

Yoichi Arai  
 Faculty of Economics  
 Chuo University, Tokyo, Japan  
 araiguma@tamacc.chuo-u.ac.jp

### A corpus-based analysis of some Neg-intensifying expressions

This paper focuses on the adverb or the adverbial phrases in italics in the following:

- (1) Naturally I do **not** give Mr Labez **any** tumble *whatever*.
- (2) I am **not** concerned with fame *in the least*.
- (3) He says that the government should **not** celebrate religious holidays *at all*.

They are similar in that (i) they always co-occur with a negative element Neg and semantically intensify it, and (ii) they are syntactically c-commanded by Neg (i.e. they can be called Negative Polarity Items). Despite these common characteristics, however, a closer investigation of mainly the British English Corpora (LOB, BNC, Bank of English, ICE-GB, *OED2*, etc.) shows different syntactic characteristics as shown in the following:

(4)	Adjacency with Neg Noun	Adjacency with Neg	Separation from Neg
<i>whatever</i>	OK	*	*
<i>in the least</i>	*	OK	OK
<i>at all</i>	OK	OK	OK

Examples of “Adjacency with Neg Noun” and “Adjacency with Neg” are shown in (5) and (6) respectively, while examples of “Separation from Neg” are found in (2) and (3):

- (5) a. ... regrettably Liudprand knew **nothing** *whatever* about a female pontiff.  
 b. It obstructs our knowledge of a great deal of music that would present **no difficulty** *at all* if we could only hear it.
- (6) a. Considerations of defense, in addition to mobilizing offensive strength, do **not** *in the least* imply softness or lack of viability.  
 b. Privately, though, Herr Brandt is **not** *at all* convinced that the Russians see eye to eye with the East Germans over a change in the status of West Berlin.

This study will make clear that *in the least* shows the same syntactic behavior as other prepositional phrases consisting of P + *any* + N, e.g. *in any way*, *in any sense*, *in any circumstances*, *by any means* and so on. As for the three syntactic characteristics in (4), *whatever* and *in the least* have complementary distributions, and *at all* is a common expression that has all the three syntactic properties. Finally, examining the tree structure scheme employed in the ICE-GB project, this paper will propose a feasible tree structure analysis which explains the syntactic differences observed in (4).