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| Nota di contenuto | Frontmatter -- Table of contents -- Is there a Jespersen cycle? / Larrivé, Pierre -- Negative words and related expressions: A new perspective on some familiar puzzles / Biberauer, Theresa / Roberts, Ian -- Negative words and negation in French / Labelle, Marie -- Secondary negation and information structure organisation in the history of English / Kemenade, Ans van -- Looking high and low for NegP in early English / Haeberli, Eric -- Ne-drop and indefinites in Anglo-Norman and Middle English / Ingham, Richard -- Looking at Middle English through the mirror of Anglo-Norman / Hoeksema, Jack -- Ne-absence in declarative and yes/no interrogative contexts: Some patterns of change / Martineau, France -- The early absence of the French negative marker ne / Rowlett, Paul -- Atoms of negation: An outside-in micro-parametric approach to negative concord / Déprez, Viviane -- Viviane Déprez: "Atoms of negation. An outside-in micro-parametric approach to negative concord." Discussion / Hansen, Maj-Britt Mosegaard -- Negative polarity and the quantifier cycle: Comparative diachronic perspectives from European languages / Willis, David -- Indefinite pronouns, synchrony and diachrony: Comments on Willis / Auwera, Johan van der / Alsenoy, Lauren Van -- Subject index |

Why do grammars change? The cycle of negation proposed by Jespersen is crucially linked to the status of items and phrases. The definition of criteria establishing when a polarity item becomes a negative element, and the identification of the role of phrases for the evolution of negation are the two objectives pursued by the contributions to this volume. The contributions look at the emergence of negative items, and their relation within a given sentence, with particular reference to English and French. The comparative perspective supports the documentation of the fine-grained steps that shed light on the factors that (i) determine change and those that (ii) accompany actuation, which are considered through a dialogue between functionalist and formalist approaches. By looking at the place of negation in the architecture of the sentence, they take up the debate as to the relevance of phrasal projections and consider the role of features. Focusing on the make-up of individual items makes it possible to re-conceptualise the Jespersen cycle as the apparent result of the documented evolution patterns of individual (series of) items. This novel perspective is solidly grounded on an extensive use of the complete, up to date bibliography, and will contribute to shape future research.