sections, the requirements in (I) and (II) are particularly relevant for the licensing of n-words in Bulgarian negative yes-no questions.

### 3. Negative yes-no questions: the view from Bulgarian

It is well known that there is cross-linguistic variation with respect to the licensing of NC (Laka 1990, Zanuttini 1994, 1997, Haegeman & Zanuttini 1995, Giannakidou 1998, 2000, 2001, Matos 1999, Zeijlstra 2004, among others). For instance, in Standard English, the occurrence of n-words with the sentential negation marker gives rise to ungrammatical sentences:

(10) \*John didn't buy nothing.

By contrast, in languages like Bulgarian, n-words must be licensed by clause-mate negation. Consider the Bulgarian data in (11) and (12):

(11) a. Ivan ne kupi ništo.

John not bought.3p.sg. nothing

“John didn't buy anything.”

b. \* Ivan kupi ništo.

John bought.3p.sg. nothing

(12) a. Nikoj ne kupi knjigata.

Nobody not bought.3p.sg. book.def

“Nobody bought the book.”

b. \* Nikoj kupi knjigata.

Nobody bought.3p.sg. book.def

In Giannakidou (2001), languages like Bulgarian are classified as *strict negative concord languages*, since n-words always co-occur with clause-mate negation. While this generalisation correctly captures the data from declarative sentences, as in (11) and (12), it does not extend to yes-no questions, as illustrated in (13):

(13) \* Ivan ne kupi li ništo?

John not bought.3p.sg. Q nothing

Intended reading: Didn't John buy anything?

The ungrammaticality of (13) stems from the position occupied by *ništo* “nothing”, which is infelicitous post-verbally in this context. As shown in section 2, Bulgarian yes-no questions are licensed by the particle *li*. When *li* attaches to the negated verb, as in (13), NC is blocked. Furthermore, the sentence improves considerably when the n-word *ništo* “nothing” is replaced by its positive counterpart *nešto* “something”, as shown in (14):

(14) Ivan ne kupi li nešto?

John not bought.3p.sg. Q something

“Didn't John buy something?”

The question in (14) is not only well-formed but it also yields what Ladd (1981) defines as Outer negation, i.e. the question in (14) is biased towards the positive value of the proposition.

Additionally, the examples above point to a broader and more significant contrast, namely that between interrogative and declarative structures. As shown in (12) and (13), while NC is felicitously licensed in the declarative clause (12), it is blocked in (13) in which *li* occurs. Consider now the behaviour of positive indefinites:

- (15) a. \*Ivan ne kupi nešto.  
 John not bought.3p.sg. something  
 Intended: John didn't buy something
- b. Ivan ne kupi li nešto?  
 John not bought.3p.sg Q something  
 "Didn't John buy something?"

Positive indefinites are generally ungrammatical within the scope of sentential negation (with the exception of cases of Metalinguistic Negation, see Horn (1989)), as illustrated in (15a). By contrast, they occur felicitously in yes-no questions formed by the [neg.verb+*li*] sequence. Thus, the distribution of n-words and positive indefinites with respect to clause-mate negation diverges sharply along the interrogative-declarative divide. The Bulgarian data make it clear that the crucial factor underlying this opposition is the particle *li* which licenses Bulgarian yes-no questions and simultaneously blocks the relation between the n-word and its licensor, namely the negation marker. Furthermore, as shown in (9) above, repeated below as (16), when a focused XP appears within the scope of *li* (in accordance with the focus-licensing conditions stated in (I) and (II) of Section 2), NC is once again felicitously licensed:

- (16) Ivan li ne kupi ništo?  
 John Q not bought.3p.sg. nothing  
 "Was it John who didn't buy anything?"

However, as pointed out in Dimitrova (2020), although the question in (16) contains sentential negation, it cannot be analysed as a negative question since only the subject *Ivan* falls within the scope of interrogation.

Moreover, this assumption has further implications for the structure of what has been termed Outer negation or positively biased questions. The Bulgarian data clearly shows that Outer negation must be associated with a specific syntactic configuration. In particular, the underlining structure of Bulgarian positively biased questions involves the particle *li* which is obligatory merged with the negated verb, thereby yielding the sequence [neg.ver + *li*].

Another intriguing point concerning negation in Bulgarian yes-no questions relates to the licensing of n-words. It appears that an obligatory

condition for the licensing of the n-words in yes-no questions is that *li* adjoins to them:

- (17) Ništo li ne kupi Ivan?  
 nothing Q not bought.3p.sg. John  
 “Didn’t John buy anything?”

Furthermore, as observed in Section 2 with respect to the focused XPs, the sequence formed by the n-word and *li* cannot occur in clause-finally:

- (18) \* Ivan ne kupi ništo li?  
 John not bought.3p.sg. nothing Q

The examples in (17) and (18) reveal a clear parallel between the licensing of the n-words and focus phrases in Bulgarian yes-no questions, thereby bringing us back to the requirements formulated in (I) and (II) of Section 2.

The parallelism in the behaviour of the n-words and the focused constituents gives rise to the hypothesis that the n-words are inherently focalised. A similar assumption has been put forward with respect to their Serbian-Croatian and Modern Greek counterparts. In Bošković (2008, 2009) it is argued that the n-words in Serbian-Croatian are inherently negative and focused. For this reason, they are obligatory fronted and, under his analysis, raise to FocP situated above NegP. Furthermore, Bošković (2008, 2009) observes that this behaviour is morphologically encoded:

- (19) *niko* “no one” = [n (neg) + i (focus (‘even’)) + ko (who)]

Tsimpli & Roussou (1996) on the n-words in Modern Greek make a similar proposal, noting a parallel between the licensing of focus and the licensing of n-words in declarative sentences:

- (20) a. TO YANI idha.  
*The John saw-1p.sg*  
 “I saw John.”  
 b. KANENA dhen idha.  
*Nobody not saw-1p.sg*  
 “I didn’t see anybody (Tsimpli & Roussou 1996: 56)

Moreover, the authors observe that, in contrast to positive indefinites, n-words bear focus stress and undergo overt movement to FocP.

Another issue related to the licensing of the n-words and the claim that their distribution patterns with that of focus phrases concerns the contrast between n-words and positive indefinites. As shown above, the two classes

diverge crucially with respect to their co-occurrence with the sequence [neg.verb+*li*]: while the n-words are infelicitous in this configuration, the occurrence of positive indefinites yield grammatical sentences encoding positive bias. With respect to their availability to serve as hosts for the particle *li*, n-words and positive indefinites again display contrasting behaviours. Consider the contrast between (21a) and (21b):

- (21) a. Ivan ništo li ne kupi?  
John nothing Q not bought.3p.sg  
“Didn’t John buy anything?”  
b. \* Ivan nešto li kupi?  
John something Q bought.3p.sg  
Intended: Did John buy something?

N-words are only licensed when *li* adjoins to them. Positive indefinites, by contrast, are categorically excluded from such structures, as illustrated by the ungrammatical sentence in (21b). Moreover, positive indefinites and n-words diverge with respect to their ability to occur in answers to wh-questions, a contrast that may be accounted for under the claim that positive indefinites are *inherently unfocusable* (Bošković 2001):

- (22) Q: Koj kupi knjigata?  
Who bought.3p.sg. book.def  
“Who bought the book?”  
A: a. Nikoj.  
No one  
b. \* Njakoj.  
Someone

In Ambar (2013) a further aspect of positive indefinites’ behaviour in Portuguese yes-no questions is discussed. On the basis of the answering patterns illustrated below, Ambar suggests that positive indefinites in yes-no questions behave like wh-phrases. Observe the examples from Portuguese in (23) below:

- (23) Q: Quem vai contigo ao cinema?  
“Who goes with you to the movies?”  
A: Vai o Pedro.  
*goes Peter*  
Peter does

(24) Q: Alguém vai contigo ao cinema?  
 “Someone is going with you to the movies?”

A: Vai o Pedro.  
*goes Peter*  
 Peter does (Ambar 2013: 24)

The examples in (23) and (24) pattern alike in that their answers identify the value of the variable introduced in the question. In Ambar’s (2013) analysis, while subjects function as topics, positive indefinites, such as Portuguese *alguém* ‘someone’, move from PolP to IntP and operate in yes–no questions like wh-phrases. This approach to the distribution of positive indefinites in yes–no questions, together with the claim that these elements are *inherently unfocusable* (Bošković 2001), provides an additional explanation for why the particle *li* does not adjoin to these constituents.

#### 4. Expletive negation and evaluation

Ever since Hamblin (1973) it has been observed that, in contrast to wh-questions, where the wh-word (*who, what, where, etc.*) is identified in the answer, yes-no questions contain a *full proposition* and the alternatives  $\{p, \neg p\}$ . It follows that the answer to a yes-no question relates to the truth value of the proposition:

(25) Q: Did John buy the book?  
 A: a. Yes. (John bought the book.)  
 b. No. (John didn’t buy the book.)

In this subsection, we briefly review previous syntactic accounts of yes-no questions focusing on those that argue in favour of the existence of a functional projection encoding polarity features, namely PolP. This projection refers to the polarity inherently encoded in yes-no questions, i.e. to the existence of the alternatives  $\{p, \neg p\}$ .

Holmberg (2012, 2016) proposes that PolP bears three possible values: *affirmative, negative* and *open*. Under this analysis, positive yes-no questions are *open*, and their polarity is valued either affirmative or negative in the answer. Moreover, Holmberg suggests a focus projection located above PolP, which probes the polarity variable. Consequently, answers of yes-no questions function as focus expressions, that assign a value to the variable. As mentioned above, following Holmberg (2012, 2016), Dimitrova (2020) claims that the occurrence of *li* in yes-no questions is crucial for the encoding of polarity

features. Under this analysis, the particle merges in the head of PolP where the verb adjoins to it.

Although the syntax of positive polar questions has received considerable attention in recent years, negative yes-no questions have been investigated primarily with respect to their pragmatic properties and to the semantic contribution of the negation marker. As discussed in Section 1, Holmberg (2016) addresses the syntax of these structures, focusing in particular on the structural positions occupied by the so called “low” and “high” *not* (i.e. IP-internal and IP-external negation, respectively). In languages like Bulgarian, however, the distribution of the negation marker does not appear to contribute for this contrast.

A central issue raised by these structures arises with respect to the fact that negative yes-no questions are typically biased (Ladd 1981, Reese 2006, a.o.), in the sense that they encode the speaker’s attitude towards the truth of the proposition. That is why, as discussed earlier in this paper, the negation occurring in these structures has often been analysed as expletive. The term *expletive negation* refers to the cases in which the occurrence of the negation marker does not contribute for the negative interpretation of the structure. Consequently, it is commonly assumed that in such contexts the negation marker lacks negative content and, therefore, does not license n-words (c.f. Brown & Franks (1995) on Russian and Milićević (2006) on Serbian-Croatian).

However, more recent works have proposed a different approach towards what has been defined as expletive negation. In particular, Yoon (2011) argues that expletive negation is not semantically void of content but instead has a special semantic contribution to the meaning of the structure. In this view, expletive negation is closely related to *nonveridicality* (Giannakidou 1998) and to the encoding of the speaker’s attitude towards the proposition.

Yoon (2011) proposes that expletive negation introduces a likelihood scale codifying the speaker’s evaluation. On this account, expletive negation has been characterised as *evaluative negation*. Importantly, based on data from Korean (26a) and Japanese (26b), Yoon (2011) observes that expletive negation systematically appears within the scope non-factive or interrogative complementisers:

- (26) a. John-un Mary-ka oci-anh-ul- {ci/kka} kitayha-ko issta.  
 John-Top Mary-Nom come-Neg-Fut-NFcomp hope-Asp  
 “John hopes that Mary might come.”  
 b. John-wa Mary-ga ko-nai-ka(-to) kitaisi-te iru.  
 John-Top Mary-Nom come-Neg-NFcomp hope-Asp  
 “John hopes that Mary might come.” (Yoon 2011:109)

The non-factive complementisers *ci/kka* in Korean and *ka* in Japanese (Miyagawa2010) are also used as question particles which draws, once again, an interesting parallel with the Bulgarian particle *li*. As observed in Yoon (2011:109) “considering that the basic semantics of questions comprises all potential answers irrespective of positive (p) or negative propositions ( $\neg$ p) (Giannakidou 2001; Kratzer & Shimoyama 2002), the employment of a non-factive complementizer strongly indicates the epistemic subject’s undecidedness concerning the realization of the content of the embedded proposition.” Under this view, the occurrence of the so-called expletive negation correlates with the lack of the speaker’s commitment towards the truth of the proposition.

Following Yoon (2011), we assume that the negation marker in negative yes-no questions is not expletive but instead it contributes to an evaluative meaning. As discussed extensively in Section 3, the data from Bulgarian suggests that the evaluative interpretation observed in these cases crucially depends from the occurrence of the particle *li*. As shown above, the relevant reading fails to arise unless *li* immediately follows the negated verb, yielding the sequence [neg.verb+*li*]. These facts indicate the activation of higher structural projections, in the sense of Holmberg’s *high* negation, triggered by movement of the negated verb.

Dimitrova (2022), building on Ambar (2000, 2003), proposes that the projection encoding the speaker’s evaluations is EvaluativeP<sup>4</sup>. According to Ambar (2000, 2003), the Split CP domain encodes two types of discourse-related properties: those related to the Common Ground and those related to the Universe of Discourse. The latter concerns aspects of the interaction between the speaker and the hearer, whereas the former relates to the speaker and the encoding of properties such as the speaker’s prior knowledge and evaluations. In Ambar’s analysis, the functional projections AssertiveP and EvaluativeP belong to the Common Ground domain. EvaluativeP represents the speaker’s evaluations, while AssertiveP encodes the speaker’s knowledge.

Taking these observations into account, and adopting Dimitrova’s (2020) proposal under which *li* merges in the head of PolP, the resulting structure of positively biased negative yes-no questions is the following:

(27) [TopP [EvaluativeP [IntP [FocP [PolP [Pol<sup>0</sup> *li* [TP [NegP

<sup>4</sup> Yoon (2011) proposes a syntactic analysis of evaluative negation that posits two Evaluative heads, Eval1 and Eval2, which account for a likelihood scale and a desirability scale, respectively. In her analysis, the negation marker correlates with the denotation of the speaker’s evaluation and thus functions as the head of EvalP.

In (27), the particle *li* is generated in the head of PolP since, as observed in Section 2, its occurrence is crucial for clause-typing (Cheng 1991). Furthermore, following Zanuttini (1994, 1997), we assume that NegP is situated below TP. Considering the relation between expletive negation and evaluation (Yoon 2011) as well as the parallels between Bulgarian *li* and its Korean and Japanese counterparts *ci/kka* and *ka*, we propose that Bulgarian negative yes-no questions activate EvaluativeP via [neg.verb+*li*] movement to Eval<sup>o</sup>. Under this view, the movement of the [neg.verb+*li*] complex to Eval<sup>o</sup> derives the evaluative interpretation characteristic of negation in yes-no question.

## 5. Conclusions

Our goal in the present paper was to provide an overview of the central properties of negative yes-no questions drawing on data from Bulgarian. Two main issues have been addressed. On the one hand, we examined the syntactic encoding of positive bias and the role of the negation marker which has been traditionally analysed as expletive. On the other, we investigated the behaviour of n-words which appear to undergo obligatory focus movement in yes-no questions.

Several issues related to the syntax of negative yes-no questions remain open, particularly with respect to the polarity value of positively biased negative yes-no questions, the intriguing behaviour of the answering system, as well as the interaction between interrogative particles, evaluative interpretations and the left-peripheral architecture of the clause. We leave these and other related topics for future research.

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