

## ‘Until’ constructions and expletive negation

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A number of works have explored expletive negation in clause-linkage constructions (Espinal 2000; Abels 2005; Delfitto 2020; Jin & Koenig 2021; Olguín Martínez 2023abc; Olguín Martínez & Peregrina Llanes 2023; Olguín Martínez 2024). Most of them have shown that this type of negative marker can be omitted from the adverbial clause without affecting the interpretation holding between clauses. The present study shows, based on the analysis of natural discourse data of Huasteca Nahuatl (Uto-Aztecan language spoken in Mexico), that expletive negation has developed an intriguing discourse function in three types of ‘until’ constructions: ‘not...until’ constructions (1), scalar additive ‘until’ constructions (2), and beginning-to-end constructions (3).

- (1) *Nopa diablo ach-tla-tsotsona biolin,*  
DET devil NEG-INDEF.OBJ-play violin  
‘The devil did not play the violin,

*asta ke amo tlahuelchihua-k-e.*  
until that NEG get.angry-PFV-PL  
until they (men) got angry.’ (The devil and the man story-07/15/2022)

- (2) *Huankino hualah-ki kuatochi,*  
and.then come-PFV bunny  
‘The bunny came (to the party),

*hua asta amo hualah-ki koxua-li.*  
and until NEG come-PFV turtle-ABS  
and even the turtle.’ (The bunny and the turtle story-07/15/2022)

- (3) *Hua ya motlalok, pehua-yaya nopa laguna,*  
and 3SG.SBJ run start-IPFV DET lake  
‘And he ran (without making a stop) from the lake,

*asta amo motlalok el-t-o-k ka-li nopa ohten-tl.*  
until NEG run be-EXT-LOC-PFV house-ABS DEM edge-ABS  
to the house that is in the periphery (of our town).’ (The brave boy story-07/15/2022)

When the negative marker *amo* appears in the ‘until’ clause, the proposition should be characterized as expressing surprise. When it is absent from the ‘until’ clause, the proposition does not express surprise. This function of the expletive negative marker *amo* does not appear in elicited sentences, but only in spontaneous speech. It is proposed that Huasteca Nahuatl developed expletive negation in ‘not...until’ constructions due to contact with Spanish. However, the development of expletive negation in scalar additive ‘until’ constructions and beginning-to-end constructions is an internally motivated development in Huasteca Nahuatl that cannot be attributed to Spanish.

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