Rita cares about grammar
Peculiar phenomena in the grammaticalisation of expressive negative indefinites*

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1 Introduction

- 'Grammar, grammar everywhere' → apparent 'fun facts' and more 'peripheral' aspects of language, yet *theoretically consequential* and *grammar-mediated*.

- A short case-study here on the **grammaticalisation of some negative-indefinite-like items in Catalan and Spanish** and crosslinguistic comparisons on **expressive language**.

    (1) a. Això s'ho   creurà   **Rita**   (Catalan)
             this CL.REFL=CL.DO= believe.FUT.3SG EI
             'Nobody is going to believe this / There's no way I'm going to believe this' (lit. 'Rita is going to believe this')
         b. Esto se   lo   va   a creer   **Rita**   (Spanish)
             this CL.REFL= CL.DO= go.3SG to believe.INF EI
             'Nobody is going to believe this / There's no way I'm going to believe this' (lit. 'Rita is going to believe this')

- Expressive items expand our typology of diachronic pathways and sources.

- Productive role of nouns and proper names in the encoding of expressive/interactional language, with potentially shared pathways of emergence.

2 Background

- Three topics to keep in mind here:

    - Negation in Catalan and Spanish (short primer).
    - Diachrony of negative markers/indefinites, and expressive items in this context.
    - Is there grammar in expressiveness?

2.1   Negation in Catalan and Spanish, briefly

- **Non-strict negative concord** languages: negative indefinites do not always co-occur with the negative marker. Whether or not they do depends on their position in the clause:

  (2) a. ***(No)** vino   **nadie**.   (Spanish)
           not   come.PST.3SG n-body
           'Nobody came'

       b. **Nadie** (***no**) vino.
           n-body not   come.PST.3SG
           'Nobody came'

       c. **Nadie** (***no**) ha   comido nada
           n-body not   AUX.HAVE.3SG eat.PTCP n-thing
           'Nobody has eaten anything'

- Strict *vs* non-strict negative concord division based on whether pre-verbal Negative Concord Items (NCIs) must co-occur with the negative marker (Strict NC; Greek, Romanian) or if, conversely, they cannot (Non-strict NC; Spanish, Italian).

- **Microvariation**: Catalan behaves differently from this macro-parametric division. *No* can optionally co-occur with pre-verbal NCIs (Tubau et al., 2023, p. 7).

  (3) **Ningú** (**no**) menja.   (Catalan)
       n-body not   eat.3SG
       'Nobody eats'

- Partly because of this, Catalan NCIs like *res* 'anything/nothing' or *ningú* 'anybody/nobody' are often indistinguishable from Polarity Items (PIs) (Espinal and Llop, 2022; Tubau et al., 2023):

  - They can behave as NCIs (*anything*, Greek *tipota*, *kanenas*), licensed only by anti-veridical operators.

  - But also have the same distribution as PIs (*nothing*, Greek *TIPOTA*, *KANENAS*). They can be licensed by negation, but also by non-veridical operators like conditionals and interrogatives.

  (4) (See Tubau et al., 2023, p. 12, for full list of examples with other licensing contexts)

       a. **No** ha   vist   **res**.   (negation; Catalan)
           not AUX.HAVE.3SG see.PTCP n-thing/anything
           'S/he hasn't seen anything'

       b. Si truca   **ningú**, avisa'm.   (conditional)
           if call.3SG anybody warn.IMP=CL.DO
           'If anybody calls, let me know'

       c. Que   vol   **res**?   (interrogative)
           that.INT want.3SG anything
           'Does s/he want anything?'

       d. A: Què ha   vist?   (isolated answer)
              what AUX.HAVE.3SG see.PTCP
           'What did s/he see?'

       e. B: **Res**.
              n-thing
           'Nothing'

2.2   Diachrony of negative indefinites and negative markers: minimisers and squatitives

- Jespersen's cycle: cyclical pattern. Negative marker in a given language is gradually weakened into a verbal proclitic, then reinforced by new NPI minimisers or indefinites, and ultimately replaced by this reinforcement.

- Horn (2001) describes the phenomenon of *squatitives*, 'quasi-NPIs' such as (*jack*)*shit, crap, beans, zilch, diddley*(*shit*), *dick, fuck all, bugger all, and* (*diddley*) *squat*.

    – Key fact is that they can appear either under the scope of a licensing negator (like English *anything*, an NPI or NCI) or on its own (like *nothing*).

(5)   a. I <u>didn't</u> sleep **squat** last night.
      b. There have been a couple of veterans who have done **squat** since they've been here

- Decategorised item, now a more generalised minimiser, following Jespersen's Cycle.

- Other cases of colloquial emphatic negation are also described in Erschler (2023) for *xuj*-negation:

    – Alongside the standard negation (*ne*), a very colloquial register of Russian can emphatically negate sentences with *xuj* 'dick' and its euphemisms (*fig, xren, xer*, etc.)

(6)   Da ja **xuj**   uexal včera
      PRT I X.NEG left   yesterday
      'I didn't leave yesterday'

→ Expressive/colloquial nouns developing into both negative indefinites (squatitives) or negative markers (*xuj*-negation).

2.3 Grammar in expressiveness

- During early traditions (e.g., structuralism and also early generative syntax, esp. pre-1970s), emotive language typically assumed to lack formal properties, being relegated to language use (de Saussure's *parole*) or pragmatics. Expressive items treated as extrasentential or extrasyntactic particles, or just simply disregarded.

- Neo-performative work, following Ross (1970) → there's grammar and structure to expressiveness, with potentially important phylogenetic and/or acquisitional consequences.

    – Growing body of work on a wide range of phenomena supporting this claim: allocutivity, insubordination, vocatives, honorificity, modal particles, discourse markers, meta-linguistic negation... (i.a., Speas and Tenny, 2003; Giorgi, 2010; Bayer and Obenauer, 2011; Haegeman and Hill, 2013; Wiltschko, 2014; Corr, 2016; Portner et al., 2019; Wiltschko, 2021; Miyagawa, 2022)

(7)   Confirmationals (Wiltschko and Heim, 2016)
    a. John knows that Mary would like to have a new dog. He hasn't seen her in a long time. And he keeps wondering whether she got a new dog. One day he runs into her while she's walking a new puppy. John utters:
       You have a new dog, eh/huh/right?
       = Confirm that *p* is true
    b. Mary is walking her new dog when she runs into John. She is expecting that he would congratulate her on the new dog, but he's not mentioning it. She isn't sure anymore whether he actually realizes that she has a new dog. So she utters:
       *I have a new dog, eh/*huh/*right?*
       = Confirm that you know that *p* is true

- Illocutionary complementisers with sentence-initial *vs* sentence-final discourse markers in Catalan

(8)   Grammatical *vs* ungrammatical configurations[1]
    a. Oi que   vindràs?   (Central Catalan)
       DM that.INT come.FUT.3SG
       'You're coming, right?'
    b. * Que vindràs, oi?
    c. Vindràs, oi?
    d. * Oi vindràs?

(9)   Dialectal variation, different orders and different readings
    a. No que   tens   gana?   (Central Catalan, Tarragonese)
       no that.INT have.2SG hunger
       'You are hungry, aren't you?)

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[1]See also Castroviejo (2018, 2019, 2023) on distributional differences between the semantically very similar discourse markers *oi* and *eh*.

b. Tens gana, no?

c. No tens   gana?   (Central Catalan)
   no have.2sG hunger
   'You aren't hungry?'

d. Que   tens   gana,   no?
   that.QUOT have.2sG hunger no
   '(You're going to tell me that) you're hungry, right?'

- Finally, Potts' hallmarks of expressive elements (Potts, 2005):

  1. *Independence*: Expressive content contributes a dimension of meaning that is separate from the regular descriptive content.

  2. *Nondisplaceability*: Expressives predicate something of the utterance situation.

  3. *Perspective dependence*: Expressive content is evaluated from a particular perspective. In general, the perspective is the speaker's, but there can be deviations if conditions are right.

  4. *Descriptive ineffability*: Speakers are never fully satisfied when they paraphrase expressive content using descriptive, i.e., nonexpressive, terms.

  5. *Immediacy*: Like performatives, expressives achieve their intended act simply by being uttered; they do not offer content so much as inflict it.

  6. *Repeatability*: If a speaker repeatedly uses an expressive item, the effect is generally one of strengthening the emotive content, rather than one of redundancy.

The Neo-performative Insight

Interaction cares about grammar.

Plan and small contribution here:

- Catalan/Spanish expressive negative indefinites further vindicate this neo-performative insight.

Roadmap

1. Introduce set of 'Expressive (Negative) Indefinites' (EIs) in Catalan and Spanish and their general syntactic behaviour.

2. Comparison with NCIs, PIs and squatitives.

3. What are these EIs?

4. Tentative diachronic pathway.

5. A bit of crosslinguistic comparison.

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3   The case of Rita: proper-noun-turned-negative-indefinite

- Understudied 'ways in' for the grammaticalisation of negative items.

  - Minimisers, squatitives, slang, swear-words, etc. (more studied)
  - **Here: Proper nouns and person-referring expressions (*much* less studied[2])**

- Catalan and Spanish have grammaticalised a limited set of (*proper*) *nouns* as negative indefinites or, minimally, as elements serving expressive functions:

  1. *Rita* (*la canta(d)ora*) → focus here is on this one, as a very widespread/common example
  2. *El Papa de Roma* 'the Pope of Rome'
  3. *Déu/Dios* 'God'

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[2]To the best of my knowledge! Please alert me of any overlooked literature.

4. *Te/ta mare*, *la teva mare*, *tu madre* 'your mother'

5. *el teu pare/tu padre* 'your father'

6. *En Pere Vamba* (Cat.)

7. *Josep el Fuster* (Cat.)

8. *Pepe el Jardinero* (Sp., especially Latin American)

9. *Txapote* (usually uttered in political contexts)

10. And possibly many others[3]...

   – These are grammaticalised to different extents (see later).

- Colloquial, expressive elements → preliminarily, I'll refer to these examples (and others to follow) as *expressive (negative) indefinites* (EIs for short), though their exact category is unclear.

3.1 General observations

- Limited set of EIs that appear to function similarly to negative indefinites like 'nobody'. In some cases, they can co-occur with negative markers.

(10) a. Si segueixen així, (no) aprovarà **Rita**. (Catalan)
    if continue.3PL like.this not pass.FUT.3SG EI
    'If they continue like this, nobody will pass (the exam) / they won't pass the exam'

   b. Pues vendrá **el Papa de Roma** a arreglar las cosas. (Spanish)
    well come.FUT.3SG the Pope of Rome to fix.INF the things
    'Well, nobody is going to come to fix this' (can also read as: 'I'm not coming to fix this')[4]

   c. Això (no) ho farà (ni) **Déu** (Catalan)
    thi not CL.DO= do.FUT.3SG not.even God
    'No one is going to do this'

   d. Perdona'm, però les redaccions te les farà **ta mare**. (Catalan)
    forgive.IMP=CL.DO but the essays CL.IO= CL.DO= do.FUT.3SG your mother
    'Sorry, but I'm not doing these essays / no one is doing these essays'[5]

- The list appears **restricted to these items**: other (proper) nouns *cannot* function as negative indefinites in the way shown above.

- They display **signs of grammaticalisation**: bleaching, decategorialisation (note loss of personal article in Catalan), some erosion (for *ta mare*, *Rita vs Rita la cantaora*)...

   – Some inter-item variation: in Catalan, *Rita* cannot be accompanied by the personal article (if it is, *Rita* is interpreted as a proper noun). Conversely, we typically require the personal article with *en Pere Vamba*.

- Unlike regular negative indefinites, they contribute an additional layer of **expressive meaning** and **speaker attitude**: although paraphrasable as 'nobody', they also encode the speaker's attitude towards an action/topic (e.g., 'I'm not doing this!' or 'there's no way we're passing this exam / I can guarantee you we won't pass this exam'). More specifically, they meet all of Potts (2005)'s characteristics of expressive material:

   ✓ *Independence*: the expressive and descriptive meanings that examples like (10) can convey aren't a single unit of meaning (∼'nobody', but also speaker attitude and opinion).

   ✓ *Nondisplaceability*: *Va venir Rita a la festa* 'nobody came to the party'. Past tense, but my emphatic attitude towards the content of the utterance still holds at the time of uttering it.

   ✓ *Perspective dependence*: usually speaker-oriented.

   ✓ *Descriptive ineffability*: 'nobody' or more articulated paraphrases aren't satisfactory.

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[3]I focus on person-referring indefinites above, but squatitive-like expressive indefinites that paraphrase as 'nothing' are also abundant in Catalan/Spanish (e.g., Cat. *he menjat **una merda*** lit. 'I have eaten shit', 'I have eaten nothing').

[4]https://x.com/LauritaRMadrid/status/185108997504909313?s=20

[5]https://x.com/AnaFerrerS/status/521411305102929920?s=20

- ✓ *Immediacy*: performative-like, they express speaker attitude (shown by paraphrases like 'I'm not going to do this!'; just uttering *Rita* expresses a similar emotive meaning/attitude towards the content of the utterance).
- ✓ *Repeatability*: harder to test, but, e.g., **Rita**, *vindrà* **Rita!** and reduplication structures (*Aquí vindrà* **Rita Rita**[6]).

→ **Overall:** These facts suggest that studying the syntactic patterning of these EIs is instructive.

- **Next:** The patterning of these EIs displays superficial resemblance to NCIs (e.g., *Rita* can, for some speakers, co-occur with a negative marker), but EIs are *not* NCIs.

3.2   Catalan/Spanish EIs ≠ NCIs and squatitives (mostly)

- First, NCIs: EIs do not pattern like NCIs.

  1. Accompanying negative markers are, for most items, banned.
  2. Subject EIs require focalisation and emphatic prosody.
  3. In Catalan, subject EIs are incompatible with negative markers when in pre-verbal position.
  4. EIs are preferably postverbal.

- **Negative markers and EIs**: a post-verbal EI usually banned with a preceding negative marker (for most items, see later!). This differs from NCIs and negative concord: in all languages that allow negative concord, postverbal NCIs must co-occur with the negative marker.

(11)   * No lo   va   a comprar tu madre   (Spanish)
        not CL.DO= go.3SG to buy.INF   EI
        (intended) 'No one is going to buy this' (alternative readings: 'Your mother won't buy this' / 'I'm definitely buying this', double negation-like reading)

- In this respect, EIs pattern more like dialectal varieties of Catalan that allow post-verbal negative indefinites without accompanying negators. This suggests both EIs and Rossellonese negative indefinites have an **inherent negative force** (which indefinites like *anything* lack).

(12)   a. Jo he   vist   **ningú**   (Rossellonese Catalan)
          I AUX.HAVE.1SG see.INF n-body
          'I have seen nobody'

       b. He   menjat **res**
          AUX.HAVE.1SG eat.INF n-thing
          'I have eaten nothing'

       c. Ella en   parla   **mai**
          she CL.PART= talk.1SG never
          'She never talks about them'   ([Rigau, 1998](#), p. 67)

- **Focalisation and positioning**: syntactically, subject EIs ≠ 'Regular' subjects. EIs usually appear postverbally. More rarely, they can occur pre-verbally, but must be *focalised*, receiving emphatic prosody. They *cannot* appear with the position/prosody that pre-verbal subjects receive. This is unlike NCIs, which do not need focalisation.

(13)   a. *? Rita trobarà   feina aquí.   (Catalan)
            EI   find.FUT.3SG work here
            (intended) 'Nobody will find a job here' (alternative reading: 'Rita will find a job here'[7])

       b. RITA trobarà   feina aquí
          EI   find.FUT.3SG work here
          'NOBODY will find a job here / There's no way I'll find a job here' OR 'RITA will find job here (not someone else)'

- Note, example (a) becomes even worse in Spanish, where propers nouns aren't preceded by determiners and cannot help disambiguate between its noun *vs* EI usage.

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[6]I set aside reduplication in what follows, but note that reduplication for expressive means is an understudied phenomenon and relevant for the topics in this handout. It is highly productive in both Catalan and Spanish: nouns, pronouns and adjectives can readily reduplicate for emphasis or other expressive effects, as can (some) verbs. (At least some) EIs can reduplicate too, as shown above.

[7]Although odd and only marginally acceptable because of the lack of personal article.

(14)   * Rita hará   esto.   (Spanish)
       EI   do.FUT.3SG this
       (intended) 'Nobody will do this' (actual reading: 'Someone called Rita will do this').

(15)   RITA hará   esto.
       Rita   do.FUT.3SG this
       'Nobody will do this' OR 'RITA will do this (not someone else)'

- **Pre-verbal EIs and negation**: recall that preverbal NCIs can co-occur with sentential negation in Catalan. If EIs = NCIs in syntactic respects, the former should too. This isn't borne out.

(16)   a.   * RITA no anirà   de vacances.   (Catalan)
          EI   not go.FUT.3SG to holidays
          (intended) 'Nobody will go on holiday' (possible alternative reading: 'Of course I'll/we'll go on holiday!')
     b.   * TE MARE no anirà   de vacances.
          EI   not go.FUT.3SG to holidays
          (intended) 'Nobody will go on holiday' (possible alternative reading: 'Of course I'll/we'll go on holiday!')

- Variation among these EIs as to how readily they allow this alternative reading. *Te mare* is the item that most clearly allows for it according to my judgements (and as shown below, seemingly one of the less grammaticalised EIs). *Déu* and *el Papa de Roma* do not seem to. *Rita* marginally can, but certainly not a standard/common usage of it.

- ⃞ **EIs aren't NCIs, then** ⃞. <u>However</u>, very clear **inter-speaker variation** w.r.t. the availability of *Rita* with preceding negative marker. At least in Catalan, 17 friends consulted (46%) would accept the following examples (the remaining 22, 56%, would not utter these examples)[8]:

(17)   a.   **No** s'aixecarà   **Rita** demà   (Catalan)
          not CL.REFL=wake.up.FUT.3SG EI   tomorrow
          'There's no way we're waking up (on time) tomorrow'
     b.   **No** vindrà   **Rita** al   gimnàs
          not come.FUT.3SG EI   to-the gym
          'Nobody is going to come to the gym tomorrow / I'm not coming to the gym tomorrow'
     c.   **No** aprova   **Rita** aquest examen
          not pass.3SG EI   this   exam
          'No one is going to pass this exam / There's no way I'm passing this exam'

→ If this latter use is diachronically subsequent[9], it suggests higher degree of grammaticalisation for *Rita*, vis-à-vis other items (negative markers with the other EIs appear impossible in my variety, but this requires further investigation).

- – But still deviates from post-verbal NCIs, which *require* the use of this accompanying negative marker.
- – Note, then, that, if true, this *isn't* Jespersen's Cycle: what's posterior is the *addition* of a compatible negative marker, not its *loss* upon a consolidated reinforcer → discrepancy with squatitives.

- Besides the fact that **squatitives** cannot refer to people, the foregoing suggests another discrepancy between squatitives and Cat./Sp. EIs: the Janus-nature of squatitives (being used as both NPIs/NCIs and *nothing*) isn't prototypical of EIs, it is possibly a more *recent* trend.

    → ⃞ **EIs don't behave like squatitives** in all respects either. ⃞

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[8]I'm unaware of whether these constructions are possible in Spanish. My own judgements are that they become a bit worse in Spanish.
[9]Possibly supported by the fact that there is no attestation of these uses with Google Search, while the use without negative markers is widely attested.

4   What exactly is Rita? (and other EIs)

- EIs as PIs? → similar, but still different.

- Recall that in Catalan (not Spanish), NCIs are often indistinguishable from PIs. EIs pattern alike here *in one respect*, isolated answers:

  (18)   a.   Qui vindrà   a córrer?   (isolated answer; Catalan)
            who come.FUT.3SG to run.INF
            'Who is going running (with me)?'

         b.   Rita / ta mare! (Amb aquesta calor...)
              EI   with   this   heat
              'Nobody! / I'm not coming! (given this heat...)'

- But not in most non-veridical contexts:

  (19)   a.   *Si truca   **Rita**, avisa'm.   (conditional)
            if call.3SG EI   warn.IMP=CL.DO
            (intended) 'If anyone/nobody calls, let me know'

         b.   *? Que   vindrà   **Rita**?   (interrogative)
            that.INT want.3SG EI
            (intended) 'Is anyone/nobody coming?'

         c.   *? Ho   va   veure abans que ho   veiés   **Rita**   (*before*)
            CL.DO= AUX.PST.3SG see.INF before that CL.DO= see.IMPF.SUBJ.3SG EI
            'S/he saw it before anybody did.'

- ([18-19](#)) contrast with squatitives as well (characterised as 'quasi-NPIs'), which can appear in (at least) several of these contexts.

- Focalisation facts earlier are a also point of divergence. PIs can occur with or without focalisation.

- → $\boxed{\textbf{EIs do not pattern fully like PIs.}}$

- Additionally, these **EIs have a broader distribution than PIs, NCIs and squatitives**. Consider the following examples:

(20)   EIs can function as responses/replies to a question or utterance and express disagreement.

- Therefore, to recap, EIs aren't NCIs, PIs, or squatitives, but seemingly *a separate class with distinct syntactic behaviour*.

	NCIs	PIs	Squatitives	EIs
Licensing via anti-veridical operators	✓	✓	✓	✗$_{Rita\ ok}$
Licensing via non-veridical operators	✗	✓	✓	✗[10]
Requires focalisation pre-verbally	✗	✗	✗	✓
Inherent negative force	✗	✓	✓	✓
Expressive	✗	✗	✓	✓
Speaker-attitude-oriented	✗	✗	✗	✓

Table 1: Comparison of the behaviour of NCIs, PIs, squatitives and EIs

Landscape so far

- Overall, EIs do not pattern like NCIs nor PIs, and are also partly different from English squatitives. Nonetheless, their behavior is interestingly *constrained*.

- Paraphrasing them with negative indefinites often does not do justice to the expressive and speaker-oriented nature of these EIs (Potts' 'descriptive ineffability').

- *Rita cares about grammar* → syntax-mediated systematicities, not entirely reducible to other extrasyntactic factors (e.g., pragmatics, implicatures, etc.) or peripheral aspects of language.

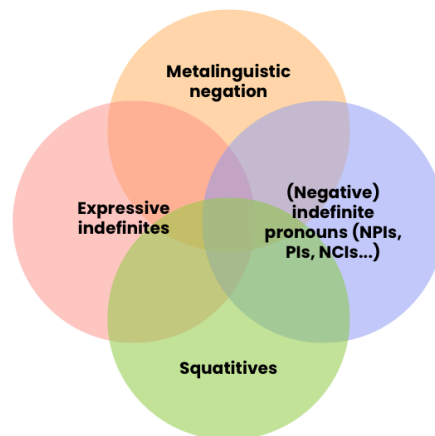→ Suggests categorising them as 'negative indefinites' may be too simplistic.

Figure 1: What are EIs?

- Lots of further questions to ask:

  - What are EIs and how does this inform us about the status and typology of expressive/interactional language?
  - How syntactically homogenous is this class of 'EIs'?

- More broadly, we have to understand the clear role of (proper) nouns as expressive elements in Catalan and Spanish.

  - Other elements are very frequently used, though not necessarily functioning as clear negative indefinites: e.g, some taboo expressions with proper nouns: *els collons/ous d'en Vamba* 'the balls of (Pere) Vamba' (which resembles metalinguistic negation instead).

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[10]Only as isolated answers.

5 Diachronic pathway: the effect of 'power' (Who is Rita?)

- Nature of these EIs apparently 'heterogenous': what do Rita, the Pope of Rome, God, etc. share?

  – My preliminary suggestion here: **nouns/NPs denoting 'powerful' entities** (broadly interpreted) have **grammaticalised** into negative indefinites via metaphor or implicature[11].

- Some context on the referents of these EIs and their traits:

  – *Rita* (*la cantaora*): extremely popular flamenco singer from the 18/19th century. Very talented, well-known for exceptional and unmatched achievements.
  – *El Papa de Roma*: religious figure, head of the worldwide Catholic Church.
  – *Déu/Dios*: supreme religious figure, omnipotent.
  – *Ta mare/tu madre* and *el teu pare/tu padre*: household and family referents, with 'power'/responsibility over their children.
  – *En* (*Pere*) *Vamba*: king of the Visigoths from 672 to 680, when the kingdom encompassed all of Hispania and part of southern Gaul.
  – *Josep el fuster*: religious figure, reference to St Joseph of Nazareth, often described as a carpenter.
  – *Txapote*: former member of the 'hard wing' of *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA), Basque separatist militant responsible for the assassination of several Basque politicians.
  – (No idea yet who *Pepe el jardinero* is...)

- With no exception, these **EIs** recruited in Catalan and Spanish systematically **make reference to a** *powerful* **entity/person** (or a person who once exercised 'power' over people).

- Possible implicature-driven or metaphor-driven pathway:

  – 'Only Rita/God/etc. can do this, no one else can', 'Let Rita/God/etc. do this, no one else can'. To the point where, potentially, 'Rita will do this' → 'No one will do this'.
  – In fact, uses of these EIs that somewhat reflect this reasoning are still found in both Catalan and Spanish.

    (21) a. Que venga   Dios y   lo   haga.   (Spanish)
            that come.PRES.SUBJ.3SG EI   and CL.DO= do.PRES.SUBJ.3SG
            'Get someone else to do it (I'm not going to)'
         b. Que se   la   pague Rita la cantaora.
            that CL.IO= CL.DO= EI
            'Someone else will have pay them for this (I won't)'[12]
         c. Que dialogue   Txapote / Que te   vote   Txapote.
            that dialogue.PRES.SUBJ.3SG EI   / that CL.DO= vote.PRES.SUBJ.3SG EI
            'Get someone else to dialogue/vote for you (we won't)'[13][14]

- Seemingly follows the diachronic trend where changes in indefinities and PIs towards "more negative" appear more common than changes towards "more positive" (see, e.g., Hoeksema, 1998; Déprez, 1999).

- If genuine negative indefinites, these EIs expand our typology of sources for negative indefinite pronouns. Haspelmath (2001, p. 229) lists the following:

  1. Non-negative scalar focus particles
     Selkup *ämtä kuty* 'nobody' < 'even who'

  2. Negative scalar focus particles
     Hungarian *sem-mi* 'nothing' < 'not even what'

  3. Diachronic negative absorption
     Yaqui *ka-abe* 'nobody' < **kaa habe* 'not anybody'
     Latin *nemo* 'nobody' < **ne homo* 'not a man'

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[11]The question still remains why this specific set of nouns (and not others) have successfully grammaticalised (at least to some extent).
[12]https://x.com/mercedestesouro/status/1694461976221499655?s=20
[13]https://x.com/Rblc8/status/1712803983528436109?s=20
[14]https://x.com/Santo_Iker/status/1712892993873600909?s=20

4. Minimal-unit expressions
   Irish *dada* 'nothing' < 'tittle'
   French *personne* 'nobody' < 'person'
   Maltese *ħadd* 'nobody' < 'one'

5. Maximal-unit expressions
   Spanish *en mi vida* 'never' < 'in my life'

6   Crosslinguistic comparison

- Romanian: *dracul* 'the devil' and *Bulă*, with distinct interpretations.

  (22)   (Sergiu Petrușca, p.c.)
  >   A: *Ai văzut cât de multe lungă e tema de la matematică?*
  >   'Have you seen how long the homework for maths is?'
  >   B: *Da, sunt 30 de probleme...*
  >   'Yes, there are 30 problems...'
  >   A: ***Dracul** le va face.*
  >   'The devil will do them.'

  →   *Dracul* ≈ 'no one is going to do them'.

  (23)   (Sergiu Petrușca, p.c.)
  >   A: *Bucătăria miroase îngrozitor. Cine duce gunoiul?*
  >   'The kitchen smells horrible. Who takes the garbage out?'
  >   B: ***Bulă** duce gunoiul...*
  >   'Bulă takes the garbage out...'
  >   A: *Așa mă gândeam și eu, <u>Ionuț</u> este neglijent ca de obicei.*
  >   'That's what I thought, Ionut is neglectful as usual.'

  →   *Bulă* ≈ 'no one will do something', but both Speaker and Addressee have a specific 'silly' person in mind that they know won't do it (Ionut).

    – Bulă: fictional stock character of Romanian humor, created during Communist Romania. Used to refer to a 'generalised stupid character/person', often in jokes.

- Italian (Valentina Colasanti, p.c.): *Tizio, Caio e Sempronio*. Described in Wikipedia as "the names of three hypothetical people, used in Italian to indicate any person taken as an example" (my translation).

    – *Già, queste sanzioni che vanno bene per **tizio** ma non per **Sempronio**. Chissà sulla base di cosa viene presa la decisione*[15] ('Yes, these sanctions are good for some people but not for others. Who knows on what basis the decision is made').

    – The three originate from three Roman politicians (Tiberius Gracco, Gaio Gracco and Sempronio Gracco).

    – Appear used together for the first time in the works of a medieval jurist and became highly widespread names in legal exemplification. To the point where *Tizio* is now synonymous with 'so and so'.

    – Not quite like Cat./Sp. EIs, but analogous to Cat./Sp. *fulanito/ita, sutanita/ito*.

- German (Theresa Biberauer, p.c.): *Ich verstehe nur **Bahnhof*** ('I don't understand anything / It's all Greek to me'). However, much more restricted than Cat./Sp. examples above. Primarily found with *verstehen* 'understand'.

    – A few other verbs are attested, too: *lesen* 'read' (*Was steht da? Ich lese nur Bahnhof...*[16]), and *sehen* 'see' (*Kenne nur Bautzner. Was soll das sein? Sehe nur Bahnhof*[17]).

- (In progress... Please let me know if your language does something like this! ☺)

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[15] https://x.com/lamanuzzicri/status/1711714877562146826?s=46&t=fui1wVRJTim3v2iCMFnjdw
[16] https://x.com/Schleudersitz1/status/1378010411744825345?s=20
[17] https://x.com/igormatviyets/status/1682293826323456000?s=46&t=fui1wVRJTim3v2iCMFnjdw

7 Some final thoughts

- 'Grammar everywhere', and also in expressive, colloquial language:
  - Systematic distribution, predictable contexts of ungrammaticality.
  - Differences with more 'neutral/non-expressive' items (EIs ≠ NCIs, PIs), but also with other classes of expressive items (squatitives).
  - Apparently heterogenous items, but shared lexical semantics.
  - Shared pathways of change, plausibly.
  - Inter-item variation: different degrees of grammaticalisation and integration.

- Noun-derived negative indefinites expand our typology of sources of negative items and parallel other phenomena like squatitives.

- Nouns (not just squatitives, but also proper nouns) appear to play an interesting role in the grammaticalisation of expressive items more generally in Cat./Sp.

- Future work:
  - Detailing and explaining the specific distributional differences among the set of EIs in Catalan/Spanish.
  - Specifying any differences between Catalan and Spanish with respect to these EIs.
  - Understanding the important relationship between proper nouns and expressiveness in these languages and others.
  - Diachronic study of their development.
  - Comparative work → how typologically rare are phenomena like the ones described?

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