

Negation in Italian *until*-clauses: effective or expletive?

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Abstract. This paper aims to investigate the status of the negation in Italian *until*-clauses introduced by the temporal connective *finché*. This connective displays an overlap between two meanings, i.e., a delimitative (*until*) and a coextensive one (*as long as*). I will show that this depends on the inherent aspectual properties of the embedded event and that the negation is effective just in the latter case (*as long as*), while in the former it can be regarded as expletive. However, I will also argue that expletive doesn't mean optional, since its presence is strongly preferred by the speakers, and in some contexts it's even compulsory.¹

Keywords: Expletive negation · Temporal clauses · Formal semantics.

1 State of the art

1.1 Expletive negation

The role of standard negation (SN) in declarative clauses is to reverse the truth value. However, when a negator is present but we don't have a change of polarity, we are dealing with an instance of **expletive negation** (EN) (1).

- (1) Skrivat ću se dok (ne) svane dan.
HIDE AUX.FUT.1SG. refl until (not) DAWN.PRES.3SG. day.
'I'll hide until it dawns.'
Croatian (Zovko Dinković & Ilc, 2017: 162)[12]

EN has a wide cross-linguistic distribution since it's attested in every linguistic macro-area [6][7], making it a window into the human mind and communication. The most common EN triggers are temporal clauses (i.e., *before/until* clauses), non-veridical predicates (*to fear, to doubt*), *unless/without* clauses, comparatives, and exclamative clauses. It has been argued that this negator should be vacuous and not compulsory², and, in general in EN, it shouldn't

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² As one of the reviewers rightfully pointed out, the fact that EN should always be optional in Romance languages is not fully clear. For instance, in prescriptive standard French, EN should be compulsory.

licence negative polarity items (NPIs) or allow negative concord chains (NC) [3]. Moreover, it seems to be mainly licensed in nonveridical contexts in the subjunctive mood, apart, crucially, from *until*-clauses. *Until*-clauses are indeed a special kind of EN environment since they usually occur with the indicative (see [12] for Croatian and Slovenian), they do not display full optionality (in some cases are even compulsory, i.e., Russian), and, at least for Slavic languages, they display an interesting correlation with grammatical aspect. In fact, we usually have the following situation: the temporal particle used to convey the coextensive reading (namely, *while/as.long.as*) is the same as the delimitative one (*until*) (i.e., *poka* for Russian, *dok* for Serbo-Croatian, *dokler* for Slovenian), but it gets the former interpretation just when the (embedded) predicate has an imperfective aspect (2), while it gets the latter with the perfective one (3). Crucially, just in this case we have EN, pointing to a correlation between aspect, *until*-clauses, and EN.

- (2) Mi jedemo jabuke **dok** ti **ne** kuhaš.
 we EAT.IPFV.PRES.1PL. apples while you not COOK.IPFV.PRES.2SG.
 ‘We eat apples while you are not cooking.’
- (3) Studenti polažu ispite **dok** ih **(ne)**
 Students TAKE.IMPV.PRES.3PL. exams until them not
 polože.
 PASS.PFV.PRES.3PL.
 ‘Students take exams until they pass them.’
 Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (Alexander & Elias-Bursać, 2010:83. Glossa added)

1.2 Expletive negation in Italian *until*-clauses

EN phenomena in Italian are mainly present in clauses introduced by the temporal connective *finché*, that is usually regarded as an *until*-like EN trigger (4) (see [4],[5]).

- (4) Mamma mangerà **finché** il papà **(non)** arriverà.
 mum EAT.3SG.FUT until the dad (not) ARRIVE.3SG.FUT.
 ‘Mum will eat until dad (EN) arrives.’

Finché is a complex lexical item composed of at least two morphemes, *fino* ‘boundary/end’ and *che* ‘that.’ It usually bears indicatives, and, when it introduces a finite clause, it can have a delimitative interpretation (5) but also a coextensive one (6). *Finché* can be substituted by more transparent particles: *fino a che* (lit. *until-to-that*), *fino a quando* (lit. *until-to-when*), *fintantoché* (*as long as*), and this give us back the complex flavour of this particle. As the following examples show, it can both convey a delimitative (5) and a coextensive (6) meaning. In this regard, the Italian data resembles the Serbo-Croatian one (I will use the acronym BCMS from now on, which stands for Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian.)

- (5) Mamma mangerà **finché** scocca la mezzanotte.
 mum EAT.3SG.FUT until STRIKE.3SG.PRES the midnight.
 ‘Mum will eat until the stroke of midnight.’
- (6) Mamma mangerà **finché** il papà sarà fuori casa.
 mum EAT.3SG.FUT as.long.as the dad BE.3SG.FUT outside home.
 ‘Mum will eat as long as dad will be away.’

Previous studies on *finché*-clauses Even if lexicographic sources ([1]), states that negation in sentences like (4) are expletive, Tovena [10] argues that this negation is actually effective. In her view, *finché* expresses an identity of terminating points between two eventualities, where the end of the matrix event depends on the end of the embedded one. Here, the negation operates by reversing the temporal relations between the events (from an overlapping to an alternation).

Positive contexts: [A [*finché* [B]]]; *negative contexts:* [A [¬ [*finché* [B]]]].

Hence, if the starting and ending points of B coincide, there is no overt contrast between the presence/absence of negation. This part is crucial since Tovena had the insight that the overall temporo-aspectual structure of the embedded event could play a role in the perception of negation. Indeed, we perceive it as expletive just in special contexts, the punctual ones. Given that the negation operates the temporal switch, she also argues that it cannot perform other operations; therefore, it is not available for forming a NC-chain.

Greco ([5]), on the other hand, claims that negation is expletive, but it can also license n-words and weak NPIs(7). However, as I will show later, I will argue against the interpretation proposed by the author.

- (7) Rimarrai qui **finché** non arriverà nessuno.
 STAY.2SG.FUT here until not ARRIVE.3SG.FUT nobody.
 ‘You will stay here until someone will have come.’ (EN)
 Italian (Greco, 2019: 7)

This would make this negation an instance of a ”weak EN”, a categorization made by the author dividing ENs that can’t license any negative import particles from the ones that seem to do it.

It is then unclear what the semantic import of negation is in *finché*-clauses. Moreover, still no formal explanation has been proposed to explain the two interpretations (4)(5), and this is crucial since we must understand where exactly an *until*-interpretation rises in order to formalise what happens to the negation in these contexts.

2 Research Questions (RQ_x)

RQ₁: What is *finché*’s behaviour in positive contexts? When is it interpreted as a coextensive connective and when as delimitative?

RQ₂: Where does this allegedly EN arise? Is it optional?

RQ₃: Is negation in Italian *until*-clauses really expletive or is it fully interpreted? Can it licence NPIs and allow NC-chains?

3 Answers (A_x)

3.1 A_1 : *Finché*'s interpretation in positive contexts.

As a first attempt to explore *finché*'s behavior, a qualitative questionnaire (Q1) was established. The aim of Q1 was to evaluate if and how the interpretation of the Italian complementizer *finché* correlates with the aspectual features of the embedded event. As pointed out earlier, this particle can be interpreted in two ways: as a coextensive temporal connective or as a delimitative one. So, if the interpretation is coextensive, it means that, given a point of evaluation t , the matrix clause and the embedded clause should be intuitively both true or both false in it. If the temporal relation between the two clauses is characterised by non-coextensivity, when A is true, B is false (or vice versa). Therefore, Q1 was designed as a Truth Value Judgement Task (40 participants, 30 females, 22-55 yo, $M = 28.33$, $SD = 7.34$). The variable manipulated was the inherent aspect of the embedded event. For this purpose, I used Smith's situation types [9], namely: activities, states, accomplishments, achievements, and semelfactives (the latter divided between multiple and single events). Two items for each of these classes have been chosen (the predicates used are reported in fig.2.)

The structure: Q1 lasted approximately 10-15 minutes, with 24 items, 12 targets, 12 fillers, and an explanation with a toy item. The state of affairs presented was displayed in the future tense, while the sentence to evaluate was in the present tense since the primary aim was to compare *finché*'s interpretation with the inherent aspectual features of the embedded events, leaving aside configurational/morphological aspect as much as possible (strongly present, for instance, in the Italian "imperfetto" and "passato remoto"). The predicate of the matrix remained constant for all the items and had to be durative due to the ungrammaticality that emerges with punctual predicates. Hence, the matrix predicate was always *mangiare*, (to eat) a simple activity-like predicate. The variable taken into consideration, and therefore the only part that changed, was the situation type of the embedded event. Here I report the classes used: achievements, semelfactives single event (S.S.E.), semelfactives multiple events (S.M.E.), accomplishments, states, activities. This is a scheme of Q1. I refer to the matrix as A and to the embedded clause as B.

1. A state of affairs (future): "A *finché* B"
i.e., Mamma mangerà *finché* papà passeggerà.
Mum will eat finché dad will stroll.

2. The sentence to evaluate (present): “if B=1, A=1.”.
i.e., Se papà passeggia (B), mamma mangia (A).
If dad strolls, mum eats.
3. The evaluation: “Given the state of affairs, how is the situation in (2.)?”
True (finché = coextensive) — **False** (finché = non-coextensive) — **Undecided**
4. For each item, the participant could leave a personal comment.

In general, what emerged was the following: (i) when the B is inherently punctual (achievements and semelfactives single event), *finché* is interpreted as delimitative (until): the sentences are not true at the same time. Conversely, when it has a duration (states, activity), it is seen as coextensive (as long as): the two sentences are true at the same time. Here I report, for each class, the predicates used and the percentages and raw data (out of 40 participants) for each interpretation. In bold, I highlighted the predominant one.

Situation type	Embedded event	Delimitative	Coextensive	Undecided
S.S.E.	to knock once	65% (26)	10% (4)	25% (10)
	to do a single cough	70% (28)	10% (4)	20% (8)
Achievement	to fall off the chair	80% (32)	7.5 (3)%	12.5 (5)%
	to burst out laughing	82.5% (33)	10% (4)	7.5% (3)
Activity	to talk	2,5% (1)	85% (34)	12.5% (5)
	to stroll	10% (4)	85% (34)	5% (2)
State	to be angry	7.5% (3)	82.5% (33)	10% (4)
	to believe in aliens	10% (4)	87.5% (35)	2.5% (1)
Accomplishment	to drink a glass of wine	45% (18)	35% (14)	20% (8)
	to build the wardrobe	30% (12)	57.5% (23)	12.5% (5)
S.M.E.	to cough	35% (14)	50% (20)	15% (6)
	to knock	37.5% (15)	37.5% (15)	25% (10)

Table 1. Finché’s interpretation for each situation type (Smith, 1997)

As it can be noticed, with accomplishment and semelfactives multiple-events, both interpretations were found since they could receive both a delimitative (ingressive) and a coextensive interpretation (8).

- (8) Mamma mangerà *finché* papà costruirà
 mum EAT.3SG.FUT, as.long.as/until dad BUILD.3SG.FUT
 l’armadio.
 the.wardrobe.
 ‘Mum eats as long as/until dad builds the wardrobe.’

Then, inspired by Slavic data, I checked qualitatively the role of configurational aspect (perfectivity), going beyond the inherent lexical structure of the temporal clause and building some sentences with the aforementioned “passato

remoto”, clearly perfective, (9) and “imperfetto” (10), imperfective. Using the same predicate (i.e., *to scream*) with two different configurations, I could check if it was possible to obtain two different meanings just by manipulating its conjugation. This is what crucially happens (9)(10).

(9) Mamma pianse **finché** papà urlò.
 mum CRY.3SG.PAST(PFV) until dad SCREAM.3SG.PAST(PFV).
 ‘Mum cried eat until dad screamed.’

(10) Mamma piangeva **finché** papà urlava.
 mum CRY.3SG.PAST(IPFV) as.long.as dad SCREAM.3SG.PAST(IPFV).
 ‘Mum cried as long as dad screamed.’

Even though these latter data should be better analysed, we can generally observe that: when the B is inherently punctual 5 or displays perfective structure (9), *finché* is interpreted as coextensive. Conversely, when it is inherently durative (6) or imperfective (10), it is seen as delimitative.

3.2 A₂: Expletive negation and aspect.

After establishing the status of the particle in positive contexts, I checked where the negation is not perceived as effective by the speakers (EN) and whether this correlated with the aspect of the subordinate (as hypothesised by Tovina). To do so, I established another qualitative questionnaire (Q2) (40 participants, 30 females, 22-51 years old, M = 28.42, SD = 6.37). The participants were presented with a pair of sentences that differed just in the presence/absence of negation and were asked whether they perceived a difference in the core meaning. The variable between the pairs was the inherent aspectual feature of the embedded event (Smith’s 1997 situation types). Then, in case no difference in meaning was perceived, a preference question was addressed. Q2 lasted approximately 5-10 minutes and consisted of 12 items. No fillers were presented because the goal of the questionnaire was to collect a metalinguistic judgement. Both events used a future simple tense because the aim was to compare *finché* with the inherent aspectual features of the embedded events (as in Q1), leaving aside configurational/morphological aspect as much as possible. Therefore, the structure of the matrix remained constant for all the items. The variable taken into consideration, and therefore the only part that changed, was the situation type of the embedded event [9]. This time, thanks to A₁ and Tovina [10], I hypothesised that we would not have found EN if the embedded event was seen as punctual (achievements and semelfactives single event). In the other cases, even in accomplishments where both interpretations are possible, I expected at least a slight change of meaning. To test this, I created two macro-groups: one formed by strictly punctual predicates, and another with the other classes, states, activities, and accomplishments. Ten of the predicates were also present in Q1, but the multiple event-semelfactives were substituted with two other strictly punctual predicates to reach six predicates for each group. Hence, we had the “punctual”

group: *to knock once, to blink once, to fall off the chair, to cross the line, to burst out laughing*; the "durative" group: *to talk, to be angry, to drink a glass of wine, to build the wardrobe, to stroll, to believe in aliens*. I report the structure of each item.

1. A minimal pair of sentences: "A finché B", "A finché ¬B".
Mamma mangerà finché papà passeggerà.
Mamma mangerà finché papà **non** passeggerà.
Mum will eat "finché" dad will/won't stroll.
2. The "EN" question: "Do these sentences have the same core meaning"?
– Yes (EN). — No (no EN). — Undecided (U).
3. For each item, the participant could leave a personal comment.
4. The "preference" question: "If your response to the first question was "yes", do you have a preference towards one of the two versions?"
– Yes, I prefer the first (- EN). — Yes, I prefer the second (+ EN).
– No, I don't have any preferences.
This question could have been left blank.
5. For each item, the participant could leave a final comment.

Results: EN was mostly found with punctual events (the latter six of Table 2), and the presence of negation was strongly (almost totally) preferred by the speakers (+EN on the table). Here in 2 I report the data found in percentages (raw data in brackets).

Situation type	Embedded event	U	No EN	EN	+EN
State	to be angry	5% (2)	85% (34)	10% (4)	100% (4)
	to believe in aliens	2.5% (1)	87.5% (35)	100% (4)	100% (4)
Activity	to talk	5% (2)	82.5% (33)	12.5% (5)	100% (5)
	to stroll	7.5% (3)	85% (34)	7.5% (3)	75% (2)
Accomplishment	to drink a glass of wine	2.5% (1)	75% (30)	22.5% (8)	88.9% (4)
	to build the wardrobe	10% (4)	67.5% (27)	22.5% (9)	100% (9)
Achievement	to fall off the chair	5% (2)	22.5 (9)%	72.5 (29)%	96.6% (28)
	to burst out laughing	5% (2)	15% (6)	80% (32)	93.8% (30)
	to cross the line	0% (0)	12.5% (5)	87.5% (35)	94.3% (33)
S.S.E.	to blink once	7.5% (3)	7.5% (3)	85% (34)	97% (33)
	to knock once	2.5% (1)	10% (4)	87.5% (35)	94.3% (33)
	to do a single cough	0% (0)	15% (6)	85% (34)	94% (32)

Table 2. Presence of EN depending on the situation type of the embedded clause ([9]) and preferences towards its presence in the structure (+EN).

Moreover, I noticed that, in the case of delimitative *finché*-clauses, the NEG can't be deleted if the temporal clause is preposed (11). This goes against the classical claim that, at least following Delfitto [3], EN is fully optional.

- (11) **Finché** papà *(non) arriverà, mamma piangerà.
 until dad not ARRIVE.3SG.FUT, mum CRY.3SG.FUT.
 ‘Until dad *(EN) arrives, mum will cry.’

3.3 RQ₃: The modelling

Knowing that the interpretation of *finché* depends on the aspectual features of the temporal clause (A_1), I modelled its semantics in an event-based fashion. In all cases, we consider positive matrix clauses that have a duration. Hence, I worked with the following model $M(\varepsilon, T, \leq, \tau)$:

- ε is the domain of eventualities. I let s_D vary over durative/imperfective situations and s_P over punctual/perfective ones.
- T is the domain of instants.
- \leq is a binary relation of temporal precedence on T .
- τ is a function that associates each event with the ordered pair $\langle t_1, t_2 \rangle \in T \times T$ such that $t_1 \leq t_2$, delimiting the interval in which the event obtains (I work with closed intervals).

Coextensive interpretation: *finché* links two durative situations and denotes their coextension. Letting P and Q range over the VP-shells respectively of the matrix and the embedded clauses, we have:

$$\mathbf{Finché}_{\text{COEX}} : \lambda s_D. \lambda s_{D'}. \lambda P. \lambda Q. P(s_D) \wedge \tau(s_D) = \langle t_1, t_2 \rangle \wedge Q(s_{D'}) \wedge \tau(s_{D'}) = \langle t_3, t_4 \rangle \wedge t_1 \leq t_3 \leq t_4 \leq t_2].$$

The matrix will last at least as long as the embedded clause holds. The fact that the end of the matrix should coincide with the end of the temporal clause is analyzed as a conversational implicature (CI) since it's cancellable (12).

- (12) Mamma dormirà **finché** papà sarà in palestra *e anche dopo, se lui non farà rumore.*
 ‘Mum will eat as long as dad is at the gym *and even afterwards, if he doesn't make noise.*’

I don't put any requirements regarding the beginning of either clause. However, if we take the reference time (RT) into consideration, it seems intuitive that the matrix should persist through it all. This means that, even if it's possible in the RF that the embedded event starts after the matrix, the other way around should not. Embracing the view that negative clauses are durative [2], the negation is effective and has a narrow scope. Then, it should allow NC-chains and license NPIs, and this is what happens, as I will show later.

Delimitative interpretation: *finché* links a durative event to a point in time. We get this interpretation just by simply adding to the formula a punctual/perfective embedded event (s_P).

Finché_{DEL} : $\lambda s_D. \lambda s_P. \lambda P. \lambda Q. P(s_D) \wedge \tau(s_D) = \langle t_1, t_2 \rangle \wedge Q(s_P) \wedge \tau(s_P) = \langle t_3, t_4 \rangle \wedge t_1 \leq t_4 \leq t_2$.

The matrix will last at least until the instantiation of the embedded clause. From this, it follows that the beginning of the matrix has to come before the embedded one in all cases. The CI is the same as before. I argued that negative events can be seen as durative; hence, in the case where the entrance is an actual negative event, the interpretation of *finché* should be a coextensive one. However, this is not always the case. We clearly find *until*-contexts in which the meaning is not an "overlapping with a negative-imperfective event" (*A as long as $\neg B$*), but an *until*-like one (*A until the point at which B instantiates*). This happens for instance with "passato remoto" (13).

- (13) Mamma pianse **finché** papà non urlò.
 mum CRY.3SG.PAST-PFV until dad (not) SCREAM.3SG.PAST-PFV.
 'Mum cried eat until dad screamed.'

Hence, this negation doesn't have a narrow scope. For this reason, I consider it an "expletive". It doesn't mean that it can't add some extra pragmatic meaning, but just that it is not interpreted as a standard one. Therefore, I expect that it can't license NPIs or negative indefinites (contra Greco [5], and as in Tovena [10]). This is what I crucially found.

NPIs and NC licensing. In order to test this allegedly EN, I will show you some tests with weak NPIs and NC-chains, starting from a sentence that can receive both interpretations (accomplishment)(14).

- (14) La maestra sarà felice **finché** Anna non cadrà dalla sedia.
 'The teacher will be happy until Anna EN falls off the chair.'
 'The teacher will be happy as long as Anna is NOT falling off the chair.'

Weak NPI: "mai" (ever).

- (15) La maestra sarà felice **finché** Anna non cadrà **mai** dalla sedia.
 'The teacher will be happy as long as Anna never falls off the chair.'
 *'The teacher will be happy until Anna ever falls off the chair.'

If the negation can be both narrow and "higher", we should conserve both interpretations. However, "mai/ever" forces a coextensive one with narrow scope (15). In this case, we already know that the licensing is possible since we have an instance of standard negation. Therefore, even if it seems that this NPI licensing is due to an EN, it is crucially not.

Negative indefinitives: "nessuno/nobody" (example taken by [5]. However i marked with * his interpretation, proposing a new one below.)

- (16) Rimarra*i* qui **finché** non arriva Gianni.
 STAY.2SG.FUT here until not ARRIVE.3SG.PRES Gianni.
 ‘You will stay here until Gianni arrives.’
- (17) Rimarra*i* qui **finché** non arriva nessuno.
 STAY.2SG.FUT here until not ARRIVE.3SG.PRES nobody.
 *‘You’ll stay here until somebody arrives.’
 ‘You’ll stay here as long as nobody arrives.’

Again, the presence of NC-words forces a coextensive interpretation (17); then, it seems that it’s the EN that licences the negative indefinite, however, it is not. This is still a standard negation.

4 Further considerations

Recognising the status of this negation as an expletive should not be avoided to reach a more elegant conclusion. As typological data seems to suggest [11] [7], the use of negation beyond its original domain is not rare in the case of temporal clauses. Especially in *until*-clause, it seems that this correlates to the overlap between connectors in expressing different temporal relationships. With *finché* (but also *dok*, BCMS), we have the situation where *as long as* overlaps with *until*. In this context, the presence of EN phenomena seems to be extremely pervasive in the *until*-clauses. It has then been hypothesised that this negation can be helpful in discriminating between the two meanings, in addition to other signals like aspect, as we have seen with the previous Italian data. This could also explain why speakers prefer its presence and why it is also less optional than, for instance, before clauses.

Nevertheless, especially in Italian, it is still possible to delete it if the temporal clause is postponed. Then it must be better clarified what the difference is between the clause with and without expletive negation. One explanation has been proposed for Modern Hebrew (MH) by Margulis [8]. He theorised that EN has the role of conveying the so-called ”interruption implication”, a scalar implicature. Briefly, this interruption implication states that the matrix’s proposition is no longer true as soon as the subordinate’s proposition becomes true. Moreover, he argues that this is not part of the lexical semantics of the particle *until*, but it crucially arises with the help of negation. Then, when a clause contains EN, it can only be interpreted with the interruption implication, and it cannot be cancelled. Hence, the speaker selects EN only when they want to encode the interruption implication, i.e., when they want to explicitly spell out the temporal sequencing of the two propositions in such a way that the truth value of the matrix proposition ceases as soon as the truth value of the subordinate clause becomes valid. Sentences without EN allow both interpretations (with and without the interruption implication). The same analysis was adopted for Croatian [12]. However, in the same work, the same analysis is not proposed for Slovenian data, where EN is always compulsory; hence, we don’t have a comprehensive explanation.

Nevertheless, the analysis is elegant and seems to match the intuition of native speakers. However, if formally we are in front of an uncancellable scalar implicature, examples like (18) should not be possible for Croatian since we have EN phenomena and we can cancel the allegedly scalar implicature.

- (18) Lupat ću na vrata dok mi (ne) otvoriš *a i poslije ako mi se prohtije*.
 ‘I’ll bang on the door until you open (to me) *and after, if I feel like it.*’

As intuitions by native speakers suggest, it seems that this EN is not really optional, even when we don’t want to spell-out the temporal sequencing of the two propositions. Hence, a theory along these lines could be adapted for languages that still display strong optionality in regards to EN (where maybe we don’t have an overlap in the connectives), but it doesn’t capture the grammaticalization process that already occurred in others, where optionality is not full (i.e., Slovenian).

Anyway, the intuition that the matrix will end as soon as the embedded situation occurs is especially present with EN and could be seen as a pragmatic strengthening of the aforementioned conversational implicature. However, it seems (at least qualitatively and for Italian) that when we have EN, this negation works not only by delimiting the temporal range in which the matrix event should occur (right boundary), but also by strengthening the persistence of the matrix event until this very specific boundary (a shift from possibility/neutrality to actuality/commitment). The commitment is on the not-ending of the matrix until the designed right boundary.

5 Conclusions

Finché-clauses can occur with both standard (on the coextensive interpretation) and expletive (on the delimitative reading) negation, and just in the former case we have the license of NPIs and negative indefinites (contra Greco [5]). However, even if expletive, the negation found in the delimitative reading is not always optional, and it is strongly preferred by the speakers. The pragmatic import of this EN must still be properly analysed; however, new insights on this side are provided as a baseline for further studies.

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