Investigating the Performance of Iraqi EFL Learner's Use of Negation Type

A paper

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by

Noor Al-Huda Safi Najih

Supervised by

Asst. Lect. Taif Hatem Shardaghly

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To
my family with love and respect

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Abstract

This paper focuses on investigating the Performance of Iraqi EFL Learner's Use of Negation Type . Thus , it aims at : 1) Illustrating what is meant by negation . 2) Do Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in recognizing types of negation? 3) Do Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in producing types of negation. To quest the aforementioned aims duly, it is hypothesized that: 1.Negation is the opposite or absence of something. 2. Iraqi EFL Learners face a difficulty in recognizing and producing sentences containing negative expressions. Lastly , it comes with the following conclusions : Negation is the opposite or absence of something. It   comes in various   forms . Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in recognizing and producing negation types.

 Key words: Negation , Structure , Types .

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 The Problem

Language is a powerful tool that allows us to describe not only the state of the world as we see it, but also the world as it is not. It has a rich landscape of negative expressions. Negation is an essential part of everyday communication. It is a universal mental element used to express the non-existence of something, an object, action or feeling. There are number of dimensions we can use to classify negative expressions into groups. Some linguists like Jackendoff claim that negation can be classified into two types: explicit and implicit. The others make a distinction between negation in the asserted meaning and negation in the non-asserted content. This study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What is meant by negation ?

2. What are the difficulties faced by Iraqi EFL Learners in using types of negation ?

1.2 Aims

In the light of the above-mentioned questions, the present study tries to achieve the following aims:

1. Illustrating what is meant by negation .

2-Do Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in recognizing types of negation ?

3- Do Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in producing types of negation ?

1.3 Hypotheses

The study adopts the following hypotheses:

1.Negation is the opposite or absence of something.

2. Iraqi EFL Learners face a difficulty in recognizing and producing sentences containing negative expressions .

1.4 Procedures

The study adopts the following procedure in order to achieve its aims :

1- Presenting a theoretical background about negation and its types .

2- Forming a test to be applied to a random sample of students.

3- Evaluating the students' performance in using types of negation .

4- Tabulating and discussing the results of the analysis to objectively verify the hypotheses of the study.

1.5 Limits

This study is limited to the investigation of 20 students in the fourth stage in Department of English/ College of Education for Human Sciences/ University of Babylon in their recognition and production types of negation .

1.6 Value

Hopefully, the present study will be of value to those interested in linguistics and grammar. The findings will help the students to enhance their academic performance.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Background

2.1 Definition of Negation

Negation is one of the distinctive properties of human language (Horn, 2001): every natural language includes at least one device that can express the negation of an affirmative constituent.

It is the operation of changing a sentence or other unit into its negative form, especially by using not *(Leech, 2006:66).* It can also be defined as contradicting the meaning or part of the meaning of a sentence. The main negator in English is not, often in its contracted form n't and combined with an auxiliary, for example: *She isn't going/hasn't gone / didn't go/doesn't want to go(Richards and Schimdt, 2010:390).*

It is a grammatical construction that contradicts (or negates) all or part of the meaning of a sentence. Also known *as a* negative construction *or* standard negation.(Web Source 1)

Also , it is a refusal or denial of something. as in "I didn't kill the butler" (Web Source 2) . In a Homogenous vein , Horn (2010:1) states that in many ways, negation is means to deny, to contradict, to misrepresent, to lie, and to convey irony."

2.2 Negative Structures in English

In most cases a negative meaning is given to a verb by adding the negative verbal particle NOT.

"Not" (sometimes shortened to n't) normally follows the principal auxiliary or modal verb in a verbal structure. In the few cases where there is no auxiliary or modal (present simple or past simple affirmative tenses), it follows a reconstituted auxiliary, do or did. The choice between not and n't is a matter of style. Not is generally preferred in written English, n't in spoken English. In circumstances where it is possible to abbreviate the operator, by the use of a contracted form enclitic to the subject (usually only a pronoun), two colloquial and synonymous forms of negation are possible: (Web Source 2)

He **plays** tennis	He doesn't play tennis	~ He never plays tennis
He is coming	He isn't coming.	~ He's not coming.
We are ready	We aren't ready.	~ We're not ready.
He will missus	He won't miss us.	~ She 'll not miss us.

2.2 Types of Negation

Natural language has a rich landscape of negative expressions. There are a number of dimensions we can use to classify negative expressions into groups. In the current paper, following Clark (1976) , we make a distinction between negation in the asserted meaning and negation in the non-asserted content (also see Horn (1996)); also following Clark (1976), we call the first group explicit negation, and the second implicit negation.

2.2.1 Explicit Negation in English

The most common negative words are no and not. Other negative words include: neither, never, no one, nobody, none, nor, nothing, nowhere. As in the following examples :

-Kieran does**n't** play the piano. (It is not true that Kieran plays the piano.)

-There were **no** newspapers left in the shop by one o'clock.

-Nobody came to the house for several days.

-None of my cousins live near us.

-Most children do**n't** walk to school any more(Web Source 3) .

Under Clark's classification, explicit negation in English includes expressions like scarcely, hardly, few, seldom, little, and only, as well as more obviously negative expressions like no, not, and never. Also Leech (1983: 100) has said that there are adverbs and determiners which are negative in meaning, but not in form (e.g., barely, few, little, rarely scarcely, seldom), as they are followed by non-assertive forms , in addition , the sentences in which they appear generally require positive tag questions. These adverbs cannot co-occur with the negative particle "not" in the sentences, e.g.,

6. I seldom get any help in my study.

7. They hardly visit their uncle.

Explicit negation does not necessitate that negation is morphologically overt. Expressions such as few, scarcely, hardly, seldom, and little, although not morphologically realized as negative, behave nevertheless syntactically and semantically negative under a number of well known, and by now classic, diagnostics (Horn, 2001). For instance, few, scarcely, hardly, seldom, and little can be followed by a conjunct modified by neither, but not by so. Moreover, they may also co-occur in a conjunct with either, but not with too.

For example: So/Neither-diagnostic

a. Those students passed the exam, and so/*neither did the teachers.

b. No students passed the exam, and *so/neither did the teachers.

c. Few students passed the exam, and *so/neither did the teachers.

d. Those students hardly passed the exam, and *so/neither did the teachers.

Too/either diagnostic

a. The students left, and all the teachers left too/*either.

b. The students left, and none of the teachers stayed *too/either.

c. The students left, and few of the teachers stayed *too/either.

d. The students left, and the teachers hardly stayed *too/either

2.2.2 Implicit Negation in English

The opposite of a positive sentence is a negative sentence. In English, people generally think of negative sentences as sentences with explicit negative words such as not, no .However, various factors convey the meaning of negation. Besides explicit negative words. Morphological negative words and implicit negative words can express negativeness, as in:

a. He is happy.

b. He is not happy.

c. He is unhappy.

d. He is miserable.

e. He is rich, intelligent and handsome, but trouble maker.

Arimitus (2000:44) states that the concept against positive is not fixed. The negation of (1a),it may generally be thought as (1 b).However, sentences such as (1c)and (1 d) can be the negation of (1 a) and they are in the opposite position of(1 a). Moreover the sentence like (1e) has the negative conjunction but and it is clear that the part after the negative conjunction "but" expresses something contrary and reverses the former part. Even the sentence (1e) seems to have some negativeness.

2.2.2 .1 Implicit negation based on meaning

a. He is a bachelor.   b. She is a spinster.

(Ibid, 2000:54) states that it is one traditional way of expressing that" bachelor" is [+male, -married]. And spinster is [+female, -married]. There is no explicit negative word here. but there is some kind of negativeness in these words. To give the feature checking, it is important to decide where to put the focus on. For example, grandmother can be expressed as both [+female, +old] and [-male, -young]. In English, verbs can imply the implicit negative sense depending on meaning-based such as deny, refuse, ignore, forget etc., and imply the sense of implicit negative.

The verbs based on meaning can be classed into two types; those which involve inherent negation of the complement clause, another type involve inherent negation of the main clause verb, e.g.

3- I warned the children to buy any ice cream. (Negation of complement

clause)

Other negative verbs of this type include (deny that, doubt that,

dissuade from, ignore) .

4-They rejected the idea that the students had taken any photos.(negation of

main clause)

The verb reject is like not to accept in taking any. Further examples of this type include forget (equivalent to not to remember).The verbs like forbear, prohibit, prevent, refrain, fear, hinder also carry the meaning of negation. They are called "verbs of implicit negation. Jespresen (1917:75), for instance, gives the appellation verbs of negative import and Rissanen (1999:273) verbs with a negative implication to the same series of verbs.

2.2.2 .2 Affixal negation in English

Zimmer(1964:5 ,funk 1971:41) mentions that negative affixation , especially when it involves the English prefixes un-, im- and in- and their cross – linguistic analogues ,admits to develop a contrary , rather than merely contradictory , interpretation. In English , some Verbs can imply the implicit negative based on affixes. Bybee (1985: 176) says that inflected verbs can also incorporate a negative meaning in lexical expressions (e.g., disagree, mismanage, and unfreeze). This is called affixal negation where negative prefixes are attached to verbs, nouns (e.g., inattention) and adjectives (e.g., unhappy).

5- I disagree that learning English is difficult .

2.2.2 .3 - Conditional Clauses Expressing Implicit Negation

Conditional clauses can easily reflect the sense of implicit negation owing to the fact that open conditional clauses are neutral in that the fulfillment or non- fulfillment of the condition is left unresolved.

13- If Jack get a job at London, he is certainly staying with me.

The above sentence leaves unresolved whether Jack gets a job at London, and hence it leaves unresolved his staying with the speaker. It is important to note that the probability of the condition being fulfilled often exists in the speaker's mind (Craver: 1986:90).

On the other hand, a hypothetical conditional clause conveys the speaker's belief that the condition will not be fulfilled (for future conditions), is not fulfilled (for present conditions) or was not fulfilled (for past conditions), e.g.,

14. If he read well, he'd get high marks.(probably won't read well)

15. They would arrive on time if they caught the train. (Probably don't catch the train).

16. If you had worked hard, you would not have passed the exam.(certainly didn't work hard and did not pass the exam .

17. If you had ever worked hard, you would not have failed any exam(Quirk et al., 1985: 1091)..

Craver (1986: 100) maintains that the conjunction unless is more emphatic in expressing a negative condition.

18. Unless Tom invites me to the party, I will not meet Mary.

The negative sense in sentence (18) is attributed to the fact that the speaker would not have met Mary without Tom's invitation.

Chapter Three

Data Collection and Analysis

3.1 Test Definition

Black and William (1998:91) define test as "all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities. Such assessment becomes formative assessment when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching to meet student needs".

3.2 Characteristics of Good Test

There are two characteristics of a good test which are:

3.2.1. Validity

Validity is defines as the extent to which the instrument measure and calculates in many ways represents the easiest being the square root of the reliability coefficient *Al-Hamash et al. (1985:200)* state that " test is valid if it measures what it is supposed to measure. It should be related to the content of the course."

3.2.2. Reliability

In order to be reliable, a test must be consistent in its measurements.

Heaton (*1975:162*) states that "reliability denotes the extent to which the same marks or grades are awarded if the same test is marked by two or more different examiners or the same examiner under different occasions".

Reliability is defined as the extent to which a questionnaire, test, observation or any measurement produces the same results on repeated trials.

3.3 The subjects

This sample consists of (20) students from the fourth stage of the Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, for the academic year 2021-2022. They are native speakers of Arabic.

3.4 Test Material

Test material are selected from books and the internet .

3.5 Test Design

The test consists of (2) questions the first measures the recognition level and the second measures the production level. Each question consists of (10) items. The students are given questions and they are required to respond according to their background knowledge.

3.6 Analysis of Recognition Level

Question 1 tests   the subjects' performance at the recognition level. The following table provides the results obtained on each test item (See Table1).

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of the test's items in Q I

No. of item	No. of correct responses	%	No. of incorrect responses	%
1	16	80%	4	20%
2	4	20%	16	80%
3	13	65%	7	35%
4	11	55%	9	45%
5	16	80%	4	20%
6	18	90%	2	10%
7	12	60%	8	40%
8	3	15%	17	85%
9	7	35%	13	65%
10	12	60%	8	40%
Total	102	51%	98	49%

The findings at the recognition level (table 1) show that only 102 responses (51%) were correct and 98 responses (49%) were incorrect. These results indicate that some students have difficulty in distinguishing between explicit and implicit negatives.

The student answered these items (2),(8), and (9) incorrectly. The reason behind that most of them are still unable to distinguish words like "scarcely, hardly, and nobody" as explicit negatives, just like " not" and" no"

3.7 Analysis of Production Level

Question 2 is prepared to assess the subjects' acquisition at the production level.

Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages of the test's items in Q II

No. of item	No. of correct responses	%	No. of incorrect responses	%
1	16	80%	4	20%
2	8	40%	12	60%
3	11	55%	9	45%
4	10	50%	10	50%
5	7	35%	13	65%
6	10	50%	10	50%
7	8	40%	12	60%
8	10	50%	10	50%
9	6	30%	14	70%
10	5	25%	15	75%
Total	90	45%	110	55%

The findings related to the production level (table 2) show that only 90 out of 200 responses were correct. These results indicate that students face considerable difficulty in the production level. The number of students who failed in giving a correct answer is 110 (55%).

Students faced difficulty giving the correct negation and using it in a meaningful sentence. In all the items, only less than half students tested answered correctly. Most students failed to make negative sentences in items (2),(5), and (10) by using the correct form of 'do" and some students even used another auxiliary, which is wrong.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

Negation is the opposite or absence of something regarded as actual, positive, or affirmative. Negation can come in different forms. In Standard English, the most common form of negation is the use of the functional word "**NOT**" or its contracted version is **n't**. Other forms of negative words you can use to express a statement in its exact opposite include **no, nowhere, none, never, and nowhere** to name a few.

In sum, Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in recognizing and stating whether the sentences in the test have explicit or implicit type of negation . Also, Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in negating sentences .

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Web Source 1

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Web Source 2

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Web Source 3

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Appendix I

Q1/ State whether the following sentences have <u>Explicit</u> or <u>Implicit</u> negation:

1. She is not happy with the results.
2. Scarcely does he understand the lesson.
3. He missed the ball.
4. I never forget a face.
5. The student failed to pass the exam.
6. He ignored her when she came in.
7. Nobody was listening to him.
8. Hardly did she hear him talking.
9. What you said was unclear.
10. He needed some money.

Q2/ Negate the following sentences:

1. Ali is writing a letter.

2. She drove to school.

3. The children are playing football.

4. The concert will begin at 7 on Sunday.

5. His mother helps him every day.

6. She can swim for one hour.

7. He might be able to join you after dinner.

8. We often go to the cinema.

9. He has eat the whole cake.

10. Close the window

Appendix II   (Answers)

Q1: State whether the following sentences have <u>Explicit</u> or <u>Implicit</u> negation:

1. Explicit
2. Explicit
3. Implicit
4. Explicit
5. Implicit
6. Implicit
7. Explicit
8. Explicit
9. Explicit
10. Implicit

Q2: Negate the following sentences:

1. **Ali is not writing a letter**
2. **She did not drive to school**
3. **The children are not playing football.**
4. **The concert will not begin at 7 on Sunday**
5. **His mother does not help him every day.**
6. **She cannot swim for one hour.**
7. **He might not be able to join you after dinner.**
8. **We do not often go to the cinema.**
9. **He has not eaten the whole cake.**
10. **Don't close the window.**