Romanian Long-distance Negative Concord

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Introduction

Romanian: Strict negative concord?

(1) a. Nimeni *(nu) a citit nicio carte.
nobody not has read no book

b. *(Nu) a citit nimeni nicio carte.
not has read nobody no book

'Nobody read any book.'

Long-distance Negative Concord (LD-NC):

(2) a. * Am făcut nimic greșit.
I.have made nothing wrong

Intended: 'I have done nothing wrong.'

b. Nu cred [că am făcut nimic greșit]. (roTenTen21)
not I.think that I.have made nothing wrong

'I don't think I have done anything wrong.'

Overview

Basic properties

LD-NC into infinitival and subjunctive complements

NC is possible across infinitival and subjunctive (*să*-marked) complement clause boundaries

(3) *Gramatica limbii române*, (GLR 2023: 1159):

a. Maria nu poate vedea nimic.
Maria not can see.INF nothing
'Maria cannot see anyting.'

b. Maria nu poate [să meargă nicăieri].
Maria not can SĂ go.SUBJ nowhere
'Maria cannot go anywhere.'

LD-NC into finite indicative complement clauses

Questionable according to GLR (2023,1159):

(4) ? Ea nu crede [că mai plecăm nicăieri].
she not believes that more we.leave nowhere
'She doesn't think that we are going anywhere.'

Ungrammatical according to Pană Dindelegan (2013, 489)

(5) nu am crezut că ai cumpărat *nimic/ ceva
not I.have believed that you.have bought nothing/ something
'I didn't think you bought anything.'

LD-NC into finite complement clauses

BUT:

- mentioned in the linguistic literature: Barbu Mititelu & Maftei Ciolăneanu (2004), Barbu Mititelu (no date)
- amply attested in corpus data:
  - `nu cred că … nimeni|nimic|nici|niciun|niciodată`
  - CoRoLa (Mititelu et al., 2014): 108 hits ($>$ 38 mio sentences)
  - roTenTen21 (Kilgarriff et al., 2014): 2,841 hits ($>$ 140 mio sentences)

$\Rightarrow$ Prescriptively discouraged, but part of the grammar, at least for some speakers (including present co-authors!)

LD-NC: Unbounded

Constructed example:

(6) [Do you want someone to help you? /Vrei să te ajute cineva?]

Nu cred [că vreau [să mă bazez [că mă ajută
not I.believe that I.want SĂ me I.count.SUBJ that me helps

nimeni]]]].
nobody

'I don't think I want to count on that anybody helps me.'

Matrix predicates: Neg Raising?

- Claim in the literature (Barbu Mititelu & Maftei Ciolăneanu, 2004; Barbu Mititelu, no date): LD-NC requires Neg Raising
- Neg Raising Inference: not-V [S] = V [not S]

⇒ Neg Raising Inference should be obligatory if there is LD-NC.

(7) nu cred [că este o surpriză pentru nimeni]. (roTenTen21)
not I.believe that it.is a surprise for nobody

'I don't think it is surprise for anyone.'

= Cred [că nu este o surpriză pentru nimeni].

'I think it is a surprise for noone.'

- We will show: LD-NC can occur without a Neg Raising inference

Matrix predicates: Neg Raising?

- *A crede* 'believe' is the most frequent matrix verb for LD-NC, but:
- examples with LD-NC and no obligatory NR inference – list of LD-NC predicates in Barbu Mititelu (no date):

(8) nu mă bazez că mă ajută nimeni.
not me I.count that me helps nobody
'I don't count on that anybody helps me'
≠ Mă bazez că nu mă ajută nimeni.
me I.count that not me helps nobody
'I count on that nobody helps me.'

(9) Nu simt [că profit de pe urma nimănui]. (roTenTen21)
'I don't have the feeling that I am taking advantage of anyone.'

(10) nu simt [că muncesc nici măcar 1 zi din viața mea]. (CoRoLa)
'I don't have the feeling that I work even a single day in my life.'

Pre-/post-verbal asymmetry

Contrast with finite indicative complement clauses: No LD-NC with pre-verbal subjects!

(11) a. Nu cred [că a sunat nimeni].
not I.believe that has called nobody

b. * Nu cred [că nimeni a sunat]
not I.believe that nobody has called

'I don't believe that anybody has called.'

Pre-/post-verbal asymmetry

If the pre-verbal subject is not a neg-word, we find LD-NC with post-verbal neg-words.

(12) … nu cred [că angoasele scutesc pe nimeni de-a lungul
not I.think that fears.DEF spare DOM nobody in length.DEF
vieții]. (roTenTen21)
life.DEF.GEN

'I don't think that fears spare anyone during their life'

Related asymmetry? Extraction

A pre-verbal subject blocks extraction from a finite complement clause.

(13) a. Ce carte crezi [că a citit Alex]?
which book you.think that has read Alex
'Which book do you think that Alex has read?'

b. * Ce carte crezi [că Alex a citit]?
which book you.think that Alex has read
'Which book do you think that Alex has read?'

CoRoLa:

- Search: `ce crezi că` 'what do you think that'
- 302 hits (5 irrelevant)
- No relevant hit with a pre-verbal subject!

Summary

- LD-NC is possible across a finite indicative clause boundary.
- LD-NC is unbounded.
- LD-NC is not restricted to Neg Raising contexts.
- LD-NC in finite indicative complement clauses is only possible with post-verbal neg-words.
  Pre-verbal subjects block extraction from finite indicative complement clauses.

Comparison with other Negative Concord languages

Comparison with Slavic languages

Polish, Bulgarian: Strict NC languages – but no LD-NC!

Polish (Przepiórkowski & Kupść, 1997, 133)

(14) * Jan nie sądzi [żeby Marysia nikogo lubila].
Jan not believes that.SUBJ Mary nobody liked
Intended: 'Jan doesn't think that Mary likes anybody.'

Bulgarian (Ivanova, p.c.):

(15) /nɛ mɪsljə, [tʃe njakɔɪ ʃtɛ mɪ pomognɛ]/
not I.think [that someone will me help]
I don't think that anyone will help me.'

(16) a. * /nɛ mɪsljə, [tʃe ʃtɛ mɪ pomognɛ nɪkɔɪ]/
not I.think that will me help nobody

b. * /nɛ mɪsljə, [tʃe nɪkɔɪ ʃtɛ mɪ pomognɛ]/
not I.think that nobody will me help

Intended: 'I don't think that anybody will help me.'

Comparison with other Romance languages: Spanish

Neg-words without pre-verbal negation in embedded clauses in non-negative meaning, both pre- and post-verbally!
Neg Raising: Always in subjunctive!

(17) a. no creo [que pueda hacer nada decente antes de
not I.believe that I.can.SUBJ do nothing decent before of
esa fecha] (esTenTen23)
that date

'I don't think I can do anything decent until that date.'

b. *(no) puedo hacer nada decente antes de esa fecha.

(18) a. no creen [que nada se dé gratis].
not they.believe that nothing REFL gives.SUBJ for free

'they don't think that you can get anything for free.' (esTenTen23)

b. Nada se da gratis.

'Nothing is obtained for free.'

Comparison with other Romance languages: Spanish

Embedded neg-words also with inherently negative predicates (and subjunctive complement clauses)

(19) Dudo [que encontren nada]. (Spanish)
I.doubt that they.find.SUBJ nothing
'I doubt that they will find anything.' (Herburger, 2001)

Neg-words can also occur in infinitival complements of inherently negative predicates:

(20) Odio [corregir a nadie]
I.hate correct DOM nobody
'I hate correcting anyone.' (esTenTen23)

Comparison with other Romance languages: Spanish

In Romanian: No LD-NC with inherently negative predicates, neither in subjunctive nor in indicative complement clauses:

(21) Oficialul a evitat [să dea vreun/ *niciun răspuns clar]
official.DEF has avoided SĂ give.SUBJ any/ no answer clear
'The official avoided giving any clear answer.' (roTenTen21)

(22) Mă îndoiesc [că găsesc pe vreunul/ *nimeni].
me I.doubt that they.find PE anyone/ noone
'I doubt they find anyone (of those).'

Comparison with other Romance languages

- Spanish:
  - Non-strict Negative Concord language
  - Embedded neg-words possible in pre- and post-verbal position,
  - ...with subjunctive complement clauses, and
  - ...negated Neg Raising Predicates or inherently negative predicates.
- Romanian:
  - Verbs of doubt may combine with finite indicative complement clauses.
  - Inherently negative predicates do not give rise to LD-NC.
  - LD-NC depends on the presence of a matrix negation.

  $\Rightarrow$ LD-NC seems to be a syntactic phenomenon!

Previous approaches

Strict Negative Concord in HPSG

- Languages analyzed: Polish (Przepiórkowski & Kupść, 1997), Romanian (Barbu, 2004; Iordăchioaia, 2009).
- Status of pre-verbal negative marker: morpho-syntactic unit with the verb (clitic/post-lexical inflection)
- Unbounded dependency aspect within neg-constituents: [*in* [[*nobody's*] *paper*]]
- Analysis in Przepiórkowski & Kupść (1997): Lexical amalgamation is used for extraction in Sag (1997) and for NC in de Swart & Sag (2002).
- But: No NC across (finite indicative) clause boundaries!

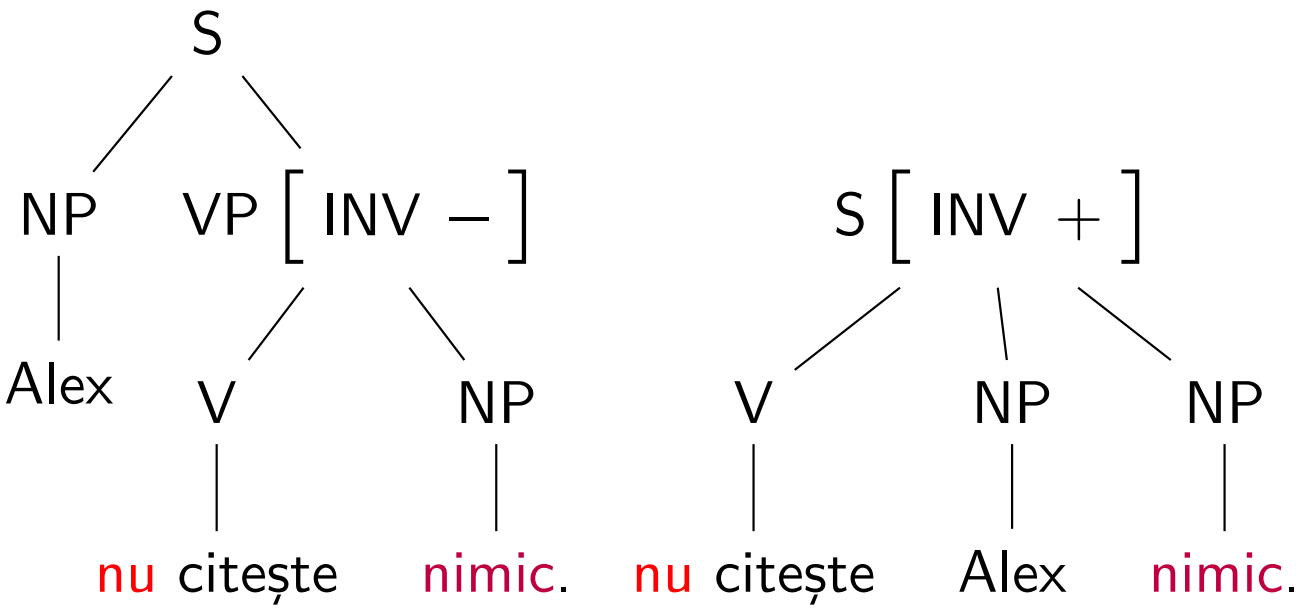
Romanian NC

- Fălăuș (2006): Analysis of NC à la de Swart & Sag (2002)
- No consideration of LD-NC
- Basic problem: neg-words analyzed as negative quantifier **NO**.
  But: In non-Neg Raising readings, there is an operator between logical negation and the quantifier, i.e.
  - we need: $\neg \ldots \exists x(\ldots)$
  - instead of: **NO**$x(\ldots)$

Framework

Basic structure of Romanian

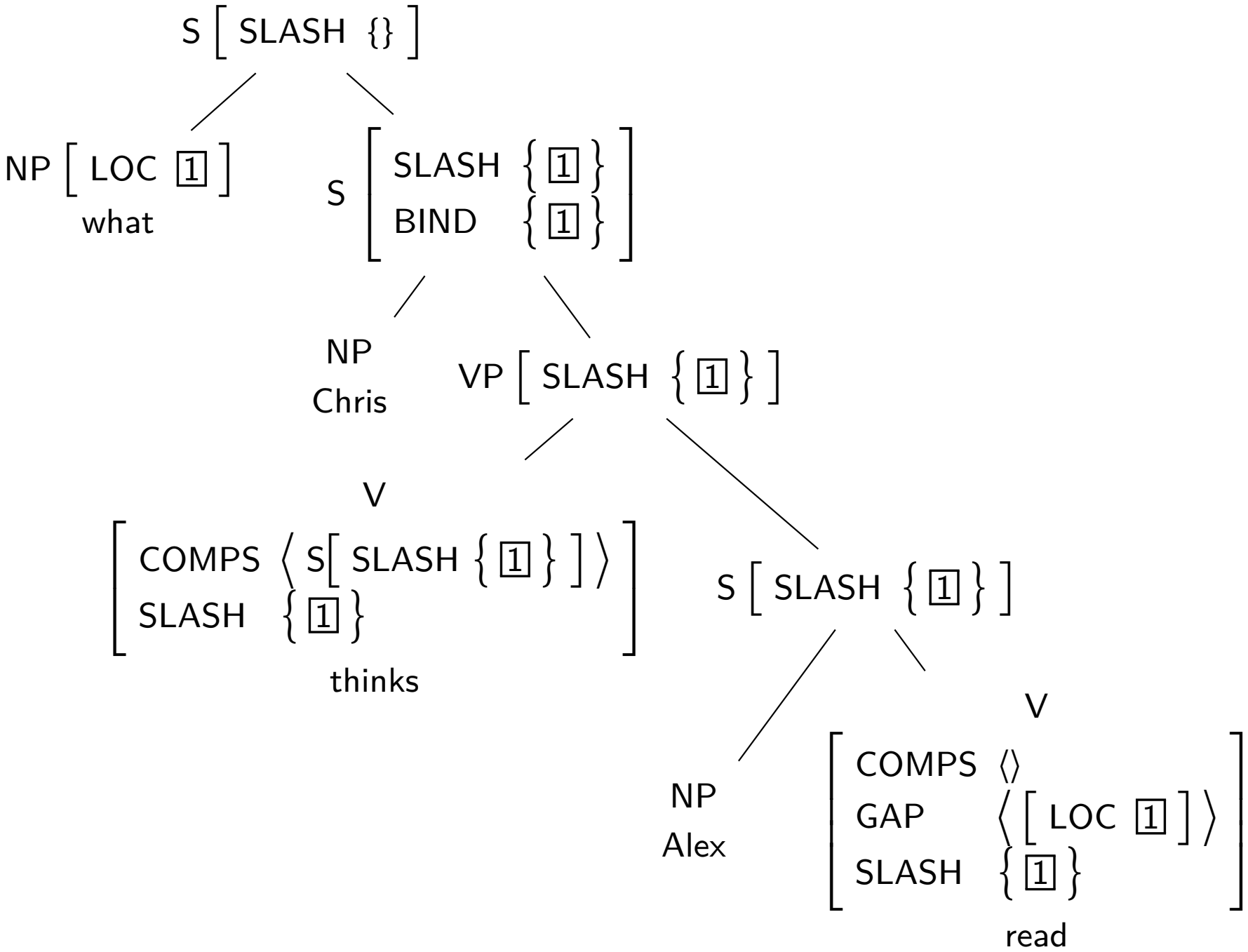
- Standard HPSG feature geometry.
- Romanian has both: SVO and VSO. ⇒ distinct syntactic structures!



Unbounded dependencies

- Adopted here: lexical treatment of slash-amalgamation.
  (Pick your favorite version!)
- A lexical head collects all SLASH elements of its dependents, the LOCAL value of GAP elements.
- The SLASH value passes from the head to the mother, minus the elements from the head's BIND set.

(23) (I wonder) what Chris thinks Alex read.


S [SLASH {}]
NP [LOC 1]
what
S [SLASH { 1 } BIND { 1 }]
NP
Chris
VP [SLASH { 1 }]
V
[COMPS ⟨ S[SLASH { 1 }] ⟩ SLASH { 1 }]
thinks
S [SLASH { 1 }]
NP
Alex
V
[COMPS ⟨⟩ GAP ⟨ [LOC 1] ⟩ SLASH { 1 }]
read

Parasitic gaps and Negative Concord

- SLASH mechanism captures data with multiple co-indexed gaps

(24) [Which paper]$_i$ did you reject $\__i$ [without reading $\__i$]?

[LOC 1] [BIND {1}] [SLASH {1}] [SLASH {1}]

- Idea: in Negative Concord, neg-words will contribute identical elements to SLASH
- LD-NC is a syntactic mechanism, sensitive to extraction barriers.

Lexical Resource Semantics: Constraint-based semantic combinatorics

- Strict NC in LRS: Polish (Richter & Sailer, 2006), Romanian (Iordăchioaia, 2009; Iordăchioaia & Richter, 2015)
- Constraints: *citește* 'reads': $\exists e\, \alpha[\textbf{read}(e, x, y)]$
  - Contribution constraints: $\textbf{read}(e, x, y)]$
  - Greek letters as metavariables for some expression: α
  - Sub-expression constraint $\alpha[\beta]$:
    expression β must be a subexpression of expression α.
- PARTS: constraints on the overall semantic representation contributed by a sign. All these constraints are collected.
- EXTERNAL-CONTENT: Semantic representation of an utterance/ clause/ phrase. Shared along the head path
- At the level of the utterance: The semantic representation is an expression that respects all the constraints from the PARTS value and does not contain any material not present in the PARTS value.

LRS specification for relevant items

- *citește* 'reads': $\exists e\, \alpha[\textbf{read}(e, x, y)]$
- *nu citește* 'reads': $\neg\beta[\exists e\, \alpha[\textbf{read}(e, x, y)]]$
- *nimeni* 'nobody': $\neg\gamma[\exists x(\textbf{person}(x) \wedge \gamma'[x])]$
- *nimic* 'nothing': $\neg\delta[\exists y(\textbf{thing}(y) \wedge \delta'[y])]$

Possible EX-CONT value: $\neg\exists e \exists x(\textbf{person}(x) \wedge \exists y(\textbf{thing}(y) \wedge \textbf{read}(e, x, y)))$

Analysis

Verbal negation

(25) A non-negated verb: *citește* '(s/he) reads':

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{PHON} & \langle\, \textit{citește} \,\rangle \\ \text{HEAD} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{NEG} & - \end{bmatrix} \\ \text{ARG-ST} & \langle\, \text{NP}_x, \text{NP}_y \,\rangle \\ \text{PARTS} & \exists e(\alpha'[\textbf{read}(e, x, y)]) \end{bmatrix}$$

(26) A negated verb: *nu citește* '(s/he) doesn't read':

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{PHON} & \langle\, \textit{nu citește} \,\rangle \\ \text{HEAD} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{NEG} & + \end{bmatrix} \\ \text{ARG-ST} & \langle\, \text{NP}_x, \text{NP}_y \,\rangle \\ \text{PARTS} & \neg\alpha[\exists e(\alpha'[\textbf{read}(e, x, y)])] \end{bmatrix}$$

The NegCriterion

(27) The Neg Criterion, adapted for Romanian from Richter & Sailer (2006)

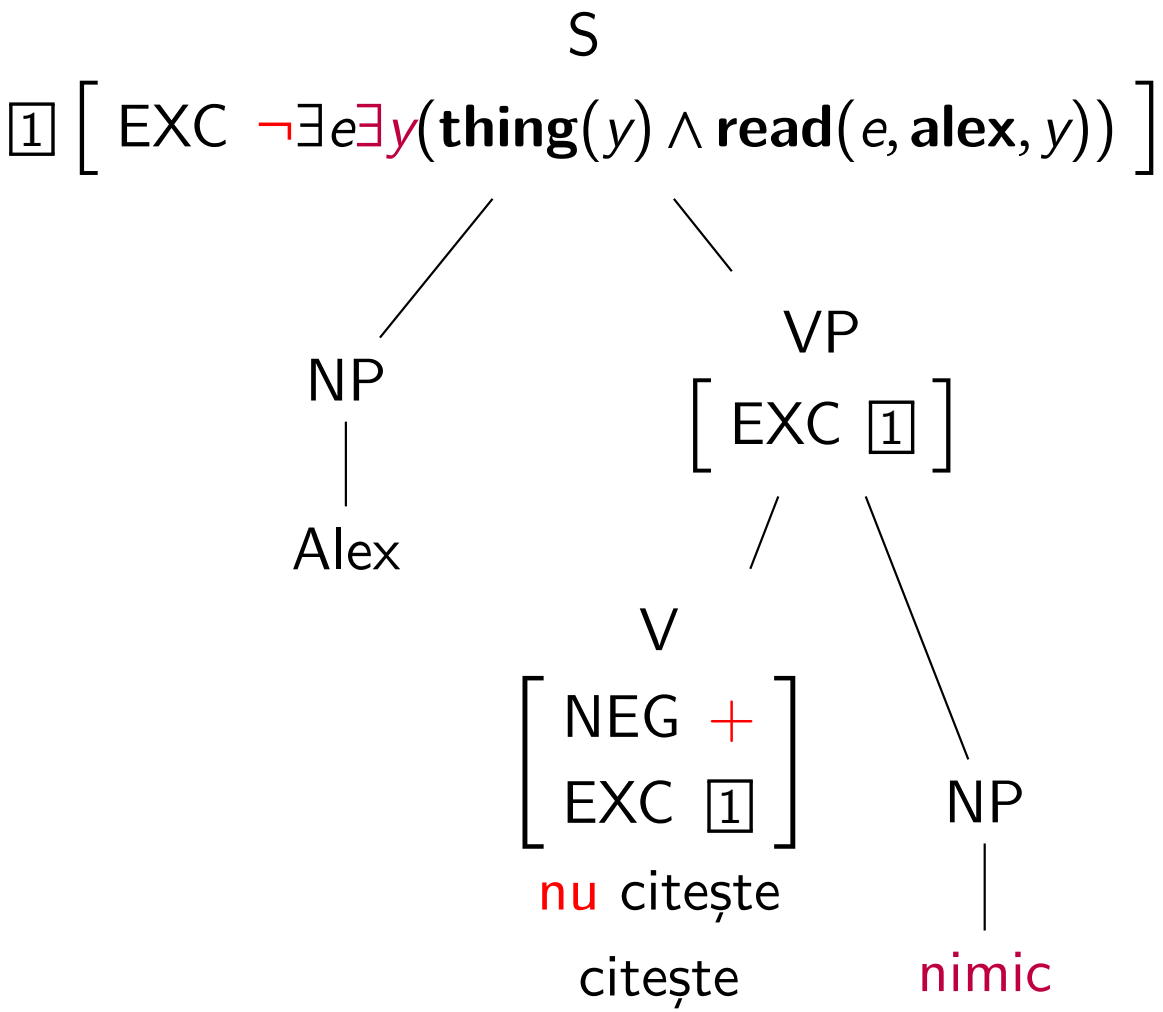
For every verb, if there is a negation in the EX-CONT of the verb that has scope over the verb, then the verb must be marked as [NEG +].

(28) EXCONT $\neg\exists e\exists y(\textbf{thing}(y) \wedge \textbf{read}(e, \textbf{alex}, y))$

a. Alex nu citește[NEG +] nimic.
Alex not reads nothing
'Alex doesn't read anything.'

b. *Alex citește[NEG –] nimic.

The NegCriterion



New elements in SLASH

- Classical slash elements: *local* objects (i.e., they contain the information shared between a filler and a gap.
- Object of type *nci* (*negative-concord-item*).
- Feature: SEMANTIC-REPRESENTATION (SEM-REP)) whose value is the negation contributed by the neg-word.

(29) Description of a neg-word

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \text{PHON} \quad \left\langle \textit{nimic} \text{ 'nothing'} \right\rangle \\ \text{PARTS} \quad \boxed{1}\colon \neg\gamma'[\exists y(\textbf{thing}(y) \wedge \delta')] \\ \text{SLASH} \quad \left\{ \left[\begin{array}{l} \textit{nci} \\ \text{SEM-REP} \quad \boxed{1} \end{array}\right] \right\} \end{array}\right]$$

Slash mechanism

- SLASH is part of *synsem*.
- Consequently a selecting head has access to the slash specification of its dependents.
- Slash amalgamation as in Sag (1997)

(30) Description of the verb *nu citește* 'not reads' when combining with an NCI-marked complement:

$$\left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{PHON} & \langle \textit{nu citește} \rangle \\ \text{HEAD} & \left[\text{NEG } +\right] \\ \text{VAL} & \left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{SUBJ} & \langle \text{NP}_x \rangle \\ \text{COMPS} & \left\langle \text{NP}_y\left[\text{SLASH } \left\{ \boxed{1} \textit{ nci} \right\}\right] \right\rangle \end{array}\right] \\ \text{SLASH} & \left\{ \boxed{1} \right\} \\ \text{PARTS} & \neg\alpha[\exists e(\alpha'[\textbf{read}(e,x,y)])] \end{array}\right]$$

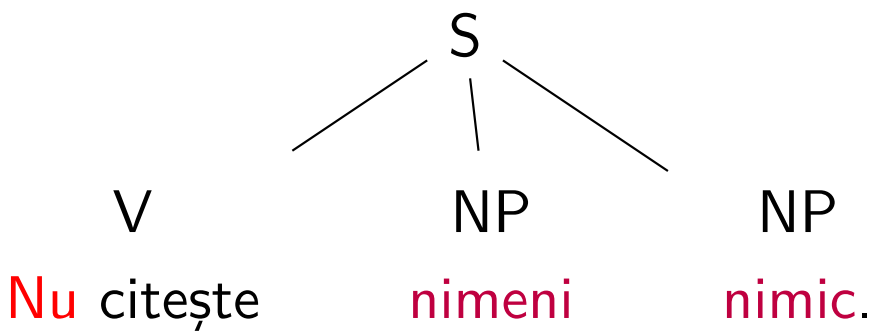
NCI retrieval

- Only negated verbs can retrieve/bind *nci* objects from SLASH.
- The negation of the *nci* object must be contributed by the verb as well, if the binder is not saturated. ⇒ strict NC for in situ dependents of the verb!

(31) NCI Retrieval Principle:
If a sign has an *nci* object in its BIND value with [SEM-REP $\boxed{1}$],
- it must be verbal and be specified as [NEG +].
- if it is not saturated (i.e., COMPS or SUBJ are non-empty), it must have $\boxed{1}$ on its PARTS list.

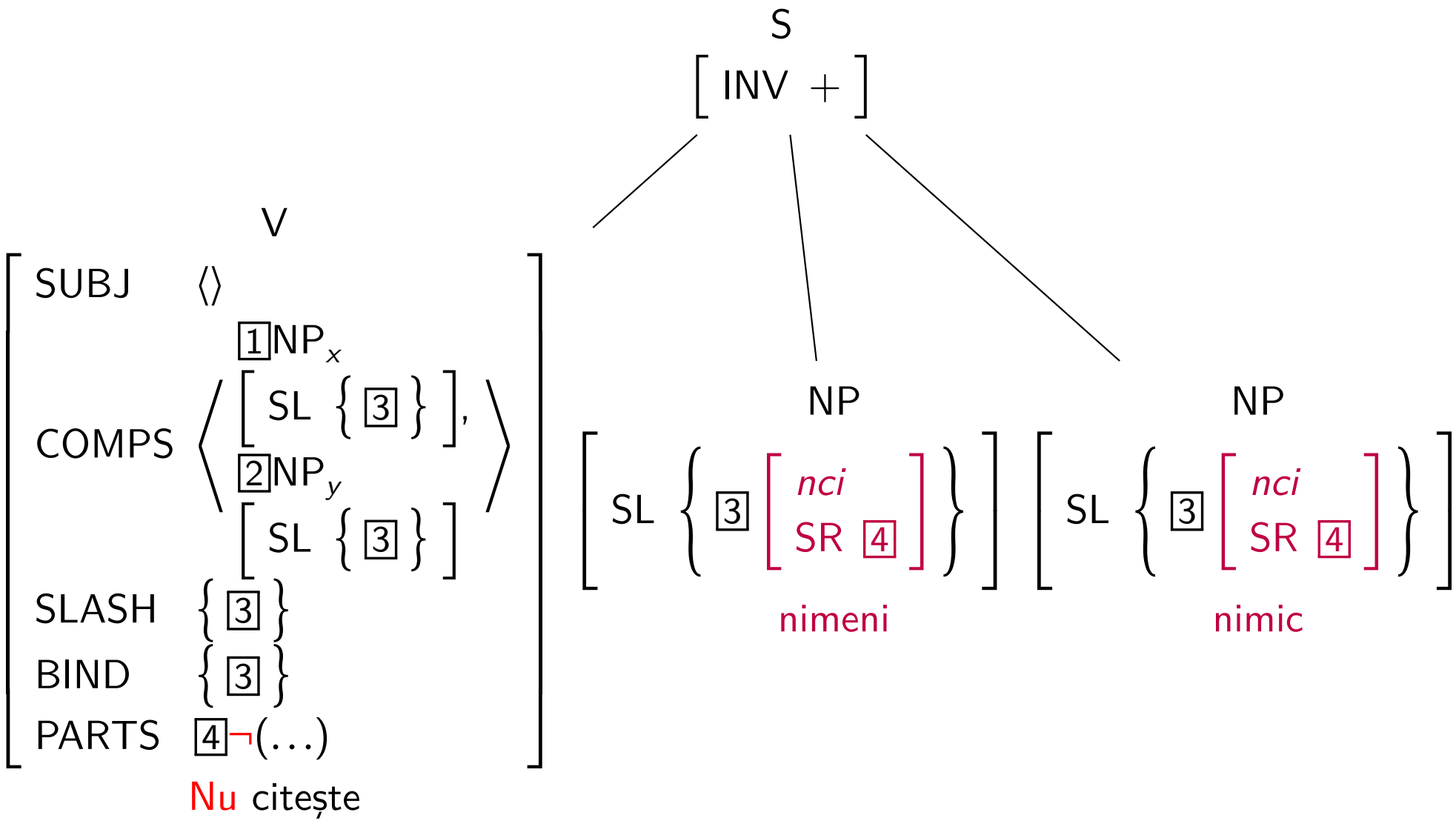
Post-verbal neg-word

(32) Nu citește nimeni nimic.
not reads nobody nothing
'Nobody is reading anything.'
$\neg\exists e\exists x(\textbf{person}(x) \wedge \exists y(\textbf{thing}(y) \wedge \textbf{read}(e,x,y)))$



- All neg-words contribute an *nci* object to the SLASH value.
- When the lexical head retrieves these *nci* objects, its valence lists are still non-empty.
- Therefore, all SEM-REP values in the SLASH value must be identical.

Post-verbal neg-word



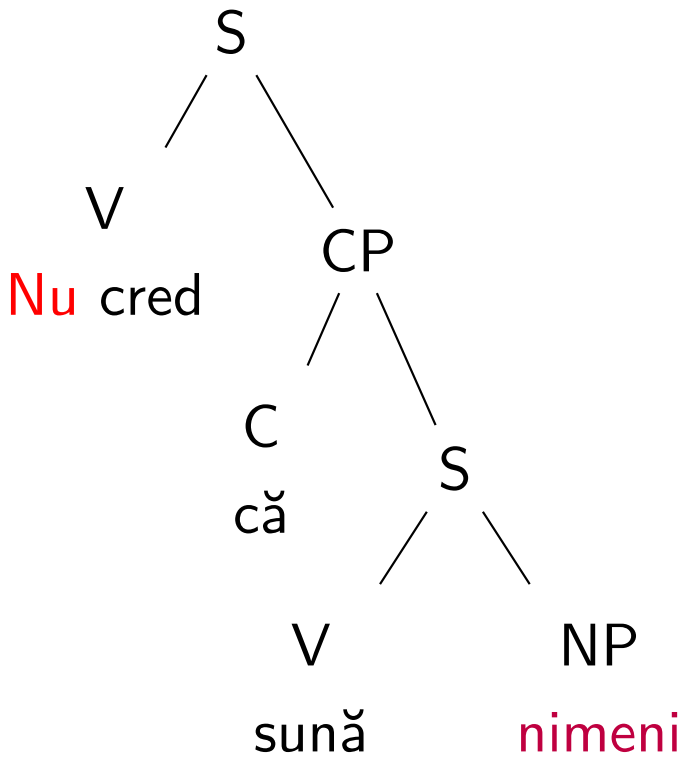
Negated matrix predicate

(33) Description of a negated LD-NC matrix predicate:

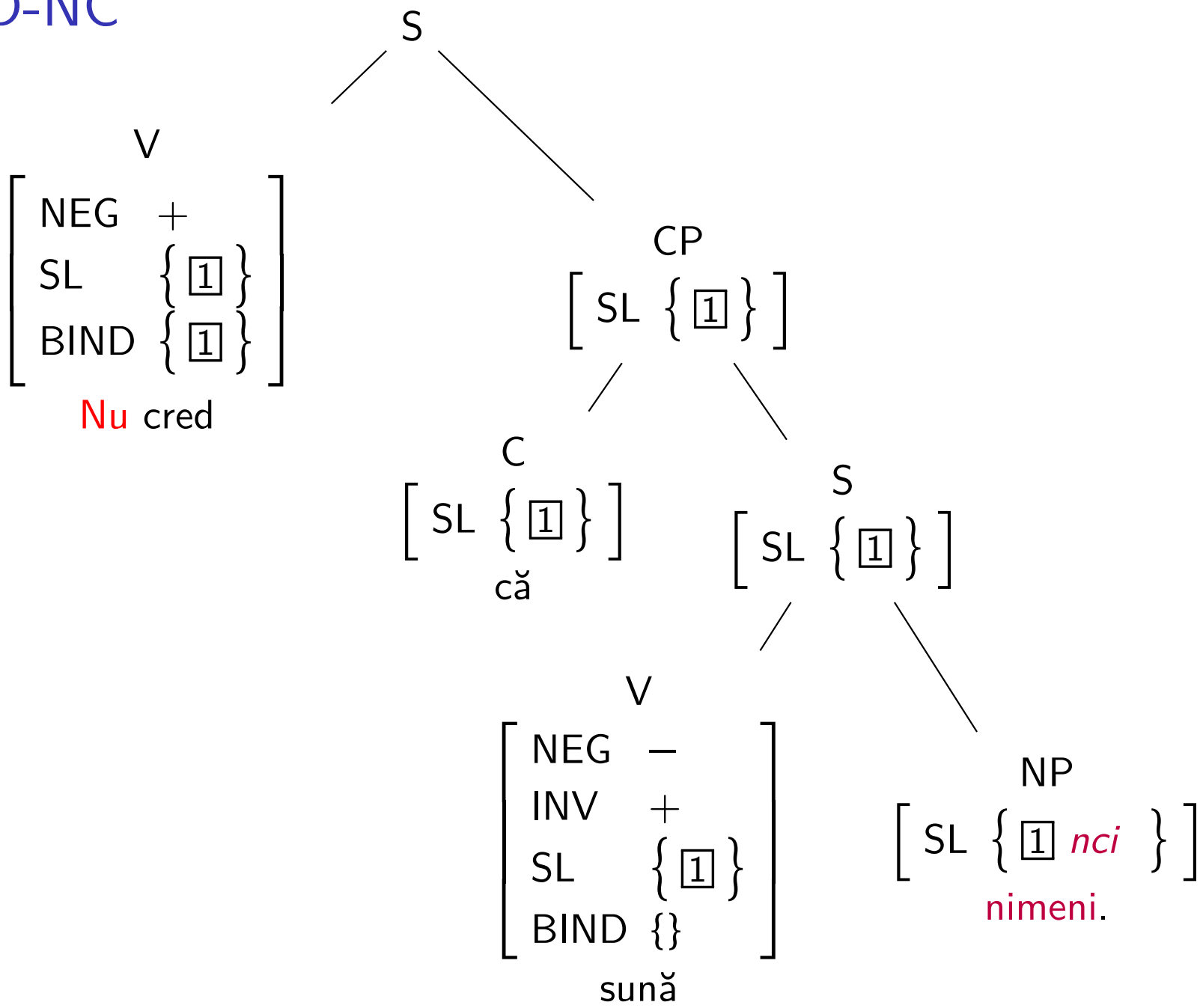
$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{PHON} & \langle\ \textit{nu cred}\ \text{`I don't believe'}\ \rangle \\ \text{HEAD} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{NEG} & + \end{bmatrix} \\ \text{ARG-ST} & \langle\ \text{NP}_x,\ \text{S}_{e'}\ \rangle \\ \text{PARTS} & \neg\alpha[\exists e(\alpha'[\textbf{believe}(e, x, (\hat{}\beta[e']))])] \end{bmatrix}$$

LD-NC

Nu cred că sună nimeni. 'I don't think anyone is calling.'

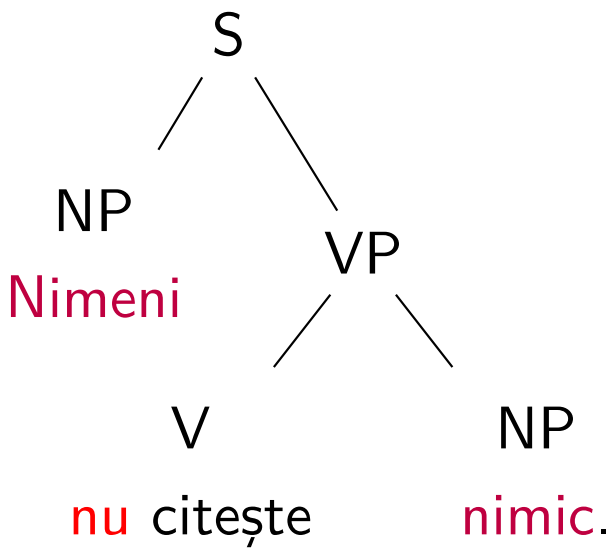


LD-NC

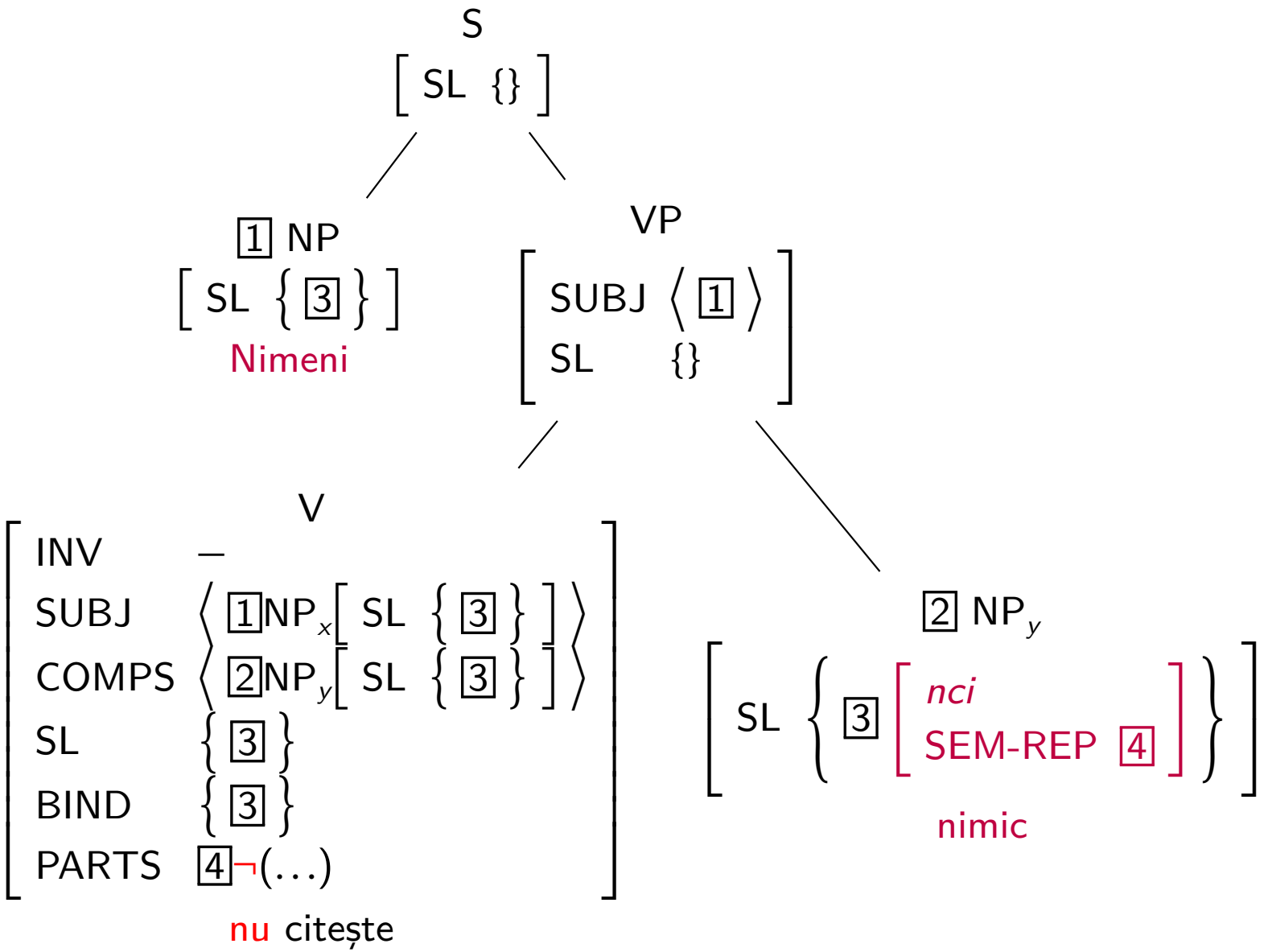

S
V
NEG +
SL {1}
BIND {1}
Nu cred
CP
SL {1}
C
SL {1}
că
S
SL {1}
V
NEG −
INV +
SL {1}
BIND {}
sună
NP
SL {1} nci
nimeni.

Unstressed pre-verbal neg-word

(34) Nimeni nu citește nimic.
nobody not reads nothing
'Nobody reads anything'
$\neg\exists e\exists x(\textbf{pers}(x) \wedge \exists y(\textbf{thing}(y) \wedge \textbf{read}(e, x, y)))$



Unstressed pre-verbal neg-word



Filler-Head Structure

- Finite, inverted, indicative structure
- Only concerned with *local* objects in SLASH
- General constraint: The landing site of an overtly moved constituent marks its maximal scope position!

(35) Head-Filler Phrase:

$$\textit{head-filler-ph} \Rightarrow \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{HDTR } \boxed{1} \left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{HEAD} & \left[\begin{array}{ll} \textit{verb} & \\ \text{VFORM} & \textit{fin} \\ \text{INV} & + \\ \text{MOOD} & \textit{ind} \end{array}\right] \\ \text{SLASH} & \{\boxed{2}\} \cup \textit{set}(\neg \textit{local}) \\ \text{BIND} & \{\boxed{2}\} \end{array}\right] \\ \text{DTRS} \left\langle \left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{LOC} & \boxed{2} \\ \text{SLASH} & \textit{set}(\neg \textit{local}) \end{array}\right], \boxed{1} \right\rangle \end{array}\right]$$

Că clauses

(36) a. Ce carte crezi [că a citit Alex]?
which book you.believe that has read Alex
'Which book do you believe that Alex has read?'

b. * Ce carte crezi [că Alex a citit]?

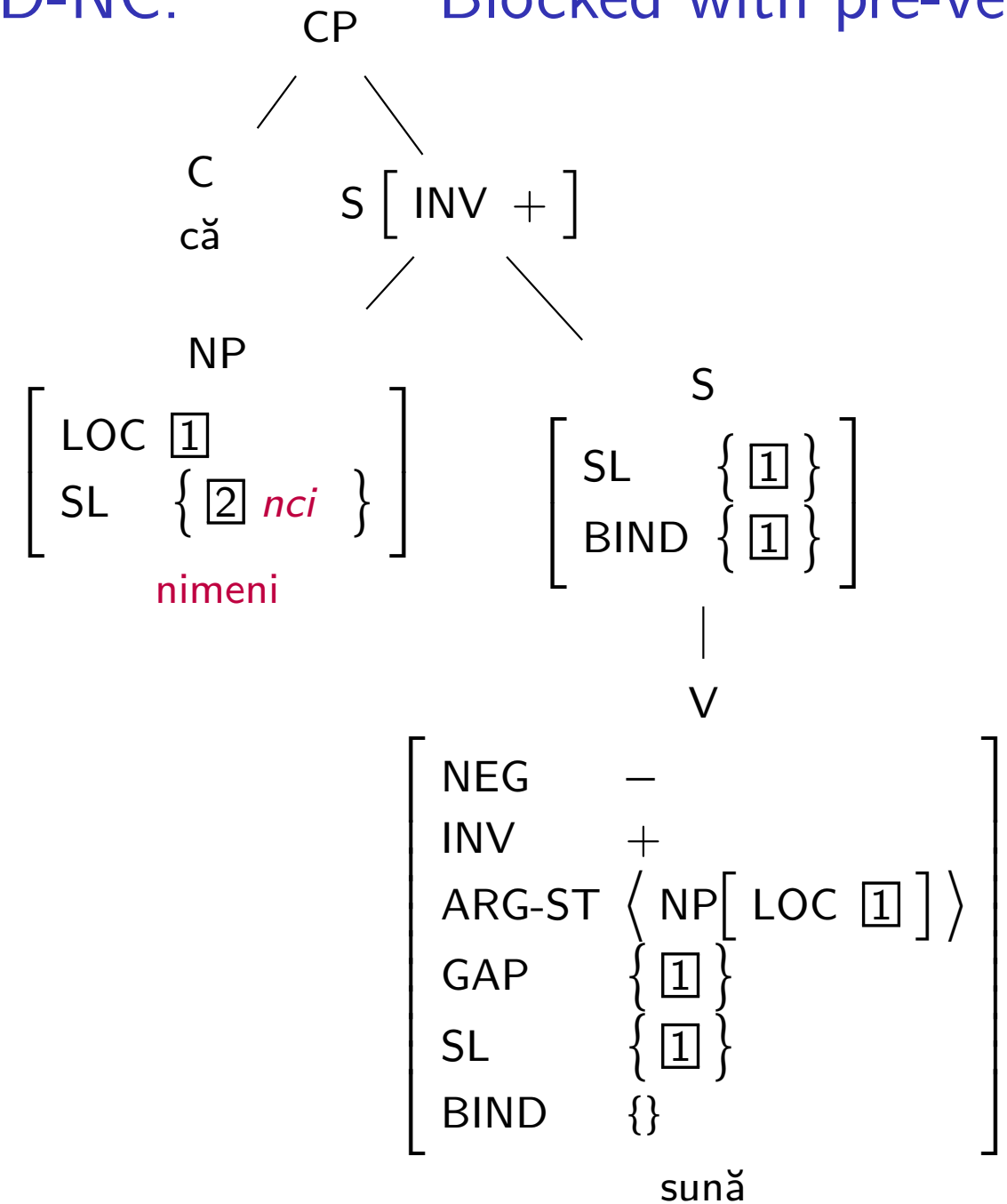
- A Filler-Head structure does not permit additional *local* objects in the head's SLASH value.
- The asymmetry follows if we assume that *că* clauses are inverted, i.e., have a post-verbal subject.
- Then, a pre-verbal subject must be a filler
- ...and blocks further extraction!

No LD-NC with pre-verbal neg-word

(37) * Nu cred [că nimeni a sunat].
not I.believe that nobody has called

- Since *că* clauses combine with inverted clauses (i.e., clauses with post-verbal subject), the pre-verbal element must be a filler.
- The landing site of a moved constituent indicates its maximal scope.
- I.e., the filler's negation must take scope in the embedded clause.
- I.e., the embedded verb is in the scope of a negation in its EX-CONT value.
- I.e., it must be $\left[\ \text{NEG}\ +\ \right]$ (Neg Criterion)

LD-NC: Blocked with pre-verbal neg-word



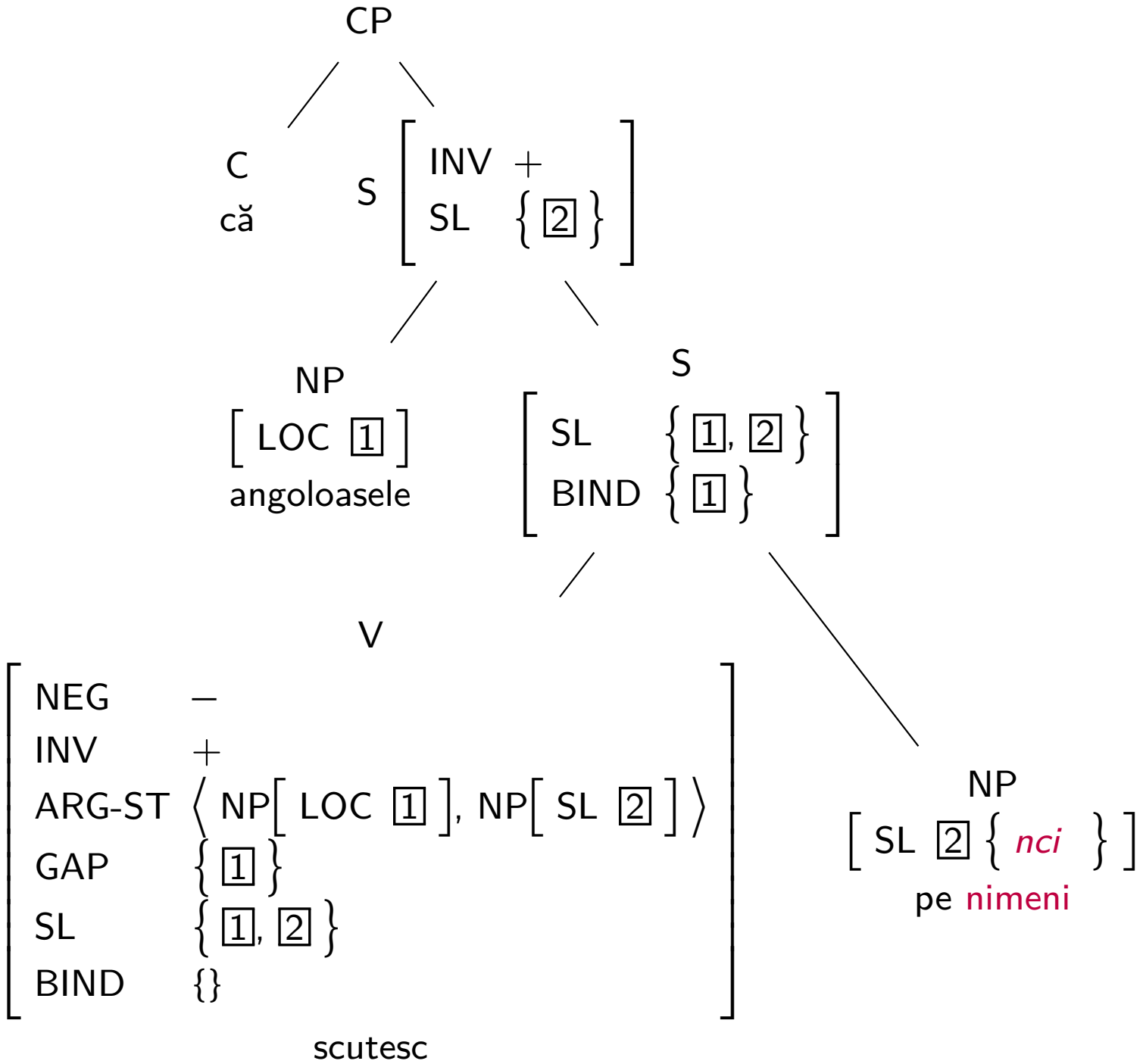
LD-NC with pre-verbal subjects and post-verbal neg-word

(38) nu cred [că angoasele scutesc pe nimeni de-a lungul
not I.think that fears.DEF spare DOM nobody in length.DEF
vieții]. (roTenTen21)
life.DEF.GEN

'I don't think that fears spare anyone during their life'

- The post-verbal neg-word is not moved. Therefore, its negation is not forced to take clausemate scope.
- The specification of the Head-Filler Phrase is compatible with an *nci* object percolating further from the head daughter.

LD-NC


CP
C
că
S
INV +
SL {2}
NP
[LOC 1]
angoloasele
S
SL {1, 2}
BIND {1}
V
NEG −
INV +
ARG-ST ⟨ NP[LOC 1], NP[SL 2] ⟩
GAP {1}
SL {1, 2}
BIND {}
scutesc
NP
[SL 2 { nci }]
pe nimeni

Other barriers for LD-NC

Non-bridge verbs:

- Not all matrix predicates allow for LD-NC.
- Verbs that do not allow for constituent extraction, do not allow for LD-NC either:

$$\left[\ \text{COMPS}\ \left\langle\ \ldots\text{S}\left[\ \text{SLASH}\ \{\}\ \right],\ \ldots\ \right\rangle\ \right]$$

- Inherently negative verbs (such as *a se îndoi* 'doubt') are of that type, too.

Other islands for extraction:

- Relative clauses, interrogative clauses, adjunct clauses, ...
- Analogous requirement of empty SLASH value

Conclusion

Summary

- LD-NC across finite clauses exists in Romanian.
- LD-NC is not restricted to Neg Raising readings.
- LD-NC depends on a morpho-syntactically negated matrix verb, i.e., it is a syntactic rather than a semantic phenomenon.
- Contrast between pre-verbal and post-verbal neg-words in LD-NC seems to be a novel observation.
- We use HPSG's SLASH mechanism to capture the parallelism with extraction.

Consequences

Romanian Negative Concord is only superficially like other negative concord languages:

- LD-NC absent in Slavic, including Bulgarian
- LD-NC different from other Romance languages (such as Spanish), where it is more of an NPI-licensing phenomenon.
- There is more variation in negative concord systems than expected!

Future refinements

- Need: Better understanding of the left periphery of embedded clauses.
- Pre-/post-verbal asymmetry also relevant for double negation readings Cristescu & Ionescu (2024)

(39) NIMENI nu moare niciodată.
nobody not dies never

a. 'Nobody ever dies' (Single Negation)
$\neg\exists x(\mathbf{pers}(x) \wedge \exists t\exists e(\mathbf{die}(e,x) \wedge \mathbf{at}(e,t)))$

b. 'Nobody never dies' (Double Negation)
$\neg\exists z(\mathbf{pers}(z) \wedge \neg\exists t\exists e(\mathbf{die}(e,x) \wedge \mathbf{at}(e,t)))$

Thank you for your attention!

Mulțumesc pentru atenție!

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