

## Negative exclamatives in Afrikaans: some initial thoughts<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

We consider the to date minimally discussed phenomenon of negative exclamatives in Afrikaans. Negative exclamatives superficially seem to be negative, when they are in fact positive exclamations. These structures therefore feature so-called *expletive negation*. Our goal is to illustrate some aspects of the phenomenon as it manifests in Afrikaans, and to demonstrate that Afrikaans's negative exclamatives seem well behaved when considered against a broader crosslinguistic backdrop.

**Keywords:** exclamatives, Afrikaans, expletive negation, true optionality

### 1. Introduction

The term *negative exclamative* refers to structures like (1):

- (1) *Hoe lank het jy nie geword nie!*  
how tall have you not become POL<sup>2</sup>  
“How tall you’ve become!/You’ve become so tall!”

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<sup>2</sup> The second *nie* element will be glossed POL(arity) to reflect the fact that it is a polarity-sensitive concord element, i.e. it does not represent an independent negative item. As first noted in Oosthuizen (1998), it is not clear that clause-final *nie* is specifically sensitive to formal **negation** as it may, in colloquial Afrikaans, surface in structures lacking a syntactically negative (i.e. negative concord-inducing) element. Consider (i):

- (i) *Ek kan tog (\*onmoontlik) alleen die werk doen (niez)!*  
I can surely impossibly alone the work do POL  
“Surely I can’t possibly be expected to do the work on my own!” (Oosthuizen 1998: 79)

Here the semantic power of the negation element seems to have been lost or altered (Portner and Zanuttini, 2000: 201). Contrast the regular negative declarative in (2), where the negation-signalling *nie*-elements combine to produce a Negative Concord structure, i.e. a structure that is genuinely negative, reflecting Afrikaans's Negative Concord character (see i.a. Oosthuizen 1998 for discussion):

- (2) *Jy is nie baie lank nie.*  
 you is not very tall POL  
 "You are not very tall."

This phenomenon is attested elsewhere, as already noted by Jespersen at the start of the 20th century (cf. Jespersen 1913, cited in Delfitto and Fiorin, 2004: 284; see also the latter source, Portner and Zanuttini 2000, and references cited therein). Its occurrence in Afrikaans has not been much remarked on to date, however: see Ponelis (1993: 482, (970b) for a single example, and Donaldson (1993: 416ff). Accordingly, the purpose of this short paper is, firstly, to offer some illustration of its manifestation in modern-day Afrikaans (section 2), and then to comment on the properties it shares with its counterparts in other languages (section 3).

## 2. Negative exclamatives in Afrikaans: an introduction to the empirical picture

Negative exclamatives in Afrikaans are compatible with a range of *wh*-elements, serving a range of functions, and they are not restricted to *hoe* ('how')-forms like that in (1). Consider the data in (3):

- (3) a. *Hoe lieflik is hierdie reën nie vandag nie!*  
 how lovely is this rain not today POL  
 "How lovely this rain today is!" (adjectival *hoe*-exclamative; cf. (1))
- b. *Hoe vinnig gaan die lewe nie verby nie!*  
 how fast goes the life not past POL  
 "How fast life passes us by!" (adverbial *hoe*-exclamative)
- c. *Wie ek nie vandag almal gesien het nie!*  
 who I not today everyone seen have POL  
 "The (range/type of) people I saw today!" (argumental *wie*-exclamative)
- d. *Wat mense nie alles doen om raakgesien te word nie!*  
 what people not all do INF.C noticed to become POL  
 "What people will do to be noticed!" (argumental *wat*-exclamative)
- e. *By wie hy nie al almal gekuier het nie!*  
 by who he not already everyone visited have POL  
 "The number of people he has dated!" (argumental *wh*-PP exclamative)

Negative exclamatives can, however, also be *wh*-less, as illustrated in (4):

- (4) *Is dit nie alte fraai nie!*  
 is that not all.too beautiful POL  
 “Isn’t that beautiful!”

Both *wh*- and polar interrogative structures seem to have a “further life” as negative exclamatives, then.

Three properties of the structures in (1), and (3-4) deserve comment here.

Firstly, it should be noted that the negative elements *nie ... nie* (“not ... POL”) do not produce a semantically negative exclamation: (1), for example, is not an expression of surprise or amazement at the addressee’s failure to have grown tall. Instead, it is an expression of surprise-amazement - or other affective sentiment - that could also be expressed by removing the negative elements from the structure. Consider in this connection the *nie*-less counterparts to (3) given in (5):

- (5) a. *Hoe lieflik is hierdie reën vandag!*  
 how lovely is this rain today  
 “How lovely this rain today is!” (cf. (3a))
- b. *Hoe vinnig gaan die lewe verby!*  
 how fast goes the life past  
 “How fast life passes us by!” (cf. (3b))
- c. *Wie ek vandag almal gesien het!*  
 who I today everyone seen have  
 “The people I saw today!” (cf. (3c))
- d. *Wat mense alles doen om raakgesien te word!*  
 what people all do INF.C noticed to become  
 “What people will do to be noticed!” (cf. (3d))
- e. *By wie hy al almal gekuier het!*  
 by who he already everyone visited have  
 “The number of people he has dated!” (cf. (3e))

Here we see that both the positive and the negative versions of a given superficially interrogative structure can take on what seems to be the same surprise-amazement or other affective reading. This is exactly the pattern also discussed by Delfitto and Fiorin (2014) for Italian and other languages (see section 3 for further comparatively oriented discussion).

The second property worth noting here relates to this first, namely the fact that there - at first sight at least - appears to be considerable optionality in the domain of Afrikaans (negative) exclamatives. More specifically, there appear to be structural alternations that do not correlate with (necessary) interpretive differences; in other words, we observe apparent free variation or true optionality, a phenomenon that has not received nearly the attention that it deserves, either in generative work or more generally. We have already seen that polarity alternations do not, at least in the cases considered above, seem to alter the meaning of the exclamative structures

under consideration here. Additionally, we observe in these structures a degree of seemingly interpretively vacuous Verb-Second (V2) versus V(erb)-final word-order variation. Consider again the examples in (3) and (5) above: while the (a) and (b) examples are V2, (c-e) are V-final. Strikingly, all the negative-containing examples in (3), with the exception of (a), are grammatical, regardless of whether they are V2 or V-final (in some cases, the V2 variant seems less marked than its V-final counterpart - (6b) is a case point; this is a point we return to below). The relevant facts are presented in (6):

- (6) a. *Hoe lieflik is hierdie reën nie vandag nie!*  
 how lovely is this rain not today POL  
 “How lovely this rain today is!” (cf. (3a))
- a'. \**Hoe lieflik hierdie reën nie vandag is nie!*
- b. *Hoe vinnig gaan die lewe nie verby nie!* (V2)  
 how fast goes the life not past POL  
 “How fast life passes us by!” (cf. (3b))
- b'. *Hoe vinnig die lewe nie verbygaan nie!* (V-final)
- c. *Wie ek nie vandag almal gesien het nie!* (V-final)  
 who I not today everyone seen have POL  
 “The people I saw today!” (cf. (3c))
- c'. *Wie het ek nie vandag almal gesien nie!* (V2)
- d. *Wat mense nie alles doen om raakgesien te word nie!* (V-final)  
 what people not all do INF.C noticed to become POL  
 “What people will do to be noticed!” (cf. (3d))
- d'. *Wat doen mense nie alles om raakgesien te word nie!* (V2)
- e. *By wie hy nie al almal gekuier het nie!* (V-final)  
 by who he not already everyone visited have POL  
 “The number of people he has dated!” (cf. (3e))
- e'. *By wie het hy nie almal gekuier nie!* (V2)

We return to the intonational properties of these structures below.

Turning to the positive counterparts of the examples in (6), we again see that both V2 and V-final variants are possible. Strikingly, however, intonational considerations are much more crucial here; we therefore present each of the following examples with an indication of the kind of stress-marking that would produce a well-formed positive exclamation (see also below for further discussion of the intonational properties of positive and negative exclamatives).

- (7) a. *Hoe LIEFLIK is hierdie reën vandag!*  
 how lovely is this rain today  
 “How LOVELY this rain today is!” (cf. (5a))
- a'. \**Hoe LIEFLIK hierdie reën vandag is!*
- b. *Hoe VINNIG gaan die lewe verby!* (V2)  
 how fast goes the life past  
 “How FAST life passes us by!” (cf. (5b))
- b'. *Hoe VINNIG die lewe verbygaan!* (V-final)
- c. *Wie ek VANDAG almal gesien het!* (V-final)  
 who I today everyone seen have  
 “The people I saw TODAY!” (cf. (5c))
- c'. *Wie het ek VANDAG almal gesien!* (V2)
- d. *Wat mense alles doen om RAAKGESIEN te word!* (V-final)  
 what people all do INF.C noticed to become  
 “What people will do to be noticed!” (cf. (5d))
- d'. *Wat doen mense alles om RAAKGESIEN te word!* (V2)
- e. *By wie HY al almal gekuier het!* (V-final)  
 by who he already everyone visited have  
 “The number of people he has dated!” (cf. (5e))
- e'. *By wie het HY al almal gekuier!* (V2)

While the V2 and V-final structures presented in (7) are both readily accepted by native-speakers as well-formed *wh*-exclamatives, it is important to note that the V2 alternant - which, of course, mirrors the form of *wh*-questions - is felt to be a type of rhetorical question; the same is not - as far as we can establish at this stage - so straightforwardly true for the V-final counterpart. This may relate to the fact that rhetorical questions as a type are more typically unembedded,<sup>3</sup> with the result that the word order associated with embedding in Afrikaans - V-final - does not so readily give rise to a rhetorical-question interpretation. To the extent that embedded rhetorical questions are possible - see (8-9) for some examples from English and Afrikaans - it may also be relevant that the productive availability of embedded *wh*-V2 in Afrikaans<sup>4</sup> decreases the frequency of V-final rhetorical questions introduced by *wh*-elements - see (9b) versus (9b'). In each of the following examples, the rhetorical question is bracketed:<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Caponigro and Sprouse (2007) on the grammar of rhetorical questions, and also Geoff Pullum's Language Log post at <http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/language-log/archives/003714.html> (last accessed 23 November 2017).

<sup>4</sup> See Biberauer (2017a) for recent discussion.

<sup>5</sup> The examples in (8) and (9a) were recorded by the first author.

- (8) a. *I repeatedly felt I wanted to respond to the questions that we were being asked for our "honest opinions" on by asking [if the Pope is Catholic]!*  
(in the context of a discussion where the speaker was describing a meeting dominated by questions that the speaker felt were loaded and thus not aimed at eliciting answers other than those the asker wanted to hear.)
- b. *I wonder [how many of them have actually tried to get from the main hall to Gate 49 in 8 minutes - even WITH one of those buggy-things]!*  
(in the context of a passenger who had been informed by airline staff that they could make it to their departure gate on time if they walked quickly, only to miss their flight despite having run all the way)
- (9) a. *Ek het eintlik gevoel ek wil vra [of hy ook dalk dink dat varkies I have actually felt I want ask if he also maybe think that pig.DIM vlerkies **het**!]!*  
wings.DIM have  
“I actually felt I wanted to ask him if he also possibly thought pigs could fly!”  
(in the context of a conversation where the speaker’s interlocutor had made a number of statements suggesting a fanciful take on reality.)
- b. *Ek wonder [hoe dikwels **kom** hulle met normale mense in aanraking]!*  
I wonder how often come they with normal people in contact  
“I wonder how often they come into contact with normal people?!”
- b'. *Ek wonder [hoe dikwels hulle met normale mense in aanraking **kom**]!*

What is central for our purposes here is the apparent discrepancy between V2- and V-final positive *wh*-exclamatives when it comes to the (ready) availability of a rhetorical-question reading: V2 positive *wh*-exclamatives are naturally interpreted with this reading, whereas it is less clear that that this is also true for V-final positive *wh*-exclamatives. And the same seems true for at least some of the negative exclamatives in (6). In respect of licensing rhetorical-question-type readings, then, V-final *wh*-exclamatives may be more restricted than V2 *wh*-exclamatives. This, in turn, may be interesting in the light of the parallelism between *wh*-exclamatives and rhetorical questions that has also been observed in other languages, with Delfitto and Fiorin (2014) explicitly constructing a theoretical account to accommodate the parallelisms in the semantics of these structures.

Before turning to the final property that we wish to highlight here, let us return to the case where the V2/V-final optionality unambiguously breaks down: copula-containing structures like (3/5a). As (10) shows, these structures are necessarily V2:

- (10) a. *Hoe lieflik is hierdie reën nie vandag nie!*  
how lovely is this rain today  
“How lovely this rain today is!” (cf. (3a))
- a' *\*Hoe lieflik hierdie reën nie vandag is nie!* (cf. (6a'))

- b. *Hoe lieflik is hierdie reën vandag!*  
 how lovely is this rain today  
 “How lovely this rain today is!” (cf. (5a))
- b' \**Hoe lieflik hierdie reën vandag is!* (cf. (7a’))

The examples in (10) are particularly important as they demonstrate that the V2/V-final alternation in this domain is a restricted alternation: there are circumstances where it breaks down and cannot apply. Probing the difference between (6-7)-type structures, which readily allow the alternation, and copula-containing structures like (10) therefore seems an important next step in understanding the formal make-up of *wh*-exclamative structures in Afrikaans.

Likewise likely to be informative in this respect is the last property we will consider in this article: the intonational profile of negative as opposed to positive *wh*-exclamatives. It is notable that negative *wh*-exclamatives seem to have a wider range of stress-placement options than their positive counterparts.<sup>6</sup> Let us firstly consider negative (1), repeated as (11):

- (11) a. *Hoe lank het jy nie geword nie!*  
 how tall have you not become POL  
 “How tall you've become!/You've become so tall!” (=1))
- b. *HOE lank het jy nie geword nie!*  
 c. *Hoe LANK het jy nie geword nie!*  
 d. *Hoe lank HET jy nie geword nie!*  
 e. *Hoe lank het JY nie geword nie!*  
 f. \**Hoe lank het jy NIE geword nie!*  
 g. \*/??*Hoe lank het jy nie geWORD nie!*  
 h. \**Hoe lank het jy nie geword NIE!*

A number of interesting properties emerge here. Firstly, we see that it is possible in this case to stress any element other than the sentential negation elements (11f, h). Some of these stress placements are readily judged by informants to produce the negative exclamative interpretation with which we are concerned here: (11c) and (11e), where the exclaimed-about property (here: length) and the subject are respectively stressed, are cases in point - a pattern which also seems to hold generally. By contrast, the negative-exclamative nature of (11b) and (11d), where the *wh*-element and the finite verb, respectively, are stressed, emerges more readily in the presence of discourse-marking elements of some kind. Consider (12) by way of example:

- (12) a. *Sjoe, en HOE lank het jy nie geword nie!*  
 wow and how tall have you not become POL  
 “Wow, and HOW tall you've become!”
- b. *En HOE lank het jy toe/ immers nie geword nie!*  
 and how tall have you then after.all not become POL  
 “And how tall didn't you end up becoming?!”

<sup>6</sup> The data presented here reflect the authors' native-speaker intuitions, which have been independently verified by three further native speakers (one in their twenties, one in their forties, and one in their sixties).

Here we see the naturalness-enhancing role of elements that explicitly mark the exclamative's connection to preceding discourse (*en* and *toe*) and/or to the speaker's perspective (*sjoe*, *immers* and also *en* and *toe*, both of which reflect the speaker's sense of the "connectedness" of what they are remarking on to a bigger picture). Since *wh*-exclamatives are, by their nature, **responses** to some kind of contextual trigger, linguistic or other, we might expect the same effect to emerge if we add elements of this type to the auxiliary-stressed structures in (11d); and this is indeed the case:

- (13) a. *Sjoe, en hoe lank HET jy nie geword nie!*  
 wow and how tall have you not become POL  
 "Wow, and how tall you ended up becoming!"
- b. *En hoe lank HET jy toe/ immers nie geword nie!*  
 and how tall have you then after.all not become POL  
 "And how tall didn't you end up becoming?!"

In V2 negative *wh*-exclamatives, then, stress on the elements most directly associated with main-clause interrogative-marking - the fronted *wh*-element and the auxiliary - evidently does not instantiate the kind of unmarked option that a property- or subject-stressing *wh*-exclamative does; at the same time, however, it is clear that such structures are, under appropriate discourse conditions and particularly where the nature of their connection to the discourse is overtly marked, compatible with an exclamative interpretation of the kind we are concerned with here.

No amount of modification will rescue the structures in (11f-h), however. That *nie* is unstressable is unsurprising given the expletive nature of negation in negative *wh*-exclamatives. As we will see in section 3, it is never possible in languages that have negative *wh*-exclamatives to reinforce the negative element (see the discussion around (24-25)). And the non-stressability of final *nie* in these structures is likewise unsurprising, given the general restriction of *nie*<sub>2</sub>-emphasis to structures in which the speaker wishes to highlight *nie*<sub>2</sub> for metalinguistic reasons (see Biberauer 2009). The ill-/dubious well-formedness of the participle-stressed structure in (11g) instantiates an example-specific rather than a more general fact; where the lexical verb is meaningfully emphasizable, participle-stress would also be fine. Consider (14) in this connection:

- (14) *Hoe lank het jy nie (daaraan) geSKRYF nie!*  
 how long have you not there.on written POL  
 "How long you sat WRITING on that!"  
 (in the context of someone who dedicated a significant, and, to the speaker, quite incredible, amount of writing time to completing a given task)

V2 negative *wh*-exclamatives, then, are compatible with a number of distinct stress-placement patterns.<sup>7</sup> The extent to which these options straightforwardly correlate with interpretations that track the placement of that stress is a topic that seems worthy of systematic attention. What is evident at this stage already, however, is that the V-final counterpart of these V2-structures permit fewer stress-placement options:

<sup>7</sup> The attentive reader will note that we have only considered primary stress here. It seems to us that the picture may become even more interesting if secondary stress is added to the picture.



- (15) a. *Hoe lank jy nie geword het nie!*  
 how tall you not become have POL  
 “How tall you've become!”
- b. *\*HOE lank jy nie geword het nie!*  
 c. *Hoe LANK jy nie geword het nie!*  
 d. *\*Hoe lank jy nie geword HET nie!*  
 e. *Hoe lank JY nie geword het nie!*  
 f. *\*Hoe lank jy NIE geword het nie!*  
 g. *\*Hoe lank jy nie geWORD het nie! But: Hoe lank jy nie geSKRYF het nie!*  
 h. *\*Hoe lank jy nie geword het NIE!*

As comparison between (11) and (15) shows, the options available in V-final negative *wh*-exclamatives are a proper subset of those available in V2 negative *wh*-exclamatives. More specifically, the two unmarked V2 options - the property- and subject-stress structures in (15c) and (15e) respectively - are again possible in the V-final structure, and, additionally, also the participle structure (see the discussion around (14) above). The marked V2 options are all impossible as V-final variants.<sup>8</sup> Thinking in terms of our true optionality challenge, then, it seems that closer investigation of the stress-placement possibilities associated with these structures might also lead to greater insight into the nature of the alternation in play here. It seems to be the case that V2 *wh*-exclamatives permit a wider range of stress-placement options than V-final *wh*-exclamatives.

Turning, finally, to the positive *wh*-exclamatives, we obtain the following picture:

- (16) V2 positive *wh*-exclamatives
- a. *Hoe lank het jy geword!*  
 how tall have you become  
 “How tall you've become!”
- b. *\*HOE lank het jy geword!*  
 c. *Hoe LANK het jy geword!*  
 d. *Hoe lank HET jy geword!*  
 e. *Hoe lank het JY geword?!*  
 f. *Hoe lank het jy \*geWORD/geSKRYF!*
- (17) a. *Hoe lank jy geword het!*  
 how tall have you become  
 “How tall you've become!”
- b. *\*HOE lank jy geword het!*  
 c. *Hoe LANK jy geword het!*  
 d. *\*Hoe lank jy geword HET!*  
 e. *Hoe lank JY geword het! (sounds like start to ... is net verstommend!)*  
 f. *Hoe lank jy \*geWORD/geSKRYF het!*

<sup>8</sup> In the case of stressed *HET* (“have”)-containing (15d), this is likely to relate to the more general unstressability of *het* when it surfaces clause-finally (see Conradie 2007, 2016, and Zwart, this volume). See also (16d) as opposed to (17d) in the main text.

Here we see, then, that V2 and V-final positive *wh*-exclamatives share the same range of stress-placement patterns, and also that both replicate the patterns found in V-final negative *wh*-exclamatives (cf. (15)). Worth noting here is the fact that *wh*- (16b) and finite-verb stress (16d) most naturally deliver question interpretations. In the former case, this is a necessary interpretation, but in the latter, discourse-oriented modification of the kind illustrated in (12-13) again demonstrates that a *wh*-exclamative structure is also possible. (18) shows this:

- (18) a. *Hoe lank HET jy geword!*  
 how tall have you become  
 “How tall you've become!”
- b. *Sjoe, en hoe lank HET jy toe geword!*  
 wow and how tall have you then become  
 “Wow, and how tall you've ended up being!”

The picture that seems to emerge, then, is that V-final *wh*-exclamatives are more restricted than V2 *wh*-exclamatives in relation to both interpretive/LF (cf. (6-9) above) and phonological/PF properties. Additionally, depending on our interpretation of the copula facts (cf. (10) above), V-final *wh*-exclamatives may also be subject to syntactic restrictions that are not in play in V2 *wh*-exclamatives.

Before concluding our first-pass description of seemingly significant aspects of Afrikaans negative-marked exclamatives, let us briefly consider the non-*wh* exclamative-type introduced in (4) above. (19) gives the key (see note 7) intonational options for this structure (?! here signals the necessary rhetorical-question reading associated with these structures):

- (19) a. *IS dit nie alte fraai nie?!*  
 is that not all.too beautiful POL  
 “Isn't that beautiful?!”
- b. *Is DIT nie alte fraai nie?!*  
 c. *Is dit nie ALTE fraai nie?!*  
 d. *Is dit nie alte FRAAI nie?!*  
 e. *\*Is dit nie alte fraai NIE?!*

Stress-placement, then, seems maximally free (taking into account our earlier discussion of the circumstances under which final *nie* can be stressed). In the absence of the negation elements, however, the picture changes radically:

- (20) a. *\*IS dit alte fraai?!*  
 b. *?Is DIT alte fraai?!*  
 c. *\*Is dit ALTE fraai?!*  
 d. *?Is dit alte FRAAI?!*

In other words, the initial-copula (20a) and degree-emphasising (20c) options disappear, while the other options remain available, albeit as rather unnatural forms. Strikingly, the latter become fully acceptable with the addition of the kind of discourse-/speaker-oriented elements that also surface very naturally in relevant *wh*-exclamatives (see (12), (13) and (18) above):

- (21) a. *En is DIT nou (vir jou<sup>9</sup>) alte fraai?!*  
and is that now for you all.too beautiful  
“And is THAT beautiful, or what?!”
- b. *Is dit nou (vir jou) alte FRAAI?!*  
is that now for you all.too beautiful  
“Now is THAT beautiful!”

In both the *wh*- and the non-*wh* exclamatives we have considered here, then, it seems that the presence of interpretively vacuous negative elements has an important grammatical role to play, one that can, to some extent at least, also be covered by discourse-/speaker-oriented elements. This is interesting in light of the proposal – also made in Delfitto and Fiorin (2014; and see also i.a. Abels 2005, Yoon 2011 and Makri 2015) – that expletive negation like that seen above involves negation that is structurally higher than regular negation. Speaker-/here-and-now-oriented elements are certainly structurally higher than regular negation in Afrikaans (see i.a. Cinque 1999, and Wiltschko 2017, and Heim and Wiltschko 2017 for discussion and references), which suggests that further investigation of the properties shared by ‘expletive negation’ and such elements may be a worthwhile component of future investigation into these structures.

### 3. Afrikaans negative exclamatives against a crosslinguistic backdrop: some initial observations

Our objective in this section is to give a brief summary of the respects in which Afrikaans negative exclamatives exhibit properties that have also been identified in the negative exclamatives attested in other languages. Unless indicated otherwise, our discussion draws exclusively on the properties highlighted in Delfitto and Fiorin (2014). Importantly, these authors highlight the fact that the properties to be discussed below are also shared by rhetorical questions; the precise relation between (negative) exclamatives and rhetorical questions therefore deserves further attention in future work (cf. also the discussion in section 2 above).

A number of properties point to the fact that the negation in negative exclamatives is rather different to that employed in “real” negation structures. Consider, firstly, the way in which the non-negative orientation of Afrikaans’s negative exclamatives emerges from the way in which they are reported in direct speech:

- (22) *Hoe vervelig was daardie klas nie?!<sup>10</sup>* (=Hoe vervelig was daardie klas?!)  
how boring was that class POL  
“How boring was that class?!”

- Q: *Wat het jy gesê?*  
what have you said  
“What did you say?”

<sup>9</sup> *Vir jou* is a non-core, ethical dative-type use that is very common in colloquial Afrikaans. See Biberauer (2017b) for some discussion.

<sup>10</sup> This structure features only a single negation element owing to the effects of haplology, which deletes final *nie* when it would surface adjacent to another *nie*-element (see Biberauer 2008 for discussion and references).

A: ... *dat die klas vervelig was.*  
 that the class boring was  
 “... that the class was boring.”

A negative exclamation is therefore reported as a positive statement in indirect speech. Negative statements are, of course, reported with fully preserved negation:

(22) *Die klas was nie vervelig nie.*  
 the class was not boring POL  
 “The class was not boring.”

Q: *Wat het jy gesê?*  
 what have you said  
 “What did you say?”

A: ... *dat die klas nie vervelig was nie.*  
 that the class not boring was POL  
 “... that the class was boring.”

We find the same phenomenon in other languages permitting negative exclamatives. Consider the German example in (23):

(23) a. *Wie groß sie nicht ist!* (= *Wie groß sie ist!*) (Roguska 2007: 5)  
 how big she not is  
 “How big she is!”

Q: *Was sagst du?*  
 what say you  
 “What are you saying?”

A: ... *dass sie groß ist*  
 that she big is  
 “... that she is big.”

That the negation that surfaces in negative exclamatives is, despite superficial appearances, not in fact identical to that found in “real” negation structures like (2) can also be shown in various other ways. Firstly, the usually stressable initial negation element appears to be phonologically weak and cannot be stressed in the way that it may be in declaratives or interrogatives. Contrast the declarative and interrogative structures in (24a) and (24b) with the negative exclamation in (24c) in this regard:

(24) a. *Hy doen NIE vir haar alles nie (ander mense sit ook handjie by).*  
 he does not for her all POL other people put also hand.DIM by  
 “He DOESN’T do everything for her; other people also lend a hand.”

- b. *Wat het hy NIE vir haar gedoen nie?*  
 what have he not for her done POL  
 “What has he NOT done for her? (You’re suggesting there’s something he’s neglected to do, but, to my mind, he couldn’t be doing more)”
- c. \* *Wat hy NIE alles vir haar sal doen nie!*  
 what he not all for her will do POL  
 ≠ “Isn’t it incredible what all he will do for her!”

The same pattern emerges in other negative exclamative-containing languages. We once again illustrate on the basis of German, a language which permits a further comparison of interest in the present context:

- (25) a. *Wen Peter nicht alles eingeladen hat!* (= *Wen Peter alles eingeladen hat!*)  
 who Peter not all invited has  
 “Incredible who all Peter has invited!”
- b. \* *Wen Peter NICHT alles eingeladen hat!*
- c. *Wen Peter alles NICHT eingeladen hat!*  
 who Peter all not invited has  
 “Incredible the people Peter DIDN’T invite (when they absolutely should have been on the invitation list)!”

Here we see that unstressed *nicht* is fine in the negative exclamative structure in (25a), with the stressed counterpart of this negator producing ungrammaticality, just like Afrikaans *NIE* in (24c) did. Importantly, however, stressed *nicht* is fine where it follows *alles* and contributes its usual negative meaning, as in (25c). Exactly the same effect is observed in Afrikaans:

- (26) a. *Wat Johan nie/\*NIE alles geles het nie!*  
 what Johan not not all read has POL  
 “Incredible what all Johan has read!”
- b. *Wat Johan alles nie geles het nie!*  
 what Johan all not read has POL  
 “Incredible what all Johan hasn’t read!”

Here, the exclamative in (26a) expresses the speaker’s admiration at how well read Johan is. The exclamative in (26b), on the other hand, expresses horror regarding the literature that Johan has failed to engage with.<sup>11</sup> Significantly, the structure in which *alles* precedes *nie* (26b) is also the one in which *alles* and *nie* are phonologically independent, each (potentially) bearing independent stress; this structure thus produces regular negation, with that negation being outscoped by *alles*, as the surface word order would predict.<sup>12</sup> Essentially, everything here is as one would expect it to be if each sentential component functions compositionally in accordance

<sup>11</sup> *Johan* in (26a) could thus potentially denote the recipient of the festschrift in which this article appears, while *Johan* in (26b) self-evidently could not.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Kayne (1994), whose Linear Correspondence Axiom specifies that asymmetric c-command maps onto precedence; if X precedes Y, therefore, it must c-command it, and is thus structurally higher than Y.

with its structural location. By contrast, *nie* and *alles* in the structure in which *nie* precedes *alles* (26a) do not function compositionally as the negative meaning disappears entirely; furthermore, *nie* and *alles* form a single phonological unit in this case, with *nie* not being able to carry focal stress. Just like the German examples in (25), then, this Afrikaans minimal pair suggests that the semantic and prosodic peculiarities of the expletive negation found in negative exclamatives are associated with structures in which the sentential negator - clause-medial *nicht* and *nie* respectively - occupies a structurally higher position than that which it occupies in regular negative structures, usually thought to be somewhere within the vP-domain (see i.a. Haegeman 1992, Biberauer 2008, and Breitbarth 2014).

While speaker-hearer domains are typically associated with the (supra-)CP domain (see again Wiltschko 2017, and Heim and Wiltschko 2017 for discussion and references), it is clear that Afrikaans *nie* and German *nicht* remain clause-medial, even when they contribute an expletive meaning (see again (25) and (26)). Interestingly, this medial location is compatible with the emerging idea that syntactic structure is, in various senses, fractal (see Biberauer 2017c,d for discussion and references).<sup>13</sup> One interpretation of this fractal perspective identifies phasal domains - at both the phrasal and the word-level (see Marantz 2007) - as domains exhibiting the recurring structure schematised in (27) (see again Biberauer 2017d for more details):

- (27) **Speaker-Hearer encoding** (outermost phase edge)
- qp
- Phase head** (e.g. C, v, D, n, etc.)
- qp
- Contentful phase-head complement** (e.g. T, V, Num, N, etc.)
- qp

In terms of (27), we would thus expect to find a speaker-hearer-oriented domain not just at the outermost clausal left periphery (i.e. above CP), but also at the “internal” clausal phase edge, i.e. at the periphery of vP.<sup>14</sup> That such a speaker-hearer-oriented domain exists in German and Afrikaans, and in West Germanic more generally, is suggested by the distribution of modal particles and other speaker-hearer-oriented particles, which various authors have identified as being located either within the low IP- or the high vP-domain (see i.a. Cardinaletti 2011, Struckmeier 2014, Thoma 2016, and Biberauer 2017d for discussion). We therefore propose that the regular negator occupies a position at the VP-edge (cf. Biberauer 2008 for argumentation to this effect), while the expletive negation element is located within this speaker-hearer-oriented vP-peripheral domain. The details of this analysis, we leave to further research.

<sup>13</sup> **Fractal**: a curve or geometrical figure, each part of which has the same statistical character as the whole. They are useful in modelling structures (such as snowflakes) in which **similar patterns recur at progressively smaller scales** ... (from Wikipedia - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fractal>; highlighting is that of the authors).

<sup>14</sup> We would also expect to find a speaker-hearer domain at the word-level phase edge, a case that we leave aside here. Recent work by Norbert Corver, including some of what is included in his contribution to the present volume, seems to us to point to speaker-hearer marking at the word-level phase edge; see also Biberauer (2017d) for some further suggestions.

#### 4. Conclusion

That Afrikaans negation constitutes a crosslinguistically unusual phenomenon, deserving systematic investigation, is by now well established. What we have sought to do in this article is highlight a to date barely discussed Afrikaans negative-containing structure: exclamatives that overtly contain both of Afrikaans's little negation words without these elements, however, seeming to contribute anything to the meaning of the exclamation. Section 2 sought to introduce some of the properties of these so-called *negative exclamatives*. Our focus here was particularly on those properties that seem to us likely to facilitate greater insight into the nature of this phenomenon, and also into the notoriously challenging questions surrounding apparent true optionality phenomena. In the latter connection, we see that Afrikaans negative exclamatives seem to exhibit the kind of restricted alternations that have led to important insights in other optionality domains. Section 3, in turn, aimed to demonstrate some respects in which the peculiarities of this expletive negation structure mirror peculiarities found in negative exclamatives elsewhere.

Counter-intuitive though Afrikaans's negative exclamatives might initially appear, then, it seems clear to us that more fine-grained investigation of these non-negative negative-marked structures and the various kinds of little words that, at this point, rather mysteriously regulate their well-formedness would constitute a very worthwhile avenue for research.

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