Testing previous formal accounts of variation in word order in negative word+ *más* constructions

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Object of the study

To test formal accounts regarding the variable positioning of *más* relative to the negative words *nada* (*nothing*), *nunca* (*never*), *nadie* (*nobody*), and *ninguno* (*not one*) in Venezuelan Spanish.

1) Entonces me dijo que yo iba a tener cuatro niñas nada más, que no buscara más porque no lo iba a tener. (CB5FD_87)
   ‘So he/she told me that I was going to have four girls, no more, that I shouldn’t expect another because I wasn’t going to have him.’

2) Primero, me dijo que ... iba a tener cuatro niñas, más nada, y que no buscara varón porque no lo iba a tener. (CB5FD_87)
   ‘First, he/she told me that I was going to have four daughters, no more, and that I shouldn’t expect a boy because I wasn’t going to have him.’
History of the variants
Preposing of más


Rosenblat (1956) also reports this alternation in Venezuela.

Highest in Argentina, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Venezuela (García Cornejo, 2008).

Más nada is the only variant that is common in the entire American continent (García Cornejo, 2008: 33).
History of the variants

*Nunca* and *ninguno* first presented variation (García Cornejo, 2008).

- *Más ninguno* surfaced in the 13th and 14th century.
- *Más nunca* first appeared in the 14th and 15th century.
- *Más nada* emerged in the 16th century.
- *Más nadie* first appeared in the 19th century.

All four variants became restricted to Atlantic Spanish in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Other Romance varieties that have preposing:

- Gallego-portuguese (*nada*, *ningún* and *nunca*)
- European Portuguese (all)
- Brazilian Portuguese (Silver, 1948: 425; Gomes de Matos, 1967: 495).
History of the variants: Data reported in Davies Corpus del Español

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>13th century</th>
<th>14th century</th>
<th>15th century</th>
<th>16th century</th>
<th>17th century</th>
<th>18th century</th>
<th>19th century</th>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>105</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>14</td>
<td>174</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### History of the variants: Data reported in CORDE from RAE

<table>
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<th>15th century</th>
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<th>17th century</th>
<th>18th century</th>
<th>19th century</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td>1846</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nunca más</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>206</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadie más</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Más ningún(o)(a) más</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ningún(o)(a) más</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Syntactic constraints on variation
Additive constructions

Negative word + más

- Additive construction similar to algunos más (eng. some more)
- Can be tested by seeing if preposed más constructions can occur with the preposition de (eng. of).

1) ¿Entre ustedes no pasó nada, nada más de lo que me ha contado?
   Between you (plural) nothing occurred, nothing other than what you’ve told me? (1909, Florencio Sánchez, Un buen negocio; CORDE; cf. Garcia Cornejo, 2008: 59).

   We found evidence to the contrary in our corpus (1 of 3 occurring with de)

2) Después que se ... que se terminó esa presidencia no hubo más nada de eso.
   After that presidency ended, there was no more of this. (CC4FB_87)
Negation

- Only purely negative uses of the negative word allow preposing of *más*. (Gutiérrez-Rexach & González-Rivera, 2012)

1)  **No estudié más nada sino hasta sexto grado.**
    
    I didn't study but up to sixth grade. (CC4FD_87)

2)  **Estudié hasta sexto grado nada más.**
    
    I studied up til only sixth grade. (CC4FD_87)

3)  **No creo en más nada, ni ningún santo ni en más nada.**
    
    I don't believe in anything else, no saint nor anything else. (CB4FC_87)

4)  **Yo creo en Dios nada más y en la Santísima Trinidad.**

5)  I believe in God, nothing else, and the Holy Trinity. (CB4FC_87)

- **Focal interpretation**

1)  **¿Quieres comer algo? Eso [nada más].**
    
    Do you want to eat something? Only this.

2)  *¿Quieres comer algo? Eso [más nada].* (Gutiérrez-Rexach & González-Rivera, 2012: 288)
Negation

- However there are preposed más + negative word with focal interpretation

1) El tranvía más nada, era lo que había.
   Only the tram was what there was. (CD5FA_87)

2) Me tomo un palito, tres palitos, y más nada.
   I have a drink, three drinks, nothing else. (CD4MC_87)

3) Porque yo voy a bailar con quien a mí me agrade, más nada.
   Because I’m going to dance with whoever I want, nobody else. (CD4MC_87)

4) Como protestes [nada más], te suspendo.
   Since you’re only protesting, I’m suspending you.

5) *Como protestes [más nada], te suspendo. (Gutiérrez-Rexach & González-Rivera, 2012: 288)
Focalization

When negative word + más constructions are used as a focal construction (only), preposing of más is not allowed (Gutiérrez-Rexach & González-Rivera, 2012). (Violation of locality constraints).

1) Voy al cine [nada más] que para verte.
   I’m going to the movies just to see you.

2) *Voy al cine [más nada] que para verte. (Gutiérrez-Rexach & González-Rivera, 2012: 288)

3) No puede uno ni siquiera ver televisión, más nada sino puro ver.
   ‘One can’t even watch televisión, simply observe.’ (CC5FB_87)

1) [Nada más] te digo que soy pobre.
   ‘I’m simply telling you that I am poor.’

2) *[Más nada] te digo que soy pobre. (Gutiérrez-Rexach & González-Rivera, 2012: 290)
Comparative constructions

Comparative constructions can only contain postposed más. (Gutiérrez-Rexach & González-Rivera, 2012)

1) No hay [nada más] terrible que sufrir en vano.
   There is nothing more terrible than suffering in vain.

2) *No hay [más nada] terrible que sufrir en vano. (Gutiérrez-Rexach & González-Rivera, 2012)

3) Yo creo que no hay nada más malo que tú te equivoques y la ... la gente te aplauda.
   There is nothing worse than when you are mistaken and people applaud you. (CA3FD_87: 289)
Comparative constructions

Miyoshi’s (1995) interpretation of these negative expressions proposes that the negative word + más represent the differential term of a comparison where the base and opposite term of the comparison is null.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Más nada que</th>
<th>Nada más que</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) Le dejó nada más que estos dos dedos. (CD5FD_87) ‘He left him only these two fingers.’

2) También como somos nada más que dos... (CAF1C_87) ‘Also, since we are only two...’

3) No había más nada que enseñarnos. (CD3FA_87) ‘There was nothing to do but teach ourselves.’

4) Yo no tenía más nada que hacer. (CD3FA_87) ‘I have nothing else to do.’

5) No puedo hacer más nada. (CA5FB_87) ‘I can’t do anything else.’
Semantic constraints on variation
Inability to continue (Agentivity)

There is a semantic inference that the agent is unable to continue the action when más is preposed (Gutiérrez-Rexach & González-Rivera, 2012).

1) Pepe no comió [nada más].
   ‘Pepe did not eat anything else.’

2) Pepe no comió [más nada].

3) No leyó [más nada].
   ‘He did not read anything else’. (Gutiérrez-Rexach & González-Rivera, 2012: 290)
Different presuppositions

1) No leeré [nunca más] libros de Vargas Llosa.
   ‘I will not read books by Vargas Llosa anymore.’

2) No leeré [más nunca] libros de Vargas Llosa.
   ‘I will not read books by Vargas Llosa ever.’ (Gutiérrez-Rexach & González-Rivera, 2012: 290)

3) Que me caí una vez y me rompí el brazo [risas], que patinamos, y más nunca quise patinar.
   ‘One time I fell and I broke my arm [laughter], we were skating and never again did I want to skate.’
   (CA2FB_87)

Examples show that preposed más can be used even when information is available to show the event has taken place before.
Quantifiers

- Quantifier similar to *más tarde, más lejos,* etc. (García Cornejo, 2008)

1) **Más nunca** tiré piedras en verdad.

   Never again did I throw rocks, honestly. (CD5MC_87)

2) **Nunca más** pisé la calle.

   Never again did I walk on the street. (CC4FA_87)
Method
Dependent variable

All tokens containing the following constructions:

- Más + nada/nadie/nunca/ninguno

- Nada/nadie/nunca/ninguno + más
Independent linguistic variables

Polarity →
  ◦ Only purely negative sentences allow preposing.

Comparative →
  ◦ Comparative phrases only allow postposing.

Position of más + negative word in comparison to verb →
  ◦ Focal constructions only allow postposed más.

Animacy →
  ◦ Only subjects that are agents allow postposed más.

Person and number of the subject →
  ◦ 1 and 2 are correlated to animacy and favor postposed más.

Verb type →
  ◦ Transitive and prepositional complement verbs also correlate with animacy and favor postposed más.

Specific negative word →
  ◦ More frequent categories will show more variation.
Independent extralinguistic variables

Age
Sex
Socioeconomic level
Data

The data

Estudio sociolingüístico de Caracas (1987) [financed by the Consejo de Desarrollo Científico y Humanístico de la Universidad Central de Venezuela]

Half-hour interviews, conducted in 1987 and 1988

160 speakers

Born and raised in Caracas, with parents also from Caracas

Divided evenly among four age groups, both genders and five socioeconomic groups
Results

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS
[negative word + más] is more predominant in the corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>[más + negative word]</th>
<th>[negative word + más]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>182</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Negative sentences commonly appear with preposed más

Distribution of [más + negative word] according to polarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentages (%)</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Affirmative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[más + negative word]</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were not any cases of preposed más in comparative constructions.
No distinction is found according to this factor.

Distribution of [más + negative word] according to position with respect the verb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage %</th>
<th>Before the verb</th>
<th>After the verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[más + negative word]
Preposed *más* appears somewhat more with animate subjects.

![Distribution of [más + negative word] according to animacy](chart.png)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage %</th>
<th>Animate</th>
<th>Inanimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[más + negative word]</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage %
Second person more commonly appear with preposed más followed by first person.

Distribution of [más + negative word] according to the subject of the main clause

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Subject</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Preposed más tends to co-occur with prepositional complements and transitive predicates

Distribution of [más + negative word] according to the type of verb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage %</th>
<th>Prepositional compl.</th>
<th>Transitive</th>
<th>Impersonal</th>
<th>Gustar type</th>
<th>Intransitive</th>
<th>Copulative</th>
<th>Pronominal</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[más + negative word]</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Variation is more common with nada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nadie</th>
<th>Ninguno</th>
<th>Nunca</th>
<th>Nada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[más + negative word]</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>38</td>
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</table>
Older speakers favored preposed más

Distribution of [más + negative word] according to age

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>46-60</td>
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<td>30-45</td>
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<td>14-29</td>
<td>38</td>
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</table>
Women used preposed más slightly more

Distribution of [más + negative word] according to sex

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<thead>
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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>43</td>
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[Bar chart showing the distribution of [más + negative word] according to sex]
Middle socioeconomic class speakers are more likely to use preposed más.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[más + negative word]</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30</td>
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Multivariate Analysis

[MÁS + NEGATIVE WORD]
<table>
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<th>P-value</th>
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<td>Significance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>Polarity</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>76/100</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.39</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>106/296</td>
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<td>Range</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>140/290</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inanimate</td>
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<tr>
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<td>72/151</td>
</tr>
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<td>Third</td>
<td>0.50</td>
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<td>96/215</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position of [más + negative word] with respect the verb of the main clause</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>150/325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>82/71</td>
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<td>Socioeconomic Level</td>
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<td>119/214</td>
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<td>44/118</td>
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<td>0.34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>0.63</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>49/89</td>
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<tr>
<td>46–60</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>41/81</td>
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<td>0.48</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>113/234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>69/162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factors in brackets [ ] were not selected as significant.
Discussion
Polarity

The formal analysis proposed that negative constructions would favor \([más + \text{negative word}]\).
- The argument is that linguistic units indicating grade/degree may be moved from their natural syntactic context and \(más\) can only be preposed in purely negative sentences since postposed \(más\) would differ in having focal interpretation (sólo ‘only’)

- We found quantitative evidence that preposed \(más\) is favored in negative sentences (0.78). However, we also found that this is not a categorical pattern since 36% of the cases have \(más\ nata \text{ type of constructions}\) in affirmative sentences with an interpretation that may be considered focal.

1) Me tomo un palito, tres palitos, y \(más\ nata\).
   I have a drink, three drinks, nothing else. (CD4MC_87)
Comparative

Our data shows very few cases of comparative sentences. We had 3 tokens out of 396. All of the examples found had [negative word + más] as predicted in the formal account.

The formal analysis argues that más cannot be moved due to a violation of syntactic locality.

We have very little evidence at this point, but we think that comparative tokens are out of the envelope of variation.
Position of *más* + negative word in comparison to verb

This factor was taken into account in order to capture focalized structures since the formal analysis proposes that they would be considered closed domains inhibiting *más* to climb to a higher position.

This factor turned out not to be significant in our analysis.

We also run a separate analysis where we think variation is more productive (*nada más* vs *más nada*) and the position was not selected even though tendencies may be in the direction predicted in the formal analysis.
Animacy

Animate subjects in our analysis were predicted to favor postposed más (i.e. nada más, nunca más, etc). The results show that this factor was not significant and the tendencies are in the opposite direction of what would be expected following the formal account.

1) Comencé a jugar pelota y esas cosas, más nada. (CA5MC_87)

2) No sé qué para no hacer gimnasia porque me daba, bueno de todo, no hacía más nada. (CB3FB_87)

3) Lo hago por mi hija nada más. (CA5MC_87)
Person and number of the subject

As in the case of animacy, first and second person were predicted to favor postposed *más* (i.e. *nada más, nunca más*, etc). However, this factor was not selected as significant in our analysis.

1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} person tend to be animate and this explains the tendencies we found in our data.
Verb type

Verb type was discarded from the multivariate analysis due to its interaction with animacy. There were no tokens or few tokens of inanimate subjects for pronominal (e.g. acordarse de ‘remember’) and for prepositional complement verbs (e.g. encargarse de ‘in charge of’).

However, the descriptive statistics show that transitive and prepositional complement verbs tend to co-occur with preposed más, a pattern we attribute to the interaction with animacy.
Specific negative word

The results from the descriptive statistics show that *nada* is the negative form most commonly found. It is also the case that variation is more likely to happen in this case in comparison to *nunca*, *nadie* and *ninguno*.

We argue that the pattern found for *nada* as the most frequent form is not particular of our corpus, but that it reflects a trend that mimics other data bases (we are not making assumptions about positioning. Just of the frequency of the form in general).
Sociolinguistic variables

The results of the sociolinguistic variables indicate that only socioeconomic class is significant with the middle class favoring preposed *más*.

The sociolinguistic profile of the variable, however, does not seem to be a clear cut case as sex and age were not selected and do not show consistent tendencies.

Regarding morphosyntactic variation, Díaz-Campos and Geeslin (2011) point out:

“One might argue that syntactic change differs from phonological change in that it advances slowly under the main influence of linguistic factors. Syntactic and phonological change might also differ in how they acquire social value in the community. While frequent and productive phonological change can be associated with certain social groups, syntactic change tends to be less frequent and its social value is more elusive.”
Conclusions

The factor groups based on formal accounts do not offer a straightforward explanation of the variation in *negative word + más* constructions.

While results demonstrate that negative polarity favors preposing of *más*, as expected, animacy, person and number of subject of the main clause, and position with respect to the verb do not statistically constrain the dependent variable as expected from formal accounts.

Comparative sentences were very few to perform an analysis, while verb type was a descriptive variable to observe distribution of tokens.

The categorical analysis proposed in the previous literature does not reflect the results of the quantitative analysis performed revealing the inherent variability of language phenomena.
Conclusions

The review of the synchronic and the historical data seems to indicate that [más + negative word] is the new competing form and that the negative word nada was the most productive for a quantitative analysis.

These findings present evidence supporting the adoption of a mixed approach using a variationist framework to test formal models.
Future directions

Propose an analysis that shows how \([\text{más} + \text{negative word}]\) may be the product of the fact that \text{más} tend to be preposed in other more common quantifiers such as \text{más bonita}, \text{más grande}, \text{más tarde} where \text{más} modifies an adjective. This kind of template may be influencing analogical leveling of \([\text{más} + \text{negative word}]\).

- Explore a usage-based approach to pursue this goal.

Study other areas of variation such as \text{más nada}, \text{nada más}, \text{sólo}, \text{solamente} as previous accounts propose a focal interpretation and there are no analyses of this phenomenon. This is another area of variation structurally related with the subject of our investigation.
References


References


