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Rowlett, P

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Authors	Rowlett, P
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On non-overt specifiers[1]
By PAUL ROWLETT
University of Salford

ABSTRACT

I consider non-overt specifiers, in particular two contexts in which they have been posited. First, SpecIP: in finite clauses in null-subject languages, SpecIP is standardly assumed to be occupied by a null pronominal (little *pro*) (Rizzi 1982a). Second, SpecNegP: in negative clauses in languages whose sole overt negative marker is associated with Neg°, SpecNegP is claimed to be occupied by a null polarity operator (OP) (Haegeman 1995). A specifier, like a complement, is a syntactic dependant of a head. I argue that the null hypothesis is that a head does not have a dependant unless it needs one; a head is capable of 'doing its job' *on its own*, and will therefore be dependant-free, *unless* it is in some relevant sense lacking, whereby the dependant provides what is missing. In this light, I review the evidence for non-overt specifiers in SpecIP/Spec-NegP and show that the evidence does not stand up to close examination, and that the facts can be accounted for by assuming that the relevant heads can 'do their job' without a specifier, and that, consequently, their projections not only have no overt specifier, but actually have no specifier position, either, and therefore no non-overt specifier.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article is about specifiers. While there is some disagreement over the precise definition of specifier (see, e.g., Cann 1999), and over whether a theory of syntax needs to recognise specifiers (see, e.g., Cormack 1999), it is intuitively clear what is behind the notion in syntactic terms, and phrasal constituents of various kinds are—within one version of Chomskyan syntax or

another—commonly deemed to 'function as the specifier of' a head, within a structure defined more or less locally (see Adger et al. 1999a for background discussion). The article represents an extension of work on issues initially raised in work on French negation (Rowlett 1996, revised as Rowlett 1998b), issues having to do with the exact nature of the relationship between a head and its specifier, more specifically, within a functional projection:

(1)   Within a structure like (2), what is the relationship between the functional head (F) and its specifier YP?

(2)
```
              FP
            /    \
        YP         F′
                 /    \
               F        . . .
```
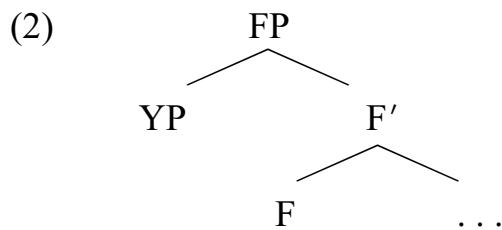
The starting point of the present investigation is the question of whether the nature of this relationship can be captured in all its subtlety on the basis of commonly held assumptions, for example, those in (3):

(3)   a. A functional head which does not have an overt specifier has a non-overt specifier.
      b. A specifier agrees with its head.

To allow increased subtlety in the characterisation of spec–head relationships, one proposal I make in Rowlett (1998b) is that spec–head agreement should be viewed, not in blanket terms of strict feature identity, but rather in terms of compatibility between the features borne by the specifier and those borne by the head: '. . . spec–head agreement is in fact nothing more than spec–head *anti-dis*agreement, guaranteeing feature compatibility rather than identity' (p. 111).[2] In Rowlett (1997) I exploit this modified view of spec–head agreement to account for the difference between negative-concord and non-negative-concord languages.[3]

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2. Feature compatibility between heads and specifiers is a notion also taken up by Cann 1999.

3. One a priori plausible mechanism by which the features of heads and specifiers might contribute to the interpretation of the phrase as a whole is unification. See, for example, Cann 1999: 25. While such an approach is

The purpose of the current investigation is to address a wider range of such spec–head issues, more specifically, whether specifiers are actually present in functional structure as much as is often thought. My aim is to challenge the notion that, in certain functional projections, where no *overt* specifier is merged, a *non-overt* specifier is merged, which enters into the same kind of relationship with the relevant head (i.e., spec–head agreement, appropriately defined) as do overt specifiers. In short, I question the extent to which syntacticians need to posit non-overt specifiers.

I do not question the existence of specifiers *per se*. (Cf. Cormack 1999, who disposes of the theoretical notion of specifier altogether.) I accept that certain *overt* phrasal constituents, which are crucially *not* complements (Anderson 1997: 132–145), can be characterised as in (4), and that such phrases can be said to 'function as the specifier of' the head.

(4)   Specifiers:
    a. A specifier occupies a structurally defined position (see section 2) with respect to the relevant head; and/or,
    b. it enters into a clearly defined unique relationship with that head.

Indeed, I follow the common practice of analysing canonical subjects as occupying SpecIP (Chomsky 1981), as in (5), from French, and adverbial negative markers as occupying SpecNegP (Pollock 1989), as in (6), also from French:

(5)   [$_{IP}$ [$_{Spec}$ Robert] fume   . . .]   (French)
          R .   smokes
      'Robert smokes.'

(6)   Robert ne$_i$ fume   . . . [$_{NegP}$ [$_{Spec}$ pas] t$_i$ . . .]   (French)
      R.   NEG smokes   NEG
      'Robert doesn't smoke.'

In my discussion of the necessity of non-overt specifiers, I concentrate on the contexts in (5) and (6), namely, SpecIP (in finite clauses) and SpecNegP. I hope to consider the equally relevant SpecCP and SpecDP, not to mention SpecIP in non-finite clauses, in later work. First, then, with respect to the *pro-*

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compatible with the analysis of negative concord in Rowlett 1997, it means that heads and specifiers have equal status within phrases. See footnote 7 for an alternative view.

drop phenomenon (Rizzi 1982a), I consider the conventional approach to null-subject languages which claims that, in 'subjectless' finite clauses, SpecIP, the canonical subject position, is nevertheless created by merger/movement of a non-overt subject proform, as in the Spanish example in (7), in which *pro* occupies the position which, in the French example in (5), is occupied by an overt subject.

(7)   [$_{IP}$ [$_{Spec}$ *pro*] fuma   . . .]   (Spanish)
                    smokes
      'He/She smokes.'

Second, with respect to sentential negation (Haegeman 1995), I consider the notion that, where a unique overt marker of negation is associated with Neg°, the SpecNegP position is nevertheless created in negative clauses, and occupied by a non-overt operator: OP, as in the example in (8)—again from Spanish—in which OP occupies SpecNegP, that is, the position which, in the French example in (6), is occupied by the overt adverbial negative marker *pas*.

(8)   Juan no$_i$ fuma   [$_{NegP}$ [$_{Spec}$ OP] t$_i$ . . .]   (Spanish)
      J.   NEG smokes
      'Juan doesn't smoke.'

Having considered these contexts, I come to the conclusions in (9):

(9)   a. The null hypothesis is that a head has no dependant (specifier or complement) unless it needs one. There is therefore no a priori need to assume that a non-overt specifier is merged: (i) in IP in subjectless finite clauses in null-subject languages; or, (ii) in NegP in negative clauses in languages whose sole negative marker is merged under Neg°.
      b. Under considerations of economy, and unless and until there is good reason to believe otherwise, that is, some 'need' can be identified (Rowlett 1998a; see section 5.3), it should be assumed that these functional projections do *not* contain a specifier.
      c. These functional projections, which contain no overt specifier, and have previously been deemed nevertheless to contain a non-overt specifier, are in fact specifier-free.

The article is structured as follows: in sections 2 and 3 I discuss the notion of specifier and its function; in section 4 I review the argument that IP

and NegP always contain a specifier, even if that specifier is not always overt; in section 5 I suggest that, on both theoretical and empirical grounds, the argument is unconvincing. My conclusions are drawn together in section 6.
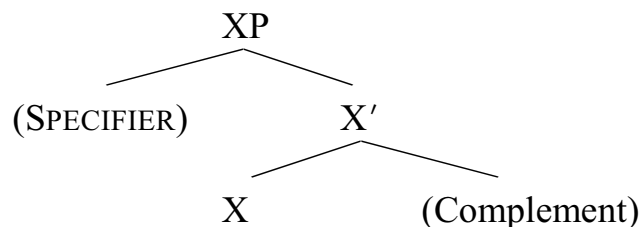

2. WHAT ARE SPECIFIERS?

Before considering the extent to which specifiers might be thought to exist, I clarify, in this section, what I understand by the term specifier. Within the generative tradition, the term has covered two quite distinct notions (Hoekstra 1991: 21ff.; Anderson 1997: 132ff.). First, there is the semantic notion of (pre-)modifier, like *too* and *safely* in (10):

(10) Semantic specifiers: a. *too* strong   b. *safely* arrive

Second, and of relevance here, there is the syntactic notion of a structural position which, for example, might be the landing site for movement (Adger et al. 1999a).[4] The modern configurational use of the term specifier, referring to the sister of X′, is as old a X′ theory itself, going back at least as far as Chomsky (1970) and Jackendoff (1977). By syntactic specifier, I mean the highlighted position in the familiar configuration in (11):

(11) Syntactic specifiers:

```
                        XP
                 _____/  _____
                /                 \
          (SPECIFIER)              X′
                              ____/  \____
                             /            \
                            X          (Complement)
```

Not all scholars have been prepared to accept a configurational definition of syntactic specifier. Hoekstra (1991), for example, rejects such an approach. For him, there is an unwelcome redundancy—see the disjunctive characterisation of specifiers in (4)—between the configurational definition of specifiers (the specifier of F is the YP sister of F′) and a second definition of specifiers, based on the notion of agreement (the specifier of F is the YP which enters into a special kind of 'agreement' relationship with F/F′). Given that

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4. Note in this respect the contrast between the analyses of the French negative marker *pas* in (6) offered in Pollock 1989 and Rowlett 1993: for the former, *pas* is generated in SpecNegP; for the latter, it is generated lower in the structure and raised into SpecNegP.

spec–head agreement in one form or another (see the comments above) is needed for independent reasons, Hoekstra (p. 24) removes the redundancy by abandoning the configurational notion of specifier, relying uniquely on the agreement definition, instead (see also Stowell 1981 and Stuurman 1985 and attempts to reduce the two-tier X' framework to a (specifier-less) single-tier one): "A specifier is an adjunct which agrees with the head." Thus, specifiers are assimilated to adjuncts in being sisters of FP. Specifiers differ from adjuncts in respect of their relationship with F/F′: specifiers agree with F/F′ (YP in (12)); adjuncts do not (ZP in (12)).

(12) Specifiers versus adjuncts:

```
                                    FP
                           _____/  _____
                          ZP                   FP
                          |              _____/  _____
                    (Adjunct)          YP_i             FP
                                        |              _/  \_
                                  (Specifier)        F_i    . . .
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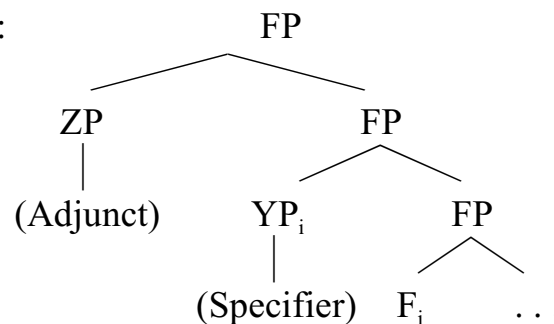
For my purposes, Hoekstra's issue is irrelevant. What survives—and what is important here—is that, one way or another, the specifier can be defined.[5] I now turn to the function of specifiers.

3. WHAT ARE SPECIFIERS FOR?

In this section I consider the purpose of specifiers. It is possible to imagine a communication system with neither specifiers nor complements. Ignoring phonology altogether, it is difficult to see how such a system would be recognisably 'syntactic' in any meaningful sense; the 'syntactic objects' generated by the system would be atomic heads, and the 'vocabulary' of the system would be as large as the number of messages that the system's users could send. Such a communication system would be vastly inferior to human language. Maybe the call systems used by various primate species correspond to such *a*syntactic communication. In comparison, the evolution of a communication system with a combinatorial syntax—for example, one with the

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5. Duffield 1999: 127 talks of 'a distinguished, usually peripheral, phrasal position uniquely related to some subjacent head H through agreement, predication, or (indirectly through) selection.'

minimalist operation Merge (Berwick 1998)—offers clear Darwinian advantage, in that it increases the number of messages which can be sent, without a concomitant increase in the size of the vocabulary (see also Pinker and Bloom 1990; Jackendoff 2002). It opens the door to head–dependant relations such as those between a head and its complement/specifier.

Nevertheless, the communicative advantage offered by combinatorial syntax comes from heads *being able* to combine with dependants; there is no advantage to be gained from heads *being forced* to combine with them. Indeed, if dependants *were* compulsory, a syntactic structure would never end! In the case of complements, merging a head with a phrasal sister is a possibility which *can* be exploited, but which is not *necessarily* exploited. The very notion of 'complement' encodes the idea that the relevant phrase (the argument) is merged if and only if the feature composition of the head (the functor) is, in some sense, wanting, for example, if it has a theta role to be discharged or a feature to be checked. In such a case, the complement completes what would otherwise be incomplete. However, if the head is not 'incomplete' or 'wanting' in any relevant respect, no complement is needed and no complement is presumably merged. Certainly, this is the spirit in which Merge is presented (Chomsky 1995). Thus, whether or not a phrase contains a complement—and, if it does, what kind—depends on the properties of the head of the phrase, via the mechanism of selection (comp features in Radford's 1997 textbook presentation).

Note that, even in the versions of X' theory taught to beginning undergraduate syntax students, it is pointed out that, within lexical phrases, dependants (complements and specifiers) are optional, and that whether or not they exist is determined by the properties (= needs) of the lexical head, X. For example, whether or not a V has a dependant depends on the thematic properties of V: some Vs do, others do not. The categorial status of a word as a V does not in and of itself indicate whether or not it has a dependant.[6] In section 3, I suggest that this traditional wisdom should be applied to functional phrases, too. Whether or not a functional projection has a dependant, a specifier in particular, depends on the properties (= needs) of the relevant functional head. Some functional heads need a specifier and therefore have one, others do

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6. Duffield 1999: 127 distinguishes between specifiers in lexical projections, which are present if and only if they are thematic, and specifiers in functional projections, which are either absent or occupied by abstract operators. Ideally, of course, no principled distinction should exist. One way of unifying specifiers in lexical and functional projections is to assume that their presence/nature depends, in some suitably abstract way, on the properties of the head.

not need one and do not have one.

Similarly, I assume that a dependency holds between heads and specifiers: if a head needs a specifier, it attracts one which is appropriate in view of its needs via merge or move; if a head does not need a specifier, no specifier is attracted.[7] As for the mechanism responsible for this dependency (cf. Radford's spec features), Hoekstra—who, as we saw in (12), dispenses with the configurational definition of specifiers in favour of one based on agreement— suggests further that it is by the very mechanism of agreement that heads are able to determine the properties of their specifiers:

(13) The specifier generalisation:
      "Categorial restrictions on specifiers follow from the nature of the type of agreement that is involved" (Hoekstra 1991: 28, (42)).

I suggest that Hoekstra's specifier generalisation has crucially to be understood in such a way that, in addition to determining the features of the specifier, the nature of the agreement also determines whether there is a specifier at all, in

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7. Annabel Cormack (personal communication) has suggested a more traditional two-way dependency between heads and specifiers, and ventures that two-way dependency may be the defining characteristic of specifiers. (See the 'criterion' approach to spec–head configurations within functional projections adopted, for example, by Haegeman and Zanuttini 1991 as well as Cann's 1999 analysis of specifiers as 'secondary heads'.) It seems to me, however, that the nature of a head's 'dependency' on its specifier is crucially different from the nature of a specifier's 'dependency' on the head. (Cf. Plunkett's 1996 attempt to disassociate the two clauses of Haegeman-and-Zanuttini-style criteria.) A head is licensed via its phrasal projection: $I°$ is licensed because $C°$ selects an IP as its complement. $I°$ is not licensed by its specifier; rather, depending on the (poverty? of the) feature composition of $I°$, $I°$ may (or may not) need a specifier. If $I°$ does not need a specifier, there will be no specifier; $I°$ will get along just fine without one. In contrast, the specifier's dependency on the head is fundamental: the specifier has no status independently of the head that it functions as the specifier of. Put another way, a specifier is defined in relation to its head, while a head is defined independently of its specifier. In short, in head–specifier relations, the head has the upper hand. It is in this sense that the dependency is *not* two-way.

other words, encompasses notions of selection/checking/θ-role assignment.[8]

In summary, as we consider complements and specifiers as the two archetypal manifestations of syntactic dependency, we are left with the view that both are potentially available, but that it makes little sense to assume that they are necessarily exploited in all contexts. In section 5, I suggest that, by virtue of its featural make-up, a head can, on its own, 'do its job', without the need for a specifier (it has no strong uninterpretable feature that needs to be checked), and that it must then be assumed, until and unless empirical considerations suggest otherwise, that the head's projection does not contain a specifier. It is in this light that claims for non-overt specifiers must be assessed.

4. CLAIMS FOR NON-OVERT SPECIFIERS

In this section, I consider the two traditional contexts, illustrated in (7) and (8) and repeated here as (14) and (15), in which it has been claimed that specifier positions are projected and occupied by non-overt phrases, namely, finite Spec-IP and SpecNegP:

(14) $[_{IP} [_{Spec} pro]$ fuma . . .] (Spanish)
                 smokes
    'He/She smokes.'

(15) Juan no$_i$ fuma $[_{NegP} [_{Spec} OP] t_i . . .]$ (Spanish)
    J. NEG smokes
    'Juan doesn't smoke.'

4.1. SpecIP
The contrast illustrated in (16a–d) between Italian and Spanish, on the one hand, and English and French, on the other, has been made compatible with the supposedly universal Extended Projection Principle (EPP)[9] in (17), by assuming that, where (16a, b) do not have an overt subject, the canonical

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8. Head–complement 'selection' and head–specifier 'agreement' are to be understood as context-specific labels for more general checking configurations.

9. Within Minimalism, the EPP is recast as a universal uninterpretable D/N feature on I°. While the original empirical motivation for the EPP is clear, in both its original version and its minimalist reincarnation, it is nevertheless conceptually rather suspicious, to say the least.

subject position, SpecIP, is nevertheless projected and occupied, as in (18a, b), by a non-overt proform (Rizzi 1982a).

(16) a. (Io) parlo italiano.   (Italian)
      b. (Yo) hablo español.   (Spanish)
      c. *(I) speak English.   (English)
      d. *(Je) parle français.   (French)
          'I speak Italian/Spanish/English/French.'

(17) Extended Projection Principle (Chomsky 1982: 10):
      S → NP – AUX – VP

(18) a. *pro* parlo italiano.   (Italian)
      b. *pro* hablo español.   (Spanish)
         (= (16a, b))

Rizzi relates the (un)availability cross-linguistically of *pro* to the properties of inflection, suggesting that, in null-subject languages like Italian (and, presumably, Spanish), the richness of finite I° optionally (see section 5.1) endows it with clitic-like pronominal properties, realised formally as a [+PRONOUN] feature (but see Jaeggli and Safir 1989a and Huang 1989). In other words, in *pro*-drop contexts, inflection *is* a subject clitic which identifies the relevant φ features of the subject in SpecIP, which can therefore be non-overt, as in (19):

(19)   IP   (Rizzi 1982a)

      Spec   I′

        pro   I°   . . .
           [+PRONOUN]
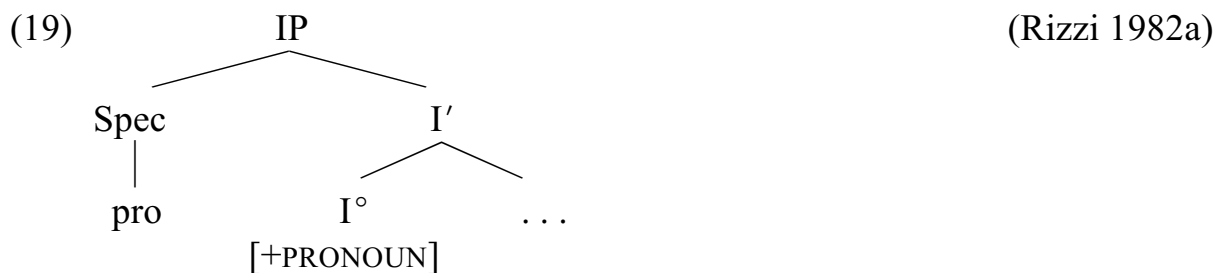
The analysis of null subjects in terms of a non-overt pronominal makes it possible to account for three properties which seem to co-distribute with the availability of null subjects (but see Guijarro-Fuentes 1998), namely, those in (20):

(20) Properties co-distributing with null subjects:
      a. the absence of overt expletive proforms;
      b. the possibility of postverbal subjects; and,
      c. the absence of *that*-trace filter violations.

- *Absence of overt expletives*: Given that, in a null-subject language, a subject *can* be omitted, it *will* be omitted (by economy) unless there is some pragmatic reason why it should be overt (e.g., contrast). Since an expletive cannot be contrastive, there will never be good reason for it to be overt. For economy reasons, then, expletives have to be non-overt, hence the ungrammaticality of (21b):

(21) a. *pro* piove. (Italian)
  b. *Ciò piove.
    it rains
    'It's raining.'

- *Free inversion*: Free inversion in null-subject languages (22a) is the equivalent of expletive *there* sentences in English (22b):

(22) a. *pro* ha telefonato sua moglie. (Italian)
      has telephoned your wife
    'Your wife phoned.'

  b. There arrived three students.

  Whereas in English the expletive is overt, in null-subject languages it is covert, for the reasons given above.

- *Absence of* that–*trace effects*: *That*–trace is ungrammatical in non-null-subject languages (23a), but grammatical in non-subject languages (23b):

(23) a. Who$_i$ do you think (*that) t$_i$ called?

  b. Chi$_i$ credi   che *pro*$_i$ abbia   telefonato t$_i$? (Italian)
    who believe:2SG that   have:SUBJ telephoned
    'Who do you think called?'

  While there is little agreement on the details underlying the ungrammaticality of (23a),[10] the conventional view is that the problem centres on the attempt to extract the underlying subject of the embedded clause (*who*), from the embedded SpecIP over an overt complementiser.

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10. See Roussou 2002 for a recent account of the *that*–trace effect within minimalism.

(The sentence becomes acceptable if the complementiser is non-overt.)
The Italian counterpart in (23b) is acceptable because the surface string
can be produced without extracting *chi* from the embedded SpecIP.
Rather, *chi* can be extracted for the free-inversion position illustrated in
(22a).

I return to this cluster of properties in section 5.1, but now I turn to the case that
has been made of non-overt SpecNegP.

4.2. SpecNegP

I assume, following Haegeman (1995: 107), that clauses are marked as negative
by the presence of an abstract feature [+NEG] in an extended VP domain:
"Negative sentences are sentences which minimally have a NEG feature
associated with a functional head of the extended projection of V, i.e., of the
clausal domain." As for the precise locus of such a feature, the claim that an
independent syntactic projection—variously labelled NegP, PolP and ΣP—
houses [+NEG] is supported by languages like French, Fɔn, Navajo, West
Flemish and Breton, which have bipartite negative marking, whereby one of the
two negative markers is head-like in its morpho-syntactic properties and the
other is phrase-like (Rowlett 2001). Under a NegP analysis of sentential
negation, the head-like negative marker is generated under Neg°, and the
phrase-like negative marker is associated with SpecNegP, as in (24):

(24)		Neg°	SpecNegP	
	a. French	ne	pas	(Pollock 1989; Rowlett 1993)
	b. Fɔn	ă	má	(da Cruz 1992, reported in DeGraff 1993: 87)
	c. Navajo	da	doo	(Speas 1991: 394–395)
	d. West Flemish	en	nie	(Haegeman 1995)
	e. Breton	ne	ket	(Stephens 1993: 397–398; Borsley et al. 1996: 67)

However, in languages like Spanish, Italian and Russian, with a single, head-
like (= Neg°) negative marker, it has been claimed (for example, by Haegeman
1995) that a fully-fledged, two-tier NegP is still projected—including a
specifier position, which is deemed to be occupied by a non-overt operator,
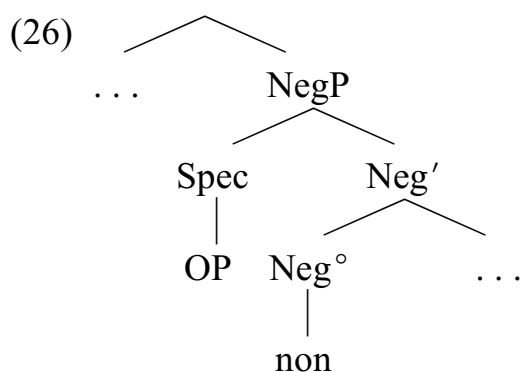OP,[11] as in the Spanish example in (8)/(15).

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11. There is disagreement as to whether this non-overt operator is actually
negative itself, i.e., specified [+NEG]. The issue is, however, irrelevant to the

The empirical evidence adduced to support the claim that in such contexts OP is merged as the specifier of NegP comes from selective opacity effects— inner islands (Ross 1984) or negative islands—as illustrated by the contrast between the examples in (25a, b), from Italian (Rizzi 1990):

(25) a. Perché hai   detto che Gianni è partito?
          why   have:2SG said that Gianni is left
          'Why did you say that Gianni left?'

      b. Perché *non* hai   detto che Gianni è partito?
          why   NEG have:2SG said that Gianni is left
          'Why didn't you say that Gianni left?'

The example in (25a) is ambiguous between an interpretation in which it is your reason for saying something that is sought, and one in which it is Gianni's reason for leaving that is of interest. Assuming that the A′ wh phrase *perché* has moved to sentence-initial position from an underlying position adjoined to the IP with which it is associated, then the ambiguity of (25a) hinges on the idea that *perché* has two potential underlying positions. The first is adjoined to the matrix IP, the second to the embedded IP. The interpretation you get depends on which underlying position you choose.

In contrast to (25a), the example in (25b) is unambiguous: what is sought is the reason why you failed to say something; (25b) is not asking for the reason why Gianni left. In other words, *perché* cannot have moved from an underlying position adjoined to the embedded IP. The question is, Why? The answer given in Rizzi (1990) exploits a non-overt polarity element occupying SpecNegP, commonly noted as OP (operator), as in (26).

(26)

```
        /\
 . . .      NegP
           /    \
        Spec     Neg′
         |      /    \
        OP   Neg°     . . .
               |
              non
```

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discussion at hand.

To be precise, OP in SpecNegP in the matrix clause in (25b) counts as a potential antecedent for the A′ trace left after movement of *perché*. The structural contrast between (25a, b), and how it crucially hinges on the presence of a non-overt operator in SpecNegP, is illustrated in (27):

(27) $[_{CP}$ ... $[_{IP}$ $[_{IP}$ ... $[_{IP}$ $[_{IP}$ ... $]]]]]$
   a. (25a)   Perché$_i$ t$_i$ t$_i$
   b. (25b)   Perché$_i$ t$_i$ OP non   *t$_i$

In (27a)/(25a), no potential closer A′ antecedent intervenes between *perché* and its trace, irrespective of which IP *perché* is underlyingly adjoined to, hence the interpretive ambiguity. In (27b)/(25b), in contrast, if the trace of *perché* is adjoined to the lower IP, there *is* a potential closer A′ antecedent, namely, OP, the non-overt polarity operator in SpecNegP in the matrix clause. This derivation is therefore ruled out by Relativised Minimality. The only alternative derivation for (27b)/(25b) is therefore for *perché* to have moved from an underlying position adjoined to the *matrix* IP, hence the lack of ambiguity. Crucially, such a Relativised-Minimality account of the contrast between (27a, b) relies on OP, the non-overt polarity operator deemed to occupy SpecNegP: "[t]his approach to negative islands therefore involves the additional assumption that the SpecNegP position is filled *even when it contains no lexical material*" (Acquaviva 1996: 295, my emphasis); "... we assume that there is a non-overt contentive operator in the relevant spec–head relation with *non*. We propose that the non-overt operator occupies SpecNegP" (Haegeman 1995: 200).

    Brown and Franks (1995) give the examples in (28) and (29) from colloquial Russian—which has a head negative marker *ne*—to show that the same contrast appears here, too. A long-distance construal is possible in (28), but not (29):

(28) Gde$_i$ ty   skazal, čto Ivan ukral den'gi t$_i$?   (Colloquial Russian,
     where you said   that Ivan stole money   Brown 1999: 25, (18))
     'Where did you say Ivan stole the money?'

(29) *?Gde$_i$ ty $[_{NegP}$ $[_{Spec}$ OP] ne skazal, čto Ivan ukral den'gi t$_i$] ?
     where you   NEG said   that Ivan stole money
     'Where didn't you say Ivan stole the money?'   (Brown 1999: 25, (17))

    Haegeman (1995) (see also Haegeman and Zanuttini 1991) explain the presence of an operator in SpecNegP by means of the Neg Criterion in (30).

(30) The Neg Criterion:
    a. Each Neg X° must be in a spec–head relationship with a Neg operator.
    b. Each Neg operator must be in a spec–head relationship with a Neg X°.

Not only does the Neg Criterion account for the non-overt operators responsible for the Relativised-Minimality effects above, but Haegeman (1995) also uses it to explain movement of n words into spec–head configurations with negative heads in a variety of contexts, e.g., negative inversion in English in (31) and Neg movement to SpecNegP in West Flemish in (32):

(31) Never would I do that.

(32) a. * . . . da Valère [ketent   [me   niets   ]] *en-* was.
              that Valère   satisfied   with nothing   NEG was

      b. . . . da Valère [me   niets   ]ᵢ [ketent   tᵢ] *en-* was.
              that Valère with nothing   satisfied   NEG was
          ' . . . that Valère wasn't satisified with anything.'

      Finally, in Rowlett (1996: ch. 3; 1997; 1998b: ch. 3) I used the non-overt operator posited in SpecNegP to formally account for the phenomenon of negative concord, more specifically, to relate preverbal Neg° negative markers with postverbal n words, as in (33):

(33) Juan noᵢ ha visto a nadieᵢ.   (Spanish)
      Juan NEG has seen to NO ONE
      'Juan hasn't seen anyone.'

Rather than assuming what would be a rather bizarre binding relationship between Neg° and the n word (heads do not usually bind XPs), it is proposed that the relationship be mediated by OP, as follows: Neg° appears in a spec–head agreement relationship with OP; OP unselectively A′ binds the n word, as in (34) (modified from Rowlett 1998b: 121, (51)):

(34)

```
            NegP
          /      \
      Spec_i      Neg′
        |        /    \
       OP     Neg°      . . .
              |            \
             no            XP_i
           [+NEG]           |
                          nadie
                         [+NEG]
```
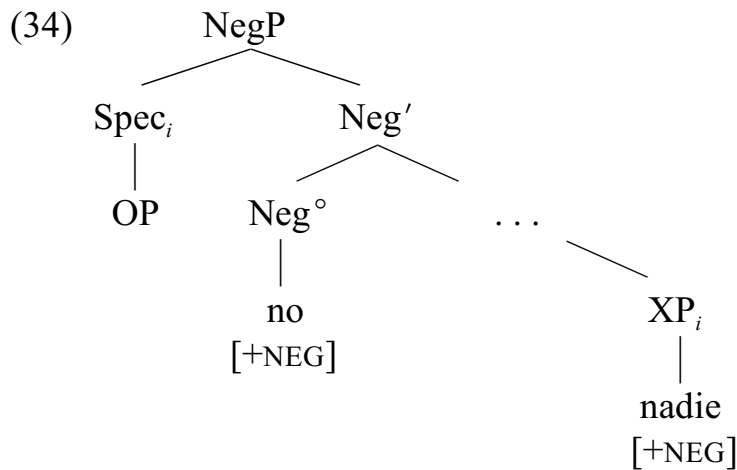
Thus, OP in SpecNegP, like *pro* in SpecIP, is argued to be a useful abstract device for explaining a number of facts.

5. ARE NON-OVERT SPECIFIERS REALLY NEEDED?

Here, I consider alternative analyses of the *pro*-drop phenomenon (section 5.1) and 'empty' SpecNegP positions (section 5.2), analyses which do not rely on positing non-overt constituents. In section 5.3 I consider non-overt specifiers more generally, suggesting that there may nevertheless be contexts in which they need to be posited.

5.1. SpecIP
The claim that the canonical subject position is always syntactically realised—overtly or covertly—has traditionally been attributed to Chomksy's (1982) EPP, re-analysed in minimalist work as a formal D/N feature, universally present on I°, and universally strong. Such a feature can only be checked in a spec–head configuration, that is, if an overt DP moves, or if an expletive like *pro* is merged, to create a specifier position.

  The traditional *pro* analysis is not without problems. An initial objection to it can be raised on the grounds of its optionality: the inflectional head I° *optionally* counts as a pronominal clitic. When it does, it licenses *pro* in Spec-IP. When it does not, a regular DP moves to SpecIP. Yet, optionality is not welcome in any theory, and is decidedly unwelcome in minimalism.[12]

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12. A different—but equally unwelcome—kind of optionality is invoked for *pro* drop by Bresnan and Mchombo 1987 (reported in Van Valin and LaPolla 1997: 331–2) within Nichol's 1986 head-marking-versus-dependant-marking

However, there is an alternative. Alongside the traditional *pro* approach, it has recently been argued that a universally strong EPP feature on I° does not *entail* a universally projected SpecIP position. Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (1999) (henceforth, A&A)[13] suggest that UG allows for the possibility of the strong EPP feature on I° being checked *without* a spec–head configuration and, therefore, without SpecIP. For them, the broad parametric contrast between null-subject and non-null-subject languages is not whether SpecIP needs to be occupied by an *overt* XP, but whether SpecIP is needed at all. A null-subject language is not so much one in which SpecIP is projected but can be occupied by a non-overt subject, as one in which the position simply doesn't exist.[14]

An interesting consequence of A&A's analysis of the *pro*-drop phenomenon is that the position occupied by an *overt* preverbal subject in a null-subject language cannot be SpecIP. The authors adduce various kinds of evidence suggesting that (rather than occupying SpecIP) overt preverbal subjects in null-subject languages are actually clitic left dislocated (pp. 99–102), occupying some position within the left periphery of Rizzi (1997). First, various constituents—adverbial PPs (35) and clauses (36)—can intervene between overt subjects and the finite verb (in I°) in a way that—parenthetical intonation aside—is not possible in non-null-subject languages like English, in which the subject is in SpecIP:

(35) a. O Janis   *xtes   meta apo poles prospathies* sinandise ti   Maria.
         the John-NOM yesterday after from many efforts   met   the Mary-ACC
         'John finally met Mary yesterday.'   (A&A's (13))

      b. *John *after many efforts* has met Mary.

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distinction. Where no overt subject is present, the agreement morphology counts as a core argument. But where an overt subject *is* present, it is this subject that counts as the core argument, while the agreement morphology is, well, mere agreement. What is unwelcome is that agreement morphology has a different status depending on whether or not an overt subject is present. Such a contingency is absent from the proposals made here. Thanks to Delia Bentley for referring me to this literature.

13. The initial discussion in this section relies heavily on A&A.

14. See section 5.3 for initial discussion of the finer details of the kind of cross-linguistic and diachronic variation there is. Thinking of the null-subject parameter in terms of a simple, two-way [±*PRO* DROP] 'switch' is an idealised simplification of reality.

(36) a. . . . epidi   o   Janis   *an erthi i   Maria*   tha figi.
           because the John-NOM if   comes the Mary-NOM FUT leave
       '. . . because if Mary comes, John will leave.'   (A&A's (14))

   b. * . . . because John *if Mary comes* will leave.

These ordering possibilities suggest, according to A&A, that the preverbal
overt subjects in Greek in (35a) and (36a) do not occupy SpecIP.
       Second, overt preverbal subjects in Greek are interpreted differently from
such subjects in English. To be precise, preverbal Greek subjects are interpreted
as partitive or specific, while English subjects are ambiguous in that an
existential interpretation is also possible:

(37) Enas heretise ti   Maria.   (A&A's (15a))
      one   greeted the Mary-ACC
      'A certain person/one of the people greeted Mary.'
      ≠ 'Someone greeted Mary.'

According to the authors, these interpretive differences suggest that the
position of the indefinite subject in Greek is not the same as the position—
SpecIP— of an indefinite subject in English. (See below for facts from Spanish
and Catalan which suggest that, here too, overt preverbal subjects are
interpreted differently from postverbal subjects.)
       Third, the scope properties of indefinite preverbal subjects in Greek do
not match those of such subjects in English. While both relative scope
possibilities are available in the English example in (38a), in the Greek example
in (38b) the subject necessarily has wide scope with respect to the object:

(38) a. A student filed every article.
        $\exists x$ (x student) $\forall y$ (y article) (x filed y)
        $\forall y$ (y article) $\exists x$ (x student) (x filed y)

   b. Kapjos fititis   arhiothetise tahe   arthro.   (A&A's (16a))
      some   student-NOM filed   every article
      $\exists x$ (x student) $\forall y$ (y article) (x filed y)

The obligatory wide scope of the subject in the Greek example in (38b)
suggests, again according to the authors, that it does not occupy SpecIP.
       Finally, A&A use the Catalan data in (39) from Montalbetti (1984) as
further evidence suggesting that preverbal subjects in null-subject languages do

not occupy SpecIP. The relevant contrast between (39a, b) is that the *pre*verbal proform in (39a) cannot be interpreted as a bound variable, while the *post*verbal one in (39b) can. (Note that if *ells* in (39a) were subscripted j, the example would be grammatical.)

(39) a. *Tots els estudiants$_i$ es pensen que ells$_i$ aprovaran.   (A&A's (20))
          all   the students   think   that they will-pass
          'All the students$_i$ think that they$_i$ will pass.'

     b. Tots els jugadors$_i$ estan convencus que guanyaran ells$_i$.
        all   the players   are   convinced that will-win   they
        'All the players$_i$ are convinced that they$_i$ are the ones who will win.'

Following Sola (1992) and Barbosa (1994), A&A suggest that it is only in (39b), i.e., when postverbal, that the subject occupies an A position (namely, its underlying SpecVP position). In contrast, the preverbal subject in (39a) occupies an A′ position, i.e., not SpecIP.

The notion that the preverbal 'subject' position in null-subject languages is not SpecIP, but rather some higher position with distinct semantico-pragmatic properties, is supported by the Spanish data in (40), taken from Zagona (2002: 49–50). In answer to the neutral question in (40a), a *presentational* predicate is required, that is, one which does not presuppose the existence or presence of its subject.[15] The judgements in (40b–e) are therefore significant. If the preverbal subject position in Spanish were the common-or-garden (that is, non-presuppositional) SpecIP position, the pre- and postverbal subjects in (40b–e) would be equally accepted. However, they are not: the postverbal subjects in (40b, d) are felicitous, while the preverbal ones in (40c, e) are not.

(40) a. ¿Qué pasó?
          what happened
          'What happened?'

     b. Empezó la   resistencia.   c. ??La resistencia empezó.
        started   the resistance   the resistance started
        b, c: 'The resistance started.'

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15. See also Zagona 2002: 208–213 and references there, especially Zubizarreta 1998.

d. Salió   el sol.   e. ??El sol salió.
   came-out the sun   the sun came-out
   d, e: 'The sun came out.'

I therefore conclude that the preverbal subjects in (40c, e) are *not* in SpecIP, but some higher position.

   Summarising, A&A (1999) argue that preverbal subjects in null-subject languages occupy, not SpecIP, but some higher position. Thus, in null-subject languages, SpecIP *never* contains overt material. A&A go on (pp. 102–104, sec. 4.2) to argue that, in fact, SpecIP simply is not projected in these languages and, consequently, is not occupied by an expletive *pro*, either. They argue, for example, that the kind of definiteness effect, illustrated in (41), familiar from non-null-subject languages, allowing overt expletives together with postverbal thematic subjects (A&A's (23)), are *not* found in null-subject languages, as shown for Greek in (42).

(41) a. There arrived a man/*the man/*every man.   (English)

    b. Il   est arrivé un homme/*l'   homme.   (French)
        EXPL is arrived a man/   the man

    c. Er   heeft iemand/*Jan een huis   gebouwd.   (Dutch)
        EXPL has someone/Jan a   house built

(42) Efase ena pedi/   o Jorgos/   kathe filos mu   (Greek)
     arrived a   child-NOM/the George-NOM/every friend mine   (A&A's (24))
     'A child/George/every friend of mine arrived.'

Chomsky's (1995) analysis of the definiteness effect illustrated in (41) is based on the assumption that the overt expletive is a D head and that its associate— the postverbal thematic subject—is the complement NP of the D head (NumP according to Lyons 1994). The necessary *in*definiteness of the NP is then expected. If the difference between EXPL-V-S in a non-null-subject language and *pro*-V-S in a null-subject language—compare (43a) and (43b)—hinges on nothing more than the (c)overtness of the expletive, A&A reason, the null hypothesis must be that the syntactic properties of *pro* will be identical to those of the overt expletive. In other words, the same definiteness effect found in (41) would be expected in (42). The fact that the same effects are *not* found leads A&A to conclude that *there is no* pro in (42); in other words, SpecIP is not projected.

(43) a. EXPL-V-S   (e.g., There arrived a man.)
    b. *pro*-V-S   (e.g., *pro* fuma un hombre.)

A&A's claim that there is no SpecIP and no *pro* in null-subject languages raises the issue of checking the EPP feature, which the authors assume is universally present on finite I° and universally strong. Thus, the absence of SpecIP in null-subject languages is not due to a weak EPP feature (cf. McCloskey 1996 for Irish): the EPP feature is strong in null-subject and non-null-subject languages alike, and therefore needs to be checked in overt syntax. In non-null-subject languages, checking is possible because a DP moves to, or merges in, SpecIP, producing a spec–head configuration suitable for checking. Null-subject languages are crucially different. Here, the strong EPP feature is checked, not in a spec–head configuration, but, rather, in a head-adjunction configuration, itself the result of V-to-I movement. The reason why this possibility is restricted to null-subject languages is essentially the same as the one given by Rizzi (1982a), namely, the intrinsically (pro-)nominal nature of inflection in null-subject languages. The difference between Rizzi's original application of the idea and A&A's is that, for Rizzi, the [+PRONOUN] feature on the verb in I° licenses *pro*, which in turn satisfies the EPP, while, for A&A, the [+PRONOUN] feature on V° can *itself* check the EPP feature on I°. A spec–head configuration (= SpecIP = *pro*) is not therefore needed in A&A's analysis; hence, SpecIP is not projected on economy grounds. Within the terms of the discussion in section 3, this means that I° in null-subject languages (once V° has raised to it) is capable of 'doing its job': it does not *need* a specifier and therefore does not *have* a specifier. Summing up, A&A offer an analysis of null-subject languages in which SpecIP is not only phonologically null, it is radically null: the position does not exist.

I return now to the question of how the account of null subjects deals with the supposed cluster of properties associated with the parameter given in (20) at the end of section 4.1, and repeated here more fully in (44):

(44) The null-subject parameter:
    a. Null subjects
    b. Absence of expletives
    c. Free inversion
    d. Absence of *that*–trace filter violations

- *Null subjects*: The availability of 'null subjects'—now an inappropriate term—is no longer attributed to *pro*. Instead, it is related to checking theory. The possible absence of an overt subject is due to the presence of

an appropriate feature on the finite verb which allows the strong EPP feature on I° to be checked within a head-adjunction configuration following V-to-I movement. SpecIP is not needed and therefore not present.

- *Absence of expletives*: The absence of expletives in null-subject languages is now expected because there is no position for them to be merged at. The position occupied by thematic preverbal subjects is not SpecIP, but a higher position with the distinct pragmatic force of clitic left dislocation (for example, topicalisation, or some other pragmatically motivated mechanism). Such pragmatic force is incompatible with expletives, and their absence is therefore expected. (For discussion of the discourse/ pragmatics of preverbal subjects in languages like Italian, see Adger 1996.)

- *Free inversion*: Under the view that, in null-subject languages, SpecIP is not projected, 'free inversion'—again, now an inappropriate term—is the expected phenomenon: the thematic subject remains in SpecVP. It is now the 'non-inverted' subjects which need an explanation, and such an explanation is arguably given by the pragmatics.

- *Absence of* that–*trace filter violations*: With respect to the *that*–trace phenomenon, it is possible to maintain essentially the traditional analysis, in other words, relate it to the availability of 'free inversion'.[16] The presence of *that*–trace effects in non-null-subject languages like English can indeed be attributed to the movement of the contents of SpecIP leftwards over an overt C°, as in (45a). Similarly, the reason why such effects are *not* found in null-subject languages like Italian, as in (45b), is that extraction does not take place from SpecIP, but from SpecVP.

(45) a. Who$_i$ did you say (*that) t$_i$ was coming?

    b. Quien has   dicho que viene?   (Spanish)
       who   have:2SG said that comes
       'Who did you say was coming?'

5.2. SpecNegP

I turn now to the case which has been made to support the claim that, in

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16. This is not without problems. The government-and-binding/principles-and-parameters account of the '*that*–trace' filter relied crucially on government, a notion which is absent from minimlism. See Cyrille-Thomas 2002 for relevant discussion. For a minimalist account of *that*–trace see Roussou 2002.

structures like (8), SpecNegP is occupied by a non-overt operator, OP. Here, too, I argue that the claim does not bear scrutiny. Consider first the phenomenon of expletive negation, for example in French. As is the case in a number of languages, the Neg° negative marker in French, *ne*, can appear, optionally, in a number of semantically non-negative contexts, e.g., the complement of adversative predicates and comparatives, as shown in (46) (see also Battye, Hintze and Rowlett 2000: 238):

(46) Expletive negation in French   (Rowlett 1998b: 27–28, (57), (58a))
    a. Je doute qu' il *ne* soit   là.
       I   doubt that he *ne* be:SUBJ there
       'I doubt he's there.'

    b. Marie est plus grande que *n'* est son frère.
       Marie is more tall   than *ne* is her brother
       'Marie is taller than her brother is.'

    c. Elle a   peur que tu *ne* sois   là.
       she has fear that you *ne* be:SUBJ there
       'She's worried you might be there.'

Significantly with expletive uses of *ne*, the kind of inner island effect which Rizzi (1990) identified (see section 4) does not occur, as shown in (47):

(47) a. Pourquoi crains-tu   qu' elle *ne* dise   qu' elle t'   aime?
       why   fear   you that she *ne* say:SUBJ that she you loves
       'Why are you afraid she might say she loves you?'
                              (Rowlett 1998b: 32, (71))

    b. Comment crains-tu qu' il *ne* se   comporte?
       how   fear   you that he *ne* REFL behaves
       'How do you fear he will behave?'   (Haegeman 1995: 161, (5b))

The question in (47a) can be construed as a request *either* for the reason why she loves you *or* for the reason why she might say something *or* for the reason why you are afraid. In other words, the form is compatible with all three interpretations; a long-distance construal is possible, despite the presence of *ne* in an intervening clause.

(48) $[_{CP}$ ... $[_{IP}$ $[_{IP}$ ... $[_{IP}$ $[_{IP}$ ... $[_{IP}$ $[_{IP}$ ...]]]]]]]]

     Pourquoi$_i$ t$_i$ t$_i$ ne   t$_i$ (= (47a))

Similarly, the sentence-initial wh phrase in (47b) can be construed with either predicate.

     In Rowlett (1998b: 32ff.) I argue that the French Neg° *ne* is not in and of itself [+NEG]. Rather, where it appears in a negative clause, the source of the negation is elsewhere, namely, a [+NEG] operator in SpecNegP which, via Dynamic Agreement, endows *ne* with the feature [+NEG]. An analysis of so-called 'expletive' *ne* which therefore immediately suggests itself is one whereby *ne* in Neg° appears without a [+NEG] operator in SpecNegP: with no operator, there's no source of the [+NEG] feature, and the 'expletive' interpretation is expected. Significantly for the data in (47), an analysis of 'expletive' *ne* on the basis of the absence of an operator *also* explains the absence of inner island effects: no [+NEG] OP means no closer A′ antecedent and no expected Relativised-Minimality violation.

     Taking a broader perspective, though, the data in (47) and the above analysis clearly point to the possibility of the underlying configuration in (49), that is, a NegP with an overt head *but no specifier*: in other words the presence of Neg°/NegP does not lead directly to the presence of (an operator in) Spec-NegP.

(49)

    ...   NegP

       Neg°   ...

        ne
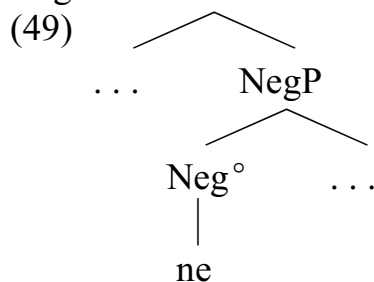
Thus, no across-the-board conclusion that NegP always has a specifier, either overt or non-overt, can be maintained.

     However, something has now been lost. If the relationship between the negative head and a lower negative constituent, or n word, in so-called negative-concord languages (see (33)/(34)) is no longer mediated by a non-overt operator in SpecNegP, as assumed in Rowlett (1997), then how *is* the relationship mediated? And how can the Relativised-Minimality violation in (50), modified from (25b), be explained?

(50) Perché$_i$ *non* hai   detto che t$_i$ Gianni è partito ?

      why   NEG have:2SG said that   Gianni is left

      'Why didn't you say that Gianni left?'

The first of these questions is addressed by Brown (1999) in her analysis of sentential negation in Russian. Brown endeavours to eliminate the non-overt operator associated with SpecNegP in the Neg-Criterion approach to sentential negation, replacing it with an uninterpretable [+NEG] feature on Russian n words. Indeed, Brown's answer (p. 29) to the first question above exploits the notion of (covert) movement of this uninterpretable [+NEG] feature: in the context of the Italian example in (33), this feature is borne by the n word underlyingly, but dissociates itself from its host phrase in the course of the derivation and raises to the Neg head where it can be checked again the interpretable [+NEG] feature on *no* (see Martín-González 2000: 173fn20 who also uses this device). Thus, the n word and the Neg head can be related *without* the need for an operator in SpecNegP (and, indeed, without the need to posit binding of a phrase by a head).

As for the second question, Brown (1999: 26) suggests that the Relativised-Minimality violations illustrated in (50) can be accounted for if Neg° is deemed to be both an A and an A′ head. It is, however, unclear to me what to make of this. It is true that Relativised Minimality is sensitive to the A/A′ distinction. However, it is also sensitive to the head/non-head distinction, and it is far from evident how a head—A or A′—could be argued within the terms of Relativised Minimality to interfere with operator movement. In fact, it is unclear how Rizzi's Relativised-Minimality violations should be accounted for. It seems unlikely that an analysis in terms of intervening A′ operators is along the right lines. For example, Relativised Minimality predicts, wrongly, that the kind of ambiguity found in (51a, b) will not be found in (51c).

(51) a. Why do you think he left?
      b. Why do you think he did not leave?
      c. Why do you not think he left?

The examples in (51a, b) are ambiguous as to whether a reason for thinking or for leaving is being sought. In (51c) the matrix clause contains a NegP with an operator (*not*) in specifier position. Relativised Minimality therefore predicts that the underlying position of *why* cannot be adjoined to the embedded clause, since in order to raise from that position to sentence-initial position, it would have to cross *not* which would then count as a closer potential A′ antecedent for the trace of *why*. Yet (51c) is just as ambiguous as (51a, b). This is a problem for Relativised Minimality and suggests that an alternative account of the contrast in (25) is needed, an account which, of course, may not rely crucially on a non-overt operator in SpecNegP.

Finally, I come to the consequences that the no-non-overt-operator

analysis has for Haegeman and Zanuttini's (1991) Neg Criterion in (30). If there is in fact no non-overt operator in SpecNegP in examples like (33), then the Neg Criterion is in trouble. And if the Neg Criterion is in trouble, so is the account of the overt movement of overt n words in (31) and (32). However, it is not entirely clear that the Neg Criterion is needed to account for the movement in (31) and (32). The movement in (32), for example, does not necessarily target SpecNegP. Haegeman herself concedes that Neg movement in West Flemish can be to an *extended* specifier of Neg°. An alternative approach to the data in (32) would be to assume that—much like the movement of *pas* in French (Rowlett 1993)—Neg movement in West Flemish is needed to endow the weak Neg° with a [+NEG] feature. Note that, like French *ne*, but unlike Italian/Spanish *no(n)*, West Flemish *ne* is incapable of marking sentential negation on its own. This suggests that the movement in (32), rather than being attributable to a principle like the Neg Criterion, is to be attributed to a checking requirement, whereby the Neg head has some strong uninterpretable feature which needs to be checked in overt syntax. The Neg Criterion is then not needed.

5.3. *An argument for non-overt specifiers*
In the previous two sections I have argued that non-overt specifiers are not in fact needed in two contexts in which they have been posited. The general question arises, then, of whether non-overt specifiers are *ever* needed. In this section, I sketch a case that can in fact be made for non-overt specifiers, and a specific role for them to play within cyclic developments diachronically.

In earlier work (Rowlett 1998a) I posit a non-overt operator for SpecNegP in French. While this may look like double standards (with respect to the above treatment of NegP in Spanish/Italian), I would defend my analysis on the basis of quite clear facts about French, and set that defence against the background of the fact that French lies at a different position from Italian/Spanish within Jespersen's (1917; 1924: 335–336) negative cycle (see also Rowlett 1996: chap. 3). The stages in the cycle are represented from the history of French in (52):

(52) The negative cycle in the history of French (Rowlett 1998b: 90, (4)):
    a. jeo ne di.
    b. je ne dis (pas).
    c. je ne dis pas.
    d. je (ne) dis pas.
    e. je   dis pas.
       I   NEG say NEG
       'I don't say.'

Italian and Spanish are at the stage represented by (52a) in the negative cycle: the Neg° marker *no(n)* (reanalysed from the phrasal, adverbial Latin negative marker *non*; see Posner 1985: 265–267) is fully negative in the sense of being capable of 'doing the job' of negating a clause on its own, and no co-occurring phrasal constituent is needed in specifier position. As for Modern French, depending on which register we are dealing with, the language can be situated anywhere between (52c) and (52e). Varieties where *ne* is never dropped are at stage (52c); those where *ne* can optionally be dropped are at stage (52d). According to Sankoff and Vincent (1977), in Montreal French *ne* is never used, and this variety is therefore at least at stage (52e).[17]

    Restricting our attention to stages (52c–e), to the extent that the head negative marker *ne* is used at all, it always needs to be reinforced by the phrasal SpecNegP marker *pas* (or some other phrasal 'negative' constituent). That is, the Neg° marker *ne* is *not* capable of 'doing the job' of negating a clause on its own. In minimalist terms, it has a strong uninterpretable feature that needs be be checked. In Rowlett (1998b) I interpret this as meaning that the Neg° marker *ne* requires an appropriately negative operator like *pas* to occupy SpecNegP (see section 5.2). Indeed, there are very good empirical reasons to believe that, when *pas* licenses *ne*, *pas* occupies SpecNegP (Pollock 1989; Rowlett 1993) and, conversely, that where *pas* does not occupy SpecNegP, it cannot license *ne*. However, *pas* is not the only phrasal 'negative' constituent which can help *ne* 'do the job' of negating a clause. For example, in the example in (53) *ne* is licit because of the presence of the 'negative' quantifier *personne* 'anyone/no one':

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17. Indeed, Moritz and Valois 1994: 679fn12 go one step further and suggest that Québécois has now turned full circle, in other words, that *pas* has been reanalysed as a head negative marker in this variety of French, along the lines of the earlier reanalysis of *non* from a phrasal negative marker in Latin to a head negative marker in Romance. Personally, I do not find this claim convincing.

(53) Julie ne veut   voir personne.
     Julie *ne* wants see   *personne*
     'Julie doesn't want to see anyone.'

Unlike *pas*, though, the other phrasal 'negative' constituents which license *ne* do not need to occupy SpecNegP. This is clear from (53), for instance, where *personne* is nowhere near the matrix SpecNegP (headed by *ne* underlyingly), and is actually located within a lower infinitival clause. (Cf. the West Flemish data in (32), in which a negative XP needs to raise overtly to license the Neg° marker *en*.) In Rowlett (1998a) this flexibility is attributed to the availability of a fully negative non-overt operator (see also Mathieu 2002), which occupies SpecNegP and mediates between the Neg° marker *ne*, which needs a specifier, and the phrasal 'negative' constituent. Positing a non-overt operator in Spec-NegP in French is therefore supported empirically by the overwhelming evidence suggesting that *ne* is incapable of 'doing the job' of negating a clause on its own; the same argument cannot be made for Italian and Spanish, where *no(n)* can 'do its job', and presumably therefore does not have an uninterpretable feature to be checked (cf. Brown 1999 for Russian *ne*). Thus, theexistence of a non-overt operator in French is due to the fact that this language is at a stage in Jespersen's negative cycle in (52) where the negative head is incapable of marking negative on its own, i.e., (52c–e).

The argument would go something like this: given the subtly different 'transitional' behaviours that languages can manifest in these restricted areas, e.g., the one represented by (52b), we expect optionally overt operators associated with SpecNegP to alternate with non-overt counterparts. Similarly, given that the diachrony of *pro*-drop is also cyclic ('agreement cycle'; cf. Rowlett 1996: chap. 3), transitional stages would be expected here, too: a stage where canonical subjects are compulsory (in SpecIP) would be followed by one where, initially, optional subjects in SpecIP alternate with non-overt counterparts.[18] I hope to return to this at some point in the future.

In summary, therefore, I am not launching a wholesale challenge to the validity of non-overt specifiers. Rather, I am questioning the assumptions in (54):

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18. Cross-linguistically there are a number of features to which *pro*-drop can be sensitive, e.g., the tense or φ features of the verb, the thematicity/referentiality of the subject (den Besten 1983; Koopman 2000b).

(54) a. Generally, specifier positions are always projected and syntactically active; where they are not filled by an overt phrase, they are occupied by null constituents; and,

b. specifically, SpecIP is projected in canonical null-subject languages; SpecNegP is projected in languages whose negative marker is a head.

These assumptions are being questioned against the background of an approach to specifiers (and dependants more generally) which sees them as secondary to heads, and present if and only if the feature composition of the relevant head demands them to be present.

6. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

I have considered claims about specifiers, namely, that in a number of contexts in which no overt specifier is present, the specifier position nevertheless exists and is filled by a non-overt phrasal constituent. I have shown that, in two particular contexts in which non-overt specifiers have been posited, the evidence is unconvincing, and that the facts that be accounted for without recourse to non-overt specifiers, a welcome result since, all other things being equal, an analysis without non-overt specifiers is more economical, or minimal, than one with non-overt specifiers.

Author's address:
Centre for Language and Linguistics
European Studies Research Institute
University of Salford
Salford M5 4WT
Greater Manchester
United Kingdom
Email: P.A.Rowlett@salford.ac.uk

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