ABSTRACT. This paper presents a lexicalist analysis of negation in French and English. In both languages, negation in finite clauses is grammatically distinguished from constituent negation. Lexical idiosyncrasy motivates treating finite negation as a verbal complement, while constituent negation is treated in terms of a familiar modifier-head construction. General principles ordering lexical and phrasal heads ensure that negation (the adverbs not and pas) follows the finite verb (the finite auxiliary verb in English), while only constituent negation appears preverbally. Our constraint-based account, cast within the framework of Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG), provides a viable alternative (with broader coverage, fewer devices and simpler principles) to analyses based on head movement, which seek to explain the syntax of negation and adverbial positions in terms of the interaction of morphological properties, verb movement, and functional projections.

1. INTRODUCTION

The similarities and systematic differences between English and French grammar have received considerable attention in the recent syntactic literature. Central to this inquiry has been the following set of contrasts:
Position of Negation:

(1) a. *Kim likes not Lee.
   b. Kim does not like Lee.

(2) a. Robin n’aime pas Stacey.

Position of Adverbs:

(3) a. *Kim kisses often Lee.
   b. Kim often kisses Lee.

(4) a. Robin embrasse souvent Stacey.

Subject-Verb Inversion in Questions:

(5) a. *Likes he Sandy?
   b. Does he like Sandy?

(6) a. *Likes Lou Sandy?
   b. Aime-t-il Sandy?

Drawing on the earlier insights of Emonds (1978), Pollock (1989) and a number of subsequent researchers (Belletti 1990; Zanuttini 1991, 1997; Chomsky 1991, 1993; Lasnik 1995; Vikner 1997; and Haegeman 1997, inter alia) have interpreted these contrasts as providing critical motivation for the process of head movement and the existence of functional categories such as MoodP, TP, AgrP, and NegP. It has been widely accepted that the variation between French and English illustrated here can be explained only in terms of the respective properties of verb movement and its interaction with a view of clause structure organized around functional projections.

For example, in Pollock’s (1989) proposal, all verbs in French move to a higher structural position, whereas this is possible in English only for the auxiliaries have and be, as shown in (7):