

Despite containing numerous linguistic signs carrying negative meaning, some sentences in Romance languages are taken to encode a single instance of negation. The phenomenon is known in linguistics as ‘Negative Concord’ (NC). This research is devoted to the evolution of NC in the history of Gascon, a small language spoken in south-western France. Romance languages are known to have turned from strict to non-strict NC grammars in the course of their history. Non-strict NC stands for the fact that some linguistic signs (never, no one, in no way, no) can do away with the negative marker provided they occur preverbally in the linear structure of the sentence.

Still, some of Gascon sentences proved reluctant to undergo the change in this direction. Therefore, a preverbal negative marker must have been steadily upheld. This clausal architecture involves sentences containing modal verbs and expressions encoding aspect. Their linear structure runs, then, as follows: negative marker – modality / aspect – negative expression. This particular construal has generally been overlooked in previous studies devoted to Romance clausal negation. Evolution in this respect can be traced with the aid of Gascon authentic language data. Additionally, the present project reveals how Old Gascon negative expressions were different from their Occitan counterparts of the same era. Discussion on this point is considered important inasmuch as Gascon and Occitan have generally been believed to represent a unique language. Historical evidence runs athwart this stance.