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Prosodic change and syntactic reanalysis: the case of focus in Jespersen's cycle

In my talk, I will address the diachronic pattern of renewal of negation known as Jespersen's cycle. In particular, I will focus on three varieties spoken in Veneto, inasmuch as they allow us to experiment with languages where the change is in progress. I show that the emergent negator *miga* is a lexical entry possessing inherently a focus feature, which drives a pragmatic interpretation corresponding to a FALSUM operator. The featural composition of the entry has primarily some syntactic effects, like the ban on some clause types which generally ban focus. Secondly, its featural specification is replicated at the interfaces. Concerning LF, we see different scopal restrictions based on the status of the negator. I also show that the focal composition is appreciable at the mapping with phonological component, where the different status of *miga* reflects distinct prosodic properties.