Italian Left Edge Licensors: *prima, senza* and *mai*

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The left edge of the clause is considered to be delimited in Italian by the finite complementizer *che* (Rizzi 1997). There are certain items, however, which could appear in clause-initial position preceding it, as shown by the following sentence:

(1) *Prima/senza/mai/non* <u>che</u> tu   riesca   a   vedere Gianni
     before/without/never/not that you manage.subj to   see   Gianni

If we consider the finite complementizer *che* in (1) in its usual position within the CP system, elements as *prima, senza, mai, non* need also to be considered as being part of the complementizer's layer. Apart from their common distribution at the left edge of the clause, they also share the important semantic property of being Downward Entailing (Ladusaw 1979, see also Giannakidou 1998 for the alternative notion of a-veridicality).
This has interesting consequences on Polarity Items licensing and in particular on the interpretation of elements as *niente* and *nessuno*. It is well-known (Rizzi 1982, Zanuttini 1991, Moscati 2006) that such elements may have a negative meaning on their own, showing a behaviour similar to Negative Quantifiers (2). But they may also show polarity dependencies when situated in post-verbal position of declarative clauses (3):

(2) nessuno   è venuto
    nobody/*anybody   came

(3) non è venuto   *nessuno*
    not   came   *nobody/anybody

Since their interpretation swings from Negative Quantifiers ($\neg\exists$) to polarity indefinites ($\exists x$), the descriptive term N-word has been introduced (Laka 1990) and will be adopted here.
In particular, it has been claimed that pre- and post-verbal environments in declarative sentences discriminates between the polarity readings and the negative quantifiers one, with the polarity reading allowed only post-verbally (Haegeman 1995, Watanabe 2004). This observation is not entirely true, and the polarity indefinite reading is possible also when the N-words appear in pre-verbal position, whenever its licensing conditions are satisfied.

If Italian N-Words allow a reading analogous to English *any*, we expect that the presence of a c-commanding DE operator could permit such interpretation. This prediction can be tested if we substitute the pronominal subject in sentence (1) with an N-Word. In this case the only possible interpretation is the indefinite one:

(3) *Prima/senza/mai/non* che   *nessuno*   riesca   a   vedere Gianni
     before/without/never/not that   ??nobody/ anybody   manage.subj to   see   Gianni

Sentence (3) can not be treated according to Negative Concord analyses (Haegeman 1995, Zanuttini 1991, Watanabe 2004), since elements as *prima* do not carry a negative operator but only a weaker DE one. Thus no factorization process can occur between two negative features, since *prima* has no negative feature on its own.

Data in (3) show that whatever analyses we adopt for sentence (2), either considering N-words as equipped with an interpretable negative feature or dependent by a null-operator (Ladusaw 1992), it is not possible to avoid the Polarity Item analysis. The existence of a double lexical entry for Italian N-words seems necessary, in order to account for sentence (2), where the N-word is the only negative element in the clause, and sentence (3), where the indefinite reading emerges.

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